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When Men Murder Women: An Analysis of 2010 Homicide Data

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

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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 study was funded with the support of the David Bohnett Foundation and The Joyce Foundation. A list highlighting select past VPC studies is listed below. For a complete list of VPC publications with document links, please visit <http://www.vpc.org/studyndx.htm>.

- *Understanding the Smith & Wesson M&P15 Semiautomatic Assault Rifle Used in the Aurora, Colorado Mass Murder* (July 2012)
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- *Bullet Buttons: The Gun Industry's Attack on California's Assault Weapons Ban* (May 2012)
- *American Roulette: Murder-Suicide in the United States* (May 2012)
- *"Never Walk Alone"—How Concealed Carry Laws Boost Gun Industry Sales* (April 2012)
- *Black Homicide Victimization in the United States: An Analysis of 2009 Homicide Data* (January 2012, annual study)
- *Lost Youth: A County-by-County Analysis of 2010 California Homicide Victims Ages 10 to 24* (January 2012, annual study)
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- *Clear and Present Danger: National Security Experts Warn About the Danger of Unrestricted Sales of 50 Caliber Anti-Armor Sniper Rifles to Civilians* (July 2005)
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- *Vest Buster: The .500 Smith & Wesson Magnum—The Gun Industry's Latest Challenge to Law Enforcement Body Armor* (June 2004)
- *Bullet Hoses—Semiautomatic Assault Weapons: What Are They? What's So Bad About Them?* (May 2003)
- *"Officer Down"—Assault Weapons and the War on Law Enforcement* (May 2003)
- *License to Kill IV: More Guns, More Crime* (June 2002)
- *"A .22 for Christmas"—How the Gun Industry Designs and Markets Firearms for Children and Youth* (December 2001)
- *Unintended Consequences: Pro-Handgun Experts Prove That Handguns Are a Dangerous Choice For Self-Defense* (November 2001)
- *Voting from the Rooftops: How the Gun Industry Armed Osama bin Laden, Other Foreign and Domestic Terrorists, and Common Criminals with 50 Caliber Sniper Rifles* (October 2001)
- *Hispanics and Firearms Violence* (May 2001)
- *Where'd They Get Their Guns?—An Analysis of the Firearms Used in High-Profile Shootings, 1963 to 2001* (April 2001)
- *A Deadly Myth: Women, Handguns, and Self-Defense* (January 2001)
- *Handgun Licensing and Registration: What it Can and Cannot Do* (September 2000)
- *Pocket Rockets: The Gun Industry's Sale of Increased Killing Power* (July 2000)
- *Guns For Felons: How the NRA Works to Rearm Criminals* (March 2000)
- *Cease Fire: A Comprehensive Strategy to Reduce Firearms Violence* (Revised, October 1997)

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

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. 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].”²

Gun use does not need to result in a fatality to involve 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.”³

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.⁴

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.”⁵ 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

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 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.

females with no gun in the home.⁶ 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.⁷

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.⁸ Instead, they are all too often used to inflict harm on the very people they were intended to protect. According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Reports, in 2010 there were only 278 justifiable homicides committed by private citizens. Of these, only 34 involved women killing men. Of those, only 23 involved firearms, with 16 of the 23 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 2010, the most recent final data available, are suicide (19,392), homicide (11,078), or fatal unintentional injury (606).

When Men Murder Women is an annual report prepared by the Violence Policy Center detailing the reality of homicides committed against females. The study analyzes the most recent Supplementary Homicide Report (SHR) data submitted to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).⁹ The information used for this report is for the

⁶ 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.

⁷ K.M. Grassel et al., "Association between Handgun Purchase and Mortality from Firearm Injury," *Injury Prevention* 9 (2003): 50.

