

## DOMESTIC HOMICIDE IN NSW, JANUARY 2003 – JUNE 2008

Clare Ringland and Laura Rodwell

*This brief examines trends and characteristics of domestic homicides in NSW over the period January 2003 to June 2008. During this time, there were 215 victims of domestic homicide, 115 females and 100 males. The rate of domestic homicide per year remained stable, ranging from a low of 0.46 per 100,000 population in 2004 to a high of 0.63 per 100,000 population in 2006. Forty-three per cent of domestic homicide victims (70 females and 23 males) were killed by intimate partners, and 19 per cent by parents. Stabbing was the most common act causing death, with knives used in over one-third of domestic homicides. The use of knives increased over the period, while the use of firearms decreased. Over three-quarters of offenders were male, and one-third of offenders may have had a history of mental illness and/or been suffering from mental illness at the time of the homicide. Twenty-six per cent of offenders were persons of interest in a violence-related incident in the 12 months prior to the homicide, and 52 per cent in the five years prior. In the 12 months prior to the homicide event, only 10 per cent of victims had been identified as a victim in a violence-related incident where the homicide offender was identified as a person of interest.*

### INTRODUCTION

Findings from the National Homicide Monitoring Program (NHMP) suggest that around 40 per cent of homicide victims are killed by a family member, and nearly one quarter by an intimate partner (Mouzos & Rushforth 2003, Dearden & Jones 2008). Despite this, domestic violence-related fatalities in NSW are not systematically reviewed. On 19 December 2008, following the death of Melissa Cook, who was shot fatally by her estranged husband, the Minister for Women announced that the NSW Government would bring forward the examination of domestic violence-related fatalities as a matter of urgency. An expert Advisory Panel was convened to provide recommendations on the establishment of an ongoing review mechanism and the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research was asked to conduct an analysis of trends and patterns in domestic and family violence-related homicides in NSW over a five-year period to inform the Panel. To this end, the aim of this brief is to describe the trends and characteristics of domestic homicides in NSW over the period 1 January 2003 to 30 June 2008.

This analysis includes all incidents of murder and manslaughter (not including driving), defined as domestic or family

violence-related based on the *Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007* (further details are provided in the Methods section). The brief begins by providing information on the rate of domestic homicide and domestic violence-related assaults. Characteristics of domestic homicide events are then described, including the number of victims and offenders per event, temporal and spatial aspects, and the involvement of weapons. Victim and offender characteristics are presented (such as age, sex, Indigenous status, remoteness and socio-economic index of disadvantage of area of residence), the relationship of the offender to the victim, as well as data on the mental health and drug and alcohol use of offenders. The extent to which victims and offenders had contact with police for violence-related incidents prior to the homicide is also examined.

### METHODS

#### *Definition of homicide*

For the purposes of this report, homicide is defined as murder or manslaughter, excluding driving related fatalities. This definition reflects the NHMP definitions (Dearden & Jones 2008). Homicides were selected if there was a person charged with the offence, a warrant was issued for

their arrest, or the homicide involved the suicide of the offender. Some homicide cases had not been finalised in court at the time of identification. For this reason, all alleged offenders charged with a homicide offence were included. This may have included those subsequently acquitted of the offence.<sup>1</sup>

#### *Definition of domestic homicide*

For the purposes of this examination, the definition of 'domestic relationship' was taken from the *Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007* (see Box 1).

#### *Domestic homicide case selection*

All events where murder or manslaughter was the recorded offence, and where the offence date fell between 1 January 2003 and 30 June 2008<sup>2</sup> were identified within the recorded crime database managed by the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research.

