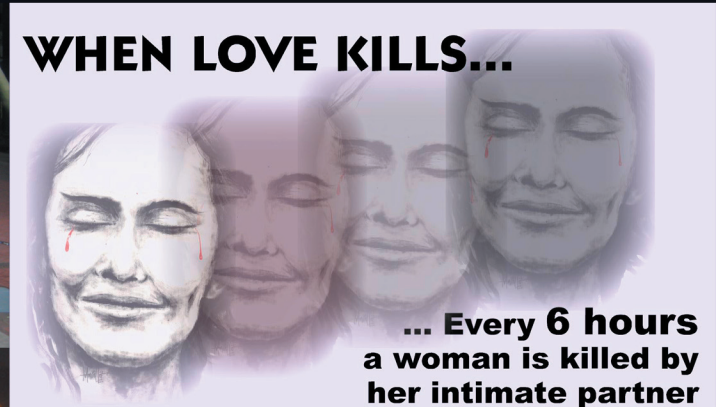


# Strengthening Understanding of Femicide

## Using research to galvanize action and accountability



Washington DC  
April 14 through 16, 2008

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### WHEN LOVE KILLS...



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# Acknowledgments

This publication provides an overview of a conference on femicide convened jointly by PATH, the Inter-American Alliance for the Prevention of Gender-based Violence (*InterCambios*), the Medical Research Council of South Africa (MRC), and the World Health Organization (WHO) in Washington, DC, April 14–16, 2008. The conference brought together activists, researchers, and forensic professionals from 13 countries, with the aim of identifying common ground for strengthening research and galvanizing global action to prevent femicide and end the impunity so often granted to perpetrators. We are extremely grateful for their participation and willingness to share their experiences with femicide research and activism in this forum. (The meeting agenda can be found in Annex A, and the list of participants in Annex B.)

Monique Widyono (PATH) developed the framework, background paper, and matrix of femicide studies for the conference, and was primarily responsible for its organization. Naeema Abrahams and Shanaaz Mathews (both of MRC), Mary Ellsberg (formerly of PATH), and Margarita Quintanilla and Yamileth Molina (both of PATH/*InterCambios*) provided invaluable guidance in shaping the framework and background paper and co-facilitating discussions during the technical working group sessions. *InterCambios* was also responsible for a preliminary matrix of studies in Latin America, which formed the basis of the final matrix. Claudia Garcia-Moreno (WHO) and Jacquelyn Campbell (Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing) provided additional guidance on the framework and background paper.

An opening panel discussion for the meeting was co-sponsored by the Interagency Gender Working Group (IGWG) of the US Agency for International Development. The presentations are available at [www.alianzaintercambios.org](http://www.alianzaintercambios.org) and [www.igwg.org](http://www.igwg.org).

The opinions presented in this report are those of the respective authors, and do not necessarily represent the views of their organizations or other organizations associated with the meeting.

This report is dedicated to the memory of the countless femicide victims around the world, and in recognition of the efforts of activists working to ensure their stories are heard, their names are remembered, and justice is achieved for their murders.

Information about PATH can be found at [www.path.org](http://www.path.org)

Information about *InterCambios* can be found at  
[www.alianzaintercambios.org](http://www.alianzaintercambios.org)

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# Acronyms and Abbreviations

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CCJS	Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics
FBI	US Federal Bureau of Investigation
HIV	Human immunodeficiency virus
IGWG	Interagency Gender Working Group
<i>InterCambios</i>	Inter-American Alliance for the Prevention of Gender-based Violence
	Latin American Alliance for Gender-based Violence Prevention and Health
MRC	South African Medical Research Council
NHMP	National Homicide Monitoring Program
PATH	Program for Appropriate Technology in Health
SHR	Supplemental Homicide Report
WHO	World Health Organization





# Introduction



# Background and Overview

## Background

Violence against women has received increasing international attention as a public health and human rights concern. However, femicide, one of its extreme manifestations, is still not well understood. While a number of studies have been conducted, mainly in high-resource areas, reliable and globally comparable data on its nature and prevalence remain scarce. Femicide has been addressed in different contexts, including intimate-partner violence, stranger violence, rape and other sexual violence, and honor and dowry practices, as well as murders associated with gang activity and political violence. A number of definitions have been proposed by researchers and activists, leading to methodological differences in the collection and interpretation of data.

In addition, a range of methodologies has been used in different contexts to collect data on femicide, including population-based studies; analysis of service records; homicide, police, hospital, court, and mortuary statistics; domestic fatality reviews; verbal autopsies; and review of newspaper articles. Each methodology has advantages and disadvantages with respect to the ease with which data can be collected, the rigor of the data, and the use of data in advocacy efforts.

In April 2008, PATH convened a first-of-its-kind conference on femicide, frequently referred to as “the gender-based murder of women” or “the murder of women because they are women.” The conference, “Strengthening Understanding of Femicide,” was co-sponsored by the Latin American Alliance for Gender-based Violence Prevention and Health (*InterCambios*), the South African Medical Research Council, and the World Health Organization. It brought together activists, researchers, and forensic professionals from Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, England, Guatemala, India, Jamaica, Jordan, Mexico, Nicaragua, South Africa, and the United States, who collectively represent the most current research and groundbreaking advocacy on femicide.

While representing a range of backgrounds, perspectives, and regions, participants found that they faced similar challenges in collecting data and advocating for action around femicide. The meeting aimed to identify common ground for strengthening research and galvanizing global action to prevent femicide and end the impunity so often granted to perpetrators.

## **Overview**

The conference began with a half-day panel discussion open to the public, hosted by the Interagency Gender Working Group. Diana Russell, one of the first activists to publicize the term *femicide*, opened the discussion by highlighting her definition of the word—the killing of women simply because they are women—and providing an historical overview of its use in raising awareness and catalyzing action. Her keynote presentation placed femicide in the context of unequal gender relations and the notion of male power and domination over women.

During the first of two panels, “Current knowledge on femicide: what we know about its nature and prevalence,” presenters highlighted the range of methodologies being used to strengthen understanding of femicide, including definitions and sources of information used, and their significance for data collection. Presenters for the second panel, “Filling in gaps in understanding the nature of femicide: strengthening information and advocacy,” highlighted the urgent need to strengthen data on the dynamics and magnitude of femicide as a critical component of advocacy and prevention. The presentations reflected international advocacy efforts as well as interventions aimed at protecting women from violence. Femicide occurs in all societies throughout the world and is perpetrated by a wide range of individuals and groups, including those known to the victims (current and former intimate partners, family members, friends, and acquaintances) and those unknown. Femicide takes unique forms, including murders associated with interpersonal violence, dowry practices, honor crimes, sexual violence, political violence, gang activity, and female infanticide. A universal finding in all regions however is that women are most at risk of being murdered by someone they know: a family member or intimate partner. This conclusion is supported by studies conducted, for example, in South Africa by Shanaaz Mathews, Jamaica by Glendene Lemard, and the United States by Jacquelyn Campbell. The data are in stark contrast to male murder victims, who are most likely to have been killed by strangers, in random acts of violence.

As activists have struggled over the past four decades to raise visibility around femicide, they have used the framework of a continuum of violence against women, not only in the sense that such violence increases gradually until it turns deadly, but also because the different ways it manifests itself have no well-defined or insurmountable divisions. As Latin American activist researcher Ana Carcedo noted, the essence of violence against

women is not a particular blow, insult, or sexual attack, but the norms of male power and gender inequality that underlie such acts.

The panel discussions were followed by a two and a half day closed technical working session. A challenge raised by all participants is the critical need for additional research and systematic collection of data on all forms of femicide. The weaknesses in information systems and quality of data are major barriers in investigating femicides, developing meaningful prevention strategies, and advocating for improved policies. Studies on the subject have been conducted primarily in well-resourced areas, using data from homicide databases. While they represent the most complete datasets and most rigorous sources of information currently available, even these databases pose challenges for researchers and activists attempting to extrapolate femicide data.

Additionally, information collected by official sources, including the police, the justice system, hospitals, and mortuaries, is frequently not harmonized. Often there are incongruities with the data collated by facilities, including inconsistencies in the categories used to document the circumstances surrounding the crime, the victim-perpetrator relationship, and any prior violence. Femicide cases are often hidden in the catchall box “other.” In addition, the use of categories such as “crime of passion” to classify murders of women reflects a common practice of finding mitigating factors, usually referring to victims’ actions, to excuse violence against women.

Such instances of missing, incorrect, or incomplete data mean that femicide is significantly underreported in every region. The vast majority of femicides are not identified as such; their victims remain uncouned, and perpetrators remain free, with impunity for their crimes. Indian forensic pathologist Virendra Kumar noted, for example, that his efforts to identify dowry-related deaths and bride burnings are hampered by attempts by the police and victims’ relatives to conceal the nature of how the women died.

In addition to the collection of information, participants focused attention on the need for data in advocacy and prevention efforts. Feminist activists from Latin America in particular have been at the forefront of politicized movements pushing for changes in laws and policies that offer impunity to perpetrators. The most common theme identified by activists such as Susi Pola in the Dominican Republic, Giovana Lemus in Guatemala, and Soledad Rojas in Chile is the need to challenge the indifference of governments to the thousands of women murdered in the region and to ensure their stories are publicized, through the media and other attention-grabbing campaigns.

Perhaps the most important lesson shared by activists is their commitment to finding ways of documenting and exposing femicide even when little or no official information is available. Rana Hussein, a journalist from Jordan, began collating an informal database of stories brought to her attention



of women murdered in the name of honor. Through her coverage of these crimes, she helped raise national awareness on a traditionally taboo topic, which impelled the government to introduce necessary legal changes. Activists from southern Africa and Latin America have used a similar combination of newspaper coverage and interviews with victims' relatives to begin developing a picture of femicide in their regions, and calling for government accountability.

The situation of women murdered in the Ciudad Juárez region of Mexico is emblematic of the challenges involved in documenting femicide and the power of evidence-based activism. The work of researchers such as Julia Monárrez Fragoso and Patricia Ravelo Blancas has sharpened global attention and calls for government action and accountability. The difficulty, however, lies in identifying victims and perpetrators and ascribing motives to the murders.

Another question addressed by participants concerned who might be at risk for femicide and how that risk can be assessed. The South African femicide study highlighted, for example, the strong association between gun ownership and intimate-partner femicide. The findings were important in advocating for improved firearm legislation. Rebecca and Russell Dobash focused their research on identifying characteristics of perpetrators with a similar aim of strengthening prevention. And Margo Wilson and Martin Daly's research on uxoricide—the killing of a woman by her husband—has elucidated an association between relationship status, including whether partners cohabitated, and femicide.

Strong, rigorous evidence on femicide forms the basis of meaningful, successful advocacy. The development of a robust evidence base requires improving the quality and comparability of data. The meeting was one of the first opportunities for researchers and activists to reflect collectively on key questions that need to be asked to strengthen understanding of the nature, dynamics, and extent of femicide, and galvanize action for effective interventions. These include:

- What femicide patterns can be detected in different settings and contexts?
- Who is at greatest risk for femicide and how can such risk be assessed?
- What responsibilities do States have in responding to femicide, how successful have they been in meeting their obligation, and how can they be held accountable?
- What kinds of interventions would be most effective at preventing femicide, and how do we measure effectiveness?

Analysis of these questions requires recognition of the frameworks for conceptualizing femicide outlined above, with the aim of identifying

commonalities and potential methodologies to move the agenda forward. The conference was a first step in this discussion. Participants agreed on three outcomes: a publication with an overview of the meeting and a collation of presentations; the convening of an ad hoc International Working Group on Femicide; and an addendum to the PATH/World Health Organization manual, *Researching Violence against Women: A Practical Guide for Researchers and Activists*, that focuses on femicide research.

# Conceptualizing Femicide

Monique Widyono

This paper presents a brief overview of research on femicide and was meant to serve as a framework for the meeting. It complements the matrix of research also prepared for the meeting. The paper highlights the ways femicide has been conceptualized, including the range of definitions that have been adopted, and their implications for data collection. It also outlines various methodologies and sources of information used by researchers, highlighting the advantages and disadvantages of each and placing them in the context of specific studies being carried out. The paper concludes by summarizing recommendations made by researchers and advocates regarding critical steps needed for strengthening understanding of femicide.

## Conceptualizing and documenting femicide

The term *femicide* was publicly introduced by Diana Russell while testifying about murders of women at the International Tribunal on Crimes Against Women in Brussels in 1976, but not explicitly defined by her at that time.<sup>1</sup> In 1992, Russell and Jill Radford defined femicide as “the misogynistic killing of women by men,” and Radford specifically identified it as a form of sexual violence.<sup>2</sup>

In 1998, Jacquelyn Campbell and Carol Runyan redefined femicide as “all killings of women, regardless of motive or perpetrator status.”<sup>3</sup> Researchers who use this broadened definition remove the need to clarify perpetrators’ motives or their relationships to the victims before classifying murders as femicide. Many focus their work around the concepts of *intimate femicide* or *intimate-partner femicide*.

In 2001, Russell adapted her definition to “the killing of females by males because they are females.” She intended to highlight femicide in the context of unequal gender relations and the notion of male power and

domination over women. She also recognized that many girls and female infants are victims of femicide, and that young boys can also perpetrate these crimes.<sup>4</sup>

In the early 1980s, feminist researchers began focusing attention around the issue of *intimate femicide*,<sup>5</sup> defined by Karen Stout as “the killing of women by male intimate partners,”<sup>6</sup> and subsequently modified by Myrna Dawson and Rosemary Gartner to include “current or former legal spouses, common-law partners or boyfriends.”<sup>7</sup> Campbell and Runyan adapted the term *intimate-partner femicide* to clarify the nature of the victim-perpetrator relationship.<sup>3</sup>

The growing body of evidence in this area reflects increased understanding of the dynamics of femicide and that the majority of female homicide victims are killed by male intimate partners.<sup>8-12</sup> As with all forms of intimate-partner violence, however, intimate-partner femicide is likely to be significantly underreported, even in areas with the most extensive and complete data collection. Death certificates in most countries do not include information on perpetrators of femicide.

The majority of current research on intimate-partner femicide refers to the killing of a female by an intimate partner. However, even with the increasing attention this form of femicide is receiving, there is little consistency in terminology used by researchers and service providers. The different frameworks, definitions, and classifications used for conceptualizing femicide complicate the collection of information from various sources, and lead to documentation that may not be comparable across communities or regions.

One issue involves the inclusion or exclusion of female perpetrators. Maria Crawford and Gartner did not originally restrict their definition to male partners.<sup>13</sup> Shanaaz Mathews and her co-researchers included same-sex partners in their definition of intimate femicide for a national study of female homicide in South Africa.<sup>8</sup> Nancy Glass and her colleagues also included same-sex partners and descriptively analyzed those cases in a separate publication.<sup>14</sup> Some argue that women committing or facilitating murder—for example, in the context of dowry deaths or in the name of honor—are doing so for gender-related reasons, and are therefore perpetrating femicide.

A second issue is the classification by some of murders by family members other than current or former partners as intimate femicides. Studies in Chile<sup>15</sup> and Costa Rica,<sup>16</sup> for example, classify intimate femicide as “murders committed by men with whom the victim has or had an intimate or familial relationship, with whom the victim was cohabitating, or a similar relationship.” And the South Africa study includes incest perpetrators in its definition of intimate femicide.<sup>8</sup>

A third, related issue, is the lack of consistency in terminology used in official statistics and collection of facility-based data on homicides. Medical professionals may not focus on the victim-perpetrator relationship in murder cases, and would not have guidelines for identifying and categorizing intimate-partner femicide. While police are likely to collect and have access to the most complete information on homicides, there are no standard definitions or guidelines for categorizing intimate-partner femicide. A brief overview of official national-level homicide statistics in three countries illustrates the possible implications for data collection on femicide.

The Supplemental Homicide Reports (SHRs) collected by the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), for example, ask police to identify the relationship between the victim and perpetrator for all reported homicides. This information is subsequently categorized by the US Bureau of Justice Statistics into (a) intimate: spouses, ex-spouses, and boyfriends/girlfriends; (b) other family; (c) acquaintance: friends, neighbors, employees; (d) stranger; and (e) undetermined (US Bureau of Justice Statistics, US Federal Bureau of Investigation).

In contrast, the Australian National Homicide Monitoring Program (NHMP) defines intimate partners as including spouses, separated spouses, divorced spouses, de facto and former de facto unions, extra-marital lovers/former lovers, boyfriends, girlfriends, homosexual relationships, and former homosexual relationships. The inclusion of ex-boyfriends, ex-girlfriends, and ex-lovers in this category has important implications for data collection, as a significant number of femicides are perpetrated by “ex-intimate partners” (Australian National Homicide Monitoring Program, Australian Institute of Criminology). The above examples reflect some of the most complete data collection efforts. Most countries collate little information beyond basic death certificates.

Incident questionnaires on reported homicides collected by the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics (CCJS) do not include a question on the relationship between victim and perpetrator. Space is provided for a narrative report on the circumstances surrounding the homicide, where, presumably, such information is detailed. Police are asked to identify an apparent motive from a list of possibilities, including “hate crime.” Relationships are subsequently coded for national homicide surveys into categories, including among others, wife, husband, common-law wife or husband, lover, friend, or acquaintance. The CCJS does not provide a specific definition for intimate-partner homicide (Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Statistics Canada Homicide Survey). Crawford and Gartner highlight that the “spousal” category used in the homicide survey likely represents an undercount of intimate-partner femicide, because of the fuzzy boundaries in marital relationships.<sup>13</sup>

A fourth issue is the inclusion or exclusion of deaths resulting from interpersonal or other violence but not as the direct result of specifically targeted acts. Russell has proposed a category of *mass femicide* to incorporate deaths of women resulting from male acts of power and domination, including, for example, women who die from AIDS or female genital mutilation. This category might also include women killed in so-called honor crimes or during times of armed conflict. The Chilean study included *femicide by connection* as a category for women murdered “in the line of fire,” as a result of their presence or by trying to intervene and prevent possible femicide.<sup>15</sup>

In tandem with intimate-partner femicide, a number of studies, primarily in Canada and the United States, have focused on *uxoricide*, the killing of a woman by her husband, also called wife-killing.<sup>17-20</sup> Such research draws attention to specific dynamics of the marital relationship, including registered, common-law, and cohabiting relationships, in looking at demographic risk patterns for homicide. It should be noted that all uxoricides addressed in these studies fall under the category of intimate-partner femicide by any definition. Most uxoricide studies, however, do not include non-cohabiting intimate partners.

An additional branch of research focuses on *non-intimate femicide*, referring to the killing of a female by someone other than an intimate partner. Russell adapted a typology by Desmond Ellis and Walter DeKeseredy<sup>21</sup> to categorize non-intimate femicide into (a) familial femicides committed by male relatives who are not intimate partners of the victim (father, uncle, brother, etc.); (b) femicides committed by other known perpetrators, such as acquaintances, friends, dates, and colleagues; and (c) stranger femicides.<sup>4</sup> As outlined above, some official statistics and researchers include familial femicides in a broad category of “intimate femicide.”

The issue of defining femicide and the implications of terminology for data collection are illustrated in the growing body of research on homicides of women in Latin America. Researchers in Chile and Costa Rica, for example, have framed studies around the central tenet of femicide as the killing of females by males because they are female.<sup>15,16</sup> Analyses of police, justice-sector, and other service data are often used to determine whether cases of female homicide should be classified as femicide. Such analyses usually include victim-perpetrator relationship; history of violence, including threats of violence, toward the victim or other women; and indications of gender-related factors, such as sexual assault.

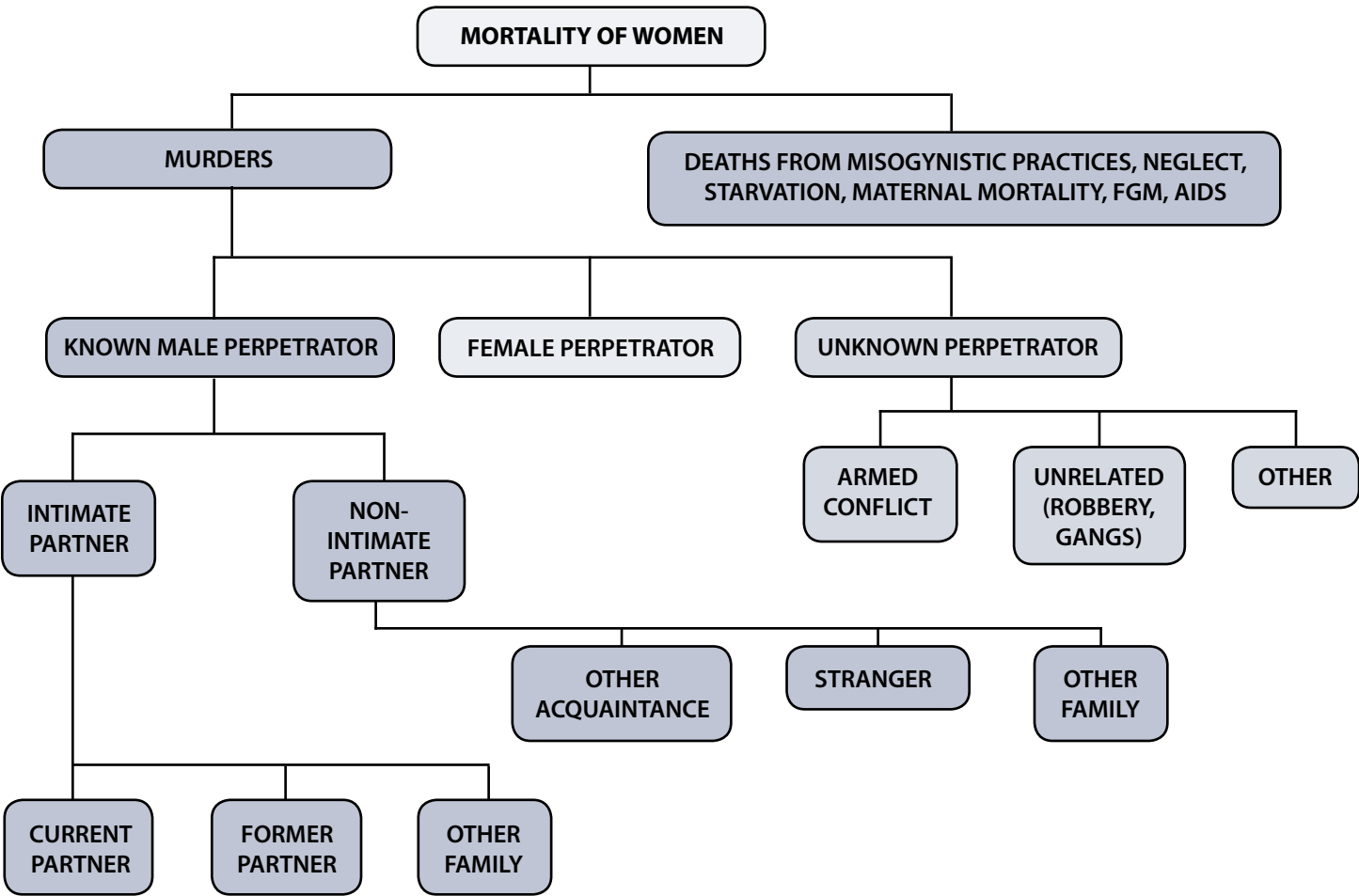
Other researchers have adopted the term *feminicide*, framing research around an analysis of the response or non-response of the State to murders of women and contextualizing such murders more broadly. Accounts of murders of women in Ciudad Juárez and Guatemala received widespread global attention, mainly due to perceived government



inaction in preventing femicide and bringing perpetrators to justice. To date, while some organizations have publicized credible data on the number of femicide victims, less can be ascertained for certain about the characteristics of the perpetrators, their relationships to the victims, or their motives.

