

2017

# FEMICIDE REPORT

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOMICIDE IN MINNESOTA



**MCBW**

Minnesota Coalition  
for Battered Women



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## FOREWORD

Each year as we prepare to release this report, we hope for one thing: that we will never have need to do it again. Sadly, as we publish the 2017 *Femicide Report*, we are already tracking information on domestic violence homicides happening in 2018. In the 29 *Femicide Reports* we have released so far, we have documented murders of hundreds of women, men, and children. We gather this information in hope that it will propel members of our communities into actions that will end violence in our homes, our relationships, and our lives. It is with heavy hearts we report that in 2017, at least 24 more people lost their lives to domestic violence in our state.

As you read the 2017 *Femicide Report*, we would like you to remember the victims as more than their deaths. Numbers and statistics only tell us a small part of the story. They do not share the lifetime of grief faced by family members and loved ones of the victims. The numbers do not tell the full story of the victim's lives nor the full story of their deaths.

As we reflect on information shared in these reports, we realize how year after year, the names change but the stories and the circumstances surrounding victims' lives and deaths remain the same. We ask ourselves: why? Why is it that despite huge strides made in public policy and awareness, are people still being murdered due to domestic violence? The answer is not simple, nor is it one that can command a quick fix – though we must act with urgency. What we need is a multifaceted response to ending domestic violence in Minnesota.

The only way to end domestic violence homicides is to end domestic violence itself. We must pull it out from its roots and eradicate the very conditions on which it thrives. We must open our eyes to the connections between everyday oppressions like sexual harassment, and recognize domestic violence homicides as an extreme manifestation of patriarchy. If we do nothing to improve the conditions surrounding abusive relationships, leaving the relationship will not guarantee safety or peace.

The only way for us to achieve a peaceful, thriving society where domestic violence is a distant nightmare is to create a culture of shared responsibility. To recognize that we are only as safe as those around us. To remember that domestic violence, at its core, is a public safety issue; no one is immune to its risks. In a culture of shared responsibility, we assume it is our obligation to ensure the safety of our community. We believe and support survivors and we invest in whatever it takes to hold people accountable and change their abusive behaviors.

We must respond to domestic violence urgently, like our lives depend on it, because they do.



# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOMICIDES IN MINNESOTA: 1989-2017

# 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

### \*

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, childcare 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.

# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOMICIDES IN MINNESOTA: 1989-2017

*We remember...*

## **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

## **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

## **2015**

At least 22 women died from domestic violence  
At least 9 family members/friends/interveners were murdered  
At least 3 men died from domestic violence

## **2016**

At least 18 women died from domestic violence  
At least 3 family members/friends/interveners were murdered

## **2017**

At least 19 women died from domestic violence  
At least 5 family members/friends/interveners were murdered



# OVERVIEW OF THE 2017 FEMICIDE REPORT

The number of Minnesotans killed due to domestic violence varies from year to year. We have seen a yearly low of 12 deaths and numbers as large as 47. In 2016, 21 Minnesotans were murdered due to domestic violence. This year, the number is slightly higher. However, one year's data does not depict a trend. In 2012, there were 18 cases included in the *Femicide Report*. In 2015, there were 34 known domestic violence homicides in Minnesota. The numbers of homicides fluctuate and can vary significantly from year to year.

***In 2017 at least 24 Minnesotans were killed due to violence from a current or former intimate partner.***

## **At least 19 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 bystanders**

Were murdered in domestic violence related situations.

## **At least 12 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 2017 but MCBW is waiting for further information on circumstances surrounding the deaths and the relationship between the victims and the perpetrators. Once full information is public, MCBW will update this report.

The revised report will be available through MCBW's website: [www.mcbw.org](http://www.mcbw.org)



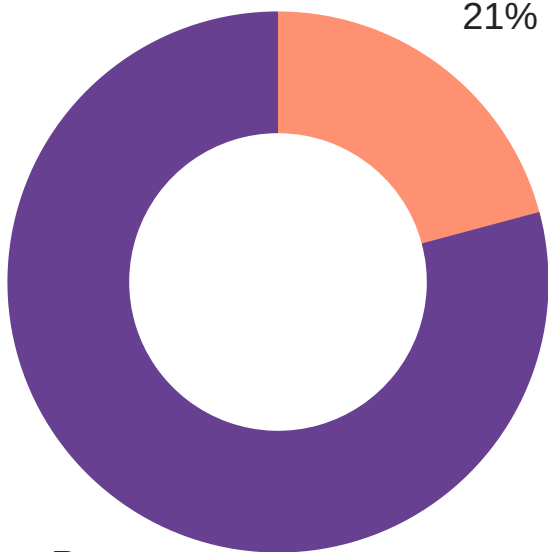
# VICTIMS AND RELATIONSHIP TO THE ALLEGED PERPETRATORS

## Key Femicide Statistics

**Current/former  
intimate partner**

*19 victims*

**Other**  
21%



**Intimate Partner**

79%

**Other**

*5 victims*

Senicha Marie Lessman  
Alicia Ann Swenson  
Lacey J. Kuschel  
Maria McIntosh  
Tawnja Rene Wallace  
Iesha Lanell Wiley  
Sandra Kay Sandland  
Jaida Marie Hoffman  
Dominga Mejia Guerrero  
Michelle Le  
Vanessa Rae Danielson  
Martina Lopez Garcia  
Dawn Marie Blomberg  
Ruzana Semenovna Yedvabnik  
Melissa Seefert  
Jessica Suzanne Ludenia  
Phanny Phay  
Sarah Ruth (Benson) Cheshire  
Linda Pa Vue

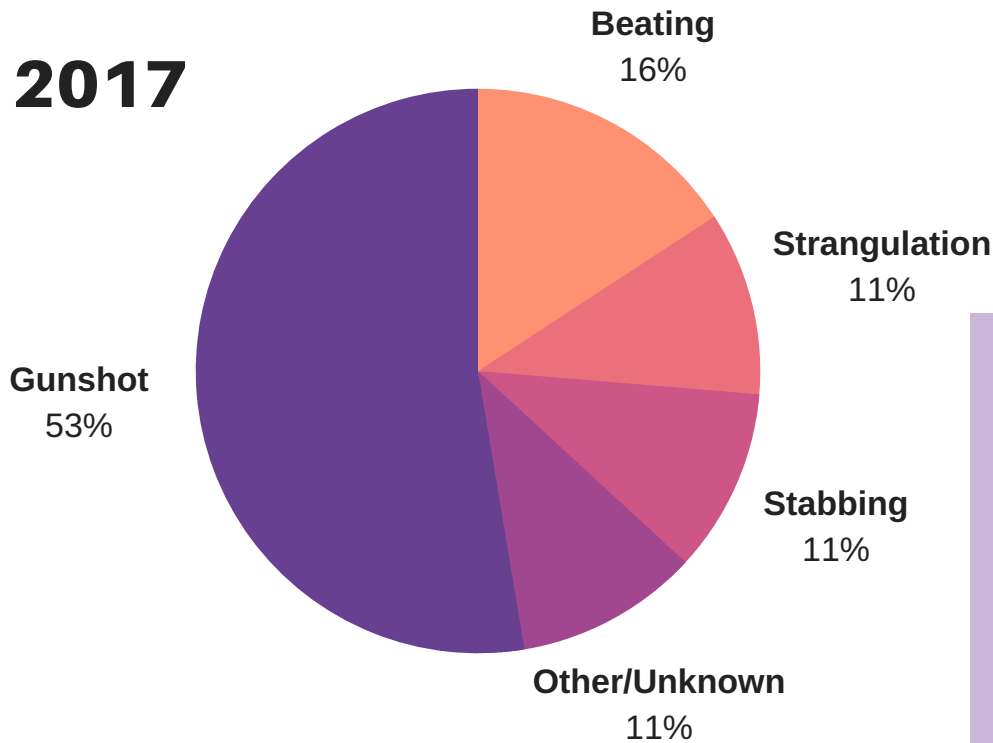
Carlton Campbell +  
Olivia McIntosh\*  
Wade McIntosh\*  
Jody T. Fry +  
Paw Boh Htoo +

\* Family members killed alongside victim of intimate partner violence.  
+ Bystander killed due to intimate partner violence.

# CAUSE OF DEATH

## Key Femicide Statistics (2015-2017) for Adult Women Murdered by a Current or Former Intimate Partner

**2017**



**2017 VICTIMS: 19**

### **G U N S H O T : 1 0**

Alicia Ann Swenson  
Lacey J. Kuschel  
Maria McIntosh  
Ilesha Lanell Wiley  
Sandra Kay Sandland  
Jaida Marie Hoffman  
Martina Lopez Garcia  
Dawn Marie Blomberg  
Melissa Seefert  
Sarah Ruth (Benson) Cheshire

