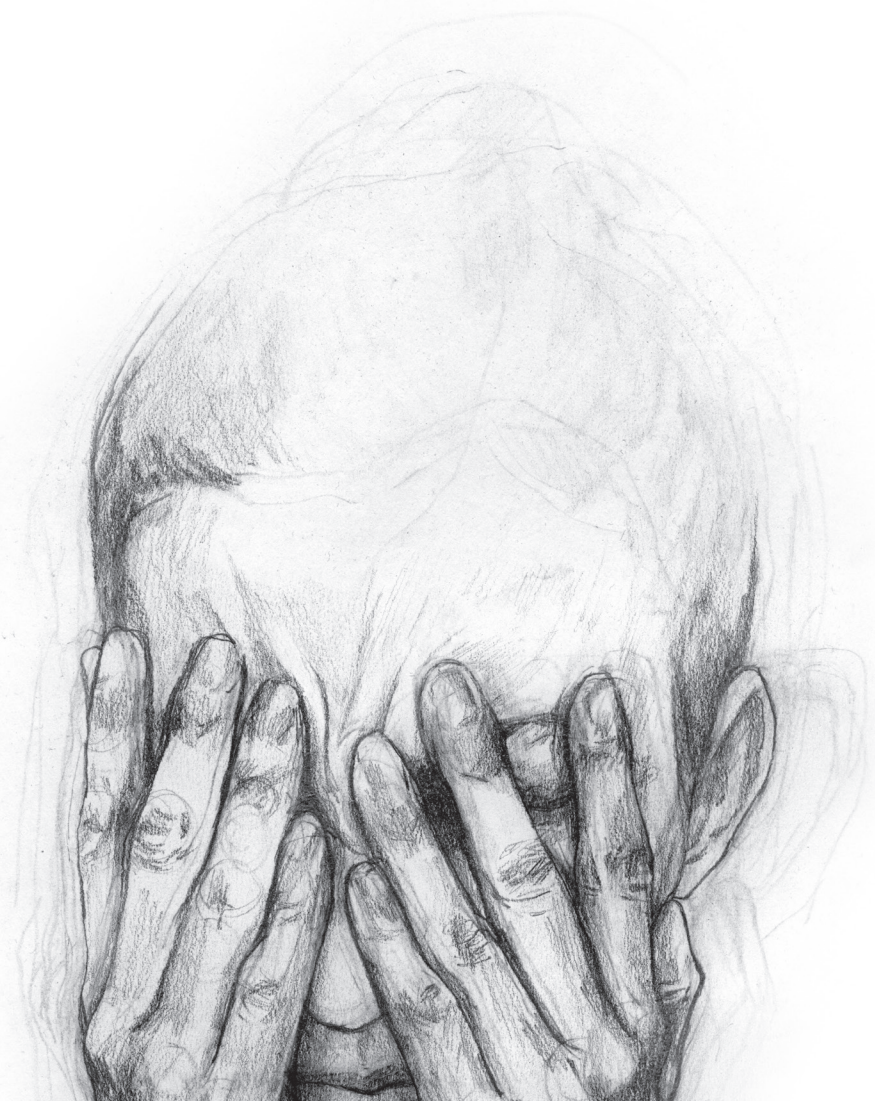




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United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime



GLOBAL STUDY ON HOMICIDE
Gender-related killing of women and girls

2019



UNITED NATIONS OFFICE ON DRUGS AND CRIME
Vienna

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PREFACE

The *Global Study on Homicide* is a search for solutions. By bringing together the available data, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime seeks to shed light on different phenomena, from lethal gang violence and the role of firearms to links with inequalities and gender-related killings, and in this way support targeted action. I hope that the research and analysis contained in the study are used in this spirit – not to designate “murder capitals” but to learn, understand and strengthen prevention.

Criminal activity is responsible for many more deaths worldwide than armed conflict and terrorism combined. Unless the international community takes decisive steps, targets under Sustainable Development Goal 16 to significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates by 2030 will not be met.

The Americas continue to report high homicide rates. Young men are especially at risk, with a homicide rate for men aged 18 to 19 estimated at 46 per 100,000 – far higher than the risk faced by their peers in other regions. Firearms are also involved far more often in homicides in the Americas than in other parts of the world.

By contrast, Europe has seen a decline in the homicide rate by 63 per cent since 2002 and by 38 per cent since 1990. The rate in Asia has fallen by 36 per cent since 1990. Data collection overall has improved since the previous *Global Study on Homicide*, but there remain serious gaps in the availability of reliable data for African countries. There are also indications that homicide is underreported in the official statistics in Pacific countries.

This study offers particular insights into the gender-related killing of women and girls. “Femicide” represents just a small percentage of the overall number of homicides, but our analysis indicates that the drivers of this type of lethal violence require tailored responses. Killings carried out by intimate partners are rarely spontaneous or random, and should be examined as an extreme act on a continuum of gender-related violence that remains underreported and too often ignored.

The *Global Study on Homicide 2019* also documents successes in preventing and addressing lethal violence. In particular, the study offers examples of effective community-based interventions in settings afflicted by violence, gangs and organized crime. These accounts show that with targeted interventions backed by sustained engagement and trust between communities and law enforcement, bringing down homicide rates is possible.



Yury Fedotov

Executive Director, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

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Cover drawing © Julija Zaharijević.

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SCOPE OF THE BOOKLET

Constituting the fifth part of the *Global Study on Homicide 2019*, this booklet gives an overview of the scope of gender-related killing of women and girls. It provides in-depth analysis of killings perpetrated within the family sphere and examines forms of gender-related killings perpetrated outside the family sphere, such as the killing of women in conflict and the killing of female sex workers. The booklet explores the scale of intimate partner/family-related killings of women and girls, and describes different forms of gender-related killings of women. It also looks at the characteristics of the perpetrators of intimate partner killings, the link between lethal and non-lethal violence against women, and the criminal justice response.

The availability of data on intimate partner/family-related homicide means that such killings of females are analysed in greater depth than other forms of “femicide”¹ and that the analysis focuses on how women and girls are affected by certain norms, harmful traditional practices and stereotypical gender roles. Although other forms of gender-related killing of women and girls are described, such as female infanticide and the killing of indigenous or aboriginal women, given severe limitations in terms of data availability, only literature-based evidence is provided.

The data presented in this booklet are based on homicide statistics produced by national statistical systems in which the relationship between the victim and perpetrator and/or the motive are reported. While the disaggregation of homicide data at the country level has improved over the years, regional and global estimates are based on a limited number of countries, with Africa and Asia accounting for most of the gaps.



¹ Throughout this booklet the word “femicide” is written with quotation marks when it refers to a concept that is not clearly defined and covers acts subject to a certain degree of interpretation. Femicide is written without quotation marks when referring to countries in Latin America that have defined this concept in their national legislation.

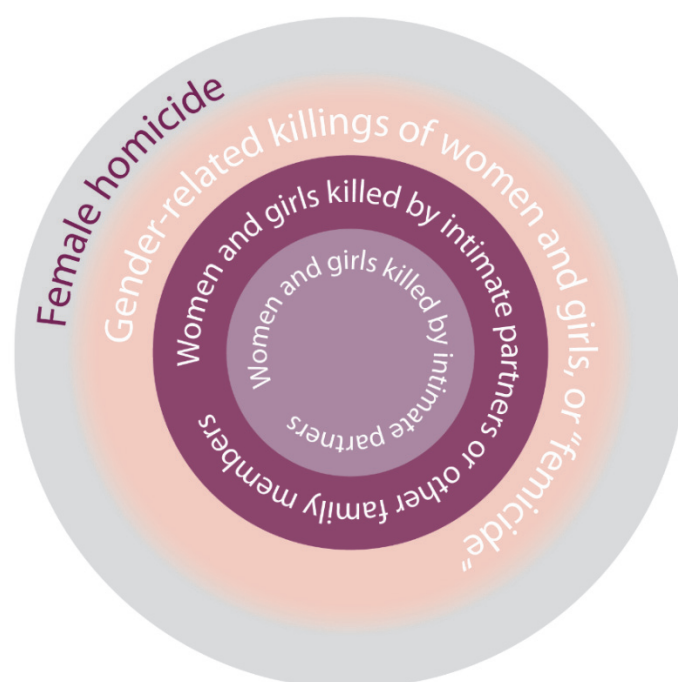
INTRODUCTION TO THE CONCEPT OF GENDER-RELATED KILLING OF WOMEN AND GIRLS

The focus of this booklet is on the killing of women and girls as a result of gender norms. Among the many documents that draw attention to the alarming proportions reached by this phenomenon in all its different manifestations, the 2013 United Nations General Assembly resolution on “Taking action against gender-related killing of women and girls” is noteworthy.²

Some national Governments, international organizations, academics and advocates of women’s rights use the term “femicide” to refer to this problem. The notion of gender-related killing, or “femicide”, requires an understanding of which acts are gender related – something that is subject to a certain degree of interpretation. For example, in many cases there is a continuum of (intimate partner) violence that culminates in the killing of women even when perpetrators have no specific (misogynistic) motives.

Nevertheless, some aspects of gender-related killing of women are indisputable, one being that this type of homicide is part of female homicide, yet not all female homicides are gender related. Therefore, only a specific, if considerable, share can be labelled “gender-related killings of women and girls”, i.e. “femicide”.

Gender-related killings of women and girls are committed in a variety of contexts and through different mechanisms. In broader terms, such killings can be divided into those perpetrated within the family and those perpetrated outside the family sphere. Data availability at the regional and global level show that the vast majority of cases of this type of crime fall into the first category.



Gender-related killing of women and girls is analysed in this booklet using the indicator for intimate partner/family-related homicide. This provides a concept that covers most gender-related killings of women, is comparable and can be aggregated at the global level. Other existing national data labelled as “femicide” are not comparable, as countries use different legal definitions of this concept when collecting data. Where data are available, however, it is clear that intimate partner/family-related homicide covers most of the killings categorized as “femicide” and is a good fit for analysing trends in the latter.

² Resolution 68/191. In the preamble of the resolution, concern was specifically expressed over the fact “that the global prevalence of different manifestations of the gender-related killing of women and girls is reaching alarming proportions ...”. It also noted that gender-related killing of women and girls had been criminalized in some countries as “femicide” or “feminicide” and had been incorporated as such into national legislation in those countries.

UNODC collects data from Member States on intimate partner/family-related homicide as a proxy for gender-related killings of women and the broad concept evolving around the notion of “femicide”. This indicator covers female victims of homicide perpetrated by current or former intimate partners, or other family members.³ General sex-disaggregated homicide data are collected through regular UNODC data collection on crime. Using the framework of the *International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes* (ICCS), homicide data can be categorized and analysed to define gender-related killings and quantify intimate partner/family-related homicide.⁴

While the majority of intentional homicide victims are male, the majority of the victims of intimate partner/family-related homicide are women. Therefore, understanding the extent and patterns of the killing of women and girls requires a dedicated analysis of intimate partner/family-related homicide, such as that presented in this booklet.

³ UNODC collects data on intimate partner/family-related homicide through the United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems.

⁴ The ICCS classification disaggregates intentional homicide according to the relationship between victims and perpetrators. Victims of intimate partner homicide include those killed by a current or former intimate partner or spouse. Victims of intimate partner/family-related homicide also include those killed by a blood relative, household member or relative by marriage or adoption. More information is available at www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/statistics/crime/ICCS/Gender_and_the_ICCS.pdf.

KEY FINDINGS

A total of 87,000 women were intentionally killed in 2017. More than half of them (58 per cent) – 50,000 – were killed by intimate partners or other family members, meaning that 137 women across the world are killed by a member of their own family every day. More than a third (30,000) of the women intentionally killed in 2017 were killed by their current or former intimate partner – someone they would normally expect to trust.

Based on revised data, the estimated number of women killed by intimate partners or other family members in 2012 was 48,000 (47 per cent of all female homicide victims). The annual number of female deaths worldwide resulting from intimate partner/family-related homicide therefore seems to be on the increase.

The largest number (20,000) of all women killed worldwide by intimate partners or other family members in 2017 was in Asia, followed by Africa (19,000), the Americas (8,000), Europe (3,000) and Oceania (300). However, with an intimate partner/family-related homicide rate of 3.1 per 100,000 female population, Africa is the region where women run the greatest risk of being killed by an intimate partner or other family member, while Europe (0.7 per 100,000 female population) is the region where the risk is lowest. The intimate partner/family-related homicide rate was also high in the Americas in 2017, at 1.6 per 100,000 female population, as well as Oceania, at 1.3, and Asia, at 0.9.

Even though the largest number of women and girls are killed by intimate partners or other family members in Asia, they run the greatest risk of being killed by an intimate partner or other family member in Africa.



The regions with the largest number of females killed purely by intimate partners (not including other family members) in 2017 were Asia and Africa (11,000 each), followed by the Americas (6,000), Europe (2,000) and Oceania (200).

Africa was also the region with the highest rate of females killed purely by intimate partners in 2017 (1.7 per 100,000 female population). The Americas had the second-highest rate (1.2), Oceania the third (0.9), Europe the fourth (0.6) and Asia the fifth-highest rate (0.5 per 100,000 female population).

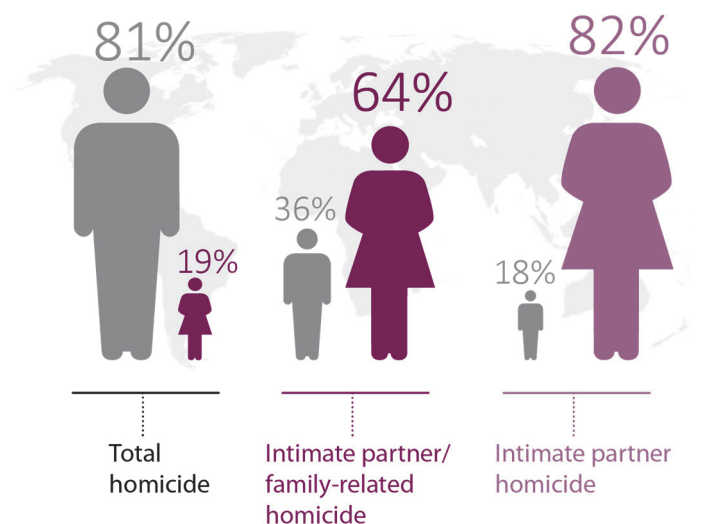
The global rate of female total homicide in 2017 was estimated to be 2.3 per 100,000 female population, the global female intimate partner/family-related homicide rate was 1.3, while the female intimate partner homicide rate was estimated at 0.8 per 100,000 female population.

More than two thirds of all women (69 per cent) killed in Africa in 2017 were killed by intimate partners or other family members, while more than a third (38 per cent) of women were killed by intimate partners or other family members in Europe. Oceania accounts for the largest share of all the regions in terms of women killed exclusively by intimate partners, at 42 per cent, while Europe accounts for the lowest, at 29 per cent.

Only one in five homicides at the global level are perpetrated by an intimate partner or other family member, yet women and girls make up the vast majority of those deaths. Victim/perpetrator disaggregation reveals a large disparity in the shares of male and female victims of homicide committed by intimate partners or other family members: 36 per cent male versus 64 per cent female victims.

Women also bear the greatest burden in terms of intimate partner violence. The disparity between the shares of male and female victims of homicide perpetrated exclusively by an intimate partner is substantially larger than for victims of homicide perpetrated by intimate partners or other family members: roughly 82 per cent female victims versus 18 per cent male victims.

Although women and girls account for a far smaller share of total homicides than men, they bear by far the greatest burden of intimate partner/family-related homicide, and intimate partner homicide.



These findings show that even though men are the principal victims of homicide globally, women continue to bear the heaviest burden of lethal victimization as a result of gender stereotypes and inequality. Many of the victims of “femicide” are killed by their current and former partners, but they are also killed by fathers, brothers, mothers, sisters and other family members because of their role and status as women. The death of those killed by intimate partners does not usually result from random or spontaneous acts, but rather from the culmination of prior gender-related violence. Jealousy and fear of abandonment are among the motives.

Through the indicator “female victims of homicide perpetrated by intimate partners or other family members”, this booklet quantifies a significant share of all gender-related killings of women and girls perpetrated globally, including forms that are prevalent across certain regions, such as dowry and honour killing. Given the lack of data, it is not possible to quantify the number of gender-related killings outside the family, but the booklet describes their different manifestations and provides examples where information is available. The information available shows that, other than gender-related killings in conflict settings, gender-related killings of women and girls outside the family are relatively rare in comparison to killings perpetrated by intimate partners or other family members.

Countries have taken action to address violence against women and gender-related killings in different ways, by adopting legal changes, early interventions and multi-agency efforts, as well as creating special units and implementing training in the criminal justice system. Countries in Latin America have adopted legislation that criminalizes femicide as a specific offence in their criminal codes. Yet there are no signs of a decrease in the number of gender-related killings of women and girls.

This booklet highlights what more can be done to prevent those killings. A more comprehensive range of coordinated services needs to be provided by the police, criminal justice systems, and health and social services. Moreover, in order to prevent and tackle gender-related killing of women and girls, men need to be involved in efforts to combat intimate partner violence/family-related homicide and in changing cultural norms that move away from violent masculinity and gender stereotypes.

INTIMATE PARTNER/FAMILY-RELATED KILLING OF WOMEN AND GIRLS: SCALE OF THE PROBLEM

Scale of the problem in numbers of victims

The lethal victimization of women within the family sphere is encountered in all regions and countries. UNODC estimates that the deaths of women and girls resulting from intentional homicide perpetrated by an intimate partner or other family member⁵ amounted to a global total of 50,000 in 2017.⁶ An improvement in the coverage of sex-disaggregated country data has led UNODC to re-evaluate the 2012 figure published in the previous edition of the *Global Study on Homicide* to 48,000. The number of female deaths resulting from intimate partner/family-related homicide may therefore have increased slightly since 2012.⁷

Given that the total number of deaths of women and girls worldwide resulting from all forms of intentional homicide amounted to 87,000 in 2017, more than half (58 per cent) of all female victims of intentional homicide, or 137 every day, were actually killed by a member of their own family. The number of women killed purely by their intimate partners (i.e. not including other family members) was 30,000, meaning that more than one third (34 per cent) of all women and girls intentionally killed worldwide, or 82 every day, are killed by someone whom they would normally trust and expect to care for them.

Scale of the problem in homicide rates

The number of victims is only one way of looking at the toll that intimate partner/family-related homicide takes on women. Looking at the homicide rate per 100,000 female population offers a different perspective. For example, in absolute numbers, the largest number of women killed by an intimate partner or other family member in 2017 was in Asia (20,000), by far the most populous of the five regions. However, at 3.1 per 100,000 female population, the highest rate of intimate partner/family-related homicide was in Africa. Thus, while fewer women are killed by an intimate partner or other family member in Africa than in Asia, women are actually at a higher risk of being killed by intimate partners or other family members in Africa. Women are also most at risk of being killed by their intimate partners (not including other family members) in Africa (1.7 per 100,000 female population) and the Americas (1.2), while they are least at risk in Oceania (0.9), Europe (0.6) and Asia (0.5).

Estimated at 1.3 per 100,000 population in 2017, although slightly lower than in 2012, when it stood at 1.4 per 100,000 population, the female intimate partner/family-related homicide rate can be considered stable at the global level. However, the female intimate-partner/family-related homicide rate not only varies across regions but also between countries within those regions (see box 1). These variations show that, in general, countries with relatively low female total homicide rates tend to have a relatively larger share of female intimate partner/family-related homicides, whereas in countries with relatively high female total homicide rates, the share of female intimate partner/family-related homicides is relatively smaller. This is because more women are killed outside the family sphere, although the actual intimate partner/family-related homicide rate may still be relatively high.

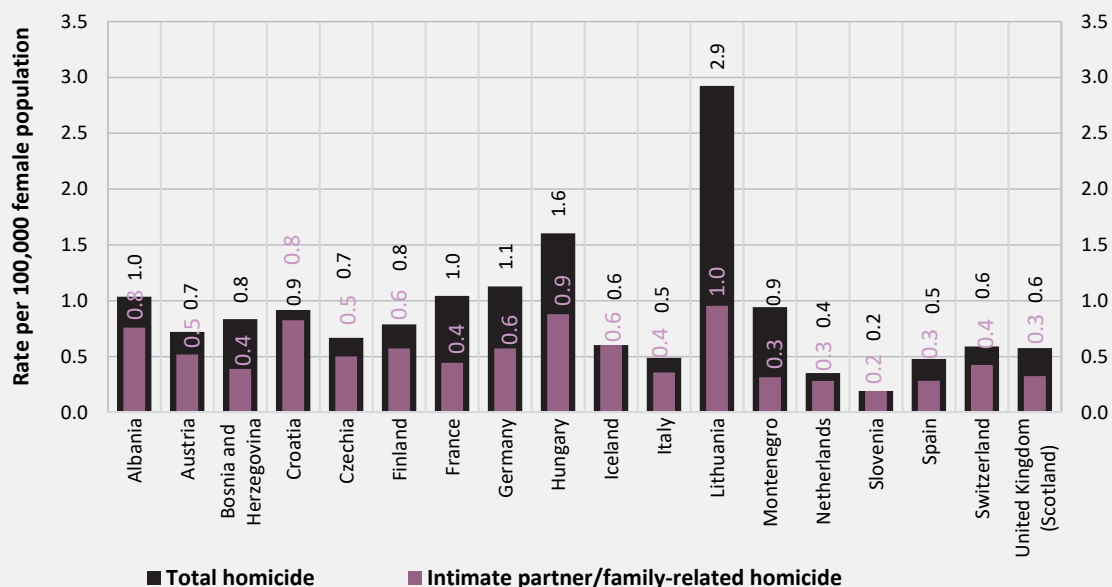
⁵ In heterosexual relationships, women are killed by a male partner, whereas those killed by family members are killed by both sexes.

