

An Overview of Intimate Partner Homicides in Massachusetts

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Intimate Partner Homicide in Massachusetts

- Two reports:
 - Analysis of Intimate Partner Homicides in Massachusetts: An Overview of Supplementary Homicide Report Cases between 1986 and 2007
 - Massachusetts Intimate Partner Homicide Review: An Overview of District Attorney Cases between 2005 and 2007



Intimate Partner Homicide (IPH)

- For the purposes of these reports, we defined intimate partner homicides as:
 - Any homicide where the victim was a spouse, ex-spouse, common-law husband/wife, live-in partner, former live-in partner, boy/girlfriend, former boy/girlfriend of the assailant (or someone acting under the direction of the assailant).



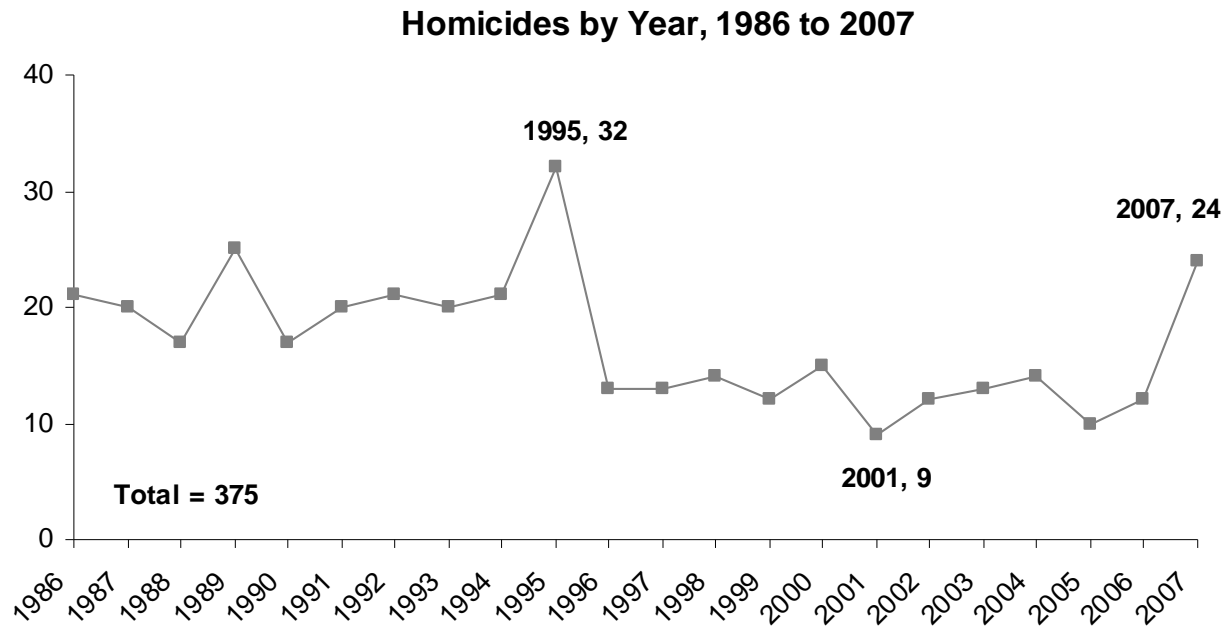
Analysis of Intimate Partner Homicides in Massachusetts:

An Overview of Supplementary Homicide
Report Cases between 1986 and 2007



SHR: Historical IPH Trends in MA

- According to Supplementary Homicide Report (SHR) data there were 375 intimate partner homicides in Massachusetts between 1986 and 2007.



SHR:

Characteristics of Victims and Offenders

- ❑ Both intimate partner homicide victims and offenders were most commonly between the ages of 21 and 40 at the time of the homicide.
- ❑ Intimate partner homicide victims were predominately female (82%) while offenders were predominately male (84%).
- ❑ Victims and offenders of IPH were most commonly White, Non-Hispanic.

