



**2016**

# **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**



**Tennessee Bureau of Investigation**  
CJIS Support Center



**Bill Haslam**  
Governor

## TENNESSEE BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

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**Mark Gwyn**  
Director

June 7, 2017

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 2016 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 the state continues to maintain such a successful program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Gwyn".

Mark Gwyn  
Director



## Quick Facts

- ❖ A total of 78,100 domestic violence offenses were reported to TIBRS in 2016.
- ❖ Simple Assault was, by far, the most frequently reported offense accounting for 66.7% of all domestic violence offenses.
- ❖ Females were three times more likely to be victimized than males; accounting for 71.5% of all domestic violence victims, males accounted for the other 28.5%.
- ❖ The majority of domestic violence victims identified their race as either White (57.0%) or Black or African-American (40.7%).
- ❖ A total of 7,509 juveniles were reported, accounting for approximately 9.6% of domestic violence victims.
- ❖ Boyfriend/Girlfriend relationships were the most frequently reported (35, 656) of all domestic violence offenses reported.
- ❖ Domestic violence resulted in 91 Murder victims in 2016.
- ❖ Within Homosexual relationships, the largest group of domestic violence victims were African-American females at 41.9%.
- ❖ Juveniles accounted for 58.6% of victims where a victim to offender relationship was reported as Child or Stepchild.
- ❖ 64.4% 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, this study analyzes recent crime data collected from the Tennessee Incident Based Reporting System (TIBRS). Utilizing this TIBRS crime data, offenses flagged as domestic related in 2016 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 had to meet the following criteria: Crimes Against Persons offense(s); offense(s) flagged by the law enforcement agency as being domestically related; and victim gender could not be reported as Unknown. The total number of domestic violence victims reported in the state for 2016 totaled 78,100. 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 (71.5%) outnumbering male victims by almost 3 to 1.

An analysis of race breakdown revealed that White victims, the race majority for all offenses, accounted for as much as 58.4% of victims for the following offenses: Simple Assault, Aggravated Assault, and Intimidation. White victims made up 45.6% of Murders that were domestic related in 2016. In addition to gender and race, victim age was also analyzed. A total of 7,509 juveniles, or individuals under age eighteen, were reported as victims during the study period accounting for 9.6% of all victims.

The overall numbers reveal a slight increase (0.4%) from 2015 to 2016. Additionally, domestic violence offenses have continuously increased from 2014 to 2016. Three of the four TIBRS Assault Offenses combined account for 95% 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 these, 12 were included in the study with the four omitted offenses being Negligent Manslaughter, Justifiable Homicide, Commercial Sex Acts, and Involuntary Servitude.



Simple Assault accounted for the greatest majority of all domestic offenses in 2016. Aggravated Assault and Intimidation were second and third respectively accounting for 14.7% and 13.8%. These three assault offenses accounted for 95.2% of all domestic violence offenses reported during the study period. Stalking offenses increased 6.4% from 2015 to 2016 and Intimidation increased 3.9%. Reported Murder offenses (9.9%) and Kidnapping/Abduction offenses (6.0%) decreased from 2015 to 2016. The most frequently reported relationship between victim and offender for assault offenses such as, Simple Assault, Aggravated Assault and Intimidation was Boyfriend/Girlfriend.

Homicides determined to be the result of domestic violence decreased by 9.9% with 91 reported in 2016 compared to 101 in 2015. The number of reported Forcible Fondling cases increased slightly by 0.4%; however, reported Sexual Assaults with an Object decreased by 9.3% and Forcible Sodomy offenses decreased by 8.5%. Incest demonstrated the greatest percentage decrease of all offenses at 34.9% followed by Statutory Rape at 19.8%.

