



Toward Safety: The 2025 Tennessee Report on Domestic Violence

*Charting progress, accountability,
and the work still to be done.*



Created by:

The Tennessee Coalition to End
Domestic and Sexual Violence

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Letter from the CEO

Launching an Annual Commitment to Accountability and Change.

Each October, during Domestic Violence Awareness Month, we pause to reflect on our collective progress toward a Tennessee free from violence. This year, for the first time, the Tennessee Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence is releasing a report that will become an annual tradition—one documenting not just the numbers, but the systems shaping them.

Our ultimate goal is clear: to end domestic and sexual violence in every form. Until that day comes, our mission is to ensure that every community in Tennessee has the knowledge, resources, and collaboration necessary to fully support survivors and prevent abuse before it begins. Achieving that vision requires accountability. We must understand the current state of the problem, measure the progress we've made, and identify the work still to be done.

This report represents the first step in that ongoing effort. It is not perfect—nor could it be. Gathering timely, accurate data on domestic violence across Tennessee remains one of our greatest challenges. For this initial analysis, we have chosen to begin with the most urgent and devastating outcome of domestic violence: homicide. We examined publicly available media and law enforcement reports from across the state, and where possible, we confirmed information with advocates on the ground. There may be cases we have missed, but we believe this examination offers an important starting point in understanding where fatal domestic violence continues to occur—and, more importantly, how it can be prevented.

We undertake this work in a complex and uncertain moment. Services for survivors across Tennessee depend heavily on government funding—funding that, as we have seen in recent months, can be unpredictable. While the Coalition secured a historic state investment in victim services, that funding is temporary, lasting only two years. As I write this, the federal government remains shut down, placing critical grants and programs at risk. At the same time, we face new challenges that did not exist even a few years ago—technology-facilitated abuse, misinformation, and the implications of emerging tools such as artificial intelligence. Our work must evolve as quickly as the world around us.

In this report, we look at domestic violence homicides in Tennessee during the first ten months of 2025, what the Coalition is doing to advance our mission, and what is needed to move forward. It is a record of loss and a call to act. The progress we've made is real, but fragile. Preserving it—and building on it—requires clarity, courage, and collective will.

Thank you for joining us in this essential work.

Jennifer Escue

Chief Executive Officer
Tennessee Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence





Domestic Violence Homicides in Tennessee, January-October 2025

An Overview of Lives Lost

From January through October 2025, at least **37 Tennesseans were murdered in 33 domestic violence-related incidents** across **16 counties**. The youngest victim was **just one year old**. The oldest was **eighty**. In ten of those cases, the perpetrators also died—seven by suicide, one killed by their victim in self-defense, and two by law enforcement responding to active violence.

Behind each statistic is a family, a community, and a pattern of harm that often began long before the final act of violence. Domestic violence homicides are not isolated tragedies; they are the most visible and devastating end of a continuum of abuse that impacts every system in our state.



Violence in the home doesn't stay in the home. It spreads—to children, to workplaces, and to communities.

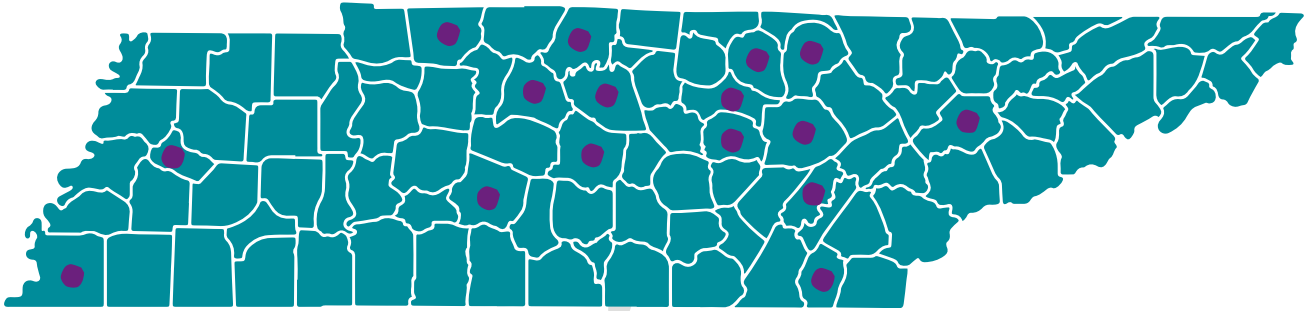
**37 Tennesseans
murdered in
domestic violence-
related incidents so
far in 2025.**

The youngest was 1-year-old. The oldest was 80-years-old.



