



# **When Men Murder Women: An Analysis of 2001 Homicide Data**

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

**September 2003**

**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 Karen Brock, MPH, and edited by VPC Publications Coordinator Aimée Newth.

This study was funded in part with the support of The David Bohnett Foundation, The California Wellness Foundation, The George Gund Foundation, The Joyce Foundation, The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and The Streisand Foundation. Past studies released by the VPC include:

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## 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 recent 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>

In addition, a study by the Department of Justice found that women were far more likely to be the victim of violent crimes committed by intimate partners than were men, especially when a weapon was involved. Moreover, women were much more likely to be victimized at home than in any other place.<sup>4</sup>

Finally, 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> Furthermore, a June 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 form 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 2000 there were only 137 justifiable homicides (the justified killing of a felon during the commission of a felony) committed by private citizens using firearms. Of these, only 122 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 2000, the most recent final data available, are suicide (16,586), homicide (10,801), or fatal unintentional injury (776). 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 2001. Once again, it is the most recent data available. This is the first analysis of the 2001 data on female homicide victims to offer breakdowns of cases in the 15 states with the highest female victim/male offender homicide rates, and the first to rank the states by the rate of these 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 2001, there were 1,899 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 highlights 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 Nearly nine times as many females were murdered by a male they knew (1,588 victims) than were killed by male strangers (178 victims).
- o Fifty-one percent (970) of female homicide victims were wives or intimate acquaintances of their killers.<sup>12</sup>
- o There were 327 women shot and killed by either their husband or intimate acquaintance during the course of an argument—nearly one woman a day.
- o Nationwide, more female homicides were committed with firearms (49 percent) than with any other weapon. Knives and other cutting instruments accounted for 20 percent of all female murders, bodily force 16 percent, and murder by blunt object 8 percent. Of the homicides committed with firearms, 76 percent were committed with handguns.

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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 2001 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.

- o In 86 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.

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 15 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 15 states can be found in Appendix Two.

### ***State Rankings***

In 2001, the homicide rate among female victims murdered by males in single victim/single offender incidents in the United States was 1.35 per 100,000. For that year, South Carolina 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 3.15 per 100,000 was more than twice the national average. South Carolina was followed by Alabama (3.11 per 100,000) and Nevada (2.93 per 100,000). The remaining states that make up the top 15 can be found in Chart One on page seven. 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 2001, nine percent of the victims were less than 18 years old (170 victims) and eight percent were 65 years of age or older (158 victims). The average age of female homicide victims was 37 years old. Homicides in which race was identified (1,889 victims) included: 17 American Indian females, 46 Asian or Pacific Islander females, 619 black females, and 1,207 white females. Eighty-eight percent (1,634 out of 1,859) of the homicides where the race of the female victim and male offender were known were intra-racial.<sup>13</sup> Overall, black women (3.34 per 100,000) were murdered at a rate more than three times higher than white women (1.05 per 100,000). American Indian women (1.38 per 100,000) were slightly more likely than white women to be murdered by a male offender, while Asian women were the least likely (0.79 per 100,000) of women of any race to be murdered by a male offender. Unfortunately,

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

Hispanic ethnicity could not be determined on a national level because of the inadequacy of data collection and reporting. Of the 49 states reporting, only eight 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.

### ***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 than by a stranger. Nearly nine times as many females were murdered by a male they knew (1,588 victims) than were killed by male strangers (178 victims) in single victim/single offender incidents in 2001.<sup>14</sup> Of victims who knew their offenders, 61 percent (970 out of 1,588) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders.<sup>15</sup> (Ex-girlfriends cannot be included in the intimate acquaintance analysis because there is no 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 weapon used by males to murder females in 2001. For homicides in which the weapon could be identified,

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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 2001 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 1,766 of 1,899 incidents. In 133 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.

