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RULING RUSSIA

*Law, Crime, and Justice
in a Changing Society*



Patterns of Violent Crime in Russia

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This chapter describes general patterns of violent crime in Russia using data from official statistics and existing publications on the topic. The last two decades have been marked by significant political, economic, and social changes. The antialcohol campaign of 1985–1987, perestroika, market reforms, and the economic crisis of 1998 all had significant impacts on social and demographic processes in Russia, including violent crime. During the last fifteen years, the crime rate grew with unprecedented rapidity, and the criminal situation now raises major concerns among the general public. The situation became particularly acute with regard to the interpersonal violence, which is the topic of this chapter.

SOURCES AND QUALITY OF INFORMATION ABOUT VIOLENT CRIME

The American Panel on the Understanding and Control of Violent Behavior defines violence as “behavior by persons against persons that intentionally threatens, attempts, or actually inflicts physical harm” (Reiss and Roth 1993). This definition excludes consideration of behavior that inflicts physical harm unintentionally, self-inflicted injuries, and legal intervention in the course of enforcing the law. Sometimes violence is considered in a broader context including not only physical but also verbal or psychological violence (Zabelina 2002). Russian criminal statistics do not consider violent crime as a special group of offenses. The first chapter of the Russian Criminal Code defines

crimes against the person, which include homicide, bodily harm, rape, kidnapping, and some other less common interpersonal crimes. Two crimes defined as property crimes in the Russian Criminal Code—robbery and aggravated robbery—are considered violent crimes in the U.S. criminal statistics. In this chapter, we will follow the definition of violent crime applied in the U.S. criminal statistics and focus our study on the following intentional violent crimes: homicide, aggravated assault (called “serious bodily harm” in the Russian Criminal Code), rape, and robbery (simple and aggravated).

Information about violent crimes is collected by the MVD on a regular basis. The MVD reporting system includes all cases of violent crimes registered by police and also records supplementary information about the circumstances of crimes and basic descriptions of arrestees. Classification of intentional homicide in this system excludes deaths caused by negligence, suicide, accident, justifiable homicides, and attempted murder. However, in the official statistical reports (e.g., *Prestupnost i pravonarushbentya*), attempts are included together with completed homicides. Fortunately, information submitted by the Russian officials to the United Nations World Crime Surveys (UNODC 2003b) has separate data for attempted and completed homicides. The classification of this offense is based solely on police investigation findings, as opposed to the determination of a court or medical examiner.

Information about criminal events is collected from incident police (“militia”) reports using statistical form no. 1. Before a violent event is counted by the MVD statistical system, it must have been reported to, or discovered by, a police agency, where a police officer is responsible for following event classification and reporting procedures. The main source of error here, undercounts, occurs because in many cases police recording and investigation are not mandatory and depend on a victim’s decision to report. Generally, more serious crimes, such as murder or serious armed robbery, are likely to be recorded. Although in the case of some serious crimes, such as rape, where reporting may be difficult for the victim given the context of the crime, the official data reflect only a small proportion of all actual cases.

Unfortunately, even cases of homicide are underreported by police. A comparison of homicide statistics taken from the MVD and mortality data from the vital statistics registration system revealed that vital statistics data reported an average of nearly 40 percent more homicides annually during the last fifteen years (Pridemore 2003a). Regional comparison showed that, in sixty-six of seventy-eight Russian regions, mortality estimates are higher than crime estimates (Pridemore 2003a). This discrepancy is partially the result of tricks with crime qualifications used by police agencies in order to improve regional crime statistics (Dolgova 1998; Pridemore 2003a). For example, some cases of intentional homicide (article 105 of the Russian Criminal Code) may be qualified as serious bodily harm leading to death (article 111). Researchers report that, in 1993–1996, about 30 percent of all cases of serious bodily harm re-

sulted in death of the victim (Dolgova 1998). During 1990–1996, the period of the most rapid growth of violent crime in Russia, cases of serious bodily harm with death of victim increased by 2.2 times, while cases of serious bodily harm without death of victim increased only by 1.1 times (Dolgova 1998). These data suggest that some cases of homicide reported by vital statistics are not qualified as murders in police statistics. Hiding a victim's body by violent offenders is another source of underestimation because, in most cases, the police do not start an investigation when the person is missing. For example, Tolpekin (1993) studied official data on rapes followed by victim's homicide during the period of 1970–1990. During this period, the proportion of such rapes declined from 1.5 percent in 1970 to 0.25 percent in 1990. The author questions the validity of these declining figures and suggests the decline is caused by the hiding of the victims' bodies by offenders and the reluctance of the police to search for missing persons.

Police also collect data on arrestees and report them using statistical form no. 2. However, these data do not reflect accurately the characteristics of all violent offenders because, in many cases, no suspects are identified. According to the MVD (2003), 78.7 percent of murders, 73.5 percent of aggravated assaults, 84.4 percent of rapes, and 55.5 percent of aggravated robberies were cleared by arrests in 2003. One of the most significant problems in using police crime reports to analyze offender characteristics is the sizable and growing number of unsolved homicides contained in the data file. Ignoring unsolved homicides, of course, would seriously understate calculated rates of offending by particular subgroups of the population, distort trends over time among these same subgroups, and bias observed patterns of offending to the extent that the rate of missing offender data is associated with offender characteristics. For example, offenders related to organized crime are less likely to be apprehended by police, while alcohol addicts are easier targets of police investigations.

The Russian Ministry of Justice conducts surveys of prison populations, collecting information on social and demographic characteristics of convicts (Mikhlin 2001). Although these data contain important and detailed characteristics of offenders, they are biased, representing more males and offenders charged for offenses with aggravated circumstances. Some researchers studied homicide trial records from local courts (Chervyakov et al. 2002) to conduct a more in-depth study of homicide convicts. Such data, however, are not readily accessible or published, so they require special efforts for data collection for each particular case in local official agencies.

Another source of information about violent crimes is vital statistics, with homicide data tabulated annually from death certificates and collected by the Russian State Committee for Statistics (Goskomstat). It is believed that homicide data collected by vital statistics are more accurate compared to crime statistics, because each death in Russia should be reported and recorded by

the local ZAGS office (i.e., the civil status recording system in Russia). Individual death certificates are collected in regional statistical offices and submitted to Goskomstat. Cases of homicide deaths (codes E960–E978 according to the ninth revision of the International Classification of Diseases, ICD-9) by age, sex, and region are tabulated on the Goskomstat form C51. In 1999, the Russian death registration system adopted the tenth revision of the International Classification of Diseases. These changes did not affect the definition of homicide deaths in Russian statistical forms.

Most researchers studying mortality in Russia argue that the quality of Russian vital statistics is good, with nearly 94 percent of all deaths being registered by a physician (Leon et al. 1997; Notzon et al. 1998; Wasserman and Varnik 1998; Andreev 1999). The vital statistics system is not without problems, however. The main concern here is the increase in mortality from "injuries undetermined whether accidentally or purposely inflicted" (Russian code 175, new code 251, and ICD-9 codes E980–E989) or simply "undetermined injuries." Some researchers believe that this code could be used to conceal some cases of homicide and suicide in order to avoid criminal investigation (Wasserman and Varnik 1998; Pridemore 2003a). Male mortality from this cause increased dramatically after 1992, reaching its maximum in 1994. In previous research, we found that in Moscow, with its relatively high proportion of unregistered migrants, homeless, and refugees, the "undetermined injuries" for males exceeded any other cause of external mortality in 1994 (Gavrilova et al. 2000; 2001). Reports appearing in the mass media indicate that, in some cases, homicide deaths of homeless persons are reported as deaths from natural causes, deaths from undetermined injuries, or deaths, from accidental falls, and this situation appears to be particularly common for Moscow. Thus, while the population estimates and death counts are reasonably accurate, the quality of death coding is less satisfactory. This deficiency can bias the estimates of violent mortality and lead to mortality underestimation for some causes (especially for homicide and suicide deaths, which may be assigned to "undetermined injuries"), and, while vital statistics data are considered a more accurate source of data on homicide than police data, there are reports that regional ZAGS agencies underreport homicide deaths compared to initial forensic medical records (Porodenko and Chernobai 1999).

