



When Men Murder Women

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When Men Murder Women: An Analysis of 2003 Homicide Data

**Females Murdered by Males in
Single Victim/Single Offender Incidents**

September 2005

The Violence Policy Center (VPC) is a national non-profit educational organization that conducts research and public education on violence in America and provides information and analysis to policymakers, journalists, advocates, and the general public. This report was authored by VPC Policy Analyst Marty Langley. This report was funded in part with the support of The Herb Block Foundation, The David Bohnett Foundation, The George Gund Foundation, The Joyce Foundation, and, The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. Past studies released by the VPC include:

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- *Safe At Home: How D.C.'s Gun Laws Save Children's Lives* (July 2005)
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- *Cease Fire: A Comprehensive Strategy to Reduce Firearms Violence* (Revised, October 1997)

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Introduction

Intimate partner violence against women is all too common and takes many forms. The most serious is homicide by an intimate partner.¹ Guns can easily turn domestic violence into domestic homicide. A 2001 study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on homicide among intimate partners found that female intimate partners are more likely to be murdered with a firearm than all other means combined. The study concluded: "the figures demonstrate the importance of reducing access to firearms in households affected by IPV [intimate partner violence]."²

Gun use does not need to result in a fatality to involve domestic violence. A 2000 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."³

The 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.⁴

Estimates from the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) indicate that from 1993 to 1998, women were victims of violent crimes by their intimate partners an average of more than 935,000 times a year.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

¹ An intimate partner or intimate acquaintance is defined as a spouse, common-law spouse, ex-spouse, or girlfriend/boyfriend.

² 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.

³ 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.

⁴ Diane Craven, "Sex Differences in Violence Victimization, 1994," *Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997).

⁵ Callie Marie Rennison, "Intimate Partner Violence," *Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2000).

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. 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.

When Men Murder Women is an annual report prepared by the Violence Policy Center detailing the reality of homicides committed against women. The study analyzes the most recent Supplementary Homicide Report (SHR) data submitted to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).¹⁰ The information used for this report is for the

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 According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s Uniform Crime Reports, in 2003 there were only 203 justifiable homicides (the justified killing of a felon during the commission of a felony) committed by private citizens using firearms. Of these, only 163 involved handguns. While firearms are at times used by private citizens to kill criminals or to stop crimes, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that the most common scenarios of gun use in America in 2002, the most recent final data available, are suicide (17,108), homicide (11,829), or fatal unintentional injury (762). The April 1994 Justice Department study *Guns and Crime* revealed that from 1987 to 1992, the annual average of all victims of violence who claimed to have used a firearm of any type (handgun, shotgun, or rifle) to defend themselves was only about one percent (62,200 instances). Another 20,300 claimed to have used a firearm to defend their property during a theft, household burglary, or motor vehicle theft. Also, it is not known whether the gun was successfully used to stop the particular crime. In comparison, *Guns and Crime* reported that offenders armed with handguns alone committed a record 930,700 violent crimes in 1992.

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 consists 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

year 2003. Once again, this is the most recent data available. This is the first analysis of the 2003 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 the rate of female homicides.

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.

In 2003, there were 1,817 females murdered by males in single victim/single offender incidents that were submitted to the FBI for its Supplementary Homicide Report.¹¹ These key findings from the report, expanded upon in the following sections, dispel many of the myths regarding the nature of lethal violence against women:

- o For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 92 percent of female victims (1,547 out of 1,689) were murdered by someone they knew.
- o More than 10 times as many females were murdered by a male they knew (1,547 victims) than were killed by male strangers (142 victims).
- o For victims who knew their offenders, 62 percent (952) of female homicide victims were wives or intimate acquaintances of their killers.¹²
- o There were 316 women shot and killed by either their husband or intimate acquaintance during the course of an argument.
- o Nationwide, more female homicides were committed with firearms (50 percent) than with any other weapon. Knives and other cutting instruments accounted for 21 percent of all female murders, bodily force 15 percent, and murder by blunt object 7 percent. Of the homicides committed with firearms, 77 percent were committed with handguns.

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 In 2003 the state of Florida did not submit any data to the FBI Supplementary Homicide Report. Data from Florida was not requested individually because the difference in collection techniques would cause a bias in the study results.

¹² A female intimate acquaintance is defined as a wife, common-law wife, ex-wife, or girlfriend.

- o 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 women overall: most homicides against black women are not committed by strangers, but by men 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 top 10 states, 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 the 10 states can be found in Appendix Two.