<sup>15</sup> For the 2001 data, one incident mistakenly miscoded the murder victim as a "boyfriend." The victim was a female and the offender was a male, so classification of her relationship as "boyfriend" rather than "girlfriend" is a coding error.

**Chart One: Number of Females Murdered by Males in Single Victim/Single Offender Homicides and Rates by State in 2001, Ranked by Rate**

<b>Ranking</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>Number of Homicides</b>	<b>Homicide Rate per 100,000</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>South Carolina</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>3.15</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Alabama</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>3.11</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Nevada</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>2.93</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Louisiana</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>2.42</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Tennessee</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>2.41</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Alaska</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2.37</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Arkansas</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>2.26</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>Arizona</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>2.19</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>Georgia</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>2.14</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>Oklahoma</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>1.97</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>Virginia</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>1.85</b>
<b>12</b>	<b>West Virginia</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>1.82</b>
<b>13</b>	<b>Texas</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>1.77</b>
<b>14</b>	<b>Missouri</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>1.73</b>
<b>15</b>	<b>Hawaii</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>1.69</b>

49 percent of female victims (846 out of 1,720) 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 (534 victims) was three times higher than the total number murdered by male strangers using all weapons combined (178 victims) in single victim/single offender incidents in 2001. In homicides where males used firearms to kill females, handguns were clearly the weapon of choice over rifles and shotguns. In 2001, 76 percent of female homicide victims (642 out of 846) were killed with handguns.

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

The overwhelming majority of homicides among females by male offenders in single victim/single offender incidents in 2001 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 2001 there were 1,541 incidents in which the circumstances of the homicide between the female victim and the male offender in single victim/single offender incidents could be identified. Of these, 86 percent (1,320 out of 1,541) were not related to the commission of any other felony.

Of the non-felony homicides, 65 percent (862 out of 1,320) involved arguments between the female victim and the male offender and 49 percent (425 out of 862) of those homicides involved guns. According to the Supplementary Homicide Report data, in 2001 there were 327 women shot and killed by their husbands or intimate acquaintances in single victim/single offender incidents during the course of an argument—nearly one such murder every day of the year.

## **Section Two: Black Women**

The disproportionate burden of fatal and nonfatal violence borne by black women has almost always been overshadowed by the toll violence has taken on black men. In 2001, black women were murdered at a rate more than three times higher than white women: 3.34 per 100,000 versus 1.05 per 100,000.

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

In single female victim/single male offender homicides reported for 2001, 10 percent of black female victims were less than 18 years old (60 victims) and four percent were 65 years of age or older (25 victims). The average age of black female homicide victims was 34 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 seven times as many black females were murdered by a male they knew (479 victims) then were killed by male strangers (67 victims) in single victim/single offender incidents in 2001. Of black victims who knew their offenders, 59 percent (281 out of 479) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Ninety-four percent (569 out of 607) 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 2001. In the 543 homicides for which the murder weapon could be identified, 53 percent of black female victims (287 victims) were shot and killed with guns. And when these women were killed with a gun, it was almost always a handgun (242 victims or 84 percent). The number of black females shot and killed by their husband or intimate acquaintance (157 victims) was more than twice as high as the total number murdered by male strangers using all weapons combined (67 victims) in single victim/single offender incidents in 2001.

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

The overwhelming majority of homicides among black females by male offenders in single victim/single offender incidents in 2001 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 2001, for the 487 homicides in which the circumstances between the black female victim and male offender could be identified, 87 percent (422 out of 487) were not related to the commission of any other felony.

Two thirds of non-felony related homicides (282 out of 422) involved arguments between the black female victim and male offender. Fifty-three percent (149 victims) were shot and killed with guns during those arguments.

## 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 U.S. counties found that when there were one or more guns in the home, the risk of homicide increased more than three times.<sup>16</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, Georgia, 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>17</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 *84 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 U.S. 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>18</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>16</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>17</sup> Linda E. Salzman et al., "Weapon Involvement and Injury Outcomes in Family and Intimate Assaults," *JAMA* 267, no. 22 (1992): 3043-3047.

