



**Georgia
Commission on
Family
Violence**

**FAMILY VIOLENCE
STATISTICS AND TRENDS
IN THE STATE OF GEORGIA
2013-2017**

PUBLISHED JUNE 2020

ABOUT THIS REPORT

The coordinated community response to family violence in Georgia is continually evolving and improving. As stakeholders move toward evidence-based decision making, the need for reliable data about the problem of family violence grows. The Georgia Commission on Family Violence (GCFV) recognizes the need for accurate and current information on how this prevalent and pressing issue is impacting Georgians. This report represents a key step forward in the State's capacity to enable a strategic response to family violence.

Family violence in Georgia persists amid silence. Open discussion about the scope of the problem within our communities is an important step to enhance systems' performance by preventing violence, intervening with people who are abusive, enhancing community connections and support, providing equitable access to resources, and ensuring effective responses with the goal of ending family violence in Georgia.

The data contained in this report represent only reported or known incidents of family violence in Georgia and should be considered an undercount of the true number of incidents statewide. Many abusive relationships are never known to the criminal or civil justice systems, and many services provided to victims and offenders are done under protection of confidentiality.

With the support of other state agencies including the Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI) and the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, GCFV seeks to act as a clearinghouse for statewide data pertaining to the problem of family violence in Georgia. As we develop our data-sharing partnerships, we hope to also grow the capacity of our reporting on this issue and the coordinated community response to family violence in Georgia.

ABOUT GCFV

The Georgia Commission on Family Violence is a state agency created by the Georgia General Assembly in 1992 to develop a comprehensive state plan for ending family violence in Georgia. The mission of GCFV is to provide leadership to end family violence by promoting safety, ensuring accountability, and improving justice for generations to come.

Charged with the study and evaluation of needs, priorities, programs, policies, and accessibility of services relating to family violence in Georgia, GCFV is led by 37 appointed Commissioners and a staff of eight. GCFV is administratively attached to the Georgia Department of Community Supervision (DCS).

GCFV carries out our statutory duties through the following projects:

- **Public Awareness and Education** - GCFV provides training statewide on family violence and related issues, such as building safer communities, protocol development, and ensuring a coordinated community response to relationship violence.
- **Statewide Annual Conference** - GCFV's Annual Family Violence Conference provides an opportunity for more than 600 participants to receive training by state and national experts on best practices addressing family and domestic violence.
- **Family Violence Intervention Programs (FVIPs)** – GCFV and DCS establish standards for FVIPs in Georgia and provide training, certification, and monitoring of FVIP facilitators and programs. Certified FVIPs are designed to rehabilitate family violence offenders and are charged with prioritizing victim safety and participant accountability.
- **Community Task Forces** – GCFV works throughout the state to help create and support task forces made up of citizen volunteers working to end family violence in their communities.
- **Domestic Violence Fatality Review** - GCFV compiles statistics and studies trends unique to family violence-related deaths in Georgia and works with communities to conduct in-depth case reviews and to implement recommendations for systematic change.
- **Support for Survivors of Murder-Suicide** - GCFV provides support, resources, and referrals to survivors of family violence-related murder-suicide incidents occurring in Georgia, as well as provides training, technical assistance, and resources to communities responding to murder-suicide incidents.
- **Legislative Advocacy** - GCFV has been instrumental in creating laws which enhance safety for victims of family violence and their children, and increase accountability for family violence offenders.
- **Research** - GCFV conducts ongoing research on a range of issues related to family violence and periodically disseminates the findings to policymakers and the general public.

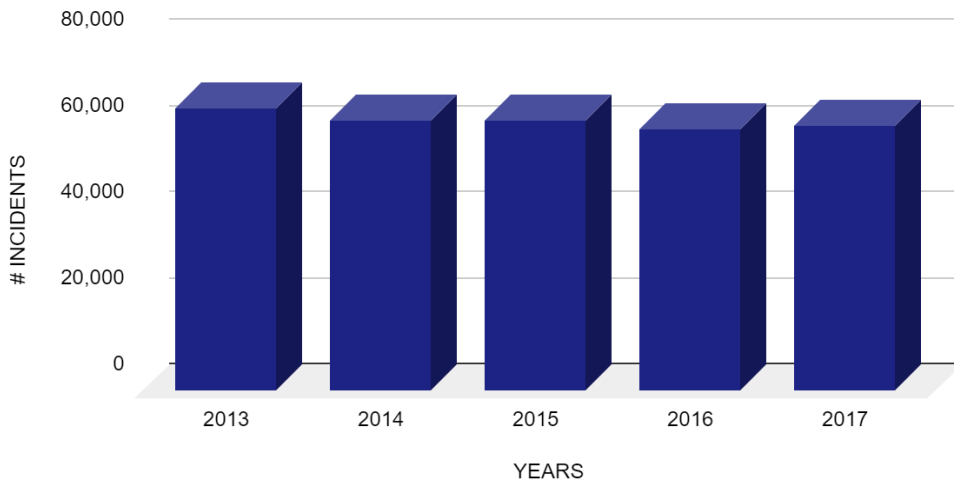
For more information, visit gcfv.georgia.gov.

State of Georgia (2013-2017)

Reported Incidents of Family Violence

Reported Incidents of Family Violence

Statewide 2013-2017



Over the course of the five-year reporting period, the rate of family violence incidents reported to law enforcement fell 6%. There were 311,975 family violence incidents reported in Georgia, 2013-2017.

YEARS	# INCIDENTS
2013	65,201
2014	62,659
2015	62,358
2016	60,451
2017	61,306

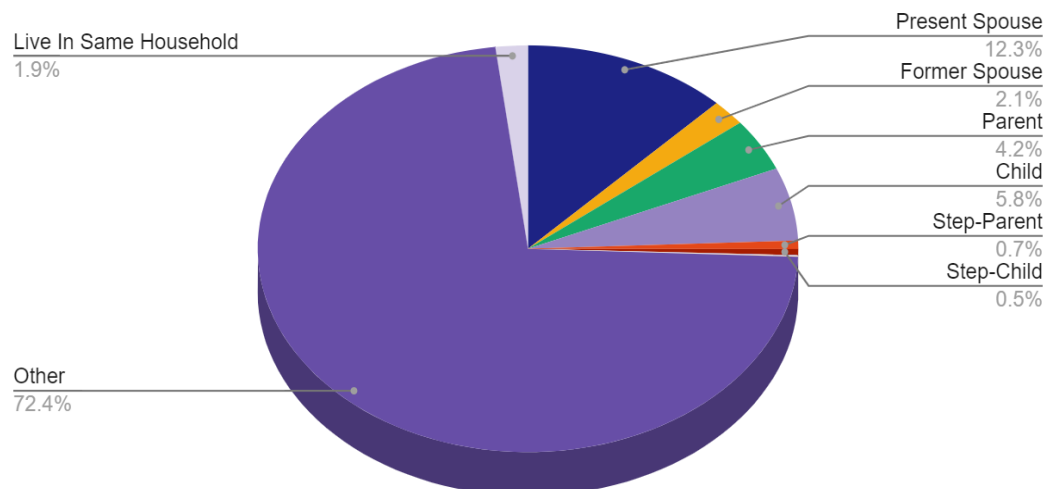
Relationship of Parties in Reported Incidents of Family Violence

Georgia's family violence incident report includes multiple fields with the option for an officer to select "other." The definition of "other" has not been properly defined, and the contents of this catch-all category within the data are otherwise unspecified. Clarifying the selection criteria for the category "other" is an area for improvement within the data. This is particularly true given that the response "other" was selected 72.4% of the time as it pertains to the relationship of the parties involved in a family violence incident.

