Metro Office of Family Safety

Where Hope and Healing Begin



ANNUAL REPORT

Domestic Violence Homicide in Nashville

2025

Domestic Abuse Death Review Team | Nashville – Davidson County, TN

Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.

- James Baldwin

The events described within this report were obtained from the following sources: The Metro Nashville Police Department homicide report and additional reports from the police, witness interviews, and other organizations in Nashville that provided services to the victims or perpetrators. Please note that some of the information contained in this report are the opinions of these witnesses or third parties and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Domestic Abuse Death Review Team, the Metro Nashville Office of Family Safety, or the City of Nashville. Names and specific dates have been redacted from the report in order to respect the privacy of the victims and their loved ones.

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Metro Office of Family Safety

Where Hope and Healing Begin

Domestic Violence Homicide in Nashville

2025 Annual Report

Prepared for

The Honorable Mayor Freddie O'Connell,

The Davidson County Metro Council,

& The Metropolitan Government Office of Family Safety Advisory Committee

Prepared by

The Office of Family Safety High-Risk Team

Walden Ferrell, Statewide Fatality Review Coordinator

Metropolitan Government of Nashville – Davidson County Office of Family Safety

Letter to the Mayor

Dear Mayor O'Connell,

The Nashville-Davidson County Domestic Abuse Death Review Team (DADRT) would like to share our 2025 annual report. DADRT is managed by the Metro Office of Family Safety (OFS) and meets monthly at Nashville's Family Safety Center (FSC) with partners from criminal justice and victim services agencies.

The Team hopes this report will highlight areas of potential improvement in Nashville's domestic violence response and victim services. Ultimately, our goal is to identify ways to reduce domestic violence homicides in our community and make Nashville the safest city for women, children, and families.

Sincerely,

Diane Lance

Department Head, Office of Family Safety

And All of Nashville's DADRT Team Members

DEDICATION

This report is dedicated to the fifteen victims of domestic violence homicide in Nashville in 2025 and to those who mourn their tragic loss of life. These individuals were family members, friends, and neighbors in our community. We will continue to remember their experiences and learn lessons from their stories that will help others. To those still living in fear, we hope to introduce you to a supportive community dedicated to helping survivors every day.

You are not alone.

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Executive Summary

In 2025, the Domestic Abuse Death Review Team (DADRT or Team) conducted in-depth reviews of three homicides: A strangulation homicide, a murder-suicide using a firearm, and a homicide involving a heavy instrument.

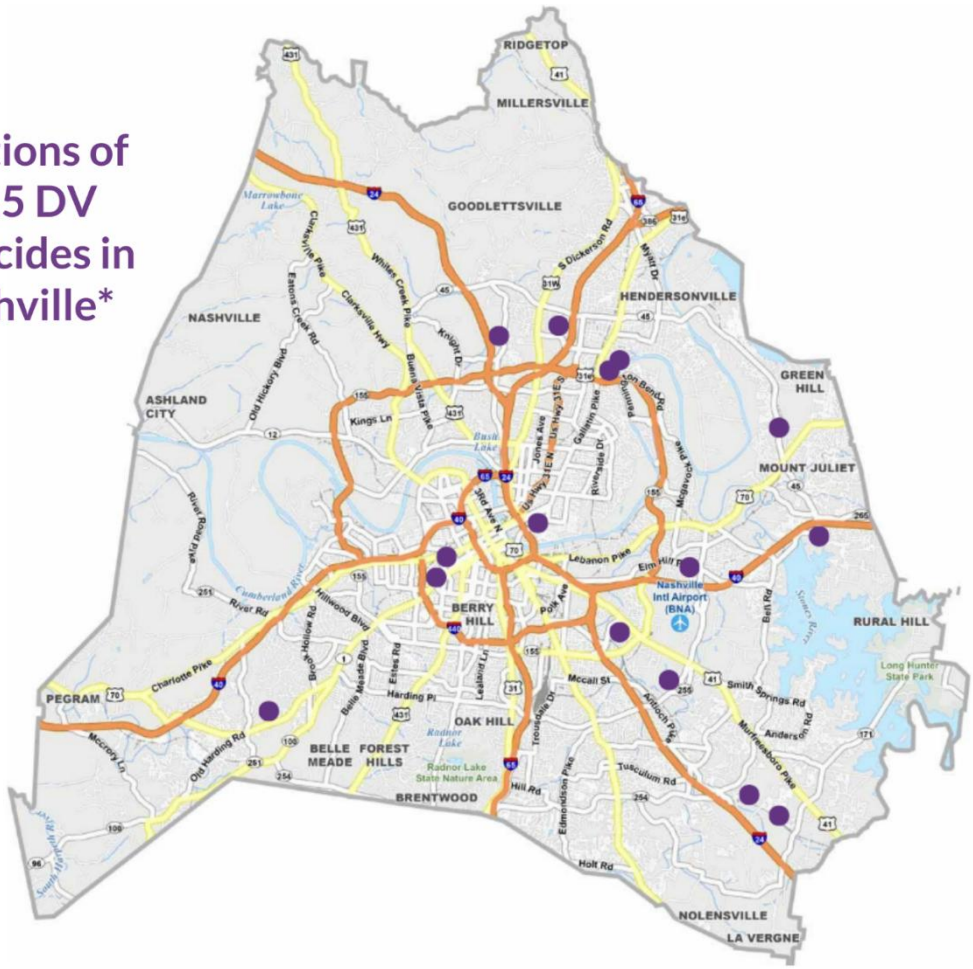
- In case study 1, a 44-year-old woman was beaten and strangled by her 31-year-old boyfriend. The Team's research into this case revealed the perpetrator's significant criminal history across multiple counties, substance use history for both parties, and the victim's increased isolation from friends and family.
- In case study 2, a 24-year-old woman was shot and killed by her 37-year-old husband before he ultimately took his own life. The Team's research into this case revealed no known history of domestic violence (DV), child abuse, mental health issues, or substance use. The victim was seeking a divorce, and the perpetrator reportedly suspected infidelity on the victim's part.
- In case study 3, a 76-year-old woman was killed by her 70-year-old husband using a heavy household item. The Team's research into this case revealed that this couple did not have any known history of DV, child abuse, mental health issues, or substance use issues. However, the perpetrator had sole access to their shared finances, and it was later discovered that he had gambled away much of their wealth. Though unconfirmed, investigators and family members believe that this extreme gambling and the associated financial losses directly led to the victim's death.

