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# Homicide Statistics

This paper is one of an occasional series, updating those issued in 1990 (Background Paper no. 263) and 1994 (Research Paper 94/15) with the latest figures for homicide offences committed in the UK. Figures for particular types of homicide, such as those involving firearms or ethnic minority victims, are presented. Some consideration of sentencing and reconvictions, and some international comparisons are included.

Patsy Richards

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## Summary of main points

Homicide in England and Wales includes the offences of murder, manslaughter and infanticide. In 1997, 738 deaths were initially recorded as homicide. This was a 9% rise from 1996, exceeded this century only by 753 in 1995. Around 15% of homicides as recorded by the police are generally reclassified as other offences following police and court action.

In Scotland, homicide includes the offences of murder and culpable homicide. In 1997, 88 cases (and the same number of victims) of homicide were recorded. This compared to 119 cases and 138 victims of homicide in 1996, but 1996 included the shootings at Dunblane. 1997's total was the lowest since 1990 and similar to the average level recorded in the 1980s. Since the 1960s the rate of homicide per million population has been slightly higher in Scotland than in England and Wales. It is difficult to compare these rates to Northern Ireland because of the security situation, but figures for that country are included in this paper.

As homicide victims, the sexes differ. In England and Wales in 1997, a third of homicide victims were female. In the early 1990s females accounted for more (around 40% of) victims. Almost four fifths of female victims and just over half of male victims knew their killer. A present or former partner or lover killed almost half of female victims. Around a third of men were killed by someone they knew (but not family/partner) and another third by a stranger.

In 1997 around 8% of homicides involved firearms and almost one third a sharp weapon. Firearm use in homicide has fallen over the past few years, in common with firearm use in other offences.

While the police have identified only eight homicides over the past two years with a racial motive, there are differences between ethnic groups regarding victim characteristics. Black victims are less likely than white victims to have been killed by a spouse or lover for instance and ethnic minorities are over-represented as victims of homicide compared to the population; but the numbers involved are small and could be affected by several factors.

Of cases which remain classified as homicide following police and court action, a conviction for homicide will be obtained in around three quarters of cases and around half of homicide convictions are today for murder, compared to only a third in 1970. Men are more likely than women to be convicted, and to be convicted of murder.

On average, 61 people serving a mandatory life sentence for murder are released each year. Murderers released in 1997 on life licence had served on average just over 14 years, while others released on life licence served just over 13 years. Over the past decade 41 people originally convicted of homicide (13 of whom were convicted for murder) have been reconvicted of the same offence, seven while still in custody.

The last section of this paper considers homicide rates in other countries, and by state in America, where the death penalty is available and used frequently (74 times in 1997). It is very difficult to draw conclusions concerning the effect of this on the homicide rate, however.

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# I Homicide

This paper presents statistics on homicide rates in England & Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland since the 1940s. It follows the homicide statistics from initial recording by the police through to final disposal by the courts. In section III some detail is given on the victims of homicides, the use of firearms, and ethnicity and homicide. Convictions and sentencing are considered in section IV, including the likelihood of conviction for murder versus manslaughter, sentences and tariffs set, terms served by those given life sentences, and release and reconviction rates. The last section makes some international comparisons, and considers the situation in the United States, where some states retain the death penalty and others do not.

For further information, the Home Office and Scottish Office publish detailed statistics on homicide, which are available in the Library for consultation<sup>1</sup>. They include more depth on such issues as the relationship between victim and offender, method of killing, and the age and sex of victims. It should be remembered that murder is relatively rare, so large year-on-year variations are to be expected in the numbers of offences committed and it is unwise to place too much emphasis on the most recent year's figures.

## A. Definition of the offence of homicide

In England and Wales, 'homicide' includes the offences of murder, manslaughter and infanticide. In Scotland, 'homicide' includes murder and the offence of culpable homicide, which is the equivalent of manslaughter. Offences of causing death by dangerous or careless driving while under the influence of drink or drugs, or deaths following aggravated vehicle taking are generally not included in homicide statistics.

The offences of murder and manslaughter are common law offences, without origin in statute. However, the definition and sentencing of these offences have been modified by legislation, which affects the statistics.

Manslaughter in England and Wales is the unlawful killing of someone without any malice being expressed or implied. The *Homicide Act 1957* introduced the concept of conviction for manslaughter while accepting diminished responsibility, so-called 'section 2' manslaughter. This defence has largely come to replace findings of insanity. This introduces a discontinuity to the statistics, because it is impossible to tell which convictions for manslaughter after this date might previously have resulted in a conviction for murder or manslaughter, or a finding of insanity.

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<sup>1</sup> Latest editions; *Homicides in Scotland 1987-1996* Scottish Office Statistical Bulletin CrJ/1997/7 December 1997, supplemented by *Homicides in Scotland in 1997*, Scottish Office 26 November 1998 and Chapter 4 of *Criminal Statistics England and Wales 1997* Cm 4162 Home Office November 1998

The 1957 Act also altered the sentencing of murder by abolishing the death penalty, which until then followed any conviction for murder with the exceptions of young offenders, pregnant women, or those to whom the Royal Prerogative of Mercy was extended. For non-capital murder the punishment became life imprisonment.

The death penalty was retained however for capital murder<sup>2</sup>, and for those convicted of murder on a previous occasion, or convicted on the same indictment to two or more murders done on different occasions.

This remained the situation until 1965, when the *Murder (Abolition of Death Penalty) Act* abolished capital punishment, making life imprisonment mandatory for all adult offenders. In Northern Ireland, capital punishment for murder was abolished from 1973 by the *Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1973*.

In Scotland, where the offence of common law culpable homicide replaces that of manslaughter, there has always been a concept of diminished responsibility. Thus the Scottish statistics do not show a split in manslaughter offences after 1957.

## **B. Recording crimes of homicide**

### **1. Offences recorded by the police**

Recorded crime statistics relate to incidents as originally noted by the police. As the Home Office acknowledges, they do not show the true level of crime, since not all crimes are reported; the biennial British Crime Survey, which interviews individuals on a confidential basis about their experiences of crime in the previous year, records far higher levels<sup>3</sup>. In general, the less serious the offence, the less likely it is to be reported. For homicide however, such a serious offence, under-reporting or under-recording is likely to be negligible.

So homicide is one of the few crimes for which recorded crime figures provide a reasonably accurate measure of crime levels. However, because the statistics relate to the crime as originally discovered, rather than the offence for which a person may be finally brought to court or convicted, they are subject to revision. Nor do the initial recorded statistics contain a great deal of detail concerning the offence (or of course the unknown offender).

### **2. One victim, one crime?**

'Counting rules' have been adopted to standardise the crime statistics recorded across forces. The old counting rules have been in place since 1980 and state that only the most

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<sup>2</sup> Murder done in the cause or furtherance of theft; by shooting or causing an explosion; resisting arrest or escaping from custody; of a police officer; or of a prison officer by a prisoner.

<sup>3</sup> See for instance Home Office Statistical Bulletin 21/98, The British Crime Survey for a discussion

serious offence should be recorded when several have been committed in one 'incident'. Exceptions include the most serious offences of homicide, violence against the person and sexual offences where there is more than one victim, in which case one offence is recorded for each victim.

The Home Office counting rules were revised in 1998, partly in an attempt to measure one crime per victim in more cases (and more closely equate BCS results with recorded crime). Clearly this will increase recorded crime levels, and the net effect has provisionally been estimated by police forces to be an increase of around 20% in recorded crime from next year<sup>4</sup>. However, the main impact will be on the fraud, theft, and criminal damage categories. For homicide, the new rules should make little difference, apart from a switch to recording on a financial year basis. The latest recorded crime statistics for the year to March 1998, released in October 1998, were the last under the old counting rules.

In Scotland, unlike England and Wales, a single offence is counted for each act of homicide, regardless of the number of victims or offenders. The Dunblane tragedy, then, was recorded as one act of homicide, whereas in England it would have resulted in the recording of 17 offences, and Lockerbie in 1988 similarly as one, rather than 270. The Scottish Office publishes the number of victims along with the number of cases to aid interpretation.

### 3. Reclassification of homicide cases

A homicide case is generally presented in the official statistics against the year in which the police recorded it. This is not always of course the year in which the offence took place, the year in which the accused is brought to trial, or the year in which a person is finally found guilty (or innocent) of homicide.

On initial recording, the single term 'homicide' is used. Up to 1972, offences were recorded separately under the headings of murder, manslaughter and infanticide, but such separation was found to be unreliable on first recording.

After the police record an offence as homicide, the figures are generally adjusted downwards. This happens as offences are written off by the police as 'no crime', or as court proceedings find that the victim committed suicide, that no offence took place or that the case should be reclassified as a lesser offence. Of course there is also the possibility of homicide figures being revised upwards, when previously undiscovered crimes come to light.

Three key terms used in this paper indicate the stage of the recording process to which statistics relate. There are cases *initially* recorded by the police as homicide, while official statistics more normally relate to cases *currently* recorded as homicide. A

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<sup>4</sup> Source: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/index.htm>

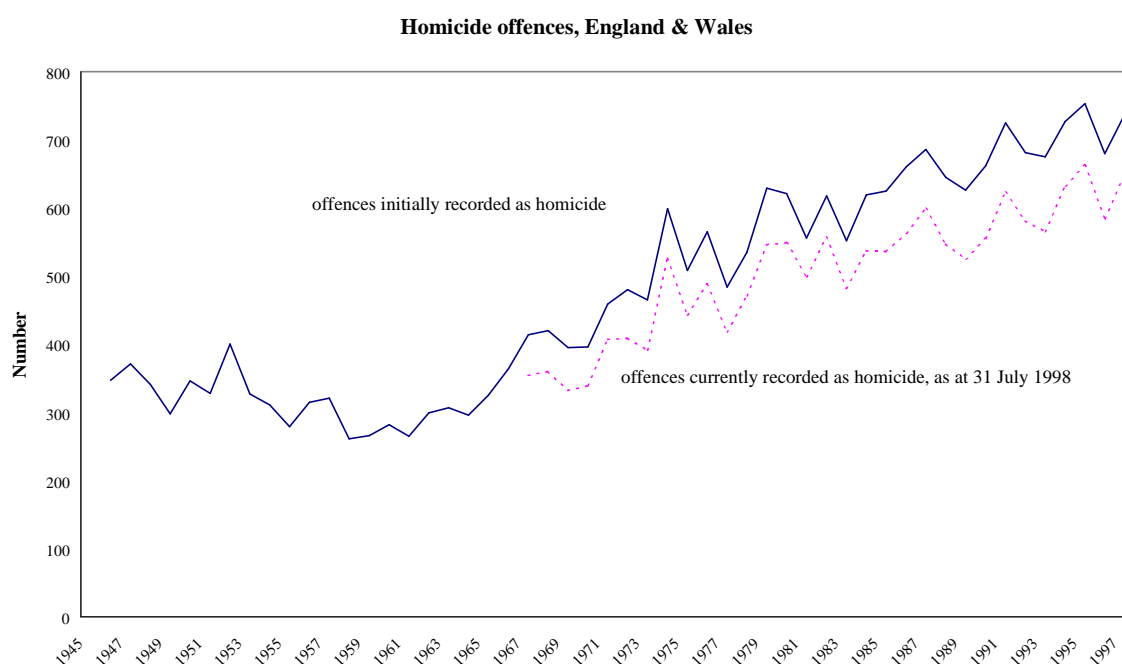


breakdown between murder, manslaughter and infanticide becomes available following the final *disposal* of court proceedings.

