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# Radford/FGCU Annual Report on Serial Killer Statistics: 2023

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# Section A

## About This Report

## 1. About This Report

The purpose of this annual report is to provide the most accurate statistics possible about serial killers and their victims. The source of this information is the Radford/FGCU Serial Killer Database which is described in detail in the next section of the report.

For many years, the report consisted of a series of tables with little commentary. In this version (2023) of the report, we have included a description of the Database as well as commentary for most of the tables. In each subsequent year, we will continue to add commentary to selected topics until the report contains results and commentary for all topics. In subsequent years we also plan on including infographics that will help “spice up” the information in the tables as well as including tests of statistical significance for all relevant comparisons.

It is not the purpose of this report to delve into the mind of the serial killer. There are already excellent text books (e.g., Fox, Levin, & Fridel, 2023; Hickey, 2016) and other books that do a thorough job of doing this.

One of our goals is to increase collaboration among serial homicide researchers. Toward that end, if any researchers are interested in “adopting” a current topic or proposing a new topic to provide annual updates and commentary, we would love to partner with you.

Although information has been collected on such topics as the presence of triad behaviors and head injuries, we will not publish summaries of fields such as these until we have collected enough information that will lead to reliable interpretations.

The recommended citation for this report is:

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# Section B

## The Radford/FGCU Serial Killer Database

## 2. The Radford/FGCU Serial Killer Database

The Radford/FGCU Serial Killer Database (“Database”) is believed to be the most comprehensive serial killer database available to researchers<sup>1</sup>. The goal of the Database is to generate accurate information regarding serial killers and their victims. The Database is continually updated and, as of March 1, 2023, contained information on 5,752 serial killers from the U.S. and other countries and a separate section with 15,088 victims<sup>2</sup>.

### INITIAL DEVELOPMENT

The project began when the first author (Aamodt) began teaching a forensic psychology course at Radford University in the early 1990s. As part of the class, students were required to create a timeline for an assigned serial killer listing the major events in that killer’s life as well as providing basic demographic information (e.g., race, sex, age) and information about the crimes themselves (e.g., type of victim, killing method). Sources of information included biographies on serial killers, newspaper articles, publically available court documents, and publically available prison records. The purpose behind this assignment was to allow the students to apply what was discussed in class about aggression and violence to a particular case study.

Initially the timelines were stored in a file drawer and after a few years were added to the class website<sup>3</sup>. In the mid-1990s, the information from the timelines was entered into an Excel file and additional information and serial killers were continually added to the file. By 2008, the database had grown to over 1,900 serial killers and now contains over 5,752 serial killers worldwide.

Although the Database originated at Radford University and the primary source of additional information continues to be Radford University, the forming of two partnerships has greatly enhanced the size and quality of the Database.

### Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU)

In 2011, Kristin Elink-Schuurman-Laura, at the time a graduate student working on her master’s degree in forensic science at Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU), suggested that the Database be put on-line as a Microsoft Access file. FGCU agreed to host the Database and dedicate resources to ensure that the Database be continually updated. This partnership resulted in the Database being renamed from the Radford Serial Killer Database to the Radford/FGCU Serial Killer Database. FGCU put into place a process by which qualified researchers could apply to use the Database and a FGCU committee would review the applications and grant access to the

<sup>1</sup> Researchers can apply to use the database and permission is normally granted to qualified researchers who are not trying to use the information for commercial or inappropriate purposes. There are no fees charged for using the database, only a requirement that the researcher properly cite the database, agree not to distribute the database, and agree to share any additional data gathered during the project that could be added to the database.

<sup>2</sup> Currently our “victims section” concentrates on US and Canadian victims of serial killers but our plans are to eventually include victims from other countries.

<sup>3</sup> These timelines are still on the Internet but are not updated and do not represent the most recent or accurate information on a serial killer.

Database<sup>4</sup>. In addition, FGCU graduate students reviewed the information in the database to ensure that it was accurate and to document sources for the information. Dr. Terry Leary is the current coordinator of the FGCU-hosted database.

### **Serial Homicide Expertise and Information Sharing Collaborative (SHEISC)**

Another independent effort, the Serial Homicide Expertise and Information Sharing Collaborative (SHEISC), was created in 2010 with the purpose of bringing together an interdisciplinary team of researchers and practitioners to share data on serial homicide offenders. Contributors to this effort included James Alan Fox, Eric Hickey, Gerard Labuschagne, Jack Levin, Janet McClellan, Bryan Nelson, Michael Newton, Kenna Quinet, Cloyd Steiger, John White, and Enzo Yaksic<sup>5</sup>. Each member contributed their dataset of serial killers to the collection effort. In 2012, these data were merged into the Radford/FGCU Serial Killer Database, further expanding the size of the Database.

### **WHO IS A SERIAL KILLER?**

For the Database to be of most use, it must contain information on as many serial killers as possible, while at the same time ensuring that people included in the Database are actually serial killers. Ensuring comprehensiveness and accuracy was a two-part process: (1) Identifying names of potential serial killers and, (2) determining which of those names were actually serial killers.

#### **Identifying Names of Potential Serial Killers**

Over the years, many sources were used to generate a list of serial killers for possible inclusion in the database. These sources included scholarly journal articles, news articles, dissertations and theses (e.g., Del Fabbro, 2006; Field, 2007; Grine, 2003), text books on serial killers (e.g., Fox & Levin, 2012; Hickey, 2013), popular books on serial killers in general (e.g., Newton, 2006; Schechter & Everitt, 2006), popular books on serial killers in a particular country (e.g., Kalman (2014) for the USSR, Mellor (2012) for Canada, Johnson (2012) for the United Kingdom, Aki (2003) for Japan, Pistorius (2006; 2007) for South Africa), popular books on Black serial killers (i.e., Cottrell, 2012), Wikipedia, intensive manual searches of various Internet sources (e.g., court records, prison records), and lists compiled as part of SHEISC<sup>6</sup>. As of March 1, 2023, these sources resulted in a list of 6,370 potential serial killers; 618 of which turned out not to meet the definition of a serial killer.

#### **Determining Who Qualifies as a Serial Killer**

Once a person was identified as a potential serial killer, research was conducted to verify that the person actually existed and killed at least two people. If the person passed this initial screen, they were then evaluated to determine if they fit the definition of a serial killer or whether they might be more appropriately classified as another type of killer (e.g., double murder, mass murder).

<sup>4</sup> Due to administrative difficulties, the FGCU on-line version is currently behind in adding the additions and revisions represented in this report.

<sup>5</sup> If we have inadvertently left out the name of a contributor, please let us know and we will add you to the list.

<sup>6</sup> It is important to note that this list of sources provides examples of the sources we used but is not an inclusive list of all sources that were used.

Because there is considerable disagreement among experts regarding the definition of a serial killer (Reid, 2016), we decided to use the 2005 FBI definition as a base (the unlawful killing of two or more victims by the same offenders in separate events) and then provide subtypes that will allow individual researchers to remove individuals who do not reflect the researcher's personal definition of a serial killer. Although each of us has our own ideas as to whom we might count as a serial killer, we felt it important that the Database be broad enough to allow individual researchers to make that call for their own research purposes. For a detailed discussion of differing opinions regarding the definition of a serial killer, see Reid (2016).

It should be noted that for historical and other reasons, we will continue using the term, "serial killer" in the Database, although a better term might be "multiple-event killer." As originally coined, the term serial killer was used to describe murders that occurred in a series. There are many people in the Database who committed several murders over a long period of time, but the murders were unplanned, unconnected, and certainly not in a series.

It should also be noted that individual serial killers have been added and deleted from the Database based on newly found information. That is, we may have kept a person out of the Database because we could only find one murder and added him to the Database ten years later when we were able to confirm a second or third murder. Likewise, an individual may have been in the Database ten years ago but recently discovered DNA evidence cleared him of the crimes.

Using the FBI definition of a serial killer, killers who murdered two or more people in one location, during one event were not included in the Database. Such examples would be:

- Double murder (Two murders in the same location within a 24-hour period)
- Triple murder (Three murders in the same location within a 24-hour period)
- Mass murder (Four or more murders in the same location within a 24-hour period)

#### *One Event – Two or More Locations – No Cooling Off Period*

Prior to the 2005 FBI conference on serial murder, most researchers separated spree and serial killers. Traditional thinking on the difference between spree and serial killers is that serial killers have a break or "cooling off" period between their murders, thus constituting separate events. As one would imagine, defining "break" or "cooling-off period" can be difficult. To allow researchers the option of including spree killers in their serial killer analyses, we first tried to identify those that are spree killers and then split these spree killers into those whose event lasted less than 24 hours (presumably no possibility of a break/cooling-off period in such a short time) and those whose event lasted more than 24 hours. Individual researchers may disagree with our categorizations and are free to reclassify the initial classification (i.e. serial v. spree) as well as the presence of a break or cooling off period.

Spree-One Event-One Day: Two or more murders occurring within a 24-hour period in different locations. These individuals were not included in the Database.

Spree: Two or more murders over a period of multiple days with no "cooling off" period or clear break between kills. These individuals were included in the Database.



### *Multiple Events*

Although the FBI definition of the number of kills necessary to be considered a serial killer is now two rather than the three from the old definition, there are researchers who think that only individuals with three, or four, or five kills should be considered serial killers. To provide these researchers with the opportunity to easily remove individuals from their analyses, we have added the following categories:

Serial-Accused: Is awaiting trial.

Serial-Two murders: Killed two people on two separate events.

Serial-Two events: Killed more than two people but the kills occurred on only two events.

Serial: Three or more murders on three or more separate events.

Serial-Self-Proclaimed: Person has confessed to two or more murders on two or more occasions but authorities don't have any confirmation of the murders or the perpetrator.

Serial-Suspected: Person was never tried but evidence suggests person is a serial killer.

Serial-Accomplice: Person did not do the actual killing but was present during the killing.

Serial-Ordered murders: Person never actually killed but ordered, hired, or manipulated a person to do the killing.

### *Involvement of Others*

Another way in which multiple event killers differ is the extent to which others are involved in the killing. There seem to be two broad categories of other involvement: team and organizational. With team killers, there are usually between two and four people involved in the killing and they are linked by being family, lovers, or friends. Such types of killers will be labeled, "Serial-Team"

Serial – Team: One or more partners but no formal organization to the group

The second type of "other involvement" is when the killing is sanctioned as part of a formal organization such as a gang, criminal enterprise, or cult. Although individuals in these organizations can meet the technical definition of a serial killer (i.e. two or more murders on two or more separate events), they seem fundamentally different from individual multiple event killers. As such, we propose to label such killers as "Serial-Organizational" and at some point will place them in a separate dataset from individual and team killers.

Serial – Organizational – Cult

Serial – Organizational – Gang or Criminal Enterprise

Serial – Organizational – Military (war crimes)

When we find information on these organizational killers, it will be entered into the Database but intentional efforts to find and research these killers is not a priority for this project.

## SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Because the Database will be shared with many researchers, we made a decision to only include information that is publicly available. Thus, information from confidential sources such as psychiatric reports or law enforcement files was not included unless it had officially been released to the public. With that said, great care was taken to ensure that the publicly available information included in the Database is accurate. As new information becomes available, we revise, delete, and add information to the Database.

Information in the Database came from a variety of sources including:

- On-line prison records
- On-line State birth, death, marriage, and divorce records
- On-line Social Security information
- Individual-level Census data (1900, 1910, 1920, 1930, 1940, 1950)
- Journal articles
- Newspaper articles
- Books, both scholarly and popular
- Dissertations and theses
- Internet sources

When we came across conflicting information, which was common, we used our best judgment to determine which source was most likely to have the accurate information. For example, it was not uncommon for a date of death to be different in sources such as social security records, a graveyard headstone, media reports or on-line prison records.

At times, an accurate date of death was not available. Instead, information reported might include the date the victim was:

- Last seen
- Reported missing
- Observed being abducted
- Found dead

In such cases, we included the date we thought was the closest to the date of the actual crime. As a result, the date included in the database might differ from a state death record because if the actual date of death is unknown, many states list the date of death as the date on which the body was found – a date that could be months or years later than when the victim was actually abducted or killed.

We also had to use judgment on coding information such as whether a serial killer was psychologically, physically, or sexually abused as a child. Although there were times when sources such as self-reports, court statements from the family, and psychiatric reports were consistent, it was more common that a serial killer would report abuse, the family would deny that

abuse occurred, and the forensic psychologists/psychiatrists disagreed with one another. In such cases our coding reflected what we believed to be supported by the preponderance of evidence.

Although we could write many pages on the data collection process, the main purpose of this annual report is to present the findings that we think are of most interest to the public, the media, teachers, students, law enforcement professionals, and researchers. Our plan is to annually update our findings and in each subsequent year, add additional types of information.

## INFORMATION GATHERING PROCESS

As mentioned previously, the initial step in building the Database was to collect names of people who were identified by at least one source as being a serial killer. For each of these names, we then collected information through sources such as books, newspaper articles, and the Internet. We then used sources such as those listed in Appendix A to confirm, replace, or add to the information found in the initial steps. It is important to note that there were many more confirmation sources (e.g., death records, prison records) for U.S. serial killers and their victims than for international serial killers. As a result, more confidence can be placed in the information for the U.S. than for the international serial killers and victims.

