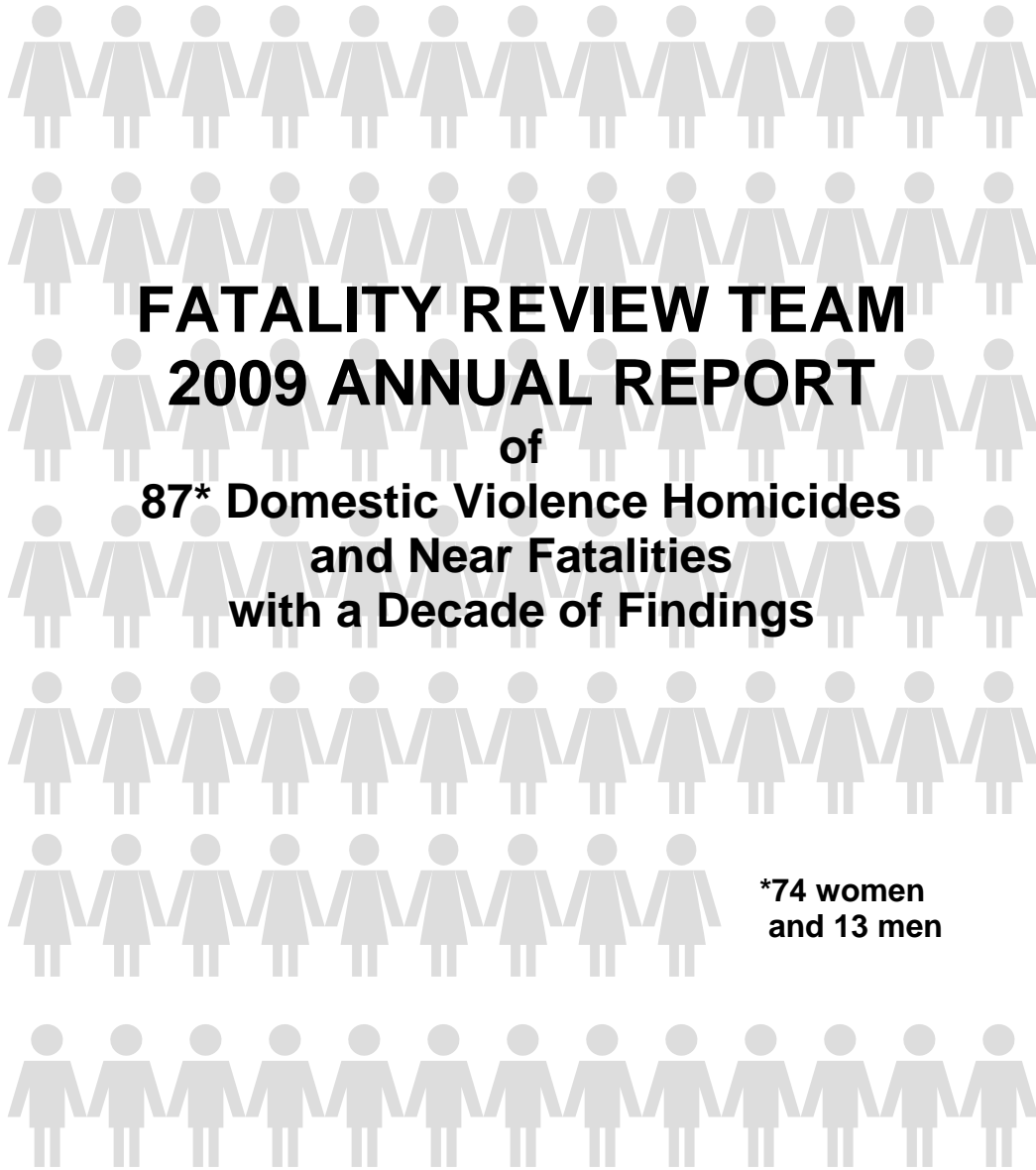


**Pinellas County  
Domestic Violence Task Force**



**FATALITY REVIEW TEAM  
2009 ANNUAL REPORT  
of  
87\* Domestic Violence Homicides  
and Near Fatalities  
with a Decade of Findings**

**\*74 women  
and 13 men**

***In Pinellas County for the last 10 years, domestic violence homicides  
have accounted for 1 in 5 of all homicides.***

*This report is dedicated to domestic violence homicide victims, near fatality survivors, and their families*

For more information, visit us at [www.dvtf.org](http://www.dvtf.org)

## **MISSION, OBJECTIVES AND CASE CRITERIA**

### **Mission:**

The mission of the multi-disciplinary Pinellas County Fatality Review Team is to review domestic violence fatalities and near fatalities for public policy changes needed to prevent domestic violence.

