

# THE VANCOUVER SUN

These records were obtained by  
The Vancouver Sun through a Freedom of  
Information or Access to Information request.

To read more exclusive Sun stories, and  
internal government documents, check out  
The Sun's Paper Trail blog at:

**[www.vancouversun.com/papertrail/](http://www.vancouversun.com/papertrail/)**

UNCLASSIFIED

## **Statistical overview of homicides in British Columbia 1997-2007**

Prepared by:

Criminal Analysis Section & Major Crime Section  
RCMP "E" Division, British Columbia

June 2008



*This page intentionally left blank*

UNCLASSIFIED

### Contents

Acknowledgments.....	- 2 -
Executive Summary.....	- 3 -
Statistical Overview of Homicide in British Columbia 1997-2007.....	- 4 -
Key Findings.....	- 4 -
Terms of Reference and Definitions .....	- 5 -
Homicide .....	- 5 -
Instances of "homicide": scoring rules.....	- 6 -
Coding individual cases.....	- 6 -
Jurisdiction .....	- 7 -

### Tables

British Columbia Homicide Statistics 1997-2007: Overall.....	- 8 -
Homicide Statistics, BC 1997-2007: Organized Crime in Context .....	- 9 -
Homicides related to Organized Crime, BC 1997-2007 .....	- 10 -
Homicides by Gun/Other Causes, BC 1997-2007 .....	- 11 -
Homicides by Victim Gender, BC 1997-2007.....	- 12 -
Homicides by Region (Overall and OC-Related), BC 1997-2007 .....	- 13 -
Homicides in the BC Lower Mainland, 1997-2007: a closer look.....	- 15 -
Homicides in the BC Lower Mainland, 1997-2007: OC-related.....	- 16 -

UNCLASSIFIED

### ***Acknowledgments***

Data for this project was compiled and scored by analysts from "E" Division Major Crime Section, the BC Integrated Gang Task Force and the Lower Mainland Integrated Homicide Investigation Team. Significant support and assistance was also provided by appropriately designated personnel from BC ViCLAS and from the police departments of the cities of Vancouver, Delta, Abbotsford, New Westminster, Victoria and Saanich, British Columbia. While many people took time to ensure that the data provided and the scoring choices made were consistent and reliable, C/M Carrie McPherson of "E" Division MCS deserves special mention for her hard work and focus in leading the project through the methodology design, data collection and data cleaning phases.

Analysis of the data set and preparation of the final report was conducted by "E" Division Criminal Analysis Section. "E" DCAS takes responsibility for any errors contained in the report and for the conclusions and analysis presented herein.

Comments and feedback are welcome and may be addressed to:

OIC Criminal Analysis Pacific Region  
Criminal Analysis Section  
RCMP "E" Division Headquarters  
5255 Heather Street  
Vancouver BC  
V5Z 1K6

UNCLASSIFIED

### ***Executive Summary***

This report catalogues and analyzes patterns from a total of 1160 homicides in British Columbia over the reporting period 1997-2007. Key findings of this report are:

- BC's overall homicide rate is currently stable both in absolute terms and as adjusted for population.
- Organized crime homicides in BC are increasing in real and relative terms, and now represent nearly two fifths of all BC homicides.
- Organized crime homicides have become a major problem outside the Lower Mainland since 2004. Previously, these homicides occurred only rarely in these regions of the province.
- Use of guns as a cause of death in homicide is stable at approximately one third of all cases over the reporting period, with two anomalous years.
- The overall gender profile of victims is changing due to the violent effects of organized crime, with male victims forming an increasing portion of the total.
- IHIT as a consolidated approach is now handling two-thirds of all Lower Mainland homicides and a slightly higher proportion of organized crime related homicides. Between Vancouver Police Department and IHIT the pattern of homicides by jurisdiction has been stable since 2003.

