

MCBW

Minnesota Coalition
for Battered Women

2014



Femicide Report

This report is dedicated to the women, children, and men who lost their lives in Minnesota during 2014 as a result of domestic violence.

INDEX

Murder Statistics 1989 – 2014	3
Overview of the Femicide Report	6
Overview of 2014	8
Red Flags for Batterer Lethality	10
Observations from 2014 Cases	13
A Challenge to Minnesota Communities: Recommendations	14
Key Femicide Statistics	17
Women Murdered	23
Men Murdered	29
Family Members & Interveners Murdered	30
About the Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women	32
Summary of Those Murdered in 2014	33

Domestic Violence Homicides in Minnesota: 1989-2014

**We remember our mothers, our fathers, our sisters, our brothers, our daughters, our sons,
our wives, our husbands, our intimate partners, our family members, our friends, our
neighbors, our co-workers, our fellow Minnesotans...**

- 1989 At least 18 women died from domestic violence*
- 1990 At least 26 women died from domestic violence
- 1991 At least 12 women died from domestic violence
- 1992 At least 31 women died from domestic violence
At least 8 children died from child abuse+
At least 3 women were murdered while being used in prostitution#
At least 2 family members/friends were murdered by a woman's current or former partner**
- 1993 At least 28 women died from domestic violence
At least 13 children died from child abuse
At least 6 women were murdered while being used in prostitution
At least 5 family members/friends were murdered
- 1994 At least 19 women died from domestic violence
At least 7 children died from child abuse
At least 2 women were murdered while being used in prostitution
- 1995 At least 29 women died from domestic violence
At least 11 children died from child abuse
- 1996 At least 22 women died from domestic violence
At least 17 children died from child abuse
At least 6 women were murdered while being used in prostitution
- 1997 At least 17 women died from domestic violence
At least 5 children died from child abuse
- 1998 At least 22 women died from domestic violence
At least 15 children died from child abuse
- 1999 At least 22 women died from domestic abuse
At least 20 children died from child abuse
- 2000 At least 40 women died from domestic violence
At least 6 children died from child abuse
At least 1 family member was murdered

- 2001 At least 33 women died from domestic violence
At least 12 children died from child abuse
At least 6 family members/friends were murdered
- 2002 At least 16 women died from domestic violence
At least 13 children died from child abuse
- 2003 At least 14 women died from domestic violence
At least 10 children died from child abuse
- 2004 At least 13 women died from domestic violence
At least 11 children died from child abuse
At least 3 family members/friends were murdered
- 2005 At least 26 women died from domestic violence
At least 1 women was murdered while being used in prostitution
At least 4 children died from child abuse
At least 2 family members/friends were murdered
- 2006 At least 20 women died from domestic violence
At least 20 children died from child abuse
At least 1 family member/friend was murdered
- 2007 At least 22 women died from domestic violence
At least 10 children died from child abuse
At least 3 family members/friends were murdered
- 2008 At least 23 women died from domestic violence
At least 7 children died from child abuse
At least 2 family members/friends were murdered
At least 1 man died from domestic violence from his male partner
- 2009 At least 12 women died from domestic violence
At least 10 children died from child abuse
At least 2 family members/friends/interveners were murdered
At least 1 man died from domestic violence
- 2010 At least 15 women died from domestic violence
At least 7 children died from domestic violence
At least 4 family members/friends were murdered
At least 2 men died from domestic violence
- 2011 At least 23 women died from domestic violence
At least 4 children died from domestic violence
At least 6 family members/friends were murdered
At least 1 man died from domestic violence

- 2012 At least 14 women died from domestic violence
At least 3 family members/friends were murdered
At least 1 man died from domestic violence
- 2013 At least 25 women died from domestic violence
At least 6 family members/friends were murdered
At least 7 men died from domestic violence
- 2014 At least 16 women died from domestic violence
At least 5 family members/friends were murdered
At least 2 men died from domestic violence

*Cases of women murdered where the suspected, alleged, or convicted perpetrator was a current or former husband, boyfriend, intimate partner, household member, or family member.

+Cases of children murdered where the suspected, alleged, or convicted perpetrator was the father, mother, guardian, babysitter, child care provider, or household/family member of the child; or the perpetrator was the parent's spouse or intimate partner.

#MCBW recognizes prostitution as a system of violence against women and children.

**Cases of family, friends, interveners or bystanders murdered in domestic violence-related situations.

++Cases of children murdered as a result of violence involving current or former intimate partners are now tracked under the family members, friends & interveners category.

Overview of the Femicide Report

The Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women (MCBW) tracks homicides in which the known or suspected perpetrator was a *current or former intimate partner* or the homicide is the result of domestic violence between current or former intimate partners. This includes family members, friends, and interveners who are killed as a result of the domestic violence being perpetrated by a current or former intimate partner.

History of the Report

For over 25 years, MCBW has been producing the annual Femicide Report. The information contained within these 26 years of reports is overwhelming in terms of the numbers of individual deaths that are recorded. The reports list the number of people killed, however they do not reveal the enormous number of people impacted by those deaths, nor do the reports reflect the hundreds of thousands of individuals who, across these years, have experienced domestic violence and survived.

What the Report Measures

In 1989, MCBW began collecting the names of women killed by domestic violence. The report has always recorded the deaths of women killed by current or former boyfriends and husbands. Over time, the report has evolved in terms of the definition of which deaths were included in the report. The report has expanded to include anyone killed due to domestic violence between current or former intimate partners. This includes the homicides between lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, and/or transgender current and former intimate partners, as well as cases of men killed by their current and former intimate partners. The report also documents the deaths of other family members, friends, neighbors, interveners, and bystanders who are killed due to domestic violence between current or former intimate partners.

Since 1993, the report has included those killed as a result of being used in prostitution or sex trafficking. These deaths are included because MCBW recognizes prostitution and sex trafficking as a system of violence against women and children. These numbers were tracked separately for a number of years but are now included in the general count.

While there has been some fluctuation over the years, MCBW is working to maintain a consistent definition regarding what is included in the Femicide Report. In recent years the report has consistently listed people killed in Minnesota due to violence by a current or former intimate partner.

