

Arizona
Domestic Violence
Fatality Report
2011



With deepest sympathy, the Board of Directors and staff of AzCADV dedicate this report to the surviving loved ones of victims of domestic violence homicide.

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Introduction

The complicated dynamics of domestic violence make it a difficult issue for some to grasp. The relationship may start out normally and may continue that way for some time, but abuse may begin with insults and isolation from family and friends. The violence usually escalates and may be verbal, emotional, physical, sexual, or may contain elements from all of those categories. Recent research shows that abusive male partners may also engage in reproductive coercion. Reproductive coercion is defined as a pattern of behaviors exerting control over a partner's reproductive health; it is perpetrated by an adult or adolescent against an intimate partner. It includes attempts to impregnate her against her wishes, forcing or coercing sex without a condom, sabotaging contraceptive efforts, and using threats or acts of violence to control the outcome of a pregnancy.

These abusive verbal, emotional, sexual, and physical acts are different in the context of an abusive relationship than when used against strangers or even friends. Perpetrators utilize a series of behaviors which create a coercive, controlling atmosphere that leaves victims dependent on them for all of their emotional and often financial needs. These acts, however, are intermingled with acts of love and healthy behaviors, adding to the victim's confusion. The time immediately after a victim leaves an abusive relationship is statistically the most dangerous, as the abuser may attempt to gain his or her power back through increased physical violence.

Since 2005, at least 776 Arizonans have lost their lives in domestic violence related incidents. These tragedies represent a small fraction of those involved in abusive relationships in this state, but they demonstrate a wide ranging potential for lethality in intimate and familial situations.

Methodology

This document examines the fatalities that occurred in Arizona from January 1 – December 31, 2011. Each year, the Arizona Coalition Against Domestic Violence (AzCADV) catalogues domestic violence related fatalities by combing through hundreds of news articles from all over the state containing certain keywords. In 2010, the Coalition transitioned from a physical clipping service to an online service.

The domestic violence statute in Arizona, ARS 13-3601, outlines crimes that can be charged as domestic violence if the perpetrator and victim meet the defined relationship criteria: current or former spouses, people who currently live or previously lived together, people in a current or previous romantic or sexual relationship, people who share a child in common or one is pregnant by the other party, relations by blood or court order, or cases where the victim is a child with a specific relationship to the defendant.

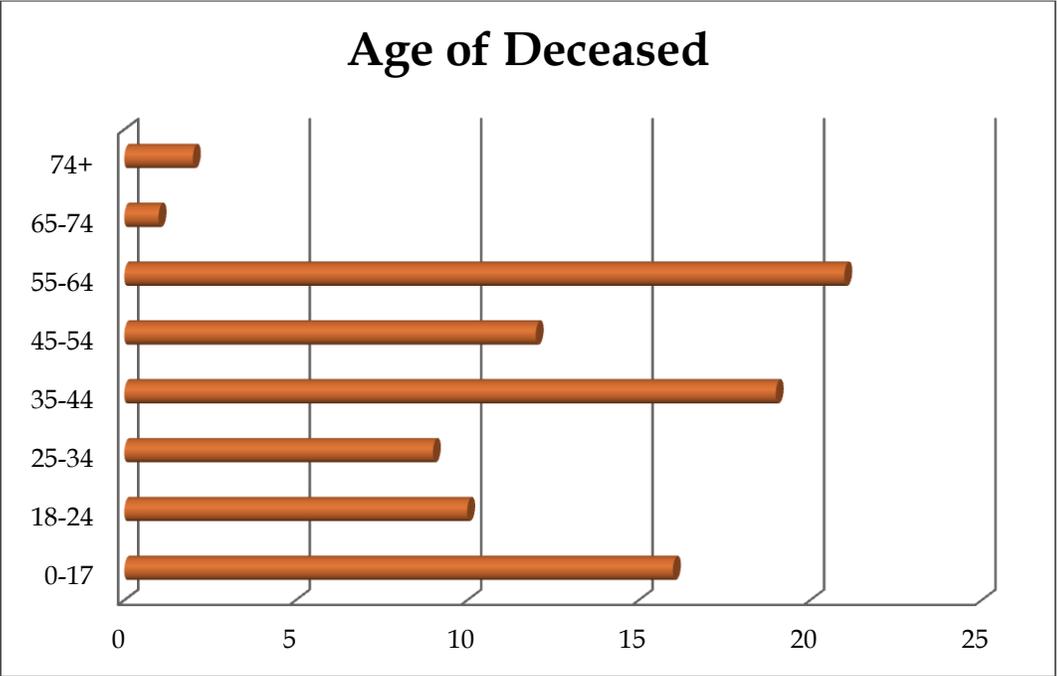
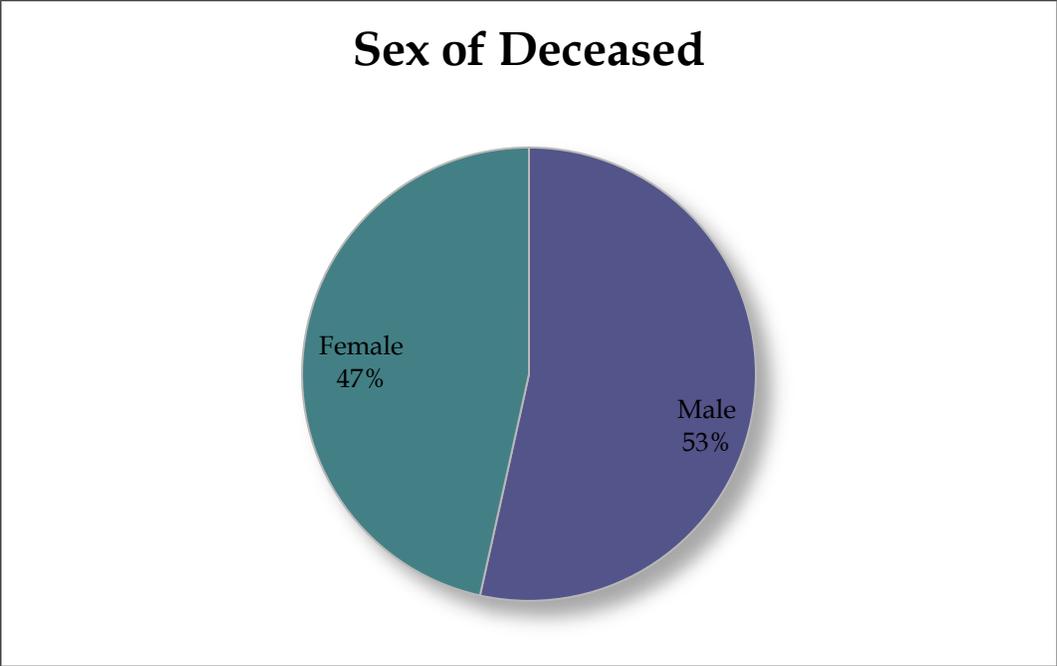
Domestic violence is an attachment crime in Arizona, meaning that certain crimes can be “tagged” as domestic violence. For example, an assault on a stranger will be charged as assault, but an assault by a perpetrator against a person with whom they have a specific relationship can be charged as assault per domestic violence. The list of crimes that can be tagged as domestic violence was expanded in 2010 to include the homicide and manslaughter statutes as well as sexual assault, unlawful imprisonment, animal cruelty, and prevention of the use of a telephone in an emergency.

