



**T**HE DEMOGRAPHICS OF armed violence are often described in general terms. Men—especially young men—are determined to be most likely to kill and be killed. Women, it is often said, are affected in different ways: as victims, survivors, and often as single heads of households. Yet on closer inspection these crude generalizations are found wanting. This chapter unpacks global patterns of armed violence directed against women. It focuses on ‘femicide’—the killing of a woman—as well as sexual violence committed against women during and following armed conflict.

Men generally represent a disproportionately high percentage of the victims of homicide, while women constitute approximately 10 per cent of homicide victims in Mexico, 23 per cent in the United States, and 29 per cent in Australia (INEGI, 2009; FBI, 2010; ABS, 2009). It would be a mistake, however, to underestimate the gravity of homicidal violence committed against women. In the United States, for example, homicide was reportedly the second leading cause of death for women of all races aged 15–24 between 1999 and 2007 (CDC, n.d.a).<sup>1</sup>

Men are also more commonly involved in perpetrating homicide and sexual violence; the perpetrators of serious violence against women are frequently current or former partners (Geneva Declaration Secretariat, 2008; BJS, 2005). Yet statistical estimates of femicide and sexual violence conceal complex patterns of victimization

and suffering, especially given that violence against women seldom occurs as an isolated incident. It is often the culmination of escalating aggressions that in some cases lead to fatal outcomes. Moreover, when a woman is killed, there are also frequently indirect casualties; perpetrators sometimes commit suicide while also taking the lives of others, including children, witnesses, and bystanders. Many women who endure abusive and violent relationships also commit suicide in order to end their misery. The sharp increase in reported suicide and self-immolation among Afghan women is attributed to severe forms of psychological, physical, and sexual violence, including forced marriage (MOWA, 2008, pp. 12–13).

The violent killing of any individual is a tragedy with traumatic knock-on effects; it generates far-reaching repercussions that reflect the victim’s former role in the family and community. Many assessments examining the social and economic costs of armed violence highlight the lost productivity of wage-earning men in the formal economy (Geneva Declaration Secretariat, 2008; Florquin, 2006). In contrast, the implications of femicide and sexual violence on the female workforce and wider labour market are rarely considered. Yet there is growing evidence that a culture of violence can contribute to the ‘feminization of poverty’, further marginalizing women in society (Pearce, 1978). More broadly, armed violence—and especially violence against women—constitutes a serious challenge for development.

While femicide and sexual violence are prevalent in the domestic sphere, this chapter finds that women are exposed to many other forms of violence—from gang violence to robberies and stray bullets. They are also often singled out for hate crimes, particularly when they are categorized as migrants and refugees (Freedman and Jamal, 2008, pp. 13–19). Guatemala and Mexico’s Ciudad Juarez exhibit staggering numbers of women victims and exceptional brutality. In these contexts, intimate partner violence accounts for a relatively small proportion of femicides (Suarez and Jordan, 2007); many women are victims of the increasingly widespread violence related to organized crime and narco-trafficking, which affects the entire population (Molloy, 2010). Furthermore, according to a group of Mexican NGOs:

impunity and government permissiveness, which serves as a crude expression of institutional violence, have led to a multiplication in the number of women murdered throughout the country and this can be attributed to a lack of due diligence (RNOCDH, 2010, p. 4).

In such areas, an exclusive focus on femicide may limit the understanding of a broader picture of extreme violence, which reveals major ‘systemic failures’ (Eriksson Baaz and Stern, 2010, p. 12; A UNIFIED APPROACH).

The social, cultural, and political risk factors for femicide and sexual violence are widely debated. Analysts frequently point to cultures of ‘machismo’ that can distort traditional gender roles and encourage constraints on the freedom of girls and women, misogynist behaviour, and recurring violence with impunity. In many war zones, rape has been used as ‘a weapon of mass destruction’ (UNDP, 2008, p. 2). Assessments of sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo indicate that mass rapes and atrocities committed against women during periods of fighting occur in a con-

text of widespread tolerance of sexual violence and a high level of impunity (Peterman, Palermo, and Bredenkamp, 2011).<sup>2</sup> Indeed, a study conducted by the World Health Organization in selected countries reveals that adolescent girls frequently experience the practice of forced sex initiation (WHO, 2002, p. 153); this finding suggests widespread acceptance and impunity of violence against women and girls.

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 seeks to disaggregate the demographics of armed violence and capture 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 became homicide victims in 2004–09.
- Roughly 66,000 women are violently killed around the world each year, accounting for approximately 17 per cent of total intentional homicides.
- On average, men are killed approximately five times more frequently than women.
- 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 frequently 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.

This chapter considers the particular settings and risks shaping femicide and sexual violence. The first section provides an overview of femicide on the basis of available statistics, including the incidence, the relationship between victim and offender, and instruments used. The second section considers the characteristics and dynamics of homicide involving female victims. The third section examines other forms of lethal and non-lethal violence against women, including dowry deaths, ‘honour’ killings, ritual killings, and lethal practices associated with witchcraft, as well as the risk of contracting HIV/AIDS in conflict and post-conflict settings.

## Disaggregating homicide by sex

One useful way of measuring the extent of lethal violence perpetrated against women is by disaggregating homicide statistics by sex. Yet since such data is simply not readily available in many settings, analysts may be required to identify and generate additional information to supplement overall homicide data. Even when such analysis is pursued, police reports and files may not satisfactorily record the sex of the victim or critical information on the context in which a given event occurred. Although a growing number of countries are committed to maintaining sex-disaggregated information, internationally comparable data remains scarce.<sup>3</sup>

The 2011 *Global Burden of Armed Violence* compiles national statistics on femicide covering the largest possible geographical scope. This chapter defines femicide broadly as ‘any homicide with a

female victim’, thus avoiding an exclusive, narrow interpretation of intent, such as the targeting of females because of their sex. The wider definition allows for a focus on all women, in recognition of their right to live free from violence under international law. This context calls for the provision of objective information on incidents of violence against women, including baseline indicators against which to assess the effectiveness of measures to prevent violence and respond to offenders.

Fortunately, sex-disaggregated statistics are increasingly available in key sectors relating to population, school enrolment, employment, and parliamentary representation (UN, 2010a). Notwithstanding widespread improvements, the production of valid and reliable gender statistics in many areas of public and private life—including in relation to violence—still falls short of international standards. Countries face numerous challenges in generating disaggregated statistics on femicide and sexual violence, including the following:

- the under-development of basic concepts, definitions, and methods limits data collection;
- the absence of agreed international standards and coding systems reduces comparability;
- limited capacity and resources to invest in data collection results in an over-reliance on qualitative outputs;
- the lack of detail in available statistics leads to under-diagnosis;
- the reliance on mixed-quality data from different sources (such as administrative and survey data, police and other criminal justice sources, and health and mortuary data) undermines validity (Alvazzi del Frate, 2010).

#### Box 4.1 Unpacking femicide: what's in a label?

When it was coined by the feminist movement in the 1970s, the term 'femicide' implied the killing of women specifically because they were women. As such, it was intended to convey 'the misogynous killing of women by men' and to capture 'the proportion of female deaths that occurred due to gender-based causes' (Radford and Russell, 1992, p. 3; Bloom, 2008, p. 178). The overall femicide concept emerged as an expression of the feminist movement to politicize and contest male violence against women.

Diana Russell, an architect of the femicide concept, argues that the notion has been in use for centuries. She traces its origins to early 19<sup>th</sup>-century Britain, when it was used to describe 'the killing of a woman' (Russell, 2008, p. 3).<sup>4</sup> She also acknowledges that the term later emerged as a symbol of the battle to emancipate women and free them from violence in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

From the beginning, the idea of femicide was designed to account for a range of specific forms of violence. These include dowry and 'honour' killings, intimate partner or spousal violence, murder with rape, the killing of prostitutes, female infanticide or selective abortion, and other deaths that, according to forensic reports, occur as a result of women or girls being targeted on the basis of their sex (for example, victims of a serial killer who specifically targets women) (Bloom, 2008, p. 178).

While the concept has drawn attention to the particular ways in which women are selectively targeted, the definition has become progressively diluted and confused. Indeed, it is now often conflated with a broader understanding of violence against women (such as *any* killing of a woman) and has thus lost much of its original political connotation. The broadening of the definition may be connected to a growing interest in generating quantitative information of violence against women to facilitate comparability across countries and jurisdictions.

Today, most of the related literature applies a broad interpretation of femicide. Yet there are also several qualitative studies and data collection initiatives assessing femicide in the stricter sense, examining the intent of the perpetrator and thus separating femicides from other killings of women. These projects are especially common in Latin America and include, for example, the Registro de Femicidio del Ministerio Público, hosted by the Crime Observatory of the Ministerio Público in Peru; the Observatorio de Muertes Violentas de Mujeres y Femicidio in Honduras; the Observatorio de Femicidios in Argentina; the Observatorio Ciudadano Nacional del Femicidio in Juarez, Mexico; and the Banco Datos Femicidio for Latin America, based in Chile.

Investments in generating accurate sex-disaggregated data in the crime and justice sectors appear to be growing.<sup>5</sup> Several initiatives have already started to generate a wealth of data, albeit not always comparable across time and space.<sup>6</sup> Owing to the absence of agreed definitions, many institutions and researchers collect data and develop datasets based on incompatible working definitions. The term 'femicide' is a case in point (see Box 4.1). Some analysts describe femicide as 'the proportion of female deaths occurring due to gender-based causes' (Bloom, 2008, p. 178). Others contend that femicide refers to gender-disaggregated data on homicide or 'murder of women', as indicated by the former Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, Its Causes and Consequences (UN, 2008, p. 18).

This chapter draws on a combination of data sources to generate a profile of femicide and sexual violence. These sources include reports and surveillance data from national statistical institutions, law enforcement and public health agencies, and research institutions. The resulting GBAV 2011 femicide database entails the following three sets of data, covering 111 countries and territories—56 per cent of the world's female population—for the period 2004–09:<sup>7</sup>

- **Femicides in general** (homicides with female victims): drawing on the general femicide database alluded to above, information was checked for consistency and categorized according to the classification of countries presented in Chapter Two (TRENDS AND PATTERNS).<sup>8</sup> The examination therefore includes a total of 104 countries or territories, providing information on most world regions (with the exception of Middle and Western Africa).