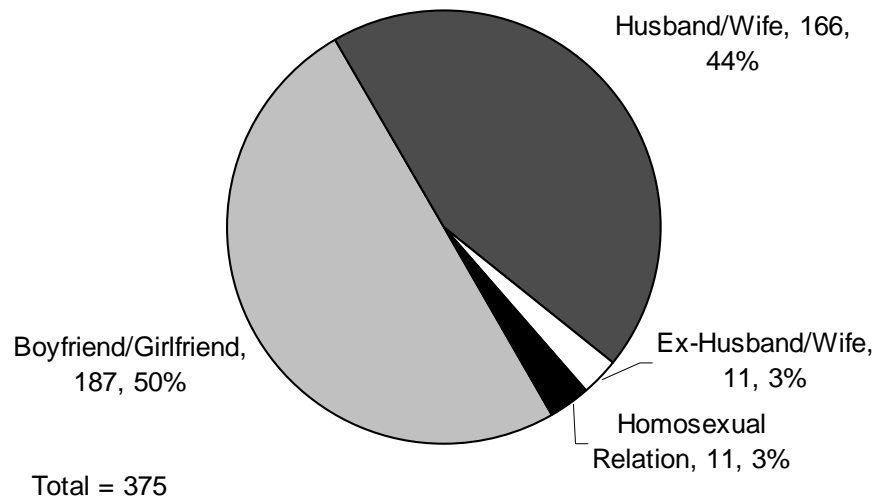


SHR:

Victim-Offender Relationship

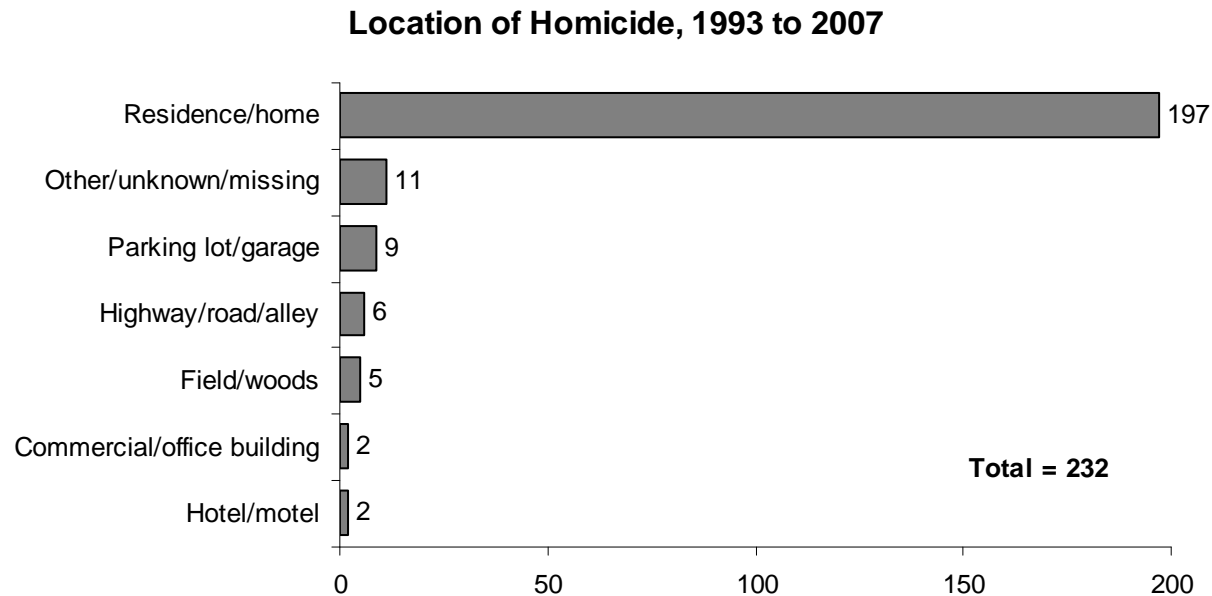
- Approximately half of all IP homicides were committed by boyfriends/girlfriends (50%), followed closely by husband/wives (44%).

