

Arizona Domestic Violence Fatality Report:

A Review of Domestic Violence Related
Deaths from 2005 – 2008

A Publication of the
Arizona Coalition Against Domestic Violence

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Introduction

Violent relationships, whether between current or former intimate partners or family members, have severe consequences for victims, their families, and their communities. While most abusive relationships do not end in death, a significant number of them escalate to homicide. The Bureau of Justice Statistics estimates that three women lose their lives at the hands of intimate partners every day in this country. Each year, the Arizona Coalition Against Domestic Violence records the number and circumstances of fatalities due to domestic violence in our state by utilizing news reports, and we have seen the numbers rise over the past few years. Because of our method of data collection, we know that our statistics do not accurately reflect the actual number of fatalities.

Over the last four years, at least 458 people died due to domestic violence in Arizona. In 2005, 95 people died, and in 2006, 111 people lost their lives. The last two years have seen 126 fatalities in each year. These stark numbers show the real cost of violence between intimate partners and family members.

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. These acts of violence are different in the context of abuse 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 violence. Several of the homicides in this report were committed after separation or during arguments about the status of the relationship.

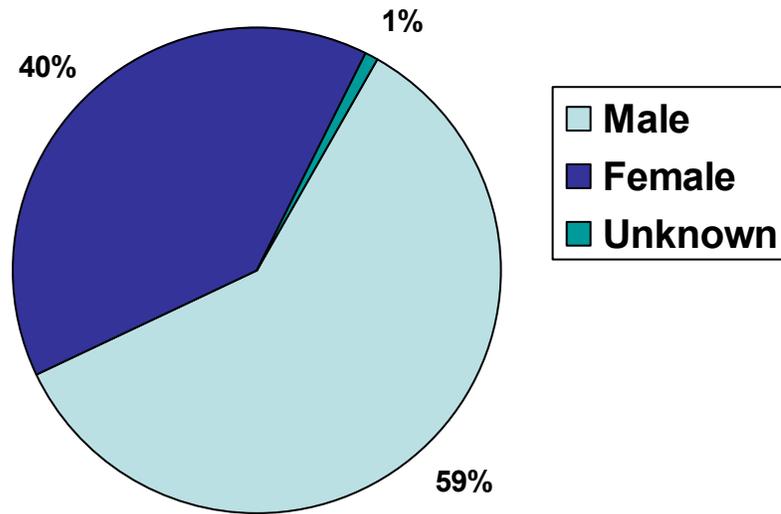
Others who died were abusers themselves. Many of them committed suicide, some in the context of assaults on their partners. Others who killed themselves also killed or attempted to kill their partners, family members, or bystanders before taking their own lives. Still other perpetrators were killed by police when they responded to a domestic violence call.

Domestic violence services in Arizona have provided safety, shelter, and other types of assistance to thousands of victims and their families. Each year, the National Network to End Domestic Violence performs a national census to provide a snapshot of service provision within one 24-hour period. The 2008 census, with 25 of 32 programs reporting, showed that residential domestic violence programs provided 1,230 victims with emergency shelter or transitional housing. An additional 186 adults and children received other assistance, such as counseling, legal advocacy, support groups, and others, widening the safety net and providing critical stabilization and healing services.

