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# Juristat

Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics



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## HOMICIDE IN CANADA – 2000

by Orest Fedorowycz

### Highlights

- There were 542 homicides in Canada in 2000, 4 more than the previous year. The national homicide rate remained unchanged at 1.76 homicides per 100,000 population. This rate has generally been decreasing since the mid-1970s.
- Most victims of homicide knew their killer. In 2000, about one-third of all solved homicides were committed by a family member, one-half by an acquaintance (including illegal business relationships), and the remaining 17% by a stranger.
- In general, 2000 saw a continuation of the recent decline in spousal and other family homicides, but an increase in gang-related killings. The number of gang-related murders has more than tripled over the past five years, from 21 homicides in 1995 to 71 in 2000.
- Almost three-quarters of all homicide victims in 2000 were male, slightly higher than the historical average of about two-thirds. Over half (55%) of female victims were killed by a person with whom they had an intimate relationship at one point in time, either through marriage or dating, compared to 7% of male victims. Males tended to be killed by acquaintances. As in past years, 9 in 10 accused were male.
- According to police-reported data, two-thirds of all persons accused of homicide and half of all homicide victims (over the age of 12) in 2000 had a criminal record. Almost 70% of those accused with a criminal record had previously been convicted of violent crimes, including five for homicide. All five had completed their sentence and were living in the community at the time of the homicide.
- Firearms continued to account for about one-third (34%) of all homicides in 2000, with handguns accounting for almost 6 in 10 shootings. Stabbings comprised a further 28% and beatings, 23%. Although the number of homicides committed with a firearm has increased by 21% (an increase of 32 homicides) since 1998, the 183 firearm homicides in 2000 were still fewer than the average of 200 per year during the 1990s.
- There were 41 youths accused of committing homicide in 2000, 4 fewer than in 1999 and 11 fewer than the average over the past decade. Over this time period, the youth homicide rate has remained relatively stable, while the homicide rate for adult-accused has been declining.
- There were 17 persons killed “on the job” in 2000, down from 21 the previous year. The most common occupations at risk included retail business owners/managers, “bouncers”, and taxi drivers.
- As is the case historically, homicide rates were generally higher in the west than in the east in 2000. Among the provinces, Manitoba recorded the highest rate (2.61 homicides per 100,000 population) followed by Saskatchewan (2.54). The lowest rates were found in Newfoundland (1.11), New Brunswick (1.32) and Ontario (1.33). Both British Columbia and Ontario recorded their lowest homicide rate since the mid 1960s.
- Among the nine largest metropolitan areas, Winnipeg reported the highest homicide rate followed by Montreal and Vancouver, while Ottawa and Hamilton reported the lowest rates. For the remaining seventeen metropolitan areas with populations between 100,000 and 500,000, Regina and Saskatoon, each with 7 homicides, had the highest rates, while Hull and London had the lowest.



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**INTRODUCTION**

The 2000 police-reported statistics indicate that the overall crime rate in Canada decreased for the ninth consecutive year and is at its lowest point since 1978.<sup>1</sup> In addition, data from studies such as the 1999 General Social Survey (GSS)<sup>2</sup> suggest that many Canadians perceive crime as having stabilized over the past five years and feel less fearful of being a victim of crime in their neighbourhoods. Despite these positive indicators, the violent crime rate increased by 3% in 2000, the first increase in seven years. This report examines trends and characteristics for the most serious violent crime – homicide. In addition, the report compares rates among major metropolitan areas, provinces and territories, and selected countries.

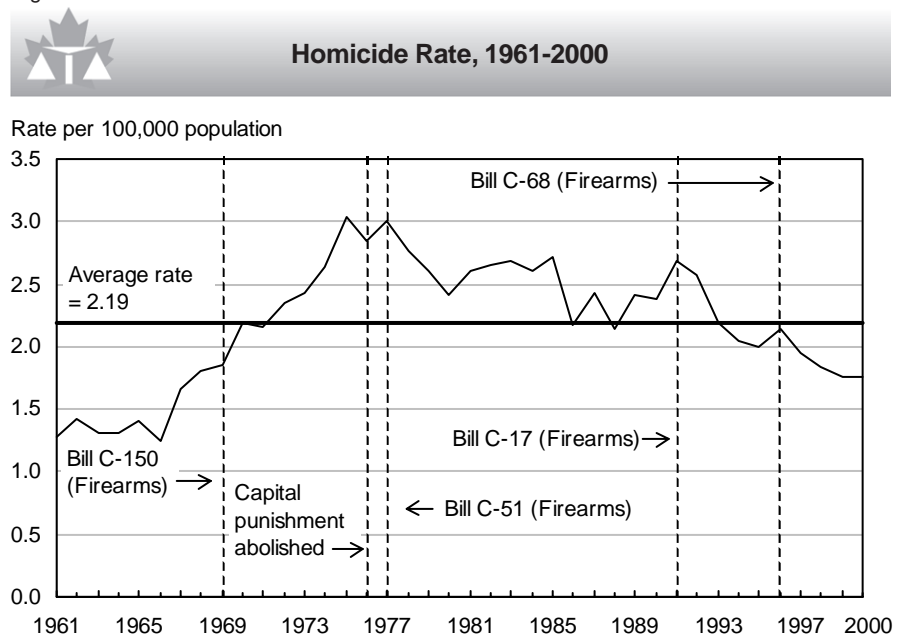
In Canada, criminal homicide is classified as first degree murder, second degree murder, manslaughter or infanticide (see Glossary section for definitions). Deaths caused by criminal negligence, suicide, accidental or justifiable homicides are not included in this classification.

**GENERAL TRENDS**

**Homicide rate remains at lowest level since 1967**

Homicide is a relatively rare occurrence in Canada. The 542 homicides reported in 2000 (4 more than the previous year) accounted for 0.02% of the 2.4 million *Criminal Code* incidents reported to police. By comparison, there were nearly one and one-half times more attempted murders, almost seven times more suicides,<sup>3</sup> and over 400 times as many assaults as homicides.

Figure 1



Source: *Homicide Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, October 2001.*

<sup>1</sup> Logan, R. 2001. *Canadian Crime Statistics - 2000, Juristat, Catalogue 85-002-XPE, Vol. 21 No. 8. Ottawa: Statistics Canada.*  
<sup>2</sup> For more information, see Besserer, S. and C. Trainor 2000. *Criminal Victimization in Canada, 1999, Juristat, Catalogue 85-002-XPE, Vol. 20, No. 10. Ottawa: Statistics Canada.*  
<sup>3</sup> Statistics Canada. *Causes of Death, Catalogue 84-208, Health Statistics Division, 1999.*

Since 1961, when national homicide statistics were first collected, there have been two distinct trends. After several years of stability, the homicide rate increased steadily from 1.25 per 100,000 population in 1966 to a peak of 3.03 in 1975, an increase of 142%. Since 1975, despite yearly fluctuations, the homicide rate has gradually declined, reaching a rate of 1.76 in 2000, a decrease of 42% compared to 1975 (Figure 1).

### Homicide rate also decreasing in United States and many other countries

According to preliminary figures, the Federal Bureau of Investigation reported a 1.1% decrease in the number of homicides in the United States in 2000.<sup>4</sup> There were about 15,500 homicides reported for that year, representing a rate of about 5.50 per 100,000 population. The homicide rate as well as the crime rate have been decreasing in both Canada and the United States over the past decade. Although Canada's homicide rate is generally three to four times lower than the USA rate, it is still higher than rates in many European countries, such as Switzerland and Italy. In 2000, Canada's homicide rate was very similar to the rate in France and Australia's (Table 1).<sup>5</sup>

The rate of attempted murders in Canada declined between 1991 and 1999, similar to the trend in the homicide rate. However, in 2000, the rate of attempted murders (2.49 per 100,000 population) increased by 11% from the previous year, the only year-over-year increase since 1991.<sup>6</sup>

Table 1

### Homicide Rates for Selected Countries, 2000

Country	Homicide rate per 100,000
Russia	19.68
United States	5.50
Finland	2.80
Hungary	2.14
Sweden	2.00
Australia	1.80
France	1.78
<b>Canada</b>	<b>1.76</b>
England & Wales	1.37 <sup>e</sup>
Italy	1.32
Switzerland	0.95
Japan	0.52

<sup>e</sup> estimated number

<sup>4</sup> United States Bureau of Justice Statistics.  
<sup>5</sup> Information provided by the National Central Bureau - Interpol Ottawa.  
<sup>6</sup> Logan, R. 2001. Canadian Crime Statistics - 2000, Juristat, Catalogue 85-002-XPE, Vol. 21 No.8. Ottawa: Statistics Canada.

## GEOGRAPHICAL PATTERNS IN HOMICIDE

### Homicide rate increases in all but three provinces

The decline in the national homicide rate since the mid-1970s was also reflected in the rates for most provinces during that period. The exception was the Atlantic Provinces where homicide rates have generally been below the national rate and have remained relatively constant over the last 20 years.

Historically, rates in the Western provinces and the Territories have generally been higher than the national rate. This was still the case in 2000 (Figure 2). Among the provinces, Manitoba recorded the highest rate (2.61 homicides per 100,000 population), followed by Saskatchewan (2.54). The lowest rates were in Newfoundland (1.11), New Brunswick (1.32) and Ontario (1.33). The homicide rate in Ontario was the lowest since 1966.

