

Utah Health Status Update: *Intimate Partner Homicide in Utah 1994-1999*

No one deserves to be hurt. No excuses justify abusive relationships. In 2001 there were 17 homicides in Utah that were related to intimate partner violence. Family and intimate partner violence is a serious public health problem. It is estimated that every year in the U.S. over two million individuals are severely beaten by their intimate partners.

Following is a summary of the findings of the Intimate Partner Violence Death Review Team (IPVDRT). This team, established in 2000 by the Utah Department of Health, is a multi-disciplinary advisory committee that met to review all female homicides perpetrated by an intimate partner between 1994 and 1999.

Overall, there were 131 female homicides during the study period. Of those, 64 (49%) were perpetrated by an intimate partner according to the case definition. For this project, the IPVDRT case definition included the following criteria: the death of a female aged 15+, classified as a homicide by the Medical Examiner, and perpetrated by a male boyfriend, ex-boyfriend, husband, or ex-husband according to law enforcement or the Medical Examiner.

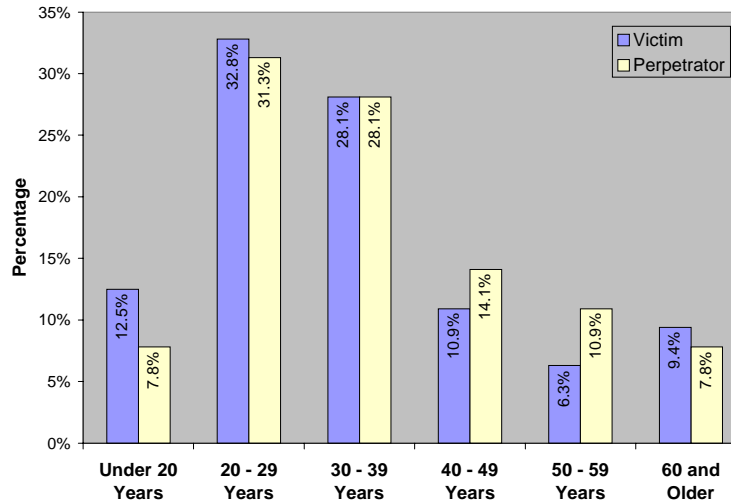
The lives of the victims and perpetrators varied. While some were young with short relationships, others were older with much longer commitments. The victims were from a variety of social and ethnic groups, economic levels, and age groups. Although each case was unique, there were often recurring elements identified by the review committee.

Figure 1 provides age characteristics of the victims and the perpetrators. The victims ranged in age from 15 to 79 with a median age of 31.7 years. The perpetrators ranged in age from 17 to 79 with a median age of 33.9. Overall, 67.2% of the perpetrators were under 40 years of age.

Figure 2 provides racial characteristics of the victims and the perpetrators. The majority (75.0%) of victims were White, non-Hispanic females. Another 18.8% were Hispanic, 4.7% were Black, and 1.5% were Asian. Three of the victims were preg-

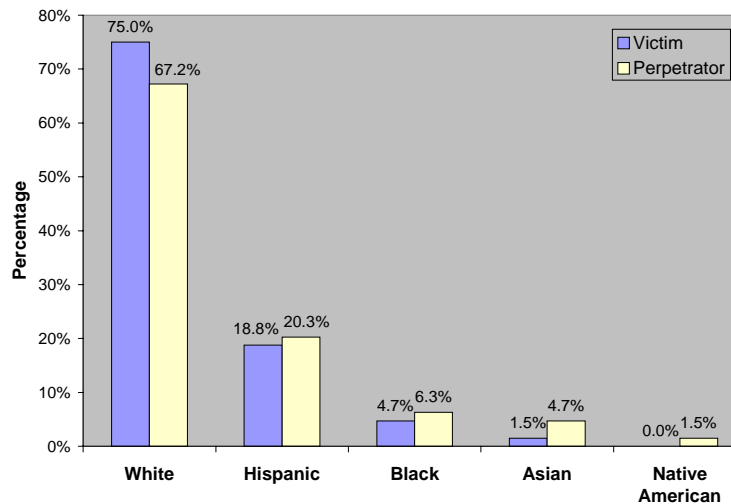
Age Distribution

Figure 1. Age distribution of the victims and perpetrators, Utah intimate partner homicides, 1994-1999.