The Domestic Abuse Death Review Team identified findings that may have contributed to the victims' level of risk, impacted the support that they received before their murders, or caused challenges with offender accountability. From these findings, the following recommendations were developed by the Team:

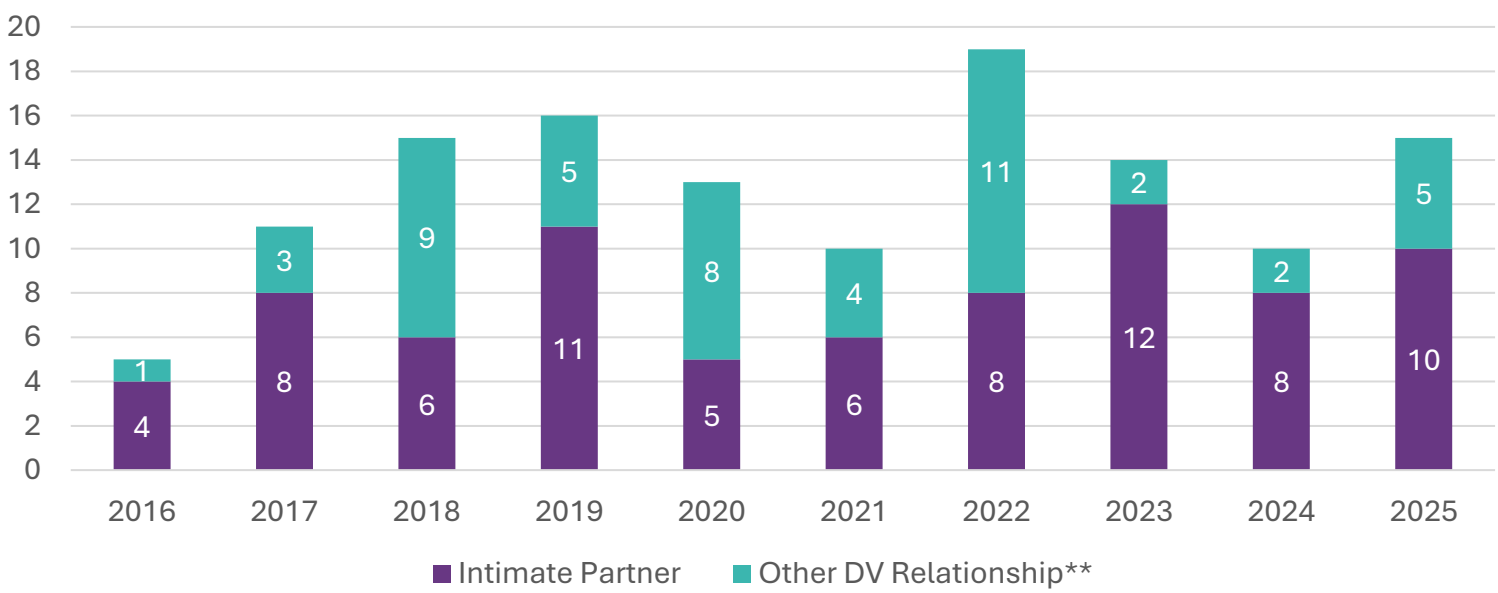
1) **Statewide Criminal Database Access**
2) **Increased Use of Evidence-Based Prosecution**
3) **Increased Coordination Between Family Law Profession and Victim Service Providers**
4) **Increased Coordination for Faster Response Time to 911 Calls**
5) **Continued Partnership Between DCS and Local DV Service Providers**

DV Homicide Data

Locations of 2025 DV Homicides in Nashville*



Total Domestic Violence (DV) Homicides in Nashville 2016-2025

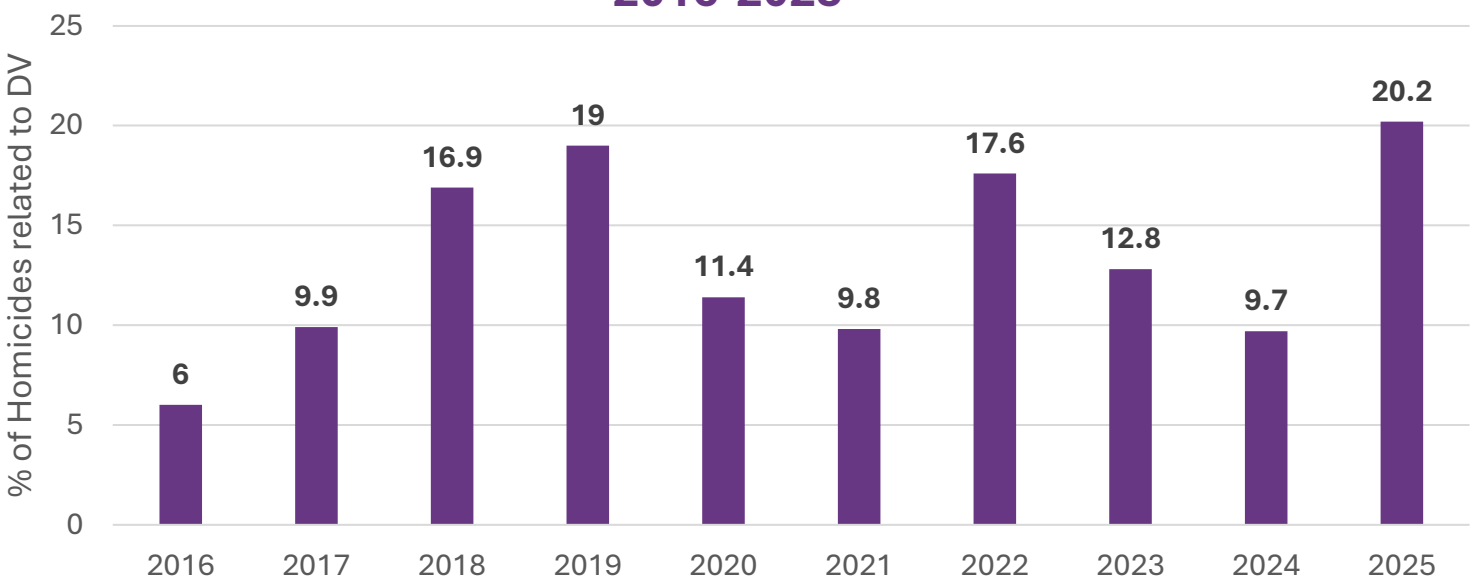


*Homicides in this data and statistics section exclude deaths attributed to negligence, accident, or self-defense - these numbers may differ from numbers cited elsewhere in this report.