What the Report Does Not Measure

The definition of domestic violence in Minnesota law is broader than the definition that we use for this report. In the report, MCBW measures the number of people killed in Minnesota due to violence by a current or former intimate partner. The legal definition of domestic violence is physical violence or threats of physical violence between a family or household member. This

includes violence between any family members or household members: adult child to parent, between cousins, roommates who have no intimate relationship, uncles who kill nieces, and parents who kill children. The Femicide Report focuses on one section of that broader definition of domestic violence. MCBW specifically looks at those killed by current or former intimate partners and as a result of domestic violence between current or former intimate partners.

Why do we limit our definition? While all of these homicides are tragic and there are many similarities, MCBW has expertise in intimate partner abuse. We hope that by limiting this report to the intimate partner definition and looking at those deaths in light of the research that has been done about lethality and risk factors for that specific population, we may find information to help improve our work to end domestic violence.

MCBW also only measures those killed in Minnesota. Sometimes a person from Minnesota is temporarily residing in another state and is killed while living there. That person would not be included in our count. Conversely, someone from Illinois or Wisconsin or New Jersey may be visiting Minnesota and be killed by their intimate partner while in Minnesota. *We do* include that homicide in our count. The reason we make this distinction is twofold. First, we do not have the capacity to monitor the homicides that occur in other states. Second, we gather the Femicide Report information in part to look at what we can do here in Minnesota to improve our work on domestic violence issues. In recent years, we have also included cases where the victim's body is found in Minnesota or where we have reason to believe the homicide occurred in Minnesota, even if the body was found in a different state.

Limitations of the Report

We rely on public information to create this report. In the early days of the report our sole source of information was media reporting. That has expanded to include public police records, as well as the growing volume of information found on social media.

We use the phrase “at least” when describing the number of people killed each year. We cannot be certain we have not missed some deaths since we rely on public records, primarily news accounts. No state or federal agency collects comprehensive data on domestic homicides. In addition, the murders of women and children of color, Native American people, immigrant and refugee women and children, those living in poverty, people with disabilities, rural women, lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender people, and those exploited in prostitution and sex trafficking may be underreported in our listing as they frequently go unreported in mainstream media.

While we record all homicides that are a result of domestic violence between current or former intimate partners, we provide yearly comparison information on a series of factors exclusively concerning murdered *women*. We limit this analysis to women killed by intimate partners because we are looking at the research that has been done on risk and lethality factors for women in abusive relationships. It may be that men face the same risk and lethality factors in abusive relationships but to our knowledge, that research has not been done.

The information that MCBW tracks is not research but rather a compilation of information gathered from public sources. We gather this information to bear witness to those killed, to raise

public awareness of domestic violence, and to help inform our work. This report is not a research report. One example of this limitation is in regard to tracking the rate of suicides committed by perpetrators after committing homicide. For a number of years approximately 50% of the domestic violence homicides of adult women also involved the perpetrator then committing suicide. The last two years show a small decrease. These numbers are significantly higher than the homicide-suicide rate reported nationally. What we don't know, and what this report does not address, is why there is a difference and what the recent decrease means. MCBW is not a research agency. We present this information in the hopes of raising questions and opening the door to deeper conversations.

Overview of 2014

The number of Minnesotans killed due to domestic violence varies from year to year. We have seen yearly lows in the teens and highs in the 40s. Last year 38 Minnesotans were murdered due to domestic violence. This year, the number is lower. At least 23 Minnesotans were killed due to violence from a current or former intimate partner.

At least 16 women

Were murdered in cases where the suspected, alleged, or convicted perpetrator was a current or former husband, boyfriend, or male intimate partner.

At least 5 friends, family members or interveners

Were murdered in domestic violence-related situations.

At least 2 men

Were murdered in a case where the suspected, alleged, or convicted perpetrator was a current or former intimate partner.

At least 19 minor children

Were left motherless due to domestic violence murders.

Note: At the time this report was completed, MCBW was reviewing four additional cases. These deaths occurred in 2014 but MCBW is waiting for information on whether the deaths would be officially ruled homicides versus accidental or natural causes, and information on the nature of the relationship between the victim and suspected perpetrator. Once full information is public, MCBW will update this report and the revised report will be made available through MCBW's website. www.mcbw.org

Femicide Report: Victims and Relationship to the Alleged Perpetrators

	2014		
Relationship to Victim	#	% of Total	Name of Victim
Current/former boyfriend, husband or male intimate partner	17	74%	Angel Lowe (Dorothy Redd-Lowe) Amber Lechuga Angel Linderman Beverly Gongoll Carrie Olson Doris Doust Katie Christopherson Kelly Lund Kelly Phillips Kiela Knowles Komel Crowley Laura Simonson Lorraine Swor Michelle Ploetz Miranda Schunk Susan Marie James Towanda Harris
Current/former girlfriend, wife or female intimate partner	1	4%	Richard Baity
Other	5	22%	Amelia Ramirez * British Morris-Rice + Francesca Desandre ++ Prince Pope ++ Raniya Crowley *
Total:	23		

* Children killed by male intimate partner of their mother.

+ Killed during an incident where British was assaulted by her male intimate partner.

++ Interveners and bystanders who were killed due to assault of female by her male intimate partner.

Red Flags for Batterer Lethality

In this report, we pay special attention to women murdered by intimate partners, as the majority of women murdered in the United States and Minnesota are murdered by their current or former intimate partners. Various tools to assess for high risk or potential lethality have been developed based on research of women killed by their intimate partners. It is impossible to predict with certainty which batterers will become lethal to their victims. All batterers should be viewed as potentially deadly, though there are well-documented indicators of lethality of which everyone should be aware. Included in the factors that have been identified as possible lethality indicators are: separation, extended history of domestic violence or other violence, pregnancy, threats or fantasies of homicide or suicide, access to a firearm, threats to use a weapon, stalking, attempted strangulation, forced sex, extreme jealousy, and control of daily activities.

