

Addressing Intimate Partner Homicide in Wyoming

A Comprehensive Analysis of Fatalities, 2014-2023

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Document Roadmap

This report is structured into 8 chapters, each designed to stand alone, meaning readers can focus on just one section without reading the entire report to understand it.

FOUNDATIONAL AND SUMMARY CHAPTERS

Chapter 1 introduces the project, its purpose, and goals, along with a brief literature review on domestic violence fatality review boards. It also outlines data sources and case selection criteria. Chapter 7 explores future research directions, and Chapter 8 provides recommendations to enhance responses to domestic violence homicides.

STANDARD CHAPTER STRUCTURE

Chapters 2 through 6 follow a consistent structure to make the report easier to read:

1. **Chapter Overview** – Each chapter starts with an overview that explains what the chapter will cover.
2. **Key Terms and Definitions** – All chapters include a section to introduce important words and concepts before they appear later in the chapter. This ensures readers have a clear understanding of the language used throughout.
3. **Relevant Research/Background** – When needed, chapters have a literature review that looks at other studies and research on the topic. This helps readers understand how the current project fits into what is already known about domestic violence and intimate partner homicides.
4. **Methods** – The methods section explains how data were gathered and studied. It describes where the information came from, how it was analyzed, and challenges faced.
5. **Findings** – Chapters that include data have a findings section, which shares the most important results and highlights patterns, risk factors, and other key takeaways.
6. **Discussion** – The discussion section explains what the findings mean.
7. **Section Limitations** – Data limitations and difficulties accessing information are discussed throughout the report in italics.

Together, these chapters offer a flexible, accessible resource for anyone working to better understand and prevent domestic violence homicides.



Chapter 1: Foundations

Chapter Overview

This chapter explains the purpose and function of domestic violence fatality review boards (DVFRBs) and their role in understanding and preventing domestic violence (DV) deaths. It also introduces the research featured throughout this report, which aims to simulate the process of a DVFRB and provide relevant findings. Finally, this chapter outlines the data sources used and describes how the DV cases were identified and selected for analysis, providing a foundation for the other chapters of the report.

KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Domestic Violence, and Domestic Violence Homicide

Domestic violence is when a household member tries to or does hurt another household member. This can include hitting, threatening, or other harmful actions. Wyoming law recognizes different types of DV, including domestic assault (trying to cause harm) and domestic battery (causing harm on purpose or through reckless actions).¹ Domestic violence homicide (DVH) happens when one household member kills another during a violent incident or after prolonged abuse.

DV is a broad term which includes many types of abuse between household members such as family members, roommates, or intimate partners.

Intimate Partner Violence, and Intimate Partner Homicide

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is when a current or former partner causes harm through physical violence, sexual violence, stalking, or emotional abuse.² Intimate partner homicide (IPH) is when one partner kills the other during a violent incident or after prolonged abuse.

Intimate partner violence is a form of domestic violence. All intimate partner violence is domestic violence, but not all domestic violence is intimate partner violence.

Familicide

Familicide is when a person kills multiple family members, often including a spouse, children, or other relatives. It is usually committed by a parent or intimate partner and may be linked to DV.³

Stakeholder

A stakeholder is a person or group with an interest in a project, issue, or organization.⁴ In the context of DV, a stakeholder is anyone involved in preventing, responding to, or addressing DV. This can include survivors, advocates, researchers, law enforcement, social workers, healthcare providers, and policymakers.

Relevant Research: DVFRBs

Domestic violence fatality review boards are teams of people from different organizations who look at deaths related to DV to find patterns and problems in how DV cases are handled.^{5,6,7} The main goal of these boards is to prevent future deaths by improving the identification, management, and response to DV cases.^{8,9,10} About 45 states have a DV fatality review process, but Wyoming is not one of them.

FATALITY REVIEW PROCESS

DVFRBs bring together people from different areas including law enforcement, healthcare, social work, victim advocacy, and sometimes family members, to work collaboratively.^{11,12} They avoid placing blame or shame on individuals or agencies. Instead, the focus is on creating an environment of trust that encourages stakeholders to share information openly and allows for careful review of how agencies and policies respond to DV.^{13,14,15} These boards can be permanent organizations or temporary groups created to review specific deaths.¹⁶

A typical review involves identifying DV-related deaths, checking if any agencies had been involved, and looking at the impact of those efforts. It also focuses on finding ways to improve prevention and intervention systems and creating recommendations for stakeholders.^{17,18,19} DVFRBs often begin by creating a timeline of events leading up to the death. They then identify “red flags” and missed opportunities for intervention, as well as look at how well agencies worked together.^{20,21,22,23} DVFRBs typically review many types of documents, including police and medical records, court documents, child protective services records, witness statements, and 911 call transcripts, as well as hearing input from law enforcement, healthcare workers, DV advocates, and community members.^{24,25,26,27}

IMPORTANCE

DVFRBs are important because they provide a way to improve how different agencies respond to DV. Finding problems in the system can help make future efforts safer and more effective.²⁸ DVFRBs can also show trends in DV, like the higher risk posed by suicidal abusers.²⁹ In addition, DVFRBs can help:

-  **Increase understanding** by helping agencies and communities learn more about DV.³⁰
-  **Improve collaboration** by teaching agencies how to better communicate and collaborate with one another.³¹
-  **Strengthen prevention efforts** through suggesting new strategies to stop DV by making informed recommendations.^{32,33}

EFFECTIVENESS

Although DVFRBs are common, it is not clear how effective they are at directly reducing DV deaths, and more research is needed to measure their impact.^{34,35,36} Some studies show positive results, like a study in Washington State where fatality reviews helped people better understand the risks of suicidal abusers.³⁷ The National Domestic Violence Fatality Review Initiative also shares examples of better communication and teamwork between agencies, as well as a greater community understanding of DV after reviews.

However, some challenges that make it hard to measure the true impact of these reviews:



Resource and implementation challenges: Many DVFRBs face barriers, like a lack of funding, which limits how many cases they can review and how deep their investigations go. They also sometimes struggle with securing resources, coordinating between agencies, and keeping information confidential during the review process.^{38,39,40,41}



Lack of standardization: Different practices across states make it hard to know how well DVFRBs are working overall.^{42,43}

Despite these challenges, DVFRBs remain a valuable tool in addressing and preventing DV. They help improve how agencies respond to these cases and offer recommendations which can lead to safer environments for victims and the community.

THE CURRENT PROJECT

The United States Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), through its State Justice Statistics (SJS) Program, provides funding to state Statistical Analysis Centers (SAC) to increase their ability to collect, study, and share criminal justice data with policymakers, administrators, and stakeholders. In 2023, BJS funded the Wyoming Survey & Analysis Center (WYSAC) at the University of Wyoming to study 10 years of DVH data. The project's goal was to find the main risk factors causing these deaths and highlight areas where the system could be improved to prevent DV in the future.

To reach these goals, WYSAC conducted work similar to a DVFRB. Available resources, such as police and investigative reports, coroner dockets, protection order information, criminal history records, and online sources, were used to study the circumstances surrounding IPH cases. This approach helped identify common patterns and risk factors linked to these crimes.

In addition, retrospective lethality assessments were completed for female victims to identify known risk factors before their deaths.ⁱ This analysis helped identify warning signs that could indicate risk for future homicides. By carefully studying these, the project identified the main factors contributing to IPH in Wyoming.

Although the project did not have the same access to information and authority as a formal DVFRB, it successfully achieved its main goal: analyzing past data and identifying risk factors that could help prevent

ⁱ Male victims of intimate partner violence were not included in the assessment because the lethality assessment tool had not been validated for male victims at the time the research took place.

future homicides. This research provides a better understanding of IPH in Wyoming and highlights areas where policies and interventions can be improved.

THE NEED FOR A FORMAL DVFRB IN WYOMING

While this project made important progress in understanding IPH risk factors, a formal DVFRB could conduct a more detailed review with access to:

-  A wider range of confidential records;
-  Better coordination between agencies; and
-  Direct input from experts and community representatives.

Such a board could build on this research, reveal more important details, and improve prevention and intervention efforts across the state.

IMPACT AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This project strengthened WYSAC's ability to work with state and local criminal justice agencies and showed how the SAC can provide data for Wyoming stakeholders and policy makers to make informed decisions. As part of the project, WYSAC accessed and analyzed sources of information not previously used by the SAC, including coroners' dockets, statewide protection order data, and police report narratives.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

This research, the first of its kind in Wyoming, highlights the importance of:

1. Creating a permanent DVFRB to review DVH cases.
2. Standardizing the use of lethality assessments to find and protect high-risk victims.
3. The need for a full review of existing services to find gaps and improve support for victims.

Taking these steps could help keep people safe, improve support services, and prevent future DV deaths.

Data Sources

STATE-LEVEL DATA

The fatality reviews conducted for this project used data from four state-level databases: the Computerized Crime Victim Compensation (CCVC) system maintained by the Wyoming Division of Victim Services (DVS), computerized criminal history (CCH) records maintained by the Wyoming Division of Criminal Investigation (DCI), Vital Statistics Services (VSS) maintained by the Wyoming Department of Health

(WDH), and protection order data from the Wyoming Supreme Court. This project also utilized Wyoming law enforcement data from the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS), maintained by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

Crime Victim Compensation Claims

The crime victims' compensation program helps pay for costs when victims of crime suffer physical or mental harm and have no other way to cover expenses. This includes burial costs in DVH cases. In Wyoming, the program is administered by DVS. Victims who apply for compensation must provide DVS details about the crime and the offender, such as the date of the crime, when it was reported to the police, the police report number, and the offender's name.

Criminal History Records

The CCH holds records of all arrests and case outcomes in Wyoming. These records include details about offenders, such as gender and race, as well as arrest information like the date, offense, and arresting agency. They also include case outcomes, such as the disposition date, offense, court agency, and verdict. Additionally, each case outcome has a "flag" showing whether the conviction prevents the offender from buying a firearm in the future.

Vital Statistics Services

The VSS keeps records of all deaths, including homicides, that happen in Wyoming. These records include detailed information such as names, date of death, demographics (like gender and race), where the injury and death occurred, and the cause of death.

National Incident-Based Reporting System

NIBRS is the FBI's main system for collecting detailed crime data in the United States. Started in 1980, it is now the federal standard for law enforcement records. It tracks 46 offenses in 22 crime categories and collects 53 data elements, including age, gender, race, ethnicity, victim-offender relationships, property details, weapon types, and injuries.

Protection Order Data

Protection orders are legal orders designed to protect individuals from harm or threats, especially in DV cases. These orders can require an abuser to stay away from the victim or stop all contact. Wyoming law ([Statute 35-21-110](#)) requires the Attorney General or a designated agency to maintain a statewide registry of DV-related protection orders. This registry includes all valid temporary and final civil and criminal court orders and is part of the National Crime Information Center, accessible only to law enforcement. Because of these restrictions, the registry itself could not be used for this study. However, the Wyoming Supreme Court provided summary information on protection orders, which are included in [Chapter 3](#) of this report.

LOCAL-LEVEL DATA

Police Reports

Police reports give detailed records of incidents investigated by law enforcement. They include the date and time of the incident, descriptions of the crime, people involved (such as victims, offenders, and witnesses), and actions taken by officers. For this project, police reports were used to identify individuals, confirm timelines, and compare details with other data sources.

Coroner Dockets

Coroner dockets are public records that include important information from death investigations, such as the cause and manner of death, toxicology results, and other medical findings. They also typically contain demographic details of the deceased (like age, gender, and race) and information about the circumstances of the death. Local coroner dockets provided extra context for homicide cases, helping to confirm victim identities and homicide details.

Public Access Data

Publicly accessible sources, like online newspapers, journals, and other media, help add context to formal records by sharing personal stories and community views on the cases. These sources can include news articles, obituaries, and statements from family and friends, offering insights into the events leading up to the crime, how the public reacted, and details about the victims and offenders.

Case Identification

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

For this project, WYSAC focused the analysis on [IPH](#) – the killing of an adult by a current or former intimate partner within the context of [DV](#). Only cases where the intimate partner was the main victim or focus of the violence were included.

[Familiicide](#) cases, which often involve complex dynamics beyond IPV, were excluded. Cases where children were the primary victims were also left out, as Wyoming has a separate process for reviewing child fatalities. Attempted homicides and cases where an intimate partner's death was determined to be accidental or unrelated to DV were excluded. These determinations were made case-by-case based on information found in the public access data and the CCH.

Section Limitation: This project's findings cannot be directly compared to national data due to the definition of IPH used, which may differ from the broader definitions and methods in national studies.

CASE IDENTIFICATION PROCESS

Step 1: Initial List of Homicides

The process began with WYSAC requesting a complete list of all homicide victims in Wyoming from 2014 to 2023 from VSS at WDH. VSS provided a list of 254 individuals forming the basis for identifying cases of IPH.

