

ILLINOIS COALITION AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOMICIDE REPORT: June 2009 - May 2010

The Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence (ICADV) began collecting domestic violence homicide data mid-way through May 2009; this report covers June 2009 to May 2010. The data relied upon include information contained in newspaper articles from papers with an on-line presence. Additional information was collected from the directors of 55 domestic violence agencies located throughout Illinois.

Methods

The Coalition used interns from the University of Illinois at Springfield to help with this important project. A listing of Illinois newspapers was obtained from the Illinois Press Association. The internet was searched for a website affiliated with each paper. A number of papers are parts of newspaper consortia that maintain one website. Other papers are neither part of a consortium website, nor do they maintain a web presence. Additionally, the Coalition did not use papers for which there is a fee.

A list of papers that provide state-wide coverage was created. The list includes the Chicago Tribune, the Chicago Sun-Times, the Pantagraph (Bloomington-Normal), the State Journal-Register (Springfield), The Southern (Carbondale), the News-Gazette (Champaign-Urbana), the Journal-Gazette Times Courier (Charleston-Mattoon), the Herald and Review (Decatur), the Jacksonville Journal-Courier, the Daily Journal (Kankakee), the Dispatch/Rock Island Argus, the Journal Star (Peoria), the St. Louis Post-Dispatch (for coverage of southwestern Illinois), the Quincy Herald-Whig, the Rockford Register Star, and the Register-News (Mt. Vernon). Please refer to **Figure 1** for a map showing the locations of the cities from which news sources were used for the project.

Websites were checked every week-day morning for stories. Occasionally, domestic violence program staff would email a link to a story or fax an article to the interns.

A database was created using Microsoft Access. Two sets of forms were created to capture data of interest. One form was for the perpetrator of each incident (homicide event) and the other form was for the individual victims, which was tied to the perpetrator form. Each offender was assigned an incident number by the database. The following information was collected for each incident and entered into the domestic violence homicide incident form: incident number, date of incident, city/town of incident, county of incident, judicial district; then information on the perpetrator, including last name, first name, middle name, date of birth, age at time of incident, sex, citizenship, city or town of residence, ethnic identity, religious identity, history of drug or alcohol abuse, prior criminal record, special notes (e.g., murder/suicide, house set on fire, perpetrator shot..., attempted to kill...), and citations of news articles.

For each victim, the Victim Form was completed. Information captured includes victim identification number (generated by the database), incident number (connected to the domestic violence homicide incident form), last name, first name, middle name, date of birth, date of death, age at time of death, sex, city/town of residence, citizenship, ethnic identity, religious identity, history of drug or alcohol abuse, pregnant at time of death, means of death, relationship with perpetrator (e.g., wife, child of perpetrator's girl friend), order of protection against perpetrator, other court orders against perpetrator, subjected to prior stalking behavior by perpetrator, subjected to prior verbal threats by perpetrator, perpetrator charged or convicted of other crimes against the victim, and special notes.

All information available from news articles was added to the appropriate fields in the database as news articles were published on-line or as articles were brought to the attention of the interns by domestic violence programs. All of the latter were also identified through the on-line resources. Articles were saved under the perpetrator's name to correspond with the database and facilitate subsequent access. All analysis was conducted using the data from the domestic violence homicide database.

Domestic Violence Homicide Data

The domestic violence homicide database was used to compile information about numbers of incidents, victims, characteristics of both perpetrators and victims, their relationships, as well as how victims were murdered. For the period June 2009 – May 2010, a total of 59 incidents took the lives of 76 victims (**Table 1**). Table 1 also tabulates the number of homicides by month and year. There is a peak of 10 individuals in June of 2009, followed by 8 in April of 2010, 7 in February 2010, and 6 each for the months of January and May 2010. Additionally, nine incidents account for more than one victim, the range for multiple victims being from two to five in a single incident (Table 1).

Table 2 presents the gender of the perpetrators and that of the victims. Four homicides were committed by women and represent 5.3% of the total number of homicides (4 of 76), whereas male perpetrators committed 94.7% of the homicides (72 of 76). Women murdered mostly other females and one male. Females accounted for nearly 70% of the individuals murdered by men, who murdered 50 females and 22 other males (Table 2).

Table 3 presents information on the types of people murdered. As is clear in the table, intimate victims were wives (17), ex-wives (3), girl friends (10), an ex-girl friend (1), and a probable girl friend or ex-girl friend (1). Six victims were the sons of the perpetrators; two were their daughters. Other relatives of the murderers were also killed, including the mothers, fathers, stepmothers, brothers, cousins, sisters, and nieces. Four victims were the in-laws of the perpetrator, often associated with the attempted homicide of the wife or ex-wife, who was wounded at the same time the in-law was killed. There was one homicide incident in which five former in-laws (father, mother, two nephews, and one niece) were murdered.