### **B E A T I N G : 3**

Ruzana Semenovna Yedvabnik  
Phanny Phay  
Linda Pa Vue

### **S T A B B I N G : 2**

Senicha Marie Lessman  
Dominga Mejia Guerrero

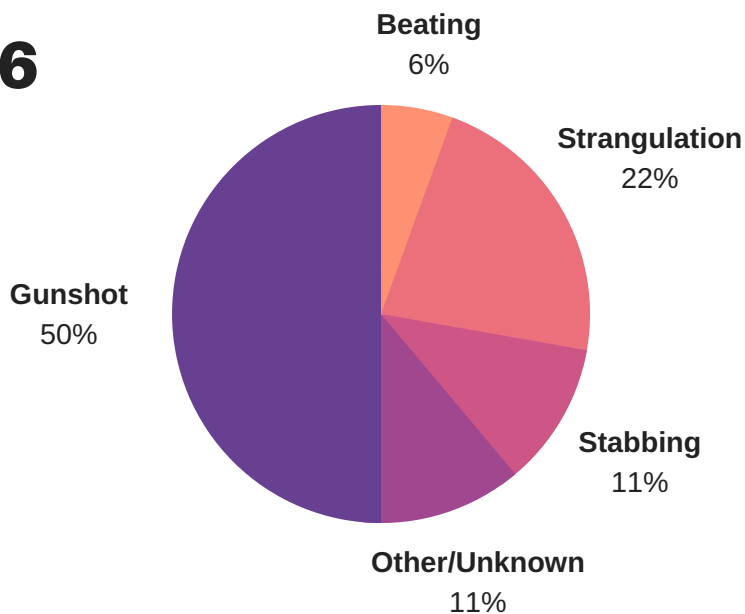
### **S T R A N G U L A T I O N : 2**

Tawnja Rene Wallace  
Michelle Le

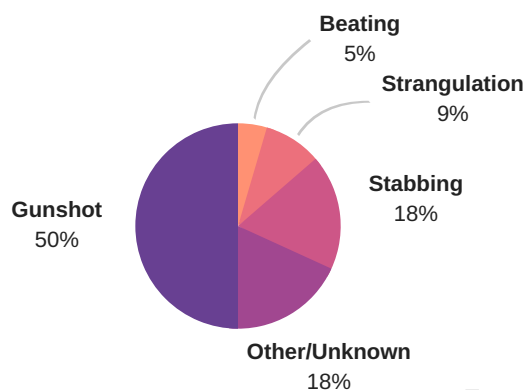
### **O T H E R / U N K N O W N : 2**

Vanessa Rae Danielson  
Jessica Suzanne Ludenia

**2016**



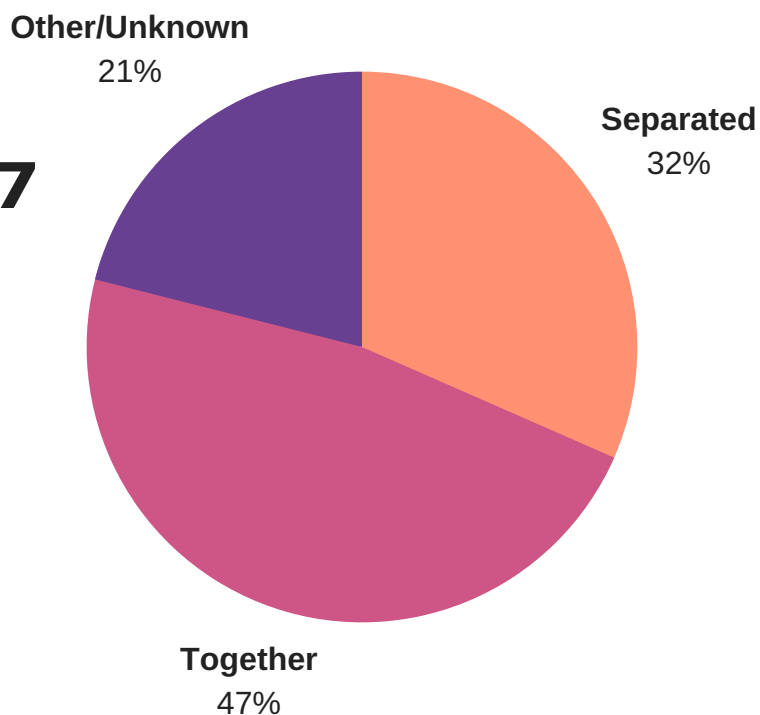
**2015**



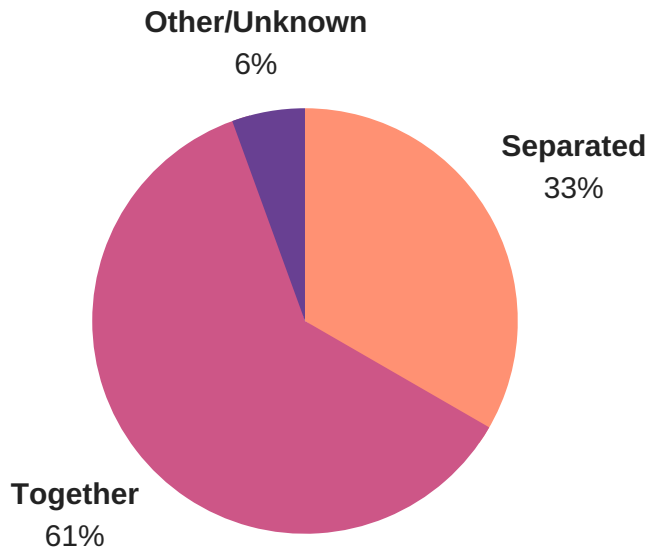
# VICTIM WAS SEPARATED FROM ABUSER OR ATTEMPTING TO LEAVE

Key Femicide Statistics (2015-2017) for Adult Women Murdered by a Current or Former Intimate Partner

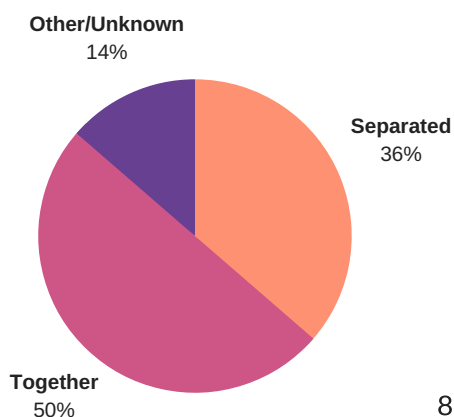
**2017**



**2016**



**2015**



**2017 VICTIMS: 19**

**SEPARATED OR ATTEMPTING TO LEAVE: 6**

Maria McIntosh  
Michelle Le  
Vanessa Rae Danielson  
Sarah Ruth (Benson) Cheshire  
Linda Pa Vue  
Martina Lopez Garcia

**TOGETHER: 9**

Senicha Marie Lessman  
Alicia Ann Swenson  
Lacey J. Kuschel  
Jaida Marie Hoffman  
Dawn Marie Blomberg  
Ruzana Semenovna Yedvabnik  
Melissa Seefert  
Jessica Suzanne Ludenia  
Phanny Phay

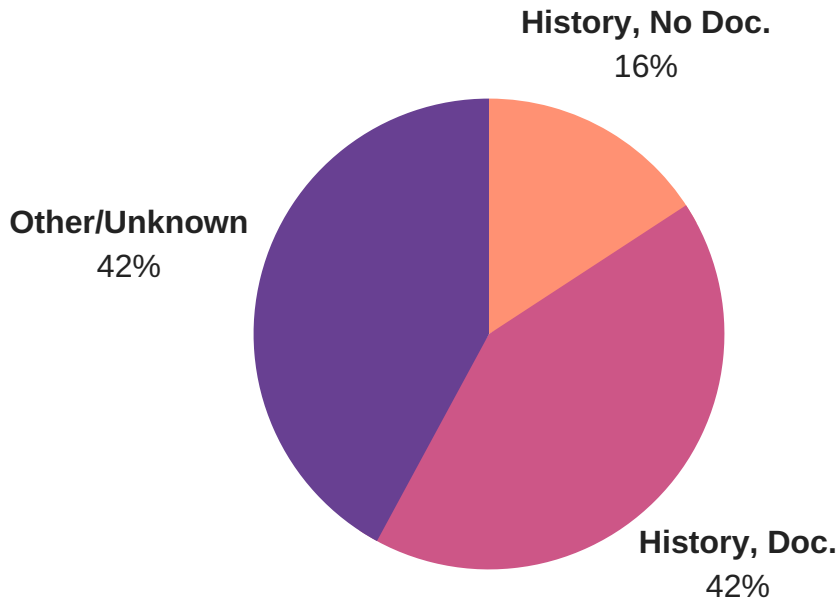
**OTHER / UNKNOWN: 4**

Tawnja Rene Wallace  
Iesha Lanell Wiley  
Sandra Kay Sandland  
Jaida Marie Hoffman  
Dominga Mejia Guerrero

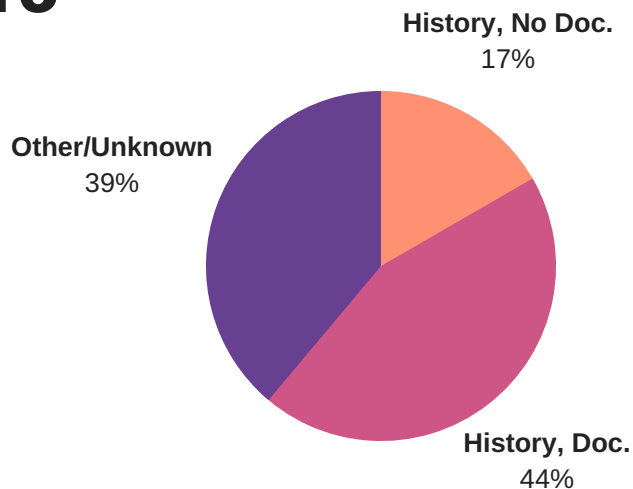
# HISTORY OF VIOLENCE

## Key Femicide Statistics (2015-2017) for Adult Women Murdered by a Current or Former Intimate Partner

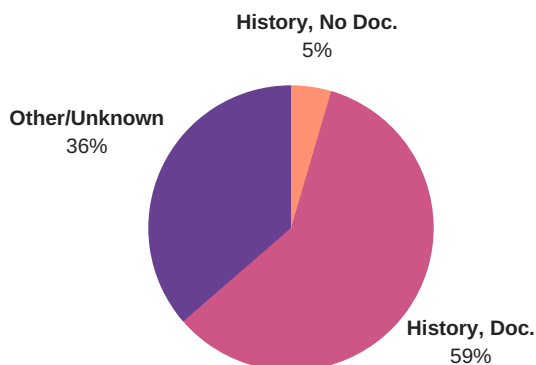
### 2017



### 2016



### 2015



### 2017 VICTIMS: 19

#### HISTORY, NO DOCUMENTATION: 3

Maria McIntosh  
Michelle Le  
Sarah Ruth (Benson) Cheshire  
*Cases in which offender had a prior history of abusive behavior but no documented involvement with legal system.*

#### HISTORY WITH DOCUMENTATION: 8

Tawnja Rene Wallace  
Iesha Lanell Wiley  
Sandra Kay Sandland  
Vanessa Rae Danielson  
Martina Lopez Garcia  
Dawn Marie Blomberg  
Ruzana Semenovna Yedvabnik  
Linda Pa Vue  
*Cases in which offender had a documented prior criminal or civil history of domestic violence.*