Step 2: Narrowing the List

To identify cases that met the IPH criteria, WYSAC reviewed information from the [Wyoming Silent Witness Initiative](#), examined obituaries of the deceased, and conducted keyword searches. Keywords included both victim and perpetrator names, as well as terms like “Wyoming” along with “domestic violence homicide,” “intimate partner homicide,” “killed by husband/boyfriend,” and “killed by wife/girlfriend.” Using the IPH definition and eligibility criteria, 42 potential IPH cases were identified over the 10-year period.

WYSAC gave the refined list of 42 IPH cases to DVS who then cross-checked the cases with their records of CVCC burial expense claims for DV victims to ensure no cases were overlooked. While not all families file for compensation, DVS confirmed that all victims in their records were included in WYSAC’s list of 42 IPH victims.

Step 3: Gathering Police Reports

For each identified IPH, online newspapers were used to find the primary law enforcement agency (LEA) responsible for responding to the homicides and leading the investigations. A total of 23 LEAs were identified as the lead agencies. Public records requests were sent to each of these 23 LEAs for police reports related to the 42 cases.

WYSAC received 33 reports covering 32 incidents (one incident involved reports from two LEAs). Seven reports (seven incidents) were unavailable due to pending investigations or missing information, and one LEA (three incidents) declined to provide their reports. The content and level of detail in the police reports varied widely by agency, with some reports heavily redacted while others contained hundreds of pages of detailed documentation.

Step 4: Requesting Coroner Dockets

Requests for coroner dockets for each IPH were sent to the coroners in the 14 counties where the homicides happened. WYSAC received 30 dockets from eight coroners. Six coroners could not provide dockets because of the sensitive nature of the cases (e.g., sexual assaults) or due to time constraints. Like the police reports, the coroner dockets varied in what they included. Some had details like toxicology reports, inventory of personal belongings or jewelry found on the deceased, and signs of bruising or injuries, while others did not.

Step 5: Data Review and Final Case Selection

WYSAC reviewed each police report, coroner docket, and all public records about the deaths to create a database with details about the victims, offenders, their relationships, criminal histories, and how the deaths happened.

Two cases were excluded during this part of the review because although both involved a person being killed by their spouse, the incidents were found to be unrelated to DV. This left 40 IPH cases to be analyzed in the report. Unlike bigger states where only a few cases are looked at, Wyoming's smaller population allowed for a complete analysis of every case that met the criteria.

Ready for Research

After learning how DVFRBs work, identifying available data sources, setting clear rules for what cases to include in the study, and gathering a list of homicide victims with the information needed for each case, WYSAC conducted the fatality reviews.

The findings of this research are shared in several chapters, each focusing on different parts of the data. These include contextual data and trends, criminal history records, risk factors, retrospective lethality assessments, the 2024 non-fatality DV data from NIBRS, recommendations for moving forward, and ideas for further research to help prevent future DVHs.



Chapter 2: Contextual Data & Trends

Chapter Overview

Forty incidents of intimate partner homicide were identified in Wyoming from 2014 through 2023. To protect the privacy of victims and their families, this report does not include names or details about specific cases. Instead, it shares general statistics and demographic information to help show who is affected. These numbers can reveal patterns, such as differences in age, gender, or education. However, because Wyoming has a small number of cases, these findings should not be used to draw broad conclusions.

KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS IN THIS CHAPTER

Domestic Violence, and Domestic Violence Homicide

Domestic violence is when a household member tries to or does hurt another household member. This can include hitting, threatening, or other harmful actions. Wyoming law recognizes different types of DV, including domestic assault (trying to cause harm) and domestic battery (causing harm on purpose or through reckless actions).⁴⁴ Domestic violence homicide (DVH) happens when one household member kills another during a violent incident or after prolonged abuse.

DV is a broad term which includes many types of abuse between household members such as family members, roommates, or intimate partners.

Intimate Partner Violence, and Intimate Partner Homicide

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is when a current or former partner causes harm through physical violence, sexual violence, stalking, or emotional abuse.⁴⁵ Intimate partner homicide (IPH) is when one partner kills the other during a violent incident or after prolonged abuse.

Intimate partner violence is a form of domestic violence. All intimate partner violence is domestic violence, but not all domestic violence is intimate partner violence.

Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board

Domestic violence fatality review boards (DVFRB) are teams of experts from different agencies that review deaths related to DV. Their goal is to find patterns and gaps in the system to help prevent future deaths.

“Current” Versus “Former” Intimate Partner

For this analysis, “current” intimate partners include those who were still legally married, living together, separated but actively attempting to reconcile, or dating and working through relationship issues. In some cases, current intimate partners were also seeing other people, but as noted by witnesses in the police reports, they were still choosing to maintain contact with their partner. “Former” intimate partners are those whose relationships had been legally ended, who had officially left the partner for someone else, or who had expressed a desire to no longer have contact with the partner.

Murder-Suicide

A murder-suicide happens when the perpetrator first kills their intimate partner and then takes their own life.

Primary Victim

A primary victim is a person who is directly sought out and harmed by the perpetrator.

Collateral Victim

A collateral victim is a person who is hurt or killed because of a crime directed at someone else, usually because they were close to the primary victim.

Methods

This chapter uses data from many sources, including death records from the Vital Statistics Service (VSS), police reports, coroner dockets, online news articles, obituaries, and stories shared by victims’ loved ones through the [Wyoming Silent Witness Initiative](#). The information was entered into a Microsoft Access database to create a clear and organized record of each victim, offender, and the details of the homicides. Basic counts and statistics were then used to find patterns in the victims, perpetrators, and events leading up to these deaths.

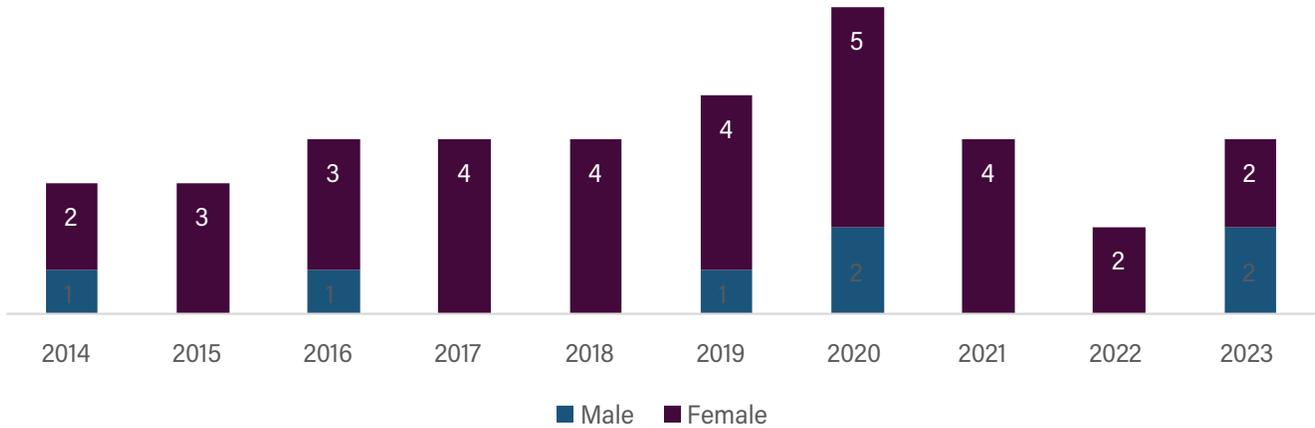
Findings

The demographics included in this section reflect the information available to the research team while carefully protecting the identities of victims, which is why some details, like race, were suppressed. Categories were selected based on guidance from previous DVFRBs and because they represent known or potential risk factors for DVH.

DEATHS ACROSS A DECADE

The number of IPHs varied each year over the 10-year period (Figure 1). On average, one man and three women are killed by an intimate partner each year in Wyoming.

Figure 1: IPH Victims, by Sex



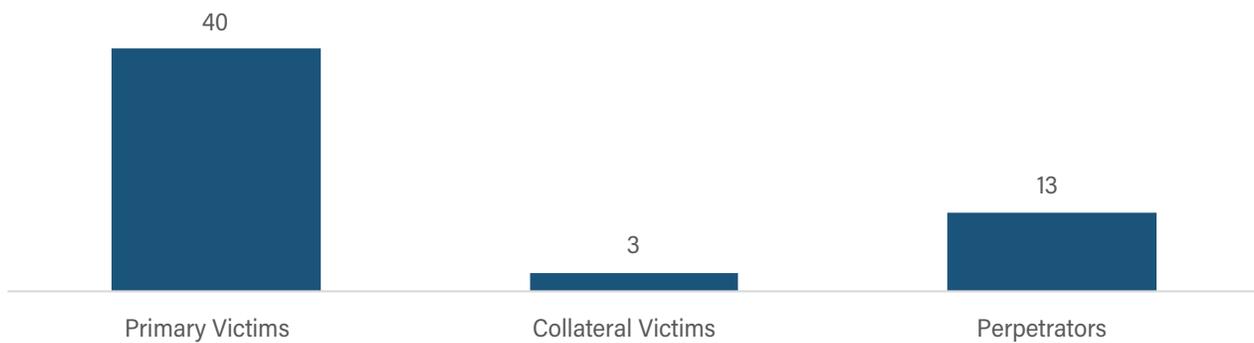
Source: Public access data; Police reports
WYOMING SURVEY & ANALYSIS CENTER

Section Limitation: The 40 IPHs identified in Wyoming are likely an undercount. This is due to factors like Wyoming residents being killed in other states, IPV victims who die by suicide, cases not covered by the media, deaths classified incorrectly, and unsolved cases.

Fatalities Per Case

IPHs sometimes lead to more than just the death of the primary victim. In the past ten years, three collateral victims and 13 perpetrators have also died because of IPH.

Figure 2: Total IPH Fatalities



Source: Public access data; Police reports
WYOMING SURVEY & ANALYSIS CENTER

Instances of Murder-Suicide

One-third of IPH cases in Wyoming from 2014 to 2023 (13 cases, 33%) were murder-suicides. Three of these murder-suicides involved a collateral victim. In two cases, the suicides happened at different times and locations from where the victims were killed. The perpetrator was male in all but one case. All 13 incidents involved a firearm.

All of the murder-suicides occurred among current intimate partners. Nearly half (6 cases, 46%) of the victims had talked about leaving or ending the relationship before they died. In four of these cases, accusations of affairs (whether real or suspected) were involved. Four other cases included perpetrators who had previously expressed suicidal thoughts.

Section Limitation: It is important to remember that these numbers represent the lowest possible count of these instances. The actual figures are likely higher since this part of the analysis depended only on details found in police reports, coroner records, criminal history files, and publicly accessible data.

Instances with Collateral victims

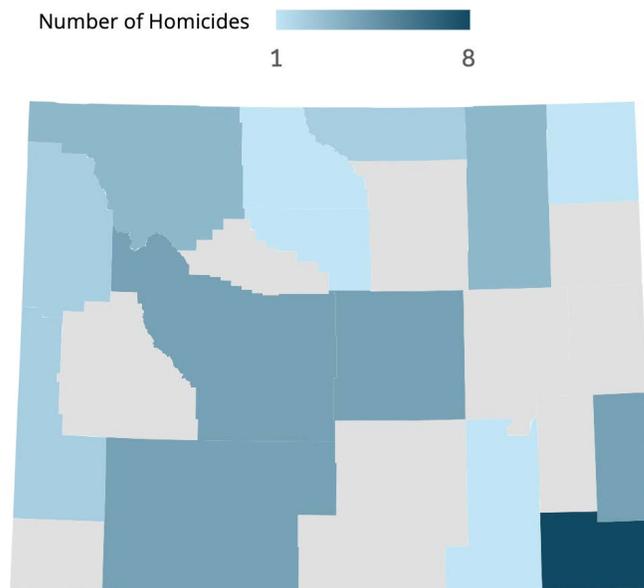
Three cases involved collateral victims, all of whom were children. The perpetrators in these cases were all male, with two being the biological fathers of the children who died. All three collateral victims died in the same way as the primary victims—two from gunshot wounds and one from blunt force trauma.

Section Limitation: It is important to recognize there are likely many other collateral victims not included in this report. In some cases, children, pets, or other loved ones are harmed or killed to hurt the intimate partner. However, these losses did not meet the criteria for this analysis. This report focuses only on cases where the primary victim was the intimate partner, and their death was the direct result of the violence.

GEOGRAPHY

IPHs were identified in 14 out of Wyoming's 23 counties over the ten-year period.