Marcela Lagarde, former Mexican government representative and Chair of the Special Commission on Femicide created in 2004 to address murders of women in Ciudad Juárez, highlights femicide as “a crime of the state which tolerates the murders of women and neither vigorously investigates the crimes nor holds the killers accountable.”<sup>22</sup> She states further that “femicide is when the state offers women no guarantees and creates no conditions of security for their lives in the community, at home, not even in work or recreational areas. Even worse, authorities do not even do their job efficiently” (Special Commission on Femicide).

**Figure 1. Typology of femicide.<sup>a</sup>**



<sup>a</sup> The acronym “FGM” in this figure refers to female genital mutilation.

## **What questions need to be asked and what do we need to know in order to advocate effectively on femicide?**

Strong, rigorous evidence on femicide forms the basis of meaningful, successful advocacy. The development of a robust evidence base requires improving the quality as well as the comparability of data. A number of key questions need to be asked to strengthen overall understanding of the nature, dynamics, and extent of femicide around the world, and galvanize action for effective interventions. Analysis of these questions requires recognition of the frameworks for conceptualizing femicide outlined above, with the aim of identifying commonalities and potential methodologies to move the field forward. Some of the key questions include:

1. **What is the extent of femicide and how do we measure it?**  
The extent of femicide is frequently measured as incidence and expressed as a rate. For example, incidence might be measured as the number of homicides of women per specific population per year. Or it might be measured as a mortality rate, using deaths of women per specific population per year. A typology of defined, measurable categories would be useful for ensuring comparable data on incidence.
2. **What femicide patterns can we detect in different settings and environments?** Femicides need to be addressed in the specific contexts in which they occur, and not as isolated incidents. Attention needs to be paid to sociopolitical and economic dynamics, as well as overall patterns of gender-based violence, and how they affect the nature of femicide in a particular community, country, or region. In this regard, issues such as conflict- and post-conflict-related violence against women, trafficking, so-called honor crimes or dowry-related deaths, as well as prevailing norms around intimate-partner violence, need to be taken into account.
3. **Who is at greatest risk for femicide and how can such risk be assessed?** Identifying factors that appear to correlate with individual risk for femicide has critical implications for health care, advocacy, education, social service, justice-sector, and other interventions, especially in terms of prevention. Risk factors might be identified for victimization as well as perpetration of femicide.
4. **What are States' responsibilities for responding to femicide, and how successful have they been in meeting their obligations?** International and regional agreements have clarified governments' responsibilities for addressing all forms of gender-based violence. These obligations include the abolishment of discriminatory legislation, the provision of meaningful access to justice and support services for victims, and taking proactive initiative to prevent such violence from occurring. Advocacy on femicide in many countries has

struggled to galvanize even initial government recognition of this extreme form of violence against women and the need for action, including rigorous data collection.

### **What sources of information have been used to collect data on femicide?**

#### **Facilities-based data**

**Police.** Because of their role in investigating homicides, police can capture detailed information needed to identify and document cases of femicide. When complete, police reports provide data on victim-perpetrator relationship and contextual factors, including the time and location of the murder, weapon used, and other details uncovered during the investigation process. Such statistics have been used extensively in population-based studies and other research on femicide, conducted primarily in high-resource areas, where their collection is more systematic (see for example Morocco, Runyan, and Butts 1998<sup>23</sup>; Websdale 1999<sup>24</sup>; Wilson, Daly, and Wright 1993<sup>17</sup>; Mouzos 1999<sup>25</sup>; Shackelford and Mouzos 2005<sup>20</sup>; and Brewer and Paulson 1999<sup>19</sup>). Police homicide reports are also the primary data source for the few national homicide registries that exist from which data on femicides can be extrapolated.

Significant challenges exist with police statistics. The completeness of police reports on homicides varies greatly, even in areas with the most systematic, routine collection of data. In many locations, statistics are not disaggregated by sex. Police data systems in most limited-resource settings do not routinely capture victim-perpetrator information in homicide cases, making surveillance of trends in these countries impossible. Incomplete or missing dockets and postmortem reports and the inability or unwillingness of police to investigate such murders remain a problem in many areas.

Guidelines for documenting the relationship between victim and perpetrator and any history of violence or threats of violence are not standardized. In South Africa, for example, victim-perpetrator relationship and history of violence were unknown or not documented in a large proportion of cases.<sup>8</sup> Global research also indicates that a significant amount of violence against women is not reported to police or other services,<sup>26</sup> meaning links between homicides and prior violence cannot be easily made. Even when incidents of violence are reported to police, they may not be formally documented. A study of homicides in Australia found documentation of earlier police calls to a residence, restraining orders, or pending assault charges in only 18% of cases brought to light in subsequent review.<sup>27</sup>

Despite the above challenges, police homicide reports remain the single most important source of information from which data on femicide can

be gleaned. Most contain case narratives that offer critical details that can be uncovered through careful analysis, as was done in a current study of femicide in Jamaica.<sup>28</sup> As outlined above, the completeness of the narratives varies greatly depending on investigators' training and understanding of the nature of femicide, and violence against women in general.

Other research in Chile,<sup>15</sup> Costa Rica,<sup>16</sup> the Dominican Republic,<sup>29,30</sup> El Salvador,<sup>31</sup> South Africa,<sup>8</sup> Tanzania,<sup>32</sup> and the United States<sup>23</sup> have included analyses of police records or follow-up interviews with investigators as a methodology for filling gaps and confirming information on homicides collected from other sources, such as mortuaries.

Homicide investigators are themselves important sources of information for filling in gaps in case reports. A population-based study of femicide in North Carolina relied on telephone interviews with investigating officers to follow up on information collated from the state medical examiner to ascertain the relationships between the victims and the perpetrators, the context of the femicides, and in the case of intimate-partner femicides, whether they knew of any history of domestic violence.<sup>23</sup> National homicide registries in Australia, Canada, and the United States, among others, also rely on follow-up interviews with investigating officers to fill in missing information.

**Medical examiner (mortuary).** Medical examiner systems are excellent resources for identifying female homicide victims, because cases are classified regardless of motivation or legal outcome, ensuring that cases not pursued by the criminal justice system are included. The North Carolina Medical Examiner System, for example, routinely identifies about 12% more homicides than the State Bureau of Investigation.<sup>33</sup> Medical examiners also collect health and demographic information about victims, which could be made accessible through centralized databases.<sup>23</sup>

Research on femicide conducted in Chile,<sup>15</sup> Costa Rica,<sup>16</sup> the Dominican Republic,<sup>29,30</sup> El Salvador,<sup>31</sup> South Africa,<sup>8</sup> Tanzania,<sup>32</sup> and the United States<sup>23</sup> have used as their starting points, death registers compiled by medical examiners, sometimes referred to as medico-legal or mortuary statistics. Such registers allow a preliminary analysis of information about the victim, cause of death, and whether a homicide is indicated, a first step in identifying and documenting femicide.

Medical examiner data, however, are limited in terms of data on femicide perpetrators, the context of femicides, and documentation of victims' histories of interpersonal violence. They document only the immediate cause of death or injury, rather than the long-term events that may have culminated in murder. All the above studies included some follow-up analysis of police records, judicial statistics, and newspaper accounts or interviews with investigating officers to fill in missing gaps.

**Justice (court and criminal law enforcement).** Justice-sector data are important for understanding the response to femicide. The South Africa study incorporated information regarding legal and non-legal outcomes of femicide cases to ascertain factors correlated with conviction and sentencing rates.<sup>8</sup> Studies in Latin America included data collated from attorney general offices regarding cases brought to trial and successfully prosecuted.<sup>16,29-31</sup> However, justice data include only cases processed through the legal system, which represent only a small percentage of femicide cases in many regions. In South Africa, only 25% of cases in which the perpetrator was known ended in conviction.<sup>8</sup> Such data usually are not disaggregated, and do not provide information about victim-perpetrator relationship or other contextual factors, beyond the outcome of the case.

### **Media reports**

Newspaper accounts are often the only available source of information on incidents of femicide, particularly when official statistics are difficult to obtain, or for undocumented forms of femicide. Studies in southern Africa<sup>34</sup> and Peru,<sup>35</sup> and of so-called honor crimes in Pakistan,<sup>36,37</sup> for example, relied heavily on media accounts of murdered women.

Newspaper accounts of homicides are also an important source of information regarding the relationships between victims and perpetrators and the circumstances surrounding cases of murder. They have been used in a number of studies to follow up on gaps in information available through official police and medical examiner data.<sup>15,16</sup> Newspapers also provide contextual details on possible demographic risk factors. Studies focusing on the dynamics of the marital relationship and the presence of children, for example, combed newspapers for information on children in the household and their relationship to the victim and perpetrator.<sup>18,19</sup>

Sensationalized media coverage about cases, however, may reflect misinformation and myths about intimate-partner violence and homicide. In Zambia, cases of femicide were presented as isolated, exceptional events, rather than as part of a trend resulting from a system of gender domination. The language used and details revealed often hid the brutality involved, blamed the victim for the assault, and perpetuated the idea that such killings were private affairs. More details were published about those accused than about the women they killed. Men were often depicted as justifiably unable to contain their rage and violence and women as having somehow provoked their anger. Newspaper accounts of violence resulting in a woman's death tended not to provide a full, fair, or accurate picture of events.<sup>34</sup>

### **Studies using population-based data**

A number of studies have increased the evidence base on femicide with the collection of data that can be generalized to larger populations. Such studies employ a range of statistical methods to draw inferences from

sample data that can be applied to a broader community, and to make comparisons with other populations. They have been used to strengthen understanding of the nature of femicide and its prevalence in certain communities, as well as sociodemographic and other risk factors for victimization and perpetration. A number of issues have been raised with respect to such studies:

1. Can information from a sample of femicide victims be meaningfully compared to women in the general population? Researchers need to ensure a large enough sample with sufficient detail for comparison purposes. The population at risk needs to be clearly defined so that information from groups comparable in terms of age, marital status, employment status, etc., can be ascertained.
2. What is the basis for comparison? Some studies have compared the sample population of femicide victims and perpetrators with all other homicides; others have compared femicide perpetrators with other male homicide perpetrators<sup>38</sup>; while others have compared intimate-partner femicides with other murders of women.<sup>39</sup> Still others have compared male and female victims, or victims of intimate-partner femicide with other battered women. Each approach has its advantages and disadvantages that need to be considered when interpreting findings.
3. How are victimization and perpetration rates calculated? For the Australian NHMP reports, rates are calculated using the mid-year population for the year of interest, or the estimated resident population for states and territories at mid-year. Rates for age and sex have been calculated using mid-year estimates. Similar methods were used in other studies. To calculate intimate-partner homicide victimization rates per million married couples per year for women younger than 25 killed by men younger than 25, Todd Shackelford and Jenny Mouzos first calculated how many married women younger than 25 were killed by men younger than 25 (the numerator), then divided by the number of couples in the general population (population estimate) younger than 25 (the denominator). The resulting figure was multiplied by one million to obtain the rate.<sup>20</sup>
4. What sources of demographic information and population data are available? Most demographic data come from census statistics. The completeness of such statistics varies greatly from region to region and by country.
5. How will the large number of unsolved cases be treated? To adjust for unsolved homicides, the US Bureau of Justice Statistics uses the profiles of “similar” solved cases (in terms of victim demographics; circumstances of the homicide, such as felony or argument; location; weapon; and timeframe) to infer the demographic characteristics of perpetrators. The Australian



NHMP omits categories for which data cannot be ascertained; for example, when relationships remain unknown. Other studies include missing data in their analysis.<sup>40</sup>

### **National homicide databases**

A number of countries, primarily in high-resource areas, maintain systematic national-level collection of data on homicide incidence from police records, which are available to the public. With respect to femicide, these databases represent a “silver standard” for data collection. They currently provide the most extensive, reliable, longitudinal information on murders, from which information on femicides can be gleaned, through careful analysis of information such as victim-perpetrator relationship. However, such databases do present some challenges:

- Information collected varies depending on the quality and completeness of records submitted by local, municipal, and state police services.
- The national databases do not include information from hospitals or mortuaries, although in some cases, additional information regarding circumstances surrounding a homicide, including victim-perpetrator relationship, prior history of violence, and involvement of drugs or alcohol, are added as a result of follow-up efforts by homicide investigators.
- There are no standard classifications for cases of femicide. Nor are there standard definitions for intimate-partner violence and intimate-partner homicide.

Australia’s NHMP collects homicide data annually from state and territory police incidence records, supplemented with information provided by investigating officers. Data include incident files (location, time and date, weapon, etc.); sociodemographic information related to victims; details of the cause of death; and sociodemographic information related to perpetrators, including their relationships to the victims, if known. Not all information collected by the NHMP is available in police offense reports. In many instances, staff in homicide squads or major crime units need to track down missing information through other sources.

The US Bureau of Justice Statistics collects updated statistics on national homicide trends. SHRs submitted monthly as part of the FBI’s Uniform Crime Reporting Program provide incident information about the location and time of the homicide, as well as victim and perpetrator characteristics. The US Bureau of Justice Statistics notes that, of all violent crimes, “homicide counts are the most complete,” and suffer from “minimal underreporting.” While they may represent the most complete national-level information on homicides, such data collated through the SHRs could be improved to strengthen specific data on femicides.

Campbell and her co-researchers note that “according to an analysis in Massachusetts, the SHR misclassifies as many as 13% of intimate partner homicides of women as non-intimate partners,<sup>41</sup> primarily because there is no category for the ex-boyfriend/girlfriend relationship of perpetrator and victim, which accounts for about 20% of [intimate partner] homicides of women,” and when hand counts or medical record reviews correct for misclassifications, the percentage of women killed by an intimate or ex-intimate partner increases dramatically.<sup>41,24</sup>

Statistics Canada maintains a database of statistics collated from national homicide surveys disaggregated into categories, including victim-perpetrator relationship. As detailed earlier, a number of issues related to categorizing intimate-partner and spousal relationships remain. While they have limitations, such databases are important for the surveillance of trends that can strengthen understanding of the effectiveness of advocacy campaigns and other prevention measures.

### **Identifying risk factors and characteristics of perpetrators**

Research has increasingly focused on the identification of risk factors for intimate-partner femicide, with the aim of strengthening prevention interventions. A range of methods, including the abstraction of data from police, medical examiner, and court records; mortality surveillance systems; newspaper articles; and case control studies, have been used to identify major risk factors for victimization, including intimate-partner violence, employment status, access to weapons, stepchildren in the house, alcohol and drug abuse, and estrangement (see for example Campbell et al. 2003<sup>42</sup>; Glass et al. 2004<sup>14</sup>; Wilson and Daly 1993<sup>43</sup>; Daly, Wiseman, and Wilson 1997<sup>18</sup>; and Brewer and Paulsen 1999<sup>19</sup>).

A separate set of studies has focused attention on identifying characteristics of femicide perpetrators, with a similar aim of strengthening prevention. Rebecca and Russell Dobash used data from a three-year study designed to examine different types of murder in Britain in detail (Murder in Britain Study) and the Violent Men Study, a three-year investigation of criminal justice responses to intimate-partner violence, to compare characteristics of men’s lethal versus non-lethal violence against intimate partners<sup>44</sup> and men who murder their intimate partner versus those who murder other men.<sup>38</sup> Additional research using data from a sample of men in England who had been convicted and incarcerated for murdering their female partner or spouse proposes a classification typology for perpetrators of intimate-partner femicide.<sup>45</sup>

A number of risk assessment tools are now used to assess the potential of non-lethal and lethal intimate-partner violence. In Canada and the United States, the most widely used tools are the Danger Assessment instrument, initially designed to assist women in assessing future risk; the Spousal Assault Risk Assessment, which helps professionals judge levels of

dangerousness among men; and the Domestic Violence Inventory, used by criminal justice professionals to assess risk among offenders.<sup>46-48</sup>

Some possible concerns regarding risk assessments have been raised by Neil Websdale, who questions whether such assessments might “reduce and fragment knowledge about battered women and their relationships, lift battered women’s experiences out of context, stripping them of their socially situated meanings, or have the potential to become big business.”<sup>49</sup> He also expresses concern regarding the appropriateness of comparing one woman’s experiences with an “historical archival” of others, the potential for women to be blamed for staying in abusive relationships, and the impact that identifying high- and low-risk populations might have on the allocation of scarce resources.

### **Gaps in research**

Advocates, policymakers, and researchers have identified a number of significant gaps in research on certain forms of femicide, including honor- and dowry-related femicides; deaths resulting from intimate-partner or other violence but not as the direct result of specific acts; ritualistic femicide; femicide in certain populations, including elderly women, lesbians and women perceived as sexually abnormal, and minority and indigenous communities; HIV/AIDS-related deaths; femicide during pregnancy and in the context of family planning and reproductive health; and femicide-suicides.

Additional research is also needed to explore risk factors and assess the effectiveness of interventions aimed at preventing femicide. Websdale highlights the importance of fatality reviews for determining what went wrong and what could have been done to prevent femicides. Fatality reviews engage community practitioners and service providers in identifying homicides and suicides resulting from domestic violence, examining events leading up to the deaths, identifying gaps in service delivery, and improving preventive interventions. They can also lead to changes in service provision that could prevent future deaths.<sup>50</sup>

Current research on forms of femicide outlined above is notable mainly for highlighting the lack of available information. A number of studies are beginning to strengthen the evidence base in some areas. Femicides related to honor crimes have gained significant attention and galvanized calls for action at both national and international levels. While data in this area are scant, a few studies have attempted to collate reliable information, mostly from media accounts and interviews with family members.<sup>51,52</sup> Some advocates criticize the manner in which such crimes have been singled out for attention. Many note that honor crimes should be viewed in the same context as all other femicides perpetrated against women. It is the use of so-called honor as an excuse and justification for perpetrating murder that advocates wish to address. Dowry-related deaths and bride

burnings have also received specific attention. A number of studies on such deaths have involved the analysis of medical pathology, forensic, and autopsy reports of women who had been murdered.<sup>53-56</sup> A study of violence against women that focused specifically on African American women included lethal violence experience by this community.<sup>57</sup> And intimate femicide-suicide has been the focus of recent studies in Canada,<sup>58</sup> South Africa,<sup>8</sup> and the United States.<sup>59</sup> Female infanticide, however, remains a largely undocumented crime.

### **Summary of recommendations made by researchers and advocates**

Researchers and advocates have made a number of recommendations for strengthening data on femicide. These can be summarized as follows:

1. National-level data, national registries, or dedicated sections on femicide are needed in existing homicide databases. Such registries should include collated data from a range of sources, including police, mortuaries, courts, medical examiners, and other services in a position to identify cases of femicide and the circumstances surrounding them. Ongoing surveillance using medical examiner databases, such as the New York City femicide database, and efforts to link homicide and medical examiner data as currently done by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are needed.
2. Standardized guidelines and categories for identifying and documenting cases of femicide, including intimate-partner femicide, are needed. In addition, guidance for homogeneity in documenting victim-perpetrator relationships and information regarding history of violence or threats of violence in those relationships are needed. Specific attention needs to be given to what may or may not be feasible in resource-poor regions.
3. Ongoing training is needed to strengthen the capacity of police, mortuary staff, medical examiners, and hospital and other health care personnel to identify and document cases of femicide and the circumstances surrounding them. In addition, sensitizing of media staff through awareness raising and training are needed to strengthen skills in gender-sensitive, complete reporting on femicides.
4. Comprehensive, centralized reports on the incidence and consequences of femicide need to be developed, disseminated, and publicized for use in awareness-raising and advocacy around femicide. This can only be accomplished in tandem with strengthening overall data collection.
5. Quantitative and qualitative research methods that improve understanding of the social context, including the characteristics, dynamics, and circumstances surrounding femicides, need to be strengthened. Gaps in research on specific forms of femicide need

to be addressed. Alternative methods such as fatality reviews, proxy interviews, and verbal autopsies should be used to develop understanding on the nature of femicide.

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# Femicide: Politicizing the Killing of Females

Diana E. H. Russell, PhD

## My definitions of femicide

I first heard the word *femicide* in 1975, when an acquaintance told me that an American writer, Carol Orlock, was preparing an anthology on femicide. Although her book was never published, the term resonated with me powerfully as one that was needed to refer to sexist murders of females by males.

In 1976, I testified about femicide at the International Tribunal on Crimes Against Women, held in Brussels.<sup>1</sup> While I did not provide an explicit definition of femicide in this testimony, the meaning was clear from the examples of femicide mentioned therein.

In my book, *Rape in Marriage*, I reported my findings on wife rape, battery, and femicidal threats obtained from face-to-face interviews with a probability sample of 930 women residents in San Francisco aged 18 years and older. I defined femicide as “the killing of women because they are women.”<sup>2</sup> Of the 87 victims of wife rape, who constituted 14% of the women who had ever been married, 22% mentioned that their husbands had threatened to kill them—although they had not been specifically asked. Had they been specifically asked, the percentage would certainly have been much higher. It is also important to remember that it was only possible to interview the femicide survivors.

A careful reading of the data available on each of the raped wives, as well as data on those who had been beaten but not raped (162 women), indicated that at least 7% were in apparent danger of being killed by husbands or ex-husbands. For an additional 10% of these women, while there were indications of their being in danger, the evidence was not sufficient to draw any conclusion. These are shockingly high percentages. Given that 25% of the 644 women who had ever been married were victimized by either rape or beating or both, extrapolating from these figures to married

women in the population at large, these findings suggest that out of every one million women, at least 17,500 are at risk of being killed by their husbands. (This figure was obtained as follows: 7% divided by 4 [because victims constituted 25% of the women sampled] = 1.75. 1.75 out of 100 extrapolates to 17,500 out of one million.)