### **Objectives:**

1. To describe trends and patterns of domestic violence related fatalities and near fatalities in Pinellas County, Florida.
2. To identify high risk factors, current practices, gaps in systemic responses, barriers to safety in domestic violence situations, and recommend prevention or intervention activities to the Domestic Violence Task Force for implementation.
3. To educate the public, policy makers, and funders about fatalities and near fatalities due to domestic violence and about strategies for intervention.
4. To recommend policies, practices, and services that will encourage collaboration to prevent and reduce fatalities and near fatalities due to domestic violence.
5. To improve the process of sharing information between agencies and offices that work with domestic violence victims.
6. To more effectively facilitate the prevention of domestic violence fatalities and near fatalities through multidisciplinary collaboration.

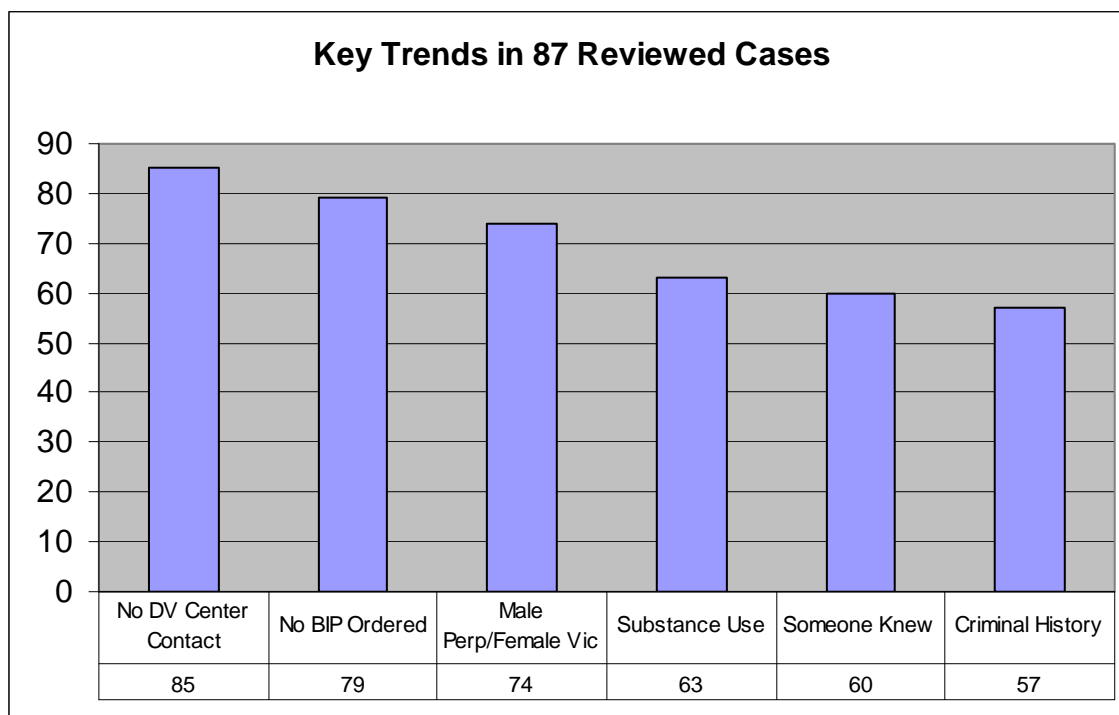
### **All cases that met the following criteria were reviewed:**

- Cases involving violence between intimate partners
- Homicides, homicide/suicides, and near fatality cases
- Closed cases (investigated, prosecuted with a resolution if appropriate)
- Cases that occurred since 1996

The Fatality Review Team is a committee of the *Pinellas County Domestic Violence Task Force*, whose purpose is to promote the prevention of domestic and sexual violence, to enhance victim safety, and to hold batterers accountable.

