

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOMICIDE IN SAN DIEGO COUNTY: A 22 YEAR OVERVIEW

BULLETIN I - VICTIMS
December 2019

COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE FATALITY
REVIEW TEAM





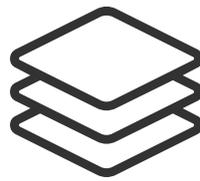


Table of Contents

Foreword	
County Leadership	— 01
Message from DA Summer Stephan	—02
Highlights	— 03
Case Identification & Selection	— 03
DVFRT Organizations	— 04
DVFRT Overview	— 05
DV Homicides 1997-2018	— 06
Other Victims	— 15
DVFRT History	— 17
Prevalence of DV in SD County	— 18



County of San Diego Board of Supervisors

Greg Cox – District 1

Dianne Jacob – District 2

Kristin Gaspar – District 3

Nathan Fletcher – District 4

Jim Desmond – District 5

Chief Administrative Officer

Helen N. Robbins-Meyer

San Diego County District Attorney

Summer Stephan

Chief Medical Examiner

Dr. Glenn Wagner



The County of San Diego Domestic Violence
Fatality Review Team is coordinated
by the San Diego County District Attorney's Office

Contact: (619) 498-5653

www.sdca.org

MESSAGE FROM SAN DIEGO COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY SUMMER STEPHAN



The County of San Diego Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team (DVFRT) has been tracking domestic violence-related fatalities in San Diego County for over 22 years. This bulletin provides a critical look at trends in domestic violence victimization in San Diego County.

With knowledge comes justice, awareness and change. Thank you to the dedicated members of the DVFRT for their ongoing efforts to bring attention to this serious issue in our county.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Summer Stephan".

San Diego County
District Attorney's Office
Family protection Division
(619) 531-4300
www.sdca.org

National Domestic
Violence Hotline
1-800-799-7233
www.thehotline.org

Highlights

- There was an annual average of 13 domestic violence (DV) homicides in San Diego County in the past 22 years.
- DV homicides made up 14% of all homicides in San Diego County.
- One third (33.3%) of the DV homicide cases were homicide/suicide cases.
- 42% of domestic violence homicides occurred in the North Region of San Diego County.
- While one in five homicide victims in San Diego County are female, more than four in five DV homicide victims are female.
- The average age of DV homicide victims was 42 years, with ages ranging from 15 to 95 years.
- People who are black make up 5.5% of the population in San Diego, yet include 15% of the DV homicide victims.
- The offender was a former partner in nearly one third (28%) of the cases.
- The most frequent method of DV homicide was shooting (45%).
- Youth and children (0-18 years) made up 36% of the “other victims” (family members, friends, new partners, etc.) murdered in DV related incidents.

Case Identification and Selection

The DVFRT tracks domestic violence (intimate partner-related) fatalities in San Diego County. These fatalities are identified through a collective process by the team’s membership particularly the Medical Examiner, District Attorney’s Office, and law enforcement.

The process to capture accurate tallies of DV fatalities for a given year can take months, even years. For example, someone may go missing, their body found the following year and the arrest of the offender two years later. For this reason, the number of identified intimate partner-related fatalities may be an under-estimate of the actual total that have occurred.

This report includes “all known” DV homicides that have occurred in San Diego County in the past 22 years. Due to the collective process for tracking these cases over time and consistency in selection, the DVFRT is the most accurate source for DV homicide data in our county.

DVFRT Member Organizations

San Diego County District Attorney's Office
County of San Diego, Child Welfare Services, HHSA
County of San Diego, Medical Examiner's Office
County of San Diego, Probation Department
County of San Diego, Juvenile Probation Department
County of San Diego, Superior Court of CA, Family Court Services
County of San Diego, HHSA, Public Health Nursing
San Diego District Attorney's Office, Victim Assistance Program
County of San Diego, Aging and Independence Services, HHSA
County of San Diego, Behavioral Health Services, HHSA
County of San Diego Office of Violence Prevention, HHSA
San Diego City Attorney's Office
San Diego Police Department
Chula Vista Police Department
San Diego Sheriff's Department
Escondido Police Department
Naval Medical Center San Diego
Naval Base San Diego, Fleet and Family Support
United States Marine Core, San Diego, Family Advocacy Program
San Diego Unified School District
Southern Indian Health Council
SD Domestic Violence Council, Treatment & Intervention Committee
YWCA of San Diego County
Center for Community Solutions
Women's Resource Center
Community Resource Center
South Bay Community Services
Rady Children's Hospital - Chadwick Center for Children and Families
Interfaith Shelter Network
License to Freedom
San Diego Family Justice Center
Palomar Health Services



Overview

This is the first bulletin in a three-part series to be released in the coming year. This bulletin contains a summary of domestic violence homicides that occurred within San Diego County from 1997 to 2018 (22 years). The second bulletin will include a summary of offenders in DV homicide cases from that same period. The third bulletin will share the findings from in-depth case reviews held by the Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team (DVFRT) and the team's recommendations for systems change.

In honor of those who have lost their lives to domestic violence and their loved ones, these bulletins aim to bring awareness to this critical issue and to be a catalyst for change.

Objectives

1. Enhance collaboration through multi-disciplinary partnerships to improve coordination.
2. Conduct in-depth case reviews and identify areas for improvements in the prevention and intervention of domestic violence.
3. Develop policy and program recommendations across systems.
4. Collect, analyze, and share data on domestic violence fatalities.
5. Increase awareness and involvement in the prevention and intervention of domestic violence.



County of San Diego DVFRT

A confidential multidisciplinary team that conducts in-depth retrospective case reviews of intimate partner related fatalities that have occurred in San Diego County.



Mission & Objectives

Mission

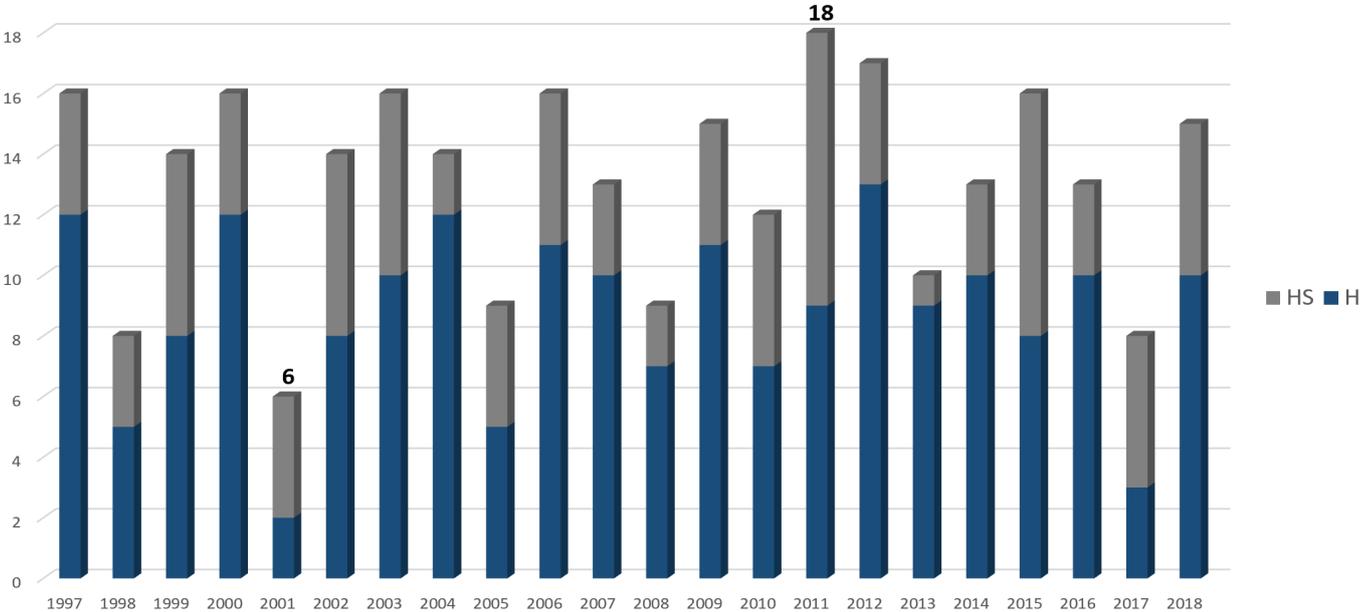
The County of San Diego Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team seeks to identify and recommend system-based improvements in violence prevention and intervention policies, procedures, coordinated strategies, and to raise public awareness about domestic violence.