We look at the homicide cases in Minnesota and see whether information was known regarding key lethality factors. MCBW specifically focuses on four lethality factors:

- the victim's attempts to leave the abuser;
- previous threats to kill the victim;
- perpetrator access to firearms; and
- perpetrator's history of violence.

MCBW has been looking at these four lethality factors since 2006. For the past nine years, these lethality factors were present in a significant number of cases. We would expect that a more complete analysis of public records and interviews with friends and family of the victims would yield further information on other cases and further information on other red flags.

For each homicide case there is much to be learned from the individual circumstances as the circumstances surrounding each death are complex and unique. We look at the key lethality factors with the expectation that this information is useful to inform public policy and intervention strategies.

There were 16 women murdered in Minnesota in 2014 by their intimate partners.

Victim's Attempts to Leave the Abuse: While conventional wisdom persists that leaving an abuser will always make a battered women safer, separation often increases the risks of further harm, as batterers “step up” their efforts to control or intimidate the victim. In 2014, 5 of the 16 cases of homicide occurred after the woman had left the relationship or when she was attempting to leave. This year the percentage of cases where it was known that the victim had left or was attempting to leave is lower, 31% of the cases. This statistic has been consistent for the past few years between 47 – 67%. In many of the cases, information is not known as to whether the victim was planning on leaving. Attempting or planning to leave a relationship does continue to be a significant factor when assessing lethality. Preparing to leave a relationship may be one of the most dangerous times for battered women.

Angel Lowe was attempting to end her relationship with boyfriend, Marc Bakambia when she was killed. On August 6, Marc Bakambia assaulted Angel and dragged her out of a car by her hair. Angel told her mother she “feared for her life” and that she was so afraid that she “pretended like she was dead.” Four days later, on August 10th, Angel Lowe was strangled to death by Bakambia.

Text messages on Angel's phone show she had broken up with Bakambia the day before she was found dead. Marc Bakambia has been indicted by a grand jury on one count of first-degree murder involving domestic abuse and three counts of second-degree murder.

Threats to Kill the

Victim: Threats by the abuser to kill the victim are among the most reliable indicators of lethality and are the most often overlooked by the criminal and civil justice systems. A review of the media reports of the 2014 murders does not reveal much information about threats to kill. We know that in at least 3 instances, the woman had experienced threats to kill and it is possible that threats to kill may have been part of the prior abuse in other cases.

Miranda Schunk had a protection order against her ex-boyfriend, Kevin Evans. In violation of that order, Evans went to Miranda's apartment and repeatedly stabbed her, inflicting fatal wounds to her head, chest and abdomen. Ten days prior to the stabbing, Miranda had filed for the order for protection. In her petition, Miranda stated, "I am really afraid that [Evans] will follow through with his threats and do serious harm to me, at times I am afraid to leave my home." The order detailed the abuse which included daily threats of violence, stalking, physical violence including being slapped and punched in the face, as well as spray painting derogatory remarks on her apartment building, and previously attempting to enter Miranda's apartment armed with a knife. The day before the stabbing, Miranda reported to police that Evans had violated the protective order and was threatening to slit her throat and put a bullet in her head. A friend of Miranda's, who lived in the building, said Evans had been calling her all day trying to contact Miranda.

On the day of her death, Miranda planned to leave the state and move down south to her family with the help of her friend. The friend reported that Evans had found out about the plan, gotten ahold of Miranda's address book, and had started calling the friend. He told the friend that he knew her address and told her he'd stab her, her children and Miranda if she helped Miranda leave.

Access to Firearms:

In 2014, 9 of the 16 (56%) domestic violence homicides were committed with firearms. While the percentage of domestic violence homicides using firearms fluctuates from year to year, murder with firearms is the most frequent weapon of choice and firearms were used in about 50% of the documented domestic violence homicides (Of women killed - 52% in 2011, 50% in 2012, 42% in 2013, and 56% in 2014) supporting the studies showing that possession of firearms can increase the risk of lethality. In light of current debates regarding

Angel Linderman, of Lake City, was shot to death by her boyfriend, Tanner Rix, on September 9, 2014. Rix called 911 around noon from Baldwin, Wisconsin to report a shooting injury in the car he was driving. Police found Angel's body in the car, covered with a tarp. Autopsy results confirmed that Angel had been shot hours prior to the 911 call. Rix has been charged with felony counts of 1st degree intentional homicide, hiding a corpse, and possession of a firearm by a felon. Rix had two felony warrants for drug crimes and unauthorized possession of a firearm.

guns and gun control legislation, it is helpful to consider these statistics. When there is a history of domestic violence, we should be looking at the question of access to firearms.

Observations about 2014 Homicides

Complexity of cases: One of the challenges in effectively preventing and intervening around domestic violence is the complexity of issues that exist within individual's lives and relationships. Domestic violence victims may be living in poverty, may struggle with issues of chemical dependency or with mental health issues, or may have other obstacles and barriers that they face. Each issue can limit a victim's options and may limit the resources that are available to them and their family. Many prevention and intervention strategies are designed to address each of these issues in isolation from the others. For example, chemical dependency issues may be dealt with separate from the domestic violence; job training and economic assistance programs are not typically integrated with domestic violence programs. To improve prevention and intervention work, we must find ways to deal with all of the complexities that are a part of people's lives and relationships. Domestic violence victims need holistic approaches that work for them and their families.

- ❖ Timothy Hendricks was on a conditional jail release for a criminal charge where he pointed a rifle at his 13-year-old nephew.
- ❖ A woman he had been staying with reported that Hendricks told her that he was going to kill his girlfriend, Michelle Ploetz. He had also threatened to hurt himself.
- ❖ John Ploetz, Michelle's father, tried three times to get Hendricks committed because he feared Hendricks might kill him or his family.
- ❖ Hendricks' sister had tried "more than 40 times" to have him hospitalized for addiction and mental health issues. Each time he was sent home with medication and was never admitted.

On April 16th, John Ploetz was driving his daughter Michelle and Timothy Hendricks home after a dinner. Hendricks shot Michelle in the head while their 8-month old son was in a car seat beside her. Hendricks also shot at Michelle's father several times as he tried to intervene. Michelle died two days later.

