



Justice Analysis Review

A PUBLICATION OF THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE ANALYSIS CENTER

Identifying Domestic Violence in North Carolina

Summary

Domestic and family violence must be clearly defined before analyzing the prevalence of domestic violence in North Carolina using the National Incident-Based Reporting System data. NIBRS provides our current framework for measuring the prevalence of domestic violence. Its instructions allow assignment of a domestic violence circumstance code only to reports that involve aggravated assault or homicide. NIBRS also provides a definition of domestic violence that includes the use of force, or a Crime Against Property when the offender is in a current or former relationship with or a family member of the victim. Further analysis of the frequency of crimes committed by persons known to the victim was conducted to get a clearer picture of domestic and family violence incidents across the state.

In this paper, the North Carolina Governor's Crime Commission – Criminal Justice Analysis Center presents analysis of NIBRS crime data that classifies all Crimes Against Persons committed by a current or former intimate partner or family member as domestic and family violence. This definition broadens the review of domestic violence cases to include reports of simple assault, kidnapping, intimidation and other crimes.

The broader definition of domestic and family violence was applied to analysis of crime data submitted by North Carolina law enforcement agencies from 2019 to 2021. The analysis provided new insight into domestic and family violence in the state:

21,199

incidents of aggravated assault or homicide were committed by a current or former intimate partner or family member during the three-year period.

138,375

reports of simple assault committed by a current or former intimate partner or family member make this crime the most common type of domestic and family violence reported during the three-year period.

71%

of domestic and family violence victims in 2021 were female.

81%

of domestic and family violence incidents in 2021 occurred in a residence or home.

Domestic and Family Violence in North Carolina

This Justice Analysis Review (JAR) examines various approaches to identifying domestic and family violence in North Carolina. The National Incident-Based Reporting System User Manual defines domestic and family violence as:

“the use, attempted use, or threatened use of physical force or a weapon; or the use of coercion or intimidation; or committing a Crime Against Property by a current or former spouse, parent, or guardian of the victim; a person with whom the victim shares a child in common; a person who is or has been in a social relationship of a romantic or intimate nature with the victim; a person who is cohabitating with or has cohabitated with the victim as a spouse, parent, or guardian; or by a person who is or has been similarly situated to a spouse, parent, or guardian of the victim.”¹

¹ 2021.1 National Incident-Based Reporting System User Manual. Federal Bureau of Investigation—Criminal Justice Information Services Division; 2021.

However, NIBRS instructions state that the circumstance of domestic violence should only be applied to reports of aggravated assault or homicide (murder and nonnegligent manslaughter) offenses. Therefore, determining the frequency of domestic and family violence incidents in North Carolina requires analysis of offenses committed by offenders in close relationships with victims.

Analysis of the prevalence of domestic and family violence incidents is affected by multiple factors:

1. NIBRS instructions allow a ‘circumstance’ of an offense to be recorded only in the cases of aggravated assault or murder and nonnegligent manslaughter.
2. A broader definition for domestic violence from NIBRS data is to include the crimes against a person and property offenses where the relationship between the victim and the offender is reported to be a current or former intimate partner or within the family of the victim.
3. NIBRS data includes only crimes reported to law enforcement agencies that chose to submit crime reports to the North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation.
4. An estimated 54% of 2021 violent offenses went unreported to police nationally.²

This report examines the following four approaches to identifying domestic and family violence in North Carolina:

1. The reported 2019-2021 aggravated assault or homicide incidents categorized as domestic violence in NIBRS (hereinafter referred to as NIBRS Domestic Violence)
2. The reported 2019-2021 aggravated assault or homicide incidents where the offender is a current or former intimate partner or within the family of the victim³ (hereinafter referred to as Partner or Family Violence – Aggravated Assault or Homicide)
3. The reported 2019-2021 Crimes Against Persons where the offender is a current or former intimate partner or within the family of the victim (hereinafter referred to as Partner or Family Violence – Crimes Against Persons)
4. The reported 2019-2021 Crimes Against Persons and Property where the offender is a current or former intimate partner or within the family of the victim. Analysis of Crimes Against Property will be referred to as Partner or Family Violence – Crimes Against Property.

NIBRS Domestic Violence Circumstance Versus Partner or Family Violence in Aggravated Assault or Homicide Incidents

A larger number of aggravated assault or homicide incidents were committed by a current or former partner or family member (21,199) than were assigned a domestic violence circumstance (5,572) in 2019-2021.

