



**UNODC**

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime



## Gender-related killings of women and girls (femicide/feminicide)

Global estimates of gender-related killings of women and girls in the private sphere in 2021

*Improving data to improve responses*



\* The title of this research brief refers to the Statistical framework for measuring the gender-related killing of women and girls (also referred to as “femicide/feminicide”), developed by UNODC and UN Women and approved by the UN Statistical Commission in March 2022. The term “femicide” in this publication is used to refer to all types of gender-related killings of women and girls.

## Acknowledgements

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# PREFACE

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Violence against women and girls is the most pervasive human rights violation rooted in gender inequality and discrimination, unequal power relations and harmful social norms. An estimated one in three women globally have been subjected to either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime.<sup>1</sup>

The gender-related killing of women and girls is the most brutal and extreme manifestation of such violence. The findings of this report show that in 2021, around 45,000 women and girls worldwide were killed by intimate partners or other family members. This means that more than five women or girls are killed every hour by someone in their own family. While these numbers are alarmingly high, the true scale of femicide may be much higher.

Concerted, urgent action is needed, to improve the knowledge base and strengthen responses to gender-related killings and other forms of gender-based violence against women and girls. With the aim of galvanizing global action against this all-too pervasive crime, UNODC and UN Women have joined forces this year to produce the second edition of this report.

UNODC and UN Women have been spearheading efforts to improve data collection through the Statistical framework for measuring the gender-related killing of women and girls (also referred to as “femicide/feminicide”), which is aligned with the International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes (ICCS) and was endorsed by the UN Statistical Commission in March 2022. The framework also aims to expand the knowledge base beyond gender-related killings in the family, as quality, comparable data about femicides perpetrated in the public sphere remains extremely limited.

By ensuring that every victim is counted we can ensure that perpetrators are held to account and justice is served. By improving understanding of all types of gender-related killings of women and girls we can strengthen prevention and improve responses. With this in mind, we are proud that this first joint UNODC-UN Women research brief features expanded policy recommendations to support comprehensive and multisectoral approaches to prevent and address gender-related killings and other forms of gender-based violence against women and girls.

The global theme for this year’s 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence (25 November to 10 December) is “UNITE! Activism to end violence against women and girls”. Civil society women’s rights organizations play an important and complementary role in documenting gender-related killings of women and girls, and in line with the 2022 theme, this report also features case studies highlighting efforts around the world by women’s rights organizations and other stakeholders to strengthen data collection and advocate for improved responses to femicide. Gender-related killings and other forms of violence against women and girls are not inevitable. They can and must be prevented, through early intervention, multi-stakeholder and multisectoral partnerships – including the partnerships that helped to produce this research brief, which we hope will support more determined action against this crime.



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Sima Bahous,  
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<sup>1</sup> WHO, *Violence against Women Prevalence Estimates 2018* (Geneva, 2021).



# KEY FINDINGS

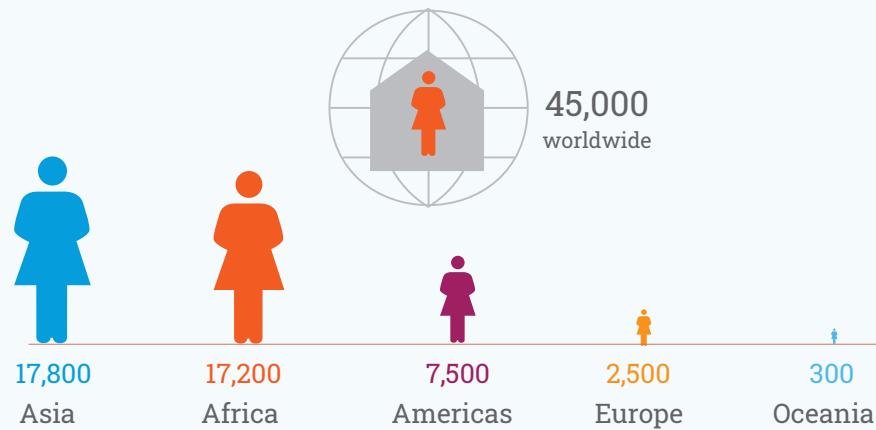
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- Globally, an estimated 81,100 women and girls were killed intentionally in 2021. The overall number of female homicides has remained largely unchanged over the past decade.
- Most killings of women and girls are gender motivated. In 2021, around 45,000 women and girls worldwide were killed by their intimate partners or other family members. This means that, on average, more than five women or girls are killed every hour by someone in their own family.
- While the overwhelming majority of homicides worldwide are committed against men and boys (81%), women and girls are disproportionately affected by homicidal violence in the private sphere. Approximately 56% of all female homicides are committed by intimate partners or other family members, while only 11% of all male homicides are perpetrated in the private sphere.
- Estimating the global number of gender-related killings of women and girls is challenging and data gaps persist: Of the estimated 81,100 female homicides in 2021, roughly four in ten have no contextual information to allow them to be identified and counted as gender-related killings (femicide/feminicide). Data on gender-related killings committed in the public sphere are particularly scarce, making it difficult to inform prevention policies for these types of killings.
- Between 2010 and 2021, Europe witnessed an average reduction in the number of female intimate partner/family-related homicides (by -19%), albeit with differences across sub-regions and with signs of trend reversals since 2020 in some sub-regions such as Western and Southern Europe. By contrast, the Americas recorded an average increase over the same period (by 6%), with the South American sub-region notably moving in the opposite direction. Limited data availability means that the estimation of over-time trends is not possible in Africa, Asia, and Oceania.
- In Northern America, and to a lesser extent in Western and Southern Europe, the year 2020 was particularly deadly in terms of gender-related killings of women and girls in the private sphere. This may point to a pernicious impact of Covid-19 confinement measures on lethal violence in the private sphere, although other contributing factors cannot be ruled out. Other sub-regions in Europe and the Americas recorded negligible changes or decreases in the number of killings between 2019 and the end of 2020, which suggests that the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic had heterogeneous impacts. The decreases in some sub-regions may reflect delays in recording due to Covid-19 rather than reductions in the number of killings.
- Disaggregated trend data from 25 countries in Europe and the Americas indicate that increases in female homicides in the private sphere at the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic were driven primarily by increases in killings perpetrated by family members other than intimate partners. The increases in female family-related homicides at the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic were larger than any yearly variations observed since 2015.

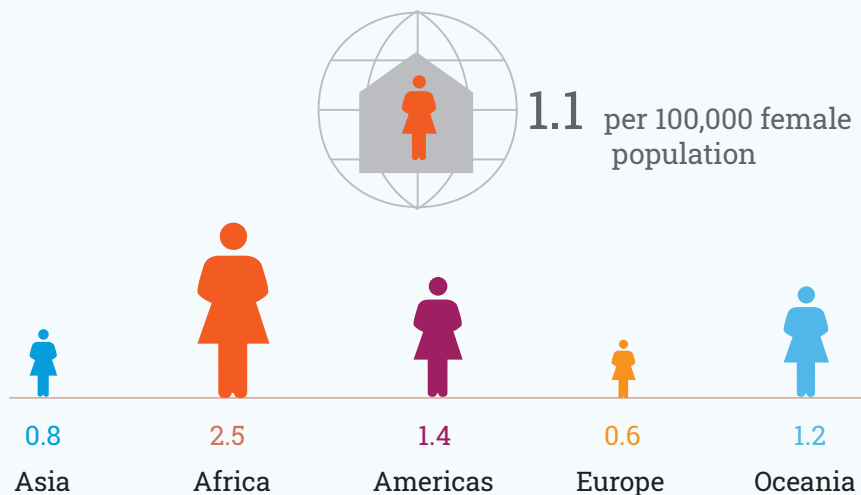
## Global estimates

Women and girls in all regions are affected by gender-based killings. While Asia is the region with the largest absolute number of killings, Africa is the region with the highest level of violence relative to the size of its female population.

Total female intimate partner/family-related homicides  
2021

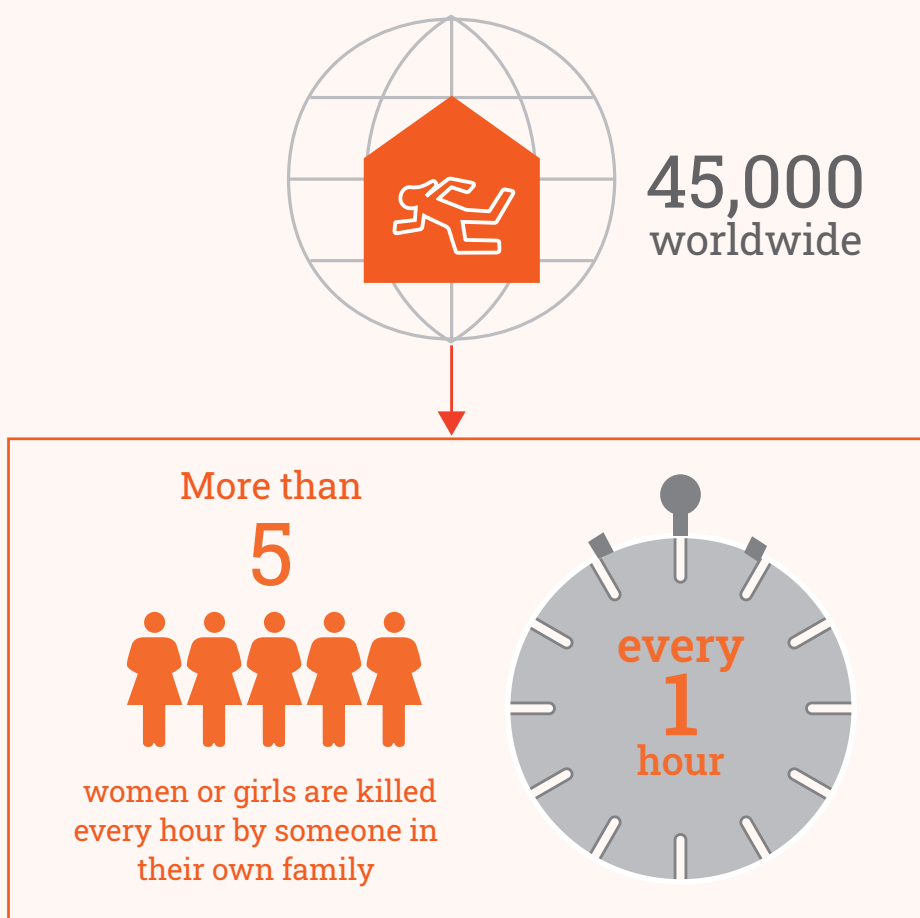


Rates of female intimate partner/family-related homicide per 100,000 female population  
2021



## Total number of women killed by intimate partners or other family members

In 2021, around 45,000 women and girls worldwide were killed by their intimate partners or other family members. This means that, on average, more than five women or girls are killed every hour by someone in their own family.



## Gender dimension of homicide

While the overwhelming majority of male homicides occur outside the private sphere, for women and girls the most dangerous place is the home.

### Male and female share of homicide victims

2021



### Share of male and female homicide victims killed by intimate partners/family members

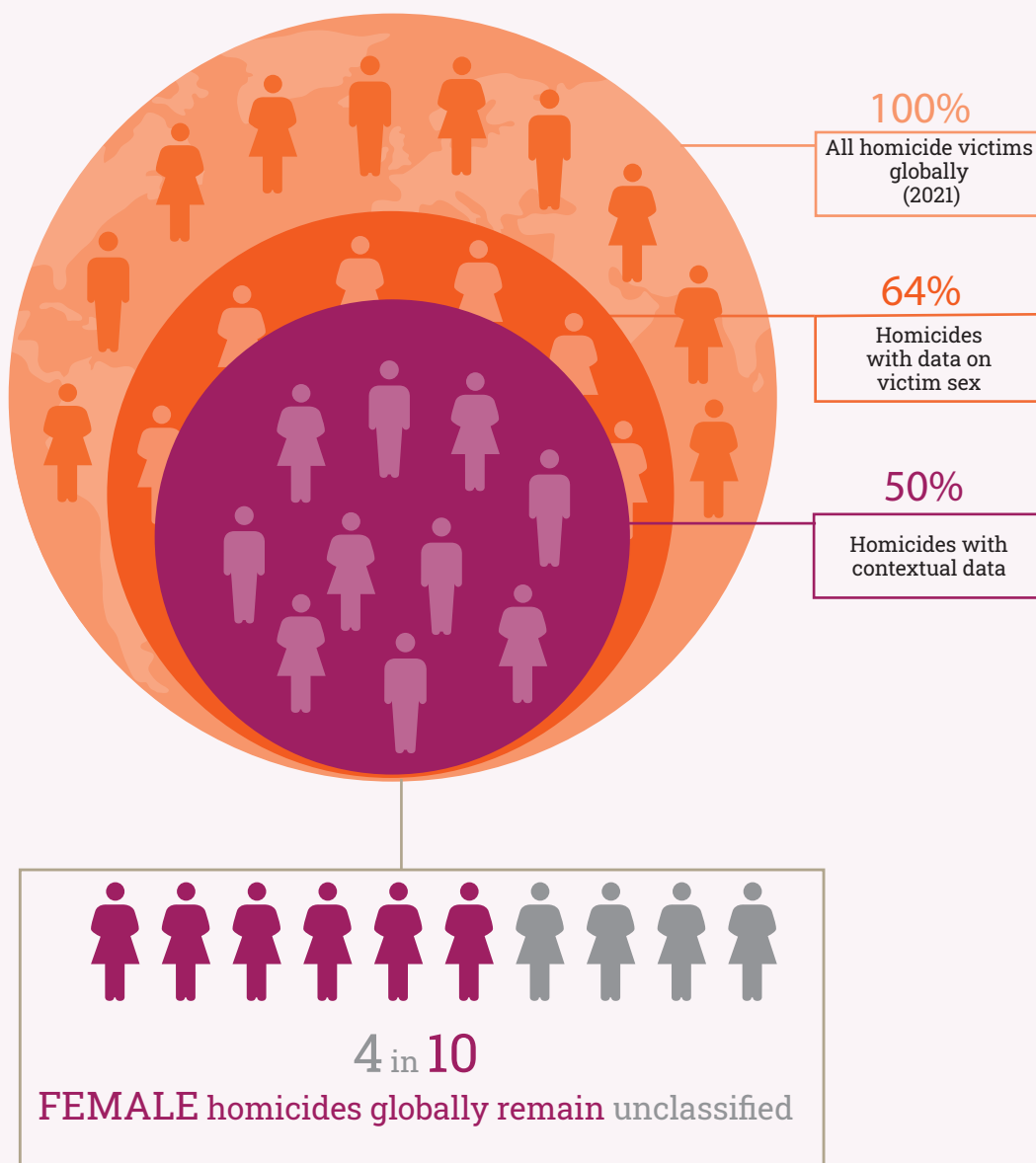
2021





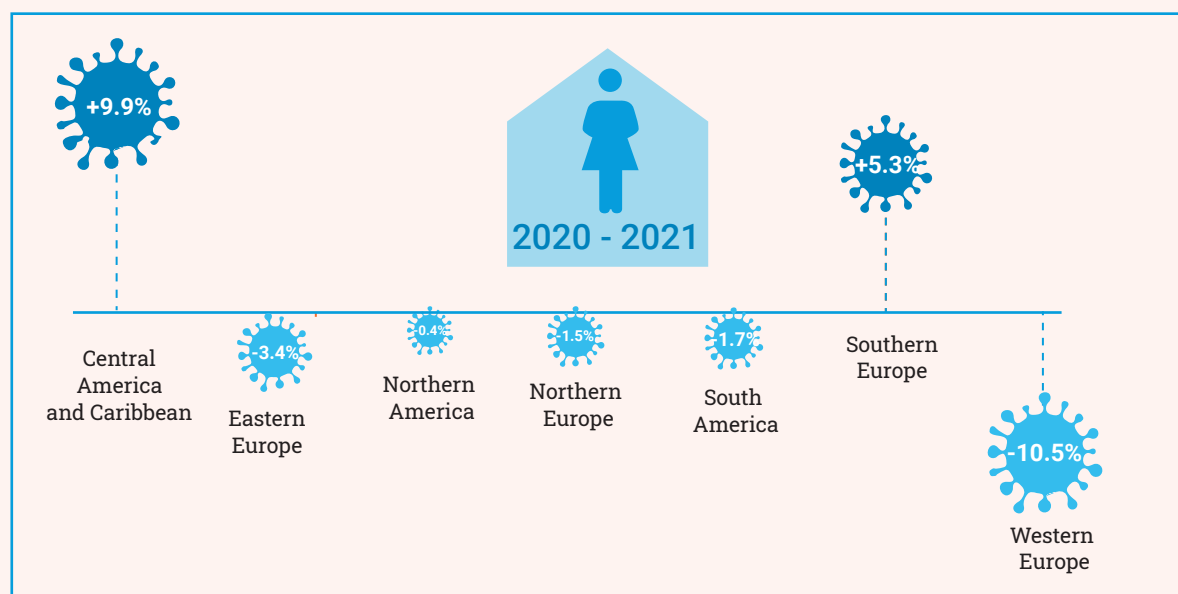
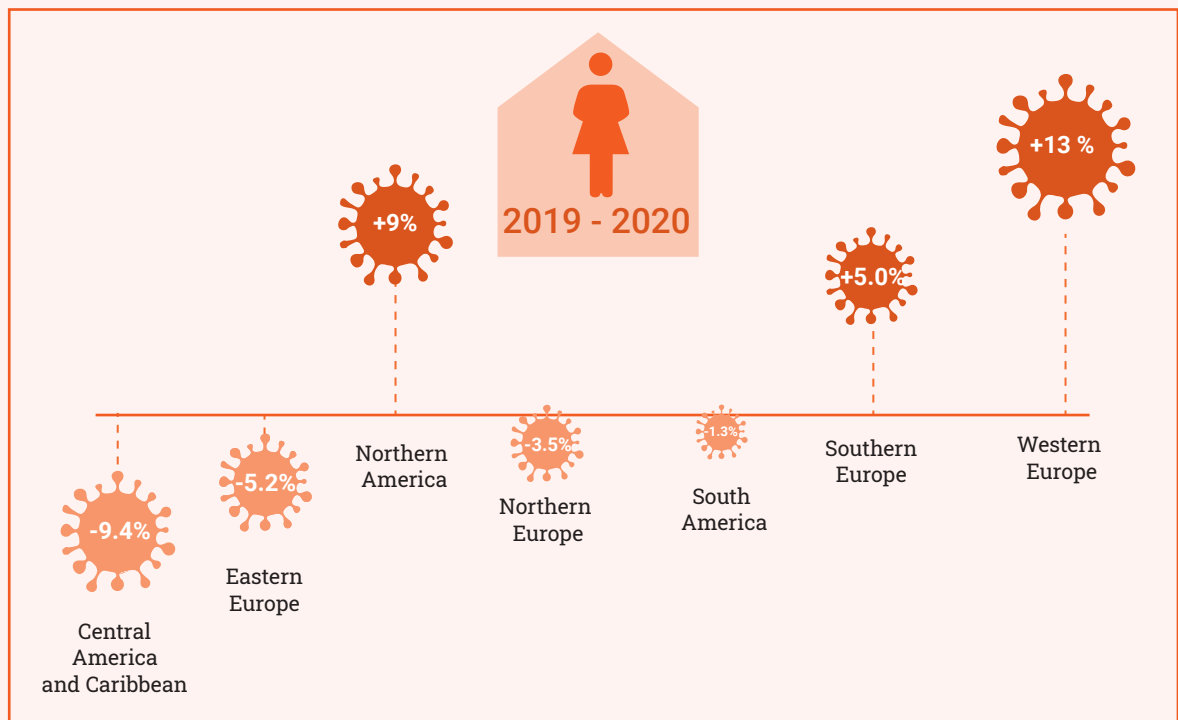
## Many gender-related killings are not identified and counted

Four out of ten female homicides in 2021 had no contextual data that would allow for them to be classified as gender-related killings.



