

Is the Decline in Serial Killing Partially Explained by a Reduction in *Free Range Kids?*

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Presentation Topics

- Show statistics for decline in serial killing
- List potential factors in the decline
- Concept of “Free Range Kids”
- Results
 - Targets in general
 - Child targets
- Skenazy’s (2009) take on free range kids

Radford/FGCU Serial Killer Database

- 20 years of data collection
- 3,338 serial killers
- 9,418 victims (mostly U.S. and Canada at this point)
- FBI definition
 - Two or more murders
 - Two or more events
 - FBI no longer distinguishes spree and serial
 - We don’t include spree when kills took place within 24 hours with no cooling off period
- In the process of separating
 - Serial – Individual
 - Serial – Organizational
 - Serial – Organizational – Gang
 - Serial – Organizational – Drug Enterprise
 - Serial – Organizational – Criminal Enterprise
 - Serial – Organizational – Cult

Serial killing has declined in the U.S. since the 1980s

Decade	U.S.	Canada	Other Countries	Total
1900	18	0	11	29
1910	30	0	13	43
1920	30	2	23	55
1930	29	0	22	51
1940	29	3	29	61
1950	47	1	30	78
1960	156	5	56	217
1970	451	13	107	571
1980	604	12	151	767
1990	498	12	215	725
2000	275	9	155	439
2010	66	3	26	95

Totals do not include serial killers operating in multiple countries

Trends in Murder Rates Per 100,000

Year	U.S.	Canada
1960	5.1	1.28
1970	7.9	2.19
1980	10.2	2.41
1990	9.4	2.38
2000	5.5	1.78
2010	4.8	1.62
2011	4.7	1.73

International trend is more complex

Decade	U.S.	Canada	S. Africa	U.K.	Japan	Australia	Russia	Italy
1900	18	0	1	3	2	2	0	0
1910	30	0	0	2	1	0	1	0
1920	30	2	3	6	3	2	2	2
1930	29	0	1	5	3	3	0	2
1940	29	3	1	6	6	3	0	1
1950	47	1	2	6	4	1	0	2
1960	156	5	1	9	11	3	2	5
1970	451	13	3	20	17	10	2	17
1980	604	12	12	19	12	10	5	20
1990	498	12	31	22	16	9	17	33
2000	275	9	37	15	4	2	6	7
2010	66	3	2	3	0	0	2	0

Totals do not include serial killers operating in multiple countries

The Rate is Especially Declining for Women

Decade	Men %	Women %
1900	61.1	38.9
1910	69.8	30.2
1920	78.2	21.8
1930	84.3	15.7
1940	86.9	13.1
1950	84.6	15.4
1960	91.7	8.3
1970	94.2	5.8
1980	92.2	7.8
1990	92.7	6.3
2000	93.4	6.6
2010	94.7	5.3

Why the decrease in the U.S.?

- Technology
 - Insurance fraud is more difficult
 - Killing multiple patients is not likely to go unnoticed
- Longer prison sentences keep potential serial killers in prison
- Law enforcement efforts
 - Catch single murder more quickly (e.g., DNA)
 - Efforts on terrorism reduce the FBI's ability to link serial murders
- Fewer available victims

Fewer Targets: We Have Changed our Behavior

- Hitchhiking Related
 - Hitchhiking
 - Offering rides
 - Accepting an offer to "get in"
- Disabled Motorists
 - Offering assistance
 - Accepting assistance
- Free-Range Kid Behavior (Skenazy, 2009)
 - Walking to and from school or the store
 - Riding bicycles
 - Playing in the park
 - Fishing and hiking alone

Serial killer victims in the U.S. & Canada

Decade	# Victims	% ages 6-17
1900	113	8.9
1910	167	6.6
1920	139	11.5
1930	84	14.3
1940	84	13.1
1950	153	15.7
1960	347	21.6
1970	1,344	22.5
1980	2,192	14.1
1990	1,851	9.2
2000	1,115	8.0
2010	272	4.0

Note: Victims represent those from serial killers who were caught and for whom we know the circumstances of their abduction or death