## II Homicides recorded

### A. England and Wales

Table 1 shows offences initially recorded by the Police as homicide in England and Wales since 1946. It also shows those offences currently recorded as homicide. These figures are summarised in the graph;



In 1997, the latest year available, 738 deaths were initially recorded as homicide. This was a 9% rise from 1996, and the second highest total this century, exceeded only by 753 in 1995. Not too much should be inferred from this, since these numbers are relatively small, so quite wide variation can occur from year to year.

As of 31 July 1998, 650 of these deaths were currently/still recorded as homicide; since a quarter of cases were still pending the figure may be further revised. Judging by recent years, around 15% of the deaths initially recorded as homicide might be reclassified.

**Table 1**  
**Offences initially recorded by the police as homicide<sup>1</sup> and current classification**  
**England and Wales 1946 to 1997**

	Offences initially recorded as homicide		Offences currently <sup>2</sup> recorded as homicide	
	Number	Per million population	Number	Per million population
1946	347	8.1	..	..
1947	371	8.6	..	..
1948	341	7.8	..	..
1949	298	6.8	..	..
1950	346	7.9	..	..
1951	328	7.5	..	..
1952	400	9.1	..	..
1953	327	7.4	..	..
1954	311	7.0	..	..
1955	279	6.3	..	..
1956	315	7.1	..	..
1957	321	7.1	..	..
1958	261	5.8	..	..
1959	266	5.9	..	..
1960	282	6.2	..	..
1961	265	5.7	..	..
1962	299	6.4	..	..
1963	307	6.5	..	..
1964	296	6.3	..	..
1965	325	6.8	..	..
1966	364	7.6	..	..
1967	414	8.6	354	7.3
1968	420	8.7	360	7.4
1969	395	8.1	332	6.8
1970	396	8.1	339	6.9
1971	459	9.3	407	8.3
1972	480	9.7	409	8.3
1973	465	9.4	391	7.9
1974	599	12.1	526	10.6
1975	508	10.3	443	9.0
1976	565	11.4	488	9.9
1977	484	9.8	418	8.5
1978	535	10.8	471	9.5
1979	629	12.7	546	11.0
1980	621	12.5	549	11.1
1981	556	11.2	499	10.1
1982	618	12.5	557	11.2
1983	552	11.1	482	9.7
1984	619	12.4	537	10.8
1985	625	12.5	536	10.7
1986	660	13.2	563	11.2
1987	686	13.7	599	11.9
1988	645	12.8	547	10.9
1989	626	12.4	525	10.4
1990	662	13.1	555	10.9
1991	725	14.2	623	12.2
1992	681	13.3	581	11.3
1993	675	13.1	565	11.0
1994	727	14.1	632	12.2
1995	753	14.5	663	12.8
1996	680	13.1	584	11.2
1997	738	14.1	650	12.4

.. not available

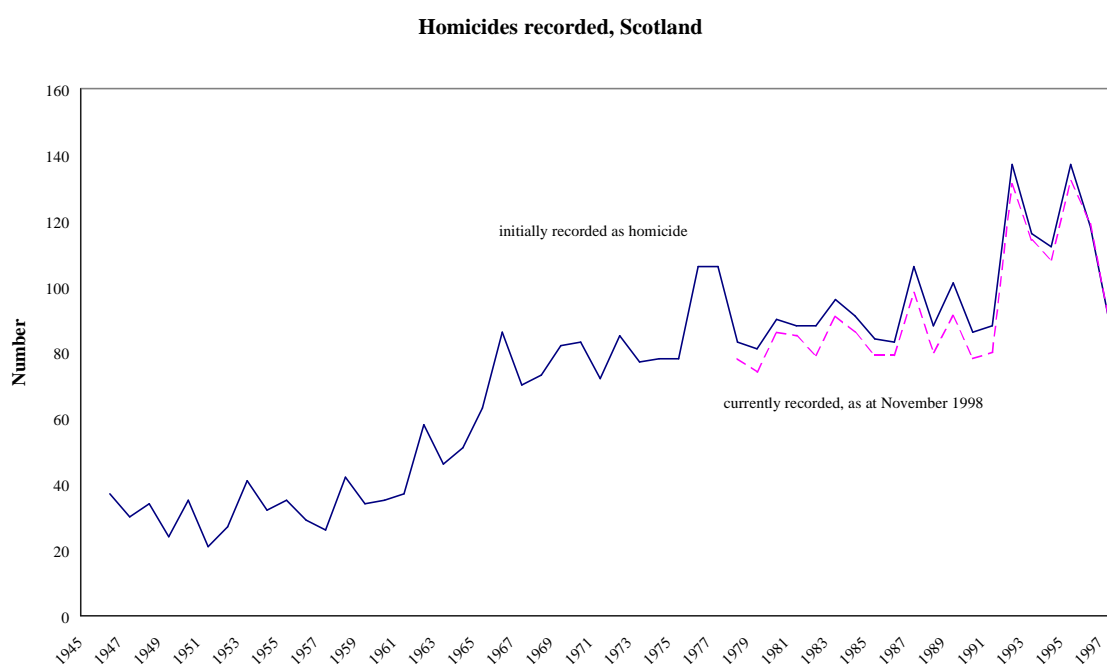
<sup>1</sup> Murder, all manslaughter and infanticide.

<sup>2</sup> At 31 July 1998. The latest figures are subject to revision as cases are dealt with by the courts and police, or further information becomes available.

Sources: *Criminal Statistics England and Wales Annual Command Papers*  
*Monthly Digest of Statistics, Population Trends*

## B. Scotland

In 1997 88 cases (and the same number of victims) of homicide were recorded. This compared to 119 cases and 138 victims of homicide in 1996, although 1996 included the 17 victims of the Dunblane tragedy. The 1997 total was the lowest since 1990; it followed higher figures during the early and mid 1990s and was similar to the average level recorded in the 1980s, although again, it is difficult to infer trends. Cases and victims currently<sup>5</sup> recorded as homicides in Scotland are shown in table 2 and in summary in the graph.



Since 1992 there has been an increase in the number of homicides recorded in Scotland. Most of this increase can be attributed to homicides occurring outside the City of Glasgow but within Strathclyde. Other areas where there has been an increase in the homicide rate include Central Region and in the City of Dundee. Generally however, the numbers of homicides have declined in the cities and 1996 had the lowest number of homicides ever recorded (around a quarter of all cases) in the four cities<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> As of 12 November 1998

<sup>6</sup> *Homicides in Scotland 1987-1996* Scottish Office Statistical Bulletin CrJ/1997/7 December 1997

**Table 2**  
**Offences initially recorded by the police as homicide and current classification**  
**Scotland 1946 to 1997**

	Offences initially recorded as homicide		Offences currently (a) recorded as homicide						Total offences per million popln.
	Number	Per million population	Murder		Culpable homicide (b)		Total		
			Offences	Victims	Offences	Victims	Offences	Victims	
1946	37	7.2	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
1947	30	5.9	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
1948	34	6.6	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
1949	24	4.7	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
1950	35	6.8	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
1951	21	4.1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
1952	27	5.3	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
1953	41	8.0	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
1954	32	6.3	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
1955	35	6.8	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
1956	29	5.7	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
1957	26	5.1	11	14	..	..	..	..	..
1958	42	8.2	14	20	..	..	..	..	..
1959	34	6.6	12	13	..	..	..	..	..
1960	35	6.8	14	16	..	..	..	..	..
1961	37	7.1	10	10	..	..	..	..	..
1962	58	11.2	24	25	..	..	..	..	..
1963	46	8.8	14	15	..	..	..	..	..
1964	51	9.8	23	27	..	..	..	..	..
1965	63	12.1	29	29	..	..	..	..	..
1966	86	16.5	29	32	..	..	..	..	..
1967	70	13.5	38	38	..	..	..	..	..
1968	73	14.0	37	40	..	..	..	..	..
1969	82	15.7	26	28	..	..	..	..	..
1970	83	15.9	28	28	..	..	..	..	..
1971	72	13.8	42	44	..	..	..	..	..
1972	85	16.2	41	43	..	..	..	..	..
1973	77	14.7	39	41	..	..	..	..	..
1974	78	14.9	34	34	..	..	..	..	..
1975	78	14.9	43	43	..	..	..	..	..
1976	106	20.3	56	57	..	..	..	..	..
1977	106	20.3	58	60	..	..	..	..	..
1978	83	15.9	41	42	37	37	78	79	15.0
1979	81	15.6	38	40	36	37	74	77	14.2
1980	90	17.3	44	47	42	45	86	92	16.6
1981	88	17.0	38	42	47	48	85	90	16.4
1982	88	17.0	47	48	32	34	79	82	15.3
1983	96	18.6	51	54	40	41	91	95	17.7
1984	91	17.7	45	53	41	43	86	96	16.7
1985	84	16.4	37	41	42	44	79	85	15.4
1986	83	16.2	47	48	32	37	79	85	15.4
1987	106	20.8	47	48	51	51	98	99	19.2
1988	88	17.3	34	305	46	46	80	81 c)	15.7
1989	101	19.8	38	41	53	57	91	97	17.9
1990	86	16.8	33	36	45	45	78	80	15.3
1991	88	17.2	42	53	38	36	80	89	15.7
1992	137	26.8	65	79	65	58	131	136	25.6
1993	116	22.6	72	..	41	..	114	116	22.3
1994	112	21.8	62	..	42	..	108	111	21.0
1995	137	26.7	77	..	55	..	132	133	25.7
1996	118	23.0	69	..	45	..	119	138	23.2
1997	88	17.2	..	..	..	..	88	88	17.2

.. indicates not available

The number of offences in Scotland represents the number of complete acts of homicide, regardless of the number of people killed (unlike England & Wa

(a) At 12 November 1998 for total homicide, as at 30 September 1997 for murder and culpable homicide verdicts.

(b) Excludes statutory culpable homicide (causing death by reckless driving).