Racial Distribution

Figure 2. Racial distribution of the victims and perpetrators, Utah intimate partner homicides, 1994-1999.



nant at the time of their deaths. Most of the perpetrators were White, non-Hispanic (67.2%) followed by Hispanic (20.3%), Black (6.3%), Asian (4.7%), and Native American (1.5%). At the time of the homicide, or within days of the homicide, 25 (37.5%) of the perpetrators completed suicide.

Table 1 illustrates the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim as most often husband (46.9%) and boyfriend (35.9%),

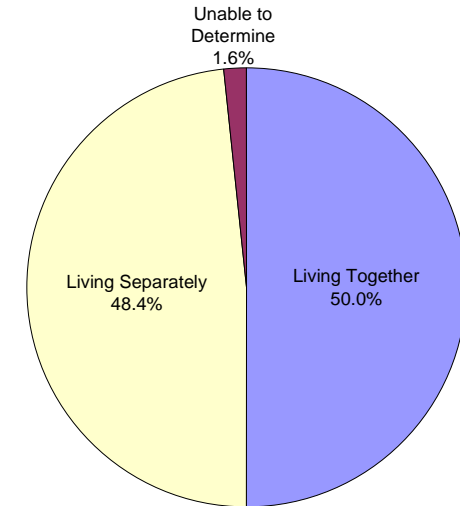
Relationship

Table 1. Relationship of perpetrator to victim (N=64), Utah intimate partner homicides, 1994-1999.

Husband	30	(46.9%)
Ex-husband	2	(3.1%)
Boyfriend	23	(35.9%)
Ex-boyfriend	9	(14.1%)

Relationship

Figure 3. Living arrangement of victim and perpetrator (N=64), Utah intimate partner homicides, 1994-1999.



rather than ex-husband (3.1%) or ex-boyfriend (14.1%). Overall, half of the women were living with the perpetrators and roughly half were living apart (Figure 3).

Intimate partner homicides account for 20% of all Utah homicides each year. The IPVDR's reviews focused on identifying challenges and proposing solutions. Some of the recommendations provided by the IPVDR include:

- Continue and expand the review of intimate partner violence homicides to include all domestic violence related homicides, including those perpetrated on men, children, and extended family members.
- Create a statewide data system that includes linked data from all law enforcement agencies, District Courts, Justice Courts, Juvenile Courts, the Division of Family and Child Services, and the Department of Corrections to improve communication and services between government agencies.
- Require all judges and prosecutors to obtain mandatory continuing education credit in domestic, intimate partner, and stalking violence.

Over a thousand women die every year in the United States as a result of intimate partner violence. There has been a recent downward trend in the overall homicide rate, but the homicides related to intimate partner violence have remained constant. In Utah, intimate partner perpetrated homicides of women have claimed an average of ten lives per year from 1994 through 1999.

Abusive behavior is not always easy to recognize. Often it appears in the form of control and may escalate over time. Threats of harm are abusive behaviors. Physical harm is a crime, even if you are living with or are married to the abuser. Breaking an abusive pattern in a relationship has four key steps:

- tell someone who can help
- ensure your safety
- pre-arrange a signal with someone you trust if you need help
- leave an "emergency kit" with someone that includes money, important papers, medications, etc. for you and your children.

The Domestic Violence Info-line will LINK you to the help you need. Your call will be free and confidential. You don't have to tell your name to get help. If you or someone you know is being abused, please call the Utah Domestic Violence Crisis Line at 1-800-897-LINK (5465).

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For additional information about this topic, contact the Violence and Injury Prevention Program, Utah Department of Health, P. O. Box 142106, Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-2106, (801) 538-6864, FAX (801) 538-9134, email: nsearle@utah.gov or agibbons@utah.gov; or the Center for Health Data, Utah Department of Health, P.O. Box 142101, Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-2101, (801) 538-9191, FAX (801) 536-0947 or (801) 538-9346, email: phdata@doh.state.ut.us.

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