Serial Killer Victims (age 6-17) by selected category

Victim Category	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	TOTAL	% Change 1980-2000
Park	0	10	9	9	2	0	1	31	0.0%
Shopping center/Parking lot/School	0	1	19	16	6	0	0	42	0.0%
Prostitute	0	0	8	38	6	2	0	54	5.3%
Hitchhiking related	4	4	57	32	5	2	0	104	6.3%
Street - Walking/Riding a bicycle	7	18	65	73	37	8	1	209	11.0%
Employee or customer	0	2	15	7	15	1	1	41	14.3%
Rural (e.g., fishing, hiking)	2	9	13	6	5	1	0	36	16.7%
Street - Public Transportation	1	0	6	5	1	1	0	14	20.0%
Street	0	2	16	24	7	6	1	56	25.0%
Home or home invasion	3	7	34	40	30	10	1	125	25.0%
Met at a bar, skating rink, etc.	0	0	4	4	3	2	0	13	50.0%
Friend or acquaintance	0	7	29	31	12	16	0	95	51.6%
Girlfriend/Boyfriend Related	0	4	1	7	9	4	1	26	57.1%
Street - Runaway	0	0	0	2	6	2	1	11	100.0%
Family	7	10	9	13	9	14	2	64	107.7%
Drug or gang related	0	0	0	4	11	18	0	33	450.0%
TOTAL	24	75	303	315	170	89	11	987	28.3%

Serial Killer Victims (all ages) by selected category (1950-2013)

Victim Category	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	TOTAL	% Change 1980-2000
Shopping Center/School	0	1	21	33	17	2	0	74	6.1%
Disabled motorist or good Samaritan	0	1	19	16	2	1	1	40	6.3%
Hitchhiking related	11	14	138	95	24	9	0	291	9.5%
Law enforcement	2	2	17	18	13	2	11	65	11.1%
Street - Walking/Riding a bicycle	8	25	97	119	81	20	12	362	16.8%
Park	0	12	19	14	7	3	2	57	21.4%
Employee or customer	21	54	135	173	166	48	11	608	27.2%
Family	34	58	93	127	102	64	17	495	50.4%
Friend or acquaintance	8	31	96	199	121	118	32	605	59.3%
Prostitute/John	0	4	36	274	339	166	28	847	60.6%
Prison guard/inmate	6	6	8	21	22	15	5	83	71.4%
Girlfriend/Boyfriend Related	2	14	21	73	81	55	22	268	75.3%
Street - Parking lot	0	3	17	14	20	16	2	72	114.3%
Drug or gang related	0	2	27	91	173	190	35	518	208.8%
Street - Drug addict	0	0	0	9	32	31	0	72	344.4%
TOTAL	153	347	1344	2192	1851	1115	272	7274	50.9%

Serial Killer Victims (all ages) Most Frequent 1950-2013

Victim Category	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	TOTAL
Home or home invasion	22	58	284	404	295	167	37	1,267
Prostitute or john	0	4	36	274	339	166	28	847
Employee or customer	21	54	135	173	166	48	11	608
Friend or acquaintance	8	31	96	199	121	118	32	605
Drug or gang related	0	2	27	91	173	190	35	518
Family	34	58	93	123	98	64	17	487
Street – Walking/Riding Bicycle	8	25	97	119	81	20	12	362
Hitchhiking related	11	14	138	95	24	9	0	291
Girlfriend/Boyfriend Related	2	14	21	73	81	55	22	268
Met at a bar or similar	2	8	57	75	88	31	3	264
Patient	0	9	39	96	61	43	0	248
Rural (e.g., fishing, hiking)	2	13	40	36	25	11	1	128
Street – Homeless	12	3	7	39	29	14	9	113
Prison guard or inmate	6	6	8	21	22	15	5	83
Street – Drug addict	0	0	0	9	32	31	0	72

Note: List does not include over a thousand killed on the street in general

Abductions in perspective

- Number of children age 2 – 14 killed in car accidents, as passengers: **1300**
- Number of children killed each year by family members and acquaintances: **About 1000**
- Number of children abducted in “stereotypical kidnappings” in 1999, the most recent year for which we have statistics: **115**.
 - Number of those children killed by their abductor: **About 50**.
- Murders of children by abductors constitute less than one half of **1%** of all murders in America.

Stranger Danger?

Of all children under age 5 murdered from 1976-2005:

- 31% were killed by fathers
- 29% were killed by mothers
- 23% were killed by male acquaintances
- 7% were killed by other relatives
- 3% were killed by strangers

Moral: Your safest bet is to leave your child with a stranger.

Crimes Decline Since its High in the 1990s

- All U.S. homicides: Down 40% 1992 -2005.
- Juvenile homicide: Down 36% 1993 – 2005 (kids under age 14)
- Juvenile homicide: Down 60% 1993 – 2005 (age 14 – 17)
- Forcible rape: Down 28% 1992 – 2006
- Sex Abuse Substantiations of Children, 1990 – 2005: Down 51%
- Physical Abuse Substantiations of Children, 1990 – 2005: Down 46%
- Juvenile Sex victimization trends, 1993 – 2003: Down 79%

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