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Violence Policy Center

When Men Murder Women

An Analysis of 2016 Homicide Data

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

INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

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

1 See for example, Shannan Catalano, Ph.D., et al., “Female Victims of Violence,” Bureau of Justice Statistics, September 2009.

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

3 Leonard J. Paulozzi et al., “Surveillance for Homicide Among Intimate Partners—United States, 1981-1998,” *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR) Surveillance Summaries* 50 (October 12, 2001): 1-16.

4 Deborah Azrael and David Hemenway, “‘In the Safety of Your Own Home’: Results from a National Survey on Gun Use at Home,” *Social Science & Medicine* 50 (2000): 285-291.

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

6 Garen Wintemute et al., “Increased Risk of Intimate Partner Homicide Among California Women Who Purchased Handguns,” *Annals of Emergency Medicine* 41, no. 2 (2003): 282.

7 Douglas Wiebe, “Homicide and Suicide Risks Associated with Firearms in the Home: A National Case-Control Study,” *Annals of Emergency Medicine* 41, no. 6 (2003): 775.

8 K.M. Grassel et al., “Association Between Handgun Purchase and Mortality from Firearm Injury,” *Injury Prevention* 9 (2003): 50.

9 In 2016, justifiable homicides involving women killing men occurred in: Arkansas (1); Arizona (1); California (5); Colorado (1); Georgia (5); Indiana (3); Kansas (1); Kentucky (2); Louisiana (1); Michigan (2); Missouri (1); New Jersey (2); Oklahoma (1); Oregon (2); South Carolina (4); Tennessee (3); Texas (6); Virginia (2); Washington (1); and, Wisconsin (1). In 2016, justifiable homicides involving women killing men with a firearm occurred in: Arkansas (1);

they are all too often used to inflict harm on the very people they were intended to protect.

According to the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports, in 2016 there were only 327 justifiable homicides committed by private citizens. Of these, only 45 involved women killing men. Of those, only 29 involved firearms, with 22 of the 29 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 2016, the most recent final data available, are suicide (22,938), homicide (14,415), or fatal unintentional injury (495).

When Men Murder Women is an annual report prepared by the Violence Policy Center detailing the reality of homicides committed by males against females in single victim/single offender incidents. The study analyzes the most recent Supplementary Homicide Report (SHR) data submitted to the Federal Bureau of Investigation.¹⁰ The information used for this report is for the year 2016. Once again, this is the most recent data available. This is the first analysis of the 2016 data on female homicide victims to offer breakdowns of cases in the 10 states with the highest female victim/male offender homicide rates, and the first to rank the states by these rates.

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

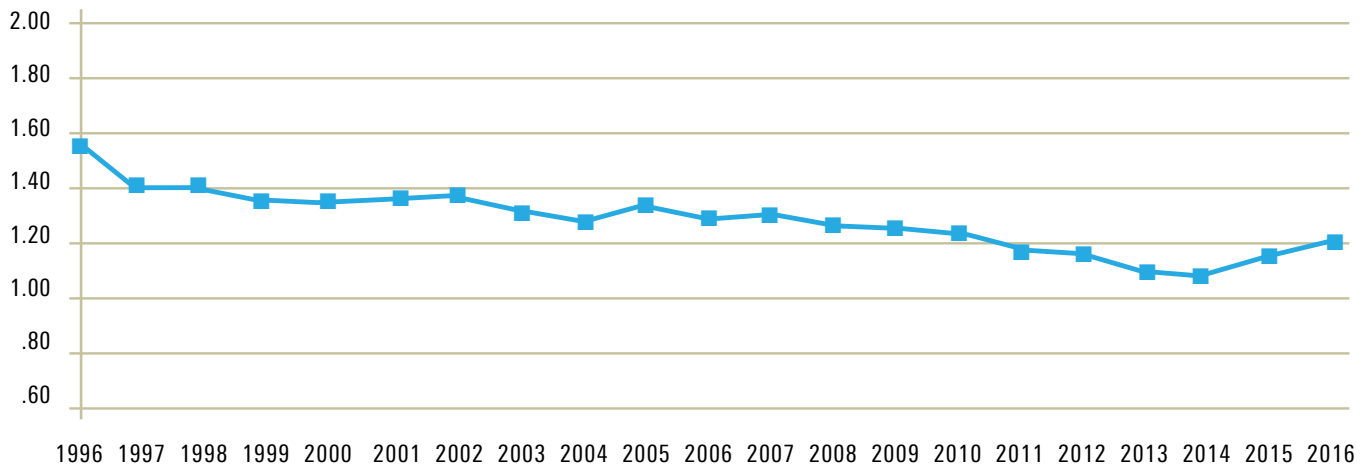
This is the 21st edition of *When Men Murder Women*. From 1996 to 2016, the rate of women murdered by men in single victim/single offender incidents dropped from 1.57 per 100,000 women in 1996 to 1.20 per 100,000 women in 2016, a decrease of 24 percent (see graph on the following page). Since reaching its low of 1.08 in 2014, the rate has increased in each of the last two years, with 2016's rate of 1.20 up 11 percent since 2014.

