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Violence Policy Center

When Men Murder Women

An Analysis of 2020 Homicide Data

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This study is published in PDF format and is designed to be printed in color as a single-page document.

INTRODUCTION

Intimate partner violence against women is all too common and takes many forms.¹ The most serious is homicide by an intimate partner.² Guns can easily turn domestic violence into domestic homicide. One federal study on homicide among intimate partners found that female intimate partners are more likely to be murdered with a firearm than all other means combined, concluding that “the figures demonstrate the importance of reducing access to firearms in households affected by IPV [intimate partner violence].”³

Guns are also often used in non-fatal domestic violence. A study by Harvard School of Public Health researchers analyzed gun use at home and concluded that “hostile gun displays against family members may be more common than gun use in self-defense, and that hostile gun displays are often acts of domestic violence directed against women.”⁴

The U.S. Department of Justice has found that women are far more likely to be the victims of violent crimes committed by intimate partners than men, especially when a weapon is involved. Moreover, women are much more likely to be victimized at home than in any other place.⁵

A woman must consider the risks of having a gun in her home, whether she is in a domestic violence situation or not. While two thirds of women who own guns acquired them “primarily for protection against crime,” the results of a California analysis show that “purchasing a handgun provides no protection against homicide among women and is associated with an increase in their risk for intimate partner homicide.”⁶ A 2003 study about the risks of firearms in the home found that females living with a gun in the home were nearly three times more likely to be murdered than females with no gun in the home.⁷ Finally, another study reports, women who were murdered were more likely, not less likely, to have purchased a handgun in the three years prior to their deaths, again invalidating the idea that a handgun has a protective effect against homicide.⁸

While this study does not focus solely on domestic violence homicide or guns, it provides a stark reminder that domestic violence and guns make a deadly combination. According to reports submitted to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), firearms are rarely used to kill criminals or stop crimes.⁹ Instead, they are all too often used to inflict harm on the very people they were intended to protect.

- 1 See for example, Shannan Catalano, Ph.D., et al., “Female Victims of Violence,” Bureau of Justice Statistics, September 2009.
- 2 An intimate partner or intimate acquaintance is defined as a spouse, common-law spouse, ex-spouse, or girlfriend/boyfriend.
- 3 Leonard J. Paulozzi et al., “Surveillance for Homicide Among Intimate Partners—United States, 1981-1998,” *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR) Surveillance Summaries* 50 (October 12, 2001): 1-16.
- 4 Deborah Azrael and David Hemenway, “‘In the Safety of Your Own Home’: Results from a National Survey on Gun Use at Home,” *Social Science & Medicine* 50 (2000): 285-291.
- 5 Diane Craven, “Sex Differences in Violence Victimization, 1994,” *Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997).
- 6 Garen Wintemute et al., “Increased Risk of Intimate Partner Homicide Among California Women Who Purchased Handguns,” *Annals of Emergency Medicine* 41, no. 2 (2003): 282.
- 7 Douglas Wiebe, “Homicide and Suicide Risks Associated with Firearms in the Home: A National Case-Control Study,” *Annals of Emergency Medicine* 41, no. 6 (2003): 775.
- 8 K.M. Grassel et al., “Association Between Handgun Purchase and Mortality from Firearm Injury,” *Injury Prevention* 9 (2003): 50.
- 9 In 2020, justifiable homicides involving women killing men occurred in: Alaska (1); Arkansas (4); Arizona (3); California (8); Georgia (1); Illinois (1); Indiana (7); Kentucky (1); Louisiana (2); Maine (1); Maryland (1); Michigan (3); Missouri (1); Nevada (2); North Carolina (1); South Carolina (3); Tennessee (6); Texas (5); Virginia (1); West Virginia (1); and, Wisconsin (1). In 2020, justifiable homicides involving women killing men with a firearm occurred in: Arkansas (3); Arizona (3); California (2); Georgia (1); Illinois (1); Indiana (6); Kentucky (1); Louisiana (2); Maine (1); Maryland (1); Michigan (3); Missouri (1); Nevada (2); North Carolina (1); South Carolina (3); Tennessee (4); Texas (5); Virginia (1); West Virginia (1); and, Wisconsin (1). Of these, handguns were used in: Arkansas (2); Arizona (2); California (2); Illinois (1); Indiana (6); Kentucky (1); Louisiana (2); Maine (1); Maryland (1); Michigan (3); Missouri (1); Nevada (2); North Carolina (1); South Carolina (3); Tennessee (1); Texas (3); and, Virginia (1).

According to the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports, in 2020 there were only 384 justifiable homicides committed by private citizens. Of these, only 54 involved women killing men. Of those, only 43 involved firearms, with 33 of the 43 involving handguns. While firearms are at times used by private citizens to kill criminals, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that the most common scenarios of lethal gun use in America in 2020, the most recent final data available, are suicide (24,292), homicide (19,384), or fatal unintentional injury (535).

When Men Murder Women is an annual report prepared by the Violence Policy Center detailing the reality of homicides committed by males against females in single victim/single offender incidents. The study analyzes the most recent Supplementary Homicide Report (SHR) data submitted to the Federal Bureau of Investigation.¹⁰ The information used for this report is for the year 2020. Once again, this is the most recent data available. This is the first analysis of the 2020 data on female homicide victims to offer breakdowns of cases in the 10 states with the highest female victim/male offender homicide rates, and the first to rank the states by these rates.

This study examines only those instances involving one female homicide victim and one male offender. This is the exact scenario—the lone male attacker and the vulnerable woman—that is often used to promote gun ownership among women.

