



Research using city-level data from the United States corroborates the excess risk of uxoricide for cohabiting women relative to married women. Cohabiting relationships constituted 46% of 972 “spousal” homicides in Detroit during 1926–1968 [Bourdouris, 1971], 31% of 45 spousal homicides in Houston in 1969 [Lundsgaarde, 1977], 35% of 43 spousal homicides in Miami in 1980 [Wilbanks, 1984], and 46% of 1,706 spousal homicides in Chicago during 1965–1989 [Wilson and Daly, 1992a]. Recent estimates of the prevalence of cohabiting relationships in the United States are much lower, around 9% [Bumpass and Sweet, 1989]. Apparently no national-level analyses using data from the United States have been published on the excess uxoricide risk of cohabiting women relative to married women. Such analyses would allow for a clearer replication of the national-level Canadian data, and I report these analyses using national-level data from the United States.

Wilson et al. [1993, 1995] report that, within marital relationships, women in their early 20s are at greatest risk of uxoricide. In contrast, within cohabiting relationships, middle-aged women, in their mid-30s and 40s, are at greatest risk of uxoricide. Wilson et al. [1993, 1995] also report that in both cohabiting and marital relationships the age difference between the man and the woman predicts uxoricide risk. Women in both types of relationships are at greater risk of uxoricide when mated to men who are either much older or much younger than they are. I use national-level US data to attempt to replicate these Canadian patterns.

## METHODS

### National Homicide Database

The US Federal Bureau of Investigation requests information from each state on criminal homicides. Supplementary Homicide Reports include incident-level data on every reported homicide, including the relationship of the victim to the offender and the ages of the victim and offender. The database analyzed for the present project includes Supplementary Homicide Reports for the years 1976–1994 [Fox, 1996], providing information on 429,729 homicides. Homicide rates for married women and for cohabiting women were calculated according to relevant population estimates provided by the US Census Bureau (all estimates and calculations are available from the author on request).

### Procedures

There were 13,670 homicides in which a man killed the woman to whom he was legally married, and 2,000 were cases in which a man killed the woman with whom he was cohabiting but to whom he was not married. The average age of married victims was 39.4 years ( $SD = 15.4$  years), ranging from 15 to 95 years. The average age of married perpetrators was 43.3 years ( $SD = 15.7$  years), ranging from 16 to 98 years. The average age of cohabiting victims was 34.1 years ( $SD = 11.4$  years), ranging from 14 to 81 years. The average age of cohabiting perpetrators was 38.2 years ( $SD = 12.1$  years), ranging from 15 to 85 years.

## RESULTS

Married women were murdered by their partners at a rate of 13.11 women per million married women per annum, whereas cohabiting women were murdered at a much higher rate of 116.06 women per million cohabiting women per annum. Thus, cohabiting women in the United States incurred about 8.9 times the risk of murder by a partner than did married women. This replicates the results of analyses of Canadian data [Wilson et al., 1993, 1995].

**TABLE I. Woman-Killings per Million Married Couples per Annum, by Man's Age and Woman's Age\***

Man's age, y	Woman's age, y				
	< 25	25-34	35-44	45-64	65+
< 25	41.88 (763)	34.05 (139)	62.27 (26)	33.64 (7)	10.00 (1)
25-34	39.75 (935)	18.27 (2,533)	18.38 (340)	38.15 (47)	32.00 (3)
35-44	81.24 (125)	23.17 (1,448)	9.73 (1,752)	10.72 (203)	16.00 (3)
45-64	84.55 (53)	63.29 (369)	15.07 (1,148)	7.45 (2,016)	15.03 (100)
65+	22.00 (2)	30.48 (12)	41.19 (46)	9.00 (426)	8.83 (1,173)

\*Total number of uxoricides across the 19-year study period are shown in parentheses beneath the corresponding uxoricide rate.

Table I shows the rates of woman-killing per million married couples per annum as a function of the ages of the spouses. The total number of uxoricides is shown in parentheses beneath the corresponding rate. Women in the youngest age category, less than 25 years, appear to be at greatest risk of uxoricide, and this risk appears to decrease with the woman's age. Table II shows the rates of woman-killing per million cohabiting women per annum as a function of the ages of the partners. As in Table I, the total number of uxoricides is shown in parentheses beneath the corresponding rate. Cohabiting women in the 35–44 age category appear to have the greatest risk of murder by their partner, in contrast to the pattern of risk for married women. Figure 1 displays the risk of homicide by a partner for cohabiting and married women as a function of the woman's age.

