

**North Carolina Coalition Against
Domestic Violence
Comprehensive Homicide Report
2002-2010**

698 Lives Lost



**NORTH CAROLINA
COALITION**
AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
1981-2011

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Report Overview

In a report released by the Violence Policy Center in 2010, North Carolina was ranked the 4th highest state for homicides perpetrated by one male perpetrator against one female victim in 2008. This ranking signifies the prevalence and scope of domestic violence homicide in NC. This report is designed to highlight the dynamics of domestic violence homicide and provide information to the general public, policy makers, and allied professionals supporting the North Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence's (NCCADV) work to end domestic violence. Most importantly, this report is created to honor all of the lives lost to domestic violence in our state so that we can increase awareness of this epidemic.

This comprehensive report examines trends in NCCADV domestic violence homicide data from 2002-2010. We look at trends in demographic factors such as age and sex, as well as situational factors such as the day and location of the homicide, the weapon used, and alleged perpetrators' previous criminal charges. At the time of publication, some criminal data were only available through 2009 and graphs have been labeled accordingly.

Since January 1, 2002, NCCADV has collected information regarding domestic violence homicides in North Carolina. Information is gathered from public sources, primarily from media reports, and posted on our website. Our intention is for this list to serve as a memorial to the victims and their families, and to provide a current representation of the tragic impact domestic violence has in North Carolina.

Our hearts go out to all of the families and friends of those who have lost a loved one to domestic violence. NCCADV thanks the media, as well as the domestic violence advocates, allies, and surviving family members who provide assistance and support to NCCADV's homicide tracking project. We appreciate your support in working to end domestic violence. Too many lives have been lost...one life is too many.

Disclaimer

This information is not intended to be an official record of all domestic violence homicides in North Carolina for the time period covered and shall not be used for any purpose without prior permission from the North Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence. Homicides are included based on case specific information that demonstrates a correlation between domestic violence and the death of the victim. Additionally, references to the “perpetrator” indicate that the individual was the alleged killer at the time data was collected. Nothing included in this information is intended to represent a legal standard of guilt or innocence. Lastly, trends and interpretation of data included in the following report are based on data available through January 2011 and based primarily on data collected by NCCADV from the media and should be interpreted with care.

Domestic Violence Homicide Defined

The North Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence defines a domestic violence homicide as the following: domestic violence homicides occur when someone murders a current or former intimate partner and/or his or her children. Domestic violence homicides include the murder of third parties. Examples of third parties include the murder of relatives of the person’s former or current intimate partner, someone attempting to protect their current or former intimate partner, or the current intimate partner of the person’s ex-partner. Domestic violence homicides include acts of self-defense against an abusive partner.

The Impact of Domestic Violence Across the Country and in North Carolina

Domestic violence occurs when a person uses physical violence, sexual violence, threats of violence, psychological, emotional and/or economic abuse, or stalking to establish a pattern of coercive power and control over his or her current or former intimate partner. Victims of domestic violence are physically, emotionally, and/or economically controlled by their partners, and their right to live peaceful and productive lives is continuously compromised.

Domestic Violence in the United States

- About **1 in 4 women** will experience domestic violence in her lifetime.¹
- Each year, 1.3 million women are physically abused, more than 200,000 women are raped, and more than 500,000 women are stalked by an intimate partner.²
- Women of all ages are victims of domestic violence, but the highest rates of victimization occur among young women aged 20-24 years.³
- Women of all races are victims of domestic violence, but minorities are disproportionately affected.³
- The highest rates of domestic violence occur in American Indian women: 11.1 per 1000 compared to 4.0 per 1000 in white women.³
- Children exposed to domestic violence and/or child abuse are at increased risk for becoming a victim or perpetrator of domestic violence in adulthood.⁴
- 1 in 3 adolescent girls is a victim of dating violence.⁵
- Teen victims are more likely to engage in unhealthy behaviors such as smoking, using drugs, risky sexual behavior, and suicide.⁵

Domestic Violence is one of the Most Common Causes of Injury to Women in the United States ⁶

- Each year, it is estimated that over 486,000 visits to the Emergency Department are a result of physical abuse or rape by an intimate partner. ²
- Victims of domestic violence suffer from a number of negative health effects in addition to injuries, such as chronic pain, unintended pregnancy, activity limitations, heart disease, joint disease, asthma, gynecological problems, sexually transmitted infections, stress, depression, and anxiety. ⁶ These effects occur at higher levels in abused women than women who have never been abused, and can continue even after the abuse has ended. ⁶
- Abuse during pregnancy can lead to low birth weight, miscarriage, and abuse post-partum (after the baby is born). ⁷ Abuse can also interfere with breastfeeding. ⁷

The Economic Impact of Domestic Violence Affects Individuals, Families, Businesses, and Society

- The total health care costs of domestic violence are about \$4.1 billion each year. ²
- Victims of abuse have more absences from work than the general population, often due to injuries, embarrassment due to visible cuts or bruises, or because the abusive partner interferes with her ability to get to work. ²
- It is estimated that up to 74% of abused women who are employed experience harassment by the batterer at work or interference with her ability to do her work. ⁸
- Loss of wages due to domestic violence leads to financial instability and makes it difficult to maintain steady housing or provide for children. ⁹
- A survey of 27 cities, including Charlotte and Gastonia, identified domestic violence as one of the top three causes of homelessness. ¹⁰
- 50-60% of women receiving public assistance have been victims of domestic violence, compared to 22% of the general population. ¹¹
- Women in the U.S. lose about 8 million paid days of work (the equivalent of 32,114 full-time jobs) each year due to domestic violence. ²

- The cost of productivity lost from employment due to domestic violence is \$727.8 million each year.²

Domestic Violence and Children in the United States

- An estimated **15.5 million children** live in homes where domestic violence occurs.⁸
- In homes where domestic violence exists, children are at higher risk of being abused.⁹
- Children who are exposed to domestic violence, or who are victims of abuse, are at higher risk of being victims or batterers as adults.⁴
- A common tactic of batterers is to isolate the victim from family and friends.¹²
- Women who experience isolation may have reduced ability to care for themselves or their children.¹³

Domestic Violence in North Carolina

- **1 in 5 women** experience **physical abuse**.¹⁴
- North Carolina has the 8th largest American Indian population in the U.S, and American Indian women are disproportionately affected by domestic violence, 11.1 per 1000 compared to 4.0 per 1000 in white women.⁹
- According to the North Carolina Council for Women¹⁵ during 2009-2010:
 - Crisis lines across North Carolina received 120,666 calls.
 - Local shelters served 6,047 children (0-17 years) and 7,466 adults.
 - An additional 1,721 victims were referred to other shelters due to lack of space.
 - Shelters in 26 counties were filled to capacity more than 100 days that year.

Domestic Violence Homicides in the United States and North Carolina

Domestic Violence Homicides in the United States

- Every day, **3 women are murdered** by a husband or boyfriend.¹⁶
- Women are **9 times more likely** to be killed by an intimate partner than by a stranger.¹⁶
- There are **9 near-fatal domestic violence incidents** for every domestic violence homicide.¹⁶
- Rates of domestic violence homicides have declined by about 30% over the last 30 years in the U.S.¹⁶
- Rates have decreased for male victims much faster than for female victims.¹⁶

Over the last 30 years, there has been an increase in public awareness of domestic violence as a criminal offense with far reaching individual, community and social consequences as opposed to a private issue occurring within the confines of households. Policy changes and increased funding for direct service agencies resulted in increased resources available for victims such as legal domestic violence advocacy programs, crisis lines, and shelters. Declines in domestic violence homicides in the United States, however, varied by the victim's sex and race:

- 9% decrease for white females
- 49% decrease for African American females
- 56% decrease for white males
- 81% decrease for African American males¹⁶

Domestic Violence Homicide in North Carolina: NCCADV Domestic Violence Data Summary

The North Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCCADV) has collected data regarding domestic violence homicides in North Carolina since January 1, 2002. What follows is a summary 2002-2010 data. The information collected by NCCADV was gathered from public sources, primarily from media reports.