## ACCURACY OF INFORMATION

There is no doubt that information from public sources such as media reports and Internet sites can contain inaccurate information. To ensure that information contained in the Database is accurate, four major safeguards were used:

1. When possible, multiple sources were used for each piece of information.
2. When multiple sources contained conflicting information, we relied on the more official sources (e.g., state death records, state birth records) rather than media-driven sources.
3. Graduate students at Florida Gulf Coast University reviewed many of the data fields to corroborate and source the information in each data field.
4. As a condition of having access to the Database, researchers agreed to provide us with new information that was uncovered and to notify us of any data errors they encountered.

Because much of the person-related information for U.S. serial killers and victims (e.g., sex, race, age, date of death, place of death) came from reliable sources such as those listed in Appendix A, we have great confidence in the accuracy of that information.

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# Section C

## Frequency of Serial Homicide

## 3. SERIAL KILLER FREQUENCY

### Research Questions Addressed

- How many known serial killers began their series in each decade?
- How many serial killer victims have there been each year in the United States and Canada?
- How many known serial killers are operating in the United States in any given year?
- Why has there been a decrease in the number of serial killers?

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### Data Notes and Interpretation Cautions

#### Data Notes

- None

#### Interpretation Cautions

- The information in this section is only for known serial killers. The number of actual serial killers and their victims is unknown but is certainly higher than that shown in this section.
- As will be discussed in Section 4, the frequencies for serial killers outside of the United States are greatly underestimated.

### How Many Known Serial Killers Began Their Series in Each Decade?

As shown in Table 3.01,

- The number of known serial killers peaked in the United States in the 1980s (840) and has declined each decade since then.
- The number of known serial killers in Canada peaked between 2000 and 2009 (26).
- The number of known serial killers in countries other than the U.S. and Canada peaked in the 1990s (441) and has declined each decade since then.

### How Many Serial Killer Victims Have There Been Each Year in the United States and Canada?

As shown in Table 3.02,

- The number of serial killer victims in the United States peaked at 414 in 1987 and has generally declined in each subsequent year.

Table 3.01 Number of Serial Killers by Decade in Which Series Started

Decade	US	Canada	Other Countries	Total	% US
1900	53	0	32	85	62.4
1910	62	0	33	95	65.3
1920	70	3	40	113	61.9
1930	67	0	34	101	66.3
1940	61	4	52	117	52.1
1950	93	1	50	144	64.6
1960	255	8	79	342	74.6
1970	673	20	175	868	77.5
1980	840	24	246	1,110	75.7
1990	729	18	441	1,188	61.4
2000	438	26	364	828	52.9
2010	215	20	189	424	50.7
2020	26	1	20	47	55.3

**Table 3.02 Serial Killer Victims by Year**

1900-1939			1940-1979			1980 - present		
Year	U.S.	Canada	Year	U.S.	Canada	Year	U.S.	Canada
1900	28	0	1940	11	0	1980	339	3
1901	17	1	1941	16	0	1981	303	<b>17</b>
1902	19	0	1942	18	0	1982	271	6
1903	21	0	1943	14	0	1983	275	4
1904	15	0	1944	19	1	1984	318	7
1905	19	0	1945	21	2	1985	282	9
1906	36	0	1946	27	5	1986	350	4
1907	20	0	1947	20	0	1987	<b>414</b>	8
1908	22	0	1948	24	0	1988	262	5
1909	30	1	1949	14	0	1989	265	14
1910	17	0	1950	20	0	1990	265	7
1911	70	0	1951	28	0	1991	288	11
1912	69	0	1952	19	0	1992	280	13
1913	23	0	1953	35	0	1993	289	8
1914	24	0	1954	28	0	1994	274	5
1915	12	0	1955	28	0	1995	268	16
1916	12	0	1956	29	2	1996	243	7
1917	17	0	1957	29	1	1997	232	14
1918	18	0	1958	36	0	1998	198	11
1919	22	0	1959	24	0	1999	194	13
1920	29	0	1960	51	0	2000	157	9
1921	53	1	1961	44	0	2001	145	9
1922	19	0	1962	35	3	2002	202	4
1923	45	0	1963	53	4	2003	176	7
1924	12	0	1964	58	1	2004	157	7
1925	26	0	1965	53	4	2005	160	5
1926	55	0	1966	90	1	2006	156	7
1927	18	2	1967	54	1	2007	172	11
1928	22	0	1968	70	0	2008	132	7
1929	14	0	1969	113	4	2009	159	8
1930	13	0	1970	102	6	2010	144	15
1931	20	0	1971	150	4	2011	111	9
1932	21	0	1972	166	3	2012	116	15
1933	25	0	1973	233	8	2013	101	7
1934	29	0	1974	293	10	2014	81	5
1935	30	0	1975	194	9	2015	82	9
1936	28	0	1976	180	2	2016	86	2
1937	23	0	1977	238	5	2017	90	3
1938	25	0	1978	283	7	2018	61	2
1939	20	0	1979	253	5	2019	52	7
						2020	28	1
						2021	42	0

Source: Radford/FGCU Serial Killer Database

Updated: 3/2/2023

Note: The numbers for 2019-2021 should be interpreted with caution as there is often a lag between a murder and the identification of the serial killer.



- The number of serial killer victims in Canada peaked at 17 in 1981 but there is not a clear pattern of decline since that year.

## How Many Known Serial Killers Are Active in the United States in Any Given Year?

As shown in Tables 3.03 and 3.04,

- The number depends on whether one uses a “two or more homicides” or “three or more homicides” definition of a serial killer.
- 1987 was the year with the most number of active known serial killers in the United States.
- The number of active serial killers in the United States peaked in the 1980s with an average of 173 active per year using the two or more definition and an average of 122 active per year using the three or more definition.
- In 2010-2019, there were an average of 53 per year using the two or more definition, versus 31 or more using the three or more definition.

## Why Has There Been a Decrease in the Number of Serial Killers in the United States?

There are several factors that probably contribute to this decline.

- The increase in technology has made it more difficult for serial killers with motives such as insurance fraud (e.g., black widows) to go undetected.
- Stricter parole policies have put fewer potential serial killers back on the streets. Since 1950 in the United States, 17.9% of the serial killers in our database killed again after being released from prison for a prior homicide. This figure, combined with the fact that 79% of U.S. serial killers spent time in jail or prison prior to their first murder, supports the relationship between longer prison sentences and decreased serial killer frequency.
- There is a decreased availability of high risk targets for serial killers. That is, there are fewer people hitchhiking, offering rides to strangers, and walking to school. As shown in Table 3.05, some of the largest decreases in serial killer victim types from 1980-1999 to 2000-2019 are: Hitchhiking related, abductions from shopping centers, and disabled motorists or good Samaritans.

**Table 3.03 Number of U.S. Serial Killers Active Each Year**

Year	Definition of Serial Killer	
	2 or More Victims	3 or More Victims
1920	17	16
1921	27	22
1922	12	12
1923	24	21
1924	13	9
1925	17	13
1926	22	15
1927	13	10
1928	13	11
1929	11	8
1930	9	8
1931	15	11
1932	19	14
1933	22	16
1934	21	13
1935	21	19
1936	18	16
1937	14	12
1938	19	17
1939	14	10
1940	10	8
1941	9	8
1942	8	6
1943	11	11
1944	13	11
1945	13	12
1946	18	14
1947	14	11
1948	17	10
1949	12	7
1950	19	13
1951	17	15
1952	15	12
1953	21	14
1954	20	16
1955	24	15
1956	19	15
1957	20	14
1958	24	17

**Table 3.03 Number of U.S. Serial Killers Active Each Year**

Year	Definition of Serial Killer	
	2 or More Victims	3 or More Victims
1959	16	9
1960	32	22
1961	29	18
1962	20	15
1963	37	31
1964	38	25
1965	33	21
1966	48	38
1967	39	30
1968	44	31
1969	65	51
1970	62	43
1971	71	58
1972	93	68
1973	113	96
1974	136	96
1975	123	90
1976	106	76
1977	130	93
1978	162	113
1979	141	113
1980	169	133
1981	168	123
1982	147	103
1983	144	101
1984	170	118
1985	186	136
1986	202	135
1987	<b>212</b>	<b>147</b>
1988	162	108
1989	165	117
1990	162	113
1991	176	116
1992	170	118
1993	183	122
1994	177	119
1995	152	98
1996	154	99
1997	136	92

**Table 3.03 Number of U.S. Serial Killers Active Each Year**

Year	Definition of Serial Killer	
	2 or More Victims	3 or More Victims
1998	138	90
1999	121	80
2000	94	59
2001	95	61
2002	102	72
2003	105	65
2004	88	55
2005	101	76
2006	97	65
2007	112	74
2008	86	54
2009	101	63
2010	81	41
2011	77	42
2012	78	36
2013	66	37
2014	49	25
2015	50	31
2016	41	28
2017	36	27
2018	25	18
2019	22	21
2020	13	8
2021	15	11

Updated 3/01/2023

**Table 3.04 Yearly Average by Decade**

Decade	Definition of Serial Killer	
	2 or More	3 or More
1920-1929	17	14
1930-1939	17	14
1940-1949	13	10
1950-1959	20	14
1960-1969	39	28
1970-1979	114	85
1980-1989	173	122
1990-1999	157	105
2000-2009	98	64
2010-2019	53	31
2020-2021	14	10

Updated 3/2/2023

Note: This table only contains U.S. serial killers that have been caught and identified.

Numbers represent the number of separate serial killers who killed at least one person that year.

The number of kills in the definition represents the total number of kills; not the number in a given year.

## 4. SERIAL KILLER FREQUENCY BY COUNTRY

### Research Questions Addressed

- How many serial killers have been identified in each country?
- How do the numbers of serial killers in each country compare to the country's share of the world population?

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### Data Notes and Interpretation Cautions

#### Data Notes

The population count for each country was obtained in 2022 from:

<http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/population-by-country/>

#### Interpretation Cautions

The results in this section must be interpreted with caution as they greatly underrepresent the actual number of serial killers outside of the United States. To be included in our database, the following must have occurred:

1. A person illegally killed two or more people in separate incidents.
2. The murders were discovered by law enforcement.
3. The murders were tied by law enforcement to the same killer.
4. The identity of the killer was identified by law enforcement.
5. The name of the killer and the number of victims or the names of the victims were publicized in the media or other publically available source of information.
6. The publication of the murders was at some point documented in English.

Because all 6 of the above conditions must be met, the Database is much more likely to contain killers from countries – such as the United States – that have effective law enforcement agencies, openly publish information about crimes, and communicate those results in English.

### How Many Serial Killers Have Been Identified in Each Country?

As shown in Table 4.01,

- 115 countries had at least one identified serial killer.
- 64% (3,690) of the identified serial killers are from the United States.
- England (182), Russia (164), Japan (138), India (130), South Africa (129), and Canada (125) are the only other countries for which at least 100 serial killers have been identified.

## How do the Number of Serial Killers in each Country Compare to the Country's Share of the World Population?

As shown in Table 4.01,

- The United States, Australia, England, Canada, Hungary, and Austria – four of the six being English-speaking countries – have the highest percentages of serial killers as compared to their relative populations in the world.
- Of those countries with at least 10 identified serial killers, China, Pakistan, Nigeria, India, Iran, Turkey, and Thailand have the lowest percentages of serial killers as compared to their relative populations in the world.

**Table 4.01 Countries with at Least 10 Identified Serial Killers**

Country	Number of Serial Killers	% of Serial Killers	Country's Share of World Population	Ratio
United States	3,690	64.16	4.24%	15.12
England	182	3.16	0.68%	4.66
Russia	164	2.85	1.87%	1.52
Japan	138	2.40	1.62%	1.48
India	130	2.26	17.70%	0.13
S. Africa	129	2.24	0.76%	2.95
Canada	125	2.17	0.48%	4.49
Germany	99	1.72	1.07%	1.60
Italy	95	1.65	0.78%	2.13
Australia	92	1.60	0.33%	4.89
France	89	1.55	0.84%	1.85
China	68	1.18	18.46%	0.06
Mexico	64	1.11	1.65%	0.67
Brazil	42	0.73	2.73%	0.27
Hungary	28	0.49	0.12%	3.93
Poland	28	0.49	0.49%	1.00
Spain	28	0.49	0.60%	0.81
Austria	24	0.42	0.12%	3.61
Colombia	24	0.42	0.65%	0.64
Netherlands	20	0.35	0.22%	1.58
Belgium	17	0.30	0.15%	1.99
Czech Republic	16	0.28	0.14%	2.03
Turkey	15	0.26	1.08%	0.24
Scotland	14	0.24	0.07%	3.59
Sweden	14	0.24	0.13%	1.88
Argentina	14	0.24	0.58%	0.42
Kenya	13	0.23	0.69%	0.33
Thailand	13	0.23	0.90%	0.25
Iran	13	0.23	1.08%	0.21
Nigeria	13	0.23	2.64%	0.09
Ukraine	12	0.21	0.56%	0.37



**Table 4.01 Countries with at Least 10 Identified Serial Killers**

Country	Number of Serial Killers	% of Serial Killers	Country's Share of World Population	Ratio
Greece	11	0.19	0.13%	1.43
South Korea	11	0.19	0.66%	0.29
Pakistan	11	0.19	2.83%	0.07
New Zealand	10	0.17	0.06%	2.81
Finland	10	0.17	0.07%	2.45
Switzerland	10	0.17	0.11%	1.57
Ireland	9	0.16	0.06%	2.47

Caution should be taken in reviewing this table as the number of serial killers by country is a function of the number of actual killers, the number caught, and the number reported by police or the media

Note: Serial killers operating in multiple countries are not included in the counts

# Section D

## Killer Characteristics

## 5. SERIAL KILLER SEX

### Research Questions Addressed

- What percentage of serial killers are women?
  - Has the percentage of female serial killers changed over time?
  - Are there sex differences in killing motives and methods?
  - Are there sex differences in the frequency of unusual crime scene behaviors?
  - Are there sex differences in the types of victims killed?
- 

### Data Notes and Interpretation Cautions

#### Data Notes

None

#### Interpretation Cautions

None

### What Percentage of Serial Killers Are Women?

As shown in Tables 5.01 through 5.03,

- Across all time periods, approximately 11% of serial killers have been women.
- The percentage of women serial killers in the US (8.6%) is lower than that in other countries (14.4%).

