This Max patch takes in the rate of Australian firearm and non-firearm homicides and suicides over the period 1915-2004. The purpose is to investigate links between these four, or common movement between them. The patch does this by producing triangular waves at a pitch approximately equal to the rate multiplied by 100 – a higher rate means a higher pitch. Homicides are played through the left earphone, suicides through the right. The user is able to select any out of the four to play at once.

Four scrolling displays at the bottom show the progress of the data. Each display has a different range, to accommodate their respective rates.

At the end of the data (after year 2004), I put two ‘dummy’ years in the data which have rates of 999, in order to clearly show the start of the data in the displays, as can be seen in the picture below.

There are some conclusions that can be drawn even at this stage. For one, firearm homicide and firearm suicide both have dramatic falls and rises in the same 2 places – perhaps corresponding to a sudden decrease in firearm popularity.

Across non-firearm homicides and suicides there are less obvious trends, but they are still there. For example, all four displays show a slight decrease soon after the data starts, around the 1940-1950 mark – the latter part and the aftermath of the Second World War. Another common feature across non-firearm homicides and suicides is that there is an increase near the end of the data, where the firearm homicides and suicides lessen – showing perhaps that people were resorting to other weapons of violence for whatever reason.

However, for most of these types of analyses the visual displays are more useful than the actual sonification. With the sound on, the sudden downswing in firearm use near the end of the data is especially prominent – whatever the speed the years are going through. At slower speeds, though, other peaks and troughs become apparent.

The Max patch is original – although I took ideas from other patches, and used other patches to learn how to use certain objects, I did not copy anything directly from another patch – this one was made from scratch, perhaps why it is so messy.