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HOMICIDES

Domestic Violence Homicides in North Carolina

The North Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCCADV) has collected information regarding domestic violence homicides in North Carolina since January 1, 2002. Information is gathered from public sources, primarily from media reports. This list serves as a memorial to the victims and families and provides a current representation of the deadly impact domestic violence can have in North Carolina. NCCADV thanks the media, as well as the advocates, allies, and surviving family members who provide assistance and support for this project.

EVENTS

HAPPY HOLIDAYS
from the staff at
NCCADV

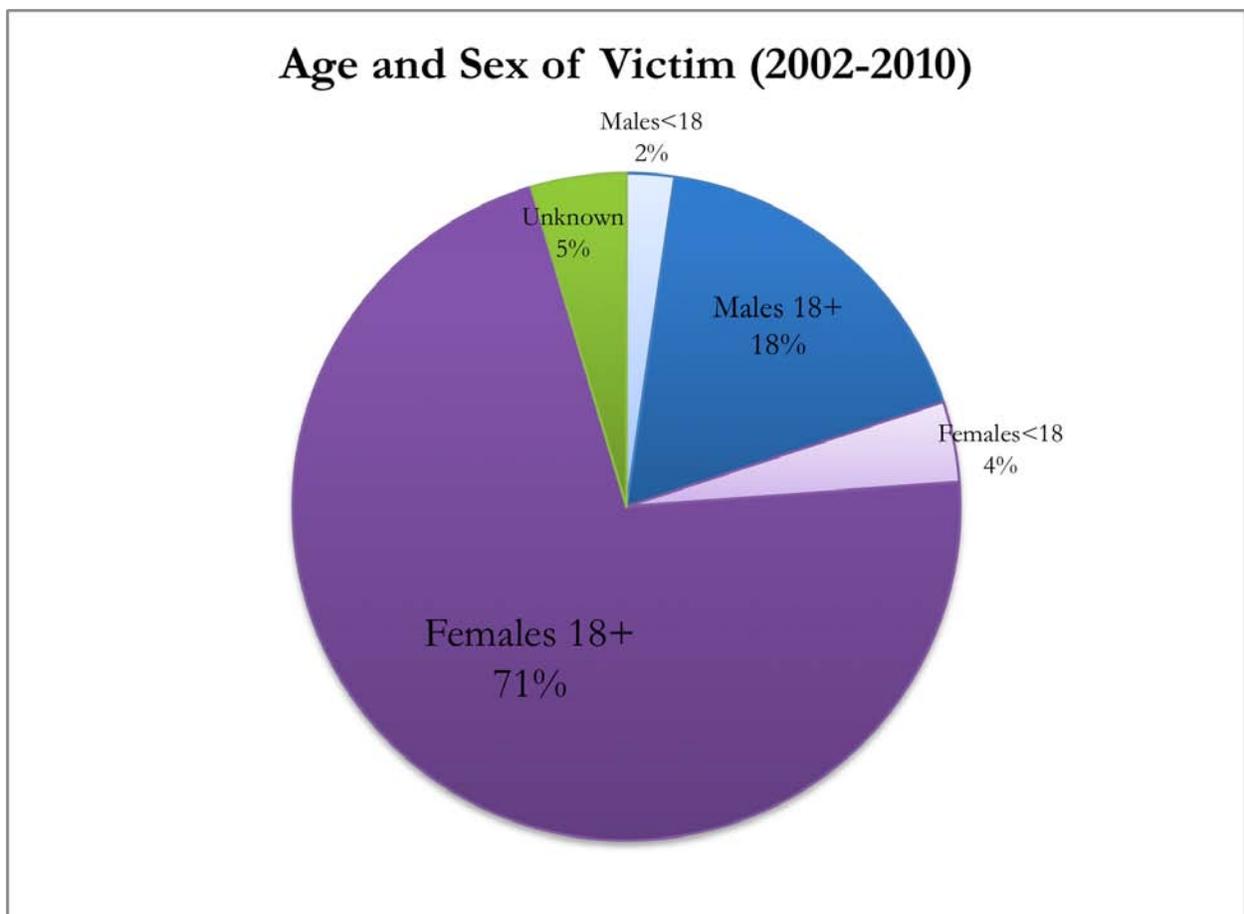
- [2010 Homicide Report](#)
- [2009 Homicide Report](#)
- [Homicides 2011](#)
- [Homicides 2010](#)
- [Homicides 2009](#)
- [Homicides 2008](#)
- [Homicides 2007](#)
- [Homicides 2006](#)
- [Homicides 2005](#)
- [Homicides 2004](#)
- [Homicides 2003](#)
- [Homicides 2002](#)

The North Carolina Violent Death Reporting System (NC-VDRS) also collects data on domestic violence homicides. NC-VDRS has collected data since 2004 and uses medical examiner records, vital statistics and law enforcement reports to capture domestic violence-related homicides across North Carolina.

Age and Sex of Victim

In North Carolina, according to NCCADV data, most victims of domestic violence homicide are women, and most perpetrators are male. This is consistent with national data.³

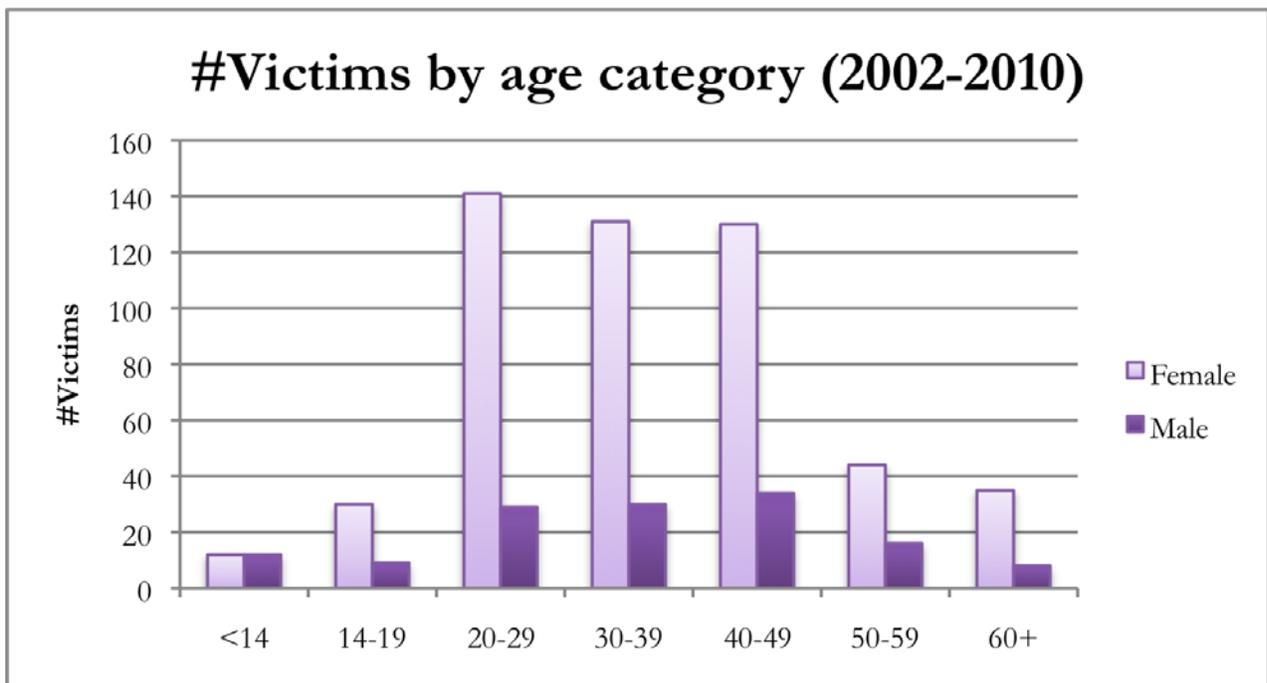
Women who are much younger or older than their intimate partner may be at greater risk of being killed by their current or former intimate partner.¹³ The average age of victims in North Carolina increased slightly over the years, from 33 years old in 2002 to 40 years old in 2010.