⁶ When provided by countries, data from 2017 have been used throughout this booklet. Otherwise, the data are for the latest available year.

⁷ The *Global Study on Homicide 2013* estimated that 43,600 women were killed in 2012 by intimate partners or other family members.

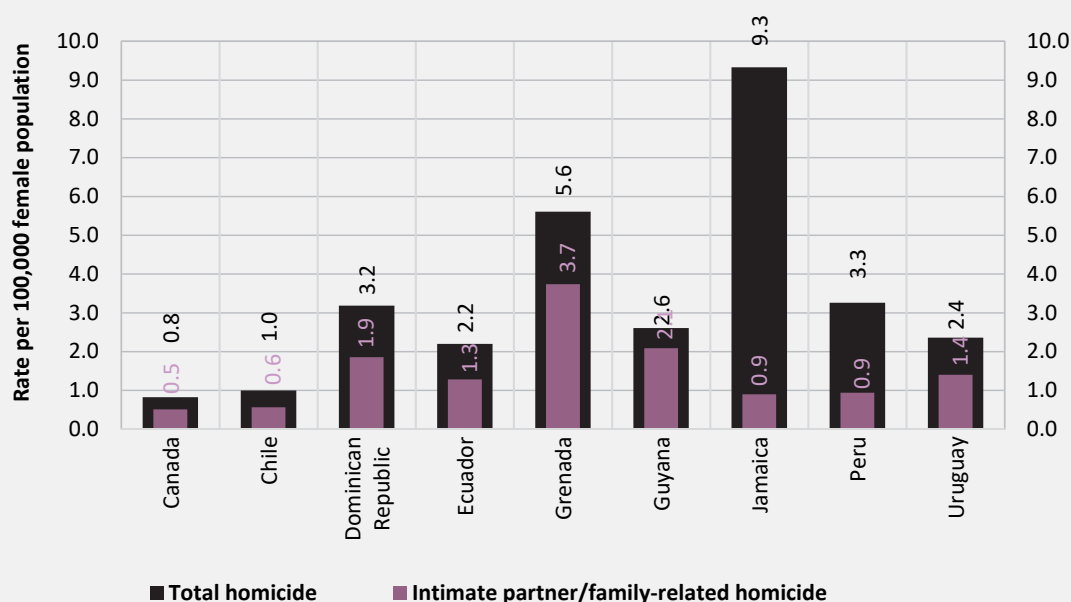
BOX 1: Female total homicide and intimate partner/family-related homicide in selected countries

Rates of female total homicide and intimate partner/family-related homicide, selected countries in Europe, 2016



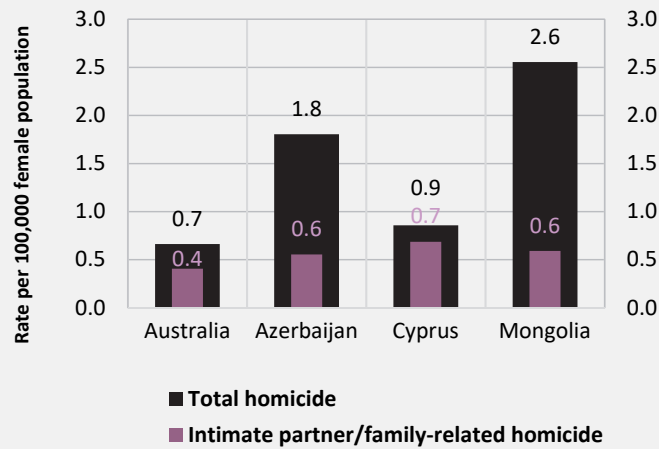
Source: UNODC homicide statistics.

Rates of female total homicide and intimate partner/family-related homicide, selected countries in the Americas, 2016



Source: UNODC homicide statistics; United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

Rates of female total homicide and intimate partner/family-related homicide, selected countries in Asia and Oceania, 2016

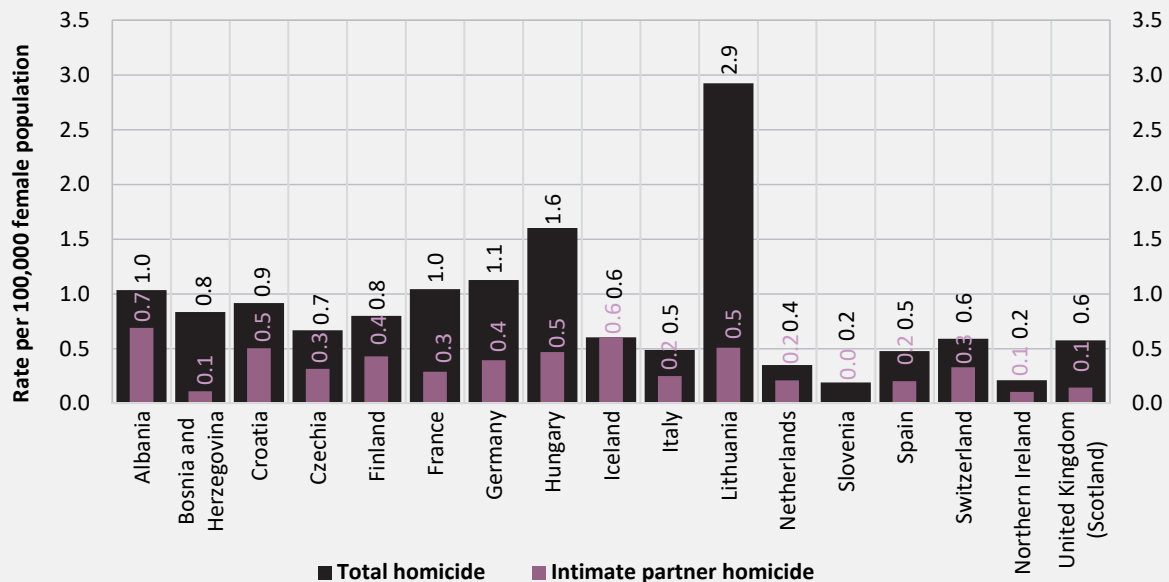


Source: UNODC homicide statistics.

Data on the killing of women perpetrated exclusively by intimate partners (not including other family members) is even harder to come by than data on women killed by intimate partners or family members, but where data are available (see box 2) the picture is similar to that for intimate-partner/family-related homicide, as mentioned in the previous paragraph.

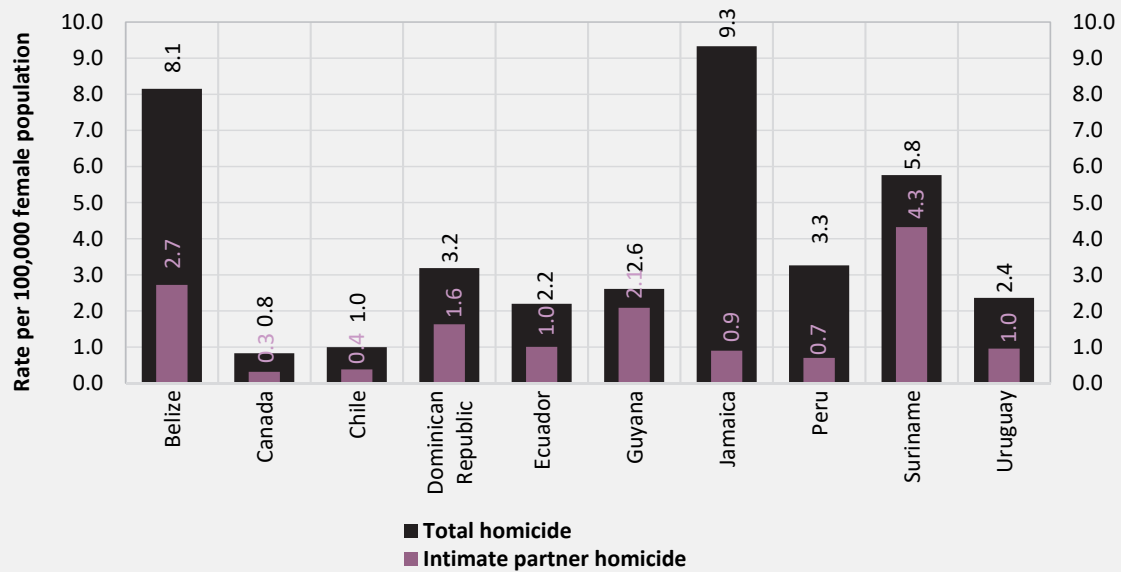
BOX 2: Female total homicide and intimate partner homicide in selected countries

Rates of female total homicide and intimate partner homicide, selected countries in Europe, 2016



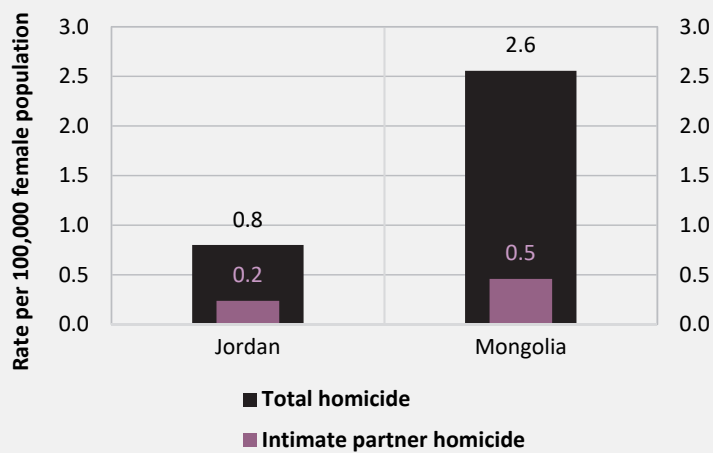
Source: UNODC homicide statistics.

Rates of female total homicide and intimate partner homicide, selected countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2016



Source: UNODC homicide statistics.

Rates of female total homicide and intimate partner homicide, selected countries in Asia, 2016



Source: UNODC homicide statistics.

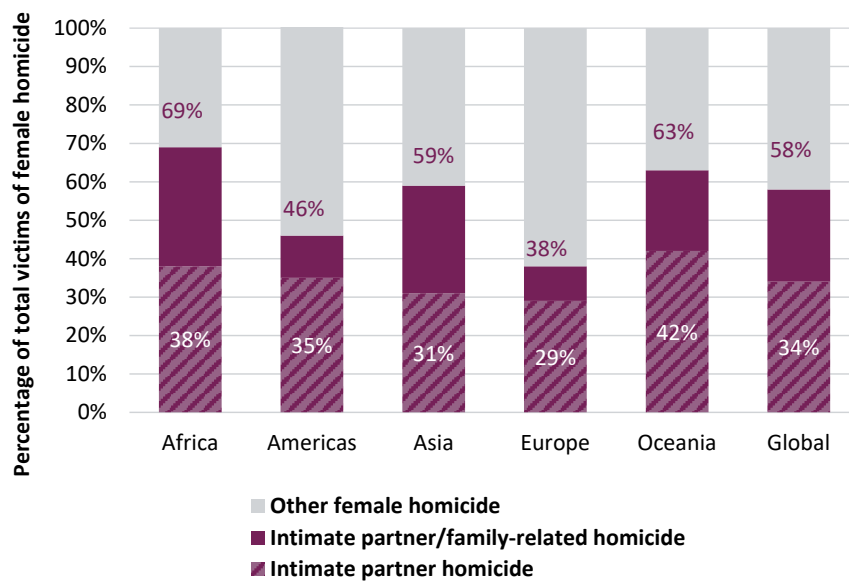
Scale of the problem in shares of all women murdered

While almost six out of every ten women (58 per cent) intentionally killed worldwide are murdered by an intimate partner or other family member, there are marked disparities in this share across all the regions.



In four of the five regions, the share is very large, making the home the most likely place for a woman to be killed. At the upper extreme, more than two thirds of all women (69 per cent) intentionally killed in Africa in 2017 were killed by intimate partners or other family members, while the region with the smallest share of women killed by intimate partners or other family members was Europe (38 per cent). Oceania had the highest share of women killed exclusively by intimate partners, at 42 per cent, while Europe had the lowest (29 per cent).

Figure 1: Female victims of intimate partner/family-related homicide and of intimate partner homicide as a percentage of female total homicide victims, by region, 2017



Source: UNODC homicide statistics (estimated).

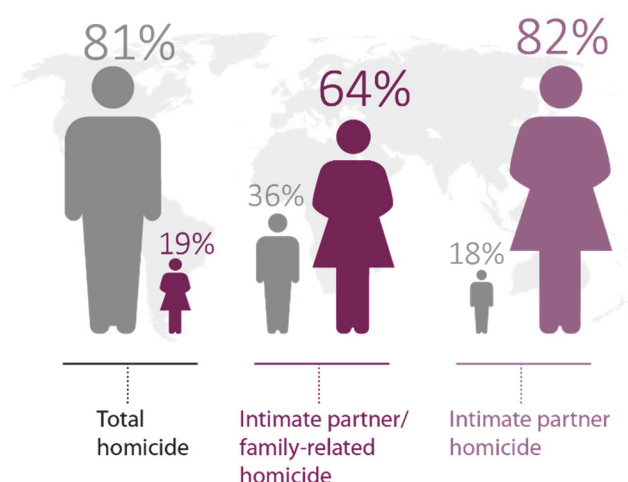
Note: Any differences between the counts and percentages presented are because of rounding.

Female burden of intimate partner/family-related homicide

Although intimate partner/family-related homicide is the most important factor in understanding the magnitude of female deaths resulting from intentional homicide, this form of homicide only accounts for a relatively small proportion of all (male and female) homicides recorded globally. While still far too many, fewer than one out of every five homicides (18 per cent) at the global level were perpetrated by an intimate partner or other family member in 2017. In terms of homicide perpetrated exclusively by an intimate partner (not including other family members), the proportion was lower: roughly one out of every eight (12 per cent) homicides.

At the regional level, the proportion of all homicides in 2017 perpetrated by intimate partners or other family members in Oceania (39 per cent), Asia and Europe (both 24 per cent) was significantly larger than in Africa and the Americas. In some countries in the Americas, very high homicide rates are associated with crime (mainly organized crime), which means that the shares of intimate partner/family-related homicide and of intimate partner homicide out of all homicides are smaller than in other regions, although the number of victims is still high in comparative terms. With the exception of Oceania, the disparity in the share of homicides committed by intimate partners or other family members and those committed purely by intimate partners is less marked between regions.

Although women and girls account for a far smaller share of total homicides than men, they bear by far the greatest burden of intimate partner/family-related homicide, and intimate partner homicide.



At the global level, men are around four times more likely than women to lose their lives as a result of intentional homicide: sex-disaggregated data on homicide reveal that the shares of male and female victims remained very stable, with roughly 80 per cent of all homicides committed globally involving male victims and 20 per cent involving female victims.

Only one out of every five homicides at the global level are perpetrated by an intimate partner or other family member, yet women and girls make up the vast majority of those deaths. Victim/perpetrator disaggregation reveals a large disparity in the shares of male and female victims of homicide committed by intimate partners or other family members: 36 per cent of victims were male, while 64 per cent were female.⁸ This represents an increase of 4 percentage points in the share of female victims of intimate partner/family-related homicide since 2014.

Women also bear the greatest burden in terms of intimate partner homicide. The disparity between the shares of male and female victims of homicide perpetrated exclusively by an intimate partner is

⁸ These findings are in line with those published by UNODC in the 2011 and 2013 editions of the *Global Study on Homicide*, which also showed that women were overwhelmingly represented in the share of victims of homicide committed by family members and intimate partners.

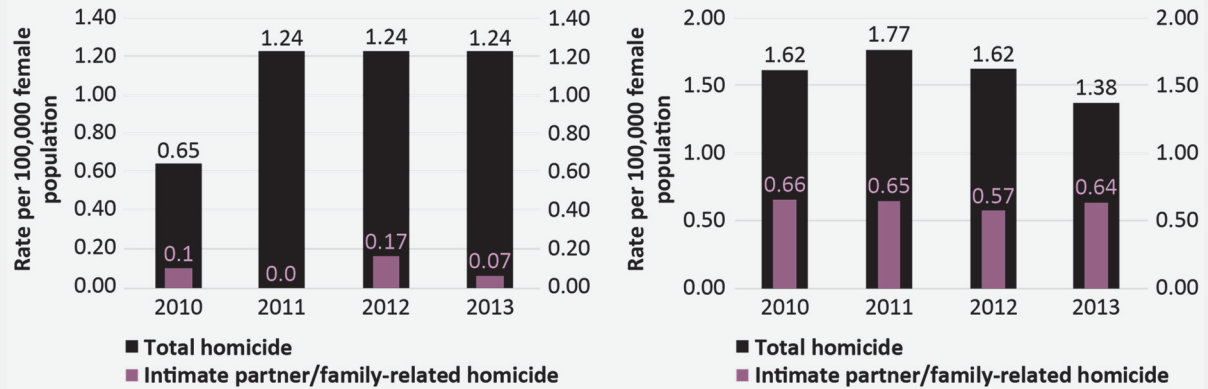
substantially larger than between male and female victims of homicide perpetrated by intimate partners or other family members. Out of the total number of victims of intimate partner homicide in 2017, roughly 82 per cent were female victims while 18 per cent were male victims – these shares have remained quite stable since 2012. Intimate partner violence continues to take a disproportionately heavy toll on women.

Male and female rates of intimate partner/family-related homicide

Because of existing limitations in the availability of data for countries in Africa and Asia, sex-disaggregated data on victims of intimate partner/family-related homicide can be analysed only for a few countries (see box 3). The picture emerging from this sample is one in which intimate partner/family-related homicide remains stable over time, despite changes in the overall homicide rate. These limited examples also show that some countries may be an exception to the global pattern in which women are more likely to be victims of intimate partner/family-related homicide than men. However, while both male and female homicide is perpetrated within the domestic sphere, it is possible that the relationship between victims and perpetrators is not recorded for all homicides. Progress has been made by countries in collecting sex-disaggregated homicide data, yet advances made in collecting homicide data disaggregated by victim/perpetrator relationship are still limited. There are therefore serious limitations in terms of data availability for this indicator, and, when reported, such figures may point to under-recording of victims.

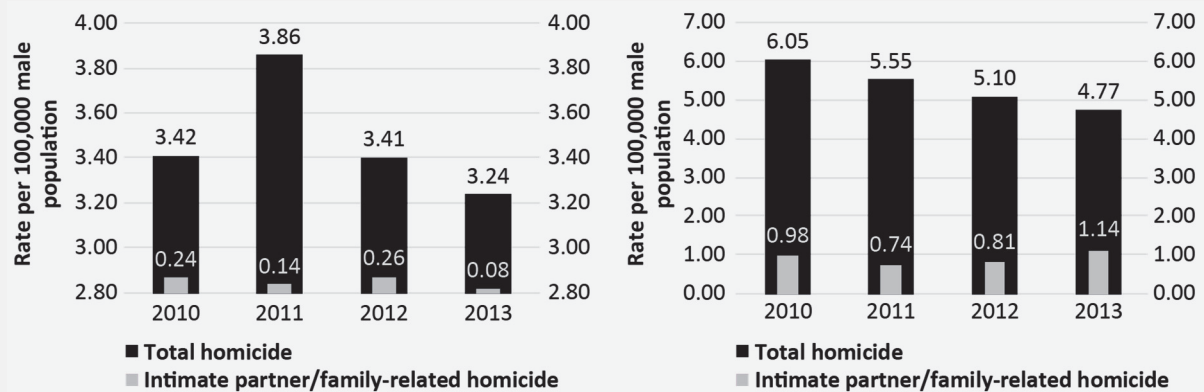
BOX 3: Male and female intimate partner/family-related homicide and total homicide in selected countries

Rates of female intimate partner/family-related homicide and of total homicide, Armenia (left) and Sri Lanka (right), 2010–2013



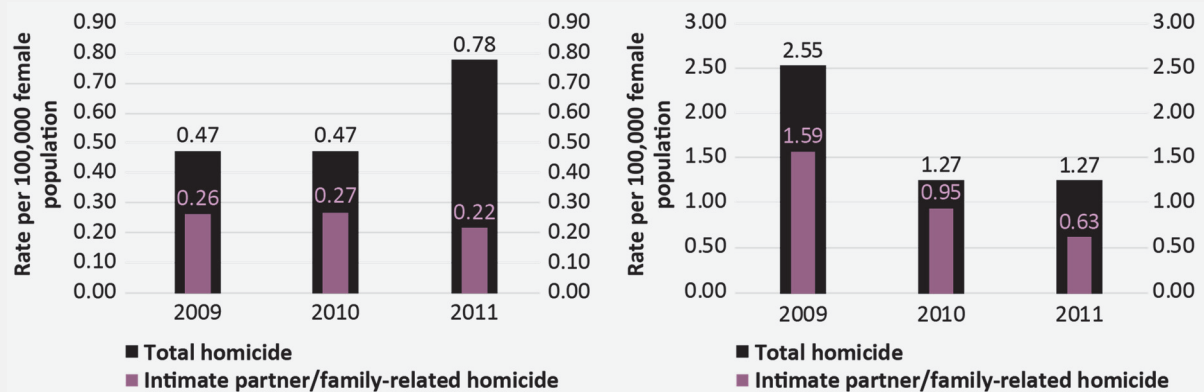
Source: UNODC homicide statistics.

