



**Georgia  
Commission on  
Family  
Violence**

# **MALE INVOLVEMENT IN FAMILY VIOLENCE INCIDENTS**

**GEORGIA | 2016-2020**

**PUBLISHED FEBRUARY 2022**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

●	<b>About the Georgia Commission on Family Violence</b> .....	1
●	<b>Male Involvement in Family Violence Incidents</b> .....	2-6
○	The Issue.....	2
○	Barriers to Reporting and Services .....	3-4
○	Recommendations.....	5
○	Navigating the Data.....	6
●	<b>Data Report</b> .....	7-17
○	Family Violence Incidents.....	7
○	Fatal Incidents & Fatalities.....	8
○	Primary Victim Fatalities.....	9
○	Victim Perpetrator Relationships.....	10
○	Bystander Fatalities.....	11
○	Fatalities by Weapon Type.....	12
○	Fatalities per Capita Maps.....	13
○	Homicide Victims & Suicide Fatalities.....	14
○	Suicides by Weapon Type.....	15
○	Murder-Suicide Fatalities.....	16
○	Temporary Protective Orders.....	17
○	Family Violence Services.....	17
●	<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	18
●	<b>Citations</b> .....	19

## ABOUT THE GEORGIA COMMISSION ON FAMILY VIOLENCE

The Georgia Commission on Family Violence (GCFV) 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.

## The Issue

Family violence is a nationwide epidemic that carries an astronomical cost to society. A 2018 study published in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine estimates the economic burden of intimate partner violence in the United States to be \$3.6 trillion annually.<sup>1</sup> This estimate is based on costs related to medical care, lost productivity for victims and perpetrators, criminal justice activity, property loss or damage, and various other costs. While family violence is undoubtedly an issue that requires significant attention, the question of how to effectively prevent, respond to and intervene in family violence incidents is of greater complexity.

The State of Georgia has a population of 10,617,423<sup>2</sup> and estimates show 1 in 4 women and 1 in 10 men experience stalking, sexual and/or physical violence by an intimate partner during their lifetime.<sup>3</sup> From 2016-2020 there were 254,905 reported family violence incidents<sup>4</sup> and 769 family violence-related fatalities in Georgia.<sup>5</sup> The reduction of family violence fatalities is a core mission of GCFV - including victims, perpetrators, and bystanders.

When gathering and analyzing data on known family violence incidents, there is always an underlying working assumption that the reported data is likely an undercount of actual family violence victimization. It is well known that law enforcement is not involved in every incident of family violence, and some victims never involve law enforcement for assistance. Men in particular are less likely to report victimization and tend to resist being identified as a victim of family violence.<sup>6</sup> Underreporting by men is primarily attributable to social norms around gender roles and expectations, higher likelihood of disbelief by law enforcement and other formal systems, and a perceived lack of services for male victims of family violence.<sup>7</sup>

Practitioners are well aware that some populations of victims face additional and distinct barriers that create greater reluctance or avoidance of reporting family violence to law enforcement and/or seeking help to escape abusive situations. Examples include individuals in the LGBTQ community, immigrant communities, and male victims. It follows that our knowledge of abuse in these populations is limited, thus also impacting our ability to adequately serve these victims.

Through studying special populations of victims of family violence in this and future reports, GCFV seeks to create awareness and improve responsiveness and service accessibility in particular, for all victims of family violence. This report examines data related to male involvement in family violence. In subsequent years, GCFV will focus on other special populations of victims which have traditionally been less represented in advocacy and dialogue on addressing family violence.

## Barriers to Reporting and Services

Family violence is about power and control. An abusive partner or family member maintains control over their victim(s) through many types of abuse such as physical, psychological, and/or economic. The goal is to gain and maintain dominance over another person using various tactics to carry out the abuse. In order to report abuse, a victim has to be able to overcome the tactics of control being used on them. In addition, the victim must also overcome the barriers associated with other aspects of their identity. For a male victim of family violence, there is a gender paradigm<sup>8</sup> that inhibits reporting their abuse to formal and informal systems. This gender paradigm is a set of beliefs that form our expectations of roles and behaviors based on a person's gender.

Under the prevailing gender paradigm, males are perceived as the aggressive, dominant figure in their intimate and familial relationships. While this may be true of abusive men, it is an unfair presumption of all males. Gender alone is not an appropriate determinant of who is capable of exerting abusive tactics - family violence can be perpetrated by either gender. Acknowledging male victims of family violence does not minimize the validity and plight of female victims of family violence. However, it is important that all victims have access to needed services and interventions. A woman-centered approach to services is understandable, but it is also incomplete.<sup>9</sup> Women represent the majority of known victims of family violence, so it is reasonable that services have focused resources to serve this population. However, as our knowledge of special populations of victims expands, it should also serve to enhance our ability to provide more inclusive services, achieve safety for all victims and require accountability for all offenders.

Access to services for victims of family violence requires three components: a victim must have knowledge of the available resources, a safe way to contact the provider, and confidence that the service will improve their situation. These three components are difficult to achieve for victims of family violence for various reasons. Male victims of family violence report having negative experiences with formal systems, such as law enforcement agencies and family violence programs, when they attempt to report their victimization.<sup>7</sup> Many men may also either be unaware of available services or uncertain about whether resources are designed for men to access. Furthermore, men may have low confidence that accessing services will improve their situation. These experiences lead to less reporting thus creating a critical gap in available data about male victims of family violence. The barriers to reporting victimization and accessing services encountered by men are not entirely different from other victims, however there are some important distinctions worth highlighting.

Given that most family violence victims are female, and perpetrators are male, a common response from formal systems can be disbelief of male victimization.<sup>8</sup> Formal systems include public and social service entities such as law enforcement, medical services, mental health services, and others. This can lead to “second wave trauma” which has negative physical and mental health implications for males.<sup>10</sup> Second wave trauma refers to the harm a victim experiences when they are not believed and subsequently fail to receive necessary services relative to their primary trauma. Further, a particular barrier for men as victims of family violence is that they are less likely to be viewed as a victim given the gender paradigm in our society which perceives men as being primarily perpetrators, and not victims, of family violence.

The possibility always exists that a perpetrator will falsely accuse the actual victim of an incident when law enforcement arrives in an effort to evade accountability. These wrongful accusations complicate the responding officer’s job of documenting the predominant aggressor and appropriately arresting the abuser. When you combine the troublesome abusive tactic of false blame by a perpetrator with the harms of perceptions reinforced by the gender paradigm, male victims of family violence face a particularly difficult struggle with being believed and receiving support from available systems. This reality reinforces the need for the development of training, resources, and support specifically designed for understanding the needs and challenges of male victims.

Importantly, male victims of family violence report positive experiences when seeking help from informal sources such as friends and female family members,<sup>11</sup> and formal sources such as mental health and medical professionals.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, male victims have also found a largely positive response when disclosing intimate partner abuse anonymously through technology.<sup>11</sup> The anonymity of an online disclosure circumvents some of the barriers to reporting for male victims such as the involvement of formal systems and the revelation of identity while concurrently providing an avenue for sympathy and support.

A critical inflection point in a victim's decision to seek help is the perceived positive or negative response to the disclosure of family violence. Being believed and receiving emotional support are associated with more positive outcomes for victims’ mental health among other things.<sup>12</sup> Conversely, cumulative negative experiences resulting from disclosing abuse are associated with increased substance use, mental health disorders, and poor physical health outcomes.<sup>7</sup> Disclosing abuse is risky for victims of family violence. Research reveals that the risk of lethal violence increases following help-seeking.<sup>13</sup> It is imperative that communities continually work to reduce barriers to disclosure for all victims, while simultaneously improving access to services to increase safety following the report of family violence.

