

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOMICIDE REPORT JULY 2014-JUNE 2015

In fiscal year 2015, July 2014 through June 2015, 35 domestic violence (DV) homicide incidents took the lives of 49 individuals in Illinois. This report summarizes what the Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence (ICADV) learned about these incidents when a domestic violence situation became fatal. In many cases, law enforcement officers, social workers, nurses, doctors and therapists, have better opportunities to identify domestic violence lethality risk factors in the people that they see than trained domestic violence advocates do. The fact is many domestic violence homicide victims never seek the assistance of a DV advocate who can help them create a safety plan or get an order of protection.

Child Homicide Victims

In fiscal year 2015, there were 3 victims under the age of 18. The age of the child victims were 4, 6 and 7.

Means of death for the child victims:

- (2) Firearms: 4 and 6 year old
- (1) Stabbing: 7 year old

Adult Homicide Victims

In fiscal year 2015, there were 39 adult victims. 27 were female and 12 were male. The victims ranged in age from 19 to 84 years old. Firearms were means of death for 17 of the 39 adult victim homicides. The second highest means of death was stabbing, which accounted for 12 of the adult homicides. The chart titled "Means of Death-Homicides" provides a full list of all homicides.

Perpetrator Suicides

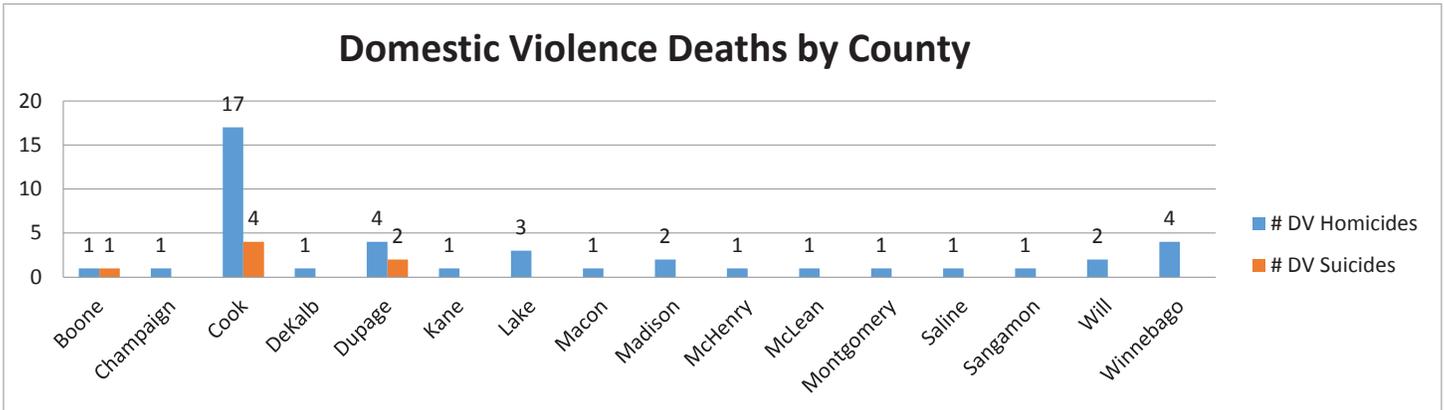
In fiscal year 2015, there were 7 perpetrators (all males) who committed suicide after committing homicide(s). These deaths are included in the grand total for fiscal year 2015 as they are domestic violence related. Firearms accounted for six of the suicides. The chart titled "Means of Death-Suicides" provides a full list of all suicides.

A Success Story...

"Sarah" received emergency services due to physical abuse by her partner. The abuser was arrested for battering Sarah and for assaulting one of the children. Sarah returned to the abuser. Staff encouraged her to call anytime if she needed assistance. Later on, Sarah contacted staff because her partner had physically assaulted her again. Her partner was arrested and staff assisted Sarah in obtaining an emergency order of protection, provided advocacy, emotional support, safety planning, information and referral, and economic assistance. They accompanied her through the court process and in meeting with the State's Attorney's office regarding the criminal charges. Staff advocated with DCFS on Sarah's behalf and assisted her in keeping her children safe. She was able to obtain a plenary order of protection. She attended individual counseling services on a weekly basis. Sarah has moved to a new residence and is working toward her goals of independence, living violence free, meeting DCFS service plan goals, and obtaining employment. She is determined to continue with services because she now understands she was caught in the cycle of violence and does not want to pass that on to her children. We believe that Sarah would not have been able to break free of the violence or navigate her way through the court system without her own strength and the support and encouragement the domestic violence agency staff provided.

