

Homicide Section

2007 Year End Workload Analysis/Statistical Report



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Mandate

The Homicide Section is tasked with the investigation of all homicides, in-custody deaths, police shootings and occurrences involving police use of force in preparation for fatality inquiry hearings. In addition, the Section evaluates all sudden deaths, suspicious deaths, and accidental deaths to ensure that no criminal act was the cause of death. The Homicide Section also assists other police agencies in homicide and death investigations.

A subset of Homicide Section is the Historical Homicide Unit which is responsible for the organization and investigation of all historical homicide files, and historical missing persons files where foul play is suspected.

Staffing

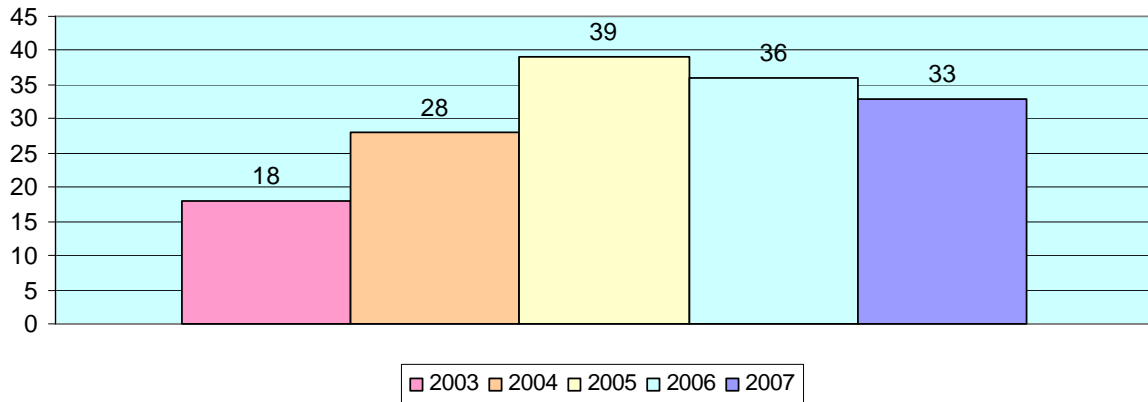
The Homicide Section has an authorized strength of 2 Staff Sergeants, 16 Detectives, one analyst, one witness coordinator, and one administrative assistant. The Section is currently fully staffed.

Number of Homicides in 2007

There were a total of 33 Homicide investigations initiated in 2007. Comparing 2006 and 2007, there was an overall decrease of 8% (n=36 for 2006). A reduction fits with the trend of a nation wide drop of 10% in 2006.¹ The reduction in Edmonton comes after increases in 2004 and 2005 and a leveling off in 2006.

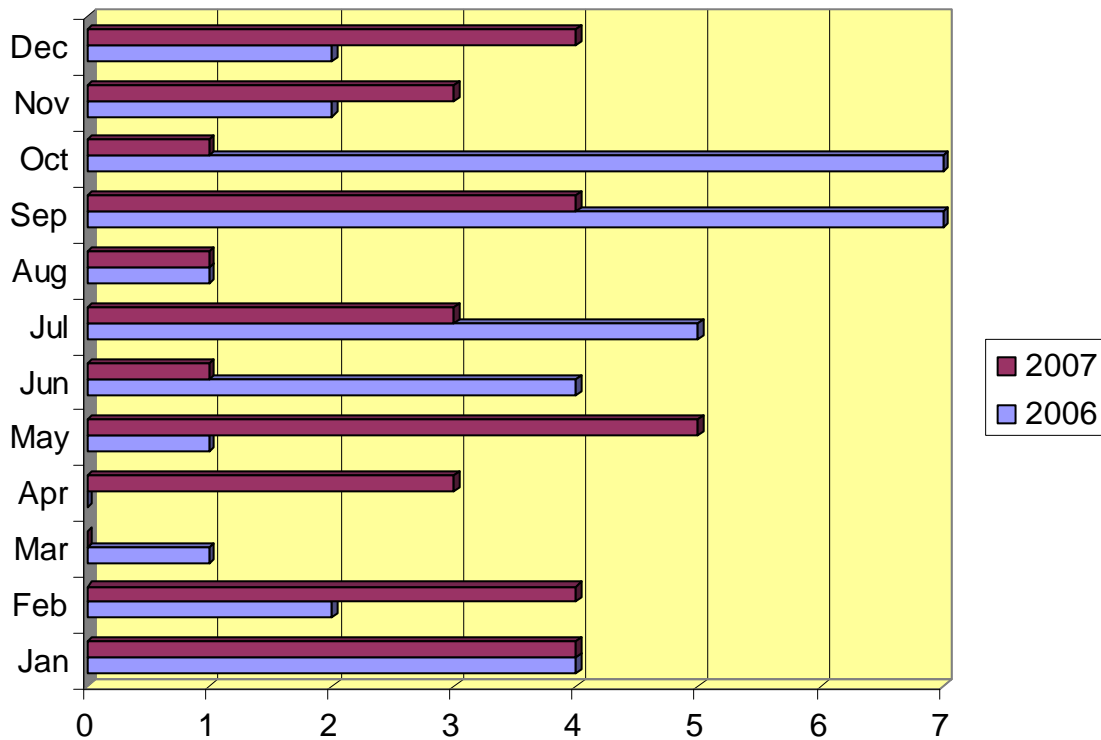
¹ Geoffrey LI, "Homicide in Canada, 2006," Juristat: Canadian Center for Justice Statistics Catalogue 85-002, vol 27, no. 8 (2007): 22 Nov. 2007 <<http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/85-002-XIE/85-002-XIE2007008.htm>>