The data presented over the years in *When Men Murder Women* coincides with the passage and implementation of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)—which will be 24 years old this year and will expire on September 30, 2018 if Congress does not act to renew it—as well as the passage of restrictions on firearms possession by persons with misdemeanor convictions for domestic violence or those who are subject to certain protective orders for domestic violence. Since the passage of these laws, domestic violence has increasingly been treated as the serious problem that it is. States have also reformed their laws to better protect victims of domestic abuse and remove firearms from persons with histories of domestic violence.

California (1); Colorado (1); Georgia (3); Indiana (2); Kansas (1); Kentucky (1); Louisiana (1); Michigan (2); New Jersey (2); Oregon (2); South Carolina (3); Tennessee (2); Texas (4); Virginia (2); and, Washington (1). Of these, handguns were used in: Arkansas (1); California (1); Georgia (3); Indiana (1); Kansas (1); Kentucky (1); Louisiana (1); Michigan (1); New Jersey (2); Oregon (2); South Carolina (3); Texas (3); Virginia (1); and, Washington (1).

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 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.

Rate of Women Murdered by Men in Single Victim/Single Offender Incidents 1996 - 2016



In 2016, there were 1,809 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 of this study, expanded upon in the following sections, dispel many of the myths regarding the nature of lethal violence against females.

- For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 93 percent of female victims (1,537 out of 1,651) were murdered by a male they knew.
- Thirteen times as many females were murdered by a male they knew (1,537 victims) than were killed by male strangers (114 victims).
- For victims who knew their offenders, 63 percent (962) of female homicide victims were wives or intimate acquaintances of their killers.¹²
- There were 292 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 (1,615), more female homicides were committed with firearms (56 percent) than with any other weapon. Knives and other cutting instruments accounted for 19 percent of all female murders, bodily force 11 percent, and murder by blunt object seven percent. Of the homicides committed with firearms, 66 percent were committed with handguns.
- In 82 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.

11 In 2016, as in years past, the state of Florida did not submit any data to the FBI Supplementary Homicide Report. Also in 2016, data from Alabama was not available from the FBI. Data from Florida and Alabama was not requested individually because the difference in collection techniques would create a bias in the study results.

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

SECTION ONE: NATIONAL DATA

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

STATE RANKINGS

In 2016, the homicide rate among female victims murdered by males in single victim/single offender incidents nationally was 1.20 per 100,000. For that year, Alaska ranked first as the state with the highest homicide rate among female victims killed by male offenders in single victim/single offender incidents. Its rate of 3.40 per 100,000 was nearly three times the national average. Alaska was followed by Louisiana (2.42 per 100,000) and Nevada (1.98 per 100,000). The remaining states with the 10 highest rates, all of which had female homicide victimization rates higher than the national average, can be found in the chart below. For ranking information for all states that submitted data to the FBI, please see Appendix One.

