

Spring 5-1-2024

## **The Gender Divide: Exploring Gender Patterns of Perceived and Realistic Risks of Murder by Unknown and Known Perpetrators**

Haley Forth

*Chapman University*, [forth@chapman.edu](mailto:forth@chapman.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.chapman.edu/cusrd\\_abstracts](https://digitalcommons.chapman.edu/cusrd_abstracts)



Part of the [Political Science Commons](#)

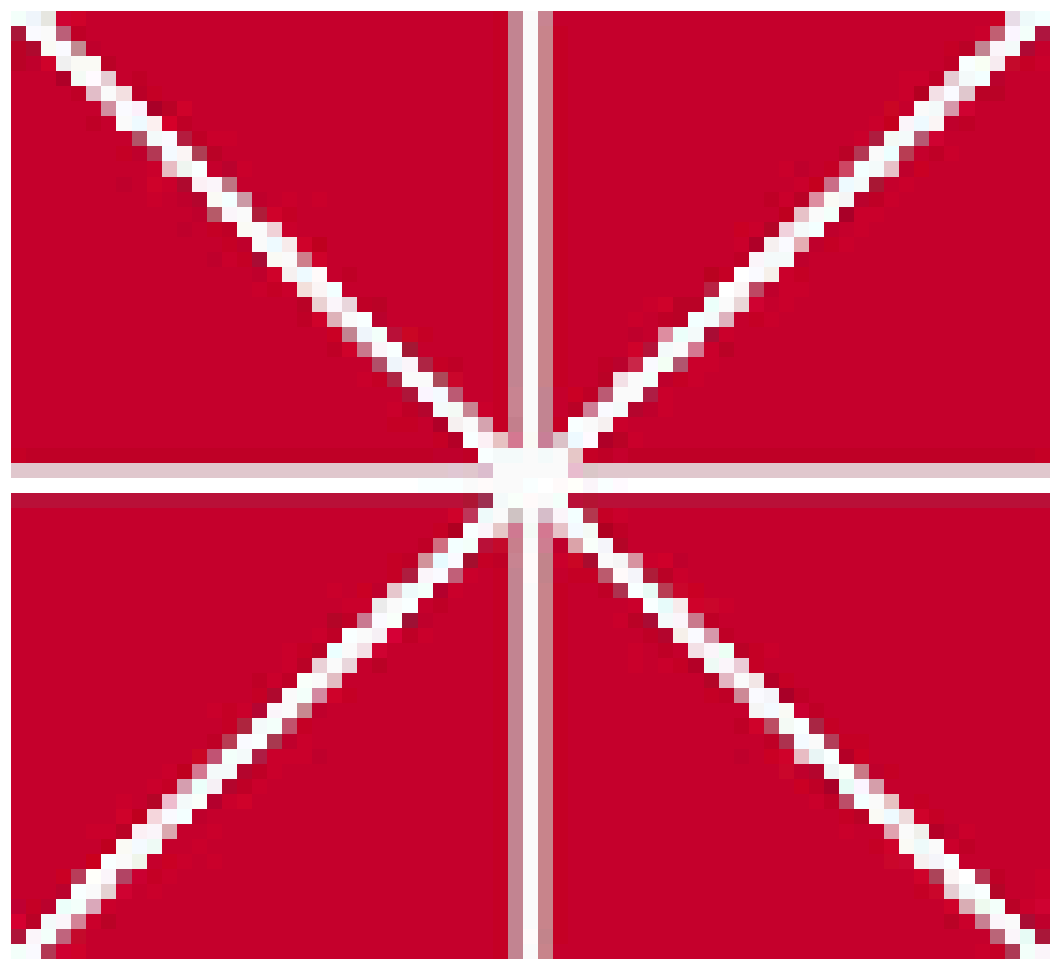
---

### **Recommended Citation**

Forth, Haley, "The Gender Divide: Exploring Gender Patterns of Perceived and Realistic Risks of Murder by Unknown and Known Perpetrators" (2024). *Student Scholar Symposium Abstracts and Posters*. 657.  
[https://digitalcommons.chapman.edu/cusrd\\_abstracts/657](https://digitalcommons.chapman.edu/cusrd_abstracts/657)

This Poster is brought to you for free and open access by the Center for Undergraduate Excellence at Chapman University Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Student Scholar Symposium Abstracts and Posters by an authorized administrator of Chapman University Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [laughtin@chapman.edu](mailto:laughtin@chapman.edu).





