

CRIME AND JUSTICE

HOMICIDE IN SCOTLAND 2015-16

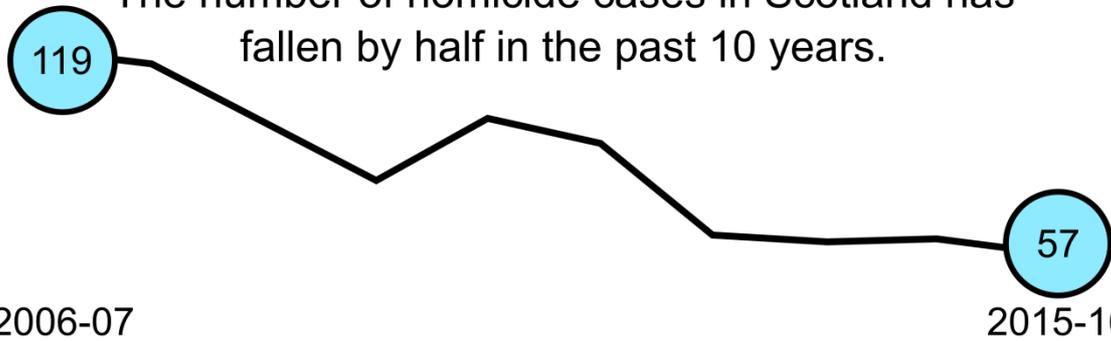
This bulletin presents statistics on crimes of homicide recorded by the police in Scotland in 2015-16. Statistics are presented on the number of homicide cases recorded in Scotland, where a single case of homicide is counted for each crime involving Murder or Culpable homicide (common law), irrespective of the number of victims or accused. This bulletin also presents victim and accused data, the circumstances associated with the homicide, and additional details relating to the method, motive and relationship between the victim and the accused.

Key Points

- Between 2014-15 and 2015-16, the number of homicide cases recorded by the police in Scotland decreased by 8% (5 cases) from 62 to 57 (Table 1). This is the lowest number of recorded homicide cases for a single twelve month period since 1976, the first year for which comparable data are available.
- Over the ten year period from 2006-07 to 2015-16, the number of homicide cases in Scotland fell by 52% (62 cases) from 119 to 57 (Table 1). Glasgow City accounted for almost one third (31%) of this decrease. In 2015-16, almost one quarter (14) of the 57 national recorded homicide cases occurred within Glasgow City.
- In 2015-16, 57 victims of homicide were recorded, 8% (5 victims) less than the 62 victims recorded in 2014-15 (Table 1). As at 31 March 2016, only one case of homicide recorded in 2015-16 was unresolved (Tables 13, 14 & 17).
- In 2015-16, 65 persons were accused of homicide and 86% (56) of them were male (Table 6). Of the 57 victims, 72% (41) were also male (Table 5).
- For each of the last ten years, the most common method of killing was with a sharp instrument. In 2015-16, a sharp instrument was the main method of killing for 51% (29) of homicide victims.

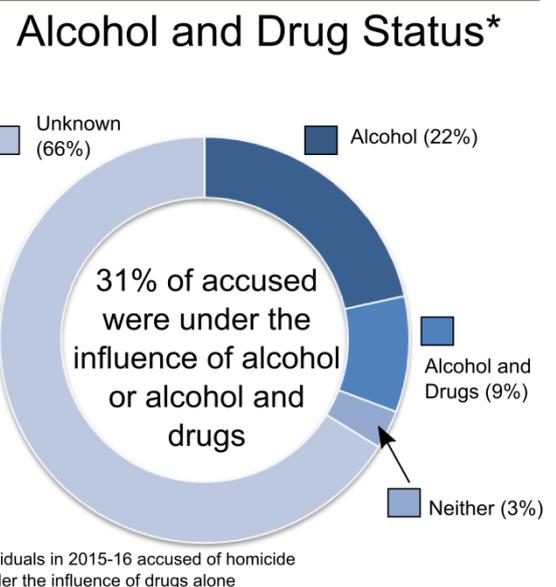
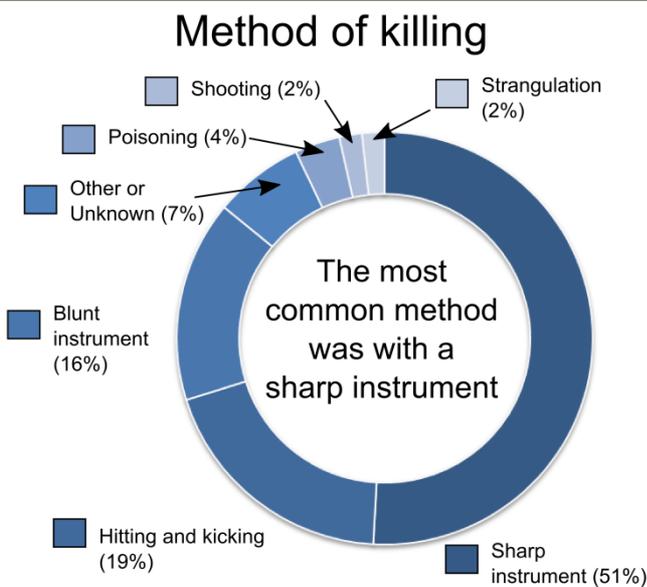
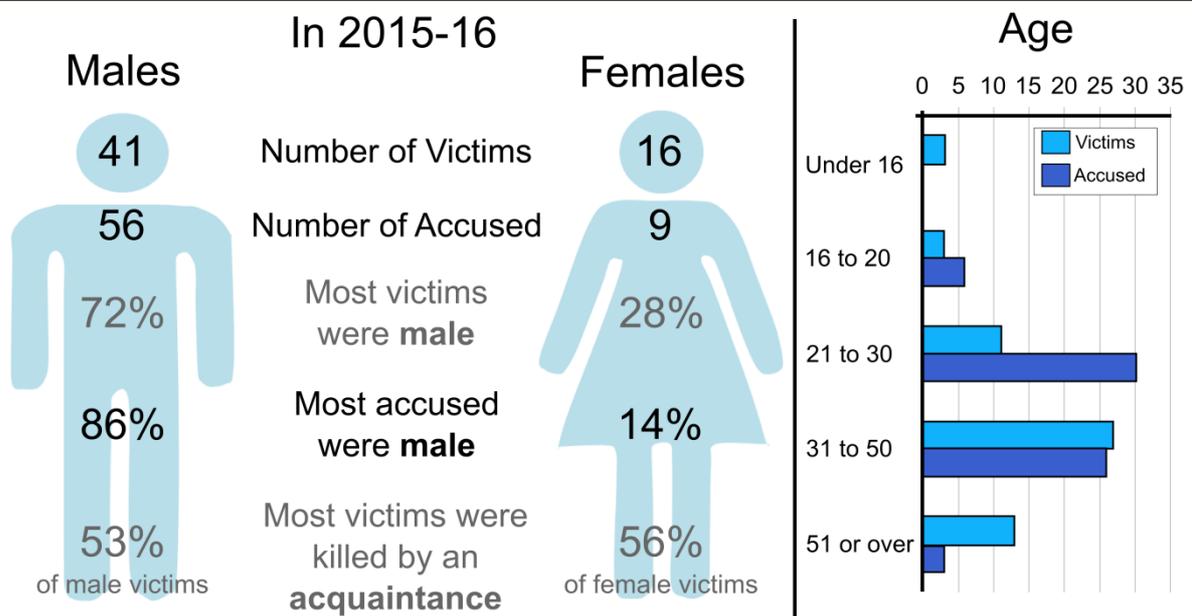
Homicide in Scotland 2015-16

The number of homicide cases in Scotland has fallen by half in the past 10 years.



2006-07

2015-16



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Background

The statistics used in this bulletin refer to cases recorded as homicide by Police Scotland, as at 31 March 2016. The bulletin includes all crimes of Murder and Culpable homicide (common law), with these two crimes collectively referred to as homicide throughout the bulletin. The associated tables to this bulletin can be downloaded from the Scottish Government [website](#).

A [glossary](#) in the annex provides a full list of key variables used throughout this bulletin and what they mean.

The statistics on homicides are used to inform [National Outcome 9](#) – ‘we live our lives safe from crime, disorder and danger’ as well as [The Strategy for Justice in Scotland](#). These statistics are also used by a wide range of stakeholders to monitor trends, for policy research and development, and for research purposes. The *Homicide in Scotland* statistical bulletin forms part of a series of bulletins produced by the Scottish Government on the criminal justice system, which can be found at: <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice/Publications>.

