

# Economic Barriers to Safety in Domestic Violence Homicides

Washington State Domestic Violence Fatality Review

November 2012

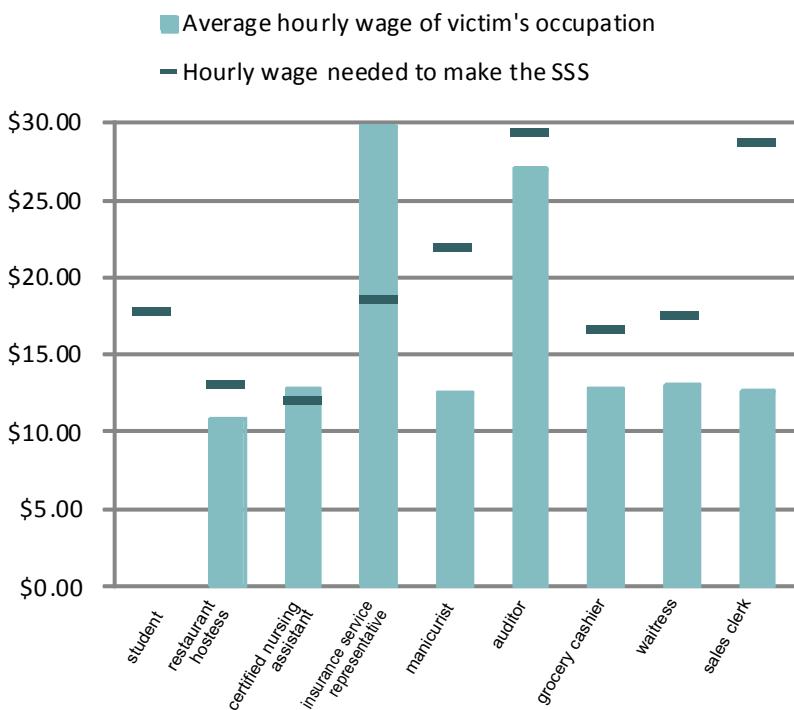
## Limited options for economic stability overwhelmingly contribute to keeping victims trapped in relationships

**with violent abusers.** In-depth reviews of 84 domestic violence homicides in Washington showed that victims faced many economic barriers to safely leaving an abuser. The chart below illustrates the gap between victims' income in the nine most recently reviewed fatalities and the income required to meet their basic needs, as measured by the Self Sufficiency Standard<sup>1</sup> (SSS).

"Before I leave, I have to find a new job that pays more so I can take care of my girls and pay the rent for a few months until I can get child support."

- Mother of two killed by her ex-husband

### Victims' income compared to basic needs



Income estimates are based on the average wage for each victim's occupation and region.<sup>2</sup> The SSS includes housing, childcare, transportation, and health care costs and takes into account number of children in the family and regional cost of living.

Seven of these nine victims would be unable to make ends meet without additional income. One victim who worked in a higher paying, professional occupation (auditor) would still be unable to support herself and her children. In reviewed cases, this instability meant that victims were unable to leave or delayed leaving abusers. In a number of cases, abusers further undermined victims' and children's stability by refusing to pay court-ordered child support and harassing victims in the workplace.

## RESOURCE

**Get Money Get Safe** is a website to help survivors and advocates find resources and information about economic assistance and security. Money has a lot to do with getting safe from domestic violence.

