



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

2013-2015

A PUBLICATION OF
TENNESSEE BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
CJIS SUPPORT CENTER





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Mark Gwyn
Director

May 2, 2016

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Each year the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation releases annual reports on crimes reported by law enforcement agencies to the Tennessee Incident Based Reporting System (TIBRS) program in six different reports. The TIBRS data contains a wide range of incident level information including victim and offender demographics. In addition to the usual annual reports, the Criminal Justice Information Services Support Center focuses on a data subset of domestic violence victims of crime for the last three years of reported data.

The issue of domestic violence is, by no means, a novel problem in American society. The persistence of domestic violence and the large number of related incidents reported to law enforcement necessitates continued awareness about this issue. In an effort to gain more insight into the problem of domestic violence within the state of Tennessee, the current study analyzes crime data collected from the Tennessee Incident Based Reporting System, hereafter referred to as TIBRS. Utilizing this TIBRS crime data, offenses flagged as domestic violence for the years of 2013 - 2015 are included in the report.

I would like to thank all participating law enforcement agencies for their hard work and contributions to making this report a thorough and accurate picture of crime in Tennessee. It is only with their support that the state continues to maintain such a successful program.

Sincerely,

Mark Gwyn
Director



Quick Facts

- ❖ A total of 232,031 domestic violence offenses were reported to TIBRS from 2013 to 2015.
- ❖ Simple Assault was, by far, the most frequently reported offense accounting for 68.1% of all domestic violence offenses
- ❖ Females were three times more likely to be victimized than males and accounted for 71.6% of all domestic violence victims, males accounted for the other 28.4.%
- ❖ 99.0% of domestic violence victims identified their race as either White (57.0%) or Black or African-American (42.0%)
- ❖ A total of 23,142 juveniles were reported during the study period accounting for approximately ten percent of domestic violence victims each year from 2013 to 2015
- ❖ From 2013 to 2015, victims were six times more likely to be abused by a Spouse than an Ex-Spouse in domestic offenses
- ❖ Boyfriend/Girlfriend relationships were the most frequently reported accounting for 45.1% of all domestic violence offenses during this time frame
- ❖ Domestic violence resulted in 276 Murder victims during the three year study period
- ❖ Within Homosexual relationships, the largest group of domestic violence victims were African-American females at 42%
- ❖ Juveniles accounted for 59.8% of victims reporting a victim to offender relationship as Child or Stepchild
- ❖ 48% of domestic violence incidents were Cleared by Arrest



Introduction

The issue of domestic violence is, by no means, a novel problem in the American society. However, the persistence of domestic violence and the large number of related incidents reported to law enforcement necessitates continued awareness about this issue. In an effort to gain more insight into the problem of domestic violence within the state of Tennessee, the current study analyzes crime data collected from the Tennessee Incident Based Reporting System (TIBRS). Utilizing this TIBRS crime data, offenses flagged as domestic related from 2013 - 2015 were examined.

Overall Findings

Upon initially examining the TIBRS data submitted for domestic violence offenses, several parameters for the study were established. The data included in this study met the following criteria: Crimes Against Persons offense(s); offense(s) flagged by the law enforcement agency as being domestically related; and victim gender cannot be reported as Unknown. A count of domestic violence victims reported from 2013 through 2015 in the state of Tennessee totaled 232,031. It should be noted that individuals who reported domestic abuse in more than one incident during the study period will be duplicated accordingly in this report's victim count. The majority of these victims were female (71.6%) outnumbering the male victims by almost 3 to 1. Analysis of race breakdown revealed that White victims were consistently the race majority for all offenses of the years 2013 to 2015 accounting for as much as seventy percent of victims for the following offenses: Incest (84.8%), Forcible Fondling (71.7%), and Sexual Assault with an Object (70.9%). White victims made up almost 69% of Murders that were domestic related. In addition to gender and race, victim age was also analyzed. A total of 23,142 juveniles, or individuals under age eighteen, were reported as victims during the study period accounting for approximately 10 percent of all victims.

Though the overall numbers reveal a decrease in total reported offenses from 2013 to 2015 involving domestic violence, this trend should be cautiously interpreted. Over the three year period, the percentage of domestic violence offenses decreased from 2013 to 2014 but showed a slight increase in 2015. Three of the four TIBRS Assault Offenses combined account for ninety-six percent of all domestic violence reported during the time period. These findings will be further examined later in the report.



Domestic Violence Offenses

Crimes identified as domestically related in TIBRS must always have the victim type of Individual. Crimes Against Society and Crimes Against Property cannot be flagged as domestic violence in TIBRS. There are 16 offenses considered to be Crimes Against Persons. Of the 16 offenses, 12 were included in the study with the four omitted offenses being Negligent Manslaughter, Justifiable Homicide, Commercial Sex Acts, and Involuntary Servitude. The remaining offenses reported to TIBRS between the years of 2013 and 2015 as domestic violence were analyzed.

Simple Assault accounted for the greatest majority of all domestic offenses at 68.1%. Aggravated Assault and Intimidation were the second and third most frequently reported offenses accounting for 14.3% and 13.1% respectively. These three assault offenses accounted for 95.5% of all domestic violence offenses reported during the study period. During the three year time period reported both Aggravated Assaults and Stalking offenses increased 4.3%. Simple Assaults decreased by 3.3%. Reported Kidnapping/Abduction offenses also showed an increase of 35.0%. The most frequently reported relationship between victim and offender for Kidnapping/Abduction offenses was child – indicating possible custodial interference.

Homicides determined to be the result of domestic violence increased by 6.5% with 98 reported in 2015 compared to 92 in 2013. The number of reported Rapes increased by 8%, however, reported Sexual Assaults with an Object decreased by 28.9% and Forcible Sodomy offenses decreased by 17.2%.