The FBI has made changes in the way it collects and reports crime data that in the short term will drastically reduce the availability of state and local data and deprive researchers access to detailed information that can help prevent gun violence and other crime. In 2021 the FBI stopped collecting detailed crime data from police agencies that are not ready to participate in the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS), an updated and expanded version of the Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) system. While full implementation of NIBRS would be an improvement on the current UCR system, as of March 2021, only 62.6 percent of law enforcement agencies that formerly participated in the UCR program were now submitting their information through the new system.¹¹ Instead of allowing local agencies who missed the deadline to continue to report crime data via the UCR, the FBI is partnering with the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) to create national estimates to account for the missing information. For the immediate future these changes will severely hobble ongoing efforts, like this VPC series of studies, to understand and prevent gun violence, domestic violence, homicide, and, in fact, all types of violent crime.

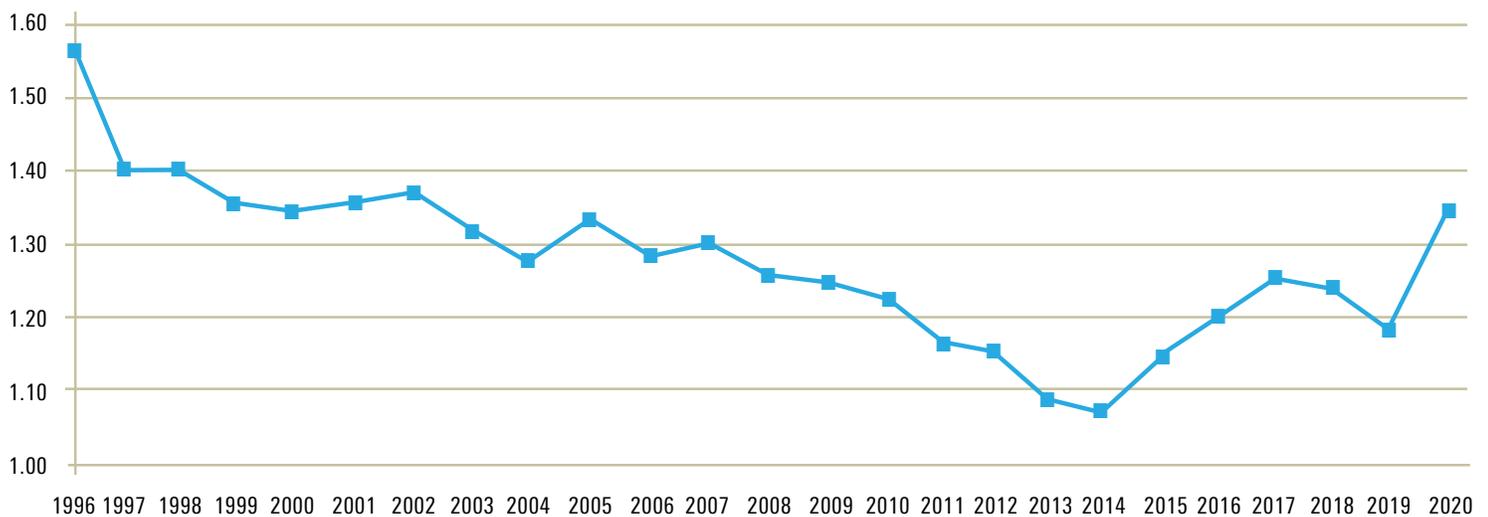
10 The Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program collects basic information on serious crimes from participating police agencies and records supplementary information about the circumstances of homicides in its unpublished Supplementary Homicide Report (SHR). Submitted monthly, supplementary data consist of: the age, sex, race, and ethnicity of both victims and offenders; the types of weapons used; the relationship of victims to offenders; and, the circumstances of the murders. According to the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting Program, supplementary data are provided on only a subset of homicide cases. Additionally, SHR data are updated throughout the year as homicide reports are forwarded by state UCR programs.

11 "Thousands of Police Agencies Stop Reporting Crime Data to the FBI," *Newsy*, March 31, 2022 (<https://www.newsy.com/stories/thousands-of-police-depts-stop-reporting-crime-data-to-fbi/>).

This is the 25th edition of *When Men Murder Women*. From 1996 to 2020, the rate of women murdered by men in single victim/single offender incidents dropped from 1.57 per 100,000 females in 1996 to 1.34 per 100,000 females in 2020, a decrease of 15 percent (see graph on the following page). Since reaching its low of 1.08 in 2014, the rate has increased, with 2020's rate of 1.34 up 24 percent since 2014.

The data presented over the years in *When Men Murder Women* coincide with the passage and implementation of the federal Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) as well as the enactment of federal laws restricting firearms possession by persons with misdemeanor convictions for domestic violence or who are subject to certain protective orders for domestic violence. The Violence Against Women Act Reauthorization Act of 2022 was passed by Congress as part of the Omnibus appropriations package and signed by President Biden in March 2022. The Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, the package of new gun violence prevention laws passed this year by Congress, expands the prohibition on gun possession by domestic violence misdemeanants to include those in a dating relationship. This prohibition expires after five years if the person is not convicted of another offense. The bill, however, did not extend the prohibited category of persons subject to a final domestic violence protective order to those in a dating relationship.

Rate of Women Murdered by Men in Single Victim/Single Offender Incidents 1996 - 2020



Since the passage of these laws, domestic violence has increasingly been treated as the serious problem that it is. States have also reformed their laws to better protect victims of domestic abuse and remove firearms from persons with histories of domestic violence.