### Has the Percentage of Women Serial Killers Changed Over Time?

As shown in Tables 5.01 through 5.03,

- The percentage of women serial killers has decreased over time. Prior to the 1930s, approximately a third of all known serial killers were women compared to about 6% since 1980.
- This decline in the percentage of women serial killers can be found for the United States as well as for other countries.

### Are There Sex Differences in Killing Motives and Methods?

As shown in Tables 5.04 through 5.06,

- Financial gain is the primary motive for women serial killers whereas enjoyment is the primary motive for men.

**Table 5.01 U.S. and International**

Decade	N		Percent	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Prior to 1900	138	112	55.2	44.8
1900	54	31	63.5	36.5
1910	66	29	69.5	30.5
1920	77	36	68.1	31.9
1930	85	16	84.2	15.8
1940	100	17	85.5	14.5
1950	123	21	85.4	14.6
1960	315	27	92.1	7.9
1970	823	45	94.8	5.2
1980	1033	77	93.1	6.9
1990	1109	79	93.4	6.6
2000	751	77	90.7	9.3
2010	389	35	91.7	8.3
2020	46	1	97.9	2.1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5138</b>	<b>614</b>	<b>89.3</b>	<b>10.7</b>

Note: Total includes decades not listed on this chart

**Table 5.02 United States Only**

Decade	N		Percent	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Prior to 1900	48	47	50.5	49.5
1900	37	16	69.8	30.2
1910	46	16	74.2	25.8
1920	50	20	71.4	28.6
1930	60	7	89.6	10.4
1940	52	9	85.2	14.8
1950	85	8	91.4	8.6
1960	234	21	91.8	8.2
1970	639	34	94.9	5.1
1980	791	49	94.2	5.8
1990	691	38	94.8	5.2
2000	406	32	92.7	7.3
2010	198	17	92.1	7.9
2020	25	1	96.2	3.8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3373</b>	<b>317</b>	<b>91.4</b>	<b>8.6</b>

Note: Total includes decades not listed on this chart

**Table 5.03 International Only**

Decade	N		Percent	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Prior to 1900	90	65	58.1	41.9
1900	17	15	53.1	46.9
1910	20	13	60.6	39.4
1920	27	16	62.8	37.2
1930	25	9	73.5	26.5
1940	48	8	85.7	14.3
1950	38	13	74.5	25.5
1960	81	6	93.1	6.9
1970	184	11	94.4	5.6
1980	242	28	89.6	10.4
1990	418	41	91.1	8.9
2000	345	45	88.5	11.5
2010	190	18	91.3	8.7
2020	21	0	100.0	0.0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1764</b>	<b>297</b>	<b>85.6</b>	<b>14.4</b>

Note: Total includes decades not listed on this chart

**Table 5.04 Primary Motive**

Primary Motive	Men		Women	
	N	%	N	%
Financial Gain	1,238	28.3	302	69.6
Enjoyment - Rape	1,209	27.7	16	3.7
Anger	779	17.8	76	17.5
Multiple Motives	532	12.2	15	3.5
Enjoyment - No rape	360	8.2	23	5.3
Gang/Criminal Enterprise	254	5.8	2	0.5

**Table 5.05 Number of Kills**

Number of Kills	Men		Women	
	N	%	N	%
Two	1,566	30.8	152	25.4
Three	1,169	23.0	126	21.0
Four	665	13.1	91	15.2
Five	421	8.3	48	8.0
More than five	1,270	24.9	182	30.4

**Table 5.06 Killing Method**

Method	Men		Women	
	N	%	N	%
Shoot	1,434	<b>35.2</b>	76	19.1
Strangle	626	15.3	18	4.5
Stab	459	11.3	31	7.8
Stab/Shoot	315	7.7	14	3.5
Bludgeon	310	7.6	15	3.8
Strangle/Stab	196	4.8	4	1.0
Bludgeon/Stab	191	4.7	13	3.3
Bludgeon/Shoot	160	3.9	5	1.3
Strangle/Bludgeon	163	4.0	2	0.5
Strangle/Shoot	117	2.9	3	0.8
Poison	98	2.4	217	<b>54.5</b>
Bomb	10	0.2	0	0.0

Source: Radford University/FGCU Serial Killer Database  
March 2, 2023

- Women serial killers are much more likely to kill using poison whereas men are more likely to shoot and or strangle their victims.

## Are There Sex Differences in the Frequency of Unusual Offender Behaviors?

As shown in Table 5.07,

- Male serial killers are much more likely than female serial killers to torture victims, mutilate the body after death, and engage in overkill
- Although necrophilia, eating part of the body, and drinking the victim's blood are very rare behaviors, male serial killers are more likely to engage in necrophilia than are female serial killers.

## Are There Sex Differences in the Types of Victims Killed?

As shown in Table 5.08,

- Male serial killers are more likely to only kill females whereas female serial killers are more likely to have both male and female victims.
- Female serial killers are more likely to kill infants and children than are male serial killers.
- The majority of female serial killer victims are family members whereas the victims of male serial killers tend not to be family members.



**Table 5.07 Offender Behaviors**

Crime Behavior	Men		Women		Chi Square	p level
	N	%	N	%		
Tortured Victims					2.52	0.1126
No	3,820	90.1	521	92.2		
Yes	419	9.9	44	7.8		
Overkill					41.23	0.0000
No	3,271	81.9	478	93.2		
Yes	722	18.1	35	6.8		
Body Mutilated					20.84	0.0000
No	3,997	90.7	541	96.4		
Yes	411	9.3	20	3.6		
Necrophilia					16.12	0.0001
No	4,638	96.6	583	99.7		
Yes	161	3.4	2	0.3		
Ate Body					1.29	0.2566
No	4,720	98.1	579	98.8		
Yes	89	1.9	7	1.2		
Drank Blood					1.14	0.2849
No	4,769	99.3	583	99.7		
Yes	35	0.7	2	0.3		

Source: Radford University/FGCU Serial Killer Database  
 March 2, 2023

**Table 5.08 Victim Characteristics**

Victim Characteristic	Serial Killer Sex			
	Male		Female	
	N	%	N	%
<b>Victim Sex</b>				
Male	1,343	28.1	200	36.2
Female	1,577	33.0	68	12.3
Both male and female	1,862	38.9	284	51.4
<b>Age of Primary Victim</b>				
Infants	20	0.4	67	14.2
Children (2-12)	136	3.0	37	7.8
Children & Teens	55	1.2	5	1.1
Teens (13-17)	153	3.4	7	1.5
Adults	3,484	76.9	273	57.7
Elderly (70+)	147	3.2	38	8.0
Various age categories	533	11.8	46	9.7
<b>Victim Type</b>				
Street - General Public	1,269	43.5	59	11.6
Home invasion	478	16.4	18	3.5
Street people (e.g., homeless, prostitute)	376	12.9	16	3.1
Family or boyfriend/girlfriend	327	11.2	291	57.1
Employee or customer	290	9.9	18	3.5
Patients	76	2.6	91	17.8
Johns or sexual encounters	70	2.4	16	3.1
Hitchhikers	31	1.1	1	0.2

## 6. SERIAL KILLER RACE

### Research Questions Addressed

- What is the racial composition of serial killers in the United States?
- Has the racial composition of serial killers changed over time?
- Are there race differences in killing motives and methods?
- Are there race differences in the frequency of unusual offender behaviors?
- Are there race differences in the types of victims killed?

---

### Data Notes and Interpretation Cautions

#### Data Notes

- The analyses in this section only cover the United States
- The race of the serial killer came from a variety of sources such as on-line prison records, ancestry.com (e.g., birth records, Census records, death records), and media/Internet reports.

#### Interpretation Cautions

The information on offender behaviors (Table 6.07) is still in a very preliminary stage.

### What is the Racial Composition of Serial Killers in the United States?

As shown in Tables 6.01 through 6.03,

- Across all time periods, approximately half of serial killers have been White, 41% Black, 7% Hispanic, 1% Asian, and 1% Native American.
- Since 1990, the majority of serial killers were Black (50.9%) followed by White (36.3%), Hispanic (10.6%), Asian (1.9%), and Native American (.4%).
- The percentages for White and Black serial killers change only slightly – about 2% - when serial killers who killed as part of an organization (i.e., gang, organized crime, or a cult) are removed from the analysis.
- In all decades, the percentage of Black serial killers exceeds the percentage of Black citizens in the United States population.

### Has the Racial Composition of Serial Killers Changed Over Time?

As shown in Tables 6.01 through 6.03,

- The percentage of Black serial killers in the United States has steadily increased across the decades from a low of 17% in the 1920s to over 57% in the 2010s.

**Table 6.01 Individual, Team, & Organizational**

Decade	Race				
	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Native American
1900	75.5	22.6	0.0	0.0	1.9
1910	67.8	32.2	0.0	0.0	0.0
1920	80.0	17.1	1.4	0.0	1.4
1930	71.6	28.4	0.0	0.0	0.0
1940	65.6	29.5	1.6	1.6	1.6
1950	67.4	29.3	2.2	0.0	1.1
1960	65.6	32.0	1.2	0.0	1.2
1970	60.7	33.6	4.2	0.4	1.0
1980	52.3	38.1	7.1	0.6	1.9
1990	41.4	46.7	9.0	2.5	0.4
2000	30.7	54.5	13.5	0.9	0.5
2010	30.7	57.2	10.2	1.4	0.5
2020	33.3	54.2	8.3	4.2	0.0
TOTAL	50.6	40.6	6.8	1.0	1.0

**Table 6.02 Individual or Team (does not include organizational)**

Decade	Race				
	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Native American
1900	76.9	21.2	0.0	0.0	1.9
1910	68.4	31.6	0.0	0.0	0.0
1920	79.1	17.9	1.5	0.0	1.5
1930	63.5	36.5	0.0	0.0	0.0
1940	64.4	30.5	1.7	1.7	1.7
1950	67.0	29.7	2.2	0.0	1.1
1960	65.3	32.6	0.8	0.0	1.3
1970	62.0	32.9	3.5	0.5	1.1
1980	54.0	37.0	6.5	0.7	1.8
1990	46.3	43.5	8.3	1.4	0.5
2000	36.4	54.2	7.6	1.1	0.6
2010	32.5	55.2	10.3	1.5	0.5
2020	33.3	57.1	4.8	4.8	0.0
TOTAL	53.3	39.3	5.6	0.8	1.1

**Table 6.03 United States Race/Ethnicity Composition by Decade**

Decade	Race						
	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Native American	Other	Two or More
1900	87.3	11.6	0.7	0.20	0.30		
1910	88.1	10.7	0.9	0.20	0.30		
1920	88.5	9.9	1.2	0.20	0.20		
1930	89.8	9.7		0.20	0.30		
1940	88.3	9.8	1.5	0.20	0.30		
1950	87.5	10.0	2.1	0.20	0.20		
1960	85.4	10.5	3.2	0.50	0.30		
1970	83.5	11.1	4.4	0.80	0.40		
1980	79.6	11.7	6.4	1.50	0.60		
1990	75.6	12.1	9.0	2.90	0.80		
2000	69.1	12.3	12.5	3.80	0.90		2.4
2010	63.7	12.2	16.3	4.69	0.73	0.35	1.9
2020	57.8	12.1	18.7	5.92	0.68	0.70	4.1

Source: U.S. Census

- The percentage of Hispanic serial killers has also increased in the past few decades but has remained at or below the Hispanic representation in the U.S. population.

### Are There Race/Ethnicity Differences in Killing Motives and Methods?

As shown in Tables 6.04 through 6.06,

- Enjoyment was more often a motive for White serial killers than Black serial killers whereas gang or criminal enterprise activity was more often a motive for Black serial killers than for White serial killers.
- Poison was used more often by White serial killers than Black serial killers whereas Black serial killers were more likely to shoot their victims than were White serial killers.

### Are There Race/Ethnicity Differences in the Frequency of Unusual Offender Behaviors?

As shown in Table 6.07,

- White serial killers were more likely than Black serial killers to torture victims, mutilate the body after death, and engage in overkill
- Although necrophilia, eating part of the body, and drinking the victim's blood are very rare behaviors, White serial killers were more likely to engage in these activities than were Black serial killers.

### Are There Race/Ethnicity Differences in the Types of Victims Killed?

As shown in Table 6.08,

- White serial killers were more likely to kill only White victims (81.9%) whereas only 43.4% of Black serial killers killed only Black victims.
- White serial killers were more likely to kill infants, children, and teens than were Black serial killers.
- Compared to Black victims, a higher percentage of White victims were family members or boyfriends/girlfriends and a lower percentage were killed during a home invasion.