In order to create a complete picture of the lives lost to domestic violence in Arizona, the deaths are not limited to intimate partner homicides. They include homicides perpetrated by family members as well as suicides related to incidents of domestic violence and perpetrators killed by law enforcement when they respond to a domestic violence call. The methodology creates a reasonably comprehensive list, but AzCADV recognizes that it is inherently incomplete. Some fatalities fail to garner a news article, or information related to underlying domestic violence may not be included. Other deaths may occur in related circumstances but cannot be specifically linked to domestic violence. For instance, approximately 25% of homeless women report that domestic or sexual violence was the immediate cause of their homelessness. Some victims may die from conditions associated with living on the street, which is difficult to trace back to their experiences of domestic violence. Additionally, it is very difficult to document the link between suicide and domestic violence. Some victims may take their own lives to escape the abuse, and the public would rarely know.

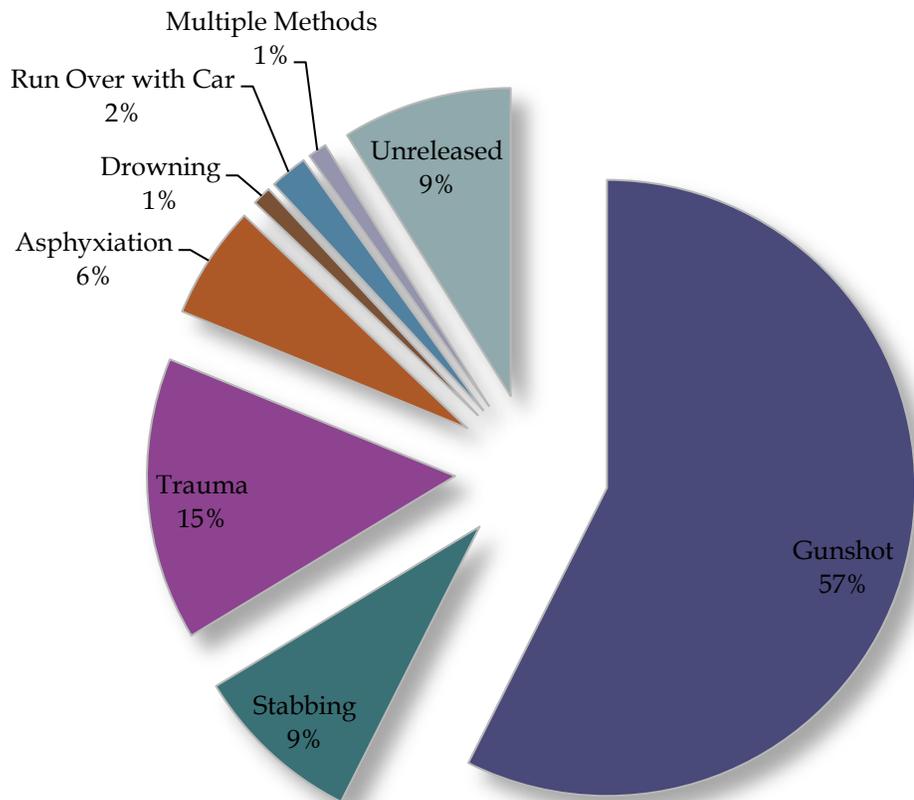
Another complication arising from our methodology is that an entire population may be overlooked by the media. Incidents occurring on tribal lands may not be highlighted by mainstream sources, leaving a broad gap in this report. Domestic violence incidents among Native women are much higher than other demographics, and the lack of cases on tribal lands indicates that another source of data should be found rather than assume a dearth of incidents themselves.