From an initial examination of the homicides recorded by the NSW Police Force, it was identified that some cases that should have been classified as domestic violence-related were not.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, information on the relationship between the offender and victim was not always complete.<sup>4</sup> As a result of this, the narratives (where police

## Box 1. CRIMES (DOMESTIC AND PERSONAL VIOLENCE) ACT 2007

### Section 5 Meaning of “domestic relationship”

For the purposes of this Act, a person has a “domestic relationship” with another person if the person:

- (a) is or has been married to the other person, or
- (b) has or has had a de facto relationship, within the meaning of the *Property (Relationships) Act 1984*, with the other person, or
- (c) has or has had an intimate personal relationship with the other person, whether or not the intimate relationship involves or has involved a relationship of a sexual nature, or
- (d) is living or has lived in the same household as the other person, or
- (e) is living or has lived as a long-term resident in the same residential facility as the other person and at the same time as the other person (not being a facility that is a correctional centre within the meaning of the *Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999* or a detention centre within the meaning of the *Children (Detention Centres) Act 1987*), or
- (f) has or has had a relationship involving his or her dependence on the ongoing paid or unpaid care of the other person, or
- (g) is or has been a relative of the other person, or
- (h) in the case of an Aboriginal person or a Torres Strait Islander, is or has been part of the extended family or kin of the other person according to the Indigenous kinship system of the person’s culture.

### Section 6 Meaning of “relatives”

For the purposes of this Act, a person is a “relative” of another person (the “other person”):

- (a) if the person is:
  - (i) a father, mother, grandfather, grandmother, step-father, step-mother, father-in-law or mother-in-law, or
  - (ii) a son, daughter, grandson, grand-daughter, step-son, step-daughter, son-in-law or daughter-in-law, or
  - (iii) a brother, sister, half-brother, half-sister, step-brother, step-sister, brother-in-law or sister-in-law, or
  - (iv) an uncle, aunt, uncle-in-law or aunt-in-law, or
  - (v) a nephew or niece, or
  - (vi) a cousin,  
of the other person, or
- (b) where the person has a de facto relationship, within the meaning of the *Property (Relationships) Act 1984*, with somebody else (the “person’s partner”) — if the other person is:
  - (i) a father, mother, grandfather, grandmother, step-father or step-mother, or
  - (ii) a son, daughter, grandson, grand-daughter, step-son or step-daughter, or
  - (iii) a brother, sister, half-brother, half-sister, step-brother or step-sister, or
  - (iv) an uncle or aunt, or
  - (v) a nephew or niece, or
  - (vi) a cousin,  
of the person’s partner.

further verified through identification on the NSW Police Force’s Computerised Operational Policing System (COPS).

Following the identification of domestic homicide cases, the corresponding unique identification numbers for the persons of interest and victims were uploaded into the NSW Police Force’s Enterprise Data Warehouse (EDW) to gather information on past involvements<sup>5</sup> reported to police. These involvements included recorded offences (e.g. common assault, malicious damage, telecommunication offences), as well as incidents where the police attended to a report or occurrence but it was determined that an offence had not taken place (e.g. domestic violence - no offence).

These involvements were used to identify the extent to which offenders of domestic homicide had prior contact with the NSW Police Force in relation to domestic violence-related incidents and other assaults.

### Coding of domestic homicide narratives

For each domestic homicide, specific characteristics of the incident were coded from the police narrative. Due to their free-text nature, the degree of detail relating to these characteristics varied between the narratives. Where possible, additional information was obtained from the Supreme Court judgment and/or media articles. At the time of coding, Supreme Court judgments for 124 offenders were available (i.e. for almost 60%). Key characteristics coded included:

- sex of the offender and the victim;
- age of the offender and the victim at the time of the incident;
- date of the incident<sup>6</sup> (i.e. the date the act causing death occurred);
- nature of the relationship (i.e. offender was the ..... of the victim);
- location of the incident (both the town/suburb and the type of premises);
- weapon used (if any) and the type of weapon;
- main injury to the victim (such as head trauma, stab to chest etc.);
- assessment of whether the offender had a mental illness and its nature;

provide more specific free-text details of all homicides involving murder or manslaughter across this time period were examined and domestic homicides were identified using the definition provided in Box 1.

To identify cases that may have been missed, searches were also conducted within the Supreme Court judgments from the NSW Caselaw system and archived newspaper articles from the Factiva database. These cases were then

- whether the offender committed, or attempted to commit, suicide following the homicide; and
- whether the victim and/or the offender were under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs at the time of the incident.

Many characteristics coded from the narratives (e.g. sex, age, relationship, weapon type) were also available in the recorded crime data collection, managed by the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research. Data on these characteristics were compared, discrepancies were investigated, and data coded from narratives were verified.

