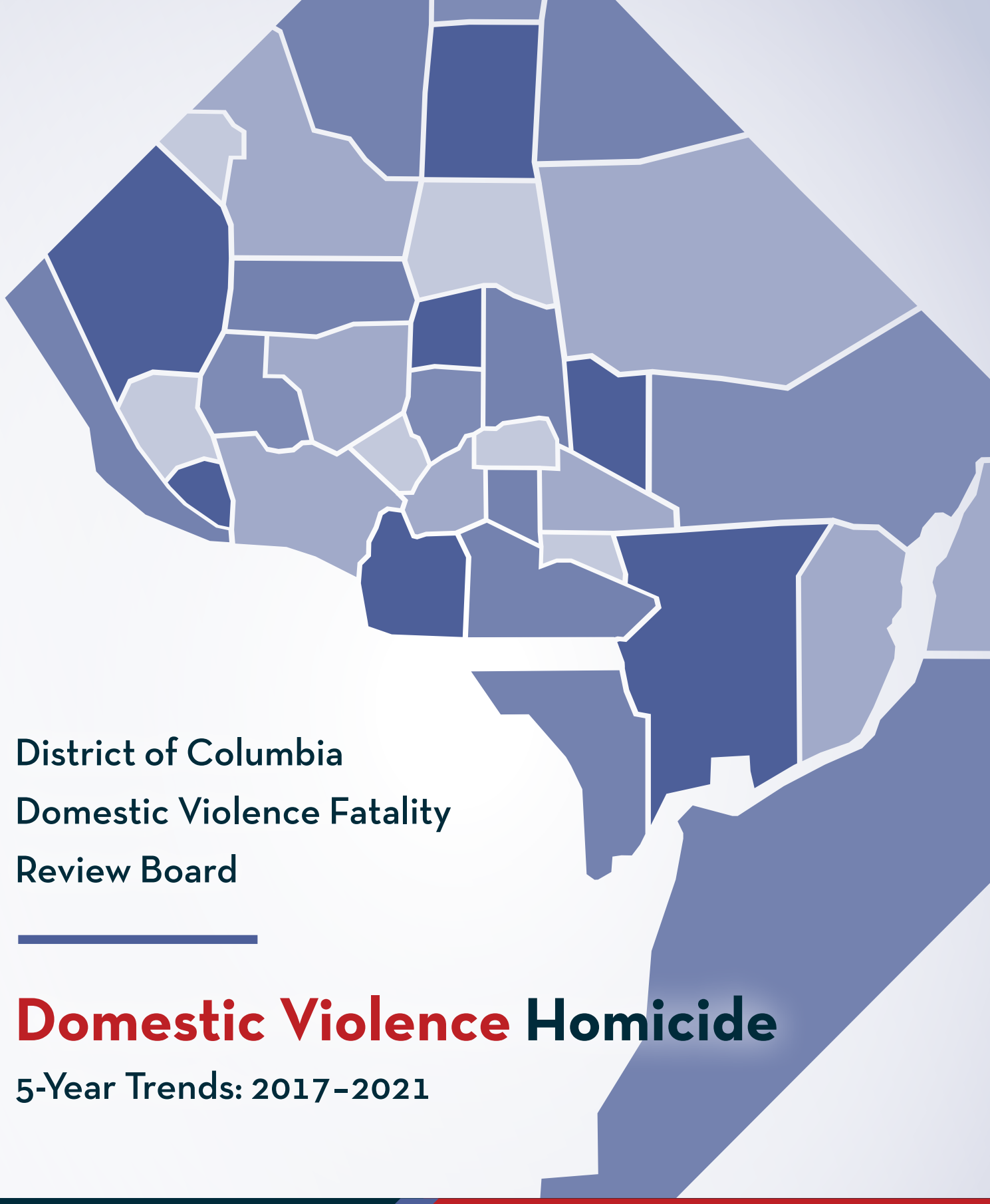


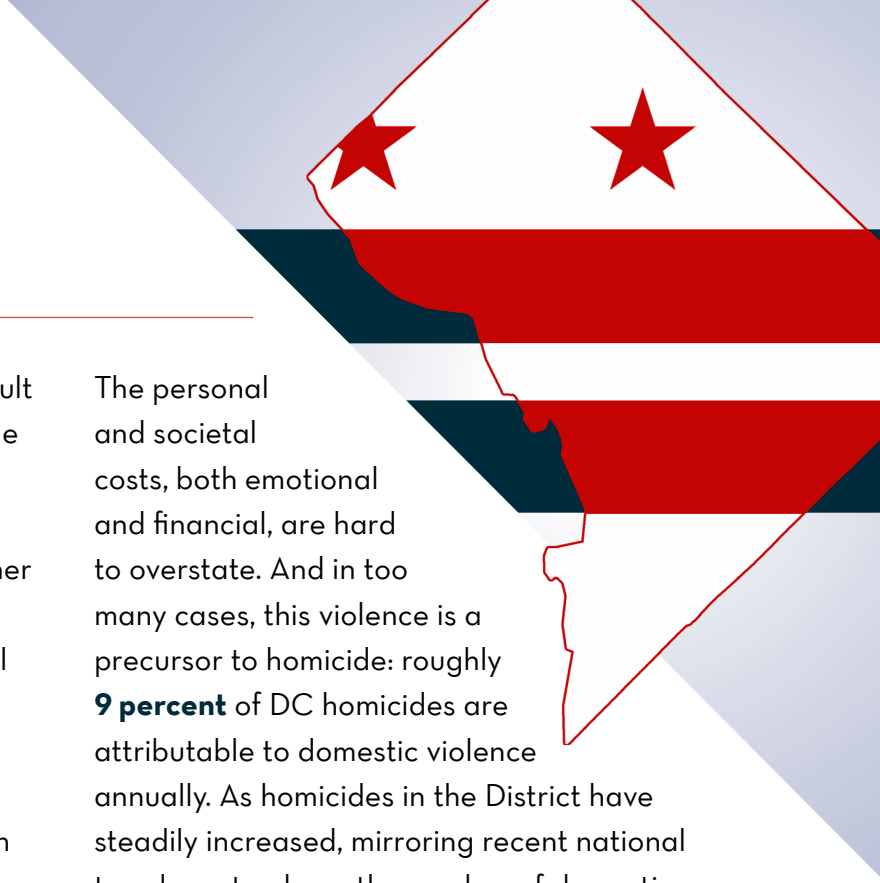
District of Columbia
Domestic Violence Fatality
Review Board

Domestic Violence Homicide

5-Year Trends: 2017–2021

OVSJG
Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
MURIEL BOWSER, MAYOR



INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence and the homicides that result are serious public health problems. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, over **10 million** women and men in the United States experienced physical violence by a current or former partner each year[1]; approximately **1 in 4 women** and nearly **1 in 7 men** experienced severe physical violence by a partner over the course of their lifetime.[2] Locally, an estimated **39 percent** of women in DC had been physically or sexually assaulted or stalked by an **intimate partner** in their lifetime.[3]

Since the pandemic, related lockdowns and other stressors have affected victims and survivors of domestic violence—particularly intimate partner violence—in ways we're only starting to understand. Combined, isolation from community, constant close quarters, economic instability, and medical anxiety proved combustible: domestic violence reports around the world increased at alarming rates.[4]

The personal and societal costs, both emotional and financial, are hard to overstate. And in too many cases, this violence is a precursor to homicide: roughly **9 percent** of DC homicides are attributable to domestic violence annually. As homicides in the District have steadily increased, mirroring recent national trends, so too have the number of domestic violence-related homicides.[5]

The Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board (DVFRB) works to prevent intimate partner and other domestic violence homicides in the District by improving the response of individuals, the community, and government agencies to domestic violence.[6] Data in this five-year trends report are based on the DVFRB's expert analysis of available **police, court, medical, and media records.**[7]

