



Jüri Saar

*Professor of Criminology,
University of Tartu*

Intentional Homicides in Estonia: The Short-term and Long-term Trends

1. Introduction

In recent decades, the reliability of recorded crime statistics in assessing crime levels and comparing crime in international terms has increasingly been called into doubt. Court and police statistics are too much affected by the national features of law enforcement authorities and of the crime recording practice to fulfil that purpose. By now, it has become symptomatic of this that general crime indicators are interpreted above all as characterising of the activity of the criminal justice system.^{*1} More adequate ways for assessing the crime situation have been sought, including searching for types of crimes that are most immune to the above-mentioned shortcomings.

Intentional taking of another person's life is a type of criminal offence that is characterised by relatively little dependence on the will of the particular regulator involved or on national statistical manipulations; by low latency; and by a high rate of detection. That is why intentional homicides rather than general numbers of recorded crimes are often used for comparing the crime in different countries. The attention to the homicide rate has spread from criminology to more general sociological approaches, where it is used as an indicator in the assessment and comparison of the crime situation and social security of different countries.^{*2}

This article looks at violent crime and its level in Estonia as compared to other countries. The most significant type of criminal homicides in Estonia—intentional homicide—is used as empirical material.^{*3} The objective is to assess the level of intentional homicide in Estonia in comparison to other countries and to point out the most important short- and long-term trends. Based on homicide rates, an attempt is made to determine the general vector of Estonia's social development.

Up to now only a few in-depth analyses of violent crime in Estonia that have been published in the domestic scientific literature.^{*4} Local homicides have been analysed by M. Lehti, who has also gathered material on this

¹ K. Kangaspunta (ed.). *Crime and Criminal Justice in Europe and North America 1986–1990*. HEUNI Publications Series No. 25. Helsinki: HEUNI 1995.

² United Nations Development Programme. *Human Development Report 1999*. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1999; United Nations Development Programme. *Human Development Report 2007/2008. Fighting Climate Change: Human Solidarity in a Divided World*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2007.

³ For problems with the legal qualification of criminal homicides in Estonia before the year 2002, see J. Saar. *Kriminaalkorras karistatavate ja õiguspärase surmamiste regulatsioon Eestis võrrelduna Ameerika Ühendriikide ja Saksamaa õigusega* (Regulation of Criminal and Legal Homicides in Estonia as Compared to the Law of the United States of America and Germany). – *Juridica* 2000/1, pp. 14–26 (in Estonian).

⁴ H. Urvaste. 1994. aastal Eesti Vabariigis toimepandud tapmistest (On the Homicides Committed in the Republic of Estonia in 1994). – *Juridica* 1995/2, pp. 50–52 (in Estonian).

subject in Estonia. His research on this subject has been published in Finnish^{*5} and also in English.^{*6} Homicides in Estonia as indicators of the local crime situation were mostly beyond the scope set for that study, and the time period covered ended with the mid-1990s.

2. Homicide statistics in Estonia

Homicide statistics in Estonia since the restoration of independence must be viewed in the context of the criminal law in force. Firstly, the period from 1991 to 2002—i.e., the time when the Criminal Code of the Republic of Estonia (hereinafter ‘CrC’) was in force^{*7}—must be considered and, secondly, the period that started with the entry into force of the Penal Code^{*8} (hereinafter ‘PenC’) on 1 September 2002.

Until 2002, criminal homicides in Estonia were accounted for in two statistics: the recorded criminal offences (crime) statistics compiled by the Police Board and the court statistics of the Ministry of Justice. Criminal homicides were also accounted for in the health statistics of fatalities caused by external forces—i.e., violent deaths—kept by the Statistical Office. Police and court statistics are normally maintained in terms of criminal offences and types of crimes, whereas violent death statistics focus on crime victims.