(c) In 1988 to the number of victims may be added the 270 victims of the Lockerbie tragedy

Sources: *Criminal Statistics Scotland Annual Command Papers*

*Research Paper 94/15, Population Trends*

*Homicides in Scotland 1987-1996 Scottish Office Statistical Bulletin CrJ/1997/7 December 1997*

*Homicides in Scotland in 1997, Scottish Office 26 November 1998*

## C. Northern Ireland

Homicides and deaths arising through the security situation are shown in table 3. Note that not all deaths arising from the security situation are necessarily classified as murder, and that civilian victims of the security situation include members of paramilitary organisations;

**Table 3**  
**Offences of homicide recorded, Northern Ireland 1949 to 1999**

	Homicide offences recorded				Deaths arising from the security situation			
	Murder	Manslaughter and infanticide	Total	Per million population	Civilian (a)	Amy/UDR/RIR	RUC/RUC 'R'	Total
1949	2	0	2	na	-	-	-	-
1950	1	0	1	na	-	-	-	-
1951	0	0	0	0.0	-	-	-	-
1952	3	0	3	2.2	-	-	-	-
1953	1	4	5	3.6	-	-	-	-
1954	3	4	7	5.0	-	-	-	-
1955	1	2	3	2.1	-	-	-	-
1956	2	1	3	2.1	-	-	-	-
1957	3	1	4	2.9	-	-	-	-
1958	3	4	7	5.0	-	-	-	-
1959	0	0	0	0.0	-	-	-	-
1960	9	3	12	8.4	-	-	-	-
1961	5	1	6	4.2	-	-	-	-
1962	2	3	5	3.5	-	-	-	-
1963	0	1	1	0.7	-	-	-	-
1964	1	0	1	0.7	-	-	-	-
1965	1	3	4	2.7	-	-	-	-
1966	3	3	6	4.0	-	-	-	-
1967	5	3	8	5.3	-	-	-	-
1968	5	0	5	3.3	-	-	-	-
1969	5	7	12	7.9	12	0	1	13
1970	14	na	14	9.1	23	0	2	25
1971	123	na	123	79.9	115	48	11	174
1972	376	na	376	245.8	321	129	17	467
1973	200	na	200	131.0	171	66	13	250
1974	205	na	205	134.5	166	35	15	216
1975	238	na	238	156.2	216	20	11	247
1976	280	na	280	183.8	245	29	23	297
1977	116	7	123	80.8	69	29	14	112
1978	82	3	85	55.6	50	21	10	81
1979	128	8	136	88.7	51	48	14	113
1980	85	8	93	60.5	50	17	9	76
1981	95	7	102	66.3	57	23	21	101
1982	99	5	104	67.4	57	28	12	97
1983	86	5	91	58.7	44	15	18	77
1984	63	2	65	41.7	36	19	9	64
1985	59	2	61	38.9	25	6	23	54
1986	85	2	87	55.2	37	12	12	61
1987	100	9	109	69.1	66	11	16	93
1988	111	5	116	73.3	54	33	6	93
1989	67	8	75	47.2	39	14	9	62
1990	71	11	82	51.2	49	15	12	76
1991	114	7	121	74.8	75	13	6	94
1992	108	3	111	68.0	76	6	3	85
1993	101	5	106	64.6	70	8	6	84
1994	82	4	86	52.2	56	3	3	62
1995	22	2	24	14.4	8	0	1	9
1996	35	4	39	23.3	14	1	0	15
1997	40	2	42	25.1	17	1	4	22
1998	na	na	na	na	53	1	1	55
1999 to April	na	na	na	na	3	0	0	3

(a) Includes members of paramilitary organisations. Deaths arising from the security situation are not necessarily all recorded as homicide.

*A Commentary on Northern Ireland Crime Statistics NIO, various years; RUC Statistical Information Monthly, March 1999; ONS database series BBAJ*

## D. Comparison of national rates and underlying crime trend

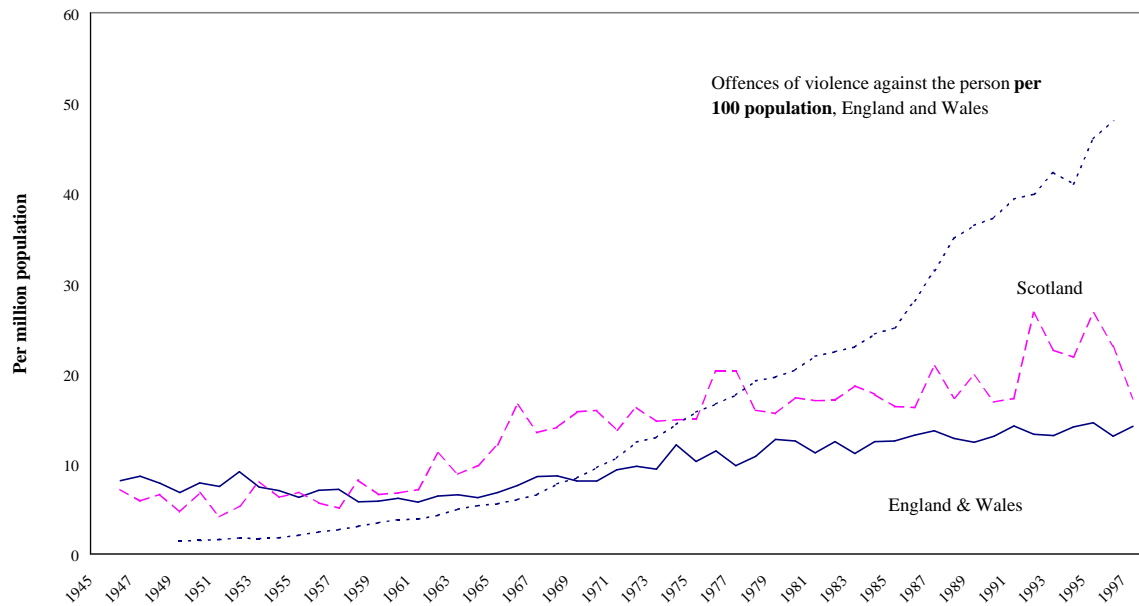
Because of the security situation, it may not be appropriate to compare the homicide rate (per million population) in Northern Ireland to the rest of the UK, but the chart does show that until the end of the 1960s Northern Ireland experienced relatively few homicides.

After that time of course, the rate rose drastically, but recently has returned to levels closer to those in the rest of the UK;



Excluding the figures for Northern Ireland, during the 1940s and 1950s the rate of homicide was similar throughout the rest of Great Britain. In the 1960s however the rates diverged and today England and Wales still experience a lower rate of homicide than Scotland, as the chart on the next page shows.

**National homicide rates**



This is not simply because of the Scottish practice of recording offences rather than victims; if this were done the discrepancy between the two would be even higher. To compare this to the underlying crime rate, the chart also shows (dotted line) the rate of offences of violence against the person (per 100 population) in England and Wales.

The rate of increase in serious crimes of violence against the person has been far greater than for homicide. Over the past twenty years, the average annual increase in the homicide rate has been 2.1% a year, whereas for all serious offences of violence against the person the average increase has been 7.2% a year.

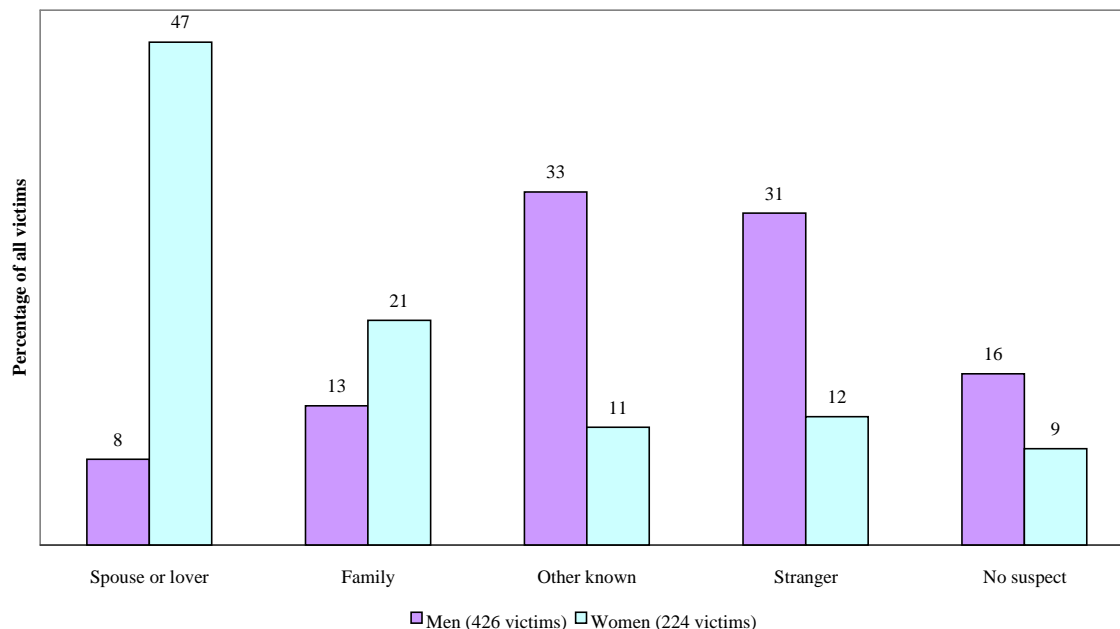
### III Some detailed aspects of the homicide statistics

#### A. Victims

For the 650 offences currently recorded as homicide in England and Wales for 1997, almost two thirds of the victims (426 offences) were male. There were 224 female victims. The proportion of female victims has been around a third for the past three years, but in the early 1990s the proportion of female victims was higher, at around 40%.

Almost four fifths of all female victims and just over half of all male victims knew the main or only suspect before the killing. A present or former partner or lover killed almost half of female victims, while for men the same held for only 8% of victims. A fifth of women victims were killed by family members and a third of men by someone they knew but not family or a partner. Only 12% of women were killed by a stranger, compared to 31% of men.

Relationship of victim to principal suspect, England & Wales 1997



By age group, children under the age of one are most at risk of homicide with 57 offences per million population in 1997. Apart from this group, males between the ages of 16 and 29 are next most at risk with 27 offences per million population. These compare to the overall average risk for all age groups of 12 offences currently recorded as homicide per million population in 1997<sup>7</sup>. In general terms, these patterns hold true in Scotland<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> *Criminal Statistics England and Wales 1997* Home Office November 1998, Cm4162

<sup>8</sup> see *Homicides in Scotland 1987-1996* Scottish Office Statistical Bulletin CrJ/1997/7 December 1997 p.7



Between 1993 and 1997/98, five police officers were killed on duty in England and Wales<sup>9</sup>. Not all cases will necessarily be determined as murder or manslaughter.