<sup>18</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, 2001**

<b>State Ranking by Rate</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>Number of Homicide Victims</b>	<b>Homicide Rate per 100,000</b>
2	Alabama	71	3.11
6	Alaska	7	2.37
8	Arizona	54	2.19
7	Arkansas	30	2.26
22	California	238	1.42
30	Colorado	24	1.15
36	Connecticut	16	0.94
18	Delaware	6	1.53
	Florida	NA	NA
9	Georgia	87	2.14
15	Hawaii	10	1.69
23	Idaho	9	1.41
39	Illinois	51	0.82
24	Indiana	41	1.34
44	Iowa	9	0.61
20	Kansas	20	1.48
46	Kentucky	11	0.54
4	Louisiana	55	2.42
43	Maine	4	0.62
19	Maryland	41	1.53
48	Massachusetts	14	0.44
27	Michigan	63	1.24
37	Minnesota	21	0.86
33	Mississippi	15	1.04
14	Missouri	49	1.73
47	Montana	2	0.45

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45	Nebraska	5	0.59
3	Nevada	27	2.93
40	New Hampshire	5	0.81
34	New Jersey	42	0.99
21	New Mexico	13	1.46
29	New York	112	1.18
17	North Carolina	65	1.63
49	North Dakota	1	0.32
35	Ohio	55	0.95
10	Oklahoma	34	1.97
31	Oregon	19	1.13
28	Pennsylvania	74	1.19
41	Rhode Island	4	0.77
1	South Carolina	64	3.15
26	South Dakota	5	1.34
5	Tennessee	69	2.41
13	Texas	183	1.77
16	Utah	18	1.66
42	Vermont	2	0.66
11	Virginia	66	1.85
25	Washington	39	1.34
12	West Virginia	17	1.82
32	Wisconsin	30	1.12
38	Wyoming	2	0.84
	<b>U.S. Total</b>	<b>1,899</b>	<b>1.35</b>

**Appendix Two:  
Additional Information on the 15 States with the  
Highest Rates of Female Homicide**

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# **South Carolina**

*64 females were murdered by males in South Carolina in 2001*

*The homicide rate among females murdered by males in South Carolina was 3.15 per 100,000 in 2001*

*Ranked 1<sup>st</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 36 years old.

## **Race**

Out of 64 female murder victims, 1 was Asian, 31 were black, and 32 were white.

## **Most Common Weapons**

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 45 percent of females victims (26 out of 58) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 73 percent (19 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 13 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 5 females killed by a blunt object, and 11 females killed by bodily force.

## **Victim/Offender Relationship**

For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 95 percent of female victims (61 out of 64) were murdered by someone they knew. Three female victims were killed by strangers. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 67 percent (41 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 54 percent (22 victims) were killed with guns; 73 percent of these (16 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

## **Circumstance**

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 86 percent (50 out of 58) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 72 percent (36 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

# **Alabama**

*71 females were murdered by males in Alabama in 2001*

*The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Alabama was 3.11 per 100,000 in 2001*

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

## **Age**

Five female homicide victims (7 percent) were less than 18 years old and 6 victims (9 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 37 years old.

## **Race**

Out of 71 female murder victims, 37 were black and 34 were white.

## **Most Common Weapons**

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 76 percent of female victims (39 out of 51) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 85 percent (33 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 5 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments and 7 females killed by bodily force.

## **Victim/Offender Relationship**

For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 76 percent of female victims (39 out of 51) were murdered by someone they knew. Twelve female victims were killed by strangers. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 72 percent (28 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 71 percent (20 victims) were killed with guns; 70 percent of these (14 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

## **Circumstance**

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 87 percent (20 out of 23) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 90 percent (18 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

# **Nevada**

*27 females were murdered by males in Nevada in 2001*

*The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Nevada was  
2.93 per 100,000 in 2001*

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

## **Age**

Three female homicide victims (11 percent) were less than 18 years old and 3 victims (11 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 41 years old.

