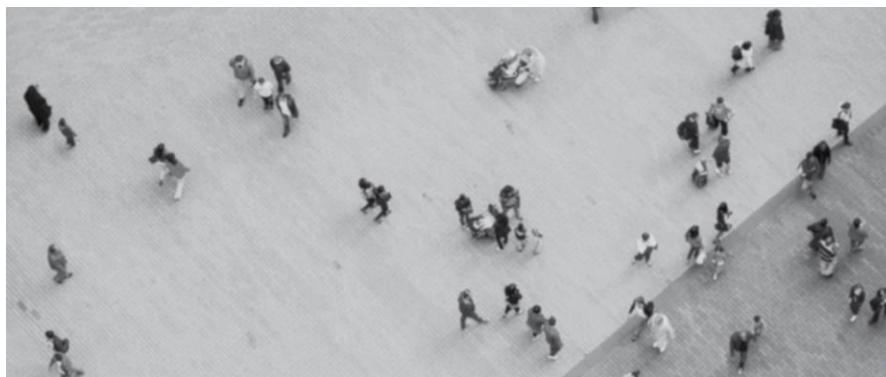


# Georgia Domestic Violence Fatality Review Project

## Supplement to 2016 | 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Report



### Introduction

Traditionally, the Georgia Domestic Violence Fatality Review Annual Report contains aggregated data and charts for all cases reviewed by the Project. In 2016, the Project focused on the suicide-homicide connection, and to highlight the trends specific to murder-suicide cases, the data in the Report was segmented for comparison against itself. This document is a supplement to the 2016 Annual Report and provides the aggregated data that our readers use for developing training content, conducting community outreach and education or when writing grant proposals.

Charts 1-3 of this document are also included in the 2016 Annual Report. These charts are generated using statewide data sourced from media monitoring and stakeholders and are not reflective of reviewed cases. Because of this method of collection, the Project does not have complete information for all cases in Georgia and acknowledges our data is an undercount of the true number of domestic violence-related fatalities in our state. That may be particularly true in certain types of domestic violence-related deaths including: children killed by domestic violence abusers as part of an ongoing pattern of abuse in the home, same-sex relationships, homicides mistakenly classified as suicides or accidents, missing persons and unsolved homicides, victims who lived in Georgia and were killed in a different state and suicides of domestic violence victims. We welcome new sources of information on domestic violence-related deaths known to our readers and encourage you to contact the Project to contribute information from your area.

Charts 4-15 contain aggregate data for all cases reviewed by the Project. Each chart includes Key Points designed to give you relevant points quickly.

If you have not received a copy of the 2016 Annual Report you can download your copy from our website [www.georgiafatalityreview.com](http://www.georgiafatalityreview.com).

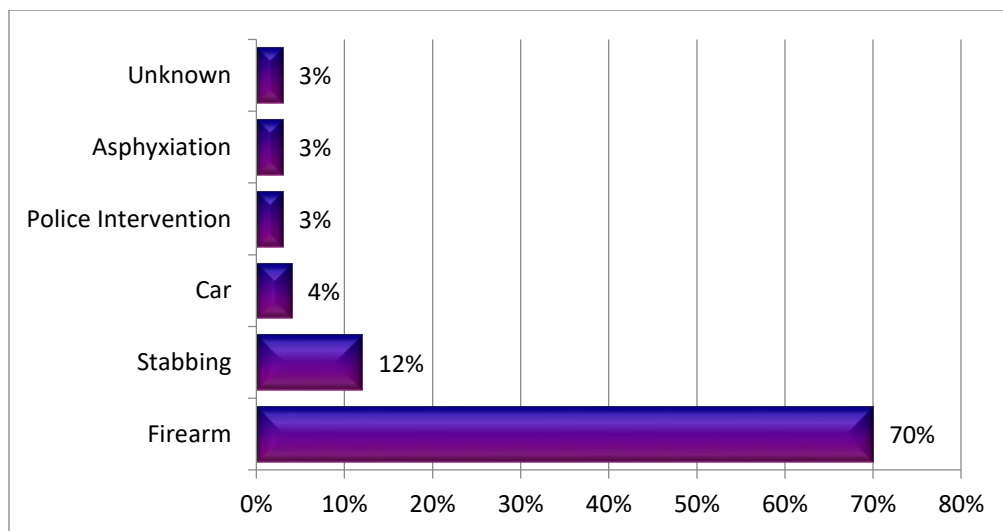
This document was developed by the Georgia Domestic Violence Fatality Review Project and was revised on 3/8/17. When using this data, please cite the 2016 Georgia Domestic Violence Fatality Review Project. For more information or questions, please contact Taylor Tabb [ttabb@gcadv.org](mailto:ttabb@gcadv.org) or Niki Lemeshka [niki.lemeshka@dcs.ga.gov](mailto:niki.lemeshka@dcs.ga.gov).

**If you or someone you know is being abused help is available and can be reached by calling the 24-HOUR STATEWIDE HOTLINE:  
1 (800) 33-HAVEN (1-800-334-2836) SE HABLA ESPAÑOL**