Ranking	State	Number of Female Homicide Victims	Homicide Rate per 100,000 Females
1	Alaska	12	3.40
2	Louisiana	58	2.42
3	Nevada	29	1.98
4	Arkansas	30	1.97
5	Tennessee	65	1.91
6	South Carolina	48	1.88
7	Missouri	57	1.84
8	Delaware	9	1.83
9	Kentucky	38	1.69
10	Maryland	49	1.58

AGE AND RACE OF FEMALE HOMICIDE VICTIMS

In 2016, for single female victim/single male offender homicides where the age of the victim was reported (1,765 homicides), seven percent of the victims were younger than 18 years old (124 victims) and 10 percent were 65 years of age or older (174 victims). The average age of female homicide victims was 40 years old. Homicides in which race was identified (1,786 victims) included: 26 American Indian or Alaskan Native females; 55 Asian or Pacific Islander females; 517 black females; and, 1,188 white females. Eighty-five percent (1,520 out of 1,786) of the homicides where the race of the female victim and male offender were known were intra-racial.¹³ Overall, black females were murdered by males at a rate (2.62 per 100,000) more than twice as high as white females (1.03 per 100,000). American Indian and Alaskan Native females (1.34 per 100,000) were murdered by male offenders at a higher rate than white females, while Asian and Pacific Islander females

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

were the least likely (0.57 per 100,000) females of any race to be murdered by a male offender. Nationally, the female homicide victimization rate was 1.20 per 100,000. Unfortunately, Hispanic ethnicity could not be determined on a national level because of the inadequacy of reporting and data collection.

VICTIM TO OFFENDER RELATIONSHIP

The relationship of victim to offender differs significantly between male and female victims of homicide. Compared to a man, a woman is far more likely to be killed by her spouse, an intimate acquaintance, or a family member than by a stranger. For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 93 percent of female victims (1,537 out of 1,651) were murdered by someone they knew. Thirteen times as many females were murdered by a male they knew (1,537 victims) than were killed by male strangers (114 victims) in single victim/single offender incidents in 2016.¹⁴ Of victims who knew their offenders, 63 percent (962 out of 1,537) 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 were the weapon most commonly used by males to murder females in 2016. For homicides in which the weapon could be identified, 56 percent of female victims (897 out of 1,615) were killed with a gun. Of the females killed with a firearm, 62 percent were murdered by male intimates. The number of females shot and killed by their husband or intimate acquaintance (552 victims) was nearly five times higher than the total number murdered by male strangers using all weapons combined (114 victims) in single victim/single offender incidents in 2016. In homicides where males used firearms to kill females, handguns were clearly the weapon of choice over rifles and shotguns. In 2016, 66 percent of female firearm homicide victims (592 out of 897) were killed with handguns.

FEMALE HOMICIDE VICTIMS AND CIRCUMSTANCE

The overwhelming majority of homicides of females by male offenders in single victim/single offender incidents in 2016 were not related to any other felony crime. Most often, females were killed by males in the course of an argument—most frequently with a firearm. In 2016 there were 1,389 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, 82 percent (1,142 out of 1,389) were not related to the commission of any other felony.

Of the homicides not related to the commission of another felony, 64 percent (727 out of 1,142) involved arguments between the female victim and male offender. Fifty-two percent (377 out of 727) of the homicides stemming from an argument were committed with guns. In 2016 there were 292 women shot and killed by their husbands or intimate acquaintances in single victim/single offender incidents during the course of an argument.

14 These are homicides in which the relationship between the victim and the offender could be identified. According to the FBI's 2016 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 1,651 of 1,809 incidents (91 percent). In 158 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.