RELATIONSHIP	TOTAL INVOLVED
Present Spouse	70,450
Former Spouse	11,853
Parent	24,010
Child	33,261
Step-Parent	3,826
Step-Child	2,759
Foster Parent	301
Foster Child	432
Live in Same Household	11,050
Other	415,177

Relationship of Parties in Reported Family Violence Incidents

Statewide 2013-2017 (Projected)

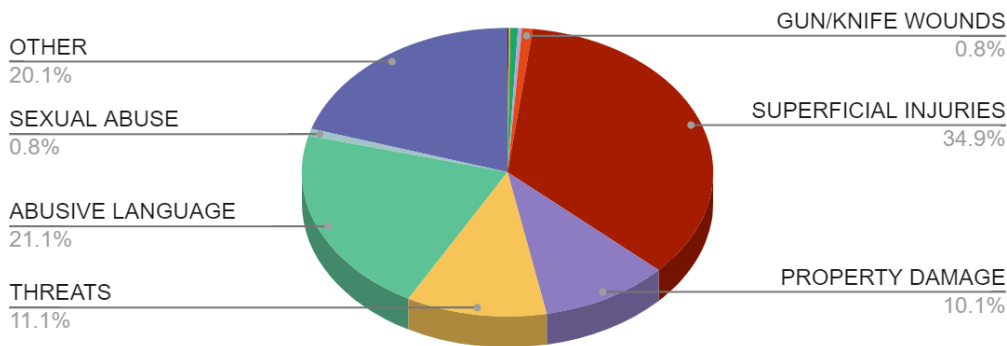


State of Georgia (2013-2017)

Abuse Types in Reported Family Violence Incidents

Abuse Types in Reported Family Violence Incidents

Statewide 2013-2017



ABUSE TYPE	# INCIDENTS
Superficial Injuries	154,843
Abusive Language	93,523
Threats	49,072
Property Damage	44,763
Gun/Knife Wounds	3,757
Sexual Abuse	3,572
Temporary Disability	2,606
Broken Bone	1,431
Permanent Physical Injury	650
Fatal Injury	359
Other	89,375

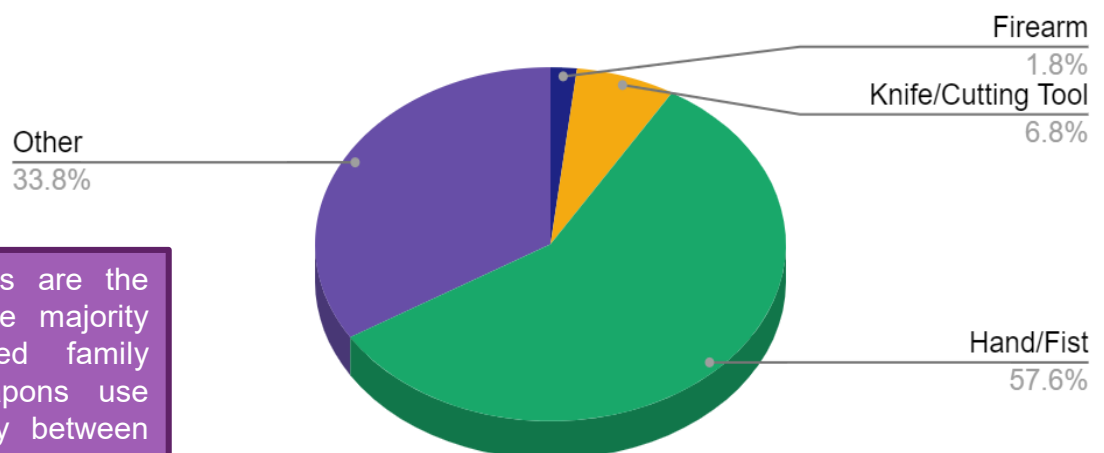
Public awareness campaigns often highlight the physical aspects of family violence, often featuring black eyes and bruises. This image of the issue ignores many more prevalent aspects of family violence. During the five-year reporting period, more than three quarters (77.2%) of the incidents involved either no injuries to the victim (abusive language 21.1%, threats 11.1%, property damage 10.1%) or superficial injuries (34.9%).

Weapons Use in Reported Family Violence Incidents

WEAPON	TOTAL
Hand/Fist	179,545
Knife/Cutting Tool	21,318
Firearm	5,616
Other	105,496

Weapons Use in Reported Family Violence Incidents

Statewide 2013-2017



Abusers' hands and fists are the weapon of choice in the majority (57.6%) of all reported family violence incidents. Weapons use patterns vary significantly between non-fatal and fatal incidents. (See page 12 for more information.)

State of Georgia (2013-2017)

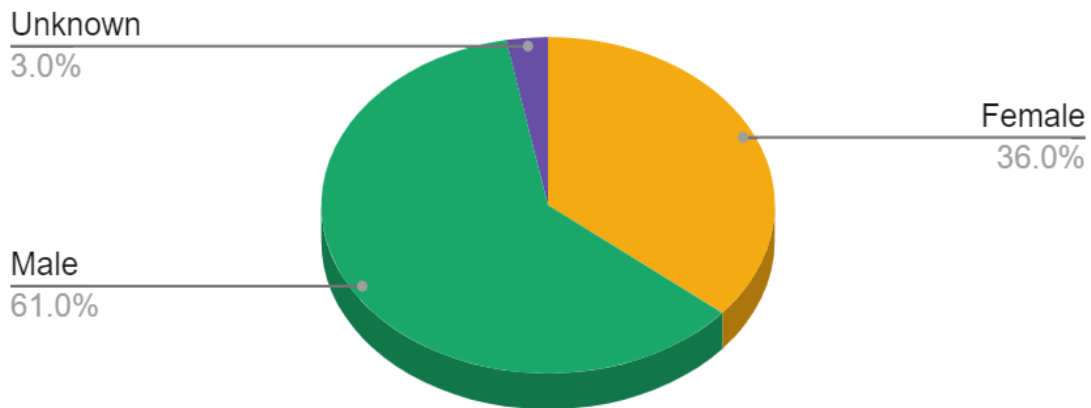
Gender of Offender and Victim in Reported Incidents of Family Violence

GENDER	# OFFENDERS	# VICTIMS
Female	108,792	205,687
Male	184,111	118,909
Unknown	8,942	752

Georgia's definition of family violence, and therefore the family violence incident data contained in this report, includes intimate partner violence along with incidents involving other relationships including parent/child and roommates, but our overall trend falls in line with national research which has revealed that victims of intimate partner violence are disproportionately female¹ and offenders are disproportionately male.