Regarding the murder of people not related, or formally related, to the murderers, some victims were with the perpetrators' intended victim, as 10 people were murdered while with the perpetrators'

partner or former partner; the intended victims often were injured, but not killed. The children of perpetrator's girl friends were also murdered; although the girl friends were not injured. Finally, there is one incident for which the exact nature of the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator is currently unknown. In this case, the female victim shared a household with the male perpetrator and the victim's sister.

The means for killing victims is shown in **Table 4**. The most prevalent means of killing a victim in domestic violence homicides in the current database is by shooting, as 44.7% (34) victims were shot to death. About 22% of the victims were beaten to death (17 victims). Almost 15% (n = 11) people were stabbed to death, three strangled, and six died by fire and/or smoke inhalation. One toddler died from shaken baby syndrome, another was suffocated in a bag, and an elderly person died from an aneurysm after being pushed to the ground by the perpetrator. The means of death for two other victims is unknown.

Table 5 presents the cause of death by the relationship to the perpetrator. The majority of wives and ex-wives were shot, whereas the majority of girl friends and ex-girl friends were not; they were beaten, stabbed, or strangled. Male children of offenders were all murdered by their fathers and tended to be shot (5-to-1); daughters tended to be beaten (3 of 4). A variety of deaths were meted out for other victims, including beatings, shootings, stabbings, strangulations, and death by fire.

Five of the offenders' blood or step parents were murdered (n = 4 blood, 1 step), being mostly mothers killed by adult sons (n = 3 of 5) (Table 5). Brothers, cousins, sisters, and nieces were also victims (n = 5), as were in-laws (n = 4). A wide variety of methods were used by the offenders; 9 of the 14 were shot. Additionally, five former in-laws were beaten to death in one incident (Table 5).

Seven of the 10 friends of the perpetrators' partners, or former partners, were shot to death (Table 5). Two children were killed by their mother's boyfriends by shaking or beating (Table 5).

Regarding previous threats, stalking, and attempts on the parts of victims to create safety for themselves, papers indicated that the victims in eight out of 59 (13.5%) incidents are known to have been verbally threatened. The victims reported in two incidents were known to have been stalked; one of these also had verbal threats and another had an order of protection. Finally, only four victims had had orders of protection at the time of their murder.

Discussion

Fifty-nine homicide incidents and 76 murder victims are sufficiently large numbers to examine the domestic violence homicides in Illinois from June 2009 – June 2010. For some categories, the numbers are too small to have any statistical relevance; however, the data are suggestive of possible trends. For example, currently, without additional years for comparison, it is hard to identify any trend in the time of year that homicides occurred (see Table 1).

What can be identified from the data is that domestic violence homicides are most often committed by men (94.7%) and that women are the most likely to be their victims (69.4%) (see Table 2). Women, over-all, are more likely to be domestic violence victims, regardless of the perpetrator, as they represent almost 70% of the total individuals killed (see Table 2). Regarding the relationships between victims and perpetrators, it is hard to make any inferences from the four incidents perpetrated by women in the database, so the remainder of the discussion will focus on male-killed victims.

As is presented in Table 3, the relationships suffering the most homicides are wives and ex-wives, representing 20 victims out of 72. The next largest group includes girl friends or ex-girl friends with 12 individuals. These two groups together account for 44.4% (n = 32) of all people murdered by men. Turning to Table 5 and examining the male-only perpetrated homicides, the vast majority of wives and ex-wives were shot (13 of 20); only one girl friend was shot, the remaining girl friends and ex-girl friends were dispatched in other ways.

The second largest group of victims killed by men were non-partner/non-former partners that included the perpetrators' siblings and parents (Table 3). Half of these 14 individuals were shot (Table 5).

Male perpetrators of domestic violence homicide in Illinois also killed eight of their children (Table 5). This number includes six sons, five of whom were shot, and two daughters, both of whom were beaten to death (Table 5). All sons were killed in incidents involving multiple homicides, usually along with their mothers; two sons were adult brothers gunned down by their father at his home. The two daughters were beaten to death.

A large group of victims includes friends or relatives of the partner or former partner; 17 people lost their lives because they happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time, or were related to the perpetrators' partner or ex-partner (Table 3). These people were mostly shot to death (n = 7) and usually were present when the perpetrator was trying to harm his partner or former partner (Table 5). Five former in-laws were brutally beaten to death, allegedly, by the ex-husband of one of their surviving daughters. The reasons for the killings may have been triggered by custody and visitation issues. These data suggest some validity for the concept of the perpetrator going after people important to their intimate partners with the murder of the in-laws, former in-laws, children of the partner, and survivors' friends.