UNCLASSIFIED

### ***Statistical Overview of Homicide in British Columbia 1997-2007***

Contemporary policing in British Columbia is driven by an explicit focus on evidence-based, strategic operations. Major incidents of violent crime, particularly homicides, are central to operational and policy considerations regarding public safety in the province. Key factors and questions associated to the rate and characteristics of this most serious of crimes, of current relevance to police, to the public and to policy makers concerned with public safety include:

- The prevalence of violent crime, up to and including murder, occurring as a consequence of organized criminal activity, as a major public order concern
- Organized crime-related homicides as a manifestation of the underground criminal economy and as a bellwether regarding the rule of law
- The importance of identifying trends and anomalies within patterns of homicide (including patterns of motive, circumstance, or victim characteristics) which may alert and require either a tactical or systemic response

Comprehensive records providing extensive detail on homicides occurring within British Columbia now exist in reliable form for the past eleven calendar years (1997 through 2007 inclusive). This data is far richer than normally provided by existing national and provincial statistical reporting agencies in annual totals. However, in light of the operational and policy concerns noted above, this data has rarely been scrutinized in a manner which would assist in answering a number of key questions in the aggregate. In this we may include questions such as the proportion of BC homicides that are a consequence of organized crime, the breakdown of these crimes by geography, gender, and method, and important or emergent trends in homicide.

It is critical that those concerned with public safety be in a position to ask and answer these questions in a reliable, evidence-based manner. The absence of analysis of the data can otherwise be keenly felt in dialogue regarding violent crime which is by its nature susceptible to sensationalism.

This report, intended as an annual product from this point, provides an introductory summary and limited analysis of the BC homicide data between 1997 and 2007. Initiated by RCMP "E" Division Criminal Analysis and Major Crime Sections, it was produced as a collaborative venture amongst the police agencies of the province, and catalogues a total of 1160 homicide victims over the reporting period. Distinct from standard statistical counts, it includes missing persons where there is compelling evidence of foul play. The methodology of individual case review and coding allowed in addition for in depth resolution of certain data issues to minimize counting or allocation/assignment errors. The report is thus an improvement on existing information sources, but as an initial effort critique is welcomed to further improvements in subsequent releases.

### ***Key Findings***

The major insights derived from this analysis are detailed in the following paragraphs.

**BC's homicide rate is stable.** No statistically significant upward or downward trend in the overall homicide rate for the province can be observed. This is true whether one examines the absolute numbers of homicides or (taking into account population growth) the adjusted rate per 100,000 inhabitants. While the decline is not significant, per the population-adjusted rate homicide appears to be a marginally less frequent occurrence in the population by the end of the reporting period. The stable homicide rate is also true within each of the four areas of the

## UNCLASSIFIED

province demarcated by RCMP District boundaries (Lower Mainland, Island, Southeast and North).

As the reporting period covers the largest alleged serial killing episode in the history of the province, it is very possible that in the absence of these events the overall rate would have risen given the systemic upward pressure on the homicide rate being applied by organized criminal activity.

**Organized crime homicides in BC are increasing in real and relative terms.** Organized crime related (OC) homicides have increased over the reporting period while other homicides have decreased in absolute terms. OC homicides have nearly doubled as a proportion of all homicides since 1997 and now represent nearly two out of every five homicides.

**Organized crime homicides are now a major problem outside the Lower Mainland.** The slow if steady growth in organized crime-related homicides in the Lower Mainland contrasts with recent significant increases in other regions of the Province. In 2004, 2005, and 2006 approximately one-third or more of all OC homicides occurred outside the Lower Mainland. This pattern is particularly acute in the southern interior, although in that region 2007 OC homicides declined to pre-2004 levels.

**Use of guns as cause of death is stable.** No statistically significant upward or downward trend in prevalence of guns as murder weapons can be observed. The high rate in the single year of 2005 appears to be an anomaly; in all but two recorded years guns were identified as the murder weapon in approximately one third of all cases.

**The overall gender profile of victims is changing.** The proportion of male to female victims of homicide has increased since 1997, though not dramatically; female victims have dropped in absolute numbers while male victims have increased. This finding is likely the product of two factors: (a) a statistical anomaly (the presence of higher than usual numbers of female victims in the early years of the reporting period associated to the Missing Women Task Force investigation), and (b) the real growth in organized crime-related homicides over the entire reporting period with a corresponding increase in male victims who are overrepresented in this category of homicide.