## Recommendations

All family violence victims experience barriers to reporting their abuse and reaching the support needed to achieve safety. Male identifying victims face barriers that are exacerbated by socially normalized perceptions of men as perpetrators of violence. The totality of these barriers operates to invalidate their experiences and increase the inherent isolation which accompanies family violence victimization. Education about the realities and challenges faced by male victims for law enforcement and other formal system actors will aid in reducing second wave trauma and improving outcomes for male victims of family violence.

All state-certified family violence programs are required to make their services available and accessible to both men and women. However, due to widely held gender stereotypes, organizational names and/or prior negative experiences with family violence programs, many male victims believe these helpful organizations and services are not for them and are reluctant to make contact. Negative experiences of male victims with family violence programs increase the barriers to help-seeking for men<sup>7</sup> and reduce the likelihood that a male victim will access services. Inclusive language in organizational names, materials and training is imperative to create an environment that welcomes all victims of family violence.

## Navigating the Data

The information presented in this report is derived from multiple data partners of the Georgia Commission on Family Violence. Each agency collects and categorizes data regarding family violence in different ways depending on their purpose. Terms used by these agencies include Family Violence, Domestic Violence/Domestic Violence-Related, Intimate Partner Violence, and Intimate Partner Problem. For clarity and consistency, this report uses the term family violence in place of these multiple different terms.

The table below denotes the gender of individuals throughout the report; blue for males, green for females and purple for when the gender is unknown, missing, or not applicable. Additionally, the role of the individual involved in the family violence incident is indicated by the shade of the color used. Dark shades are perpetrators, medium shades are bystanders and light shades are victims.

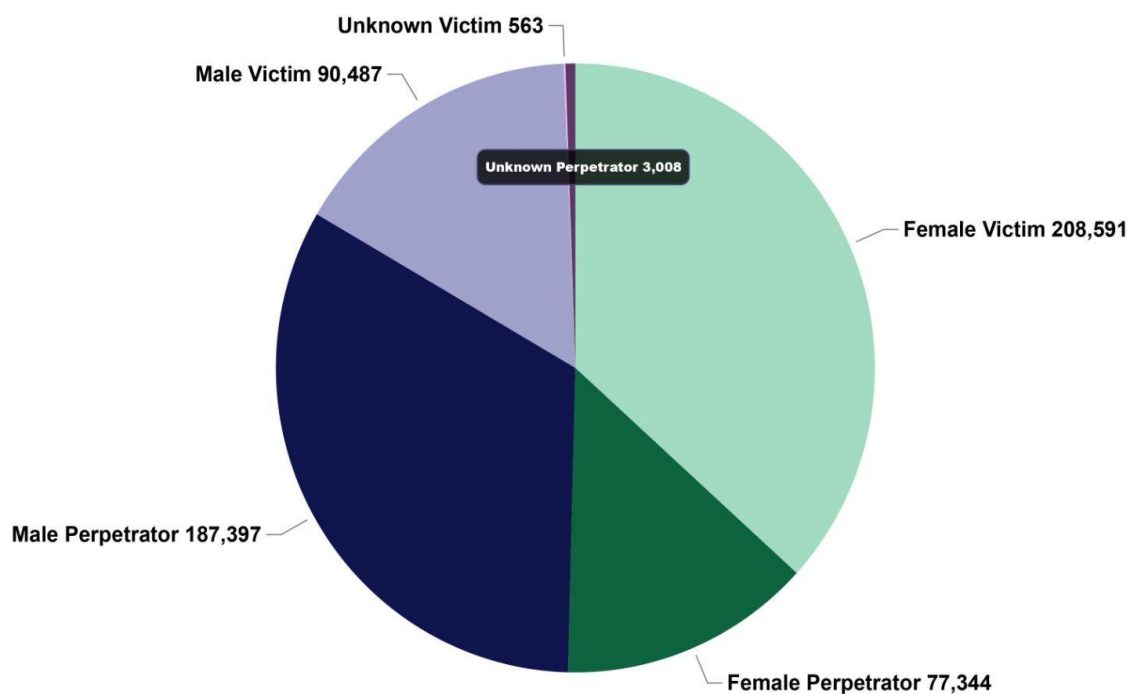
Color	Label
Blue	Male
Dark Blue	Male Perpetrator
Medium Blue	Male Bystander
Light Blue	Male Victim
Green	Female
Dark Green	Female Perpetrator
Medium Green	Female Bystander
Light Green	Female Victim
Purple	Gender is Unknown, Missing or Not Applicable
Dark Purple	Gender of Perpetrator is Unknown, Missing or Not Applicable
Medium Purple	Gender of Bystander is Unknown, Missing or Not Applicable
Light Purple	Gender of Victim is Unknown, Missing or Not Applicable

## FAMILY VIOLENCE INCIDENTS

Years 2016-2020	Total
Family Violence Incidents	254,905

**Family Violence Incidents by Year:** According to the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, 254,905 family violence incidents were reported in Georgia from 2016-2020. This includes both fatal and non-fatal incidents.<sup>4</sup>

### Family Violence-Related Incidents by Gender & Role 2016-2020



Gender & Role   Female Victim   Female Perpetrator   Male Perpetrator   Male Victim   Unknown Victim   Unknown Perpetrator

**Family Violence-Related Incidents by Gender and Role<sup>4</sup>:** In all reported incidents of family violence, offenders were identified as male in 69.99% (187,397) of reports and were known to be female 28.89% (77,344) of the time. Males were identified as the victims in reported incidents of family violence 30.2% (90,487) of the time, whereas females were identified as the victim in 69.61% (208,591) of incidents. An unknown gender status was designated for 1.12% (3,008) of offenders and 0.19% (563) of victims.



