

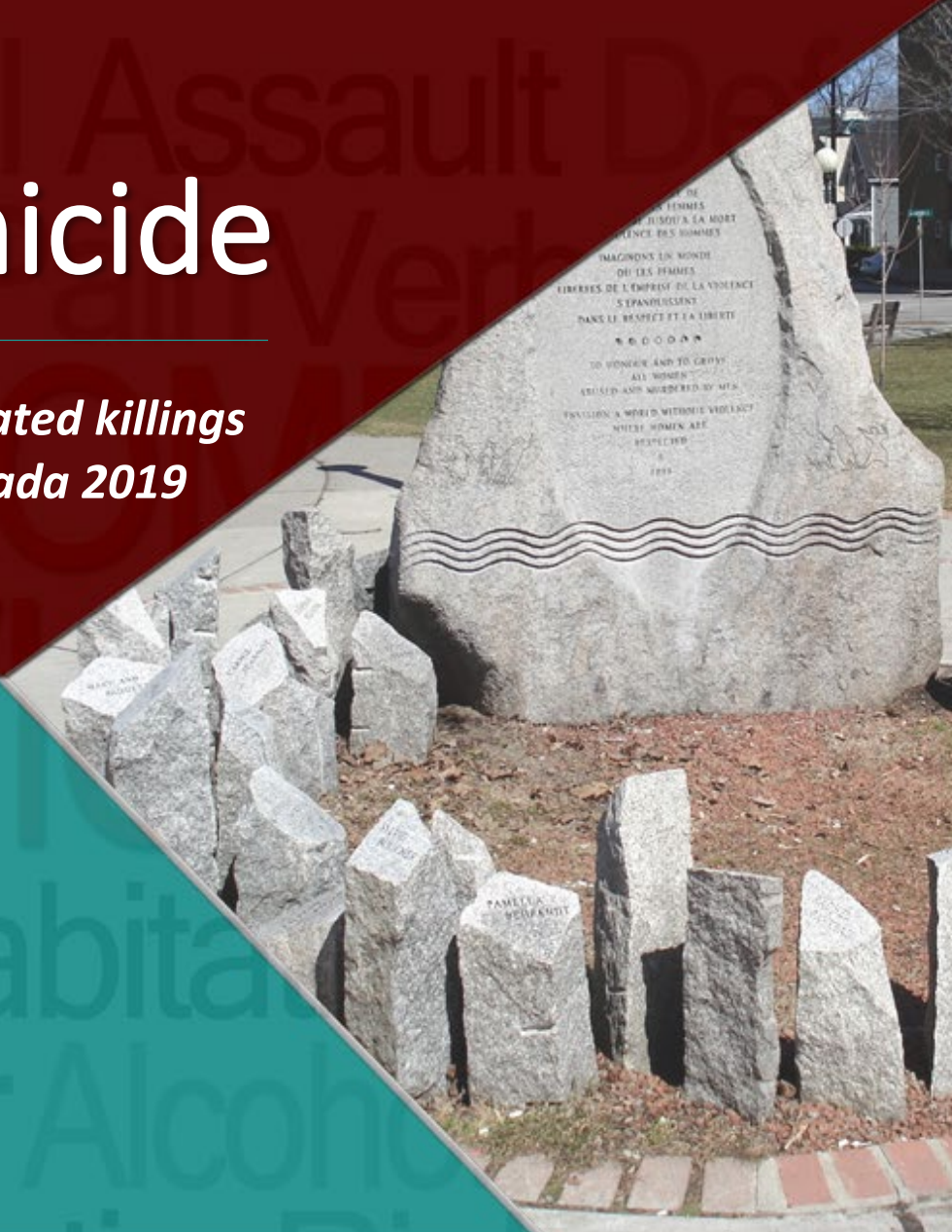


Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability

Observatoire canadien du fémicide pour la justice et la responsabilisation

#CallItFemicide

Understanding gender-related killings of women and girls in Canada 2019



Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada

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- Ending Violence Association of British Columbia
- Ending Violence Association of Canada
- Ending Violence Manitoba
- Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women
- Ontario Native Women's Association
- Prince Edward Island Advisory Council on the Status of Women
- Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women Newfoundland and Labrador
- Provincial Association of Transition Houses and Services of Saskatchewan
- Silent Witness New Brunswick
- Silent Witness Nova Scotia
- Status of Women Council of the Northwest Territories



It is our work together that will make a difference and ensure that these women and girls are not forgotten and that fewer women and girls need to be remembered in the future.

Foreword

I was wounded on December 6, 1989, at Polytechnique, during the tragic evening when my female classmates lost their lives. When I talk about it, even today, I may say: “the night he killed us.”

I think I died a little that night. I let a part of my innocence die, as well as a large part of my confidence in the world. Fallen to the ground, I remember thinking where in the world I could safely go without danger... Nowhere. No place in the world appeared to be peaceful anymore... Not even Quebec.

The killer of the Polytechnique told us why he was there in front of us. Femicides have always been evident in my mind. However, we must still make their importance known today. To remember December 6, 1989, is to remember that our society creates monsters and that we must confront them. To remember December 6 is to recognize that the veneer of civilization is very thin, that it can crumble and that we can lose our ability to live together, our openness to difference, our compassion in the face of human suffering. To remember December 6 is to remember that women are often the first victims of a world in disarray.

The *#CallItFemicide* report of the Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability paints a disturbing picture of a reality that is ours but that we often want to ignore. However, for 30 years, confronting and understanding my reality seemed necessary and salutary in my life. At the individual level, doing so was the first step towards healing and resilience. The same is undoubtedly true at the collective level.

I thank the Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability, through their work; we may be better equipped to build a more just and welcoming world. For all.

Nathalie Provost
Godmother, Order of the White Rose, Polytechnique Montréal



Remembering the women killed in the École Polytechnique mass femicide 30 years ago today:

[Geneviève Bergeron](#)
[Hélène Colgan](#)
[Nathalie Croteau](#)
[Barbara Daigneault](#)
[Anne-Marie Edward](#)
[Maud Haviernick](#)
[Barbara Klucznik-Widajewicz](#)
[Maryse Laganière](#)
[Maryse Leclair](#)
[Anne-Marie Lemay](#)
[Sonia Pelletier](#)
[Michèle Richard](#)
[Annie St-Arneault](#)
[Annie Turcotte](#)



Dedication

As of November 30, 2019, the CFOJA was able to document that 118 women and girls' lives were ended by violence. This report is dedicated to their memory, to the memory of all those women and girls who died due to violence perpetrated against them, and to the family and friends who the women and girls have left behind both to mourn and to celebrate their lives.

Beginning on November 25, 2019 - the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women - and continuing throughout the 16 Days of Activism, the Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability is remembering each woman and girl who was killed by violence in Canada using #RememberMe. The image below represents all women and girls remembered.

We have included a single flame when no photo was available, a silhouette when the woman or girl's name was not released, or the 'You Are Not Forgotten' image for MMIWG when their names were not released and/or no photo was available.

Femicide is Preventable!





Executive Summary

The *Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability* (CFOJA) is the sole Canadian initiative responding to the United Nations call to establish femicide observatories¹ to more comprehensively and accurately document gender-related killings of women and girls or ‘femicide’. The CFOJA mandate is to establish a visible and national focus on femicide in Canada by: (1) documenting femicides as they occur in Canada; and, (2) monitoring state, legal and social responses to these killings. This is the CFOJA’s second annual *#CallItFemicide* report, focusing on women and girls killed by violence in Canada from January 1 to November 30, 2019.²

In the **Introduction**, we highlight that it is 30 years today since the mass femicide occurred at École Polytechnique at the Université of Montréal on Dec. 6, 1989. We provide some current context on progress and challenges which led to the establishment of the CFOJA. Key reasons why it is crucial to focus on femicide in the fight against violence against women and girls are also provided. We also discuss our approach to conducting this research and outline the structure of the full report.

The work of the CFOJA is only one component of a growing Global Fem[in]icide³ Movement with some countries leading the way in bringing femicide and feminicide to the forefront of public concern. To capture this global momentum, **Section I** begins to explore where some regional mobilizations have taken place around the world, what sparked these mobilizations, and how those involved continue to spread awareness, increase education, and fight femicide and feminicide. We will continue to document these international movements in coming reports.

Drawing from media reports, **Section II** provides some basic trends for all women and girls killed by violence in Canada in

2019 before turning to a more in-depth focus on women and girls killed in incidents that involved male accused only in 2019 and then over a four-year period (2016-2019). Below, we provide some highlights.

Women and girls killed by violence in 2019:

- In 2019, a total of 118 women and girls were killed by violence in Canada. On average, every three days one woman or girl is killed in this country.
- The highest rates of killing of women and girls by violence were in Nunavut followed by the Yukon, Manitoba and Alberta. Where at least one woman or girl was killed, the lowest rates were in Nova Scotia, Quebec, and Newfoundland-Labrador.
- Focusing on the primary accused, 87 percent were male accused and 13 percent were female accused.
- Where known, method of killing included shooting (36%), stabbing (29%) and beatings (19%); information remains missing in just over half of the cases.

Incidents involving males accused of killing women and girls in 2019:

- The highest rate of killing of women and girls by male accused remained in Nunavut followed by Manitoba and Alberta.
- More than one-third of women and girls (38%) were killed in non-urban regions (i.e. rural, remote, and northern), including small towns.
- Where victim-accused relationship was known, 57 percent of the primary victims shared a current or former relationship with the accused – referred to as intimate partner femicide.
- Women aged 25-54 continue to be overrepresented as victims of femicide; in contrast to 2018, women

¹ <https://acuns.org/femicide-volume-vii-establishing-a-femicide-watch-in-every-country/>

² The second annual *#CallItFemicide* report is being released on Dec. 6 to commemorate 30 years since the mass femicide at École Polytechnique at the Université of Montréal. The full figures for women and girls killed by violence in 2019 will be updated and released in January 2020. Our inaugural one-year report can be downloaded at: <https://femicideincanada.ca/callitfemicide.pdf>.

³ Fem[in]icide recognizes that the two most frequently-used English terms to capture the gender-related killings of women and girls are ‘femicide’ and ‘feminicide’. Appendix A discusses the evolution of these two terms internationally and in the Canadian context.



aged 65 and older are now overrepresented as victims in 2019.

- Nine out of every 10 women killed had at last one child.
- Information is missing in a high proportion of cases but, where known, method of killing included shooting (38%), stabbing (31%) and beatings (17%).
- Just over one in four accused (26%) died by suicide following the killing; the majority of these cases involving current or former male partners.

Incidents involving males accused of killing women and girls 2016-2019:

- During the four-year period, the highest rate of killing of women and girls by male accused was in Nunavut followed by the Yukon and Saskatchewan which had the third highest rate in the country and the highest among provinces.
- A higher proportion of women and girls were killed in non-urban areas (42%) during the four-year period compared to 2019 alone (38%).
- Where victim-accused relationship was known, a slightly lower proportion (53%) were intimate partner femicide during the four years compared to 2019 (57%) and a higher proportion were acquaintance and stranger femicide.
- Shooting was the most common method of killing (32%) during the four-year period followed by stabbing (28%).
- Women and girls continue to be in the greatest danger in their homes with more than half (55%) being killed in their own home or the home they shared with the accused.

With increasing global attention to femicide, **Section III** introduces discussions that are ongoing as to how femicide should be defined, how it is distinct from homicide and, if so, how these differences might be operationalized to better identify gender-related killings of women and girls. These questions and the subsequent answers are crucial:

1. To effectively produce and understand femicide statistics within and across countries;

2. To determine prevention and intervention initiatives, including identifying appropriate sanctions for offenders; and,
3. To raise public awareness and increase education about gender-related violence against, and killings of, women and girls, primarily by men.

Therefore, **Section III** also describes some of the most common gender-related motives and indicators that have been identified globally, using illustrative case examples of femicide that have occurred in Canada during the past four years.

Section IV describes current and emerging research and data priorities for informing the prevention of femicide and male violence against women and girls more broadly. We focus on some key incident characteristics that continue to dominate among cases of femicide: intimacy, non-urban spaces, and firearms. We, then, describe an ongoing and an emerging risk, respectively, associated with two socio-demographic characteristics: Indigeneity and age. We bring these research priorities together in a subsequent discussion on the challenges faced in terms of access to, and availability of, data. Specifically, we discuss how the risks for these victims and other groups of women and girls remain difficult to document accurately because of data limitations and an increasing lack of transparency, not only when relying on media and/or court documents, but also when reviewing official data sources.

Throughout this report, we have included shaded textboxes that highlight various types of killings of women and girls, illustrative case examples (see **Section III**), and provide further information on issues related to femicide introduced in the main text.

Finally, **Section V** remembers all women and girls killed by violence in Canada in 2019. We include quotes throughout the report from family members and friends impacted by the deaths of their loved ones as one way of showing their lost potential and the ongoing impacts on those they leave behind due to femicide. Their deaths remind us also of the lives of over 10,000 women and girls who have been killed, primarily by men, since official record keeping began in 1961. Their deaths are the tip of the iceberg representing male violence against women.



Introduction



Thirty years ago, Dec. 6, 1989, a mass femicide was perpetrated by a lone gunman at École Polytechnique at the Université of Montréal. Following what is now commonly referred to as the Montreal Massacre, the term ‘misogyny’ was brought into public discourse by feminists, women’s advocates and their allies who worked tirelessly in the days, weeks, months and years following this mass femicide to ensure that the violence perpetrated by this man, motivated by his hateful and misogynist attitudes toward women, would not be disconnected from larger societal norms and structures that support these attitudes (Eglin & Hester 1999; Rosenberg 2003). Specifically, their work underscored the connections between the gunman’s actions and the broader legacies, and ongoing impacts, of entrenched patriarchal societal structures – structures that continue to perpetuate and maintain gender and other inequalities and that are supported by dominant cultural and societal norms about expected roles for women and girls.

The efforts of feminists, women’s advocates and their allies were not in vain. The Montreal Massacre set off a chain of events in Canada that lead to new directions in legislation, policy, and research that served as the impetus for significant legal, social and cultural transformations in the treatment of, and perceptions about, male violence against women and girls. Thirty years later, however, women and girls continue to be victimized and killed *because* they are women and girls in Canada and globally. This fact was driven home once again by a mass femicide in April 2018 which called into question how much progress had been made in addressing the culture of misogyny in Canadian society. While speculation continues about the motives of the man who drove a van along a Toronto street, killing eight women and two men and severely injuring 16 others, the accused discussed his disdain for women on social media and his support for the Incel rebellion⁴ (see *Textbox 1, page 14*). Furthermore, the accused reported during a police interview that his lack of female attention motivated him to take action.

This event and others like it do not negate the progress that has been made during the past three decades, particularly for some types of violence and for some groups of women and girls. For example, violence perpetrated against women by current or former male partners has been the target of significant feminist, grassroots, community-based, and government efforts (Dawson 2008; Johnson & Dawson 2011). This has led to declines in intimate partner and domestic homicide during this period for female and male victims (Burczycka et al. 2018). However, women and girls in Canada and worldwide continue to face the greatest danger in their homes and/or from men with whom they share intimate or familial relationships – a fact driven home by a 2018 report released by the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime on gender-related killings of women and girls (UNODC 2018), which found that, globally, six women are killed every hour by people they know, primarily men. In Canada, at least one woman or girl is killed by a male partner or family member every five days (Dawson et al., 2019).⁵

In addition, despite overall reductions in homicide generally, these declines have not been experienced similarly across all groups of women and girls, like patterns globally. For example, Indigenous and other racialized women and girls continue to face high risks of violence both inside and outside their intimate relationships (MMIWG Final Report, 2019; Peters et al. 2018).

⁴ Those who have conducted research on Incels, short for ‘involuntarily celibate,’ indicate that it is a violent political ideology based on a new wave of misogyny and white supremacy (Zimmerman et al., 2018: 1).

⁵ This is a minimum estimate based on 2018 data for which relationships remained unknown in 26 per cent of the cases.



This was documented, most recently, by Statistics Canada’s Homicide Survey which reported that the homicide rate for Indigenous women and girls increased again in 2018 (Roy & Marcellus 2019: 12). Similarly, women living in rural, remote and northern regions of the country (Dawson et al. 2018; Jeffrey et al. 2019), women with disabilities (CACL 2017; Cotter 2018), older women (Sutton & Dawson 2017), LGBTQ women (Ibrahim 2019), and many others have not experienced increased safety from violence despite changes in legislation and policy targeting violence against women and girls.

Reports released in Canada during the past year have continued to underscore the urgency of this situation. For example, on June 3, 2019, the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls released its final report, *Reclaiming Power and Place*, and related Calls for Justice. The report concluded that “persistent and deliberate human and Indigenous rights violations and abuses are the root cause behind Canada’s staggering rates of violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people”.⁶ As concluded in their executive summary:

This violence amounts to a race-based genocide of Indigenous peoples, including First Nations, Inuit, and Métis, which especially targets women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA people. This genocide has been empowered by colonial structures, evidenced notably by the *Indian Act*, the Sixties Scoop, residential schools, and breaches of human and Inuit, Métis and First Nations rights, leading directly to the current increased rates of violence, death, suicide in Indigenous populations (p. 2).

Later that month on June 27, 2019, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women (UNSRVAW), its causes and consequences released her country report for Canada following her visit April 13-23, 2018.⁷ In her report, the UNSRVAW recognized progress made and commitments to action by the current Canadian government, but noted that “women’s lives in the country are still marked by systemic gender-based violence, especially concerning Indigenous women and girls and other women who encounter multiple forms of discrimination” (p. 4). In addition to Indigenous women and girls, the UNSRVAW specifically underscored the high rates of perpetration against women and girls with disabilities, women asylum seekers and refugees, women living in rural and remote regions, and women in detention.

Echoing ongoing calls by feminists and women’s advocates in Canada, the UNSRVAW concluded that there is “an urgent need for a more comprehensive and holistic National Action Plan on violence against women, ensuring that women and girls in all areas of the country have access to comparable levels of services and human rights protections” (p. 18). She recommended a national action plan on violence against women and domestic violence, including a separate national action plan on violence against Indigenous women or elaboration of a separate framework in the broader action plan addressing the specific needs of Indigenous women and girls. This would address problems with the current federal government approach which she described as “mainly project-oriented, focusing on specific areas and lacking a human rights-based holistic legal framework” (p. 7).

Also noting gaps in available data on all forms of sex- and gender-based violence against women across jurisdictions, the UNSRVAW called for the Canadian government to ensure “systemic and comparable national data collection on all manifestations of gender-based violence against women and girls and femicide with specific emphasis on Indigenous women and girls” (p. 18). Referring to her global call for femicide watches or observatories, the UNSRVAW identified the Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability (CFOJA) as a “good practice” for tracking acts of femicide as well as documenting social and state responses to these crimes to inform evidence-based policy making (p. 8) (see also Hemblade & Gabriel 2019).

⁶ See: <https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report/>

⁷ See Mission to Canada at: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/SRWomen/Pages/CountryVisits.aspx>.



The Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability

Launched on Dec. 6, 2017, the work of the CFOJA builds on previous and ongoing efforts by feminists and women's advocacy organizations in Canada (e.g. Women We Honour Action Committee, Silent Witness initiatives) and in other parts of the world where femicide has been tracked for many years, including the United Kingdom⁸, Australia⁹ and Mexico¹⁰. Referred to as feminicide or feminicidio in some world regions, the use of the term 'femicide'¹¹ which is growing globally underscores the gender-related aspects of the killings of women and girls, highlighting the stark differences in their characteristics and contexts compared to the killings of men and boys.

As outlined in the CFOJA inaugural report (Dawson et al. 2019), this focus is important for various reasons, including:

1. Global findings show that women and girls continue to bear the largest burden of sex- and gender-based violence and lethal victimization, which is attributed to the historical and ongoing impacts of patriarchal social structures, entrenched gender stereotypes and related inequalities (UNODC, 2018).
2. When women and girls are killed by violence, it is most often in the context of their intimate relationships with men. In 2002, the World Health Organization emphasized that women are overwhelming the victims of intimate partner violence worldwide (UNODC 2018; WHO, 2002). As such, the killing of women is significantly different from the killing of men, which is more commonly the result of male-on-male violence by acquaintances and strangers, a consistent finding documented nationally (David, 2017) and internationally (UNODC, 2019). In their *Global Study on Homicide*, the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime reported that:
 - About 87,000 women were killed around the world in a single year – 2017 – which is 137 women and girls being killed on a daily basis.
 - About 50,000 or 58 percent of these women were killed by, primarily male, intimate partners or family members.
 - Women continue to pay the highest price for gender inequality, discrimination and negative stereotypes.
 - Progress in saving the lives of female victims of intimate partner/family-related femicide has not been made in recent years, despite significant efforts.
3. Sexual violence is a key factor in the killing of women and girls, regardless of whether their perpetrators are male partners or strangers. Specific to sexual femicide, while the largest group of women and girls are killed in the context of their intimate relationships, as shown above, a significant proportion (42%) are killed by perpetrators with whom they shared more distant relationships or no relationship at all. These deaths often involve brutal, sexualized violence (e.g. women killed during armed conflict, women killed in the context of human trafficking, organized crime and/or gang-related violence, the killing of Indigenous women and girls) and demonstrate misogynist attitudes and behaviours (e.g. degradation, humiliation, public exposure of sexual nature, abandonment of bodies, etc.).

Given the above facts, the phenomenon of femicide has been identified by the UNSRVAW as the most extreme form of violence against women and the most violent manifestation against women and their inequality (UN General Assembly, 2016).

⁸ For the Femicide Census, see: <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/what-we-do/campaigning-and-influencing/femicide-census/>

⁹ See more information about Counting Dead Women Australia, see: <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/counting-dead-women-the-project-keeping-toll-of-australia-s-hidden-epidemic>

¹⁰ For information on National Citizen Observatory on Femicide: <https://www.observatoriofeminicidiodemexico.org/>

¹¹ For a more information on the evolution of the term 'femicide' and 'feminicide' internationally, and in Canada specifically, see Appendix A.



Consequently, the call for all governments to establish femicide watches or observatories is meant to support data collection as a key mechanism for developing effective strategies to address this “serious human rights violation” (ACUNS, 2017: 1), particularly for the most marginalized and vulnerable women and girls.

With increasing global attention to femicide, then, discussions are ongoing as to how femicide should be defined, how it is distinct from homicide and, if so, how these differences might be operationalized to better identify gender-related killings of women and girls. These questions and the subsequent answers are crucial for: (1) effectively producing and understanding femicide statistics within and across countries; (2) determining prevention and intervention initiatives, including identifying appropriate sanctions for perpetrators; and, (3) raising public awareness and increasing education about gender-related violence against, and killings of, women and girls, primarily by men.

While these discussions continue, the majority of femicide research has been inclusive when defining such acts, typically incorporating one of two approaches: (1) a focus on *all* killings of women and girls or “female homicide victims”; or (2) a focus on what is commonly perceived as the most obvious gender-motivated type of femicide – intimate femicide (Dawson & Gartner, 1998; McFarlane et al., 2002; Stout, 1992; UNODC, 2011, 2013). Both approaches are incorporated in this report as will be discussed below; however, the CFOJA is currently conducting research that will contribute to more nuanced discussions about the gender-related elements of femicide which we introduce in this report.

Structure of this report

Our inaugural *#CallItFemicide* report discussed the evolution of the term ‘femicide’ internationally and in the Canadian context (Dawson et al. 2019; *see also Appendix A*) and, despite being introduced by Diana Russell in 1975, the term remains a relatively new concept with limited visibility and recognition. However, as **Section I** describes, there is a growing Global Fem[in]icide Movement that is contributing to increased education and awareness about this phenomenon among the general public, professionals, and policymakers alike. This global movement is described to situate the work of the CFOJA and Canada in the international context.

In **Section II**, we provide basic patterns in the killing of all women and girls by violence in Canada, including temporal and geographic distributions, gender of accused, victim-accused relationship, and method of killing. The CFOJA tracks the killings of all women and girls, adopting the first approach discussed above (*see Appendix B for more detail on methodology and data sources*). A key reason for doing so is that it is often difficult to know at first if a woman or girl has been killed *because* they were a woman or girl. Therefore, research often includes all killings of women and girls and works to differentiate those influenced by gendered contexts and motives from those that are not. Furthermore, many cases of femicide are originally labelled ‘suspicious deaths’ or remain unsolved for some time with no accused identified. Therefore, these cases must be monitored until resolved although some will remain unsolved indefinitely.

However, incidents that involve women and girls killed by men most closely align with common understandings of femicide; therefore, we focus in more detail on these femicides in the remainder of Section II. We begin by describing victim, accused, and incident characteristics as well as case outcomes where available. Then, focusing on three femicide subtypes, we examine select characteristics for intimate partner femicide, familial femicide and non-intimate femicide (i.e. those that occur between friends, acquaintances, strangers and other non-intimate relationships). Finally, we examine aggregate patterns in femicides that occurred during the four-year period, 2016-2019.

While all femicides are homicides in Canada, not all homicides will be femicide even if a male accused is involved. In other words, for a case to be classified as a femicide, at least one gender-related motive or indicator needs to be identified. **Section III** builds



on the five gender-related motives or indicators that were identified in our inaugural report¹² by identifying additional characteristics of cases or those involved that have been used in other countries to classify a killing as a femicide. Currently, there is little work that has sought to identify and measure gender-related motives and indicators beyond some ground-breaking work in Latin America, which will be discussed further in Section III. Many of these indicators are contained in legislation that describes the offense of femicide in those countries. To more clearly delineate what is meant by *'women/girls killed because they were women/girls'*, we describe each gender-related motive or indicator and include illustrative cases that occurred in Canada during the four-year period, 2016-2019. Research is ongoing to identify the presence or absence of gender-related motives and indicators across all cases; however, as we discuss in this section, it may not always be possible to make such determinations in all cases.

Section IV identifies some current and emerging trends in femicide related to various characteristics of the killings or those involved, some of which remain unchanged from our inaugural report and have been documented by previous research: intimacy, non-urban spaces, firearms, Indigeneity, and age. We also discuss data priorities and challenges that are underscored by these trends.

Throughout the report, we have also included multiple textboxes that highlight various types of killings of women and girls, illustrative case examples (particularly in Section III), and provide further information on issues related to femicide which is introduced in the main text.

Finally, **Section V** remembers all women and girls killed by violence in Canada in 2019. On page 6, we dedicate this report to these women and girls as well as the thousands who have been killed before them in our country. We list the names of the 2019 victims that we were able to gather at the end of the report with the hope that readers will, by then, have a better understanding of their lives and deaths. For some victims listed, it was not possible to remember them by name because they have not been identified and/or their names have not been released to the media, discussed in Section IV. In addition to remembering them in this section, we include quotes throughout the report from family members and friends impacted by their deaths as one way of showing their lost potential and the ongoing impacts on those they leave behind. All quotes have been taken from media reports, and names and identifiers removed. These words reflect all the potential that has been lost to Canadian society due to the deaths of women and girls.

The CFOJA research is ongoing. Early in 2020, we will complete data collection for all victims – female and male – killed by violence in Canada from 2016 to 2019. These data will be used to compare the killings of women and men, underscoring the distinct features of femicide. We will also continue to document femicides of women and girls for earlier years next focusing on cases that occurred between and including 2010 and 2015. By remembering these women and girls and uncovering as much as we can about their deaths, we hope to contribute to a better understanding of the circumstances that led to their killings, many of which will be classified as femicide as information becomes available. In turn, we hope to contribute to the growing international recognition that femicide is a serious and persistent social, legal, public health, and human rights emergency.

In the coming year, as we reflect on transformations of the past several decades, our work going forward will target more specifically the social and state responses to femicide. For example, we will examine 'government responsiveness' to violence against women and girls across the country in terms of legislation, policies, action plans and programs that exist in the various provinces and territories to provide a baseline against which to measure our progress going forward. We will also work to

¹² The five indicators covered in the CFOJA inaugural report were: misogyny, sexual violence, coercive-controlling behaviours, separation, and over kill (see Dawson et al. 2019).



document in more detail changes in media coverage of these crimes over the course of several decades. Finally, we will begin to examine the ‘geography of justice’ that exists in our country with respect to varying sanctions imposed for femicide, what factors may determine variations in court outcomes and if this varies by geography.¹³

The ultimate goal of the CFOJA is to increase justice and accountability for victims of femicide and, in doing so, raise national and international awareness about femicide as an issue that requires attention in our own country and worldwide. The consistent and dominant message in our focus on women and girls who are killed by violence, primarily at the hands of men, is that their deaths are at the extreme end of a continuum of violence experienced by women and girls on a daily basis in Canada. It is our responsibility to protect women and girls from this continuum of violence to ensure they have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

The role of misogyny in contemporary femicide

In the spring of 2018, a male rented a van and used it to inflict terror on the citizens of a large Ontario city. He drove the van down a busy street at lunch hour, killing eight women and two men while leaving another 16 people suffering severe injuries. The victims ranged in age from 22 to 94 years old. The male was arrested shortly afterwards, following a brief standoff with a single officer and was subsequently charged with 10 counts of first-degree murder and 16 counts of attempted murder. When speculating on his motive, conflicting accounts have been provided by those who knew him. Some argue that he was not a terrorist – according to dominant definitions of terrorism, at least – but instead was struggling from mental health issues. Others argued that the attack was motivated by misogyny because the accused belonged to the Incel. The Incel is an online, misogynistic community of involuntary celibate men who blame women for their sexual failings. While not discounting the possibility of mental illness, media reports appear to focus more on the misogynistic explanation. Reports draw attention to the fact that, on his Facebook page, the accused openly discussed his disdain for women and indicated his support for the Incel rebellion. Furthermore, in a newly-released police interview, it is reported that the accused suggested that the lack of female attention he received was what motivated him to take action. It is reported that he further explained that his problems with women began when he attended a Halloween party in 2013 and women laughed at him when he attempted to socialize with them. He was quoted in media as saying that he was angry they would give their love and attention to obnoxious brutes. He thought it was unfair that some men would never get the same level of affection from women. He claimed that it was after that experience that he started to visit Incel chatrooms and speak with other like-minded men who blamed women for the loneliness of men. As the interview progressed, it was reported that he told investigators how he drew inspiration for the attack from misogynistic killer, Elliot Rodger, who is believed by his followers to have founded the Incel movement, and who went on a stabbing spree in California. At some point, the accused reportedly “felt it was time to take action” and initiate the rebellion, which he planned a month prior by reserving the rental van. His judge-only trial is scheduled for February 2020.

[She] was robbed of the chance to “shine like the true diamond that she was.”

¹³ The Geography of Justice project is part of a larger initiative, funded primarily by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, which examines responses to homicide across Canada. For more information, see <https://www.violenceresearch.ca/projects>.



Section I: The Growing Global Fem[in]icide Movement¹⁴

Femicide is now recognized as a global issue that demands action (ACUNS 2013, 2014), but some countries and world regions are leading the way in bringing femicide/feminicide to the forefront of public concern. As the Global Fem[in]icide Movement continues to grow both socially and academically, it is important to explore where regional mobilizations have taken place, what sparked these mobilizations and how those involved continue to spread awareness, increase education, and fight femicide. While not an exhaustive list, the information below provides a sampling of these efforts, drawing from Latin America, Europe, and Africa which represent some of the most active world regions when it comes to mobilizing against femicide/feminicide. In subsequent reports, we will continue to build this section, describing the Global Fem[in]icide Movement in more detail to capture the combined efforts of feminist, women's advocates and their allies internationally to combat fem[in]icide globally. [Contact cfoja@uoguelph.ca to let us know about mobilization efforts targeting femicide/feminicide in your region.]

Latin America

Latin American countries have some of the highest feminicidio (or, in English, feminicide) rates in the world; therefore, it should not be surprising that this world region has been one of the most active in mobilizing against feminicide. The political, economic, and social histories of Latin American countries have also facilitated the mobilization of women and their allies across this region. For example, many Latin American countries transitioned from dictatorships to democracies during the 1970s and 1980s (Carey & Torres 2010; Sanford 2008). After the fall of their respective dictatorships, several countries such as Argentina and Chile suffered from neo-liberal reorganizations. These unique social conditions resulted in what some have called a cycle of protests whereby groups were forced to organize to gain recognition for their human rights (Chenou, 2019). For example, one of the most well-known women's social movements, before the feminicide movement, was *Las Madres del Plaza de Mayo* (Safa, 1990). *Las Madres* was comprised of women with no political experience who evolved into activists when children began disappearing during Argentina's military dictatorship. Every week, *Las Madres* met in the main square demanding the safe return of their disappeared children (Thornton, 2000). Starting as a group of concerned mothers, this movement quickly grew into one of the largest critics of the dictatorship, advocating for the recognition of human rights (Thornton 2000).