### 2016 Domestic Violence Offenses by Gender

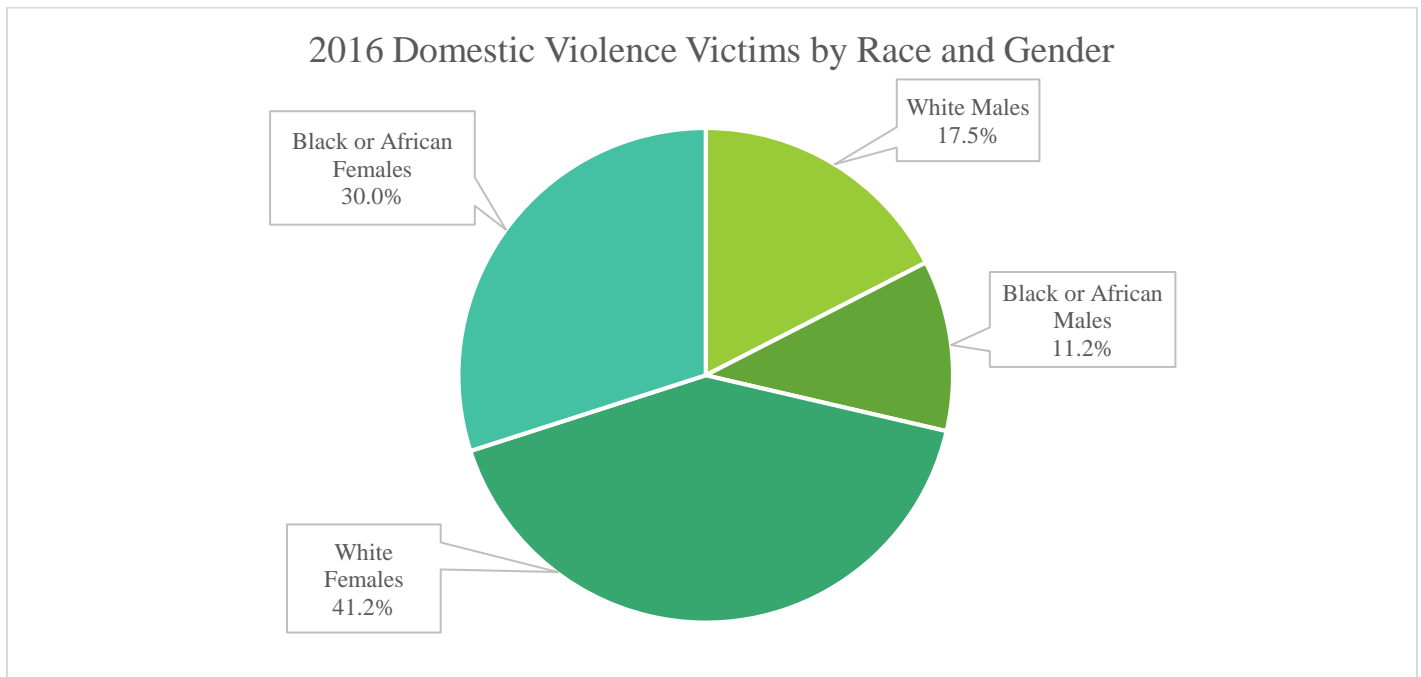
Offense	Female	%	Male	%	Total	%
	Number		Number		Number	
Murder	53	0.1%	38	0.2%	91	0.1%
Kidnapping/Abduction	687	1.2%	229	1.0%	916	1.2%
Forcible Rape	604	1.1%	21	0.1%	625	0.8%
Forcible Sodomy	77	0.1%	84	0.4%	161	0.2%
Sexual Assault W/Object	77	0.1%	11	0.0%	88	0.1%
Forcible Fondling	608	1.1%	122	0.5%	730	0.9%
Incest	22	0.04%	6	0.03%	28	0.04%
Statutory Rape	127	0.2%	11	0.0%	138	0.2%
Aggravated Assault	7,364	13.2%	4,122	18.5%	11,486	14.7%
Simple Assault	37,274	66.8%	14,792	66.6%	52,066	66.7%
Intimidation	8,139	14.6%	2,627	11.8%	10,766	13.8%
Stalking	778	1.4%	159	0.7%	937	1.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>55,810</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>22,222</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>78,032</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

### 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 reported as being committed towards female victims.



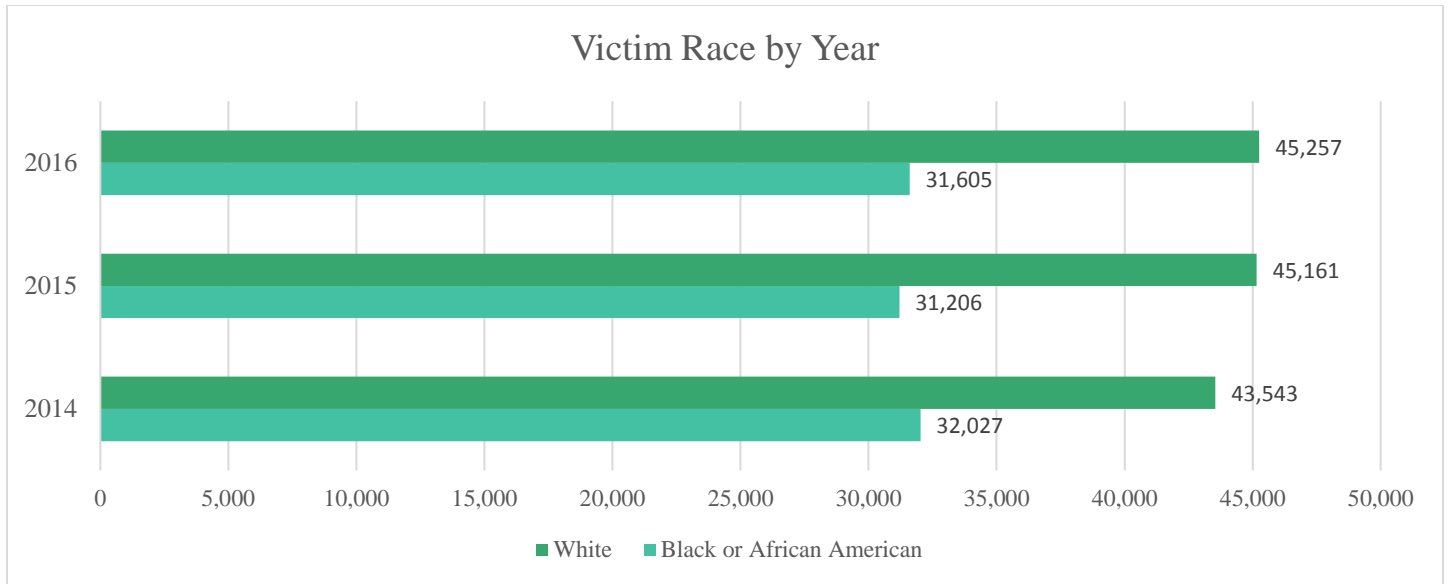
Data collected from TIBRS revealed that women were consistently the primary victims of domestic violence offenses each year from 2014 through 2016 except for the offense of Forcible Sodomy where the numbers were about equal. Male victims accounted for 28.5% of all domestic violence victims. As such, 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 77,335 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 less than 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 2014 to 2016 by 3.8% and the number of Black or African American victims decreased by 1.3%.