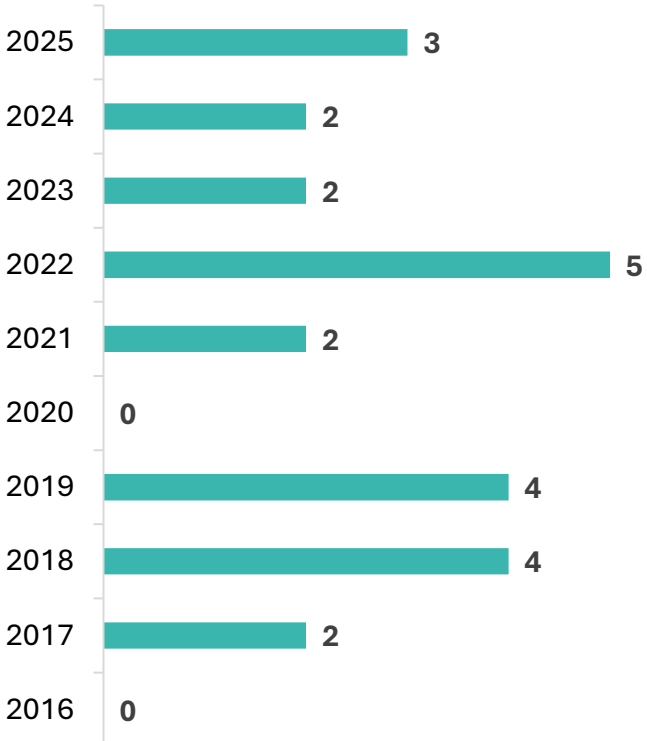
**Other DV relationships include any familial relationship, current or former roommates.

DV Homicide Rates & Types

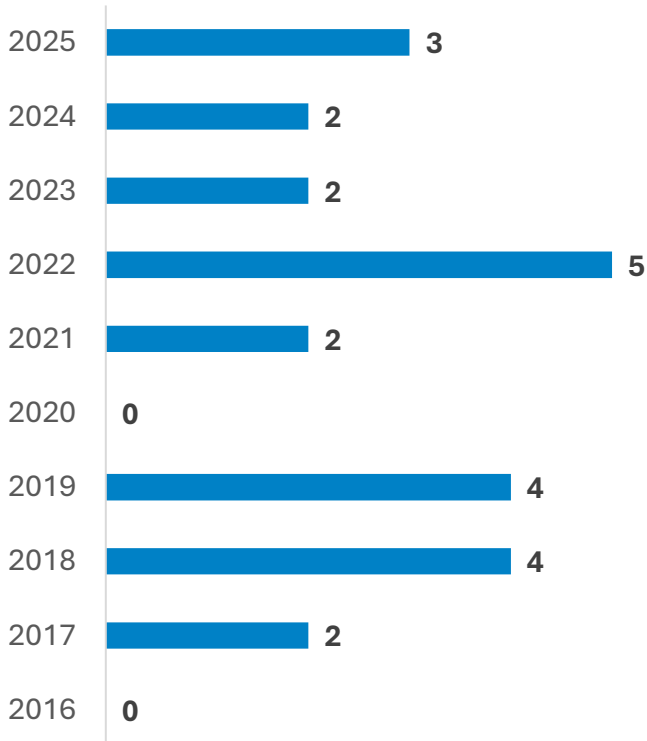
Percent of Nashville's Total Homicides that were DV Homicides 2016-2025