This bulletin excludes cases involving death by dangerous/careless driving, illegal driving resulting in a fatal accident and corporate homicide. The Scottish Government also publishes *Recorded Crime in Scotland*, which includes data on the wider homicide etc. category. The 2015-16 edition of *Recorded Crime in Scotland* can be accessed [here](#).

The data in this bulletin are collected separately from the data included in the *Recorded Crime in Scotland* bulletin. For the crimes of murder and culpable homicide, data are extracted from police recording systems at a different time point and so there may be discrepancies in the information presented here and the *Recorded Crime in Scotland* bulletin. In this bulletin homicide cases are included against the year in which the crime that led to the homicide is first recorded by the police. This is not necessarily the year in which the victim dies (and hence is recorded as a homicide), the year in which the accused is brought to trial for the crime, or the year in which the case is finally disposed of by the courts.

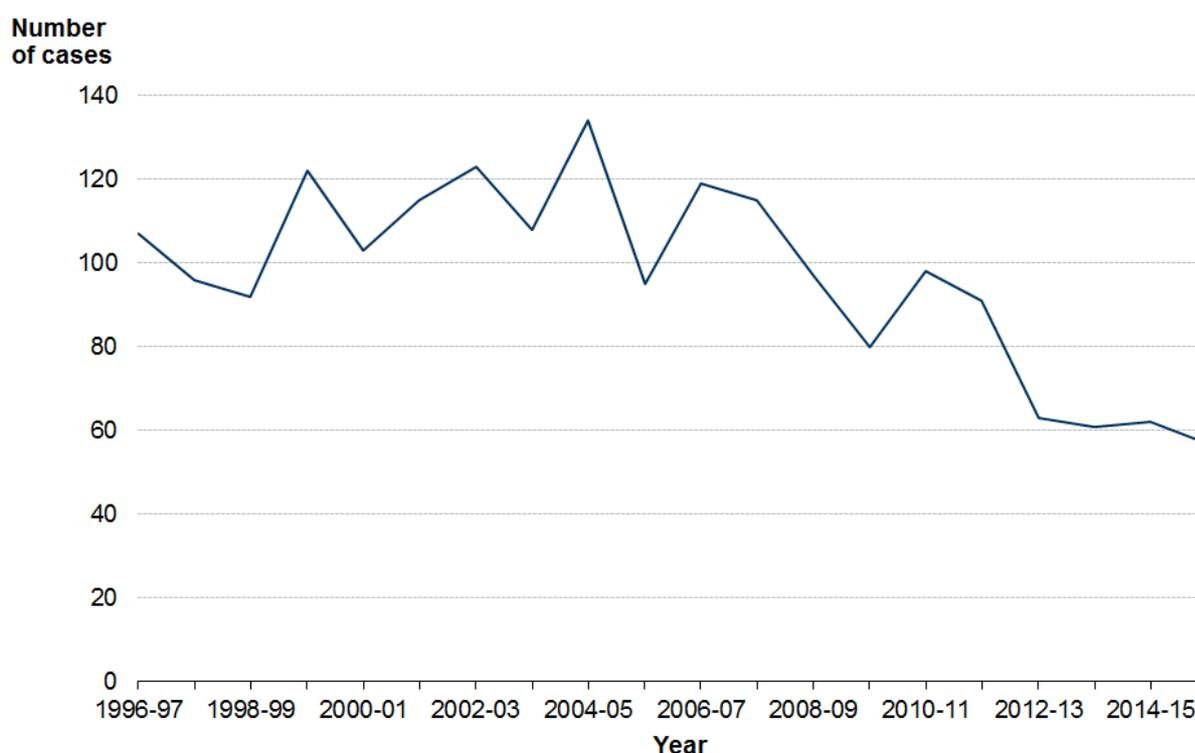
Commentary

Homicide cases

Table 1 and Charts 1, 2

- The number of homicide cases recorded by the police in Scotland decreased by 8% between 2014-15 and 2015-16, from 62 to 57. This is the lowest annual number of homicide cases since 1976, the first year for which comparable data are available ([Chart 1](#)). While there is a relatively large amount of year on year fluctuation due to the small numbers involved, the figures show an overall downward trend since the mid 2000s.

Chart 1: Cases recorded as homicide by the police, Scotland, 1996-97 to 2015-16



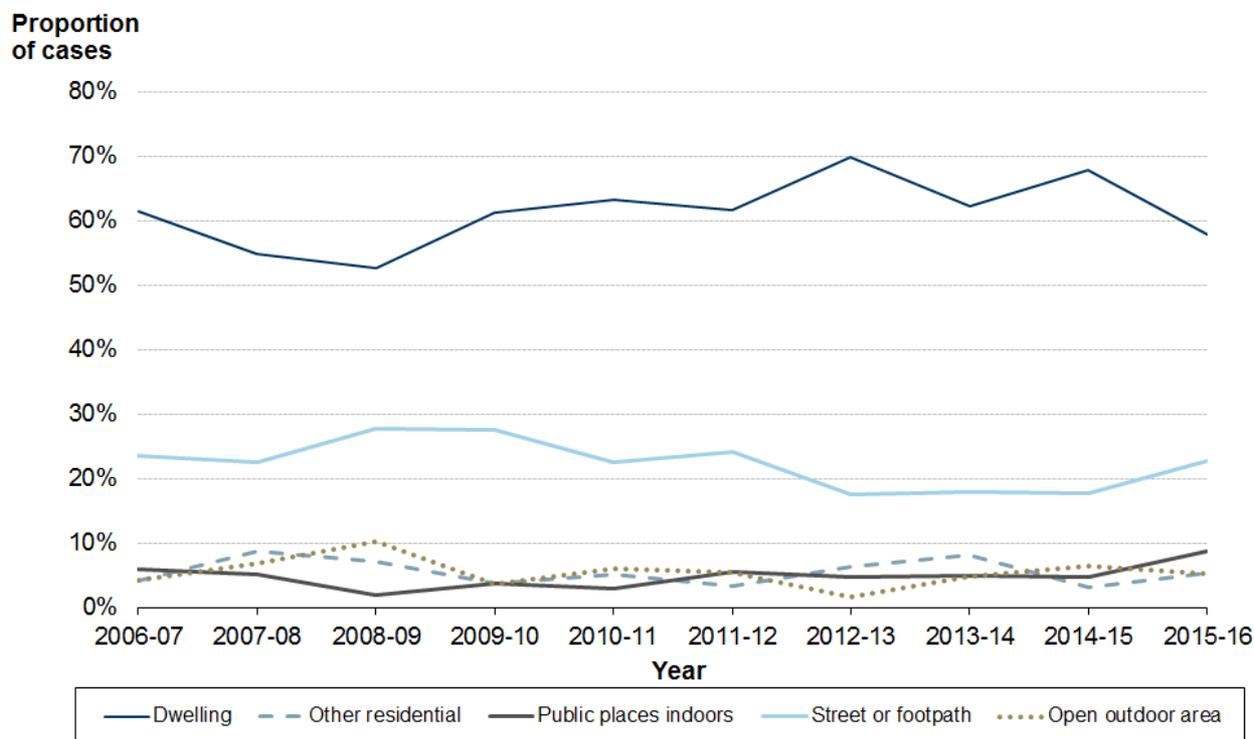
- Homicide cases involving more than one victim are very rare, and none were recorded in 2015-16 ([Table 1](#)). Of the 57 homicide cases recorded, 8 involved more than one accused person.

Table 1: Summary table of homicide cases, victims and accused persons, Scotland, 2006-07 to 2015-16

| | 2006-07 | 2007-08 | 2008-09 | 2009-10 | 2010-11 | 2011-12 | 2012-13 | 2013-14 | 2014-15 | 2015-16 |
|--------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Total number of cases | 119 | 115 | 97 | 80 | 98 | 91 | 63 | 61 | 62 | 57 |
| Cases by number of victims: | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | 118 | 115 | 95 | 78 | 97 | 90 | 63 | 60 | 62 | 57 |
| 2+ | 1 | - | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | - | 1 | - | - |
| Total number of victims | 120 | 115 | 99 | 82 | 100 | 93 | 63 | 62 | 62 | 57 |
| Cases by number of accused: | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | 90 | 88 | 67 | 53 | 68 | 66 | 45 | 47 | 49 | 48 |
| 2 | 14 | 16 | 19 | 20 | 19 | 13 | 11 | 8 | 9 | 7 |
| 3+ | 14 | 8 | 8 | 6 | 10 | 10 | 6 | 6 | 4 | 1 |
| unsolved | 1 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | - | - | 1 |
| Total number of accused | 169 | 149 | 132 | 121 | 142 | 127 | 85 | 90 | 80 | 65 |

- In 2015-16, Glasgow City had the highest number of homicide cases (14), representing 25% of the Scottish total. Although victims may not necessarily reside in the local authority where the homicide took place, Glasgow City has more than double its share based on population (11% of the Scottish population¹). Glasgow City has also witnessed a large fall in homicides of 58% since 2006-07, accounting for almost one third of the overall national decrease.