#### OTHER / UNKNOWN: 8

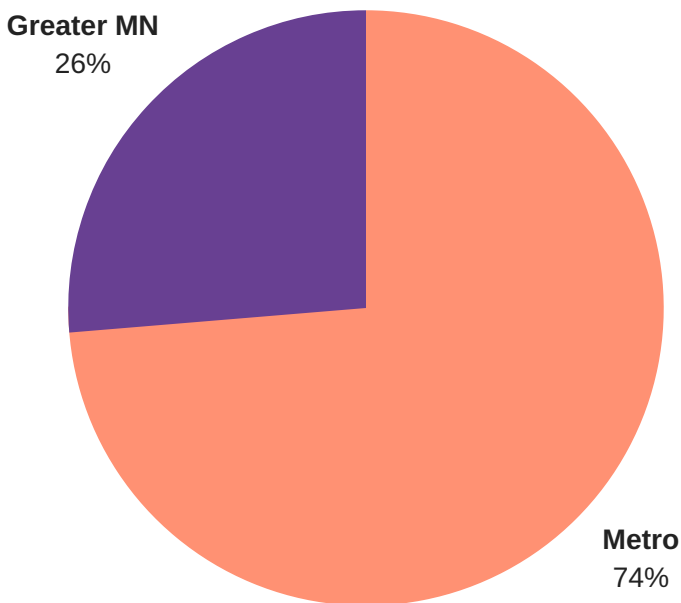
Senicha Marie Lessman  
Alicia Ann Swenson  
Lacey J. Kuschel  
Jaida Marie Hoffman  
Dominga Mejia Guerrero  
Melissa Seefert  
Jessica Suzanne Ludenia  
Phanny Phay



# GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION OF VICTIM

Key Femicide Statistics (2015-2017) for  
Adult Women Murdered by a Current or Former Intimate Partner

## 2017



### 2017 VICTIMS: 19

#### TWIN CITIES METRO AREA: 14

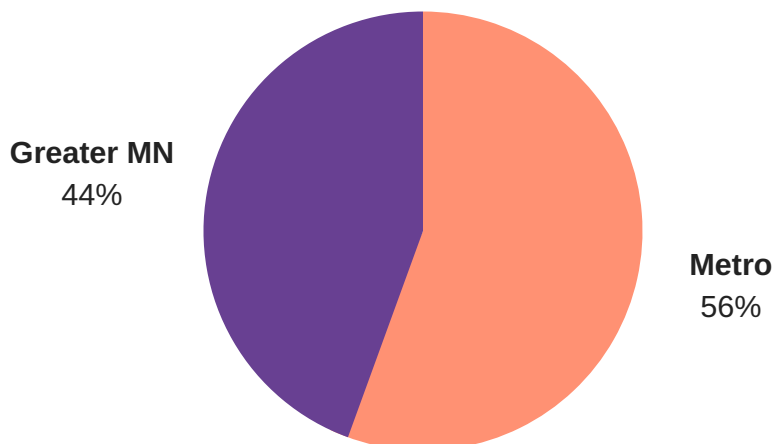
Senicha Marie Lessman  
Alicia Ann Swenson  
Maria McIntosh  
Ilesha Lanell Wiley  
Melissa Seefert  
Sandra Kay Sandland  
Jessica Suzanne Ludenia  
Michelle Le  
Vanessa Rae Danielson  
Martina Lopez Garcia  
Dawn Marie Blomberg  
Ruzana Semenovna Yedvabnik  
Phanny Phay  
Linda Pa Vue

*The "Twin Cities Metro Area" includes: Hennepin, Ramsey, Dakota, Anoka, Washington, Scott, and Carver counties.*

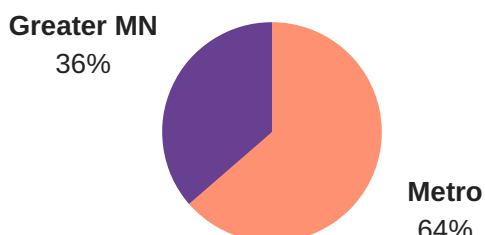
#### GREATER MINNESOTA: 5

Lacey J. Kuschel  
Tawnja Rene Wallace  
Jaida Marie Hoffman  
Dominga Mejia Guerrero  
Sarah Ruth (Benson) Cheshire

## 2016

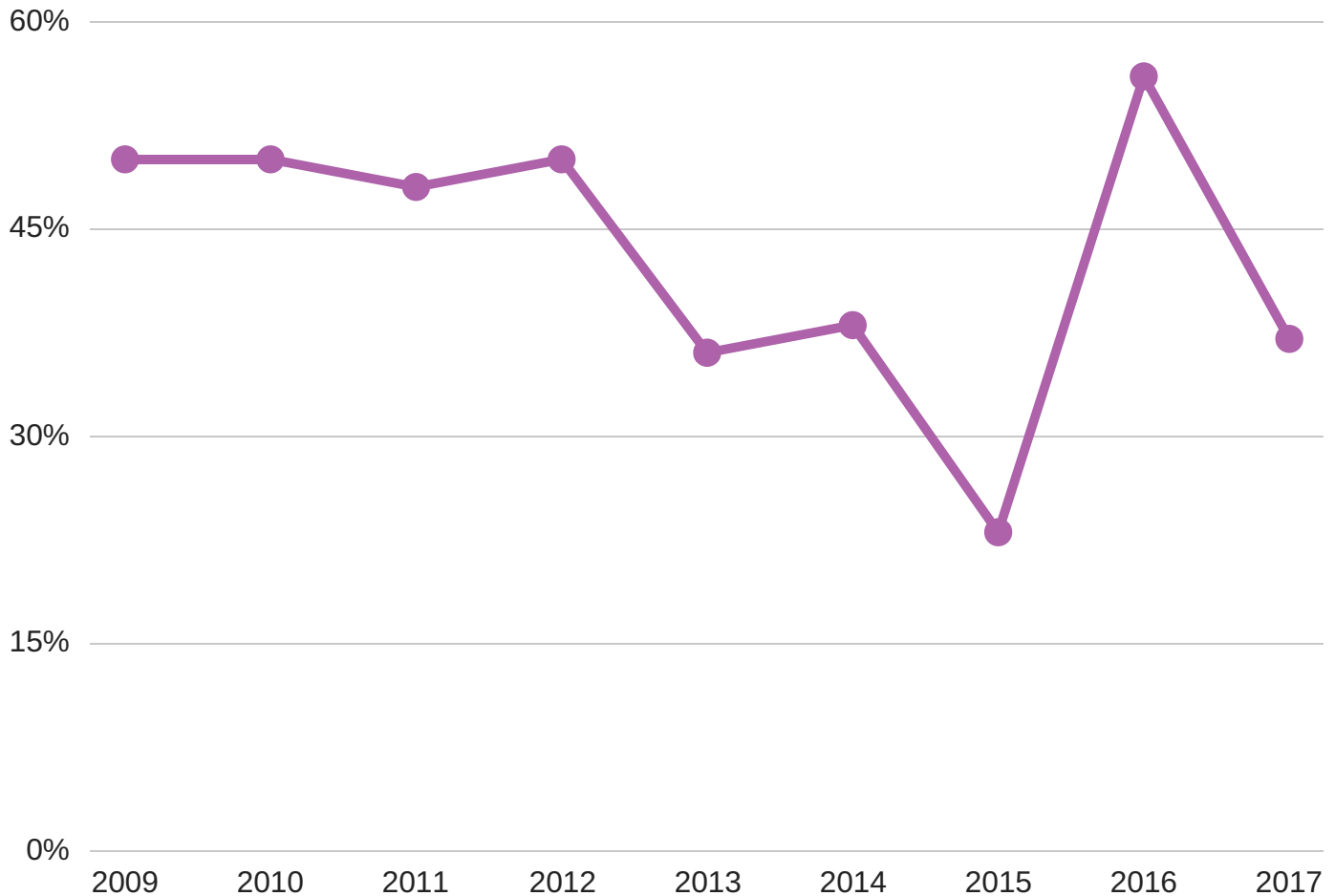


## 2015



# HOMICIDE-SUICIDE

Key Femicide Statistics (2009-2017) for  
Adult Women Murdered by a Current or Former Intimate Partner



2017  
HOMICIDES WHERE  
PERPETRATOR  
COMMITTED SUICIDE

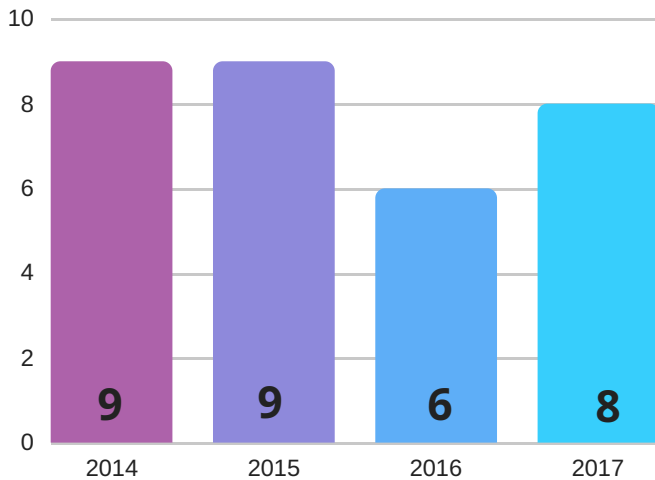
## VICTIMS: 7

Alicia Ann Swenson  
Maria McIntosh  
Jaida Marie Hoffman  
Martina Lopez Garcia  
Dawn Marie Blomberg  
Melissa Seefert  
Sarah Ruth (Benson) Cheshire

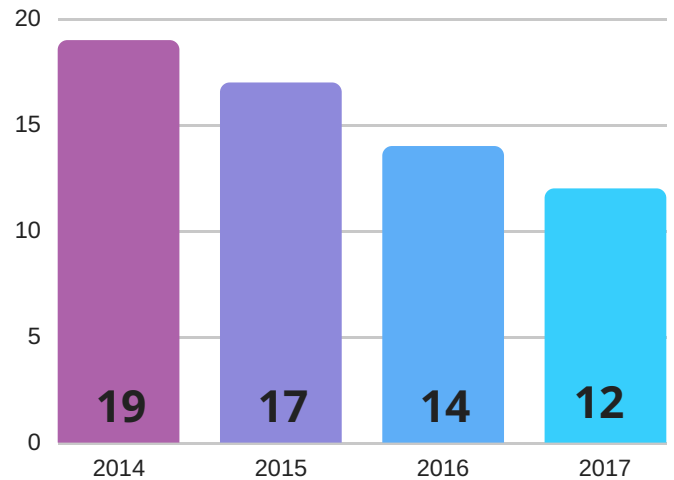
# MURDER OF MOTHERS AND EFFECT ON CHILDREN

