

Dining With A Detective

Serial Killer IQ's



What is the truth?



What is the average IQ of a serial killer?

- Are there IQ differences across different serial killer characteristics?
- Do crime scene characteristics tell us anything about a serial killer's IQ?
- Does the type of victim tell us anything about a serial killer's IQ?

Notes and Interpretation Cautions

Data Notes

We were able to obtain IQ scores for 319 serial killers. Of those 319, 87 had more than one IQ score. Some of these multiple scores were situations in which a serial killer was tested on two separate occasions, usually separated by years in time (e.g., school, military, prison) whereas others were situations in which psychologists for the defence and the prosecution conducted separate tests and generated independent reports at approximately the same time.

The average difference between the two sources was 10 points, with the largest difference being 36 points.

Interpretation Cautions

Typically, the IQ of a serial killer is reported in a media source or court document when the killer's IQ is unusually high or low. For example, it is illegal to execute someone who has an IQ lower than 70 (that is in the USA) Thus, a focus of many death penalty trials is whether the serial killer's IQ falls below that level. If IQ tests indicate a serial killer's IQ is well above that level, it is unlikely that the killer's IQ will be an important legal issue and thus the killer's IQ is not likely to be reported in a court document or media report.

What is the Average IQ of a Serial Killer?

In the general population, IQ scores are designed to have a mean (average) of **100**. **Compared to the general population, the average IQ for criminals is about 94.** We were able to obtain IQ scores for 319 serial killers. **The average IQ for a serial killer is 92.3. There is a huge takeaway point!**

It is the "typical" IQ for a serial killer is in the normal (using the mean) to low normal (using the median) range. Thus, contrary to popular media portrayals, although there are some very intelligent serial killers, the typical serial killer does not have an unusually high IQ.

Are there IQ Differences across Different Serial Killer Characteristics?

- Male and female serial killers have similar IQ scores
- Past the age of 20, the older a serial killer is before beginning his/her killing series, the higher his or her IQ.
- Serial killers whose motive is enjoyment have the highest average IQ (105.4) whereas serial killers whose motive is financial gain (86.5) have the lowest IQ. This makes me think of psychopathic behaviour which is another test and issue!
- **In general, the higher the number of kills, the higher the serial killer's IQ.**

Do Crime Scene Characteristics Tell Us Anything about a Serial Killer's IQ?

Information from the crime scene may help estimate a serial killer's IQ.

- Killers who bludgeon their victims tend to have lower IQ scores whereas those who strangle their victims tend to have higher IQ scores. These 319 include 297 from the United States and 22 from other countries Although the lowest IQ is for people killing as part of a gang or criminal enterprise, the low sample size (3) makes interpreting this average very unreliable.
- Serial killers who torture their victims and/or mutilate the victims' bodies tend to have higher IQ scores than those who do not.
- **Serial killers with disorganised (we are going to talk about this at the Offender Profiling masterclass) crime scenes tend to have lower IQ scores than do those with organised or mixed crime scenes.**

Does the Type of Victim Tell Us Anything about a Serial Killer's IQ?

- The sex of the victims does not provide any insight into a serial killer's IQ.
- Serial killers who killed infants, children, or the elderly tend to have lower IQ scores than those who killed teens, adults, or victims from multiple age categories.
- Serial killers who killed their victims in a home invasion had the lowest average IQ.

In short, this information is extremely useful, especially with the use of offender profiling and in police investigations in general.

My thanks go to Radford University, where I was able to collect most of the data used in this paper

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Serial Killers Gender Differences



Serial killers-Gender Differences

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.

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