## CHART 1 | DOMESTIC VIOLENCE-RELATED DEATHS IN GEORGIA: 2016

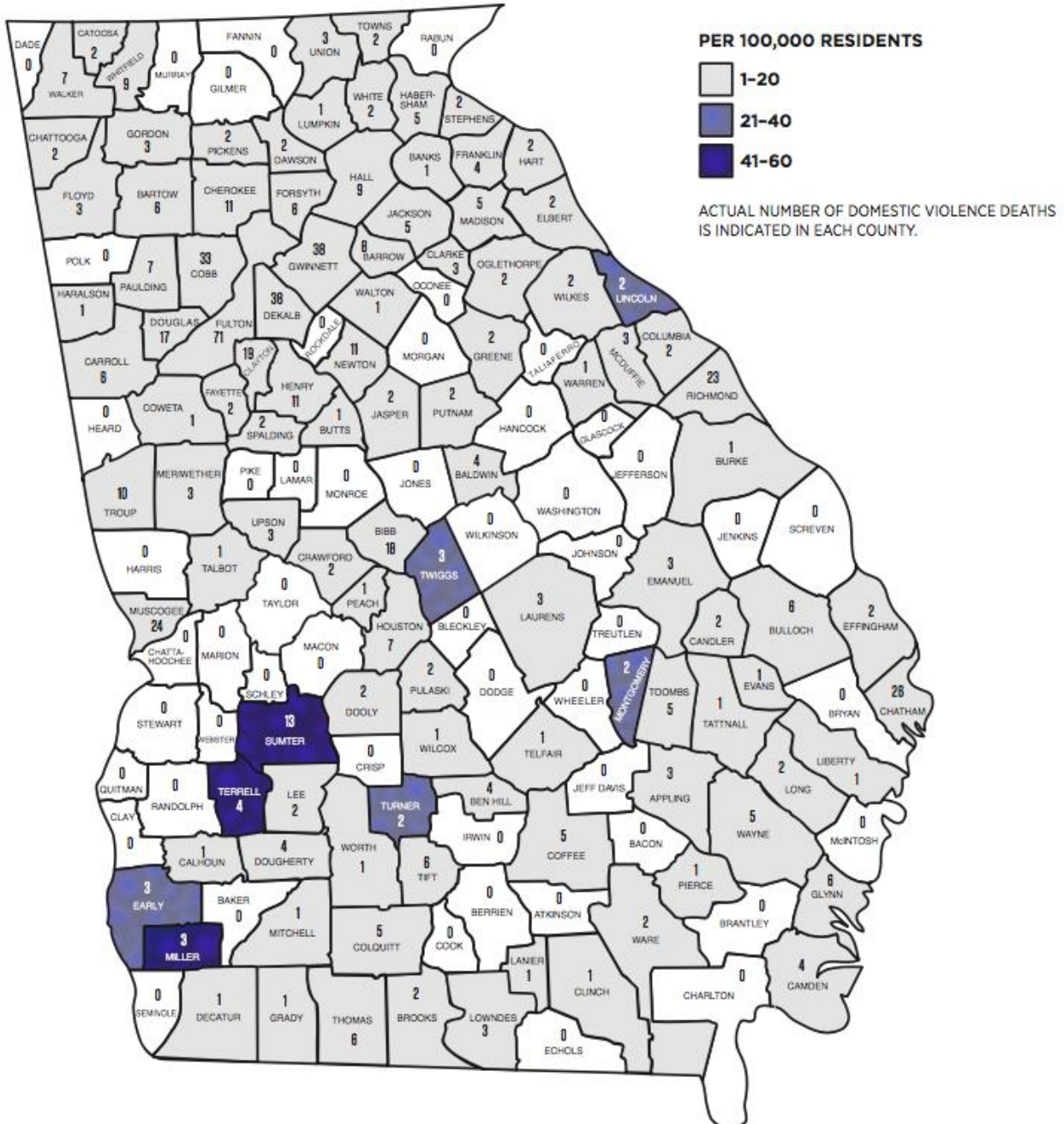
COUNTY	Number of Deaths	COUNTY	Number of Deaths	COUNTY	Number of Deaths
Baldwin	2	Columbia	8	Mitchell	1
Barrow	1	DeKalb	6	Muscogee	4
Bartow	1	Dougherty	2	Newton	1
Ben Hill	1	Douglas	4	Paulding	1
Bibb	3	Elbert	2	Richmond	1
Bulloch	1	Floyd	1	Spalding	1
Butts	1	Fulton	13	Sumter	7
Camden	1	Glynn	4	Terrell	1
Carroll	2	Gordon	2	Thomas	1
Catoosa	1	Gwinnett	2	Tift	2
Chatham	6	Hall	3	Toombs	2
Chattooga	1	Henry	5	Twiggs	2
Cherokee	3	Houston	2	Ware	1
Clarke	2	Long	2	Wayne	2
Clayton	6	Lumpkin	1		
Cobb	4	McDuffie	1	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>121</b>

## CHART 2 | CAUSE OF DEATH IN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE-RELATED DEATHS IN GEORGIA: 2016

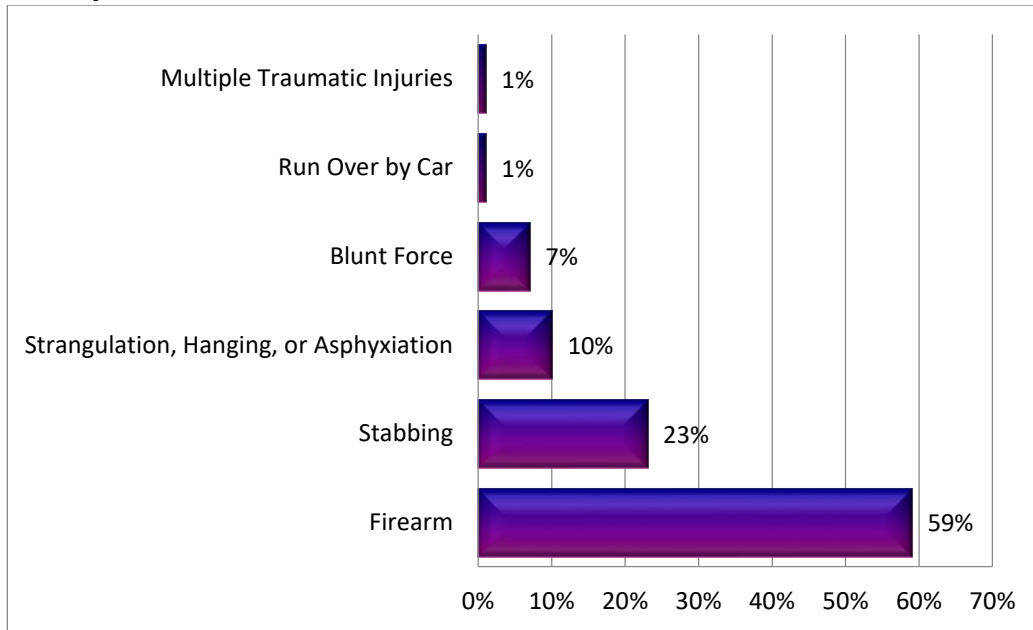


**Chart 1 and Chart 2 Key Points:** Chart 1 includes only Georgia counties in which a domestic violence-related death is known to have occurred in 2016. Chart 2 captures the cause of death in those incidents. Previous versions of this chart included a category called “suicide by cop.” The category is now called “police intervention” and includes instances where abusers were killed by law enforcement officers responding to a domestic violence incident. Most incidents are consistent with “suicide by cop,” in which abusers threaten officers or victims with deadly violence to provoke a lethal response.