⁸ In 2010, justifiable homicides involving women killing men occurred in: Alaska (1); Arizona (1); California (3); Delaware (1); Georgia (2); Indiana (2); Kentucky (1); Louisiana (1); Maryland (1); Michigan (3); New Mexico (1); Ohio (2); Oklahoma (2); South Carolina (1); Tennessee (5); Texas (6); and, Virginia (1). In 2010, justifiable homicides involving women killing men with a firearm occurred in: Alaska (1); Arizona (1); California (3); Delaware (1); Georgia (1); Indiana (2); Michigan (2); New Mexico (1); Ohio (1); Oklahoma (2); South Carolina (1); Tennessee (2); and, Texas (5). Of these, handguns were used in: Arizona (1); California (3); Delaware (1); Georgia (1); Indiana (2); New Mexico (1); Ohio (1); Oklahoma (2); South Carolina (1); Tennessee (1); and, Texas (2).

⁹ 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 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.

year 2010. Once again, this is the most recent data available. This is the first analysis of the 2010 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 2010, there were 1,800 females murdered by males in single victim/single offender incidents that were submitted to the FBI for its Supplementary Homicide Report.¹⁰ These key findings from the report, 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, 94 percent of female victims (1,571 out of 1,669) were murdered by a male they knew.
- Sixteen times as many females were murdered by a male they knew (1,571 victims) than were killed by male strangers (98 victims).
- For victims who knew their offenders, 65 percent (1,017) of female homicide victims were wives or intimate acquaintances of their killers.¹¹
- There were 313 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 (1,622), more female homicides were committed with firearms (52 percent) than with any other weapon. Knives and other cutting instruments accounted for 20 percent of all female murders, bodily force 12 percent, and murder by blunt object seven percent. Of the homicides committed with firearms, 70 percent were committed with handguns.

¹⁰ In 2010, as in years past, 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 create a bias in the study results. In addition, according to the FBI's *Uniform Crime Reports*, limited SHR data was received from Illinois for 2010.

¹¹ A female intimate acquaintance is defined as a wife, common-law wife, ex-wife, or girlfriend.

- 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 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 2010, the homicide rate among female victims murdered by males in single victim/single offender incidents nationally was 1.22 per 100,000. For that year, Nevada 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 2.62 per 100,000 was more than double the national average. Nevada was followed by South Carolina (1.94 per 100,000) and Tennessee (1.91 per 100,000). The remaining states that comprise the top 10 can be found in the chart on page six. For a ranking of all states that submitted data to the FBI, please see Appendix One on page 13.

Age and Race of Female Homicide Victims

In 2010, for single female victim/single male offender homicides where the age of the victim was reported (1,725 homicides), seven percent of the victims were younger than 18 years old (128 victims) and 10 percent were 65 years of age or older (164 victims). The average age of female homicide victims was 40 years old. Homicides in which race was identified (1,781 victims) included: 18 American Indian or Alaskan Native females; 46 Asian or Pacific Islander females; 499 black females; and 1,218 white females. Eighty-seven percent (1,545 out of 1,781) of the homicides where the race of the female victim and male offender were known were intra-racial.¹² Overall, black females were murdered by males at a rate (2.59 per 100,000) nearly two and a half times higher than white females (1.06 per 100,000). American Indian and Alaskan Native females (1.00 per 100,000) were murdered by male offenders at

¹² Intra-racial homicides are homicides in which the victim and the offender are of the same race.

nearly the same rate as white females, while Asian and Pacific Islander females were the least likely (0.60 per 100,000) females 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.