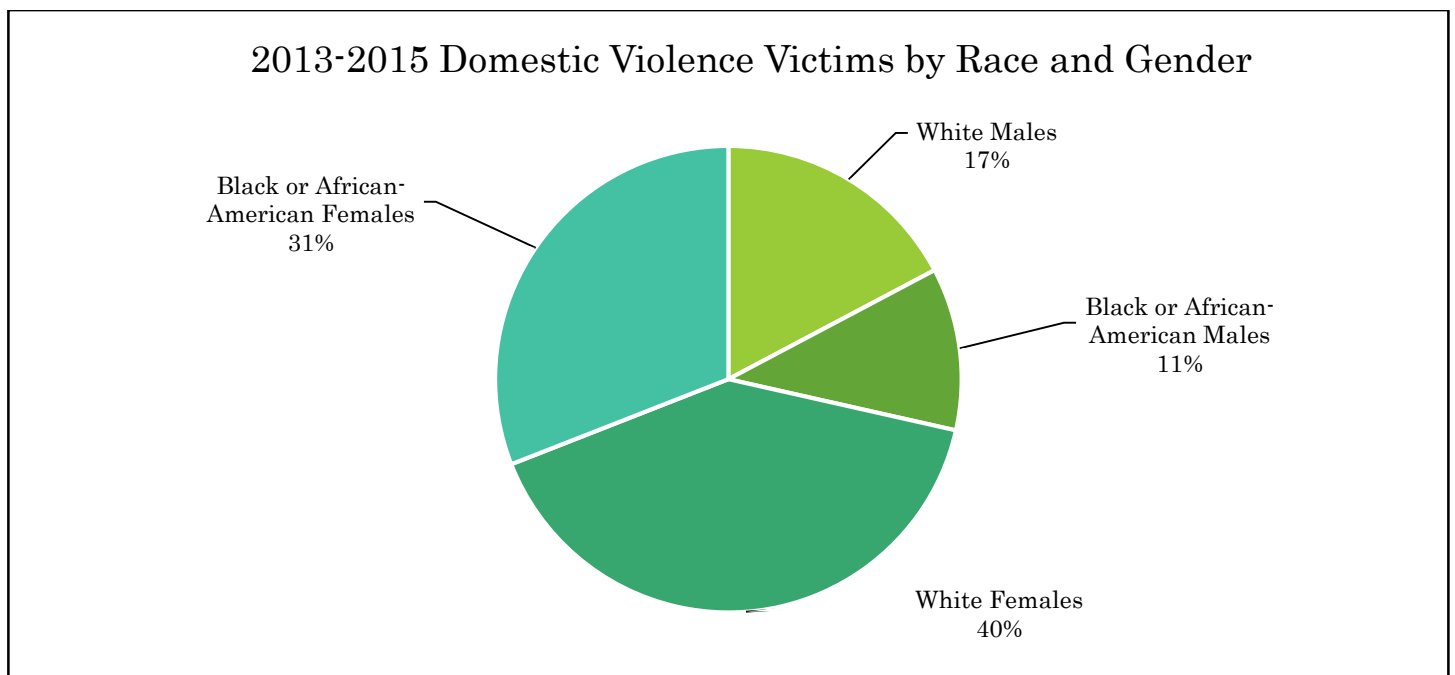
Domestic Violence Offenses by Gender 2013-2015

OFFENSE	Female		Male		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Murder	167	60.5%	109	39.5%	276	0.1%
Kidnapping/Abduction	1,801	73.6%	647	26.4%	2,449	1.1%
Forcible Rape	1,684	98.2%	30	1.8%	1,714	0.7%
Forcible Sodomy	253	49.6%	257	50.4%	511	0.2%
Sexual Assault with an Object	284	87.1%	42	12.9%	326	0.1%
Forcible Fondling	1,611	82.5%	341	17.5%	1,962	0.8%
Incest	80	87.9%	11	12.1%	92	0.0%
Statutory Rape	469	94.0%	30	6.0%	499	0.2%
Aggravated Assault	21,155	63.7%	12,052	36.3%	33,256	14.3%
Simple Assault	113,181	71.7%	44,782	28.3%	158,071	68.1%
Intimidation	23,224	76.4%	7,171	23.6%	30,411	13.1%
Stalking	2,091	84.9%	373	15.1%	2,464	1.1%
TOTAL	166,000	71.6%	65,845	28.4%	232,031	100.0%