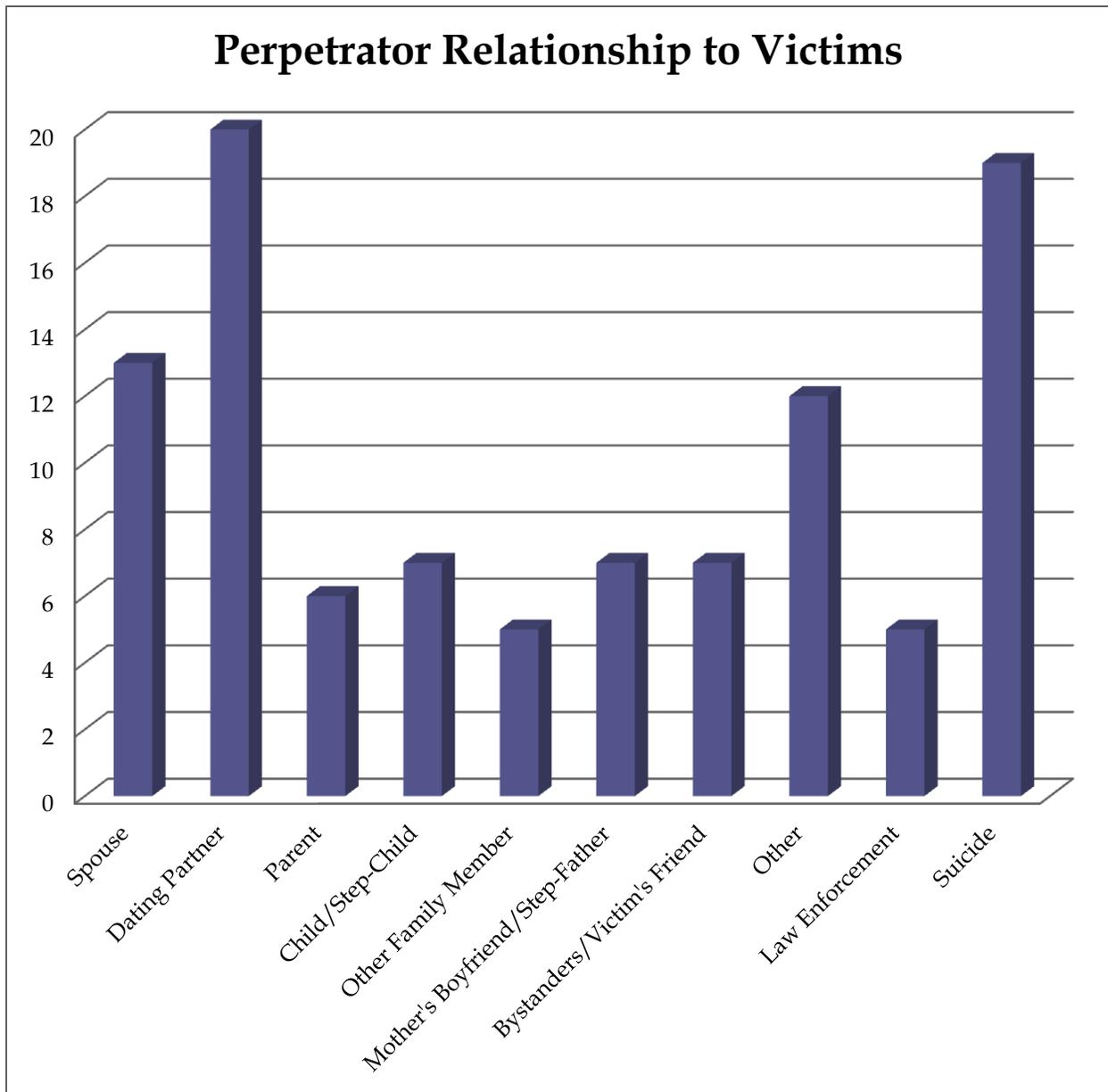
As domestic violence emerged from the confines of people's homes into the public sphere, community understanding and efforts to respond have changed and improved dramatically. Domestic violence programs are the cornerstone of victim safety in Arizona and across the country. The National Network to End Domestic Violence conducts a nationwide census of services delivered by programs. In a single 24 hour period in 2011, programs in Arizona served 1,611 victims, the vast majority of whom found refuge in shelters or transitional housing. Programs provided individual advocacy and group support for adults and children as well as court accompaniment and legal advocacy. Hotlines answered 336 calls for help, providing support, safety planning, referrals, and information; programs answered more than 14 hotline calls per hour. However, in that 24 hour period, 161 requests for services went unmet due to funding limitations. Programs did not have available beds or enough staff to meet every request, so some victims in Arizona are not finding help from conventional sources even when they find the courage to reach out. In June of 2012, the Department of Economic Security announced a new funding formula for Arizona's domestic violence programs. While some programs received an increase, others saw their funding slashed by up to 80%.