In the Estonian crime statistics of the first, earlier, time period, the compilation principles of which remained relatively unchanged from those of the Soviet era, intentional homicides were considered separately.^{*9} They were taken to include the CrC § 100 (homicide without aggravated circumstances), CrC § 101 (murder), CrC § 102 (infanticide), and § 103 (homicide by one in a provoked state, so-called affect homicide). In presentation of the intentional homicide statistics, one type of intentional homicide was omitted—CrC § 104 (homicide through exceeding the limits of self-defence).

Another important aspect of Estonian homicide statistics up to the year 2002 was the fact that completed and attempted homicides were viewed together on account of legislative logic according to which attempted and completed crime resulted in prosecution under the same section of the law. The percentage of attempts from the total numbers of homicides varied greatly by types of homicide. In the earlier Estonian crime statistics, causing of fatal bodily injury (CrC § 107 (2) 1)) was not regarded as intentional homicide, which was quite problematic in view of the similarity between this type of criminal offence and homicide with regard to motivation and result.^{*10} As demonstrated by international comparisons of judicial practice, some countries prefer to classify violent crimes whose victim survives as attempted homicides, whereas others classify them as causing of serious bodily injury. As a result, the percentage of completed and attempted homicides from the total number of intentional homicides varies greatly by country.^{*11} At the same time—as demonstrated by Estonian crime statistics in the Soviet period, among others—the numbers for attempted homicide and fatal bodily injury were almost equal. Given that by the addition of attempted homicides to homicides the total number seemed to rise, while the omission of fatal bodily injury caused the total number of homicides to fall, the total number of intentional homicides in Estonian statistics from that time period can be regarded as quite reliable for the purpose of international comparison.

In 2002, when the PenC entered into force in Estonia, the *corpus delicti* of intentional homicide have been changed and some alterations were made to the principles for compilation of homicide statistics. The Penal Code now has four *corpus delicti*'s that refer to intentional taking of another person's life and are regarded as intentional homicide in crime statistics. The first of these is manslaughter (PenC § 113), the second is murder as an aggravated form of intentional homicide (PenC § 114), third is manslaughter in a provoked state (PenC § 115), and fourth is infanticide (PenC § 116).

It must be pointed out as an organisational characteristic that it is now the Ministry of Justice that compiles and presents national crime statistics, not the police. The statistics differentiate between completed and attempted homicides. At the same time, violent crimes that result in a human fatality but in whose case the death of the victim is not intentional but caused by negligence are still not classified as homicides in Estonian statistics.

⁵ M. Lehti. Viron henkirikollisuus 1990-luvulla. English Summary: Homicides in Estonia in the 1990s. Helsinki 1997.

⁶ M. Lehti. Homicide trends in Estonia, 1971–1996. – H. Ylikangas (ed.). Five Centuries of Violence in Finland and the Baltic Area. Columbus: Ohio State University Press 2001, pp. 133–192.

⁷ Entered into force on 1.06.1992, effective until 31.08.2002. – RT 1992, 20, 287 and 288; RT I 2002, 64, 390 (in Estonian).

⁸ Karistusseadustik. – RT I 2001, 61, 364; 2010, 29, 151 (in Estonian).

⁹ The main reason for that situation was the fact that the Criminal Code of the Republic of Estonia overlapped to a large extent with the Criminal Code of Soviet Estonia with regard to homicides.

¹⁰ Estonia is no exception in that regard, and in the Finnish Criminal Code, for instance, there is an analogous so-called fight homicide, in which case the resulting deaths are not qualified as intentional homicides. See The Penal Code of Finland and The Decree on the Enforcement of the Penal Code. Unauthorized Draft Translation, translated by Matti Joutsen. Helsinki: Research Institute of Legal Policy 1983, p. 71.

¹¹ In that regard, see the comparison of the Estonian and Finnish judicial practice M. Lehti. Tahtlikud tapmised Eestis 1990ndatel aastatel (Intentional Homicides in Estonia in the 1990s). Tallinn: Sisekaitseakadeemia 1998, pp. 11–12 (in Estonian).