- **Intimate partner-related femicides:** consisting of information on femicides attributable to intimate-partner violence (IPV), this dataset yielded a smaller sample of 54 countries and territories.<sup>9</sup> In principle, all data included in the IPV dataset refers to homicides committed by current or former intimate partners; however, varying definitions, such as ‘spousal’ or ‘marital’ violence, may be used in some settings.
- **Femicides committed with firearms:** this dataset collates information from a variety of sources for 24 countries and territories.

While not exhaustive and thus under-representing the overall burden of femicide, the GBAV 2011 femicide database is among the largest ever constructed to record femicide. There was insufficient information on direct conflict-related deaths of women, and they have thus been excluded. Due to the absence of relevant international standards, the overall quality of sex-disaggregated information is less reliable and comparable than that of data presented in Chapter Two.

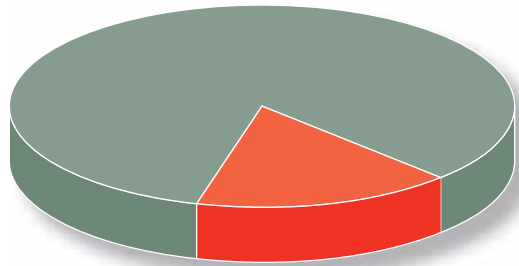
The analysis finds that an average annual total of about 44,000 femicides were reported in the 104 countries and territories under review between 2004 and 2009.<sup>10</sup> What, then, is the global extent of femicide?

The global extent of lethal violence against women was calculated by applying regional rates of femicide to the populations of countries with missing information and using the global rate for the two regions with no data. The estimate yields approximately 66,000 women killed every year at the global level.<sup>11</sup> Female victims thus appear to represent approximately 17 per cent of the total number of violent deaths in a given year (see Figure 4.1). This results in a rate of one woman vs. five men killed per 100,000 total population; this ratio means that, on average, there are five times more male homicide victims than female ones.

**FIGURE 4.1** Estimated average proportion of female vs. male homicide victims per year, 2004–09

**LEGEND:**

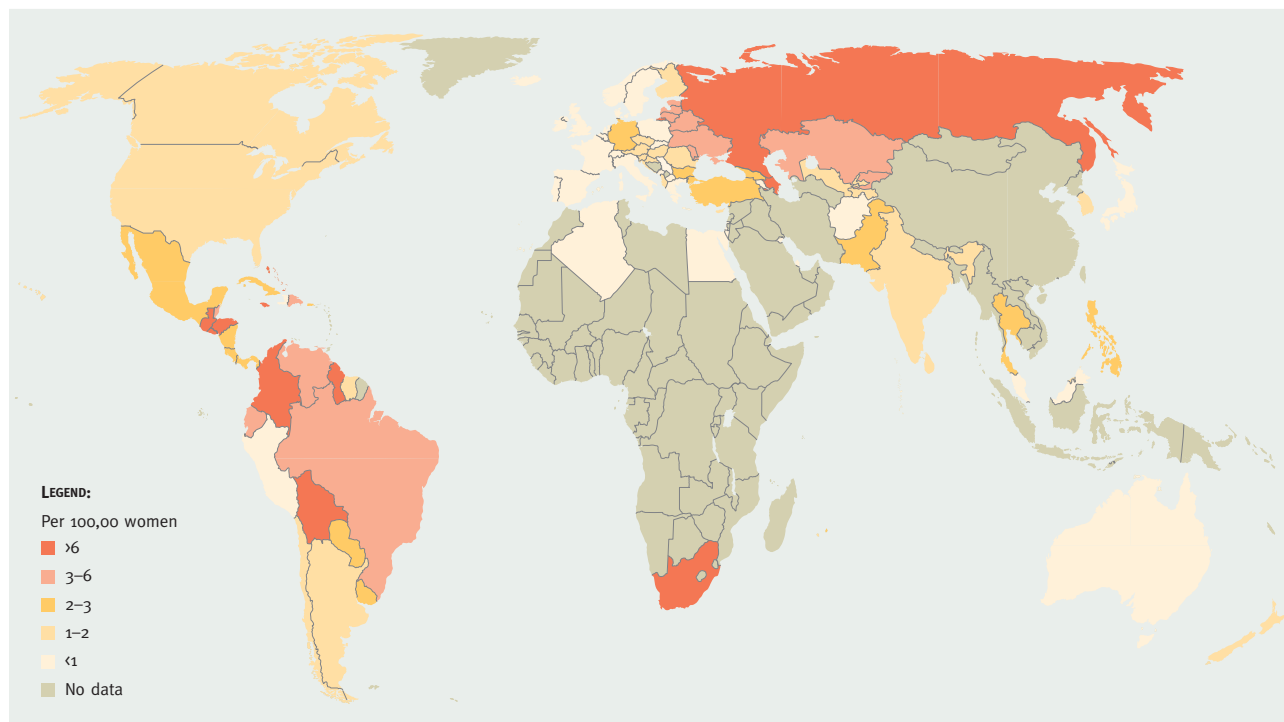
- Male victims (330,000; 83%)
- Female victims (66,000; 17%)



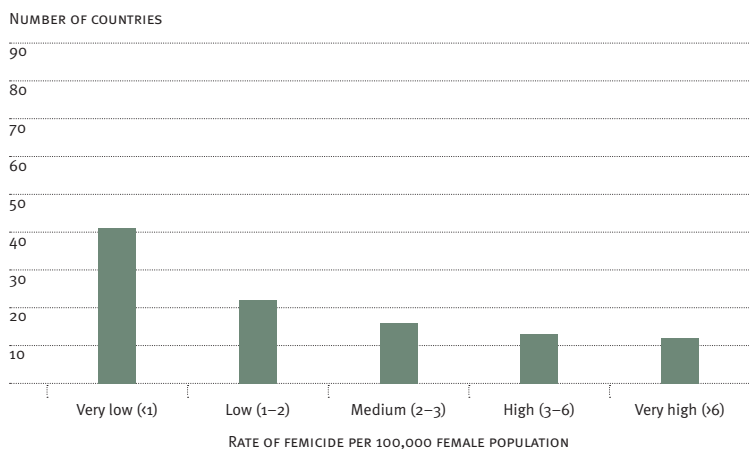
**SOURCES:** GBAV 2011 database and femicide database

Map 4.1 reveals specific femicide rates in countries for which reliable information is available. As the map clearly shows, major data gaps are common and sex-disaggregated information is unavailable for most African and Asian countries, including many of those featuring high homicide rates (TRENDS AND PATTERNS). Since the establishment of the Millennium Development Goals, however, a small number of development agencies have invested in statistical systems across Africa based on the conviction that accurate data will allow for more effective policy-making and assessments of interventions.<sup>12</sup> While evidence shows that both public and non-governmental monitoring systems are being developed, major steps must still be taken before a comprehensive surveillance capacity can be established.<sup>13</sup> To date, the best coverage is available from the Americas and Europe.

Figure 4.2 considers the distribution of the intensity of femicide per 100,000 female population in 104 countries and territories for which data is available. It finds that 41 countries exhibit ‘very low’ rates (<1 per 100,000 female population). Twenty-two countries feature ‘low’ rates (1–2)

**MAP 4.1** Rates of female homicide victims per 100,000 female population, 2004–09

SOURCE: GBAV 2011 femicide database

**FIGURE 4.2** Countries and territories by rate of femicide per 100,000 female population, 2004–09

SOURCE: GBAV 2011 femicide database

while 16 countries have ‘medium’ rates (2–3). The figure shows, however, that 13 countries suffer from ‘high’ rates (3–6) and another 12 countries report a ‘very high’ intensity of femicide (>6). All in all, 25 countries, or nearly one-quarter of all reviewed countries, exhibit ‘high’ or ‘very high’ rates of femicide—that is, rates above the global average. The sum of femicides committed in these 25 countries represents almost half (47 per cent) of the total number of femicides in the database.

At the regional level, the highest rates of femicide are found in regions that also exhibit very high rates of homicide. Figure 4.3 compares the average rates of total homicide and femicide across countries pooled by region.<sup>14</sup> Spreading

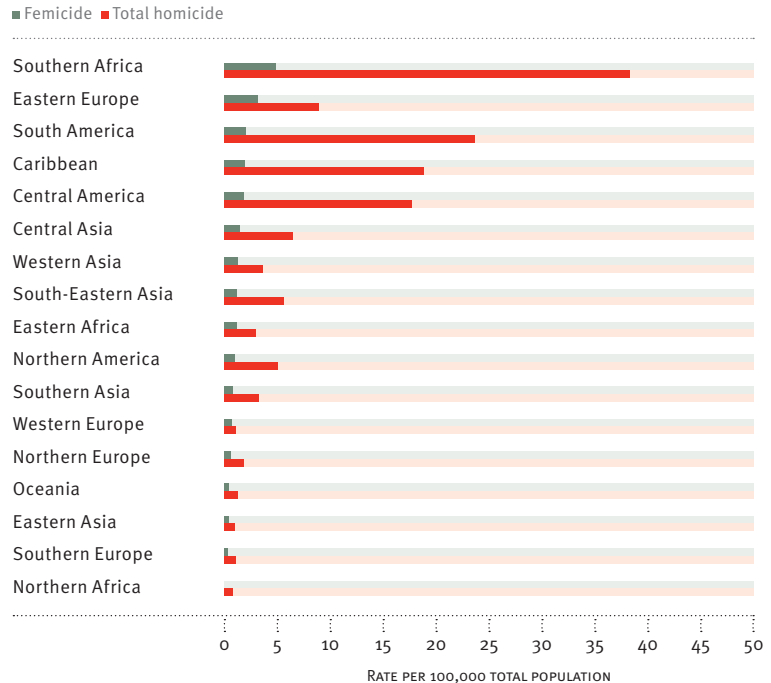
the number of femicides across the total population shows discrepancies that appear larger where rates are higher. Four out of five regions with the highest homicide rates in Chapter Two also feature at the top of the femicide ranking, namely—in descending order—Southern Africa,<sup>15</sup> South America, the Caribbean, and Central America; meanwhile, femicide rates in Eastern Europe appear disproportionately high with respect to homicides in general.

