

## QUALITATIVE OBSERVATIONS

Key elements of a thorough threat assessment include such items as the subject's motive and goal in carrying out an attack, triggering life events, target selection, and/or prior concerning or threatening behavior. These elements are at times difficult to discern due to the availability of information and subjectivity of their interpretation. Information related to these elements is particularly difficult to gather from open-sources, which do not always contain complete and accurate reporting.

Efforts were made to gather as much information as possible to provide an initial description of the motives and triggers, targeting, and pre-incident behaviors of concern. When the information was reported, judgments were made as to its completeness and apparent accuracy. A more in-depth analysis of each of these elements would require additional data other than what is available through open-source.

### *What factors motivated or triggered the attacks?*

Generally, several categories were observed among the incidents regarding the factors that may have played a role in the subjects' decision to carry out the directed assault. These factors fall broadly within areas related to personal relations, academic performance, workplace issues, and/or individual stressors (see Table 7; for definitions, see Appendix C). Although it was recognized that multiple factors may have motivated or triggered the offenders' violent acts, efforts were made to identify the most prominent ones and the incidents were categorized accordingly. In 17 percent ( $n = 45$ ) of the cases, either the motivating and/or triggering factors were completely unknown or they were less apparent as various factors specific to the subject and his/her environment appeared to influence the decision to engage in the violent behavior. Those incidents in which the motive and/or trigger was not apparent were excluded from Table 7.

**Table 7: Factors that Motivated or Triggered the Directed Assaults**

Categories	<i>n</i> =	%
Related to an Intimate Relationship	77	33.9
Retaliation for Specific Action(s)	31	13.7
Refused Advances or Obsession with the Target	23	10.1
Response to Academic Stress/Failure	23	10.1
Acquaintance/Stranger Based Sexual Violence	22	9.7
Psychotic Actions	18	7.9
Workplace Dismissal/Sanction	14	6.2
Need to Kill / Specific Victimology	7	3.1
Draw Attention to Self/Issue(s)	7	3.1
Bias Related	5	2.2
Total	227	100

As noted in Table 7, the most prevalent category identified related to current or former personal relationships between the subject and victim, followed by retaliation for specific actions. Future research should examine primary source materials, which may offer more insight into the underlying motives and triggers related to these incidents.