In 2020, there were 2,059 females murdered by males in single victim/single offender incidents that were submitted to the FBI for its Supplementary Homicide Report.¹² The key findings of this study, expanded upon in the following sections, dispel many of the myths regarding the nature of lethal violence against females.

- For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 89 percent of female victims (1,604 out of 1,801) were murdered by a male they knew.

¹² In 2020, as in years past, the state of Florida did not submit any data to the FBI Supplementary Homicide Report. Also in 2020, data from Alabama were not available from the FBI. Data from Florida and Alabama were not requested individually because the difference in collection techniques would create a bias in the study results.

- Eight times as many females were murdered by a male they knew (1,604 victims) than were killed by male strangers (197 victims).
- For victims who knew their offenders, 60 percent (967) of female homicide victims were wives or intimate acquaintances of their killers.¹³
- There were 298 women shot and killed by either their husband or intimate acquaintance during the course of an argument.
- Nationwide, for homicides in which the weapon could be determined (1,735), more female homicides were committed with firearms (61 percent) than with all other weapons combined. Knives and other cutting instruments accounted for 18 percent of all female murders, bodily force nine percent, and murder by blunt object five percent. Of the homicides committed with firearms, 64 percent were committed with handguns.
- In 88 percent of all incidents where the circumstances could be determined, homicides were not related to the commission of any other felony, such as rape or robbery.

The study also analyzes available information on the murders of Black females. Not surprisingly, these homicides mirror the trends for females overall: most homicides against Black females are not committed by strangers, but by males known to the victims.

SECTION ONE: NATIONAL DATA

When Men Murder Women offers both national and state-by-state statistics from FBI Supplementary Homicide Report data including charts listing the number and rate of female homicides by state and a chart ranking each state by rate. For the states with the 10 highest rates of females killed by males, data are broken out by: age and race of victim; type of weapon used; relationship of victim to offender; and, the circumstances of the murder. General findings are summarized below. More detailed data on each of these states can be found in Appendix Two.

STATE RANKINGS

In 2020, the homicide rate among female victims murdered by males in single victim/single offender incidents nationally was 1.34 per 100,000. For that year, Alaska ranked first as the state with the highest homicide rate among female victims killed by male offenders in single victim/single offender incidents. Its rate of 3.43 per 100,000 was two and a half times the national rate. Alaska was followed by Oklahoma (3.28 per 100,000) and Wyoming (2.80 per 100,000). The remaining states with the 10 highest rates, all of which had female homicide victimization rates higher than the national rate, can be found in the chart on the following page. For ranking information for all states that submitted data to the FBI, please see Appendix One.

¹³ A female intimate acquaintance is defined as a wife, common-law wife, ex-wife, or girlfriend.

| Ranking | State | Number of Female Homicide Victims | Homicide Rate per 100,000 Females |
|---------|--------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1 | Alaska | 12 | 3.43 |
| 2 | Oklahoma | 66 | 3.28 |
| 3 | Wyoming | 8 | 2.80 |
| 4 | Arkansas | 41 | 2.66 |
| 5 | Louisiana | 52 | 2.18 |
| 6 (tie) | North Dakota | 8 | 2.14 |
| 6 (tie) | Missouri | 67 | 2.14 |
| 8 | Wisconsin | 60 | 2.05 |
| 9 | South Dakota | 9 | 2.04 |
| 10 | Kentucky | 46 | 2.02 |

AGE AND RACE OF FEMALE HOMICIDE VICTIMS

In 2020, for single female victim/single male offender homicides where the age of the victim was reported (2,022 homicides), six percent of the victims were younger than 18 years old (125 victims) and 11 percent were 65 years of age or older (224 victims). The average age of female homicide victims was 40 years old. Homicides in which race was identified (2,004 victims) included: 44 American Indian or Alaskan Native females; 60 Asian or Pacific Islander females; 641 Black females; and, 1,259 white females. Eighty-three percent (1,665 out of 2,004) of the homicides where the race of the female victim and male offender were known were intra-racial.¹⁴ Overall, Black females were murdered by males at a rate (2.96 per 100,000) nearly three times as high as white females (1.07 per 100,000). American Indian and Alaskan Native females (1.86 per 100,000) were murdered by male offenders at a higher rate than white females, while Asian and Pacific Islander females were the least likely (0.54 per 100,000) females of any race to be murdered by a male offender. Nationally, the female homicide victimization rate was 1.34 per 100,000. Unfortunately, Hispanic ethnicity could not be determined on a national level because of the inadequacy of reporting and data collection.

VICTIM TO OFFENDER RELATIONSHIP

The relationship of victim to offender differs significantly between male and female victims of homicide. Compared to a man, a woman is far more likely to be killed by her spouse, an intimate acquaintance, or a family member than by a stranger. For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 89 percent of female victims (1,604 out of 1,801) were murdered by someone they knew. Eight times as many females were murdered by a male they knew (1,604 victims) than were killed by male strangers (197 victims) in single victim/single offender incidents in 2020.¹⁵ Of victims who knew their offenders, 60 percent (967 out of 1,604) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. (Ex-girlfriends cannot be included in the intimate acquaintance analysis because there is not a separate designation for ex-boyfriends or ex-girlfriends in the FBI Supplementary Homicide Report relationship category.)