Total DV Murder-Suicide Victims in Nashville 2016-2025

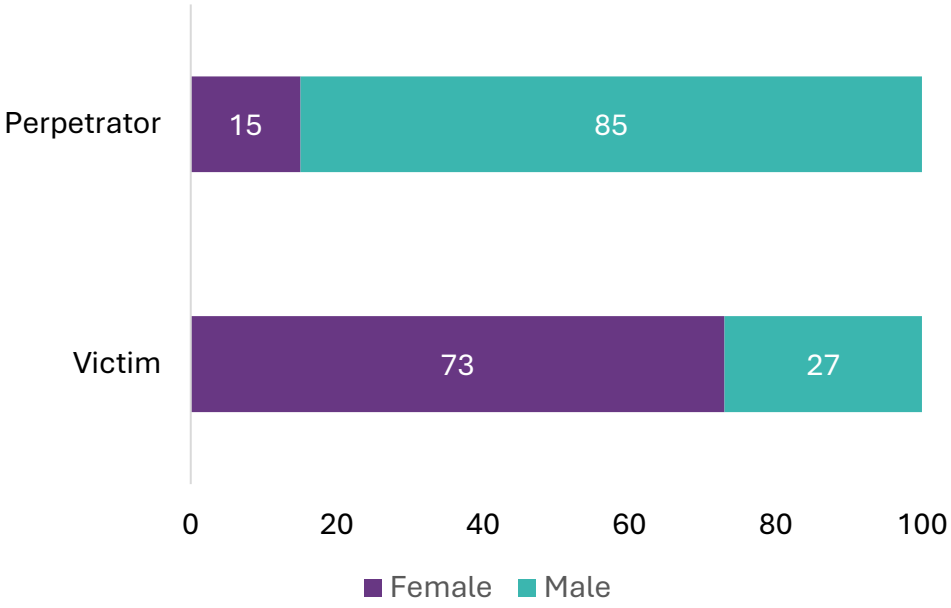


Total DV Familicides & Multiple-Murders in Nashville 2016-2025



DV Homicide Demographics

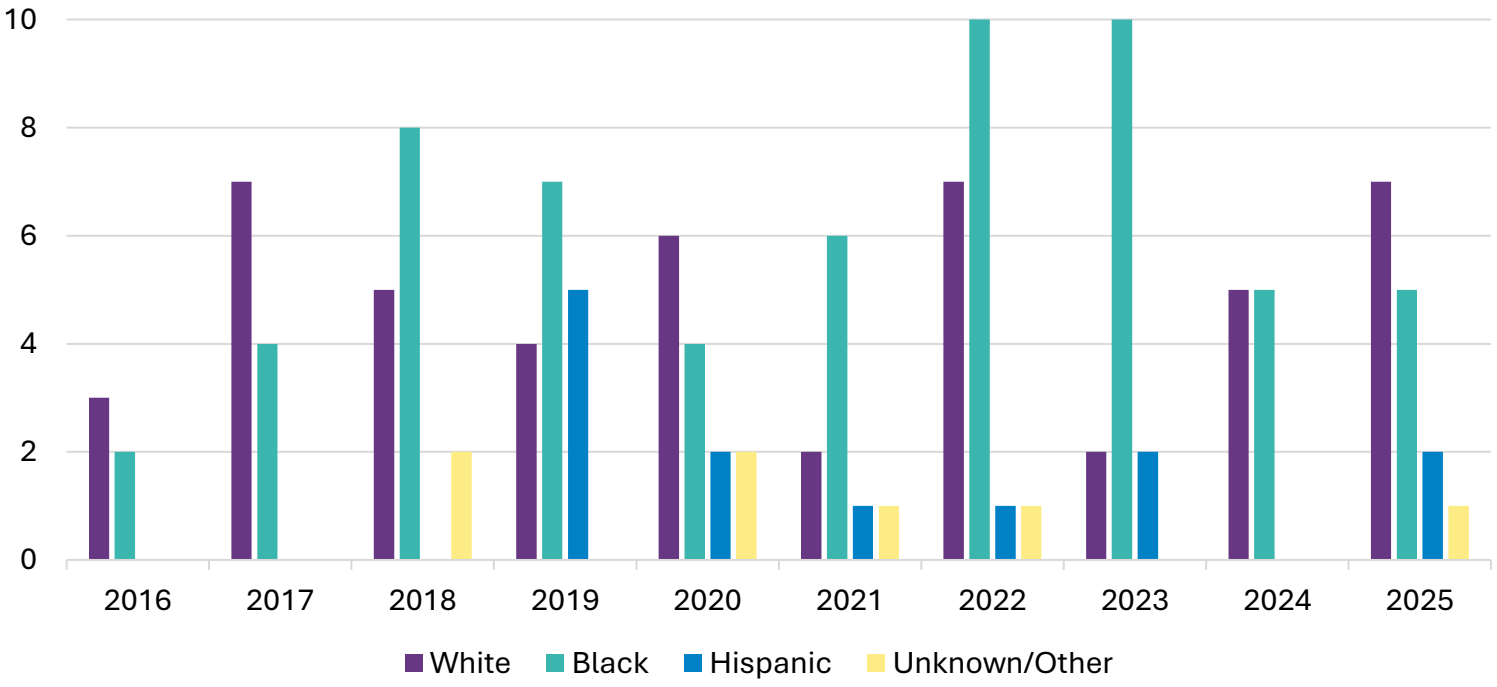
DV Homicide Victims' & Perpetrators' Gender Percentage 2016-2025



Women are far more likely to be killed by an intimate partner, while men are more likely to be victims of non-intimate domestic violence.

In 2025, 67% of the victims of domestic violence homicide in Nashville were female.

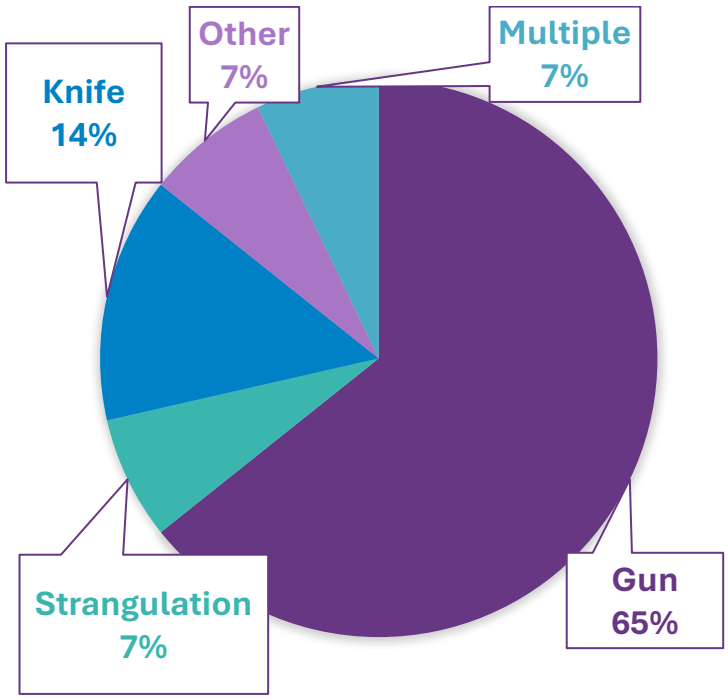
DV Homicide Victims' Race/Ethnicity 2016-2025



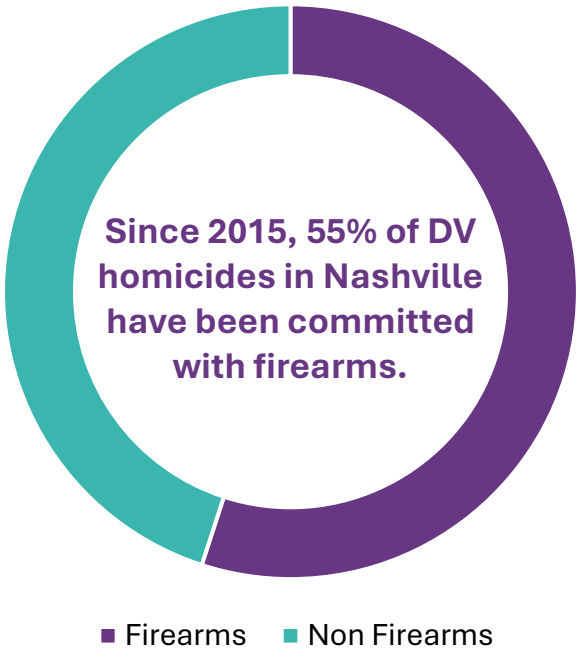
Despite making up only 28% of Nashville's population, black people, mostly black women, account for over 50% of Nashville's DV homicide victims.
Black women are at a greater risk of DV homicide than any other population in Nashville.