Figure 3: IPH Across Wyoming



Source: Vital Statistics Services; Public access data; Police reports

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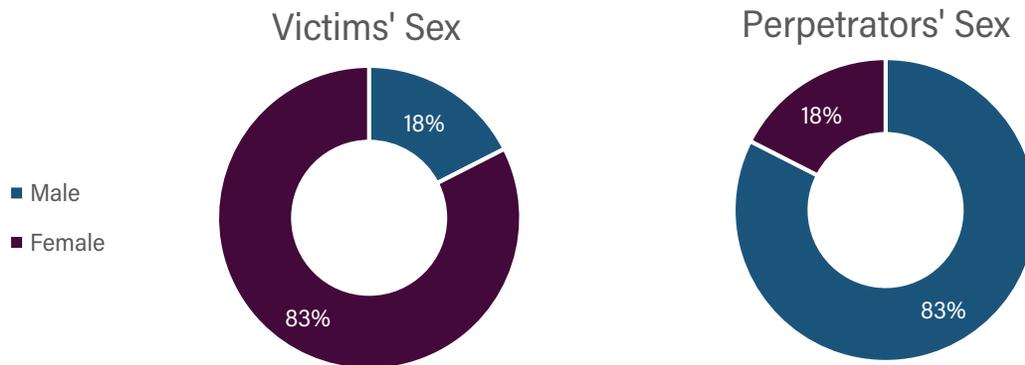
Section Limitation: It is not possible to analyze trends or make meaningful conclusions about geographic patterns or differences between counties because there are so few cases.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Sex

Most IPHs in Wyoming from 2014 to 2023 (33 cases, 83%) involved a female victim and a male perpetrator. All 40 cases involved a victim and perpetrator of the opposite sex.

Figure 4: Victims and Perpetrators, by Sex



Note: Percentages do not equal 100 due to rounding.

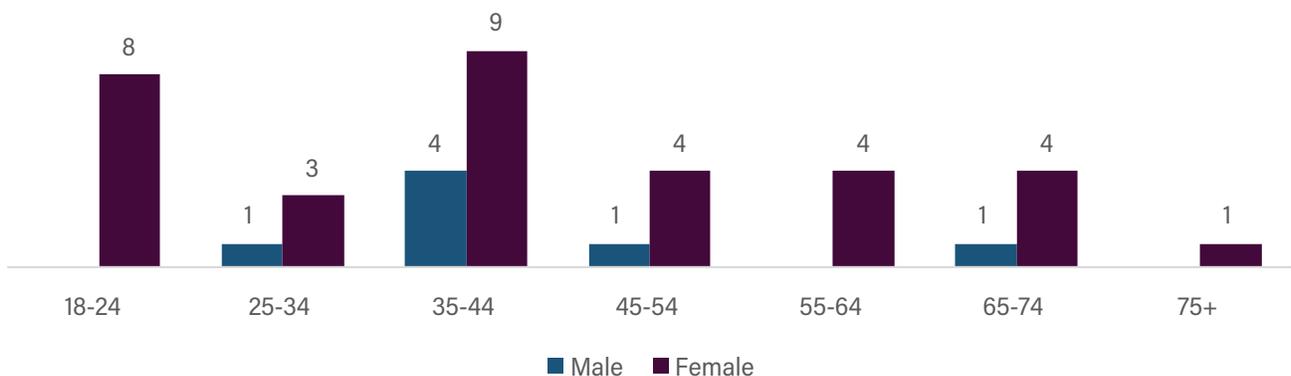
Source: Vital Statistics Services

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Age

Most victims, both male and female, were between the ages of 35 and 44. For female victims, the second most common age group was 18–24. In contrast, male victims had a more evenly distributed age range, spanning from 25 to 34 and 45 to 74. Both male and female victims had a median age of 41. The median age was used instead of the mean because it better reflects the typical age, especially when the data is not evenly spread out and may have outliers.

Figure 5: Number of Victims in each Age Range, by Sex

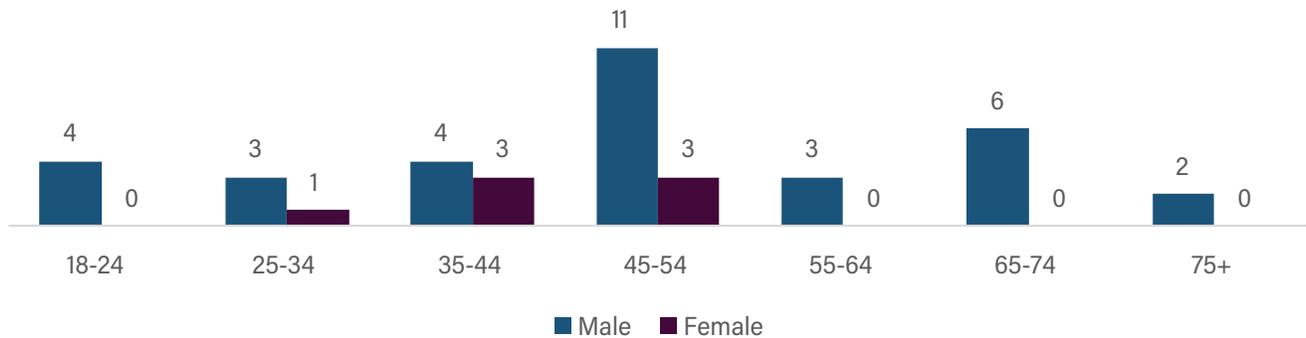


Source: Vital Statistics Services

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In most cases, perpetrators were older than their victims. Female perpetrators had a median age of 39, while male perpetrators had a median age of 48 years. Male perpetrators were most commonly aged 45–54, while female perpetrators were evenly distributed across the 35–44 and 45–54 age groups.

Figure 6: Number of perpetrators in each age range, by Sex



Source: Vital Statistics Services

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The median age shows that both perpetrators and victims in murder-suicides tend to be younger than those involved in homicides. Murder-suicide victims have a median age of 39, compared to 41 for homicide victims, while murder-suicide perpetrators have a median age of 46, compared to 47 for homicide perpetrators.

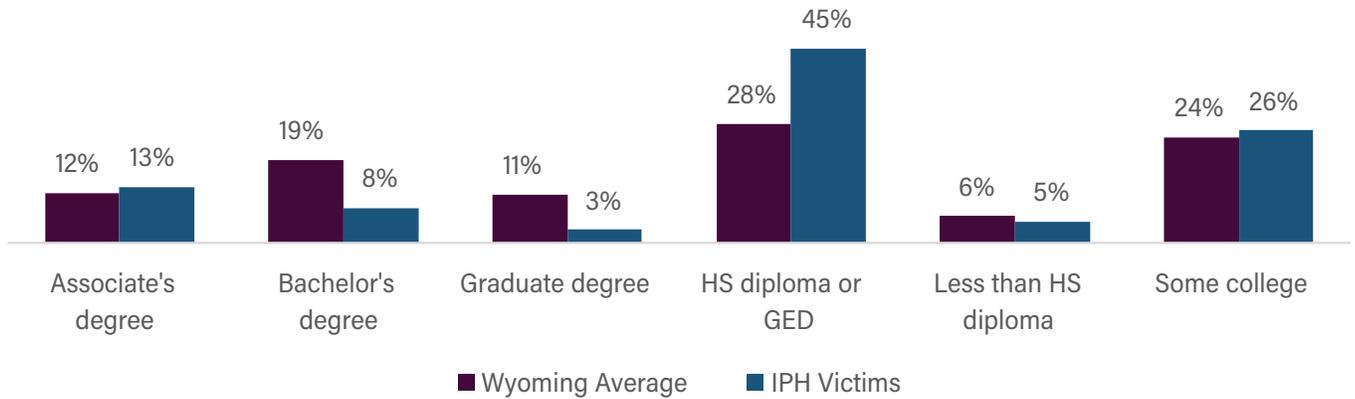
Race & Ethnicity

Section Limitation: Reporting on the race and ethnicity of the IPH victims and perpetrators could risk individual confidentiality and may not offer reliable insights because of the small number of cases. For this reason, demographic information about the race and ethnicity of victims and offenders is not included in this report.

Educational Attainment

Educational information was available for 38 of the 40 IPH victims. The victims' most common level of education was a high school diploma or General Education Development test (GED), followed by some college credit without a degree. The least common level of education was a graduate degree. Compared to the average educational level of Wyoming residents aged 25 and older, fewer IPH victims had a Bachelor's or Graduate degree, while a higher percentage had only a high school diploma or GED (see Figure 7).⁴⁶

Figure 7: Educational Attainment, Victims



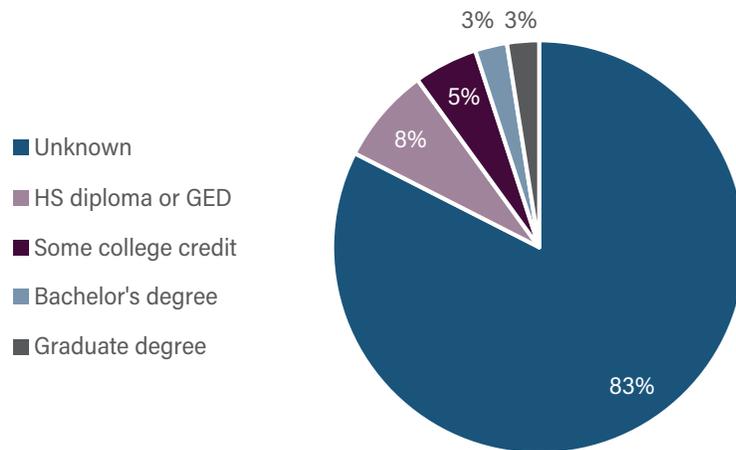
Source: American Community Survey; Vital Statistics Services

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The perpetrators' most common level of education was a high school diploma or GED, followed by some college credit without a degree.

Section Limitation: Educational information was only available for seven IPH perpetrators. More information on the remaining 33 cases would be needed to identify trends, draw meaningful conclusions, or compare with statewide data.

Figure 8: Educational Attainment, Perpetrators



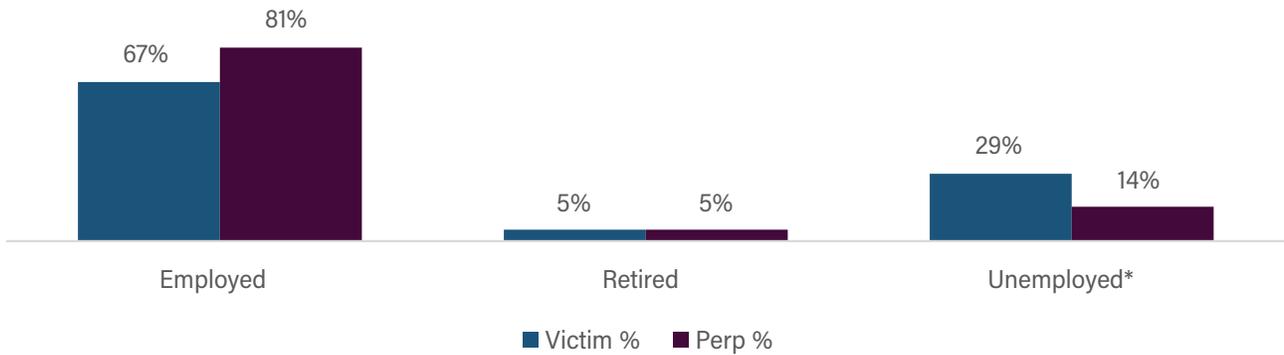
Source: Police reports; Public access data

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Employment Status

The employment status of both the victim and the perpetrator was identified in 21 of the 40 cases. In these cases, perpetrators were more often employed than victims, and victims were more often unemployed than perpetrators.

Figure 9: Employment status



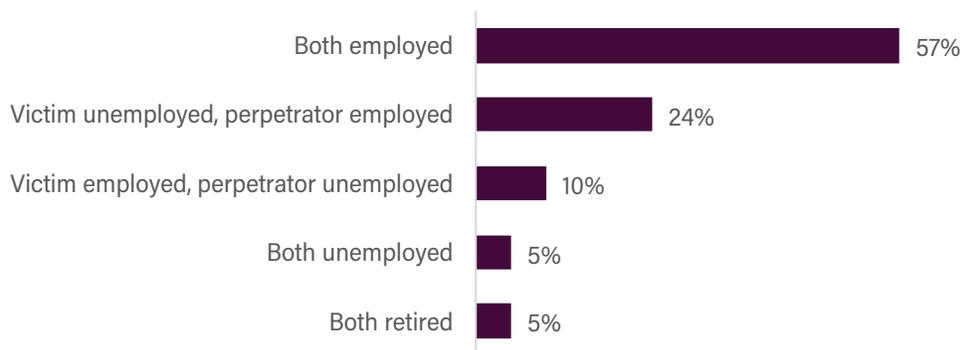
Note: Individuals who were students only were considered unemployed for this analysis.

Source: Police reports; Public access data

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Analysis of employment status in victim-perpetrator pairs shows that most IPH cases (12 cases, 57%) occurred in relationships where both individuals were employed. The second most common situation, found in 24 percent of cases (five cases), involved a match-up of an unemployed victim and an employed perpetrator.

Figure 10: Power dynamic, Employment status



Note: Individuals who were students only were considered unemployed for this analysis.

Source: Police reports; Public access data

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Section Limitation: Employment status was identified for both the victim and perpetrator in only 21 out of 40 cases. More information on the remaining 19 cases would be needed to identify trends or understand possible power dynamics.