## Trends in female intimate partner/family-related homicide during Covid-19

Year-on-year percentage change in female intimate partner/family-related homicide in selected sub-regions.



## INTRODUCTION

Gender-related killings of women and girls, also referred to as femicide and feminicide,<sup>2</sup> represent the lethal end point of a continuum of multiple, overlapping and interconnected forms of gender-based violence. Such homicides usually follow prior experiences of physical, sexual or emotional abuse.<sup>3</sup>

In broad terms, gender-related killings of women and girls can be defined as intentional killings with a gender-related motivation connected to its root causes, which may range from stereotyped gender roles, discrimination towards women and girls, to unequal power relations between women and men in society.<sup>4</sup>

Gender-related killings can take place in different situations within both the private and public spheres, and within different contexts of victim-perpetrator relationship. Examples include homicides as a result of intimate partner violence, as well as rape-murder, so-called “honour killings”, dowry-related killings, killings of women accused of witchcraft and gender-motivated homicides connected with armed conflict or with gangs, trafficking in persons and other forms of organized crime.

The majority of female homicides are gender-related killings – and estimates may understate the problem because in four in ten cases there is insufficient information recorded (see below). The largest share of gender-related killings of women and girls are homicides perpetrated by intimate partners and other family members.

While the vast majority of homicide victims recorded globally are men and boys, women and girls are, in every region of the world, disproportionately affected by homicide in the private sphere.<sup>5</sup> For this reason, and for reasons of availability and comparability, the data featured in this research brief focuses on female victims of intimate partner and family-related homicide.

## MANY GENDER-RELATED KILLINGS OF WOMEN AND GIRLS ARE NOT IDENTIFIED AND COUNTED

Estimating the global number of gender-related killings of women and girls (femicide/feminicide) is challenging. Despite improvements in the availability and comparability of homicide data over the past decade,<sup>6</sup> significant data gaps remain, especially in countries in Africa, Asia, and Oceania.<sup>7</sup> In some cases, these data gaps can be attributed to a lack of reporting mechanisms between sub-national, national, and international data producers. In other cases, homicides are simply not recorded by or reported to the police or other competent authorities.<sup>8</sup>

As of 2021, out of all 193 UN Member States,<sup>9</sup> 173 have reported data on the total number of homicide victims or offences for at least one year since 2010. However, while data on the total number of homicides are relatively widely available – albeit not always timely – sex-disaggregated data on

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<sup>2</sup> See UN General Assembly resolutions A/RES/68/191 adopted in 2013 and A/RES/70/176 adopted in 2016.

<sup>3</sup> UNODC, *Global Study on Homicide 2019*, booklet 5, *Gender-related Killing of Women and Girls* (Vienna, 2019).

<sup>4</sup> UNODC and UN Women, *Statistical framework for measuring the gender-related killing of women and girls (also referred to as “femicide/feminicide”)* (Vienna, 2021).

<sup>5</sup> UNODC, *Data Matters 3* (Vienna, 2021).

<sup>6</sup> See UNODC, *Global Study on Homicide 2019*, booklet 5, *Gender-related Killing of Women and Girls* (Vienna, 2019).

<sup>7</sup> Regional groupings of countries are based on the M49 standard, <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/methodology/m49/>.

<sup>8</sup> See UNODC, *Methodological Annex to the Global Study on Homicide 2019*, for a detailed discussion of homicide data gaps from a global perspective.

<sup>9</sup> Global and regional homicide estimates also include data from several overseas territories and non-Member States.

homicide victims are recorded much less frequently. As of 2021, only 133 UN Member States have reported data that distinguish between male and female homicide victims. This means that of all homicide victims estimated globally in 2021, 36% had no information on the sex of the victim.

Information on the victim-perpetrator relationship – a crucial “data block” for identifying and counting gender-related killings of women and girls in the private sphere – is even harder to come by. As of 2021, only 97 UN Member States provided information on the victim-perpetrator relationship or other contextual information<sup>10</sup> that would allow for the identification and counting of gender-related killings of women and girls.<sup>11</sup> This means that of all homicide victims in 2021 – both male and female – around 50% had no data on the context of the killing. It also means that of the estimated 81,100 female homicides in 2021, four out of ten had no contextual information that would allow for them to be identified and counted as gender-related killings.

The large share of female homicides worldwide where no contextual information is available highlights the urgent need for national authorities to move beyond a crime statistics approach where homicide events are simply counted, to an approach where contextual characteristics of homicides (such as the victim-perpetrator relationship) are recorded on a routine basis. To strengthen the collection and harmonization of data on gender-related killings of women and girls globally, UNODC and UN Women recently developed the *Statistical framework for measuring the gender-related killing of women and girls (also referred to as “femicide/feminicide”)*, which was approved by the United Nation’s Statistical Commission in March 2022 (see below).<sup>12</sup>

The lack of sufficient contextual information also highlights why it is difficult to obtain a precise estimate of the global number of gender-related killings of women and girls. For several countries and years, gender-related female homicides can be estimated only through statistical modelling and based on information from neighbouring countries or other years. Regional estimates therefore also come with intervals of uncertainty, which are relatively wider in regions with limited data such as Africa, Asia, and Oceania.

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<sup>10</sup> Other contextual information that can be used to identify gender-related killings of women and girls includes, for example, information on the motivation of the killing (honour-related killings, hate crime killings, dowry killings, etc.). For more information, see UNODC and UN Women, *Statistical framework for measuring the gender-related killing of women and girls (also referred to as “femicide/feminicide”)* (Vienna, 2021).

<sup>11</sup> In several countries, data on other types of gender-related killings such as ‘femicides’ or ‘feminicides’ (as defined in domestic legislation) can be used as proxy measures given that reliable data on the victim-perpetrator relationship (including on female intimate partner/family-related homicides), are not available. For a detailed comparison of data on female intimate partner/family-related homicides and ‘femicides/feminicides’, see *The Global Study on Homicide 2019, Booklet 5*, p.25

<sup>12</sup> UNODC and UN Women, *Statistical framework for measuring the gender-related killing of women and girls (also referred to as “femicide/feminicide”)* (Vienna, 2021).

## BOX: THE STATISTICAL FRAMEWORK TO MEASURE GENDER-RELATED KILLING OF WOMEN AND GIRLS (“FEMICIDE/FEMINICIDE”)

Preventing and ending gender-related killings of women and girls require grasping the full dimension of this crime and disentangling its complexity. Gender-related killings are often not recorded as such and where they are, they lack consistency and completeness. Improving the quality, availability, and timeliness of data on this phenomenon helps to assess progress or setbacks and support evidence-based policy making and an effective criminal justice response.

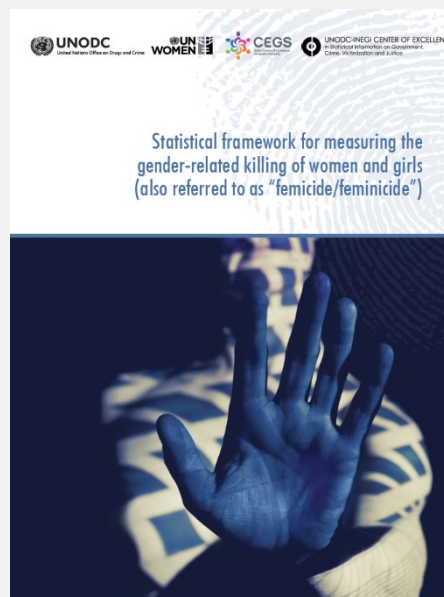
Identifying, recording and producing statistics on gender-related killings of women and girls require a granular system of data collection and reporting where all data providers follow a standardized approach when collecting and integrating the data.

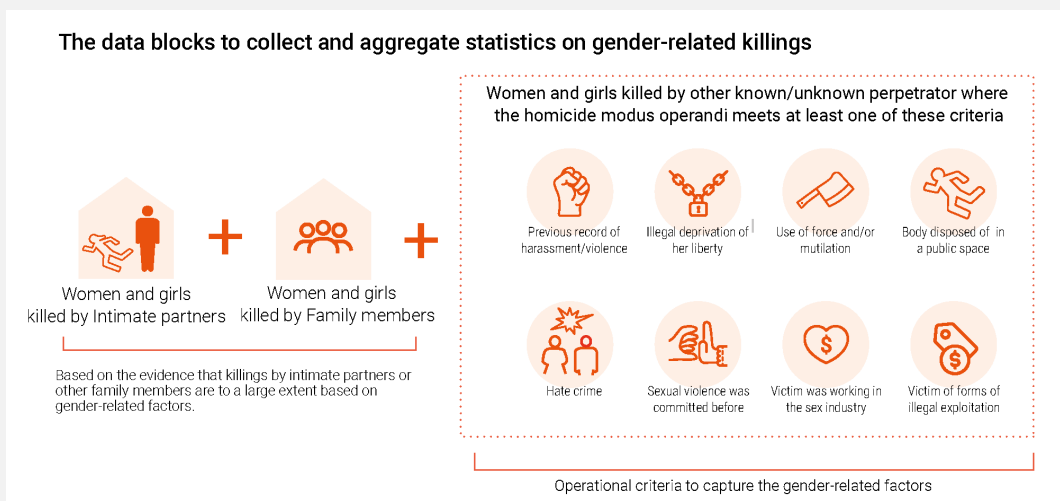
In March 2022, the United Nations Statistical Commission at its 53<sup>rd</sup> session approved a statistical framework that guides countries in the development of such a granular system. The process that resulted in the approval of the framework started in 2019, when the Commission stressed the need to improve data on gender-based violence on the characteristics of victims and perpetrators, and to measure and monitor the effectiveness of State responses to this phenomenon. Following the Commission’s request, UNODC and UN Women jointly launched a global consultation to assess the validity of the characteristics to determine the gender-related motivation of crime; their relevance for the development of evidence-based prevention policies; and their feasibility in terms of the technical and operational capacity in national institutions to produce corresponding data. 54 countries responded to this call and participated in the global consultation.

Based on the results of the global consultation, in 2022, the UN Statistical Commission endorsed the “Statistical framework for measuring the gender-related killings of women and girls (femicide/ feminicide)” developed by the UNODC and UN Women, supported by the UNODC-INEGI Center of Excellence on Statistical Information on Government, Crime, Victimization and Justice and the UN Women-INEGI Global Centre of Excellence on Gender Statistics.

The foundation of the framework is to recognize the structural causes framing gender-related killings, including unequal power relations and social gender roles, inter alia. Moreover, it recognizes that femicide/feminicide may take place in the private and public spheres, or even when there is no existing relationship between the victim and the perpetrator.

This framework ensures international comparability of data on femicide/feminicide, since it provides a standard statistical definition of gender-based killings of women and girls (femicide/feminicide) and identifies the “data blocks” that can characterize those killings that are gender motivated, independently from the specific national legislation on such crime. The framework builds on the International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes (ICCS) disaggregating variables that should be registered on the victims, perpetrators, the context and the mechanism of killings.





The Statistical Framework aims to assist national statistical offices, institutions within the criminal justice and public health systems, mechanisms for the advancement of women and gender equality, civil society organizations and academia in harmonizing data collection within countries, and across countries and regions.

UNODC and UN Women have started working together to support Member States in implementing the Statistical Framework, through outreach and advocacy, supporting the creation of national coordination mechanisms and by providing technical assistance to strengthen national capacities for collecting and integrating harmonized and complete data on gender-related killings.

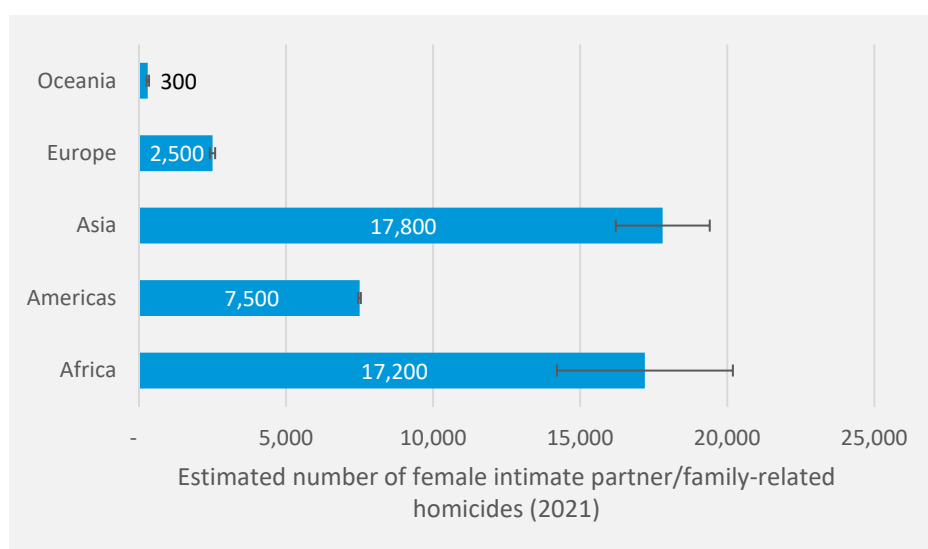
UNODC is expected to report back to the UN Statistical Commission in 2025 on the results of implementing the Statistical Framework.

## EXTENT OF FEMALE INTIMATE PARTNER/FAMILY-RELATED HOMICIDE IN ABSOLUTE NUMBERS

In 2021, approximately 45,000 (40,200 – 49,800) women and girls were killed globally by their intimate partners or other family members (including fathers, mothers, uncles and brothers).<sup>13</sup> This means that around 56% of the estimated total of 81,100 female homicide victims recorded in 2021 were killed by someone in their own family.<sup>14</sup>

With an estimated 17,800 victims (16,100 – 19,500), Asia recorded the largest number of female intimate partner/family-related killings in 2021, followed by Africa, with 17,200 (14,200 – 20,200). In the Americas, an estimated 7,500 (7,450 – 7,550), women and girls were killed by their intimate partners or other family members in 2021, while Europe recorded 2,500 (2,400 – 2,600) and Oceania recorded 300 (250 – 350) such killings (Figure 1).<sup>15</sup> Differences in absolute numbers between world regions are also a reflection of differences in the size of the regional populations, so it is important to also examine the extent of the problem in terms of rates (per 100,000 female population).

**FIGURE 1: Estimated number of female victims of intimate partner/family-related homicide, by region (2021)**



Source: UNODC estimates based on UNODC Homicide Dataset.

Note: Uncertainty bands represent possible estimation errors due to imputation of missing values at the country level. The bands do not represent probability confidence intervals. The estimates are based on the latest available data, which remain limited, especially in Africa, Asia, and Oceania. The size of the error bars provides an indication of the level of uncertainty that the estimates carry at the regional level.

<sup>13</sup> The global and regional estimates are produced based on available national data and through a statistical model imputing missing values at the country level. They are complemented by an interval of uncertainty that accounts for possible estimation errors due to the imputation of missing values at the country level. The bands do not represent probabilistic confidence intervals. For more information, see the methodological annex.

<sup>14</sup> The 2021 estimate of 45,000 victims is not directly comparable to the 2020 figure (47,000) published in *Data Matters 3* and the 2017 figure (50,000 victims) published in the *Global Study on Homicide 2019* due to an improvement in the coverage of national data and refinements in the statistical model. The different global estimates for 2017, 2020 and 2021 should not be interpreted as evidence of a trend in the global number of gender-related killings in the private sphere over this time span.

<sup>15</sup> The difference of 300 killings between the estimated global total and the sum of the regional estimates is due to rounding.

## EXTENT OF FEMALE INTIMATE PARTNER/FAMILY-RELATED HOMICIDE IN RATES

By accounting for differences between regions in terms of population size and growth, homicide rates are more suitable than absolute numbers in terms of capturing women's actual risk of being killed by someone in their own family. In 2021, out of every 100,000 women and girls worldwide, approximately 1.1 were killed by their intimate partners or other family members.<sup>16</sup> Although the absolute number of killings was highest in Asia, the available data suggest that in Africa women and girls are at greater risk of being killed by their intimate partners or other family members. In 2021, the female intimate partner/family-related homicide rate in Africa was estimated at 2.5 per 100,000 female population, compared with 1.4 in the Americas, 1.2 in Oceania, 0.8 in Asia and 0.6 in Europe.