Among regions that exhibit lower rates of femicide, Northern Africa appears at the bottom of the list. In regions with very low rates (<1 per 100,000), the difference between femicide and homicide rates is minor; Western Europe records the smallest difference, with a homicide rate that exceeds the femicide rate by only 0.4 per 100,000 total population. One explanation may be that in countries that exhibit low homicide rates—and that are thus less violent in general—homicides probably include a higher proportion of ‘crimes of passion’ or domestic violence in which women are frequently the victims. The resulting male-to-female victim ratio therefore approaches 1:1 (CHARACTERISTICS OF ARMED VIOLENCE).

### Femicide rates by country

Countries that exhibit high rates of femicide also tend to feature high rates of homicide. At the country level, El Salvador, Guatemala, Jamaica, and South Africa all report rates of 10 femicides per 100,000 female population or above. Indeed, El Salvador ranks first in both femicide and lethal violence in general (TRENDS AND PATTERNS). In addition, Guyana and Honduras register extremely high rates of femicide. In all of these countries, the femicide rates are up to five times higher than overall homicide rates in the majority of Northern, Western, and Southern European countries.

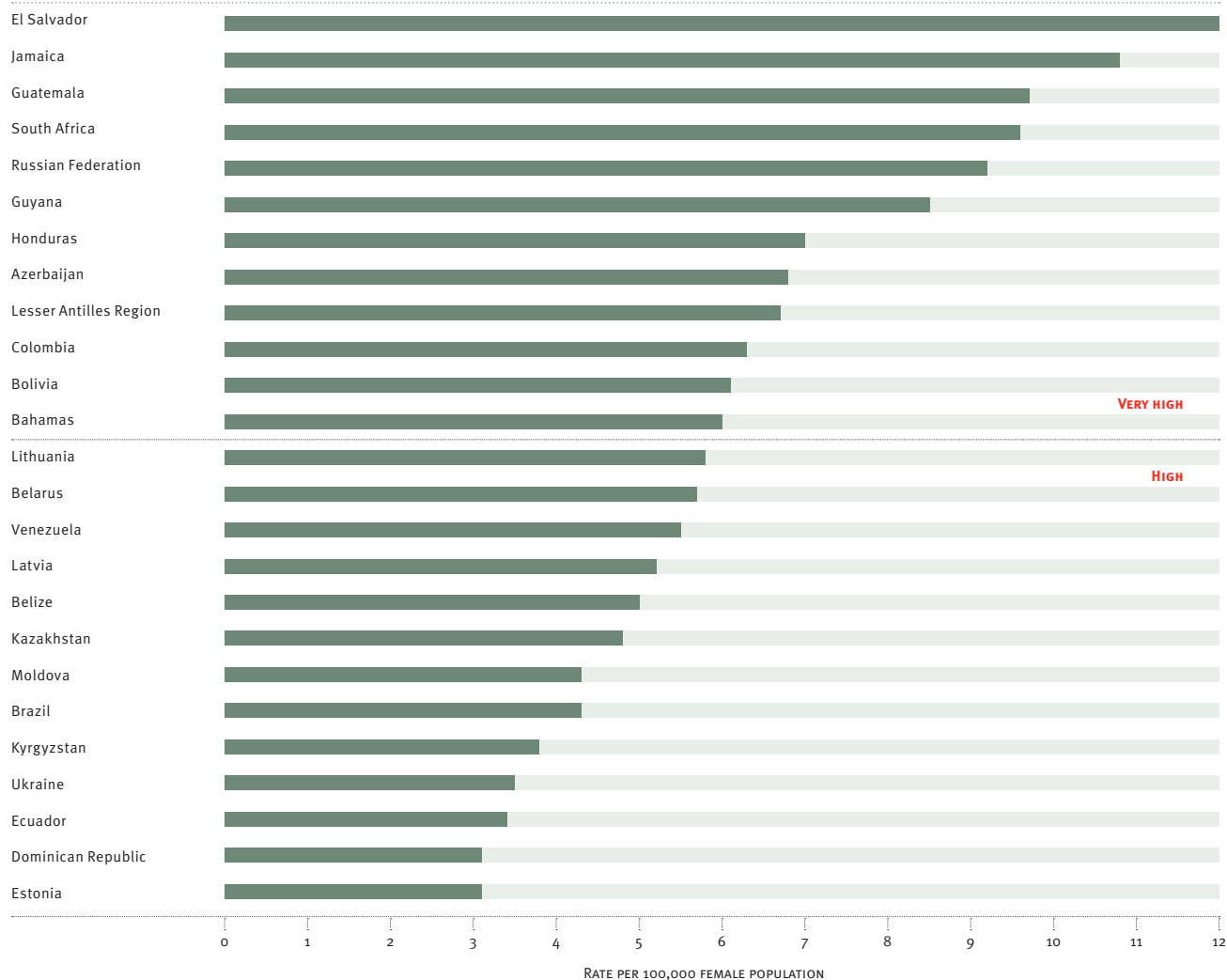
**FIGURE 4.3** Average homicide and femicide rates per 100,000 total population, by region, 2004–09



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

Of the 25 countries that feature high and very high femicide rates, more than 50 per cent (14) are in the Americas: four in the Caribbean, four in Central America, and six in South America (see Figure 4.4). Seven countries reporting high or very high femicide rates are located in Europe: three in Northern and four in Eastern Europe. Among the remaining countries, three are in Asia and one in Africa. Some countries—such as the Bahamas, Belize, and Guyana—are home to female populations of fewer than 500,000 individuals. In these and other small countries, even a few killings of women generate a relatively high femicide rate. For example, with a total count of seven female victims of homicide and a female population of approximately 141,000, Belize has a high rate of 5.0 per 100,000.<sup>16</sup>

**FIGURE 4.4** Average femicide rates per 100,000 female population in 25 countries and territories with high and very high rates, 2004–09



SOURCE: GBAV 2011 femicide database

Countries in Latin America and the Caribbean appear to share a particularly high incidence of femicide. A comparison reveals that not only young men, but also a disproportionately high number of women and girls, are dying in high numbers. Killings appear to be most frequent in specific states and cities of these countries. Indeed, data

on femicide at the sub-national level reveals even higher rates than those recorded as national averages. In Mexico's Ciudad Juarez, for example, the 2009 femicide rate was 19.1 per 100,000 female population (see Box 4.2). In the state of Espirito Santo in Brazil, the government authorities documented a femicide rate of 10.9 per 100,000 in 2008.<sup>17</sup>



### Box 4.2 Femicide in Ciudad Juarez: a human rights crisis

The national statistical authority of Mexico—the Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (INEGI)—reported femicide rates at a historical low of 2.0 per 100,000 female population in 2007, followed by a rapid increase to 3.5 per 100,000 by 2009. Not all areas of Mexico are equally affected by escalating violence; in 2009 three states exhibited rates well above the national average: Chihuahua (13.1 per 100,000 female population), Baja California (10.1), and Guerrero (10.1). Rates in Durango (7.1), Sinaloa (6.0), Sonora (5.1), Tamaulipas (4.5), Oaxaca (3.8), Michoacán (3.8), and Nayarit (3.7) were also above the national average.

Ciudad Juarez in Chihuahua state currently exhibits one of the highest homicide rates in Mexico. It recorded some 170 homicides per 100,000 population in 2009 (INEGI, 2009). The number of women and girls killed in this city is significant—INEGI counts 669 between 1990 and 2009—and constitutes a serious human rights crisis.<sup>18</sup> Figure 4.5 shows trends in femicide at the national and city levels during 1993–2009. Following a radical climb from 2007 to 2008, the peak observed in 2009 is mirrored by a similar trend in the rate of male victimization. Nevertheless, the brutal executions of women, many of whom are tortured before being killed, betrays a particular level of savagery often confined to war zones.

Source: Small Arms Survey elaboration of Arroyo (2011)



PHOTO Armed police stand behind pink crosses marking the murder and disappearance of women in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, June 2009. © Teun Voeten/Panos Pictures

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FIGURE 4.5 Trends in femicide per 100,000 female population in Ciudad Juarez and Mexico, 1993–2009

■ Ciudad Juarez ■ Mexico

RATE PER 100,000 FEMALE POPULATION



SOURCE: Small Arms Survey elaboration of Arroyo (2011)

As noted above, high femicide rates are often accompanied by high levels of tolerance to violence against women among the wider population. Analysts claim that such behaviour is shaped by levels of gender inequality and norms that discriminate against the status of women—norms that are often shared by women themselves. One widely cited study reports that about one in four women surveyed in 33 countries agreed that it was justifiable to be hit or beaten for arguing or refusing to have sex with one's husband (UN, 2010a, p. 137).

Additional research has demonstrated that in settings with high rates of femicide the criminal justice response may be substantially slower and less efficient than for homicide more generally. Cases may not be investigated and consequently not prosecuted, resulting in very low clearance and conviction rates. For example, a recent study finds that between 2008 and 2010 in Honduras, only 211 of 1,010 reported cases of femicide were heard in court and only 56 sentences were passed (Sánchez, 2011, p. 40). Similar patterns have emerged in other regions where femicide is poorly investigated and countered.<sup>19</sup>

Armed conflicts in particular can reconfigure gender relations. Research tracking the popular usage of violence in everyday speech in post-conflict El Salvador identifies men as having 'more "right" to use violence than women' (Hume, 2008, p. 66). Indeed, prolonged repression and everyday violence affect the lives of many long after a conflict ends. In particular, Hume finds that:

individuals and communities learned that silence was the only option when no one could be trusted and violence was an ever-present possibility. They testified to feeling afraid of the *orejas* (informers), who were often neighbors or family members (Hume, 2008, p. 71).

