

Intimate Partner Homicide-Suicide in New York City (2010-2017)

Kara Noesner, Sandhya Kajeepeta, Edward Hill

Suicide is a leading cause of injury death in New York City and rates have been steadily increasing.¹ The rate of suicide in New York City increased from 5.5 per 100,000 in 2000, to 6.3 per 100,000 in 2014, with an average annual increase of 2.3% per year between 2008 and 2014. There is a significant intersection between suicide and intimate partner homicide. These incidents, in which an abusive partner murders their intimate partner and then dies by suicide forms a subset of all intimate partner homicide cases. The following is a description of these cases (hereafter referred to as “intimate partner homicide-suicide”) that occurred in New York City between 2010 and 2017.

From 2010 to 2017, there were 40 intimate partner homicide-suicides in New York City. These 40 homicide-suicide cases include the death of 90 people, with seven cases involving multiple victims (Figure 1). For the purpose of this report, victim-specific analyses focus only on the 40 intimate partner victims.

These cases occurred in all five boroughs including 16 (40%) in Brooklyn, 11 (28%) in Manhattan, 7 (18%) in the Bronx, 3 (8%) in Queens and 3 (8%) in Staten Island (Figure 2).

Homicide-Suicide Characteristics

Sex: 95% of intimate partner homicide-suicide victims were female (Figure 3) and 98% of the perpetrators were male.

Relationship: 40% of cases involved a victim and perpetrator who were married at the time of the incident (Figure 4).

Location: 90% of intimate partner homicide-suicides took place in the victim’s or perpetrator’s home.

- In 85% of cases, the homicide and suicide occurred in the same location; in six cases the perpetrator fled the scene and died by suicide elsewhere.

Figure 1: People Killed in Intimate Partner Homicide-Suicide Cases (2010-2017) (N=90)

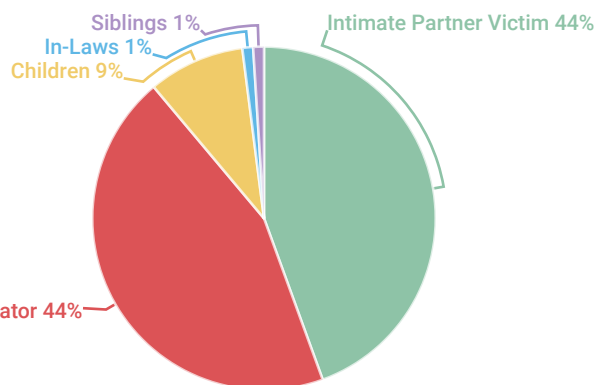


Figure 2: Intimate Partner Homicide-Suicide by Borough (2010-2017) (N=40)

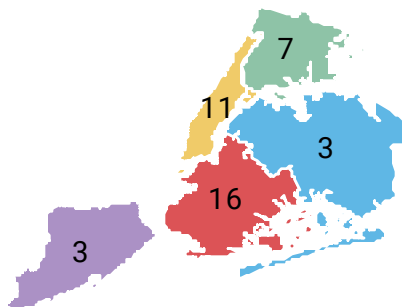
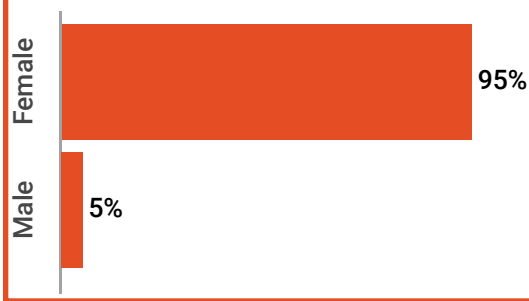


Figure 3: Intimate Partner Homicide-Suicide Victim Sex (2010-2017) (N=40)



Definitions: Intimate Partner Violence is a pattern of abusive behavior that occurs between intimate partners to gain or maintain power and control. Intimate partners can include current or former spouses, dating partners, and domestic partners as well as people with children in common. Intimate partner violence can include, but is not limited to, physical, sexual, psychological, technological, and economic abuse. Intimate partner homicide is defined as death of a person by their intimate partner and intimate partner homicide-suicide as the