Rates of male intimate partner/family-related homicide and of total homicide, Armenia (left) and Sri Lanka (right), 2010–2013



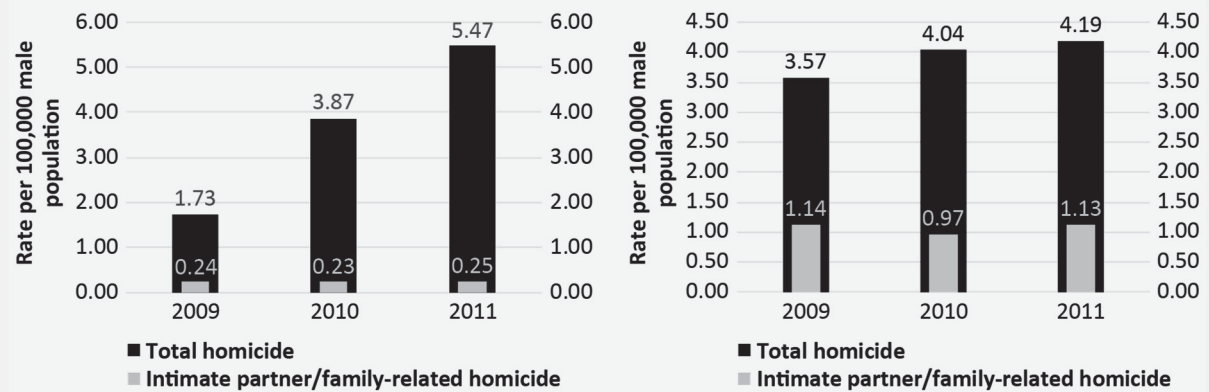
Source: UNODC homicide statistics.

Rates of female intimate partner/family-related homicide and of total homicide, Egypt (left) and Mauritius (right), 2009–2011



Source: UNODC homicide statistics.

Rates of male intimate partner/family-related homicide and of total homicide, Egypt (left) and Mauritius (right), 2009–2011



Source: UNODC homicide statistics.

Male and female rates of intimate partner homicide

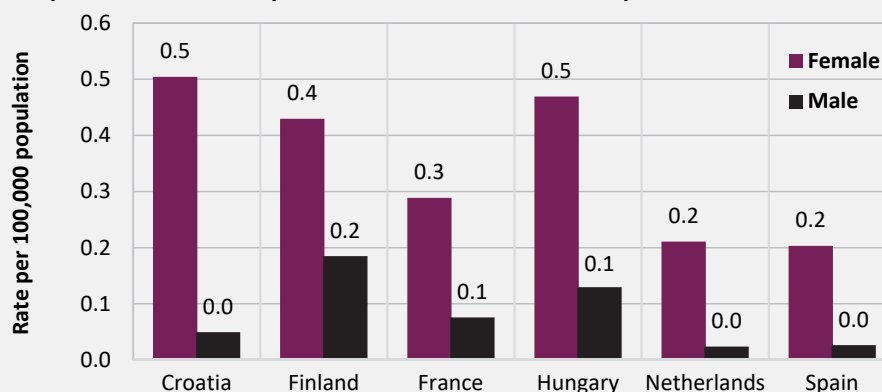
Although data availability on male and female rates of intimate partner homicide is very limited across regions, it is possible to put those rates into perspective in a sample of European and Latin American countries (see box 4). A substantial disparity is observable between these values across both regions, with the female rate being much higher than the male rate. In Europe, the female intimate partner homicide rate was, on average, four times higher than the male intimate partner homicide rate in 2016. As significant as this may be, it is important to highlight the fact that these rates are very low when compared with overall national homicide rates. In Latin America, the disparity was even larger, as the female intimate partner homicide rate was five times higher than the male rate.

Asia, Europe and Oceania generally have low levels of homicide but the share of women among all homicide victims tends to be higher than in regions with higher levels of homicide. This observation is in line with the first of “Verkko’s laws”, the “static law”, which holds that the higher the level of homicide, the smaller the share of female victims and perpetrators. In other words, in countries with low homicide rates the difference between male and female homicide rates is smaller than in countries with high homicide rates.⁹

⁹ Verkko, V., “Homicides and suicides in Finland and their dependence on national character”, *Scandinavian Studies in Sociology*, vol. 3 (Copenhagen, G. E. C. Gads Forlag, 1951).

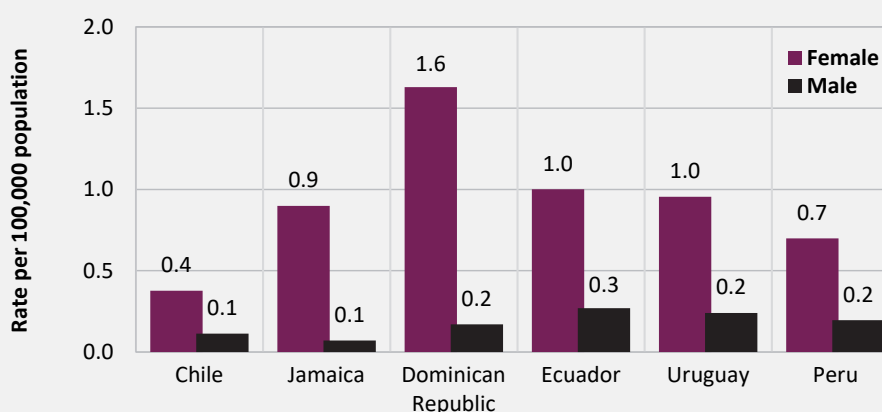
BOX 4: Male and female intimate partner homicide in selected countries

Rate of intimate partner homicide, by sex, selected countries in Europe, 2016



Source: UNODC homicide statistics.

Rate of intimate partner homicide, by sex, selected countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2016



Source: UNODC homicide statistics.

The context of gender-related killing of women and girls

While the ICCS classification provides the framework for recording homicide and crime data according to the situational context, geographical location, date, time and motive, very few countries release national data on the circumstances surrounding gender-related killings of women and girls. Anecdotal information is available for very few countries. Reports from Argentina¹⁰ and Peru indicate that the majority of gender-related killings of women and girls, or femicides, in those countries are perpetrated in large cities, usually the capital. In the case of Peru, the mechanisms for committing femicide are mainly asphyxiation or strangulation, stabbing, beating or shooting by firearm.¹¹ Over the period 2011–2014, the majority of gender-related killings in Peru occurred in the private sphere, whether in the house occupied by the perpetrator and the victim, the house of the victim or the house of the perpetrator.¹²

¹⁰ Argentina, Supreme Court of Justice, “Registro Nacional de Femicidios de la Justicia Argentina: Datos estadísticos del poder judicial sobre femicidios 2014–2016”. Available at www.csjn.gov.ar/om/femicidios.html.

¹¹ Peru, National Institute of Statistics and Informatics, “Homicidios en el Perú, contándolos uno a uno: 2011–2014”, Informe Estadístico, No. 3 (Lima, 2015), p. 37. Available at www.inei.gov.pe/media/MenuRecursivo/publicaciones_digitales/Est/Lib1289/libro.pdf.

¹² Peru, National Institute of Statistics and Informatics, “Homicidios en el Perú, contándolos uno a uno: 2011–2014”, p. 45.

DEFINING AND UNDERSTANDING GENDER-RELATED KILLING OF WOMEN AND GIRLS

Two terms, “femicide” and “feminicide”, are widely used in relation to the concept of gender-related killing of women and girls. The conventional understanding conveys the idea that hate crimes against women are perpetrated by men simply because of the gender roles assigned to women.

The term “femicide” was coined in the literature several decades ago to define the gender-related motivation associated with the killing of women and girls.¹³ Although the term has attracted attention to the extent that it is now used by some Governments and a wide range of stakeholders, at the global level there is no commonly agreed definition of what constitutes “femicide”. What is observable, however, is a plurality of definitions stemming from different legal and sociological approaches, which indicate the elements that may contribute to labelling a crime as “femicide”. The following section provides an overview of the sort of crimes that have been considered in the context of gender-related killing of women or “femicide”.

The history of the term “femicide” goes back to the 1970s,¹⁴ when it was coined to raise awareness of the violent deaths of women; it referred to the killing of females by males because they are females. Subsequently, “femicide” was defined in the first anthology on the topic, published in 1992, as “the misogynous killing of women by men motivated by hatred, contempt, pleasure, or a sense of ownership over women, rooted in historically unequal power relations between women and men”.¹⁵ In the past few decades, the term and its associated problem have been gaining recognition among academics, civil society organizations, international organizations and regional organizations such as the European Union.¹⁶ For example, a report by the United Nations Secretary General in 2006 referred to “femicide” as “the gender-based murder of a woman” and “the murder of women because they are women”.¹⁷ The report focused on certain settings and community contexts, such as intimate partner violence, armed conflict and dowry disputes, in which those crimes were being perpetrated. The report also highlighted certain characteristics of such homicides, as well as the underlying gender inequality between men and women that fuels them, thus illustrating the interrelationship between cultural norms and the use of violence in the subordination of women.¹⁹ In September 2018, the European Union and the United Nations launched a joint programme aimed at tackling “femicide” in Latin America.²⁰

While men are usually considered to be the perpetrators of gender-related killings of women and girls, this is not the case in all situations. Historically, the study of female victimization has been focused on intimate partner killings perpetrated by men, as intimate partner killings account for a significant share of gender-related killings of women and girls.²¹ Nevertheless, it is important to bear in mind that in some instances women can also be perpetrators of extreme gender-based violence against other women. For example, in cases of honour killings, both male and female family members may be complicit.

Several theoretical approaches to gender-related killing of women and girls have emerged in the contemporary literature. The feminist approach is connected to the notion of patriarchy, which highlights

¹³ See footnote 1.

¹⁴ Radford, J. and Russell, D. E. H., eds., *Femicide: The Politics of Woman Killing* (Buckingham, Open University Press, 1992).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

¹⁶ European Parliament resolution of 14 March 2017 on equality between women and men in the European Union in 2014–2015 (2016/2249(INI)). Available at www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P8-TA-2017-0073&language=EN.

¹⁷ A/61/122/Add.1, “In-depth study on all forms of violence against women”, Report of the Secretary-General (2006), paras. 127 (heading) and 84.

¹⁹ A/61/122/Add.1, paras. 69–85.

²⁰ European Commission, “Questions and answers: EU-UN Spotlight Initiative to eliminate violence against women and girls”, Fact Sheet, 26 February 2019. Available at http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-18-5904_en.htm.

²¹ Dawson, M. and Gartner R., “Differences in the characteristics of intimate femicides: the role of relationship state and relationship status”, *Homicide Studies*, vol. 2, No. 4 (November 1998), pp. 378–399.

the fact that power is unequally distributed between women and men in society, meaning that violence is often used as a tool by men to keep women under control.²²

The criminological approach to gender-related killing of women and girls, or “femicide”, which was developed in the past two decades, is now widely used in epidemiology and public health research.²³ Criminological studies apply different terms to the analysis of this phenomenon, with some studies applying the term broadly to indicate the killing of a woman,²⁴ while others focus on intimate partner homicide, which they analyse as a subset of the broader homicide category.²⁵

Previously defined by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences as the culmination of pre-existing forms of violence, often experienced in a continuum of violent acts, the notion of “femicide” is inextricably linked to violence against women.²⁶ As such, the violence experienced by women is influenced by conditions of gender-based discrimination, often reflected in patterns attributable to gender-related killings of women: structural factors influencing such discrimination are encountered at the macro level of social, economic and political systems.²⁷

Owing to the lack of a standardized definition of “femicide”, data collected by countries under this label are not comparable and cannot be used for global or regional estimates to provide an indication of the scale of this phenomenon. The way this type of offence is criminalized under a country’s legal system has an influence on the kind of data that are collected by the criminal justice system. Existing national reports on “femicide” indicate that official data sometimes capture the number of cases of what could be broadly considered gender-related killing of women and girls, and not necessarily the number of “femicide” victims and subsequent disaggregation concerning the perpetrators, mechanism and context of killings related to the number of victims.

The indicator “female victims of homicide perpetrated by intimate partners or other family members” is used instead, as this represents the only concept that has a standard definition across countries and, when operationalized, that yields comparable data. This concept is standardized in the ICCS classification.²⁸ The advantage of using this classification for the purpose of recording and collecting relevant statistical data is that it is built on a set of behaviours and not legal definitions enshrined in criminal codes, as the latter differ across countries (see box 5 for a comparison of data on the two indicators, “femicide” and “intimate partner/family-related homicide”).

²² Corradi, C. et al., “Theories of femicide and their significance for social research”, *Current Sociology*, vol. 64, No. 7 (November 2016), pp. 975–995.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Campbell, J. C. et al., “Risk factors for femicide in abusive relationships: results from a multisite site case control study”, *American Journal of Public Health*, vol. 93, No. 7 (July 2003), pp. 1089–1097.

²⁵ Stöckl, H. et al., “The global prevalence of intimate partner homicide: a systematic review”, *The Lancet*, vol. 382, No. 9895 (September 2013), pp. 859–865.

²⁶ A/HRC/20/16, Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, Rashida Manjoo (2012), para. 15.

²⁷ Ibid., para. 17.

²⁸ UNODC, *International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes: Version 1.0* (Vienna, 2015).

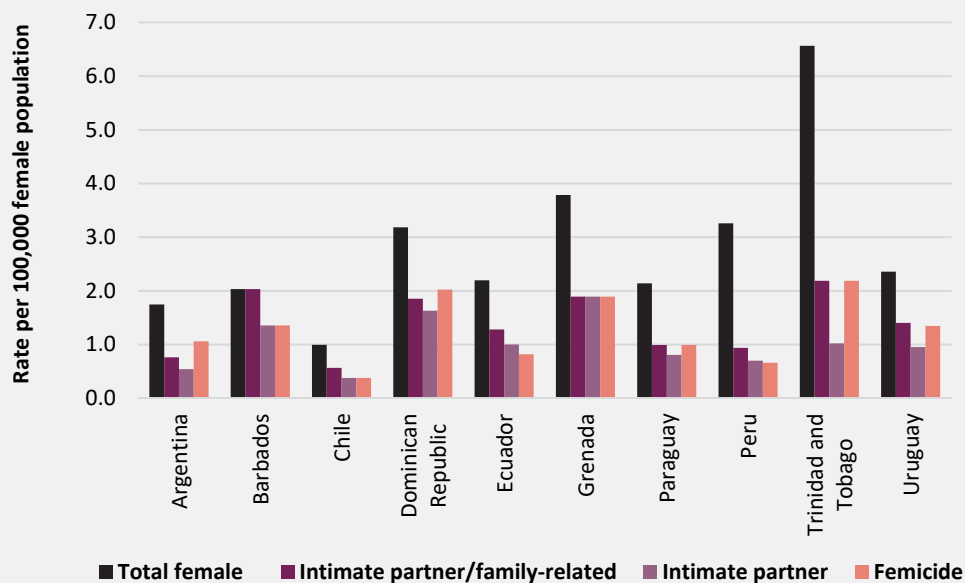
BOX 5: Comparison of data on “femicide”, female total homicide, and female intimate partner/family-related homicide

The charts below compare different data associated with the notion of gender-related killing of women and girls: the rates of female homicide, intimate partner/family-related homicide and “femicide” in countries where all three types of data are available. No consistent pattern emerges when comparing nationally defined data on “femicide” and the data collected under the standardized concept of intimate partner/family-related homicide. This depends on how “femicide” is defined in national legislation and whether the definition covers crimes committed in both the public and private spheres. In some countries, the two indicators have the same value, in others either the rate of “femicide” or the rate of intimate partner/family-related homicide is higher.

The analyses presented in the graphs below show that criminal justice recording practices regarding “femicide” vary significantly across countries that have adopted legislation to criminalize the offence. Legislation that addresses “femicide” helps to combat impunity and raise awareness in society of its gravity, but data resulting from specific “femicide” legislation may misinterpret the level of the crime. Even though certain countries have criminalized “femicide” as a separate criminal offence, in many instances such crimes are still being recorded and prosecuted purely as homicide. This is because of obstacles encountered during criminal proceedings, such as a lack of evidence to identify a perpetrator or to establish the circumstances in which the crime was committed. In such cases, data recorded as “femicide” may underestimate the number of gender-related killings. For statistical purposes, looking at behaviours observed during the criminal act and the type of relationship existing between victims and perpetrators, rather than at how the act is defined in the criminal justice system, provides measures that are more standardized across legislations and easier to interpret.

Comparison of levels

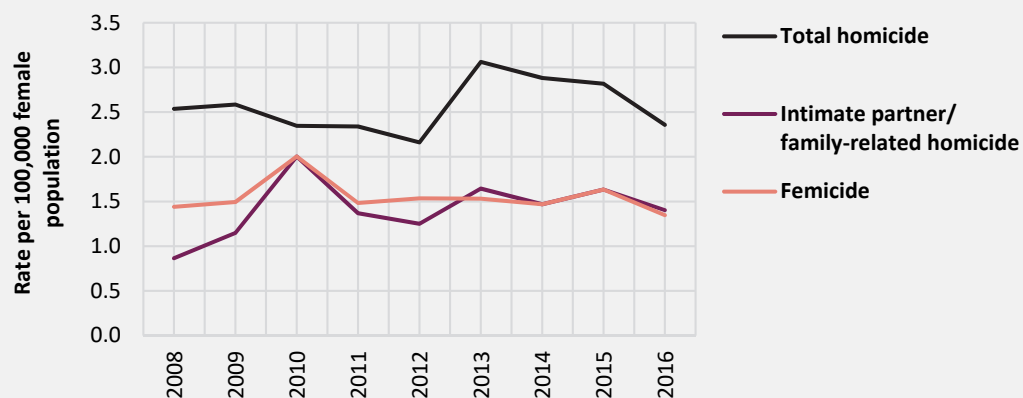
Rates of female total homicide, female intimate partner/family-related homicide, female intimate partner homicide and femicide, Latin America and the Caribbean, 2016 or latest available year



Source: UNODC homicide statistics; ECLAC.

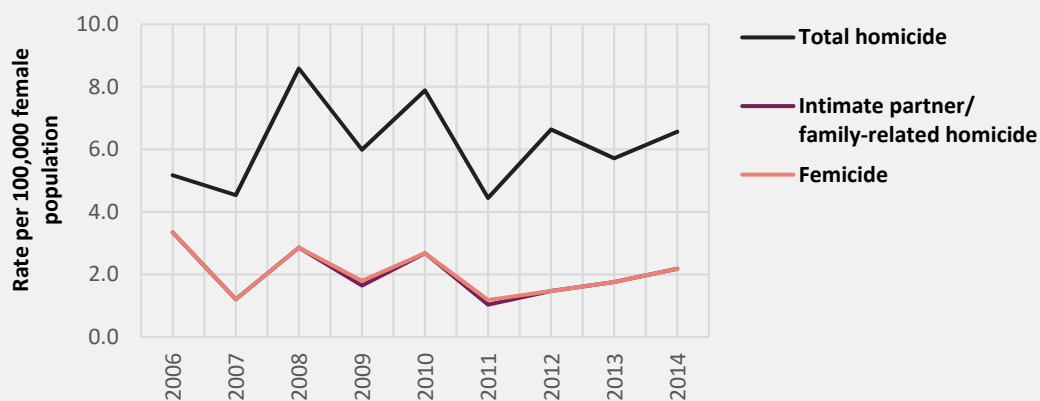
Comparison of trends

Rates of female total homicide, female intimate partner/family-related homicide and femicide, Uruguay, 2008–2016



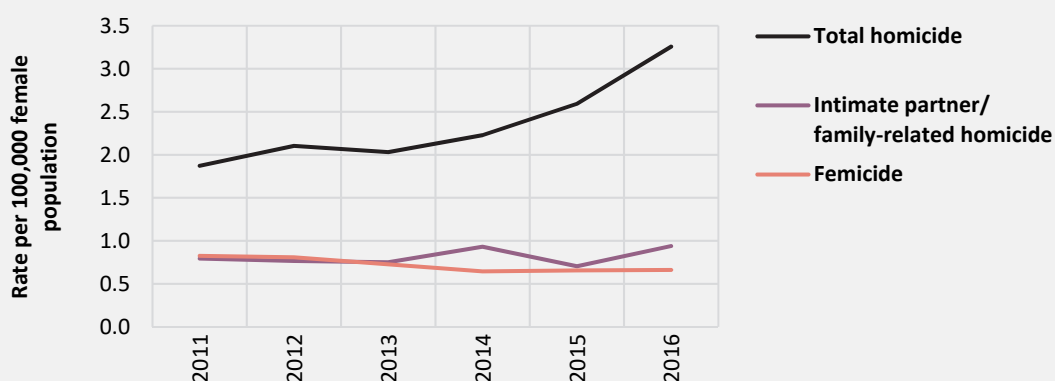
Source: UNODC homicide statistics; ECLAC.

