

Update on Domestic Violence Homicide Study

CT Sentencing Commission
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State of Connecticut
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

STATE CAPITOL
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591

April 10th, 2024

Dear Connecticut Sentencing Commission,

We respectfully ask that the Connecticut Sentencing Commission create a subcommittee to study sentencing and outcomes for domestic and family violence murder. We ask that the subcommittee consider but not limit themselves to: the method and means of murder, prior protective orders, prior history of abuse, race and gender of the victim and defendant, age of the victims and defendants, the criminal charges, any plea bargains, the prosecution process, the sentence and potential appeal, and the survivor or their family's satisfaction.

We thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stafstrom".

Representative Steve Stafstrom
129th District

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Raghib".

Representative Raghib Allie-Brennan
2nd District

Background

Research Approach

Comparative Legal Exploration

Data Exploration

- Reviewed 21 years (2002-2023) of DESPP CT Family Violence Homicide Reports
 - Built annual summary data set
 - Built victim-level data set
- Requested 21 years of murder & manslaughter conviction data from Office of Court Operations

Findings

Comparative Legal Exploration

- Connecticut is **one of seven** states that does not have any sentencing structures that make explicit mention of domestic violence
- Four states (New Jersey, Wyoming, Washington, and Rhode Island) have laws specific to domestic violence homicide
- At least 34 states have some type of sentencing structure related to domestic violence crimes including:
 - Pattern laws -- sentences increase in response to repeated offenses and/or depending on timing between offenses

Findings

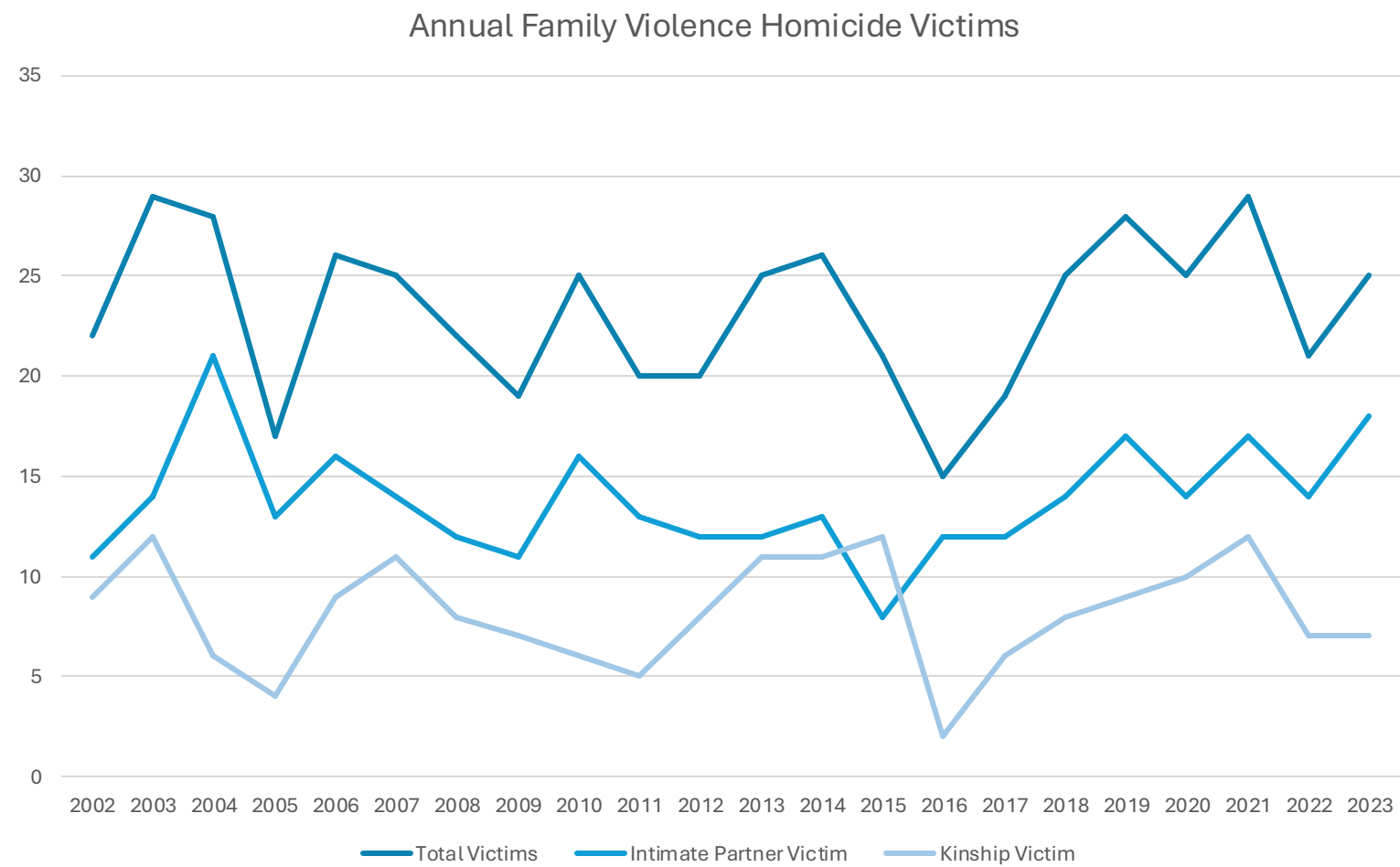
Overview of Family Violence Homicide 2002-2023