State Rankings

In 2003, the homicide rate among female victims murdered by males in single victim/single offender incidents nationally was 1.31 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 2.87 per 100,000 was more than double the national average. Alaska was followed by Nevada (2.64 per 100,000) and Louisiana (2.42 per 100,000). The remaining states that make up the top 10 can be found in Chart One on page six. For a ranking of all states that submitted data to the FBI, please see Appendix One.

Age and Race of Female Homicide Victims

In single female victim/single male offender homicides reported for 2003, 10 percent of the victims were less than 18 years old (187 victims) and 8 percent were 65 years of age or older (141 victims). The average age of female homicide victims was 36 years old. Homicides in which race was identified (1,802 victims) included: 14 American Indian or Alaskan Native females, 59 Asian or Pacific Islander females, 572 black females, and 1,157 white females. Eighty-eight percent (1,577 out of 1,782) of the homicides where the race of the female victim and male offender were known were intra-racial.¹³ Overall, black women (2.95 per 100,000) were murdered at a rate three times higher than white women (0.98 per 100,000). American Indian and Alaskan Native women (1.01 per 100,000) were slightly more likely than white women to be murdered by a male offender, while Asian and Pacific Islander women

¹³ Intra-racial homicides are homicides where the victim and the offender are of the same race.

were the least likely (0.92 per 100,000) women of any race to be murdered by a male offender. Unfortunately, Hispanic ethnicity could not be determined on a national level because of the inadequacy of data collection and reporting. Of the 49 states reporting, only six states reported having at least one Hispanic female homicide victim. Yet, even most of these states did not code a sufficient number of their female victims' ethnicity as either Hispanic or non-Hispanic to run a valid analysis.

Chart One: Number of Females Murdered by Males in Single Victim/Single Offender Homicides and Rates by State in 2003, Ranked by Rate

Ranking	State	Number of Homicides	Homicide Rate per 100,000
1	Alaska	9	2.87
2	Nevada	29	2.64
3 (tie)	Louisiana	56	2.42
3 (tie)	New Mexico	23	2.42
5	Tennessee	71	2.38
6	South Carolina	47	2.21
7	Arizona	60	2.15
8	Georgia	90	2.05
9	Mississippi	29	1.95
10	Texas	213	1.92

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, 92 percent of female victims (1,547 out of 1,689) were murdered by someone they knew. More than 10 times as many females were murdered by a male they knew (1,547 victims) than were killed by male strangers (142 victims) in single victim/single offender incidents in 2003.¹⁴ Of victims who knew their offenders, 62 percent (952 out of 1,547) 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.)

Female Homicide Victims and Weapons

Firearms—especially handguns—were the most common weapons used by males to murder females in 2003. For homicides in which the weapon could be identified, 50 percent of female victims (835 out of 1,678) were killed with a gun. Of the females killed with a firearm, nearly two-thirds were murdered by male intimates. The number of females shot and killed by their husband or intimate acquaintance (533 victims) was more than three times higher than the total number murdered by male strangers using all weapons combined (142 victims) in single victim/single offender incidents in 2003. In homicides where males used firearms to kill females, handguns were clearly the weapon of choice over rifles and shotguns. In 2003, 77 percent of female firearm homicide victims (647 out of 835) were killed with handguns.

Female Homicide Victims and Circumstance

The overwhelming majority of homicides among females by male offenders in single victim/single offender incidents in 2003 were not related to any other felony crime. Most often, females were killed by males in the course of an argument—usually with a firearm. In 2003 there were 1,478 incidents in which the circumstances of the homicide between the female victim and male offender in single victim/single offender

¹⁴ These are homicides in which the relationship between the victim and the offender could be identified. According to the FBI's 2003 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 1,689 of 1,817 incidents. In 128 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 initially unsolved homicides 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.

incidents could be identified. Of these, 88 percent (1,298 out of 1,478) were not related to the commission of any other felony.

Of the non-felony homicides, 65 percent (840 out of 1,298) involved arguments between the female victim and male offender and 51 percent (429 out of 840) of those homicides involved guns. According to the Supplementary Homicide Report data, in 2003 there were 316 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 Women

The disproportionate burden of fatal and nonfatal violence borne by black women has almost always been overshadowed by the toll violence has taken on black men. In 2003, black women were murdered at a rate three times higher than white women: 2.95 per 100,000 versus 0.98 per 100,000.

Age of Black Female Homicide Victims

In single female victim/single male offender homicides reported for 2003, 12 percent of black female victims were less than 18 years old (69 victims) and four percent were 65 years of age or older (22 victims). The average age of black female homicide victims was 32 years old.