Rates of female total homicide, female intimate partner/family-related homicide and femicide, Trinidad and Tobago, 2006–2014



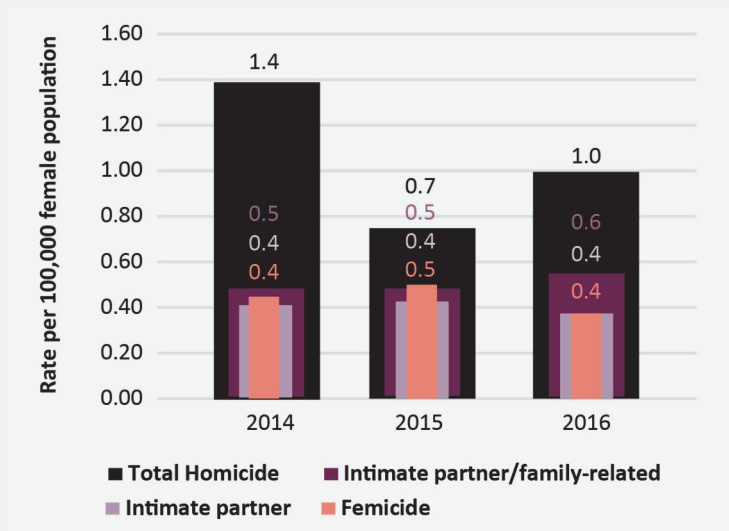
Source: UNODC homicide statistics; ECLAC.

Rates of female total homicide, female intimate partner/family-related homicide and femicide, Peru, 2011–2016



Source: UNODC homicide statistics; ECLAC.

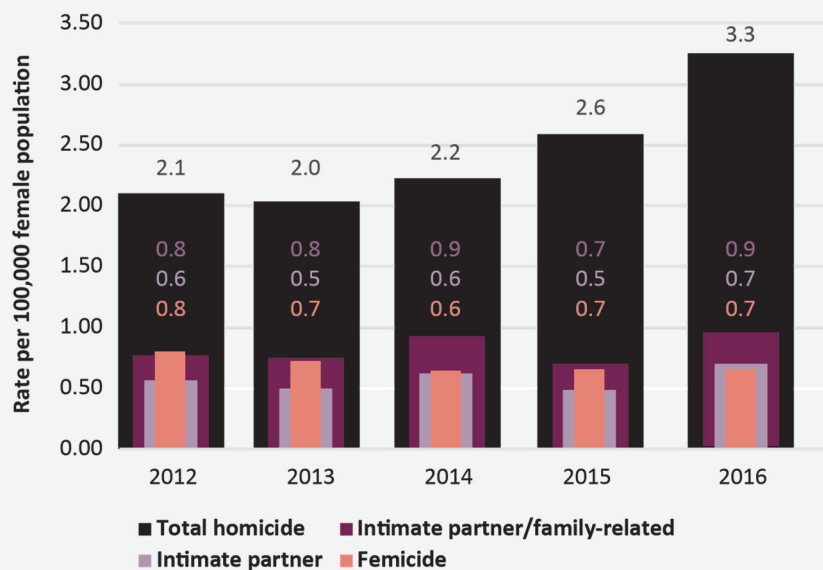
Rates of female total homicide, female intimate partner/family-related homicide and femicide, Chile, 2014–2016



Source: UNODC homicide statistics; National Prosecutor's Office; ECLAC.

Note: In accordance with national legislation in Chile, only cases of female homicide committed by current or former intimate partners are covered under the definition of femicide.

Rates of female total homicide, female intimate partner homicide and femicide, Peru, 2012–2016



Source: UNODC homicide statistics; ECLAC; Public Prosecution Service (Ministerio Público), Femicide Register.

It is important to recognize that the indicator “intimate partner/family-related homicide” is not exhaustive, as it does not capture all killings of women that may be considered under the label “femicide”, excluding those homicides perpetrated outside the family sphere, such as some killings of female sex workers or gender-related killings of women and girls in conflict situations. The availability of data on homicides perpetrated outside the family sphere is limited and, given the nature and circumstances in which such crimes are perpetrated, it is extremely difficult to identify the perpetrator, establish the motivation behind the crime and record it. Where data on gender-related killing of women and girls outside the family sphere are available, they show that the number of such killings outside conflict zones is very small in comparison

to the total number of killings resulting from intimate partner/family-related homicide. In Argentina and Peru, for example, where data on femicide/feminicide perpetrated both within and outside the intimate partner or family sphere are collected by the Government, the data indicate that the majority of cases are committed by intimate partners or other family members, with only a small percentage being committed by persons unknown to the victim.

While comparable global and regional estimates of gender-related killings of women and girls can, to date, only be based on intimate partner/family-related homicide, the description of different forms of gender-related killing of women and girls below provides an overview of other forms of gender-related killing of women and girls that occur outside the family sphere. The killing of female sex workers is presented as an example of gender-related killing outside the family sphere, although it represents a small proportion of all gender-related killings of women and girls, as indicated by data collected in Italy and Colombia.

BOX 6: United Nations initiatives to prevent and combat gender-related killing of women and girls

The United Nations General Assembly adopted two resolutions on gender-related killing of women and girls in 2013^a and 2015.^b

In 2014, UNODC convened an intergovernmental expert group meeting on gender-related killing of women and girls, which discussed United Nations reports and information provided by Member States and civil society organizations, and made a number of recommendations, notably on data collection and analysis.^c The recommendations envisage practical measures to be undertaken by Member States in order to improve the prevention, investigation, prosecution and punishment of gender-related killing. They are contained in the report of the Secretary-General on “Action against gender-related killing of women and girls”, issued in 2015.^d

The former United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences started to develop a knowledge base around the topic of “femicide” and identified an extensive set of direct and indirect categories.^e The current Special Rapporteur has identified prevention of “femicide” as an immediate priority of her mandate and emphasized the importance of collecting comparable data on “femicide” disaggregated by the relationship between victims and perpetrators, age and ethnicity of victims, together with information on the prosecution and punishment of perpetrators.^f To this end, the Special Rapporteur has called upon Member States to establish “femicide/gender-related killing of women watches”, which are mechanisms to be created at the national level, for the purpose of undertaking systematic and detailed recording of “femicide”, in order to further develop preventive measures and guide policymaking in this area.^g

^a A/RES/68/191.

^b A/RES/70/176.

^c For further information, see www.unodc.org/unodc/en/justice-and-prison-reform/expert-group-meetings7.html.

^d A/70/93.

^e A/HRC/20/16, para. 16.

^f A/HRC/32/42, Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences (2016), para. 45.

^g A/71/398, Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences (2016), para. 32.

Clustering gender-related killings of women and girls into different forms

The following is a description of recognizable forms of gender-related killing of women and girls based on the definition of “femicide” provided by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences. The prevalence of these different forms of killing may be global, regional or national.³⁶

1. Killings of women and girls as a result of intimate partner and domestic violence

Family homicides, also known as domestic homicides, include homicides perpetrated by intimate partners or by other family members: siblings, parents, children, other blood relatives and other members of the family. While in some countries the male and female shares of the reported number of victims of intimate partner homicides and family homicides are almost equal, this is far from being the case in other countries.

As shown earlier in this booklet, in the context of gender-related killing of women within the family sphere the perpetrators are often intimate partners. Intimate partner homicide refers to homicide committed by a current or previous intimate partner. Criminological literature uses the term “uxoricide” to denote the killing of a female intimate partner; strictly speaking, the term is only applicable to female victims, while “mariticide” is only applicable to male victims. However, given the fact that the vast majority of intimate partner homicide victims are women, uxoricide is often used to refer to the entire category.

The prevalence of intimate partner violence has been well documented in recent decades.³⁷ Previous studies on homicide point out that, without exception, females run a greater risk than men of falling victim to intimate partner homicide.³⁸ The first *Global Study on Homicide* (2011) showed that in certain countries, particularly in Europe, between 40 and 70 per cent of female victims of homicide may be killed by an intimate partner.

Intimate partner violence in general victimizes women above all, and the same can be said about homicides perpetrated by intimate partners. As mentioned earlier, in homicide cases where an intimate partner was implicated, 82 per cent of the victims were women, while 18 per cent were men.

Intimate partner violence against women and girls is rooted in widely accepted gender norms about men’s authority within society in general and the family in particular, and in men’s use of violence to exert control over women.³⁹ Research shows that men and boys who adhere to rigid views of gender roles and masculinity – for example, the belief that men need more sex than women or that men should dominate women, including sexually – are more likely to use violence against a partner, among other negative outcomes.⁴⁰ While available studies and their findings vary across different settings, some researchers have identified ideas of male privilege and control among the main factors likely to lead to the perpetration of violence against women.⁴¹ Key findings published by the World Health Organization (WHO) indicate that men are more likely to perpetrate violence if they have a limited education, a history of abuse during

³⁶ A/HRC/20/16.

³⁷ Dobash, R. E. et al., “Not an ordinary killer: just an ordinary guy – when men murder an intimate woman partner”, *Violence against Women*, vol. 10, No. 6 (June 2004), pp. 577–605; Campbell, J.C., Sharps, P. and Glass, N., “Risk assessment for intimate partner violence”, in *Clinical Assessment of Dangerousness: Empirical Contributions* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2000).

³⁸ UNODC, *Global Study on Homicide 2013* (United Nations publication, Sales No. 14.IV.1); UNODC, *Global Study on Homicide 2011* (Vienna, 2011).

³⁹ Dunkle, K. L. and Jewkes, R., “Effective HIV prevention requires gender-transformative work with men”, *Sexually Transmitted Infections*, vol. 83, No. 3 (June 2007), pp. 173–174.

⁴⁰ Courtenay, W. H., “Better to die than cry? A longitudinal and constructionist study of masculinity and the health risk behavior of young American men”, doctoral dissertation, University of California at Berkeley, 1998; Pulerwitz, J. and Barker, G., “Measuring attitudes toward gender norms among young men in Brazil: development and psychometric evaluation of the GEM Scale”, *Men and Masculinities*, vol. 10, No. 3 (April 2008), pp. 322–338.

⁴¹ Jewkes, R. K., “Intimate partner violence: causes and prevention”, *The Lancet*, vol. 359, No. 9315 (April 2002), pp. 1423–1429.

childhood, exposure to domestic violence against their mothers, harmful use of alcohol, unequal gender norms, including attitudes that normalize the use of violence, and a sense of entitlement over women.⁴²

When it comes to non-lethal violence against women, sexual violence in adolescent relationships tends to be associated with multiple individual and contextual factors, including exposure to adverse childhood experiences, poor conflict-resolution and relationship skills, and norms that condone the perpetration of violence.⁴³ The perpetration of sexual violence often occurs in the context of male peers who demonstrate negative attitudes towards females, endorse prejudices regarding homosexuality and condone the perpetration of abuse. As regards male adolescents, perceived peer tolerance of sexual violence in relationships may promote the individual likelihood of such behaviour and “may reduce comfort and [the] ability to intervene when faced with negative behaviors among peers, contributing to a social climate that enables such behavior”.⁴⁴

The vast majority of intimate partner homicides occur between heterosexual couples, most frequently involving a male perpetrator and a female victim. Intimate partner homicide among same-sex, bisexual and transgender couples also occurs, although much less frequently. Prior research in this area is scarce, and has focused mostly on same-sex relationships. However, research in the United States of America found that male same-sex intimate partner homicide occurs about 12 times more often than female same-sex homicides.⁴⁵ This pattern was confirmed by another study that used a Chicago homicide data set from the period 1965–1990, in which 41 homicides involved male same-sex couples while 5 homicides involved female same-sex couples.⁴⁶

A recent analysis in three European countries found that a total of 2 per cent of all intimate partner homicides involved male same-sex couples in both Finland and Sweden and 7 per cent involved male same-sex couples in the Netherlands. None of the intimate partner homicides in the timeframe studied occurred among female same-sex couples.⁴⁷

2. Honour-related killings of women and girls

Honour-related killings of women and girls are usually committed by family members when they consider that the behaviour of female family members has brought shame on the family and needs to be sanctioned. This kind of killing is a consequence of men’s domineering relationships with women.⁴⁸ Typical patterns of behaviour that are perceived to transgress strict patriarchal gender roles include a young woman eloping with a man other than the husband-to-be chosen by her family, and engaging in premarital relations. Honour killings have also been reported in which female rape victims have been killed by the male elders of their families, including fathers, uncles and brothers, in order to spare the family the shame associated with the stigma of sexual violence suffered by unmarried women.⁴⁹

Available data on honour killings are scarce, as such crimes often go unrecorded and unreported. Nevertheless, existing studies indicate that honour killing remains a practice that is encountered in parts of Asia, in particular. When perpetrated in rural areas, such crimes are particularly difficult to record, yet efforts have been made to reveal the scope of this problem in certain countries. In Afghanistan, for example, a national inquiry report published by the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission

⁴² See WHO, “Violence against women: key facts”, 29 November 2017. Available at www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women.

⁴³ Abebe, K. Z. et al., “Engendering healthy masculinities to prevent sexual violence: rationale for and design of the Manhood 2.0 trial”, *Contemporary Clinical Trials*, vol. 71 (2018), pp. 18–32.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁴⁵ Glass, N. et al., “Female-perpetrated femicide and attempted femicide: a case study”, *Violence against Women*, vol. 10, No. 6 (June 2004), pp. 606–625.

⁴⁶ Block, C. R. and Christakos, A., “Intimate partner homicide in Chicago over 29 years”, *Crime and Delinquency*, vol. 41, No. 4 (October 1995), pp. 496–526.

⁴⁷ Liem, M., et al., “Intimate partner homicide in Europe”, paper presented at the Colloque international sur l’homicide, Paris, May 2017.

⁴⁸ Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, *National Inquiry Report on Factors and Causes of Rape and Honor Killing in Afghanistan* (2013), p. 8.

⁴⁹ Puttick, M., *The Lost Women of Iraq: Family-based Violence during Armed Conflict* (Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights and Minority Rights Group International, 2015), p. 26.

estimated that some 243 cases of honour killing had occurred between April 2011 and August 2013.⁵⁰ The risk of falling victim to such crimes was higher among youth and the middle-aged. When the victim was an unmarried girl, the crime was usually committed by male family members; there were some cases, however, in which the killing was perpetrated by female family members.⁵¹

Anecdotal evidence provided by news outlets and human rights commissions in some Asian countries has indicated that many victims of honour killing were married women and that the perpetrator was often the husband. The motive for the killing was frequently linked to the victim's illicit affairs, or her choice of husband. In certain instances, other members of the family, such as parents, siblings, uncles, in-laws, other distant relatives or even neighbours and acquaintances were responsible for the crimes. The mechanisms used for committing honour killings often include firearms and, to a lesser extent, blunt objects and strangulation, beating and burning. The majority of victims were not employed.

3. Dowry-related killings of women

Dowry-related killings of women – which occur when brides are killed or are driven to commit suicide after being subjected to continuous harassment and abuse by the groom's family in an effort to extort dowry payment or increased dowry involving cash or goods –⁵² are widely reported in South Asian countries. A common manifestation of this practice is the burning of the wife, such incidents often being presented to criminal justice authorities as accidents caused by an exploding kitchen stove.⁵³ Despite the fact that many of the countries in which dowry deaths are prevalent have adopted legislation banning the practice of dowry, it remains embedded in religious and cultural traditions in South Asian countries.⁵⁴

BOX 7: Dowry-related killings in India

Dowry deaths constitute a unique category of deaths in the Indian Penal Code, which has been amended in recent decades to deal specifically with dowry-related violence.^a The offence "dowry death" was introduced into the Indian Penal Code in 1986 as section 304B by an amendment to the Dowry Prohibition Act. Section 498A of the Indian Penal Code penalizes any kind of harassment by a husband's family; the penal provisions of section 304B apply in any unnatural death of a woman within seven years of her marriage. In cases where a woman commits suicide as a result of harassment by her husband or his family, non-dowry-related section 306 is applicable. In cases of dowry-related suicide, both sections 304B and 306 are applicable. Available data on dowry-related killings from the National Crime Records Bureau indicate that female dowry deaths account for 40 to 50 per cent of all female homicides recorded annually in India, representing a stable trend over the period from 1999 to 2016. Despite legislation adopted by the Indian Government in 1961 that prohibits the payment of dowry,^b the practice continues throughout the country and dowry deaths continue to account for a substantial share of all female homicides.

⁵⁰ Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, *National Inquiry Report on Factors and Causes of Rape and Honor Killing in Afghanistan*, p. 4.

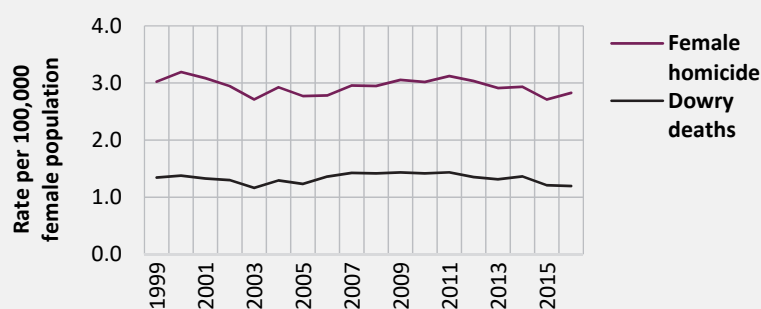
⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² A/HRC/20/16, para. 56.

⁵³ Saha, K. K. and Mohanthy, S., "Alleged dowry death: a study of homicidal burns", *Medicine, Science and the Law*, vol. 46, No. 2 (April 2006), pp. 105–111.

⁵⁴ United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, "Harmful traditional practices in three countries of South Asia: culture, human rights and violence against women", Gender and Development Discussion Paper Series, No. 21 (2012).

Rates of female homicide and dowry-related death, India, 1999–2016



Source: National Crime Records Bureau, India.

^a Belur, J. et al., “The social construction of ‘dowry deaths’”, *Social Science and Medicine*, vol. 119 (October 2014), pp. 1–9.

^b For more information, see India, Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961.

4. Killings of women in the context of armed conflict

The practice of targeting women in an armed conflict and the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war has been documented in several reports published by the United Nations.⁵⁷ The systematic rape of women is used to destroy the fabric of societies, as women who have suffered conflict rape are often shunned and ostracized by their communities. Mass rapes and killings of women and girls were documented in the conflicts in Rwanda in 1994 and more recently in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.⁵⁸ Mass killings of Yazidi women by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) are reported to have taken place in recent years in the Sinjar District in Iraq, where several mass graves have been discovered.⁵⁹

Killings of women in conflict are often preceded by sexual abuse. Women are sometimes killed together with their families; in other instances they are forced into slavery and subjected to sexual abuse.⁶⁰ Although it is not possible to accurately record gender-related killings of women and girls during armed conflict, it is important to note that sexual violence, kidnapping and enslavement accompanied, or preceded, by intentional killing has been systematically used against women in times of conflict. For this reason, these unrecorded gender-based killings of women and girls may substantially elevate the global number of victims of this type of homicide. The ICCS classification also considers intentional killings of civilians, i.e. non-combatants, during armed conflict as intentional homicides, irrespective of whether they are committed by combatants or non-combatants.⁶¹

5. Gender-based killings of aboriginal and indigenous women

The thematic report issued in 2012 by the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences categorizes the killing of aboriginal and indigenous women as a form of “femicide”.⁶² This categorization is made in the context of social, cultural, economic and political marginalization faced by aboriginal and indigenous women, which exacerbates their vulnerabilities. Data on gender-related killings of aboriginal and indigenous women are very scarce, making it a challenge to comprehensively analyse this phenomenon. Data from Canada show that aboriginal and indigenous girls may experience much higher levels of violence than non-aboriginal women, both in terms of victimization (as indicated by data collected

⁵⁷ A/HRC/37/CRP.3, “‘I lost my dignity’: sexual and gender-based violence in the Syrian Arab Republic”, conference room paper of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (2018).

⁵⁸ S/2017/249, Report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence (2017), paras. 32–38.

⁵⁹ A/HRC/32/CRP.2, “‘They came to destroy’: ISIS crimes against the Yazidis” (2016), para. 48.