Between 2002 and 2023...

- 496 Incidents
- 512 Victims
 - Mean: 23 Victims Annually
 - Range: 15 Victims – 29 Victims Annually
- 63% of Family Violence Victims are Intimate Partners (Spouse, Cohabiting, Dating, etc.)
- 37% of Family Violence Victims are Kin Relations (Parents, Children, Siblings, Extended Family, Roommates)
- 26% of Family Violence Incidents involve Murder-Suicide

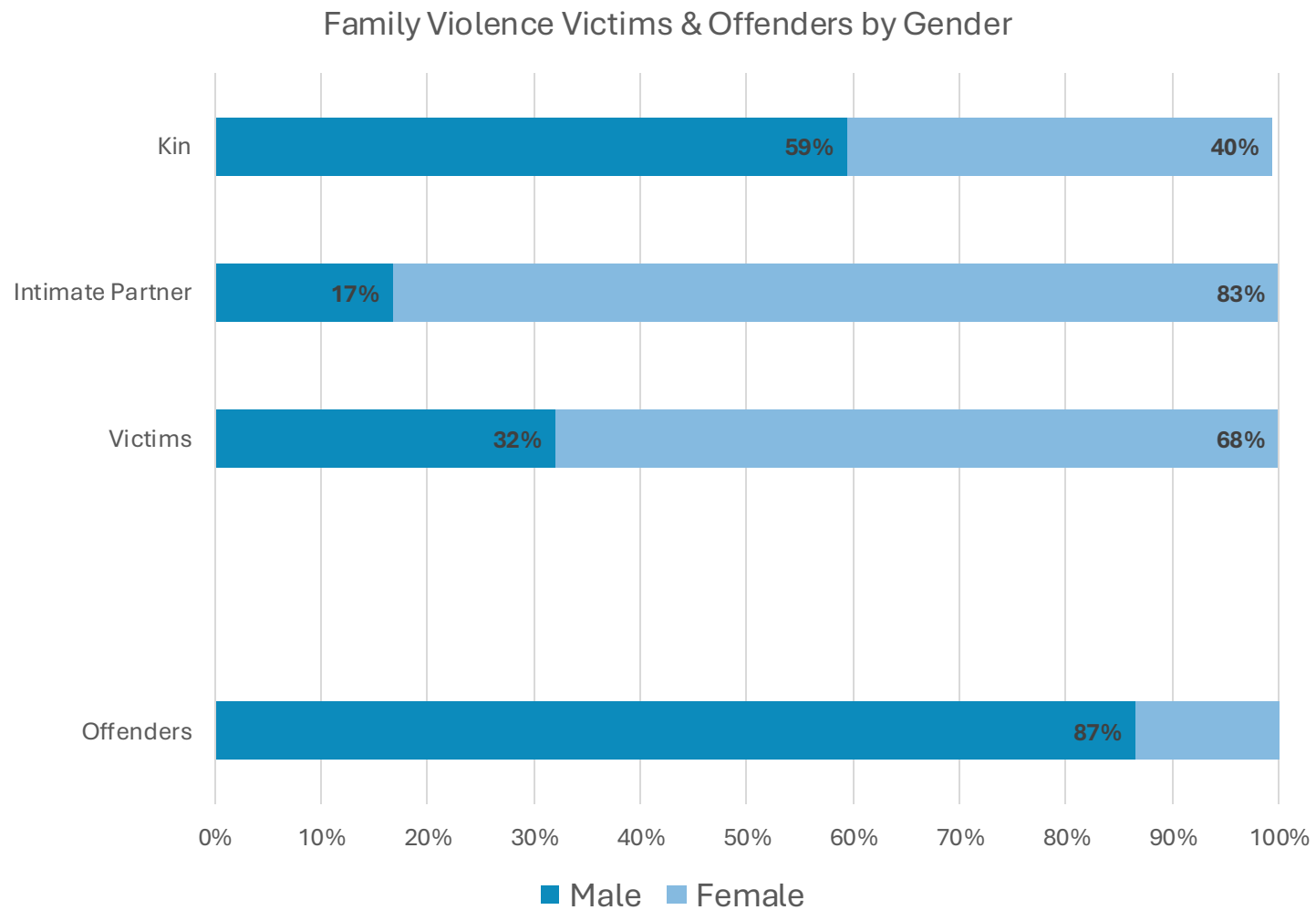
Findings

Overview of Family Violence Homicide 2002-2023



Findings