Child Victims



Based on NCCADV data collected from 2002-2010, there were also 44 victims under the age of 18 years. Twenty-nine children were murdered by their stepfather or their mother's boyfriend. Six victims under 18 were teenagers killed by a current or former boyfriend or girlfriend.

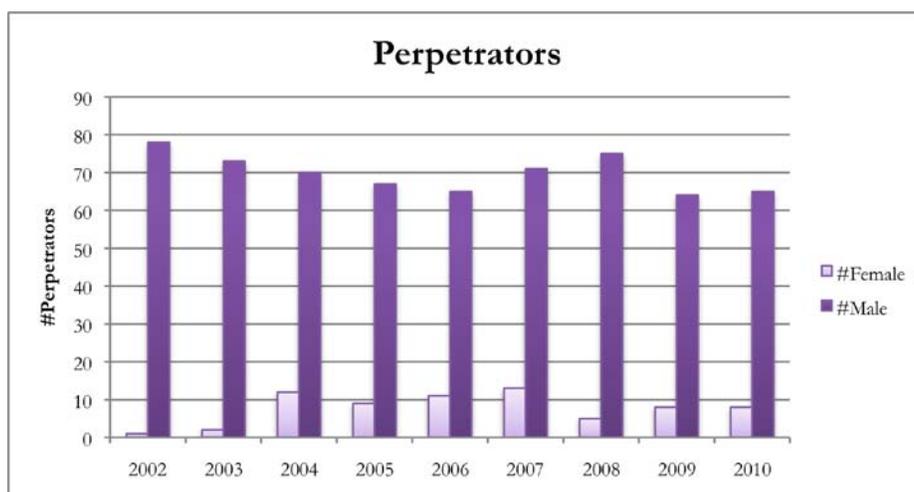
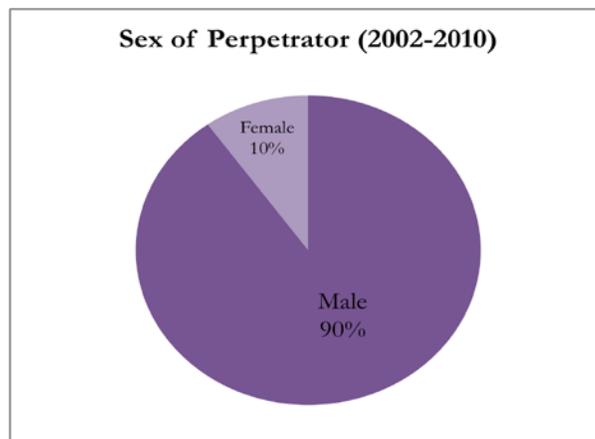


Age and Sex of Perpetrator

NCCADV data shows that the average age of perpetrators in 2010 was 39 years old, about the same as it was in 2002. In North Carolina, on average, perpetrators were 8 years older than victims.

Each year in North Carolina, there were significantly more male than female perpetrators. Women who perpetrate a homicide against their current or former intimate partner may be acting in self-defense and/or have been victims of abuse at the hand of the homicide victim.¹⁷

Over the years, across the country, domestic violence homicides have declined, but the largest declines have been among spousal relationships and female-perpetrated incidents. This may be due in part to increased availability of victim services, which prompt some women to leave an abusive partner.¹⁸



Relationship of Perpetrator to Victim

According to NCCADV, in North Carolina, and throughout the United States, most victims of domestic violence homicide had at some point been either married to or in a dating relationship with the perpetrator. According to national data submitted to the FBI from local and state law enforcement, in 2008, 92% of female homicide victims in the U.S. were killed by someone they knew and 64% were killed by husbands, ex-husbands, or boyfriends; ex-boyfriends are not captured in this data.¹⁹

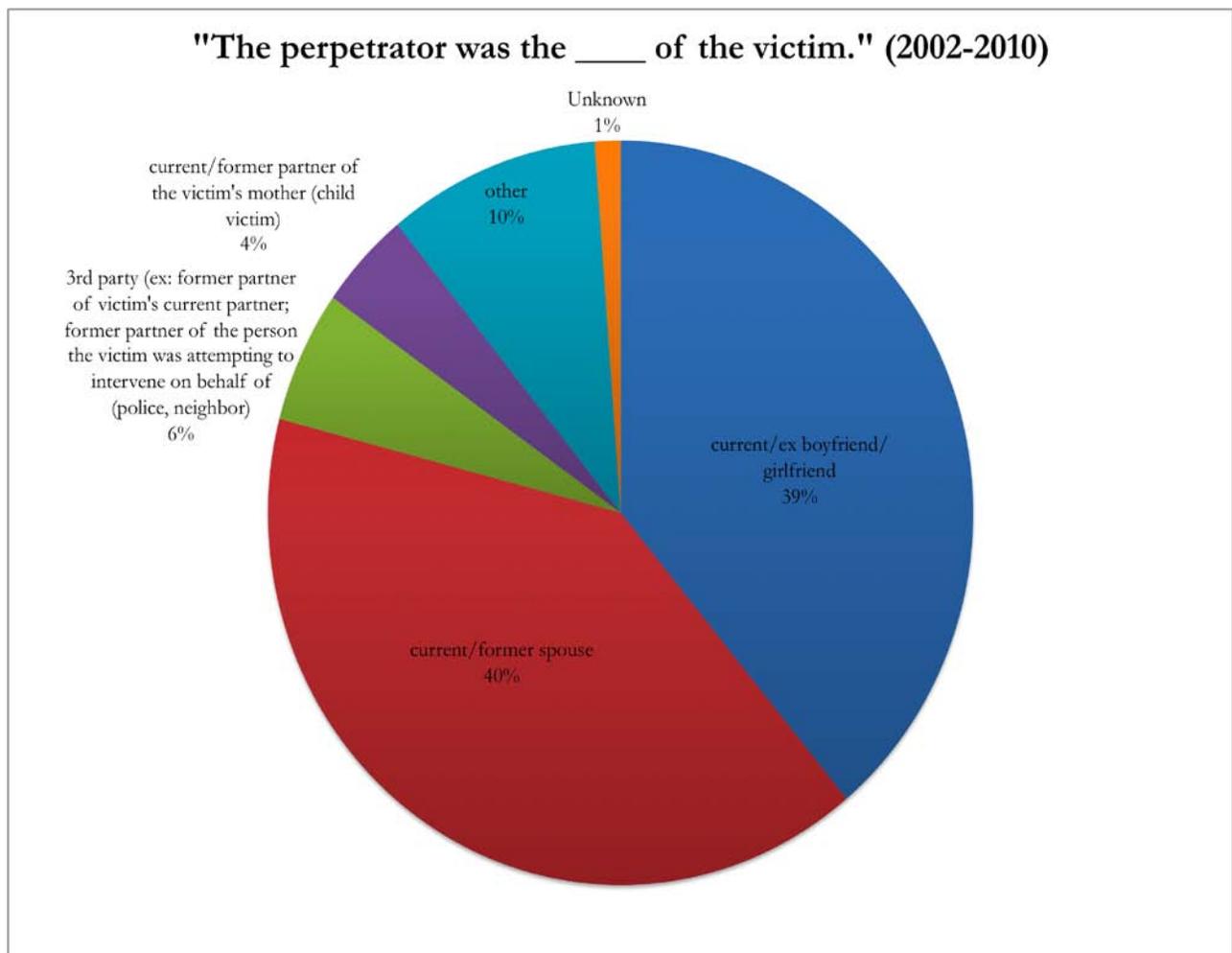
A study of domestic violence homicides in North Carolina in the 1990s found that, of all the women killed by a current or former intimate partner:

- 3 out of 4 had been threatened or assaulted by the partner that eventually killed them.
- Over half had been in contact with law enforcement in the year prior to being killed, and in 4 out of 5 of those cases, police had responded to more than one domestic violence call.
- 2 out of 5 domestic violence homicides occurred in the context of threatened, attempted, or completed separation.²⁰

The chart below represents the nature of the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator as captured by NCCADV.