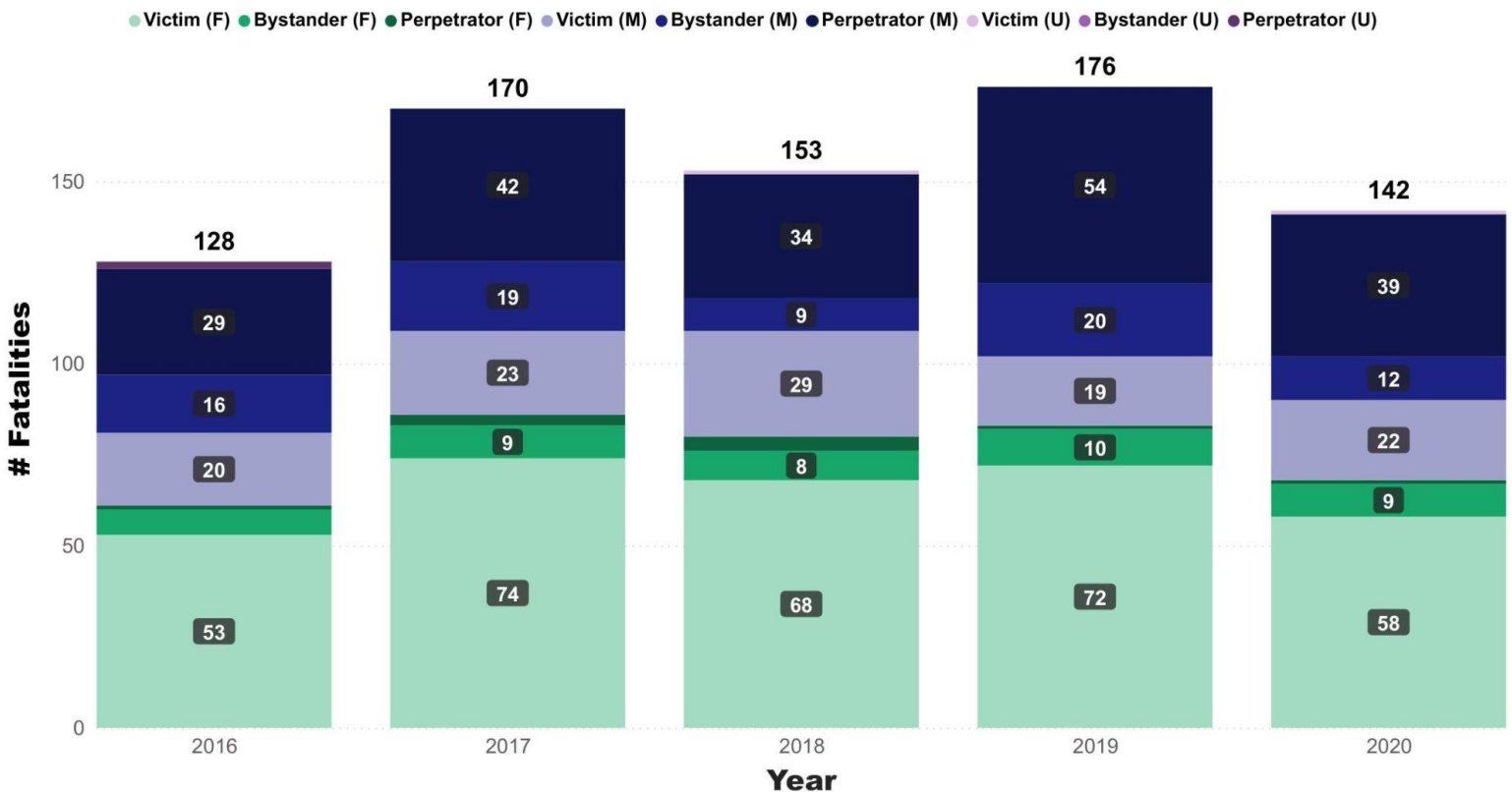
## FAMILY VIOLENCE FATALITIES

Year	Fatal Incidents	Total Fatalities	Male Victim Fatalities	Male Bystander Fatalities	Male Perpetrator Fatalities	Female Victim Fatalities	Female Bystander Fatalities	Female Perpetrator Fatalities	Unknown Gender Victim Fatalities	Unknown Gender Perpetrator Fatalities
2016	100	128	20	16	29	53	7	1	0	2
2017	138	170	23	19	42	74	9	3	0	0
2018	124	153	29	9	34	68	8	4	1	0
2019	130	176	19	20	54	72	10	1	0	0
2020	117	142	22	12	39	58	9	1	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>609</b>	<b>769</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>325</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>

\*There were no unknown gender bystander fatalities.

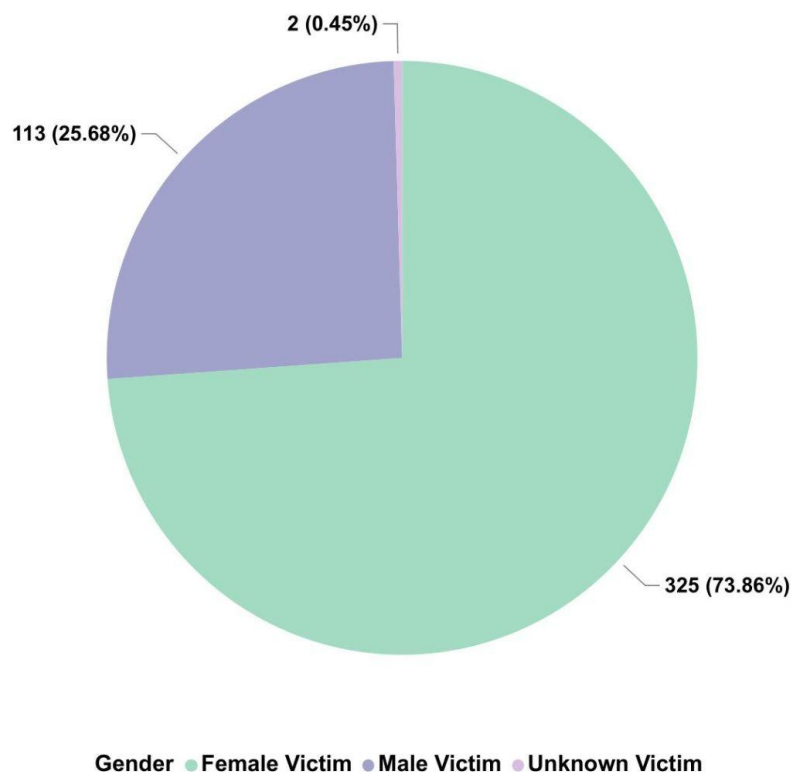
**Family Violence-Related Fatal Incidents & Fatalities by Year<sup>5</sup>:** From 2016-2020 GCFV's Family Violence Fatality Review Project verified 609 family violence-related fatal incidents and 769 total fatalities from those incidents. Total fatalities mean all lives lost, including victims, perpetrators, and bystanders. An examination of these three categories by gender reveals that males represented 50.33% (387) of the fatalities, while 49.15% (378) were female and 0.52% (4) had an unknown gender. Male perpetrator fatalities accounted for 51.16% (198) of the male deaths in family violence incidents while 2.65% (10) of female fatalities were women perpetrators. Men were victims in 29.2% (113) of fatal incidents while women were victims in 85.58% (325) of fatal family violence incidents. Men were more likely to be killed as bystanders in fatal family violence-related incidents. Below is another visualization of the above data.

### Family Violence-Related Fatalities by Gender & Role 2016-2020



## PRIMARY VICTIM FATALITIES

### Family Violence-Related Primary Victim Fatalities by Gender 2016-2020



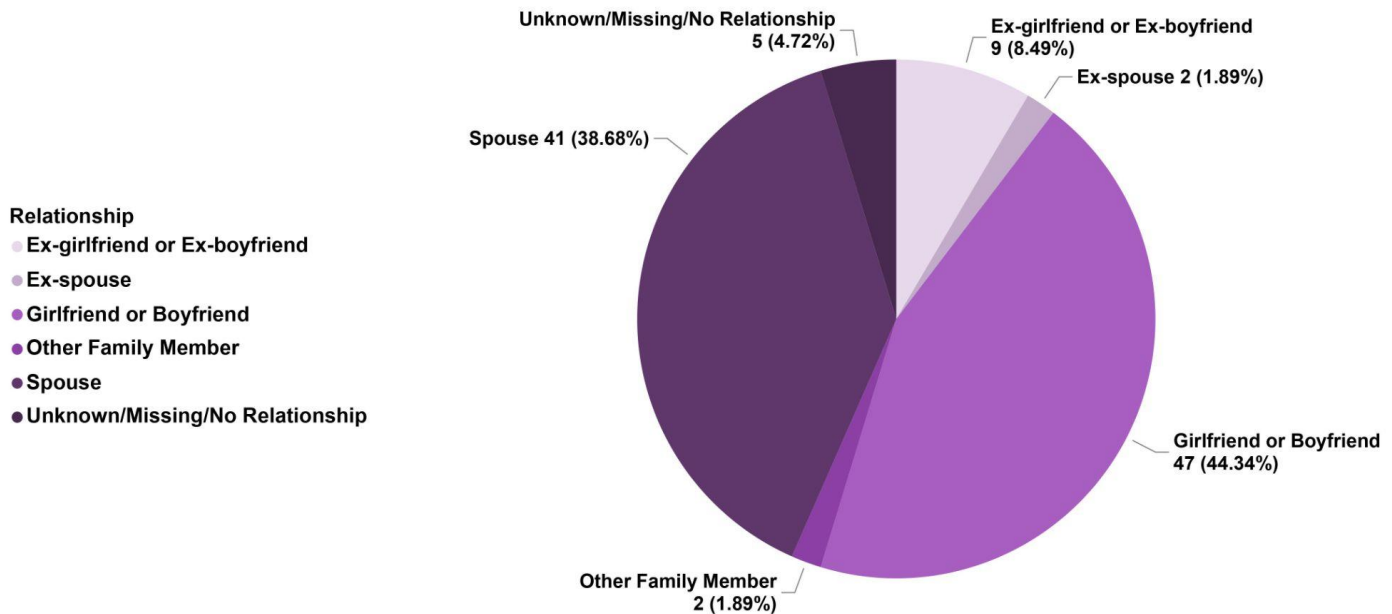
**Family Violence-Related Primary Victim Fatalities by Gender<sup>5</sup>:** A primary victim refers to the current or former intimate partner of the perpetrator; this category excludes other victims including bystanders. From 2016-2020, 73.86% (325) of primary victims who were killed by a current or former intimate partner were female and 25.68% (113) were male.