Chart 2: Location of homicide cases, where known, Scotland, 2006-07 to 2015-16



¹ Population estimates are as at mid-year 2015 from the National Records of Scotland (<http://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/population/population-estimates/mid-year-population-estimates>)

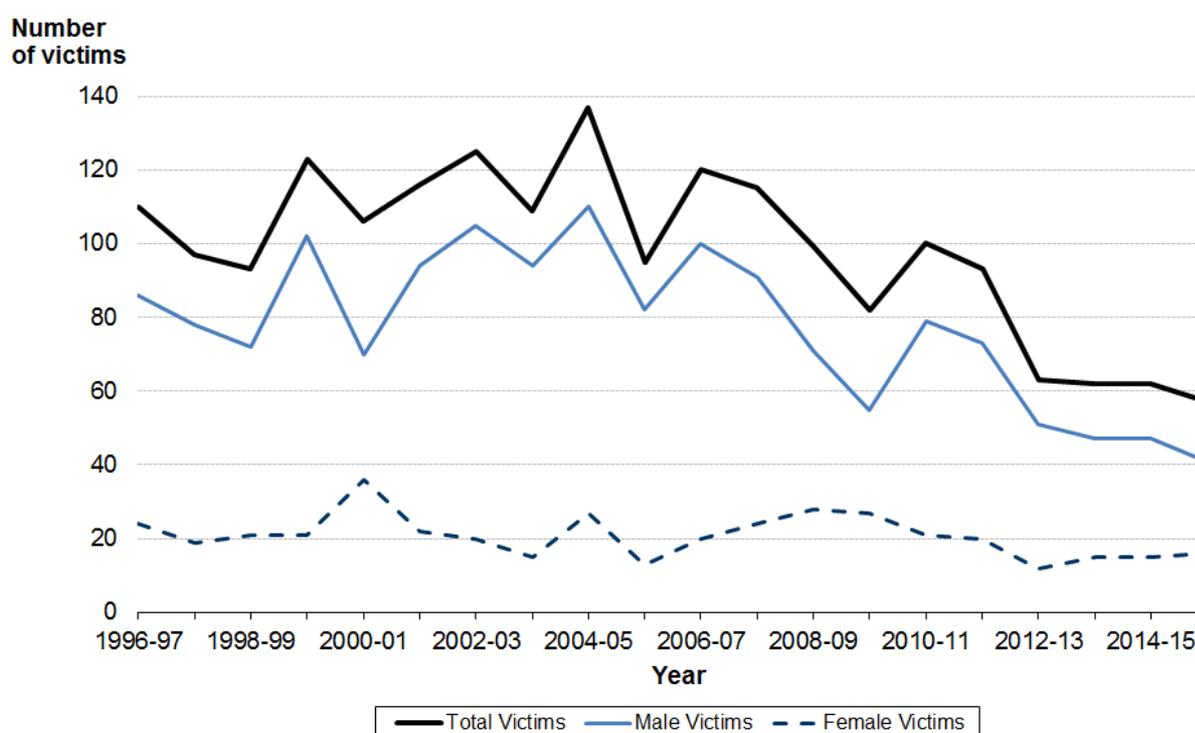
- In 2015-16, 63% of homicides occurred within a residential location (dwelling and other residential), 28% in outdoor public places (street, footpath and open outdoor area) and 9% in indoor public places ([Chart 2](#)).

Victims of homicide

Charts 3, 4

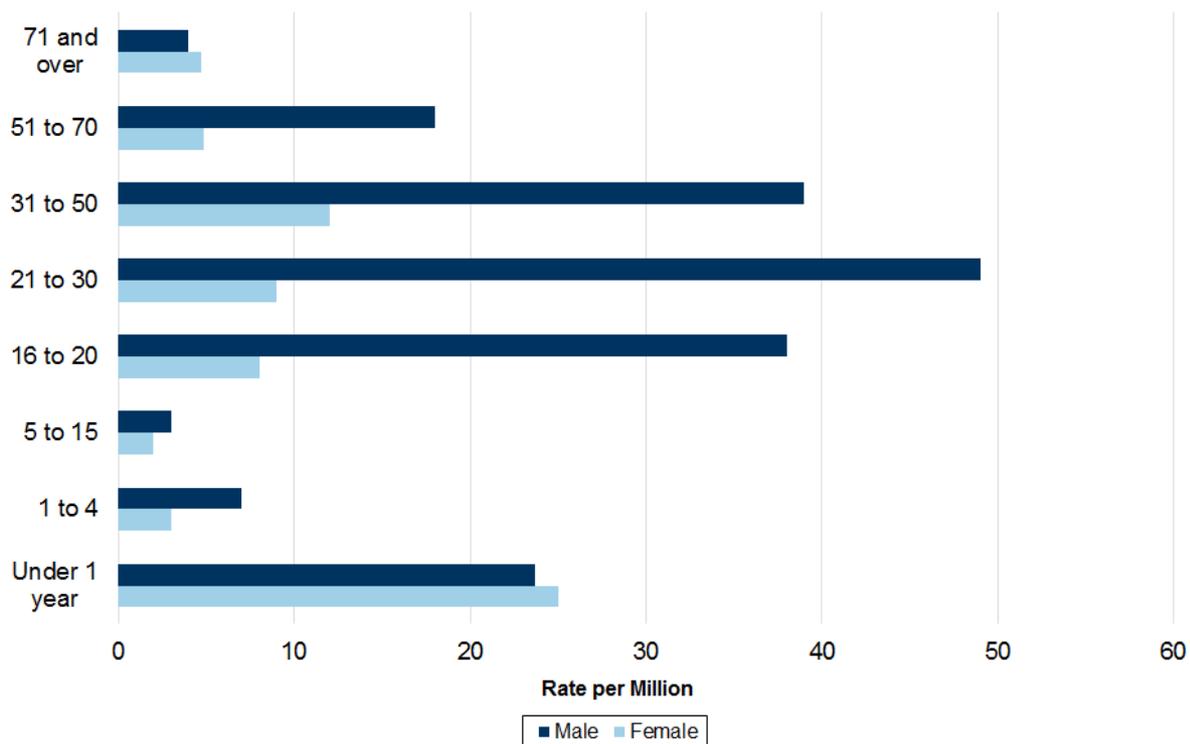
- Between 2014-15 and 2015-16, the number of homicide victims in Scotland decreased by 8%, from 62 to 57. This is the lowest number of recorded homicide victims for a single twelve month period since 1976, continuing the overall downward trend observed since the mid-2000s ([Chart 3](#)).

Chart 3: Total number of victims and victims by gender, Scotland, 1996-97 to 2015-16



- In 2015-16, there were 41 male victims, representing 72% of all homicide victims. Males are more likely to be victims compared to women, with an overall rate for males of 16 victims per million population, nearly three times the rate for females (six victims per million population).
- [Chart 4](#) shows the victimisation rate by age group and gender for homicides since 2006-07. For males aged 1-70 years, the victimisation rate is much higher than for females. The rate for males peaks in the 21 to 30 age group.

Chart 4: Age profile of homicide victimisation rate by gender, Scotland, 2006-07 to 2015-16