## TRENDS AND CHARACTERISTICS

### Trends in homicide and domestic violence-related assaults

#### Homicide victims

As shown in Figure 1, over the 10-year period from 1998 to 2007, the rate of murder and manslaughter in NSW decreased from 1.9 to 1.3 per 100,000 population. On average, there were 103 victims of murder or manslaughter each year.

#### Domestic homicide victims

Although there have been some fluctuations from year to year, the number of victims of domestic homicide has remained relatively stable since 2003, ranging from a low of 31 in 2004 to a high of 43 in 2006, and representing a rate between 0.46 and 0.63 per 100,000 population. Of all homicides between 2003 and 2007 (inclusive), 42 per cent were classified as domestic. This finding is generally consistent with a national study

that reported 38 per cent of homicide victims between 1989 and 2002 were killed by a family member (Mouzos & Rushforth 2003).<sup>7</sup>

#### Domestic violence-related assaults

Each year since 1998, there have been between 17,800 and 27,500 incidents of domestic violence-related assault recorded by the NSW Police Force. The rate has increased over the period, ranging from a minimum of 279 incidents per 100,000 population in 1999 to a maximum of 400 per 100,000 population in 2007.

Each year, for every victim of domestic homicide, there are more than 620 recorded incidents of domestic violence-related assault.

### Event characteristics

#### Number of victims and offenders per event

The 215 victims of domestic homicide between January 2003 and June 2008 were killed in 196 events involving 207 offenders (who had a domestic relationship with the victim).<sup>8</sup>

Of the 196 events, 182 (93%) resulted in the death of one victim; the remaining 14 (7%) events resulted in the death of multiple victims. Eleven (6%) of the 196 events involved two offenders, both of whom would be classified as having a domestic relationship with the victim.

#### When the events occurred

Events were reasonably well spread across time of day and days of the week. Table 1 shows that the greatest proportion of domestic homicide events occurred between 6pm and midnight, and the smallest proportion between midnight

**Table 1. Domestic homicide events by time of day and day of week**

	Events (N=196)	
	n	%
<b>Time of day</b>		
Midnight to before 6am	40	21.4
6am to before noon	42	22.5
Noon to before 6pm	48	25.7
6pm to before midnight	57	30.5
Unknown	9	
<b>Day of week</b>		
Sunday	34	18.2
Monday	22	11.8
Tuesday	29	15.5
Wednesday	22	11.8
Thursday	25	13.4
Friday	33	17.6
Saturday	22	11.8
Unknown	9	

and 6am. Sunday was the most common day on which domestic homicides occurred.

The highest numbers of domestic homicide events occurred in January and February, and the lowest in May (Figure 2).

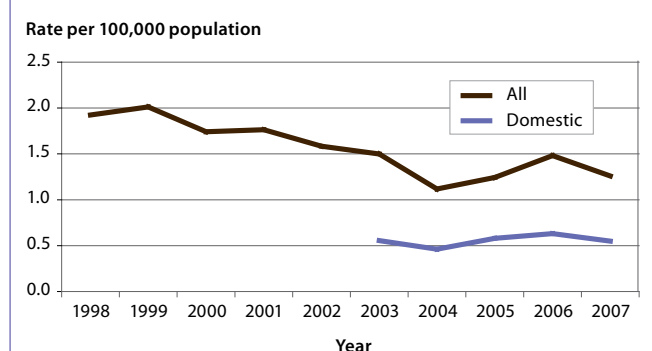
#### Where the events occurred

The majority (176 events, or 90%) of domestic homicide events occurred on residential premises. Most often, the residential dwelling was home to both the victim and the offender.

#### Weapon use

At least 76 (39%) of the 196 homicide events involved the use of a sharp implement and 31 (16%) involved a firearm. In at least 39 events (20%), no weapon, implement or object was used. The use of knives and sharp implements

