



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Overview

MetroWest towns have noted a disturbing increase in domestic violence during the latter part of the decade, a trend that state and local leaders are determined to understand. This report analyzes statewide incidence of domestic violence, its characteristics and setting. These statistics are notable for their similarities rather than their differences in terms of racial profile and economic standing, as well as the impact on children involved.

Massachusetts Intimate Partner Homicide Review: An Overview of District Attorney Cases between 2005 and 2007, the Research and Policy Analysis Division in the Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety and Security

- **Geography:** State
- **Year:** Issued June, 2009
- **Website:**
www.mass.gov/Eeops/docs/eops/Publications/070909_IP_homicides_2005_to_2007.pdf

Key Findings:

An analysis was conducted on intimate partner homicides occurring between 2005 and 2007 in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts based on a data collection tool (survey) designed by EOPSS (Executive Office of Public Safety and Security) for use by the 11 District Attorney's offices in the state. This report presents findings on the 47 intimate partner (IP) homicide surveys returned to EOPSS by the District Attorneys.

For the purposes of this report only, an intimate partner homicide was defined as any homicide where the victim was a spouse, ex-spouse, live-in partner, former live-in partner, boy/girlfriend, or former boy/girlfriend of the assailant (or someone acting under the direction of the assailant).

Highlights of the findings:

- The number of intimate partner homicides has increased each year from 2005 through 2007.
- The distribution of IP homicides was fairly even across most DA offices. Worcester, Essex, and Middlesex Counties had the highest number of IP homicides, while Dukes, Hampshire, Franklin, Nantucket and Norfolk Counties had no IP homicides.
- IP homicide victims and assailants were usually very close in age and generally of the same race.
- Most IP homicide victims were female (85%) and most assailants were male (87%).
- Victims and assailants were generally married (55% of cases). Live-in partner and boyfriend/girlfriend were the next most common relationship types (13% each).
- The assailant committed suicide within 24 hours of the homicide in 28% of the cases.
- Intoxication and illegal drug use did not factor into the homicide for many of the cases analyzed.
- The most common motive for IP homicides was the ending of the relationship (20% of cases).
- IP homicide victims were most commonly killed (37%) in the home shared by the victim and assailant.
- Almost half (45%) of assailants were charged with a previous violent crime. Of those charged with a previous violent crime, all had at least one prior charge involving some type of assault.
- The racial/ethnic profile of IP homicide victims and assailants is very similar. Both groups were more commonly white (73%) and non-Hispanic (84%). Nearly all victims (98%) were killed by intimate partners who shared the same racial category as their own.

- Children were present in more than half of the homicide victims' homes (54%). Stepchildren were present in 28% of the homicide victims' homes. Three quarters of the stepchildren were children of the homicide victims and 25% were children of the homicide assailants.
- The majority of both intimate partner homicide victims and assailants were proficient in English (93% vs. 90%, respectively), indicated the United States as their country of origin (84% vs. 80%, respectively), and had not immigrated to the United States within one year of the homicide (94% vs. 90%, respectively).
- Almost half (45%) of the homicide assailants were unemployed at the time of the homicide. It is interesting to note that the unemployment rate of IP homicide assailants in this sample is more than 8 times higher than the state average (33% vs. 4.1%). Of the 10 cases where an income level was indicated, the largest percentage of homicide assailants earned between \$15,000 and \$30,000.
- Guns were the most common weapons used during the commission of the IP homicides (34%), followed closely by knives (32%). "Other weapons" include: rock, scissors, fire, motor vehicle, nylon rope, plastic bag, pillow, pavement, and a plastic zip tie.
- As guns were the most commonly used weapons, it is not surprising that gunshot wounds were the most frequent cause of death in intimate partner homicides (34%). Similarly, as knives were the next most commonly used weapon, stab wounds were the second most frequent cause of death (28%).
- In addition to the 47 IP homicide victims, 8 other people were killed during the commission of 6 of the IP homicides. These victims included children, stepchildren, and a victim's parent.
- In 18 of the 47 cases (38%), there was a history of abuse against the IP homicide victim by the homicide assailant. In 2 cases (4%) there was a history of abuse against the homicide assailant by the homicide victim. Of those 18 cases where a history of abuse was indicated, 8 of the homicide victims previously sought a restraining order against the homicide assailant. A total of 10 homicide victims previously sought a restraining order against the homicide assailant (this includes 2 cases where a history of abuse against the homicide victim by the homicide assailant was not indicated).
- Restraining orders were granted in 90% of cases (the result was unknown for 1 case). There was only one documented case where an assailant violated the restraining order granted to the homicide victim prior to the homicide. Restraining orders had been filed against the homicide assailant by previous domestic partners (not the homicide victim) in 19% of the cases. Only 7% of IP homicide assailants violated these restraining orders.