Key Femicide Statistics (2014-2017) for  
Adult Women Murdered by a Current or Former Intimate Partner

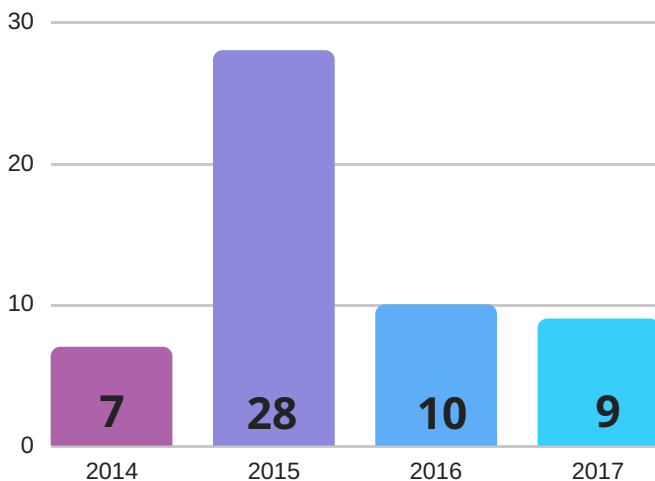
## Mothers with Minor Children



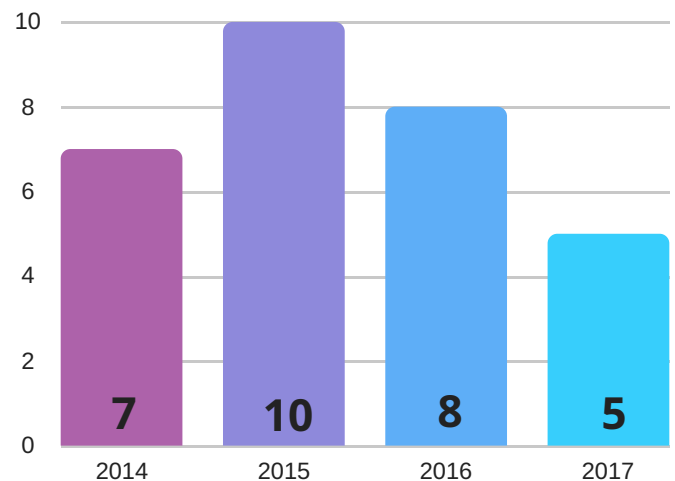
## Number of Minor Children Who Lost Mother



## Number of Adult Children Who Lost Mother



## Child(ren) Present at Time of Murder or Discovery of the Body



2017  
MOTHERS  
WITH MINOR  
CHILDREN

### VICTIMS: 8

Lacey J. Kuschel	Martina Lopez Garcia
Maria McIntosh	Ruzana Semenovna Yedvabnik
Jaida Marie Hoffman	Jessica Suzanne Ludenia
Vanessa Rae Danielson	Sarah Ruth (Benson) Cheshire

# RED FLAGS FOR BATTERER LETHALITY

Every time a domestic violence homicide happens in our community, we tend to ask the same question: what could have gone differently to prevent this from happening? About 80 percent of adult women murdered in Minnesota between 2006 and 2016 were killed by a current or former intimate partner. Most of the victims were killed inside their homes; almost half were killed with a firearm.

Each homicide is a tragedy and behind each death are lessons we can learn. We examine public data collected for each case of domestic violence homicide in Minnesota every year to identify patterns of behavior that preceded the murder. While we make every attempt to collect as much information as we can on each case, our analysis is limited by privacy laws, inadequate data collection, and lack of documented information regarding a perpetrator's history of abuse. Hence, we also rely on existing research on intimate partner homicides to guide our analysis around red flags for batterer lethality in the cases highlighted in this report.

Several tools have been developed to assess potential lethality of intimate partner violence through evidence-based research. Law enforcement departments, health care professionals, advocacy programs, corrections professionals, and judges in several cities and counties in Minnesota use these tools, more commonly known as lethality assessments, to screen victims at high risk of murder. Based on our knowledge, the most common use of these assessments happen when law enforcement first arrive at the scene. The results are used to determine whether a survivor is immediately connected to advocacy services and to inform bail and sentencing.

It is impossible to predict with certainty which batterers will become lethal to their victims. All batterers should be viewed as potentially dangerous, though everyone should be aware of well-documented indicators of lethality. Possible lethality indicators include: attempts to separate from the abuser, extended history of domestic violence or other violence, pregnancy, threats or fantasies of homicide or suicide, access to firearms, threats to use a weapon, stalking, attempted strangulation, sexual assault, extreme jealousy, and control of daily activities.

## SAMPLE LETHALITY ASSESSMENT

**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE  
SCREEN FOR FIRST RESPONDERS**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Offender: \_\_\_\_\_

*of answer any of the questions.*

*Questions #1-3 automatically triggers*

*on against you or threatened you with a*

*ou or your children?*

*o kill you?*

*#1-3, but positive responses to a*

*she get one easily?*

While we are heartened to see these screening tools used to enhance safety and security for victims of domestic violence, we have identified several gaps in practices in Minnesota.

- **Altering assessment tools:** Some agencies in the state have altered screening tools, selecting a few questions from various tools to create their own. While it may be helpful to gather this information, all screening tools should be used as created and intended by the researcher to help with validity.
- **Lack of training and response:** Several agencies have taken up the use of lethality assessments without adequate training and without establishing protocol to mitigate the risk posed to the victim. It is important that those conducting the screening receive training on the research behind the tool, its intended use, and how to weigh each question. Stakeholders must both identify lethality risks and establish responsive protocols.

No risk assessment tool should be used as the sole basis for providing victim access to resources or safety planning with victims, but rather used in addition to other

## INNOVATIVE PRACTICE

### WRAP AROUND SAFETY PLANNING

In 2014, MN Department of Corrections (DOC) began offering the facilitation of Wrap-Around Safety Planning Meetings for victims of domestic violence-related offenses in anticipation of the offender's release from prison. These meetings are to be a victim-centered process involving all stakeholders, including victims, community-based advocates, other victim support people identified by the victim, supervising agents, and law enforcement. The meetings provide an opportunity for victims to share information about their relationship with the offender, including any undocumented abuse or other behavior while on supervision previously. The meeting ensures that all stakeholders have the same information and have developed a contingency plan for worst-case scenarios. The process was shaped by input received from victim focus groups and victim interviews.

information, especially information provided by the victim. All victims should be connected to services as soon as possible. Research has shown that victims are often accurate in predicting future risk and we should rely on their expertise about their lives. All systems interventions offered to victims must be centered in their lived experiences.

Screening tools should be guides for information collecting - not the only source of information about the risk an abuser poses to a victim. Victim input must be taken into consideration while attempting to assess for potential lethality by a perpetrator. This input should be valued just as any other behaviors or information indicative of high risk, such as the perpetrator's prior history of abuse against any and all victims, or substance abuse or recent loss of employment.

Each year, MCBW looks at homicide cases in Minnesota and gathers any known information regarding key lethality factors. We focus on four lethality factors:

### LETHALITY FACTORS

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

MCBW has been analyzing these four lethality factors since 2006. For the past eleven years, these lethality factors have been present in a significant number of cases. If we had more access to records and conducted interviews with friends and family members of victims, we are confident that we would find additional information on the lethality factors.

We have the opportunity to learn from the complex and unique circumstances of each of the victims' lives and deaths. We look at the key lethality factors with the expectation that this information is useful to inform public policy and intervention strategies.

In 2017, 24 people were killed due to domestic violence in Minnesota. These included 19 women who were murdered by their current or former intimate partners.

# VICTIM'S ATTEMPTS TO LEAVE THE ABUSER

## LETHALITY FACTOR

National statistics, as well as information gathered from our report show attempts to separate from an abuser can increase the risk of lethality for victims. Most women leaving abusive relationships are not killed but a large number of those who are killed were attempting to separate from their abuser.

Abusers often see any attempts by the victim to leave the relationship as loss of power and control which can inadvertently result in increased risk for the victim. In several 2017 cases, we did not have enough information available to determine whether or not the victim had made any attempts to separate at the time of or shortly before her murder. At least 6 of the 19 women (32%) were attempting to leave or had recently left the relationship. In another 4 cases (21%), not enough information was available to make a determination. This statistic has ranged between 30 – 67 percent over the years in our reports.

## CASE HIGHLIGHT

### MICHELLE LE

Tony Le strangled and killed his wife Michelle Le on September 25, 2017. Michelle Le had confided in close clients and friends about problems in her 20 year marriage. She had contacted an attorney and started divorce proceedings. Tony Le had been out of the country for three weeks. When he returned, he learned that Michelle had filed divorce paper. He admitted to police that this led to an argument. Tony Le confessed to police that he was arguing with Michelle and that he strangled her with a telephone cord.

Attempting or planning to leave a relationship does continue to be a significant factor when assessing lethality. If a perpetrator is involved with the criminal justice system, victims may think that there is increased safety for them at that time. This may or may not be true depending on the level of control and monitoring that is happening from the criminal justice system. At least two of the victims this year were killed shortly after the abuser was charged with a domestic violence related offense. In at least one more case, there had been recent criminal justice system involvement related to the abuse.

# THREATS TO KILL THE VICTIM

## LETHALITY FACTOR

Threats by the abuser to kill the victim, as well as the victim's belief that the abuser will kill her, are among the most reliable indicators of lethality. These indicators are often overlooked by the criminal and civil justice systems. A review of court documents and media reports of the 2017 murders does not reveal much information about threats to kill. We know that in at least two cases, the perpetrators had threatened to kill a victim in the past. In another case, the perpetrator did not make specific threats to kill but explicitly threatened to cause harm to the victim.

Without access to and review of police case files and court records, it is difficult to determine whether threats to kill were made against the victim. At the time this report was published, we did not have complete information available to show the extent of the perpetrator's abuse. While the absence of threats to kill does not tell us much, their presence can be a significant indicator of an abuser's risk of lethality. Practitioners who work with victims, and those who intervene in domestic violence cases, should pay close attention when a perpetrator has made threats to kill towards a victim or her family and friends.