**Within the Lower Mainland a stable jurisdictional pattern is emerging.** The 2003 creation of the Integrated Homicide Investigation Team concluded a period of several years in which the proportion of all LMD homicides handled by RCMP & non-VPD Municipal police departments rose. The overall pattern of homicides by investigative jurisdiction has since been relatively stable, IHIT handling approximately two-thirds of all LMD homicides (Vancouver Police handling one-third) and a similar but slightly higher proportion of OC homicides. The latter figure is more volatile due in part to smaller overall numbers.

## **Terms of Reference and Definitions**

### **Homicide**

In addition to the self-evident category of deceased persons presumed murdered, *homicide* was also applied to cases involving missing persons where there exist credible grounds to suspect foul play. *The reader should note that this decision impacts the comparability of the statistics in this report with those provided annually through Statistics Canada.*



UNCLASSIFIED

### Instances of "homicide": scoring rules

The major distinction drawn in the data set was that between "organized crime" (or "gang") related homicides and all other types. The goal was to identify those homicides which in the absence of organized criminal business and its associated structures may not otherwise have occurred. The analytical team was not bound by formal adherence to (e.g.) the definition established in CCC 467.1, or other pre-existing formal definitions of organized crime or gangs. The underlying philosophy was to identify the violent manifestations of criminal markets as they affect life in British Columbia.

Although it became apparent that there are always challenging real or hypothetical situations that defy easy categorization, the following rules were agreed by "E" DCAS and "E" MCS as providing a common-sense basis for distinction, and were shared with the participating parties of all agencies contributing to the data collection exercise.

- An *organized crime-related homicide* is a homicide that was a result of or was motivated by the association to, exploitation of, advancement or promotion of an organized illegal criminal activity or criminal group.
- Organized illegal criminal activity includes the unlawful production, trafficking, importation, exportation, sale or trading of illegal monies, substances, goods, and materials.
- The definition also includes crime committed in association to a criminal group, where two or more offenders otherwise associated through a criminal organization or gang are involved in the homicide, and the violent culture of that organization or gang may reasonably be said to have made the violence significantly more likely. An example of this would be a "swarming" or beating death of an otherwise unconnected person by two or more gang members.

### Coding individual cases

Cases were coded according to these scoring rules by analysts as *organized crime-related*, as due to *other causes*, or as *SUI/Unknown*.

The *organized crime-related* criterion was satisfied if one or more of the following characteristics were true of the circumstances of the homicide:

<i>Drug deal gone wrong</i>	<i>Innocent Victim of Gang Activity</i>
<i>Drug Dealer</i>	<i>Loan sharking</i>
<i>Drug Debt</i>	<i>Money Laundering</i>
<i>Drug Importer</i>	<i>Retaliation</i>
<i>Drug Production</i>	<i>Sex Trade</i>
<i>Drug related (only use when the specific activity is unknown)</i>	<i>Territorial Dispute</i>
<i>Drug Rip</i>	<i>Terrorism</i>
<i>Elimination of Competition</i>	<i>Trafficking – drugs</i>
<i>Enforcement/Intimidation</i>	<i>Trafficking – illegal goods</i>
<i>Fencing of stolen goods</i>	<i>Trafficking – weapons</i>
<i>Gang related (only used when the specific activity is unknown)</i>	<i>Unknown</i>
<i>Group Rivalry</i>	

UNCLASSIFIED

Attributes which would allow a score of *other causes* (elements besides organized criminal activity) included the following:

<i>Altercation</i>	<i>Jealousy</i>
<i>Anger</i>	<i>Mental illness</i>
<i>Contract Killing (not related to organized crime)</i>	<i>Serial Killer</i>
<i>Domestic (non-spousal)</i>	<i>Sexual</i>
<i>Domestic (spousal)</i>	<i>Substance Abuse</i>
<i>Financial Gain</i>	<i>Thrill</i>
<i>Hate Crime</i>	<i>Unknown</i>

The reader should note that illicit drug use itself (by either the victim or the perpetrator) as an aggravating factor was NOT sufficient to identify the crime as being organized crime-related, despite the commonly observed relationship between organized crime and the trafficking of illicit substances.

