



Nine out of ten violent deaths occur outside conflicts

Crime is the single largest contributor to violent killings

An estimated 526,000 people die violently every year, but only 55,000 of them lose their lives in conflict or as a result of terrorism, reveals the second edition of the *Global Burden of Armed Violence*, released on 27 October 2011 in Geneva. The report also finds that 396,000 people—including 66,000 women—are victims of intentional homicide (murder), 54,000 die as a result of so-called ‘unintentional’ homicides (manslaughter), and 21,000 violent deaths occur during law enforcement actions.

The *Global Burden of Armed Violence* is based on a comprehensive database that covers violent deaths across both conflict and non-conflict settings.

‘The boundaries between political, criminal, and interpersonal violence have become increasingly blurred, as revealed in cases of killings associated with drug trafficking in Central America or of pirates engaging in economically-motivated violence in Somalia,’ said Keith Krause, one of the editors and authors of the report.

‘This research presets a wider view encompassing deaths from armed violence in all contexts, including crime and gang-related violence, including conflict, and including gender-related violence,’ he said.

The report provides a unique integrated approach to understanding the global impact of lethal violence. As an independent monitoring instrument, it supports the implementation of the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development in developing solid and evidence-based answers to the challenges of armed violence.

‘The *Global Burden of Armed Violence 2011* provides policy-makers and other stakeholders with a timely tool for responding to evidence in designing policies and programmes at the local, national, and regional levels,’ said Peter Maurer, State Secretary of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs.

The *Global Burden of Armed Violence* calculates that the average annual violent death rate between 2004 and 2009 was 7.9 per 100,000 population. At least 58 countries exhibit violent death rates above 10.0 per 100,000, accounting for almost two-thirds of all violent deaths—or 285,000 individuals killed annually.

One-quarter of all violent deaths occur in just 14 countries with average annual violent death rates above 30.0 per 100,000, half of which are in the Americas. Although wars dominate media headlines, the levels of armed violence in some non-conflict countries resemble those of conflict zones. In an average year between 2004 and 2009, more people per capita were killed in El Salvador than in Iraq.

Lethal violence is unevenly distributed not only across countries, but also within them. In Mexico, the national violent death rate in 2009 stood at 18.4 per 100,000. In contrast, Ciudad Juarez in the northern part of the country experienced a rate of 170.4 per 100,000 in the same year—more than 20 times the global rate.

The *Global Burden of Armed Violence* also links lethal violence to underdevelopment.

‘States with high levels of lethal violence almost always struggle to achieve the Millennium Development Goals,’ said Keith Krause. ‘And we also know that when a country makes progress in terms of development, it is likely to exhibit decreasing levels of lethal violence.’

Echoing the results of a growing body of research, the report also confirms that countries with low levels of income inequality and unemployment experience lower levels of homicide.

The *Global Burden of Armed Violence 2011* also reveals that:

- El Salvador was the country most affected by lethal violence in 2004–09, followed by Iraq and Jamaica.
- Central and Southern Africa, Central America and the Caribbean, and South America are the regions that exhibit the highest levels of lethal violence.
- About 66,000 women and girls are violently killed around the world each year. High levels of ‘femicide’ are frequently accompanied—and in some cases generated by—a high level of tolerance for violence against women.
- Intimate partner and family-related homicides represent a high proportion of homicides in some countries in Europe and Asia. In countries with low homicide rates the percentages of male and female victims are similar.
- Homicide rates related to robbery or theft tend to be higher in countries with greater income inequality, including in the Americas.
- The relative weakness of rule of law in a country is linked with higher overall homicide rates. Yet particular challenges—such as gang activity, a history of conflict, or a high level of income inequality—may lead to high homicide rates even in societies with comparatively strong institutions and rule of law.

Published by Cambridge University Press, the *Global Burden of Armed Violence: Lethal Encounters* is a product of the Geneva Declaration Secretariat. The Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development, endorsed by more than 100 countries, calls upon states to achieve measurable reductions in the global burden of armed violence and tangible improvements in human security by 2015. 

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