## 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 (58.5%) were victimized at a higher rate overall than Black or African-American victims (41.5%), there were several offenses that showed even greater disparity between these two racial groups in terms of victimization. Of the Incest victims, 85.2% reported their race as White; 80.3% of Statutory Rape offenses had White victims; and a total of 45.6% of Murder offenses flagged as domestically related identified the victim race as White. Simple Assault and Intimidation offenses reported the highest percentage of Black or African-American victims accounting for 41.1% victims of those particular offenses. Black or African-American victims accounted for 48.4% of all Aggravated Assaults offenses in 2016.

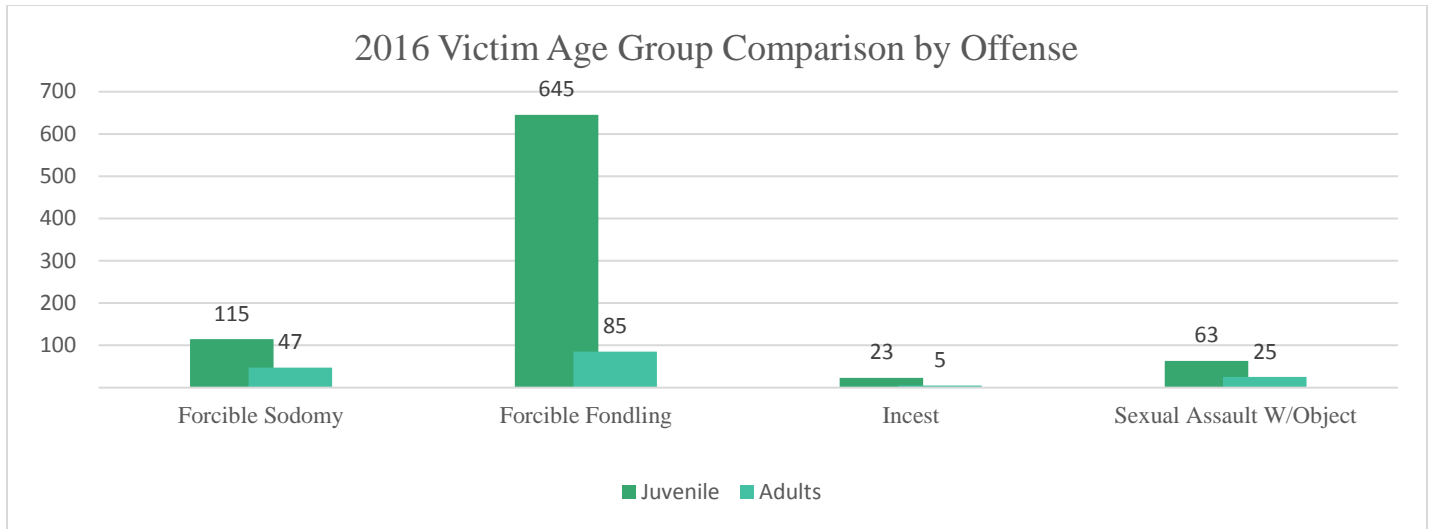
## Juvenile Domestic Violence Victims

Among domestic violence victims, juveniles accounted for approximately ten percent of victims each year of the study with 7,509 (9.6%) in 2016, 7,955 (10.2 %) in 2015, and 7,770 (10.1%) in 2014. Data also revealed victims of age 15 comprised the most reported juvenile victims of the three year time period. The most frequently reported sex offense for female victims was Forcible Fondling for each year. The four TIBRS Assault offenses account for the vast majority (78.2%) 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 four 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 48.6% of all reported Forcible Rapes in 2016.

