

# femicide census



**UK Femicides 2009–2018**

*"If I'm not in Friday,  
I might be dead"*

The police said:  
***"There is no risk to the  
wider community."***

[femicidecensus.org](http://femicidecensus.org)

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## With:

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## Acknowledgements

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## Foreword

Wanting things to be different is part of the motivation for just about anyone involved in any aspect of work to end men's violence against women; but to solve a problem you need to be able to say what it is. When we first spoke to each other in 2013, Karen had been running her project, Counting Dead Women, for a year and a half and Clarrie had come across it in a search for data to evidence state failure to protect women at risk of death at the hands of violent current and former partners. We were both motivated by a lack of official data from the state and an apparent unwillingness to look at the problem of men's fatal violence against women and girls as a coherent issue. With support from Women's Aid, law firm Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer, and Deloitte, we launched the Femicide Census in 2015 and released our first report, *Redefining an Isolated Incident: An Analysis of the*

*Deaths of Women Killed Between 2009 and 2015, in 2016.*

Since then, we have released a report every year, looking at femicide in the UK the preceding year, which has enabled us to collate and review ten years of femicides in the UK. That is ten years' worth of violent and premature ends to more than 1,425 women's lives because men made choices to kill them. That is ten years' worth of grieving loved ones and children growing up without their mother, in some cases knowing that their father killed her: their pain and loss does not stop. For us, one of the most striking things is how little has changed in those ten years. It is both heart-breaking and, frankly, makes us so angry because we, and all those who work on responses to men's violence against women, seem to be shouting our findings, our understanding, our advocacy, into a void.

Of the men who killed women, as recorded in this report, 29 (2%) are known to have killed before. In twenty cases they had killed women, in nine cases other men. It is chilling to be aware of the number of men who killed women named in this report who are already out of prison. There were a further 117 suspicious deaths of women involving violent incidents or histories of violence where for various reasons the death could not be attributed to the suspected perpetrator or his actions. These men are at liberty to form new relationships with women, return to their mothers and buy sexual access to women in prostitution. Almost half of the men who killed women during this ten-year period were known to have a history of violence against women, either the woman they killed or another woman or women. We know there are thousands of men currently harming women, girls and children and that some of these women will become subjects of future reports. We are not convinced that the risks that these men pose to women, girls and children are adequately assessed and monitored, therefore too many women, girls and children are not being protected by the state.

The Femicide Census should be contributing to ending, or at least reducing, men's violence against women. We have never been under the illusion that we could do this with four reports and ten years' worth of data as we are just a very small part of a complex and extensive response to men's violence against women and

children, but surely it should have been possible for the Femicide Census to capture change for the better somewhere. But that doesn't seem to be what we see.

Ten years ago, men in the UK were killing a woman every three days, and a woman was killed by a man who was or had been an intimate partner every four days. Today, we see the same. The Femicide Census shows us that the numbers of women killed per year, the methods used, the contexts in which women are killed and their relationship with the men who kill them have changed little over the ten-year period. Should we celebrate the fact that the numbers have not worsened, given the increased access to ever more violent pornography through the internet, the apparent increase in men's predilection for rough sex, the cuts to specialist support services, and falling conviction rates for sexual violence? Have medical interventions masked an increase in potentially lethal violence? Or, as we suspect, is the constant level of men's fatal violence against women and girls one of the great public policy failures of the last decade?

The Femicide Census findings give the most comprehensive analysis of men's fatal violence in the UK and raise as many questions as they answer. The one thing that is not questionable though is that every single woman and girl in this report mattered. They were loved and they are missed, and a man chose to end their life. The Femicide Census is a call to action for change.

Karen Ingala Smith and Clarrie O'Callaghan

## Dedication

This report is dedicated to the 1,425<sup>1</sup> women killed by men in the UK from 2009-2018, to those killed in previous and subsequent years, and to their grieving families and friends. We wish never to lose sight of the women behind the figures in this report, and to honour their lives. Every effort has been made to use victims' preferred names with the correct spelling. However, media and official reports sometimes used alternative names and alternative spellings, so we apologise if the name or spelling used is not the preferred or correct version.

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<sup>1</sup> At the point of publication of this report, a number of cases of femicide from 2018 could not be included as investigations were ongoing or cases were unsolved. It is therefore believed that this total is less than the total number of cases of femicide for 2018. Those asterisked cases relate to cases where information was only finalised after data were complete so they are femicides that took place in the period but the details of the cases are not included. Please see the Methodology section for a discussion of the criteria by which cases are included or excluded.

# The women killed by men from 2009–2018 to whom this report is dedicated:

Abida Bi • Afsana Kossar • Aftaben Khanom • Agnes Sina-Inakoju • Agnieszka Dziegielewska • Agnieszka Szeffler  
Agnieszka Szymura • Ahdieh Khayatzadeh • Aileen Bell • Aisha Alam • Akua Agyeman • Alami Gotip • Albertina  
Choules • Aleksandra Korkus • Aleksandra Mrozik • Alena Grlakova • Alethea Taylor • Alex Stuart • Alexandra  
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Arnold • Amina Adan • Amina Begum • Amina Bibi • Amoe Seline Stevens • Amrit Kaur Ubhi • Amy Barnes  
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Andrea Carr • Andrea Johnson • Andrea Lewis • Andreea Cristea • Andrena Douglas • Angela Best • Angela  
Conoby • Angela Craddock • Angela Crompton (Phillips) • Angela Eastwood • Angela Holgate • Angela Hoyt  
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Antonina Belska • Anu Kapoor • Arena Saeed • Asha Muneer • Ashleigh Hall • Asia Tufail • Asiyah Harris • Asma  
Begum • Assia Newton • Assia Shahzad • Audrey Taylor • Ava Anthony • Avan Najmadeen • Avis Addison  
Ayesha Mohammed • Ayodele Akinsiku • Aysel Djevdet • Aysha Frade • Aytul Serbetli • Badri Dabir • Barbara  
Baraniecka • Barbara Davison • Barbara Hobbs • Barbara Jane Cumming • Barbara Yates • Beata Hausner • Beata  
Slomiana • Beatrice (Trixie) Bennett • Becky Morgan • Beena Bhatt • Bei Carter • Belen Tripp • Bernadeta  
Jakubczyk • Bernadette Fox • Bernadette Gallagher • Bernadette Green • Beryl Hammond • Beryl Webb • Bethan  
Callaghan • Bethany Hill • Betty Constable • Betty Gallagher • Betty Lyons • Betty Yates • Beverley Bliss • Beverley  
Farrow • Beverley Hudson • Beverley Shears • Bianca Shepherd • Brenda James • Camille Mathurasingh • Carly  
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Carole Forth • Carole Green • Carole Harrison • Carole Kolar • Carole Mudie • Carole Waugh • Caroline Andrews  
Caroline Finegan • Caroline Jane Coyne • Caroline Parry • Carolyn Ann Ellis • Carolyn Hill • Caron Smyth • Carrie  
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Catherine Wells-Burr • Catrina Rae • Cecilia Powell • Celia Levitt • Celine Dookhran • Cerys Marie Yemm  
Chanelle Sasha Jones • Chantelle Barnsdale-Quean • Charito Cruz • Charlotte Brown • Charlotte Hart • Charlotte  
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Shuren Ma • Sian Blake • Sian O'Callaghan • Sian Rees • Sian Roberts • Simone Grainger • Simonne Kerr • Sinead  
Wooding • Siobhan Kelly • Sohbia Khan • Sonita Nijhawan • Sophie Cavanagh • Sophie McDonald • Sophie Smith  
Sophie Taylor • Sophie Taylor • Sorrell Leczkowski • Stacey Anne Henderson • Stacey Mackie • Stacey Quigley  
Stela Domador-Kuzma • Stephanie Bellinger • Stephanie Owen • Stephanie Packman • Susan Ann Forster • Susan  
Ashworth • Susan Cole • Susan Davenport • Susan Fuller • Susan Gyde • Susan Hughes • Susan Lancaster • Susan  
Williams • Susan McFall • Susan McGoldrick • Susan Meanwell • Susan Mitchelson • Susan Rose Southern • Susan  
Rushworth • Susan Smith • Susan Westwood • Susan Whiting • Susan Workman • Susie Smith (Beaney) • Suzanne  
Bavette Newton • Suzanne Blamires • Suzanne Brown • Suzanne Harper • Suzanne Jones • Suzanne Pillee  
Suzanne Van Hagen • Svetlana Olsevka • Svetlana Zolotovska • Sybil Sibthorpe • Syeda Lipia Begum • Sylvia  
Rowley-Bailey • Sylvia Smith • Sylvia Stuart • Sylwia Ciapcinska • Tahira Ahmed • Tamara Holboll • Tamara  
Sinakova • Tanya Turnbull • Tasneem Sheikh • Taylor Burrows • Teresa Garner • Teresa Parkin • Teresa Wishart  
Terrie-Ann Jones • Tia Kounota • Tina Bennett • Tina Billingham • Tina Cantello • Tina Crawford • Tina  
Montgomery • Tolu Kalejaiye • Toni Rudman • Tracey Arden • Tracey Baker • Tracey Bowen • Tracey Downer  
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Donnelly • Tracy Dryden • Tracy Gabriel • Tracy Goodwin • Tracy Jones • Tracy Kearns • Tracy Maria Walters  
Tracy McPartland • Tracy Patsalides • Tracy Stonehouse • Trisha Lad • Tuanjai Sprengel • Tyler Denton • Umida  
Eshboboeva • Una Dorney • Unnamed • Usha Patel • Val (Valerie) Forde • Valerie Davison • Valerie Graves  
Valerie Rhodes • Valerie Rockall • Valerie Turner • Vanessa James • Varkha Rani • Varsha Champaclal • Vera  
Savage • Vikki Hull • Vicky Roberts (Wynne-Jones) • Victoria Adams • Victoria Bance née Channing • Victoria Rose  
Viktorija Ljevleva • Viktorija Sokolova • Vina Patel • Virginja Jurkiene • Vitalija Baliutaviciene • Vitalija  
Nemniaseviene • Wendy Adlard • Wendy Ambrose • Wendy Fawell • Wendy Goodman • Wendy Mann • Wendy  
Milligan • Wendy Thomas • Weronika Gospodarczyk • Winifred Thomas • Xin Xin Liu • Xing Ding • Xixi Bi • Yasmin  
Akhtar • Yong Li Qui • Yvette Hallsworth • Yvonne Davies • Yvonne Fox • Yvonne Tapp • Yvonne Walsh • Zainab  
Taufiq • Zandra Maxwell-Nelson • Zaneta Balazova • Zaneta Kindzierska • Zarina Bibi • Zoe Morgan • Zoe Nelson  
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# 1. Introduction

■ She inadvertently predicted her own killing as she left work with the words: "If I'm not in Friday, I might be dead."<sup>2</sup>

Over the ten years from 2009 to 2018, at least 1,425 women were killed by men in the UK.<sup>3</sup> This means that a man killed a woman every three days; a woman was killed by a male partner or ex-partner every four days. One of the most tragic findings of this research is that the rate at which men kill women shows no sign of reducing.

This report presents information on these femicides: the crimes, the victims, the perpetrators and the criminal justice outcomes. The report shows that women are killed by their husbands, partners and ex-partners; by sons, grandsons and other male relatives; by acquaintances, colleagues, neighbours and strangers. The killing of a woman, especially in a domestic setting, is often reported as an "isolated incident" and "giving no cause for wider public concern". On the contrary, however, the Femicide Census illustrates exactly why there is every cause for wider public concern. Femicides are the epitome of the state failing to respect, protect and fulfil women's human rights, and a public response of this nature minimises and obscures the scale, extent and connected nature of men's violence against women.

Femicide is generally defined as the killing of women because they are women, though some definitions – including that used by the Femicide Census – include any killing of women

or girls by men.<sup>4</sup> The term "femicide" was established by feminist researcher and author Diana Russell in the 1970s, in the hope that by highlighting the killing of women as a specific type of male violence against women, governments and other actors would take steps to reduce such killings worldwide. In the book *Femicide: The Politics of Woman Killing*, Russell and her co-editor Jill Radford offered the first known written and explicitly feminist definition of femicide as "the misogynistic killing of women by men".<sup>5</sup>

Femicide has been identified globally as a leading cause of premature death for women, yet until recently there has been limited research on this issue. In December 2013, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution on femicide, urging member states to undertake a range of measures to address the killing of women and girls, including the need to enhance data collection and analysis. The Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women (SRVAW) cited the UK's Femicide Census to the UN General Assembly in her 2016 report as a laudable example of best practice in this regard, and recommends that States "collect and publish data on femicides and on other forms of violence against women (VAW) and establish Femicide watch or

---

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-36072860>

<sup>3</sup> Given the number of as yet unsolved cases, the actual number is likely to be considerably higher.

<sup>4</sup> [https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/77421/WHO\\_RHR\\_12.38\\_eng.pdf;jsessionid=4DD39FB77FD32FE6CC03FE98F3A27D79?sequence=1](https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/77421/WHO_RHR_12.38_eng.pdf;jsessionid=4DD39FB77FD32FE6CC03FE98F3A27D79?sequence=1) (accessed 10 August 2018).

<sup>5</sup> D. Russell and J. Radford, *Femicide: The Politics of Woman Killing*, Michigan, Twayne, 1992.

observatories on VAW with such functions.”<sup>6</sup>

Since our launch in 2015, the Femicide Census has played a ground-breaking role in raising awareness of femicide: men’s fatal violence against women has gained increasing attention in the UK Parliament and in mainstream media.

The Femicide Census collates the details of hundreds of femicides, to demonstrate the scale of the violence and to explore whether lessons can be learnt by viewing these cases together. Findings from the census give the lie to the notion of “isolated incidents” which “cause no wider public concern”. Most femicides are committed in similar settings, similar weapons are used, and similar relationships exist between the perpetrators and victims. Frequently, the killings are committed by perpetrators with a history of violence in

circumstances in which the victim has told others of the violence she suffers and sought help. By highlighting the trends in cases of femicide, this report demands that much more be done through social, institutional and state changes, so femicide can be reduced, if not completely prevented.

This report is, of necessity, rather long in order to properly examine over 1,400 killings of women by men over ten years. Consequently, we have structured it slightly differently to the norm in that we have focused on our findings in the initial chapters. There is then extensive detail about the methodology behind this report and about the context of the ten years against which we are reporting in the later chapters.

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<sup>6</sup> United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), “Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences”, 2016, [http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage\\_e.aspx?m=106](http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?m=106), (accessed 24 November 2016).

**Jill Radford: author of *Femicide: the politics of woman killing* (1992) and Professor Emerita, University of Teesside.**

The Femicide Census marks a significant milestone in the development of knowledge and understanding of femicide, the misogynistic killing of women, across the UK over a ten-year period. Despite careful counting, which led it to be commended as an example of good practice by the United Nations, it found no evidence of any fall in the numbers of femicides in this period. It did highlight the persistence of women-blaming myths like: the home being a safe haven for women; children needing fathers; pornography being harmless, and how men continue to endanger the lives of women and children.

The Census takes forward the work undertaken by myself and (the late and much missed) Diana E.H. Russell in '*Femicide: The Politics of Woman Killing*' (1992). Naming, framing and defining femicide were among its key aims. Without a name, femicide remains hidden, impossible to speak about, count, research or to develop strategies to combat it.

In the anthology we compiled 40+ articles, essays and poems from the UK, the USA and India in order to name, document and describe the misogynist killing of women in a 'scrapbook' of historical and cross-cultural evidence and testimony. By framing femicide within a feminist analysis of violence against women, the connections between ostensibly discrete problems like: witch burnings; sati; domestic homicides, sex murders; serial killings of women, become apparent thereby revealing the alarming scale of femicide. When published in 1992, the anthology had its share of reviews but had only modest impact.

This changed in the 2000s, following feminist protests and international concern over the disappearances, murders and abductions of 1,000s of women in Juarez City on the Mexican /USA border. There, the power of organised criminal gangs ensured their impunity from investigation and prosecution. Feminists demanded state intervention and Marcela LaGarde, a Mexican Congresswoman, invited Diana Russell and myself to go and speak on femicide. Subsequently, we were pleased to agree to the translation of our Femicide anthology into Spanish. It was published in 2006, fourteen years after the English language edition.

LaGarde led a successful campaign for 'femincidio' to be recognised and included in the Mexican penal code. Women in other Latin American states, inspired by Mexico, developed similar campaigns. In the 2000s, specific laws against femicide entered into the penal codes of many Central and South American states. Observatories and Centres to combat femicide were founded within governments, local governments, universities, women's Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and police units. By 2012 research had been undertaken, statistics gathered, art installations created and a plethora of publications and prevention strategies were produced, Similar work on femicide was also developing in Asian and African countries.

Another key moment was the recognition of femicide by the United Nations. On International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women 2012, the United Nations held a Symposium: 'Femicide: A Global Issue that Demands Action!' (ACUN Vienna). This, together with the Resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2014, served to further heighten awareness of femicide, elaborated as 'gender-based killings of women'. The following year (2015), the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women called on all member states to establish national 'Femicide Watch' observatories to develop, monitor and promote models of good practice on data collection, investigation and law relating to femicide.

Sadly, but hardly surprisingly; the UK government, in its 2016 response to this call seemed to miss the point completely. Other than acknowledging its brief, it made no mention of 'femicide'. The 30-year global struggle for recognition of femicide as a major threat to the lives of women might just as well not have happened.

No wonder I welcome the Feminist Census! Statistically sound, and with respect to its subjects: the women victimised by femicide, I consider it to be essential reading for all students, practitioners and professionals whose work touches on femicide and all forms of violence against women and girls.



## 2. Femicides

### 2.1. UK femicides by calendar year, day and month

#### Femicides per calendar year

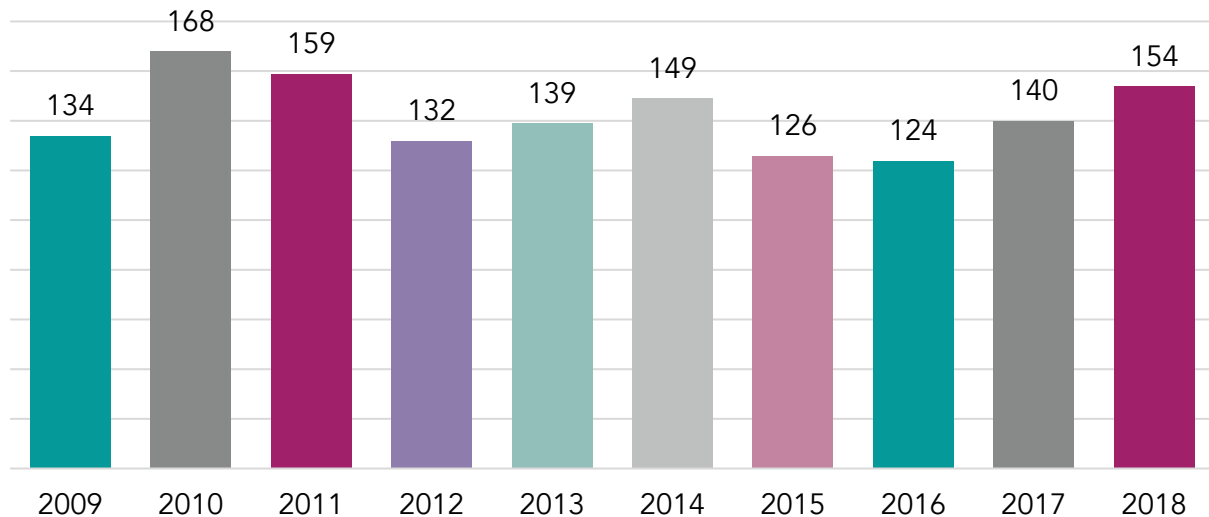


Figure 1: UK femicides per calendar year, 2009 – 2018

This report documents 1,425 femicides over the ten-year period of 2009-2018 with the annual number of victims varying from 124 (2016) to 168 (2010). Numbers in 2010, 2011 and 2018 were particularly high, but the general pattern of women killed by men did not change significantly in these years. As in other years, when considering the context of femicide, by far the largest number of women were killed in the context of intimate partner violence, and the second largest number were killed in the context of son-mother domestic violence.<sup>77</sup> These findings are consistent with the general pattern across the ten-year period. In 2010 and 2011, the third largest group of femicides were sexually motivated, while in 2018 the third largest number

of femicides were committed in the context of financial gain.

The terror attacks in London and Manchester in 2017 make this an atypical year: while, as in other years, women killed in the context of intimate partner violence constituted the largest group, this was a lower percentage than other years (47%), with the second largest number being killed in the context of terrorism (15%) and the third largest number (8%) in the context of son-mother violence.

The chart above shows that while there is some variation in the annual number of femicides, there is no evidence of a decline across the ten-year period. Such a finding indicates that patterns of male violence are consistent and enduring, in

<sup>77</sup> This finding is reached by considering the context of the femicide. In terms of perpetrators' relationships to victims, stranger is the next highest group after intimate partners and husbands. However, these may be contextualised in different ways: sexually motivated, in the course of a robbery, terrorism and so forth. The context of son-mother violence occurs more frequently than these other contexts.

spite of the policy developments and interventions detailed in the Context section. As discussed in that section, “austerity” measures – including cuts to welfare, women’s refuges and support services, policing, criminal justice and other key state agencies – have no doubt created a very challenging context for prevention of femicides. However, a consideration of the success or otherwise of prevention measures and criminal justice sanctions does not address the question of why men kill women in the first place, which is clearly far more profound. It seems likely that as long as sex inequality persists, there are limits to what prevention and response measures can achieve.

**Days on which men killed women**

We aimed to identify whether there were patterns across the week, as this may have implications for how and when support services are provided. Across the ten-year period, the highest number of femicide deaths appear to have occurred on Fridays and generally over the weekend period (the high number on Mondays seems best explained by femicides being discovered after the weekend). However, there was significant variation in the days on which women died: for example, in both 2012 and 2018, most femicide deaths appear to have occurred on Tuesdays, which has one of the lowest frequencies across the timespan. The distribution of femicides suggests that men kill women on any given day of the week, though most

deaths seem to be clustered around the weekend, from Thursday to Monday. Such a finding may relate to enforced family time with perpetrators and have particular implications in terms of policing and ensuring the availability of support services over the weekend period.