**Figure 1. Homicide victims, 1998 to 2007, and victims of domestic homicide, 2003 to 2007**



**Figure 2. Domestic homicide events by month of year, 2003 to 2007**

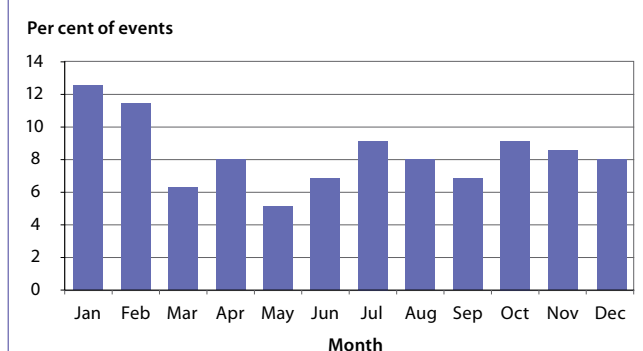


Figure 3. Victims of domestic homicide by sex, January 2003 to June 2008

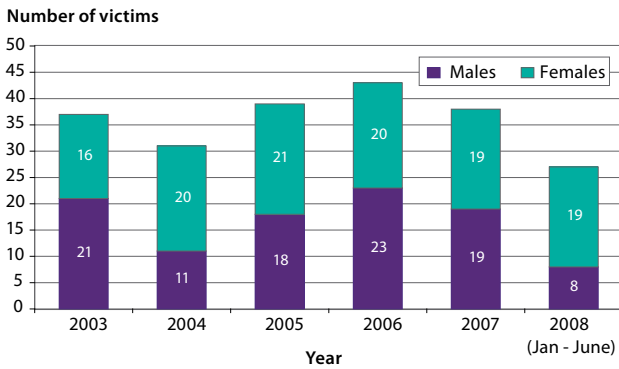


Figure 4. Rate of domestic homicide by year and sex, 2003 to 2007

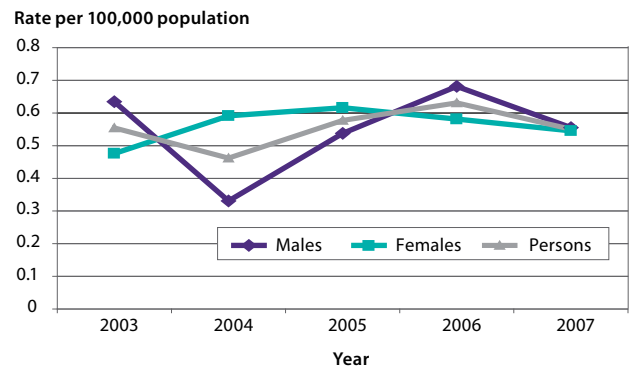


Figure 5. Victims of domestic homicide by sex and age group, January 2003 to June 2008

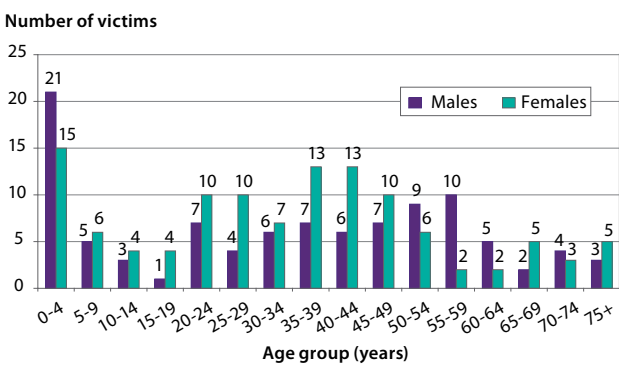
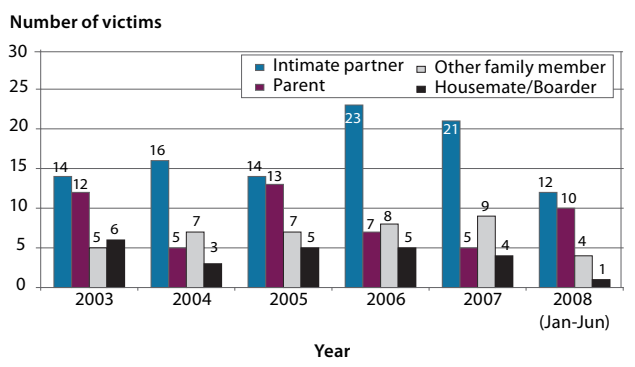


Figure 6. Victims of domestic homicide by relationship<sup>13</sup> of offender to victim, January 2003 to June 2008



in domestic homicide events increased over the period 2003 to 2007. In 2003, they were used in 23 per cent of domestic homicide events, while in 2007 they were used in 50 per cent of events. However, the use of firearms in domestic homicides has decreased. In 2003, firearms were used in 23 per cent of domestic homicide events; and in 2007, this had decreased to 11 per cent of events. These trends are consistent with national homicide trends more generally (Dearden & Jones 2008).

ranging between 0.3 and 0.7 per 100,000 population.

