

**Domestic Violence Claimed 72 Lives in Wisconsin in 2019**



***Wisconsin Domestic Violence  
Homicide Report:***

***2019 Homicides and a Review of 20 Years of Data***

***Published in September 2020***



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## Foreword

This is the eighteenth edition of the *Wisconsin Domestic Violence Homicide Report*. End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin (End Abuse) has been tracking and analyzing all incidents of domestic violence homicide that have occurred in Wisconsin since 2000. This report documents fatalities from 2019. In addition, the eighteenth edition also reviews domestic violence homicide data from the last 20 years, including statistics, interviews with experts on the past twenty years of work and future directions, and reflections on the impacts domestic violence homicide has on children.

Through our years of gathering and reporting homicide data, we have learned how challenging it is to fully illustrate the scope and impacts of domestic violence homicide. The fatal consequences of domestic abuse extend beyond the cases that meet the criteria for inclusion in our reports. Domestic abuse is a pervasive epidemic that has directly victimized a countless number of Wisconsinites. We acknowledge that this report in no way captures all the ways domestic abuse has life and death implications in our state.

Our past homicide reports include an analysis around trends we have noticed in our state's domestic violence homicide data and attempt to provide the reader with new information or considerations regarding the unique and disparate impact of domestic violence on specific populations. The "Topic Index to Previous Reports" on page 54 indicates the topics we have covered in the past, many of which are also pertinent and applicable to 2019 domestic violence homicide cases.

End Abuse

# Methodology

Our definition of homicide is the killing of one human being by another. This encompasses criminal, justifiable, self-defense, and reckless homicides. We consider a homicide domestic violence-related if:

- The victims and perpetrators were spouses or partners, former spouses or former partners, adults with children in common, and adults or teens that had been in a dating relationship.
- It was a homicide of a person other than the intimate partner, and it occurred within the context of domestic violence. This encompasses cases where the circumstances of the murder included obsessive control of the perpetrator's current or former partner that extended to their new partner. We also include the homicide of a bystander or someone who attempted to protect a domestic violence victim from future harm.
- The homicide was a child's death that occurred as an extension of or in response to ongoing abuse between adult intimate partners. For example, when a partner or estranged partner killed their children in order to exact revenge on their partner, it is considered domestic violence-related.
- A responding officer was in a position in which they needed to use deadly force against an individual to prevent the homicide or assault of another person. The count of domestic violence homicide victims occasionally includes perpetrators killed by responding law enforcement officers (also referred to as homicide by legal intervention).
- Beginning with the report for 2010, we include cases that involve a parent or grandparent killed by an adult child or grandchild, as well as adult step-children or step-grandchildren killing a step-parent or step-grandparent. We do not include these cases, however, if the defendant was found not guilty by reason of mental illness or lacked the capacity to stand trial. See Limitations section on page 14 for an extended explanation of this criteria.

The report also accounts for overall deaths related to domestic violence homicide, including perpetrator deaths. Most perpetrator deaths are suicides. In each case of homicide-suicide, we listed the murdered person in our heading as the homicide victim.

We seek to be as consistent and as accurate as possible year to year in determining which homicides to include in the report. Our summaries of domestic violence homicides are compiled from information that is readily available via public sources and limited follow-up inquiries. The amount of attention such sources pay to one domestic violence-related homicide in comparison to another varies greatly.

We request Uniform Crime Report (UCR) data submitted to Department of Justice, criminal complaints, and police reports obtained from the jurisdiction in which the homicide occurred. The UCR does not always include all the homicides that we include in our report, and therefore we supplement with data from other sources. The sex, race, and ethnicity classifications of victims and perpetrators are obtained from the above listed sources that we use to compile our report.

# Executive Summary

Since 2000, End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin has chronicled deaths due to domestic violence in our state. In 2019, individuals died in Wisconsin due to domestic violence at a rate of 1 death every 5 days. The basic findings contained in this report are outlined below.

2019 compared to 2018	2019	2018
All domestic violence-related homicide deaths	53	39
Incidents of domestic violence homicide	48	37
Victims of domestic violence homicide (excluding by legal intervention)	52	38
Homicides by legal intervention (responding law enforcement)*	1	1
Perpetrator suicide (excluding by legal intervention)	18	7
Attempted homicide incidents with perpetrator suicide*	1	1
Total deaths (victim and perpetrator)	72	47

\*After publication we learned new information about a case. In an incident we had previously listed as homicide by legal intervention, the perpetrator died by a self-inflicted gunshot wound after shooting his wife. This case was re-categorized on 9/21/20 as an attempted homicide-suicide incident. These perpetrator demographics are not included in the tables and percentages in the rest of the report.

Other findings in the *2019 Wisconsin Domestic Violence Homicide Report* include:

- Perpetrators of domestic violence homicide incidents were overwhelmingly male. In 2019, **83% of perpetrators were male**. This figure excludes the one homicide that occurred during legal intervention. This incident has also been excluded from other perpetrator demographic statistics.
- In 2019, **at least 56% of the victims of intimate partner homicide were killed after the relationship ended** or when one person in the relationship was taking steps to end the relationship. This figure demonstrates that leaving does not equate to safety. It also supports the main message of this report: no victim in Wisconsin should have to take the courageous step of leaving an abusive relationship without the safety and support offered by domestic violence victim advocates and without the benefit of a coordinated community response.
- **Sixty percent of the victims (31) in this report were not an intimate partner of the perpetrator**, whereas 40% (21) were an intimate partner of the perpetrator.
- The ages of victims in this report range from infant to 77 years old. Perpetrators' ages ranged from 15 to 78 years old. **The average age for both perpetrators and victims were 36 years old.**
- In 2019, homicides were committed in **23 counties in Wisconsin**.

- Firearms remain the most common means of perpetrating domestic violence homicides. In 2019, **firearms were the weapons used in 56% of domestic violence homicide incidents**, not including one homicide by legal intervention. At least 7 of the 27 perpetrators who used a firearm to commit a domestic violence homicide in 2019 were legally prohibited from having firearms.
- **There were 19 perpetrator suicides in 2019, which is the highest number of perpetrator suicides since collecting data.** This is the second highest percentage of perpetrator suicides to total number of deaths. Perpetrator suicides in our report are connected to the homicide they committed or attempted to commit in the immediate time prior to their suicide. This reflects the **connection between homicidality and suicidality in domestic violence cases** and should thus be considered when discussing domestic violence and homicide prevention.
- Many of the 2019 homicide cases reflect the risk factors that research has found to be associated with lethal violence. These include, among other factors: threats to use or actual use of a weapon, threats to kill, stalking, strangulation, obsessive jealousy, and sexual assault.

### Historical, National, and Global Context

According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, from 1980 to 2005, intimate partner homicides declined by 44% and homicides among other family members decreased by 26%. Similarly, nonfatal domestic violence decreased by about 63% from 1994 to 2010. Yet, the decline has varied significantly for different populations. The data indicate that between 1976 and 2005, “the number of black males killed by intimates dropped by 83%, white males by 61%, black females by 52%, and white females by 6%.” This downward trend has been attributed to increased awareness, services, and intervention.<sup>1</sup>

In 2017, the Centers for Disease Control released an analysis on the prevalence and circumstances surrounding female homicide deaths in the United States. Their study analyzed the deaths of 10,018 women from 18 states between the years 2003 and 2014 by looking at data from the National Violent Death Reporting System. In addition to the finding that over half of female homicides in the US are intimate partner violence (IPV) related and perpetrated with a firearm, the study found that non-Hispanic black and American Indian/Alaska Native women are killed at nearly three times the rate of non-Hispanic white women.<sup>3</sup> Despite the aforementioned downward trend of the number of homicides, disparities in the number of victims of certain racial and ethnic groups still persist.

On a global level, a systematic review published in *The Lancet* in 2013 reported that one in seven homicides overall are committed by an intimate partner. Though domestic violence homicide victims are both males and females, the latter experience higher risk and mortality. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime issued a report in 2019 titled, “Global Study on Homicide: Gender-related killing of women and girls”, which provides insights into the issue of femicide on a worldwide scale. They report that 58% of women who were killed intentionally in 2017 were killed by their intimate partner or a family member. This equals approximately 50,000 women globally who were victims of domestic violence homicide in 2017, which rose from 48,000 in 2012.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> National Institute of Justice, “The Decline of Intimate Partner Homicide,” July 1, 2005, [nij.ojp.gov: http://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/decline-intimate-partner-homicide](http://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/decline-intimate-partner-homicide)

<sup>2</sup> Stöckl, H., Devries, K., Rotstein, A., Abrahams, N., Campbell, J., Watts, C., & Moreno, C. G. (2013). The global prevalence of intimate partner homicide: a systematic review. *The Lancet*, 382(9895), 859-865.

<sup>3</sup> Petrosky E, Blair JM, Betz CJ, Fowler KA, Jack SP, Lyons BH. Racial and Ethnic Differences in Homicides of Adult Women and the Role of Intimate Partner Violence — United States, 2003–2014. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep* 2017;66:741–746. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6628a1External>

<sup>4</sup> UNODC, *Global Study on Homicide 2019* (Vienna, 2019)

# 2019 Key Findings

## Overview

	2019
Domestic violence homicide incidents	48
Victims of domestic violence homicide (excluding by legal intervention)	52
Homicides by legal intervention (responding law enforcement)*	1
All domestic violence-related homicides	53
Homicide incidents with perpetrator suicides	18
Attempted homicide incidents with perpetrator suicide**	1
Total deaths (victims and perpetrators)	72
Homicide incidents with two or more victims***	4
Female victims	29
Male victims	24
Female perpetrators****	11
Male perpetrators****	36

\*Officer demographics are not included in the rest of the tables and percentages found elsewhere in this report.

\*\*After publication we learned new information about a case. In an incident we had previously listed as homicide by legal intervention, the perpetrator died by a self-inflicted gunshot wound after shooting his wife. This case was re-categorized on 9/21/20 as an attempted homicide-suicide incident. These perpetrator demographics are not included in the tables and percentages in the rest of the report.

\*\*\*One double homicide case crossed state lines, with one homicide not occurring in Wisconsin. This death is not included in the rest of the tables and percentages in the report but is included in the narratives.

\*\*\*\*One perpetrator's sex is unknown.

## Relationship of victim to female perpetrator

When the perpetrator was female, the victim was:	2019
Current male partner	8
Current female partner	1
Former male partner	1
Father of perpetrator's child	1

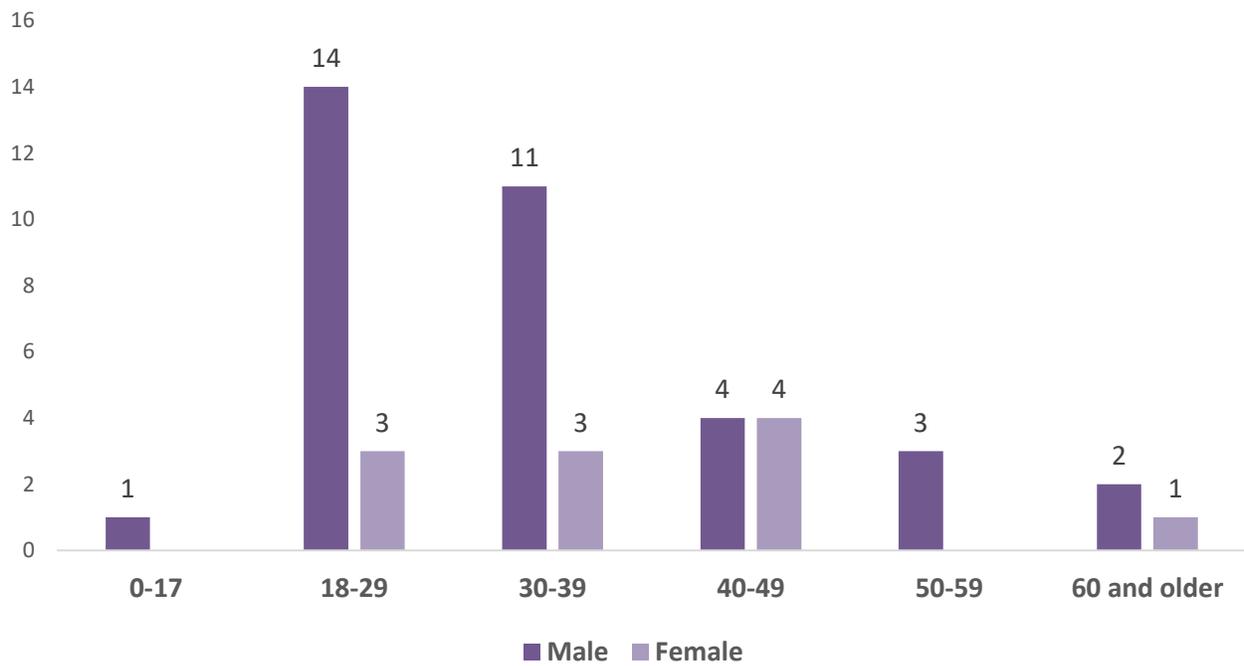
## Relationship of victim to male perpetrator

When the perpetrator was male, the victim was:	2019
Current female partner	12
Former or estranged female partner	9
Parent or step-parent	3
Child of perpetrator's girlfriend	3
Boyfriend of perpetrator's ex-girlfriend	3
Other family of perpetrator	3
Former or estranged male partner	2
Perpetrator's child	1
Love interest of perpetrator's girlfriend	1
Mother of perpetrator's girlfriend	1
Grandson of perpetrator's girlfriend	1
Unknown relationship (victim was part of a multiple-victim incident)	1

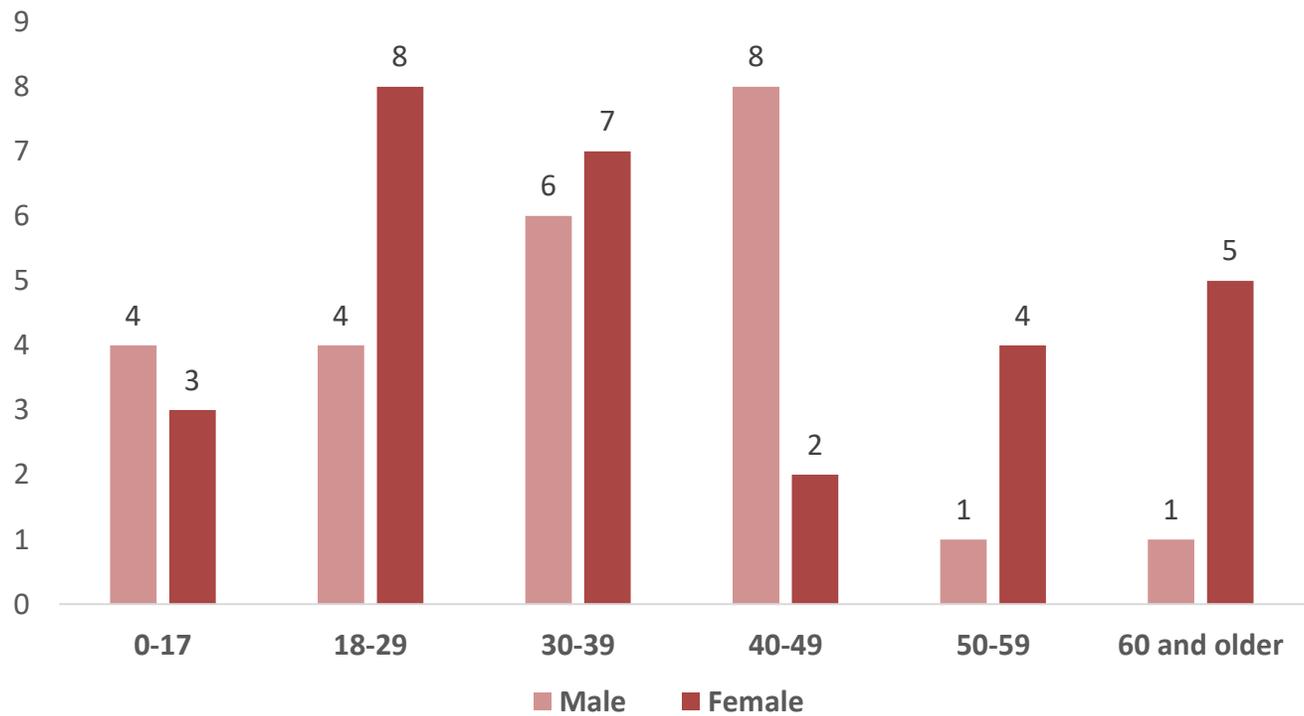
## Perpetrator suicide

	2019
Homicide incidents with perpetrator suicide	18
Attempted homicide with perpetrator suicide	1
Homicide-suicide incidents involving firearms	14
Male perpetrators of homicide-suicide	18
Female perpetrators of homicide-suicide	1

## Age and sex of perpetrators



## Age and sex of victims



## Method of homicide

Method	Number*	Percentage (out of # of incidents)*
Firearm	27	56%
Stabbing or Cutting	12	25%
Blunt Force	4	8%
Fire	1	2%
Strangulation or Suffocation	1	2%
Car	1	2%
Unknown	1	2%

\*These numbers and percentages do not include homicide involving legal intervention.