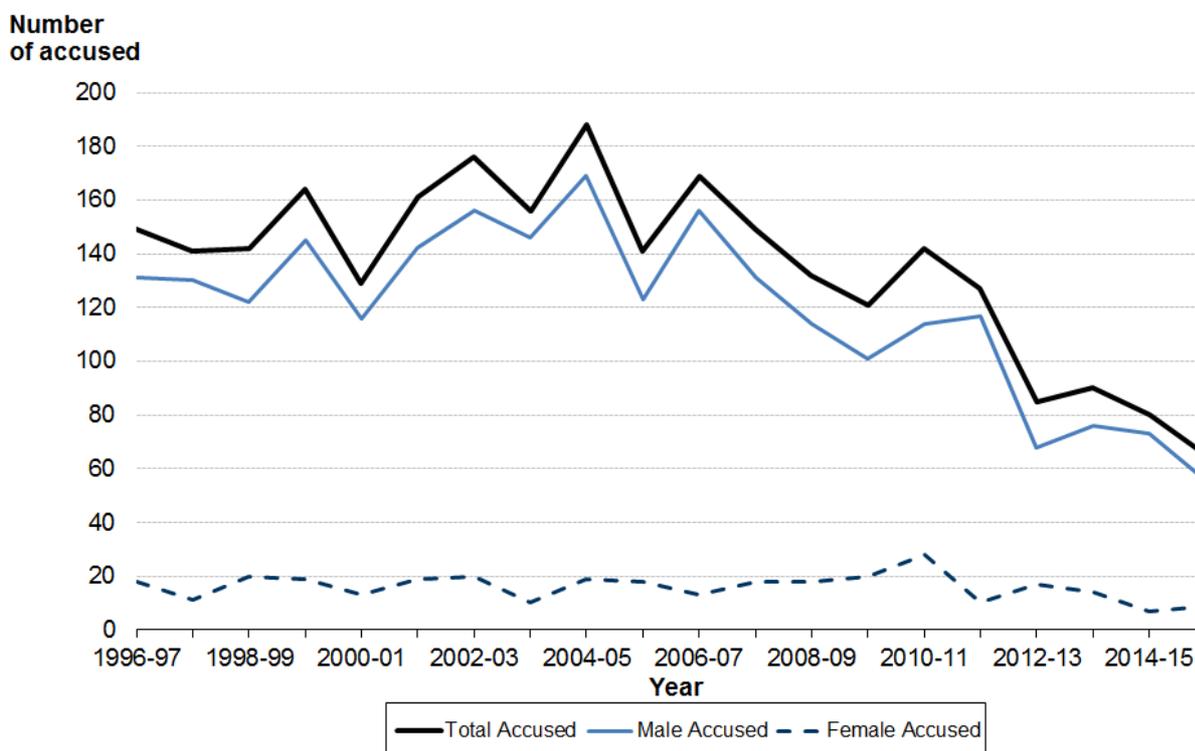


Persons accused of homicide

Chart 5, 6

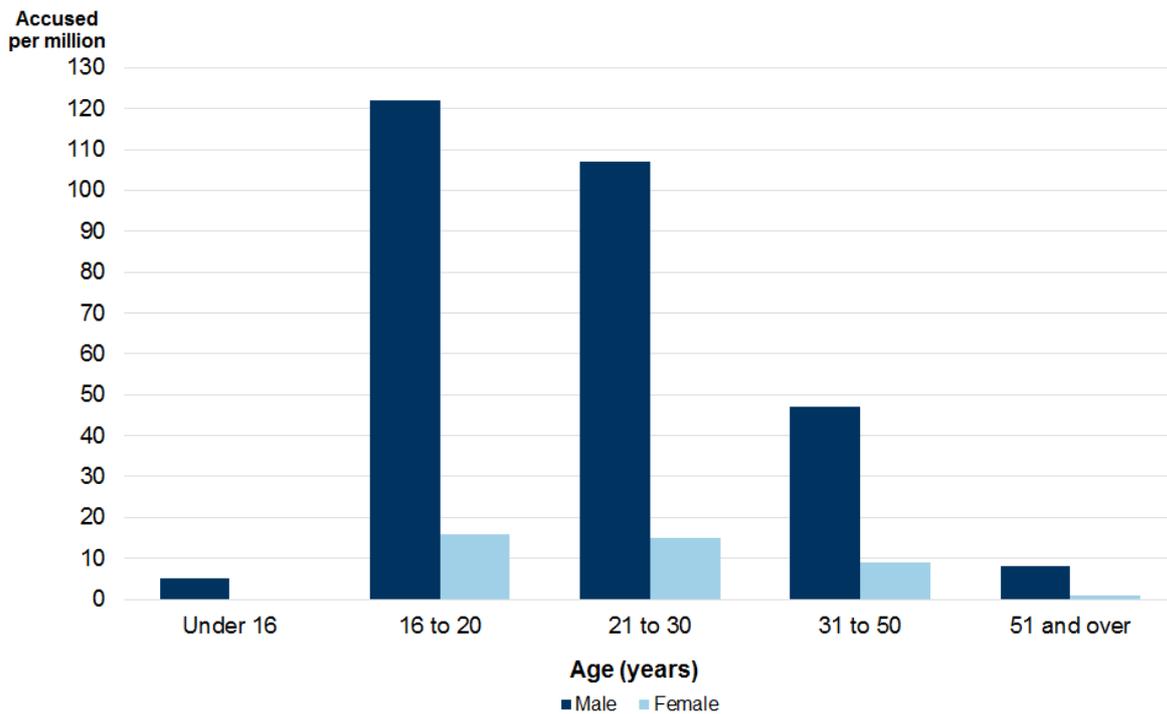
- The number of people accused of homicide has shown an overall downward trend since the mid-2000s ([Chart 5](#)). In 2015-16, there were 65 persons accused of homicide, 15 less than in 2014-15 and the lowest number of persons over this time period.
- The vast majority of persons accused of homicide since 1996-97 have been male, making up 85% of all accused in 2015-16.

Chart 5: Total number of accused and total number accused by gender, Scotland, 1996-97 to 2015-16



- In 2015-16, the total number of individuals accused of homicide equated to 12 per million population. This is the lowest rate recorded in the last ten years.
- For both males and females, the rates for those accused of homicide were highest for the 21 to 30 age group, at 71 per million population and 11 per million population respectively.
- [Chart 6](#) shows that the rates of males accused of homicide per million population were considerably higher across all age groups than for females in the period from 2006-07 to 2015-16.

Chart 6: Age and gender profile of persons accused of homicide per million population, Scotland, 2006-07 to 2015-16

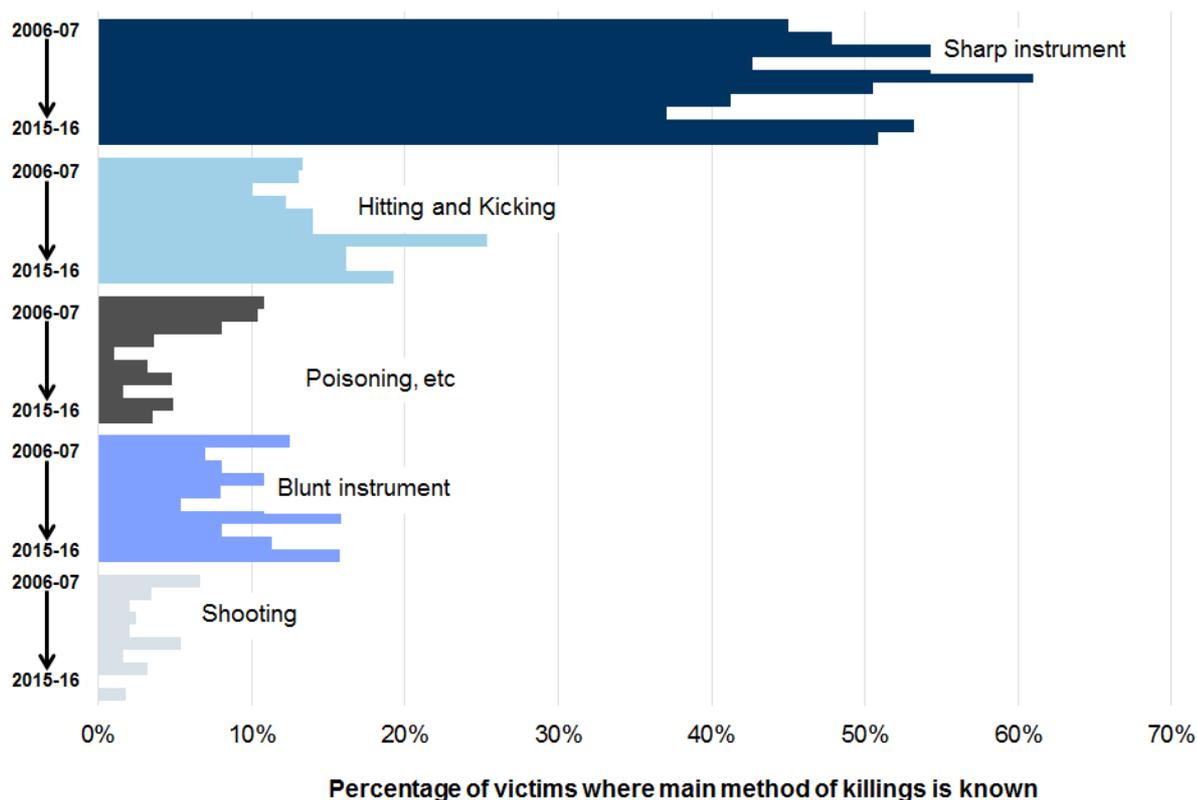


Method

Chart 7

- [Chart 7](#) shows that the most common main method of killing in each of the last ten years was with a sharp instrument. This includes 51% of homicide victims in 2015-16. The next most common main method was hitting and kicking, accounting for 19% (11) of homicide victims in 2015-16.
- Homicide by shooting, while very rare, has shown a decrease over the last ten years, from eight in 2006-07 to one case in 2015-16.