The risk for women and girls to be killed within domestic contexts varies across world regions but is more homogeneous than the variability in overall homicide rates across regions. In 2021, the variability in the total homicide rate across regions ranged from roughly 2.1 in Asia to 14.7 in the Americas, while the rate of female intimate partner/family-related homicide remained in the low single digits across all five world regions.<sup>17</sup>

## TRENDS IN FEMALE INTIMATE PARTNER/FAMILY-RELATED HOMICIDE

Europe and the Americas are currently the only two world regions where data availability allows for estimation of over-time trends in female intimate partner/family-related homicides. Although the macro-level trends hide a significant amount of variability in sub-regional and national trends, the overall picture emerging is one of relative stability in the absolute number of yearly killings at the regional level (Figure 2).

Between 2010 and 2021, Europe witnessed an average reduction in the number of female intimate partner/family-related homicides (by -19%), albeit with different patterns between sub-regions and with signs of trend reversals since 2020 in some sub-regions such as Western and Southern Europe. By contrast, the Americas recorded an average increase over the same period (by 6%), with the South American sub-region notably moving in the opposite direction. When comparing trends in Europe and the Americas it is important to keep in mind that the absolute number of killings recorded each year is roughly three times as high in the Americas compared to Europe (Figure 2). Due to population growth in both regions, the *rate* of female intimate partner/family-related homicide per 100,000 female population declined in both regions between 2010 and 2021 – quite markedly in Europe (by -19.5%) and moderately in the Americas (by -4%).

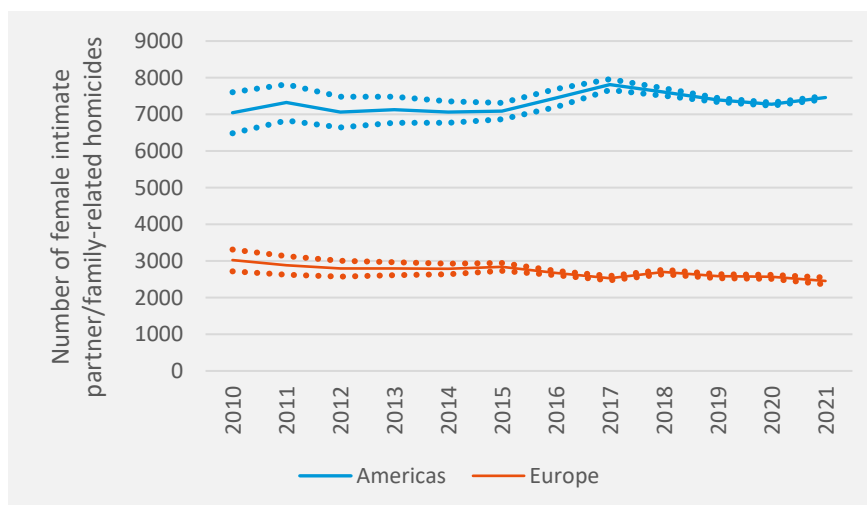
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<sup>16</sup> Due to improvements in data coverage and statistical modelling, the estimated 2021 global rate of 1.1 female intimate partner/family-related homicides per 100,000 women is not directly comparable to the 2020 rate of 1.2 rate published in the *Data Matters 3* and should not be interpreted as a decrease in the risk of such killings at the global level in recent years.

<sup>17</sup> As of 2021, variability in the male homicide rate ranged from 26.4 in the Americas to 2.7 in Asia. The female homicide rate varied from 3.8 in Africa to 1.2 in Europe.



**FIGURE 2: Trends in the total number of female victims of intimate partner/family-related homicide in the Americas and Europe (2010–2021)**

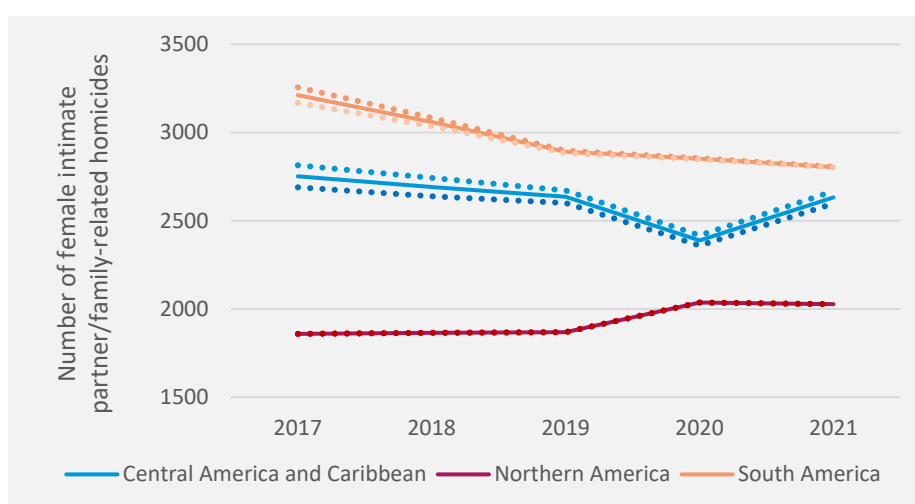


Source: UNODC estimates based on UNODC Homicide dataset.

Note: The dotted lines represent ranges around the estimate and show the extent to which the regional estimate for a specific year relies on reported versus imputed country-level series of intimate partner/family-related homicide. The ranges do not represent confidence intervals and should not be interpreted as such. For more information, see the methodological annex.

In the Americas, the most noteworthy development in recent years is the flat U-shaped trend observable since 2017, which suggests some reductions in the yearly number of gender-related killings of women and girls in the region until the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, followed by a deterioration of the situation thereafter. This regional trend can be to some extent explained by diverging sub-regional and national trends. Figure 3 shows the estimated yearly number of female victims of intimate partner/family-related homicide in the Northern, South, Central America and the Carribean sub-regions since 2017. While South America experienced a decline in yearly killings (by -13%) since 2017, Northern America witnessed an increase (by 9%) and Central America and the Carribean recorded fluctuations in yearly killings around a modest decline (by -4%).

**FIGURE 3: Trends in the total number of female victims of intimate partner/family-related homicide in Northern, South, Central America and the Carribean (2017–2021)**



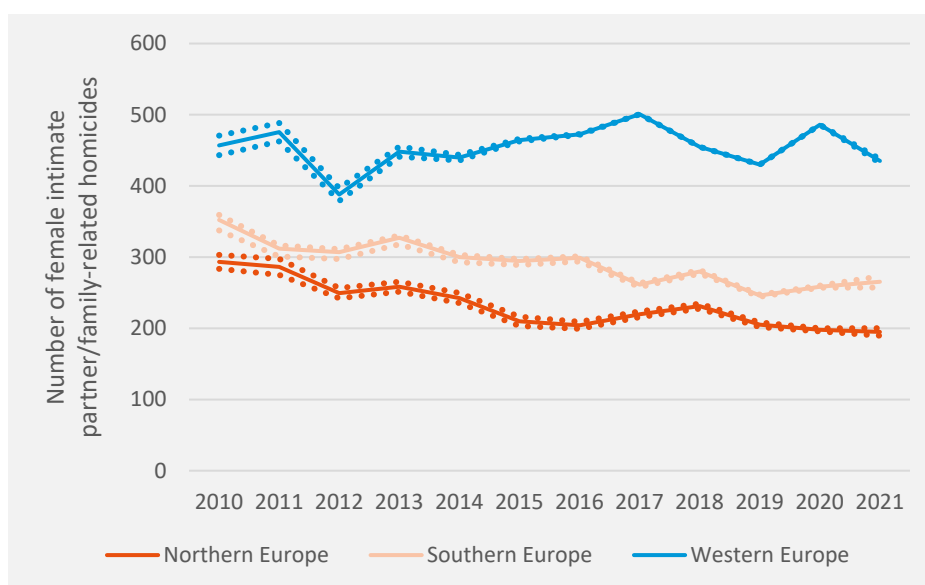
Source: UNODC estimates based on UNODC Homicide dataset.

Note: The dotted lines represent ranges around the estimate and show the extent to which the regional estimate for a specific year relies on reported versus imputed country-level series of intimate partner/family-related homicide. The ranges do not represent confidence intervals and should not be interpreted as such. For more information, see the methodological annex.

These sub-regional trends in the American sub-regions are in turn to a large extent driven by national trends in a few populous countries as well as some smaller countries with relatively high homicide rates. In Northern America, the United States has recorded an increase in female intimate partner/family-related homicides in recent years, especially since 2020 – taking place in the context of an overall increase in homicidal violence in the country since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic (Figure 12). In South America, Brazil has witnessed a modest decline in “femicides” in recent years, mirroring reductions in overall levels of homicide with a temporary low point in 2019 (Figure 12). In Central America, diverging national trends can explain the fluctuations at the sub-regional level since 2017. For example, Mexico has witnessed an increase in “femicides” since 2018, which is taking place in the context of an overall increase in homicidal violence against both men and women (Figure 12). By contrast, some less populous countries in Central America with relatively high homicide rates, such as El Salvador and Honduras, have recorded reductions in “femicides” since 2015, again in the context of overall declines in homicidal violence (Figure 13).

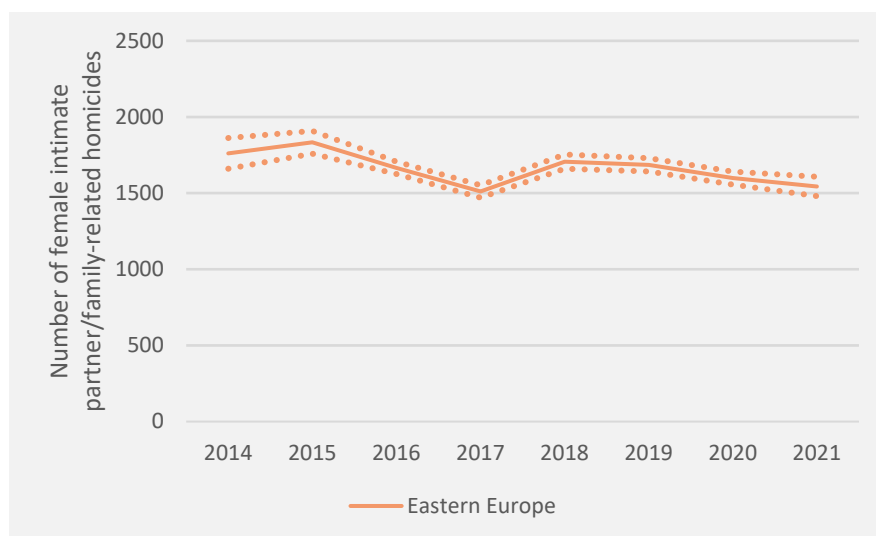
In Europe, the average decline (by -19%) in the yearly number of female intimate partner/family-related homicides between 2010 and 2021 hides substantial difference in trends at the sub-regional level. While both Northern Europe and Southern Europe recorded average declines in female intimate partner/family-related homicides over the past decade (by -34% and -25% respectively), Western Europe saw little improvement in reducing the yearly number of killings, with significant year-on-year fluctuations around a relatively stable longer-term trend ( Figure 4). In Eastern Europe, trend estimates are subject to more uncertainty due to less data availability in the region. However, based on available data, it is estimated that the yearly number of female intimate partner/family-related homicides remained relatively stable between 2014 and 2021, fluctuating between 1,500 and 1,800 yearly killings – a significantly higher level of homicidal violence (both in absolute numbers as well as rates) compared with other European regions (Figure 5).

**FIGURE 4: Trends in the total number of female victims of intimate partner/family-related homicide in Northern, Southern, and Western Europe (2010–2021)**



Source: UNODC estimates based on UNODC Homicide dataset.

Note: The dotted lines represent ranges around the estimate and show the extent to which the regional estimate for a specific year relies on reported versus imputed country-level series of intimate partner/family-related homicide. The ranges do not represent confidence intervals and should not be interpreted as such. For more information, see the methodological annex.

**FIGURE 5: Trends in the total number of female victims of intimate partner/family-related homicide in Eastern Europe (2014–2021)**

Source: UNODC estimates based on UNODC Homicide dataset.

Note: The dotted lines represent ranges around the estimate and show the extent to which the regional estimate for a specific year relies on reported versus imputed country-level series of intimate partner/family-related homicide. The ranges do not represent confidence intervals and should not be interpreted as such. For more information, see the methodological annex.

As in the Americas, the sub-regional trends in Europe are reflective of different national trends in the more populous countries. The overall average decline in Northern Europe, for example, is to a large extent driven by a slow downward trend in the United Kingdom (Figure 14), while the reduction in Southern Europe is driven by some modest decreases in yearly killings recorded in Spain and Italy between 2010 and 2019 (Figure 14). The yearly fluctuations around a relatively stable longer-term trend witnessed in Western Europe is, in turn, primarily driven by the yearly number of female intimate partner/family-related homicides in Germany, which recorded little change in the longer-term, albeit with some noteworthy reductions in 2012 and 2019 as well as upticks in 2013 and 2020 (Figure 14). Other countries in Western Europe such as France, the Netherlands, Austria and Switzerland have equally seen variability around relatively stable levels of gender-related killings in the private sphere.

In Eastern Europe, several countries including Belarus, Hungary and Romania recorded some reductions in the yearly number of female intimate partner/family-related homicides since 2015 (Figure 15). However, the sub-regional trend for Eastern Europe is largely driven by available data from the Russian Federation, which are not indicative of a downward or upward trend in such killings, but rather show yearly fluctuations around stable levels (Figure 15).

## BOX: BETTER UNDERSTANDING AND RESPONDING TO FEMICIDE IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

In 2018, Serbian organizations FemPlatz and Women's Research Center for Education and Communication, with the technical and financial support of a UN Women programme funded by the European Commission, "Ending Violence against Women in the Western Balkans and Turkey: implementing norms, changing minds", began developing a framework for understanding the characteristics, patterns, and causes of femicide in Serbia. The process involved developing a methodology and collecting data on final court decisions for 94 convictions for gender-related killings of a woman by a man and 30 final enforceable decisions for attempted murder of a woman from 2016 to 2019 in order to analyse the court proceedings, profiles of perpetrators, information about victims, prior reports of violence, qualification of the criminal act and other aspects. The methodology also involved in-depth analysis of selected court casefiles, capacity assessments of institutions and professionals working on protection from violence against women, interviews with convicted perpetrators, and analysis of legislation and policies to improve and strengthen existing preventive measures. Furthermore, through media monitoring, an additional 80 cases of femicide that happened between 2020 and 2022 were tracked and reported on to raise the awareness on the scope and importance of solving this problem, increase accountability and strengthen advocacy. The operational definition of femicide used was every form of gender-related killing of a woman by a man (partner and family context, non-partner/non-family context that has a gender component, namely directed at women based on their gender, sex, gender roles and unequal power relations).

The overall programme was framed with three main pillars:

- **Producing institutional responses to femicide:** producing a data collection model; sectoral protocols for femicide risk assessment and review for the prosecution, health care system, police departments and social welfare system; proposals for legislative changes; introduction of the femicide watch in national policies; and a proposal for the operational model for the femicide watch to be established within the Ombudsperson institution, as well as maintaining constant dialogue between women's organizations and governmental officials, human rights and equality institutions and members of the Parliament.
- **Building the capacities of professionals** to analyse cases and risk factors more thoroughly and insist on a strengthened multi-sectoral approach. Over 400 professionals participated in capacity building events, and two-thirds expressed willingness to work together more closely on risk assessment on femicide.
- **Raising awareness and building support** for advocacy by alerting the public to every femicide case, publishing relevant information, maintaining a media and online presence and issuing joint civil society demands. Over 70 civil society organizations supported the demands for urgent actions against femicide. Joint civil society initiatives contributed to control procedures in some cases of femicide.

The same model was replicated in Montenegro and Albania.<sup>18</sup> About 140 final court decisions on killings of women were analysed in the three countries, over 350 professionals participated in the capacity assessment of institutions relevant for the prevention and protection of women from violence, and partnerships were established with various actors. Also, over 100 cases of femicides in the period 2020 to 2022 that were not covered by the judicial research were tracked and analysed through media reporting. Similar patterns and challenges with systemic data collection, data quality and institutional capacities were observed in all countries, alongside a range of legal and social similarities. Governments and authorities in all three countries expressed their commitment to work on eradicating femicide and establish a femicide watch, the Serbian government by defining femicide as the most extreme manifestation of violence against women and by establishing a control mechanism for monitoring and analysing femicide cases (Femicide Watch) in the Strategy for combating gender-based violence. As proposed by FemPlatz and Women's

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<sup>18</sup> In partnership with the Helpline for women and children victims of violence Niksic, Montenegro and Center for Legal Civic Initiatives, Tirana, Albania.

Research Center, this mechanism should collect data on all femicide and attempted femicide cases, analyse response of all institutions (social care system, judiciary, prosecution, police, health care system and service providers), give recommendations to authorities about improving the prevention system and inform the public about steps taken by the authorities to prevent and eradicate femicide. The Albanian government expressed its commitment in its input to the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women and Girls to provide information about the implementation of the Femicide Watch initiative, and the Montenegrin government in a statement by the prime minister on defining femicide as a criminal act.

The programme partners systematized the available data on femicide from all responsible courts, police departments, justice system data and media monitoring, proposed a data collection model as there was no central evidence systems, and worked to put this issue on the political and public agenda. The establishment of a femicide watch has now become a topic for wider consultative processes, and the word 'femicide' has entered daily use by authorities, politicians, the media.<sup>19</sup>

*(UN Women)*

Limited data availability means that the estimation of over-time trends in female intimate partner/family-related homicides is not possible in the other world regions, namely in Africa, Asia, and Oceania. However, evidence from several populous Asian and African countries with available trend data suggest that the situation might be improving gradually, with a moderate decline in gender-related killings of women and girls over time. For example, in India, violent deaths related to dowry payments, accusations of witchcraft and other gender-related factors have been slowly declining over the past decade (Figure 16). A similar trend can be observed in neighbouring Pakistan, which recorded some reductions in female victims of "honour crimes" since 2011, with a slight trend reversal since 2018 (Figure 17). In South Africa, estimates of female intimate partner killings from three national studies across 18 years (1999, 2009, and 2017), suggest that the female intimate partner homicide rate was halved over this time period (see Box below).<sup>20</sup>

Importantly, downward trends are by no means observed across all of Africa and Asia. In several African and Asian countries with available time series data on female intimate partner/family-related homicides (for example in Afghanistan, Algeria, Morocco, and Uganda), the data are not indicative of clear trends (Figure 18). Finally, although the link between the total number of female victims and the number of female intimate partner/family-related homicides is not always direct,<sup>21</sup> trend data on the total number of female homicide victims (both inside and outside the home) from several populous Asian countries, including the Philippines, Türkiye and Japan, show reductions since 2010 (Figure 19). Taken together, the available trend data therefore suggest that the situation for women and girls might be improving, particularly in Asia.