### Regarding the role of firearms in domestic violence homicide incidents:

- Domestic violence assaults involving a gun are 12 times more likely to result in death than those involving other weapons or bodily force.<sup>1</sup>
- One study indicates that the presence of a gun in domestic violence situations increases the risk of homicide for women by 500%.<sup>2</sup>
- There are 46% fewer female intimate partner gun homicides in states that require background checks for private handgun sales than in states, like Wisconsin, which do not.<sup>3</sup>
- Since 2005 in Wisconsin, firearms have accounted for more domestic violence homicides than all other methods of killing combined.
- In Wisconsin, 26% of the 27 perpetrators in 2019 who used a gun to commit a domestic violence homicide were legally prohibited from possessing a firearm.

<sup>1</sup>Saltzman, Linda E., James A. Mercy, Patrick W. O'Carroll, Mark L. Rosenberg, and Philip H. Rhodes. "Weapon Involvement and Injury Outcomes in Family and Intimate Assaults." *JAMA* 267, no. 22 (1992): 3043-3047.

<sup>2</sup>Campbell, Jacquelyn C., Daniel Webster, Jane Koziol-McLain, Carolyn Block, Doris Campbell, Mary Ann Curry, Faye Gary et al. "Risk Factors for Femicide in Abusive Relationships: Results from a Multisite Case Control Study." *American Journal of Public Health* 93, no. 7 (2003): 1089-1097.

<sup>3</sup>Everytown for Gun Safety. *State Background Check Requirements and Rates of Domestic Violence Homicide*. 2014. Accessed September 20, 2016. <http://everytown.org/1y3kxCb>.

## Location of homicide incidents

Location	2019
Home of the victim and/or perpetrator	40
Public space (i.e. on a street, outside of a bar)	4
In a car	2
Motel	1
Another residence	1

## Race and sex of victims

	White	Black	Latinx	Native American	Asian	Unknown
Male	13	9	0	1	0	1
Female	16	9	1	0	2	1

## Race and sex of perpetrators

	White	Black	Latinx	Native American	Asian	Unknown
Male*	17	15	2	0	1	0
Female*	7	4	0	0	0	0

\*One perpetrator's sex is unknown and therefore is not included in the table above.

# Limitations

We have summarized limitations of the data we report annually in the paragraphs below. Consistency in how we define and therefore report data is important so that comparisons can be made from year to year and trends examined. This consistency is particularly important for the 20-year review of data in this year's report. Without this consistency, analysis of data across years would have been inaccurate, misleading, and meaningless. Thus, we chose to continue to use our definitions for the cases we include and outline limitations to these definitions below.

## ***Wisconsin Residents Killed Outside of Wisconsin***

Our homicide report details domestic violence homicides that occur in the state of Wisconsin almost exclusively. Exceptions in past reports have been made to include deaths of Wisconsin residents that occur within hours or minutes of leaving Wisconsin. Often domestic violence-related deaths of Wisconsin residents who are killed outside of our state do not end up on our radar. There are undoubtedly homicides that fit this definition that our limited research for producing this report would not have captured. We know that domestic violence is not confined by state lines. In 2019, there was one double homicide case that crossed state lines, where one victim was killed in Wisconsin and the other in a neighboring state. Although the victim who was killed outside of Wisconsin was not included in the statistics and figures, that victim was included in the case narratives.

Most states produce similar reports to ours; however, the methodology and criteria for inclusion in such reports vary widely from state to state. Situations where the homicide incident involves Wisconsin residents but happens while in another state, are a relatively rare circumstance.

## ***Expanded 2010 Definition***

As noted on page 6, beginning with the report for 2010, we include cases that involve a parent or grandparent killed by an adult child or grandchild, as well as adult step-children or step-grandchildren killing a step-parent or step-grandparent. We began including these cases in 2010 at the advising of advocates for victims of elder abuse, in particular, our colleagues at the National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life, which is an initiative of End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin. We included these cases in our report because the preceding dynamics of violence in families in which adult parents or grandparents are killed by their adult children or grandchildren often exhibit similar characteristics of power and control. The perpetrator's ongoing abuse frequently relies on tactics of coercion, intimidation, and unique vulnerabilities inherent in a close familial relationship.

Because our original motivation to include these cases stemmed from an acknowledgement that intentional use of power and control tactics is a pattern in family abuse outside of intimate partner relationships, we excluded cases in which there is a clear indicator that mental health issues were a predominant factor in the homicide. Therefore, we have excluded cases in which the defendant was found not guilty by reason of mental illness or lacked the capacity to stand trial. Two cases were not included in the 2019 report for this reason. One case was excluded because the perpetrator, who was a minor when the incident occurred, was found not guilty by reason of mental illness. In the other case, the adult perpetrator was also found not guilty by reason of mental illness.

In making these distinctions, we are aware that our effort to categorize homicides is imperfect and may exclude cases that could illuminate potentially significant aspects of violence that happens in families.

For instance, our definition does not include situations in which an adult parent or step-parent causes the death of an adult child or step-child. These homicides appear to be rare and thus difficult to generalize about; however, we would be challenged to give a satisfying reason as to why one type of case is included and the other is not. Our exclusion of patricide and matricide cases that seem closely related to mental illness reflects our belief that the analogous cases of intimate partner homicide—that is, intimate partner violence homicides primarily caused by mental illness—are relatively rare. We know from research and experience that mental illness alone rarely explains why an abusive person kills their partner; yet, we acknowledge that these efforts to conceptually cordon off cases that are closely linked to mental illness from those that are not may prevent us from attending to the complex etiologies of domestic violence homicide.

Furthermore, we do not include cases where the perpetrator was a minor child who killed a parent or step-parent or grandparent or step-grandparent. There was one incident in 2019 in which a 12-year-old shot his father while defending his mother from domestic abuse and threats of violence from her husband of 20 years.

### ***Child Homicides***

We include child killings that occurred as an extension of or in response to ongoing abuse between adult intimate partners against others as domestic violence homicides. For example, when a partner or estranged partner killed their children or their partner's children in order to exact revenge on their partner, it is considered domestic violence-related.

We believe our limited ability to recognize these cases likely results in an undercount of these homicides. Homicide of a child is often viewed as an isolated incident of child abuse. An investigation of a child homicide can often overlook past domestic violence, or the domestic violence might not be included in the public record. While we believe that a larger number of child deaths are directly related to an ongoing pattern of domestic abuse, our current methods of tracking homicides do not allow us to consistently identify children killed by perpetrators of domestic violence. These cases are not included because we lack the information necessary to link the killings to intimate partner violence (and thus to the report's definition of domestic violence homicide).

### ***Cold Cases***

In addition to the above-mentioned cases that are not included in this report, there is one domestic violence homicide that occurred in 1979 but was solved in 2019. This case was not included in the 2019 data as it did not occur in 2019. In our years of gathering domestic violence homicide information, we have learned that not every homicide case is initially recognized as such. Some domestic violence homicides are ruled suicides or inconclusive, turning cold and forgotten. The perpetrator faces no consequences and are often treated as a victim who lost a loved one, perhaps receiving a life insurance check for the life they ended. Recently, due to developments in technology and evidence processing, these crimes have renewed hope of being solved. There may be other cold cases that were solved during 2019 as well, which may represent an undercount of total cases. We honor the lives of those included in this report, and the lives of those lost in Wisconsin in years that we have collected data that we have not yet been able to attribute to domestic violence. Please see the 2017 Wisconsin Domestic Violence Homicide Report page 41 for additional information on cold cases.

# 2019 Domestic Violence Homicides

*“...she was a person, she wasn’t just a victim of a crime. [Her daughter] wasn’t just some little girl that was killed. They were people. They were so much to so many people. They were people who had lives and people who cared for them.”*

It is far too easy to reduce individuals’ lives to a sensational story or a numerical statistic, so the accounts of the homicides included in this report should be read with these words from surviving family members in mind.

Our brief descriptions in no way reflect the complexity and circumstances of each person’s death. They certainly do not capture the complexities and fullness of their lives and the impact that each homicide or suicide has on surviving family members, friends, neighbors, co-workers, communities, and those responding and attempting to help during the immediate event or in the time preceding it.

NOTE: Case status reflects information available at the time of publication of this report. The current status of an open case can be found via Wisconsin Circuit Court Access at: <http://wcca.wicourts.gov>

Individuals’ ages are listed as of the date of the homicide. In cases of homicide by legal intervention, we do not list a victim name, in recognition that the person who was killed was actually a domestic abuse perpetrator.

County	In the death of...
BARRON	<p><b>Brett Bents, 50: Turtle Lake, August 10, 2019</b></p> <p>On August 10, Melanie Kuula, 44, walked in on her boyfriend Brett Bents with another woman in an apartment next to the one the couple lived in together, according to the criminal complaint for this case. Kuula told police that seeing Bents with another woman upset her, so she ran to their apartment and grabbed a knife and “hit” and “stuck” (stabbed) Bents. He then ran outside and collapsed in the back of the apartment building. After stabbing Bents, Kuula knocked on her neighbor’s door, telling them that she had stabbed her boyfriend. The neighbors found Bents laying on the ground in the rear area of the apartment and called 911. The officer and paramedics were unable to detect a pulse in Bents, who ultimately died of a stab wound to his chest and extensive trauma to his head. Kuula was charged with second degree intentional homicide to which she pleaded not guilty. She is claiming self-defense, according to the transcript of her preliminary hearing. Online court records indicate there was a long history of domestic violence in their relationship, with Kuula being the victim. The case has not concluded.</p> <p><b>Audra Poppe, 22: Cameron, August 12, 2019</b></p> <p>According to her family, On August 12, Audra Poppe went to the trailer of her former romantic partner Eldon Jackson, 21, to tell him she was moving on. Details are not</p>

yet clear about exactly what happened next, but Poppe was found stabbed to death, and hours later Jackson was involved in a fatal head-on collision while driving Poppe's car. The Barron County Sheriff indicated that law enforcement had nearly 90 contacts with Jackson since 2010 related to assault, battery, disorderly conduct, and domestic assault. Poppe's family shared that Jackson and Poppe had a "troubled past," but that Poppe had recently completed drug treatment, received her GED, had a steady job, and found a new boyfriend. This case is believed to be a murder-suicide, but the investigation is ongoing.

**County**

**In the death of...**

**BROWN**

**Brooke Fontaine, 34: Suamico, February 18, 2019**

According to police, Brook Fontaine and Sebastian Royal, 28, had been fighting over custody of their 14-month old child. On the day of the homicide, Royal recorded a "live post" on Facebook right before going to Fontaine's home, largely deflecting blame on the legal system and Fontaine for damaging Royal's relationship with their child. In the video, Royal stated that he was going to "do what was fair," and apologized to his son for what would happen. Upon arriving at Fontaine's home, Royal shot multiple rounds of bullets through a window where Fontaine's mother and Fontaine's other child were sleeping. Hearing the gunshots, they both got down on the ground. Fontaine then entered the room and Royal shot Fontaine while her mother begged him to stop. Afterwards, Royal fatally turned the gun on himself and died by suicide. Fontaine died of her wound the next day.

**Gerald Linzmeier, 65: DePere, July 14, 2019**

Sharon Linzmeier, 64, shot and killed her husband Gerald Linzmeier on July 14. She then turned the gun on herself in this murder-suicide case. According to media reports, shortly before the incident, Sharon called a family member to talk, but her tone changed at the end of the conversation, when she instructed the family member to "call the police," indicating that something harmful would occur in the home. The family member called law enforcement who responded to the Linzmeier's home for a welfare check. Tragically they arrived too late, as Sharon had already fatally shot her husband and herself. There had been no previous records of problems in the marriage or calls to the police. The investigation into this murder-suicide is ongoing.

**County**

**In the death of...**

**CHIPPEWA**

**Bridget German, 66; Douglas German, 32; Calvin Harris, 8; and Laile Vang, 24: Chippewa Falls, July 26 & 28, 2019**

According to media coverage and police statements, Ritchie German, 33, shot and killed his mother Bridget German, his brother Douglas German, and his nephew Calvin Harris at Bridget German's home on July 26. Two days later, German went to the home of Laile Vang, with whom he had an unknown relationship, and shot and killed her. He also shot Vang's parents, injuring them so severely that they both

needed to have one arm amputated. Laile’s parents told police they heard a noise in their house that they thought was an explosion of gas and they went to investigate, which is when Vang’s father was shot by German. Vang’s mother laid on the floor and called police. She was worried the shots hit their children, and as she ran to her daughter’s room, she was also shot by German. She was able to keep talking to police and did not see when Laile was shot. The rest of the children in the home were not harmed. German then fatally shot himself. When police went to Bridget’s home to inform her of what happened, they found the bodies of her, her son Douglas, and Douglas’ 8-year-old son. Although the relationship between German and Laile is still unclear, the investigation revealed that he had called her cell phone early in the morning on July 18, followed by a call to her father’s cell phone. The Vangs stated that they do not know how German obtained their phone numbers. German had also sent Laile text messages of a sexual nature, to which she had responded that she did not know who he was. The investigation into the details of the incident is ongoing.

**County**

**In the death of...**

**DODGE**

**Stacia Hollinshead, 30: Beaver Dam, March 23, 2019**

On the afternoon of March 23, 2019, Ulisses Medina Espinosa, 31, entered his mother’s home and shot and killed his ex-wife, Stacia Hollinshead. Espinosa and Hollinshead had a daughter together but had been divorced for approximately two years. According to the criminal complaint and media reports, a 2016 court decision granted sole custody for their child to Hollinshead and Espinosa had lost parental rights. However, media reports in Illinois reported that those rights had been restored to Espinosa with specific visitation conditions. Hollinshead still allowed her daughter to see Espinosa’s parents and had arranged for her five-year-old daughter to see her grandparents (Espinosa’s parents) the afternoon that she was killed. Hollinshead and her daughter were in Espinosa’s parents’ home when Espinosa entered with gifts for his daughter. After speaking with his daughter for a few minutes, he entered the kitchen where Hollinshead was washing dishes and shot her 15 times. After killing Hollinshead, Espinosa returned to the living room and sat by his daughter, who was crying, but he said nothing. Espinosa’s mother told police he had never been a violent person in the past, but Hollinshead’s sister shared with police that he had a history of stalking and controlling behavior toward Hollinshead and had placed a tracking application on her phone. Espinosa was charged with first degree intentional homicide to which he has pleaded not guilty. The case has not concluded.

**County**

**In the death of...**

**FOND DU LAC**

**Carol Foreman, 75: Waupun, August 24, 2019**

According to the criminal complaint, Gregory Spittel, 30, fatally assaulted his grandmother Carol Foreman after becoming angry that Foreman’s recent conversation with police resulted in misdemeanor drug charges that would likely cause him to lose visitation rights with his children. The mother of his children

gained full custody of them on August 23. Spittel’s next visitation with his children was scheduled for August 24, to be supervised by Foreman. On the night of August 23, Spittel had been communicating with a friend who told police he was very upset about losing custody and about his grandmother calling the police. The friend indicated he was very intoxicated while they were texting and talking on the phone. At some point later that evening in the basement of the home, Spittel beat Foreman’s head with his fist and into the concrete floor repeatedly, then left her in the basement and went upstairs to clean himself up and go to sleep. The next day, a neighbor who Spittel had invited over called to report Foreman’s injuries to the police. When the police officer arrived at the home, she found the home in disarray and Spittel climbing up the steps from the basement wearing only his underwear, screaming, unsteady, and smelling of intoxicants. Spittel later admitted to illicit drug use, which was confirmed by a search of his home. When interviewed by police, Spittel claimed he did not remember injuring his grandmother or damaging his home. He was charged with first degree intentional homicide and eight additional felony charges. Spittel has pleaded not guilty to all charges. The case has not concluded.