It is sometimes difficult to ascertain exactly when femicides were committed as the exact day of the death may be unknown – for instance when the victim’s body remained undiscovered for some time or there is a lack of information in the media reports. There is an additional proviso in interpreting these findings, as the Femicide Census tries to record the date of death rather than date of incident, and although often this is the same date, in some cases the victim may have died some time after the violent incident.

Day:	No. of femicides:
Mon	206
Tues	183
Wed	183
Thurs	197
Fri	217
Sat	195
Sun	202
Unknown	42
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,425</b>

Figure 2: UK femicides by day of week, 2009 – 2018

## Months in which men killed women

■ A man who struck his teenage wife on the head with a frying pan before repeatedly stabbing her to death in a frenzied attack on Christmas Day has been jailed for life.<sup>8</sup>

We have recorded the dates of femicides and looked at whether there were any spikes across the year as this may tell us something about triggers for men’s fatal violence. Looking at this data across a decade has the potential to be more useful than an annual picture.

While it is evident that men kill women throughout the year, there are some significant differences in findings in this category. The number of femicide deaths in each of the highest three months – April, December and May – exceeds that of the lowest month (October) by over 40%. Numbers are lower in late summer and autumn months, from August to November. Almost half (47%) of all December femicides were committed over the Christmas and New Year period (20-31 December). Eight femicides were committed on Christmas Day, five on Christmas Eve, five on New Year’s Eve and three on Boxing Day. Twelve femicides were committed on New Year’s Day: a particularly striking figure given that there were 22 fewer femicide deaths overall in January than December.

Month	No. of femicides:
Jan	110
Feb	119
Mar	122
Apr	141
May	131
Jun	122
Jul	126
Aug	107
Sept	108
Oct	93
Nov	106
Dec	132
Unknown	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,425</b>

Figure 3a: UK femicides by calendar month, 2009 – 2018

The Manchester bombing of 2017, in which 16 women and girls over 14 were killed, was perpetrated in May. Taking this into account, the remaining months with the highest number of femicide deaths are April, December and July. A range of suggestions have been put forward for the distribution of femicides during the calendar year. However, much of this is speculative or anecdotal. For instance, it is commonly reported that couples break up most frequently on the following dates: Valentine’s Day, during the spring, April Fool’s Day, on

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/man-who-stabbed-teen-wife-16476834>

Mondays, during the Summer holidays, two weeks before Christmas and on Christmas day.<sup>9</sup> This might possibly be of significance, given that separation is a particularly dangerous time for victims (see Separation section below). The main school holiday periods also fall at least partially in these months, and this context could possibly be significant in terms of enforced family time with perpetrators and less access to services over bank holiday periods. However, it should also be noted that summer holidays fall mainly in August, when the number of femicide deaths is lower; also, Easter holidays do not appear to be particularly significant, as only 8% (11) of all April femicide deaths occurred over Easter bank holiday long weekends. Of course, Easter is not a fixed date and indeed large parts of the population have other significant dates or periods in which families may gather, so again it seems rather too speculative to try to

draw any conclusions. High-profile sporting tournaments and championships, particularly football, have often been associated with an increase in male violence against women and such events – including the FA Cup final, Champions League final, World Cup, European Cup and the Olympic Games – tend to be held over the summer from mid-May to mid-August. However, here again there is no obvious increase in the number of femicides, and in fact this association has been critiqued for focusing on incidents rather than on ongoing coercive or abusive behaviour by a perpetrator.<sup>10</sup>

Overall, the most significant finding is that men kill women throughout the year. However, consideration should be given to some fluctuations in terms of agency awareness and provision of services over holiday periods.

**Femicide Deaths per calendar month**

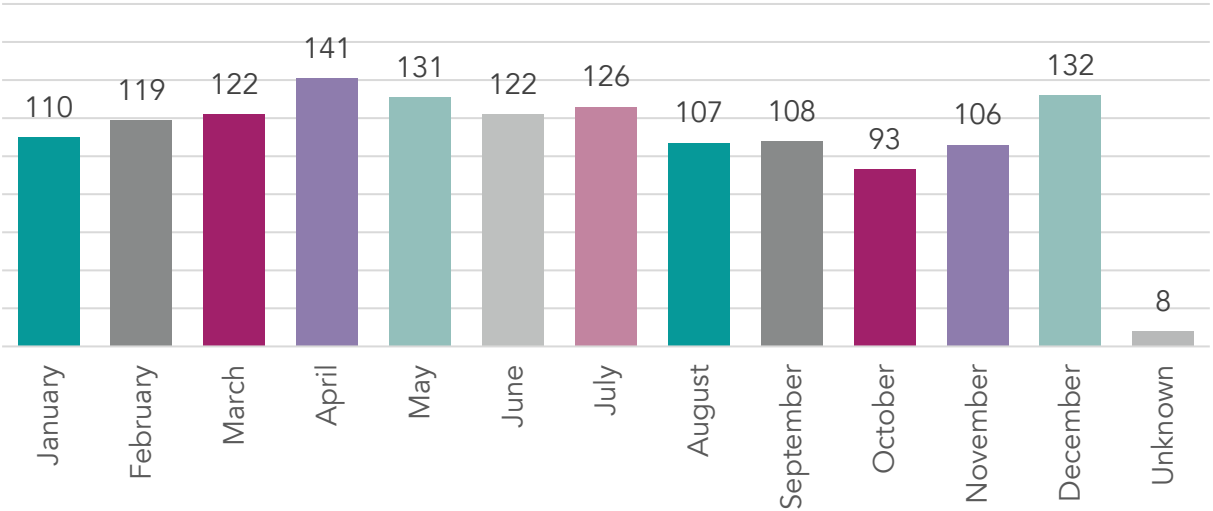


Figure 3b: UK femicides by calendar month, 2009 – 2018

<sup>9</sup> <https://coffeemeetsbagel.com/blog/dating-statistics/7-popular-time-year-relationships-break/>; <https://edition.cnn.com/2010/TECH/social.media/11/02/facebook.breakups/index.html> (accessed 12 November 2020).  
<sup>10</sup> Brooks-Hay, O & Lombard, N 2018, "Home game": domestic abuse and football", *Journal of Gender-Based Violence*, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 93-108.

## 2.2. Femicides by police force area

The number of women killed by men per police force area from 2009 – 2018 is presented in Figure 4a below. These numbers relate to the police force area in which a woman was killed and where the force had jurisdiction to investigate the killing. The Femicide Census relies for its core data on responses from police forces to Freedom of Information requests. In addition to information provided by police forces, data is taken

from other official documents such as judges' sentencing remarks and publicly available sources such as media reports.

The highest number of femicides unsurprisingly occurred in areas covering the highest populations: London, Scotland, Greater Manchester, West Midlands and West Yorkshire. There was little variation by year over the ten-year period.

Police force area	Total femicides
Metropolitan Police Service	220
Police Scotland	112
Greater Manchester	89
West Midlands	87
West Yorkshire	62
Thames Valley	43
Merseyside	42
Devon and Cornwall	38
Essex	36
South Yorkshire	35
Leicestershire	33
Kent	32
Lancashire	32
Avon and Somerset	30
South Wales Police	30
Sussex	30
West Mercia	29
Police Service of N. Ireland	28
Nottinghamshire	27
Northumbria	25
Derbyshire	23
Staffordshire	23

Police force area	Total femicides
Hertfordshire	21
Cleveland	19
Cheshire	18
Dorset	18
Norfolk	18
North Wales	18
Hampshire	17
Cambridgeshire	16
Lincolnshire	16
Suffolk	16
Durham	15
Humberside	15
Surrey	15
Gwent	14
Dyfed-Powys	13
Cumbria	12
Bedfordshire	11
Northamptonshire	11
Warwickshire	11
Wiltshire	10
North Yorkshire	8
Gloucestershire	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,425</b>

Figure 4a: Number of femicides per police force area, 2009-2018

## 2.3. Rate of femicides by police force area, 2015–2018

The average annual rate of femicide for each police force area is calculated per 100,000 general population.<sup>11</sup> Taking populations into account shows that the forces with the highest numbers of femicides are not necessarily those with the highest annual rate of femicide. As shown below, the police force areas with the highest average annual rates of femicide 2015 – 2018 over the ten-year period were Cleveland, Greater

Manchester, Leicestershire, the West Midlands and Merseyside.

It could be argued that a more accurate picture of the rate of femicide would be produced by basing the calculation on the number of femicides specifically on the population of women and girls over 14 in that area (i.e. the population of relevance to the census). This is something that will be considered in future reports.

Police force area	Total femicides	Police force area	Total femicides
Cleveland	0.336	Norfolk	0.201
Greater Manchester	0.320	Essex	0.198
Leicestershire	0.306	Warwickshire	0.196
West Midlands	0.302	Cambridgeshire	0.189
Merseyside	0.297	Thames Valley	0.180
West Yorkshire	0.269	Suffolk	0.179
North Wales	0.259	Sussex	0.178
Dyfed-Powys	0.252	Avon and Somerset	0.178
South Yorkshire	0.251	Hertfordshire	0.178
Metropolitan Police Service	0.250 <sup>12</sup>	Kent	0.175
Gwent	0.239	Northumbria	0.172
Durham	0.238	Cheshire	0.171
Dorset	0.234	Bedfordshire	0.166
West Mercia	0.229	Humberside	0.161
South Wales	0.227	Police Service of N. Ireland	0.150
Cumbria	0.220	Northamptonshire	0.149
Derbyshire	0.220	Wiltshire	0.140
Devon and Cornwall	0.218	Surrey	0.127
Lancashire	0.215	Gloucestershire	0.112
Lincolnshire	0.214	North Yorkshire	0.097
Scottish Police	0.207	Nottinghamshire	0.096
Staffordshire	0.204	Hampshire	0.086

Figure 4b: Rate of femicide per 100,000 population by police force area, 2015-2018

<sup>11</sup> The average annual rates of femicide rate were calculated by dividing the total number of femicides per police force area by the average population in the police force area. This result was then multiplied by 100,000, and divided by 10 to establish the average annual rate rather than rate over a ten-year period. It should be noted that of course the populations of each police force area change to some extent over time. Population data were not available for all the years 2009-2018, so the average population was calculated from the available years (2015-2018). For example:

Total number of femicides in Cambridgeshire (n=16) x 100,000 = 1.89 / 10 = 0.189

Cambridgeshire police force area population (n= 845,550)

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/datasets/policeforceareadatatables>

[www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/timeseries/nipop/pop](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/timeseries/nipop/pop)

(Accessed 28 September 2020).

[www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/populationestimatesforukenglandandwalesscotlandandnorthernireland](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/populationestimatesforukenglandandwalesscotlandandnorthernireland) (Accessed 28 September 2020).

<sup>12</sup> Average population calculated for years 2015-17 as data for 2018 was not available.

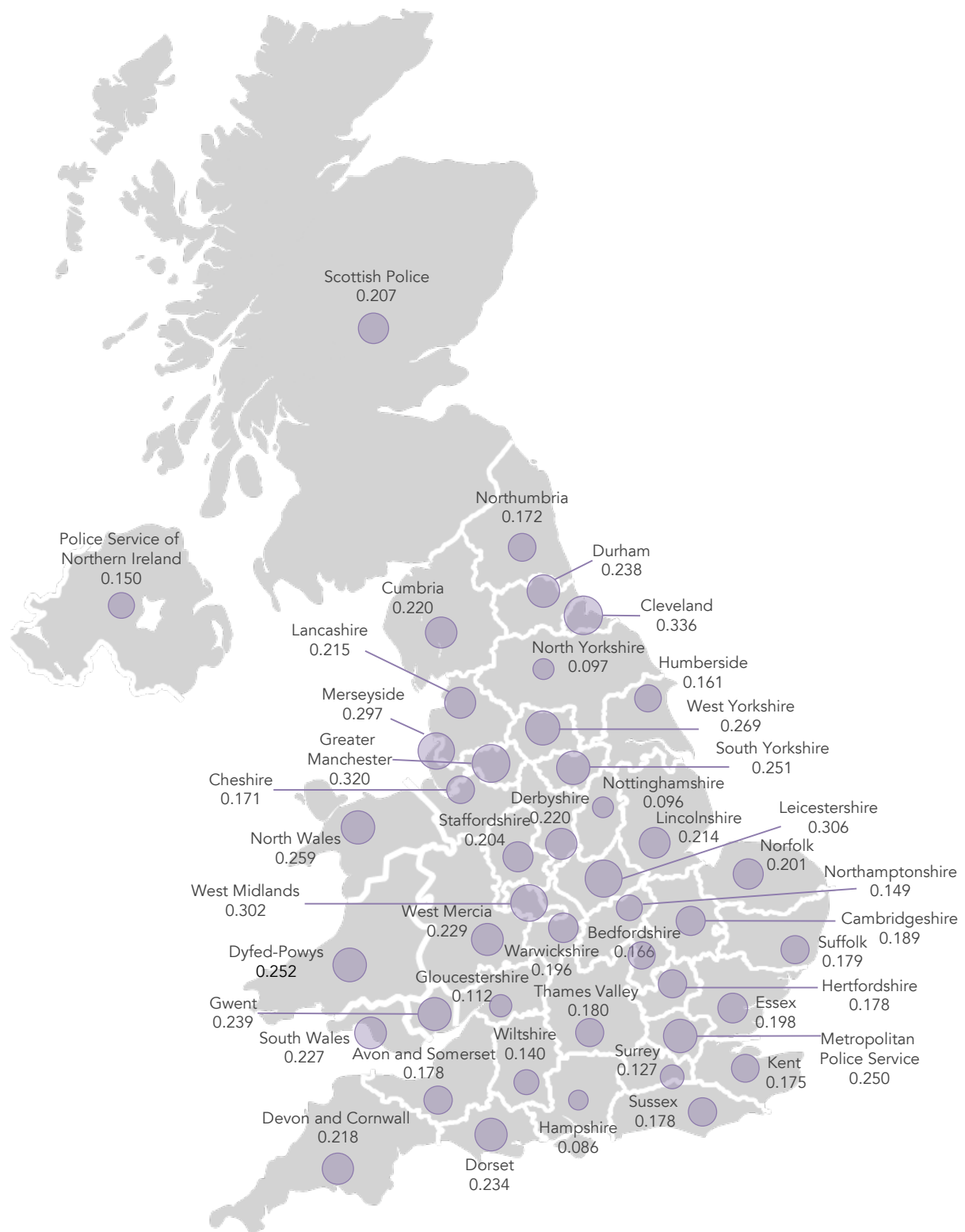


Figure 4c: Rate of femicide per 100,000 population by police force area, 2015-2018

As discussed in the context section, there have been a significant number of legislative and policy guideline developments to assist police in particular as well as other criminal justice agencies in the prevention, investigation and prosecution of violence against women. However, it is repeatedly found that there is a major implementation gap between such initiatives and practice on the ground. As of 2018, a further new mechanism to help in holding police to account, the “police super complaint” became available. Designated agencies can bring a super complaint where they identify repeated or serious failings. One such police super complaint in 2019,<sup>13</sup> which falls just outside the period of the report but is illustrative of the failings found here, highlighted how police forces either lack awareness and training on protective VAWG measures or choose not to use them as they are deemed too onerous in terms of officer time. In either case, they are routinely failing to make use of these powers to the detriment of victims of male violence against women.

Police handling of a number of the femicide cases was subject to scrutiny and accountability measures of this kind including internal reviews and investigations by the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) or the previous Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC). In total, 72 references to IOPC/IPCC reports were found in media reports. (Neither the full reports nor the outcomes of investigations were consistently

available. See further in Methodology section.) Of the five police force areas with the highest rates of femicide, several forces had been subject to IOPC/IPCC investigations or internal reviews: Greater Manchester Police had been subject to eight; West Midlands to four; Leicestershire Police to two; and Merseyside Police to two. The table below presents the findings for all police forces that were found to have been subject to IOPC/IPCC investigations or internal reviews across the ten-year period, there are likely to have been others which we have not been able to access. Some examples of the sort of findings that could result from such measures are given below.

For instance, findings critical of the police from IOPC/IPCC investigations include remarks such as these which, in this case, involved Greater Manchester Police:

- The conclusion that victim Clare Wood had been let down in 2009 by “individual and systemic” failures by Greater Manchester Police<sup>14</sup>
- The finding that three women killed by their abusive partners in 2013 were failed by Greater Manchester Police “on several levels”<sup>15</sup>
- The conclusion that there were “significant failings” on the part of both Greater Manchester and Kent police in the investigation of crimes committed by a 2014 perpetrator<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/797419/Super-complaint\\_report.FINAL.PDF](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/797419/Super-complaint_report.FINAL.PDF) (accessed 14 November 2020).

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-manchester-13506721> (accessed 14 November 2020).

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/manchester-police-accused-of-failure-over-women-killed-by-abusive-partners-l9dhghg27> (accessed 14 November 2020)

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/katelyn-parker-murder-inquest-heywood-14825428> (access 14 November 2020)



- The finding that the search for a murdered teenager was delayed by four hours due to a lack of available officers<sup>17</sup>

Whereas findings that limit police responsibility but can still identify lessons from IOPC/IPCC investigations include remarks such as these which, in this case, involved Hertfordshire Constabulary:

- The finding that a police response in a femicide case was “appropriate” and that the murder of the victim by

her former partner could not have been foreseen<sup>18</sup>

- The identification of areas where improvement could be made to how the force handles allegations of domestic abuse (the force then acted on six of the seven learning recommendations)<sup>19</sup>
- The finding that the force's response was “proportionate and appropriate” and “did not cause or contribute” to the deaths of two victims<sup>20</sup>

Police force area	IOPC / IPCC inquiries / internal reviews
Greater Manchester	8
Hertfordshire	6
Metropolitan Police Service	5
Essex	4
West Midlands	4
Durham	3
Nottinghamshire	3
Police Scotland	3
Staffordshire	3
Avon and Somerset	2
Dorset	2
Kent	2
Leicestershire	2
Merseyside	2
North Wales	2
Northamptonshire	2

Police force area	IOPC / IPCC inquiries / internal reviews
Northamptonshire	2
Northumbria	2
Police Service of N. Ireland	2
Surrey	2
Thames Valley	2
Cheshire	1
Cumbria	1
Devon and Cornwall	1
Dyfed-Powys	1
Gloucestershire	1
Gwent	1
Hampshire	1
Lincolnshire	1
Suffolk	1
Sussex	1
West Yorkshire	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>72</b>

Figure 4d: Police forces known to have conducted IOPC or internal review inquiries

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-manchester-43656388> (accessed 14 November 2020)

<sup>18</sup> [https://www.policeoracle.com/news/Crime/2012/May/03/Harassment-Murder-Police-Response-Appropriate\\_48094.html/specialist](https://www.policeoracle.com/news/Crime/2012/May/03/Harassment-Murder-Police-Response-Appropriate_48094.html/specialist) (accessed 14 November 2020)

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.wired->

[gov.net/wg/news.nsf/articles/Improvements+to+how+domestic+abuse+is+investigated+by+Hertfordshire+Constabulary+made+following+the+deaths+of+Lee+Guntip+and+Sarah+Nash+26062019091000?open](https://www.wired.gov.net/wg/news.nsf/articles/Improvements+to+how+domestic+abuse+is+investigated+by+Hertfordshire+Constabulary+made+following+the+deaths+of+Lee+Guntip+and+Sarah+Nash+26062019091000?open) (accessed 14 November 2020)

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-beds-bucks-herts-43199210> (accessed 14 November 2020)

## 2.4. Victim’s relationship to perpetrator

- “The lethal victimization of women within the family sphere is encountered in all regions and countries.” <sup>21</sup>
- “[The perpetrator] left his former partner in a pool of blood, where she was found by the couple’s five-year-old son, in a scene of ‘unimaginable horror’, the court heard.” <sup>22</sup>
- “A boy who killed his stepmother with an axe and samurai sword was ‘obsessed’ with watching extreme violence. [...] He later told police his stepmother took good care of him and he was ‘sure she loves me and my father’.” <sup>23</sup>

The findings regarding the victim’s relationship to the perpetrator were very consistent over the ten-year period (see chart below). Overwhelmingly, the largest number of femicides (888, 62%) were carried out by men who were currently or had previously been in an intimate relationship with the victim: spouses, intimate partners, former intimate partners, former spouses and “casual” or “on-off” partners. Within this group, the comparatively lower

figure for femicides perpetrated by former spouses – as distinct from former intimate partners – may possibly reflect the greater amount of time and distance between victim and perpetrator in these cases. Cases where there had been a very recent separation and no indication of divorce proceedings were recorded as “spouse”. <sup>24</sup> The main categories of victims’ relationships to perpetrators are shown in the bar chart below:

Relationship to perpetrator: main categories

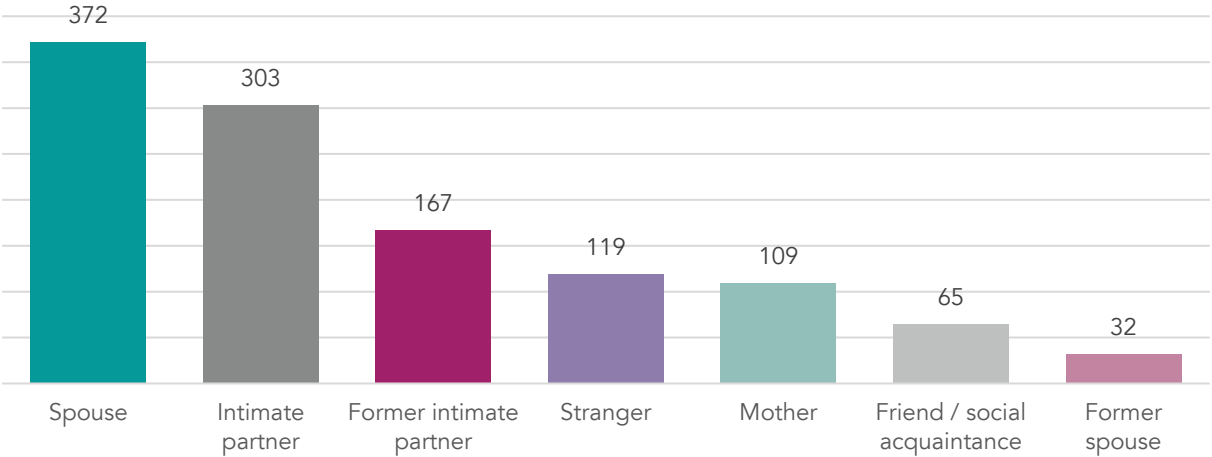


Figure 5a: Relationship of victim to perpetrator (most frequently occurring categories), 2009-2018

<sup>21</sup> UNDOC, [https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/gsh/Booklet\\_5.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/gsh/Booklet_5.pdf), p.13  
<sup>22</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2010/oct/04/facebook-murderer-child-support-jailed>  
<sup>23</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-45522338>  
<sup>24</sup> Recently estranged or separated spouses were recorded as ‘spouses’; perpetrators were recorded only as ‘former spouses’ if the victim and perpetrator were divorced, or there had been a substantial period of separation. The rationale behind this was to show the financial, legal and other ties that endure beyond an initial act of separation, and the length of time and obstacles involved in achieving the status of ‘ex-spouse’.