Number of Females Murdered by Males in Single Victim/Single Offender Homicides and Rates by State in 2010, Ranked by Rate

Ranking	State	Number of Female Homicide Victims	Homicide Rate per 100,000 Females
1	Nevada	35	2.62
2	South Carolina	46	1.94
3	Tennessee	62	1.91
4	Louisiana	43	1.86
5	Virginia	72	1.77
6	Texas	222	1.75
7	New Mexico	17	1.63
8 (tie)	Hawaii	11	1.62
8 (tie)	Arizona	52	1.62
10	Georgia	80	1.61

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, 94 percent of female victims (1,571 out of 1,669) were murdered by someone they knew. Sixteen times as many females were murdered by a male they knew (1,571 victims) than were killed by male strangers (98 victims) in single victim/single offender incidents in 2010.¹³ Of victims who knew their offenders, 65 percent (1,017 out of 1,571) 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 weapon used by males to murder females in 2010. For homicides in which the weapon could be identified, 52 percent of female victims (849 out of 1,622) were killed with a gun. Of the females killed with a firearm, more than two-thirds were murdered by male intimates. The number of females shot and killed by their husband or intimate acquaintance (574 victims) was nearly six times higher than the total number murdered by male strangers using all weapons combined (98 victims) in single victim/single offender incidents in 2010. In homicides where males used firearms to kill females, handguns were clearly the weapon of choice over rifles and shotguns. In 2010, 70 percent of female firearm homicide victims (597 out of 849) were killed with handguns.

¹³ These are homicides in which the relationship between the victim and the offender could be identified. According to the FBI's 2010 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 1,669 of 1,800 incidents. In 131 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.

Female Homicide Victims and Circumstance

The overwhelming majority of homicides among females by male offenders in single victim/single offender incidents in 2010 was 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 2010 there were 1,433 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 (1,257 out of 1,433) were not related to the commission of any other felony.

Of the homicides not related to the commission of another felony, 60 percent (760 out of 1,257) involved arguments between the female victim and male offender. Fifty-one percent (386 out of 760) of the homicides stemming from an argument involved guns. In 2010 there were 313 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. In 2010, black females were murdered at a rate nearly two and a half times higher than white females: 2.59 per 100,000 versus 1.06 per 100,000.

Age of Black Female Homicide Victims

In 2010, for single female victim/single male offender homicides where the age of the victim was reported (474 homicides), 10 percent of black female victims were less than 18 years old (48 victims) and four percent were 65 years of age or older (17 victims). The average age of black female homicide victims was 35 years old.

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, 94 percent of black females killed by males in single victim/single offender incidents knew their killers (414 out of 442). Nearly 15 times as many black females were murdered by a male they knew (414 victims) than were killed by male strangers (28 victims) in single victim/single offender incidents in 2010. Of black victims who knew their offenders, 64 percent (267 out of 414) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Ninety-three percent (463 out of 499) of the homicides of black females 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 2010. In the 451 homicides for which the murder weapon could be identified, 53 percent of black female victims (237 victims) were shot and killed with guns. And when these females were killed with a gun, it was most often a handgun (179 victims or 76 percent). The number of black females shot and killed by their husband or intimate acquaintance (136 victims) was nearly five times as high as the total number murdered by male strangers using all weapons combined (28 victims) in single victim/single offender incidents in 2010.

Black Female Homicide Victims and Circumstance

The overwhelming majority of homicides of black females by male offenders in single victim/single offender incidents in 2010 was 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 2010, for the 403 homicides in which the circumstances between the black female victim and male offender could be identified, 89 percent (358 out of 403) were not related to the commission of any other felony.

Nearly two-thirds of non-felony related homicides (218 out of 358) involved arguments between the black female victim and male offender. Forty-nine percent (107 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 1994.¹⁴

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 are already precluded from firearms possession under a general provision prohibiting firearms possession by felons).¹⁵

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, 2012, these two domestic violence prohibited categories accounted for approximately 15 percent of rejected federal firearm transfers.¹⁶

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.

¹⁴ 18 USC § 922 (g)(8).

¹⁵ 18 USC § 922 (g)(9).

¹⁶ *Federal Denials, Reasons Why the NICS Section Denies, November 30, 1998–July 31, 2012*, http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/nics/reports/O80112_Denials.pdf.

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.¹⁷ 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.¹⁸

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."¹⁹

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.

¹⁷ 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.