Russia has no tradition of population victimization surveys, such as the National Crime Victimization Survey in the United States, that provide information about nonfatal victimization. The only information on current victimization rates in Russia comes from the International Crime Victimization Survey (ICVS) conducted by the United Nations (Zvekic 1998). The ICVS is a program of standardized sample surveys to look at, in a large number of countries, householders' experience with crime, policing, crime prevention, and fear of crime. Russia participated in the second (1992–1996) and third

(1996–1997) rounds of ICVS. In the 1996–1997 ICVS, samples of approximately 1,000 respondents were generally drawn from the population of a participating country's largest city (1,018 Moscow residents, in the case of Russia). Then, face-to-face interviews were conducted with persons aged sixteen or more. ICVS provides important information for international comparisons of nonfatal crimes. However, in Russia it is limited only to the population of Moscow and is not representative of the rest of the Russian population, so there is an urgent need for a national-level survey that would reveal the levels of latent crime and provide checks on police reports.

As for the international comparisons, we may conclude that for selected crimes, most notably homicide, country to country comparisons are relatively safe, although still subject to the drawbacks outlined above. In the case of some categories of violent crime—such as rape or assault—country to country comparisons will likely be unreliable and misleading. According to these data, the homicide mortality rate in Russia is exceeded only by rates in South Africa and Colombia and was nearly ten times higher than that of any European nation (see Chervyakov et al. 2002). Most European countries report rates on the order of one to two per 100,000 people per year, whereas the Russian homicide victimization rate in 2002 was nearly thirty per 100,000 people.

HISTORICAL TRENDS IN VIOLENT CRIME

Violent crime rates in Russia have fluctuated considerably during the last twenty to thirty years (Leon et al. 1997; Pridemore 2003a). During this time, major political and economic changes took place in Russia, including Gorbachev's antialcohol campaign of 1985–1987, Yeltsin's transition to the market economy in 1992, and the financial crisis of 1998 (Gavrilova et al. 2000; 2002). All these events appear to have had significant impact on the levels and trends of the violent crime rate.

Historical Trends in Homicide

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Russia already had a rather high homicide rate—about ten per 100,000 people per year (Bogoyavlenski 2001). In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the rate remained stable with levels somewhat lower than in the United States. A rise in the mid-1960s and 1970s peaked in 1980, followed by slow decline until 1985 and a rapid fall in 1986–1987 (Pridemore 2002b). Until the late 1980s, homicide rates in Russia were comparable with the United States but then saw an explosive rise in the 1990s (table 6.1). As a result, the homicide rate in Russia in 2002 exceeded U.S. levels by nearly five times. After 1995, the reported homicide rates fell but then rose again and have now nearly reached the levels of 1995. In 1981,

age-adjusted death rates (hereafter we use the U.S. 2000 population standard) were 19.71 for males and 7.20 for females (hereafter rates are measured per 100,000 persons). In 1981, mortality from homicide was the fourth leading cause of death for males (after suicide, accidental poisoning by alcohol, and accidental drowning) and third for females (after suicide and accidental poisoning by alcohol) among external causes of death. In 1990, homicide rates were 22.73 for males and 6.58 for females. The age-adjusted homicide mortality rate increased twofold between 1990 and 1994 for both sexes. In 2002, age-adjusted homicide rates increased to 47.14 for males and 13.20 for females. The relative importance of homicide as a cause of violent death increased significantly for females after 1992: In 2001, mortality from homicide became the leading cause of external mortality for females and the third major cause of external deaths for males (after suicide and undetermined injuries).

Trends in Nonfatal Violent Crime

Trends of some nonfatal violent crime rates in Russia and the United States are presented in table 6.1. These data show that rates of reported aggravated robberies and simple robberies in Russia increased after 1990, whereas rates of rapes declined. This table also provides statistics on violent crimes in the United States from 1990 to 2000. All types of violent crimes in the United States demonstrated a decline after 1995, though the rates of reported nonfatal violent crimes in the United States are substantially higher than in Russia. It should be noted, however, that differences in definitions of particular violent crimes make cross-national comparisons problematic. This is particularly true for the definition of "*razбой*" (aggravated robbery), which is reported to the United Nations by the MVD under the name of "major assault" (or serious bodily harm) while, in fact, the reported figures correspond to the rates of aggravated robbery (*razбой* or robbery accompanied by threat to life and/or health of victim) published by the Russian official sources (Goskomstat 2001b). Aggravated robberies and other robberies taken together make rates observed in Russia and the United States closer, but still the robbery rate in the United States remains higher. Another problem that hampers international comparisons is the different rate of reporting of violent events to police. It is known that many victims of nonfatal violent crimes (and sexual crimes in particular) do not report them to police. For example, in the United States in 2000, it is estimated that only 15 percent of sexual assaults were reported to police, while for robberies this figure was higher—69 percent (van Kesteren, Mayhew, and Nieuwbeerta 2000). According to some reports, the percentage of rape reporting in Russia is particularly low—7.5 percent (Dolgova 1998)—which may reflect low victim faith in the ability of the police to help in such cases (Timoshenko 1998). Data from the ICVS conducted in

Table 6.1. Violent Crimes in Russia and the United States, 1990–2000

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
<i>Russia</i>											
Intentional homicide, completed	9.33	9.72	14.20	18.24	20.17	21.3 ^a	19.9 ^a	19.9 ^a	18.03	19.27	19.80
Intentional homicide, attempted	1.17	1.12	1.27	1.43	1.60	—	—	—	2.07	2.06	2.00
Aggravated robberies (<i>razboj</i>)	11.2	12.4	20.4	27.0	25.5	25.4	23.4	23.3	26.20	28.18	27.01
Rapes	10.12	9.47	9.19	9.72	9.41	8.45	7.36	6.33	5.25	5.01	4.78
Robberies (<i>grabezhi</i>)	56.18	68.60	110.90	124.17	100.14	94.91	82.00	76.23	83.24	95.19	90.68
<i>United States</i>											
Intentional homicide, completed	9.4	9.8	9.3	9.5	9.0	8.2	7.4	6.8	6.3	5.7	5.5
Major assaults	424.1	433.3	441.8	440.3	427.6	418.3	390.9	382.0	361.4	334.3	323.6
Rapes	41.2	42.3	42.8	41.1	39.3	37.1	36.3	35.9	34.5	32.8	32.0
Robberies	257.0	272.7	263.6	255.9	237.7	220.9	201.9	186.1	165.5	150.1	144.9

Sources: Data for Russia are from the UN Survey of Crime Trends (based on the Russian MVD reports), MVD (1994) and Goskomstat (2000). Data for the United States are taken from the Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics Online 2001. Bureau of Justice Statistics. Available at: www.albany.edu/sourcebook/.
 Note: Entries represent number of reported crimes per 100,000 persons according to police data, by type of crime.
^aincludes attempted murders.

Moscow revealed the rate of reporting to the police for sexual incidents to be 7.4 percent in 1992 and 15.2 percent in 1996 (Timoshenko 1998). The reporting of robberies (16.9 percent in 1992 and 23.6 percent in 1996) and assaults (19.5 percent in 1992 and 24.5 percent in 1996) to the police in Moscow was higher than for sexual incidents (Timoshenko 1998). In general, the reporting of violent crimes to the police in Moscow is lower than in the United States.

Data from the ICVS can shed light on the real victimization rates for non-fatal violent crimes in Russia. According to the 1996 ICVS conducted in Moscow, the percentage of the Russian population victimized during one year was 2.5 for sexual assault (for women), 3.8 for robbery, and 2.8 for assault with force (Zvekić 1998). Percentages for sexual assault in Russia were slightly higher than in Ukraine (1.7), Belarus (1.5), and the United States (1.2) but significantly lower than in the countries of Latin America (5.0) (Alvazzi del Frate 1998; Zvekić 1998; van Kesteren, Mayhew, and Nieuwbeerta 2000). Percentages for robberies in Russia were lower than in Ukraine (5.7) and the countries of Latin America (8.1) but higher than in Belarus (1.5) and the United States (1.3). It is interesting that all rounds of the ICVS (from 1989 to 2000) demonstrate consistently lower victimization rates for robberies in the United States compared to Russia, while figures for sexual assault are close for both countries. The discrepancies between official police reports for robberies and sexual assaults, which show lower rates of these crimes for Russia compared to the United States (see table 6.1), and results obtained from the ICVS may be partially explained by differences in crime reporting. For example, some researchers do not agree that the recent decline in the reported rate of rapes in Russia reflects a real trend (Dolgova 1998; Pridemore 2002a). They note that the traditional, "natural" latency of rapes, where victims are reluctant to report them to the police, is complemented now by an "artificial" latency, where law enforcement organs refuse to start investigations in order to hide these cases from reporting or because they are unlikely to result in convictions (Dolgova 1998). This suggestion is supported by the rapid decline of registered rape attempts (Dolgova 1998). Taking into account the possible underreporting of rapes, Dolgova (1998) estimated that the real number of rapes should be four times higher than the registered number. This makes the rate of rapes observed in Russia closer to the figures reported for the United States (table 6.1). It should be noted that the ICVS in Russia was conducted in Moscow (a large city with a population of over 9 million), which may not be representative for the rest of Russia. The extension of the ICVS, conducted by the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) in collaboration with the MVD, in six regions of European Russia in 1991 revealed significantly lower one-year victimization rates: 1.0 for robbery and 0.5 percent for sexual incidents

(Goryainov 1993). This compares with 48.5 percent of robberies and 56.5 percent of sexual incidents that were reported to the police, but the police did not start an investigation in 20–25 percent of robberies and 15 percent of rapes, so that less than half of these crimes were recorded by police (Goryainov 1993). These data suggest that rates of rape and robbery in small towns of European Russia are lower than in Moscow. Unfortunately we do not have any information about victimization rates in large industrial regions of Siberia, the Urals, and the Far East to make a more definite conclusion about the rates of rapes and robberies in Russia.