In Oceania, Australia and New Zealand are the only two countries with reliable trend data on female intimate partner/family-related homicides. Australia has seen some reductions in the number of female intimate partner/family-related homicides in recent years, while New Zealand has experienced an

<sup>19</sup> E.g. Vice-president of the National Parliament of the Republic of Serbia supported the initiative for the establishment of femicide watch in Serbia (more on [Потпредседник Народне скупштине др Зоран Лутовац разговарао са представницама удружења FemPlatz \(ds.org.rs\)](#), 14.10.2022); Parliamentary group "Zajedno" in the National Parliament of Serbia supported the initiative for the establishment of the femicide watch in Serbia (more on [Stranka Zajedno danas se sastala sa predstavnicama udruženja građanki FemPlatz – ZAJEDNO – zeleno leva politička stranka \(zajedno-moramo.rs\)](#), 14.10.2022); Prime Minister of Montenegro Statement to criminalize femicide (more on [Abazović: Iniciraćemo uvrštanje femicida kao posebnog krivičnog djela \(www.gov.me\)](#)); Input of the Government of Albania to the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences about the progress in establishing femicide watch (more on [OHCHR | Femicide Watch initiative \(2021\)](#)).

<sup>20</sup> Abrahams, N. et. al., *Decrease in Femicide in South Africa: Three National Studies Across 18 Years*. Research brief, South African Medical Research Council (2022).

<sup>21</sup> See *Data Matters 3* for a discussion of trends in non-intimate partner/family-related female homicides and how they related to trends in intimate partner/family-related female homicides.

increase in killings (Figure 20).<sup>22</sup> Large data gaps remain for the rest of Oceania, with no recent sex-disaggregated homicide data available for the more populous Pacific nations of Papua New Guinea and Fiji. In Papua New Guinea, which has recorded some of the highest homicide rates in the region, there is evidence that gender-related killings of women due to sorcery accusations continue to occur as of 2020.<sup>23</sup>

The information available on homicides involving marginalized groups such as aboriginal and indigenous women and girls is extremely limited, but evidence available from Canada and Australia suggests that indigenous women bear a disproportionate burden of homicidal violence.<sup>24</sup> Violence against indigenous women in general has been linked to racial and ethnic discrimination and socioeconomic status.<sup>25</sup>

Indigenous people are overrepresented among all victims of intentional homicide recorded in Canada. The homicide rate among indigenous women and girls (4.3 per 100,00 female population) was almost five times higher than among non-indigenous women and girls in 2021 (0.8 per 100,00 female population), and the situation does not appear to be improving (Figure 21).<sup>26</sup> The data are not disaggregated by the relationship between victim and perpetrator, and it is not possible to establish whether there was any gender-related motivation behind the killings of indigenous women.

Similarly, in Australia, indigenous people are overrepresented among homicide victims, having recorded consistently higher homicide rates than non-indigenous Australians during the past decades.<sup>27</sup> Due to limitations of data availability, there are no sex-disaggregated victimization rates available for indigenous people in the context of domestic/family violence. However, the homicide rate in the context of domestic/family violence of indigenous people in the Northern Territory in 2021 (8.9 per 100,000 population) was almost 17 times higher than the national female homicide victimization rate in context of domestic/family violence the same year (0.5 per 100,000 female population).<sup>28</sup> In South Australia, the victimization rate of indigenous people in the context of domestic/family violence was almost 13 times higher in 2021 (6.4 per 100,000 population) than the national female homicide victimization rate in the context of domestic/family violence.<sup>29</sup> The results of a comparative analysis of indigenous and non-indigenous homicides in Australia over a period of eleven years suggest that indigenous homicides were predominantly perpetrated in the domestic environment, many of these being related to domestic disputes.<sup>30</sup> Female involvement either as victims or perpetrators was also detected in a high share of homicides.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> The Australian national trend in female intimate partner/family-related homicides to a large extent determines the overall trend in Oceania. This is because Australia is by far the most populous country in the region, accounting for around 60% of the regional population.

<sup>23</sup> UNODC, *Global Study on Homicide 2019*, booklet 5, *Gender-related Killing of Women and Girls* (Vienna, 2019), p. 34; Forsyth et. al., 2021. *Sorcery Accusation-Related Violence in Papua New Guinea*

Part 5: Incidents and Victims. In Brief 2021/5. ANU Department of Pacific Affairs. <https://pacificdata.org/data/dataset/pwl-sorcery-accusation-related-violence-in-papua-new-guinea>

<sup>24</sup> UNODC 2019, page 32.

<sup>25</sup> Violence against indigenous women: Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, Reem Alsalem (A/HRC/50/26).

<sup>26</sup> Statistics Canada, *A comprehensive portrait of police-reported crime in Canada, 2021* (2 August 2022).

<sup>27</sup> Mouzos, J., *Indigenous and non-indigenous homicides in Australia: A comparative analysis*, Australian Institute of Criminology (2001).

<sup>28</sup> As reported by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. For further information see Figure 22 in the Statistical Annex.

<sup>29</sup> The figures of indigenous homicide rates should be interpreted in relation to a much smaller indigenous population, compared to the population of the entire country.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p.5.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

## BOX: FEMICIDE RESEARCH IN SOUTH AFRICA: REPORTING FROM THREE NATIONAL STUDIES ACROSS 18 YEARS

National research on the magnitude and circumstances of femicide has been conducted in South Africa over two decades by the Gender and Health Research Unit of the South African Medical Research Council. Disaggregating femicide data from routinely available sources is a significant challenge as the information is not available on the police's computerized information system because the case data is uploaded before an investigation has been conducted. For this reason, the team has developed a methodology for collecting primary data from forensic services and the police. This methodology has been used across three national femicide studies<sup>32</sup> – covering deaths in the years 1999, 2009 and 2017. A summary of the methodology together with some of the key findings from the three studies describing the scope of femicide – in particular, intimate partner femicide (IPF) and non-intimate partner femicide (NIPF) are provided below.

TABLE 1: FEMICIDE DEFINITIONS USED IN THE THREE SOUTH AFRICAN FEMICIDE STUDIES

<b>Intimate-Partner Femicide</b>	Murder of a woman by an intimate partner (i.e. a current or ex-husband/boyfriend, same-sex partner or a rejected would-be lover)
<b>Non-Intimate Partner Femicide<sup>33</sup></b>	Murder of a woman by someone other than an intimate partner (i.e. stranger, family member, acquaintance etc.)

### Methodology

A nationally representative sample of medical-legal laboratories (MLL) operating in the study year was randomly selected. The MLL were stratified into three strata according to the number of postmortems done per year to ensure the inclusion of smaller rural MLL. In each MLL, all homicide cases of women 14 years and older were identified for the study year from the MLL registers and details of the victims from the autopsy reports (victim age, manner of death, etc.) were captured. Using the linking identification numbers and information on the Investigating Officer in each case, the research team contacted the relevant police station and collected data from the South African Police Services (SAPS) Investigating Officers on all the cases identified. Because of the sensitivities related to third parties accessing case files (dockets) that were still open, as many were, an interview was conducted with the Investigating Officer to collect further information on the victim and perpetrator (both alleged and confirmed perpetrators). This included socio-demographic information, the relationship between victim and perpetrator, crime information such as place of death, history of violence in the relationship and the outcome of the investigation. In the analysis of the data, sampling weights were applied to get national estimates. The information from the Investigating Officer enabled to distinguish between intimate partner femicide (IPF) and non-intimate partner femicide (NIPF). The definitions used in the studies are shown in Table 1.

### Key findings

In South Africa, an estimated 3,793 women 14 years and older were murdered in 1999 and this decreased to an estimated 2,407 victims in 2017. Similarly, there was a decrease in IPF and NIPF. Table 2 presents the rate of IPF and NIPF in South Africa across 18 years. The decline can be attributed partly to the implementation of the Firearms Control Act in the early 2000s, the biggest decrease between 1999 and 2009 was in gun-related murders.<sup>34</sup> The research also indicates the rewards from the activism of women and community-based organizations and the government's policy and practice measures aimed at

<sup>32</sup> Abrahams, N. et. al., *Decrease in Femicide in South Africa: Three National Studies Across 18 Years*. Research brief, South African Medical Research Council (2022).

<sup>33</sup> In the South African context all female homicides are considered as "femicides", which is a more expansive definition than the one used in the Statistical framework for measuring the gender-related killing of women and girls.

<sup>34</sup> Abrahams, N. et. al., "Guns and gender-based violence in South Africa", *South African Medical Journal* (2010); 100: 586-588.

reducing gender-based violence.<sup>35</sup> Despite the decrease over the last 18 years, the problem of intimate partner femicide is still very substantial in South Africa with three women killed by an intimate partner per day in 2017. The overwhelming majority of the women killed by their intimate partners in 2017 were 45 years old or younger (83.7%). Although some caution is needed in any comparison with the global rate, due to differences in methodology and the fact that South Africa studies include women 14 years and older, the South African intimate partner femicide rate of 4.6/100 000 population is five times higher than the estimated 2017 global rate of 0.8/100 000 population.<sup>36</sup>

TABLE 2: AGE STANDARDIZED RATES PER 100 000 POPULATION IN SOUTH AFRICA ACROSS 18 YEARS

	1999	2009	2017
<b>Intimate Partner Femicide</b>	8.9 (6.1 - 11.8)	6.3 (5 - 7.6)	4.6 (3.8 - 5.4)
<b>Non-Intimate Partner Femicide</b>	11.4 (6.9 - 15.8)	5.8 (4.5 - 7)	4.4 (3.7 - 5.1)

### Non-partner perpetrators of femicide

The research conducted in South Africa, distinguished between intimate partner femicides and non-partner femicides and included femicide perpetrated by family members in the latter category. This is because honour-related killings and dowry-related killings are not very common in the country. Murders with a family-member perpetrator normally occur in the context of family conflict, often over financial resources, and reflect the high prevalence of interpersonal violence in the country. In the 2017 study it was found that 7.6% of perpetrators were family members. The proportion of femicides that were perpetrated by a combination of intimate partners (56%) and family members (7.6%) was therefore 63.7%. Family members included persons with a wide range of relationships (brother, fathers, cousins, in-laws, step-relations, etc.) to the victim. Furthermore, it was found that 1 in 5 women killed in South Africa in 2017 were killed by strangers (19.8%).

### Context of killings

As expected, the home was the most common place where women were killed by intimate partners (61.6%). However, the bodies of nearly 30% of all women killed by a partner in 2017 were found in public spaces, compared to 34.7% of those killed by a non-intimate partner. Data were also collected on how women were killed. One in five of the women killed by their intimate partners were killed with a firearm. The proportion of firearm-related killings was even higher for women killed by non-intimate partner perpetrators (25%). The research also identified if a sexual assault was part of the evidence collected. This information was derived from both the autopsy report (injuries linked to sexual violence, the state of clothing and from the interviews with police). In the 2017 study, it was found that 8.1% of all femicides were “sexual femicides”, however, evidence of sexual assault was more common among non-intimate partner femicides than intimate partner femicides (13.5% vs 3.2%).

### Challenges and lessons learned

- The methodology of collecting data at both the mortuary and the police enabled the collection of data on most of the variables identified in the Statistical Framework for Measuring Femicides. Information was collected on previous experience of intimate partner violence, use of force/body mutilations, location of where the body was found, links to hate crime, evidence of sexual violence, and if victim was a sex worker. Currently, the South African Police does not easily have knowledge on illegal deprivation of liberty and forms of illegal exploitation. All of the above is dependent on the quality of the police investigation, which can vary across police districts.

<sup>35</sup> Abrahams, N. et. al., *Decrease in Femicide in South Africa: Three National Studies Across 18 Years*. Research brief: South African Medical Research Council (2022).

<sup>36</sup> UNODC, *Global Study on Homicide 2019*, booklet 5, *Gender-related Killing of Women and Girls* (Vienna, 2019), p.11.



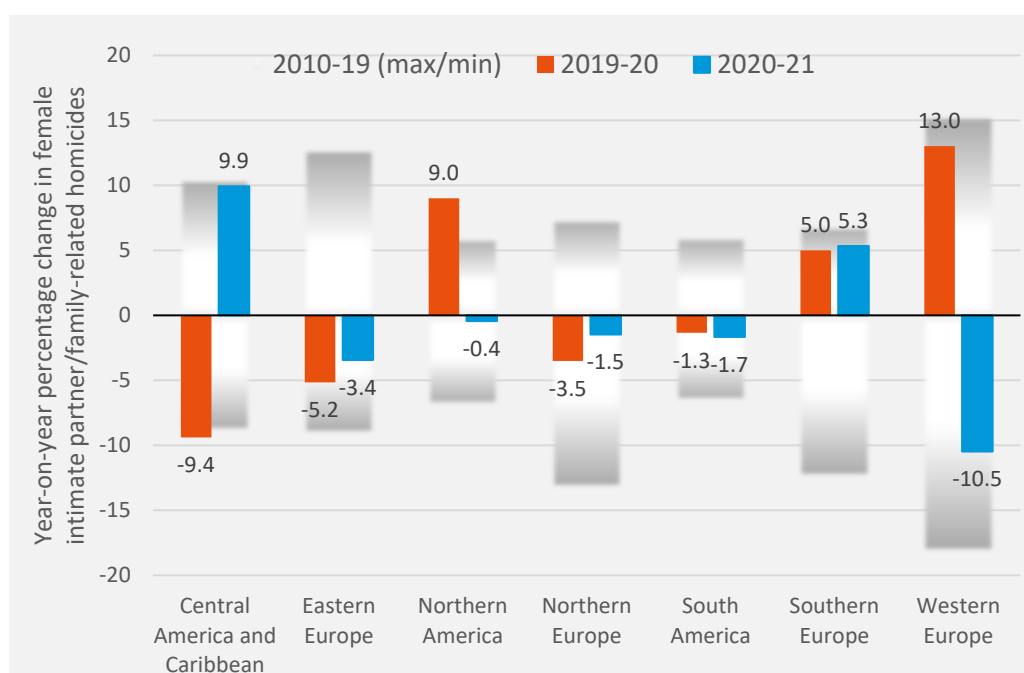
- Partnerships with forensic services and police services were critical to implement the study methodology.
- Linking the forensic data to a police investigation relies on common identification numbers and can be challenging in police districts with weaker documentation systems.
- Data are best collected about two years after the killings to ensure the maximum number of police investigations are completed and insights can be provided into case outcomes.

*Contribution provided by Naeemah Abrahams and Rachel Jewkes (South African Medical Research Council)*

## WAS 2020 A PARTICULARLY DEADLY YEAR?

The limited availability of relevant data outside of Europe and the Americas means that a global assessment of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on gender-related killings in the private sphere remains challenging. Annual data on female intimate partner/family-related homicides in Europe and the Americas - where trends can be estimated - suggest that the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic had heterogeneous impacts and that only some sub-regions (Northern America, Southern Europe, and Western Europe) saw notable increases in killings in 2020 (Figure 6).

**FIGURE 6: Year-on-year percentage change in female intimate partner/family-related homicide in selected sub-regions (2010-2021)**



Source: UNODC estimates based on UNODC Homicide dataset.

*Note: The grey bars represent the maximum/minimum year-on-year percentage change in female intimate partner/family-related homicides recorded in each region in the period 2010-2019. Changes in 2019-20 and 2020-21 that fall outside of this range can be considered unusual considering previous changes recorded since 2010.*

To assess how unusual the changes in female intimate partner/family-related homicides recorded in 2020 were, it is useful to compare them to previous year-on-year changes over the past decade. Figure 6 shows how year-on-year changes in the number of such killings recorded in 2020 (as well in 2021) compare with previous year-on-year changes recorded since 2010. This comparison suggests that the increases in killings recorded in Western Europe (+13%) and Southern Europe (+5%) in 2020 were

relatively large, but not exceptional when considering previous year-on-year changes (both positive and negative) recorded in these sub-regions since 2010. However, the increase in female intimate partner/family-related homicides recorded in Northern America in 2020 (+9%) appears to have been exceptional, with no such drastic changes (both positive and negative) recorded in any year since 2010.<sup>37</sup> Taken together, this suggests that in Northern America, and to a lesser extent in Western and Southern Europe, the year 2020 was particularly deadly in terms of gender-related killings of women and girls in the private sphere. This may point to a pernicious impact of Covid-19 confinement measures on lethal violence in the private sphere in these sub-regions, although other contributing factors cannot be ruled out.<sup>38</sup>

Figure 6 also shows that Northern Europe (-3.5%) and South America (-1.3%) recorded negligible changes in female intimate partner/family-related homicides between 2019 and the end of 2020. Eastern Europe (-5.2%) and Central America and the Caribbean (-9.4%), in turn, recorded decreases in 2020, which suggests that the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic had heterogeneous impacts on gender-related killings of women and girls in the private sphere. While the 2020 decrease in Eastern Europe was not unusual compared with previous year-on-year changes over the past decade, the decline recorded in Central America and the Caribbean appears to have been particularly pronounced (Figure 6). It is, however, important to note that this decrease may reflect delays in the recording of homicide cases during the first year of the Covid-19 pandemic, rather than actual declines in the number of gender-related killings of women and girls that year. For example, in Central America, Guatemala and El Salvador - two countries with comparatively high homicide rates - both recorded relatively low numbers of “femicides” in 2020, followed by increases in 2021, which may suggest delays in recording due to Covid-19 (Figure 13). This interpretation is supported by submissions from women’s organizations and other civil society actors to the UN Femicide Watch Initiative,<sup>39</sup> which indicate that the recording of “femicide” cases by authorities may have worsened in several countries during the first year of the Covid-19 pandemic.

