

Intimate partner homicides in Utah, 2014–2023



Introduction

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a significant public health issue that involves abuse between a current or former intimate partner. In 2022, 14% of adults reported having ever been physically hurt by an intimate partner, with 1 in 5 female adults reporting it.¹ Moreover, 7% of high school students reported being physically hurt by a boyfriend or girlfriend on purpose, and 22% reported receiving verbal or emotional dating harm.²

The Utah Violent Death Reporting System (UT-VDRS) collects information on homicide deaths related to intimate partner violence, as well as the relationship of the victim to the suspect. The focus of this report is on those who were killed by their current or former intimate partner, including 102 cases from 2014 to 2023.

These deaths are tragic and preventable. There are resources available 24 hours a day/7 days a week:

- Utah Domestic Violence Link Line at 1-800-897-LINK (5465)
- Rape & Sexual Assault Crisis Line at 1-888-421-1100

See additional resources at the end of this report.

Key findings

- The number of intimate partner homicide deaths increased in 2020 and remained high through 2023.
- **Two in 5** female homicide victims died from a current or former intimate partner.
- A firearm was used in more than two-thirds of intimate partner homicides.

Recommendations

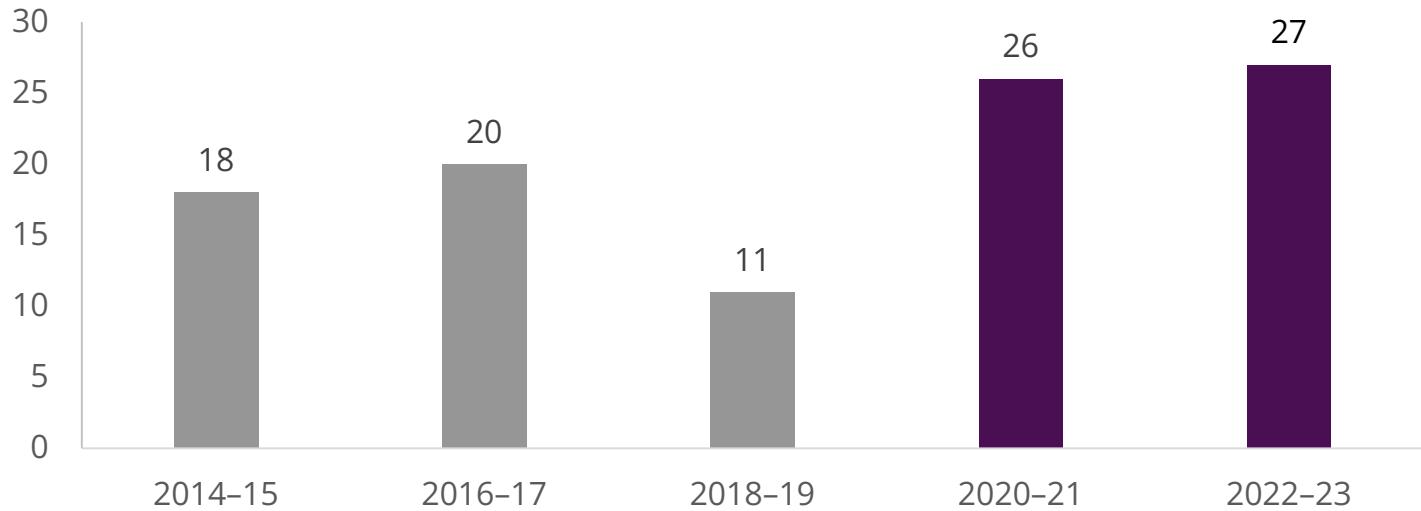
- Educate providers on how to screen for intimate partner violence and provide resources during prenatal appointments.
- Increase messaging about domestic violence prevention and mental health resources for men and boys.
- Monitor and track domestic violence and child abuse data and use it to enhance protective orders.
- Reduce access to lethal means through safety training and safe storage of firearms.
- Educate Utah communities about when to report to the Utah Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS).

The number of intimate partner homicide deaths increased in 2020 and remained high through 2023

The number of intimate partner homicides steadily increased from 2019 to 2020, remaining steady through 2023. Many factors could have influenced this increase. Such factors could include the increasing use of a firearm in homicides, as well as increased social isolation and time spent in the home as the result of the pandemic and quarantine measures.

Figure 1. Number of intimate partner homicide deaths in Utah, 2014–2023.

The number of intimate partner homicide deaths increased in 2020 and remained high through 2023.