Years 2016-2020	Female Perpetrator	Male Perpetrator	Unknown Perpetrator	Totals
Female Primary Victim	12	460	0	472
Male Primary Victim	103	18	0	121
Unknown Primary Victim	1	13	2	16

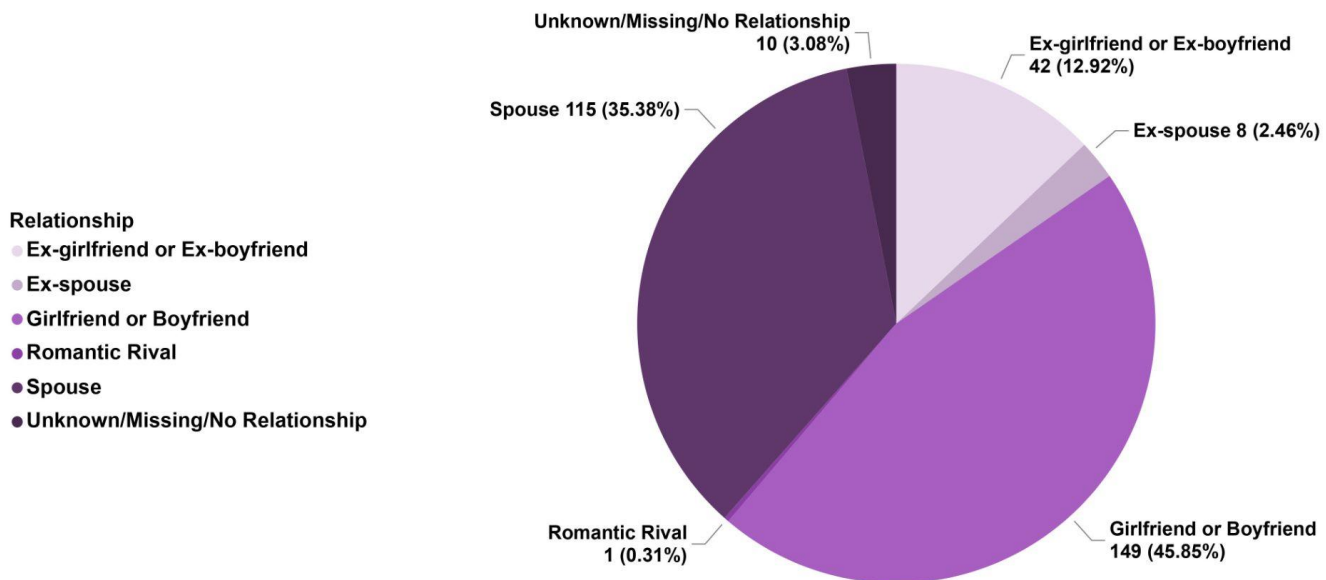
**Perpetrator Gender in Family Violence-Related Primary Victim Fatalities<sup>5</sup>:** From 2016-2020, 609 deaths of primary victims resulted from fatal family violence incidents. Female primary victims were killed by a male perpetrator 76.53% (460) of the time and by a female perpetrator 1.97% (12) of the time. When a male primary victim was killed it was by a female perpetrator 16.91% (103) of the time and a male perpetrator 2.96% (18) of the time. In total, male perpetrators killed 80.62% (491) of primary victims and female perpetrators were responsible for the deaths of 19.05% (116) of primary victims. An unknown perpetrator was responsible for 0.33% (2) primary victim fatalities.

## VICTIM PERPETRATOR RELATIONSHIPS

### Victim-Perpetrator Relationships in Male Primary Victim Family Violence-Related Fatalities 2016-2020



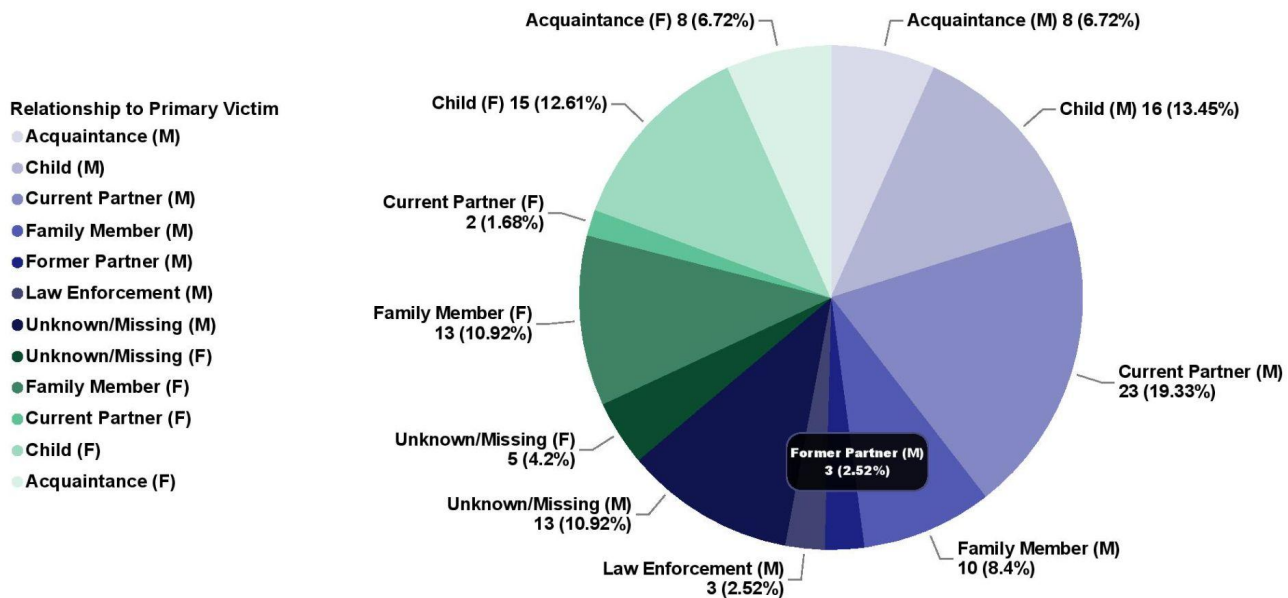
### Victim-Perpetrator Relationships in Female Primary Victim Family Violence-Related Fatalities 2016-2020



**Victim Perpetrator Relationship in Family Violence-Related Fatalities<sup>5</sup>:** In family violence-related fatal incidents, the perpetrator was most often a girlfriend or boyfriend of the victim. The second most common relationship status of the perpetrator was spouse, including estranged or separated married partners. Additionally, if a couple was engaged, but not legally married, they were included in the boyfriend/girlfriend category.

