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# **When Men Murder Women: An Analysis of 1998 Homicide Data**

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

**October 2000**

**The Violence Policy Center** is a national non-profit educational organization that conducts research and public education on firearms violence and provides information and analysis to policymakers, journalists, grassroots advocates, and the general public. The Center examines the role of firearms in America, analyzes trends and patterns in firearms violence, and works to develop policies to reduce gun-related death and injury.

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## INTRODUCTION: Myth vs. Reality

### *The Myth: The Stranger Lurking in the Alley*

Homicides against women are surrounded by an aura of mythology and sensationalism. These supposedly typical scenarios are familiar to us all: a woman is depicted alone and vulnerable, perhaps walking on a dark street or at home asleep. Her attacker, according to this archetype, is a depraved stranger who will rape, rob, and eventually kill her.

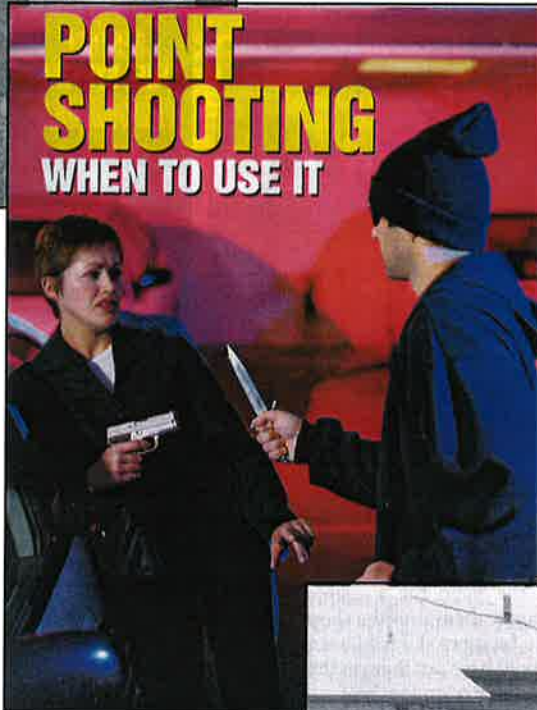
The gun industry is particularly enthusiastic in promulgating these images and stoking their attendant fears. After all, the firearms business has a unique stake in reinforcing women's feelings of insecurity: fear sells guns. The gun lobby focuses on the threat of attack by a stranger to promote handguns as self-defense weapons for women. As a result, images of a woman armed with a handgun fending off an attacker abound in gun publications. (For examples, please see page two.)

These images aim to persuade women that buying a gun will protect them from murderous strangers. Yet firearms—whether in the hands of men or women—are rarely used to kill criminals.<sup>1</sup> While stranger attack occurs all too often, it is in fact the most unlikely homicide scenario a woman can expect to face.

Efforts by the gun lobby to equate female homicide with stranger attack not only obscure the reality of violence against women, but also promote the notion that safety is a purely personal obligation. In this view, rejecting this perceived obligation is tantamount to inviting victimization. As a result of such thinking, women who are attacked are often blamed for the violence committed against them.

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<sup>1</sup> According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Supplementary Homicide Report, in 1998 there were only 165 justifiable homicides (the justified killing of a felon during the commission of a felony) committed by private citizens using firearms. Of these, only 145 involved handguns. While firearms are at times used by private citizens to kill criminals or to stop crimes, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that the most common scenarios of gun use in America are suicide (17,424 in 1998), homicide (12,102 in 1998), or fatal unintentional injury (866 in 1998). The April 1994 Justice Department study *Guns and Crime* revealed that from 1987 to 1992, the annual average of all victims of violence who claimed to have used a firearm of any type (handgun, shotgun, or rifle) to defend themselves was only about one percent (62,200 instances). Another 20,300 claimed to have used a firearm to defend their property during a theft, household burglary, or motor vehicle theft. Also, it is not known whether the gun was successfully used to stop the particular crime. In comparison, *Guns and Crime* reported that offenders armed with handguns alone committed a record 930,700 violent crimes in 1992.



## ***The Reality: The Husband or Boyfriend with a Gun***

*When Men Murder Women* is an annual report prepared by the Violence Policy Center detailing the reality of murders committed against women. The study analyzes the most recent Supplementary Homicide Report data submitted to the Federal Bureau of Investigation.<sup>2</sup> The information used for this report is for the year 1998. Once again, it is the most recent data available. This is the first analysis of the 1998 data on female homicide victims to offer breakdowns of cases in the 15 states with the highest female victim/male offender homicide rates, and the first to rank the states by the rate of these 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 used by the gun lobby to promote gun ownership among women.