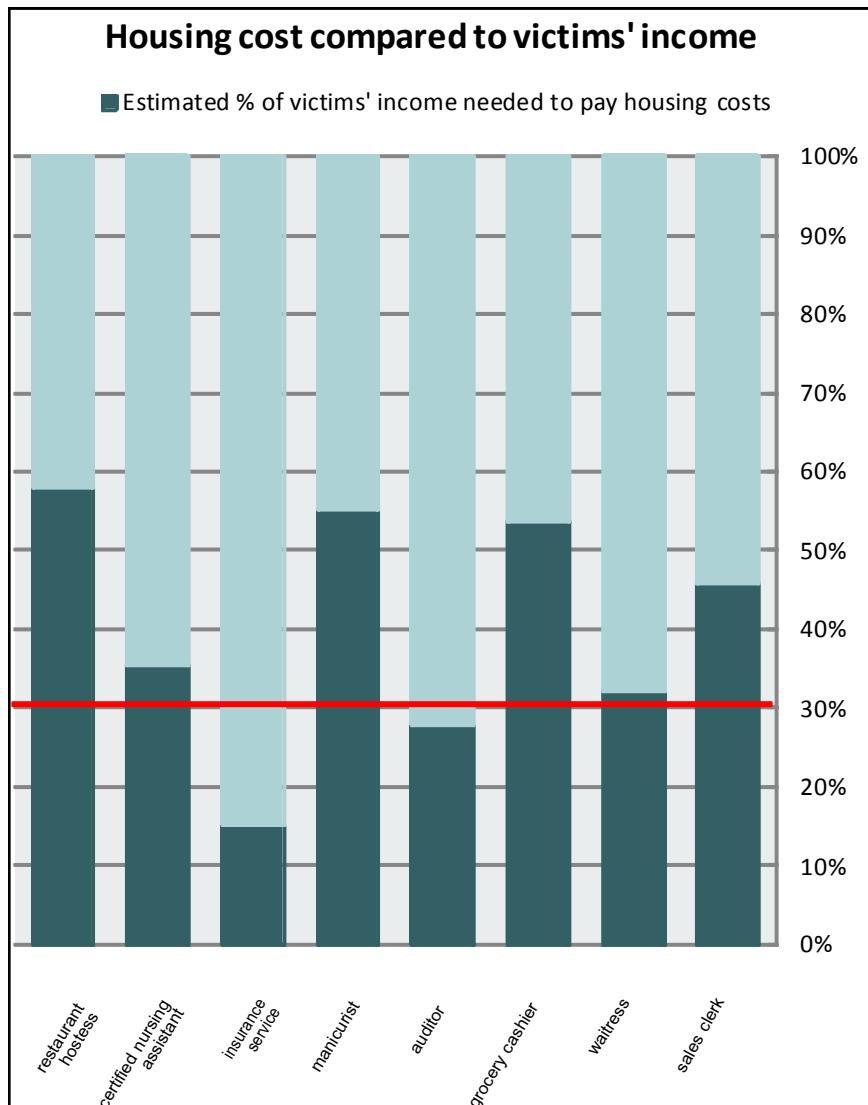


<sup>1</sup>Learn more at [www.SelfSufficiencyStandard.org](http://www.SelfSufficiencyStandard.org).

<sup>2</sup>Wage data from Bureau of Labor Statistics , based on victims' occupation reported on death certificates.

**Communities lack affordable housing options for domestic violence victims who need to relocate.** Fatality reviews showed that the lack of safe and affordable housing made it difficult for victims to leave abusive partners. According to a widely accepted HUD standard<sup>3</sup>, housing is affordable if it costs no more than 30% of household income. Based on their estimated income, only two victims in the nine most recently reviewed homicides<sup>4</sup> could afford housing at fair market rates. And victims had few alternatives. Short-term shelters have a high turn away rate. Subsidized housing often has long waiting lists; in some communities wait lists for public housing are simply closed. And some victims struggled to obtain housing due to past evictions or criminal history.

<sup>3</sup>HUD affordable housing information:  
[http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program\\_offices/com\\_m\\_planning/affordablehousing](http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/com_m_planning/affordablehousing)



<sup>4</sup>Estimated income and housing costs shown for victims in eight most recent domestic violence fatality reviews. One additional victim is not included in the chart because she had no income.

### RESOURCE

**Domestic Violence Housing First** provides strategies for long term housing options for victims impacted by domestic violence. Check out the Domestic Violence Housing First Toolkit for how you can implement these strategies in your community.



- Get up-to-date statewide fatality statistics.
- Join the conversation on our blog and facebook page.
- Find resources for survivors and advocates.