The mean age of male domestic homicide victims was 34.8 years and the median age was 37.9 years. Similarly, the mean age of female domestic homicide victims was 34.3 years and the median age 35.5 years. However, despite similarities in these summary statistics, the age distribution of male and female victims varied somewhat.

Figure 5 presents the distribution of domestic homicide victims by five-year age group and sex. Seventeen per cent of domestic homicide victims, 21 per cent of male victims and 13 per cent of female victims, were less than five years of age. Twenty-five per cent were less than 15 years of age. In all five-year age groups from 5 to 9 years through to 45 to 49 years, there were more female than male victims of domestic homicide.

## Victim characteristics

### Sex and age

Of the 215 victims of domestic homicide, 115 (53%) were female and 100 (47%) were male. As Figure 3 shows, the ratio of male to female victims has varied somewhat over the years. In 2003, 43 per cent of domestic homicide victims were female, while in 2004, 65 per cent were female.

In Figure 4, the numbers of male and female domestic homicide victims are expressed as crude rates per 100,000 population. Perhaps with the exception of 2004, it can be seen that rates in males and females were similar over time,

Table 2. Remoteness and index of socio-economic disadvantage of victim area of residence

		Victims (N=215)	
		n	%
Remoteness <sup>9</sup>	Major City	133	63.9
	Inner Regional	55	26.4
	Outer Regional	17	8.2
	Remote	2	1.0
	Very Remote	1	0.5
	Unknown	7	
Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage quintiles <sup>10</sup>	1 – Most disadvantaged	82	39.8
	2	46	22.3
	3	23	11.2
	4	34	16.5
	5 – Least disadvantaged	21	10.2
	Unknown	9	

## Aboriginality

While Aboriginal people comprise around two per cent of the total NSW population, approximately nine per cent of domestic homicide victims (20 of 215) in NSW over the period 2003 to June 2008 were recorded as being Aboriginal (ABS 2008a). The disproportionate number of Indigenous homicide victims has previously been reported. At the national level in 2006/07, Indigenous women were nearly nine times as likely as their non-Indigenous counterparts to be a victim of homicide (Dearden & Jones 2008). In NSW, a review of child deaths resulting from assault over the period 1996 to 2005 found that Aboriginal children are four times more likely than non-Aboriginal children to die from assault (NSW Child Death Review Team 2008).

## Remoteness and socio-economic disadvantage of area of residence

Table 2 shows the percentage of events according to the remoteness and index of socio-economic disadvantage of the area of residence of domestic homicide victims. Sixty-four per cent of victims resided in a major city, 35 per cent in a regional area, and the remaining one per cent in a remote location. This compares to the respective NSW population distribution of 73 per cent, 27 per cent and less than one per cent. Forty per cent of domestic homicide victims resided in the most socio-economically disadvantaged quintile (20% of the population), according to the Index of Relative Disadvantage.

## Relationship between victim and offender

As shown in Table 3, for 43 per cent of domestic homicide victims (61% of female victims and 23% of male victims) the offender was an intimate partner.<sup>11</sup> For 19 per cent of victims, the offender was a parent.

As shown in Figure 6, each year, the largest group of domestic homicide victims were intimate partners.

## Violent act causing death

As Table 4 shows, stabbing was the most common act causing death (37% of victims). In 73 (91%) of these 80 cases, the weapon was a knife. The next most common cause of death was being bashed, beaten or shaken (46, or 21% of victims). This included receiving a blow to the head by an object.

