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Ohio records second-deadliest year for domestic violence, with nearly half of victims killed while trying to leave their abuser

The number of victims killed while ending the relationship has nearly doubled since 2024

COLUMBUS, Ohio (Oct. 21, 2026) – Ohio recorded the second-highest number of intimate partner-related fatalities in the 11 years since the [Ohio Domestic Violence Network](#) (ODVN) began collecting annual fatality statistics, according to a [report](#) released today.

A total of 134 people died in 101 cases, down from 157 deaths in 108 cases in [2024-2025](#). Together, the past two years mark the highest fatality levels since ODVN began tracking. And in nearly half of those cases (49%), the victim was trying to leave. That share has nearly doubled since 2024, when the victim was ending the relationship in nearly a quarter of cases.

“People ask, ‘Why don’t they just leave?’ In nearly half of these cases, they were leaving,” said Maria York, ODVN’s Director of Policy and Communications. “These homicides are not random. They are the final act of control.”

ODVN released the [report](#) at its annual Domestic Violence Awareness Month event in the Ohio Statehouse Atrium. More than 180 people registered to attend. The count, compiled from media reports, police and court records, and information provided by ODVN’s 76 member programs, includes fatalities that occurred between July 1, 2025 and June 30, 2026.

The cases show a disturbing level of targeted rage. In nearly 1 in every 4 cases (23%), the perpetrator strangled or stabbed the victim, or the victim died of a traumatic brain injury or blunt force trauma. One woman was beaten to death with a homemade wooden club while she was sleeping.

Ohio children already witness domestic violence at a rate [28% higher than children nationwide](#). In this reporting year, 53 children witnessed their parent’s murder, a 47% increase over the year before, even as total deaths declined. Five children were killed, all by a parent or stepparent, and three teenagers were killed by someone they were dating.

Eleven deaths took place in public places, including a man in Ottawa County who shot a woman and then himself while driving, leading to a crash, and a man who shot his former wife’s new partner as he sang on a karaoke bar patio in Licking County. The violence also reached

bystanders. In Highland County, a good Samaritan was killed on May 31, 2026, when he tried to stop a man from beating and strangling his ex-girlfriend in a gas station parking lot. The attacker got into his vehicle and drove it into the intervener, causing a head injury that proved fatal.

Guns played a significant role: 75% of those who died were shot to death, and only 7 of the 108 people who were shot in these incidents survived. The pattern is clear in one of the year's most devastating cases.

In November 2025, Ryan Eagon shot and killed his wife's two children, a 7-year-old boy and a 7-month-old baby who was his own son, along with the father of the older child. Eagon shot the man first, then killed the children in front of their mother outside their home in Seneca County as she tried to rush them into the car to flee. When, distraught at the children's suffering, she begged him to shoot her too, Eagon refused, telling her that "she would have to live with this for the rest of her life," according to the police investigation. He then killed himself in the driveway.

The investigation found that Eagon had been stalking and threatening his estranged wife for months, including placing hidden cameras at the home and a tracking device in a baby bootie on top of the spare tire in her car.

At the event, ODVN presented its Croucher Family Award for Outstanding Leadership to State Sen. Susan Manchester (R-Waynesfield) and State Rep. Dontavius Jarrells (D-Columbus) for legislation that helps survivors stay safe when they leave. Lana Hiott, of Marysville, whose sister was killed by her former boyfriend in 2023, also spoke at the event.

About the Ohio Domestic Violence Network (ODVN): ODVN provides a strong statewide voice for Ohio's domestic violence programs that serve all 88 counties, and advocates on domestic violence-related issues at the state and federal level. The network's 76 member programs served more than 75,000 survivors and their children in 2025.