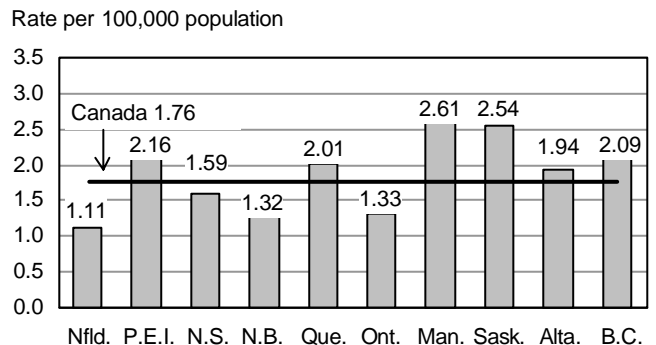
Only three provinces reported decreases in the number of homicides in 2000 - British Columbia, Ontario, and Alberta. The largest decline was seen in British Columbia where the number of homicides dropped from 110 in 1999 to 85 in 2000. This resulted in the lowest rate in that province since 1964 (Table 2).

### Homicide not an urban phenomenon

Crime, particularly homicide, is often considered to be an urban phenomenon. However, historical data show that the homicide rate for Canada's census metropolitan areas (CMAs) as a whole is virtually identical with the total rate for smaller non-CMA areas. In 2000, the homicide rate for the 37% of the population living in non-metropolitan areas of less than 100,000 population was 1.71, almost identical to the national rate (1.76).


Figure 2

### Homicide Rates by Province, 2000



Source: Homicide Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, October 2001.

Table 2



### Homicides by Province/Territory, 1999<sup>r</sup> and 2000

Province/Territory	2000 <sup>1</sup>		1999 <sup>2r</sup>		Average 1990-1999 <sup>3</sup>	
	Number	Rate <sup>4</sup>	Number	Rate <sup>4</sup>	Number	Rate <sup>4</sup>
Newfoundland	6	1.11	2	0.37	5	0.90
Prince Edward Island	3	2.16	1	0.73	1	0.75
Nova Scotia	15	1.59	13	1.38	19	2.00
New Brunswick	10	1.32	9	1.19	11	1.48
Québec	148	2.01	137	1.86	151	2.10
Ontario	155	1.33	162	1.41	192	1.76
Manitoba	30	2.61	26	2.28	33	2.95
Saskatchewan	26	2.54	13	1.27	27	2.63
Alberta	58	1.94	61	2.06	66	2.43
British Columbia	85	2.09	110	2.73	115	3.12
Yukon	2	6.52	1	3.22	2	4.91
Northwest Territories <sup>5</sup>	1	2.38	1	2.43	6	8.85
Nunavut	3	10.83	2	7.41	...	...
<b>CANADA</b>	<b>542</b>	<b>1.76</b>	<b>538</b>	<b>1.76</b>	<b>627</b>	<b>2.15</b>

... figures not appropriate or not applicable

<sup>r</sup> revised

<sup>1</sup> The following number of homicides were reported and included in 2000 but occurred in previous years: Ont. - 3; N.S. - 1; N.B. - 1; TOTAL - 5.

<sup>2</sup> The following number of homicides were reported and included in 1999 but occurred in previous years: Ont. - 3; B.C. - 1; TOTAL - 4.

<sup>3</sup> Numbers may not add to totals because of rounding.

<sup>4</sup> Rates are calculated per 100,000 population.

Population estimates at July 1st, provided by Statistics Canada, Census and Demographic Statistics, Demography Division.

<sup>5</sup> Includes Nunavut before 1999. See text for further explanation.

Source: Homicide Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, October 2001.

#### Territories: a homicide profile

Although the actual number of homicides each year is very low, the corresponding rate can be quite high due to the relatively small population of these areas. Small changes in the actual number of homicides can result in dramatic fluctuations in the rate. Homicide rates in the Territories are usually higher than those in the provinces (Tables 10 and 11).

On April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1999, Nunavut officially became a Canadian territory. The table below shows homicide statistics for the period 1991 to 2000 according to the current boundaries. Although populations in the three territories are lower than 100,000, rates are based on this number for comparability purposes with provincial figures.

#### Homicide Numbers and Rates<sup>1</sup> in Territories, 1991-2000

Territory	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999 <sup>r</sup>	2000
	number									
Nunavut	1	2	3	3	1	2	1	4	2	3
NWT (excludes Nunavut)	2	11	4	1	2	2	2	1	1	1
Yukon	-	2	-	3	4	-	1	3	1	2
	rate									
Nunavut	4.50	8.71	12.68	12.25	3.99	7.77	3.85	15.12	7.40	10.83
NWT (excludes Nunavut)	5.17	27.89	10.03	2.46	4.82	4.78	4.78	2.44	2.40	2.38
Yukon	0.00	6.61	0.00	9.98	12.95	0.00	3.10	9.50	3.26	6.52

- nil or zero

<sup>r</sup> revised

<sup>1</sup> Rates per 100,000 population.

Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) - a large urban core (population of 100,000 and over) together with adjacent urban and rural areas which have a high degree of economic and social integration. The areas that police forces serve may differ in their mix of urban/suburban populations, making the comparability of crime rates among these forces difficult. This lack of comparability is addressed by analyzing crime rates by CMA. Usually, more than one police force is responsible for enforcing the law within the boundaries of a CMA.

Table 3 divides the CMAs into three population categories: nine CMAs with populations of 500,000 and over, eight CMAs with populations of 250,000 – 499,999, and nine CMAs with populations of 100,000 – 249,999. Historically, the largest CMAs have generally shown the highest rates. However, for the year 2000, the nine smallest metropolitan areas as a group

had a rate of 2.16 compared to 1.37 for the eight mid-sized CMAs, and 1.83 for the nine largest CMAs. It is important to note that, due to the relatively small number of homicides within some of the smaller CMAs, homicide rates for these areas can change dramatically from year to year.

Among the nine largest CMAs with populations of 500,000 and greater, Winnipeg reported the highest rate (2.50), followed by Montréal (2.07), and Vancouver (2.05). The homicide rates for both Vancouver and Edmonton were their lowest since CMA data were first tabulated in 1981. The lowest rates were reported for Ottawa (0.97) and Hamilton (1.34). Toronto, Canada's largest metropolitan area, recorded a rate (1.70) slightly lower than the national rate.

Table 3

### Homicides by Census Metropolitan Area, 1999<sup>2r</sup> and 2000

Census Metropolitan Area	2000 <sup>1</sup>			1999 <sup>2r</sup>			Average 1990-1999 <sup>3</sup>	
	Population	Number	Rate <sup>4</sup>	Population	Number	Rate <sup>4</sup>	Number	Rate <sup>4</sup>
<b>500,000+population</b>								
Toronto	4,751,408	81	1.70	4,665,727	61	1.31	79	1.84
Montréal	3,480,342	72	2.07	3,447,237	71	2.06	86	2.58
Vancouver	2,048,823	42	2.05	2,027,899	57	2.81	56	3.09
Calgary	952,960	16	1.68	925,578	13	1.40	17	2.02
Edmonton	944,194	19	2.01	928,308	20	2.15	25	2.79
Ottawa <sup>5</sup>	822,933	8	0.97	812,644	12	1.48	12	1.57
Québec	689,654	12	1.74	688,297	10	1.45	11	1.62
Winnipeg	681,146	17	2.50	680,014	15	2.21	18	2.70
Hamilton	671,679	9	1.34	664,499	16	2.41	12	1.86
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,043,139</b>	<b>276</b>	<b>1.83</b>	<b>14,840,203</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>1.85</b>	<b>316</b>	<b>2.27</b>
<b>250,000 - 499,999 population</b>								
Kitchener	446,311	8	1.79	439,256	2	0.46	5	1.26
St. Catharines-Niagara	422,995	4	0.95	421,384	7	1.66	7	1.69
London	377,523	2	0.53	418,536	5	1.19	5	1.28
Halifax	355,996	8	2.25	352,396	7	1.99	8	2.33
Victoria	317,492	7	2.20	316,933	9	2.84	7	2.11
Windsor	304,390	6	1.97	300,079	7	2.33	7	2.36
Oshawa	297,869	2	0.67	292,486	2	0.68	4	1.37
Hull <sup>6</sup>	258,053	1	0.39	255,415	5	1.96	4	1.59
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,780,629</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>1.37</b>	<b>2,796,485</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>1.57</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>1.72</b>
<b>100,000 - 249,999 population</b>								
Saskatoon	232,600	7	3.01	230,910	4	1.73	7	2.94
Regina	200,455	7	3.49	199,998	2	1.00	5	2.53
St. John's	175,062	3	1.71	175,532	-	0.00	2	1.25
Sudbury	157,132	1	0.64	159,341	4	2.51	4	2.56
Sherbrooke	152,897	4	2.62	152,548	2	1.31	2	1.22
Chicoutimi-Jonquière	145,014	4	2.76	146,689	2	1.36	1	0.86
Saint John	146,844	1	0.68	146,901	1	0.68	3	1.99
Trois-Rivières	141,785	4	2.82	141,918	-	0.00	2	1.20
Thunder Bay	126,343	1	0.79	127,063	4	3.15	4	2.86
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,478,132</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>2.16</b>	<b>1,480,900</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>1.28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>1.98</b>
<b>CMA TOTALS</b>	<b>19,301,900</b>	<b>346</b>	<b>1.79</b>	<b>19,117,588</b>	<b>338</b>	<b>1.77</b>	<b>391</b>	<b>2.16</b>
<b>&lt; 100,000 population</b>	<b>11,448,187</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>1.71</b>	<b>11,375,845</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>1.76</b>	<b>236</b>	<b>2.13</b>
<b>CANADA</b>	<b>30,750,087</b>	<b>542</b>	<b>1.76</b>	<b>30,493,433</b>	<b>538</b>	<b>1.76</b>	<b>627</b>	<b>2.15</b>

- nil or zero

<sup>r</sup> revised

<sup>1</sup> The following number of homicides were reported and included in 2000 but occurred in previous years: Saint John - 1; Hamilton - 1; Toronto - 1; St. Catharines-Niagara - 1; Areas < 100,000 population - 1; TOTAL - 5.

