Are serial killers born or made?
There have been arguments to determine whether serial killers are born murderers or shaped to be killers. Here are some contextual clues:
- Instability at home can negatively influence and alter the psychological makeup of a child.
- Many serial killers were abused physically, emotionally or sexually.
- Most serial killers had poor relationships with family members, especially mothers.
- Most killers come from broken families.
- Many killers were bullied throughout their childhood.
- Many killers hurt and kill animals in their childhood.

The Insanity Plea
How often is it used and does it work?
- Insanity" is a legal rather than a psychological term. For someone to be found not guilty by reason of insanity (NGRI), the courts most find them to have a mental disease or defect, and because of this the accused was unable to determine the nature and quality of their actions.
- The insanity defense almost never works. In a study of criminal cases in the early 1990s, it said that less than 1% of defendants pleaded insanity and of those, only ¼ of them were acquitted.

Brain Scans
Brain scan (PET) of a normal control (left) and a murderer (right), illustrating the lack of activation in the prefrontal cortex in the murderer.

The prefrontal region is at the top of the figure, and the occipital cortex (the back part of the brain controlling vision) is at the bottom. Warm colors (e.g., red and yellow) indicate areas of high brain activation; cold colors (e.g. blue and green) indicate low activation. (Courtesy of Adrian Raine)

The Brain of a Serial Killer
Brain injury influences behavior, but it doesn’t necessarily “turn” someone into a killer.

- The pre-frontal cortex is located above the eyes and behind the forehead.
- The pre-frontal cortex of the brain controls and functions behavior and impulse.
- Raine explains that the pre-frontal cortex acts as the “brakes” of our brains.
- If an individual has a poor functioning pre-frontal cortex, they are unable to regulate and control their emotions.
- The structure of the brains of 41 murderers and 41 control subjects were compared.
- They found that there was lower activity in the pre-frontal cortex of the brains of murderers when compared to that of normal control subjects.

Sources
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