## CHART 3 | DOMESTIC VIOLENCE-RELATED DEATHS IN GEORGIA BY COUNTY PER CAPITA: 2012–2016

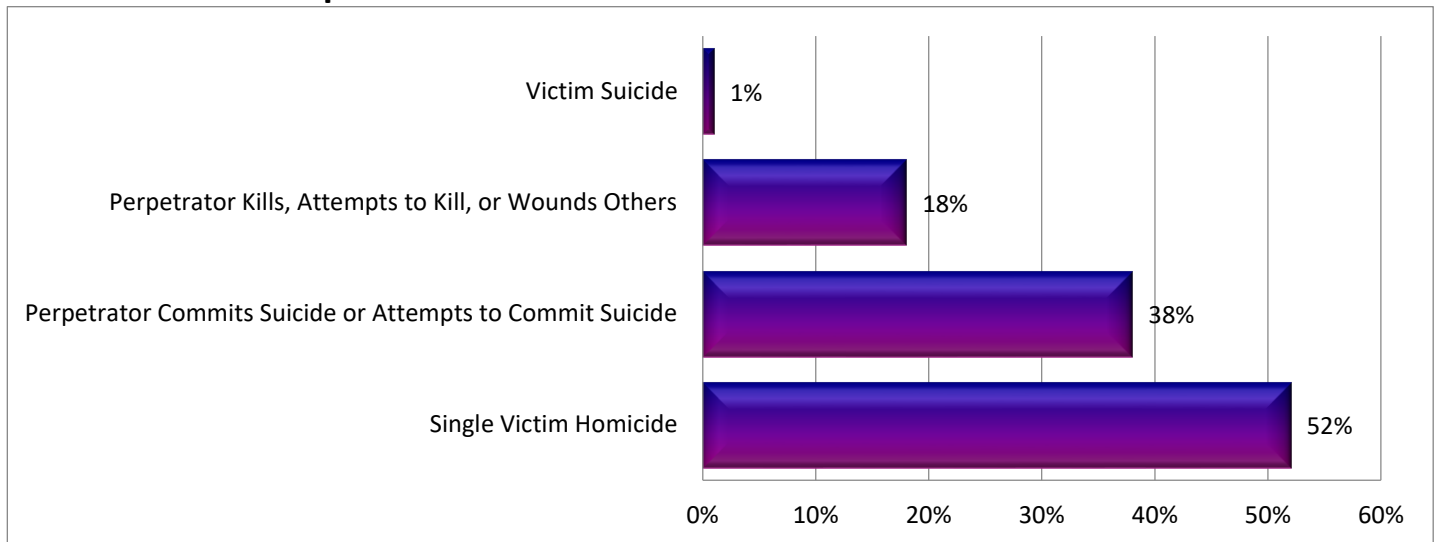


## CHART 4 | VICTIM CAUSE OF DEATH IN REVIEWED CASES: 2004-2016



**Chart 4 Key Points:** Greater than all other methods combined, firearms have been the leading cause of death for victims in reviewed cases (59%). This finding indicates the urgent need to use all legal means possible to remove firearms from the hands of domestic violence abusers. The presence of a gun in domestic violence situations, no matter who technically owns it, increases the risk of homicide significantly.

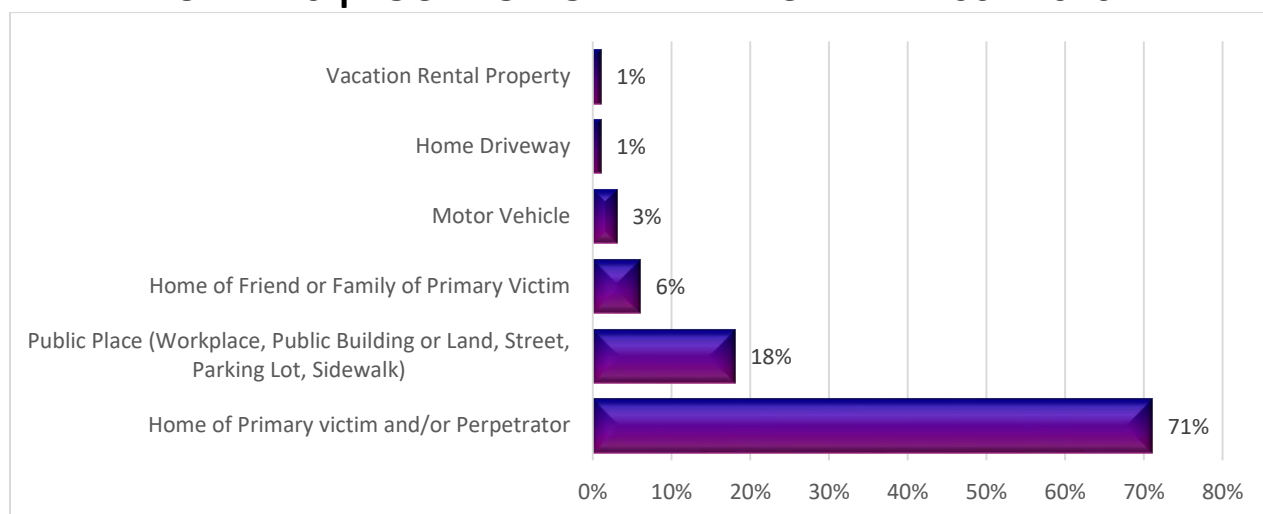
## CHART 5 | TYPES OF INCIDENTS IN REVIEWED CASES: 2004-2016



**Chart 5 Key Points:** In 37% of reviewed cases, domestic violence perpetrators were known to have either threatened or attempted suicide prior to the lethal incident. In 38% of cases, the perpetrator attempted or completed suicide at the homicide scene or soon after. These findings support research by Dr. Jacquelyn Campbell at Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing who also found a correlation between suicidal thought and the subsequent killing of a family member. To learn more about suicide intervention and prevention initiatives, please refer to page 41 of the 2016 Georgia Domestic Violence Fatality Review Annual Report.