<sup>2</sup> The following number of homicides were reported and included in 1999 but occurred in previous years: Hamilton - 1; Areas < 100,000 population - 3; TOTAL - 4.

<sup>3</sup> Numbers may not add to totals because of rounding.

<sup>4</sup> Rates are calculated per 100,000 population. Population estimates at July 1<sup>st</sup>, provided by Statistics Canada, Census and Demographic Statistics, Demography Division.

<sup>5</sup> Ottawa refers to the Ontario part of the Ottawa-Hull CMA.

<sup>6</sup> Hull refers to the Quebec part of the Ottawa-Hull CMA.

Source: Homicide Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, October 2001.

Among the CMAs with populations of 250,000 - 499,999, Halifax reported the highest homicide rate (2.25), followed by Victoria (2.20), while Hull (0.39) and London (0.53) reported the lowest.

For CMAs with populations less than 250,000, Regina (3.49) reported the highest rate followed by Saskatoon (3.01). In fact, the five highest homicide rates in Canada were recorded in this CMA group. The lowest rates were reported for Sudbury (0.64) and Saint John (0.68). It should be noted that because of their small populations, any fluctuations in the number of homicides for the cities in this CMA group will greatly affect their homicide rate.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF HOMICIDE INCIDENTS

### Half of all homicides are first degree murders

With the abolition of capital punishment in 1976 (Bill C-105), murder was categorized into first and second-degree. In 2000, half (54%) of all homicides were classified by police as first degree murder, 35% as second degree murder, 10% as manslaughter, and less than 1% (5 cases) as infanticide.<sup>7</sup>

The classification of homicide offences in this report is based upon initial police investigation. In the transition period from initial police charging of the accused to final court disposition, the legal classification of an incident may change.

### Only 5% of homicide incidents involved more than one victim

Multiple victim homicides tend to receive more attention from the media and public than single victim homicides. In 2000, the majority (95%) of the 512 separate homicide incidents involved a single victim, while 5% (24) were multiple-victim

incidents. Two in five victims (43%) in solved multiple-victim incidents were acquaintances of the accused, and one-third (35%) of the victims were family members of the accused (i.e., immediate or extended family members related through blood, marriage or adoption), down from 49% in 1999 and 68% in 1998. A further 10% of victims were non-spousal intimates with the accused, and 12% were strangers.

### Most murder-suicides are family-related

In 2000, 5% (27 incidents) of all homicide incidents were murder-suicides, a slightly lower percentage than the average of 7% for the past 20 years. During this period, the number of murder-suicide incidents reached a high of 59 in 1992. All but one of the suspects who committed suicide in these incidents in 2000 were male. Over half (56%) of these murder-suicides were family-related, down from 87% the previous year, a figure which has been relatively constant over the past 20 years.

Of these 15 family-related murder-suicides in 2000, 10 involved men killing their spouse, 3 involved men killing both their spouse and children, one involved a father killing his child, and one involved a mother killing her child.

### Gang-related homicides more than triple since 1995

For the past few years, the police and the justice community have been investigating the involvement of organized criminal groups in crime, such as homicides perpetrated by bikers fighting over control of the lucrative drug market. Between 1991 and 1995, there was an average of 20 gang-related homicides each year. Since 1995, the number of such homicides has more than tripled, from 21 in 1995 to 71 in 2000 (Table 4). Gang-related murders now account for one out of every eight homicide victims. Over half (53%) of these incidents in 2000 occurred in Québec, accounting for one in four homicide incidents in that province.

<sup>7</sup> See Glossary of Terms for definitions of criminal homicide.

Table 4

Year	Gang-related incidents			Total Number of Incidents	Total Number of Victims	Gang-related incidents as a % of all homicide incidents
	Drug-related	Settling of Accounts	Other Motives			
	number					
1991	9	4	7	20	22	2.8
1992	9	6	4	19	19	2.8
1993	8	2	2	12	13	2.0
1994	15	6	2	23	24	4.1
1995	8	2	9	19	21	3.4
1996	21	3	2	26	29	4.5
1997	8	8	12	28	29	5.2
1998	18	19	11	48	51	9.1
1999 <sup>r</sup>	19	19	6	44	45	8.7
2000	33	23	8	64	71	12.5
Average 1991-95	10	4	5	19	20	3.0
Average 1996-00	20	14	8	42	45	8.0

<sup>r</sup> revised

Source: Homicide Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, October 2001.

Approximately nine in ten gang-related homicides in 2000 involved drug trafficking and the settling of accounts; the remainder, gang rivalries and disputes. Over 80% of victims were shot, while the rest were either stabbed or beaten.

Drugs and drug dealing are believed to be linked directly to many types of crimes, including homicide. In 2000, one in seven (77) homicide incidents were reported by the police to be drug-related, up from the previous year, but similar to the average between 1991 and 1999.<sup>8</sup> Of the 82 victims of drug-related homicides in 2000, 64 were reported by the police to be drug dealers.<sup>9</sup>

### Three in four homicide incidents solved by police

During 2000, the police solved 74% of all reported homicide incidents through the identification of at least one accused. Over the past ten years, this proportion has fluctuated between 75% and 85%. Since the process of solving a homicide can sometimes be complex and time-consuming, an incident may not be solved until after the year in which it was initially recorded. These data for 2000, therefore, underestimate final police clearance rates.

Of those homicide incidents cleared by police in 2000, 92% were cleared by a charge being laid or recommended and 7% by the accused having committed suicide immediately following the offence. The remaining 1% were cleared for other reasons, eg., Crown chose not to proceed because of the advanced age and mental condition of the accused, accused person committed to a psychiatric facility, or the accused person was less than 12 years old.

### Six in ten homicides occur in residences

Of the 501 homicide incidents with a known location (11 were unknown) in 2000, six in ten took place in a private residence, the majority (78%) of which were in a residence occupied by the victim (either solely or, in some cases, jointly with the

accused). The majority of spousal homicides (88%) and other homicides within the family (90%) occurred in private residences.

The remaining locations were distributed as follows: 27% in an open area (e.g., a parking lot, street or field), 10% in a commercial area (e.g., bar, bank, restaurant), 8% in a private vehicle and the remaining 3% in a public institution (eg., correctional facility, hospital, nursing home, detoxification centre, psychiatric facility, public swimming pool, or school).

## FIREARMS

### Firearms continue to account for one-third of all homicides

With the exception of three years (1990, 1995, 1998) shooting has been the most common method used in homicides since statistics were first collected in 1961. In 2000, shooting accounted for 34% of all homicides, stabbing 28%, beating 23%, strangulation/suffocation 7%, shaking (Shaken Baby Syndrome) 2%, fire (burns/suffocation) 1%, struck by vehicle 1%, and poisoning 1% (Table 5). The 13 incidents of shaking were double the figure reported each year since 1997.

Homicides account for a relatively small portion of all firearm-related deaths. Of the 1,043 deaths in Canada involving firearms in 1998 (the latest year for which figures are available), the largest proportion of these deaths were due to suicide (78%), followed by homicide (15%), and accidents 4%.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> This question was added to the Homicide Survey in 1991.

<sup>9</sup> For more information, see Tremblay, S. 1999. *Illicit Drugs and Crime in Canada*, Juristat, Catalogue 85-002-XPE, Vol. 19, No. 1. Ottawa: Statistics Canada.

<sup>10</sup> Statistics Canada. *Causes of Death*, Catalogue 84F-0208-XPB, Health Statistics Division, 1999.

Table 5

Cause of Death	2000		1999 <sup>r</sup>		Average 1990-1999 <sup>1</sup>	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Shooting	183	33.8	165	30.7	200	32.0
Stabbing	149	27.5	143	26.6	187	29.9
Beating	127	23.4	125	23.2	126	20.2
Strangulation	39	7.2	55	10.2	68	10.8
Shaken Baby Syndrome	13	2.4	7	1.3	68	11
Struck by vehicle	6	1.1	13	2.4	...	...
Poisoning	4	0.7	5	0.9	6	1.0
Fire (burns / suffocation)	3	0.6	11	2.0	19	3.0
Other <sup>2</sup>	11	2.0	6	1.1	13	2.0
Unknown	7	1.3	8	1.5	7	1.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>542</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>538</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>627</b>	<b>100.0</b>

... figures not appropriate or not applicable

<sup>r</sup> revised

<sup>1</sup> Numbers may not add to totals because of rounding.

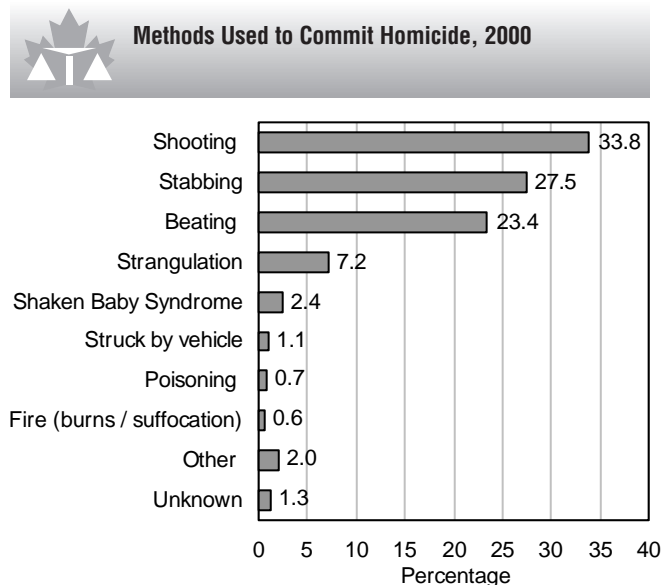
<sup>2</sup> Includes heart attacks, exposure, etc.

Source: Homicide Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, October 2001.