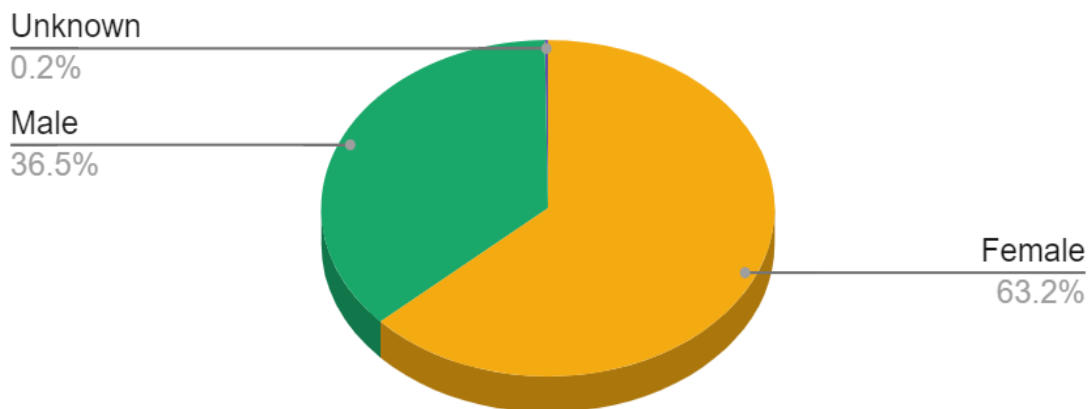
Gender of Offender in Reported Family Violence Incidents

Statewide 2013-2017



Gender of Victim in Reported Family Violence Incidents

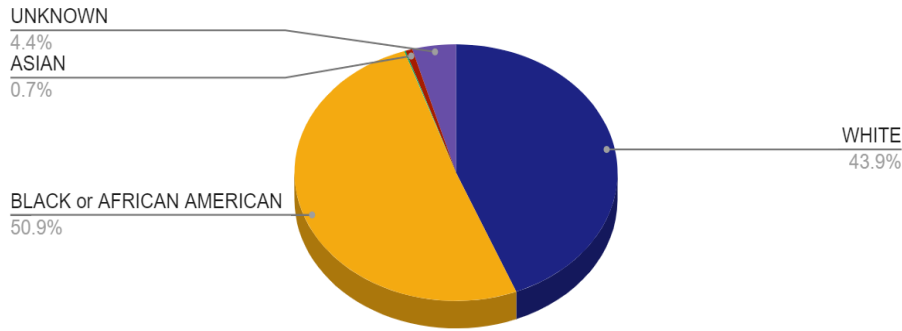
Statewide 2013-2017



State of Georgia (2013-2017)

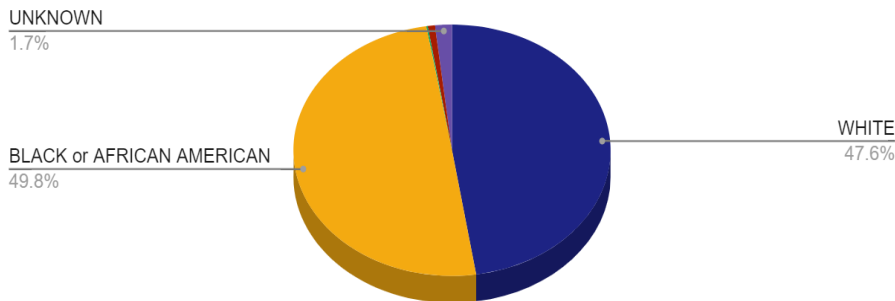
Race of Offender and Victim in Reported Incidents of Family Violence

Race of Offender in Reported Family Violence Incidents
Statewide 2013-2017



RACE	# OFFENDERS
American Indian or Alaska Native	408
Asian	2,225
Black or African-American	163,743
White	141,297
Unknown	14,057

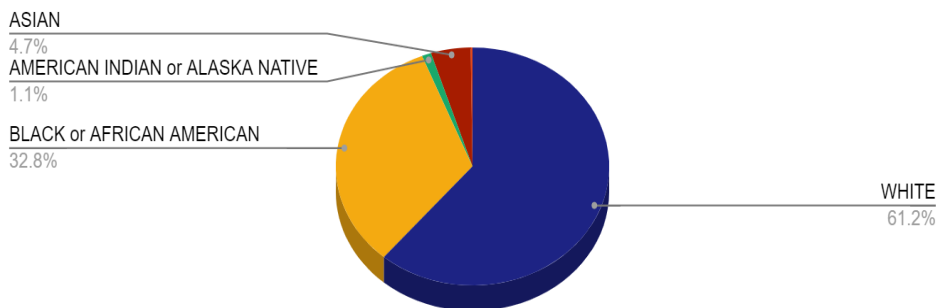
Race of Victim in Reported Family Violence Incidents
Statewide 2013-2017



RACE	# VICTIMS
American Indian or Alaska Native	480
Asian	2,372
Black or African-American	162,731
White	155,294
Unknown	5,632

Race in Population of Georgia

Race in Population of Georgia
Statewide 2017



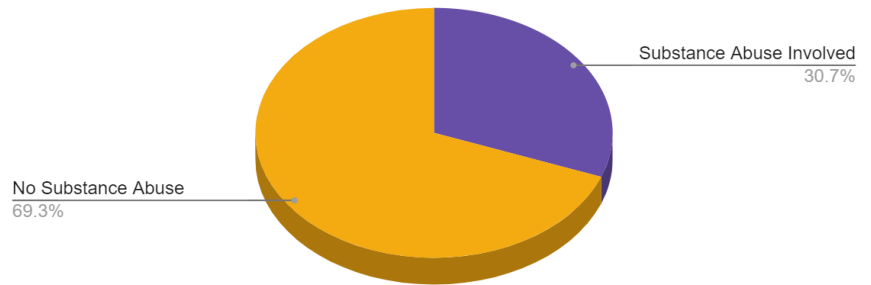
Research on the intersection of race and intimate partner violence is limited, but Georgia's victim data show that Black women are victimized at higher rates than their peers of different racial backgrounds. This finding is in line with national research about the disparate impacts of abuse on Black communities.²

State of Georgia (2013-2017)