## **Race**

Out of 27 female murder victims, 2 were Asian, 5 were black, and 20 were white.

## **Most Common Weapons**

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 44 percent of female victims (12 out of 27) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 75 percent (9 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 5 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, 88 percent of female victims (22 out of 25) were murdered by someone they knew. Three female victims were killed by a stranger. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 59 percent (13 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 62 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, 86 percent (12 out of 14) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 58 percent (7 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and offender.

# **Louisiana**

*55 females were murdered by males in Louisiana in 2001*

*The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Louisiana was 2.42 per 100,000 in 2001*

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

## **Age**

Two female homicide victims (4 percent) were less than 18 years old and 4 victims (8 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 35 years old.

## **Race**

Out of 55 female murder victims, 1 was Asian, 24 were black, and 30 were white.

## **Most Common Weapons**

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 58 percent of female victims (29 out of 50) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 83 percent (24 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, 91 percent of female victims (49 out of 54) were murdered by someone they knew. Five female victims were killed by a stranger. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 63 percent (31 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 63 percent (18 victims) were killed with guns; 72 percent of these (13 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

## **Circumstance**

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 83 percent (35 out of 42) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 63 percent (22 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

# Tennessee

*69 females were murdered by males in Tennessee in 2001*

*The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Tennessee was 2.41 per 100,000 in 2001*

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

## Age

Four female homicide victims (7 percent) were less than 18 years old and 5 victims (9 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 40 years old.

## Race

Out of 69 female murder victims, 28 were black and 41 were white.

## Most Common Weapons

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 62 percent of female victims (38 out of 61) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 63 percent (24 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 9 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 5 females killed by a blunt object, and 8 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 (55 out of 59) were murdered by someone they knew. Four female victims were killed by a stranger. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 62 percent (34 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 74 percent (23 victims) were killed with guns; 70 percent of these (16 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

## Circumstance

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 81 percent (34 out of 42) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 71 percent (24 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

# **Alaska**

*7 females were murdered by males in Alaska in 2001*

*The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Alaska was  
2.37 per 100,000 in 2001*

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

## **Age**

None of the female homicide victims were less than 18 years old or were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 43 years old.

## **Race**

Out of 7 female murder victims, 5 were American Indian and 2 were white.

## **Most Common Weapons**

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 43 percent of female victims (3 out of 7) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, none were killed with handguns. There were 2 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 1 female killed by a blunt object, and 1 female killed by bodily force.

## **Victim/Offender Relationship**

For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, all of the female victims (7 out of 7) were murdered by someone they knew. No female victim was killed by a stranger. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 86 percent (6 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 50 percent (3 victims) were killed with guns; none of these victims were shot and killed with handguns.

## **Circumstance**

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, none (0 out of 6) were related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 83 percent (5 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

# **Arkansas**

*30 females were murdered by males in Arkansas in 2001*

*The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Arkansas was 2.26 per 100,000 in 2001*

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

## **Age**

Eight female homicide victims (31 percent) were less than 18 years old, while none of the victims were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 28 years old.

## **Race**

Out of 29 female murder victims, 13 were black and 16 were white.

## **Most Common Weapons**

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 39 percent of female victims (11 out of 28) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 73 percent (8 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 4 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 2 females killed by a blunt object, and 10 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 (28 out of 30) were murdered by someone they knew. Two female victims were killed by a stranger. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 36 percent (10 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 50 percent (5 victims) were killed with guns; 60 percent of these (3 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

## **Circumstance**

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 50 percent (13 out of 26) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 77 percent (10 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

# **Arizona**

*54 females were murdered by males in Arizona in 2001*

*The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Arizona was 2.19 per 100,000 in 2001*

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

## **Age**

Five female homicide victims (9 percent) were less than 18 years old, and 2 victims (4 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 35 years old.