Organizations and movements

Women's organizations in Latin America have been organizing against gender-based violence and the killing of women long before femicide was internationally recognized as a social problem (Prieto-Carrón et al., 2007). In many Latin American countries, victims' families have been integral for gaining national and international recognition for fem[in]icide as a social issue (Prieto-Carrón et al., 2007). In Mexico, feminicide campaigns began as early as the 1990s. In Ciudad Juarez, a city close to the US-Mexican border, over four hundred women have been killed and another thousand have disappeared within 10 years (Fregoso 2006). In contrast to the homicides of men, femicides are often accompanied by sexual violence and mutilation (Godoy-Paiz 2012). Campaigns against feminicide began as the bodies of mutilated women began to appear on wastelands outside the

¹⁴ As discussed in the introduction, varying terms have been used to capture the gender-related killings of women and girls since the term 'femicide' was introduced by Diana Russell in 1975. The term 'fem[in]icide captures the combined efforts across world regions to combat femicide/feminicide, the two most common English terms in use. It is also the term incorporated in the logo for the *Global Knowledge Platform on the Gender-Related Killing of Women and Girls* (see: <http://femicide-watch.org/>). In this section, we use femicide or feminicide, depending on the term most commonly used in the country or world region being discussed.



city and the femicide movement in Mexico has been integral in getting fem[in]icide recognized as an international problem (Prieto-Carron et al. 2007). As another example, in 2004, the Central American Women’s organization met in Guatemala, recognizing that femicide was a serious problem across the region and was being largely overlooked by their respective governments (Prieto-Carrón et al., 2007). As a result, The Central American Women’s Organization decided to establish the Red Feministas, also known as the Central American Feminist Network against Violence against Women (Prieto-Carrón et al., 2007). The Red Feministas have been responsible for research initiatives in several countries including Honduras, El Salvador, and Costa Rica with the goal of increasing public education and government action (Prieto-Carrón et al., 2007).

Summary of femicide legislation by country

Country	Year	Law	Distinct Legislation	Naming Style
Argentina	2012	Law 26791 "Femicide" Penal Code Modifications	No	Femicide
Bolivia	2013	Law 348 Comprehensive Law to Guarantee to Women A Life Free of Violence	Yes	Feminicide
Brazil	2015	Law 13.104 Penal Code to provide for femicide as a qualifying circumstance for the crime of homicide	No	Feminicide
Chile	2010	Law No. 20,480 Modifies Criminal Code and Act 20.066, Establishing "Femicide"	No	Femicide
Colombia	2008/2015	Criminal Code Reform/ Rosa Elvira Cely Law	No	Feminicide
Costa Rica	2007	Law No. 8589 Penalization of Violence Against Women	No	Femicide
Dominican Republic	2014	Law No. 550-14 that establishes the Criminal Code of the Dominican Republic.	No	Feminicide
Ecuador	2014	Organic Integral Penal Code	No	Femicide
El Salvador	2010	Special Comprehensive Law for a Life Free from Violence for Women	Yes	Feminicide
Guatemala	2008	Law Against Femicide and Other Forms of Violence Against Women	Yes	Femicide
Honduras	2013	Criminal Code Reform Decree 23-2013	No	Femicide
Mexico	2012	Criminal Code Reform General Law Of Access Of Women To A Life Free Of Violence	Yes	Feminicide
Nicaragua	2012	Law 779 Integral Law Against Violence Towards Women and Reforms to Law No. 641, "Penal Code"	Yes	Femicide
Panama	2013	Adopting measures to prevent violence against women and reform the Criminal Code to criminalize femicide and punish acts of violence against women.	Yes	Femicide
Paraguay	2016	Art. 50 of the Law No. 5777 "Of integral protection of women, against all forms of violence"	Yes	Feminicide
Peru	2013	No. 29819 Law That Modifies Article 107 of the Criminal Code, Incorporating Femicide	Yes	Feminicide
Uruguay	2017	No. 19538 Law That Modifies Article 312 of the Criminal Code.	No	Femicide
Venezuela	2007/2014	Organic Law on the Right of Women to a Life Free from Violence	Yes	Femicide



One of the most well-known and widespread femicide movements is the *#NiUnaMas/NiUnaMenos* (*#NotOneMore* Movement).¹⁵ This movement has traversed throughout Latin America to Central and South America, now including countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Paraguay. Those involved in the NiUnaMas/NiUnaMenos movements across Latin America were able to organize national and regional protests against gender-based violence, climbing fem[in]icide rates, and widespread impunity for these crimes (De Souza, 2019).¹⁶ Although the particular circumstances that sparked the movements in each country were unique, the conditions facilitating high fem[in]icide rates, namely gender inequality and widespread impunity, allowed the movements to gain momentum from one another. In Argentina, for example, the impetus for femicide protests was the killing of Lucia Perez, a 16-year-old girl who had been tortured, raped, and killed after which her body was left in an abandoned hospital. This protest included a one-hour working strike by all women and a public protest through Argentina’s capital, *Buenos Aires* (De Souza, 2019). The protests highlighted the connections between the killing of women and inequalities across class, gender, race, and ethnicity. The movement also called attention to women’s rights as human rights and the need for women to regain power over their bodies (De Souza, 2019).

A second and related influential fem[in]icide movement has been the *#VivasNosQueremos* (*#WeWantUsAlive*) movement. In Mexico, femicide is an infamous social problem, marked by the thousands who have marched in the name of social justice, calling for an end to violence against women in Mexico (Wright 2006). Protestors have also been calling attention to the political apathy, lack of accountability, and the failure to investigate which has been perpetuating these killings. In February 2019, women overwhelmed the streets of Mexico City and social media with slogans and hashtags including *#VivasNosQueremos* (*#WeWantOurselvesAlive*) and *#NoEstamosSolos* (*#WeAreNotAlone*). The protests were motivated by the increase in the number of femicides by women kidnapped from Mexican public transportation systems. Organizers urged governments to increase security measures for women on public transportation (Salazar 2019). In Bolivia, in 2019, President Evo Morales marched along with hundreds of people and organizations to denounce gendered violence using *#VivasNosQueremos* (Telesur, 2019). Similarly, in Ecuador, in November 2018, thousands of women marched in the capital of Quito to demand recognition of their reproductive rights and to end sexual violence and state impunity (Telesur, 2018).

Additional movements in recent years have been instrumental in drawing attention to fem[in]icide in Latin American include the *Mulheres Unidas* (Women United) organizations in Brazil and the *#MachismoKills* protests in Chile. In commemoration of International Women’s Day, thousands of women, children, and men marched in a protest organized in Rio, Brazil under Brazil’s *Mulheres Unidas* “Women United” (Contini, 2019). During the march, activists commemorated the one-year anniversary of the killing of city councilor, Marielle Franco, who was brutally executed and whose killing remains unsolved (Contini, 2019). In Chile, in 2018, over 80, 000 people participated in a march to denounce sexual violence and femicide (Rueckert and Sanchez, 2018). The protest was spurred by a series of sexual assaults at Chilean universities that have gone unpunished (Rueckert and Sanchez, 2018). Holding signs that read “Machismo kills” and “We owe it to those who never came back,” the march made connections between lethal and non-lethal violence against women as products of continuing inequality (Rueckert and Sanchez, 2018).

Most recently, on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, organized by a feminist collective in Chile, a group of women performed “*Un violador en tu camino*” (“A rapist in your way”) (see lyrics, page 18). The song and accompanying dance performance have since spread to other cities and countries and has gone viral on social media being shared by those wishing to draw attention to femicide as human rights violation and a global emergency.

¹⁵ Ni Una Mas translates into Not one more while Ni Una Menos translates to Not one [woman] Less. Although the phrase employed can vary by country, the movements share similar characteristics and messages. For example, while Ni Una Mas is popular in Mexico, activists in Argentina often use Ni Una Menos.

¹⁶ Impunity is the failure or unwillingness of a state to respond. Failing to investigate or prescute femicide perpetrators fosters violence, resulting in a denial of women’s human rights to live free from violence (Fregoso and Bejarano 2010).



Chilean Feminist Anthem Goes Global

[Source: <https://qz.com/1758765/chiles-viral-feminist-flash-mob-is-spreading-around-the-world/>]

A rapist in your way (Un violador en tu camino)

The patriarchy is a judge
that judges us for being born
and our punishment
is the violence you don't see.

The patriarchy is a judge
that judges us for being born
and our punishment
is the violence that have seen.

It's femicide.

Impunity for the killer.

It's disappearance.

It's rape.

And the fault wasn't mine, not where I was, not how I dressed
And the fault wasn't mine, not where I was, not how I dressed
And the fault wasn't mine, not where I was, not how I dressed
And the fault wasn't mine, not where I was, not how I dressed

The rapist is you.
The rapist is you.

It's the cops,
The judges,
The state,
The president.

The oppressive state is a rapist.
The oppressive state is a rapist.

The rapist is you
The rapist is you

"Sleep calmly, innocent girl
Without worrying about the bandit,
Over your dreams smiling and sweet,
watches your loving cop."

The rapist is you
The rapist is you
The rapist is you
The rapist is you



Policies and Legislation

Highlighted as a key sign of progress in the fight against fem[in]icide has been the move by various countries to formally criminalize the offense of fem[in]icide. Beginning in 2007 with Venezuela, Latin American governments have enacted legislation, classifying these killings as a distinct crime and/or stipulating specific penalties. More than 16 countries throughout the region have now enacted fem[in]icide legislation (Prieto-Carrón et al., 2007; Sarmiento et al., 2014). In addition to criminalizing fem[in]icide, countries have also started broadening the scope of fem[in]icide legislation. In 2018, Argentina implemented the *Brisa Law*, aimed at compensating children who have lost their mothers to femicide (Hanssen, 2019).¹⁷ In the same year, Argentina also approved the *Micaela Law* which creates a national and permanent program designed to train frontline workers in gendered analysis and violence against women (Hanssen, 2019). Creation of legislation, however, is not enough. While the development of legislation is important in protecting women from femicide, legislation is only useful if it is effective at influencing the practices on *the ground* (Prieto-Carrón et al., 2007). Additional research is needed to assess the effectiveness of femicide legislation and the impacts of violence against women legislation more broadly.

Broader efforts

Across this same region, there are also numerous campaigns designed to educate the public on anti-violence laws, change existing sexist stereotypes, and reinforce the right to live free from violence as a human right (ECLAC, 2014). Further fem[in]icide advancements include increased support for victims of violence such as shelters, legal aid, and economic services. For example, in El Salvador in 2011, the government created the *Ciudad Mujer* (City of Women) program which aims to

The CFOJA and the MMIWG inquiry

The Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability (CFOJA) underscores the importance of the June 3, 2019 Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls - *Reclaiming Power and Place*. This report depicted the starkly violent reality for Indigenous women and girls living in Canada as historical and ongoing genocide. Given the CFOJA's work on femicide, we are keenly aware of the danger faced by Indigenous women and girls, whose daily lives are conditioned by what the National Inquiry terms "structural" and "state-sponsored" violence. Laws, policies, and practices combined with the lack of culturally safe and appropriate services perpetuate and maintain Indigenous women and girls' ongoing experiences of sexism, racism, and discrimination. As also noted in the report, police-perpetrated violence and sexual assault documented by the Inquiry make law enforcement and protection especially fraught and complicated for these women and girls. Ultimately, these oppressive structures and practices lead to violence and death for a disproportionate number of Indigenous women and girls. As the Final Report points out, the origins and ongoing nature of this danger can be directly linked to historical and ongoing impacts of colonization and patriarchy. The report also notes the strong reliance on women in many Indigenous cultures and traditional governance roles, and calls for all levels of government – federal, provincial, territorial, municipal and Indigenous – to honour and recognize these strengths by inviting women into leadership.

The CFOJA calls for immediate accountability and, specifically, for the immediate implementation of a national action plan on violence against Indigenous women and girls led by Indigenous women. In the meantime, it is our hope that the CFOJA can contribute to the calls for justice by: (1) tracking the number of Indigenous women and girls killed by violence in Canada as part of our larger efforts to document femicide nationally; (2) documenting which provinces and territories have the highest rates of femicide of Indigenous women and girls; (3) describing the circumstances that surround femicide of Indigenous women and girls to better understand how marginalization contributes to their greater vulnerability to femicide and all forms of violence which far exceeds what is experienced by other groups of women and girls; (4) identifying the relationships that exist between Indigenous women and girls and their killers, those that occur in the context of family relationships as well as those perpetrated by acquaintances or strangers; and (5) monitoring whether and how prevention initiatives that focus specifically on Indigenous women and girls and their experiences of violence develop over time, including legislation, policies and programs, as well as appropriate punishments for their killers.

Our inaugural *#CallItFemicide* report released in 2018 documented the continued overrepresentation of Indigenous women and girls as victims of femicide, representing at least 36 percent of the femicide victims as compared to their representation in the Canadian population at about five percent. The 2018 report discusses femicide of Indigenous women and girls as a research priority (see page 53). This overrepresentation continues in 2019 although data challenges are making it increasingly difficult to document in a transparent manner (see Section IV).

¹⁷ For more on the children left behind due to femicide, see recent volume in the United Nations Studies Association Femicide series at: http://femicide-watch.org/sites/default/files/Femicide%20XII_0.pdf



provide health, education, and social services to women (ECLAC, 2014). This program includes social services, police assistance and legal advice for victims of violence (ECLAC, 2014).

Additional campaigns have been designed to target particularly vulnerable groups including young people, older women, or Indigenous women and girls. In Colombia, for example, in 2007, several female children died as a result of complications from female genital mutilation, a clear example of femicide. These deaths exposed practices previously unknown to much of the public. As a result, Colombia has implemented a national action plan to identify, review, and abolish practices that are harmful to the lives or health of women and girls (ECLAC, 2014).

Although these fem[in]icide movements have spurred governments to make considerable progress on femicide, much work remains. Governments in Bolivia and Costa Rica have recognized the issue of fem[in]icide as a national emergency. In 2018, Chile implemented approximately 40 measures and programs to address gender violence at the state level, including the creation of women's shelters. Bolivia also declared a feminicide emergency in 2019. This 10-point emergency plan declared feminicide a national priority, including prevention and punishment initiatives as well as resources for victims (Reuters, 2019). The high rates of feminicide despite increased programming and services demonstrates the need for additional action (Fregoso & Bejarano, 2010; Musalo & Bookey, 2013).

One of the primary limitations for combatting fem[in]icide is the lack of reliable fem[in]icide data (Weil, 2016). To combat this, several Latin American countries have created national fem[in]icide observatories to collect, analyze, and disseminate information on fem[in]icide. National observatories currently exist in Argentina, Mexico, and Nicaragua.¹⁸

Europe and United Kingdom

Drawing inspiration from the successes of the fem[in]icide movements in Latin America, European citizens have recently taken to the streets in countries across Europe to denounce fem[in]icide and gender-based violence. In particular, the *#NiUnaMas/#NiUnaMenos* (*#NotOneMore/#NotOneLess*) movement seems to be gaining momentum in this world region as well as it formed the basis for the protests in both Spain and Germany (EFE, 2018; Wischnewski, 2018).

Governments and academics across Europe have also recognized femicide as an issue requiring state action. The first regional femicide initiative was implemented in 2013. Funded by the COST Action, the 'Femicide across Europe' project had several aims, including to create a foundation of femicide research, foster the exchange of ideas among researchers, and develop femicide coalitions across Europe working toward femicide prevention (Weil et al., 2018). The first regional book on femicide in Europe was published in 2018, reporting on country and regional progress to date. One such success has been the European Observatory on Femicide. In 2018, the European Observatory on Femicide was launched at the University of Malta. The primary purpose of the observatory is to prevent femicide through data collection and increasing awareness of femicide (Weil et al., 2018). In addition to the regional femicide observatory, national observatories have also begun to be adopted, including in Portugal, Spain, and the Femicide Census in the United Kingdom (Weil et al., 2018).

Most recently, French citizens have mobilized against the killing of women as a result of an increase in femicide across France. Mobilization efforts have included marches, rallies and a "die-in" where women lay in the street to represent the number of women killed by femicide (Tessier, 2018). Protestors are calling for action from the French Government, including the allocation

¹⁸ For more information on national observatories in respective countries, see the following links: Argentina at <http://www.dpn.gob.ar/observatorio-femicidios.php>; Mexico at <https://www.observatoriofemicidiomexico.org/>; Nicaragua at <https://voces.org.ni/femicidio>



of funds to reduce domestic violence (Cost and Johnstone, 2019). Organizers are using the hashtags *#1Milliardpas1Million* or *#NousToutes* on social media to draw global attention to the issue of femicide in France and to pressure the government to act.

A similar movement also occurred in Spain in 2019. In more than 250 locations across Spain, organizers declared a “feminist emergency.” This movement was set in motion after several high-profile rape cases and a “summer of killing” during which 19 women were murdered by current or former partners (Jones, 2019). Organizers promised to “Turn the Night Purple”, the colour of the anti-violence campaign, protesting the inaction of government officials to protect women from violence (Jones, 2019). The hashtag *#NocheVioleta* was also used on social media to call attention to femicide and advocate for state intervention. The fem[in]icide movement in Spain has also drawn from the Latin American movement, using the hashtag *#NiUnaMenos* to shed light on the similarities of fem[in]icides in Spain to those in Latin America (EFE, 2018).

Germany has also begun to mobilize around the issue of femicide. For example, *#KeineMehr* (*#NotOneLess*) is a femicide collective that aims to disseminate knowledge and break the silence surrounding femicide in Germany (Wischnewski, 2018). In 2017 Keine Mehr hosted a femicide conference to share information on femicide characteristics, media portrayals, and gaps in femicide data (Wischnewski, 2018).

Significant advancements have been made in the United Kingdom’s fight against femicide by the Femicide Census and the Women’s Aid Organization. Women’s Aid combats violence through a multi-sectoral approach which includes lobbying the government, supporting survivors, facilitating professional training and conducting research on domestic abuse.¹⁹ Developed by Karen Ingala Smith and Women’s Aid, the Femicide Census is a database that contains more than one thousand women killed by men in England and Wales since 2009 (Long et al., 2018). Since 2016, femicide census reports have been released annually. The aim of this research is to track men’s violence against women to develop a more nuanced understanding of the causes of violence for more effective prevention techniques (Long et al., 2018).

“She was my hero. She had survived so much pain and trauma in her life on the street but she was not angry or resentful because of it. She was truly the most compassionate and sensitive person in spite of everything she had been through. She got up every day and faced the world with her big, beautiful smile. My daughter's death has destroyed me.”

Africa

Kenya was among the first African countries to mobilize against violence against women and femicide. Media reports have documented horrific cases of women who have been raped, mutilated, burned, tortured, and killed without intervention (Nzuki, 2019). For example, in February 2019, in Nairobi, a young woman on her way to the hospital got into a taxi but never reached her destination. The woman’s body was later discovered and had been sexually assaulted and mutilated (Nzuki, 2019). Movements such as *#HerLifeMatters*, *#EndFemicideNow*, and *#TotalShutDownKe* have been used to raise awareness and fight against femicide in Kenya (Mutune, 2019).

¹⁹ For more information on the vital work of the Women’s Aid Organization, see <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/what-we-do/>



With the highest femicide rates in the world, South Africa has become a recent leader in the mobilization against femicide. In 2016, women's groups protested the killings of sex workers using the phrase *#SayHerName*. This movement was intended to draw attention to the number of women killed and the perceived apathy surrounding about the killings of sex workers (News Deeply 2016). In 2019, women in Johannesburg and Cape Town took the private sector by storm as protestors organized outside the Stock Exchange and the World Economic Forum (Mumbere, 2019). Protestors demanded that President Ramaphosa declare a state of emergency due to the rampant killings of women in the region (BBC News, 2019). This mobilization was sparked by the killing of a 19-year-old university student Uyinene Mrwetyana who was sexually assaulted and killed inside a post office by one of its employees while she was trying to collect a package (Khumalo, 2019). On social media, the hashtags *#AmINext* and *#RIPUyinene* were used to increase awareness surrounding her death, calling for action to end gender-based violence and femicide (BBC News, 2019).

The South African Government responded to these protests by declaring a femicide crisis and introducing an emergency action plan (Khumalo, 2019; Stagoff-Belfort, 2019). The action plan includes changes to the criminal justice system, improving legal and policy practices in sexual assault cases, and increasing female economic empowerment (Khumalo, 2019). The action plan further promises to hire additional social workers, train 200 social workers in trauma management, and increase funding and services to femicide survivors and their children (Stagoff-Belfort, 2019).

Nigeria and Uganda have also made the news recently for high rates of violence against women and femicide. Protests in Nigeria occurred only weeks after the South African protests to call attention to the killing of at least eight women killed since July in Port Harcourt (Mumbere, 2019). Police are investigating a potential connection between these killings, but no charges have yet been laid. Nigerian protestors have also taken to social media, using the hashtag *#ProtectPHGirls* to call attention to this latest string of unsolved killings (Mumbere, 2019).

This summer, organizers protested in Uganda, calling for increased femicide accountability in light of increases in kidnapping and killings of women in the country (Nalubega, 2019). Protestors called for three specific actions from Uganda police and government, including the creation of a specific investigation team to investigate and prosecute femicide cases, changing the victim-blaming narratives around femicides, and creating a directorate to work exclusively on issues of gender-based violence (Nalubega, 2019).

Canada and the United States

Although the femicide movement in North America has received significantly less attention than other continents, mobilization in this region has also begun. On social media, hashtags including *#CallItFemicide* in Canada have continued to gain popularity in recognizing the killing of women as an epidemic instead of isolated or sporadic events. In Canada and the United States, ongoing and recent attention has been focused on the number of unsolved killings and disappearances of Indigenous women and girls. The hashtag *#MMIWG* (Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls) is used to link the killings of Indigenous women and girls, many of which have gone unpunished (Gray, 2018). In Canada, the release of the Final Report from the MMIWG Inquiry identified Calls for Justice to be addressed by various levels of government.

In the United States, Women Count USA is an organization that has been working to fill analytical gaps by collecting data on women killed by men (Anguiano, 2019). Using social media and media reports to count the killings of women, this organization humanizes the problem of femicide by calling attention to individual women who have become victims of femicide (Anguiano, 2019).



International progress

Largely as a result of tireless feminist and grassroots fem[in]icide movements, particularly in some world regions, the international community has begun to take a more active approach in combatting fem[in]icide. International initiatives include raising awareness, creating policies and conventions, and encouraging domestic states to tackle fem[in]icide. The UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences has begun investigating fem[in]icide and its causes as part of its in-country investigations (ACUNS 2017; Weil et al., 2018). In 2012, the Vienna Declaration on Femicide²⁰ recognized femicide as a human rights issue, defining femicide as ‘the killing of women and girls because of their gender’ (Weil et al. 2018). The United Nations has also recognized gender equality and the elimination of violence against women and girls as a sustainable development goal, marked by #SDG on social media.

More recently, in 2017, at the 26th Session of the UN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, the Femicide Watch Platform was launched and has been upgraded on an ongoing basis (see <http://femicide-watch.org/>).²¹ Referred to as the *Fem[in]icide Watch: Global knowledge platform on the gender-related killings of women and girls*, it is a joint project of the UN Studies Association and the Femicide Team of the former Academic Council of the United Nations Systems (ACUNS) Vienna Liaison Office. The platform encompasses femicide definitions, important data and documents, and recommends best practices in the implementation of legislation and the investigation and prosecution of femicides with the goal of increasing education and awareness globally.

The international community has also begun assisting regions more directly with their femicide initiatives. The European Union and the United Nations, through the Spotlight Initiative, announced an investment of 50 million euros to help end femicide in Latin America (European Commission, 2018). The Spotlight Initiative is a global alliance between the European Union and the United Nations which aims to end all forms of violence against women by 2030. Although this initiative is concerned with all forms of violence against women, the alliance is particularly focused on femicide, human trafficking, domestic and sexual violence.

“When [she] wasn't with her brothers and sisters, cousins, and babies, you could find her reading a Jude Devareaux book, doing yard work, gardening, berry picking, canning, baking, or sipping some wine. She took pride in her house and was a wonderful hostess. She was also a wonderful cook, and had aspirations of getting her Red Seal. Her big dinners and breakfasts at her house are always going to be missed.

Above all, out of anything in this world, she loved spending time with her family, especially her babies. Days spent with them camping, mushroom picking, and summers by the lake, are some of the most fondest memories of her. That's when she was in her element.”

²⁰ For full declaration, see: <https://femicideinCanada.ca/sites/default/files/2017-12/VIENNA%20%282012%29%20DECLARATION%20ON%20FEMICIDE.pdf>.

²¹ CFOJA Director, Myrna Dawson, is Senior Advisor for the Global Platform Team (see: <http://femicide-watch.org/content/about-us#overlay-context=>).

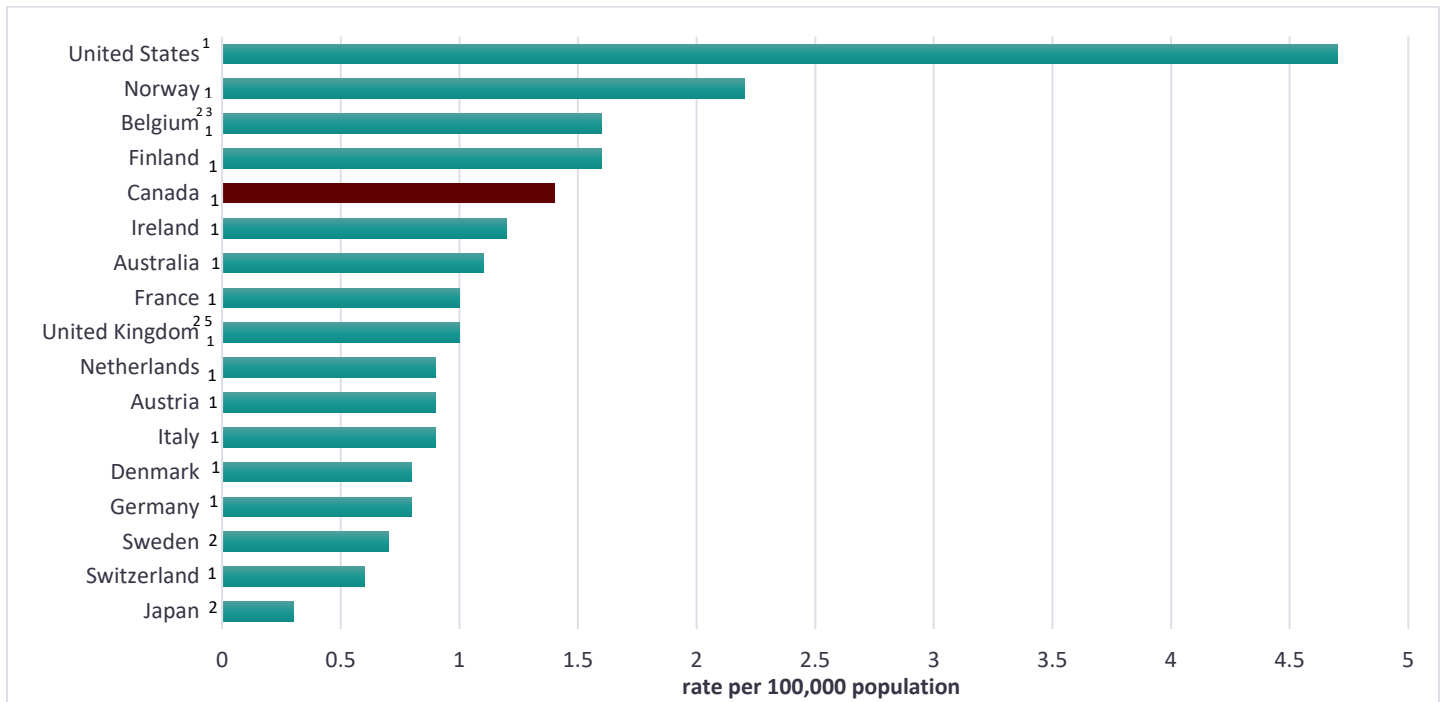


Section II:

Patterns in Women & Girls Killed by Violence in Canada

Canada is often viewed as a safe country by those living outside of Canada and by many Canadians themselves given what are seen to be low rates of violence, including homicide. Such perceptions are often based on comparisons to levels of violence documented in the United States and, as a result, the assumption about the safety of Canadians appears valid. However, when comparing Canada to countries or world regions with whom we arguably have more in common than simple proximity (e.g. Australia, Europe, United Kingdom), our seemingly less violent existence is more easily challenged. Canada’s homicide rate is higher than most of its peer countries (*see Chart 1*), ranking fifth highest among those compared (Cotter, 2014). Therefore, the peaceable (or not) context in which Canadians are perceived to live depends largely upon who is looking and from where. More importantly, it depends on whose experiences are being examined. For example, Indigenous peoples and some urban black populations in Canada face homicide risks many times higher than other groups (Bania, 2009; MMIWG Inquiry Final Report 2019; Thompson, 2014)

Chart 1: Homicides by peer countries most recent year



- 1. Figures reflect 2012 data.
- 2. Figures reflect 2011 data.
- 3. Includes homicides committed during the Utoya Island mass shooting in July 2011. From 2001 to 2010, Norway’s annual homicide rate fluctuated between 0.6 and 1.1 per 100,000 population.
- 4. Figures reflect 2013 data.
- 5. Includes England and Wales.

Notes: Peer countries were determined using a methodology developed by the Conference Board of Canada. The Conference Board of Canada began by selecting countries deemed "high income" by the World Bank, then eliminated countries with a population less than one million, as well as countries smaller than 10,000 square kilometres. Of the remaining countries, the Conference Board of Canada used a five-year average of real income per capita and eliminated any countries that fell below the mean. Based on these criteria, a total of 17 countries remained.

Source: Statistics Canada and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.



Similarly, when examining the rate at which women and girls are killed in Canada, it is higher than that documented in some other countries, including Australia, Austria, Finland, Iceland, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom (UNODC, 2018: 14).²² Furthermore, the risk for certain groups of women and girls is much higher than that faced by other women and girls in Canada. As we discuss below, however, information is often limited or not available to accurately examine femicide risk for many groups, underscoring the need for more attention to research and data collection priorities to inform prevention, an issue we discuss in Section IV.



Below, we examine the killings of all women and girls due to violence that have been documented so far in 2019 to contribute to a better understanding of who is killed, by whom, how and, where when known (Section III discusses some reasons behind these killings). Our data were drawn from media reports. Research on the reliability and validity of media reports as a source of data is summarized and discussed in Appendix B. In short, media reports have been shown to be as reliable and valid as official reports for specific types of information (e.g. gender, age, method of killing, location, etc.) and oftentimes more so when documenting the relationship between the victim and accused – a key element in understanding femicide (Walby et al., 2017). As such, we focus on these factors primarily. As 2019 cases proceed through the criminal justice system, we will update data using court documents where available.

In 2019, up to and including November 30, 2019, 118 women and girls were killed in Canada.²³ This means that, on average, every three days one woman or girl is killed in this country. These 118 women and girls were killed in 113 incidents²⁴ involving 112 accused, both female and male accused. Another 15 cases that have been identified as homicides by police remain open or unsolved and so no accused has yet to be identified.

We caution that the above number is to be considered a minimum estimate of women and girls killed by violence for at least two reasons:

1. We were able to document that at least 21 deaths of women and girls are deemed suspicious by police, but no further information was available and/or investigations were ongoing at the time of writing this report. It is likely that a proportion of these women and girls are femicide victims, but we have not yet added these deaths to our count. The CFOJA will continue to monitor these cases in 2019 and review their potential inclusion in subsequent reports.
2. Some femicides may not yet be reported in the media and/or some women and girls may have gone missing or disappeared, some of whom may be undiscovered victims of femicide. These women and girls may never be discovered. This gap in knowledge has been clearly and effectively demonstrated by reports that highlight the number of missing or disappeared Indigenous women and girls (MMIWG Inquiry Final Report, 2019). While the exact number who have gone missing or have been murdered is uncertain, estimates range from over 1,000 to nearly 4,000.