Substance Abuse in Reported Incidents of Family Violence

SUBSTANCE ABUSE	# INCIDENTS
Offender Drug	10,619
Offender Alcohol	51,270
Offender Drug and Alcohol	3,039
Victim Drug	3,109
Victim Alcohol	26,599
Victim Drug and Alcohol	1,206
Offender Substance Abuse (Total)	64,928
Victim Substance Abuse (Total)	30,914

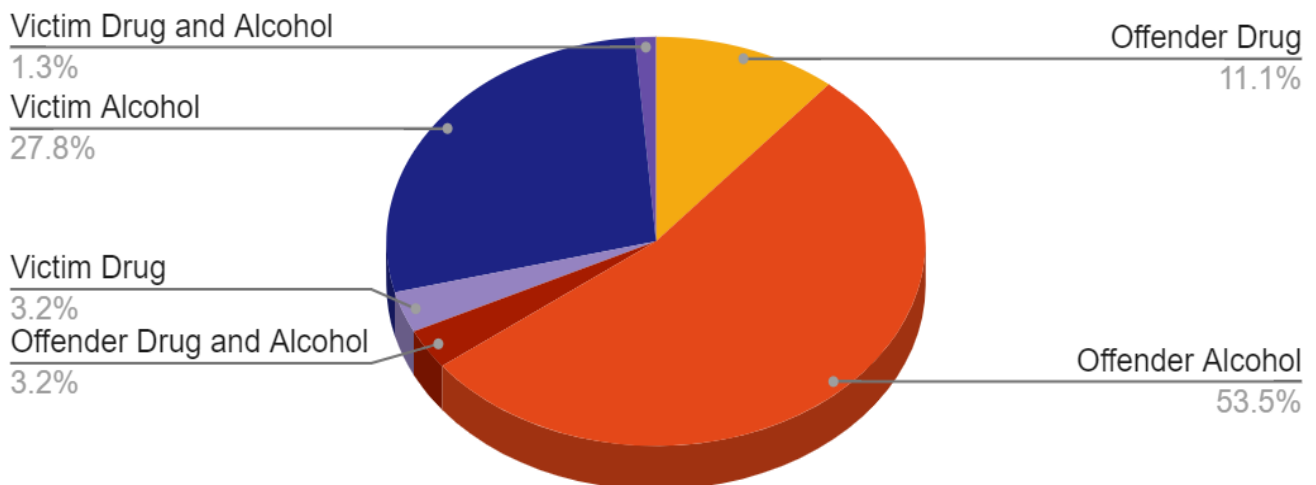
Substance Abuse in Reported Family Violence Incidents
Statewide 2013-2017



While the co-occurrence of substance abuse and intimate partner violence is common, we must be aware that one issue does not cause the other. In fact, less than a third (30.7%) of family violence incidents in Georgia involve alcohol or drug use. Of those that do, it is the abuser that is under the influence 67.8% of the time. Given that, Georgia's data may support national research that shows abuse is more likely to occur if the offender is under the influence of alcohol³ or drugs.⁴

Substances Used in Reported Family Violence Incidents with Substance Abuse Involved

Statewide 2013-2017



State of Georgia (2013-2017)

Child(ren) Involved or Present in Reported Family Violence Incidents

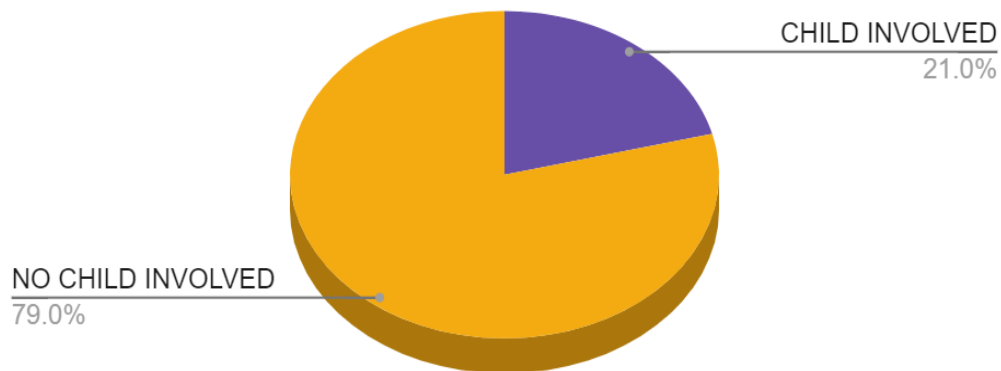
CHILD(REN) INVOLVED	# INCIDENTS
Child(ren) Involved	65,449
No Child(ren) Involved	246,526

CHILD(REN) PRESENT	# INCIDENTS
Child(ren) Present	102,704
No Child(ren) Present	209,271

For children, the impact of exposure to intimate partner violence is long-lasting and significant.⁵ Unfortunately, the full extent of their exposure to Georgia family violence incidents cannot be accurately measured using the law enforcement reporting systems in place during the five-year reporting period. Georgia plans to address this issue under its transition to the NIBRS reporting system in 2018. NOTE: The data included do not reflect the number of children exposed, rather the data reflect the number of reported incidents where one or more children were present or involved.

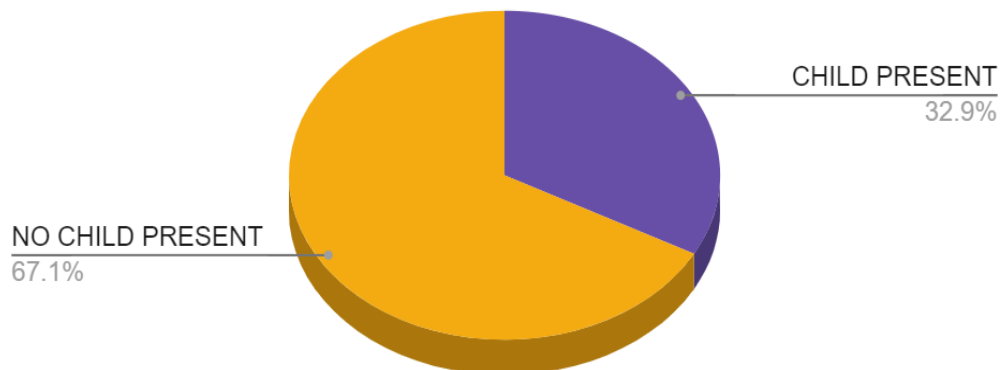
Child Involved in Reported Family Violence Incidents

Statewide 2013-2017



Child Present in Reported Family Violence Incidents

Statewide 2013-2017



State of Georgia (2013-2017)