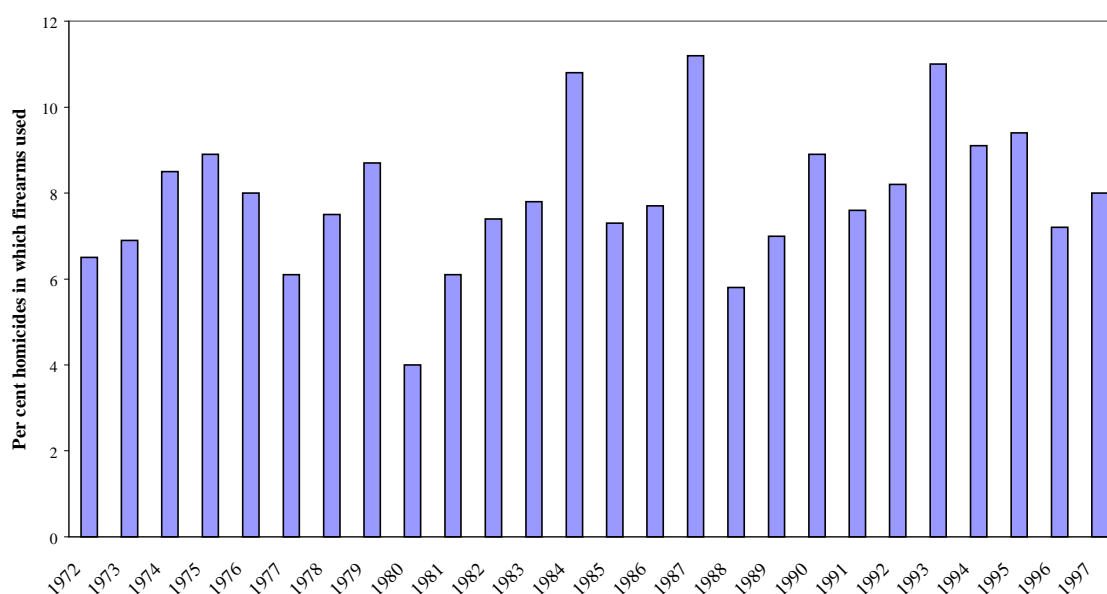
## B. Homicide involving firearms

While the most common method of killing in 1997 was with a sharp instrument (just under a third of offences), nine per cent of the 650 homicide victims currently recorded for England and Wales in 1997 were shot.

To examine the data in more detail, one has to use the figures for offences as initially recorded, before court and police decisions, so the percentages appear slightly different and indicate that eight per cent of homicide victims in 1997, or 59 people, were shot. Of these, a handgun was used in 39 cases, a long barrel shotgun in 12, sawn-off shotgun in four, rifle in three cases and the remaining case was unknown, but a supposed firearm<sup>10</sup>.

Table 4 (next page) shows the use of firearms in homicides and in other offences of violence since 1972. During the 1990s, the use of firearms as a percentage of all offences peaked in 1993 – and firearm use has decreased markedly since then, particularly so for robbery and attempted murder. Homicide appears to be following this general pattern;

Use of firearms in homicides 1972-1997



It is however too soon as yet to see whether the banning of large calibre handguns from July 1997 and all handguns from February 1998 has had any effect on the figures. In the

<sup>9</sup> HM Inspectorate of Constabulary England and Wales 1998 Report

<sup>10</sup> *Criminal Statistics England and Wales 1997* Home Office November 1998, Cm4162 p.63

period nine months before July 1997<sup>11</sup> 543 notifiable offences were recorded by the police in which shotguns were reported to have been used and in the period afterwards<sup>12</sup> 420 were recorded. The figures for handguns were 2,200 and 1,951 respectively<sup>13</sup>.

Table 4

**Notifiable offences recorded by the police in which firearms were reported to have been used  
England and Wales 1972 to 1997**

By offence group		Number (percentage of all offences recorded in group)						By principal weapon			
All offences (a)	Of which, violence against the person						Criminal damage	Airgun	Shotgun	Handgun	Other(b)
	Homicide	Attempted murder & other acts endangering life		Other	Robbery						
1972	2,070	31 (6.5)	184 (4.9)	1,074 (2.3)	539 (6.0)	182 (0.4)	1,275	357	254	184	
1973	2,466	32 (6.9)	260 (6.0)	1,356 (2.4)	487 (6.6)	269 (0.5)	1,642	415	247	162	
1974	2,828	51 (8.5)	214 (4.6)	1,437 (2.5)	650 (7.5)	410 (0.6)	1,859	437	348	184	
1975	3,850	46 (8.9)	296 (6.0)	1,836 (2.8)	958 (8.5)	603 (0.8)	2,489	576	476	309	
1976	4,632	45 (8.0)	227 (5.2)	2,273 (3.2)	1,076 (9.3)	893 (1.0)	3,171	684	493	284	
1977	5,302	29 (6.1)	230 (4.9)	2,264 (3.0)	1,234 (9.0)	1,408 (1.1)	3,671	759	566	306	
1978	5,672	40 (7.5)	239 (4.8)	2,480 (3.1)	996 (7.6)	1,775 (1.3)	4,235	760	414	263	
1979	6,547	55 (8.7)	255 (5.0)	2,909 (3.3)	1,038 (8.3)	2,158 (1.3)	5,066	682	462	337	
1980	6,587	24 (4.0)	274 (5.4)	2,471 (2.7)	1,149 (7.7)	2,569 (1.3)	5,032	552	620	383	
1981	8,067	34 (6.1)	277 (5.0)	2,691 (2.9)	1,893 (9.3)	3,046 (1.4)	5,629	846	1,114	478	
1982	8,400	46 (7.4)	308 (5.5)	2,404 (2.4)	2,560 (11.2)	2,957 (1.2)	5,337	1,068	1,538	457	
1983	7,961	43 (7.8)	269 (4.6)	2,429 (2.3)	1,957 (8.8)	3,148 (1.2)	5,474	904	1,127	456	
1984	8,376	67 (10.8)	322 (5.1)	2,330 (2.2)	2,098 (8.4)	3,417 (1.1)	5,540	994	1,232	610	
1985	9,742	45 (7.3)	353 (5.0)	2,652 (2.3)	2,531 (9.2)	3,977 (1.1)	6,380	1,105	1,390	867	
1986	9,363	51 (7.7)	363 (4.5)	2,015 (1.7)	2,629 (8.8)	4,140 (1.0)	5,886	1,160	1,314	1,003	
1987	9,002	77 (11.2)	508 (5.1)	1,944 (1.5)	2,831 (8.7)	3,453 (0.8)	5,172	1,234	1,543	1,053	
1988	8,524	36 (5.8)	531 (4.5)	1,816 (1.2)	2,688 (8.6)	3,235 (0.6)	4,813	1,206	1,484	1,021	
1989	9,502	45 (7.0)	581 (4.5)	1,914 (1.2)	3,390 (10.2)	3,321 (0.7)	5,037	1,313	1,983	1,169	
1990	10,373	60 (8.9)	663 (4.9)	1,855 (1.1)	3,939 (10.9)	3,544 (0.6)	5,380	1,193	2,537	1,263	
1991	12,129	55 (7.6)	861 (5.9)	1,795 (1.0)	5,296 (11.7)	3,777 (0.6)	5,464	1,569	3,430	1,666	
1992	13,341	56 (8.2)	868 (5.1)	1,893 (1.0)	5,859 (11.1)	4,318 (0.6)	6,098	1,494	4,023	1,726	
1993	14,067	74 (11.0)	1,058 (6.1)	1,743 (0.9)	6,012 (10.4)	4,685 (0.7)	6,337	1,592	4,273	1,865	
1994	13,167	66 (9.1)	1,075 (5.7)	1,789 (0.9)	4,239 (7.1)	5,450 (0.8)	7,165	1,190	3,087	1,725	
1995	13,434	70 (9.4)	984 (4.9)	1,779 (0.9)	4,206 (6.2)	5,857 (0.8)	7,568	983	3,319	1,564	
1996	13,876	49 (7.2)	810 (3.7)	2,027 (0.9)	4,013 (5.4)	6,123 (0.8)	7,813	933	3,347	1,783	
1997	12,410	59 (8.0)	628 (2.7)	2,148 (0.9)	3,029 (4.8)	5,906 (0.8)	7,506	580	2,648	1,676	

(a) Excluding offences of criminal damage of value £20 and under.

(b) Includes starting guns, rifles, prohibited weapons, imitation and supposed weapons.

Source: Criminal Statistics England and Wales Annual Command Papers

### C. Homicide and ethnicity

In the two year period 1996/97 and 1997/98, the police identified eight homicides where there was a racial motivation. Four victims were white, one black, two Asian and one 'other'. Suspects were identified in all cases but one, where the victim was white<sup>14</sup>. Of

<sup>11</sup> 1 October 1996 to 30 June 1997

<sup>12</sup> 1 July 1997 to 31 March 1998

<sup>13</sup> HC Deb 20 October 1998 c119w

<sup>14</sup> *Statistics on Race and the Criminal Justice System*, Home Office December 1998

course, racial crime may go un-reported, or be subsequently under-recorded. The Stephen Lawrence enquiry<sup>15</sup> identified problems with the current definition of a 'racial incident' and highlighted possible discrepancies between the police and the public perception of what constitutes racially-motivated crime in general.

From April 1996 the Home Office has included data on the ethnicity of victims and suspects in its Homicide Index. Of the 1,227 homicides currently recorded for the years 1996/97 and 1997/98, suspects were identified in 1,066 cases. An ethnic breakdown of victims and suspects is shown in table 5 below;

**Table 5**  
**Ethnicity of homicide victims by ethnicity of principal suspect,**  
**England and Wales, 1996/97 and 1997/98 combined**

Victims	Principal suspects					Total with current principal	Total with no current suspect (a)	Total	Total as per cent of all victims
	White	Black	Asian	Other	Not known				
White	826 92%	31 3%	21 2%	7 1%	11 1%	896 100%	96	992	81%
Black	15 24%	44 70%	1 2%	1 2%	2 3%	63 100%	42	105	9%
Asian	19 28%	0 0%	44 66%	4 6%	0 0%	67 100%	10	77	6%
Other	7 29%	0 0%	1 4%	16 67%	0 0%	24 100%	9	33	3%
Not known	3 19%	2 13%	0 0%	0 0%	11 69%	16 100%	4	20	2%
Total	870 82%	77 7%	67 6%	28 3%	24 2%	1,066 100%	161	1,227	100%

Currently recorded as homicide as at 31 July 1998

(a) Total with no suspect includes 28 cases where a former principal suspect has been acquitted etc

Source: *Statistics on Race and the Criminal Justice System, Home Office December 1998*

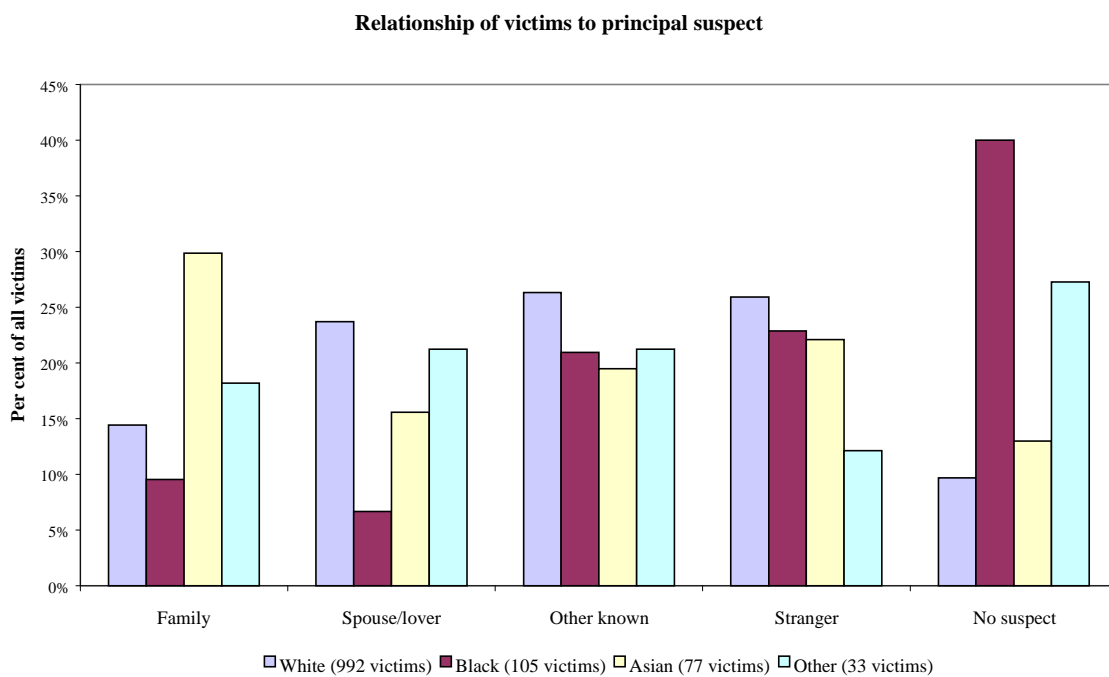
The table shows several things. First, looking at the right-hand column, 9% of all victims of homicide are black and 6% Asian, percentages disproportionately higher than their representation in the England and Wales population (2% black, 3% Asian and 1% 'other'). Of course, this may arise through a number of factors because ethnic populations tend to be concentrated in urban areas.