Between 2017-2021, there were **74 homicides** in the District of Columbia that were determined to be linked to domestic violence. The DVFRB aggregates

1 *National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): General Population Survey Raw Data, 2010*, https://doi.org/10.3886/ICPSR34305.v1

2 Black, M.C., et al. (2011). *The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2010 Summary Report.* Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 43, https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/nisvs_report2010-a.pdf

3 Smith, S.G., et al. (2017). *The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2010-2012 State Report.* Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 128, https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/nisvs-statereportbook.pdf

4 UN Women, "Issue Brief: COVID-19 and Ending Violence Against Women and Girls," *Gender-Based Violence* 1 (2020). https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/04/issue-brief-covid-19-and-ending-violence-against-women-and-girls

5 MPD. (2022). "District Crime Data at a Glance." https://mpdc.dc.gov/page/district-crime-data-glance; FBI, "Crime Data Explorer," 2017-2020, https://crime-data-explorer.app.cloud.gov/pages/explorer/crime/crime-trend

6 D.C. Code §16-1052

7 Media records include data from DC Witness, which tracks all homicides in the District of Columbia. Only those homicides of victims 15 years and older that were attributed to domestic violence are included in this report.

information on these domestic violence homicides, then classifies them as intimate partner-related homicide (IPH) or non-intimate partner-related homicide (non-IPH).

Because its main goal is to prevent future domestic violence deaths by identifying previous gaps in services and issuing recommendations for improvement, the DVFRB closely examines all intimate partner homicides. Unlike other domestic violence homicides, intimate partner homicides tend to follow similar patterns and, therefore, can benefit from systemic prevention efforts. A well-developed body of scientific research surrounding intimate partner fatality risk factors and prevention strategies guides the Board's review of these cases.

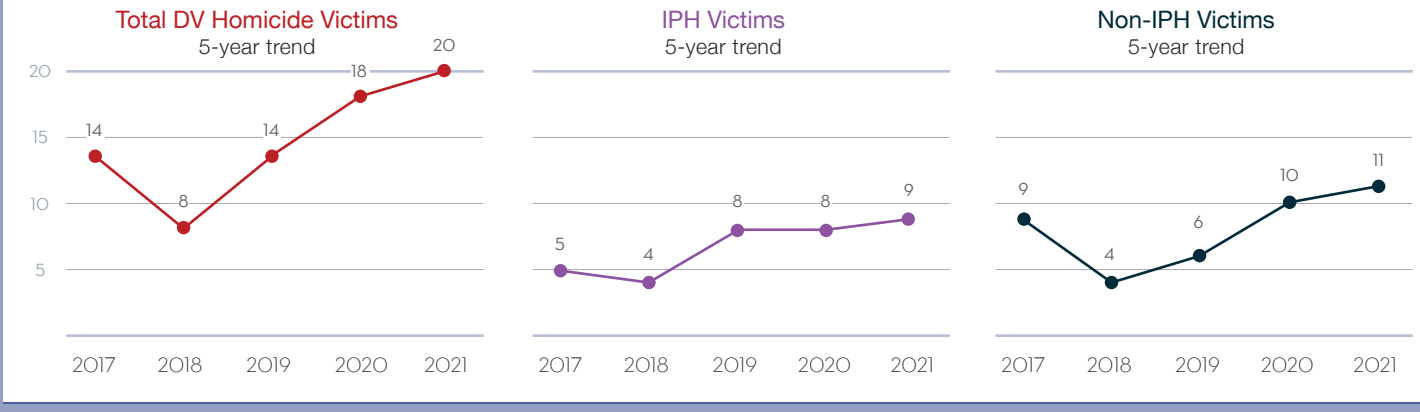
To review recent DVFRB findings and recommendations, please refer to the Board's latest Annual Report, available from the Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants.[8]

8 Trends data are drawn from the most recent MPD case files and include active cases. Due to the nature of homicide investigations, some demographic details may be unknown at the time of publication. In contrast, the DVFRB bases its annual recommendations on a review of closed cases only. For more information on DVFRB practices, please see the most recent Annual Report.