There is not enough information included in newspaper accounts to adequately examine how many victims were stalked or threatened prior to their murders, nor is there confidence that the information concerning these types of abuse and/or orders of protection was consistently collected for the news articles. Clearly, Table 6 indicates that some victims suffered multiple types of abuse prior to their murder and some took steps to try to protect themselves.

Next Steps

ICADV will continue to collect homicide data for at least one additional year so as to have comparative data from one year to the next to look for any trends. Year two will make use of a news-clipping service to help cut down the amount of time required for the news searches. This will help provide additional time to conduct some in-depth analysis about cases already in the database. Of importance, is looking at the history of orders of protection, as well as information about the disposition of the perpetrators of domestic violence homicide.

Table 1. Multiple homicides within domestic violence homicide incidents, June 2009 - May 2010.

Month	Year	Incidents (n)	Victims (n)	Incidents with multiple homicides (n)	Range for numbers of victims per incident
June	2009	10	12	2	1-2
July	2009	1	1	0	1
August	2009	1	1	0	1
September	2009	5	9	1	1-5
October	2009	4	5	1	1-2
November	2009	4	6	1	1-3
December	2009	2	2	0	1
January	2010	6	6	0	1
February	2010	7	7	0	1
March	2010	5	7	1	1-3
April	2010	8	12	1	1-5
May	2010	6	8	2	1-2
Total		59	76	9	

Table 2. Gender of those killed by the gender of the murderers, June 2009 - May 2010.

Gender of perpetrator	Victim's gender	Number of victims (n)	Total (n)	Percent
female	female	3	4	75
	male	1		25
Subtotal (n)			4	
male	female	50	72	69.4
	male	22		30.6
Total			76	

Table 3. Numbers of domestic violence homicides and genders of victims and perpetrators in Illinois from June 2009 - May 2010.

Gender of perpetrator	Victim's relationship to perpetrator	Victim's gender	Number of victims (n)	Sub-total (n)	Total
female	daughter	female	2		
	mother	female	1		
	husband	male	1		
total female-killed victims				4	4
male	wife	female	17		
	ex-wife	female	3		
				20	
	girl friend	female	10		
	ex-girl friend	female	1		
	probable gf or ex-gf	female	1		
				12	
					32
	child (son)	male	6		
	child (daughter)	female	2		
				8	8
	perpetrator's mother	female	3		
	perpetrator's father	male	1		
	perpetrator's stepmother	female	1		
				5	5
	perpetrator's brother/cousin	male	2	2	
	perpetrator's sister	female	1	1	
	perpetrator's niece	female	2	2	5
	perpetrator's in-laws	male	1		
		female	3		
				4	4

Table 3. (continued)

Gender of perpetrator	Victim's relationship to perpetrator	Victim's gender	Number of victims (n)	Sub-total (n)	Total
male (cont.)	perpetrator's former in-laws	male	3		
		female	2		
				5	5
	friends/relatives of partner, former partner	female	3		
		male	7		
				10	10
	unrelated, shares household (could be partners)	female	1	1	1
	child of perpetrator's girl friend	male	2	2	2
total male-killed victims				72	
Total victims					76

Table 4. Methods of killing domestic violence victims, June 2009 through May 2010.

Method of murder	Number of victims (n)	Percent
Shot with firearm	34	44.7
Beaten to death	17	22.4
Stabbed	11	14.5
Strangled	3	3.9
Fire (burned or smoke inhalation)	6	7.9
Shaken baby	1	1.3
Aneurysm from being pushed to ground	1	1.3
Suffocation in bag	1	1.3
Unknown	2	2.6
Total	76	100

Table 5. Numbers of domestic violence homicides and means of death in Illinois from June 2009 through May 2010.

Gender of perpetrator	Victim's relationship to perpetrator	Means of death	Victims (n)	Sub-total (n)	Total (n)
female	daughter	beating	1		
		suffocation in a bag	1		
	husband	stabbed	1		
		fire	1		
					4
male	wife	shot	10		
		fire	1		
		strangled	1		
		stabbed	3		
		beaten	1		
		unknown	1		
	ex-wife	shot	3		
				20	20
	girl friend	beaten	2		
		stabbed	5		
		strangled	1		
		shot	1		
		unknown	1		
	ex-girl friend	beaten	1		
	probable gf/ex-gf	beaten	1		
				12	12
	child (son)	shot	5		
		fire	1		
	child (daughter)	beaten	2		
				8	8

Table 5. (cont.)

