



## When Men Murder Women

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# **When Men Murder Women: An Analysis of 2002 Homicide Data**

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

**September 2004**

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

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# Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Section One: National Data.....	5
Section Two: Black Women.....	9
Section Three: Gun Laws Help Prevent Abusers from Obtaining Firearms.....	11
Conclusion.....	13
Appendix One:     Number of Females Murdered by Males in Single Victim/Single Offender Homicides and Rates by State, 2002.....	15
Appendix Two:     Additional Information for the 10 States with the Highest Rates of Female Homicide.....	17
Alaska.....	19
Louisiana.....	20
New Mexico.....	21
Nevada.....	22
Wyoming.....	23
South Carolina.....	24
Tennessee.....	25
Delaware.....	26
North Carolina.....	27
Alabama.....	28
U.S. Summary.....	29
Understanding the Statistics.....	30
Appendix Three:   Additional Information on State Efforts to Help Prevent Domestic Violence Abusers from Obtaining Firearms.....	31

## Introduction

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

Gun use does not need to result in a fatality to involve domestic violence. A 2000 study by Harvard School of Public Health researchers analyzed gun use at home and concluded that "hostile gun displays against family members may be more common than gun use in self-defense, and that hostile gun displays are often acts of domestic violence directed against women."<sup>3</sup>

The Department of Justice has found that women are far more likely to be the victims of violent crimes committed by intimate partners than men, especially when a weapon is involved. Moreover, women are much more likely to be victimized at home than in any other place.<sup>4</sup>

Estimates from the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) indicate that from 1993 to 1998, women were victims of violent crimes by their intimate partners an average of more than 935,000 times a year.<sup>5</sup>

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

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

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> 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.

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

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

among women and is associated with an increase in their risk for intimate partner homicide.”<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup> 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.<sup>8</sup>

While this study does not focus solely on domestic violence homicide or guns, it provides a stark reminder that domestic violence and guns make a deadly combination. Firearms are rarely used to kill criminals or stop crimes.<sup>9</sup> Instead, they are all too often used to inflict harm on the very people they were intended to protect.

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

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<sup>6</sup> 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.

<sup>7</sup> 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.

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

<sup>9</sup> According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s Supplementary Homicide Report, in 2002 there were only 183 justifiable homicides (the justified killing of a felon during the commission of a felony) committed by private citizens using firearms. Of these, only 152 involved handguns. While firearms are at times used by private citizens to kill criminals or to stop crimes, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that the most common scenarios of gun use in America in 2001, the most recent final data available, are suicide (16,869), homicide (11,671), or fatal unintentional injury (802). 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.

<sup>10</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

year 2002. Once again, this is the most recent data available. This is the first analysis of the 2002 data on female homicide victims to offer breakdowns of cases in the 10 states with the highest female victim/male offender homicide rates, and the first to rank the states by the rate of female homicides.

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

In 2002, there were 1,880 females murdered by males in single victim/single offender incidents that were submitted to the FBI for its Supplementary Homicide Report.<sup>11</sup> These key findings from the report, expanded upon in the following sections, dispel many of the myths propounded by the gun lobby regarding the nature of lethal violence against women:

- o More than nine times as many females were murdered by a male they knew (1,587 victims) than were killed by male strangers (168 victims).
- o For victims who knew their offenders, 61 percent (963) of female homicide victims were wives or intimate acquaintances of their killers.<sup>12</sup>
- o There were 287 women shot and killed by either their husband or intimate acquaintance during the course of an argument.
- o Nationwide, more female homicides were committed with firearms (54 percent) than with any other weapon. Knives and other cutting instruments accounted for 19 percent of all female murders, bodily force 15 percent, and murder by blunt object 7 percent. Of the homicides committed with firearms, 73 percent were committed with handguns.
- o In 89 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.

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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>11</sup> In 2002 the state of Florida did not submit any data to the FBI Supplementary Homicide Report. Data from Florida was not requested individually because the difference in collection techniques would cause a bias in the study results.

