Womankind Worldwide

AN OVERVIEW OF FEMICIDE:

WHAT IT IS, WHY IT HAPPENS, AND HOW TO END IT



INTRODUCTION

Through global analysis and statistics, this publication provides a comprehensive overview of femicide – what it is, why it happens, and how to end it – with the aim of raising awareness and inspiring collective action for change.

Until now, there have been plenty of barriers to progress – such as systemic patriarchal biases, a lack of intersectional data on femicide, and widespread impunity for perpetrators – but we call on decision-makers everywhere to take urgent action through comprehensive policy reforms, enhanced legal frameworks, and adequate support systems for survivors. Our 'Taking Action Against Femicide' section includes specific prevention measures for key actors.

We recognise that women's rights organisations and feminist movements across the world are pivotal in bringing about the change needed to end femicide. In the face of systemic failings, grassroots feminist organisations and movements are courageously paving the way for a safer world for women and girls in all their diversities.

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Photo by Sajana Shrestha for Womankind Worldwide

ABOUT WOMANKIND WORLDWIDE

Womankind Worldwide is an international women's rights organisation and funder, working with women's rights groups and feminist movements across the world to end gender inequality. We believe in a world where women, girls and people of all genders – in all their diversities – live without fear of violence, have equal economic rights, and can participate and lead in all spheres of public and private life. We take collective action and advocate for change alongside diverse women's rights organisations, feminist movements and activists, representing the most marginalised groups - including LBTQI+, women with disabilities, young women, Indigenous women and women in the criminal justice system - to challenge inequality at home, in communities and the workplace. We fund and strengthen these movements and advocate for change alongside them.

Learn more about our work:
WWW.WOMANKIND.ORG.UK



DEFINITION OF FEMICIDE

While contexts vary greatly, femicide involves the 'intentional murder of women because they are women, but broader definitions include any killings of women or girls'.[1] It is the most extreme manifestation of violence against women and girls, and it happens everywhere: femicide constitutes a global epidemic.

The term 'femicide' gained prominence at the end of the last century to highlight the gender-based nature of killing women and girls, but the act itself is nothing new. From the misogyny-fuelled witch hunts of 16th and 17th century Europe,[2] to armed-conflict femicide in Africa,[3] to female infanticide and dowry-related killings in Asia,[4] femicide has been going on throughout history.



1 WHO, Understanding and Addressing Violence against Women: Femicide, (2012) I 2 Thobi Thomas, Prejudices that led to witch-hunts still affect women today, 17 May 2022 I
3 Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL), 16 Days Campaign Femicide Advocacy Guide 2021 I 4 Kallie Szczepanski, Female Infanticide in Asia, 2019

TYPES OF FEMICIDE

Femicide can be divided into two main categories: direct and indirect. [5]

Direct femicide includes killing as a result of intimate partner violence – the most common form of femicide – and 'honour' related killings. Gender identity and sexual orientation-related killings, and Indigenous and ethnic-related killings are further examples of direct femicide.

Indirect femicide relates to situations where the death may not have been intentional but accounts for a fatal manifestation of gender inequality. State neglect or discriminatory laws and judicial systems that fail to protect and uphold women's rights can all be to blame. Examples include lack of access to safe reproductive healthcare (including poorly conducted abortions), and failure to provide adequate support to victims of domestic abuse, leaving them vulnerable to escalations of violence.



[5] As defined by the UN's former Special Rapporteur on violence against women, Rashida Manjoo. (UN Report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, Its Causes and Consequences, 2012).

Globally an estimated

81,100 WOMEN AND GIRLS

were killed in 2021, around 45,000 of them (56%) died at the hands of an intimate partner or a family member.[6]

There are an estimated

5000 murders of women

in the name of 'honour' [9] each year worldwide, although this is believed to be an underestimate.[10]

45% of all abortions are unsafe,

and could lead to complications, including death, for the woman. In some cases, abortion is essential care, yet bans or lack of access lead to over **800 MATERNAL DEATHS DAILY,** which are preventable.[8]

On average, more than

5 WOMEN OR GIRLS

ARE KILLED EVERY HOUR

by someone in their own family.[7]



[6] UN/UNODC, **Gender-related killings of women and girls (femicide/feminicide)** (2022) | [7] Ibid. | [8] CWGL, **Factsheet: Femicide due to unsafe abortions,** (2022) | [9] 'Honour–related murders involve a girl or woman killed by a male or female family member for an actual or assumed sexual or behavioural transgression, including adultery, sexual intercourse or pregnancy outside marriage – or even for being raped'. (WHO, **Understanding and Addressing Violence against Women: Femicide**, 2012.) | [10] Ibid

WHY does femicide happen?