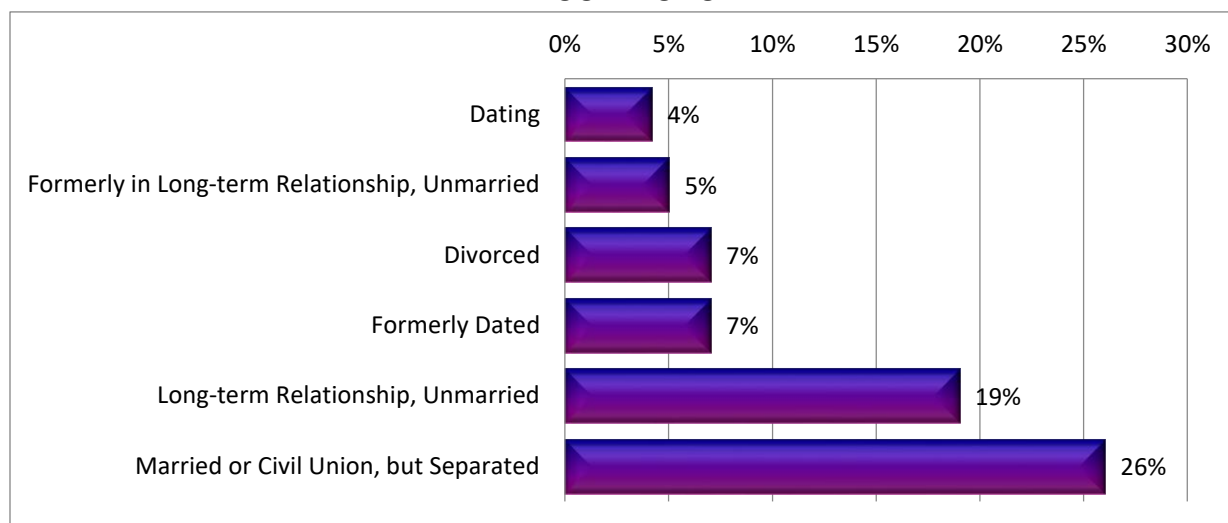
In 18% of reviewed cases, someone other than an intimate partner was killed. This includes children of the intimate partner, new dating partners and other family members. Abusers do not limit their violence to their intimate partner. Often, other people close to the victim are targeted because they are with the primary victim at the time of the attack, or because the perpetrator intends to cause additional anguish to the primary victim by harming her friends or loved ones.

## CHART 6 | LOCATION OF FATAL INCIDENT: 2004-2016



**Chart 6 Key Points:** Most fatal incidents occurred in the home of the victim and/or perpetrator (71%), a space where everyone deserves to be safe. Often children and other adults also shared these living spaces—homes that are now crime scenes. Beyond the disruption and potential trauma of families not being allowed in these spaces during the investigation, once the investigation is complete, some families return to a home filled with memories and tragedy to retrieve belongings and handle the estates of their deceased loved ones. Neighbors and communities may also be impacted by the violence that took place within a house in their neighborhood. Georgia Crime Victims Compensation Program can assist surviving families with the cost of crime scene cleanup and counseling. Please see their website for more information: [crimevictimscomp.ga.gov](http://crimevictimscomp.ga.gov).

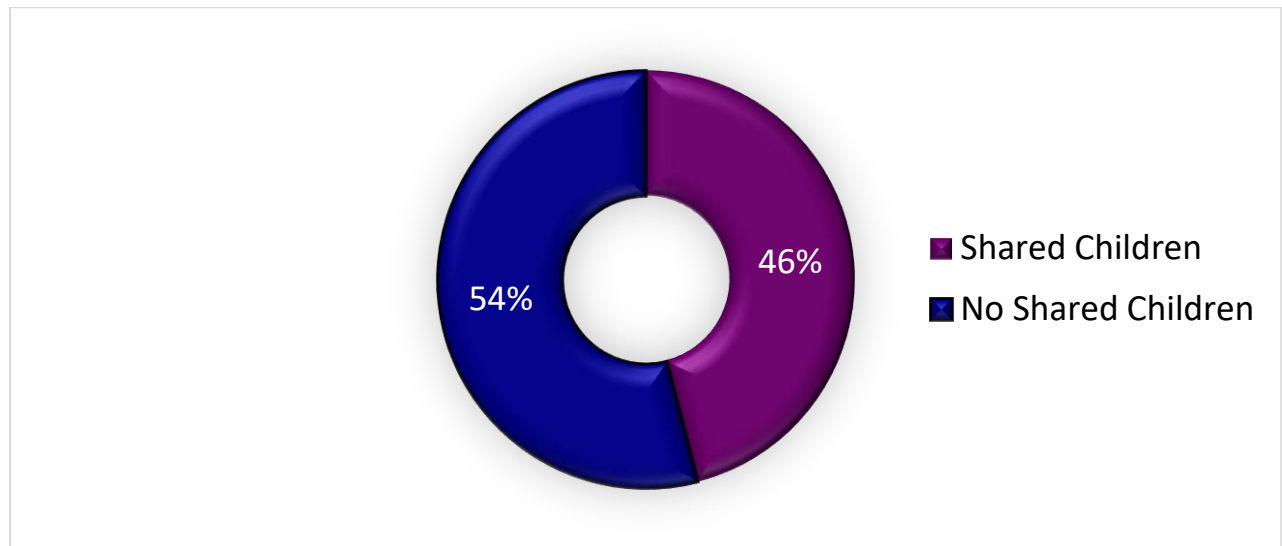
## CHART 7 | RELATIONSHIP STATUS AT THE TIME OF THE FATAL INCIDENT: 2004-2016



**Chart 7 Key Points:** In 52% of reviewed cases, the victim and abuser were in a relationship at the time of the fatal incident—meaning they were married, in a long-term relationship (more than 6 months), or dating. In cases where the victim and perpetrator were married, 24% had a divorce pending at the time of the fatal incident.