## THREATS TO KILL (CONT.)

### CASE HIGHLIGHT VANESSA DANIELSON

Wyndale Fayson has been charged with murder for dousing his girlfriend's, Vanessa Danielson, bed with gas while she was asleep and then setting it on fire, killing her. Fayson has an extensive criminal history, with numerous domestic assault charges and convictions against several different women. Fayson assaulted Vanessa in July, was criminally charged, and a no contact order was issued. On September 28th, 2017 Vanessa called the police at 2:45am to say Fayson had come to her apartment and became angry. She said he smashed her cellphone, said "he would kill her and that he would set the place on fire". He said he would use gasoline to douse the house. Fayson was gone when police arrived. Around 6:40 am, a neighbor called police to report the house on fire. Police arrived to find Vanessa's apartment on fire and her severely burned.

Based on available Minnesota court records, at least 20 percent of perpetrators who killed the victim with a firearm were prohibited from possessing a firearm at the time of the murder. These statistics support studies showing that access to firearms by an abuser can significantly increase the risk of lethality.

National studies also show that firearms are the most commonly used weapon when there are multiple people killed by an intimate partner. Each year we see this in our report. In 2015, Brian Short used a firearm when he killed his wife Karen and their three children, Cole, Madison, and Brooklyn. In 2016, Luis Renquillo Alvarado used a firearm when he injured his wife and killed their children Nahily & Luis. This year Jeffrey Taylor used a firearm when he killed his ex-girlfriend Maria McIntosh, her sister Olivia, and her father Wade.

## ACCESS TO FIREARMS

### LETHALITY FACTOR

In 2017, 10 of the 19 (53%) women murdered by their current or former intimate partners were killed with a firearm. While the percentage of domestic violence homicides using firearms fluctuates from year to year, firearms are the most frequent weapon of choice and are used in about half of the documented domestic violence homicides of women (42% in 2013, 56% in 2014, 50% in 2015, and 56% in 2016).

### CASE HIGHLIGHT MARIA MCINTOSH

On April 7, 2017 Jeffrey Taylor shot and killed his ex-girlfriend, Maria McIntosh, her sister Olivia, and father Wade. Maria's mother, A.S., was also shot and critically injured but survived. There was a history of physical abuse and an intense dispute over custody of their 18-month-old daughter. Wade McIntosh and A.S. had divorced year ago but Wade had moved back to look after the family due to the escalating custody dispute. Hours before the shootings, Taylor was arguing with Maria. He then returned, shot all of the family and took the child. Taylor later shot and killed himself.



# PERPETRATOR'S HISTORY OF VIOLENCE

## LETHALITY FACTOR

We strive to capture as much information as possible regarding a perpetrator's history of violence. Since our main source of information regarding a perpetrator's violence is through court records, we are limited in our analysis. We consider a perpetrator to have a documented history of domestic violence if there are police or court records available to us or referenced in the media.

Occasionally, media stories will quote a perpetrator's undocumented history of abuse in interviews with family members or loved ones of the victim or previous victims of the perpetrator. At times, we will be contacted by family members who will share this information with us. We categorize this information as undocumented but known domestic violence history of the perpetrator.

In 2017, we found that in 11 of the 19 cases (58%), the perpetrator had a history of domestic violence. In 8 of the 19 cases (42 %), the perpetrator had a documented history of domestic violence. In 3 additional cases, the perpetrator had an undocumented history of domestic violence.

## CASE HIGHLIGHT

### LINDA PA VUE

On December 31, 2017, Linda Pa Vue, 29, was killed by her boyfriend, Fue Her, 34, in Fridley. Linda's body was found in the back seat of a parked SUV in Columbia Heights on New Year's Day after police received a call about a suspicious vehicle left idling for several hours. Linda had been fearful of Her, and contacted police in August, 2017, to report that he was threatening her. She also told police that she did not feel safe and wanted police to come to her residence. Her was arrested for Linda's murder on January 2, 2018, along with his brother, Kong Her, who was accused of aiding an offender.



# FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

As the statewide coalition of domestic violence programs focused on policy, training, and public awareness, we study long-term patterns established by the *Femicide Report* to guide our work. Each year, we identify common themes in cases or any unusual findings. Our recommendations are based on our organization's forty years of expertise working with domestic violence advocates and survivors who inform our work.

From our observations over the years, it is apparent that women often confide in the people in their lives and the systems they interact with about the abuse they are experiencing. Women murdered in 2017 confided in family members, friends, and colleagues about the abuse and their attempts to leave; they shared information with criminal justice system professionals, health care providers, family court, employers, and government agencies.

As a community, we must educate ourselves about existing resources for victims such as voluntary and confidential services through domestic violence programs that can safety plan and assist victims. It is also important to inform ourselves about complex barriers, such as homelessness or financial instability, that victims encounter. We need to invest in collaborations that will assist victims in accessing safety.

Intimate partner homicides are the most extreme manifestation of domestic violence in a relationship. To end domestic violence, we must focus on the full spectrum of violence, not only homicides. The use of physical and sexual violence against an intimate partner does not exist in a vacuum, separate from other forms of violence. Domestic violence thrives and is supported in a culture where there is acceptance of power differences in intimate relationships. Domestic violence is rooted in the same dynamics as racial oppression, misogyny, and gender inequality.

If we are invested in public safety, we must recognize that the conditions outside of a survivor's home and relationship directly impact their ability to achieve safety for themselves and their children. Those same conditions provide the environment which allows abusers to engage in the full range of abusive behaviors. If we invest in anti-oppression and culture change efforts, if we find ways to achieve equality, we can end domestic violence. We use the information gathered on domestic violence homicides to formulate recommendations that can result in actions to enhance survivor safety across the spectrum of violence and across stakeholders and communities in Minnesota.



## FIREARMS

As previously mentioned, firearms are the most common means of domestic violence homicides in Minnesota. Over the last five years, over 50 percent of all domestic violence homicides of adult women were committed with a firearm. Recently, there has been increased discussion locally and nationally around the link between domestic violence homicides and firearms. Several policy initiatives have been launched across the country to combat the issue of abusers possessing firearms.

Domestic violence firearms prohibitions and surrender laws have been established by the legislature in Minnesota. In 2014, Minnesota passed a firearms surrender law requiring the surrender of guns when a qualifying protective order was issued and for certain criminal convictions. Since passage of the surrender law, there have been significant gaps in its implementation. While we don't have detailed information on each case, reviews of court documents over the last three years have highlighted a few findings:

FIREARMS  
SURRENDER LAW  
OBSERVATIONS

- In most firearms-related domestic violence homicides, the perpetrators did not have any criminal or civil histories that would have resulted in the surrender of existing firearms and/or being prohibited from purchasing or possessing new ones. (It is important to note that we cannot accurately measure how many perpetrators who were prohibited from possessing and purchasing firearms did not end up killing a victim because of those restrictions).
- In cases where firearms were used in a homicide and the perpetrator was prohibited from purchasing a gun (and where we were able to find information on how the firearm was acquired), the person either already had firearms or had access to firearms through family members and friends.
- We also regularly review cases where someone prohibited from possessing firearms uses a different method of homicide (i.e. strangulation).

The issue of firearms and domestic violence is a complex problem requiring a multifaceted response. The response to perpetrators in each of the findings identified above should be different and no singular law or strategy alone can reduce firearms related domestic violence homicides. Policy responses require good evidence and a big gap in the conversation around domestic violence and firearms is the lack of reliable data.

Gun violence within and outside of domestic violence relationships is an epidemic, and it is not only important for us to look at it as a criminal justice system issue but as a public health issue. Without insight into research data about fatal and nonfatal firearms injuries, it is impossible for us to come up with approaches that target the issue at its core. Firearms-related domestic violence homicides have remained consistent in our state for almost 30 years. What that tells us is that our existing approaches have not worked in keeping victims safe. Adopting a public health lens to tackle the issue of firearms deaths is crucial to implementing strategies that can actually save lives.

*We recommend:*

- **Lawmakers lift prohibitions in state statute against collecting firearms related data** so that public health officials can collect and analyze it for the purpose of public health research and policy development.
- **Invest in monitoring all forms of firearms-related injuries and deaths**, as well as the efficacy of existing laws and proposed policy solutions.
- **Conduct pilot projects to test improvements in implementing current firearm laws.** MCBW has identified several potential improvements for existing laws but believe they should be tested before broader statewide implementation happens.





# FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

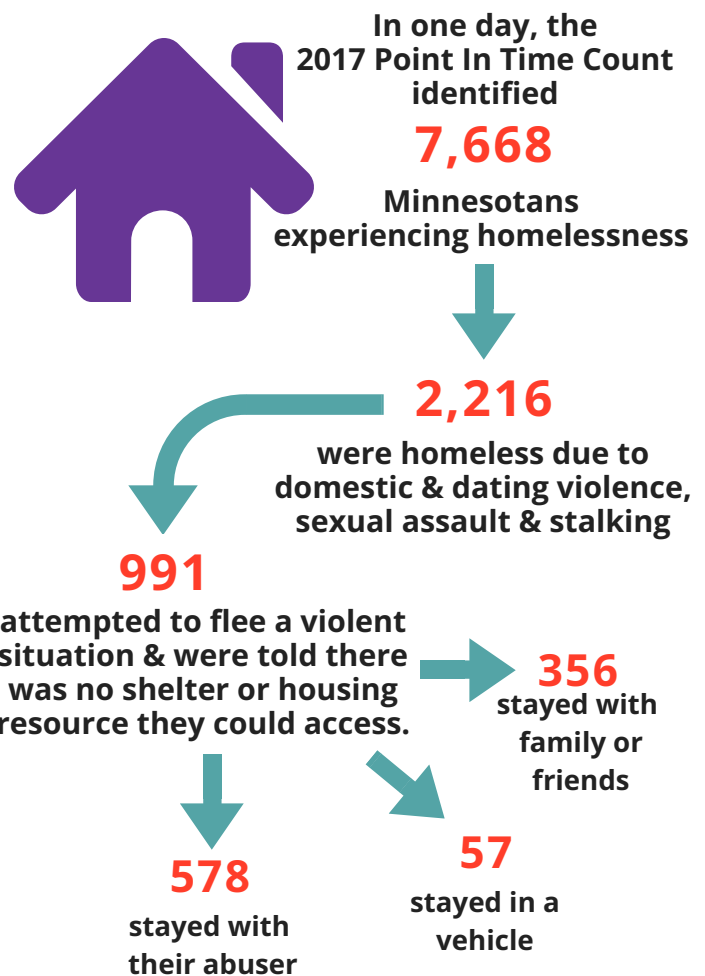
## CONTINUED

### ECONOMIC INSTABILITY

Economic justice is a core necessity for survivors of domestic violence to access safety. Financial abuse, the withholding or sabotaging of financial resources, is the most common abuse tactic in intimate partner violence relationships, creating financial instability. Without financial stability, the choices that victims have, including safely leaving the abusive relationship, become limited to null. Almost a quarter of the women murdered in 2017 had experienced financial hardships evidenced by evictions, personal fundraisers detailing financial hardships, and debt collection records.