RELATIONSHIP DYNAMICS AND CHARACTERISTICS

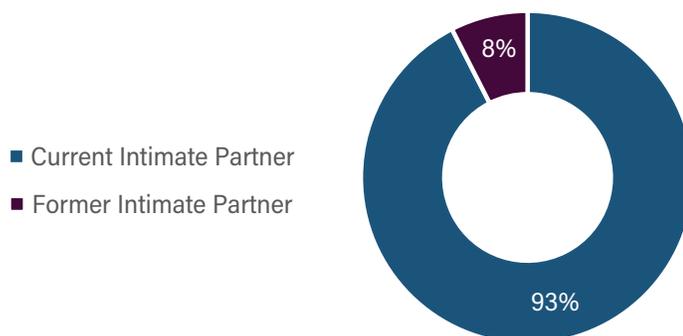
Section Limitation: This section is based on police reports and statements from family, friends, or coworkers of those involved. However, the actual relationship at the time of the homicide may have been different from what these sources understood. Many of these relationships had an on-again, off-again pattern, with periods of separation and reconciliation.

At least 24 (60%) of the 40 IPHs occurred in relationships with a known history of abuse. In all but one of these 24 cases, close contacts (e.g., family, friends, colleagues, or neighbors) were aware of the abuse. Additionally, in 30 percent of the cases (12 cases), the victim had told someone that the perpetrator had threatened to kill them or could do so, or a close contact had overheard such a threat.

Current Intimate Partner Dynamics

Most (37 cases, 93%) of the IPHs occurred between [current intimate partners](#).

Figure 11: Current versus Former Intimate Partner Relationships



Note: Percentages do not equal 100 due to rounding.

Source: Police reports

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Of the 37 current intimate partner relationships, the distribution was nearly even between marital and dating partners. Married partners made up 49 percent (18 cases) of the relationships while dating or engaged partners accounted for 51 percent (19 cases).

In 15 of the 37 cases involving current intimate partners (41%), victims had expressed a desire to leave or had discussed ending the relationship either with the perpetrator or with someone else. Eighty-four percent (31 cases) of the current intimate partner couples were living together at the time of the homicide.

Former Intimate Partner Dynamics

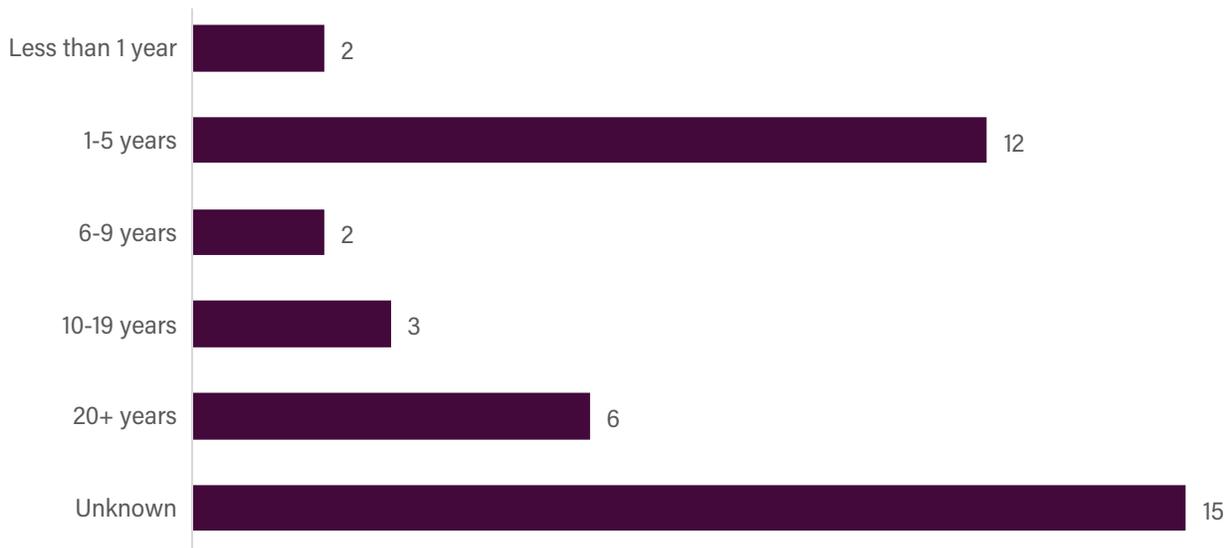
Section Limitation: Only three of the IPHs involved former intimate partners. Two of the three cases had a documented history of DV, with one also involving stalking. Due to the small sample size, meaningful conclusions about IPH in Wyoming among former intimate partners cannot be drawn.

Length of Relationships

The length of the relationship between victim and perpetrator (both current and former partners) was estimated in 25 of the total 40 IPH incidents using police report narratives and online newspapers; the length was unknown for 15 cases. When identified, most of the IPHs occurred between partners who had been in a relationship for 1 to 5 years. The next most common occurrence was among partners who had been together for 20 years or more.

Section Limitation: The length of 38 percent of relationships could not be estimated due to missing information. This limitation hinders the ability to draw conclusions.

Figure 12: Length of the Relationship



Source: Police reports; Public access data

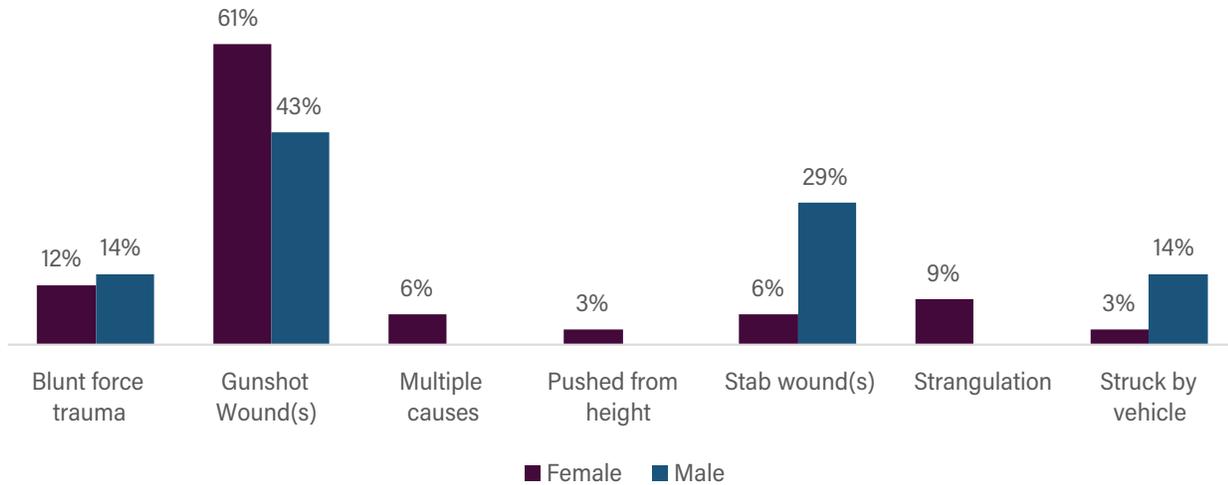
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MEANS OF DEATH

The cause of death varied slightly between male and female victims. Most IPHs in Wyoming over the past 10 years (23 cases, 58%) were committed with a firearm, but a higher percentage of female victims (61%) died this way compared to male victims (43%). The second most common cause of death for female victims was blunt force trauma, while for male victims it was stab wounds.

Section Limitation: Drawing conclusions about differences in the manner of death is challenging because there were much fewer male victims (7) compared to female victims (33).

Figure 13: Means of death, by sex



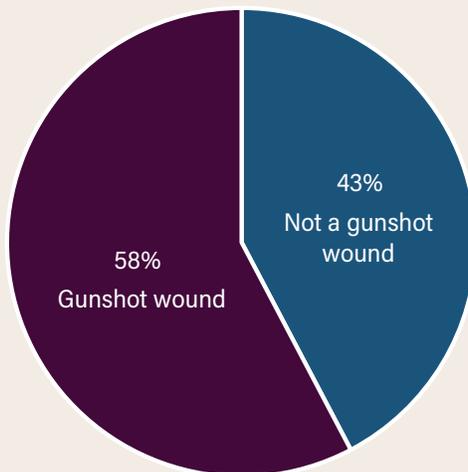
Source: Vital Statistics Services; Police reports

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Deeper Dive: Firearms

Between 2014 and 2023, firearms were used in 58% (23 cases) of IPHs in Wyoming.

**Figure 14:
Cause of Death**



Source: Vital Statistics Services

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Section Limitation: It is important to remember that these numbers represent the lowest possible count of IPH cases based on available information. The actual figures are likely higher since this part of the analysis depended only on details found in police reports, coroner records, criminal history files, and publicly accessible data.

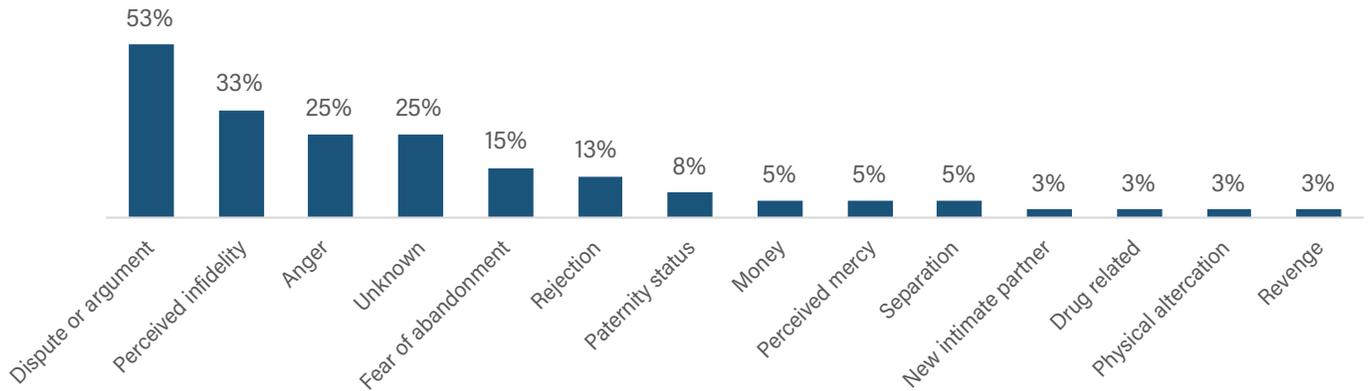
Among the 23 perpetrators who used a firearm, at least 11 had a history of substance use, and nine had known mental health issues. More than half (12 cases, 52%) had a known history of DV, and 30% (7 cases) had threatened their partner with a weapon before. Also, 52% of these offenders had a known history of violent behavior. Most of the firearms used were handguns, followed by rifles and shotguns.

At least 12 perpetrators were not allowed to buy or own a gun at the time of the homicide (more details can be found in [Chapter 3](#)). Five of these offenders used a gun to commit the crime, even though they had been banned from buying or owning a firearm for more than five years before the incident.

MOTIVE

At least one motive (usually more) was identified for 30 of the 40 IPHs. The most common motive was anger, followed by an argument or dispute, and then suspected infidelity, respectively. The motive was not clear in ten of the cases.

Figure 15: Motive



Note: Percentages do not total 100 because many cases involved multiple motives.

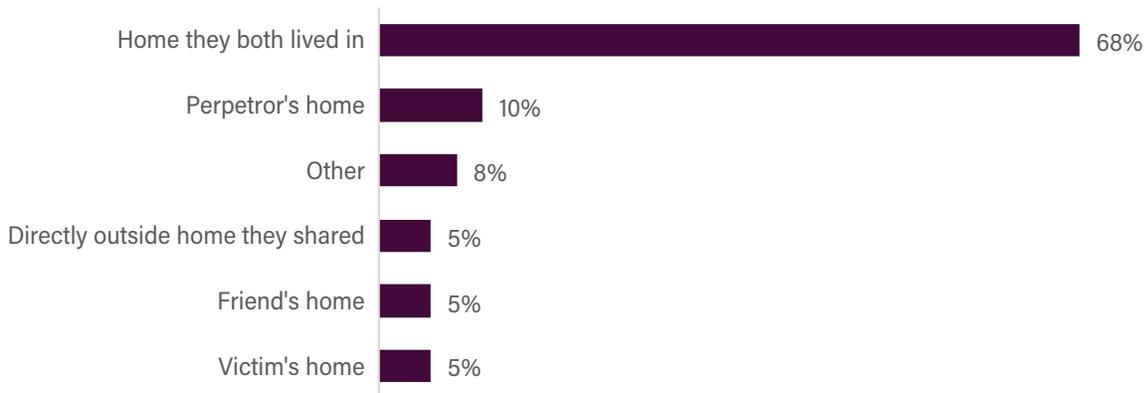
Source: Police reports; Public access data

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LOCATION

Most (35 cases, or 88%) of the IPHs happened inside a home. The place where the victim died was sometimes different from where they were harmed, as 25 percent of victims were taken to a hospital where they later died. Of the IPHs that happened inside a home, most (17 cases, or 49%) took place in a bedroom, followed by the kitchen (7 cases, or 20%) and living area (4 cases, or 11%).

Figure 16: Injury location



Note: "Other" includes locations such as private businesses or outdoor areas.