Hendricks has been convicted of second-degree murder in the death of Michelle Ploetz and second-degree attempted murder of her father John Ploetz. He was sentenced to 32 years in prison.

Murder-Suicide in Elderly Relationships: Murder-suicides in the United States among people 55 and older have increased from 21 percent in 2002 to 25 percent in 2011 of the total murder-suicides, according to the Violence Policy Center. In 2014, 4 of the 16 adult women murdered by their intimate partners were over the age of 55. In each of these instances, the perpetrator also committed suicide (Doris Doust, Beverly Gongoll, Susan James, and Lorraine Swor). While murder-suicides involving older couples are often categorized as “suicide pacts” or “mercy killings,” research shows that in majority of murder-suicides among older couples, the victim is not aware of the plan and that over 95% of the perpetrators in these cases are the male intimate partners. It is important that outreach and services provided to survivors of domestic violence by various systems recognize the complexities, and cultural and social nuances, of working with older survivors.

Lorraine Swor, age 85, was shot and killed by her husband, Robert Swor, 85, on October 6, 2014. Robert Swor then turned the gun on himself and also died from gunshot wounds. The two were married for 65 years. They leave behind two adult children.

Challenge to Minnesota Communities

Domestic violence and domestic homicide have a devastating effect on every person living in Minnesota. Each of the victims whose story is told here was someone’s daughter, son, mother, father, sister, brother, family member, intimate partner, friend, neighbor, or co-worker.

We pledge to remember the women, children, men, family members, and friends who die each year from domestic violence.

Our challenge to the community is to not let these deaths go unnoticed but rather to use these brutal murders as a springboard for action.

While we have research and tools that can assist us in identifying the people most likely to reoffend and those most likely to engage in high risk and lethal behaviors, nothing can predict with 100% accuracy the batterers who will seriously injure or kill. Some of the women injured and killed in Minnesota each year were so isolated or so disconnected that they never told anyone what was happening, and no one had any information about the abuse. Many of these women, however, *did* interact with our legal system, our medical system, our mental health system or they reached out to family, friends or community members. It is precisely in those cases where we can start to make a difference. We can learn from the tragic loss of life by taking action towards meaningful change.

Over the past 35 years, we have learned much about domestic violence. Our laws have improved; our advocacy and justice systems and the personnel within those systems have learned, changed and improved how they respond to domestic violence; we talk with our

children about healthy relationships and about domestic violence. We applaud all of those efforts but we can do even better. That is the challenge we name for ourselves and for all of Minnesota.

Recommendations for the Community

While the ultimate responsibility for these murders rests with the perpetrators alone, opportunities for meaningful intervention in many of these cases were missed. Especially in the cases in which the victim reached out for help or the perpetrator was known to be dangerous, we should examine the reasons why our systems ultimately failed to protect those victims from lethal violence.

Safety is a Foundational Issue: Safety is a fundamental human right and an essential building block for stable communities. Safety must be addressed and considered not just when dealing with legal system policies but when looking at any policy. When discussing how we provide quality education, we must make sure that children are safe in order that they be ready to learn. When looking at ways to stimulate the business economy, we must make sure that employees are safe at home so they are able to be present and productive at work. We must prioritize safety on every level.

Assess Batterer Lethality at Every Opportunity: Comprehensive and ongoing screening and assessments for domestic violence should be the norm with all systems. In every circumstance in which a battered woman or abuser encounters the criminal justice system, the housing and human services systems, the medical/mental health system, the civil or family court, or an advocacy program, a concerted effort should be made to screen for domestic violence and assess potential lethality, risk and potential re-offense. Many excellent assessment tools exist and most rely on multiple opportunities for disclosure throughout a system. In some cases, a review of public records could assist in assessing for high risk or lethality. Minnesota has developed a number of tools and models for assessing risk including the Blueprint for Safety and various Minnesota counties have developed specific coordinated community responses for screening. Criminal proceedings do not represent the sole opportunity to assess batterer lethality or risk of re-offense. When battered women seek protection orders, are involved in family court proceedings, or seek mental health or medical services, screening should happen. The screening should not just be at times and places where previously identified victims come in contact with a provider. Providers and agencies should be assessing for domestic violence with everyone, looking for both potential perpetrators and victims. Assessment and screening is only the first step. Appropriate responses to disclosures of information, quality referrals and assistance are needed. Information should be shared in safe ways that prioritize victim self-determination. Screening and assessment are the initial steps to good response.

Strengthen Partnerships: Assessment tools provide information that can and should be used to fashion meaningful responses to the individuals and families. This means we need to have strong partnerships that include the various agencies, systems, and community based organizations. Each organization has a role to play in order to achieve effective intervention. We need to have sufficient and appropriate resources to effectively apprehend, monitor, and, when necessary, incarcerate dangerous batterers. We need to have sufficient and appropriate resources to support

families in gaining and maintaining safety. Law enforcement, the courts, battered women's advocacy programs, schools, public benefits programs, and public health clinics - all struggle to meet the public safety needs of the community with limited resources. We need coordinated and holistic approaches that address the individual realities of victim's lives. While having a strong coordinated criminal justice system response is important, those criminal justice system partnerships need to expand and include those working in related systems such as the medical and educational systems as well as community based services such as those working on homelessness and economic justice issues. An investment in the whole spectrum of public safety systems is necessary to reduce domestic violence in our communities.

Community-wide Investment: Effective intervention in domestic violence cases and improved identification of high risk and lethal offenders are not the full answer. We must commit to prevention efforts to stop the violence before it starts. It is critical to stem the incidents of domestic violence by creating an environment where everyone knows that violence will not be tolerated and where healthy, respectful and violence free relationships are the norm for everyone.

Everyone must see domestic violence as their issue. Almost half of the victims whose deaths are documented in the Femicide Reports did not have any interactions with the criminal justice system. However, many of them had reported the abuse to their friends, family members, employers, and others in their communities. A successful response to domestic violence can only be achieved with the investment of an entire community. Whether as a parent, a partner, within the workplace, or in neighborhoods, we all need to talk about domestic violence and work to create healthy communities where domestic violence is not accepted or tolerated. If we fail to keep safety as a top priority, women will continue to be killed and our communities destabilized.