Gender of perpetrator	Victim's relationship to perpetrator	Means of death	Victims (n)	Sub-total (n)	Total (n)
male (cont.)	perpetrator's mother	stabbed	1		
		aneurysm from being pushed to the ground	1		
		shot	1		
	perpetrator's father	shot	1		
	perpetrator's stepmother	beaten	1		
				5	5
	perpetrator's brother/cousin	fire	2	2	2
	perpetrator's sister	beaten	1	1	1
	perpetrator's niece	shot	2	2	2
	offender's mother-in-law	shot	2		
	strangled	1			
offender's father-in-law	shot	1			
			4	4	
perpetrator's former in-laws	beaten	5			
			5	5	
friends/relatives of partner/former partner	shot	7			
	beaten	1			
	stabbed	1			
	fire	1			
			10	10	

Table 5. (cont.)

Gender of perpetrator	Victim's relationship to perpetrator	Means of death	Victims (n)	Sub-total (n)	Total (n)
male (cont.)	Unrelated, shares household, female	shot	1	1	1
	child of perpetrator's girl friend	shaken baby	1		
		beaten	1		
				2	2
Total male-killed victims (n)				72	
Total (n)					76

Table 6. Incidents where victims had been previously threatened verbally, stalked, or who had had an order of protection against the offender.

Incident number	Prior verbal threats	Prior stalking	Orders of protection
7	X		X
14	X		
17	X		
22		X	X
24	X	X	
29	X		
30	X		X
48	X		X
49	X		

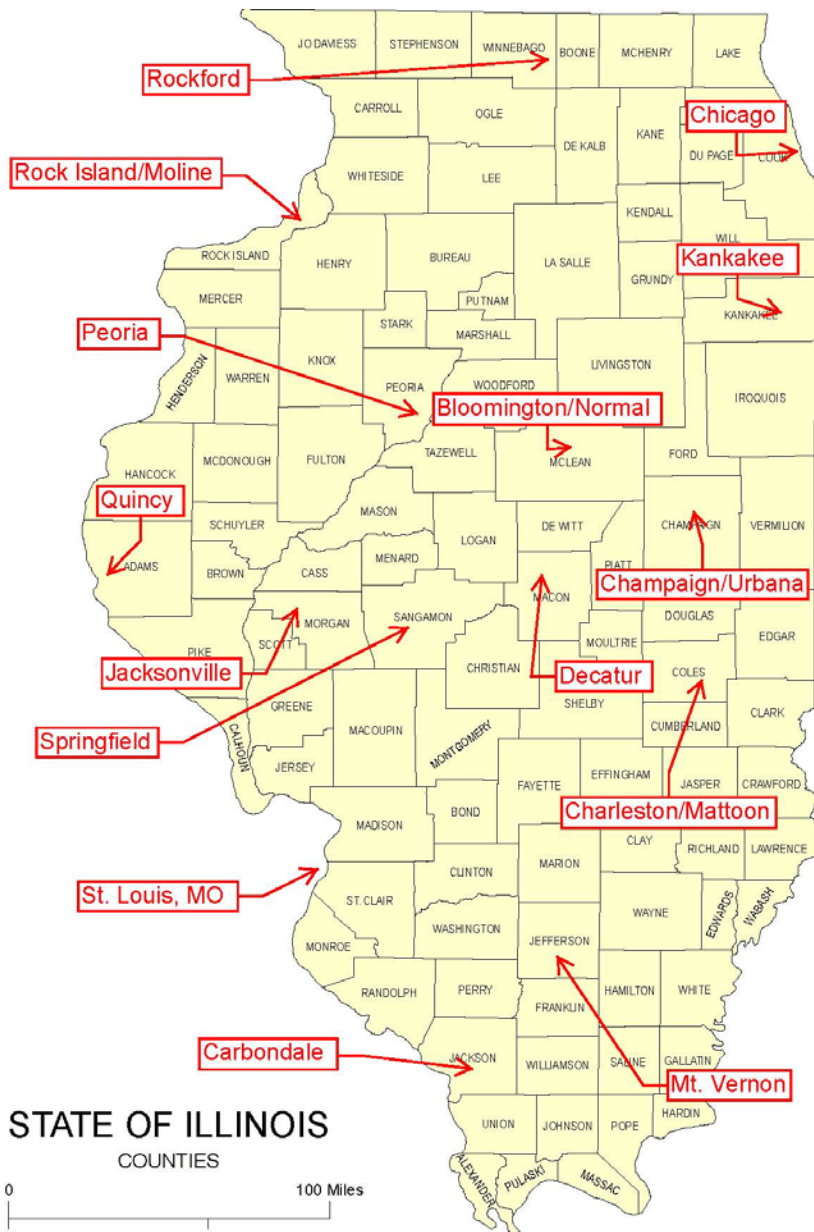


Figure 1. Map Showing the Geographic Locations of Newspapers Consulted.