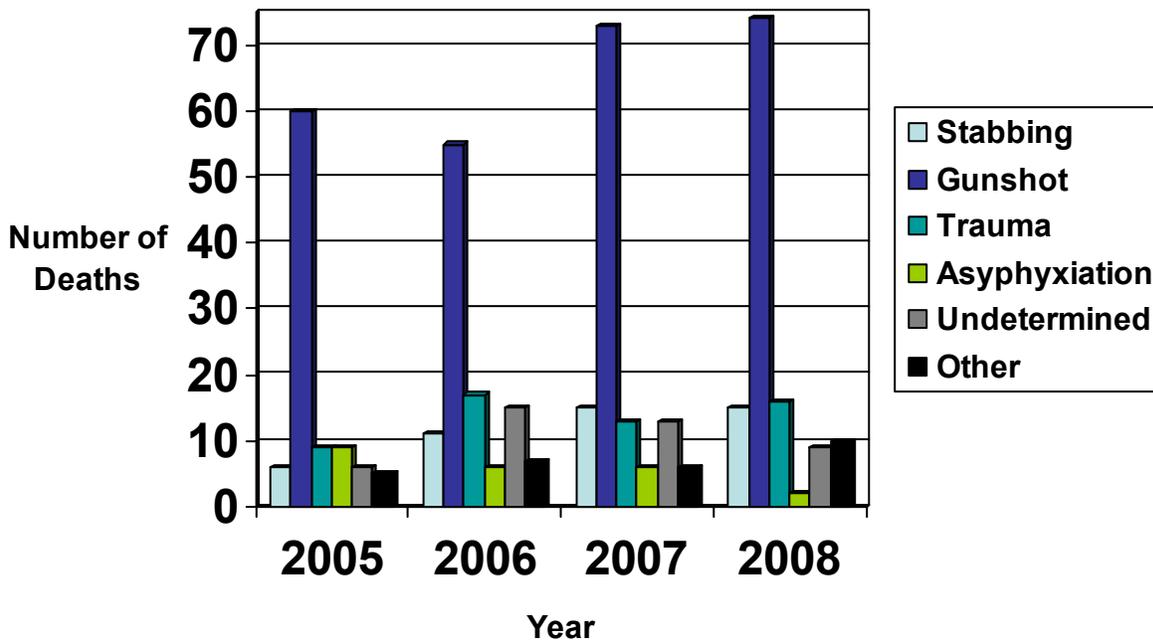
While many victims found shelter, an additional 119 requests for services were unmet due to lack of available beds, staff, or funding.