In 1998, there were 1,932 females murdered by males in single victim/single offender incidents that were submitted to the FBI for its Supplementary Homicide Report.<sup>3</sup> These highlights from the report, expanded upon in the following sections, dispel many of the myths propounded by the gun lobby:

- o More than 12 times as many females were murdered by a male they knew (1,699 victims) than were killed by male strangers (138 victims).
- o Sixty percent (1,016) of female homicide victims were wives or intimate acquaintances<sup>4</sup> of their killers.
- o There were 410 women shot and killed by either their husband or intimate acquaintance during the course of an argument—more than one

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<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> In 1998 the states of Florida, Kansas, and Wisconsin did not submit any data to the FBI Supplementary Homicide Report. In addition, data from these states was not requested individually because the difference in collection techniques would cause a bias in the study results.

<sup>4</sup> Intimate acquaintance is defined as a wife, common-law wife, ex-wife, or girlfriend.

woman a day.

- o More female homicides were committed with firearms (54 percent) than with all other weapons combined. Of the homicides committed with firearms, 77 percent were committed with handguns.
- o In 87 percent of all incidents where circumstance could be determined, homicides were *not* related to the commission of any other felony, such as rape or robbery.

The study also, for the first time, analyzes available information on the murders of black and Hispanic females. Not surprisingly, these homicides mirror the trends for women overall: most homicides against women are not committed by strangers, but by men known to the victims.

## SECTION ONE: National Data

*When Men Murder Women* offers both national and state-by-state statistics from FBI Supplementary Homicide Report data including charts listing the number and rate of female homicides by state and a chart ranking each state by rate. For the top 15 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 15 states can be found in Appendix Two.

### ***State Rankings***

In 1998 the homicide rate among female victims murdered by males in single victim/single offender incidents in the United States was 1.40 per 100,000. For that year, South Carolina ranked first as the state with the highest homicide rate among female victims by male offenders in single victim/single offender incidents. Its rate of 3.12 per 100,000 was more than twice the national average. South Carolina was followed by Louisiana (2.69 per 100,000) and Arkansas (2.67 per 100,000). The remaining states that make up the top 15 can be found in Chart One on the following page. For a ranking of all states that submitted data to the FBI, please see Appendix One.

### ***Age and Race of Female Homicide Victims***

In single female victim/single male offender homicides reported for 1998, 10 percent of the victims were less than 18 years old (184 victims) and nine percent were 65 years of age or older (161 victims). The average age of female homicide victims was 36 years old. Female homicides in which race was identified (1,914 victims) included: 1,204 white females, 659 black females, 30 Asian or Pacific Islanders, and 21 American Indian or Alaskan natives. Ninety-one percent (1,718 out of 1,894) of the homicides where the race of the female victim and male offender were known were intra-racial.<sup>5</sup> Overall, black women (3.64 per 100,000) were murdered at a rate more than three times higher than white women (1.06 per 100,000). Unfortunately,

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<sup>5</sup> Intra-racial homicides are homicides where the victim and the offender are of the same race.

Hispanic ethnicity could not be determined on a national level because of the inadequacy of data collection and reporting. Of the 47 states reporting, only five states met the criteria of having at least one Hispanic female homicide victim and having at least 70 percent of female victims coded as Hispanic or non-Hispanic ethnicity.<sup>6</sup> Information regarding the five states is offered in Section Three.

**Chart One: Number of Females Murdered by Males in Single Victim/Single Offender Homicides and Rates by State in 1998, Ranked by**

Ranking	State	Number of Homicides	Homicide Rate per 100,000
1	South Carolina	62	3.12
2	Louisiana	61	2.69
3	Arkansas	35	2.67
4	North Carolina	100	2.57
5	Wyoming	6	2.51
6	Maine	15	2.35
7	Oklahoma	37	2.16
8	Nevada	18	2.10
9	Alabama	47	2.08
10	Colorado	41	2.05
11	Mississippi	29	2.02
12	Texas	199	1.99
13	Virginia	69	1.99
14	Indiana	60	1.98
15	Georgia	76	1.94
Rates have been rounded to two decimal places. In the case of a tie, the rate has been carried out to a third decimal place. Thus, Texas is ranked 12 <sup>th</sup> with a rate of 1.987 and Virginia is ranked 13 <sup>th</sup> with a rate of 1.986.			

<sup>6</sup> Those places where the ethnicity was left blank or labeled as unknown did not count toward the minimum of 70 percent of Hispanic ethnicity being determined.