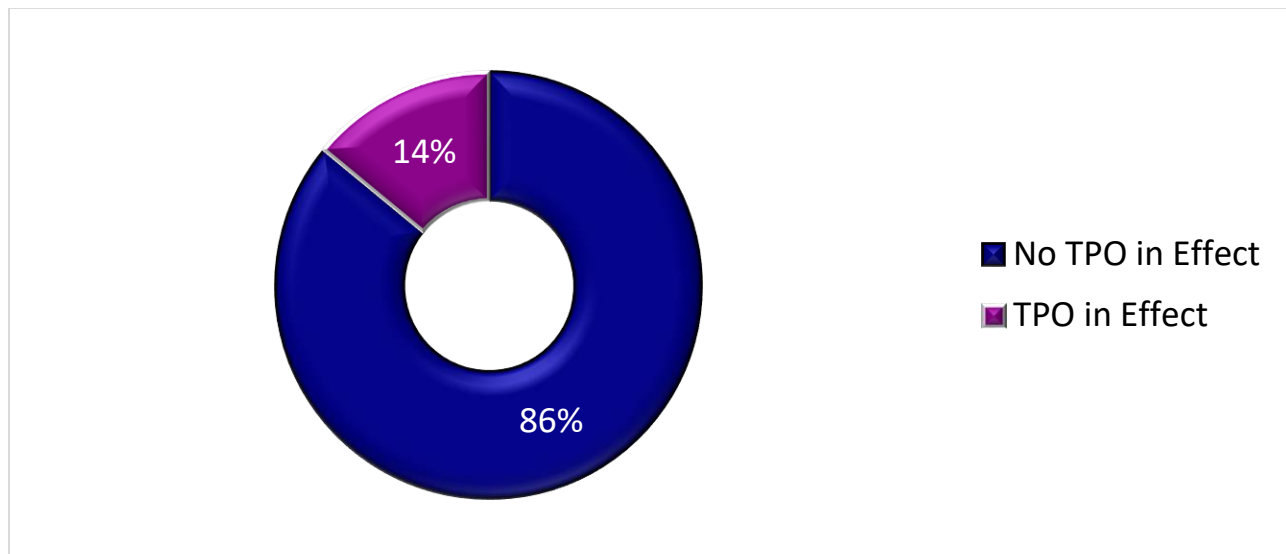
This chart does not reflect the fact that almost all victims were contemplating leaving the relationship or taking steps to do so. Victims are at the highest risk of being killed by their abusive partners when they separate from them; both rates of, and seriousness of, physical abuse increase during periods of separation and divorce. Even when a victim's desire to leave is not spoken aloud, any increase in behaviors or steps to gain independence may signal to their partner that they are losing control over the victim. Taking a new job, increasing social activities, saving money, and changing locks on doors can all signal to a domestic violence abuser that the victim is serious about leaving and is actively taking steps to separate.

## CHART 8 | PERCENTAGE OF CASES WHERE THE PERPETRATOR AND VICTIM SHARED MINOR CHILDREN: 2004-2016



**Chart 8 Key Points:** In 46% of cases, the perpetrator and victim had at least one minor child together. Sharing children can significantly increase victims' barriers to safety, including their decision to leave the relationship, their ability to support themselves and their children away from the abuser, and continued interactions with the abuser regarding custody arrangements. In some cases, the homicide or murder-suicide occurred in the presence of the children during a custody exchange. Supervised visitation and safe exchange locations are important options for maintaining the safety of victims and their children.

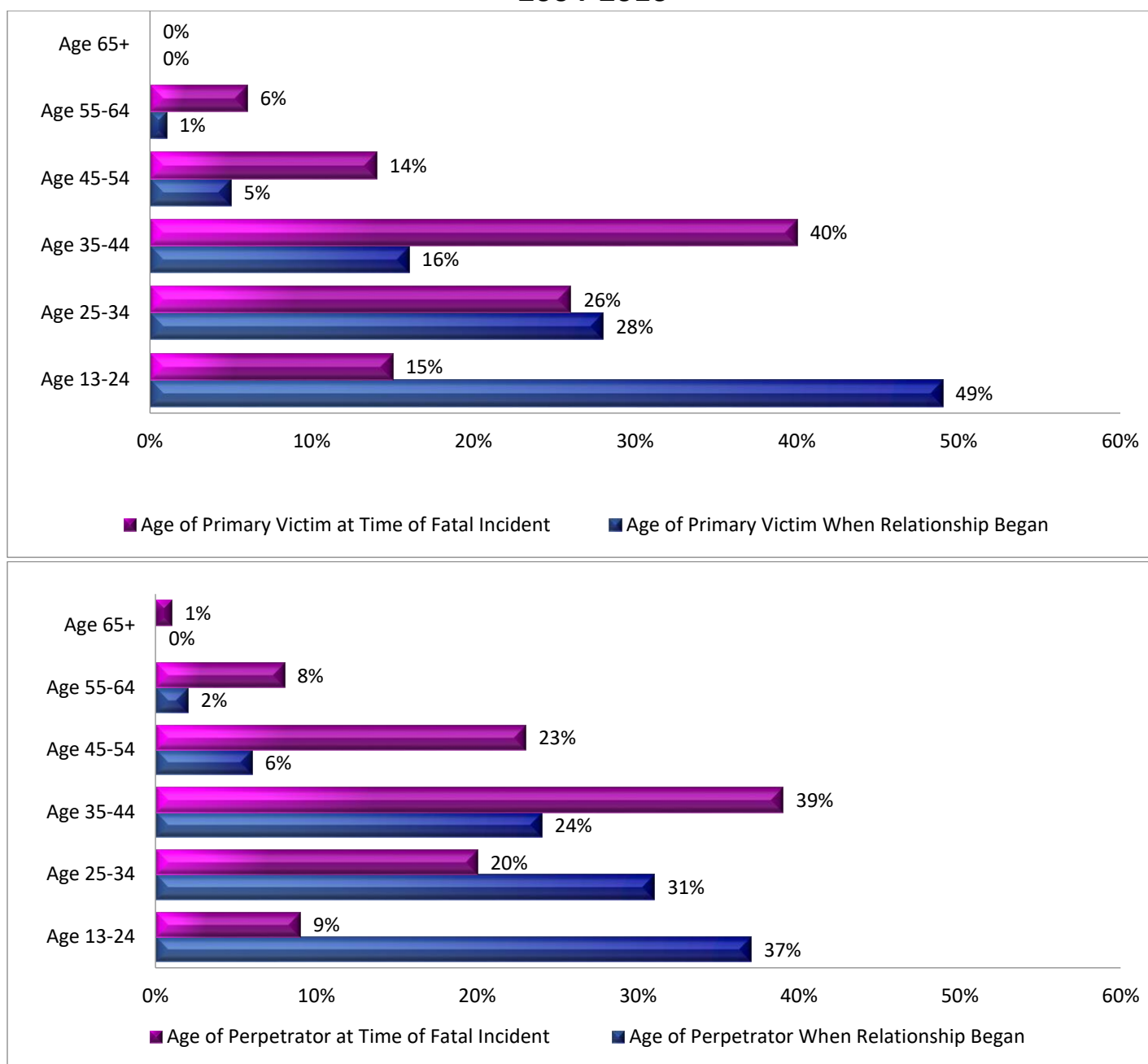
## CHART 9 | TEMPORARY PROTECTIVE ORDER IN EFFECT AT TIME OF FATAL INCIDENT: 2004-2016



**Chart 9 Key Points:** In 14% of cases, the domestic violence victims had a Temporary Protective Order (TPO) in place at the time of their death. Several other victims in reviewed cases had a TPO at some point prior to their deaths, but the order was not in place at the time of the fatal incident. Lack of advocacy and safety planning for TPO petitioners is a critical gap in victim protection. TPOs can be an important element in a victim's safety plan, but for some victims the process of obtaining a TPO, service of the order, and subsequent court dates may cause the respondent's abusive behavior and tactics to escalate. It is imperative that all victims of domestic violence seeking relief from the courts under the Family Violence Act are referred to an advocate who can explore the potential risks associated with filing the TPO, conduct risk assessment and safety planning, and offer additional resources and support.