In that case, the offender's behaviour is qualified as an aggregate of *corpus delicti* in such a way that PenC § 117 (negligent homicide) is combined with one of the following crime events: PenC § 118 (causing serious damage to health), PenC § 121 (physical abuse), or PenC § 122 (torture).^{*12}

3. International comparison of intentional homicides

The data on intentional homicides are more comparable on an international basis than are the data on other types of crime. At the same time, it is, of course, impossible to know and consider all country-specific nuances arising from under- or over-recording and differences in classification when one is utilising these data.^{*13} Comparative data on intentional homicides can be found from several, quite different sources that have been compiled by international organisations. As a general rule, the number of intentional homicides per year per 100,000 inhabitants is used as an indicator.

- a) The UN (through the UNODC, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime) has been gathering information on crime, including homicides, in member states since 1946. In 1974, a series of special studies on crime trends and the activity of criminal justice systems were commenced. The first of these covered the period from 1970 to 1975 and included 56 member states. The fifth study covered 1990 to 1994 and, among other things, presents the data on intentional homicides in 65 member states. This study employs the concept of intentional homicide ('death intentionally caused by another person, including infanticides by mothers and attempted homicides').^{*14} The newest publication in the series covers the years 1995–2004.^{*15}
- b) INTERPOL (the International Criminal Police Organization) used to collect and publish crime data obtained from national police organisations since 1950. Criminal homicide was defined as 'any act performed with the intention of taking another person's life regardless of the circumstances of the performance of said act'. These statistics included infanticide but not always attempted homicide. The member states of INTERPOL did not submit crime data on a regular basis, and the number of countries that submitted data varied greatly from one year to the next.^{*16} Since 2006, INTERPOL is no longer involved in collecting and publishing the data on intentional homicides in member states.^{*17}
- c) WHO (World Health Organization) data on causes of death, collected since 1948, are regarded as one of the best statistical sources. The WHO has defined homicide as 'death resulting from injuries intentionally caused by other people'. In contrast to the two above-mentioned statistics, this proceeds not from consideration of criminal offence but from information on crime victims, and it includes all homicide victims, regardless of how the case has been described in the criminal code of the country in question.^{*18} The newest data from this series cover the situation in 2006.^{*19}
- d) The Council of Europe has compiled international crime statistics for European countries. In 1996, a committee of the Council of Europe—the European Committee on Crime Problems—formed a specialist group that first collected data on the period from 1990 to 1996. In contrast to the UN and INTERPOL methodology, where country data are defined on the basis of standard definitions of crimes, a number of national correspondents were used instead, in an attempt to render the data from different countries as comparable as possible. Causing of fatal bodily injury, euthanasia, assistance to suicide, and infanticide were added to the standard definition of intentional homicide ('intentional

¹² J. Sootak, P. Pikamäe (ed.). *Karistusseadustik. Kommenteeritud väljaanne. täiendatud ja ümbertöötatud väljaanne* (Penal Code. With commentary. 3rd revised edition). Tallinn 2009, comment on § 117, p. 374 (in Estonian).

¹³ One of the issues related to recording is the combining of homicide and attempted homicide figures in statistics. As mentioned before, some countries prefer to qualify the crime as causing of serious bodily injury if the victim survives, whereas others classify it under attempted homicide. For example, violent crimes whose victim survives are in Estonia mostly recorded as physical abuse. In contrast, Finland currently assigns a much broader meaning to attempted homicide; therefore, if homicides and attempted homicides are presented together, the level of this type of crime is much higher compared to the indicator of completed homicides only (e.g., in 1996 a total of 10.1 homicides and attempted homicides per 100,000 inhabitants were committed in Finland, whereas the corresponding indicator of completed intentional homicides was 3.7).