14 Intra-racial homicides are homicides in which the victim and the offender are of the same race.

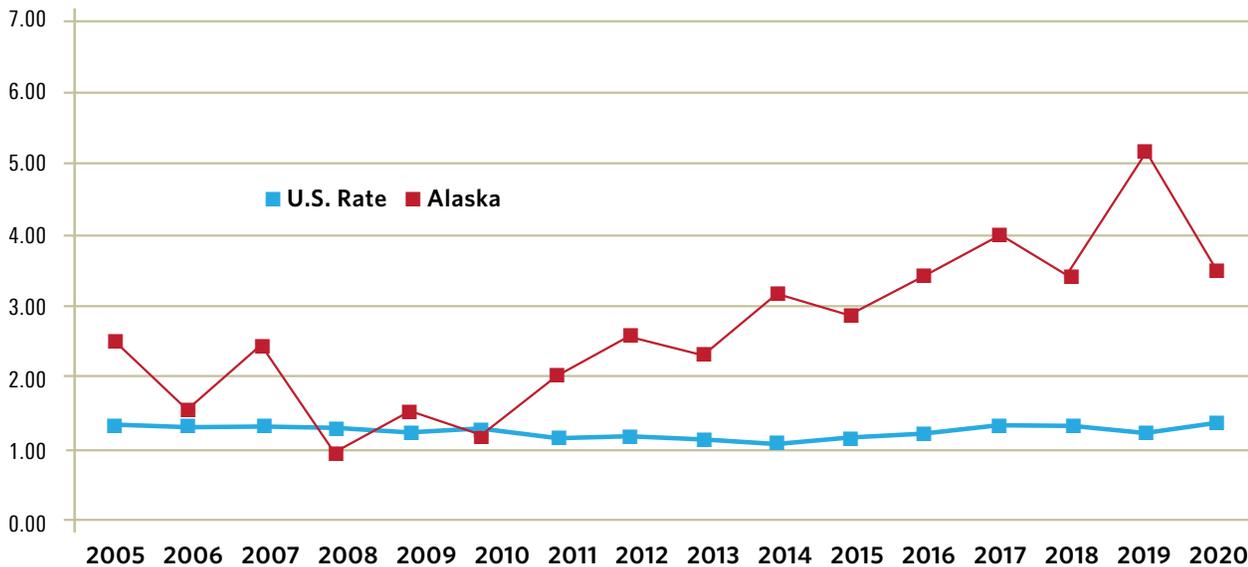
15 These are homicides in which the relationship between the victim and the offender could be identified. According to the FBI's 2020 Supplementary Homicide Report data on females murdered by males in single victim/single offender incidents, the relationship of victim to offender could be determined in 1,801 of 2,059 incidents (87 percent). In 258 homicides the relationship of victim to offender was "unknown," meaning the reporting police officer was unable to determine at the scene if the victim and offender knew each other or were strangers. According to the July 1992 *Journal of Trauma* study "Men, Women, and Murder: Gender-Specific Differences in Rates of Fatal Violence and Victimization," local law enforcement agencies generally submit case reports early in the course of their investigation, sometimes before the identity of the offender is known. Although one might assume that most homicides where the relationship was initially unknown would eventually be determined to have been committed by a stranger, follow-up data from one large metropolitan police jurisdiction (Los Angeles) suggest that a substantial number involve an acquaintance or relative of the victim.

SPOTLIGHT ON ALASKA

Alaska is experiencing a prolonged epidemic of deadly violence against women.

In 2020, Alaska had the highest homicide rate in the United States for female victims killed by male offenders in single victim/single offender incidents for the seventh year in a row. Alaska has ranked either first or second in the nation in the rate of women killed by men for 10 years in a row.

Rate of Females Murdered by Males in Single Victim/Single Offender Incidents, in Alaska and the U.S. 2005 - 2020



Alaska's rate of women killed by men of 3.43 per 100,000 women in 2020 was two and a half times the 2020 U.S. overall rate of 1.34 per 100,000 women.

American Indian/Alaska Native women are disproportionately impacted by deadly violence against women in Alaska. In 2020 the rate of American Indian/Alaska Native women killed by men in Alaska was 12.63 per 100,000 women, which is **more than three and a half times** the rate for all women in Alaska and **10 times** the rate for white women in Alaska.

The epidemic of deadly violence against women in Alaska, particularly against American Indian/Alaska Native women, should be a top priority for lawmakers in the state.

FEMALE HOMICIDE VICTIMS AND WEAPONS

Firearms were the weapon most commonly used by males to murder females in 2020. For homicides in which the weapon could be identified, 61 percent of female victims (1,057 out of 1,735) were killed with a gun. Of the females killed with a firearm, 63 percent were murdered by male intimates. The number of females shot and killed by their husband or intimate acquaintance (562 victims) was nearly three times higher than the total number murdered by male strangers using all weapons combined (197 victims) in single victim/single offender incidents in 2020. In homicides where males used firearms to kill females, handguns were clearly the weapon of choice over rifles and shotguns. In 2020, 64 percent of female firearm homicide victims (675 out of 1,057) were killed with handguns.

FEMALE HOMICIDE VICTIMS AND CIRCUMSTANCE

The overwhelming majority of homicides of females by male offenders in single victim/single offender incidents in 2020 were not related to any other felony crime. Most often, females were killed by males in the course of an argument—most frequently with a firearm. In 2020 there were 1,550 incidents in which the circumstances of the homicide between the female victim and male offender in single victim/single offender incidents could be identified. Of these, 88 percent (1,364 out of 1,550) were not related to the commission of any other felony.

Of the homicides not related to the commission of another felony, 58 percent (797 out of 1,364) involved arguments between the female victim and male offender. Fifty-six percent (447 out of 797) of the homicides stemming from an argument were committed with guns. In 2020 there were 298 women shot and killed by their husbands or intimate acquaintances in single victim/single offender incidents during the course of an argument.