Domestic Violence Victims

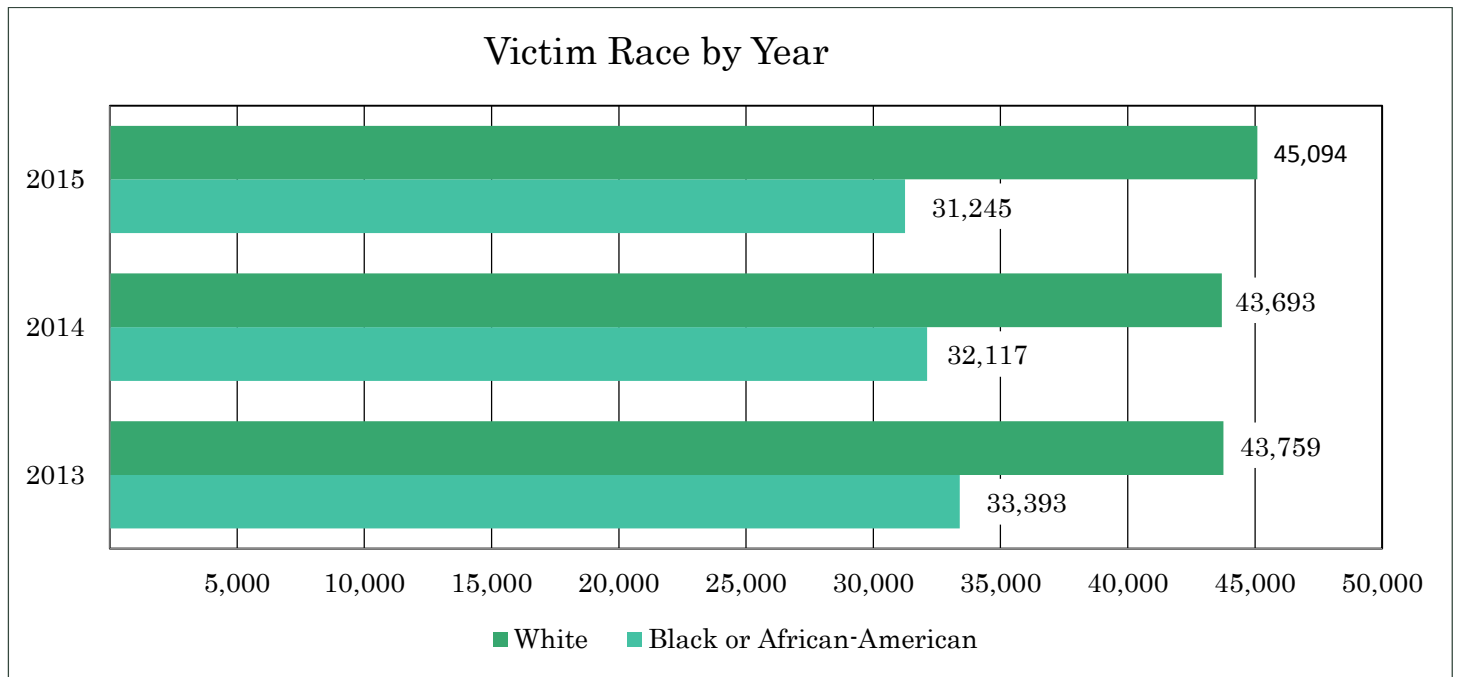
Domestic violence may often be perceived as violence against women. There are numerous agencies nationally and locally that advocate specifically for battered and abused women. The current analyses of domestic offenses in the state of Tennessee supports this notion that domestic violence is most often committed towards female victims. Data collected from TIBRS revealed that women were consistently the primary victims of domestic violence offenses each year from 2013 through 2015 except for the offense of Forcible Sodomy where the numbers were about equal. Male victims accounted for 28.4% of all domestic violence victims. As such, females in Tennessee are almost three times more likely than males to become victims of domestic abuse.



Secondary analysis of the TIBRS data element Race found that of the 231,845 domestic abuse victims with a known gender reported during the study period, those identified as having a Race other than White or Black or African-American accounted for one percent. As a result, White and Black or African-American victims will be specifically highlighted in this study. Though not omitted from the total victim count, due to the very low representation, other victim races (i.e. Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, Native American/Alaskan Native, and Unknown) will not be detailed through graphs in the current study. Black or African-American males were the least likely to be victimized. The overall number of White victims increased from 2013 to 2015 by 2.4% and the number of Black or African American victims decreased by 6.4%.



Domestic Violence Victims continued



Please note: Adding only given figures for Black or African-American and White victims will not give an accurate total.

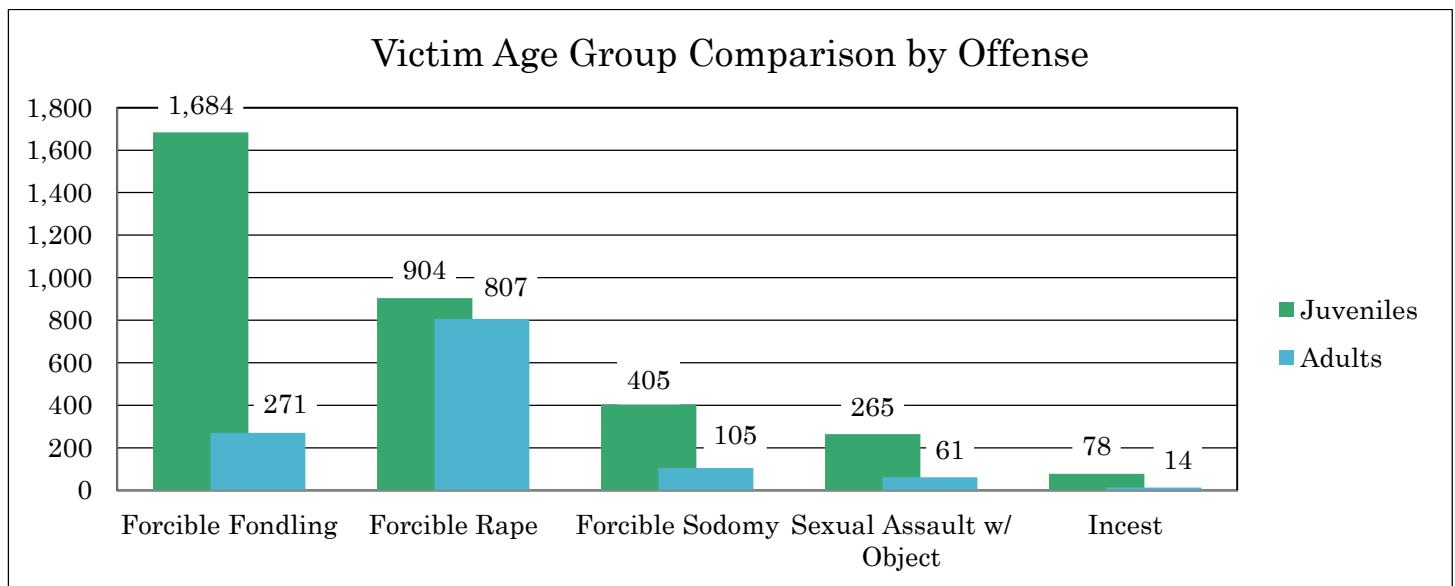
Though White victims (57.0%) were victimized at a higher rate overall than Black or African-American victims (42.0%), there were several offenses that showed even greater disparity between these two racial groups in terms of victimization. Of the Incest victims, 84.8% reported their race as White; 74.3% of Statutory Rape offenses had White victims; and a total of 68.5% of Murder offenses flagged as domestically related identified the victim race as White. Intimidation and Stalking offenses reported the highest percentage of Black or African-American victims accounting for 43.7 % victims of those particular offenses. Black or African-American victims accounted for 41.3% of all Aggravated Assaults and 41.8% of all Simple Assaults.