Overview of Family Violence Homicide 2002-2023



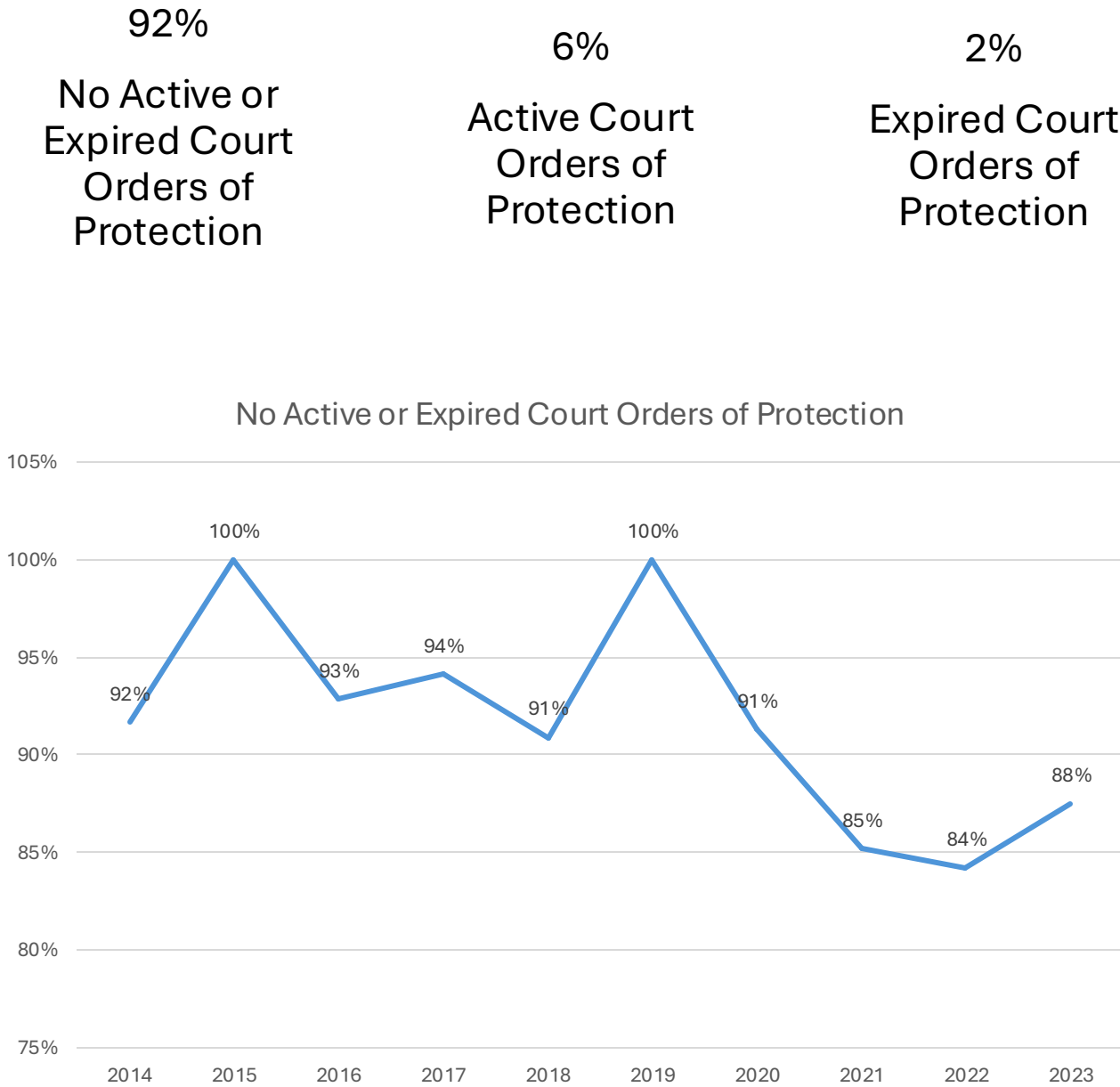
Findings

Overview of Family Violence Homicide 2002-2023



Findings

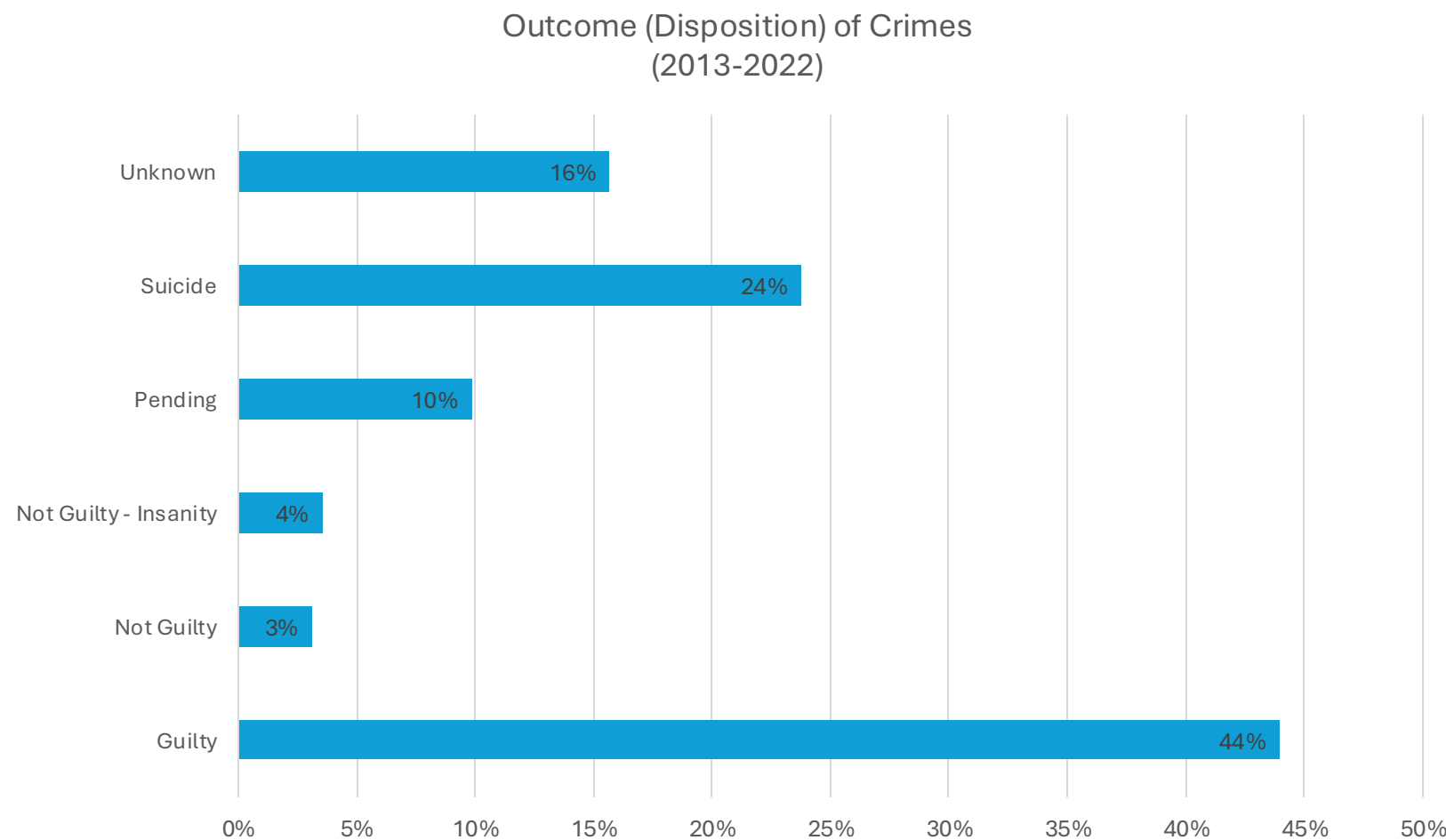
Overview of Family Violence Homicide 2002-2023