Types of Domestic Violence Homicide

Intimate Partner Homicide (IPH)	Non-Intimate Partner Homicide (Non-IPH)
Current spouse	Parent, child, sibling, other family
Former spouse	3rd-party to current/former intimate partner
Current intimate partner (unmarried)	Roommate
Former intimate partner (unmarried)	Landlord/tenant

Number of Domestic Violence Homicides by Year



Domestic Violence Fatalities Defined

According to DC Code § 16-1051, a "domestic violence fatality" is a homicide that occurs under any of the following circumstances:

- The alleged perpetrator and victim resided together at any time;
- The alleged perpetrator and victim have a child in common;
- The alleged perpetrator and victim were married, divorced, separated, or had a romantic relationship, not necessarily including a sexual relationship;
- The alleged perpetrator is or was married to, divorced, or separated from, or in a romantic relationship, not necessarily including a sexual relationship, with a person who is or was married to, divorced, or separated from, or in a romantic relationship, not necessarily including a sexual relationship, with the victim;
- The alleged perpetrator had been stalking the victim;
- The victim filed a petition for a protective order against the alleged perpetrator at any time;
- The victim resided in the same household, was present at the workplace of, was in proximity of, or was related by blood or affinity to a person who experienced or was threatened with domestic violence by the alleged perpetrator; or
- The victim or the perpetrator was or is a child, parent, sibling, grandparent, aunt, uncle, or cousin of a person in a relationship that is described within this subsection.

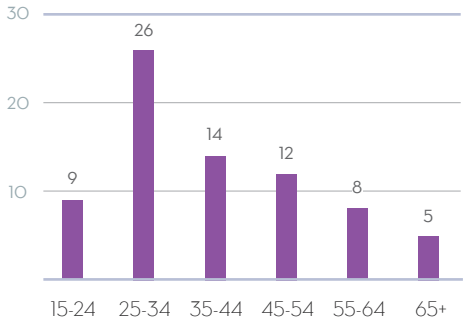
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOMICIDE
5-Year Trends: 2017-2021

The District of Columbia had **74** domestic violence homicides from 2017-2021.

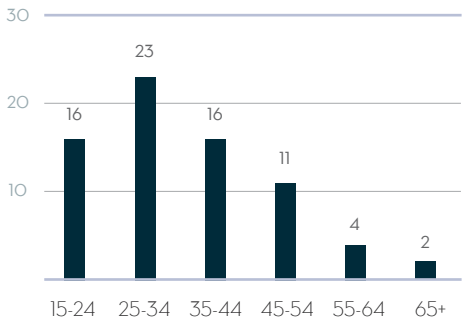
Victims and perpetrators of domestic violence homicide ranged broadly in age from their teens through 80s.

For victims, the median age was **33** and the average was **40**. For perpetrators, the median age was **32** and the average was **40**.

DV Victims by Age
at time of death



DV Perpetrators by Age
at time of victim death

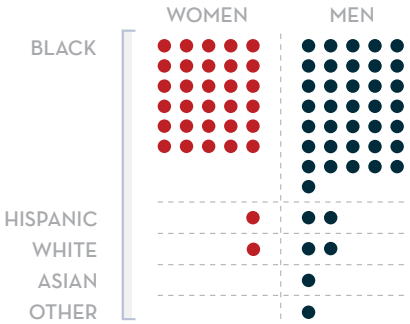


Both women (**43%**) and men (**57%**) were victims of domestic violence homicide. Men made up **88%** of perpetrators.