Statistical Overview 2011



Cause of Death

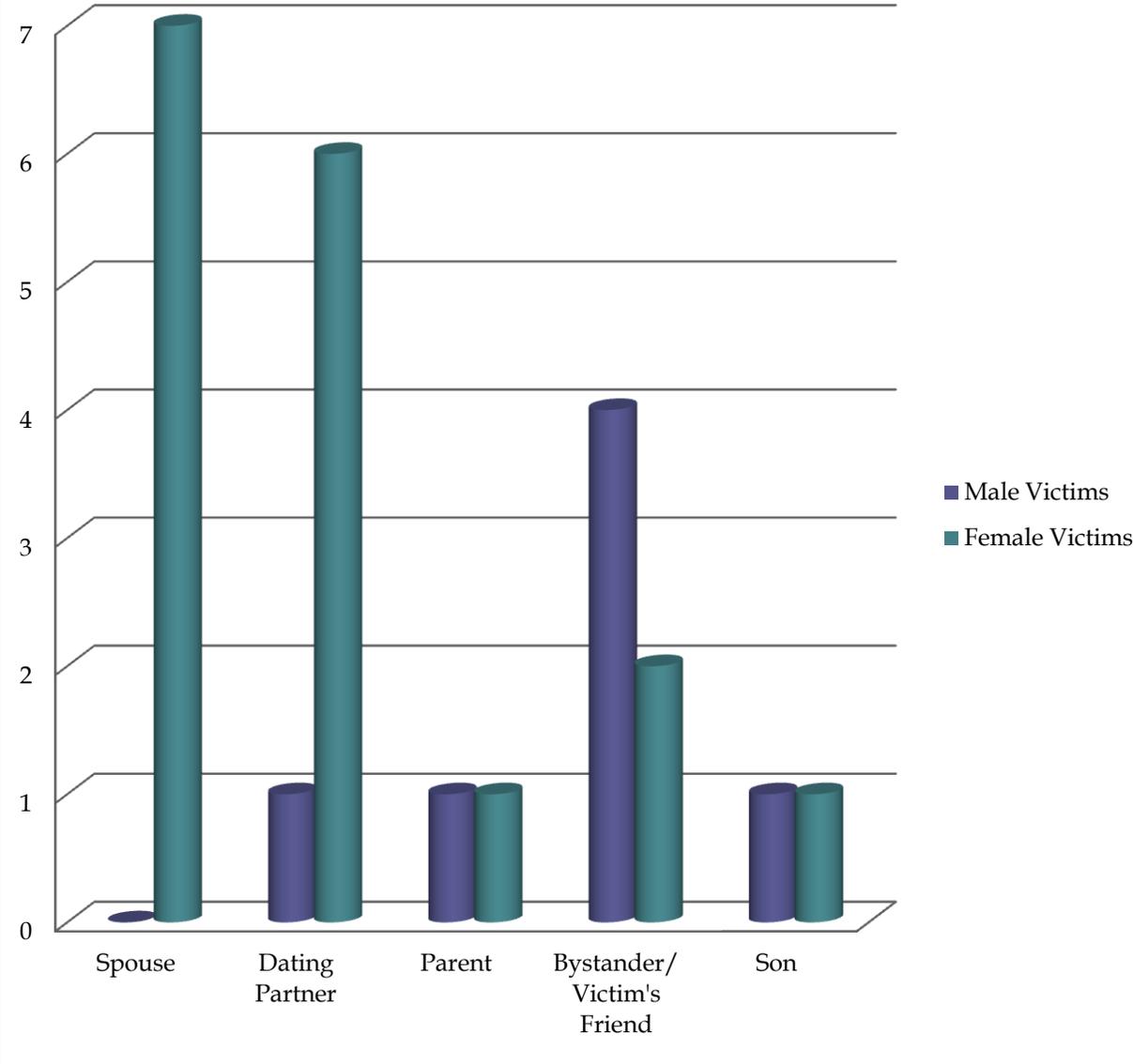




“Other” perpetrator/victim relationships include: roommates (2), jealousy killings (2), caregivers (2), and unknown relationships that were identified as domestic violence (6).

“Suicide” refers to persons who committed suicide in the context of a domestic violence incident.

Perpetrator Relationship to Victims in Homicide/Suicides



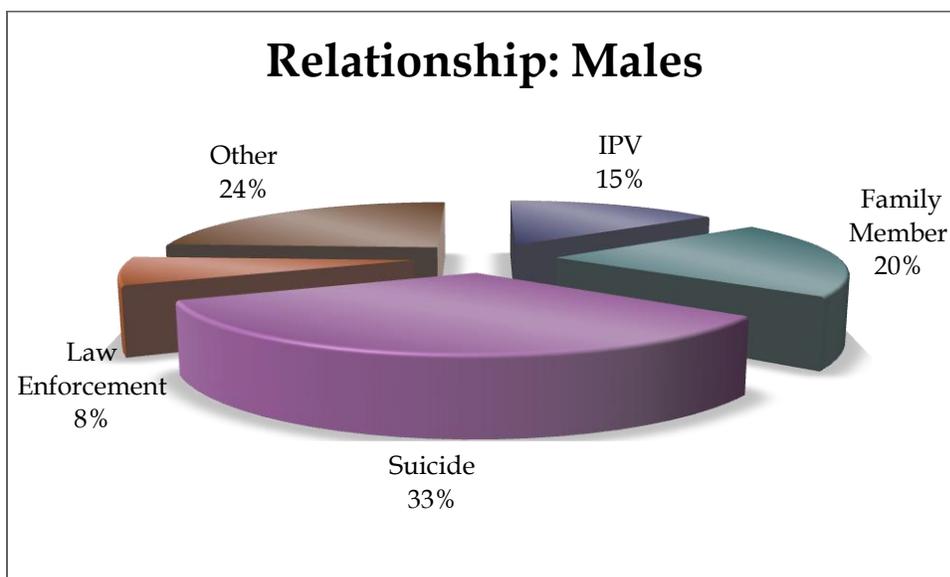
Sex of Deceased & Relationship to Perpetrator

Males

In 2011, at least 54 males died in domestic violence related incidents in Arizona. Of these, 19 of them took their own lives. Seven were victims of intimate partner violence, which are discussed in the “Intimate Partner Homicide” section. Four were killed by law enforcement responding to a domestic violence call. The remaining males, except one, died at the hands of a family member or a domestic violence perpetrator.