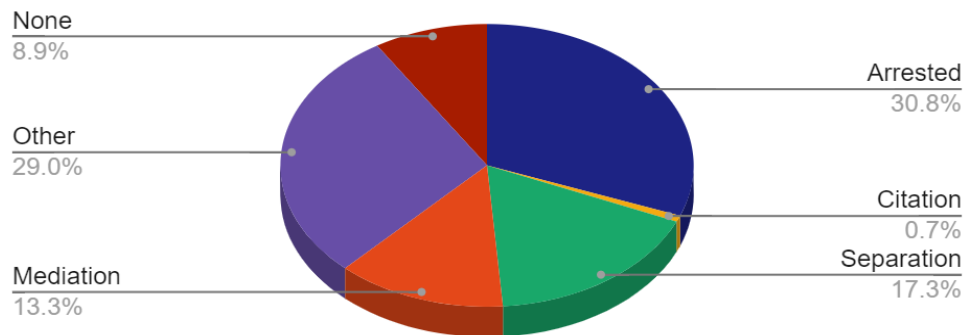
Police Action Taken in Family Violence Incidents

POLICE ACTION TAKEN	Arrested	Citation	Mediation	None	Separation	Other
TOTAL	105,630	2,469	45,519	30,610	59,196	99,600

Georgia officers are not mandated to make an arrest in family violence incidents.⁶ Moreover, the statute clearly allows officers to arrest one party, even if both parties have used violence. Appropriately identifying the primary physical aggressor and charging that person is the most effective intervention in family violence incidents. While GBI's data on police action taken in family violence incidents do indicate that arrest is the most frequently occurring outcome, arrests represent only 30.8% of reported police responses. This means that in more than two-thirds of responses, preference was given to a different outcome. And, when we examine these responses by year, the trends show a decrease (-8.5%) in the rate of arrest. Even more disconcerting, there has been a significant rise (+52.2%) in the rate of reports in which "none" (no action taken) was the officer's reported response.

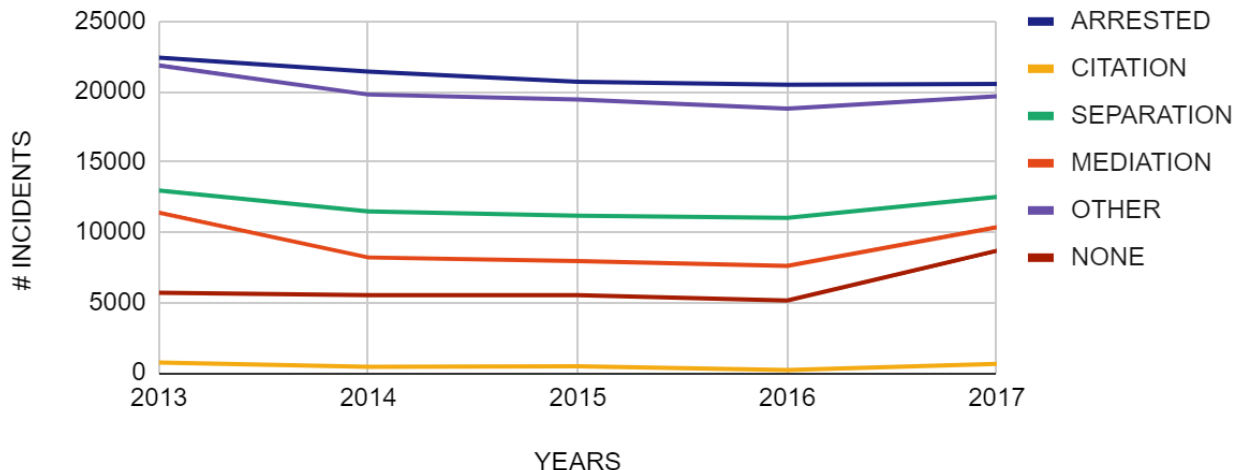
Police Action Taken in Reported Family Violence Incidents

Statewide 2013-2017



Police Action Taken in Reported Family Violence Incidents

Statewide 2013-2017

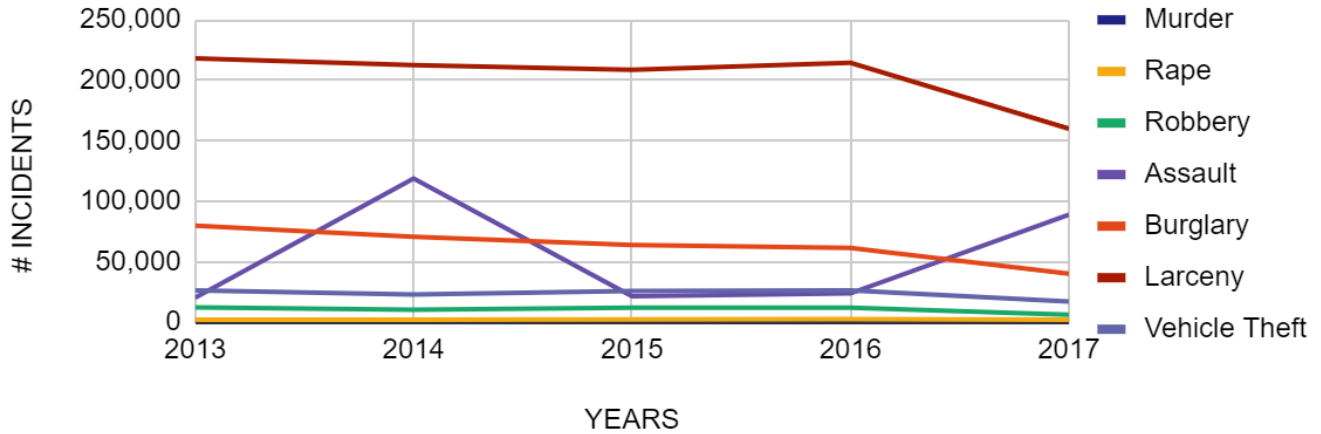


State of Georgia (2013-2017)