"Terrorism" does not fit perfectly within either broad category but a *priori* was assigned to *organized crime-related* due to its association with sustained, strategic law-breaking. No cases were so coded and a reasonable argument (in principle) could be made for creating a standalone category.

*SUI/Unknown* was employed on a limited number of occasions as a category for a limited number of cases where the need to apply "holdback" on case details applied, or indeed where the circumstances were genuinely unknown. The number of events to which this applied is insufficiently large to affect any of the overall conclusions.

### Jurisdiction

Scoring by investigating jurisdiction was normally straightforward. The reader should note several exceptions:

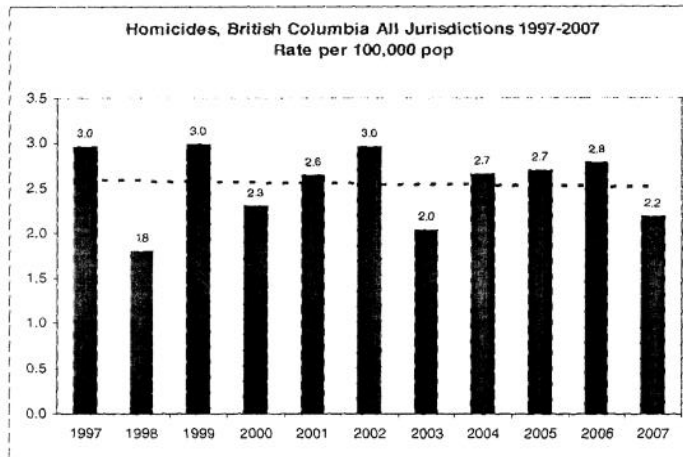
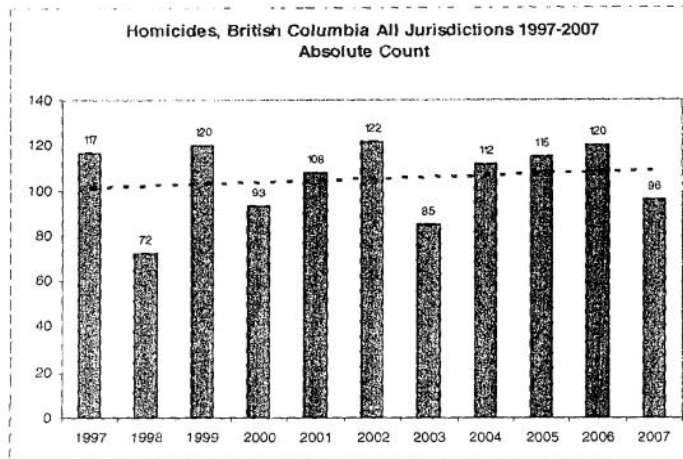
- The circumstances of victims identified in the context of the Missing Women's Task Force (2000 to date) provided a major challenge. The issue of establishing timelines for many of these cases has been well documented in other contexts and is not germane to this report. As a decision rule, all individuals formally identified as missing in association with MWTF have been assigned to the year and jurisdiction in which they were first reported missing.
- The establishment in 2003 of the Integrated Homicide Investigation Team (IHIT) serving all police jurisdictions in the Lower Mainland outside the City of Vancouver results in some anomalous indications on the charts that follow – in particular, RCMP investigations in the Lower Mainland, along with the majority of Municipal cases, are reflected in IHIT statistics from 2004 on.
- Exceptions to the IHIT coverage of homicide cases can be found in the charts, in cases which are not formal homicides but are in fact "missing person, suspect foul play."