## KEY FINDINGS AND ACTIONS NEEDED

At the end of 2009, the Fatality Review Team concluded its 10<sup>th</sup> year of reviewing domestic-related homicides and near fatalities that have occurred since 1996 in Pinellas County. During those ten years (2000 – 2009), the team reviewed all eligible cases. The cumulative data from those 87 cases (see Appendix) clearly reveals trends and immediate actions needed to prevent domestic homicides in our community.



**The data highlights that in the vast majority of cases:**

- **Victims had no contact with a domestic violence center**
- **Perpetrators had not been ordered to Batterer’s Intervention Program (BIP)**
- **Perpetrators were men and victims were women**
- **Substance use was involved**
- **Either friends or family knew of violence in the relationship**
- **Perpetrators had a criminal history**

**Lack of victim contact:** 98% of the victims had no known contact with a DV Center prior to their deaths. The conclusion reached from this statistic is that the DV Centers, CASA and The Haven of RCS, provide protection from homicide and near fatal attacks.

**Actions Needed:** Expand community education and outreach regarding available support services through CASA and The Haven of RCS. Funding for DV Centers should be increased in order to accomplish these critical outreach and educational initiatives.

**No Batterer's Intervention Program (BIP) ordered:** 91% of the reviewed cases had no record of the batterer ever being ordered to or voluntarily attending BIP, although in many of the cases there was no domestic violence court intervention that would have enabled BIP to be ordered. However, there were at least potential opportunities in 13% of the reviewed cases in which an Injunction for Protection had been ordered and in 39% of the reviewed cases where there was a prior arrest for domestic violence. The 2009 data reveals that less than 2% of respondents to a violence-related injunction (domestic, dating, sexual or repeat) were ordered to any treatment program, including BIP. Orders to BIP and sanctions for noncompliance have been steadily decreasing for several years.

**Actions Needed:** When a domestic violence-related injunction is issued, BIP is usually appropriate per F.S. 741.2902 and sometimes mandatory per F.S. 741.30(6)(e). Further, the Court should monitor completion and institute sanctions when the batterer does not comply with court-ordered treatment.

**Male perpetrators and female victims:** 85% of the domestic-related homicides reviewed were women killed by men.

**Action Needed:** Primary prevention programs, especially for youth and young adults, should be increased. These programs focus on gender issues, social norms for males and females, and male respect for girls and women. An increase in violence prevention and nonviolent conflict resolution education for boys is also clearly needed, preferably conducted by men. It is recommended that this education include the fact that over 53% of the couples involved in domestic-related homicides had an age gap of more than 6 years, twice the national average for married or cohabitating couples.

**Substance use:** In 72% of the reviewed cases, either the perpetrator or victim or both had consumed drugs or alcohol prior to the homicide or near fatal attack.

**Action Needed:** Domestic violence training should be required for substance abuse treatment professionals. This training should include how to routinely screen for domestic violence victims and perpetrators, integrate domestic violence education into treatment, and make appropriate referrals. Onsite victim support groups and Batterer Intervention Programs should be available within substance abuse treatment programs.