### ***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. More than 12 times as many females were murdered by a male they knew (1,699 victims) than were killed by male strangers (138 victims) in single victim/single offender incidents in 1998.<sup>7</sup> Of victims who knew their offenders, 60 percent (1,016 out of 1,699) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders.

### ***Female Homicide Victims and Weapons***

Firearms—especially handguns—were the most common weapons used by males to murder females in 1998. For homicides in which the weapon could be identified, 54 percent of female victims (978 out of 1,825) were shot and killed with guns—more than 60 percent by male intimates. The number of females shot and killed by their husband or intimate acquaintance (611 victims) was more than four times higher than the total number murdered by male strangers using all weapons combined (138 victims) in single victim/single offender incidents in 1998. In homicides where males used firearms to kill females, handguns were clearly the weapon of choice over rifles and shotguns. In 1998, 77 percent of female firearm homicide victims (751 out of 978) were killed with handguns.

### ***Female Homicide Victims and Circumstance***

The overwhelming majority of homicides among females by male offenders in single victim/single offender incidents in 1998 were not related to any other felony crime. Most often, females were killed by males in the course of an argument—usually with a firearm. In 1998 there were 1,645 incidents in which the circumstance of the homicide between the female victim and male offender in single victim/single offender

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<sup>7</sup> These are homicides in which the relationship between the victim and the offender could be identified. According to the FBI's 1998 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 1,837 of 1,932 incidents. In 95 homicides the relationship of victim to offender was "unknown," meaning the reporting police officer was unable to determine at the scene if the victim and offender knew each other or were strangers. According to the July 1992 *Journal of Trauma* study "Men, Women, and Murder: Gender-Specific Differences in Rates of Fatal Violence and Victimization," local law enforcement agencies generally submit case reports early in the course of their investigation, sometimes before the identity of the offender is known. Although one might assume that most initially unsolved homicides would eventually be determined to have been committed by a stranger, follow-up data from one large metropolitan police jurisdiction (Los Angeles) suggest that a substantial number involve an acquaintance or relative of the victim.

incidents could be identified. Of these, 87 percent (1,429 out of 1,645) were not related to the commission of any other felony.

Of the non-felony homicides, 69 percent (987 out of 1,429) involved arguments between the female victim and male offender and 55 percent (545 out of 987) of those homicides involved guns. According to the Supplementary Homicide Report data, in 1998 there were 410 women shot and killed by their husbands or intimate acquaintances in single victim/single offender incidents during the course of an argument—more than one such murder every day of the year.

## **SECTION TWO: Black Women**

The disproportionate burden of fatal and nonfatal violence borne by black women has almost always been overshadowed by the toll violence has taken on black men. Black women were murdered at a rate more than three times higher than white women (3.64 per 100,000 versus 1.06 per 100,000).

### ***Age of Black Female Homicide Victims***

In single female victim/single male offender homicides reported for 1998, 10 percent of the black victims were less than 18 years old (63 victims) and only three percent were 65 years of age or older (22 victims). The average age of black female homicide victims was 32 years old.

### ***Victim to Offender Relationship***

Compared to a man, a black woman is far more likely to be killed by her spouse, an intimate acquaintance, or a family member than by a stranger. More than 18 times as many black females were murdered by a male they knew (582 victims) than were killed by male strangers (32 victims) in single victim/single offender incidents in 1998. Of black victims who knew their offenders, 54 percent (317 out of 582) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders.

### ***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 1998. In the 631 homicides for which the murder weapon could be identified, 58 percent of black female victims (365 victims) were shot and killed with guns. And when these women were killed with a gun, it was almost always a handgun (302 victims or 83 percent). The number of black females shot and killed by their husband or intimate acquaintance (198 victims) was more than six times higher than the total number murdered by male strangers using all weapons combined (32 victims) in single victim/single offender incidents in 1998.

### ***Black Female Homicide Victims and Circumstance***

The overwhelming majority of homicides among black females by male offenders in single victim/single offender incidents in 1998 were not related to any other felony crime. Most often, black females were killed by males in the course of an argument—usually with a firearm. In 1998 for the 560 homicides in which the circumstance between the black female victim and male offender could be identified, 89 percent (499 out of 560) were not related to the commission of any other felony.

Three quarters of non-felony homicides (375 out of 499) involved arguments between the black female victim and male offender. Sixty percent (225 victims) were shot and killed with guns during those arguments.

Among those homicides of black females where the race of the offender was known (653 incidents), almost all of the homicides (96 percent) involved an offender of the same race.