SECTION TWO: BLACK FEMALES

The disproportionate burden of fatal and nonfatal violence borne by black females has almost always been overshadowed by the toll violence has taken on black males. Research published in July 2017 by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found, “Homicides occur in women of all ages and among all races/ethnicities, but young, racial/ethnic minority women are disproportionately affected.” The article concluded, “The racial/ethnic differences in female homicide underscore the importance of targeting prevention and intervention efforts to populations at disproportionately high risk. Addressing violence will require an integrated response that considers the influence of larger community and societal factors that make violence more likely to occur.”¹⁵

In 2016, black females were murdered by males at a rate more than twice as high as white females: 2.62 per 100,000 versus 1.03 per 100,000.

AGE OF BLACK FEMALE HOMICIDE VICTIMS

In 2016, for single female victim/single male offender homicides where the age of the victim was reported (506 homicides), 10 percent of black female victims were less than 18 years old (52 victims) and three percent were 65 years of age or older (17 victims). The average age of black female homicide victims was 34 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, 91 percent of black females killed by males in single victim/single offender incidents knew their killers (397 out of 434). More than 10 times as many black females were murdered by a male they knew (397 victims) than were killed by male strangers (37 victims) in single victim/single offender incidents in 2016. Of black victims who knew their offenders, 58 percent (232 out of 397) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Ninety-two percent (474 out of 517) of the homicides of black females were intra-racial.

BLACK FEMALE HOMICIDE VICTIMS AND WEAPONS

As with female homicide victims in general, firearms were the weapon most commonly used by males to murder black females in 2016. In the 469 homicides for which the murder weapon could be identified, 62 percent of black female victims (291 victims) were shot and killed with guns. Of these gun homicides, 66 percent involved handguns (193 victims). The number of black females shot and killed by their husband or intimate acquaintance (137 victims) was nearly four times as high as the total number murdered by male strangers using all weapons combined (37 victims) in single victim/single offender incidents in 2016.

BLACK FEMALE HOMICIDE VICTIMS AND CIRCUMSTANCE

The overwhelming majority of homicides of black females by male offenders in single victim/single offender incidents in 2016 were not related to any other felony crime. Most often, black females were killed by males in the course of an argument—most commonly with a firearm. In 2016, for the 373 homicides in which the

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

circumstances between the black female victim and male offender could be identified, 84 percent (314 out of 373) were not related to the commission of any other felony.

Two-thirds of non-felony related homicides (206 out of 314) involved arguments between the black female victim and male offender. Fifty-nine percent (121 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 1994.¹⁶

In 1996, the late Senator Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ) sponsored a provision prohibiting individuals with misdemeanor domestic violence convictions from purchasing or possessing firearms (those with felony domestic violence convictions are already precluded from firearms possession under a general provision prohibiting firearms possession by felons).¹⁷

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, 2018, these two domestic violence prohibited categories accounted for 13 percent of rejected federal 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 Law background checks. Moreover, the U.S. Department of Justice has identified several common impediments to thorough checks of domestic violence records: incomplete automation; incomplete records; and, the inability to distinguish domestic violence misdemeanors from other misdemeanors. Moreover, to enhance enforcement of these life-saving measures it is important for states to adopt laws that mirror the federal laws and ensure that guns are surrendered by, or removed from the possession of, abusers.

Bills have been introduced in Congress to improve the federal laws that protect victims of domestic violence. In July 2018, Representative Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX) introduced legislation to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) which will expire on September 30, 2018 if Congress does not act to renew it. The bill contains a number of provisions to expand domestic violence firearms prohibitors and to improve enforcement of existing federal, state, and local laws intended to keep guns out of the hands of abusers. Senator Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) has introduced the "Protecting Domestic Violence and Stalking Victims Act of 2017" to prohibit persons convicted of misdemeanor crimes of stalking from possessing firearms and expand the victims protected to include dating partners. In the U.S. House, Representative Debbie Dingell (D-MI) has introduced a similar bill, the "Zero Tolerance for Domestic Abusers Act." These bills are important steps forward in preventing domestic homicide.

¹⁶ 18 USC § 922 (g)(8).

¹⁷ 18 USC § 922 (g)(9).

¹⁸ *Federal Denials, Reasons Why the NICS Section Denies, November 30, 1998–July 31, 2018*, https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/federal_denials.pdf/view.