Victim to Offender Relationship

Compared to a black man, a black woman is far more likely to be killed by her spouse, an intimate acquaintance, or a family member than by a stranger. More than 10 times as many black females were murdered by a male they knew (471 victims) than were killed by male strangers (44 victims) in single victim/single offender incidents in 2003. Of black victims who knew their offenders, 58 percent (273 out of 471) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Ninety-five percent (537 out of 567) of the homicides of black women where the race of the male offender was known were intra-racial.

Black Female Homicide Victims and Weapons

As with female homicide victims in general, firearms—especially handguns—were the most common weapons used by males to murder black females in 2003. In the 536 homicides for which the murder weapon could be identified, 51 percent of black female victims (272 victims) were shot and killed with guns. And when these women were killed with a gun, it was almost always a handgun (231 victims or 85 percent). The number of black females shot and killed by their husband or intimate acquaintance (139 victims) was more than three times as high as the total number murdered by male strangers using all weapons combined (44 victims) in single victim/single offender incidents in 2003.

Black Female Homicide Victims and Circumstance

The overwhelming majority of homicides among black females by male offenders in single victim/single offender incidents in 2003 were not related to any other felony crime. Most often, black females were killed by males in the course of an argument—usually with a firearm. In 2003, for the 459 homicides in which the circumstances between the black female victim and male offender could be identified, 88 percent (402 out of 459) were not related to the commission of any other felony.

More than two thirds of non-felony related homicides (285 out of 402) involved arguments between the black female victim and male offender. Fifty-two percent (144 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 1994.¹⁵ Nineteen states supplement the federal prohibition with a similar state law.

In 1996, 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 were already precluded from firearms possession under a general provision prohibiting firearms possession by felons).¹⁶ Twenty states have comparable state law prohibitions.¹⁷

These laws are enforced in part by the Brady Law background checks performed on firearms transactions conducted through Federal Firearms License holders (FFLs). In 2002, the most recent year for which data is available, the two domestic violence prohibited categories accounted for approximately 11 percent of rejected firearm transfers.¹⁸

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 background checks. Moreover, the U.S. Department of Justice identifies 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.

¹⁵ 18 USC § 922 (g)(8).

¹⁶ 18 USC § 922 (g)(9).

¹⁷ State law prohibitions give prosecutors more options in prosecuting offenders and allow states to impose their own penalties.

¹⁸ Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Survey of State Procedures Related to Firearm Sales, Midyear 2002* (April 2003)

For a chart detailing which states make available records of protective orders and misdemeanor domestic violence convictions to systems used to conduct the Brady background check for gun purchases, see Appendix Three. The chart also notes whether the records of misdemeanor domestic violence convictions can be distinguished from other misdemeanor convictions which are not a basis for denying a firearm purchase under federal law.

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. A 1997 *Archives of Internal Medicine* 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.¹⁹ 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.²⁰

More recently, 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 US 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."²¹

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

¹⁹ 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.

²⁰ Linda E. Salzman et al., "Weapon Involvement and Injury Outcomes in Family and Intimate Assaults," *JAMA* 267, no. 22 (1992): 3043-3047.

²¹ 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, 2003**

State Ranking by Rate	State	Number of Homicide Victims	Homicide Rate per 100,000
12	Alabama	38	1.64
1	Alaska	9	2.87
7	Arizona	60	2.15
18	Arkansas	19	1.37
22	California	232	1.31
23	Colorado	29	1.29
36	Connecticut	16	0.89
42 (tie)	Delaware	2	0.48
	Florida	NA	NA
8	Georgia	90	2.05
39	Hawaii	4	0.64
21	Idaho	9	1.32
44	Illinois	30	0.47
31	Indiana	32	1.02
32 (tie)	Iowa	15	1.00
24	Kansas	17	1.24
47	Kentucky	7	0.33
3 (tie)	Louisiana	56	2.42
30	Maine	7	1.05
11	Maryland	52	1.83
42 (tie)	Massachusetts	16	0.48
16 (tie)	Michigan	71	1.38
41	Minnesota	14	0.55
9	Mississippi	29	1.95
25 (tie)	Missouri	34	1.16
46	Montana	2	0.43

**Appendix One: Number of Females Murdered by Males in Single
Victim/Single Offender Homicides and Rates by State, 2003**