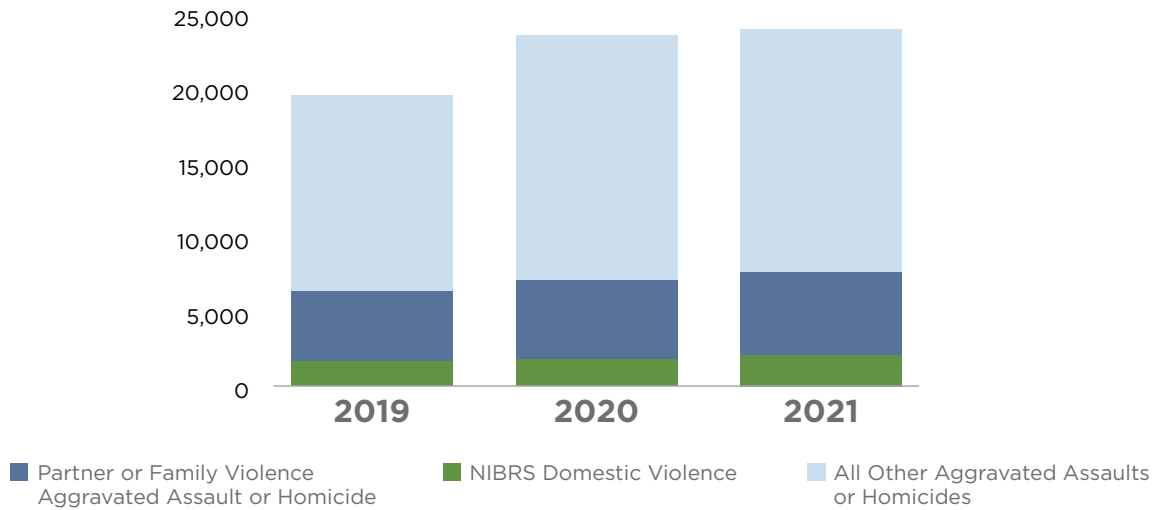
The total number of aggravated assaults and homicides reported to NIBRS during 2019-2021 is represented by the light blue bars in Figure 1. The green segment represents incidents submitted to NIBRS with a domestic violence circumstance assigned (NIBRS Domestic Violence). NIBRS Domestic Violence represents approximately 8% of the incidents.

The dark blue segment represents incidents that have been classified as Partner or Family Violence following a review of the reported relationship between the victim and the offender, rather than the circumstance code. An additional 24% of incidents occurred between current or former intimate partners or family members and are categorized as Partner or Family Violence – Aggravated Assault or Homicide.

² Thompson, A., & Tapp, S. N. (2022, September). Criminal victimization, 2021. Retrieved September 23, 2022, from <https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/cv21.pdf>

³ Current or former intimate partner is comprised of the following relationship codes: BG, CS, SE, XR, XS. Within family is comprised of: CH, CF, GC, GP, IL, OF, PA, SB, SC, SP, SS.

Figure 1: Aggravated Assault or Homicide Incidents by Domestic and Family Violence Classification and Year

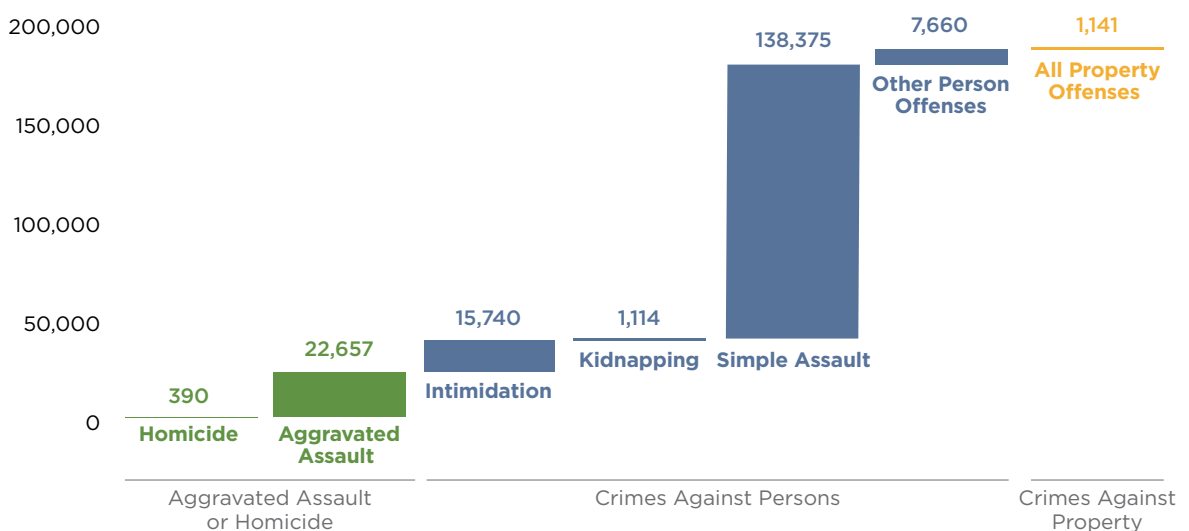


Partner or Family Violence in Other Offenses

Partner or Family Violence occurs in a much wider range of offenses than is currently captured by the NIBRS circumstance code (aggravated assault or homicide). There were 162,889 other victims of Crimes Against Persons offenses involving Partner or Family Violence and 1,141 victims of Crimes Against Property offenses between 2019 and 2021.