Domestic Violence Homicides in Massachusetts Tracking Analysis 2003-2009 (as of 12/31/09)

- **Geography:** State
- **Year:** 2003-2009
- **Website:** http://www.janedoe.org/know/2003-2009_YTD_DV_Homicides_MA.pdf

Key Findings:

- The vast majority of victims are women, and nearly all the killers were men.
- Most male domestic violence homicide victims were killed by men. They were friends, family members or new partners of the domestic violence victims.
- In the majority of cases where the homicide perpetrator is a woman, there is evidence to suggest that she was the victim of domestic violence who acted in a self-defense.
- In approximately 9% of the cases from 2003 to 2008, the male homicide victim was the intimate partner of the male domestic violence homicide perpetrator.

Jane Doe Inc., The Massachusetts Coalition Against Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence

- **Geography:** By state
- **Year:** 2003-2009
- **Website:** www.janedoe.org

Key Findings:

Note: Comes from 1 day 1-day survey of 49 out of 56 MA programs

- The year 2007 marked the highest rate of domestic violence homicides in Massachusetts in the past fifteen years: 55 deaths occurred. As a result, 25 children were left without one or both parents.
- As of September 30, 2008, there were 24 deaths as a result of domestic violence homicides in MA.
- Immigrants account for a disturbingly high share of domestic violence homicides in MA.
- While only an estimated 14% of the state's population, immigrants accounted for 26 % of the 180 domestic violence deaths in Massachusetts from 1997 to 2006, according to the most recent figures from the state Department of Public Health. Nearly all of the 47 victims were women and children.

Public Health Advisory: Massachusetts Health Officials Issue Advisory to Public and Health Care Providers on Domestic Violence, June 5, 2008

- **Geography:** By state
- **Year:** 2005-2008
- **Website:** www.mass.gov

Key Findings:

- The number of domestic violence deaths in Massachusetts was nearly three times higher in 2007 than in 2005. According to statistics maintained by Jane Doe, Inc., there were 15 murders and four domestic violence-related suicides in 2005, 28 murders and three suicides in 2006, and 42 murders and 13 suicides in 2007.
- Additionally, according to Jane Doe, Inc., a total of 31 children were directly impacted by domestic violence in 2007. Five children were killed, 13 orphaned, 11 lost their mother, and two lost their father.
- So far in 2008, Jane Doe, Inc. reports that there have been 19 domestic violence homicides and five domestic violence-related suicides for a total of 24 deaths.

Violent Crimes in Massachusetts; July, 2009, Crime Policy Brief Series

- **Geography:** By state
- **Year:** 2007-2008
- **Website:** www.mass.gov

Key Findings:

- When looking at each Part I violent crime individually, the aggravated assault rate did not change (0%), murder has decreased (14%), the robbery rate did not change (0%), and rape has increased (4%).

Domestic violence rates spike, Michelle Laczoski, Daily News staff, The MetroWest Daily News

- **Geography:** State
- **Year:** June 7, 2008
- **Website:** www.metrowestdailynews.com/news/x858457171/Domestic-violence-rates-spike

Key Findings:

- An alarming recent spike in domestic violence could be triggered by several factors, and state leaders are determined to identify them.
- "We have a public health emergency on our hands," Governor Patrick said. "This weighs heavily on the administration and the Commonwealth. This is something that affects us all."
- The number of domestic violence incidents rose 300 percent in the past three years, according to data compiled by Jane Doe Inc.