22 Years of Domestic Violence Homicides in San Diego County

Domestic violence homicides for the past 22 years totaled 287. One third of these cases (33.3%) were homicide/suicide cases. When examining the years with the highest and lowest number of DV homicides, 2011 totaled 18 and 2001 had the fewest with 6 in total.

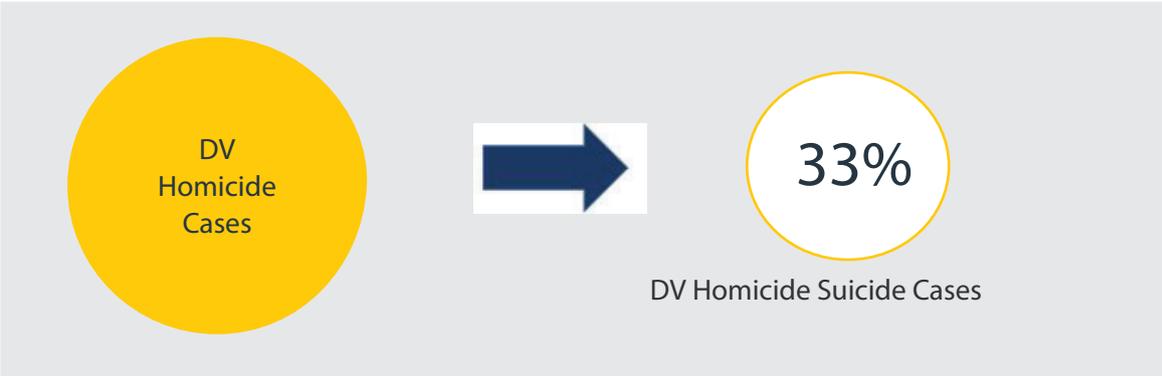
Figure 1

Domestic Violence Homicide Cases (1997-2018)

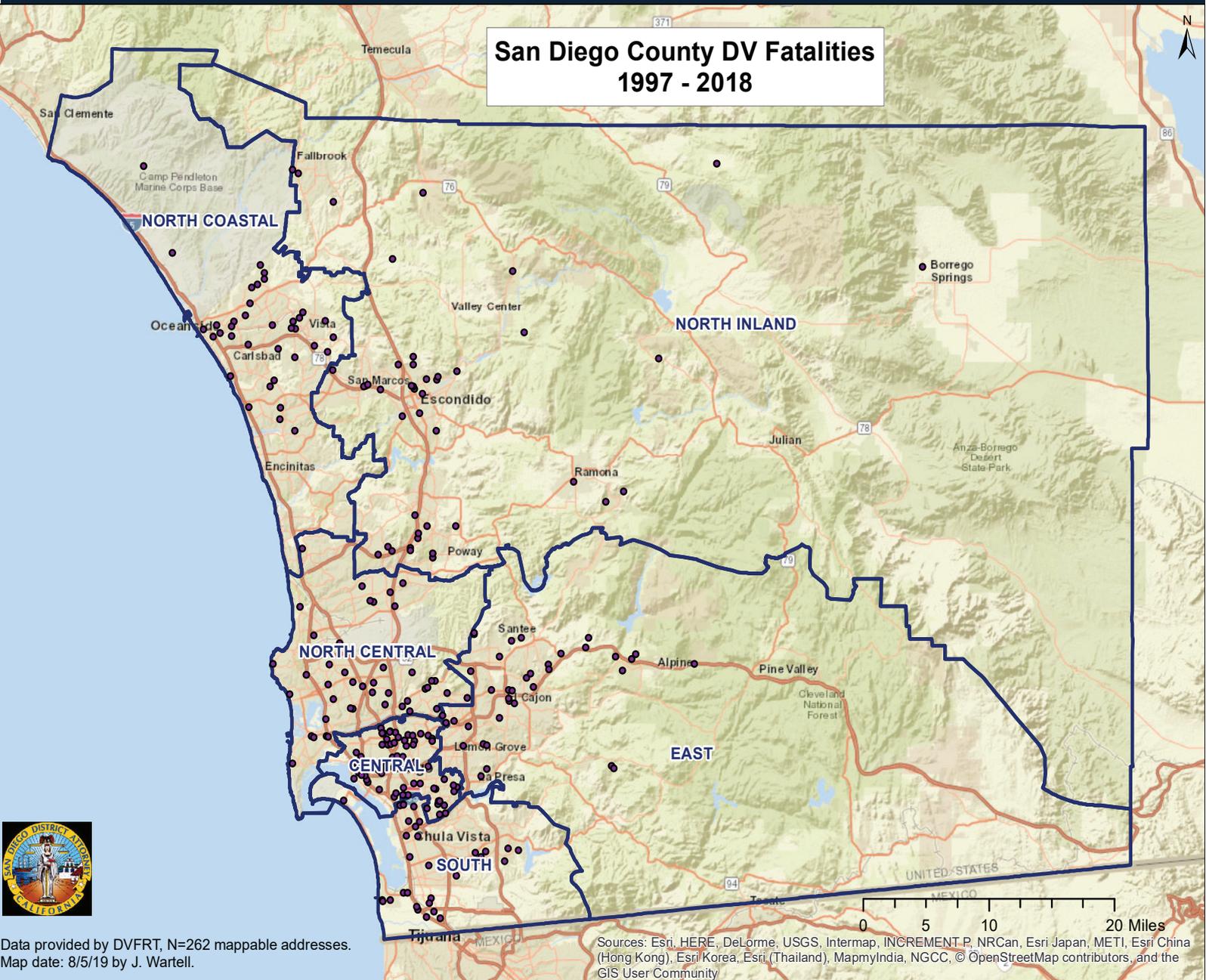


Note: These tallies include cases in which the suspect was a current or former intimate partner (spouse, dating partner, boyfriend/girlfriend, fiancé, child in common) of the homicide victim. These tallies are speculative as there are cases included that still are under open investigation and/or that have not completed the court process.