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

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



## **Section One: National Data**

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

### ***State Rankings***

In 2002, the homicide rate among female victims murdered by males in single victim/single offender incidents in the United States was 1.37 per 100,000. For that year, Alaska 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 4.84 per 100,000 was more than three times the national average. Alaska was followed by Louisiana (2.91 per 100,000) and New Mexico (2.66 per 100,000). The remaining states that make up the top 10 can be found in Chart One on page 6. 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 2002, 10 percent of the victims were less than 18 years old (190 victims) and 9 percent were 65 years of age or older (157 victims). The average age of female homicide victims was 36 years old. Homicides in which race was identified (1,863 victims) included: 15 American Indian or Alaskan Native females, 53 Asian or Pacific Islander females, 636 black females, and 1,159 white females. Eighty-seven percent (1,624 out of 1,863) of the homicides where the race of the female victim and male offender were known were intra-racial.<sup>13</sup> Overall, black women (3.31 per 100,000) were murdered at a rate more than three times higher than white women (0.99 per 100,000). American Indian and Alaskan Native women (1.09 per 100,000) were slightly more likely than white women to be murdered by a male offender, while Asian and Pacific Islander women were the least likely (0.89 per 100,000) women of any race to be murdered by a male offender. Unfortunately, Hispanic ethnicity could not be

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<sup>13</sup> Intra-racial homicides are homicides where the victim and the offender are of the same race.

determined on a national level because of the inadequacy of data collection and reporting. Of the 49 states reporting, only seven states reported having at least one Hispanic female homicide victim. Yet, even most of these states did not code a sufficient number of their female victims' ethnicity as either Hispanic or non-Hispanic to run a valid analysis.

**Chart One: Number of Females Murdered by Males in Single Victim/Single Offender Homicides and Rates by State in 2002, Ranked by Rate**

Ranking	State	Number of Homicides	Homicide Rate per 100,000
1	Alaska	15	4.84
2	Louisiana	67	2.91
3	New Mexico	25	2.66
4	Nevada	27	2.54
5	Wyoming	6	2.42
6	South Carolina	49	2.32
7	Tennessee	67	2.26
8	Delaware	9	2.17
9	North Carolina	88	2.08
10	Alabama	42	1.82

***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. More than 9 times

as many females were murdered by a male they knew (1,587 victims) than were killed by male strangers (168 victims) in single victim/single offender incidents in 2002.<sup>14</sup> Of victims who knew their offenders, 61 percent (963 out of 1,587) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. (Ex-girlfriends cannot be included in the intimate acquaintance analysis because there is not a separate designation for ex-boyfriends or ex-girlfriends in the FBI Supplementary Homicide Report relationship category.)

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

Firearms—especially handguns—were the most common weapons used by males to murder females in 2002. For homicides in which the weapon could be identified, 54 percent of female victims (928 out of 1,733) were shot and killed with a gun. Of the females killed with a firearm, nearly two thirds were murdered by male intimates. The number of females shot and killed by their husband or intimate acquaintance (550 victims) was more than three times higher than the total number murdered by male strangers using all weapons combined (168 victims) in single victim/single offender incidents in 2002. In homicides where males used firearms to kill females, handguns were clearly the weapon of choice over rifles and shotguns. In 2002, 73 percent of female firearm homicide victims (679 out of 928) were killed with handguns.

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

The overwhelming majority of homicides among females by males offenders in single victim/single offender incidents in 2002 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 2002 there were 1,527 incidents in which the circumstances of the homicide between the female victim and male offender in single

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<sup>14</sup> These are homicides in which the relationship between the victim and the offender could be identified. According to the FBI's 2002 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 1,755 of 1,880 incidents. In 125 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.

victim/single offender incidents could be identified. Of these, 89 percent (1,362 out of 1,527) were not related to the commission of any other felony.