Statistical Overview

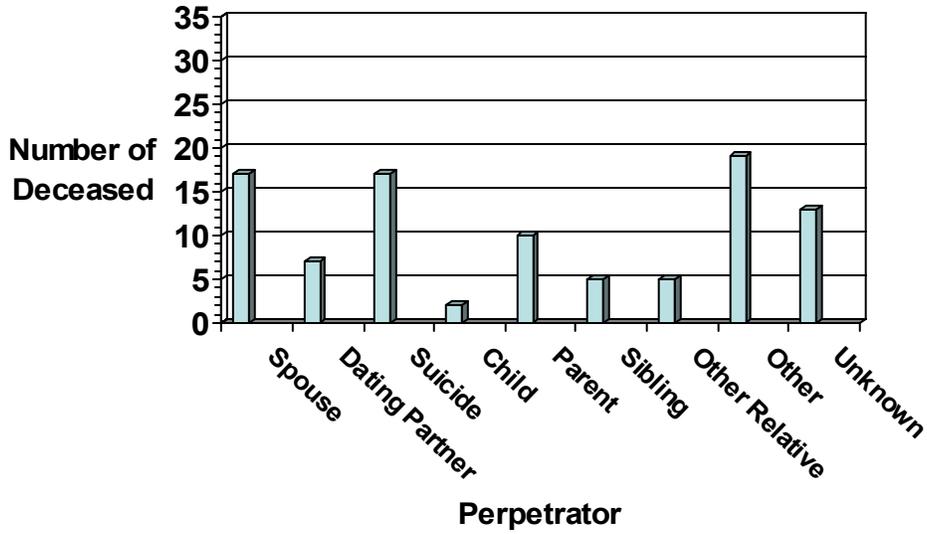
Gender of Deceased 2005-2008



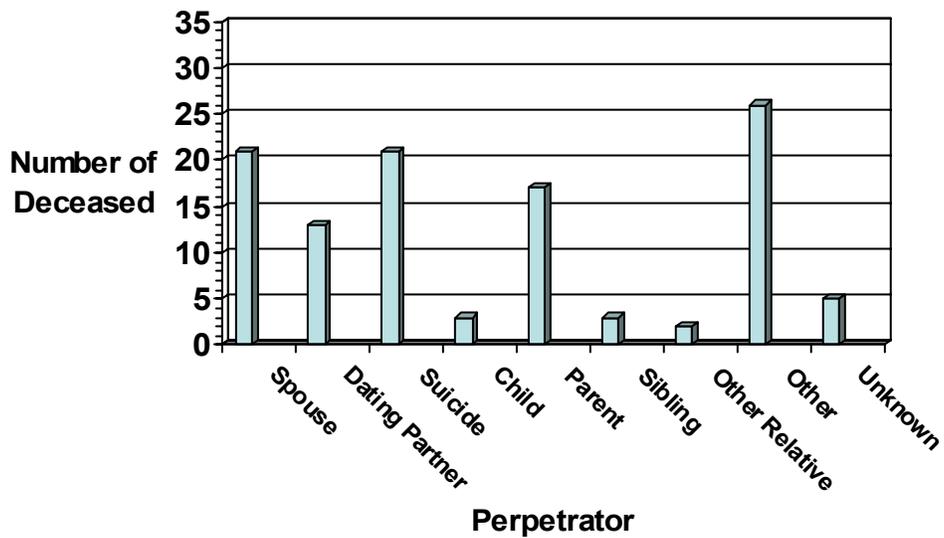
Cause of Domestic Violence-related Death



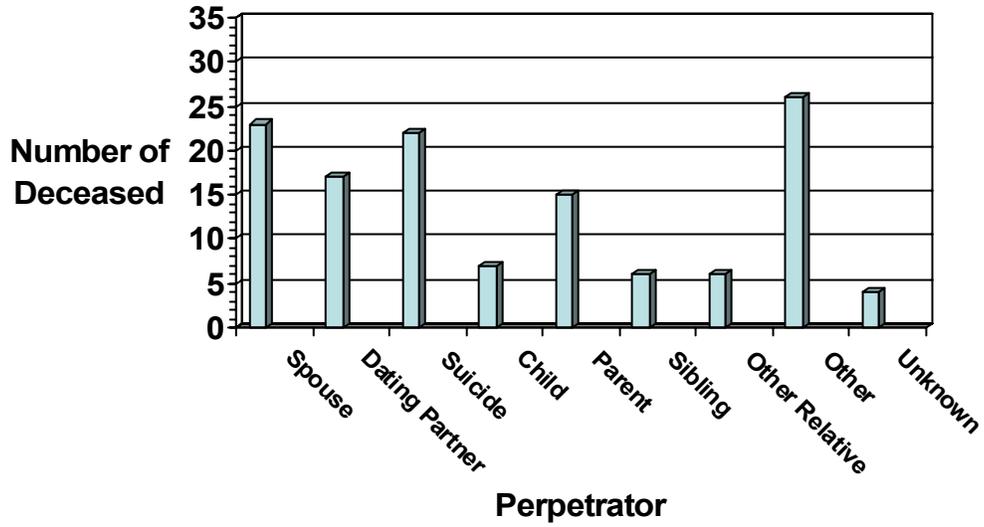
Relationship Between Deceased and Perpetrator 2005