### SECTION THREE: Hispanic Women—Five-State Analysis

Few national or regional studies have compared the murder of Hispanic women to black women and/or white women. This omission is partly because there is no comprehensive database that adequately identifies women of Hispanic ethnicity and the circumstances of their murders. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has information about the numbers of murders broken out by Hispanic ethnicity, while the Federal Bureau of Investigation has information about the circumstances of murders, but has severely limited information regarding ethnicity. There is no way to link the two databases, nor any other database that contains both types of information.

Only five states—Arizona, California, Nebraska, Oregon, and Texas—reported Hispanic ethnicity information that could be broken down for comparison with other races/ethnicities. These five states provide a snapshot of the characteristics of Hispanic female homicides and how these homicides fit into the larger female homicide picture.

Comparing the three races/ethnicities of white, black, and Hispanic females, white females had the lowest homicide rate, Hispanic females had a slightly higher rate than whites, and black females had a homicide rate nearly three times that of whites in the five states that were analyzed.

The finding that Hispanic females are killed at rates slightly above white females, but below black females, is consistent with the *national* female homicide rate (including women murdered by other women, women murdered by more than one person, etc.). The overall female homicide rate for Hispanic females is 2.89 per 100,000, with the white and black female homicide rates at 2.09 and 8.84 per 100,000, respectively.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Data from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control—WISQARS.

<b>Chart Two: Comparison of Female Homicide Rates in Five States*</b>		
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	<b>Number of Victims</b>	<b>Rate per 100,000</b>
White	249	1.40
Hispanic	131	1.54
Black	93	3.84

\*Homicide rates are for women murdered by men in single victim/single offender incidents.

### ***Age of Hispanic Female Homicide Victims—Five-State Analysis***

In single female victim/single male offender homicides reported for 1998, 13 percent (17 victims) of the Hispanic victims were less than 18 years old and only one percent (one victim) were 65 years of age or older. The average age of Hispanic female homicide victims was 28 years old, far younger than the average age of non-Hispanic white women (42 years old) or black women (31 years old) in the five states analyzed.

### ***Victim to Offender Relationship—Five-State Analysis***

Compared to a man, a Hispanic woman is far more likely to be killed by her spouse, an intimate acquaintance, or a family member than by a stranger. Seven times as many Hispanic females were murdered by a male they knew (111 victims) than were killed by male strangers (16 victims) in single victim/single offender incidents in 1998. Of Hispanic victims who knew their offenders, 69 percent (77 out of 111) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Of the homicides where the race/ethnicity of the offender was known, 84 percent (109 out of 130) involved an offender of the same race/ethnicity.

### ***Hispanic Female Homicide Victims and Weapons—Five-State Analysis***

Firearms—especially handguns—were the most common weapons used by men to murder Hispanic females in 1998. In homicides in which the murder weapon could be identified, 58 percent (72 out of 125) of all female Hispanic homicide victims in the five states were shot and killed with guns. And when these women were killed with

a gun, it was almost always a handgun (63 victims or 88 percent). In fact, in the five states, 88 percent of Hispanic women were killed with a handgun in firearm murders, compared to 78 percent of non-Hispanic white women and 73 percent of black women. The number of Hispanic females shot and killed by their husband or intimate acquaintance (45 victims) was nearly three times higher than the total number murdered by male strangers using all weapons combined (16 victims) in single victim/single offender incidents in 1998.

### ***Hispanic Female Homicide Victims and Circumstance—Five-State Analysis***

The overwhelming majority of homicides among Hispanic females by male offenders in single victim/single offender incidents in 1998 were not related to any other felony crime. Most often, females were killed by males in the course of an argument—usually with a firearm. In 1998 for homicides in which the circumstance between the Hispanic female victim and male offender could be identified, 89 percent (110 out of 124) were not related to the commission of any other felony.

Of the homicides not involving a felony, 73 percent (80 out of 110) involved arguments between the Hispanic female victim and male offender. Fifty-one percent (41 victims) were shot and killed with guns during those arguments.

## **CONCLUSION: Guns and Domestic Violence—A Deadly Mix**

The best efforts of the firearms industry and its supporters to portray gun ownership as a guarantor of personal safety cannot conceal the deadly reality. A 1997 *Archives of Internal Medicine* study that examined the risk factors of violent death for women in the home in three United States counties found that when there were one or more guns in the home, the risk of homicide increased more than three times.<sup>9</sup> The increased risk of homicide associated with firearms was attributable to homicides at the hands of a spouse, intimate acquaintance, or close relative.