## **Race**

Out of 54 female murder victims, 2 were American Indian, 6 were black, 15 were Hispanic, and 31 were white.

## **Most Common Weapons**

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 55 percent of female victims (28 out of 51) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 93 percent (26 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 11 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 3 females killed by a blunt object, and 6 females killed by bodily force.

## **Victim/Offender Relationship**

For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 83 percent of female victims (45 out of 54) were murdered by someone they knew. Nine female victims were killed by a stranger. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 51 percent (23 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 57 percent (13 victims) were killed with guns; all of these victims were shot and killed with handguns.

## **Circumstance**

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 88 percent (45 out of 51) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Overall, 71 percent (32 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

## **Georgia**

*87 females were murdered by males in Georgia in 2001*

*The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Georgia was  
2.14 per 100,000 in 2001*

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

### **Age**

Eight female homicide victims (9 percent) were less than 18 years old and 4 female homicide victims (5 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 34 years old.

### **Race**

Out of 86 female murder victims, 2 were Asian, 43 were black, and 41 were white.

### **Most Common Weapons**

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 57 percent of female victims (48 out of 84) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 85 percent (41 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 14 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 7 females killed by a blunt object, and 11 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 (73 out of 80) were murdered by someone they knew. Seven female victims were killed by strangers. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 62 percent (45 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 69 percent (31 victims) were killed with guns; 87 percent of these (27 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

### **Circumstance**

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 77 percent (62 out of 81) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 65 percent (40 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

# Oklahoma

*34 females were murdered by males in Oklahoma in 2001*

*The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Oklahoma was 1.97 per 100,000 in 2001*

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

## Age

Two female homicide victims (6 percent) were less than 18 years old and 2 victims (6 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 39 years old.

## Race

Out of 34 female murder victims, 3 were American Indian, 8 were black, 3 were Hispanic, and 20 were white.

## Most Common Weapons

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 47 percent of female victims (15 out of 32) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 47 percent (7 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 6 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 2 females killed by a blunt object, and 6 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 (31 out of 34) were murdered by someone they knew. Three female victims were killed by strangers. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 61 percent (19 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 61 percent (11 victims) were killed with guns; 45 percent of these (5 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

## Circumstance

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 97 percent (32 out of 33) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 63 percent (20 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

# **Virginia**

*66 females were murdered by males in Virginia in 2001*

*The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Virginia was 1.85 per 100,000 in 2001*

*Ranked 11<sup>th</sup> in the United States*

## **Age**

Three female homicide victims (5 percent) were less than 18 years old and 10 victims (16 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 38 years old.

## **Race**

Out of 66 female murder victims, 23 were black and 43 were white.

## **Most Common Weapons**

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 62 percent of female victims (34 out of 55) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 59 percent (20 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 6 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 6 females killed by a blunt object, and 8 females killed by bodily force.

## **Victim/Offender Relationship**

For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 98 percent of female victims (57 out of 58) were murdered by someone they knew. One female victim was killed by a stranger. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 74 percent (42 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 69 percent (25 victims) were killed with guns; 60 percent of these (15 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, 75 percent (33 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

# **West Virginia**

*17 females were murdered by males in West Virginia in 2001*

*The homicide rate among females murdered by males in West Virginia was 1.82 per 100,000 in 2001*

*Ranked 12<sup>th</sup> in the United States*

## **Age**

One female homicide victim (6 percent) was less than 18 years old and 1 victim (6 percent) was 65 years of age or older. The average age was 41 years old.

## **Race**

Out of 17 female murder victims, all 17 were white.

## **Most Common Weapons**

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 50 percent of female victims (8 out of 16) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 63 percent (5 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 4 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 1 female killed by a blunt object, and 3 females killed by bodily force.