We cannot afford to compromise on safety.

Key Femicide Statistics (2012-2014) for Adult Women Murdered by a Current or Former Intimate Partner

Cause of Death

	2012		2013		2014		
Cause of Death	#	% of Total	#	% of Total	#	% of Total	Name of Victim
Gunshot	7	50%	10	42%	9	56%	Amber Lechuga Angel Linderman Beverly Gongoll Doris Doust Katie Christopherson Komel Crowley Lorraine Swor Michelle Ploetz Susan Marie James
Stabbing	3	21%	3	13%	2	13%	Miranda Schunk Towanda Harris
Strangulation	2	14%	2	8%	3	19%	Angel Lowe Kelly Lund Kiela Knowles
Beating	2	14%	5	21%	0	0%	
Other/Unknown	0	0%	4	17%	2	13%	Carrie Olson Laura Simonson
Total:	14		24		16		

Victim was Separated from Perpetrator or Attempting to Leave

	2012		2013		2014		
	#	% of Total	#	% of Total	#	% of Total	Name of Victim
Separated or attempting to leave	6	43%	15	60%	5	31%	Angel Lowe Carrie Olson Michelle Ploetz Miranda Schunk Towanda Harris
Together	5	36%	6	24%	9	56%	Amber Lechuga Angel Linderman Beverly Gongoll Doris Doust Katie Christopherson Kelly Lund Komel Crowley Lorraine Swor Susan Marie James
Not applicable	3	21%	4	16%	2	13%	Kiela Knowles Laura Simonson
Total:	14		25		16		

History of Violence

	2012		2013		2014		
History of Violence	#	% of Total	#	% of Total	#	% of Total	Name of Victim
Prior history of abusive behavior but no documented involvement with legal system	1	7%	6	24%	4	25%	Amber Lechuga Carrie Olson Laura Simonson Michelle Ploetz
Prior history of abuse and prior law enforcement involvement or protective order	7	50%	14	56%	3	19%	Angel Lowe Miranda Schunk Towanda Harris
Unknown	6	43%	5	20%	9	56%	Angel Linderman Beverly Gongoll Doris Doust Katie Christopherson Kelly Lund Kiela Knowles Komel Crowley Lorraine Swor Susan Marie James
Total:	14		25		16		

Geographic Location of Victim

	2012		2013		2014		
Location of Victim	#	% of Total	#	% of Total	#	% of Total	Name of Victim
Twin Cities Metro Area*	10	71%	16	64%	9	56%	Angel Lowe Beverly Gongoll Carrie Olson Kemel Crowley Lorraine Swor Michelle Ploetz Miranda Schunk Susan Marie James Towanda Harris
Greater Minnesota	4	29%	9	36%	7	44%	Amber Lechuga Angel Linderman Doris Doust Katie Christopherson Kelly Lund Kiela Knowles Laura Simonson
Total:	14		25		16		

*Twin Cities Metro Area includes Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott, and Washington Counties. According to the 2000 United States census, approximately 60% of Minnesota's population lives in the Twin Cities area and 40% lives in Greater Minnesota.

Homicide – Suicide

	2012		2013		2014		
	#	% of Total			#	% of Total	Name of Victim
No. of homicides where perpetrator then committed suicide	7	50%	9	36%	6	38%	Beverly Gongoll Doris Doust Katie Christopherson Komel Crowley Lorraine Swor Susan Marie James
Total No. of Femicides:	14		25		16		

2011: In 48% of the domestic violence homicides, the perpetrator then committed suicide.
 2010: In 50% of the domestic violence homicides, the perpetrator then committed suicide.
 2009: In 50% of the domestic violence homicides, the perpetrator then committed suicide.

Murder of Mothers and Effect on Children

	2012		2013		2014		
Children	#	% of Total	#	% of Total	#	% of Total	Name of Victim
Murders of mothers with minor children	7	50%	7	28%	9	56%	Amber Lechuga Angel Linderman Katie Christopherson Kelly Lund Kiela Knowles Kemel Crowley+ Laura Simonson Michelle Ploetz Miranda Schunk
Number of minor children who lost mother	11		13		19		
Number of adult children who lost mother	8		23		7		
Child(ren) present at time of murder or discovered the body	2		6		7		

*This represents the percentage of cases in which the woman who was killed was a mother of minor children. There were 9 mothers of minor children killed in 2014.

+ Kemel Crowley's 5-year-old daughter, Raniya, was also murdered.

Women murdered in cases where the suspected, alleged, or convicted perpetrator was a current or former husband, boyfriend, or intimate partner.

<p>Kiela Gem Knowles Age 19 Park Rapids February 23, 2014</p> 	<p>David Leritz, 21, strangled Kiela Knowles to death on February 23, 2014. Knowles met Leritz in 2011 and reconnected online shortly before the murder. Her father found Kiela unresponsive with a pillow over her face at her Park Rapids apartment when he went to check on her. An autopsy confirmed she died of asphyxiation by strangulation. Leritz was convicted of 2nd degree murder in Knowles' death and received a 28 year prison sentence. He had previously been convicted of Fourth Degree Criminal Sexual Conduct charge in 2012, which involved an underage female. For that crime he received 30 days in jail and 10 years of supervised probation. He is charged with a probation violation in that case, for allegedly failing to remain law abiding during his probation for that crime. Kiela Gem Knowles leaves behind a two-year old son.</p>
<p>Katie Ray Christopherson Age 29 Hudson Township February 24, 2014</p> 	<p>On Monday, February 24, Devin Blowers, 24, shot Douglas County sheriff's deputy Dustin Alexander before killing his girlfriend, Katie Ray Christopherson, with whom he had recently had a child. Blowers then committed suicide. The deputy was saved by his bullet-resistant vest, but Katie Christopherson died. She left behind an infant daughter and a young son.</p>
<p>Carrie Olson Age 29 Hastings April 5, 2014</p> 	<p>Carrie Olson of Davenport, Iowa went missing in December 2013. She was last seen at a gas station on December 28th and her body was found in a field near Hastings, MN on April 5, 2014. Her ex-boyfriend, Tim McVay, 39, was seen driving her car after her disappearance and was charged with first-degree murder. At the time this report was written, Carrie's death was ruled an unspecified homicide and the cause of death had not been released. McVay's former girlfriend told authorities that he stalked her, was violent and that she feared for her safety around him.</p>