Homicides and Suicides by County

There are 102 counties in Illinois, but there were only 16 counties in which homicides occurred. Cook County had the most homicides, totaling 17. DuPage and Winebago are tied for second, with four homicide victims each. The chart below reflects the number of homicide victims and perpetrator suicides by county.

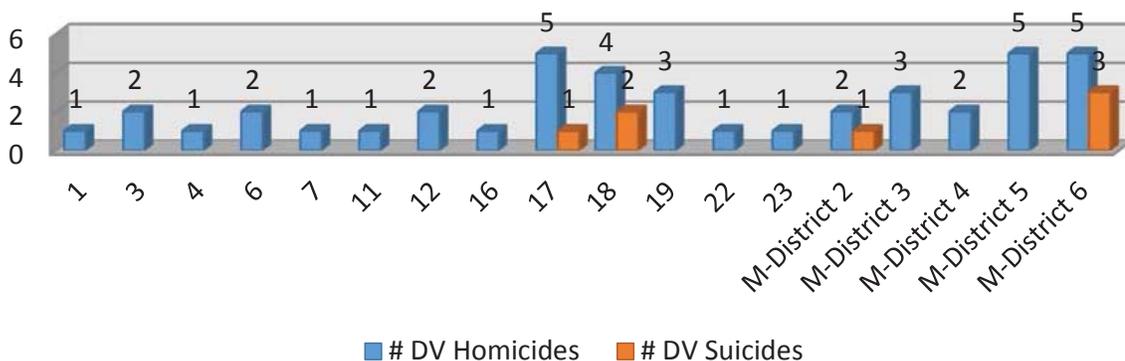


In 1985, Jacquelyn C. Campbell, PhD, RN, created a Danger Assessment Tool. This tool, which is still being used today, helps DV advocates and many others across the United States determine if a domestic violence victim has a higher lethality risk based on the abuser's behavior. Parts of that assessment tool are included in the pages of this homicide report. To find more information and read some of the research that has come out of the data collected with this Danger Assessment Tool type "Jacquelyn Campbell danger assessment tool" into any search engine to see a wide variety of links that will provide an abundance of useful information.

Homicides and Suicides by Judicial Circuit

Illinois has 23 judicial circuits along with six municipal districts (located in Cook County). This report summarizes the number of homicides that occurred within each of the judicial circuits and municipal districts in Illinois. Not all are listed in this report because no homicides were reported as domestic violence related in excluded circuits. The 17th Judicial Circuit, Cook County's 5th and 6th Municipal Districts were the highest with 5 homicide victims each. The chart below provides more information on homicides and suicides by judicial circuit.

DV Homicides and Suicides by Judicial District



A Success Story...

A domestic violence victim in severe emotional distress contacted a local DV agency seeking immediate assistance for legal advocacy, emotional support, and possible emergency shelter services. She had survived severe physical, emotional, and financial abuse from her spouse for several years. Long term isolation from family and friends kept her from seeking help. In addition, she was subjected to witnessing the physical and mental abuse of her father at the hands of her controlling husband.