Figure 2



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOMICIDES (1997-2018) SAN DIEGO COUNTY*

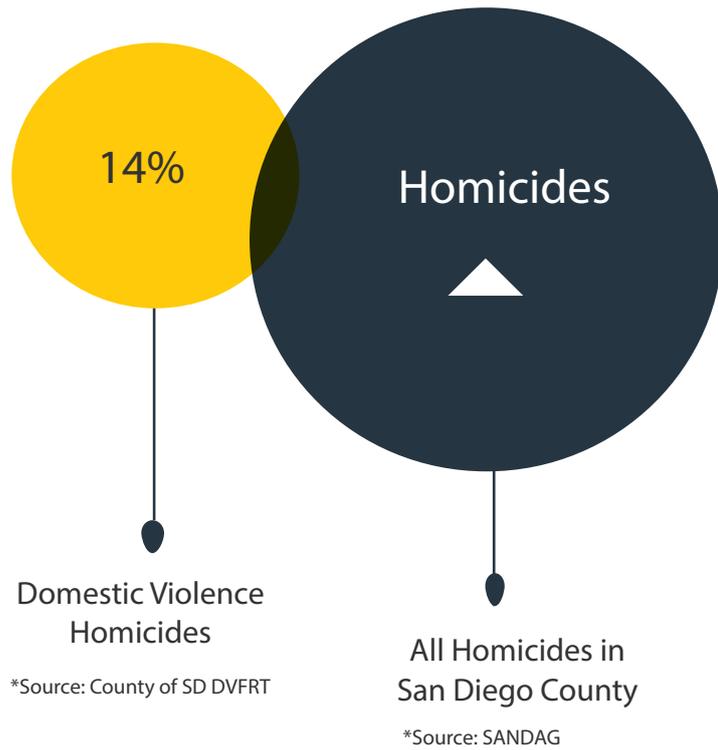


*Locations where DV incidents resulting in homicide occurred.

THERE IS AN AVERAGE OF
13 DV HOMICIDES IN SAN DIEGO
COUNTY EACH YEAR.

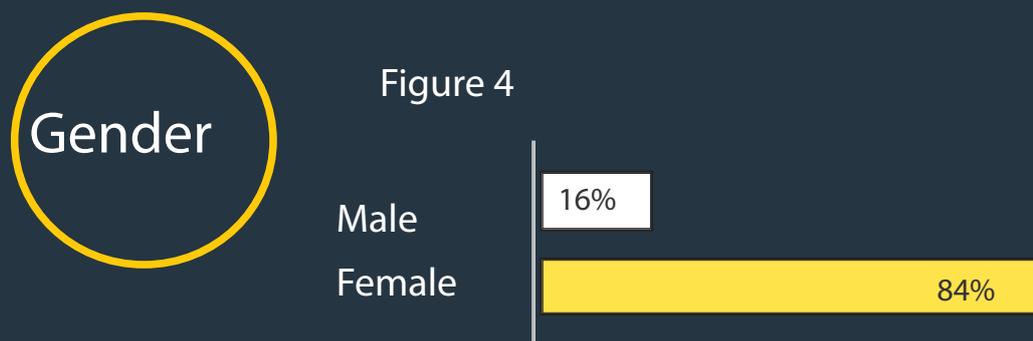
Figure 3

Domestic violence homicides made up 14% of all homicides in San Diego County from 1997 to 2018.*



Domestic Violence Victims 1997-2018

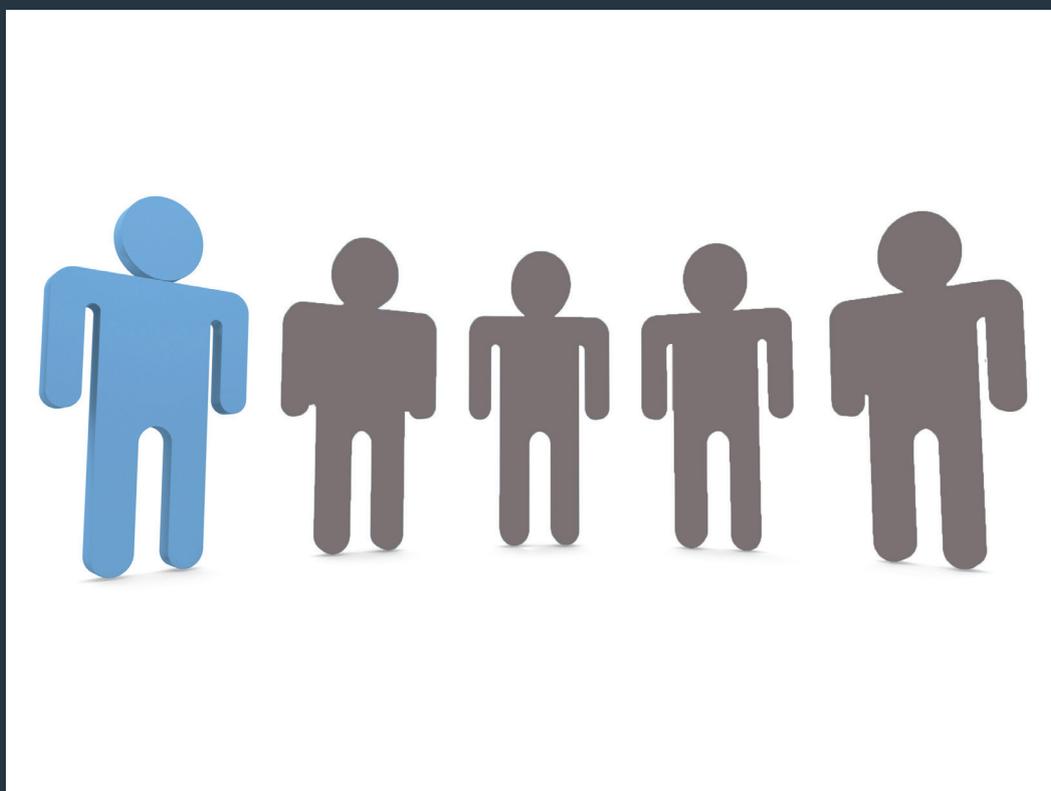
The majority of DV homicide victims were female.



Gender Disparities

When taking into consideration the gender of all homicide victims relative to domestic violence homicide victims, the DVFRT found that females were disproportionately more likely to be victims of domestic violence.

While females make up approximately one in five homicide victims in our county*, they constitute more than four in five DV homicide victims.