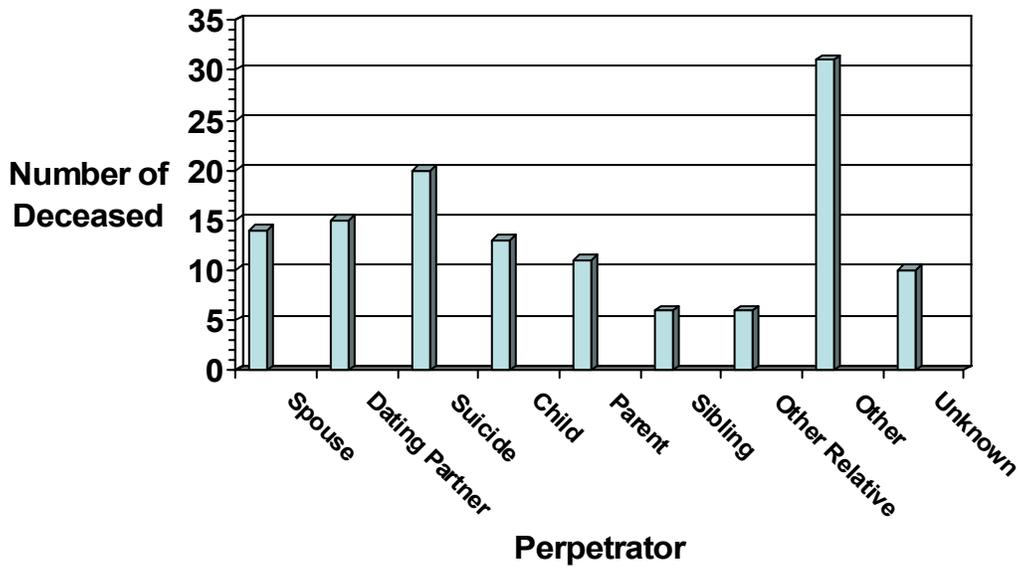
Relationship Between Deceased and Perpetrator 2006



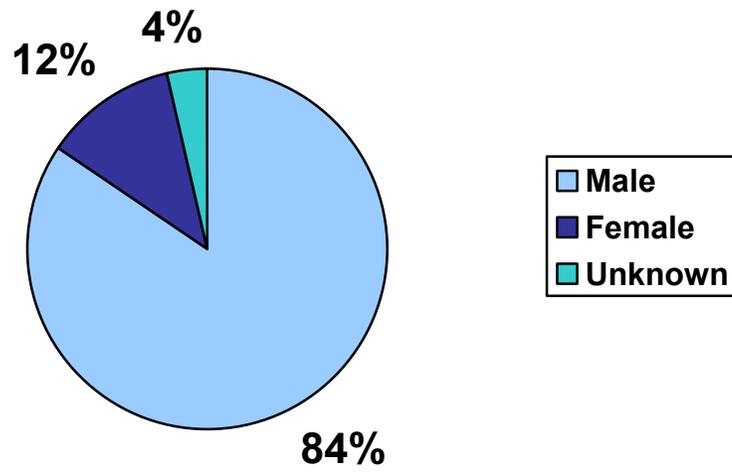
Relationship Between Deceased and Perpetrator 2007



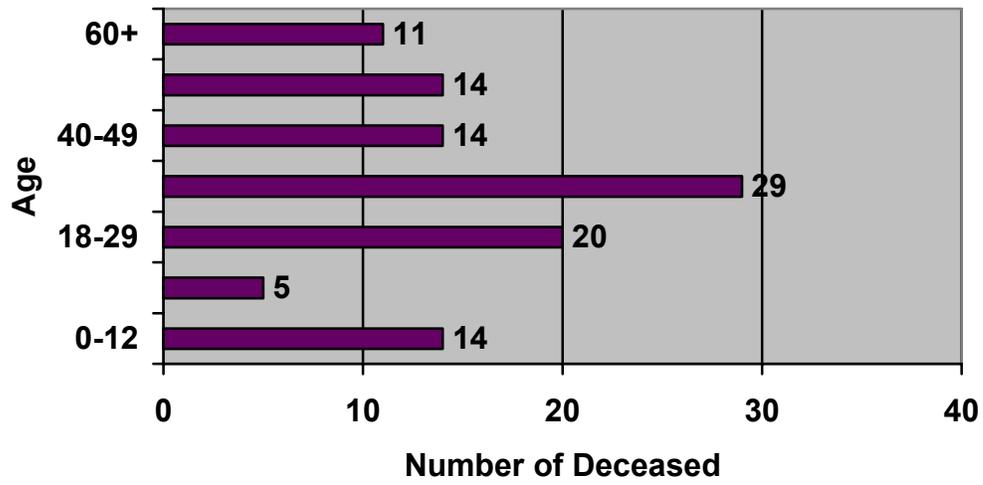
Relationship Between Deceased and Perpetrator 2008