¹⁴ K. Kangaspunta, M. Joutsen, N. Ollus (eds.). *Crime and Criminal Justice in Europe and North America 1990–1994*. HEUNI Publications Series No. 32, Helsinki: HEUNI 1998.

¹⁵ K. Aromaa, M. Heiskanen (eds.). *Crime and Criminal Justice in Europe and North America 1995–2004*. HEUNI Publications Series No. 55, Helsinki: HEUNI 2008.

¹⁶ M. Riedel. Homicide. – L. Kurtz, J. Turpin (eds.). *Encyclopedia of Violence, Peace, and Conflict*. Vol. 2. San Diego, London: Academic Press 1999, pp. 123–138.

¹⁷ INTERPOL: <http://www.interpol.int/Public/otherCrime/default.asp>.

¹⁸ United Nations. *United Nations Demographic Yearbook 1997. Forty-Ninth Issue*. New York: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs 1999, pp. 450–470.

¹⁹ United Nations. *United Nations Demographic Yearbook 2006. Fifty-Eighth Issue*. New York: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2008, pp. 609–749.

killing of another person') where possible.^{*20} The last, third publication in the series was issued in 2006, and it includes crime data for the years 2000–2003.^{*21} In addition, Eurostat publishes the population and social statistics of member states on a regular basis. The last data that also reflect the intentional homicides recorded by the Estonian Police cover the years 1998–2007.^{*22}

4. Short- and long-term trends of intentional homicides in Estonia

In order to assess the current level of intentional homicide in Estonia, we will look at the development trends of this type of criminal offence since the founding of the Republic of Estonia, comparing three periods:

- 1) the Republic of Estonia before the Soviet occupation (1918–1940);
- 2) the period of Soviet occupation (1945–1990); and
- 3) the Republic of Estonia after restoration of independence (1991–2009).

In pre-war Estonia, on average, 127 homicides were committed per year; that is slightly above 11 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants, given the population at that time.^{*23} During the Soviet period, the average number of homicides and attempted homicides per year was 66; the corresponding indicator is about six homicides per 100,000 inhabitants.^{*24} The average figure in today's Estonia is 196 homicides per year, the quotient being 13.9 per 100,000 inhabitants. Such figures require further comment.

At the same time, the very large figures for illegal abortions and infanticides grab attention. In the early 1920s, these two types of homicide accounted for almost a third of the total number of intentional homicides, whereas in 1924 this indicator was already nearly 60%.^{*25} Comparing this to the current situation, wherein, on average, only a few such criminal offences are committed per year (e.g., three in 1994, two in 1995, six in 1996, one in 2005, none in 2006, and two in 2007), we can see a significant change in the breakdown of intentional homicides committed in Estonia. The performance and detection of illegal abortions has become virtually non-existent in today's Estonia as a result of legal options for abortion. Therefore, it is better to compare the numbers of intentional homicides in the 1920s and 1930s with later figures only after subtracting out infanticides and illegal abortions. The number of intentional homicides per year in the 1920s and 1930s in Estonia would thus be around 100 cases, on average.

The relatively low homicide figures in the Soviet period require fundamental specification. The crime statistics from that period must be approached with care, because in a totalitarian country the accounting of what goes on in the society is radically different from the practice of democratic nations. Crime statistics in the Soviet period also enabled manipulation of the numbers of intentional homicides. For instance, the crimes committed by the military or defence-industry enterprises' employees staying here were not accounted for. Given that competition with the capitalist world also took place with regard to crime indicators, law enforcement authorities were subjected to strong political and ideological pressure upon producing the figures.

At the same time, it is quite logical that in a society where all of people's conduct was strictly controlled, activity, including criminal activity, was restricted. The low level of intentional homicide in Estonia during the period of Soviet occupation is a vivid example of this. The opportunities of an over-controlled society to keep homicide indicators down is well characterised by China with its more than one milliard people—according to official data, 63 people were killed there in 1996; that is less than one case per 100,000 inhabitants.^{*26} It is impossible for an outsider to assess this figure objectively, but it can certainly not be juxtaposed with an analogous indicator from a European country for the purpose of comparison. The same applies to comparing the crime levels of Soviet Estonia and today's Estonia.