Since 1979, firearms have been used in about one-third of all homicides each year. This trend continued in 2000 with 34% of all homicides committed with a firearm. The 183 shootings in 2000 were distributed as follows: 107 (58%) with a handgun, 56 (31%) with a rifle/shotgun, 11 (6%) with a sawed-off rifle/shotgun, 5 (3%) with a fully-automatic firearm, and 4 (2%) with other types of firearms (Table 6, Figure 3).

Figure 3



Source: Homicide Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, October 2001.

Handguns were used in about 3 in 10 firearm homicides until 1990. Between 1990 and 1992, homicides using handguns increased significantly, representing half of all firearm homicides during those years. This proportion has remained relatively constant until 2000, when handguns accounted for six in ten firearm-related homicides. In Australia, some researchers have attributed increases in the use of handguns in homicides to the introduction of new, more restrictive firearm regulations - "offenders tend to use firearms that are easily concealable and available on the black market, such as handguns"<sup>11</sup>.

Over the last decade, there has been a corresponding decrease in the use of rifles/shotguns (includes sawed-off firearms), from 51% of all firearm-related homicides and a rate of 0.36 per 100,000 population in 1990 to 37% and a rate of 0.22 per 100,000 population in 2000 (Table 6, Figure 4).

**Two in three recovered handguns were not registered**

In 1997, the Homicide Survey began collecting the following supplementary information on firearms: firearm registration, ownership, possession of a valid FAC or Firearms Licence by the suspect, firearm status, and classification of the firearm (whether restricted or prohibited). Analysis of these data focus on handguns used in homicides, as police have been required for some time to record this information as part of their investigations.

**Firearm Legislation**

Canada has adopted a number of legislative measures that are aimed at reducing firearm deaths and injuries. In 1969, Parliament amended the *Criminal Code* (Bill C-150), which for the first time made it illegal to provide firearms to persons of "unsound mind" or criminals under prohibition orders. The legislation also expanded the definition of a "firearm," which prior to 1969, referred to only handguns and automatic firearms, and introduced non-restricted, restricted, and prohibited firearm categories.

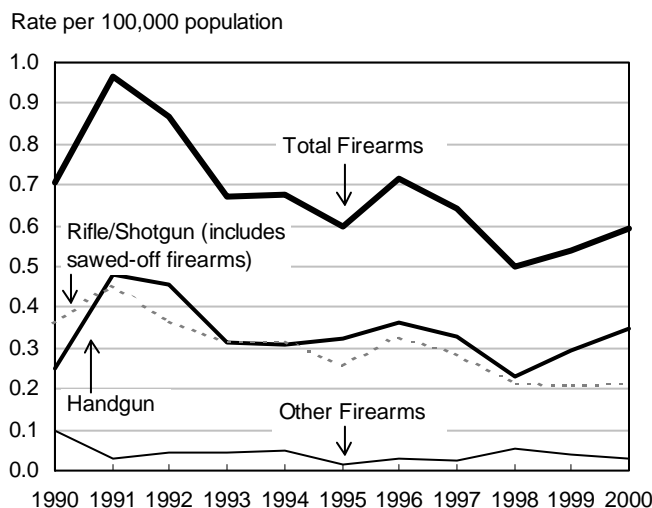
In 1977, Parliament again amended the *Criminal Code* (Bill C-51), requiring individuals to obtain a Firearms Acquisition Certificate (FAC) before acquiring firearms. The legislation also introduced a variety of provisions including regulations on safe storage and display of firearms for businesses and bona-fide gun collectors, and mandatory minimum sentences to deter the criminal use of firearms.

In 1991, Parliament strengthened the screening provisions for FAC applicants by introducing new legislation (Bill C-17). A multi-page form with a variety of questions concerning the applicant's personal and criminal history, personal references, picture, and a mandatory 28-day waiting period for approved FAC applicants were incorporated. Under this legislation all firearm owners have to comply with safe storage, handling, display, and transportation of firearms.

In December 1995, Parliament passed Canada's newest firearms legislation (Bill C-68) which created a new *Firearms Act* and amended the *Criminal Code*. The legislation created strict new penalties for firearms trafficking and smuggling, and tougher mandatory minimum sentences for 10 serious offences involving firearms. All firearm owners and users are now required to obtain a firearm licence, and all firearms will have to be registered by January 2003 (this includes non-restricted rifles and shotguns).

Figure 4

**Rate of Firearm Homicides, 1990-2000**



Source: Homicide Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, October 2001.

<sup>11</sup> Mouzos, J.2000, *The Licensing and Registration Status of Firearms Used in Homicide, Trends and Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice, no.151, Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra, p.5.*

Table 6

Year	Firearm										Total	Homicides involving firearms as a % of Total Homicides
	Handgun		Rifle/Shotgun		Fully automatic firearm <sup>2</sup>		Sawed-off rifle/shotgun <sup>2</sup>		Other firearms <sup>2</sup>			
	Number	% of Firearm Homicides	Number	% of Firearm Homicides	Number	% of Firearm Homicides	Number	% of Firearm Homicides	Number	% of Firearm Homicides		
1974	76	26.9	180	63.6	...	...	12	4.2	15	5.3	283	47.2
1975	88	30.1	183	62.7	...	...	10	3.4	11	3.8	292	41.7
1976	68	26.4	165	64.0	...	...	5	1.9	20	7.8	258	38.6
1977	61	23.5	161	61.9	...	...	14	5.4	24	9.2	260	36.6
1978	63	25.2	177	70.8	...	...	2	0.8	8	3.2	250	37.8
1979	54	26.1	135	65.2	...	...	4	1.9	14	6.8	207	32.8
1980	62	31.8	120	61.5	...	...	4	2.1	9	4.6	195	32.9
1981	59	29.6	123	61.8	...	...	2	1.0	15	7.5	199	30.7
1982	88	35.5	146	58.9	...	...	9	3.6	5	2.0	248	37.2
1983	78	34.8	127	56.7	...	...	4	1.8	15	6.7	224	32.8
1984	66	28.9	142	62.3	...	...	2	0.9	18	7.9	228	34.2
1985	73	32.9	131	59.0	...	...	9	4.1	9	4.1	222	31.5
1986	38	21.7	114	65.1	...	...	1	0.6	22	12.6	175	30.8
1987	58	28.7	108	53.5	...	...	7	3.5	29	14.4	202	31.4
1988	47	27.8	94	55.6	...	...	7	4.1	21	12.4	169	29.3
1989	54	24.8	131	60.1	...	...	3	1.4	30	13.8	218	33.2
1990	69	35.2	99	50.5	...	...	1	0.5	27	13.8	196	29.7
1991	135	49.8	103	38.0	6	2.2	25	9.2	2	0.7	271	35.9
1992	129	52.4	90	36.6	12	4.9	15	6.1	-	0.0	246	33.6
1993	90	46.6	76	39.4	11	5.7	15	7.8	1	0.5	193	30.8
1994	90	45.9	66	33.7	14	7.1	26	13.3	-	0.0	196	32.9
1995	95	54.0	61	34.7	5	2.8	15	8.5	-	0.0	176	29.9
1996	107	50.5	81	38.2	8	3.8	16	7.5	-	0.0	212	33.4
1997	99	51.3	77	39.9	2	1.0	10	5.2	5	2.6	193	32.9
1998	70	46.4	51	33.8	12	7.9	14	9.3	4	2.6	151	27.1
1999 <sup>r</sup>	89	53.9	58	35.2	6	3.6	6	3.6	6	3.6	165	30.7
2000	107	58.5	56	30.6	5	2.7	11	6.0	4	2.2	183	33.8
Average 1990-99	97	48.7	76	38.1	...	...	14	7.2	5	2.3	200	31.9

... figures not applicable or not appropriate

- nil or zero

r revised

<sup>1</sup> Detailed information on firearms is not available prior to 1974.

<sup>2</sup> The addition of this new firearm category in 1991 and the improved identification of firearms and classification of sawed-off rifles/shotguns may account for some of the decrease in the numbers for the "other firearms" category.

Source: Homicide Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, October 2001.

The data suggest that most firearms used in handgun-related homicides were not registered and the suspects were not licensed firearm users. Studies in other countries on firearm use in homicides have reached similar conclusions.<sup>12,13</sup>

Between 1997 and 2000, there were 365 homicides committed with handguns. In 30% (110) of these homicides where the handgun was recovered, more than two-thirds (69%) of the handguns were not registered. The suspect owned the firearm in almost one-quarter of solved handgun-related homicides compared to 2% owned by the victim. In the remaining incidents, one-fifth of the handguns belonged to someone other than the suspect or victim, and in over half (54%) of cases, the ownership could not be determined. In addition, 11% of suspects in solved handgun-related homicides possessed a valid FAC or Firearms Licence; 49% of suspects did not; and, in 41% of cases this information was not known.

## ACCUSED-VICTIM RELATIONSHIP

The Homicide Survey collects data on the relationships between persons accused of homicide and their victims. Unless noted otherwise, these and other related distributions exclude "unsolved" homicide incidents where there was no accused identified (26% of all incidents in 2000).

The data collected through the Homicide Survey indicate that homicides are far more likely to be committed by someone known to the victim than by a stranger. Half (51%) of all solved homicides in 2000 were committed by an acquaintance (i.e.,

<sup>12</sup> Home Office 1998, Criminal Statistics England and Wales 1997, Research Development and Statistics Directorate, The Stationery Office, London.