Juvenile Domestic Violence Victims

Of the domestic violence victims, juveniles accounted for approximately ten percent of victims each year of the study with 7,727 (9.9%) in 2013, 7,687 (10%) in 2014, and 7,800 (10.1%) in 2015. Female juveniles make up 59.0% of reported juvenile victims. The most frequently reported sex offense for female victims was Forcible Fondling for each year. The four TIBRS Assault offenses combine to account for the vast majority (79.0%) of crimes against juvenile victims just as was found to be true for the entire study population.



Juvenile Domestic Violence Victims continued



The chart above depicts five offenses in which juveniles are victimized at a higher rate than adults. Juvenile victims comprised over 80% of the reported occurrences of domestic Forcible Fondling and Sexual Assault with an Object. Juveniles accounted for 53.0% of all reported Forcible Rapes during the study period.

Domestic Violence Victim to Offender Relationships

Though domestic violence victims and offenders can have various interpersonal relationships, the intimate relationship is most often the center of attention when addressing domestic abuse. Intimate relationships may present as formal relationships such as marriage or less formal relationships such as dating.

TIBRS Domestic Violence Victim to Offender Relationships	
Within Family	
Spouse	Grandchild
Common-Law Spouse	In-Law
Parent	Stepparent
Sibling	Stepchild
Child	Stepsibling
Grandparent	Other Family Member
Outside Family	
Boyfriend/Girlfriend	Ex-Spouse
Child of Boyfriend/Girlfriend	Homosexual

To examine just such relationships, one particular TIBRS data element was used. TIBRS collects information concerning the particular relationship between the victim and offender. This element, Victim to Offender relationship, was used. More specifically, the intimate Victim to Offender relationships of Spouse, Ex-Spouse, and Boyfriend/Girlfriend were analyzed.



Domestic Violence Victim to Offender Relationships continued

Spouse/Ex-Spouse

The Spouse and Ex-Spouse relationships were examined together for comparison purposes. Results revealed that the number of domestic abuse victims reporting Spouse as the Victim to Offender relationship greatly outnumbered Ex-Spouse relationships each year by approximately 6 to 1. Over the three year period, a total of 35,314 domestic violence victims reported their relationship to the offender as Spouse; and 5,688 victims reported their Victim to Offender relationship as Ex-Spouse. Black or African-American males were the least likely to be reported victims of domestic violence abuse by a spouse (6.7%) or ex-spouse (6.5%). Black or African-American females were victimized at a higher rate than their male counterparts accounting for 18.8% of victims reporting Spouse Victim to Offender relationship and 19.1% of victims with Ex-Spouse relationship. The data reveals that White males were victimized more often by an Ex-Spouse than Black or African-American females during the three year period accounting for 18.5% of reported victims in this category. White male victims with a Spouse relationship occurred 18.9% of the time. Of all the victims reporting Spouse and Ex-Spouse relationships with their domestic abuse offenders, White females account for 55.5% when concerning a Spouse Victim to Offender relationships and 55.9% of the Ex-Spouse Victim to Offender relationships.

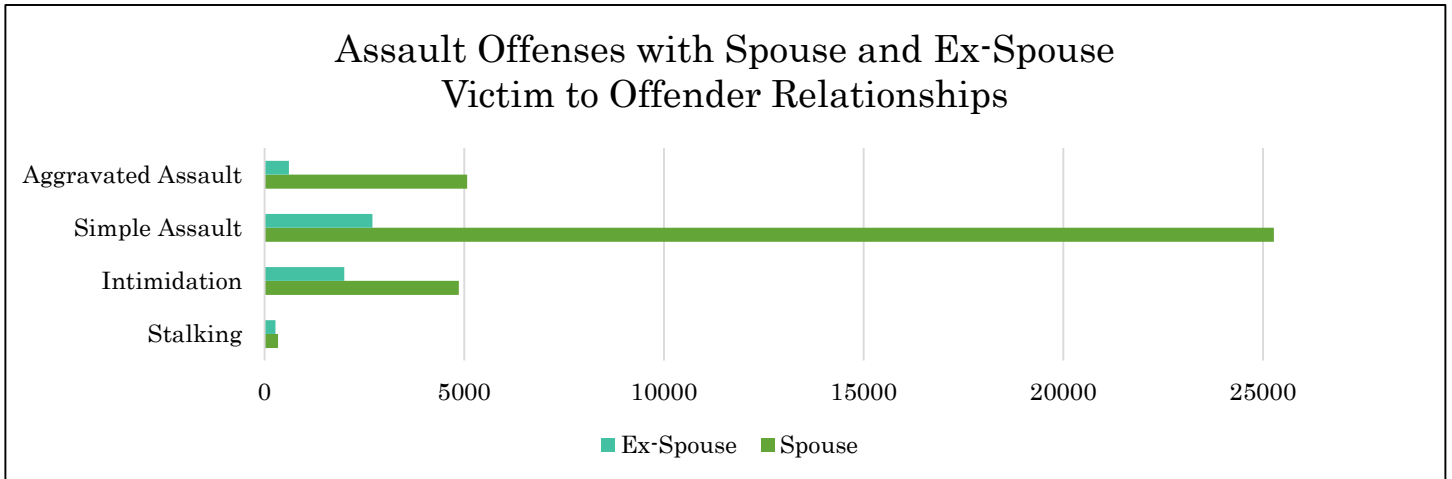
Spouse/Ex-Spouse Relationship by Gender and Race