## **Victim/Offender Relationship**

For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, all of the female victims (15 out of 15) were murdered by someone they knew. None of the female victims were killed by a stranger. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 60 percent (9 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 63 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, none (0 out of 11) were related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 64 percent (7 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

## **Texas**

*183 females were murdered by males in Texas in 2001*

*The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Texas was  
1.77 per 100,000 in 2001*

*Ranked 13<sup>th</sup> in the United States*

### **Age**

Eighteen female homicide victims (10 percent) were less than 18 years old and 15 victims (9 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 35 years old.

### **Race**

Out of 183 female murder victims, 1 was Asian, 44 were black, 52 were Hispanic, and 86 were white.

### **Most Common Weapons**

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 54 percent of female victims (92 out of 171) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 83 percent (76 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 26 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 9 females killed by a blunt object, and 31 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 (161 out of 176) were murdered by someone they knew. Fifteen female victims were killed by a stranger. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 61 percent (98 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 64 percent (59 victims) were killed with guns; 80 percent of these (47 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

### **Circumstance**

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 84 percent (137 out of 163) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 58 percent (79 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

# **Missouri**

*49 females were murdered by males in Missouri in 2001*

*The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Missouri was  
1.73 per 100,000 in 2001*

*Ranked 14<sup>th</sup> in the United States*

## **Age**

Four female homicide victims (9 percent) were less than 18 years old, and 4 victims (9 percent) were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 36 years old.

## **Race**

Out of 49 female murder victims, 1 was Asian, 16 were black, and 32 were white.

## **Most Common Weapons**

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 42 percent of female victims (15 out of 36) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 53 percent (8 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 7 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 2 females killed by a blunt object, and 1 female killed by bodily force.

## **Victim/Offender Relationship**

For homicides in which the victim to offender relationship could be identified, 83 percent of female victims (34 out of 41) were murdered by someone they knew. Seven female victims were killed by strangers. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 74 percent (25 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 60 percent (12 victims) were killed with guns; 58 percent of these victims (7 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

## **Circumstance**

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 67 percent (24 out of 36) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 79 percent (19 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

# **Hawaii**

*10 females were murdered by males in Hawaii in 2001*

*The homicide rate among females murdered by males in Hawaii was  
1.69 per 100,000 in 2001*

*Ranked 15<sup>th</sup> in the United States*

## **Age**

One female homicide victim (10 percent) was less than 18 years old, while no victims were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 37 years old.

## **Race**

Out of 10 female murder victims, 6 were Asian and 4 were white.

## **Most Common Weapons**

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 33 percent of female victims (3 out of 9) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 67 percent (2 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 3 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 1 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, all of the female victims (10 out of 10) were murdered by someone they knew. No female victims were killed by strangers. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 70 percent (7 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 50 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, none (0 out of 8) were related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 88 percent (7 homicides) involved arguments between the victim and the offender.

# United States

*1,899 females were murdered by males in the United States in 2001*

*The homicide rate among females murdered by males in the United States was 1.35 per 100,000 in 2001*

## Age

There were 170 female homicide victims (9 percent) who were less than 18 years old and 158 victims (8 percent) who were 65 years of age or older. The average age was 37 years old.

## Race

Out of 1,889 female murder victims, 17 were American Indian, 46 were Asian, 619 were black, and 1,207 were white.

## Most Common Weapons

For homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 49 percent of female homicide victims (846 out of 1,720) were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 76 percent (642 victims) were killed with handguns. There were 341 females killed with knives or other cutting instruments, 135 females killed by a blunt object, and 274 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 (1,588 out of 1,766) were murdered by someone they knew. There were 178 female victims killed by strangers. Of the victims who knew their offenders, 61 percent (970 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered, 55 percent (533 victims) were killed with guns; 74 percent of these (394 victims) were shot and killed with handguns.

## Circumstance

For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 86 percent (1,320 out of 1,541) were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 65 percent (862 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 2001 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. Hispanic ethnicity data is not available on a national scale, but is presented for individual states where available.

### **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.