# BYSTANDER FATALITIES

## Family Violence-Related Bystander Fatalities by Relationship to Primary Victim and Gender 2016-2020

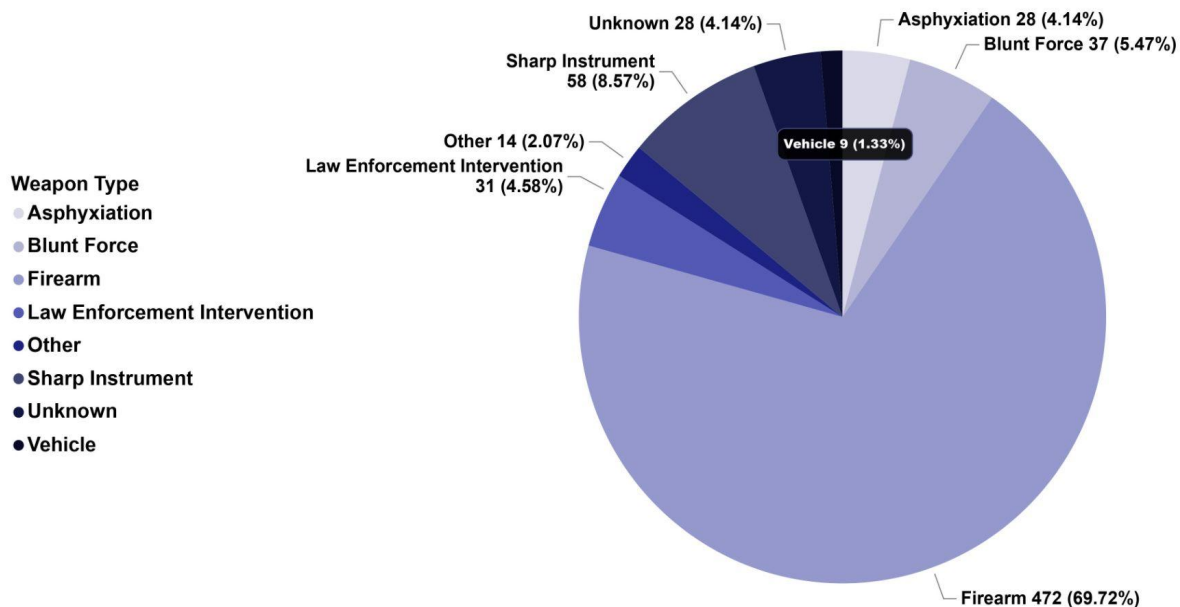


Bystander Fatality by Relationship to Primary Victim & Gender	Female Perpetrator	Male Perpetrator
F - Acquaintance	0	7
F - Child	1	10
F - Current Partner	2	0
F - Family Member	0	9
F - Former Partner	0	0
F - Law Enforcement	0	0
F - Unknown/Missing	1	2
M - Acquaintance	2	6
M - Child	7	13
M - Current Partner	1	22
M - Family Member	1	15
M - Former Partner	0	3
M - Law Enforcement	0	3
M - Unknown/Missing	1	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>103</b>

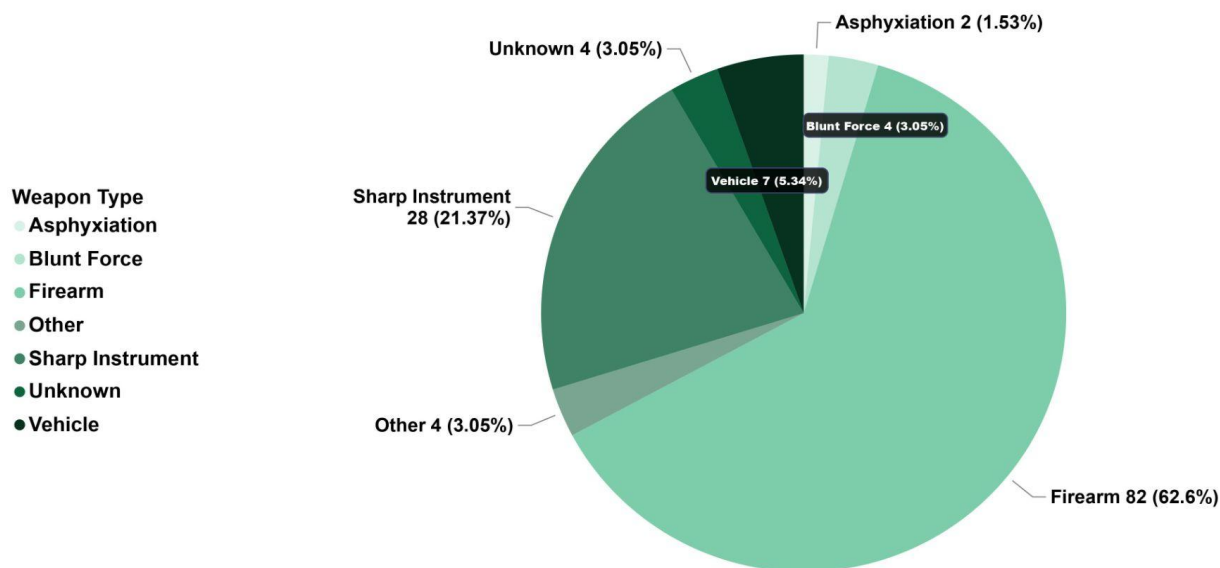
**Family Violence-Related Bystander Fatalities<sup>5</sup>:** A bystander is any person killed who is not the primary victim or the perpetrator in a fatal family violence incident. Overall, female perpetrators killed 13.45% (16) of all bystanders and male perpetrators killed 86.55% (103) of all bystanders. In total, 119 bystanders were killed in family violence-related incidents. Current male partners of the primary victim killed by a male perpetrator represented the largest number (22) of bystander fatalities. Family members and children were the next two largest groups of bystanders killed, with the bystander-victim most likely being a male. In general, whether by a male or female perpetrator, male bystander victims comprise a disproportionate number of family violence-related bystander fatalities.