State Ranking by Rate	State	Number of Homicide Victims	Homicide Rate per 100,000
45	Nebraska	4	0.45
2	Nevada	29	2.64
49	New Hampshire	1	0.15
20	New Jersey	59	1.33
3 (tie)	New Mexico	23	2.42
35	New York	89	0.90
16 (tie)	North Carolina	59	1.38
40	North Dakota	2	0.63
27	Ohio	66	1.12
14 (tie)	Oklahoma	25	1.40
32 (tie)	Oregon	18	1.00
25 (tie)	Pennsylvania	74	1.16
37	Rhode Island	4	0.72
6	South Carolina	47	2.21
48	South Dakota	1	0.26
5	Tennessee	71	2.38
10	Texas	213	1.92
38	Utah	8	0.68
34	Vermont	3	0.95
19	Virginia	51	1.36
29	Washington	33	1.07
14 (tie)	West Virginia	13	1.40
28	Wisconsin	30	1.09
13	Wyoming	4	1.61
	U.S. Total	1,817	1.31

**Appendix Two:
Additional Information for the 10 States with the
Highest Rates of Female Homicide**

Alaska

9 females were murdered by males in Alaska in 2003

The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Alaska was 2.87 per 100,000 in 2003

Ranked 1st in the United States

Age

One female homicide victim (11 percent) was less than 18 years old. The average age was 30 years old.

Race

Out of 9 female homicide victims, 1 was black, 2 were American Indian or Alaskan Native, and 6 were white.

Most Common Weapons

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 33 percent of female victims (3 out of 9) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 100 percent (3 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 2 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 2 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, 86 percent of female victims (6 out of 7) were murdered by someone they knew. One female victim was killed by a stranger. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 50 percent (3 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 33 percent (1 victim) were killed with guns; 100 percent of these (1 victim) were shot and killed with a handgun.

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, 83 percent (5 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

Nevada

29 females were murdered by males in Nevada in 2003

The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Nevada was 2.64 per 100,000 in 2003

Ranked 2nd in the United States

Age

Three female homicide victims (10 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 38 years old.

Race

Out of 29 female homicide victims, 3 were Asian or Pacific Islander, 3 were black, and 23 were white.

Most Common Weapons

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 59 percent of female victims (17 out of 29) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 76 percent (13 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 2 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 2 females killed by a blunt object, and 4 females killed by bodily force.

Victim/Offender Relationship

For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 96 percent of female victims (27 out of 28) were murdered by someone they knew. One female victim was killed by a stranger. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 74 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; 75 percent of these (9 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

Circumstance

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 95 percent (21 out of 22) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 62 percent (13 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

Louisiana

56 females were murdered by males in Louisiana in 2003

The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Louisiana was 2.42 per 100,000 in 2003

Ranked 3rd in the United States

Age

Four female homicide victims (7 percent) were less than 18 years old and 2 victims (4 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 33 years old.

Race

Out of 56 female homicide victims, 1 was American Indian or Alaskan Native, 31 were black, and 24 were white.

Most Common Weapons

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 61 percent of female victims (34 out of 56) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 76 percent (26 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 11 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 3 females killed by a blunt object, and 4 females killed by bodily force.

Victim/Offender Relationship

For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 85 percent of female victims (45 out of 53) were murdered by someone they knew. Eight female victims were killed by strangers. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 64 percent (29 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 62 percent (18 victims) were killed with guns; 78 percent of these (14 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

Circumstance

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 89 percent (40 out of 45) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 70 percent (28 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

New Mexico

23 females were murdered by males in New Mexico in 2003

The homicide rate among females murdered by males in New Mexico was 2.42 per 100,000 in 2003

Ranked 3rd in the United States

Age

Three female homicide victims (13 percent) were less than 18 years old and 3 victims (13 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 37 years old.

Race

Out of 23 female homicide victims, 2 were American Indian or Alaskan Native, 1 was black, and 20 were white.

Most Common Weapons

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 33 percent of female victims (7 out of 21) were shot and killed with guns. All of these (7 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 4 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 3 females killed by a blunt object, and 5 females killed by bodily force.

Victim/Offender Relationship

For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 96 percent of female victims (22 out of 23) were murdered by someone they knew. One female victim was killed by a stranger. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 59 percent (13 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 38 percent (5 victims) were killed with guns; 100 percent of these (5 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

Circumstance

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 89 percent (17 out of 19) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 76 percent (13 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

Tennessee

71 females were murdered by males in Tennessee in 2003

The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Tennessee was 2.38 per 100,000 in 2003

Ranked 5th in the United States

Age

Three female homicide victims (4 percent) were less than 18 years old and 4 victims (6 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 38 years old.

