

Criminal & Forensic Psychology Addicts

# Serial Killer Characteristics



## What are the characteristics of a serial killer?

1. What percentage of serial killers are women?
2. Has the percentage of female serial killers changed over time?
3. Are there sex differences in killing motives and methods?
4. Are there sex differences in the frequency of unusual crime scene behaviours
5. Are there sex differences in the types of victims killed?

## What percentage of serial killers are women?

- Across all time periods, approximately 11% of serial killers have been women.
- The percentage of female serial killers in the US (8.6%) is lower than that in other countries (15.1%).

## Has the percentage of female serial killers changed over time?

- The percentage of female serial killers has decreased over time.
- Prior to the 1930s, approximately a third of all known serial killers were women compared to about 6% since 1980.
- This decline in the percentage of female serial killers can be found in the United States as well as in other countries.

## Are there sex differences in killing motives and methods?

- Financial gain is the primary motive for female serial killers whereas enjoyment is the primary motive for male serial killers.
- Female serial killers are much more likely to kill using poison whereas male serial killers are more likely to shoot and or strangle their victims.

## Are there sex differences in the frequency of unusual crime scene behaviours ?

- Male serial killers are much more likely than female serial killers to torture victims, mutilate the body after death, and engage in overkill
- Although necrophilia, eating part of the body, and drinking the victim's blood are very rare behaviors, male serial killers are more likely to engage in necrophilia than are female serial killers.

## Are There Sex Differences in the Types of Victims Killed?

- Male serial killers are more likely to only kill females whereas female serial killers are more likely to have both male and female victims.
- Female serial killers are more likely to kill infants and children than are male serial killers.

- The majority of female serial killer victims are family members whereas the victims of male serial killers tend not to be family members.

I hope you have found these facts interesting!

Steve Gaskin