Often 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.<sup>10</sup>

The picture that emerges from *When Men Murder Women* is strikingly different from the fear-mongering fictions promoted by the gun lobby and its industry partners. The data suggest that women do not face the greatest threat of murder from knife-wielding strangers intent on rape or robbery, but 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.

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<sup>9</sup> 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.

<sup>10</sup> Linda E. Salzman et al., "Weapon Involvement and Injury Outcomes in Family and Intimate Assaults," *JAMA* 267, no. 22 (1992): 3043-3047.

**Appendix One: Number of Females Murdered by Males in Single Victim/Single Offender Homicides and Rates by State, 1998**

<b>State Ranking by Rate</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>Number of Homicide Victims</b>	<b>Homicide Rate per 100,000</b>
9	Alabama	47	2.08
43	Alaska	2	0.69
16	Arizona	44	1.86
3	Arkansas	35	2.67
25	California	223	1.36
10	Colorado	41	2.05
24	Connecticut	23	1.36
28	Delaware	5	1.31
NA	Florida	NA	NA
15	Georgia	76	1.94
41	Hawaii	5	0.84
37	Idaho	6	0.97
35	Illinois	67	1.09
14	Indiana	60	1.98
33	Iowa	16	1.09
NA	Kansas	NA	NA
34	Kentucky	22	1.09
2	Louisiana	61	2.69
6	Maine	15	2.35
22	Maryland	38	1.44
46	Massachusetts	15	0.47
21	Michigan	80	1.59
44	Minnesota	13	0.54
11	Mississippi	29	2.02

<b>State Ranking by Rate</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>Number of Homicide Victims</b>	<b>Homicide Rate per 100,000</b>
17	Missouri	49	1.75
40	Montana	4	0.90
39	Nebraska	8	0.94
8	Nevada	18	2.10
36	New Hampshire	6	1.00
26	New Jersey	57	1.36
27	New Mexico	12	1.36
38	New York	90	0.95
4	North Carolina	100	2.57
47	North Dakota	1	0.31
32	Ohio	64	1.10
7	Oklahoma	37	2.16
29	Oregon	21	1.26
23	Pennsylvania	88	1.41
42	Rhode Island	4	0.78
1	South Carolina	62	3.12
45	South Dakota	2	0.53
19	Tennessee	46	1.64
12	Texas	199	1.99
30	Utah	13	1.23
18	Vermont	5	1.66
13	Virginia	69	1.99
31	Washington	33	1.15
20	West Virginia	15	1.60
NA	Wisconsin	NA	NA
5	Wyoming	6	2.51
	<b>U.S. Total</b>	<b>1,932</b>	<b>1.40</b>

## Appendix Two: Additional Information on the 15 States with the Highest Rates of Female Homicide

### South Carolina

*62 females were murdered by males in South Carolina in 1998*

*The homicide rate among females murdered by males in South Carolina was 3.12 per 100,000 in 1998*

*•Ranked 1<sup>st</sup> in the United States•*

#### Age

Five female homicide victims (8 percent) were less than 18 years old, and 4 victims (6 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 36 years old.

#### Race

Out of 62 female murder victims, 27 were black and 35 were white.

#### Most Common Weapons

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 63 percent of female victims (38 out of 60) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 79 percent (30 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 5 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 4 females killed by a blunt object, and 11 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 (59 out of 61) were murdered by someone they knew. Two female victims were killed by strangers. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 69 percent (41 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the 41 female intimates murdered, 85 percent (35 victims) were killed with guns; 77 percent of these (27 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

#### Circumstance

For homicides in which the circumstance could be identified, 80 percent (47 out of 59) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 91 percent (43 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and offender.

## **Louisiana**

*61 females were murdered by males in Louisiana in 1998*

*The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Louisiana was  
2.69 per 100,000 in 1998*

*•Ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> in the United States•*

### **Age**

Seven female homicide victims (12 percent) were less than 18 years old, and 3 victims (5 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 34 years old.

### **Race**

Out of 61 female murder victims, 29 were black and 32 were white.

### **Most Common Weapons**

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 56 percent of female victims (33 out of 59) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 79 percent (26 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 10 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 6 females 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, 96 percent of female victims (52 out of 54) were murdered by someone they knew. Two female victims were killed by strangers. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 67 percent (35 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the 35 female intimates murdered, 63 percent (22 victims) were killed with guns; 82 percent of these (18 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

### **Circumstance**

For homicides in which the circumstance could be identified, 86 percent (37 out of 43) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 68 percent (25 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and offender.