In 1990, feminist American cultural studies professor Jane Caputi and I defined femicide as “the murder of women by men motivated by hatred, contempt, pleasure, or a sense of ownership of women,”<sup>3</sup> which is to say, sexism. Then, in 2001, Roberta Harmes and I defined femicide as “the killing of females by males because they are female.”<sup>4</sup> This version of the definition covers all manifestations of male sexism, not just hatred. In addition, it replaces “women” with “females” in recognition of the fact that many girls and female babies are victims of femicide. Similarly, because many boys and male youth are perpetrators of femicide, Harmes’ and my definition refers to “males” instead of “men.” This is the definition I continue to use.

Although assessing motives is difficult and sometimes impossible, all hate crimes require the evaluation of the perpetrators’ motives. However, it would be unacceptable to forgo the concept of racist murder, for example, because of the difficulty of establishing the murderer’s racist motivation.

According to my definition, just as murders targeting African Americans can be differentiated into those that are racist and those that are not, and murders targeting gays can be differentiated into those that are homophobic or lesbophobic and those that are not, so should we be able to figure out a way to differentiate murders targeting women into those that are femicides and those that are not. When the gender of the victim is immaterial to the perpetrator, we are dealing with a non-femicidal murder. For example, an armed male robber who shoots and kills the male and female owners of a grocery store in the course of his crime has not committed a femicide. The same applies to a man who accidentally kills a female bystander when attempting to target a man.

When Harmes was searching for articles on femicide for our book, *Femicide in Global Perspective*, she stumbled across the third edition of a short book entitled *The Confessions of an Unexecuted Femicide*, published in 1827, and authored by William MacNish, who wrote about his seduction, impregnation, abandonment, and murder of a young woman.<sup>5</sup> This led to the next surprising discovery: the term femicide was first used in 1801 in the British publication *The Satirical Review of London at the Commencement of the Nineteenth Century* to signify “the killing of a woman.”<sup>6</sup> And, according to the 1989 edition of *The Oxford English Dictionary*,<sup>7</sup> which defined femicide in an identical way, the term femicide appeared in Wharton’s *Law Lexicon* in 1848,<sup>8</sup> suggesting that it had become a prosecutable offense.

Despite Harmes' discovery of this brief history of the term femicide, I was not tempted to substitute the dictionary definition for my own because I was, and still am, convinced that the sexist aspect of most murders of females by males needs to be incorporated into the definition of femicide.

### **Female-on-female murders**

While my definition of femicide is limited to murders of females by males because they are female, there is a significant minority of murders of females by females because they are female, such as the participation of some Indian (South Asian) mothers-in-law in murders of their daughters-in-law by setting fire to their saris because they consider the dowries given to their families by the fathers of their daughters-in-law to be insufficient (dowry femicides). I decided to refer to these crimes as female-on-female murders.

In *Femicide in Global Perspective*, I outline a typology that distinguishes between:

- females acting as agents of patriarchy;
- females acting as agents of male perpetrators; and
- females acting on their own behalf.

Several examples of each category are provided in this typology (see Russell and Harmes 2001,<sup>4</sup> Table 2.1).

### **Other distinctions between femicides**

The following distinctions between femicides are also made, based on the relationships between killers and their victims (this is a slightly adapted version of Desmond Ellis and Walter DeKeserdy's typology<sup>9</sup>):

1. **Intimate-partner femicides**, for example: husbands/ex-husbands, lovers/sex partners, ex-lovers/sex partners, boyfriends/ex-boyfriends.
2. **Familial femicides**, for example: fathers/stepfathers, brothers/stepbrothers/half-brothers, uncles/step-uncles, grandfathers/step-grandfathers, fathers-in-law, brothers-in-law.
3. **Femicides by other known perpetrators**, for example: male friends of family, male authority figures (teachers, priests, employers), male co-workers.
4. **Stranger femicides**: male strangers (see Russell and Harmes 2001,<sup>4</sup> Table 2.2).

Most of the research to date in the United States has been done on intimate-partner femicide, which most researchers refer to as "intimate femicide." Other kinds of femicides include mass femicides, serial femicides, rape

femicides, racist femicides, wife femicides, acquaintance femicides, lover femicides, date femicides, femicides of prostituted females, drug-related femicides, “honor” femicides, lesbiphobic femicides, incest-related femicides, and extra-familial child sex-abuse-related femicides. These are not discrete categories, since a particular case of femicide may fall into two or even three categories (for example, a racist, drug-related, rape femicide).

### **Covert femicide**

The concept of femicide includes covert forms of woman killing, such as women being permitted to die because of misogynistic attitudes and/or social institutions. For example, wherever women’s right to choose to be mothers is not recognized, thousands of women die every year from botched abortions. Hence, these deaths qualify as femicides.

Other examples of covert femicides include deaths from unnecessary surgeries such as hysterectomies and genital mutilation (particularly excision and infibulation); experimentation on women’s bodies (including the use of insufficiently tested methods of birth control, some of which have turned out to be carcinogenic); dangerous marriage practices, such as those in which extremely young females are married to much older men, some of whom die as a result of forced sexual intercourse; and the deliberate preference given to boy children in many cultures that results in countless female deaths from neglect, illness, and starvation in numerous impoverished nations such as China and India.

### **The impact of my definition of femicide**

It was my intention in resurrecting the term femicide to refer to killings of females by males because they are females, that this politicization of this widespread and most extreme form of male violence against women and girls would mobilize feminists to initiate organizations to campaign to raise public awareness about these misogynist crimes, and to try to combat them. Among other things, I hoped that anti-femicide organizations would struggle to pressure governments to pass laws that would sentence femicide perpetrators to more severe prison terms than perpetrators of non-femicidal murders.

Although there is as yet only minimal awareness of femicide in the United States and most other countries, the term is now widely used in many Latin American and other countries.

Another potential impact of the term femicide is that it would result in the reconceptualization of women’s deaths as a result of AIDS and abortion—to name but two examples. I have argued that AIDS is a form of mass femicide because male sexism is the major cause of women contracting

this fatal disease. My analysis focuses on southern Africa, where AIDS is particularly prevalent.

For example, because of male promiscuity and male domination of their families, combined with men's feelings of entitlement to insist on unprotected sex with their wives and other female partners, these females become infected with AIDS when their husbands and non-marital partners are infected with the disease.

Reconceptualizing AIDS as a form of mass femicide reveals the inadequacy of exclusively pharmaceutical approaches to this lethal infection. To combat AIDS, male sexism must also be combated. And males who negligently or deliberately infect women and children with AIDS must be tried for murderous femicide.

### **Priorities for addressing femicide**

I would like to suggest that femicide researchers focus on these major priorities:

1. Research to ascertain the ratios of femicidal to non-femicidal murders. If the ratio of all types of murders (in contrast to a particular type of murder, such as intimate-partner murder) were found to be approximately 75 femicides for every 100 murders, then this could be helpful in using the official statistics on murder to estimate the prevalence of femicide, as I have defined it.
2. Compiling testimonies about, or accounts of, femicides about which friends, parents, other family members, and/or others have considerable knowledge, as well as testimonies by the victims of attempted femicides. I consider this a priority topic because I believe that publicizing personal "stories" of violence against women and girls is the most effective way to touch peoples' hearts and motivate them to act to combat these crimes.
3. Research that would be useful to activists organized to combat femicide.
4. Research on how to mobilize feminist movements to fight femicide—the most extreme form of femicide, the killing of females by males because they are females—currently neglected by feminist anti-violence activists in the United Kingdom, the United States, and many other countries.
5. Research on the forms of femicide of most concern to activists, governments, other policymakers, and researchers in the societies where researchers are located; for example, "honor femicides" in many Moslem countries, "dowry femicides" in India, and rape/torture/mutilation femicides in Juárez, Mexico, and Guatemala.
6. Research on femicidal pornography and other mass media that condones or promotes femicide.



While I consider these six research priorities of vital importance, I believe that raising public awareness and concern about femicide is a greater priority—given how relatively few feminists in most countries have embraced this concept. Consequently, few feminists have recognized the importance of politicizing the widespread killing of females by males *because they are females*, and setting up organizations to combat this form of terrorizing women and girls.

I believe that the International Tribunal on Crimes Against Women that occurred in Brussels in 1976 provides an excellent example of how effective this method of consciousness-raising can be. More specifically, I recommend that local, national, and international tribunals on femicide be organized in those countries where there is already considerable awareness about femicide, including several Latin American countries, and where there are feminists who can take on this important task.

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## **What do we know: current research on the prevalence of femicide**



# “Every Six Hours”: Intimate Femicide in South Africa

Shanaaz Mathews<sup>a</sup>

## Introduction

The killing of a woman by an intimate partner (intimate femicide) is considered to be the most extreme form and consequence of intimate-partner violence. The health consequences of intimate-partner violence have been extensively explored. Yet, little is known about the mortality of women as a result of intimate-partner violence. The *World Report on Violence and Health* estimates that globally, between 40% and 70% of female murder victims are killed by an intimate partner.<sup>1</sup> There is, however, an absence of published data from developing countries. In South Africa, the only other study that explored this phenomenon identified cases through inquest into court inquiries and newspaper reports in one region of the country, Gauteng, more than a decade ago. This study estimated that a woman was killed every six days in Gauteng.<sup>2</sup> The magnitude of the problem for South Africa was therefore unknown until the national study on intimate femicide.<sup>3</sup>

Studies on intimate femicide have predominantly been conducted in developed countries. Such studies have mainly used data obtained from homicide databases and supplemental homicide reports to establish rates of femicide. Although South African mortality data documents cause of death, these routine surveillance systems do not provide us with the kinds of information required for femicide research. For example, police homicide statistics do not capture victim-perpetrator relationship. This study aimed to establish the prevalence and factors associated with intimate femicide in South Africa.

<sup>a</sup> Presentation of a study co-authored by Naeema Abrahams, Rachel Jewkes, Lorna Martin, Lisa Vetten, Lisa van der Merwe and Carl Lombard. See Mathews S, Abrahams N, Martin LJ, Vetten L, van der Merwe L, Jewkes R. Every six hours a woman is killed by her intimate partner: a national study of female homicide in South Africa. MRC Policy Brief. 2004;5.

## Methodology

### Definitions of femicide

**Female homicide (or femicide):** the unlawful and intentional causing of a death of a female.

**Intimate femicide:** the intentional killing of a woman by an intimate partner (husband, boyfriend, cohabiting partner, same-sex partner (current or ex), or a rejected would-be lover, as well as perpetrators from incestuous relationships.

**Non-intimate femicide:** the intentional killing of a woman by someone other than an intimate partner.

This study was retrospective, with data collected on female homicides of women aged 14 and older in South Africa in 1999. Female homicides were identified from the death registers at the mortuaries. Data were collected from a national representative sample of medico-legal laboratories (referred to here as mortuaries). Mortuaries (public and private) operating in 1999 were divided into three strata based on the number of postmortems done per annum. Large mortuaries performed more than 1,500 postmortems per annum; medium mortuaries performed 500 to 1,499 postmortems per annum; and small mortuaries performed less than 500 postmortems per annum. A proportionate random sample of mortuaries was drawn per strata—giving a sample of 25 mortuaries. Cases that were obviously suicides, train and motor vehicle accidents, and other accidents were excluded at the mortuary collection phase.

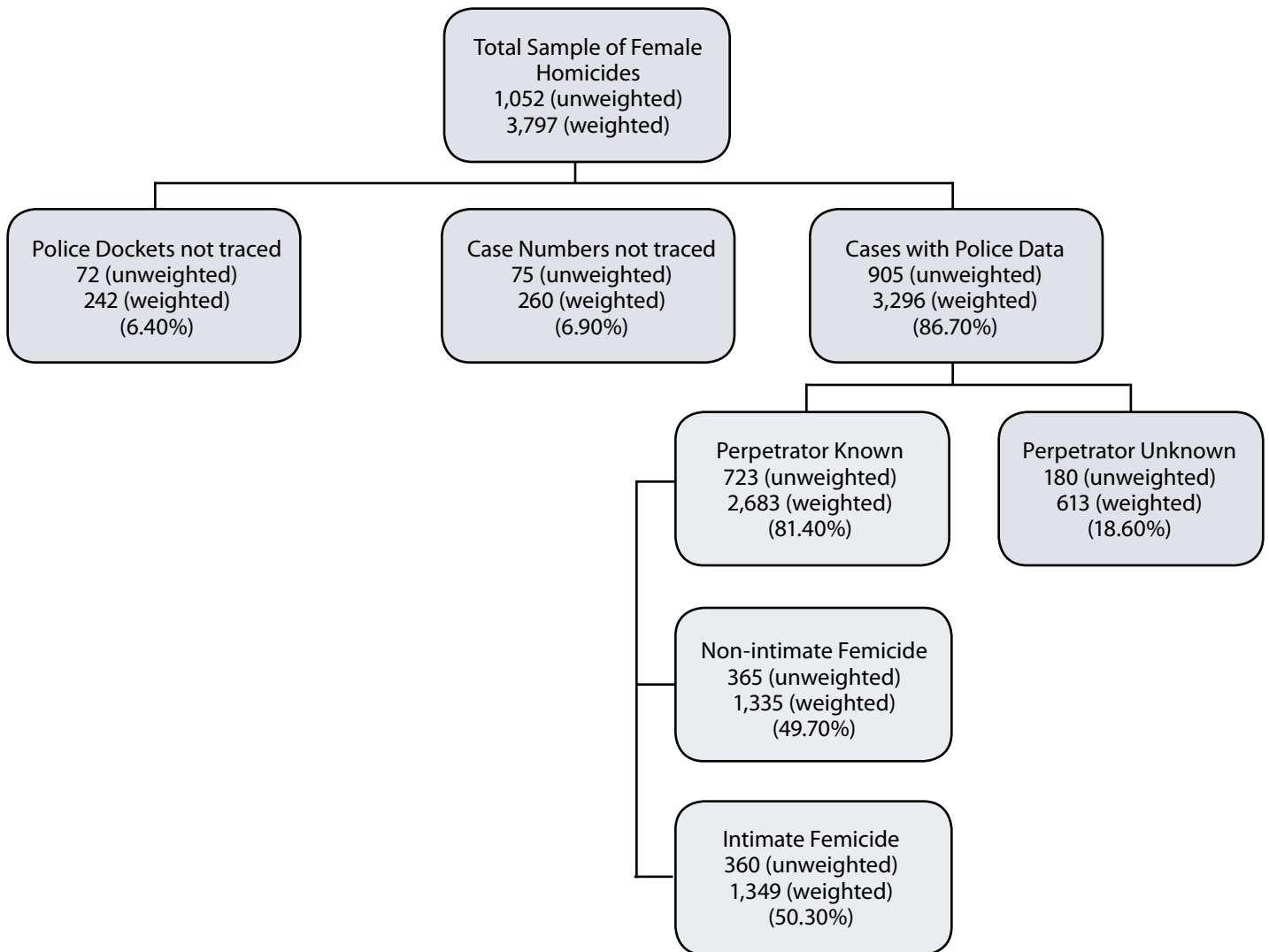
A standardized, pre-tested data capture sheet was used to record information. Initial data were captured from mortuary records. Telephone or face-to-face interviews with investigating officers/commanding officers or reviews of police dockets followed, to gather information about victims and perpetrators. This included demographic details, victim-perpetrator relationship and relationship status, circumstances around the homicide, previous history of violence, and legal outcome of the case. A final section abstracted from postmortem reports by a forensic pathologist included information on the pathology of the case and an assessment of adequacy of the postmortem report. Survey sampling techniques were used to analyze the data. The modeling was done by multiple logistic regression, and the risk factors for the different outcomes listed were those found to be independently associated after adjusting for the other factors in the model. All statistics presented here are estimates for the year 1999 in South Africa.

### Findings

Complete data were found for only 86.70% of the women murdered. Police case numbers were not traced for 6.90% of the women murdered,

and in 6.40% of cases, no dockets could be found (see Figure 1). In 18.60% of the female murders, the victim-perpetrator relationship could not be established from the police sources. The analysis presented in this brief is based on the cases in which the perpetrator was established.

**Figure 1. Typology of female homicides**



This study found an overall female homicide rate of 24.7 per 100,000 women 14 years or older. Of the cases in which relationship status could be established, 50.30% of the women were killed by an intimate partner. We estimate that 1,349 women were murdered by an intimate partner nationally in 1999, with an intimate femicide rate of 8.8 per 100,000 women 14 or more years of age. The only comparable rate is from the United States (in North Carolina, at 3.5 per 100,000 women 15 years and older), suggesting that South Africa has an intimate femicide rate 2.5 times higher than that reported in this US study.<sup>4</sup>

Intimate femicide fatality rate by race group is shown in Table 1. The rate for colored women was more than double (18.3/100,000) the rate for African women (8.8/100,000) and more than six times that of white women. Perpetrators of intimate femicide were overwhelmingly male. Common-law partners were the most common perpetrators, followed by boyfriends and husbands (Table 2).

**Table 1. Rates of intimate femicide by race for women 14 years and older.**

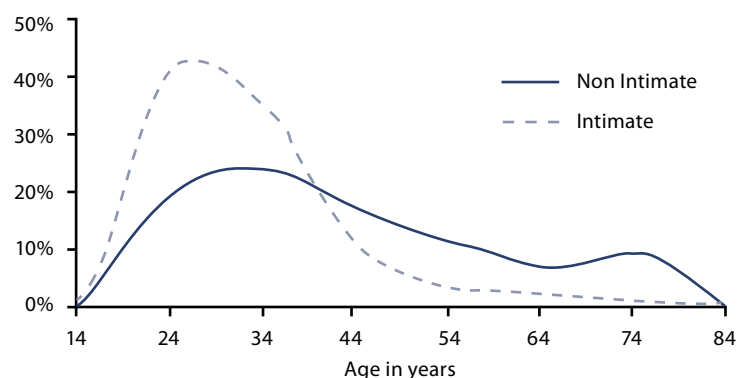
White	2.8/100,000
Colored	18.3/100,000
Indian	4.9/100,000
African	8.8/100,000
Overall	8.8/100,000

**Table 2. Relationship status of intimate femicide cases.**

Relationship	Proportion
Common-law partner	52.10%
Boyfriend	27.90%
Husband	18.50%
Other	1.50%

Women killed by intimates were on average significantly younger than women killed by non-intimates. The mean ages were 30.4 years and 41.2 years respectively (see Figure 2). The difference in age pattern for intimate and non-intimate homicide suggests that it is not an extension of homicide in South Africa. This pattern of greater risk for younger women is similar to the pattern for intimate-partner violence found by the demographic health survey.<sup>5</sup> This indicates that mortality from intimate femicide is an extension of the intimate-partner violence problem in South Africa.

**Figure 2. Age comparison of victim by type of female homicide.**



Mechanism of death showed that, overall, women were more likely to be killed by a firearm. Women who were killed by an intimate partner were also significantly more likely to be killed by blunt force. The study showed that a third of women who were killed by an intimate partner were killed with a firearm. One in five perpetrators owned a legal firearm, compared to 7% who owned an illegal firearm. Legal gun ownership was found to be strongly associated with intimate femicide, as perpetrators who owned a legal firearm were ten times more likely to murder an intimate partner as compared to committing other homicides. The population attributable risk showed that 64.90% of intimate femicides could have been averted if the perpetrator had not owned a legal gun. The lethality of firearms was also found to be associated with intimate femicide-suicides. One in five perpetrators went on to commit suicide after killing an intimate partner. 66.30% owned a legal firearm at the time of the killing, and 58% of perpetrators were employed in the security industry.

Rape homicide was suspected in 16.30% of all female homicides, with a rape homicide rate of 3.65 per 100,000 females 14 years and older. Rape homicides were more likely to occur when the perpetrator was a stranger, and cause of death was more likely blunt force injury, strangulation, or asphyxiation. A gunshot was less likely to be the cause of death in rape homicides.

Multiple regression modeling showed that the factors associated with a woman being killed by an intimate partner were younger victim, older perpetrator, killed at home, perpetrator had a problem with alcohol use, use of a legal firearm, and being killed by blunt force.

## **Conclusions**

This study is the first national study to scientifically explore the size of the problem of intimate femicide, and the factors associated with it, in South Africa. This study showed us that South Africa has the highest reported rate of intimate femicide in the world. Intimate femicide is the most extreme form of intimate-partner violence, and is, therefore, linked to the levels of gender inequality in South Africa. The findings also highlighted the lethality of firearms; in particular, the role of legal guns in the premature deaths of women at the hands of their intimate partners. This study elucidated weaknesses in the police information system and the investigation of cases. It is imperative that a national homicide database be established to monitor the management of such cases and assist in monitoring trends of intimate femicide, as this is an indicator of levels of intimate-partner violence and gender inequality in South Africa.



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# Femicide in Central America 2000–2006

Ana Carcedo<sup>a</sup>

## Introduction

This study on femicide in Central America for the period 2000–2006 is a piece of action research, quantitative and qualitative in nature. It is promoted by feminist organizations for the purpose of carrying out advocacy work. This initiative initially received support from the United Nations Development Fund for Women, and later from the Council of Ministers on the Condition of Women in Central America and the Spanish International Development Agency. The study covered seven countries: Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama.

The goals of the study were to:

- Analyze the characteristics and factors associated with the homicides of women and femicides.
- Analyze the State response to femicide.
- Analyze the response of the communications media to femicide in each country.
- Make recommendations and proposals for public policy intended to prevent femicide and promote actions the State should take to investigate femicide and punish those responsible.

<sup>a</sup> Presentation of a study co-authored by Giovana Lemus, Mirta Kennedy, Morena Herrera, Almachiara D'Angelo, Ana Hidalgo, Urania Ungo, and Susi Pola.

## Methodology

### Definitions of femicide

My point of departure is a theoretical definition of femicide as an extreme and deadly manifestation of violence against women, meaning violence against women that kills. The notion of femicide is taken from Diana Russell, who defines the term as “the murder of women at the hands of men because they are women.”<sup>1</sup>

Another key concept is that of violence against women, which lies at the foundation of the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women, better known as the Belém do Pará Convention. Violence against women is a specific form of violence, directed at women of all ages and derived from the “historically unequal power relations between women and men.” It occurs not only in the domestic, but in all spheres.