Victim to Offender Relationship	2015		2014		2013	
	Total	% of Total	Total	% of Total	Total	% of Total
Spouse	11,629		11,550		12,135	
Male	2,962	25.5%	2,988	25.9%	3,112	25.6%
Black or African-American	735	6.3%	803	7.0%	841	6.9%
White	2,227	19.2%	2,185	18.9%	2,271	18.7%
Female	8,667	74.5%	8,562	74.1%	9,023	74.4%
Black or African-American	2,112	18.2%	2,188	18.9%	2,345	19.3%
White	6,555	56.4%	6,374	55.2%	6,678	55.0%
Ex-Spouse	1,878		1,897		1,913	
Male	463	24.7%	457	24.0%	504	26.3%
Black or African-American	135	7.2%	114	6.0%	120	6.3%
White	328	17.5%	343	18.1%	384	20.1%
Female	1,415	75.3%	1,440	75.9%	1,409	73.7%
Black or African-American	349	18.6%	371	19.6%	365	19.1%
White	1,066	56.8%	1,069	56.4%	1,044	54.6%

Please note: This table only reflects the relationships of spouse and ex-spouse for Black or African American and White victims.

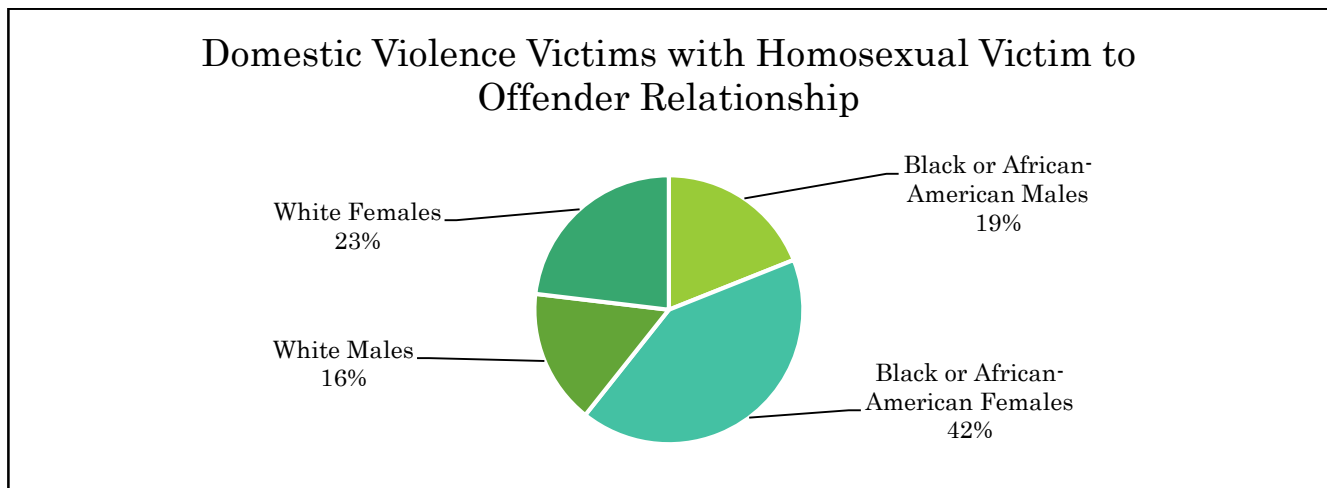


Domestic Violence Intimate Relationships continued



Homosexual Relationship

A total of 4,288 Homosexual Victim to Offender relationships were documented as domestic violence from 2013 through 2015. This particular TIBRS code specifies the victim and offender as being individuals of the same sex that are involved in an intimate relationship. Given this definition, the gender data element being reported for victims will inherently be mirrored for the respective offenders. The largest number of domestic violence offenses reported was Simple Assault at 3,043 (71.0%). Aggravated Assault was the second most frequently reported offense at 638 (14.9%). Females were most likely to be victims (64.8%) of domestic violence between same-sex couples. When cross examining race and gender, Black or African-American females accounted for the largest percentage of victims at 41.7%. White and Black or African-American males showed very little difference in the number of Homosexual Victim to Offender relationships at 16.2% and 19.0% respectively.