Minnesota has a history of creating coordinated system responses to domestic violence. In most communities, these are solely focused on the criminal justice system. While there are domestic violence programs across the state establishing partnerships with economic support systems, there is still a prevalent need in seeking economic justice for victims. Working with economic justice and poverty coalitions and housing and homelessness systems broadens our work to address poverty and safety. Bringing in other key players such as employers, landlords, economic safety net programs, legal aid attorneys who assist with economic-related legal needs, begin to shift our conversations.

Economic instability not only creates barriers to safety, it is also a leading cause of homelessness for victims and their children. Women and men who experienced food and housing insecurity in the past 12 months reported a significantly higher 12-month prevalence of rape, physical violence, or stalking by an intimate partner compared to women and men who did not experience food and housing insecurity.



### INNOVATIVE PRACTICE SURVIVORS FUND

*"Without this financial help I would not have been able to go back to work because I would not have had childcare."*

In early 2017, MCBW launched an economic empowerment program called the Survivors Fund. The program aims to partner with member programs to address economic instability faced by victims and survivors of domestic violence. These funds are a one-time, low-barrier cash grant to domestic and sexual violence victims and survivors for the purposes of increasing and/or maintaining housing stability and credit repair.

- **Total Amount Awarded:** \$20,000
- **Number of Survivor Funds Requested:** 46
- **Average Amount Funded:** \$434.78
- **72%** requested maximum amount of \$500

## ECONOMIC INSTABILITY (CONT.)

### *Recommendations to enhance economic stability:*

- **Engage economic justice and poverty coalitions** and city, county, and state level economic system stakeholders in domestic violence responses.
- **Cross train domestic violence programs, housing and homeless programs and economic support agencies** to increase understanding of the issues faced by survivors.
- **Invest in innovative programs that focus on financial stability** like repairing/building credit scores through micro loan lending, access to individual development account (IDA) savings accounts, matched savings IDA, car IDA, financial literacy and empowerment programs, and low-barrier emergency financial assistance funds.
- **Address, via policy, issues surrounding eviction of domestic violence victims**, including evaluation of nuisance ordinances, housing discrimination, and fines and fees.
- **Educate others in economic sectors**, such as businesses, tax preparers, banks and lenders, and utilities providers to identify domestic and sexual violence and refer victims for advocacy services.

## ENHANCING RESPONSES TO VICTIMS FROM IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES

For the past three years, we have gathered race data on the cases included in our report. We rely on criminal records and receive some information from media stories, social media and friends and family members. While this information is not complete or totally reliable, we are able to draw some conclusions. During this time, we have found that a disproportionate number of victims from communities of color and native communities have been murdered in domestic violence homicides.

## FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

### CONTINUED

In 2017, at least 8 out of 19 (42%) of women killed by their current or former intimate partners were women of color or native women. Four victims were of Asian descent and at least three victims were immigrants.

While we do not know the specifics around services for each of these victims, we can speak broadly about the gaps in services for survivors belonging to the same communities as the victims based on the expertise of our programs serving diverse communities across Minnesota. Our information is echoed in research and work done on the national level within the anti-domestic violence advocacy community.

### INNOVATIVE PRACTICE U-VISA CERTIFICATION PROCESS ORDINANCE

The U nonimmigrant status (U visa) is set aside for victims of certain crimes who have suffered mental or physical abuse and are helpful to law enforcement or government officials in the investigation or prosecution of criminal activity. In December, the city of Minneapolis passed U-visa Certification Process Ordinance, 2017-083. This ordinance establishes a model for reviewing and certifying critical U-visas that fosters a relationship of confidence between immigrant and refugee communities, the police department, and city government. Victims of domestic and sexual abuse would have more protections as the ordinance allows U-visa certification by multiple city agencies, includes a 30 day certification deadline and expedited process for people in deportation proceedings, maintains confidentiality, and assumes that the victim is helping an investigation rather than requiring the victim to prove they are helping the investigation.

# FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

## CONTINUED

### ENHANCING RESPONSES (CONT.)

Immigrant survivors of domestic violence face additional barriers to safety due to their citizenship status or lack of language access. Perpetrators commonly use the immigration system to further their abuse by threatening deportation, not giving the victim access to her immigration documents, or not following through on completing partners' immigration applications. Victims might be unable to access legal and social systems due to language and cultural barriers. Lack of culturally specific and locally accessible services can also result in victims not being informed of their rights or the reliefs available to them through different systems. Based on national statistics, immigrant victims are also less likely to report the abuse to police due to distrust and fear of the system.

Minnesota has several culturally specific domestic violence programs providing services statewide to victims and their children. All of the domestic violence programs in Minnesota provide confidential and voluntary services to victims of domestic violence and their children regardless of their citizenship status or country of origin. We know through our programs across the state that the current political atmosphere has had a chilling effect on immigrant victims reaching out to programs for services.

#### ***Recommendations to ensure improving conditions for immigrant survivors include:***

- **Increase collaboration** between criminal justice system partners and culturally specific programs and community leaders to ensure the unique needs of immigrant victims are met.
- **Establish Limited English Proficiency plans** by all criminal, legal, social, and economic justice systems to ensure services are accessible to victims regardless of their language skills.

- **Streamline and make accessible processes around U-visa certification** for immigrant victims who are working with law enforcement.

### MEDIA RESPONSE

Mass media is a critical tool in educating the public about domestic violence and sharing resources for those who need it. We rely heavily on media stories for information included in the *Femicide Report*. In the 2016 *Femicide Report*, we pointed out several gaps in media coverage of domestic violence homicides. We noticed improvements in the way several media outlets covered 2017 domestic violence homicides.

SOUTH METRO

#### **St. Paul shooting victims mourned as domestic violence is condemned**

*Headline from the Star Tribune (Erin Adler)*

Some critical components of responsible coverage of domestic violence homicides include: looking beyond the perpetrator's quotes in criminal complaints, highlighting the victim's life, not using photos of the victim and the perpetrator together, covering the homicide as an incident of domestic violence, speaking with domestic violence experts, using terminology that does not sensationalize or minimize the abuse, and sharing information about resources available to survivors or their families, such as the 24 hour crisis hotline number, in every story.

#### ***Our recommendations for the media:***

- **Cover the full spectrum of domestic violence in our communities and not just domestic violence homicides.** Focus on local programming, resources, and collaborations to increase safety for victims even when a domestic violence homicide has not happened.
- **Increase coverage of domestic violence homicides** of victims from rural communities in mainstream media sources.
- **Receive training and increase collaboration** with domestic violence experts to broaden the knowledge of those covering domestic violence issues in the media.





Neighbor



Co-worker



Sister

The shirt is  
worn on the  
designed by  
flowers in  
"Thank  
"An  
design  
"Please  
"Love  
"Love



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.

## EXPLANATION OF DATA

For nearly 30 years, MCBW has been producing the annual *Femicide Report*. The information contained within these 29 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.

## 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.

# REPORT METHODS

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.

## CURRENT CRITERIA

- The homicide victim and perpetrator were current or former intimate partners, including dating partners; or
- The homicide victim was someone present during, or intervened in, an intimate partner violence incident, including friends, family members, new intimate partners, law enforcement officers or other professionals attempting to assist a victim of intimate partner violence; or
- Children who are killed by a parent's current or former intimate partner where there is sufficient public information that the perpetrator killed the child as an act of abuse against the parent; or
- The perpetrator killed the homicide victim due to perceived or actual rejection of romantic interest; or
- Homicides of sex workers, victims of sex trafficking, prostitution, and exploitation.

## AND

- If the homicide happened in Minnesota, if the body of the victim was found in Minnesota, or if the body was found in a nearby state but the circumstances surrounding the homicide began in Minnesota.

We do not include cases where victims of domestic violence have killed an abusive partner in retaliation or self-defense. To make this determination, we look at each case individually, and look at the history of abuse, circumstances of the homicide, and information from family members and friends.

# METHODS

## CONTINUED



*The Clothesline Project, an interactive art display honoring the lives lost to domestic violence. Learn more at [www.mcbw.org](http://www.mcbw.org)*

## 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. 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 or 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. Currently, we identify most cases through media search results that are tracked daily, and then we follow up with local law enforcement agencies or county attorney's offices for more detail. We also look at other sources of information such as public court data, reports issued by medical examiners' offices, and social media. The way we gather information and the amount of data available to us has changed drastically over the years. However, we still struggle with inconsistent and incomplete information due to the discrepancies in the way information is collected and shared across the state.

We use the phrase "at least" when describing the number of people killed each year because we cannot be certain we have recorded all domestic violence homicides since we rely on public records, primarily news accounts. In addition, almost every year there are deaths of women that are considered suspicious but the cases are not resolved. No state or federal agency collects comprehensive data on domestic violence 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.