Second, looking at the percentages of principal suspects by different ethnic groups, while only 8% of white victims were killed by someone from a different ethnic group, the same proportion for other groups is more like a third. The Home Office say that this might be

<sup>15</sup> By Sir William Macpherson of Cluny, February 1999 Cm 4262

expected however, because ethnic minorities account for only 6% of the entire population, spread unevenly across the country. This means that most white people live in areas where there are few ethnic minorities, whereas ethnic minorities live in areas where whites form the majority population. Thus ethnic minorities are more likely to come into contact with whites than the reverse<sup>16</sup>.

Third, for black victims, no suspect has been identified in 42 out of 105 cases of homicide (no suspect in 40% of cases), compared to 96 cases out of 992 for white victims (no suspect in 10% of cases). It may be dangerous to attach too much meaning to this since the numbers are small, but patterns across ethnic groups do seem to differ regarding the relationship of the principal suspect to the victim. The chart shows the relationship of principal suspects to victims, by the ethnic group of the victim<sup>17</sup>;



<sup>16</sup> *ibid*

<sup>17</sup> Cases recorded as homicide as of 31 July 1998. Note that this chart excludes 20 cases where ethnicity was not known, and that although percentages are shown, the actual number of victims are small in some cases (total victims for each group shown in legend).

## **IV Convictions and sentencing**

### **A. Convictions**

Table 6 shows the outcome of homicide proceedings (the number of people found guilty or with a charge proven for murder or homicide) in Great Britain each year since 1946.

For the latest years, many cases are still to be decided. For example, of the 738 offences initially recorded as homicide in England and Wales in 1997, as at July 1998 190 court decisions were still pending. The full breakdown for the remainder was as follows;

- 88 offences reclassified as other than homicide
- 309 cases decided at court to be homicide
- In 64 cases proceedings not concluded for various reasons; the death or suicide of the suspect (38 cases), a finding of insanity (2 cases), or the proceedings being dropped (24 cases)
- No suspects charged in 71 cases
- Suspects acquitted in 16 cases

As a general rule, of the cases initially recorded as homicide, 14% will be reclassified as other than homicide, and *of the remainder*, the final disposals will be as follows;

- Three quarters - conviction for homicide obtained
- One tenth - court proceedings dropped or not started (because of the suicide of the suspect in around two thirds of such cases)
- One eighth - no suspect

The proportion of homicide convictions that are for murder has been growing, at the expense of convictions for section 2 manslaughter. Today, almost half of homicide convictions are for murder and a tenth for section 2 manslaughter. By comparison, in 1970 for instance, convictions for murder accounted for only a third of homicide convictions and s.2 manslaughter one fifth. 'Other' manslaughter convictions have continued throughout to make up around 40% of all homicide convictions.

**Table 6**  
**Persons found guilty of homicide, Great Britain**

	England and Wales						Scotland			
	Murder	Capital murder	Non-capital murder	Section 2 manslaughter	Other manslaughter	Infanticide	Murder (a)	Capital murder	Non-capital murder	Culpable homicide (b)
1946	31	..	..	..	..	..	6	..	..	..
1947	35	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	..	..
1948	40	..	..	..	..	..	3	..	..	..
1949	33	..	..	..	..	..	-	..	..	..
1950	38	..	..	..	..	..	9	..	..	..
1951	22	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	..	..
1952	41	..	..	..	..	..	3	..	..	..
1953	26	..	..	..	..	..	4	..	..	..
1954	25	..	..	..	..	..	3	..	..	..
1955	30	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	..	..
1956	32	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	..	..
1957	13	6	21	11	..	..	..	2	..	..
1958	..	9	21	25	..	..	..	2	3	..
1959	..	6	36	21	..	..	..	1	5	..
1960	..	9	33	23	..	..	..	3	2	..
1961	..	9	42	36	..	..	..	-	4	..
1962	..	4	27	34	..	..	..	1	7	..
1963	..	4	42	46	..	..	..	2	-	..
1964	..	6	38	41	..	..	..	1	7	..
1965	57	..	..	47	84	17	2	-	13	..
1966	72	..	..	51	109	22	22	..	..	..
1967	64	..	..	47	122	18	26	..	..	23
1968	76	..	..	50	120	26	25	..	..	21
1969	78	..	..	58	122	13	22	..	..	27
1970	99	..	..	65	120	15	25	..	..	29
1971	91	..	..	72	146	18	40	..	..	10
1972	85	..	..	85	150	17	33	..	..	27
1973	83	..	..	77	152	9	33	..	..	30
1974	125	..	..	96	188	15	35	..	..	28
1975	99	..	..	77	203	4	37	..	..	20
1976	108	..	..	92	188	6	41	..	..	41
1977	116	..	..	94	146	6	50	..	..	30
1978	137	..	..	90	189	8	39	..	..	30
1979	169	..	..	109	190	7	35	..	..	30
1980	140	..	..	88	186	9	26	..	..	41
1981	167	..	..	87	187	7	27	..	..	43
1982	161	..	..	102	172	6	42	..	..	36
1983	153	..	..	80	174	10	37	..	..	45
1984	171	..	..	77	201	2	37	..	..	31
1985	166	..	..	76	207	8	26	..	..	50
1986	208	..	..	84	211	3	29	..	..	27
1987	216	..	..	78	220	1	35	..	..	49
1988	198	..	..	74	222	8	30	..	..	40
1989	198	..	..	83	176	1	33	..	..	47
1990	186	..	..	70	183	4	23	..	..	41
1991	196	..	..	76	224	5	29	..	..	36
1992	213	..	..	78	205	6	44	..	..	70
1993	223	..	..	62	207	5	36	..	..	38
1994	227	..	..	69	191	3	47	..	..	43
1995	265	..	..	53	224	3	57	..	..	52
1996	253	..	..	49	212	4	54	..	..	46
1997	161	..	..	40	139	3	..	..	..	..

.. indicates not available

As at 30 September 1997 (Scotland), 31 July 1998 (E&W)

(a) From 1980 charge proved, including those insane and unfit to plead and those insane at the time of the offence.

(b) Although causing death by reckless/careless driving was included in the common law culpable homicide totals from 1979 these are excluded here.

Sources: *Homicide in Scotland 1987-1996 Scottish Office Statistical Bulletin CrJ/1997/7 December 1997*

*Criminal Statistics England and Wales, various years; HL Deb 25 November 1982 c1054*

*HC Deb 5 December 1989 c162w; HC Deb 15 July 1997 c157w*

For England and Wales, looking more closely at the outcome of proceedings by the sex of the suspect, in 1996 and 1995 (as noted, proceedings for 1997 are incomplete) 1,258 male suspects and 153 female suspects were indicted for homicide. 935 male suspects (three quarters of those indicted) and 101 female suspects (two thirds of those indicted) were convicted of homicide<sup>18</sup>.

Table 7

**Outcome of homicide proceedings by sex of suspect**  
England & Wales 1995 and 1996

	Male suspects	Female suspects
<b>Indicted for homicide</b>	<b>1,258</b>	<b>153</b>
	(100%)	(100%)
Convicted of murder	38%	15%
Convicted of s.2 manslaughter	7%	12%
Convicted of 'other' manslaughter	30%	35%
Convicted of infanticide	-	4%
Total convicted for homicide	74%	66%

*Criminal Statistics England and Wales Annual Command Papers, various years*

Men appear to be more likely than women to be convicted, and to be convicted of murder. An analysis of the figures for domestic homicides<sup>19</sup> only for the past six years shows not only that this pattern holds true but that when convicted for manslaughter, male suspects are more likely to be given an immediate and longer sentence<sup>20</sup>. (Immediate custody and life imprisonment is mandatory in all cases for a conviction for murder.) The next section discusses sentencing in more detail.

## **B. Sentences and tariffs set and served**

Murder carries a mandatory life sentence, so for all the persons found guilty of murder shown in table 6, a life sentence has been passed (ie 161 persons found guilty of murder and sentenced to life imprisonment so far in 1997).