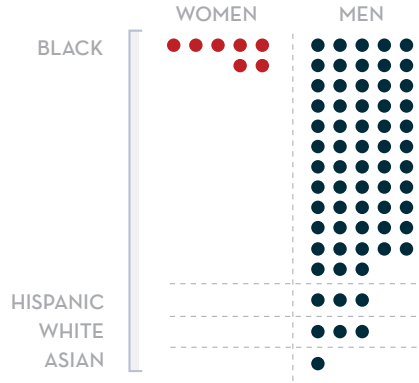
Most victims and perpetrators were Black. All but two domestic violence homicides were intraracial.

(Term *Hispanic* based on MPD data collection category.)

DV Victims by Gender & Race

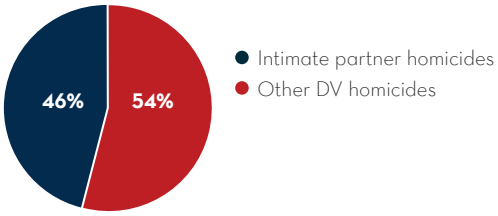


DV Perpetrators by Gender & Race

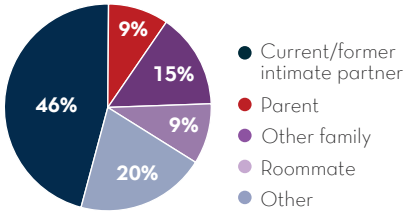


Just under half of domestic violence homicides were perpetrated by current or former intimate partners.

Type of DV Homicide



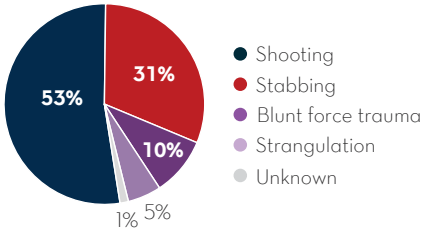
DV Homicide Victims' Relationship to Perpetrator



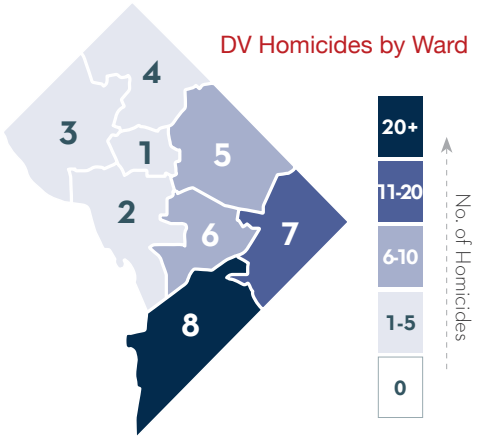
Domestic violence homicide victims were largely shot or stabbed. Of the three domestic violence homicide/suicides in this period, all were shootings.

38% of domestic violence homicides occurred in Ward 8.

Primary Manner of Homicide



DV Homicides by Ward



Please note numbers may not total 100% due to rounding.
Demographic information on two perpetrators is unknown.

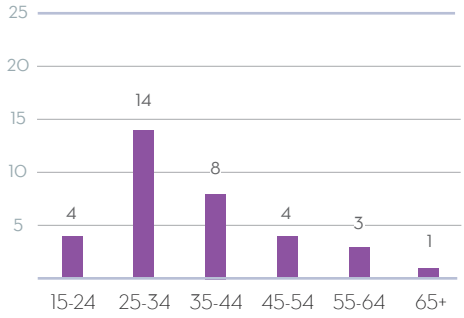
INTIMATE PARTNER HOMICIDE
5-Year Trends: 2017-2021

The District of Columbia had **34** intimate partner homicides (IPH) from 2017-2021.

Victims and perpetrators of IPH ranged broadly in age.