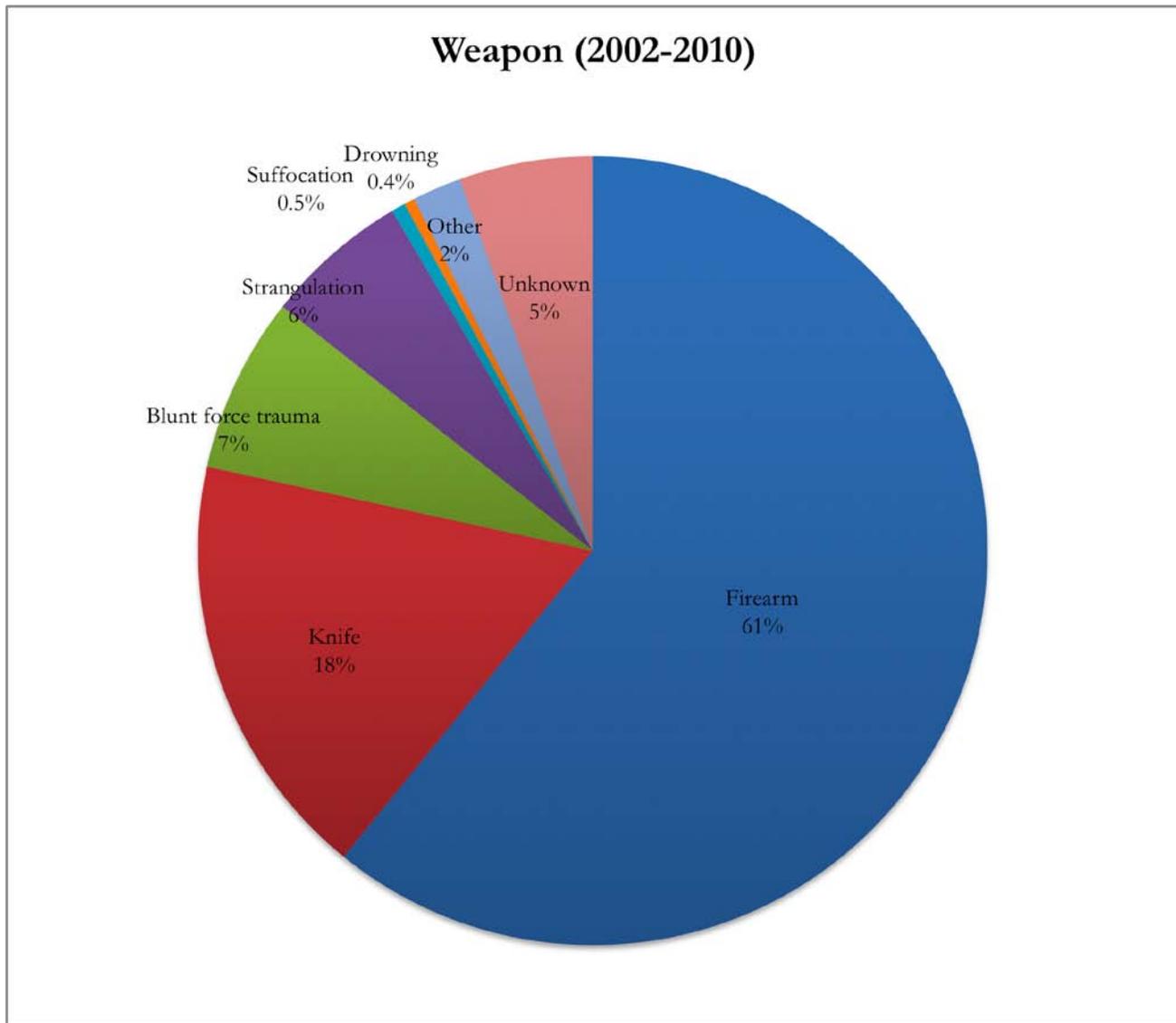


There were 39 “third party” victims, including family members, neighbors, and law enforcement officers. Many of these victims were killed while trying to intervene on behalf of a domestic violence victim.



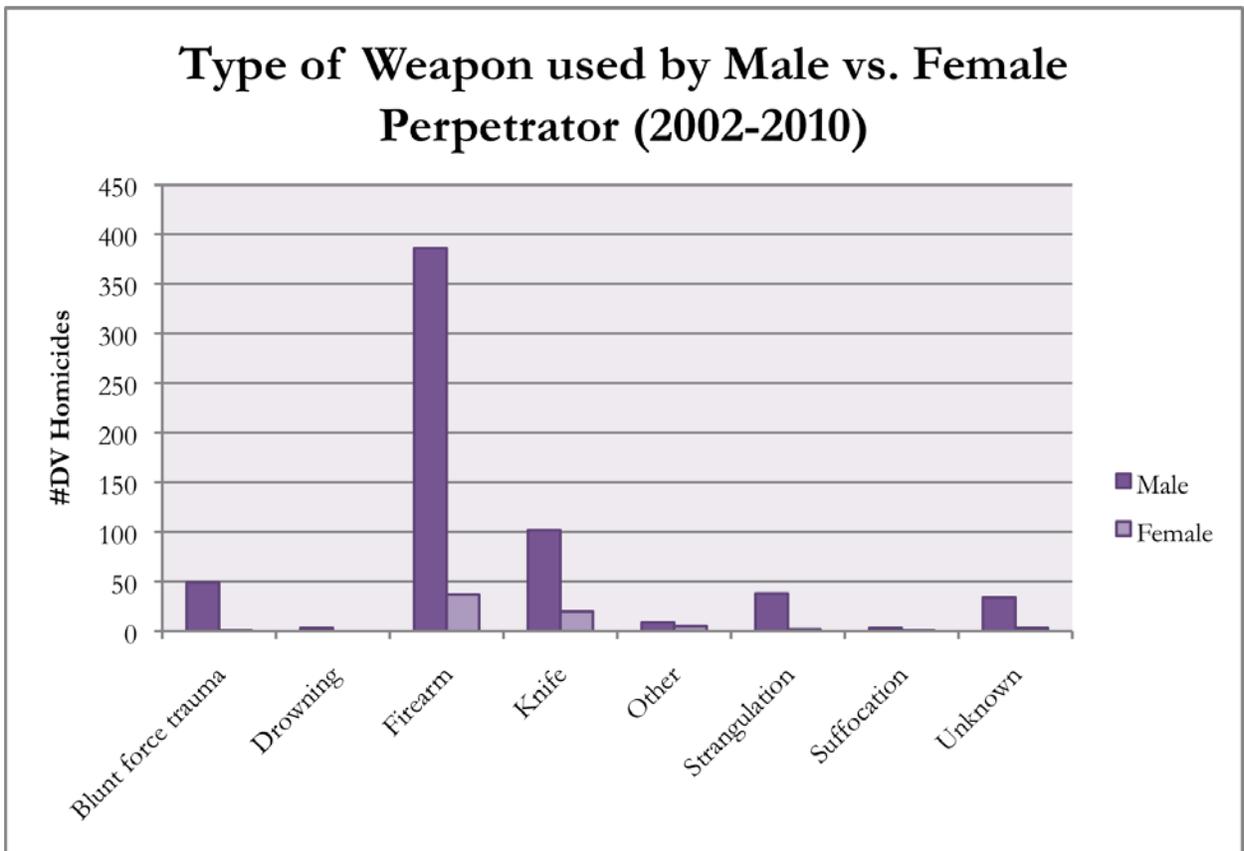
Weapon

Firearms are used in 60% of domestic violence homicides nationwide.²¹ NCCADV data show that this trend is consistent in North Carolina. See chart below.