Below, we begin by focusing on all 118 women and girls whose deaths have been ‘officially’ determined to be homicide to document basic trends and patterns in their killings. Following this, and for the remainder of Section II, we focus on those incidents that most closely align with the phenomenon of femicide – the killing of women and girls by men. We examine total

²² Only those countries for whom information was listed in the UNODC report and are arguably similar in many ways to Canada are noted above. Other countries with lower documented rates of killings of women and girls than Canada are Bosnia and Herzegovina, Czechia, and Slovenia.

²³ The total figures for 2019 will be updated on December 30, 2019 and released in January 2020.

²⁴ The number of victims exceeds the number of incidents because some cases involved multiple victims as will be discussed below



patterns as well as select patterns across three subtypes – intimate partner femicide, familial femicide, and non-intimate partner femicide. We then examine aggregate patterns over a four-year period (2016-2019).

All Women and Girls Killed by Violence in Canada

Table 1: Monthly distribution of women and girls killed by violence (N=118)

Month	Women/girls killed	
	N	(%)
January	12	10
February	11	9
March	9	8
April	15	13
May	12	10
June	5	4
July	15	13
August	10	8
September	8	7
October	14	12
November	7	6
Total	118	100

Temporal distributions: As shown in Table 1, the number of women and girls killed each month ranged from five victims in June to 15 victims in April and July with an average of 11 women or girls killed each month. Table 2 shows that the highest number of women and girls were killed on Tuesdays with one in five killings occurring on that day of the week.

Geographic distributions: Table 3 shows the number and percentage of victims killed in 2019 in each province or territory as well as the percentage of the total female population each province and territory and the subsequent rate of killing of women and girls in each jurisdiction. The largest group of women and girls (35%) was killed in Ontario, attributable, in part, to the fact that Ontario is Canada’s most populated province. However, when adjusting for

Table 2: Distribution of women and girls killed by violence in Canada by day, 2019 (N=114)*

Day of Week	Women/girls killed	
	N	(%)
Sunday	13	11
Monday	14	13
Tuesday	23	20
Wednesday	17	15
Thursday	13	11
Friday	19	17
Saturday	15	13
Total	114	100

*Exact homicide date was unknown in four cases.

Ontario’s female representation of the Canadian population (39%), the rate at which women and girls were killed in Ontario (0.56) in 2019 is below the national average for female victims of homicide (0.87 per 100,000 women and girls).²⁵

Focusing on rates, and consistent with 2018 patterns, Table 3 also shows that the highest rate of killing of women and girls is in Nunavut (10.60) followed by the Yukon (4.98) where the majority of the population is Indigenous. The next highest rates were documented in two of the three Prairie provinces – Manitoba (1.46) and Alberta (1.11). Where at least one woman or girl was killed, the lowest rates were in Nova Scotia (.20), Quebec (.31) and Newfoundland-Labrador (.38).

Table 3: Geographic distribution of women and girls killed by violence in Canada, 2019 (N=118)*

Province/Territory	Number killed	% total victims	% female population	Rate of killing
Ontario	41	35	39	0.56
Alberta	25	21	11	1.11
British Columbia	15	13	14	0.59
Quebec	13	11	22	0.31
Manitoba	10	8	3.6	1.46
Saskatchewan	5	4	3.1	0.86
New Brunswick	4	3	2.1	1.02
Nunavut	2	2	<1	10.60
Newfoundland & Labrador	1	1	1.4	0.38
Nova Scotia	1	1	2.6	0.20
Yukon	1	1	<1	4.98

*There were no documented killings of women and girls in the Northwest Territories or Prince Edward Island.

²⁵National homicide rate based on the population of female residents in Canada in 2018 (163 victims/18,655,084 females x 100,000=0.87).



Gender of the accused: Excluding 15 unsolved/open cases, there was a total of 98 cases involving 112 accused of which 82 percent were male (N=90) and 18 percent were female (N=20).²⁶ Focusing on the primary accused²⁷ only, 87 percent of accused were male (N=84) and 13 percent were female (N=13), consistent with national figures (David, 2017).

Victim-accused relationship: In 2019, results showed that the relationship between the primary victim and the primary accused was known in over three-quarters of the incidents (77%, N=75). Focusing on these cases, Figure 1 shows that 52 percent of the primary victims were the current or former female partner of the accused. The remaining cases involved other family members (31%), friends/acquaintances (9%) or strangers (8%). These patterns are driven largely by cases involving male accused which will be discussed in more detail later in this section.

For the 13 incidents in which the primary accused was female, the relationship was not specified in over half of the cases (N=7; 54%). Focusing on cases where relationships were known, the victims were children (N=3), strangers (N=2), or other family members (N=1) of the accused.

Number of victims: In 2019, a single victim was killed in 92 percent of the cases (N=90), with the remaining eight percent of the cases involving two (6%) or four victims (2%). In half of the multiple-victim cases, the primary target was the accused’s current or former female

Figure 1: Distribution of primary victim-accused relationship in cases of women & girls killed by violence, Canada, 2019

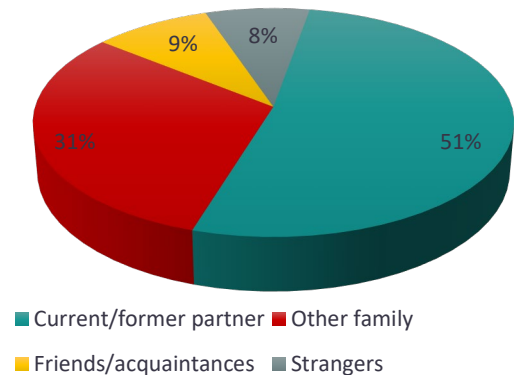
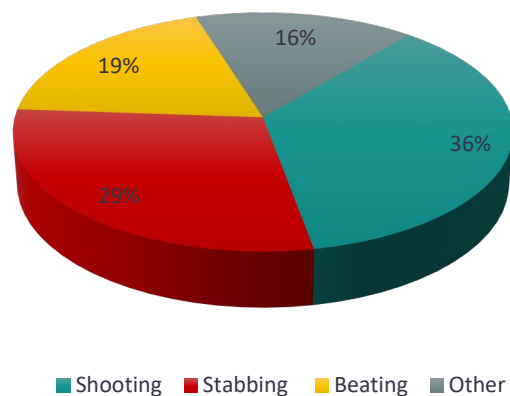


Figure 2: Distribution of method of killing for all women and girls killed by violence in Canada, 2019 (N=58)*

intimate partner or biological child. Other primary targets involved acquaintances, other family members, or strangers. Five secondary (or what are sometimes referred to as ‘collateral’) victims were killed; most of whom were family members (including children) of the accused.



Number of accused: Most cases involved a single accused (92%) with the remaining cases involving two (7%) or eight accused (1%). Among the 20 female accused, seven were co-accused charged in the same case.²⁸

Method of killing: Information on method of killing remains missing in more than half the cases (51%). Among cases with available information (N=58), Figure 2 shows that the most common method used to kill a woman or girl was shooting (36%) followed by stabbing (29%) and beating (19%). Information on the type of gun used was rarely reported. The remaining 16 percent of women and girls were killed by other methods such as arson, strangulation, shaken baby syndrome, or being axed to death.

*Method of killing has not been publicly released in 51% of cases

²⁶Sex was unknown for two accused.

²⁷The primary accused designation is used when there were multiple perpetrators, but one perpetrator was more dominant in the killing and/or shared the closest relationship to the victim. Sex was unknown for one accused.

²⁸ One 2019 incident involves eight co-accused of which seven are female accused.



Women and Girls Killed by Violence Involving Male Accused



In this section, we begin by describing patterns for the total sample of incidents that involved the killing of a woman or girl in which a male accused has been identified. Next, focusing on select characteristics, we examine the most common type of femicide – intimate partner femicide – followed by familial femicide before moving to a discussion of femicides that occur outside the context of intimacy, capturing primarily friends, acquaintances and strangers. In 2019, up to and including November 30, 2019, 89 women and girls were killed by violence involving male accused in Canada. The 89 women and girls were killed in 84 incidents, involving 90 accused.²⁹

Temporal distributions: As shown in Table 4, the number of women and girls killed by violence involving male accused each month ranged from three victims in June to 12 victims in July with an average of eight women or girls killed each month. Table 5 shows that the highest number of women and girls were killed on Tuesday with just under a quarter of killings occurring that day.

Table 4: Monthly distribution of women and girls killed by violence, male accused, Canada, 2019 (N=89)

Month	Women/girls killed by male accused	
	N	(%)
January	8	9
February	10	11
March	7	8
April	11	12
May	9	10
June	3	3
July	12	14
August	6	7
September	7	8
October	9	10
November	7	8
Total	89	100

Geographic distributions: Similar to the geographic distributions above for the total sample, Table 6 shows that Nunavut continues to carry the highest rate of killings of women and girls with male accused (10.60), followed by Manitoba (.88) and Alberta (.78). This is somewhat consistent with provincial/territorial distributions in the general homicide rates in 2018³⁰ in which Nunavut also had the highest homicide rate (20.84). However, the Northwest Territories and Yukon followed with the next highest homicide rates, but there were no documented cases of women and girls killed by male accused in 2019. This may be attributable to a reliance on media reports as our data source whereby killings that occur in more remote regions may not always make the news sources being accessed. Alternatively, it may be that other types of homicide are more common in

Table 5: Distribution of women and girls killed by violence involving male accused in Canada by day of week, 2019 (N=88)

Day of Week	Women/girls killed by men accused	
	N	(%)
Sunday	11	12
Monday	9	10
Tuesday	19	22
Wednesday	12	14
Thursday	9	10
Friday	17	20
Saturday	11	12
Total	88	100

**Exact homicide date was unknown in one case.*

these two territories, but information is not available to make that determination. Consistent with our patterns, the general homicide rate for Manitoba (4.07) also exceeded the national homicide rate (1.76) recorded in 2018.

²⁹ These figures do not include the 16 cases that remain open or unsolved or the 21 deaths of women and girls that have been deemed ‘suspicious’ by police.

³⁰ The most recent figures available to calculate general homicide rates at the time of writing the report was in 2018.



Table 6: Geographic distribution of women and girls killed by violence involving male accused in Canada, 2019 (N=89)*

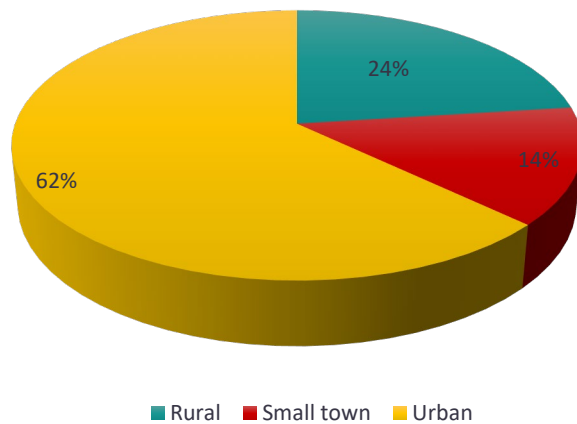
Province/Territory	Number killed	% total victims	% female population	Rate of killing
Ontario	34	38	39	0.46
Alberta	17	19	11	0.78
Quebec	11	12	22	0.26
British Columbia	10	11	14	0.39
Manitoba	6	7	3.6	0.88
Saskatchewan	4	5	3.1	0.69
New Brunswick	3	4	2.1	0.76
Nunavut	2	2	<1	10.60
Newfoundland-Labrador	1	1	1.4	0.38
Nova Scotia	1	1	2.6	0.20

*There were no documented killings of women and girls by men in Northwest Territories, Yukon, or Prince Edward Island.

Of those jurisdictions in which at least one woman or girl was killed by male accused, the lowest rates were in Nova Scotia (.20), Quebec (.26), and Newfoundland-Labrador (.38). Compared to general homicide rates in 2018, these provinces also reported rates below the national average.

Urban/rural distinctions³¹: Results show that women and girls continue to be more at risk of femicide in non-urban regions of the country compared to more urban areas. Specifically, Figure 3 shows that 24 percent of women and girls were killed by male accused in rural, remote or northern regions; only about 16 percent of the population in Canada lives in such areas of the country (Beattie et al., 2018). When small towns were included in the non-urban category, results demonstrated that, overall, 38 percent of women and girls were killed in non-urban areas compared to 62 percent in urban areas, that latter of which comprises just over 80 percent of the Canadian population.

Figure 3: Distribution of women and girls killed by violence involving male accused in Canada by population density, 2019 (N=89)

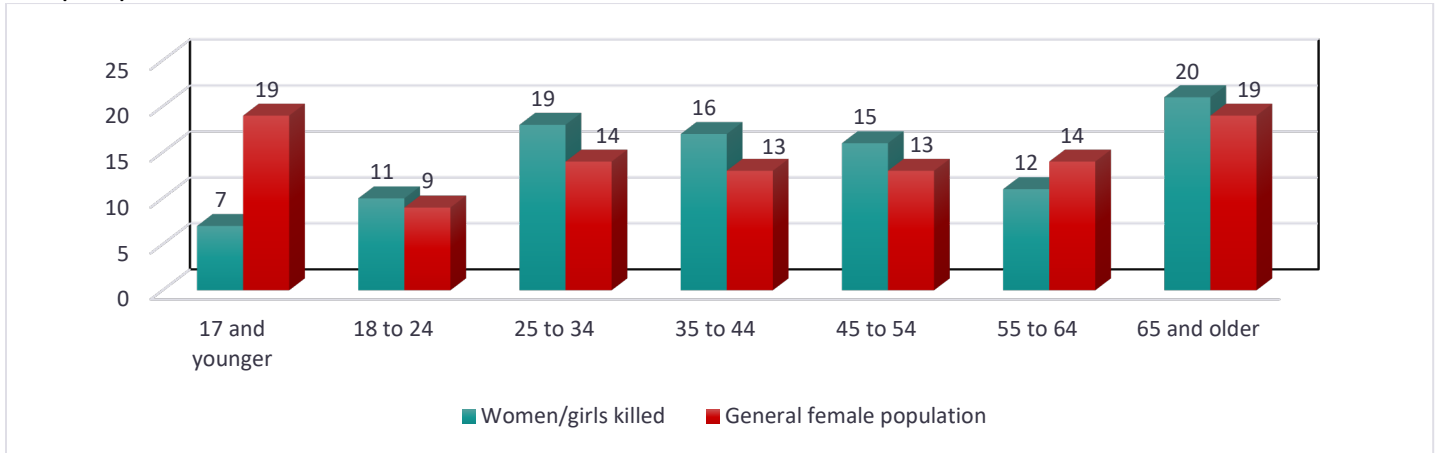


Age of victims: The victims ranged in age from less than one year old to 94 years old, with an average age of 45 years. Chart 2 shows that the largest proportion of victims were 65 years and older (20%), followed by those aged 25 to 34 years (19%), 35 to 44 years (16%), 45 to 54 years (15%), and 55 to 64 years (12%). The smallest victim age groups were those aged 18 to 24 years (11%) and aged 17 or younger (7%). When comparing these distributions to the age distributions of women and girls in the general population (also shown in Chart 2), various age groups are overrepresented, underscoring their greater vulnerability to femicide than women and girls in other age groups. For example, and consistent with 2018 and other research, women aged 25-54 continue to be overrepresented as victims of femicide.

³¹ While definitions vary, we define rural as less than 10,000; small towns as equal to or greater than 10,000, but less than 50,000; urban, 50,000 or more residents.



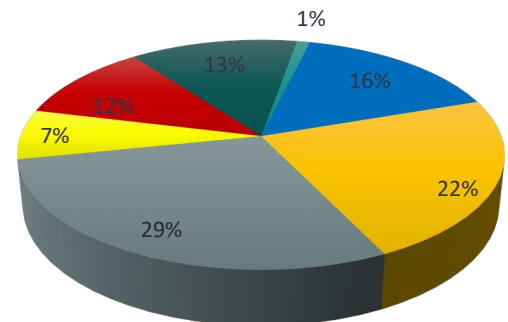
Chart 2: Age distribution of women and girls killed by violence involving male accused in Canada, compared with general female population, 2019 (N=85) *



*Age was unknown for four women

One change with respect to age as a risk factor for femicide has occurred for victims aged 65 and older³² who represent the largest age group of victims involving male accused in 2019 and are slightly overrepresented compared to their representation in the population. In contrast, in 2018, this victim age group was underrepresented compared to the general population. This group reflects a wide variation in ages with just over half of the victims aged 65 to 74 years (53%), followed by those aged 75 to 84 years (35%) and those aged 85 to 94 years (12%). Older women were identified as an emerging research and policy priority in the CFOJA inaugural report similar to other countries. We will come back to this issue below in Section IV.

Figure 4: Age distribution of males accused of killing women and girls by violence in Canada, 2019 (N=86)*



17 and younger 18 to 24 25 to 34
 35 to 44 45 to 54 55 to 64
 65 and older *Age was unknown for four accused

Age of the accused: Focusing on those accused for which ages were known (N=86), male accused ranged in age from 17 to 90 years old, with an average age of 42 years. As shown in Figure 4, the largest proportion of male accused were aged 35-to-44 years (29%), followed by those aged 25 to 34 (22%), 18 to 24 (16%), 65 years and older (13%), and 55 to 64 (12%). The smallest accused age groups were aged 45-to-54 years (7%) and 17 years or younger (1%).

Race/ethnicity of victims and their accused: Information is missing in two-thirds of the cases so little can be concluded about victims’ race/ethnicity. Similarly, in cases for which an accused was identified (N=90), information on race/ethnicity was missing in over three-quarters of the cases (77%). Therefore, the reliability of this information is not adequate to make conclusions because distributions may change significantly when additional information becomes available or media may be more likely to report race/ethnicity in some incidents. We return to this issue in Section IV.

³² Those aged 65 and older are designated as seniors in Canada.



Familial femicide by fathers in the context of separation

While children are killed by both fathers and mothers, the contexts and motivations surrounding these crimes differ significantly. Often referred to as filicide – the killing of children by parents – research has demonstrated that when fathers kill their children it is often in the context of a history of domestic violence and retaliation against their female partner for leaving or attempting to leave the relationship (Bourget et al. 2007; Dawson, 2015; Jaffe et al. 2014). For example, in an examination of historical filicide trends in Canada, Dawson (2015) found that an increasing proportion of particularly male accused were experiencing relationship breakdown at the time of the filicide over the period examined (1961-2011). Further, when revenge, retaliation, and/or jealousy were identified as a motive, fathers were more commonly the accused than were mothers. In contrast, although research findings are mixed, when mothers kill their children, research shows they are more likely to be suffering mental illnesses than fathers (Eriksson et al. 2014; Koenen & Thompson 2008; Liem & Koenraadt, 2008).

In 2019, to date, three femicide cases involve male accused who killed their female children (and one male child), all involving reported relationship breakdown or separation. In the first case, the offender abducted his five-year-old daughter, and subsequently killed her and then himself. He sent his estranged female partner, the victim's mother, texts threatening to harm their daughter and himself and then he did so. It was reported that the offender had previously been charged with domestic assault against the victim's mother but had not been convicted. In the second case, the offender's female partner reportedly filed for divorce one month before her estranged husband set fire to the family home, killing his two daughters. The offender/father also died, although it is unclear if it was an intentional suicide. It was reported that the female partner wanted the offender to move out so she could live in the home with her daughters who reportedly had a strained relationship with their father. In the third case, the offender shot his two children – a daughter and a son – before hanging himself. He was in the process of separating from the mother of the children. In none of the three cases were the mothers also killed, but the death of the son underscores that no one is exempt from lethal femicide in the context of separation – acts almost exclusively perpetrated by men.

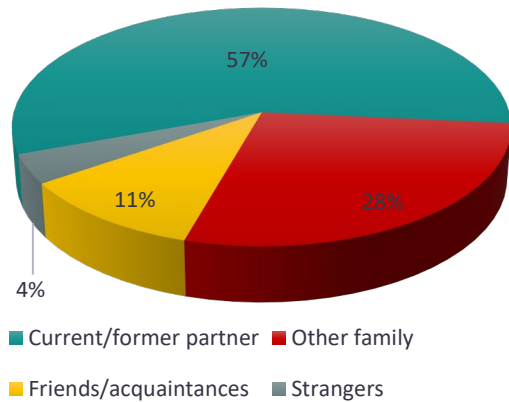
The above cases and existing research underscore that children are at an increased risk of both lethal and non-lethal violence during and after parental separation and divorce, particularly in the context of ongoing domestic and family violence. Separation can be an opportunity to end the violence and protect the children and their mothers, but only if risks are effectively assessed, appropriate custody, access and supervision arrangements are made, and resources provided to the family (Jaffe et al. 2014). This is a critical research priority, particularly given the growing recognition of the impact of femicide on the children who are also killed or left behind (United Nations Study Association 2019). While the children may not always be female – and, thus, familial femicide – the role of relationship breakdown and separation is a gender-related motive and indicator for femicide.

Presence of children: Whether the victims had children was known in about 59 percent of the cases. Of those, 90 percent of the victims had at least one child. Focusing on victims with children, 25 percent had one child, 21 percent had two children, 15 percent had three children, and 19 percent had four or more children. An additional 10 percent had at least one child, but the exact number of children was not specified.

Victim-accused relationship: In 2019, results showed that the relationship between the primary victim and the primary accused was known in over two-thirds of the cases (81%, N=68). Figure 5 shows that 57 percent of the primary victims (N=39) were the current or former partner of the male accused, consistent with patterns globally (UNODC 2018). Other cases in which primary victim and accused were identified involved other family (N=19; 28%), friends/acquaintances (N=7; 11%) or strangers (N=3; 4%).



Figure 5: Distribution of primary victim-accused relationship in cases of women and girls killed by violence involving male accused, 2019 (N=68)



Method of killing: For cases with available information on method of killing (N=42), consistent with patterns for the total sample, the most common method identified in incidents involving male accused was shooting (38%) followed by stabbing (31%) and beating (17%). The remaining 14 percent of women and girls were killed by various methods including arson, strangulation, shaken baby syndrome, and axed to death. Information was missing in a significant proportion of cases (54%, N=49) and these distributions may change as more information becomes available.

Location: Most incidents of women and girls killed by male accused occurred in a private location (84%), including their own homes, the accused home, or the home they shared with the accused. Other private locations included hotel rooms, institutions (e.g., long-term care facilities), or unspecified residences. Ten percent were killed in a public location, such as parks, other outdoor locations, restaurants, or inside vehicles. The remaining six percent were killed and/or discovered in unknown locations.

Suicide: Results showed that 26 percent (N=23) of the accused committed suicide following the killing. In 13 of these cases (57%), their victims were current or former female partners. In the remaining cases, the accused killed his child (13%; N=3), strangers (9%; N=2), another family member (4%; N=1), acquaintances (4%; N=1), and the final three cases involved an “other” (4%, N=1) and unspecified relationship (9%, N=2) between the victim and accused.

Case status: In cases that did not end with the suicide of the accused (N=67), second-degree murder charges have been laid in 58 percent of the cases and, in 25 percent of the cases, first-degree murder charges were laid. Five percent of the cases resulted in a charge of manslaughter. In 12 percent of cases, case status was not specified (8%), or involved charges related to criminal negligence (2%), attempted murder (2%), or accessory after the fact (2%).

*"...She was the sister that I never had. She had a heart of gold.
She would never hurt anybody."*

Intimate Partner Femicide

Research in Canada and globally shows that women bear the greatest burden of intimate partner violence (UNODC 2018) and this is especially true when focusing on lethal violence, referred to as intimate partner femicide – the killing of women by their current or former male partners. Of the 89 women and girls who were killed by men in 2019, the type of relationship they shared was known in 68 cases of which 39 involved a current or estranged intimate relationship (or 57%).

Victim-accused relationship: Table 7 shows that intimate partner femicide comprises a broad spectrum of relationships. The largest proportion of victims were killed by a current legal spouse (49%) followed by current common-law (13%) or dating



partner (13%). The same number of victims were killed by estranged legal spouses and boyfriends (5% each). In 13 percent of the cases (N=5), the relationship was known to be intimate partners, but the status or state were unknown.

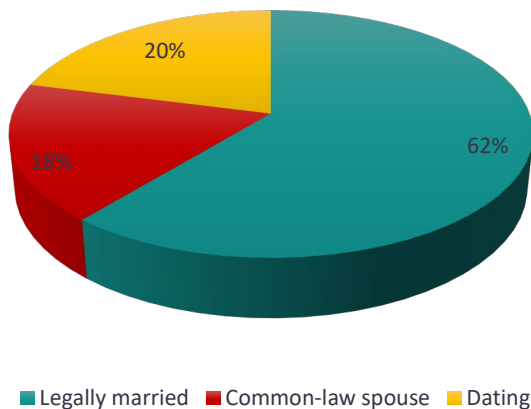
Table 7: Distribution of each relationship type in cases of intimate partner femicide in Canada, 2019 (N=39)

Relationship type	N (%)
Legal spouse	19 (49)
Common-law spouse*	5 (13)
Dating	5 (13)
Estranged legal spouse	2 (5)
Estranged common-law spouse	1 (2)
Estranged dating	2 (5)
Unspecified**	5 (13)
Total	39 (100)

*Common-law defined as victims and accused living together for at least one month.

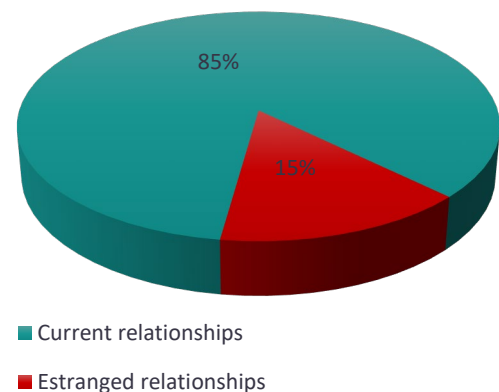
** These cases had evidence that the victim and accused were intimate or had been previously, but exact relationship type was not specified.

Figure 6: Distribution of relationship status in intimate partner femicide cases in Canada, 2019 (N=34)



Variations across a wide range of intimate relationships can be captured by focusing on relationship status and relationship state (Dawson & Gartner, 1998). Relationship status refers to whether the victim and accused were/had been legally married, common law partners, or dating. Relationship state refers to whether the victim and accused were currently in a relationship or separated at the time of the killing. Focusing on relationship status, among 34 intimate partner femicides for which status was known, Figure 6 shows that 62 percent involved

Figure 7: Distribution of relationship state in intimate partner femicide cases in Canada, 2019 (N=34)



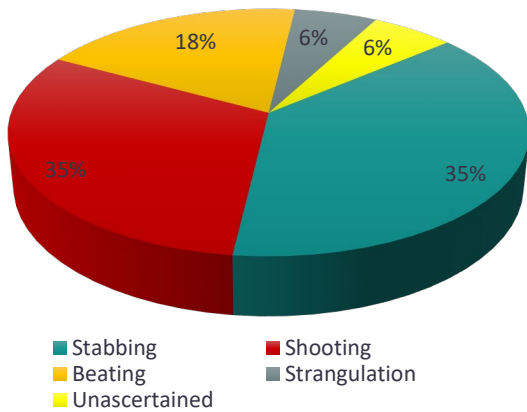
victims and accused who were currently or previously legally married, 20 percent were/had been dating, and 18 percent were/had been common-law partners. Examining relationship state, Figure 7 shows that 85 percent were currently in a relationship when the femicide occurred and 15 percent were separated.

Age of victims and their accused: The victims ranged in age from 22 years to 82 years old with an average age of 46 years. The largest proportion of victims were aged 35 to 44 years (28%), followed by those aged 25 to 34 years (21%) and 65 years and older (18%). Those aged 55 to 64 (15%), 18 to 24 (10%), and 45 to 54 (8%) were almost equally represented among victims of intimate femicide. Given that intimate partner femicides, by definition, involve women victims who were intimate partners with their male accused, it is expected that accused aged groups would demonstrate similar age patterns (Adinkrah, 2014; Stout,



1991). The youngest accused in this sample was 23 years old and the oldest was aged 90 with an average accused age of 49 years, slightly older, on average, than their victims. Like victim ages, the largest proportion of accused were aged 35 to 44 (41%). There was an equal representation of accused 65 years and older (18%) and those aged 55 to 64 (18%). A smaller proportion of accused fell within the 25-to-34-year age category (10%), 45 to 54 (8%), and 18 to 24 years (5%).

Figure 8: Distribution of method of killing in cases of intimate partner femicide in Canada, 2019 (N=17)*



*Information on method of killing has not been publicly released in 56% of cases

Method of killing: Differing from patterns observed in the total sample, Figure 8 shows that stabbings were tied with shooting deaths for most common method of killing in 70 percent (35% each) of the intimate partner femicide cases followed by beatings (18%). These rates align with those found during a six-year period during which stabbing was the most common method used to kill an intimate partner homicide, including both female and male victims, followed by shooting, strangulation and beating (Dawson et al., 2018).

Location of intimate femicide: The majority of intimate partner femicides occurred in a private location (87%). Of those cases, most occurred in the home the woman shared with the accused (51%), her own residence (10%), or the home of the accused (5%). These figures underscore the home as a “dangerous domain” for women (Johnson, 1996; UNODC 2018).

is consistent with earlier intimate femicide research in Ontario that found 28 percent of the perpetrators committed suicide following the femicide (Dawson, 2005: 80). Examining those cases in which the accused did not commit suicide, 65 percent of the accused have been charged with second-degree murder, 27 percent with first-degree murder, and four percent with manslaughter. One accused has been charged with attempted murder.³³

Accused suicide and case status: Compared to the total sample of male accused in which 26 percent died by suicide, a higher proportion of the accused died by suicide following the intimate partner femicide (33%). This

She excelled in softball and tetherball and had a passion for horseback riding in her early years. She loved to read, listen to music and dance. She was known for her baking and cooking delicious meals for everyone and loved to travel. She was creative in decorating her home to make it comfortable for her family and friends. [She] had a one-of-a-kind sense of humor, her smile was contagious and would light up the room. She had a gentle voice that made us all feel special.

³³The attempted murder charge was laid before the victim died of blunt force trauma three days after the initial assault. Media reported that police expected charges to be upgraded following her death, but no further updates have been provided.



Familial Femicide

This section focuses on those women and girls killed by male accused who were family members, not including intimate partners – most often referred to as familial femicide. There were 19 cases involving 23 victims and 20 accused in 2019 that can be categorized as familial femicide. To be consistent with above sections, percentages will be reported, but we caution that they are based on small numbers – also provided – and should be interpreted accordingly.

Age of victims and their accused: The victims ranged in age from less than one year old to 88 years old with an average age of 46 years. While numbers are small for most age groups, a clear pattern emerges whereby familial femicides are more likely to involve girls aged 17 and younger (22%; N=5) or older women (e.g. women aged 55 and older, 39%; N=9). With respect to the accused, the youngest accused was 17 years old and the oldest was 56 years old with an average age of 36 years. This represents a younger age demographic, on average, for accused in familial femicides compared to an average of 42 years in the total sample and 49 years in the intimate partner femicide sample.

Victim-accused relationship: Familial femicides encompass a wide range of victim-accused relationships. Of the 23 victims, 13 were mothers of the male accused (57%) (*see Textbox: Mothers killed by son*), four were children of the male accused (17%) (*see Textbox: Familial femicides in the context of separation*), three were other family (13%), two were siblings (9%), and one shared step-child-type relationship (4%).

Method of familial femicide: Information on the method of killing was known in 44 percent of familial femicides. Compared to findings in previous sections, the most common method used was beating (30%; 3 victims), followed by an equal proportion of those perpetrated by shooting, stabbing, or arson (20%; 2 victims each). One victim was axed to death (10%).