<p>Beverly Gongoll Age 62 Waconia Township April 8, 2014</p> 	<p>Beverly Gongoll was found dead in her home on April 8, 2014. Her husband, Kenneth Gongoll, 62, was also found in the home with her. Both died of apparent gunshot wounds. Authorities believe that Kenneth Gongoll first killed his wife before turning the gun on himself in a murder-suicide. They had two adult children together and were married for several decades.</p>
<p>Michelle Ploetz Age 20 St. Paul April 18, 2014</p> 	<p>Michelle Ploetz was shot in the head by her boyfriend, Timothy Hendricks, 19, while their 8-month old son was in a car seat beside her. Michelle Ploetz died two days later. Michelle’s father told authorities that Michelle met Hendricks for dinner so that he could see their child. Michelle’s father accompanied them out of concern for his daughter’s safety. Over dinner, Michelle Ploetz and her father told Hendricks that he needed to get into a treatment program. They also discussed meeting the following week so that Hendricks again could visit his son. After the dinner, Michelle’s father was driving the group home when Hendricks shot Michelle in the backseat. Hendricks also shot at Michelle’s father several times as he tried to intervene.</p> <p>At the time of the murder, Hendricks was on a conditional jail release for a January charge where he pointed a rifle at his 13-year-old nephew. A woman he had been staying with in the days prior to the homicide reported Hendricks had told her that he was going to kill Michelle. He had also threatened to hurt himself. Michelle’s father had tried three times to get Hendricks committed because he feared Hendricks might kill him or his family. Hendricks’ sister had tried “more than 40 times” to have him hospitalized for addiction and mental health issues. Each time he was sent home with medication and was never admitted.</p> <p>Hendricks was convicted of one count of second-degree murder in the death of Michelle Ploetz and one count of second-degree attempted murder of her father, 45-year-old John Ploetz. He was sentenced to 32 years in prison.</p>

<p>Doris Doust Age 86 Worthington May 2, 2014</p> 	<p>Doris Doust’s body was found in her room at the Crossroads Care Center on May 2, 2014 after police were called to investigate gunshots. Her husband, George Doust, 87, was found sitting on an adjacent bed with a fatal self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head. Doris Doust had arrived at the senior care facility only weeks before the incident.</p>
<p>Towanda Harris Age 46 St. Paul May 10, 2014</p> 	<p>Towanda Harris was stabbed to death by her ex-boyfriend, William Chestnut, age 54, on May 9, 2014. According to the criminal complaint, Chesnut and Towanda dated in 2003. Chestnut, his current girlfriend, and their 5 year old son were visiting Harris and her husband. During an argument, Chestnut attacked and stabbed Towanda. Three of Towanda Harris’ nieces, all under the age of ten, and Chestnut’s son were present at the time of the homicide. William Chestnut has been charged with second-degree murder with intent and second-degree murder without intent in Ramsey County District Court. He has a long criminal history that includes several domestic assault charges and violations of protective orders.</p>
<p>Kelly Lund Age 32 Menahga July 12, 2014</p> 	<p>Family members found Kelly Marie Lund dead in a tent on her brother’s lawn the morning of July 12. She had returned to her hometown for the annual Midsummer Festival and was camping out with her boyfriend. The death certificate -- filed after the Ramsey County Medical Examiner’s Office completed an autopsy -- lists the cause of death as a “ligature wrapped around neck multiple times causing asphyxia. At the time this report was written, this case was still under investigation. Kelly leaves behind two young children.</p>

<p>Angel Lowe (Dorothy Redd-Lowe) Age 24 West St. Paul August 10, 2014</p> 	<p>On August 6, four days before Angel’s death, her ex-boyfriend, Marc Bakambia, 28, was arrested and charged with domestic abuse and interfering with a 911 call after he allegedly assaulted her and dragged her out of a car by her hair. Angel told her mother she “feared for her life” and that she was so afraid that she “pretended like she was dead”.</p> <p>On August 10th, Angel Lowe was strangled to death in her West St. Paul home that she used to share with Bakambia. Text messages on Angel's phone show she had broken up with Bakambia the day before she was found dead. A Dakota County grand jury indicted Bakambia on one count of first-degree murder involving domestic abuse and three counts of second-degree murder. Residents of their apartment complex said that they had reported the couple for violent fights in the past. Police had been called to the address at least four times in the past year. Bakambia's past convictions in Minnesota include domestic assault, disorderly conduct and two DWIs.</p>
<p>Laura Simonson Age 32 Rochester November 2, 2013 Body Found on June 5, 2014</p> 	<p>Laura Simonson, of Farmington, MN, was last seen entering a Rochester hotel with 52 year old Steven Zelich, a former police officer from Wisconsin. Laura was reported missing November 22, 2013. On June 5, 2014, police in Wisconsin discovered two bodies in suitcases along a highway and identified one as Laura Simonson. Rochester police say Zelich and Laura were known acquaintances that had a previous relationship through the Internet. In 2001, a woman had reported to the police that Zelich had attempted to rape her. Zelich’s case was never referred to prosecutors for possible criminal charges. Steven Zelich has been charged with first-degree intentional homicide and hiding a corpse. Laura Simonson was the mother of 7 children.</p>