Of the non-felony homicides, 56 percent (762 out of 1,362) involved arguments between the female victim and male offender and 51 percent (390 out of 762) of those homicides involved guns. According to the Supplementary Homicide Report data, in 2002 there were 287 women shot and killed by their husbands or intimate acquaintances in single victim/single offender incidents during the course of an argument.

## **Section Two: Black Women**

The disproportionate burden of fatal and non-fatal violence borne by black women has almost always been overshadowed by the toll violence has taken on black men. In 2002, black women were murdered at a rate more than three times higher than white women: 3.31 per 100,000 versus 0.99 per 100,000.

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

In single female victim/single male offender homicides reported for 2002, 12 percent of black female victims were less than 18 years old (71 victims) and four percent were 65 years of age or older (27 victims). The average age of black female homicide victims was 32 years old.

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

Compared to a black man, a black woman is far more likely to be killed by her spouse, an intimate acquaintance, or a family member than by a stranger. More than eight times as many black females were murdered by a male they knew (505 victims) than were killed by male strangers (61 victims) in single victim/single offender incidents in 2002. Of black victims who knew their offenders, 59 percent (296 out of 505) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Ninety-four percent (596 out of 636) of the homicides of black women where the race of the male offender was known were intra-racial.

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

As with female homicide victims in general, firearms—especially handguns—were the most common weapons used by males to murder black females in 2002. In the 583 homicides for which the murder weapon could be identified, 59 percent of black female victims (345 victims) were shot and killed with guns. And when these women were killed with a gun, it was almost always a handgun (275 victims or 80 percent). The number of black females shot and killed by their husband or intimate acquaintance (179 victims) was nearly three times as high as the total number murdered by male strangers using all weapons combined (61 victims) in single victim/single offender incidents in 2002.

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

The overwhelming majority of homicides among black females by male offenders in single victim/single offender incidents in 2002 were not related to any other felony crime. Most often, black females were killed by males—usually with a firearm—in the course of an argument. In 2002 for the 495 homicides in which the circumstances between the black female victim and male offender could be identified, 90 percent (447 out of 495) were not related to the commission of any other felony.

Nearly two thirds of non-felony homicides (272 out of 447) involved arguments between the black female victim and male offender. Fifty-eight percent (159 victims) were shot and killed with guns during those arguments.

### **Section Three: Gun Laws Help Prevent Abusers from Obtaining Firearms**

In the 1990s, two major provisions were added to federal law to help 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.<sup>15</sup> Nineteen states supplement the federal prohibition with a similar state law. (See Table 2 in Appendix Three.)

In 1996, Senator Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ) sponsored a provision prohibiting individuals with misdemeanor domestic violence convictions from purchasing or possessing firearms (those with felony domestic violence convictions were already precluded from firearms possession under a general provision prohibiting firearms possession by felons).<sup>16</sup> Twenty states have comparable state law prohibitions.<sup>17</sup>

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

However, not all states make the records of domestic violence protective orders and misdemeanors available to the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS), the computer system used to conduct the Brady background checks. (See Table 7 in Appendix Three.) Moreover, the U.S. Department of Justice identifies several common impediments to thorough checks of domestic violence records: incomplete automation; incomplete records; and the inability to distinguish domestic violence misdemeanors from other misdemeanors.

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<sup>15</sup> 18 USC § 922 (g)(8).

<sup>16</sup> 18 USC § 922 (g)(9).

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

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

Of the 10 states that had the highest number of incidents of men murdering women, Louisiana accesses neither protective orders nor misdemeanor conviction records. New Mexico does not make available protective order records, and Alabama does not make records of misdemeanor domestic violence convictions available to the system.<sup>19</sup>

With respect to state laws, only one top 10 state, Delaware, has a law on its books prohibiting firearms possession by both categories of domestic abusers. South Carolina law prohibits gun possession by those with misdemeanor convictions and North Carolina law adds a prohibition for those under domestic violence protective orders.