Source: Vital Statistics Services

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Discussion

Over the ten-year period, 40 cases of IPH were identified, leading to the deaths of 56 people. However, this number is likely an undercount due to the difficulty of identifying cases and should be thought of as a sample rather than a complete list of all incidents. Murder-suicides made up about one-third of these homicides. Most victims were women between the ages of 35 and 44, and all were killed by a partner of the opposite sex. Perpetrators were generally older than their victims, and while both victims and offenders were often employed, perpetrators were more likely to have stable employment.

Many of these homicides happened in relationships with a known history of abuse, and in nearly all cases, someone close to the victim was aware of the danger. Most victims were killed by a current intimate partner rather than an ex-partner, and at least 41 percent had said they wanted to leave before the homicide. Firearms were the most common weapon used, and anger was identified as the main motive. The killings overwhelmingly took place inside the partners' shared homes, with the bedroom being the most common place for violence.

Without a [formal DVFRB or process](#), important details such as employment status, education, and motive depend mainly on police reports, which might not provide the full story. Also, the true number of victims is likely higher, as this analysis does not include people who died by suicide to escape abuse or those killed to hurt a primary victim who survived. Additionally, the small sample size makes it hard to identify patterns based on geography or race. While this analysis highlights trends in IPH, it shows that more data and better research are needed to fully understand and prevent these homicides.



Chapter 3: Criminal History Records

Chapter Overview

This chapter examines Computerized Criminal History (CCH) records for perpetrators and victims to identify possible factors contributing to intimate partner homicide in Wyoming. Reviewing these records is important for identifying patterns or risks that can help understand past incidents and help prevent future ones. This chapter details the process of requesting, receiving, and analyzing Wyoming CCH data, including how records were matched and reviewed for accuracy. The analysis revealed that perpetrators generally had more frequent and serious criminal histories compared to victims, including higher rates of violent crime, substance-related offenses, and firearm disqualifications.

KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS IN THIS CHAPTER

Domestic Violence, and Domestic Violence Homicide

Domestic violence is when a household member tries to or does hurt another household member. This can include hitting, threatening, or other harmful actions. Wyoming law recognizes different types of DV, including domestic assault (trying to cause harm) and domestic battery (causing harm on purpose or through reckless actions).⁴⁷ Domestic violence homicide (DVH) happens when one household member kills another during a violent incident or after prolonged abuse.

DV is a broad term which includes many types of abuse between household members such as family members, roommates, or intimate partners.

Intimate Partner Violence, and Intimate Partner Homicide

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is when a current or former partner causes harm through physical violence, sexual violence, stalking, or emotional abuse.⁴⁸ Intimate partner homicide (IPH) is when one partner kills the other during a violent incident or after prolonged abuse.

Intimate partner violence is a form of domestic violence. All intimate partner violence is domestic violence, but not all domestic violence is intimate partner violence.

Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board

Domestic violence fatality review boards (DVFRB) are teams of experts from different agencies that review deaths related to DV. Their goal is to find patterns and gaps in the system to help prevent future deaths.

Vendor

A vendor is a company, organization, or individual that provides goods or services to another business or entity. In this context, the Wyoming Division of Criminal Investigation's (DCI) vendor, Innova Solutions, is a specialized provider hired to perform specific tasks such as matching personal information to CCH records and generating de-identified data files for analysis.

Confidence Levels

When matching data, a confidence level refers to the degree of certainty that a given record in a dataset accurately matches the individual it is being compared to. In the context of criminal history records, it indicates how likely it is that the person identified in a CCH record is the same as the person being analyzed based on available identifying information such as names, birthdates, and other demographic details. The confidence levels in this analysis were provided by DCI's CCH vendor, Innova Solutions (see Table 1).

A high confidence level (i.e., 1) means there is strong evidence that the CCH record belongs to the individual in question, while a low confidence level (i.e., 6) suggests that there is less certainty or multiple individuals with similar identifying information. Only records with a confidence level between 1 and 4 were used in this analysis to ensure accuracy.

Soundex

Soundex is a system that converts words, especially names, into a code based on how they sound, allowing similar-sounding words with different spellings to be matched. Soundex is used in Table 1 by Innova Solutions when determining the confidence level for matching each individual to a CCH record.

Table 1: Innova Solutions CHR Matching Criteria and Confidence Levels

Confidence Level	Criteria	Number of cases
1 (Ideal match)	Exactly matching Last Name, First Name, Year of Birth, and Gender	18
2	Exactly matching Last Name, First Name Soundex, and Year of Birth	1
3	Exactly matching Last Name Soundex, First Name Soundex, Year of Birth, and Gender	4
4	Exactly matching Last Name Soundex, First Name Soundex, Year of Birth +/- 1 year, and Gender	13
5	Exactly matching Last Name Soundex, First Name Soundex, Year of Birth +/- 5 years, Gender	7
6	Exactly matching Last Name Soundex, First Name Soundex, and Gender	10

Note: There are 53 cases in total because only these individuals had an assigned confidence level. The other 27 were not in the CCH, meaning they had no prior record in Wyoming.

Source: Innova Solutions

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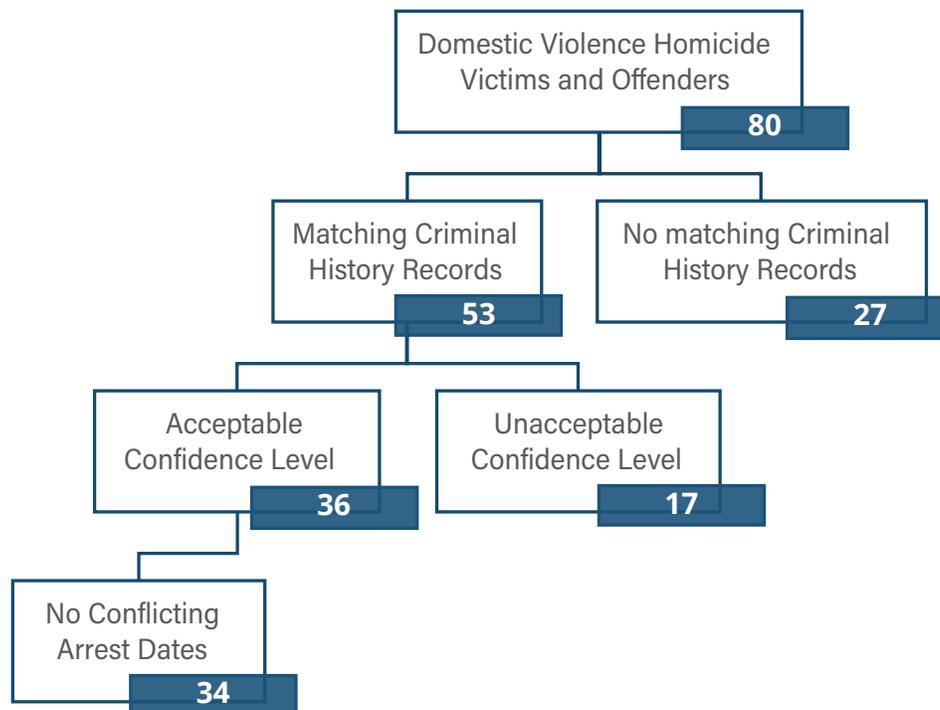
Methods

DCI maintains CCH records in Wyoming. WYSAC worked with DCI's vendor, Innova Solutions, to match names, ages, birth dates, races, and homicide dates for the 40 perpetrators and 40 victims to existing records. The vendor provided WYSAC with de-identified data, including possible matches, state identification numbers (SIDs), and confidence levels (see Table 1). The files also listed arrests, charges, custody details, case outcomes, and sentences.

Of the 80 individuals checked, 53 had at least one possible match in CCH records. The other 27 (22 victims and five perpetrators) had no Wyoming criminal history.

Among the 53 with potential matches, 36 met the confidence level criteria (25 perpetrators and 11 victims). Two possible matches for victims were excluded because their arrest dates were after the victims were already deceased, meaning they were likely not the individuals intended for analysis. This left a final group of 34 (25 offenders and 9 victims) for analysis. Using each person's unique SID, WYSAC compiled their demographic details, homicide dates, arrest records, charges, case outcomes, and sentences into one file.

Figure 17: Case Selection



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Additionally, researchers gave a list of the victims and perpetrators to the Wyoming Supreme Court. The Supreme Court reviewed all court records in Wyoming to check for any active protection orders between the victims and perpetrators at the time of the homicides.

Findings

PERPETRATORS' CRIMINAL HISTORY

Twenty-five IPH perpetrators had a CCH record with a confidence level between 1 and 4. Of these, 18 had been arrested before the homicide, while seven only appeared in the CCH because of their arrest for the homicide itself.

Criminal History Before Homicide

Of the 18 perpetrators arrested before the homicide, 15 had at least one prior conviction. Ten had been arrested for a violent crime, but only seven were confirmed to have been convicted, with three of those convictions happening within the five years before the homicide.

At least 12 offenders were arrested for substance-related crimes, and nine were convicted. Seven had prior felony convictions, with three occurring within five years of the homicide. Four had been arrested for DV, with two confirmed convictions—both within five years of the homicide.

Ten perpetrators were flagged as not allowed to buy or own a firearm. Two had confirmed histories of sexual violence.

Section Limitation: It is likely that additional crimes took place but were never reported to law enforcement, happened outside of Wyoming, or were not captured here because 10 perpetrators did not meet the criteria for inclusion in this part of the analysis.

Additional Criminal History Data

Police Reports

Police reports provided extra criminal history for two perpetrators who did not meet the confidence criteria and were not included in the previous section. These reports confirmed that both had felony convictions, meaning they were not allowed to buy or own firearms.

Section limitation: The police reports provided very little information about the two individuals confirmed to have criminal history records. The nature of their crimes remains unclear.

Protection Order Registry

The Wyoming Supreme Court reviewed all court records to check for active protection orders between the victims and perpetrators at the time of the homicides. Their review found no active protection orders in any of the cases.

Section Limitation: Wyoming's statewide protection order registry exists within the National Crime Information Center and is therefore only accessible to law enforcement agencies. WYSAC was not able to access this information directly.

VICTIMS' CRIMINAL HISTORY

Most victims had no documented criminal history, and serious crimes were rarely associated with them. Six victims (15%) were confirmed to have been convicted of a crime. Only one victim was convicted of a violent crime, specifically DV, within 10 years of their death, which legally disqualified them from possessing a firearm. None of the victims had been convicted of a felony before their death.

Discussion

The criminal histories of both perpetrators and victims help identify patterns of IPH in Wyoming. Many perpetrators had prior involvement with the criminal justice system, often for violent offenses or substance-related crimes. However, DV convictions were rare, even though abuse was a known factor in most cases. This suggests that many instances of DV may not have been reported or led to legal action. This finding aligns with current literature, showing that DV convictions can lower the chance of IPH, as legal intervention may help prevent further violence.⁴⁹ Firearm access also emerged as a significant factor, as several perpetrators were legally prohibited from owning firearms but still had access to them.

Victims, in contrast, had little to no documented criminal history, and serious offenses were uncommon. While some had prior arrests, few had been convicted of violent crimes and none of felonies.

Data limitations made it difficult to fully understand the criminal histories of those involved in Wyoming's IPH cases. Incomplete records, restricted access to protection order data, and unreported or out-of-state offenses created gaps in understanding past interactions with the justice system. Despite these challenges, the findings of this chapter confirm a connection between past perpetrator criminal behavior (especially violent behavior or substance use) and the likelihood of committing IPH. A formal DVFRB could help bridge these gaps by gaining better access to court records, protection order data, and law enforcement reports, potentially working directly with law enforcement for more comprehensive information sharing as part of the review process. With a more complete picture, a DVFRB could better assess how prior criminal behavior contributes to IPH risk and help develop stronger prevention strategies.



Chapter 4: Risk Factors

Chapter Overview

This chapter examines the most common risk factors associated with intimate partner homicide, beginning with a brief literature review, and then explores the prevalence of these risk factors in Wyoming's 40 intimate partner homicide cases. The literature review highlights risk factors commonly linked to intimate partner homicide, including prior domestic violence, access to firearms, desire to leave the relationship, and substance abuse. Each Wyoming intimate partner homicide case was examined individually to determine the presence of these and other risk factors. The analysis revealed that many of the identified risk factors were present across the cases.

KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS IN THIS CHAPTER

Domestic Violence, and Domestic Violence Homicide

Domestic violence is when a household member tries to or does hurt another household member. This can include hitting, threatening, or other harmful actions. Wyoming law recognizes different types of DV, including domestic assault (trying to cause harm) and domestic battery (causing harm on purpose or through reckless actions).⁵⁰ Domestic violence homicide (DVH) happens when one household member kills another during a violent incident or after prolonged abuse.

DV is a broad term which includes many types of abuse between household members such as family members, roommates, or intimate partners.

Intimate Partner Violence, and Intimate Partner Homicide

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is when a current or former partner causes harm through physical violence, sexual violence, stalking, or emotional abuse.⁵¹ Intimate partner homicide (IPH) is when one partner kills the other during a violent incident or after prolonged abuse.