¹⁸ Linda E. Salzman et al., "Weapon Involvement and Injury Outcomes in Family and Intimate Assaults," *JAMA* 267, no. 22 (1992): 3043-3047.

¹⁹ 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, 2010**

State Ranking by Rate	State	Number of Homicide Victims	Homicide Rate per 100,000 Females
23 (tie)	Alabama	31	1.26
25	Alaska	4	1.17
8 (tie)	Arizona	52	1.62
19	Arkansas	21	1.41
26	California	216	1.15
37	Colorado	23	0.92
40 (tie)	Connecticut	16	0.87
42	Delaware	4	0.86
NA	Florida	NA	NA
10	Georgia	80	1.61
8 (tie)	Hawaii	11	1.62
22	Idaho	10	1.28
48	Illinois ²⁰	21	0.32
31 (tie)	Indiana	34	1.03
27 (tie)	Iowa	17	1.11
27 (tie)	Kansas	16	1.11
11	Kentucky	35	1.59
4	Louisiana	43	1.86
31 (tie)	Maine	7	1.03
12	Maryland	47	1.58
45	Massachusetts	23	0.68
40 (tie)	Michigan	44	0.87
47	Minnesota	14	0.52
13 (tie)	Mississippi	23	1.51
13 (tie)	Missouri	46	1.51

²⁰ According to the FBI's *Uniform Crime Reports*, limited SHR data was received from Illinois for 2010.

**Appendix One: Number of Females Murdered by Males in Single
Victim/Single Offender Homicides and Rates by State, 2010**

State Ranking by Rate	State	Number of Homicide Victims	Homicide Rate per 100,000 Females
18	Montana	7	1.42
33 (tie)	Nebraska	9	0.98
1	Nevada	35	2.62
46	New Hampshire	4	0.60
43	New Jersey	35	0.78
7	New Mexico	17	1.63
38	New York	91	0.91
21	North Carolina	64	1.31
39	North Dakota	3	0.90
34	Ohio	57	0.97
17	Oklahoma	27	1.43
16	Oregon	28	1.45
20	Pennsylvania	88	1.35
15	Rhode Island	8	1.47
2	South Carolina	46	1.94
49	South Dakota	1	0.25
3	Tennessee	62	1.91
6	Texas	222	1.75
36	Utah	13	0.95
23 (tie)	Vermont	4	1.26
5	Virginia	72	1.77
29	Washington	37	1.10
35	West Virginia	9	0.96
44	Wisconsin	20	0.70
30	Wyoming	3	1.09
	U.S. Total	1,800	1.22

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

Nevada

35 females were murdered by males in Nevada in 2010

*The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Nevada was
2.62 per 100,000 in 2010*

Ranked 1st in the United States

Age

For homicides in which the age of the victim was reported (35 homicides), 6 female homicide victims (17 percent) were less than 18 years old and 5 victims (14 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 37 years old.

Race

Out of 35 female homicide victims, 1 was Asian or Pacific Islander, 10 were black, and 24 were white.

Most Common Weapons

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 45 percent of female victims (15 out of 33) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 73 percent (11 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 4 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 1 female killed by a blunt object, and 6 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 (32 out of 35) were murdered by someone they knew. Three female victims were killed by strangers. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 56 percent (18 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 50 percent (9 victims) were killed with guns; 67 percent of these (6 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

Circumstance

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 94 percent (30 out of 32) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 27 percent (8 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

South Carolina

46 females were murdered by males in South Carolina in 2010

The homicide rate among females murdered by males in South Carolina was 1.94 per 100,000 in 2010

Ranked 2nd in the United States

Age

For homicides in which the age of the victim was reported (45 homicides), 5 victims (11 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 41 years old.

Race

Out of 46 female homicide victims, 17 were black, 1 was American Indian or Alaskan Native, and 28 were white.