Location of familial femicide: Most of the familial femicides occurred in private locations (87%; 20 victims), two were killed in public (9%), and one was killed at an unknown location (4%). Among the women and girls who were killed in private, the vast majority died in the home she shared with the accused (50%; 10 victims), her own home (20%; 4 victims), or the home of the accused (10%; 2 victims). Another four victims were killed in an unspecified residence (20%).

Mothers killed by sons and the aging population

The killing of one's parent – or what is broadly referred to as parricide – is an understudied phenomenon, in part, due to the rarity of cases (Miles & Condry 2015) and the same is true for matricide – the killing of mothers by children. However, existing research estimates that between one and four percent of reported homicides in Western countries such as England, the United States and Canada fit the parricide classification (Boots & Heide, 2006; Fedorowycz, 2001). For example, in Canada, 3.8% of homicides between 1990-1999 involved the killing of parents (Fedorowycz, 2001). It is well documented that women and girls are most likely to be killed by those closest to them, particularly male partners and male relatives. Less recognized, however, is the frequency with which mothers are killed by their children, and primarily their sons. In 2019 so far, 13 mothers have been killed by their sons, or one in every 10 killings (11%), with victims ranging in age from 50 to 88 years old. During the four-year period examined in this report (2016-2019), a total of 42 of the 427 women and girls killed involved their sons as the accused/offender, demonstrating consistency over time in femicide by sons (10% of the total sample).

Along with a dearth of research on parricide, there is also increasing concern about gaps in research on elder abuse which would include parricide, particularly involving mothers. Research shows female parents are who are killed are typically older than male parents (Heide 2013, 2014). The recognition of elder abuse as a research priority parallels the rapidly growing elderly population worldwide. In 2016, for the first time in Canadian survey history, Canada's seniors outnumbered its children (Conroy, 2017; Globe & Mail, 2017) and this trend is expected to continue. This growth in the aging population has sparked interest in the abuse of older persons in Canada (Burczycka & Conroy, 2017; Ploeg, Lohfeld & Walsh, 2013) and internationally with elder abuse now identified as a matter of global concern (Baker, Sugar, & Eckert, 2009; WHO, 2013). Specifically, femicide of older women has become a priority for research because little is currently known about why such killings occur and whether specific types of supports may be effective in preventing such killings (ACUNS, 2017). Understanding who their killers are and the contexts of their deaths will be important to identifying prevention initiatives for this growing population and, particularly, the role played by gender-related motives and indicators for femicide.



Accused suicide and case status: Four of the accused in the cases of familial femicide committed suicide following the killing (20%). For the remaining accused, over two-thirds were charged with second-degree murder (69%; 11 accused), four were charged with first-degree (25%) and one was charged with criminal negligence causing death (6%).

Non-Intimate Femicide

This section focuses on cases of non-intimate femicide in which the woman or girl did not share an intimate partner or familial relationship with the male accused, capturing primarily acquaintance and stranger femicide. There were such 10 cases in 2019 involving 11 female victims and 12 accused.³⁴ To be consistent with above sections, percentages will be reported, but again caution that they are based on small numbers – also provided – and should be interpreted accordingly.



Age of the victims and their accused: The victims ranged in age from less than one year to 94 years old with an average age of 41 years. The victims ages were dispersed evenly across most of the age groups.³⁵ The youngest accused in the non-intimate femicide cases was 18 years old and the oldest was 74 years old with an average age of 39 years.

Victim-accused relationship: The category of non-intimate femicide is comprised of a range of relationships; specifically, most victims were acquainted with their accused (73%, N=8) and a smaller proportion were strangers (27%; N=3). Within the acquaintance category, relationships ranged from housemates or roommates, neighbours, legal business, or caregiver-type relationships. Within the stranger category, victims and accused had no prior interaction, including the one victim whose death involved the police.³⁶

Method of non-intimate femicide: The most common method used in non-intimate femicide cases was shooting (60%, N=6), followed by stabbing (20%; N=2). The remaining methods were beatings and shaken baby syndrome (10% each; N=1). Information was missing on the method of killing for one victim.

Location of non-intimate femicide: Similar to the previous sections, most non-intimate femicides occurred in a private location (91%, N=10) such as the victim's home (45%; N=5), the accused home (18%; N=2), or other/unspecified residence (27%; N=3). The remaining victim was killed at an outdoor location (9%; N=1).

Accused suicide and case status: Four accused in non-intimate femicide cases committed suicide following the killing (33%). Examining other outcomes, 38% percent of the accused were charged with second-degree murder (N=3), followed by an equal proportion of those charged with first-degree murder or manslaughter (25% each, N=2). This information was not specified in the final case (12%).

³⁴ Excluded are 16 victims whose relationship with the accused was not specified.

³⁵ The age of one victim was unknown.

³⁶ Two victims that were killed by police are not included because either the gender of the police officer is not known or the officer was female and this section focuses on male accused only.



All Women & Girls Killed Involving Male Accused/Offenders (2016-2019)

One of the core activities of the CFOJA is to track femicides as they occur and, given its launch at the end of 2017, this began in 2018. However, building on ongoing work on femicide in Ontario which has tracked the killings of women and girls and homicide generally for the years 1974 to current day (Dawson 2016; Crawford et al. 1992, 1997), the CFOJA is also working retrospectively to document women and girls killed by violence. To date, based on media reports and available court documents, data collection for 2016 to 2019 has been completed. We provide some basic patterns from these data.

In doing so, it is important to underscore that not all homicides will be captured. For example, we were only able to document 114 women and girls for 2016, 155 women and girls for 2017 and 156 women and girls in 2018. This compares to 148, 170, and 163, respectively, documented by Statistics Canada. However, given that the gap in our numbers compared to official figures is more narrow since we began tracking on a daily basis, we feel confident that our findings will increasingly reflect national figures as we identify better and more comprehensive mechanisms for collecting these data. It is also recognized that even official figures are incomplete, particularly for some groups of women and girls (e.g. Indigenous) and Statistics Canada data focuses on limited variables with respect to documenting the gender-related motives and indicators for femicide discussed in more detail in Section III. The latter is the core focus of the CFOJA, along with documenting social and state responses to femicide; therefore, a more comprehensive picture of femicide and its prevention in Canada will emerge in subsequent reports.

Women and girls killed since 2016: Between January 1, 2016, and November 30, 2019, at least 543 women and girls were killed by violence in 456 incidents for which 535 accused/offenders³⁷ have been identified, primarily male (83%; N=442). Focusing on those that involved male accused/offenders only, there were 396 cases resulting in the deaths of 431 women and girls. Focusing on this latter subset of cases – women and girls killed by men – results are reported in aggregate format, unless reference is made to specific years.

Table 8: Geographic distribution of women and girls killed by violence involving male accused/offenders in Canada, 2016-2019 (N=431)*

<i>Province/Territory</i>	Number killed	% victims	% female population	Rate of killing
<i>Ontario</i>	161	38	39	2.18
<i>Alberta</i>	68	16	11	3.13
<i>Quebec</i>	54	13	22	1.27
<i>British Columbia</i>	48	11	14	1.87
<i>Saskatchewan</i>	29	7	3.1	4.98
<i>Manitoba</i>	26	6	3.6	3.79
<i>Nova Scotia</i>	16	4	2.6	3.23
<i>New Brunswick</i>	12	3	2.1	3.06
<i>Nunavut</i>	8	2	<1	42.42
<i>Newfoundland-Labrador</i>	6	1	1.4	2.28
<i>Yukon</i>	2	<1	<1	9.97
<i>Northwest Territories</i>	1	<1	<1	4.59

*There were no documented killings of women or girls in Prince Edward Island.

Geographic distribution: Table 8 shows the total number and proportion of women and girls killed by violence in each province/territory since 2016 as well as the proportion of the total population that was female in each jurisdiction and the subsequent rate of the killings of women and girls by violence. Focusing on rates which adjust for the female representation in

³⁷Given the longer time period examined, many accused have now been convicted; thus, we use ‘accused/offender’ to capture the varying stages that these cases are at in the criminal justice system.



the population, during this period, two of the three territories had the highest rates of women and girls killed by men: Nunavut (42.42) and the Yukon (9.97). The Northwest Territories had the fourth highest rate in the country. Among the provinces, Saskatchewan had the highest rate (4.98) – and the third highest in the country – followed by Manitoba (3.79) and Nova Scotia (3.23). The lowest rates of women and girls being killed by violence were found in Quebec (1.27) and British Columbia (1.87). Table 9 shows the number and proportion of women and girls killed by men during each of the four years for the individual provinces and territories.

Table 9: Geographic distribution of women and girls killed by violence involving male accused/offenders in each province or territory in Canada, 2016-2019 (N=431)

<i>Province/Territory</i>	2016 N (%)	2017 N (%)	2018 N (%)	2019 N (%)	Total N (%)
<i>Ontario</i>	28 (31)	40 (32)	59 (46)	34 (38)	161 (38)
<i>Alberta</i>	17 (19)	15 (12)	19 (15)	17 (19)	68 (16)
<i>Quebec</i>	8 (9)	23 (19)	12 (10)	11 (13)	54 (13)
<i>British Columbia</i>	15 (17)	16 (13)	7 (5)	10 (11)	48 (11)
<i>Saskatchewan</i>	11 (12)	7 (6)	7 (5)	4 (5)	29 (7)
<i>Manitoba</i>	6 (7)	5 (4)	9 (7)	6 (7)	26 (6)
<i>Nova Scotia</i>	1 (1)	10 (8)	4 (3)	1 (1)	16 (4)
<i>New Brunswick</i>	1 (1)	-	8 (6)	3 (3)	12 (3)
<i>Nunavut</i>	-	2 (2)	4 (3)	2 (2)	8 (2)
<i>Newfoundland-Labrador</i>	2 (2)	3 (2)	-	1 (1)	6 (1)
<i>Yukon</i>	-	2 (2)	-	-	2 (<1)
<i>Northwest Territories</i>	1 (1)	-	-	-	1 (<1)
<i>Prince Edward Island</i>	-	-	-	-	-
Total	90 (100)	123 (100)	129 (100)	89 (100)	431 (100)

Urban/rural distinctions: As shown in Table 10, women and girls are more at risk of femicide in non-urban (i.e. rural and remote) compared to urban centres. Specifically, 29 percent of all women and girls were killed in rural areas whereas only about 16 percent of the population in Canada lives in rural areas (Beattie et al., 2018). This ranged from a low of 20 percent in 2016 to a high of 37 percent in 2018. When rural and small town is included together, the proportion increases to 42 percent (see Figure 9).

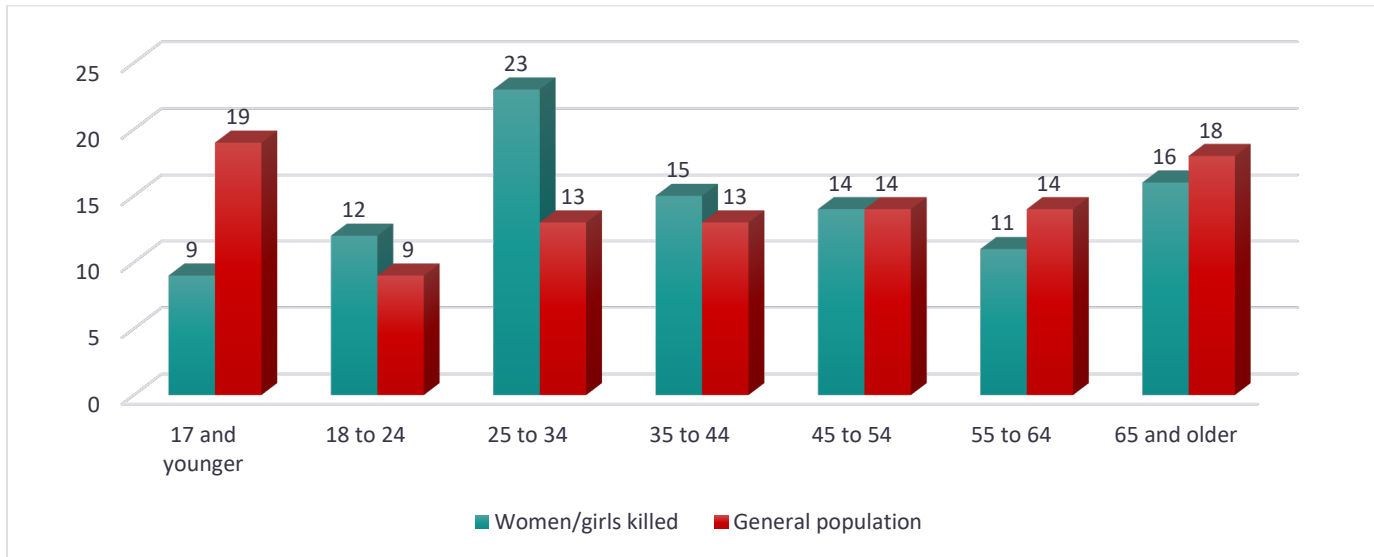
Table 10: Distribution of women and girls killed by violence involving male accused/offenders in Canada by population density, 2016 to 2019 (N=430)*

<i>Population density</i>	2016 N (%)	2017 N (%)	2018 N (%)	2019 N (%)	Total N (%)
<i>Rural</i>	18 (20)	39 (32)	47 (37)	21 (24)	125 (29)
<i>Small town</i>	12 (13)	22 (18)	7 (5)	13 (14)	54 (13)
<i>Urban</i>	60 (67)	61 (50)	75 (58)	55 (62)	251 (58)
Total	90 (100)	122 (100)	129 (100)	89 (100)	430 (100)

*Exact location of killing unknown in one 2017 case.

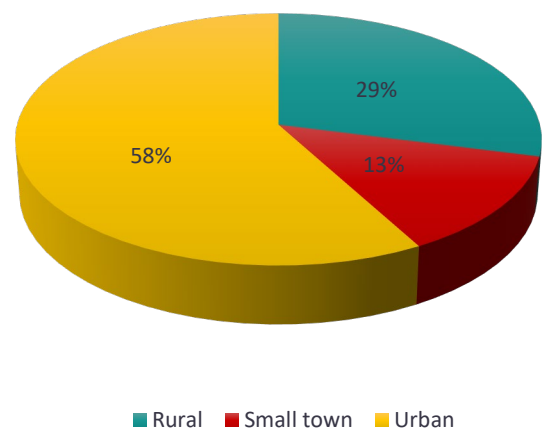


Chart 3: Age distribution of women and girls killed by male accused/offenders compared with their age distribution in the general female population, 2016-2019 (N=422)



Age of the victims and their accused/offenders: Ages were known for 422 women and girls (98%) who were killed by men between 2016 and 2019. Victim ages ranged from newborns to 98 years old, with an average age of 42 years. These age trends remained relatively stable over the years; each year victims ranged in age from less than a year old to mid-90s, with an average age fluctuating between a low of 39 and a high of 45 years. When compared to their distribution in the general population (see Chart 3), women victims aged 25-34 years of age (23%) were significantly overrepresented and those aged 17 and younger were underrepresented (9%). Where 2019 data differed from the four-year period, however, is with respect to older women who were slightly underrepresented during the four-year period, but overrepresented when 2019 was examined on its own above, suggesting this may be the beginning of an emerging risk group as noted in our inaugural report.

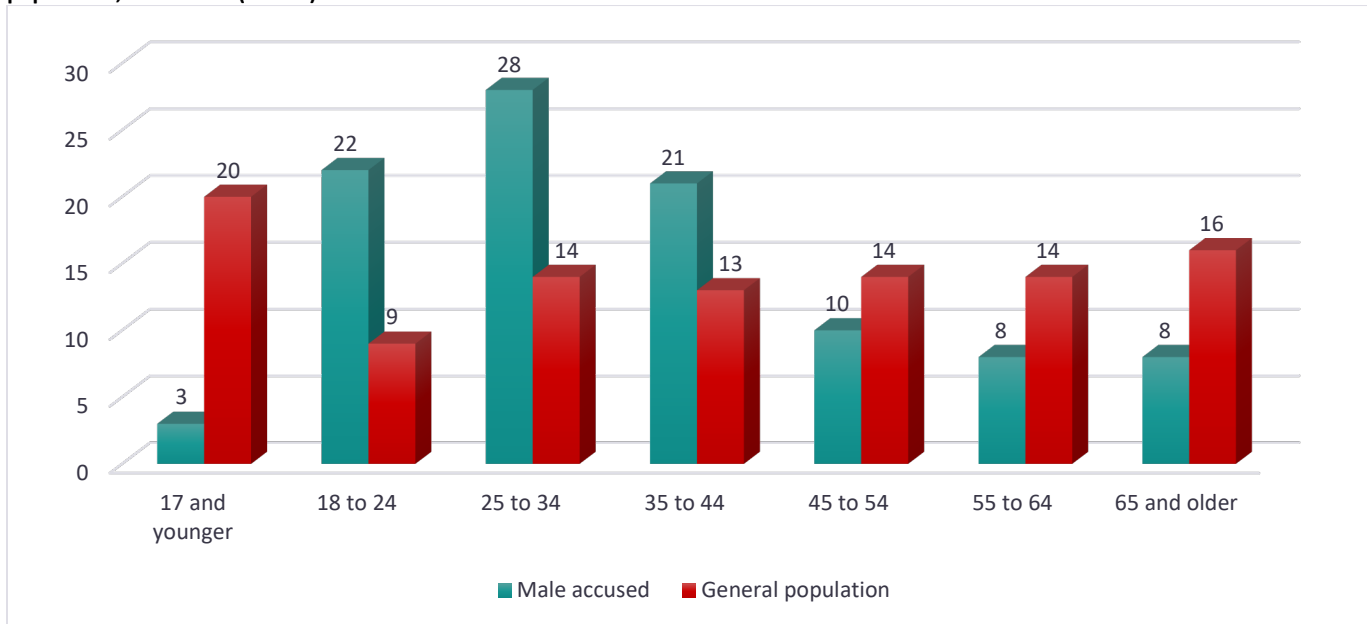
Figure 9: Distribution of women and girls killed by violence involving male accused/offenders in Canada by population density, 2016-2019 (N=430)



As shown in Chart 4, with respect to the accused, ages were known for 426 male accused/offenders (96%), ranging between 15 to 90 years old, with an average age of 37 years. Similar to trends observed among victims, ages for the accused/offenders remained relatively stable. Each year the youngest accused was a teenager and the oldest ranged from late 70s to early 90s. Their average age fluctuated between a low of 36 years and a high of 42 years old. When compared to their representation in the population, as expected, given victims were also overrepresented, accused/offenders in the 25-34 age group were significantly overrepresented (28%) as were those aged 18-24 and 35-44 years of age.



Chart 4: Age distribution of males accused of killing women and girls in Canada compared with their age distribution in the general male population, 2016-2019 (N=426)



Victim-accused relationship: Between 2016 and 2019, the relationship between the primary victim and the primary accused was known for 321 cases (81% of total sample). Focusing on these incidents, Table 11 shows that 53 percent of the primary victims were the current or former partner of the accused. Other cases in which primary victim and accused were identified involved other family (22%), friends/acquaintances (17%), or strangers (8%).³⁸ This ordering—intimate partners, other family members, friends/acquaintances, and strangers—remained consistent over the years, with the exception of 2018, where the killing of women/girls who were friends or acquaintances of the accused outnumbered those who were family members of the accused.

Table 11: Distribution of primary victim-accused relationship in cases of women and girls killed by violence involving male accused/offenders, 2016 to 2019 (N=321)

Relationship	2016 N (%)	2017 N (%)	2018 N (%)	2019 N (%)	Total N (%)
Intimate partners	35 (45)	46 (50)	51 (60)	39 (57)	171 (53)
Other family	20 (26)	22 (24)	9 (11)	19 (28)	70 (22)
Friends/Acquaintances	16 (20)	16 (18)	14 (17)	7 (11)	53 (17)
Strangers	7 (9)	7 (8)	10 (12)	3 (4)	27 (8)
Total	78 (100)	91 (100)	84 (100)	68 (100)	321 (100)

Children: Whether the victims had children was known in 69 percent of the 2016-2019 cases. Results revealed that most women aged 14 and older did have children, with numbers ranging from one to 11 children.

³⁸ The friends/acquaintance category encompasses a broad range of relationships aside from just friends and acquaintances, such as neighbours, coworkers, housemates/roommates, legal and illegal business relationships. The strangers category requires that the primary victim and accused did not have a prior interaction and includes cases where police were involved in the death of the victim.



Number of victims and accused/offenders: Consistent with most research on femicide, most incidents involved a single victim. Specifically, from 2016 to 2019, a single victim was killed in 87 percent of the cases with the remaining 13 percent of the cases involving two (9%), three (2%), four victims (1%) or ten victims (<1%). Multiple-victim cases primarily involved a primary target – often the female intimate partner – as well as her and/or the perpetrator’s children/stepchildren or other family members such as parents. Although less common, a handful of primary victims shared a stranger, acquaintance, or other/unspecified relationship with the accused. Most incidents involved a single accused/offender (92%) with the remaining cases involving two (4%), three (2%), or four or more accused/offenders (2%).

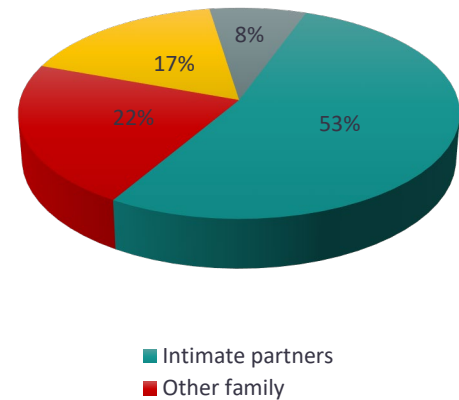
Method of killing: Where information was known (N=296; 68% of total sample), shooting (32%) was the most common method used to kill women and girls, followed closely by stabbing (28%). As highlighted in previous sections, the greater likelihood that firearms were used in killings of women and girls in non-urban areas was also evident in the 2016-2019 data. That is, where information is known, the proportion of killings by firearms in rural areas with populations less than 10,000 was 51 percent (N=39) compared to 27 percent (N=49) in urban centres.

Location: In the four-year period examined, over three-quarters (77%) of all women and girls killed by male accused/offenders died in private locations. Over half were killed in the home they shared with the accused (N=129; 30%) or in her own home (N=107; 25%). On average, less than one-fifth of all femicide victims were killed in public locations, the exception being in 2018, which saw two high-profile homicide cases involving multiple victims being killed by men in public locations.

Suicide: Results showed that 13 percent of all male accused/offenders in the four-year period committed suicide following the femicide. Of those who committed suicide, most were accused of killing their intimate partner (64%), followed by other family members (15%). The remaining 21 percent of accused who committed suicide killed female acquaintances (9%), strangers (5%), or women or girls with whom they shared an ‘other’ or unspecified relationship with (7%).

Case outcome: Of those accused/offenders who did not die by suicide (87%), four accused (1%) died or were killed before they could be charged, no charges have yet been laid for two accused (<1%) and, in another eight (2%), there was no information available. Focusing on those with known case status, second-degree murder charges have been laid in 52 percent of the cases (N=190) and first-degree murder charges were laid in 35 percent of the cases (N=127). Nine percent of the cases resulted in charges of manslaughter (N=34). Outcomes varied for the remaining four percent of cases and involved charges of criminal negligence causing death (N=3; 1%), attempted murder (N=6; 2%), and accessory after the fact (N=9; 2%).

Figure 10: Distribution of primary victim-accused relationship in cases of women and girls killed by violence involving male accused/offenders, 2016-2019 (N=321)





Recognizing the children left behind after femicide

Despite public concern with the welfare of children exposed to domestic and family violence, little research has focused on the impacts of femicide on children, whether killed along with their mothers, killed by their fathers as a form of revenge against their mothers, or as living victims left behind. However, 'Living Victims of Femicide' was one of two themes of the 12th and most recent volume in the *Femicide* series released by the United Nations Studies Association on Nov. 25, 2019. Featured in this volume, drawing from two overlapping datasets including data from the CFOJA, is preliminary research that describes the involvement of children in cases of femicide in the Canadian context as victims, witnesses and/or children left behind.

First, focusing on Ontario, female victims of femicide aged 14 and older were examined, and demonstrated that, between 1974-2012, there were 2,158 femicide victims, 77% of which had at least one child, leaving at least 2,382 children without one or both parents (i.e. if their father was the perpetrator and died by suicide or was incarcerated for the killing). Second, focusing on more recent data (2016-2018) for Canada documented by the CFOJA, there were 410 femicide victims with more than three-quarters again having at least one child, leaving another 553 children behind in this short, three-year period. Based on findings from the Ontario sample, intimate partner femicide (IPF) cases in which women were killed by male partners were more likely to involve children (81%) compared to non-intimate partner femicide (non-IPF) cases in which women were killed by other family members, friends, acquaintances, or strangers (71%). In contrast, the more recent Canadian sample shows that both IPF and non-IPF were equally likely to involve children who were left behind (84 percent and 82 percent respectively). Although there remain gaps in these data which are currently being addressed, this means that almost 3,000 children have been impacted by femicide in the past several decades. These are minimum and conservative estimates of the children left behind because information on children was missing in a proportion of cases and, in some cases, it was only known that the victim had children, not how many.

While this study represents only a snapshot and minimum count of the number of children left behind due to femicide in Canada, the patterns clearly demonstrate how many of these invisible victims of femicide may be impacted by negative short- and long-term consequences, changing their life-course trajectories for years to come. For those who witness their father's lethal attack on their mother, the psychological consequences will be even more profound. For example, in one recent case, while a woman slept in the same bed as one of her children, her male partner began to stab her, continuing to do so even when a second child awoke and entered the bedroom. In another case, prior to the killing, one of the children heard her father telling someone that he was going to harm her mother and then he later did so by killing her. In another case, a teenage child 'played dead' after being shot along with her mother by her mother's common-law husband; then, when he left, she sought help from the neighbours.

The trauma of experiencing such events is clear. Understanding who these children are and what – if any – supports are in place for them following femicide is an urgent research priority. Further, what little research there is on the effects of femicide on bereaved children focuses on intimate partner femicide, but many children are left behind due to non-intimate femicide. Thus, how their experiences may differ and whether challenges are similar across the two groups of children would be crucial to identify existing and needed supports. For both groups of children, with the loss of one or both parents, the likelihood of ending up in foster care increases and, while this can and has worked out positively for some children, the negative impacts of such trajectories are equally possible and more likely for other children (e.g. for Indigenous children, see <https://www.macleans.ca/first-nations-fighting-foster-care/>). Preventing the killings of women and girls by femicide is paramount and, when the focus extends to the effects on children, who witness femicide and/or are thereby bereaved, the far-reaching and long-term negative impacts on their life course trajectories point to staggering future losses to families, communities and society more broadly.





Section III:

Identifying Gender-Related Motives & Indicators for Femicide

Why is it important to identify gender-related motives and indicators in femicide?

With increasing global attention to femicide, discussions are ongoing as to how femicide should be defined, how it is distinct from homicide and how these differences might be operationalized to better identify gender-related killings of women and girls. These questions and the subsequent answers are crucial:

- To effectively produce and understand femicide statistics within and across countries;
- To determine prevention and intervention initiatives, including appropriate punishments for offenders; and,
- To raise public awareness and education about gender-related violence against, and killings of, women and girls, primarily by men.



Latin American Model Protocol for the investigation of gender-related killings of women

As discussed in earlier sections, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women has been calling for enhanced efforts to collect more accurate and comparable femicide data and related information since 2016.³⁹ While many responding states, including Canada, collect data on the killing of all women and girls, there is increasing recognition that understanding these deaths from a human rights perspective requires that we better understand what is meant by gender-related killings or the ‘killing of women and girls *because they are women and girls*’.

Historically and still often today, the killings of women and girls, particularly in the context of intimate partner or familial femicide, are typically seen as isolated, sporadic events that occur between individuals rather than as extreme manifestations of broader cultural and societal norms surrounding violence against women and girls. When femicides occur outside intimate relationships, victims are often blamed for their ‘risky lifestyles’ (especially if their lifestyles do not align with dominant norms for women’s roles in society) and perpetrators are portrayed (or excused) as mentally ill, substance abusers, or simply ‘evil’. Seldom are these acts linked to broader and more frequent incidents of non-lethal violence against women and girls, perpetuated and maintained by community, societal and cultural norms that support the use of violence in the subordination of women and girls. Still more rare is to have such killings identified as violations of the human rights of women and girls – violations that work against the principles of gender equality and non-discrimination, and are supported by misogyny, hatred, and/or contempt of women and girls.

One way to draw attention to how broader societal and cultural norms lead to femicide is by clearly showing how motives are often linked to discrimination and hatred of women and girls and/or by identifying related gender-based indicators that are evident before, during or after the femicide. To date, one of the most comprehensive efforts to do so is *The Latin American Model Protocol for the Investigation of Gender-Related Killings of Women (Femicide/Feminicide)* (hereafter referred to as ‘the protocol’; Sarmiento et al., 2014). The protocol documents how femicide might be identified by reviewing gender-related signs,

³⁹ See most recent call at <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/SRWomen/Pages/CallForFemicide2019.aspx>.



motives, or indicators that capture the contexts surrounding femicide and its various subtypes (e.g. intimate partner femicide, familial femicide). While the protocol specifically targets criminal justice investigations, it also serves as a crucial starting point for researchers aimed at measuring femicide, documenting trends within and across countries, and better informing prevention efforts.

The protocol states that, in most countries, all femicides can be classified as homicides; however, not all homicides of women or girls are eligible to be classified as femicide (p. 51). In other words, while the death of a woman or girl may be violent, the act may not have been motivated by the fact that she was female (e.g. traffic accident), or indicators that it was gender-related may not be present in the context surrounding her death. For example, the woman may have been the unintended target of a shooting (e.g. killed because she was a bystander) or she was killed along with a male victim and he was the primary target (e.g. a drug- or gang-related killing). However, is it always possible to eliminate gender-related motives or indicators even in these latter cases? For example, a woman may be killed because she is the female partner of a man who is in a dispute with someone over drugs or money and she is killed to send a message to her male partner. In this situation, she is clearly seen as the ‘property’ of a man by those who killed her, using her to send a message to that man. Further, a woman may be killed by police, or while in detention or incarcerated, which can involve varying contexts which may or may not involved gender-related motives or indicators. Therefore, only with careful review and analysis can such conclusions be made.

It is important, then, to clearly establish the killings that have some “motivation or context based in a culture of gender-based violence and discrimination” (p. 51), particularly for enhanced awareness and education. To further clarify, the protocol authors write:

The factors that differentiate the crime of femicide from the homicide of a man, and even from the common homicide of a woman, reveal that aim of the killing is to entrench and perpetuate the patterns that have been culturally assigned regarding what it means to be a woman: subordination, weakness, sentimentality, delicateness, femininity, etc. This means that the femicidal agent and his actions draw on cultural patterns rooted in the misogynist ideas of male superiority, discrimination against women, and disrespect toward her and her life. These cultural elements and systems of beliefs make the perpetrator believe that he has sufficient determinative power over the lives and bodies of women to punish them, and ultimately, to preserve social orders of inferiority and oppression. These same cultural elements allow the perpetrator to feel reinforced in his manhood through this conduct (p. 52).

The key objectives, then, of identifying the gender-related motives and indicators for femicide is to link these acts to the continuum of violence against women and girls more broadly and to locate all forms of violence against women within broader cultural and societal norms and environments that tolerate, accept and/or condone the use of violence in the ongoing subordination of women and girls.

“[She] was an astounding woman, and to know her was a blessing. She was always the historian of the family saving family photos, keeping family heirlooms, and preserving family history. She was consistently the organizer and you could count on her to get everything just right.”



What is a gender-related motive or indicator for femicide?

Broadly speaking, gender-related motives/indicators (GRMIs) for femicide are characteristics that signify whether and how the killings were rooted in the perpetrators' misogynist attitudes or community- and societal-level acceptance of, or support for, violence against women and girls. The protocol explains that motives centre around 'women/girls as possessions' (i.e. belongs to a man) and 'women/girls as objects' (i.e. can be used by a man) who can, at any time, be disposed of in whatever way that is deemed opportune or appropriate. Intimate partner or familial femicides arguably most clearly align with the view that 'women/girls are possessions' and sexual femicide is a common example of the idea of 'women/girls as objects.' These categories are not mutually exclusive, however; for instance, a sexual femicide can also be an intimate partner femicide or a familial femicide. Furthermore, gender-based motives or indicators for femicide often overlap and one case may present many similar or overlapping indicators. It may not always be easy to categorize femicide as being motivated by the perception of women/girls as possessions or as objects, however.