## **Arkansas**

*35 females were murdered by males in Arkansas in 1998*

*The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Arkansas was  
2.67 per 100,000 in 1998*

*•Ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> in the United States•*

### **Age**

There were no female homicide victims less than 18 years old, but 3 victims (9 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 41 years old.

### **Race**

Out of 35 female murder victims, 21 were black and 14 were white.

### **Most Common Weapons**

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 59 percent of female victims (19 out of 32) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 74 percent (14 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 6 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 3 females killed by a blunt object, and 3 females killed by bodily force.

### **Victim/Offender Relationship**

For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 97 percent of female victims (34 out of 35) were murdered by someone they knew. One female victim was killed by a stranger. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 68 percent (23 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the 23 female intimates murdered, 52 percent (12 victims) were killed with guns; 67 percent of these (8 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

### **Circumstance**

For homicides in which the circumstance could be identified, 90 percent (28 out of 31) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 82 percent (23 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and offender.

## **North Carolina**

*100 females were murdered by males in North Carolina in 1998*

*The homicide rate among females murdered by males in North Carolina was  
2.57 per 100,000 in 1998*

*•Ranked 4<sup>th</sup> in the United States•*

### **Age**

Eight female homicide victims (8 percent) were less than 18 years old, and 7 victims (7 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 37 years old.

### **Race**

Out of 100 female murder victims, 4 were American Indian, 51 were black, and 45 were white.

### **Most Common Weapons**

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 67 percent of female victims (60 out of 67) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 75 percent (45 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 14 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 3 females killed by a blunt object, and 11 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 (89 out of 98) were murdered by someone they knew. Nine female victims were killed by strangers. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 64 percent (57 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the 57 female intimates murdered, 70 percent (40 victims) were killed with guns; 73 percent of these (29 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

### **Circumstance**

For homicides in which the circumstance could be identified, 88 percent (74 out of 84) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 50 percent (37 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and offender.

## Wyoming

*Six females were murdered by males in Wyoming in 1998*

*The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Wyoming was  
2.51 per 100,000 in 1998*

*•Ranked 5<sup>th</sup> in the United States•*

### Age

One female homicide victim (20 percent) was less than 18 years old. There were no victims 65 years of age or older. The average age was 36 years old.

### Race

All 6 female murder victims were white.

### Most Common Weapons

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 50 percent of female victims (3 out of 6) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 67 percent (2 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 3 females killed by bodily force.

### Victim/Offender Relationship

For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, all of the female victims (6 out of 6) were murdered by someone they knew. None of the female victims were killed by strangers. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 33 percent (2 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the 2 female intimates murdered, both were killed with guns. One victim was shot and killed with a handgun.

### Circumstance

For homicides in which the circumstance could be identified, 67 percent (4 out of 6) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 50 percent (2 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and offender.

## **Maine**

*15 females were murdered by males in Maine in 1998*

*The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Maine was  
2.35 per 100,000 in 1998*

*•Ranked 6<sup>th</sup> in the United States•*

### **Age**

Two female homicide victims (14 percent) were less than 18 years old, and 2 victims (14 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 40 years old.

### **Race**

All 15 female murder victims were white.

### **Most Common Weapons**

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 20 percent of female victims (3 out of 15) were shot and killed with guns. All of these gun victims were killed with handguns. There was 1 female killed with a knife or other cutting instrument, 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, 93 percent of female victims (14 out of 15) were murdered by someone they knew. One female victim was killed by a stranger. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 50 percent (7 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the 7 female intimates murdered, 43 percent (3 victims) were killed with guns; all of them (3 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

### **Circumstance**

For homicides in which the circumstance could be identified, 93 percent (13 out of 14) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 85 percent (11 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and offender.

## Oklahoma

*37 females were murdered by males in Oklahoma in 1998*

*The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Oklahoma was  
2.16 per 100,000 in 1998*

*•Ranked 7<sup>th</sup> in the United States•*

### Age

Seven female homicide victims (19 percent) were less than 18 years old, and 2 victims (6 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 34 years old.

### Race

Out of 37 female murder victims, 2 were American Indian, 2 were Asian, 5 were black, and 28 were white.

### Most Common Weapons

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 53 percent of female victims (18 out of 34) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 89 percent (16 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 2 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 3 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, 86 percent of female victims (32 out of 37) were murdered by someone they knew. Five female victims were killed by strangers. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 72 percent (23 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the 23 female intimates murdered, 52 percent (12 victims) were killed with guns; 83 percent of these (10 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

### Circumstance

For homicides in which the circumstance could be identified, 86 percent (30 out of 35) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 53 percent (16 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and offender.