Despite contextual variations, all femicides are rooted in misogyny and gender discrimination.

Harmful gender and social norms, deeply ingrained patriarchal attitudes (including beliefs of male dominance and subordination of women), and weak or discriminatory legal systems which fail to sufficiently protect women's rights or hold perpetrators accountable are all manifestations of gender inequality that drive violence against women. High femicide rates end up reinforcing existing gender inequalities – because a society that tolerates or ignores violence against women ultimately 'normalises' it, and fuels the problem.

There are several complex risk factors[11] for women, but according to a European Parliament briefing on femicide, the 'celebration of aggressive masculinity and, reciprocally, devaluation of women's roles are among the most important'.[12] It highlights that, particularly in traditional communities, it is the women who challenge the status quo who are at increased risk of femicide, while at the same time, 'political and legal reforms concerning women's collective status in society are a protective factor'.[13] Though it must be noted that it is the implementation of these legal reforms – and how they are tangibly accessed by women and girls – that is key.

Femicide is not solely a result of misogynistic attitudes in personal relationships but also stems from the pervasive misogyny embedded in patriarchal social structures that women encounter daily: from the police and justice courts to education, healthcare and the media. Womankind's Director of Policy and Communications, Dinah Musindarwezo, explains that it is specifically "how [patriarchy] intersects with other systems of oppression – such as capitalism, racism and white supremacy – that leads to discrimination, dominance and continued violence against women, girls and marginalised genders."

[11] The WHO highlights specific risk factors for perpetrating femicide and for being a victim of femicide in **Understanding and Addressing Violence Against Women: Femicide (2012).** I [12] The European Parliament, **Femicide, its causes and trends: What do we know?** (2021) I [13] Ibid.

Analysing femicide through an intersectional lens

Every woman, everywhere, is at risk of femicide. But as always, intersectionality is key. Globally, the risk of femicide is higher for women in marginalised groups, such as those who identify as LBTQI+, women with disabilities, Black women, women of colour, and Indigenous women. In Australia, murder rates for Indigenous women are eight times higher than for their non-Indigenous counterparts,[14] while in Canada, the homicide rate among Indigenous women and girls was almost five times higher than among non-Indigenous women and girls in 2021.[15]

> **Of all the women captured in FBI homicide data in the USA, Black women and girls are being murdered by male offenders at a rate of almost three times more than white women.**[16]
>
> The Guardian

Women in certain professions are particularly vulnerable too – this is often due to harmful stereotypes and unequal power relations: for example, women sex workers are 18 times more likely to be killed than women in other types of work.[17] Domestic workers are at increased risk of violence too (especially those with informal contracts and no legal or social protection), as are women in professions that may challenge the status quo – such as women judges, parliamentarians, activists, human rights defenders, and journalists.[18]

Across the world, femicide of transgender women often faces a high level of impunity, with many of these crimes uninvestigated.[19] Similarly, femicide of women with disabilities 'remains a largely invisible problem, as data on this issue is not consistently collected and, in most cases, remains anecdotal if it is collected at all,' says Women Enabled International.[20] And for girls with disabilities, the danger is there from birth. They are at heightened risk of infanticide as their lives are often devalued.[21]

[14] Australian Associated Press, 'Murder rate of First Nations women eight times higher than for non-Indigenous counterparts', 5 October 2022 | [15] UN/UNODC, Gender-related killings of women and girls (femicide/feminicide) (2022) | [16] Rose Hackman, Femicides in the US: the silent epidemic few dare to name, 26 September 2021 | [17] CWGL, Femicide in the world of work (2021) | [18] CWGL, 16 Days Campaign Femicide Advocacy Guide (2021) | [19] Ibid. | [20] For example, Argentina is among the few Latin American countries that criminalises femicide, yet the government's official registry and other organisations that track femicide cases do not include data on violence against women with disabilities. (CWGL, 16 Days Campaign Femicide Advocacy Guide, 2021) | [21] Ibid.

BEHIND CLOSED DOORS:
the prevalence of intimate partner violence

Statistically, most femicide victims know their killer. While the majority of male homicides take place in the public sphere, women are more likely to be killed in their own homes,[22] making intimate partner killings the most prevalent type of femicide. According to UN data, around 45,000 women and girls worldwide were killed in 2021 by their intimate partners or other family members – meaning that on average, **over five women or girls are killed every hour by someone in their own family.**[23] This same UN report reveals that 56% of all global femicides in 2021 were committed by intimate partners or family members.[24] And yet, as shocking as these statistics are, major data gaps mean the numbers are likely to be significantly higher.