For example, as described at the beginning of this report, the relevance of the term femicide in the Canadian context was driven home on December 6, 1989, when a lone male entered École Polytechnique at the Université of Montréal with the intent to kill women, blaming them for his failure to gain entrance to the engineering program (Eglin & Hester 1999). The male separated students by sex and yelled, "You're all a bunch of feminists, and I hate feminists!" before firing at the women. Following this targeted act of lethal violence against women, 14 women were dead and another 10 were injured before the male turned the gun on himself. It is not clear whether his motive focused on these women as 'objects' or 'possessions', but it is clear that these were gender-related killings – the lone gunman's hatred of women was stated specifically and directly at the women before he shot and killed them. Despite this, in the aftermath of the killing, many people including the media described his actions as the work of a madman, disconnecting the violence from clear evidence of his hateful and misogynist attitudes toward women. In short, it was not acknowledged that he targeted his victims *because* they were women, consistent with the definition of femicide, despite the direct evidence that it was a gender-motivated killing.

Further, in contrast to the above case, GRMIs may not always be directly identifiable; rather, they may be indirectly evident or more subtle, only becoming clear after a careful investigation of the context surrounding the killing, the specific victim or perpetrator characteristics or actions, and/or manifestations of violence. For example, in 2018, a male armed with a handgun opened fire, seemingly at random, on a crowded street where restaurants were filled with customers relaxing on a summer evening, ending in the death of a young woman and a girl. At first appearing far removed from any misogynistic motivations, and attributed to mental health issues, later reports revealed that a search of his home found evidence of his preoccupation with killing fantasies, including the misogynistic Incel ideology that blames women for the sexual failings of men. It was also reported that, just prior to the event, he had been told by his family that he should find a wife. Despite this, his actions continue to be linked primarily to substance abuse and mental health issues thereby overlooking gender-related motivations.

As such, with respect to context, a woman or girl may be killed in a generalized situation of violence against women influenced by a culture of discrimination that is not immediately or clearly gender-related (Sarmiento et al., 2014: 47). Further, specific types of victims may share particular characteristics that increase their vulnerability such as being young or elderly, poor, or having multiple and intersecting identities/oppressions (e.g. a poor, elderly, immigrant woman) or their deaths involved initial disappearances⁴⁰ and/or the victims were disposed of or abandoned after death. Femicide victims may also be subject to

⁴⁰ The protocol uses the killings of women and girls in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico (e.g. Wright 2006) as an example of those who disappear before deaths. Similarly, in the Canadian context, missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls frequently disappear before death and the links have been drawn between these two groups of femicide victims (Labrecque 2014).



excessive violence, often referred to as ‘overkill’, mutilation and/or torture.⁴¹ Finally, their perpetrators may share cultural beliefs or attitudes that their actions were justified because they were humiliated or disrespected by the victims (e.g. who spurned their advances, who left or were leaving the relationship, who were involved in suspected/actual infidelity, and/or shamed the family).

In short, femicide reinforces in both direct and indirect ways how societal and cultural norms define what it means to be a woman or girl, including their ongoing subordination as possessions or objects, and whose future – and, in fact, lives – depend on the actions of the men with whom they come into contact as intimates or otherwise (Sarmiento et al., 2014). To understand femicide, then, it is important to assess whether and how perpetrators might use or draw upon such norms when committing femicide, including ideas of male dominance, bias and disregard for a woman or girl’s life. These ideas facilitate the perpetrators’ beliefs that they have authoritative control over victims’ lives or bodies, including the right to punish or kill to maintain social order (Sarmiento et al., 2014). Again, given the difficulties of identifying these and other GRMIs until careful investigations have occurred, all killings of women and girls are often initially counted as femicides until such determinations can be made.

Although frequency may vary, many GRMIs are similar across countries, including Canada, because gender equality has not been achieved in any country despite some countries making more progress than others. Some may argue, as a result, that all killings of women and girls by violence can be considered femicide given that patriarchal social structures that perpetuate and maintain gender and other inequalities exist globally to varying degrees. It might also be argued that all women killed by current or former male partners can be considered femicide, more commonly referred to as intimate partner femicide (UNODC 2018). This is largely because most of these cases involve some stage of separation and/or a prior history of one or more forms of violence or abuse, both of which are common GRMIs as discussed below.

Our goal is to more clearly delineate what we mean by gender-related motives and indicators for femicide to increase public awareness and education about femicide and, in turn, contribute to the global movement to reduce such killings. Below, building on the ground-breaking work of the Latin American model protocol, some of the most common GRMIs are described and, where possible, linked to illustrative femicide cases that occurred in the Canadian context.⁴² As will become evident below, it is often the case that multiple GRMIs will be evident in any one case; however, the protocol states that understanding whether a killing is gender-related does not depend on the existence of more or fewer indicators.

In the following discussion, when cases are pending or still before the courts, perpetrators are referred to as the ‘accused’ and information is drawn from media reports. When cases have resulted in a conviction, perpetrators are referred to as the ‘offender’ and information may also be drawn from court documents in addition to media reports. It is acknowledged that information is based on narratives provided by third parties but reported characteristics of the femicides and those involved can still be used to illustrate the role played by gender-related motives and indicators based on available information. However, because of the difficulties gathering information about the circumstances that lead up to the femicide, it is not always possible to make a firm conclusion either way. While the GRMIs described below are not exhaustive, they are evident in the cases examined during the period focused upon in this report.

⁴¹ Forms of non-state torture, particularly in the femicidal contexts, are becoming more well-known because of work by Canadians Linda MacDonald and Jeanne Sarson who have increased public awareness and education about forms of torture that are committed by private citizens and groups as opposed to states and state actors (e.g. police and military) more commonly seen as perpetrators of torture. For example, non-state torture can occur within families as well as cultural, religious and economic contexts. For more information, see <https://www.nonstatetorture.org/>.

⁴² It is not possible to fully capture all GRMIs in this report; therefore, we encourage readers to access the full 200-plus page protocol for further reading.



GRMI #1: Committed previous physical, psychological, and/or sexual violence

The existence of prior violence by the perpetrator against the victim, regardless of whether the violence was reported to police or other formal agencies, is one of the most common GRMIs globally. In short, if the killing was preceded by a history of violence by the perpetrator against the victim, repeated expressions of violence, or an incident of violence, this is seen as a clear manifestation of the man's perception of the woman or girl as a possession or object to do with as he wishes. Furthermore, violence by perpetrators against previous female partners, or women generally, may also be considered as an indicator of gender-related violence because it demonstrates hatred and disrespect for women or misogynist attitudes and beliefs.

Like other world regions, previous violent victimization of women and girls by their killers is a common GRMI in Canada. For example, many femicide cases involved accused who were before the courts for perpetrating violence against their female victims or offenders who had already been convicted of prior offences against them, previous female partners or women generally. Among others, these charges or convictions included distributing intimate images, animal cruelty, uttering threats, mischief, common assault, sexual assault, assault causing bodily harm, as well as breaches of previous restraining orders, no-contact orders, and/or peace bonds. [For case example, see Case 3.1]

Case 3.1

A woman was murdered in her home and her ex-boyfriend was charged with second degree murder in the days following the discovery. They reportedly had an on-again off-again relationship for about five or six years. During their relationship, the accused was charged with assault causing bodily harm after he had punched, choked, and bit the victim before fleeing her residence with her wallet. In pleading guilty to the lesser offence of simple assault, the accused was sentenced to two months. Four months prior to her femicide, court documents revealed that the victim had obtained a protection order against the accused who was now her ex-boyfriend. In applying for the order, she outlined years of mental, verbal, emotional, and occasional physical abuse by the accused. She emphasized how he was aware that she was pursuing a protection order and threatened her by saying she would "be in a world of hurt" and that she had "added fuel to the fire" and he would "sabotage her job" if she went through with it. He was known to stalk, intimidate, control, and threaten her. Just prior to the femicide, they had rekindled their relationship. It was reported that the couple often argued about the accused's drug addiction. On the day he killed her, an argument was reported to have occurred when she got off work during which he strangled her, cracking her neck. He then stabbed her, post-mortem, before hiding her body in the attic. Two years following her murder, the offender pled guilty as charged and was sentenced to life with no possibility of parole for 10 years. This case is also illustrative of the presence of multiple GRMIs given that, in addition to prior violence, it also involved prior separation, previous threats to kill, excessive violence, and disposal/abandonment of the woman's body.

GRMI #2: Coercive-controlling behaviours

One type of violence – coercive-controlling behaviour – is almost exclusively used by men against women in the context of their intimate relationships (Ansara & Hindin, 2010; Myhill, 2015). Thus, it is a highly gendered – male – behaviour that encompasses an interplay of physical and sexual violence and/or psychological, emotional and financial abuse, that leads to women suffering injuries, intimidation, and/or daily fears (Johnson et al. 2019). In fact, men who use such tactics often do not need to resort to physical violence to achieve control of their partners; rather they accomplish this through fear of potential consequences if women do not comply (Stark, 2007). There are four common measures of coercive control: controlling/proprietary behavior (specific to the perception of 'women/girls as property'), psychological abuse, sexual jealousy; and stalking. Many coercive-controlling behaviours may often go unnoticed as red flags for the femicide that ultimately occurs and, therefore, coercive-controlling behaviours are worth mentioning as a separate GRMI.



Coercive-controlling behaviours were frequently evident in the Canadian cases examined over the past four years with many of the femicide victims being stalked, intimidated, controlled and threatened by the perpetrators prior to the femicide. For example, one accused called his female victim as many as 33 times in a single day. Another offender did not allow his female partner to have male friends or to connect with family on social media. Still another accused reportedly would not let his female victim speak to her parents who lived some distance away, would not give her access to her travel documents, and would not let her use a cellphone. In another case, the perpetrator would call repeatedly when the victim was out with others, demanding to know her activities and whereabouts. He also controlled her social media presence, demanding that she unfriend people he did not approve of and post photos that he pre-approved. [For case example, see Case 3.2]

Case 3.2

The body of a mother of three was found in a suitcase, abandoned below a bridge in a river. Her husband was charged with first degree murder the following day. Less than a week prior, she had filed for divorce. The victim and her husband appeared to be a “power couple” but there was a history of control and abuse in their marriage. In 2005, the offender was charged with assault and threatening to cause bodily harm, charges that were later withdrawn when he admitted to causing fear and acting inappropriately. Another serious assault occurred less than two months before her murder, which may have led the victim to initiate the divorce proceedings. Throughout their marriage, the offender would prioritize his work over family time, ridiculed his wife, abused her verbally, and rejected the food she cooked for him. She needed to seek her husband’s permission and defer to him when out in public. When she was out with others, he would call repeatedly demanding to know her activities and whereabouts. He would also control her social media presence; he made her unfriend people he did not approve of and only post photos that were flattering to him. Her family knew of the abuse she suffered during her 12-year marriage to the offender, but when they encouraged her to leave, she refused. When the victim filed for divorce and refused the offender’s attempts at reconciliation, he repeatedly beat and strangled her, before cutting off her hair, placing her body in a suitcase and dumping it in a river. Over two years later, the offender pled guilty to second degree murder and was sentenced to life without the possibility of parole for 14 years. Her family has shared dark details of her life and death in the hope that other women in similar situations are able to leave safely.

"I worry all the time now. I worry the girls will forget the sound of [her] voice, the touch of her hand, her hugs, her snuggles, her laugh, her scent. I worry they will forget her sense of adventure, her friendship, her love. And I worry that I will forget that too."

GRMI #3: Separation (or in the process of separation)

This is one of the most common gender-related motives/indicators surrounding femicide, particularly intimate partner femicide, and involves perpetrators who kill a female partner because she left him, was in the process of leaving, or had communicated her intention to do so. Similar to research worldwide, femicide cases in Canada during the period examined repeatedly showed signs that the woman was planning to leave the perpetrator and this was, in part, a catalyst for the femicide. For example, prior to her death, one woman had booked a flight for her and her children to return to her home country prior to her death. Another victim had told her male partner she and her children would be leaving him and that night he stabbed her to death in front of their two children. Another woman, frequently seen with bruises, had expressed to family and friends her desire to leave and they believe she was in the process of doing so when he killed her. In other cases, the victims had already left, but the



perpetrators could not accept what they perceived as a betrayal and/or enacted their revenge against their female partners for doing so. For example, in one case, family members indicated the perpetrator became increasingly aggressive to his ex-girlfriend after she left him, harassing and intimidating her, before shooting her and severely injuring her sister. [For case examples, see Case 3.3 and Case 3.4]

Case 3.3

A woman was murdered by her ex-partner in their shared home. Their young son heard his mother scream loudly before she urged him to call the police. She then ran outside, where the offender stabbed her 17 times with a knife on their balcony. He then dragged her back inside and proceeded to stab her once more, where she collapsed in front of their son. Following her death, the young boy was abducted by his father, the offender. A manhunt ensued which lasted over 24 hours and spanned two provinces. At a rest stop, the offender attacked and killed an elderly man, stole his car, and then disposed of his body in a nearby wooded area. Shortly thereafter, the young boy was located physically unharmed and the offender was arrested. He was later charged with, and convicted of, two-counts of first degree murder in connection with the death of his wife and the elderly man. Although he has yet to be sentenced, both convictions are currently under appeal. At trial, it was revealed that the “stormy” relationship between the offender and victim turned “explosive,” just prior to her death. They had enrolled in marriage counseling and their therapist testified to the state of their relationship. He claimed that the victim was fearful of the offender who had physically assaulted and exhibited controlling behaviour in the past. He reported that the victim felt overwhelmed by the offender’s “neediness” and explained to the court how the offender would become enraged if she did not respond to his texts or calls immediately. The last appointment was the day before the victim’s murder; she had informed their therapist of a violent episode three days prior where the offender forcibly confined and yelled at her for unknown reasons. The offender did not deny the incident and the therapist began to believe the victim’s life was in danger. He had agreed with the victim that the offender should move out of the family home and urged her to call police if he tried to return. The offender, however, did not want the relationship to end and refused to move out of their shared home.



Case 3.4

After a woman returned from a trip overseas, she went to bed for the night. Sometime during the night, her husband stabbed her twelve times in front of their two young children. He then fled the scene and attempted suicide by driving his car in front of a semi-tractor trailer. He survived with minimal injury and was charged with second degree murder. After pleading guilty as charged, it was revealed that their marriage had become strained in recent years and, when she returned from her trip, she informed the offender that she planned to stay at their home for a month and would then leave with the children. Following their discussion, she went to bed with their five-year-old child and the offender slept on the couch. Sometime during the night, their other child awoke to his mother screaming, went into her room and witnessed his father repeatedly stab his mother. Sentencing the offender to life with no possibility of parole for 12 years, the judge agreed with the Crown that her murder was horrific and would continue to have an enormous impact on their children.



GRMI #4: Victim declined to establish or re-establish a relationship

Similar to but distinct in some ways from separation is the GRMI that involves a femicide that occurs in response to a victim who rejects or spurns a perpetrator's advances to initiate a relationship or re-establish a prior relationship. With respect to the first type of incident, there is no previous relationship between the victim and the perpetrator, but he wished for there to be or, in some cases, he believed there was an existing relationship although the victim had not agreed to this or was not even aware of his beliefs. For example, in a 2016 case, a woman was sexually assaulted and killed by a man who lived on the same floor of her building who believed that she was his girlfriend. With respect to the second type of case, the victim was not killed while leaving or because she left, but rather because she refused the perpetrator's efforts to enter into the relationship again. [*For case example, see Case 3.5*]

Case 3.5

A woman was killed in her apartment by a man who lived down the hall from her. He claimed that she was his girlfriend, however, they had no connection apart from living on the same floor. The offender broke into her apartment and watched violent pornography while he waited for the victim to come home. Upon her arrival, she was attacked, beaten, repeatedly sexually assaulted, and strangled. Her autopsy described several injuries to her genitalia, head, neck, and abdomen, most of which occurred while she was still alive. The next morning, her body was found partially nude on her bed, with an electrical cord wrapped around her neck and a sex toy nearby. Investigators believe that she was sexually assaulted before and possibly during or after her death. The offender consumed anti-anxiety medication and alcohol and was found unresponsive in the victim's living room. Subsequent to receiving medical treatment, he was arrested and charged with first degree murder. The offender had a troubled upbringing. He was diagnosed with a paranoid and antisocial personality disorder and a substance use disorder. His mother and grandmother also suffered from mental illness and both committed suicide when he was young, leading him to drop out of school after acquiring a grade six education. He had also been sexually abused as a child, by someone outside of the family. However, he was assessed by a psychologist who determined he was criminally responsible. The offender pled guilty to second degree murder and was sentenced to life with no possibility of parole for 15.5 years. The victim's family agreed to this deal to spare them from having to sit through a long, and "excruciating" trial.

GRMI #5: Committed along with oppression/domination over women/girls' life decisions or sexuality

While often more difficult to identify than some other GRMIs, this indicator is seen to stem from the patriarchal organization of the family or a community whereby the male is viewed as the decision-maker, particularly over women and girls, and a femicide occurs when a woman or girl attempts to exert independence over their own life or sexuality. While this GRMI may overlap with other motives or indicators (e.g. separation), the situation or circumstances may often be more subtle in their manifestation and more easily missed by those investigating or responding to such killings, warranting its separate mention.

The ways in which this GRMI presents itself varies significantly as shown by some cases that occurred in Canada since 2016 which involved general, ongoing oppression or specific acts of domination and oppression. For example, one accused reportedly wanted to control the location his mother lived because he had power of attorney and did not want her to relocate. In another situation of ongoing oppression, a woman was victimized for not adhering to her male partners notions of being a proper wife. Another woman was killed during an argument over the fact that she wanted to begin working again which reportedly left the offender feeling insulted and disrespected. [*For case examples, see Case 3.6 and Case 3.7*]



Case 3.6

Police responded to a domestic dispute after neighbours reported hearing multiple gunshots. Upon their arrival, they found a woman shot to death and her teenage daughter still alive but suffering from gunshot wounds to the face. The deceased victim's common-law husband fled the scene with their two younger children who were located physically uninjured but who had witnessed the shooting. He was later arrested and charged with second degree and attempted murder in relation to the shootings. Police had not been called to the residence previously, although some family members indicated prior violence had gone unreported. The offender pled guilty to second degree murder and discharging a firearm to endanger a life and was sentenced to life with no possibility of parole for 12 years. During sentencing, it was revealed that the offender had shot both his wife and daughter after feeling "insulted" and "disrespected" during a fight. The fight revolved around the victim's desire to start working again. The victim disengaged from the argument and went into her kids' bedroom, closing the door. The offender followed her with a pistol, shooting her in the head and chest. He then shot his teenage daughter, who played dead, and later sought help from neighbours.



Case 3.7

Police were called to an area for reports of a sudden death. Upon arrival, they located two people dead—an elderly woman who was found beaten to death in a car and a male in his 50s was found below a bridge. Police later ruled the deaths as a murder-suicide. The male reportedly killed his mother before taking his own life. The victim had been living in a nursing home but frequently travelled to Florida to visit her two daughters and other friends. Her daughters were trying to move her down to Florida to live permanently. Her son, however, had power of attorney and reportedly did not agree with the plan to relocate.

GRMI #6: Prior threats to hurt or kill the woman or girl

These femicide cases involve perpetrators who made prior threats to commit various crimes against the victim, including harassment or injury and, particularly, threats to kill her. This might include direct threats to the victims themselves, perhaps also with the intent to instill fear in her and control her movements, or threats to harm others such as children or family members. These threats may also have been communicated by letter, email or telephone messages or they may also have been communicated to others, such as family, friends and/or co-workers. [For case example, see Case 3.8]

Case 3.8

A woman was found dead in a laneway after being attacked by her ex-husband with a machete. The victim was on her way home from work when witnesses claimed he ambushed her and chased her down the street. She was reported to have been hit multiple times with the machete and suffered substantial injuries to her head and body. The attack continued after she collapsed to the ground, leaving her with severe lacerations to her head and limbs. She died at the scene. He was charged with first degree murder in connection with the attack and the case is currently before the courts. The man and woman were in an arranged marriage. Two years prior to her death, she reported to police that her then-husband allegedly assaulted her twice. The first incident was reported to have occurred while they were travelling in a car and the accused grabbed her arm and twisted it painfully. Six days later, a second incident occurred that stemmed from his controlling behaviour. The victim testified that the accused would not let her speak to her parents overseas and withheld her travel documents. He refused to let her use a cellphone, telling her "in this country, only the husband uses the phone." When she raised her concerns with him regarding his controlling behaviour, they argued. He allegedly injured her arm and smothered her with a pillow while saying, "Do you know who I am? Do you know what I am capable of?" Following these incidents, the accused was charged with two counts of common assault and the victim separated from him, attempting to start a new life without abuse. He was acquitted of the charges since the judge noted how inconsistencies in the victim's evidence "had raised reasonable doubt about whether the violence happened." The accused, however, agreed to a peace bond and not go within 500 metres of the victim. At the time of her death, the peace bond was still in effect. Two weeks prior to her murder, the accused was reported to have told his brother that he would kill the victim.



GRMI #7: The woman or girl was pregnant

Research has shown that pregnant women are highly vulnerable to femicide, and are often younger, more likely to be from minority ethnic groups, and unmarried (Cliffe et al. 2019). Domestic violence is also a significant risk factor for both attempted and completed femicides of pregnant women. As such, the fact that the victim was pregnant when she was killed is seen as a GRMI. [For case example, see case 3.9]

Case 3.9

Police received a call from a woman regarding a domestic disturbance after her estranged husband would not let her leave his home. When police arrived, she was found deceased, naked from the waist down with 17 stab wounds to her head, face, neck, and body. Her estranged husband had fled the scene but was arrested the following day and charged with first degree murder. The victim was nine months pregnant at the time of her murder, due to deliver in two weeks and the baby did not survive. The victim and offender dated on and off for approximately six years and were married for six months. A few months prior to her murder, she had moved back into her parents' home but did not reveal why she was separating from her husband. There was a history of violence in the relationship. The offender was charged twice with domestic assault; however, on both occasions the charges were withdrawn. The offender pled guilty to second degree murder and was sentenced to life with no possibility of parole for 17 years. At his hearing, it was revealed how the offender sent the victim a series of hostile texts, calling her misogynistic names and wrote "I really don't want to be married to you," "I want nothing to do with you or this baby anymore," "I hope to god you stop breathing while you drive," and "I hope you die delivering." In increasing his parole ineligibility from the mandatory minimum for second degree of 10 years, the judge stressed that he committed a "senseless act of cruelty" that had a "profound and crushing" impact on the victim's family, friends, and wider community.

GRMI #8: Sexual violence

Sexual violence refers to any act of a sexual nature that is not consensual, including exhibitionism, voyeurism, and imposition of non-consensual sexual acts that occur in the context of intimate/familial relationships as well as outside the context of intimacy. Non-consensual sexual acts can include forced abortion, forced pregnancy, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, and forced nudity. In group contexts, femicide involving sexual violence and torture are a violent means "used to affirm and reaffirm the belonging to a group or to seek the acceptance of other men" (Sarmiento et al., 2014: 58). In other cases, the perpetrator may direct his violence against different women in public life. Sexual violence can also include the public exposure of a women after death in sexually-violent ways such as the placing, or insertion, of objects on her body to degrade or humiliate or leaving the victim exposed, either fully or partially nude.

Numerous femicide cases that occurred in Canada since 2016 involved some form of sexual abuse or violence prior to, during, or after the femicide. For example, one offender smothered and stabbed his victim until she stopped making noises and then proceeded to sexually assault her. In another case, the offender, a neighbour, had previously entered the victim's home uninvited, demanded sexual favours, exposed himself to her, and then sexually assaulted the victim. In another case, the offender broke into the victim's home to lay in wait for her and, when she returned home, he repeatedly beat and sexually assaulted her, eventually strangling her to death. Some of these matters involved incidents that occurred prior to the femicide and were before the court when the victims were killed. [For case examples, see Case 3.10 and Case 3.11]



Case 3.10

A woman was shot in her home by her next-door neighbour. Just before midnight, the intoxicated neighbour took a shotgun, walked to her home, and knocked on the window of her front door. When she came to the door, he fired a single fatal blast and walked in to see her body on the floor. He returned home, where he retrieved another firearm, and then fled the scene in his vehicle. Students staying with the victim at the time discovered her body and called the police. Her neighbour was quickly identified as a suspect, and police initiated a short pursuit that ended in a graveyard. After hours of attempting a peaceful negotiation, multiple gunshots were exchanged, injuring both the suspect and an officer. After receiving medical treatment, the offender was arrested and charged with first degree murder and attempted murder of the injured officer. There was an alleged history of sexual violence between the victim and her neighbour. He allegedly demanded sexual favours and exposed himself to her. On one occasion, he walked into her home uninvited and intoxicated and proceeded to sexually assault her while her grandchildren were sleeping. She told his wife about the incident, who then decided to leave him. Over a period of two months, the victim filed at least three complaints against him, claiming that her life was in danger. She applied for a peace bond against the offender. At the hearing, the judge ordered the offender to have no contact with the victim while the matter was before the court. A few days before her death, she walked into a police detachment and told them she “feared for her life.” She felt threatened and noted that he was “very strong.” The offender was upset about the breakdown of his marriage and the allegations against him. He pleaded with his wife to persuade the victim to drop the peace bond application and stated that his neighbour “would have to die.” Leading up to the murder, he had also been dealing with mental health issues, substance abuse, and depression. He pled guilty to second degree murder and was given a life sentence without a chance of parole for 20 years.



Case 3.11

A group of children discovered the body of an Indigenous girl near her home. A coroner’s investigation revealed that the girl died as a result of her skull being crushed. The offender was charged with first degree murder and faced charges of sexual assault and illegal confinement. He was sentenced as a young offender to six years in prison followed by four years of conditional supervision in the community. During trial, the court heard how the victim was seen on a surveillance camera walking in the direction of her home. One minute after she was out of view of the surveillance, someone else appeared and was rushing in the same direction. According to police, her body was discovered approximately three minutes away from the range of surveillance. During trial, the offender’s lawyer argued that he lived in a violent household and “had not learned how to love.”

GRMI #9: Mutilation

A femicide may be brought on by mutilation, or involve mutilation, including the practice of genital mutilation, before and/or after death. This may include mutilation of parts of a woman or girl’s body which may hold special meaning to the perpetrator. It can also include dismemberment and/or decapitation, regardless of whether it was done to conceal the body, reduce the likelihood of victim identification and/or to avoid detection. While these latter reasons may seem to be less gender-related in nature, the fact that the perpetrator sees mutilation of the victim as appropriate to minimize the discovery of his actions suggests a perception of the victim as a ‘possession’ or an ‘object’. For example, in one Canadian case, a victim’s full remains have yet to be found, but some of her remains were found in a garbage bin and at a nearby recycling plant where the offender had disposed of her. *[For case example, see Case 3.12]*



Case 3.12

A woman was visiting friends in an apartment building when she had a chance encounter with a male whom she recognized from frequenting the building. The male then invited her back to his apartment, and she was last seen exiting the building's elevator, walking alongside him. In the following days, friends were unable to locate her and put up missing person posters around the city. Within two weeks of her disappearance, dismembered human remains were found in a garbage bin behind a butcher shop and others found in a nearby recycling plant. Police were able to positively identify the remains as belonging to the victim and charged the male with first degree murder and indignity to human remains. It is unclear what occurred after the victim entered his apartment; the offender testified that the victim died of an overdose and, in a state of panic, he dismembered and disposed of her remains. Accordingly, he pled guilty to committing indignity to human remains but not guilty to murder. Because only some of her remains were located, the cause of death could not be determined. There was, however, evidence of bruising to suggest she was beaten, before being dismembered, and decapitated with a hack saw. The offender was convicted of second degree murder and one count of indignity to a dead body. He had a long criminal record which included four previous instances of stalking, harassment and violence towards women. The judge sentenced him to life in prison with no chance of parole for 22 years.

GRMI #10: Use of excessive violence

Sometimes referred to as 'overkill', a femicide is often demonstrated by an excessive level of violence beyond what was necessary to kill the victim. This might entail the repeated use of the same method or weapon or a combination of multiple methods or weapons. Excessive violence is common in cases of intimate partner femicide specifically and this was true in the Canadian context as well. For example, one victim was stabbed 17 times in her head, face, neck and torso. Another was found stabbed 30 times. Still another woman was found with 69 wounds on her body. In another case, the offender strangled the woman, cracking her neck, then stabbed her before hiding her body in an attic. In another case, the perpetrator smothered and stabbed the victim after which he sexually assaulted her. [For case example, see Case 3.13]



Case 3.13

A woman was beaten and stabbed to death following an argument with her male partner in their shared apartment. Several neighbours heard shouting and screams for help, but their concerns were dismissed by the offender and police were not called. The offender then placed a business suit over his bloodied clothes and went for dinner at a casino restaurant. He could not afford the food he ordered. Police were called, at which time he was arrested for an outstanding warrant related to a prior domestic assault charge involving the victim. Shortly after his arrest, police located the victim deceased in her apartment and charged the offender with first degree murder. The forensic pathologist noted that there were obvious signs of trauma to the victim's body. The injuries were inflicted with a 20-centimeter-long knife. There were 69 wounds on her body; 25 of which were on her hands, arms, and legs, indicative of defensive posturing during the attack. A series of stabbing injuries to the forehead, neck, nose, and cheek areas also show that the victim tried to prevent herself from sustaining injuries. The offender was convicted of second degree murder and sentenced to life without a chance of parole for 15 years. During sentencing, a history of "turbulence and volatility" in the couple's relationship was disclosed, although the judge could not determine whether the assault had occurred because the offender denied injuring the victim previously and he had not been tried on the charge. There was evidence, however, that the two had argued a lot throughout their relationship.



GRMI #11: Forcible confinement

These femicides involve the victims being forcibly confined, or held against their will, before being killed by the perpetrator. For example, in one case, the victim and several other women, also living as the offender's 'wives', were not allowed to leave the house or talk to any visitors who came to the door. They had no phone or contact with the outside world beyond emails which were monitored by the offender. Before finally killing the victim in this case, he locked her in the basement and tortured her until she died from her injuries, again demonstrating how many of these cases involve more than one GRMI. [For case example, see case 3.14]

Case 3.14

The decomposed remains of a woman were found in a barrel in the backyard of an abandoned home. Her common-law husband, and father to her child, was charged with her homicide. The offender was described as a 'ladies' man' with a long criminal record for assaulting women. At the time of the victim's death, he was living with her and four other women, all of whom he was sharing intimate relationships with. The Crown argued that the offender maintained control over all five women through surveillance, drugs, physical, financial, and emotional abuse. The victim had lived with the offender and four "sister wives" for four years prior to her murder. At trial, the other women testified to the nature of the offender's control tactics. There was very little food in the home and the women were not allowed to leave the residence alone or speak to any visitors. They had no phone or contact with the outside world aside from emails, which were strictly monitored by the offender. Each had domesticated roles to play and would be made "an example of" if they did not fulfill their roles. In the summer of 2016, the offender became convinced that the victim was cheating on him and locked her in the basement, torturing her for several days before she succumbed to her injuries. While investigating her homicide, officers found a handwritten relationship contract between the victim and offender, signed and dated in 2013. This contract stipulated that the offender was her "master" and she was his "submissive". The Crown argued successfully that the offender was guilty of first degree murder because he "physically and psychologically" confined the victim to the home, beat her for several days in the locked basement, and enlisted the help of two other sister wives in disposing her remains. In sentencing the offender, the judge called him a "curator in a house of horrors" as he imposed the "much-deserved" 25-year mandatory sentence.

"He stole (his daughters') happiness, my best friend, my brother's source of advice, my parent's eldest daughter and a wonderful friend to so many."