UNCLASSIFIED

**British Columbia Homicide Statistics 1997-2007: Overall**

Key findings:

- No statistically significant upward or downward trend
- Absolute numbers show very minor increase
- Adjusted for population growth, numbers show minor decrease

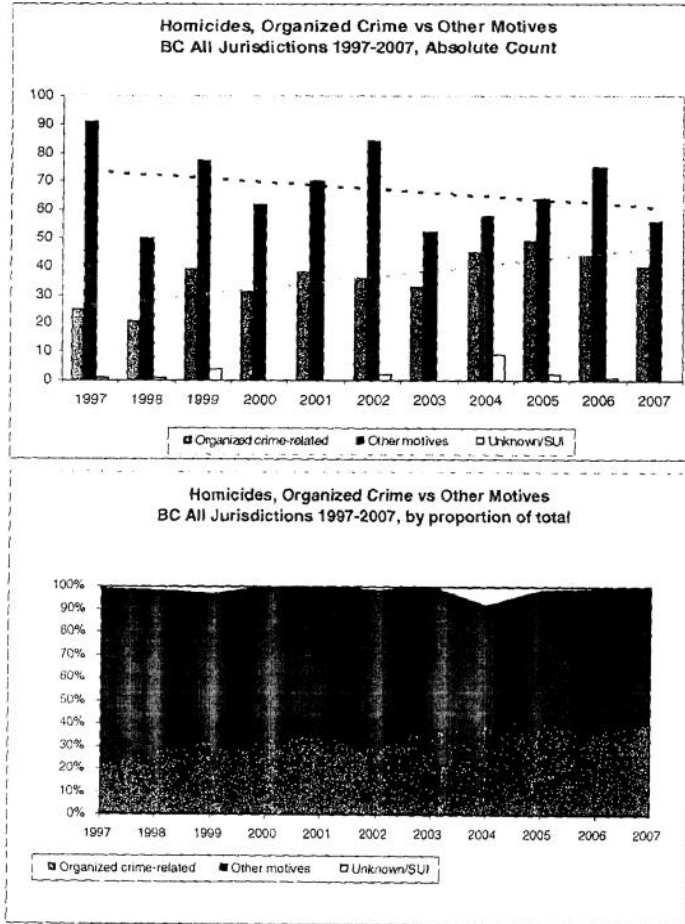


UNCLASSIFIED

### Homicide Statistics, BC 1997-2007: Organized Crime in Context

Key findings:

- Increase in organized-crime related homicides offsets stable/decreasing numbers of other homicides
- Proportion of all homicides that are related to organized crime has nearly doubled over the reporting period

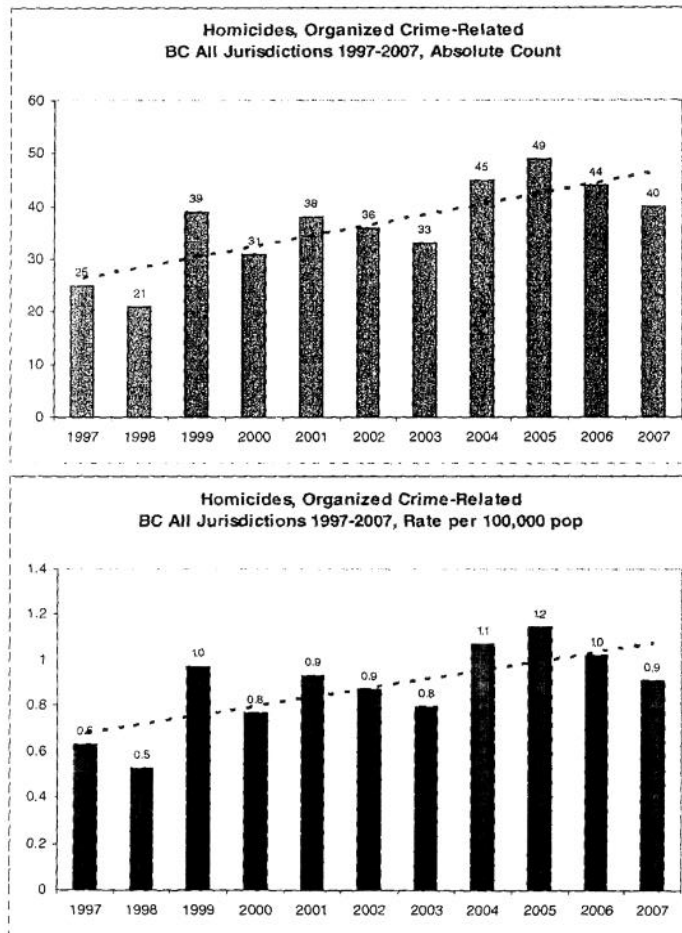


UNCLASSIFIED

### Homicides related to Organized Crime, BC 1997-2007

Key findings:

- General rise in absolute numbers over reporting period
- Increase cannot be accounted for by population growth
- Year-on-year fluctuations provide limited insight into situation; long term trend appears upward despite decline from peak in 2005



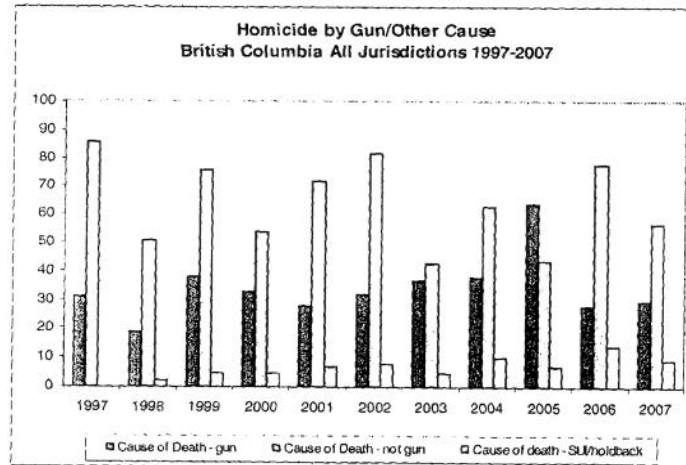
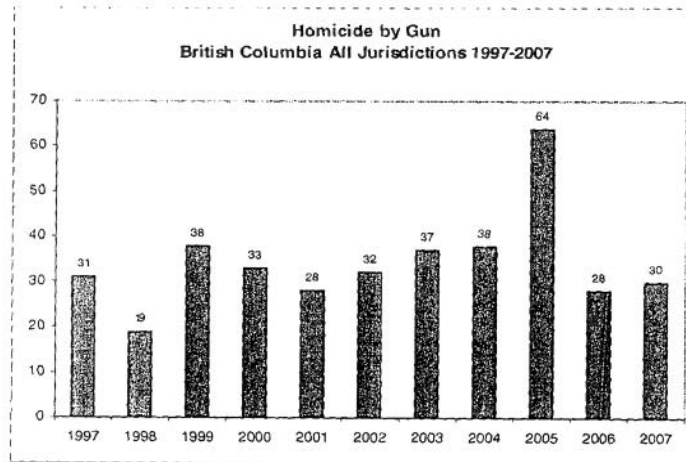
UNCLASSIFIED

### Homicides by Gun/Other Causes, BC 1997-2007

Key findings:

- No obvious upward or downward trend
- 1998 and 2005 are anomalous departures from otherwise steady pattern
- Firearms used in only a minority of cases in all years except 2005

← 2005  
is  
wrong  
a

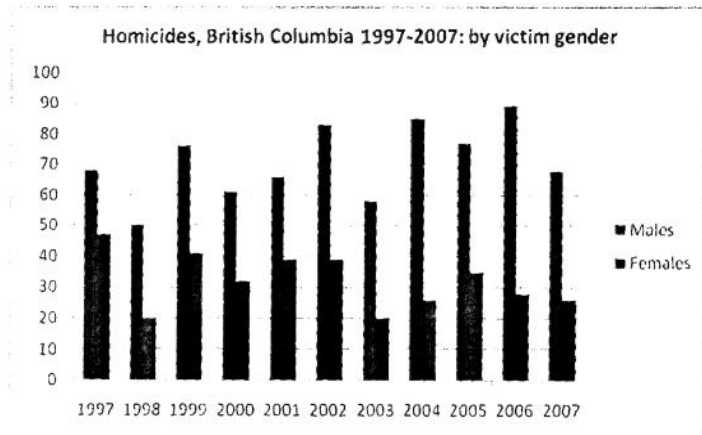


UNCLASSIFIED

### Homicides by Victim Gender, BC 1997-2007

Key findings:

- Absolute numbers have risen for men and fallen for women over the reporting period
- Increasing proportion of male victims likely a result of two factors: concentration of female victims identified by MWTF in early years of reporting period, & increase in organized crime-related homicide as proportion of total in latter years of reporting period