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<sup>19</sup> Depending on the state and type of firearm, either the FBI or the state itself conducts the background check. Some states serve as a Point of Contact (POC) and conduct their own checks. Louisiana, New Mexico, and Alabama all rely on the FBI to conduct NICS checks.



## Conclusion

Many women—those in abusive relationships, those who have left such relationships, those who fear, in general, for their safety—have considered bringing a gun into their home as a measure of protection. Yet, gun ownership contains clear risks that should deeply concern women. A 1997 *Archives of Internal Medicine* study that examined the risk factors of violent death for women in the home in three United States counties found that when there were one or more guns in the home, the risk of homicide increased more than three times.<sup>20</sup> 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.<sup>21</sup>

More recently, a 2002 study from researchers at the Harvard School of Public Health found that although the United States represented only 32 percent of the female population among 25 high-income countries, it accounted for *82 percent of all female firearm homicides*. The study's lead author, Dr. David Hemenway, concluded that "the difference in female homicide victimization rates between the US and these other industrialized nations is very large and is closely tied to levels of gun ownership. The relationship cannot be explained by differences in urbanization or income inequality."<sup>22</sup>

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.

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<sup>20</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>21</sup> Linda E. Salzman et al., "Weapon Involvement and Injury Outcomes in Family and Intimate Assaults," *JAMA* 267, no. 22 (1992): 3043-3047.

<sup>22</sup> 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, 2002**

<b>State Ranking by Rate</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>Number of Homicide Victims</b>	<b>Homicide Rate per 100,000</b>
10	Alabama	42	1.82
1	Alaska	15	4.84
22	Arizona	36	1.32
11	Arkansas	25	1.81
20	California	239	1.36
14	Colorado	38	1.70
44	Connecticut	10	0.56
8	Delaware	9	2.17
	Florida	NA	NA
17	Georgia	70	1.62
23	Hawaii	8	1.29
31 (tie)	Idaho	7	1.04
42	Illinois	43	0.67
25 (tie)	Indiana	38	1.21
40	Iowa	11	0.73
37	Kansas	11	0.80
46	Kentucky	11	0.53
2	Louisiana	67	2.91
39	Maine	5	0.75
18	Maryland	45	1.60
45	Massachusetts	18	0.54
21	Michigan	68	1.33
38	Minnesota	20	0.79
15 (tie)	Mississippi	25	1.69
15 (tie)	Missouri	49	1.69
36	Montana	4	0.88

**Appendix One: Number of Females Murdered by Males in Single  
Victim/Single Offender Homicides and Rates by State, 2002**

<b>State Ranking by Rate</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>Number of Homicide Victims</b>	<b>Homicide Rate per 100,000</b>
43	Nebraska	5	0.57
4	Nevada	27	2.54
48	New Hampshire	2	0.31
31 (tie)	New Jersey	46	1.04
3	New Mexico	25	2.66
25 (tie)	New York	120	1.21
9	North Carolina	88	2.08
34	North Dakota	3	0.95
27	Ohio	68	1.16
13	Oklahoma	31	1.75
41	Oregon	12	0.68
24	Pennsylvania	78	1.23
29 (tie)	Rhode Island	6	1.08
6	South Carolina	49	2.32
49	South Dakota	0	0.00
7	Tennessee	67	2.26
12	Texas	197	1.80
28	Utah	13	1.13
47	Vermont	1	0.32
19	Virginia	53	1.42
29 (tie)	Washington	33	1.08
33	West Virginia	9	0.97
35	Wisconsin	26	0.94
5	Wyoming	6	2.42
	<b>U.S. Total</b>	<b>1,880</b>	<b>1.37</b>

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



## **Alaska**

*15 females were murdered by males in Alaska in 2002*

*The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Alaska was 4.84 per 100,000 in 2002*

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

### **Age**

Three female homicide victims (21 percent) were less than 18 years old and 1 victim (7 percent) was 65 years of age or older. The average age was 33 years old.