## FATALITIES BY WEAPON TYPE

### Male-Perpetrated Family Violence-Related Fatalities by Weapon Type 2016-2020



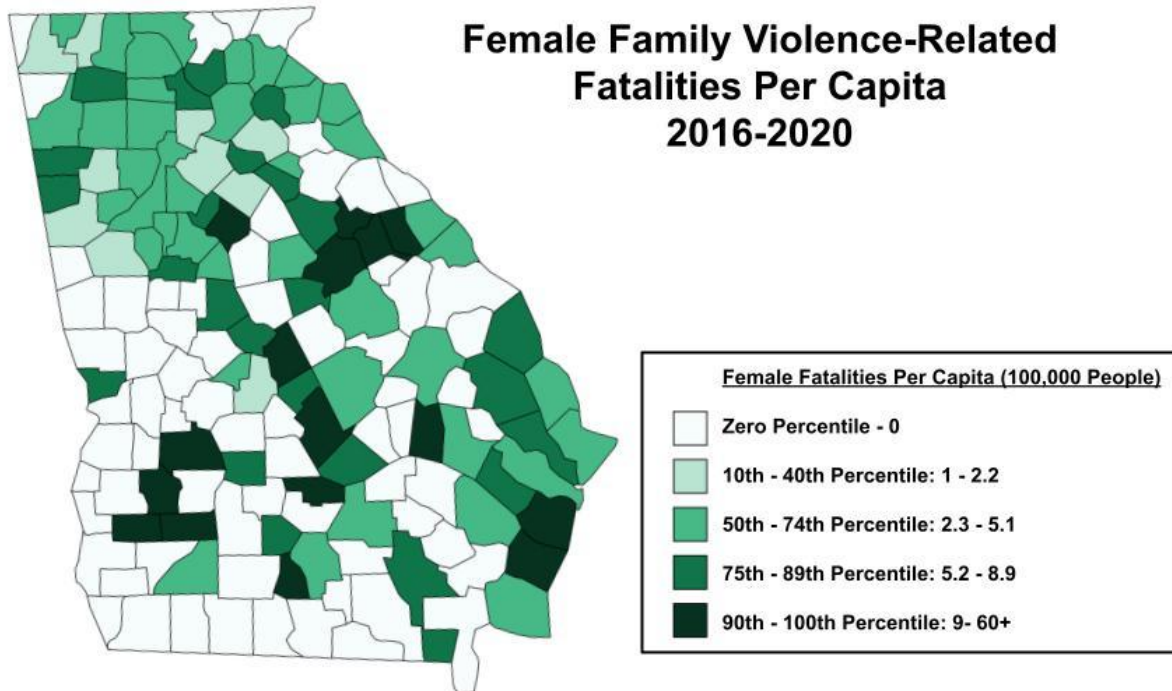
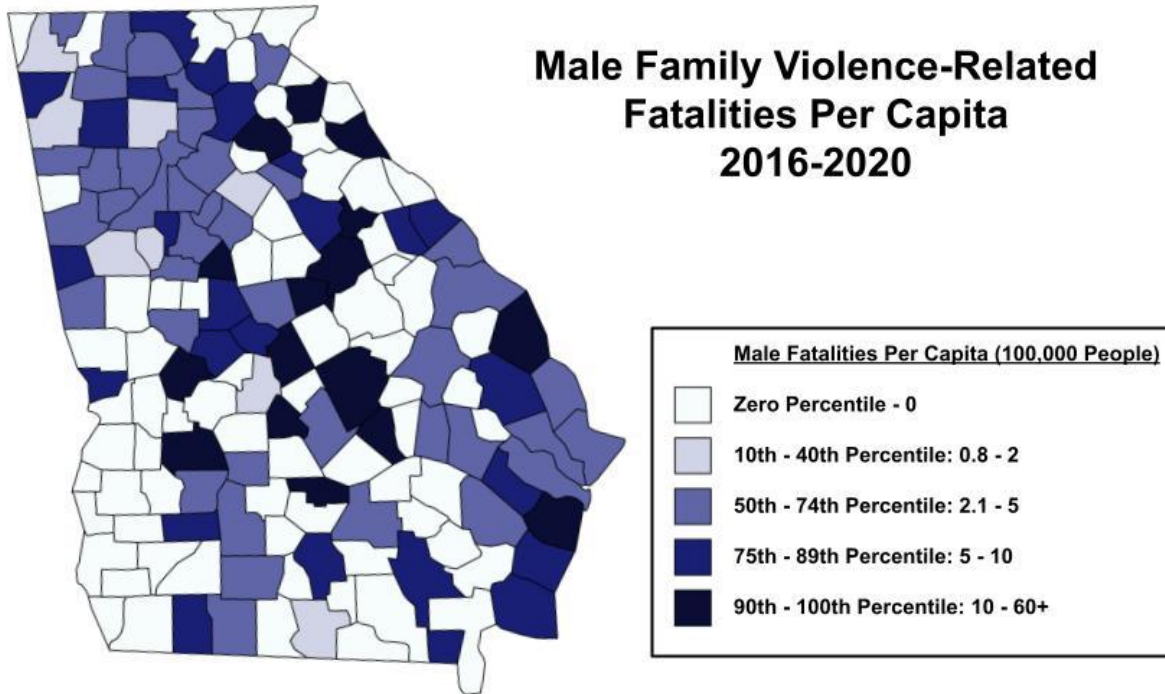
### Female-Perpetrated Family Violence-Related Fatalities by Weapon Type 2016-2020



**Family Violence-Related Fatalities by Weapon Type<sup>5</sup>:** It is well established that family violence fatalities are significantly more likely to be perpetrated by males against females. However, the data shows similar patterns between men and women perpetrators when it comes to the instrumentality used during the commission of the fatalities. Firearms are the most frequently used weapon type by both genders in fatal incidents of family violence, with a firearm being the choice instrument in 69.72% of fatalities committed by men and 62.6% of fatalities committed by women. Notably, female perpetrators used a sharp instrument as the choice weapon over two times as often as males.



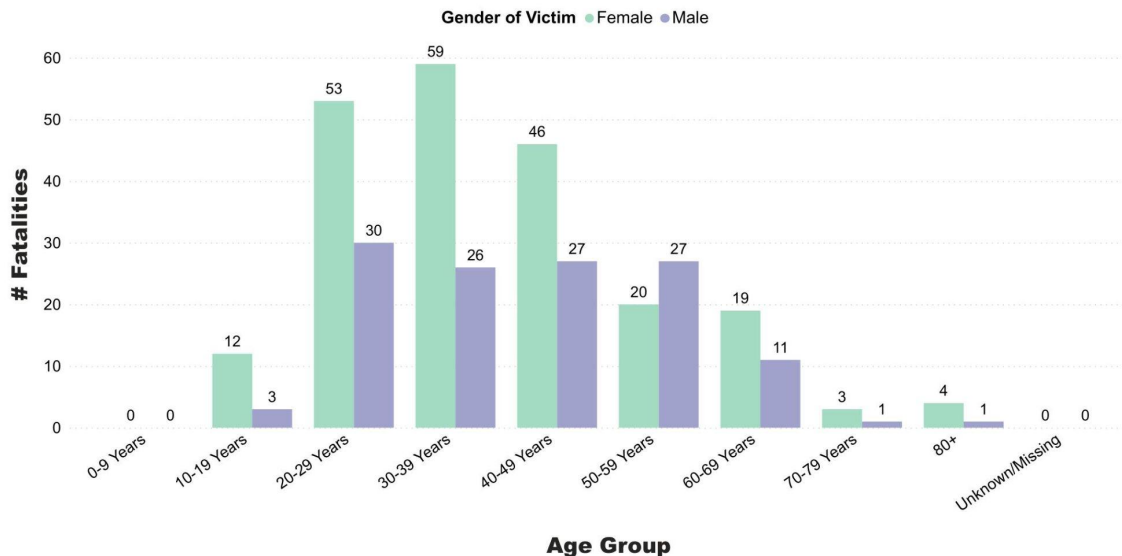
## FAMILY VIOLENCE-RELATED FATALITIES PER CAPITA



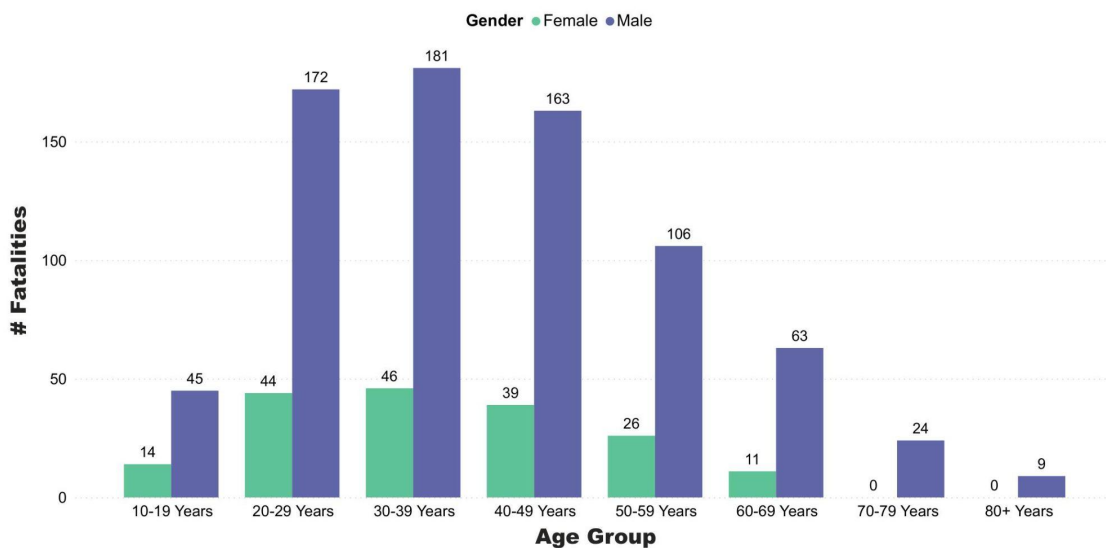
**Family Violence-Related Fatalities Per Capita<sup>5</sup>:** These maps detail family violence-related fatalities per capita in Georgia from 2016-2020, including victims, bystanders, and perpetrators. The darker shades indicate more known fatalities while the lighter shades indicate a lower occurrence of fatalities. The percentile rankings are based on a per capita rate of fatalities per 100,000 people. Comparing the distribution of fatalities by gender across the state begins to give a picture of where the need may exist for additional training and resources to support a coordinated response for survivors of both genders in family violence cases. Further, areas reflecting higher densities of male fatalities may indicate communities needing to focus their coordinated response toward identifying and developing more resources for addressing male victimization, offender accountability, and suicide prevention.