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<sup>37</sup> The specific countries driving the 2020 increases in female intimate partner/family-related homicides at the sub-regional level are Germany in Western Europe, the United States in Northern America, as well as Italy and Spain (and to a lesser extent Portugal) in Southern Europe.

<sup>38</sup> In the United States, the increase in female intimate partner/family-related homicides in 2020 took place in the context of a significant overall increase in male and female homicides (both inside and outside the private sphere). Various explanations have been put forward to explain the surge in homicides in 2020 (including Covid-19 confinement measures, changes in police-community relations, and record gun sales), but evidence on the respective impact of these factors on gender-related killings in the private sphere is still limited, see Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Violence Solutions. (2022). *A Year in Review: 2020 Gun Deaths in the U.S.* Available: <https://publichealth.jhu.edu/gun-violence-solutions>; CDC/National Center for Health Statistics. (2021). *The Record Increase in Homicide During 2020.* <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/podcasts/2021/20211008/20211008.htm>

<sup>39</sup> Submissions for 2021 are available here: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/calls-for-input/2021/femicide-watch-initiative-2021>

### BOX: A SNAPSHOT OF FEMICIDE AND ATTEMPTED FEMICIDE IN GEORGIA

The Femicide Watch<sup>40</sup> in Georgia is a monitoring mechanism to prevent the gender-related killings of women and girls created in 2016<sup>41</sup> in the Public Defender's Office (Ombudsman) with the support of UN Women. This resulted from the call issued by the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women and Girls to establish femicide watches in every country to provide a detailed analysis of national cases and to identify good practices for prevention.

A special methodology to monitor cases of femicide and attempted femicide was developed in the Public Defender's Office, taking into consideration the guidelines provided by the Latin American Model Protocol.<sup>42</sup> In the work undertaken by the Public Defender's Office, a killing of a woman is considered a gender-related killing when "the killing itself, its motive or context is related to gender-based violence against women, discrimination, subordination of women, which is manifested in men's sense of entitlement to or superiority over women, an assumption of ownership of women and a desire to control them, or other reasons related to the gender of a woman, as well as incitement to suicide for the aforementioned reasons".<sup>43</sup>

In the latest data published by the Femicide Watch in Georgia, the following four motives were considered instrumental to identify a gender-related killing<sup>44</sup>:

- discriminatory or sexist attitude towards the victims
- assumption of ownership
- controlling the behaviour of the victim
- requesting the victim to adhere to stereotypical gender roles

The data were collected from different types of courts (courts of first instance, Court of Appeal and Supreme Court) in three stages. Overall, 24 cases of femicide and attempted femicide which occurred in 2020 were analysed. In half of the ten cases of femicide identified, current or former husbands were the perpetrators. Other family members were identified as perpetrators in two other cases. In more than half of the fourteen cases of attempted femicide, current or former husbands and partners were identified as perpetrators. A firearm was used in two of the aforementioned femicide cases, and in three other cases a knife was identified as the mechanism of killing. Other mechanisms of killing involved blunt objects and an axe. A knife was also used in half of the cases of attempted femicide. While the majority of femicides were committed in the home, the largest share of attempted femicides occurred in public spaces. Twenty years in prison was the most severe sentence given in the 10 cases of femicide, the lowest sentence was 12 years in prison. The most severe sentence for attempted femicide was 18 years in prison, while the lowest sentence was two years of imprisonment. In 16 of the 24 cases of femicide and attempted femicide, the perpetrator was under the influence of alcohol when the crime was committed.

*(UNODC with UN Women)*

<sup>40</sup> The data and related information presented in this box were sourced from the following report: Public Defender of Georgia, *Femicide Monitoring Report 2020* (UN Women, 2021).

<sup>41</sup> Although the Femicide Watch was established in 2016, a decision was made to analyse cases from 2014 onwards given the higher number of femicides in that year. This would also allow trends to be monitored over the years using the same methodology.

<sup>42</sup> OHCHR, *Latin American Model Protocol for the investigation of gender-related killings of women (femicide/feminicide)*, (UN Women, 2015).

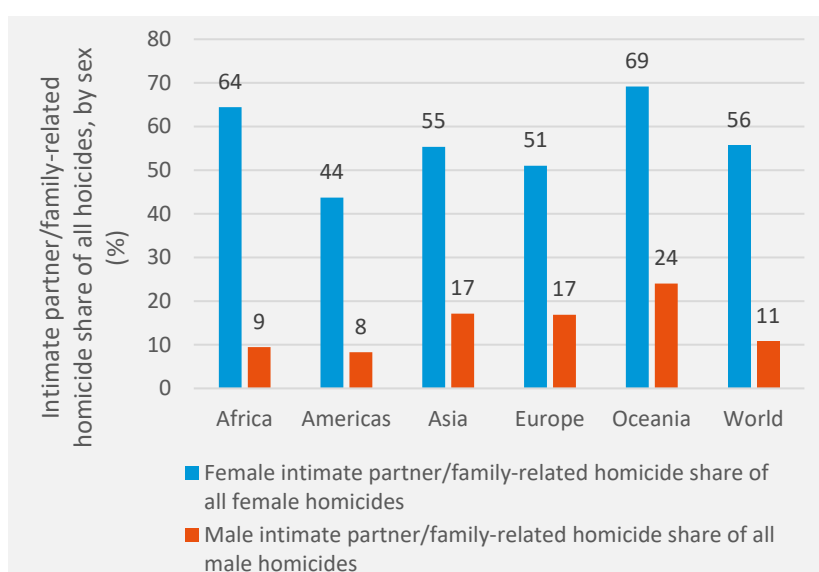
<sup>43</sup> Public Defender of Georgia, *Femicide Monitoring Report 2020* (UN Women, 2021).

<sup>44</sup> Detailed information about the methodology can be found in the following publication: Public Defender of Georgia, *Report on Femicide Monitoring: Analysis of Criminal Cases Committed in 2016* (UN Women 2018).

## HOMICIDES IN THE PRIVATE SPHERE HAVE A DISPROPORTIONATE IMPACT ON WOMEN

As of 2021, the overwhelming majority of homicides worldwide are committed against men and boys (81%), while women and girls account for a much smaller share of all homicide victims (19%). However, women and girls are disproportionately affected by homicidal violence in the private sphere (perpetrated by intimate partners or other family members), while men and boys are disproportionately affected by homicidal violence in the public sphere.

**FIGURE 7: Share of intimate partner/family-related homicides among all female and male homicides, by region (2021)**



Source: UNODC estimates based on UNODC Homicide dataset.

Out of all female homicide victims in 2021, around 56% were killed by intimate partners or other family members, indicating clearly that the most dangerous place for women and girls is their home. Men and boys are instead primarily at risk of being killed by someone outside their family. Out of all male homicide victims in 2021, only around 11% were killed by intimate partners or other family members.

Some regional differences are observable in relation to the female and male burden of homicidal violence in the private sphere. Figure 7 suggests that in regions with lower levels of intentional homicide (both inside and outside the home) such as Europe and Asia, the share of male homicides related to violence in the home is larger (at 17%) than in regions with very high levels of homicidal violence such as Africa and the Americas, where the respective shares drop below 10%.

## MAPPING FEMICIDES/FEMINICIDES IN LATIN AMERICA (MUNDOSUR)

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, MundoSur<sup>45</sup> formed a partnership with organizations that make up the Latin American Network against Gender Based Violence (RLCVG)<sup>46</sup> to generate greater visibility and awareness of the data gaps on femicide/feminicide<sup>47</sup> by analysing official statistics collected by the Economic Commission for Latin America Observatory on Gender Equality in Latin America and the Caribbean<sup>48</sup>, comparing them with data collected by civil society women's rights organizations across 12 countries in the region (Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Honduras, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico, Uruguay and Venezuela).

When there are discrepancies detected between official data and the data collected by the RLCVG network, a formal notification is sent to national authorities. In some cases where states have not complied with their obligations under the Interamerican Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (Belém do Pará Convention Article 8), formal requests have been sent to the Committee of Experts of the Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention monitoring mechanism.

In 2020, a comparative analysis carried out by MundoSur of official femicide data compared to data collected by the organizations that form part of the RLCVG network found that for every 100 femicides documented by RLCVG, only 35 were registered by national authorities.<sup>49</sup> This under-recording may be explained by differences in data collection methods and timeframes, inconsistent definitions of femicide or the different variables considered, the lack of standardized data collection protocols and mechanisms and the limited understanding of gender violence by those responsible for femicide data collection.<sup>50</sup>

Another concern identified by MundoSur is the lack of intersectional data on the victim which is key to understanding the multiple and overlapping vulnerabilities and forms of discrimination that may place some women and girls at greater risk of femicide. Of the 12 countries covered by MundoSur, only one country collects information on whether the victim had a disability or whether the victim was pregnant; two countries collect data on the victim's ethnic identity and three countries recorded whether the victim was a migrant.<sup>51</sup> The lack of an intersectional perspective in femicide data collection in the region is a barrier to developing effective, evidence-based public policies and prevention strategies.

### Lessons learned

- South-South cooperation and exchanging good practices among civil society organizations at the regional level offer a useful strategy for advocacy and awareness raising.

<sup>45</sup> <https://mundosur.org/mlf/>

<sup>46</sup> MuMaLá (Argentina), Corporación Miles (Chile), Asociación Latinoamericana para el Desarrollo Alternativo (Ecuador), CATTRACHAS (Honduras), Monitor de Femicidios UTOPIX (Venezuela), Manuela Ramos (Peru), Observatorio de Femicidios (Panama), Observatorio de Equidad de Género (Puerto Rico).

<sup>47</sup> MundoSur and the organizations that make up the Latin American Network against Gender Violence have agreed to use the following definition: Femicide/feminicide is defined as "the violent death of women whose principal cause is the existence of asymmetrical power relations based on gender, whether it takes place within the family, domestic unit, or in any other interpersonal relationship, in the community, by any person, or whether it is perpetrated or tolerated by the State and its agents, by action or omission. The element that characterizes femicide/feminicide and that differentiates it from the homicide of a woman is that the deprivation of life is committed for reasons of gender."

<sup>48</sup> The ECLAC Observatory on Gender Equality in LAC requests data from the authorities of the national machinery for advancement of women annually on the absolute number of deaths of women, over 15 years of age, murdered due to gender violence. The definition respects the legal criteria established by national laws in each of the countries for femicide, feminicide or aggravated homicide due to gender.

<sup>49</sup> MundoSur (2022) Femicidios en pandemia en América Latina, <https://mundosur.org/informes/>

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> MundoSur, 2022. Femi(ni)cidios bajo la lupa en América Latina y el Caribe: Desafíos para un análisis interseccional.

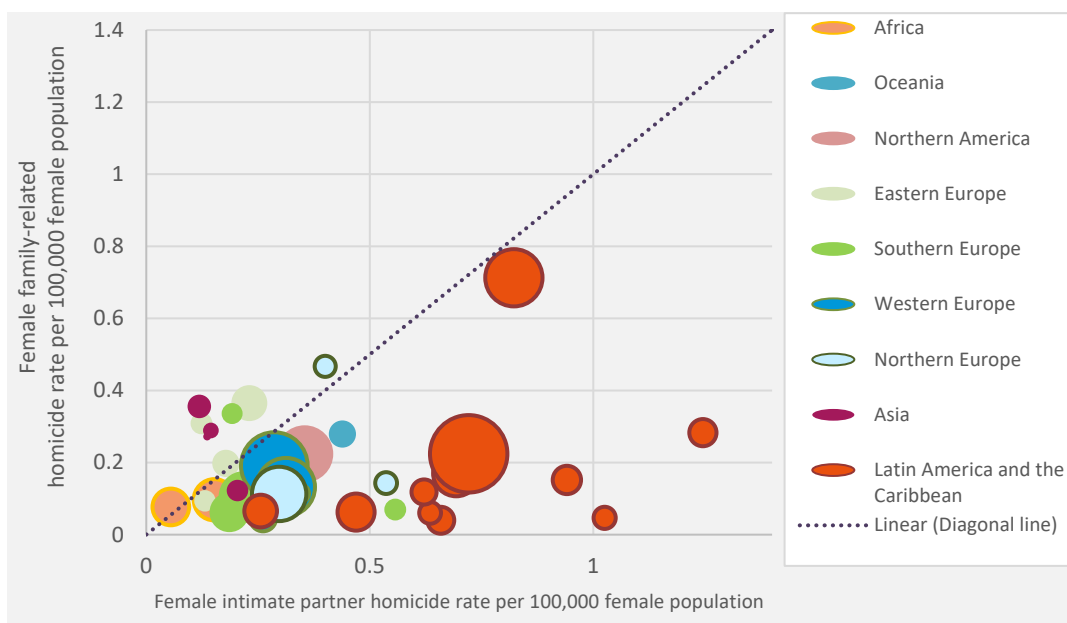
- Given the limitations of official data collection, strengthening the technical capacities of civil society organizations to collect and monitor femicide data applying an intersectional approach through the inclusion of additional variables can complement efforts and help ensure that marginalized women and girls are not left behind.
- To find concrete, long term, sustainable and effective solutions, multi-stakeholder coordination is critical. Governments and civil society need to work together to share information and jointly develop integrated human-rights based policies addressing gender inequality, discrimination and violence against women and girls.

*Contribution provided by Eugenia D'Angelo, Maria Paula Spagnoletti and Bricia Trejo (MundoSur)*

## UNPACKING INTIMATE PARTNER AND FAMILY MEMBER HOMICIDES

Current and former intimate partners are by far the most likely perpetrators of lethal violence against women and girls. Based on available data from 75 countries and territories from all world regions,<sup>52</sup> female homicides perpetrated by current or former intimate partners account for an average of 65% of all female intimate partner/family-related killings.<sup>53</sup> Women and girls also bear the overwhelming burden of all killings perpetrated by intimate partners, accounting on average for approximately 71% of all victims of intimate partner homicide in the 75 countries.<sup>54</sup>

**FIGURE 8: Relationship between rates of female intimate partner and family member homicide in 35 countries, latest available year 2015-2021**



Source: UNODC Homicide dataset.

Note: Rates of female intimate partner and family-related homicide are based on data from 35 countries, using the latest available year in the period 2015–2021. The size of circle represents the total number of victims of intimate partner/family-related homicide in each country.

<sup>52</sup> Data on female homicides perpetrated exclusively by intimate partners are available from 75 countries across all regions for at least one year in the period 2015–2021.

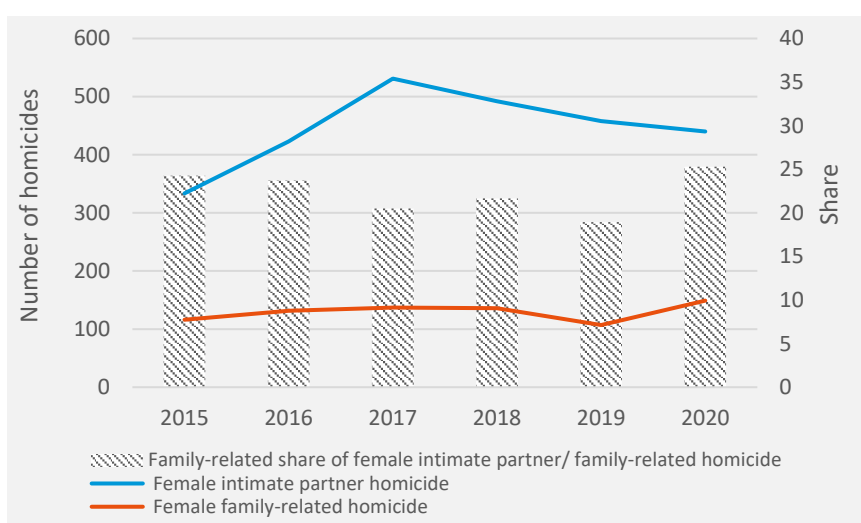
<sup>53</sup> Average weighted by the number of female intimate partner/family-related killings in each of the 75 countries.

<sup>54</sup> Average weighted by the number of intimate partner killings (male and female victims) in each of the 75 countries.

Distinguishing between female homicides committed by intimate partners and those committed by other family members (including fathers, mothers, uncles and brothers) reveals important commonalities as well as differences across regions and countries (Figure 8). On average, countries that record higher rates of female intimate partner homicide tend to also record higher rates of female family-related homicide.<sup>55</sup> However, rates of female intimate partner homicide exhibit much greater variability across countries in various world regions compared to rates of female family-related homicide (Figure 8). Especially in Latin America and the Caribbean (11 countries), women and girls are significantly more likely to be killed by intimate partners compared to other family members (with all data points for the region located below the diagonal line in Figure 8). Countries in other world regions tend to record more equal shares of female intimate partner and family-related homicides (with data points being located closer to the diagonal line in Figure 8). Notable exceptions are several countries in Asia and Eastern Europe with available data, where rates of female family-related homicide exceed rates of female intimate partner homicide (with data points being located above the diagonal line in Figure 8). These findings suggest that, depending on the region or country, interventions aimed at reducing gender-related killings of women and girls need to target different types of perpetrators.

The relative share of female intimate partner and family-related homicides appears to be largely stable over time in those sub-regions with sufficient trend data. However, all sub-regions included in the analysis recorded an increase in the number (and share) of female homicides committed by other family members between 2019 and the end of 2020. What is noteworthy is that the increase in female family-related homicide at the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic was larger than the usual yearly variations one could expect (see Figure 9 - Figure 11). For example, in Latin America and the Caribbean (10 countries), the share of family-related female homicides increased from 19% to 25% percent between 2019 and 2020 (Figure 9). Similarly, in Western, Northern and Southern Europe (13 countries), the share of family-related female homicides increased from 32% to 36% percent between 2019 and 2020 (Figure 10). In Northern America (2 countries), the same trend can be observed: the share of family-related female homicides increased from 34% to 36% percent between 2019 and 2020 (Figure 11). Overall, these trends suggest that the increase in female killings in the private sphere recorded in several countries in Europe and the Americas at the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic may be attributable to a disproportionate increase in the number of killings perpetrated by non-intimate partner family members between 2019 and the end of 2020.