## Domestic Violence Victim to Offender Relationships

Though domestic violence victims and offenders can have various interpersonal relationships, the intimate relationship is the most common when addressing domestic abuse. Intimate relationships may be presented as formal relationships such as a 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 such relationships, TIBRS collects information concerning the particular relationship between the victim and offender using the Victim to Offender relationship; and more specifically, the intimate Victim to Offender relationships of Spouse, Ex-Spouse, and Boyfriend/Girlfriend,





## Domestic Violence Victim to Offender Relationships continued

### Spouse/Ex-Spouse

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 reporting period, a total of 35,078 domestic violence victims reported their relationship to the offender as Spouse; and 5,739 victims reported their Victim to Offender relationship as Ex-Spouse. Black or African-American males were the least likely to be reported as victims of domestic violence abuse by a spouse (6.7%) or an ex-spouse (7.1%). Black or African-American females were victimized at a higher rate than their male counterparts accounting for 18.0% of victims reporting Spouse Victim to Offender relationship and 19.7% of victims with an 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 of reported victims in this category. White male victims reported a Spouse relationship in 18.9% of domestic violence offenses. Of all the victims reporting Spouse and Ex-Spouse relationships with their domestic abuse offenders, White females accounted for 56.4% when concerning a Spouse Victim to Offender relationships and 54.5% of the Ex-Spouse Victim to Offender relationships.

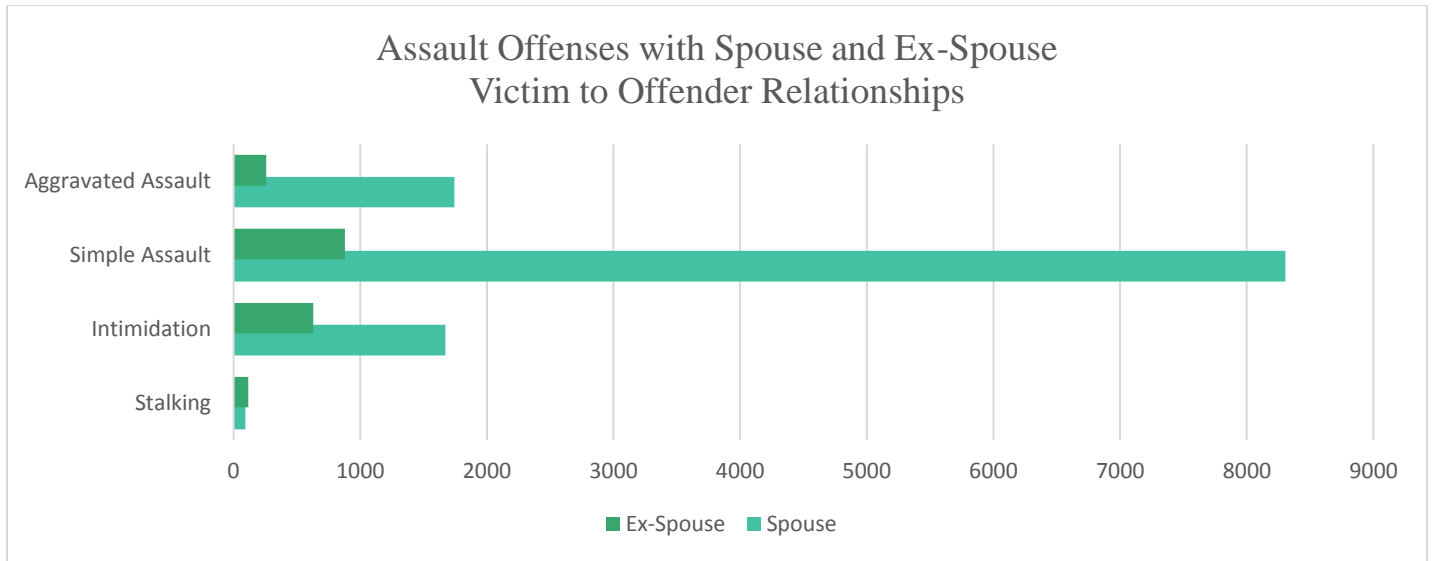
### Spouse/Ex-Spouse Relationship by Gender and Race