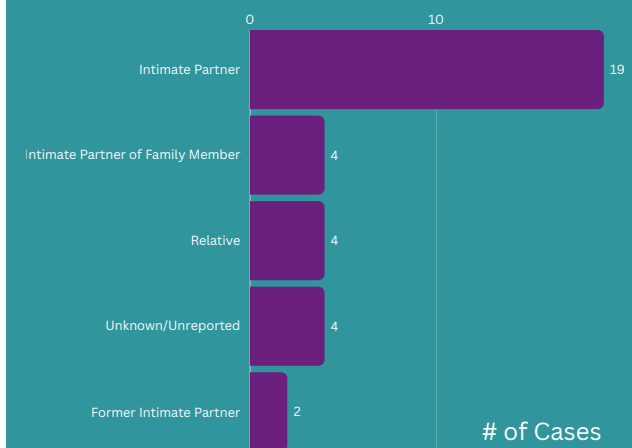


By the Numbers: Domestic Violence Homicides in Tennessee, 2025

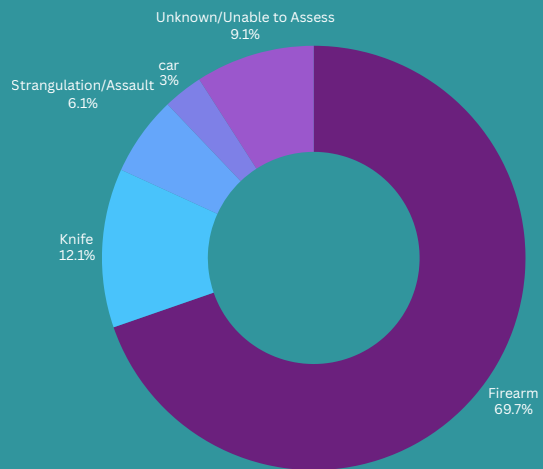


Domestic violence–related homicides occurred across Tennessee in 2025, touching urban and rural communities alike.

Who was the perpetrator?



Primary Weapons Used



***28% of perpetrators
had a documented history
of domestic violence.***

What the Data Tells Us--and What It Demands

This first analysis draws on publicly available media reports, law enforcement releases, and input from advocates across Tennessee. Though incomplete, it paints a clear picture of a persistent and deadly problem.



Firearms were the most common weapon, used in roughly **four out of five homicides**.



Murder-suicides accounted for at least **five** incidents, underscoring the extreme lethality of domestic violence when combined with access to guns.



Children and older adults were both represented among the victims. The **16 counties** in which the incidents occurred were both **urban and rural**. No age group or community is immune.



One homicide occurred at a **school**, the victim's workplace—a stark reminder that domestic violence endangers not only families, but also coworkers, students, and first responders.

Domestic violence is a public safety issue, a child protection issue, and a community well-being issue. It cannot be contained within private walls.



Guns & Lethality: The Preventable Factor

A clear opportunity to save lives

The role of firearms in domestic violence homicides is undeniable. In case after case, the presence of a gun turned a moment of rage into irreversible loss.

Tennessee, like many states, has laws that prohibit individuals under an order of protection or with a domestic violence conviction from possessing firearms. Yet **enforcement and verification of dispossession remain inconsistent** across jurisdictions.

This is not about wading into a Second Amendment debate—it is about **public safety and prevention**. Every Tennessean deserves to be safe in their home, workplace, and community. When someone is legally prohibited from having a firearm, we must ensure that the prohibition is meaningful.

Allowing the courts and law enforcement tasked with enforcing an order of protection to effectively verify firearm dispossession, paired with training and resources for courts and law enforcement, could prevent deaths and save lives.

*When someone is
legally prohibited
from having a
firearm, that law
must have meaning.*

Recommendation

Tennessee has the opportunity to save lives by strengthening and standardizing firearm dispossession processes for individuals under orders of protection or with qualifying domestic violence convictions, ensuring local systems can verify and enforce compliance.

The Ripple Effects of Domestic Violence



Children who witness or survive these incidents face lifelong trauma and increased risk of both victimization and perpetration later in life.



Employers and schools bear the hidden costs of workplace safety risks, lost productivity, and secondary trauma.



Communities experience fear, grief, and moral injury, particularly when repeat warning signs went unaddressed.

Moving Forward

- Strengthen firearm dispossession systems.
- Expand trauma-informed services for children.
- Invest in prevention and coordinated community responses.

*Every statistic in this report represents a life that could not be saved in time.
Our task now is to ensure those losses lead to action.*



Turning Data Into Action

Building the conditions for safety and healing

Domestic violence will not end through crisis response alone. It ends when communities are informed, systems are coordinated, and survivors have real pathways to safety, healing, and stability. Across Tennessee, the Coalition is advancing this work through training, prevention, direct services, and accessibility initiatives—turning data into action.