Relationship to perpetrator by calendar year: main categories

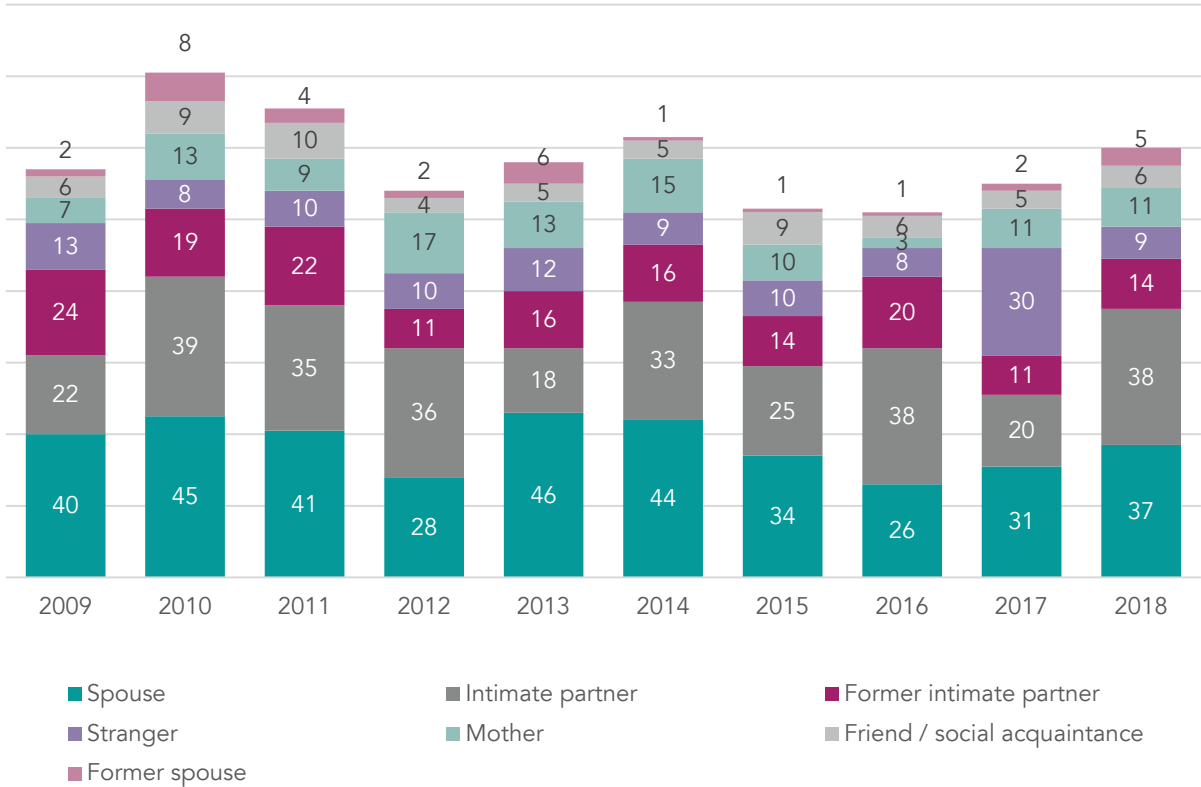


Figure 5b: Relationship of victim to perpetrator by calendar year (main categories), 2009-2018

Other categories of relationship were represented far less frequently than spouses and intimate partners. The next largest single category was “stranger/no known relationship” – a figure significantly increased by terrorist attacks in 2017 (see chart above, and Context of Violence section). Nonetheless, only 8% of femicides were perpetrated by strangers. In 92% of cases the victim knew, was related to or had some kind of relationship or acquaintance with the perpetrator. After spouses, partners and strangers, the most common relationship of the victim to the perpetrator was “mother”, with

“friends” or social acquaintances, acquaintances and neighbours the next most frequently represented (see table below). There was little variation over the ten-year period, with spouses, intimate partners and former intimate partners consistently being the most common perpetrators of femicide (see chart above).

It should be noted that victims may have had more than one relationship to the perpetrator, where more than one perpetrator was involved. The number of relationships is therefore greater than the number of victims.

Relationship of victim to perpetrator	Number	%
Spouse/intimate partner, including:	888	62
• Spouse (372)		
• Intimate partner (304)		
• Former intimate partner (167)		
• Former spouse (32)		
• Casual/on-off/ongoing contact (13)		
Stranger/no known relationship	119	8
Mother	109	8
Friend/social acquaintance	65	5
Acquaintance	31	2
Neighbour	28	2
Unknown	25	2
Prostituted woman/"escort"	18	1
Housemate	14	1
Daughter	12	1
Sister	12	1
Business associate/colleague	11	1
Grandmother	11	1
Relative of perpetrator's partner/ex-partner	10	1
First contact/date	9	1
Landlady	8	1
Mother-in-law	7	0.5
Sister-in-law	7	0.5
Relative of perpetrator's acquaintance	6	0.5
Ex mother-in-law	5	0.4
Aunt	4	0.3
Fellow care home resident	4	0.3
Niece	4	0.3
Stepmother	4	0.3
Friend of perpetrator's partner/ex-partner	3	0.2
Mother of perpetrator's partner	3	0.2
Mother of perpetrator's ex-partner	3	0.2
Partner/ex-partner of perpetrator's acquaintance	3	0.2
Step-grandmother	3	0.2
Stepdaughter	2	0.1
Tenant/lodger	2	0.1
Foster carer	1	<0.1
Partner/ex-partner of perpetrator's relative	1	<0.1
Partner of perpetrator's ex-partner	1	<0.1
Partner of perpetrator's father	1	<0.1
Stepsister	1	<0.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,435</b>	<b>100</b>

Figure 5c: Relationship of victim to perpetrator, 2009-2018

The category “first contact/date” refers to cases where the victim had met the perpetrator some hours prior to the femicide or was on a first date with him, following contact via an online dating site. Numerous reports to dating app sites complaining about abusive behaviour receive little or no response or action.<sup>25</sup> This category captures cases that fall between “intimate partner” and “stranger”: the perpetrator is not

entirely a stranger, but equally there is no history – or only a very limited online history – of a relationship. Such cases differ from “intimate partner” cases in that there is no history of abuse from perpetrator to victim (although there may well be a history of abuse of other women or violence generally) and there may be evidence of opportunistic predation.

**Caroline Goode, Retired Detective Superintendent, Metropolitan Police:**

“All murders are tragic. Murders of women, particularly when committed by men, are especially tragic as they result from the power imbalance between the two sexes. But, for me, the most tragic murders of all are those where the victim has sought help and not been believed.

In 2009, I investigated the murder of an elderly Jewish woman, a survivor of the Holocaust. She told police that men were living in her basement. She was dismissed as delusional. In fact, two men had broken into her basement. They tied her up and tortured her, leaving her to die of exposure over Christmas week. In another case I dealt with, a young Kurdish woman went to police five times, seeking help. Dismissed as melodramatic, she was killed by her family two weeks later. There are numerous similar cases. One woman who complained of being stalked was even charged with wasting police time.

In addition to misogyny, several factors play into these fatal decisions, including those of resources, lack of training and political correctness. Austerity measures have resulted in fewer officers, who run from incident to incident. COVID has exacerbated the problem. Detectives have overwhelming caseloads. Tick box NCALT (National Centre for Applied Learning Technologies) training and a faster staff turnover means less experience and loss of corporate memory. Officers lack the time to listen to victims who might not even be able to articulate their abuse. A stolen purse is a lot easier to explain than years of insidious coercive control. That requires time and a frame of reference in order to understand and spot the danger signs. Until those factors change, mistakes will continue to be made and women will continue to be killed. It’s no good repeating the ‘lessons learned’ mantra; systemic change is required.

Crime reporting must be accurate in terms of the biological sex of both victim and perpetrator. Such data influences risk assessment methodology, resource allocation, even legislation. If perpetrators are allowed to self-identify out of maleness, the data is meaningless. This is why the femicide census is such an important body of work. It helps us to prove what women already know – that men are murdering us.”

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-10-12/tinder-dating-app-helps-sexual-predators-hide-four-corners/12722732?nw=0> (accessed 14 November 2020)

## 2.5. History of abuse

- “The death of [the victim], 47, was initially treated as a tragic accident after [the perpetrator] claimed she had fallen down the stairs. But police re-investigated the death and later charged the computer programmer after a friend of the victim told them of domestic violence in the relationship.”<sup>26</sup>
- “[The perpetrator] had a history of domestic violence before he murdered his current and ex-partner within moments of each other, it has been revealed.”<sup>27</sup>

Over the ten-year period, a history of prior abuse of the victim by the perpetrator was evident in at least 611 cases, constituting 59% of 1,042 femicides committed by intimate partners or relatives (clearly the category does not apply across all relationship categories, for example where the perpetrator was not known to the victim). However, this figure is likely to represent a considerable undercount, given that many media reports do not necessarily report histories of previous violence and abuse. Given what is known about intimate partner femicides, it is likely that the victim was subjected to violent or controlling behaviour by the perpetrator in the overwhelming majority of cases prior to the femicide (see below).

Prior abuse by the perpetrator, “especially severe abuse which took place within the previous month, and when abuse was increasingly frequent”, has been identified by the World Health Organisation as an indicator of high risk of being a victim of femicide.<sup>28</sup>

Detailed information on reports of prior abuse was not always available in media reports and where it was, the reports often also did not specify to whom the report was made. Where the victim was known to have reported the abuse, this was most commonly to police or family and friends. These findings raise important questions regarding appropriate responses in order to keep women safe; questions for police and statutory services, but also for families and friends of victims. Violence or other abuse had been reported to police in almost a quarter (202 cases, 23%) of the 888 intimate partner femicides, at the same time, current police super-complaints highlight the police failure to use preventative powers in violence against women cases. Indeed, at the time of writing this report, the Chief Constable of West Midlands police, an area with consistently high rates of femicides, argued that police should not have to be so involved in “policing relationships” but should be freed up to concentrate on crimes and

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/tracey-topliss-abusive-boyfriend-who-5366516> (accessed 14 November 2020)

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.itv.com/news/tyne-tees/2016-07-28/murderer-alan-bennett-had-history-of-domestic-violence/> (accessed 14 November 2020)

<sup>28</sup> [https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/77421/WHO\\_RHR\\_12.38\\_eng.pdf;jsessionid=4DD39FB77FD32FE6CC03FE98F3A27D79?sequence=1](https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/77421/WHO_RHR_12.38_eng.pdf;jsessionid=4DD39FB77FD32FE6CC03FE98F3A27D79?sequence=1) (accessed 14 November 2020).

emergencies.<sup>29</sup> This highlights that there is a long way to go before police are delivering on their role in the state’s obligation to respect, protect and fulfil women’s human rights.

Research has shown that agency staff can have limited understanding of risk assessments, that risk assessment tools can be used inconsistently and that staff can tend to have a narrow focus on physical violence, which is not always the best indicator of serious risk (Regan et al, 2007).<sup>30</sup> Indicators of high risk are not always interpreted as such and the threshold for risk assessing perpetrators of sexual and domestic violence (Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA)) is much higher, applying only to convicted offenders.

The development of the “eight stage homicide timeline” has also been important in identifying the stages that can result in intimate partner femicide (Monckton Smith, 2019).<sup>31</sup> The Femicide Census findings support the timeline and recommend that services responding to violence against women familiarise themselves with it and draw on it in their practice and training.

Research also suggests that social and family networks can know far more than agencies about the extent of abuse and violence, the details of the victim’s circumstances and the risk associated with the perpetrator’s behaviours (Regan et al, 2007).

Victim-blaming and excusing perpetrators can be evident, and coercive control is not necessarily identified as a form of abuse.<sup>32</sup> The Cut it Out campaign (see Context section) is one initiative seeking to address this through training hairdressers to spot signs of abuse and respond appropriately.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, Women’s Aid are running Ask Me, a scheme using locally trained champions based in the community.

History of abuse reported	Number of victims	%
Not known if reported <sup>34</sup>	221	36
Reported to police	202	33
Reported to friends/family only	117	19
Reported to unknown	47	8
Reported to statutory services	23	4
Reported to police abroad	1	<0.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>611</b>	<b>100</b>

Figure 6a: History of abuse reported, 2009-2018

Previous abuse was reported in the media as taking a number of forms, the most commonly occurring were emotional and psychological abuse, coercive control and physical violence.

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/david-thompson-free-police-from-handling-some-domestic-cases-suggests-chief-tl92d99c3> (accessed 14 November 2020).

<sup>30</sup> <https://cwasu.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/if.pdf>, pp 7-8 (accessed 14 November 2020).

<sup>31</sup> Monckton Smith, Jane (2019). ‘Intimate Partner Femicide: Using Foucauldian Analysis to Track an Eight-Stage Progression to Homicide’. *Violence Against Women*. Sage. 1-19. DOI: 10.1177/1077801219863876. See: <https://www.glos.ac.uk/news/pages/the-homicide-timeline.aspx> (accessed 14 November 2020); [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IPF\\_p3ZwLh8&feature=youtu.be&app=desktop](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IPF_p3ZwLh8&feature=youtu.be&app=desktop) (accessed 14 November 2020).

<sup>32</sup> <https://cwasu.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/if.pdf>, pp.7-8 (accessed 14 November 2020).

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.salon-services.com/blogs/article?cid=Cut-it-out-campaign-for-Hair-and-Beauty-Professionals&start=undefined&fdid=blog> (accessed 14 November 2020); <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-47386104> (accessed 14 November 2020). See also: [https://www.sutton.gov.uk/news/article/508/hairdressers\\_barbers\\_and\\_beauticians\\_are\\_set\\_to\\_get\\_training\\_to\\_spot\\_signs\\_of\\_domestic\\_abuse](https://www.sutton.gov.uk/news/article/508/hairdressers_barbers_and_beauticians_are_set_to_get_training_to_spot_signs_of_domestic_abuse) (accessed 14 November 2020).

<sup>34</sup> Histories of abuse were only recorded if explicitly referenced in media or official reports.

Since individual victims may have been reported as experiencing more than one type of abuse, the total number of instances exceeds the total number of victims (in fact, by more than double).

Nature of previous abuse	Number
Emotional and psychological	400
Coercive control	363
Physical	315
Stalking and harassment	137
Threats	131
Unknown	60
Financial	49
Sexual	32
Forced/arranged marriage <sup>35</sup>	5
"Honour"-based	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1493</b>

Figure 6b: Nature of previous abuse, 2009-2018

Further to the specific offence of "coercive control" being introduced in 2015 (see Context section), there are some convincing arguments to suggest

that there may be merit in seeing this form of abuse as an overarching concept, with other forms of abuse representing the means by which the perpetrator attempts to exert and sustain that control over the victim. However, instances of emotional and psychological abuse of the victim were the forms of abuse most commonly referred to in press reports.

These findings serve as an important reminder that many women live for years being subjected to serious abuse and violence prior to being killed by their partners, as well as the many cases of domestic violence and abuse that do not end in femicide (see Context section). They also support earlier research that suggests that physical violence is not necessarily always the best indicator of risk of femicide, and that an understanding of coercive control is key in identifying risk (Regan et al, 2007; Monckton Smith, 2019). In their study of domestic homicide, Regan et al introduce the concept of "jealous surveillance" which seems relevant to the kind of emotional and psychological abuse and coercive control experienced by women who were killed:

- "Jealous surveillance is a core aspect of 'coercive control', which characterises much IPV [Intimate Partner Violence] and encompasses violence, intimidation, isolation and controlling behaviour. Coercive control was evident in all the English cases.
- The English cases did not 'fit' the profile of IPH [Intimate Partner Homicide] cases, since there was little evidence in most of physical or sexual violence. However, a set of indicators were common across the cases: jealous surveillance and relationship conflict; controlling behaviour; actual or potential separation; perpetrator depression; histories of violence and potential suicide."<sup>36</sup>

<sup>35</sup> A forced marriage is one in which one or both parties did not give their full, free and informed consent and 'duress' is a factor. ('Duress' is measured on a subjective test). An arranged marriage is one where, however the parties may have been introduced, they both gave their full, free and informed consent. However, it is widely accepted that the distinction is often very unclear in practice.

<sup>36</sup> <https://cwasu.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/if.pdf>, p.6 (accessed 14 November 2020).



### Sam Shrewsbury on her daughter Jayden Parkinson:

"Jayden was born on 26 September 1996, she was my youngest of three children. From the day that she learnt to talk she never stopped questioning everything around her and could talk the hind leg off the proverbial donkey. She had a wonderful sense of humour and, over time, especially during her teens, we became more like good friends than mother and daughter.

Following the divorce between Jayden's father and myself, due to my circumstances at the time, Jayden went to live with her father in Lancashire. I used to have Jayden with me during the school holiday and weekends once a month, during the time that she would be at her father's we constantly kept in touch through telephone calls and each kept identical stuffed kangaroo toys which we would exchange on next visits.

From the time that she met her abusive murderer, I tried everything to stop her seeing him but as with all mental and physical abusers, he sometimes treated her nice. Throughout her time with him, I tried many ways and means to stop her seeing him even to the point of locking her in the house. However, as she was then sixteen years of age she was considered under the law to be old enough to do as she pleased. When she told the police what I had done I was threatened with being arrested; eventually three police officers were reprimanded for failing in their duty.

Jayden was also failed by the social services, even to the point where she was given a railway ticket by her social worker and put on a train to Sheffield to stay with her sister. However, she left at the next station to go back to her abuser. The social services officer supposedly dealing with her case came to my home to apologise for his failings but promptly resigned during the investigation into his actions, which denied us not only being able to hold him to account but also the right to pursue any legal action against the social services. Despite previously being found old enough to do as she pleased at the age of sixteen, following her death and the social services investigation, it was then TOO LATE, considered that in fact she should have been considered a child until she reached the age of eighteen. At the time of her death, she had finally recognised him for what he was and made the decision to end the relationship. Sadly, when she found that she was pregnant Jayden, being Jayden, made the decision to meet him to tell him that he was to be a father. On that day he took not only Jayden's life, he also took all of the love and hope that Jayden had, and the love and hope that Jayden's family had for her."

## 2.6. Context of violence

- “[The victim], aged 86, was stabbed 12 times – including six times to the head – in the brutal attack. [...] It was alleged the incident was sparked by a £1,000 debt.”<sup>37</sup>
- “[The victim] was struck over the head most likely with a bottle, she was also stabbed with a broken bottle in the neck, on her abdomen and on her wrists with a broken bottle. Although there is no evidence that [the victim] was actually sexually assaulted, the prosecution allege that this was a sexually motivated and sadistic attack.”<sup>38</sup>

In the table below, femicides have been presented according to the primary context in which men killed their victims, such as intimate partner violence, financial or material gain, sexually motivated killings and prostitution. There is of course no suggestion that such contexts in any way constitute a reason or justification for a perpetrator killing a woman: rather, they have been provided in order to help identify patterns in relation to circumstances, perceived motivation and relationships.

In many cases, more than one context is relevant – for example, femicides categorised as “intimate partner violence” may also have been committed within the context of financial gain, as in cases where the perpetrator expected to inherit an insurance pay-out or gain access to the victim’s savings. There is inevitably an element of judgement involved in identifying the primary context of the

femicide. From 2013 onwards, data on multi-contexts of violence were collected, some of which is presented below.

As discussed above, findings relating to the primary context in which perpetrators killed victims are unequivocal: overwhelmingly, perpetrators killed women who were or had previously been their spouses or intimate partners. 62% of all femicides were committed in the context of “intimate partner violence”: eight times as many (888) as the next context category of sons killing mothers<sup>39</sup> (111).<sup>40</sup> Fifteen of these femicides include so-called “mercy killings”: these include a 77-year-old woman who was stabbed to death by her husband, who was given a two-year suspended sentence,<sup>41</sup> and an 83-year-old victim who was pushed down the stairs and strangled by her husband who was also given a two-year suspended sentence.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/he-isnt-human-heartbroken-family-15661451> (accessed 14 November 2020).

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/finsbury-park-murder-iuliana-tudos-kasim-lewis-sex-attacker-a8356356.html> (accessed 14 November 2020).

<sup>39</sup> Son-mother femicide is the second highest category here, as “stranger” femicides are disaggregated according to the primary context of violence in each case.

<sup>40</sup> This figure includes cases where a step-son killed a step-mother.

<sup>41</sup> <https://www.coventrytelegraph.net/news/coventry-news/oap-spared-jail-over-mercy-9034223> (accessed 14 November 2020).

<sup>42</sup> <https://www.getreading.co.uk/news/local-news/earley-pensioner-who-killed-wife-11709615> (accessed 14 November 2020).

In 43 (3%) cases the context of violence was unknown, usually due to very little information being available. Unknown

cases were evenly distributed across the ten-year period.