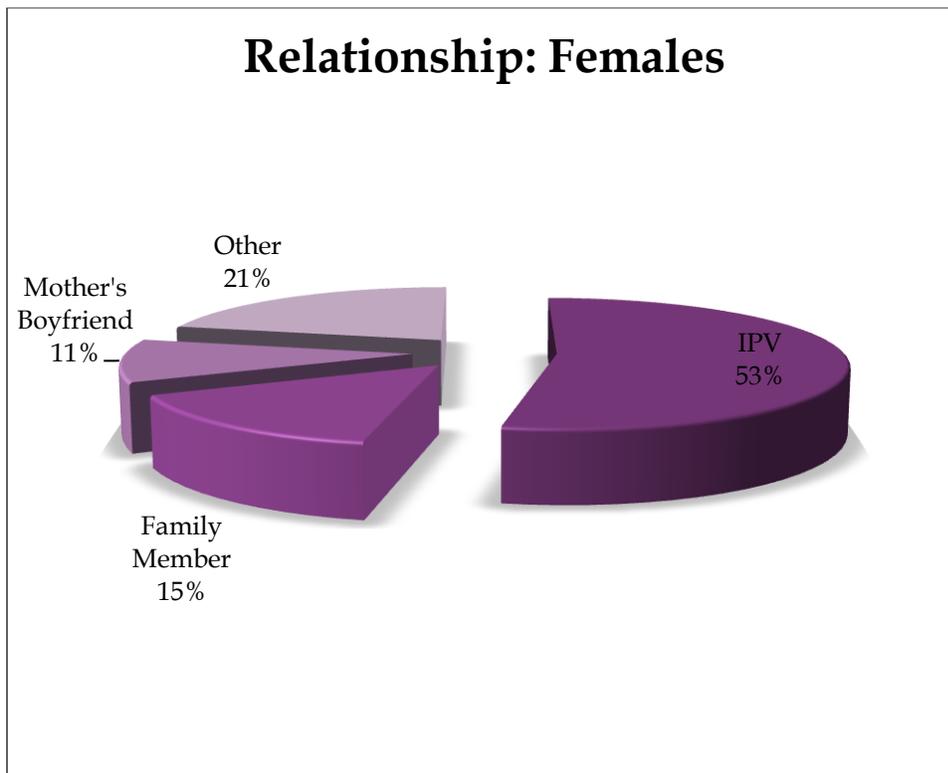
The Coalition honors the contributions of law enforcement to victim safety and perpetrator accountability.

On June 26th, 2011, Sergeant Darrell Curly responded to a domestic violence call near Kaibito on the Navajo Nation. A 26 year veteran of the Navajo Police Department, Sgt. Curly attempted to break up a fight between two brothers. As he and another officer were escorting one of the men into the car, their father opened fire on them. Sgt. Curly was struck and killed. He was honored in Washington during National Police Week, along with other fallen officers across the country.



Females

In 2011, at least 47 females died in domestic violence related incidents. In contrast to male victims, female victims were most likely to be murdered by a current or former intimate partner. Those cases are discussed more in depth in the “Intimate Partner Homicides” section. There were also several cases of young girls killed by their mother’s boyfriends. The “Other” category includes bystanders (5), caregivers (2), law enforcement responding to a domestic violence call (1), and unknown relationships identified as domestic violence related (2).



Intimate Partner Homicide

Twenty five women and eight men were the victims of intimate partner homicide. These deaths comprised 33% of the total deaths.

Male Victims of IPV	8
Wife	3
Girlfriend	1
Ex-Girlfriend	2
Boyfriend	2

In two of the above cases, the woman cited prior domestic violence. In the others, arguments and infidelity preceded the homicide.

Case Example: Female Perpetrated Homicide with Prior Domestic Violence

Aimee Stensgaard called the police after shooting her husband, David, 48, during an argument. She reported a long history of domestic violence; the couple was going through a divorce. Her neighbors told the media that they heard yelling frequently, and that on one occasion she ran to their house in the middle of the night in fear for her life.

Female Victims of IPV	25
Husband	7
Ex-Husband	3
Boyfriend	13
Ex-Boyfriend	3

In 12 of the above cases, the perpetrator took his own life. The subsection “Homicide/Suicides” provides more information. The proportion of female victims of intimate partner homicide related to the total number of deaths decreased from 2010, when nearly 80% of the female victims were killed by a current or former husband or boyfriend. The overall number of female deaths increased from 38 to 43, while the intimate partner homicides decreased from 30 to 25.

Many of the intimate partner deaths included known lethality indicators. (See Appendix A for more information on current research.) Five of the cases with female victims contained prior domestic violence reported to the media. The single greatest predictor of homicide perpetrated by a romantic partner is prior domestic violence against the woman; this is true both for female and male victims in heterosexual relationships.

Case Example: Male Perpetrated Homicide with Prior Domestic Violence

According to a woman staying at the apartment with the couple, Paul Hamilton, 38, argued with his girlfriend, Stephanie Joyce. The witness heard a noise; Hamilton reportedly threatened to kill the witness and took both her and Joyce's body out in his pickup. While the woman was getting gas, she flagged down a passerby for help starting the truck. The passerby called authorities when he realized Joyce wasn't breathing. Hamilton was arrested days later. He had multiple prior offenses, including domestic violence, in Arizona.

In nine of the cases where females died, media reports cited estrangement. In the context of intimate partner violence, estrangement is based on the perspective of the abusive partner. It may include separation and divorce, but can also be identified when the victim appears to be moving away from the relationship emotionally. For some abusive partners, a victim seeking educational or job opportunities may be perceived as a threat to the relationship.

Police believe that Erik Grumpelt, 39, struck his girlfriend, Melinda Raya, 39, after learning she had cheated on him. He didn't call authorities when she became unresponsive and instead left the body in the apartment and continued living there until he was arrested in July.

Case Example: Male Perpetrated Homicide with Estrangement

Case Example: Male
Perpetrated Homicide with
Estrangement

Monique Cota, 19, went to her ex-boyfriend's home after he called to tell her he needed her. Eric Coulter, 18, fatally shot her. He had a history of domestic violence against her, and both young people had been arrested for domestic violence stemming from an incident last year. Police say that she ended the relationship a month ago and had made plans to move to California.