# Gender Perceptions to Murder Victimization

Haley Forth

Department of Political Science, Chapman University; Orange, California

## Introduction:

- This study explores gender perceptions of perceived risks behind the fear of being murdered by someone you know and murder by a stranger.
- Fear of murder is largely based on fear of strangers and one’s perceived risk to victimization.
- Womens fear of murder is largely based on perceived risk and vulnerability as women are suggested to have less control over their personal/public space than men to defend themselves (vulnerability theory). Gendered stereotypes shape womens fear as they are seen as weak and passive. All women are believed to be fearful, while men are fearless.
  - Fear just as likely to affect men, but little is known about men’s experience of fear levels on murder by stranger and by someone you know.
- Women more likely to be murdered by someone they know, while men are more likely to be victimized and murdered by a stranger.
- Based on control theory, homicide appears to vary by how much individuals are attached to one another where married individuals are less engaged outside the house and in risky behavior compared to single individuals.
  - For men, marriage is viewed as a form of social control to prevent from engaging in risky behavior.
  - Power discrepancies in marriages, in which husband is subordinate, serve as a risk factor for husband to wife violence.
- Based on cultivation theory, high amounts of violence in mass media cultivates the public’s fear and risk to victimization.
  - Media distorts the reality of crime as the news relies on sensationalism, increasing fears among the public.
  - Media disproportionately covers cases of violence against women compared to men.
- Crime is more likely to be a leading story for local news and is presented as graphic and sensational, cultivating individuals that this can happen at anytime.
- Stranger homicide and stranger sexual homicide typically reported in news, than non-stranger homicide, but most common relationship between victim and offender is by acquaintances.
- Sexual violence heavily prevalent on television and is the crime women fear the most in real life. The stereotypical representation of sexual crime on television may cultivate womens fear as sexual assault has a shadowing effect on other types of victimization among women.

## References:

Bader, C., Day, L. E., & Gordon, A. (2020, March 3). Chapman Survey of American Fears, Wave 7 (2021). Breault, K. D., & Kposowa, A. J. (1997). The Effects of Marital Status on Adult Female Homicides in the United States. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, 13(2), 217–230. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23366030>.

Callanan, V. J. (2012). Media Consumption, Perceptions of Crime Risk and Fear of Crime: Examining Race/ Ethnic Differences. *Sociological Perspectives*, 55(1), 93–115. <https://doi.org/10.1525/sop.2012.55.1.93>.

Custers, K., & Van den Bulck, J. (2013). The Cultivation of Fear of Sexual Violence in Women: Processes and Moderators of the Relationship Between Television and Fear. *Communication Research*, 40(1), 96–124. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650212440444>.

Gilchrist, E., Bannister, J., Ditton, J., & Farrall, S. (1998). WOMEN AND THE “FEAR OF CRIME”: Challeng ing the Accepted Stereotype. *The British Journal of Criminology*, 38(2), 283–298. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23638718>.

Spencer, C. M., & Stith, S. M. (2020). Risk Factors for Male Perpetration and Female Victimization of Intimate Partner Homicide: A Meta-Analysis. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 21(3), 527–540. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838018781101>.

Warr, M. (1984). FEAR OF VICTIMIZATION: WHY ARE WOMEN AND THE ELDERLY MORE AFRAID? *Social Science Quarterly*, 65(3), 681–702. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42861723>.