GRMI #12: Enforced disappearance

A femicide can involve the initial disappearance of the woman or girl and may be characterized by their disappearance or found abandoned outside or disposed of in private or public locations. For example, in 2016, in Ontario, an elderly woman disappeared, sparking a two-week search which ended when she was found in a local landfill site where she had been dumped by the perpetrator. In Alberta, a young mother and her daughter disappeared, their bodies found about a month later abandoned in a wooded area. These cases may also be characterized by excessive violence, mutilation, or sexual violence which is evident when the body of the woman or girl is discovered. Each can be seen as a common characteristic of femicides associated with kidnapping and public disposals. [For case example, see Case 3.15]

Case 3.15

The torso of a pregnant woman who had been missing for almost two weeks was discovered floating in a harbour by fishermen. As the police investigation progressed, more body parts were found in a basement apartment and the resident who lived there was charged with indecent interference to human remains. The autopsy on the torso did not reveal a cause of death, however it indicated that the victim suffered from “obvious signs of trauma.” During the investigation, DNA of a second woman who went missing almost a decade prior was also discovered at his residence and, the following year, the accused was charged with two counts of first degree murder. Information on how the accused’s relationship to the two women, or if he knew them at all, has not been released publicly. Friends of the accused shared his alleged fascination with bondage, discipline, dominance and submission (often referred to as BDSM), and he referred to himself as a “sexual freak” on his Facebook account. Media reports discuss how the accused had a troubled upbringing and suggested that a breakup with his girlfriend a year prior to the killing may have been a potential trigger for the 2016 murder and dismemberment. According to his friends, the relationship ended as a result of his controlling and abusive nature, as he often “chok[ed] her out and forc[ed] himself on her tiny 100-or-so pound frame.” The accused frequently referred to his ex-girlfriend negatively in various Facebook posts, and often stated that women cheat and are disloyal. His trial is scheduled for September 2020.

“[Her] passion was her girls, and she lived every minute to bring them joy and happiness,” the death notice said. “We will always remember the sharing of her love for reading, baking and crafting with the girls. [She] had a love of the outdoors and adventure, and was always ready to try anything at least once, especially if it gave her a chance to get in a workout.”

GRMI #13: Disposal or abandonment of the woman or girl

Frequently present in femicide that involves an initial enforced disappearance, the body of the victims are often disposed of, or thrown away, in a public or private place, touched on briefly above. For example, the decomposed remains of one victim was found in a barrel in the backyard of an abandoned home where the offender, her common-law partner, had disposed of her. Another offender placed his wife in a suitcase and dumped her in a river. The elderly Ontario woman above, who disappeared and was later found at a local landfill site, was wrapped in a tarp and her head covered in a garbage bag. Finally, another woman in British Columbia was found on the side of a highway late at night and, in another case, a young victim whose mother had



already been killed by the perpetrator was suffocated and dumped in a secluded wooded area. [For case examples, see Case 3.16 and Case 3.17]

Case 3.16

A woman and her young daughter were murdered by her best friend's former intimate partner. The offender had blamed the victim for the termination of his two-year, common-law relationship because she encouraged her friend to leave him after witnessing him assault her. The offender then drove to the victim's house to confront her. Upon arrival, he bound her with duct tape, assaulted her, and fatally strangled her. Following this, he abducted her daughter and took her to his home. He spent hours planning and deliberating before deciding to kill the young child, in order to eliminate her as a key witness to her mother's murder. She was suffocated and her body was found three days later, after being dumped in a secluded, wooded area. The offender had an extensive criminal record, including convictions of exercising control over a person to carry on prostitution. The judge commented that the offender experienced no remorse after the killings. He was convicted of two counts of first degree murder and sentenced to life imprisonment with no eligibility for parole for 50 years.



Case 3.17

An elderly woman was reported missing and her disappearance sparked a two-week search. At a local landfill site, her concealed remains were discovered. Her body was covered with a tarp and her head was wrapped with a garbage bag. She died by choking on her own blood, after being repeatedly struck in the face. Her adult son had a known history of violence against her, including previous assault and uttering threats convictions, and was charged with second degree murder. During the trial, the victim's daughter stated, "My mother should have been surrounded by those who loved and cared for her. Not left with a garbage bag over her head and thrown into a ditch." The judge stated that the offender's actions demonstrated a clear lack of remorse by disposing of his mother's body at a dump. He was convicted of second degree murder and sentenced to life with no possibility of parole for 15 years

GRMI #14: Connected to human trafficking, group or cultural practices

Femicide can stem from crime-related activities such as drug dealing, human trafficking and/or gang-related activities and other contexts in which there are group/cultural rituals. For example, in one case, the femicide victim was shot and then burned. It is suspected that the killing was a message to her boyfriend who was reportedly involved with drugs- or gang-related activities. As such, arguably, she was viewed as the property or the possession of her boyfriend and used as such by the perpetrators, but cases such as this may not often be recognized as involving a GRMI. [For case example, see Case 3.18]

Case 3.18

An Indigenous woman was found shot in the head and severely burned after being pulled from her burning house. A day later, she was taken off life support and died. Three men involved in drug trafficking were charged in connection with her death. The offenders arrived at her house looking for the victim's boyfriend who was known to sell drugs out of the home and was indebted to the offenders over a prior drug transaction. When they found he wasn't home, they decided to rob the victim. Her brother saw the three men enter the home armed with a knife and firearm. During the course of the robbery, she was shot in the head by one man. Her brother heard a gunshot and saw one of the men deliberately set fire to the house. All three men had gang connections and lengthy criminal records. One offender pled guilty to second degree murder and was sentenced to life in prison. The jury found the other two men guilty of manslaughter: one offender was sentenced to 13 years in prison. The other offender was sentenced to 15 years; however, he had been tried and convicted for two murders prior to being convicted in this woman's death and so is not eligible for parole for 40 years due to consecutive sentences.



GRMI #15: Misogyny

Femicides that result from misogyny involve perpetrators who demonstrate a strong prejudice against women which could be directly expressed with statements of hatred or, indirectly, with attitudes and beliefs about the role of women and girls as being primarily for taking care of men, both domestically and/or sexually. Often seen as one of the more difficult gender-based motives to identify, beyond the Montreal Massacre where misogyny was evident, recent years have provided numerous examples of gender-based killing motivated by hatred and contempt for women and girls. For example, one victim whose



body was mutilated and disposed of in several random locations was killed by an offender who had a long criminal record including multiple previous incidents of stalking, harassment and violence against women. Another victim was reportedly not allowed to use a cellphone because “only the husband uses the phone” while another was reportedly abused for “not being a proper wife”. Further, as previously discussed, the male neighbour who reportedly felt it was appropriate to demand sexual favours, expose himself and sexually assault the woman who lived next door arguably holds the attitude that women’s primary role is to take care of men sexually. Another offender who killed a woman and her daughter because he believed the woman had advised his female partner to leave him had an extensive criminal record including convictions for exercising control over a person to carry on prostitution. In another case, as mentioned above, the previous partner of a femicide perpetrator described him as cruel and indicated he had destroyed her emotionally, suggesting a hatred or contempt for women. In another case, the perpetrator ridiculed the victim throughout their marriage, abused her verbally, rejecting the food she cooked and requiring that she ask his permission in many contexts and deferring to him when in public. [For case example, see Case 3.19]

Case 3.19

Emergency personnel responded to calls of a transport truck on fire. One male occupant was able to escape but his wife remained trapped inside. Following an investigation, police charged the man with first-degree murder in the death of his wife. At trial, the offender admitted to hitting his wife with a hammer and setting fire to the truck to conceal her homicide. It was revealed that the two had met through an arranged marriage and had three children together. Evidence suggested that their marriage was not happy and was filled with tension. The offender and his relatives would question the victim’s whereabouts and would reportedly slap her for “not being a proper wife.” The offender testified that an argument arose in the minutes before her death due to the offender’s belief that the victim was being unfaithful and that their youngest child may not be his child. Upon hearing of her alleged infidelity, the offender admitted to hitting her repeatedly with the hammer. There is evidence the murder was premeditated because one of their daughters testified that she heard her father on the phone prior to the killing saying he would disfigure his wife. Twelve hours prior to her murder, the couple had signed matching wills and powers of attorney giving all assets to the surviving spouse in the event that one died. Additionally, just days prior to the victim’s death, there was evidence the victim planned to leave the offender. She had booked a flight for her and two of her children to return to her home country. He was found guilty of first-degree murder and sentenced to life in prison with no parole eligibility for 25 years.

"She was a very outgoing person. Never known anyone to hate her. She was happy-go-lucky. She was just fantastic."



Section IV: Current and Emerging Research and Data Priorities for Femicide Prevention

Accurate femicide data requires case scrutiny

On a warm summer evening in 2018, a male armed with a handgun opened fire on a crowded, patio-lined street in a large city in Ontario. He was shooting people, seemingly at random, resulting in the deaths of a young woman and a girl and an additional 13 people injured. The young woman, a recent high school graduate, was killed while attending a friend's birthday celebration. The young girl was enjoying an ice cream with her father. Police officers quickly arrived on scene, exchanged gunfire with the male perpetrator, who died by suicide during the encounter. Following the shootings, the perpetrator's family expressed their condolences and publicly shared his ongoing mental health challenges. The investigation revealed that he had a long history of substance abuse, self-harm, and failed psychiatric interventions. Almost a year later, however, the release of a Toronto Police Service (TPS) investigative report and related documents revealed additional details about the circumstances leading up to the femicides. For example, the TPS report indicated that, in a search of the perpetrator's home, police found several rounds of ammunition and a large quantity of drugs as well as electronic equipment that revealed a preoccupation with murderous fantasies, including documents and audio files about the misogynistic Incel group whose ideology and its followers blame women for the sexual failings of men. The report also noted that, on the afternoon of the day of the femicide, family members reported having a conversation with the perpetrator about his future and advised him to find a wife. This conversation reportedly upset the perpetrator and he left their residence shortly afterwards. Despite this information, investigators indicated to the media that they were unable to pinpoint the exact motivation for the shootings, stating that there was no evidence that the male was affiliated "with radical ideologies, hate groups or terrorist organizations." However, in light of recent discussions about the link between violent misogyny, mass shootings, right-wing White supremacy ideology and gun advocacy, the dominant definition of terrorism may be too narrow, particularly as it relates to violence against women broadly and femicide specifically (e.g. Hamm & Spaaij 2017).

This section identifies and discusses current and emerging research and data priorities for informing the prevention of femicide and male violence against women and girls. Reflecting some similarities to the 2018 CFOJA report, we focus on three key incident characteristics that continue to dominate among cases of femicide: intimacy, non-urban spaces, and firearms. While each are well-documented risk factors on their own, we underscore how these factors work together to increase the risk of femicide. We then turn to a discussion of two key socio-demographic characteristics that reflect, respectively, an ongoing and an emerging risk for femicide, both also identified in the 2018 report: Indigeneity and age.

Following this, we bring together these research priorities in a discussion on the challenges faced in addressing these and other research priorities because of limited or non-existent data. Specifically, we discuss how the risks for diverse groups of women and girls remain difficult to document because of a lack of reliable and valid data, in part due to an increasing lack of transparency from those who record/report these incidents, not only when relying on media and/or court documents, but also across official data sources. This decline in availability of essential data is occurring in the face of international calls for more in-depth and more accurate data on femicide and other forms of violence against women/girls.

Femicide and the 'intimacy discount'

Consistent with our inaugural report and research globally (UNODC, 2018), patterns documented for 2019 (57%) and the four-year period examined (53%) demonstrate that the largest proportion of women continue to be killed by current or former male partners. Therefore, intimacy is arguably the greatest risk factor for women, consistent over time and across cultures (UNODC 2018). This remains the case despite significant efforts

targeting intimate partner violence against women by men in the past three decades resulting in social and legal transformations. Furthermore, we know that there has been little progress in the past several years in preventing violence



against women and girls globally, including in the context of their intimate relationships (UNODC, 2018). Recently, it feels like the progress pendulum is rapidly swinging backward.

This is largely due to an inability to address negative and damaging attitudes, beliefs and stereotypes about intimate relationships and about women's and men's roles in those relationships. This point can be illustrated by examining typical public and professional responses to the following three scenarios:

1. A stranger enters the home of a woman and, after a struggle, he pulls out a gun and shoots her.
2. A man enters the home of a woman, his estranged female partner; there is a struggle, he gets his gun and shoots her.
3. A man and a woman, husband and wife, are at home; there is a struggle, he gets his gun, and he shoots her.

All three scenarios involve the same set of basic facts – a man, a woman, a struggle, a shooting, and a death. Only one variable has changed: the degree of intimacy that existed between the killer and the victim prior to the homicide. In the first scenario, there was no intimacy, no prior relationship. They were strangers. Members of the public are appalled. They question how this can happen and whether anyone is safe in their own home. In the second scenario, there was a prior intimate partner relationship between the victim and the offender. Members of the public are saddened. Two people who used to be in love, now estranged, the situation driving the individuals to a shocking end.

In the final scenario, the degree of intimacy is the closest social relationship that can exist between two adults. Members of the public are resigned. Another domestic dispute spirals out of control and ends in death. Simply put, as the degree of intimacy between a victim and their killer becomes closer, more intimate, society's collective 'gut reaction' seems to become less intense, less strong, less indignant and, somehow, more accepting. This occurs because violence that occurs between intimates, and particularly intimate partners, is typically seen as 'normal', 'expected', 'spontaneous', 'unpredictable' and, therefore, unpreventable.

At one time, our laws made little mention of intimacy and its meaning in the criminal justice process. Today, however, the sentencing principles in the *Criminal Code of Canada* stipulate that the relationships offenders have (or had) with their victims may act as an aggravating factor in determining their punishments, specifically in cases of domestic and child abuse. The symbolic success of this amendment is obvious given the law's previous silence on this issue. The law and those who impose it must recognize the seriousness of this type of violence before society can combat it effectively. As a result, this legislative amendment may be viewed as a social barometer of sorts that demonstrates the extent to which the treatment and perception of intimate partner and domestic violence has changed in Canada. Despite these changes, the ongoing legacy of these entrenched stereotypes creates an environment in which intimacy continues to be a risk factor for women and girls. Furthermore, these entrenched stereotypes – specifically as they relate to intimate partner violence as 'normal' and 'unpredictable' – are often more entrenched in non-urban regions of our country exacerbating risks for some women and girls, as we discuss next.

Femicide in non-urban areas

Non-urban communities – rural, remote, northern – are often characterized as idyllic and peaceful; however, existing research demonstrates that geography is a risk factor for intimate partner femicide. In 2008, a Canadian study revealed that the rate of intimate partner homicide – which primarily involves women as victims – in rural versus urban jurisdictions was .90 and .16 per 100,000 population, respectively (Northcott, 2011). In 2018, non-urban women and girls represented 16 percent of the female population in Canada, but about 34 percent of femicide victims in general (CFOJA, 2018).



Given that non-urban women and girls are overrepresented as victims of femicide, there is a pressing need to examine how the killing of women and girls in Canada varies across geographic regions (Dawson, 2010; Pruitt, 2008; National Inquiry MMIWG, 2017). Preliminary research identifies unique factors that increase the risk of lethality for women living in non-urban communities experiencing intimate partner violence. These factors include, but are not limited to, a lack of access to social and emergency services and transportation, rural gun culture, and difficulty maintaining privacy and confidentiality as described further below.

First, geographic isolation is a “monumental obstacle” for non-urban women, particularly in crisis (Grama, 2000: 181; Pruitt 2007). Geographic isolation places women living in non-urban communities at high-risk primarily because availability and access to services and supports are limited or unavailable. Women living in non-urban communities are often required to travel a long distance to access social services and support (Forsdick Martz & Bryson Saraurer, 2002; Peek-Asa et al., 2011; Neill & Hammatt, 2015; Shepherd, 2001). Relatedly, it is difficult for women living in non-urban communities to seek protection from a violent partner because public transportation is typically unavailable (Forsdick Martz & Bryson Saraurer, 2002; Stommes & Brown, 2002), requiring access to a working vehicle or private transportation. Some non-urban communities are not accessible by road, requiring transport by air or water, which is cost prohibitive (Shepherd, 2001; Grama, 2000). Additionally, emergency responders (e.g. police) are sparsely distributed across non-urban communities, meaning that response times are longer response times when there is immediate danger or a medical emergency (Huey & Ricardelli, 2017; Wisniewski et al., 2016; Weisheit et al., 2005; Logan et al., 2001).

Second, concerns related to anonymity and confidentiality may also prevent non-urban women from accessing social services and disclosing intimate partner violence to formal (e.g. service providers) and informal supports (e.g. family members, friends, coworkers, neighbours) (Wendt & Hornosty, 2010; Pruitt, 2008; Eastman et al., 2007; Bosch & Bergen, 2006; Dudgeon & Evanson 2014; Grama, 2000). Anonymity is compromised in non-urban communities because social networks are close-knit among individuals living and working in these communities. In this sense, "everybody knows everybody" (Wendt & Hornosty, 2010), meaning that service providers could also be friends or neighbours.

Finally, in non-urban communities, firearms are viewed favourably and entrenched within a longstanding tradition related to the lawful purpose of hunting (Doherty & Hornosty, 2008; Huey & Ricciardelli, 2017). As a result, there is high gun ownership in non-urban communities in Canada. However, firearms are also used commonly by violent men living in non-urban communities to intimidate and threaten women (Doherty & Hornosty, 2008; VanHightower & Gorton, 2002; DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2009). For example, between 1984 and 2005, about 46 percent of women were killed with a gun by an intimate male partner in rural New Brunswick (Doherty, 2006). And, given increased availability of guns, in cases where a violent male has a history of violence against his partner and is subject to a firearms’ ban, it is likely that he can still access a gun through a friend or family member. However, because firearms are typically used for hunting, they may not be perceived as a threat against women, meaning that the risk presented by possession or access to firearms is overlooked. This may be why current public and policy discussions around firearms and their controls or restrictions largely ignores risks to women as discussed next.

Femicide, non-urban areas, and firearms

In 2017, Statistics Canada documented a recent increase in homicides in rural areas that was 45 percent higher than the rate reported in urban areas (Beattie et al. 2018). Except in Ontario, this increase was, in part, due to an increase in firearms-related homicide. For example, in rural areas of Saskatchewan, the rate of homicide was 126 percent higher than the rate in urban areas due to higher rates of firearms violence (Beattie et al. 2018). No information was available on the gendered contexts of these firearms-related homicides, particularly relevant for women in non-urban areas as noted above. However, given the geographic isolation and lack of anonymity, women living in non-urban areas may be hesitant to report firearm misuse due to concerns



about police response times, a lack of trust in the police to protect them, and a lack of follow-up from service providers (Kasdorff and Erb 2010; Doherty & Hornosty 2008a). The latter stems from non-urban communities often being severely underfunded, further preventing the victim from receiving help (Pruitt 2008b). Rural households are also more likely to own firearms than households in urban areas, as noted, so non-urban regions are more likely to become lethal for women (Dawson et al. 2019; Doherty and Hornosty 2008) as noted in a recent high-profile case discussed next.

In one of Canada's most extreme instances of multi-partner intimate partner femicide which occurred in a non-urban region of Ontario, three women were left dead, two of whom were killed by a non-restricted firearm used by the offender (Nease 2017). In the fall of 2015, a man killed three of his former intimate partners. The offender's relationships with the three women were all marked by his stalking, harassment, abuse, and physical attacks against them. Within the span of several hours, the man travelled to the victims' residences, murdering them – two with his sawed-off, 12-gauge pump-action shotgun and strangling the third woman. He was found guilty of first-degree murder in the two shootings, and guilty of second-degree murder in the strangulation death of the third victim. He was sentenced to life in prison with no parole eligibility for 70 years. In August 2019, the Ontario Ministry of the Solicitor General announced that there would be an inquest held into the deaths of the three women (CBC 2019). Given media coverage of this case, the role of rurality and firearms will likely be identified as contributors.

Despite this and other similar cases, as well as well-documented research knowledge, women appear to be left out of current public and policy discussions regarding firearms' control and restrictions. The 2018 Statistics Canada report that documented the highest firearms-related homicide rate in 25 years, coupled with the series of recent shootings in Toronto sparked concerns about perceived increases in organized and gang-related crime in urban areas (Babych 2019). According to media reports, street gangs were responsible for the majority of firearms-related violence (CBC News 2019) and policymakers and police appear to be prioritizing initiatives that aim to crack down on gang activity and related gun violence (Westoll 2019).

For example, Toronto's mayor is pushing for a city-wide ban on handguns in order to reduce firearms-related homicide in the large, urban city of Toronto (von Scheel 2019). Municipal politicians in other Canadian metropolises, such as Montreal, Calgary, and Ottawa, are placing similar calls to the government (Gatehouse 2019). City counsellors consider these calls an "excellent first step" to reducing gun violence in major cities (Mussa 2019). However, little attention has been paid to firearms-related risks to women in these or other contexts, including the voices, trauma, and experiences of Black women and girls - several of whom were unintended victims of shootings in the past several years (Vaillancourt 2009; YWCA 2019). When the media does consider gun control in non-urban settings, it is argued that such discussions are quite different from those in urban areas because, "gang violence is far less prevalent *than the need to put down an injured farm animal or scare off a large animal*" (Sharp 2019; *italics added*).

Canadian gun control lobbyists, such as health associations and victim's organizations, are also looking for a ban on handguns and some semi-automatic rifles (Tasker 2019). The Liberal campaign promised to strengthen gun control, by giving municipalities the power to ban or restrict handguns, in addition to banning military-style assault rifles nationwide (Davison & Johnson 2019). The Toronto Medical Officer of Health released a series of recommendations which include banning the sale of handgun ammunition and prohibiting the availability, sale, possession and use of handguns and semi-automatic firearms (Amin 2019).

In contrast, long guns are rarely discussed by the media, public health groups, or the government. By leaving out long guns in these discussions, particularly in non-urban communities, women are largely erased from the broader firearms' debate. As noted above, non-urban women are more likely to be murdered with a rifle or shotgun than a handgun (Ogrodnik 2008; Brzozowski 2004). Research consistently demonstrates that long guns are the most common type of firearm used in intimate partner femicide (Brzozowski 2004). For example, in 2011, 71 percent of firearms-related intimate partner homicides were committed with a rifle or shotgun (Sinha 2013). Thus, the weapon of choice for femicide appears to be a long gun, especially in



non-urban areas. However, in 2012, Bill C-19 ended the long gun registry (RCMP 2010), removing the requirement to register the most lethal firearms to women.

Women were not always absent from these discussions. Following the Montreal Massacre, the Coalition for Gun Control (CGC) was founded to support strategies that aim to reduce death, injury, and crime as a result of firearms. The Coalition supports legislation that includes licensing for all gun owners and bans on military assault weapons and handguns for civilians (CGC 2018). Throughout the Coalition’s lobby for increased gun controls, the voices of women in both urban and non-urban areas were recognized. Consistent with research generally, the Coalition argues that rates of intimate partner homicide increase when there is a firearm present in the household (CGC 2018). This echoes a number of studies which demonstrate that the risk of intimate partner femicide increases with the availability of firearms (Sheehan et al. 2015; Kellerman et al. 1993; Roberts 2009; Krug et al. 1998; Campbell et al. 2001). The Coalition also recognizes that when women are killed by their male partner with a firearm, it is most often a legally-owned shotgun or rifle. This knowledge is supported by Statistics Canada research which documented how women are more likely than men to be killed with a long gun by their partners (Brzozowski 2004; Sinha 2013). Further, it is recognized that the presence of guns in the household remains a key determinant in the lethality risk assessment in cases of intimate partner violence (CGC 2018; Canadian Department of Justice 2001; Doherty & Hornosty 2008). This supports research which finds household ownership of a firearm by an abusive partner increases the risk of intimate partner violence and femicide occurring (Vernick et al. 2007; Webster 2007; Wiltsey 2008; Hepburn & Hemenway 2004).

Recently, the CGC lobbied for increased controls and the strengthening of firearms legislation, submitting a petition to Parliament calling for a ban on the civilian ownership of handguns and military assault weapons. In the spring of 2019, the government responded by stating that they are “committed to combatting gun-related violence and gang activities,” and launched an engagement process to inform policy surrounding firearms (Dzerowicz 2019). The *Reducing violent crime: a dialogue on handguns and assault-style firearms* report states that gang-related gun violence is their priority, but the violent use of firearms in other situations, such as intimate partner violence, remains of the “utmost concern” (Public Safety Canada 2019). However, the federal government’s Bill C-71 which received Royal Assent in June 2019 was framed as “gender neutral,” ignoring the calls of women’s groups (Palmater 2019). It is essential that firearms-related risks to women are highlighted in ongoing and future discussions to introduce effective controls that will help combat femicide in Canada with a specific focus on non-urban communities.

Femicide of Indigenous women and girls



As noted in the Introduction, on June 3, the Final Report of the National Inquiry into the Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls concluded that Indigenous women and girls are victims of an historical and ongoing genocide. Indeed, in the past decade, the marginalization, and increased vulnerability, of Indigenous women and girls to violence has come to the forefront of national and international attention. Beginning with the work of Amnesty International and the Native Women’s Association of Canada and culminating in the Inquiry’s Final Report, it is starkly and violently evident that Indigenous women and girls continue to face significantly higher risk of all types of violence, including femicide. This point was underscored yet again in the UNSRVAV’s Canada report also released in June 2019 as discussed earlier in this report.



In Canada, historical and ongoing impacts of colonization, systemic discrimination, poverty, and other inequalities lead to Indigenous populations in general, including men and boys, being overrepresented as victims of violent crime. The relative impunity for crimes, particularly against Indigenous women and girls compared to non-Indigenous victims, also continues to be well-documented (MMIWG Inquiry, 2017). There is an absence of systematic research on what happens to femicides involving Indigenous women and girls that do result in charges and proceed through the court system, but what information does exist paints a dismal picture.⁴³

Similarly, the data collected by the CFOJA in 2018 and 2019 demonstrate that little appears to be changing for Indigenous women and girls, at least with respect to femicide. Indigenous women and girls continue to be overrepresented as femicide victims compared to other groups of women and girls. This finding underscores the need to recognize equally-important identities that intersect with gender to compound risk of femicide, including geography, since a significant proportion of Indigenous women and girls live in rural, remote and northern regions of the country, also a risk factor for femicide, as discussed above. In addition to being at greater risk than other women and girls, some research has shown that violence against Indigenous women and girls is also often more brutal and more likely to involve sexual violence (Amnesty International, 2009).

Documenting femicide risk for Indigenous women and girls is increasingly more challenging, however. First, when names of victims are not identified and/or released publicly to the media, a significant proportion of the victims appear to be Indigenous women or girls (Dawson et al. 2019). While the reasons for not identifying these and other victims remain unclear, there has been a growing trend whereby officials, police or otherwise, are deciding as a policy or on a case-by-case basis, that they will not release homicide victims' identities publicly, discussed in more detail below in 'Data Priorities and Challenges'. Second, while many investigations are ongoing, it appears that there may be greater obstacles in the investigation of the deaths of Indigenous women and girls, foul play or otherwise. For example, many deaths are deemed 'suspicious' whereas others remain unsolved. The result is that there is less information available to understand the context of these femicides, including the gender-related motives and indicators, and how they might intersect with Indigeneity due to racism and discrimination. This situation is reflective of broader issues surrounding the collection of data on race/ethnicity of victims and accused, particularly as it relates to media as data sources, an issue we return to below.

Older women and risk of femicide



In the 2018 inaugural *#CallItFemicide* report, older women were identified as an emerging research priority although they remained slightly underrepresented as victims (16%) compared to their representation in the general population (18%). Highlighting older women as an emerging vulnerable population was consistent with global calls for more research on violence against, and abuse of, older women, including femicide (ACUNS 2017). As noted above, 2019 data show that women aged 65 and older are now overrepresented as victims and were, in fact, the largest age group of victims (20%), representing one out of every five women killed in the past year.

Although violence and abuse against older women is common worldwide, it has received little attention to date and it is currently one of the most widespread, but unpunished crimes, affecting older women across all groups and nations (ACUNS, 2017). In part, the risk of violence faced by older women stems from the fact that they live longer than men and, as a result, are more likely to live alone or with a single caregiver, making them vulnerable to

⁴³ <https://aptnnews.ca/2018/11/28/people-who-kill-indigenous-women-punished-less-than-those-who-kill-non-indigenous-women-senators-study-finds-2/>



victimization. Being at an increased risk of violence further exacerbates other health conditions. Specifically, older women who experienced physical or psychological abuse were more likely to report more physical (e.g., cardiovascular issues, chronic pain, heart issues, etc.) and mental health conditions (e.g., depression and anxiety) than similarly-aged women who had not experienced abuse (Fisher & Regan, 2006). Furthermore, research shows that, as women age, the harder it is for them to cope with and engage in help-seeking behaviours (Nagele, 2010). If aging women seldom engage in help-seeking behaviours, it is imperative for professionals working with older women to be knowledgeable of the risks and signs of domestic violence among older women and to provide information on available resources when these women do engage (Fisher & Regan, 2006).

Focusing on femicide, specifically, research shows that the majority of older women are killed by intimate male partners or other family members, often sons (Allen et al. 2018; Bows, 2018; Dawson, 2017; Krienert & Walsh, 2009; Sutton & Dawson, 2017). This is consistent with an emerging pattern that has been identified earlier in this report. Because older women are most often killed by a close relative, femicides tend to occur within the victims' home, a finding that is not true of older male homicide victims (Krienert & Walsh, 2009). In addition, risk factors such as caregiver burnout and a history of domestic violence may increase the risk of homicide among older women (Canetto & Hollenshead, 2000; Malphurs & Cohen, 2005). Therefore, when attempting to identify preventative measures for this vulnerable population, it is crucial for practitioners to understand and educate women on how social isolation and limited mobility may work to increase opportunities for her caregiver and/or spouse to inflict potentially lethal violence (Krienert & Walsh, 2009). Given that this population is increasing rapidly, more focused research and violence prevention initiatives are also needed to target this group of women.

Women killed by police

At least nine women were reported to have died due to the actions of police between 2016 and 2019, four of whom were confirmed as having an Indigenous background. The circumstances surrounding each fatality varied. Three women who were shot were allegedly armed with a sharp-edged weapon which is said to be a recognized danger signal that impacts how officers respond (Klinger, Rosenfeld, Isom, & Deckard, 2016; Rojek, Alpert, & Smith, 2012; Sun, Payne, & Wu, 2008). In two of these three cases, the officers have been cleared of any wrongdoing: the investigations concluded that they acted reasonably to protect their own lives or the lives of others. The third case is under investigation. Two additional women were also reported to have been killed by police while allegedly using weapons against officers. The first allegedly used her car as a weapon and was shot by an officer who reportedly feared the woman would run over another officer. The second involved an Indigenous woman who allegedly sprayed an officer with pepper spray and attempted to disarm the officer before she was fatally shot. Both those cases are currently under investigation.

Another two cases occurred in the alleged context of police responding to a violence-related call. There is a consensus in the research literature that police use of deadly force is more likely to occur when officers are responding to such calls (Miller, 2015; Kesic, Thomas, & Ogloff, 2012; Klinger et al., 2016). The first involved police responding to a possible break-and-enter which resulted in two individuals being barricaded in the home. The tactical team entered the home and a confrontation ensued between the male and the police officers, resulting in the male being incapacitated by rubber bullets fired by police. Officers then reportedly "engaged" with the female, whom family members identified as Indigenous, during which she was shot by one of the officers. The second case involved a hostage situation in which a woman was reportedly being held captive by her boyfriend. Following a 10-hour standoff, during which attempts at a peaceful resolution failed, officers entered the home and opened fire on the male, killing both him and his female hostage. These two cases are also currently under investigation.

The remaining two cases involved Indigenous women, highlighting the larger tensions that exist between Indigenous communities and police (Cao, 2014; Dylan et al. 2008; MMIWG Inquiry, 2019; Nihmey, 1998). The first involved a woman who was suffering from a heart attack, reportedly related to a methamphetamine overdose. The arresting officer told other officers she had been medically assessed, which was later revealed to have not been the case. He was subsequently charged and convicted of criminal negligence causing death and failure to provide the necessities of life. The judge concluded the officer was influenced by stereotypes of drug users and failed to ensure that she received the medical attention necessary to reverse a fatal overdose. The second woman died in medical distress related to her refusal to receive kidney dialysis treatment. Despite allegations made by First Nations chiefs that she was treated roughly as she was arrested for allegedly uttering threats, the officers were cleared when the investigation ruled her death as being from natural causes.