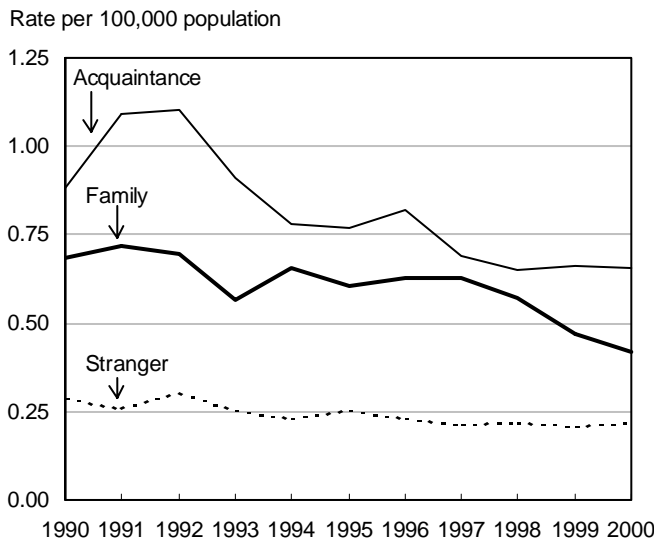
<sup>13</sup> Mouzos, J. 2000, The Licensing and Registration Status of Firearms Used in Homicide, Trends and Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice, no. 151, Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra.

non-family) of the victim and almost one-third (32%) by a family member (Table 7). The remaining 17% were killed by strangers. Of the 202 victims in acquaintance homicides, 104 were killed by a "casual" acquaintance (not a particularly intense or close relationship established prior to the homicide), a further 30 were killed by a "close" acquaintance, 23 by a current or ex boyfriend/girlfriend, and 23 by someone known to them through a criminal relationship, which includes prostitutes, drug dealers and their clients.

The proportion of stranger homicides has remained relatively stable over the past ten years, ranging from 12% to 17% of all homicides (Figure 5). Almost six in ten (58%) incidents where victims were killed by strangers in 2000 occurred during the commission of another criminal offence, usually a robbery. Male victims were four-and-a-half times more likely to be killed by strangers (23%) than were female victims (5%).<sup>14</sup>

Figure 5

**Homicides by Accused-Victim Relationship, 1990-2000**



Source: Homicide Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, October 2001.

**Family homicides continue declining**

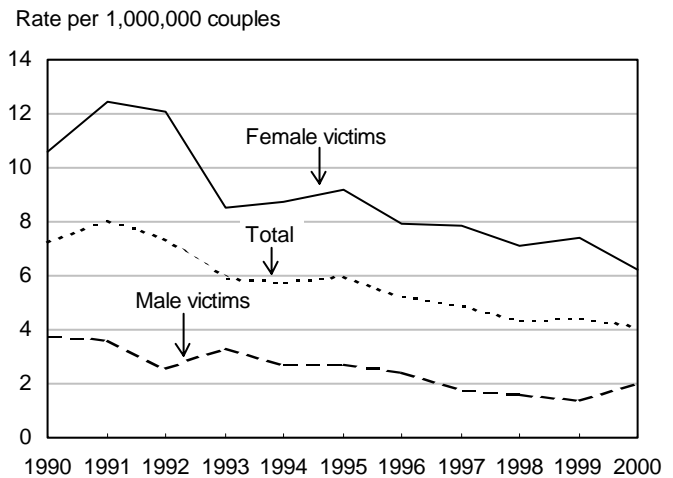
Family homicides involve spouses, parents, children, siblings or other members related either by blood, marriage or adoption. The recent declines in family homicides continued in 2000. The 129 family homicides were 15 fewer than in 1999, and 52 fewer than the previous ten-year average of 181. Most of this decline from 1999 to 2000 resulted from a large decrease in extended family killings (down from 16 in 1999 to 8 in 2000). The remaining family homicides included: 67 victims killed by a spouse, 31 by a parent, 17 by a son or daughter, and 6 by a sibling<sup>15</sup> (Table 7).

**Spousal homicides decreasing**

Spousal homicides have generally been decreasing since 1991, and in 2000 accounted for one out of every six solved homicides. They include persons in registered marriages, in common-law relationships and persons separated or divorced from such unions (Figure 6). In 2000, 67 persons were killed by a spouse, down from an average of 88 victims over the previous ten years. The decline in the number of spousal homicides in recent years may be the result of various factors such as increased societal intolerance of spousal abuse and mandatory charging policies in spousal assaults. In addition, reduced exposure to abusive or violent relationships as a consequence of improvements in the economic status of women, and increases in the availability of domestic violence services (e.g., safe houses or shelters, and counselling) may have contributed to the decrease in spousal homicides.<sup>16,17</sup>

Figure 6


**Spousal Homicide Rate, 1990-2000**



Source: Homicide Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, October 2001.

<sup>14</sup> For more information on stranger homicides, see Janhevich, D. 1998. *Violence Committed by Strangers*. Juristat, Catalogue 85-002-XIE, Vol. 18, No. 9. Ottawa: Statistics Canada.  
<sup>15</sup> For more information on family violence, see Trainor, C. and K. Mihorean, 2001. *Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile 2001*, Catalogue 85-224-XPE, Ottawa: Statistics Canada.  
<sup>16</sup> For more information on services available to abused spouses, see Locke, D. and R. Code. 2001. *Canada's Shelters for Abused Women, 1999-2000*. Juristat, Catalogue 85-002-XPE, Vol. 21, No. 1. Ottawa: Statistics Canada.  
<sup>17</sup> Dugan, L., Nagin, D. and R. Rosenfeld, "Explaining the Decline in Intimate Partner Homicide", *Homicide Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 3, August 1999: 188.

Table 7



**Solved Homicides by Accused-Victim Relationship<sup>1</sup>, 1999<sup>r</sup> and 2000**

Relationship Type (Victims killed by:)	2000		1999 <sup>r</sup>		Average 1990-1999 <sup>2</sup>	
	Number of victims	Percent	Number of victims	Percent	Number of victims	Percent
<i>Family Relationship</i>						
Husband (legal and common-law)	37	9.3	38	9.2	52	10.4
Husband (separated/divorced)	14	3.5	20	4.8	17	3.4
Same sex spouse	-	0.0	3	0.7	...	...
Wife (legal and common-law)	13	3.3	8	1.9	17	3.5
Wife (separated/divorced)	3	0.8	2	0.5	2	0.3
<b>Total Spousal</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>16.8</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>17.2</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>17.5</b>
Father	21	5.3	22	5.3	27	5.4
Mother	10	2.5	9	2.2	16	3.3
Child	17	4.3	19	4.6	19	3.8
Sibling	6	1.5	7	1.7	11	2.1
Other family relation	8	2.0	16	3.9	20	4.1
<b>Total Family</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>32.3</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>34.9</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>36.2</b>
<i>Acquaintance</i>						
(ex) Boyfriend/girlfriend/other intimate	23	5.8	20	4.8	22	4.5
Close Acquaintance	30	7.5	29	7.0	36	7.1
Authority figure	5	1.3	4	1.0	...	...
Business associate (legal)	7	1.8	14	3.4	14	2.8
Criminal relationships <sup>3</sup>	23	5.8	28	6.8	32	6.4
Neighbour	10	2.5	12	2.9	22	4.5
Casual acquaintance	104	26.0	95	23.0	117	23.4
<b>Total Acquaintance</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>50.5</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>48.9</b>	<b>243</b>	<b>48.5</b>
<i>Stranger</i>	68	17.0	64	15.5	72	14.3
<i>Unknown relationship</i>	1	0.3	3	0.7	4	0.9
<b>TOTAL SOLVED HOMICIDES</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>413</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>100.0</b>

... figures not applicable or not appropriate

- nil or zero

<sup>r</sup> revised

<sup>1</sup> Includes only homicide incidents in which there are known suspects. If there was more than one suspect, only the closest relationship to the victim was recorded.

<sup>2</sup> Numbers may not add to totals because of rounding.

<sup>3</sup> Includes prostitutes, drug dealers and their clients.

Source: Homicide Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, October 2001.

Although three in four spousal homicide victims were women in 2000, there were seven fewer wives killed and six more husbands killed than in 1999. In 2000, 37 women were killed by a current male spouse (legal or common-law) and 14 were killed by a separated or divorced male spouse. Of the 16 men killed by a female spouse in 2000, 13 were killed by a current spouse and 3 by a separated spouse. Regardless of gender, seven in 10 incidents of spousal homicides involved a history of domestic violence between the victim and the accused that was known to police.

In addition to those killed by a spouse, 16 females were killed by a current or ex-boyfriend, and 2 males were killed by a current or ex-girlfriend. In all, 55% of all female victims and 7% of all male victims in 2000 were killed by a person with whom they had an intimate relationship at one point in time, either through marriage or dating.

### Two-thirds of murdered children killed by a parent

There were 39 children (under the age of 12) murdered in 2000, 25% fewer than the average of 52 killed each year since 1990. In solved cases, two-thirds of these children were killed by

parents, and the remainder, mostly by acquaintances. In 2000, there were 24 parent-child homicide incidents involving 27 victims (Table 8).

Taking into account that some of these incidents involve multiple-accused and multiple-victims, the actual number of accused parents in 2000 were 15 fathers (11 biological fathers and 4 stepfathers) and 9 biological mothers.

The number of infants under one year of age who were killed increased from 11 in 1999 to 20 in 2000, just below the previous ten-year average of 21. Two-thirds of these infants were killed by parents, the rest primarily by a caregiver or sibling. Nine of these infants died as a result of shaking (Shaken Baby Syndrome), 7 at the hands of their parents and 2 by caregivers.

The figure for infant homicides may still be under-reported since some claims of accidental childhood deaths such as falls or "sudden infant deaths" could actually be due to child abuse. Since 1995, most provinces have legislated mandatory coroner inquests into deaths of children less than two years of age, which may have resulted in the increased reporting and classification of these cases as homicides in some years.