Liz Kelly put forth the concept of a continuum of violence against women, not only in the sense that this violence increases gradually until it turns deadly, but also because the different ways it manifests itself have no well-defined or insurmountable divisions. The essence of violence against women is not a particular blow, insult, or sexual attack, but rather, the control that men and the patriarchal system exert over women.<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, this study does not propose to investigate the causes of such violence; it starts from a theoretical and political position regarding those causes. Nor are risk factors an issue, as the only real risk is that of being a woman and the imbalance of power implicit in sexist societies.

From this theoretical definition, an operational definition of femicide is arrived at for the purpose of this study: femicide is the violent and intentional death of a woman of any age at the hands (or on orders) of a man, as a consequence of the phenomenon of violence against women. The point of departure is what in general terms is known as homicide and its variations (murder, parricide, attempted murder, and so on), among which is femicide.

This study does not cover all types of femicide described in the theoretical framework and that are known to have occurred in the region, such as suicide motivated by violence against women, death by infection with AIDS, and death induced by unsafe abortions or by the prohibition/penalization of therapeutic abortion, among others.

The quantitative component of the research was developed in two methodological steps. The first consisted of taking into account all the intentional, violent deaths of women of all ages (homicides, murders,

parricides, infanticides of girls). Based on the extant information, temporal series were developed and tendencies analyzed for each country. The results were then compared to tendencies regarding homicides among men. Likewise, comparisons were made between the various countries.

During the second step, the total number of femicides in each country was identified for the year 2003 using a variety of indicators. An analysis of femicides by country and region was conducted, taking into account variables such as age bracket, nationalities, and professions of the women and their killers; the relationships (if any) between them; the locations at which the murders took place; the types of weapons used; any prior history of violence; the existence of a sexual attack or cruelty; the presence of explicitly misogynist messages; and so on.

In addition, a qualitative component was included for each step, in which the judicial response and the reaction of the media were studied. For the analysis of the judicial response, the point of departure was how the crime was classified and the standards and practices employed during the investigative process (police report on the scene of the crime, autopsy, gathering and custody of evidence) as well as the judicial proceedings (opening of the case, charges brought, sentence, appeals). An analysis was made of the effectiveness with which the legal apparatus investigates, pursues, and punishes femicides.

In some countries, files were made available, which made it possible to trace common practices in cases of femicide and any existing and typical biases and prejudices, as well as the degree of compliance or inconsistency with national and international norms with respect to sentencing.

To analyze the treatment of femicide in the media, a sample of published stories was studied and catalogued according to nature, the type of information provided, any follow-up to cases of femicide, and the profitability of this type of event for the publishing institution. The discourse employed by the media as well as other sources was analyzed for the purpose of identifying stereotypical, misogynistic language, justification for the crime, or possible re-victimization.

An important theoretical and methodological contribution made by this research is the notion of the scenarios of femicides it establishes. Historical records in the region (and in particular, the study of femicide in Costa Rica during the period 1990–1999) led to the identification of three types of femicide: intimate, non-intimate, and by connection. However, the complexity of the Central American situation requires more elaborate analytical instruments. The scenarios of femicide are complex, including the socioeconomic, political, and cultural contexts that exist or support unequal power relations and dynamics of control between men and women that underlie violence against women, including femicide.

Every scenario has its indicators, some linked to the relationship between the woman and her killer or killers (partner, family), others to the manner in which the femicide takes place (sexual attack, cruelty, messages), and yet others to the various contexts (exploitation, trafficking in persons, gangs, mafia). The scenarios identified in the region were as follows:

- Partner relations, current or prior, permanent or occasional
- Family relations (by consanguinity or affinity)
- Death “in the line of fire” of a man who is attacking or trying to kill another woman
- Sexual harassment by men known to the victim (includes so-called “suitors”)
- Sexual attacks by men known or unknown to the victim
- Sexual trade (clients and pimps)
- Trafficking for exploitation (all types)
- Gangs with which the woman had some type of connection (a member, family involvement, previous experience with gang harassment)
- Networks and mafias that use gender control as a method of power
- Revenge by men against third parties
- Misogyny, marking of the bodies, messages left at the scene of the crime
- Cruelty

Two types of sources were used: official statistics and the written media. The former included police and court statistics, individual case reports and police files, forensic and legal documents, opinions on judicial proceedings, and other information gathered during interviews with officials. Additional background and contextual information was gathered on each case through the media, including any published commentaries, editorials, and letters sent in by readers.

The quality of information is a major challenge for investigating femicides. Available official data tend to be dispersed, and rife with incongruities and inconsistencies. Underreporting of cases and incomplete data were issues in all countries. The use of inexact categories for the classification of murders, such as the category “others,” results in misidentification, concealment, and underreporting of femicides, in particular those that do not occur in a family situation. The use of stereotypical, potentially prejudicial categories including “crime of passion” or “mistress” is another common practice.

Media coverage of murders of women reflects prevailing stereotypes and prejudicial biases, often sensationalizing certain details of the victims’ private lives. Compared to official records, media accounts tend to be less precise with respect to documenting hard facts (name, age), but provide contextual information that may help in identifying cases of femicide,

including victim-perpetrator relationship, history of violence, etc. The media are an indispensable source of information, despite the potential for re-victimization as a result of the coverage.

## **Findings**

Among the main methodological findings is the absence of systematically collected and recorded statistics. This lack of data hampers any effort to establish the real extent of the problem and understand its dynamics. At the root of this deficiency are the serious weaknesses inherent in the investigation of murders of women, or indeed, the total absence of investigations in such cases.

Another challenge is the tendency of some women's organizations to classify all murders of women as femicide. This carries serious, implicit risks for femicide research and for galvanizing urgent action around these murders, as they might easily be viewed in the context of generalized social violence, thus rendering invisible the specificity of violence against women and the need to approach it in a particular manner.

The most noteworthy finding was that throughout the Central American region, starting in the year 2000, there has been an increase in murders of women in general and of femicides in particular. The most significant rise in this type of crime has taken place in El Salvador, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, and Honduras. In some countries, notably El Salvador and Guatemala, the rate of homicides against women is growing at a faster pace than those against men.

## **Conclusions**

The following conclusions were reached:

- As in other countries during earlier periods, most of the cases of homicide perpetrated against women and for which a minimum of information is available are indeed femicides.
- Traditional scenarios tend to prevail (partner, family, sexual harassment and attack, the sex trade, and "line of fire"), but new ones are gaining importance as well.
- The current legislation is inadequate to prevent and punish femicide. In addition, there is a high level of social and judicial tolerance toward men who kill women. On the other hand, there is a growing interest among some officials to improve the level of investigations and to pursue these more actively, followed by legal prosecution, although this is not generalized and by no means institutionalized.
- There exists an almost total absence of specific policies to prevent femicide, although in most of the cases identified as such, these deaths were foreseeable (partners or former partners).

As an output derived from this research, the following recommendations are made:

- Strengthen capacity for criminal investigation and legal prosecution.
- Strengthen capacity at state institutions to record, store, and handle information.
- Update and amend national legislation, as agreed to in the Belém do Pará Convention.
- Develop public policies specifically geared toward the prevention of femicide (warning systems, risk measurement, effective protection) in a variety of likely settings and involving third parties (family, neighbors).

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# Femicide in Jamaica

Glendene Lemard, PhD

## Introduction

In 2005, Jamaica was coined the murder capital of the world by the British Broadcasting Corporation because of its annual homicide rate of approximately 64 murders per 100,000 persons. Jamaica's homicide rate is more than ten times the rate of homicide in the United States, eight times the world average, and three times the rate in the Americas as a whole. Prior to 1998, data on homicides were not disaggregated by gender, and as a result, the issue of femicide was largely overshadowed by the staggering numbers of male homicides. However, femicide in Jamaica is a very big problem, with 13 females for every 100,000 females murdered every year. In addition, the factors underlying femicides are different from those for homicides of males and warrant particular, close investigation.

## Methodology

This study focused on an analysis of police homicide reports from 1998 to 2002, with the aim of identifying trends associated with femicides in Jamaica. Additional analysis was conducted on femicides occurring in 2007 to identify any recent changes. Case narratives were used to capture important details, including the weapon used, motive for the femicide, location of the crime, and the age of the victim. Bivariate analyses were used to find significant correlations. This paper will discuss the process of conducting a study of femicide in Jamaica, the issues with femicide data in the country, and implications for policies aimed at preventing femicides.

## Findings

During the period 1998–2002, 89% of homicide victims were male and 11% were female. In 2007, 91% of the victims were male and 9% were female. Data from 2007 showed that the age of the femicide victims ranged from a few months to 90 years old. The average age of the victims was 30, and



the mode was 21 years old. The most common motives for femicide were disputes (44%), reprisals/revenge killings (27%), and robbery (11%). This was different from the motives for male homicides, which were mainly reprisals (31%), disputes (27%), and drug/gang-related activity (22%). Rape-related killings accounted for 5% of all the femicide cases. In 2007, the main weapons used to commit femicides were guns (70%), knives (15%), other weapons (12%) (blunt instruments, cloth/rope for strangulation and/or suffocation, acid), and machetes (3%).

A typical case highlighting intimate-partner femicide was:

*Victim and accused, who was her boyfriend, had a dispute, during which, he used a knife to slash her throat. She was taken to the hospital, where she was pronounced dead.*

Information from the case narratives also showed that the rape-related femicides typically included strangulation. However, more research is needed in this area, especially on the serial nature of the rapes.

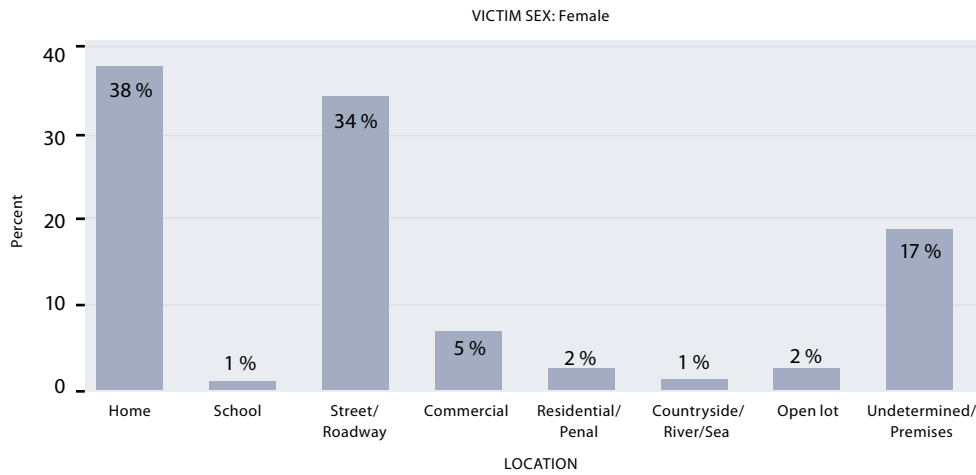
Another main finding from the 2007 data showed that in 21% of cases, three or more assailants engaged in the murder. In 41% of femicides, the killing was committed by one assailant, and in 5%, the crime involved two assailants. An example from the case narrative:

*Victim was at home sleeping with her common-law husband when a group of men armed with guns kicked open the front door, entered, and fired shots, hitting victim all over her body. She was taken to the hospital, where she was pronounced dead.*

A challenge with collecting information from the police is the reliance on unwritten and normative categories for classifying homicides and describing motives. Guidelines for categorization are said to be “just understood.” Domestic violence in Jamaica, for example, includes social violence between strangers, which differs from the US classification of domestic violence. This is an important distinction to consider when analyzing cases of domestic violence in Jamaica.

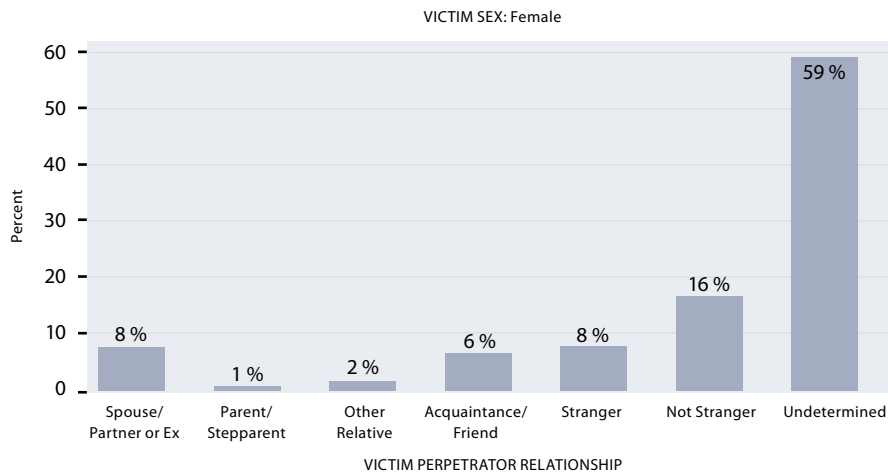
The classification of location was also challenging. The use of the ambiguous term “premises” often complicated identification of the exact location of the crime. For example, according to police data, 1.50% of homicides occurred in the home, 35.70% occurred in “premises,” and 62.10% occurred in the street. After reclassification of the data, it was found that 15.10% of the homicides occurred in the home, and 56.50% occurred in the street. Looking at femicides in particular, 38% occurred in the home compared to 12% of male homicides, and only 34% occurred in the street compared to 59% of male homicides. These data have clear implications for targeting interventions around preventing femicides.

**Figure 1. Location of homicide event.**



In addition, much of the most useful contextual data from case narratives are not coded. For example, the victim-perpetrator relationship is not systematically classified by the police. A review of the narratives found that in 8% of femicides, the perpetrator was the spouse or partner of the victim, and in 6% of cases, he was an acquaintance or friend of the victim. Most of the relationships remain undetermined; this is an area that requires critical attention.

**Figure 2. Victim-perpetrator relationship.**



## Conclusions

Femicide data in Jamaica usually document the age of the victim, the basic motives for the murder, the circumstances surrounding the crime, the weapon used, the location of the crime, and some preliminary information about the suspects—37% of whom were arrested. Information is usually

scarce with respect to the victim-perpetrator relationship, the underlying motives for revenge and execution-type killings, and any correlations between contextual factors. Questions that could be posed include: Why is there an increasing trend of females being targeted for execution by groups of armed men? Are the women innocent bystanders, the intended targets, or scapegoats?

Information from interviews of key persons working in crime prevention in Jamaica provides some insight. The changing power dynamics in gender relations is said to play a role in violence against females. As women become increasingly independent, Jamaican men are not dealing with it well and try to assert power through the use of violence. Women and children are also being increasingly targeted in revenge killings and are becoming scapegoats in issues that may involve their intimate partners, spouses, or other family members or close friends. There are indirect and direct links with the drug trade, as well as gang activity, but the lines often are not clear. Love triangles are also a problem, and small disputes have the potential to get out of hand. Females sometimes kill females; an important issue that must not be overlooked.

More research is needed on femicide in Jamaica. Though overshadowed by male homicides, the problem must still be examined in detail in order to be prevented. In-depth research on the circumstances of female killings is needed, and the indirect links to drugs and gang activity must be investigated. The Jamaican police need to strengthen systematic surveillance of homicides in general and of femicides in particular. Additional training of the police is necessary, especially in the area of data collection and classification. The next important step is to use the sound data that have been collected to target interventions for the prevention of femicides. It is also important that these efforts are done in a timely fashion, as homicides are increasingly being committed with the use of a gun, which is the deadliest of all weapons.

# Feminicide in the Dominican Republic

María Jesús (Susi) Pola Z.

## Introduction

The term *feminicide* has been known in the Dominican Republic since the mid-nineties, when the feminist movement and the Social Women's Movement imported the term from the works of Diane Russell<sup>a</sup> and began to use it nationally and within their organizations.

The first research initiatives took place in the mid-nineties in some of the feminist movement and Social Women's Movement spaces that carried out advocacy work for the prevention and eradication of violence against women. At about the same time, *Quehaceres*, the oldest publication of the Latin American feminist movement (it has been in existence since 1980),<sup>b</sup> held a survey and published numbers related to feminicide, taking into account indicators that identified gender-based violence against women.

In October of 1996, I began to write a column in the afternoon newspaper *El Nacional* that to this day appears every Tuesday. My first article was about the feminicide of a young Dominican at the hands of the father of her children, who after killing her, committed suicide. Since 2002, I have published a number of articles and conducted two studies on feminicide in the Dominican Republic (*Feminicide in the Dominican Republic I and II*). This text is part of a regional study (Central America, the Dominican Republic, and Panama) on the subject of women who were murdered for gender-related reasons during the period 2000–2006, with emphasis on the years 2003 and 2006.

In the Dominican Republic, there is a law on gender-based, intrafamily, and/or sexual violence, which was reformed by the 1997 Criminal Code

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<sup>a</sup> Diana Russell is the author of *Femicide in Global Perspective* and *Femicide: The Politics of Woman Killing*.

<sup>b</sup> *Quehaceres* is a publication of the Feminine Action Research Center. Its director is Magali Pineda.

in order to specify these crimes. It is thus from a perspective of criminal law that such crimes began to become more visible. For this reason, the first pieces of research on the subject necessarily had to be based on the files of the homicides that had taken place. There is an important juridical-legal conceptual difference between the terms homicide and feminicide. Homicide refers to the voluntary killing of another person. (The *animus necandi* is the design to kill a person. It is voluntary and specific.) Feminicide refers to the voluntary killing of a woman because of her gender.

## Methodology

### Definitions of feminicide

While working on the first study of feminicide in the Dominican Republic, I consulted the Royal Academy of the Spanish Language, the official body that tracks changes and issues findings on the language, as well as a number of feminists both in country and in the Caribbean and Central American region. Ultimately, I opted for keeping the neologism *feminicide* to mean the murder of women for gender-related reasons, as it is the term most widely used among the women's movements in the Dominican Republic.<sup>c</sup>

In the Dominican Republic, the term *feminicide* is equivalent to the word *femicide*, which is used in other countries in the region. It is considered to be an extreme form of violence against women, which we understand to be specific, and as set forth in the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women,<sup>d</sup> derived "from the historically unequal power relations between women and men."

In general terms, and as a methodology for the studies, both quantitative and qualitative types of social research techniques were employed. These were applied depending on the needs and requirements of the process, and were used in a complementary and integrated fashion for the purpose of enriching the information gathered and improving the process.

The quantitative techniques used were as follows:

- Systematization and ordering of the database, starting from matrices created for the purpose of organizing the data according to agreed-upon variables.

<sup>c</sup> The Royal Academy explained that in Spanish, both terms, femicide and feminicide, are neologisms, and therefore, suggested I use the one most adequate to local custom. As recently as 2005, at a meeting of the Caribbean, Mexican and Central American subregion, called to discuss the issue of feminicide, we found there was an ongoing discussion concerning the two neologisms, ascribing each a different meaning.

<sup>d</sup> Commonly known as the Belém do Pará Convention.

- Vertical data file based on newspaper stories dealing with feminicides that occurred during the period from January 1 through December 31, 2002.
- The total number of cases by year and grouping of years published by the State Secretariat for Women and the National Statistics Bureau.
- Two matrices in Excel, one for 2003 and one for 2006, with data from the three sources available (National Police, Instituto Nacional de Ciencias Forenses, and newspapers).
- A statistical and descriptive analysis of the data.

The data were exported to the package for statistical data management in SPSS version 15.0, where the review and codification was carried out. Frequency tables were generated, and variables were crossed for the total and broken down by source.

The qualitative techniques used for this work included the gathering of information based primarily on perceptions, attitudes, opinions, meanings, and conduct. Due to the complexity of the task, a number of methods were used:

- In-depth interviews (structured, semi-structured, and open) with the victims' families and neighbors, held in the immediate setting in which they lived. Permission was requested from the state prosecutor's office in Santiago to interview eight men who had perpetrated feminicide in that city and were sent to Rafey Prison.
- Interviews with focus groups.
- Case studies.
- Observation.
- Analysis of texts and discourses.

For purposes of applying the research techniques, the following were taken into account:

- The road map for intervention by the National Police; the Public Ministry (Office of the Attorney General); and probable cause proceedings in the lower courts, which receives and classifies criminal cases.
- Effects on the woman's family, neighborhood, and work environment.
- Justification and myths regarding gender violence.
- Case studies by type of feminicide.
- Impact on the expanded environment (society).
- Indicators of violent manifestations of masculinity.

Studies were carried out by type of feminicide, and impacts were analyzed in the broader context—the effects on the woman’s family, neighborhood, and workplace. I also examined the justifications for and myths surrounding gender violence.<sup>e</sup>

For the second study, the overall data in the theoretical framework were used in an attempt to delve a bit deeper into the theories on male violence, with the understanding that the legal definition or elements of a crime are incomplete without a perpetrator and secure in the knowledge that violence as a manifestation of control and power is a problem that men have and women suffer.

The specific sources of data included:

- Lower criminal courts in which judges examine the evidence and determine whether or not there is cause to warrant a trial
- The state prosecutor
- The National Police and its Statistics and Mapping Unit
- The Forensic Medicine Department
- The Intrafamily Violence Program at the Public Health Ministry
- A vertical file taken from the written press (stories on the subject that ran during the year under study)
- Killers of women serving time at Rafey Prison in Santiago
- Families and immediate settings of the victims, including workplaces

For the representative sample, the data used were from the year 2000, taken from newspapers that reported 92 cases of feminicides in the country, of which, 36 (39%) occurred in Santo Domingo and 16 (17%) in Santiago. A total of 56% of these killings took place in these two cities.<sup>f</sup>

Consultations/interviews were conducted with:

- Women from the feminist movement
- Journalists
- Adjunct prosecutors involved in the investigations
- Staff at the Statistics Unit, Office of the State Prosecutor
- Staff at the Statistics and Mapping Unit, National Police
- Staff at the National Institute of Forensic Sciences
- Staff at the Department of Public Policy, State Secretariat for Women’s Issues

The feminicides were classified as intimate, non-intimate, and by connection, following the typology proposed by Carcedo and Sagot in 2000.<sup>g</sup>

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<sup>e</sup> In the Dominican Republic, as in many other countries, a widespread myth is that “men are born violent and women like to be mistreated.”

<sup>f</sup> Santo Domingo is the capital of the Dominican Republic, while Santiago is the second largest city. The Dominican Republic shares the island of Hispaniola with Haiti.

<sup>g</sup> As in the samples examined for this study, there were some violent deaths that were not feminicides.