Race

Out of 71 female homicide victims, 25 were black and 46 were white.

Most Common Weapons

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 52 percent of female victims (34 out of 65) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 82 percent (28 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 15 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 5 females killed by a blunt object, and 8 females killed by bodily force.

Victim/Offender Relationship

For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 88 percent of female victims (59 out of 67) were murdered by someone they knew. Eight female victims were killed by strangers. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 63 percent (37 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 65 percent (22 victims) were killed with guns; 77 percent of these (17 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

Circumstance

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 91 percent (42 out of 46) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 71 percent (30 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

South Carolina

47 females were murdered by males in South Carolina in 2003

The homicide rate among females murdered by males in South Carolina was 2.21 per 100,000 in 2003

Ranked 6th in the United States

Age

Three female homicide victims (6 percent) were less than 18 years old and 1 victim (2 percent) was 65 years of age or older. The average age was 35 years old.

Race

Out of 47 female homicide victims, 22 were black and 25 were white.

Most Common Weapons

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 60 percent of female victims (26 out of 43) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 73 percent (19 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 7 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, and 9 females killed by bodily force.

Victim/Offender Relationship

For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 91 percent of female victims (41 out of 45) were murdered by someone they knew. Four female victims were killed by strangers. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 68 percent (28 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 61 percent (17 victims) were killed with guns; 82 percent of these (14 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

Circumstance

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 80 percent (37 out of 46) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 76 percent (28 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

Arizona

60 females were murdered by males in Arizona in 2003

The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Arizona was 2.15 per 100,000 in 2003

Ranked 7th in the United States

Age

Six female homicide victims (10 percent) were less than 18 years old and 4 victims (7 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 35 years old.

Race

Out of 60 female homicide victims, 3 were Asian or Pacific Islander, 2 were American Indian or Alaskan Native, 10 were black, and 45 were white.

Most Common Weapons

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 52 percent of female victims (31 out of 60) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 81 percent (25 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 6 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 5 females killed by a blunt object, and 12 females killed by bodily force.

Victim/Offender Relationship

For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 79 percent of female victims (45 out of 57) were murdered by someone they knew. Twelve female victims were killed by strangers. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 64 percent (29 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 55 percent (16 victims) were killed with guns; 88 percent of these (14 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

Circumstance

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 80 percent (44 out of 55) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 73 percent (32 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

Georgia

90 females were murdered by males in Georgia in 2003

The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Georgia was 2.05 per 100,000 in 2003

Ranked 8th in the United States

Age

Thirteen female homicide victims (15 percent) were less than 18 years old and 4 victims (4 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 33 years old.

Race

Out of 90 female homicide victims, 3 were Asian or Pacific Islander, 57 were black, and 30 were white.

Most Common Weapons

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 56 percent of female victims (47 out of 84) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 83 percent (39 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 14 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 2 females killed by a blunt object, and 15 females killed by bodily force.

Victim/Offender Relationship

For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 90 percent of female victims (79 out of 88) were murdered by someone they knew. Nine female victims were killed by strangers. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 58 percent (46 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 65 percent (30 victims) were killed with guns; 87 percent of these (26 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

Circumstance

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 79 percent (67 out of 85) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 88 percent (59 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

Mississippi

29 females were murdered by males in Mississippi in 2003

The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Mississippi was 1.95 per 100,000 in 2003

Ranked 9th in the United States

Age

Three female homicide victims (10 percent) were less than 18 years old and 3 victims (10 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 40 years old.

Race

Out of 29 female homicide victims, 20 were black and 9 were white.

Most Common Weapons

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 55 percent of female victims (16 out of 29) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 81 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 5 females killed by bodily force.

Victim/Offender Relationship

For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 100 percent of female victims (28 out of 28) were murdered by someone they knew. No female victims were killed by strangers. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 64 percent (18 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 78 percent (14 victims) were killed with guns; 79 percent of these (11 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

Circumstance

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 84 percent (16 out of 19) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 69 percent (11 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

Texas

213 females were murdered by males in Texas in 2003

The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Texas was 1.92 per 100,000 in 2003

Ranked 10th in the United States

Age

Thirty-one female homicide victims (15 percent) were less than 18 years old and 16 victims (8 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 34 years old.

Race

Out of 213 female homicide victims, 4 were Asian or Pacific Islander, 41 were black, and 168 were white.

Most Common Weapons

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 47 percent of female victims (94 out of 199) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 70 percent (66 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 43 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 13 females killed by a blunt object, and 38 females killed by bodily force.