Rates of aggravated assault (serious bodily harm) increased from 27.7 per 100,000 people in 1990 to 45.7 per 100,000 people in 1994 (Dolgoва 1998). The most rapid growth of this kind of offense was observed in 1992—the year of “shock therapy” and rapid population impoverishment. Rates of serious bodily harm follow the same temporal dynamics as homicide rates: an increase in the early 1990s with a peak in 1994, a decline, and then an increase after 1998. As with homicide, we observe some stabilization of aggravated assault during the last three years. As we noted, this kind of offense is closely related to homicides and some cases of homicides are actually categorized by police statistics as serious bodily injuries. For example, the proportion of serious bodily harm resulting in the death of the victim increased from 29.3 percent in 1993 to 30.0 percent in 1994 (the peak year in homicide deaths) and then decreased to 27.3 percent in 1995 when homicide mortality also declined (Dolgoва 1998).

With the exception of rapes, temporal changes in different types of violent crime had very similar patterns. Rates of violent crime declined during the antialcohol campaign (1987–1991), started to increase when the antialcohol campaign ended, grew with accelerated pace after the “shock therapy” (1992), peaked in 1994, then declined again and stabilized after 1999. The reported rape rates demonstrate a rather unusual tendency of steady decline during the 1980s and the 1990s. Data from the ICVS confirm the opposite trends for robberies/assaults and sexual incidents (including rapes) reported by the police statistics: the victimization rates of sexual incidents decreased from 1992 to 1996, while victimization rates of robberies and assaults increased during the same period (Timoshenko 1998). More studies are required to find out whether the reported decline of rape rates is real or reflects a long-term tendency of data underreporting.

In contrast to homicide rates, data from the ICVS suggest that the rate of non-fatal violent crimes in Russia appears to not be extraordinarily high compared to other nations: victimization rates for such nonfatal violent crimes as robbery and rape are only slightly higher in Russia than in the United States and lower than in many other countries of the world (Alvazzi del Frate 1998; Timoshenko 1998; Zvekic 1998; van Kesteren, Mayhew, and Nieuwbeerta 2000).

VICTIMS OF VIOLENT CRIME

What are the chances of becoming a victim of violent crime and homicide in Russia? Crime statistics from the United States show that the annual risk of becoming a victim of personal violence (forcible rape, robbery, or assault) is well below the risk of victimization from property crime (Reiss and Roth 1993; van Kesteren, Mayhew, and Nieuwbeerta 2000). However, in the countries of Eastern and Central Europe (including Russia), annual risks of victimization for some property crimes (burglary or theft of cars) and violent crimes (robbery, assault with force, or sexual assault) were very close: 2.5 for burglary, 6.3 for theft of car, 3.8 for robbery, 2.8 for assault with force, and 2.5 for rape (Zvekic 1998).

The most complete information about victims of violent crime in Russia is provided by vital statistics data. It was already noted that the homicide registration by vital statistics is more complete than reports of legal organs (Pridemore 2003a). We use official mortality data provided by Goskomstat to analyze homicide victimization rates in different groups of the population. Homicide victimization risk can be measured by a demographic indicator obtained from the multiple decrement life tables, which is called "chances of eventually dying per 100." This indicator does not depend on the age structure of the living population and estimates chances of dying from a particular cause for a cohort of individuals who would experience currently observed mortality schedules throughout their life. In 2002 in Russia, the chances of eventually dying from homicide were 2.70 percent for males and 0.96 percent for females. In 1981, chances of eventually dying from homicide were much lower, 1.17 percent for males and 0.53 percent for females. Thus, the chances of becoming a victim of homicide doubled during the last twenty years. We selected 1981 for comparison because it precedes in time all the political and economic changes discussed in this chapter and reflects a mortality pattern typical for the former Soviet Union. It is known that, after a short period of stabilization in 1980–1984, mortality from homicide experienced periods of rapid decrease in 1985–1987 and increase in 1990–1994 (Gavrilova et al. 2000; Pridemore 2003b). In 1999–2001, we observe again a period of relative stabilization in homicide death rates, so it would be interesting to compare current homicide victimization rates with the rates in the Soviet past.

Age of Victims

Figure 6.1 shows the age-profile of homicide victimization rates for three time periods: 1981, 1991, and 2002. The first striking observation from this figure is an explosive growth of homicide death rates in the 1990s. Another notable feature is the shift of age with the highest mortality for males from

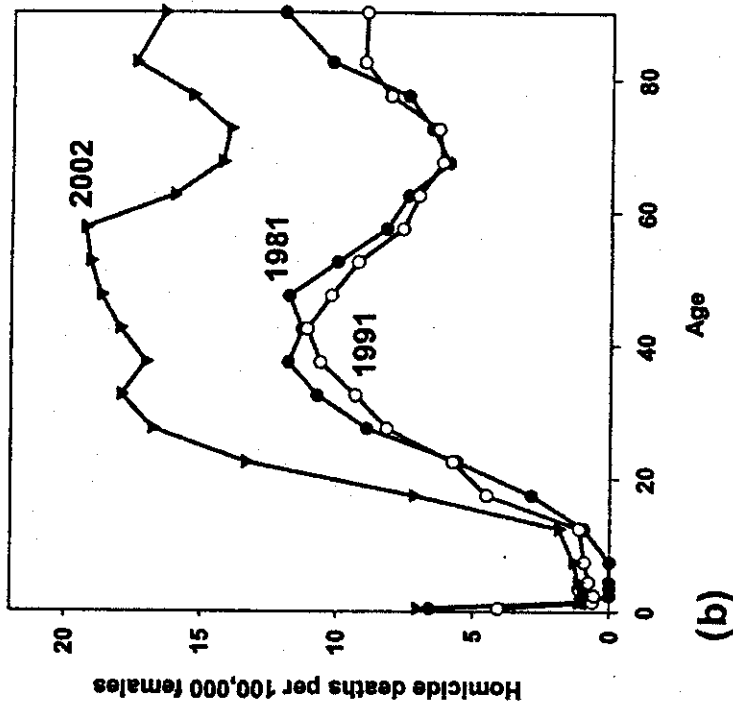
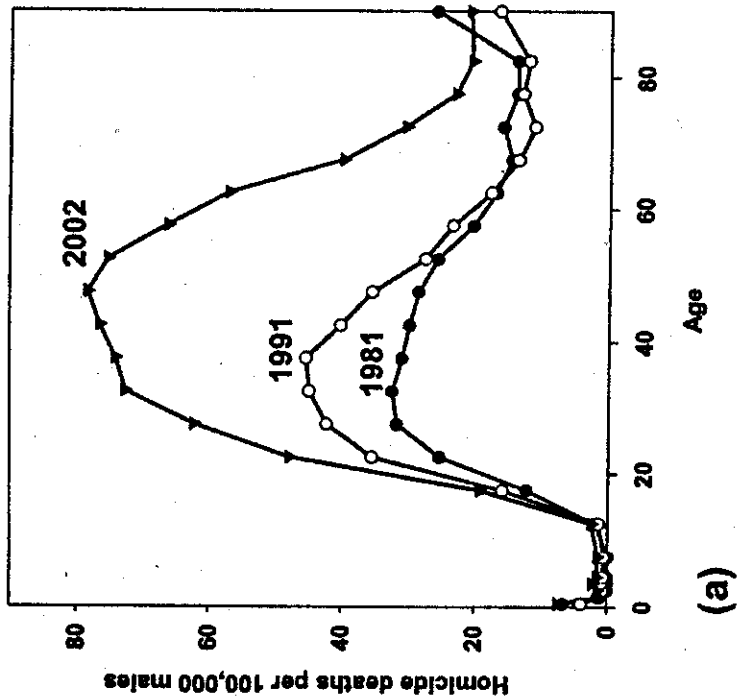