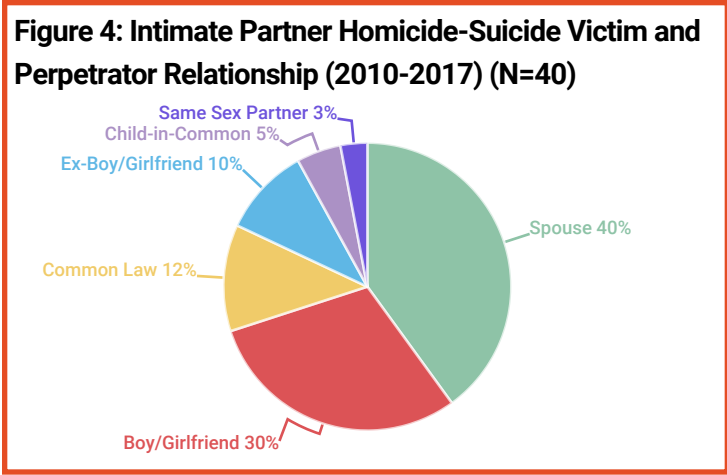
[1] Source: <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/ip/ip-death-inj-rank.pdf>

[2] Source: <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/epi/databrief75.pdf>

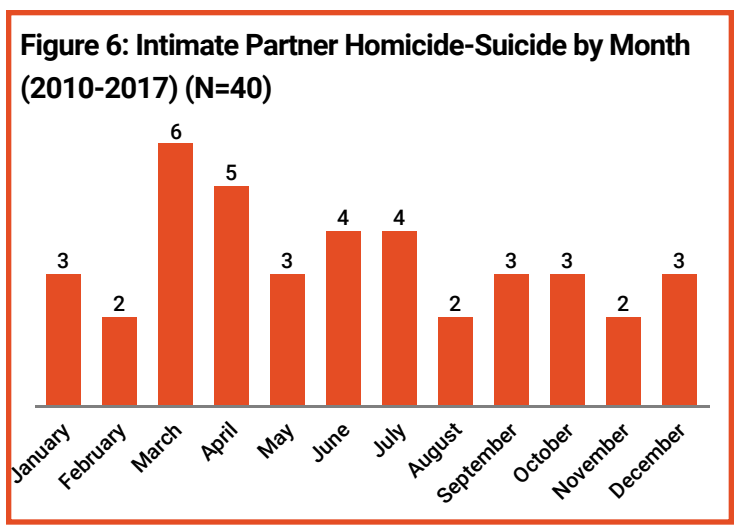
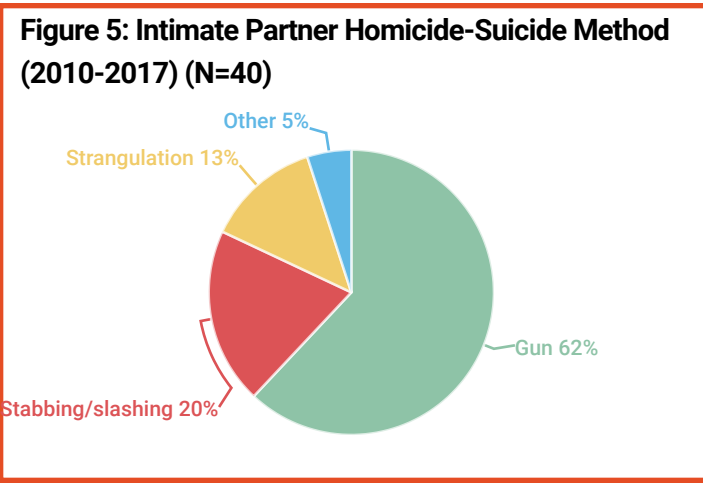
Method: A firearm was used in the majority (62%) of cases followed by stabbing/slashing (20%) and strangulation (13%). In all cases where the perpetrator used a firearm to commit the homicide, it was also used subsequently in the death by suicide (Figure 5).

History of Domestic Violence: In the majority of intimate partner homicide-suicide cases, there was no documented history of domestic violence between the parties prior to the incident. Seventy percent of intimate partner homicide-suicide cases did not have a previous New York City Police Department (NYPD) Domestic Incident Report (DIR) and only 8% had an active order of protection.

Time: Homicide-suicide cases occurred throughout the year. (Figure 6).