## Findings

The following findings were highlighted with respect to the situation of femicide in the Dominican Republic:

- 70% of femicide cases were intimate feminicides.
- 56% of the victims were between the ages of 15 and 30; 20% were older than 41.
- 91% of the victims were known to their killers, who in 67% of the cases, were their partners.
- In all cases in which the victim was killed by her partner, the femicide was preceded by harassment, persecution, and threats. This information was gleaned from interviewing persons familiar with the victim and murderer, but had not been recorded in the legal system.
- 58% of the killers had been in trouble with the law prior to killing their victims.
- 50% of the women were killed in their homes.
- 50% of the women were killed using bladed weapons, 39% by firearms, and the remainder using other weapons or methods.
- 50% of the cases occurred in the presence of witnesses.
- 50% of the killings took place on a Sunday between 10 pm and 1 am.
- In 91% of the intimate feminicides, the women had indicated their intention to end the relationship.
- 33% of the perpetrators extended their violent behavior to other people in their surroundings.
- The killers used arguments emphasizing the issue of dominance and control.
- Couples in relationships were the most frequently involved in femicide scenarios: 72% of total cases in 2003 and 53% in 2006.
- The National Police classified a considerable number of the feminicides as “crimes of passion,” without giving additional details (including 14 cases in 2003 and 30 cases in 2006).
- For the purpose of this study, 11% of cases in 2003 and 28% in 2006 were catalogued as “undetermined.”
- Violence extended to other family members and people in the general setting.
- Feminicides were often preceded by intense harassment of the victim by the perpetrator, accompanied by sexual attacks, and linked to jealousy among men.



- The suicide of a man who had killed a woman was considered to be an important piece of information, as it reflected adherence to the role of control in conditions of violent masculinity, and the capability of killing others as well as oneself.

For the year 2003, of the 187 violent deaths suffered by women, and about which basic information was available:

- 124 (67%) were feminicides;
- three (1.60%) were suspected feminicides;
- 29 (15.50%) were classified as homicides; and
- in 31 cases (17%), the information available was not sufficient to reach a conclusion.

For the year 2006, of the 207 violent deaths suffered by women, and about which basic information was available:

- 107 (52%) were feminicides;
- two (1%) were suspected feminicides;
- 39 (19%) were not feminicides;
- for one out of every five cases of homicides of women (22%), no information was available regarding the perpetrator of the crime or how it took place; and
- in 59 cases (28.50%), the information available was not sufficient to reach a conclusion.

Young women are the age group at highest risk for feminicides:

- In 2003, one out of every three victims was between 30 and 39 years of age.
- In 2006, 32% of femicide victims were between 20 and 29 years of age.

## Conclusions

The term femicide and its declensions are being used more frequently in newspaper accounts, including editorials in well-respected media. The issue of femicide has also been broached for discussion in a range of different forums, signaling increased awareness in the country. Building on this, a coalition of nongovernmental organizations that work on women's issues has put forth a proposal for reforming the Criminal Code. The results of this study were shared directly with stakeholders in the justice and health sectors, and with nongovernmental organizations as well as the population at large, through the written media and other means of communication.

Some of the challenges with undertaking research in the legal system:

- Official data on femicide cases are not systematically collected.

Current data collection is hampered by incomplete files and a lack of consistency in the way cases introduced at the state prosecutor's office are filed.

- Ambiguous terminology is used, including the general term "homicide," which complicates the identification of femicide cases.
- Suicides by men who kill women are not recorded.
- The files of the forensic experts frequently do not provide information on the perpetrator.
- Femicide files at the Homicides Department are not accessible to the public.
- The system has no facilities for carrying out investigations.



**Who is at risk:  
understanding risk factors  
for femicide victimization  
and perpetration**

# Risk Factors for Femicide and Femicide-Suicide: A Multisite Case Control Study<sup>a</sup>

Jacquelyn Campbell, PhD

## Introduction

Femicide, the homicide of women, is the leading cause of death among African American women aged 15 to 45 years and the seventh leading cause of premature death among women overall.<sup>1</sup> American women are killed by intimate partners (husbands, lovers, ex-husbands, or ex-lovers) more often than by any other type of perpetrator.<sup>2-4</sup> Intimate-partner homicide accounts for approximately 40% to 50% of US femicides, but a relatively small proportion of male homicides (5.90%).<sup>1,5-10</sup> The percentage of intimate-partner homicides involving male victims decreased between 1976 and 1996; whereas, the percentage of female victims increased, from 54% to 72%.<sup>4</sup>

The majority (67% to 80%) of intimate-partner homicides involve physical abuse of the female by the male before the murder, no matter which partner is killed.<sup>1,2,6,11-13</sup> The objective of this study was to specify the risk factors for intimate-partner femicide among women in violent relationships with the aim of preventing this form of lethality.

## Methodology

A 12-city case control design was used. 220 femicide victims were identified as cases. All consecutive femicide police or medical examiner records from 1994 through 2000 at each site were examined to assess victim-perpetrator relationships. Cases were eligible if the perpetrator was a current or former intimate partner and the case was designated as “closed” by the police (suicide by the perpetrator, arrest, or adjudication, depending on the

<sup>a</sup>This summary is excerpted from:

Campbell JC et al. Risk factors for femicide in abusive relationships: results from a multisite case control study. *American Journal of Public Health*. 2003;93(7):1089–1097.

Koziol-McLain J et al. Risk factors for femicide-suicide in abusive relationships: results from a multisite case control study. *Violence and Victims*. 2006;21(1):3–21.

jurisdiction). At least two proxy informants—individuals knowledgeable about the victim’s relationship with the perpetrator—were identified from the records. The proxy, who in the investigator’s judgment was the most knowledgeable source, was sent a letter explaining the study. If no communication was initiated by the proxy, attempts were made at telephone or personal contact. If the first proxy was not knowledgeable about details of the relationship, she or he was asked to identify another willing potential proxy informant.

Stratified random-digit dialing was used to select women aged 18 to 50 years who had been involved romantically or sexually in a relationship at some time in the past two years in the cities in which the femicides occurred. A woman was considered abused if she had been physically assaulted or threatened with a weapon by a current or former intimate partner during the past two years, using a modified version of the Conflict Tactics Scale with stalking added.<sup>11,14</sup> Using this method, 356 randomly selected abused women were identified as controls.

In-depth interviews conducted with the proxies and controls included previously tested instruments, such as the Danger Assessment,<sup>16-17</sup> and gathered information on demographic and relationship characteristics, including type, frequency, and severity of violence, psychological abuse and harassment, threats of violence, alcohol and drug use, and weapon availability. The Danger Assessment had been previously translated into Spanish, and back translated into English. Spanish- and English-speaking interviewers completed sensitivity and safety protocol training before conducting the interviews.

## **Findings**

79% of the femicide victims aged 18 to 50 years and 70% of the total femicide cases were physically abused before their deaths by the same intimate partner who killed them, in comparison with 10% of the pool of eligible control women. Thus, the premise, that physical violence against the victim is the primary risk factor for intimate-partner femicide, was upheld. The purpose of the study, however, was to determine risk factors that, over and above previous intimate-partner violence, are associated with femicide in a sample of battered women.

In comparing femicide perpetrators with other abusive men, the study found that unemployment was the most important demographic risk factor for acts of intimate-partner femicide. In fact, an abuser’s lack of employment was the only demographic risk factor that significantly predicted femicide risk after we controlled for a comprehensive list of more proximate risk factors, increasing risks four-fold relative to the case of employed abusers. Instances in which the abuser had a college education (versus a high school education) were protective against femicide, as were instances in which the abuser had a college degree and was unemployed but looking for work.

Race/ethnicity of abusers and victims was not independently associated with intimate-partner femicide risk after controlling for other demographic factors. Unemployment appears to underlie increased risks often attributed to race/ethnicity, as has been found in other analyses.<sup>19,20</sup>

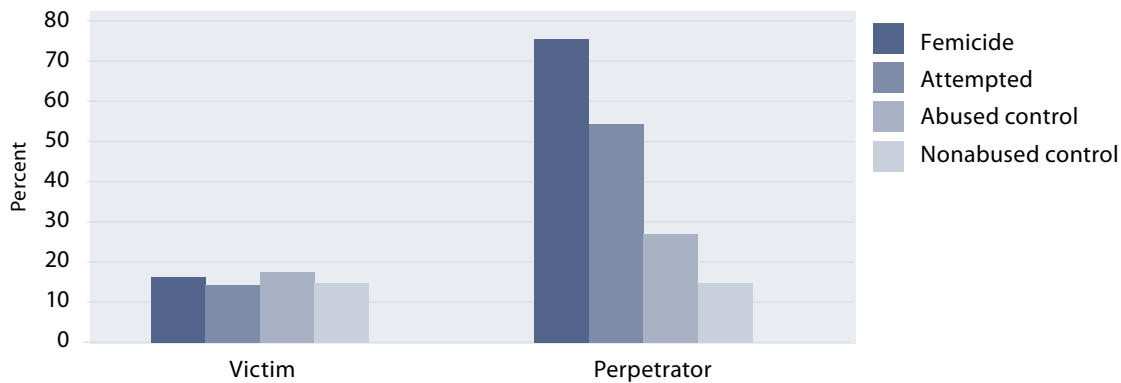
When additional individual-level risk factors for homicide were added, both abuser’s access to a firearm and abuser’s use of illicit drugs were strongly associated with intimate-partner femicide, although the abuser’s excessive use of alcohol was not. Although the abuser’s access to a firearm increased femicide risk the victim’s risk of being killed by her intimate partner was lower when she lived apart from the abusers and had sole access to a firearm. When threatening behaviors and stalking were added to the model, abusers’ previous threats with a weapon and threats to kill were associated with substantially higher risks for femicide. Neither alcohol abuse nor drug use by the victim was independently associated with her risk of being killed.

**Table 1. Significant variables before femicide incidents.**

Significant (p<.05) variables (entered into blocks) before incident (overall fit = 85% correct classification)	
Perpetrator unemployed	OR = 4.4
Perpetrator gun access	OR = 5.4
Perpetrator stepchild	OR = 2.4
Couple never lived together	OR = 0.34
Highly controlling perpetrator	OR = 2.1
Estranged X low control (interaction)	OR = 3.6
Estranged X control (interaction)	OR = 5.5
Threatened to kill her	OR = 3.2
Threatened with a weapon prior	OR = 3.8
Forced sex	OR = 1.9
Prior arrest for domestic violence	OR = 0.34

The present results revealed that traits of perpetrators thought to be characteristic of violent criminals in general tended to be no more characteristic of femicide perpetrators than of other batterers. For instance, in contrast to results of previous research comparing abusers and non-abusers,<sup>22</sup> the study’s regression analysis showed that arrests for other crimes did not differentiate femicide perpetrators from perpetrators of intimate-partner violence. After controlling for other risk factors, prior arrest for domestic violence actually decreased the risk for femicide, suggesting that arrest of abusers protects against future intimate-partner femicide risks.

**Figure 1. Victim and perpetrator ownership of weapons in femicides and control cases.**



Two relationship variables remained significant throughout the models. Consistent with earlier research,<sup>27,28</sup> instances in which a child of the victim by a previous partner was living in the home increased the risk of intimate-partner femicide. Situations in which the victim and abuser had never lived together were protective, validating safety advice that battered women have offered to other battered women in interview studies.<sup>29</sup> Women who separated from their abusive partners after cohabitation experienced increased risk of femicide, particularly when the abuser was highly controlling. Other studies have revealed the same risks posed by estrangement,<sup>30,31</sup> but this one further explicates the findings by identifying highly controlling male partners as presenting the most danger in this situation. At the incident level, the study found that batterers were significantly more likely to perpetrate homicide if their partner was leaving them for a different partner.

**Table 2. Danger Assessment items comparing actual and attempted femicides and controls.**

**Danger Assessment items comparing actual and attempted femicides (N = 493) and abused (within past 24 months) controls (N = 427) (\*p<.05)**

	Actual/Attempted	Control
Physical violence increased in frequency*	56%	24%
Physical violence increased in severity*	62%	18%
Partner tried to choke victim*	50%	10%
A gun was present in the house*	64%	16%
Partner forced victim to have sex*	39%	12%
Partner used street drugs*	55%	23%
Partner threatened to kill victim*	57%	14%
Victim believed partner was capable of killing her*	54%	24%
Perpetrator AD Military History (ns.)	16%	22%
Stalking score*	4.6	2.4



Significant explanatory power was achieved in identifying risk factors for femicide-suicide, which made up 32% of femicide cases in the study. Most notable among the risk factors that could be identified in encounters prior to the event were partner access to a gun, prior threats with a weapon, prior threats to kill her, estrangement from the perpetrator, a stepchild in the household, and a marital relationship. In the final incident-level model, even more explanatory power was achieved, with the use of a gun strongly predicting the femicide-suicide over the worst incident in an abusive relationship. The use of a gun among the femicide-suicide cases (61%) is also striking in that it is differentiated not only from the controls (1%) but from the femicide without suicide cases as well (28%). Two risk factors emerged in these models that were unique to femicide-suicide cases compared to overall femicide risk analyses: prior perpetrator suicide threats and victims having been married to the perpetrators—the femicide-suicide cases were more likely to be married.

With respect to femicide related to pregnancy, the study found that 25.80% of women killed had reported experiencing abuse during their pregnancy, in contrast to 8.40% of abused controls. 4.20% of women were killed while they were pregnant. Homicide is the leading cause of maternal mortality in US cities where it has been measured but has been neglected in reviews of maternal deaths, and therefore, in the development of programming. This points to the need for further study of maternal mortality as a whole and homicides during pregnancy specifically.

## Conclusions

The analysis demonstrated that a combination of the most commonly identified risk factors for homicide, in conjunction with characteristics specific to violent intimate relationships, predicted intimate-partner femicide risks. The bivariate analysis supported earlier evidence that certain characteristics of intimate-partner violence are associated with intimate-partner femicide, including stalking, strangulation, forced sex, abuse during pregnancy, a pattern of escalating severity and frequency of physical violence, perpetrator suicidality, perception of danger on the part of the victim, and child abuse.<sup>15,16,20,32-37</sup> However, these risk factors, with the exception of forced sex, were not associated with intimate-partner femicide in the multi-variate analysis. Many of these characteristics of abuse are associated with previous threats with a weapon and previous threats to kill the victim, factors that more closely predict intimate-partner femicide risks.

The study's iterative model-building strategy also allowed us to observe whether the effects of more proximate risk factors mediate the effects of more distal factors. For example, the eight-fold increase in intimate-partner femicide risk associated with abusers' access to firearms attenuated to a five-fold increase when characteristics of the abuse were considered,

including previous threats with a weapon on the part of the abuser. This suggests that abusers who possess guns tend to inflict the most severe abuse. However, consistent with other research, gun availability still had substantial independent effects that increased homicide risks.<sup>3,15,23-25</sup> As expected, these effects were due to gun-owning abusers' much greater likelihood of using a gun in the worst incident of abuse, in some cases, the actual femicide.

A number of critical lessons can be gleaned with respect to the collection of data. These include the importance of:

- proxy informants in determining the true incidence of prior domestic violence in the relationship;
- hand searches of police records for identifying cases of femicide that may have been overlooked;
- identifying, documenting, and studying cases of femicide-suicide;
- documenting and addressing maternal mortality cases; and
- looking at cases of attempted femicide as sources of data.

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# Murder in Britain Study: The Murder of Women

Rebecca Emerson Dobash, PhD, and Russell P. Dobash, PhD

## Introduction

The aim of the Murder in Britain Study (including England/Wales and Scotland) was to examine all types of murder in order to provide detailed evidence about the nature, context, and lethal intentions associated with the act of murder and to extend knowledge about different types of murder, including the killing of women. Of particular interest were male-on-male, intimate-partner, child, elderly, and sexual murders. Different types of murder were identified and investigated in terms of a number of theoretically derived constellations of variables/factors previously shown to be associated with homicide, including demographic and socioeconomic factors; childhood background, adult circumstances, relationships, and experiences, including offending behavior; substance use and abuse; and the murder event, especially contextual and situational factors and the relationship between victim and offender.

## Methodology

The research included three different sources of data: (1) national Homicide Indexes for England/Wales and Scotland,<sup>a</sup> (2) case files of a sample of 866 men and women convicted of murder, and (3) 200 in-depth, structured interviews with men and women currently in prison for murder.

The two Homicide Indexes (for England/Wales and Scotland) contain data similar to the Supplemental Homicide Reports based on the Uniform Crime Reporting Program of the US Federal Bureau of Investigation. Each dataset holds about 25 variables on every homicide committed annually (about 700–800 killings per year in England/Wales and about 100 in Scotland).<sup>b</sup> Similar to all such national indexes on homicide, only a limited amount of information is held about each case.

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<sup>a</sup> In Britain, there are two different criminal justice jurisdictions, one for England and Wales (Home Office in London) and one for Scotland (Scottish Executive in Edinburgh).

<sup>b</sup> Of interest here, the data for England/Wales and for Scotland show that of all the women killed in any given year, between 40% and 45% are killed by an intimate male partner or ex-partner, while only about 5% to 7% of men who are killed each year are killed by an intimate female partner or ex-partner.<sup>1,2</sup>

Official homicide statistics can provide general descriptions of national and regional patterns and rates of homicide, and can be used to provide a limited overview of offenders and sketchy information about the circumstances of the murder event. The type and limited amount of data collected about each homicide make it impossible to examine such events in detail, to consider the complexity of contexts and circumstances in which they occur, or to look in detail at the individuals and relationships involved. These tasks require much more information than currently available in any official homicide dataset.

Since the aim of this research was to extend knowledge about the murder event and about different types of murder, it was essential to obtain much more information about each case of murder than contained in the Homicide Index. This was done in two ways: (1) by conducting intensive interviews with a sample of 200 men and women currently in prison for murder, and (2) by examining in detail a sample of 866 case files of men and women currently in prison for murder (for a discussion of the interviews, see Lewis et al. 2003<sup>3</sup>). Taken together, the three sources of data provide a unique view of murder and allow for a more comprehensive examination of different types of murder and comparisons across types than would otherwise be possible. Here, we consider the research procedures associated with the case file dataset and focus on the murder by her male intimate partner.

The case file dataset includes only cases in which there was a conviction for the charge of “murder.” It does not include those charged with “manslaughter” or cases in which the perpetrator committed suicide. This dataset contains information that is not available in the Homicide Indexes discussed above, and is not available for those convicted of “manslaughter” for reasons outlined below.

In Great Britain, a homicide results in a charge either of “murder” or “manslaughter.”<sup>c</sup> The difference between the charges of murder and manslaughter does not rest, as it does in some jurisdictions, on the notion of premeditation or intention to kill. A conviction for murder in Great Britain does not require premeditation; but rather, the offender must intend to use bodily violence and to cause grievous bodily harm.<sup>4</sup> Although in practice, there is often little difference in the acts that result in the charge of “murder” or “manslaughter,” the sentence of murder results in an automatic life sentence (with a “tariff” or suggested minimum period that should be served, currently around 12 years, although a few offenders are required to serve a “whole life” sentence).

Because of the gravity of the offense of “murder” and the “indeterminate” nature of the life sentence (a minimum tariff), the Correctional Services invest considerable effort in dealing with those convicted of “murder,”

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<sup>c</sup> While the jurisdictions of England/Wales and Scotland differ in some respects, such as the charge of “infanticide,” for the purposes of this research, the basic similarities are important.

who must be judged “safe” before being released into the community. This involves numerous rehabilitative and monitoring activities consisting of interviews and observations by prison staff and allied professionals conducted throughout the period of imprisonment. Each file contains official reports from police, forensic scientists, solicitors, trial judges, psychiatrists, medical officers, social workers, probation officers, and prison staff. The file also includes numerous interviews with the perpetrator conducted by various professionals from the time of the murder and throughout the prison sentence. Case files are extensive, sometimes 100 pages in length, and contain an extraordinary amount of information regarding a range of pertinent issues, including the murder event; violence; injuries; circumstances and situations associated with the murder; perpetrator-victim relationship; criminal career of the offender; life course of the offender, including childhood and adulthood circumstances; orientations and attitudes of the offender; and adjustment in prison (see Dobash et al. 2004<sup>5</sup> and Cavanagh, Dobash, and Dobash 2007<sup>6</sup> for more details).

The data collection procedures for the case file data were developed in the following manner: (1) case files were initially reviewed to establish the nature and consistency of their content, and (2) initial data collection instruments were developed that allowed quantitative and qualitative data to be coded directly on to laptops using SPSS for quantitative information and word documents for qualitative information that were subsequently translated into the Nudist/QSRN6 package for qualitative analysis. The data collection procedures were piloted in England and Scotland and modified in light of the pilot study. The data were gathered, coded, and analyzed by a team of four researchers who had many years of experience studying violence against women, and violent men. Throughout the data collection period, members of the team discussed any issues concerning data collection/coding to ensure consistency across the team.

The raw data were collected in considerable detail, and response categories were compressed only at a later stage of analysis. For example, the relationship between perpetrator and victim was initially coded to allow for slightly more than 100 possible relationships across the range of murder types. Importantly, this included a careful consideration of the genders of victims and offenders, as well as the nature and length of each relationship (e.g., male murders adult female acquaintance of only one day). In this way, a great deal of potentially important information could be collected initially and then “collapsed” into fewer categories for more efficient data analysis (e.g., intimate partners, friends and acquaintances, relatives, and strangers).

In addition, by retaining detailed response categories, nuances of particular types of relationships, such as an adult woman killed in a sexual murder by a current or ex-intimate partner, neighbor, friend/acquaintance, or stranger, could be examined. These procedures resulted in the collection of detailed information on 866 cases of murder (786



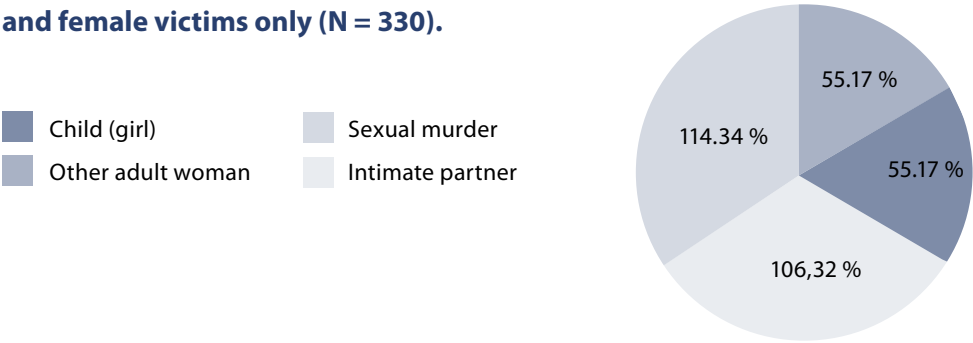
men<sup>d</sup> and 80 women perpetrators). At the time of the study, the case file sample represented about 20% of all men currently serving a life sentence for “murder” in England and Wales (about 3,000) and 35% of all those serving life for “murder” in Scotland (about 500).<sup>e</sup>

**Findings**

The quantitative and qualitative data collected in the Murder in Britain Study has enabled us to go well beyond the usual analysis associated with official homicide statistics by including substantially more valid and reliable information about a much wider range of significant issues relating to all types of murder of women and girls. Information about offenders includes extensive details about childhood, adulthood, previous history of violence and criminality, dynamics of the murder event (circumstances, situations, motivations), and the perpetrators’ orientations toward women as well as empathy and remorse.