Years reported: 2014-2023

Findings

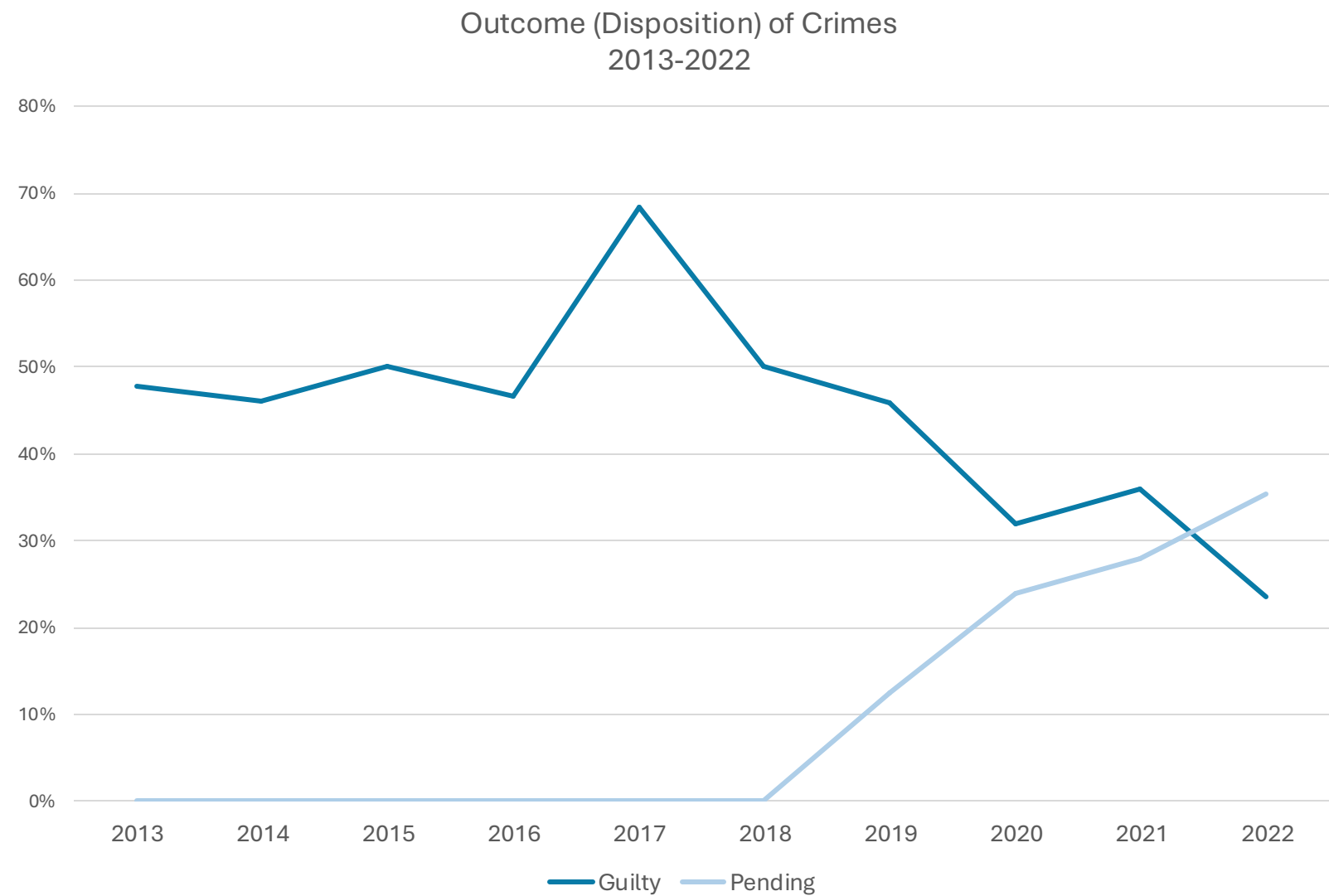
Overview of Family Violence Homicide 2002-2023