Fears of reprisal during the war partly explain the silence regarding contemporary forms of violence and crime, including violence against women. Certain members of the Salvadoran state had employed local militia to perpetrate violence during the civil war, highlighting how conflict-related violence can affect the domestic and private spheres. Thus:

despite important legislative changes, normative notions of appropriate behavior for men and women still make violence 'acceptable' in certain contexts to the point that it is not always recognized as violence (Hume, 2008, p. 64).

### Trends in femicide

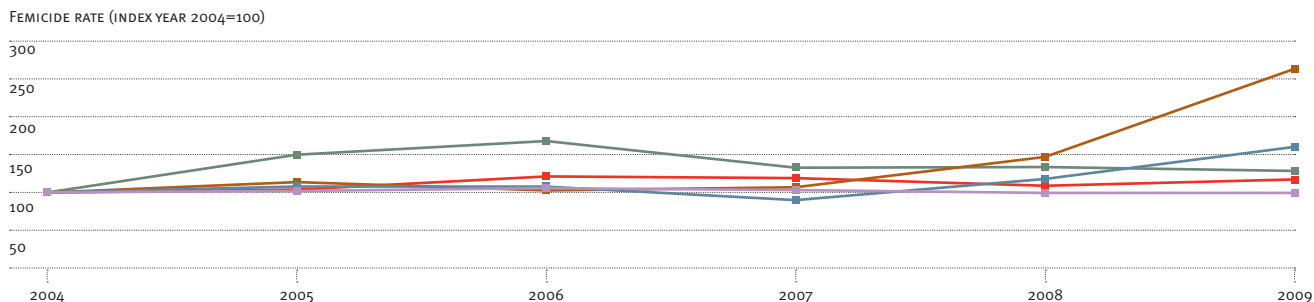
It is possible to examine time-series trends in femicide and violence against women for countries with available data.<sup>21</sup> Attributing the value 100 as a starting point for all countries in 2004 allows several different patterns emerge. These include countries experiencing rapid increases, rapid decreases, fluctuating trends, and more stable rates. Among 22 countries with trend series available, only seven exceeded the starting point rate in 2008 or 2009; the countries are—in descending order of femicide rates—Honduras, Mexico, Finland, El Salvador, Azerbaijan, Guatemala, and the Dominican Republic. In some countries—such as Azerbaijan and Finland—rates that had initially climbed may have dropped towards the end of the observed period. The majority of countries under review show stable or decreasing rates. Figure 4.6 displays trends in femicide rates for a sample of five countries with data for the entire 2004–09 period.

### Male versus female victims

Available data shows that there is a correlation between the rates of homicides with male victims

**FIGURE 4.6** Femicide trends in five selected countries, 2004–09 (basis 2004=100)<sup>20</sup>

■ El Salvador ■ Guatemala ■ Honduras ■ Mexico ■ United States



SOURCE: GBAV 2011 femicide database

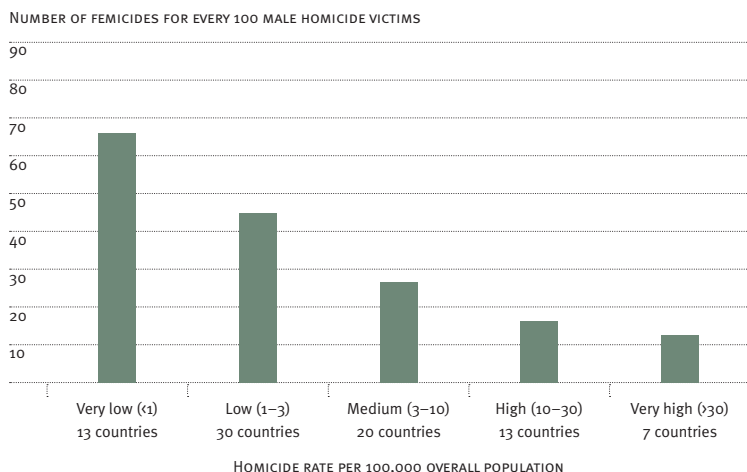
and those with female victims.<sup>22</sup> In general, countries featuring high levels of male homicide victims also report high rates of femicide. El Salvador and Guatemala exhibit the highest rates of homicide with respect to both male and female victims. The Russian Federation and Guyana feature relatively high femicide rates, while the opposite can be observed in Colombia, Venezuela, and the US Virgin Islands, which show high homicide rates with respect to male victims.

Nevertheless, a deeper inspection of the male-to-female homicide victim ratio in each country shows considerable variation, partly reflecting the population structure of each country.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, in some countries—especially those presenting low homicide rates—the victimization rate for women appears very close to that observed for men. This is mostly the case in countries with disproportionately large male populations, such as Brunei Darussalam. It is also the case where homicide is relatively rare, such as in Austria, Switzerland, Norway, and Japan.<sup>24</sup> This gender gap becomes more significant when the levels of overall violence increase, with the largest differences being observed in Venezuela, Colombia, Guatemala, and El Salvador, in that order.

In countries that feature very low rates of homicide per total population, the difference between rates for men and women appears smallest. In these countries, femicide rates are, on average, just one-third lower than homicide rates for men (see Figure 4.7). Yet Figure 4.7 also shows that in countries experiencing high and very high homicide rates, femicide rates represent just a fraction of homicide rates for men: 16.3 per cent in countries with high rates and 12.5 per cent in those with very high rates. There is a negative correlation between homicide rates and the proportion of women killed. Where homicide rates are higher, the disparity between sexes is higher, and the proportion of male victims is much higher. For example, in Venezuela, Colombia, Puerto Rico, and Brazil, the proportion of male homicide victims is more than ten times greater than the proportion of female ones. This does not mean that women were safer in these countries than elsewhere, given that they were also the countries in which femicide rates were the highest during the period under review.

The countries that exhibit the highest homicide rates also have higher proportions of male and female homicide victims compared to other countries. Even if the proportion of women killed

**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

may appear small with respect to that of male homicide victims within a country, the actual femicide rate remains high. A possible explanation for these sustained high rates is the involvement of organized crime and gangs in committing violent acts against women and girls, especially femicide.<sup>25</sup> This is not the case in the majority of countries, where femicides apparently occur predominantly within the family or in the context of an intimate relationship (CHARACTERISTICS OF ARMED VIOLENCE).

### Characteristics of femicide

In order to better understand the factors shaping femicide it is important to disaggregate the actors, causes, and circumstances shaping the killing of women. Specifically, the characteristics of the perpetrator are a central component of this classification system. It is widely accepted that male perpetrators comprise the vast majority of offenders

while female perpetrators represent a residual portion.<sup>26</sup> Since femicide often occurs in the family or in restricted circles close to the victim, the perpetrator is likely to be found in most cases. Often there is a previous connection with the victim, most frequently at the family or intimate partner level. The broad category of intimate partners includes all sexual partners—such as current and former spouses or partners—as well as other close family members if involved in an intimate relationship with the victim. Non-intimate partners include friends and acquaintances, as well as known strangers and family members.

The perpetrator remains unknown if the investigation does not succeed in identifying the offender, preventing the case from being ‘solved’. This is frequently the case with respect to deaths occurring between armed groups, during armed conflicts, and as a result of robberies, gang activity, shootings in public places, and other incidents of a similar nature. In addition, the capacity and resources necessary for effective investigations may also have an impact on the number of ‘unsolved’ cases (CHARACTERISTICS OF ARMED VIOLENCE).

Some researchers contend that women who kill themselves in the context of protracted violence or aggression should be counted as victims of femicide.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, the category of ‘forced suicide’<sup>28</sup> is the frequent outcome of strong social pressure and ‘honour’-based violence, such as reported in Iraqi Kurdistan (KWRW, 2008). The consequences of structural repression and social stigmatization in such settings can lead to enduring physical harm and serious psychological hardship.<sup>29</sup>

Another lethal scenario is the killing of a rape victim in order to restore the family ‘honour’. For example, in Libya women and girls who become pregnant through rape run the risk of being murdered by a family member in so-called ‘honour’

### Box 4.3 Insecurity and impunity in Afghanistan

The personal security of Afghan women and girls has been hampered by decades of armed conflict, discrimination, and widespread impunity. The post-Taliban period has witnessed growing international preoccupation regarding women's rights, as evidenced by the creation of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission and the Ministry of Women's Affairs at the Bonn Conference in 2001. Both agencies have since been struggling to bring about meaningful social change in the absence of a strong civil society (Azarbaijani-Moghaddam, 2007).

Armed groups persistently target women who are seen as breaking away from their traditional roles. Numerous women in public positions have been threatened, harassed, and killed. As reported by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan:

Of five high-profile women interviewed in 2005 by a newspaper interested in covering stories of Afghan women who wanted to take a role in reconstructing their country, three have been murdered and one had to flee the country (UNAMA, 2009, p. 10).<sup>30</sup>

Malalai Kakar, the highest-ranking female police officer in Kandahar, was killed in September 2008, allegedly because she was leading a unit of ten police-women dealing with domestic violence (UNAMA, 2009, p. 11).

Young girls are also explicitly targeted with violence:

Insurgent groups have repeatedly attacked education infrastructure in general and girls' schools in particular. Security fears have resulted in the closure of over 70% of schools in Helmand province of Afghanistan (UNESCO, 2011, p. 15).

The Ministry of Women's Affairs recorded 192 attacks on schools by insurgent groups between July 2005 and February 2007 alone, including their looting, burning, and total destruction. As a result of such attacks, 'parents fear sending their children to school, especially daughters' (MOWA, 2008, p. 11).

Today, only 66 girls are enrolled for every 100 boys (UNESCO, 2011, p. 8).

Afghanistan suffers from extensive domestic violence directed against women. In 2006, UNIFEM Afghanistan, together with participating agencies,<sup>31</sup> established a database on violence against women (UNIFEM Afghanistan, n.d.). Between January 2003 and June 2005, the project recorded 1,327 cases from 818 respondents. An analysis of the data highlights that most attacks against women were perpetrated within their homes and by someone close to them, such as a husband, father-in-law, son, or cousin (82 per cent). The most common incidents of violence were physical attack, followed by forced marriage (UNIFEM, 2006, pp. 1–2, 19).