The different types of murders of females (Figure 1) include intimate-partner, sexual, and female child killing, and women killed in other circumstances. The detailed information in the case file dataset enabled the identification of other types of murder related to intimate relationships that would not have been possible using official information (e.g., intimate-partner collaterals such as killing a new male partner, parents or friends acting as guardians, children, and neighbors). In addition, information about a rape or sexual attack during the act of murder is not usually included in the official charge and thus is lost unless the case file or other materials are read and coded. For example, the reading of these case files revealed 114 cases that were charged with “murder” that also involved some form of sexual attack, but only 13 of these cases included an official charge reflecting the sexual assault. As such, this information would have been lost to research using only the official statistics about murder cases unless some further form of information was collected such as that in the case file database.

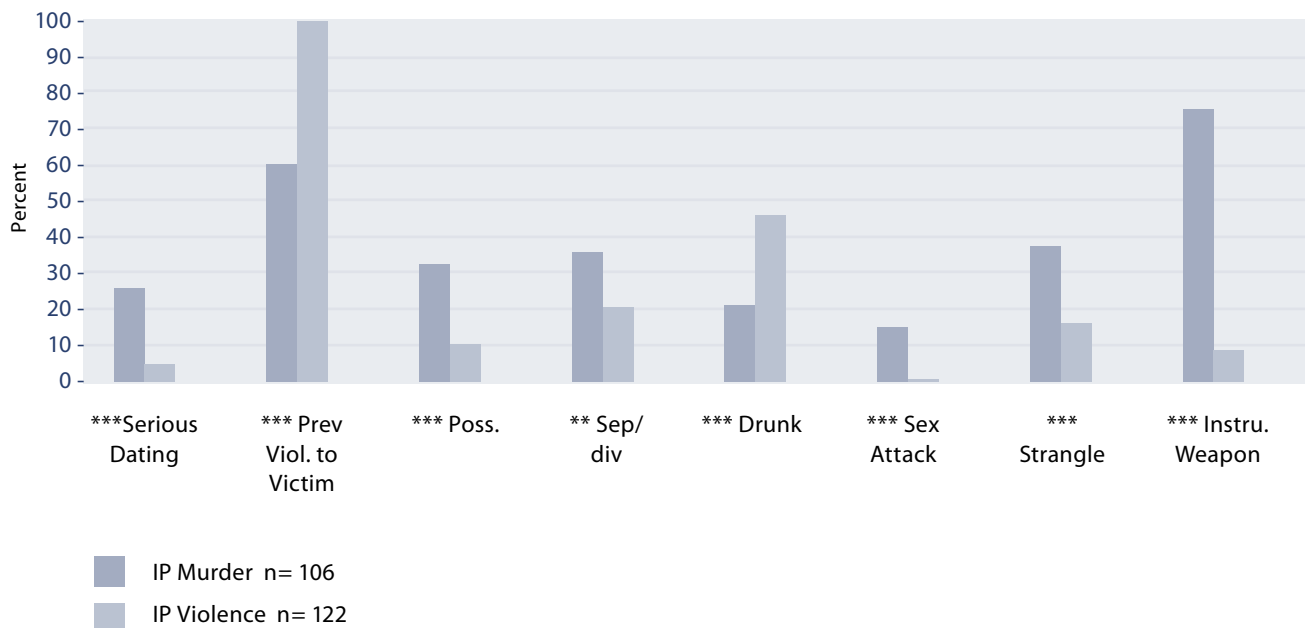
**Figure 1. Murders of females: male perpetrators and female victims only (N = 330).**



<sup>d</sup> The case file dataset of 786 men included 612 from England/Wales and 174 from Scotland.  
<sup>e</sup> In England and Wales, from 1991 to 2000, 6,318 men were indicted for killings in which they were charged either with “murder” or “manslaughter.”<sup>11</sup> Of the 6,318 men charged with an offense, 4,620 were convicted. Of those convicted, 2,280 (49.40%) were convicted for “murder,” 1,893 (41%) for “manslaughter,” and 447 (9.60%) were convicted for Section 2 Manslaughter (diminished responsibility).

To date, we have undertaken a number of comparisons involving different types of the murder of females.<sup>3,5-8</sup> Comparative analysis is an important tool for revealing distinct and significant aspects of different types of murders. For example, comparisons of the murders of women by intimate partners with male-on-male murders, as well as the comparison of intimate-partner murder and non-lethal abuse of women in intimate relationships (using data gathered in another study) (Figure 2) enabled us to examine risk factors associated with intimate-partner murders. Comparisons of the circumstances and situational aspects of intimate-partner murders and non-lethal abuse (Figure 2) revealed that the men who murdered a partner were more likely to be in a serious dating relationship, separated at the time, possessive and controlling, to have sexually attacked the woman during the murder, to have used an instrument/weapon in the attack, and/or to have strangled the woman. In addition, men who committed murder were less likely than abusers to have been drunk at the time of the attack and to have previously used violence against their victim.

**Figure 2. Lethal and non-lethal violence, intimate-partner violence, circumstances, and murder/violent event.**



## Conclusions

Overall to date, the results of our analysis confirmed a number of patterns. Many of the men who murdered an intimate partner had previously been convicted of an assault against a woman and/or had previously used violence against the intimate partner they killed, and as such, might be defined as specialists in violence against women.<sup>9</sup>

Cohabiting, dating, and tenuous relationships that are highly conflicted and contested are at risk, as are those that are separated or estranged. However, separation often occurs in conflicted relationships and does not result in murder. As such, separation cannot be considered in isolation as a risk factor for murder. Our data revealed that at the point of the murders, the men appeared to “change the project” from attempting to cajole or coerce the women into remaining with them to one of killing the women because they were not willing to do so. At the point of “changing the project,” the women were placed outside the “moral universe” of concern and became objects to be destroyed.

The nature of the violence used in the murders (sexual attack, use of object or weapon, strangulation) may also indicate further objectification of the woman. These data allowed us to discover men who appeared to “come out of the blue” and kill their women partners when there was no known history of violence. The extensive information in the case files allowed us to explore more fully the backgrounds of these men, the intimate relationships, and the circumstances of the murders. This revealed that while the backgrounds of the men who appeared to “come out of the blue” were more conventional than the backgrounds of others who had killed their women partners, and some had never used violence against the women they killed, some of them had, in fact, used violence that had gone undetected. However, men with and without a previous history of violence toward a woman partner were similar in terms of their orientations toward women and especially toward “wives.”

Finally, the findings from the Murder in Britain Study revealed the extraordinary significance of gender and of men’s orientations toward women in the ongoing effort to more fully understand the murder of women by men.<sup>10</sup>

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# Spousal Conflict and Uxoricide in Canada

Margo Wilson, PhD, and Martin Daly, PhD

Our epidemiological analyses of uxoricide, which means the killing of a wife by her husband, have largely concerned killings of wives in registered marriages, but also those in common-law unions. For this approach, both the number of victims and the corresponding number of persons in the population at large are needed in order to compute uxoricide rates per million wives. We have not been able to conduct similar analyses of women in other intimate-partner relationships because data on such relationships for the population at large have either been lacking or unreliable.

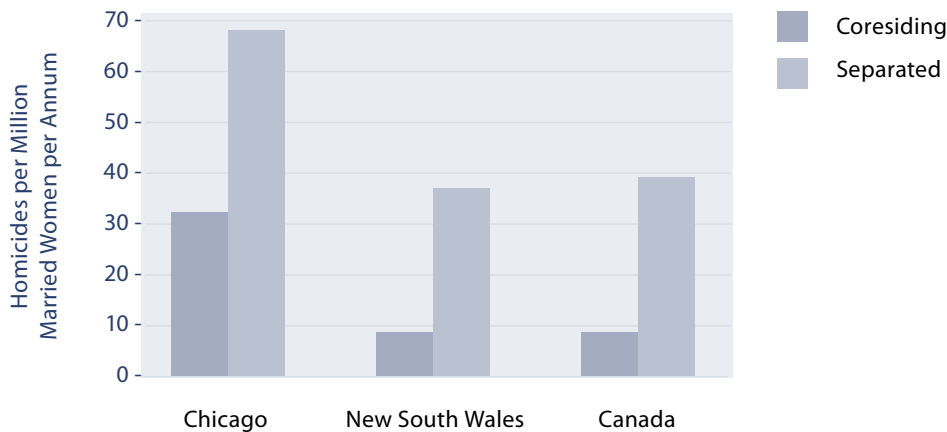
In the United States over the past few decades, there has been a decline in spousal homicide rates, which is associated with, and perhaps a consequence of, improved protective services for women.<sup>1</sup> Ironically, those who have apparently benefited the most are men, since the rate of male victimization at the hands of wives (“mariticide”) has declined substantially more than has the uxoricide rate.

In Canada, with a parallel development of protective services, the rates of killings of both male and female intimate partners have declined, especially so for women victims.<sup>2,3</sup> The Canadian data cannot be directly compared with the rates for the United States, since US census and national homicide data files do not routinely identify common-law unions, whereas in Canada, these co-resident unions are routinely part of the census and other national surveys of the population.

In analyses of data from Canada, the city of Chicago, and the Australian state of New South Wales, we have found that although the majority of uxoricide victims were co-residing with their killers, the per capita rate of uxoricide was actually much higher when registered marriage partners were separated (Figure 1).<sup>4</sup> We suspect that the same is true for common-law unions, but in the absence of data on the numbers of separated common-law spouses in the population at large, comparable rate estimates cannot be made. The data in Figure 1 represent a conservative estimate

of the elevated risk associated with separation, since many victims were killed very soon after separation, and yet the census data (and hence the rate denominator) included women who had been separated from former partners for many years.

**Figure 1. Uxoricide rates per million women per annum.<sup>4</sup>**



In Canada, there has since been more extensive examination of the risk of wives being killed after leaving abusive partners, with similar conclusions.<sup>5,3</sup> It had long been recognized that women leaving abusive husbands are at risk of being pursued, harassed, assaulted, and killed, but there had been no quantitative estimates of the risk. Another supporting piece of evidence of this risk in Canada for the period 1995–2000 is that the number of criminal charges for stalking and harassment were much higher for ex-husbands than for husbands and boyfriends,<sup>2,6</sup> and yet, the total number of boyfriends and husbands for this time period must surely have been greater.

An epidemiological approach to studying uxoricide is constrained by the limited information in police files and other sources. The mandate of the police is, of course, not social science research, but they do collect basic demographic information, such as the status of the marital union, the ages of the parties, the type of weapon, and whether the killer committed suicide, all of which can provide insights about the possible nature of the conflict and situational markers of risk that warrant further study.

The ages of wives and husbands are one such risk marker. Young wives (18–24 years) are at greatest risk of being killed by their husbands in Canada, and they also experience the highest rates of non-lethal assault.<sup>7-10</sup> Since young wives are typically married to young men, and young men are the most violent age class,<sup>11-13</sup> it might be concluded that the elevated risk to young wives simply reflects the young ages of the men, but in fact, young wives in Canada and elsewhere are at greatest risk if married to much older men.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, the risk of uxoricide increases as a function

of the disparity in age between husband and wife, whether the wife is younger or older.<sup>10</sup> Rates of uxoricide in Canada have also been found to be higher for unions of short duration.<sup>14</sup>

The highest rates of uxoricide in Canada are found in common-law or de facto unions. Moreover, unlike the case in registered unions, it is not the youngest wives who are most likely to be slain, but those aged 35–54.<sup>15</sup> This difference in age pattern of uxoricide rates for registered and common-law unions has persisted in more recent analyses of Canadian homicides,<sup>16</sup> and is evident in other countries, too. We were curious about what might account for these different age patterns.

An obvious hypothesis is that older common-law couples constitute a socioeconomically disadvantaged group, but this is not the case: in Canada, registered and common-law unions exhibit virtually identical age-specific income trajectories. The only demographic variable that we have found to distinguish common-law unions from registered marriages is the age-specific incidence of co-resident stepchildren, whose presence is most prevalent by far in common-law unions between middle-aged couples, the very group in which uxoricide rates are maximal. And perhaps this is not surprising in light of evidence that stepchildren can be a source of conflict and that the presence of stepchildren to the woman's partner is associated with an elevated risk of uxoricide in Canada<sup>17</sup> and in the United States.<sup>18,19</sup>

These are a few examples of how analyses based on homicide statistics and census and national survey data can be used to inform our understanding of some of the factors associated with lethal violence against wives or former wives in registered and de facto marital unions. More research is required to fully understand just why uxoricide rates are higher for women in common-law unions, why the rates peak in middle age for de facto unions and in youth for registered marriages, and so forth. A broader comparative analysis of recent temporal changes in the rates of intimate-partner homicides, using data not just from Canada and the United States but from many countries, could also be enlightening regarding the impacts of policy changes and the resources available to women at risk.

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**Closing gaps and galvanizing  
action for accountability  
around all forms of femicide**

# An Analysis of Femicide in Ciudad Juárez: 1993–2007

Julia E. Monárrez Fragoso,<sup>a</sup> PhD

## Introduction

The murders of women in Ciudad Juárez, in the state of Chihuahua, Mexico, that have taken place since 1993 have been the subject of discussion and a paradigm of violence against women in both the national and international spheres. Notwithstanding, there is a descriptive generalization of memory taking place when it is said that some 400 young women, ranging in age from 16 to 24, mainly immigrants, often black, primarily students at commercial schools or computing centers or workers in free trade zones, have been mutilated, tortured, and raped, their bodies left abandoned in the desert surrounding the town. This generalization hinders making visible other representations of femicide and elaborating a feminist policy that focuses on opposition strategies vis-à-vis the murder of women in all its forms.

Along the same lines, starting this year, each and every one of the crimes committed against girls and/or women is being defined as femicide. This description is inexact. While it is true that all lethal violence culminating in the death of a girl or woman, and perpetrated by a man, constitutes femicide insofar as the victim is a woman, it is necessary to point out that there are killings of women that cannot be considered femicides. "When the gender of the feminine figure of a victim is irrelevant, we are dealing with a non-femicide murder.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, in such cases, from the feminist standpoint, the word "murder" is used, which is neutral, and not the juridical term "homicide," which refers to the killing of a man.

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From that position, an analysis of the murder of women requires analysis through the paradigm of feminicide. At the same time, it is necessary to consider other kinds of murder perpetrated against girls and women based on types of violence that occur in the community that are not directed at women specifically because they are women, but have irrevocable consequences for them.

This study has two main objectives: to present a sociodemographic characterization of the girls and women who have been killed, and to classify the incidents that have taken place during the 1993–2007 period from the perspective of feminist theory. This analysis of the murders of women had for its foundation the Feminicide Database 1993–2007 at the Colegio de la Frontera Norte.<sup>b</sup> The causes and motives of the victimizers for murdering their victims were taken into account, as were any family relationships between them, in order to be able to classify the different types of murders.

## Methodology

The aforementioned database contained information for 494 victims. It was created using the definition of feminicide as “the misogynous murder of women by men”<sup>9</sup> and the five factors that characterize it: motives, victimizers, violent acts, structural changes in society, and tolerance by the State and other institutions.<sup>10</sup>

The analysis highlighted attacks on girls and women whose ages ranged from 10 to 29 years, with 260 cases representing 52.60% of the total of 494 cases. There were an additional 96 cases (19.40%) of women in the 30- to 39-year age bracket. Thus, the average age of the victims was 26.1 years.

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<sup>b</sup> This database was created using information from the following sources: list of murdered women (1993–1998), research of newspaper stories carried out by the Gender Studies Group at Ciudad Juárez Autonomous University, the Independent Chihuahua Human Rights Committee, and the Ciudad Juárez Ocho de Marzo Women’s Group.<sup>2</sup> Other sources to which I had access and that contained evidence regarding murders of women for the period studied were two reports, the first by the deputy prosecutor of the Ministry of Justice, Northern Zone,<sup>3</sup> and the second by the Office of the State Prosecutor General. It is worth noting that these reports were the obligated output resulting from the pressure exercised on the authorities by organized women’s groups to force them to solve cases and put a halt to the feminicide. Starting in 1998, a daily review of the two local papers has taken place (Norte and Diario de Juárez). I also gathered information based on the list of murdered women that appeared in the book *El Silencio que la voz de Todas Quiebra*.<sup>4</sup> In July of 1993, I compared the list to the Chihuahua Women’s Institute audit of newspaper stories on the murders.<sup>5</sup> I also reviewed the 2003 special report by the National Human Rights Commission on Cases of Homicides and Disappearances of Women in the Municipality of Ciudad Juárez.<sup>6</sup> In June of 2005, the journalist Diana Washington Valdez published the book *Cosecha de Mujeres: Safari en el Desierto Mexicano*, in which she included a list of the women murdered or who disappeared.<sup>7</sup> Finally, I studied the three reports and final report of the Special Prosecutor for Crimes Related to the Homicide of Women in the Municipality of Juárez, put forth by the Office of the Federal Prosecutor.<sup>8</sup>

## Findings

With regard to economic activity or profession outside the home at the time of their deaths, information was available for 187 cases. Fifty-seven (11.50%) of the women killed were employed (it is specified that four were secretaries, ten worked and studied, and ten were domestic servants). Another 47 (9.50%) worked in free trade zones (*maquilas*). Other professions accounted for 8.30% of the women: 14 were dancers; four were barroom waitresses; and six worked taverns, but the capacities in which they worked were not specified. Another 17 were described as sex workers. Eleven were merchants, and 9 owned their own small businesses, the latter of the two categories (20 cases) accounting for 4%. Professionals included four teachers, a model, a journalist, a nutritionist, two doctors, a lawyer, and a public accountant (2.20% altogether). The variety of occupations showed that most of those killed were employees, workers at free trade zones, sex workers, and dancers. Thus, it can be said that violence against women is also related to their condition of poverty, which tends to make them even more vulnerable. Fifty-one of the women killed were housewives (10.30%). Thirty-five (7.10%) were minors (between the ages of 0 and 17). In 162 cases (33%), the ages of the women were not known.

It was possible to ascertain the civil status of the victims in 306 cases. The murder of girls younger than 17 years of age stands out (128 cases, or 26%). Unmarried, divorced, and separated women and widows, together, accounted for 60 cases (12%). There were 118 cases (24%) of married women or those in an ongoing relationship with a partner. As these data show, not only young and unmarried women are killed.

The different types of murders of women show two worrisome patterns: those related to intimate feminicide and those related to systemic sexual feminicide (see Table 1). The first of these refers to women who were killed by men who were close to them (112 victims). This category also includes two subcategories: child feminicide (24 cases) and family feminicide (14 cases). Taken together, these add up to 150 cases.

The second group, systemic sexual feminicide, reflects sexual murders, also known as serial killings (115 cases), in which there were systematic and concerted patterns on the part of the murderers that included kidnapping, sexual violence, torture, and the murder of children and women, whereupon their bodies were abandoned in desert areas, empty lots, sewage ditches, or garbage dumps, to mention but a few scenes of these sexual transgressions. Here, the total defeat of the female body was exhibited, including its scarce or nonexistent value vis-à-vis a State that cares little for imparting justice. There was another type of sexual murder (42 cases) for which no systemic and concerted pattern was apparent. Notwithstanding, the violence exercised on the bodies of the victims by persons they may or may not have known indicated extreme sexual abuse. In total, there were 157 cases of intimate feminicide and systemic sexual feminicide.

Not less worrisome was the feminicide of women in stigmatized professions, meaning those who worked as prostitutes and in bars, or performed as dancers (28 cases).

These three expressions of gender violence and murder of girls and women because they were women made up 67.90% of the murders in Ciudad Juárez between 1993 and 2007.

Organized crime and drug traffickers were responsible for 45 of the killings, or 9.10% of the total of girls and women killed.<sup>c</sup> Community violence accounted for another 62 crimes, or 12.60% of the deaths.

There were not enough elements extant regarding murders classified under “negligence,” without further specification, to venture a precise evaluation.

## Conclusions

The total of 494 girls and women killed in Ciudad Juárez between 1993 and 2007 represents a serious phenomenon of gender violence: these persons were killed because they were female. The remaining murders, those that were not classified as feminicides, were cases in which there was not sufficient information to categorically state that gender violence was not involved. However, they are still a matter of concern, as they demonstrate breaking with the rule of law and the norms of social coexistence, and reflect a high degree of impunity.<sup>d</sup>

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<sup>c</sup> It should be emphasized that in this category, not all the girls and women who were killed belonged to groups of drug traffickers or were involved in organized crime. A large proportion of those killed were circumstantial victims of the violence that took place among members of these organizations.

<sup>d</sup> For data cut at May 23, 2006, State Prosecutor Patricia González Rodríguez reported that of the 386 recorded cases [of homicide against women from January 21, 1993, to May 23, 2006], 185 (47%) were solved, and final sentences were handed down against the perpetrators of the crimes; 15 were homicides followed by suicide (in which the murderer killed himself after committing the crime); and 16 were solved in the juvenile courts. Another 65 cases are being tried before a judge, 124 are under investigation, and another 12 have been sent to the Office of the Federal Prosecutor.<sup>11</sup>

**Table 1. Types of femicide and murders of girls and women in Ciudad Juárez, 1993–2007.**

Type of femicide	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	Total cases	%
Intimate femicide <sup>a</sup>	8	5	7	7	10	8	7	13	10	16	16	5	14	11	13	150	30.40
Systemic sexual femicide <sup>b</sup>	9	7	20	22	17	17	7	9	15	6	7	6	8	2	5	157	31.80
Femicide by exposure to stigmatized professions <sup>c</sup>	3	2	3	3	0	2	4	0	3	1	0	2	2	1	2	28	5.70
<b>Murders</b>																	
Organized crime and drug-trafficking	1	1	5	4	4	2	1	8	4	5	0	3	3	1	3	45	9.10
Community violence <sup>d</sup>	0	4	8	3	3	8	3	2	5	9	4	2	4	6	1	62	12.60
Negligence <sup>e</sup>	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	1	2	1	1	0	1	1	0	10	2.00
Unspecified	3	2	4	5	5	2	3	4	1	3	0	2	2	1	5	42	8.50
<b>Total per year</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>494</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Own elaboration. Femicide Database 1993–2007, Colegio de la Frontera Norte.