### **Race**

Out of 15 female murder victims, 1 was black, 3 were American Indian or Alaskan Native, and 11 were white.

### **Most Common Weapons**

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 47 percent of female victims (7 out of 15) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 86 percent (6 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 2 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 4 females killed by a blunt object, and 2 females killed by bodily force.

### **Victim/Offender Relationship**

For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 100 percent of female victims (15 out of 15) were murdered by someone they knew. No female victims were killed by strangers. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 53 percent (8 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 50 percent (4 victims) were killed with guns; 75 percent of these (3 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

### **Circumstance**

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 93 percent (13 out of 14) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 31 percent (4 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

## **Louisiana**

*67 females were murdered by males in Louisiana in 2002*

*The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Louisiana was 2.91 per 100,000 in 2002*

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

### **Age**

Eight female homicide victims (12 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 67 female murder victims, 2 were Asian or Pacific Islander, 32 were black, and 33 were white.

### **Most Common Weapons**

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 65 percent of female victims (43 out of 66) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 79 percent (34 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 8 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, 92 percent of female victims (58 out of 63) were murdered by someone they knew. Five female victims were killed by strangers. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 59 percent (34 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 74 percent (25 victims) were killed with guns; 80 percent of these (20 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

### **Circumstance**

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 90 percent (44 out of 49) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 57 percent (25 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.



## **New Mexico**

*25 females were murdered by males in New Mexico in 2002*

*The homicide rate among females murdered by males in New Mexico was 2.66 per 100,000 in 2002*

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

### **Age**

Three female homicide victims (12 percent) were less than 18 years old and 2 victims (8 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 37 years old.

### **Race**

All 25 female murder victims were white.

### **Most Common Weapons**

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 44 percent of female victims (11 out of 25) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 82 percent (9 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 5 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, 88 percent of female victims (21 out of 24) were murdered by someone they knew. Three female victims were killed by strangers. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 52 percent (11 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 45 percent (5 victims) were killed with guns; 80 percent of these (4 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

### **Circumstance**

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 79 percent (15 out of 19) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 33 percent (5 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

## **Nevada**

*27 females were murdered by males in Nevada in 2002*

*The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Nevada was 2.54 per 100,000 in 2002*

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

### **Age**

Four female homicide victims (15 percent) were less than 18 years old and 1 victim (4 percent) was 65 years of age or older. The average age was 38 years old.

### **Race**

Out of 27 female murder victims, 5 were Asian or Pacific Islander, 3 were black, and 18 were white.

### **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, 73 percent (11 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 4 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, and 6 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 (27 out of 27) were murdered by someone they knew. No female victims were killed by strangers. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 63 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; 73 percent of these (8 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

### **Circumstance**

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 100 percent (26 out of 26) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 58 percent (15 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

## **Wyoming**

*6 females were murdered by males in Wyoming in 2002*

*The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Wyoming was 2.42 per 100,000 in 2002*

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

### **Age**

Two female murder victims (33 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 51 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 was 1 female killed with knives or other cutting instruments, and 2 females killed by bodily force.

### **Victim/Offender Relationship**

For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 100 percent of female victims (6 out of 6) were murdered by someone they knew. No female victims were killed by strangers. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 67 percent (4 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 75 percent (3 victims) were killed with guns; 67 percent of these (2 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

### **Circumstance**

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 100 percent (6 out of 6) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 50 percent (3 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

## **South Carolina**

*49 females were murdered by males in South Carolina in 2002*

*The homicide rate among females murdered by males in South Carolina was 2.32 per 100,000 in 2002*

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

### **Age**

Three female homicide victims (6 percent) were less than 18 years old and 5 victims (10 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 39 years old.

### **Race**

Out of 49 female murder victims, 1 was Asian or Pacific Islander, 29 were black, and 19 were white.