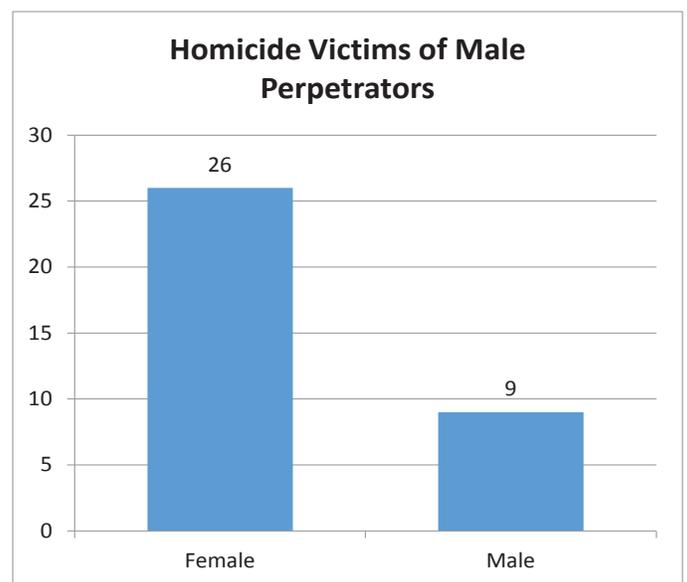
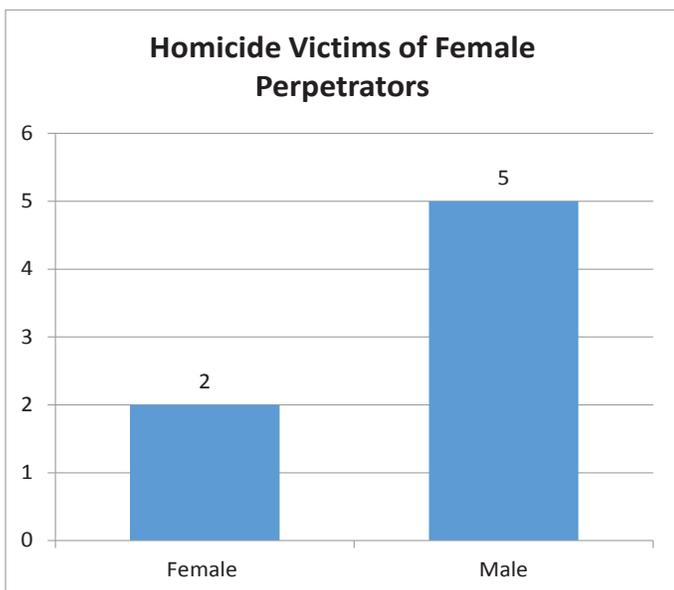
Through numerous communications with local family law attorneys and law enforcement as well as extensive IDVA research, her rights as a surviving victim were advocated for and upheld. She was granted the emergency order of protection and three weeks later was granted a plenary order of protection. If it were not for the DV legal advocates, a collaborative effort with the criminal justice system, and all the other services received from the DV agency, this survivor would have most likely remained trapped in the abusive relationship and become a domestic violence homicide statistic.

Lethality Risk Considerations

- Has the physical violence increased in severity or frequency over the past year?
- Has the abuser ever used a weapon against you or threatened you with a weapon?
- Does the abuser ever put a strangle hold on you?
- Does the abuser own or have a gun?