Children and adolescents were present at 6 of the homicides. They were all physically unharmed. Overall, at least 25 children lost one or both parents to some form of domestic violence in 2012.

Homicide/Suicides

The proportion of deaths in homicide/suicides fell slightly in 2011 from 43.6% in 2010 to 42.6% in 2011. This is the first year in four years where the proportion of domestic violence related deaths involving homicide/suicides declined, though the difference is nearly negligible. In 2011, 17 perpetrators were male; they killed 22 people (16 female, 6 male) before killing themselves. One perpetrator was female; she killed her boyfriend before shooting herself. In one incident, information regarding the perpetrator was not released.

Year	Incidents	Victims	Percentage (Including Perpetrators)
2011	19	25	42.6%
2010	19	25	43.6%
2009	19	24	38.7%
2008	16	20	28.6%

As demonstrated in the graph in the statistical overview, the relationships between the perpetrator and victim were overwhelmingly intimate partners; only two were other familial

relationships, and in one case bystanders were killed when they attempted to intervene in an argument between two partners. Nearly 95% of the cases were perpetrated by men against current or former intimate partners. This is consistent with national data, which shows that men perpetrate 85-95% of intimate partner related homicide/suicides (Adams, 2007). Contextual relationship information was limited in most cases, but several reports cited prior domestic violence and estrangement.

A woman called police to report that she had found her daughter, Marilyn Guerra, 24, and her daughter's ex-boyfriend, Dylan Bell, dead of gunshot wounds. Neighbors reported that they had frequently heard the two arguing. Guerra's mother said her daughter had broken up with Bell five months ago, and that he was angry over custody issues and Guerra's new boyfriend.

Additional Issues

Child and Adolescent Deaths

There were 16 homicides with victims under the age of 18 in 2011. One was an intimate partner homicide, while the rest were killed by parents or caregivers. Seven of the children were killed by a step-father (1) or their mother's boyfriend (6). The presence of a child who is not biologically related to the mother's male intimate partner is a risk factor for homicide (Websdale, 1999).

Domestic Violence Later in Life

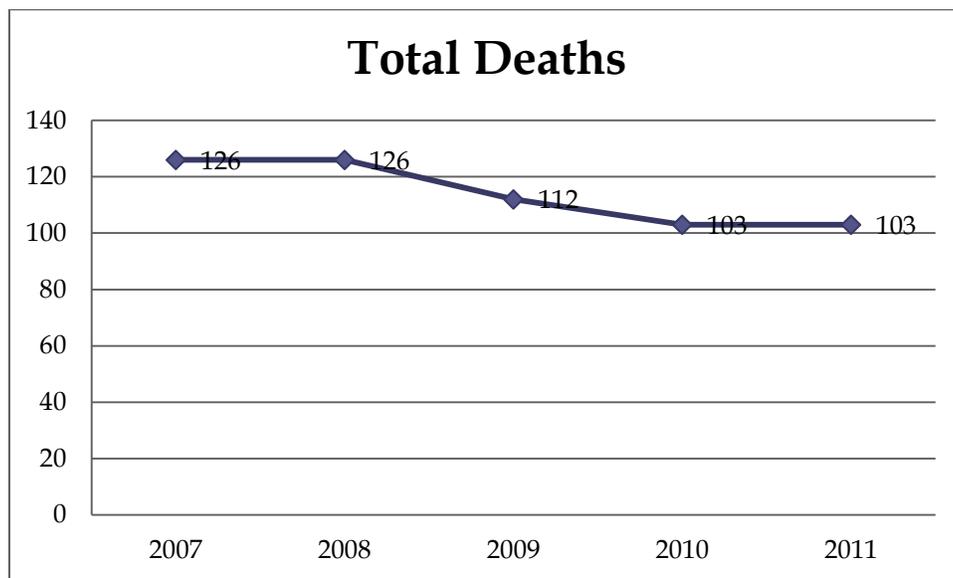
AzCADV recorded a large number of deaths involving intimate partner violence where the victim, the perpetrator, or both were over the age of 55. Twenty-four of the deceased persons (23%) were in this age group, and 20 of those concerned intimate relationships.