Crime Trends

Index Crimes

Statewide 2013-2017

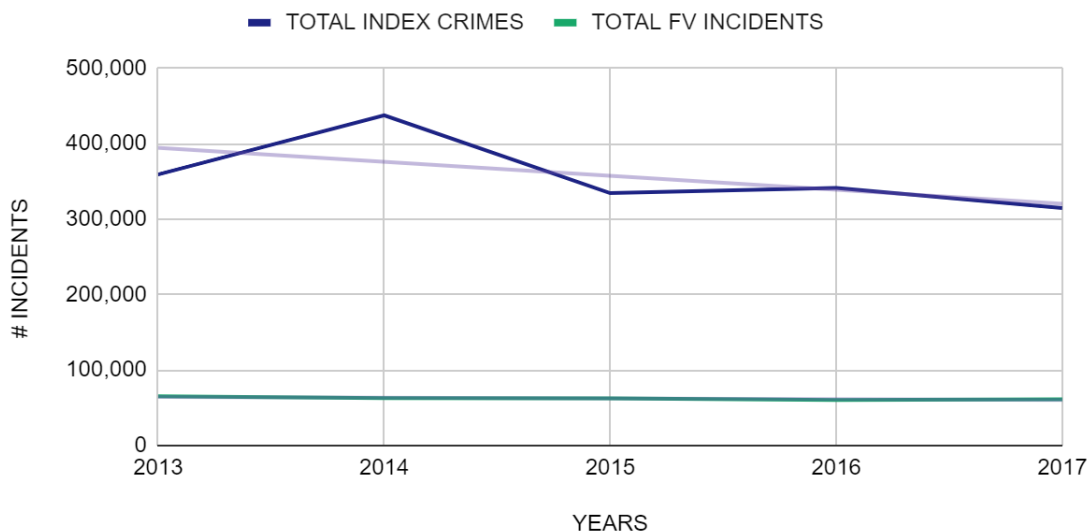


Index crimes, including assault, burglary, larceny, murder, rape, robbery, and vehicle theft, are used as an indicator of the rate of violent crimes nationally. In Georgia, index crime data are generated from uniform crime reports (UCR) completed by law enforcement officers. These reports are also the source of family violence incident information statewide. Many family violence incidents also qualify as index crimes. Despite some duplication given that overlap, comparing the trendlines of index crimes and family violence incidents provides great insight into our state's effort to reduce violent crime. In Georgia, both index crimes and family violence incidents were on the decline during the five-year reporting period. However, index crimes fell 12%, while family violence incidents were reduced at only half that rate (-6%).

YEARS	TOTAL INDEX CRIMES	TOTAL FV INCIDENTS
2013	359,297	65,201
2014	437,566	62,659
2015	334,508	62,358
2016	341,254	60,451
2017	314,776	61,306

Crime Trends

Statewide 2013-2017



State of Georgia (2013-2017)

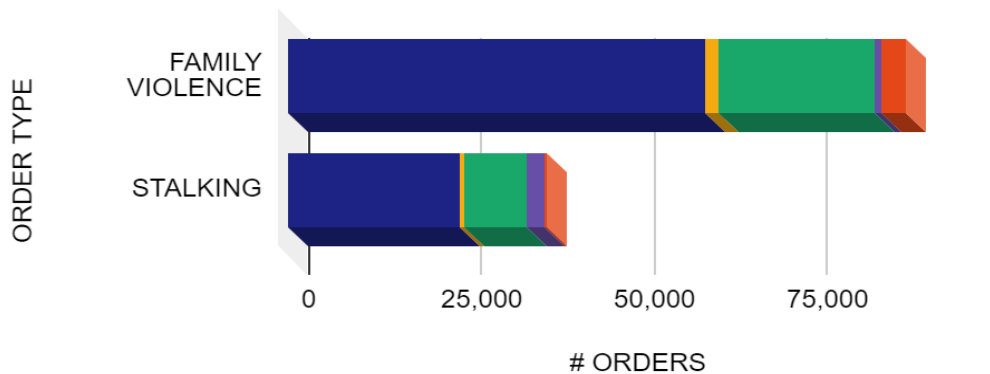
Temporary Protective Orders (TPOs) by Type

ORDER TYPE	EX PARTE TPO	6-MONTH TPO	12-MONTH TPO	3-YEAR TPO	MISCELLANEOUS / CRIMINAL ORDER	TOTAL TPOs (ALL TYPES)
FAMILY VIOLENCE	60,219	1,968	22,557	994	3,452	89,190
STALKING	24,595	802	8,991	2,431	394	37,213

Temporary Protective Orders (TPOs) by Type

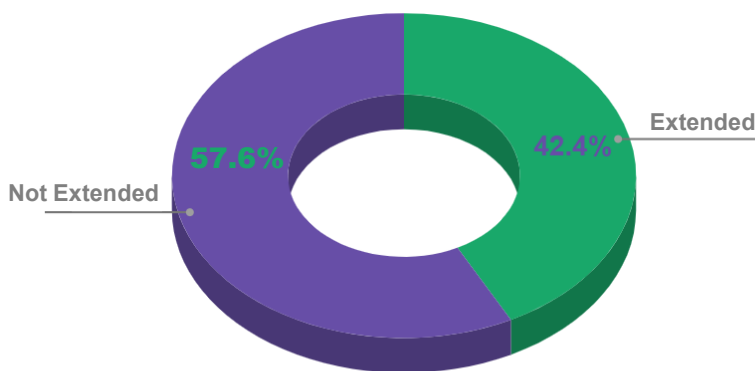
Statewide 2013-2017

■ EX PARTE TPO
 ■ 6-MONTH TPO
 ■ 12-MONTH TPO
■ 3-YEAR TPO
 ■ MISCELLANEOUS / CRIMINAL ORDER



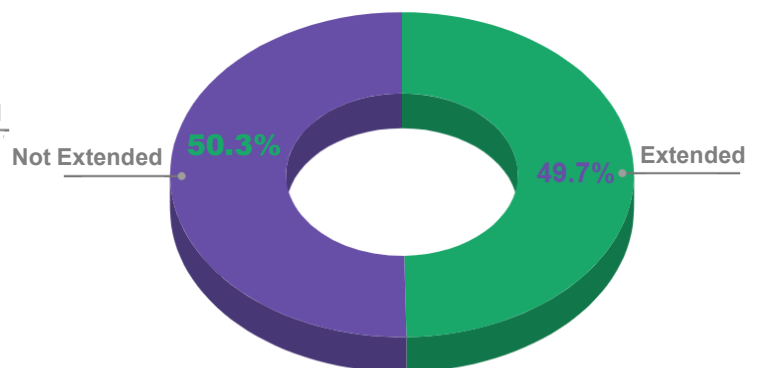
Extension Rate From Ex Parte to Longer-Term Family Violence TPO

Statewide 2013-2017



Extension Rate From Ex Parte to Longer-Term Stalking TPO

Statewide 2013-2017



Temporary Protective Orders (TPOs) are an effective tool for victim safety. Research shows the majority of victims report their TPO ended the violence.⁷ In many cases, the longer the protective period, the better the outcomes. Between 2013 and 2017, 126,403 family violence and stalking TPOs were issued statewide. In Georgia, the overall “extension rate,” or the rate at which an emergency (Ex Parte) TPO is extended into a longer-term (6-Month, 12-Month, 3-Year) order, is 55.5%. The “extension rate” is 7.3% higher for stalking cases than for family violence cases. In both types, the “extension rate” is impacted by judicial discretion, failure to legally serve notice of the proceeding to the abuser, lack of legal representation, and victim decisions as to how or whether to proceed with a follow-up hearing.