Primary context of violence	No.	%
Domestic – intimate partner violence (including 15 so-called “mercy killings”)	888	62
Domestic – son-mother (includes one so-called “mercy killing”)	111	8
Sexually motivated	57	4
In the course of other crime – robbery or burglary	42	3
Unknown	42	3
Domestic – extended family	32	2
Dispute/grudge/revenge	30	2
Mental health	30	2
Financial/material gain	25	2
Intimate partner violence – collateral	25	2
Terrorism	25	2
Other	22	2
Prostitution/pornography	20	1
Domestic – brother/sister	13	1
Domestic – father/daughter	13	1
Rejected advance/sexual harassment	11	1
Revenge against victim's family member	11	1
Mistaken victim	7	<1
Resulting from an offence of arson	7	<1
Symbolic woman	4	<1
Assisted suicide/suicide pact	3	<1
Authority figure – unknown	3	<1
Authority figure – known	2	<1
In the course of other crime – other than robbery or burglary	2	<1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1425</b>	<b>100</b>

Figure 7a: Femicides by primary context of violence, 2009-2018

### Julie Warren Sykes on her daughter Samantha:

"Samantha was like a beautiful flower. People were drawn to her in the same way a butterfly would be drawn to the light.

She was described by some as a 'collector of people'. She helped many young people, including those who were looked-after children and care leavers. The young person who was murdered along with Samantha, was a victim of child sexual exploitation. Samantha tried to support her to get the right help. She was courageous and compassionate. She hated injustice of any kind and was never afraid to challenge this.

To carry on Samantha's legacy, our family established the Samantha Sykes Foundation Trust, a charity which supports looked-after children and care leavers to access further and higher education and supports victims of child sexual exploitation to access therapeutic interventions to help rebuild their often broken lives.

Samantha was 18 when her life was taken. She was my daughter."

The third most common context for femicides was "sexually motivated". These include the rape and murder of a 19-year-old pregnant woman two weeks before she was due to give birth; the perpetrator was found guilty of rape, murder, child destruction and arson, having subsequently set fire to the bed where the victim was found in order to destroy evidence.<sup>43</sup> Another perpetrator raped and killed a 50-year-old woman on their first meeting, leaving her in a pool of blood with evidence of extreme violence including internal injuries and bite marks.<sup>44</sup>

42 femicides were committed "in the course of other crime – robbery or burglary". 30 of these femicides were

perpetrated by strangers; in twelve cases the perpetrator knew the victim, including a case where an 88-year-old great grandmother, was stabbed, battered and her flat ransacked by a former neighbour's son whom she had known since he was a boy.<sup>45</sup>

Of the 32 cases of "extended family" femicides, eleven grandmothers were killed by grandsons and three by step-grandsons.

Thirty women were killed in the context of the perpetrator's perceived dispute with, or grudge against, the victim,<sup>46</sup> or his desire for revenge.<sup>47</sup> A further eleven victims were killed in an act of revenge against a family member, including cases where perpetrators

<sup>43</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-17128055> (accessed 14 November 2020).

<sup>44</sup> <https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/crime/man-found-guilty-of-manslaughter-and-rape-of-woman-at-wisbech-hotel-1-2254282> (accessed 14 November 2020).

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-12498425> (accessed 14 November 2020).

<sup>46</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-tees-25185055> (accessed 14 November 2020).

<sup>47</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-dorset-29880678> (accessed 14 November 2020).

killed several members of the same family.<sup>48</sup>

In many acts of terrorism, it may be thought the victims are randomly selected and combine male and female victims. The Femicide Census collates data on all women killed by men, hence the 25 female victims of terrorism are recorded here. Moreover, however, it is important to recognise that some terrorist attacks may have a more selective focus knowing who is likely to be disproportionately the target and this may be the case in the attack on the Manchester Arena.

The Ariana Grande concert was inevitably going to have a large proportion of young girls and women out enjoying themselves given the target audience for her music. There is also increasing evidence that those who commit mass killings, including in terrorist attacks, often exhibit a combination of attitudes and behaviours that are discriminatory and

prejudiced towards various segments of society they deem inferior, including women.<sup>49</sup>

The term “symbolic woman” refers to femicides where the perpetrator apparently perceives the victim as representing a particular woman, such as his partner<sup>50</sup> or former partner,<sup>51</sup> or women more generally. In five cases, perpetrators killed women they perceived to be “authority figures”, whether known<sup>52</sup> or unknown to them.<sup>53</sup>

The findings show that men kill women in a wide range of contexts. Men kill women with whom they have, or had, an intimate relationship; they kill family members including women who have raised and cared for them; they also kill women with whom they have no known relationship. Some perpetrators use women as sexual objects as part of the femicide, and kill women who say “no” or assert their boundaries in some way.

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<sup>48</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-northamptonshire-24985703>; <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/aug/26/michelle-pearson-mother-of-four-children-killed-in-2017-house-fire-dies-salford> (accessed 14 November 2020).

<sup>49</sup> Smith, J. (2019) *Home Grown: How domestic violence turns men into terrorists* (Riverrun, Hachette UK)

<sup>50</sup> <https://www.bexleytimes.co.uk/news/teenager-jailed-for-life-for-murder-of-toni-rudman-in-plumstead-1-798657> (accessed 14 November 2020); <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-north-east-wales-11758370> (accessed 14 November 2020).

<sup>51</sup> <https://www.essexlive.news/news/essex-news/lakeside-murder-full-story-how-2620714> (accessed 14 November 2020).

<sup>52</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/may/03/david-browning-jailed-killing-jillian-howell> (accessed 14 November 2020).

<sup>53</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-manchester-19637980> (accessed 14 November 2020).

## Joan Smith, journalist and author of *Home Grown: How Domestic Violence Turns Men into Terrorists*

"Many academics, police officers and members of the security services have an intense interest in terrorism. Yet few have ever remarked on one of its most significant features, which is that it is overwhelmingly carried out by men. A report published in December 2017 by Lord Anderson QC found that 93% of the 269 individuals responsible for terrorism-related offences in the UK between 1998 and 2015 were male<sup>54</sup>. So, of course, were the perpetrators of the Westminster Bridge, Manchester Arena, London Bridge and Finsbury Park terrorist attacks in 2017. The other striking fact is that all six of the men who were directly involved had histories of misogyny and abusing women.

Even though it is not usually recognised as such, terrorism is a form of male violence. In that sense, it is comparable to the mass shootings carried out by men in the US who do not appear to be ideologically motivated, except by their deep loathing of women. In recent years, it began to emerge that misogyny was implicated in horrific incidents such as the massacre at a school at Sandy Hook, Connecticut, in 2012, which was preceded by the perpetrator killing his mother. In one well-known study, over half the perpetrators of mass shootings turned out to have killed an intimate partner or family member<sup>55</sup>.

Misogyny is intimately involved in these crimes. The attack on the Manchester Arena was carried out by a young man with a history of bullying women, including an occasion when he punched a fellow-student in the head for wearing a short skirt. Three of the remaining five perpetrators of the 2017 attacks, including the right-wing extremist Darren Osborne, were so abusive that they had recently been left by their partners; we know that women are at high risk of violence following a separation, but we are now seeing a pattern of angry men reacting to a perceived rejection by killing and maiming total strangers. The connection has only recently been acknowledged, but if experts on terrorism were willing to listen, they could learn a great deal from women who already know a great deal about male violence – and misogyny."

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<sup>54</sup> Attacks in London and Manchester between March and June 2017, David Anderson QC, published by the Home Office, 2017

<sup>55</sup> Guns and Violence Against Women: America's Uniquely Lethal Domestic Violence Problem, Everytown for Gun Safety, 2014

### 2.6.1. Multi-contexts of violence (from 2013)

As mentioned above, in some femicides more than one context is relevant – for example, femicides categorised as “intimate partner violence” may also have been committed within the context of financial gain, or where femicides committed in the course of a robbery or burglary are also sexually motivated. From 2013 onwards, data on multi-contexts of violence were collected, and data on some of the most notable findings are presented in the table below. The percentage given is of the total cases under each “Primary context of violence” category from 2013-2018. A consideration of multi-contexts of

violence reveals the striking number of femicides committed by sons and grandsons where mental health is the secondary context of the violence. From 2013-18, 40% of son-mother and 36% of grandson-grandmother (or step-grandmother) femicides involved the mental health of the perpetrator as a secondary context. Such a high prevalence of mental health issues in these cases raises questions regarding the position of mothers and grandmothers who may be living with and/or in caring roles for sons or grandsons with mental health issues, and levels of available support.

Primary context of violence	No. of cases 2013-18	Secondary context of violence	No. of cases 2013-18	%
Domestic (intimate partner violence)	506	Mental health	29	6
Domestic (son-mother)	65	Mental health	26	40
Domestic (extended family)	23	Mental health	5	22
Domestic (extended family) – where victims are grandmothers / step-grandmothers of perpetrator	11	Mental health	4	36
Sexually motivated	34	Financial gain	3	8
In the course of other crime – robbery or burglary	23	Sexually motivated	2	9

Figure 7b: Multi-contexts of femicides 2013-2018

It is the case that in many instances, a young person who does not reach a social services vulnerable adult standard is left with no support. Similarly, ex-offenders and individuals released from mental health institutions rarely are provided with appropriate accommodation or support workers. In such situations, mothers are often expected, or feel obliged, to step in and provide

accommodation and support despite a lack of safety or appropriate skills and support to manage such an individual. The findings here are significant and reflect findings of other organisations such as World Health Organisation and Standing Together’s recent review of the findings of domestic homicide reviews that mental health is a significant risk factor for both perpetrators and victims.

## 2.7. Prostitution and the sex industry

■ “[A woman involved in prostitution] was murdered and dumped in a locked alleyway in Fairfield. [...] [The judge] said [the perpetrator] washed [the victim’s] body in the bath and tried to get rid of a considerable amount of blood.”<sup>56</sup>

Women exploited in prostitution and the sex industry face intrinsic male violence and prostitution is associated with premature mortality. Research from the United States found that “[c]lients perpetrate a large proportion of the lethal and nonlethal violence experienced by prostitutes” and that “[w]omen engaged in prostitution face the most dangerous occupational environment in the United States.” (Potterat et al, 2004)<sup>57</sup> The Femicide Census found that over the ten-year period, 32 victims were known to have been involved in prostitution or the wider sex industry, and in 20 cases this formed the primary context of the femicide. In eighteen cases the perpetrator was a punter; in two other cases he had come into contact with the woman in other ways related to prostitution. As with several other categories, this is likely to be an undercount as such information was not always known about a victim. It is not known whether any of the victims from 2009 to 2018 whose cases remain unsolved were involved in prostitution and/or killed in this context; however, it is known that murders of prostituted

women often go unsolved for many years.<sup>58</sup>

The relationship was recorded as ‘Prostituted woman / escort’ where a woman involved in prostitution was killed by a punter, or had otherwise come into contact with the perpetrator through her involvement in prostitution. Six women known to be involved in prostitution or other aspects of the sex industry were killed by intimate partners or spouses (this could mean the partner was also a pimp – a factor often little understood by domestic violence and social services) so were recorded in those categories; in seven further cases there was no known relationship to the perpetrator.

The number of victims known to have been involved in the sex industry each year remained fairly consistent across the ten-year period, ranging from one in 2017 to six in 2014. There appears to be a general upward trend in numbers from 2014 onwards, although 2017 appears to be an anomaly. Three victims were killed by a serial killer who targeted women in prostitution from 2009 to 2010.<sup>59</sup>

Women were most frequently reported as having been involved in prostitution or “escorting”, although one was

<sup>56</sup> <https://www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/news/liverpool-news/maxine-showers-murder-michael-williams-11140574> (accessed 14 November 2020).

<sup>57</sup> <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/15051587/> (accessed 14 November 2020).

<sup>58</sup> <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/the-prostitute-murder-mysteries-1987042.html> (accessed 14 November 2020); <https://www.gazettelive.co.uk/news/teesside-news/murders-three-young-women-who-14507715> (accessed 14 November 2020); <https://www.gazettelive.co.uk/news/teesside-news/rachel-wilson-murder-man-still-14396065> (accessed 14 November 2020).

<sup>59</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-bradford-west-yorkshire-11541168> (accessed 14 November 2020).



reported as involved in “glamour” modelling, two in webcamming, one as owning a brothel and another was reported to be a dominatrix.

The context of prostitution featured in three cases where perpetrators’ defence teams argued a “rough sex” defence (see Criminal Justice Outcomes section, below) and there was a possibility of a context of prostitution in two further cases.

**Victims involved in sex industry**

Primary context of violence	Number
Prostitution/pornography	20
Intimate partner violence	6
Financial gain	1
In the course of other crime – robbery or burglary	1
Other	1
Rejected advances/sexual harassment	1
Sexually motivated	1
Unknown	1
<b>Total victims</b>	<b>32</b>

Figure 8a: Victims involved in prostitution/sex industry as primary context of violence, 2009-2018

The findings of the Femicide Census regarding killings of prostituted women should be understood in the wider context of research into the endemic violence and other systematic disadvantages they experience. These include homelessness or precarious housing situations, problematic substance use, barriers to support and a policy framework that routinely fails to criminalise the men who seek to exploit them, whether as pimps or punters.

Indeed, many women killed while involved in prostitution would not attract a domestic homicide review as their death is seen as a hazard of the job and is often at the immediate hands of a buyer rather than the traditional idea of an “intimate partner”.

Year	Victims involved in sex industry
2009	2
2010	2
2011	4
2012	2
2013	2
2014	6
2015	5
2016	3
2017	1
2018	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>

Figure 8b: Victims involved in prostitution and sex industry, 2009-2018

As prostitution is commonly enveloped by a haze of other factors related to survival in prostitution – problematic substance use, homelessness, sofa surfing, offending and general poor health and repeated violence – the cause of death is often difficult to establish at all or to ascribe to the partner/pimp or buyer. This attitude by agencies means there is often much less incentive to robustly investigate a killing of a woman involved, all of which results in both an undercounting of the killings of women involved in prostitution and impunity for perpetrators of such killings.

**Fiona Broadfoot, Founder and CEO of Build a Girl on her cousin Maureen:**

“Violence and abuse are endemic in the sex trade. I know this, I am a sex trade survivor.

I spent eleven years shut down and disassociated from self, enduring rapes and beatings framed as ‘occupational hazards’. There was not a day went by that I wouldn’t think perhaps I will be murdered today.

Many of the girls and women I was in street prostitution with disappeared without trace. No one missed them, no one looked for them, estranged from family and friends and dehumanised by the system of prostitution.

It was after the murder of my eighteen-year-old cousin that the bubble I had created burst and brought me back to reality. I exited the life and started to support other women to exit.

My cousin Maureen had been groomed/coerced into the sex trade at the tender age of fourteen. Soon after she started to use heroin and by the time she was eighteen she had a chronic heroin and crack cocaine addiction and was entrenched in the sex trade, in street prostitution. Maureen also ‘worked’ the streets to feed her so called boyfriend’s (pimp) habit.

Her battered and tortured body was found by her neighbour just a few weeks before her nineteenth birthday. Her pimp was in prison at the time so could not have been the culprit.

It was not long before they arrested the man responsible. His name is George Naylor. He had previously murdered a young woman called Deborah Kershaw. Deborah was 22 at the time of the murder and she was also in the sex trade, in street prostitution. Her body was found in the footwell of Naylor’s car when police stopped him for a driving offence. He was charged with Deborah’s manslaughter. He also had previous for the rape of an 88-year-old neighbour in the late 70s. He most certainly had a history of serious sexual offences.

His previous convictions were not read out during the trial for Maureen’s murder. He was depicted as an upstanding member of society. Maureen was referred to as prostitute Stepan (Stepan is her surname) throughout the case.

RIP dear Maureen xxxx”

## 2.8. Post-separation killings

- “[The perpetrator] stabbed his 29-year-old wife more than 20 times in her face, neck and upper back ‘while their two young children were in the house’ on the night of 24 September, Humberside Police said. [...] ‘She was looking to escape a deeply maligned marriage,’ [the judge] said. ‘You did not want her to end your marriage, so you ended her life with ferocious brutality.’”<sup>60</sup>
- “Once [the perpetrator] realised that their marriage was over, he exerted his control over [the victim] for a final time by killing her.”<sup>61</sup>

Of the 888 women killed by partners or former partners, at least 378 (43%) were known to have separated, or taken steps to separate, from the perpetrator. As with a number of other findings this is very likely to be an undercount, as it is not always possible to ascertain whether a woman had taken steps to leave or

told her partner she was leaving and the ability to set the narrative is often given to the perpetrator in trial proceedings, which is then reflected in media reports. The proportion of victims who were known to have separated or taken steps to separate was very consistent across the ten-year period.

Post-separation femicides	Number	%
Victims who had separated from perpetrators (including victims who had taken steps to separate)	378 (71)	43
Total victims killed by partner or former partner	888	100

Figure 9a: Post-separation femicides, 2009-2018

In some cases, a separation event was identified; however, separation is often a process rather than a single event and typically perpetrators refuse to accept their partners’ decision to end the relationship. Of the cases where women had separated, or made attempts to separate, the vast majority (338, 89%) were killed within the first year and 142 (38%) were killed within the first month

of separation, or when the victim first took steps to separate even if she had not actually left the perpetrator. In some cases, the perpetrator appears to have killed the victim when he discovered that she was planning to leave him. Where the length of time since separation was known, almost all of the women were killed within the first year of separation. A further 11% of

<sup>60</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-humber-42746367> (accessed 14 November 2020).  
<sup>61</sup> <https://www.kentonline.co.uk/ashford/news/damning-report-highlights-missed-opportunities-20256/> (accessed 14 November 2020).

femicides were committed after a year or more of separation. In 16% of cases, information on the length of time between separation and femicide was not available in media reports.

The findings relating to length of time from separation were very consistent across the ten-year period, with no significant departure from the main pattern (see chart below).

Length of time: separation to femicide	Number	% (where length of time was known)
< 1 month (includes "taken steps to separate")	142	38
Length of time unknown	61	16
1-3 months	53	14
3-6 months	43	11
6-12 months	39	10
12-36 months	22	6
36 months/3 years+	18	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>378</b>	<b>100</b>

Figure 9b: The length of time between separation and killing for the 378 women killed following separation from their ex-partner, 2009-2018

These findings support extant research and sectoral knowledge regarding the particularly high risk of escalation associated with victims' attempts to separate from abusive or violent partners. Leaving an abusive partner has been identified by the World Health Organisation as a risk factor for being a victim of femicide.<sup>62</sup> Jane Monckton Smith identifies separation as being a common Stage 4 "trigger" of the eight-stage homicide timeline.<sup>63</sup> The initial

period of separation – when the victim takes steps to separate, or within the first month of separation – stands out as a particularly high-risk time. Such findings clearly provide evidence of the urgent need for wider community understanding of the risk of escalation, as well as the need for appropriate support and agency management of separation, particularly at the initial stage and over the first year thereafter.

<sup>62</sup> [https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/77421/WHO\\_RHR\\_12.38\\_eng.pdf;jsessionid=4DD39FB77FD32FE6CC03FE98F3A27D79?sequence=1](https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/77421/WHO_RHR_12.38_eng.pdf;jsessionid=4DD39FB77FD32FE6CC03FE98F3A27D79?sequence=1) (accessed 15 November 2020).  
<sup>63</sup> Monckton Smith, Jane (2019). 'Intimate Partner Femicide: Using Foucauldian Analysis to Track an Eight-Stage Progression to Homicide'. *Violence Against Women*. Sage. 1-19. DOI: 10.1177/1077801219863876.

Length of time: separation – femicide

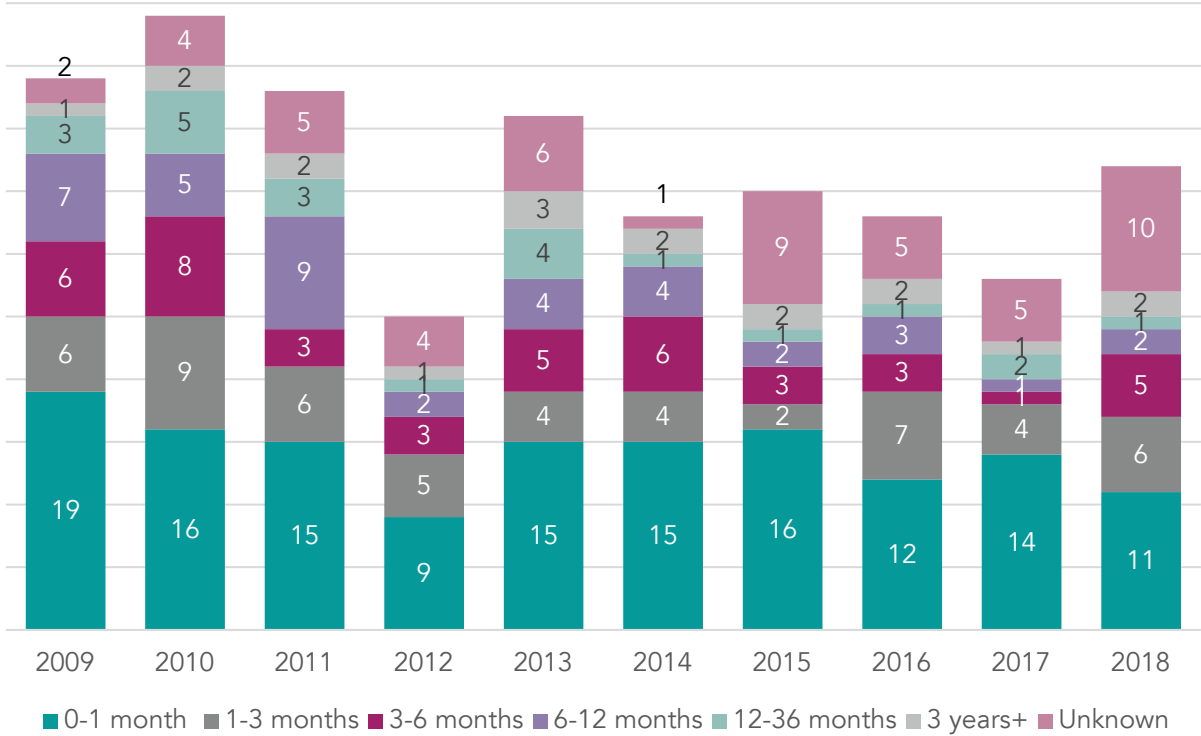


Figure 9c: The length of time between separation and killing for the 378 women killed following separation from their ex-partner, 2009-2018

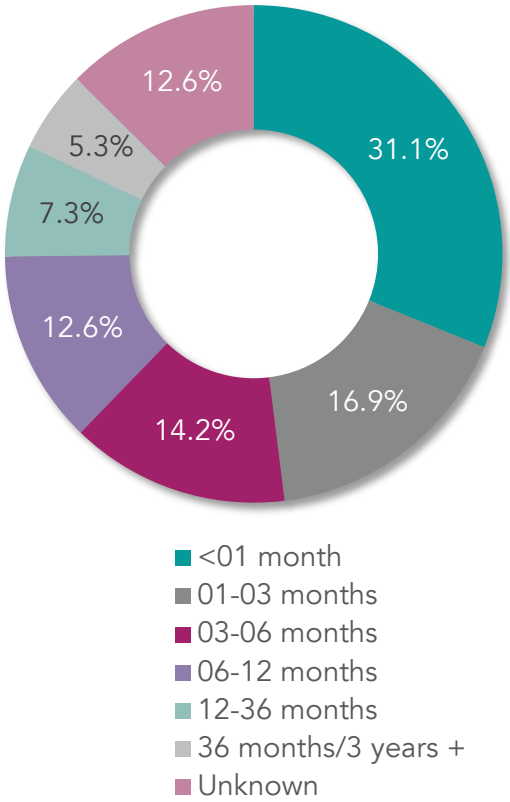


Figure 9d: The length of time between separation and killing for the 378 women killed following separation from their ex-partner, 2009-2018

**Rachel Williams, survivor, campaigner and author of My Journey:**

“Friday 19 August was a sunny day. It was the first morning I had woken up in my own home for roughly six weeks. My alarm clock went off at 6.45am, as I was due in work. I was covering a colleague’s day off as it wasn’t my usual day to work. I stepped out of bed and lifted the metal bar off which was reinforcing my bedroom door. This was my new panic room! I had a panic room installed in my bedroom. This was put in place by the police as a measure of protection in case my perpetrator of abuse, who was now out on bail, came to the family home. This wasn’t necessary though.