Figure 6.1. Age profiles of homicide mortality, 1981, 1991, and 2002 (a) males and (b) females

30–34 in 1981 to 40–44 in 2002. Another observation is very high victimization rates of middle-aged and older women. Homicide mortality in Russia has already attracted the attention of researchers because of its anomalous age structure (Chervyakov et al. 2002; Pridemore 2003b). For example, in the United States, 62.5 percent of homicide victims were under age 35 and only 14.9 percent of all victims were of age 50 years and over (Fox and Zawitz 2003), and the modal age of homicide victims in 2002 was 20–24 years (U.S. FBI n.d.). In Russia, only 32 percent of all victims were under age 35 in 2001 and 30 percent of homicide victims were 50 years and older. In 1981, age structure of homicide victims was younger: 46 percent of victims were under age 35 and 25 percent of them were 50 years and older. We should take into account, however, that these figures depend on the age structure of population and may be affected by the process of population aging. In 1981, the Russian population had a younger age structure, while, in 2001, because of population aging, the proportion of older people increased and it was apparently reflected in the absolute numbers of homicide deaths. Indeed, if we use mean expected age at death, a demographic indicator that does not depend on the population age structure, the age differences between homicide victims in 1981 and 2002 virtually disappear: mean expected age of homicide death for males was 40 years in 1981 and 41 years in 2002 while, for females, mean expected age at death remained unchanged (46 years). The stability of the mean expected age at death does not mean that homicide death rates changed in a similar manner for all age groups because this aggregated indicator reflects only average tendencies and does not take into account specific trends for each age category. Different age groups may demonstrate opposite trends in homicide rates over time. For example, in 2002 compared to 2001, homicide rates continued to grow for middle-age groups (40–50 years) but decreased for young (below 25) and very old (over 75) age groups.

Gender

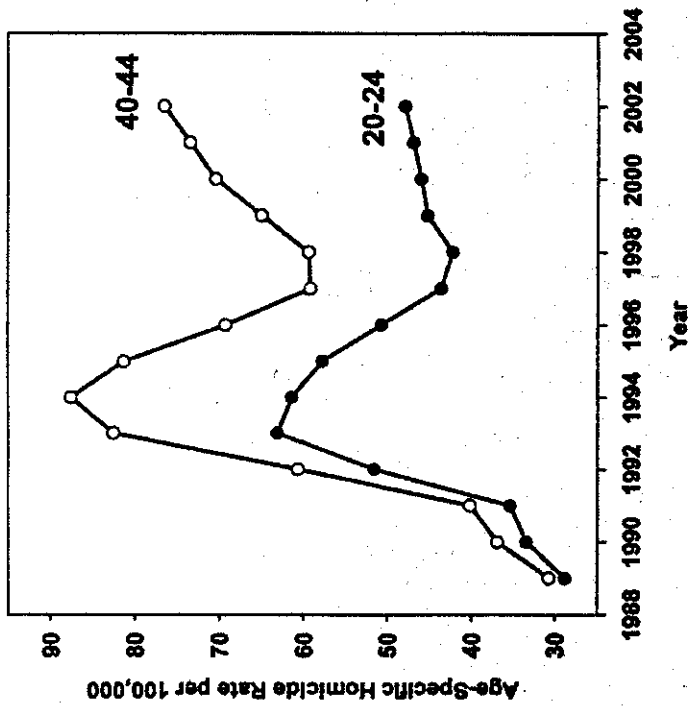
There is also a considerable variation in homicide mortality by gender in Russia. In 2002, males became victims of homicide 3.6 times more often than females, and the same male/female ratio is observed in the United States—3.3 in 2002 (U.S. FBI n.d.). In the same calendar year, the age of maximum mortality in Russia was 45–49 years for males and 55–59 years for females. Compared to the United States and other Western countries, middle-aged and older women in Russia have anomalously high homicide victimization rates, which some researchers partially explain by domestic violence (see Pridemore 2003b). Pridemore (2003a) compared the male-female ratio of homicide victimization in Russia and the United States at different ages and found no significant differences in the ratios for both countries. Thus, women in Russia do not demonstrate excessive mortality from homicide at

older ages compared to males. On the contrary, at ages 25–54 the male-female ratio is higher in Russia than in the United States implying that males at middle ages in Russia are at higher homicide risk than in the United States. It appears that the relative importance of domestic violence in 2002 decreased compared to 1981: the male-female homicide victimization ratio increased from 2.8 in 1981 to 3.61 in 2002. This tendency was not the same for younger and older age groups. In 1981, the male-female homicide victimization ratio at middle ages was relatively low and then significantly increased. For example, the male-female ratio at age 40–44 was 2.65 in 1981 and rose to 4.25 in 2002, demonstrating the more rapid growth of homicide mortality in middle-aged males compared to middle-aged females. The opposite tendency is observed for the young adult group: the homicide male-female ratio of young adults (20–24) declined from 4.54 in 1981 to 3.59 in 2002. Thus, the homicide victimization rate of young females grew faster compared to young males, particularly in the 1990s (Gavrilova et al. 2002).

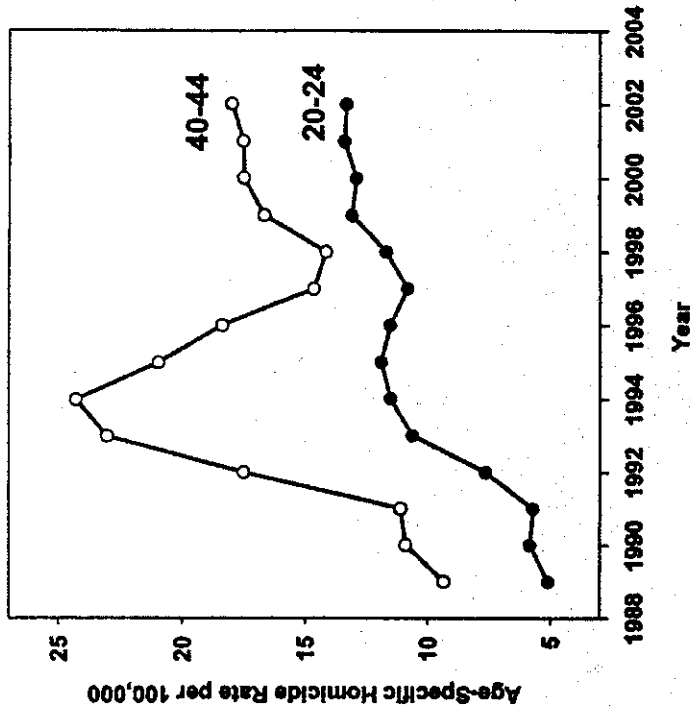
Figure 6.2 displays time trajectories of homicide victimization rates in different age and sex groups. Middle-aged males and females demonstrate a similar pattern of time trends in homicide rates during the 1990s: a rapid increase after 1989, a peak in 1994, and a short-term decline followed by another increase after 1998. In 2002, homicide mortality for both males and females was still high, but it did not reach the levels observed in the year of peak mortality (1994). The homicide mortality of young males (20–24) follows the pattern demonstrated for the middle-aged group but with slower growth of homicide rates after 1998. Young females (20–24), however, demonstrate another pattern: steady growth of homicide mortality during the 1990s, until homicide mortality in 2001 hit the highest level ever observed for this age and gender (figure 6.2). Thus, middle-aged males and young females were among the most adversely affected groups during the transition period. While the adverse effects of the transition to a market economy on middle-aged male mortality is well documented (Shkolnikov et al. 1998; Notzon et al. 1998; Gavrilova et al. 2000; Semyonova et al. 2000; Pridemore 2003b), little attention is paid to the disturbing trend of homicide mortality in young females (Gavrilova et al., 2001; 2002). The growing involvement of young women in risky behavior (including prostitution and drug abuse) may be a possible explanation of this negative tendency, although more detailed research in this area is required to fully explore this issue.

Victims of Nonfatal Crimes

The ICVS conducted in Moscow in 1992 and 1996 provides information about victims of robbery, sexual assault, and assault/threat (Timoshenko 1998). Young people more often become victims of robbery: the average risk of robbery of the age group 16–34 years is more than twice as high as that



(a)



(b)

Figure 6.2. Age-specific death rates for young and middle-aged Russian males and females, 1989–2002 (a) males and (b) females

for the rest of the respondents (16.5 percent and 7 percent). Females are nearly three times less likely than males to become victims of robbery. One author explains this gender difference by the intention of the offender not only to steal property but also to humiliate the masculinity of the male victim (Timoshenko 1998). Another possible explanation of this phenomenon may be a higher return expected by the offender from a male victim. The study also found an increase of the risk of being robbed with the level of education, which corresponds to recent research on education as a protective factor against homicide victimization in Russia (Pridemore and Shkolnikov 2004). As expected, young women (16–24 years) are the most likely targets of sexual assaults. Like robbery, assault is more likely directed against males: victimization risks are nearly twice as high for men than for women (Timoshenko 1998). Among men, the most vulnerable groups for assault are 20–24 and 40–44 years. The survey revealed that males more often fall victim to brutal violent crimes (robbery and assault), while females more often become victims of theft.