Chart 7: Victims of homicide by main method of killing, 2006-07 to 2015-16



Relationship of main accused to victim

Charts 8-10

- In the majority of cases, the victim and main accused were known to each other, representing 71% of homicide cases solved in 2015-16. The victim and accused were not known to each other in 14 cases (25%). This latter group includes 4 cases where the victim was known to the accused and 10 cases where the victim was not known to the accused. Of those cases where the victim and accused were known to each other, 54% were acquaintances and 13% were partners or ex-partners.
- [Chart 8](#) and [Chart 9](#) show the percentage of homicides for male and female victims by their relationship to the main accused since 2006-07. The highest percentage of male victims was consistently those killed by an acquaintance. For female victims the largest percentage since 2006-07 has tended to be killed by a partner or ex-partner, however in 2015-16 the highest percentage was for killed by an acquaintance (56%). Due to the smaller number of female victims overall, there can be greater fluctuation in the proportions of the accused’s relationship to the victim.
- A total of 41 children under the age of 16 years were victims of homicide between 2006-07 and 2015-16 (in cases where there was an accused person). Of these, 68% were killed by one of their parents. Since 2006-07 there have been 14 victims aged under one year old and in all but two cases

(where there was an accused person) the main accused was a parent (Table 9).

Chart 8: Male victims of homicide by relationship to main accused, where relationship known, Scotland, 2006-07 to 2015-16

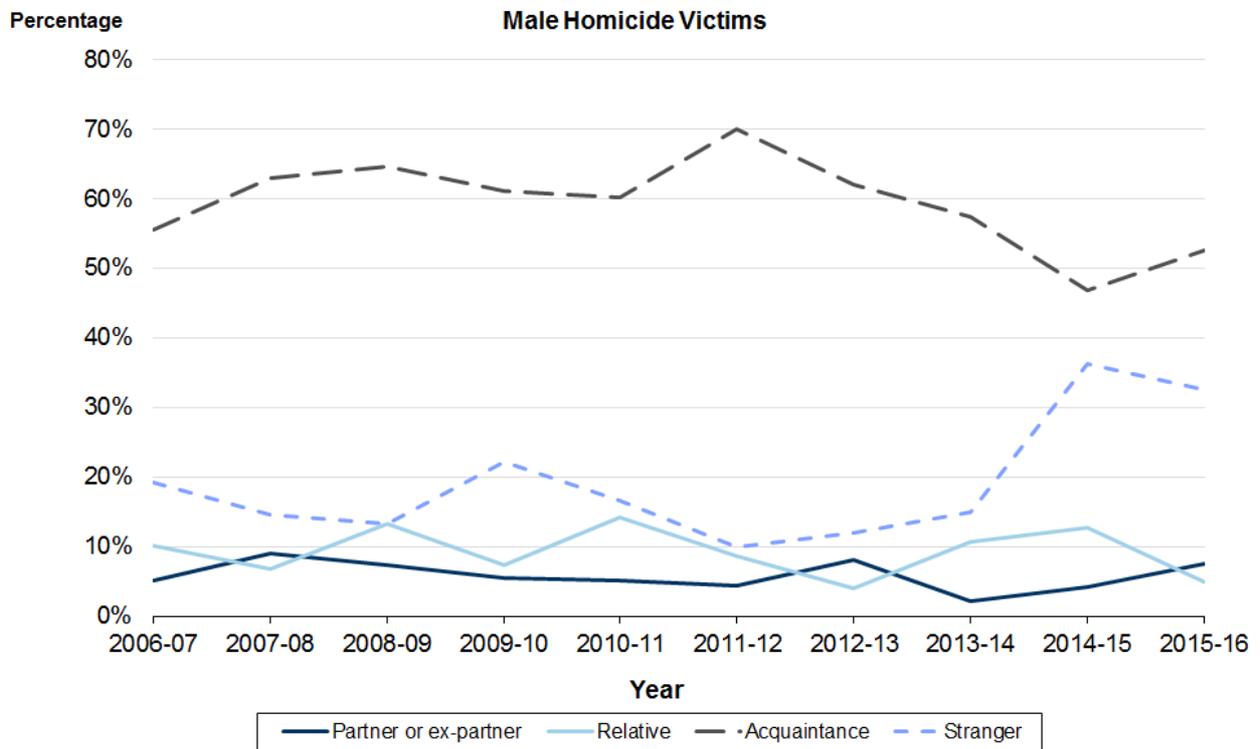
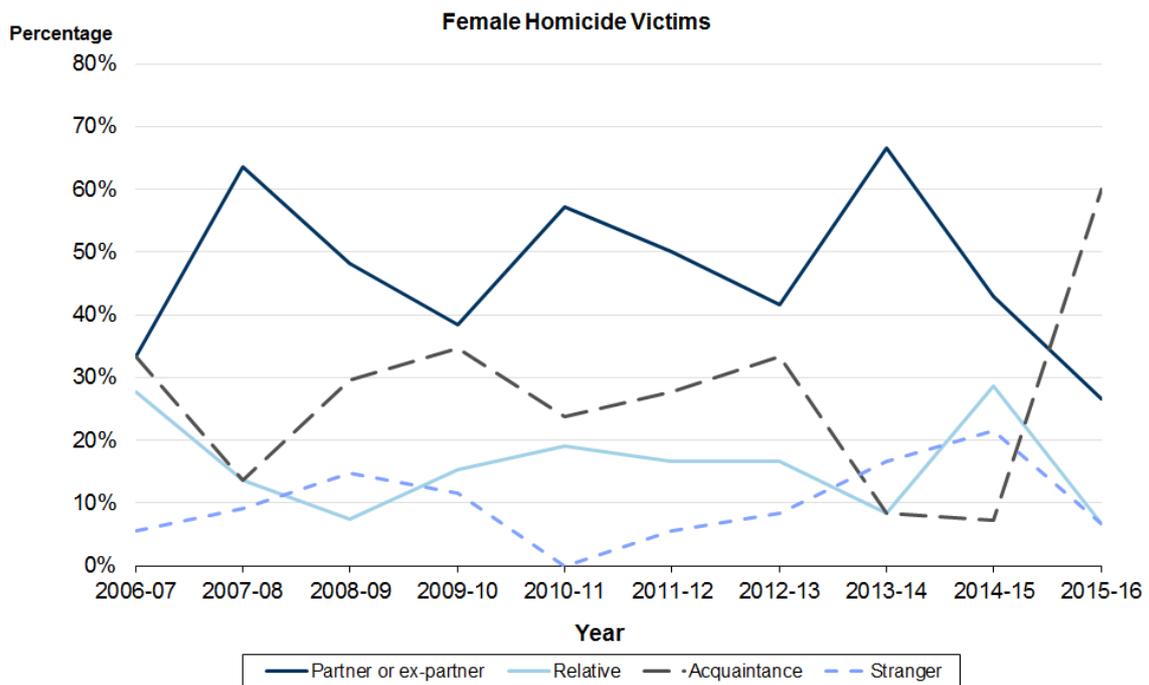
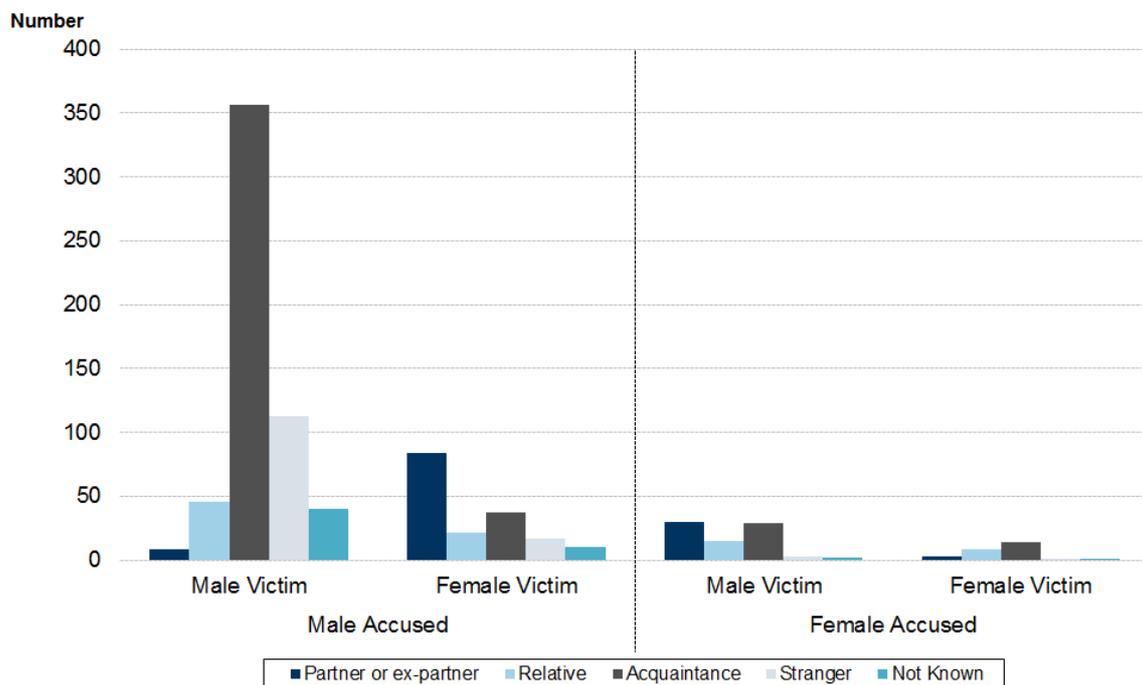