Among married women, the risk of being killed by a partner is greatest for the youngest women. Married women who are less than 25 years old incur about two times the risk of uxoricide as women in the 25–34 age group and about three times the risk of women in the 35–44 age group. Among cohabiting women, the greatest risk of being killed by a partner is incurred by middle-aged women, in the 35–44 age group. Women in this age group incur about two times the risk of women in the youngest age group and about four times the risk of women in the oldest

**TABLE II. Woman-Killings per Million Cohabiting Couples per Annum, by Man's Age and Woman's Age\***

Man's age, y	Woman's age, y				
	< 25	25-34	35-44	45-64	65+
< 25	21.26 (141)	26.58 (50)	52.63 (6)	17.64 (2)	0.00 (0)
25-34	35.69 (198)	34.87 (365)	68.58 (86)	105.26 (22)	0.00 (0)
35-44	77.75 (65)	75.68 (243)	77.62 (233)	75.74 (59)	42.11 (4)
45-64	48.87 (13)	105.26 (96)	101.85 (149)	64.01 (180)	30.85 (17)
65+	0.00 (0)	26.32 (4)	197.37 (15)	29.79 (30)	22.70 (22)

\*Total number of uxoricides across the 19-year study period are shown in parentheses beneath the corresponding uxoricide rate.

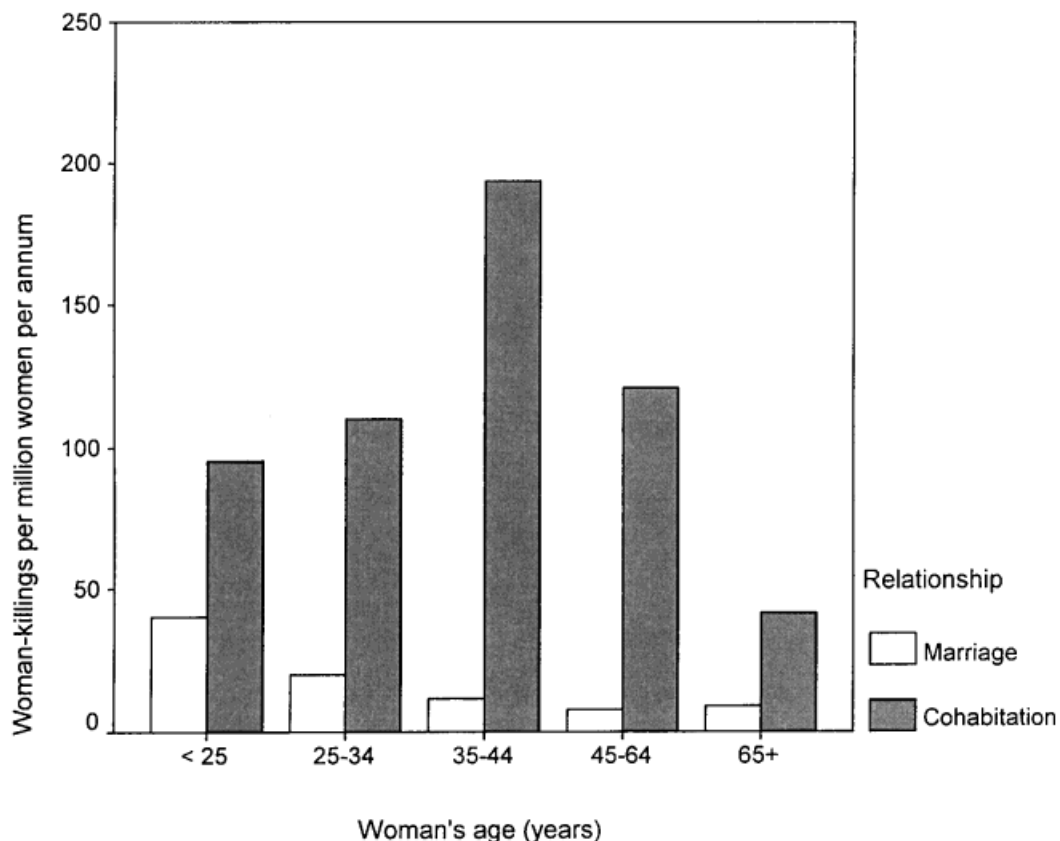


Fig. 1. Woman-killing per million women per annum as a function of relationship type and woman's age.