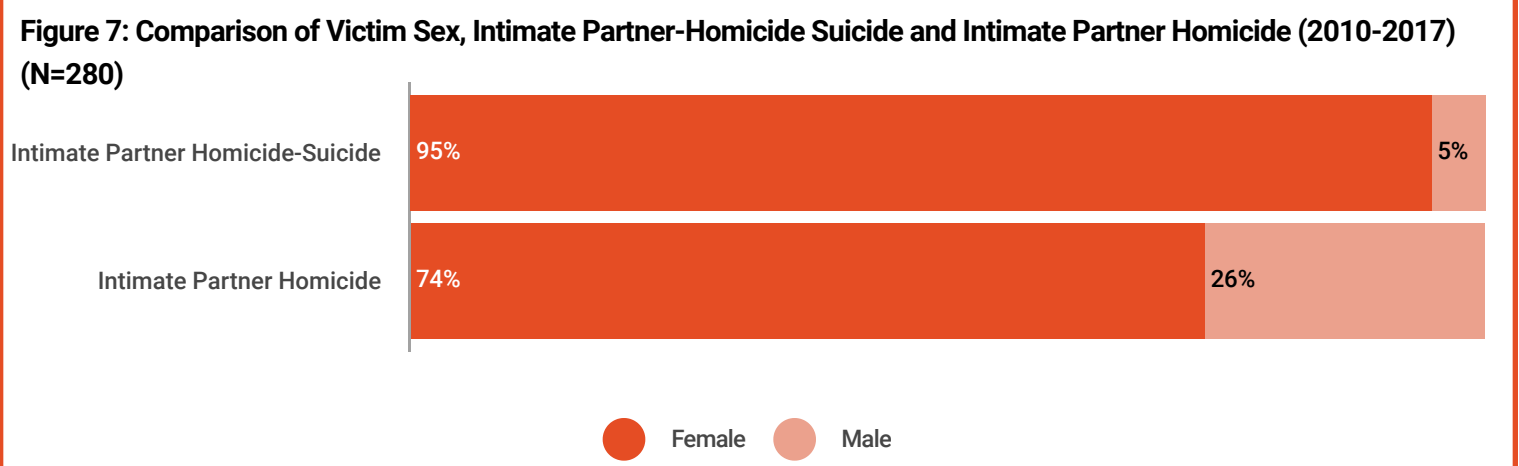
Note: NYPD designates all former and current same sex partnerships as one category. All other categories are between opposite sex partners. NYPD considers common law to be partners living together in a marriage-type relationship who are not legally married.



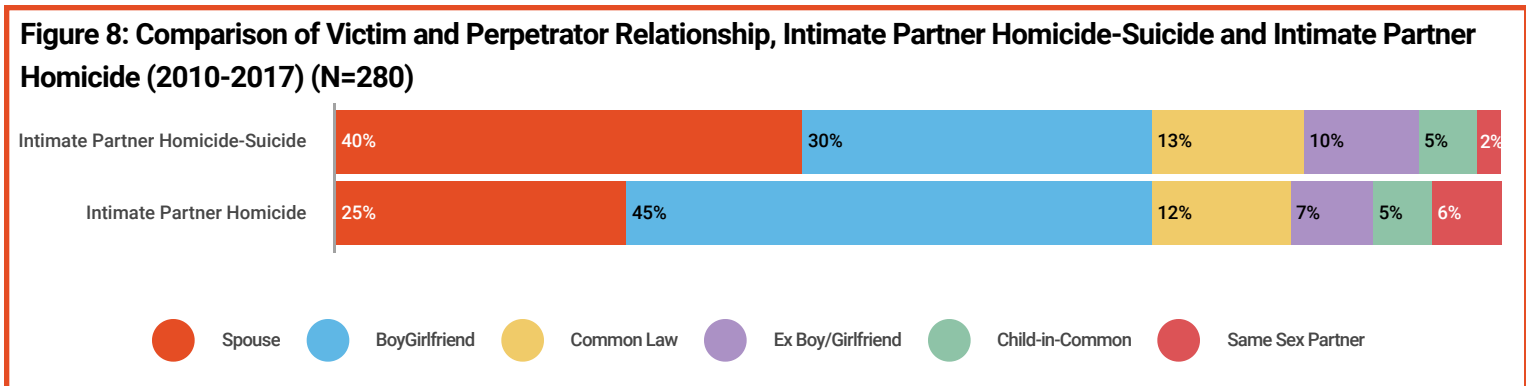
Comparison of Intimate Partner Homicide-Suicide to Intimate Partner Homicide

Between 2010 and 2017, there were 280 total intimate partner homicides, 40 of which included death by suicide and 240 of which did not. The following is a comparison of the 40 intimate partner homicide-suicides to the 240 intimate partner homicides that did not include a death by suicide.