Firearms are the most common weapons used by males to kill their intimate partner.¹⁹

Women who are being abused are 5 times more likely to be killed if her partner owns a gun.¹⁶

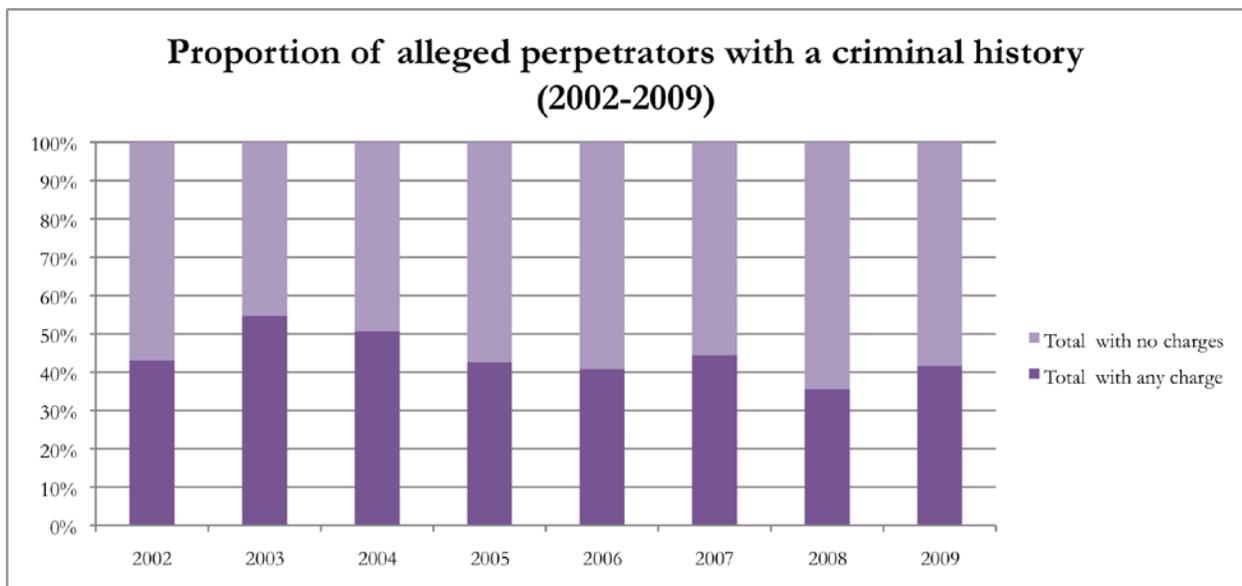


Perpetrator Criminal History

NCCADV collected perpetrator criminal history data from publicly available information on the North Carolina Department of Corrections website (<http://www.doc.state.nc.us/>), which provides users with a list of all criminal convictions. It does not include any charges that were dismissed or dropped, or out-of-state convictions. Because there is a lapse of time between the date that charges are filed and the date the case is brought to court, there is a delay in obtaining the most up to date data on criminal records. This report includes criminal conviction history through 2009.

In a study of 11 U.S. cities, researchers found that in homicide cases where the victim was a female, half of the perpetrators had been arrested in the past, with 44% having been arrested for domestic abuse incidents.¹⁶

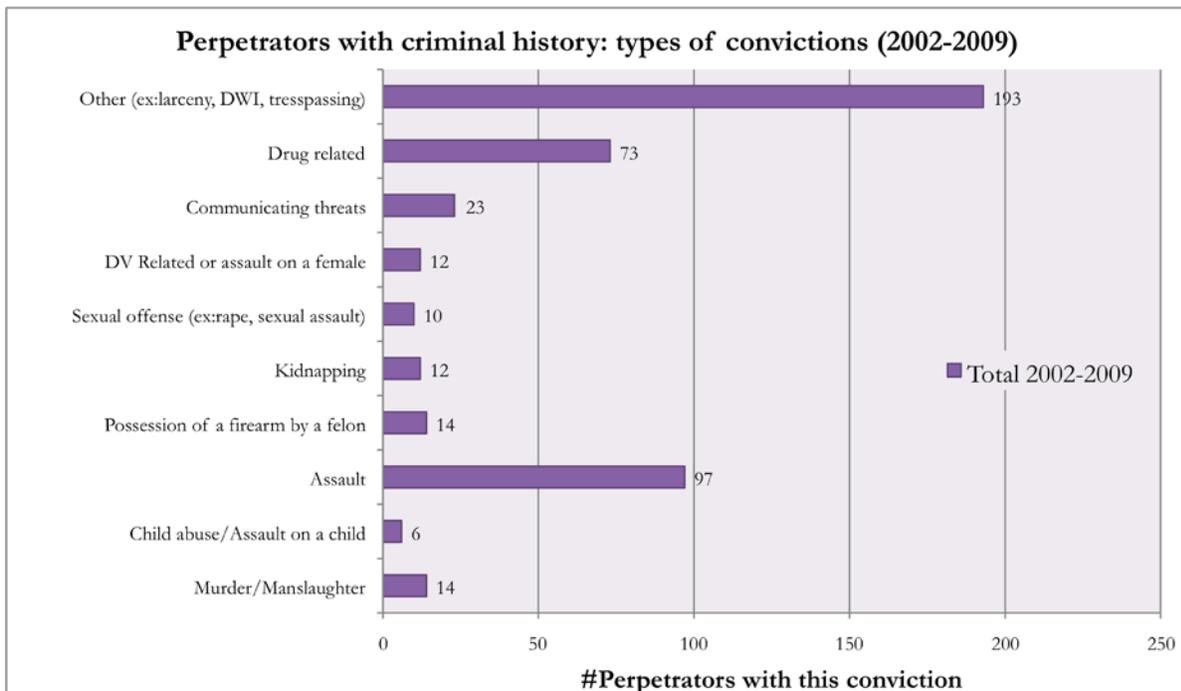
Since 2002, the proportion of perpetrators of domestic violence homicides in North Carolina who had a history of criminal convictions ranged from about 37-55%. That proportion has remained fairly consistent over the years.



For the years 2002-2009, 44% of the alleged perpetrators of domestic violence homicide in North Carolina on average had been convicted of a crime prior to committing domestic violence homicide. Of those with a criminal history, many had more than one type of conviction. The most common charges were assault or drug related. Although drug and alcohol problems are present among a substantial number of perpetrators, on average, perpetrators of domestic violence homicides are less likely than perpetrators of other homicides to have drug and alcohol problems.¹⁶

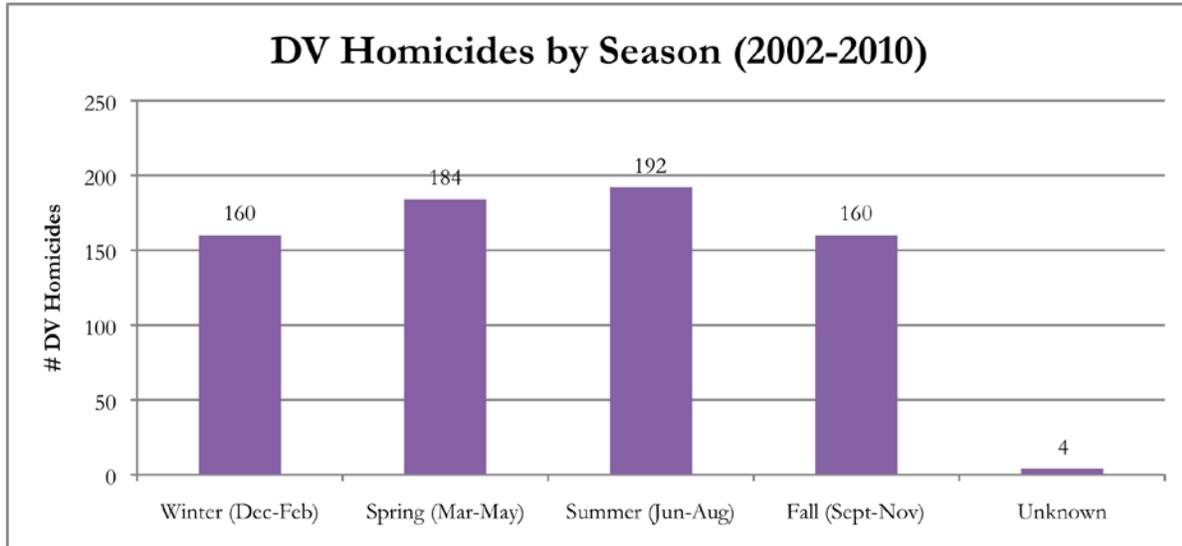
The chart below represents the various types of perpetrators' previous criminal convictions highlighting that domestic violence homicides are more likely an outcome of patterns of issues related to abuse, power and control as opposed to an isolated incident. It is important to note two features of this data: first, for each of the crimes, a perpetrator is only counted once, even if he/she had been convicted more than once for the same crime. Second, a perpetrator could have been convicted of more than one type of crime.