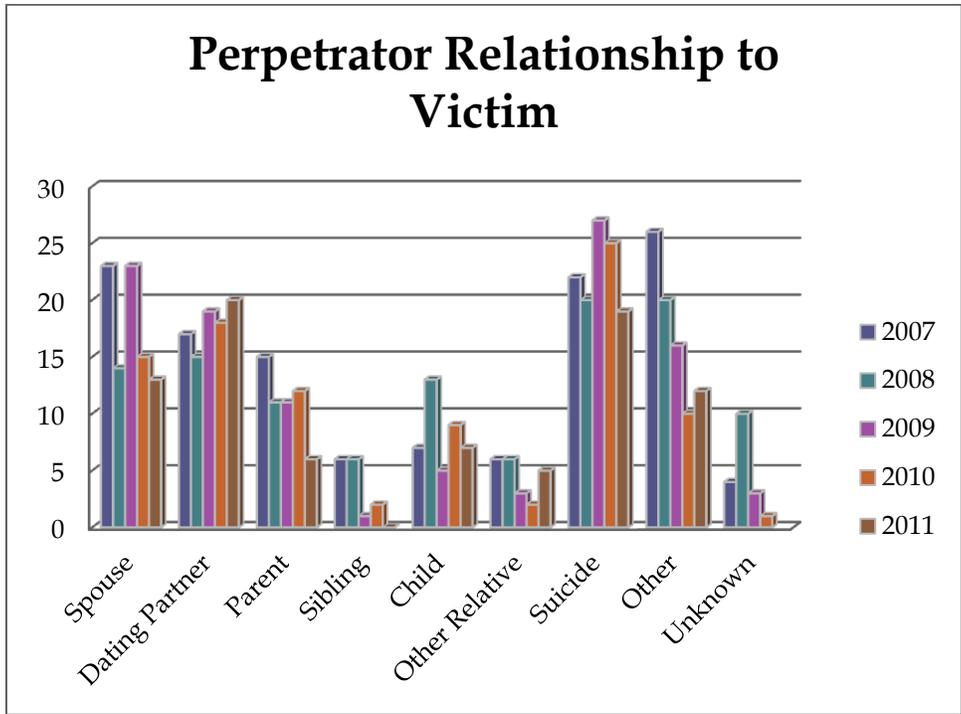
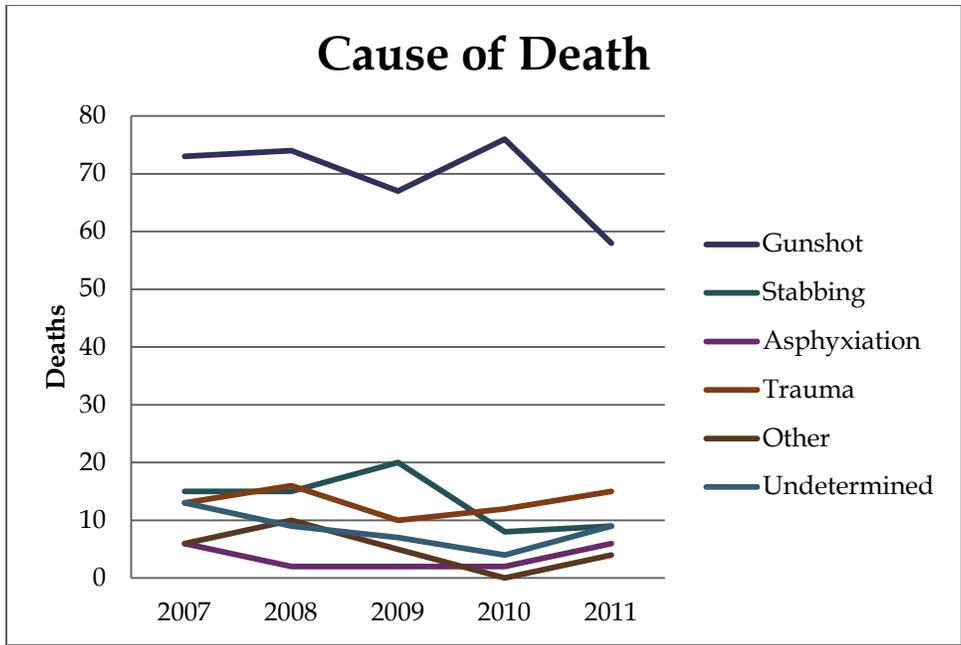
Firearms and Domestic Violence

The vast majority of perpetrators used firearms to kill their victims and/or themselves. Gunshots were cited as the cause of death in 56 fatalities (not including perpetrators killed by

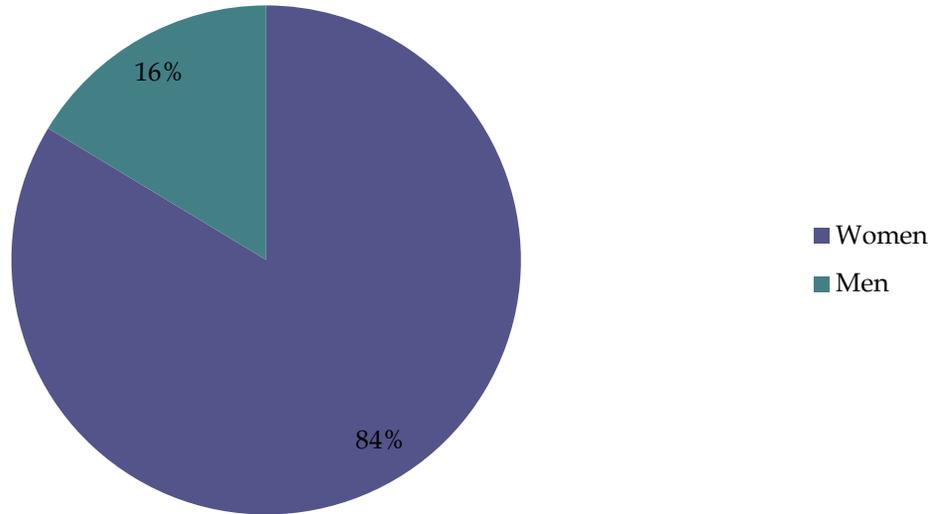
law enforcement), more than all other causes combined. Among the homicide/suicides where cause of death was released, a gun was not used in only one case out of 17. This is a decrease from previous years; 2011 saw increased asphyxiation and trauma deaths. It is widely known that keeping firearms out of the hands of domestic violence offenders is a protective factor for victims. Dr. Campbell's groundbreaking work on risk assessment has shown that being attacked or threatened with a weapon increases risk for murder by 20.2 times, and merely having a gun in the home increases the risk by 6.1 times (Campbell, 2003). Under state and federal law, perpetrators who have been convicted of a qualifying misdemeanor, or who have a qualifying Order of Protection against them, are prohibited possessors. However, some offenders manage to retain or obtain weapons, even when those conditions apply.

Trends





Intimate Partner Homicides Among Victims Over 18, 2005-2011



Recommendations

Programmatic Support

Domestic violence victims utilize numerous support services in order to escape abuse. While a small population of all domestic violence victims attempt to access residential or non-residential services, full support from local, state, and federal governments keep these life-saving programs open. Emergency and transitional housing, case management, victim advocacy, legal advocacy, and economic empowerment create an environment where survivors can begin to rebuild their lives. The programs also cannot thrive without aid from their communities. Financial and in-kind donations can help fill the gap left by steep budget cuts.