**County**

**In the death of...**

JUNEAU

**Jason Dailey, 26: Necedah, November 12, 2019**

According to the criminal complaint, Jason Dailey had not been to work for two days when a co-worker requested a welfare check from local police. When law enforcement arrived at the home Dailey lived in with his girlfriend, Crystal Pharis, 27, they asked Pharis if she knew where he was. She told them that Dailey had left two days prior after taking money out of his wallet, but that he left his wallet and both cars at the residence. The police officer left and returned 24 minutes later, at which point a male opened the door to let him in. The officer found Pharis unresponsive. When he moved her, the officer found Pharis’ two-month-old child underneath her and a bag of pills next to her. Both she and her child were transported to a hospital for treatment. Upon checking the rest of the home, the officer found Dailey’s body on the bedroom floor, covered by blankets. An autopsy indicated he died of blunt force trauma. The man who opened the door for the officer the second time informed police that Pharis was often “moody and angry with violent tendencies,” that he saw her hitting and pushing Dailey, that Dailey did not fight back, and that Pharis thought Daily was cheating on her. Pharis was charged with first degree intentional homicide, child neglect, hiding a corpse, and four counts of felony bail jumping. No plea has been entered and the case has not concluded.

**County**

**In the death of...**

KENOSHA

**Kaylie Juga, 16: Kenosha, May 9, 2019**

The criminal complaint for this incident indicates that Kaylie Juga was in her bedroom when she was shot and killed by her ex-boyfriend, Martice Fuller, 15, who also shot and injured Juga’s mother. According to Fuller’s cousin’s statement to the police, Fuller had spoken to her about the incident shortly after it occurred. She

shared that Fuller entered through the garage and when he saw his ex-girlfriend in her bedroom wearing headphones, he went in and shot her. He told his cousin that he only intended to shoot twice, but when Juga screamed, he shot her two more times and then shot Juga's mother twice after she approached him to tell him he does not have to do this. Fuller exited the home through the garage and fled the scene. He told police that he was at home during the time of the shooting, which his mother first confirmed and later retracted. Video surveillance footage from a neighbor's security camera captured images and sounds that correspond with Fuller's cousin's recounting of the incident. Fuller was charged with first degree intentional homicide, attempted first degree intentional homicide, and burglary and has pleaded not guilty. The case has not concluded.

**County**

**In the death of...**

**KEWAUNEE**

**Attempted homicide-suicide, Kewaunee, November 19, 2019\***

On November 19, Luis Cardona, 38, kidnapped his wife, Babette Caraballo, from her workplace in Green Bay for the second time in a month, per media coverage of this incident. Caraballo had attempted to end their relationship a year prior, but Cardona would not leave her alone. A domestic abuse restraining order was filed against him and granted by the court on October 25. Cardona had abducted Caraballo on October 18 and held her against her will for several hours while her son called him, begging him to release her. On November 11, Cardona went to Caraballo's home and tried to force her to come with him, which she refused to do. Cardona attempted to take her by force and threatened that he would not leave her alone if she did not come with him. She called the police and said she was "terrified" of him. Charges of Felony Bail Jumping and Knowingly Violate a Domestic Abuse Injunction were filed the next day against him. Cardona's initial court appearance for these charges was scheduled for November 19, the day he went to Caraballo's workplace and took her at gunpoint. Cardona put her in his SUV and drove to a rural area in Kewaunee County. Officers used a drone to find the location of the SUV and surrounded the area. Cardona shot Caraballo and then turned the gun on himself. He died by suicide. One deputy opened fire on Cardona after Cardona shot Caraballo, but several months after the incident, the investigation determined that the bullets from the deputy's gun did not hit Cardona. Caraballo was treated for her gunshot wound and survived.

\*After publication we learned new information about this case. Previously listed as homicide by legal intervention, we later discovered that the perpetrator died by a self-inflicted gunshot wound after shooting his wife. This case was re-categorized on 9/21/20 as an attempted homicide-suicide incident.

**County**

**In the death of...**

**LA CROSSE**

**Mark Phillips, 48: Holmen, June 16, 2019**

According to media reports of the incident, Lori Ann Phillips, 49, and her husband Mark Phillips were out for dinner and drinks with a few friends on June 16. They began to argue after Mark accused Lori of sleeping with one of their friends. When they left the restaurant, Lori told police that Mark held her down and tried to

strangle her. She went back into the bar with friends, and he left. Mark called her later and threatened physical violence, but then apologized via text and went to pick Lori up and drive her home. They continued to argue in the car, so when they arrived home, Lori said she would leave for the night. Mark went to the passenger's side to get some things and Lori moved into the driver's seat. At this point, Lori "took off" while the passenger's door was open. The door eventually shut itself as she drove around, and Lori stopped to see if he was following her, which he was not. According to Lori's statement to police, after trying to sleep in a store's parking lot, she went home around 2am and found Mark's shoes by the front door. She assumed he was inside sleeping. Lori turned off the security camera system so that she would not wake him up, and she slept on the couch until 6am, when she went upstairs to find him. Still not finding him, she searched the home and garage and then found Mark outside in a nearby snowbank. Lori called 911, saying that she had not seen him since the night before and that she did not know where he had been. Mark was pronounced dead with the cause of death listed as multiple blunt force injuries, likely from being run over by Lori's car. When interviewed by police, Lori indicated that "he was such a good guy," but also stated that "he gets so angry," and he had pushed her in the past but had never punched her. Lori was charged with second degree reckless homicide to which she pleaded not guilty. The case has not concluded.

**County**

**In the death of...**

LINCOLN

**Barbara Renken, 77: Pine River, February 14, 2019**

On February 14, 2019, police went to the home of Barbara and John Renken for a welfare check, and found Barbara dead, alongside her husband who was severely injured. John Renken, 78, had shot his wife and then turned the gun on himself. A few weeks later Renken passed away from his injuries, making this a homicide-suicide incident. There was no known history of domestic violence in the marriage.

**County**

**In the death of...**

MANITOWOC

**Julie Wood, 50 and Mason Lesczykowski, 10: Kiel, May 27, 2019**

Julie Wood was in a relationship and lived with Jack Schigur, 69. On May 27, the bodies of Wood, Schigur, and Wood's 10-year old grandson Mason Lesczykowski were found in Woods's home. All three had died from gunshot wounds. According to police, the deaths of Woods and her grandson were ruled a homicide; Schigur died by suicide. There was no known history of domestic violence in the relationship.

**County**

**In the death of...**

MARINETTE

**Shelley Erickson-Rogge, 63: Pembine, January 13, 2019**

Gary Rogge, 55, admitted to police that he shot his wife Shelley Erickson-Rogge in their home after a day of drinking at a local bar. The couple, who had been married

for less than a year, were seen arguing by other patrons after spending several hours at a local bar on January 13. According to the criminal complaint, Erickson-Rogge left the bar, while Rogge stayed behind. An investigation of cell phone data revealed that during the next few hours, Erickson-Rogge sent Rogge text messages stating that their relationship was over. Video from the bar captured Rogge holding hands and kissing another woman while Erickson-Rogge was gone. He got a ride home from another bar patron. Rogge told police he and his wife were watching Western movies and that he wanted to demonstrate a “quick draw” to her when he accidentally shot her. He claimed he did not think the gun was loaded. Rogge called 911 two hours after he shot his wife, stating he did not think she was hurt badly. The autopsy of Erickson-Rogge showed that she was shot in the chest at close range. Rogge was charged with first degree reckless homicide, pleaded guilty, and was sentenced to 40 years in state prison and 20 years extended supervision.

**County**

**In the death of...**

MARQUETTE

**Daniel Gilmartin, 43: Montello, April 20, 2019**

According to a criminal complaint, Daniel Gilmartin’s ex-girlfriend, Frances Rittmann, 42, set fire to his home with the intent to kill him. She told police that earlier that month she had set fire in his home and that she returned a second time to kill him and herself through arson. However, Rittmann changed her mind about killing herself and instead left Gilmartin, who was sleeping at the time, in his burning home. Gilmartin died in the fire. The morning that Rittmann set fire to his home, Gilmartin called a friend to indicate that he was worried about what she may do to him and asked his friend to check up on him later that day. Rittmann was charged with first degree intentional homicide and two counts of arson of a building to which she pleaded not guilty. The case has not concluded.

**County**

**In the death of...**

MILWAUKEE

**Timothy Theis, 37: West Allis, January 10, 2019**

In the early hours of January 10, Jacob Paradinovich, 30, was driving Timothy Theis home from a bar where Paradinovich worked, according to the criminal complaint for this incident. Paradinovich told police that the two had been in a relationship until Paradinovich moved out of state, but they had seen each other several times since Paradinovich moved back to Milwaukee. They began to argue in the car, so Paradinovich pulled over and asked Theis to get out. When Theis got out he kicked the door, so Paradinovich also got out and they began to physically fight. Paradinovich told police that Theis had knocked him down two times, so he grabbed a knife from his pocket and stabbed him in the head. Paradinovich then called 911 and attempted first aid, but Theis died of his injuries. He claimed that he aimed for Theis’ shoulders but missed and told police that they had gotten into a physical altercation a week prior. Paradinovich was charged with second degree intentional homicide to which he pleaded not guilty. The case has not concluded.

**Jamie Wilson, 36: Milwaukee, February 5, 2019**

Ramone Jones, 42, killed his ex-girlfriend, Jamie Wilson, by stabbing her six times. According to the criminal complaint for this incident, there was a history of domestic violence and threats from Jones to kill Wilson as recently as the day before she was found dead. Jones previously lived with Wilson, but she asked him to move out after he repeatedly abused her. Since then, he had returned to her home several times and threatened her. On February 5, Jones came to Wilson's home where she lived with her daughter and a roommate. A friend was also in the home at the time and provided information about the incident to police. Jones entered, pointed and shot a gun at the friend, Wilson's roommate, and Wilson's daughter. After taking a knife from the kitchen, Jones found Wilson in the shower and stabbed her, then left. Wilson struggled out of the bathroom and into her garage, where she collapsed. Police responded to the home but were unable to revive Wilson. As a convicted felon, Ramone Jones was prohibited from possessing a firearm at the time of the homicide. He was charged with first degree intentional homicide and six other felony charges for the death of Wilson, to which Jones pleaded not guilty. The case has not concluded.

**Montrell Marks, 22: Milwaukee, February 15, 2019**

Shasta Flowers, 23, and Montrell Marks had a child together, who Marks was going to pick up from Flowers' home on February 15<sup>th</sup>, per the criminal complaint for this case. Flowers told police that she and Marks began to argue, and that Marks hit her, at which point she physically fought back. Flowers' mother came in and separated them. Flowers told police she went to her purse to retrieve her gun and her mother's cell phone to try to call 911, but the phone did not work. Flowers went back to the bedroom and told Marks to leave. He came towards her, so Flowers raised the gun to face him, and it fired. Flowers claimed the gun went off by accident. After realizing she had shot Marks, Flowers tried to administer first aid, but he did not survive. Flowers was charged with second degree reckless homicide to which she pleaded not guilty. The case has not concluded.

**Sierra Robinson, 24: Milwaukee, March 11, 2019 and Noelani Robinson, 2: Austin, Minnesota, March 10, 2019**

According to the criminal complaint, Sierra Robinson was found shot by her ex-boyfriend Dariaz Higgins, 34, on March 11 in the driveway of her friend's home. Robinson and Higgins had a two-year-old child [Noelani] together who Higgins had been taking care of while he lived in Florida. He had returned to Milwaukee to allegedly return Noelani to Robinson. However, he killed Noelani in Minnesota using blunt force and left her in a ditch before traveling to Milwaukee to see Robinson. A friend of Robinson's who was also shot and injured by Higgins in Milwaukee was interviewed by police about the shooting incident. She shared that Higgins had been both her and Robinson's pimp, during which time Higgins and Robinson began "messaging around." Media reports indicate that Robinson was a victim of sex trafficking by Higgins. Robinson's friend told police in February that Robinson

decided she did not want to “be with Higgins” any longer and moved to Las Vegas, leaving Noelani with Higgins. After Robinson moved to Las Vegas, she and her friend tried to get Noelani from Higgins. He agreed to return Noelani to Robinson, so she flew back to Milwaukee and stayed with her friend until they could meet Higgins and retrieve Noelani from him. Higgins told Robinson and her friend to meet him near a farmer’s market. He did not have Noelani with him at that time. Higgins gave them an ecstasy pill to share and drove them to an apartment where he said Noelani was located. As the three of them got out of the car and walked up to the apartment building, Higgins began to shoot at Robinson and her friend. He then got back into his car and left the scene. When police arrived, Robinson was found dead and her injured friend was taken to the hospital. A neighbor who witnessed the shooting was hit by fragments of glass from a bullet that entered his home through a window. Higgins was charged with first degree intentional homicide, attempted first degree intentional homicide, and first degree recklessly endangering safety to which he pleaded not guilty. The case has not concluded.

**Neyaka Oliver, 27: Milwaukee, March 18, 2019**

Neyaka Oliver was shot and killed by her ex-boyfriend, Cas Alexander Martin, 26, one week after she reported domestic abuse incidents perpetrated against her by Martin to the police, according to the criminal complaint. The police issued an arrest warrant on March 16 after learning about Martin’s repeated threats and physical attacks on Oliver and her property. Martin was a convicted felon and therefore was prohibited from possessing a firearm at the time of the homicide. According to family and friends, Oliver had been trying to get out of the abusive relationship for a while. For the incident prompting Oliver’s report to the police, Martin was charged with strangulation and suffocation and multiple misdemeanors. However, Martin was found dead from a self-inflicted gunshot wound prior to his initial appearance in court.

**Ayrius Winzer, 6 months: Milwaukee, April 22, 2019**

Ayrius Winzer died from severe injuries incurred by Devante Marquise Randall, 26, who killed the six-month-old and severely injured Winzer’s two-year-old brother. According to the criminal complaint, Randall’s girlfriend, Winzer’s mother, left her sons with Randall while she went to work. During that time, Randall sent her text messages stating that he was going to a family member’s home with the two boys. A while later, he messaged her that he heard shots being fired while at his family member’s home and that he had to grab the children and run. Randall claimed that he dropped the boys while attempting to flee, causing them injury. Randall then drove to Winzer’s mother’s place of work. Winzer’s mother saw her son lifeless in the car and told Randall to drive to the hospital. She brought her son in and expected Randall to follow and explain to the doctors what had happened to Winzer, however, Randall fled from the hospital. Doctors pronounced Winzer brain dead, and he died three days later. Randall was charged with second degree reckless homicide, child abuse, and two counts of neglecting a child. He pleaded guilty for all four counts and was sentenced to 24 years in state prison and 11 years on extended supervision.

**Jose Rodriguez-Castro, 22: Milwaukee, May 3, 2019**

According to the criminal complaint for this incident, on May 3, 2019, Jose Rodriguez-Castro was driving with his girlfriend in the passenger seat when she spotted her ex-boyfriend Victor Cintron, 23, driving his SUV near them. At a stoplight, Cintron drove up next to Rodriguez-Castro's car and began shooting at his ex-girlfriend. Rodriguez-Castro leaned over to shield her from the bullets and got shot multiple times. Although he was able to move back into the driver's seat, he was unresponsive and declared dead by paramedics after they arrived on the scene. Rodriguez-Castro's girlfriend told police that Cintron was the one who shot at them and killed Rodriguez-Castro. She told police that she used to date Cintron, has a child with him, and that he had a history of threatening and physically abusing her. A few weeks prior to the shooting, Cintron confronted his ex-girlfriend, saying he was going to kill her. He had a concealed carry permit but did not heed demands to relinquish his guns to authorities after his ex-girlfriend was granted a domestic abuse restraining order against him in April 2019. Cintron was charged with first degree intentional homicide, attempted first degree intentional homicide, and three counts of first degree recklessly endangering. He pleaded not guilty to all charges. The case has not concluded.