Victim/Offender Relationship

For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 93 percent of female victims (187 out of 202) were murdered by someone they knew. Fifteen female victims were killed by strangers. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 63 percent (118 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 58 percent (69 victims) were killed with guns; 70 percent of these (48 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

Circumstance

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 91 percent (164 out of 180) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 54 percent (88 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

United States

1,817 females were murdered by males in the United States in 2003

The homicide rate among females murdered by males in the United States was 1.31 per 100,000 in 2003

Age

There were 187 female homicide victims (10 percent) who were less than 18 years old and 141 victims (8 percent) who were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 36 years old.

Race

Out of 1,802 female homicide victims, 59 were Asian or Pacific Islander, 572 were black, 14 were American Indian or Alaskan Native, and 1,157 were white.

Most Common Weapons

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 50 percent of female victims (835 out of 1,678) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 77 percent (647 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 345 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 112 females killed by a blunt object, and 252 females killed by bodily force.

Victim/Offender Relationship

For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 92 percent of female victims (1,547 out of 1,689) were murdered by someone they knew. There were 142 female victims killed by strangers. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 62 percent (952 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 56 percent (533 victims) were killed with guns; 77 percent of these (410 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

Circumstance

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 88 percent (1,298 out of 1,478) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 65 percent (840 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

Understanding the Statistics

This analysis of female homicide victims in America 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 2003 from the U.S. Census Bureau.

Ranking

States were ranked by their female homicide 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

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.

**Appendix Three:
Additional Information on State Efforts to Help
Prevent Domestic Violence Abusers
from Obtaining Firearms**

Jurisdiction	Restraining (protective) orders		Domestic violence misdemeanor convictions	
	Statewide database	Entered into NCIC file	In criminal history (CH)	Method used to distinguish from other misdemeanors in CH ^a
Federal	---	X	X	Flagged records (from States)
Alabama	X	X	X	Flagged records
Alaska	X	X	X	Flagged records
Arizona	X	X	X	Flagged records
Arkansas	X	X	X	Flagged records
California	X	X	X	Flagged records
Colorado	X	X	X	Flagged records
Connecticut	X	X	X	Flagged records
Delaware	X	X	X	Flagged records
Florida	X	X	X	
Georgia	X	X	X	Flagged records
Hawaii	X	---	X	Flagged records
Idaho	---	X	X	
Illinois	X	X	X	Flagged records
Indiana	X	X	---	
Iowa	X	X	X	Flagged records
Kansas	X	X	X	Statute citations
Kentucky	X	X	X	
Louisiana	X	X	X	Modifier denoting DV
Maine	X	X	---	
Maryland	X	X	X	Flagged records
Massachusetts	X	X	X	Included in crimes of violence ^b
Michigan	X	X	X	Flagged records
Minnesota	X	X	X	Offense codes
Mississippi	---	---	---	
Missouri	X	X	X	Flagged records
Montana	---	X	X	Flagged records
Nebraska	X	X	X	Flagged records
Nevada	X	---	X	Flagged records
New Hampshire	X	X	X	Flagged records
New Jersey	X	---	X	Flagged records
New Mexico	X	X	X	Flagged records
New York	X	X	---	
North Carolina	---	X	X	Flagged records
North Dakota	X	X	---	
Ohio	---	X	---	
Oklahoma	---	X	X	Offense codes / flagged records
Oregon	X	X	X	Flagged records
Pennsylvania	X	X	X	Flagged records
Rhode Island	X	X	X	Flagged records
South Carolina	---	X	X	Flagged records
South Dakota	X	X	X	Flagged records
Tennessee	X	X	X	Flagged records
Texas	X	X	X	Flagged records
Utah	X	---	X	Flagged records
Vermont	X	X	X	Flagged records
Virginia	X	X	X	Flagged records
Washington	X	X	X	Flagged records
West Virginia	X	X	X	
Wisconsin	X	X	X	Flagged records
Wyoming	X	X	X	Flagged records
State totals	43	45	44	

X Data are accessed by checking agencies within the jurisdiction (may not be available to other checking agencies).
 ---No data are available for firearm background checks or availability is unknown.
^aExtent of flagging and ability to distinguish domestic crimes from other misdemeanors varies significantly by jurisdiction.
^bDomestic misdemeanors are not flagged because all crimes of violence are disqualifying offenses.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Survey of State Procedures Related to Firearm Sales, Midyear 2004* (August 2005).