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.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

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."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, 2016**

State Ranking by Rate	State	Number of Homicide Victims	Homicide Rate per 100,000 Females
NA	Alabama	NA	NA
1	Alaska	12	3.40
27	Arizona	43	1.24
4	Arkansas	30	1.97
33	California	184	0.93
17 (tie)	Colorado	38	1.38
41	Connecticut	14	0.76
8	Delaware	9	1.83
NA	Florida	NA	NA
25	Georgia	67	1.27
12 (tie)	Hawaii	11	1.55
12 (tie)	Idaho	13	1.55
35 (tie)	Illinois	59	0.90
29	Indiana	38	1.13
37 (tie)	Iowa	13	0.83
31	Kansas	16	1.10
9	Kentucky	38	1.69
2	Louisiana	58	2.42
46 (tie)	Maine	4	0.59
10	Maryland	49	1.58
48	Massachusetts	16	0.46
26	Michigan	63	1.25
37 (tie)	Minnesota	23	0.83
19	Mississippi	21	1.37
7	Missouri	57	1.84
12 (tie)	Montana	8	1.55
44 (tie)	Nebraska	6	0.63
3	Nevada	29	1.98
46 (tie)	New Hampshire	4	0.59
32	New Jersey	44	0.96
22 (tie)	New Mexico	14	1.33
40	New York	83	0.81
17 (tie)	North Carolina	72	1.38
20	North Dakota	5	1.36

State Ranking by Rate	State	Number of Homicide Victims	Homicide Rate per 100,000 Females
24	Ohio	77	1.30
11	Oklahoma	31	1.57
42	Oregon	15	0.73
35 (tie)	Pennsylvania	59	0.90
34	Rhode Island	5	0.92
6	South Carolina	48	1.88
28	South Dakota	5	1.17
5	Tennessee	65	1.91
15	Texas	208	1.48
30	Utah	17	1.12
44 (tie)	Vermont	2	0.63
22 (tie)	Virginia	57	1.33
39	Washington	30	0.82
43	West Virginia	6	0.65
21	Wisconsin	39	1.34
16	Wyoming	4	1.40
	U.S. Total	1,809	1.20

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

ALASKA

12 females were murdered by males in Alaska in 2016

The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Alaska was 3.40 per 100,000 in 2016

Ranked 1st in the United States

AGE

For homicides in which the age of the victim was reported (12 homicides), the average age was 38 years old.

RACE

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

MOST COMMON WEAPONS

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 60 percent of female victims (6 out of 10) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 17 percent (1 victim) were killed with handguns. There was 1 female killed with a knife or other cutting instrument and 1 female killed by a blunt object.

VICTIM/OFFENDER RELATIONSHIP

For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 92 percent of female victims (11 out of 12) were murdered by someone they knew. One victim was killed by a stranger. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 55 percent (6 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 17 percent (1 victim) were killed with guns.

CIRCUMSTANCE

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 70 percent (7 out of 10) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 29 percent (2 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

LOUISIANA

58 females were murdered by males in Louisiana in 2016

The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Louisiana was 2.42 per 100,000 in 2016

Ranked 2nd in the United States

AGE

For homicides in which the age of the victim was reported (58 homicides), 4 female homicide victims (7 percent) were less than 18 years old and 2 victims (3 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 34 years old.

RACE

Out of 58 female homicide victims, 34 were black, 23 were white, and 1 was of unknown race.

MOST COMMON WEAPONS

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 69 percent of female victims (35 out of 51) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 69 percent (24 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 4 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, 98 percent of female victims (49 out of 50) were murdered by someone they knew. One female victim was killed by a stranger. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 76 percent (37 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 62 percent (23 victims) were killed with guns; 74 percent of these (17 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

CIRCUMSTANCE

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 74 percent (37 out of 50) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 62 percent (23 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

NEVADA

29 females were murdered by males in Nevada in 2016

The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Nevada was 1.98 per 100,000 in 2016

Ranked 3rd in the United States

AGE

For homicides in which the age of the victim was reported (29 homicides), 2 victims (7 percent) were less than 18 years old and 5 victims (17 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 41 years old.