**Rosa Rivera, 35: Milwaukee, June 2, 2019**

According to statements Luis Ramirez-Oliva, 28, provided to police, he and Rosa Rivera were in a relationship and lived together. On the evening of June 1, they went to a party at which they both consumed alcohol. Upon arriving home, Ramirez-Oliva wanted to have sex with Rivera, but she refused. This led to an argument and Ramirez-Oliva getting on top of her in bed and removing her clothes. He then grabbed Rivera's head and neck which he held for five to six minutes, until he realized she was not breathing anymore. Ramirez-Oliva attempted to revive her by rubbing alcohol on her face, but she did not respond. At this point, he became frightened and took a knife from the kitchen and tried to stab himself in the stomach, telling police later that he wanted to join her in death. After being unable to penetrate his stomach, he called his sister about the incident, who told him to call 911. When police arrived, they found Rivera deceased on the bed and Ramirez-Oliva at the scene. Her cause of death was ruled strangulation. Ramirez-Oliva was charged with first degree reckless homicide to which he pleaded guilty and was sentenced to 26 years in state prison and 9 years on extended supervision.

**Cassandra Steward, 54: Milwaukee, June 2, 2019**

Cassandra Steward and her partner Tawana Eddmonds, 36, were at Steward's apartment when two visitors joined them to smoke crack cocaine inside, per the criminal complaint for this incident. When the visitors left, Eddmonds told police that she and Steward got into an argument. Steward went to get a knife and approached Eddmonds, who then used a different knife to defend herself and stabbed Steward. Eddmonds claims that after the initial stabbing, she "blacked out" and does not remember what happened next. She woke up panicked when she saw

her bloody hands and clothes and Steward on the floor, apparently dead. At that point, she changed her clothes, washed her hands, and took two televisions from Steward's apartment. She sold them for crack cocaine, which she smoked in Steward's apartment, and then went to the police station to turn herself in for the homicide. Eddmonds was charged with first degree reckless homicide to which she pleaded guilty and was sentenced to 20 years in state prison and 10 years on extended supervision.

**Jaquerrion Dancer, 2 months: Milwaukee, June 5, 2019**

According to the criminal complaint, Jaquerrion Dancer was the 2-month-old son of Kenta Evans, 21, and Jessica McNeal. On June 5, McNeal reported that Evans came to see Dancer at her home. However, he quickly changed his intention from wanting to see his son to accusing McNeal of having other men in her home. Evans took McNeal's phone and hit it against the wall, smashing it. McNeal then walked towards Dancer's room and picked him up from his playpen. McNeal told Evans to leave the house, which upset him. He came towards McNeal, who backed up while continuing to tell him to leave. Evans began punching her several times while she was holding Dancer. McNeal's sister, who also lived in the home, was awakened by the arguing and entered the room to tell Evans to stop. She took Dancer from McNeal and noticed he was bleeding. McNeal asked her sister to take him to the hospital and said she was going to call the police, which prompted Evans to flee from the residence. When McNeal's sister looked at Dancer, she realized he was barely breathing and had several knots on his head, so she rushed him to Children's Hospital where he died later that evening. Police went to search for Evans at his mother's home where they found him hiding in a closet. Evans was arrested and charged with second degree reckless homicide and child abuse. Evans pleaded guilty and was sentenced to 15 years in state prison and 10 years on extended supervision.

**Jermaine Renix, 46: Glendale, June 18, 2019**

Shaniqua Alexander, 28, told police that she was living in a local motel and had allowed her partner, Jermaine Renix to stay with her. According to the criminal complaint, as she was driving around one evening, Alexander saw Renix with another woman, became upset, and called to tell him she did not want to see him anymore. She returned to her room at the motel and found Renix there and the two began to argue. Alexander decided to take a shower and when she came out and found him still there, the two began to "tussle." Alexander picked up a knife and demanded Renix leave. When he did not, they continued to fight and, according to Alexander, Renix "bumped into" her knife. Alexander called 911 and tried to stop the bleeding, but he died from his injuries. Alexander had a history of assaulting Renix and was sentenced to six months on probation in 2015 for assaulting him while he was driving. Alexander told police that the two were not supposed to be in contact with each other at the time of his murder per Alexander's conditions of probation. Alexander was charged with second degree reckless homicide to which she pleaded not guilty. The case has not concluded.

**Sonya Collins, 41: Milwaukee, June 26, 2019**

Per the criminal complaint for this incident, Sonya Collins' daughter came to her mother's home on June 26, along with her daughter's son and a friend. Collins' daughter shared with police that during this time, she was on the phone arguing with her boyfriend, Oshonti Cannady, 21. After she arrived at Collins' home, Collins' daughter saw another car arrive that was driven by Cannady with two male passengers. She and Cannady began to fight and Cannady threatened to physically assault her and her friend. Collins heard the fighting and attempted to intervene but ended up arguing with Cannady as well. He went back to his car, got a gun, and then shot Collins, her daughter, and her friend. Although Collins' daughter and her friend survived their gunshot wounds, Collins died of the shot to her chest. At the time of the incident, Cannady was out on bail for a misdemeanor charge and was not allowed to possess firearms. He was charged with second degree reckless homicide, two counts of second-degree reckless injury, and bail jumping. Cannady pleaded guilty to all charges and is awaiting sentencing.

**Kimberly Criss, 49: Milwaukee, July 22, 2019**

On July 22, the 14-year-old son of Kimberly Criss woke up when he heard a car outside the apartment where they lived with Criss' partner, Vincent Tyrone Richardson, 47. Per the criminal complaint for this case, when Criss' son looked out of the window, he told police that he saw a SUV pull up and Criss get out of the car. He then saw Richardson get out of the driver's side, stumble, pull a gun out, and fire it up in the air once. Fearing the shot was close to his head, Criss' son moved away from the window and ducked for safety. He heard his mother shout at Richardson, who yelled back, "I'm gonna keep shooting." Criss' son heard several more shots after that, but no longer heard his mother's voice. Richardson came into the apartment still holding the gun and laughing. Criss' son asked him if he shot his mother, to which he replied no and then put the gun down. Criss' son went outside to look for her and found her next to the SUV, bleeding from her head. Neighbors heard the shooting and saw that Criss had been shot and called the police. She was pronounced dead at the scene. Richardson admitted to shooting the gun multiple times in the air but claimed he did not mean to shoot Criss. Richardson was a convicted felon at the time of the incident and was banned from possessing firearms. In Criss' death he was charged with first degree reckless homicide and possession of a firearm by a felon. Richardson pleaded guilty to the charges and was sentenced to 20 years in state prison and 10 years on extended supervision.

**Markel Johnson, 42: Milwaukee, August 4, 2019**

Gina Johnson, 40, and her partner, Markel Johnson were at a bar where a witness saw them arguing. According to this witness' statement to police, Markel was in Gina's "face" and the argument was very heated. Several bar patrons including the witness attempted to break up the fight. Later that night, the witness saw the couple fighting by the bathroom, at which point the witness told Markel that he should leave, because he saw that Gina had a knife in her hand. She put the knife back in

her purse and as both she and Markel began to leave, she again approached him aggressively. He responded with, "you only get one swing with that and then I'm gonna knock your a\*\* out." The couple was asked to leave the bar, which they did. Awhile later, the witness saw them arguing outside of the bar. Gina had her knife out again and swung at and stabbed Markel. After she stabbed him, Markel punched her. The witness saw Gina grab a handgun from her SUV and heard her ask Markel if this is what he wanted. She shot the gun twice over the roof of the SUV before getting into her car and driving away. A police officer on patrol in the area was flagged down by citizens near the scene. He attempted to revive Markel, but he had died from a gunshot wound. Gina admitted to arguing, stabbing, and shooting him after Markel was being aggressive and punching her. Gina was charged with second degree reckless homicide and pleaded not guilty. The case has not concluded.

**Varick Choice Sr., 48: Milwaukee, August 31, 2019**

According to statements made to police in the criminal complaint, Varick Choice Jr., 24, lived with his mother and father, Varick Choice Sr., along with his girlfriend and her two children. According to Choice Jr.'s girlfriend, when she arrived home on August 31, she heard Choice Sr. and his wife arguing about the dishes. Choice Jr. got involved in the argument, and Choice Jr.'s girlfriend saw that he had a gun in his waistband. Choice Sr.'s wife left to go to work, however, Choice Jr. was still angry and continued arguing with his father. At that point, Choice Jr.'s girlfriend walked outside and then heard three or four gunshots from the house. She ran back into the home and saw Choice Jr. standing in the living room holding his gun, and Choice Sr. sitting on the floor with a pool of blood around him. Choice Jr.'s girlfriend called 911 and Choice Jr. left the home. When he was initially interviewed by police, he provided a fabricated story about an intruder in the home shooting Choice Sr. When interviewed again, Choice Jr. stated to police that his father rushed at him and Choice Jr. escaped to the living room, but his father came at him again, so he fired his gun at him, killing him. Choice Jr. was a convicted felon and therefore prohibited from possessing firearms. He was charged with first degree reckless homicide and possession of a firearm by a felon to which he pleaded not guilty. The case has not concluded.

**Cherron Miller, 31: Milwaukee, September 12, 2019**

As stated in the criminal complaint, Cherron Miller had been staying at the home of her partner Darnell Kimble, 29, but he recently asked her to leave. On September 12, when Miller went to the home to collect her belongings, she and Kimble got into a fight. Kimble's mother was in the home at the time and told police that Miller swung at Kimble, who then aimed a gun at her and shot her before running out of the house. Miller was transported to the hospital, but ultimately died from the gunshot to her abdomen. At the time of the incident, Kimble was a convicted felon and prohibited from possessing firearms. Kimble was charged with first degree reckless homicide and possession of a firearm by a felon. He pleaded not guilty. The case has not concluded.

**Velencia Spears, 29: Milwaukee, September 22, 2019**

In the early morning hours of September 22, Velencia Spears and her boyfriend Javontrae Price, 26, returned to their apartment after celebrating Spears' birthday with friends and family. Price's sister, who also worked with Spears, told police that she had been out with the couple, and later received a call from Price asking her to bring his children to his apartment. When she arrived, Price ran out to her car holding a gun, and asked her to come inside. When Price's sister went in, she saw Spears' body lying on the floor, covered in blood. Price eventually walked to the local police station, admitted he shot his girlfriend, and was charged with first degree reckless homicide. He pleaded guilty to the charges and the case has not concluded.

**Benjamin Simms Sr., 44: Milwaukee, October 11, 2019**

According to statements to the police and the criminal complaint, Benjamin Simms Sr. was in his home with his wife and 7-year old daughter when his son, Melvonta Jones, 24, rang the doorbell several times. Simms' daughter opened the door to let Jones in. He walked in and asked his mother if she was "good," to which she responded that she was. Jones then turned to Simms and told him that he should not "disrespect my family, or my mom, or my sister!" After Simms stood up from the couch, Jones took a gun out and shot at him once, apparently missing. He then shot Simms a second time, hitting his head, causing Simms to fall. Jones ran from the house. According to Jones, he was estranged from his family and went to his mother's house to threaten Simms, not to shoot him. Jones was charged with first degree reckless homicide to which he pleaded guilty. He was sentenced to 22 years in state prison and 8 years on extended supervision.

**Candice Buford, 36: Milwaukee, October 20, 2019**

On October 20, 2019, Charles Kendrick, 39, Candice Buford, and another woman they lived with were out at a bar. According to the criminal complaint, when they arrived home, Buford and Kendrick began to argue. The roommate told police she attempted to get them to stop arguing, but they continued until Buford went into her room to lay down and told Kendrick to "shut up." Kendrick grabbed a gun, which he told police he thought was not loaded, and pointed it at her, trying to scare her. The gun went off and hit her in the head. Instead of calling 911, Kendrick posted a farewell message on Facebook and loaded the gun so he could kill himself, but then the police arrived. Kendrick asked police to shoot him, saying that he wanted to die. Two of the eight children who lived in the home were interviewed by police and stated that they heard Buford and Kendrick arguing and a gunshot. At the time of the incident, Kendrick was a convicted felon and prohibited from possessing firearms. He was charged with first degree reckless homicide and possession of a firearm by a felon, to which he pleaded not guilty. The case has not concluded.

**Kimotasha Perry 26: Milwaukee, October 27, 2019**

Kimotasha Perry was shot by someone her family claims was her partner and that the incident was a result of domestic violence. However, no one has been identified

as the perpetrator, no arrests have been made, and no charges have been filed in this case. The investigation is ongoing.

**County**

**In the death of...**

MONROE

**Sparta, November 5, 2019**

According to media reports, the wife of Michael Nguyen, 32, called the Sparta police to report that her husband tried to strangle her and that she had fled to a nearby bar with their child. She told police that Nguyen was suicidal and had a gun. When officers arrived at the bar, they found Nguyen outside with a firearm, making suicidal threats. His wife and child and other patrons were inside the bar. The officers commanded Nguyen to put the gun down several times, but he refused. After a few minutes, he walked around to the entrance of the bar and tried to get in, but the door was locked. For the next twenty minutes, Nguyen remained armed while officers tried to negotiate with him. Eventually Nguyen got up and smashed the large window of the bar, causing the officers to discharge a round of gunfire at him. Uninjured, Nguyen took cover behind one of the squad cars. When he went past the cover of the car and remained armed, officers discharged gunfire at him, this time immediately injuring him. Officers attempted life saving measures and Nguyen was transported to a hospital, where he ultimately died. All officers were placed on administrative leave during the investigation. No criminal charges were filed against the police officers involved in this shooting.

**County**

**In the death of...**

OUTAGAMIE

**Mattelin Samson, 4 and Hailey Poppe, 3 months: Seymour, April 19, 2019**

According to media reports, Mattelin Samson and Hailey Poppe were stabbed to death in their home by Andrew Poppe 35, who then took his own life. Poppe was Hailey's father and the fiancé of Mattelin's mother. Shortly before the killing, Poppe's fiancé reported to police that he had strangled and raped her and threatened to kill her and her children. She was able to escape the home when her older son called for a ride, and while on the way she called the police and asked them to get Poppe out of the home before he got violent again. In the early morning of April 19, police attempted to contact Poppe. When they could not reach him by phone, police responded to the home. They were concerned about further escalating the situation and did not force entry into the home until several hours later. Inside they found Poppe and the children dead from stab wounds. According to online court records, Poppe had a history of perpetrating domestic violence. In 2015 he was convicted of a disorderly conduct charge for physically abusing and threatening to kill a previous partner. In that case, Poppe had been sentenced to twelve months of probation and required to participate in an anger management assessment and follow any recommendations for counseling.

**Se Chang-Xiong, 36: Grand Chute, October 7, 2019**

Police in Grand Chute were sent to a home for a welfare check on October 7. When they arrived, they found Koua Xiong, 40, and his wife, Se Chang-Xiong, in a locked bedroom, both dead from gunshot wounds in an apparent murder-suicide incident. The gun was near the couple inside the room. Shortly before police found their bodies, both Koua Xiong and Se Chang-Xiong posted a goodbye message to friends and family on their Facebook pages, although those close to Se told police that they doubt she was involved in writing the message. Interviews conducted by police following the incident indicate that Koua had recently become jealous of Se's activity on social media and had expressed suicidal thoughts after learning that Se was planning on divorcing him. Se was concerned to the point of asking a family member to remove Koua's guns from the home in the days preceding the murder-suicide. The couple's five children were in the home at the time of the incident.

**County**

**In the death of...**

**RACINE**

**Angelica Rios, 30: Racine, May 10, 2019**

As reported in the media, on May 10, 2019, Ubaldo Gonzalez Jr., 34, entered the home of his ex-partner, Angelica Rios, and shot and killed her. Rios' child who was in the home called the police to report the incident. When police arrived on the scene, they found both Rios and Gonzalez dead. Two of Rios' children were in the home, both of whom were unharmed. Gonzalez died by suicide via a self-inflicted gunshot wound. According to online court records, Gonzalez had a history of domestic abuse charges, with Rios being the victim, dating back to 2011. In 2016, Rios was granted a restraining order against Gonzalez, stating in the petition that, "I live in constant fear that he will actually go through with his threat and actually kill me one day. I beg that you please grant this restraining order." However, in early 2017, Rios requested that the order be dismissed.