Figure 2 shows the number of offenses per victim for Partner or Family Violence grouped by offense. The green bars represent Partner or Family Violence – Aggravated Assault or Homicide, the blue bars represent the instances of Partner or Family Violence – Crimes Against Persons, and yellow bars indicate Partner or Family Violence – Crimes Against Property. The vast majority of Partner or Family Violence – Crimes Against Person offenses were simple assault.

Figure 2: Partner or Family Violence by Offense, 2019-2021



Partner or Family Violence in Crimes Against Persons and Property

Looking at the monthly reported incidents shows some variation during the three-year period, but the proportion that involved partner or family violence remained steady. The total number of Crimes Against Persons incidents (including aggravated assaults and homicide) reported to NIBRS by month is shown by the gray bars in Figure 3, and the number of Partner or Family Violence – Crimes Against Persons incidents is represented by the green bars. Almost half (47%) of all Crimes Against Persons incidents involved partner or family violence. The number of Crimes Against Persons incidents tended to increase from a low in February to a high in spring to summer. Partner or Family Violence – Crimes Against Persons incidents followed a similar seasonal pattern.

Figure 3: Partner or Family Violence Incidents by Month, Crimes Against Persons



From 2019-2021, law enforcement reported a larger number of Crimes Against Property incidents (992,217) than Crimes Against Persons (353,642). However, only a small percentage (1%) of reported Crimes Against Property had a victim and offender relationship that categorized it as Partner or Family Violence. Most of these Partner or Family Violence incidents also involved Crimes Against Persons (92%).

Definition of Domestic and Family Violence

Given that the domestic violence circumstance in NIBRS is limited to use in cases of aggravated assault or homicide, the prevalence of domestic and family violence in North Carolina is better captured by using a broader definition. Many Crimes Against Persons incidents – particularly those involving simple assault – were perpetrated by a current or former intimate partner or family member of the victim. Including Crimes Against Property adds a large number of incidents, but only a small percentage of Crimes Against Property are classified as Partner or Family Violence.

In the following sections, analysis of domestic and family violence will focus on Crimes Against Persons committed by a current or former intimate partner or family member.

Demographics of Domestic and Family Violence Victims in North Carolina

Of the 423,004 unique victims of Crimes Against Persons incidents (there can be multiple victims per incident) in 2019-2021, 44% were victims of domestic and family violence. The demographics of domestic and family violence victims did not vary significantly by year. Table 1 presents demographics of domestic and family violence victims in 2021.

Table 1: Demographics of Domestic and Family Violence Victims, 2021

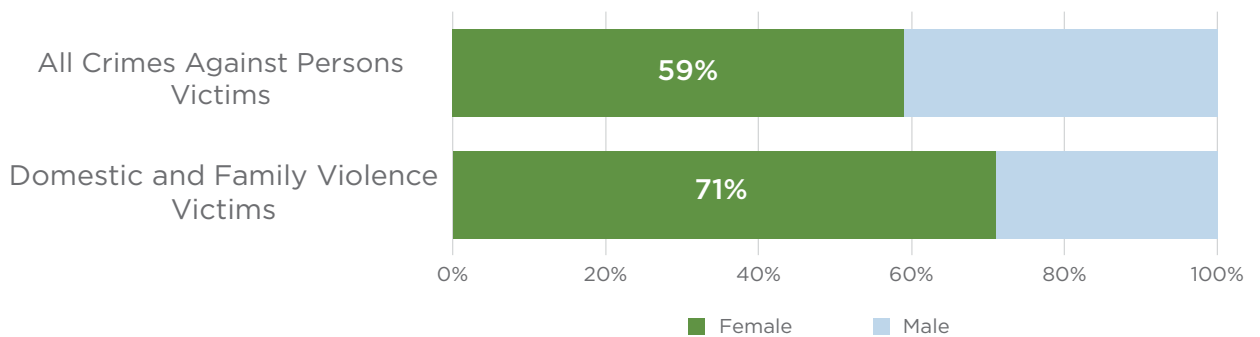
	All Crimes Against Persons Victims		Domestic and Family Violence Victims	
Gender				
Female	86,349	59%	45,392	71%
Male	59,494	41%	18,528	29%
Race				
African American or Black	69,468	48%	30,634	48%
White	70,794	48%	31,320	49%
Other/Unknown	5,938	4%	2,053	3%
Ethnicity				
Hispanic/Latino	11,892	8%	5,239	8%
Not Hispanic/Latino	109,441	75%	48,359	76%
Unknown Ethnicity	24,867	17%	10,409	16%
Age				
Under 18	23,658	16%	8,113	13%
18-24	24,678	17%	10,800	17%
25-34	37,029	26%	18,168	29%
35-49	35,112	24%	16,748	26%
50-64	19,106	13%	7,773	12%
65+	5,136	4%	2,098	3%
Total	146,200		64,007	