In fact of the 3,721 life sentence prisoners held in England and Wales in 1997, by far the majority - 2,984 people - were serving life sentences for murder. The life sentence population in 1997 was split as follows<sup>21</sup>;

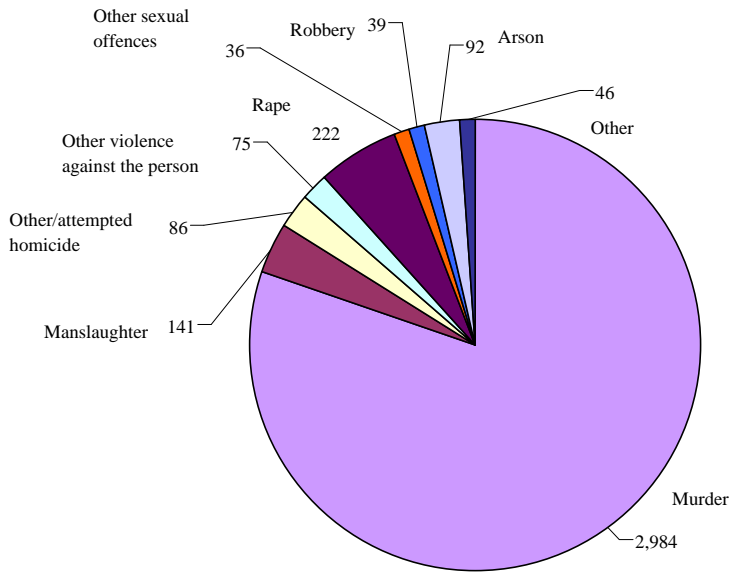
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<sup>18</sup> Criminal Statistics England and Wales 1997 Cm 4162 table 4.8

<sup>19</sup> Killing of a present or former spouse, co-habitant or lover

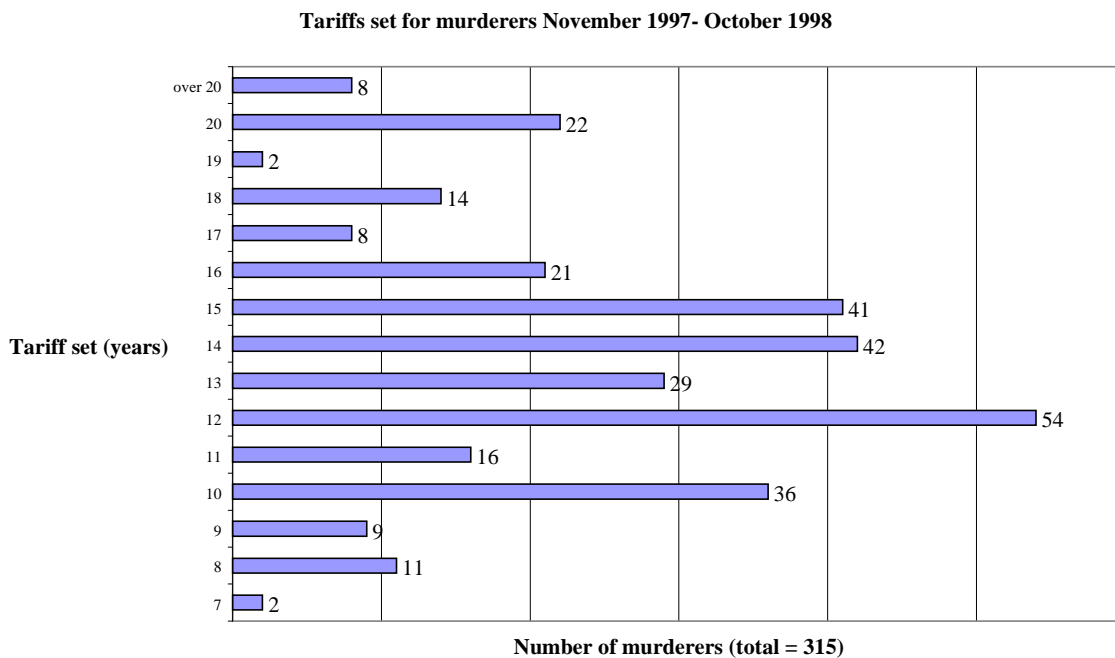
<sup>20</sup> Criminal Statistics England and Wales 1997 Cm 4162 table 4A

<sup>21</sup> Prison Statistics England and Wales 1997 Cm 4017 table 5.2



**Life sentence prisoners 1997**

However, tariffs are set for convicted murderers along with other life sentence prisoners, as a period deemed necessary in custody for retribution and deterrence, and prisoners cannot expect to be released before the expiry of their tariff. For the 315 convicted murderers for whom a tariff was set in the last twelve months for which figures are available, the tariff lengths set were as follows<sup>22</sup>;



<sup>22</sup> HC Deb 12 November 1998 c258w



The only figures available for tariffs served relate to all (mandatory and discretionary) life sentence prisoners. Of 265 life sentence prisoners released between April 1996 and October 1998, three were released on expiry of their tariff, 90 within a year of tariff expiry, and 172 more than a year after their tariffs expired<sup>23</sup>.

Manslaughter, along with the other 'grave' offences including serious wounding, rape, buggery, aggravated burglary and arson endangering life carries a maximum sentence of life imprisonment.

Under the *Crime (Sentences) Act 1997* life imprisonment will be the mandatory penalty where a person has a previous conviction for one of a number of serious sexual or violent offences. When the changes feed through, this will increase the number of prisoners serving life for offences other than murder, changing the pie chart on the previous page of the life sentence population, so murderers will occupy a relatively smaller slice.

Of course some of those convicted for manslaughter do not receive a custodial sentence at all. Of the 40 people found guilty of s.2 manslaughter so far in 1997, the sentences were as follows<sup>24</sup>

- one person was given a life sentence
- ten others were given immediate custody with sentences of up to 10 years
- 25 were given hospital/restriction or hospital orders
- one person received a fully suspended sentence
- three people were given probation/supervision

For other manslaughter convictions, the sentences were as follows

- five people were sentenced to life
- four people were sentenced to over 10 years
- 116 people were sentenced to up to ten years
- two people were given fully suspended sentences
- one hospital/restriction order was made
- ten people were given probation/supervision

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<sup>23</sup> HC Deb 12 November 1998 c258w

<sup>24</sup> Criminal Statistics England and Wales 1997 table 4.9

The average sentences for persons sentenced to custody for homicide over the past five years have been as follows;

Table 8

**Average sentence length<sup>a)</sup>**  
**England and Wales (months)**

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
Murder	All convicted people sentenced to life				
Attempted murder	99.3	98.7	111.5	115.8	98.0
Manslaughter	62.3	57.2	58.0	60.9	62.0
Section 2 manslaughter	57.3	57.4	56.0	61.0	74.4

a) based on custodial sentences excluding life, includes unsuspended imprisonment and juvenile custody

Source: HC Deb 1 December 1998 c115w

The average time served by life sentence prisoners increased by around 30% from prisoners released in 1987 to those released in 1997, but the number of prisoners involved are small in some cases and of course the circumstances of cases may vary considerably;

Table 8

**Average time served by persons released on life licence**  
**England and Wales, years served**

	Murderers		Others		Total	
	Number	Time served (years)	Number	Time served (years)	Number	Time served (years)
1987	48	11.2	2	10.3	50	11.2
1988	55	10.2	11	11.0	66	10.3
1989	71	11.5	5	15.2	76	11.7
1990	57	12.2	17	15.5	74	13.0
1991	58	11.9	14	12.7	72	12.1
1992	67	12.4	23	15.3	90	13.2
1993	66	14.4	60	14.6	126	14.5
1994	77	15.4	29	13.6	106	14.9
1995	60	14.0	32	13.5	92	13.8
1996	71	13.1	14	17.3	85	13.8
1997	88	14.4	10	13.3	98	14.3

Source: Prison Statistics 1997 Cm 4017 Table 5.5

The number of murderers released in 1997, 88, was the highest on record, but only 10 discretionary lifers were released that year. From 1972 to 1997, each year an average of 61 people serving a mandatory life sentence have been released on life licence<sup>25</sup>.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid*, and Home Office Statistical Bulletin 2/97 (1997) *Life Licensees – Reconvictions and recalls by the end of 1995*

## C. Reconvictions

For all prisoners, originally sentenced for any standard list offence, the two-year reconviction rate is around 55%, and this rate is relatively constant from year to year. The rate also varies little with the type of sentence handed out (whether a community penalty or custody - reconviction rates for fines and conditional discharges are lower, but this can be put down to offence and offender characteristics). The rate of reconviction varies more with age (young offenders are almost twice as likely to be reconvicted) and the type of original offence<sup>26</sup>.

For life sentence prisoners originally convicted of homicide and released on licence, the reconviction rate is far lower, and rather more variable, perhaps because of the smaller numbers involved. Over the 1970s and 80s, the two year reconviction rate for homicide life licensees has been around 9% for reconvictions for standard list offences, with around 1% of these being reconvicted for a grave offence<sup>27</sup>. Most life licensees are older when released and age has little effect on reconviction rate. (For discretionary life licencees convicted of other offences of violence against the person such as arson or rape, two year reconviction rates are very slightly higher.) Regarding reconvictions for homicide only, over the past decade 41 people originally convicted of homicide (13 of whom were convicted for murder) have been reconvicted of the same offence. Table 9 gives details. Seven people were still serving a custodial sentence for homicide when reconvicted.

Table 9

### Suspects convicted of homicide who had previously been convicted of homicide England and Wales 1988 to 1997

Homicide offence of latest conviction	Total	Homicide offence of previous conviction		
		Murder	Section 2 manslaughter	Other manslaughter
Murder	30	10	2	18
Section 2 manslaughter	5	1	1	3
Other manslaughter	6 <sup>a)</sup>	2	0	4
Total	41	13 <sup>b)</sup>	3 <sup>c)</sup>	25 <sup>d)</sup>

As of 31 July 1998. Figures are subject to revision

a) In addition, one suspect was found 'unfit to plea' to their previous homicide

b) In addition one suspect of homicide who committed suicide had been previously convicted of murder

c) In addition one suspect of homicide who committed suicide had been previously convicted of s.2 manslaughter

d) In addition two suspects of homicide who committed suicide had been previously convicted of manslaughter

<sup>26</sup> for more information see Home Office Research Findings No.90 (1999) *Reconviction of offenders sentenced or released from prison in 1994*

<sup>27</sup> Home Office Statistical Bulletin 2/97 *Life Licensees – Reconvictions and recalls by the end of 1995*

## V International comparisons

### A. Homicide by country and in major cities

Care must be taken comparing crime rates across different countries, because not only social and economic conditions, but legal and criminal justice systems, the definition of criminal offences and counting rules may vary. The use of the term 'homicide' to denote murder, manslaughter and infanticide is common to many other countries, but not all (see notes to table 10a in the Appendix). Some countries may include some or all aspects of causing death by dangerous driving as manslaughter. Since 1994 the Home Office has collected and *in part* standardised statistics for homicide rates in different countries, shown in table 10. Only five of the countries covered had lower homicide rates than England and Wales in 1997.

Table 10

#### Homicide rates per 100,000 population, by country Countries ranked by homicide rate in 1997

	1994	1995	1996	1997
Norway	0.8	1.0	0.9	0.9
Japan	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Eire	0.7	1.2	1.2	1.1
Switzerland	1.1	1.1	2.8	1.2
Portugal	1.7	1.3	3.9	1.3
England & Wales	1.4	1.5	1.3	1.4
Belgium	1.2	1.4	1.2	1.4
Germany	1.7	1.7	1.5	1.4
France	2.4	2.3	2.0	1.6
Italy	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.6
Denmark	1.5	1.2	1.3	1.7
Scotland	2.2	2.7	2.3	1.7
Netherlands	1.5	1.8	1.8	1.8
Sweden	1.8	2.0	2.2	1.8
Austria	2.5	2.2	2.2	1.8
Canada	2.0	2.0	2.1	1.9
Greece	1.3	1.4	2.5	1.9
Australia	1.8	2.0	1.9	1.9
Poland	2.4	2.2	2.9	2.1
New Zealand	2.1	1.4	2.0	2.4
Northern Ireland	5.2	1.4	2.3	2.5
Spain	2.7	2.5	n/a	2.6
Finland	2.9	2.9	3.1	2.8
Czech Republic	2.8	2.7	2.6	2.8
Hungary	3.1	2.9	2.7	2.8
USA	8.9	8.3	7.4	7.3
Russia	21.9	21.5	19.9	19.9
South Africa	66.2	65.7	n/a	58.9

n/a = not available

Sources: *Criminal Statistics England and Wales 1997*

Table 10a in the Appendix shows these same figures together with homicide rates derived from mortality statistics for earlier years. The two different methods mean that there is some discontinuity in the data.