Victim/Offender Relationship by Category, 1986 to 2007



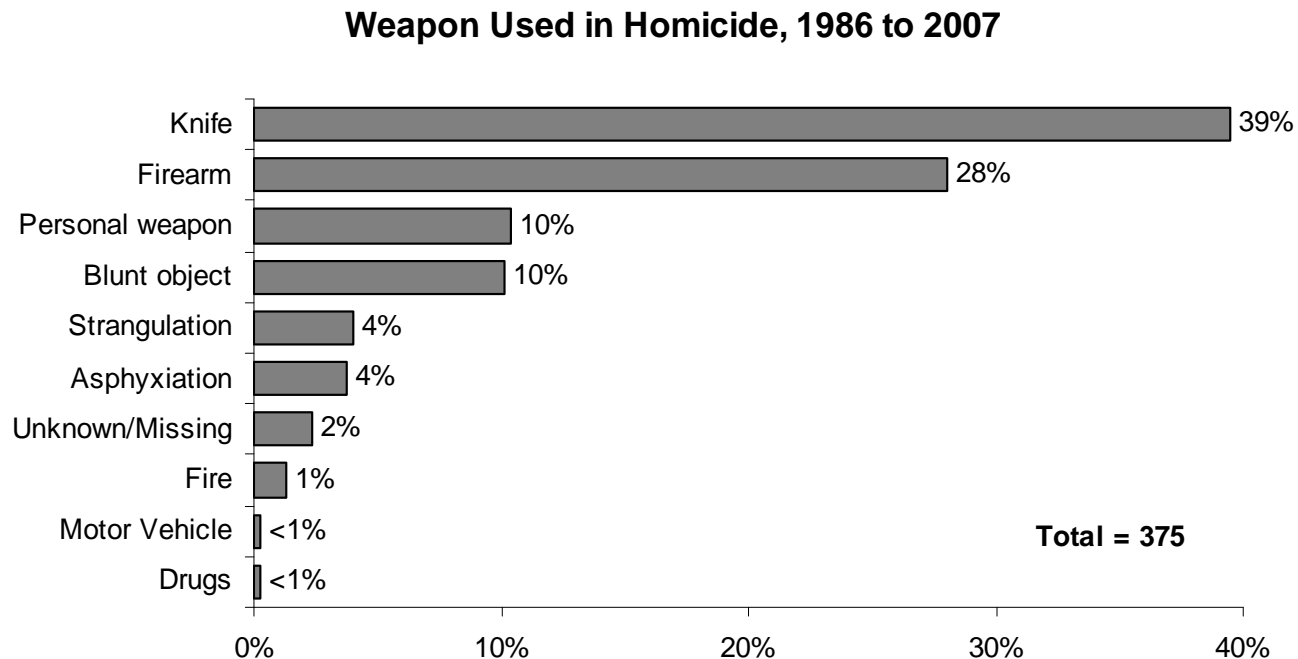
SHR: Location

- Boston had the largest number of intimate partner homicides between 1986 and 2007 (79), followed by Springfield (27), and Lynn (16).
- Intimate partner homicides most often occurred in a residence/home (197, or 85%)