DV Homicide Data

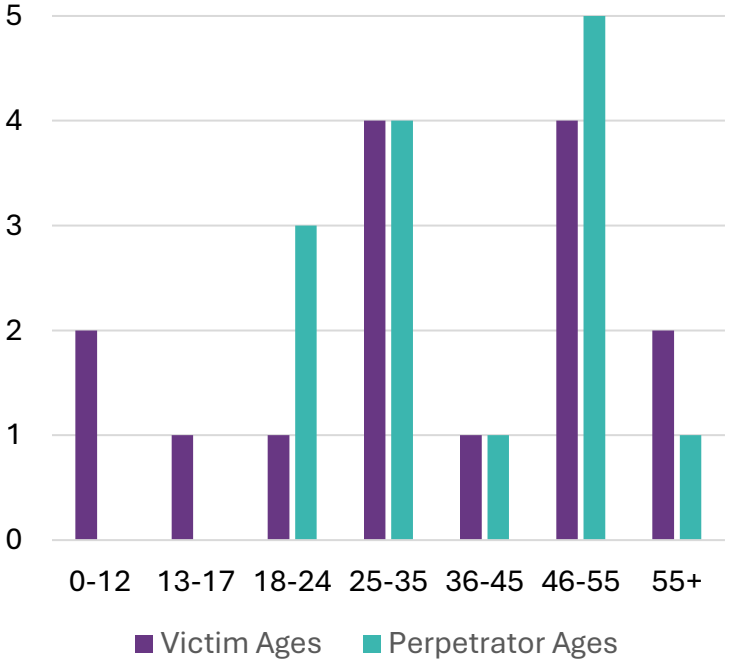
Methods Used in 2025 DV Homicides



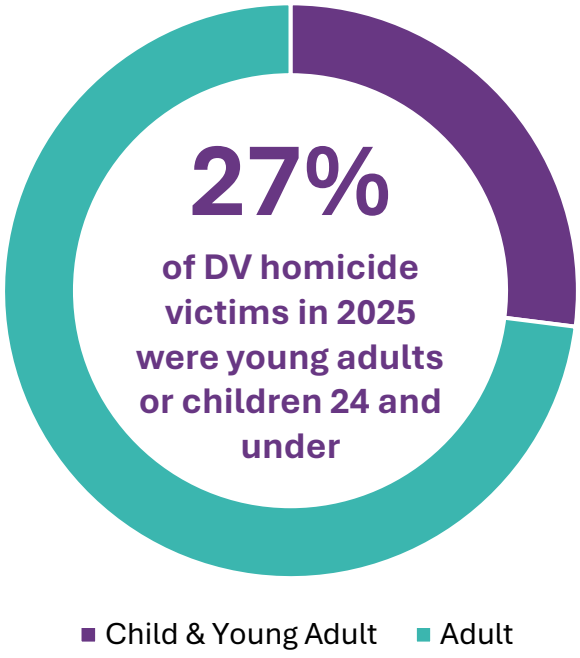
Firearms Use in DV Homicides



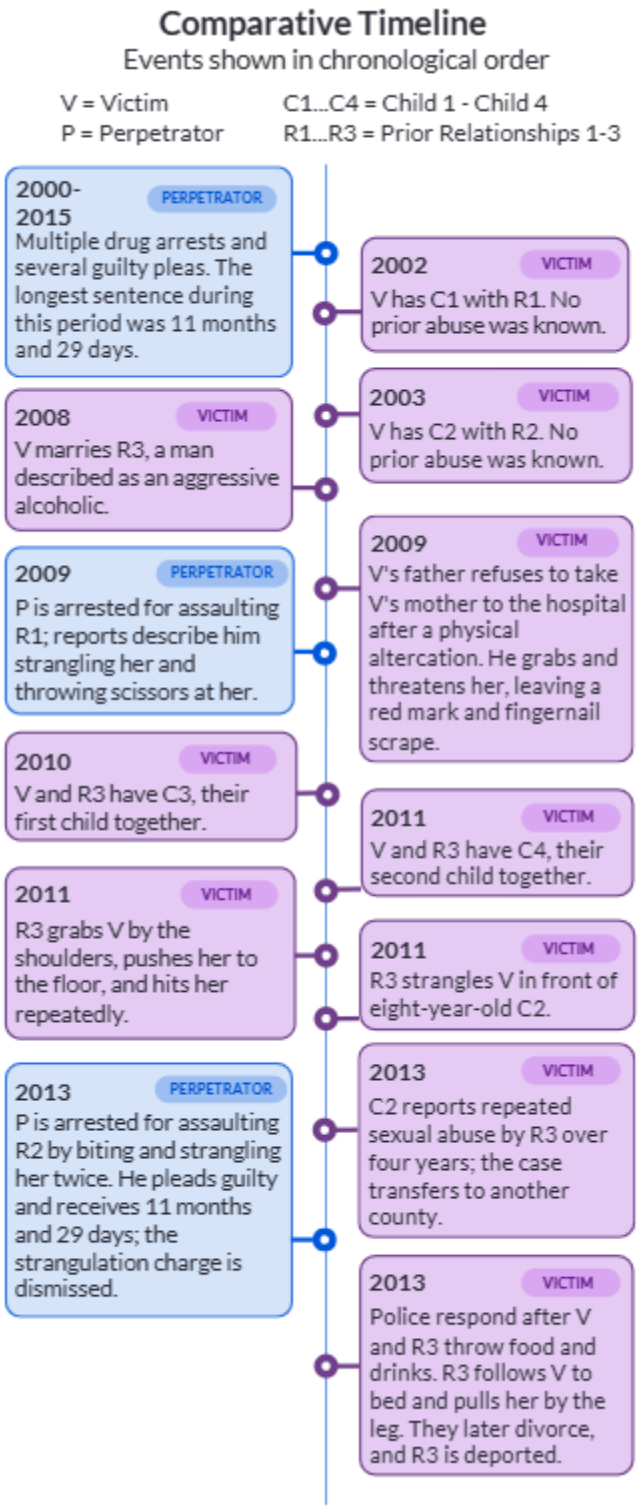
Victim & Perpetrator Average Ages 2025



Young Victims 2025



Case 1: Strangulation Murder



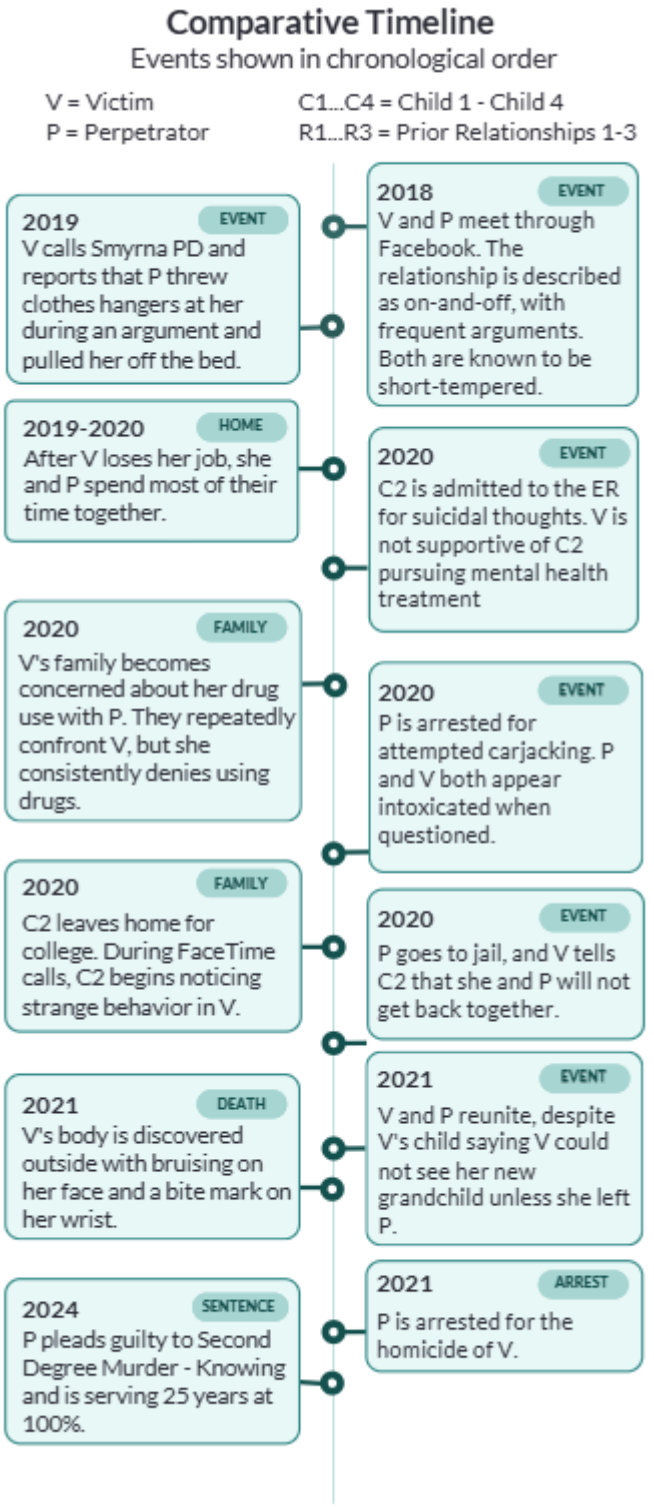
The Victim

Family interviews indicated that there was a history of domestic violence between the victim's parents. The victim had four children from previous relationships and had been previously married. Her first husband was known to be an alcoholic and had a history of aggressive behavior. One of the victim's children disclosed a history of sexual abuse from the victim's second husband, that child's stepfather. The victim originally dismissed these claims, and the family reported no changes were made to the family structure following a DCS investigation. This relationship included a history of domestic violence (DV), including strangulation in front of a child. After a final DV incident with her second husband, the victim and her husband separated and later divorced. Following the divorce, the victim told her child she believed their previous disclosures of sexual assault.

The Perpetrator

The perpetrator had 71 prior arrests in Davidson County alone, including domestic assault, aggravated assault by strangulation, narcotics offenses, and weapons law violations. The perpetrator also had a criminal history in Rutherford County and an active probation violation warrant out of Wilson County.

In 2009, the perpetrator was charged with DV assault with strangulation against a former partner (not this victim). This case was dismissed. In 2013, this perpetrator was charged with DV assault and aggravated assault with strangulation against a different former partner. In the DV assault charge, the defendant left visible bite marks on the victim. The perpetrator was found guilty in this case and was sentenced to serve six months. The aggravated assault strangulation case involved two instances of strangulation within the same incident. The victim reported tunnel vision and had saved photos of her injuries. This case was later dismissed.