Victim to Offender Relationship	2016		2015		2014	
	Total	% of Total	Total	% of Total	Total	% of Total
<b>Spouse</b>	<b>11,730</b>		<b>11,766</b>		<b>11,582</b>	
<b>Male</b>	<b>3,001</b>	<b>25.6%</b>	<b>3,008</b>	<b>25.6%</b>	<b>2,994</b>	<b>25.9%</b>
Black or African-American	781	6.7%	742	6.3%	807	7.0%
White	2,220	18.9%	2,266	19.3%	2,187	18.9%
<b>Female</b>	<b>8,729</b>	<b>74.4%</b>	<b>8,758</b>	<b>74.4%</b>	<b>8,588</b>	<b>80.8%</b>
Black or African-American	2,110	18.0%	2,127	18.1%	2,196	25.6%
White	6,619	56.4%	6,631	56.4%	6,392	55.2%
<b>Ex-Spouse</b>	<b>1,913</b>		<b>1,907</b>		<b>1,919</b>	
<b>Male</b>	<b>493</b>	<b>25.8%</b>	<b>471</b>	<b>24.7%</b>	<b>463</b>	<b>24.1%</b>
Black or African-American	135	7.1%	138	7.24%	116	6.0%
White	358	18.7%	333	17.46%	347	18.1%
<b>Female</b>	<b>1,420</b>	<b>74.2%</b>	<b>1,436</b>	<b>75.3%</b>	<b>1,456</b>	<b>75.9%</b>
Black or African-American	377	19.7%	349	18.3%	374	19.5%
White	1,043	54.5%	1,087	57.0%	1,082	56.4%

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

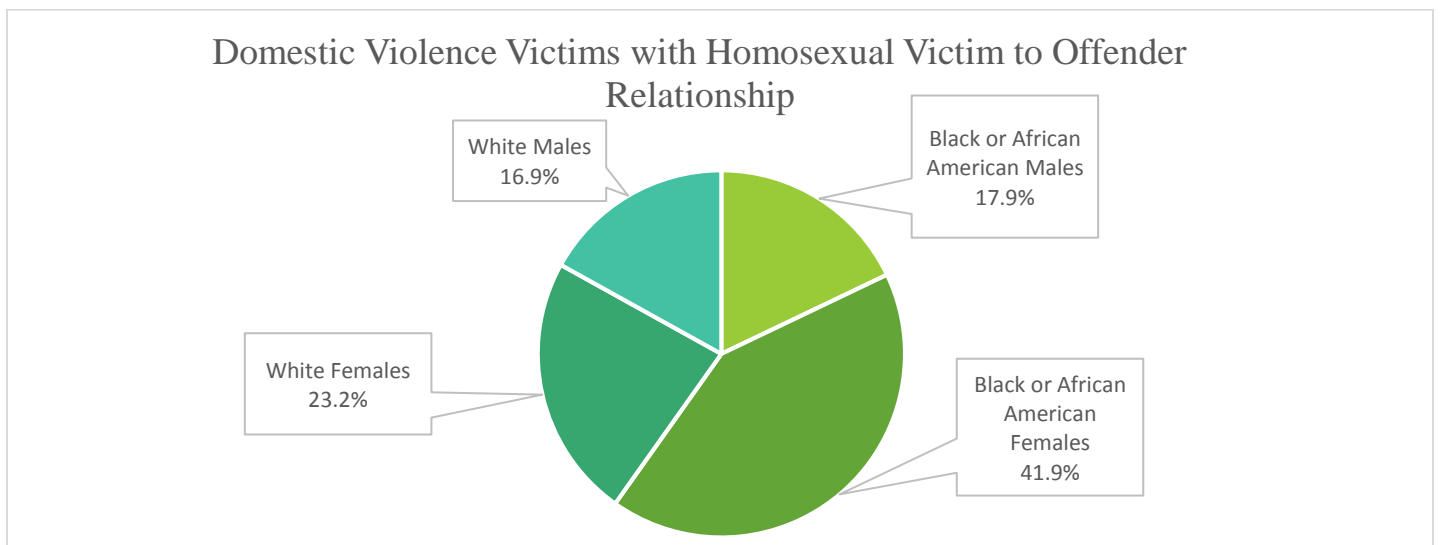


## Domestic Violence Intimate Relationships continued



### Homosexual Relationship

A total of 1,557 Homosexual Victim to Offender relationships were documented as domestic violence in 2016. 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 1,072 (68.1%). Aggravated Assault was the second most frequently reported offense at 251. Females were most likely to be victims (65.2%) 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 64.3%. White and Black or African-American males showed very little difference in the number of Homosexual Victim to Offender relationships at 17.0% and 17.9% respectively.