Training & Prevention

Strengthening Tennessee's network of advocates and partners

What we're hearing and addressing

- **Housing insecurity:** Scarcity of affordable housing and transitional options leaves survivors choosing between danger and homelessness.
- **Economic Instability:** High demand for financial assistance and sustainable supports during transition.
- **Trauma & substance use:** High demand for training, resources and technical assistance through the Coalition's Center for Trauma, Healing, and Substance Abuse Prevention.
- **Mental health crises:** Programs sought concrete tools for crisis intervention and de-escalation; our training series is now being requested by partners beyond Tennessee.
- **Advocate well-being and workforce challenges:** Funding uncertainty and turnover have increased workloads and reduced institutional knowledge. Programs are innovating with flexible schedules and well-being initiatives to retain skilled staff.

Mobilizing men, employers and communities

Engaging Men (Men PACT)

- 11 week curriculum
- 6 community leaders trained
- Consistent community engagement

Safer Workplaces

- New 2-part eLearning module
- Supports workplace policy and safety planning

2025 So Far...



52 Trainings



1,272
Professionals
Trained



1,418 Technical
Assistance
Requests
Fulfilled

Why Prevention Matters

Prevention is the most cost-effective and humane way to end domestic violence—but it remains the most underfunded part of the response system. Programs that engage men and boys, build safer workplaces, and teach healthy relationships can stop violence before it begins. Yet most funding is directed to crisis response, leaving prevention dependent on short-term grants and local initiative. Investing in prevention means investing in fewer victims, stronger families, and safer communities across Tennessee.



From Crisis to Change: Healing Through Advocacy

Healing

Mom's & Kid's Club

In partnership with The Mary Parrish Center, this pilot program provides counseling for non-offending parents and their children to strengthen relationships and interrupt the cycle of violence. Early results show stronger family bonds, improved emotional regulation, and reduced trauma symptoms.

The Healing Garden

In collaboration with the Nashville Metropolitan Development and Housing Agency, we are creating a trauma-informed green space for reflection, peer support, and community education. Healing happens in spaces that are safe, visible, and accessible—not just in counseling rooms.

Tele-Counseling Across Tennessee

Through our Center for Trauma, Healing & Substance Abuse Prevention, survivors at risk for substance abuse disorder can access free support from any location across the state.

Accessibility Partnership with Bridges for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Together with Bridges DHH, we are identifying and removing barriers that limit access for Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing survivors.

Advocacy

Healing requires systems that sustain progress.

The Coalition works at the state and federal levels to improve laws, funding, and coordination that support survivors and those who serve them. Our advocacy includes:

- **Protecting and expanding funding for victim services.**
- **Strengthening firearm dispossession verification to prevent lethal violence.**
- **Advancing workplace, housing, and technology-safety policies.**
- **Promoting accessibility and collaboration across systems.**

When healing and advocacy work together, safety becomes possible—not by chance, but by design.





Together, We Build a Safer Tennessee

Ending domestic violence will take all of us.

In October, we recommit to ending domestic violence. You can be part of this effort year-round. Each statistic in this report represents a life, a family, and a community forever changed. But it also represents an opportunity—to do better, to listen more closely, and to act with courage and compassion.

The Tennessee Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence will continue to lead with collaboration, accountability, and hope. Together with our member programs, advocates, and partners, we are building the knowledge, resources, and systems that make safety possible for every Tennessean.

The future we imagine is one where every person is safe, supported, and free from violence.



Join the Movement

Become a member of the Tennessee Coalition. Your membership strengthens our shared voice in policy, prevention, and advocacy statewide.



Support the Work

Your donation sustains training, prevention, and advocacy across Tennessee. Every dollar helps build safer communities and stronger support for survivors.



Give Locally

Our member programs provide the shelter, counseling, and hope that save lives. Find and support a program in your community.

Together, we have made progress—but there is more to do. The work of ending domestic and sexual violence belongs to all of us. With partnership, courage, and compassion, we can create a Tennessee where every person can live in safety and dignity.



With Gratitude

This report—and the work it represents—exists because of the dedication and collaboration of many.

We are profoundly grateful to our member programs, whose daily work saves lives and strengthens communities; to our Coalition staff, who bring expertise, compassion, and perseverance to every aspect of this mission; and to our partners, funders, and advocates across Tennessee who make progress possible.

Together, we are building a statewide movement rooted in safety, accountability, and hope. Our collective work honors survivors, uplifts communities, and moves us closer to a Tennessee where every person can live free from violence.

May our shared commitment bring healing, safety, and justice to every corner of our state.

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