



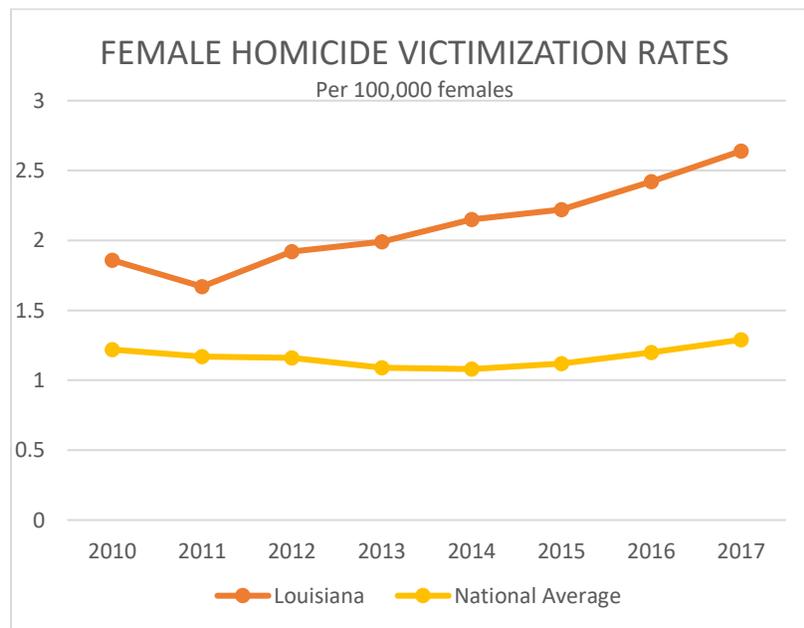
Louisiana’s Female Homicide Rate Continues to Climb

For Immediate Release: September 18, 2019

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Baton Rouge, LA – Louisiana’s rate of women murdered by men has increased for the sixth consecutive year, a trend that has domestic violence advocates sounding alarms. The Washington, D.C. based Violence Policy Center released its annual report on female murder victims, *When Men Murder Women: An Analysis of Homicide Data*, this week. The report reviews female victims killed by male offenders in single victim/single offender incidents and ranks all states from highest rates to lowest. The 2019 report, which analyzes homicides committed in 2017, ranks Louisiana 2nd in the nation. The report also reveals that Louisiana’s rate of women murdered by men is more than twice the national average, at 2.64 homicides per 100,000 females.

Mariah Wineski, executive director of the Louisiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence, said that while female homicide rates are beginning to increase slightly nationwide, the sharp upward trend in Louisiana is especially alarming. “These numbers point to a crisis in our state. Women are being murdered at sky-high rates, in most cases by current or former intimate partners.”



According to the Coalition, there are a number of factors that contribute to Louisiana’s high rate of female homicide victimization. “Our state’s funding for domestic violence victim services is woefully inadequate, and in many communities criminal justice practices still fail to hold abusers accountable before a homicide occurs,” Wineski said. The Coalition points to criminal justice practices proven to reduce homicides in other states - such as dedicated dockets, specialized law enforcement and prosecutorial units, and domestic violence-specific risk assessments - as one piece

of the puzzle. “Make no mistake, domestic homicide is preventable. We know what works. Louisiana just has to make these changes a priority.”

This is the 22nd year that the Violence Policy Center has published *When Men Murder Women*. A review of the report reveals statistics that paint a bleak picture for Louisiana women. Women of color were disproportionately victimized, with black women representing 36 (57%) of the 63 female homicide victims identified in 2017. Sixty-seven percent of the victims in Louisiana were killed with firearms. Three victims were under the age of 18, and six victims were over age 65. The report does not count multiple death incidents or incidents where the perpetrator and victim are of the same sex.

The report comes as the U.S. Senate has failed to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act, landmark legislation that provides funding for victim service and criminal justice efforts nationwide. First enacted in 1994, the Violence Against Women Act expired in February of 2019. A bill to reauthorize it (H.R. 1585) has passed the House of Representatives. It contains several provisions to improve enforcement of firearm prohibitions, expand housing protections for victims, and fund efforts to prevent abuse before it occurs. The Senate has yet to take up the bill.

The release of the Violence Policy Center report coincides with Domestic Violence Awareness Month, which takes place each year in October. This year, advocates hope increased awareness will come with a commitment to improve Louisiana’s response to domestic violence. “Advocates are working tirelessly to prevent domestic violence and help keep survivors safe, but victims in our state have to navigate an exceptionally difficult road to safety,” Wineski said, pointing to economic inequality, housing insecurity, easy firearm access, and a litany of other barriers faced by victims. “A reduction in our female homicide rate will require our state to do something it has yet to do: prioritize women.”

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The Louisiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence (LCADV) is a statewide network of programs, organizations, and individuals who share the goal of ending domestic violence in Louisiana. LCADV empowers its members and communities through advocacy, education, resource development, and technical assistance. LCADV is dedicated to bringing about change in our institutions, laws, politics, attitudes, and beliefs which will allow individuals to live free of violence. For more information, visit www.lcadv.org.