²⁰ European Sourcebook of Crime and Criminal Justice Statistics. European Committee on Crime Problems. Directorate General I, Legal Affairs, Strasbourg Oct. 1999, p. 17.

²¹ M. Aebi, K. Aromaa, B. de Cavarlay, G. Barklay, B. Gruszczynska, H. von Hofer, V. Hysi, J.-M. Jehle, M. Killias, P. Smit, C. Tavares. European Sourcebook of Crime and Criminal Justice Statistics – 2006. Third Edition. Haag: Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek- en Documentatiecentrum (WODC) 2006. Available at http://www.europeansourcebook.org/esb3_Full.pdf.

²² C. Tavares, G. Thomas. Population and Social Conditions. Crimes Recorded by the Police: Homicide. Eurostat. Statistics in Focus, 36/2009. Available at http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-SF-09-036/EN/KS-SF-09-036-EN.PDF.

²³ A. Susi. Kuritegevus Eestis 1919–1924 (Crime in Estonia 1919–1924). – Eesti Statistika 1926 (53) 1, pp. 1–7 (in Estonian); Central Bureau of State Statistics (publisher). Eesti Arvudes 1920–1937 (Estonia in Numbers, 1920–1937). Tallinn: Riigi Statistika Keskbüroo 1937, pp. 303–310 (in Estonian); K. Raid. Süütegevus 1937 (Offences 1937). – Eesti Statistika 1938 (200) 7 – (201) 8, pp. 357–365 (in Estonian).

²⁴ For the indicators of the Soviet period, see J. Saar. Criminality as an Indicator of the Social Situation in Estonia. – B. Szamota-Sacki, D. Wojcik (eds.). Impact of Political, Economic and Social Change on Crime and Its Image in Society. 51st International Course of Criminology, 12–16 September 1995 Warsaw, Poland. Warsaw: Instytut Nauk Prawnych PAN 1996, pp. 61–77.

²⁵ See A. Susi (Note 23) and K. Raid (Note 23).

²⁶ United Nations. Demographic Yearbook of the United Nations 1999. New York: United Nations 1999, pp. 455–460.

When one looks at the homicides committed in the 1990s in Estonia, a clear dynamic emerges. The number of homicides started to rise in the early 1990s, exceeding 15 cases per 100,000 inhabitants in 1992 and 21 cases in 1993. The most homicides were committed in 1994, when the corresponding number was 365, or 24.2 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants. Since then, the number of intentional homicides in Estonia has been decreasing steadily. The latest figure for intentional homicides in Estonia is for the year 2009, during which 7.0 such criminal offences (attempts included) were committed per 100,000 inhabitants. With attempts excluded, the corresponding indicator was 5.2 (see Table). As we can see from the data presented, the level of homicide in Estonia has by now decreased more than three times in comparison to that of the mid-1990s.

