La. retains high rate of women slain by men

THE ADVOCATE

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Women killed by men: How Louisiana ranks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NATIONAL RANK</th>
<th>WOMEN KILLED PER 100,000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006 5th</td>
<td>1.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007 1st</td>
<td>2.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008 12th</td>
<td>1.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009 3rd</td>
<td>1.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 4th</td>
<td>1.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 9th</td>
<td>1.67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Violence Policy Center

Advocate file photo by PATRICK DENNIS/Advocate graphic

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Men are still killing women at a higher rate in Louisiana than most other states, according to a new report, a finding advocates said points to long-term challenges in improving the lives of women.

The annual report, released this week by the Violence Policy Center, a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit organization, ranked Louisiana ninth among states in the rate of women murdered by men, the third year in a row the state has finished in the category's "Top 10." The report, based on FBI homicide statistics, reflects policy changes or improvements that will help ensure the safety of women," said Catherine The- riots, director of Voices of Innocent Citizens Empowered, a support group in New Iberia. "We need to do more to stop this.

At 39 victims, Louisiana had a rate of 1.67 women murdered by men per 100,000 women, compared to the national average of 1.2 per 100,000, the report found. At least seven of those deaths were investigated by law enforcement agencies in East Baton Rouge Parish.

But those statistics don't reflect the true extent of domestic violence in Louisiana, said Beth Meeks, executive director of the Louisiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence, who noted the report includes only women killed in single-victim, single-offender incidents.

Meeks said her organization identified nine "multiple-death" domestic incidents involving, for instance, a husband who kills his wife and children that resulted in 20 fatalities in 2011.

"The reality is that our ranking is probably worse than No. 9 because the report did not take into account multi-death fatalities and we had so many in 2011," Meeks said. "It literally looks better than it actually is.

While Meeks said the numbers are misleading, Louisiana has seen worse rankings by the Violence Policy Center report. The state was ranked fourth, third and in 2010 and 2009, respectively, and had the worst rate in the nation of women murdered by men in 2007.

"Louisiana has continued to see progress over the past four years, and we will continue to work with our partners to examine the findings of the report and recommend more

Meeks cited a "complex inter- action of factors" that could be contributing to violence against women, including easy access to firearms and a dwindling amount of resources for victims. Even the state-wide domestic violence hotline has been jeopardized by a lack of funding, she said.

"We're having a problem right now where there are so few shelter beds between Baton Rouge and Arkansas — every shelter in the state is full — that we don't have enough places for a victim to go," Meeks said.

"They literally can't get away from an offender who's intent on killing them."