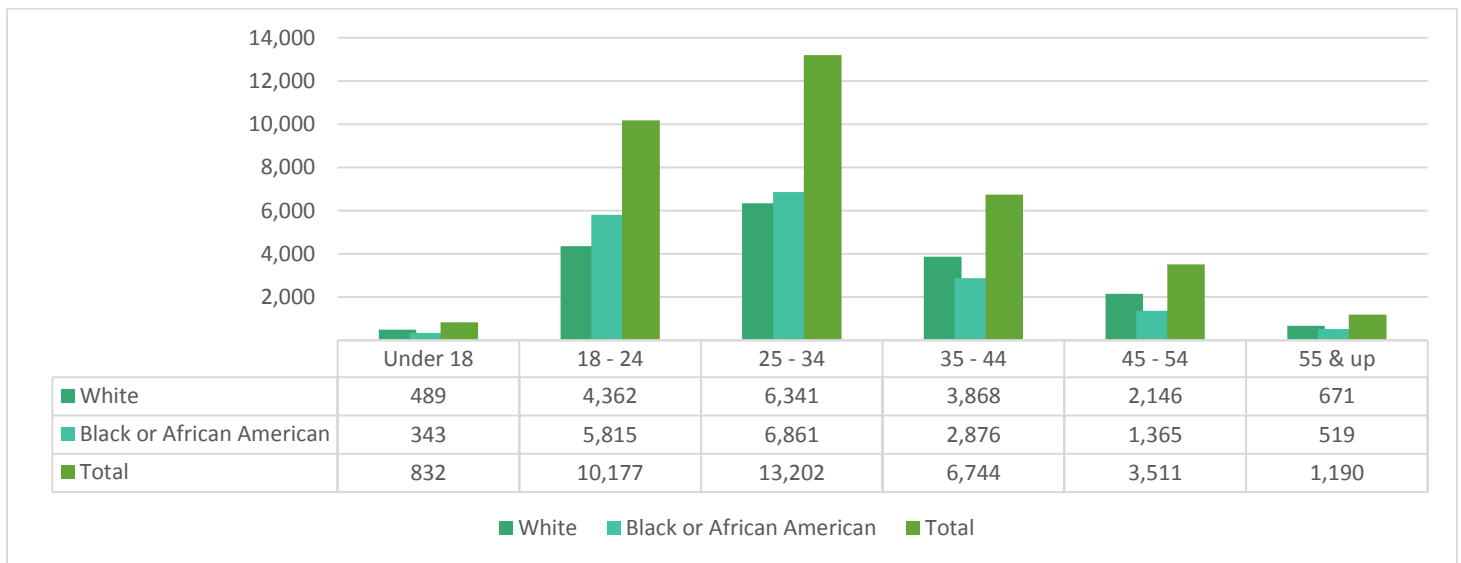


## Domestic Violence Victim to Offender Relationships continued

### Boyfriend/Girlfriend

The research literature often documents the relationship between domestic victims and their abusers as Boyfriend/Girlfriend. In 2016, Tennessee law enforcement agencies reported 35,656 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, 50.1% identified their race as White and 49.9% were Black or African-American. Victims reporting their offender as a Boyfriend/Girlfriend were most frequently females. Of the 35,656 abuse victims reporting this relationship, 27, 828 were females which accounted for 78.0%. The breakdown of Females by race was almost the same at 49.3% Black or African American and 50.7% for 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 15 victims with an age of Unknown.

### Domestic Violence Victims 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 3,573 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.



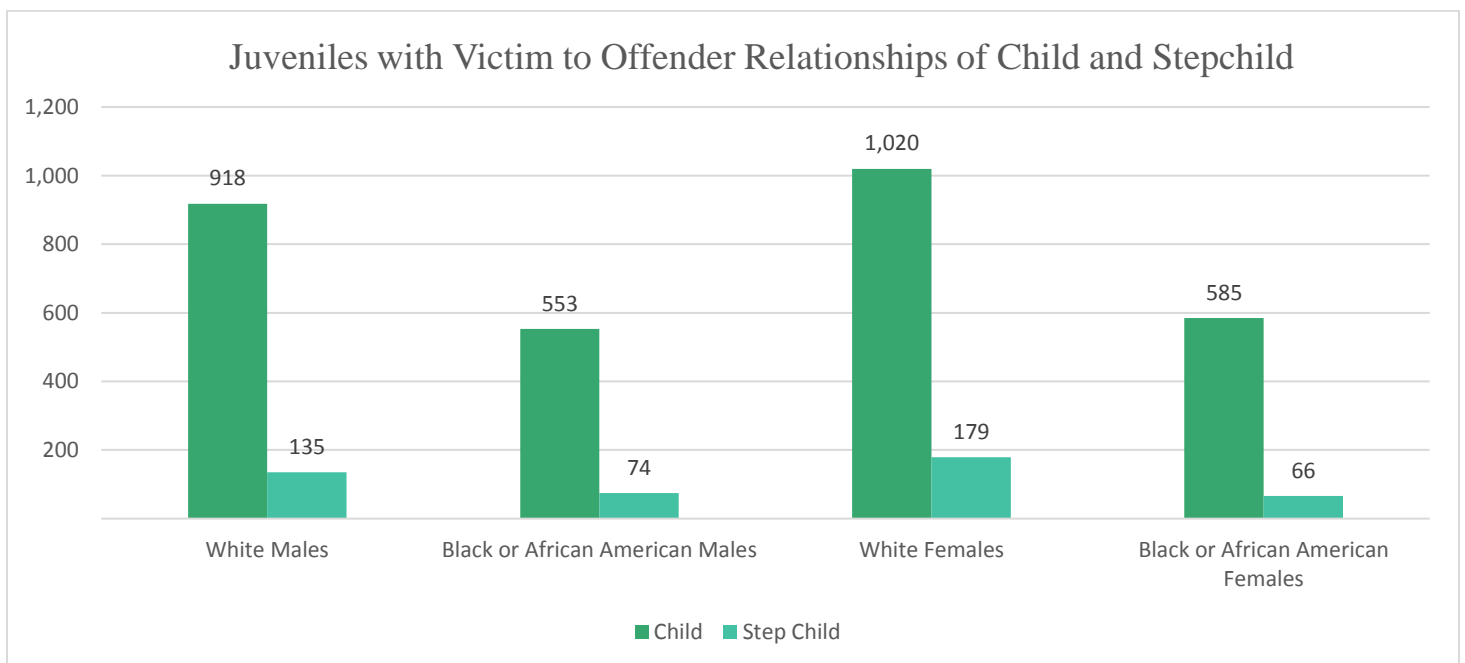
## Domestic Violence Victim to Offender Relationships continued