Chart 9: Female victims of homicide by relationship to main accused, where relationship known, Scotland, 2006-07 to 2015-16



- For all homicides recorded in the last ten years, just over half (51%) of the female victims aged between 16 and 70 years were killed by their partner or ex-partner, 28% were killed by an acquaintance and 7% were killed by a stranger. For male victims aged 16 to 70 years, only 6% were killed by their partner or ex-partner. Just under two thirds (62%) of male victims aged 16 to 70 years were killed by an acquaintance and 18% were killed by a stranger (Table 9).
- Of the 25 people aged over 70 who were victims of homicide between 2006-07 and 2015-16, 17 were female and nine were male. Older people were most likely to be killed by an acquaintance (eight victims, of which six were male). Of the six victims killed by their son or daughter, five were female.
- [Chart 10](#) shows that the majority of all homicide cases (67%) recorded between 2006-07 and 2015-16 involved males killing males. Cases where the main accused and main victim were both female accounted for just 3% of the total number (Table 10).

Chart 10: Relationship between main accused and victim, where relationship known, Scotland, 2006-07 to 2015-16



Main motive

- The most common reasons recorded for committing homicide in the ten year period between 2006-07 and 2015-16, were fight or quarrel, and rage or fury, with half (50%) of all victims in solved cases killed in such circumstances. In

2015-16, this figure was 57% (32 victims), with similar proportions for male and female victims.

- In the period 2006-07 to 2015-16, 81% of all female victims were killed in dwellings, compared with 55% of males. The most common set of circumstances in which females become victims of homicide are in a dwelling, in a rage or fight with a partner or ex-partner (20% of female victims). Location is less of a factor for male victims, whose killings are typically a result of a rage or fight with an acquaintance either in a dwelling (20% of male victims) or not in a dwelling (15% of male victims) (Table 12).
- Seven victims were reported to have been killed in drug-related homicide cases in 2015-16, all of which were male (Table 13). None of the homicides recorded in 2015-16 were reported to have had a homophobic motivation and one was reported to have had a racial motivation (Table 14). In all homicide cases in the ten years leading up to 2015-16, 3% had a homophobic or racist motivation.

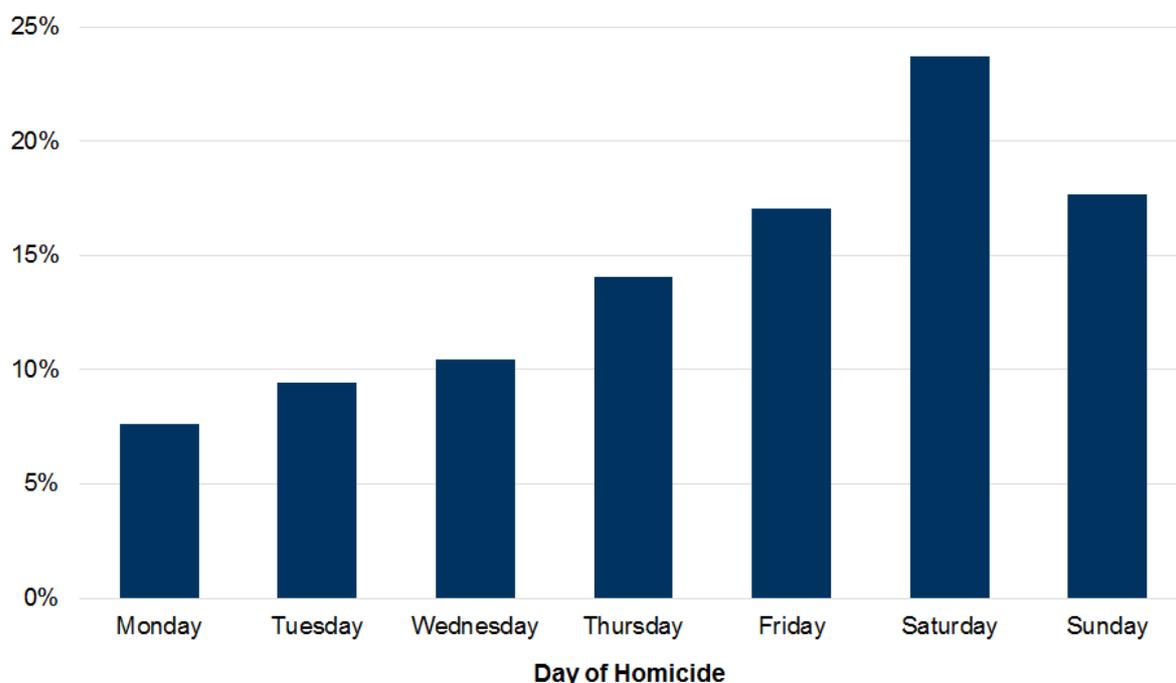
Use of alcohol and drugs

Chart 11

- In 2015-16, the alcohol and drug status of the accused was unknown for 43 persons, 66% of all accused. Two accused persons (3%) were reported to have been neither under the influence of alcohol nor drugs at the time of the homicide.
- Nearly a third (31%) of the 65 persons accused in homicide cases in 2015-16 were reported to have been under the influence of alcohol or alcohol and drugs at the time of the homicide. Of these 65, 14 (22%) were under the influence of alcohol, 6 (9%) were under the influence of both alcohol and drugs and none were under the influence of drugs alone.
- In the ten year period between 2006-07 and 2015-16, around half (48%) of all accused were reported to have been under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs at the time of the homicide. This is similar for both males (48%) and females (50%).
- In 2015-16, in 78% of cases where the main accused was under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs, the victim was also known to have been under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs.
- [Chart 11](#) shows that over the last ten years 24% (118) homicides, where the accused was suspected of being under the influence of alcohol, occurred on a Saturday. Furthermore, more than half of homicides where the accused

was under the influence of alcohol (58% or 291) occurred during the weekend (i.e. Friday, Saturday and Sunday) (Table 18).

Chart 11: Distribution of the accused of homicide under the influence of alcohol² by day of the week 2006-07 to 2015-16



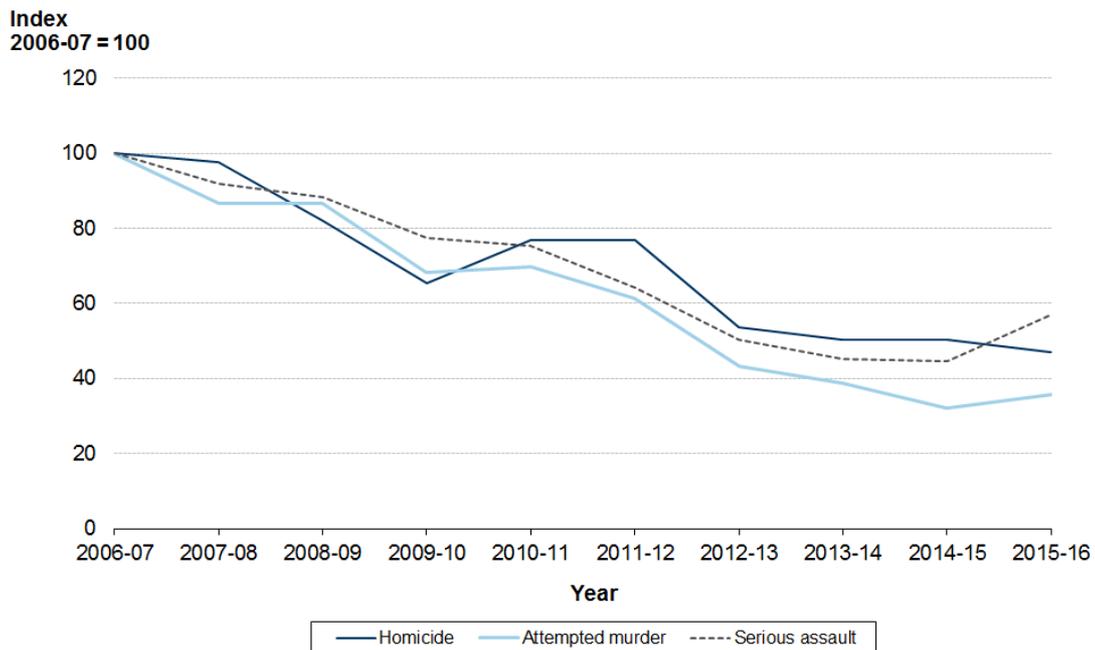
Comparator statistics

Chart 12

- This bulletin has reported a decreasing trend in homicides. [Chart 12](#) shows this trend and compares it to the trend in attempted murder and serious assaults. This latter information is taken from the [Recorded Crime in Scotland, 2015-16](#) bulletin. Over the ten year period between 2006-07 and 2015-16, the reduction in levels of homicide has broadly followed a similar fall in levels of attempted murder and serious assault.