Intimate partner killing is rarely a random act; it's almost always preceded by domestic abuse. This means that these femicides are preventable, if only there were better support systems in place for domestic abuse survivors and improved justice systems where perpetrators are held accountable. *(See 'Taking action against femicide' on page 22).*

It's also important to recognise that domestic abuse is complex. There's often a lack of understanding around how complicated it is to leave an abusive relationship. In reality, several barriers stand in the way – from financial to societal to psychological – and more recently, the rise in technology-facilitated abuse (for example denying, limiting or monitoring a partner's access to technology, and online harassment) has made things worse for victims attempting to leave.[25] Also, the very act of leaving is in itself a trigger for abusive men. Between 2018 and 2019, on average 43% of all women killed by current or former partners in the UK had left or were in the process of leaving, with the real figures likely to be higher as women don't always tell anyone that they're planning to leave.[26]

[22] UN/UNODC, Gender-related killings of women and girls (femicide/feminicide) (2022) | [23] Ibid. | [24] In some regions the statistics are much higher: for example in the US, of all female homicides accounted for in 2018 where the relationship between perpetrator and victim could be identified, 92% of cases involved women or girls killed by a man they knew. (Rose Hackman, Femicides in the US: the silent epidemic few dare to name, 26 September 2021) | [25] UNFPA/University of Melbourne, Measuring technology-facilitated gender-based violence (2023) [26] Karen Ingala Smith and Clarrie O'Callaghan, Femicide Census: There's a disturbing reason for the falling number of murders, 27 February 2022

Crucially, the lack of understanding around domestic abuse extends to the police. In many countries such as El Salvador, there is a tendency to consider cases of intimate partner violence to be private 'family matters' that don't warrant intervention, leaving women vulnerable to femicide. Many victims of domestic abuse know this, and is one of the reasons why they don't report the crimes: they fear they won't be believed or taken seriously – or worse, will be revictimised by the authorities that are supposed to protect them.[27] This is an example of state violence; a manifestation of gender inequality.

In an interview with the Wilson Center,[28] Juliana Martins from the Brazilian Forum for Public Safety highlights the need for gender-sensitive training in the police force: "Often, the same woman calls the police several times from different occasions. This is frustrating for the police, who are trained to arrest, and they are not trained to understand the complexities of violence against women." To avoid escalations of violence, we need more than arrests; we need a system where the victim's immediate needs (such as housing, counselling, or financial support) are considered and met too.[29]

> **The dynamic of intimate partner violence is by its very name intimate. So there are very rarely witnesses, very rarely corroborating evidence. There's the complicated factor of control and manipulation, financial dependence, isolation – all of those types of things that come from being in an abusive relationship that make the proving something beyond a reasonable doubt difficult.**
>
> Sarah Fair George, US State Attorney [30]



[27] Kristina Zanzinger, SJ Fernandez, and Yanxi Liu, Underreported and Unpunished, Femicides in El Salvador Continue, March 5 2021 | [28] Wilson Center, Accessing Justice: Femicide and the Rule of Law in Latin America, June 22 2020 | [29] Rose Hackman, Femicides in the US: the silent epidemic few dare to name, 26 September 2021 | [30] Ibid.

WHERE DOES FEMICIDE HAPPEN?

While femicide happens everywhere, there are higher femicide rates in countries or regions with significant gender inequality. Relatively speaking, Africa has the highest rate of intimate partner/family-related femicides when taking into account the size of its female population, followed by the Americas.[31] Asia has the highest total number of intimate partner/family-related femicides (17,800 women were killed in Asia in 2021, compared to 17,200 in Africa and 7500 in the Americas).[32]