age group. These differential risk patterns for married and cohabiting women replicate the results of national-level analyses reported by Wilson et al. [1993, 1995] for Canada.

Figure 2 displays the homicide perpetration rates for cohabiting and married men. The risk of woman-killing is highest for married men in the youngest age group (<25 years) and appears to decrease slightly with the man's age, replicating the pattern identified by analyses of Canadian data [Wilson et al., 1993, 1995]. The risk of woman-killing for cohabiting men increases with the man's age, up to the 45–64 age group, replicating the Canadian national-level patterns reported by Wilson et al. [1993, 1995]. Homicide perpetration risk drops substantially with age for cohabiting men 65 years and older in the United States but appears to increase somewhat for cohabiting men of this same age group in Canada.

Figure 3 is constructed from the data presented in Tables I and II and displays the risk of woman-killing as a function of the age difference between partners, in categories. Figure 3 shows that for both cohabiting and marital relationships, uxoricide rates for women mated to relatively older men and relatively younger men are higher than uxoricide rates for women mated to same-age men. For both cohabiting and married women, the uxoricide rate for women mated to men who are older by two age categories is about four times higher than the uxoricide rate for women mated to same-age men. And for both cohabiting and married women, the uxori-

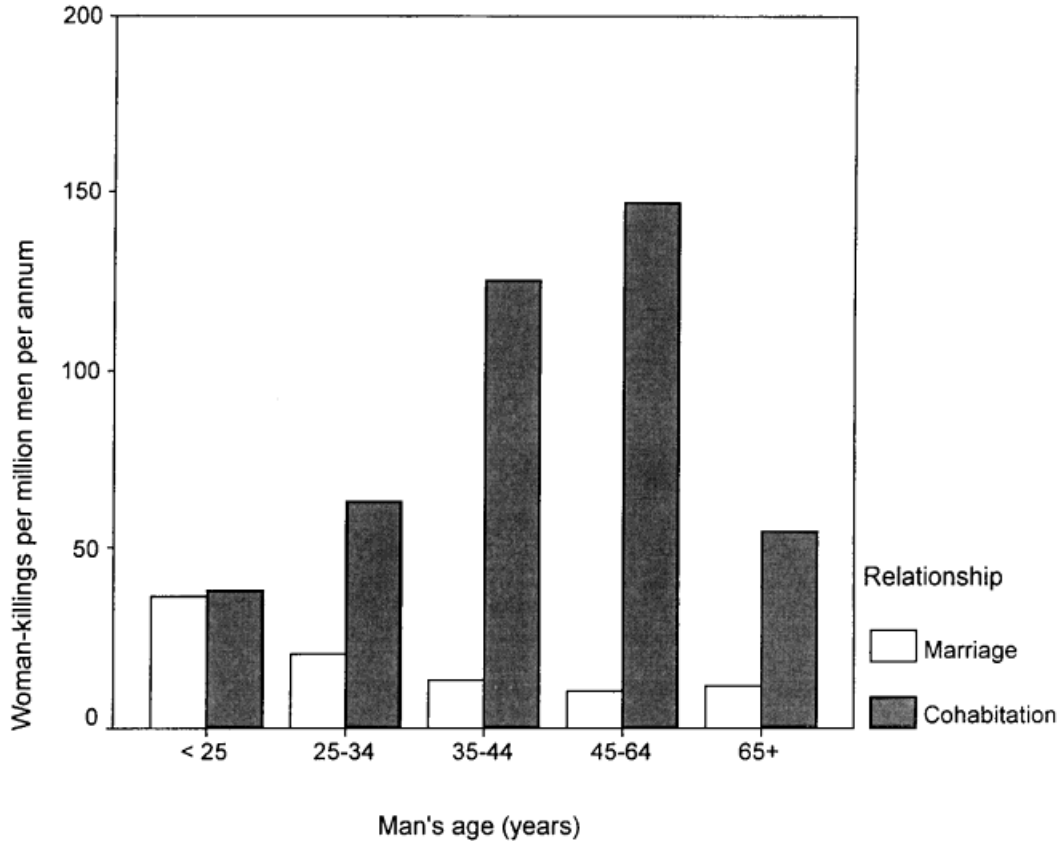


Fig. 2. Woman-killings per million men per annum as a function of relationship type and man's age.