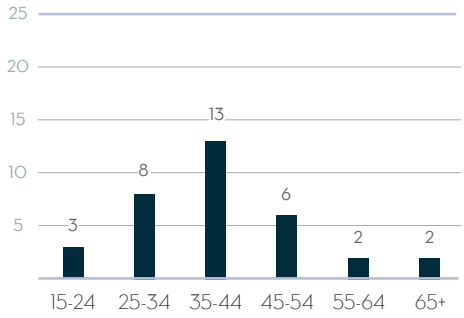
For victims, the median age was **34** and the average was **37**. For perpetrators, the median age was **37** and the average was **39**.

IPH by Victim Age
at time of death



The youngest victim was **16** years old and the oldest was **71**

IPH by Perpetrator Age
at time of victim death

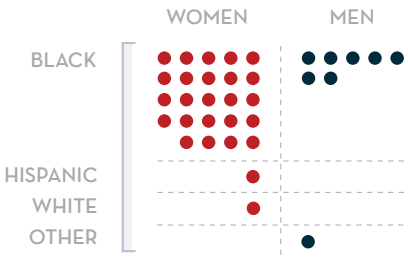


The youngest perpetrator was **18** years old and the oldest was **67**

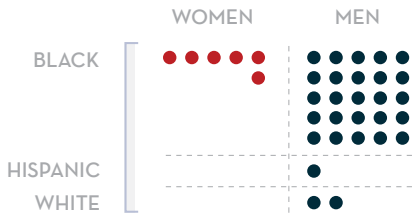
IPH victims were more likely to be women (**76%**) than men (**24%**). Both perpetrators and victims were majority Black.

(Term *Hispanic* based on MPD data collection category.)

IPH Victims by Gender & Race



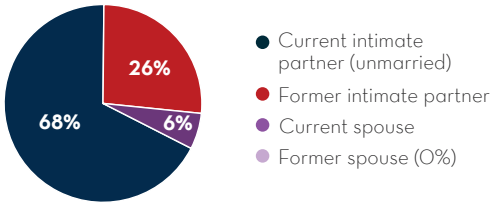
IPH Perpetrators by Gender & Race



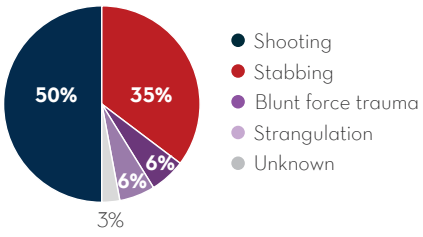
3/4 of IPH victims were in a current relationship with the perpetrator. **1/4** were former partners.

85% of IPH victims were stabbed or shot.

IPH Victims' Relationship to Perpetrator

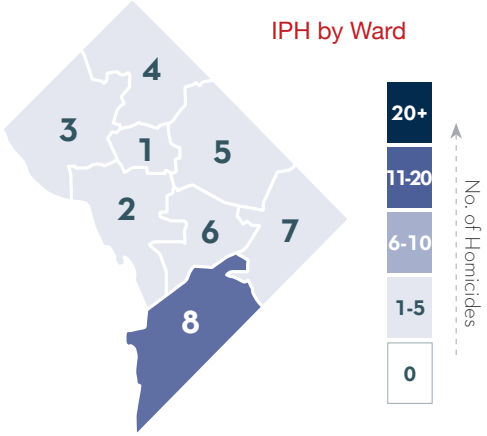


Primary Manner of Homicide



IPH deaths occurred in every Ward. Ward 8 had 13 IPH deaths—more than twice as many as the next highest Wards (Wards 5 and 7, with five IPH deaths each).

IPH by Ward



Please note numbers may not total 100% due to rounding.

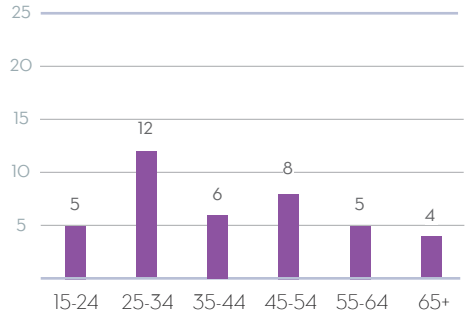
NON-IPH DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOMICIDE
5-Year Trends: 2017-2021

The District of Columbia had **40** domestic violence homicides that did **not** involve intimate partners from 2017-2021.