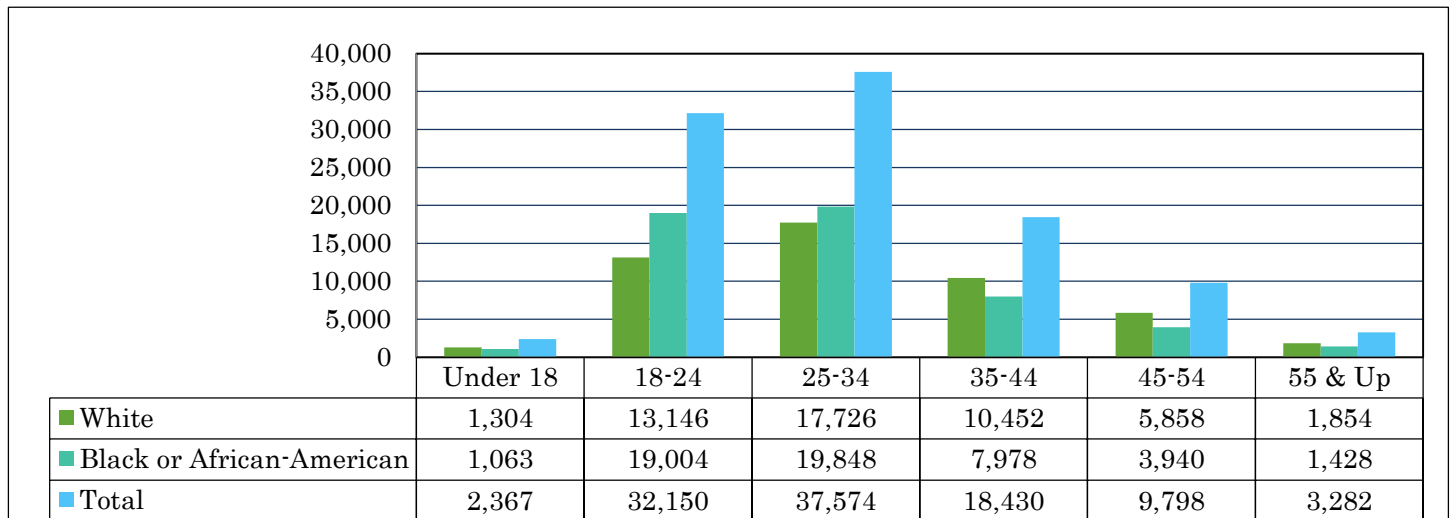


Domestic Violence Victim to Offender Relationships continued

Boyfriend/Girlfriend

The research literature often documents the relationship between domestic victims and their abusers as Boyfriend/Girlfriend. From 2013 to 2015, Tennessee law enforcement agencies reported 104,471 Boyfriend/Girlfriend Victim to Offender relationships flagged as domestic violence incidents. Specific demographic information of both victims and offenders was examined to better understand domestic abuse within Boyfriend/Girlfriend relationships. Of these victims, 50.3% identified their race as White and 49.7% were Black or African-American. Victims reporting their offender as a Boyfriend/Girlfriend were most frequently females. Of the 104,471 abuse victims reporting this relationship, 82,418 were females accounting for 78.8%. The breakdown of Females by race was almost the same at 51% Black or African American and 48% White. A breakdown of age groups showed age ranges 18 to 24 and 25 to 34 had the highest frequency of domestic abuse victims reporting Boyfriend/Girlfriend relationships to his/her abuser. There were 143 victims with an age of Unknown.

Domestic Violence with Boyfriend/Girlfriend Victim to Offender Relationships



Please note: Totals include Races of all victims reported as having a known gender. Adding only given figures for Black or African-American and White victims will not give an accurate total.

Child and Stepchild

The Victim to Offender relationship Child or Stepchild denotes the offender as being the parent or stepparent (mother or father) of the victim. In the state of Tennessee, a total of 18,752 such relationships were reported in domestic violence offenses. This particular TIBRS data element, when specifically addressing juvenile victims, can be considered a direct indication of child abuse.



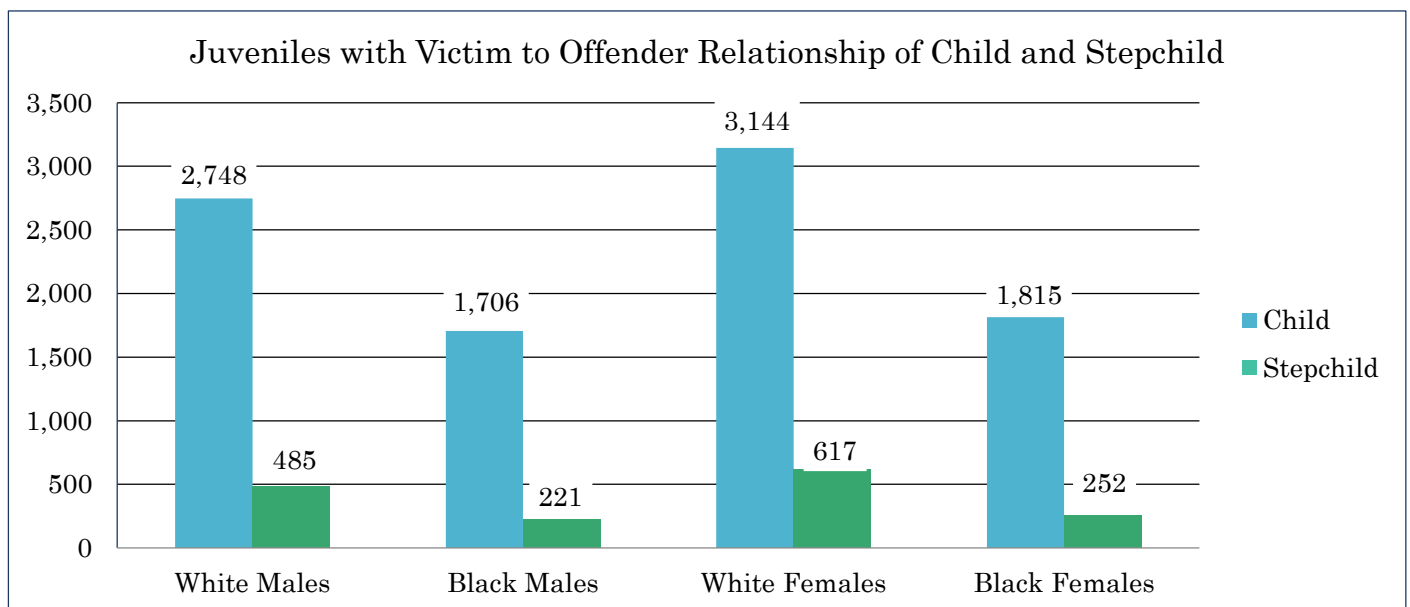
Domestic Violence Victim to Offender Relationships continued

Child and Stepchild continued

The majority of domestic violence incidents indicating a Child or Stepchild Victim to Offender relationship reported to TIBRS between 2013 and 2015 had victims under age 18. For TIBRS purposes these individuals are considered to be juveniles and any physical assaults perpetrated against them are inherently child abuse. Several local and state agencies such as the Department of Children's Services and Prevent Child Abuse Tennessee advocate strongly on behalf of juveniles that are abused and/or neglected and try to prevent future abuse.