² Includes both under the influence of alcohol and under the influence of alcohol and drugs.

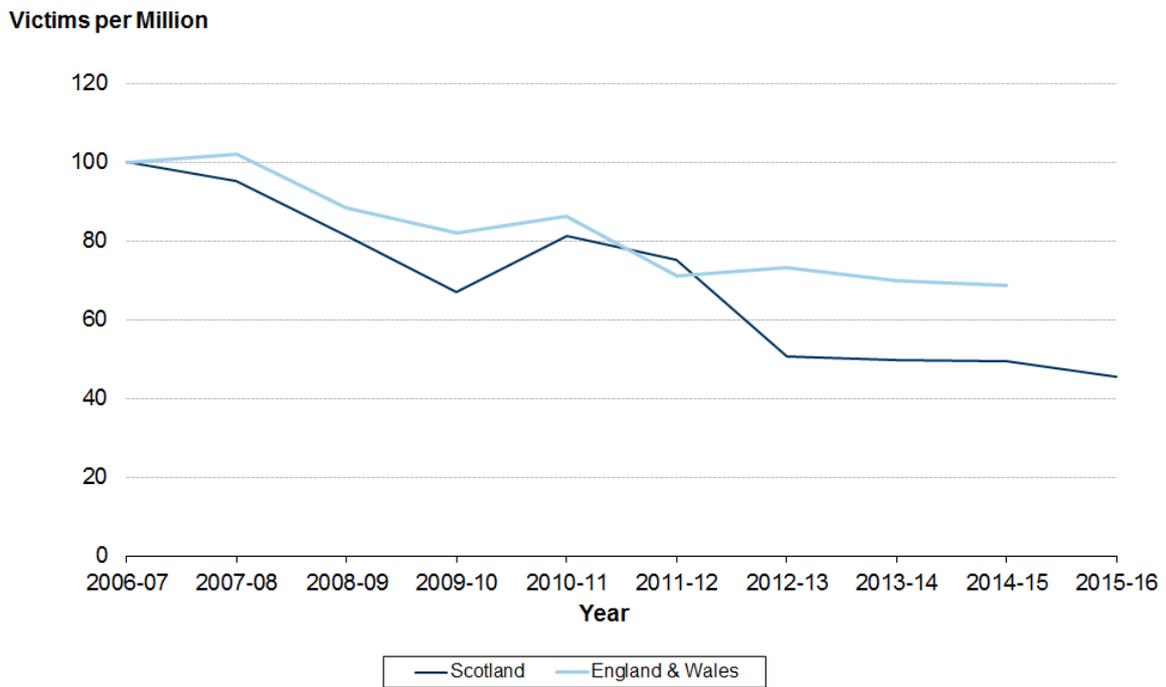
Chart 12: Indices in selected crimes of violence, Scotland, 2006-07 to 2015-16 (Index 2006-07 = 100)



- [Chart 13](#) uses an index to evaluate the trends in homicide victimisation rates in Scotland and England & Wales³ between 2006-07 and 2015-16 (Note that 2015-16 England & Wales data are not yet available). Direct comparisons with England & Wales are not possible due to uncertainty around different counting and classification conventions. However we can compare the change over time, which is broadly similar to the downward trend in Scotland since 2006-07.

³ Data England & Wales was taken from the 2014-15 Violent Crime and Sexual Offences bulletin:
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/compendium/focusonviolentcrimeandsexualoffences/yearendingmarch2015>

Chart 13: Change in the victimisation rate in Scotland (2006-07 to 2015-16) and England and Wales (2006-07 to 2014-15) (Index 2006-07 = 100)



Annexes

Data Quality Statement

The statistics presented in this bulletin are based on a snapshot of Police Scotland's live homicide database at an agreed date. Police Scotland maintain a continuously updated list of homicide cases that the Scottish Government uses to populate its own database of homicides in Scotland.

Since it is a 'live' system, amendments to Police Scotland's database can arise after the data has been submitted to the Scottish Government (for example, a serious assault may be reclassified to a culpable homicide some time after the crime was first recorded by the Police). To allow for these changes, we currently make retrospective revisions to earlier data for all years since the formation of Police Scotland (i.e. 2013-14 onwards). There are three such cases in 2014-15 - as such the total number of homicide victims for 2014-15 has been revised upwards from 59 (published last year) to 62 (as presented in this publication see [Table 1](#)).

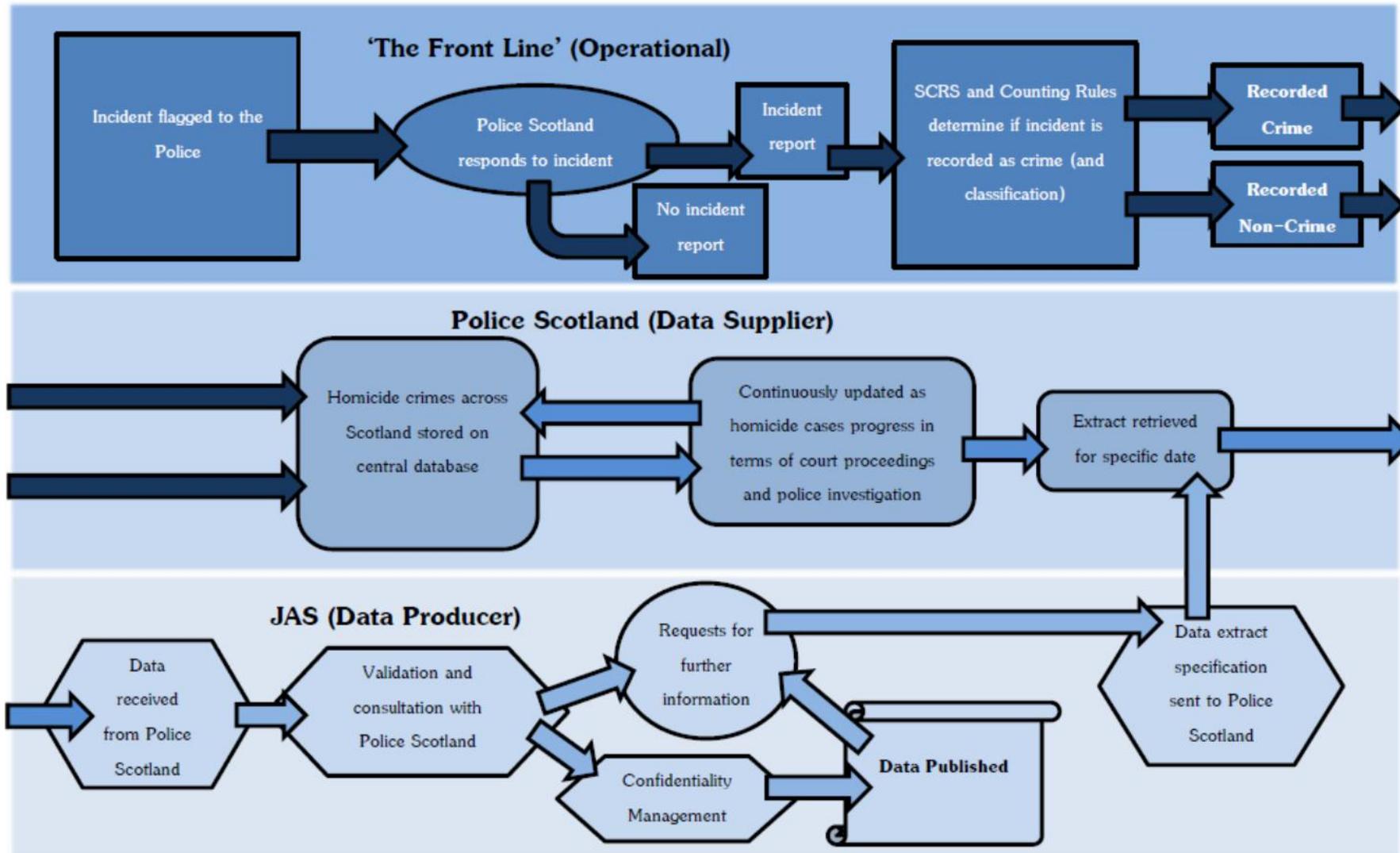
Going forward, we will review our longer term historical data with that held by Police Scotland with a view to identifying whether any further revisions are required for years prior to 2013-14. Any additional changes are likely to be small and will not change the trends and characteristics of homicide presented in this bulletin. The outcome of this review and any amendments required to data for years up to 2013-14, will be included in the Homicide in Scotland 2016-17 bulletin.