Data Priorities and Challenges

Data on femicide remain difficult to access and collect, particularly in some world regions or for some groups of women and girls. It is also a growing challenge to get even basic information beyond gender and age of the victim, date, location, and cause of death; and, if an accused is identified, sometimes the relationship that they shared (Walby et al., 2017). In many countries, basic data collection is the best-case scenario, but these data are usually collected by official agencies and not easily accessible by researchers, advocates, service providers, or violence prevention organizations.

Statistics Canada collects relatively comprehensive information on all homicides that occur; however, these data are limited in scope for determining whether the case was a gender-related killing or femicide. The data collection instrument was likely initially designed to capture the greater proportion of male-on-male homicides, potentially reflecting a bias that has been identified recently by Caroline Criado Perez in her book, *Invisible Women: Exposing Data Bias in a World Designed for Men* (2019). Whether intended or not, Perez argues, it does not really matter because the result is women's lives are put at risk because – from smartphone design to medical trials – data are based on, or generated for, men. Given the lack of variables and measures in our official data collection instruments that can assist with the prevention of femicide, the same argument can be made – the lives of women and girls are at risk because we are not collecting or making available the right information.

And, despite growing awareness and education about gender-related characteristics of male violence against women and girls, coupled with advances in technology and digital data, the situation is getting worse not better.⁴⁴ Violence prevention researchers, advocates and activists are working harder to collect evidence-based data and are becoming increasingly reliant on publicly-accessible information (e.g. media and court documents) in place of official data that are hard to access or that do not provide information to inform prevention. Publicly-available data, limited as they are, are also becoming harder to access because those who record and report public information are increasingly withholding basic facts – names, sex, gender, relationship, method of killing and so on. Thus, in addition to ongoing difficulties capturing more complex victim/accused characteristics such as race/ethnicity (for which the benefits remain controversial), what has always been the core information provided is now being increasingly withheld.

Like other countries, then, Canada faces similar challenges in documenting femicide accurately. And, a crucial question is: if we cannot document femicide in a reliable and valid manner, what is the hope of ever documenting, consistently and accurately, other forms of violence against women and girls and gender-based violence? Below, we situate the work of the Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability alongside other data already being collected by national or provincial/territorial agencies and organizations. In short, our mandate is distinct because the CFOJA focus is gender-related killings of women and girls, and not homicide generally. In addition, the CFOJA is documenting social and legal responses to femicide which, we argue, are core components of violence prevention efforts. In doing so, we discuss some of the growing challenges in this work, given recent trends in the recording and reporting of basic characteristics of violence.

Statistics Canada Homicide Survey:

While the killing of all women and girls (and men and boys) is included as a core focus of data collection for Statistic Canada's Homicide Survey, data is limited, not easily accessible, and has little focus on justice and accountability beyond the initial charge laid by police. With respect to data limitations, despite the fact that women and girls face the most danger from men they know – male partners and family members – there are few variables that specifically capture core information on a consistent basis

⁴⁴ Refer to Section III Gender-Based Motives and Indicators for more information on gender-related characteristics of violence.



that could inform prevention initiatives (e.g. prior violence in the relationship by male partners, prior police contacts or court orders, other system contacts, the presence of children and stepchildren and so on). For example, while the variable ‘history of family violence’ was added to the survey in 1991, it focuses on family violence more broadly (e.g. spousal abuse, child or parent battering) between family members, and does not capture the direction of the violence.⁴⁵ That is, the accused or the victim may have perpetrated the violence or both parties perpetrated violence against each other. Furthermore, if there were multiple victims, it is only necessary for the accused to have been previously violent against one family member. Finally, the history of violence is not available for homicides that occurred between dating partners (Burczycka et al. 2018). In addition, while information on prior criminal convictions is collected for both the victim and the accused, there is no way to determine if these were domestic violence-related convictions given that there is no such an offence in the *Canadian Criminal Code*. Therefore, despite prior violence being one of the most common GRMIs for femicide, the Homicide Survey is not able to consistently capture this information as currently designed.

Moreover, the Homicide Survey does not collect case-based information on the criminal justice processing of a homicide that can link characteristics of the victims, accused or incidents to the sanctions imposed. Beyond the initial charge laid – which often changes – outcomes of the court process – if the offender did not die by suicide – are not consistently recorded anywhere in Canada (e.g. conviction, sentence length, acquittal due to ‘not criminally responsible by reason of mental disorder’). In fact, it is well recognized that little attention is given to variation in official responses to crime across Canadian jurisdictions despite recognition that courts operate in distinct environments that impact how cases are processed and disposed (Roberts 1999; Tonry 2007; Ulmer 2012). Despite these limitations, data produced by Statistics Canada are arguably better than most other countries, even if similarly lacking when it comes to documenting gender-related killings of women and girls.

Domestic violence death review initiatives

Focusing more specifically on the killing of women by male partners – the most common type of femicide – is a growing number of domestic violence death review committees which originated in the United States in the 1990s and now exist in six countries, including Canada (Dawson 2017). Depending on the time and resources available, some of these review initiatives can access a variety of data sources to triangulate information, sometimes producing a more complete picture of the femicide at least as it occurs between intimate partners – referred to as intimate partner femicide when women are victims. Further, in cases of intimate partner femicide-suicides which may not be subject to as detailed an investigation by police given there will be no criminal proceedings, these review initiatives may be the only mechanism to comprehensively investigate those femicides that end with the perpetrator’s suicide.

While several provinces currently have domestic violence death review committees, not all have such initiatives, creating an inequity in data availability across the country. Further, where they do exist, the goal is primarily to examine intimate partner homicides and, while some do include children killed in the context of domestic violence and third-party collateral victims, many femicides would still not be captured. For example, there would be few in-depth examinations of women killed by non-intimates (e.g. strangers, friends, acquaintances) or in other contexts (e.g. gang involvement, sex trade workers, human trafficking, organized crime) unless somehow linked to domestic violence.

Further, the focus of review initiatives is on the events leading up to the intimate partner femicide with no attention to social and legal responses to the killing after it occurs given that this is not typically their mandate. In addition, the number of cases and the materials reviewed, as well as the voices heard and the stakeholders and experts represented at the table, are also variable across jurisdictions (Sheehy 2017). Therefore, while their prevention focus on prevention is crucial, and can contribute significantly to enhancing safety for those experiencing intimate partner, family and domestic violence, the reviews themselves vary significantly and do not address justice and accountability aspects which, again, are a core component of prevention.

⁴⁵ See: http://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p3Instr.pl?Function=getInstrumentList&Item_Id=1209041&UL=1V&



The Canadian Domestic Homicide Prevention Initiative (www.cdhpi.ca) is working to address the lack of domestic violence death reviews in all provinces and territories. This five-year, federally-funded project includes the development of a national database documenting all domestic homicides with the primary goal being to enhance risk assessment, risk management and safety planning, a crucial and necessary focus. Like the review committees above, however, these data will be focused largely on events leading up to the femicide with little emphasis on justice and accountability. The focus also remains on domestic violence related deaths and not femicide more broadly.

The absence of death review mechanisms that capture femicide more broadly is particularly concerning because some research has shown that Indigenous women and girls are often killed by male acquaintances and strangers and more likely to be killed by a stranger than non-Indigenous women (Legal Strategy Coalition on Violence Against Indigenous Women, 2015; NWAC 2010). These femicides would fall outside the mandate of most, if not all, domestic violence death review initiatives.

These gaps, and specifically, the lack of focus on investigations, prosecutions, and convictions of perpetrators globally have been noted by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women who has been consistently calling on countries, including Canada, to improve data collection on femicide since 2015. Recent international work has identified strategies that can be applied within and across different countries to improve the availability, collection and monitoring of femicide data (Vives-Cases et al., 2016). These strategies include “political will, technical specific requirements and the involvement of different agencies—governments, mass media, police bodies, courts and professionals, who are in charge of identifying, registering and monitoring” (Vives-Cases et al., 2016: 34). Priority clusters of actions were also identified within this range of strategies and, according to experts’ assessment, “institutionalizing national databases” was found to be most relevant, but data extracted from media coverage of femicide was rated most feasible, which has been adopted as a first step by the CFOJA.

Below, we outline recent trends that prevent even these data from assisting with the documentation of basic characteristics of femicide.

Reporting of femicide and homicide victims’ names

Some police services in Canada are adopting no-naming policies that restrict the release of homicide victims’ names to the media and, in turn, to the general public. There is variation across police services in Canada with respect to no-naming policies because individual police services interpret legislation and implement their own policies. A study conducted by Community Safety Knowledge Alliance (CSKA) examined no-naming policies across Canadian police services. The authors of the report found that the majority (54%) of police services release the names of homicide victims if the circumstances warrant doing so. Specifically, about 36 percent of police services release the names of all homicide victims, and seven percent of police services do not share homicide victims’ names (Burnett, Ruddell, O’Sullivan & Bernier, 2019). No-naming policies have proven to be controversial, however. For instance, in Saskatchewan, some police agencies have chosen not to name homicide victims despite the Minister of Justice indicating it is in the public’s interest to know (Salloum 2019).

There are more arguments that support the release of names than arguments that support the no-name policy. First, naming homicide victims is necessary to allow the public to pay respect to family members and friends for the loss of their loved one (Gormley, 2018; Burnett et al., 2019). Second, homicide is a crime against society; therefore, it is in the public interest to have information about individuals who have been killed. No-naming policies increase the appearance of secrecy of police services while decreasing transparency and accountability (Johnston, 2018, Gormley, 2018; Globe editorial, 2018; Burnett et al., 2019). Third, providing information to the public about homicides that occur is necessary to understand them as a social problem and to develop prevention strategies that address the context and circumstances preceding the homicide. More specifically, in cases of intimate partner femicide, reporting the name of the victim can help both the public and the family identify risk factors for this type of violence, which may prevent future incidents (Faulder, 2019).



Fourth, releasing the name humanizes a victim, making it difficult for the public to distance themselves and view the killing as an abstract social problem for someone else to address (Zytaruk, 2018; Globe editorial, 2018). As a result, the public may feel a sense of attachment and develop strong attitudes about homicide in their community. Finally, releasing the name of a victim increases public attention and may encourage reporting of critical information that can aid in the police investigation (Zytaruk, 2018). This is particularly important in cases where the suspect is unknown and information from the public is necessary to solve a homicide. Additionally, when names are not released, it may be difficult to differentiate between a new homicide that has occurred and an on-going homicide investigation if the news story only refers to “woman killed” with few other details, but even this information is becoming increasingly absent as discussed below.

In contrast, the primary argument to support the no-naming policy is that it protects individual privacy rights (Gormley, 2018; Ackerman, 2018). Journalists may use the victim's name to identify family members and friends, asking them to speak about the victim in a news story in a time of trauma. Furthermore, family members may not want police to release the victim's name because they feel the circumstances surrounding their death may portray her life negatively, leading to public scrutiny of the victim and possible victim-blaming attitudes (Gilchrist, 2010; Zakreski, 2018). Similarly, the family may not want their loved one remembered as a homicide victim and connected with the gruesome details of their death (Faulder, 2019). No-naming policies also allow the victim's family time to grieve by reducing unwanted media attention. Despite these arguments, it is often the case that family members want the victim's name to be released and they do so themselves when police do not. In addition, the media often find out the victims' name despite the no-naming policy. Finally, some police services have argued that releasing victims' names “serves no investigative purpose” (Johnston, 2019). However, some police agencies (e.g. Edmonton) that have used this justification have recently reversed their no-naming policy, except in some cases. It is not clear which cases will lead to the names of victims being withheld or released, however.



Regardless of where one falls on the debate, no-naming policies are particularly concerning because they disproportionately affect some victims more than others, especially when few other details are released, such as the increasing tendency to not identify the victim and killer's relationship. As such, cases of intimate femicide-suicide are largely rendered invisible when names or victim-perpetrator relationships are not released because these cases will never proceed to trial where the release of names of both victims and accused often occurs. In addition, the inaugural #CallItFemicide report demonstrated that the no-naming trend appears to be more common in some provinces or territories (e.g. Manitoba and Nunavut) and for Indigenous women and girls (Dawson et al. 2019: 53). Many researchers and violence prevention initiatives also rely on media reports to track various types of homicide to increase education and awareness and contribute to violence prevention. As such, the no-naming policy is particularly challenging and concerning in light of the strong reasons that have been cited above for releasing victim names, killing motives and characteristics.

Other trends which signal less clarity and transparency in recording and reporting of femicides have also been documented during the past year as discussed next.

Other trends which signal less clarity and transparency in recording and reporting of femicides have also been documented during the past year as discussed next.



Femicide and the gendered dynamics of end-of-life decisions

In 2017, a 60-year-old woman, living with Alzheimer's disease in a long-term care facility in Canada, was killed by her husband of 19 years. Her husband, who was reportedly suffering from a major depression, confessed to having smothered his wife because he claimed to want to end her suffering. It was reported that the victim had not seriously discussed the end of her life prior to the disease severely progressing. Media framed the murder as a 'compassion killing', although this term has no legal meaning. The defence lawyer for the accused argued that his depression narrowed his perceived options and led him to take his wife's life. The trial also revealed that a year prior to the killing, he had inquired about his wife's access to medical assistance in dying¹ (MAID) but found that she was not eligible. MAID has been allowed under federal law under Bill C-14 since 2016, providing eligible patients the right to request the administration of, or prescription for, a substance to cause their death. The husband was charged with second-degree murder, but a jury found him guilty of the lesser offence of manslaughter and he was sentenced to 2 years less a day incarceration. The victim's son reportedly denounced the verdict, claiming that the accused had acted selfishly and robbed his mother of her right to have a peaceful death. This case raises important questions about the gendered dynamics underlying end-of-life decisions, self-determination, care, disability and alleged "mercy killings", and particularly whether these dynamics can be used to mask femicide.

Mercy killings are defined as "compassionate" killings by a family member, intimate partner, or close friend (George, 2007). Studies conducted in Australia and the United States illustrate that women are overrepresented as victims of alleged mercy killings, most often killed by their male intimate partners (Otlowski, 1993; Canetto & Hollenshead, 2001). Women and girls with disabilities are at an increased risk given the dominant ableist assumptions that they have a low quality of life (Not Dead Yet, 2019). Findings show that the characteristics of offenders who perpetrate mercy killings overlap with offenders who commit other forms of gender-based violence; specifically, they both exhibit coercive-controlling and misogynistic behaviours (Canetto & Hollenshead, 2001; George, 2007). The same trends exist in murder-suicides involving elderly couples, often framed as mercy killings or suicide pacts in which women are more likely to be victims, and killed in their own homes (Abrams et al., 2007; Rogers & Storey, 2019). Furthermore, it is important to dismantle the myth that these killings are consensual given that, often, women are killed in their sleep or without their knowledge (Cohen et al., 1998). Thus, the patterns of mercy killings correspond to those of gendered violence (George, 2007) and are embedded in systemic devalorization of people with disabilities (Not Dead Yet, 2019). It is urgent, therefore, in light of increased access to MAID, to examine such mercy killings as femicides.

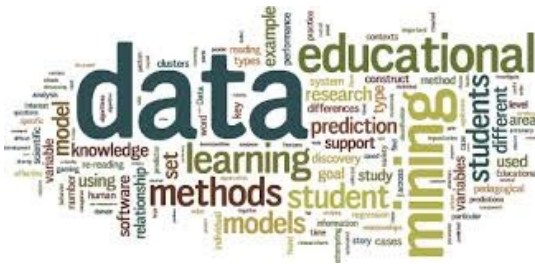
Given the above, these types of killing – often portrayed as consensual or in the woman's best interests – must be discussed in the context of male domination and ableism, as well as other relations of power, that limit women's ability to make end-of-life decisions (George, 2007; DAWN, 2016). Indeed, feminist disability activists and experts in violence against women research and practice urge the medical, legal, and political communities to consider the social forces that underlie mercy killings, MAID, and the extent to which they replicate other forms of gendered violence that lead to femicide (Wolf, 1996; Raymond, 1999; George, 2007; DAWN, 2016). Importantly, studies show that women, especially women situated in other marginalized locations, such as women with disabilities, face additional barriers to accessing the necessary resources, support, and care, including discrimination in public policy (Angus et al., 2013; DAWN, 2016; Not Dead Yet, 2019). Disability organizations claim that increasing access to MAID reduces the social responsibility to support the needs of diverse groups. For the DisAbled Women's Network of Canada, funding and political commitment should be focused on improving programs and services for women (DAWN, 2016). With the growing awareness of MAID as an option, more research is needed on the justification of choosing MAID among men and women, the impact upon claims of mercy-killing, and the extent to which gendered patterns of domination and femicide are thereby reproduced. It is also important to challenge the notion that the decision to die is necessarily a free and autonomous one, and to situate these decisions in sexist, ableist, and racist social relations that underlie violence against women and femicides.

The precarity of sex-based data collection for femicide prevention

The response of some public agencies to ongoing discussions around sex and gender identity will make it much more difficult to gather data and track crimes of male violence against women, including femicide, as well as to document transphobic violence. As of January 2019, Statistics Canada's Uniform Crime Reporting Survey (UCR) has switched from gathering data based on the category of 'sex' to a category of 'gender', in which the gender 'female' includes anyone who identifies as female (including cisgender and trans women) and the 'male' gender category which includes anyone who identifies as male (including



cisgender and trans men).⁴⁶ There is also a category for people who identify as gender diverse. This is, in contrast, to earlier surveys that captured whether a victim or an accused was ‘male’ or ‘female’ and to the most recent Homicide Survey that uses the term ‘sex’ of the victim and accused where there is a focus this characteristic albeit limited (Roy and Marcellus, 2019).



Given the increasing recognition of non-binary gender⁴⁷ and transgender identity⁴⁸, some changes to the collection of data were arguably warranted. However, while some confusion as to what will exactly happen going forward, the approach that seems to have been adopted – the removal of sex-based categories – will make it increasingly difficult to accurately track male violence against women and, specifically, femicide. It will also prevent the tracking of violence against transgender persons, data that were already difficult to collect given that previous survey instruments as noted did not provide the space to capture gender identity.

Compounding the situation, particularly with respect to the work of the CFOJA, is a seemingly-unrelated policy change by the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) to stop releasing information to the public about the sex or gender of victims and alleged perpetrators unless a suspect is still at large. The CFOJA tracks femicide, in part, through a careful review of media articles across Canada (see Appendix B for discussion on reliability of media data). If this information is not reported consistently, it will be impossible to accurately count the number of women killed, the sex of the perpetrator, and the nature of the relationship or context in which the femicide took place. If we cannot identify and track the scope of the problem, we cannot begin to address it. Without sex-specific and gender-specific data, the work of the Observatory and other anti-violence initiatives will be profoundly limited and, in turn, efforts at public education, awareness and prevention hindered.

Further, given these changes, and the complexities involved, both the recording and reporting of these data will require all those responsible, and primarily the police, to have an understanding of trans/gender diversity for subsequent data to be reliable and valid. In addition, over time and across cultures, one consistent criminological fact is that certain crimes, and specifically violent crimes, are clearly sex-specific with males overwhelmingly the perpetrators, regardless of the sex or gender identity of the victim. As a result, the collection of sex-disaggregated data is and has been an international norm.

Under its obligations to the Convention to End All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Canada has been specifically and repeatedly required to improve its data collection on violence against women and girls and the occurrence of murders and disappearances of Indigenous women and girls. Most recently, following her country visit to Canada in 2018, the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women tabled her report at the United Nations General Assembly in 2019. In it, she called on Canada to improve its collection of data related to femicide, the disappearances of Indigenous women, and the tracking of violence against women and girls and gender-based violence broadly. With these latest changes to data collection, however, Canada appears to be disregarding direct and specific recommendations made by United Nations entities to improve femicide prevention through accurate statistical gathering and has, instead, further eroded the standards for data collection on femicide and other forms of gender-based violence.

The implications of the changes to the above recording and reporting of victim and perpetrator sex or gender will have far-reaching and negative future impacts on our ability to understand and prevent crime, particularly for those already vulnerable

⁴⁶ For classification of gender, see: <http://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p3VD.pl?Function=getVD&TVD=467245&CVD=467245&CLV=0&MLV=1&D=1>. For classification of sex, see: <http://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p3VD.pl?Function=getVD&TVD=469273&CVD=469273&CLV=0&MLV=1&D=1>.

⁴⁷ Gender non-binary is a spectrum of gender identities that are not exclusively masculine or feminine or identities that are outside the gender binary.

⁴⁸ A general term used to describe someone whose gender expression or gender identity is different than their sex at birth.



to specific types of violent crime, including women, girls, and members of the LGBTQ community. This, coupled with the restrictions of other information such as victim-perpetrator relationship, leads one to wonder why the violence is reported at all. Given that the facts of cases have been shown to be as reliable in media coverage (and sometimes more so with respect to victim-accused relationship) as it is in official data (see Appendix B), it is unclear, and not well conveyed by those involved in the policy changes, what the ultimate goal is by reducing transparency about violence in our communities. Historically, the reporting of such facts has been less controversial than that of race/ethnicity of those involved in violence, an issue we turn to below.

Recording and reporting of race/ethnicity

It is not within the scope of this report to revisit discussions and debates surrounding the recording and reporting of race/ethnicity (but see Owusu-Bempah & Wortley 2014 for further information). Suffice it to say that capturing the race/ethnicity of those involved in crime and violence is fraught with difficulties given this information is often missing or recorded inaccurately despite Aboriginal status being a long-standing focus of national crime and justice statistics in this country. The situation is no less troublesome when relying on media coverage although some research in the United States has shown that the victim's race/ethnicity was correctly captured in 90 percent of the cases examined (Parkin & Gruenewald 2017). And, when approached carefully and responsibly, many agree that this information can be useful for informing policy and prevention initiatives and, thus, may offer more benefits than drawbacks.

Through the work of the CFOJA, however, it has become obvious that data on race/ethnicity continues to be one of the characteristics of violence that has the largest proportion of missing data when relying on media coverage. For example, while this information was missing in 40 percent of the incidents in 2018, missing information increased to 67 percent of the sample in 2019. Given the need to understand the risk of victimization of Indigenous and racialized women and girls, reliable and valid data are required. The marginalization of Indigenous and racialized women and girls which, in turn, increases their vulnerability to violence and femicide warrants the questions of whether these data are being collected, by whom, and how as well as the ways in which these data are being used to inform prevention. For example, during 2019, we know that 18 Indigenous women or girls were killed and another three are believed to be Indigenous, but not yet confirmed, for a total of 21 victims or 18 percent of our sample. This is an overrepresentation for Indigenous women and girls among victims given that they represent only 5 percent of the population, but we know these numbers are much higher. Without reliable and valid data, the actual risk for Indigenous women and girls remains obscured, an issue underscored by the MMIWG Inquiry's final report. This is also true for other racialized, marginalized and/or vulnerable women and girls.

Conclusion

Even with the challenges described above, while femicide is rare compared to other forms of violence against women, tracking cases as they occur allows for better documentation of the incidents and those involved. The result is more nuanced information that can inform the development of intervention and prevention initiatives within Canada and across countries. This allows society to monitor trends and patterns and to identify emerging research, policy and practice priorities. These trends and patterns can inform us more broadly about non-lethal forms of violence against women and girls. That is, rates of lethal violence, like femicide, are often used as a social barometer of sorts for other forms of violence, signaling positive or negative trends.

Despite the advantages of reliably tracking cases, data on femicide remains limited in Canada and globally, and is increasingly difficult to access and collect, especially for some groups of women and girls. As noted above, international research concluded that a firm political commitment was required before any of the practical or technical steps to ensure better and more accurate data could be progressed forward. With such a commitment, the evidence produced and the strategies that follow can contribute to increased public awareness and demand for public health, social service, and criminal justice sector responses to femicide and other forms of violence. Political will can also lead to concrete information about risk factors, particularly among



marginalized and vulnerable groups, to guide policy, legal, educational, and political forces in the development of prevention strategies and services to combat femicide and other forms of violence against women.

The Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability believes that such a political commitment in Canada is possible.



Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability

Observatoire canadien du fémicide pour la justice et la responsabilisation

#CallItFemicide

Understanding gender-related killings of women and girls in Canada 2018

AS A PART OF ITS RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION ACTIVITIES ON FEMICIDE, THE CFOJA WILL:

- ✓ Establish a visible and national focus on social and state responses to femicide in Canada;
- ✓ Count and track cases of femicide as they occur throughout the country while also remembering and honouring these women and girls;
- ✓ Identify legislation, policies and practices in social and state responses to femicide that perpetuate and maintain social structures and gender inequalities that are conducive to, or help facilitate, the perpetration of femicide;
- ✓ Document social and state responses to femicide that may further increase the vulnerability and marginalization of some groups of girls and women due to varying social identities (e.g. indigeneity, race/ethnicity, culture, age, LGBTQ2, religion, disability, poverty, geography and so on);
- ✓ Identify and examine the stereotypes and biases that support the varying social and state responses documented;
- ✓ Facilitate the exchange of information, reliable data, and current knowledge that can advance legislative, policy and program change on issues related to the prevention of femicide in Canada at the local, regional, provincial/territorial and/or national levels;
- ✓ Monitor emerging issues and trends as they relate to femicide and violence against women more generally;
- ✓ Provide user-friendly and reliable information, resources and research on femicide;
- ✓ Act as a knowledge broker for researchers, professionals, policy-makers, media and the public.

The Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability (CFOJA) is a web-based research and information centre which aims to conduct, mobilize, exchange and promote research and knowledge to prevent femicide and other forms of gender-based killings in Canada. Established by the Centre for the Study of Social and Legal Responses to Violence (CSSLRV) at the University of Guelph in 2017, its work is being led by an interdisciplinary, multi-sectoral panel of experts from across the country. Femicide is defined as the killing of women/girls **because** they are women/girls, primarily, but not exclusively, by men.



TWO KEY OBJECTIVES:



To address the need for a single location for information about justice and accountability for femicide victims in Canada



To facilitate innovative and sustainable national and international research agendas for femicide justice and accountability.

2018 Report:
<https://femicideincanada.ca/callitfemicide>
 (Available in English and French)



www.femicideincanada.ca



CAN.Femicide



CAN_Femicide



cfoja@uoguelph.ca

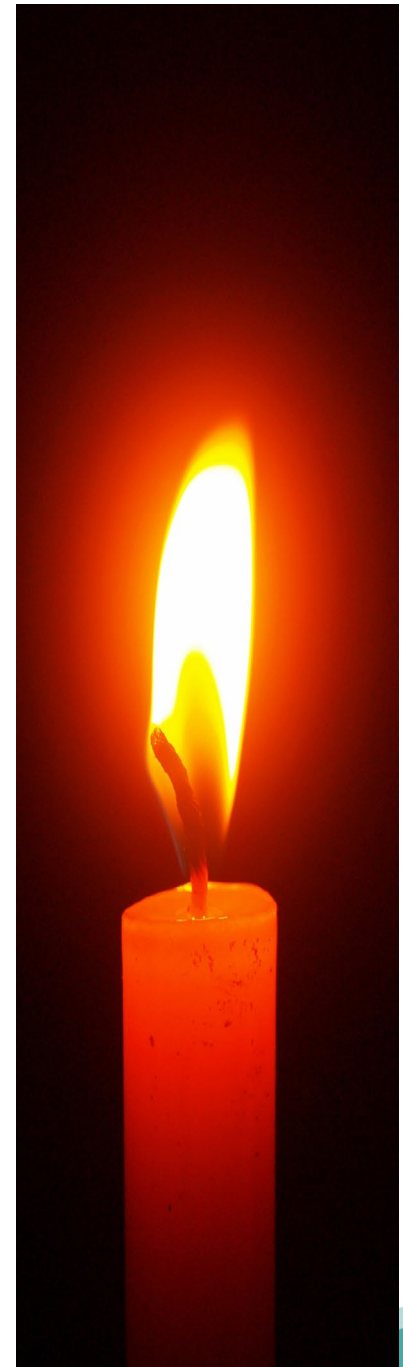


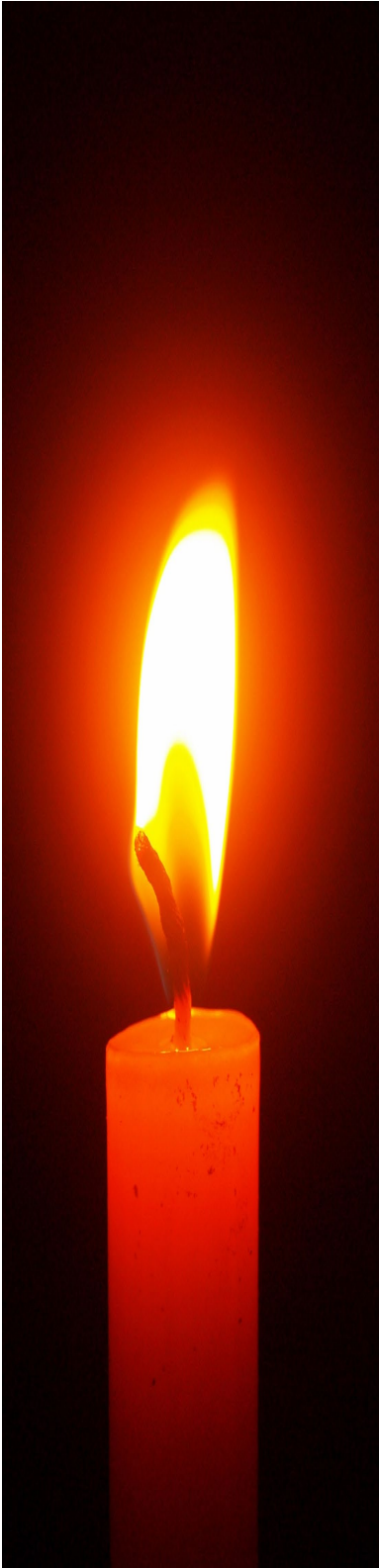


Section V: Remembering Women and Girls Killed by Violence 2019

If you know the name of a woman or girl below who is currently not named, please contact us at cfoja@uoguelph.ca so we can #SayHerName.