# MALE AND FEMALE HOMICIDES & SUICIDES

**Family Violence-Related Homicide Victims by Gender & Age  
2016-2019**



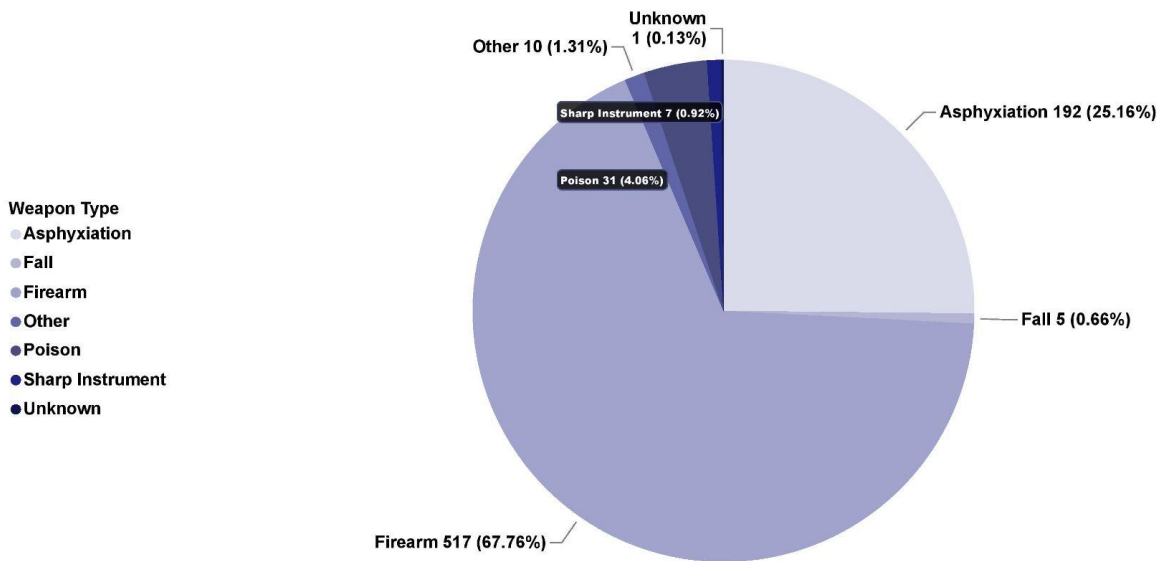
**Family Violence-Related Suicide Fatalities by Gender & Age  
2016-2019**



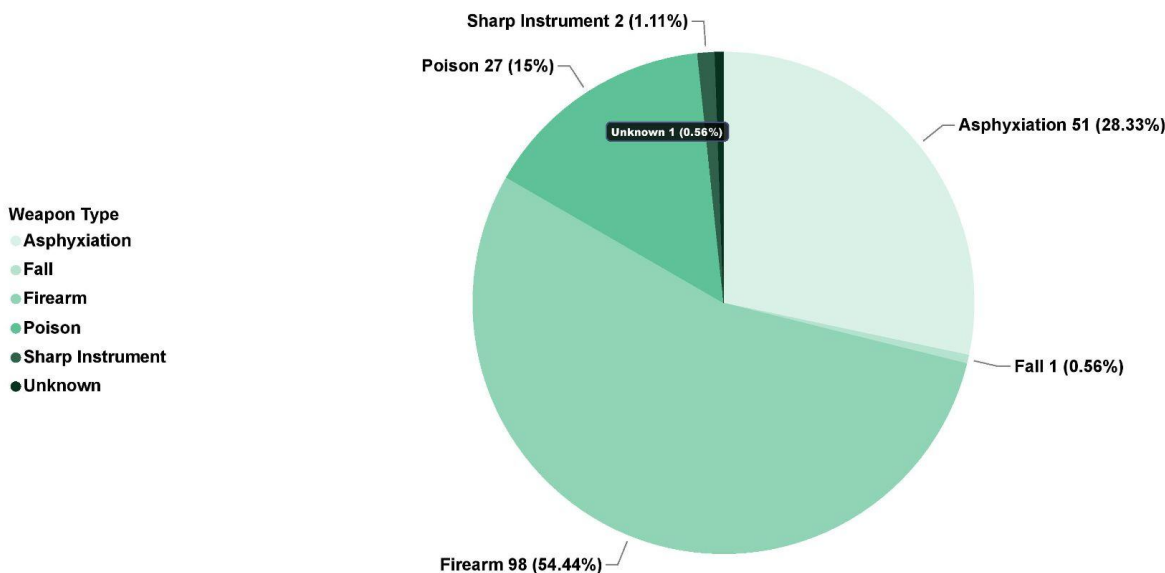
**Family Violence-Related Homicide & Suicide Victims by Gender and Age<sup>14</sup>:** The Georgia Violent Death Reporting System (GVDRS) collects data on all violent deaths in Georgia. The cases included in the charts above are categorized by GVDRS as intimate partner violence (IPV) homicides (342) and intimate partner problem (IPP)-related suicides (943). Both IPV and IPP point to family violence between intimate partners that resulted in or significantly contributed to the death of at least one partner. The age group representing the largest proportion of female homicide victims was 30 - 39 years. Most male homicide victims were killed between the ages of 20 and 29 years. Completed suicides for both men and women were most likely to occur between the ages of 30 and 39. Men complete suicide at three to four times the rate of women in every age category, pointing to a significant need for specialized training and community resources targeted at suicide prevention for men across all age groups.

# SUICIDES BY WEAPON TYPE

Male Family Violence-Related Suicide Fatalities by Weapon Type 2016-2019



Female Family Violence-Related Suicide Fatalities by Weapon Type 2016-2019



**Family Violence-Related Suicides by Weapon Type<sup>14</sup>:** According to GVDRS, from 2016-2019, a firearm was the most commonly used weapon in completed suicide incidents for both men (517) and women (98). The widest variance in weapon choice for completed suicides between genders appears to be that women are over three times more likely than men to commit suicide by poison.