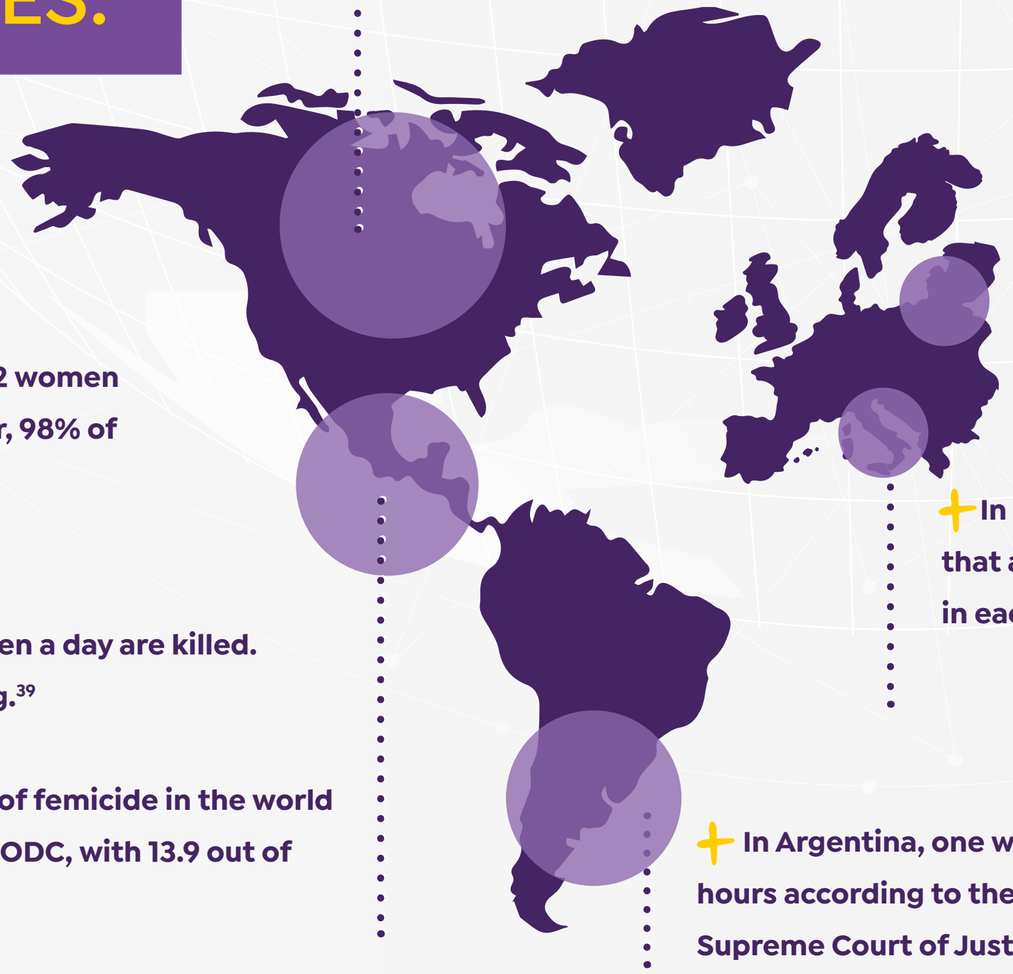
[31] UN/UNODC, Gender-related killings of women and girls (femicide/feminicide) (2022) I [32] Ibid

FEMICIDE
FACTS & FIGURES:

NORTH AMERICA

In the US, three women are murdered every day by current or former partners.[45]





EUROPE

Poland has the highest rate of femicide in Europe. Approximately 400 femicides were recorded in 2020.[42]

+In Italy and the UK, it is estimated that a woman is killed every 3 days in each country.[41]

LATIN AMERICA, THE CARIBBEAN

In Latin America and the Caribbean, 12 women and girls are killed every day. However, 98% of cases go unprosecuted.[37]



+In Mexico, an average of 10 women a day are killed. Tens of thousands more are missing.[39]

+El Salvador has the highest rate of femicide in the world according to 2017 data from the UNODC, with 13.9 out of every 100,000 women murdered.[40]

+In Argentina, one woman is killed every 32 hours according to the Women's Office of the Supreme Court of Justice.[38]



[37] Ricardo Lagos, Femicide is a crime against all humanity, 11 August 2019 | [38] UN Women, Supporting rural and Indigenous women in Argentina as gender-based violence rises during the COVID-19 pandemic, 12 October 2021 | [39] Reuters, Violence against women in Mexico rises to 70%, says study, 31 August 2022 | [40] UNFPA, UNFPA in Jamaica collaborates with Government and CSOs to address GBV and Family Violence, Scale up HFLE, 19 January 2022 | [41] Angela Giuffrida, 'Italy records a big increase in femicides over the last year', 15 August 2022, and The Femicide Census press release, 'Men still killing women every 3 days in the UK' | [42] Statista, Estimated number of femicide victims in the European Union in 2020, by country | [45] Wilson Center, A global look at femicide

FEMICIDE
FACTS & FIGURES:

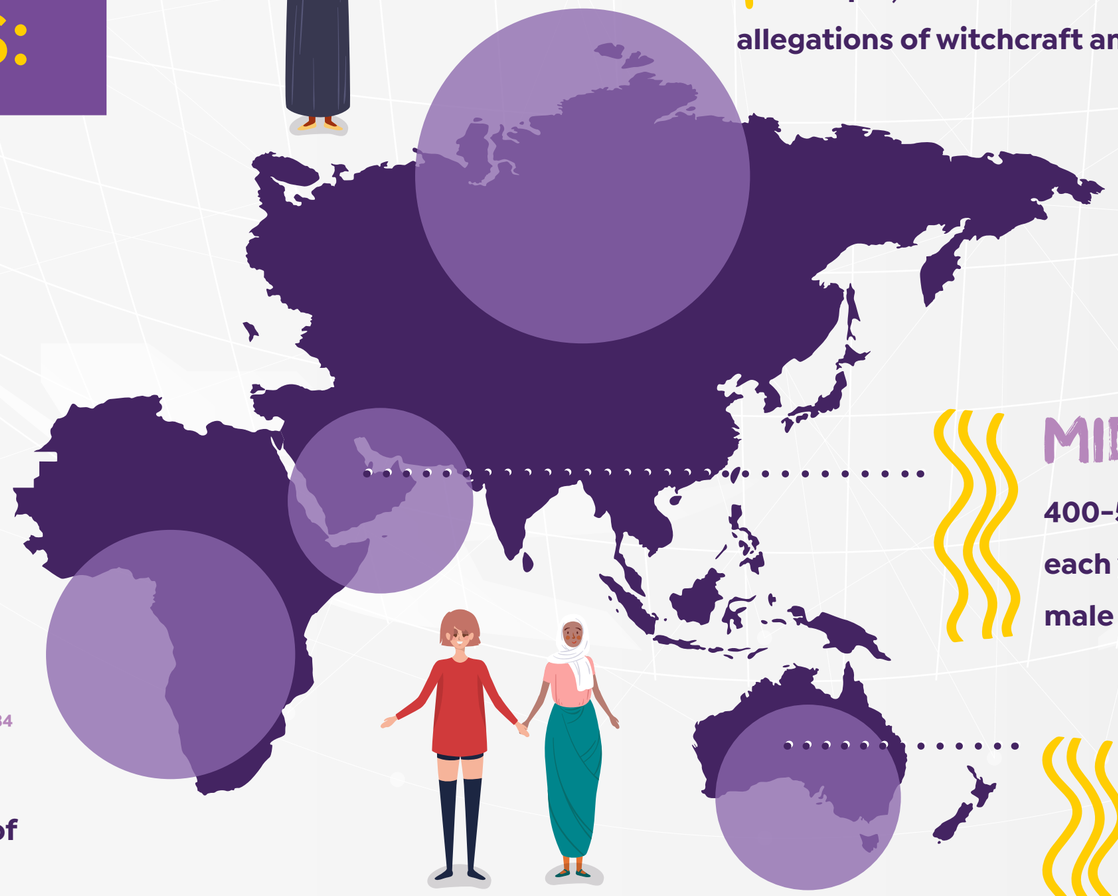


AFRICA

+ In South Africa, a woman is killed every four hours.[33] According to the human rights organisation, Centre for Constitutional Rights, the femicide rate in South Africa is five times the global average.

+ More than two-thirds of all women (69%) intentionally killed in Africa in 2017 were killed by intimate partners or other family members.[34]

+ According to UN Women Kenya, an average of eight women died every month in 2019 due to femicide, February being the worst with 17 deaths.



ASIA

+ In India, dowry-related killings equal 20 femicides a day – nearly 7000 dowry deaths in 2020 alone.[35]

+ In Nepal, Dalit women are disproportionately impacted by allegations of witchcraft and are murdered.[36]



MIDDLE EAST

400–500 honour killings take place each year in Iran. Almost always by male relatives.[43]

OCEANIA

On average, one woman a week is killed by her intimate partner in Australia.[44]

For more statistics, see Womankind Worldwide's global femicide factsheet.

[33] Africa Check, Five facts: Femicide in South Africa, 3 September 2019 I [34] UNODC, Global Study on Homicide: Gender-related killings of women and girls (2018) I [35] Wilson Center, A global look at femicide I [36] CWGL, 16 Days Campaign Femicide Advocacy Guide (2021) I [43] Wilson Center, A global look at femicide I [44] Our Watch, Change the story (2021)

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

The lack of data

One of the major issues when it comes to understanding and tackling femicide is that there is no standardised way of collecting data or reporting on femicide across regions, making it extremely hard to evaluate and compare data globally. Many crimes go underreported, or unreported. Even what constitutes femicide differs from country to country: in parts of Europe, for example, femicide is generally understood as killing by an intimate partner, a definition that does not reflect the reality of the crime.[46]

The fact that many countries fail to provide sex-disaggregated data on homicides or report on the relationship between victim and perpetrator is deeply problematic, because contextual information is crucial. The UN/UNODC states that 'for approximately four in ten women and girls killed intentionally in 2021, there is not enough information to identify them as femicide, especially for those killings happening in the public sphere'.[47] This lack of consistent data means that the number of deaths are very likely to be significantly higher.