## Race/Ethnicity Differences in Crime Characteristics

**Table 6.04 Primary Motive**

Primary Motive	White		Black	
	N	%	N	%
Financial Gain	833	32.3	436	29.8
Enjoyment - Rape	726	28.2	321	22.0
Anger	434	16.9	280	19.2
Multiple Motives	289	11.2	204	14.0
Enjoyment - No rape	249	9.7	77	5.3
Gang/Criminal Enterprise	44	1.7	143	9.8

**Table 6.05 Number of Kills**

Number of Kills	White		Black	
	N	%	N	%
Two	899	29.0	601	36.7
Three	706	22.8	423	25.8
Four	448	14.5	201	12.3
Five	279	9.0	120	7.3
Six or more	765	24.7	293	17.9

**Table 6.06 Killing Method**

Killing Method	White		Black	
	N	%	N	%
Shoot	628	26.1	690	49.7
Strangle	345	14.3	172	12.4
Stab	292	12.1	106	7.6
Poison	262	10.9	5	0.4
Bludgeon	191	7.9	62	4.5
Stab/Shoot	163	6.8	130	9.4
Bludgeon/Stab	128	5.3	36	2.6
Strangle/Stab	124	5.2	46	3.3
Bludgeon/Shoot	98	4.1	59	4.3
Strangle/Bludgeon	93	3.9	48	3.5
Strangle/Shoot	74	3.1	33	2.4
Bomb	9	0.4	0	0.0



**Table 6.07 Offender Behaviors**

Crime Behavior	White		Black		Chi Square	p level
	N	%	N	%		
Tortured Victims					44.42	0.0000
No	2,378	88.3	1387	94.6		
Yes	316	11.7	79	5.4		
Overkill					7.26	0.0070
No	2,078	81.8	1190	85.2		
Yes	462	18.2	207	14.8		
Body Mutilated					65.19	0.0000
No	2,475	88.9	1443	96.1		
Yes	309	11.1	58	3.9		
Necrophilia					14.25	0.0002
No	2,872	96.7	1542	98.6		
Yes	98	3.3	22	1.4		
Cannibalism					18.29	0.0000
No	2,920	97.9	1558	99.6		
Yes	62	2.1	7	0.4		
Drank Blood					3.06	0.0801
No	2,952	99.3	1560	99.7		
Yes	22	0.7	5	0.3		

Note: Due to small sample sizes only information on Whites and Blacks is included

**Table 6.08 U.S. Victim Characteristics**

Victim Characteristic	Serial Killer Race			
	White		Black	
	N	%	N	%
<b>Victim Race</b>				
Only White victims	1,472	<b>81.9</b>	235	17.8
Only Black victims	22	1.2	573	<b>43.4</b>
Victims of various races	304	16.9	511	38.7
<b>Age of Primary Victim</b>				
Infants	71	2.6	8	0.5
Children (2-12)	121	4.4	15	1.0
Children & Teens	39	1.4	9	0.6
Teens (13-17)	114	4.1	26	1.7
Adults	1,963	71.0	1,234	82.3
Elderly (70+)	111	4.0	50	3.3
Various age categories	345	12.5	157	10.5
<b>Victim Type</b>				
Street - General Public	781	37.8	348	39.9
Family or boyfriend/girlfriend	448	21.7	101	11.6
Home invasion	239	11.6	185	21.2
Street people (e.g., homeless, prostitute)	217	10.5	110	12.6
Employee or customer	163	7.9	107	12.3
Patients	133	6.4	4	0.5
Johns or sexual encounters	58	2.8	15	1.7
Hitchhikers	29	1.4	2	0.2

Note: Due to small sample sizes only information on Whites and Blacks is included

## 7. SERIAL KILLER AGE

### Research Questions Addressed

- What is the average age of a serial killer?
- Are there age differences across different serial killer characteristics?
- Do crime scene characteristics tell us anything about a serial killer's age?
- Does the type of victim tell us anything about a serial killer's age?

---

### Data Notes and Interpretation Cautions

#### Data Notes

For the age analyses, we used the killer's age at the time of the first kill in their series<sup>7</sup>. We were able to obtain age information on 5,252 serial killers. Of those, 3,579 were from the U.S. and 1,673 were from other countries.

#### What is the Average Age of a Serial Killer?

As shown in Table 7.01, the average age for a serial killer at the start of their series was 28.1 with a median of 26.0 and a standard deviation of 9.4. The youngest age at the start of a series was 6 and the oldest was 72. On average, serial killers were 33.6 years old at the end of their series.

#### Are There Age Differences across Different Serial killer Characteristics?

As shown in Tables 7.02 through 7.05,

- Female serial killers were almost 4 years older than male serial killers at the start of their series.
- Black serial killers (25.5) were the youngest at the start of their series followed by Hispanic (27.5), White (29.3), and then Asian serial killers (31.2).
- Serial killers whose motive was enjoyment and who committed rape were the oldest at the start of their series (28.9) whereas serial killers whose motive was related to gang or organized crime activity were the youngest (23.6).
- In general, the higher the number of kills, the older was the serial killer at the start of their series.

<sup>7</sup> Approximately 1.6% of serial killers committed a murder prior to what appeared to be the start of their series.

**Table 7.01 Descriptive Statistics for Overall Sample**

Number (N)	5,252
United States	3,579
International	1,673
Average Age	
Start of series	28.1
End of series	33.6
Median Age	
Start of series	26.0
End of series	32.0
Standard deviation	
Start of series	9.4
End of series	11.3
Youngest	
Start of series	6
End of series	8
Oldest	
Start of series	72
End of series	83

### Killer Characteristics

**Table 7.02 Sex of Killer**

	N	Average Age of Killer
Male	4,745	27.8
Female	507	31.6

**Table 7.03 Race of Killer**

	N	Average Age of Killer
Black	1,552	25.5
Hispanic	374	27.5
White	2,910	29.3
Asian	334	31.2

**Table 7.04 Primary Motive**

	N	Average Age of Killer
Gang/Criminal Enterprise	233	23.6
Multiple Motives	531	25.4
Anger	814	27.8
Enjoyment - No rape	368	27.8
Financial Gain	1,373	28.8
Enjoyment - Rape	1,183	28.9

**Table 7.05 Number of Kills**

	N	Average Age of Killer
Two	1,646	27.2
Three	1,228	27.8
Four	694	28.0
Five	434	29.4
More than five	1,237	29.3

## Do Crime Scene Characteristics Tell Us Anything about a Serial Killer's Age?

As shown in Tables 7.06 through 7.14, information from the crime scene does not tell us a lot about a serial killer's age as the observed differences are relatively small.

- Killers who shoot or stab their victims tend to be younger whereas those who use poison or bombs tend to be older.
- Serial killers who engage in unusual behavior such as torture, necrophilia, and mutilation tend to be about two years older than those who don't.
- There do not seem to be any practically significant age differences between serial killers with disorganized crime scenes and those with organized or mixed crime scenes.

## Does the Type of Victim Tell Us Anything about a Serial Killer's Age?

As shown in Tables 7.15 through 7.17,

- On average, serial killers who exclusively kill women victims are about three years older than those who exclusively kill men.
- On average, serial killers who only killed White victims are about four years older than those who only killed Black victims.
- Serial killers who killed elderly victims had the highest average age at the start of their series (31.2).
- Serial killers who killed family members or street people (e.g., homeless, prostitutes) had the highest average age at the start of their series.

**Crime Characteristics**

<b>Table 7.06 Killing Method</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Average Age of Killer</b>
Stab/Shoot	320	25.2
Bludgeon/Stab	185	26.2
Shoot	1,446	26.5
Strangle/Shoot	118	27.5
Bludgeon/Shoot	163	27.6
Stab	462	27.1
Strangle/Bludgeon	163	28.5
Strangle/Stab	193	28.0
Bludgeon	306	29.2
Strangle	609	29.6
Poison	263	34.8
Bomb	10	37.6

  

<b>Table 7.07 Raped Victims</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Average Age of Killer</b>
No	3,367	27.8
Yes	1,585	28.4

  

<b>Table 7.08 Tortured Victims</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Average Age of Killer</b>
No	4,110	27.7
Yes	438	28.4

  

<b>Table 7.09 Overkill</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Average Age of Killer</b>
No	3,566	28.1
Yes	728	26.7

  

<b>Table 7.10 Body Mutilated</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Average Age of Killer</b>
No	4,301	27.9
Yes	397	28.6

  

<b>Table 7.11 Necrophillia</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Average Age of Killer</b>
No	4,885	28.0
Yes	150	28.2

  

<b>Table 7.12 Ate Body</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Average Age of Killer</b>
No	4,963	28.0
Yes	81	29.6

  

<b>Table 7.13 Drank Blood</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Average Age of Killer</b>
No	5,009	28.0
Yes	32	29.1

  

<b>Table 7.14 Crime Scene Organization</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Average Age of Killer</b>
Disorganized	351	27.5
Organized	1,579	29.1
Mixed	49	28.8

## Victim Characteristics

<b>Table 7.15 Sex of Victim</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Average Age of Killer</b>
Men	1,427	26.8
Both men and womeen	2,036	27.9
Women	1,557	29.4

<b>Table 7.16 Race of Victim</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Average Age of Killer</b>
Always Black	640	25.3
Race varied	996	26.6
Always White	2,726	29.1

<b>Table 7.17 Age of Primary Victim Type</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Average Age of Killer</b>
Infants	77	26.1
Teens (13-17)	157	26.3
Various age categories	569	26.8
Children (2-12)	164	27.3
Adults	3,577	28.1
Children & Teens	53	28.8
Elderly (70+)	178	31.2

<b>Table 7.18 Victim Type</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Average Age of Killer</b>
Hitchhikers	32	28.3
Street - General Public	1,275	27.4
Home invasion	470	27.7
Johns or sexual encounters	79	27.5
Employee or customer	288	28.1
Family or boyfriend/girlfriend	559	31.1
Street people (e.g., homeless, prostitute)	373	31.5

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Source: Radford University/FGCU Serial Killer Database

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## 8. SERIAL KILLER IQ

### Research Questions Addressed

- What is the average IQ of a serial killer?
- Are there IQ differences across different serial killer characteristics?
- Do crime scene characteristics tell us anything about a serial killer's IQ?
- Does the type of victim tell us anything about a serial killer's IQ?

---

### Data Notes and Interpretation Cautions

#### Data Notes

We were able to obtain IQ scores for 323 serial killers. Of those 323, 87 had more than one IQ score. Some of these multiple scores were situations in which a serial killer was tested on two separate occasions, usually separated by years in time (e.g., school, military, prison) whereas others were situations in which psychologists for the defense and the prosecution conducted separate tests and generated independent reports at approximately the same time. The average difference between the two sources was 10 points, with the largest difference being 36 points. There were only two times when the multiple sources generated the same IQ score. Although we considered averaging the two scores<sup>8</sup>, we instead used our judgment to determine which of the scores was the most relevant. Factors that went into this consideration included when the testing was done (the score that was generated closest in time to the murders was often given priority), indications of malingering, and court opinions.

#### Interpretation Cautions

When interpreting the results presented at the end of this section, it is important to understand that the IQ scores in our analyses do not represent a random sample of serial killers. Instead, the IQ scores represent the scores that were made publically available. Typically, the IQ of a serial killer is reported in a media source or court document when the killer's IQ is unusually high or low. For example, it is illegal to execute someone who has an IQ lower than 70. Thus, a focus of many death penalty trials is whether the serial killer's IQ falls below that level. If IQ tests indicate a serial killer's IQ is well above that level, it is unlikely that the killer's IQ will be an important legal issue and thus the killer's IQ is not likely to be reported in a court document or media report.

<sup>8</sup> Whether we averaged the scores or used our judgement did not affect our analyses as the average IQ for serial killers was 93.7 if we averaged the scores compared to 92.3 if we used our judgment to select the most appropriate score.



## What is the Average IQ of a Serial Killer?

In the general population, IQ scores are designed to have a mean of 100 and a standard deviation of 15. Thus, IQ scores that fall between 85 and 115 are considered to be in the “normal” range. Compared to the general population, the average IQ for criminals is about 94.

We were able to obtain IQ scores for 323 serial killers<sup>9</sup>. As shown in Table 8.01, the average IQ for a serial killer is 92.7 with a median of 85 and a standard deviation of 24.4. There are two main take away points from these numbers. The first is that the “typical” IQ for a serial killer is in the normal (using the mean) to low normal (using the median) range. Thus, contrary to popular media portrayals, although there are some very intelligent serial killers, the typical serial killer does not have an unusually high IQ.

The second take away point is that the IQs in our dataset contain much more variability than typical distributions of IQ scores. That is, the standard deviation in our data of 24.3 is 1.6 times the standard deviation (15) found in the population in general. As previously mentioned in data interpretation cautions section, this large standard deviation is likely due to the reporting bias of very low or very high IQ scores.

## Are there IQ Differences across Different Serial Killer Characteristics?

As shown in Tables 8.02 through 8.06,

- Male and female serial killers have similar IQ scores.
- White serial killers have the highest average IQ (101.3) and Black serial killers the lowest average IQ (79.1).
- Past the age of 20, the older a serial killer is before beginning his/her killing series, the higher their IQ.
- Serial killers whose motive is enjoyment but who do not commit rape have the highest average IQ (105.7) whereas serial killers whose motive is financial gain (87.2) have the lowest IQ<sup>10</sup>.
- In general, the higher the number of kills, the higher the serial killer IQ.

## Do Crime Scene Characteristics Tell Us Anything about a Serial Killer’s IQ?

As shown in Tables 8.07 through 8.15, information from the crime scene may help estimate a serial killer’s IQ.

- Killers who bludgeon their victims tend to have lower IQ scores whereas those who strangle their victims tend to have higher IQ scores.