CHARACTERISTICS OF VIOLENT OFFENDERS

Information about perpetrators of violent crimes is less certain than information about their victims because of a less accurate system of reporting. The main sources of information about offenders are statistics of convicts collected by the Ministry of Justice and censuses of the prison population (Mikhlin 2001).

Men made up 93.1 percent of persons convicted for murder in the prison population in 1999 (Mikhlin 2001), which is not a real proportion for all persons who committed murder because women less often are sentenced to imprisonment. According to 1993 data, men comprised 88.2 percent of homicide arrestees—a proportion comparable to the U.S. data (90 percent [U.S. FBI n.d.]). During the period of the highest growth of the crime rate in Russia, from 1989 to 1993, the proportion of women arrested for murder increased from 9.3 to 11.8 (MVD 1994). The same dynamic is observed in the case of women arrestees for aggravated assault (serious bodily harm), from 6 percent to 10 percent, and aggravated robbery, from 3.9 percent to 5.4 percent. Recent statistics also show an increasing proportion of women among arrestees for serious crimes (Dolgoва 1998).

During 1989–1993, the proportion of murderers older than 30 years slightly increased from 61 percent to 63 percent according to official data from the MVD (1994). In 1997, the percentage of persons older than 30 years among arrestees for intentional murder declined to 58.4 percent, while the mean age of arrestees decreased from 38.7 in 1990 to 34.6 in 1997 (see Chervyakov et al. 2002). In comparison, in the United States the average age

of homicide offenders is around 30 years (Fox and Zawitz 2003) and the modal age group is 20–24 years (U.S. FBI n.d.). In 1993, the proportion of juveniles under 18 arrested for homicide was almost two times lower in Russia (4.8 percent in 1993) than in the United States (9.8 percent). However, this proportion increased in Russia from 4.3 percent in 1989 to 5.8 percent in 1997 and decreased in the United States to 6 percent in 2002 (U.S. FBI n.d.). Thus, homicide offenders in Russia are on average older than in the United States (Pridemore 2003a; Chervyakov et al. 2002), though recent data demonstrate a tendency to age decline among murderers in Russia (Chervyakov et al. 2002).

Persons convicted of murder comprise one of the oldest groups among all violent crime offenders. According to the 1999 survey of the Russian penal population, 34.2 percent of all persons convicted for intentional murder (article 105) were 40 years and older with a mean age of 36.9 years (Mikhlin 2001). Those convicted of aggravated assault (intentional serious bodily harm, article 111) also are rather old—37 percent of them were older than 40 years with a mean age of 36.4 years (Mikhlin 2001). The proportion of convicts for these two crimes is high at ages 30–49 years and rapidly drops after age 50 (Mikhlin 2001). Persons convicted for other types of violent crimes are significantly younger than murderers. Only 14.4 percent of rapists (article 131) and 13.5 percent of persons convicted for kidnapping (article 126) and forced abduction (article 127) were older than 40 years (Mikhlin 2001). The mean age of convicted rapists in Russia is 30.5 years, which is similar to the United States, where most rapists have ages between 25 and 44 years (U.S. FBI n.d.). The youngest group among perpetrators of violent crime is comprised of persons convicted for robbery (*"grabezh,"* article 161) and aggravated robbery (*"razбой,"* article 162), of which 89.1 percent and 89.9 percent, respectively, were younger than 40 years. The modal age group of robbers was 20–24 years, which is slightly older than in the United States where the modal age of arrested robbers is 15–19 years (U.S. FBI n.d.). The mean ages of offenders convicted of robbery (28.4 years) and aggravated robbery (28.9 years) are the lowest among all violent offenders and are close to corresponding ages for offenders in the United States. We should not forget, however, that the population of penitentiary facilities where the census was conducted differs from the population of arrestees for any particular crime in a given year, so that comparisons between the two types of data should be regarded with caution. Thus, only murderers and persons convicted of aggravated assault in Russia are unusually old compared to offenders in the United States. One possible explanation of this peculiarity may be alcohol abuse, which peaks at old ages, 40–55 years, among Russians.

The census of the prison population provides information about other characteristics of convicts. The distribution of those convicted of intentional murder by marital status shows that more than half of them (60.6 percent) were single at the time of offense and 15.7 percent lost their family after conviction as a result of the facilitated divorce procedure available for the

spouses of convicts (Mikhlin 2001). The proportion of single rapists compared to murderers was even higher (66.6 percent), although among married rapists a higher proportion remained married after their conviction compared to married murderers (72 percent versus 60 percent). The highest proportion of single offenders is observed for offenders convicted of robbery and aggravated robbery (77 and 74 percent), which is not surprising taking into account the younger age of perpetrators.

The distribution of convicted violent offenders by occupation reveals a very high proportion of persons without a permanent source of income among perpetrators of all violent crimes: 43 percent for rapists, 46 percent for murderers, and 62 percent for robbers. These persons were not officially registered as unemployed and apparently considered illegal activity as the main source of income. Officially unemployed persons comprised only 1–2 percent of violent offenders. Persons without a permanent source of income comprise about 6–10 percent of the economically active population (Kudryavtsev 1999). Thus, we can estimate a conditional probability of committing murder and robbery for persons without a permanent source of income using the Bayes formula, which is 0.09 and 0.15, respectively. "Blue-collar workers" represented another large group of violent offenders, comprising from 25 percent (robbery) to 40 percent (rape) of those convicted of violent crimes.

The distribution of educational attainment among violent offenders is similar for all types of violent crimes. Most convicts had secondary (45–51 percent) and incomplete secondary (27–31 percent) education—two common education groups in Russia. The percentage of convicts with a college or university degree is low—0.7–1.7 percent—except for offenders convicted of kidnapping and abduction (6.8 percent). According to the Russian 1994 microcensus, people with college or university degrees comprised about 14 percent of the population, and the conditional probability of committing violent crime for this group is less than 2 per 1,000. Chervyakov and colleagues (2002) report changes in the educational structure of homicide offenders using data for Udmurt Republic. According to their data, offenders with a secondary education comprised almost 80 percent of all homicide arrestees in 1989–1991 and were replaced by persons with incomplete secondary and specialized secondary education in 1998 (Chervyakov et al. 2002). The data on educational attainment suggest very low propensity of committing violent crime for persons with college or university degrees in Russia.

COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL VARIATIONS IN HOMICIDE MORTALITY

It is known that community characteristics affect the probability of violent crime (Reiss and Roth 1993). For example, in the United States, smaller cities

and rural areas have lower rates of violent crime than larger cities and metropolitan areas (Reiss and Roth 1993). In contrast to the United States, the two largest cities in Russia, Moscow and St. Petersburg, have age-adjusted homicide rates much lower than Russia as a whole (17.11, 20.21, and 30.35, respectively). At the same time, Moscow oblast and Leningrad oblast—regions surrounding Moscow city and St. Petersburg, respectively—have homicide mortality levels that exceed the country level: 37.57 and 36.63. Thus, homicide rates in large Russian cities are lower than in small cities and rural areas. Potential explanations for this phenomenon include higher proportion of educated people, better funding of local police, as well as a strict system of registration that existed in the past that filtered out former convicts from these areas. The effect of education on decreasing the homicide rate was found in a recent study of Russian regions (Andrienko 2001), and universities in Russia traditionally are located in large cities. The better level of socioeconomic development inherent to the large cities in Russia may be another factor of lower violent (but not economic) crime (Kolennikova et al. 2002).