- **14** perpetrators had been convicted of **murder** or **manslaughter** in the past.
- **167** charges were related to **assault**, assault with a **deadly weapon**, assault on a **child**, or assault on a **female**.



Season, Month, Day and Time

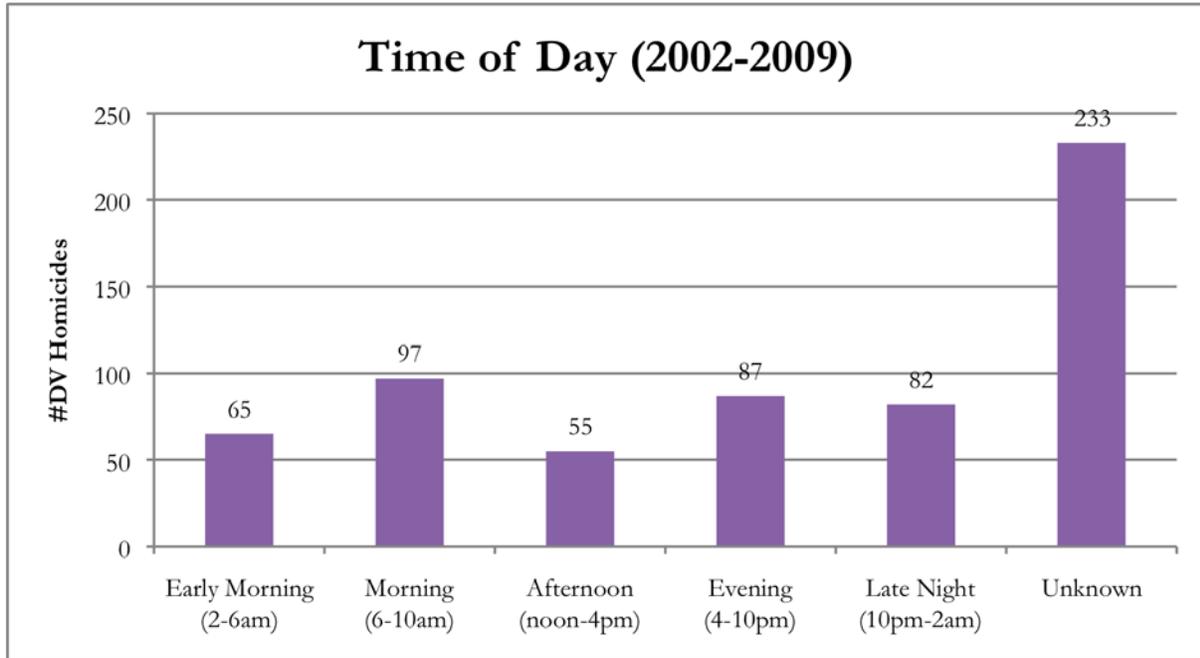
Domestic violence homicides occurred throughout the year in North Carolina. They appear to be fairly evenly distributed throughout the seasons, with a slight peak during the summer months.



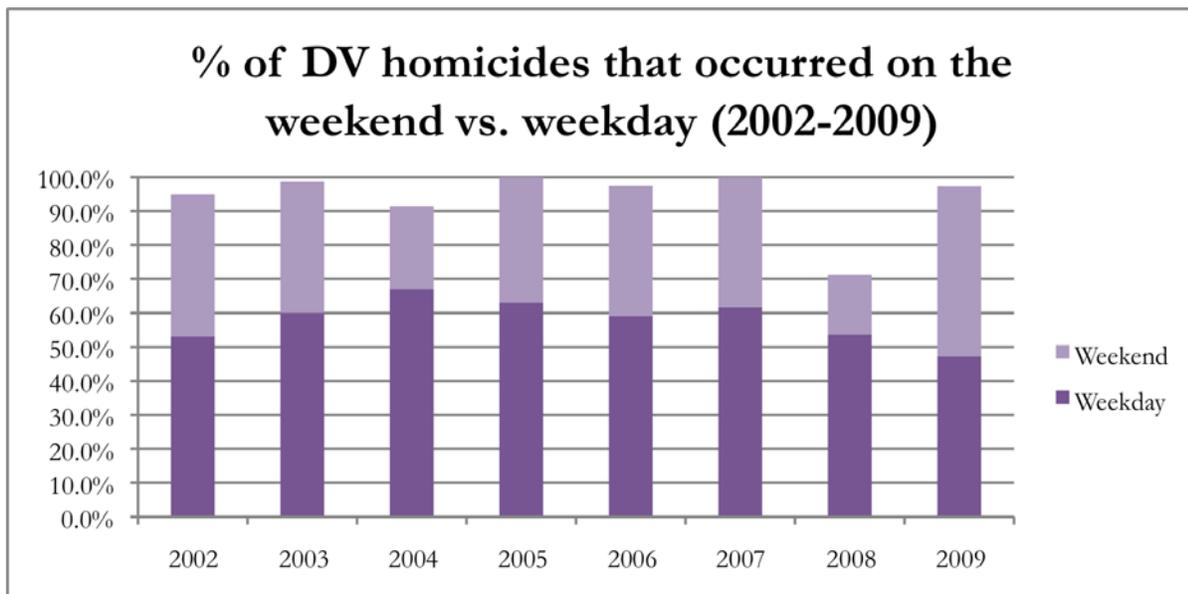
From 2002-2009, domestic violence homicides were generally evenly distributed throughout the year. Notable exceptions include a large increase from February to March, and a large decrease from March to April. It is unclear why this is the case, or whether the trend is significant.



According to NCCADV data, domestic violence homicides in North Carolina happen throughout the day and night. The time of day is often not captured in media reports; therefore it is difficult to draw conclusions about the time of day most domestic violence homicides occurred. Time is unknown for 63% of homicides.