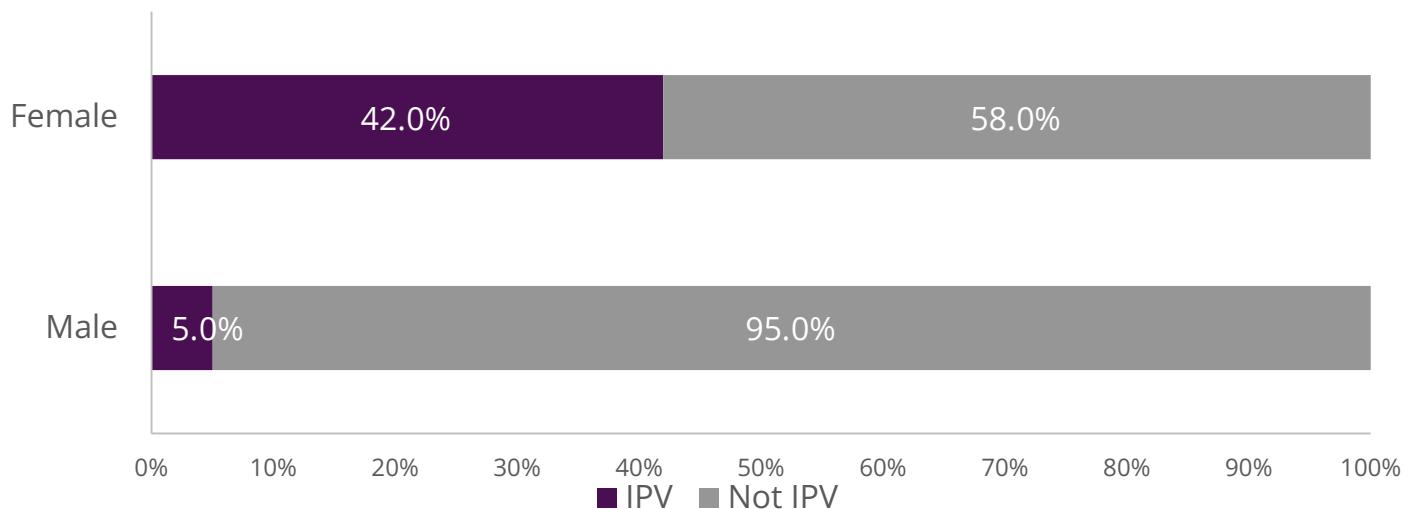
Female homicide victims were 8 times more likely to die by a current or former intimate partner than males

Although males died at a higher rate of homicide, consisting of 71% of homicide deaths, females made up the majority of intimate partner homicides (79%). Two in 5 female homicide victims were killed by a current or former intimate partner, while only 1 in 20 males were killed by a current or former intimate partner (Figure 2). Ongoing efforts to prevent relationship violence toward females are vital ways to prevent homicide.

Two in 5 female homicide victims died from a current or former intimate partner.

Figure 2. Percentage of intimate partner homicide deaths among all homicide deaths by sex in Utah, 2014–2023.

Female homicide victims were **8** times more likely to die from an intimate partner than males.



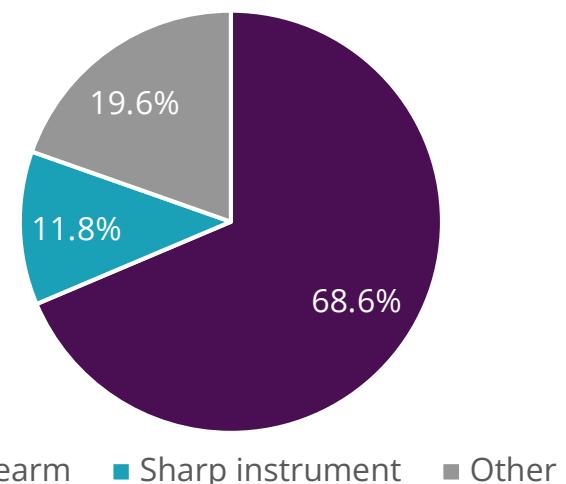
The highest rates of intimate partner homicide were among those ages 35–44, consisting of more than a quarter (27%) of all intimate partner homicides. Intimate partner homicides were more likely to take place in a house or apartment compared to all homicides (68% vs. 54%).

A firearm was used in more than two-thirds of intimate partner homicides.

Delaying access to a firearm could mean the difference between life and death during stressful times. Temporarily store firearms off-site until the situation improves, perhaps at a friend's or relative's house. Gun shops and law enforcement may offer storage options.

Figure 3. Percentage of intimate partner homicide deaths by method of injury, Utah, 2014–2023.

A firearm was used in more than two-thirds of intimate partner homicides.