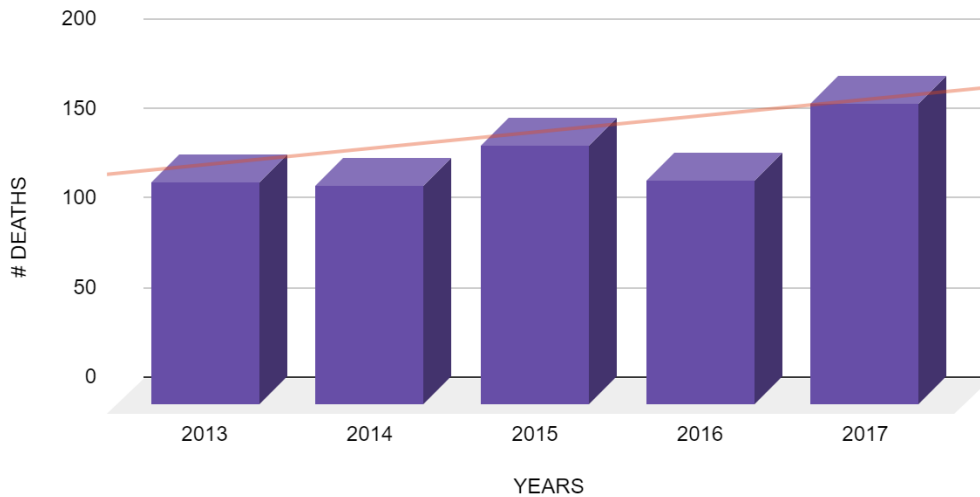
State of Georgia (2013-2017)

Domestic Violence-Related Deaths

YEARS	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
# Fatal Incidents	89	93	100	97	136
# Victim Deaths	70	80	85	70	95
# Perpetrator Deaths	44	32	35	33	45
# Bystander Deaths	10	10	25	22	28
# Deaths Resulting From Incidents	124	122	145	125	168

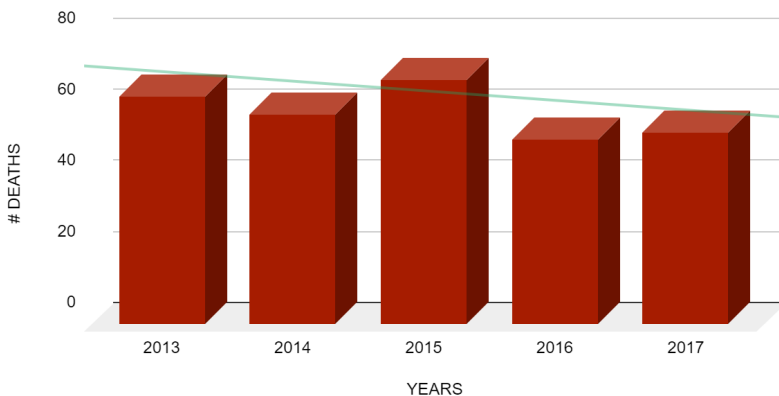
Domestic Violence-Related Deaths

Statewide 2013-2017



Domestic Violence-Related Deaths in Murder-Suicide Incidents

Statewide 2013-2017



Murder-Suicide Incidents

YEARS	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
# Completed Murder-Suicide Incidents	27	24	26	20	24
# Attempted Murder-Suicide Incidents	6	8	7	6	7
# Deaths Resulting From Incidents	64	59	69	52	54

The homicide-suicide connection in lethal incidents of domestic violence has been well established and represents a prevalent problem in Georgia.⁸ Murder-suicides represent 30% of fatal incidents of domestic violence statewide, but account for 44% of all domestic violence-related deaths. Their disproportionate weight within statewide deaths, has highlighted a need for collaboration between domestic violence and mental health stakeholders.

State of Georgia (2013-2017)

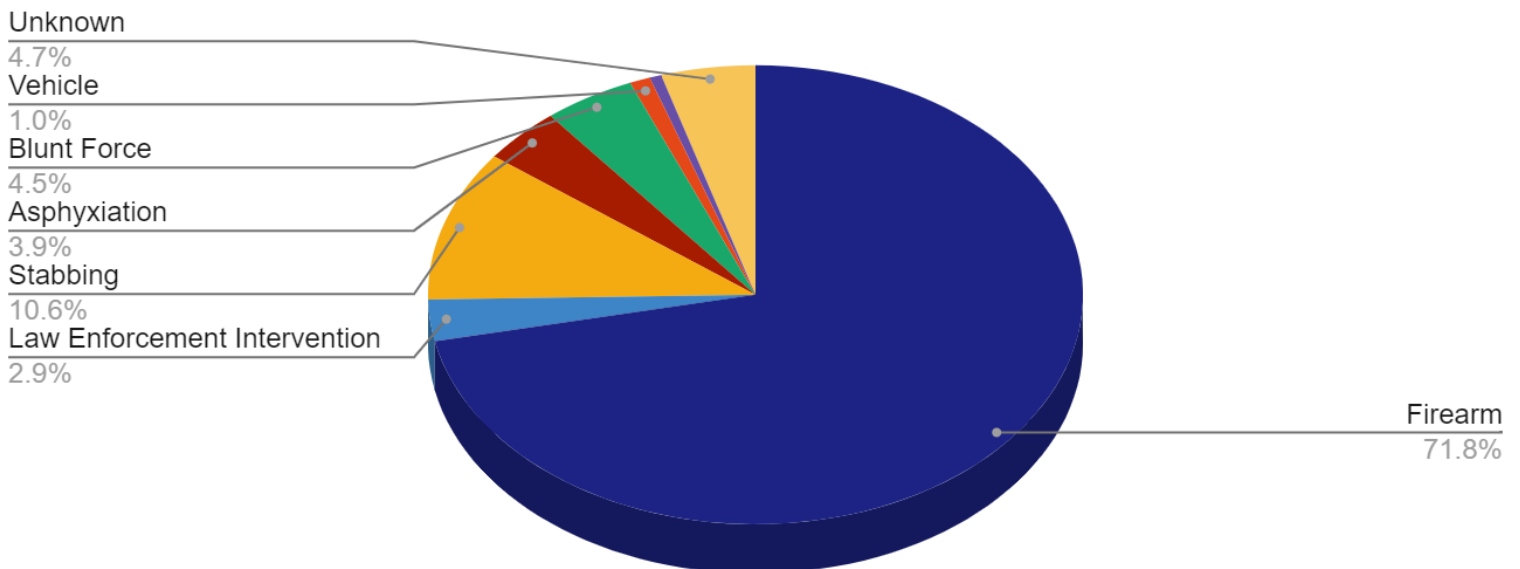
Cause of Death in Domestic Violence-Related Deaths

YEARS	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Firearm	91	80	116	89	117
Stabbing	7	22	11	16	17
Blunt Force	8	4	5	3	11
Asphyxiation	2	7	5	5	8
Law Enforcement Intervention (Firearm)	6	1	5	3	5
Vehicle	0	2	0	5	0
Other	0	0	0	2	2
Unknown	10	6	3	2	11

Firearms were the leading cause of death in fatal incidents of domestic violence during the five-year reporting period, accounting for three quarters of all known domestic violence deaths statewide [71.8% firearm, 2.9% law enforcement intervention (firearm)]. The high rate of firearms use in fatal incidents of abuse is in sharp contrast to their presence in only 1.8% of reported family violence incidents statewide, allowing the conclusion that when firearms are present in a family violence incident, the risk of a fatal incident is increased exponentially. This finding has been consistently noted locally⁹ and in national research, which reveals a 500% increase in the risk of homicide when an abuser has access to a firearm.¹⁰ NOTE: In some circumstances multiple causes are attributed to a single death. Given that, the total numbers reflected for each cause of death, may be in excess of the numbers of statewide deaths occurring in a given year.