Relationship

The victim and perpetrator met in 2018, and family members described their relationship as "on and off." The victim's child stated that "good was good, bad was really bad". The victim and perpetrator were known to have short tempers and argue frequently. When the victim lost her job due to COVID-19, she and the perpetrator spent most of their time together, and the victim's child reports that the home became dirty and unkept, often without groceries for them or V's children. Family members also reported that the victim and perpetrator used drugs together. The family suspected there was mental and emotional abuse occurring in the relationship, but the victim is not known to have confided in anyone about physical abuse. However, family members did note that the victim began wearing sweaters frequently when she had not previously and would refuse FaceTime calls from family and friends. The victim reportedly acknowledged that the relationship was unhealthy. Over time, the victim lost many friends in part due to her relationship.

The Homicide

On a Sunday morning, a passerby reported seeing an injured woman lying on the ground. The victim was found with bruises on her face and a deep bite mark on her wrist. She was later identified using her tattoos. Autopsy results found her cause of death was strangulation.

The victim had last been seen with the defendant four days earlier. Through interviews, the perpetrator's mother initially claimed he had been in her home for the last several days, though she later admitted she could not account for his whereabouts for the entire time in question. The day before the victim was found, the perpetrator appeared unprompted at a friend's house early in the morning and tried to sell his car to the friend. This friend went outside to look at the car and saw what he believed was a body covered with clothing in the back seat. Later crime scene analysis found blood throughout the car. The perpetrator later pled guilty to 2nd Degree Murder and is serving 25 years at 100%.