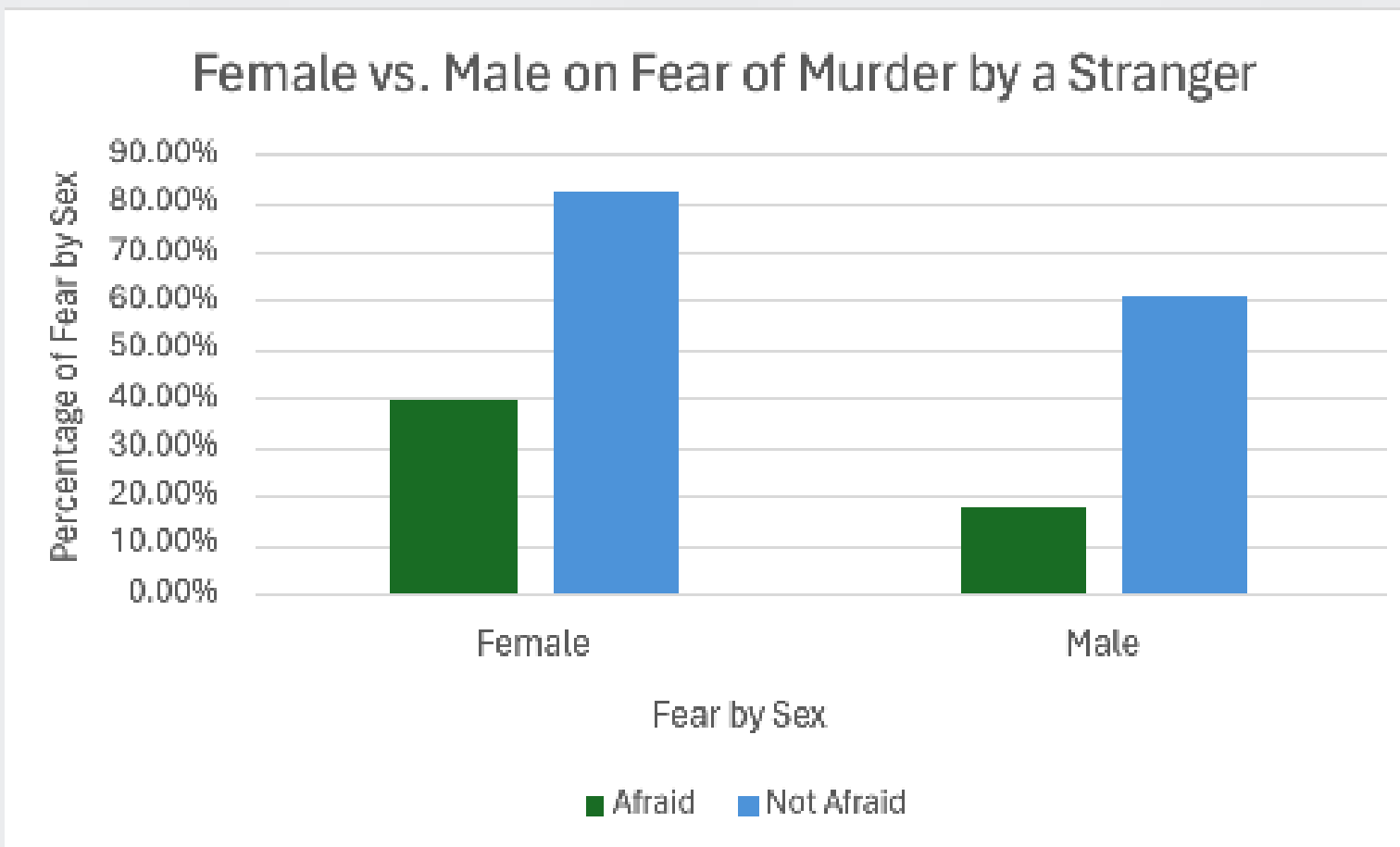
## Hypotheses:

- H1: Women are more likely to fear murder by a stranger and murder by someone they know than males.
- H2: Single individuals are more likely to fear murder by a stranger and murder by someone they know than married individuals.
- H3: The more individuals watch the national nightly news, the more likely they fear murder by a stranger and by someone they know.
- H4: The more individuals watch the local news, the more likely they fear murder by a stranger and by someone they know.
- H5: The more individuals get their news from social media, the more likely they fear murder by a stranger and by someone they know.