Gender of Perpetrator 2008



Age of Deceased 2008



Conclusions

Gender

The report shows that the majority of the fatalities (59%) were male. However, the perpetrators of these crimes were rarely intimate partners; of the cases where age was available, only 10% of the adult male fatalities were homicides perpetrated by current or former intimate partners. Adult men were much more likely to be killed by another family member, police responding to a domestic violence call, or to have committed suicide. Additionally, some male homicide victims were murdered by their current partner's ex-boyfriend or ex-husband.

Adult females, on the other hand, were more likely to have died at the hands of a current or former intimate partner. Of the cases involving females over the age of 18, 68.6% were killed by a current or former intimate partner.

These findings are consistent with national research. The Bureau of Justice Statistics has repeatedly shown that women are more likely to be killed by an intimate partner than men.

Firearms

Throughout all four years, firearms were the most common weapon used. Out of the 458 fatalities, 262 of them were due to gunshot wounds (57%). More people died of gunshot wounds than all of the other causes of death combined. An additional two victims were shot along with another form of violence, but since the cause of death was not listed, they were categorized as "other."

National studies validate these statistics. When examining risk assessment, weapons are highly correlated to intimate partner homicide. Being threatened or assaulted with a weapon increases the risk of murder by 20. A gun's presence in the home left abused women six times more likely to be killed than other abused women.¹

Dr. David Adams interviewed several abusers who had been convicted of killing their partners and found the link between guns and homicide to be incredibly strong as well. In one study of those who killed their intimate partners, of those who killed with guns, 78% said they wouldn't have used another weapon. "A gun depersonalizes... I wouldn't have gone through with it if I had time to think about it." One killer strangled his victim, but noted: "If I'd had a gun, I would have used it earlier; that's why I didn't keep one in the house." Of the killers who stabbed their victims, 4 out of the 6 said they would have used a gun had one been available.²

People who are convicted of a qualifying misdemeanor domestic violence crime or who have a qualifying order of protection against them are prohibited possessors under both federal and state law. Some of the homicides in this report cited killers who were either subject to an order or had a history of domestic violence and should not have been in

¹ Cambell, Jacquelyn, Webster, Daniel, et al. "Assessing Risk Factors for Intimate Partner Homicide." National Institute of Justice Journal, Nov. 2008.

² David Adams, Ed.D., "Profiles of Men Who Kill their Intimate Partners", presentation, Nov. 13, 2008.

possession of a firearm. Several of the victims were killed by people whom they dated; since dating relationships are not currently included in the domestic violence statute, these victims are not eligible for orders of protection. Some of those victims had filed for injunctions against harassment; an injunction against harassment does not prohibit possession of firearm.

Patricide and Matricide

Over the last four years, Arizona has seen a sharp increase in the number of children and adults killing their parents. The 2008 case in St. John's made national news; an 8 year old boy was charged with the double homicide of his father and his father's housemate. Over the course of the year, however, there were 11 other victims killed by their adopted or biological progeny. This is a drastic increase from the previous three years: 2005 had 2 such cases, 2006 had 3, and 2007 had 7. In 2008, all of the patricide and matricide cases were perpetrated by boys and men aged 8-32, with 4 perpetrators' ages unreported.

The reports of the 2008 homicides revealed that three of these perpetrators were suicidal. One had placed suicidal messages on his MySpace page, one attempted to kill himself immediately after the murder, and one completed his suicide attempt.

One of the deaths was a shooting in self-defense after the boy's father attacked him with a knife. In two other cases, the perpetrators alleged abuse against the parent they killed.