The mortality statistics are based on registrations of deaths by cause, which are also imperfect. For example, they relate to year of registration, rather than year of occurrence. When homicide is suspected, the death may be (as in England and Wales) referred to a coroner which may delay registration and cause it to be labelled 'injury by other and unspecified means' initially. These data are therefore of more use in indicating trends.

Table 11 on the next page shows homicide rate in some major cities. Again these are data collated by the Home Office<sup>28</sup>. London and Edinburgh fall mid-table.

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<sup>28</sup> Criminal Statistics England and Wales, Cm 4162 Home Office November 1998, table 10.3

**Table 11**  
**Homicide per 100,000 population in some selected cities**  
**Average 1995-1997**

Canberra	0.64
Tokyo (b)	1.10
Geneva	1.23
Athens	1.35
Rome	1.70
Wellington	1.73
Vienna	1.80
Brussels	1.83 <sup>2</sup>
Dublin	1.83
Ottawa	1.87
Oslo	2.08
London	2.17
Edinburgh	2.43 <sup>1</sup>
Budapest	2.80
Prague	2.87
Madrid	2.89
Lisbon	2.91
Helsinki	2.97
Paris	3.28
Berlin (a)	3.81
Stockholm (c)	4.13 <sup>1</sup>
Belfast	4.37
Copenhagen	4.55
Warsaw (b)	5.63
Amsterdam	7.90 <sup>1</sup>
Moscow (b)	18.15
Pretoria (d)	41.13
Washington DC	64.08 <sup>2</sup>

Notes: <sup>1</sup> 1994-1996

<sup>2</sup> 1997 provisional

(a) Includes homicides recorded by the Central Group for the investigation associated with the Government and Reunification, committed in the former East Germany or at the border before reunification

(b) Includes attempts

(c) Homicides as initially reported to the Police

(d) Includes rural areas

## **B. USA**

### **1. Use of the death penalty**

The death penalty has been available in the United States in its present form since 1976, when the Supreme Court upheld revised state capital punishment laws after ruling them unconstitutional in 1972. At the end of 1997, 38 states had capital punishment statutes but capital offences and method of execution vary by state, while a number of Federal laws provide for the death penalty<sup>29</sup>.

Those states without a death penalty are indicated in table 12. As the table shows, since January 1977, 432 people have been executed. 74 people in 17 states were executed in 1997, all of whom were men, and 45 white, 27 black, one American Indian and one Asian. This was 29 more people than in 1996 and the highest since 1955, when 76 people were executed. Provisional figures for 1998 indicate that 68 prisoners were executed.

At year end 1997, 34 states and the Federal prison system held 3,335 prisoners (including 44 women) under sentence of death, 3% more than at year end 1996 and the highest number ever. All had committed murder. The number of prisoners on death row in each state is also shown in table 11. Three states – Texas, California and Florida – accounted for 39% of America's death row population.

Among inmates under sentence of death and with available criminal histories, 1 in 12 had a prior homicide conviction.

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<sup>29</sup> US Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin *Capital Punishment 1997* December 1998

Table 12  
**Executions by state**

	Since 1930	1977 to 1997	Executions in 1997	Executions in 1998 a)	Prisoners under sentence of death, end 1997
Federal System	33				15
Texas	441	144	37	20	438
Virginia	138	46	9	13	43
Florida	209	39	1	4	370
Missouri	91	29	6	3	88
Louisiana	157	24	1		70
Georgia	388	22		1	115
Alabama	151	16	3	1	159
Arkansas	134	16	4	1	38
South Carolina	175	13	2	7	68
Illinois	100	10	2	1	159
Oklahoma	69	9	1	4	137
Arizona	46	8	2	4	120
North Carolina	271	8		3	176
Delaware	20	8			15
Nevada	35	6		1	87
Indiana	46	5	1	1	44
Utah	18	5			10
California	296	4		1	486
Mississippi	158	4			64
Nebraska	7	3	1		11
Washington	49	2		1	12
Maryland	70	2	1	1	17
Oregon	21	2	1		20
Pennsylvania	154	2			214
Montana	7	1		1	7
Wyoming	8	1			0
Colorado	48	1	1		4
Idaho	4	1			19
Kentucky	104	1	1		30
New York	329				0
Ohio	172				177
Tennessee	93				98
New Jersey	74				14
District of Columbia	40				Not Authorised
West Virginia	40				Not Authorised
New Mexico	8				4
Vermont	4				Not Authorised
New Hampshire	1				0
South Dakota	1				2
Connecticut	21				4
Iowa	18				Not Authorised
Kansas	15				0
Massachusetts	27				Not Authorised
Alaska					Not Authorised
Hawaii					Not Authorised
Maine					Not Authorised
Michigan					Not Authorised
Minnesota					Not Authorised
North Dakota					Not Authorised
Rhode Island					Not Authorised
Wisconsin					Not Authorised
<b>US Total</b>	<b>4,258</b>	<b>432</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>3,320</b>

Source: US Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin Capital Punishment 1997 December 1998

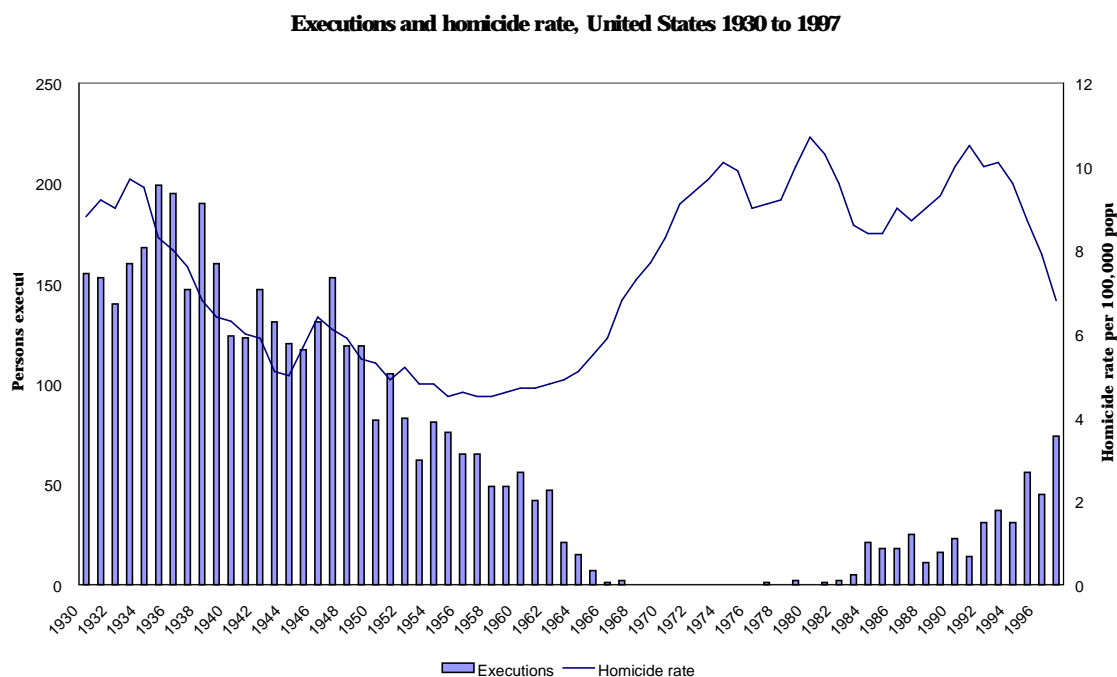
a) Data for 1998 are provisional

Not authorised = State did not authorise the death penalty during 1996 or 1997



## 2. Homicide rates

Relating any pattern in homicide rate to the retention or use of the death penalty is fraught with difficulty because so many other factors affect crime levels. However, there does appear to be some association between the two; the graph shows the number of executions each year since 1930 (bars), and the homicide rate per 100,000 population (line), taken from demographic statistics<sup>30</sup>;



Such correlation does not, of course, necessarily imply causality. By the same token, it is difficult to draw conclusions concerning the use of the death penalty and the murder rate in individual states, shown in table 13. Although all the states belong to the same country, they vary widely in their social, demographic and economic characteristics. The overall crime rate and murder rate is decreasing in the United States, and this is reflected in falling murder rates in many states, including both those who do and who do not retain or use the death penalty.

In 1997, firearms were used in 68% of murders (10,369 cases), and sharp instruments in 13% (1,963). 65 law enforcement officers were killed in the line of duty in the same year, 16% higher than the total in 1996, but still 17% lower than the figure a decade ago. Of the 688 officers killed in the line of duty over the past decade (1988-1997), firearms were used in 92% of cases<sup>31</sup>.

<sup>30</sup> National Center for Health Statistics, *Vital Statistics* November 1998 and Bureau of Justice Statistics *Capital Punishment* 1997 December 1998

<sup>31</sup> FBI Uniform Crime Reports 1997, Criminal Justice Information Services Division; can be found on Internet via page at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/welcome.html>

Table 13

**Murder rate by state 1977-1997**

**Murder and non-negligent manslaughter per 100,000 inhabitants**

**Shaded years indicate capital punishment laws in force. Boxed years indicate at least one execution took place that year.**

	Alabama	Alaska	Arizona	Arkansas	California	Colorado	Connecticut	Delaware	District of Columbia	Florida	Georgia	Hawaii	Idaho	Illinois	Indiana	Iowa	Kansas	Kentucky
1977	14	11	9	9	11	6	4	6	28	10	12	7	5	10	7	2	7	10
1978	13	13	9	9	12	7	4	7	28	11	14	7	5	10	6	3	6	9
1979	13	13	9	9	13	6	4	6	27	12	17	7	5	11	8	2	5	9
1980	13	9	10	9	14	7	5	7	31	14	14	9	3	11	9	2	7	9
1981	12	15	8	9	13	8	5	7	35	15	17	5	4	11	7	3	6	8
1982	11	18	8	8	11	6	5	5	31	14	13	3	2	9	6	2	6	10
1983	9	14	7	8	10	6	4	4	29	11	8	6	4	10	5	2	6	10
1984	9	12	8	7	11	6	4	4	28	12	9	3	3	9	6	2	4	7
1985	10	10	8	8	11	6	4	5	23	11	10	4	2	8	6	2	5	7
1986	10	9	9	8	11	7	5	5	31	12	11	5	3	9	6	2	4	7
1987	9	10	7	8	11	6	5	5	36	11	12	5	3	8	6	2	4	8
1988	10	6	8	9	10	6	5	5	60	11	12	4	4	9	6	2	3	6
1989	10	8	7	8	11	4	6	5	72	11	13	5	3	9	6	2	5	8
1990	12	7	8	10	12	4	5	5	78	11	12	4	3	10	6	2	4	7
1991	11	7	8	11	13	6	6	5	81	9	13	4	2	11	8	2	6	7
1992	11	7	8	11	13	6	5	5	75	9	11	4	3	11	8	2	6	6
1993	12	9	9	10	13	6	6	5	79	9	11	4	3	11	8	2	6	7
1994	12	6	10	12	12	5	7	5	70	8	10	4	4	12	8	2	7	6
1995	11	9	10	10	11	6	5	3	65	7	9	5	4	10	8	2	6	7
1996	10	7	9	9	9	5	5	4	73	8	9	3	4	10	7	2	7	6
1997	10	9	8	10	8	4	4	3	57	7	8	4	3	9	7	2	6	6
1998	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