# METHODS

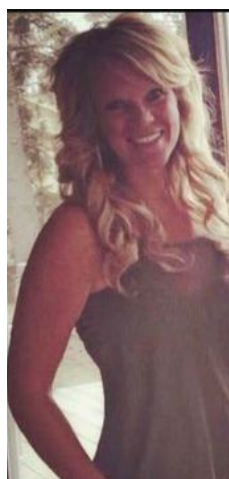
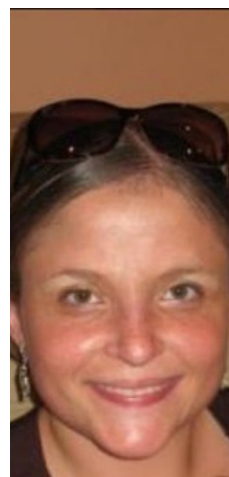
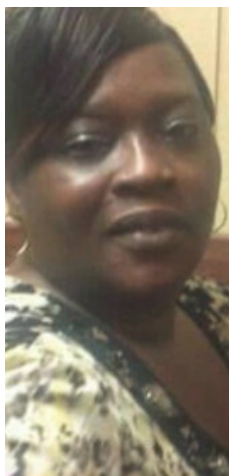
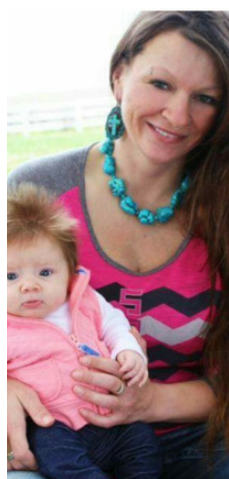
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MCBW program manager Safia Khan speaks at the Domestic Violence Homicide Memorial. Learn more at [www.mcbw.org](http://www.mcbw.org)

The information in MCBW's *Femicide Report* is not meant to be research but rather a compilation of data 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. One example of this limitation is in regard to tracking the rates of murder-suicides in domestic violence cases. For a number of years, approximately 50 percent of the domestic violence homicides of adult women also involved the perpetrator subsequently committing suicide. This percentage was significantly higher than the homicide-suicide rate reported nationally at 30 to 35 percent. In a three year period lasting through 2015, this percentage showed a significant decrease, going as far down as 23 percent. The 2016 domestic violence homicides data showed an uptick in murder-suicides again, with 56 percent of the cases falling in that category; however, in 2017, that figure again goes down to 37 percent. What we don't know, and what this report does not address, is why there was such drastic fluctuation in these percentages and what that means. MCBW is not a research agency. We present this information in the hopes of raising questions and opening the door to deeper conversations.





# Women murdered in cases where the suspected, alleged, or convicted perpetrator was a current or former intimate partner:



***Senicha Marie Lessman***

*Age 25*

*Eagan*

*January 24, 2017*

**Senicha Marie Lessman**, 25, was 32 weeks pregnant when she was murdered by Vern Mouelle, 23, on January 24, 2017. Mouelle was in a relationship with Senicha and was also the father of her unborn child. Senicha died of a severed carotid artery or an obstructed airway, from a knife wound to her neck. Her body was found by her mother. Mouelle was found guilty of two counts each of first-degree and second-degree murder in the deaths of Senicha and the unborn child. He was sentenced to two consecutive life sentences without the possibility of parole.



***Alicia Ann Swenson***

*Age 33*

*Rosemount*

*February 17, 2017*

**Alicia Ann Swenson**, 33, was shot multiple times and killed by her husband Justin Joseph Keilen on February 17, 2017, at their home in Rosemount. Keilen subsequently committed suicide.





**Lacey J. Kuschel**

*Age 32*

*Todd County*

*February 25, 2017*

Tyler Slagerman, 32, shot and killed his girlfriend, **Lacey J. Kuschel**, 35, as she held their infant daughter in their home in Todd County on February 25, 2017. Slagerman told Todd County Sheriff's deputies he had been out drinking with friends that night and that he had grabbed the rifle because he thought he heard dogs barking. He said that the rifle accidentally fired, killing Lacey and narrowly missing their daughter, Aspen. Lacey's family does not believe the shooting was accidental. Friends and family say the couple's relationship was strained and had worsened since the birth of their daughter. Slagerman was previously convicted of lying to police. Todd County authorities charged Slagerman with one count of second degree unintentional manslaughter and one count of child endangerment.



**Maria McIntosh**

*Age 19*

*St. Paul*

*April 7, 2017*

**Maria McIntosh**, 19; her sister, Olivia McIntosh, 17; and their father, Wade McIntosh, 47, were shot and killed by Jeffrey Jemaile Taylor, the father of Maria's 18 month old child on April 7, 2017. A.S., mother of Maria and Olivia, was also shot, critically injured, but survived. Taylor subsequently committed suicide. Friends informed the media that Maria had confided in them about being abused by Taylor.



***Tawnja Rene Wallace***

*Age 48*

*Crookston*

*May 3, 2016*

Eddie Frazier, 49, strangled and killed his girlfriend, **Tawnja Rene Wallace**, 48, in Crookston on or around May 3, 2017. Frazier had a history of repeatedly abusing Tawnja, and was prohibited from having contact with her due to a court order. Crookston officers initially responded to a 911 hang-up call from Tawnja's apartment. Officers responded but no one came to the door. They could hear a TV inside and what might have been the sound of furniture being moved. Officers returned later after receiving a call from the Hennepin County Dispatch Center in Minneapolis requesting a welfare check on Tawnja. Upon their arrival, they found Tawnja's daughter in the hallway, crying, and found Tawnja dead in the apartment. Frazier had called a friend and said he'd killed Tawnja and "left her for dead" in the bathtub. Frazier was arrested in Bloomington after a six-hour manhunt during which law enforcement set up perimeter and went door to door in search of him. He was initially charged with second-degree murder, but a grand jury later found enough evidence to believe it was premeditated, and charged him with first-degree murder.

**Iesha Lanell Wiley**, 26, was shot and killed at the order of her boyfriend, Marvel Galvaston Williams, 29, by his friend, Nicholas Alonzo Jefferson, 31, in Minneapolis on May 12, 2017. Witnesses saw Williams enter a business Iesha was in and argue with her. He demanded Iesha put down her cousin's infant child she was holding. Iesha refused and Williams punched her in the face, took her cellphone and exited the business. Iesha followed Williams into the parking lot and maced him. Williams threatened to shoot Iesha before ordering Jefferson, who was in a car, to shoot her. Jefferson complied and shot Iesha. Jefferson was charged with murder in the second degree in Iesha's homicide. Williams was arrested on June 30, and was charged with second-degree murder and being a felon in possession of a firearm.



***Iesha Lanell Wiley***

*Age 26*

*Minneapolis*

*May 12, 2017*





***Sandra Kay Sandland***

*Age 53*

*Crystal*

*July 12, 2017*

**Sandra Kay Sandland**, 53, was shot and killed by her husband, Dennis Sandland, 56, in their Crystal home on July 12, 2017. The police were notified of a possible homicide after the victim's adult son called 911 and said his father told him he had shot his mother. After refusing to leave the home, Dennis eventually negotiated with police and was arrested the night of the murder. While at the hospital, Dennis was overheard saying he shot his wife because he was angry with her. Family members told police that their marriage had been in trouble recently and Dennis may have been violent toward Sandra in the past. Dennis was charged with second-degree murder.

On July 24, 2017, **Jaida Marie Hoffman**, 34, was shot and killed by her boyfriend, Dano Ray Radawitz, 43, in their Winona home. That day, Winona police had received a call from Radawitz stating his girlfriend, Jaida, was shot in the head after a struggle over a handgun in their home. Shortly after officers arrived at the house, a single gunshot was heard. Officers later entered the residence to find both Radawitz and Jaida dead from single gunshot wounds. No one else was injured or in the home. Jaida leaves behind three children.



***Jaida Marie Hoffman***

*Age 34*

*Winona*

*July 24, 2017*



***Dominga Mejia Guerrero***

*Age 58*

*Long Prairie*

*July 27, 2017*

**Dominga Mejia Guerrero**, 58, was stabbed and killed by her boyfriend, Jose Raul Herrera-Torres, 35, on July 27, 2017, in their Long Prairie home. Her body was discovered by another resident of the home after Herrera-Torres fled. When the police arrived, a neighbor recalled hearing yelling coming from the residence hours before Dominga was killed. After a short search for Herrera-Torres, he was located by police, arrested. He has been found guilty of second-degree murder.



**Michelle Le**

*Age 48*

*Minneapolis*

*September 25, 2017*

Tony Le, 55, strangled and killed his wife **Michelle Le**, 48, in their south Minneapolis home on September 25, 2017. According to the criminal complaint, Tony Le admitted he strangled Michelle with a telephone cord in the bathroom of their home. Michelle owned her own nail salon and spa in Richfield. She has two adult sons. Prior to her death, Michelle had filed for divorce from Tony Le and confided in close clients and friends about problems in her 20 year marriage. Tony Le was charged with second-degree murder.

On September 28, 2017, Wyndale Fayson, 32, set his girlfriend **Vanessa Rae Danielson**, 36, and her apartment on fire. Vanessa died later the same day from injuries sustained in the arson attack. Fayson has an extensive criminal history, with numerous domestic assault charges and convictions against several different women. Fayson assaulted Vanessa in July, was criminally charged, and a no contact order was issued. On September 28th, Vanessa called the police at 2:45am to say Fayson had come to her apartment and became angry. She said he smashed her cellphone, said "he would kill her and that he would set the place on fire". He said he would use gasoline to douse the house. Fayson was gone when police arrived. Around 6:40 am, a neighbor called police to report the house on fire. Police arrived to find Vanessa's apartment on fire and her severely burned. Fayson was charged with second-degree murder.



**Vanessa Rae Danielson**

*Age 36*

*Minneapolis*

*September 28, 2017*



**Martina Lopez Garcia**

*Age 35*

*Minneapolis*

*November 2, 2017*

On November 2, 2017, Homero Lopez Salinas, 35, fatally shot his ex-girlfriend **Martina Lopez Garcia**, also 35, at her south Minneapolis apartment. Salinas subsequently committed suicide. Two acquaintances of Salinas and Martina found the bodies and called the police. Martina died from multiple gunshot wounds to the head. Salinas had previously been arrested for domestic assault in 2005.



**Dawn Marie Blomberg**

*Age 59*

*Minneapolis*

*November 5, 2017*

**Dawn Marie Blomberg**, 59, was shot and killed by her husband, Jerry Blomberg, 56, in their Northeast Minneapolis home on November 5, 2017. After Jerry used a shotgun to shoot his wife in the chest, he then used it to commit suicide. Police responded to a call of a person threatening another with a gun on the afternoon of November 5. Once officers arrived at the home, they were unable to make contact with anyone inside, and eventually entered the residence to find both bodies. Jerry Blomberg had a history of domestic assault, and had been arrested for it in the past.



**Ruzana Semenovna  
Yedvabnik**

*Age 34*

*Shakopee*

*November 6, 2017*

Sergey Nikolaevich Balandin, 31, killed his girlfriend **Ruzana Semenovna Yedvabnik**, 34, on November 6, 2017. Shakopee police arrived at Ruzana's home on the morning of November 7, after being notified that a man may have killed the woman living there. Officers found Ruzana's body in a locked bedroom. Ruzana's mother, who was at the residence at the time, told police she heard a heated and violent argument the night before between her daughter and Balandin. Balandin was found with a bloody knife and other bloody articles of clothing at a nearby hotel. He told police he "blacked out" the night before and "most likely, probably" killed Ruzana. When Ruzana's body was found, she was "unrecognizable." The Hennepin County Medical Examiner's Office found the cause of death to be homicidal violence. Balandin has an extensive criminal history with several charges related to domestic violence, and was arrested in 2014 for domestic assault by strangulation. He was charged with second-degree murder. Ruzana is survived by her daughter.