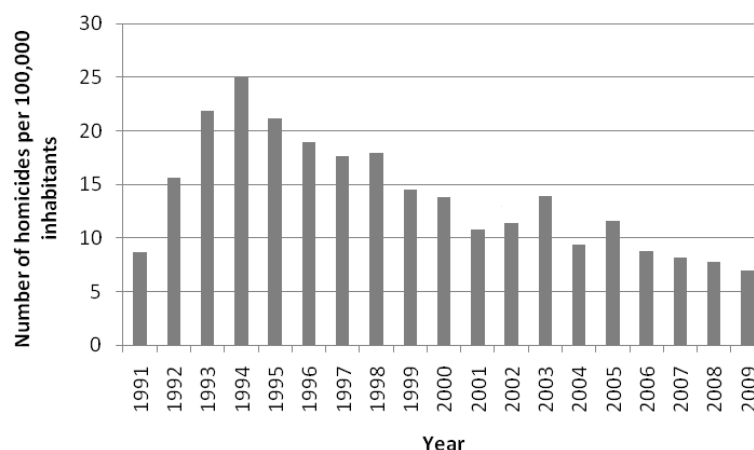


Figure. Intentional homicides in Estonia, 1991–2009

Currently, PenC § 113 (on manslaughter) covers the vast majority of homicides, followed by PenC § 114 (on murder). Then come a small number of crimes qualified under PenC § 115 (manslaughter in a provoked state) (in 2007, for example: PenC § 113, 90 cases; § 114, 20 cases; and § 115, two cases).²⁷ When it comes to intentional homicides in Estonia, it also makes sense to see whether the rate of intentional homicide has in recent years decreased inversely to the increase in the number of negligent deaths. Should that prove to be true, there would be reason to claim that whenever possible, law enforcement agencies qualify homicides as causing death through negligence. These statistics do not point to such a tendency, although a surprisingly large number of negligent homicides were recorded immediately after the entry into enforcement of the Penal Code (with 2003 featuring 1207 cases and 2004 having 938 cases). In the following years, however, the number of negligent homicides has been decreasing constantly (e.g., 106 in 2008 and 85 in 2009), which permits rating the reliability of the statistics as quite high from that perspective.

5. Intentional homicides in Estonia and international background

The statistics for intentional homicides committed in Estonia in the mid-1990s received much international attention. For example, the UN Statistical Yearbook, which covered the general trends in Europe and North America, pointed out the criminal (intentional) homicide figures of two countries as exceptionally high. These were Russia and Estonia, whose number of intentional homicides per 100,000 inhabitants was above 20 and had more than doubled from 1990 to 1994.²⁸ The UN Human Development Report of 1999 presented 1994 data on intentional homicides. Estonia held the seventh place from the top, ranking two places above Russia. The latter's level of intentional homicide was higher than the figure for Estonia only in such Third World countries as São Tomé and Príncipe, the Bahamas, Colombia, Lesotho, Guatemala, and Jamaica.²⁹ In the UN Human Development Report of 2007/2008, Estonia's position had improved significantly, ranking in the 31st place by homicide level and the 11th place among countries with a high level of human development.³⁰

²⁷ See Ministry of Justice (publisher). *Kuritegevus Eestis 2007* (Crime in Estonia 2007). – Kriminaalpoliitika uuringud 8. Tallinn 2008, p. 168 (in Estonian).

²⁸ United Nations. *The Statistical Yearbook of the Economic Commission for Europe. Trends in Europe and North America 1998/1999*. New York and Geneva: United Nations 1999, p. 223.

²⁹ United Nations Development Programme. *Human Development Report 1999*. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1999, pp. 222–224.

³⁰ United Nations Development Programme. *Human Development Report 2007/2008*. New York, UNDP: Palgrave Macmillan 2007, pp. 322–325.

Compared to those for developed countries, Estonia's level was much higher in the mid-1990s also by the number of homicide victims. In 1994, Estonia ranked fourth in the list of the 15 countries with the world's highest level of victimisation, falling below only Colombia, Russia, and El Salvador. By 1997, however, Estonia's position had improved by a couple of places: in addition to the three above-mentioned countries, Armenia and Puerto Rico had a higher number of intentional homicides.^{*31} The data from 2007 indicate that Estonia now ranks 45th according to Estonian Police data and only 82nd according to health care institutions' data.^{*32} Given the data presented, it can be said with confidence that today's Estonia has no business among the countries where the homicide figures of the mid-1990s placed us.