Three year totals for the Child and Stepchild Victim to Offender relationship for domestic violence offenses show several trends in the data. Each year juveniles, on average, accounted for 59.8% of victims abused by one or more parent(s) or stepparent(s). More specifically, females under age 18 were most frequently reported as being victimized by their parents accounting for 31.8% of all Child or Stepchild Victim to Offender relationships at 5,958. Representing 52.8% of those victims were White Females under age 18. This demographic group was victimized at a higher rate than any other combination of race, sex, and age group when analyzing Child or Stepchild Victim to Offender relationships.

Victims identified as White were victimized by their parent(s) or stepparent(s) at approximately two times the rate of Black or African-American victims. Of the 3,994 juvenile victims with a Child or Stepchild Victim to Offender relationship identified as having a race of Black or African-American, 2,067 (51.7%) were female and 1,927 (48.2%) were male.



Domestic Violence Victim to Offender Relationships continued

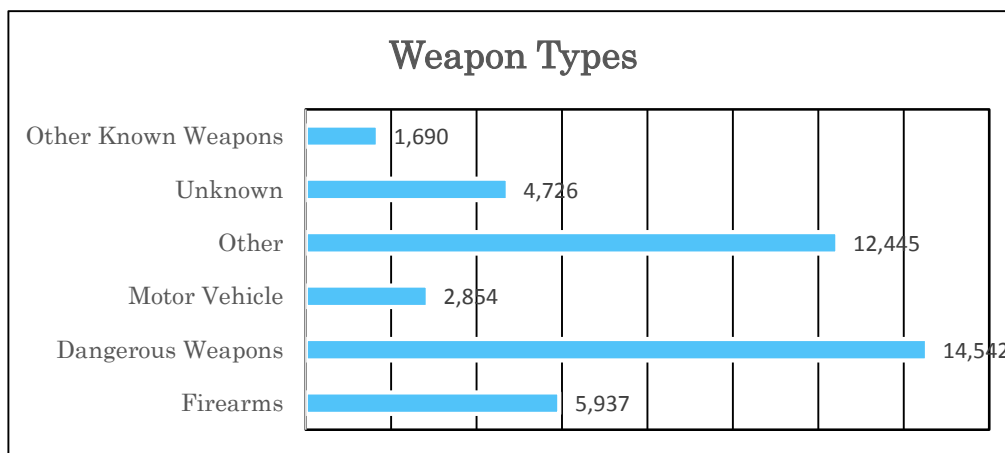
Child of Boyfriend/Girlfriend

During the three-year study period, a total of 1,348 domestic violence offenses were committed against juveniles by the boyfriend or girlfriend of the child's parent. This particular relationship information is captured via the Child of Boyfriend/Girlfriend code in the TIBRS Victim to Offender data element. Nine juvenile victims of Murder/Non-negligent Homicide were reported as having a Child of Boyfriend/Girlfriend relationship with his/her offender. Additionally, 283 offenses classified as Aggravated Assault were documented accounting for 21% of victims. The majority of offenses, where the offender was determined to be the parent's boyfriend or girlfriend, were Simple Assaults at 55.5% of victims in this relationship category. Juvenile victims with the race of White accounted for 59.2% of all juvenile victims in this Victim to Offender relationship category.

Weapons Used in Domestic Violence

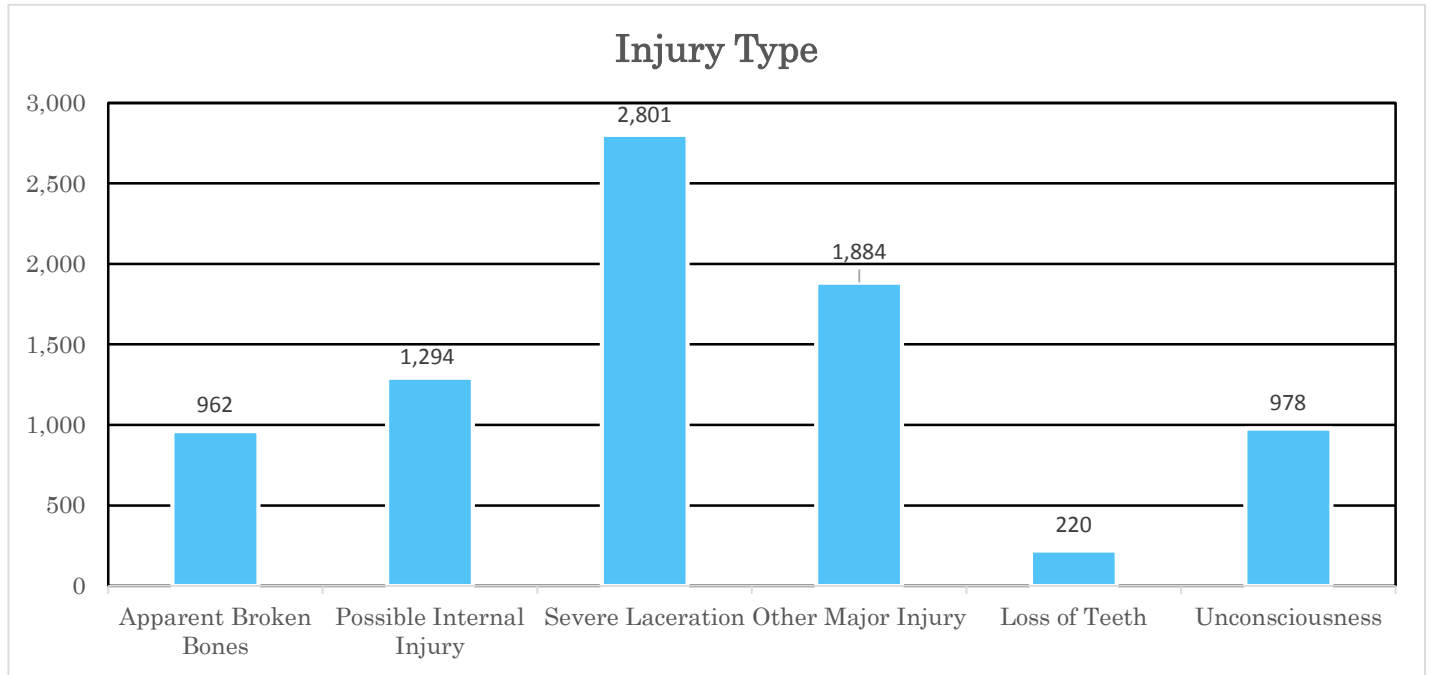
Up to three weapons can be submitted per offense that allows for reporting weapons used. The most common weapon reported with domestic violence offenses was Personal (hands, feet, teeth, etc.) at 161,645 and occurred with Simple Assault offenses which was the most commonly reported domestic violence offense. Firearms were reported with 14.1% of the offenses and dangerous weapon was reported with 34.5%. The most frequently reported weapon for Aggravated Assault was dangerous weapon which includes knife/cutting instrument and blunt object.