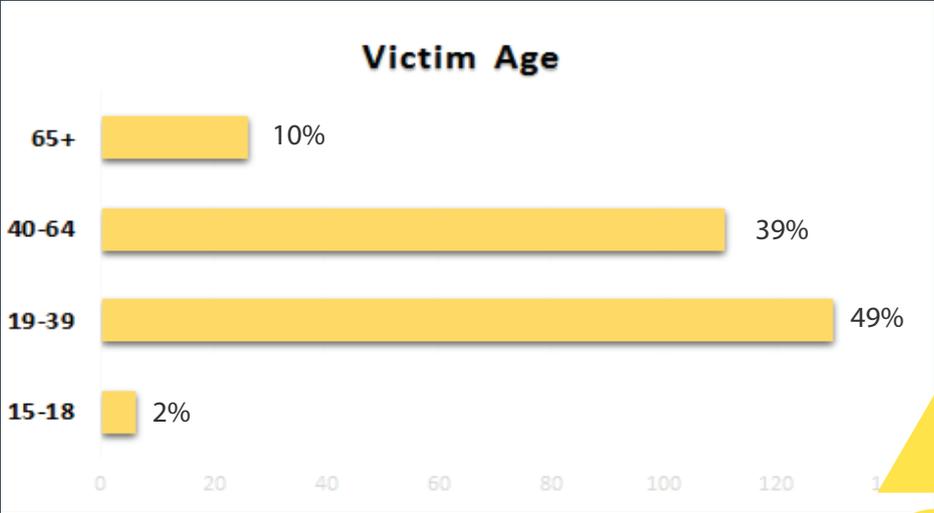


*Source for all homicides by gender: County of SD Medical Examiner

AGE

The average age of DV homicide victims was 42 years old, with age ranging from 15 to 95.

Figure 5

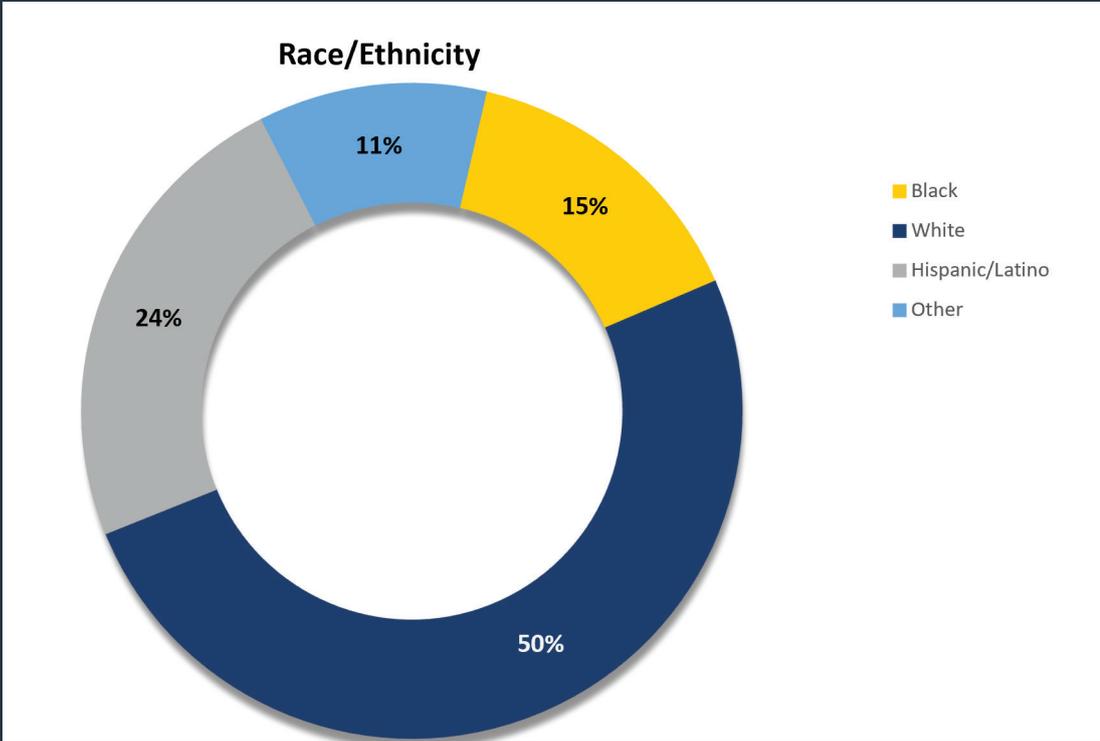


Race

DV homicide victims were disproportionately Black.

People who are black make up 5.5%* of our county's population yet constitute 15% of the DV homicide victims in our county.

Figure 6

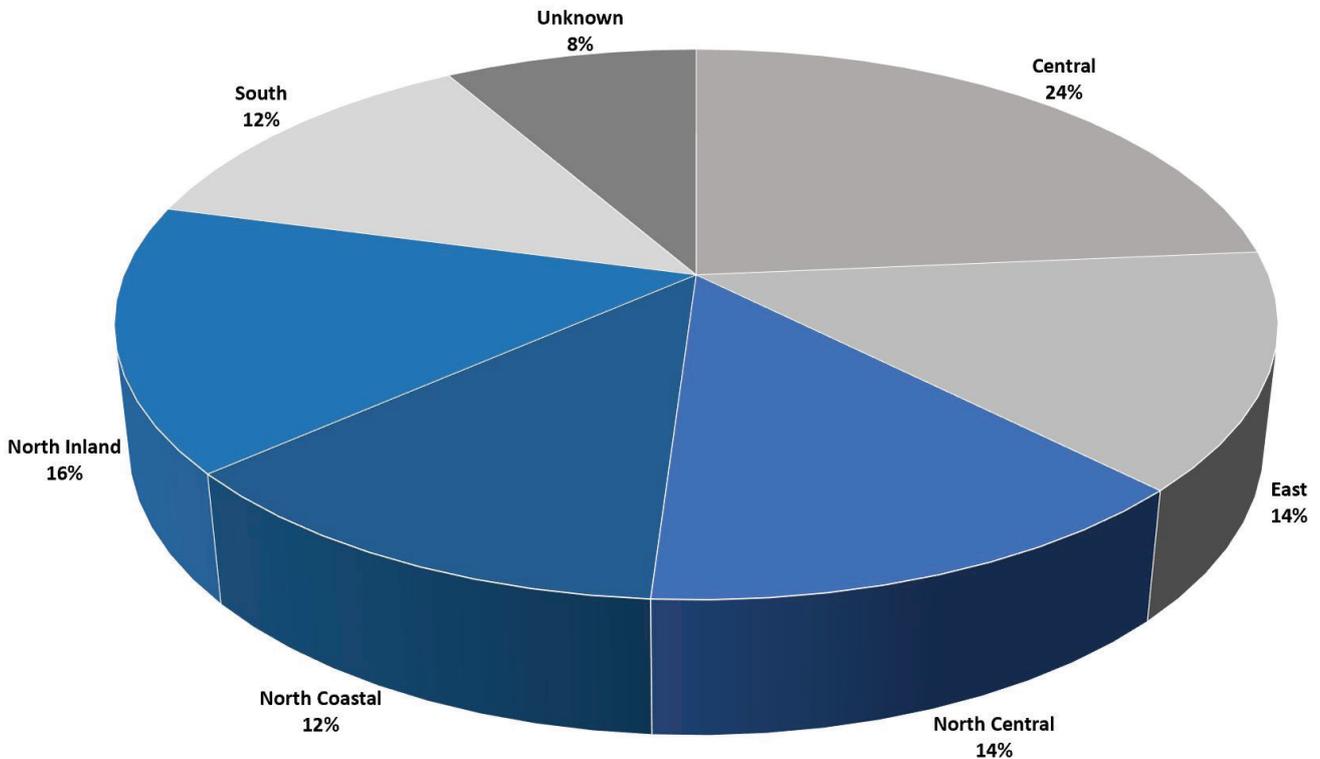


*US Census Bureau

During the 22 years included in this bulletin, 42% of the domestic violence homicides occurred in the North Region of San Diego County. However, domestic violence homicides occurred in every region of our county.