> **Of all homicide victims in 2021 – both male and female – around 50% had no data on the context of the killing. (UNODC)**

To resolve this issue, the UN and the UNODC developed a **Statistical Framework** for measuring femicide which was endorsed by the UN Statistical Commission in 2022. The intention is that if national data producers (such as national statistical offices and entities in the criminal justice and public health systems) adopt this comprehensive guide, we will reach a standardised way of collecting consistent, contextually-relevant data on femicide. This will help drive policy change and improve the criminal justice response.

[46] The European Parliament, Femicide, its causes and trends: What do we know? (2021) I [47] UN/UNODC, Gender-related killings of women and girls (femicide/feminicide) (2022)

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

In the vast majority of countries, the law does not distinguish between 'femicide' and the gender-neutral term 'homicide'. But many feminist activists and women's rights organisations around the world are calling for changes to the law, advocating that the killing of women and girls must specifically be recorded as femicide to acknowledge the misogynistic nature of these (hate) crimes. A change of terminology isn't enough to end femicide: we know this from the Latin American countries that do already recognise femicide as a specific crime, and yet femicide rates have not decreased in many of these countries. That's because passing a law and enforcing it are two different things. In some countries such as El Salvador, a femicide conviction can only happen if there is proof of an intimate relationship between the perpetrator and victim, which is not always easy. Another issue is that judges often expose personal biases in their verdicts, rather than adhering to international law and treaties. This means that many cases brought to trial as femicides are not tried as such, leading to impunity for this particular crime, explains human rights attorney Arnau Baulenas in an article for Nacla.[48] Nevertheless, many argue that using the term – and writing it into law – is a necessary step in addressing the root causes of violence against women, including the structural inequalities that enable it. The hope is that distinguishing femicide from homicide would help raise awareness and allow for more accurate data collection, leading to more effective prevention policies and better justice and support for victims of violence. *(See our calls to end and prevent femicide on page 22).*

[48] Kristina Zanzinger, SJ Fernandez, and Yanxi Liu, Underreported and Unpunished, Femicides in El Salvador Continue, 5 March 2021

Impunity

Impunity is in itself a driver of femicide: too often, perpetrators go unpunished or receive lenient sentences which contributes to a society that not only tolerates but enables violence against women. In Latin America and the Caribbean, for example, where femicide rates are high, 98% of femicide cases go unprosecuted.[49] Inadequate and discriminatory judicial systems (including personal biases among judges), weak legal frameworks, and a lack of understanding around violence against women are all to blame. There is widespread impunity for the same reason femicide occurs: ending violence against women in all its forms has not been adequately prioritised among those in power.

What we've seen are policies being put in place but are not being implemented. And what does this mean? It gives leeway for perpetrators to feel free to kill women, harrass women, violate women sexually, because they know that they will not be held accountable.
(Shyleen Momanyi, Young Women's Leadership Instititute (YWLI), interviewed for FEMNET **Femininja podcast series**)

[49] Ricardo Lagos, Femicide is a crime against all humanity, 11 August 2019





The media's role

Undoubtedly the media has an important part to play in breaking the silence around femicide, raising awareness, and promoting positive social change. It can also help build solidarity with those affected by femicide cases, such as family members. Too often, though, it can aggravate the issue with narratives of victim-blaming that perpetuate harmful gender stereotypes. Sensationalist stories dehumanise victims, which in turn may desensitise the public and contribute to the 'normalisation' of violence against women. Then there's the issue of discriminatory reporting, with cases involving women from marginalised groups often receiving the least attention.

The media has a responsibility to not only report cases of femicide, but also highlight the systemic gaps that allow for femicide to happen.[50] By doing so, it is helping to hold institutions (and perpetrators) to account.

We know that the media has the ability to shape public opinion and propel societal change. Journalists and media outlets reporting on femicide in a gender-sensitive, accurate and rights-based way are therefore among the greatest allies in the campaign to end femicide.



[50] As Ladysmith's policy brief 'Femicide and the Media' points out, 'while the public's focus is trained on the social and moral worth of individual victims and their social circles, institutional failures to prevent, investigate, and prosecute femicides go unaddressed.'

A LIST OF RESOURCES FOR JOURNALISTS REPORTING ON FEMICIDE AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN INCLUDE:

Silence and Omissions: A media guide for covering gender-based violence by The Journalism Initiative on Gender-Based Violence (JiG)

Reporting Tip Sheet on Digital Violence: A practical reference guide for journalists and media by UNFPA

Investigating Femicide – a GIJN guide for investigative journalists by Global Investigative Journalism Network

War on Indigenous Women: a short guide for journalists reporting on missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls (MMIWG) by CWGL's Journalism Initiative on Gender-Based Violence in collaboration with the National Indigenous Women's Resource Center.