**Gene Smith, 35: Racine, May 30, 2019**

Police were called to a hospital on May 30, 2019, where a woman named Joy Reid had been taken after being stabbed by Lapiate Boone, 39, who is the father of her children. According to the criminal complaint, Reid and Boone ended their relationship a year prior, at which time Reid moved out of their shared home and obtained a restraining order against him. On the day of her stabbing, Boone demanded that Reid give him the keys to the house after Reid went to visit their children who were living with Boone. When Reid refused to give him the keys and attempted to leave, he grabbed her cell phone, which she attempted to retrieve from him. Boone then grabbed a steak knife from the kitchen counter and stabbed her in the upper right thigh. She eventually got her phone back, left with her children, and went to the hospital for treatment. Upon being released from the hospital, Reid and her current partner, Gene Smith, went back to the home for clothes and her children's school bags. Although he was not there initially, Boone returned to the home while Reid and Smith were still there with the children. Upon encountering Reid and Smith, Boone began to hit Reid with a large pole. Smith

attempted to intervene, but Boone began to strike him as well. As the fighting continued, Boone again grabbed a knife from the kitchen and stabbed both Reid and Smith. The two victims fled through the back door and Boone left the scene. Smith went back into the home to call 911. Reid's children tried to use towels to stop Smith's injuries from bleeding, but Smith ultimately died. Reid was found alive in her backyard and taken to the hospital for treatment. Boone was charged with first degree intentional homicide, attempted first degree intentional homicide, and three other felony charges related to the incident. He has pleaded not guilty. The case has not concluded.

**Victor Perez, 45: Racine, December 6, 2019**

Angela Scheit, 38, shot her ex-boyfriend Victor Perez in her home on December 6, as documented in the criminal complaint for this incident. According to media reports, the couple met on Facebook in November and after being initially loving, Perez became controlling and violent towards her. According to the criminal complaint, Scheit told him that she no longer wanted to be in a relationship with him and did not want him to move in, but he threatened arson to her home if she did not allow him to live there. Officers responded to Scheit's home on December 6 after reports of shots fired. They found Scheit outside, admitting that she shot Perez, stating she did not know why, but she just started shooting after he threatened to kill her. Scheit did not know if Perez was armed but knew he had a gun either under the mattress or on him. The officers found Perez on the kitchen floor, dead from two gunshot wounds. Scheit stated to police that "He was going to kill me. I had no choice." Scheit was charged with first degree intentional homicide and has pleaded not guilty. Media reports indicate that Scheit is claiming self-defense. The case has not concluded.

**Chad Bickler, 42: Norway, December 26, 2019**

Troy Hoffman, 40, was dating a woman when he found out that she was also romantically interested in Chad Bickler, as written in the criminal complaint. On December 26, while this woman was driving to Bickler's home, Hoffman texted her and threatened to kill Bickler if she saw him again. As she arrived at Bickler's home, she saw headlights in her rearview mirror. Her car was then hit from behind by Hoffman's car. When they got out of their respective vehicles, she saw that Hoffman had a gun and feared for her life, so she began to run away to call police. She saw him walk up to Bickler's home and heard shots being fired as she called police. She then saw Hoffman walking back to the area where she was, firing his gun at her as she ran away. When police arrived, they found Bickler in the kitchen breathing, but not moving. He ultimately died from the gunshots to his abdomen. Hoffman was charged with first degree intentional homicide and attempted first degree intentional homicide. Hoffman has pleaded not guilty by reason of mental or defect (NGI). The NGI examination has been completed, but the case has not concluded.

**County****In the death of...**

ROCK

**Clifford Grice, 41: Janesville, January 23, 2019**

According to the criminal complaint for this incident, on the evening of January 10, Clifford Grice was shot in the driveway of his home by Lucas Stuhr, 39, the on-again/off-again boyfriend of a woman Grice had recently started dating. This woman arrived at Grice's home that evening to pick him up. As they got into her car, she saw Stuhr's vehicle in Grice's driveway. He got out of his car and approached the woman's car, accused her of "playing them both," and began to argue with Grice, who asked him to leave. At this point, Stuhr returned to his vehicle, came back to the driver's side of the woman's car, and fired several rounds of gunfire at Grice. Stuhr claimed that Grice had hit him, but he did not remember shooting Grice, claiming he blacked out during the incident. He fled the scene, leaving the woman unharmed. She called the police and said Stuhr had threatened to kill Grice several times since finding out about her relationship with him. Stuhr was arrested and charged with second degree intentional homicide to which he pleaded guilty. He was sentenced to 30 years in state prison and 15 years on extended supervision.

**County****In the death of...**

SAUK

**Christopher Lytle, 37: Fairfield, September 22, 2019**

Amber Lundgren, 35, had dated Christopher Lytle several years ago, but resumed text messaging with him about a month prior to his murder, per the criminal complaint for this incident. On September 22, Lytle asked Lundgren if she wanted to get high with him, so she picked him at a local casino and drove into a rural area. According to Lundgren, Lytle kept touching her without her consent and eventually she pulled the car over and told him to get out. According to Lundgren, Lytle hit her twice and dragged her out of her car. The two began to fight as she attempted to push him away from her. He came at her full force, knocking her down, but she was able to get out from under him and back to her car. After Lytle tried to get at her again, she kicked him and then shot him twice at close range. Lundgren admitted that she did not check to see if he was alive or try to help him, nor did she call 911 or report the incident to the police. No previous history of domestic violence was documented related to either Lytle or Lundgren. Lundgren was charged with first degree intentional homicide and carrying a concealed weapon to which she has pleaded not guilty. The case has not concluded.

**County****In the death of...**

WALWORTH

**Rochelle Scott, 58: Delavan, January 6, 2019**

Rochelle Scott was killed by her husband Robert Scott, 56, whom she had been married to for 19 years, as stated in the criminal complaint. Robert stabbed her over 20 times in their home three weeks after Rochelle had filed for divorce. He then called 911 and admitted that he had "just murdered my wife" and that he "stabbed her." Robert was outside of the home when police arrived and told them where to

find his wife. According to a risk assessment filed with the court, he had a history of drug abuse but no convictions for violent behavior. Robert Scott was charged with first degree intentional homicide and pleaded guilty to the charges. He was sentenced to life in state prison.

**Jenna Brovold, 29: Delavan, May 13, 2019**

On May 13, Jenna Brovold told her sister that her ex-boyfriend of a year and a half, Casey DePriest, 29, had recently threatened her after she ended their relationship two months prior. She told her sister she was afraid to stay in her home that night. Later that day, DePriest entered her home and shot and injured Brovold's brother who was there with Brovold. He and Brovold's brother both called the police to report the shooting and DePriest remained on the scene. Upon arriving at the home and transporting the injured brother to the hospital, police called for FBI and SWAT team backup to assist with negotiations with DePriest as well as investigation assistance. Upon entering the home several hours later, police found both DePriest and Brovold shot dead. DePriest died by suicide from a self-inflicted gunshot wound after he killed Brovold. DePriest previously had a harassment restraining order against him from a former partner.

**County**

**In the death of...**

WAUKESHA

**Linda Farris, 61: New Berlin, April 28, 2019**

James Farris, 59, called 911 on April 28 to report that he and his wife, Linda Farris, had been arguing in their home when she became unresponsive. He told police that they had been married for 40 years and jointly took care of their special needs daughter at home. James shared that taking care of the daughter frequently caused stress and arguments between him and his wife, which is what happened the night she died. According to the statement James provided to police, the two began to physically fight and wrestle, and Linda scratched and punched him. James said that as he fought back, he ended up landing on top of his wife on the floor. It was after this fall that she was not responsive. He attempted to "slap" her awake and moved her to the couch to try to awaken her, but since she did not respond, he called 911. Despite life saving measures by responding officers and paramedics, Linda died. When he was told that his wife was dead, James made suicidal comments and asked the police to shoot him. Police had been called to their residence multiple times to address domestic violence complaints in the past. Further, James was out on bail for domestic violence charges and was ordered not to have any altercations with his wife at the time he committed the homicide. James Farris was charged with first degree reckless homicide and two counts of bail jumping to which he pleaded guilty. He was sentenced to 25 years in state prison and 10 years on extended supervision.

## WINNEBAGO

**Brooke Harris, 26: Oshkosh, March 2, 2019**

Brooke Harris and her ex-boyfriend, Clint Jorgenson, 26, had a 9-month old child together for whom they shared custody, according to media reports. On the evening of March 2, Harris went to drop the child off at Jorgenson's apartment. While driving, she spoke to her father, who tried to convince her not to go to Jorgenson's apartment. Later that evening, Jorgenson called the police to alert them to a shooting at his apartment. When police arrived, they found Harris with multiple gunshot wounds, but still alive. They also found Jorgenson in the apartment, who died by suicide from a self-inflicted gunshot wound. Harris later died in the hospital. Their child was found safe in a locked room in the apartment. Responding police recognized the couple from a recent harassment call they had investigated that did not result in any charges. Jorgenson bought the gun he used in the homicide-suicide earlier that day.

# Homicide Prevention Program Update

Communities across Wisconsin continue to implement the Lethality Assessment Program – Maryland Model (LAP), a program involving law enforcement’s use of an 11-item, research-based questionnaire assessing the danger in domestic violence situations, and an immediate connection to domestic violence advocacy services for those in high danger. The End Abuse Homicide Prevention Program maintains our efforts to support these existing partnerships and cultivate new partnerships between Wisconsin law enforcement agencies and community-based domestic violence programs, with the ultimate goal of preventing domestic violence homicides.

End Abuse collects quantitative LAP implementation data from agencies utilizing the protocol to assess the effectiveness of the program in real-time and over time. Of the agencies entering their LAP data into our online data portal, the most recent bi-annual numbers and percentages are included in Figure 1. Collecting this information helps draw our attention to potential LAP implementation challenges in particular jurisdictions, and tailor the technical assistance we provide to address the challenges and re-align their practices with the evidence-based LAP protocol as needed.

**Figure 1. Summary LAP Data – January – June 2020<sup>1</sup>**

LAP DATA	Total	% of Total Screens	% of High-Danger Screens
LAP Screens	1918	100%	NA
High-Danger Screens	1059	55%	100%
Non-High Danger Screens	561	29%	NA
Did Not Answer	298	16%	NA
Spoke to Hotline	563	29%	53%
Officer Calls	1000	52%	94%
Went to Services	315	16%	30%

<sup>1</sup> High danger: Number of screens where a victim was assessed as high danger based on responses to the questions, or screened in based on officer belief.

Non-high danger: Number of screens where a victim was assessed as non-high danger.

Did not answer (DNA): The number of screens where the victim declined to answer ALL of the lethality screen questions, after being offered the opportunity to do so twice.

Spoke to worker: Number of victims assessed as high danger that spoke to the hotline worker after officer placed the call, and offered the victim an opportunity to do so twice.

Officer calls: Number of calls received by the domestic violence program from the scene

Went to service: Number of high danger victims who went in for any further services offered by the domestic violence program within the same quarterly data reporting period.

In addition to our quantitative data collection and analysis efforts, in late 2019 End Abuse distributed a survey to gather qualitative feedback about agencies’ and individuals’ experience utilizing the LAP protocol. We received 63 responses from law enforcement agency representatives and 24 from domestic violence advocates.

Domestic violence agencies feel the LAP has helped significantly when it comes to working with high danger situations, a direct result of advocates having more information to shape their initial conversations with victims who are connected to them through officers. *“Before when we would get calls from law enforcement we were never aware of what level risk the client was in. Often victims don’t tell us everything right away.”* Advocates further emphasized how the LAP provides effective, evidence-based language to explain to victims the level of danger they are in. *“I like having the backing to explain why they are in a dangerous situation. It’s an eye-opener for some victims.”*

Both law enforcement agencies and domestic violence program respondents were asked, *“In your view, what has been the most significant byproduct that has resulted from the LAP?”* Their responses illuminate how implementation of the LAP has had a positive impact on multiple aspects of their work with domestic violence cases.

- *“My officers seem to really dig deep into the history of the intimate partner relationship rather than just looking at the isolated incident. This allows us to provide more information in our reports to show our DA’s office the pattern of behavior by the offender. I believe we can see the victim is in danger but often times they don’t see it.”*
- *“It gives the officer more time with the victim which is important to show the victim that you really care about them and are attempting to get the services they need now instead of later when the victim is alone.”*
- *“[The LAP] gets the victim in touch with resources and advocates much quicker than before. It provides them with more options and seems to put them at ease with the unknown that may be ahead.”*

Beyond supporting LAP implementation, End Abuse promotes the development of high-risk teams in Wisconsin, which is the only other nationally recognized evidence-based domestic violence homicide prevention strategy aside from the LAP.<sup>1</sup> High-risk teams complement what’s currently being done in communities that are implementing the LAP, as law enforcement and advocates already have a process for identifying the cases they encounter that have the greatest potential to result in a homicide. High-risk teams create a wraparound response to the most dangerous cases, promoting victim safety and perpetrator accountability as the case moves throughout the criminal justice system. The use of both approaches in tandem can maximize the positive impact that communities will see as a result of their collaborative efforts.

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<sup>1</sup>“These teams often include representatives from victim service organizations, law enforcement agencies, pretrial services, prosecutors’ offices, corrections, and batterer intervention programs. They meet regularly to review the referred victims and decide, as a team, which victims warrant intensive assistance and monitoring. Victims identified as needing intensive assistance must agree to share their information with the DVHRT. The staff then gathers more information about the victim and abuser from the team’s member agencies — as well as from the victim — to develop a protection plan that allows each agency to contribute in a manner that fits its mission and resources.”

(From June 2020 National Institute of Justice Journal article, *New Approaches to Policing High-Risk Intimate Partner Victims and Offenders*: <https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/new-approaches-policing-high-risk-intimate-partner-victims-and-offenders>.)

## **New Homicide Prevention Partnerships**

Recent high-profile killings of Black people at the hands of law enforcement across the nation have caused us to further consider whether our homicide prevention work, as it looks currently, aligns with End Abuse's desire to dismantle systems of white supremacy that create racial inequities and perpetuate systemic racism, especially within the criminal justice system. These tragic events have underscored how our homicide prevention efforts primarily focused on law enforcement response are short-sighted and further propagate the systemic violence we aim to end. Our intention is not to abandon the LAP, as we know it is effective in decreasing lethality for the many survivors in high danger who decide they must call law enforcement. Moving forward, we hope to broaden the list of community partners we equip to implement homicide prevention programming similar to the LAP in conjunction with local community-based domestic violence programs. Expanding the range of service providers who are both knowledgeable about lethality risk factors and who have established relationships with domestic violence advocates will improve survivor access to individualized crisis intervention and long-term support.

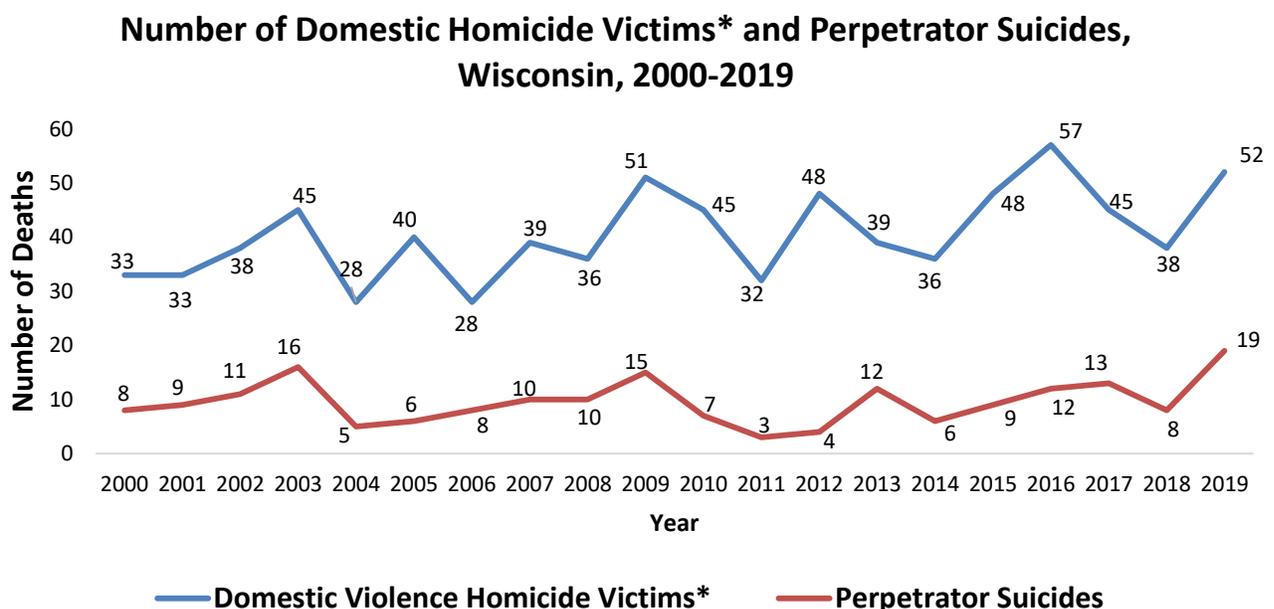
# Wisconsin Domestic Violence Homicides: A Review of 20 Years of Data

End Abuse has been producing the Wisconsin Domestic Violence Homicide reports since 2000. Here we review the last 20 years of data to provide historical perspective, highlight trends, and significant findings, and can indicate future areas of focus.