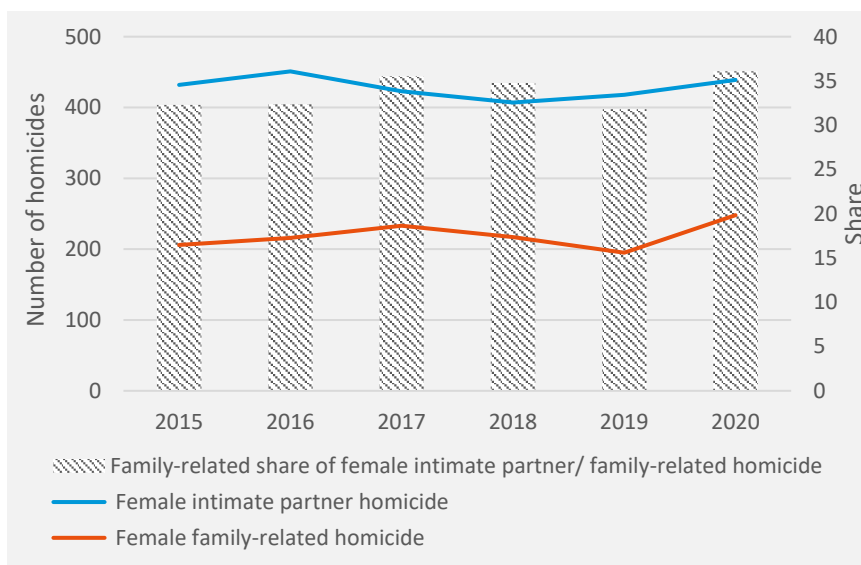
**FIGURE 9: Trends in female intimate partner and family-related homicides in Latin America and the Caribbean (10 countries, 2015-2020)**



<sup>55</sup> There is a positive and statistically significant correlation ( $r = 0.33$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) between the rate of female intimate partner homicide and the rate of female family-related homicide in a sample of 35 countries with sufficient disaggregated data in the period 2015-2021.

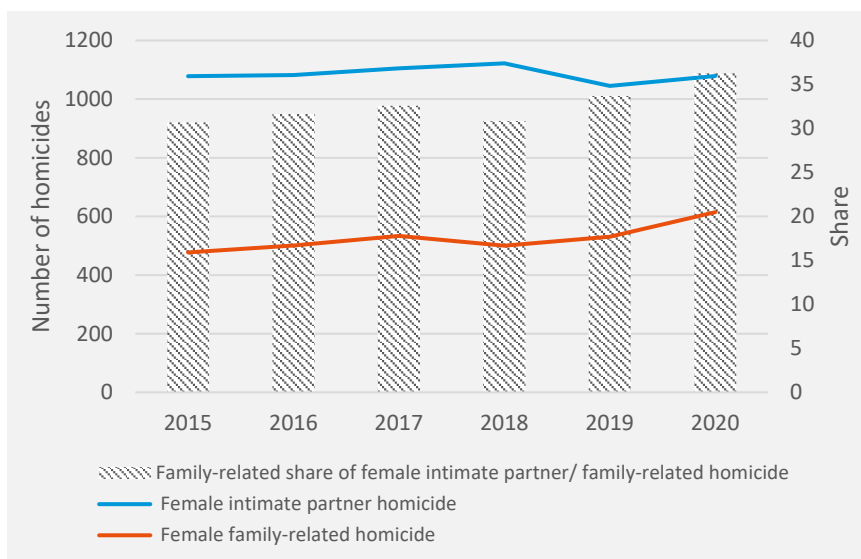
Source: UNODC Homicide dataset.

**FIGURE 10: Trends in female intimate partner and family-related homicides in Western, Northern and Southern Europe (13 countries, 2015-2020)**



Source: UNODC Homicide dataset.

**FIGURE 11: Trends in female intimate partner and family-related homicides in Northern America (2 countries, 2015-2020)**



Source: UNODC Homicide dataset.



### BOX: PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

Fiji is a focus country of the Pacific Partnership to End Violence Against Women and Girls (Pacific Partnership)<sup>56</sup>, which brings together governments, civil society organizations, women's rights movements communities and other partners to promote gender equality, prevent violence against women and girls and increase access to quality response services for survivors. The Pacific Partnership is funded primarily by the European Union, and the Governments of Australia and New Zealand, and is led by the Pacific Community, UN Women and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat.

In Fiji, 64 percent of women (almost two in three) aged 18-49 years who have ever been in an intimate relationship have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by a husband or intimate partner in their lifetime<sup>57</sup> – almost double the global average.

The Pacific Partnership has three priorities in Fiji:

1. **Transforming harmful social norms to prevent violence against women and girls** through evidence-based, comprehensive prevention work and interventions that address harmful social norms, attitudes and behaviour that perpetuate violence against women and girls, engage all community members and all levels of society across multiple settings such as faith and sports among others.
2. **Improving access to quality, essential services for survivors of gender-based violence** through strengthening quality and access to essential services for survivors in line with international, regional and national standards.
3. **Advancing government commitments to ending violence against women and girls** through the development and implementation of a National Action Plan to Prevent Violence against Women and Girls (Fiji NAP 2023-2027), making Fiji the first Pacific Island country, and one of the only two countries globally along with Australia, to develop a whole-of-government and whole-of-community, evidence-based, measurable and inclusive plan with an emphasis on stopping violence before it starts.

#### Key results<sup>58</sup>

##### *Fiji's faith communities*

Since 2018, faith-based organization House of Sarah, in partnership with UN Women, has adapted and tailored the global SASA! Faith intervention to prevent violence against women and HIV to the unique contours of Fiji's society with a focus on three Anglican parishes in Newtown (Nasinu), Matata (Lami) and Wailoku (Suva). Monitoring and evaluation data show a significant increase in positive attitudes and gender equal behaviours. The participating communities have demonstrated positive changes in behaviour and attitudes about men's power over women and increased understanding of gender inequality as a root cause of violence against women and girls. Faith leaders are also preventing and responding to such gender-based violence by preaching about the issue and values of inclusion at church and in village and community meetings.

##### *Preventing violence through sports*

With Oceania Rugby, the Pacific Partnership has designed and implemented the 'Get into Rugby PLUS' programme using sport as a tool to promote positive gender equitable norms, attitudes and behaviours.

<sup>56</sup> Pacific Partnership to end violence against women and girls, Fiji country summary ( UN Women, 2022), <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/1-Fiji-Country-Summary-FINAL-21.06.22.pdf>

<sup>57</sup> Fiji prevalence survey 2011 - FWCC, Somebody's Life, Everyone's Business.

<sup>58</sup> Snapshot: Pacific partnership programme in Fiji (2018- 2022), <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/Key-Results-Summary-PacPartnership%20-Fiji-June2022-FINAL.pdf>

As of 2021, 540 players, 19 schools and 32 coaches have been engaged with the programme. There has been a 42% increase in school-aged boys participating in the programme encouraging girls to play rugby (44% from baseline to 86% to endline), reflecting some of the positive shifts towards women and girls' participation in rugby.

*Women and girls, especially rural women, have improved access to quality essential services to recover from violence*

The Pacific Partnership has strengthened national coordination mechanisms and service delivery protocols, localized referral pathways and put in place minimum standards for shelters and other services for victims of gender-based violence, strengthening access to services for survivors, particularly through innovative models to increase access for women and girls in remote and hard-to-reach locations and facilitating emergency preparedness and response. Through the implementation and rollout of the Fiji National Services Delivery Protocol for Responding to Cases of Gender-based Violence, over 200 frontline service providers, including police, health and justice services, have received targeted training.

*(UN Women)*

## POLICY RESPONSES TO GENDER-RELATED KILLINGS OF WOMEN AND GIRLS

Despite significant efforts made by countries, gender-related killings of women and girls remain at unacceptable levels. These killings are very often the culmination of repeated episodes of gender-based violence<sup>59</sup>, which means they are preventable through timely and effective interventions. Increased efforts are needed in different areas such as prevention, criminal justice responses, and national data collection systems to enable a comprehensive response that will help prevent and eradicate gender-related killings of women and girls. A wide range of measures have been implemented by countries to prevent and tackle gender-related killings and other forms of gender-based violence against women and girls. These can be clustered around five key pillars which should underpin a comprehensive and multisectoral approach:

### Data and evidence

An urgent priority for policymakers and national data producers should be to overcome current limitations of measuring gender-related killings of women and girls and ensure improved data collection efforts are made to cover all gender-related killings of women and girls in the public and private sphere. This would enable a more comprehensive measurement and understanding of the real magnitude of this phenomenon and enable monitoring of patterns and trends over time. Additional data beyond identification purposes, such as age of perpetrators and victims, including information surrounding the event of the killing should be collected for analytical purposes, to identify any failures in responses and protection and to improve the development of preventive measures, strengthen support and ensure better access to justice.<sup>60</sup>

Better data can lead to more effective, targeted policies. The findings presented in this brief, based on data from several countries in Asia and Eastern Europe, where rates of female family-related homicide exceed rates of female intimate partner homicide, demonstrate that interventions addressing gender-related killings of women and girls need to target different types of perpetrators.

While evidence suggests that women are at greater risk of being killed in the private sphere than in the public sphere, there are significant data gaps in relation to gender-related killings of women and girls

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<sup>59</sup> UNODC, *Global Study on Homicide 2019, booklet on gender-related killing of women and girls*.

<sup>60</sup> A comprehensive list of analytical variables can be found in the *Statistical framework for measuring the gender-related killing of women and girls (also referred to as "femicide/feminicide")*.

by a perpetrator outside the family. This suggests national data collection systems may be underestimating and undercounting homicides of women and girls which should be considered gender-related killings.

A key milestone in data collection methodologies on gender-related killings of women and girls is determining what constitutes the “gender motivation” of a killing. The Statistical framework for measuring the gender-related killing of women and girls<sup>61</sup>, jointly developed by UNODC and UN Women, is a tool which addresses this issue, and its implementation is critical for ensuring national data collection systems move beyond current data limitations. Providing guidance to and strengthening capacities of all relevant actors involved in national data collection and data production processes to apply the statistical framework should be prioritized in the context of broader efforts made by Member States to tackle gender-based violence and gender-related killings of women and girls.

Furthermore, the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women and Girls, its Causes and Consequences previously called for Femicide Watches or observatories to be established at the national level to collect and publish femicide data annually, on different forms of femicide – intimate partner femicides, family-related femicides and other femicides as well as to analyse trends on femicide based on quantitative data and other sources.<sup>62</sup>

Ensuring the availability of quality, comprehensive and disaggregated data on all forms of gender-related killings of women and girls is critical to improve understanding of trends over time, to ensure better understanding of who the victims and perpetrators are, and which are the drivers behind such crimes. All these elements can inform more effective interventions, policies, and responses by Member States.

For example, further to feminist activism by #NiUnaMenos, Argentina established the national Femicide Registry<sup>63</sup> in 2015, and improvements made in the methodology to cover different forms of the crime have helped to provide policymakers with a more accurate picture of the actual magnitude of the crime and identify specific vulnerable groups. As of 2016, data collection efforts have also covered gender-related killings of women and girls involving trans women and transvestites<sup>64</sup>, whose experiences of violence are not made visible by binary sex-disaggregated indicators.<sup>65</sup> Argentina’s National Action Plan against Gender-based violence (2020-2022)<sup>66</sup>, which includes measures that specifically recognize LGBTI+ people, reflects a different paradigm in terms of how the issue of gender-based violence is defined and recognized, taking into account the diversity of women and their experiences of gender-based violence.

It is important to examine the problem of gender-related killings of women and girls with the broader conceptualization as outlined in the statistical framework to ensure no marginalized groups are left behind when national data collection processes are undertaken. For instance, in some contexts organized crime-related gender-related killings of women and girls may not be classified as such as the

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<sup>61</sup> UNODC and UN Women, *Statistical framework for measuring the gender-related killing of women and girls (also referred to as “femicide/feminicide”)*, (Vienna, 2021).

<sup>62</sup> Femicide Watch Initiative 2021 <https://www.ohchr.org/en/calls-for-input/2021/femicide-watch-initiative-2021> and Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences A/71/398.

<sup>63</sup> <https://www.csjn.gov.ar/omrecopilacion/omfemicidio/homefemicidio.html>

<sup>64</sup> According to the Action Plan, the following victims are covered: all victims whose biological sex is female and persons assigned to the male gender at birth, who identify themselves as transvestites or as women, respectively, will be considered a transvestite or a trans woman, whether or not they have agreed to the registration change established by the National Law on Gender Identity (Law No. 26,743) and regardless whether modifications have been made to the body. *Plan Nacional de Acción contra las violencias por motivos de género (2020-2022)*, Ministerio de Mujeres, Géneros y Diversidad, Argentina, p. 54.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

gendered motivations and modus operandi may be missed due to the generalized and widespread nature of violence and killings that take place.<sup>67</sup>

Member States should prioritize the inclusion of all the different variables of the statistical framework in their national data collection systems to enhance the capacity of criminal justice authorities to identify the gender motivations of female homicides through guidance, trainings and piloting.

## Laws, policies and protocols

Governments, criminal justice institutions and other stakeholders have implemented different measures to prevent and tackle gender-related killings of women and girls, ranging from reforms of legislative, policy and institutional frameworks, to awareness-raising initiatives and educational programs that address gender inequality as the root cause of gender-based violence.<sup>68</sup>

Legal approaches taken by a number of countries provide for aggravating factors surrounding the homicide victim or the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim.<sup>69</sup> Further, legal approaches in Latin America include the criminalization of specific forms of gender-related killings of women and girls as ‘femicide’ or ‘feminicide’.<sup>70</sup> Even though the specific elements vary considerably across countries which have incorporated this offence in their criminal codes, legal provisions include a series of factual circumstances which accompany the act of killing or causing the death of a woman.<sup>71</sup>

The Inter-American Model Law on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of the Gender-Related Killing of Women and Girls (Femicide/Feminicide) adopted by the Committee of Experts of the Inter-American Convention to Prevent, Punish and Eradicate Violence against Women follow-up mechanism – MESECVI - in December 2018 provides a blueprint of the highest possible standards of protection of women.<sup>72</sup> The Latin American Model Protocol developed by OHCHR and UN Women offers guidelines for carrying out an effective criminal investigation of gender-related killings of women and girls, in line with international standards committed to by states. The Model Protocol aims to improve the practice of public servants working in the justice system, forensic experts and other specialized personnel during the investigation and prosecution to hold the responsible parties accountable and to provide reparations to remaining indirect victims, such as children and other relatives. It also promotes the incorporation of a gender perspective throughout the investigation of gender-related killings of women and girls, as well as offers practical tools to guarantee the rights of direct and indirect victims, survivors and their families.<sup>73</sup>

## Survivor-centred responses

Strengthening the justice sector response, particularly that of law enforcement, is crucial and one of the most challenging issues when responding to gender-based violence against women and girls due to limited awareness, discriminatory attitudes and harmful gender bias inherent in law enforcement and justice sector institutions. A positive-first contact experience and high quality, survivor-centred police

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<sup>67</sup> Wright, M., “Necropolitics, narcopolitics and femicide: Gendered violence on the Mexico-US Border”, *Signs* (2011), Vol. 6, No. 3, pp. 707-731.

<sup>68</sup> Report of the Secretary-General, Action against gender-related killing of women and girls, A/70/93, para. 3.

<sup>69</sup> *Criminalization of gender-related killing of women and girls*, UNODC/CCPCJ/EG.8/2014/CRP.3 . For a more recent analysis of legislation in the 27 Member States of the European Union see Walkey, C., et.al., *The legislative frameworks for victims of gender-based violence (including children) in the 27 Member States* (European Parliament, 2022), pp. 18-22.

<sup>70</sup> *Criminalization of gender-related killing of women and girls*, UNODC/CCPCJ/EG.8/2014/CRP.3, para. 3. For an analysis of femicide legislation see *Analysis of femicide/feminicide legislation in Latin America and the Caribbean and a proposal for a model law* (UN Women 2018).

<sup>71</sup> A/70/93, para. 18.

<sup>72</sup> <https://www.oas.org/en/mesecvi/docs/LeyModeloFemicidio-EN.pdf>

<sup>73</sup> <https://lac.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Americas/Documentos/Publicaciones/LatinAmericanProtocolForInvestigationOffFemicide.pdf>

and justice responses are fundamental to preventing and eliminating gender-based violence against women and girls<sup>74</sup> and ensuring it does not escalate to femicide/gender-related killings. A positive first-contact experience by victims when reporting gender-based violence may not only increase trust and potentially save lives, but also encourage more reporting and disclosure over the long term.

Other measures implemented by countries in the criminal justice system also encompass the establishment of specialized units within police, prosecution and judicial services, to investigate domestic violence cases or hate crimes.<sup>75</sup> Evaluations of specialized courts on gender-based violence against women and girls have found that these are more likely to ensure survivor-centered and gender-sensitive responses throughout criminal proceedings than non-specialized courts.<sup>76</sup>

The Essential Services package developed by UN Women, UNFPA, WHO, UNDP and UNODC provides the framework of the vital components of coordinated multi-sectoral responses for women and girls affected by gender-based violence.<sup>77</sup> The tool provides a set of guidelines for policymakers to design, implement and review services for survivors of gender-based violence in the health, justice and policing and social services sectors. These services can be implemented in different contexts, to ensure provision of quality and coordinated services for women and girls in all relevant areas.

## Strengthening civil society and women's rights organizations

Women's rights organizations play an important role in preventing gender-based violence against women and girls, by advocating for and securing normative and policy change, providing psycho-social support services and holding governments to account, and partnerships between women's rights organizations and relevant stakeholders, such as national authorities and UN agencies, should be encouraged. The important role of women's organizations in combatting violence against women and girls has been recognized by the UN. The Spotlight Initiative, a global initiative of the UN funded by the European Commission, seeks to address gender-based violence against women and girls by promoting transformative and sustainable change in different countries through strong civil society engagement including grassroots women's organizations, throughout the programme development, implementation and monitoring.<sup>78</sup>

National experiences illustrate how progress has been made possible through multi-sectoral, coordinated actions by governments and civil society, and sustained advocacy efforts and media campaigns by feminist organizations.<sup>79</sup> As demonstrated through the case studies in this brief, women's rights organizations have been pivotal in efforts to document and monitor gender-related killings of women and girls and bring this crime to the attention of governments and the international community.