On the other hand, the wealth of large cities attracts many groups of marginal people (homeless, refugees, and illegal immigrants), and this problem is particularly acute in Moscow. As a result, the quality of male homicide statistics in Moscow raises serious concerns. The structure of mortality from external causes in Moscow demonstrates a very unusual pattern, quite different from other regions of Russia. For example, in 2001, the most common causes of male external deaths in Moscow were undetermined injuries and accidental falls. In the same year in Russia, the most common cause of external mortality for males was suicide, while mortality from accidental falls occupied only the ninth position. We already noted that undetermined injuries may be used for concealing homicide cases (see above). In Western countries, deaths from accidental falls are observed predominantly among the oldest age groups (over 80), so the very high proportion of deaths from accidental falls among middle-aged men in Moscow looks suspicious. Further, data from the ICVS suggest that nonfatal violent crime in Moscow appears to be higher than in some other regions of the European Russia (Zvekic 1998; Timoshenko 1998; Goryainov 1993). Also, some studies suggest that Moscow has a highly corrupt police force (Zvekic 1998; Kolennikova et al. 2002) and the lowest clearance rate for serious and very serious crimes (28.4 percent compared to 56.8 percent in Russia according to MVD 2003). All these facts suggest that the homicide rate for males in Moscow may be higher than reported by the official statistics. However, Moscow is a special case and the proportion of marginal population in other large Russian cities is significantly lower than in Moscow, so homicide statistics from other large cities appear to be of higher quality.

Before the transition period, rural and urban areas in Russia did not differ significantly by their rate of homicide. In 1988–1990, homicide victimization

rates were slightly higher in rural than urban areas. Although 1990–2002 trends for homicide show similar fluctuations for rural and urban areas, homicide victimization rates in urban areas grew at a higher pace after 1991 compared to rural areas, particularly for males. In 2002, age-adjusted death rates from homicide for males in urban areas were substantially higher than in rural areas: 54.29 versus 44.04. For females, urban and rural homicide mortality was essentially the same (14.41 in urban areas versus 13.87 in rural areas).

Russia is a vast country, and its eighty-nine different regions vary considerably in their annual homicide rate (Gavrilova et al. 1997; Pridemore 2003a). A typical regional administrative unit in Russia is called "oblast," which roughly corresponds to the state unit in the United States. Regions to the east of the Ural Mountains traditionally have very high levels of external mortality and homicide mortality in particular (Shkolnikov 1987; Pridemore 2003b). In 2001, only two out of twenty regions of Siberia and the Far East (Novosibirsk oblast and Kamchatka) had homicide mortality rates lower than the overall rate in the country. Most regions with the highest homicide rates lie in Eastern Siberia and the Far East and particularly in the regions of South-Eastern Siberia. While making regional comparisons, it is important to adjust homicide rates for population age structure because some regions may have a younger population structure and hence larger proportion of potential victims and offenders. For this reason, we calculated age-adjusted homicide mortality rates. The top five regions having the highest age-adjusted homicide rate in 2001 are situated in South-Eastern Siberia: Republic of Tyva (132.7), Irkutsk (77.8), Khabarovsk (72.9), Chita (64.7), and Kemerovo (63.7) oblasts. Starting from as early as the times of the tsars, these regions were a traditional place of exile for criminals. During the Soviet times, the population in this area received many migrants from other parts of the country, who were attracted to these regions by higher wages. Most researchers explain very high levels of homicide mortality in the Eastern parts of Russia by socioeconomic conditions (Shkolnikov 1987) and key structural factors (Pridemore 2000). On the other end of the homicide mortality spectrum are the republics of the Northern Caucasus (with the exception of Chechnya), which have the lowest levels of reported homicide rates in Russia: Kabardino-Balkariya (3.7), Dagestan (8.4), Ingushetiya (10.6), and North Osetiya (11.8). Some experts, however, believe that the quality of statistical data in these regions is flawed because of underreporting (Kolennikova et al. 2002). Another regional regularity is a South-North gradient of homicide mortality in the European part of Russia, with northern regions having higher homicide rates compared to the south.

One interesting classification of Russian regions by crime rate and socioeconomic development was proposed by the group of researchers at the Institute of Socio-Economic Problems of Population working on the project sponsored by the George Soros' Open Society Institute (Kolennikova et al.

2002). First, they divided regions of Russia into three groups according to the levels of crime rate. Then, the same regions were divided into three groups according to the level of socioeconomic development (gross regional product, mean income per capita, mean income to subsistence level ratio, etc.). Finally, the researchers selected four types of regions using superposition of the two classifications described above. The first type is represented by republics of the Northern Caucasus and several other national republics in the European part of Russia. These regions have many problems. More than half of the population has income below the subsistence level, unreliable statistical data make sociological studies practically impossible, police officers are involved in shadow businesses based on clan or family relations, and these regions produce criminal groups spreading throughout the country. Most regions of the second type are represented by the regions of the central part of European Russia. These regions have a quiet lifestyle without great economic achievements and without the serious negative consequences of rapid economic change. The crime rate is low, and police officers have few opportunities for side economic activity. The third group is represented mostly by the regions of Eastern Siberia and the Far East. These regions have a high level of industrial development mostly due to export businesses (e.g., oil and metals) and a high level of crime. Criminal groups from other regions attempt to exert control over local businesses, which results in a high proportion of grave crimes. Police officers have many opportunities for side economic activity at the cost of their true responsibilities. The percentage of crimes cleared by arrest in these areas is minimal. The fourth group of regions includes regions with large cities and centers of higher education (Moscow and Moscow oblast, St. Petersburg, Rostov, Samara, Novosibirsk, and Toms oblasts), several regions of the Far East (Kamchatka, Sakhalin, and Magadan oblast), Belgorod and Tyumen oblasts, Krasnoyarsk kray, and national republics of Karelia and Bashkortostan. These regions are considered as the wealthiest, with developed market structures not only due to export but also due to production for the internal market. They have lower rates of serious violent crimes and higher rates of economic crimes. Police have wide opportunities for commercial activity and connections with local criminal groups.

The researchers also found a tendency toward a decreasing crime rate (particularly the rate of serious violent crimes) with an increasing level of socioeconomic development (Kolennikova et al. 2002). Although this classification does not always correspond to the homicide statistics (for example, Sakhalin and Magadan oblasts in the wealthy fourth group have high levels of homicide rate), it is interesting as an attempt at linking together economic development, police economic activity, and crime rate. It may also explain the anomalously low homicide rates in Novosibirsk oblast in Siberia and Kamchatka oblast in the Far East, which both belong to the wealthy fourth group. This classification also stresses the key role of the legal system in de-

terrifying crime—an important factor that will be discussed later in this chapter. One important issue missing in this analysis is the lack of proper adjustment for population age structure. For example, older persons rarely commit violent crimes and their proportion is low in the regions with harsh living conditions (like Siberia), which also have very high crime rates per 100,000 of resident population.

OLD AND NEW CAUSES OF VIOLENT CRIME IN RUSSIA

Many factors of violent crime in Russia have their roots in the past, including a long-lasting tradition of high alcohol consumption. The disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the subsequent economic changes resulted in growing social disorganization and poverty, which likely contributed to already high levels of violent crime (Kennedy and Kawachi, 1998; Klugman and Braithwaite 1998; Pridemore 2000). During the transition period, economic crimes in Russia grew at a faster pace compared to violent crimes and now violent crimes make up a lower proportion of all crimes than in the past: 23 percent in 1998 compared to 50 percent in 1978 (Kudryavtsev 1999). The economic motivation of violent crimes also increased (Dolgova 1998), while some other factors of violent crime remained unchanged.

Alcohol abuse appears to be one significant factor in high rates of external mortality in Russia and homicide mortality in particular. Alcohol consumption in Russia increased during 1960–1980 and stabilized at an annual level of approximately fourteen liters of alcohol per person in the beginning of the 1980s (Nemtsov 2000). There is evidence of a correlation between alcohol consumption and homicides during 1965–1985 (Antonov-Romanovsky and Matveeva 1993; Trembl 1997). Further, the antialcohol campaign of 1985 was accompanied by the rapid decline of homicide rates from 12.1 in 1984 to 10.5 in 1986 (Nemtsov 2000). The rise in alcohol consumption after 1987 undoubtedly contributed to the rapid increase in mortality from external causes of death including homicides (Nemtsov and Shkolnikov 1999; Nemtsov 2000). Further, Pridemore (2002b) conducted a multivariate regression analysis using official homicide mortality rates for seventy-eight Russian regions in 1995 as a dependent variable and mortality from accidental poisoning by alcohol as a proxy for alcohol consumption. He found that alcohol consumption was positively and significantly related to the variation in the regional level of homicide mortality, suggesting that alcohol plays a significant role in regional variation of homicide mortality in Russia. Forensic data for eight regions of Russia demonstrated that, between 1981 and 1984, 64 percent of homicide victims had alcohol in their blood (before the antialcohol campaign) and only 59 percent in 1988 (after the antialcohol campaign). When the antialcohol campaign was abolished, the proportion of homicide victims

with alcohol in their blood increased again to 64 percent (Nemtsov 2001). The same data also showed that the effect of the antialcohol campaign on homicide mortality was stronger for drunk victims than for sober victims. For example, after the end of the antialcohol campaign, homicide mortality of drunken victims increased faster than homicide mortality of sober victims (from 1987 to 1989, by 101.3 percent for drunk, and by 52.3 percent for sober, victims).