Table 8



**Children (<12 years) killed by parents, Canada, 1974-2000**

Year	Number of Incidents	Number of Victims	Parent-child homicides as a % of all homicide incidents	Actual Number of Accused in Parent-Child Homicides				Ratio of accused (step) fathers to (step) mothers
				Father	Step-Father	Mother	Step-Mother	
1974	34	42	6.2	18	1	15	-	1.3
1975	26	27	4.1	13	-	13	-	1.0
1976	32	44	5.2	15	-	17	-	0.9
1977	38	43	6.0	14	3	21	-	0.8
1978	45	56	7.3	12	4	29	-	0.6
1979	36	47	6.2	16	2	18	-	1.0
1980	25	27	4.9	14	1	10	-	1.5
1981	24	27	3.9	8	2	14	-	0.7
1982	28	31	4.6	13	1	14	-	1.0
1983	31	32	4.9	16	1	14	-	1.2
1984	40	50	6.6	26	1	13	-	2.1
1985	29	31	4.4	14	1	14	-	1.1
1986	41	50	7.7	23	-	18	-	1.3
1987	27	30	4.5	17	-	10	-	1.7
1988	23	28	4.2	11	-	12	-	0.9
1989	28	37	4.8	11	2	15	-	0.9
1990	26	31	4.2	16	-	10	-	1.6
1991	24	28	3.4	8	1	13	2	0.6
1992	28	32	4.2	10	1	17	-	0.6
1993	32	32	5.4	13	4	15	-	1.1
1994	40	43	7.2	20	4	16	-	1.5
1995	32	36	5.7	18	2	11	1	1.7
1996	37	41	6.4	19	6	12	-	2.1
1997	45	54	8.4	18	3	23	1	0.9
1998	41	47	7.7	22	3	15	1	1.6
1999 <sup>r</sup>	23	26	4.6	13	3	7	-	2.3
2000	24	27	4.7	11	4	9	-	1.8
Average 1974-83	32	38	5.3	14	2	17	-	0.9
Average 1984-93	30	35	4.9	15	1	14	-	1.1
Average 1994-99	36	41	7.2	18	4	14	1	1.5

- nil or zero  
<sup>r</sup> revised

Source: Homicide Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, October 2001.

## AGE AND SEX OF VICTIMS AND ACCUSED

### Males account for three-quarters of victims and 90% of accused

Historically, about two-thirds of homicide victims have been male. However, in 2000, three quarters of victims were male. The median<sup>18</sup> age for both male and female victims of homicide was 34 years of age.

Males accounted for almost 90% of all those accused of homicide in 2000, consistent with the average for the previous ten years. Females accused of homicide tended to kill family members (53% of incidents) more often than male accused (31%).

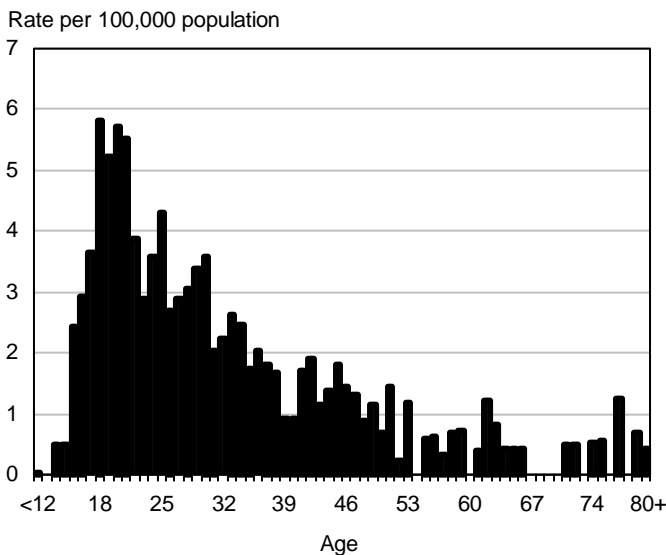
The 15-34 age group continues to be the highest risk group for committing homicide, accounting for three in five persons accused of homicide in a given year, while comprising approximately 28% of the total population. Figure 7 shows that 18 to 21 year olds had the highest single-age rates for accused in 2000.

Figure 8 shows that infants under one year of age were at the highest risk of any age group of being a homicide victim in 2000. The risk of being a homicide victim gradually declines with age especially after the early to mid 20s. While this pattern changes from year to year, the age range for the majority of victims remains around ages 17 to 34 years.

<sup>18</sup> Median refers to the middle value in a set of values ordered from lowest to highest.

Figure 7

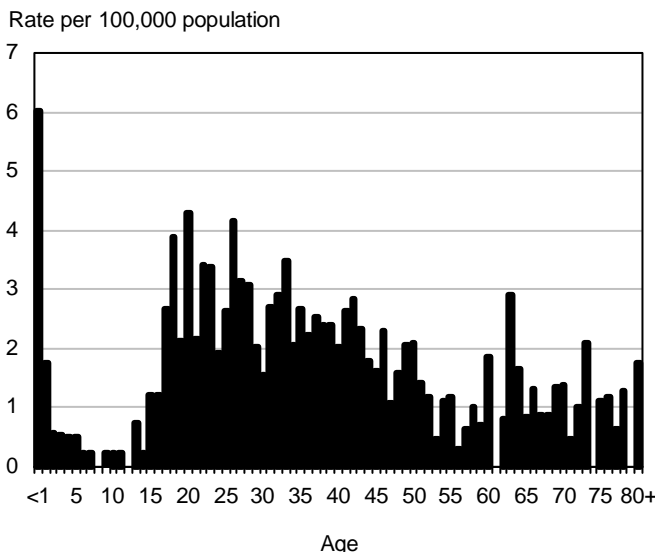
 **Homicide Accused Age-Specific Rates, 2000**



Source: Homicide Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, October 2001.

Figure 8

 **Homicide Victim Age-Specific Rates, 2000**



Source: Homicide Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, October 2001.

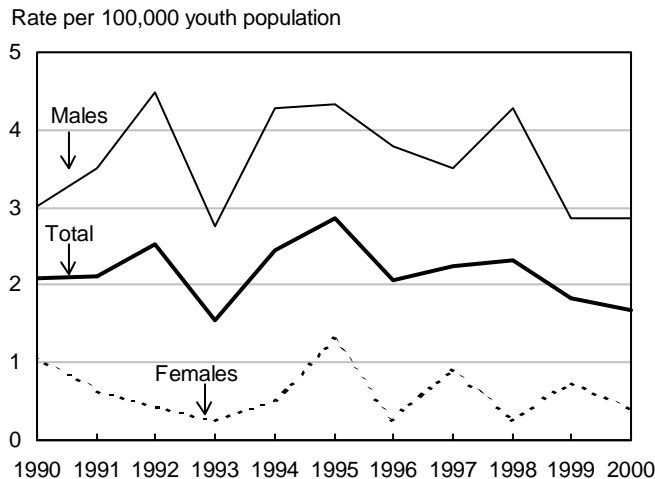
## YOUTH HOMICIDE

### Homicides committed by youths decline slightly in 2000

In 2000, 41 youths (persons 12 to 17 years of age) were accused of homicide, 4 fewer than in 1999, and representing 8.9% of all persons accused of homicide. Over the past decade, the youth homicide rate has remained relatively stable (Figure 9), while the homicide rate for adults has generally been decreasing. During this period, an average of 52 youths was accused each year, accounting for 9% of all persons accused of homicide annually (Table 9). In 2000, female youths accounted for 12% of homicides committed by youths, similar to the average of 13% over the previous ten years.

Figure 9

 **Youths (Aged 12 to 17 Years) Accused of Homicide, 1990-2000**



Source: Homicide Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, October 2001.

As is the case historically, youths were more likely than adults to kill other youths and young adults. In incidents that were solved in 2000, 12-24 year olds represented almost half (48%) of all victims killed by youths compared to 17% of all victims killed by adults.

### Youth homicide victimization trends similar in Canada and the United States

International homicide comparisons are useful for examining similar and/or varying patterns across time. Although homicide victim rates in the United States are three to four times higher than in Canada, homicides against children and youths (under 18 years) in both countries share similarities in their trends. In the early 1980s, the trend in homicide rates for males and

Table 9



**Youths (12-17 Years) Accused of Homicide, Canada, 1974-2000**

Year	Youths Accused of Homicide						Total Youth as % of Total Accused
	Number			Rate per 100,000 Youth Population <sup>1</sup>			
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
1974	53	3	56	3.67	0.22	1.98	10.2
1975	55	13	68	3.77	0.93	2.38	10.8
1976	41	8	49	2.80	0.57	1.71	7.9
1977	55	8	63	3.76	0.57	2.20	9.4
1978	48	10	58	3.35	0.73	2.07	8.4
1979	44	11	55	3.16	0.83	2.02	8.9
1980	39	7	46	2.89	0.54	1.74	8.7
1981	47	13	60	3.60	1.05	2.36	9.5
1982	42	9	51	3.33	0.75	2.07	8.0
1983	31	10	41	2.53	0.86	1.72	6.7
1984	25	11	36	2.09	0.97	1.54	6.5
1985	52	5	57	4.41	0.45	2.48	8.9
1986	31	11	42	2.67	1.00	1.85	7.6
1987	28	8	36	2.42	0.73	1.59	6.1
1988	44	3	47	3.82	0.27	2.09	8.9
1989	42	5	47	3.65	0.46	2.09	8.4
1990	35	12	47	3.02	1.09	2.08	8.5
1991	41	7	48	3.51	0.63	2.11	7.5
1992	53	5	58	4.47	0.45	2.52	8.8
1993	33	3	36	2.75	0.26	1.54	6.5
1994	52	6	58	4.29	0.52	2.46	10.1
1995	53	15	68	4.32	1.29	2.85	11.8
1996	47	3	50	3.79	0.26	2.07	9.1
1997 <sup>r</sup>	44	11	55	3.51	0.93	2.25	10.7
1998 <sup>r</sup>	54	3	57	4.29	0.25	2.33	10.8
1999 <sup>r</sup>	36	9	45	2.86	0.76	1.84	9.2
2000	36	5	41	2.86	0.42	1.67	8.9
Average 1990-99	45	7	52	3.68	0.64	2.20	9.3

<sup>r</sup> revised

<sup>1</sup> Population estimates at July 1st, provided by Statistics Canada, Census and Demographic Statistics, Demography Division.