Figure 7

DV Homicides by SD County Regions



Cases where the location of the homicide was “unknown” were removed for this analysis.

When controlling for population, Central Region had the highest rate of homicides per capita.*

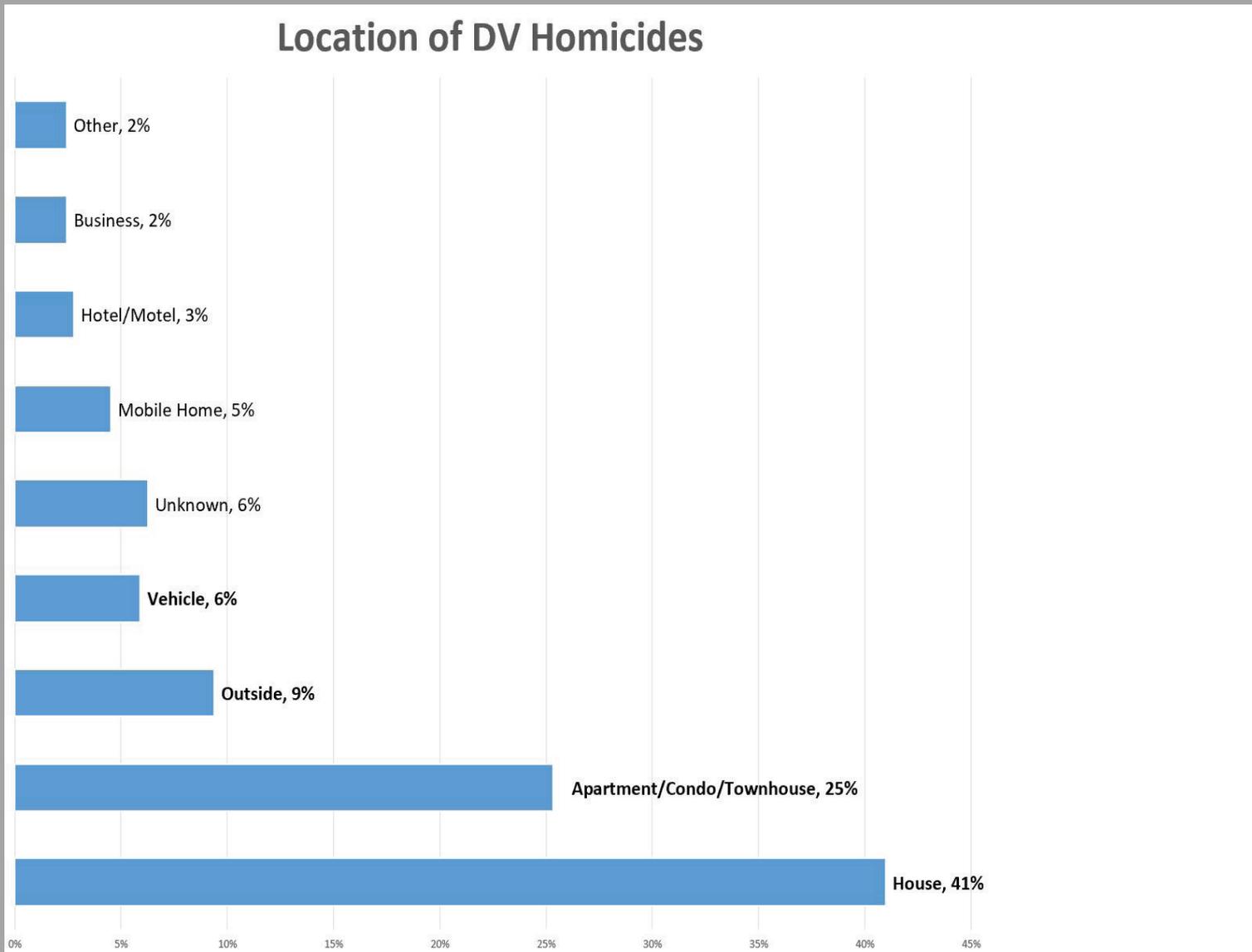
HHSA Region	Rate per 100K population
Central	16.1
East	10.2
North Central	7.3
North Coastal	8.4
North Inland	9.5
South	9.1

*Cases where the location of the homicide was “unknown” were removed for this analysis.



The majority of the DV homicides took place in a house, apartment, or condo/townhouse (66%). However, the next most frequent locations were outside (9%) and in a vehicle (6%).

