

Explanatory notes – Coroners Court of Victoria

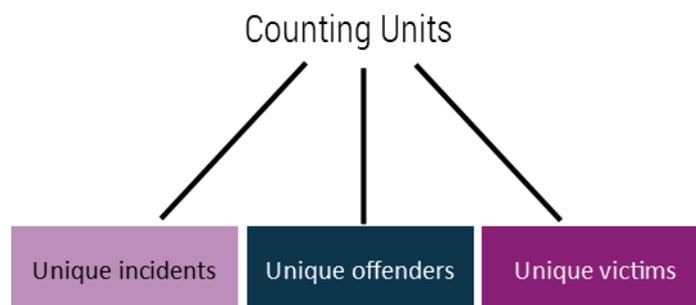
Data source

The Coroners Court of Victoria data included in this report was extracted from the Victorian Homicide Register (VHR).

The VHR is a database maintained by the Coroners Court of Victoria (the Court) which contains detailed information regarding the offender(s) and deceased(s) in all Victorian homicides reported to the Court since 2000.

The VHR record for a homicide death includes a core dataset of variables and an enhanced dataset. The core dataset encompasses the basic information that is available to coders when the death is first reported to the Court. This usually includes the name, age and sex of the offender(s) and deceased(s), the details of the relationship between them (if any), the location of the homicide incident, the location of the death, the cause of death and the mechanism of death.

The enhanced dataset encompasses the information that is usually only available in a sufficiently reliable and detailed form after the Court has received the coronial brief of evidence and any other medical records, witness statements and/or other relevant material that the Coroner has requested, and the coronial case has been closed. The enhanced dataset comprises variables across eight domains which relate to both the offender and the deceased, including inclusion criteria (relating to whether the death was included in the Victorian Systemic Review of Family Violence Deaths), socio-demographics, identity, context, mental and physical illnesses, mental health treatment, and service contacts. The enhanced dataset also includes detailed information about the mechanism of death, criminal justice system outcomes, information regarding family violence risk factors, and information regarding any history of family violence.



The above diagram depicts how data outputs concerning the Coroners court has three different counting units: unique incidents (an incident from which a single or multiple deaths resulted), unique offenders (the number of people suspected of or charged with causing or contributing to the death of another person) and unique victims (the number of people who died as a result of an incident).

Reference period

The data extracted from the VHR includes all homicides reported to the Coroners Court of Victoria between 1 July 2015 and 30 June 2020. This reference period is based on the date the homicide incident occurred.

This data includes cases where the coronial investigation has not yet been closed, where only the core dataset is available. As such, the data in this report is restricted to the core dataset of the VHR and does not include the extended dataset.

Live data

The VHR is a live database based on open and closed criminal and coronial investigations and is subject to re-classification and updating as further information becomes available.

Terminology and abbreviations

Family violence related: the homicide occurred in circumstances where there was a familial relationship between the homicide offender and the homicide victim, as defined by the Family Violence Protection Act 2008 (Vic), whether or not there was an identified history of family violence prior to the homicide. This may include current or former intimate partners or kinship relationships as defined by the Victorian Indigenous Family Violence Taskforce (2003).

Homicide incident: an incident of violence from which single or multiple deaths may have resulted. The date of the homicide incident may be different to the date of a death in circumstances where injuries were inflicted upon a person during a homicide incident, but the death occurred as a result of those injuries at a later date.

Homicide offender: unique people who have been suspected of or charged with causing or contributing to the death of another person during a homicide incident. This includes individuals who were charged but where the criminal outcome may not yet be known, where there has been a finding of guilt of murder or a lesser charge, where the individual has been found not-guilty by reason of mental impairment or where the individual has been acquitted due to findings of self-defence. This also includes individuals who have not been charged due to self-defence or mental impairment and may include a person who has died or suicided after the homicide incident.

Homicide victim: a person who died as the result of a homicide incident.

Mechanism of death: the primary means by which the death was caused.

Blunt object – an object was used to inflict the fatal injury by striking and transfer of force.

Bodily force – the fatal injury was inflicted without the use of a weapon, such as via an assault using hands and/or feet. This includes strangulation inflicted using the body (e.g. hands).

Firearm – the fatal injury was inflicted through the discharge of a firearm. This does not include the firing of arrows, which are classified under 'sharp object'.

Sharp Object – the fatal injury was inflicted using a sharp object which caused a penetrating or cutting injury. This could include a range of implements such as knives, bottles, razors or the pointed tip of an umbrella.

Threat to breathing – the death was caused by a deliberate restriction to breathing using an object or implement. The cause of the restriction may be from a range of methods including ligature strangulation,

suffocation using an object such as a pillow, drowning, or otherwise using an object to cause a restriction to breathing.

Other – this classification is used where none of the other mechanisms apply, or where there were multiple mechanisms which contributed equally to the cause of death.

Location of incident: the location where the homicide incident occurred.