<sup>9</sup> These 323 include 298 from the United States and 25 from other countries

<sup>10</sup> Although the lowest IQ in Table 8.05 is for people killing as part of a gang or criminal enterprise, the low sample size (3) makes interpreting this average very unreliable.

## Overall Statistics

**Table 8.01 Descriptive Statistics for Overall Sample**

Number (N)	323
United States	298
International	25
Average IQ	92.7
Median IQ	85.0
Standard deviation	24.4
Lowest IQ	50
Highest IQ	186

## Killer Characteristics

**Table 8.02 Sex of Killer**

	N	Average IQ of Killer
Male	311	92.8
Female	12	88.3

**Table 8.03 Race of Killer**

	N	Average IQ of Killer
Black	112	79.1
Hispanic	14	85.1
Native American	3	86.3
Asian	4	95.5
White	190	101.3

**Table 8.04 Age at First Kill**

	N	Average IQ of Killer
Under 20	56	89.9
20-24	104	87.3
25-29	90	95.0
30-39	70	96.9
40+	28	102.2

**Table 8.05 Primary Motive**

	N	Average IQ of Killer
Gang/Criminal Enterprise	4	71.3
Financial Gain	73	87.2
Anger	56	91.9
Enjoyment - Rape	111	92.5
Multiple Motives	28	94.5
Enjoyment - No rape	35	105.7

**Table 8.06 Number of Kills**

	N	Average IQ of Killer
Two	93	87.5
Three	72	93.0
Four	33	88.8
Five	24	89.9
More than five	101	99.1

<b>Table 8.07 Killing Method</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Average IQ of Killer</b>
Bludgeon	15	84.2
Bludgeon/Stab	12	85.4
Bludgeon/Shoot	13	86.6
Shoot	76	89.3
Stab/Strangle	18	91.5
Stab/Shoot	33	93.2
Stab	28	93.4
Strangle	46	94.4
Strangle/Bludgeon	10	99.6
Poison	1	100.0
Strangle/Shoot	8	105.6
Bomb	3	130.7

<b>Table 8.08 Raped Victims</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Average IQ of Killer</b>
No	168	92.9
Yes	153	91.7

<b>Table 8.09 Tortured Victims</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Average IQ of Killer</b>
No	267	90.8
Yes	53	101.9

<b>Table 8.10 Overkill</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Average IQ of Killer</b>
No	239	92.6
Yes	81	92.5

<b>Table 8.11 Body Mutilated</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Average IQ of Killer</b>
No	263	90.4
Yes	59	101.9

<b>Table 8.12 Necrophillia</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Average IQ of Killer</b>
No	293	92.4
Yes	30	95.5

<b>Table 8.13 Ate Body</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Average IQ of Killer</b>
No	313	92.7
Yes	10	91.7

<b>Table 8.14 Drank Blood</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Average IQ of Killer</b>
No	319	92.4
Yes	4	114.8

<b>Table 8.15 Crime Scene Organization</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Average IQ of Killer</b>
Disorganized	79	89.4
Organized	141	98.7
Mixed	14	100.9

- Serial killers who torture their victims and/or mutilate the victims' bodies tend to have higher IQ scores than those who do not.
- Serial killers with disorganized crime scenes tend to have lower IQ scores than do those with organized or mixed crime scenes.
- Although there appear to be some interesting IQ differences between serial killers who commit necrophilia, drink a victim's blood, or eat a victim's flesh, small sample sizes make interpreting these differences unreliable.

## Does the Type of Victim Tell Us Anything about a Serial Killer's IQ?

As shown in Tables 8.16 through 8.19,

- The sex of the victims does not provide any insight into a serial killer's IQ.
- Serial killers who only killed White victims tend to have higher average IQ scores than those who only killed Black victims or those who did not limit their victims to one race.
- Serial killers who killed infants, children, or the elderly tend to have lower IQ scores than those who killed teens, adults, or victims from multiple age categories.
- Serial killers who killed their victims in a home invasion had the lowest average IQ.

## Victim Characteristics

<b>Table 8.16 Sex of Victim</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Average IQ of Killer</b>
Male	67	92.0
Female	121	93.2
Both male and female	134	92.7

<b>Table 8.17 Race of Victim</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Average IQ of Killer</b>
Always Black	41	81.4
Race varied	108	90.4
Always White	160	99.0

<b>Table 8.18 Age of Primary Victim Type</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Average IQ of Killer</b>
Infants	3	75.7
Children (2-12)	13	86.4
Children & Teens	8	87.1
Teens (13-17)	15	99.1
Adults	223	92.9
Elderly (70+)	8	76.0
Various age categories	53	95.9

<b>Table 8.19 Victim Type</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Average IQ of Killer</b>
Home invasion	52	87.5
Family or boyfriend/girlfriend	20	85.5
Street people (e.g., homeless, prostitute)	36	92.7
Employee or customer	20	96.1
Street - General Public	121	95.8
Johns or sexual encounters	8	109.1
Hitchhikers	6	114.3

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Source: Radford University/FGCU Serial Killer Database

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## 9. SERIAL KILLER CHILDHOOD

### Research Questions Addressed

- What percentage of serial killers were abused as children?
  - Compared to the general population, were serial killer more likely to be raised by adoptive or foster parents?
  - Is the birth order of serial killers different from the population in general?
  - What is the typical education level for a serial killer?
- 

### Data Notes and Interpretation Cautions

#### Data Notes

*Childhood Abuse:* Although there were times when sources such as self-reports, statements from the family, and psychiatric reports were consistent, it was more common that a serial killer would report abuse, the family would deny that abuse occurred, and the forensic psychologists/psychiatrists disagreed with one another. In such cases our coding reflected what we believed to be supported by the preponderance of evidence.

*Child Rearing:* It was not uncommon for a serial killer to have been raised by more than one source during their childhood. For example, a person might have been raised for five years by their mother, then for two years by a grandparent, and then the rest of childhood by a foster parent. For our analyses, we selected what we thought was the primary source who raised the child. In future years, we plan to go back and code whether the serial killer had ever been raised in *each* type of environment as well as the primary source.

#### Interpretation Cautions

When interpreting the results presented at the end of this section, it should be kept in mind that the information about child abuse in our analyses do not represent a random sample of serial killers. Instead, the information reported represents the information made publically available. It is possible that media reports and court records were more likely to mention unusual situations such as child abuse or adoptions rather than situations in which there was no childhood abuse or the killer was raised by both birth parents. As a result, it is possible that the numbers we report over represent childhood problems.

## What Percentage of Serial Killers Were Abused as Children?

As shown in Table 9.01,

- 73.2% of serial killers were reported to have been abused as a child.
- The most common type of abuse was physical (48.9%) followed by psychological (48.7%) followed by sexual (26.4%).
- The prevalence of this abuse seems to be fairly steady across decades with a possible increase since 1980.

## Compared to the General Population, Were Serial Killers More Likely to be Raised by Adoptive or Foster Parents?

As shown in Table 9.02,

- Approximately 88% of serial killers were raised by one or both birth parents.
- The percentage of serial killers raised by one or both birth parents (88%) seems to be similar to the U.S. population in general (87%).
- Although the percentages are low, serial killers were more likely to be raised by an adoptive or foster parent and less likely to be raised by a relative than the U.S. population in general.

## Is the Birth Order of Serial Killers Different From the Population in General?

As shown in Table 9.03,

- Serial killers were more likely to be middle-born children and much less likely to be only children than the U.S. population in general.

## What is the Education Level of the Typical Serial Killer?

As shown in Table 9.04.

- Almost 60% of serial killers did not graduate from high school.
- Approximately 27% have a high school diploma, 1% have a two-year degree, 5% have a bachelor's degree, 1% have a master degree, and 3% have a doctorate (PhD, MD, DDS, JD).

**Table 9.01 Percentage of Serial Killers Abused as Children**

Type of Abuse	N	%
No Abuse Reported	232	26.76
Any Abuse Reported	635	73.24
Psychological Abuse	422	48.67
Physical Abuse	424	48.90
Sexual Abuse	229	26.41
Date of Birth	N	% Abused
1900 - 1919	15	66.67
1920 - 1939	71	74.65
1940 - 1959	354	71.19
1960 - 1979	345	76.52
1980 - 2010	38	78.95

Source: Radford University/FGCU Serial Killer Database

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**Table 9.02 Who Raised the Killer as a Child?**

	Serial Killers		
	U. S. and International	U.S. Only	U.S. Population*
Birth Parent	88.17	88.06	87.4
Adopted	3.58	4.26	2.2
Relative	4.23	4.54	8.3
Foster Home	1.99	1.89	0.4
Orphanage	1.84	1.05	?
Abandoned	0.20	0.21	?
Other			1.7
N	2,011	1,432	2000 Census

\* O'Hare (2008, Table 2)

Source: Radford University/FGCU Serial Killer Database

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**Table 9.03 Birth Order**

	Serial Killers		U.S. Presidents	U.S. Population
	N	%		
First Born	256	28.10	33.30	28.36
Middle Born	320	35.13	50.00	15.90
Youngest	234	25.69	14.30	28.36
Only Child	101	11.09	2.40	27.39
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>911</b>			<b>2000 Census</b>

Source: Radford University/FGCU Serial Killer Database

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Note: Census data were computed by using family size to determine the number of first born, middle born, last born, and only children. For example, a family with two children would have one oldest born and one youngest born whereas a family with three children would have an oldest, a youngest, and one middle born. This method may slightly underestimate the percentage of middle-born children.

**Table 9.04 Education Level at Time of First Homicide**

Highest Degree Prior to Series	Serial Killer Education			U.S. Population (2020)	
	N	%	Cumulative %	%	Cumulative %
No degree	823	58.9	58.9	9.1	9.9
GED	45	3.2	62.1		
High school diploma	376	26.9	89.0	42.9	51.9
Nursing degree (RN, LPN)	13	0.9	89.9		
Associates's degree	17	1.2	91.1	10.6	62.5
Bachelor's degree	76	5.4	96.6	23.4	85.9
Master's degree	7	1.4	98.0	12.0	97.9
Doctorate	41	3.5	101.4	2.1	100.0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1398</b>				

**Table 9.05 Lifestyle at Time of First Homicide**

	U.S.		International		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>Marital Status</b>						
Married	2,410		984		3,394	
No	1,633	67.8	538	54.7	2,171	64.0
Yes	777	32.2	446	45.3	1,223	36.0
Detail	2,030		885		2,915	
Single	1,057	52.1	379	42.8	1,436	49.3
Married	720	35.5	426	48.1	1,146	39.3
Separated	23	1.1	7	0.8	30	1.0
Divorced	216	10.6	66	7.5	282	9.7
Widowed	14	0.7	7	0.8	21	0.7
<b>Substance Abuse</b>						
Alcohol	620		190		810	
No	128	20.6	52	27.4	180	22.2
Yes	492	79.4	138	72.6	630	77.8
Drugs	836		169		1,005	
No	174	20.8	67	39.6	241	24.0
Yes	662	79.2	102	60.4	764	76.0
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>						
LGBT	139	5.3	112	8.8	251	6.4
Heterosexual	2,499	94.7	1,163	91.2	3,662	93.6

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**Table 9.06 Criminal and Forensic History Prior to Series**

	U.S.		International		Total		Chi	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	Square	p value
<b>Criminal History</b>								
Arrested							10.19	0.001
No	240	12.6	116	17.5	356	13.8		
Yes	1672	87.4	546	82.5	2218	86.2		
Spent Time in Jail/Prison							9.14	0.003
No	376	19.6	167	25.1	543	21.0		
Yes	1545	80.4	498	74.9	2043	79.0		
<b>Mental Health History</b>								
Spent Time in Psychiatric Facility							3.42	0.064
No	1653	88.8	335	85.5	1988	88.2		
Yes	209	11.2	57	14.5	266	11.8		
Psychiatric Diagnosis								
No	584	59.4	104	46.4	688	57.0		
Yes	399	40.6	120	53.6	519	43.0		

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## 10. MILITARY SERVICE

### Research Questions Addressed

- What percentage of serial killers served in the military?
- Are there any branches of service overrepresented by serial killers?

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### Data Notes and Interpretation Cautions

#### Data Notes

- None

#### Interpretation Cautions

- The percentage of people serving in the military can vary greatly by year and has been highest in war years.
- As can be seen in Table 10.02, the distribution of active military across the four main service branches in the United States has changed over time. Thus, caution should be taken when comparing the overall service branch percentages for serial killers with the military active duty percentages.

### What Percentage of Serial Killers Served in the Military?

As shown in Tables 10.01 through 10.02,

- Approximately 17% of U.S. serial killers served in the military. This is higher than the 7.3% found in the general population for the United States.
- In the United States, 19.6% of male serial killers served in the military compared to 13.4% of males in the general population.
- 45 serial killers were in the military during the time they committed at least one of their murders.

### Are There Any Branches of Service Overrepresented by Serial Killers?

As shown in Tables 10.1 through 10.2,

- The percentage of U.S. male serial killers with military service that served in the Air Force (7.9%) is substantially lower than the percentage in the general military population (27%).
- The percentages of U.S. male serial killers with military service that served in the Army (52.4%) or Marine Corps (17.7%) is higher than the percentages found in the general military population, 38.4% and 9.6% respectively.