Incidents of rape were less frequently reported, suggesting significant undercounting. In the course of research on violence against women in Afghanistan, the UN Assistance Mission found it 'extremely difficult' to use terms such as 'rape' or 'sexual violence', especially in relation to marriage (UNAMA, 2009, p. 21). Nevertheless, the research suggests that very young girls in forced marriages are especially at risk of being raped by a family member of the husband (p. 21).

The high level of impunity is considered a major contributing factor to widespread incidents of violence against women in general and rape specifically. Any woman who reports a rape risks further victimization, including criminal prosecution because of extra-marital sexual intercourse. As the UN Mission reports:

Coupled with the conservative nature of Afghan society and the social stigma of rape, families often attempt to resolve the case privately or at the community level, through a *jirga* [a gathering of tribal elders] or *shura* [a council of elders] (UNAMA, 2009, p. 25).

These mechanisms provide few rights to the victim, however.



**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.  
© Ash Sweeting/Panos Pictures



killings (Harter, 2011). Other studies confirm that a rape victim may be killed in defence of the family ‘honour’ (Ruggi, 1998; Faqir, 2001).

Even where forced suicide and femicide may not take place, repression of women and girls generates lasting consequences. For example, according to the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, self-immolation is not infrequent among girls and women in Afghanistan (see Box 4.3). The Commission largely attributes these cases to:

forced marriage, premature marriage and multiple marriages as well as other discriminatory practices, the lack of societal awareness of women’s rights, the psychological impact of 25 years of war, customary practices such as *Tuyana* (bride price) and family problems (AIHRC, 2004, p.32).

The correlation between domestic violence and suicide is not limited to countries confronted with chronic homicidal violence or armed conflict. Research undertaken in the United States reveals that between 35 and 40 per cent of victims of domestic violence made at least one suicide attempt at some point during or after the termination of their abusive relationship (Stark and Flitcraft, 1996). A recent European Union study that considers a sample of homicides and femicides in the context of spousal violence identifies suicide as the cause death of 42 per cent of the women in the sample (Psytel, 2010, pp. 9–10).

Indeed, the connections between femicide and suicide are more complex than often assumed. A classification of femicide from a study carried out in five countries in Southern Africa—Botswana, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia, and Zimbabwe—includes suicide as a key category among seven:

- intimate femicide involving women killed by current and former partners;
- femicide by other (male) family members;
- sexual femicide such as rape followed by murder;
- witch femicides;
- ritualistic femicides involving women and girls ritually killed to cut out their genital organs;
- women killed by thieves or robbers; and
- suicides by women experiencing violence, including cases in which there is strong evidence that women kill themselves to escape intolerable levels of violence (Watts, Osam, and Win, 2001, p. 91).

**PHOTO** ▼ A victim of domestic violence takes shelter at a safe house in Nevada County, California, August 2010.  
© Rich Pedroncelli/  
AP Photo

## IPV-related femicides

Femicide is often linked to situations involving intimate partner violence, between either spouses or partners. An intimate partner may be defined as a person with whom the victim had a physical intimate relationship, either at the time of the femicide or in the past. In this context, it is irrelevant whether they were ever married or lived together. For this reason, the term 'intimate partner violence' is more apt than 'spousal' or 'marital' violence. All these categories, however, may be captured in the wider definition of 'domestic violence'. As noted in Chapter Three, the proportion of homicides occurring in the domestic sphere is different for males and females and is not the same



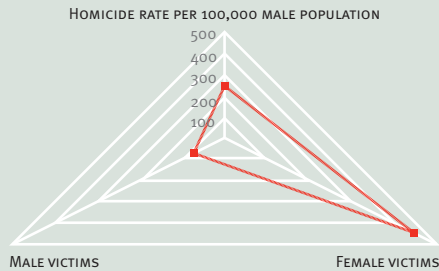


**Box 4.4 Intimate partner violence**

Many studies identify intimate partner violence as a major contributing factor to femicide. Women represent the largest group at risk of IPV. According to the US Bureau of Justice Statistics, women in the United States are more than five times more likely than men to be victims of crime committed by an intimate partner (see Figure 4.8).<sup>32</sup>

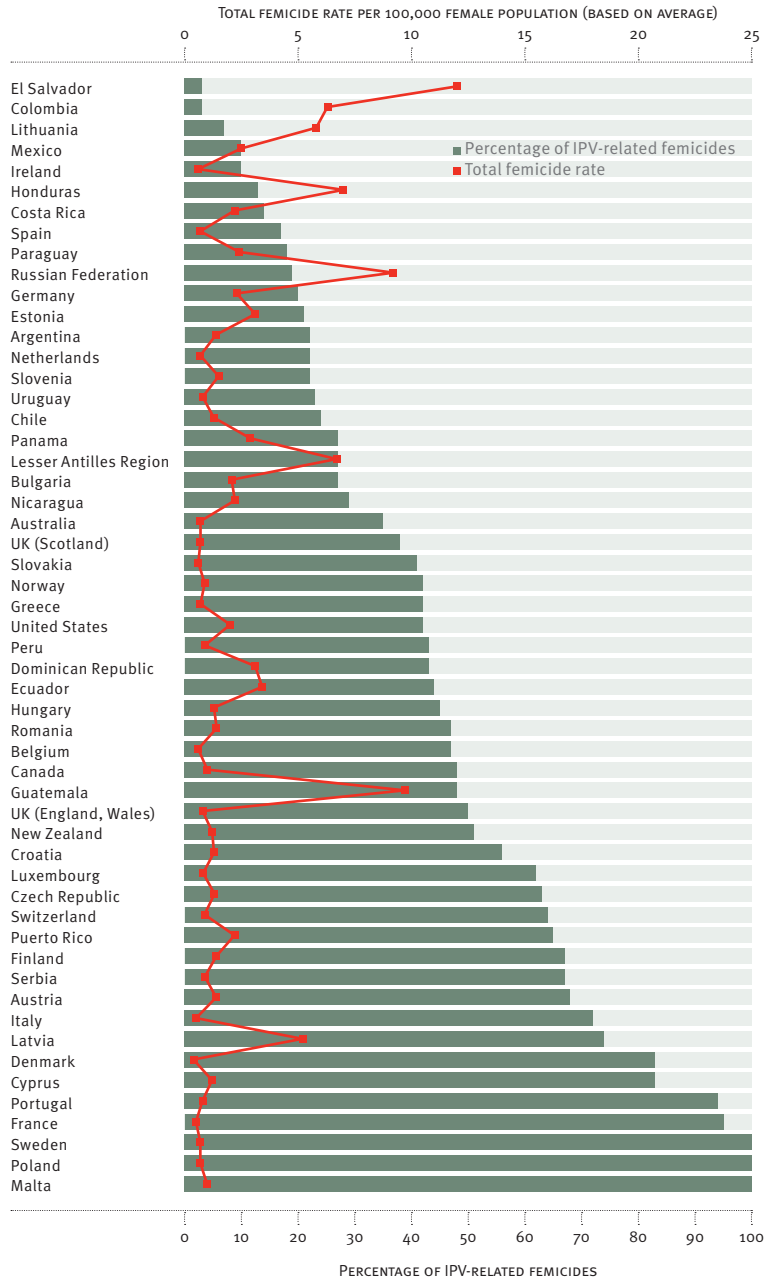
Indeed, as shown in Figure 4.8, women represent a disproportionately large share of the IPV victims with respect to the average; while the total rate is 260 per 100,000 population, the rate for women is 430, while the rate for men is 80. Furthermore, about 30 per cent of femicides are perpetrated by an intimate partner, compared to only five per cent of homicides with male victims (BJS, 2005).

**FIGURE 4.8** Victims of violent crime committed by an intimate partner in the United States, by sex and rate per 100,000 population, 2008



‘Intimate partner’ generally refers to current and former spouses, live-in partners, and dating partners. IPV is not limited to violence committed by men against women; it also refers to cases of violence by women against men and by one partner against the other in same-sex couples (WHO, 2002). IPV is frequently represented as a pattern rather than a single incident, often escalating from less serious to more severe violence. IPV may be considered a part of domestic violence, which is not limited to couples or ex-couples but extends to include acts committed by parents and other siblings who use violence to coerce, dominate, or exercise power over the victim.

**FIGURE 4.9** Total femicide rates per 100,000 female population and estimated percentage of IPV-related femicides per country, 2004–09



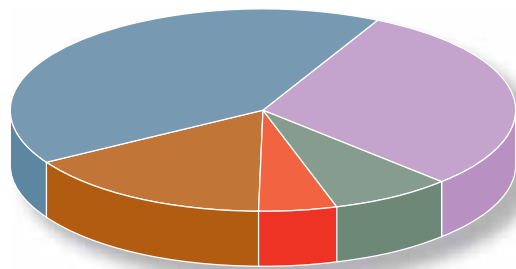
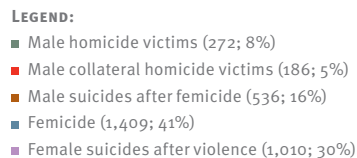
SOURCE: GBAV 2011 femicide database

in all countries. Statistically, women run a much higher risk of being killed by their partners than do men (WHO, 2002; UNIFEM, 2006; see Box 4.4).

Figure 4.9 shows total rates of femicide and the estimated percentage of IPV-related femicides based on the sample of 54 countries and territories for which data is available. There is a weak negative correlation between the two indicators ( $-0.431$ ,  $n=54$ ), reflecting that the higher the rate of femicide, the lower the proportion of IPV-related femicide. This corroborates the conclusion that higher rates of victimization of women may accompany widespread violence rather than domestic or intimate partner violence. In countries where femicide rates are high, women also run a higher risk of becoming targets of violence *outside* the private sphere.