Intimate partner violence is a form of domestic violence. All intimate partner violence is domestic violence, but not all domestic violence is intimate partner violence.

Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board

Domestic violence fatality review boards (DVFRB) are teams of experts from different agencies that review deaths related to DV. Their goal is to find patterns and gaps in the system to help prevent future deaths.

Risk Factor

A risk factor is something that increases the chance of a problem happening. For example, in IPH, risk factors are behaviors, situations, or conditions which make it more likely for someone to be harmed by their partner, such as a history of abuse or access to weapons. Having a risk factor does not always mean a person will become a victim. Risk factors only show that the chance of harm is higher when certain conditions are present. For example, if someone is in a controlling relationship or their partner has access to a weapon, the risk of harm may be greater, but it does not mean harm will happen for certain. Risk factors can be used to help understand and prevent dangers, but not to predict specific outcomes.

Methods

The risk factors discussed in this section are based on reliable sources that provide insight into IPH. [Campbell et al. \(2003\)](#) identifies risk factors before and during femicides (the murder of a female) through a case-control study. [Matias et al. \(2020\)](#) synthesizes findings from 28 studies, highlighting abusive behaviors and differences between IPH, other homicides, and IPH-suicide. The [Danger Assessment](#) (Campbell et al., 2009) outlines methods for identifying women at risk of IPH, using research such as Campbell et al. (2003) as a foundation, and [Spencer & Stith \(2018\)](#) analyzes 17 studies to identify risk factors for male perpetrators and female victims, with attention to the role of gender.

WYSAC developed a matrix using the above sources to identify and organize the most prominent risk factors associated with IPH. Researchers then applied this matrix to Wyoming's 40 individual IPH cases, assessing the presence of these risk factors based on the available data.

Section Limitation: The analysis was based only on information from police reports, publicly accessible information, and CCH records. Due to these data limitations, some risk factors may have been more prevalent than the data indicated, as not all details were available for every case.

Findings

PERPETRATOR RISK FACTORS

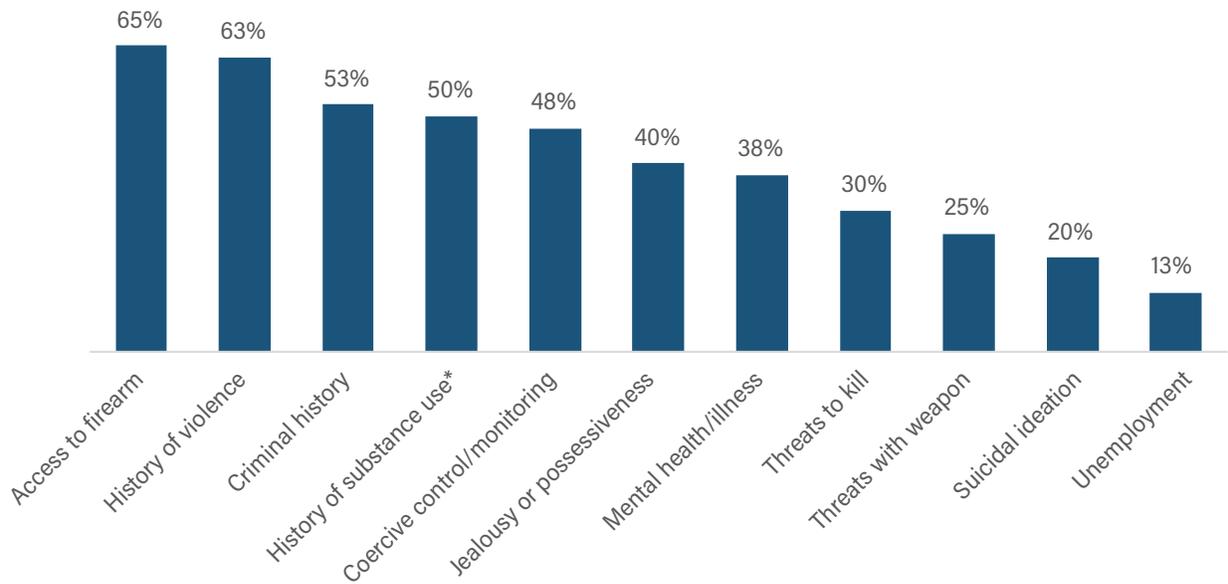
According to research from Campbell et al. (2003; 2009), Matias et al. (2020), and Spencer & Stith (2018), several factors increase the likelihood of IPH by perpetrators, including:

- ✓ Having access to a firearm.
- ✓ Threats involving weapons.
- ✓ Threats to kill.
- ✓ Having a history of violence (e.g., physical abuse, domestic violence, stalking, strangulation).
- ✓ Having a history of substance abuse.
- ✓ Having a history of mental health issues.
- ✓ Exhibiting jealousy, frequent arguments, and possessiveness.
- ✓ Having less than a high school education.
- ✓ Being unemployed.
- ✓ Having a criminal history record.
- ✓ Experiencing or exhibiting suicidal thoughts or actions.
- ✓ Coercive, controlling, or manipulative behavior (e.g., monitoring text messages or restricting access to a car or money).

Figure 18 shows how often the above-listed perpetrator risk factors were identified in the 40 Wyoming IPH cases. Overall, having access to a firearm and histories of violence, crime, and/or substance use were the most common risk factors identified among perpetrators, each present in at least half of all cases. These findings reinforce the connections identified in the literature between the identified risk factors and IPH.

Section Limitation: Some critical information was not included or was difficult to obtain. For example, data on perpetrators' educational attainment was almost never provided in the sources reviewed. Similarly, information regarding perpetrators' mental health was challenging to determine, as that required explicit mention during police interviews or other documentation.

Figure 18: Perpetrator Risk Factors



Note: *Denotes instances where substance use was identified, either in the police reports or the Computerized Criminal History Records. It is important to clarify that substance use and substance abuse are distinct; this categorization represents the closest available data.

Source: Police reports; Wyoming Silent Witness Initiative; Online newspapers; Computerized Criminal History Records

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VICTIM RISK FACTORS

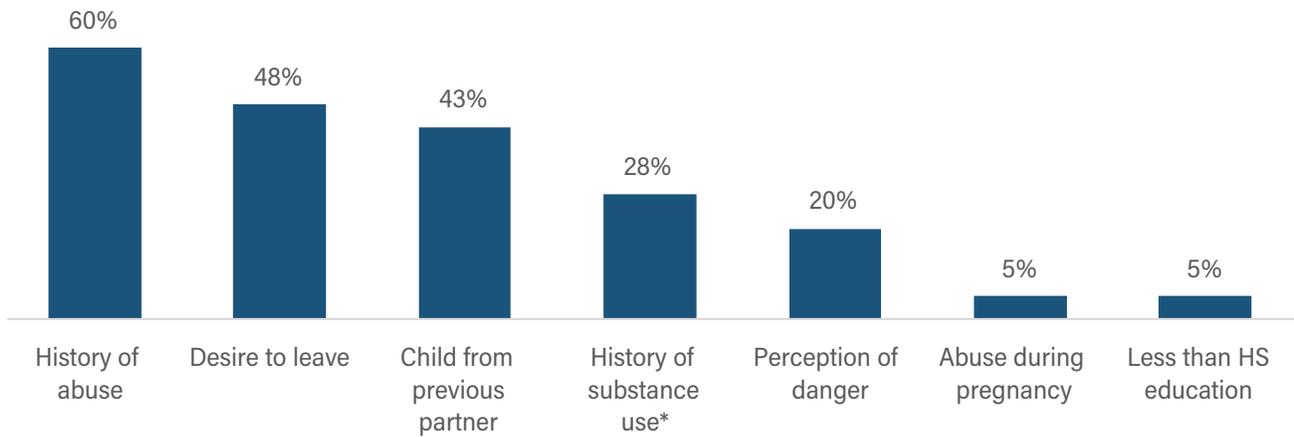
The literature also reveals that IPH victims face specific vulnerabilities which increase their risk of victimization, including the following:

- ✓ Leaving or expressing a desire to leave a controlling partner.
- ✓ Having children from a previous partner.
- ✓ Being abused while pregnant.
- ✓ Having a history of being physically abused by the partner.
- ✓ Having a history of substance abuse.
- ✓ Having less than a high school education.
- ✓ Believing their partner is capable of killing them and they are in danger.

Figure 19 identifies how often these victim risk factors were identified in the Wyoming IPH cases. The most common victim risk factors present were having a history of being abused, expressing their desire to leave to either a close contact or the perpetrator, and having a child from a previous partner.

Section Limitation: Identifying the presence of victim risk factors was reliant entirely on explicit mention during police interviews or other documentation. These risk factors were likely more prevalent than suggested here.

Figure 19: Victim Risk Factors



Note: *Denotes instances where substance use was identified, either in the police reports or the Computerized Criminal History Records. It is important to clarify that substance use and substance abuse are distinct; this categorization represents the closest available data.

Source: Police reports; Wyoming Silent Witness Initiative; Online newspapers; Computerized Criminal History Records.

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Discussion

While the findings presented here provide a baseline understanding of the risk factors associated with IPH, the scope of the data was limited. If Wyoming had a [formal DVFRB](#), more comprehensive information could be gathered. A DVFRB would involve additional stakeholders, enabling more thorough data collection on factors such as substance abuse, mental health issues, and perpetrators' employment status. This collaborative approach would lead to a more complete understanding of the risk factors and help guide more effective prevention efforts.



Chapter 5: Lethality Assessments

Chapter Overview

This chapter explores how the researchers used the Danger Assessment tool to retrospectively assess the 33 cases of female victims killed by a current or former male partner. The findings highlight that a significant proportion of these women were at heightened risk of being killed, indicating the urgent need for targeted safety measures.

KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS IN THIS CHAPTER

Domestic Violence, and Domestic Violence Homicide

Domestic violence is when a household member tries to or does hurt another household member. This can include hitting, threatening, or other harmful actions. Wyoming law recognizes different types of DV, including domestic assault (trying to cause harm) and domestic battery (causing harm on purpose or through reckless actions).⁵² Domestic violence homicide (DVH) happens when one household member kills another during a violent incident or after prolonged abuse.

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Intimate partner violence is a form of domestic violence. All intimate partner violence is domestic violence, but not all domestic violence is intimate partner violence.

Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board

Domestic violence fatality review boards (DVFRB) are teams of experts from different agencies that review deaths related to DV. Their goal is to find patterns and gaps in the system to help prevent future deaths.

Femicide

Femicide is the gender-based murder of a woman or girl by a man.⁵⁴

Weighted scoring

Weighted scoring is a way to give more importance to certain factors based on how much they matter. The Danger Assessment tool uses this method to highlight key risk factors, like access to firearms or past threats, so that the most serious warning signs carry more weight when measuring risk.⁵⁵

Validity

Validity in research refers to how accurately something measures what it intends to measure.⁵⁶ High validity means the results truly reflect the real-world situation being studied.

Stakeholder

A stakeholder is a person or group with an interest in a project, issue, or organization.⁵⁷ In the context of DV, a stakeholder is anyone involved in preventing, responding to, or addressing DV. This can include people like survivors, advocates, researchers, law enforcement, social workers, healthcare providers, and policymakers.

Background

[The Danger Assessment](#) (DA) was developed in the 1980s by Dr. Jacquelyn C. Campbell, based on research into IPH and serious injury from IPV. Initially, it consisted of a 15-item questionnaire and a calendar to track abuse, created with input from battered women, shelter workers, law enforcement, and clinical experts.⁵⁸ The tool was later revised following an 11-city study of femicide conducted from 1994–2000, which compared cases of women killed by their partners to those who survived abuse.⁵⁹ This research led to an updated 20-item version of the DA with weighted scoring and additional risk factors, such as abuser unemployment and stalking.

The DA is now a widely used tool designed to assess the risk of IPH or near-lethal violence. It includes two main components: a calendar to track the frequency and severity of violence over time, and the 20-item questionnaire, which categorizes risk into four levels:

1. **Variable Danger (0–7):** The risk is lower, but harm is still possible. Basic safety steps are encouraged, as things can change quickly.
2. **Increased Danger (8–13):** The risk is higher, and victims should seek help from advocates or consider going to a shelter.
3. **Severe Danger (14–17):** The risk is serious, and immediate safety planning with professionals is strongly advised.
4. **Extreme Danger (18+):** The risk is very high, and emergency action is needed to stay safe.

The DA has proven to be effective at identifying victims at high risk of serious harm or death.⁶⁰ It provides a structured, evidence-based way to assess danger, offering greater accuracy than relying only on the victim's perception of risk.

Used collaboratively by DV advocates, healthcare providers, or criminal justice professionals alongside the abused individual, the DA helps guide safety planning and decision-making. The DA serves as a critical starting point for managing risk, but it is not intended to be the only step in the safety planning process. By providing clear and actionable insights, it helps victims understand their level of danger and supports professionals in developing effective strategies to enhance safety.