**Table 10.01 Percentage of Serial Killers with Military Service**

	United States			U.S. & International		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Overall N	1,924	270	2,194	2,623	1,056	3,679
No Military	80.4%	99.6%	82.8%	79.3%	99.2%	82.5%
Military	19.6%	0.4%	17.2%	20.7%	0.8%	17.5%
Army	52.4%			61.0%		
Navy	21.7%			17.9%		
Air Force	7.9%			8.0%		
Marine Corps	17.7%			12.9%		
Coast Guard	0.3%			0.2%		

Source: Radford University/FGCU Serial Killer Database  
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**Table 10.02 Percentage of Enlisted Active Duty Personnel by Branch**

Year	Army	Navy	Marines	Air Force	Coast Guard
1940	40.6	26.1	5.1	28.2	
1950	35.3	25.0	6.9	32.9	
1960	43.1	22.6	8.5	25.8	
1970	37.9	25.7	9.2	27.2	
1980	35.8	28.4	9.6	26.2	
1990	34.8	27.0	12.5	25.7	
2000	39.6	22.9	14.1	23.4	
2010	38.5	22.2	13.9	22.6	2.8
2020	35.0	24.9	13.2	24.0	3.0
Average	38.2	24.9	9.8	26.6	0.5



# Section E

## Victim Characteristics

# 11. VICTIM CHARACTERISTICS

## U.S. & CANADA

### Research Questions Addressed

- What percentage of serial killer victims are women?
- What is the racial distribution of serial killer victims?
- What is the age of the typical serial killer victim?
- What is the most common way in which a victim was killed?
- What were the most common types of victims?
- Do some states have a disproportionate number of serial killer victims?

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### Data Notes and Interpretation Cautions

#### Data Notes

The results in this section only include serial killer victims in the United States and Canada

#### Interpretation Cautions

None

### What Percentage of Serial Killer Victims Are Women?

As shown in Table 11.01,

- 50.5% of serial killer victims in the U.S. are women compared to 64.8% in Canada.

### What is the Racial Distribution of Serial Killer Victims?

As shown in Table 11.01,

- In the United States, the percentage of Black serial killer victims (26.9%) is higher than what would be expected based on the general population (roughly 12.1%).
- In Canada, the percentage of Aboriginal serial killer victims (17.3%) is higher than what would be expected based on the general population (roughly 4%).

### What is the Age of the Typical Serial Killer Victim?

As shown in Table 11.02,

- The mean age is 34.15 with a median of 30.
- Approximately 6% are under the age of 10 and 7% are over the age of 70.

## Characteristics of U.S. and Canadian Serial Killer Victims

**Table 11.01 Sex and Race of Victims in the U.S. and Canada**

	U.S.		Canada	
	N	%	N	%
<b>Sex</b>				
Female	6,511	50.5	282	64.8
Male	6,390	49.5	153	35.2
<b>Race</b>				
White	8,132	65.7	307	74.7
Black	3,161	26.9	21	5.0
Hispanic	809	6.9	1	0.2
Asian	196	1.7	11	2.7
Native American/Aboriginal	79	0.7	71	17.3
<b>Sex &amp; Race</b>				
White Female	4,351	35.3	194	47.2
White Male	3,750	30.4	113	27.5
Black Male	1,611	13.1	14	3.4
Black Female	1,543	12.5	7	1.7
Hispanic Male	515	4.2	1	0.2
Hispanic Female	294	2.4	0	0.0
Asian Male	109	0.9	6	1.5
Asian Female	87	0.7	5	1.2
NatAm/Aboriginal Female	38	0.3	65	15.8
NatAm/Aboriginal Male	39	0.3	6	1.5

Source: Radford University/FGCU Serial Killer Database  
March 2, 2023

**Table 11.02 Age of United States Victims**

<b>Average Age</b>	
Mean	34.15
Median	30.00
Mode	22.00

Actual Age	N	%	Cumulative %
<1	160	1.21%	1.21%
1	71	0.54%	1.74%
2	56	0.42%	2.17%
3	62	0.47%	2.64%
4	56	0.42%	3.06%
5	55	0.42%	3.47%
6	57	0.43%	3.90%
7	64	0.48%	4.39%
8	67	0.51%	4.89%
9	96	0.73%	5.62%
10	74	0.56%	6.18%
11	85	0.64%	6.82%
12	111	0.84%	7.66%
13	127	0.96%	8.62%
14	160	1.21%	9.83%
15	229	1.73%	11.56%
16	258	1.95%	13.50%
17	313	2.36%	15.87%
18	395	2.98%	18.85%
19	426	3.22%	22.07%
20	390	2.95%	25.01%
21	430	3.25%	28.26%
22	431	3.26%	31.52%
23	365	2.76%	34.27%
24	361	2.73%	37.00%
25	354	2.67%	39.67%
26	352	2.66%	42.33%
27	331	2.50%	44.83%
28	273	2.06%	46.89%
29	312	2.36%	49.25%
30	328	2.48%	51.73%
31	246	1.86%	53.58%
32	237	1.79%	55.37%
33	220	1.66%	57.03%
34	242	1.83%	58.86%
35	251	1.90%	60.76%
36	253	1.91%	62.67%
37	196	1.48%	64.15%
38	212	1.60%	65.75%
39	194	1.47%	67.22%
40	202	1.53%	68.74%
41	156	1.18%	69.92%

Actual Age	N	%	Cumulative %
42	167	1.26%	71.18%
43	168	1.27%	72.45%
44	143	1.08%	73.53%
45	157	1.19%	74.71%
46	157	1.19%	75.90%
47	136	1.03%	76.93%
48	128	0.97%	77.89%
49	102	0.77%	78.66%
50	129	0.97%	79.64%
51	107	0.81%	80.45%
52	131	0.99%	81.44%
53	107	0.81%	82.24%
54	101	0.76%	83.01%
55	93	0.70%	83.71%
56	90	0.68%	84.39%
57	93	0.70%	85.09%
58	94	0.71%	85.80%
59	94	0.71%	86.51%
60	108	0.82%	87.33%
61	69	0.52%	87.85%
62	86	0.65%	88.50%
63	78	0.59%	89.09%
64	67	0.51%	89.59%
65	92	0.69%	90.29%
66	47	0.35%	90.64%
67	76	0.57%	91.22%
68	70	0.53%	91.75%
69	69	0.52%	92.27%
70	48	0.36%	92.63%
71	44	0.33%	92.96%
72	74	0.56%	93.52%
73	56	0.42%	93.94%
74	57	0.43%	94.37%
75	64	0.48%	94.86%
76	49	0.37%	95.23%
77	42	0.32%	95.54%
78	54	0.41%	95.95%
79	58	0.44%	96.39%
80	51	0.39%	96.78%
81	65	0.49%	97.27%
82	55	0.42%	97.68%
83	46	0.35%	98.03%
84	37	0.28%	98.31%
85	43	0.32%	98.63%
86	34	0.26%	98.89%
87	33	0.25%	99.14%
88	23	0.17%	99.31%
89	23	0.17%	99.49%
90	26	0.20%	99.68%
91	11	0.08%	99.77%

Actual Age	N	%	Cumulative %
92	8	0.06%	99.83%
93	4	0.03%	99.86%
94	5	0.04%	99.89%
95	5	0.04%	99.93%
96	2	0.02%	99.95%
97	3	0.02%	99.97%
98	1	0.01%	99.98%
99	2	0.02%	99.99%
100	1	0.01%	100.00%
 TOTAL	 13,241		

## What is the Most Common Way in Which a Victim Was Killed?

As shown in Table 11.03,

- In the United States, the three most common killing methods were gunshot (44%), strangulation (21%), and stabbing (15%).
- In Canada, the three most common killing methods were strangulation (27%), gunshot (25%), and stabbing (21%).

## What Were the Most Common Types of Victims?

As shown in Table 11.04,

- In the United States, the three most common victim types were home invasion (16%), family member (11%) and employee or customer (9%).
- In Canada, the three most common victim types were sex workers (21%), home invasion (13%), and family member (8%).

## Do Some States Have a Disproportionate Number of Serial Killer Victims?

As shown in Table 11.05, the answer is, “yes.”

- Because larger states will have more serial killer victims as a function of population size, it is necessary to control for the number of people in a state. The ratio column in Table 11.05 represents the percentage of serial killer victims divided by the state’s percentage of the U.S. population<sup>11</sup>. Ratios above 100% indicate higher than expected serial killer victim rates and ratios below 100% indicate lower than expected rates.
- The states with the five highest ratios are the District of Columbia (421%), Alaska (302%), Nevada (214%), Florida (184%), and Washington (168%). The high ratio for the District of Columbia is primarily due to gang activity.
- The states with the five lowest ratios are South Dakota (21%), Iowa (29%), North Dakota (30%), Minnesota (34%) and New Hampshire (36%).

<sup>11</sup> The state population figures are an average of the state’s population for each Census year from 1900-2010.

**Table 11.03 Method by Which Victim Was Killed**

Method of Death	U.S.		Canada	
	N	Percent	N	Percent
Shot	5,117	43.8	83	25.2
Strangled	2,427	20.8	90	27.4
Stabbed	1,757	15.0	70	21.3
Bludgeoned	1,158	9.9	54	16.4
Poisoned	748	6.4	20	6.1
Axed	150	1.3	0	0.0
Drowned	112	1.0	4	1.2
Smothered	88	0.8	5	1.5
Burned	68	0.6	3	0.9
Run over	25	0.2	0	0.0
Drug overdose	18	0.2	0	0.0
Neglect & Abuse	10	0.1	0	0.0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11,678</b>		<b>329</b>	

Source: Radford University/FGCU Serial Killer Database  
 March 2, 2023



**Table 11.04 Victim Type**

Victim Type	U.S.		Canada	
	N	Percent	N	Percent
Home or home invasion	1,813	15.7	49	12.6
Family	1,255	10.8	29	7.5
Employee or customer	1,078	9.3	15	3.9
Friend or acquaintance	1,029	8.9	27	6.9
Prostitute	987	8.5	83	21.3
Drug or gang related	612	5.3	21	5.4
Girlfriend/boyfriend related	590	5.1	23	5.9
Street - Walking/Riding a bicycle	573	4.9	31	8.0
Hitchhiking related	418	3.6	29	7.5
Met at a bar or similar	318	2.7	10	2.6
Street	302	2.6	4	1.0
Patient	296	2.6	8	2.1
Prison guard or inmate	246	2.1	4	1.0
Street - Homeless	205	1.8	11	2.8
Law enforcement	179	1.5	4	1.0
Rural	172	1.5	3	0.8
Street - Parking lot	164	1.4	1	0.3
Street - Driving	140	1.2	2	0.5
Informant or witness related	136	1.2	2	0.5
Street - Parked	109	0.9	1	0.3
Street - Drug addict	94	0.8	0	0.0
Park	81	0.7	8	2.1
Employee or employer of serial killer	81	0.7	0	0.0
Boarder/Tenant/Landlord	81	0.7	2	0.5
Street - Drive by or bystander	66	0.6	0	0.0
Contract killing	62	0.5	2	0.5
Disabled motorist or good samaritan	60	0.5	0	0.0
Taxi driver	53	0.5	3	0.8
Roommate	43	0.4	0	0.0
School/Church/College	40	0.3	4	1.0
John	36	0.3	1	0.3
Street - Shopping center	34	0.3	4	1.0
Street - Public transportation	32	0.3	2	0.5
Advertisement/Social networking	27	0.2	2	0.5
Street - Sitting or standing	26	0.2	0	0.0
Migrant worker	25	0.2	0	0.0
Street - Truck stop or rest area	19	0.2	2	0.5

**Table 11.04 Victim Type**

Victim Type	U.S.		Canada	
	N	Percent	N	Percent
Ward	18	0.2	0	0.0
Street - Public event	18	0.2	0	0.0
Street - Runaway	18	0.2	1	0.3
Child being babysat/daycare	15	0.1	0	0.0
Street - Newspaper or food delivery	12	0.1	1	0.3
Asked to pose as a model	11	0.1	0	0.0
Priest/Minister/Rabbi	5	0.0	0	0.0
Street - Playing	3	0.0	0	0.0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11,582</b>		<b>389</b>	

**Table 11.05 Victims by State**

<b>State</b>	<b># Serial Killer Victims</b>	<b>State % U. S. Population 1900-2020</b>	<b>% of Serial Killer Victims</b>	<b>Ratio</b>
District of Columbia	171	0.31	1.31	420.8
Alaska	64	0.16	0.49	301.6
Nevada	127	0.45	0.97	214.9
Florida	970	4.03	7.43	184.2
Washington	396	1.80	3.03	168.6
Louisiana	344	1.67	2.63	158.0
California	1,816	9.37	13.90	148.4
Wyoming	32	0.18	0.24	136.2
Oregon	184	1.07	1.41	131.9
Kansas	183	1.15	1.40	121.9
Texas	1,011	6.45	7.74	120.0
Missouri	368	2.36	2.82	119.5
Arizona	190	1.25	1.45	116.8
Georgia	407	2.69	3.12	115.7
Oklahoma	204	1.37	1.56	114.0
Indiana	352	2.40	2.69	112.4
New Mexico	83	0.54	0.64	117.6
South Carolina	205	1.45	1.57	108.1
Illinois	693	5.01	5.31	105.9
Montana	49	0.36	0.38	105.1
Arkansas	143	1.11	1.09	98.5
Colorado	167	1.26	1.28	101.4
Utah	85	0.66	0.65	98.8
Kentucky	212	1.70	1.62	95.6
Maryland	221	1.74	1.69	97.0
Michigan	430	3.68	3.29	89.4
Alabama	205	1.78	1.57	88.4
Virginia	280	2.38	2.14	90.2
Ohio	517	4.59	3.96	86.3
Idaho	46	0.43	0.35	82.8
North Carolina	302	2.75	2.31	83.9
Nebraska	85	0.78	0.65	83.8
Connecticut	134	1.27	1.03	80.7
Tennessee	211	2.08	1.62	77.5
New York	706	7.98	5.40	67.8
Pennsylvania	468	5.59	3.58	64.1
Mississippi	100	1.21	0.77	63.2
New Jersey	240	3.05	1.84	60.2
Massachusetts	200	2.67	1.53	57.3
Delaware	19	0.26	0.15	56.4
Maine	35	0.53	0.27	50.5
Rhode Island	26	0.43	0.20	45.8
Wisconsin	120	2.09	0.92	43.9

**Table 11.05 Victims by State**

<b>State</b>	<b># Serial Killer Victims</b>	<b>State % U. S. Population 1900-2020</b>	<b>% of Serial Killer Victims</b>	<b>Ratio</b>
West Virginia	50	0.90	0.38	42.6
Vermont	13	0.24	0.10	41.3
Hawaii	20	0.38	0.15	40.2
New Hampshire	19	0.41	0.15	35.5
Minnesota	82	1.88	0.63	33.5
North Dakota	13	0.33	0.10	30.2
Iowa	54	1.42	0.41	29.1
South Dakota	10	0.36	0.08	21.4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>13,062</b>			

Source: Radford University/FGCU Serial Killer Database  
 March 2, 2023

# Section F

## Characteristics of the Crimes

## 12. Primary Motivations for Killing

### Research Questions Addressed

- What are the primary motivations for serial murder?
- Are the primary motives the same in the U.S. and in other countries?