## **Nevada**

*18 females were murdered by males in Nevada in 1998*

*The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Nevada was  
2.10 per 100,000 in 1998*

*•Ranked 8<sup>th</sup> in the United States•*

### **Age**

One female homicide victim (6 percent) was less than 18 years old, and 3 victims (19 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 42 years old.

### **Race**

Out of 18 female murder victims, 1 was Asian, 5 were black, 11 were white, and 1 victim's race was unknown.

### **Most Common Weapons**

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 65 percent of female victims (11 out of 17) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 91 percent (10 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 2 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments and 2 females killed by a blunt object.

### **Victim/Offender Relationship**

For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, all of the female victims (17 out of 17) were murdered by someone they knew. None of the female victims were killed by strangers. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 47 percent (8 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the 8 female intimates murdered, 63 percent (5 victims) were killed with guns; 80 percent of these (4 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

### **Circumstance**

For the 12 homicides in which the circumstance could be identified, none were related to the commission of any other felony. Overall, 42 percent (5 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and offender.

## **Alabama**

*47 females were murdered by males in Alabama in 1998*

*The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Alabama was  
2.08 per 100,000 in 1998*

*•Ranked 9<sup>th</sup> in the United States•*

### **Age**

None of the female homicide victims were less than 18 years old, while 5 victims (11 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 39 years old.

### **Race**

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

### **Most Common Weapons**

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 78 percent of female victims (32 out of 41) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 81 percent (26 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 4 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments and 5 females killed by bodily force.

### **Victim/Offender Relationship**

For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 92 percent of female victims (35 out of 38) were murdered by someone they knew. Three female victims were killed by strangers. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 74 percent (26 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the 26 female intimates murdered, 81 percent (21 victims) were killed with guns; 76 percent of these (16 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

### **Circumstance**

For homicides in which the circumstance could be identified, 87 percent (26 out of 30) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 73 percent (19 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and offender.

## Colorado

*41 females were murdered by males in Colorado in 1998*

*The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Colorado was  
2.05 per 100,000 in 1998*

*•Ranked 10<sup>th</sup> in the United States•*

### Age

Six female homicide victims (15 percent) were less than 18 years old, and 2 victims (5 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 35 years old.

### Race

Out of 41 female murder victims, 1 was American Indian, 4 were black, and 36 were white.

### Most Common Weapons

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 42 percent of female victims (16 out of 38) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 81 percent (13 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 11 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 2 females killed by a blunt object, and 9 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 (38 out of 40) were murdered by someone they knew. Two female victims were killed by strangers. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 53 percent (20 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the 20 female intimates murdered, 65 percent (13 victims) were killed with guns; 77 percent of these (10 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

### Circumstance

For homicides in which the circumstance could be identified, 86 percent (31 out of 36) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 58 percent (18 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and offender.

## **Mississippi**

*29 females were murdered by males in Mississippi in 1998*

*The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Mississippi was  
2.02 per 100,000 in 1998*

*•Ranked 11<sup>th</sup> in the United States•*

### **Age**

Two female homicide victims (7 percent) were less than 18 years old. There were no victims 65 years of age or older. The average age was 31 years old.

### **Race**

Out of 29 female murder victims, 24 were black and 5 were white.

### **Most Common Weapons**

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 62 percent of female victims (16 out of 26) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 75 percent (12 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 7 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 1 female 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, 93 percent of female victims (26 out of 28) were murdered by someone they knew. Two female victims were killed by strangers. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 50 percent (13 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the 13 female intimates murdered, 85 percent (11 victims) were killed with guns; 82 percent of these (9 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

### **Circumstance**

For homicides in which the circumstance could be identified, 92 percent (22 out of 24) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 91 percent (20 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and offender.

## **Texas**

*199 females were murdered by males in Texas in 1998*

*The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Texas was  
1.99 per 100,000 in 1998*

*•Ranked 12<sup>th</sup> in the United States•*

### **Age**

Twenty-one female homicide victims (11 percent) were less than 18 years old, and 14 victims (7 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 34 years old.

### **Race**

Out of 199 female murder victims, 3 were American Indian, 1 was Asian, 54 were black, and 141 were white.

### **Most Common Weapons**

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 57 percent of female victims (108 out of 190) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 73 percent (79 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 31 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 17 females killed by a blunt object, and 28 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 (175 out of 188) were murdered by someone they knew. Thirteen female victims were killed by strangers. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 63 percent (110 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the 110 female intimates murdered, 60 percent (66 victims) were killed with guns; 71 percent of these (47 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

### **Circumstance**

For homicides in which the circumstance could be identified, 87 percent (156 out of 179) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 79 percent (124 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and offender.