For more on the media's role, see **Femicide and the Media** policy brief, put together by Ladysmith.



FEMICIDE IS A SOCIETAL ISSUE

Every femicide is a tragic loss of life, but there are other ramifications too. For example, surviving children whose mothers have been murdered by their fathers are subject to life-long trauma and are often forced to leave their homes. In some cases of intimate partner femicide, the woman isn't the only victim – witnesses, friends, children, or a new partner are sometimes killed as well.[51]

Society at large suffers from high femicide rates: a prevalence of violence against women creates a culture of fear and intimidation which can negatively impact women's mental health and wellbeing, and erode trust within communities. It's also worth mentioning the substantial economic cost of inaction. Though this has never specifically been calculated in relation to femicide alone, Deputy Executive Director UN Women Laksmi Puri stated in 2016 that the cost of violence against women as a whole is estimated at 2% of global GDP. 'This is equivalent to USD 1.5 trillion, approximately, the size of the economy of Canada,' she explained.[52]



[51] WHO, Understanding and addressing violence against women (2012) I [52] UN Women, The economic cost of violence against women, 21 September 2016



What we've seen are policies being put in place but are not being implemented. And what does this mean? It gives leeway for perpetrators to feel free to kill women, harrass women, violate women sexually, because they know that they will not be held accountable.

(Melissa Upreti, CWGL from **FEMNET Femininja podcast series**)

TAKING ACTION AGAINST FEMICIDE

In order to end femicide, we must address the root causes of violence against women. This means challenging systemic inequality in all its forms – including ensuring justice for victims of femicide, support for survivors of violence and accountability for perpetrators. It means a clear focus on prevention by promoting gender equality in both public and private spheres (from an early age), and ensuring equal opportunities in education, employment and leadership roles. Engaging with whole communities to challenge harmful cultural norms and gender stereotypes that enable violence against women is also a priority.

Ni UNA MENOS

Ni Una Menos (translated as 'Not One Less') is a powerful example of how feminist movements can be a force for change when it comes to tackling femicide. It came about in June 2015, in response to high femicide rates in Argentina (where it is estimated that one woman is murdered every 32 hours). When news broke of yet another femicide – this time of Chiara Paez, a pregnant 14-year-old murdered by her boyfriend – tens of thousands of women across Argentina took to the streets to protest. The #NiUnaMenos hashtag went viral, and a movement was born. Ni Una Menos has continued to mobilise mass demonstrations to raise awareness around femicide and advocate for change. It has since grown to encompass other women's rights issues and was instrumental in changing the law to (partially) legalise abortion in 2021. The success of Ni Una Menos has inspired feminist movements across Latin America to take a stand against femicide, showing the world that when feminist movements rise up and say 'enough is enough', people – and governments – are forced to listen.



YOUNG WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

A key area of Womankind's work is supporting partner organisations that are focused on ending violence against women and girls. One such organisation is Young Women's Leadership Institute (YWLI) in Kenya. Since 2021, they have been running the #MyDearBody campaign on and offline to raise femicide awareness, challenge misogynistic beliefs that fuel violence against women, and change public discourse that too often blames victims. As part of the campaign, YWLI drafted recommendations to improve Kenya's Sexual Offences Act and are also calling for better, readily available data on femicide: they co-wrote a letter (published in The Star) to Kenyan President William Ruto to demand exactly this. Together with other feminist activists, YWLI put together The Young Feminist Manifesto to guide advocacy work and resource mobilisation strategies. When it comes to ending femicide, YWLI believes in focusing on strategic objectives that encompass shifting mindset initiatives, as well as engaging policymakers to prioritise femicide conversations within their spaces. Visit their website and follow the #MyDearBody campaign on Twitter to find out more.

What can individuals do?

Individuals can raise awareness around the issue of femicide by amplifying the voices of survivors and activists, and supporting women's organisations that work to end violence against women.

Supporting initiatives around the international campaign '16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence' that takes place annually from 25th November to 10th December is an important act of global solidarity in the drive to end violence against women and girls. The campaign has also launched a **petition** to declare December 6 as the International Day to End Femicide with the intention of raising femicide awareness, uniting global feminist movements working to end femicide, and putting pressure on governments to take urgent action.

Ending and preventing femicide

Ending femicide requires a multi-faceted approach. Led by the Centre for Women's Global Leadership and The Canadian Observatory for Justice and Accountability, the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence campaign published a 2022 action guide with ideas on how key actors – including civil society organisations, the media, and policymakers – can implement change.