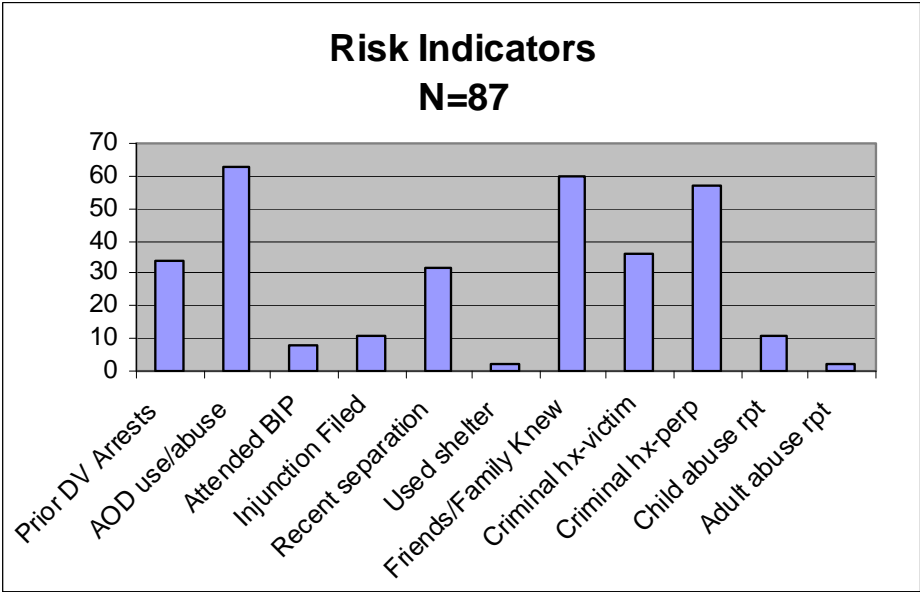
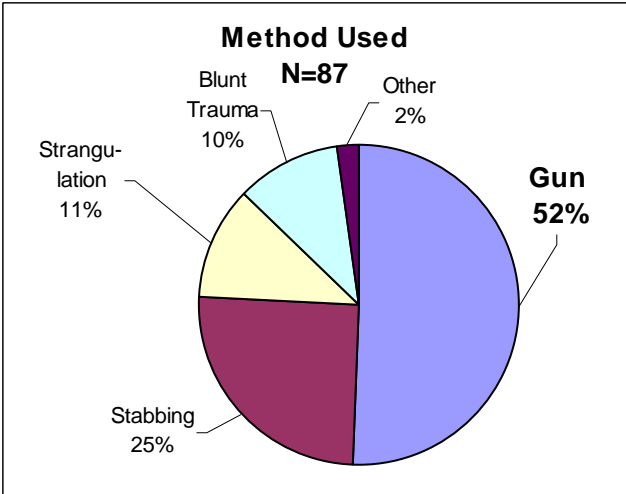
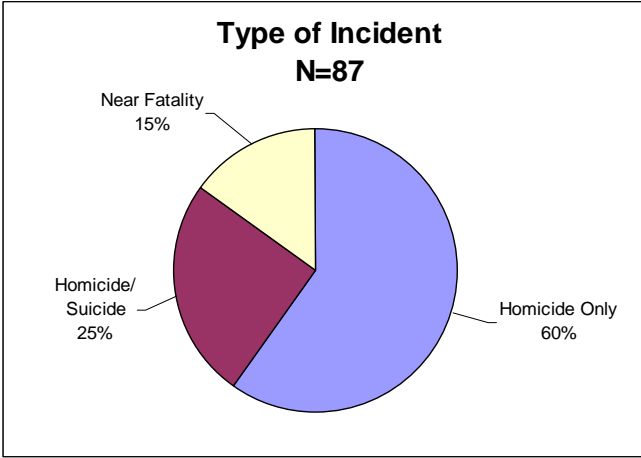
**Friends and family:** In 69% of the reviewed cases, friends or family members knew the relationship was abusive but did not know how to effectively intervene.

**Action Needed:** Increase education to the general public about lethality risks and effective interventions and resources.

**Perpetrator criminal history:** In 65% of reviewed cases, the perpetrator had a criminal history not related to domestic violence and 39% of cases showed some history of domestic violence arrests prior to the incident. Research shows that predictors for reabuse include: having just one prior criminal offense for any crime, having an outstanding warrant for any crime, and being on probation for any crime at the time of the domestic violence arrest (Hirschel, 2007; Words, 2000; and Kline, 2005 respectively).