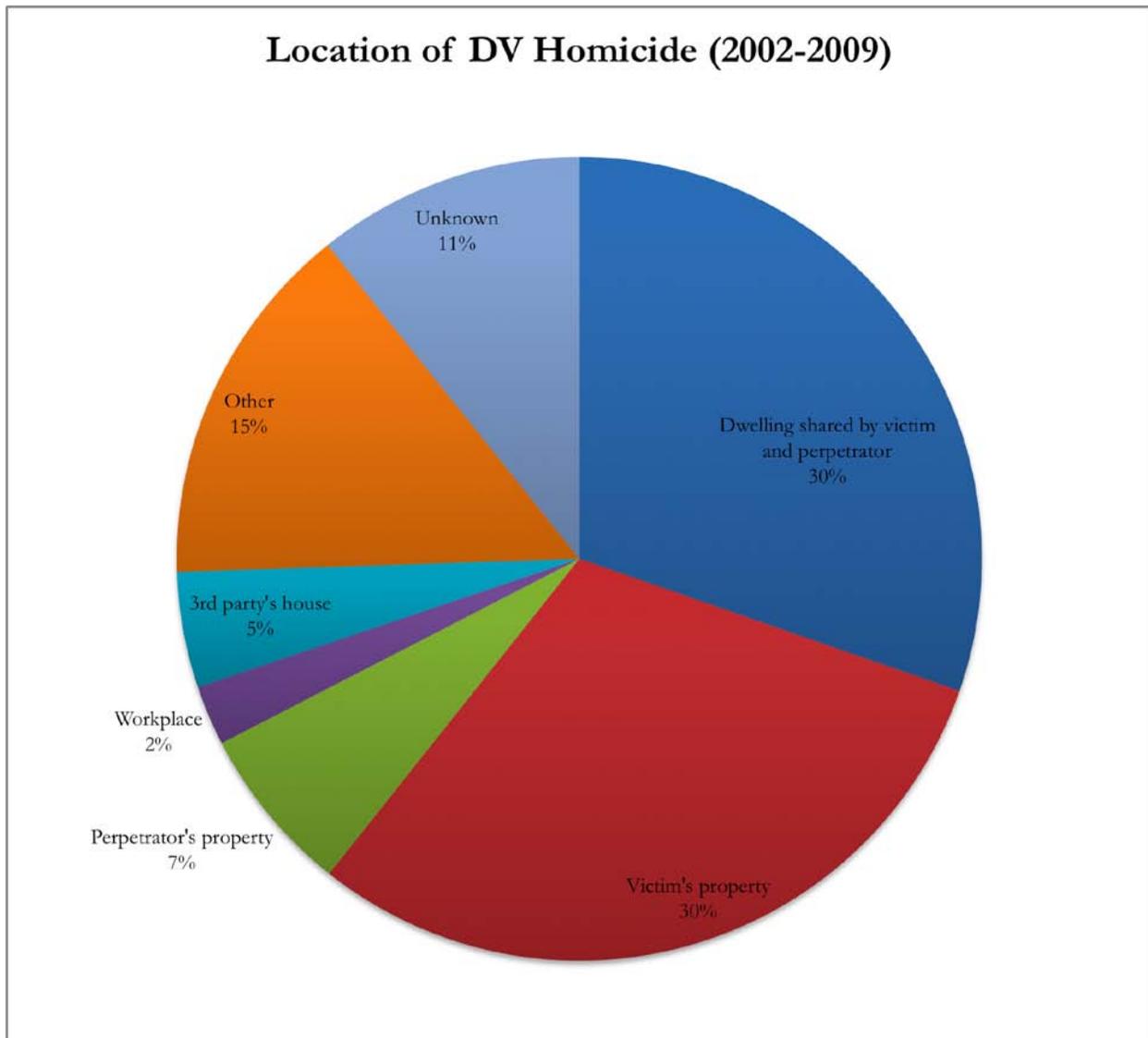


Domestic violence homicides happen throughout the week, with no apparent trend in the day of week.



Location of Domestic Violence Homicides

In North Carolina, most women are killed in their **own home**, which is consistent with national data.¹⁶



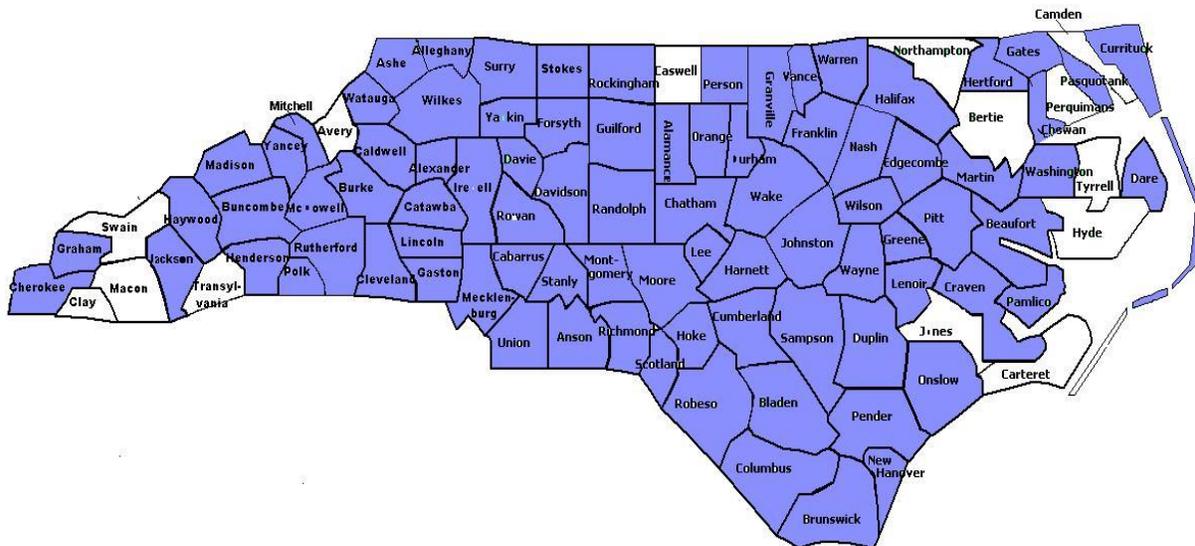
Murder-Suicides

Murder-suicides make up almost a third of domestic violence homicides when the victim is female and the perpetrator male, but are rare when the victim is male and the perpetrator is female.¹⁶ In North Carolina there were 178 murder-suicides from 2002-2010.

Domestic Violence Homicides by County 2002-2010

According to NCCADV domestic violence homicide data, 86 out of all 100 counties in North Carolina experienced at least one domestic violence homicide between 2002-2010.

Counties that are shaded in purple had at least one domestic violence homicide from 2002-2010.



Tracking Domestic Violence Homicides

Estimates of domestic violence and domestic violence homicides vary depending on the data source used. In North Carolina, we have three tracking systems that capture domestic violence homicide data and each tracking system uses slightly different definitions to classify homicides as a “domestic violence homicide.” Therefore, it is challenging to capture consistent data on the number of domestic violence homicides and related trends in a given year. The following section provides summaries of the different data sources used to collect domestic violence homicide data on the national and state level.



National Data Sources

Uniform Crime Reports (UCRs)

Since 1930, participating local, county, state, tribal, and federal law enforcement agencies have voluntarily provided the nation with a reliable set of crime statistics through the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program. The FBI, which administers the program, periodically releases the crime statistics to the public.

- Limitations: Does not currently include a category for ex-boy/girlfriends, therefore this tracking system is likely to underestimate domestic violence homicides. Up to 20% of domestic violence homicides are perpetrated by an ex-boyfriend or ex-girlfriend.¹⁶

Violence Policy Center (VPC)

The Violence Policy Center is a non-profit organization based in Washington, D.C. that works through research, domestic violence advocacy, education, and collaboration to reduce the number of firearm-related homicides. They have released a number of publications, including their yearly report “When Men Murder Women”, which is based off of UCR data (see above). <http://www.vpc.org/>

- Limitations: The report is based on UCR data, so it will have the same limitations noted above.
- Additionally, the report will not capture same-sex offender and victim homicides and homicides perpetrated by women against men.

National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS)

In 2002, the CDC received funding to create the NVDRS, which is a state-based surveillance system that collects data on violent deaths. It pools data from police reports, medical examiner reports, and death certificates into a database that can be used by state and local agencies such as law enforcement, practitioners, and researchers. Currently, 18 states participate, and North Carolina is one of them. Data on domestic violence homicides from these 18 states can be found at <http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/NVDRS/index.html>

- Limitations: Not all law enforcement agencies provide reports to their state VDRS. Also, law enforcement agencies usually stop collecting information once a perpetrator is arrested and charged; the prosecutor then continues the investigation, with new information kept in the prosecutor's files. Medical Examiner records usually do not have complete information on criminal history and circumstances of the murder.¹⁶

North Carolina Data Sources

Uniform Crime Reports (UCRs)

The North Carolina Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program is part of a nationwide, cooperative statistical effort administered by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. While the program's primary objective is to generate a reliable set of criminal statistics for use in law enforcement administration, operation, and management, its data have over the years become one of the country's leading social indicators. Since 1973, law enforcement agencies throughout North Carolina have voluntarily submitted data to the State Bureau of Investigation on specific crimes committed in their areas of jurisdiction. <http://crimereporting.ncdoj.gov/>

- Limitations: As noted above, UCRs may misclassify some domestic violence homicides, primarily because there is no category for ex-boyfriends and ex-girlfriends. According to NCCADV domestic violence data, ex-boyfriends or ex-

girlfriends committed 16%, or 107, of domestic violence homicides in North Carolina between 2002-2010. These 107 victims could go uncounted in UCR data.

North Carolina Violent Death Reporting System (NC-VDRS)

The North Carolina Violent Death Reporting System, part of the 18-state National Violent Death Reporting System, also collects data around domestic violence homicides. NC-VDRS has collected data since 2004 and uses medical examiner records, vital statistics, and law enforcement reports to capture domestic violence homicides among North Carolina residents. Because data is collected from multiple sources, these reports are generally released 2 years after the calendar year in which homicides were perpetrated. Fact sheets that provide aggregated information on these homicides can be found at:

<http://www.injuryfreenc.ncdhhs.gov/About/ncVDRS.htm>.