Figure 8

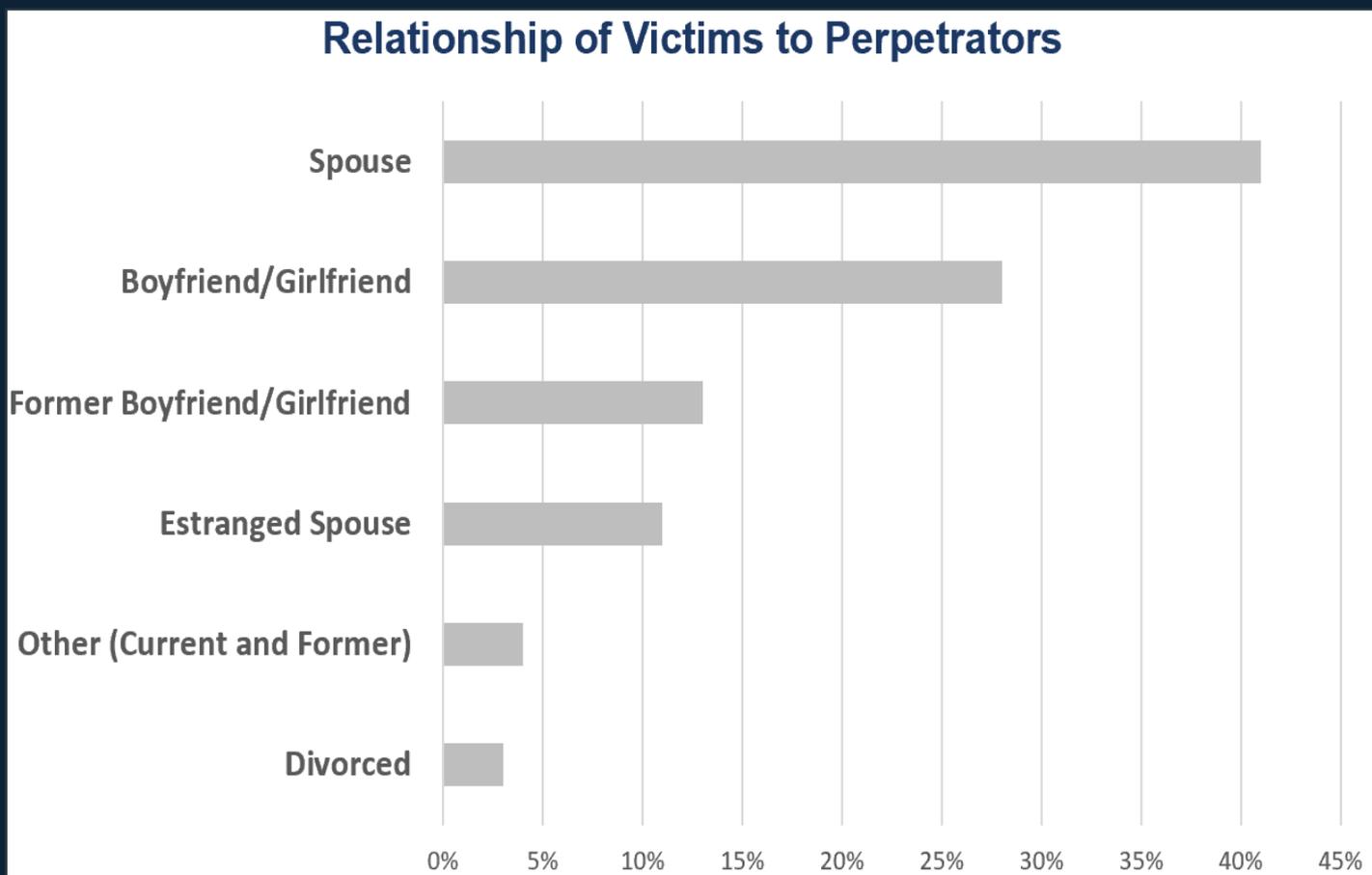


Victim Relationship to Offender

A current spouse or boyfriend/girlfriend relationship made up the majority (69%) of the relationships between victims and offenders in DV homicide cases over the past 22 years.

The offender was a former partner in nearly one third (28%) of the cases.

Figure 9



Same-Sex Relationships

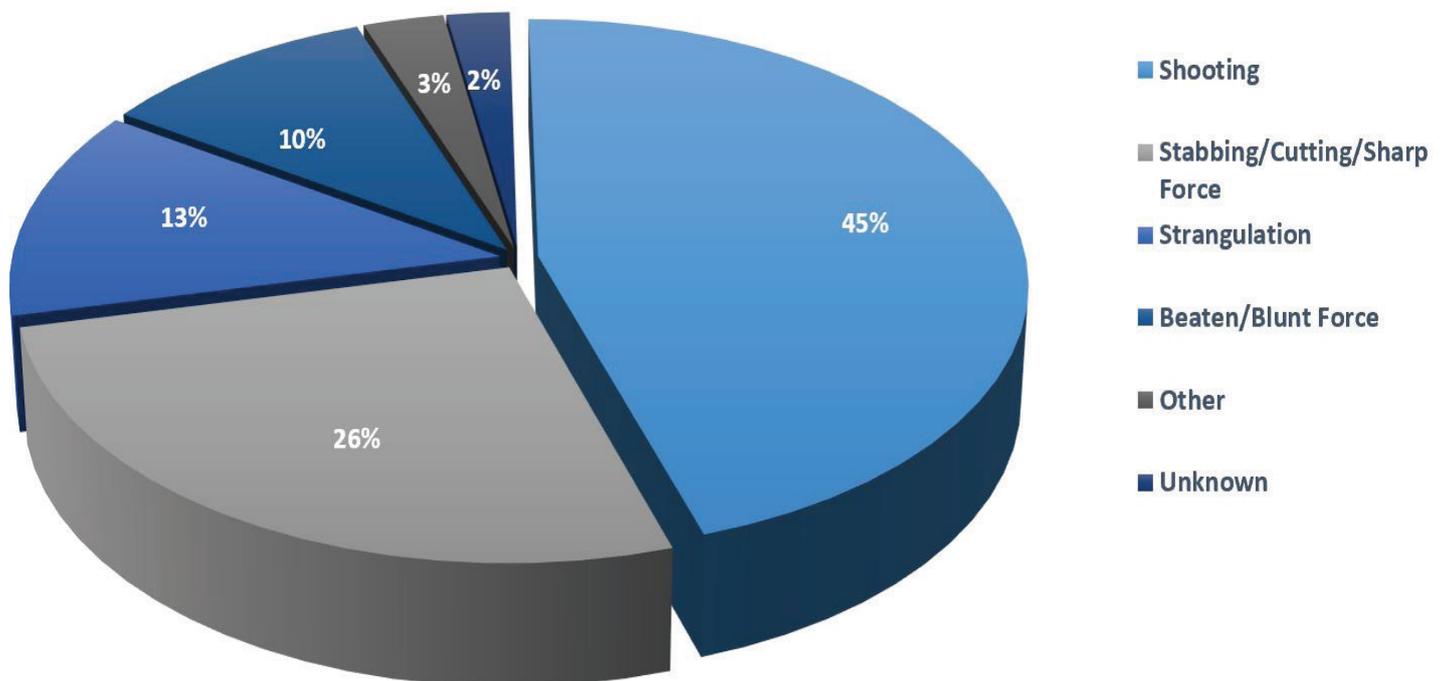
In 4% of DV homicide cases, the victim and offender were in a current or former same-sex relationship with each other. The majority of these relationships were male same-sex relationships.

Method of DV Homicide (Victims)

The most frequent method of domestic violence homicide from 1997 to 2018 was shooting (45%) followed by stabbing (26%) and strangulation (13%).

Figure 10

Method of DV Homicide 1997-2018



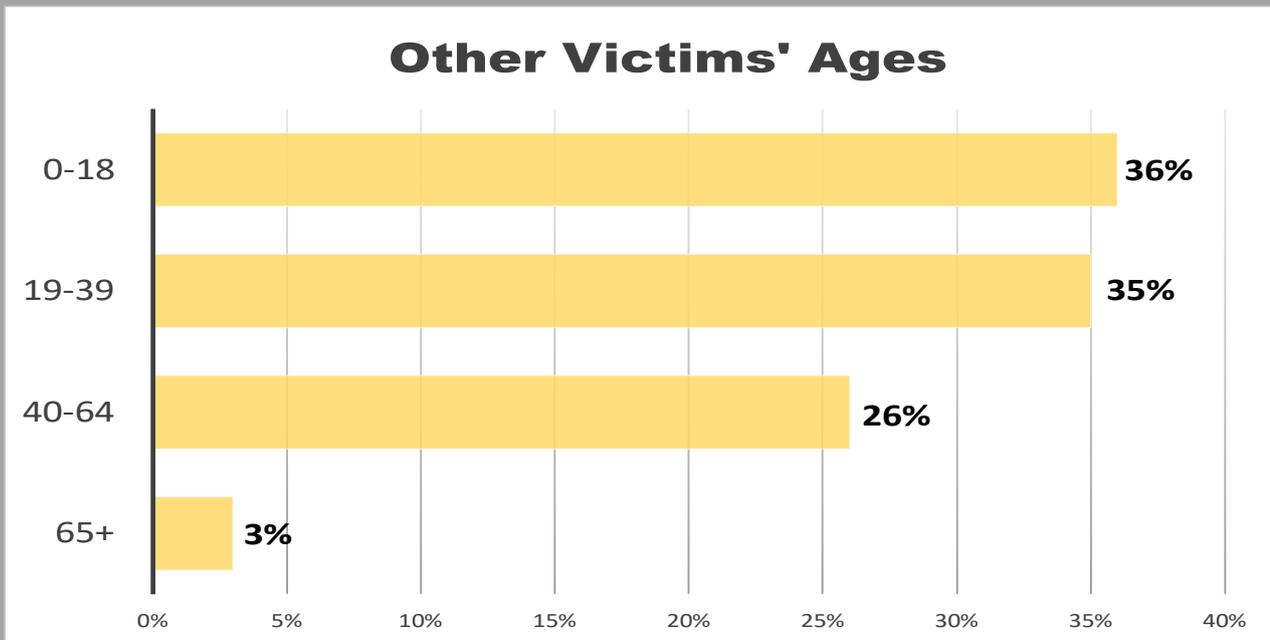
THE MOST FREQUENT METHOD OF
DV HOMICIDE IN THE PAST 22 YEARS
WAS **SHOOTING**.