Most European countries are characterised by low homicide levels when compared to the rest of the world, which is why Estonia firmly held a position among the European countries with the highest such figures in the mid-1990s. According to the above-mentioned study of the Council of Europe, Estonia shared third and fourth place in Europe with Albania for the level of intentional homicide (when cases of attempted homicide are included). More such crimes than in Estonia were committed in 1996 only in Russia and, surprisingly, in the Netherlands.^{*33} In the ranking of countries by completed intentional homicides, however, Estonia holds the second place after Russia for that year. The Netherlands, with 1.8 completed homicides per 100,000 inhabitants can be found only in the lower half of the ranking. In 2002, Estonia again ranked highest, with an indicator of 10.3. According to the year-2007 data and among European Union member states only, Estonia with its indicator of 6.9 holds second position, after Lithuania.^{*34} However, because countries' figures also differ in the kind of data they provide, compiling an accurate ranking of intentional homicide levels is rather complicated.

On the basis of the violent crime data from the period between the World Wars, it was possible to divide Europe into a western part with a low homicide rate and an eastern part with a high homicide rate.^{*35} That was the general picture also in the first decades after World War II. Today such a division no longer applies in full, because the area with a low homicide rate has expanded, also covering several Central and Southern European countries in addition to Western Europe. However, the transitional countries with a large number of homicides (including Estonia) are still mostly found in Eastern Europe. The highest level in that regard characterises the former Soviet republics, followed by the former so-called European socialist countries. It seems that the earlier division of Europe into two parts applies to the overall condition of the society and the level of intentional homicide in combination with traditions that go back several decades. Estonia's intentional homicide rates have improved in comparison to the mid-1990s but are nevertheless not as good as those of long-time European Union countries.

6. Conclusions

Offences against the person (homicides, above all) have been regarded as important from the perspective of characterising the moral level and proneness to conflict of the population. A society's high crime level can be interpreted as the result of social interaction that develops in the presence of a sufficient contingent of motivated criminals, relatively weak social control, and suitable crime targets.^{*36} Such a general model where crime level is determined by the interaction of motivational and opportunity-related factors can also be used in interpreting homicide trends. The level of violent crime is correlated with factors of community life such as relative poverty, social inequality, and dissatisfaction with earnings.^{*37} At the same time, it is logical that the development of a large middle class brings about a reduction in violence, the level of which is indicated by intentional homicides.

In the interpretation of international trends with regard to intentional homicides, it must be taken into account that different societies have entered different stages of the modernisation process. This is accompanied by constant change in criminal motivation and opportunity. The main element of consistency is as follows: the more

³¹ Demographic Yearbook of the United Nations 1994 (1996), pp. 445–465; Demographic Yearbook of the United Nations 1997 (1999), pp. 450–470.

³² UNODC homicide criminal justice statistics. Available at http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Crime-statistics/Criminal_justice_latest_year_by_country.20100201.xls; UNODC homicide public health data: http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Crime-statistics/Public_health_latest_year_by_country_2.xls.

³³ European Sourcebook of Crime and Criminal Justice Statistics (1999), p. 41.

³⁴ European Sourcebook of Crime and Criminal Justice Statistics (1999), p. 42; European Sourcebook of Crime and Criminal Justice Statistics (2006), p. 40; Eurostat, crimes recorded by police http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-SF-09-036/EN/KS-SF-09-036-EN.PDF.

³⁵ V. Verkko. Homicides and Suicides in Finland and Their Dependence in National Character. Preface by Professor Thorsten Sellin. Scandinavian Studies in Sociology, 3. Kobenhavn: G.E.C.GADS FORLAG 1951, pp. 65–76.

³⁶ J. Van Dijk. Opportunities for Crime: A Test of the Rational-interactionist Model. Report at the Eleventh Criminological Colloquium of the Council of Europe. Strasbourg 1994, 23–30 November.