The next several pages provide a summary of data for the following variables: domestic violence homicide victims, perpetrator suicides, victim and perpetrator demographics, homicide methods, the relationship of victim to perpetrator, and relationship factors in domestic violence homicides. Although there were additional data elements included in reports over the last 20 years, those listed above were identified as the most significant and meaningful to present through a historical lens. The main method used for this section of the report was conducting data extraction from the 2000-2019 reports for the key variables of interest. A total of 18 reports were included in the extraction (some years of data were presented in combined reports, i.e. 2006-2007 and 2011-2012). Data were entered into a database for descriptive analysis and visualization as presented.

## Domestic Violence Homicides and Perpetrator Suicides: 2000 to 2019

There were 811 victims killed in domestic violence homicides from 2000 through 2019 in Wisconsin, excluding homicides involving legal intervention. The number of domestic violence homicide victims has ranged from 28 (in 2004 and 2006) to 57 (in 2016), with an average of 41 victims across all years. There is a slight upward trend in the number of homicides from 2000 to 2019. This could reflect a true increase in the number of domestic violence homicide incidents or the result of improved ability to identify and gather information on cases through better reporting and tracking mechanisms.



\*Does not include those killed by law enforcement.

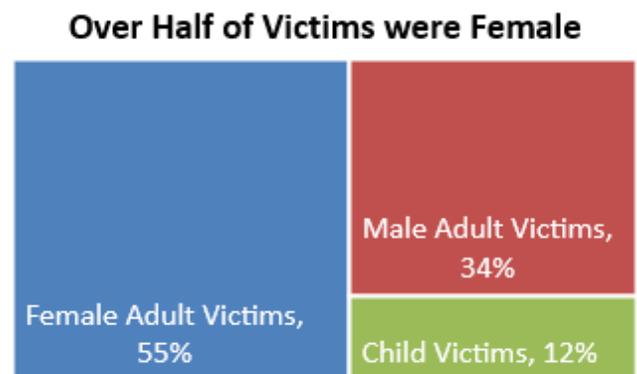
## Perpetrator Suicides

Wisconsin experiences several domestic-violence related “homicide-suicide” incidents each year, in which the perpetrator kills someone and then dies by suicide. A total of 190 perpetrators of domestic violence homicide committed suicide in Wisconsin from 2000 to 2019, varying across years, from 3 (8% of total deaths) in 2011 to 19 (26% of total deaths) in 2019\*. The average number of perpetrator suicides per year was 10. The number of perpetrator suicides per year parallels the number of homicide victims. However, the upward trend is less steep for perpetrator suicides. The number of perpetrator suicides over the last 20 years illustrates the strong correlation between suicidal and homicidal ideation in highly lethal abusive partners. Abusers, contrary to what some may believe, often harbor feelings of low self-esteem and self-worth. They may use threats or attempts of suicide to convince the victim to stay with them. The abuser may try to make the victim to feel as though they would be responsible for the suicide. The risk that abuser suicidality poses is centered on their ability, or lack thereof, to control the circumstances in their lives. When abusers feel like they have lost control, they become the most dangerous. If an abuser’s maladaptive thinking patterns and coping skills can be identified and addressed earlier on, there is a greater chance of identifying and breaking the cycle of abuse before it escalates to a lethal level.

\* After publication we learned new information about a case. In an incident we had previously listed as homicide by legal intervention, the perpetrator died by a self-inflicted gunshot wound after shooting his wife. This case was re-categorized on 9/21/20 as an attempted homicide-suicide incident.

## Victim and Perpetrator Demographics

Domestic violence, like other forms of violence, presents a stark pattern of differences based on sex. Adult females accounted for over half of the victims of domestic violence homicide overall from 2000 to 2019 (446 total). Thirty-four percent (279) of the victims were adult males, and twelve percent (101) were child victims. Although most victims were female, over 1/3 of domestic violence homicide victims were males. While abuse is most often committed by a male against a female, men and boys are not immune from being victims of domestic violence homicides: domestic violence cannot and should not be pigeonholed as a women’s issue. It also adversely affects the health and safety of men and is a problem for which men bear responsibility. It is important to note that in our limited research, we are seldom privy to how people self-identify their gender or sexual orientation.



There were 730 perpetrators of domestic violence homicide in Wisconsin from 2000 to 2019, most of whom were male. While the risk of domestic violence homicide is more equal for females and males, most who commit the homicide are male. The behaviors exhibited by homicide victims and perpetrators vary by sex. Female perpetrators rarely engage in patterns of stalking, strangulation, increasing severity of violence, forced sex, threats to kill, and other coercive behavior that often characterizes homicides committed by males. Many homicides committed by females were preceded by an immediate or anticipated attack or a history of abuse by the homicide victim.

### Large Majority of Perpetrators were Male



Men’s use of violence against women and other men is also a byproduct of broken, unhealthy notions of masculinity. Perhaps one of the most nuanced and cogent analyses of the relationship between faulty beliefs about masculinity and domestic violence homicides is Dr. Neil Websdale’s *Familicidal Hearts: The Emotional Styles of 211 Killers*<sup>1</sup>. Websdale, a professor at Northern Arizona University and director of the National Domestic Violence Fatality Review Initiative, paints a complex yet convincing picture of “family annihilators.” He argues that perpetrators of familicide, who are overwhelmingly male, share one common trait: feelings of shame that they have fallen short of societal ideals of manhood. His account complicates but also builds off the traditional feminist understanding that domestic violence is an expression of male power and control to subordinate women in intimate partner relationships. Extensive research informs his belief that men who kill their families generally have a conscious or unconscious need to control their female partners, yet also feel a deep sense of powerlessness or lack of control in their lives.

<sup>1</sup> Websdale, Neil. *Familicidal Hearts: The Emotional Styles of 211 Killers*. Oxford University Press, 2010.

## Homicide Method

The top five methods used in domestic violence homicides were firearms, stabbing, blunt force, strangulation, and cars. Firearms remained the most common method used in domestic violence homicides in Wisconsin across all report years, being used in over half of all homicides from 2000 to 2019. In addition to the methods described in the table below, other methods used in domestic violence homicides included smoke inhalation, arson, violent shaking, drug overdose, and neglect.

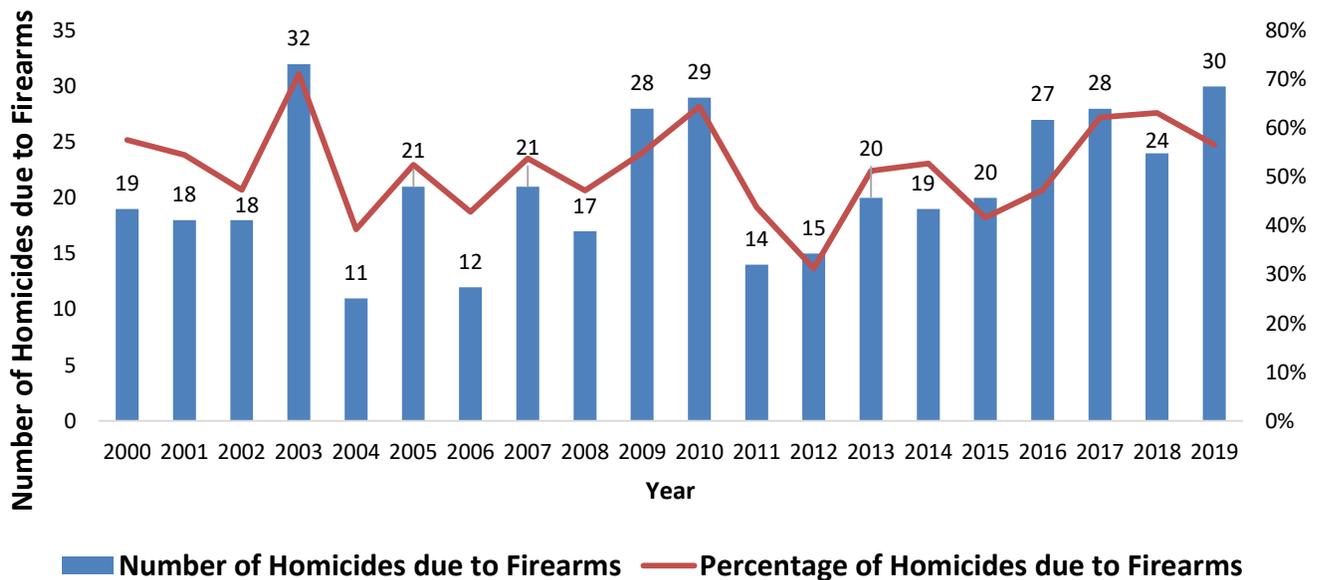
Top Methods Used in Domestic Violence Homicides, Wisconsin, 2000-2019*		
Method Used	Number of Homicides	Percentage of Total Homicides*
Firearm	423	52%
Stabbing	174	21%
Blunt force	86	11%
Strangulation	51	6%
Car	23	3%

\*Excluding homicides where law enforcement killed domestic violence perpetrators.

### Method: Firearms

The use of firearms in domestic violence homicide varied significantly in Wisconsin from 2000 to 2019, with the highest number of deaths using this method occurring in 2003 (32 deaths) and the lowest in 2004 (11 deaths). Although the number and percentage of homicides in which firearms were used fluctuates, there is a marked, steadier upward trend from 2011 to 2019. The figure on the following page illustrates these trends over time.

### Number and Percentage of Domestic Violence Homicides by Firearms, Wisconsin, 2000-2019



A gun is the most commonly used weapon in domestic violence homicide in the United States.<sup>1</sup> In 2013, approximately half of the intimate partner homicides in the United States were committed using firearms.<sup>2</sup> The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has reported that family and intimate assaults with a firearm were three times more likely to result in death than those involving knives or other sharp instruments, and 23 times more likely to result in death than assaults involving other weapons or bodily force.<sup>3</sup>

While not as predictive as the use or threatened use of a firearm, the very fact that an abuser has access to a gun puts victims at elevated risk to be killed. An abused woman is five times more likely to be killed when her abusive partner has a gun in the home.<sup>4</sup> Guns are kept in homes where there is domestic violence more often than in homes that are not violent. In addition, if a gun is present, its use in domestic violence situations is relatively common.<sup>5</sup> In response to the heightened risk that guns pose to domestic violence victims, federal law restricts an offender convicted of a domestic violence-related misdemeanor crime from possessing a firearm. Similarly, both federal and Wisconsin law prohibit possession of firearms while a person is subject to an active domestic abuse injunction.

Many of the homicide perpetrators included in this report had been prohibited from firearm possession yet maintained access to their current weapons or obtained a firearm to commit a homicide after being prohibited by court order. These individual homicides highlight loopholes in the law, and systemic failures to enforce laws regarding firearm sales, possession, and surrender. According to national research by *Everytown for Gun Safety*<sup>6</sup>, survivors would be safer in communities with common-sense gun safety policies like universal background checks, and purchase waiting periods that align with cross-referenced state and federal prohibition lists. Communities also saw increased safety for survivors when their systems implemented specific logistical protocols to safely enforce firearm surrender in a timely manner, and when done so in collaboration with intersecting law enforcement and court jurisdictions.

<sup>1</sup> Cooper, A., Smith, E. L. (2011). Homicide trends in the United States, 1980–2008. In Bureau of Justice Statistics (Ed.), *Homicide trends in the United States* (pp. 18–20, 27–28). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice.

<sup>2</sup> Zeoli, A. M., Malinski, R., & Turchan, B. (2016). Risks and targeted interventions: Firearms in intimate partner violence. *Epidemiologic Reviews*, 38(1), 125-139.

<sup>3</sup> Leonard J. Paulozzi et al., “Surveillance for Homicide Among Intimate Partners – United States, 1981 – 1998,” *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report Surveillance Summaries*, October 12, 2001, 50:1 – 16.

<sup>4</sup> Campbell, Jacquelyn C., Daniel W. Webster, and Nancy Glass. “The danger assessment validation of a lethality risk assessment instrument for intimate partner femicide.” *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 24.4 (2009): 653-674.

<sup>5</sup> S.B. Sorenson and D.J Wiebe, “Weapons in the Lives of Battered Women,” *American Journal of Public Health*, August 2005, 94:1412- 1417.

<sup>6</sup> Every Town for Gun Safety, “Guns and Violence Against Women”, October 2019. Retrieved from <https://everytownresearch.org/report/guns-and-violence-against-women-americas-uniquely-lethal-intimate-partner-violence-problem/>

## Relationship of Victim to Perpetrator

The types of relationships between victim and perpetrator ranged from current or former partners to family members and the new partners of victims. From 2000 to 2019, current partners of victims were responsible for the highest percentage of domestic violence homicides in Wisconsin, at 43%. This includes current husbands/wives and girlfriends/boyfriends. The relationship with the second-highest percentage was former partners, at nearly 19%. In addition to the relationships listed below, other relationship types included relatives or friends of the domestic violence victim, neighbors, co-workers, bystanders, or others who attempted to intervene or protect the victim.

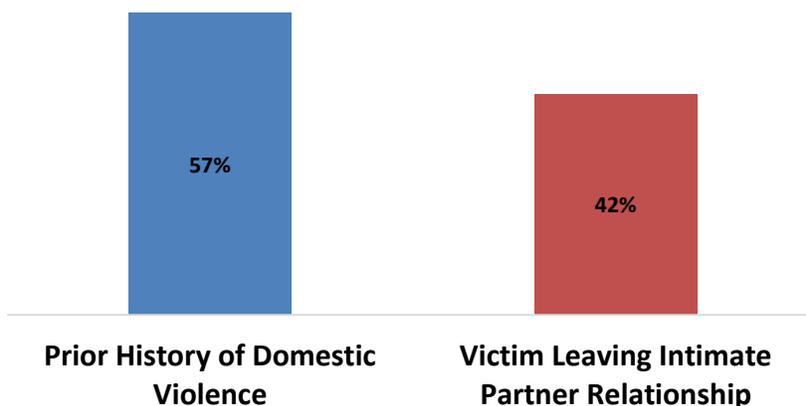
<b>Top Relationship Types between Victims and Perpetrators, Wisconsin, 2000-2019</b>		
<b>Relationship</b>	<b>Number of Victim Deaths</b>	<b>Percentage of Victim Deaths</b>
Current Partner	303	42.7%
Former Partner	132	18.8%
Parent of Victim	54	7.7%
Child of Victim	49	6.9%
Current Partner of Perpetrator’s Former Partner	44	6.2%

## Relationship Factors involved in Domestic Violence Homicides

There are several related factors that victims of domestic violence homicide in Wisconsin experienced prior to their death. From 2000 to 2019, prior domestic violence of the perpetrator towards the victim was reported in over half of the homicide cases, indicating that experiencing domestic violence in a relationship is a risk factor for domestic violence homicide. In addition,

slightly less than half of the homicide victims from 2000 to 2019 were killed after attempting to or leaving their intimate partner relationship with the perpetrator.