Case Study 2: Murder-Suicide

The Victim:

At 24 years old, the victim had no known history of domestic violence, child abuse, mental health issues, or substance abuse.

The Perpetrator:

At 37 years old, the perpetrator had no known history of domestic violence, child abuse, mental health issues, or criminal activity. The perpetrator did have a known history of alcohol abuse, and family members stated he "could not function unless he had drank [sic] something that day."

The Relationship:

The victim and perpetrator married in 2023 after being together for several years. There was no documented history of domestic violence, though the couple was known to argue constantly. The victim's mother reported that the victim was trying to leave the perpetrator, but he "wouldn't allow it." On the day of this murder-suicide, the victim had just returned from visiting her mother in Memphis. These visits to her mother had become more frequent as the victim spoke more openly about wanting a divorce.

The Murder-Suicide:

At the time of the murder-suicide, the perpetrator's sister was visiting him. During a conversation the day of the incident, the perpetrator told his sister that he believed the victim was cheating on him. It is unclear why he believed this.

Before leaving for work as a security guard that evening, the perpetrator stepped into the hallway outside their apartment to talk with the victim. The two began to argue, and the perpetrator's sister came out to check on them. The perpetrator began to walk away from the argument as if to leave, but after a few steps, he turned around and moved back towards the victim.

The perpetrator shoved the victim to the ground, removed his pistol from his belt, and shot her until the magazine was empty. As his sister called 911, the perpetrator retrieved a second firearm and returned to the hallway. He shot the victim several more times before firing a single shot to his head. Both parties died on the scene. The perpetrator shot his wife a total of 21 times.

Though both parties were pronounced dead on the scene, first responders reported difficulty accessing the scene due to the size of the apartment complex. Because this murder-suicide occurred in the building hallway, this left the deceased victim and perpetrator visible to their neighbors for an extended period of time.

Case Study 3: Murder

The Victim:

At 76 years old, the victim had no known history of domestic violence, child abuse, mental health issues, criminal activity, or substance abuse. The victim was a Nashville native, and at 16 became pregnant with her oldest child. As a result, she temporarily moved to Florida before later returning to Nashville. As a young adult, the victim married and had her second child. After several years, the victim and her first husband divorced. Their marriage was described by family members as strained with frequent arguments and yelling, but no known abuse.

With one child still living in Nashville, she maintained a close relationship with her children and was a devoted and loving grandmother. Her grandchildren affectionately called her "Ya-Ya" and regularly had "Ya-Ya days" with her. After a career in teaching, the victim was enjoying retirement with friends and creating art, one of her passions.

The Perpetrator:

Though he and the victim were married for over 20 years, the victim's family knew little of the perpetrator's childhood and young adult life. He immigrated to the United States and had legal permanent status. He had no known history of domestic violence, child abuse, mental health issues, criminal activity, or substance abuse history.

The Relationship:

The victim and perpetrator met through work and later married. Despite being married for over 20 years, the perpetrator did not have the same closeness with the victim's children and grandchildren as the victim had. However, the family did generally approve of the perpetrator and his relationship with the victim. He was described as a great supporter of her ideas and passions, and they seemed to be true friends. The perpetrator was not known to be controlling, and the victim maintained an active social life separate from her husband. The couple was not known to argue or yell, and as far as family knew they had never separated or considered divorce.

The Homicide:

The perpetrator reached out to the victim's children to inform them that their mother was terminally ill and had asked them not to contact her while she took time to be alone. Following initial discomfort with this narrative and not hearing from his mother, the victim's son contacted the police for help. His concerns were unable to be filed as a missing person's case due to a lack of evidence and the short duration during which he had not heard from his mother. After using a shared location app to locate his mother's phone, the son found some of his mother's belongings in a park dumpster. After MNPD was contacted about this finding, a missing persons case was filed.

Case Study 3: Murder

Through location information available and interviews with the perpetrator, the victim was found deceased and buried on land owned by the couple in a neighboring county. In interviews with MNPD, the perpetrator admitted to assisting in her suicide by striking her over the head with a heavy household object. The victim was not known to be suicidal, and investigations revealed she had not been diagnosed with any terminal illness.

Investigations later revealed that the perpetrator had recently lost a large sum of money through gambling. Family members reported that a large portion of the couple's wealth came from a prior real estate investment by the victim; however, the perpetrator had full control over their finances. The victim's son was unsure if his mother was not allowed to access her own finances or if she simply entrusted the perpetrator to handle them. The son said from this experience, he would encourage all young women to learn about personal finances and to always maintain access to their financial accounts.

The family and investigators believed that the perpetrator killed his wife after the reality of his gambling came to light. Family members are not sure how the victim reacted to the news, but they confidently reported that the couple would have been fully supported through this financial crisis if they had reached out for help.

The perpetrator later pled guilty to first degree murder and is serving life in prison. Family reports that he continues to ask family members for money while incarcerated.

Recommendations

Statewide Criminal Database Access

TCA 39-11-142 requires commissioner due diligence in determining prior criminal history. Commissioners and their assistants should use all available databases, including NCIC-III, to review criminal records in-county, out-of-county, and out-of-state, and consider these records to ensure every domestic violence offender is given an appropriate bond. Currently, Davidson County Commissioners and their assistants do not have access to any statewide criminal database.

Increased Use of Evidence-Based Prosecution

Domestic violence cases consistently have the lowest victim participation rates of any crime type. As such, preparation for victimless prosecution or "evidence-based prosecution" in all DV cases is the nationally recommended best practice. To support successful prosecution and offender accountability, investigators and prosecutors may rely on DV Supplement questions, detailed photographs, witness interviews, immediate video evidence collection, recording of victim statements and injuries, weapons collection (especially firearms), and collection of other elements pertinent to the case, such as clothes, sheets, etc. Expert testimony on the dynamics of domestic violence and the extent of a victim's injuries can provide additional understanding and evidence for the court to consider. By further increasing the use of these practices in all DV cases, prosecutors can rely less on victim testimony without compromising the courts' ability to hold offenders accountable.