RACE

Out of 29 female homicide victims, 20 were white, 6 were black, 2 were Asian or Pacific Islander, and 1 was American Indian or Alaskan Native.

MOST COMMON WEAPONS

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 58 percent of female victims (15 out of 26) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 20 percent (3 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 5 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, 100 percent of female victims (27 out of 27) were murdered by someone they knew. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 59 percent (16 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 63 percent (10 victims) were killed with guns; 20 percent of these (2 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

CIRCUMSTANCE

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 100 percent (9 out of 9) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 67 percent (6 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

ARKANSAS

30 females were murdered by males in Arkansas in 2016

The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Arkansas was 1.97 per 100,000 in 2016

Ranked 4th in the United States

AGE

For homicides in which the age of the victim was reported (30 homicides), 1 victim (3 percent) was 65 years of age or older. The average age was 37 years old.

RACE

Out of 30 female homicide victims, 16 were white and 14 were black.

MOST COMMON WEAPONS

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 60 percent of female victims (15 out of 25) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 53 percent (8 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 3 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 1 female killed by a blunt object, and 3 females killed by bodily force.

VICTIM/OFFENDER RELATIONSHIP

For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 100 percent of female victims (21 out of 21) were murdered by someone they knew. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 76 percent (16 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 44 percent (7 victims) were killed with guns; 43 percent of these (3 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

CIRCUMSTANCE

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 96 percent (22 out of 23) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 100 percent (22 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

TENNESSEE

65 females were murdered by males in Tennessee in 2016

The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Tennessee was 1.91 per 100,000 in 2016

Ranked 5th in the United States

AGE

For homicides in which the age of the victim was reported (63 homicides), 5 victims (8 percent) were less than 18 years old and 2 victims (3 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 36 years old.

RACE

Out of 65 female homicide victims, 35 were white and 30 were black.

MOST COMMON WEAPONS

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 52 percent of female victims (28 out of 54) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 54 percent (15 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 14 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 4 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, 95 percent of female victims (57 out of 60) were murdered by someone they knew. Three female victims were killed by strangers. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 61 percent (35 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 46 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, 81 percent (34 out of 42) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 74 percent (25 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

SOUTH CAROLINA

48 females were murdered by males in South Carolina in 2016

The homicide rate among females murdered by males in South Carolina was 1.88 per 100,000 in 2016

Ranked 6th in the United States

AGE

For homicides in which the age of the victim was reported (48 homicides), 3 victims (6 percent) were less than 18 years old, and 3 victims (6 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 40 years old.

RACE

Out of 48 female homicide victims, 24 were white, 23 were black, and 1 was of unknown race.

MOST COMMON WEAPONS

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 59 percent of female victims (26 out of 44) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 54 percent (14 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 5 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 4 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, 95 percent of female victims (42 out of 44) were murdered by someone they knew. Two female victims were killed by strangers. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 69 percent (29 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 66 percent (19 victims) were killed with guns; 53 percent of these (10 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

CIRCUMSTANCE

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 88 percent (28 out of 32) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 71 percent (20 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

MISSOURI

57 females were murdered by males in Missouri in 2016

The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Missouri was 1.84 per 100,000 in 2016

Ranked 7th in the United States

AGE

For homicides in which the age of the victim was reported (56 homicides), 4 victims (7 percent) were less than 18 years old and 6 victims (11 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 38 years old.

RACE

Out of 57 female homicide victims, 39 were white, 17 were black, and 1 was Asian or Pacific Islander.

MOST COMMON WEAPONS

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 72 percent of female victims (36 out of 50) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 64 percent (23 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 6 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 2 females killed by a blunt object, and 3 females killed by bodily force.