SECTION TWO: BLACK FEMALES

The disproportionate burden of fatal and nonfatal violence borne by Black females has almost always been overshadowed by the toll violence has taken on Black males. Research published in 2017 by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found, “Homicides occur in women of all ages and among all races/ethnicities, but young, racial/ethnic minority women are disproportionately affected.” The article concluded, “The racial/ethnic differences in female homicide underscore the importance of targeting prevention and intervention efforts to populations at disproportionately high risk. Addressing violence will require an integrated response that considers the influence of larger community and societal factors that make violence more likely to occur.”¹⁶

In 2020, Black females were murdered by males at a rate nearly three times as high as white females: 2.96 per 100,000 versus 1.07 per 100,000. In 2020, Black females accounted for 14 percent of the female population in the United States, while 31 percent of the females killed by males in single victim/single offender incidents where the race of the victim was known were Black.

AGE OF BLACK FEMALE HOMICIDE VICTIMS

In 2020, for single female victim/single male offender homicides where the age of the victim was reported (628 homicides), nine percent of Black female victims were less than 18 years old (55 victims) and seven percent were 65 years of age or older (41 victims). The average age of Black female homicide victims was 36 years old.

16 Emiko Petrosky et al., “Racial and Ethnic Differences in Homicides of Adult Women and the Role of Intimate Partner Violence—United States, 2003–2014,” *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR)*, 2017; 66: 741–746.

VICTIM TO OFFENDER RELATIONSHIP

Compared to a Black male, a Black female is far more likely to be killed by her spouse, an intimate acquaintance, or a family member than by a stranger. Where the relationship could be determined, 90 percent of Black females killed by males in single victim/single offender incidents knew their killers (464 out of 516). Nine times as many Black females were murdered by a male they knew (464 victims) than were killed by male strangers (52 victims) in single victim/single offender incidents in 2020. Of Black victims who knew their offenders, 56 percent (259 out of 464) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Ninety-one percent (584 out of 641) of the homicides of Black females were intra-racial.

BLACK FEMALE HOMICIDE VICTIMS AND WEAPONS

As with female homicide victims in general, firearms were the weapon most commonly used by males to murder Black females in 2020. In the 571 homicides for which the murder weapon could be identified, 72 percent of Black female victims (411 victims) were shot and killed with guns. Of these gun homicides, 62 percent involved handguns (254 victims). The number of Black females shot and killed by their husband or intimate acquaintance (166 victims) was more than three times as high as the total number murdered by male strangers using all weapons combined (52 victims) in single victim/single offender incidents in 2020.

BLACK FEMALE HOMICIDE VICTIMS AND CIRCUMSTANCE

The overwhelming majority of homicides of Black females by male offenders in single victim/single offender incidents in 2020 were not related to any other felony crime. Most often, Black females were killed by males in the course of an argument—most commonly with a firearm. In 2020, for the 453 homicides in which the circumstances between the Black female victim and male offender could be identified, 92 percent (416 out of 453) were not related to the commission of any other felony.

Nearly two-thirds of non-felony related homicides (256 out of 416) involved arguments between the Black female victim and male offender. Sixty-seven percent (171 victims) were shot and killed with guns during those arguments.

SECTION THREE: LAWS THAT HELP PROTECT WOMEN FROM ABUSERS

In the 1990s, two major provisions were added to federal law to prevent domestic abusers from obtaining firearms.

In 1993, the late Senator Paul Wellstone (D-MN) attached an amendment to the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act to prohibit individuals who are the subject of a protective order involving domestic violence from buying or possessing firearms. The Wellstone amendment became law in 1994.¹⁷

In 1996, the late Senator Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ) sponsored a provision prohibiting individuals with misdemeanor domestic violence convictions from purchasing or possessing firearms (those with felony domestic violence convictions are already precluded from firearms possession under a general provision prohibiting firearms possession by felons).¹⁸

¹⁷ 18 USC § 922 (g)(8).

¹⁸ 18 USC § 922 (g)(9).

These laws are enforced in part by the Brady Law background checks performed on firearm transactions conducted through Federal Firearms License holders (FFLs). From November 30, 1998 to July 31, 2022, these two domestic violence prohibited categories accounted for 12 percent of rejected federal firearm transfers.¹⁹

However, not all states make the records of domestic violence protective orders and misdemeanors available to the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS), the computer system used to conduct the Brady Law background checks. Moreover, the U.S. Department of Justice has identified several common impediments to thorough checks of domestic violence records: incomplete automation; incomplete records; and, the inability to distinguish domestic violence misdemeanors from other misdemeanors. Moreover, to enhance enforcement of these life-saving measures it is important for states to adopt laws that mirror the federal laws and ensure that guns are surrendered by, or removed from the possession of, abusers.

CONCLUSION

Many women—those in abusive relationships, those who have left such relationships, those who fear, in general, for their safety—have considered bringing a gun into their home as a measure of protection. Yet, gun ownership contains clear risks that should deeply concern women. One study that examined the risk factors of violent death for women in the home in three United States counties found that when there were one or more guns in the home, the risk of homicide increased more than three times.²⁰ The increased risk of homicide associated with firearms was attributable to homicides at the hands of a spouse, intimate acquaintance, or close relative. Furthermore, a gun in the home is a key factor in the escalation of nonfatal spousal abuse to homicide. In a study of family and intimate assaults for the city of Atlanta, firearm-associated family and intimate assaults were 12 times more likely to result in death than non-firearm associated assaults between family and intimates.²¹

A 2002 study from researchers at the Harvard School of Public Health found that although the United States represented only 32 percent of the female population among 25 high-income countries, it accounted for 84 percent of all female firearm homicides. The study's lead author, Dr. David Hemenway, concluded that "the difference in female homicide victimization rates between the U.S. and these other industrialized nations is very large and is closely tied to levels of gun ownership. The relationship cannot be explained by differences in urbanization or income inequality."²²

The picture that emerges each and every year from *When Men Murder Women* is that women face the greatest threat from someone they know, most often a spouse or other intimate acquaintance, who is armed with a gun. For women in America, guns are not used to save lives, but to take them.