***Melissa Seefert***

*Age 65*

*Scandia*

*November 17, 2017*

**Melissa Seefert**, 65, died from a gunshot wound on November 17, 2017, in her Scandia home. Police responded to a welfare check at the Seefert's residence, and found her and her husband's bodies. It is suspected that Melissa's husband, Clarence Seefert, 66, shot Melissa before committing suicide. The medical examiner has yet to release the autopsy and cause of death. Melissa is survived by her three adult children.



***Jessica Suzanne Ludenia***

*Age 33*

*Watertown*

*November 14, 2017*

On November 14, 2017, Casey Hoskins, 42, struck and killed his girlfriend, **Jessica Suzanne Ludenia**, 33, with his truck near her Watertown home. Officials responded to a report of an unconscious woman on the side of the road and found Jessica lying face down in the grass. Hoskins appeared drunk at the scene and had an open beer bottle in his pocket. Jessica's eight-year old daughter recounted her mother and Hoskins arguing before he attempted to leave in his truck. Jessica jumped in the bed of the truck, and her daughter heard the truck accelerate and brake three times. The girl then ran over to see Hoskins moving Jessica's body to the grass. Hoskins' three-year old son was in the truck at the time. Jessica died from blunt force injuries to the torso, with "marks consistent with tire tracks" on her body. Hoskins was charged with criminal vehicular homicide.





**Phanny Phay**

*Age 28*

*St. Paul*

*November 19, 2017*

On November 19, 2017, Andre Duprey, 29, killed his girlfriend **Phanny Phay**, 28, in their St. Paul apartment. Police arrived to the Highland Park apartment on the early morning of the 19th and found Duprey standing in the bedroom entryway holding a knife. Officers found Phanny with a large wound to her head and a shotgun on the floor. Duprey's aunt was staying at the apartment at the time and fled with her seven year-old daughter earlier that morning after she saw Duprey pointing a shotgun at Phanny and repeating the words "demon, demon." The previous day, officers encountered an intoxicated Duprey outside a Lowertown bar on his knees, holding a bible, and saying he was ready to die. Officers later took Duprey home and no charges were filed for that incident. Duprey and Phanny had been together for eight years. Duprey was charged with second-degree murder

**Sarah Ruth (Benson) Cheshire**, 41, was shot and killed by her ex-husband, Ryan Cheshire, also 41, in his Fergus Falls apartment on December 6, 2017. Ryan then committed suicide by gunshot. After responding to a call from Sarah's friends about a person not breathing in the apartment, police arrived to find Ryan and Sarah dead from gunshot wounds. Ryan was an assistant Otter Tail county prosecutor, and Sarah was a partner at a law firm in Fergus Falls. The two had recently divorced and had three children together. One of Sarah's family members stated that the family had worried for years about her in the relationship and also described Ryan as controlling and abusive.

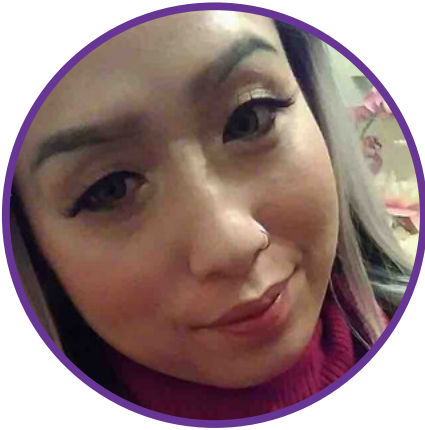


**Sarah Ruth (Benson) Cheshire**

*Age 41*

*Fergus Falls*

*December 6, 2017*



***Linda Pa Vue***

*Age 28*

*St. Paul*

*November 19, 2017*

On December 31, 2017, **Linda Pa Vue**, 29, was killed by her boyfriend, Fue Her, 34, in Fridley. Linda's body was found in the back seat of a parked SUV in Columbia Heights on New Year's Day after police received a call about a suspicious vehicle left idling for several hours. The medical examiner's autopsy found numerous injuries and signs of blunt force trauma to Linda. Linda had been fearful of Her, and contacted police in August, 2017, to report that he was threatening her. She also told police that she did not feel safe and wanted police to come to her residence. Her was arrested for Linda's murder on January 2, 2018, along with his brother, Kong Her, who was accused of aiding an offender. Fue Her was charged with second-degree murder.



# Friends, Family Members & Bystanders murdered in domestic violence related situations:



**Carlton Campbell**

*Age 58*

*New Brighton*

*April 24, 2017*

On April 14, 2017, Steven Abrams, 54, strangled and killed **Carlton Campbell**, 58, his girlfriend's brother, at her New Brighton residence. According to court documents, Abrams' girlfriend of 20 years told law enforcement that she had asked Abrams to leave her residence earlier in the day but he returned that evening and assaulted her. Carlton, her brother, intervened in the assault. Abrams then assaulted Carlton and continued to strangle him even after the police arrived. Abrams pled guilty to second-degree murder and received a 22 year prison sentence.



**Olivia McIntosh**

*Age 17*

*St. Paul*

*April 7, 2017*



**Wade McIntosh**

*Age 47*

*St. Paul*

*April 7, 2017*

Maria McIntosh, 19; her sister, **Olivia McIntosh**, 17; and their father, **Wade McIntosh**, 47, were shot and killed by Jeffrey Jemaile Taylor, the father of Maria's 18 month old child on April 7, 2017. A.S., mother of Maria and Olivia, was also shot and critically injured. Taylor subsequently committed suicide. Friends informed the media that Maria had confided in them about being abused by Taylor.



## Friends, Family Members & Bystanders:



**Jody T. Fry**  
Age 29  
Robbinsdale  
June 19, 2017

**Jody T. Fry**, 29, was fatally shot by Zittie Taylor, 32, in a parked car outside a home in Robbinsdale on or about June 19, 2017, around midnight. Taylor had previously dated a woman who lived in the Robbinsdale home that Jody, of Chicago, was visiting for Father's Day. Taylor had been known to stalk the woman at work and get jealous when she spoke with other men. Witnesses did not disclose much information, but three child witnesses stated they saw Taylor shoot Jody in his parked vehicle. Another child stated Taylor came to the home "to get drunk" and was being "mean." After the shooting, Taylor fled and was eventually apprehended by police at an undisclosed location on June 30. He was charged with second-degree murder.

Htoo Day, 61, stabbed and killed **Paw Boh Htoo**, 29, in St. Paul on November 7, 2017. Htoo Day's wife, T.P., was attempting to leave him and was staying with a neighbor. She requested help leaving her husband from Paw Boh Htoo a community member known for providing supportive services to women, who had arrived at the neighbor's house to assist TP in translating her mail and with healthcare issues. Day threatened to kill T.P. and her family and followed her into the neighbor's apartment where Paw had been assisting her. He confronted Paw who defended T.P. and stated she would help her leave. Day stabbed Paw in the chest and later admitted to police that he had done so. He was charged with second-degree murder. Paw was an active member of the Karen community in Minnesota and worked on a variety of issues, especially supporting women in her community.



**Paw Boh Htoo**  
Age 29  
Minneapolis  
November 7, 2017



# ABOUT MCBW

**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 to end intimate partner violence. MCBW member 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, 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 2017, AT LEAST 24 MINNESOTANS LOST THEIR LIVES AS A RESULT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE.

*We remember...*

1. January 24, 2017 **Senicha Lessman** died as a result of gunshot wounds in Eagan.
2. February 17, 2017 **Alicia Ann Swenson** died as a result of gunshot wounds in Rosemount.
3. February 25, 2017 **Lacey Kuschel** died as a result of gunshot wounds in Clarissa.
4. April 7, 2017 **Maria McIntosh** died as a result of gunshot wounds in Saint Paul.
5. April 7, 2017 **Olivia McIntosh** died as a result of gunshot wounds in Saint Paul.
6. April 7, 2017 **Wade McIntosh** died as a result of gunshot wounds in Saint Paul.
7. April 14, 2017 **Carlton Campbell** died as a result of complex homicidal violence in New Brighton.
8. May 3, 2017 **Tawnja Wallace** died as a result of strangulation in Crookston.
9. May 12, 2017 **Iesha Wiley** died as a result of gunshot wounds in Minneapolis.
10. June 19, 2017 **Jody T. Fry** died as a result of gunshot wounds in Minneapolis.
11. July 12, 2017 **Sandy Sandland** died as a result of gunshot wounds in Crystal.
12. July 24, 2017 **Jaida Marie Hoffman** died as a result of gunshot wounds in Winona.
13. July 28, 2017 **Domina Meija Guerrero** died as a result of knife wounds in Long Prairie.
14. September 25, 2017 **Michelle Le** died as a result of strangulation in Minneapolis.
15. September 28, 2017 **Vanessa Danielson** died as a result of being burned in Minneapolis.
16. November 2, 2017 **Martina Lopez Garcia** died as a result of gunshot wounds in Minneapolis.
17. November 5, 2017 **Dawn Marie Blomberg** died as a result of gunshot wounds in Minneapolis.
18. November 6, 2017 **Ruzana Yedvabnik** died as a result of homicidal violence in Shakopee.
19. November 7, 2017 **Paw Boh Htoo** died as a result of a stabbing in Saint Paul.
20. November 12, 2017 **Melissa Seefert** died as a result of gunshot wounds in Scandia.
21. November 14, 2017 **Jessica Suzanne Ludenia** died as a result of blunt force injuries in Watertown.
22. November 19, 2017 **Phanny Phay** died as a result of complex homicidal violence in Saint Paul.
23. December 6, 2017 **Sarah Ruth (Benson) Cheshire** died as a result of  
gunshot wounds in Fergus Falls.
24. December 31, 2017 **Linda Va Pue** died as a result of homicidal violence in Fridley.



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 2017 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 domestic violence homicide.

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



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*If you are a victim experiencing abuse,  
contact Day One at **866-223-1111** to connect with services.*