NA - 1998 not yet available, overall total was 8% down on 1997

Sources: US Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics  
 State Crime Data, 1960-96 files by state from website <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov>  
 FBI Uniform Crime Reports Index of Crime  
 Prisoner Statistics data series January 1999

Table 13

**Murder rate by state 1977-1997**

**Murder and non-negligent manslaughter per 100,000 inhabitants**

**Shaded years indicate capital punishment laws in force. Boxed years indicate at least one execution took place that year.**

	Louisiana	Maine	Maryland	Massachusetts	Michigan	Minnesota	Mississippi	Missouri	Montana	Nebraska	Nevada	New Hampshire	New Jersey	New Mexico	New York	North Carolina	North Dakota	Ohio
1977	16	2	8	3	9	3	14	10	5	4	16	3	6	9	11	11	1	8
1978	16	3	8	4	11	2	13	10	5	3	15	1	5	10	10	11	1	7
1979	17	3	10	4	9	2	13	11	4	4	18	2	7	12	12	11	2	8
1980	16	3	10	4	10	3	15	11	4	4	20	3	7	13	13	11	1	8
1981	16	3	10	4	9	2	13	10	3	3	18	3	7	11	12	9	2	7
1982	16	2	10	4	9	2	14	10	4	2	14	2	6	12	11	9	1	6
1983	14	2	9	4	10	2	11	8	4	3	13	2	5	9	11	8	2	6
1984	13	2	8	4	10	2	10	7	4	3	11	1	5	9	10	9	1	5
1985	11	2	8	3	11	2	11	8	6	3	10	2	5	11	9	8	1	5
1986	13	2	9	4	11	2	11	9	3	3	13	2	5	11	11	8	1	6
1987	11	3	10	3	12	3	10	8	4	3	8	3	5	10	11	8	1	6
1988	12	3	10	4	11	3	9	8	3	4	10	2	5	11	13	8	2	5
1989	15	3	12	4	11	3	10	8	3	2	8	3	5	9	13	9	1	6
1990	17	2	12	4	10	3	12	9	5	3	10	2	6	9	14	11	1	6
1991	17	1	12	4	11	3	13	11	3	3	12	4	5	11	14	11	1	7
1992	17	2	12	4	10	3	12	11	3	4	11	2	5	9	13	11	2	7
1993	20	2	13	4	10	3	14	11	3	4	10	2	5	8	13	11	2	6
1994	20	2	12	4	10	3	15	10	3	3	12	1	5	11	11	11	0	6
1995	17	2	12	4	8	4	13	9	4	3	11	2	5	9	9	9	1	5
1996	18	2	12	3	8	4	11	8	4	3	14	2	4	12	7	9	2	5
1997	16	2	10	2	8	3	13	8	5	3	11	1	4	8	6	8	1	5
1998	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

NA - 1998 not yet available, overall total was 8% down on 1997

Sources: US Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics

State Crime Data, 1960-96 files by state from website <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov>

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Table 13

**Murder rate by state 1977-1997**

**Murder and non-negligent manslaughter per 100,000 inhabitants**

**Shaded years indicate capital punishment laws in force. Boxed years indicate at least one execution took place that year.**

	Oklahoma	Oregon	Pennsy- lvannia	Rhode Island	South Carolina	South Dakota	Tennessee	Texas	Utah	Vermont	Virginia	Washington State	West Virginia	Wisconsin	Wyoming	US Total
1977	9	5	6	4	12	2	10	13	3	1	9	4	6	3	5	9
1978	8	5	6	4	12	2	9	14	4	3	9	5	7	3	7	9
1979	10	4	6	3	13	2	10	17	5	1	9	5	7	3	9	10
1980	10	5	7	4	11	1	11	17	4	2	9	5	7	3	6	10
1981	9	4	6	4	10	2	10	17	3	4	9	5	6	3	5	10
1982	11	5	6	4	11	3	10	16	3	2	7	4	5	3	9	9
1983	8	4	5	3	10	2	9	14	3	4	7	5	5	3	6	8
1984	8	5	5	3	9	2	8	13	3	3	8	5	4	2	3	8
1985	8	5	5	4	9	2	9	13	3	3	7	5	4	3	4	8
1986	8	7	6	3	9	4	10	14	3	2	7	5	6	3	5	9
1987	7	6	5	4	9	2	9	12	3	3	7	6	5	3	2	8
1988	7	5	5	4	9	3	9	12	3	2	8	6	5	3	3	8
1989	7	5	6	5	9	1	8	12	3	2	8	4	7	4	4	9
1990	8	4	7	5	11	2	10	14	3	2	9	5	6	5	5	9
1991	7	5	6	4	11	2	11	15	3	2	9	4	6	5	3	10
1992	7	5	6	4	10	1	10	13	3	2	9	5	6	4	4	9
1993	8	5	7	4	10	3	10	12	3	4	8	5	7	4	3	10
1994	7	5	6	4	10	1	9	11	3	1	9	6	5	4	3	9
1995	12	4	6	3	8	2	11	9	4	2	8	5	5	4	2	8
1996	7	4	6	3	9	1	10	8	3	2	8	5	4	4	3	7
1997	7	3	6	3	8	1	10	7	2	2	7	4	4	4	4	7
1998	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

NA - 1998 not yet available, overall total was 8% down on 1997

Sources: US Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics

State Crime Data, 1960-96 files by state from website <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov>

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Table 10a

**Homicide rates per 100,000 population, by country**  
**Countries ranked by homicide rate in 1997**

	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
Norway	0.7	0.8	0.7	0.9	1.1	1.3	1.0	1.2	1.1	1.2	1.6	1.4	1.2	1.3	1.2	1.2	1.1	1.0	0.8	1.0	0.9	0.9
Japan	1.3	1.2	1.1	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.9	1.0	0.9	0.8	0.9	0.8	0.8	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Eire	0.3	0.9	0.7	0.9	0.7	2.0	0.6	0.8	0.6	0.6	0.8	1.1	0.8	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.7	1.2	1.2	1.1
Switzerland	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1.3	1.4	n/a	1.6	1.1	1.1	2.8	1.2
Portugal	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.7	1.3	3.9	1.3
England & Wales	1.1	1.0	1.1	1.3	1.3	1.1	1.2	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.3	1.4	1.3	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.3	1.3	1.4	1.5	1.3	1.4
Belgium	0.9	0.9	n/a	1.6	n/a	n/a	1.5	1.8	1.7	n/a	2.1	1.6	1.5	1.3	n/a	1.4	n/a	n/a	1.2	1.4	1.2	1.4
Germany	1.3	1.2	1.2	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.1	1.1	1.0	1.0	1.1	1.2	1.2	1.7	1.7	1.5	1.4
France	0.9	1.0	1.0	1.1	1.0	1.0	1.1	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.2	1.1	1.0	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.0	1.1	2.4	2.3	2.0	1.6
Italy	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.6	1.9	1.9	2.1	1.9	1.6	1.5	1.3	1.6	1.9	2.2	2.1	2.8	2.2	2.3	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.6
Denmark	0.7	0.7	0.5	1.0	1.3	1.4	1.0	1.2	1.0	1.4	1.2	1.1	1.1	1.2	1.0	1.4	1.3	1.2	1.5	1.2	1.3	1.7
Scotland	2.0	2.0	1.6	1.6	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.9	1.8	1.6	1.6	2.1	1.7	2.0	1.7	1.7	2.7	2.3	2.2	2.7	2.3	1.7
Netherlands	0.8	0.9	0.8	0.9	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.9	0.9	0.9	1.0	0.9	0.9	1.0	0.9	1.1	1.3	1.2	1.5	1.8	1.8	1.8
Sweden	0.9	0.9	0.7	0.9	1.0	1.2	1.4	1.4	0.9	1.4	1.4	1.2	1.4	1.5	1.4	1.4	1.3	1.3	1.8	2.0	2.2	1.8
Austria	2.0	1.3	1.4	1.3	1.2	1.3	1.6	1.7	1.8	1.4	1.3	1.3	1.2	1.1	1.6	1.3	1.5	1.3	2.5	2.2	2.2	1.8
Canada	2.4	2.6	2.5	2.5	2.1	2.3	2.4	2.4	2.3	2.1	2.0	2.2	1.9	2.1	2.1	2.0	2.0	1.8	2.0	2.0	2.1	1.9
Greece	0.7	0.6	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.8	0.9	0.8	0.9	0.8	0.9	0.8	1.1	0.8	1.1	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.3	1.4	2.5	1.9
Australia	2.0	1.9	1.8	1.8	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.9	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.4	2.1	2.0	1.9	1.7	1.7	1.8	2.0	1.9	1.9
Poland	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	2.8	2.9	2.7	2.4	2.2	2.9	2.1
New Zealand	1.1	1.8	1.9	1.6	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.6	1.2	2.0	2.2	2.0	1.7	2.2	2.3	1.9	2.3	2.1	2.1	1.4	2.0	2.4
Northern Ireland	18.4	8.1	5.6	8.9	6.0	6.6	6.7	5.9	4.2	3.9	5.5	6.9	7.3	4.7	5.1	7.5	6.8	6.5	5.2	1.4	2.3	2.5
Spain	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0.9	1.0	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9	2.7	2.5	n/a	2.6
Finland	3.3	2.8	3.0	2.7	3.3	2.7	2.8	3.1	2.7	2.7	3.3	2.7	2.8	3.2	3.2	3.1	3.4	3.3	2.9	2.9	3.1	2.8
Czech Republic	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1.8	2.0	2.2	2.8	2.7	2.6	2.8
Hungary	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	4.0	4.1	3.5	3.1	2.9	2.7	2.8
USA	9.1	9.2	9.4	9.9	n/a	10.2	9.5	8.5	8.2	8.2	8.9	8.6	8.9	9.1	9.2	10.1	9.6	9.5	8.9	8.3	7.4	7.3
Russia	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	9.6	12.4	14.2	15.2	23.0	21.9	21.5	19.9	19.9
South Africa	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	66.2	65.7	n/a	58.9

n/a = not available

Data up to 1994 are in most cases mortality statistics, ICD-9 code E55, data from 1994 are homicides recorded by the Police, with the exception of UK

Sources: *World Health Statistics WHO various years*  
*Criminal Statistics England and Wales 1997*