

14 dead: 2014's grim toll for domestic violence as spousal homicides hit five-year high

Thousands live with bruises and emotional scars, advocates say

BY CHERYL CHAN, THE PROVINCE DECEMBER 19, 2014



The Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter held a rally Nov. 30 outside the Vancouver Art Gallery to call attention to domestic homicides in B.C.

Photograph by: — Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter

A 77-year-old woman shot dead in her two-storey Saanich home, along with the family dog. A 67-year-old woman brutally assaulted in a Surrey home who died later in hospital. An East Vancouver mom killed in the basement with her son in the same house.

Domestic homicides are considered the most predictable and preventable of all homicides, yet many, mostly women, still die at the hands of a person who has vowed to love them.

Spousal homicides, termed intimate-partner violence (IPV) homicides by the B.C. Coroners Service, have hit a five-year high in B.C.

There have been 14 this year to date — double last year's figure, but on par with the 10-year average. IPV homicides make up nearly 13 per cent of all homicides in B.C.

“It’s shocking. It’s very disturbing,” said Tracy Porteous, executive director of [Ending Violence Association of B.C.](#) (EVABC), on the rash of domestic-violence incidents this year that, by its count, left at least 29 people dead.

The association also counts other types of domestic killings, such as parent-child homicides, and includes in the death toll perpetrators who commit suicide.

Even though it’s the shocking homicides and murder-suicides that make the headlines, those cases are only the tip of the iceberg, said Porteous. Hidden from public view are many more women who are bruised, battered or bloodied at home, but survive.

“For every death there are thousands of women who are coping with extreme levels of violence,” she said.

In 15 years of tracking domestic homicides, Porteous has noticed a striking fact: “We have not been able to find a woman who was murdered who was a client of a community-based victim assistance program.”

The programs help women assess risks, form safety plans and navigate the police and court systems.

Crucially, they also help women who decide to leave abusive relationships create exit strategies, because the most dangerous time for a woman in a violent relationship is when she leaves.

“Having a plan is one of the best things a woman thinking of leaving can do,” said Porteous. “A plan to exit could be the difference between life and death.”

Despite increasing demand, government funding for prevention and intervention programs and crime-victim assistance programs has not kept pace.

Contacts received by EVABC programs, which include cases of domestic assault, child abuse, and sexual assault, have grown from just over 65,000 in 2008 to nearly 90,000 in 2013, yet provincial funding has stayed at \$70 million since 2008.

“Even though there has been way more awareness and more women coming forward for help, the spending has been stagnant,” said Porteous, whose association released a report earlier in the fall calling on the government to invest an additional \$30 million a year on domestic violence programs.

Daisy Kler, a crisis worker at the Vancouver Rape Relief and Women’s Shelter, said additional funding would help, but structural changes — such as improving access to safe, affordable housing and child care, an increase in welfare rates, and adequate legal aid for battered women — are necessary to ensure women are able to live independently and not trapped in abusive relationships.

“There is no one silver bullet,” said Kler. “There’s systemic issues that need to be dealt with and a strong societal response to hold them accountable for any acts of violence. Everybody has a responsibility to stop violence against women. It is absolutely preventable.”

In a statement, Attorney-General Suzanne Anton said the government recognizes the impact of domestic violence on families and communities.

“Violence against women is unacceptable. It is a societal problem and government is a partner in combating it. We all have to be involved and to be alert to these behaviours and to their root causes.”

Anton points to the Provincial Office of Domestic Violence, set up under the Ministry of Children and Family Development in 2010, with the goal of improving co-ordination across government.

The office has created a three-year, \$5.5-million Domestic Violence Plan, which calls for additional victim support teams, new programs for aboriginal families and new immigrants, and improved access to services in rural and remote communities.

“We know more can and must be done,” said Anton.

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Domestic homicides in B.C.

— Caroline Doreen Surrett, 72. Found dead in her Campbell River home. Her common-law husband Konstanty Bukiewicz, 84, was charged with second-degree murder. He was later found dead while out on bail.

— Rosa Maria DesRoches, 77. Found dead in her Saanich bedroom, along with the family dog. Her husband Joseph DesRoches, a former military man, was charged with first-degree murder.

— Amy Parkes, 35. Found dead in her Kelowna home after she failed to show up for work. Her fiancé, Ryan Quigley, was charged with second-degree murder.

— Angila Wilson, 33. The mother of three was found dead in her Clearwater home. Her former common-law spouse, Iain Drummond Scott, 42, was arrested after a standoff with police and charged with murder.

— Anne Harvey, 61. Found dead in her home in Saanich in a murder-suicide. Husband Neil Harvey drowned himself.

— Thi Tam Nguyen, 27. Found dead in her East Vancouver home. Her husband Cong “Danny” Nguyen hanged himself in a park. The couple left behind a four-year-old boy.

— Linda Marie Stewart, 51. Shot to death in her home in Lumby. Howard Everett was found with a self-inflicted gunshot wound. He was charged with second-degree murder.

— Narinder Kalsi, 67. Found with severe injuries in her Surrey home, she died in hospital. Husband Baldev Singh Kalsi, a former temple president, was charged with second-degree murder.

- Andra Ghiorghita, 38. Found dead in her Port Coquitlam townhouse. Husband Irinei Ghiorghita, 38, turned himself in to RCMP and was charged with second-degree murder. The couple had an eight-year-old son who was visiting family in Romania at the time of the slaying.
- Jaswant Pandher, 64. Found dead in her Surrey home. Husband Harbans Pandher was charged with second-degree murder.
- Unidentified woman, in her 30s. Found dead in a Richmond apartment. Husband Jian Hua Wu, 41, was charged with second-degree murder.
- Unidentified woman, 60. Found dead in a Fort St. John home.
- Unidentified woman. Found dead in a Port Alice home in a murder-suicide.
- Unidentified woman, 53. Found dead in McLeod Lake in a murder-suicide.

[Spousal homicides in B.C. from 2004-2014](#)



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