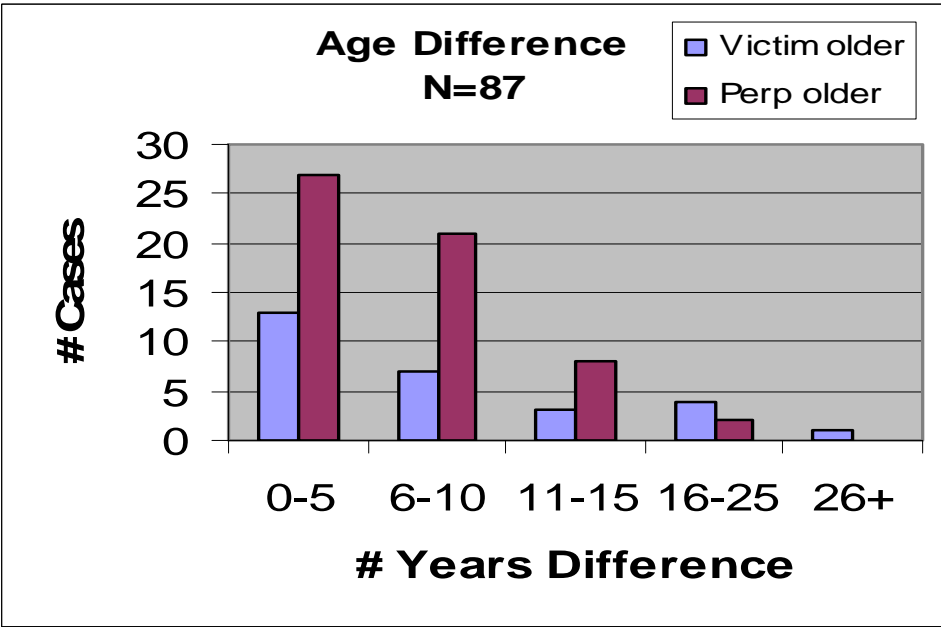
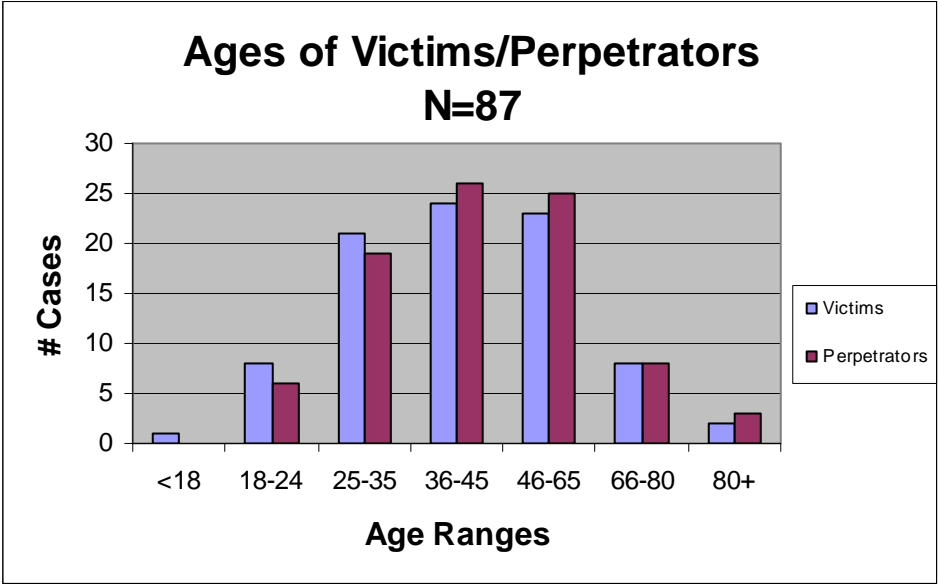
**Action Needed:** The civil and criminal systems should consider the entire criminal history of a domestic violence offender, rather than only their domestic violence history, in determining decisions about arrests, injunctions, bail, and prosecution.