The System

As stated in the introduction, services are available for victims and their families. These services include shelter, but residential programs provide far more than meals and a bed. Legal advocacy, individual and group counseling, and child care are essential tools for survivors leaving abusive relationships. Last year, over 10,000 victims were served by programs in 13 counties across Arizona. The state has made significant advances regarding service provision; according to the Department of Economic Security, fiscal year 2008 was the first year in which more victims were served than turned away.

Safety is the first priority for victims, and a comprehensive service provision system can help protect and empower victims.

In addition to keeping survivors safe and providing tools to overcome victimization, perpetrators must be held accountable for their abuse. Orders of Protection must be enforced, both in regards to surrendering firearms and contact violations. Domestic violence crimes must be tagged as such to ensure that proper charges are filed, repeat offenders are known to the system, and appropriate consequences are imposed.

Arizona has lost citizens of all ages, races, religions, and socioeconomic statuses. This problem is not a private one, and the community must take a stand to support victims and hold perpetrators accountable. The cost of not doing so is simply too high.

Appendix A: Domestic Violence Related Deaths, 2008

Location	Date	Description
Ahwatukee	March 29	A 30 year old woman seeking a divorce was killed by her husband.
	August 5	A man, 51, shot his wife, 45, and then turned the gun on himself. They were going through a divorce.
Apache Junction	November 28	A man, 43, shot himself after he assaulted his wife and she escaped to get help.
Avondale	March 8	A man, 33, shot his wife, 26, and turned the gun on himself while their four children were in the home, though none of the children were physically injured.
	November 17	A 3 year old girl died of trauma when her mother's boyfriend beat her severely.
	November 25	An 11 month old girl died of a head injury while in her mother's care.
Buckeye	June 20	After a two hour stand-off, police killed an armed man, 39, who broke into the home of his ex-wife, her new husband, and four daughters.
Casa Grande	November 23	A woman, 30, was stabbed to death by her off-and-on boyfriend.
Cave Creek	July 8	A woman, 29, was stabbed to death and left in a burning house by a date.
Chinle	May 9	A man stabbed his brother, 39, during an argument.
Fountain Hills	January 31	A woman, 78, was killed by her son-in-law during an argument.
Ganado	July 1	A man, 32, was stabbed by his girlfriend's three brothers during an argument.
Glendale	January 21	A 19 year old man who was on probation shot his girlfriend, also 19.
	June 15	A 45 year old man shot his wife and then himself.
	July 24	A man, 48, attacked his son with a knife and the son shot him.
	December 13	A man stabbed his younger brother, 32, in a parking lot, and he later died of his injuries.
Golden Shores	August 22	A man and his roommate were arguing when one was shot in the hand and later died.
Golden Valley	September 8	A woman, 64, was shot by her daughter's ex-boyfriend, 51, because he blamed her for the end of the relationship. He then turned the gun on himself.
Goodyear	January 1	A 31 year old man was shot to death while trying to protect his sister from her ex-boyfriend.
Kingman	August 4	A woman, 39, was shot by her husband, who then fled the scene and was arrested later.
Lake Havasu City	February 7	A 17 month old boy died of non-accidental head injuries.
Mayer	February 2	A woman was beaten by her boyfriend.
McNeal	May 4	A man, 36, shot his 34 year old brother during an argument.
Mesa	February 2	A 41 year old man stabbed his 17 year old roommate.
	February 6	A depressed and suicidal 15 year old boy shot his 49 year old father.
	February 7	Police shot a 37 year old man who was holding a knife to his girlfriend's throat after he refused to drop the weapon.
	February 18	An 86 year old man shot his 89 year old wife and then turned the gun on himself.
	March 19	A 3 year old girl died of trauma after her aunt, who was also her legal guardian, pushed and threw her.
	April 7	Police shot a man who was charging at his girlfriend with a large knife and refused to stop.