<p>Angel L. Linderman Age 28 Lake City September 9, 2014</p> 	<p>Angel Linderman, of Lake City, was shot to death by her boyfriend, Tanner Rix, 22, on September 9, 2014. Rix called 911 around noon from Baldwin, Wisconsin to report a shooting injury in the car he was driving. Police found Angel's body in the car, covered with a tarp. Autopsy results confirmed that Angel had been shot hours prior to the 911 call. Rix has been charged with felony counts of 1st degree intentional homicide, hiding a corpse, and possession of a firearm by a felon. In addition to being held in connection with the homicide, Rix also had two felony warrants for drug crimes and unauthorized possession of a firearm.</p>
<p>Amber Elena Lechuga Age 22 Springfield September 25, 2014</p> 	<p>Miguel Angel Vasquez, 26, shot and killed Amber Elena Lechuga, the mother of his children. Amber's body was found in the front passenger floor of a burning van in Sleepy Eye and her head was found nearby in the Cottonwood River. Vasquez and Amber lived together in an apartment with their two young children. Police searched the apartment on Sept. 26 and found evidence indicating Amber could have been killed there. Prosecutors said during Vasquez's initial court appearance that they were concerned the children may have been present in the apartment during the brutal murder.</p>
<p>Lorraine Swor Age 85 Minneapolis October 6, 2014</p> 	<p>Lorraine Swor was shot and killed by her husband, Robert Swor, 85, on October 6, 2014. Robert Swor then turned the gun on himself and also died from gunshot wounds. The two were married for 65 years. They leave behind two adult children.</p>

Miranda Schunk
Age 28
St. Paul
December 29, 2014



Less than two weeks after Miranda Schunk obtained a protection order against her 49 year-old, ex-boyfriend, Kevin Scott Evans, he returned to her apartment and repeatedly stabbed her, inflicting wounds to her head, chest and abdomen. Miranda was taken to Regions Hospital where she died on Monday, December 29th. Ten days prior to the stabbing, Miranda Schunk filed an order for protection which prohibited Evans from being in proximity to Miranda. In her petition, Miranda stated, “I am really afraid that [Evans] will follow through with his threats and do serious harm to me, at times I am afraid to leave my home.” The order detailed the abuse which included daily threats of violence, stalking, physical violence including being slapped and punched in the face, destruction of property including throwing medication and pictures of her children into the river, as well as spray painting derogatory remarks on her apartment building, and previously attempting to enter Miranda’s apartment armed with a knife. The day before the stabbing, Miranda reported to police that Evans had violated the protective order and was threatening to slit her throat and put a bullet in her head. A friend of Miranda’s, who lived in the building, said Evans had been calling her all day trying to contact Miranda.

On the day of her death, Miranda planned to leave the state and move down south to her family. Miranda’s best friend had driven up from Texas to help her relocate; she arrived in Minnesota a few hours after her death. The friend reported that Evans had found out about the plan, gotten ahold of Miranda’s address book, and had started calling the friend. He said he knew her address and told her he’d stab her, her children and Miranda if she helped Miranda leave.

Miranda is known to have experienced homelessness in the past. Evans’ past criminal history includes 2nd degree murder, domestic assault, and aggravated robbery.

Susan Marie James
Age 59
Plymouth
December 29, 2014



On December 29, 2014, a man and a woman were found dead in a Plymouth home when officers performed a welfare check at the house after one of the two people failed to show up for work. The woman has been identified as Susan Marie James. The examiner found that Susan died of a gunshot wound to the head. The man found dead in the house has been identified as Susan’s husband, David Gilbert James, and the case is under investigation.

<p>Komel Crowley Age 28 Apple Valley December 2014</p> 	<p>On January 18, 2015, the bodies of Komel Crowley, her husband David T. Crowley and her 5-year-old daughter, Raniya, were discovered in the Apple Valley home. Initial reports are that Komel and Raniya were murdered and David Crowley died of a self-inflicted gunshot. It appears that the murders-suicide occurred sometime in December 2014.</p>
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Men murdered by Intimate Partners

<p>Kelly Phillips Age 48 Arden Hills August 11, 2014</p> 	<p>On August 11th, Kelly Phillips was shot and killed in an Arden Hills gas station parking lot by his former life partner and current business co-owner Lyle "Ty" Marvin Hoffman, 44. In the past, Kelly had shared with an acquaintance that Hoffman was violent. Kelly was shot at least three times by Hoffman. Hoffman evaded police for a month but was eventually caught and charged with the murder.</p>
<p>Richard Alan Baity Age 41 Ogema August 15, 2014</p> 	<p>Richard Baity, of Ogema, was found dead on the road near his home in Becker County on August 15, 2014. According to media reports, Richard died of multiple traumatic injuries. His girlfriend, Jessica Kilde, 33, has been arrested on felony charges of second-degree murder and first-degree manslaughter in his death. Injuries to Richards's body and evidence at the scene suggest he'd been dragged, and a broken strap found nearby appeared consistent with marks on his neck. Kilde was seen driving toward the scene and a strap tied to her vehicle matched the strap found near Richard's body.</p>

Friends- Family members- Interveners murdered in domestic violence-related situations:

<p>Prince Pope Age 32 St. Paul January 25, 2014</p> 	<p>Prince Pope was murdered at his 32nd birthday party. Pope and his brother, Rico Jackson, were both upset about their sister having a black eye and suspected that her boyfriend, Damonta Jones, had been violent towards her. Jackson confronted Jones and was stabbed by Jones’s friend Leevester Rhodes. Pope was fatally shot as he intervened. Jones had a warrant for an outstanding felony drug charge and he was arrested with his accomplice, Leevester Rhodes.</p>
<p>Amelia Analesse Ramirez Age 13 months Cottage Grove March 15, 2014</p> 	<p>On March 15, Amelia Analesse Ramirez died as a result of multiple blunt-force traumatic injuries caused by her father. According to a criminal complaint, Angel Daniel Ramirez, 19, admitted during questioning that he had punched the 13-month-old girl multiple times, pulled her hair out and threw a cup that hit her eye. Ramirez told authorities that the night before Amelia died he was upset with the child’s mother so he went to the infant’s crib and punched her both in the stomach and the back of the head. Relatives told police that Ramirez was controlling and abusive toward the child’s mother, which was confirmed by the mother. Angel Ramirez has been charged with second-degree murder.</p>
<p>Francesca Desandre Age 24 Minneapolis July 5, 2014</p> 	<p>Marco Anthony Gresham, 24, shot and killed Francesca “Frankie” Desandre at a party she hosted to celebrate the 4th of July. Gresham had confronted a woman at the party, identified in the criminal complaint as "V.G.", about "her knowledge of Gresham's alleged involvement" in Prince Pope's murder. Prince Pope was murdered while trying to intervene in a fight that resulted from his brother, Rico Jackson, confronting their sister’s boyfriend regarding physical abuse of his sister. V.G. denied being present or having any knowledge. Gresham displayed a handgun and pointed it at V.G., who attempted to push the gun away but Gresham pulled V.G. close to him and fired one bullet into her abdomen. V.G. fell to the ground and Francesca Desandre began to run toward the house. Several other shots were fired toward Francesca. Desandre was pronounced dead on the scene and V.G. was transported to the hospital where she survived. Gresham has been charged with 2nd degree murder.</p>