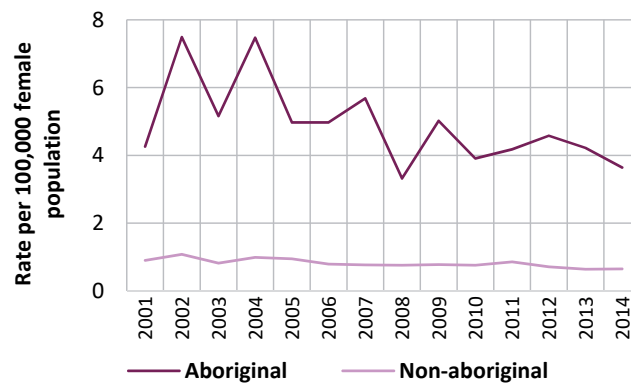
⁶⁰ A/HRC/37/CRP.3, para. 17.

⁶¹ UNODC, “Unlawful killings in conflict situations”, ICCS Briefing Note (2017), p. 2.

⁶² For further information, see A/HRC/20/16, paras. 61–65.

through the General Social Survey)⁶³ and lethal violence (as shown by data collected through the Canadian Homicide Survey). While these data are not disaggregated by motive and it is not possible to specifically identify gender-related violence, they point to a significant problem that requires further research. The murder and disappearance of large numbers of aboriginal women prompted the Government of Canada to launch a national public inquiry in 2015 to investigate such cases.⁶⁴ Victimization of aboriginal women and girls is also encountered in other regions, such as Central America and Oceania.⁶⁵ In Guatemala, for example, large-scale violent killings of indigenous Maya women were perpetrated in the 1980s during the Civil War.⁶⁶

Figure 2: Rates of aboriginal and non-aboriginal female homicide, Canada, 2001–2014



Source: Statistics Canada.

6. Extreme forms of violent killings of women

Extreme violent killings of women take place in the context of phenomena such as organized crime, drug dealing, gangs, massive migration and human and drug trafficking chains. Trafficking in persons affects more women than men, the former being trafficked predominantly for sexual exploitation.⁶⁷ Killings related to victims of human trafficking are therefore likely to affect women and involve a gender-related motive.

Not much is known about gender-related killing of women in the context of organized crime. The illegal context of organized crime reduces the scope for gender-related killings to be perpetrated in the context of illegal markets (unless they are related to the nature of the business, as in the context of human trafficking) because of the overwhelming need for offenders to minimize risk and exposure. Research on gender roles in gangs has shown that while male gang members generally experience higher rates of street victimization than female gang members, the violent victimization of female gang members can be sexual in nature and perpetrated not only by rival gang members but also by fellow gang members. In addition, women associated with male gang members are at greater risk of serious violence than women who are not.⁶⁸

7. Killings as a result of sexual orientation and gender identity

Gender-related killing as a result of sexual orientation and gender identity represents another form of “femicide” that has been insufficiently documented and analysed.⁶⁹ Such killings have also been labelled

⁶³ Boyce, J., *Victimization of Aboriginal People in Canada, 2014* (Statistics Canada, Ministry of Industry, 2016).

⁶⁴ Canada, National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, *Our Women and Girls Are Sacred: Interim Report* (Privy Council Office, 2017), p. 19.

⁶⁵ A/HRC/20/16, para. 61.

⁶⁶ Carey, D. and Torres, M. G., “Precursors to femicide: Guatemalan women in a vortex of violence”, *Latin American Research Review*, vol. 45, No. 3 (2010), pp. 142–164.

⁶⁷ UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.16.IV.6).

⁶⁸ Gartner, R. and McCarthy, B., eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Gender, Sex, and Crime* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014).

⁶⁹ A/HRC/20/16, para. 71.

as “gender bias crimes”; they reflect controlling behaviour in which others are judged according to heterosexual norms.⁷⁰

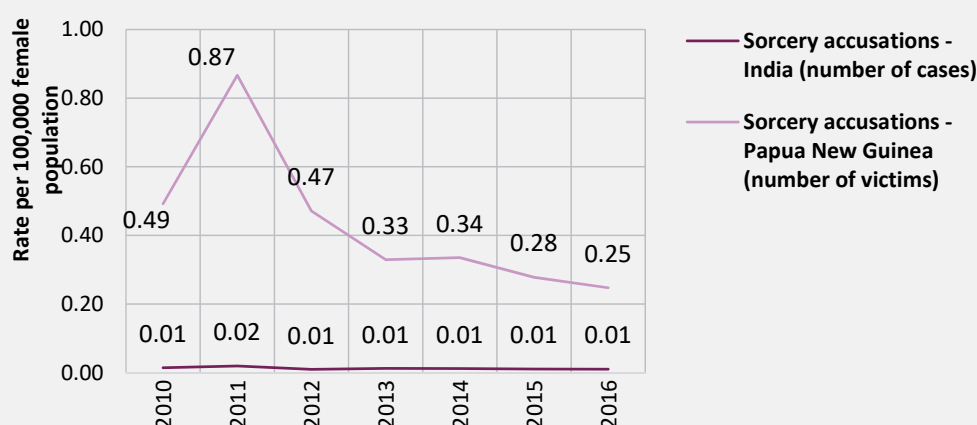
8. Killings of women due to accusations of sorcery or witchcraft

Intentional killings of women due to sorcery- or witchcraft-related accusations have been reported in Africa, Asia and the Pacific Islands.⁷¹ Existing studies analysing witchcraft killings in countries in Africa point out that, although young women, including girls, are also liable to be accused of witchcraft and be killed,⁷² women face an increasing risk as they reach old age. Women in rural areas who live alone, as is often the case with widows, are particularly exposed because of their increasing financial dependency on male family members.⁷³

The occurrence of such killings can be traced back to “witchcraft statutes”. Previously part of the national legislation of Papua New Guinea and possibly still in vigour in other countries, these statutes seem to doubt or deny the existence of witchcraft, while recognizing that witchcraft can kill.⁷⁴ In spite of the fact that such legislation has been repealed in recent years, popular belief in witchcraft remains, particularly in rural areas. This is the case in Papua New Guinea, where all ethnic groups (approximately 800) have a system of beliefs that account for the existence of sorcery.⁷⁵

BOX 8: Women killed because of sorcery accusations in Africa and Asia

Rate of homicide resulting from sorcery accusations, India and Papua New Guinea, 2010–2016



Source: India: National Crime Records Bureau; Papua New Guinea: Forsyth, M. et al., “Sorcery accusation-related violence in Papua New Guinea Part 2: key characteristics of incidents, victims and perpetrators”, In Brief series, No. 2017/29 (Australian National University, Department of Pacific Affairs, 2017).

Sorcery accusations affect some women living in countries in Africa, Asia and Oceania and can be the driver behind gender-related killings. Data from Papua New Guinea and India on homicide resulting from sorcery accusations show that, albeit in small proportions, this phenomenon still exists. Although the data are not disaggregated by sex, it is likely that women account for a large share of the victims.

⁷⁰ Kelley, K. and Gruenewald, J., “Accomplishing masculinity through anti-lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender homicide: a comparative case study approach”, *Men and Masculinities*, vol. 18, No. 1 (April 2015), pp. 3–29.

⁷¹ A/HRC/20/16, para. 36.

⁷² United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), *Children Accused of Witchcraft: An Anthropological Study of Contemporary Practices in Africa* (Dakar, UNICEF West and Central Africa Regional Office, 2010), p. 5.

⁷³ Miguel, E., “Poverty and witch killing”, *Review of Economic Studies*, vol. 72, No. 4 (October 2005), pp. 1153–1172.

⁷⁴ Mutungi, O. K., “Witchcraft and the criminal law in East Africa”, *Valparaiso University Law review*, vol. 5, No. 3 (1971), pp. 524–555.

⁷⁵ Auka, R., Gore, B. and Koralyo, P. R., “Sorcery- and witchcraft-related killings in Papua New Guinea: the criminal justice system response”, in *Talking it Through: Responses to Sorcery and Witchcraft Beliefs and Practices in Melanesia* (Canberra, Australian National University Press, 2015).

9. Other forms of gender-related killings of women and girls

Although some cultural norms and practices can empower women and promote their human rights, certain traditions and religious values can be used as a justification for violence against women.⁷⁶ Across the world, certain cultural norms and beliefs have often been used to justify harmful practices, such as female genital mutilation, child marriage and son preference, which result in violence against women and girls.⁷⁷ When these harmful practices lead to the death of women and girls, they represent another form of gender-related killing. Such practices include female infanticide, which is linked to sex-selective abortions. While abortion may not be considered a crime under many jurisdictions, sex-selective abortions that favour male babies have been labelled “femicide” in some contexts. This practice is said to occur when parents attribute less worth to girls than boys after they are born, which is rooted in cultural and social practices that are discriminatory towards women, as are inheritance laws that prevent daughters from inheriting property in the same way that sons do.⁷⁸ Available data demonstrate that in 2012 prenatal sex selection occurred not only in countries in South and East Asia, such as China and India, but also in South-Eastern Europe and the southern Caucasus.⁷⁹ Nevertheless, countries such as the Republic of Korea have managed to reverse the historical prevalence of this practice through a combination of socioeconomic policies centred around women’s access to education, urbanization and instituting a national welfare system for elderly people, who find themselves less dependent on their sons when reaching old age.⁸⁰

Killing of female sex workers

United Nations terminology surrounding prostitution includes the terms “prostitute” and “sex worker”. The first term is used in the context of trafficking in persons and sexual exploitation – for example, in the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, in which one of the forms of exploitation is the exploitation of the prostitution of others. The second term is used more broadly, particularly in the context of promoting the rights of female sex workers in some Member States, or ensuring safe access to HIV treatment.

The killing of female sex workers is another example of the homicide of women in which attitudes of possessiveness and male superiority may play a role. Female sex workers have the highest homicide victimization rate of any set of women ever studied.⁸¹ Epidemiological studies based on United States data suggest that the likelihood of active female sex workers being victimized in a homicide is almost 18 times higher than that of women of similar age and race who do not engage in sex work.⁸² Other, less conservative, estimates point to female sex workers running a risk of being killed which is 60 to 120 times higher than that of non-female sex workers.⁸³

It should be noted that not all homicides of sex workers are gender related; sex work often takes place in a highly criminal environment. Research indicates that the vast majority of female sex workers are killed by clients.^{84, 85} Motives may also include disputes over the appropriate fee paid for the sexual service, hate

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ A/61/122/Add.1, para. 78.

⁷⁸ WHO, *Preventing gender-biased sex selection: an interagency statement OHCHR, UNFPA, UNICEF, UN Women and WHO* (2011).

⁷⁹ United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), *Sex Imbalances at Birth: Current Trends, Consequences and Policy Implications* (Bangkok, UNFPA Asia and the Pacific Regional Office, 2012), p. 9.

⁸⁰ Chung, W. and Das Gupta, M., “Why is son preference declining in South Korea? The role of development and public policy, and the implications for China and India”, Policy Research Working Paper, No. 4373, (World Bank, 2007).

⁸¹ Brewer, D. D. et al., “Extent, trends, and perpetrators of prostitution-related homicide in the United States”, *Journal of Forensic Sciences*, vol. 51, No. 5 (September 2006), pp. 1101–1108.

⁸² Potterat, J. J. et al., “Mortality in a long-term open cohort of prostitute women”, *American Journal of Epidemiology*, vol. 159, No. 8 (April 2004), pp. 778–785.

⁸³ Salfati, C. G., James, A. R. and Ferguson, L., “Prostitute homicides: a descriptive study”, *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, vol. 23, No. 4 (April 2008), pp. 505–543.

⁸⁴ Brewer et al., “Extent, trends, and perpetrators of prostitution-related homicide in the United States”.

⁸⁵ Potterat et al., “Mortality in a long-term open cohort of prostitute women”.

crime (hatred of sex workers and sexually active women)⁸⁶ and robbery.⁸⁷ Prostitution, i.e. sex work in a narrower sense, is associated with factors that contribute to an increased risk of violent crime, including lack of shelter, physical proximity to high-crime areas, engaging in high-risk behaviours (e.g. substance abuse), mental illness and a history of previous victimization.⁸⁸ From this perspective, because of the nature of their work, female sex workers are more at risk of victimization than women who do not engage in sex work.

Their high level of mobility and decreased likelihood of informing their family and friends of their whereabouts when moving to a different location adds to the vulnerability of these women. Sex workers are thus part of a population group referred to as the “missing missing”, i.e. missing individuals who are never reported as missing.⁸⁹ As prior research points out, this has direct consequences for the detection of such homicides, as their disappearance is less likely to be noticed immediately and reported to the police.⁹⁰ Perhaps owing to the lack of attention given to their disappearance, they constitute easier targets for serial homicide.⁹¹ Conservative estimates in the United States suggest that serial killers account for one third of all homicides of female sex workers, with nearly all serial perpetrators being clients.⁹²

Given the marginalization of female sex workers in society, some men may find it easier to rationalize violence against them than against women who are not sex workers.⁹³ Furthermore, in the eyes of a homicide perpetrator, a sex worker’s lack of social status may make him downplay her killing and dehumanize her.⁹⁴

Data on the killing of sex workers are not collected systematically at the international level. Therefore, data from only a handful of countries are presented here. However, these data are also likely to heavily underreport the phenomenon because such homicides are particularly susceptible to not being reported at all or to being misreported.

In the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, according to a report published by the House of Commons, an estimated 152 sex workers were killed between 1990 and 2015.⁹⁵ In Colombia, a report published by the National Institute for Legal Medicine and Forensic Sciences stated that 239 female sex workers were killed between 2004 and 2013. In over 40 per cent of cases, the killing was committed by firearm, on a public street or highway, and the murder context revolved around an argument, vengeance or settling of scores. Over 50 per cent of the victims were between 20 and 29 years of age, representing 119 murder cases.⁹⁷ In Italy, data presented in the 2017 annual parliamentary report on violence against women indicate that a total of 72 female sex workers were killed in the period 2009–2016.⁹⁸

⁸⁶ Salfati, James and Ferguson, “Prostitute homicides: a descriptive study”.

⁸⁷ Beauregard, E. and Martineau, M., “A descriptive study of sexual homicide in Canada: implications for police investigation”, *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, vol. 57, No. 12 (December 2013), pp. 1454–1476.

⁸⁸ Quinet, K., “Prostitutes as victims of serial homicide: trends and case characteristics, 1970–2009”, *Homicide Studies*, vol. 15, No. 1 (February 2011), pp. 74–100.

⁸⁹ Quinet, K., “The missing missing: toward a quantification of serial murder victimization in the United States”, *Homicide Studies*, vol. 11, No. 4 (November 2007), pp. 319–339.

⁹⁰ Beauregard and Martineau, “A descriptive study of sexual homicide in Canada”.

⁹¹ Salfati, James and Ferguson, “Prostitute homicides: a descriptive study”.

⁹² Brewer et al., “Extent, trends, and perpetrators of prostitution-related homicide in the United States”.

⁹³ Salfati, James and Ferguson, “Prostitute homicides: a descriptive study”.

⁹⁴ Quinet, “Prostitutes as victims of serial homicide”.

⁹⁵ United Kingdom, House of Commons, Home Affairs Committee, *Prostitution: Third Report of Session 2016–17* (2016), p. 3.

⁹⁷ Colombia, National Institute for Legal Medicine and Forensic Sciences, “Homicidios de mujeres en condición de prostitución durante los años 2004 a 2013”, *Boletín Epidemiológico* (2014), pp. 11–14.

⁹⁸ Italy, Senate of the Republic, *Femminicidio: Stalking, malamore, maltrattamenti e altre violenze di genere – i primi dati della Commissione parlamentare d’inchiesta* (25 November 2017).

PERPETRATORS OF INTIMATE PARTNER KILLINGS OF WOMEN AND GIRLS

Victim and perpetrator characteristics

Research shows that the killing of women and girls by intimate partners does not result from random or spontaneous acts.⁹⁹ It is therefore useful to identify and analyse the factors that precede such killings, along with the traits and characteristics of the perpetrators, among whom considerable gender differences exist. For example, male and female perpetrators of intimate partner homicide seem to belong to distinct groups,¹⁰⁰ not only in terms of prevalence rates, but also in terms of the motivations behind the offence: motivations typically reported by men include possessiveness, jealousy and fear of abandonment, while motivations reported by women relate to extended periods of suffering physical violence.¹⁰¹ A recent Australian study on intimate partner homicide concluded that the majority of such homicides (80 per cent) involved men killing a current or former intimate partner. Nearly a quarter of such men were known to the authorities for having been violent towards their intimate partners in the past. It was also found that almost half of the men killed their partner within three months of the relationship ending.¹⁰²

Some studies have shown that, on average, both victims and offenders in intimate partner homicide are older than victims of non-intimate partner homicide. Studies in the United States have indicated that female victims of intimate partner violence tend to be younger than their assailants,¹⁰³ as female victims are often in relationships with men who are older than them.¹⁰⁴ Couples with large age discrepancies were found to be at a particularly high risk for this type of homicide, especially when the male partner was around 15 years older than the female partner.¹⁰⁵

Earlier studies have indicated that male perpetrators of intimate partner homicide in the United States are disproportionately poor, young and members of minority ethnic groups, often with a history of violence and substance abuse.¹⁰⁶

What emerges from studies that compare intimate partner homicide perpetrators with perpetrators who kill outside the family is that intimate partner homicide offenders tend to be more “conventional” than men who kill other men¹⁰⁷ and compared with the perpetrators of other types of homicide.¹⁰⁸ In the United Kingdom, in a study that compared over 100 male intimate partner homicide offenders with over 400 male/male homicide perpetrators, it was found that intimate partner homicide perpetrators had achieved a higher level of school education and were less likely to be unemployed than perpetrators of other types of homicide.¹⁰⁹ Also, male intimate partner homicide offenders were found to be less likely to have a

⁹⁹ Adams, D., *Why Do They Kill? Men Who Murder Their Intimate Partners* (Nashville, Tennessee, Vanderbilt University Press, 2007).

¹⁰⁰ Caman, S. et al., “Differentiating male and female intimate partner homicide perpetrators: a study of social, criminological and clinical factors”, *International Journal of Forensic Mental Health*, vol. 15, No. 1 (2016) pp. 26–34.

¹⁰¹ Belknap, J. et al., “Types of intimate partner homicides committed by women: self-defense, proxy/retaliation, and sexual proprietariness”, *Homicide Studies*, vol. 16, No. 4 (November 2012), pp. 359–379.

¹⁰² Domestic Violence Death Review Team, *Australian Domestic and Family Violence Death Review Network: Data Report 2018* (Sydney, 2018), p. xii.

¹⁰³ DeJong, C., Pizarro-Terrill, J. and McGarrell, E. F., “Can situational and structural factors differentiate between intimate partner and ‘other’ homicide?”, *Journal of Family Violence*, vol. 26, No. 5 (July 2011), pp. 365–376.

¹⁰⁴ Breitman, N., Shackelford, T. K. and Block, C. R., “Couple age discrepancy and risk of intimate partner homicide”, *Violence and Victims*, vol. 19, No. 3 (June 2004), pp. 321–342.

¹⁰⁵ Garcia, L., Soria, C. and Hurwitz, E. L., “Homicides and intimate partner violence: a literature review”, *Trauma, Violence and Abuse*, vol. 8, No. 4 (October 2007), pp. 370–383.

¹⁰⁶ Weiner, N.A. et al., *Violence: Patterns, Causes, Public Policy* (Belmont, California, Wadsworth Publishing, 1990).

¹⁰⁷ Kivivuori, J. and Lehti, M., “Social correlates of intimate partner homicide in Finland: distinct or shared with other homicide types?”, *Homicide Studies*, vol. 16, No. 1 (February 2012), pp. 60–77.

¹⁰⁸ Dobash, E. R. and Dobash, R. P., *When Men Murder Women* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2015); Weizmann-Henelius, G. et al., “Gender-specific risk factors for intimate partner homicide: a nationwide register-based study”, *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, vol. 27, No. 8 (May 2012), pp. 1519–1539.