Source: Homicide Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, October 2001.

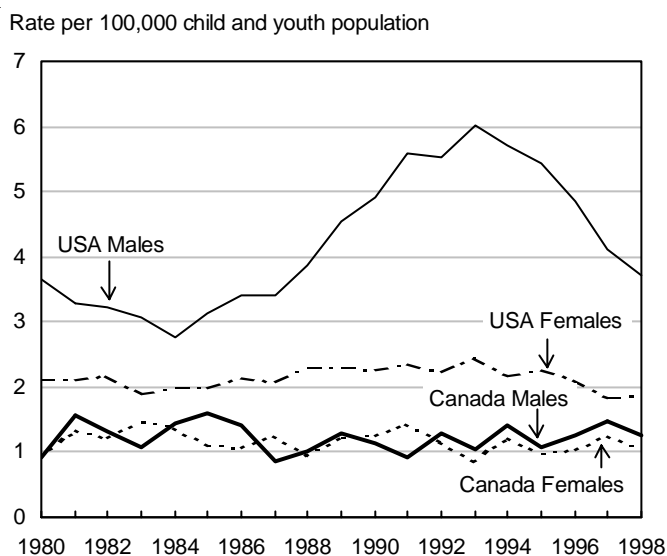
females in this age group in Canada and the United States were relatively similar. However, the American homicide rate for males increased dramatically from 1985 to 1993. Most of this increase can be attributed to males aged 14-17 years and the increased use of firearms in homicides. American females, on the other hand, were homicide victims at a consistent rate over this time period. Since 1993, the homicide rate for American males has declined sharply while Canada's homicide rate for males has been consistent (Figure 10).

**ONE IN FIVE ACCUSED AND ONE IN SIX VICTIMS ARE ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

It has been widely documented that Aboriginal Peoples are over-represented in the justice system. This also holds true for involvement in homicide. While Aboriginal Peoples account for 3% of the Canadian population, they comprised at least 24% of all persons accused of committing homicide in 2000 as well as 15% of all homicide victims. In 11% of homicide cases, police services did not collect or report information on aboriginal origin. Therefore, the proportion of Aboriginal persons may actually be higher than cited above.

Figure 10

**Child and youth homicide rate by sex of victim, Canada and USA, 1980-1998**



Source: A forthcoming joint publication of the US Department of Justice, Justice Canada and the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, by P. Harms and S. Mihorean.

One factor which may contribute to some of this over-representation is that the Aboriginal population is younger on average than the rest of the Canadian population. Historically, the high-risk age group for committing homicide and other violent crimes has been between 15 and 34 years of age. This age group accounted for 36% of the Aboriginal population in 2000, compared to 28% for the rest of the population.

## TWO-THIRDS OF SUSPECTS AND HALF OF VICTIMS HAVE A PREVIOUS CRIMINAL RECORD

In 2000, two-thirds (67%) of persons accused of homicide had a Canadian criminal record, the majority (69%) of whom had been previously convicted of violent crimes: 5 for homicide, 50 for robbery and 161 for other violent offences. All five accused with a previous homicide conviction had completed their sentence and were living in the community when the homicide charge was laid. At the same time, half (52%) of homicide victims over the age of 12 in 2000 had a Canadian criminal record, half (46%) of whom had been previously convicted of violent crimes: 5 for homicide, 25 for robbery, and 89 for other violent offences.

## PRECIPITATING FACTORS

### Alcohol/drug consumption

Alcohol, drugs and other intoxicants are known to play a role in the commission of many crimes including homicide.<sup>19</sup> In 2000, police reported that 33% of homicide victims and 44% of accused persons had consumed alcohol and/or drugs at the time of the offence, consistent with the pattern seen since 1991 when this information was first collected in the Homicide Survey. As victims of homicide, men were 50% more likely than women to have consumed alcohol and/or drugs, and as accused, were 25% more likely than women to have consumed alcohol or drugs.

### Half of homicide incidents motivated by anger and despair

As determined by police, the most common motive for committing homicide in 2000 was an argument, quarrel or incident inciting a vengeful or jealous reaction or an act of despair (54% of all homicide incidents). A further 23% were motivated by financial gain or the settling of accounts. There were three "random" killings (victim randomly selected) in 2000 and two homicides motivated by hate. Between 1991 and 1999 there were 13 homicide incidents that were motivated by hate, an average of between one and two per year.

### Homicides committed during commission of another offence

About one-third (35%) of all homicide incidents reported in 2000 occurred during the commission of another criminal offence. Of these 191 incidents, 146 were committed at the same time as another violent offence: 69 during an assault, 39 during a robbery, 15 during a sexual assault, 5 during a

kidnapping/abduction, 8 as a result of a stalking<sup>20</sup> and 10 during other violent offences. Six other homicides occurred as a result of arson, 10 were committed during other property offences, and 29, in combination with other types of criminal offences.

## OCCUPATIONS AT RISK

### Seventeen victims killed while at work

Despite the obvious dangers inherent in police work, the number of police officers murdered in Canada in the line of duty is low. Since 1961, an average of three police officers each year have been murdered as a result of performing their duties; all but seven were shot. In 2000, one police officer was a victim of homicide. By comparison, the United States, with a population about ten times greater than Canada's, reported 42 police officers murdered on the job in 1999 (latest year for which figures are available); all but one were killed with a firearm. In 2000, no correctional officers were murdered in Canada in the line of duty.

There were 16 other persons who were victims of homicide "on the job" in 2000 in Canada. The most common occupations at risk were retail business managers/owners, "bouncers" and taxi drivers.

There was one known prostitute killed as a result of the profession, down from three in 1999 and seven in 1998. It should be noted that the number of prostitutes reported killed as a result of their profession most likely under-represents the actual figure: only those incidents where the police are certain that the victim was killed in the course of engaging in prostitution-related activities are counted.<sup>21</sup>

## METHODOLOGY

The Homicide Survey has collected police-reported data on homicide incidents since 1961, including the characteristics of victims and accused. Whenever a homicide becomes known to the police, the investigating police department completes a survey questionnaire. This questionnaire remained virtually unchanged from 1961 to 1990. In 1991 and later in 1997, in an effort to respond to changing information needs, the survey was revised and expanded.

Note that the homicide *count* for each year reflects the number of homicides *reported* to police in that year, regardless of the date that the homicide actually occurred. Also, socio-demographic and other information (e.g., history of domestic violence, alcohol / drug consumption) on persons accused of homicide are only available for solved incidents (i.e., where at


<sup>19</sup> Sacco, V., and L. Kennedy. 1994. *The Criminal Event*. Scarborough, Ontario. Nelson Canada: p.47.

<sup>20</sup> For more information on this topic, see Hackett, K. 2000. *Criminal Harassment*, Juristat, Catalogue 85-002-XPE, Vol. 20, No. 11. Ottawa: Statistics Canada.

<sup>21</sup> For more information on prostitution, see Duchesne, D. 1997. *Street Prostitution in Canada*, Juristat, Catalogue 85-002-XPE, Vol. 17 No. 2. Ottawa: Statistics Canada.



Table 10



**Number of Homicides, 1961-2000**

Year	Nfld.	P.E.I.	N.S.	N.B.	Que.	Ont.	Man.	Sask.	Alta.	B.C.	Yukon	N.W.T. <sup>1</sup>	Nvt.	Canada
1961	1	1	6	2	52	89	15	14	18	34	1	-	...	233
1962	-	1	10	8	62	76	19	13	18	55	3	-	...	265
1963	3	-	6	5	69	76	16	8	27	35	3	1	...	249
1964	5	-	13	5	52	81	16	20	25	32	1	3	...	253
1965	6	4	10	5	63	77	15	15	20	57	3	2	...	277
1966	3	1	9	6	56	71	17	12	27	48	-	-	...	250
1967	1	-	10	5	75	114	15	25	38	47	6	2	...	338
1968	5	-	9	5	102	104	28	23	25	73	1	-	...	375
1969	5	1	12	1	126	111	28	33	23	50	-	1	...	391
1970	1	1	15	8	141	115	29	24	42	78	6	7	...	467
1971	2	-	16	10	124	151	33	29	45	61	-	2	...	473
1972	2	2	14	11	157	141	36	28	37	88	3	2	...	521
1973	3	-	19	17	155	160	38	23	36	87	4	4	...	546
1974	3	2	8	21	169	160	42	31	44	107	5	8	...	600
1975	4	-	14	12	226	206	37	36	57	98	6	5	...	701
1976	6	2	25	14	205	183	31	34	68	88	4	8	...	668
1977	8	1	14	38	197	192	44	46	70	91	6	4	...	711
1978	9	4	13	27	180	182	39	32	84	85	2	4	...	661
1979	5	-	17	11	186	175	44	36	56	90	4	7	...	631
1980	3	1	12	9	181	158	31	31	55	105	2	4	...	592
1981	4	1	11	17	186	170	41	29	73	110	1	5	...	648
1982	6	-	12	13	190	184	35	39	70	109	2	7	...	667
1983	6	-	13	11	190	202	40	33	75	108	1	3	...	682
1984	6	-	15	14	198	190	43	30	54	110	2	5	...	667
1985 <sup>2</sup>	5	1	26	14	219	193	26	28	63	113	6	10	...	704
1986	4	-	15	12	156	139	47	26	64	89	3	14	...	569
1987	5	-	14	20	174	204	44	30	73	78	-	2	...	644
1988	7	1	11	8	154	186	31	23	66	80	1	8	...	576
1989	5	1	16	18	215	175	43	22	67	86	2	7	...	657
1990	-	1	9	12	184	182	39	36	74	110	1	12	...	660
1991	10	2	21	17	181	245	42	21	84	128	-	3	...	754
1992	2	-	21	11	166	242	29	32	92	122	2	13	...	732
1993	7	2	19	11	159	192	31	30	49	120	-	7	...	627
1994	4	1	19	15	126	192	29	24	66	113	3	4	...	596
1995	5	1	17	14	135	181	27	21	60	120	4	3	...	588
1996	7	1	18	9	154	187	45	32	53	125	-	4	...	635
1997	7	-	24	8	132	178	31	25	61	116	1	3	...	586
1998	7	1	24	5	137	156	33	33	64	90	3	5	...	558
1999 <sup>r</sup>	2	1	13	9	137	162	26	13	61	110	1	1	2	538
2000	6	3	15	10	148	155	30	26	58	85	2	1	3	542
<b>Total</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>585</b>	<b>468</b>	<b>5,919</b>	<b>6,337</b>	<b>1,285</b>	<b>1,066</b>	<b>2,142</b>	<b>3,531</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>21,832</b>

... figures not appropriate or not applicable

- nil or zero

<sup>r</sup> revised

<sup>1</sup> Includes Nunavut before 1999. See textbox for further explanation.