- Limitations are consistent with those for the National Violent Death Reporting System noted above.

North Carolina Department of Justice (NC DOJ)

The Attorney General's Office also releases a report that provides information about domestic violence homicides in North Carolina. Under a state law enacted in 2007, law enforcement agencies are required to report to the NC Department of Justice homicides in which the offender had a personal relationship with the victim as defined by Statute 50-B to the State Bureau of Investigation:

- Current or former spouses
- Persons of opposite sex who live together or have lived together
- Related as parents and children, including others acting in loco parentis to a minor child, or as grandparents and grandchildren
- Have a child in common
- Current or former household members

- Persons of the opposite sex who are in a dating relationship or have been in a dating relationship. A dating relationship is one wherein the parties are romantically involved over time and on a continuous basis during the course of the relationship. A casual acquaintance or ordinary fraternization between persons in a business or social context is not a dating relationship.

The Attorney General's Office analyzes these reports and releases a summary report each year providing statewide statistics on domestic violence and family violence homicides. The 2010 report can be found at: <http://www.ncdoj.gov/>.

- Limitations: this system casts a wider net by including the murder of current or former household members and family living in the same household in its record of domestic violence homicides. This results in a higher proportion of male victims. It also does not include third-party victims, who are not current or former household members, such as an intervening police officer or neighbor. Additionally, the system does not track the murder of same-sex intimate partners unless they are classified by the law enforcement-reporting agency as current or former household members.

North Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence

The North Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCCADV) defines domestic violence homicides as the following: Domestic violence homicides occur when a person murders their current or former intimate partner and/or their children. A domestic violence homicide includes the murder of third parties. Examples include the murder of relatives of the person's former or current intimate partner, someone attempting to protect their current or former intimate partner, or the current intimate partner of the person's ex-partner. Domestic violence homicides include acts of self-defense against an abusive partner. Current or former intimate partner relationships are indicated by an asterisk (*). This information is collected by NCCADV domestic violence and posted on our website at: www.nccadomesticviolence.org.

- Limitations: Not all homicides are covered equally in the press. This is likely to result in underestimation of domestic violence-related homicides. Additionally, media reports may contain incomplete or inaccurate information related to the homicide.

Interpreting Domestic Violence Homicide Data

Comparing data across these different sources can be misleading. This is because each data source defines domestic violence homicide differently.

- Example: NC DOJ includes the murder of a roommate in their domestic violence homicide reports, but the NCCADV does not; in addition, NCCADV includes third parties who are killed while trying to intervene, such as neighbors or police officers, whereas NC DOJ does not, unless the third party happens to also be a current or former household member.

Data for each tracking system is collected from different sources.

- Example: NCCADV collects data almost exclusively from media reports, whereas NC-VDRS uses law enforcement reports, medical examiner data, and vital statistics, and the DOJ relies on forms submitted by local law enforcement agencies that define a domestic violence homicide as occurring when the nature of the relationship between the offender and victim fall under NC's 50-B statute.

Sometimes these sources have incomplete or missing data.

- Example: UCRs are based on reports submitted by law enforcement on a voluntary basis and may not include all available data.

Additionally, certain variables are difficult to track accurately.

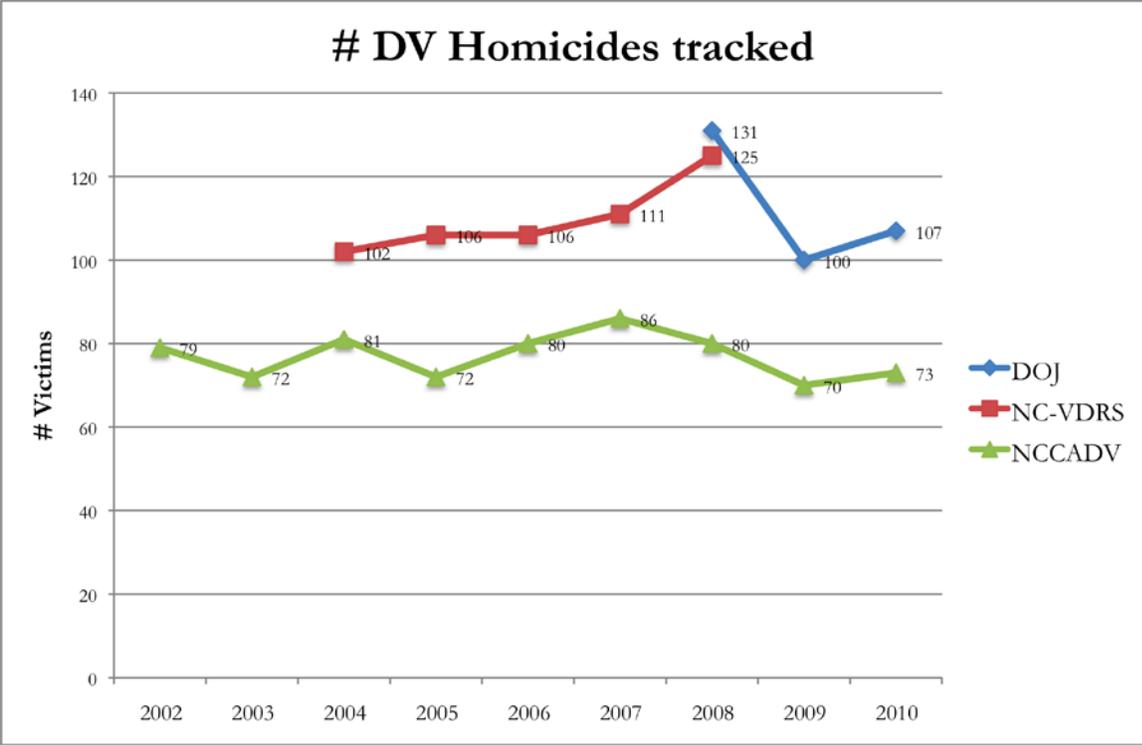
- Example: perpetrator/victim relationship in unsolved cases; there may be less investigation in murder-suicides cases since the perpetrator is identified right away, resulting in limited information.

Given the various definitions these tracking systems used for classifying a domestic violence homicide and the different data collection methods employed, it follows that each of these agencies, NC-DOJ, NCCADV domestic violence, NC-VDRS, report a different total at the end of each year.

- Example: In 2008, the total number of domestic violence homicides reported by each agency was:
 - NCVDRS – 125
 - NCCADV – 81
 - NC DOJ – 131

Why it Matters

The three domestic violence-homicide tracking systems in North Carolina use varying data collection methods and classify domestic violence homicides differently. The graph below illustrates how each tracking system tells a different story. The trajectory of homicides captured by VDRS and NCCADV domestic violence is similar over time; this may be due, in part, to the similar definitions NC-VDRS and NCCADV domestic violence use to classify domestic violence homicides. The difference in the absolute number of homicides captured by NC-VDRS and NCCADV domestic violence may be attributed to the data collection methods employed by each system.



Despite differences in methodology, each agency plays an important role in monitoring trends in domestic violence homicides. The availability of these data will assist researchers, legislators, law enforcement, and domestic violence advocates in understanding the extent to which domestic violence homicides affect the citizens of North Carolina, and in identifying possible strategies to prevent future deaths related to domestic violence from occurring. We thank the NC-DOJ and NC-VDRS for sharing the data that made this report possible.

Concluding Remarks

The vision of the North Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence is to empower all North Carolina communities to build a society that prevents and eliminates domestic violence. To this end, it is our hope that this document serves as an awareness raising tool and educational resource that initiates and/or strengthens collective community action to prevent and end domestic violence in North Carolina.

Again, our hearts go out to the victims, family members and friends across the state. NCCADV will continue to collaborate with allied professionals and local domestic violence service agencies to prevent this tragic loss of life, support survivors of domestic violence and their families, and work to create a future in which all North Carolinians enjoy safe, productive and empowered lives.

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