In the Midwest, are female victims more often murdered by someone they know?

The raw data from the Murder Accountability project lists 29 victim relationship types, including *Relationship not Determined*. This list was re-grouped into 9 main categories: *Acquaintance, Spouse, Partner, Other – known to victim, Stranger, Child, Parent, Other Family, Sibling.* A table of the consolidated categories is below.

For the purposes of this analysis, the *Relationship not determined* category was excluded. However, it is important to note that 42.6 % (47,540) of total Male victim entries (111,465), and 28.7% (9,592) of total Female victim entries (33,402), were listed as *Relationship not Determined*.

There were three victim gender categories available from the Murder Accountability project: *Male*, *Female*, and *Unknown*. For the purposes of this analysis, category type *Unknown* was excluded.

Top 5 Relationships for Female Victims:

22% Acquaintance, 21% Spouse, 17% Partner, 12% Other (known to victim), 11% Stranger.

Top 5 Relationships for Male Victims:

40% Acquaintance, 26% Stranger, 16% Other (known to victim), 4% Partner, 4% Child.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  |  |

This data shows that almost half of female victims (47%) with relationships defined were murdered by a spouse or partner. On the other hand, male victims were murdered by a spouse or partner in 8% of cases. **Conclusion: female victims during 1976-2016 were killed by people close to them more often than male victims.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Relationship** | **Includes** |
| Acquaintance | * Acquaintance |
| Spouse | * Ex-Husband * Ex-Wife * Husband * Wife |
| Partner | * Boyfriend * Girlfriend * Common-law Husband * Common-law Wife * Homosexual Relationship |
| Other – Known to Victim | * Other(known to victim) * Friend * Neighbor * Employee * Employer * In-law |
| Stranger | * Stranger |
| Child | * Son * Daughter * Stepson * Stepdaughter |
| Parent | * Mother * Father * Stepfather * Stepmother |
| Other Family | * Other Family |
| Sibling | * Brother * Sister |

Are there differences in murder method based on the relationship of the offender and the victim?

The raw data from the Murder Accountability project lists 18 weapon types, including *Other or Type Unknown.* Weapons categorized as *Other or Type Unknown* were excluded from this analysis. Weapon types were re-organized into two types: Close Contact or No/Little Contact. Close Contact weapons are those in which the offender had direct hands-on or intimate contact with the victim, such as beating, stabbing, or strangling. No/Little contact weapons are those in which the offender did not need direct hands-on or intimate contact with the victim, such as guns, poison, or explosives. A full breakdown of weapon categories is listed in the table below.

For this analysis, victim relationship categories from above were further grouped into 4 categories based on intimacy: *Stranger, Acquaintance, Family Member, and Romantic Partner.* Categories *Relationship not Determined* and *Other – known to victim* were excluded from these groupings, as we cannot determine what level of intimacy these victims had with their offenders.

From this grouping, 31% (22,216) of total murders (71,493) used close contact methods. 68.9% of total murders in this set used no/little contact methods.

Of note, 43% of close contact murders were by a spouse or romantic partner as opposed to 27% of no/little contact murders.

On the other end of the spectrum, 16.3% of close contact murders were by a stranger as opposed to 30% of no/little contact murders.

We could infer from these findings that the level of intimacy between a victim and offender may influence the way in which a murder is performed. It may be easier to gain close contact to a victim known to the offender than not. However, the number of victims in each relationship grouping is different, which skews our results. In addition, no statistical analysis was done on these groupings, so we cannot confirm any sort of statistical significance in these findings.

|  |
| --- |
|  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Close Contact Weapons | Little or No Contact Weapons |
| * Knife or cutting instrument * Personal weapons, including beating * Blunt object – hammer, club, etc. * Asphyxiation – includes death by gas * Drowning | * Handgun – pistol, revolver, etc. * Shotgun * Strangulation -hanging * Rifle * Firearm, type not stated * Other gun * Fire * Pushed or thrown out window * Narcotics or drugs, sleeping pills * Explosives * Poison – does not include gas |