³⁷ P. Mayhew, J. J. M. van Dijk. Criminal victimisation in eleven industrialised countries: Key findings from the 1996 International Crime Victims Survey. The Hague: Ministry of Justice, Research and Documentation Centre 1997.

developed the society, the lower the incidence of violence-related crime.^{*38} As also demonstrated by Estonia's development, the overall picture of the local crime is changing in a manner characteristic of a modernising society. At the same time, the importance of the socio-cultural context in explaining violent crime has been emphasised. Societies with a low homicide rate have strong informal social control and a generally accepted normative system, a strict network of social responsibilities, and a cultural orientation that suppresses aggression.^{*39} After the restoration of independence, Estonia entered an era that can be described as a deficiency of social control, the loss of earlier control mechanisms. The development of a new social control based on other principles does not come about overnight.

The homicide level dynamic in Estonia from the early 1990s to the present day shows how fundamental the social changes in this country have been. Big changes first brought about a phase of social disorganisation in which the earlier bonds and control mechanisms of the society apparently proved ineffective, and all of the factors contributing to a high level of violent crime were at that time represented to a quite considerable degree in Estonian society. Estonia's high level of homicide in the early and mid-1990s was directly related to the poor performance of law enforcement authorities in keeping such crime under control. Paradoxically, the overall numbers of recorded crime dropped in that period in Estonia, pointing to the fact that the resources of law enforcement authorities were mostly spent on curbing serious crime, and there were not always enough resources left for keeping minor offences under control.

It makes sense that social development and more extensive integration into the Western world bring about a steady reduction in the number of homicides. Estonia is no exception in that regard, and a similar process is taking place also in other transitional countries. It might be true that changes have been more rapid here, on account of the relative smallness and the geopolitical position of Estonia. If the current developments in Estonia continue and stability is achieved, the violent crime rate is likely to keep falling, to reach a level characteristic of other developed European countries.

Table. The number of intentional homicides and attempted homicides, the quotient per 100,000 inhabitants, and the number of homicide victims in Estonia in 1991–2009

Year	Number of homicides and attempted homicides	Quotient per 100,000 inhabitants ^{*40}	Number of victims ^{*41}
1991	136	8.7	170
1992	239	15.6	302
1993	327	21.9	389
1994	365	25.0	426
1995	304	21.2	328
1996	268	18.9	293
1997	247	17.6	237
1998	248	17.9	267
1999	200	14.5	227
2000	189	13.8	190
2001	137	10.8	207
2002	155 (excl. attempts, 140)	11.4 (10.3)	159
2003	188 (excl. attempts, 147)	13.9 (10.9)	148
2004	127 (excl. attempts, 91)	9.4 (6.7)	109
2005	156 (excl. attempts, 113)	11.6 (8.4)	123
2006	119 (excl. attempts, 91)	8.8 (6.8)	99
2007	110 (excl. attempts, 93)	8.2 (6.9)	95
2008	104 (excl. attempts, 88)	7.8 (6.3)	91
2009	95 (excl. attempts, 70)	7.0 (5.2)	69

³⁸ See M. Riedel (Note 16), p. 126.

³⁹ R. Gartner. Crime: Variations across cultures and nations. – C. Ember, M. Ember (eds.). Cross-Cultural Research for Social Science. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall 1997, pp. 101–119; M. Wolfgang, F. Ferracuti. The Subculture of Violence. Beverly Hills, London: Sage Publications, Inc 1982.

⁴⁰ Starting from 2003, homicide indicator with attempted homicides excluded has been given in brackets. Source: Police Board, from 2003 Ministry of Justice: registered crime 2003–2009. Available at <http://www.just.ee/orb.aw/class=file/action=preview/id=49210/Kuritegevuse+andmed+2003-2009.xls> (in Estonian).

⁴¹ Source: Statistical Office: The Deceased by Cause of Death, Sex and Age. Available at <http://pub.stat.ee/px-web.2001/Dialog/varval.asp?m=a=RV56&ti=SURNUD+SURMAP%D5HJUSE%2C+SOO+JA+VANUSER%DCHMA+J%C4RGI&path=../Database/Rahvastik/03Rahvastik+usundmused/10Surmad/&lang=2> (in Estonian).