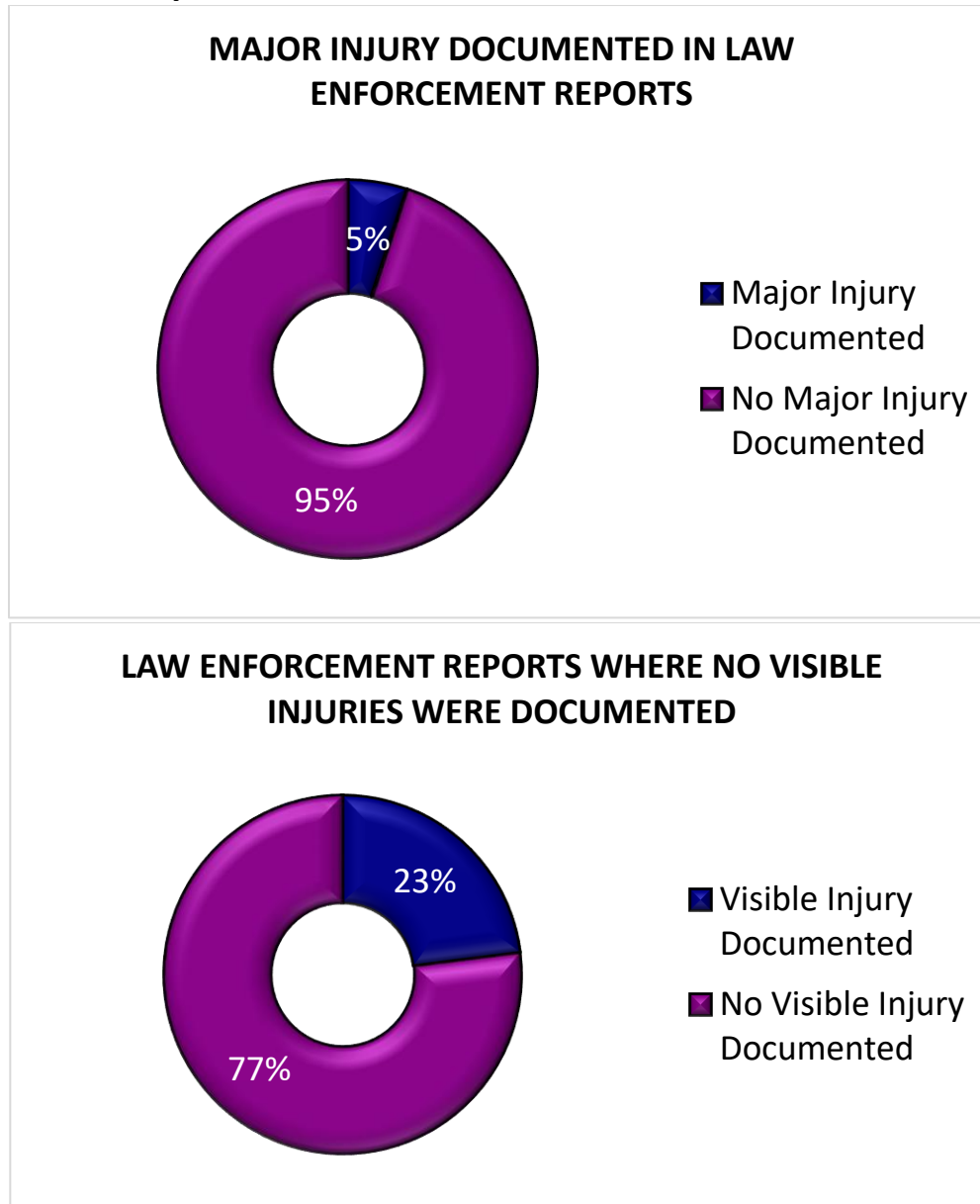


**CHART 10 | AGES OF VICTIMS AND PERPETRATORS IN REVIEWED CASES:  
2004-2016**



**Chart 10 Key Points:** In reviewed cases, almost half of victims (49%) began their relationship with the person who eventually killed them when they were between the ages of 13 and 24. People between the age of 13 and 19 made up 24% of victims. Four of the victims were just 15 when their relationships began, one victim was 14, and another victim was 13. Although a large number of relationships started when the victim was young, many of these relationships spanned several years. The Project found that 40% of victims were killed when they were between the ages of 35 and 44. These numbers demonstrate that many of the relationships lasted well beyond 10 years and highlight the need and opportunity for early intervention for teens experiencing unhealthy relationships and dating violence. Moreover, many of the victims suffered years of abuse, which escalated immediately prior to the fatal incident. A majority of these victims were making emotional and physical preparations to leave the relationships when they were killed. See Chart 7 on page 5 for more information on relationship status at the time of the fatal incident.

