On Not Misreading Murder Statistics

To the Editor:

“High Murder Rate for Women on Job” (news article, Oct. 3) states that 40 percent of women killed at work are murdered, while the figure for men is only 15 percent. Officials suggested that this “difference” is due to the large number of women exposed to crime while working late at night. The clear message is that women are at greater risk of being murdered in the workplace than men.

A critical reading of other statistics in the article discloses an entirely different picture. Men account for 93 percent of all job-related deaths, although only 55 percent of the work force is male.

What this means is that less than 3 percent (40 percent of 7 percent) of workplace deaths are female murders, while almost 14 percent (15 percent of 93 percent) are male murders. If we then take account of the differential representation of the sexes in the work force, we can see that a man is almost four times as likely to be murdered in the workplace as a woman and that a man is more than 11 times as likely as a woman to be killed on the job by all causes combined.

Thus, the reason that a greater proportion of female deaths in the workplace are murders is not that women are murdered at a higher rate than men, because they are not. It is rather that men are killed at a higher rate by other causes.

The slant of this report is symptomatic of the treatment of virtually any statistics that show differences between men and women. It is almost as if a conscious decision had been made along the line to report the information in a way to reinforce the notion that women are being victimized.

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