Most Common Weapons

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 52 percent of female victims (23 out of 44) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 74 percent (17 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 12 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 3 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, 100 percent of female victims (44 out of 44) were murdered by someone they knew. No female victims were killed by a strangers. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 70 percent (31 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 65 percent (20 victims) were killed with guns; 75 percent of these (15 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

Circumstance

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 73 percent (24 out of 33) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 75 percent (18 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

Tennessee

62 females were murdered by males in Tennessee in 2010

*The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Tennessee was
1.91 per 100,000 in 2010*

Ranked 3rd in the United States

Age

For homicides in which the age of the victim was reported (60 homicides), 2 female homicide victims (3 percent) were less than 18 years old and 1 victim (2 percent) was 65 years of age or older. The average age was 40 years old.

Race

Out of 62 female homicide victims, 1 was Asian or Pacific Islander, 16 were black, and 45 were white.

Most Common Weapons

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 51 percent of female victims (27 out of 53) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 74 percent (20 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 6 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 8 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, 98 percent of female victims (53 out of 54) were murdered by someone they knew. One female victim was killed by a stranger. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 62 percent (33 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 58 percent (19 victims) were killed with guns; 74 percent of these (14 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, 74 percent (26 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

Louisiana

43 females were murdered by males in Louisiana in 2010

*The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Louisiana was
1.86 per 100,000 in 2010*

Ranked 4th in the United States

Age

For homicides in which the age of the victim was reported (43 homicides), 2 female homicide victims (5 percent) were less than 18 years old and 7 victims (16 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 41 years old.

Race

Out of 43 female homicide victims, 18 were black, and 25 were white.

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, 68 percent (17 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 8 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, 97 percent of female victims (37 out of 38) were murdered by someone they knew. One female victim was killed by a stranger. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 70 percent (26 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 62 percent (16 victims) were killed with guns; 63 percent of these (10 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

Circumstance

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 89 percent (24 out of 27) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 75 percent (18 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

Virginia

72 females were murdered by males in Virginia in 2010

*The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Virginia was
1.77 per 100,000 in 2010*

Ranked 5th in the United States

Age

For homicides in which the age of the victim was reported (69 homicides), 5 victims (7 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 40 years old.

Race

Out of 71 female homicide victims, 2 were Asian or Pacific Islander, 24 were black, and 45 were white.

Most Common Weapons

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 70 percent of female victims (43 out of 61) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 44 percent (19 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 11 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, 100 percent of female victims (57 out of 57) were murdered by someone they knew. No female victims were killed by strangers. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 81 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; 53 percent of these (16 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

Circumstance

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 88 percent (30 out of 34) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 50 percent (15 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

Texas

222 females were murdered by males in Texas in 2010

*The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Texas was
1.75 per 100,000 in 2010*

Ranked 6th in the United States

Age

For homicides in which the age of the victim was reported (208 homicides), 18 female homicide victims (9 percent) were less than 18 years old and 18 victims (9 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 39 years old.

Race

Out of 222 female homicide victims, 3 were Asian or Pacific Islander, 61 were black, and 158 were white.

Most Common Weapons

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 56 percent of female victims (118 out of 210) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 77 percent (91 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 39 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 10 females killed by a blunt object, and 33 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 (192 out of 215) were murdered by someone they knew. Twenty-three female victims were killed by strangers. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 67 percent (129 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 66 percent (85 victims) were killed with guns; 72 percent of these (61 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

Circumstance

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 91 percent (172 out of 190) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 71 percent (122 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

New Mexico

17 females were murdered by males in New Mexico in 2010

*The homicide rate among females murdered by males in New Mexico was
1.63 per 100,000 in 2010*

Ranked 7th in the United States

Age

For homicides in which the age of the victim was reported (17 homicides), 2 female homicide victims (12 percent) were less than 18 years old and 2 victims (12 percent) was 65 years of age or older. The average age was 35 years old.

Race

Out of 16 female homicide victims, 1 was American Indian or Alaskan Native, and 15 were white.