19 Federal Denials, Reasons Why the NICS Section Denies, November 30, 1998–July 31, 2022, https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/federal_denials.pdf/view.

20 James E. Bailey et al., "Risk Factors for Violent Death of Women in the Home," *Archives of Internal Medicine* 157 (April 14, 1997): 777-782.

21 Linda E. Salzman et al., "Weapon Involvement and Injury Outcomes in Family and Intimate Assaults," *JAMA* 267, no. 22 (1992): 3043-3047.

22 David Hemenway et al., "Firearm Availability and Female Homicide Victimization Rates among 25 Populous High Income Countries," *Journal of the American Medical Women's Association (JAMWA)* 57 (Spring 2002): 100-104 and Harvard School of Public Health press release, April 17, 2002.

APPENDIX ONE: NUMBER OF FEMALES MURDERED BY MALES IN SINGLE VICTIM/ SINGLE OFFENDER HOMICIDES AND RATES BY STATE, 2020

| State Ranking by Rate | State | Number of Homicide Victims | Homicide Rate per 100,000 Females |
|-----------------------|----------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| NA | Alabama | NA | NA |
| 1 | Alaska | 12 | 3.43 |
| 22 | Arizona | 57 | 1.53 |
| 4 | Arkansas | 41 | 2.66 |
| 35 | California | 222 | 1.12 |
| 15 | Colorado | 51 | 1.77 |
| 36 | Connecticut | 20 | 1.10 |
| 46 | Delaware | 3 | 0.59 |
| NA | Florida | NA | NA |
| 30 | Georgia | 69 | 1.25 |
| 27 (tie) | Hawaii | 9 | 1.28 |
| 16 | Idaho | 16 | 1.76 |
| 41 | Illinois | 57 | 0.89 |
| 14 | Indiana | 63 | 1.84 |
| 29 | Iowa | 20 | 1.26 |
| 31 | Kansas | 18 | 1.23 |
| 10 | Kentucky | 46 | 2.02 |
| 5 | Louisiana | 52 | 2.18 |
| 38 (tie) | Maine | 7 | 1.02 |
| 25 | Maryland | 44 | 1.41 |
| 47 | Massachusetts | 18 | 0.51 |
| 24 | Michigan | 74 | 1.46 |
| 33 | Minnesota | 33 | 1.16 |
| 20 | Mississippi | 25 | 1.63 |
| 6 (tie) | Missouri | 67 | 2.14 |
| 13 | Montana | 10 | 1.86 |
| 34 | Nebraska | 11 | 1.13 |
| 18 | Nevada | 27 | 1.72 |
| 38 (tie) | New Hampshire | 7 | 1.02 |
| 42 | New Jersey | 34 | 0.75 |
| 12 | New Mexico | 20 | 1.88 |
| 44 | New York | 73 | 0.73 |
| 26 | North Carolina | 72 | 1.32 |
| 6 (tie) | North Dakota | 8 | 2.14 |

| State Ranking by Rate | State | Number of Homicide Victims | Homicide Rate per 100,000 Females |
|-----------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 27 (tie) | Ohio | 76 | 1.28 |
| 2 | Oklahoma | 66 | 3.28 |
| 37 | Oregon | 22 | 1.03 |
| 48 | Pennsylvania | 16 | 0.25 |
| 43 | Rhode Island | 4 | 0.74 |
| 23 | South Carolina | 41 | 1.52 |
| 9 | South Dakota | 9 | 2.04 |
| 11 | Tennessee | 69 | 1.96 |
| 17 | Texas | 257 | 1.74 |
| 40 | Utah | 16 | 0.99 |
| 45 | Vermont | 2 | 0.63 |
| 21 | Virginia | 67 | 1.54 |
| 32 | Washington | 45 | 1.17 |
| 19 | West Virginia | 15 | 1.67 |
| 8 | Wisconsin | 60 | 2.05 |
| 3 | Wyoming | 8 | 2.80 |
| | U.S. Total | 2,059 | 1.34 |

APPENDIX TWO: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR THE 10 STATES WITH THE HIGHEST RATES OF FEMALES MURDERED BY MALES

ALASKA

12 females were murdered by males in Alaska in 2020

The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Alaska was 3.43 per 100,000 in 2020

Ranked 1st in the United States

AGE

For homicides in which the age of the victim was reported (12 homicides), 1 victim (8 percent) was less than 18 years old and 1 victim (8 percent) was 65 years of age or older. The average age was 34 years old.

RACE

Out of 12 female homicide victims, 8 were American Indian or Alaskan Native, 3 were white, and 1 was Black.

MOST COMMON WEAPONS

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 25 percent of female victims (3 out of 12) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 67 percent (2 victims) were killed with a handgun. There were 2 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 3 females killed by a blunt object, and 1 female killed by bodily force.

VICTIM/OFFENDER RELATIONSHIP

For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 92 percent of female victims (11 out of 12) were murdered by someone they knew. One victim was killed by a stranger. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 55 percent (6 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders.