Total Homicides



In 2007, the average number of homicides per month was under 3. The average was 3 in 2006, although September and October were exceptionally high with 7 in each month. As seen below there is no real trend as to which are the busiest months in which homicides occur.

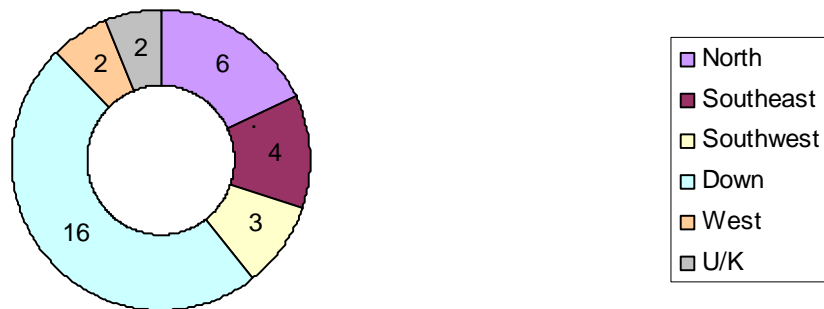
Total Homicides by Month



Occurrence Locations of Homicides

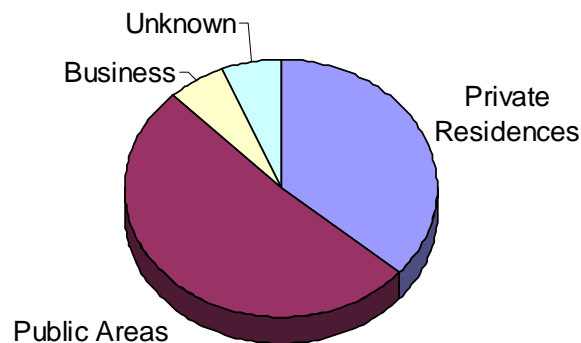
Downtown Division had the most homicides at 48%, North Division had 18%, Southeast Division 12%, Southwest Division 9% and West Division accounted for 6% of the homicides. The locations for two of the homicides are not known at this time (accounting for 6%).

Homicides by Division 2007



12 or 36% of the homicides occurred in private residences, 52% were in public areas (alleys, roadways, parking lots, etc) (n=17), 6% in a business (n=2) and 6% location is unknown (n=2).²

Location of Homicides 2007



Of the homicides which took place in a public area, only 35% were cleared (n=6). This is lower than the clearance rate for homicides that occurred in a private

² Totals may equal more than 100 due to rounding.

residence which was 58% (n=7). Half of the homicides that were committed in a business were solved (n=1) and none of those in which the location of the homicide was unknown have been solved. These results indicate a homicide is more likely to be solved when committed in a private residence.