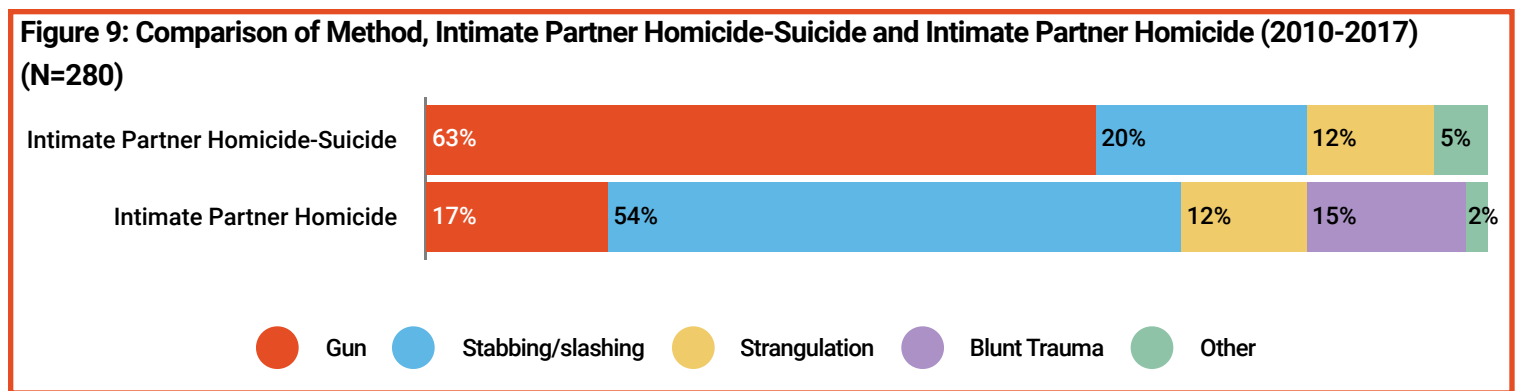
Sex: Greater sex variation existed in cases of intimate partner homicide compared to homicide-suicide. Almost all intimate partner homicide-suicide perpetrators were male, and victims, female (98% and 95%, respectively). This is in comparison to intimate partner homicide where 77% of perpetrators were male and 74% of victims were female (Figure 7).



Relationship: The preponderance of homicide-suicides occurred between partners who were in a spousal relationship, whereas the preponderance of intimate partner homicides occurred between partners in opposite sex boyfriend/girlfriend relationships (40% and 45%, respectively) (Figure 8).

