



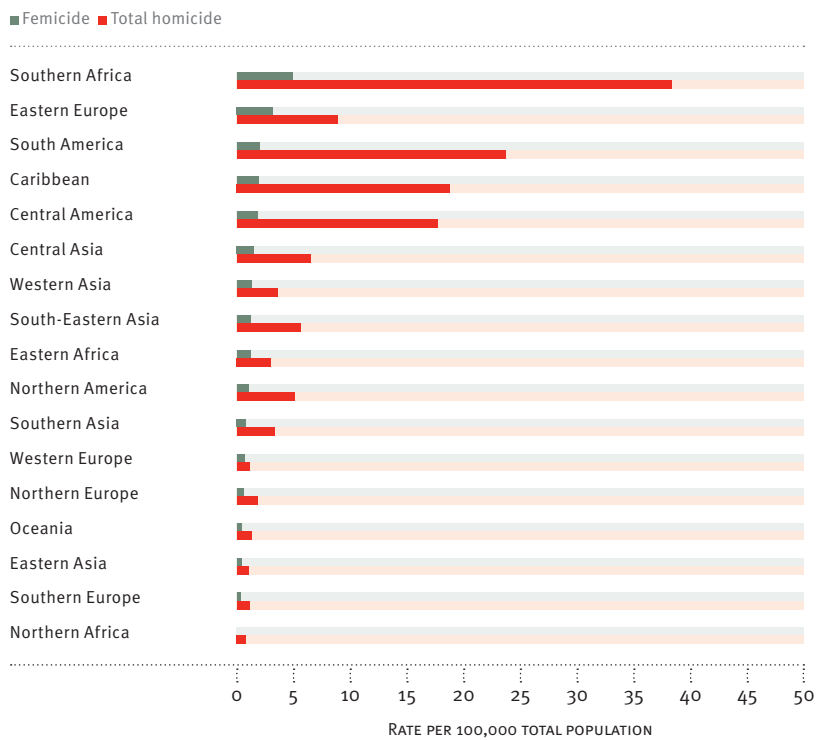
When the Victim is a Woman

The 2011 *Global Burden of Armed Violence* shines a spotlight on ‘femicide’—the intentional killing of a woman. Trends in femicide are especially difficult to monitor and interpret because of the scarcity of data. Yet femicide is an important component of armed violence and includes violence in the domestic sphere, such as that perpetrated by intimate partners and strangers. This chapter disaggregates the demographics of armed violence and captures the ways in which women of different ages are at risk. Specifically, the chapter finds that:

- In the 111 countries and territories under review, an annual average of 44,000 women were homicide victims in 2004–09.
- Roughly 66,000 women are violently killed around the world each year, accounting for around 17 percent of all intentional homicides.
- Femicides generally occur in the domestic sphere; the perpetrator is the current or former partner in just under half of the cases.
- Countries featuring high homicide rates in the male population also typically experience high femicide rates.
- High levels of femicide are often accompanied—and in some cases generated by—a high level of tolerance for violence against women.
- In countries where violence is widespread, the rate of victimization of women reaches levels far above the average risk of domestic violence.
- In some countries that exhibit low homicide rates, the percentage of female victims is similar to that of male victims.

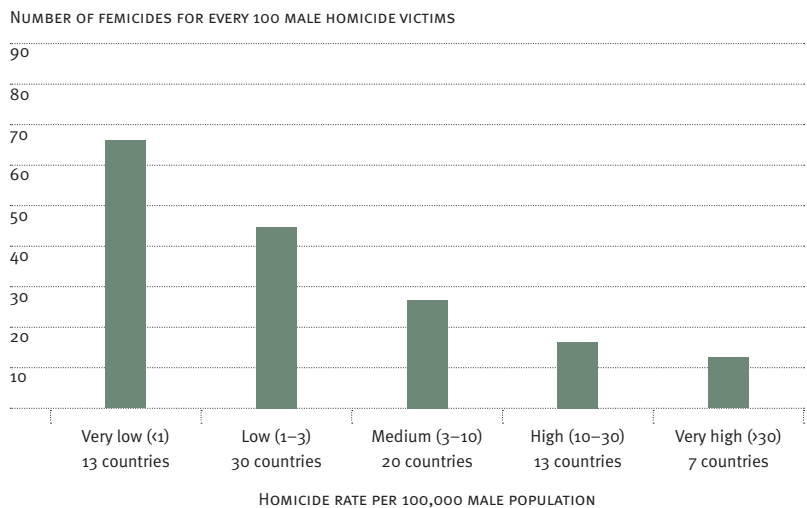
Countries and regions that feature comparatively high homicide rates also typically experience higher femicide rates (see Figure 4.3). In countries with high levels of interpersonal violence it is not just young men who are dying in high numbers, but also higher numbers of women and girls. At the same time, a deeper comparative inspection of the proportion of male and female victims shows considerable variations. A review of data from 83 countries highlights that in countries where homicides are relatively

FIGURE 4.3 Average homicide and femicide rates per 100,000 total population, by region, 2004–09



SOURCE: GBAV 2011 database and femicide database (unweighted regional averages)

FIGURE 4.7 Number of femicide victims for every 100 male homicide victims in 83 countries, 2004–09



SOURCES: GBAV 2011 database and femicide database



PHOTO Malalai Kakar, the first woman to graduate from Kandahar Police Academy, gathers evidence from victims of domestic violence. Kakar was assassinated by the Taliban in 2008.
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rare—as in Austria, Japan, Norway, and Switzerland—the percentage of female homicide victims compared to male victims is higher than in more violent contexts.

In countries where homicides are rare, the female–male victim ratio approaches 1 to 1 (see Figure 4.7). At the other end of the spectrum, in countries experiencing high homicide rates, femicide rates are significantly lower than rates of homicides with male victims. This is the case in Brazil, Colombia, Puerto Rico, and Venezuela, where men are at least ten times more likely to die from homicide than women. It is also worth noting that the use of firearms is less common in femicides than in homicides with male victims. As with homicides in general, there appears to be some relation between femicide rates and the percentage of femicides committed with firearms: low femicide rates frequently correspond to a less frequent use of firearms.

In order to better understand the factors shaping femicide it is important to disaggregate the actors, causes, and circumstances shaping the killing of women. The specific characteristics of the perpetrator are a central component of this classification system. Male perpetrators are the vast majority of offenders, and since femicide often occurs in the family or in circles close to the victim, the perpetrator is likely to be found in most cases. While women are vulnerable to violence committed by strangers, more frequently they are unsafe in their own homes.

This chapter underlines that while the evidence base is growing to demonstrate the scale and distribution of femicide and violence against women, critical information gaps exist, especially across Africa and Asia. Reliable and valid information on violence according to sex, age, relationship to the perpetrator, and instrument used is, however, crucial to designing effective violence prevention and reduction strategies. 📌