<sup>2</sup> Excludes 329 victims killed in the Air India incident.

Source: Homicide Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, October 2001.

least one accused has been identified). In incidents where there are multiple accused and one victim, only the *closest* relationship between the victim and any of the accused is recorded.

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Homicide** occurs when a person directly or indirectly, by any means, causes the death of a human being. Homicide is either culpable (murder, manslaughter or infanticide) or not culpable (not an offence) (*Criminal Code of Canada*, sections 222 – 240).

**Murder** occurs when a person intentionally causes the death of another human being, or means to cause bodily harm that the person knows is likely to cause death.

**First degree murder** occurs when:

- it is planned and deliberate; or
- the victim is a person employed and acting in the course of his/her work for the preservation and maintenance of the public peace (e.g., police officer, correctional worker); or
- the death is caused by a person committing or attempting to commit certain serious offences (e.g., sexual assault, kidnapping, hijacking).

**Second degree murder** is all murder that is not first degree.

**Manslaughter** is generally considered to be a homicide committed in the heat of passion caused by sudden provocation. It also includes other culpable homicides that are not murders or infanticides.

Table 11

<b>Homicide Rates<sup>1</sup>, 1961-2000<sup>2</sup></b>														
Year	Nfld.	P.E.I.	N.S.	N.B.	Que.	Ont.	Man.	Sask.	Alta.	B.C.	Yukon	N.W.T. <sup>3</sup>	Nvt.	Canada
1961	0.22	0.96	0.81	0.33	0.99	1.43	1.63	1.51	1.35	2.09	6.85	0.00	...	1.28
1962	0.00	0.93	1.38	1.32	1.15	1.20	2.03	1.40	1.31	3.31	20.00	0.00	...	1.43
1963	0.63	0.00	0.80	0.82	1.26	1.17	1.69	0.86	1.92	2.06	20.00	3.85	...	1.32
1964	1.04	0.00	1.72	0.82	0.93	1.22	1.67	2.12	1.75	1.83	6.67	11.11	...	1.31
1965	1.23	3.67	1.32	0.81	1.11	1.13	1.55	1.58	1.38	3.17	21.43	7.41	...	1.41
1966	0.61	0.92	1.19	0.97	0.97	1.02	1.77	1.26	1.85	2.56	0.00	0.00	...	1.25
1967	0.20	0.00	1.32	0.81	1.28	1.60	1.56	2.61	2.55	2.42	40.00	6.90	...	1.66
1968	0.99	0.00	1.17	0.80	1.72	1.43	2.88	2.40	1.64	3.64	6.67	0.00	...	1.81
1969	0.97	0.90	1.55	0.16	2.11	1.50	2.86	3.44	1.48	2.43	0.00	3.23	...	1.86
1970	0.19	0.91	1.92	1.28	2.34	1.52	2.95	2.55	2.63	3.67	35.29	21.21	...	2.19
1971	0.38	0.00	2.01	1.56	2.02	1.92	3.30	3.11	2.70	2.72	0.00	5.49	...	2.15
1972	0.37	1.76	1.75	1.70	2.54	1.77	3.59	3.04	2.18	3.82	14.89	5.16	...	2.34
1973	0.55	0.00	2.34	2.59	2.49	1.98	3.77	2.52	2.09	3.68	18.91	9.82	...	2.43
1974	0.55	1.72	0.98	3.16	2.70	1.95	4.12	3.41	2.51	4.38	23.73	19.45	...	2.63
1975	0.72	0.00	1.69	1.77	3.57	2.48	3.61	3.92	3.15	3.92	27.39	11.67	...	3.03
1976	1.07	1.69	2.99	2.03	3.20	2.17	3.00	3.65	3.64	3.47	17.80	18.05	...	2.85
1977	1.42	0.83	1.67	5.46	3.06	2.26	4.24	4.87	3.59	3.54	26.27	8.96	...	3.00
1978	1.59	3.29	1.54	3.86	2.79	2.12	3.75	3.36	4.15	3.25	8.42	8.84	...	2.76
1979	0.88	0.00	2.00	1.56	2.88	2.02	4.24	3.75	2.67	3.38	16.67	15.31	...	2.61
1980	0.52	0.81	1.41	1.27	2.78	1.81	3.00	3.20	2.51	3.83	8.22	8.64	...	2.41
1981	0.70	0.81	1.29	2.41	2.84	1.93	3.96	2.97	3.18	3.90	4.18	10.51	...	2.61
1982	1.04	0.00	1.40	1.84	2.89	2.06	3.34	3.95	2.96	3.79	8.17	14.14	...	2.66
1983	1.04	0.00	1.50	1.54	2.88	2.23	3.77	3.29	3.14	3.72	4.23	5.88	...	2.69
1984	1.03	0.00	1.71	1.94	2.99	2.07	4.01	2.95	2.26	3.73	8.36	9.51	...	2.60
1985 <sup>4</sup>	0.86	0.78	2.94	1.93	3.29	2.08	2.40	2.73	2.62	3.80	24.63	18.38	...	2.72
1986	0.69	0.00	1.69	1.65	2.33	1.47	4.31	2.53	2.63	2.96	12.26	25.60	...	2.18
1987	0.87	0.00	1.57	2.75	2.57	2.12	4.01	2.90	3.00	2.56	0.00	3.63	...	2.43
1988	1.22	0.77	1.23	1.10	2.25	1.89	2.81	2.24	2.69	2.57	3.76	14.36	...	2.15
1989	0.87	0.77	1.77	2.45	3.10	1.73	3.90	2.16	2.68	2.69	7.37	12.28	...	2.41
1990	0.00	0.77	0.99	1.62	2.63	1.77	3.53	3.57	2.90	3.34	3.60	20.37	...	2.38
1991	1.73	1.53	2.29	2.28	2.56	2.35	3.79	2.09	3.24	3.79	0.00	4.92	...	2.69
1992	0.34	0.00	2.28	1.47	2.33	2.29	2.61	3.19	3.49	3.52	6.61	20.83	...	2.58
1993	1.21	1.51	2.06	1.47	2.22	1.80	2.77	2.98	1.83	3.36	0.00	11.02	...	2.18
1994	0.70	0.75	2.05	2.00	1.75	1.77	2.58	2.38	2.44	3.07	9.98	6.14	...	2.05
1995	0.88	0.74	1.83	1.86	1.86	1.65	2.39	2.07	2.19	3.17	12.95	4.51	...	2.00
1996	1.25	0.73	1.93	1.20	2.12	1.68	3.97	3.14	1.91	3.22	0.00	5.92	...	2.14
1997	1.26	0.00	2.57	1.06	1.81	1.58	2.73	2.45	2.15	2.93	3.10	4.43	...	1.95
1998	1.28	0.73	2.56	0.66	1.87	1.37	2.90	3.22	2.20	2.25	9.51	7.40	...	1.84
1999 <sup>†</sup>	0.37	0.73	1.38	1.19	1.86	1.41	2.28	1.27	2.06	2.73	3.22	2.43	7.41	1.76
2000	1.11	2.16	1.59	1.32	2.01	1.33	2.61	2.54	1.94	2.09	6.52	2.38	10.83	1.76

... figures not appropriate or not applicable

r revised

<sup>1</sup> Rates are calculated per 100,000 population. Population estimates at July 1<sup>st</sup>, provided by Statistics Canada, Census and Demographic Statistics, Demography Division.

Estimates of population used:

1961-1990: Revised intercensal estimates

1991-1995: Final intercensal estimates

1996: Final postcensal estimates

1997-2000: Updated postcensal estimates

<sup>2</sup> As of 1971, population estimates were adjusted to reflect new methods of calculation.

<sup>3</sup> Includes Nunavut before 1999. See textbox for further explanation.

<sup>4</sup> Excludes 329 victims killed in the Air India incident.

Source: Homicide Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, October 2001.

**Infanticide** occurs when a female causes the death of her newly-born child, if her mind is considered disturbed from the effects of giving birth or effects of lactation.

**Offence** - one offence is counted for each victim of homicide.

**Incident** - an incident is defined as the occurrence of one (or more) criminal offence(s) during one single, distinct event, regardless of the number of victims. If there are multiple victims

or multiple suspects, the offences must occur at the same location and at the same time if they are to be included within the same incident. The incident count will normally be lower than the victim (or offence) count due to incidents involving multiple victims.

**Suspect** - is a person who has been identified as an offender in an incident and against whom a charge may be laid in connection with that incident. The generic term "accused" is used in this report and is intended to capture the same meaning as suspect.

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