SHR: Weapon

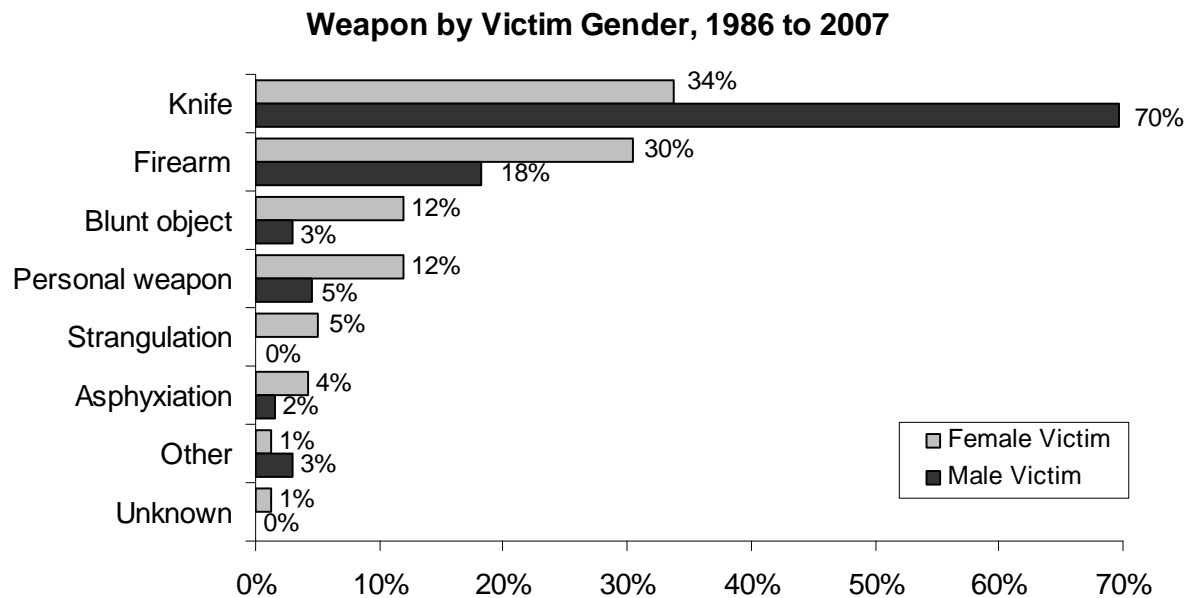
- The most common weapon used in intimate partner homicides was a knife (39%), followed by a firearm (28%).



SHR:

Weapon by Victim Gender

- ❑ Male victims were more commonly killed with a knife than female victims
- ❑ Firearms were used more often on female victims compared to male victims.



Massachusetts Intimate Partner Homicide Review:

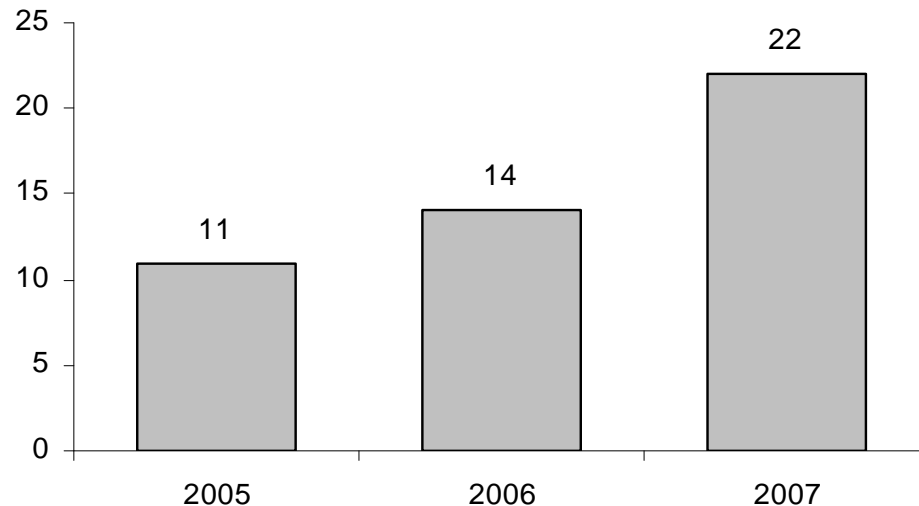
An Overview of District Attorney Cases
between 2005 and 2007



Intimate Partner (IP) Homicide Review

- ❑ There were a total of 47 intimate partner (IP) homicides in Massachusetts from 2005 to 2007.
- ❑ Overall, IP homicides doubled between 2005 and 2007.

Count of IP homicides by year



IP Homicide Review:

Characteristics of Victims and Assailants

- ❑ Both victims and assailants of IP homicides were most commonly between the ages of 30 and 39.
- ❑ IP homicide victims were much more commonly female (85%), while intimate partner homicide assailants were overwhelmingly male (87%).
- ❑ The racial/ethnic profile of IP homicide victims and assailants was very similar: both groups were more commonly white (73%) and non-Hispanic (84%).