### **Most Common Weapons**

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 68 percent of female victims (30 out of 44) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 53 percent (16 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 7 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, 93 percent of female victims (41 out of 44) were murdered by someone they knew. Three female victims were killed by strangers. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 71 percent (29 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 76 percent (22 victims) were killed with guns; 59 percent of these (13 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

### **Circumstance**

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 93 percent (40 out of 43) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 75 percent (30 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

## **Tennessee**

*67 females were murdered by males in Tennessee in 2002*

*The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Tennessee was 2.26 per 100,000 in 2002*

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

### **Age**

Six female homicide victims (10 percent) were less than 18 years old and 7 victims (11 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 34 years old.

### **Race**

Out of 67 female murder victims, 33 were black and 34 were white.

### **Most Common Weapons**

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 71 percent of female victims (44 out of 62) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 73 percent (32 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 7 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 2 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, 87 percent of female victims (53 out of 61) were murdered by someone they knew. Eight female victims were killed by strangers. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 66 percent (35 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 69 percent (24 victims) were killed with guns; 71 percent of these (17 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

### **Circumstance**

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 100 percent (45 out of 45) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 58 percent (26 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

## **Delaware**

*9 females were murdered by males in Delaware in 2002*

*The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Delaware was 2.17 per 100,000 in 2002*

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

### **Age**

The average age of female homicide victims was 33 years old.

### **Race**

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

### **Most Common Weapons**

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 78 percent of female victims (7 out of 9) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 43 percent (3 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 2 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments.

### **Victim/Offender Relationship**

For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 88 percent of female victims (7 out of 8) were murdered by someone they knew. One female victim was killed by a stranger. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 100 percent (7 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 86 percent (6 victims) were killed with guns; 33 percent of these (2 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

### **Circumstance**

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 100 percent (4 out of 4) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 75 percent (3 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

## **North Carolina**

*88 females were murdered by males in North Carolina in 2002*

*The homicide rate among females murdered by males in North Carolina was 2.08 per 100,000 in 2002*

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

### **Age**

Eight female homicide victims (9 percent) were less than 18 years old and 5 victims (6 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 34 years old.

### **Race**

Out of 86 female murder victims, 1 was Asian or Pacific Islander, 30 were black, 2 were American Indian or Alaskan Native, and 53 were white.

### **Most Common Weapons**

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 59 percent of female victims (43 out of 73) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 63 percent (27 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 9 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 3 females killed by a blunt object, and 14 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 (71 out of 78) were murdered by someone they knew. Seven female victims were killed by strangers. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 63 percent (45 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 58 percent (26 victims) were killed with guns; 65 percent of these (17 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

### **Circumstance**

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 94 percent (59 out of 63) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 32 percent (19 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

## **Alabama**

*42 females were murdered by males in Alabama in 2002*

*The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Alabama was 1.82 per 100,000 in 2002*

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

### **Age**

Six female homicide victims (15 percent) were less than 18 years old and 4 victims (10 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 35 years old.

### **Race**

Out of 42 female murder victims, 24 were black, and 18 were white.

### **Most Common Weapons**

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 75 percent of female victims (27 out of 36) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 85 percent (23 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 5 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, and 4 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 (27 out of 29) were murdered by someone they knew. Two female victims were killed by strangers. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 56 percent (15 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 53 percent (8 victims) were killed with guns; 75 percent of these (6 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

### **Circumstance**

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 88 percent (14 out of 16) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 100 percent (14 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.



## **United States**

*1,880 females were murdered by males in the United States in 2002*

*The homicide rate among females murdered by males in the United States was 1.37 per 100,000 in 2002*

### **Age**

There were 190 female homicide victims (10 percent) who were less than 18 years old and 157 victims (9 percent) who were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 36 years old.

### **Race**

Out of 1,863 female murder victims, 53 were Asian or Pacific Islander, 636 were black, 15 were American Indian or Alaskan Native, and 1,159 were white.