**Table 3. Relationship between offender and victim<sup>12</sup>, January 2003 to June 2008**

<i>Relationship of offender to victim (Offender was.... of victim)</i>	<i>Male victims (N=100)</i>		<i>Female victims (N=115)</i>		<i>All victims (N=215)</i>	
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Intimate partner	23	23	70	61	93	43
Intimate partner of intimate partner	9	9	1	1	10	5
Parent	25	25	16	14	41	19
Step-parent	5	5	6	5	11	5
Grandparent	1	1	1	1	2	1
Sibling	4	4	1	1	5	2
Child	11	11	9	8	20	9
Grandchild	2	2	0	0	2	1
Step-child	5	5	0	0	5	2
Housemate/boarder	13	13	9	8	22	10
Other	7	7	4	3	11	5

**Table 4. Violent act causing death, January 2003 to June 2008**

	<i>Victims (N=215)</i>	
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Stabbed	80	37
Bashed, beaten, shaken	46	21
Gunshot	34	16
Strangled, suffocated	19	9
Drowned, gassed	12	6
Poisoned, drug overdose	10	5
Other	8	4
Unknown	6	3

**Table 5. Victim involvements in 12 months prior to homicide where offender was recorded as a person of interest**

<i>Nature of prior police contact as a victim</i>	<i>Victims (N=213)</i>	
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Any listed below	22	10
Assault	8	4
<i>Common</i>	6	3
<i>Actual bodily harm</i>	3	1
Sexual assault	2	1
Domestic violence, no offence	10	5
Apprehended Violence Order	16	8
Breach Apprehended Violence Order (Domestic)	3	1
Malicious damage	3	1
Offence against the person	4	2
Telecommunications offence	1	0
Occurrence	2	1

*Note: Data for two victims were missing.*

## Previous police contact

Table 5 and all subsequent tables relating to the nature of prior police contacts, present information on the number of individuals who have at least one contact of the involvement type specified. For

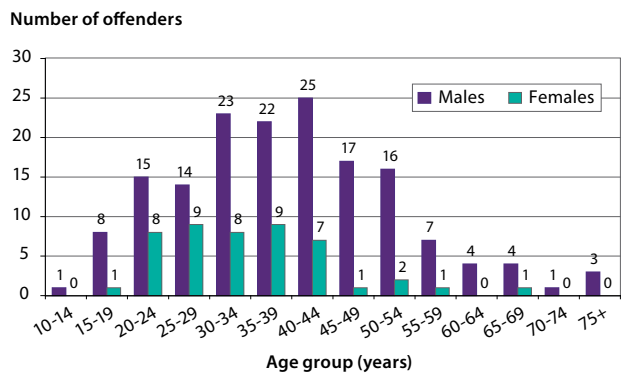
example, in Table 5, eight victims had police contact relating to an assault in the 12 months prior to the homicide event. These eight victims may have had more than one assault-related contact in the 12-month period.



Figure 7. Offenders by sex and year, January 2003 to June 2008



Figure 8. Offenders by sex and age group, January 2003 to June 2008



An examination of records provided by the NSW Police Force revealed that only 10 per cent of victims had been identified in the 12 months prior to the homicide event as a victim in an involvement, as specified in Table 5, where the offender was identified as a person of interest. Of those with a history, the majority were victims of intimate partner homicide.

### Offender characteristics

#### Sex and age

Over the period 2003 to mid-2008, 160 (77%) domestic homicide offenders were male. The ratio of male to female offenders by year is shown in Figure 7. The percentage of offenders who were male ranged from 61 per cent in 2003 to 83 per cent in 2004.

As Figure 8 shows, 44 per cent of male offenders were aged between 30 and 44 years. The mean age of male offenders was 39.9 years, the median age was 39.3 years, and the youngest offender was 14 years of age. Most female offenders were aged between 20 and 44 years. The mean age of female offenders was 34.5 years and the median age was 32.3 years. The youngest female offender was 18 years of age.

#### Relationship of offender to victim, by sex of the offender

As Table 6 shows, 51 per cent of male domestic homicide offenders killed their intimate partners, and/or intimate partners of their intimate partners (6%); 45 per cent of female offenders killed their child/children.