IP Homicide Review:

Characteristics of Victims and Assailants cont.

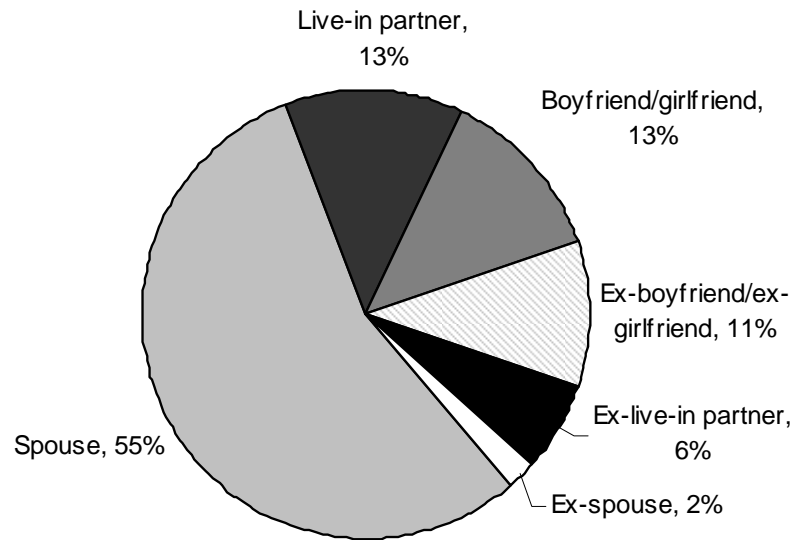
- The majority of both IP homicide victims and assailants:
 - Were proficient in English
 - Indicated the United States as their country of origin
 - Had not immigrated to the United States within one year of the homicide.
- Almost half (33%) of assailants were unemployed at the time of the homicide.



IP Homicide Review: Victim-Assailant Relationship

- Intimate partner homicide victims were most commonly married to their assailant (55%).

IP homicides by victim-assailant relationship types



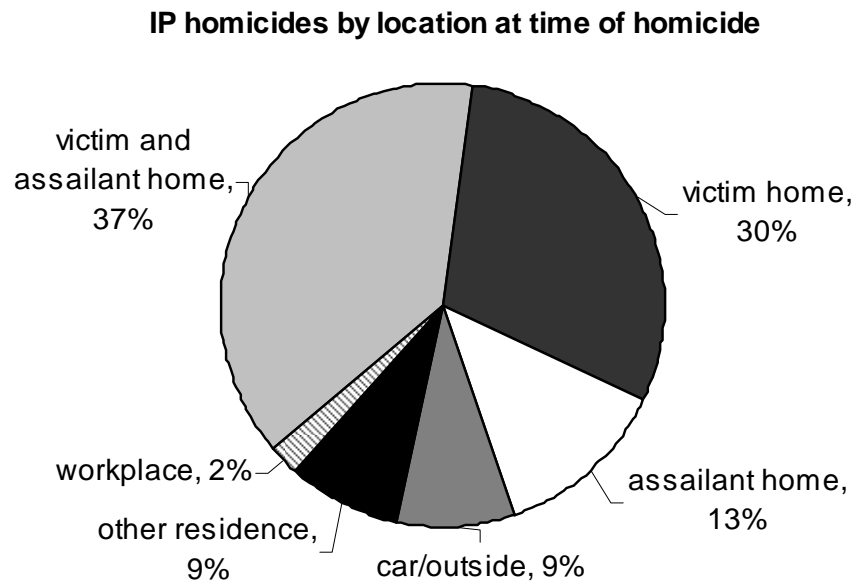
IP Homicide Review: Children

- ❑ Two IP homicide victims and one IP homicide assailant were pregnant at the time of the homicide
- ❑ Children were present in more than half of the homicide victims' homes (54%)
- ❑ Stepchildren were present in 28% of the homicide victims' homes.