When firearms were reported, the most common offense was Aggravated Assault at 94% of firearms followed by Murder with 2.6% of the firearms reported. These two offenses by their nature would involve more serious weapons. The chart below indicates weapons used in Domestic Violence excluding Personal.



Victim Injuries

When reporting domestic violence offenses to TIBRS, up to five injury types may be reported for applicable offenses. The two most frequently occurring injury types were None (47.2%) and Apparent Minor Injuries (48.7%).



Note: The chart above excludes None (94,437) and Apparent Minor injuries (97,336).

Clearance of Domestic Violence Offenses

TIBRS offenses can be cleared two ways, arrest or exceptional means, by law enforcement agencies. Per TIBRS, incidents are exceptionally cleared “when an element beyond law enforcement control prevents a physical arrest.” (TIBRS Data Collection Manual, 12th ed., 2013, p. 9)

Clearing domestic violence incidents can be difficult when considering the compounding factors that contribute to the cooperation of victims and potential witnesses. Because of the very nature of domestic violence and the close interpersonal relationships that exist between the victim and offender, it can be challenging for law enforcement to complete an arrest.

Domestic Violence Exceptional Clearances 2013-2015	
Offense Type	Occurrence
Death of the Offender	138
Prosecution Declined	4,799
In Custody of Other Agency/Jurisdiction	9
Victim Refused to Cooperate	23,002
Juvenile/No Custody	115
Total	28,083



Cohabiting domestic violence victims and offenders can present an obvious challenge in clearing an incident due to victims not cooperating in order to prevent subsequent abuse and turmoil within the household.

Cleared by Arrest was the most common clearance type at 48.1%. Exceptional Clearances made up 12.1% of clearance types, the vast majority of exceptional clearances, 82%, were documented as Victim Refused to Cooperate. As defined by TIBRS, Victim Refused to Cooperate can only clear an incident when the victim has actually stated or made it known to the agency that they refuse to cooperate or pursue prosecution of the offender. Death of the Offender, In Custody of Other Agency/Jurisdiction, and Juvenile/No Custody each accounted for less than one percent of all clearances during the study period.

Summary

The problem of domestic violence has consistently plagued our society. Given the prevalence of domestic violence and its consequences to individuals as well as the local and state community, the current study assessed domestic abuse within the state of Tennessee. Findings of the study revealed that the number of incidents decreased by 1.2% between 2013 and 2014 but showed a slight increase (0.8%) from 2014 to 2015. Overall, females were three times more likely to be reported as victims than males, and victim Race was most often documented as White (57.0%). This victim demographic information gives insight into what populations are most at-risk for domestic violence in the state.

The overwhelming majority of domestically related offenses reported during the study period were assaults. The four assault offenses combined to account for 96.6% of all domestic violence incidents in the state of Tennessee. Simple Assault was the most frequently reported offense at 68.1%.

Examination of Victim to Offender relationships revealed that Spouses are abused at a rate almost six times than that of Ex-Spouses. The data from the Boyfriend/Girlfriend Victim to Offender relationship element showed very little percentage difference between Black or African-American and White female victims: 48% and 51% respectively.

Another significant finding revealed that over half (59.8%) of the victims reporting Child or Stepchild Victim to Offender relationships were juveniles. Further analysis revealed that 64.0% of the victims in this category were White. It is vital to assess the prevalence of juveniles being abused at the hands of parents as this implicates child abuse within the community.



TIBRS data supports the fact that women and children generally have the highest potential for domestic abuse victimization. Local, state, and national agencies across several disciplines including law enforcement and social and child services avidly oppose domestic violence and advocate for its victims. These various institutions and coalitions battle domestic abuse by providing prevention training, intervention, shelter, and counseling for both victims and potential victims of domestic violence. Hopefully, the current assessment of domestic violence in Tennessee exposes the need for continued and increased efforts in the battle against domestic abuse within our community.

References

Tennessee Bureau of Investigation CJIS Support Center (2013). *TIBRS Data Collection: An instructional manual for the implementation of the Tennessee Incident Based Reporting System (12th ed.)*