The data provided by Police Scotland go through a series of validation checks. Anything flagged through these checks is sent back to Police Scotland for explanation.

A full process map of how data are collected for this publication is shown in [Chart 14](#), starting from incident reporting by police officers at an operational level to the publication of this bulletin.

Homicides are very high profile crimes, and – in many instances – discussed openly in public. Both Scottish Government statisticians and homicide specialists within Police Scotland consider it unlikely that any major errors exist (as opposed to the standard practice outlined above for making revisions).

Chart 14 Homicide in Scotland data process



Police Scotland Management Information

In addition to the National Statistics, Police Scotland publish management information on the number of homicides reported by the police. This is presented within their Quarterly Management Information Reports, which are available from Police Scotland's website:

<http://www.scotland.police.uk/about-us/our-performance/>

These reports are produced to demonstrate Police Scotland's commitment to transparency (alongside other regular reporting activity to the Scottish Police Authority). The information within these reports is presented on a cumulative quarterly basis, with the first quarter of a reporting year containing 3 months of data (from April to June), the second containing 6 months of data (from April to September) etc. The reports are typically published within 2 months of the period to which they refer.

The Quarterly Management Information Reports make clear to users that the data they contain on recorded homicides is based on the administrative data available to Police Scotland at that time and not the National Statistics. The annual National Statistics published by the Scottish Government on police recorded crime are based on management information which has undergone further quality assurance work, including additional dialogue with Police Scotland, in line with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Stakeholder Consultation

From April-June 2015, Justice Analytical Services conducted a consultation of stakeholders and users of the suite of publications based on returns from Police Scotland, which includes the Homicide in Scotland statistical bulletin series. The main objectives of this consultation were to: understand who the users are, what their requirements for data are and the benefits of any new suggested structure and content; guide the future strategy for how, when and what we publish regarding police data; and identify improvements that will ease and increase the use of police data in the future.

Reflecting our commitment to user engagement and to the establishment of a broad evidence base to inform our future publications, we used a variety of consultation methods to capture the views of both expert and non-expert users. This included one-to-one interviews, user group discussions, social media interaction and written surveys.

A report on the results of the consultation can be found at the link below:
<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice/scotstatcrime/StakeCon/RCUC2015>.

Justice Analytical Services reflected on the feedback received from the consultation during the production of this bulletin and the previous one. This included continual development of new graphics to highlight the main points conveyed by these statistics.

We always welcome feedback on the content of our statistical bulletins and users are welcome to submit their comments to: JusticeAnalysts@gov.scot.

If you would like to be kept informed about developments in crime statistics, we suggest registering with ScotStat: <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/scotstat>.

Other Notes

Justice Analytical Services publishes a work plan each year detailing the programme of work planned over the current financial year period. The work of the division covers both an agreed forward programme of analytical priorities, and routine analytical work particularly related to the compilation of National and Official Statistics, ongoing project management and knowledge transfer activity.

Analytical planning to develop a programme for the financial year 2016-17 followed a structured process of engagement with policy colleagues which was designed to closely align our analysis with current policy priorities and to the delivery of outcomes. The work plan is available via the following link: <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Research/by-topic/crime-and-justice/JAS-Programme-2016-17>.

Clearly, only a limited selection of tables can be included in any statistical bulletin. Further analysis of homicides in Scotland can be supplied on request. In certain cases a fee is charged. For details of what can be provided, please telephone Mark Bell on 0131 244 5459 or e-mail JusticeAnalysts@gov.scot.

Glossary

| | |
|---|--|
| Accused | <p>(i) a person who has been arrested in respect of an offence initially classified as homicide and charged with homicide; or</p> <p>(ii) a person who is suspected by the police of having committed the offence but is known to have died or committed suicide prior to arrest/being charged.</p> |
| Accused - Co-accused | <p>For those cases with multiple accused which are currently recorded as homicide, the co-accused are included in the statistics in this bulletin regardless of whether or not they were ultimately charged with homicide.</p> |
| Accused - Main Accused | <p>Where more than one person is accused of committing a homicide, the main accused is taken as the person who received the severest penalty. If more than one possible main accused is identified, then the first person recorded on the statistical returns that is submitted annually by Police Scotland is selected.</p> |
| Alcohol Status | <p>On 1 April 2013, Police Scotland changed their operational practices when reporting on the alcohol status of the accused and victim. Individuals are no longer referred to as being 'drunk' and are referred to as 'being under the influence of alcohol'.</p> |
| Current and initial classification of Homicide | <p>Some cases initially classified as homicide will, on the basis of criminal proceedings, no longer be classified as such at a later date.</p> |
| Date | <p>A homicide case is included against the year in which the crime that led to the homicide is first recorded by the police. This is not necessarily the year in which the victim dies, the year in which the accused is brought to trial for the crime, or the year in which the case is finally disposed of by the courts.</p> |

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Homicide Case | A single case of homicide is counted for each crime involving murder or culpable homicide (common law) irrespective of the number of victims or accused. |
| Main Method | Only one method of killing has been selected for each victim. The main method is taken to be the most serious of those methods recorded. Methods of killing have been ranked in the following order of priority: shooting, sharp instrument, blunt instrument, hitting and kicking, strangulation or asphyxiation, drowning, fire, poisoning and other or unknown. |
| Main Method - Poisoning | The main method of “poisoning” includes the use of drugs, gas and carbon monoxide poisoning. |
| Main Method - Sharp instrument | The term “sharp instrument” includes knives, broken bottles, swords, sharpened screwdrivers and any other pointed or edged weapons. |
| Main Motive | The motive behind committing a homicide is as determined by the police. |
| Main Motive - Drug-Related | A “drug-related” homicide is defined as a homicide motivated by a need to obtain drugs or money for drugs, a homicide of a consumer or supplier of drugs, a homicide committed in order to steal proceeds of the drugs trade or a homicide as a consequence of rivalry between users and/or dealers within the drugs trade. |
| Relationship | When considering the relationship of the main accused person to the victim, the term “partner or ex-partner” includes: spouse, separated or divorced spouse, cohabitee, lover, boy/girlfriend and ex-boy/girlfriend. |
| Solved cases | The distinction between “solved” and “unsolved” homicide cases is where an accused individual is attached to it (solved) and where an accused individual has not been identified (unsolved). |

Victim - Main Victim

If a person is accused of killing more than one victim, the main victim is the person for whom the accused received the severest penalty for killing. Where more than one possible main victim can be identified, then the first person recorded on the statistical return is selected as the main victim.

Statistics Designation

The United Kingdom Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

- meet identified user needs;
- are well explained and readily accessible;
- are produced according to sound methods; and
- are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed.

The Assessment Report, which was published in June 2011, can be accessed via the following link:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment/assessment-reports/assessment-report-119---statistics-on-homicide--domestic-abuse--firearm-offences-and-firearm-certificates-recorded-by-the-police-in-scotland.pdf>

Under the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, the estimated costs of responding to statistical surveys and data collection are to be published.

The estimated cost of compliance for supplying and validating the data for this bulletin is: £2,300.

Details of the calculation methodology are available on the Scottish Government Crime and Justice website at:

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice/costcalculation>.

A National Statistics publication for Scotland

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Correspondence and enquiries

For enquiries about this publication please contact:

Mark Bell,
Justice Analytical Services,
Telephone: 01312445428,
E-mail: justiceanalysts@gov.scot

For general enquiries about Scottish Government statistics please contact:

Office of the Chief Statistician, Telephone: 0131 244 0442,

E-mail: statistics.enquiries@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

How to access background or source data

The data collected for this statistical bulletin

- are available in more detail through Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics
- are available on the Scottish Government website
- may be made available on request, subject to consideration of legal and ethical factors. Please contact <email address> for further information.
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