#### Notes

- a* This category includes child and family femicide.
- b* Includes the subdivisions “organized” and “not organized.”
- c* Encompasses women who work as waitresses in nightclubs, dancers, and prostitutes.
- d* This group includes death caused during a robbery or hold-up, fights, and juvenile violence.
- e* Insofar as can be determined based on the evidence available, these murders were not premeditated, although it is possible that this presumption was undermined as the judicial procedure took its course.

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# Honor-Related Crimes in Jordan

Rana Hussein

## Introduction

As an activist and a journalist, my interest in addressing so-called honor crimes began when I started my career at *The Jordan Times* in September 1993. I noticed that the local Arabic press was not reporting on cases of women who were murdered in the name of honor, or cases of women imprisoned without charge or trial as a form of protective custody. Since then, I have followed and documented every case brought to my attention, and in the absence of official statistics, have also kept an annual tally.

There are no recent data on the issue of honor crimes in Jordan, and most studies to date on violence against women in Jordan either lack depth or are not comprehensive. The last study was conducted in the late 1990s by a team of pathologists from the National Institute of Forensic Medicine. Furthermore, there is no database of national statistics on violence against women for researchers to reference. This is due to differing classification systems among Jordanian institutes; restricted access to information on cases of violence against women; and the absence of a single entity responsible for collecting, collating, and making such data accessible.

In the early 1990s, authorities were not cooperative in addressing these crimes. When a single activist launched a nationwide campaign, however, the government, the police, the judiciary, and other officials were forced to recognize the problem and begin releasing their own data.

## Methodology for collecting data on so-called honor crimes

I have relied on the following sources for data collection: court verdicts, forensic information, criminal prosecutors, interviews with families, surviving victims, and perpetrators, interviews with neighbors and shop owners, press clippings, tips from friends and others, and the police.

It is worth noting that the police resist cooperating only in these kinds of crimes. They consider honor crime a family matter, and choose to either not report it or make light of it; or report it, without elaborating on the circumstances, as they would do when reporting a regular homicide.

Despite increased global attention, the Arabic press still does not fully cover these crimes. An example is the recent case of a man killing his sister; although police are investigating the case, newspapers gave the crime only a brief mention. Another article explains that a court sentenced a father for killing his daughter for “family problems,” and then mentioned the names of the judges, leaving them exposed to defamation in the community.

### **Reasons women are killed in Jordan**

A woman may be killed in Jordan for a number of reasons including financial or inheritance claims, being a victim of rape or incest, becoming pregnant out of wedlock, engaging in an “illegitimate” or extra-marital affair, marrying a man against her family’s wishes, being seen talking to a man who is not a family member, running away from home, being caught in a brothel or mere rumors about or suspicion of any of the above.

From my experience and reporting, the most common perpetrators are, in order: brothers, fathers, sons, cousins or nephews, uncles, mothers, and sisters. The most common means of killing are: shooting with a gun, stabbing with a knife, switchblade or ax, burning, strangulation, electrocution, drowning, running over with a vehicle, hitting with a blunt or sharp object, forced suicide, and deaths deemed to be “accidental.”

Approximately 20 honor crimes occur in Jordan each year. 99% of these crimes target women. The following are statistics are based on my investigations of these crimes for the past 15 years: 4 crimes in 2008, 19 crimes in 2007, 17 crimes in 2006, 19 crimes in 2005, 20 crimes in 2004, 18 crimes in 2003, 22 crimes in 2002, 19 crimes in 2001, 21 crimes in 2000, 19 crimes in 1999, 23 crimes in 1998, and 25 crimes in 1997.

### **Galvanizing State action**

Reporting and activism, along with the involvement of women’s nongovernmental organizations, the government, the judiciary, the forensics department, and the royal family, have played a major role in raising awareness and improving services for women. In addition, the Jordanian Family Protection Project was implemented during the period 2000–2005. The project trained judges, criminal prosecutors, physicians, police, and others working in the field, helping raise their awareness of these crimes and change their attitudes. The press has also started changing its attitude toward these crimes, as seen in the increasing number of features, columns, and editorials that tackle the problem.

The government opened the first women's shelter (the Family Reconciliation Center), which works primarily to help abused women and their children. The judiciary is handling these crimes more seriously, and criminal prosecutors do a better job of investigating femicides. Some judges have started to pass harsher punishments on perpetrators of so-called honor crimes. Thus, the current situation for women has improved since I started reporting.

### **Recommendations**

The work to end femicide and so-called honor crimes should be comprehensive and interdisciplinary. Improved lobbying could change old laws that discriminate against women. The government and nongovernmental organizations should work together to improve their services to abused women. There should be continuous press coverage on these subjects, and religious figures and community leaders should address these crimes and condemn them.

The government should alter school curricula riddled with stereotypical images of women. New curricula and faculty should use proper language that does not discriminate against women, and appropriate rehabilitation and training should be provided for current and future teachers.

Lastly, the government should support a nationwide study to provide objective, comprehensive, and continuous information on honor crimes in Jordan.

### **Articles from the Jordan Times concerning so-called honour crimes**

*Legal experts call for amending Penal Code articles invoked in so-called honour crimes*

AMMAN - Legal experts have called on the government to amend articles that offer leniency to killers in so-called honour crimes after official statistics indicated that the number of such murders in 2007 were similar to 2006. "We have dealt with 16 cases of so-called honour crimes since the beginning of last year. There is another case still being investigated and there is a big chance that it could be related to family honour," Director of the National Institute of Forensic Medicine Momen Hadidi told The Jordan Times. The pathologist stressed that so-called honour crimes constitute an "endemic problem that we need to keep working on". In 2006, the number of reported murders related to family honour in the Kingdom stood at 17, according to officials.

Criminal Court Attorney General Yassin Abdullat, who is also following up on the cases and appeals all light sentences passed against such perpetrators, confirmed the figures. "The number we have so far is a clear indication that the government should amend Articles 97 and 98

of the Penal Code which offer leniency to perpetrators of these crimes,” Abdullat told The Jordan Times in a recent interview. The attorney general stressed that civil society needs to keep pressing for amendments to Articles 97 and 98, because most killers invoke the “fit of fury” clause to get a reduced sentence.

As it stands now, Article 98 stipulates that a person who commits a crime in a fit of fury caused by an unlawful act on the part of the victim, benefits from a reduction in penalty. This penalty reduction is stated in several clauses in Article 97 of the Penal Code. One clause states that if the original sentence for a killer is death or life imprisonment, and the court decides to invoke Article 98 because the crime was committed in a moment of rage, the sentence is reduced to a minimum of a one-year prison term.

If the original court sentence is less than life imprisonment, and the tribunal decides the murder was committed in a fit of fury and applies Article 98, judges can issue a sentence ranging from six months to two years. In almost all cases these verdicts are commuted to half if the victim’s family decides to drop charges against the defendant.

In July 2004, the Ministry of Justice submitted a draft proposal to the Legislative Bureau suggesting major amendments to the Penal Code, including tougher punishment for individuals who commit a crime in “a fit of fury”. The ministry suggested increasing penalties in the articles to a minimum of five years in prison and eliminating the clause that allows the family to drop charges against the defendant. In many reported verdicts, courts used Articles 98 and 97 to issue sentences ranging from three months to one year against men who killed their female relatives for reasons of family honour. Women’s rights activists confirmed that the Cabinet has endorsed amendments and that the two articles, among many others, are on the newly-elected Lower House’s agenda for debate.

Sentences passed by Criminal Court tribunals against honour crime perpetrators this year ranged from three months to 10 years in prison, depending on the circumstances of the individual case, according to Abdullat. There was one three-month sentence, three six-month sentences, two seven-and-a-half year prison terms, and three 10-year terms, the attorney general said. “I am going to appeal all the verdicts between seven years and three months, because I am convinced that there is no honour in any of these crimes,” Abdullat told The Jordan Times.

Many of the cases are murders committed against women who leave their homes, marry a man against their families’ wishes or for financial reasons, according to Abdullat. Of the 16 cases this year, 10 murders were committed by brothers, four by fathers, one by a husband and one by an in-law, Abdullat said. “I am certain that if the punishment for such crimes was tougher, the number of murders would drop to four or five annually, he added.

Hadidi agreed, but added that in addition to amending legislation, efforts should also be exerted towards changing society's attitudes towards these crimes. "We need to work on altering many social perceptions regarding perpetrators of these crimes. People need to understand that they are murderers, not heroes," he said.

*Rana Hussein, The Jordan Times, 4 January 2008*

#### *Man convicted of attempting to murder his sister*

AMMAN - The Criminal Court on Tuesday sentenced a 32-year-old man to three years and nine months in prison after convicting him of attempting to murder his married sister in the name of family honour. The court first handed the defendant a seven-year prison term for stabbing his 27-year-old sister nine times on February 20, 2008 after learning that she was pregnant out of wedlock. But the court immediately commuted the sentence to half because the victim dropped charges against her sibling.

A second man who was standing trial in the same case on charges of raping the victim was acquitted after it was established that it was "in fact an act of consensual sex between the two".

The court said the victim was having an affair with the second defendant and later was married to another man. Six months into her marriage, the victim became sick; a family member took her to the doctor and discovered that she was nine months pregnant and the family was alerted, the court verdict said.

"The authorities immediately placed the victim in prison to protect her from her family, but the defendant went to the governor and signed a JD5,000 guarantee that he would not harm his sister," the court said. When she returned home on the day of the incident, according to the court, her brother discussed the matter with her and she claimed she was raped by the first defendant.

"The defendant brought the victim a glass of water and asked her to recite verses from the Koran because he was going to kill her," the court said, adding that he then stabbed his sister nine times on her chest and stomach and she fainted. While stabbing her, the defendant shouted: "Die, die, I do not want you anymore," the verdict stated. Thinking that his sibling was dead, the defendant headed to the nearest police station and turned himself in, claiming to have killed his sister in the name of family honour, according to the verdict.

*Rana Hussein, The Jordan Times, 3 December 2008*

# Dowry Deaths (Bride Burnings) in India

Virendra Kumar, MD

## Introduction

Different forms of crimes against women have occurred since ancient times and have carried themselves forward to contemporary times. The humiliation, harassment, torture, and exploitation of women are as old as the history of family life. The nature and extent of these crimes may be regarded as a barometer of social health. In India, the implementation of laws granting rights to women has been slow and haphazard, leaving women far behind men socially, economically, and politically. They are discriminated against at work and denied their due rights and privileges in every field.

Dowry is defined in the Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961 as “any property or valuable security given or agreed to be given either directly or indirectly by one party to a marriage to the other party to the marriage; or by parents of either party to a marriage or by any other person to either party to the marriage or to any other person, at or before or after the marriage.”

Dowry-related bride burning is a major concern in India, as it has become pervasive throughout all social strata and geographical areas. The bestowing of dowries is an ancient tradition. When the dowry demands are not met, some husbands and in-laws either kill the bride by burning, or render significant mental and physical harassment on her in an effort to encourage her family to fulfill their dowry obligations. Desperately seeking an escape from the brutality of their situation, sometimes these young women choose suicide. The sudden death of a woman soon after marriage always arouses suspicion as to whether it was natural or unnatural. Unnatural deaths can be homicides, suicides, or accidental in nature. Any suspicious death of a married woman within seven years of her marriage is considered to be a case of dowry death unless proved otherwise by the defendants as per Indian penal code.

In descending order, the most common methods used in female victim homicide or suicide are burning (bride burning), poisoning, hanging, strangulation, and head injury.

While incidence is clearly high, it is difficult to give an exact figure on dowry death at a national level. Extrapolating old data from 1989 suggests 600–750 homicide deaths per year. In 2002, Dr. B. R. Sharma and others reported that an estimated 25,000 brides are killed or maimed worldwide every year over dowry disputes,<sup>1</sup> while Rugene and Basu reported about 15,000 homicide deaths of women over dowry disputes in India every year.<sup>2</sup> The National Crime Records Bureau of India reported 7,618 dowry death cases in 2006.

### **Methodology for collecting data on dowry-related bride burnings**

Various data are collected from:

1. Interviewing the husbands and in-laws, the parents, neighbors, and friends associated with the victim. Also interviewed are police constables accompanying the cases.
2. Police inquest reports and other police papers sent with the body.
3. First information reports.
4. Autopsy examination.

These methods are used to collect the different data pertaining to the case, so as to provide information on the following aspects of the case:

- I. Epidemiological features of host or burn victim:
  - A. Age
  - B. Educational background
  - C. Occupational status
  - D. Socioeconomic status
  - E. Religion
  - F. Personal history: whether intoxicated, epileptic, insane, deluded, depressed, etc.
  - G. Marital history:
    1. Type (love marriage or arranged marriage)
    2. Date, month, and year of marriage
    3. Age at marriage
    4. Starting date of conjugal life
  - H. Family history:
    1. Whether joint or nuclear family
    2. Number of children
    3. Number of persons in the family

- II. The agent or the source of the fire involved, such as:
  - A. Match stick
  - B. Wood cooking stove
  - C. Kerosene lamp or stove
  - D. Gas cooking stove
  - E. Coal cooking stove
- III. Circumstantial data, such as:
  - A. Place of occurrence
    - 1. Closed space, like a kitchen, living room, or store room
    - 2. Open space, like a verandah, roof, portico, field, etc.
  - B. Season, month, and time of the incident
  - C. Rescue measures
    - 1. Whether attempted or not
    - 2. If yes, by whom
  - D. Place of death
    - 1. On the spot
    - 2. On the way to the hospital
    - 3. In the hospital
    - 4. After discharge from the hospital (at house or any other place)
- IV. Nature of injuries
  - A. Burn injury
    - 1. Size of the burned area
    - 2. Injury site on the body
    - 3. Whether antemortem or postmortem burn
    - 4. Fatal period
    - 5. External postmortem findings, such as kerosene oil smell, singed hairs, sooty blackening on body surface, pugilistic attitude, heat fractures
    - 6. Internal changes at autopsy, like the presence of soot in the respiratory tract or stomach, generalized congestion or pallor of the viscera, curling's ulcers, state of the uterus
  - B. Other associated injuries
- V. Medico-legal aspects:
  - A. Manner of burn
    - 1. Homicide
    - 2. Suicide
    - 3. Accidental
  - B. Motives in suicide and homicide cases
  - C. Information to parents
  - D. Information to police (from husband, in-laws, parents, neighbors, etc.)
- VI. Methods for evaluating the nature of the death:
  - A. Exclusion method (used especially in homicide cases)
  - B. Inclusion method (positive approach utilizing conflicting statements by in-laws, in-laws' movement and attitudes, presence of other associated injuries, dying declarations, etc.)



The data regarding cases collected by the above methods are compiled and treated on standard proformas and analyzed statistically.

Advantages of the methodology:

1. First-hand information at autopsy
2. Relatives, parents, or neighbors usually accompany the body and can be interviewed
3. Police also provide certain information
4. The attitudes, behavior, and sometimes the body language of in-laws becomes helpful in the determination of the nature and manner of death
5. Autopsy examination itself gives certain clues regarding the nature of the death

Disadvantages of the methodology:

1. In-laws often try to conceal the facts and attribute the death to suicide or accident
2. Parents sometimes are not available during autopsy
3. At times, parents also do not tell the truth in order to avoid any legal implications
4. Police are sometimes bribed by in-laws to report the story as an accident
5. Sometimes even at the autopsy, it is difficult to know the nature of the death

The author studied 152 fatal cases of married female burn deaths drawn from the medico-legal autopsies held in the Department of Forensic Medicine of the Institute of Medical Sciences of Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi. The cases were taken randomly from a total of 270 married female burn deaths autopsied during the period from June 13, 1987, to March 2, 1989. The cases autopsied were studied, and the following inferences were drawn.

## Findings

Married females constituted 82.31% of total burn deaths. Of these, 46.05% were accidental, 30.92% were homicides, and 21.05% were suicides. 85.47% of married female burn deaths occurred before 35 years of age. Homicide victims (48.93% of total) tended to be younger (16–20 years), while suicide and accidental burn deaths (40.62% and 27.14% respectively) occurred at a slightly older age (21–25 years).

Most of the cases (73.02%) came from rural areas; only 21.71% came from the city, and only 5.26% belonged to suburban communities. Almost all the burn victims (96.05%) were either illiterate (53.28%) or poorly literate, that is, educated only up to the high school level (41.76%). Almost all the victims were housewives by occupation (96.71%).

A majority of the victims (76.31%) came from joint families as compared to nuclear families (23.68%). Most also had arranged marriages (92.76%), and almost half of the incidents occurred within the first five years of marriage (48.68%). More than half of the homicide (53.19%) and suicide (53.12%) victims died before having had any children. During pregnancy, suicide (15.62%) and accidental (12.85%) deaths were more frequent than homicide deaths (4.25%).

Burn injuries were sustained most frequently in the kitchen (45.39%), followed by the living room (17.76%), and the kitchen-cum-living room (14.47%). 17.10% of victims received their burns in an open space. Burnings were more frequent in the evening hours (32.23%) or in the morning hours (29.60%). The midday rate was 23.34%, and the nighttime rate was only 13.80%.

Most victims (83.55%) received some kind of rescue assistance, either from their in-laws (31.57%), husbands (27.63%), or neighbors (19.73%). Most frequently, only victims sustained burn injuries (80.26%). 9.21% of husbands also sustained burn injuries, primarily during rescue attempts. In-laws sustained burns during rescue attempts in 7.89% of cases. Reportedly, parents were informed in 80.89% of the cases of the burning of married females, while in the rest of the cases (16.44%), parents were not informed until the autopsies were done. In a majority of the cases (59.86%), a medical officer was the first person to inform the police of the incident, followed by neighbors (6.57%), in-laws (9.21%), husband (7.23%), and parents (6.57%).

Frequently, homicide (34.04%) and suicide (25%) victims died instantaneously, or within 24 hours (40.42% and 46.87% respectively); whereas, the majority of accident victims survived for more than one day (67.14%). All suicide (100%) and most homicide (95.74%) cases had burns covering more than 50% of their bodies, while many accident (28.57%) victims had burns covering less than 50% of their bodies. 100% burns were more frequent in homicide cases (44.68%) than in suicide (31.25%) or accident (4.28%) cases. In 3.94% of victims, both antemortem and postmortem burns were found. Other associated injuries were seen in 17.10% of cases, all of which were homicides. Carbon soot in the respiratory tract was detected in 17.10% of cases, generalized congestion of the viscera in 73.68%, and generalized pallor in 25.64% of cases. Hairs were singed in 67.10% of cases, and sooty blackening occurred in 56.57% of cases. Pugilistic attitude was found in 15.78% of cases, heat rapture in 15.15%, and heat fracture in 1.31% of cases. In 65.98% of cases, the cause of death was shock, while 30.92% victims died of septicaemia. In four cases, there was head injury contributing to the burn shock.

## Conclusions

The problem of bride burning is frequent in India's low and lower-middle economic classes. Many of the victims are in the early periods of marriage,

and newly married females are more vulnerable to accidental burn as they may take time to acclimate to their new place in the home of their in-laws. Usually the dowry problem, and hence bride burning, exists in joint families and arranged marriage situations. Though this author only found a few cases of literate women victims, literacy has little to do with these injuries, since female literacy in India as a whole is low. Unfortunately, the issue of dowry, which results in bride burning, is becoming increasingly problematic in spite of current legislation.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations can be made:

1. An effective surveillance system should be implemented to record statistics on the deaths of married women, including:
  - Reliable estimates of dowry deaths, collected and collated from data from the various sources mentioned above, at both regional and national levels.
  - Tools for distinguishing between accidents, suicides, and homicides.
  - One central agency given responsibility for all surveillance work (e.g., the National Commission for Women in India).
2. Organizations in other countries should also be appointed to issue quarterly reports on the subject. These reports should highlight the magnitude of the problem, geographical distribution, ethnic/caste/religion distribution, age/education/occupation, manner of death, and the cost (both direct and indirect) of mortality and morbidity. This report can be utilized for advocacy at state, regional, and national levels, targeting policymakers.
3. Cinema actors have considerable influence in India, so they should be targeted as channels of change for the public.
4. Education for women should be increased, to encourage economic and emotional independence.
5. Existing laws should be properly enforced, and new, stricter legislation passed to abolish dowry-related crimes.
6. Voluntary associations should be established to decrease the importance of dowries in general.

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# Femicide in Chile<sup>a</sup>

Soledad Rojas Bravo

## Introduction

In Chile, the term *femicide* is currently used for cases in which women are murdered by males previously unknown to them, who raped and killed them, as well as for murders perpetrated by male partners, boyfriends, pimps, or former lovers. The recent visibility of these crimes is a result of sustained actions undertaken by the feminist movement and women in general to identify and publicize the violations of women's human rights. The significant number of women assassinated during the years 2006 and 2007, and the coverage provided by the media, which used the word "femicide" to describe these events, has served to propagate the familiar use of the term.

Cases of femicide were first documented by the Chilean Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence,<sup>b</sup> in the framework of the regional campaign entitled "Por la vida de las mujeres: Ni una muerta mas" (For the life of women: Not one death more).<sup>c</sup> Women's organizations sought to classify these deaths by following up on information that had appeared in the press regarding the murders of women by men, as no official records were kept.

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<sup>a</sup> Summary of a presentation at the workshop entitled "Strengthening Understanding of Femicide: Using Research to Galvanize Action and Accountability," Washington, DC; April 14–16, 2008.

<sup>b</sup> The Chilean Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence is an umbrella organization that brings together civil society and nongovernmental organizations that promote public campaigns to denounce violence against women from a perspective of human rights violations. It puts forth proposals and demands state policies geared toward the eradication of the violence, in compliance with the international treaties, conventions, and agreements to which Chile is signatory. The network was established in 1990 (for more information, see [www.nomasviolencia-contramujeres.cl](http://www.nomasviolencia-contramujeres.cl)).

<sup>c</sup> The triannual campaign that began in 2001 and has been furthered by the Latin American and Caribbean Feminist Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence. The campaign gave rise to research on femicide in several countries in the region, including Argentina (2002), Bolivia (2003), Costa Rica (2000), the Dominican Republic (2002), Mexico (2002), and Peru (2002).