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### Data Notes and Interpretation Cautions

#### Data Notes

A serial killer listed as “multiple motives” did not kill each victim for the same reason.

#### Interpretation Cautions

It is important to understand that determining what actually motivated a serial killer is difficult. Because of this difficulty, it might be best to interpret the results in this section as “categories” of serial murder rather than actual “motivations.” This is a report section that will undergo extensive revision in the coming years.

### What Are the Primary Motivations for Serial Murder?

As shown in Table 12.01,

- The most common motivation seems to be the enjoyment of killing (35.6%) followed by financial gain, (29.7%), and then anger (16.5%).
- Psychosis as a primary motive is rare (.5%).
- Approximately 10.6% of serial killers did not have the same motive for killing each victim.

### Are the Primary Motives the Same in the U.S. and in Other Countries?

As shown in Table 12.01,

- The primary difference between the United States and other countries is that enjoyment is a more common motive in other countries (46.4%) than in the United States (30.1%).

Table 12.01 Primary Motivation for Killing

Primary Motive	Frequency			Percent		
	US	International	Total	US	International	Total
<b>Financial Gain</b>	1020	520	1,540	<b>29.7</b>	<b>29.9</b>	<b>29.7</b>
Robbery	862	388	1,250	25.1	22.3	24.1
Home Invasion	157	71	228	4.6	4.1	4.4
Retail	179	12	191	5.2	0.7	3.7
Street	117	46	163	3.4	2.6	3.1
Other	23	4	27	0.7	0.2	0.5
Baby Farmer	0	25	25	0.0	1.4	0.5
Black Widow	89	47	136	2.6	2.7	2.6
Lethal Caretaker	6	9	15	0.2	0.5	0.3
Cost Cutter	7	5	12	0.2	0.3	0.2
Contract Killer	25	11	36	0.7	0.6	0.7
Family (not Black Widow)	16	16	32	0.5	0.9	0.6
Insurance & other scams	12	10	22	0.3	0.6	0.4
<b>Attention</b>	14	5	19	<b>0.4</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>0.4</b>
Munchausen by proxy	14	4	18	0.4	0.2	0.3
<b>Enjoyment</b>	1035	808	1,843	<b>30.1</b>	<b>46.4</b>	<b>35.6</b>
Enjoyment - Rape	716	509	1,225	20.8	29.2	23.6
Enjoyment - No Rape	225	158	383	6.5	9.1	7.4
Power	64	65	129	1.9	3.7	2.5
Angel of Death	34	54	88	1.0	3.1	1.7
Bluebeard	13	6	19	0.4	0.3	0.4
Sniper	7	0	7	0.2	0.0	0.1
<b>Anger</b>	639	216	855	<b>18.6</b>	<b>12.4</b>	<b>16.5</b>
General Anger	462	119	581	13.4	6.8	11.2
Missionary	21	35	56	0.6	2.0	1.1
Revenge	72	38	110	2.1	2.2	2.1
Racial	40	11	51	1.2	0.6	1.0
Lost control	36	4	40	1.0	0.2	0.8
Infanticide	4	3	7	0.1	0.2	0.1
Vigilante	3	1	4	0.1	0.1	0.1
<b>Psychosis</b>	21	6	27	<b>0.6</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>0.5</b>
Visionary	9	3	12	0.3	0.2	0.2
Paranoia	4	0	4	0.1	0.0	0.1
<b>Organizational</b>	254	41	295	<b>7.4</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>5.7</b>
Cult	21	18	39	0.6	1.0	0.8
Gang or criminal enterprise	233	23	256	6.8	1.3	4.9
<b>Convenience</b>	20	36	56	<b>0.6</b>	<b>2.1</b>	<b>1.1</b>
Didn't want babies	12	17	29	0.3	1.0	0.6
Didn't want spouse	3	13	16	0.1	0.7	0.3
<b>Multiple Motivations</b>	437	110	547	<b>12.7</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>10.6</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	3440	1742	5,182	100.0	100.0	100.0

## 13. Methods Used to Kill Victims

### Research Questions Addressed

- Do serial killers always use the same method to kill their victims?
  - What are the most common methods used to kill victims?
  - Are the killing methods the same in the U.S. and in other countries?
- 

### Data Notes and Interpretation Cautions

#### Data Notes

Multiple killing methods indicates that the serial killer did not use the same method to kill each victim. It does not mean that multiple methods were used to kill the same victim.

#### Interpretation Cautions

None.

### Do Serial Killers Always Use the Same Method to Kill Their Victims?

As shown in Table 13.01, the answer is, “no.” Approximately 34% of serial killers used more than one method to kill their victims.

### What Are the Most Common Methods Used To Kill Victims?

As shown in Table 13.01, the most common killing method was shooting (29.4%) followed by strangling (12.4%), followed by stabbing (9.4%).

### Are the Killing Methods the Same in the U.S. and in Other Countries?

As shown in Table 13.01, the answer is, “no.”

- Use of firearms was much more common in the United States (36.7%) than in other countries (13.1%).
- Serial killers in the United States (36.8%) were more likely to have used multiple killing methods than were serial killers in other countries (26.8%).



Table 13.01 Methods Used to Kill Victims

Method	U.S.		International		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>Used Only One Method to Kill</b>	<b>2,235</b>	<b>63.21</b>	<b>1,128</b>	<b>73.25</b>	<b>3,363</b>	<b>66.10</b>
Shoot	1,296	36.65	202	13.12	1,498	29.44
Strangle	342	9.67	287	18.64	629	12.36
Stab	243	6.87	233	15.13	476	9.36
Poison	135	3.82	181	11.75	316	6.21
Bludgeon	149	4.21	162	10.52	311	6.11
Smother	36	1.02	29	1.88	65	1.28
Axe	11	0.31	9	0.58	20	0.39
Drown	6	0.17	11	0.71	17	0.33
Bomb	5	0.14	5	0.32	10	0.20
Fire	3	0.08	3	0.19	6	0.12
Suffocate	1	0.03	4	0.26	5	0.10
Shake	3	0.08	0	0.00	3	0.06
Run over	2	0.06	0	0.00	2	0.04
Alcohol poisoning	1	0.03	1	0.06	2	0.04
Drug overdose	1	0.03	0	0.00	1	0.02
Withdraw treatment	1	0.03	0	0.00	1	0.02
Hang	0	0.00	1	0.06	1	0.02
Starve/Neglect	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
<b>Used Multiple Methods to Kill</b>	<b>1,301</b>	<b>36.79</b>	<b>412</b>	<b>26.75</b>	<b>1,725</b>	<b>33.90</b>
Shoot, Stab	288	8.14	43	2.79	331	6.51
Bludgeon, Stab	127	3.59	77	5.00	204	4.01
Stab, Strangle	120	3.39	78	5.06	198	3.89
Bludgeon, Shoot	143	4.04	22	1.43	165	3.24
Bludgeon, Strangle	105	2.97	58	3.77	163	3.20
Shoot, Strangle	107	3.03	12	0.78	119	2.34
Bludgeon, Shoot, Stab	51	1.44	10	0.65	61	1.20
Shoot, Stab, Strangle	39	1.10	8	0.52	47	0.92
Bludgeon, Stab, Strangle	34	0.96	16	1.04	50	0.98
Bludgeon, Shoot, Strangle	30	0.85	2	0.13	32	0.63
Strangle, Drown	16	0.45	7	0.45	23	0.45
Shoot, Drown	17	0.48	1	0.06	18	0.35
Shoot, Fire	17	0.48	0	0.00	17	0.33
Shoot, Poison	11	0.31	5	0.32	16	0.31
Shoot, Smother	13	0.37	0	0.00	13	0.26
Strangle, Smother	9	0.25	2	0.13	11	0.22
Bludgeon, Smother	7	0.20	3	0.19	10	0.20
Poison, Strangle	4	0.11	7	0.45	11	0.22
Stab, Strangle, Smother	6	0.17	1	0.06	7	0.14
Bludgeon, Shoot, Stab, Strangle	7	0.20	0	0.00	7	0.14
Bludgeon, Poison	4	0.11	3	0.19	7	0.14
Poison, Drown	2	0.06	5	0.32	7	0.14
Bludgeon, Drown	6	0.17	0	0.00	6	0.12
Shoot, Run Over	5	0.14	1	0.06	6	0.12
Strangle, Fire	5	0.14	1	0.06	6	0.12
Stab, Smother	3	0.08	3	0.19	6	0.12

**Table 13.01 Methods Used to Kill Victims**

Method	U.S.		International		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Poison, Stab	1	0.03	6	0.39	7	0.14
Bludgeon, Fire	4	0.11	1	0.06	5	0.10
Stab, Fire	3	0.08	1	0.06	4	0.08
Stab, Drown	3	0.08	1	0.06	4	0.08
Bludgeon, Stab, Smother	4	0.11	0	0.00	4	0.08
Strangle, Run over	3	0.08	1	0.06	4	0.08
Shoot, Bomb	3	0.08	3	0.19	6	0.12
Bludgeon, Shoot, Strangle, Drown	2	0.06	2	0.13	4	0.08
Bludgeon, Strangle, Smother	2	0.06	2	0.13	4	0.08
Strangle, Suffocate	2	0.06	2	0.13	4	0.08
Stab, Strangle, Drown	4	0.11	0	0.00	4	0.08
Drown, Fire	3	0.08	0	0.00	3	0.06
Poison, Stab, Strangle	3	0.08	0	0.00	3	0.06
Shoot, Strangle, Smother	3	0.08	0	0.00	3	0.06
Strangle, Hang	3	0.08	0	0.00	3	0.06
Shoot, Drug Overdose	3	0.08	0	0.00	3	0.06
Bludgeon, Poison, Stab	2	0.06	2	0.13	4	0.08
Stab, Axe	2	0.06	1	0.06	3	0.06
Bludgeon, Strangle, Drown	2	0.06	1	0.06	3	0.06
Bludgeon, Axe	2	0.06	0	0.00	2	0.04
Bludgeon, Shoot, Drown, Axe	2	0.06	0	0.00	2	0.04
Bludgeon, Shoot, Poison	2	0.06	0	0.00	2	0.04
Bludgeon, Shoot, Poison, Drown	2	0.06	0	0.00	2	0.04
Bludgeon, Shoot, Stab, Smother	2	0.06	0	0.00	2	0.04
Bludgeon, Shoot, Stab, Strangle, Drown	2	0.06	0	0.00	2	0.04
Bludgeon, Shoot, Stab, Strangle, Fire	2	0.06	0	0.00	2	0.04
Bludgeon, Shoot, Strangle, Smother	2	0.06	0	0.00	2	0.04
Shoot, Strangle, Fire	2	0.06	0	0.00	2	0.04
Shoot, Suffocate	2	0.06	0	0.00	2	0.04
Strangle, Drug overdose	2	0.06	0	0.00	2	0.04
Shoot, Burn	2	0.06	0	0.00	2	0.04
Shoot, Stab, Strangle, Smother	2	0.06	0	0.00	2	0.04
Bludgeon, Shoot, Axe	2	0.06	0	0.00	2	0.04
Bludgeon, Shoot, Fire	1	0.03	1	0.06	2	0.04
Poison, Smother	1	0.03	1	0.06	2	0.04
Shoot, Strangle, Drown	1	0.03	1	0.06	2	0.04
Shoot, Stab, Drown	2	0.06	0	0.00	2	0.04
Stab, Hang	1	0.03	0	0.00	1	0.02
Bludgeon, Hang	1	0.03	0	0.00	1	0.02
Bludgeon, Run Over	1	0.03	0	0.00	1	0.02
Bludgeon, Shoot, Bomb	1	0.03	0	0.00	1	0.02
Bludgeon, Shoot, Drown	1	0.03	2	0.13	3	0.06
Bludgeon, Shoot, Poison, Fire	1	0.03	0	0.00	1	0.02
Bludgeon, Shoot, Poison, Stab, Strangle	1	0.03	0	0.00	1	0.02
Bludgeon, Shoot, Stab, Strangle, Smother	1	0.03	0	0.00	1	0.02
Bludgeon, Smother, Drown	1	0.03	0	0.00	1	0.02
Bludgeon, Stab, Burn	1	0.03	0	0.00	1	0.02

