



# Domestic Violence-Related Deaths of Women in Eastern North Carolina: A 10-year Retrospective Study

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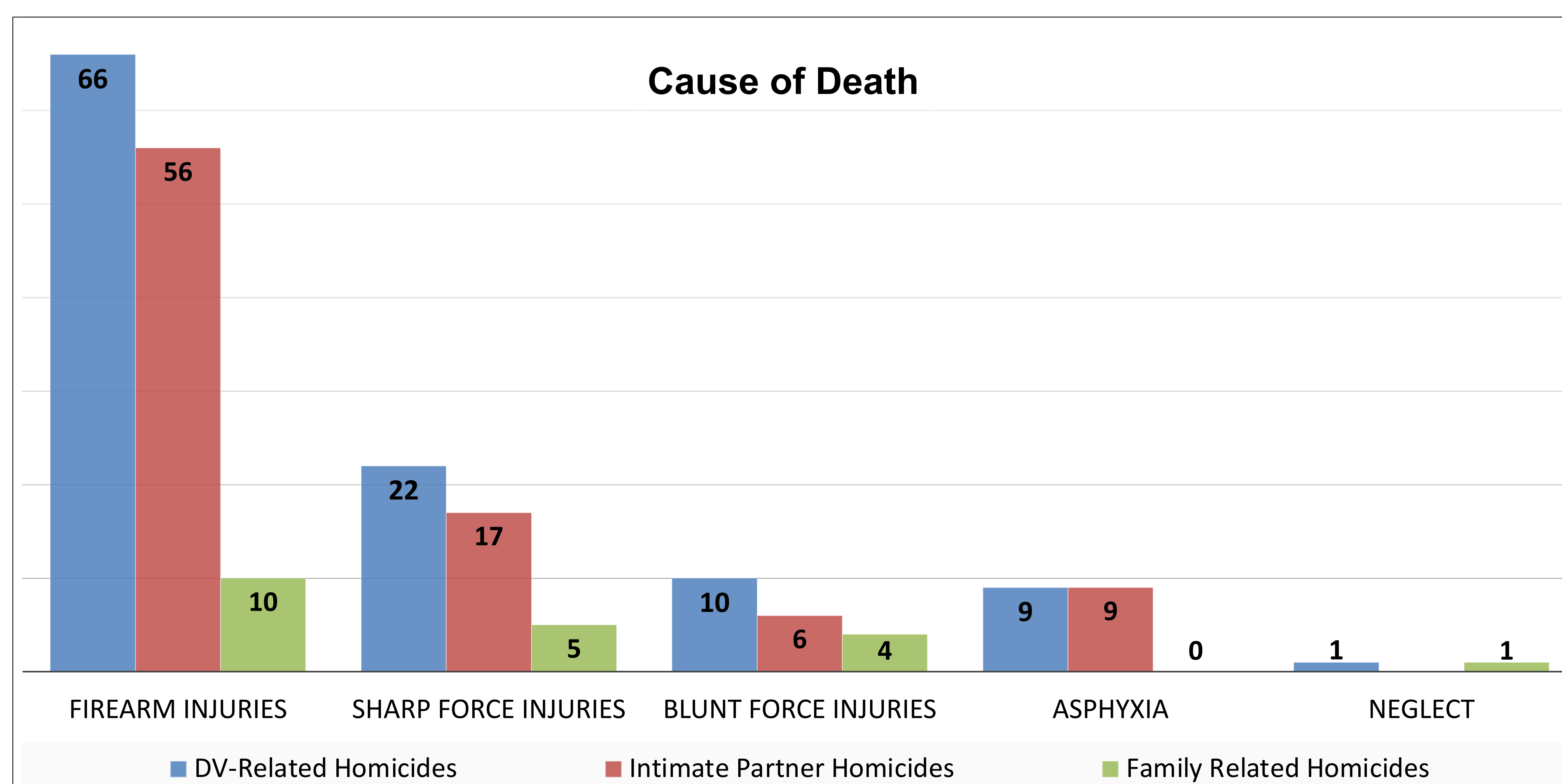
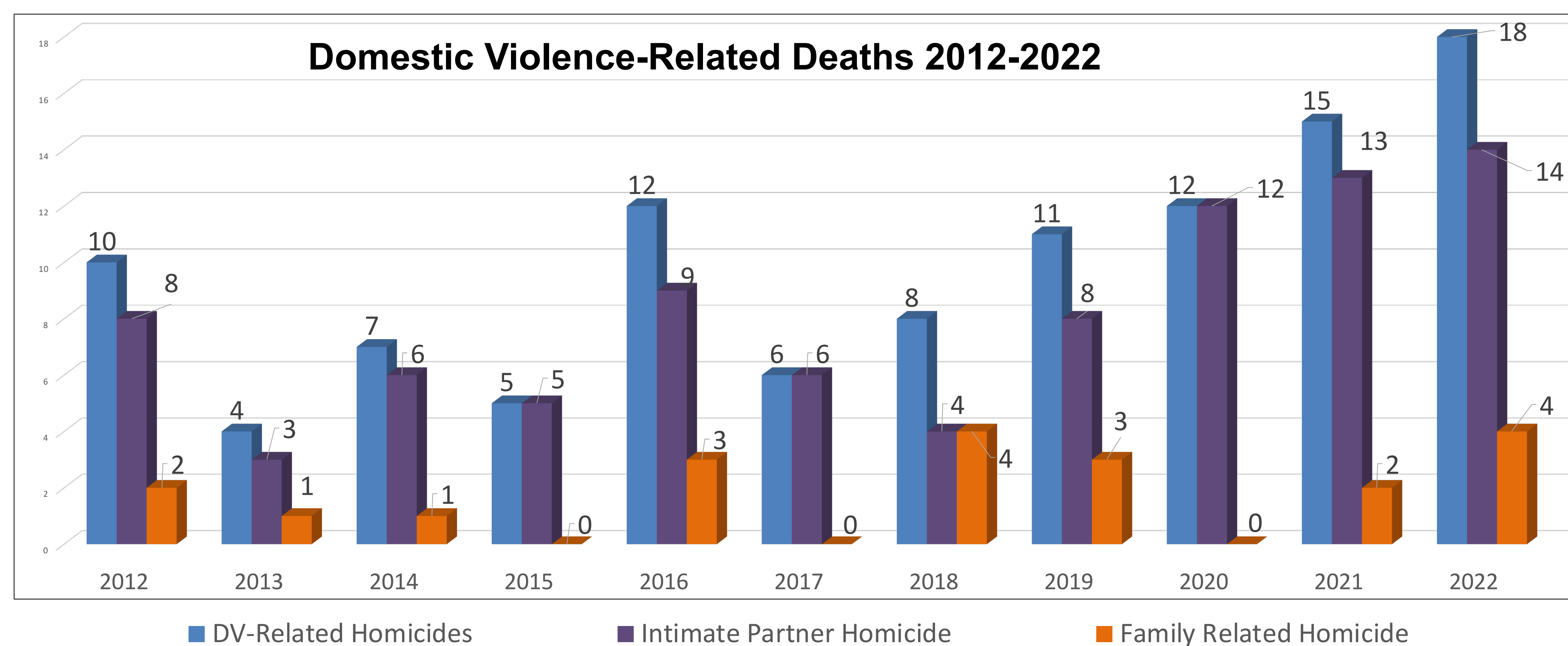
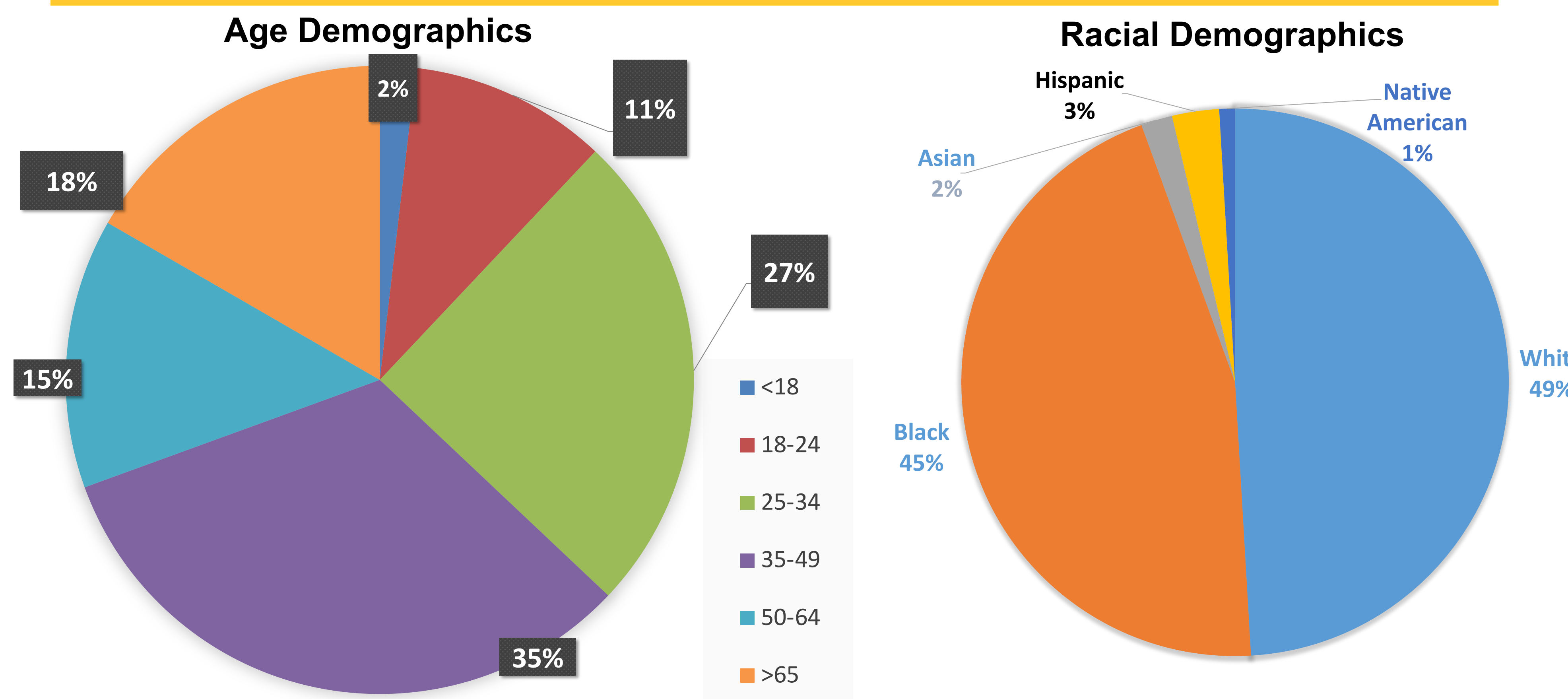
## Background