¹⁰⁹ Dobash et al., “Not an ordinary killer: just an ordinary guy”.

criminal record than other types of homicide offenders.¹¹⁰ Other studies based on data from Finland,¹¹¹ Sweden¹¹² and the United Kingdom¹¹³ seem to suggest that intimate partner homicide perpetrators are less disadvantaged with regard to employment, housing and criminal history than other types of homicide perpetrators.¹¹⁴ Furthermore, intimate partner homicides are less frequently premeditated than others.¹¹⁵ It should be noted, however, that some intimate partner homicide perpetrators are different from the general population in that they stand out in terms of social contact and relationship problems, which often lie at the root of the lethal conflict.¹¹⁶

A recent study of male prisoners in Turkey, which sought to identify psychosocial characteristics of “femicide” perpetrators, could not uncover a specific psychopathology that could be assigned to them.¹¹⁷ Nevertheless, migration and perception of gender roles were labelled as factors that help differentiate between men who perpetrate violence against women and those who do not. Such findings underline the importance of understanding “femicide” as a primarily societal phenomenon, rather than an act stemming from the individual.¹¹⁸

A study in Ghana of perpetrators of intimate partner “femicide” who committed suicide after killing their partners indicated that offenders were both of a lower socioeconomic background and, on average, older than the victim.¹¹⁹ The study, which analysed 35 reported cases of intimate partner “femicide”/suicides that occurred between 1990 and 2009, also revealed that the mechanisms predominantly used for killing female intimate partners involved firearms and machetes, whereas self-inflicted gunshots and hanging were the methods most used by male perpetrators to commit suicide.¹²⁰ The male intimate partners were prompted to commit murder by suspicions of infidelity and sexual jealousy. Relationship termination, divorce and estrangement were identified as other precipitating factors that led to the killing of female intimate partners.¹²¹

Motives of perpetrators of intimate partner killings of women and girls

As with other types of domestic homicide, the dynamics underlying intimate partner homicides can be better understood if these are differentiated according to motive.¹²² Depending on the nature of the sample, earlier studies¹²³ have identified categories such as jealousy, fear of abandonment, and severe mental illness. In an in-depth study of 105 men who had killed an intimate partner, it was found that the majority of male perpetrators had had ongoing disputes with their partners, having subjected them to violence prior to the killing.¹²⁴ A large share of the men interviewed also tended to blame the homicide on alcohol intoxication and a minority blamed it on drug use. In terms of reaction to the homicide, many of the convicted men were in complete denial straight after the event and some presented varying levels of

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Kivivuori and Lehti, “Social correlates of intimate partner homicide in Finland”.

¹¹² Caman et al., “Differentiating male and female intimate partner homicide perpetrators”.

¹¹³ Dobash et al., “Not an ordinary killer: just an ordinary guy”.

¹¹⁴ Liem, M. and Koenraadt, F., *Domestic Homicide: Patterns and Dynamics* (London, Routledge, 2018).

¹¹⁵ Leth, P. M., “Intimate partner homicide”, *Forensic Science, Medicine, and Pathology*, vol. 5, No. 3 (2009), pp. 199–203.

¹¹⁶ Dobash et al., “Not an ordinary killer: just an ordinary guy”.

¹¹⁷ Tosun Altınöz, Ş. et al., “Femicide: psychosocial characteristics of the perpetrators in Turkey”, *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, vol. 62, No. 13 (October 2018), pp. 4174–4186.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Adinkrah, M., “Intimate partner femicide-suicides in Ghana: victims, offenders, and incident characteristics”, *Violence Against Women*, vol. 20, No. 9 (September 2014), pp. 1078–1096.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 1088.

¹²² Liem and Koenraadt, *Domestic Homicide: Patterns and Dynamics*.

¹²³ Liem, M., Geene, K. and Koenraadt, F., *Partnerdoding door etnische minderheden: een empirische studie* (Utrecht, Dutch University Press, 2007).

¹²⁴ Dobash and Dobash, *When Men Murder Women*, p. 253.

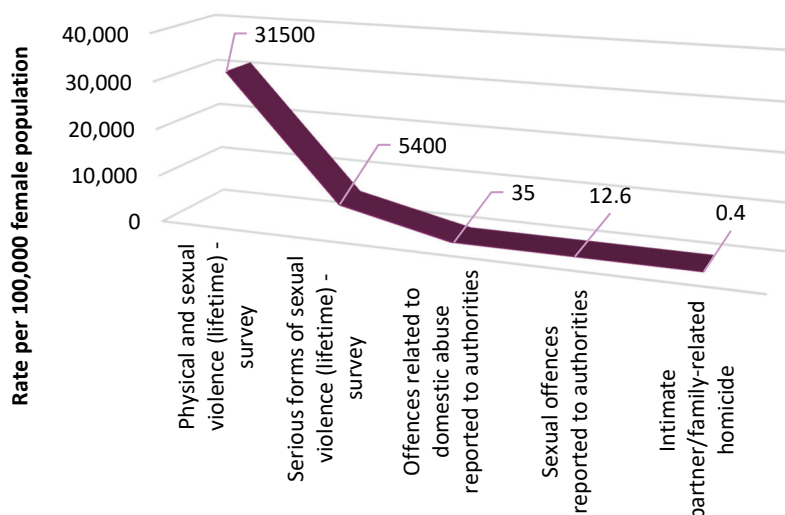
acceptance of their guilt with the passage of time. About half of the men who had killed their intimate partner showed no empathy towards the victim and about a third expressed no remorse. In some cases, a perpetrator would refuse to acknowledge the repeated acts of physical violence that had taken place during the homicide incident, claiming that the woman had simply fallen on the knife or that he had not realized that he had gripped the victim's throat with such force as to cause suffocation. Furthermore, perpetrators also tended to present themselves as having been victimized by their intimate partners, implying that the homicide was actually a consequence of the abuse to which they had been subjected.¹²⁵

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¹²⁵ Dobash and Dobash, *When Men Murder Women*.

LINK BETWEEN LETHAL AND NON-LETHAL VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

As gender-related killing of women is often the culmination of prior gender-based violence, when looking at countries with either a high or a low risk of women being killed by intimate partners or other family members, an interesting question that arises is how homicide relates to other non-lethal violence against women.

Figure 3: Rates of female intimate partner/family-related homicide and various forms of violence against women, as reported in surveys and as reported to the authorities, Italy, 2014



Source: Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT).

Note: Rates of physical and sexual violence and serious forms of sexual violence are per 100,000 female population aged 16–70 years.

One of the most common forms of violence against women is that perpetrated by a male intimate partner. Intimate partner violence – often termed domestic violence – takes various forms, including physical violence. Violence against women can be seen as a continuum,¹²⁶ ranging from slaps, punches and kicks, to assaults with a weapon and, ultimately, homicide.¹²⁷ It could therefore be expected that the violent non-lethal victimization of women and the killing of women manifest themselves at similar levels. To determine this, female gender-based killings can be compared with other indicators of gender-related violence.

BOX 9: Violence against women is widely underreported to the authorities

While the killing of a person tends to be recorded by the police more effectively than other crimes, it is well known that violence against women is poorly reported to the police and that a large share of it remains hidden. For example, the country that reported the highest rate of police-recorded sexual assault in 2015 was Sweden, whereas only three sexual assaults were reported that year in the United Republic of Tanzania. However, victimization survey data suggest that these figures do not accurately reflect the risk faced by women in those two countries.^a

Violence against women is almost universally underreported,^b irrespective of whether a country is developed or developing. Research suggests that the reluctance of women to report domestic assault can be attributed to

¹²⁶ Allwood, G., *French Feminisms: Gender and Violence in Contemporary Theory* (London, UCL Press, 1989).

¹²⁷ Watts, C. and Zimmerman, C., "Violence against women: global scope and magnitude", *The Lancet*, vol. 359, No. 9313 (April 2002), pp. 1232–1237.

fear of reprisals, economic and psychological dependence, anticipation that the police will not take the charges seriously^c and viewing the assault as a private matter.^d

In developing countries in particular, research has found that the most frequently mentioned reasons for not reporting violence against women include embarrassment, the belief that reporting is pointless, the belief that gender-related violence is a normal part of life that women must bear, and various concerns about the well-being of others.^e Research on the reporting of gender-related violence in developing countries suggests that increasing age is associated with formal reporting, which may reflect an increase in autonomy and a decrease in dependence on male partners over time.

Women who were formerly married have also been found to be more likely to report gender-related violence than others, as have women in urban centres, possibly owing to better access to social, legal and health services than in rural areas.^f The reluctance of women to report further contributes to the underreporting of sexual violence; this has been attributed to their lack of confidence in a criminal justice system that assigns blame to them rather than to offenders.^g

Reasons for the underreporting of sexual violence also include the embarrassment and stigma associated with the crime, perceptions by victims that they will not be believed, perceptions that some incidents are not serious enough, ambiguity about what constitutes unwanted or illicit sexual conduct and fear of reprisals after violence has been reported.^h

^a Lynch, J. P., “Problems and promise of victimization surveys for cross-national research”, *Crime and Justice*, vol. 34, No. 1 (2006), pp. 229–287.

^b Watts, C. and Zimmerman, C., “Violence against women: global scope and magnitude”, *The Lancet*, vol. 359, No. 9313 (April 2002), pp. 1232–1237.

^c Felson, R. B. and Paré, P.-P., “The reporting of domestic violence and sexual assault by nonstrangers to the police”, *Journal of Marriage and Family*, vol. 67, No. 3 (2005), pp. 597–610.

^d Felson, R. B. et al., “Reasons for reporting and not reporting domestic violence to the police”, *Criminology*, vol. 40, No. 3 (August 2002) pp. 617–648.

^e Palermo, T., Bleck, J. and Peterman, A., “Tip of the iceberg: reporting and gender-based violence in developing countries”, *American Journal of Epidemiology*, vol. 179, No. 5 (March 2014), pp. 602–612.

^f Ibid.

^g Felson and Paré, “The reporting of domestic violence and sexual assault by nonstrangers to the police”.

^h Ibid.

Because of the challenges associated with police-recorded data, the general consensus is that population-based victimization surveys are the best way of collecting statistical information on violence against women.¹³⁶ Therefore, data based on surveys and police-recorded data vary substantially.

Survey data¹³⁷ on the level of violence against women presented in the United Nations report *The World’s Women 2015* show great variation. This variation can be attributed not only to differences in the level of violence between settings, but also to differences in interviewer training and skills, cultural differences that affect respondents’ willingness to reveal intimate experiences, and cultural definitions of violence.¹³⁸ While these methodological limitations need to be taken into consideration, the data do show clearly that the level of both physical and sexual violence experienced by women is highest in countries in Africa, which coincides with high overall female gender-based homicide rates. However, in the Americas, particularly in Latin America and the Caribbean, rates of female gender-related killings and female total homicide are high but the level of violence against women, as measured in the survey data, seems to be relatively low when compared with that in other regions.

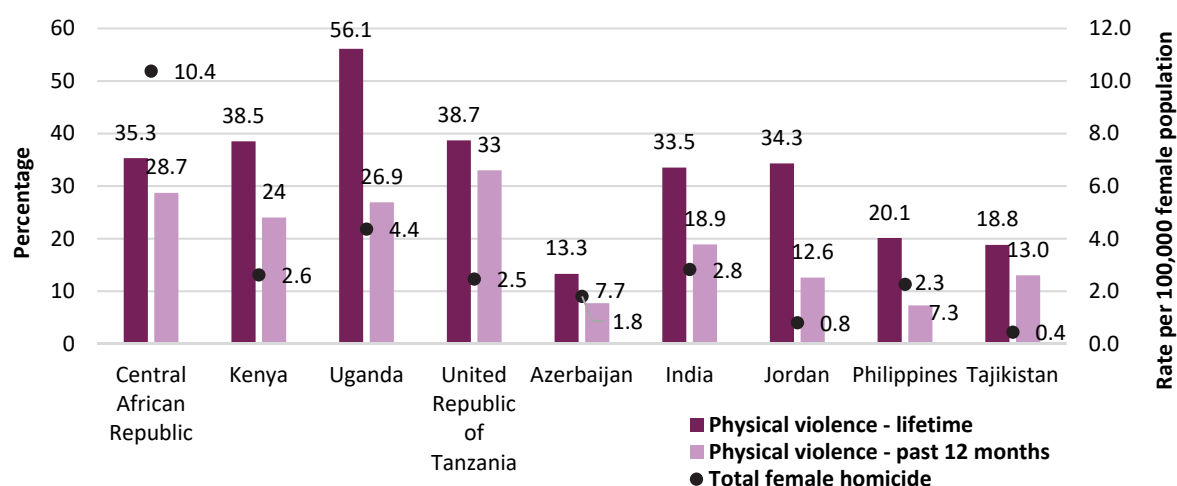
¹³⁶ *The World’s Women 2010: Trends and Statistics* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.10.XVII.11); Watts and Zimmerman, “Violence against women”.

¹³⁷ Data sources compiled by the United Nations Statistics Division from Demographic and Health Surveys conducted in 2014 by ICF International and Reproductive Health Surveys conducted in 2014 by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC); European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *Violence against Women: An EU-wide Survey – Main Results* (Luxembourg, 2014).

¹³⁸ Watts and Zimmerman, “Violence against women”.

Differences could be attributed partially to the fact that the violence against women reported in surveys varies across cultures because women in different societies and countries have a different understanding of what constitutes “violence against women”, meaning that some women may show greater tolerance of physical and verbal abuse, or may fail to recognize such acts as abuse altogether. Furthermore, women from countries that have made advances in the field of women’s rights and education and the achievement of gender equality are more likely to identify and report certain acts as violence committed against them, be it to criminal justice authorities or during victimization surveys.

Figure 4: Female homicide rate (2016) and percentage of women and girls aged 15–49 who experienced physical violence (irrespective of perpetrator) at least once in their lifetime and in the past 12 months, Africa and Asia, 1995–2013 or latest available year



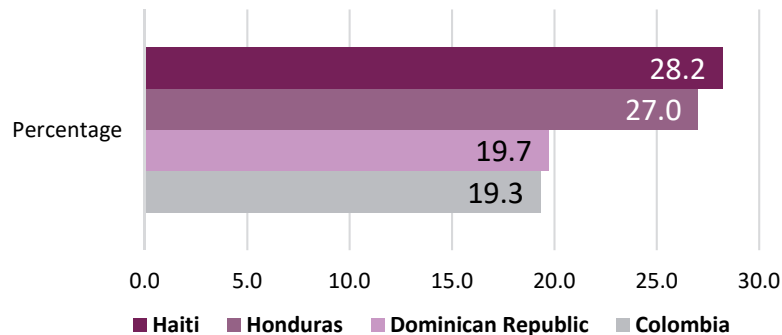
Source: Compiled by the United Nations Statistics Division from Demographic and Health Surveys; UNODC homicide statistics.¹³⁹

As with homicide in general, in countries where most women are killed by partners or other family members, most physical and sexual violence against women is perpetrated by partners. Although the common image of sexual violence is a violent attack by a stranger, most sexual violence is actually perpetrated by individuals known to the victim, including intimate partners, male family members, acquaintances and individuals in positions of authority. Although sexual assault by a stranger is widely acknowledged to be a crime, rape in marriage, sexual coercion in schools, sex in return for a job, and forced marriage are still tolerated or socially condoned in many parts of the world.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁹ *The World’s Women 2015: Trends and Statistics* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.15.XVII.8), p. 143.

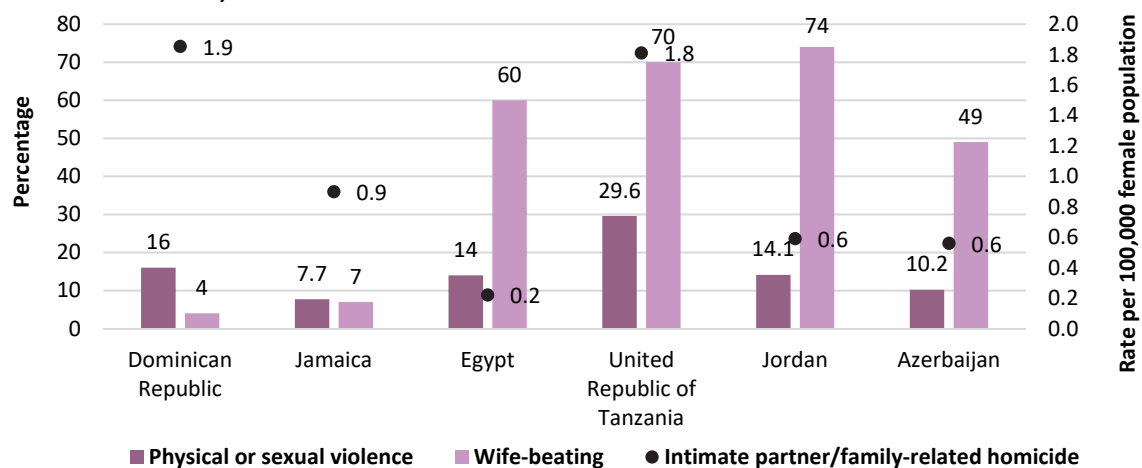
¹⁴⁰ Watts and Zimmerman, “Violence against women”.

Figure 5: Percentage of women and girls aged 15–49 who experienced physical violence (irrespective of perpetrator) at least once in their lifetime, selected countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, 1995–2013



Source: Compiled by the United Nations Statistics Division from Demographic and Health Surveys.

Figure 6: Rate of female intimate partner/family-related homicide and percentage of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15–49 who experienced intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence in the previous 12 months (2016 or latest available year) and percentage who accepted that wife-beating may be justified in certain circumstances, 2010–2016, selected countries

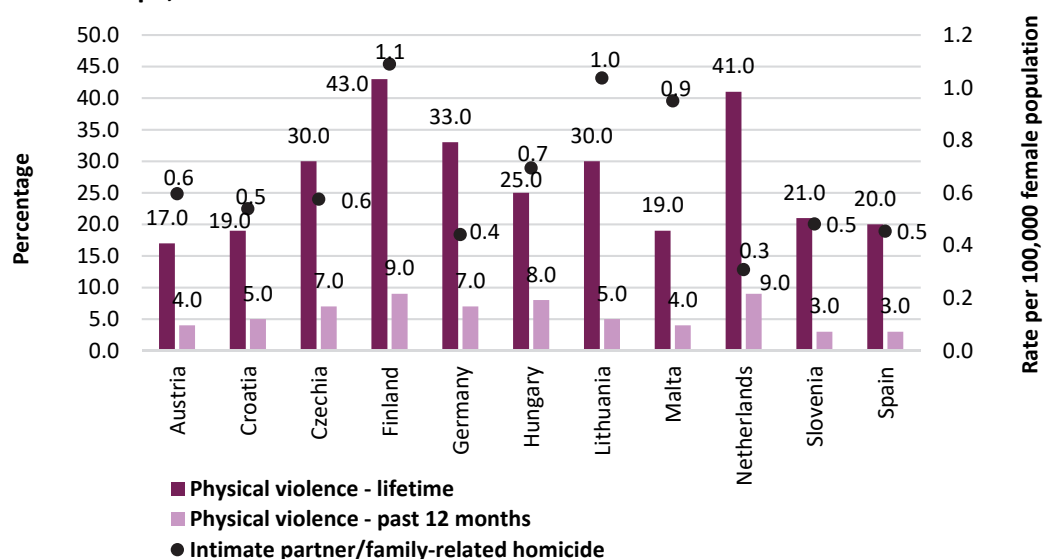


Source: UNICEF; United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs; UNODC homicide statistics.

A survey on violence against women conducted in European Union countries in 2014 yielded data on the share of women experiencing non-lethal physical and/or sexual violence. Direct comparisons between Europe and other regions are difficult to make because of differences in data collection methods. Similar difficulties as in the reporting of physical violence are also found in the reporting of sexual violence, although research suggests that rates of formal reporting are higher among women who have experienced sexual violence than among those who have experienced physical violence.¹⁴¹ However, several countries seem to have relatively high levels of physical and sexual violence against women, particularly when measuring lifetime prevalence. Moreover, in this case, it seems that low female homicide rates do not necessarily mean that violence levels are also low.

¹⁴¹ Palermo, T., Bleck, J. and Peterman, A., “Tip of the iceberg: reporting and gender-based violence in developing countries”, *American Journal of Epidemiology*, vol. 179, No. 5 (March 2014), pp. 602–612.

Figure 7: Rate of female intimate partner homicide/family-related homicide and percentage of women and girls aged 15-49 who experienced physical violence (irrespective of perpetrator) at least once in their lifetime and in the past 12 months, selected countries in Europe, 2012



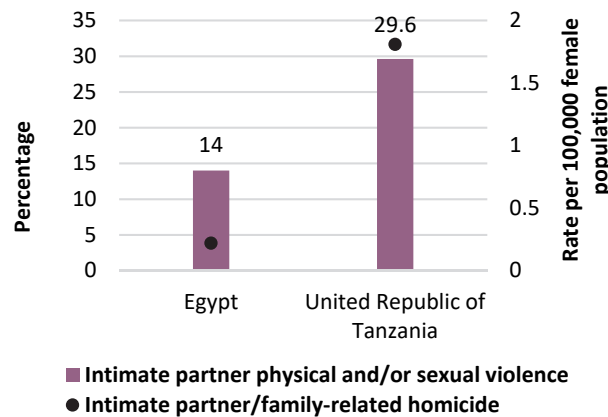
Source: UNODC homicide statistics; European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *Violence Against Women: An EU-wide Survey – Main Results* (Luxembourg, 2014).

Available data indicate that the high levels of lethal violence against women, i.e. female total homicide, encountered in Latin America and the Caribbean are not always connected to high levels of non-lethal violence against women. Furthermore, in Europe, low levels of lethal violence against women do not always correspond to a low level of non-lethal violence against women.

When analysing data on female intimate partner/family-related homicide and the prevalence of intimate partner violence, countries can be divided into groups. One group of countries has high levels of intimate partner/family-related homicide and high levels of physical and/or sexual partner violence; examples can be found in Africa. Another group of countries has high levels of intimate partner/family-related homicide but low levels of physical and/or sexual partner violence; examples can be found in Latin America and the Caribbean. A third group comprises countries with low intimate partner/family-related homicide rates and low levels of physical and/or sexual partner violence; examples can be found in Europe and Asia. The fourth group of countries has low intimate partner/family-related homicide rates but high levels of physical and/or sexual partner violence; examples can be found in Europe.