Most Common Weapons

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 56 percent of female victims (9 out of 16) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 56 percent (5 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 3 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, 88 percent of female victims (14 out of 16) were murdered by someone they knew. Two female victims were killed by strangers. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 57 percent (8 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 50 percent (4 victims) were killed with guns; 50 percent of these (2 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

Circumstance

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 82 percent (14 out of 17) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 36 percent (5 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

Hawaii

11 females were murdered by males in Hawaii in 2010

*The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Hawaii was
1.62 per 100,000 in 2010*

Ranked 8th (tie) in the United States

Age

For homicides in which the age of the victim was reported (11 homicides), 2 female homicide victims (18 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 48 years old.

Race

Out of 11 female homicide victims, 1 was Asian or Pacific Islander, 1 was black, and 9 were white.

Most Common Weapons

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 22 percent of female victims (2 out of 9) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 100 percent (2 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 3 females killed with a knife or other cutting instrument, 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, 82 percent of female victims (9 out of 11) were murdered by someone they knew. Two female victims were killed by strangers. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 78 percent (7 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 29 percent (2 victims) were killed with guns; 100 percent of these (2 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

Circumstance

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 91 percent (10 out of 11) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 20 percent (2 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

Arizona

52 females were murdered by males in Arizona in 2010

*The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Arizona was
1.62 per 100,000 in 2010*

Ranked 8th (tie) in the United States

Age

For homicides in which the age of the victim was reported (48 homicides), 4 female homicide victims (8 percent) were less than 18 years old and 4 victims (8 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 42 years old.

Race

Out of 50 female homicide victims, 3 were Asian or Pacific Islander, 1 was American Indian or Alaskan Native, 2 were black, and 44 were white.

Most Common Weapons

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 60 percent of female victims (27 out of 45) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 78 percent (21 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 9 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, 94 percent of female victims (45 out of 48) were murdered by someone they knew. Three female victims were killed by strangers. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 60 percent (27 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 63 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, 97 percent (28 out of 29) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 64 percent (18 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

Georgia

80 females were murdered by males in Georgia in 2010

*The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Georgia was
1.61 per 100,000 in 2010*

Ranked 10th in the United States

Age

For homicides in which the age of the victim was reported (79 homicides), 8 female homicide victims (10 percent) were less than 18 years old and 7 victims (9 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 40 years old.

Race

Out of 80 female homicide victims, 2 were Asian or Pacific Islander, 40 were black, and 38 were white.

Most Common Weapons

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 61 percent of female victims (43 out of 71) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 77 percent (33 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 13 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, and 6 females killed by a blunt object.

Victim/Offender Relationship

For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 97 percent of female victims (68 out of 70) were murdered by someone they knew. Two female victims were killed by strangers. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 68 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; 77 percent of these (23 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

Circumstance

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 72 percent (57 out of 79) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 42 percent (24 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

United States

1,800 females were murdered by males in the United States in 2010

The homicide rate among females murdered by males in the United States was 1.22 per 100,000 in 2010

Age

For homicides in which the age of the victim was reported (1,725 homicides), there were 128 female homicide victims (7 percent) who were less than 18 years old and 164 victims (10 percent) who were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 40 years old.

Race

Out of 1,781 female homicide victims where race was identified, 46 were Asian or Pacific Islander, 499 were black, 18 were American Indian or Alaskan Native, and 1,218 were white.

Most Common Weapons

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 52 percent of female victims (849 out of 1,622) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 70 percent (597 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 325 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 112 females killed by a blunt object, and 199 females killed by bodily force.

Victim/Offender Relationship

For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 94 percent of female victims (1,571 out of 1,669) were murdered by someone they knew. There were 98 female victims killed by strangers. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 65 percent (1,017 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 56 percent (574 victims) were killed with guns; 71 percent of these (405 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

Circumstance

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 88 percent (1,257 out of 1,433) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 60 percent (760 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 2010 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

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.