Note: Gender was unknown for 357 Crimes Against Person victims and 87 Domestic and Family Violence victims. Age was unknown for 1,481 Crimes Against Persons victims and 307 Domestic and Family Violence victims

Gender of Domestic and Family Violence Victims

Females were 45% more likely than males to be the victims of all reported Crimes Against Persons. Figure 4 shows that female victims outnumbered male victims of domestic and family violence by 145%.

Figure 4: Gender of Domestic and Family Violence Victims, 2021



Age of Domestic and Family Violence Victims

Victims of all Crimes Against Persons, as well as victims of domestic and family violence, had an average age of 33. Crimes Against Persons victims under 18 and over 50 years old were less likely to be involved in domestic and family violence than victims between 18 and 50 years old.

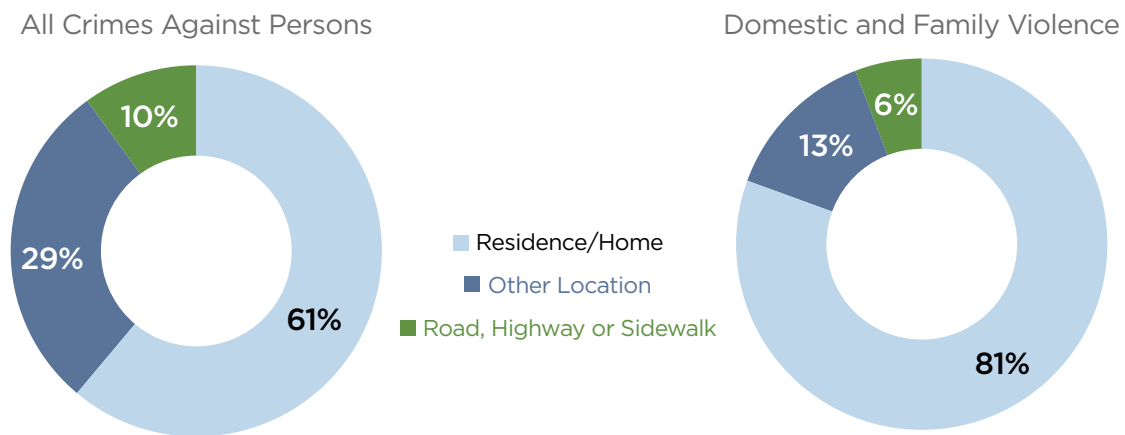
Race and Ethnicity of Domestic and Family Violence Victims

The race and ethnicity of victims of domestic and family violence was similar to that of victims of all Crimes Against Persons. Almost half (48%) of the victims of domestic and family violence were Black or African American, while 49% were white. Less than 10% of victims of domestic and family violence were Hispanic or Latino.

Location of Domestic and Family Violence in North Carolina

Law enforcement officers can include the location of each incident reported to NIBRS. More Domestic and Family Violence occurred at a residence or home (81%) than the total of all Crimes Against Persons (61%).

Figure 5: Location of Crimes Against Persons and Domestic and Family Violence, 2021



Conclusion

Defining domestic and family violence using the circumstance code undercounted this type of crime within aggravated assaults and homicides, and limited analysis of potential incidents involving other offenses.

The broader definition of domestic and family violence provided by the NIBRS User Manual includes Crimes Against Persons and Crimes Against Property committed by a current or former intimate partner or family member. However, analysis of offenses involving all Crimes Against Property found that a very small percentage of property crimes qualified as domestic and family violence.

Further, most Crimes Against Property that met the criteria for domestic and family violence based on the victim-offender relationship occurred in conjunction with Crimes Against Persons.

Thus, domestic and family violence in the State of North Carolina is best defined as any Crime Against Person perpetrated by a current or former intimate partner or family member of the victim, with the understanding that this definition excludes a small number of property-only offenses.