### Child and Stepchild continued

The majority of domestic violence incidents indicating a Child or Stepchild Victim to Offender relationship reported to TIBRS in 2016 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.

Juveniles accounted for 58.6% 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 30.9% of all Child or Stepchild Victim to Offender relationships at 3,573. Representing 1,199 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 3,573 juvenile victims with a Child or Stepchild Victim to Offender relationship identified as having a race of Black or African-American, 651 (18.2%) were female and 627 (17.5%) were male.



## Domestic Violence Victim to Offender Relationships continued

### Child of Boyfriend/Girlfriend

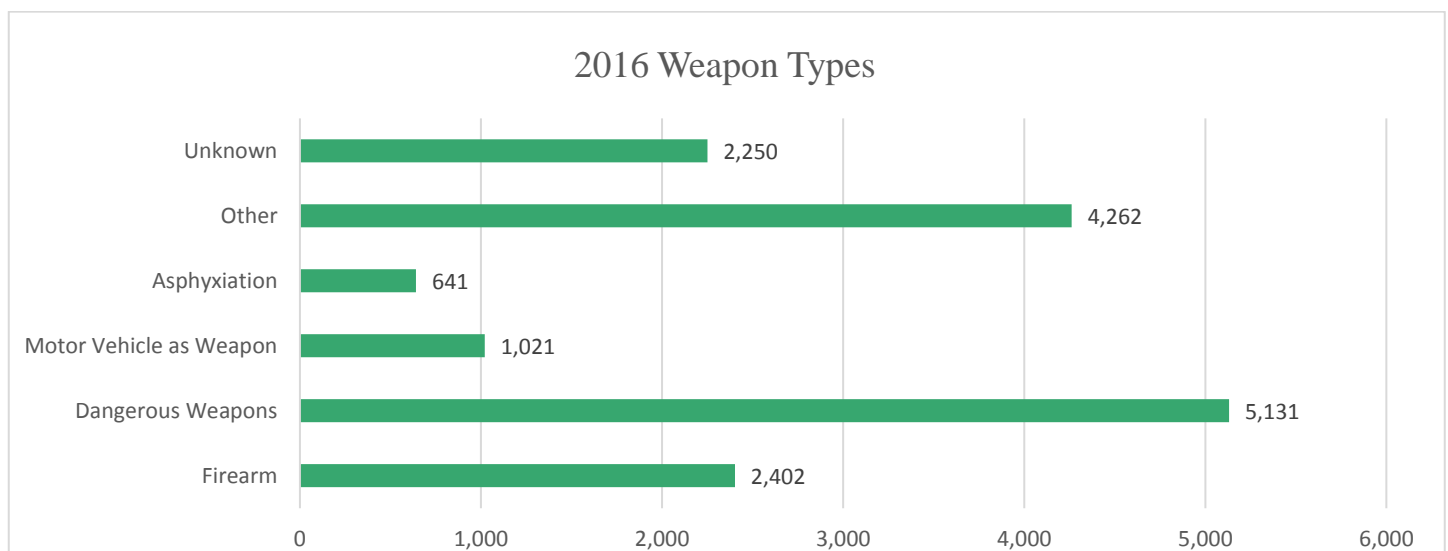
A total of 431 domestic violence offenses were committed against juveniles by the boyfriend or girlfriend of the child's parent. This particular relationship information is captured via the Child of Boyfriend/Girlfriend code in the TIBRS Victim to Offender data element. One juvenile victim of Murder/Non-negligent Homicide was reported as having a Child of Boyfriend/Girlfriend relationship with his/her offender. Additionally, 95 offenses classified as Aggravated Assaults were documented accounting for 22.0% of victims. The majority of offenses, where the offender was determined to be the parent's boyfriend or girlfriend, were Simple Assaults at 57.8% 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 for reporting weapons used. The most common weapon reported with domestic violence offenses was Personal (hands, feet, teeth, etc.) at 52,601 usually occurring with Simple Assault offenses, the most commonly reported domestic violence offense.