Later that afternoon, just as I finished a lady’s hair, my perpetrator, my estranged husband, burst into the salon armed with a sawn-off shot gun. There was a battle in the salon, he did shoot me, and battered me after he shot me. I am here. I am one of the lucky ones so to speak. Sadly my son wasn’t. Jack, my sixteen-year-old son, took his life weeks after the shooting. This was all because of one man’s actions.

There is so much more to my story. The eighteen years of abuse, the failings by all services and the road to recovery. I am no longer a victim but very much a victor. I am an advocate for those women who have been affected by male violence. I have five successful campaigns with almost one million signatures combined. I have written a book called *The Devil at Home*. I run an online advocacy Facebook page called *Don’t Look Back* and I continue to hold those in power to account.

The army of voices is getting louder. We will not stay silent to let those perpetrators stay invisible.”

## 2.9. Location of incident

- "The jury was told that [the perpetrator] was extremely jealous of his wife and would monitor her movements. The attack took place in the kitchen of the family home after they had returned from being out shopping. [...] Jailing him, [the judge] said: 'The ferocity of your attack was shocking. [...] It was a terrifying end to her life to be attacked in her own home by the man whom she loved, honoured and obeyed.'"<sup>64</sup>
- "[The perpetrator] became prone to angry outbursts and was violent towards [the victim], culminating in the fatal attack at the flat they shared in Whitechapel, east London, last March. [The perpetrator] was asleep on a sofa in his mother's blood-spattered bedroom when her body was discovered by her grandson."<sup>65</sup>
- "An obsessed man who murdered his housemate in a 'sustained and brutal' hammer attack has been jailed for life. [The perpetrator] battered [the victim] at their shared home in south London after he spent the night taking cocaine and watching sadomasochistic porn. The Old Bailey heard he was infatuated, sending cards calling her the 'most beautiful creature from the universe' and filming her in the shower."<sup>66</sup>
- "A man who stabbed a woman to death as she walked her dog because he was feeling 'very angry' has been jailed for life."<sup>67</sup>

Consistently across the ten-year period, the place where a victim was most likely to be killed was in her own home; most frequently, the home she shared with the perpetrator. According to the WHO, having a separate domicile is a protective factor for potential victims of femicide.<sup>68</sup> However, the Femicide Census findings suggest that the risk for women is still high even when living

apart from the perpetrator (also see below, for post-separation findings). Over seven times as many women were likely to be killed at home than in the next most common location, an outdoor/public area. These cases also include a small number of victims who were in sheltered accommodation/ supported housing; in six cases the victim shared this accommodation

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<sup>64</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-glasgow-west-25637757> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>65</sup> <https://www.asianimage.co.uk/news/8841927.brain-damaged-son-locked-up-after-killing-mother/> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>66</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-43302613> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>67</sup> <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/8488026.stm> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>68</sup> [https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/77421/WHO\\_RHR\\_12.38\\_eng.pdf;jsessionid=4DD39FB77FD32FE6CC03FE98F3A27D79?sequence=1](https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/77421/WHO_RHR_12.38_eng.pdf;jsessionid=4DD39FB77FD32FE6CC03FE98F3A27D79?sequence=1) (accessed 15 November 2020).

with the perpetrator.<sup>69</sup> Twelve victims were killed in care homes. There was little variation over the ten-year period, although in 2017, the number of victims killed in a public area was significantly higher than in other years, due to the Manchester bombing and London Bridge terror attacks, in which 25 women and girls over fourteen were killed.

When the victim had separated from the perpetrator, the locations of the femicide followed a slightly different pattern, with victim’s home being the

most common location and victim/perpetrator’s home the second. Of the 378 women who had separated, or taken steps to separate, from the perpetrator, 134 were killed in their own home and 121 in the home they continued to share with the perpetrator. A further 38 victims were killed in the perpetrator’s home, 26 in an outdoor area and the remaining victims were killed in other locations including the victim’s garden (12), victim’s workplace (9), perpetrator’s vehicle (4) and street/area outside the victim’s workplace (5).

Location	No. of women	%
Victim/perpetrator’s home (including sheltered/supported housing)	554 (6)	39
Victim’s home (including sheltered/supported housing)	443 (5)	31
Outdoors: public area	118	8
Perpetrator’s home (including sheltered/supported housing)	116 (1)	8
Unknown	38	3
Garden/street outside victim’s home	26	2
House: no further information	21	2
Victim’s workplace	21	1
Other	16	1
Perpetrator’s vehicle	13	1
Care home	12	1
Relative’s home	10	1
Other victim’s home	9	1
Garden/street outside victim/perpetrator’s home	8	<1
Street/area outside victim’s workplace	7	<1
Friend’s home	6	<1
Caravan/holiday home	3	<1
Perpetrator’s workplace	3	<1
Victim’s vehicle	3	<1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1425</b>	<b>100</b>

Figure 10: Location of incidents of femicide, 2009-2018

<sup>69</sup> The Public Interest Law Centre is pursuing a legal challenge over the right for survivors of male violence to be accommodated in appropriate (which may mean single-sex) accommodation.



The fact that 70% of all victims were killed in their own home highlights the fact that the notion of the home as a safe haven and place of emotional sustenance – “where the heart is” – is a bitter lie for many women. Feminist scholarship has, over decades, analysed the unequal relationships between women and men who reside together in intimate or family relationships, in terms of domestic labour, childcare and other domestic arrangements, as well as violence. The home is where notions and practices of gender roles are forged and practised, where women are expected to serve and service men, and where children learn the social roles of masculinity and femininity.

The findings of the Femicide Census need to be understood in this wider context of the home as a key site of patriarchal sex inequality, the implications of which are extensive and profound. In terms of women’s safety, access to refuge spaces, safe

accommodation and housing are clearly crucial. For women in care homes, sheltered/supported housing and other residential settings, single-sex spaces should be more widely available and males in particular should be subject to risk assessment. However, the findings raise searching questions regarding our social norms and structures and this is touched on further in the Context chapter.

Outdoors/public space is the next most common location where men kill women. Femicides committed in public areas reflect women’s lack of safety and freedom in the public domain more broadly.<sup>70</sup> Again, the implications of this are extensive and profound. They highlight broader questions of men’s harassment of women in the public domain, male domination of both the design and use of public space,<sup>71</sup> and (most importantly) issues of safe female access to and, male behaviour in, that space.

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<sup>70</sup> By way of example, financial savings made on university campuses and across local authorities include the reduction of provision or operation of street lighting – while street lights do not cause violence against women, they are key in perceptions of safety for victims and impunity for perpetrators and in impact on women’s likelihood to enter such unlit public spaces, with extremely constricting impact on women’s public participation (especially given it is dark in the UK between 4pm and 8am during winter months).

<sup>71</sup> A Spanish example shows many differences in town planning led by women: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/world-50269778> (accessed 18 November 2020).

## 2.10. Method of killing

■ “A man used a sledgehammer and knife to murder his wife after drugging the couple's children so they would not witness the attack, a court heard.”<sup>72</sup>

The findings, in terms of the number of methods of killing used in each femicide, were again very consistent, with very little variation over the ten-year period. Consistently, sharp instrument was by far the most frequently used method of killing across the ten-year period: almost half (47%)

the perpetrators killed women in this way (sometimes also using additional forms of violence). Strangulation was the next most frequent method of killing (20%), killing using a blunt instrument followed as the next most common method (16%) and then kicking/hitting/stamping (15%).

### Methods of killing

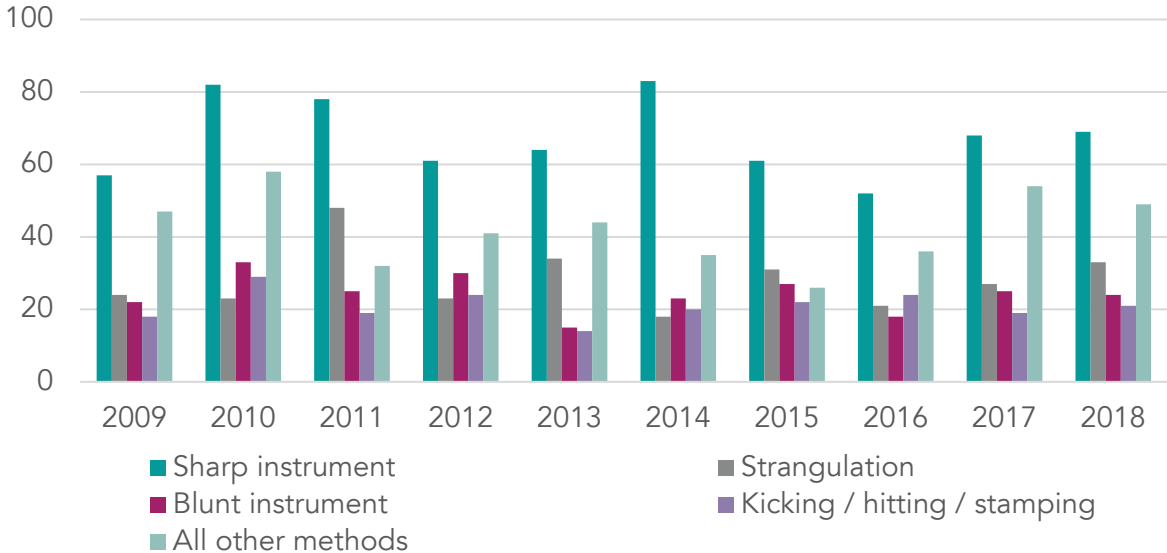


Figure 11a: Methods of killing in femicides by year, 2009 – 2018

The findings illustrate that men kill women with whatever means they have to hand. While some perpetrators seek out weapons in advance of killing the woman, many use kitchen knives, strangle their victims or hit/kick/stamp their victims to death. It is significant that while “knife crime” is most frequently associated with youth and gang crime, it is by far the most frequent method of

killing in femicides too. This clearly has implications for knife-crime strategies: the Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) referred to intimate partner femicides in their knife crime strategy following interventions from the Femicide Census. It also raises questions for criminal justice charges and outcomes: if carrying a knife in the public domain is deemed to be indicative of

<sup>72</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-hampshire-11577144> (accessed 15 November 2020).

“intent”, should this not extend to the private domain, when a perpetrator carries a knife from one room to another?<sup>73</sup>

Indeed, it is the case that the “use of a weapon” in violent offences in the public space may aggravate the offence and attract a more severe sentence. A “weapon”, in such public space offences, is defined as an object designed for harm or an object carried and/or adapted to cause harm. But, of course, in serious assaults and murders in the domestic sphere anything and everything could be used as a weapon,<sup>74</sup> yet no such similar concept applies in domestic settings. This means that the aggravating nature of “use of a weapon” is not brought to bear on the majority of assaults and killings of women by men – which occur precisely in a home setting.

Strangulation is the second most frequent method men use to kill women. This is of particular relevance given current efforts to make non-fatal strangulation a specific crime as it is in certain other jurisdictions. Strangulation is recognised as a risk indicator in risk assessments. The actual number of incidences of strangulation may be a slight undercount as, in a small number of cases, reports did not specify whether a victim had been strangled or asphyxiated.

Findings in relation to occurrence of all the methods of killing used by men to kill women are presented in the table above. In some cases, men used more than one

method, so the total number of methods are greater than the number of victims. Where the method was unknown, this was due to lack of available information on the case.

The percentages in the charts below differ, as the percentages in the table related to the number of femicides whereas the percentages in the pie chart relate to the number of incidents. That is to say, an incident is the event or occasion in which a man used fatal violence but this could have resulted in one or more femicides.

### Methods of killing

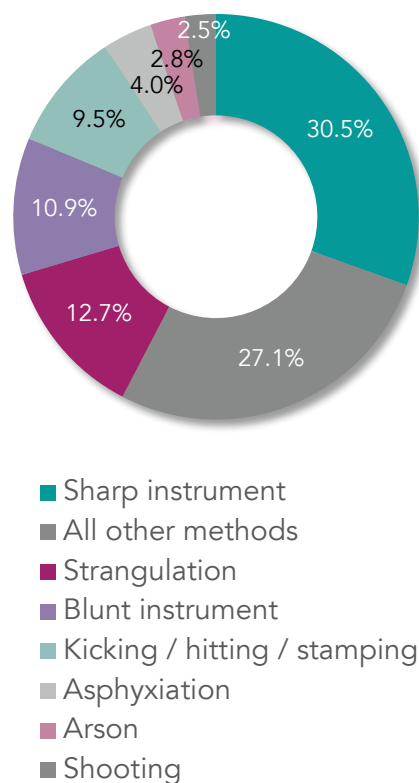


Figure 11b: Methods of killing in incidences of femicide, 2009-2018

<sup>73</sup> Julie Devey, the mother of one of the victims in this report, highlights this as in her daughter’s case, the boyfriend took the knife and moved through the house with it to attack and kill her daughter.

<sup>74</sup> Within the cases in this report, for instance, the killing may have involved the use of a cooking pan, an iron, an ironing board, a pillow or cushion, the flex or cable from household electrical items, a scarf, an ashtray or mantelshelf ornament, or a bottle, to name but a few.

Method of killing	Number of incidences	% of femicide cases
Sharp instrument	675	47
Strangulation	282	20
Blunt instrument	242	16
Kicking/hitting/stamping	210	15
Asphyxiation	88	6
Arson – setting fire and causing death by fire	61	4
Shooting, including:	55	4
• 52 firearm		
• 3 crossbow		
Unknown	35	3
Other – head injuries	32	2
Causing to fall against a hard surface/ pushed or thrown from height	21	1
Explosion	20	1
Strangulation/asphyxiation (unspecified)	17	1
Motor vehicle (includes speedboat)	16 (1)	1
Drowning	14	1
Poisoning – alcohol/drugs	11	1
Secondary cause resulting from assault	9	1
Other	6	<1
Burning/scalding	4	<1
Neglect	4	<1
Other poisoning (inc. carbon monoxide poisoning)	3	<1
Acid/ammonia/corrosive liquid	2	<1
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,214</b>	<b>N/A</b>

Figure 11c: Methods of killing in incidences and numbers of femicides, 2009-2018

The findings, in terms of the number of methods of killing used in each femicide, were again very consistent, with very little variation over the ten-year period. The actual number of incidences of strangulation may be a slight undercount as, in a small number of cases, reports did not specify whether a victim had been strangled or asphyxiated.

Almost three quarters (1,041) of the femicides were committed using a single method of killing, 18% (258) using two methods and 4% (49) using three methods. In 30 cases the number of methods of killing was not known; in thirteen cases the body was never found. In five cases, perpetrators used four methods of killing and in two cases five or more methods.

Number of methods of killing

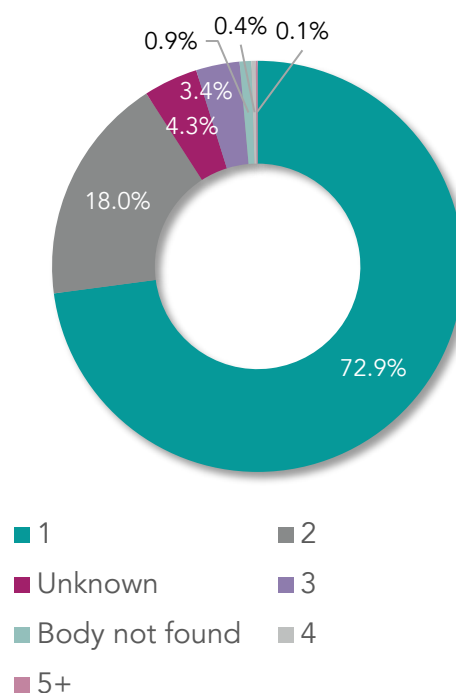


Figure 12: Number of methods of killing used in femicides, 2009-2018

### 2.10.1. Overkilling

- “[The perpetrator] knifed [the victim], his partner of 37 years, more than 120 times during the frenzied attack at their north London home.”<sup>75</sup>
- “Norwich Crown Court heard that [the victim] suffered nineteen separate injuries with her whole face caved in by a centimetre, her jaw broken, fractures to both eye sockets, her nasal bone protruding from her face and evidence of strangulation [...] During the two-week trial [the pathologist] described [the victim’s] skull as ‘almost a mosaic of small fractured pieces of bone’.”<sup>76</sup>

“Overkilling” is defined as the use of excessive, gratuitous violence beyond that necessary to cause the victim’s

death.<sup>77</sup> Cases involving more than one method of killing were generally recorded as overkilling.<sup>78</sup> In addition,

<sup>75</sup> <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2129635/Insane-husband-stabbed-wife-120-TIMES-frenzied-killing-walks-free-court-hears-recovered.html> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>76</sup> <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/uk-world-news/one-worst-cases-ever-seen-10648232> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>77</sup> Mitchell, C., Anglin, A., (2009) *Intimate Partner Violence: A Health-Based Perspective*, p. 325, Oxford University Press.

<sup>78</sup> One exception was where the perpetrator first drugged the victim before asphyxiating her, as this seemed to indicate intent to lessen rather than increase her suffering.

many cases involving one method such as sharp instrument, blunt instrument or kicking/hitting/stamping also demonstrated excessive, gratuitous levels of violence.

The term “overkilling” has been used in order to capture the extreme, gratuitous violence to which perpetrators frequently subject their victims. The use of this term is not intended in any way to minimise the level of pain, terror and suffering experienced by victims of femicide where “overkilling” has not been recorded. For instance, the degree of force and length of time involved in strangling or smothering someone to death should not be underestimated.

There was evidence of overkilling in over half the femicides across the ten-year period. Overkilling was identified in 744 (55%) femicides. This proportion remained fairly consistent at 50-55% in most years; however, there was a difference of 19% between the lowest

(42%, 2013) and the highest (61%, 2015). The actual numbers are likely to be even higher, as in 23% of cases (321), due to lack of information, it was not possible to determine whether or not the femicide involved overkilling.

**Evidence of overkilling**

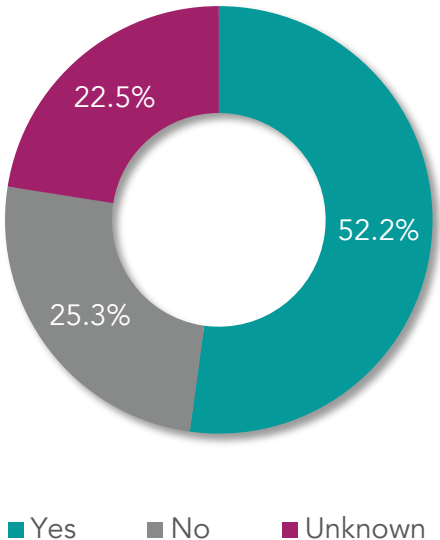


Figure 13: Evidence of overkilling in femicides, 2009-2018

**2.10.2. Evidence of sexual violence**

■ “A serial sex offender was today sentenced to life in prison after he admitted kidnapping, raping and murdering a teenager whom he ensnared using a fake profile on Facebook.”<sup>79</sup>

The third most common context for femicides was sexual violence. There was evidence of sexual violence in 83 cases (6%), with the number of such cases ranging from three to twelve per year (see line chart below). As with some other findings, this is likely to be an undercount as cases were only recorded in this category if it was specified in

media reports that charges of sexual violence were made against the perpetrator specifically in relation to the femicide. As the line chart shows below, there appears to be an upward trend in relation to these figures, but there is variation and a lack of information particularly in relation to earlier years which could influence the data.

<sup>79</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2010/mar/08/peter-chapman-facebook-ashleigh-hall> (accessed 15 November 2020).

There are several factors that may contribute to a lack of identification of evidence of sexual violence in femicide cases. In terms of charges being pressed, police officers and pathologists may lack training to spot indicators of sexual violence. Prosecutors may only proceed with the most serious charge. In addition, evidence like semen on the woman's body may not be identified as possible indications of sexual violence in intimate partner femicides or prostitution as sexual activity may be assumed by investigators to be consensual. Details of sexual violence may not always be reported in the press, and the Femicide Census is reliant on publicly available information. Deference to the memory of victims and their families may contribute to a lack of reporting on sexual violence in a femicide, as may the established practice in DHRs of focusing on the opportunities for intervention rather than what was perpetrated upon the woman in the fatal assault.