### **Most Common Weapons**

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 54 percent of female victims (928 out of 1,733) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 73 percent (679 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 325 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 120 females killed by a blunt object, and 260 females killed by bodily force.

### **Victim/Offender Relationship**

For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 90 percent of female victims (1,587 out of 1,755) were murdered by someone they knew. There were 168 female victims killed by strangers. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 61 percent (963 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 57 percent (550 victims) were killed with guns; 73 percent of these (401 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

### **Circumstance**

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 89 percent (1,362 out of 1,527) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 56 percent (762 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 2002 from the U.S. Census Bureau.

### **Ranking**

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

### **Age**

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

### **Race**

This section identifies the race of female victims.

### **Most Common Weapons**

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

### **Victim/Offender Relationship**

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

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



**Table 2. Prohibited persons: statutory basis for denial of firearm sale or possession, June 30, 2002**

Jurisdiction	Felony <sup>a</sup>	Misdemeanor <sup>a</sup>	Fugitive	Mental illness <sup>b</sup>	Restraining order	Drug abuse <sup>c</sup>	Alcohol abuse <sup>c</sup>	Minor (underage)	Juvenile offense	Aliens <sup>d</sup>
Federal	X	X	X	X	X	X	--	X	--	X
Alabama	X	--	--	X	--	X	X	X	--	--
Alaska	X	--	--	--	--	X	X	X	X	--
Arizona	X	--	--	X	--	--	--	X	X	--
Arkansas	X	--	--	X	--	--	--	X	--	--
California	X	X	--	X	X	X	--	X	X	--
Colorado	X	--	--	--	--	--	--	X	X	--
Connecticut	X	X	--	X	X	--	--	X	X	X
Delaware	X	X	--	X	X	X	X	X	X	--
Florida	X	X	--	X	X	X	--	X	X	--
Georgia	X	--	--	X	--	--	--	X	X	--
Hawaii	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Idaho	X	--	--	--	--	--	--	X	--	--
Illinois	X	X	--	X	X	X	--	X	X	X
Indiana	X	--	--	X	--	X	X	X	X	--
Iowa	X	X	--	X	--	X	X	X	--	--
Kansas	X	--	--	--	--	X	--	X	X	--
Kentucky	X	--	--	--	--	--	--	X	X	--
Louisiana	X	--	--	--	--	--	--	X	--	--
Maine	X	--	--	--	X	--	--	X	X	--
Maryland	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	--
Massachusetts	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Michigan	X	--	--	X	X	--	--	X	--	--
Minnesota	X	X	X	X	--	X	--	X	X	X
Mississippi	X	--	--	--	--	X	X	X	--	--
Missouri	X	X	X	X	--	X	X	X	--	X
Montana	X	--	--	--	--	--	--	X	--	--
Nebraska	X	--	X	--	--	--	--	X	--	--
Nevada	X	--	--	--	--	--	--	X	--	--
New Hampshire	X	--	--	--	X	--	--	X	--	--
New Jersey	X	X	--	X	X	X	X	X	X	--
New Mexico	X	--	--	--	--	--	--	X	--	--
New York	X	X	--	X	X	--	--	X	--	--
North Carolina	X	--	X	X	X	X	--	X	--	X
North Dakota	X	X	--	X	--	--	--	X	--	--
Ohio	X	--	X	X	--	X	X	X	X	--
Oklahoma	X	--	--	X	--	X	X	X	X	--
Oregon	X	X	X	X	--	--	--	X	X	--
Pennsylvania	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Rhode Island	X	--	X	X	--	X	X	X	--	X
South Carolina	X	X	X	X	--	X	X	X	--	--
South Dakota	X	--	--	--	--	X	--	X	--	--
Tennessee	X	--	--	--	--	X	X	X	--	--
Texas	X	X	--	--	X	X	X	X	--	--
Utah	X	--	--	X	--	X	--	X	X	X
Vermont	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	X	--	--
Virginia	X	--	--	X	X	X	--	X	X	X
Washington	X	X	--	X	--	X	--	X	X	--
West Virginia	X	X	--	X	X	X	X	X	--	X
Wisconsin	X	--	--	X	X	--	--	X	X	--
Wyoming	X	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
State totals	49	20	12	32	19	29	19	49	26	12