Location	Date	Description	
Mesa (cont.)	April 23	A man who had a protective order against him for threats and harassment shot the woman and her neighbor before police shot him.	
	May 6	A man shot his roommate.	
	June 8	Police shot a man who assaulted his girlfriend and then pointed a gun at them and refused to drop it.	
	June 9	A 30 year old man was killed by his ex-girlfriend.	
	June 18	A man tracked down his ex-girlfriend's current boyfriend and shot him. He fled the scene and shot himself before police caught up with him.	
	July 3	After a fight with his wife, a man jumped onto the car as she attempted to leave with her cousin. He died either from being thrown from the car or run over.	
	October 2	A 28 year old man was stabbed by his wife, 26, during an argument.	
	October 5	Police responded to a "family fight" and found a woman dead of stab wounds.	
	Oro Valley	August 12	A 25 year old woman was beaten and then strangled to death by her boyfriend, whom she was attempting to leave.
	Peach Springs	July 3	A 20 year old man shot his adoptive parents, 60 and 56, while they were driving before walking out into the desert and shooting himself.
November 11		A man beat his cousin to death, and when police responded to the disturbance call, they found him raping a woman.	
Peoria	January 18	A murder-suicide involved a 71 year old woman and a 41 year old man.	
	March 7	A man, 33, shot his 2 year old daughter and then turned the gun on himself. He shared custody with the girl's mother.	
Phoenix	January 26	A 22 year old woman stabbed her husband during an argument about their relationship	
	January 28	A 17 year old man shot his 17 year old ex-girlfriend before killing himself. There was a history of abuse, and she had filed for an injunction against harassment a week prior to the killing; the order had not been served.	
	February 12	A 17 year old shook his one year old son and the child died from shaken impact syndrome.	
	February 13	A 56 year old detention officer beat his wife to death before attempting suicide.	
	February 15	A 911 call for an unresponsive infant revealed that a 2 month old had been beaten and he died a day later; his father, 23, was arrested.	
	March 23	Police shot and killed a man who was threatening his family and then pointed a gun toward police.	
	April 9	A man shot his ex-wife's current boyfriend and then killed himself, weeks before a scheduled hearing would have addressed violations of the order of protection his ex-wife had against him.	
	June 21	A woman ran her husband over after an argument.	
	July 15	A man committed a double murder, killing a man who was involved with a woman he dated as well as the victim's brother.	
	July 28	A 49 year old man set fire to his house and then slit his wrists, killing himself and his wife. He had sent an email regarding an impending foreclosure and his intent to kill.	
November 23	An 8 mo old died of shaken impact syndrome. Her father was arrested.		