## Prevention

Gender-related killings of women and girls may be prevented through early intervention risk assessment and ensuring that women and girls have access to survivor-centered support and protection as well as by improving gender-responsive policing and justice services. Often, the very institutions that are responsible for stopping gender-based violence to escalate in a lethal killing lack the understanding to notice when a victim is in a critical situation or have implicit or explicit gender bias which can result

<sup>74</sup> UN Women and UNODC Handbook on Gender-Responsive Police Services.

<sup>75</sup> UNODC/CCPCI/EG.8/2014/CRP.1.

<sup>76</sup> *Handbook for the judiciary on effective criminal justice responses to gender-based violence against women and girls* (UNODC, 2019).

<sup>77</sup> *Essential services package for women and girls subjected to violence: Core elements and quality guidelines* (UN Women, UNFPA, WHO, UNODC and UNODC, 2015).

<sup>78</sup> *Investing in civil society organizations and movements - Driving transformative, sustainable change* (Spotlight Initiative, 2021).

<sup>79</sup> Ellsberg, M. et al., *Pathways to change: Three decades of feminist research and activism to end violence against women in Nicaragua* (Global Public Health 2022); see also the *Ni una Menos* movement in Argentina, which was initiated by women's organizations and facilitated the establishment of the national Femicide Registry in 2015 (*Datos estadísticos del poder judicial: Femicidios 2014, Corte Suprema de la Justicia de la Nación, Republica Argentina 2015*).

in victim blaming and judgmental attitudes, or not believing the victim and ultimately missing opportunities for prevention.<sup>80</sup> Sustained work on transforming institutional cultures is critical for creating an enabling environment for the prevention of gender-based violence against women and girls.

The case of South Africa (see box on Femicide Research in South Africa) suggests that gender-related killings of women and girls can be prevented through comprehensive laws and policies aimed at preventing gender-based violence against women and girls, firearms control legislation and activism of women's rights and community-based organizations.<sup>81</sup> More research is required to better understand what is driving increases in gender-related killings of women and girls in certain contexts and what the enabling factors and pathways to prevention are in contexts where there have been decreases.

Broader prevention strategies to address lethal violence against women and girls refer to the adoption of national action plans and gender equality strategies<sup>82</sup>, focusing holistically on the issue of gender-based violence and gender equality, or on specific related issues such as trafficking in persons (for example in Zimbabwe<sup>83</sup>), or indigenous women (for example in Canada<sup>84</sup>).

The UN system has developed a comprehensive framework to address gender-based violence against women and girls, *Respect Women*<sup>85</sup>, after conducting a review of a wide range of national prevention strategies. According to this approach, successful prevention rests on sustained political commitment and leadership; implementing laws and policies that promote gender equality; investing in women's organizations; and allocating sufficient resources to prevention. Beyond this it also requires addressing the multiple forms of discrimination faced by women. A successful implementation of the framework entails the adoption of more than one of the seven strategies, which should not be regarded as silos.

The framework consists of seven inter-related interventions derived from the word 'respect':

- Relationship skills strengthened
- Empowerment of women
- Services ensured
- Poverty reduced
- Environments made safe
- Child and adolescent abuse prevented
- Transformed attitudes, beliefs and norms

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<sup>80</sup> UN Women and UNODC, *The handbook on gender-responsive police services: For women and girls subjected to violence* (2021).

<sup>81</sup> Abrahams, N. et. al., *Decrease in Femicide in South Africa: Three National Studies Across 18 Years*. Research brief: South African Medical Research Council (2022).

<sup>82</sup> *National measures taken to prevent, investigate, prosecute and punish gender-related killings of women and girls*, UNODC/CCPCJ/EG.8/2014/CRP.1.

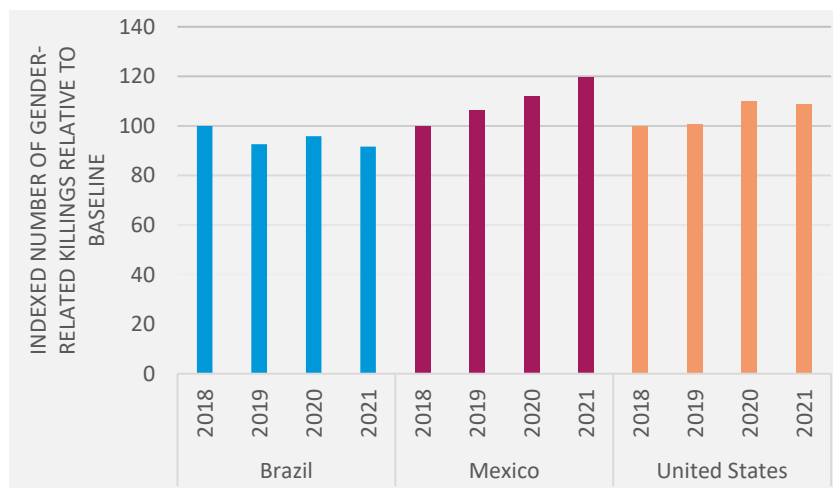
<sup>83</sup> *The Zimbabwe trafficking in persons national plan of action 2019-2021*, [https://www.unodc.org/documents/southernafrica/Publications/CriminalJusticeIntegrity/TraffickinginPersons/2019\\_to\\_2021\\_Final\\_NAPLAC\\_.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/southernafrica/Publications/CriminalJusticeIntegrity/TraffickinginPersons/2019_to_2021_Final_NAPLAC_.pdf) .

<sup>84</sup> *2021 Missing and murdered indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ people National Action Plan* (Government of Canada, 2021), <https://mimiwg2splus-nationalactionplan.ca/components> .

<sup>85</sup> UN Women WHO, *Respect women: Preventing violence against women* (2019).

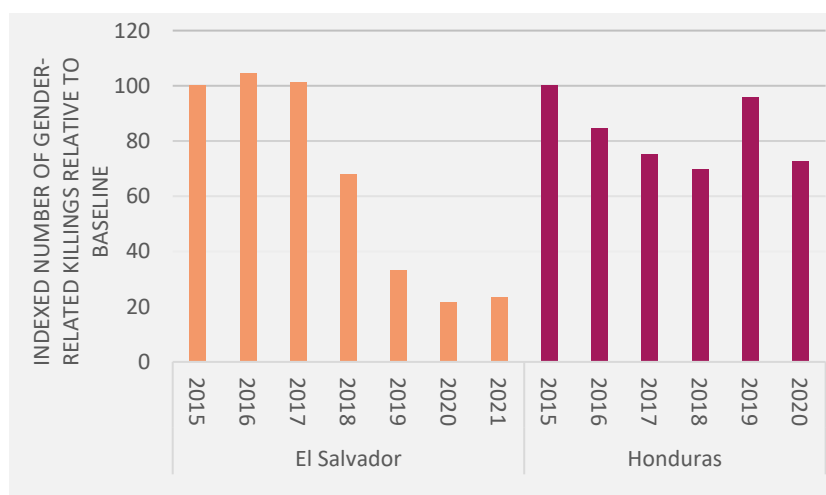
## STATISTICAL ANNEX

**FIGURE 12: Country-level trends in gender-related killings of women and girls in selected countries of the Americas (2018-2021)**



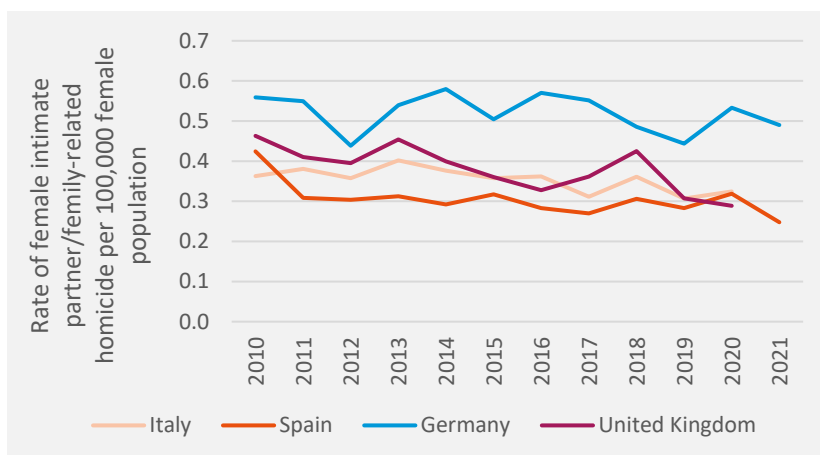
Note: Available data for the United States refer to female intimate partner/family-related homicides and are based on the FBI's Expanded Homicide Data (available at <https://crime-data-explorer.fr.cloud.gov/pages/explorer/crime/shrs>). Available data for Brazil and Mexico refer to "femicide" as defined in respective national legislation. For Mexico, see Secretariado Ejecutivo del Sistema Nacional de Seguridad Pública, Gobierno de Mexico (<https://www.gob.mx/sesnsp/acciones-y-programas/datos-abiertos-de-incidencia-delictiva>). For Brazil, see Fórum Brasileiro de Segurança Pública (available at <https://forumseguranca.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/anuario-2022.pdf?v=5>). The selection of the specific criminal offence to conduct investigation and/or prosecution in cases when a woman is intentionally killed is subject to determination by competent authorities and this can affect comparability and even completeness of relevant data (see UNODC, Global Study on Homicide 2019).

**FIGURE 13: Country-level trends in gender-related killings of women and girls in selected countries of the Americas (2015-2021)**



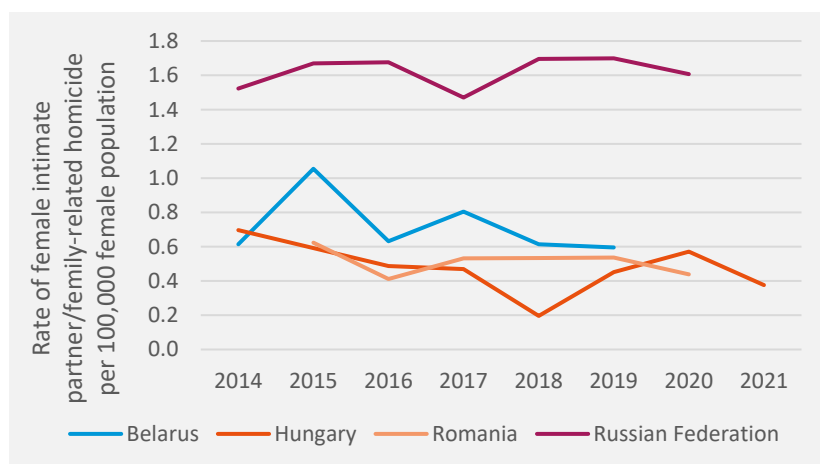
Note: Available data for El Salvador and Honduras refer to "femicide" as defined in respective national legislation. For El Salvador, see Ministerio de Justicia y Seguridad Pública (available at <https://www.seguridad.gob.sv/dia/#>). For Honduras, see Instituto Universitario en Democracia, Paz y Seguridad (IUDPAS) - Observatorio de Muertes Violentas de Mujeres y Femicidios (available at <https://iudpas.unah.edu.hn/areas/observatorio-de-la-violencia/boletines-del-observatorio-2/unidad-de-genero/>). The selection of the specific criminal offence to conduct investigation and/or prosecution in cases when a woman is intentionally killed is subject to determination by competent authorities and this can affect comparability and even completeness of relevant data (see UNODC, Global Study on Homicide 2019).

**FIGURE 14:** Trend in the rate of female intimate partner/family-related homicide per 100,000 female population in Italy, Spain, Germany and the United Kingdom (2010-2021)



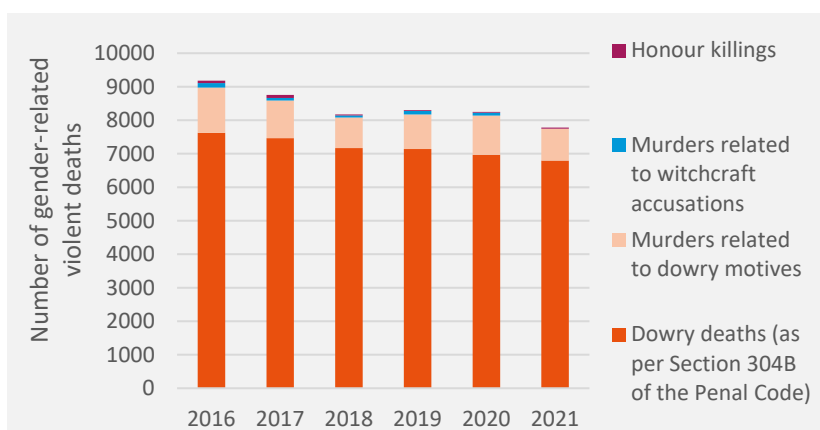
Source: UNODC Homicide dataset. Note: Rates for the United Kingdom for the period 2010-2012 do not include data from Northern Ireland.

**FIGURE 15:** Trend in the rate of female intimate partner/family-related homicide per 100,000 female population in Belarus, Hungary, Romania and the Russian Federation (2014-2021)



Source: UNODC Homicide dataset

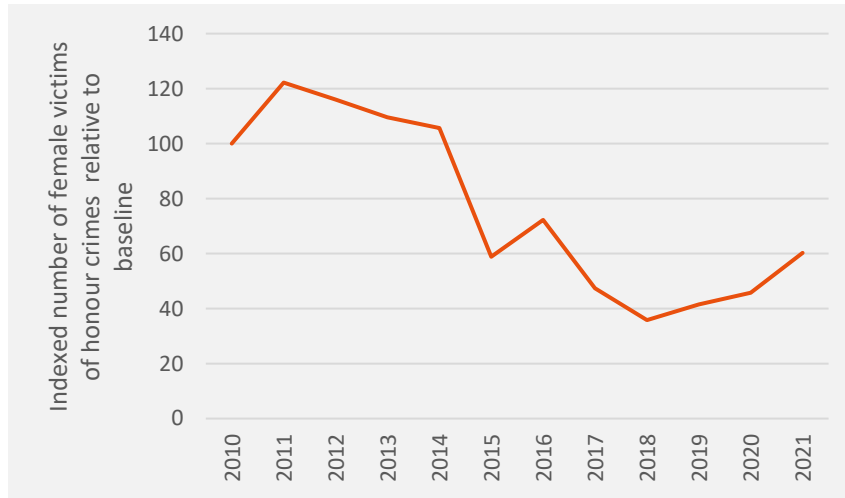
**FIGURE 16:** Number of gender-related violent deaths in India (2016-2021)



Source: National Crime Record Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs, India.

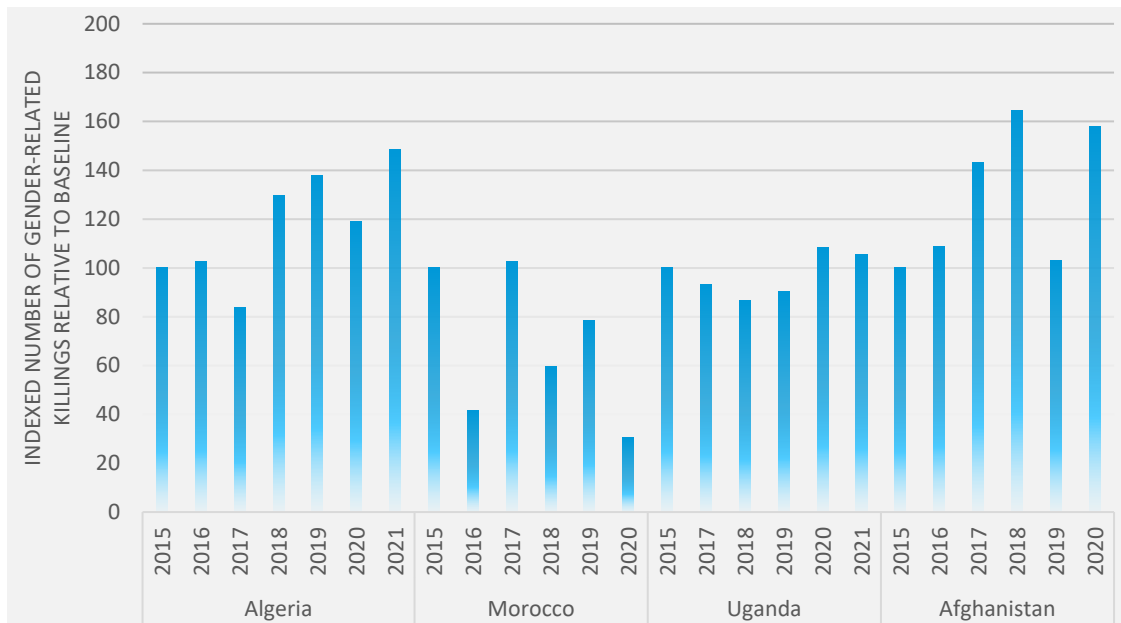


**FIGURE 17: Female victims of honour crimes in Pakistan (2010 -2021)**



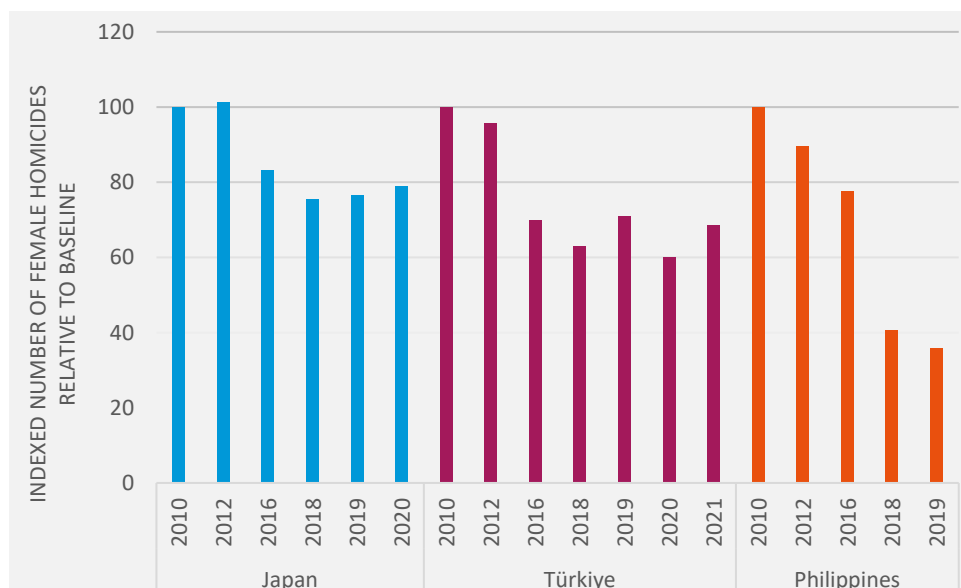
Source: Human Rights Commission of Pakistan. Data are based on cases reported in the news.