Cause of Death in Fatal Incidents of Domestic Violence

Statewide 2013-2017



HOW TO USE THIS REPORT

In December 2012, GCFV published the “Georgia State Plan for Ending Family Violence.” The plan outlined a vision for a future in which all Georgia’s family support agencies share in a continuous process of reducing family violence in concrete ways that lend themselves to each agency’s special mission, vision and values.¹¹ Among the strategic directions outlined under the 2012 plan, was the goal to improve collaboration and develop practices, protocols and tools for gathering and using family violence data to assist with state planning in Georgia. This report represents another milestone in our efforts to achieve that goal.

This report contains aggregate data for the entire State of Georgia. Future reports will delineate the data according to geographic region to facilitate targeted responses to family violence on the local level. The multifaceted nature of family violence requires rigorous use of data on the state and local level to ascertain the systemic gaps that exist in family violence response. Providing comprehensive and targeted reports on family violence throughout Georgia offers an opportunity to cultivate change and develop innovative responses to the issue of family violence.

Family violence is a complex issue that requires a coordinated community response to implement change. The data in this report clearly show a significant decrease in violent crimes in Georgia. However, the same is not true for family violence incidents. GCFV’s mission is to end family violence in Georgia; the participation of key stakeholders is integral to the success of this mission. Family violence is a systemic issue that needs to be addressed in a multidimensional, data driven, evidence-based manner. This report is a step towards equipping state and local leaders to do so effectively.



**Georgia
Commission on
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Violence**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

PROJECT STAFF

“Family Violence Statistics and Trends in the State of Georgia 2013-2017” was written by Niki Lemeshka, Program Manager of the Georgia Commission on Family Violence.

Data Analysis and project support was provided by Doug Bailey of Performance Vistas, Inc.

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- District Attorney’s Office Victim Witness Assistance Program directors statewide
- Domestic violence programs statewide
- The Georgia Coalition Against Domestic Violence
- The Criminal Justice Coordinating Council’s Statistical Analysis Center

This project would not be possible without the financial support of the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council and the project support of current and former GCFV staff and Commission members, particularly former GCFV Executive Director Jennifer Thomas and current Chairwoman Stephanie Woodard.

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DATA SOURCES AND LIMITATIONS

UNIFORM CRIME REPORTS (pages 2-9)

Family Violence Crimes

Data on reported incidents of family violence, weapons use, abuse types, relationship of the parties, gender, race of offender and victim, substance abuse, children, and police action taken (henceforth referred to as “UCR data”) were obtained from the Uniform Crime Reporting system administered by the Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI). GCFV acknowledges that, as law enforcement agencies report outcomes on a rolling basis, UCR data can and will shift over time as reported data comes closer in line with actual rates of occurrence.

We are also aware that the UCR data set contained in this report is incomplete. Over the course of the five years studied, a number of counties reported zero incidents or failed to submit a family violence report to the GBI. Those counties include: Baker (2013, 2015-2017); Clay (2013-2015); Evans (2015); Glascock (2013, 2015, 2016); Jenkins (2014, 2015); Johnson (2013-2017); Lincoln (2016, 2017); Marion (2013); McIntosh (2013-2017); Montgomery (2013-2017); Quitman (2013-2015, 2017); Stewart (2013-2017); Taylor (2014); Telfair (2017); Treutlen (2017); Warren (2016, 2017); and Webster (2014, 2015, 2017).

Further, the data pertaining to the relationship between victim and offender is not known for 2017. That year only, the GBI changed the way it calculated incidents in which the parties “live in the same household.” In order to ensure continuity with the previous four years’ data, GCFV extrapolated the total it used from 2013-2016 using a linear projection to obtain a figure for 2017. We acknowledge that the 2017 figures on relationships are projections, not actual counts.

Index Crimes

Index crime data were provided by the GBI. The index crime data set contained in this report is substantially complete but, over the course of the five year reporting period, law enforcement agencies in seven of Georgia’s 159 counties reported zero index crimes or failed to submit index crimes to the GBI. The following counties failed to report their statistics during one or more years between 2013 and 2017: Baker (2015, 2016, 2017); Chattahoochee (2017); Clay (2013, 2015); Glascock (2013); Jenkins (2014); Johnson (2017); and Montgomery (2013, 2015, 2016, 2017).

Data on “Race in Population of Georgia” were obtained from the US Census Bureau’s projections for the year 2017.

TEMPORARY PROTECTIVE ORDERS (page 10)

Temporary Protective Order (TPO) data was obtained from the Georgia Protective Order Registry, administered by the Georgia Crime Information Center (GCIC) of the GBI.

The “extension rate” from Ex Parte to longer-term TPO, assumes that each Ex Parte order is eligible to qualify for extension to a longer-term order. The rate is determined through comparison of the total of longer-term orders, including 6-Month, 12-Month, and 3-Year orders of each type, family violence and stalking, to the total number of Ex Parte orders of each type within the reporting period. The rate represents a general trend within the report types, and GCFV acknowledges that individual case outcomes were not tracked.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE-RELATED DEATHS (pages 11-12)

Domestic violence-related death data, including murder-suicide data, and cause of death in fatal incidents is collected through GCFV’s Fatality Review Project using media monitoring and independent verification of deaths, supported by domestic violence programs and Victim Witness Assistance Programs in District Attorney’s Offices statewide.

The data consist of intimate partner violence-related deaths, including those in which one intimate partner kills another intimate partner, a bystander is killed during an active domestic violence incident, an intimate partner commits suicide during or immediately following a domestic violence incident, or an intimate partner is killed by law enforcement responding to a domestic violence incident or while serving a family violence warrant or TPO.

For our purposes, the term “intimate partner” is intended to reflect that the domestic violence victim and perpetrator fall into one of the following relationships: dating or formerly dated, married or formerly married. This definition varies from state statute as it pertains to family violence, in that current Georgia law excludes dating partners from those categorized as “family violence” unless those parties have a common child or have resided in the same home.

The data also include information on domestic violence incidents that resulted in the death of a bystander. These deaths are most often reported to involve an act of revenge by the perpetrator, or the individual being present during the homicide of the intimate partner victim. Bystanders most often fall into one of the following groups: a new partner/spouse, family member, friend, child, public bystander/witness, or intervener such as law enforcement.

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