## Data:

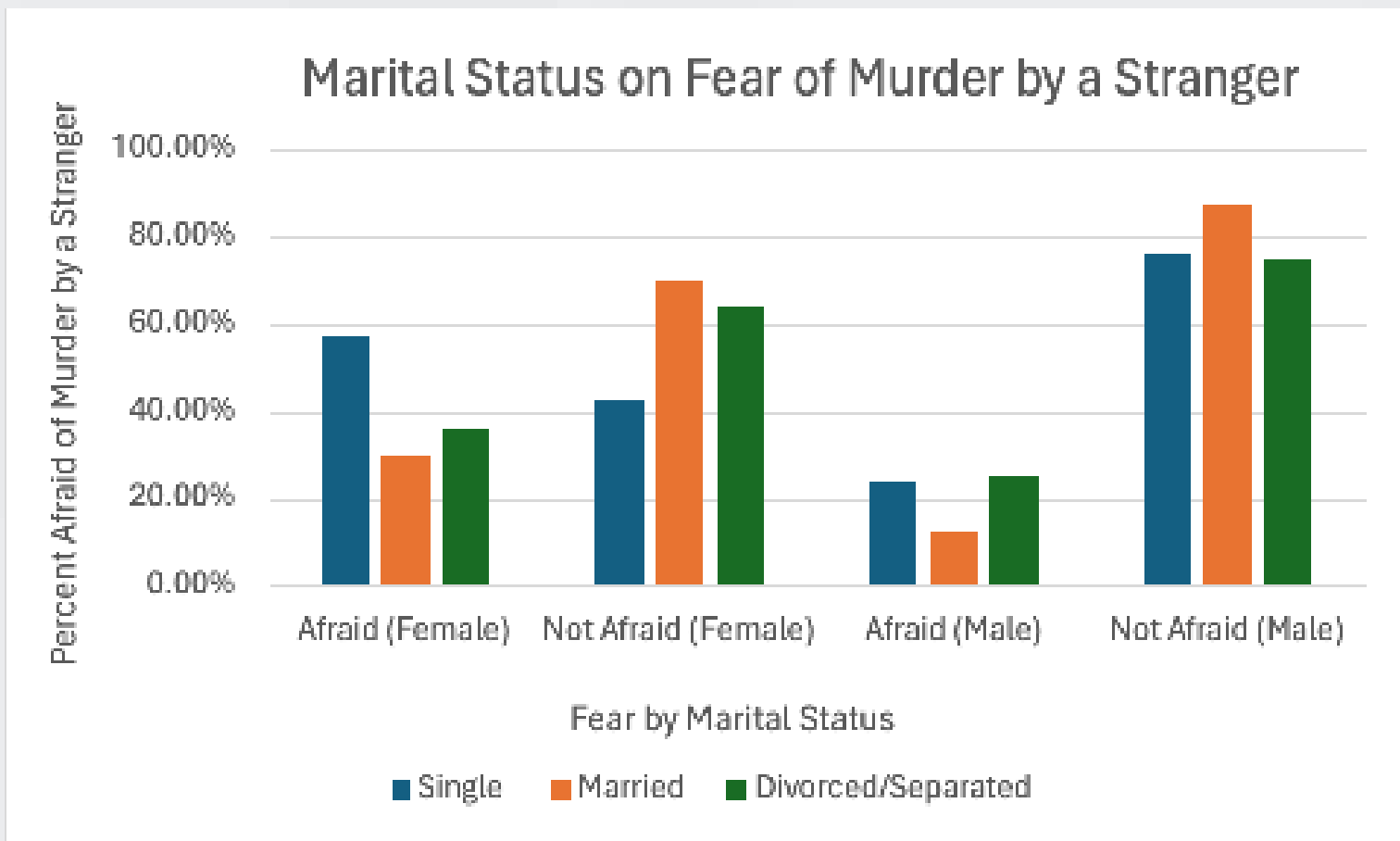
H1:

Figure 1: Cross Tabulation of Sex on Fear of Murder by a Stranger (2021 CSAF)



H2:

Figure 3: Cross Tabulation of Marital Status on Fear of Murder by a Stranger (2021 CSAF)



H3 - H5:

Figure 5: Correlation of Media on Fear of Murder by a Stranger vs. Murder by Someone You Know (2021 CSAF)

		Stranger	Someone You Know
News from Social Media	Pearson Correlation	.196**	.265**
	Sig. (2 - tailed )	< .001	< .001
	N	1035	1033
National Nightly News	Pearson Correlation	.131**	.177**
	Sig. (2 - tailed )	< .001	< .001
	N	1035	1033
Local News	Pearson Correlation	.144**	.177**
	Sig. (2 - tailed )	< .001	< .001
	N	1030	1028

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2 - tailed)

Figure 2: Cross Tabulation of Sex on Fear of Murder by Someone you Know (2021 CSAF)

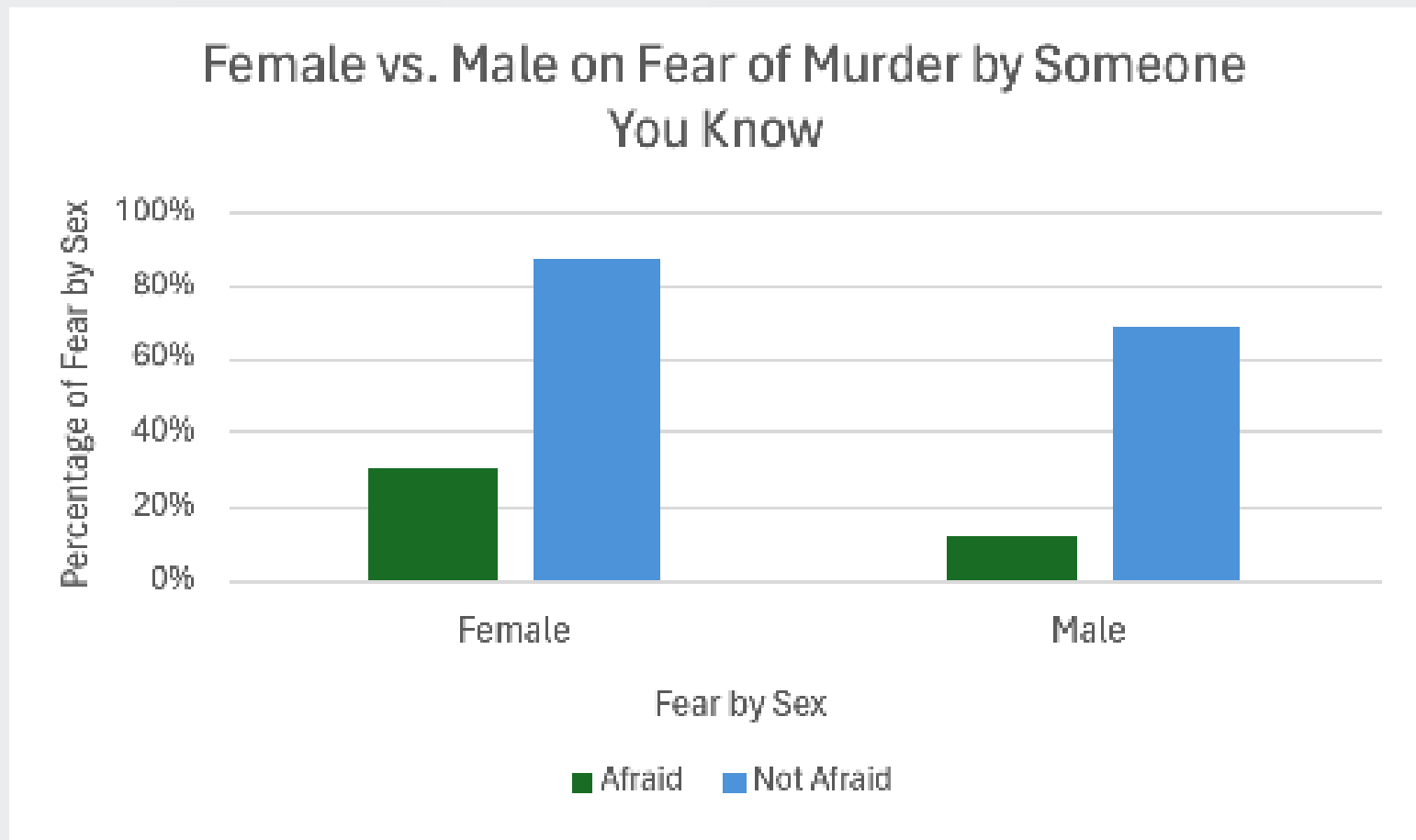
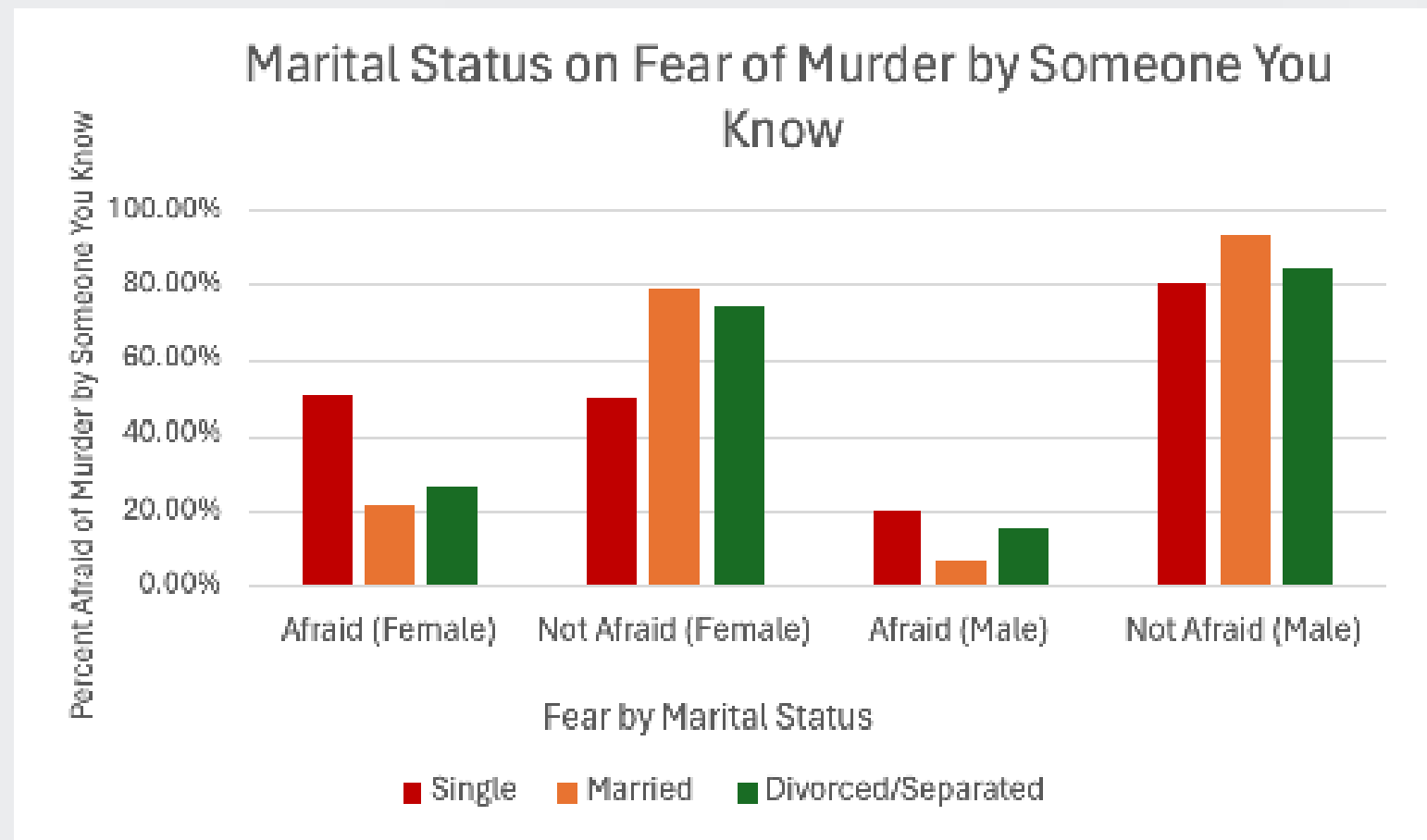