Understanding the circumstances behind intimate partner homicides can help prevent them.

More than half (53%) of intimate partner homicides between 2014 and 2023 involved an argument that led to the death, compared to 39% of all homicides. During times of crisis and relationship conflict, a personalized safety plan can provide practical help in staying safe. Calling the domestic violence hotline can help create a safety plan and help file a protective order.

Suspect information

The majority of intimate partner homicide suspects were male (84%). Over one-third of intimate partner homicide suspects attempted suicide after the death of the victim (Table 1).

Table 1. Percentage of intimate partner homicides by suspect circumstance, Utah, 2014-2023

Suspect circumstance	Percentage of intimate partner homicides
Suspect attempted suicide after the death of the victim	32%
History of abuse of victim by this suspect	21%
Suspect's attack on victim believed to be the result of a mental illness	16%
Suspected alcohol use by the suspect	14%

Stories of intimate partner homicide in Utah

Every life lost to intimate partner homicide is a tragic loss. The following stories are actual descriptions about people who died by intimate partner homicide in Utah. They have been de-identified for confidentiality. The intent of presenting these stories is to help personalize a critical issue and provide recommendations on how we can prevent these tragedies in the future.

Story number 1

A smart, passionate, and adventurous young adult woman who enjoyed helping others was with her ex-boyfriend. They began fighting in her home. He then shot and killed her with a handgun. Their relationship involved a long history of violence and threats of violence. She had reported the violence and injuries to family members. Her family was concerned about her safety, yet she did not want to involve the police.



Prevention takeaways:

- It is important to listen to, support, and stay connected to victims in abusive relationships.
- Calling the domestic violence hotline can help create a safety plan and help file a protective order. A safety plan is a personalized, practical plan designed to help one stay safe and secure. Safety plans are necessary, whether someone is in a relationship with, preparing to leave, has left, or is leaving the person who is causing harm.

Story number 2

A creative, loving mother lived with her boyfriend. The couple spent most of the day drinking alcohol and then began arguing. The argument turned physical, and the boyfriend killed the girlfriend with a handgun.



Prevention takeaways:

- If a person recognizes that conflict is increasing, they should remove themselves from the situation before the violence begins.
- Know where weapons and safer places in a house are located.

Many of these tragedies can be prevented

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends 6 key strategies to prevent intimate partner violence.⁵

- Teach safe and healthy relationship skills.
- Engage influential adults and peers.
- Disrupt the developmental pathways toward partner homicide.
- Create protective environments.
- Strengthen economic support for families.
- Support survivors to increase safety and lessen harms.

Intimate partner and domestic violence resources

- Lethality Assessment Program, <https://udvc.org/risk-assessment/>
- Seekhaven, <https://www.seekhaven.org/>, (435) 259-2229
- Utah Domestic Violence Coalition, <https://udvc.org/>, 1-800- 897-LINK (5465)
- Utah Homicide Survivors, <https://utahhomicidesurvivors.org>
- Utah Office for Victims of Crime, <https://crimevictim.utah.gov>
- Utah Coalition Against Sexual Assault (UCASA), <https://www.ucasa.org/>, (801) 746-0404

Data note

The focus of this report is on those who were killed by their current or former intimate partner, including 102 cases from 2014 to 2023. The broader definition of intimate partner violence-related includes corollary victims (i.e., persons who were not involved in the intimate partner relationship). These consisted of 15% of IPV-related homicides and were not included in the counts for this report.

References

1. Utah Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Public Health Assessment, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), 2022 data queried via Utah's Indicator-Based Information System for Public Health (IBIS-PH) [cited 2025 July].
2. Utah Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System, Utah State Office of Education, 2021-2023 data queried via Utah's Indicator-Based Information System for Public Health (IBIS-PH) [cited 2025 July].
3. Utah Violent Death Reporting System, Violence and Injury Prevention Program, Utah Department of Health and Human Services, 2014-2023 data [cited 2025 July].
4. Population data: National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) through a collaborative agreement with the U.S. Census Bureau. IBIS Version 2021, data queried via Utah's Indicator Based Information System for Public Health (IBIS-PH) [cited 2025 July].
5. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2024). Preventing intimate partner violence. <https://www.cdc.gov/intimate-partner-violence/prevention/index.html>.

This project was supported by funds from the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (NCIPC), U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) under grant NU17CE010136—Advancing Surveillance of Violent Deaths Using the National Violent Death Reporting System. This information or content and conclusions are those of the author and should not be construed as the official position or policy of, nor should any endorsements be inferred by the NCIPC, CDC, DHHS, or the U.S. Government.