CIRCUMSTANCE

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 67 percent (8 out of 12) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 25 percent (2 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

OKLAHOMA

66 females were murdered by males in Oklahoma in 2020

The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Oklahoma was 3.28 per 100,000 in 2020

Ranked 2nd in the United States

AGE

For homicides in which the age of the victim was reported (65 homicides), 2 victims (3 percent) were less than 18 years old and 6 victims (9 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 40 years old.

RACE

Out of 66 female homicide victims, 40 were white, 16 were Black, 9 were American Indian or Alaskan Native, and 1 was of unknown race.

MOST COMMON WEAPONS

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 65 percent of female victims (28 out of 43) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 68 percent (19 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 6 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 2 females killed by a blunt object, and 2 females killed by bodily force.

VICTIM/OFFENDER RELATIONSHIP

For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 78 percent of female victims (46 out of 59) were murdered by someone they knew. Thirteen female victims were killed by strangers. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 67 percent (31 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 42 percent (13 victims) were killed with guns; 69 percent of these (9 victims) were shot and killed with handguns

CIRCUMSTANCE

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 93 percent (50 out of 54) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 40 percent (20 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

WYOMING

8 females were murdered by males in Wyoming in 2020

The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Wyoming was 2.80 per 100,000 in 2020

Ranked 3rd in the United States

AGE

The average age was 42 years old.

RACE

Out of 8 female homicide victims, 8 were white.

MOST COMMON WEAPONS

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 86 percent of female victims (6 out of 7) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 83 percent (5 victims) were killed with handguns.

VICTIM/OFFENDER RELATIONSHIP

For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 100 percent of female victims (8 out of 8) were murdered by someone they knew. No female victims were killed by strangers. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 100 percent (8 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 86 percent (6 victims) were killed with guns; 83 percent of these (5 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

CIRCUMSTANCE

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 86 percent (6 out of 7) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 33 percent (2 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

ARKANSAS

41 females were murdered by males in Arkansas in 2020

The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Arkansas was 2.66 per 100,000 in 2020

Ranked 4th in the United States

AGE

For homicides in which the age of the victim was reported (41 homicides), 3 victims (7 percent) were less than 18 years old, and 2 victims (5 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 38 years old.

RACE

Out of 41 female homicide victims, 24 were white and 17 were Black.

MOST COMMON WEAPONS

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 62 percent of female victims (21 out of 34) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 52 percent (11 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 8 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 2 females killed by a blunt object, and 3 females killed by bodily force.

VICTIM/OFFENDER RELATIONSHIP

For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 97 percent of female victims (32 out of 33) were murdered by someone they knew. One female victim was killed by a stranger. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 63 percent (20 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 70 percent (14 victims) were killed with guns; 50 percent of these (7 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

CIRCUMSTANCE

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 86 percent (25 out of 29) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 64 percent (16 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

LOUISIANA

52 females were murdered by males in Louisiana in 2020

The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Louisiana was 2.18 per 100,000 in 2020

Ranked 5th in the United States

AGE

For homicides in which the age of the victim was reported (52 homicides), 1 victim (2 percent) was less than 18 years old, and 3 victims (6 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 36 years old.

RACE

Out of 52 female homicide victims, 33 were Black, 17 were white, 1 was Asian or Pacific Islander, and 1 was of unknown race.

MOST COMMON WEAPONS

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 74 percent of female victims (35 out of 47) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 54 percent (19 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 5 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 1 female killed by a blunt object, and 1 female killed by bodily force.

VICTIM/OFFENDER RELATIONSHIP

For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 98 percent of female victims (39 out of 40) were murdered by someone they knew. One female victim was killed by a stranger. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 56 percent (22 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 59 percent (13 victims) were killed with guns; 77 percent of these (10 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

CIRCUMSTANCE

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 81 percent (35 out of 43) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 71 percent (25 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

NORTH DAKOTA

8 females were murdered by males in North Dakota in 2020

The homicide rate among females murdered by males in North Dakota was 2.14 per 100,000 in 2020

Ranked 6th (tied) in the United States

AGE

For homicides in which the age of the victim was reported (8 homicides), 1 victim (13 percent) was less than 18 years old. The average age was 38 years old.

RACE

Out of 8 female homicide victims, 7 were white and 1 was of unknown race.

MOST COMMON WEAPONS

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 17 percent of female victims (1 out of 6) were shot and killed with guns. There was 1 female killed with a knife or other cutting instrument and 2 females killed by bodily force.

VICTIM/OFFENDER RELATIONSHIP

For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 75 percent of female victims (6 out of 8) were murdered by someone they knew. Two female victims were killed by strangers. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 67 percent (4 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 25 percent (1 victim) were killed with guns.

CIRCUMSTANCE

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 80 percent (4 out of 5) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 50 percent (2 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

MISSOURI

67 females were murdered by males in Missouri in 2020

The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Missouri was 2.14 per 100,000 in 2020

Ranked 6th (tied) in the United States

AGE

For homicides in which the age of the victim was reported (66 homicides), 3 victims (5 percent) were less than 18 years old and 3 victims (5 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 38 years old.

RACE

Out of 67 female homicide victims, 39 were white, 27 were Black, and 1 was of unknown race.

MOST COMMON WEAPONS

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 78 percent of female victims (45 out of 58) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 62 percent (28 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 7 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 1 female killed by a blunt object, and 1 female killed by bodily force.