### Average Percentage that Relationship Factors were involved in Domestic Violence Homicide Incidents, Wisconsin, 2000-2019



Every year, thousands of domestic violence victims decide to leave their abusive partners to start new and better lives for themselves and their children. Leaving an abusive relationship is often a very difficult, complex, and dangerous process. According to the National Crime Victimization Survey, the rate of domestic violence homicides by husbands was 25 times higher when women were separated from their husbands than when married and cohabitating.<sup>1</sup> Other research has found that a woman’s attempt to leave was the precipitating factor in 45% of intimate partner homicides of women.<sup>2</sup> Leaving means weighing and reweighing threats to themselves and their loved ones. The frequency of such threats is related to an increased risk of violence for victims who had left their relationship.<sup>3</sup> The work of Jacquelyn Campbell and others shows that women whose partners threatened them with murder were 15 times more likely than other women to be killed.<sup>4</sup> Nearly half of domestic violence homicides occur a month or more after a couple has separated.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Neil Websdale, *Understanding Domestic Homicide*, Northeastern University Press, 1999.

<sup>2</sup> Carolyn Rebecca Block, “How Can Practitioners Help an Abused Woman Lower Her Risk of Death?” *NIJ Journal*, Issue 250, November 2003.

<sup>3</sup> *Violence: Women’s Experiences of Violence by Former Partners*, *Violence Against Women*, December 2000.

<sup>4</sup> Campbell, J. C., Webster, D. W., Koziol-McLain, J., Block, C. R., Campbell, D. W., Curry, M. A., ... & Ulrich, Y. (2003). Assessing risk factors for intimate partner homicide. *National Institute of Justice Journal*, (250), 14-19.

<sup>5</sup> Campbell, J. C., Webster, D., Koziol-McLain, J., Block, C., Campbell, D., Curry, M. A., ... & Sharps, P. (2003). Risk factors for femicide in abusive relationships: Results from a multisite case control study. *American journal of public health*, 93(7), 1089-1097.

## Conclusions

Examining quantitative data from the previous 20 years of Wisconsin Domestic Violence Homicide Reports provides insight into the historical trends regarding our state’s homicide data. These trends can help practitioners and policymakers identify areas of needed intervention, funding, and advocacy in order to mitigate the frequency and impact of domestic violence homicide in Wisconsin.

# Looking Back, Thinking Forward: Reflections of Domestic Violence Experts

Countless individuals have worked to prevent and address domestic violence in Wisconsin over the last twenty years, whose experiences and expertise are important to consider as we reflect and continue our work to prevent domestic violence homicides in Wisconsin. We identified and invited 13 professionals who have worked in Wisconsin domestic violence advocacy programs for at least 20 years to participate in either an online survey or an interview to offer their perspective. The responses to the open-ended questions are summarized below. Four professionals working in unique geographic areas in Wisconsin participated in the survey.

**As you reflect on the last 20 years of work in the domestic violence field in Wisconsin, what stands out the most to you? Is there a moment, event, or experience that you deem pivotal to the work that has been done in Wisconsin, or locally in your community?**

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Responses to this question ranged from personal and community experiences to statewide practice and policy change. As one respondent noted, the domestic violence field is *“a whole lot different than in the early years...change was inevitable.”* Improved data collection and awareness has unveiled how domestic abuse uniquely impacts people from different cultural and geographic communities as well as other demographic identities. Additionally, clients are presenting with broader and more complex needs than before. Programs report that an increasing number of clients are struggling with mental health or substance abuse issues, often as a result of or in response to the domestic abuse they have experienced. This combination of factors has resulted in significant expansion of services to address these needs, and elevated the importance of offering tailored, culturally appropriate domestic abuse advocacy services.

One respondent’s personal experience with knowing someone who was killed by their partner challenged her to deeply reflect and re-consider working in the field of domestic abuse, ultimately deciding to pour more energy and commitment into advocacy. This personal experience highlights the significant emotional and professional impact homicides can have on domestic abuse advocates and reinforces the need for support for those working in this field.

Professional experiences with domestic violence homicide were also identified as pivotal moments that have shaped the field over the last two decades. One respondent shared how multiple child homicides related to domestic violence incited both sadness and resolve to address the issue. Professionals from the local domestic abuse program and family court system began to meet and review how they were all doing their work, how they identify domestic violence, and how they could enhance their collaboration by identifying creative solutions and best practices to keep victims and their children more safe.

Another community experience that stood out to a respondent was a series of lethal incidents involving the Hmong community, including two domestic homicide/suicides and an attempted homicide occurring within a single year of each other. These incidents greatly altered how the Hmong Advocate at their

domestic violence program approached the work of domestic abuse within that community and sparked discussions statewide about how best to support Hmong victims of domestic abuse. Lastly, these tragic events offered an opening to talk about homicide and suicide in the Hmong community. Although these experiences caused substantial pain and suffering, they positively impacted both local and statewide work in domestic abuse and homicide prevention.

When discussing facets of the work that have changed over the last two decades, one professional mentioned the more recent use of trauma-informed care in domestic abuse programming. Although there remain varying degrees of understanding of trauma, there have been more training opportunities that support domestic abuse professionals' efforts in identifying and addressing all forms of trauma at the individual and community level. Furthermore, one survey respondent commented that there has been enhanced support for staff within the domestic abuse field in Wisconsin itself. As professionals began to share their feelings while working in this field, they realized there is a need to share these as a form of self-care in the profession. These conversations led to the development of a [Homicide Response Plan](#) that was created in 2011 and revised in 2019 by End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin, which helps to support domestic violence programs through navigating such a crisis in their community.

### **What policies and programs have been developed over the last few decades that have positively contributed to or worked to prevent domestic violence homicides?**

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This question elicited a variety of responses, again ranging from local efforts to statewide. On the local level, one professional shared that their community developed a "serious violent offender" list, which served to coordinate communication between criminal justice stakeholders. This is used as another homicide prevention strategy in that community. Another community implemented mobile advocacy, reaching victims where they are instead of victims needing to go somewhere to receive help and support. This community also adopted policies that screened victims in, not out, of domestic abuse shelter, and increased abuse prevention education over the last twenty years.

Several respondents said that the Lethality Assessment Program (LAP) that is used in many Wisconsin communities has had a significant impact on the field of domestic abuse over the last two decades. Developed by the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence and adopted for use in Wisconsin, this approach identifies cases of domestic violence that pose the greatest risk and connects these victims to domestic abuse advocacy services proactively, taking the onus off the victim to be the one initiating contact. Law enforcement receives training on this approach and serve as key partners to local domestic abuse programs in its use and success in diverse Wisconsin communities. Importantly, the respondent noted that both domestic abuse programs and law enforcement agencies must be on board and ready to implement the LAP for it to be successful. The training is lengthy, but the benefits of it far outweigh the time commitment to learning and understanding its implementation. As one respondent wrote, "Preventing homicide is so difficult to quantify (prevention in general is) but the research that was done with the LAP demonstrates an impact."

## As you think about the work that needs to be done going forward, what do you think are the most pressing needs to address and why?

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After thinking back on the work that has been done over the last 20 years, respondents had great insight into the pressing needs for the future. Priorities are summarized below.

- **Advocating for more sustainable funding for domestic abuse programs across the state.** One respondent shared that most programs live “paycheck to paycheck” and are fragile financially. They cannot accomplish what is needed for true prevention in the community with the dollars they currently receive. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the giving ability for some donors, as well as the financial situations of programs as they may not be able to raise funds via fundraisers or other in-person events during this context.
- **Increasing community engagement to reduce domestic abuse.** The recognition that more genuine community engagement with all stakeholders is needed resounded in one response. This includes engaging schools, churches, family members, law enforcement, and the court system to take on domestic violence as a community problem and learn the indicators of violence at home. These stakeholders should learn how to sensitively approach a victim of domestic abuse and know where to locate additional support from community resources.
- **Expanding resources to those who are often marginalized economically, racially, ethnically, geographically, or due to sexual orientation.** These groups are often the most dependent on the community for support and tools to navigate domestic abuse situations among other challenges in their lives, so services of domestic abuse programs should aim to provide services to those most marginalized by institutional and systemic oppression, thereby providing comprehensive services that reach everyone in between.
- **Expanding court education about domestic violence.** Domestic violence victims often find themselves in court settings where decision-makers struggle to understand the nuances of domestic violence. Therefore, more education is needed to help court staff understand why they cannot simply apply the “rules” of what a healthy relationship looks like to a relationship fraught with domestic violence.
- **Addressing the economic security of victims of domestic violence.** Victims of domestic violence may be financially dependent on their abusive partner and thus may not have the economic means to take steps to leave the relationship. In these scenarios, victims often feel like they have little choice but to stay in an unsafe situation with the abuser, particularly if children are in the picture.
- **Spreading awareness about the need to take threats of domestic violence seriously.** One respondent shared that their community has experienced how threats to kill go unheard and end up leading to awful tragedy. There are times that family and/or law enforcement do not intervene if there is “only a threat” of violence, unaware that these threats are indeed risk factors for future violence or even homicide. Increasing awareness about the seriousness of threats to kill the victim or commit future violence is an important step to take going forward.

- **Finding a safe way for victims of domestic abuse to raise the concern early in the family court process.** One respondent reflected that many victims do not want to “rock the boat” in early discussions of divorce/custody proceedings for various reasons. Victims should be provided with a safe path to divulge domestic abuse early in the process to avoid unintended consequences with their case and reduce the likelihood of ongoing abuse throughout the court process.
- **Identifying and advocating for safer placement situations for children who are involved in custody processes.** Many children are put in unsafe placement situations, reflecting that in court processes, a parent’s rights supersede the child’s right to safety. This has resulted in continued abuse and even deaths of children who have been placed in unsafe situations, not to mention the lifelong trauma and other negative impacts that the children may experience due to the domestic abuse.
- **Improving support and resources for child homicide survivors who lost one or both parents to homicide or homicide/suicide.** There is a need to better identify the safest placement for children who have lost a parent or both parents in a domestic violence homicide incident and provide ongoing social and emotional support and resources.
- **Increasing prevention education in schools.** This education should begin at a younger age and include lessons on healthy versus unhealthy relationships.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> End Abuse has unsuccessfully advocated for legislation that would mandate the implementation of the Teen Dating Violence education in schools. This remains a priority for the organization moving forward.

**If you could create a "wish list" that would improve efforts to prevent domestic violence homicide, what would the top five things on your list be?**

Common themes in responses included funding, expansion, or continuation of work that is being done in the state, a review and amendment of current practices in court systems, and implementation of new programs, practices, policies, and trainings. The following table summarizes items on the respondents’ “wish lists” for domestic violence homicide prevention in Wisconsin.

<b>“Wish List Items” for Domestic Violence Homicide Prevention in Wisconsin</b>	
<b>Fund:</b>	Victims to obtain legal representation in family law cases
	Long term treatment programs for people that use power and control
	Safe housing so survivors have options of places to go if they can escape
	Programs to fairly compensate and retain staff
<b>Continue and Expand:</b>	Lethality Assessment Program (implementation in collaboration with a domestic violence program)
	Family law justice roundtables and similar work started by End Abuse
	Collaboration with healthcare systems, housing resources, childcare and school systems, neighborhood organizations, and economic structures

<b>Review and Change:</b>	Divorce and child custody process to keep victim and child safety at the forefront
	Guardian Ad Litem process in Wisconsin to enhance victim and child safety
	Mandatory Arrest Law - allow for more discretion for police to be supportive of victims' wishes and not be required to make an arrest
<b>Implement:</b>	Domestic Violence Housing First practice <sup>1</sup>
	Robust homicide review procedures <sup>2</sup>
	Training for all key stakeholders on elements of domestic violence and social and systemic causes of it
	Prevention programming and education
	Systems of economic support for victims that cover all of their needs, rather than piecemeal

<sup>1</sup>“Housing instability is four times more likely for women who have experienced DV compared to other women (Pavao et al., 2007), and approximately 25% of homeless women have noted DV as being a major contributor to their homelessness (Jasinski et al., 2002; Wilder Research Center, 2007). The Housing First model was based on the presumption that helping people obtain stable housing before addressing other concerns makes dealing with these other issues easier, and the evidence has strongly supported this claim (Padgett et al., 2016; Tsemberis, 2010). The model was evaluated through a 5-year pilot involving 13 DV agencies from diverse areas within Washington State. Program records indicated that 96% of the families receiving DV Housing First retained their housing at 18 months. Focus group data with survivors revealed additional positive outcomes for families, including increased safety, improved health and well-being, and restored dignity.” From: <https://safehousingpartnerships.org/sites/default/files/2017-06/Sullivan-Olsen-Adapting%20the%20Housing%20First%20Model%20for%20DV%20Survivors-6-2017.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> One respondent wrote: “One way to prevent future domestic violence homicides is to establish robust homicide review procedures so that local law enforcement agencies, court systems, domestic violence advocacy organizations, and other stakeholders can collaborate to determine currently existing systemic barriers that preclude victims of abuse from getting assistance before it is too late. This lack of collaboration, particularly in the wake of domestic violence homicides, often pits court systems, local law enforcement, and advocacy organizations against one another when attempting to establish the cause of the homicide. Rather than evaluate system structures and community tools for homicide prevention, local stakeholders are forced to defend their practices to avoid blame for a tragic and traumatizing event.”

## **Conclusion and Acknowledgment**

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We would like to thank the domestic abuse professionals who took the time to complete the online survey and/or participate in an interview. They reflected on the last 20 years of work in the domestic violence field in Wisconsin and identified their recommendations for what is needed to move the needle on domestic violence homicide in the coming years. Their responses provide qualitative depth and meaning to the quantitative data that was presented in the previous section. Importantly, their perspective also identifies key areas of practice change, policy advocacy, and prevention strategies to further decrease domestic abuse and homicides in our state. Using both quantitative and qualitative data can further guide prevention programming and policy making in Wisconsin to reduce abuse and deaths.

# Wisconsin Domestic Violence Homicides: Impacts on Children

Understanding and documenting the impacts of domestic violence homicide is a vital and complex undertaking. Among the many individuals and communities that domestic violence homicides impact, surviving children are perhaps one of the most vulnerable groups to consider. To measure this impact, the early years of the Wisconsin Domestic Violence Homicide Report included data on how many children were left orphaned, fatherless, or motherless, and the number of children who witnessed domestic violence homicide. The report stopped including these statistics several years ago because obtaining accurate data related to surviving minor children was challenging due to limited public information available.

End Abuse therefore prioritized this topic as one to highlight in the 20-year review section of this edition of the *Wisconsin Domestic Violence Homicide Report* to demonstrate the significant impacts domestic violence homicides have on surviving children, and to provide a human touch to these numbers. We chose to interview experts in this area who could speak to their experience working with children impacted by domestic violence homicide. An interview was conducted via Zoom with Courtney Olson, Director, and Jessica Honish, Lead Advocate, of Rainbow House Domestic Abuse Services, Inc. A summary of the questions and responses Courtney and Jessica shared can be found below and on the following pages. For more information about the Rainbow House, please visit <https://therainbowhouse.us/>.

## **How have you seen the impact of domestic violence homicide on children in your work, or children with whom you have worked?**

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As they considered this question, Courtney and Jessica wanted to provide their response in the context of a domestic violence homicide that greatly impacted the Rainbow House several years ago. In 2013, Rainbow House experienced a loss of one of their own when Trish Waschbisch, mother of a young daughter and a legal advocate and interim director for the agency, was killed by her ex-partner. This tragic incident brought to light the lack of adequate resources for families and other community members affected by domestic violence homicide. This motivated the agency to develop a website that hosts tools and resources about domestic violence homicide (<https://domesticviolencehomicidehelp.com>). Trish's story is featured on their site, along with a video created by Melanie Bradshaw, whose mother was the victim of domestic violence homicide in Jessica's hometown of Oconto when Melanie was a minor. These stories provide Courtney, Jessica, and other Rainbow House staff with a genuine reminder of the impact domestic violence homicide on children.

In addition to having a professional experience with a domestic violence homicide, Courtney and Jessica shared that they see the impact of domestic violence on children daily. They recognize **signs and symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in some of the children** with whom they have worked and strive to connect these youth with counseling services to support them. Research echoes what Courtney and Jessica reflected from their anecdotal experience;

children who have been impacted by domestic violence are more likely to have difficulty in school academically and behaviorally, and more likely to be involved in the criminal justice system.

They have seen how the conflict and emotional struggles of these children are pervasive, and that things such as media reports about the incident can re-trigger children repeatedly, causing more trauma. Rainbow House staff work to forewarn children and their caregivers about these media releases ahead of time in hopes of supporting their emotional needs.