Violence committed by current and former intimate partners represents a risk across all countries and cultures. Strikingly, the vast majority of women killed in the context of IPV had previous experience of domestic violence or stalking, including

**FIGURE 4.10** Deaths of men and women as a consequence of domestic violence in the European Union, 2006



**SOURCE:** Small Arms Survey elaboration of Psytel (2010)

being physically abused by the same perpetrator (McFarlane et al., 1999; Campbell et al., 2003). Understanding these and other risk factors is critical when considering measures to prevent and reduce femicide.

As noted above, the total number of femicide victims may be higher if suicides and indirect casualties are also included. For example, children, relatives, or other witnesses may be killed as a result of IPV. A study carried out in the 27 countries of the European Union analyses 3,413 deaths resulting from domestic and spousal conflicts in 2006, taking into account both male and female victims (Psytel, 2010, p. 9; see Figure 4.10). The findings are instructive:

- Incidents of femicide were most common, accounting for 41 per cent of all cases.
- Some 8 per cent of the victims were men killed by their female partners.
- Women who committed suicide after enduring long-lasting domestic or spousal violence represent 30 per cent of the sample.
- In 16 per cent of the cases, perpetrators killed themselves in ‘homicide–suicide’ scenarios.
- Collateral victims who happened to be involved in domestic or spousal incidents represent 5 per cent of the sample.

In some cases—known as ‘extended suicide’, ‘familicide’, or ‘homicide–suicide’—the perpetrator may kill his or her entire family before committing suicide. The vast majority of these incidents involve a male perpetrator who commits ‘femicide–suicide’ or, in some cases, ‘femicide and attempted suicide’; they tend to take place in the home and guns represent the instrument of choice (Auchter, 2010; Liem and Nieuwebeerta, 2010). Homicide–suicide represents an important component of lethal domestic violence. Research on this issue

is most advanced in Europe and the United States, where this type of incident is more frequent among the middle class than in the lower strata of society (Oberwittler, 2008; Kivivuoria and Lehtia, 2003). Not much information is available from low- and middle-income countries. Yet research in South Africa has identified patterns similar to those found in high-income countries, highlighting that approximately 19 per cent of perpetrators of femicide commit suicide within a week of the murder (Roberts et al., 2010; Abrahams, Jewkes, and Mathews, 2010).

### The use of firearms in femicides

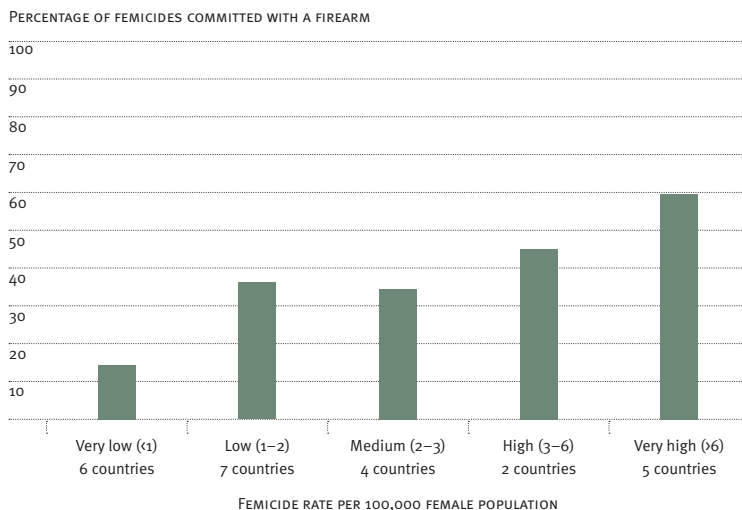
The 2008 *Global Burden of Armed Violence* estimates that approximately 60 per cent of homicides are committed with a firearm (Geneva Declaration Secretariat, 2008, p. 5). While firearms are frequently used in homicides involving men, the use of firearms in femicide is less frequent. Nevertheless, firearms play an important role in violence against women, especially in IPV. Moreover, when a firearm is used, the probability that the perpetrator of femicide will commit suicide is also higher (Mathews et al., 2008).

Firearms are more often used merely to threaten rather than to shoot victims (Hemenway and Azrael, 2000). Firearms may be used to coerce victims to comply with one or more offenders. Weapons are also frequently present in the case of stalking. Specifically, stalkers may own weapons and use them ‘to control and intimidate rather than injure victims’ (Meloy, 1998, p. 17). Nevertheless, displaying firearms is a predictor of actual use. Many victims of femicide had previously reported being threatened with a firearm (Campbell, Webster, and Glass, 2009). Likewise, the presence of a weapon in the home may also facilitate lethal violence against women and girls; indeed, a firearm is more likely to be used to threaten and injure

family members than to protect the home from intruders (Hemenway, 2011, p. 7). A Canadian study has demonstrated that gun policy limiting access to firearms in households has reduced the risk of domestic disputes ending tragically, based on a study of the number of women killed over a six-year period (RCMP, 2010).

In the 24 countries for which adequate data is available, there is a direct correlation between femicide rates and the percentage of femicides committed with firearms. Low homicide rates frequently correspond with the rare use of firearms (see Figure 3.7, CHARACTERISTICS OF ARMED VIOLENCE). By way of contrast, in countries with high homicide rates—such as Brazil, Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras—more than 60 per cent of femicides perpetrated in 2004–09 involved the use of a firearm. Figure 4.11 shows the average distribution of femicides committed with firearms by rate of femicide per 100,000 female population.

**FIGURE 4.11** Average percentage of femicides committed with firearms in 24 countries, by femicide rate, 2004–09



SOURCE: GBAV 2011 femicide database

Figure 4.11 also reveals that the use of firearms is much more frequent in countries that exhibit very high femicide rates. Among all countries under review, an average of one-third of all femicides were committed with firearms.

Figure 4.12 highlights the difference between the use of firearms in homicides with male vs. female victims in Mexico on the whole and in Ciudad Juarez from 1993 to 2009. On average, approximately 60 per cent of homicides involving a male victim were committed with a firearm; in contrast, fewer than 40 per cent of femicides involved the use of a gun. Since 2005, there has been a marked increase in the proportion of homicides committed using a firearm, with more than two-thirds of male victims killed by firearms in 2009.

The extremely high levels of violence in Ciudad Juarez, capital of Chihuahua state, are reflected in the very high proportion of homicides committed with firearms, which is generally higher than

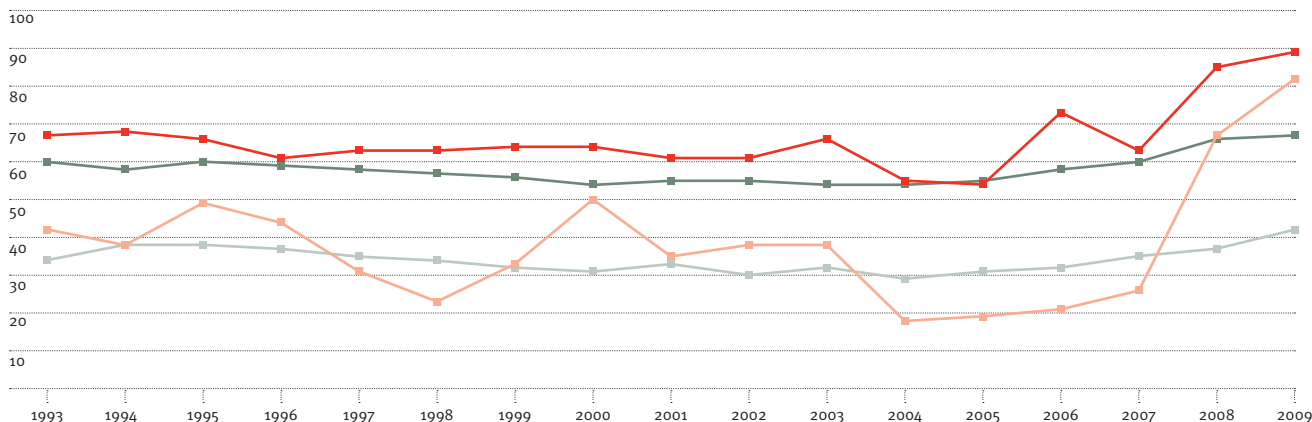
the national average for both male and female victims. In 2007–09, the percentage of femicides committed with firearms increased dramatically, reaching 82 per cent in 2009 and thus nearing the percentage observed in homicides with male victims (89 per cent).

In the United States, data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows that firearms were used in approximately half of all recorded femicides in 1999–2007 (CDC, n.d.a; see Figure 4.13). Most of the femicides by firearm occurred in the age group of 15–24-year-olds, in which they account for 59 per cent of the cases. This suggests that firearm use may be linked to the age of the victim. Firearms were also used to kill more than one-third of the victims aged 5–9 and almost half of those aged 10–14. Indeed, ‘children aged 5 to 14 years in the United States have 11 times the likelihood of being killed accidentally with a gun compared with similarly aged children in other

**FIGURE 4.12** Percentage of male and female homicide victims killed by firearm, Mexico and Ciudad Juarez, 1993–2009

- % of male homicide victims killed with a firearm in Mexico
- % of female homicide victims killed with a firearm in Mexico
- % of male homicide victims killed with a firearm in Ciudad Juarez
- % of female homicide victims killed with a firearm in Ciudad Juarez

PERCENTAGE OF HOMICIDES COMMITTED WITH A FIREARM



SOURCE: Small Arms Survey elaboration based on INEGI (2009)

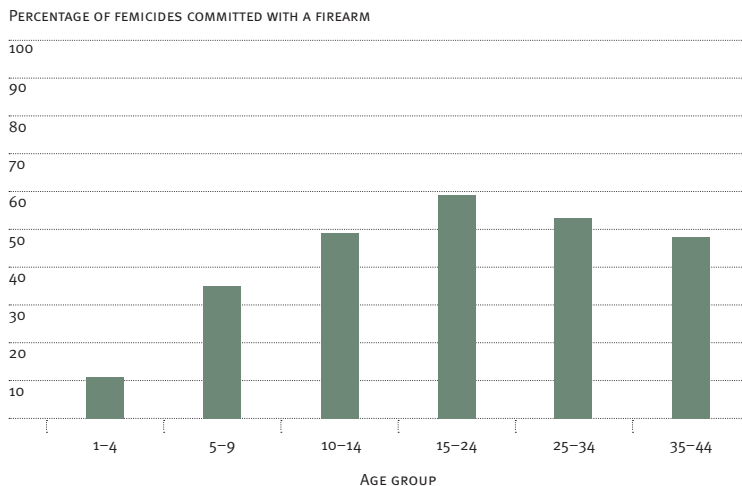
developed countries' (Hemenway, 2011, p. 2). Furthermore, incidents involving girls killed by a firearm most frequently took place inside a residence, often as a result of reckless behaviour with a firearm (Coyne-Beasley, Morocco, and Casteel, 2003, p. 358).