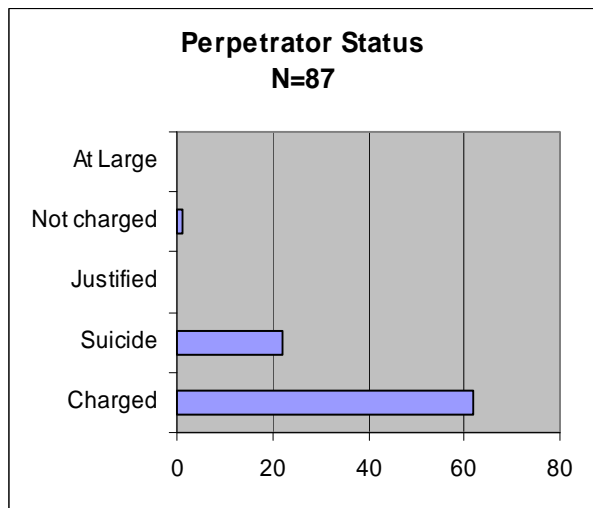
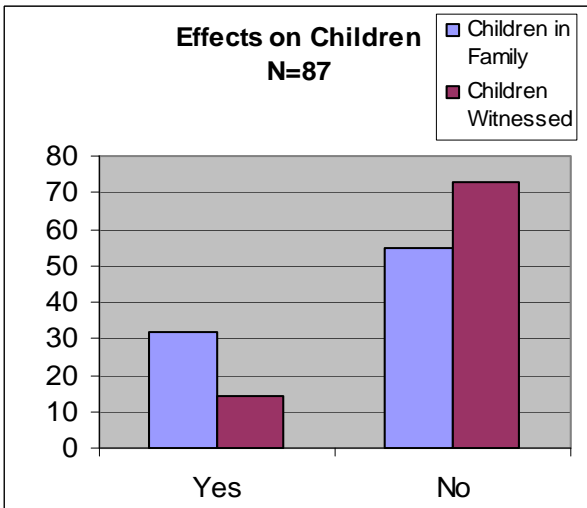
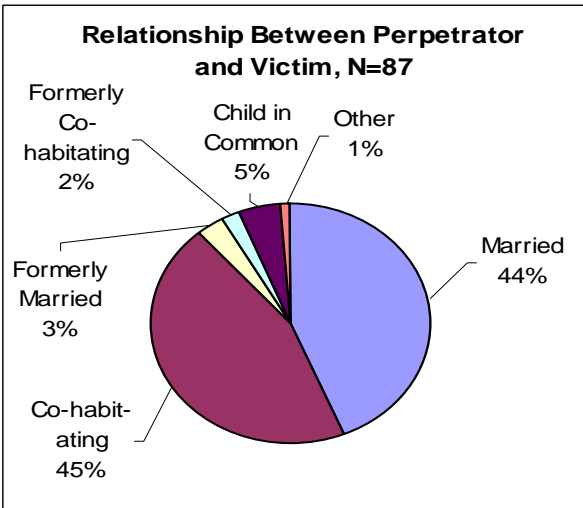
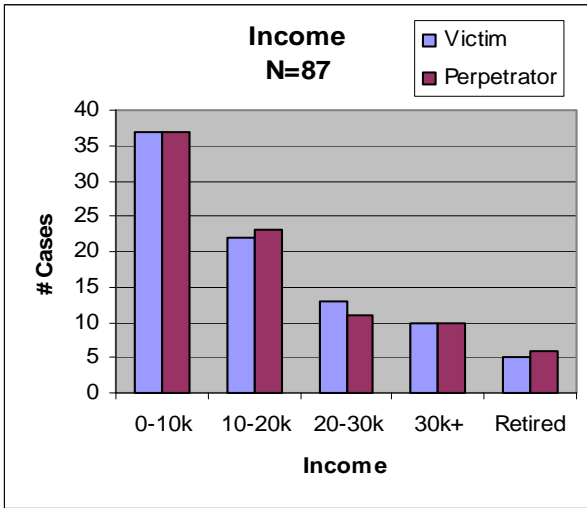
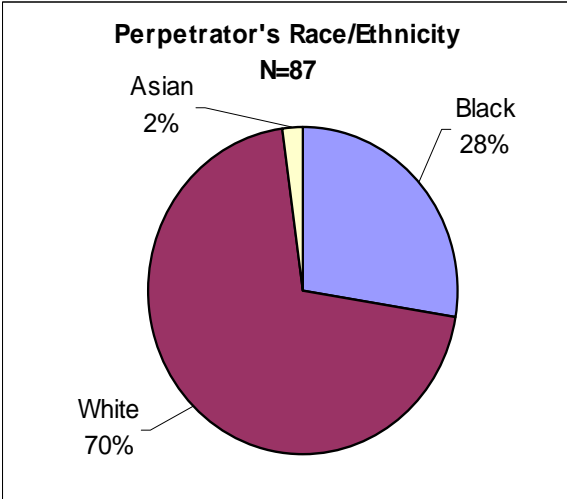
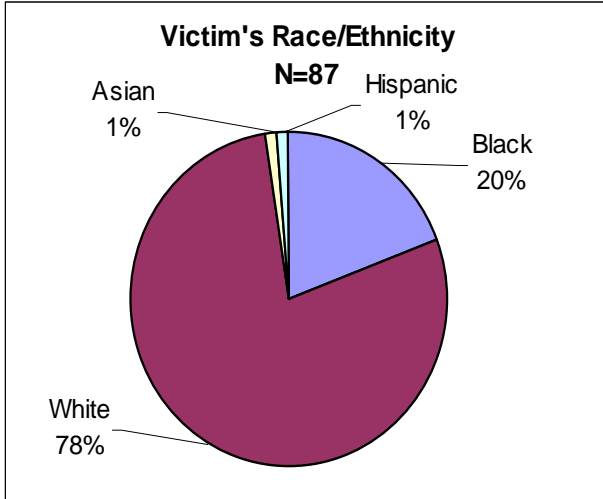
# APPENDIX CUMULATIVE DATA