Section Limitation: The DA was created and tested for female victims of IPV with male abusers. It has not been tested for use with male victims, female abusers, or same-sex relationships. Because of this, it may not be accurate or effective for these situations.

Methods

The DA was used to retrospectively conduct a lethality risk assessment for each of the 33 female victims who were killed by a current or former male partner. Relevant details about each relationship and the circumstances surrounding the homicides were gathered from various sources, including police reports, coroner dockets, online newspaper articles, the [Wyoming Silent Witness Initiative](#), obituaries, and criminal history records. Researchers answered each of the 20 questions in the DA based on the available information.

Once the questionnaire was completed for each victim, the scores were weighted according to the DA's scoring system. The weighted scores were then summed to calculate the overall risk level for each case. This allowed for the identification of each woman's level of risk, categorized into one of four levels: variable, increased, severe, or extreme danger.

For a complete list of the DA questions and the scoring system used, please see the [Appendix](#).

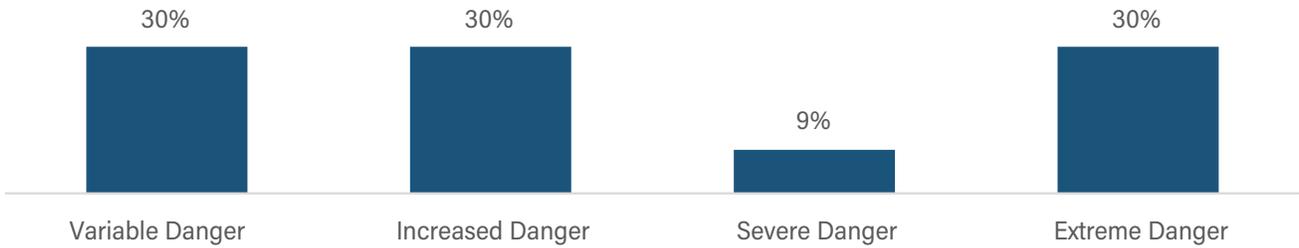
Findings

Results of the DA lethality risk assessment:

-  Thirty percent of the women (10 cases) were categorized as being in "variable danger." This group represented those who were at the lowest level of risk but still faced some danger due to the nature of the abusive relationship. While the immediate threat was not extreme, there were warning signs that the situation could have escalated quickly if not addressed.
-  Thirty percent of the women (10 cases) were in "increased danger." These women were facing a more significant risk, with multiple red flags indicating that their situation was worsening. The risk of lethal violence was elevated, but not imminent. Intervention and safety measures were necessary to reduce the likelihood of harm.

- 
 Nine percent of the women (3 cases) were classified as being in “severe danger.” This group included those who were in immediate danger, with clear indications that the abusive relationship had escalated to a point where lethal violence was a very real concern. At this stage, serious, immediate intervention was required to ensure the victim’s safety.
- 
 Finally, Thirty percent of the women (10 cases) were found to be in “extreme danger.” These individuals were at the highest level of risk, with an imminent threat of lethal violence. For these women, intervention needed to be immediate and drastic to prevent a potentially fatal outcome.

Figure 20: Level of Danger Faced by Female Victims



Note: Percents do not equal 100 due to rounding.

Source: Police reports; Obituaries; Online newspapers; Wyoming Silent Witness Initiative; Computerized Criminal History Records

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Section Limitations: The retrospective nature of this study relied on the information available from police reports, coroner dockets, online newspapers, the Wyoming Silent Witness Initiative, obituaries, and criminal history records. It is possible that some incidents of abuse or risk factors were not documented in these sources, leading to an underestimation of the victims’ danger levels. If abuse occurred that only the victims and their abusers were aware of, the women’s DA scores may have been even higher. Additionally, the DA has not been validated for use with male victims of IPV. Consequently, the seven male victims discussed throughout this report could not be included in the lethality risk assessment.

Discussion

The findings from this analysis reveal that approximately 70 percent of the female victims would have been categorized at levels of danger—increased, severe, or extreme—where safety planning and intervention are critical. If a lethality assessment, such as the DA, had been conducted for these victims, it could have informed targeted safety measures, closer supervision, and potentially life-saving interventions.

These results support the argument that lethality assessments should become a standard practice for law enforcement, healthcare providers, advocates, and other professionals who encounter victims of IPV. By including these tools into routine practice, practitioners can more accurately identify individuals at the highest risk of severe harm or death and take appropriate steps to intervene.

However, it is valuable to acknowledge that even if a law enforcement officer or other stakeholder were able to identify a victim's high level of risk, it does not guarantee that the victim would have accepted help, believed they were in danger, or taken steps to leave the abusive relationship. Lethality assessments are tools to inform decisions and guide safety planning, but their effectiveness depends on the victim's willingness to connect with available resources. As such, these tools must be used with sensitivity, respect, and an understanding of the complex barriers victims may face in seeking safety.

Standardizing the use of lethality assessments would not only improve early identification of danger but also encourage partnerships among agencies to implement coordinated safety plans. While they cannot remove all risks, through planning and preparation, these measures have the potential to save lives and reduce the frequency of IPV.



Chapter 6: Domestic Violence in 2024 — Insight from NIBRS

Chapter Overview

The other chapters of this report use data from a many sources (e.g., police reports, coroner dockets, vital records death data, online newspapers) to examine intimate partner homicides that occurred in Wyoming from 2014 through 2023. This chapter focuses on data from the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) from 2024 to assess the prevalence of domestic violence (DV) incidents that did not result in homicide. By analyzing these cases, it is possible to identify patterns, risk factors, and trends among individuals who experience DV but have not been killed.

KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS IN THIS CHAPTER

Domestic Violence, and Domestic Violence Homicide

Domestic violence is when a household member tries to or does hurt another household member. This can include hitting, threatening, or other harmful actions. Wyoming law recognizes different types of DV, including domestic assault (trying to cause harm) and domestic battery (causing harm on purpose or through reckless actions).⁶¹ Domestic violence homicide (DVH) happens when one household member kills another during a violent incident or after prolonged abuse. DV is a broad term which includes many types of abuse between household members such as family members, roommates, or intimate partners.

Intimate Partner Violence, and Intimate Partner Homicide

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is when a current or former partner causes harm through physical violence, sexual violence, stalking, or emotional abuse.⁶² Intimate partner homicide (IPH) is when one partner kills the other during a violent incident or after prolonged abuse.

Intimate partner violence is a form of domestic violence. All intimate partner violence is domestic violence, but not all domestic violence is intimate partner violence.

Rate of Victimization per 100,00

The victimization rate per 100,000 shows how many people out of every 100,000 experienced a certain type of crime, such as IPV. This makes it easier to compare different groups or time periods, even if their population sizes are not the same. For example, a rate of 50 means that 50 people out of every 100,000 were victims.

Background

NIBRS is a crime reporting system run by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. It collects detailed information about crimes reported to law enforcement, including data on victims, offenders, and their relationships. NIBRS was created to improve older crime reporting systems that only recorded basic crime counts.⁶³ Instead of just tracking how many crimes happen, NIBRS provides a fuller picture of each incident.

NIBRS is useful for studying DV because it includes important details about these cases, like whether the victim and offender were intimate partners, family members, or had another type of relationship. It also tracks different types of DV offenses, such as assault, stalking, and violation of protection orders. Since many DV cases involve more than one type of abuse, this information helps show how violence can escalate over time.

Chapter limitation: Even though NIBRS is a good tool for studying DV, it has limits. Not all law enforcement agencies report their data to NIBRS, so some cases may be missing. Additionally, among agencies who do report their data, information on certain things may not have been available (such as injuries, victim to offender relationship, offense type, etc.) and so the total number of victims and incidents changes depending on the type of analysis being conducted. Furthermore, many DV victims do not report abuse to the police, meaning the numbers in NIBRS do not show the full scope of the problem. Still, NIBRS provides some of the best available data for understanding how often DV happens and what it looks like in communities.

Methods

Researchers used the online NIBRS dashboard to query 2024 data for the state to learn more about the current landscape of non-fatal IPV in Wyoming. The analysis examined the number of incidents and victims and included variables such as gender, relationship type, offense type, weapon type, injuries sustained, average victim age, and the rate of victimization. Data were extracted directly from the NIBRS dashboard.

CLEANING THE DATA

Since this chapter is focused on non-fatal incidents, WYSAC excluded incidents and victims where the offense was “Murder and Non-negligent Manslaughter” (5 incidents and 5 victims) or “Negligent Manslaughter” (1 incident and 1 victim).

Researchers only included incidents where the victim and offender were in an intimate partner relationship. Spouses, common-law partners, and boyfriends/girlfriends were grouped as “current intimate partners,” while ex-spouses and ex-boyfriends/ex-girlfriends were classified as “former intimate partners.”

Offense categories were also condensed into the following groups: Kidnapping/Abduction, Sexual Violence (including rape, sodomy, sexual assault with an object, and criminal sexual contact), Aggravated Assault, Simple Assault, and Intimidation. Human trafficking was reported in a small number of incidents but was excluded from tables to protect victim privacy.

Findings

In 2024, Wyoming reported more than 1,300 incidents of IPV, involving approximately 1,500 victims (some incidents had more than one victim). The most common type of IPV incident was simple assault, which accounted for 77 percent of all reported cases. Current intimate partner relationships accounted for 83 percent of these incidents, while former intimate partner relationships made up the remaining 17 percent.

Table 2: Number of IPV Incidents

	Current Intimate Partner	Former Intimate Partner	Total
Kidnapping/Abduction	35	7	42
Sexual Violence	16	9	25
Aggravated Assault	155	15	170
Simple Assault	923	138	1061
Intimidation	29	47	76
Total	1158	216	1374

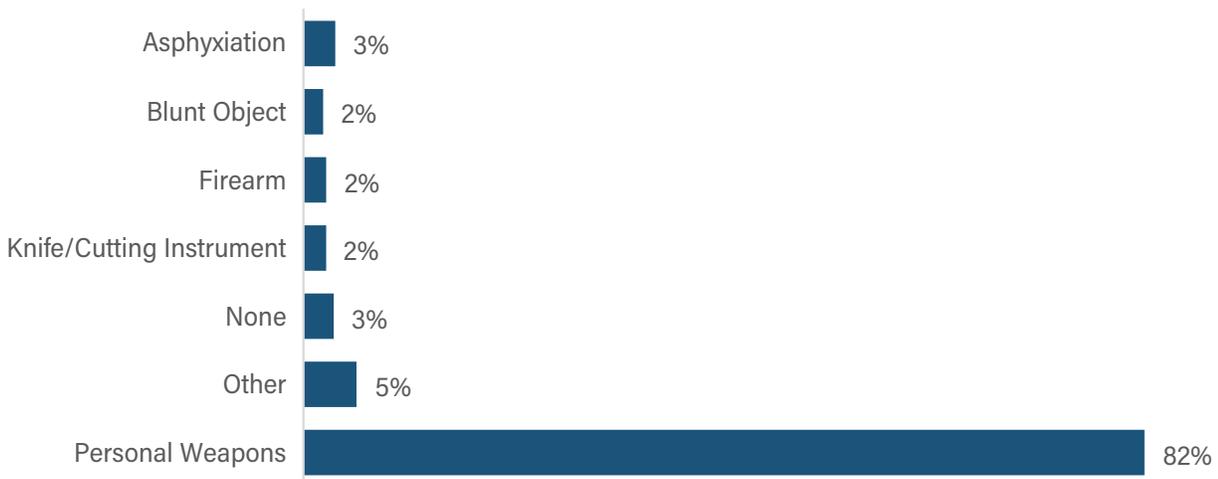
Source: National Incident-Based Reporting System

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Most IPV incidents (97%) did not involve a violation of a protection order. Among the small number that did, just over half (53%) occurred between current intimate partners.

The most common weapons used in IPV incidents in 2024 were personal weapons, including hands, fists, feet, arms, and teeth. Dangerous weapons like firearms, knives, or blunt objects were used far less often (see Figure 21).

Figure 21: Incidents by Type of Weapon or Force Used



Note: Percents do not equal 100 because of missing data in NIBRS. Asphyxiation includes drowning, strangulation, suffocation, and gas.

Source: National Incident-Based Reporting System

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Seventy-two percent of IPV victims reported some type of injury to police. Among those injured, nearly all (91%) experienced an apparent minor injury.