**Table 13.01 Methods Used to Kill Victims**

Method	U.S.		International		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Bludgeon, Stab, Electrocute	1	0.03	0	0.00	1	0.02
Bludgeon, Stab, Fire, Run over	1	0.03	0	0.00	1	0.02
Bludgeon, Stab, Strangle, Axe	1	0.03	0	0.00	1	0.02
Bludgeon, Stab, Strangle, Smother	1	0.03	0	0.00	1	0.02
Bludgeon, Strangle, Bomb	1	0.03	0	0.00	1	0.02
Bludgeon, Strangle, Fire	1	0.03	0	0.00	1	0.02
Drown, Hang	1	0.03	0	0.00	1	0.02
Drug overdose	1	0.03	0	0.00	1	0.02
Drug Overdose, Electrocute	1	0.03	0	0.00	1	0.02
Fire, Staged Accident	1	0.03	0	0.00	1	0.02
Poison, Break neck	1	0.03	0	0.00	1	0.02
Poison, Hang, Push over cliff	1	0.03	0	0.00	1	0.02
Poison, Run over	1	0.03	0	0.00	1	0.02
Shoot, Fire, Starve	1	0.03	0	0.00	1	0.02
Shoot, Poison, Stab	1	0.03	0	0.00	1	0.02
Shoot, Smother, Fire	1	0.03	0	0.00	1	0.02
Bludgeon, Shoot, Staged Accident	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
Shoot, Stab, Drug Overdose	1	0.03	0	0.00	1	0.02
Shoot, Stab, Run Over	1	0.03	0	0.00	1	0.02
Shoot, Stab, Smother	1	0.03	0	0.00	1	0.02
Shoot, Stab, Strangle, Fire	1	0.03	0	0.00	1	0.02
Smother, Abandon	1	0.03	0	0.00	1	0.02
Smother, Drown	1	0.03	0	0.00	1	0.02
Smother, Electrocute	1	0.03	0	0.00	1	0.02
Stab, Shake	1	0.03	0	0.00	1	0.02
Stab, Strangle, Drown, Fire	1	0.03	0	0.00	1	0.02
Stab, Strangle, Fire	2	0.06	0	0.00	2	0.04
Strangle, Shake	1	0.03	0	0.00	1	0.02
Strangle, Smother, Fire	1	0.03	0	0.00	1	0.02
Strangle, Starve	1	0.03	0	0.00	1	0.02
Shoot, Axe	0	0.00	3	0.19	3	0.06
Bludgeon, Stab, Fire	0	0.00	2	0.13	2	0.04
Bludgeon, Starve	0	0.00	2	0.13	2	0.04
Starve, Bury Alive	0	0.00	2	0.13	2	0.04
Strangle, Fall	0	0.00	2	0.13	2	0.04
Bludgeon, Stab, Push	0	0.00	1	0.06	1	0.02
Poison, Drown, Burn	0	0.00	1	0.06	1	0.02
Poison, Fire	0	0.00	1	0.06	1	0.02
Poison, Withdrew treatment	0	0.00	1	0.06	1	0.02
Shoot, Fire, Axe	0	0.00	1	0.06	1	0.02
Stab, Drown, Run Over	0	0.00	1	0.06	1	0.02
Stab, Gas	0	0.00	1	0.06	1	0.02
Strangle, Axe	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
Strangle, Suffocate, Drown	0	0.00	1	0.06	1	0.02
Stab, Strangle, Fire, Run over	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00

# Section G

## Post-Arrest Outcomes

## 14. POST-ARREST EVENTS

### Research Questions Addressed

- What percentage of serial killers confess to their murders?
- What percentage of serial killers plead, “not guilty by reason of insanity” (NGRI)?
- What is the typical sentence for a serial killer?
- What is the most common cause of death for serial killers?

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### Data Notes and Interpretation Cautions

#### Data Notes

None

#### Interpretation Cautions

Although the *number* of serial killers who committed suicide is relatively accurate, the *percentage* of serial killers committing suicide is likely an overestimate of the actual percentage. This overestimation is because information on unsuccessful attempts or non-attempts are often not reported in the media or in court documents.

### What Percentage of Serial Killers Confess to Their Murders?

As shown in Table 14.01,

- Approximately 66% of serial killers confess to at least one murder.
- Serial killers in other countries (70.0%) were more likely to confess than were serial killers in the United States (63.9%).

### What Percentage of Serial Killers Plead NGRI?

As shown in Table 14.01,

- Approximately 5% of serial killers attempt an insanity plea.
- Approximately 1% of serial killers are found NGRI; 0.7% in the United States and 1.7% in other countries.
- Approximately 25% of those pleading NGRI are successful.
- The NGRI plea is less successful in the United States (successful in 19.5% of attempts) than in other countries (successful in 39.7% of attempts).

## What is the Typical Sentence for a Serial Killer?

As shown in Table 14.01,

- Approximately 49% of serial killers are sentenced to prison for life, 31% receive a death sentence, 10% received a prison sentence of less than life, and 7% die prior to trial.

## What is the Most Common Cause of Death for Serial Killers?

As shown in Table 14.01,

- The most common cause of death for serial killers is legal execution (44.3%), followed by natural causes (30.2%), and then suicide (14.7%).
- Serial killers in the United States were less likely to die from legal execution (41.0%) than were serial killers in other countries (49.9%).

**Table 14.01 Post-Arrest Events**

Post-Arrest Event	U.S.		International		Total		Chi Square	p value
	N	%	N	%	N	%		
Confessed to at least one murder	3,177		1,398		4,575		16.38	0.0001
No	1,148	36.1	419	30.0	1,567	34.3		
Yes	2,029	63.9	979	70.0	3,008	65.7		
Pleaded NGRI	3,491		1,642		5,133			
No	3,296	94.4	1,569	95.6	4,865	94.8		
Yes - Not successful	157	4.5	44	2.7	201	3.9		
Yes - Successful for some murders	12	0.3	1	0.1	13	0.3		
Yes - Successful	26	0.7	28	1.7	54	1.1		
Sentence	3,447		1,624		5,071			
Life	1,782	51.7	694	42.7	2,476	48.8		
Death	1,059	30.7	494	30.4	1,553	30.6		
Prison sentence less than life	276	8.0	232	14.3	508	10.0		
Died prior to trial	214	6.2	131	8.1	345	6.8		
Not prosecuted	46	1.3	14	0.9	60	1.2		
Not guilty by reason of insanity	27	0.8	34	2.1	61	1.2		
Acquitted	23	0.7	9	0.6	32	0.6		
Forensic hospital prior to trial	6	0.2	3	0.2	9	0.2		
Not competent to stand trial	7	0.2	3	0.2	10	0.2		
Guilty - sent to forensic hospital	3	0.1	8	0.5	11	0.2		
Lynched prior to trial	1	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.0		
Guilty but mentally ill	3	0.1	1	0.1	4	0.1		
Escaped prior to trial	0	0.0	1	0.1	1	0.0		
Executed	3,025		1,494		4,519		32.31	0.0000
No	2,560	84.6	1,162	77.8	3,722	82.4		
Yes	465	15.4	332	22.2	797	17.6		
Cause of Death	1,134		657		1,791			
Legal Execution	465	41.0	328	49.9	793	44.3		
Natural causes	384	33.9	157	23.9	541	30.2		
Suicide	162	14.3	102	15.5	264	14.7		
Killed by police prior to arrest	55	4.9	34	5.2	89	5.0		
Killed while in prison	29	2.6	14	2.1	43	2.4		
Killed by others prior to arrest	19	1.7	10	1.5	29	1.6		
Accidental death	10	0.9	5	0.8	15	0.8		
Killed by accomplice	4	0.4	6	0.9	10	0.6		
Killed by potential victim	4	0.4	0	0.0	4	0.2		
Lynched prior to trial	2	0.2	1	0.2	3	0.2		

# Appendix A

## Summary of Information Sources



**State Birth Records (on-line)**

State	Type of Information Available				
	Sex	Race	Birth Year	Birth Date	Place of Birth
Arizona, 1880-1935			x	x	x
California, 1905-1995	x		x	x	x
Delaware, 1800-1932	x		x	x	x
District of Columbia, 1830-1955	x				x
Idaho, 1861-1914			x	x	x
Indiana, 1907-1940	x		x	x	x
Iowa, 1800-1999			x	x	x
Kansas, 1885-1911	x	x	x	x	x
Kentucky, 1847-1911	x				
Maine, 1621-1922	x		x	x	x
Maryland, 1662-1911	x				x
Massachusetts, 1620-1988			x	x	x
Michigan, 1867-1911	x		x	x	x
Minnesota, 1935-2002			x	x	x
Missouri, 1847-1910	x	x	x	x	x
Nevada, 1975-2012			x	x	x
New Hampshire, 1714-1904	x	x	x	x	x
New Jersey, 1660-1931	x		x	x	x
North Carolina, 1800-2000	x	x	x	x	x
Ohio, 1774-1973	x	x	x	x	x
Oregon, 1868-1929	x		x	x	x
Pennsylvania, 1906-1908	x		x	x	x
Rhode Island, 1636-1930			x	x	x
South Carolina, 1766-1900			x	x	x
South Dakota, 1865-1915	x		x	x	x
Tennessee, 1869-1909	x		x	x	x
Texas, 1903-1997	x		x	x	x
Vermont, 1909-2008	x		x	x	x
Virginia, 1912-2014			x	x	x
Washington, 1870-1935	x		x	x	x
West Virginia, 1804-1938	x		x	x	x
Wisconsin, 1801-1928	x	x	x	x	x

## State Death Records (on-line)

State Death Record	Type of Information Available								
	Sex	Race	Birth Year	Birth Date	Place of Birth	Death Date	Place of Death	Marital Status	Occupation
Alabama, 1881-1974	X	X	X			X	X		
Arizona, 1887-1960			X	X		X	X		
Arkansas, 1914-1950						X	X		
California, 1940-1997	X		X		X	X	X		
Connecticut, 1949-2012	X	X	X			X	X	X	
Delaware, 1811-1933	X		X			X	X		
Florida, 1877-1998	X	X				X	X		
Georgia, 1919-1998	X	X				X	X		
Idaho, 1890-1964					X	X	X		
Illinois, 1916-1947		X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Indiana, 1899-2011	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Iowa, 1850-1990	X	X	X		X	X	X		
Kentucky, 1911-2000						X	X		
Massachusetts, 1841-1915			X		X	X	X		
Massachusetts, 1901-1980						X	X		
Massachusetts, 1970-2003			X	X	X	X	X		
Michigan, 1867-1950	X		X		X	X	X	X	
Minnesota, 1908-2002						X	X		
Missouri, 1910-1962						X	X		
Nevada, 1911-1965; 1980-2012			X	X	X	X	X		
New Hampshire, 1654-1949	X	X				X	X		
New Jersey, 1798-1971	X		X			X	X		
North Carolina, 1909-1976	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Ohio, 1908-1932; 1938-2007						X	X		
Oregon, 1898-2008						X	X		
Pennsylvania, 1906-1964	X	X	X			X	X		
South Carolina, 1821-1961	X	X	X			X	X		
South Dakota, 1879-1955						X	X		
Tennessee, 1874-1955	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Texas, 1903-2000						X	X		
Utah, 1847-1966	X		X			X	X		
Vermont, 1909-2008	X		X	X	X	X	X		
Virginia, 1912-2014	X	X	X			X	X	X	
Washington, 1907-1960	X		X			X	X	X	
West Virginia, 1853-1973	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Wisconsin, 1959-1997	X		X			X			

## State Prison Records (on-line)

State	Type of Information Available								
	Sex	Race	Height	Birth Year	Birth Date	Offense Date	Sentence	Crime County	Crime
Alaska		x							
Arizona	x	x	x			x	x	x	x
Arkansas	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x
California									
Colorado	x	x	x				x	x	
Connecticut				x	x		x		
Delaware		x							
Federal	x	x							
Florida	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Georgia	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x
Hawaii									
Idaho								x	x
Illinois	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x
Indiana	x	x		x	x		x	x	x
Iowa	x			x	x			x	
Kansas	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x
Kentucky	x	x	x			x		x	x
Louisiana		x							
Maine	x	x	x	x	x				x
Maryland				x	x				
Massachusetts		x							
Michigan	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Minnesota				x	x				x
Mississippi	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	
Missouri	x	x		x	x		x		x
Montana	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x
Nebraska	x	x		x	x		x	x	x
Nevada	x	x	x						
New Hampshire							x	x	
New Jersey	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
New Mexico			x						x
New York	x	x		x	x		x	x	x
North Carolina	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x
North Dakota				x	x				
Ohio	x	x		x	x		x	x	x
Oklahoma	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x
Oregon	x	x	x	x			x	x	x
Pennsylvania	x	x	x	x	x			x	
Rhode Island	x	x					x		x
South Carolina	x	x	x				x	x	x
South Dakota	x	x	x						
Tennessee	x	x		x	x				
Texas	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x
Utah	x		x	x	x				
Vermont	x	x				x			x
Virginia	x	x							
Washington									
West Virginia	x	x	x	x	x			x	
Wisconsin	x	x	x	x					
Wyoming	x	x	x				x	x	x