VICTIM/OFFENDER RELATIONSHIP

For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 94 percent of female victims (46 out of 49) were murdered by someone they knew. Three female victims were killed by strangers. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 65 percent (30 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 77 percent (23 victims) were killed with guns; 57 percent of these (13 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

CIRCUMSTANCE

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 89 percent (39 out of 44) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 56 percent (22 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

WISCONSIN

60 females were murdered by males in Wisconsin in 2020

The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Wisconsin was 2.05 per 100,000 in 2020

Ranked 8th in the United States

AGE

For homicides in which the age of the victim was reported (59 homicides), 6 victims (10 percent) were less than 18 years old, and 6 victims (10 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 39 years old.

RACE

Out of 60 female homicide victims, 34 were white, 25 were Black, and 1 was Asian or Pacific Islander.

MOST COMMON WEAPONS

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 66 percent of female victims (25 out of 38) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 52 percent (13 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 5 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 1 female killed by a blunt object, and 3 females killed by bodily force.

VICTIM/OFFENDER RELATIONSHIP

For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 81 percent of female victims (38 out of 47) were murdered by someone they knew. Nine female victims were killed by strangers. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 53 percent (20 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 60 percent (12 victims) were killed with guns; 58 percent of these (7 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

CIRCUMSTANCE

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 98 percent (49 out of 50) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 41 percent (20 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

SOUTH DAKOTA

9 females were murdered by males in South Dakota in 2020

The homicide rate among females murdered by males in South Dakota was 2.04 per 100,000 in 2020

Ranked 9th in the United States

AGE

The average age was 32 years old.

RACE

Out of 9 female homicide victims, 5 were American Indian or Alaskan Native, 2 were white, and 2 were Black.

MOST COMMON WEAPONS

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 40 percent of female victims (2 out of 5) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 50 percent (1 victim) were killed with handguns. There were 2 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments and 1 female killed by bodily force.

VICTIM/OFFENDER RELATIONSHIP

For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 89 percent of female victims (8 out of 9) were murdered by someone they knew. One female victim was killed by a stranger. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 50 percent (4 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 50 percent (2 victims) were killed with guns; 50 percent of these (1 victim) were shot and killed with handguns.

CIRCUMSTANCE

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 83 percent (5 out of 6) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 60 percent (3 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

KENTUCKY

46 females were murdered by males in Kentucky in 2020

The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Kentucky was 2.02 per 100,000 in 2020

Ranked 10th in the United States

AGE

For homicides in which the age of the victim was reported (45 homicides), 4 victims (9 percent) were less than 18 years old and 4 victims (9 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 41 years old.

RACE

Out of 46 female homicide victims, 37 were white , 7 were Black, and 2 were of unknown race.

MOST COMMON WEAPONS

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 69 percent of female victims (29 out of 42) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 66 percent (19 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 3 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 4 females killed by a blunt object, and 3 females killed by bodily force.

VICTIM/OFFENDER RELATIONSHIP

For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 82 percent of female victims (36 out of 44) were murdered by someone they knew. Eight female victims were killed by strangers. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 61 percent (22 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 73 percent (16 victims) were killed with guns; 69 percent of these (11 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

CIRCUMSTANCE

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 86 percent (31 out of 36) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 87 percent (27 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

UNITED STATES

2,059 females were murdered by males in the United States in 2020

The homicide rate among females murdered by males in the United States was 1.34 per 100,000 in 2020

AGE

For homicides in which the age of the victim was reported (2,022 homicides), there were 125 female homicide victims (6 percent) who were less than 18 years old and 224 victims (11 percent) who were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 40 years old.

RACE

Out of 2,059 female homicide victims, 1,259 were white, 641 were Black, 60 were Asian or Pacific Islander, 44 were American Indian or Alaskan Native, and 55 were of unknown race.

MOST COMMON WEAPONS

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 61 percent of female victims (1,057 out of 1,735) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 64 percent (675 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 319 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 89 females killed by a blunt object, and 163 females killed by bodily force.

VICTIM/OFFENDER RELATIONSHIP

For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 89 percent of female victims (1,604 out of 1,801) were murdered by someone they knew. There were 197 female victims killed by strangers. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 60 percent (967 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 65 percent (562 victims) were killed with guns; 66 percent of these (370 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

CIRCUMSTANCE

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 88 percent (1,364 out of 1,550) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 58 percent (797 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

UNDERSTANDING THE STATISTICS

This analysis of female homicide victims in the United States is limited to cases involving one female victim and one male offender. Supplemental data on age and race of victim, the type of weapon used, the relationship of victim to offender, and the circumstances of the murder are provided for each state as follows:

RATES

Rates of females killed by males in single victim/single offender incidents by state were computed using reported incidents by state and female population estimates for 2020 from the U.S. Census Bureau.

RANKING

States were ranked by their female homicide victimization rates. Rates were rounded to the second decimal place.

AGE

This section notes how many female homicide victims were less than 18 years old and how many were 65 years of age or older.

RACE

This section identifies the race of female victims.

MOST COMMON WEAPONS

For homicides in which the weapon could be identified, this section records the number of females killed by firearms, specifically handguns. It also lists the most common weapons—other than firearms—used by males to kill females.

VICTIM/OFFENDER RELATIONSHIP

This section lists the number of females killed by known offenders and the number killed by strangers. This section also enumerates the number of victims identified as wives or intimate acquaintances (common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends) of the offenders, as well as the number of these intimates shot and killed with firearms in general and handguns in particular.

CIRCUMSTANCE

This section indicates the number of cases in which the homicide was related to the commission of any other felony. This section also provides the number of cases that involved arguments between the victim and the offender.



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