## Hidden forms of lethal violence against women

There is little doubt that the data presented above underestimates the extent and breadth of femicide and violence against women. The fact is that such violence frequently goes undocumented as a result of the reluctance of victims to report and due to the poor accessibility of reporting systems. In some contexts, violence against women and girls is tolerated and condoned. Some countries still have legislation in place that foresees the use of violence to sanction a woman's perceived misbehaviour. The development of an international debate to guarantee equal rights for women and to protect them from violence has been quite slow. A steady process only started with the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (UN, 1993); it continued with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Beijing Declaration, culminating in UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on 'Women and Peace and Security' in 2000 (UN, 1994; 1995; 2000).

This section considers examples of lethal and non-lethal violence that may be difficult to capture at a global and even national statistical level. Specifically, 'honour' killings and dowry deaths may not be subject to criminal justice procedures or punished with the same seriousness as homicide (HRCP, 2011; see Box 4.5). These and other related practices occur in many different countries across Asia and Africa—and among diasporas—

**FIGURE 4.13** Percentage of femicides committed with firearms in the United States, by age group, 1999–2007



SOURCE: Small Arms Survey elaboration of CDC (n.d.a)

as well as in certain countries in Europe and the Americas (Gendercide Watch, 2008). Some jurisdictions may not consider that killing women or forcing them to commit suicide under certain circumstances even constitutes a crime. Acknowledging this gap in his 2010 report, the Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions encourages more research on the link between gender-based violence and killings, 'whether concerning honour killings, femicide, domestic violence or witchcraft killings' (UN, 2010b, paras. 62–63).

There are myriad examples of women being subjected to violence or killed by relatives because they allegedly infringed on social customs or damaged the family 'honour'. The UN Population Fund estimates that around 5,000 women and girls are abused, exposed to violence, and in some cases killed each year by male relatives as punishment for a range of behaviour judged to have damaged the reputation of the household,

### Box 4.5 Dowry deaths in India

The home of the in-laws in South Asia can be a particularly dangerous environment for women and girls. Survey data suggests that the vast majority of reported murders of women in India are incidents of husbands killing their wives, with 85 per cent of female victims killed in their own home (Mohanty et al., 2004; UNFPA, 2003).

Marriages involving dowry and other demands from the husband are not only a risk factor for domestic violence, but also a direct cause of violent death for women. While dowry payment is illegal in India, it remains common practice, with related disputes or violent demands for more money frequently leading to the death of brides or brides-to-be (Ash, 2003).

Of India's reported 32,369 homicide victims in 2009, around one-quarter were female (NCRB, n.d.b). 'Dowry deaths' under Section 304B of the Indian Penal Code are recorded separately.<sup>33</sup> In 2009, 8,383 cases were filed under that heading, which may include more cases of violent deaths of women and girls than those recorded under the homicide category. Taken together, dowry killings may represent up to 26 per cent of violent deaths and more than 50 per cent all violent deaths of women and girls in India in 2009.<sup>34</sup>

The number of police-recorded dowry killings in India has risen by 25 per cent since 1999 (NCRB, n.d.b, p. 58). Whether the rise is due to an increase in police and law enforcement attention to the issue or a real underlying increase is unclear. The latter explanation is supported by a retrospective hospital study of female homicide victims, which estimates that 30 per cent of those deaths are dowry-related (Mohanty et al., 2004, p. 153).

Source: Malby (2011)



clan, or tribe (UNFPA, 2003). Women who demonstrate intolerance towards traditional restrictions, especially as regards the choice of friends or partners and sexual behaviour, are especially at risk.

Another scenario in which women and children may be killed is when they are believed to be practising witchcraft. According to a 2002 report by Radhika Coomaraswamy, the then Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, Its Causes and Consequences, the practice is found 'mainly in Asian and African communities' (UN, 2002, p. 16).

While victims can be male or female, the majority of witch killings across societies appear to target women. Reports of some 50 ritual killings in Papua New Guinea in 2009, for example, provide accounts of young and old victims, mostly women and girls (Al, 2009; Parry, 2009). In Tanzania, up to 1,000 persons are reportedly killed every year based on allegations of witchcraft; the majority of the victims are women above the age of 50 (HAI, 2008, p. 7). According to a study carried out in Ghana, being aware of the status of women and girls in a society is crucial to understanding witch-related femicides (Adinkrah, 2004). The Special Rapporteur also points out that witch killing is often the result of highly unequal gender relations in a society (UN, 2002, p. 17).

Research suggests that witch murders are often linked to poverty and situations of economic despair. One study carried out in Tanzania assesses the number of witch murders in connection with extreme rainfalls that lead to droughts or floods. It finds that the link is significant: 'There are twice

**PHOTO** ◀ A newlywed stands in a shelter for victims of dowry violence next to a poster highlighting the economic demands some new brides face from their husbands and in-laws, New Delhi, June 2004. © Elizabeth Dalziel/AP Photo

as many witch murders in years of extreme rainfall as in other years' (Miguel, 2005, p. 1153). Similarly, reports of witch killings in India suggest that they may well be the result of economic suffering:

When people suffer from illnesses, or if there is a lack of drinking water, or if there is a death in the family, or cattle die, or if there is a crop failure, or even if there is a natural calamity, the local magic doctor is approached. [. . .] He usually declares a woman or women to be witches or 'dayans' and suggests their elimination through death, to be rid of the evil spirit that is causing the problems (UN, 2002, p. 17).

Alleged witches are killed in a variety of ways. Killings may take ritual forms, including burning, stoning, or beating.<sup>35</sup> In the past few years, several reports have called attention to the risk of witchcraft rituals acting as covers for trafficking in organs (Kelly, 2009). In such scenarios, victims are abducted and killed in order to sell their organs.<sup>36</sup>

Another way that women are intentionally and unintentionally killed is through infection with HIV/AIDS. Unprotected sex is the major mode of HIV transmission and women victims of sexual violence are at high risk of contracting the virus. According to the World Health Organization, forced sex increases the chances of virus transmission because of the likelihood of tissue laceration (Dunkle and García Moreno, 2010). It is extremely difficult to quantify the extent of the problem. Victims of violence rarely seek help or report incidents. Many live in abusive relationships in which asking for medical care would raise suspicion of the partner, who may use further violence against them. A lack of information and medical assistance contributes to the spread of HIV/AIDS and limits the effectiveness of prevention programmes and interventions.

#### Box 4.6 HIV and sexual violence in Kenya

Violence against women is not only a public health problem, but also a key vector of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. There is evidence that women and girls in Kenya were at especially high risk of contracting HIV/AIDS during the post-election violence of December 2007 and early 2008. Violence erupted suddenly, ushering in waves of mass rape. Hospitals were soon confronted with a rapid surge in the number of rape victims seeking assistance (Holmes, 2008).

Some groups of women were more vulnerable to sexual violence and HIV/AIDS transmission than others. Specifically, the situation was extremely serious among the approximately 350,000 displaced people due to the elevated incidence of gang rape (COVAW, 2008). Even after the post-election violence subsided, the risk for women remained high.

In Kenya, as elsewhere, women are socialized to accept, tolerate, and even rationalize domestic violence and to remain silent about such experiences. A recent study finds that 44.1 per cent of national HIV incidence can be attributed to heterosexual sex within existing unions and regular partnerships (Kenya NACC, 2009). These findings confirm a long-hidden reality: that spousal sexual violence, usually initiated by the male partner, is a major source of HIV infection.

A recent study carried out in Kenya reveals that HIV-positive women are subjected to many forms of abuse by their partners (Machera, 2009). Violence and the threat of violence can hamper women's ability to adequately protect themselves from HIV infection or assert healthy sexual decision-making. In addition, women living with HIV are more likely to experience violence due to their HIV status (Dunkle and García Moreno, 2010).

The *Kenya Demographic and Health Survey 2008–09* documents a sizeable reduction in the proportion of women who say they have experienced physical violence since they turned 15 >>

years old (KNBS, 2010). The survey finds a reduction from 49 per cent in 2003 to 39 per cent in 2008–09. Even so, at least 12 per cent of women aged 15–49 reported that their first sexual intercourse was forced against their will. Moreover, overall, one in five Kenyan women (21 per cent) experienced sexual violence. Analysis across provinces indicates that the two provinces with the highest proportion of women experiencing physical violence (Nyanza and Western provinces) also featured the highest proportion of women experiencing sexual violence.

Among surveyed women who had been married at least once, sexual violence was reportedly perpetrated mainly by current and former husbands and partners. Those who never married said that violence was committed mainly by boyfriends, although almost one in five never-married women (19 per cent) was violated by a friend or acquaintance and almost as many by a stranger (17 per cent). The likelihood of experiencing either physical or sexual violence increases with the age of the women. That said, women with secondary or higher education and those in the top two wealth quintiles are less likely to experience sexual violence than other women.

In the vast majority of cases, sexual violence is perpetrated by persons known to the victims (Machera, 2009). Indeed, strangers commit only 6 per cent of recorded sexual violence. About 37 per cent of women who experienced sexual violence reported current husbands or partners as the perpetrators, followed by current or former boyfriends (16 per cent) and former husbands or partners (13 per cent). Women who have experienced both physical and sexual violence are more likely to seek help than those who experienced only one or the other (KNBS, 2010). Older women are more likely than younger women to seek help to stop the violence.