## CHART 11 | HISTORY OF INJURY TO THE VICTIM: 2004-2016

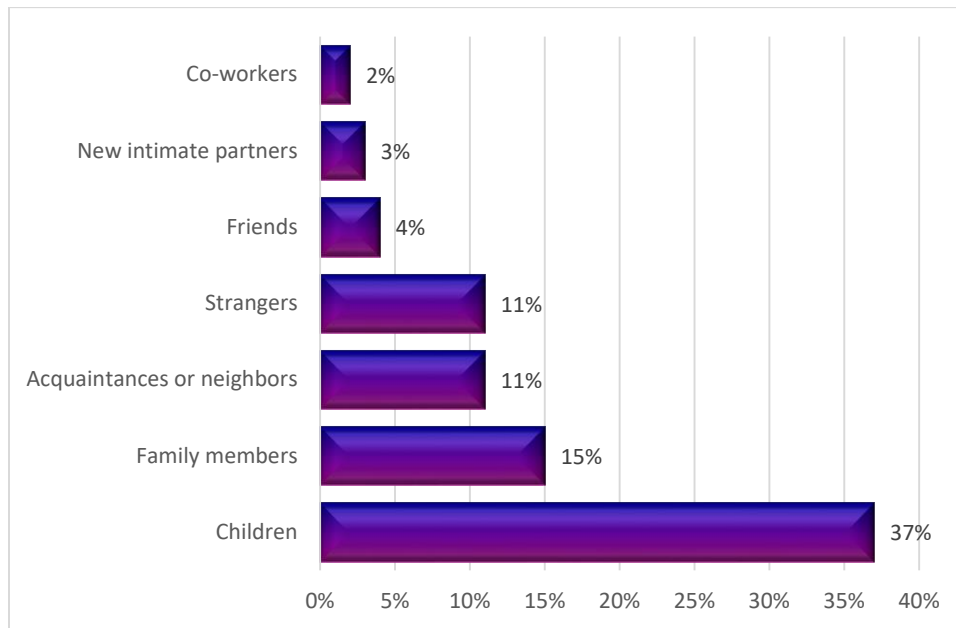


**Chart 11 Key Points:** In 95% of calls to the police prior to the fatal incident, there was no major injury to the victim documented in law enforcement reports. In 77% of prior calls, there were no visible injuries documented. This means most victims who were later killed were either not physically injured or did not have major physical injuries when the police were called prior to their death. This suggests that while serious and visible injury is a predictor of future, possibly lethal violence, it will not always be present in cases where victims are later killed.

This information has implications for service providers. First, when advocates and other service providers are assessing for danger, they cannot rely solely on the level of prior injury to the victim. While research indicates that a history of prior violence is a predictor of future violence, victims who are at a substantial risk for a lethal assault will not always have a history of serious injury. Lethality assessments must take into account the totality of the victim's experience and the presence of a combination of factors that are viewed as high risk. Moreover, acts of lower-level violence provide an opportunity for the system to prosecute and sanction perpetrators and provide support to victims with the goal of de-escalating the violence and preventing future homicide. If responders wait for a more aggravated crime or a serious injury to occur before they intervene, they do so at the risk of further loss of life. While criminal prosecution is not always possible and not always the safest option, it is important to understand the messages victims and perpetrators (and children) receive about the system's willingness or capacity to intervene when there is a history of unsuccessful intervention.



## CHART 12 | PERCENTAGE OF CASES WHERE OTHERS WITNESSED THE FATAL INCIDENT: 2004-2016



**Chart 12 Key Points:** In 37% of cases, children witnessed the fatal incident. Often, if the child(ren) did not directly observe the fatal incident, they were the first to find their deceased parent(s) or caregiver(s). There is a critical need to assist children dealing with the traumatic effects of witnessing a fatal incident, losing one or both parents or caregivers, and witnessing domestic violence. In particular, the Project has found that children and surviving family members of murder-suicides are less likely to be aware of available resources, because many surviving family members receive this information through the prosecutor's office, and in most circumstances, there is no prosecution involvement in murder-suicide incidents.

## CHART 13 | AGENCIES AND SERVICES KNOWN TO BE INVOLVED WITH VICTIMS OR PERPETRATORS IN THE FIVE YEARS PRIOR TO THE FATALITY: 2004-2016

	AGENCY / SERVICE / PROGRAM	VICTIMS		PERPETRATORS	
		#	% total cases	#	% total cases
JUSTICE SYSTEM AGENCIES	Law enforcement	83	79%	87	83%
	Prosecutor	41	39%	57	54%
	Superior court	34	32%	41	39%
	Magistrate court	30	29%	41	39%
	Civil court, including juvenile court	25	24%	24	23%
	State court	22	21%	38	36%
	Protection order advocacy program	17	16%	2	2%
	Court-based legal advocacy	14	13%	2	2%
	Probation	12	11%	39	37%
	Municipal court	6	6%	9	9%
	Legal Aid	4	4%	0	0%
	Parole	2	2%	10	10%
	Supervised visitation / drop-off center	1	1%	0	0%

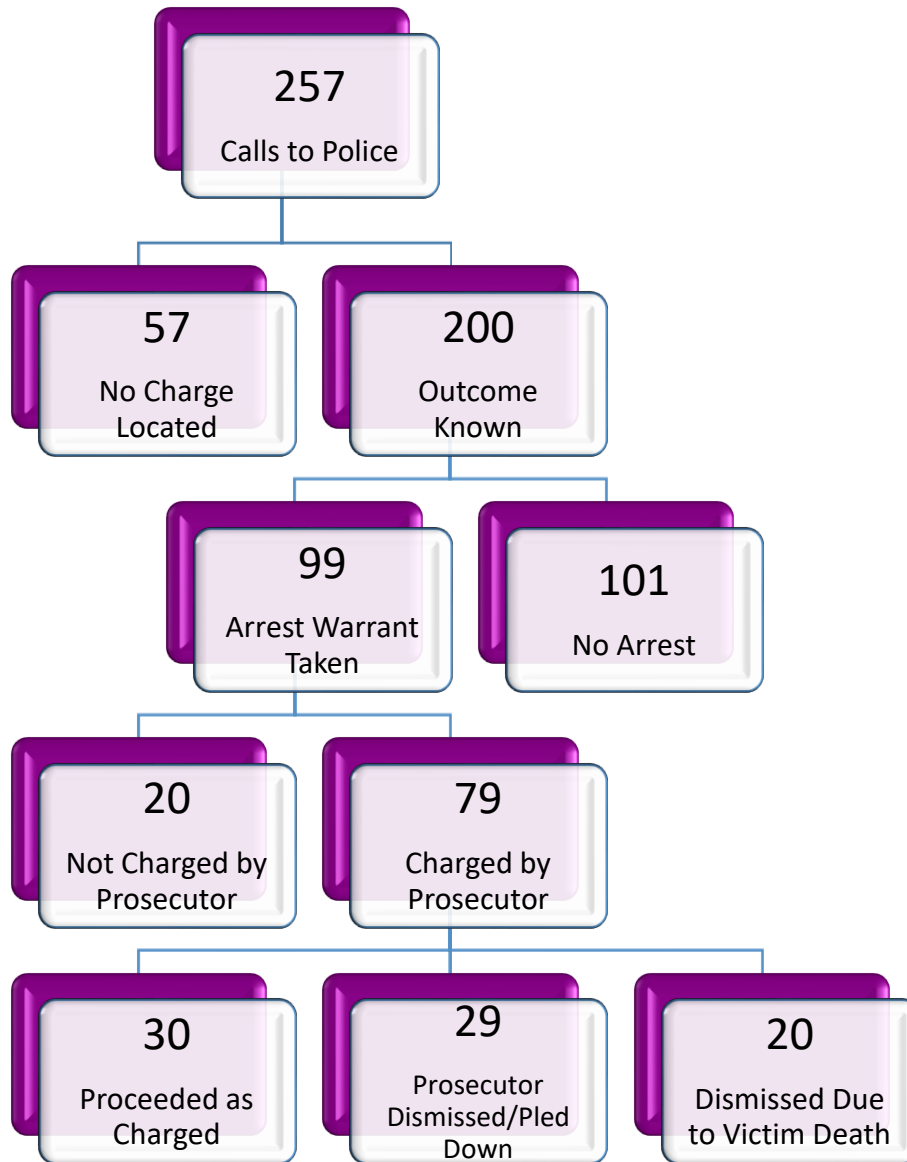
	AGENCY / SERVICE / PROGRAM	VICTIMS		PERPETRATORS	
		#	% total cases	#	% total cases
SOCIAL SERVICE AGENCIES	Child protective services (DFCS)	13	12%	11	10%
	TANF or Food Stamps	8	8%	3	3%
	Medicaid	6	6%	2	2%
	WIC	6	6%	0	0%
	Child care services	5	5%	2	2%
	Homeless shelter	2	2%	1	1%
	PeachCare	1	1%	0	0%
HEALTH CARE AGENCIES	Hospital	24	23%	21	20%
	Private physician	24	23%	20	19%
	Emergency medical care	20	19%	9	9%
	Emergency medical service (EMS)	14	13%	10	10%
	Mental health provider	11	10%	25	24%
	Substance abuse program	3	3%	7	7%
FAMILY VIOLENCE AGENCIES	Community-based advocacy	18	17%	5	5%
	Domestic violence shelter or safehouse	16	15%	0	0%
	Family Violence Intervention Program (FVIP)	2	2%	12	11%
	Sexual assault center	1	1%	1	1%
MISCELLANEOUS AGENCIES	Religious community	34	32%	24	23%
	Immigrant resettlement	2	2%	1	1%
	Anger management	1	1%	6	6%
	Animal control	1	1%	0	0%
	English as Second Language (ESL) program	1	1%	0	0%