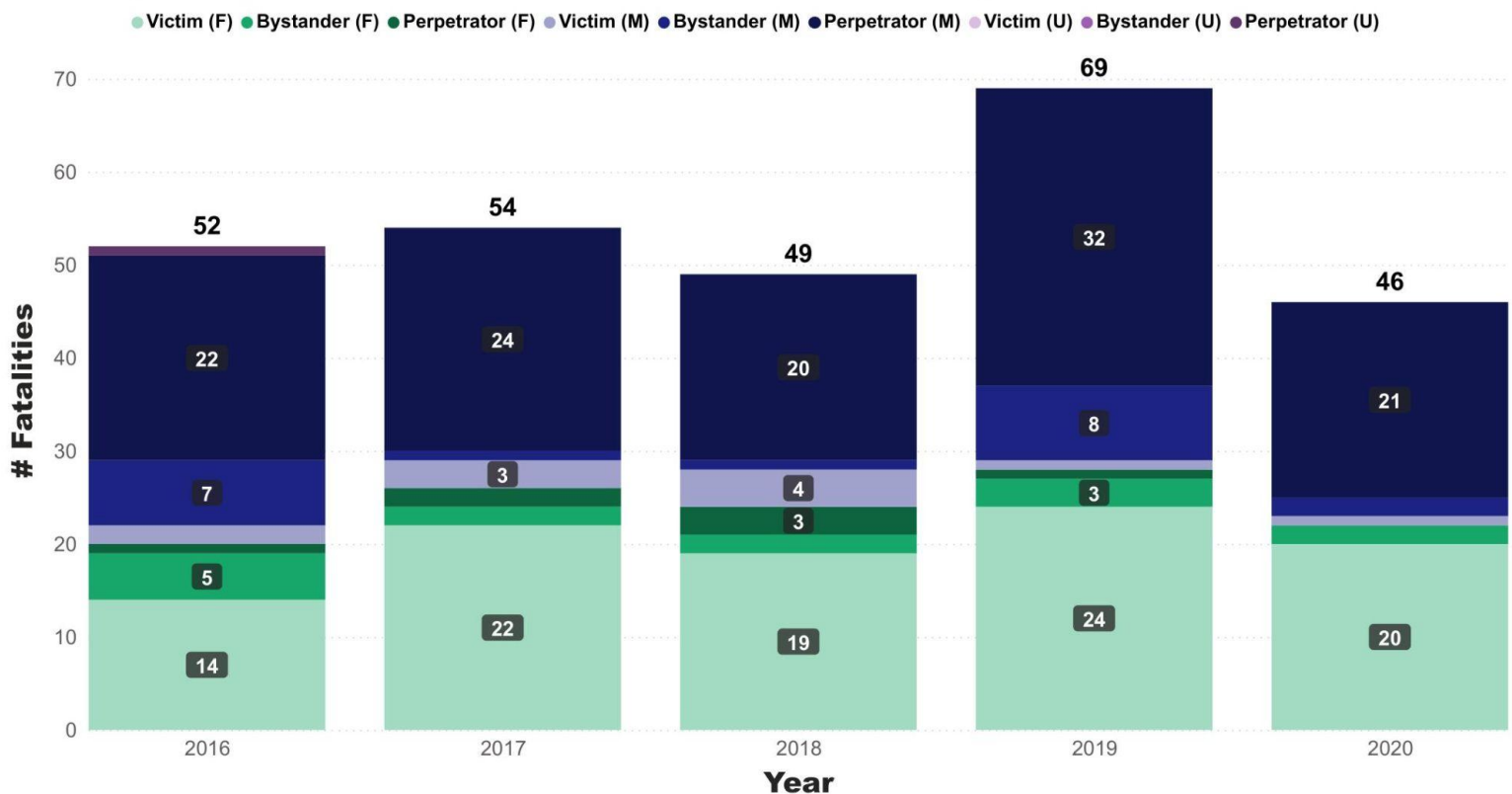
## MURDER-SUICIDE FATALITIES

Year	Murder-Suicide Incidents	Murder-Suicide Fatalities	Male Victim Fatalities	Male Bystander Fatalities	Male Perpetrator Fatalities	Female Victim Fatalities	Female Bystander Fatalities	Female Perpetrator Fatalities	Unknown Gender Perpetrator Fatalities
2016	26	52	2	7	22	14	5	1	1
2017	31	54	3	1	24	22	2	2	0
2018	26	49	4	1	20	19	2	3	0
2019	34	69	1	8	32	24	3	1	0
2020	26	46	1	2	21	20	2	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>

\*No Unknown Gender Victim or Bystander Fatalities

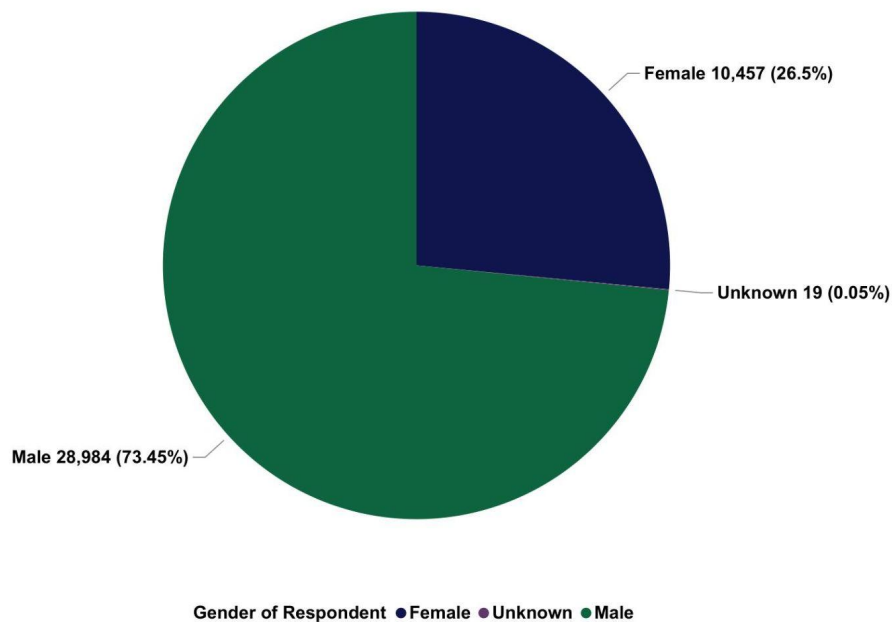
**Family Violence-Related Murder-Suicide Fatalities<sup>5</sup>:** From 2016-2020, 143 murder-suicide incidents resulted in 270 fatalities. These incidents represent 35.11% of all family violence-related fatalities statewide during that time. Even though women are significantly more likely to be the primary victims in fatal family violence incidents (outnumbering male victims nine to one), when combined across the three categories, 11% more men die in these incidents than women. This further informs the need for greater development of resources for men to address victimization, suicide risk, and offender accountability. In total, murder-suicide incidents resulted in the deaths of 149 men and 120 women, with one unknown gender, between 2016-2020.

### Family Violence-Related Murder-Suicide Fatalities by Gender & Role 2016-2020



## FAMILY VIOLENCE SERVICES

### Ex-Parte Temporary Protective Orders by Gender of Respondent 2018-2020



**Ex-Parte Temporary Protective Orders (TPOs)<sup>4</sup>:** 39,460 Family Violence and Stalking Ex-Parte TPOs were granted in Georgia courts from 2018-2020. In TPO filings, the Respondent is the alleged perpetrator and is the party that is being served with the TPO, while the Petitioner is the individual applying for the protective order. Georgia TPO data on a statewide level does not currently track the Petitioner's gender, however it is known that a male was the Respondent 73.45% (28,984) of the time, while a female was the Respondent 26.5% (10,457) of the time. There were 19 orders where the gender of the Respondent was unknown.

Victims Served 2017-2020	Adult Family Violence Victim	Teen Dating Violence Victim	Child Affected by Family Violence
Female	224,929	895	13,496
Male	46,958	139	11,915
Unknown Gender	17,422	20	1,790
<b>Total</b>	<b>289,309</b>	<b>1,054</b>	<b>27,201</b>

**Victims Served by State-Certified Family Violence Programs<sup>15</sup>:** According to the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC), 317,564 victims of family violence received services from a state-certified family violence program in Georgia from 2017-2020. Male adults, teens and children accounted for 18.58% of all victims served, however male victims of abuse represented just 16.2% of adult victims served. Male victims of teen dating violence represented a slightly smaller pool at 13.19% of all teen victims served.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

### **PROJECT STAFF**

“Male Involvement in Family Violence Incidents” was written by Carolynn Brooks (Fatality Review Coordinator, GCFV) with support from Niki Lemeshka (Program Manager, GCFV). Data Analysis was provided by Samar Abdelmageed (Family Violence Data Analyst, GCFV).

### **SPECIAL THANKS**

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- District Attorney’s Office Victim Witness Assistance Program directors statewide
- Domestic violence programs statewide

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