While non-IPH domestic violence homicide victims ranged in age from their teens through 80s, the oldest perpetrator was 60.

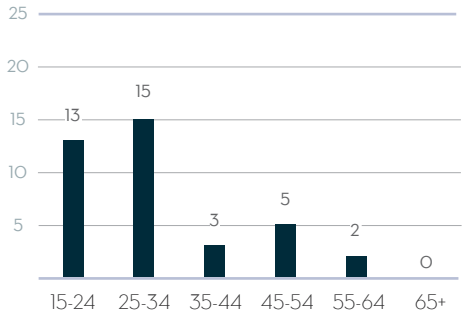
For victims, the median age was **38** and the average was **42**. For perpetrators, the median age was **30** and the average was **32**.

Non-IPH by Victim Age
at time of death



The youngest victim was **16** years old and the oldest was **81**

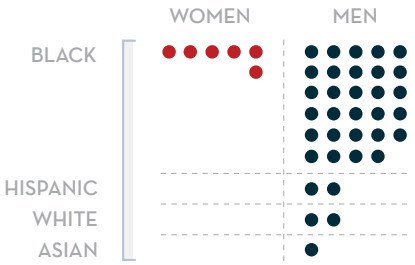
Non-IPH by Perpetrator Age
at time of victim death



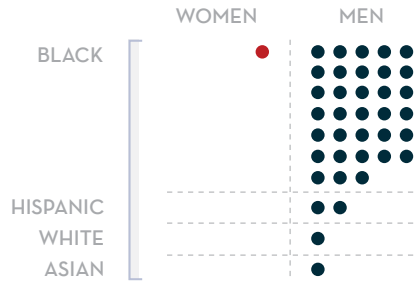
The youngest perpetrator was **15** years old and the oldest was **60**

The majority of non-IPH domestic violence homicide victims and perpetrators were Black men (**73%** and **87%**, respectively).

Non-IPH Victims by Gender & Race

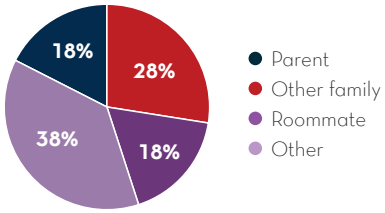


Non-IPH Perpetrators by Gender & Race

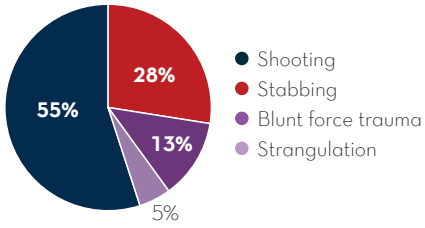


About half (**44%**) of non-IPH domestic violence homicides were committed by a relative. The other half (**56%**) were roommates or third parties to a romantic relationship.

Non-IPH Victims' Relationship to Perpetrator

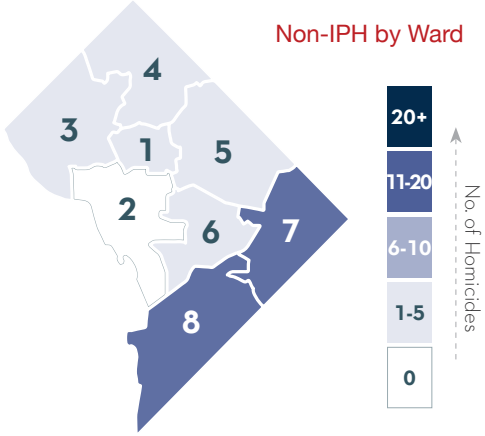


Primary Manner of Homicide



Non-IPH domestic violence homicides occurred in every Ward but 2.

Non-IPH by Ward



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