Source: Author Estimates

Findings

Overview of Family Violence Homicide 2002-2023



Source: Author Estimates

Findings

Overview of Court Operations Data 2002-2023

Court Operations Manslaughter & Murder Convictions Data (2002-2023)

- 1,710 Observations (limited to Manslaughter & Murder Charges for Offenses post 2002)
- 11% of observations flagged as Family Violence Incidents
- Average Time Offense to Sentence: 31 Months
- Average Jail Sentence: 24 Years

Findings

Overview of Court Operations Data 2002-2023

	Time from Offense to Sentence	Time from Offense to Arrest	Time from Arrest to Sentence		Jail Sentence		Disposed without Trial	Jury Trial
Family Violence Offense	30.5 Months	2.7 Months	27.9 Months		30 Years (362 Months)		72%	23%
Non-Family Violence Offense	31 Months	6.5 Months	24.7 Months		24 Years (289.6 Months)		75%	21%
Significant Difference		***	**		***			
Result Robust to Gender, Race, Age Controls	Y	Y	Y		Y		Y	Y

Findings

Overview of Court Operations Data 2002-2023

Differences in Criminal Process Timeline

Comparing the guilty outcomes of family violence murder and manslaughter perpetrators compared to other perpetrators of murder and manslaughter between 2002 and 2023 ...

- There is no difference in the length of time between offense and sentencing between family violence perpetrators (30.5 months) and other murder and manslaughter perpetrators (31 months)
- Cases involving family violence have significantly shorter periods between offense and arrest (2.7 months) compared to other cases of murder and manslaughter (6.5 months)
- On average, family violence murder and manslaughter cases take 3 months longer to be sentenced following arrest (27.9 months) than other murder and manslaughter cases (24.7 months)

Findings

Overview of Court Operations Data 2002-2023

Differences in Jail Sentences

Comparing the guilty outcomes of family violence murder and manslaughter perpetrators compared to other perpetrators of murder and manslaughter between 2002 and 2023 ...

- Those found guilty of family violence murder or manslaughter face significantly longer jail sentences (30 years or 362 months) compared to others found guilty of murder and manslaughter (24 years or 289.6 months)
- Models controlling for variation in gender, race, and age show that perpetrators of family violence murder and manslaughter on average receive 8 years (96 month) longer jail sentences compared to other perpetrators of murder and manslaughter
 - These models also show that men and African Americans receive significantly longer sentences for murder and manslaughter charges than women or White perpetrators, controlling for age

Findings

Overview of Court Operations Data 2002-2023

Differences in Trial Type

Comparing the guilty outcomes of family violence murder and manslaughter perpetrators compared to other perpetrators of murder and manslaughter between 2002 and 2023 ...

- Cases involving family violence murder or manslaughter are as likely to be disposed without a trial (72%) as other cases of murder and manslaughter (75%)
- Jury convictions account for about a quarter (23%) of cases of family violence murder or manslaughter in which the perpetrator is found guilty.
- Jury convictions similarly account for about a quarter (21%) of other murder or manslaughter cases in which the perpetrator is found guilty.

Next Steps & Recommendations

Continue to digest data

Engage more directly with Criminal Procedure and Sentencing Subcommittee on process for completing report

Collaborate with Domestic Violence Criminal Justice Response and Enhancement Advisory Council