

OCTOBER IS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH

The widely accepted definition of domestic violence is a pattern of abusive behavior in a relationship that is used by one intimate partner to gain or maintain power and control over the other intimate partner. Domestic violence can include physical, sexual, emotional, economic, and psychological abuse. Since 1989, October has been recognized by the U.S. Congress as National Domestic Violence Awareness Month, with key events including mourning those who have died because of domestic violence, celebrating those who have survived, and connecting those who work to end violence.



During the first half of 2015, there were 8,633 domestic violence incidents reported to law enforcement across the San Diego region, an increase of four percent from the 8,326 reported in 2014. This 2015 figure of 8,633 equates to almost 48 incidents per day or 332 per week, and more than the 5,021 burglaries, 4,777 motor vehicle thefts, and 1,338 robberies reported during the same time period.

While an increase in the number of reported domestic violence incidents could mean either more incidents, or more reporting, it is disturbing to also see a greater percentage of homicides categorized as having a domestic violence motive at mid-year 2015 (35%, or 12 homicides), compared to mid-year 2014 (18%, or 4 homicides).¹

Further analysis of information available from law enforcement regarding the 16 victims of a domestic violence homicide during the first half of the past two years revealed that:

- Six were reported by the San Diego Sheriff's Department, 4 by Oceanside, 3 by San Diego, and 1 each by Chula Vista, Carlsbad, and Escondido.
- For the 15 cases where a weapon could be identified, 9 involved a firearm, 2 each a knife/sharp object or personal weapon, and 1 each a blunt object or arson.
- Eight of the 16 victims were identified as White/Caucasian, 4 as an other ethnic group, 3 as Hispanic/Latina(o), and 1 as Black/African-American.
- Thirteen of the 16 victims were female.
- The average age of the victims was 46.3 years, with 7 of the 16 victims being 50 years of age or older.
- Thirteen of the 15 locations where the crime occurred was a residence and 2 were parking lots.

Some of the options available to survivors of domestic violence include obtaining a protection order, staying in a shelter, or exploring other services through support groups or anonymous calls to local hotlines. If you or someone you know is a victim of domestic violence, encourage them to call the San Diego Domestic Violence Hotline (1-888-DV-LINKS) or the San Diego Family Justice Center (www.sandiegofamilyjusticecenter.org), whose mission is to stop family violence, make victims safer, hold batterers accountable, and provide long-term support for victims and children through collaboration and coordinated services (1-866-933-HOPE).

¹ It should be noted that homicide motives are based on the best information available from individual law enforcement agencies at the time of the request and is not verified for consistency across departments.