Other Victims

We track all domestic violence homicides related to DV incidents. There were 61 “additional victims” murdered as related to DV incidents between 1997 and 2018. For example, the offender may have targeted their current or former partner’s new intimate partner; seeing them as a romantic rival. Family members and children of DV victims have been murdered by offenders as a means of emotionally harming their current or former partner, as another example.

The average age of these “other victims” was 30 years old. Youth and children age 0-18 years old made up 36% of those murdered. This includes cases where the DV homicide victim was pregnant.

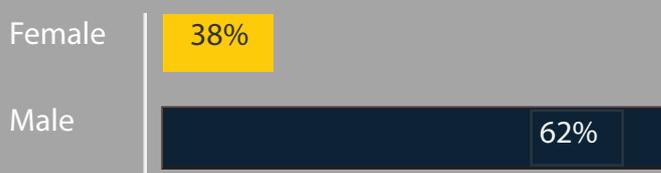
Figure 11



Gender

The majority of “other victims” were male, making up 62% of the total.

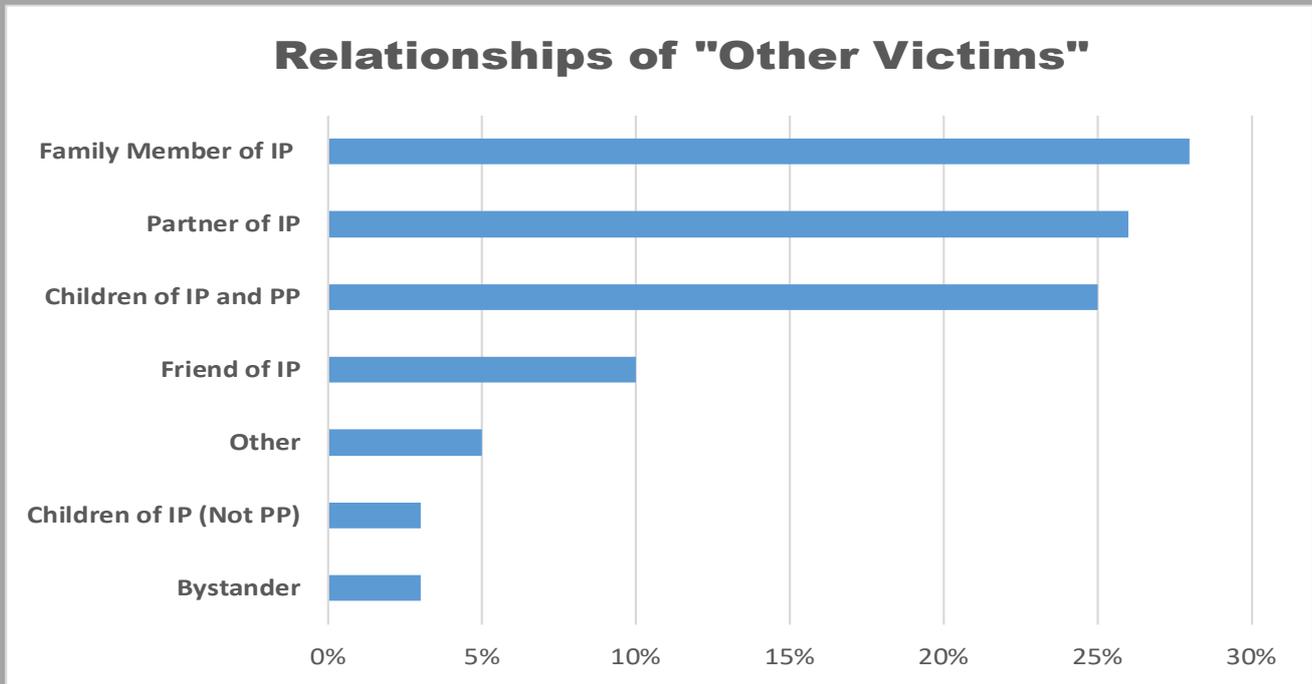
Figure 12



Relationship

The role/relationship of these “other victims” is presented in Figure 13 below.

Figure 13



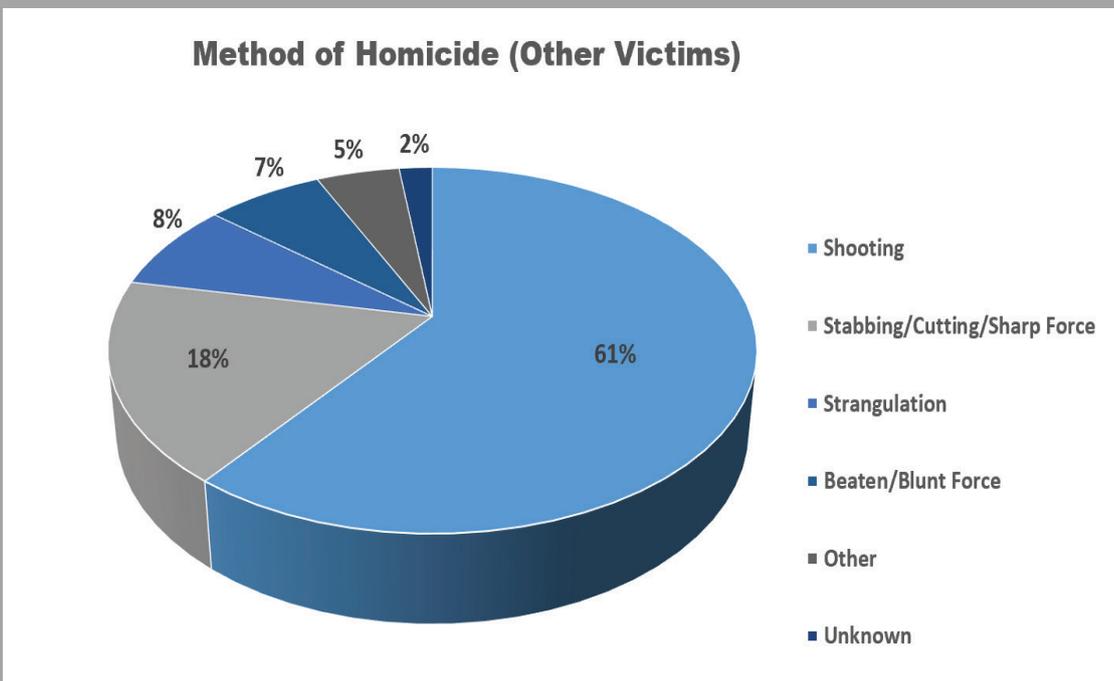
*IP=Intimate partner victim **PP=Perpetrator (offender)

**Note: Not all intimate partner victims related to these cases were murdered

Method of Homicide (Other Victims)

The most frequent method of homicide for “other victims” was shooting.