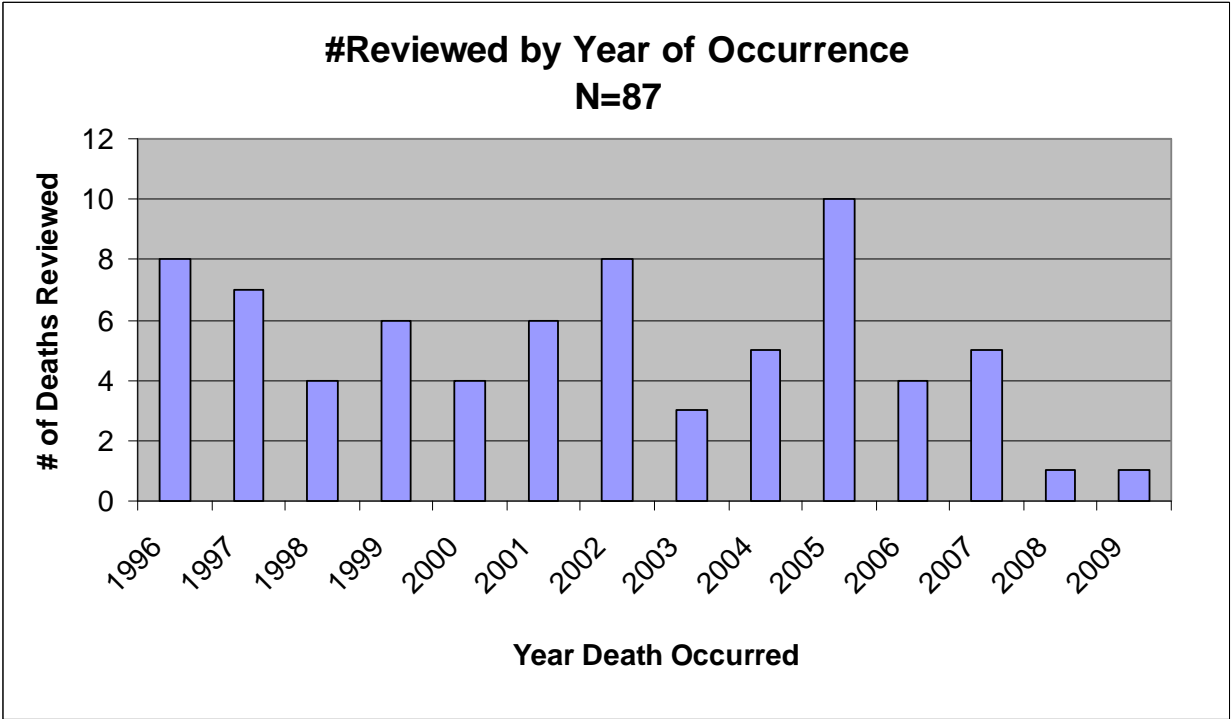
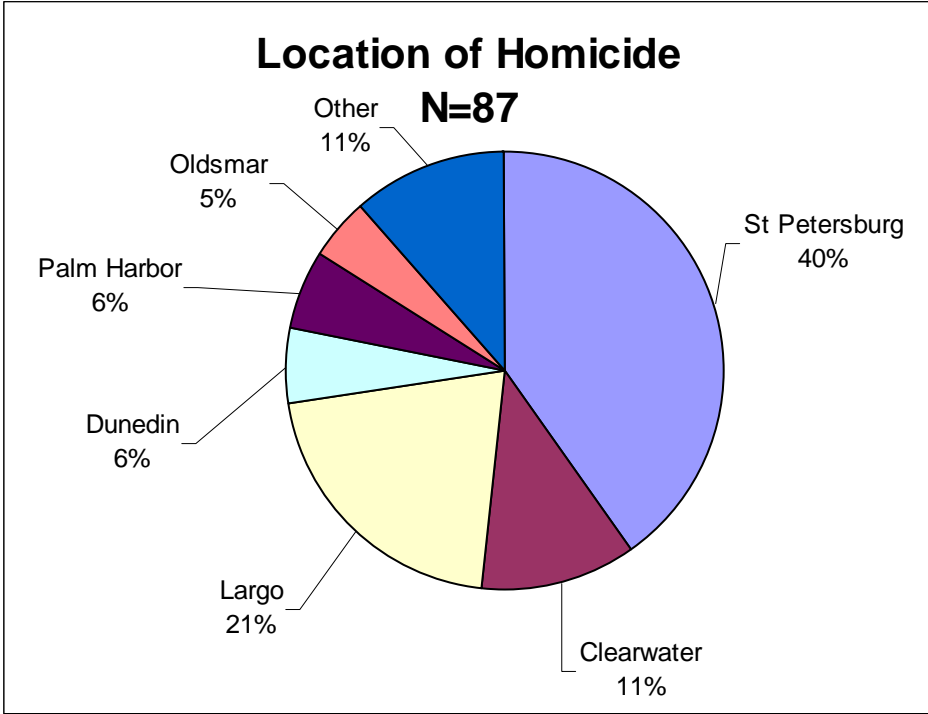


