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## For Every Time a Women Uses a Handgun to Kill in Self-Defense, 101 Women Die in Handgun Murders, New VPC Report Finds

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### Only Eight States Report Women Using Handguns to Kill in Self-Defense in 1998

WASHINGTON, DC—In 1998, for every time a women used a handgun in the United States to kill in self-defense, 101 women died in handgun homicides, according to a new VPC report, *A Deadly Myth: Women, Handguns, and Self-Defense*. The VPC report analyzes unpublished Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Supplementary Homicide Report (SHR) data.

VPC Health Policy Analyst and study author Karen Brock, MPH, states, "In the wake of slumping sales to their primary market of white males, the handgun industry has set its sights on American women. In arguing that handguns are effective self-defense tools for women, the industry has focused on the threat of stranger attack. This message—seen in gun industry advertising and repeated by firearm advocates in pro-gun publications—is presented as an article of faith by the gun lobby. Yet the exact opposite is true. Handguns don't offer women protection, they guarantee peril. And the greatest threat to a women is the men she knows best: husbands, friends, and lovers."

According to the VPC analysis of the FBI data, a woman is far more likely to be the victim of a handgun homicide than to use a handgun in a justifiable homicide. In 1998, handguns were used to murder 1,209 women. That same year, 12 women used handguns to kill in self-defense. And when a woman does use a handgun to kill in self-defense, it is usually against someone she knows, *not* a stranger. Of the 12 handgun self-defense killings by women reported to the FBI in 1998, eight of the attackers were known to the women, while only four of the attackers were strangers.

According to the report, of the 47 states reporting SHR data to the FBI in 1998 only the states of California, Colorado, Georgia, Michigan, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Texas reported incidents of women using handguns to kill in self-defense. In each state, the number of women murdered with handguns outnumbered the number of women who used a handgun to kill in self-defense. [Please see the chart below for the number of women killed with handguns in these eight states compared to: women who used handguns in self-defense to kill a stranger; intimate acquaintance (spouse, common-law spouse, ex-spouse, or boyfriend); or, friend or acquaintance.]

State	Number of Women Who Used a Handgun			Number of Women Murdered with a Handgun
	to Kill a Stranger in Self-Defense	to Kill an Intimate Acquaintance in Self-Defense	to Kill a Friend or Acquaintance in Self-Defense	

California	2	1	0	178
Colorado	0	1	0	21
Georgia	1	0	0	46
Michigan	0	0	1	41
North Carolina	1	0	0	59
Oklahoma	0	1	0	20
Tennessee	0	2	0	34
Texas	0	1	1	124

The study also reports that in spite of gun industry marketing efforts, handgun ownership among women remains rare, with no statistically significant change since the 1980s.

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The Violence Policy Center is a national non-profit educational foundation that conducts research on violence in America and works to develop violence-reduction policies and proposals. The Center examines the role of firearms in America, conducts research on firearms violence, and explores new ways to decrease firearm-related death and injury.