Femicide is a global epidemic and needs to be treated as such by decision-makers. Alongside feminist organisations and movements, Womankind Worldwide calls for urgent action and recommends the following measures:

TO THE POLICY MAKERS:

- Establish laws that criminalise femicide (recognising the gendered nature of the crime), starting by writing all forms of femicide into law and ensuring that these laws are passed, implemented and enforced: the criminal justice system must simultaneously protect victims and hold perpetrators to account.

- Invest in – and pay attention to – intersectional feminist research on violence against women to understand the social context that allows for femicide to happen.

- Fund more accessible, survivor-centred support services (including hotlines, legal assistance, counselling and shelters).

- Increase long-term funding for women's rights organisations (WROs) that are working to end violence against women and welcome them into decision-making spaces. WROs are instrumental in driving policy change and holding governments to account. (To learn more on this, read Womankind Worldwide's article **'Resourcing for resilience'**)

- Support the collection of intersectional data on all forms of femicide at the national level, disaggregated by sex and relationship between perpetrator and victim. Encourage national statistics offices and entities in the criminal justice and public health sector systems to adopt the **Statistical Framework** developed by the UN and UNODC.

- Invest in women's economic rights initiatives to promote economic and financial independence and autonomy of women and girls, including for survivors and victims of gender-based violence, so as to ensure that they have informed choices in forming relationships and have a choice to leave abusive relationships.

- Ratify and implement the International Labour Organisation's Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (ILO Convention 190) to end violence and harassment in the world of work.

- Ratify and fully integrate progressive normative standards at global and regional levels as identified by the UN's Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women and Girls, Its Causes and Consequences, to comprehensively address gendered forms of violence that inevitably lead to femicide. These are available here.

TO PUBLIC SERVICE PROVIDERS:

- Train healthcare staff and police to detect cases of violence against women and to effectively and sensitively intervene, always with a survivor-centred approach. They can also be trained to identify and document femicide cases.

- Prioritise gender-transformative education that tackles multiple forms of discrimination and oppression so as to address gender power imbalances and gender inequality that lead to varied forms of violence against women, including femicide.

TO THE MEDIA

- Raise awareness by ensuring femicide is reported sensitively and accurately, avoiding victim-blaming narratives. Highlight the systemic failures that allow femicide to happen.



It's clear that femicide calls for urgent systemic change. Women's rights organisations and global feminist movements have a crucial role in ending femicide by holding governments accountable, driving policy change and raising awareness. Womankind Worldwide is proud to support partners who provide vital services for survivors of violence, help women access justice, and work with communities to challenge harmful cultural norms that endanger women.

Everyone has a part to play in building a society where women, girls and people of all genders are safe, respected, equal and free. As we collectively work to make this vision a reality, we must never become desensitised to the data and what it means: "Behind every femicide statistic is the story of an individual woman or girl who has been failed." (UN Women Executive Director Sima Bahous)

INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS

A UN list of international standards related to ending violence against women can be found here.

POLICY BRIEFS, REPORTS AND FRAMEWORK

WHO, Understanding and Addressing Violence against Women: Femicide (2012)

UNODC, Global Study on Homicide: gender-related killing of women and girls (2018)

The European Parliament, Femicide, its causes and trends: What do we know? (2021)

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UNODC, Statistical framework for measuring the gender-related killing of women and girls (written 2021, endorsed 2022)

Ladysmith, Femicide and the Media: do reporting practices normalise gender-based violence?

TOOLKITS & GUIDES

Womankind Worldwide, Breaking the Silence: Ending online violence and abuse against women's rights activists (2018)

Raising Voices and the African Women's Development Fund, Preventing Violence against Women: A Primer for African Women's Organisations (2019)

Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL), Global 16 Days Campaign Advocacy Guide (2021)

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Wilson Center, Infographic: A global look at femicide (2021)

Womankind Worldwide, A femicide factsheet: global stats and calls to action (2022)

Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL), Global 16 Days Campaign Action Guide (2022)

ARTICLES

Ricardo Lagos, Femicide is a crime against all humanity, 11 August 2019

Kristina Zanzinger, SJ Fernandez, and Yanxi Liu, Underreported and Unpunished, Femicides in El Salvador Continue, 5 March 2021

Rose Hackman, Femicides in the US: the silent epidemic few dare to name, 26 September 2021

Womankind Worldwide, Wake up and smell the misogyny, 21 November 2021

Karen Ingala Smith and Clarrie O'Callaghan, Femicide Census: There's a disturbing reason for the falling number of murders, 27 February 2022

UN Women, Five essential facts to know about femicide, 25 November 2022

Margaret Taylor, Latin America fights femicide with legislation, but cultural change is still needed, 22 June 2023

Adie Vanessa Offiong, Explainer: What is femicide and how bad is it globally?

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