A struggle some families face is when siblings are impacted by domestic violence homicide and one of the children continues to have a relationship with the perpetrator, while the other does not. Not only can this create relationship challenges among the siblings and other family members, but it can also re-trigger the children and cause further emotional struggles.

The Rainbow House staff have witnessed how people seem fearful of talking to children who have been affected by domestic violence homicide, and consequently do not say anything to them. Instead, Courtney and Jessica suggest that those who want to support these children should **ask them how they are doing and be willing to listen**. Having a trusted adult to turn to and talk to after a traumatic experience is vital throughout the grieving and healing process.

Courtney and Jessica both emphasized the **importance of counseling for children** impacted by domestic violence homicide and that accessing these services should not be a financial decision. Indeed, crime victim compensation programs exist in part to pay for therapy for those who are victims of crimes. Agencies like Rainbow House have advocates who can help victims connect with these programs and services. However, some children who have lost a parent due to domestic violence are unable to talk to anyone about the experience for years, as speaking about it re-triggers their memories and the trauma the experience continues to incite. Experienced mental health professionals can support a child's grieving and healing process in the short and long-term.

### **What has stayed the same and what has changed over the last 20 years?**

Courtney and Jessica feel **there is always work to be done** in preventing and addressing the impact of domestic violence homicide on children. They both agreed that in years past and still today, it seems there are not enough resources and counselors for children and that appointments tend to be sporadic and inconsistent for various reasons. Tools and resources for children who have experienced or witnessed domestic violence in rural areas are difficult to find and could be enhanced using telehealth options. In addition, the **complex process of going through the criminal justice system** after a domestic violence homicide is incredibly challenging and overwhelming when it is so personal. Children are not equipped to understand why their homes may be locked up or have police tape around them, why media are so interested in their family, and why the "ongoing wheels of justice are slow." Without adequate counseling resources, children are prone to suffer more emotional damage from the confusion and frustration surrounding the ongoing intrusion of these experiences after the incident has occurred.

Courtney and Jessica conveyed personal challenges when their staff member Trish was killed. They recalled how law enforcement locked up and taped their office, media went to staff members' homes, surrounded the shelter, and repeatedly tried to talk to shelter residents about the case. They also reflected about how slowly the process in the courts moved. Yet, they did positively reflect how supportive it felt when other domestic violence agencies stepped in to help during that crisis, which is a collaborative practice that continues when domestic violence crises emerge around the state.

In terms of things that have changed, Courtney and Jessica feel that the criminal justice process and relations with media have slightly improved over time. Coupled with this is a **growing awareness** of domestic violence and the risk factors associated with it among various audiences, as well as **improved tracking of data**. This can result in better and more targeted prevention strategies, more effective training, and reporting that can inform programming and policies.

Given the significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 on so many facets of individuals' and communities' lives, Courtney and Jessica highlighted that **the pandemic is having an escalating effect on domestic violence incidents**. The importance of prevention, training, identification, collaboration, and support for victims and their children are therefore even more necessary as the world navigates through this uncertain time. As the pandemic has necessitated that more health care services are provided via telehealth modalities, this has the potential to increase access to support for children in rural areas and those who might not otherwise be able to access in-person services. **Capitalizing on technology to provide mental health services for children** impacted by domestic violence homicide has changed this work because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **What aspects of this work and advocacy are important to focus on moving forward?**

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In response to this question, Courtney and Jessica mentioned that evaluating the **impact of Marsy's law**, which passed in the spring of 2020, is important to understand its impact on victims of violence. Relatedly, they feel that the criminal justice system needs to improve the ability of victims to have a voice in the process and to provide better and more services for them throughout.

Furthermore, Courtney and Jessica feel that there needs to be a **better connection to counseling services for children** in the aftermath of homicide and beyond. Children can experience different layers of trauma due to domestic violence homicide. For example, a child may have not only lost one parent in the homicide, but also the other parent if they are now incarcerated. Ongoing support for children long after the incident takes place can help mitigate emotional challenges and equip the child with tools to address and work through various layers of trauma associated with the homicide.

## What message would you like to convey to anyone who reads this report whom has lost a parent or caregiver to domestic violence homicide?

When answering this question, Courtney and Jessica again reflected on the impactful story of their previous staff member, Trish, who was a victim of domestic violence homicide in 2013, as well as the perspective of Melanie, a woman whose mother died from domestic violence homicide. Melanie shared a message that Courtney and Jessica echoed: **“Just because it happened to you, doesn’t mean it has to define you.”** She emphasized that being a child who witnessed or experienced domestic violence homicide should not deter your life from going forward and that each person is their own; their life path does not have to be their parents’. <https://youtu.be/PPRcvFMSKc8>

Another important message Courtney and Jessica shared is that families should know that the experience is **not their fault and that they are not alone**. Unfortunately, many families have gone through domestic violence homicide incidents. They also stressed the importance of asking for help through counseling or other support and resources.

Finally, Courtney and Jessica want children and families know that **healing does not have a timeline**, nor does forgiving. These processes are unique to each individual affected by domestic violence homicide and should not be rushed, judged, or disregarded. Additionally, these processes are not linear in nature; there will be good days and bad days. Identifying a support system (trusted adult/individual) to be there for each of these days is vital to work towards healing.

### Research on the Impact of Domestic Violence Homicide on Children

“Clinical case series describe substantial mental health and development difficulties in children exposed to fatal domestic violence. Many mental health difficulties reside within the domains of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and traumatic grief, and include intrusive memories, anxiety, sleep disturbances, aggressive and self-destructive behavior, protracted grief, hyperactivity, and concentration problems<sup>1-7</sup>. Prominent developmental difficulties involve attachment problems in relation to new caregivers, regression (e.g. language deterioration), social problems, identity questions, and deteriorating school performance. In the long term, there are concerns about the heightened risks for children of becoming a perpetrator of violence<sup>2</sup>.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Alisic, E., Groot, A., Snetselaar, H., Stroeken, T., & van de Putte, E. (2017). Children bereaved by fatal intimate partner violence: A population-based study into demographics, family characteristics and homicide exposure. *PLoS one*, 12(10), e0183466.

<sup>2</sup> Hardesty JL, Campbell JC, McFarlane JM, Lewandowski LA. How children and their caregivers adjust after intimate partner femicide. *J Fam Issues*. 2008. January 1;29(1):100–24.

<sup>3</sup> Harris-Hendriks J, Black D, Kaplan T. *When father kills mother: Guiding children through trauma and grief* London: Routledge; 2002.

<sup>4</sup> Black D, Harris-Hendriks J, Kaplan T. Father kills mother: post-traumatic stress disorder in the children. *Psychother Psychosom*. 1992;57(4):152–157.

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<sup>6</sup> Lovrin M. Parental murder and suicide: Post-traumatic stress disorder in children. *J Child Adolesc Psychiatr Nurs*. 1999. July 1;12(3):110–7.

<sup>7</sup> Malmquist CP. Children who witness parental murder: Posttraumatic aspects. *J Am Acad Child Psychiatry*. 1986. May 31;25(3):320–5.

<sup>8</sup> Eth S, Pynoos RS. Children who witness the homicide of a parent. *Psychiatry*. 1994;57(4):287–306

# Topic Index to Previous Homicide Reports

Each year, the homicide report includes a discussion of a variety of topics. Below is an index of the topics that have been addressed. The report year is followed by the page number in parentheses. Each year's report is available at <http://www.endabusewi.org/homicide-reports>.

**African-American communities, impact on,** 2005 (16), 2008 (23), 2009 (34), 2010 (37), 2011/12 (42), 2013 (46)

**Bystander risk,** 2002 (8), 2003 (10), 2004 (6), 2005 (11)

**Child custody, connection to,** 2001 (7), 2006/7 (23), 2009 (25), 2017 (37)

**Children, impact on,** 2003 (10), 2005 (10), 2006/7 (22), 2008 (18), 2009 (22), 2010 (27), 2011/12 (39), 2014 (28), 2016 (36)

**Cold cases,** 2017 (41)

**Coordinated community response,** 2010 (7), 2013 (30)

**Dane County, a closer look,** 2009 (21)

**Domestic abuse programs, impact on,** 2009 (39), 2010 (30), 2013 (48)

**Family members, surviving,** 2013 (32, 34), 2017 (28)

**Fatality review,** 2016 (39), 2018 (33)

**Gender[sex] differences,** 2008 (21), 2006/7 (28), 2009 (30), 2011/12 (45), 2015 (30)

**Gun violence,** 2000 (2), 2001 (5), 2002 (6), 2003 (7), 2004 (5), 2005 (8), 2006/7 (32), 2008 (25), 2009 (37), 2010 (33), 2010 (34), 2011/12 (34), 2014 (30)

**Health-care response,** 2013 (45)

**Help-seeking,** 2005 (17), 2006/7 (33), 2009 (38), 2010 (37)

**Hmong and Lao communities, impact on,** 2006/7 (30), 2009 (33), 2011/12 (43), 2013 (39)

**Homicide prevention,** 2011/2012 (33), 2013 (26), 2017 (35)

**Human trafficking,** 2018 (38)

**Immigrant survivors,** 2016 (34)

**Interventions, missed opportunities,** 2004 (9), 2011/12 (46)

**Later life homicides,** 2005 (15), 2008 (23), 2009 (35), 2010 (27), 2011/12 (38), 2013 (44)

**Latinx communities, impact on,** 2009 (34), 2011/12 (42), 2013 (29)

**Legislative process, connection to,** 2017 (39)

**Lethality Assessment Program**, 2014 (37), 2015 (29), 2016 (29), 2018 (31)

**Lethality risk factors**, 2014 (27)

**LGBTQ communities, impact on**, 2010 (30), 2011/12 (44), 2013 (43), 2015 (32)

**Law enforcement, homicides by**, 2010 (35)

**Media coverage**, 2001 (8), 2002 (9), 2003 (10), 2004 (10)

**Multiple homicides**, 2006/7 (20), 2008 (16), 2009 (29), 2010 (32), 2011/12 (45)

**Near homicides**, 2006/7 (21), 2008 (16), 2009 (37), 2010 (36), 2016 (38)

**Northcentral Wisconsin, a closer look**, 2006/7 (17)

**Pregnancy, elevated risk**, 2005(14), 2011/12 (35)

**Prevention**, 2010 (7), 2018 (34)

**Location of homicide**, 2006/7 (21), 2011/12 (37)

**Rural communities, impact on**, 2009 (32)

**Self-defense**, 2001 (5), 2000 (2), 2003(8), 2005 (15), 2008 (22)

**Separation, increased risk**, 2001 (7), 2002 (7), 2003 (8), 2004 (7), 2006/7 (26), 2008 (20), 2009 (26), 2010 (32), 2014 (34)

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**Suicide**, 2003 (9), 2005 (9), 2014 (35), 2016 (33)

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**Strangulation**, 2005 (13), 2006/7 (29), 2008 (22), 2009 (29), 2010 (34), 2014 (32)

**Teen dating violence**, 2013 (40)

**Ten-year retrospective**, 2009 (41)

**Tribes, impact on**, 2009 (32), 2011/12 (43), 2013 (41)

**Veterans**, 2010 (35), 2011/12 (36)

**Welfare reform**, 2000 (3)

**Workplace violence**, 2011/12 (37), 2013 (42)

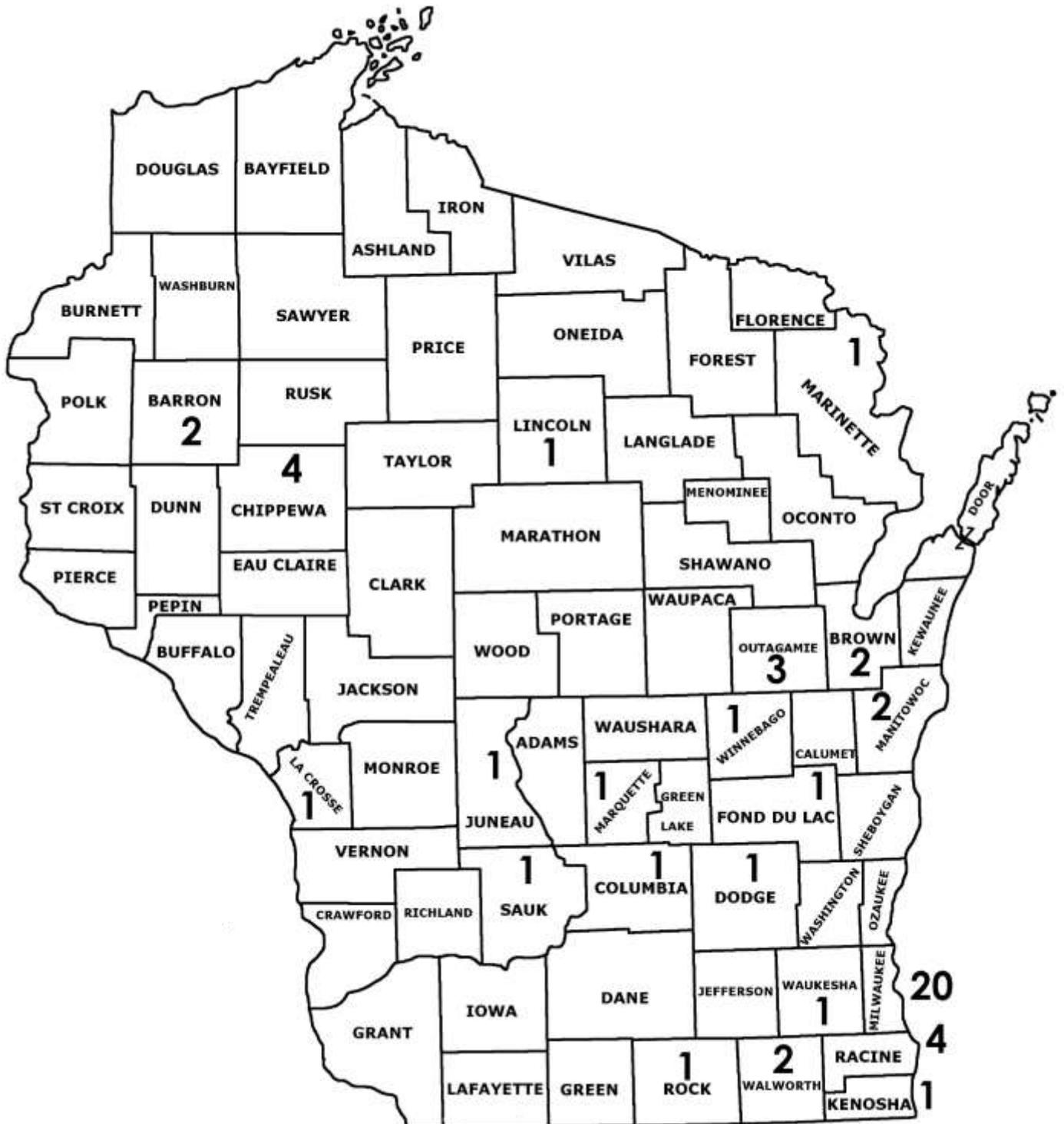
## 2000 to 2019 Totals

Year	Total Homicide Deaths	Homicides, Pre- 2010 Definition*	Perpetrator Suicides	Total
2019	53	52	19	72
2018	39	37	8	47
2017	48	44	14	62
2016	59	54	14	73
2015	49	43	9	58
2014	37	33	6	43
2013	43	41	12	55
2012	48	47	4	52
2011	34	29	3	37
2010	45	37	7	52
2009	52	52	15	67
2008	37	37	10	47
2007	41	41	10	51
2006	28	28	8	36
2005	40	40	6	46
2004	28	28	5	33
2003	45	45	16	61
2002	38	38	11	49
2001	33	33	9	42
2000	33	33	8	41
Totals	830	792	194	1024

\*see Methodology on page 6

# 2019 DV Homicide Map

Domestic violence homicide victims by county, excluding those involving law enforcement intervention.



# About End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin

For advocates, survivors, and allies, End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin is the only statewide coalition led by social policy advocates, attorneys, and experts working to support, connect, equip, empower, and lead organizations for social change to end domestic abuse, because everyone deserves dignity and safety.

## Acknowledgements

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