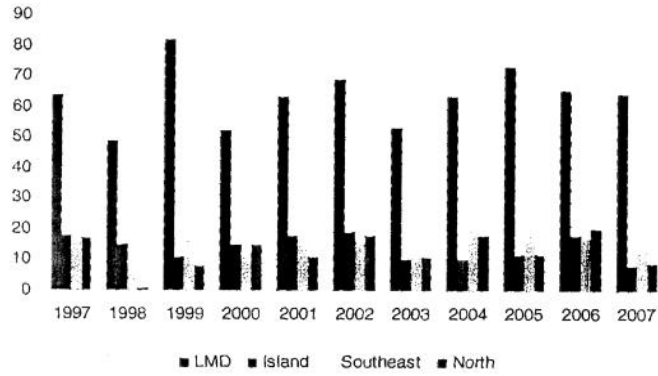
UNCLASSIFIED

**Homicides by Region (Overall and OC-Related), BC 1997-2007**

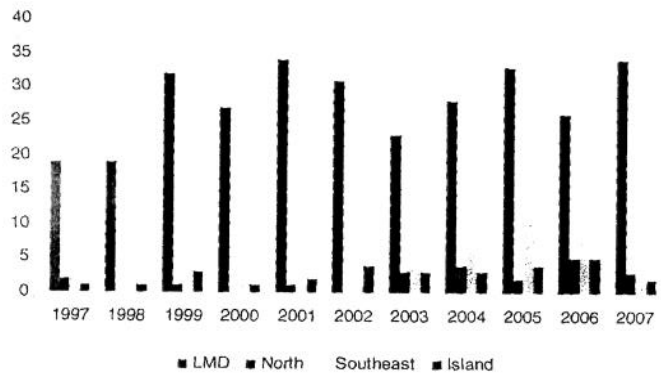
Key findings:

- LMD consistently accounts for the majority of homicides overall in the Province
- "Flat" pattern (neither an overall increase nor decrease of statistical note) holds in all four major regions for overall statistics

**Homicides by region, BC 1997-2007  
(RCMP District Boundaries)**



**Organized crime-related homicides by region,  
BC 1997-2007**



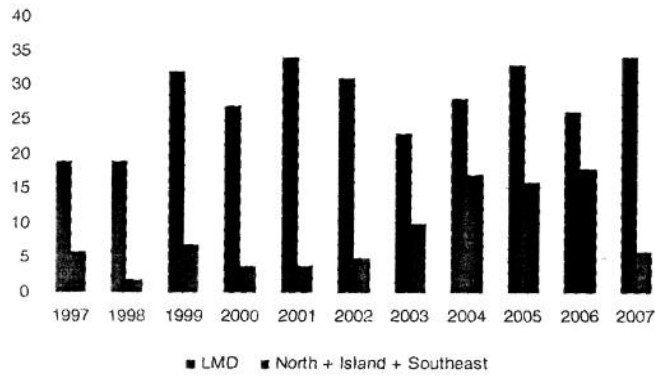


UNCLASSIFIED

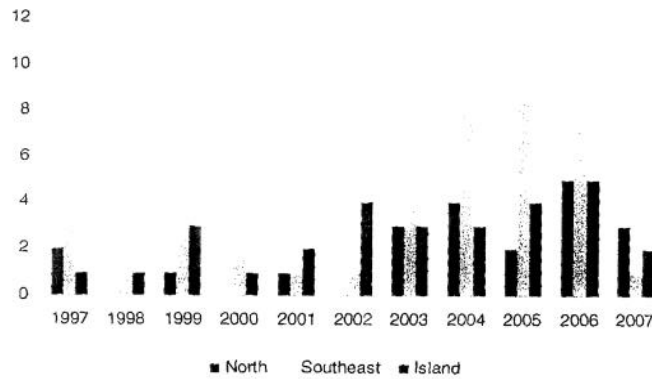
Key findings:

- Slow growth in organized crime-related homicides in the Lower Mainland contrasts with recent significant increases in other regions of the Province
- Past 5 years have seen increases in North, Southeast and Island Districts
- 2004, 2005, 2006: one-third or more of all OC-related homicides occurred outside the Lower Mainland
- Southeast District shows most growth, lapsing to prior levels only in 2007

**Organized crime-related homicides, BC 1997-2007,  
LMD vs. non-LMD comparison**



**Organized crime-related homicides  
by region, BC 1997-2007 excluding LMD**



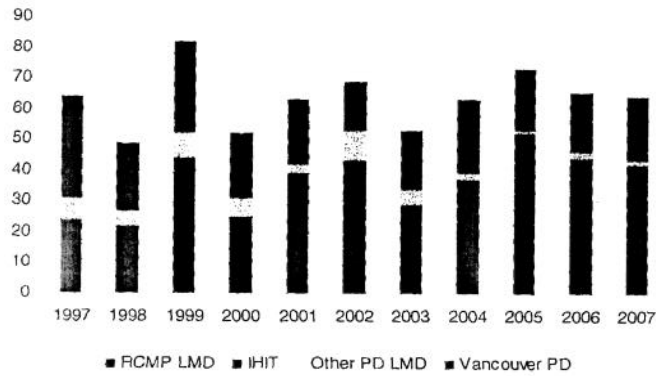
UNCLASSIFIED

**Homicides in the BC Lower Mainland, 1997-2007: a closer look**

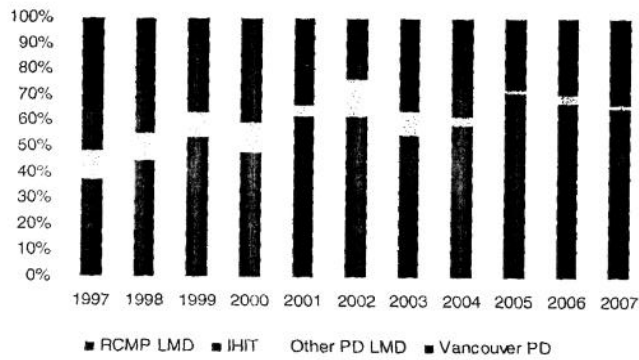
Key findings:

- LMD homicides show no significant increase/decrease over 1997-2007
- IHIT incorporation of RCMP and Municipal (non-VPD) investigations in 2003 has resulted in consolidation of investigative response
- Proportion of all LMD homicides handled by RCMP & non-VPD Municipal rose in years leading to IHIT creation, now stable at approximately 2 in 3

**Homicides by investigating jurisdiction, BC Lower Mainland 1997-2007**



**Proportion of homicides by investigating jurisdiction, BC Lower Mainland 1997-2007**



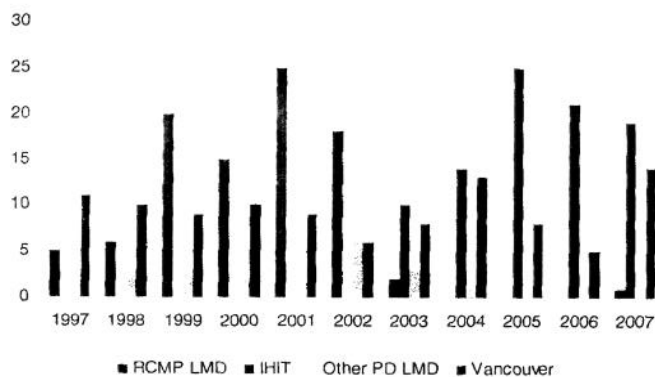
UNCLASSIFIED

**Homicides in the BC Lower Mainland, 1997-2007: OC-related**

Key findings:

- IHIT incorporation of RCMP and Municipal (non-VPD) investigations in 2003 has resulted in consolidation of investigative response
- Proportion of all organized crime-related homicides in the LMD handled by RCMP & non-VPD Municipal rose in years leading to IHIT creation, now somewhat stable at approximately 70% but with major annual fluctuations

**Organized crime-related homicides by investigating jurisdiction, BC Lower Mainland 1997-2007**



**Proportion of organized crime-related homicides by investigating jurisdiction, BC Lower Mainland 1997-2007**

