

Research & Statistics

Domestic Violence-Related Murders in Hawaii

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The Crime Prevention & Justice Assistance Division receives numerous requests for estimates of the proportion of statewide murders that can be attributed to domestic violence. Unequivocal statistics have traditionally been difficult to produce due to the lack of a firm definition of the term "domestic violence" as it applies to Uniform Crime Report murder statistics. The most recently released estimate was based on data through 1996 and placed Hawaii's domestic violence-related proportion of total murders within a range of 25-30%. All subsequent efforts will employ a working definition of domestic violence-related murder that includes murders resulting from circumstances of either child abuse or domestic arguments, as determined at the police level and reported to the Attorney General via monthly "supplemental homicide reports." Doing so places Hawaii's current (1998) statistic at 25%, and the 1992-1998 average at 24.3% (see table, below). Years prior to 1992 are summarized in an earlier report published by this office.

However, this "proportion of domestic violence-related murders" is largely dependent upon the number of *non*-domestic violence-related murders that are committed. For example, if two cities of equal population have the same number of DV-related murders, but one city has significantly fewer street crime-related murders (drive-by shootings, convenience store robberies gone bad, etc.), then this city will have a larger proportion of domestic violence-related murders. Thus it would be inaccurate and misleading to use this statistic to imply that the city with the higher proportion of DV-related murders has a "bigger" or "worse" domestic violence problem than does the other city.

A much more objective and meaningful way to compare statistics over time and/or between jurisdictions is to calculate the *rate* of domestic violence-related murders. Doing so removes non-DV-related murders from the equation and factors in population size to provide a statistic that can be fairly compared over time or between jurisdictions. These figures are also included in the table.