A 2004 study on femicide in Chile focused on the review and analysis of the administrative records and femicide registries for the years 2001 and 2002 kept by institutions which, by virtue of their competencies, are charged with keeping track of femicides.<sup>1</sup> This study concluded that, at the time, official records were inadequate and insufficient *to create an information bank that reflects the real magnitude of femicide in Chile*. The lack of statistical information regarding the sex of murder victims and their link to the perpetrators makes it unfeasible to establish with certainty that a woman has been murdered for reasons related to gender.

This study was based on feminist theory that highlights the killing of women as an extreme outcome of the continuum of violence against women reflecting male power and control over their bodies and lives.<sup>2,3</sup>

## Methodology

### Definitions of femicide

The category “femicide” encompasses the relationship between the murdered woman and her murderer, the differential status of power between them, and the context of and motives for the crime as key factors for identifying it as such. The definition allows for establishing connections between the different types of violence, which in a systematic continuum, affect the lives of women and reveal the existing tolerance vis-à-vis this type of crime on the part of the State and other institutions. Any form of gender violence that ends in the death of a woman or a girl is a femicide.

The operational concepts used in this study are “intimate femicide,” “non-intimate femicide,” and “femicide by connection,” according to the relational space of the murdered woman/victim with the murderer/victimizer.<sup>4</sup>

In order to identify cases of femicide, judicial files on the homicide of women were examined in the courts of the Santiago metropolitan area. This was only possible through the autopsy records kept by the Servicio Médico Legal (Legal Medical Service).<sup>d</sup> These records contain the necessary judicial information (court and legal case numbers) of deaths caused by violence, classified by forensic experts as “aggression.”<sup>e</sup> In addition, corresponding files on deaths of women classified as “external events

<sup>d</sup> The Case Entry Books carried by criminal courts provide no information on victims’ sex. Given the impossibility of reviewing all judicial files on homicides in order to identify those pertaining to women, this information was requested from the Legal Medical Service, as all victims are autopsied per judicial order, and autopsy records indicate victims’ sex.

<sup>e</sup> The classification of detailed causes of death in Chile—both vital statistics regarding deaths and statistics on autopsies—are carried out using the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Health-Related Problems, CIE Review 10, proposed by the World Health Organization. The tenth version of this document has been in use in Chile since 1997.

of undetermined intent” were examined. The review had for its purpose to establish if under that forensic conclusion, underreported homicides could be found. Ten cases were examined, until a file was found regarding a woman’s death by homicide.

The loss of information and the underreporting detected at the various institutions responsible for police, judicial, and medical procedures in cases of murdered women *do not allow for recognizing features of femicide*. Key data needed to identify these crimes, such as the relationship between the murdered women and their victimizers, the circumstances under which the crimes took place, and possible motives, are not considered relevant by the institutions and the staff involved in the processes. Usually the motives for these crimes are reported as having to do with “passion,” or emotional problems related to sex, pathological jealousy, and infidelity, among other reasons.

The review of these and the review of press information related to the murders of women during the years 2001 and 2002, facilitated the identification of femicide cases and the characteristics of this crime, establishing that at least 50% of women murdered were victims of femicide.

The invisibility of the phenomenon is a reflection of the restricted interpretation of what constitutes violence against women, which effectively hinders establishment of the continuum and connections between its different manifestations and their extreme outcome, namely femicide.

This lack of understanding regarding violence against women results in the absence of unified and complete information. The fact that no national records on violence against women are kept makes it impossible to quantify its occurrence; and therefore, it becomes more difficult to formulate programs leading to crime prevention, treatment, and reparation for those affected; access to justice; and the promotion of cultural changes necessary to eradicate the patterns of discrimination and subordination that underlie this particular type of violence, which leads to the deaths of so many women.

The main existing records on violence against women refer to “intrafamily violence,” based on police records of accusations and judicial procedures in civil courts. These statistics and records lack information on the sex of the victims and their relationships with the aggressors. Further, they do not record recidivism in cases where the offense has occurred more than once. Judicial records on crimes of injury, rape, and homicide heard in criminal courts are subject to the same weaknesses, and do not allow for establishing when these crimes were committed by family members. Therefore, the magnitude of violence against women is unknown.

## Galvanizing State action

The State has dealt with violence against women as a violation of human rights in a partial and fragmented manner. In the area of health, violence against women has considered to be a mental health problem to be handled via primary health care centers and programs or short-term psychological support and legal guidance from the National Service for Women (SERNAM).

In the legislative sphere, there have been partial reforms to the Sexual Crimes Law (1998), and a new Law on Intrafamily Violence went into effect in 2005 that modifies the 1994 law. While this modification corrects the classification of intrafamily violence as a misdemeanor, and typifies the crime of “habitual mistreatment,” this still must be declared to be the case by a family court before it can be introduced to the criminal system. This represents an additional obstacle for women seeking justice. The main achievement of this law in relation to the earlier legislation is that it obligates family and criminal courts to provide protective measures for victims. Starting in 2006, the State began to set up shelters for women whose lives were at risk. However, women are only allowed to access these upon direct intervention by the Office of the State Prosecutor, which again hampers access to protection for women whose lives are in danger.

The absence of penalties for sexual harassment, the lack of police investigations into the trafficking of women for purposes of sexual exploitation, the invisibility of sexual violence against women as gender-based violence, and the nonexistence of regulatory ethical frameworks concerning sexist violence, among other aspects, constitute further evidence of partiality in state policies and the failure to address a phenomenon that at its most extreme ends in femicide.

This study concludes with a number of recommendations to the State that call for an all-encompassing approach to violence against women and femicide in different areas. To begin with, it recommends the design and implementation of a national policy governing the various state agencies with competencies in this matter, leading to a comprehensive approach to prevention, treatment, and reparation for those affected by gender-based violence, understood as a specific type of violence resulting from patterns of discrimination against and subordination of women.

Considering the importance of information and recordkeeping for defining public policies and programs, the study proposes the following:

- Set up a centralized information system on violence against women and femicide at the Ministry of the Interior (Internal Affairs).
- Publish statistics on citizen security, broken down by the sex of the victims.

- Introduce modifications to the recordkeeping system at the Public Ministry (Office of the Attorney General) with regard to homicides, injury, and rape so that records provide reliable and timely information.
- Include the sex of the victims and their relationships to the aggressors in all records and files pertaining to homicide cases. Records kept on homicides should include the motives for the crime.
- Instruct and train officials on the mandatory and comprehensive completion of the pertinent forms.
- Introduce changes to the police and judicial recordkeeping and filing systems that allow for linking of information on the accusations brought forth, investigations conducted, and trials held in cases of intrafamily violence, injury, rape, and femicide, broken down by the sex of the victims and their relationships with the aggressors.
- Ensure public access to this information.

This study was a benchmark effort, as it contributed to making this brutal violation of women's rights more visible. The public presentation of the results generated a significant impact through the media. When the term femicide began to be used, state organizations reacted. A new Intrafamily Violence Law was passed, which included among its modifications, the obligation to include indicators for evaluating whether women who bring forth accusations of intrafamily violence are at risk for further violence or if their lives are in danger.

In 2006, the Police Directorate of Family Protection, a division of the Chilean police; the Citizen Safety Division of the Ministry of the Interior; and the Chilean Network against Domestic and Sexual Violence proposed a list of indicators of risk for gender-based violence, with the purpose of introducing changes to the police forms for reporting intrafamily violence, to increase early detection of situations in which women are at risk and to activate protection mechanisms for potential victims. This process concluded with the nationwide introduction of the new police form for reports of intrafamily violence.

During that same year, Chilean Police began strengthening the collection and accuracy of statistics on femicides in the country. In data presented at a National Seminar on Intrafamily Violence,<sup>f</sup> held by the police in May 2007, a reported 51 women were murdered by male partners in 2006 in the context of intrafamily violence, and were classified as femicides. This number does not include deaths of women at the hands of men they did not previously know and who raped, then killed them.

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<sup>f</sup> Chilean Police, Directorate of Police Protection to Families. Femicide in Chile. Santiago, Chile; May 2007.



In July 2007, the Chilean Network against Domestic and Sexual Violence began a tri-annual campaign aimed at making the connections between the different types of violence against women and femicide, and the context in which it exists more visible. Women's organizations throughout the country put up signs with the warning slogan, "CUIDADO" EL MACHISMO MATA!" (CAREFUL! MACHISMO KILLS!), and simultaneously installed a memorial for the 2001–2007 victims of femicide in Chile, symbolized by more than 300 pairs of shoes, and the victims' names, ages, and relationships to their victimizers.<sup>9</sup>

In this context of higher visibility and public attention to femicide, in 2007, the country learned of the brutality and cruelty with which women are killed by men whom they presumably trusted, or by unknown men who raped and subsequently murdered them. The public commotion generated by media exposure of these crimes and the obvious partiality reflected in the categories in the Law on Intrafamily Violence used to describe different situations in which women are murdered, led to parliamentary proposals to include the relationship between victims and men they are dating as a legally recognized category. During this period, a group of parliamentarians also drew up a bill aimed at classifying femicide as a subcategory of parricide, with the stiffest sentences allowable, and juridical recognition of this crime as one directed specifically at women for gender-related reasons. However, one year after the bill was introduced in Congress, and after the first wave of outrage following increased public awareness around femicide subsided, the bill lies dormant.

## Conclusions

The Femicide in Chile Study, together with the sustained actions of the women's movement, accelerated the arrival of a new concept, femicide, which facilitates the identification of men who murder women for the simple reason that they are women. However, this greater public visibility is still precarious and likely to remain so until a better understanding is achieved on the different ways in which women die as a result of the exercise of masculine power and control over their bodies and their lives.

The political understanding of femicide recasts violence against women as a public human rights issue that concerns the entire society. Likewise, it underscores the State's obligation to take effective and timely measures intended to deter those crimes and to promote cultural change by means of policies and programs intended to transform social relations between men and women, while guaranteeing the rights of women to autonomy, integrity, and life.

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<sup>9</sup> Number based on newspaper reports, as there are no official statistics.

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# Annex A. Meeting Agenda

**Monday, April 14<sup>th</sup> Panel discussion on Femicide: What is it and why isn't anyone talking about it?**  
**International Student House, 1825 R Street NW, Washington, DC**

## **Welcome and introduction**

Dr. Mary Ellsberg, Senior Advisor, Gender, Violence and Human Rights, PATH

Charlotte Feldman-Jacobs, Interagency Gender Working Group

## **Brief history of the concept of femicide**

Diana Russell, noted author of *Femicide in Global Perspective* and *Femicide: The Politics of Woman Killing*

## **Panel 1 Current knowledge on femicide: what we know about its nature and prevalence**

Moderator: Dr. Mary Ellsberg

### Panelists:

1. Shanaaz Mathews (Medical Research Council, South Africa, co-author and researcher of *Every Six Hours a Woman is Killed by Her Intimate Partner: A National Study of Female Homicide in South Africa*)
2. Ana Carcedo (CEFEMINA [Feminist Center for Research and Action], Costa Rica, co-author and researcher of *Regional Investigation of Femicide in Central America*)
3. Dr. Glendene Lemard (University of Massachusetts, School of Public Health and Health Sciences, principal researcher for a study of homicides in Jamaica)
4. Dr. Jacquelyn Campbell (The Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing, co-author and researcher of *Risk Factors for Femicide in Abusive Relationships: Results from a Multisite Case Control Study, Abuse During Pregnancy and Femicide* and other studies)

**Panel 2 Filling in gaps in understanding the nature of femicide: strengthening information and advocacy**

Moderator: Dr. Martin Daly (Professor of Psychology, McMaster University, co-researcher and author of studies on femicide and uxoricide in Canada)

Panelists:

1. Dr. Julia Monárrez Fragoso (sociologist, researcher on gender and violence, and author of *Feminicidio Sexual Serial en Ciudad Juárez*)
2. Dr. Russell Dobash (Professor of Criminology, School of Law, University of Manchester, co-researcher of the Murder in Britain and Violent Men Studies in the United Kingdom)
3. Dr. Virendra Kumar (Aarupadai Veedu Medical College, India, author of *Burnt Wives: A Study of Homicides* and other studies on bride burning and dowry-related femicides)
4. Rana Hussein (award-winning journalist for *The Jordan Times* and advocate on so-called honor crimes)

Ending comments: Dr. Rebecca Dobash (Professor of Social Research, University of Manchester, Adjunct Professor, Arizona State University)

**TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP MEETING  
PATH, 1800 K Street NW, Suite 800, Washington, DC**

**Monday, April 14<sup>th</sup>**

- |              |  |
|--------------|--|
| 1:00–2:00 pm | Lunch at PATH offices  |
| 2:00–2:15 pm | Presentation of the agenda, objectives, and methods to be used during the two-day meeting, and expected final outcome (Monique Widyono)  |
| 2:15–4:00 pm | <p>Presentations by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dr. Margo Wilson (Professor of Psychology, McMaster University, and co-researcher on studies on uxoricide in Canada) on spousal homicide and uxoricide risk</li><li>• Soledad Rojas (Chilean Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence, co-researcher and author of <i>Femicide in Chile</i>) on femicide in Chile</li><li>• María Jesús (Susi) Pola (Profamilia, Dominican Republic, co-researcher and author of <i>Feminicidio en la República Dominicana</i>) on femicide in the Dominican Republic</li></ul> |

- Giovana Lemus (Guatemalan Women's Group) on femicide in Guatemala
- Dr. Patricia Ravelo Blancas (Sociologist, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México) on documentation of action around gender-based/sexual violence in Chihuahua, Mexico

Questions and comments and coffee break

- |              |  |
|--------------|--|
| 4:00–4:15 pm | Presentation of background paper and matrix with an overview of research on femicide (Monique Widyono)   |
| 4:15–5:30 pm | <p>Plenary group discussion to identify major issues, themes, and areas around which a framework/research agenda for strengthening data on femicide might be developed. This might include, among other areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conceptualizing femicide, including definitions</li> <li>• Methods for measurement and sources of information</li> <li>• Patterns of femicide</li> <li>• Assessing risk</li> <li>• Ethical issues around research on femicide</li> </ul> <p>(moderated by Dr. Naeema Abrahams)</p> |

## **Tuesday, April 15<sup>th</sup>**

- |                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| 8:30–9:00 am      | Light breakfast  |
| 9:00–10:45 am     | Plenary discussion about the proposed areas identified on Monday afternoon, highlighting gaps and challenges in strengthening understanding of the nature and prevalence/incidence of femicide |
| 10:45–11:00 am    | Coffee break   |
| 11:00 am–12:30 pm | Small group discussions outlining specific suggestions and recommendations for strengthening understanding on femicide   |
| 12:30–1:30 pm     | Lunch  |
| 1:30–3:15 pm      | Continued small group sessions   |
| 3:15–3:30 pm      | Coffee break   |
| 3:30–5:30 pm      | Plenary discussion on suggestions and recommendations (moderated by Dr. Margarita Quintanilla)   |

**Wednesday, April 16<sup>th</sup>**

8:30–9:00 am	Light breakfast
9:00–10:45 am	Discussion about proposed recommendations and suggestions for moving forward with strengthening understanding on femicide (moderated by Dr. Mary Ellsberg)
10:45–11:00 am	Coffee break
11:00 am–12:30 pm	Final discussion and recommendations (moderated by Dr. Mary Ellsberg)
12:30 pm	Close

## Annex B. List and Biographies of Participants

**Dr. Naeema Abrahams** is the deputy director of the Gender and Health Research Unit of the South African Medical Research Council. Her research interests include stigma as a factor in the use of sexual assault services and risk factors for male perpetration of violence. She coordinated a national femicide study in South Africa and has raised awareness on the role of guns in violence against women. Dr. Abrahams is a faculty member of Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing. She was a consultant on the WHO study on violence against women, and collaborated on development of a handbook on best practices of inter-personal violence interventions. She chairs the South African Gender-based Violence and Health Initiative.

**Ana Carcedo** is a Costa Rican feminist, activist, and academic. She is the president of CEFEMINA (Feminist Center for Research and Action), a professor of women's studies, and a researcher on violence against women. She is also the co-author and co-investigator for the study *Femicide in Costa Rica 1990–1999*, and is coordinating a forthcoming regional study on femicide in Central America, which will cover Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama.

**Dr. Patricia Ravelo Blancas** received her PhD in sociology from the National Autonomous University of Mexico, with a specialization in women's studies from El Colegio de México. She is a research professor at the Center for Research and Graduate Studies in Social Anthropology, and a visiting professor at the Program for Chicano Studies at the University of Texas in El Paso. She has conducted research on sexual and gender-based violence, workplace culture in export factories, and on the range of issues related to gender studies. She has published books and articles addressing these issues.

**Dr. Jacquelyn Campbell** is the Anna D. Wolf Chair at The Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing. She has conducted advocacy work and research on violence against women since 1980, and has published numerous articles and books on the topic. Dr. Campbell has been a principal investigator on US National Institutes of Health, US National Institute of Justice, and US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention research grants, and she co-chaired the Steering Committee for the WHO Multi-country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women. She serves on the US Department of Defense Task Force on Domestic Violence and the Boards of the House of Ruth battered women's shelter and the Family Violence Prevention Fund.

**Dr. Rebecca Emerson Dobash** is Professor of Social Research and **Dr. Russell P. Dobash** is Professor of Criminology in the School of Law, University of Manchester. They have co-authored several books, government reports, and articles on violence against women, and violent men. Their research focuses on policies and interventions relating to violence. They undertook the first national study of murder in Britain and other studies, including on violence against women; child sexual abuse; criminal justice-based treatment programs for violent men; steroids, bodybuilding, and violence; and men's and women's responses to televised violence.

**Dr. Mary Ellsberg** is an epidemiologist with more than 25 years of experience in international research and program work in gender and development, and in epidemiological research, with an emphasis on gender inequity, domestic violence, and sexual and reproductive health. She is currently Vice President for Health and Development at the International Center for Research on Women. Prior to joining ICRW, she was senior advisor at PATH for gender, violence, and human rights and the director of its Nicaragua office. Dr. Ellsberg is a member of the Core Research Team of the WHO Multi-country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women. She has authored numerous books and articles on gender-based violence.

**Dr. Julia E. Monárrez Fragoso** is a researcher for the College of the Northern Frontier in Ciudad Juárez. She is a national researcher specializing in feminism, gender, and violence. In this context, she has published several articles on femicide in Ciudad Juárez. She coordinated with María Socorro Tabuenca on the book *Bordering Violence Against Women Along Mexico's Northern Frontier*. She is in the process of publishing a book on systematic sexual femicide in Ciudad Juárez from 1993 to 2004, and co-authoring a book on violence against women and civil unrest, which is going to press.



**Rana Hussein** is a passionate human rights advocate and award-winning Jordanian journalist at *The Jordan Times* who has focused attention on violence against women and the brutal crimes committed against Jordanian women in the name of family honor. Her coverage of and dedication to ending this practice helped raise national awareness on a topic traditionally considered taboo. Until *The Jordan Times* began reporting on so-called crimes of honor, the local press shied away from addressing the issue. The government responded to the increased attention by introducing legal changes imposing tougher punishments for perpetrators of such crimes.

**Dr. Virendra Kumar** is Professor and Head of Forensic Medicine at Aarupadai Veedu Medical College in Pondicherry, India. He has co-authored several papers and studies related to dowry deaths and bride burning in India, including a chapter in the book *Violence and Aggression Around the Globe*. He also served as Head of the Forensic Unit in the Department of Pathology at the University Malaya, Malaysia, and as the external examiner of forensic medicine at Rangsehit University, Thailand.

**Dr. Glendene Lemard** is a research assistant professor at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Her current research interest is on violence prevention in developing countries. She has conducted research on crime and violence in Jamaica, including on homicides of women, for the past ten years. Dr. Lemard holds a PhD in international relations and completed her postdoctoral training in health policy and management.

**Shanaaz Mathews** is a researcher with the Gender and Health Unit of the South African Medical Research Council. Her research interests include gender-based violence with specific reference to intimate femicide and child sexual abuse. She was a co-researcher and co-author of *Every Six Hours a Woman is Killed by Her Intimate Partner: A National Study of Female Homicide in South Africa* and the forthcoming *Intimate Femicide-Suicide in South Africa*. She holds a Master of Public Health and is currently a PhD candidate.

**Yamileth Molina** is a program officer at PATH's Nicaragua office, responsible for coordinating InterCambios (Inter-American Alliance for the Prevention of Gender-based Violence) activities. Her experience includes training, awareness-raising, education, research, and evaluation of interventions related to violence against women and children and human rights. She also serves as a legal advocate for victims of child sexual abuse. She has a degree in education sciences and law from the National Autonomous University in Nicaragua.

**María Jesús (Susi) Pola Z** is a lawyer and professor of gender and development, and has been a human rights and women's rights activist in the Dominican Republic for more than 30 years. She has written editorial opinion pieces for the newspaper *El Nacional* since 1996. She also conducts research on femicide in the Dominican Republic and is co-author of two studies in the country, a larger study on femicide in Central America, and a number of books addressing the role of gender and constitutional reform and gender and judicial power.

**Dr. Margarita Quintanilla** is Country Representative for PATH in Nicaragua. Prior to working for PATH, she worked for the Reproductive Health and Women's Empowerment Project implemented by the Nicaraguan Health Ministry, and was responsible for the project component on policies aimed at promoting health-sector attention to domestic and sexual violence. She also coordinated the Central American component of the Latin American Gender-Based Violence Consortium. She is author of several publications on gender-based violence in the health sector.

**Soledad Rojas** is a Chilean feminist, activist and researcher on violence against women and femicide and has written a number of articles and publications on this topic. She has served as Editor of *La Agenda Mujer—Chile* since 1997. She has served as the coordinator of the Chilean National Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence Against Women since 2003.

**Dr. Diana Russell** is Professor Emerita of Sociology at Mills College, Oakland, California, and the co-author/co-editor of 17 books, mostly on sexual violence. She first used the term *femicide* when she testified about this crime at the International Tribunal on Crimes Against Women in Brussels in 1976. She also co-edited the first book ever published on femicide: *Femicide: The Politics of Woman Killing*, co-edited with Jill Radford, in 1992. A book she co-edited with Roberta Harmes, *Femicide in Global Perspective*, was published in 2001.

**Monique Widyono** is a program officer for gender, violence, and rights at PATH, and has ten years of experience addressing issues related to gender and human rights, gender-based violence, and monitoring and evaluation of related interventions. At PATH, she is responsible for providing technical assistance to a range of organizations on monitoring and evaluation and strengthening support for regional gender-based violence networks and community-level initiatives. Prior to joining PATH, she was the project officer for the United Nations Secretary-General's Study on Violence Against Women.

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