<p>British Morris-Rice Age 22 West St Paul July 20, 2014</p> 	<p>British Morris-Rice was killed during an intervention in a domestic assault against her. DeMarcus L. Barnett, 30, pled guilty to one count of second-degree unintentional murder in British's shooting death. He was sentenced to 17 years in prison. According to Barnett, at a party on the night of July 19, he and his friend, M.M., got into a dispute with British's boyfriend over the man's abusive treatment of British Morris-Rice. Witnesses say British was assaulted by her boyfriend at the party. During the dispute British's boyfriend swung at M.M. and in response, Barnett wrestled him to the ground. British got in her car and was leaving when Barnett shot her.</p> <p>In his statement, Barnett said he had fired a shot that he thought was aimed at the ground intending to scare off the boyfriend. When police arrived on the scene they found British Morris-Rice in the driver's seat, slumped toward the passenger seat. British died nine hours later from a gunshot wound.</p>
<p>Raniya Crowley Age 5 Apple Valley December 2014</p> 	<p>On January 18, 2015, the bodies of Komel Crowley, her husband David T. Crowley and her 5-year-old daughter, Raniya, were discovered in the Apple Valley home. Initial reports are that Komel and Raniya were murdered and David Crowley died of a self-inflicted gunshot. It appears that the murders-suicide occurred sometime in December 2014.</p>

About the Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women

The Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women was founded in 1978 to serve as a unifying voice for battered women and to link battered women's programs in the state with the common purpose of ending domestic violence.

MCBW is a statewide, member-based organization serving more than 80 local, regional, and statewide member organizations that advocate for an end to battering. MCBW members programs include battered women's shelters and safe homes, community advocacy programs, criminal justice intervention projects, state and national training and technical assistance organizations, human rights organizations, and homeless shelters and transitional housing programs. Members include 12 culturally specific and population specific programs serving differing communities.

MCBW is working to improve conditions for battered women and their families by increasing public awareness, impacting public policy and increasing the capacity of those who work directly with domestic violence victims and their families.

Mission Statement:

The mission of the Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women is to provide a voice for battered women and member programs; challenge systems and institutions so they respond more effectively to the needs of battered women and their children; promote social change; and support, educate, and connect member programs.

Vision Statement:

The vision of the Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women is to end violence against women and their children and to achieve social justice for all.

In 2014, at least 23 Minnesotans lost their lives as a result of domestic violence.

Remember their names...

1. January 25, 2014 Prince Pope, St. Paul, died as a result of gunshot wounds.
2. Feb 23, 2014 Kiela Knowles, Park Rapids, died as a result of strangulation.
3. Feb. 24, 2014 Katie Christopherson, Fargo, died as a result of gunshot wounds.
4. March 15, 2014 Amelia Ramirez, Cottage Grove, died as a result of blunt force trauma.
5. April 5, 2014 Carrie Olson, Davenport, died from unknown causes.
6. April 8, 2014 Beverly Gongoll, Waconia, died as a result of gunshot wounds.
7. April 16, 2014 Michelle Ploetz, St. Paul, died as a result of gunshot wounds.
8. May 2, 2014 Doris Doust, Worthington, died as a result of gunshot wounds.
9. May 10, 2014 Towanda Harris, St. Paul, died from a stabbing.
10. Nov. 2, 2013 Laura Simonson, Farmington, died as a result of strangulation.
(Body found on June 5, 2014)
11. July 5, 2014 Francesca Desandre, Minneapolis, died as a result of gunshot wounds.
12. July 12, 2014 Kelly Lund, Menahga, died as a result of strangulation.
13. July 20, 2014 British Morris-Rice, West St Paul, died as a result of a gunshot wound.
14. August 20, 2014 Angel Lowe (Dorothy Redd-Lowe), West St. Paul, died as a result of strangulation.
15. August 11, 2014 Kelly Phillips, Arden Hills, died as a result of gunshot wounds.
16. August 15, 2014 Richard Baity, Ogema, died as a result of excessive dragging.
17. Sept 9, 2014 Angel Linderman, Lake City, died as a result of gunshot wounds.
18. Sept 25, 2014 Amber Lechuga, Springfield, died as a result of gunshot wounds.
19. October 6, 2014 Lorraine Swor, Minneapolis, died as a result of gunshot wounds.
20. Dec 29, 2014 Miranda Schunk, St Paul, died as a result of stabbing.
21. Dec 29, 2014 Susan James, Plymouth, died as a result of a gunshot wound.
22. December 2014 Komel Crowley, Apple Valley, died as a result of a gunshot wound.
23. December 2014 Raniya Crowley, Apple Valley, died as a result of a gunshot wound.

The Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women publishes *The Femicide Report*, a report on those murdered in our state, to educate the public about the lethality of domestic violence. We report on the murders that occur at the hands of abusers to direct attention to the challenges faced by all of the women and children who are living with abuse and as a call to all Minnesotans to come together because it takes the entire community to end violence.

The 2014 Femicide Report is compiled from news accounts. Please contact MCBW if we have missed a death or if you have updated or more complete information on any femicide.

We ask that the Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women be credited when information from this report is used.

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