The dynamic of homicide offenders regarding their alcohol status also shows an interesting pattern. The rate of sober offenders (2 per 100,000 people) remained stable until 1992 and was not affected by the antialcohol campaign. After 1992, however, the rate of sober offenders demonstrates steady growth without any sign of stabilization. This tendency may be partially explained by the increasing number of economically motivated violent crimes during the transition period (Dolgova 1998). The rate of drunken offenders stabilized after 1994 at a high level of 12 per 100,000 (Nemtsov 2001). As a result, the proportion of drunken offenders continues to decline. In 1981, about 80 percent of murderers were drunk at the time of the offense and this figure dropped to 70 percent in 1998 (Nemtsov 2001). According to other authors, in the early 1980s, 90 percent of offenders were under the influence of alcohol when committing murder. In the 1990s, this proportion declined to 63 percent (Dolgova 1998). This tendency of a declining proportion of drunken homicide offenders is observed in the Udmurt Republic of Russia: in 1989–1991, 84 percent of homicide offenders were intoxicated with alcohol at the time of offense, while in 1998 this figure was 67 percent (Chervyakov et al. 2002). It should be noted that drunken offenders are more likely to be apprehended by police compared to the sober offenders, so the actual number of sober murderers may be higher now and close to the number of drunken offenders.

From these data, we may conclude that alcohol plays a significant role as a factor of violent crime in general and homicide in particular. Excessive alcohol consumption by both victims and offenders of homicide may help to explain the anomalously high mean age among victims and offenders of this crime in Russia. Many homicides in Russia are committed at home ("in domestic circumstances" according to the terminology of Russian police) comprising two-thirds of all homicides in the 1980s and 40 percent in the 1990s (Dolgova 1998). Many of these homicides appear to be a result of joint drinking at home and ensuing arguments between casual acquaintances, relatives, or neighbors. Chronic alcoholics are among the major players in this type of murder. Alcoholism is a progressive illness and it develops during a rather long period of time (from ten to fifteen years), so that by age 40–50 years alcohol abusers may develop physical and psychological disorders including liver cirrhosis and alcohol psychoses (Nemtsov and Shkolnikov 1999). Mortality from accidental poisoning by alcohol shows a very sharp peak at ages 45–55 years when many

chronic alcoholics die from overdose or from consumption of poor quality liquors. Chronic alcohol abusers apparently comprise a sizable proportion of victims of murders committed in domestic circumstances, thus resulting in the elevated mean age of homicide victims in Russia.

Although alcohol is a significant factor of high homicide mortality in Russia, excessive alcohol consumption alone cannot explain the observed explosion of homicide deaths during the 1990s. Expert estimates of alcohol consumption in Russia show that in 1981 annual consumption of alcohol per capita (14.9 liters) was even higher than in 1994 (13.3 liters). At the same time, homicide mortality of males in 1994 was 2.7 times higher than in 1981. Thus, with almost the same level of alcohol consumption, Russian males in 1994 committed homicide almost 3 times more often than in 1981. We may conclude that, despite its importance in explaining many violent events, the role of alcohol as a traditional factor in violent crime in Russia is now declining and newly emerging factors are coming into play.

The problem of domestic violence as a contributing factor in violent crime is closely related to the problem of alcohol abuse, as many cases of spousal homicides result from the drinking of the husband or both spouses. According to a case review in St. Petersburg in 1991, spousal homicides comprise 15 percent of all homicides, which is slightly higher than in the United States with 10 percent (Gondolf and Shestakov 1997). In about 60–75 percent of the Russian male-perpetrated spousal homicides, the offender had been drinking, while in the United States this percentage is lower at 50–65 percent. Wives in Russia fall victim to spousal homicide almost 3 times more often than in the United States: the male-female ratio of spousal homicide is 1:6 in Russia and 1:2 in the United States (Gondolf and Shestakov 1997). These data demonstrate the more vulnerable status of Russian women in the family. Another difference in spousal homicides in Russia compared to the United States is the low percentage of suicide attempts after a husband murders his wife (8 percent versus 25 percent in the United States) and the very few murders of children (Gondolf and Shestakov 1997). The authors believe that murders of wives committed by husbands in Russia are related more to marital conflicts, which are intensified by a lack of mobility and economic stress. Lack of housing and women's shelters in Russia also exacerbates the problem of domestic violence when women have to live with abusive spouses for many years (Zabelina 2002).

There is little information about changes in domestic violence during the last decade in Russia. However, we can study violence against children in the home using levels of homicide mortality of infants and children as a proxy, because most infants and small children are killed by their parents. In 1981, homicide mortality was 6.5 per 100,000 for infant boys and 6.6 per 100,000 for infant girls. Homicide mortality of infants declined during the antialcohol campaign and remained rather low until 1992—the beginning of market

reforms. After 1992, infant homicide mortality demonstrated relatively steady growth until 1999 and then a stabilization at high levels of 10–12 deaths per 100,000. These data clearly demonstrate that the beginning of stressful economic experiments (1992), rather than an increase in alcohol consumption (1987), coincided with the rapid increase of infanticide rates. We may conclude, therefore, that domestic violence and violence against children in the 1990s were most likely induced by psychological stress caused by rapid impoverishment and social disorganization.

The deaths and injuries of spouses and children represent direct negative consequences of domestic violence in Russia. Indirect consequences of domestic violence and child abuse in families include a rapid increase in the number of abandoned children and children without parental support during the last decade. According to MVD estimates, in 2002, Russia had 2–2.5 million homeless children (Arefiev 2003). The number of parents who lost legal custody of their children (mainly because of alcohol abuse) grew from 41,411 in 1998 to 56,350 in 2001 (Arefiev 2003). More parents in 2001 compared to 1998 were convicted for child neglect. All these factors likely contributed to the growth of juvenile crimes (Pridemore 2002a). Although the total number of juvenile crimes shows a tendency to decline, the cruelty of crimes committed by juveniles increases. For example, the number of completed and attempted homicides by juvenile offenders increased by 149 percent between 1999 and 2001 and cases of aggravated assault increased by 160 percent. In fact, decrease of total crimes committed by juvenile offenders in 1999–2001 was mainly due to decreases in nonviolent property crimes while almost all violent crimes (homicide, aggravated assault, rape, and aggravated robbery) showed increases (data taken from the annual state report "On the status of orphan children in Russian Federation—2002"). Together with the number of homeless children and juvenile crimes, these factors create bleak prospects for the future (Pridemore 2002a).

There are several other factors of violent crime that emerged and developed during the transition period. One such factor is organized crime, which flourished during the period of "wild" capitalism in the 1990s. Criminal statistics show that property crime is the major "specialization" of organized criminal groups. For example, larceny and fraud comprise 22 percent and 21 percent, respectively, of all crimes committed by organized criminals in January–November 2003, while homicides comprised only 1.3 percent (MVD n.d.). Violent crime is less common for organized crime, and, in January–November 2003, organized criminal groups committed approximately 1.4 percent of all homicides (attempted and completed) investigated by police, 0.3 percent of aggravated assaults, 0.6 percent of rapes (attempted and completed), 1.2 percent of robberies, and 7.1 percent of aggravated robberies (MVD n.d.). Organized criminal groups play an important role in contracted murders and kidnappings: for example, in 2003 (January–November), or-

ganized criminal groups committed 28 percent of all contracted murders investigated by police and 15 percent of kidnappings. However, contracted murders comprise a tiny proportion of all murders (142 cases or 0.4 percent in 2001) and their proportion remained stable during the last five years (*Demoscope Weekly* 2002). These data demonstrate that organized crime does not make a significant contribution to violent crime. However, we should not underestimate the adverse effect of organized criminal groups on Russian society. The publicity of organized crime by mass media and publicity of contracted murders in particular may have a negative impact on behavior in the general population. For example, some specialists note that even ordinary drunkards and hooligans kill now more often than in the past, imitating methods publicized by mass media for contracted killings (see Dolgova 1998, 133).