#### Aboriginality

Approximately 13 per cent of offenders were recorded as being Aboriginal

Table 6. Offenders by sex and relationship<sup>14</sup> to victim

Relationship to victim (Offender was ..... of victim)	Male offenders (N=160)		Female offenders (N=47)		All offenders (N=207)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Intimate partner	82	51	20	43	102	49
Parent	28	18	21	45	49	24
Other family member	34	21	5	11	46	22
Other (eg. flatmate, boarder)	21	13	2	4	23	11

Table 7. Remoteness and index of socio-economic disadvantage of offender area of residence

		Offenders (N=207)	
		n	%
Remoteness <sup>15</sup>	Major City	131	65.2
	Inner Regional	46	22.9
	Outer Regional	20	10.0
	Remote	3	1.5
	Very Remote	1	0.5
	Unknown	6	
Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage quintiles <sup>16</sup>	1 – Most disadvantaged	84	40.6
	2	37	17.9
	3	28	13.5
	4	27	13.0
	5 – Least disadvantaged	24	11.6
	Unknown	7	

(26 of 207). As with the number of domestic homicide victims who were Aboriginal, this is disproportionate to the population of Aboriginal people in NSW (approximately 2%). At the national level in 2006/07, in relation to homicide more broadly, Indigenous males were found to be seven times as likely to be offenders as were non-Indigenous males, while Indigenous females offended at nearly 14 times the rate of non-Indigenous females (Dearden & Jones 2008).

#### Remoteness and socio-economic disadvantage of area of residence

Table 7 shows the percentage of events according to the remoteness and index of socio-economic disadvantage of the area of residence of domestic homicide offenders. Given that the majority of victims and offenders resided together, the distribution of offenders is similar to that of victims. Sixty-five per cent of offenders resided in a major city, one-third

in a regional area, and the remaining two per cent in a remote location. Over 40 per cent of domestic homicide offenders resided in the most socio-economically disadvantaged quintile of the population, according to the Index of Relative Disadvantage.

### Alcohol and drug use

At least 28 per cent of domestic homicide offenders had consumed alcohol in the hours leading up to the homicide event, and at least 15 per cent had used drugs. A recent study of the NHMP found that 38 per cent of all homicides involved an offender who had been drinking (Dearden & Payne 2009). This study used toxicological reports in addition to police records.

### Previous police contact

An examination of involvements provided by the NSW Police Force revealed that

26 per cent of offenders had been identified in the 12 months prior to the homicide event as a person of interest<sup>17</sup> in a violence-related offence, malicious damage, an offence against the person, telecommunications offence or an occurrence. Fifty per cent of offenders were a person of interest for such an offence in the five years prior to the homicide event.

As Table 8 shows, the types of offences for which offenders were most commonly involved with the police prior to the homicide event were assault, domestic violence – no offence, and Apprehended Violence Orders.

Table 9 shows the proportion of offenders who had previous police contact in the 12 months and five years prior to the homicide event, by the relationship of the offender to the victim. Almost half of those offenders who killed a housemate

or landlord had police contact for a violence-related offence or involvement in the previous 12 months, compared to only 10 per cent of those offenders who killed other family members (such as parents, siblings or cousins), and almost 30 per cent of those who killed intimate partners (including intimate partners of intimate partners) or their children (including step-children and grandchildren).

In the five years prior to the homicide event, 65 per cent of those offenders who killed a housemate or landlord had police contact for a violence-related offence or involvement, compared to 33 per cent of those offenders who killed other family members, 54 per cent of those who killed intimate partners and 61 per cent of those who killed their children.

### Mental health

Information contained in the homicide narratives and the available Supreme Court judgments suggest that 73 offenders (approximately 35%) may have had a history of mental illness and/or been suffering from mental illness at the time of the homicide.<sup>19</sup> The most common reference was to schizophrenia, followed by depression. At least 26 offenders were found not guilty by reason of mental illness.

### Murder-suicide

Research suggests that the closer the relationship between the homicide offender and victim, the greater the likelihood the offender will commit suicide (Carcach & Grabosky 1998). Of the 207 offenders, 26 (13%) committed suicide during or immediately following the homicide event, and 20 (10%) offenders attempted suicide. At least one offender committed suicide some time after. Of those who committed suicide, 23 had killed their intimate partners and/or children.