It is instructive to look to international human rights law for some of their interpretations of rape. For instance, in the Akayesu case before the International Criminal Tribunal of Rwanda in 2001,<sup>80</sup> the court held that the elements of rape were "a physical invasion of a sexual nature, committed on a person under circumstances which

are coercive." This definition could be applied to sexual relations in a coercively controlling relationship with domestic violence.

Almost half of the 83 victims found to have been subjected to sexual violence were in the younger age bands: 21 were aged 18-25 and 20 were aged 26-35.

As stated earlier in this chapter, 57 of all femicides were identified as "sexually motivated". However, sexual violence was also evident in cases where other contexts of violence had been identified as primary, including: intimate partner violence, prostitution/pornography, femicide committed in the course of a burglary or robbery, brother-sister femicide, extended family femicide, son-mother femicide, dispute/grudge/vengeance, financial gain, intimate partner violence collateral, and perpetrator's mental illness diagnosis.

Men's sexual violence towards women in acts of femicide, as with all acts of men's sexual violence against women, should be understood in the context of the routine sexual objectification and sexual harassment of women within the culture, and the myriad ways in which this sexual objectification and harassment is used to establish and naturalise relations of male dominance and female subordination.

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<sup>80</sup> Prosecutor v. Jean-Paul Akayesu ICTR-96-4-A, 1 June 2001. It should be noted that the ICT, unusually, benefitted from a gender justice caucus of women's rights lawyers and thus arrived at one of the most inclusive and comprehensive definitions of rape ever elaborated.

## Evidence of sexual violence in femicides

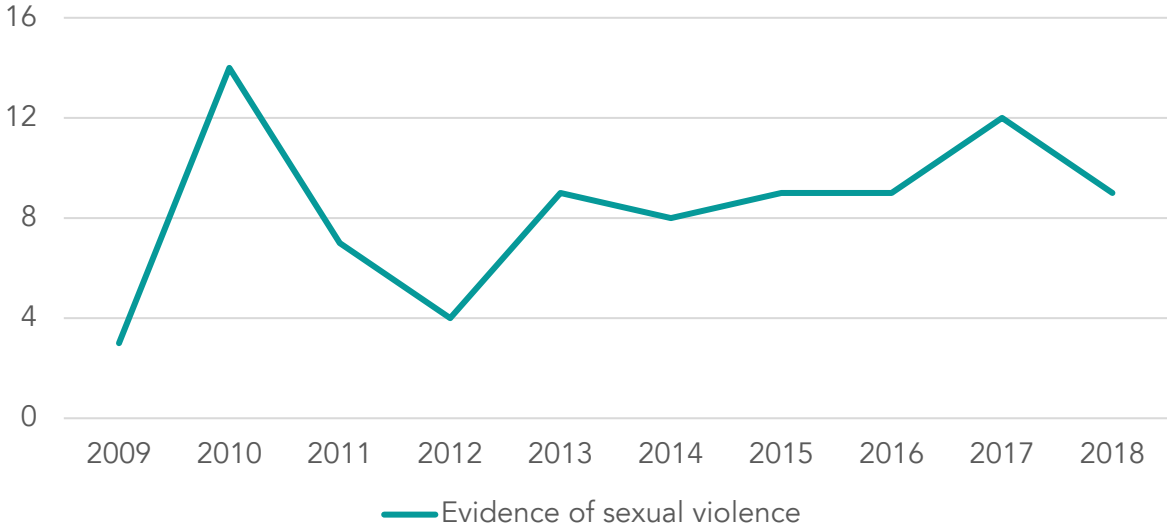


Figure 14: Evidence of sexual violence in femicides, 2009-2018

### Jodie Woodward, co-chair, Rape Crisis England and Wales:

“Andrea Dworkin once said, ‘We are very close to death. All women are. And we are very close to rape and we are very close to beating.’ It seems obvious that rape and femicide – two extreme expressions of male violence and domination – are intrinsically linked. Yet, sexual violence is so often left out of the conversation around femicide.

‘I thought he was going to kill me.’ These words are frequently spoken by women who access Rape Crisis Centres. It is critical that we bear witness to all forms of male violence perpetrated against women. In the public arena, sexual violence is often seen as a ‘grey area’. We hear that there are two sides to every story. Privately, it is often the last form of violence a woman will disclose. In law, rape is effectively decriminalised with a current conviction rate in reported rapes of under 2%, not to mention the vast numbers of unreported rapes. Last year, Rape Crisis Centres in England and Wales supported over 70,000 women and girls, and saw waiting lists reach 6000.

It has long been known that women are more likely to be killed by a man they know. Similarly, women are more likely to be raped by a man they know, but this is not the only context in which women are raped and murdered by men.

The femicide census importantly, and yet tragically, shines a light on the intersection of sexual violence and femicide, with ‘sexually motivated’ being the third highest context in which femicides were perpetrated. This figure does not include the many women named in the census, who were in intimate relationships with men, and whose experience of sexual violence will never be told. It doesn’t include the many women driven to suicide, unable to cope with the aftermath of rape.”



### 2.10.3. Violation of body

- "Evidence suggests he then used a plastic bag to kill [the victim] before pouring petrol over her body in an upstairs bedroom and setting her alight in an attempt to conceal the crime."<sup>81</sup>
- "[The perpetrator] was found guilty earlier this month of murdering [the victim], whose body he disposed of in their flat ... A jury heard how he had told relatives on Facebook how he 'chopped [her] up and put [her] down the toilet'. [The victim's] body has never been found, Exeter Crown Court was told."<sup>82</sup>

There was evidence of violation of the victim's body in up to a quarter (26%) of femicides. Most frequently this involved concealment or disposal of the body. Details of violation of the body are provided in the table below; the table presents instances of violation rather than number of victims, because in some cases men inflicted more than one type of violation on the victim's body.

It may be that there is a qualitative difference between attempts to dispose of, or conceal, the victim's body for the purposes of hiding a crime, and other types of violations. However, there is not always a clear division between the two. In some cases, the perpetrator may have set fire to the body or dismembered it for the purposes of hiding his crime: it is not always possible to distinguish between gratuitous violation and acts of concealment or disposal, all of which involve violation and/or disrespect of the victim's body.

Violation of victim's body

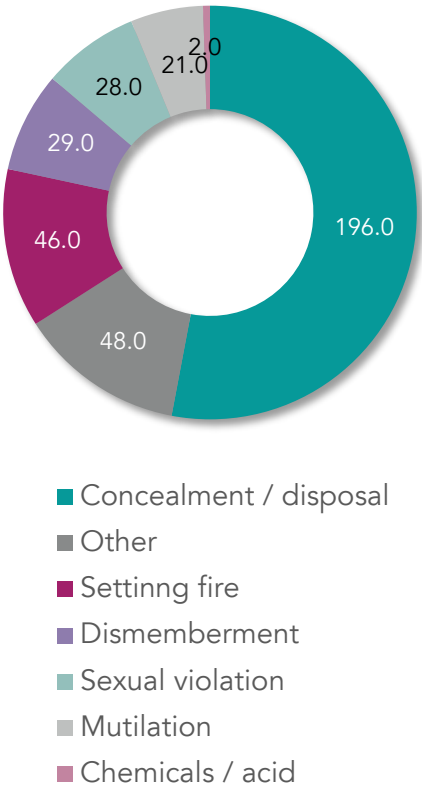


Figure 15a: Violation of victim's body in femicides, 2009-2018

<sup>81</sup> <https://www.guardian-series.co.uk/news/9751556.walthamstow-brother-in-law-jailed-mothers-murder/> (accessed 15 November 2020).  
<sup>82</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-cornwall-44112951> (accessed 15 November 2020).

Attempts to conceal or dispose of the body obviously prevent or delay a lawful burial, causing further distress to the victim’s family.<sup>83</sup>

However, there was evidence of a gratuitous element to the violation, in some cases, which went beyond acts of concealment and disposal.

48 cases of violation of the body were categorised as “other”. These included the perpetrator surrounding the body with notes and images “like a shrine”,<sup>84</sup> suspected acts of cannibalism,<sup>85</sup> showing the body to a friend,<sup>86</sup> writing on the body,<sup>87</sup> and attempting to upload images of the victim’s body to a website.<sup>88</sup>

Violation of body	No. of instances	%
Concealment/disposal	196	14
Other	48	3
Setting fire	46	3
Dismemberment	29	2
Sexual violation	28	2
Mutilation	21	1
Chemicals/acid	2	<1
<b>Total</b>	<b>370</b>	<b>25</b>

Figure 15b: Violation of victim’s body in femicides, 2009-2018

<sup>83</sup> Proposals for “Helen’s law” are under discussion, whereby a killer refusing to provide information about the location/disposal of a body may be denied parole. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/jul/06/killers-kept-jail-refusing-reveal-body-locations-helens-law-mccourt> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>84</sup> <https://www.getreading.co.uk/news/local-news/murdered-wife-abused-for-decades-4215537> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>85</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-bradford-west-yorkshire-11541168> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>86</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2011/jul/27/rebecca-aylward-welsh-schoolgirl-murder> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>87</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-sussex-43989357> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>88</sup> <https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/horrific-details-murder-unfailingly-kind-15151775> (accessed 15 November 2020).

## 2.11. Other victims

- "A man who stabbed his girlfriend more than 30 times as she slept, before killing their daughter, has been jailed for life for their murders [...] Earlier the court was told that [the perpetrator] did not kill the couple's two-and-half-year-old son, but fled from the house, leaving the child locked inside for more than 30 hours."<sup>89</sup>
- "Teesside Crown Court today heard how [the perpetrator] stood like a 'crazed maniac' over [the victim], his ex-partner, after violently stabbing her 132 times outside her home. Their three children were seen in the garden standing and screaming over their mother in the aftermath of the attack."<sup>90</sup>

There is no femicide that does not include other victims; bereaved families and friends live with the loss of their loved ones for the rest of their lives. The impact of losing a loved one through violent means is incalculable, and the Femicide Census makes no attempt to measure such a devastating experience. However, the census records other victims of both sexes, who were either injured or killed during the femicide, and children who witness femicides. Most frequently this means witnessing the killing of their mothers or discovering their mothers' bodies.<sup>91</sup> Children were also killed by perpetrators during or following the femicide.<sup>92</sup>

The total number of cases where "other victims" were recorded was 388. The table below shows the number of incidences rather than the number of cases; one case may involve more than one category of "other victims". It

should be noted that terror attacks include multiple other victims across different categories. When femicides where terrorism was the primary context of violence were removed from the list, the total number of cases was 364 and the number of incidences for each "other victim" category was 412.

In 214 cases the perpetrator attacked or injured other victims; in 174 cases, the perpetrator also killed another victim or victims. In 70 cases children witnessed the femicide – most frequently the killing of their mother – and in 17 cases the perpetrator also killed a pet.

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<sup>89</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-hampshire-11887912> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>90</sup> <https://www.gazettelive.co.uk/news/teesside-news/alan-bennett-jailed-least-32-11675177> (accessed 15 November 2020.)

<sup>91</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-dorset-11515139> (accessed 15 November 2020); <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-lincolnshire-13157153> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>92</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2012/oct/08/man-murders-family-kills-himself> (accessed 15 November 2020); <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-48199547> (accessed 15 November 2020).

Other direct victims	No. of femicides
Yes – non-fatal	214
Yes – fatal	174
Yes – children witnessed	70
Yes – pets killed	17
<b>Total</b>	<b>475</b>

Figure 16: Other victims in femicides, 2009-2018

Among the victims, 29 victims were pregnant when they were killed (see Victims chapter). Four perpetrators were convicted of child destruction alongside the femicide.<sup>93</sup> A further perpetrator was charged with, but cleared of, child destruction. One baby was delivered by caesarean section following the femicide, and survived.<sup>94</sup>

The findings from the Femicide Census support research that shows that abusive and/or violent men are frequently violent to mothers in front of their children, and/or use their children in order to abuse their female partners, including through post-separation child contact.<sup>95</sup> The Femicide Census findings contribute to this evidence base, with clear implications for family social policy, child protection approaches and the family courts, which continue to operate from the assumption that paternal involvement in children’s lives is inherently desirable and a

presumption. The findings from the Femicide Census also contribute to research on the impact and consequences of femicide for children.<sup>96</sup>

In 20 cases, other victims were killed or injured in the context of “intimate partner collateral”, as in one case where the perpetrator killed his partner, her sister and her niece.<sup>97</sup> In four cases, other victims were killed or injured in the context of a “dispute/grudge/revenge”,<sup>98</sup> and in a further four cases other victims were killed or injured in the context of “financial gain”.<sup>99</sup>

While the focus of this report is the women killed in male violence, it is important to recognise that for these other victims, witnesses, friends and family members there is a stark lack of both immediate and long-term support. This may be with regard to practical and logistic help to deal with the bureaucracy and fall out of a violent killing, to attend courts, hearings and inquests, to access legal advice or to challenge system failings. It may relate to emotional support and counselling or importantly financial support and compassionate adjustments. This relative lack of support substantially adds to the distress and hardship of families. Advocacy After Fatal Domestic Abuse (AAFDA) is a unique charity campaigning and advocating for families in all these areas.

<sup>93</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo5/19-20/34/section/1> (accessed 15 November 2020); <http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsbeat/article/32332040/too-hard-to-convict-people-of-harming-unborn-babies> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>94</sup> <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-6388637/Miracle-baby-saved-emergency-caesarean-pregnant-mother-killed-crossbow-horror.html> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>95</sup> Harne, L. (2011). *Violent fathering and the risks to children: the need for change*. Bristol: Policy Press. See also <https://www.theduluthmodel.org/wheels/understanding-power-control-wheel/#children> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>96</sup> [http://femicide-watch.org/sites/default/files/Femicide%20XII\\_0.pdf](http://femicide-watch.org/sites/default/files/Femicide%20XII_0.pdf) (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>97</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-16426094> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>98</sup> <https://www.kentlive.news/news/kent-news/natasha-sadler-ellis-simon-gorecki-1702350> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>99</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-46700151> (accessed 15 November 2020).

**Frank Mullane, AAFDA:**

“In 1628, an Englishman’s home was described as his castle. 400 years later, for many women, it is still the deadliest place they can be. It’s where so many are abused and murdered by their castle-keeping men. Coke’s term was taken to mean that a man’s home was his last refuge. What irony that has for these women.

In 2003 my sister and nephew were murdered by the husband and father. Since then, we have seen improvements in state responses to domestic abuse but also some regression. Anecdotally, I hear of the closing of police specialist domestic abuse units. These were set up to ensure that victims received an appropriate risk assessment and response to their plight.

Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs) are causing public protection agencies to discuss domestic abuse and I have read 800 DHRs for the Home Office. These reveal three distinguishing features of femicides which should attract more interest from Government. First, they often involve ‘overkill’, tens of stab wounds and repeated blunt force, inflicted after the body was dead and exhibiting, seemingly, the male killer’s hatred of women. Second, they are a breach of trust. Third, and contrary to commonly held beliefs, they often involve planning.

DHRs are providing rich data on femicide. But I sense a complacency creeping in to some narratives. Frequently, DHRs report ‘lessons learned’. This phrase should only ever be used when the utterer knows that the agency has measurably and significantly changed its response to victims’ plights. Until then, we should use the term ‘lessons identified’.

We should be so disgusted by femicide that a ten-year report showing no decline should make us retch. There are many professionals and politicians working very hard to make women’s lives safer. Until the power bases are filled with enough anger, there will not be the sustained and intensive action to prevent femicide.”

## 3. Victims

### 3.1. Country of birth, ethnicity and immigration status

#### 3.1.1. Country of birth

- “[The victim] may have been alive when she was stuffed into a suitcase and thrown into a canal [...]. The couple had met online, the court was told, with [victim’s name] moving from Poland to London in 2012 to live with [the perpetrator].”<sup>100</sup>
- “Police have yet to find the body of the Syrian-born mother-of-three. [...] ‘[A]t the point, when she thought she might be able to create a better life for her and her children – free of the domestic abuse she suffered at the hands of [the perpetrator] – her husband snatched it all away in the cruellest and most despicable way possible.’”<sup>101</sup>

As the table below shows, the overwhelming majority (1,191, 84%) of victims were born or believed to have been born in the UK; 16% (234) of victims were born outside the UK. This means that women born outside the UK may be disproportionately killed by men: according to the 2011 census, 87% of people living the UK were born in the UK, while 13% were born outside the UK.<sup>102</sup> However, these census statistics were not disaggregated by sex, so it is difficult to make accurate comparisons.

Eastern European, post-communist/post-Soviet countries appear to stand out in the data, constituting four of the most frequently represented countries of birth after the UK: Poland (34 victims), Latvia (12), Romania (11) and Lithuania

(10). The most prevalent nationality, Polish, constitutes 2% of victims and there were almost three times the number of Polish victims as the next most represented nationality. 1% of victims were Latvian, Pakistani, Romanian, Chinese and Lithuanian respectively and collectively Eastern European nationalities represent 5% of victims. Each other non-British nationality represented constituted less than 1% of victims.

The representation of Eastern European victims remained constant over the ten-year period. In addition to victims from Poland, Latvia, Romania and Lithuania, there were also a number of other victims from other post-communist/post-Soviet countries including Hungary,

<sup>100</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-34703328> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>101</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2014/jun/04/husband-jailed-life-rania-alayed-murder> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>102</sup> <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/ethnicity/articles/2011censusanalysisethnicityandreligionofthenonukbornpopulationinenglandandwales/2015-06-18#:~:text=In%202011%2C%207.5%20million%20people,African%2FCaribbean%2FBlack%20British> (accessed 15 November 2020).

Bulgaria, Albania, the Czech Republic, Moldova and Ukraine. This finding suggests that there may be particular issues facing Eastern European women in the UK that merit further investigation, such as poverty, language barriers, sexual exploitation, economic and social precarity, cultural issues, dependency on men and barriers to accessing support. Accession to the European Union was granted for Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Estonia, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Slovenia in 2004 with Romania and Bulgaria acceding in 2007. Albania is not yet a member of the EU.

Countries of birth represented are aggregated as follows: UK/believed to be UK (84%), European – non-UK (7%), Asian (4%), African (3%), North American (<1%), Central & South American (<1%), Australia and New

Zealand (<1%). Asian-born and African-born women represent 4% and 3% of victims respectively. According to the 2011 census, non-UK born Asian people constitute 4.238% of the population,<sup>103</sup> so it appears that the percentage of victims may broadly reflect population numbers. However, non-UK born African people constitute only 1.157% of the total population, which suggests that the number of African-born victims of femicide may be disproportionate by almost 300%.<sup>104</sup> Available information suggests that some of the social, cultural and economic issues mentioned above may also have been factors in several of these cases, including barriers to support. The finding may have particular implications for women with insecure immigration status (see below), and the specific barriers to accessing support and safety that they are likely to face.

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<sup>103</sup> See footnote 196 above.

<sup>104</sup> However, ONS figures are not disaggregated by sex, so it is not possible to be definitive about this possibility.

**Sumanta Roy, research manager, Imkaan:**

The ten-year Femicide Census provides an important analysis of patterns and trends which requires urgent attention from policy makers to inform future strategies aimed at reducing femicide. The disproportionate number of deaths of Black, minoritised women/girls are highlighted and the presence of specific institutional barriers which increase women's vulnerability and risk of femicide.

It's simply not enough for us to know that disproportionality exists or try to understand the femicide prevalence and prevention through the lens of an individual case. It is critical to understand the wider system of gendered/intersectional inequalities that contribute to this disproportionality at different levels (interpersonal, community/public, state). Women's immigration status, their lack of state protection which is exploited by perpetrators, the hostile environment and inequitable access to specialist "by and for" support are critical to understanding the underlying factors. For example, when the data tells us that African women are at 300% increased risk and Polish women were three times more likely to be killed or that a significant proportion of women were disabled, we need to explore the multifaceted reasons behind this.

We need to review systems of data collection, assessment, training and support that reproduce socio-political and racial inequalities. Collecting better quality and more consistent data through independent research led by specialists is key. Improving existing systems so that we can understand how we respond, for example, to a Black, disabled, older woman will provide a better understanding of the patterns of help seeking, gaps in support, and how to respond to VAWG across diverse communities. Agencies need to be much more proactive in acknowledging the way in which they can themselves perpetuate further harm through racialised and intersectional myths and assumptions – e.g. racism, ableism, ageism, class within reporting, risk assessment and safeguarding approaches. In many areas of the country there are gaps in funding and access to safe, specialist wraparound support and advocacy, which are led by, and designed to address the needs of, diverse communities.

If states fail to identify and address the ways in which women/girls are subject to institutional violence as part of the lessons learned within domestic homicide review processes – the state itself colludes with the perpetrator and, in doing so, becomes negligent and complicit in femicide."<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Jill, Radford, and Diana EH Russell. "Femicide: The politics of woman killing." (1992).



Country of birth	No. of victims
UK/believed to be UK	1191
Poland	34
Unknown	16
Latvia	12
Pakistan	11
Romania	11
China	10
Lithuania	10
India	7
Zimbabwe	7
Somalia	5
Hungary	4
Italy	4
Philippines	4
United States	4
Afghanistan	3
Bangladesh	3
Bulgaria	3
Cyprus	3
Eritrea	3
Ireland	3
Nigeria	3
Albania	2
Australia	2
Belgium	2
Canada	2
Czech Republic	2
Gambia	2
Ghana	2
Iran	2
Iraq/Iraqi Kurdistan	2
Kuwait	2
Mauritius	2
Nepal	2
New Zealand	2

Country of birth	No. of victims
Portugal	2
Russia	2
Sierra Leone	2
Slovak Republic (Slovakia)	2
Sudan	2
Syria	2
Turkey	2
Uganda	2
Venezuela	2
Brazil	1
Colombia	1
France	1
Germany	1
Greece	1
Israel	1
Jamaica	1
Kenya	1
South Korea	1
Libya	1
Mexico	1
Moldova	1
Morocco	1
Palestine	1
Republic of Congo	1
Saudi Arabia	1
South Africa	1
Spain	1
Sri Lanka	1
Thailand	1
Timor-Leste	1
Ukraine	1
Uzbekistan	1
Vietnam	1
Yemen	1
Zambia	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1425</b>

Figure 17a: Victim countries of birth, 2009-2018

### 3.1.2. Ethnicity

■ “The [victim and her daughter] managed to return to the UK with the help of the consulate who gave them emergency travel documents, and went to the [name of refuge]. It was there [the victim], who speaks little English, told staff at the refuge that [the perpetrator] had hit her while she was there and that she was lonely, isolated and frightened that he would hit her again. [...] the mum-of-three became part of a horrifying statistic [...] It is thought that she was sat at her beloved sewing machine, wearing earphones, when her husband struck her with a hammer, shattering her skull and causing catastrophic injuries.”<sup>106</sup>

As has been noted in previous reports, the lack of meaningful, verified data on ethnicity is an ongoing problem. Data on race and ethnicity is drawn solely from police responses to Freedom of Information requests; details are seldom provided in press reports and such information is not used as it would involve making potentially inaccurate assumptions.

