

Key findings & IFAS recommendations: An analysis of Domestic Homicide Reviews with fatal strangulation

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Victims

- 95% (71/75) were female, 5% (4/75) were male.
- The most common age group was 25-29 years old (9/75 cases). Victim age was not reported in 7 cases.
- 53% were White, 1% were Black, 15% were Asian. Victim ethnicity was not stated in 31% of cases.
- Over a third of victims (37%) had a reported vulnerability such as substance misuse issues, financial dependency, or pregnancy.

Perpetrators

- 77 homicide perpetrators across the 75 cases.
- 96% (74/77) were male, and 4% (3/77) were female.
- The most common age group for was 45-49 (n=9), however, ages were not reported for 16 perpetrators.
- 42% were White, 4% were Black, and 14% were Asian. Ethnicity was not reported for 40% of the perpetrators.
- More than a third of perpetrators had a reported vulnerability such as substance misuse issues or mental health conditions not formally identified as disabilities.
- 13% (13/77) perpetrators took their own lives shortly after the homicide, and perpetrator self-harm was reported in 27% of cases.

Relationship

- 84% of the victim-perpetrator relationships were current or former intimate partners. In 66% of intimate partner relationships, the DHR reported that the relationship had ended or the victim was trying to end the relationship around the time of the homicide.

Method of homicide

- In 12% of cases the homicide was by manual strangulation, 20% involved strangulation with a ligature, 1% involved a chokehold, and 67% did not specify the type of 'compression to the neck' that the perpetrator used in the homicide. Some DHRs highlighted instances of 'overkill' where by for example strangulation alongside repeated fist blows, was used by the perpetrator.

Domestic abuse

- In 72% (54/75) of the DHRs, there was a reported history of domestic abuse between the victim and perpetrator of the homicide. Psychological/emotional abuse and coercive control were the most common types of abuse reported/disclosed prior to the homicide.
- Non-fatal strangulation was present in 43% of all DHR cases whereby the victim was killed by strangulation.

DHR recommendations

- Key themes highlighted in the DHR recommendations included: training and awareness for front-line staff, better joint working between agencies, improving recognition of abuse and neglect, improved and checked risk assessment processes, underlined by effective policies and procedures to support the implementation of improved practice.

Method

1. IFAS retrieved **deaths by strangulation** on the DHR online library and cross-referenced these with the DHRs previously retrieved from Community Safety Partnerships for the analysis series.
2. **75 cases** were identified as meeting the criteria for this analysis.
3. Each DHR was read in detail and information was extracted with regard to demographics, homicide circumstances, domestic abuse histories, and the DHR processes.

IFAS Recommendations

- **Recommendation 1:** DHR processes to be considerate and critical of victim ethnicity data, including transparency with missing or unknown information.
- **Recommendation 2:** Those who work with victim/survivors and perpetrators of domestic abuse to recognise risk factors related to relationship types and abusive behaviours, and act in accordance with these high risk indicators.
- **Recommendation 3:** We would like to call for consideration around the actions of perpetrators in the lead up to and immediate aftermath of a murder to be taken into account in the criminal proceedings following domestic homicides.
- **Recommendation 4:** DHR processes to consider the possibility of embedding, within published DHR reports, the outcomes of the recommendations (where complete), to serve as a best practice framework for future services, interventions, and DHR processes.
- **Recommendation 5:** DHR processes to better consider the potential for the information published in DHR reports to be used for the purpose of identifying trends and understanding the overall picture, so maximum learning can be achieved from each individual tragedy.