**FIGURE 18: Country-level trends in gender-related killings of women and girls in selected countries in Africa and Asia (2015-2021)**



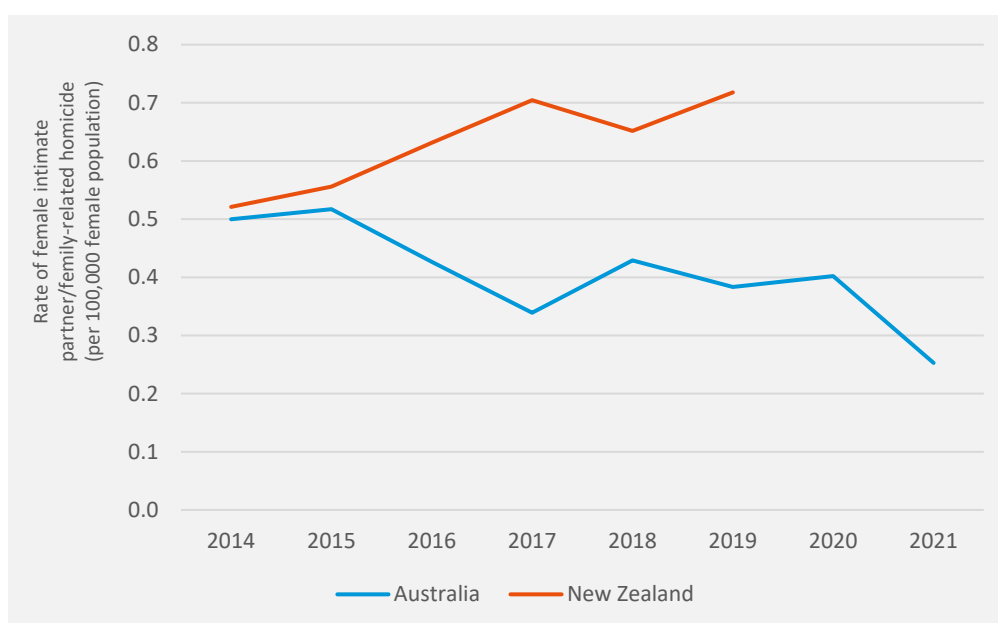
Note: Available data for Algeria and Morocco refer to female intimate partner/family-related homicides and are based on the United Nations Crime Trends Survey. Available data for Uganda refer to female murders as a result of domestic violence based on the Uganda Police Force Annual Crime Reports. Available data for refer to female murder victims killed in the context of violence against women and girls based on the Afghanistan NSIA Statistical Yearbooks.

**FIGURE 19: Country-level trends in female homicide victims in Japan, Türkiye and the Philippines (2010 – most recent year available)**



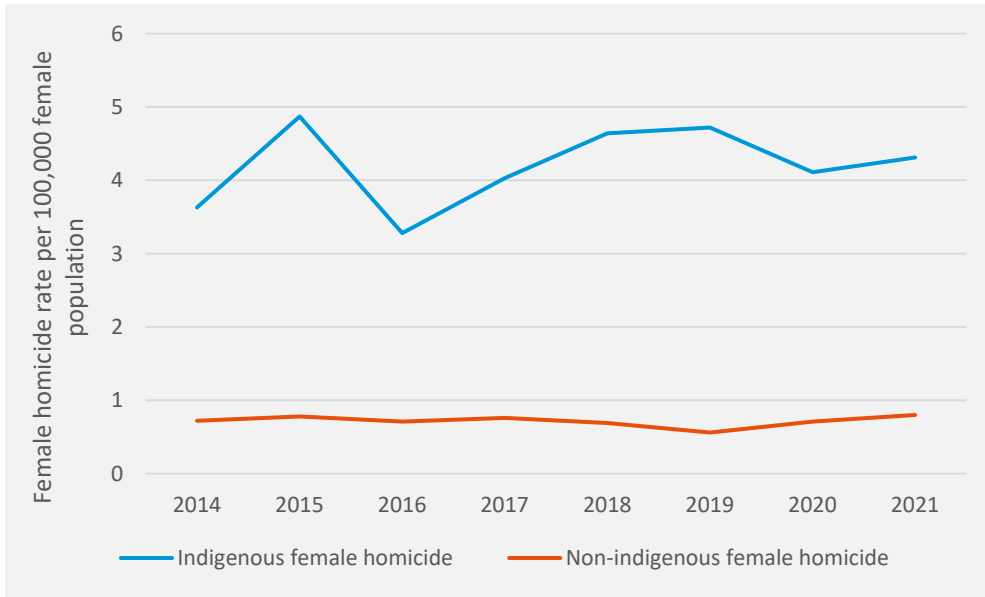
Source: UNODC Homicide dataset

**FIGURE 20: Trend in the rate of female intimate partner/family-related homicide per 100,000 female population in Australia and New Zealand (2014-2021)**



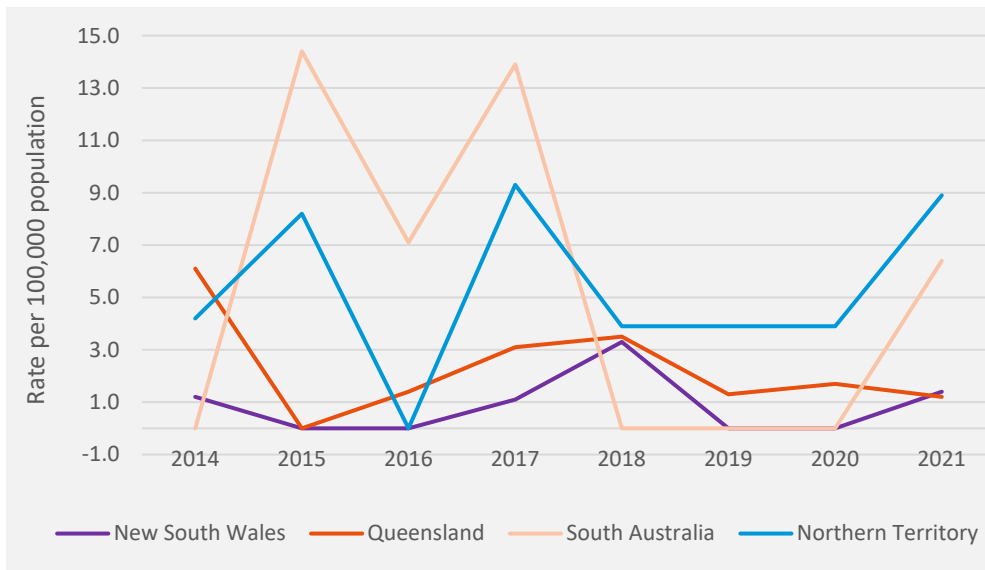
Source: UNODC Homicide dataset

**FIGURE 21: Trends in indigenous and non-indigenous female homicide rates in Canada (2014-2021)**



Source: Statistics Canada

**FIGURE 22: Trend in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family and domestic violence-related homicide rates per 100,000 population, selected states and territories (2014–2021)**



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics. Note: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victim data are only published for New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and the Northern Territory. Homicide and related offences exclude driving causing death. Caution should be used when comparing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victim data across states and territories or time periods, due to variations in the proportion of victims with unknown Indigenous status.

## METHODOLOGICAL ANNEX

### Data

#### *Data sources*

The analysis presented in this brief and the estimates produced at global and regional level are based on data available for 103 countries or territories. For these countries or territories, at least one data point on intentional homicides of female victims perpetrated by their intimate partner or other family members was available for the period 2010-2021. These data were primarily submitted to UNODC by Member States through the annual United Nations Surveys on Crime Trends and the Operations of Criminal Justice Systems (UN-CTS).<sup>86</sup> The UN-CTS collects administrative data on the total number of homicide victims as well as relevant disaggregations of homicide victims by sex and age, by killing mechanism (firearms, sharp objects and others) and by perpetrator/context of the crime (family/intimate partner, organized crime, gang, robbery, other, unknown context). In most cases, the homicide data are sourced from Member States' criminal justice systems, however, in a few cases the data are sourced from the public health system.<sup>87</sup>

Where needed and applicable, UN-CTS homicide data were supplemented with external data sources, mostly using official sources from Member States or UNODC's global initiative to improve knowledge of the impact of COVID-19 on crime.<sup>88</sup> Population data used to calculate sex-disaggregated homicide rates (per 100,000 population) were sourced from the United Nations 2022 Revision of World Population Prospects.<sup>89</sup>

#### *Data validation*

All homicide data collected through the UN-CTS as well as external data sources were validated to ensure that they meet a set of minimal quality criteria, including consistency with the standard definition of intentional homicide in the International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes (ICCS),<sup>90</sup> coherence of country time trends (to ensure the use of data with consistent counting rules and reporting authorities), and internal consistency of homicide disaggregations (for example to ensure the male and female homicides add up to the reported total, or that the reported number of female intimate partner/family-related homicides does not exceed the reported number of female homicides).<sup>91</sup>

#### *Data coverage*

Internationally comparable data on female homicides and female intimate partner/family-related homicides remain patchy, especially in Africa, Asia and Oceania, but are available for a large enough number of countries and territories to enable the production of global and regional estimates. Table 1 provides an overview of data coverage of these two indicators in the five world regions.

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<sup>86</sup> National homicide data are available at: <https://dataunodc.un.org/dp-intentional-homicide-victims>

<sup>87</sup> See Methodological Annex to The Global Study on Homicide 2019 for more information.

<sup>88</sup> More information available at: <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/coronavirus.html>

<sup>89</sup> Available at: <https://population.un.org/wpp/>

<sup>90</sup> Available at: <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/statistics/iccs.html>

<sup>91</sup> For a detailed description of the validation procedure applied to the homicide data, see Methodological Annex to The Global Study on Homicide 2019.

**TABLE 1: Data coverage for female homicides and female intimate partner/family-related homicides by region (2010-2021)**

Region	Number of countries/ territories in region	with available data for at least 1 year in the period 2010-21		with available data for at least 3 years in the period 2010-21	
		Female homicide	Female intimate partner/family- related homicide <sup>92</sup>	Female homicide	Female intimate partner/fam- ily-related homicide
<b>Africa</b>	58	18	8	13	5
<b>Americas</b>	54	43	34	40	30
<b>Asia</b>	52	35	17	32	9
<b>Europe</b>	52	47	41	44	33
<b>Oceania</b>	23	6	3	4	2
<b>World</b>	239	149	103	133	79

Source: UNODC homicide dataset

## Methods

The methods used for estimating the number of female intimate partner/family-related homicides at the global and regional level aim to make the best possible use of available data. For each regional aggregate, the number of female intimate partner/family-related homicides should correspond to the sum of all national data of such killings in the region, in each year. However, for many countries, data on female intimate partner/family-related homicides are not available, or data are available only for some years (see Table 1). As a result, the sample of countries with available data is different for each year. If left unaddressed, this issue would result in inconsistencies, as regional aggregates would be drawn from a different set of countries each year.

### *Imputation of missing values at the country level*

The imputation of missing values at the country level follows a three-step procedure, whereby first, the values in the total homicide series are imputed if missing, second, the total homicide series is used to inform the imputation of missing values in the female homicide series,<sup>93</sup> and third, the female homicide series is then used to inform the imputation of missing values in the female intimate partner/family-related homicide series.

- Imputation of the total homicide series is performed on the country-level *rate* of total homicides per 100,000 population.
- Imputation of the female homicide series is performed on the country-level *ratio* of female homicides over total homicides (where data on both indicators are available).

<sup>92</sup> In 20 countries (11 in the Americas, 1 in Africa, 4 in Asia, and 4 in Europe) data on other types of gender-related killings such as 'femicides' or 'feminicides' were used as proxy measures given that reliable data on female intimate partner/family-related homicides are not available. These proxy measures were primarily used to capture information on country-level trends. For a detailed comparison of data on female intimate partner/family-related homicides and 'femicides/feminicides', see The Global Study on Homicide 2019, Booklet 5, p. 25.

<sup>93</sup> Coverage for female homicide is generally better compared to female intimate partner/family-related homicide, see Table 1.

- Imputation of the female intimate partner/family-related homicide series is performed on the country-level *ratio* of female intimate partner/family-related homicides over total female homicides (where data on both indicators are available).<sup>94</sup>

For all three series, the following three-step imputation approach is applied:

- If a country has just one available data point in the respective series,<sup>95</sup> all missing values are set equal to this single available data point. Given that the estimated series is either a rate (if the imputation refers to total homicide) or a ratio based on that rate (if the imputation refers to female homicide or female intimate partner/family-related homicide), this approach accounts for population growth over time and does not mean that the series is constant in absolute terms.
- If a country has two to eight available data points in the respective series, the missing values between two data points are estimated by linear interpolation, and if there are missing values that are temporally before (or after) the earliest (or latest) available data point, the values at the beginning (or end) of the series are filled with the earliest (or latest) available data point.
- If a country has more than eight available data points in the respective time series, the missing values between two data points are estimated by linear interpolation, and if there are missing values that are temporally before (or after) the earliest (or latest) available data point, the values at the end of the time series are imputed using an exponential smoothing approach.<sup>96</sup>

### *Estimation of regional aggregates*

Once the series have been computed at the national level, they are aggregated at the regional level using the following approach:

- Regional homicide totals are calculated for each year by multiplying the regional homicide rate per 100,000 population with the total population of the respective region (divided by 100,000).<sup>97</sup>
- Regional female homicide totals are calculated for each year by multiplying the regional ratios of female homicides over total homicides with the total homicides of the respective region.
- Regional totals of female intimate partner/family-related homicide are calculated for each year by applying the regional ratios of female intimate partner/family-related homicides over total female homicides to the total female homicide series of the respective region.

Finally, regional estimates are aggregated to compute the global number of female intimate partner/family-related homicides.

### *Computation of uncertainty intervals*

As explained above, global and regional estimates of female intimate partner/family-related homicides are produced based on available national data and through a statistical model imputing missing values at the country level. To account for estimation error due to the imputation of missing values at the country level, the global and regional estimates are accompanied by intervals of uncertainty. These bands are intended to represent how the uncertainty due to imputation varies across time and regions. It is important to note that these bands do not represent confidence intervals and should not be

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<sup>94</sup> Validation checks ensure that this ratio is lower or equal to one.

<sup>95</sup> The three-step imputation approach is applied to the period 2000-2021.

<sup>96</sup> For more information, see [https://afit-r.github.io/ts\\_exp\\_smoothing](https://afit-r.github.io/ts_exp_smoothing)

<sup>97</sup> In order to better reflect the diversity of homicide levels across African countries a different approach was used to calculate the regional homicide estimate for Africa, which rests on the classification of countries into three groups according to levels of insecurity. For more information, see Methodological Annex to The Global Study on Homicide 2019, p.viii.

interpreted as such. The procedure to compute the uncertainty intervals closely follows the approach used in the *Global Study on Homicide 2019*.<sup>98</sup>

For countries and territories with at least one year of data on female intimate partner/family-related homicide (in the period 2010-2021), a penalty of plus and minus 1.8 per cent was added<sup>99</sup> to the value of each estimate for each year of distance between the estimate and the closest observed female intimate partner/family-related homicide value. For countries and territories without any reported data on female intimate partner/family-related homicide, a maximum “penalty” is applied in the sense that the distance to the closest observed values is assumed to be 11 years. Ranges around global and regional trends were obtained by adding up – for each year – the compounded ranges of all countries that are a part of each regional aggregate. This approach to calculating uncertainty intervals means that countries with fewer years of reported data have wider ranges around the national trend and contribute more to the ranges around the trends of their respective regions. In addition, regions with a greater number of countries without any reported data have even wider ranges.

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<sup>98</sup> See Methodological Annex to The Global Study on Homicide 2019, p.ix.

<sup>99</sup> The 1.8 per cent represent the global average change in the ratio of female intimate partner/family-related homicides over total female homicides. For the two regions with sufficient data coverage, Europe and the Americas, the *regional* average change in the ratio of female intimate partner/family-related homicides over total female homicides is used instead (Europe: 2.3 per cent; Americas: 2.8 per cent).

Of all the women and girls intentionally killed last year, some 56 percent were killed by intimate partners or other family members (45,000 out of 81,000), showing that home is not a safe place for many women and girls. Meanwhile, 11 percent of all male homicides are perpetrated in the private sphere. This year's figures also underscore the urgency to prevent and respond to femicide with stronger actions. Even though these numbers are alarmingly high, the true scale of femicide may be much higher. Too many victims of femicide still go uncounted – given inconsistencies in definitions and criteria amongst countries, for roughly four in ten women and girls killed intentionally in 2021, there is not enough information to identify them as femicide, especially for those killings happening in the public sphere.

This year's research brief on *Gender-related killings of women and girls (femicide/feminicide)*, *Global estimates of gender-related killings of women and girls in the private sphere in 2021. Improving data to improve responses* is jointly produced by UNODC and UN Women.

The brief is the fifth issue of the Data Matters series, launched by UNODC in 2021:

<https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/data-matters.html> .