Increased Coordination Between Family Law Profession and Victim Service Providers

Empower private family and divorce attorneys to provide safety planning services with clients pursuing divorce by offering recurring training and increased partnerships. The risk of DV homicide is highest when victims are ending the relationship with their abuser. Knowing this, conversations about domestic violence risk and safety planning should be built into the divorce process. Through continued partnerships with local attorneys and legal professionals, DADRT partners may serve as a regular source of referrals and training.

Recommendations

Increased Coordination for Faster Response Time to 911 Calls

When responding to a fatality, patrol officers can shield the victim from sight while ensuring scene integrity. This can both preserve victim dignity and prevent bystander traumatization.

With the continued construction of new, large apartment complexes, patrol officers experience increased challenges in finding exact locations when responding to calls.

Increased partnership among multi-building apartment complexes, additional patrol officers, and mobile booking locations can work together to decrease call times.

Continued Partnership Between DCS and Local DV Service Providers

Specialized training on child abuse, risk, impact of trauma, trauma-informed interviewing, familial trafficking, pediatric strangulation, and intersections with other abuse types should be required and recurring for all practitioners. This includes police, courts, prosecutors, DCS, and service providers, as well as Juvenile Court magistrates hearing custody cases.

Continue collaboration and decrease silos between interpersonal violence teams when child abuse overlaps with other forms of abuse, such as domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking. Ensure that the investigation and prosecution of child abuse with intersecting abuse involves information sharing and minimizes overlapping work. This could also include collaborative work through an IPV prosecution division

Successful Past Recommendations

An Offender's Level of Risk Under the LAP Should be Considered in Setting Bond Amounts and Conditions (2023, 2022)

The LAP form was updated in 2025 with several changes to better assess and respond to risk. Among these changes was the addition of a "shown to commissioner" checkbox. This change in LAP procedure provides commissioners with more information about offender risk when setting bond amounts and conditions.

DV Firearms Dispossession Protocol Implementation (2023, 2022)

In 2025, Nashville's Metro Council unanimously supported a resolution to hire a dedicated firearms dispossession investigator. This position now exists within the MNPD Domestic Violence Division, and partners closely with OFS staff to identify and investigate cases where dispossession has not occurred as required.

Address Root Causes of Domestic Violence Through Education on Generational Trauma and the Effects of DV on Children (2023)

In 2024, OFS DCS Liaisons began working with households experiencing both child abuse and DV. Through partnering with DCS investigators, the DCS Liaisons support non-offending caregivers through domestic violence advocacy, system navigation, resource linkage, and collaborative case planning. In 2025, the DCS Liaisons worked with 200 children and caregivers.

Increase Training for Medical Providers on Screening and Responding to Patients Experiencing DV (2022, 2021)

Through the Medical IPV Subcommittee and partnerships with local medical providers, nurses throughout Nashville have been trained on identifying and responding to patients experiencing DV. Vanderbilt Medical Center has also revised its intake questionnaire to broaden the language used when screening for DV.

Provide Increased Education and Outreach on DV in the Workplace to Interested Organizations in Nashville (2020)

OFS provides 'DV in the Workplace' training to an average of 1,800 Metro employees annually. DV in the workplace trainings are also regularly provided for other organizations throughout Nashville. In 2025, OFS trained a total of 21,499 individuals on DV-related topics.

The Office of Family Safety Should Foster Relationships with Local Church Communities and Offer Leadership and Church Members Training on Interpersonal Violence (2019)

In 2025, OFS hosted the first annual 'Coffee Cake and Conversations' DV education event specifically for faith leaders in Nashville. Local religious leaders engaged in training and discussion to recognize signs of abuse and identify ways that their faith community can best support survivors.

Conclusion

The findings and recommendations from this report highlight areas for continued growth and improvement in Nashville's domestic violence prevention services and response that can be addressed within our government, non-profit, and for-profit sectors. The Metro Nashville Office of Family Safety (OFS) and the Domestic Abuse Death Review Team (DADRT) are committed to working on the recommendations and implementation plan from this review in conjunction with our partner agencies.

The DADRT will continue to review each domestic violence homicide in Nashville Davidson County and conduct its annual in-depth case reviews to glean further information on how to improve our work. The OFS will work with partner agencies to implement the report's recommendations, which we hope will address identified gaps and increase community awareness. The OFS Statewide Fatality Review Coordinator will continue to develop domestic violence fatality review teams throughout the state and facilitate Tennessee's statewide death review team meetings. This statewide team will amplify the impact of Nashville and other jurisdictions' recommendations throughout the state.

The DADRT and Metro Nashville Office of Family Safety (OFS) are incredibly grateful for the support we have received from Metro Nashville-Davidson County Government, the Mayor, the Metropolitan Council, our FSC Leadership Committee, our state and federal funders, and our committed partner members for the support they have contributed to this report. Above all, we are grateful to the survivors of domestic violence homicide who shared their experiences and insight with our Team and helped form these recommendations.

To view Executive Order 26, Re-establishing the Domestic Abuse Death Review Team Under Mayor O'Connell, please scan the QR code above.

To view past DADRT reports, please scan the QR code above.

Members of the Domestic Abuse Death Review Team (DADRT)

AGAPE/MORNING STAR SANCTUARY

CITIZEN VOLUNTEERS (3)

DAVIDSON COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

DAVIDSON COUNTY MEDICAL EXAMINER'S OFFICE

DAVIDSON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

LEGAL AID SOCIETY OF MIDDLE TN

METRO NASHVILLE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

METRO NASHVILLE OFFICE OF FAMILY SAFETY

METRO NASHVILLE OFFICE OF YOUTH SAFETY

METRO SOCIAL SERVICES

MNPD DOMESTIC VIOLENCE DIVISION

MNPD FAMILY INTERVENTION PROGRAM

MNPD HOMICIDE UNIT

NASHVILLE CHILDREN'S ALLIANCE

NASHVILLE GENERAL HOSPITAL

SEXUAL ASSAULT CENTER

TENNESSEE BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

TN DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN SERVICES

VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTER

YWCA

Additional individuals may be invited to attend DADRT Meetings when they had involvement working with any of the parties in the case being reviewed.

If you have any questions about the report, please contact:

Walden Ferrell, Metro Office of Family Safety Statewide Domestic Violence Fatality Review Coordinator at WaldenFerrell@jisnashville.gov