Table 3: Percent of IPV Victim by Injury Type

Injury	Percent of Victims
Apparent Broken Bones	1%
Possible Internal Injury	2%
Severe Laceration	1%
Apparent Minor Injury*	91%
Other Major Injury	2%
Unconsciousness	3%

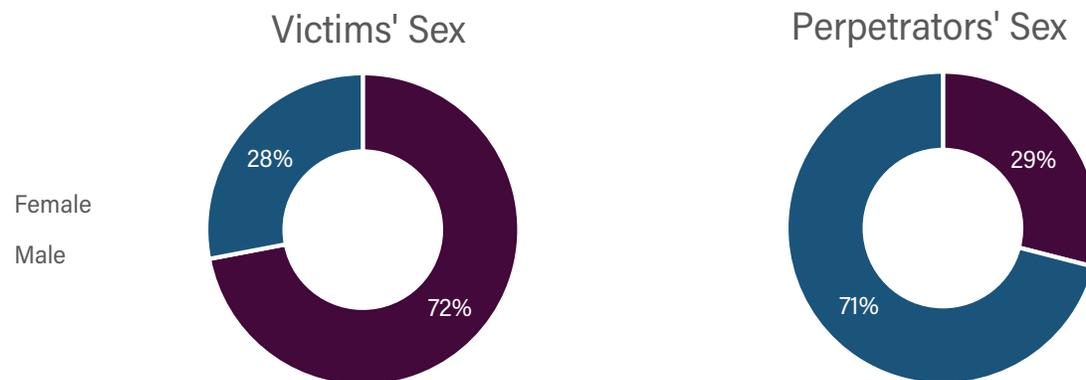
Note: *Abrasions, minor cuts or lacerations, bruises or contusions, swelling, minor burns, and scratches.

Source: National Incident-Based Reporting System

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Most (95%) incidents of IPV reported to NIBRS for Wyoming in 2024 occurred between opposite-sex couples. Specially, 69 percent of all incidents involved a female victim and male offender, and 26 percent between a male victim and female offender. The remaining five percent of incidents occurred between same-sex intimate partners. Overall, most victims were female.

Figure 22: Victims and Perpetrators, by Sex



Source: National Incident-Based Reporting System

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In Wyoming in 2024, dating relationships had the highest rate of IPV victimization among both current and former intimate partners. On average, victims in dating relationships—current or former—were younger than those in marital or common-law partnerships.

Table 4: Domestic Violence Statistics by Victim to Offender Relationship

	Spouse	Ex-Spouse	Common-Law Spouse	Boyfriend/Girlfriend	Ex-Boyfriend/Ex-Girlfriend
Victimization Rate (per 100,000)	66.45	5.83	3.00	140.56	34.47
Average Age of Victim	40.89	42.00	37.33	33.40	32.24

Source: National Incident-Based Reporting System

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Discussion

The non-fatal IPV cases reported in NIBRS help show what abuse can look like before it turns deadly. When these cases are compared to the IPH cases from earlier chapters, some clear patterns appear. Some parts are very similar—like the types of relationships involved or the use of physical violence—while other parts show important differences. For example, most non-fatal cases involved minor injuries and didn’t include weapons, but many IPH cases involved serious violence, dangerous weapons, or repeated abuse over time.

By studying these non-fatal cases, it becomes easier to see patterns across different types of IPV. The 2024 NIBRS data show that most victims were women, most abusers were current partners, and simple assault was the most common type of offense. These same patterns also appeared in many of the IPH cases discussed earlier in the report. This suggests that even when violence does not lead to death, it often follows the same paths. Seeing these shared patterns can help people understand what IPV looks like in its earlier stages and where risks may be growing.



Chapter 7: Recommendations

Reducing intimate partner homicides (IPH) requires strong and lasting solutions. These solutions need to address both prevention and response efforts to make a meaningful difference. Based on this report's findings, two key practices stand out to help reduce IPH in Wyoming: creating a permanent Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board (DVFRB) and standardizing the use of lethality assessments.

Create a Permanent DVFRB

This project showed how helpful it is to review cases of domestic violence (DV)-related deaths. A permanent DVFRB would have several benefits for Wyoming:

- ✓ **Collect and Study More Data:** A permanent board could access more confidential records to better understand the causes and patterns of DV. Access to comprehensive data would allow the board to continue identifying trends, pinpointing risk factors, and uncovering gaps in services that could prevent future tragedies.
- ✓ **Help Agencies Work Together:** A DVFRB would improve the collaboration between stakeholders like police, healthcare workers, social services, and victim advocates to stop DV by bringing together all perspectives and ensuring that recommendations address the full range of challenges victims face.
- ✓ **Suggest Better Prevention Plans:** The board could make recommendations based on case reviews to improve safety and prevent future incidents. These recommendations would be informed by detailed analyses of past cases, allowing agencies to design strategies to intervene earlier and provide better support for victims.

Currently, Wyoming does not have a formal process for reviewing DV-related deaths. This project was a good start, but it had limited access to important records and relied on publicly available information. A permanent DVFRB would have the tools and support needed to continue this work, ensuring a more comprehensive and sustainable approach. With dedicated resources and collaboration among stakeholders, a DVFRB could foster meaningful change in how DV is addressed statewide and eventually prevent IPHs in the future.

Make Lethality Assessments Standard Practice

Lethality assessments used in this project were helpful in confirming that many of the IPH victims were at measurably high risk before their deaths. These assessments have proven valuable tools for identifying dangerous situations and prioritizing interventions. Making these assessments standard practice across Wyoming would have several important benefits:

-  **Identify Danger Early:** Lethality assessments can help police and advocates act quickly to protect people in high-risk situations. By identifying the warning signs of severe violence or homicide, these assessments allow responders to step in before it is too late.
-  **Use Resources Wisely:** Agencies can focus their help on those who need it the most. High-risk victims often require more intensive support, and lethality assessments ensure that resources are directed where they can have the greatest impact.
-  **Ensure Consistent Practices:** A standardized approach means every community in Wyoming would respond to high-risk cases the same way, improving outcomes. Consistency is important for making sure all victims receive the level of care and attention appropriate to their level of risk, regardless of where they live.

Lethality assessments should be part of regular procedures for police, victim advocates, and service providers. Comprehensive training will be essential to ensure that everyone involved understands how to use these tools effectively. Additionally, statewide guidelines should be developed to ensure uniformity and best practices in implementing these assessments. Over time, this approach should help build a stronger safety net for victims and reduce the number of DV-related deaths.

Additional Recommendations

In addition to these two main recommendations, several supporting steps should be considered to strengthen Wyoming's response to IPH:

-  **Encourage the Use of Protection Orders:** Only about three percent of non-fatal IPV incidents in 2024 involved a protection order, and none of the fatal IPH cases reviewed in this report included a victim with one. While it is unclear if protection orders helped prevent fatal outcomes, they may be one of several tools that offer some level of safety. Law enforcement, service providers, and community programs should provide information about protection orders, help victims obtain them when appropriate, and offer support throughout the process. More research is needed to understand when and how protection orders are most effective.
-  **Increase Public Awareness:** Educating the public about the warning signs of abusive relationships and the resources available can empower victims to seek help before violence escalates. Almost every case of abuse was known about by someone else, showing how important

it is to teach communities the signs of abuse and how to help. Victims might not always realize how much danger they are in, which is why it is important for others to step in and offer support.



Enhance Support Services: It is important to make sure support services like shelters, counseling, and legal assistance programs are working well and that people have access to them. A needs-gap analysis should be done to determine if these services meet the actual needs of victims and if they are available in all regions of Wyoming. This will help ensure that victims in Wyoming have the resources they need to escape dangerous situations.

CONCLUSION

Setting up a permanent DVFRB and making lethality assessments standard are important steps to prevent IPHs in Wyoming. These actions, supported by the findings in this report, should better protect victims, hold abusers accountable, and reduce future homicides. By combining these measures with enhanced public awareness, strong victim services, and consistent enforcement efforts, Wyoming can build a safer future for its residents. Addressing IPH is a shared responsibility, and these recommendations provide a clear path forward to making meaningful progress.



Chapter 8: Future Research

[Domestic violence homicide](#) (DVH) is a serious issue that affects individuals, families, and communities alike. While much of this report has focused on [intimate partner homicide](#) (IPH), many other forms of DVH deserve attention. A deeper understanding of the causes and effects of DVH may be found by broadening the scope of research to include different types of victims, such as children or those killed as a means of harming someone else, and by learning from the experiences of survivors and service providers. This chapter outlines several areas for future research that can improve prevention, increase support for victims, and create a more comprehensive response to domestic violence (DV).

Ideas for Future Research

CONDUCT A NEEDS-GAP ANALYSIS

A needs-gap analysis could help identify where support services for DV survivors may be lacking, especially in rural and small-town areas. Research should explore how well current programs work, what barriers might make it harder for people to get help, and how services could be improved.

Wyoming's large size and small population may create challenges for survivors seeking support. It is possible that many people live far from the nearest DV services and limited public transportation makes travel difficult. In small towns, some survivors might hesitate to ask for help due to privacy concerns or fear of judgment. Service providers may also face staffing shortages or funding limitations, which could make it harder for them to reach everyone in need.

A detailed study could identify service gaps and potential ways to improve them. This could include looking at successful DV programs in other areas to find out what works and what should be offered, surveying service providers to better understand their resource limitations, and talking to survivors about their lived experiences.

While WYSAC found that every county in the state has a domestic violence and sexual assault (DVSA) program and a victim/witness program, this does not necessarily mean survivors can always access the help they need. Some may struggle due to lack of transportation, limited awareness of available resources, or underfunded services. A needs-gap analysis could identify barriers and areas where improvements might be needed to ensure all survivors have access to support.

EXPAND THE SCOPE

To get a clearer picture of DVH, future research should include a broader range of victims.

- ✓ **Broader Victim Inclusion:** Research should include cases where intervening family members, friends, or others were harmed or killed in DV situations. It should also examine victims who took their own lives to escape abuse, highlighting the full impact of DVH. Additionally, it should cover cases where a [collateral victim](#) (like a child or family member) was killed to punish the [primary victim](#).
- ✓ **Survival Cases:** Research should also look at cases where a DVH attempt failed. These cases can further reveal risk factors and identify additional ways to prevent violence before it happens.

LEARN FROM STAKEHOLDERS

Talking to people involved responding to DVH situations can provide important information for improving prevention and support.

- ✓ **Insights from Service Providers and First Responders:** Healthcare workers, first responders, and service providers often see signs of DV before and after incidents. Their experiences can help improve prevention plans and support systems.
- ✓ **Mental Health and Healthcare Engagement:** Investigating whether perpetrators of DVH had contact with healthcare professionals before the violence can uncover missed chances for early intervention. This can highlight the need for better training to spot warning signs of DV.

STUDY THE IMPACT ON CHILDREN

Some groups are more at risk from DV, and research can help improve support for them.

- ✓ **Impact on Children:** Many children witness or experience DV, which can harm their mental and emotional health. Research should focus on understanding how to better protect these children and prevent abuse from continuing in future generations.

ENGAGE WITH FAMILIES AND SURVIVORS

Talking to families and survivors of DV can provide critical insights.

- ✓ **Interviews with Families and Survivors:** Speaking with the families of DVH victims or survivors of intimate partner violence (IPV) or attempted IPV can help identify patterns, risk factors, and the challenges these individuals faced in getting help. This can reveal barriers to accessing services and offer ways to improve support.

Discussion

Understanding and preventing DVH requires ongoing attention, deeper investigation, and collaboration across systems. The ideas in this chapter highlight ways to strengthen the overall response to DV by filling research gaps, listening to those with lived experience, and learning from both fatal and non-fatal outcomes. As new data become available and more voices are included—especially from rural areas, survivors, families, and frontline workers—Wyoming can continue building more effective strategies to prevent violence, protect those at risk, and support recovery. Future research is not only important—it is essential for saving lives.

Appendix: Danger Assessment and Scoring

The Danger Assessment tool asked the following questions:

1. Has the physical violence increased in severity or frequency over the past year?
2. Does he own a gun?
3. Have you left him after living together during the past year?
4. (if you have never lived with him, check here: ____)
5. Is he unemployed?
6. Has he ever used a weapon against you or threatened you with a lethal weapon? (if yes, was the weapon a gun? Check here: ____)
7. Does he threaten to kill you?
8. Has he avoided being arrested for domestic violence?
9. Do you have a child that is not his?
10. Has he ever forced you to have sex when you did not wish to do so?
11. Does he ever try to choke/strangle you or cut off your breathing?
12. (If yes, has he done it more than once, or did it make you pass out or black out or make you dizzy? Check here: ____)
13. Does he use illegal drugs? By drugs, I mean "uppers" or amphetamines, "meth", speed, angel dust, cocaine, "crack", street drugs or mixtures.
14. Is he an alcoholic or problem drinker?
15. Does he control most of all of your daily activities? For instance, does he tell you who you can be friends with, when you can see your family, how much money you can use, or when you can take the car? (If he tries, but you do not let him, check here: ____)
16. Is he violently and constantly jealous of you? (For instance, does he say: "If I can't have you, no one can.")
17. Have you ever been beaten by him while you were pregnant? (If you have never been pregnant by him, check here: ____)
18. Has he ever threatened or tried to commit suicide?
19. Does he threaten to harm your children?
20. Do you believe he is capable of killing you?

21. Does he follow or spy on you, leave threatening notes or messages, destroy your property, or call you when you don't want him to?
22. Have you ever threatened or tried to commit suicide?

Scoring

Add total number of "yes" responses: 1 through 20

Add 4 points for each "yes" to questions 2 and 3

Add 3 points for a "yes" to question 4

Add 2 points for a "yes" to questions 5, 6, and 7

Add 1 point for each "yes" to questions 8 and 9

Subtract 3 points if 3a is checked

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