cide rate for women mated to men who are younger by two age categories is about two times higher than the rate for women mated to same-age men. The positive relationship between age difference and uxoricide rate holds for both cohabiting and marital relationships for the largest age difference categories in the Canadian data [Wilson et al., 1993, 1995] but for neither type of relationship in the United States data.

## DISCUSSION

Using a national-level US database, I document that women in cohabiting relationships incur about nine times the risk of uxoricide as women in marital relationships. Within marital relationships, the risk of uxoricide decreases with a woman's age. Within cohabiting relationships, in contrast, middle-aged women are at greatest risk of uxoricide. Uxoricide perpetration rates are highest for young married men and middle-aged cohabiting men. These risk patterns replicate the results of analyses using national-level Canadian data [Wilson et al., 1993, 1995].

Uxoricide risk increases with greater age difference between partners, replicating the Canadian analyses—with the exception of the largest age difference categories, for which the rates are largest in the Canadian data and smallest in the US data. Because the largest age difference

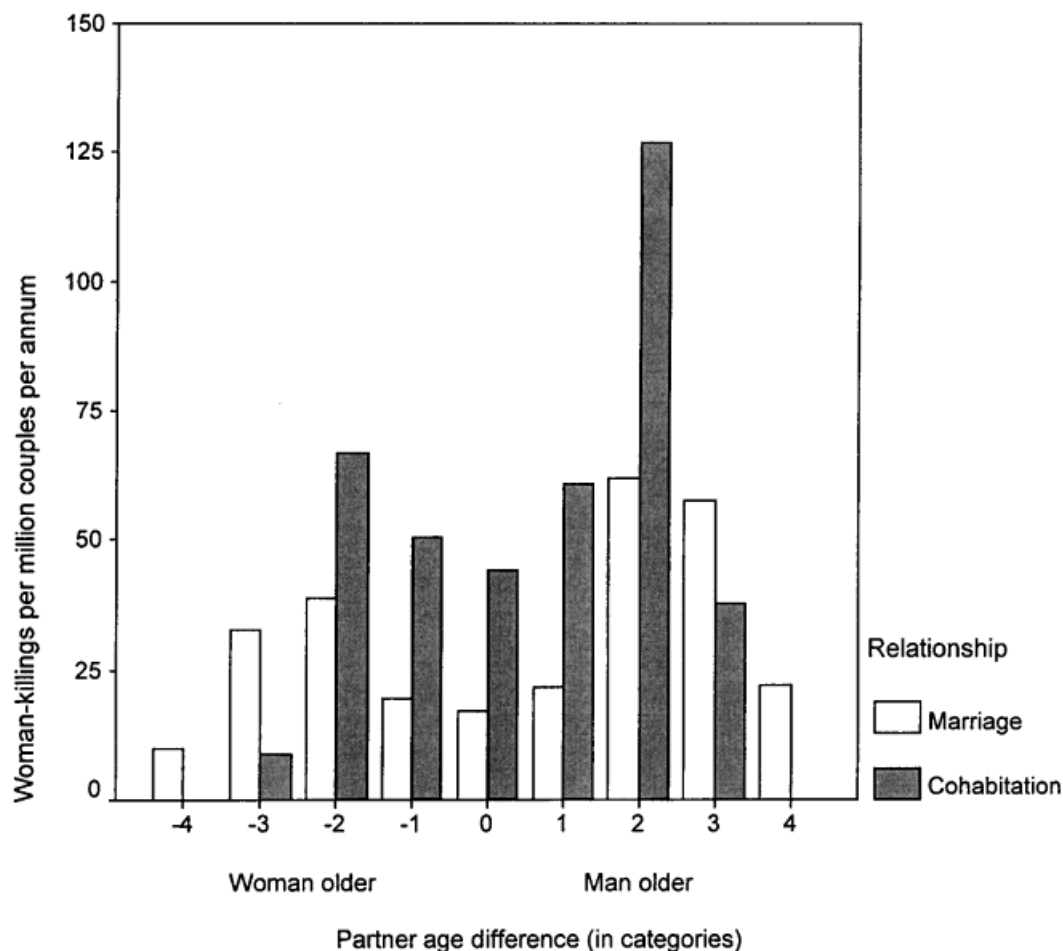


Fig. 3. Woman-killings per million couples per annum as a function of relationship type and age difference between partners, in categories. "1" indicates a one-category age difference, "2" indicates a two-category age difference, and so on. Positive values refer to categorical differences in which the man is older than the woman, whereas negative values refer to categorical differences in which the woman is older than the man. "0" refers to cases in which the man and the woman are in the same age category. Categories are as follows, in years: <25, 25–34, 35–44, 45–64, and 65 and older.

categories contain the least reliable population estimates and the lowest uxoricide frequencies [see Wilson et al., 1993, 1995], the uxoricide rates in these age difference categories are likely to be commensurately less reliable. The apparent difference between the Canadian and US data may be attributable to unreliability of the data.

The current work is important because no other research, besides that conducted by Wilson et al. [1993, 1995], has presented the results of national-level analyses of uxoricide risk as a function of type of relationship. That I replicated a majority of the findings presented by Wilson et al. [1993, 1995] makes the results of both analyses more powerful. Neither set can be attributed to some quirk or strangeness of Canada or the United States. It is possible, however, that these results would not replicate in national-level analyses of non-Western countries, such as Japan,

China, or Korea. It is also possible that these results may not replicate in non-North American but Western countries, such as France, Germany, and Spain.