Homicides occurred on every day of the week with the breakdown as follows:

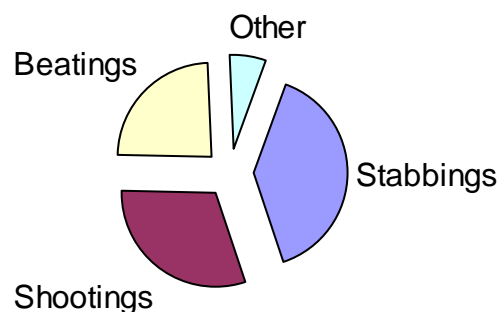
- Monday 4 (12%)
- Tuesday 10 (30%)
- Wednesday 2.5 (8%)
- Thursday 2.5 (8%)
- Friday 5 (15%)
- Saturday 4 (12%)
- Sunday 5 (15%)

As is evident from above, the majority of the homicides occurred on Tuesdays, however, the day of week appears to be random. Further, 23 of the homicides were reported outside of normal business hours while 10 occurred between 0700 hrs and 1700 hrs.

Types

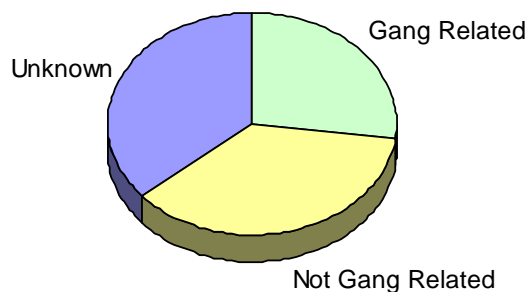
The majority of homicides in 2007 were as a result of stabbings at 40% (n=13), followed by shootings at 30% (n=10), then beatings 24% (n=8). The rest of the Homicides fall into the 'other' category, which includes being hit by a vehicle and a cause which is not for disclosure at this time; this category makes up 6% (n=2).

Types of Homicides



Only 9 out of all of the homicides were known to be gang related (27%). This is a decrease from 11 last year. The other files are either classified as not gang related or unknown. For the purposes of this document, a gang related homicide is considered one in which the victim, known offender, strong suspect or motive have a known gang association.

Gang Related Homicides



Further Factors

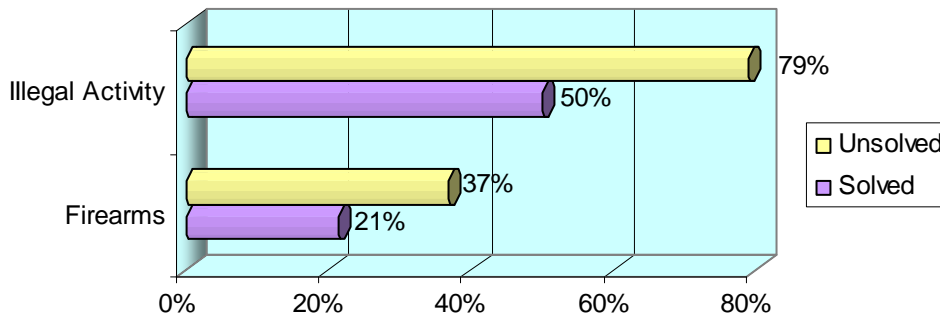
Of the 33 homicides in 2007, offenders most often knew their victims. Of all the homicides with an identified suspect or accused, none were committed by a stranger. Only one homicide is believed to be spousal related.

8 of the homicides are known to have involved alcohol and 4 involved drug use, although in most cases it is unknown whether either were factors.

Interestingly, 14 out of the 33 homicides (42%) are believed to be drug trade related. The definition of drug trade related is that the motivation for the homicide is believed to be related to the drug trade; this could be a homicide as a result of stolen drugs, a drug debt, a fight for territory within the drug trade or simply between individuals involved in the drug trade.

Finally, 5 of the homicides this year (15%) involved a Youth; that is, the offender or victim was under the age of 18.

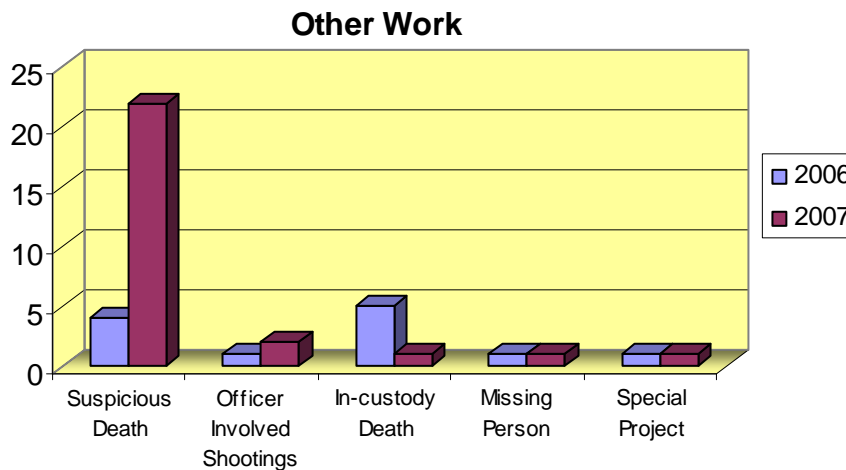
Percentage of 2007 Homicides Involving Firearms & Illegal Activity by the Victim