**Chart 13 Key Points:** Law enforcement had the most contact with both victims (79%) and perpetrators (83%) in the five years prior to the fatal incident. Fatality Review Teams identified a much smaller number of victims (15%) in contact with a domestic violence program in the five years prior to their death. Law enforcement agencies may represent a victims' best chance at getting connected to supportive services and law enforcement agencies should take proactive steps to ensure victims they interact with are made aware of the full range of services available via local domestic violence programs. Continued law enforcement training on the dynamics of domestic violence and how and where to refer domestic violence victims for services is needed.

In turn, domestic violence programs should take proactive steps to ensure their full range of services are known to other community agencies and community members, including friends and family members. It is important that services are accessible to victims from marginalized communities, and are culturally relevant and inviting to all victims.

A significant number of victims (32%) and perpetrators (23%) interacted with a religious community—church, temple, mosque, or similar place of worship in the five years prior to the fatal incident. The faith community has great potential for offering resources, referrals, and safety to its congregants. In 2016, the Project updated materials for outreach to the faith community. Two new materials can now be used for training: *Safe Sacred Space: A Manual for Faith Leaders* and *Safe Sacred Space: A Training Guide for Family Violence Task Forces*. Both materials are available for download at [www.georgiafatalityreview.com](http://www.georgiafatalityreview.com).

## CHART 14 | INVESTIGATION AND PROSECUTION OUTCOMES: 2004-2016



**Chart 14 Key Points:** In reviewed cases, 257 calls were made to law enforcement regarding a domestic violence incident prior to the fatal incident. Because law enforcement often acts as the first point of contact between the victim and the criminal legal system, officers have a unique opportunity to influence victim safety. It is crucial for law enforcement officers to both make arrests and make effective referrals for victim services on-scene. Fatality Review Teams located outcomes for only 78% of calls made to law enforcement, indicating a gap between written policy (requiring officers to write family violence incident reports after each call of alleged domestic violence to which they respond) and practice.

In the 200 known outcomes, 51% showed no arrest was made by law enforcement or there was no record of charges against the accused abuser. Most often, officers did not make arrests because they did not find probable cause or because the perpetrator fled the scene. Thirty-six percent of victims were advised to apply for their own arrest warrants, a practice that increases barriers to justice and safety risks for victims. In some cases officers undercharged qualifying family violence crimes as disorderly conduct.

Of the cases where law enforcement was called and an arrest was made, prosecutors pursued a majority (80%) of family violence arrests. However, of the cases where charges were pursued by prosecutors, a significant number (38%) were later dismissed or pled down. In 25% of cases charged by the prosecutor, charges were dismissed because the victim was killed prior to the case proceeding to prosecution.

## CHART 15 | PERPETRATOR’S HISTORY AS KNOWN BY THE COMMUNITY: 2004-2016

		% of Cases Where This Factor Was Present
VIOLENT OR CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR	History of domestic violence against victim	89%
	Threats to kill the primary victim	55%
	Violent criminal history	49%
	Stalking	43%
	Threats to harm victim with weapon	37%
	Child abuse perpetrator	28%
	History of DV against others	27%
	Inflict serious injury on victim	25%
	Sexual abuse perpetrator	22%
	Strangulation	23%
	Threats to kill children, family, and/or friends	17%
	Harmed victim with weapon	12%
	Hostage taking	9%
CONTROLLING BEHAVIOR	Monitoring and controlling	55%
	Isolation of victim	32%
	Ownership of victim	27%
MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE	Alcohol and drug abuse	51%
	Suicide threats and attempts	37%
	Depression	35%

**Chart 15 Key Points:** This chart details the information gathered about how often certain lethality factors are present in reviewed cases. An example of how to read this chart is to say, “In 89% of reviewed cases, the perpetrator had a history of violence against the victim.”

Information about lethality indicators is gathered from police reports, TPO filings and interviews with the family and friends of the deceased victim. Often, friends and family members know the most about the perpetrator’s history of abusive and controlling behaviors, but they are the least prepared to respond in ways truly supportive of the victim. This highlights the need for outreach to victim support networks and bystanders, for the purposes of education on the dynamics of abuse and awareness of available resources and advocacy options available to victims.

For purposes of this chart, we define perpetrator as the individual who committed the homicide and the victim as the individual who was killed. Nine women killed male partners; two female perpetrators killed female partners. One man killed his male partner, and one woman committed suicide. All remaining homicides were men killing women.