## **Virginia**

*69 females were murdered by males in Virginia in 1998*

*The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Virginia was  
1.99 per 100,000 in 1998*

*•Ranked 13<sup>th</sup> in the United States•*

### **Age**

Two female homicide victims (3 percent) were less than 18 years old, and 6 victims (9 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 39 years old.

### **Race**

Out of 69 female murder victims, 1 was Asian, 31 were black, and 37 were white.

### **Most Common Weapons**

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 56 percent of female victims (37 out of 66) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 57 percent (21 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 10 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 2 females killed by a blunt object, and 15 females killed by bodily force.

### **Victim/Offender Relationship**

For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 98 percent of female victims (64 out of 65) were murdered by someone they knew. One female victim was killed by a stranger. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 66 percent (42 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the 42 female intimates murdered, 62 percent (26 victims) were killed with guns; 50 percent of these (13 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

### **Circumstance**

For homicides in which the circumstance could be identified, 95 percent (57 out of 60) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 70 percent (40 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and offender.

## Indiana

*60 females were murdered by males in Indiana in 1998*

*The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Indiana was  
1.98 per 100,000 in 1998*

*•Ranked 14<sup>th</sup> in the United States•*

### Age

Two female homicide victims (3 percent) were less than 18 years old, and 5 victims (9 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 37 years old.

### Race

Out of 60 female murder victims, 20 were black and 40 were white.

### Most Common Weapons

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 64 percent of female victims (37 out of 58) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 86 percent (32 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 5 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 3 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, 93 percent of female victims (53 out of 57) were murdered by someone they knew. Four female victims were killed by strangers. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 43 percent (23 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the 23 female intimates murdered, 74 percent (17 victims) were killed with guns; 94 percent of these (16 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

### Circumstance

For homicides in which the circumstance could be identified, 85 percent (41 out of 48) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 73 percent (30 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and offender.

## **Georgia**

*76 females were murdered by males in Georgia in 1998*

*The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Georgia was  
1.94 per 100,000 in 1998*

*•Ranked 15<sup>th</sup> in the United States•*

### **Age**

Six female homicide victims (8 percent) were less than 18 years old, and 1 victim (1 percent) was 65 years of age or older. The average age was 33 years old.

### **Race**

Out of 76 female murder victims, 1 was Asian, 47 were black, 25 were white, and 3 victims' race were unknown.

### **Most Common Weapons**

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 53 percent of female victims (37 out of 70) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 76 percent (28 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 17 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 6 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, 97 percent of female victims (72 out of 74) were murdered by someone they knew. Two female victims were killed by strangers. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 56 percent (40 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the 40 female intimates murdered, 50 percent (20 victims) were killed with guns; 85 percent of these (17 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

### **Circumstance**

For homicides in which the circumstance could be identified, 84 percent (58 out of 69) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 78 percent (45 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and offender.

## **United States**

*1,932 females were murdered by males in the United States in 1998*

*The homicide rate among females murdered by males in the United States was 1.40 per 100,000 in 1998*

### **Age**

There were 184 female homicide victims (10 percent) who were less than 18 years old, and 161 victims (8 percent) was 65 years of age or older. The average age was 36 years old.

### **Race**

Out of 1,932 female murder victims, 21 were American Indian, 30 were Asian, 659 were black, 1,204 were white, and 18 victims' race were unknown.

### **Most Common Weapons**

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 54 percent of female homicide victims (978 out of 1,825) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 77 percent (751 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 332 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 145 females killed by a blunt object, and 259 females killed by bodily force.

### **Victim/Offender Relationship**

For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 92 percent of female victims (1,699 out of 1,837) were murdered by someone they knew. There were 138 female victims killed by strangers. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 60 percent (1,016 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the 1,016 female intimates murdered, 60 percent (611 victims) were killed with guns; 76 percent of these (463 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

### **Circumstance**

For homicides in which the circumstance could be identified, 87 percent (1,429 out of 1,645) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 69 percent (987 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and 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 1998 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. Hispanic ethnicity data is not available on a national scale, but a limited five-state analysis is presented in the study.

### **Most Common Weapons**

This section records the number of females killed by firearms, specifically handguns. It also lists the most common weapons—other than firearms—used by males to kill females.

### **Victim/Offender Relationship**

This section lists the number of females killed by known offenders and the number killed by strangers. This section also enumerates the number of victims identified as wives or intimate acquaintances (common-law wives, ex-wives, and 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 offender.