## CONCLUSIONS

The most important finding to emerge from this study was the low percentage of victims who had contact with the police as a victim of domestic violence where the eventual homicide offender was the person of interest. Only ten per cent of victims had contact with the police in the 12 months leading up to the homicide with involvements of this nature. This provides some indication

**Table 8. Nature of police contact of offender as a person of interest in 12 months and 5 years prior to homicide event (N=204)**

Nature of police contact	In previous 12 months		In previous 5 years	
	n	%	n	%
Any listed below	53	26	107	52
Assault	25	12	67	33
Common	21	10	57	28
Actual bodily harm	8	4	31	15
Grievous bodily harm	0	0	7	3
Homicide (manslaughter)	1	0	2	1
Sexual assault	2	1	6	3
Domestic violence, no offence	22	11	53	26
Apprehended Violence Order	21	10	60	29
Breach Apprehended Violence Order (Domestic)	6	3	13	6
Malicious damage	6	3	32	16
Offence against the person	7	3	19	9
Telecommunications offence	4	2	8	4
Personal violence – not domestic Occurrence	3	1	7	3
	11	5	26	13

Note: Data for three offenders were missing.

**Table 9. Any police contact in which the offender was a person of interest in 12 months and 5 years prior to homicide event, by relationship<sup>18</sup> to homicide victim**

Any police contact	In previous 12 months		In previous 5 years	
	n	%	n	%
Relationship of offender to victim				
Intimate partner (N=99)	27	27	53	54
Parent (N=49)	14	29	30	61
Other family member (N=39)	4	10	13	33
Housemate/boarder (N=23)	11	48	15	65

that the majority of victims and offenders involved in domestic homicide do not come to the attention of the police in the 12 months leading up to the homicide. This highlights the difficulties that would be faced by the police in identifying offenders and victims who are likely to be at risk of being involved in a domestic homicide. One possibility is that these individuals are coming to the attention of other agencies and services, such as victim support services, counselling providers, mental health services, or hospitals.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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- Collection District level. Twenty per cent of the population is represented in each quintile.
11. For the purposes of this report 'intimate partner' includes: spouse, separated spouse, divorced spouse, de facto, ex-de facto, extramarital lover, former extramarital lover, boyfriend, ex-boyfriend, girlfriend, ex-girlfriend.
  12. Numbers do not sum to the number of victims because where there were two offenders with different relationships to the victim (e.g. a parent and a step-parent), both were included. In the case of four victims, both parents were offenders, and for two victims both a parent and a step-parent were offenders. One child and one grandchild were the offenders for one victim, an intimate partner and a child for another, and an intimate partner and an intimate partner of an intimate partner for three others.
  - 13, 14. In the classification of relationship 'intimate partner' includes intimate partners as well as intimate partners of intimate partners; 'parent' includes parents, step-parents and grandparents; 'other family member' includes children, step-children, grandchildren, siblings and cousins.
  15. See note 9.
  16. See note 10.
  17. Data presented relates to involvements where offenders were persons of interest, and not necessarily charged.
  18. See note 13.
  19. Information on mental health status contained in police narratives is not complete and may not be reliable. As Supreme Court judgments were not available for all homicides, in particular murder-suicides and more recent homicides, in many cases mental health status was difficult to verify.

## NOTES

1. At the time of preparing this brief, at least four offenders charged with murder or manslaughter had been found not guilty, 59 had been found guilty of murder, 46 of manslaughter, and 26 not guilty by reason of mental illness.
2. At the time of commencing this analysis, the most recent available data were up to 30 June 2008.
3. 43 per cent of homicides identified as being 'domestic' in this study were not flagged by the NSW Police Force as domestic violence-related.
4. These inconsistencies are likely to be a result of the offender being unknown at the initial input of the information into the NSW Police Force's Computerised Operational Policing System (COPS).
5. 'Involvements' is a term used by the NSW Police Force to encompass offences as well as occurrences or contacts with police where no offence was recorded.
6. This may be different to the date recorded in COPS as the date of the homicide could relate to the date of death rather than the date of the act causing death.
7. Our definition of domestic is broader and not directly comparable.
8. Additional offenders not having a domestic relationship with the victim are not included in this report.
9. Remoteness was assigned according to the Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ASGC) 2006 coding of Census Collection Districts (ABS 2006).
10. The Index of Socioeconomic Disadvantage quintile was assigned according to the Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) 2006 (ABS 2008b), and was coded at Census