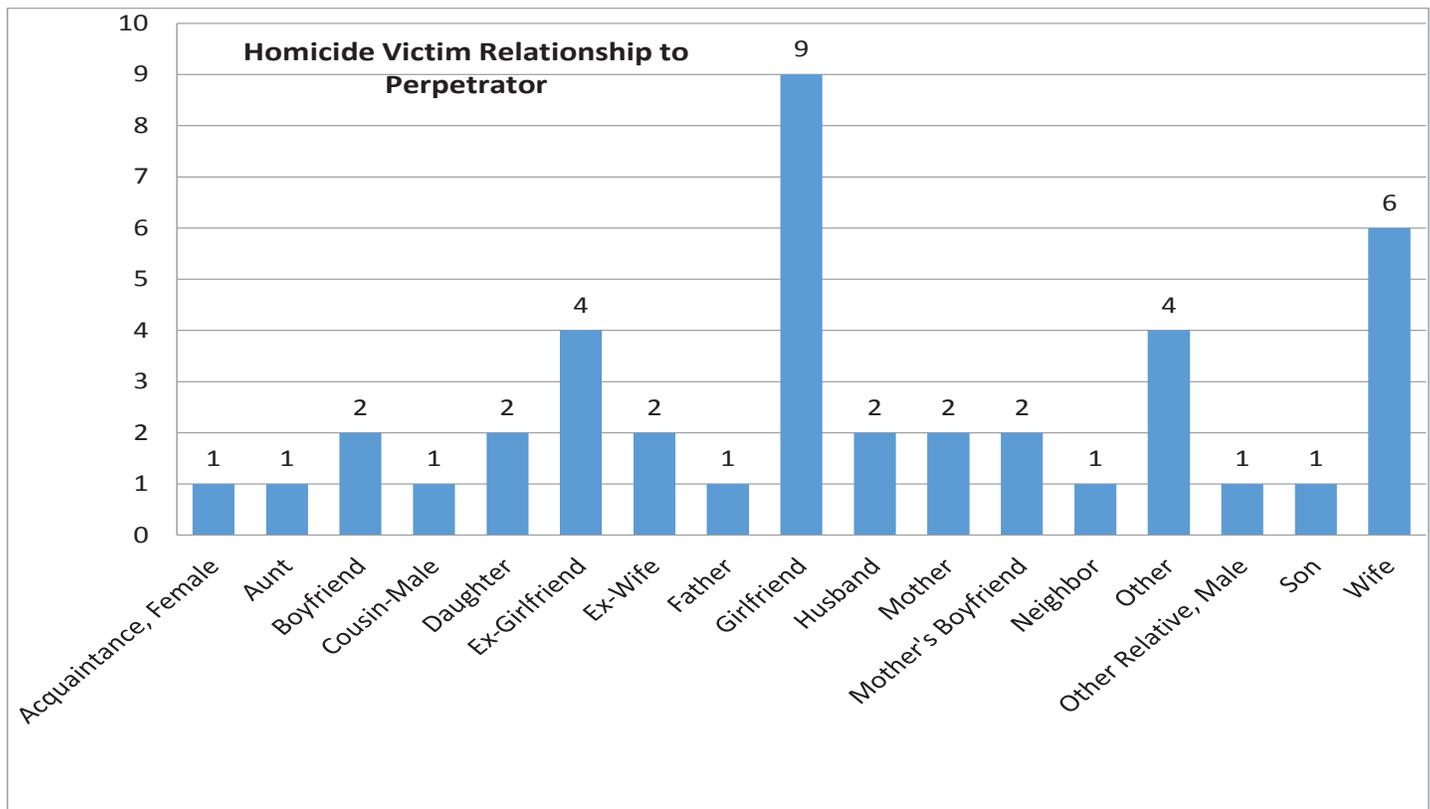
Sex of Perpetrators and Their Victims

This report reviews the sex of the perpetrators. Female perpetrators' most common victims were male. Of the 7 homicides committed by female perpetrators, five victims were male and two were female. Male perpetrators' most common victims were female. Male perpetrators were responsible for 35 domestic violence homicides, and 26 of those 35 were female. The remaining 9 victims killed by male perpetrators were male.



Homicide Victim Relationship to the Perpetrator

This report looks at the type of relationship that the homicide victim had with the perpetrator. Most often homicide victims were girlfriends (9) and wives (6) of the perpetrator. Additional homicide victims included friends and family members of the homicide victim. See the chart below for further results.



A Success Story...