Figure 14



HOW TO STOP VIOLENCE

- Awareness
- Education
- Prevention



DVFRT History

In 1995, California Senate Bill 1230 was passed by the state legislature authorizing the formation of county-wide interagency death review teams to examine homicides and suicides related to domestic violence. This legislation resulted in California Penal Code Sections 11163.3-11163.5 and was enacted in January 1996. Domestic violence death review teams were established to ensure that incidents of domestic violence and abuse are recognized and that agency/system involvement with homicide and suicide victims are systematically studied.

In April 1996, the Board of Supervisors established the County of San Diego Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team (DVFRT) to review intimate partner-related deaths. The DVFRT assembled in October 1996 and began reviewing intimate partner-related deaths a year later.

At that time, there were about ten formal teams nationwide. Today, there are approximately 225 teams nationally and internationally. The National Domestic Violence Fatality Review Initiative provides technical assistance to teams throughout the country.

Membership on the DVFRT is limited to representatives that can provide case information or who have a critical area of expertise to guide the team. Written and oral communication may be provided to and shared amongst team members for the purpose of the death reviews and is held strictly confidential (PC 11163.3).

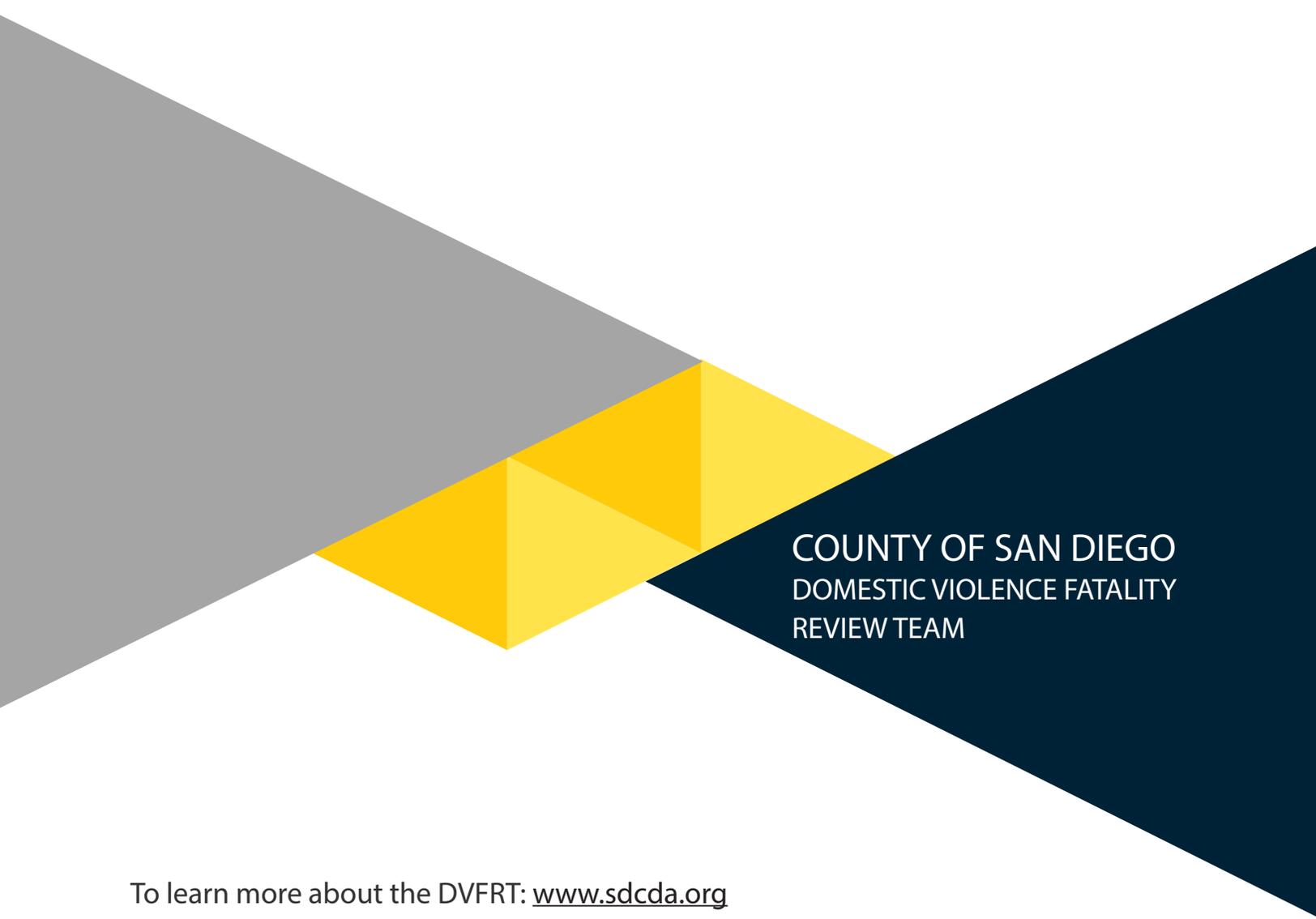
Domestic violence death review teams are tasked with collecting and summarizing the statistical occurrence of domestic violence deaths in their counties in order to ensure consistent and uniform results (PC 11163.6).

PC 13700 "Domestic violence" means abuse committed against an adult or a minor who is a spouse, former spouse, cohabitant, former cohabitant, or person with whom the suspect has had a child or is having or has had a dating or engagement relationship. For purposes of this subdivision, "cohabitant" means two unrelated adult persons living together for a substantial period of time, resulting in some permanency of relationship.



PREVALENCE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SAN DIEGO COUNTY (2018)

- There were 14 domestic violence homicide victims for whom the suspect was a current or former intimate partner. There were an additional 3 homicide victims (e.g. family member, new boyfriend, bystander) that died during domestic violence incidents and 5 offenders died by suicide.
Source: County of San Diego Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team
- There were 17,513 domestic violence incidents reported to law enforcement in San Diego County.
Source: SANDAG
- A combined total of 3,622 defendants were prosecuted for domestic violence cases in San Diego County.
Sources: San Diego County District Attorney's Office and San Diego City Attorney's Office
- Based on Multiple Structured Decision Making assessments completed for 2,665 families with substantiated Child Welfare Services referrals, domestic violence was indicated in 994 (37%) of these families.
Source: County of San Diego Child Welfare Services, HHSA
- In FY 2017/2018, Adult Protective Services investigated 10,116 cases. When the elder is female, a family member or current/former spouse is the abuser in 64% of cases.
Source: County of San Diego Adult Protective Services, HHSA
- In FY 2017/2018, County of San Diego Behavioral Health Services identified that approximately one in four clients receiving mental health treatment services indicated a history of domestic violence.
Source: County of San Diego Behavioral Health Services, HHSA



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE FATALITY
REVIEW TEAM

To learn more about the DVFRT: www.sdcda.org