Social service programs provided by government and non-government agencies offer temporary financial aid, job training, and support for permanent housing for domestic violence survivors who need them. While the Coalition understands the financial situation in Arizona and nationally, additional budget cuts to programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) will place survivors and their children in an increasingly tenuous financial situation. Child care, affordable housing, and transportation have been consistent issues among survivors in AZ for years. Additionally, research has shown that domestic violence survivors and their children utilize health care at a greater rate than others, often for years after the abuse has stopped. **(INSERT CITATION)** Victims are at increased risk for a myriad of health problems; asthma, seizures, diabetes, arthritis, and gastrointestinal problems have all been linked to experiences of abuse. The most consistent link is between domestic and sexual violence and reproductive health. Unintended pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, and even cervical cancer have been connected to abusive relationships. **(INSERT CITATION)** Sufficient access to primary and reproductive health care is essential for survivors to address both short and long-term consequences of abuse.

Reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act

The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) provides fiscal and social policy to protect victims of domestic violence, sexual violence, and stalking. First authorized in 1994, the bill is facing its first reauthorization mired by controversy. Reauthorizing an inclusive VAWA would increase victim safety and perpetrator accountability across the nation.

Years of discussions with stakeholders across the country identified several gaps service delivery. For instance, Native American women experience domestic and sexual violence at greatly increased rates. As stated in the Introduction, AzCADV acknowledges that a lack of media coverage of deaths among Native women does indicate a lack of cases, but rather that the cases are difficult to track. Granting tribal governments an expanded, but still very limited, authority to hold perpetrators accountable if they have specific connections to the tribe will increase options for safety among victims. Additionally, the bill expands access to U Visas, which offer undocumented victims of violence an option to participate in the legal prosecution of the offender and stay in the country. Immigrant victims of abuse are often victimized by US citizens, who use their petitions for citizenship as a tool in the abuse. The final important need identified was explicit language regarding services for victims who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT). LGBT individuals experience domestic violence at the same rates as heterosexual couples, and advocacy services in this community is essential.

Risk Assessment

AzCADV continues to encourage exploration of the use of risk assessment in communities across the state. Many law enforcement agencies are in stages of implementation, and universal use of tools may help maximize available resources. Successful responses involve collaboration between multiple agencies, which is occurring in jurisdictions across the state. AzCADV looks forward to continued progress in this area.

Increased Community Awareness and Education

Many of the media reports did not offer information regarding prior systems involvement. Increasing access to information about domestic violence through community-based training and material distribution may help victims who do not come in contact with law enforcement. Some domestic violence programs have resources to conduct trainings, and expansion of these efforts is recommended.

The report found that nearly 25% of the cases involved individuals over the age of 55. Resources for this population differ from those for younger victims and survivors, as individuals later in life have different advocacy, housing, and medical needs. Statewide, targeted community outreach to this population is recommended to raise awareness; generational gaps in beliefs about domestic and sexual abuse may leave some victims without avenues to discern

available services.

Surrender of Weapons

Under ARS 13-3601, law enforcement responding to a domestic violence has the authority to question the parties regarding the presence of a firearm in the home. If the responding officer believes that the weapon may pose a threat to the victim or anyone else in the household, he or she can seize it temporarily. Utilizing this authority more regularly may help increase victim safety, and AzCADV recommends strict adherence to policies and procedures regarding firearm seizure.

The statute defining Orders of Protection, 13-3602, grants judges the authority to deem the respondent a prohibited possessor if that judge finds that the respondent poses a credible threat. Judges who utilize this authority must make sure their orders are being carried out, and that surrender of firearms takes place within 24 hours of service.

Similarly, under ARS 13-3101, perpetrators on probation for domestic violence offenses become prohibited possessors for the duration of their sentence. Funding cuts to the criminal justice system have made supervised probation difficult. In order to enhance both victim safety and perpetrator accountability, supervised probation should be utilized and the prohibited possessor status enforced at all times.

On a federal level, under 18 USC 922(g)9, those convicted of a qualifying misdemeanor or who have been served with a qualifying protective order become prohibited possessors and are not permitted to obtain or maintain weapons. Universal background checks, including checking purchases made at gun shows, can help vendors determine if they are supplying a firearm illegally.

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Appendix A

Risk Factors for Lethality in Domestic Violence Cases

Dr. Jackie Campbell developed the “Danger Assessment,” a risk assessment tool for domestic violence victims. In her research, she compared behaviors exhibited by abusers who murdered their partners to behaviors among abused women.

Behavior	Increased Likelihood of Homicide	Behavior	Increased Likelihood of Homicide
Partner used or threatened with a weapon	20.2	Physical violence increased in frequency	4.3
Partner threatened to kill woman	14.9	Partner uses illicit drugs	4.2
Partner tried to choke (strangle) woman	9.9	Partner drunk every day or almost every day	4.1
Partner violently and constantly jealous	9.2	Woman ever beaten while pregnant	3.8
Woman forced to have sex when not wanted	7.6	Woman believed he was capable of killing her	3.3
Gun in the house	6.1	Partner reported for child abuse	2.9
Physical violence increased in severity	5.2	Partner violent outside the home	2.2
Partner controls most or all of woman’s daily activities	5.1	Partner threatened or tried to commit suicide	1.3

Campbell, J. et al. “Assessing Risk Factors for Intimate Partner Homicide.” National Institute of Justice Journal. 250, p 17

Dr. Neil Websdale's book, "Understanding Domestic Homicide," examined deaths in Florida. He found commonalities in the cases that can be seen in Arizona.



Understanding Domestic Homicide. (Websdale, 1999)