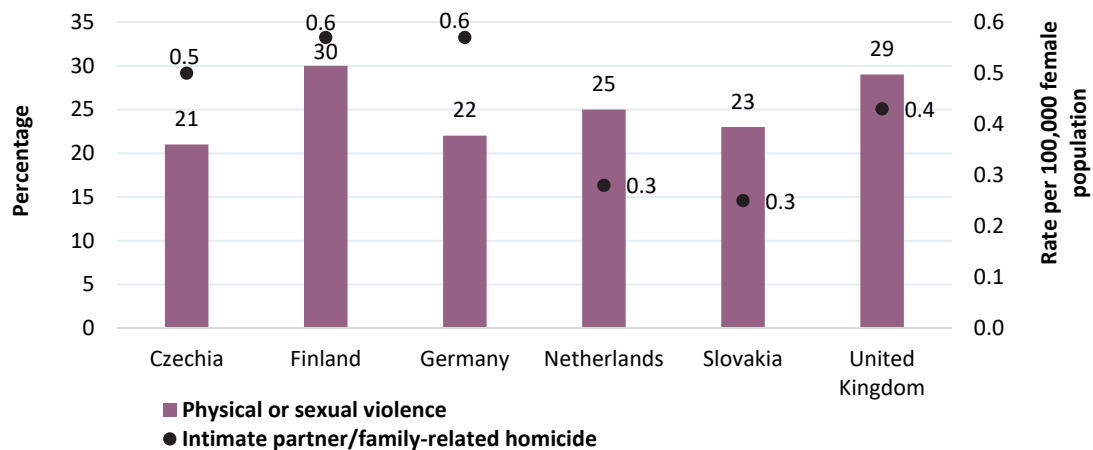
There may be several factors that explain the relationships between female homicide and other violence against women, including socioeconomic and demographic factors, gender equality and the role of women in society, as well as the quality of data.

Figure 8: Rate of female intimate partner/family-related homicide and percentage of women and girls aged 15–49 who experienced intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence in the past 12 months, selected countries in Africa, 2013 or latest available year



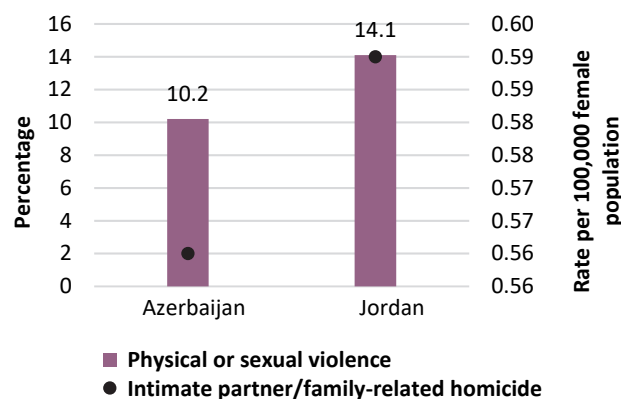
Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs and UNODC homicide statistics.

Figure 9: Rate of female intimate partner/family-related homicide (2016) and percentage of ever-partnered women aged 18–74 who experienced intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence at least once in their lifetime (2012), selected countries in Europe



Source: European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *Violence against Women: An EU-wide Survey – Main Results* (Luxembourg, 2014); UNODC homicide statistics.

Figure 10: Rate of female intimate partner/family-related homicide (2015) and percentage of ever-partnered women aged 18–74 who experienced intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence in the past 12 months (2013), selected countries in Asia



Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs and UNODC homicide statistics.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND POLICY RESPONSES TO GENDER-RELATED KILLING OF WOMEN AND GIRLS

In the past few decades, the high prevalence of violence against women and the damage to victims and society have been recognized by both international and national authorities.¹⁴² The killing of women and violence against women in general have been addressed by an array of policies and programmes using social, public health and criminal justice responses. Criminal justice responses have included the development and enforcement of laws that prohibit all forms of violence against women, laws that eliminate discrimination against women, the implementation of relevant policies, and strengthening the capacities of institutions.¹⁴³ Developments in the field of public policy and legislation addressing violence against women and “femicide” are discussed below.

International responses

To gender-related killing of women and girls

On various occasions, the international community has addressed the problem of gender-related killing of women. A Declaration on Femicide was first adopted in 2008 by the Committee of Experts of the Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention (MESECVI), which states that “femicide” represents “the most serious manifestation of discrimination and violence against women” in Latin America and the Caribbean.¹⁴⁴ The United Nations General Assembly adopted two resolutions on gender-related killing of women and girls, in 2013¹⁴⁵ and 2015,¹⁴⁶ encouraging Member States to adopt strategies and responses to address violence against women and reduce the risk of gender-related killings, including the criminalization and prosecution of gender-related violence and ensuring “that appropriate punishment[s] for perpetrators of gender-related killing of women and girls are in place and are proportionate to the gravity of the offence”.¹⁴⁷

To violence against women

On the broader challenge of violence against women, a number of treaties have been adopted to protect the right of women and girls to live a life free from all forms of violence. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and its Optional Protocol do not explicitly cover matters related to violence against women. However, General Recommendation No. 35 (“on gender-based violence against women, updating General Recommendation No. 19”), adopted by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in 2017, argues that the definition of discrimination against women under the terms of the Convention “includes gender-based violence, that is, ‘violence which is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately’”.¹⁴⁸ A number of regional treaties impose legally binding obligations on ratifying States to adhere to a set of minimum standards, in order to specifically prevent and combat violence against women: the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (Convention of Belém do Pará); the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol); and the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention).

¹⁴² García-Moreno, C. et al., “Addressing violence against women: a call to action”, *The Lancet*, vol. 385, No. 9978 (April 2015), pp. 1685–1695.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ Organization of American States, document MESECVI/CEVI/DEC. 1/08, para. 1. Available at www.oas.org/en/mesecvi/docs/DeclaracionFemicidio-EN.pdf.

¹⁴⁵ A/RES/68/191.

¹⁴⁶ A/RES/70/176.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, para. 9.

¹⁴⁸ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, document CEDAW/C/GC/35, para. 1.

Beyond treaties, several intergovernmental documents, standards and norms reflect the international community's commitment to addressing the problem of violence against women, and also gender-based violence against girls in the context of violence against children:¹⁴⁹ from the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women (1995)¹⁵⁰ to a series of United Nations General Assembly resolutions, starting with the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women¹⁵¹ in 1993.¹⁵² The United Nations Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice has also adopted decisions and resolutions on violence against women that have often culminated in General Assembly resolutions such as resolution 65/228, whereby the General Assembly adopted in 2010 the Updated Model Strategies and Practical Measures on the Elimination of Violence against Women in the Field of Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice.¹⁵³ These documents contain detailed provisions and practical guidance for criminal justice systems, building upon and complementing the different legally binding treaties mentioned above.

National responses

Criminal justice responses

As most forms of gender-related killing of women and girls discussed in this booklet fall under the definition of homicide in most countries, the criminal justice response to most gender-related killings follows the same pattern as for other homicide offences. Some countries use general criminal law provisions on homicide, murder and manslaughter, applying harsher sentences when there are aggravating circumstances in cases such as the killing of a spouse or the killing of a pregnant woman. Other countries have put in place additional legislative provisions in order to prosecute gender-related killings of women and girls more specifically. These additional provisions can be classified into two approaches:¹⁵⁴

1. The establishment of the specific crime of “femicide” or “feminicide”. The elements that characterize this specific crime vary considerably across national legislation. This approach has been taken primarily in Latin American countries, where rates of gender-related killing of women and girls are relatively high compared with those in other regions, such as Europe.
2. The inclusion of aggravating factors for homicide offences. These include objective circumstances, such as the relationship between victim and perpetrator, and the pregnancy of the victim, or subjective elements, i.e. hatred, prejudice or honour.

Eighteen countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have adopted specific laws that criminalize femicide as an offence in their national legal frameworks.¹⁵⁵ The majority have introduced a new type of offence, i.e. “femicide” or “feminicide”, whereas in two countries, Argentina and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, it is criminalized as a type of aggravated homicide.¹⁵⁶ While the majority of these femicide laws are applicable within and outside the family sphere, in countries such as Chile and Costa Rica, they only apply to females killed by current or former intimate partners. Other countries such as El Salvador, Mexico, Panama and Peru have adopted legal definitions that significantly broaden the set of circumstances in which the law is applicable. Costa Rica has also amended its legislation in recent years, extending the scope of its femicide definition to the public sphere by adopting the term “extended femicide” (*femicidio*

¹⁴⁹ A/RES/69/194, “United Nations Model Strategies and Practical Measures on the Elimination of Violence against Children in the Field of Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice” (2015), annex.

¹⁵⁰ Available at www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/.

¹⁵¹ A/RES/48/104.

¹⁵² For a comprehensive description of the work of the United Nations General Assembly on violence against women, see www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/vaw/reports.htm.

¹⁵³ A/RES 65/228.

¹⁵⁴ UNODC/CCPCJ/EG.8/2014/2, “Gender-related killing of women and girls: promising practices, challenges and practical recommendations”, background paper prepared by the Secretariat.

¹⁵⁵ The full table can be found in the annex to this booklet.

¹⁵⁶ Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean, “Femicide or feminicide as a specific type of crime in national legislations in Latin America: an on-going process”, Notes for Equality, No. 17 (July 2015).

ampliado). In terms of the applicability of these femicide laws, an element encountered in the majority of legal definitions is the killing of females by current or former intimate partners and by other family members. For femicide perpetrated outside the family sphere, laws capture elements that indicate the presence of sexual violence, extreme torture and brutality associated with the killing of a woman or girl. The adoption of specific laws does not always facilitate the prosecution of these crimes as actual gender-related killings of women and girls, or “femicides”, because it may be challenging to identify the additional gender-related elements that constitute the crime. Laws creating specific femicide offences typically introduce longer prison sentences than those that are applicable to intentional homicide. Elements of extreme cruelty, torture, prior domestic abuse and sexual violence are also captured by specific laws.

Apart from the aforementioned group of Latin American countries that have adopted legislation to specifically prosecute gender-related killing of women, many other countries have passed national legislation tackling violence against women, which is also applicable in instances of rape and domestic homicide. A comparative study by UNODC showed that, in addition to creating specific criminal offences, there are other ways of criminalizing certain aspects of gender-related killing.¹⁵⁷

Some countries have introduced gender-related aggravating factors for homicide and other offences. In some cases, these provisions were formulated in a gender-neutral manner, while others pertain specifically to women. Aggravating factors may include specific motives (such as bias, hate and discrimination in relation to a person’s sex, as in Belgium, Canada and Spain, or motive of honour and custom, as in Turkey) and factual circumstances (such as pregnancy, as in the Russian Federation and Turkey, or being the spouse of the victim, as in Belgium, Spain and Turkey). Some States, such as Jordan, Morocco, Turkey and the State of Palestine, have removed mitigating circumstances from their criminal code, which used to reduce sentences for the killing of women on the grounds of adultery or other family circumstances. Specific provisions have also been introduced to criminalize the killing of children, such as infanticide (e.g. in Angola, Canada and Guatemala).¹⁵⁸

The penalty for sexual violence and rape resulting in the death of the victim may be either equal to or greater than the penalty for simple homicide. In some countries, such as Croatia, both of these offences are punishable by a minimum of 5 years of imprisonment, in Belgium by 20 to 30 years of imprisonment, and in France by 30 years of imprisonment. In the Russian Federation, rape and violent acts of a sexual nature resulting in the death of the victim are punishable by 12 to 20 years of imprisonment, whereas aggravated forms of homicide are punishable by 8 to 20 years of imprisonment.¹⁵⁹

Examples of criminal justice responses that focus on law enforcement intervention include the “Latin American Model Protocol for the investigation of gender-related killings of women (femicide/feminicide)”, developed in 2014 by the Regional Office for Central America of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in collaboration with the Caribbean Regional Office of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women). Designed to help tackle the high rates of impunity for such crimes in many countries in the region, the Protocol was subsequently implemented in Argentina and Brazil.

BOX 10: Policies in response to the needs of children affected by gender-related killing of women

The children of women killed by their partner or other family members are the other victims of these killings because they not only lose their mother in brutal circumstances, but also their father or other close family members. These children are left vulnerable, traumatized and often without a guardian, although sometimes they are left in the care of grandparents or other family members. In situations where the perpetrator is given a mild, short prison sentence, he may still be able to reclaim his custody rights, unless the law specifically denies him such rights. A public discourse addressing the problem of children left behind has emerged in countries where perpetrators are frequently given relatively mild prison sentences for killing their female partners. Some

¹⁵⁷ UNODC/CCPCJ/EG.8/2014/CRP.3, “Criminalization of gender-related killing of women and girls”.

¹⁵⁸ UNODC/CCPCJ/EG.8/2014/CRP.1, “National measures taken to prevent, investigate, prosecute and punish gender-related killings of women and girls”, para. 12.

¹⁵⁹ UNODC/CCPCJ/EG.8/2014/CRP.3, “Criminalization of gender-related killing of women and girls”, para. 41.

countries have started to take a tough stance on this issue in order to prevent perpetrators of gender-related killing from reclaiming custody rights and coming into contact with their children once they are out of prison. For example, Argentina adopted a law in 2017, which amends the Civil and Commercial Code, removing parental authority from persons who are found guilty in a court of law of committing aggravated homicide associated with femicide, or inflicting injuries and sexual abuse on their children.^a In February 2018, the Government of Italy adopted a similar law on the protection of minors orphaned by domestic violence, which ensures that such minors have free access to legal aid and psychological assistance. Additionally, minors who share their family name with the parent convicted of killing the other parent can request to have it changed. When it comes to appointing guardians, the law gives priority to other relatives and family members.^b

^a Argentina, Civil and Commercial Code, Law No. 27,363 of 26 June 2017. Available at www.colegioescribanos.org.ar/noticias/2017_06_26-Ley-27363.pdf.

^b Italy, Law No. 4 of 11 January 2018, Amendments to the Civil Code, Criminal Code, Code of Criminal Procedure and Other Provisions for the Benefit of Children Orphaned by Domestic Violence Crimes. Available at www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2018/2/1/18G00020/sg.

BOX 11: Guatemala: an example of femicide law applied in Latin America

The Law against Femicide and Other Forms of Violence against Women (Decree No. 22-2008) was approved by the Guatemalan Congress in 2008. The Government has made efforts to establish a system of specialized courts at the national level for the prosecution of crimes related to violence against women and femicide. The judicial body in Guatemala consists of specialized and regular courts, the latter often lacking the capacity and expertise to apply the correct approach and legal perspective to cases involving violence against women or femicide. While the number of complaints relating to domestic violence brought to the Public Prosecution Service under this law has increased, only a small percentage have actually resulted in sanctions.^a

A report by the criminal justice agencies that are competent to try cases of femicide and other forms of violence against women, sexual violence and trafficking in persons indicates that, in 2014, there were 18 specialized courts and 102 regular courts in Guatemala.^b Nevertheless, enforcement of the law is often hampered by the lack of implementation mechanisms and of coordination between criminal justice authorities. Despite these obstacles, from July 2013 to June 2014 regular courts in Guatemala passed a total of 774 sentences in cases involving femicide and other forms of violence against women; the number of sentences handed out by specialized courts amounted to 1,894.^c In 2015, the authorities registered 65,620 reports of violence against women, of which 2,565 cases resulted in a sentence.^d

^a UN-Women, Americas and the Caribbean Regional Office, "Guatemala". Available at <http://lac.unwomen.org/en/donde-estamos/guatemala>.

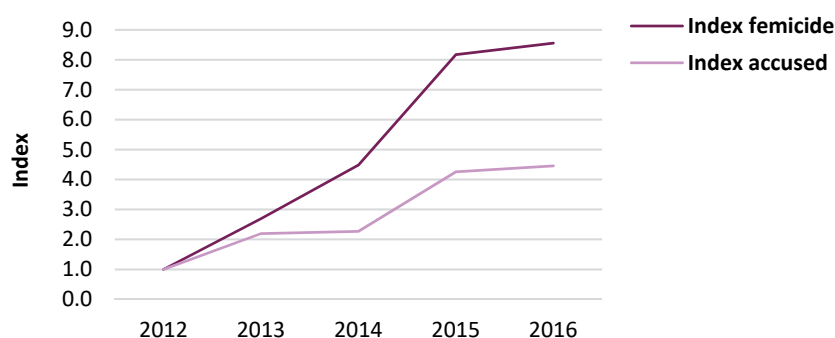
^b Guatemala, Judicial Branch, Tercer Informe de los Órganos Jurisdiccionales Penales en delitos de femicidio y otras formas de violencia contra la mujer, violencia sexual, explotación y trata de personas (2014).

^c Ibid., p. 74.

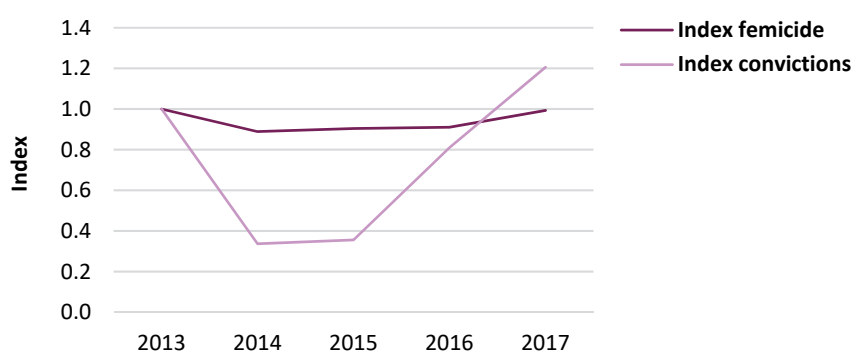
^d Organization of American States, Committee of Experts of the Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention, document MESECVI/CEVI/doc.247/17, paras. 40–41.

Convictions for "femicide"

Data allowing one to assess the criminal justice response to gender-related killing of women are not available at the regional or global level. Countries rarely disaggregate prosecution or conviction statistics by type of homicide and it is difficult to quantify whether the level of convictions is an adequate response to the problem. In El Salvador, data indicate that the gradual implementation of the femicide law (Decree No. 520) since 2011 has been followed by a gradual increase in convictions for that offence. While the impact of those convictions is not apparent, it is clear that up to the conviction stage, the Decree seems to have provided a criminal justice response to the problem of femicide.

Figure 11: Trends in rates of femicide and persons accused of femicide, El Salvador, 2012–2016

Source: Femicide: El Salvador, Attorney General's Office (Fiscalía General de la República) (special UNODC request); convictions: El Salvador, Attorney General's Office (special UNODC request).

Figure 12: Trends in rates of femicide and convictions for femicide, Peru, 2013–2017

Source: ECLAC; Peru, National Bureau of Criminal Records (Registro Nacional de Condenas) (special UNODC request).

Beyond criminal justice: policies and practices aimed at reducing violence against women

In Europe, “femicide” does not typically constitute a separate legal category in the criminal justice system. Policy developments have focused on recognizing violence against women and intimate partner homicide as serious human rights and public health issues in need of attention. Research has assessed to what extent policy development in these areas has influenced the occurrence of intimate partner homicide in 10 European countries (Finland, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom). Based on the period when action on domestic violence and intimate partner violence was developed by their Government, the countries were categorized as: “early bird countries”, which have been developing government action since the mid-1970s/early 1980s (Netherlands, Sweden and United Kingdom); “intermediate countries”, which have been developing government action since the late 1980s/early 1990s (Finland, France, Germany and Spain); and “newcomer countries”, which have been developing government action since the mid-1990s (Italy, Portugal and Slovenia). No direct link was found between the prevalence of intimate partner homicide among female homicides and the development of policies on intimate partner violence. However, a link was established between policy development and the availability of routine statistics on male-perpetrated and female-perpetrated intimate partner homicide.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁷ Corradi, C., and Stöckl, H., “Intimate partner homicide in 10 European countries: statistical data and policy development in a cross-national perspective”, *European Journal of Criminology*, vol. 11, No. 5 (September 2014), pp. 601–618.

Examples¹⁶⁸ of national practices aimed at reducing violence against women can be roughly divided into three areas: the implementation of legal changes; early interventions; and multi-agency efforts (creating special units or specialized expertise within the police, prosecution and courts, and training of criminal justice officials in charge of investigation and prosecution).

Legal changes

Armenia is one of numerous countries that recently (2017) implemented amendments to their criminal code to specifically cover violence against women.¹⁶⁹ The Law on Prevention of Violence within the Family, Protection of Victims of Violence within the Family and Restoration of Peace in the Family seeks to establish legal mechanisms for preventing violence within the family, ensuring the safety and protection of victims of violence within the family, and guaranteeing their rights and legitimate interests. Specifically, the Law defines domestic violence as acts of physical, sexual, psychological and economic violence and negligence. Furthermore, it prescribes measures for protecting victims of domestic violence, including warning the perpetrator and deciding on emergency interventions.