Other Work

During 2007 there have been 27 'Other Investigations' undertaken by homicide investigators. This represents a 125% increase in workload from 2006 (n=12). Some of the increase may be attributed to junior patrol members not experienced enough in investigating and concluding these types of files and therefore, the Homicide Section is called out.

Interestingly, of these 'Other Investigations' in 2007, 22 were Suspicious Death investigations, compared with 4 in 2006, which accounts for a 450% increase. There were 2 Officer Involved Shootings in 2007 and one in 2006. In 2007, there was one In-custody Death (5 in 2006) and one Missing Person investigation (one in 2006). Finally one Special Project was worked on in 2006 and one in 2007.



Additionally, members were also involved in providing assistance to outside agencies.

Prior Homicide Files

14 of the 36 reported homicides in 2006 remain unsolved and investigations on these continued in 2007.

Investigations also continued into some historical homicides such as:

- Karen EWANCIW (1976)
- Murray SPARROW (1983)
- Lillian BERUBE (1987)
- Joanne GHOSTKEEPER (1996)
- Carlos MEJIA (1999)
- Greggor HARRISON (1995)
- Nancy GLADUE (1981)
- Tanya MURRELL (Missing Person 1983)

All totaled there are currently 56 files which are currently open investigations.

Witness Management

The Witness Manager received approximately 546 requests to serve subpoenas in 2007.³ Approximately 506 of these subpoenas were served, 25 were found to be not in Edmonton, 2 were recalled and 2 were unable to be located; this results in a 98% served rate.⁴ The served rate is up from last year at 89%.⁵ In addition to subpoena service, the witness manager was responsible for witness preparation and accompaniment, both of which account for a lot of her work time.

Trends

There were 605 Homicides reported in Canada in 2006, which translated to a 10% decrease in the national homicide rate from 2005. The largest decreases were recorded in the provinces of Ontario (-23), Alberta (-12), Manitoba (-10), and Quebec (-7). Edmonton's homicide rate in 2007 mirrored this trend with a decrease in the homicide rate of 8%.

Homicides that were as a result of shootings were down in 2007 compared to 2006, 30% and 39% respectively. This is a positive trend considering Edmonton led the country in gun related homicides in 2006 (per capita).⁶

³ Data only available for 2007-Jan-01 to 2007-Oct-04. 455 received in that time, therefore it is estimated that 91 more subpoenas would be received during this time based on the previous rate.

⁴ Again numbers were estimated for the full year.

⁵ Again numbers were estimated for the full year.

⁶ *The Daily: Homicides*. 17 Oct. 2007. Canadian Center for Justice Statistics. 22 Nov. 2007
<<http://www.statcan/Daily/English/071017/d071017b.htm>>

The number of known gang related homicides decreased from 34% in 2006 to 27% in 2007. This is an important change considering the census metropolitan area of Edmonton had one of the highest number of homicides related to gang activity (along with Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver) in 2006.⁷

The above workload analysis demonstrates that although the homicide rate was down in 2007, there has also been an increase in workload due to 'other files' assigned to or assisted by the Homicide Section.

Concluding Remarks

Homicide Section continued with a heavy caseload in 2007. Although there were three fewer homicides in 2007 than 2006, there was a substantial increase in the number of suspicious death files that homicide detectives investigated. The increased number of suspicious deaths may be attributed to some degree to the inexperience of patrol members in making a determination at the scene, thus requiring assistance from homicide investigators.

The current clearance rate for 2007 is 42%. This clearance rate will be improved upon as investigations on the 2007 files continue into 2008, which should result in more of the files being cleared.

This analysis demonstrates that Edmonton remains a safe community for its regular, law abiding citizens. They should not fear being the victim of a homicide. The analysis clearly shows that those engaged in higher risk lifestyles, such as involvement in gangs and/or drugs, are most likely to be involved in homicides.

⁷ The Daily: Homicides. 17 Oct. 2007. Canadian Center for Justice Statistics. 22 Nov. 2007
<<http://www.statcan/Daily/English/071017/d071017b.htm>>