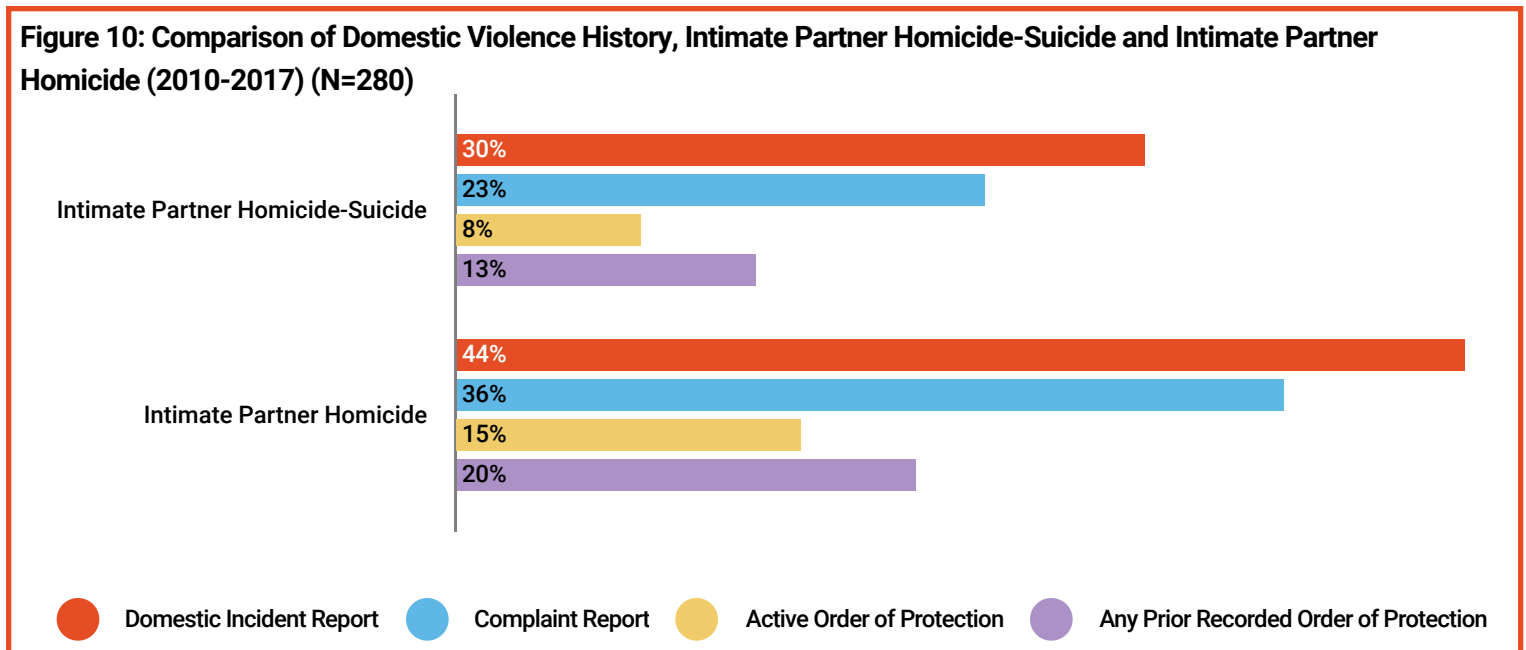


Method: A firearm was used in the majority (63%) of intimate partner homicide-suicides in comparison to intimate partner homicides, where a knife was used in the majority (54%) of cases (Figure 9).



Location: The majority of both intimate partner homicide-suicides (90%) and intimate partner homicides (76%) took place in a home, either the victim's, the perpetrator's, or a friend's home.

History of Domestic Violence: In the majority of both intimate partner homicide-suicide (70%) and intimate partner homicide (56%) cases, there was no reported history of domestic violence to the NYPD between the couple. Most cases did not have an active order of protection (92% and 85%, respectively) (Figure 10).



Conclusion

Intimate partner violence is a pattern of abusive behavior that involves the use of violence to gain and maintain power over control over a current or former partner. Intimate partner homicide-suicide forms a subset of all intimate partner homicide cases and is also rooted in power and control. Due to the limitations of available data, we were not able to establish the presence of alcohol or drugs, or establish the physical or mental health of the victim or perpetrator at the time of the homicide-suicide. It is possible that these factors also played a role in shaping risk.

Intimate partner violence is a risk factor for homicide-suicide and homicide. Dr. Jacquelyn Campbell's research on the risk of lethality among victims of intimate partner violence highlights the importance of suicidality. Specifically, there is an increased risk of homicide when a male partner has threatened suicide, has access to a gun, or has used or made threats with a gun. Perpetrator threats to commit suicide is a required field in a NYPD DIR. As seen in Figure 9, guns are used more frequently in homicide-suicide than in homicide cases. Law enforcement, healthcare professionals, and domestic violence advocates use of intimate partner violence risk assessment tools, such as the Danger Assessment, can help identify those who are at a highest risk of lethality. Approaches to reduce the threat of intimate partner homicide emphasize early identification. Interventions aimed at suicide prevention should be investigated as tools in the prevention of intimate partner homicide-suicide, and all intimate partner homicide more generally.

Suicide and Domestic Violence Hotlines, Information, and Resources

- If you or someone you know is suicidal call the 24-hour National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255)
- NYC Well, the citywide portal to mental health and substance use support, provides connections to counselors and peer support specialists in crisis and non-crisis situations. Text "WELL" to 65173, call 1-888-NYC-WELL, or go online to nyc.gov/nycwell.
- NYC Domestic Violence Hotline provides safety planning, referrals, and access to emergency housing for survivors of domestic violence. Call (800) 621-HOPE(4673), or 311.
- Located in all five boroughs, NYC Family Justice Centers are walk-in one-stop locations for victims and families of domestic and gender-based violence to receive comprehensive civil legal assistance, counseling and supportive services. More information can be found at nyc.gov/ENDGBV.
- NYCHope web portal is available at nyc.gov/nychope for survivors and community members to access information, education, and resources.

Data Sources: Data provided by the New York City Police Department and New York City Office of the Chief Medical Examiner for all intimate partner homicides and homicide-suicides, and analyzed by OCDV. Due to the limitations of the data, we were not able to establish the effects of alcohol and drugs or the physical/mental health of the victim or perpetrator.

This report is also available through NYC Open Data: <https://opendata.cityofnewyork.us/>

[3] Source: <https://www.fcadv.org/sites/default/files/Campbell%2020032.pdf>