Name not released, 25, Indigenous, Opaskwayak Cree Nation, MB (Jan 4)
Josée Savard, 42, Fermont, QC (Jan 4)
Rajwinder Bains, 38, Surrey, BC (~Jan 7)
Lorraine Kerubo Ogoti, 30, Scarborough, ON (Jan 8)
Chantel John, 28, Indigenous, Conne River, NL (Jan 9)
Eunjee Kim, 41, Winnipeg, MB (Jan 9)
Susan Kuplu, 37, Indigenous, Ottawa, ON (~Jan 10)
Wanda Cardinal, 37, Janvier, AB (Jan 15)
Barbara Nelson, 59, Edmonton, AB (Jan 18)
June Rose, 24, Bassano, AB (Jan 22)
Hanh (Hana) Nguyen, 41, Toronto, ON (Jan 24)
Tammy Brown, 39, Saskatoon, SK (Jan 29)
Amber Cobean, 30, Grimsby, ON (Feb 1)
Name not released, 70, Montreal, QC (Feb 1)
Rosalie Lafontaine, 5 months, Montreal, QC (Feb 5)
Nicole Cantin, 56, Quebec City, QC (Feb 7)
Veronika Mrhova, 24, Toronto, ON (Feb 10)
Tan Nguyen, 74, Mississauga, ON (Feb 12)
Riya Rajkumar, 11, Brampton, ON (Feb 14)
Alberta "Beth" McGaghey, 77, Rothesay, NB (Feb 14)
Savannah (Shavannah) Krystal Buffalo, 33, Samson Cree Nation, AB (Feb 15)
Noémie Lavoie, 24, Montreal, QC (Feb 26)
Christine Denham, 42, Chilliwack, BC (Mar 1)
Sara Cimerman, 68, Richmond Hill, ON (Mar 11)
Jennyfer Lachappelle, 41, Toronto, ON (Mar 13)
Helen Fronczak, 79, Toronto, ON (Mar 18)
Tanya Andy, 37, Indigenous, Thunder Bay, ON (Mar 19)
Name not released, 6, Indigenous, Kasabonika First Nation, ON (Mar 20)
Brenda Lautaoja, 68, Kirkland Lake, ON (Mar 23)
Lise Suzanne Marie Danais, 51, Winnipeg, MB (Mar 26)
Rose Cutknife, 48, Edmonton, AB (Mar 28)
Nona McEwan, Surrey, BC (Mar 29)
Chiou-Shuang "Susan" Chen, 40, Scarborough, ON (Apr 3)
Ngoc Mai (Anita) Nguyen, 32, North Vancouver, BC (Apr 4)
Abigail Ootoova, 54, Indigenous, Vanier, ON (Apr 6)
Jenaya Mary Wapemoose, 22, Indigenous, Regina, SK (Apr 7)
Rae Cara Carrington, 51, Toronto, ON (Apr 10)
Marie-Ève Naud, 42, La Tuque, QC (Apr 15)
Susan Wonch, Penticton, BC (Apr 15)
Darlene Knippelberg, Penticton, BC (Apr 15)
Nature Duperron, 25, Indigenous, Hinton, AB (~Apr 15)
Jasmine Lovett, 25, Calgary, AB (Apr 16)
Aliyah Sanderson, 22 months, Calgary, AB (Apr 16)
Helen Isobel Schaller, 58, Cambridge, ON (Apr 17)
Merna (Myrna) Lynn Fiddler, 55, Bezanson, AB (Apr 23)
Name not released, Swan River Reserve, AB (Apr 23)
Name not released, 7, Granby, QC (Apr 29)

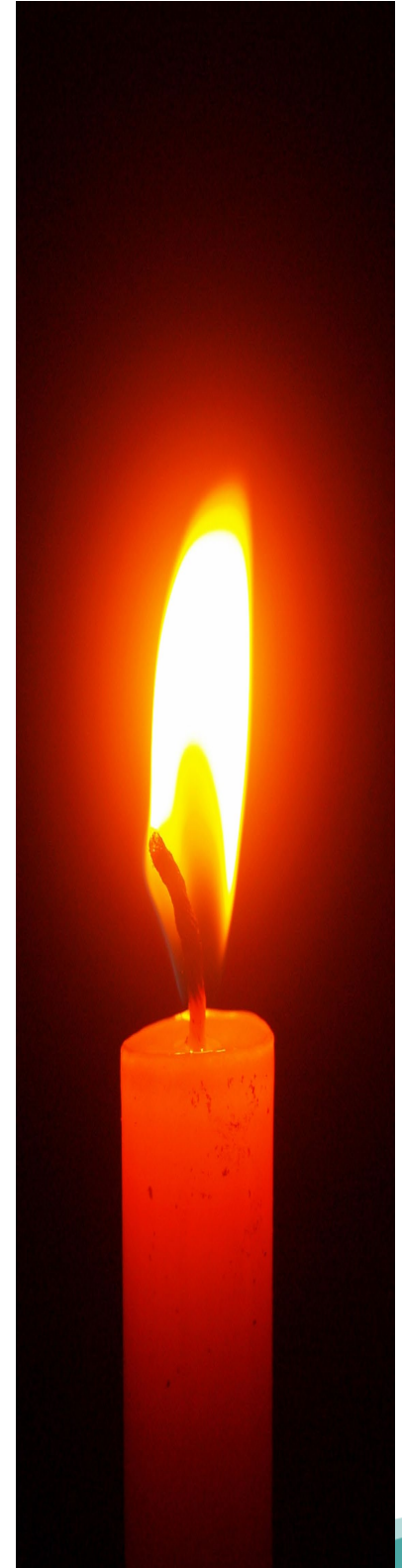




Shubangi Amin, 41, Brampton, ON (May 1)
Tiki Brook-Lyn Laverdiere, 25, Indigenous, North Battleford, SK (~May 1)
Morag Sigsworth, 71, Montrose, BC (May 2)
Emily Nicole Caruana, 20, Brentwood Bay (Central Saanich), BC (May 11)
Yvonne Mooney, 83, Oshawa, ON (May 12)
Maryhelen Johnston, 39, London, ON (May 12)
Bao Lian Li, 82, Brampton, ON (May 13)
Gerardine "Gerry" Butterfield, 63, Windsor, ON (~May 25)
ShayInne Marie Hunter, 25, Winnipeg, MB (May 25)
Dorsa Dehdari, 22, Calgary, AB (May 25)
Dorna Dehdari, 15, Calgary, AB (May 25, died Sep 2)
Liisa Nukkala, 77, Calgary, AB (May 31)
Sabrina Rosette, 33, Indigenous, Toosey Reserve, BC (Jun 8)
Janice Elaine Whitequill, 51, Indigenous, Regina, SK (Jun 25)
Robin Fiddler, 34, Indigenous, Calgary, AB (Jun 26)
Name not released, 31, Berwyn, AB (Jun 26)
Vicky Belle-Isle, 32, Pointe-aux-Trembles, Montreal, QC (Jun 28)
Noreen Victorine Moore, 52, Indigenous, Saskatoon, SK (Jul 5)
Jessica Cameron, 33, Indigenous, Beardy's & Okemasis Cree Nation, SK (Jul 6)
Jackline Keji Gore, 24, Mississauga, ON (Jul 8)
Chynna Noelle Deese, 24, near Liard Hot Springs, BC (~Jul 14)
Ginette Radermaker, 69, Rivière-Rouge, Laurentians, QC (Jul 15)
Kathryn Niedoba, 36, Toronto, ON (Jul 18)
Lynn VanEvery, 62, Brantford, ON (Jul 18)
Name not released, 44, Stony Plain, AB (Jul 23)
Name not released, 64, Windsor, ON (Jul 24)
Lysa Graves-Smith, 30, Pointe-Sapin, NB (Jul 25)
Ashley Smith-Ames, 28, Rocky Mountain House, AB (Jul 26)
Momotaz Begum (Zaman), 50, Markham, ON (Jul 28)
Malesa Zaman, 21, Markham, ON (Jul 28)
Firoza Begum, 70, Markham, ON (Jul 28)
Maryann Ollie, 59, Indigenous, Ross River, YK (Aug 1)
Violaine Gagnon, 59, Baie-Saint-Paul, QC (Aug 5)
Name not released, Windsor, ON (Aug 9)
Name not released, 93, Cross Lake, MB (Aug 9)
"Rose", 5, Lac-des-Plages, Outaouais, QC (Aug 14)
Marie Lisa Gorospe, 53, Brampton, ON (Aug 16)
Verna Cathaline May Traina, 94, Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON (Aug 20)
Laura Grant, 57, Burlington, ON (Aug 21)
Name not released, 30, Sheshegwaning First Nation, ON (Aug 25)
Name not released, 38, Kimberley, BC (Aug 25)
Giuseppina Micieli, 83, Edmonton, AB (Aug 26)
Mariantonia Biunno, 88, Mississauga, ON (Sep 3)
Rose-Marie Saulnier, 74, Dieppe, NB (Sep 7)
Tharshika Jeganathan, 27, Toronto, ON (Sep 11)
Kulvinder Sandhu, 36, Sylvan Lake, AB (Sep 14)
Lucja Wojtalski, 58, Brampton, ON (Sep 18)
Name not released, Iqaluit, NU (Sep 20)
Norma "Bambi" Helen Andrews, 28, Indigenous, Winnipeg, MB (Sep 21)
Name not released, 42, Sherwood Park, AB (Sep 23)
Octavia Adams, 6 months, Niagara Falls, ON (Oct 2)
Name not released, Surrey, BC (Oct 4)
Name not released, 37, Peace River, AB (Oct 8)
Name not released, 52, Pangnirtung, NU (Oct 13)



Terri-Lynn Thompson, 54, Belleville, ON (Oct 15)
Maggie Nelson, 60, Vancouver, BC (Oct 16)
Bobbie-Lynn Lee Moose, 29, Indigenous, Thompson, MB (Oct 17)
Karen Jane Letniak, 48, Winnipeg, MB (Oct 18)
Elise Pomares, 5, Montreal, QC (Oct 22)
Betty Anne Hughes, 63, Brandon, MB (Oct 22)
Linda Lamontagne, 65, Halifax, NS (~Oct 22)
Deborah Onwu, 47, Calgary, AB (Oct 25)
Jakira Mary Iris Eastman-Moore, 14, Indigenous, Winnipeg, MB (Oct 26)
Bethelhem Geleta, 22, Toronto, ON (Oct 26)
Cheryl Nicholl, 32, Hamilton, ON (Nov 1)
Name not released, 60, Anglemont, BC (~Nov 5)
Roslyn Nelson, 78, Armena, AB (Nov 8)
Linda Lalonde, 48, Salaberry-de-Valleyfield, QC (~Nov 15)
Saladina Vivancos, 33, Parkland County, AB (Nov 17)
Prabhleen Kaur Matharu, 21, Surrey, BC (Nov 21)
Gertrude "Trudy" Cleghorn, 61, Oak Bay, NB (Nov 23)





APPENDIX A

THE HISTORY AND EVOLUTION OF THE TERM ‘FEMICIDE’

International context

The term “femicide” was introduced publicly in the modern age⁴⁹ by violence against women feminist pioneer, expert and activist, Diana Russell, at the *International Tribunal of Crimes Against Women* to bring attention to violence and discrimination against women (Russell & Van de Ven, 1976). Its definitional parameters have changed somewhat over time, however. For example, in its earlier iterations, femicide was defined as “the murder of women by men motivated by hatred, contempt, pleasure, or a sense of ownership of women” (Caputi & Russell, 1990) and “the misogynistic killings of women by men” (Radford & Russell, 1992). More recently, this definition evolved to “the killing of one or more females by one or more males because they are female” as stated by Russell in her introductory speech to the *United Nations Symposium on Femicide* in November 2012 (Russell, 2012). At this event, the Vienna Declaration on Femicide was signed by 150 individuals, including various ambassadors and 10 Member States.⁵⁰

Emphasizing that femicide comprises the killing of women and girls because of their gender, the following forms were identified specifically at this 2012 symposium:⁵¹

- 1) murder of women as a result of intimate partner violence; 2) torture and misogynist slaying of women 3) killing of women and girls in the name of "honour"; 5) targeted killing of women and girls in the context of armed conflict; 5) dowry-related killings of women; 6) killing of women and girls because of their sexual orientation and gender identity; 7) killing of aboriginal and indigenous women and girls because of their gender; 8) female infanticide and gender-based sex selection foeticide; 9) genital mutilation related deaths; 10) accusations of witchcraft and 11) other gender-based murders connected with gangs, organized crime, drug dealers, human trafficking, and the proliferation of small arms (Acuns, 2013: 4).



However, the term as well as its accepted meaning continues to vary, depending upon whose perspective and from where it is being examined. As such, the phenomenon of femicide and its definitional parameters continue to be discussed and debated internationally in academia, policy and grassroots activists’ arenas as well as regional, national and other legislative processes (Fregoso & Bejarano, 2010; Laurent et al., 2013; Mujica & Tuesta, 2014). For example, in some world regions, such as Latin America, the term *feminicidio* (or feminicide in English) is preferred because it captures the way in which states or governments are often unresponsive to the killings of women (Lagarde De Los Rios, 1990).

⁴⁹ The first documented use of the term ‘femicide’ was in a book by John Corry (1801) called *A Satirical View of London at the Commencement of the Nineteenth Century* where it was used to refer to the killing of a woman.

⁵⁰ See: <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/ngos/DCN5-Symposium-on-femicide-a-global-issue-that-demands-action.html>.

⁵¹ This list is not exhaustive and has been expanded by others. For example, while killing because of race or racism is not captured directly above, others including the CFOJA include ‘racist femicide’ which refers to killings that occur because of hate or rejection of a woman’s ethnic or racial origins, real or perceived, or her genetic features (see also <https://www.femicideincanada.ca/about/types>).



It has been argued that this term may also be more appropriate in the Canadian context of ongoing settler colonialism. Indigenous women and girls, in particular, face disproportionate violent victimization in the context of ongoing settler colonial relations and a long history of targeted colonial violence against Indigenous peoples in Canada. This includes state violence, such as the targeted apprehension of Indigenous children into residential schools, as well as a general failure of police and others in the criminal justice system to adequately respond to, or provide for, the needs of Indigenous women and girls (e.g. CEDAW, 2015; Garcia-Del Moral, 2018). The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (2015) indicates that perpetrators of violence against Indigenous women “may count on the insufficient response of the police and justice system and continue to operate in an environment conducive to impunity in which aboriginal women continue to suffer high levels of violence with insufficient criminal liability and without adequate access to justice.”

Internationally, a broader definition of femicide is sometimes used that includes all killings of women and girls (UNODC 2018; Corradi et al., 2016). This is often done for ease of international comparisons. In more recent international work, however, the focus has been on intimate partner/family-related femicide *committed by males*, while also acknowledging that, in some cases, the violence may be perpetrated by female family members in various social and cultural contexts (Glass et al., 2004; Muftic & Bauman, 2012). It is also recognized that women may be the accused in other contexts categorized as femicide (e.g. female-perpetrated acquaintance femicide, Muftic & Bauman, 2012). It continues to be recognized, however, that men are the primary perpetrators of femicide and, as stated by the United Nations Secretary-General, in a report on the progress towards Sustainable Development goals, this violence is perpetuated and maintained through broader patriarchal systems of oppression and ongoing gender inequality (Grzyb, 2016; Taylor & Jasinski, 2011; Russell & Harnes, 2001).

The former UN SRVAW, Rashida Manjoo, was instrumental in developing a knowledge base around the topic of femicide and identifying various types of femicide. The current UN SRVAW, Dubravka Šimonović, has continued with this focus, identifying femicide prevention as an immediate priority and emphasizing the pressing need to collect comparable data on femicide that can be disaggregated by victim-perpetrator relationship, age and race/ethnicity of victims, as well as prosecution and punishment outcomes for perpetrators. To this end, the current UN SRVAW called upon all countries to establish femicide watches/observatories as a key mechanism for the systematic and detailed collection of data on femicide to inform the development of more effective prevention initiatives and to guide knowledge-based policymaking.⁵²

Such watches or initiatives existed in some countries before this call (e.g. the United Kingdom,⁵³ Australia,⁵⁴ and Mexico⁵⁵) and, most recently, on a regional basis (European Observatory on Femicide⁵⁶).

Canadian context

The relevance of the term femicide in the Canadian context emerged following December 6, 1989, when Mark Lépine entered École Polytechnique at the Université of Montréal with the intent to kill women, blaming them for his failure to gain entrance to the engineering program. Lépine separated students by gender and yelled, “You’re all a bunch of feminists, and I hate feminists!” before firing at the women (Elgin & Hester, 1999: 225; Rosenberg, 2003: 20). Following this gendered act of lethal violence, 14 women were dead and another 10 were injured before Lépine turned the gun on himself.

⁵² See: <https://acuns.org/femicide-volume-vii-establishing-a-femicide-watch-in-every-country/>.

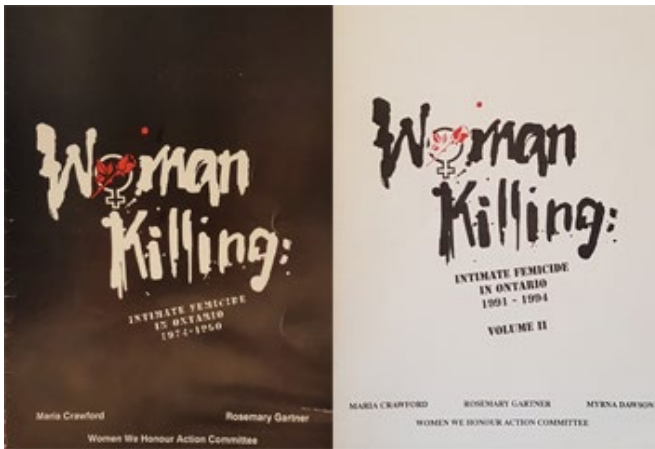
⁵³ See: <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/what-we-do/campaigning-and-influencing/femicide-census/> and <https://kareningalasmith.com/counting-dead-women/>
⁵⁴ See: <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/counting-dead-women-the-project-keeping-toll-of-australia-s-hidden-epidemic> and Cullen et al. (2019).

⁵⁵ See: <http://femicide-watch.org/players/national-observatory-femicide-mexico> and <https://justiceinmexico.org/femicidesinmexico/>.

⁵⁶ See: <http://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2018-03-20/education/The-European-Observatory-on-Femicide-launched-in-Malta-6736186593> and Weil et al. (2018).



The gendered nature of this attack was largely overlooked by the media, however. In the aftermath of the killing, many people described Lépine’s actions as the work of a madman, disconnecting the violence from his hateful and misogynistic attitudes toward women. In short, it was not acknowledged that he targeted his victims *because they were women* thereby largely ignoring the context of his actions. Regardless, these killings serve as a clear example of what femicide means or, in this case, mass femicide and the role of misogyny in such deaths. Since then, every year on December 6, Canadians come together to honour the victims of this mass femicide as well as other femicide victims in a *National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women*.⁵⁷



That same year – 1989 – in response to a series of killings in Ontario, a group of eight women working in shelters for abused women in that province came together to share experiences and to provide each other with emotional support. They had worked with, or had been friends of, women who were killed by male partners (Gartner et al., 1999). Naming themselves the *Women We Honour Action Committee*, the group set themselves the task of learning more about women killed by male partners. Launching a study, they had three goals: (1) to document the incidence of these killings; (2) to describe the characteristics of those involved as well as the circumstances; and (3) to present the stories of some of the women who had been killed by current or former legal spouses, common-law partners or boyfriends.

Occurring in two stages and focusing on the period 1974-1994, the study documented 1,206 killings of women aged 15 and older from official records (e.g. coroner’s files, police and court records) (Crawford & Gartner 1992; Crawford et al., 1997). Of the 1,120 cases with identified killers, 705 or 63 percent of the killers were current or former male partners (Gartner et al., 1999). Described in two reports (*see above images*), the study’s findings demonstrated that, like global patterns, femicide was most often perpetrated by current or former male partners.

Since then, this early ground-breaking, feminist-inspired research has been cited frequently in publications internationally. It also served as the impetus for the ongoing research project, *Femicide in Ontario*, which, in turn, is the core foundation of research being conducted by the CFOJA (Dawson, 2018). Where possible, data from this research will be used to provide some historical context to the 2018 trends and patterns discussed in this report.⁵⁸

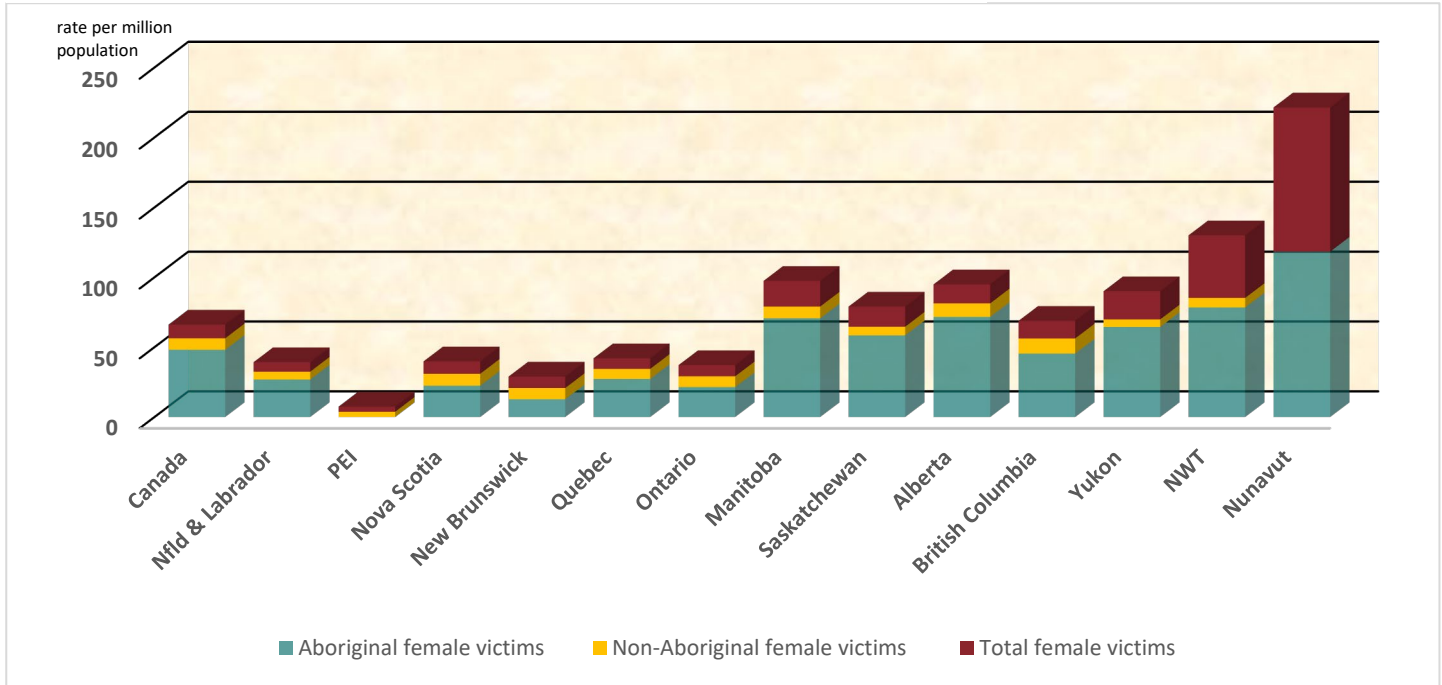
Contributing significantly to knowledge about femicide and intimate femicide, the authors of the early study acknowledged that many questions remained. Of note was why did some groups of women face disproportionately higher risks of intimate femicide compared to other groups of women (Dawson & Gartner, 1998; Gartner et al., 1999)? This question continues to be asked today about femicide more broadly (*see Chart 1 next page*), particularly with respect to missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls who face higher risks of femicide both in and outside their intimate relationships as discussed next.

⁵⁷ For more information, see: <https://cfc-swc.gc.ca/commemoration/vaw-vff/remembrance-commemoration-en.html>.

⁵⁸ While the *Femicide in Ontario* research focuses on one province in Canada, Ontario is the country’s most populated province and, as such, typically represents close to one-third of the homicides that are documented annually. Therefore, while patterns are not generalizable to the country, they may reflect some of the dominant patterns over time.



Chart 1: Rates of female homicide by Aboriginal identity and province or territory, 2001-2015



Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Homicide Survey, 2001 to 2015

In Canada, official statistics have consistently documented that Indigenous women are significantly more likely to be killed by male partners than non-Indigenous women. However, Indigenous women and girls are overrepresented as victims of femicide more generally. For example, about five percent of the Canadian population is Indigenous and female yet they represented 24 percent of victims in 2015 (Statistics Canada, 2017; Statistics Canada, 2015). Despite their higher risk of intimate femicide, some research shows that Indigenous women and girls are also often killed by male acquaintances and strangers and more likely to be killed by a stranger than non-Indigenous women (Legal Strategy Coalition on Violence Against Indigenous Women 2015).

This fact was initially brought to light by Amnesty International and the Native Women’s Association of Canada (NWAC). The Amnesty International reports – *Stolen Sisters* (2004) and *No More Stolen Sisters* (2009) – demonstrated that “widespread and entrenched racism, poverty and marginalization” heightened Indigenous women and girls’ vulnerability to violence while “denying them adequate protection by police and government services” (p. 2). Similarly, NWAC’s *Sisters in Spirit* grassroots initiative launched in 2005 demonstrated that Indigenous women and girls were as likely to be killed by male acquaintances or strangers as they were by male partners. This finding is even more significant given that official statistics indicate that they also are eight times more likely to be killed by male partners than non-Indigenous women (NWAC 2010; Statistics Canada 2006).



The Sisters in Spirit initiative also highlighted various systemic issues including the impunity⁵⁹ of many of the perpetrators, similar to that being documented in other world regions like Latin America and South Africa. Other key contributing factors identified are the violence that has been experienced for decades by Indigenous women and girls in Canada along with their families and communities due to “the intergenerational impact and resulting vulnerabilities of colonization and state policies” (e.g. residential schools, child welfare system) which is both historical and ongoing (NWAC 2010: i).

More recently, the Legal Strategy Coalition (LSC) on Violence Against Indigenous Women (2015) examined over two decades of reports – a total of 58 reports containing 700 recommendations – focused on stopping violence against Indigenous women and girls. The report revealed that, despite general consensus about the root causes of violence against Indigenous women and girls, only a

handful of the 700 recommendations have been fully implemented and there has been a complete failure to plan or implement the needed responses detailed in the recommendations. The LSC analysis suggested a national inquiry examine the resistance to implementation of known and recommended measures to address violence against Indigenous women and girls, including the systemic barriers that must be addressed to bring about needed changes.

After repeated national and international calls for an inquiry into the treatment of Indigenous women and girls, the Canadian government launched the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in 2016.⁶⁰ The Inquiry's interim report documented the continued high risk of violence experienced by Indigenous women and girls, which stems, in large part, from a failure of police and others in the criminal justice system to adequately respond to, or provide for, the needs of Indigenous women and girls (MMIWG, 2017). Serious concerns have been raised about the ability of the national inquiry to address systemic causes when its mandate includes no explicit reference to review police policies and practices or the criminal justice system more generally (LSC 2018; Also see FAFIA and NWAC 2016). The final report of the MMIWG Inquiry is scheduled for release in April 2019.

In summary, the phenomenon of femicide in Canada and its evolution as an increasingly-recognized social, legal, public health and human rights problem underscores that women do have the most to fear from current or former male partners, as demonstrated by the early work of the *Women We Honour Action Committee* as well as by subsequent research which continues to build on this study in the Canadian context (e.g. for most recent research, see Dawson, 2018, 2017, 2016).

*"Just know that (she) was a very kind and loving young woman.
Very family-oriented and never wanted harm to come to anyone."*

⁵⁹ Impunity is defined as the exemption from punishment, or freedom from any consequences, for perpetrating injurious actions and, in this context, describes the inadequate, and often non-existent, actions by police, prosecution and the courts when responding to violence against women and femicide, particularly when victims are Indigenous women and girls (ACUNS, 2018; MMIWG 2017).

⁶⁰ For more information, see: <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1448633299414/1534526479029> where the Inquiry's interim report is also available for download.



However, Canada’s National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women underscores that women and girls also continue to be targeted outside their intimate relationships *‘because they are women and girls’* due to misogynistic attitudes, male entitlement, and other social structural impacts (e.g. access to, and quality of, education, employment opportunities, services and resources), in part, the result of ongoing gender inequality. In addition, the experiences of Indigenous women and girls in Canada highlights that some groups of women and girls are at greater risk, due in part to gender, but also to other intersecting identities and inequalities that increase their marginalization in society and, in turn, their vulnerability to violent victimization.

*“(She) had the most beautiful smile. When she smiled the entire world smiled.
Her daughter... has that same one.”*

Defining the CFOJA research parameters

Because the CFOJA is a new initiative, to be consistent with some international efforts, we begin by defining femicide as the killing of all women and girls primarily, but not exclusively, by men (see <http://www.femicideincanada.ca/home/what>).⁶¹ We do so for three reasons:

- 1) Given that the CFOJA adopts a national lens, this definition enhances the ability to make provincial/territorial comparisons. This same reasoning has been used to support the adoption of a broad definition at the international level (Sarmiento et al., 2014).
- 2) This definition allows for the possibility that femicide may involve female perpetrators in various social and cultural contexts (UNODC, 2018: 24) and to examine what those circumstances may look like in Canada.
- 3) It is not always, or even usually, immediately clear that there were gender-related elements present in the killing of a woman or girl; therefore, this definition allows us to capture all killings which can then be monitored and examined over the long-term to identify gender-based motives/indicators.

It is a long-term goal of the CFOJA, as will be discussed in Section III, to develop more specific and nuanced definitional parameters that better capture the *‘killed because they were women or girls’* aspect of the definition of femicide and to identify various subtypes of femicide. This parallels similar efforts internationally (Sarmiento et al., 2014).

⁶¹ This definition excludes deaths by car accident unless identified as intentional. We also exclude the deaths of women and girls who reside in Canada but were killed abroad unless both victim and accused were residents of Canada. For more information, see: <https://www.femicideincanada.ca/about/types>.



Appendix B

Data sources

To track and describe femicide in Canada, this report relies primarily on media sources to document the initial incident, subsequent investigation and court processing of an accused if arrested. Additional information will be drawn from public court records when they become available upon the resolution of the criminal case.

With the growth of information technology, these sources are now easier to access and retrieve, either for free or for a small, monthly subscription fee. Given increasing reliance on media sources, the quality of information documented in the media has been compared to information contained in official sources. Although this research has largely been conducted in the US, similarities to the Canadian situation are likely. This research has shown that:

- Demographic information, such as the gender and age of the victim and perpetrator, is often reported accurately in newspapers, aligning with national database statistics (Heide & Boots, 2007; Parkin & Gruenewald, 2017).
- Race/ethnicity can be more difficult to determine based on newspaper articles alone due to editorial restrictions on how and when race/ethnicity can be reported. However, when comparing information extracted from newspapers to official US statistics, one study showed that it was possible to correctly identify the race/ethnicity of the victim in 90 per cent of cases based on newspapers alone (Parkin & Gruenewald, 2017). They argued that one reason for this may be that official statistics do not record race/ethnicity if it is not easily available.
- Information can also be found on education, employment, prior criminal record, and whether the victim and/or perpetrator had children (Parkin & Gruenewald, 2017), but information may not be consistently reported. In fact, most news coverage only reports affirmative characteristics (e.g. whether the victim/perpetrator had a particular characteristic, such as a prior criminal record, children, etc.). However, this is also typically the case with official statistics.
- Newspapers were found to be more informative than official data for determining the victim-perpetrator relationship. The relationship was specified in 80 percent of cases reported in the media compared to only 55 percent of cases included in official data (Parkin & Gruenewald, 2017).
- Newspapers were also found to be useful for providing information about the situational context. For example, information extracted exclusively from police files may not provide the bigger picture because information is not recorded for research purposes, but rather to fulfill organizational requirements (Shon & Lee, 2016). In addition, a more complete picture of events may not be known at the time the official report was generated. For example, the circumstances of the homicide may not be known early in the investigation, especially if a suspect has not been identified, and the initial report may not be updated when the investigation has concluded. This might be particularly problematic if the accused committed suicide following the killing and no trial follows.
- Newspapers, on the other hand, are more likely to report the social and contextual details of the homicide as the investigation unfolds to construct an interesting story for their audiences (Shon & Lee, 2016). Another study by Genovesi et al. (2010) found that newspaper articles provided more context on the homicide circumstances than what was noted in medical examiner files



- The exact location (e.g. address) and the type of location (e.g., residence, outdoors) is often reported consistently across news sources (Heide & Boots, 2007; Huff-Corzine et al., 2014; Parkin & Gruenewald, 2017). This is an advantage compared to official data in which exact location is rarely specified and is reported at the census level.

In summary, there is general agreement in the literature that newspapers identify just as much, or more, information about the circumstances surrounding a homicide than what is included in official data sources (Genovesi et al., 2010; Huff-Corzine et al., 2014; Parkin & Gruenewald, 2017; Shon & Lee, 2016). In addition, there were similarities between the two data sources in terms of the information and circumstances listed, highlighting a high level of agreement and legitimacy to media/newspaper accounts.

Some limitations were also noted, however, again drawing primarily from US research:

- 1) Certain homicides may not receive coverage while others are sensationalized (Parkin & Gruenewald, 2017; Salari & Sillito, 2016).
- 2) Related to the first point, minority homicide victims and victims residing in low socio-economic communities are less likely to receive media coverage (Parkin & Gruenewald, 2017). However, it is important to recognize that these limitations are drawn from US-based literature. It is possible that Canadian news outlets report on most homicides given their relative infrequency compared to US homicide rates; however, the level of detail will likely vary by the characteristics of the victim and accused and the region of the country.
- 3) Journalists typically rely on police sources, may not interview those who knew the victim/perpetrator well, or may not contact violence against women agencies who may have been working with the victim, accused and/or the family (Fairbairn & Dawson, 2013; Richards et al., 2011; Taylor, 2009). Therefore, the information shared by police may not be an accurate reflection of the interpersonal history of those involved, especially when there was a limited amount of police contact prior to the homicide (Taylor, 2009).



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