Many questions are left unanswered by the Canadian and US analyses. For example, *why* is uxoricide risk greater among cohabiting than marital relationships? Cross-culturally, males think and behave in ways that reveal a proprietary concern about their partner. This proprietariness is focused on a partner's sexuality [Daly and Wilson, 1988; Daly et al., 1982; Wilson and Daly, 1996]. Men who beat and kill their partners often do so upon suspicion or discovery of her sexual infidelity or her plan to terminate their relationship [Daly and Wilson, 1988; Daly et al., 1982; Wilson and Daly, 1992b, 1996]. In short, men who suspect or know that the relationship with their partner is not secure often take drastic measures to ensure that the relationship continues or, barring that, to ensure that their partner does not initiate or maintain a relationship with another man. Relative to marital relationships, cohabiting relationships are more likely to break up [Booth and Johnson, 1988; Bumpass and Sweet, 1989; Wu and Balakrishnan, 1992], and men in cohabiting relationships may be especially sensitive to this "predicament." They may have a lower threshold for reacting to suspected infidelity or relationship termination, resulting in more frequent battery and murder of their partner.

Cohabiting relationships may be more dangerous for women because these relationships co-occur with other predictors of homicide. Homicide is relatively more common among the poor and the young [Daly and Wilson, 1988; Wilson and Daly, 1985] and so too are cohabiting relationships, relative to marital relationships. Stepchildren also are relatively more common among cohabiting couples, and the presence of stepchildren increases the risk of uxoricide [Brewer and Paulsen, 1999; Daly et al., 1997]. Relative to women in marital relationships, women in cohabiting relationships therefore may incur greater uxoricide risk not because of something unique to the cohabiting relationship but because of a coalescence of factors known to increase uxoricide risk. The national-level homicide data used in this research and in the Canadian research do not include information about most of these risk factors. Future work might examine the relative importance of cohabitation and other risk factors in smaller-scale databases that code these variables at the incident level.

In summary, the current research contributes to the literature on spousal homicide by replicating with a national-level United States database key findings produced by analyses of a national-level Canadian database. Although many important questions remain, the current research is a small step toward a better understanding of woman-killing by male romantic partners.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author thanks Viviana Weekes-Shackelford for comments and suggestions that improved this article.

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