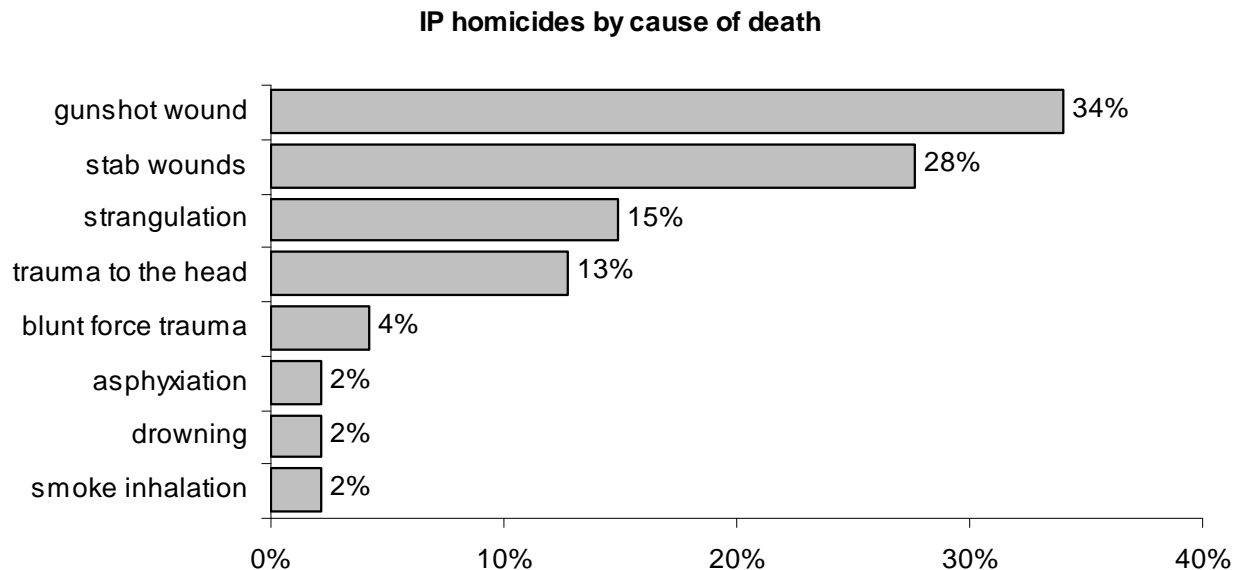
IP Homicide Review: Location

- The majority of IP homicides occurred in the home shared by the victim and the assailant (38%).



IP Homicide Review: Weapons

- Guns were the most common weapons used during the commission of the IP homicides (34%), followed closely by knives (32%).
- Gunshot wounds were the most frequent cause of death in IP homicides (34%), followed by stab wounds (28%).