Similarly, in 2017 the National Strategy for Action in the Interests of Women¹⁷⁰ was launched in the Russian Federation to prevent social hardship among, and violence against, women. It includes the development of information and guidance materials on preventing violence against women for use in the training of law enforcement officials, health professionals and psychologists who provide assistance to women in crisis situations.

Other examples of changes to the law can be found in Turkey, where the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence has become part of Turkish national law.¹⁷² Since the implementation of the Convention in 2012, Turkey has reported a systematic increase each year in the number of violent incidents reported to the police. Furthermore, three specific actions have ensued from the enactment of the Law on the Protection of the Family and the Prevention of Violence against Women. The first was the introduction of electronic bracelets to tag individuals known to resort to violence, in order to prevent them from coming into the proximity of victims. The second was the training of personnel involved in countering domestic violence and violence against women. The third initiative, launched in 2018, was the creation of a smartphone application allowing women at risk of violence to share their location information with emergency centres and police.

Around the same time, in 2013, Tajikistan enacted a specific law on domestic violence, aimed at the prevention of violence against women and minors.¹⁷³ To support enforcement of the new law, the Government organized seminars and training events. Further related activities included creating awareness of domestic violence through television programmes and publications in magazines and booklets.

Similarly, in Morocco in 2014, amendments were made to the Criminal Code to incorporate provisions aimed at tackling violence against women.¹⁷⁴ This was accompanied by several initiatives, which included training police officers on how to obtain testimonies from women affected by violence, the establishment of units to assist women through psychological counselling, and mandating specific persons to interrogate women.

Legal reforms have also been implemented in Chile, where the Criminal Code now specifies homicide in the context of domestic violence, and includes – in addition to the killing of parents and children – the killing of women as a separate legal category.¹⁷⁶ Such provisions not only facilitate the work of officials and prosecutors in investigating these crimes and protecting the victims, but also enable improved recording

¹⁶⁸ In preparation of the *Global Study on Homicide 2019* (of which this booklet is part), UNODC, in April 2018, asked countries to submit examples of best practices to reduce homicide. The practices summarized here are those that countries submitted in relation to violence against women.

¹⁶⁹ Armenia, Criminal Code, chap. 20, arts. 165–174.

¹⁷⁰ Russian Federation, Government Order No. 410 of 8 March 2017 and Government Order No. 420 of 14 March 2018.

¹⁷² Turkey, Law No. 6284 of 8 March 2012 on the Protection of the Family and the Prevention of Violence against Women.

¹⁷³ Tajikistan, Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence (19 March 2013).

¹⁷⁴ Morocco, Criminal Code, art. 103.13.

¹⁷⁶ Chile, Criminal Code, arts. 390, 394, 372 and 391 (amendments introduced by the Domestic Violence Law (Law No. 20066)).

of gender-based homicides. In Chile, the recording of such crimes has been further enhanced through the establishment (in 2017) of an observatory on gender-based violence. With better recording of gender-based homicides, the observatory seeks to analyse manifestations of gender-based violence and raise awareness of them.

Early interventions

A second type of practice addressing violence against women includes early intervention. An example can be found in the Bahamas, where the “Healthy Teen Relationship” campaign taught young people about teenage relationship abuse. The campaign was initially designed for high school students but was subsequently extended to primary school pupils. It sought to help young people to recognize possessiveness, jealousy and controlling behaviours in intimate relationships, and to create awareness of forced sex, verbal and emotional abuse, and physical violence in teenage relationships. Moreover, teenagers were given the opportunity to reach out to teachers, guidance counsellors and a crisis centre helpline. Designed as a multi-agency effort (partnering with the Ministries of Social Services and Education, social clubs and civil society organizations), the campaign was part of a larger programme aimed at reducing the prevalence of domestic violence.

Multi-agency efforts

One of the countries that have introduced multi-directional approaches to addressing violence against women is the Republic of Moldova, which, after approving a law¹⁷⁷ on the prevention and combating of domestic violence in 2007, launched several initiatives in this area. These included enabling police personnel to apply emergency restraining orders as a temporary measure to protect victims of domestic violence, the establishment of a free telephone support service providing 24/7 counselling to callers, and raising public awareness of domestic violence. This awareness-raising was achieved through a campaign entitled “Preventing Violence through Art”, and also by training community police officers, criminal prosecutors, social workers and family doctors. Other initiatives that were launched simultaneously included: the distribution of a practical guide for police officers on effective police interventions in cases of domestic violence; a concert series drawing attention to domestic violence; the organization of public meetings to inform citizens about the phenomenon of family violence and existing legal frameworks for prevention; and outreach by the authorities and legal advice. In 2017, these initiatives were supplemented with a social network video entitled “What to do if you are a victim of domestic violence”, which contained instructions and guidance for victims of domestic violence.

Similar multilateral and multi-agency efforts have been undertaken in Lithuania. After the enactment of the Law on Protection against Domestic Violence in 2011, three specific measures were implemented to reduce domestic violence. The first was the establishment of Specialized Assistance Centres for victims of domestic violence. Specifically, these centres provide advice and help through mediation and representation in other institutions, offer psychological and legal support, and help to rebuild interpersonal ties with family members. Victims are put in contact with the centres by the police after they have reported suffering domestic violence. A second measure was the launch of a National Programme for the Prevention of Domestic Violence, which included the training of specialists, improvement of the system for imposing sanctions on convicted abusers, support for organizations working with abusers, and storing and systemizing data (including administering a representative population survey) on domestic violence. A third measure consisted of raising public awareness of domestic violence through the “16 Days without Violence” campaign, in which citizens were familiarized with various manifestations of domestic violence, its consequences, legal outcomes and liability, and victims were informed about how to obtain assistance when confronted with domestic violence.

A third example of a country that has introduced multi-agency efforts to reduce violence against women is Montenegro, which recently (2018) established an “Operational Team” to target poor links in the chain of institutions dealing with domestic violence cases. The team consists of 19 members from various agencies, including representatives of the Ministry of the Interior, the Police Directorate, the Ministry of Labour and

¹⁷⁷ Republic of Moldova, Law No. 45 of 1 March 2007, art. 8, para. 6.

Social Welfare, the Ministry of Health, the High Misdemeanour Court, the Supreme Court, the State Prosecutor's Office, the Council for Civilian Control of Police Operations, and representatives of five non-governmental organizations involved in the protection of victims of violence. The team acts as a coordinating body that aims to solve problems in the domestic violence chain by promoting relevant guidelines and initiatives.

Creating special units or expertise within the police, prosecution service and courts

Some countries have established special units with specialized expertise within the police to deal with: domestic violence (Bosnia and Herzegovina); hate crime (Canada); violence and victim protection (Italy); and violence against women and children (Japan and the State of Palestine).¹⁷⁸ Some countries also provide special expertise within the prosecution service, this being the case of Sweden with regard to cases concerning violence in close relationships.¹⁷⁹ Jordan has established special units within its judiciary to address cases relating to honour-based crimes.¹⁸⁰

Training of criminal justice officials in charge of investigation and prosecution

In Finland, police and prosecutors have received training for technical or tactical investigation concerning homicide or other violent crimes. The Angolan police (General Command of the National Police) have carried out awareness-raising efforts to provide police officers with the knowledge and skills required in situations of domestic and gender-based violence.¹⁸¹ In Turkey, judges and prosecutors have participated in study visits and training workshops on domestic violence and violence against women.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁸ UNODC/CCPCJ/EG.8/2014/CRP.1, para. 61.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, para. 72.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, para. 73.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, para. 74.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, para. 82.

CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

As the evidence presented in this booklet shows, even though men are the principal victims of lethal violence, women continue to bear the heaviest burden as a result of gender stereotypes and inequality. Across the world, in rich and poor countries, in developed and developing regions, a total of 50,000 women per year are killed by their current and former partners, fathers, brothers, mothers, sisters and other family members because of their role and status as women.

Tangible progress in both protecting and saving the lives of female victims of intimate partner/family-related homicide has not been made in recent years, despite the many programmes developed to eradicate violence against women and the amount of legislation adopted. Many women still find themselves alone, not only in the face of violence in their home but also by being let down by criminal justice systems that fail to respond adequately or do not have the capacity and knowledge to do so.

The killing of a woman by her partner is often the culmination of long-term violence and can be prevented. Local, national and international institutions need to scale up their efforts to help and protect women who fall victim to such violence. The development and effective implementation of national strategies to combat gender-based violence and legislation to address domestic violence, sexual harassment and marital rape can help build a suitable protective system and ensure that there is no impunity for such crimes.

Women need access to a comprehensive range of services provided by the police and justice system, and by the health and social services, which need to be coordinated to be effective. Specific measures are also necessary to enable women to leave a violent relationship. Such measures have to take into account the fact that women are often economically dependent on their intimate partner, and are thus at risk of being deprived of their only source of economic support should their partner turn against them and be convicted or imprisoned. Specialized support services for women, including shelters, protection orders, counselling and legal aid, have been shown to be effective in helping women to leave abusive relationships.

Another crucial aspect is the involvement of men in combating intimate partner violence/family-related killings and developing cultural norms that move away from violent masculinity and gender stereotypes. Effective interventions need to be targeted at men in order to address the underlying discriminatory social norms that legitimize male power, control and use of violence. As recommended by UN-Women, good practices for working with men and boys to end violence against women include: promoting a human rights-based and gender-responsive approach; basing violence prevention programmes on a conceptual framework that covers perceptions of masculinity and gender relations; making an explicit effort within programmes to discuss gender and masculinity and to transform gender norms; understanding the diversity of the experiences of men and boys, and tailoring initiatives appropriately; engaging men as part of the solution; questioning existing gender roles without imposing particular behaviours; promoting change beyond the individual level at the society and community level; and holding men accountable for their actions. Early education for boys and girls that promotes gender equality and counters the negative effects of stereotypical gender roles is also an effective prevention policy.

It is important that programmes and strategies aimed at combating violence against women include provisions dealing with extreme forms of violence such as gender-related killing of women. The national reports submitted under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) should cover gender-related killings in the context of violence against women. In conflict and post-conflict situations, the risk of women being affected by extreme gender-based violence increases because of the overall violent environment. Therefore, national action plans for the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 (on women, peace and security) should include specific provisions on gender-related killings in sections covering prevention and protection.

Standardized data on gender-related killings of women and girls remain patchy and of insufficient quality to enable the monitoring of trends and understanding the scale of the problem. Implementation of the International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes (ICCS) enables countries to develop a standardized and sustainable way of recording the gender-based dimension of all offences and facilitates the measurement of violence against women and girls. Among its many features, the ICCS classification defines a standard framework for recording the gender characteristics of victims and perpetrators in

relation to all crimes, including homicide. It can therefore add value to collected data, allowing for a more thorough, in-depth analysis, as well as a comparable system of data collection across countries for gender-related killings of women and girls.

Effective crime prevention and criminal justice responses to violence against women are human rights-based, manage risk and promote victim safety and empowerment while ensuring offender accountability. They not only include comprehensive laws and policies that eliminate discriminatory provisions and prohibit and criminalize all forms of violence against women, but also mechanisms for coordination among criminal justice agencies and between these and the social, health and other sectors. They also involve providing specialized expertise and ensuring the adequate capacity of police, prosecutors, judges and other judicial officers, in order to increase the likelihood of successful apprehension, prosecution and conviction of offenders, to contribute to the well-being and safety of women, and to prevent secondary victimization. Gender-sensitive approaches that are women-centred, rather than considering women as mere objects of protection and sources of testimony, are more likely to build confidence and trust in criminal justice institutions and increase the number of women reporting violence as well as the number of perpetrators brought to justice.

ANNEX

The table below gives an overview of the countries that have adopted specific legislation to criminalize femicide, indicating which offences are counted as femicide according to the legal definitions included in their criminal codes.¹⁸³

Country	Femicide Law	What is counted as femicide	Offence
1. Argentina (2012)	Law No. 26,791	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Killing of a woman by a family member - Killing of a woman by a current or former intimate partner - Killing of a woman because of her sexual and gender identity - Killing of a woman for pleasure, greed, racial or religious hatred - Killing of a woman by a man in the context of gender-based violence 	- Aggravated homicide
2. Bolivia (Plurinational State of) (2013)	Law No. 348	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Killing of a woman by a current or former intimate partner - Killing of a woman because she refused to initiate an intimate relationship with the perpetrator - Killing of a pregnant woman - Killing of a woman when there was a relationship of subordination or dependency with the perpetrator, or a relationship based on friendship or related to the working environment. - Killing of a woman subjected to sexual violence prior to the killing - Killing of a woman in the context of trafficking in persons - Killing of a woman who is in a vulnerable situation - Killing of a woman previously subjected to physical, psychological, sexual or economic violence by the same perpetrator 	- Femicide
3. Brazil (2015)	Law No. 13,104 and the “Maria da Penha Law” (2006)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Killing of a woman by a current or former intimate partner - Killing of a woman by a family member 	- Femicide
4. Chile (2010)	Law No. 20,480	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Killing of a woman by a current or former intimate partner (in its Criminal Code, Chile also includes the offence of 	- Femicide

¹⁸³ Further information about countries that have adopted specific laws to criminalize gender-related killing of women and girls can be found in UNODC/CCPCJ/EG.8/2014/CRP.3, “Criminalization of gender-related killing of women and girls” (2014).

Country	Femicide Law	What is counted as femicide	Offence
		parricide, which covers other family-related homicide)	
5. Colombia (2015)	“Rosa Elvira Cely Law”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Killing of a woman by family members - Killing of a woman by a current or former intimate partner - Killing of a woman by a friend or colleague, when a cycle of physical, sexual or psychological violence preceded the killing - Killing of a woman subjected to sexual violence and/or bodily mutilation prior to the killing 	- Femicide
6. Costa Rica (2007)	Law No. 8,589	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Killing of a woman by a current or former intimate partner - Subsequently Costa Rica also included the term “extended femicide” (<i>femicidio ampliado</i>) in its legislation, which broadens its scope, making it applicable to cases occurring outside the intimate partner sphere.¹⁸⁴ <p>New situations covered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Killing of a woman subjected to sexual violence prior to the killing - Violent/brutal killings of women 	- Femicide
7. Dominican Republic (2014)	Law No. 550-14 enacting the Criminal Code of the Dominican Republic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Killing of a woman by a current or former intimate partner 	- Femicide
8. Ecuador (2014)	Organic Integral Criminal Code	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Killing of a woman by a current or former intimate partner - Killing of a woman by family members or other persons such as friends, colleagues, classmates, or any other persons who had a relationship based on trust, superiority or subordination with the female victim - Killing of a woman in the presence of her children or other family members - Killing of a woman whose body was disposed of or thrown away in a public space 	- Femicide

¹⁸⁴ See <https://observatoriodegenero.poder-judicial.go.cr/soy-especialista-y-busco/estadisticas/femicidio/>.

Country	Femicide Law	What is counted as femicide	Offence
9. El Salvador (2011)	Decree No. 520	<p>Simple femicide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Killing of a woman after violence was committed by the perpetrator - Killing of a woman when the perpetrator took advantage of her situation of physical or psychological vulnerability - Killing of a woman subjected to sexual violence and/or bodily mutilation prior to the killing <p>Aggravated femicide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Killing of a woman by a State official or any other person acting as an agent of the State or public authority - Killing of a woman by more than two persons - Killing of a woman within the family - Killing of a minor woman (under 18 years of age) or of an older woman - Killing of a woman with a physical or mental disability - Killing of a woman by a perpetrator who committed the crime in the context of a relationship of trust, friendship, or a relationship related to the domestic, educational or work sphere. 	- Femicide (aggravated and simple)
10. Guatemala (2008)	Decree No. 22-2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Killing of a woman by a family member - Killing of a woman by a current or former intimate partner - Killing of a woman subjected to sexual violence and/or bodily mutilation prior to the killing - Killing of a woman in the presence of her children 	- Femicide
11. Honduras (2013)	Decree No. 23-2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Killing of a woman by a current or former intimate partner - Killing of a woman by a family member - Killing of a woman subjected to sexual violence and/or bodily mutilation prior to the killing 	- Femicide
12. Mexico (2012)	Decree that amends and adds various provisions to the Federal Criminal Code,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Killing of a woman subjected to sexual violence and/or bodily mutilation prior to the killing, including acts of necrophilia 	- Femicide

Country	Femicide Law	What is counted as femicide	Offence
	the General Law for Women's Access to a Life Free from Violence, the Organic Law of Federal Public Administration and the Organic Law of the Attorney General's Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Killing of a woman in the context of family violence - Killing of a woman by a current or former intimate partner - Killing of a woman whose deceased body was disposed of or exhibited in a public space 	
13. Nicaragua (2012)	Law No. 779	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Killing of a woman by a family member - Killing of a woman by a current or former intimate partner - Killing of a woman by groups such as gangs - Killing of a woman subjected to sexual violence and/or bodily mutilation prior to the killing - Killing of a woman in the presence of her children 	- Femicide
14. Panama (2013)	Law No. 82	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Killing of a woman by a current or former intimate partner - Killing of a woman by a family member - Killing of a woman when there is a relationship of subordination or dependency with the perpetrator - Killing of a woman in the presence of her children - Killing of a pregnant woman - Killing of a woman in a situation of physical or psychological vulnerability - Killing of a woman subjected to sexual violence and/or bodily mutilation prior to the killing - Killing of a woman whose body was disposed of or thrown away in a public space - Killing of a woman as a result of group rites or revenge 	- Femicide
15. Paraguay (2016)	Law No. 5,777	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Killing of a woman by a current or former intimate partner - Killing of a woman by a family member 	- Femicide as a form of aggravated homicide ¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁵ See the text of the Law at www.pj.gov.py/images/contenido/secretariadegenero/observatorio/femicidio-en-py.pdf.

Country	Femicide Law	What is counted as femicide	Offence
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Killing of a woman after a cycle of physical, sexual or psychological violence (irrespective of whether the abuse was previously reported or not) - Killing of a woman when she was in a situation of physical or psychological vulnerability - Killing of a woman subjected to sexual violence prior to the killing - Killing of a woman motivated by her refusal to initiate or reinstate an intimate relationship with the perpetrator 	
16. Peru (2013)	Law No. 30,068	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Killing of a woman by a family member - Killing of a woman by a current or former intimate partner - Killing of a woman as a result of sexual harassment - Killing of a minor woman - Killing of a pregnant woman - Killing of a woman by her guardian or someone responsible for her safety and well-being - Killing of a woman subjected to sexual violence and/or bodily mutilation prior to the killing - Killing of a woman with any kind of disability when the crime was committed - Killing of a woman for the purpose of trafficking in persons 	- Femicide
17. Uruguay (2017)	Law No. 19,580 (Law on Gender-based Violence against Women) and Law No. 19,538 (amending the Criminal Code)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Killing of a woman by a current or former intimate partner - Killing of a woman by a family member - Killing of a woman subjected to sexual violence prior to the killing - Killing of a woman after a cycle of physical, sexual or psychological violence (irrespective of whether the abuse was previously reported or not) 	- Femicide as a form of aggravated homicide ¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁶ See the text of Law No. 19,580 at www.impo.com.uy/bases/leyes/19580-2017.

Country	Femicide Law	What is counted as femicide	Offence
18. Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) (2007)	Organic Law on Women's Right to a Life free from Violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Law criminalizes different forms of violence against women, but not the crime of femicide per se - The law makes an amendment to the Criminal Code, applicable to the crime of "intentional homicide" when this is committed by a current or former intimate partner, which is considered an aggravating circumstance 	- Aggravated homicide



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Since the publication of the previous edition in 2014, the *Global Study on Homicide* has been expanded into a special six-booklet format, five of which are dedicated to thematic areas relevant to the study of the ultimate crime.

Booklet 1 of the *Global Study on Homicide 2019* summarizes the content of the five subsequent substantive booklets by reviewing their key findings and highlighting a set of policy implications derived from the analyses presented in them. Booklet 2 provides an overview of international homicide counts, rates, trends and patterns, and of criminal justice responses to homicide. Booklet 3 examines drivers and mechanisms of, and contributors to, homicide, and looks at the different homicide typologies. The latter is done in an effort to improve understanding of the contexts in which homicide is perpetrated, as this can inform more effective policymaking. Booklet 4 analyses the relationship between homicide and development with reference to the Sustainable Development Goals by looking in detail at the main pillars of development and their reciprocal relationship with homicide and violence. Booklet 5 gives an overview of the scope of gender-related killings of women and girls. It contains an in-depth analysis of killings perpetrated within the family sphere and also examines forms of gender-related killings perpetrated outside the family sphere. Booklet 6 deals with the homicide of children, adolescents and young adults, and covers different types of child killings within and outside the family.

As in previous years, the *Global Study on Homicide 2019* is aimed at improving understanding of this complex phenomenon and at providing policymakers with an updated dataset of cross-national data that evaluates the scale of homicide globally.

The statistical annex is published on the UNODC website: <https://www.unodc.org/gsh/>