Note: Table does not include State statutes which incorporate Federal prohibitions. Types of firearms covered by statutes vary.  
<sup>a</sup>Generally, felony carries penalty of 1 year in prison or more, misdemeanor less than 1 year; offenses included vary by State.  
<sup>b</sup>Includes persons adjudicated mentally ill, committed to a mental institution, or acquitted by reason of insanity.  
<sup>c</sup>Includes persons convicted of substance-related offenses, addicted to an intoxicating substance, or intoxicated at time of purchase.  
<sup>d</sup>Includes laws that require U.S. citizenship or prohibit some or all aliens.

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

**Table 7. Databases accessed for firearms background checks, June 30, 2002**

Jurisdiction	Criminal histories <sup>a</sup>	Wanted fugitives	Domestic violence		Mental health <sup>b</sup>	Juvenile offenders	Other <sup>c</sup>
			Restraining orders	Misdemeanor convictions			
Federal	X	X	X	X	X	--	X
Alabama	X	X	X	--	--	--	X
Alaska	X	X	X	X	--	--	--
Arizona	X	X	X	X	X	--	X
Arkansas	X	X	X	X	--	--	X
California	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Colorado	X	X	X	X	--	X	X
Connecticut	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Delaware	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Florida	X	X	X	X	--	X	X
Georgia	X	X	--	X	X	--	X
Hawaii	X	--	--	X	X	--	--
Idaho	X	X	X	X	--	--	X
Illinois	X	X	X	X	X	X	--
Indiana	X	--	--	--	--	--	X
Iowa	X	X	X	X	--	X	X
Kansas	X	--	X	X	--	X	X
Kentucky	X	X	X	--	--	--	--
Louisiana	X	X	--	--	--	--	X
Maine	X	X	X	--	--	--	X
Maryland	X	X	X	X	--	--	X
Massachusetts	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Michigan	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Minnesota	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Mississippi	X	--	--	--	--	--	--
Missouri	X	X	X	--	--	--	X
Montana	X	X	X	--	--	--	X
Nebraska	X	X	X	--	X	--	X
Nevada	X	X	X	X	--	--	--
New Hampshire	X	X	X	X	--	--	X
New Jersey	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
New Mexico	X	--	--	X	--	X	--
New York	X	X	X	X	X	--	--
North Carolina	X	X	X	X	--	--	X
North Dakota	X	X	X	--	--	--	X
Ohio	X	X	X	X	--	--	X
Oklahoma	X	--	--	--	--	--	--
Oregon	X	X	X	--	X	X	X
Pennsylvania	X	X	X	--	X	--	X
Rhode Island	X	X	X	X	--	--	X
South Carolina	X	X	X	X	--	X	X
South Dakota	X	X	X	--	--	--	X
Tennessee	X	X	X	X	--	--	X
Texas	X	X	X	X	--	X	X
Utah	X	X	X	X	X	--	X
Vermont	X	X	X	X	--	--	X
Virginia	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Washington	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
West Virginia	X	X	X	X	--	--	--
Wisconsin	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Wyoming	X	X	X	X	--	--	--
State totals	50	44	43	36	19	19	39

X State has a separate database or a statewide system for accessing a particular type of data.

--Data are not available statewide, although some agencies conducting background checks may search local data.

<sup>a</sup>"Criminal histories" contain at least felony arrests and dispositions and may also have data on misdemeanors, restraining orders, or other subjects.

<sup>b</sup>"Mental health" may include persons adjudicated mentally ill or committed to a mental institution.

<sup>c</sup>"Other" includes categories such as probation, parole, and motor vehicle data.

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