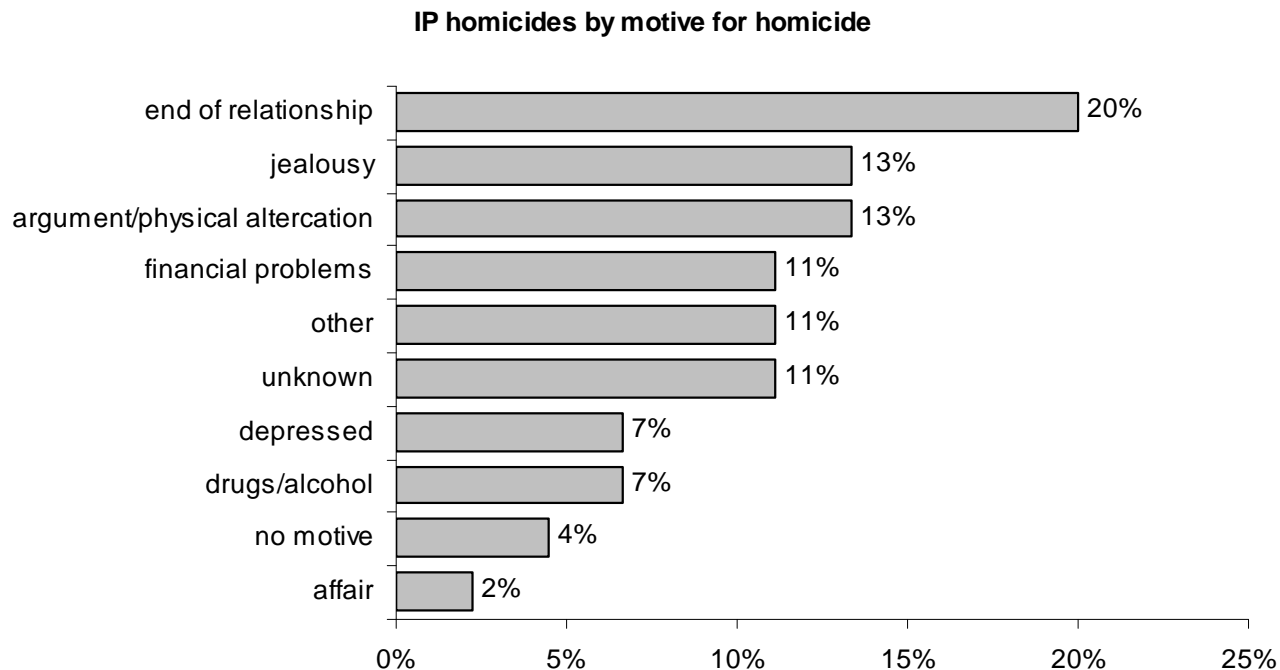
IP Homicide Review: Stressors

- ❑ In 30% of cases, the homicide victim attempted to leave the relationship within the year prior to the homicide.
- ❑ More than half of the IP homicide assailants experienced a significant life stressor prior to the homicide.
 - The most common significant life stressor was “ending of the relationship.”



IP Homicide Review: Motive

- Approximately 29% of IP homicides were planned by the assailant and 24% were spontaneous.
- Of those cases where a motive for the homicide was given, the ending of the relationship was indicated in 20% of cases.



IP Homicide Review: Other Victims

- ❑ In addition to the 47 homicide victims, 8 other people were killed during the commission of 6 of the IP homicides.
- ❑ These victims included:
 - 6 children
 - 1 stepchild
 - 1 victim's parent



IP Homicide Review: Legal Outcome

- ❑ In 26% of cases (12 out of the 47), the IP homicide assailant committed suicide within 24 hours of the homicide.
- ❑ In every case, excluding those where the homicide assailant committed suicide, the assailant was prosecuted or a prosecution was pending.
 - Of the 24 who were prosecuted, 17 were convicted of the homicide.
 - ❑ Of those 17, all but two assailants were convicted of a murder charge
 - Five cases were prosecuted, but the assailants were not convicted of the homicide.



IP Homicide Review: History of Abuse

- ❑ In 18 of the 47 cases (38%), there was a history of abuse against the IP homicide victim by the homicide assailant.
- ❑ Of those 18 cases where a history of abuse was indicated, 8 of the homicide victims previously sought a restraining order against the homicide assailant.
 - Restraining orders were granted in 90% of cases.
- ❑ In 19% of cases restraining orders had been filed against the homicide assailant by a previous domestic partner.



IP Homicide Review: History of Violence

- Approximately 45% of IP homicide assailants were previously charged with a violent crime.
 - Of those charged with a previous violent crime, all assailants were charged with some type of an assault charge.
 - More than half (57%) of assailants previously charged with a violent crime were also previously convicted of a violent crime.
- None of the IP homicide assailants were under supervision (probation/parole) at the time of the homicide.



IP Homicide Review: Recommendations

- The Research and Policy Analysis Division of the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security recommends maintaining annual data collection efforts of IP homicide data in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.



SHR/IPH Review: Study Limitations

- ❑ Small sample size (IP homicide review)
- ❑ Relies on our classification as an intimate partner homicide.
- ❑ Missing information from DA files
 - Specifically where assailant committed suicide after the homicide.
- ❑ Difference in the number of cases from SHR vs. IP homicide review
 - Could be due to police relationship-type classification, cases determined not to be IP homicide after the fact, incomplete DA files, different relationship types, etc.