As the table indicates, information provided by police forces is sparse, with ethnicity being recorded in only a fifth (21%) of cases. Ethnicity is also inconsistently recorded across forces; some categories are meaningless (“Dark European”) and some archaic and offensive (“Oriental”).

Lack of information in this area prevents the census from capturing important data, which in turn hinders examination of other issues, such as potential risk factors and patterns, specific

disadvantages, barriers to support, progress in criminal justice investigations and the importance of specialist services for women from specific ethnic communities. Research carried out in the United States has shown that African American women are four times more likely to be killed by a partner than white women.<sup>107</sup> Reliable, verified data on ethnicity is necessary for such important research to be possible in this country. Another area of concern is an apparent asymmetry in terms of media coverage in relation to victims’ ethnicity, particularly in relation to missing victims.<sup>108</sup>

The failure to record and publicise demographic data can also feed stereotypes, prejudice and assumptions. Media tends to over focus on the details of violence against women in certain communities and this in turn both feeds and reflects the existing prejudices and racism across UK society. Assumptions

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<sup>106</sup> <https://www.lep.co.uk/news/crime/controlling-husband-told-police-ive-done-something-terrible-1091555> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>107</sup> <https://www.thetrace.org/2016/12/black-women-more-likely-fatally-shot-by-man-than-white-women/> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>108</sup> [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/275464705\\_The\\_Invisible\\_Damsel\\_Differences\\_in\\_How\\_National\\_Media\\_Frame\\_d\\_Coverage\\_of\\_Missing\\_Black\\_and\\_White\\_Women/link/554e727c08ae93634ec70312/download](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/275464705_The_Invisible_Damsel_Differences_in_How_National_Media_Frame_d_Coverage_of_Missing_Black_and_White_Women/link/554e727c08ae93634ec70312/download) (accessed 15 November 2020).

are engrained that it is more a problem with certain groups such as those from working class backgrounds and those of other ethnicities, particularly those of South Asian heritage and religions other than Christianity, notably Islam. This can also lead to services seeming to accept, normalise or avoid intervening in levels of violence among families of some heritages that they would absolutely reject in the white British population. Such services may have lower

expectations of victims in terms of willingness to access support or leave a violent partner. If services are not alert to the reality that violence against women occurs in many forms across all backgrounds, then they are less likely to identify those at risk and respond appropriately, as well as making it far harder for individuals at risk to have confidence in the response they will receive if they seek help.

Ethnicity (as recorded in police FOI responses)	No. of victims	%
Information not provided	1132	79
White (no further information)	78	5
White British	76	5
White Northern European	46	3
White European	22	2
Asian	18	1
Unknown	15	1
Black (no further information)	6	0.4
British (no further information)	5	0.4
White – Polish	5	0.4
Afro-Caribbean (sic)	4	0.3
Asian – Pakistani	4	0.3
White – other	4	0.3
Other – any other ethnic group	3	0.2
Black – other	2	0.1
Chinese	2	0.1
Asian or Asian British	1	0.1
Dark European (sic)	1	0.1
Oriental (sic)	1	0.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1425</b>	<b>100</b>

Figure 17b: Victim ethnicities, 2009 – 2018

### Pragna Patel, Southall Black Sisters:

“We still don’t know enough about femicide. Shockingly, as the Femicide Census shows, there is no official attempt to disaggregate data according to for example, ethnicity, sexuality and migrant and socio-economic status. This means that what we know is only half complete. It falls to those carrying out the Femicide Census to piece together what data and information is available in the public domain and to make sense of it. What we do know from the picture that emerges is that all women experience violence in a cultural context – and that culture is one of patriarchal control and power in which the notion of women as property is persistent. However, even if the conceptual framework is the same, the contours of patriarchal ideology can fall differently and impact women in similar and dissimilar ways. Patriarchy interlocks with other systems of power in ways that complicate our understanding of how contexts conducive to femicide are created and sustained.

The census highlights how femicides are largely born out of intimate partner violence rooted in the dynamics of coercion and control and the imbalance of power between men and women. But we also have forms of femicide that illustrate how the same dynamics are more entrenched in cultures that are communal in their organisation, giving rise to collective forms of punishment. They can also involve the participation of women in policing what are seen as female transgressions based on heightened cultural norms regarding chastity, virginity, ‘family honour’ ‘shame’ and stigma. For example, many of the femicides involving South Asian and Middle Eastern women arise from dynamics of coercion and control operating within extended family structures in which partners, family and even kinship group members are implicated through their active or passive participation in what are often joint enterprises.

Whilst both intimate and communal forms of femicide are ultimately socially sanctioned – the question is one of degree – it is still important to examine the specificity of the social conditions in which women are killed; the centrality of marriage in family ideology, the regulation of sexuality, the levels of female inequality, the role of popular culture, the institutionalisation of racial and gender stereotypes, and the barriers created by the lack of citizenship and poverty are just some areas ripe for exploration. Without such an examination, we cannot hope to determine the level of risks involved and the protection and prevention measures that are needed or tackle the wider structural nature of gender inequality of which femicide is both a cause and consequence.

### 3.1.3. Immigration Status

■ “A ‘controlling’ husband, who suffocated his wife and drowned his two children, controlled her access to the internet and use of a mobile phone. This affected her ability to communicate with her family in the Yemen. She spoke little or no English, the family were not part of the Yemeni community in Liverpool and she must have felt isolated.”<sup>109</sup>

Reliable information on the immigration status of victims or related issues is very limited, therefore it is not currently feasible for the Femicide Census to collect specific data in this area. However, migrant and asylum-seeking women can be in an extremely isolated and precarious position and thus rendered particularly vulnerable to abuse. Women with insecure immigration status, women with no recourse to public funds, refugee and asylum-seeking women and women who are “over-stayers” or cannot show that they are legally resident, are likely to face decreased – in some cases near-impossible – access to support services, safety and justice. The “hostile environment”<sup>110</sup> and well-founded fear of deportation or destitution can deter women with insecure status from reporting abuse.<sup>111</sup>

The immigration status of the perpetrator was also salient in a number of cases, with evidence of perpetrators

pressurising their wives to support their asylum claims, and killing them when they refused to do so,<sup>112</sup> or if he feared she would divorce him and he would be deported.<sup>113</sup>

The quotation above, concerning the murder of a woman and her two children by her husband, is also illustrative of femicides of migrant women. The family were living in the UK having married in the Yemen in 2009. The family were not a part of the local Yemeni community, the victim’s family were in Yemen and she spoke little or no English, so she would have faced many barriers to accessing support. The perpetrator killed his wife and children less than a month after she told him that she wanted a divorce.

Femicides were also committed in the context of forced or arranged marriages.<sup>114</sup> In one such case the victim had been sixteen and the perpetrator 30

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<sup>109</sup> <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5639571/Controlling-husband-murdered-wife-two-children-jailed-31-years.html> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>110</sup> <https://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/FINAL-living-in-a-hostile-environment-for-Web-and-sharing-.pdf> (accessed 15 November 2020); <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/migrant-domestic-abuse-survivors-horror-public-agencies-b531191.html> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>111</sup> <https://stepupmigrantwomen.org/> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>112</sup> <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/fenton-stabbing-stoke-husband-wife-immigration-court-case-trial-stafford-a8776636.html> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>113</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2014/feb/18/farhad-sarfi-trial-orina-morawiec-murder> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>114</sup> A forced marriage is one in which one or both parties did not give their full, free and informed consent. The legal test for duress in these cases is a subjective one. In arranged marriages, no matter how the parties were introduced, they both give their full, free and informed consent. However, it is recognised that this distinction is very blurred in many cases.

when they married;<sup>115</sup> another victim was nineteen and the perpetrator 27 when he killed her.<sup>116</sup> One perpetrator killed his mother-in-law after she helped her daughter to escape her arranged marriage which had taken place in Pakistan five years earlier. The perpetrator, who was his wife's cousin on her father's side, joined her in the UK in September 2016, "and the court heard the couple needed to live together for three years so [the

perpetrator] could stay in the UK."<sup>117</sup> The victim helped her daughter to escape the marriage after the perpetrator refused to grant her a divorce. Giving evidence, the victim's daughter testified that "her mother had never accused her of bringing shame to the family and she had told her 'wherever my daughters are happy I'm happy'." The perpetrator stabbed his mother-in-law to death with a kitchen knife.

### 3.2. Age bands

- "[The 17-year-old victim] begged 'don't do this' before being strangled to death by her boyfriend."<sup>118</sup>
- "The 58-year-old divorced mother-of-one and grandmother was stabbed, stamped on and hit over the head with a saucepan before having her throat slit by the drugged-up and drunk seventeen-year-old at her home in Caerphilly, during the early hours of February 28."<sup>119</sup>

Overwhelmingly, the majority of women killed by men were aged between 26 and 55. Women in this age group accounted for 59% of all victims across the ten-year period

Women aged 66 and over accounted for 14% of victims and 3% of victims

were young women aged under eighteen.<sup>120</sup> The six youngest victims were aged fourteen, the minimum age for inclusion in the Femicide Census, and the oldest victim was aged 100. In six cases, the age of the victim was unknown.

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<sup>115</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/nov/29/man-jailed-for-crossbow-of-pregnant-ex-wife-ilford-london> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>116</sup> <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/man-who-stabbed-teen-wife-16476834> (accessed 15 November 2020)

<sup>117</sup> <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/arranged-marriage-murder-mother-law-rochdale-manchester-muhammed-tafham-rahman-begum-a8502116.html> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>118</sup> <https://www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/news/liverpool-news/speke-teenager-kelsey-shaw-begged-10488453> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>119</sup> <https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/local-news/teenager-david-matthews-gets-life-2083062> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>120</sup> The Femicide Census records victims of femicide aged 14 and over.

## Age Bands

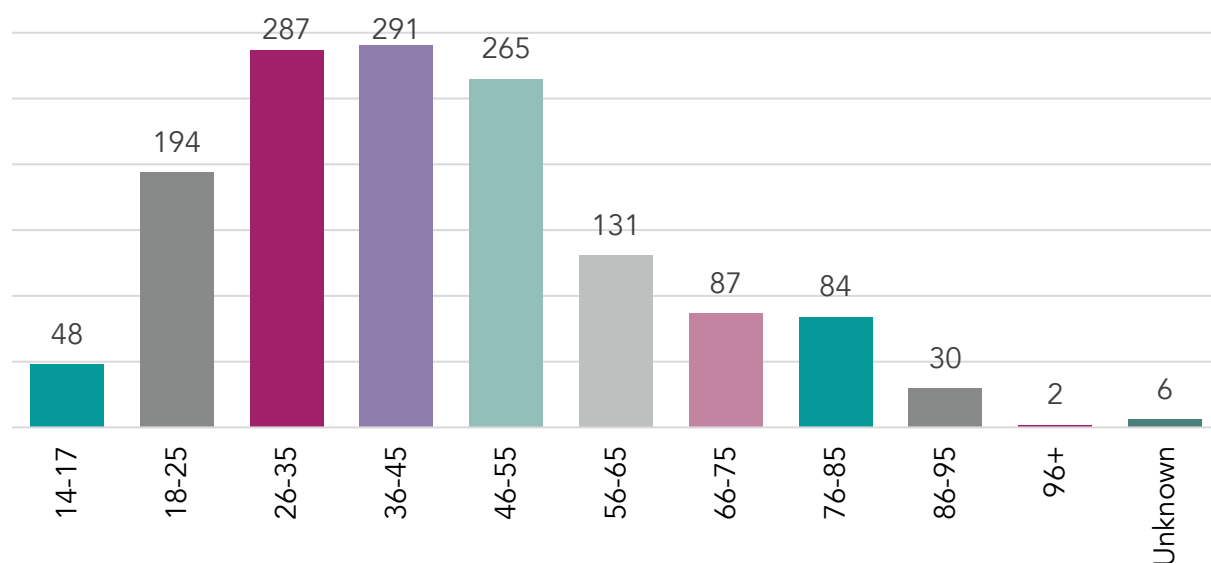


Figure 18a: Age bands of femicides in UK, 2009-2018

### 3.2.1. Women aged 66+

- “A debt-ridden taxi driver who murdered two of his elderly passengers in their homes and robbed another victim in ‘unspeakably wicked crimes’ has been jailed for at least 30 years.”<sup>121</sup>
- “After leaving the great-grandmother with severe blunt-force head injuries and ransacking her home, [the perpetrator] stole the wedding ring which [the victim] had not removed for 60 years.”<sup>122</sup>

While the majority of victims were aged 26-55, 203 (14%) were aged 66 and over. Of these, 87 were aged 66-75, 84 were aged 76-85, 30 were aged 86-95 and two were aged 96 and over. The oldest victim was 100 years old. The table below shows the primary contexts of violence for femicides of women aged 66 and over.

<sup>121</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2012/jul/23/southport-taxi-driver-jailed-murder> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>122</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-merseyside-43711591> (accessed 15 November 2020).

**Dr Hannah Bows, assistant professor in criminal law, Durham Law School:**

“Older women as victims of men’s violence have historically been ignored.<sup>123</sup> Older age has for a long time been assumed to be a protective factor against violence and abuse, even though the evidence to support such assumptions has been lacking.

At a national level, we have excluded women aged 60 and over from our analysis of domestic violence, sexual violence and stalking until recently, and we continue to exclude those aged 75 and over, and/or those living in care homes, hospitals or other temporary or institutional settings. Our academic research has similarly focused on young women as victims and survivors of male violence. As a result, our policies and practices have been designed to assess and manage risk of violence in young(er) life, and we have built our support services to address the needs of that population. Consequently, we are ill-equipped to recognise and prevent violence against older women; we remain ‘shocked’ when an older woman is killed by a man, believing this to be an unusual occurrence, when in fact my research has identified at least one in four domestic homicides involves a woman aged 60 or older, despite them constituting only 18% of the population. At least half of these deaths are committed by an adult son or grandson.

The femicide census sheds further light on the nature of men’s violence against older women. Of particular concern is that these offences may be incorrectly labelled a ‘mercy killing’, even where the case involves ‘overkilling’. The impact of (the combination of) ageist and sexist stereotypes and attitudes in the criminal justice system remains under-researched, but as the census shows, it is critical we turn our attention to this.

Moreover, while the census provides much needed further evidence on the extent and nature of men’s fatal violence against older women, it is likely that many killings are never recorded as such because it is wrongly assumed an older woman died of age-related and/or natural causes – these hidden homicides must be made visible and our work on prevention must be enhanced to ensure older women are given equal consideration and protection.”

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<sup>123</sup> There is no agreed definition of older but the term is used here to describe women who are ‘older’ than those typically represented in research and data on men’s violence.



Primary context of violence (women aged 66+)	Age				Total	% (of victims over 66)
	66-75	76-85	86-95	96+		
Domestic violence – intimate partner (including “mercy killings” in brackets)	34 (4)	28 (8)	6 (3)	0	69	34
Domestic violence – son-mother (including “mercy killing” in brackets)	21	23 (1)	7	1	52	25
In the course of other crime – robbery/burglary	6	14	5	1	26	13
Domestic violence – extended family (including “mercy killings” in brackets)	7	5 (1)	2 (1)	0	14	7
Financial gain	6	3	1	0	10	5
Mental health condition	1	6	2	0	9	5
Intimate partner violence – collateral	5	0	0	0	5	2
Unknown	2	1	2	0	5	2
Sexually motivated	3	0	1	0	4	2
Dispute/grudge/revenge	0	2	1	0	3	1
Assisted suicide/suicide pact	1	0	1	0	2	<1
Other	0	1	1	0	2	<1
Resulting from an offence of arson	0	1	0	0	1	<1
Revenge against victim’s family member	0	0	1	0	1	<1
Terrorism	1	0	0	0	1	<1
<b>Total</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>100</b>

Figure 18b: Primary context for violence where victims were women aged 66+, 2009-2018

Most frequently, older women were killed by their husbands or intimate partners, or by their sons. Where the context of violence was “Domestic violence – extended family”, most femicides were perpetrated by grandsons (or in one case a step-grandson). Grandsons/step-grandsons perpetrated ten of the femicides in this category; other perpetrators included brothers-in-law (two), a nephew (one) and a son-in-law (one).

In a number of cases, defence teams argued that the femicides were “mercy killings” (see Criminal Justice Outcome section) – such cases involved husbands, sons and grandsons. Of thirteen such cases,<sup>124</sup> five perpetrators were found guilty of manslaughter (four on the grounds of diminished responsibility); two were found guilty of murder; two were detained under the Mental Health Act; one died by suicide; two were found guilty of culpable homicide (one on grounds of diminished responsibility);

<sup>124</sup> Perpetrator defences were only collected from 2013 onwards. These thirteen femicides took place in that timeframe.

and one was recorded as “deceased”. Prison sentences for the murder convictions were 24 and 22 years duration; for manslaughter/culpable homicide convictions one to three years; two perpetrators were given suspended sentences; one perpetrator was detained under the Mental Health Act and one was given an Indefinite Hospital Order. Both perpetrators found guilty of murder were grandsons of the victims.

The readiness of judges and juries to accept claims of “mercy killing” raises serious concerns. Such claims need to be understood in the broader context of men’s violence against women, ageism and the undervaluing of older women’s lives. In seven cases, claims or notions of “mercy killing” featured in media reports,<sup>125</sup> and perpetrators received suspended sentences. It is argued that any such killing should be treated as a crime scene initially and interrogate the history of violence and control prior to the killing before accepting such a construction.

Almost half (47%, n=95) of victims over 66 were subjected to “overkilling” (see Femicides section). Of these victims, 46 were aged 66-75, 39 were aged 76-85 and ten were aged 86-95. The cases involving “overkilling” included 27 femicides committed by the victims’ sons; 23 by husbands or intimate partners; four by grandsons; one by the victim’s nephew, one by her brother-in-law and one by her son-in-law. As

indicated above, it is commonly the case that sons, often with mental health issues and with little other ability to look after and finance themselves, are put up by their mothers with attendant risks in the face of a lack of appropriate access to care and support. Eleven were committed in the course of a robbery or burglary; seven in the context of financial gain; four in the context of the perpetrator’s diagnosed mental illness and three were sexually motivated. The remaining femicides where the perpetrator subjected victims to overkilling were committed in the context of a “dispute/grudge/revenge”, “mercy killing”, “assisted suicide/suicide pact”, and “revenge against a victim’s family member”. In five such femicides the context was unknown.

The extent of men’s violence against older women is gaining attention,<sup>126</sup> and the findings of the Femicide Census support other research findings<sup>127</sup> and initiatives in this area.<sup>128</sup> In particular, the findings demonstrate the necessity for improved awareness of risks to older women among services. There is also a need for research and crime statistics to collect age-specific, sex-disaggregated data, and for such data to be used to inform policy making and service provision for older women. It is shocking that women over 60 have until recently been excluded from domestic violence analysis, and that this is still the case for those over 75 living in institutions.

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<sup>125</sup> These may include cases where defence teams may not have argued a “mercy killing” defence.

<sup>126</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/apr/25/domestic-violence-abuse-older-couples-increase> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>127</sup> Bows, H. (2019). *Violence Against Older Women*. Vols 1 & 2. London: Palgrave MacMillan; <https://www.iriss.org.uk/resources/esss-outlines/older-women-abuse> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>128</sup> <https://safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Safe%20Later%20Lives%20-%20Older%20people%20and%20domestic%20abuse.pdf> (accessed 15 November 2020).

### Onjali Q Raúf on her aunt Mumtahina "Ruma" Jannat:

"Imagine a woman who was a romantic at heart... Who loved watching a love story – no matter how cheesy! – and could get so deeply lost in a Bollywood movie that you could call out to her a hundred times and she would remain utterly oblivious... Imagine a woman who loved the touch of Indian silks and cloths against her skin, and no matter how downtrodden her heart, would dress herself up in the brightest of garments to help her mind break free of the darkness it was battling each and every day. A darkness added to by judges calling her 'a silly woman' for fearing the charmer of a husband she was trying to free herself of; of social workers whispering 'he seems so nice though' as if her broken innards were a figment of her imagination; of incompetent lawyers and police officers to whom she was 'just' another 'dumb Asian woman' they had to respond to, because it was in their job descriptions and nothing more...

Imagine a woman who loved her two little girls so much that she would often stare at them as if she couldn't quite believe they were really hers. Two little girls whom she would fight her whole life to protect from a man whose cunning – and bank account – could dupe the legal system, and who thought it his right to break her in every way, encouraged as he was by a 'justice' system which always took his word over hers. A man who, when he couldn't break her in life, decided to do so by taking that life from her.

Mumtahina 'Ruma' Jannat was that woman.

She was an aunt, mother, beloved friend, who deserved a system which saw her for the fascinating, wonderful human being she was. A system which worked together to protect her and her children – not one which called her a liar in a million different ways, or better yet, just plain ignored her. But she didn't get what she deserved. And neither have any of the souls listed in this ever-pain-filled Femicide Census. In its very existence, this census is a reminder to all brave enough to open its pages that those who go on being dehumanised by our systems when forced to bring themselves before it, are human. Humans with a face, a heart, a story that each should have survived to share with the world themselves. One day, if it is ever listened to and heeded as it should be by every agency we have, this census won't need to exist. But until that day arrives, we must cry, we must shout, we must remember, and we must fight on. We have no other choice."