Figure 4: Cross Tabulation of Marital Status on Fear of Murder by Someone you Know (2021 CSAF)



## Findings:

- H1: Females are more likely to fear both murder by a stranger and by someone they know than males. Females 22% more likely to fear murder by a stranger than males and 19% more likely to fear murder by someone they know than males. However, males are 6% more likely to fear murder by a stranger than murder by someone they know and women are 9% more likely to fear murder by a stranger than murder by someone they know.
- H2: Based on Figure 3 and 4, single individuals are more likely to fear both murder by a stranger and murder by someone they know compared to married individuals. Single individuals are more likely to fear both fears than divorced/separated individuals. Single women have more fear of both fears than single males.
- H3: National nightly news has a significance level of .001 for both fears in 2021, with a slight correlation of .131 for murder by a stranger and a slight correlation of .177 for murder by someone you know.
  - Individuals who watch the national nightly news are more likely to fear murder by a stranger and murder by some one they know.
- H4: Local news has a significance level of .001 for both fears in 2021, with a slight correlation of .144 for murder by a stranger and a slight correlation of .177 for murder by someone you know.
  - Individuals who watch the local news are more likely to fear murder by a stranger and murder by someone they know.
- H5: Social media has a significance level of .001 for both fears in 2021, with a slight correlation of .196 for murder by a stranger and a modest correlation of .265 for murder by someone you know.
  - Individuals who watch get their news from social media are more likely to fear murder by a stranger and murder by someone they know.

## Conclusion:

- While both men and women showcase some level of fear, women have significantly higher levels of fear compared to men. A prevalent gender gap on fear levels is showcased that stem more on perceptions than realistic risks.
- Women have the lowest rate of criminal victimization, but display the highest fear compared to men.
- Significance is that men show some level of fear, though lower than women, men are not fearless.
- Control theory can be seen as an explanation to lower levels of fear among married individuals’, but single individuals feel more vulnerable to murder.
- Out of the news platforms tested, social media influences and heightens individuals’ fear of both murder by a stranger and murder by someone they know the most, then local news, and lastly following national nightly news. Media can be seen to play a role in cultivating risk perception to murder.
- Understanding the disconnect between gender dimensions related to fear of being murdered by someone you know and by a stranger enables a nuanced understanding to develop gender-sensitive approaches to murder prevention.
- Working towards understanding disparities in homicide victimization among both men and women is crucial for promoting justice, protecting vulnerable populations, preventing violence, and advancing human rights to build safer and more equitable societies.