To reduce sexual violence the Kenyan government has enacted the Sexual Offences Act No. 3 of 2007 (KNBS, 2010). The law has been lauded as a move in the right direction, although its implementation remains slow. For example, the cases brought by women and girls who were raped during the post-election violence in 2007–08 have not yet been addressed by the courts. Mechanisms for retrieving evidence and tracking down perpetrators are generally substandard. Consequently, the law has not yet succeeded in deterring rapists.

Source: Machera (2011)

**PHOTO** ► A woman stands outside an office dealing with child abuse and violence against women at a police station in Mombasa, Kenya, 2005.

© Sven Torfinn/Panos Pictures







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The level of brutality has been heightened through the systematic use of rape as a weapon of war and perpetrated by soldiers who carry the HIV/AIDS virus. Indeed, the widespread and systematic targeting of civilians and the use of rape is a striking aspect of recent armed conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa (Elbe, 2002, p. 168; see Box 4.6). In other parts of the world, rape has also been used as a systematic weapon of terror leading to the spread of HIV/AIDS. During the military rule between 1991 and 1994 in Haiti, for example, women were raped because of the alleged political activities of their husbands. The perpetrators were reportedly 'police, soldiers and criminal gangs operating with impunity' (Bastick, Grimm, and Kunz, 2001, p. 79). Twenty per cent of police officers reportedly suffered from HIV/AIDS in Haiti at the time. As a consequence, in 2001 Haiti had the highest prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the Western hemisphere (p. 79).

## Conclusion

The critical role of collecting data on lethal violence against women cannot be overstated. And while the evidence base is growing to demonstrate the scale and distribution of femicide and violence against women, this chapter has underlined critical information gaps, especially across Africa and Asia. The fact is that the quantity and quality of data on femicide are very poor and characterized by incomplete geographical coverage. Reliable and valid information on violence according to sex, age, relationship to the perpetrator, and instrument used is crucial to designing effective violence prevention and reduction strategies.

In settings where reported levels of violence are high, femicide levels are also likely to be high. Similarly, these environments are likely to be characterized by the systematic discrimination

of women and pervasive gender inequality. In these places, women and girls cannot enjoy a safe or secure lifestyle. The chapter calls attention to incidents occurring inside as well as outside the domestic sphere. Women are vulnerable to violence committed by strangers, but more frequently they are unsafe in their own homes.

A key conclusion, then, is that there is a need to enhance reporting and analysis of data on lethal and non-lethal violence against women—both cross-nationally and sub-nationally. This goal could be achieved by undertaking steps such as those proposed by the Geneva Declaration study on *Tackling Violence against Women: From Knowledge to Practical Initiatives* (Milliken, Gilgen, and Lazarevic, 2011). Practical recommendations include:

- supporting international initiatives to track violence against women globally;
- the promotion of field-based research on mapping violence against women, including surveys to measure violence committed by intimate partners and strangers; and
- the development of costing tools to improve estimates of the effects of violence against women on development, including direct and indirect costs of violence against women. 

## Abbreviations

<b>INEGI</b>	Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (Mexico)
<b>IPV</b>	Intimate partner violence

## Endnotes

- 1 Figures based on a report generated at CDC (n.d.b).
- 2 The findings are based on a 2007 survey that estimates that between 1.7 and 1.8 million women were raped in their lifetime in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Peterman, Palermo, and Bredenkamp, 2011).

- 3 The data presented in this chapter has largely been obtained from the following international sources: a) the database developed by the Homicide Advisory Group at Harvard University, covering 96 countries and providing public health data on violent deaths disaggregated by age and sex (Bhalla et al., 2011); b) a study on femicide carried out by the Queen Sofia Center in Spain, covering 44 countries (Sanmartín et al., 2010); c) the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe database on gender statistics, covering 29 countries, mostly from the European Union (UNECE, n.d.).
- 4 Russell also notes that certain dictionaries define ‘femicide’ as ‘the killing of a woman’ (Russell, 2008, p. 3).
- 5 See, for example, UNECE (n.d.).
- 6 See, for example, the compilation of data at UNECE (n.d.) and that presented in Sanmartín et al. (2010).
- 7 For details on population data and regional classifications, see the online methodological annexe at [www.geneva.declaration.org](http://www.geneva.declaration.org).
- 8 As in Chapter Two, several smaller Caribbean islands have been grouped together as the ‘Lesser Antilles Region’; they are Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago. The five countries that reported no female victims are excluded from the analysis; the countries are Andorra, Liechtenstein, the Maldives, Monaco, and Qatar.
- 9 The fact that this dataset contains a smaller number of countries than does the one for general femicide reflects the difficulty inherent in capturing additional information on the circumstances of homicide. Many countries may lack the capacity or resources to compile such information, which is extremely scarce at the international comparative level. Furthermore, due to the use of varying definitions or data collection methods in different countries, the more detailed the information, the higher the risk of incomparability.
- 10 Femicide rates represent an average over the period 2004–09. This ‘smoothing’ of data reduces extreme high and low points as well as the distortions resulting from gaps in data series.
- 11 For methods of calculation, see the online methodological annexe at [www.genevadeclaration.org](http://www.genevadeclaration.org).
- 12 For example, the World Bank recently provided funding for the restructuring of the Nigeria Bureau of Statistics; see Zavala and Hazen (2009) about the role of injury prevention surveillance systems in Africa.
- 13 See Small Arms Survey (2006) for an assessment of injury surveillance systems from the Injury Prevention Initiative for Africa. The Initiative was founded in 1997 as a network of individuals and institutions involved in violence and injury prevention on the African continent and to highlight the scale and distribution of mortality and morbidity due to ‘external’ causes, including interpersonal and collective violence.
- 14 Regional homicide rates presented here do not correspond to rates of violent deaths per region in Figure 2.3 in Chapter Two, which also include direct conflict deaths and are calculated based on a larger number of countries (TRENDS AND PATTERNS).
- 15 The analysis includes data from only one country in Southern Africa.
- 16 See the online methodological annexe at [www.geneva.declaration.org](http://www.geneva.declaration.org).
- 17 A detailed breakdown of femicide rates at the state and municipal levels in Brazil is presented by the Brazilian Ministry of Justice in Waiselfisz (2011).
- 18 See the 2009 decision of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights holding Mexico responsible for unsolved disappearances and killings of women in Ciudad Juarez (SRE, 2009, p. 1); see also the reiterated requests of the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, Its Causes and Consequences, Rashida Manjoo, that Mexico respond to continued violence against women in the country and especially in Ciudad Juarez (UN, 2011, pp. 21–23).
- 19 See, for example, Suarez and Jordan (2007) and RNOCDH (2010).
- 20 In order to compare trends across countries without the interference of the different levels, the chart shows patterns over time starting from a normalized value of 100, corresponding to the number of femicides in the country in the year 2004. Lines show percentages of change for each country over the period 2004–09.
- 21 Another challenge for statistical analysis of femicide is represented by time series. The GBAV 2011 femicide database includes very few countries with complete time series, which limits the potential of trends analysis. Furthermore, trend data is frequently available for countries with low rates, in which there may be large fluctuations due to the small number of cases.
- 22 While there is a dearth of homicide data on women in many countries, relevant information on male victims is also limited.
- 23 The population sex ratio varies significantly across countries. The global ratio is estimated at 101.7 men per 100 women for 2010 (UNdata, n.d.). Some countries have larger differences, showing an excess of either male or female population. For example, Kuwait, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and Brunei Darussalam have a strong prevalence of male population, with ratios of 146, 135, 121, and 106 men per 100 women, respectively. In contrast, countries with a larger female population are Latvia and Estonia (86 men per 100 women), Belarus (87), and Cape Verde (92) (UNdata, n.d.).
- 24 These countries exhibit some of the lowest homicide rates in the world: Austria (0.68 per 100,000 population), Switzerland (0.83), Norway (0.69), and Japan (0.45) (TRENDS AND PATTERNS).

- 25 See, for example, Suarez and Jordan (2007) on the involvement of organized crime in femicide in Guatemala.
- 26 Statistically, female authors of femicide, either in same-sex couples or in other circumstances, represent a very small portion of the total, for example less than 1 per cent in the United States. See Glass et al. (2004).
- 27 Sexual abuse is a strong predictor of suicide; see, for example, McFarlane and Malecha (2005).
- 28 The definition of 'forced suicide' is commonly used and has been adopted in the context of violence against women by the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its Causes and Consequences. See UN (2008).
- 29 Any form of violence against women is likely to be reiterated and to have a long-lasting effect on the victim. This generates psychological effects ranging from low self-esteem to the development of aggressive or criminal behaviour and, very frequently, self-inflicted violence. When the violence comes from the surrounding community and social pressure, especially at a very young age, the psychological impact may be stronger and longer lasting. See, for example, Ho (2008), Dubow, Huesmann, and Boxer (2009), and Leslie (2000) on the long-term psychological effects of violence against women in conflict settings.
- 30 See also *Independent* (2008).
- 31 The agencies are the Ministries of Women's Affairs, Interior, Health, Education, and Justice, as well as the courts, women's *shuras* (councils of elders), provincial councils, the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, referral centres, Save the Children, legal aid providers, and the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan.
- 32 See Catalano et al. (2009). Victimization rates are per 100,000 persons age 12 or older. The difference between male and female intimate partner victimization rates is significant at the 95 per cent confidence level.
- 33 Section 304B of the Indian Penal Code specifies that 'where the death of a woman is caused by any burns or bodily injury or occurs otherwise than under normal circumstances within seven years of her marriage and it is shown that soon before her death she was subjected to cruelty or harassment by her husband or any relative of her husband for, or in connection with, any demand for dowry, such death shall be called "dowry death" and such husband or relative shall be deemed to have caused her death' (India, 1860).
- 34 NCRB (n.d.a; n.d.b).
- 35 See Watts, Osam, and Win (2001, p. 91) about the stoning of accused witches in Zimbabwe. See Schnoebelen (2009) for details on the beating and burning of so-called witches in Angola.
- 36 In the last few years, the connection between trafficking in women and girls and trafficking in human organs has moved up on the international agenda. See Pearson (2004) and ECOSOC (2004).

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