VICTIM/OFFENDER RELATIONSHIP

For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 88 percent of female victims (42 out of 48) were murdered by someone they knew. Six female victims were killed by strangers. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 62 percent (26 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 69 percent (18 victims) were killed with guns; 67 percent of these (12 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

CIRCUMSTANCE

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 76 percent (34 out of 45) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 85 percent (29 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

DELAWARE

9 females were murdered by males in Delaware in 2016

The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Delaware was 1.83 per 100,000 in 2016

Ranked 8th in the United States

AGE

For homicides in which the age of the victim was reported (9 homicides), the average age was 34 years old.

RACE

Out of 9 female homicide victims, 7 were black, and 2 were white.

MOST COMMON WEAPONS

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 44 percent of female victims (4 out of 9) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 50 percent (2 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 4 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, and 1 female killed by a blunt object.

VICTIM/OFFENDER RELATIONSHIP

For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 100 percent of female victims (9 out of 9) were murdered by someone they knew. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 44 percent (4 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 25 percent (1 victim) were killed with guns; 100 percent of these (1 victim) were shot and killed with handguns.

CIRCUMSTANCE

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 100 percent (1 out of 1) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 100 percent (1 homicide) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

KENTUCKY

38 females were murdered by males in Kentucky in 2016

The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Kentucky was 1.69 per 100,000 in 2016

Ranked 9th in the United States

AGE

For homicides in which the age of the victim was reported (38 homicides), 3 victims (8 percent) were less than 18 years old and 6 victims (16 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 38 years old.

RACE

Out of 38 female homicide victims, 25 were white, 11 were black, and 2 were Asian or Pacific Islander.

MOST COMMON WEAPONS

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 54 percent of female victims (19 out of 35) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 84 percent (16 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 4 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 5 females killed by a blunt object, and 7 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 (35 out of 35) were murdered by someone they knew. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 49 percent (17 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 65 percent (11 victims) were killed with guns; 91 percent of these (10 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

CIRCUMSTANCE

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 81 percent (22 out of 27) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 68 percent (15 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

MARYLAND

49 females were murdered by males in Maryland in 2016

The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Maryland was 1.58 per 100,000 in 2016

Ranked 10th in the United States

AGE

For homicides in which the age of the victim was reported (45 homicides), 3 victims (7 percent) were less than 18 years old and 6 victims (13 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 42 years old.

RACE

Out of 49 female homicide victims, 24 were white, 23 were black, and 2 were Asian or Pacific Islander.

MOST COMMON WEAPONS

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 41 percent of female victims (18 out of 44) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 78 percent (14 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 12 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 5 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, 91 percent of female victims (39 out of 43) were murdered by someone they knew. Four female victims were killed by strangers. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 64 percent (25 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 52 percent (13 victims) were killed with guns; 85 percent of these (11 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

CIRCUMSTANCE

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 74 percent (25 out of 34) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 40 percent (10 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

UNITED STATES

1,809 females were murdered by males in the United States in 2016

The homicide rate among females murdered by males in the United States was 1.20 per 100,000 in 2016

AGE

For homicides in which the age of the victim was reported (1,765 homicides), there were 124 female homicide victims (7 percent) who were less than 18 years old and 174 victims (10 percent) who were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 40 years old.

RACE

Out of 1,809 female homicide victims, 1,188 were white, 517 were black, 55 were Asian or Pacific Islander, 26 were American Indian or Alaskan Native, and 23 were of unknown race.

MOST COMMON WEAPONS

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 56 percent of female victims (897 out of 1,615) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 66 percent (592 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 308 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 108 females killed by a blunt object, and 181 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 (1,537 out of 1,651) were murdered by someone they knew. There were 114 female victims killed by strangers. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 63 percent (962 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 57 percent (552 victims) were killed with guns; 67 percent of these (371 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

CIRCUMSTANCE

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 82 percent (1,142 out of 1,389) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 64 percent (727 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 2016 from the U.S. Census Bureau.

RANKING

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

AGE

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

RACE

This section identifies the race of female victims.

MOST COMMON WEAPONS

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

VICTIM/OFFENDER RELATIONSHIP

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

CIRCUMSTANCE

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



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