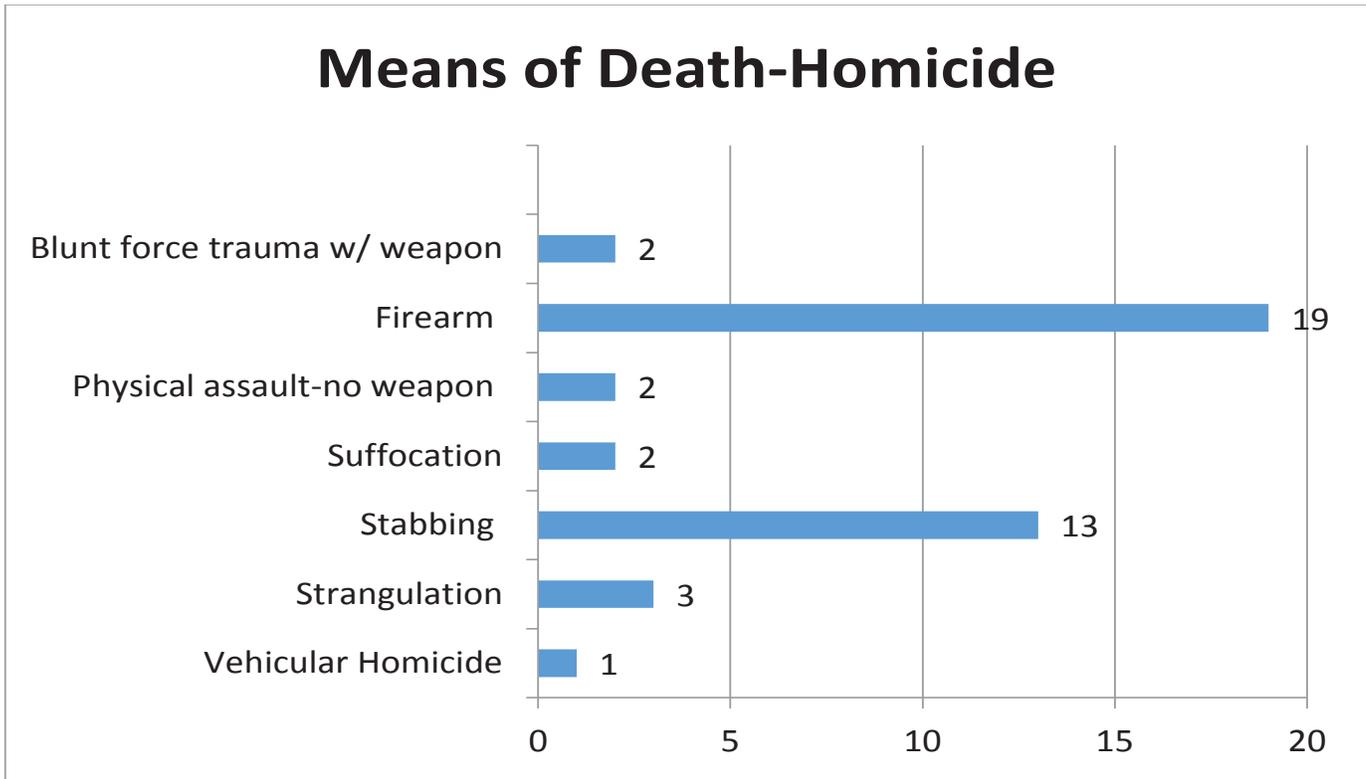
A Latina client came to a domestic violence program looking for counseling for herself and her two children; her oldest son was 11 years old and her youngest was 8 years old. Partly because of her culture, she had to get help without her husband knowing. Years earlier, she was kidnapped when she was 15 years old by the man to become husband—a practice not uncommon in her country of origin. Through the years, her husband was physically, emotionally, sexually and mentally abusive. Her two children regularly witnessed the abuse and sometimes were abused as well. When they moved to the United States, some abuse stopped and some continued. One of her friends told her about the help she had received from the local domestic violence program. Because of her husband's controlling nature, she had to be discreet with her plans to seek the help she and her children needed. The program's staff worked with her and her two children for two years to live in a violent free and safe home. She and her children are currently receiving services such as counseling from the domestic violence program. Getting a divorce, being safe, and living violence free has put a genuine smile on her face now when she sees domestic violence advocates. The children have also mentioned they are enjoying their new life.

Lethality Risk Consideration

- Does the abuser control most or all of the your daily activities?
- Have you ever been beaten by your abuser while you were pregnant?