#### Risk Indicator Key

AOD	- Alcohol and Other Drugs
BIP	- Batterer's Intervention Program
DV	- Domestic Violence
Hx	- History
Rpt	- Report







.....  
Tear off for quick reference guide!

## PINELLAS COUNTY DOMESTIC FATALITY REVIEW TEAM RESULTS

Reviewed cases reveal the following trends:

- Lack of victim contact with domestic violence center (98%).
- Perpetrator has not attended Batterer's Intervention (91%).
- Perpetrators are male and victims are female (85%).
- Substance use by one or both parties (72%).
- Friends or family know of violence in relationship (69%).
- Prior criminal history for perpetrator (65%).

These reviewed cases also reveal:

- An overrepresentation of black victims and perpetrators.
- A higher incidence of victims and perpetrators with incomes less than \$10,000 per year.
- A higher incidence of victims and perpetrators in the age range of 25 to 45 years.
- Age gap of 6 years or more (53.5%, double the national rate).
- Firearm as weapon of choice (52%).

Local and national studies consistently demonstrate that the danger level for the victim is heightened when any of these indicators is present and, as such, enhanced efforts must be made to increase victim safety in these situations. However, we must keep in mind that any domestic violence victim can be killed by an abuser, and any abuser can become a murderer.

## **NATIONAL TRENDS OR ANTECEDENTS TO DOMESTIC HOMICIDE**

- Prior threat with a firearm or other weapon (20.2 times more likely to kill).
- Prior threat to kill victim or themselves (14.9 times more likely to kill).
- Firearm in the home (6.1 times more likely to kill).
- Extreme jealousy, possessiveness, control of everyday activities (5 times more likely to kill).
- Prior domestic violence history in relationship.
- Separation issues.
- Substance use by perpetrator.
- Criminal history for perpetrator.
- Perpetrator's lack of employment.
- Prior attempt to strangle.
- Child in home and perpetrator is not biological father.
- Forced sex.

National Sources: Dr. Jacqueline Campbell, Dr. Byron Johnson, and Dr. Neil Websdale.

Local Source: Pinellas County 2009 Fatality Review Team Annual Report

For more information on domestic homicide or this report, please contact:

Frieda Widera  
Chairperson, Fatality Review Team  
Largo Police Department  
201 Highland Ave.  
Largo, FL 33770  
(727)586-7481  
[fwidera@largo.com](mailto:fwidera@largo.com)