- Domestic violence is abuse (emotional, sexual, or physical) that is inflicted on another person (male or female) by a significant other or family member.
  - Encompasses intimate partner violence, elder abuse, and child abuse.
- Domestic violence effects more than 10 million people a year, with 1 in 3 women and 1 in 4 men having experienced severe physical violence from an intimate partner in their lifetime
- Domestic violence has been shown to increase during stressful situations, like COVID-19.
- In current literature domestic violence-related deaths increased during COVID-19 and then started to decline after COVID-19 was sustained.
- This study looks to see if a similar trend of domestic violence-deaths was seen in the 28 counties covered by the Eastern Regional Autopsy Center.

## MATERIALS & METHODS

- A retrospective study of female deaths autopsied at the Eastern Regional Autopsy Center from 2012 to 2022 was conducted, finding 182 cases.
- Demographics, cause of death, weapon type, and perpetrator were recorded.
- Group Classifications
  - Female homicides were classified into two groups
    - Other homicides (74 cases)
    - Domestic violence-related homicides (108 cases)
- Domestic violence-related homicide inclusion criteria:
  - Greater than 15 years old
  - The perpetrator was a significant other or a family member
  - Bystander killed in a domestic violence-related incidence.
- Domestic violence-related homicides were reclassified into two groups
  - Intimate partner homicide (88 cases)
    - Female killed by significant other or bystander killed in an intimate partner incident.
  - Family-related homicide (20 cases)
    - Female killed by a family member or a bystander killed in a family-related incident.

## RESULTS



## Weapon Types

- Firearm Injuries:** Handgun (56), rifle (1), and shotgun (9).
- Sharp force injuries:** Knife (21) and broken alcohol bottle (1).
- Blunt force Injuries:** Unknown (8), hammer (1), and tire iron (1).
- Asphyxia:** Manual strangulation (6), smothering (1), and ligature strangulation (2).

## Additional Findings

- 9 cases involved multiple injury types
  - Combination of sharp force injuries, blunt force injuries, firearm injuries, or asphyxia
- 7 cases were intimate partner homicides
- 2 cases were family-related homicides
- 4 cases involved women that were pregnant at the time of their death.
- 22 case involved domestic violence-related deaths followed by perpetrator suicide.
- 3 case were classified as “mercy killing” by the perpetrator.
- 3 cases involved bystanders killed during a domestic violence-related incident.

## Conclusions

- COVID-19 brought about many repercussions around the world, including increases in violence, including domestic violence
- Our study aligns with the current literature on increased domestic violence during COVID-19.
- This study highlights the continued increase of domestic violence following COVID-19 in eastern North Carolina, which maybe due to increased economic uncertainty and mental health problems in the region.
- This study also highlights the need for on going funding and support for victims of domestic violence.

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