Location	Date	Description
Phoenix (cont.)	December 13	A 16 year old who was upset that his girlfriend broke up with him attacked a woman passing in the street, and dragged her to a nearby field. He sexually and physically assaulted her, and she died of her injuries.
	December 25	A woman attending a Christmas party was murdered by her ex-boyfriend, who showed up uninvited, shot her in front of her children, and fled the scene before killing himself.
Pima	October 19	During an argument about their recent breakup, a man shot his ex-girlfriend in the arm, then pulled the trigger while pointing the gun at her head. It didn't go off, and she escaped; he was found dead of a self-inflicted gunshot wound a few hours later.
Pinetop	February 16	A 29 year old man on a first date was stabbed repeatedly by the woman's ex-husband.
Prescott	January 30	A fight between brothers-in-law ended when one fatally stabbed the other.
	July 2	A woman, 35, was killed while on the phone with her mother; her ex-husband has been charged.
Queen Creek	June 27	A 24 year old man stabbed his 23 year old girlfriend after an argument.
	December 27	When police responded to a domestic violence call, the 55 year old perpetrator fired a shot at the police; they returned fire and killed him.
San Manuel	December 11	An 81 year old man shot his 80 year old wife.
Scottsdale	February 26	A 21 year old reported that he accidentally shot his cousin while cleaning his gun, but police stated that the evidence did not corroborate that the death was accidental.
	July 14	A welfare check led police to another man's house; when questioned about the individual, the man excused himself and then shot himself. The other man had been shot and strangled, and his body was found a short distance from the house.
	July 18	A young man killed his grandfather with a lead pipe and attacked his grandmother, who survived.
St. John's	August 17	A man hanged himself after assaulting his girlfriend and her two sons.
	November 5	An 8 year old boy was charged with two counts of murder after his father and his father's housemate were found dead of gunshot wounds.
St. Michael's Surprise	January 7	A woman stabbed her boyfriend during an argument.
	March 12	The remains of a 38 year old woman were found when police put out a fire in a dumpster. Her boyfriend was charged with the murder.
	April 21	Police responding to a domestic violence call hit the suspect after he confronted them, and he died several days later.
Tempe	September 17	A man, 55, died of a gunshot wound occurring during an argument with his wife; it is unclear whether it was self-inflicted.
	February 15	A 15 year old boy was shot by his mother while he slept; his mother said she thought she killed a look-alike and that her son was still alive.
Three Points	October	The body of a 65 year old woman was found in a shallow grave behind her house; her son, 32, admitted to strangling her.
Tonopah	June 8	A 15 year old boy shot his father, who had a long history of domestic violence.
Tucson	January 10	A 36 year old man killed his 21 year old girlfriend and left her body in the desert.
	January 21	A 5 mo old died while in his mother's boyfriend's care, and he was charged with first degree murder and child abuse.
	January 26	A four year old boy was killed by his mother's boyfriend.

Location	Date	Description
Tucson (cont.)	February 29	Police responded to a domestic violence call and shot the perpetrator after he fired at them, hitting one officer.
	March 10	A man left his 4 month old son in the car for three hours.
	April 1	A man, 29, killed his 61 year old mother.
	April 6	A 23 year old man shot his girlfriend, 22, in the head, claiming he thought he had the safety on when they were "playing."
	April 20	A man shot his ex-girlfriend's current boyfriend.
	June 18	A 48 year old woman was shot by her son, who then attempted suicide.
	June 26	A woman killed her ex-boyfriend and his brother before killing herself.
	July 14	A woman and her boyfriend abused her 13 month old son, and he died of his injuries.
	July 19	A fight resulted in a woman stabbing her boyfriend, who got into an additional fight later with a man who fatally stabbed him.
	July 26	A boy, 15, shot his half-sister, 14, in the head.
	July 27	A 31 year old man was fatally stabbed by his mother.
	August 1	A 12 year old boy shot his mother, and he claimed she had abused him.
	September 6	A woman starved her 6 week old baby to death, and gave no motive. Both she and her husband were arrested.
	September 7	A 19 year old woman was shot by her boyfriend.
	November 23	A 58 year old woman called police and told them her boyfriend had shot her; as police approached the house, they heard another shot and found the man dead. The woman survived.
December 15	A woman was retrieving her belongings from a storage unit in preparation for a move to Phoenix when her ex-boyfriend arrived and killed her before killing himself.	
December 30	Police were led on a high-speed chase by a domestic violence perpetrator, who accidentally crashed, killing himself and his friend.	
Village of Oak Creek	January 23	A 3 month old suffered multiple injuries from multiple instances of abuse, and he died from the last instance.
Wittman	June 23	A man surrendered to police after admitting to killing his two sons and his brother.
Unknown	May 14	Two brothers stole a car, and the police chase ended with one brother shooting the other before killing himself at a location outside of Tucson.
	December 11	Utility workers discovered a couple laying outside their car at an intersection west of the Tucson Mountains. A man had shot his wife and then himself, but she was taken to a hospital and survived.

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If you need assistance or resources,
contact us at 602-279-2900 or 1-800-782-6400

National Domestic Violence Hotline:
1-800-799-SAFE (7233) or
1-800-787-3224 (TTY)