Another potentially important factor in violent crime is the increasing prevalence of drug addicts. The number of crimes related to drug turnover increased from 1990 to 2000 by fifteen times (Scherbakova 2002), and the number of crimes committed by offenders under the influence of illicit drugs was two times higher in 2000 compared to 1995. On the other hand, the proportion of such offenders is extremely low in the total number of violent crimes (Pridemore 2002a), so they may not yet have a significant impact on the total number of violent crimes. Firearms availability is another potential factor in violent crime that deserves attention. For example, in the United States, over 60 percent of murders are committed with guns (U.S. FBI n.d.). Armed conflicts in the former Soviet Union (including Chechnya) increased availability of illegal guns in Russia, and private possession of registered guns was officially allowed in the 1990s. According to the police statistics, the number of crimes related to illegal gun possession and gun turnover was increasing during the 1990s but declined after 1999. The proportion of murders committed with guns is not particularly high: only 10 percent of murders in 1994 were committed with guns and this proportion decreased in 1995 to 6 percent (Dolgova 1998). Data for the Udmurt Republic also demonstrate that the proportion of firearms as a weapon of murder remained essentially the same during the 1990s: 9.8 percent in 1989–1991 and 10.4 percent in 1998 (Chervyakov et al. 2002). ICVS showed that the level of gun possession by civilians in Russia is lower than in the United States and closer to the Western European level (Zvekic 1998; van Kesteren, Mayhew, and Nieuwbeerta 2000). Mortality from firearm accidents in Russia remained low and very stable during the last twenty years. It appears that the effect of gun availability on violent crime in Russia is not as high as it is in the United States.

As we have seen in the discussion thus far, the beginning of the transition to the market economy in 1992 coincided with an accelerated growth of violent crime. Unfortunately, Russian police and judicial systems failed to respond to the jump in the crime rate. Also, the rise of the crime rate was not

accompanied by a corresponding increase in police manpower and funding from the Russian state. As a result, police officers fell into the group of low-paid workers with salaries well below the mean regional level of wages. The results of this policy were abysmal. Police officers began to look for additional jobs at the cost of their direct duties. The ICVS revealed that Russia has one of the highest levels of bribery among police officers compared to other countries in transition (Zvekic 1998). A team of Russian researchers conducted a study of side economic activities by police in eight regions of Russia (Kolennikova et al. 2002). They interviewed 2,209 mid- and low-level police officers. The study found that about 50 percent of police officers make extra money by engaging in up to fifty activities unrelated to their duties, many of which are illegal. Illegal activities include bribe-taking, registering stolen cars, drug and arms dealing, selling fake passports, and kidnapping. Legal activities include retail trade, driving gypsy taxicabs, and providing guard services (Kolennikova et al. 2002). The study also makes a direct link between police corruption and their rudeness to the public. All these facts could not improve the crime situation in Russia and violent crime in particular. Many studies demonstrated that a strong, professional, and efficient police force is very important in deterring crime (see reviews in Tullock 1980; Fajnzylber, Lederman, and Loayza 2002), and this conclusion was confirmed recently on the Russian data (Andrienko 2001). Another possible factor is that the system of punishment in the Russian Criminal Code was rather lenient for serious violent offenders and cruel to perpetrators of smaller crimes. A typical sentence for intentional murder in Russia was eight to twelve years (Mikhlin 2001) with an opportunity for early parole, which may not have a sufficient deterrent effect on violent offenders. For example, a woman who intentionally murdered (poisoned) four persons, including a pregnant woman and two children, was sentenced to ten years in jail and recently was recommended for early release by prison officials after seven years of confinement (*Moskovskiy Komsomolets* newspaper of December 24, 2003). A recent revision of the Russian Criminal Code (December 2003) attempted to correct existing inconsistencies in the system of punishment. The future will show whether these measures are successful in crime deterrence.

So far, we have considered factors of violent crime separately. However, violent crime is a complex phenomenon depending on many socio-economic, cultural, and even geographic factors, so multivariate analyses are more appropriate for understanding the causes of violent crime. One such study was conducted by Pridemore (2000), who analyzed the effects of several socioeconomic variables on the level of regional homicide mortality in Russia in 1995: poverty, unemployment, inequality, mobility, family disruption, heterogeneity (measured in terms of ethnic diversity), and urbanization. He found that such variables as poverty (proportion of population living below the subsistence level), family disruption (proportion of single-headed

households), and ethnic diversity (in some models) had a significant and positive relationship with regional homicide victimization rates. On the other hand, unemployment and urbanization (measured as proportion of urban dwellers) demonstrated unexpected negative relationships with regional levels of homicide rate (Pridemore 2000). We already discussed relatively low homicide rates in Russian large cities—Moscow and St. Petersburg. In general, large cities in Russia have more developed social and business infrastructure, more opportunities for employment, and a more educated population, which may result in a lower crime rate. Results obtained for unemployment may be explained by very low reliability of this indicator in Russia: on one hand, many officially employed people receive very low salaries or have long-term wage arrears; on the other hand, a considerable number of people are employed unofficially and hide their real income. Pridemore's study did not find a significant relation between homicide mortality and such characteristics of social structure as inequality (measured as gini coefficient of income inequality) and mobility (measured through migration influx). This study showed that analysis of social and economic characteristics as factors in homicide mortality results in interesting findings that deserve further exploration.

Andrienko (2001) used panel data to examine homicide and theft rates for seventy Russian regions during the period from 1990 to 2000. He found an existence of a strong inertia for both types of crime (i.e., coefficients of the lagged homicide and theft rates were highly significant), which indicated that the observed regional differences in crime rates remain very stable over time. Three variables were treated as endogenous—the proportion of murders cleared by arrest, alcohol consumption, and real income—while such variables as drug abuse (rate of drug abusers registered by local health care agencies), income inequality (gini coefficient), unemployment, level of education, net marriage rate, urbanization, ethnic structure, proportion of youth, latitude, and longitude were considered exogenous. The results of this study showed that the level of education and proportion of murders cleared by arrest had very strong and statistically significant negative effects on homicide rates. Unemployment, real income, and net marriage rates also had statistically significant but weaker negative effects on homicide rates. On the other hand, proportion of youth, alcohol consumption, income inequality, latitude, longitude, and drug abuse had statistically significant positive effects on homicide rates. This study revealed the important role of education in reducing the crime rate in Russia—a factor that was found not to be important in the cross-country analyses (Fajnzylber, Lederman, and Loayza 2002). According to Andrienko (2001), one additional year in the regional mean for education may result in a 10 percent decline in the regional crime rate.

All these studies clearly demonstrated the importance of socioeconomic and structural factors in determining the rates of violent crimes in Russia. The

dramatic social, political, and economic changes that occurred in Russia during the transition period are well documented. The first immediate effect of these changes on the life of ordinary people was a significant loss of real savings and salaries because of the more than one thousand-time increase in retail prices during the first year of reforms, leading to rapid impoverishment of a significant part of the population. As a result, most people had to change their profession, job, or mode of life. These changes had a serious impact on the social, economic, and political processes leading to social disorganization, maladaptation, and loss of social capital. During the 1990s, the proportion of economically motivated murders increased (Dolgova 1998), and economic reasons appear in homicide trial cases more often now than in the past (Shkolnikov and Chervyakov 2000). Taking into account that GDP more than halved during the transition period and income inequality rose sharply in the 1990s, it is not surprising that the crime rate rapidly increased. Studies of social-economic factors of violent crime, and homicides in particular, provided very important results (Andrienko 2001; Pridemore 2000) and undoubtedly will produce more interesting and provocative results in the future.

CONCLUSION

This review of violent crime in Russia reveals the existence of similar patterns in the temporal trends of most violent offenses (except for rapes), and the recent data demonstrate some stabilization (albeit at very high levels) in the rates of most violent crimes. Males become the victims of homicide more often than females, while the relative importance of homicide as a cause of death is higher for females: in 2001–2002, homicide became the major cause of external death for females. The homicide rate of young females (20–24 years) is growing with a relatively high pace and has yet to stabilize. Both homicide victims and offenders are, on average, older in Russia than in the United States, although there has been a decline in the mean age of offenders. Regional patterns of homicide mortality show an increase in rates from the West to the East, with the highest levels observed in the South-Eastern parts of Siberia. The homicide rate in Russia is about two times higher than in the United States, while rates of nonfatal violent crimes (rape and robbery) appear to be very close to each other.

Alcohol remains an important factor in violent crime and homicide in particular. However, there are some indications that the role of alcohol as a major factor in violent crime and homicide is decreasing. Alcohol-related, noneconomically motivated violent crimes are being replaced by economically motivated violent crimes. Finally, an increase in poverty and income inequality, as well as a decline in GDP, appears to contribute to the increase of

criminal activity, and it appears that socioeconomic and structural changes will largely determine the future direction of violent crime in Russia.

NOTE

We thank William Pridemore for useful comments and suggestions related to the topics discussed in this chapter.

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