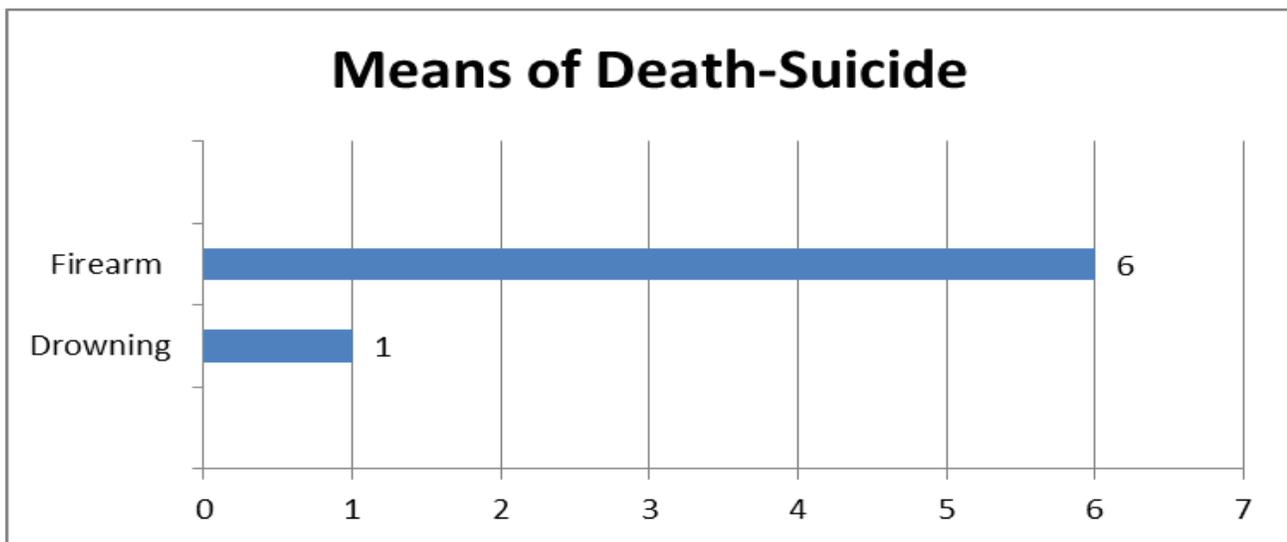
Means of Death by Homicide

Firearm deaths (19) and stabbing deaths (13) accounted for over two-thirds of all of the domestic violence homicides in fiscal year 2015.



Means of Death by Suicide

This report reviews the rate of suicides following the commission of a homicide. Of the 49 total domestic violence deaths, 7 were suicides. Suicides were committed through the use of firearms (6) and drowning (1).



Next Steps

The Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence will continue to collect homicide data on a regular basis increase comparative data from one year to the next which will enable us to identify possible trends. In year two of this project, ICADV began using a news-clipping service to increase efficiency of domestic violence homicide news searches. This led to additional time for some in-depth analysis about cases already in the database. The history of orders of protection, as well as information about the disposition of the perpetrators of domestic violence homicide, will continue to be of importance to this research.

Methods of Data Collection

ICADV staff gathered data for this important project throughout the year. The Meltwater News online system for articles pertaining to domestic violence homicides in Illinois was checked regularly. Additionally, domestic violence program staff from around the state occasionally email, fax, or mail articles to the ICADV administrative office. Many thanks to everyone who assisted in the writing of this report.

Lethality Risk Questions

- Have you ever threatened or tried to commit suicide?
- Has your abuser ever threatened or tried to commit suicide?
- Has your abuser ever been violent toward your children?
- Is the abuser violent outside of the home?
- Does the abuser threaten to kill you and/or do you believe they are capable of killing you?

A Success Story...

“D” immigrated to the United States with her U.S. citizen husband in 1996. Controlling behavior began almost immediately and escalated to physical violence over time. D’s husband often told her that if she reached out for help or called the police, she would be arrested and deported back to Mexico – without her children. D believed him and endured the abuse for 16 years. In 2012, a violent incident led D’s neighbors to call the police. She realized that her husband had been lying to her when the police arrested him rather than her. After the police gave D information about the local domestic violence program, she reached out for services. Initially, D requested counseling services for herself and her children. When she learned that she could also receive civil and criminal court advocacy, she requested those services as well. She obtained an order of protection and received emotional support throughout the criminal prosecution of her abuser. Additionally, D was assisted in efforts to gain permanent resident status by filing a VAWA petition. She is now a lawful permanent resident. D reports that she feels stronger, both emotionally and physically, than ever before and is grateful to the domestic violence advocates for supporting her through her journey.