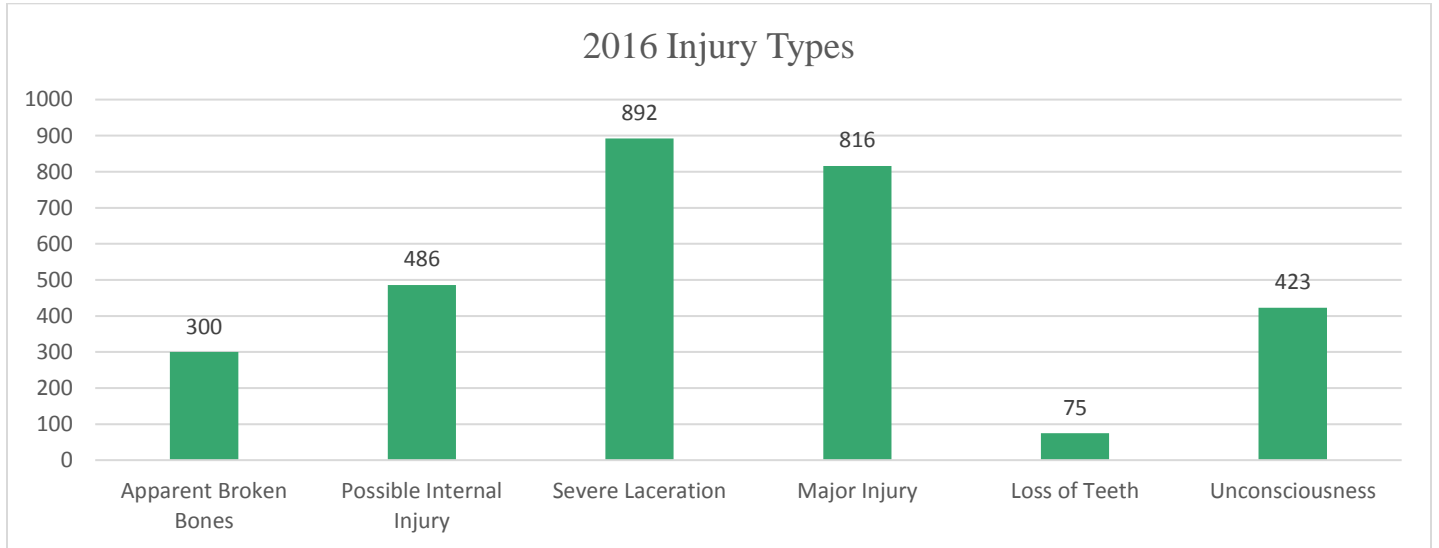
Firearms were reported with 3.5% of the offenses and dangerous weapon was reported with 7.5%. The most frequently reported weapon for Aggravated Assault was dangerous weapon which includes knife/cutting instrument and blunt object.

When firearms were reported, the most common offense was Aggravated Assault at 94.5% of firearms followed by Murder with 2.0% of the firearms reported. These two offenses, by their nature, would involve more serious weapons. The chart below indicates weapons used in Domestic Violence offenses excluding Personal weapon.



## 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 (47.3%) and Apparent Minor Injuries (48.2%).



Note: The chart above excludes None (31,501) and Apparent Minor injuries (32,140).

## Clearance of Domestic Violence Offenses

TIBRS offenses can be cleared two ways by law enforcement agencies, either by arrest or exceptional means. Per TIBRS, incidents are exceptionally cleared “when an element beyond law enforcement control prevents a physical arrest.” (TIBRS Data Collection Manual, 13<sup>th</sup> ed., 2016, 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. Cohabiting domestic

2016 Domestic Violence Exceptional Clearances	
Offense Type	Occurrence
Death of the Offender	43
Prosecution Declined	1,634
Extradition Denied	2
Victim Refused to Cooperate	8,384
Juvenile/No Custody	49
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,112</b>

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.



Domestic offenses cleared by Arrest was the most common clearance type at 64.4%. Exceptional Clearances made up 17.8% of clearance types, the vast majority of exceptional clearances, 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 as a whole within the state of Tennessee. Findings of the study revealed that the number of domestic incidents increased by 1.7% between 2014 and 2016 and showed a slight increase (0.4%) from 2015 to 2016. Overall, females were three times more likely to be reported as victims than males, and victim Race was most often documented as White (58.4%). This victim demographic information gives insight into what populations are most at-risk for domestic violence in the state.

The overwhelming majority of domestic related offenses reported in 2016 were assaults. The four assault offenses combined to account for 96.4% of all domestic violence incidents in the state of Tennessee. Simple Assault being the most frequently reported offense at 66.7%.

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: 49.3% and 50.7% respectively.

Another significant finding revealed that over half (58.6%) of the victims reporting Child or Stepchild Victim to Offender relationships were juveniles. Further analysis revealed that 37.4% of the juvenile 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 (13<sup>th</sup> ed.)*