### 3.3. Children and pregnancy

- “An ‘evil’ man has been jailed for life for the murder of his heavily pregnant former fiancée and causing the death of their unborn baby. [...] He lured [victim’s name] to meet him in the early hours of 27 June by sending her a text message saying: ‘I’ve got a surprise for you.’”<sup>129</sup>
- “[A man] murdered his girlfriend and their ten-month-old daughter in a ‘sustained and fearsome’ knife attack [...] the surviving child [was] left locked in the house for more than 24 hours aged just two-and-a half.”<sup>130</sup>

Of the total number of victims, 34% were known to have children under eighteen.<sup>131</sup> In a number of cases perpetrators also killed the victim’s children, killed their mother in front of the children or left the children to discover their mother’s body (see Other Victims section). 47% of victims were believed to have adult children or no children, and in 19% of cases it was unknown whether the victim had children under eighteen.

#### Children under 18

No	Yes	Unknown	Total
672 (47%)	488 (34%)	265 (19%)	1425

Figure 19: Femicides of women with children under 18, 2009-2018

It is known that pregnancy can be a high-risk time for women with abusive or violent male partners or former partners; it can also be the time at

which domestic abuse begins or escalates. The World Health Organisation has identified pregnancy as being an individual risk factor for being a victim of femicide.<sup>132</sup>

29 victims (2%) were known to have been pregnant at the time of the femicide. Four perpetrators were convicted of child destruction (see Other Victims section above).<sup>133</sup> A further perpetrator was charged with, but cleared of, the crime. The few convictions for child destruction over the ten-year period are indicative of the fact that the crime can be difficult to prove, since the prosecution must not only prove that the child was capable of sustaining life outside the mother’s body, but also that the perpetrator intended to kill the unborn child.<sup>134</sup> In one case the baby was delivered prematurely and survived the femicide.<sup>135</sup>

<sup>129</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-essex-21681930> (accessed 15 November 2020).  
<sup>130</sup> <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/26-years-for-stabbing-mum-and-baby-2148251.html> (accessed 15 November 2020).  
<sup>131</sup> Data were only recorded where children were under eighteen. Victims with adult children are not included.  
<sup>132</sup> [https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/77421/WHO\\_RHR\\_12.38\\_eng.pdf;jsessionid=4DD39FB77FD32FE6CC03FE98F3A27D79?sequence=1](https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/77421/WHO_RHR_12.38_eng.pdf;jsessionid=4DD39FB77FD32FE6CC03FE98F3A27D79?sequence=1) (accessed 15 November 2020).  
<sup>133</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo5/19-20/34/section/1> (accessed 15 November 2020).  
<sup>134</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsbeat/article/32332040/too-hard-to-convict-people-of-harming-unborn-babies> (accessed 15 November 2020).  
<sup>135</sup> <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-6388637/Miracle-baby-saved-emergency-caesarean-pregnant-mother-killed-crossbow-horror.html> (accessed 15 November 2020).

### 3.4. Disability, health and problematic substance use

- “[Victim’s name] had learning difficulties and diabetes [...] This is a shocking case of a woman who was left to die by the one man she should have been able to rely on and trust.”<sup>136</sup>
- “[The victim] had become involved in prostitution and hard drugs, but her family felt she was beginning to ‘turn a corner’ in the months before her death, the court heard.”<sup>137</sup>
- “The mother-of-three, who walked with a frame and had a mobility scooter, attempted to fend him off, scratching her husband with her nails.”<sup>138</sup>
- “She went back to drinking and was extremely vulnerable and that is when she met [the perpetrator]. She used to drink in his flat and he took advantage of her – she was never his girlfriend. He refused to let her go out. She wouldn’t have looked twice at a beast like him if she hadn’t been at rock bottom.”<sup>139</sup>

A number of victims were reported as having physical or mental health issues, a disability and/or problematic substance use issues. This category of problematic substance use is broadly drawn as it was not possible to separate out what was ordinary or non-problematic substance use. For instance, the case may have involved recreational drink or drug use and not actually problematic use. Similarly, in some cases, the perpetrator may have forcibly or surreptitiously caused intoxication or overdose in a victim who may not have otherwise had problematic use. Likewise, since health and disability details are not consistently provided in

media reports it is difficult to accurately establish prevalence. Some victims were reported as having more than one health issue or disability. The UK legal definition of “disability” was used in recording disabilities where possible.<sup>140</sup> “Chronic disease” includes conditions such as cancer, diabetes and Alzheimer’s disease. Other forms of dementia may have been recorded as “Learning difficulty/impairment”, due to their effects on cognitive and memory functions. In the case of mental illness, this was recorded as a disability only where there was a medical diagnosis, e.g. of schizophrenia.

<sup>136</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-manchester-14027535> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>137</sup> <https://www.bucksfreepress.co.uk/news/9294684.anthony-mullett-sentenced-to-life-imprisonment-for-murder-of-danielle-van-der-zyden/> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>138</sup> <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2961858/Wife-pleaded-husband-stop-strangled-death-suffering-delusions-broke-evicted.html> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>139</sup> <https://www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/news/liverpool-news/family-liverpool-murder-victim-lisa-3328846> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>140</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/definition-of-disability-under-equality-act-2010> (accessed 15 November 2020).

Concepts of mental illness and the classification and diagnosis of psychiatric “conditions” are contested, particularly in relation to women where responses to male violence can result in a mental illness diagnosis. Medical rather than social models of health, illness and disability tend to pathologise individuals and minimise the importance of social context. Recording these conditions should therefore not be interpreted as an endorsement of psychiatric diagnoses or the medical model of health and disability. Rather, it is intended to help bring to light any patterns or trends in terms of perceived or actual additional vulnerabilities in relation to victims. These findings also reflect those of World Health Organisation and of Standing Together which find mental health to be a risk factor to both perpetrators and victims. Offenders may deliberately target disabled people or attempt to exploit their disability or health issue,<sup>141</sup> and there was evidence of perpetrators “befriending” or moving into the properties of disabled women prior to stealing from them and killing them.<sup>142</sup> Some perpetrators shared sheltered/supported accommodation.<sup>143</sup> Victims’ disabilities and/or health issues were also referenced in so-called “mercy killing” cases perpetrated by husbands, partners or other relatives,<sup>144</sup> or where

perpetrators claimed they “couldn’t cope”.<sup>145</sup>

Known health issue	Number
Physical health	111
Mental health	64
Unspecified	77
<b>Total</b>	<b>252</b>

Figure 20a: Health issues of femicide victims, 2009-2018

Disability	Number
Physical impairment	38
Chronic disease	33
Learning difficulty/impairment	15
Mental illness (diagnosed condition)	14
Other	7
Sensory impairment	6
Autism/Asperger’s	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>115</b>

Figure 20b: Disabilities of femicides victims, 2009-2018

These findings have implications for policy makers, health services and other service providers, and should be interpreted alongside other research on violence against disabled women and women with mental and physical health issues.

<sup>141</sup> [https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/research\\_report\\_21\\_disabled\\_people\\_s\\_experiences\\_of\\_targeted\\_violence\\_and\\_hostility.pdf](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/research_report_21_disabled_people_s_experiences_of_targeted_violence_and_hostility.pdf) (accessed 15 November 2020).  
<sup>142</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-leicestershire-43474621> (accessed 15 November 2020);  
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-hereford-worcester-44646698> (accessed 15 November 2020).  
<sup>143</sup> <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-6479949/Tenant-51-stabbed-flatmate-56-death-kitchen-knife-TV-row.html> (accessed 15 November 2020).  
<sup>144</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-kent-12127987> (accessed 15 November 2020).  
<sup>145</sup> <https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/local-news/erdington-man-who-killed-mother-152664> (accessed 15 November 2020).

Victims' problematic use of alcohol, illegal drugs and/or prescribed drugs was also referenced in a number of media reports, though with little recognition that they may be using substances as a coping strategy or indeed may have been deliberately or forcefully administered drugs. Problematic use of alcohol was cited most frequently (70 instances); more than one substance may have been referenced in the same case, and victims may also have had other health or disability issues. Problematic substance use may have put victims into contact with perpetrators who sought to control and/or exploit them.<sup>146</sup> Sometimes this contact happened very directly, through use of mixed-sex drug and alcohol facilities.<sup>147</sup> These findings clearly have implications for service providers, and in

2019 the mother of one femicide victim launched a campaign to ensure that providers of drug and alcohol services offered single-sex provision.<sup>148</sup> Again, both World Health Organisation and Standing Together, reviewing domestic homicides, have identified problematic substance use as a risk factor.

Problematic substance use	Number
Problematic substance use: alcohol	70
Problematic substance use: illegal drugs	45
Problematic substance use: prescribed drugs	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>116</b>

Figure 20c: Femicide victims with problematic substance use issues, 2009-2018

### 3.5. Occupation

■ "A paranoid schizophrenic teenager will be detained indefinitely after he killed a 62-year-old grandmother while she was stacking shelves in a shop. [The perpetrator], nineteen, knifed [the victim] at least 22 times after storming into the One Stop shop she worked in."<sup>149</sup>

The most frequently reported occupation category was "Pensioner/retired", followed by "Professional", a wide-ranging category including managerial, accounting and legal occupations. "Student" includes school

pupils, and further/higher education students: this number was particularly high in 2017, when eight young women were killed in the bombing of the Ariana Grande concert in Manchester.<sup>150</sup>

<sup>146</sup> <https://www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/news/liverpool-news/family-liverpool-murder-victim-lisa-3328846> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>147</sup> <https://www.gazettelive.co.uk/news/teesside-news/lauras-killer-should-never-met-16835077> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>148</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p07mdc4l> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>149</sup> <https://metro.co.uk/2019/03/23/teen-stabbed-grandmother-death-inside-shop-detained-indefinitely-8994031/> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>150</sup> Please note that only women and young women aged fourteen and over are included in the sentence, so this figure does not reflect the total number of victims in the Manchester bombing.

Research on occupational sex-segregation shows that women tend to be clustered into five low-paid and undervalued areas: clerical work, retail, catering, cleaning and care work. These areas are reflected in our findings. Women also do disproportionate amounts of domestic labour, childcare and other unpaid care work, which should be recognised even though it has not been possible to capture this as a quantitative finding. Other patterns of sex-segregated and gendered norms of employment are reflected in both victim and perpetrator occupations, with 29 victims working in “trade/manual trades” compared to 113 perpetrators, and 21 victims and no perpetrators working in “health and beauty”. Social work, healthcare, charity work, social care, childcare and retail featured far more frequently among victim occupations than among perpetrators. 41 perpetrators were recorded as military or ex-military, compared to only two victims. ‘Taxi driver’ and ‘security officer’ featured among perpetrator occupations but not among victims (see next chapter for perpetrator occupations).

Most reports did not state a victim’s occupation; victims were far more likely

to be described in terms of their marital and family status, and roles such as mother, wife, grandmother, daughter, sister or homemaker/housewife. Moreover, it may be relevant to consider how terms are used: “unemployed” is an official term meaning able, available for and actively seeking work, which entitles the individual to access job-seeking benefits. This is different to “economically inactive”, whereby the individual may be able and eligible to work, but is not working or available or seeking employment because they either have private or informal means or are not choosing to engage with the labour market, or are unable to do so due to other responsibilities or barriers to the labour market. The terms are not well understood or accurately used in media.

Victims’ occupations sometimes put the victim into contact with perpetrators.<sup>151</sup> Public workplaces were sometimes the locations of femicides.<sup>152</sup> Women’s involvement in prostitution or the wider sex industry has been recorded in a separate section above, in order to avoid legitimising this form of male violence against women as work.

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<sup>151</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-somerset-45472640> (accessed 15 November 2020); <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-esssex-46363520> (accessed 15 November 2020); <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-manchester-19637980> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>152</sup> See note 245 above. Also see: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-merseyside-43699004> (accessed 15 November 2020); <https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/932529/aldi-murder-neville-hord-rotten-jodie-willshire-skipton> (accessed 15 November 2020).



Occupation	Number	% of total
Pensioner/retired	211	15
Professional	108	8
Student	91	6
Social work/healthcare/charity	78	5
Unemployed	41	3
Teaching/education	40	3
Retail	39	3
Administrator/clerical	34	2
Hospitality/catering	33	2
Trade/manual trades	29	2
Childcare/social care	21	1
Hair and beauty	20	1
Other	13	1
Business owner	11	1
Cleaner	11	1
Police	8	1
Arts/literature/music/performing arts	7	<1
Factory worker	5	<1
Military	2	<1
Volunteer	2	<1
Farmer	1	<1
Foster carer	1	<1
IT	1	<1
Journalism/media	1	<1
Postal service/delivery driver	1	<1
Security officer	1	<1
<b>Total</b>	<b>810</b>	<b>57</b>

Figure 21: Occupations of femicide victims, 2009-2018

### 3.6. Sexual orientation

- ““ Jailing [the perpetrator], [the temporary judge] said: ‘This is an incredibly sad case and has had tragic consequences for everyone who knew her including you. You had lived an exemplary life, but all of that ended when you discovered [the victim] was having an affair with another woman.’ [...] Detectives who examined the home after the murder found an entry on a calendar in the kitchen for 20 September 2013 which stated: ‘[Victim’s name] cheating lesbian whore.’”<sup>153</sup>
- “A steelworker who murdered his flatmate, stabbing her 48 times to steal £1,000 from her room, inflicted horrific injuries to her genitals as she lay dying, the Old Bailey heard. [...] [The judge said] ‘It is impossible to interpret your decision to carry out this later attack as anything other than an attack made in reference to her sex or sexual orientation which you knew to be lesbian.’”<sup>154</sup>

As Section 1 shows, most victims were killed by men in the context of a heterosexual relationship with the perpetrator (887, 62% – more if including all heterosexual encounters

and prostitution). However, seven (<1%) victims were known to have been lesbian or have a history of current or past same-sex relationships.

Context of violence/ relationship to perpetrator	Dispute/ grudge/ revenge	“Rejected advances”	Domestic violence (intimate partner)	In the course of robbery/ theft	Total
Housemate		1		1	2
Neighbour (two perpetrators)	1				1
Business associate (two perpetrators)	1				1
Partner of perpetrator’s ex-partner	1				1
Stranger				1	1
Spouse			1		1
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>

Figure 22: Victims’ sexual orientation in femicides, 2009-2018

<sup>153</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-glasgow-west-27238412> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>154</sup> <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/london-murderer-mutilated-victims-genitals-because-she-was-a-lesbian-a7059766.html> (accessed 15 November 2020).

Clearly, it is impossible to know from media reports on her death whether a woman married to, or in a relationship with, a man may be a lesbian or bisexual, whether she had same-sex relationships in the past or may have gone on to have same-sex relationships had she lived. A further six victims were recorded as "unknown" in terms of sexuality, as there were indicators that the woman may have been lesbian or bisexual.

Of the known lesbian victims, one was killed by the male ex-partner of her

current female partner, another was killed by her male spouse after she told him she was having a relationship with another woman. Anti-lesbianism was evident in a number of cases: one victim was killed following an incident of anti-lesbian harassment by the perpetrators; another was killed in the course of a robbery, but the perpetrator mutilated her genitals in what the judge interpreted as a specifically anti-lesbian act of gratuitous violence.

## 4. Perpetrators

Over the ten-year period, at least 1,419 men killed 1,425 women in the UK. This number is likely to be an undercount, as at the time of writing the report a number of cases remain unsolved (please see the Methodology section for a discussion of the criteria by which cases were included in the database). In 43 cases one perpetrator killed more than one woman in the same incident; these included terrorist offences and domestic violence cases where the perpetrator killed his partner or ex-partner along with another victim, such as a mother or sister. There was at least one case of a known serial killer across the ten-year period:<sup>155</sup> a man who specifically targeted women involved in prostitution.<sup>156</sup> At the time of writing news was also emerging of a police force examining the possibility that a serial killer may have been responsible for a number of deaths: one victim concerned is on the Femicide Census

database.<sup>157</sup> There were 41 cases where more than one perpetrator killed one or more victims. Almost half the perpetrators were known to have had histories of violence against women (see below, but this is almost certainly an undercount) and 29 perpetrators had killed previously.

While the primary focus of the Census is the women killed, it is the case that they are killed by men. Some of the data on perpetrators here reflects other research and practice into perpetrators and the risk factors associated with them.<sup>158</sup> Too often we risk assess victims but not the perpetrators, whereas there are factors which may include health, status, employment, relationship breakdown and problematic substance use which can be risk factors and therefore potential intervention points for prevention with violent perpetrators.

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<sup>155</sup> The definition used is from the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies: "Serial killing is the rarest form of homicide, occurring when an individual has killed three or more people who were previously unknown to him or her, with a 'cooling off' period between each murder." [www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/publications/cjm/article/social-study-serial-killers](http://www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/publications/cjm/article/social-study-serial-killers) (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>156</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-bradford-west-yorkshire-11541168> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>157</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/aug/23/cheshire-police-examine-serial-killer-theory-in-five-couples-deaths> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>158</sup> See the work of Respect, "a pioneering domestic abuse leading the development of safe, effective work with perpetrators, male victims and young people using violence in their close relationships."

## 4.1. Country of birth

- "A POLISH man who murdered his former girlfriend in a jealous rage previously tried to kill another partner and is suspected of killing his wife, a court heard. [...] During the case, it emerged that [the perpetrator] was jailed for eight years in Poland in 1990 for stabbing [first victim], who had lived with him for six months, and is wanted by Swiss police in connection with his wife's murder in 2001."<sup>159</sup>

As with victims, the overwhelming majority of perpetrators were known or believed to be from the UK (1150, 81%). The next highest groups were from Poland and Pakistan, and other Eastern European and Asian countries. A number of factors may be relevant in the demographics. These include the fact that the report covers a period immediately following the expansion of the EU with several EEA countries acceding in 2008 and 2009. UK also has well-established second and third generation populations of British Asians

from Pakistan, Bangladesh and India and has seen increases in this period in immigration and asylum claims from conflict affected areas such as Afghanistan and Iraq.

Perpetrators born outside of the UK constituted 19% of the total, which is disproportionate in relation to the general non-UK born population, which according to the 2011 census constitutes 13% of the total.<sup>160</sup> However, the ONS figures are not disaggregated by sex.

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<sup>159</sup> <https://www.somersetcountygazette.co.uk/news/5080267.murderers-violent-past-revealed/> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>160</sup> <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/ethnicity/articles/2011censusanalysisethnicityandreligionofthenonukbornpopulationinenglandandwales/2015-06-18#:~:text=In%202011%2C%207.5%20million%20people,African%2FCaribbean%2FBlack%20British> (accessed 15 November 2020).

Country of birth	No. of victims	Country of birth	No. of victims
UK/believed to be UK	1150	Sierra Leone	2
Blank/unknown	80	Sudan	2
Poland	24	Argentina	1
Pakistan	18	Barbados	1
Lithuania	11	Brazil	1
Romania	9	Djibouti	1
India	8	Dominican Republic	1
Afghanistan	7	France	1
Iran	6	Germany	1
Bangladesh	5	Greece	1
Iraq	5	Ireland	1
Jamaica	5	Jordan	1
Latvia	5	Mauritius	1
Somalia	5	Mexico	1
Zimbabwe	5	Nepal	1
China	4	New Zealand	1
Portugal	4	Philippines	1
Turkey	4	Russia	1
Czech Republic	3	Saint Kitts and Nevis	1
Eritrea	3	South Africa	1
Ghana	3	Spain	1
Hungary	3	Sri Lanka	1
Nigeria	3	Syria	1
United States	3	Tanzania	1
Albania	2	Timor-Leste	1
Bulgaria	2	Trinidad and Tobago	1
Gambia	2	Uganda	1
Kuwait	2	Venezuela	1
Morocco	2	Vietnam	1
Netherlands	2	Yemen	1
		<b>Total</b>	<b>1419</b>

Figure 23: Perpetrator countries of birth, 2009-2018

## 4.2. Age bands

- “[The perpetrator] was fourteen when he beat his mother to death and burned her body”<sup>161</sup>
- “A serial burglar who robbed and killed an 84-year-old woman after knocking on her door to ask for a glass of water has been jailed. [...] The 27-year-old [...] also admitted robbery and burglary during an earlier hearing at Guildford Crown Court.”<sup>162</sup>
- “[The perpetrator], 35, attacked [the victim] and then left a message on a whiteboard saying she “deserved it”. The 31-year-old’s naked body was found in bed at his flat in Chatterton Road in May.”<sup>163</sup>

Across the ten-year span of this report, the majority of perpetrators (951, 66%) were aged between 26 and 55 years old. This is a broad age bracket and would seem consistent with the fact that a high proportion of femicides were committed in the context of domestic violence by a current or ex-partner. Unusually, in 2015 the 18-25 age band was the largest single group (by a narrow margin); there does not appear to be any obvious reason for this, and in all other years the largest single group of perpetrators fell into either the 26-35 or 36-45 age band. Twenty-seven perpetrators were aged under eighteen: the youngest were aged thirteen, two were fourteen, eight were fifteen, six were sixteen, and nine were seventeen years old. Of the two thirteen-year-old perpetrators, one killed his foster

carer,<sup>164</sup> and the second killed a 47-year-old woman in the course of a robbery.<sup>165</sup> Ten perpetrators were aged 89-95; the oldest perpetrator – who strangled his wife in a so-called “mercy killing” and received a suspended sentence – was 96 years old.<sup>166</sup>

An area of interest suggested by the data for more detailed future analysis is the possibility of patterns relating to age gaps between perpetrators and victims. In domestic violence femicides it appeared relatively common that the perpetrator was substantially older than the victim, whereas in family and extended family femicide – and in femicides carried out in the context of a robbery, or other opportunistic femicides – the perpetrator was often substantially younger than his victim.

<sup>161</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2012/apr/02/teenager-daniel-bartlam-jailed-murder> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>162</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-surrey-49294931> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>163</sup> <https://www.bromleytimes.co.uk/news/bromley-man-jailed-for-16-years-after-killing-wife-in-fit-of-jealousy-1-5812708> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>164</sup> <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3637936/Family-foster-carer-murdered-teenage-boy-looking-launch-700-000-claim-damages-against-firm-placed-him.html> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>165</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-birmingham-32356081> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>166</sup> <https://www.lincolnshirelive.co.uk/news/local-news/pensioner-96-strangles-wife-68-103751> (accessed 15 November 2020).

### Perpetrator Age Bands

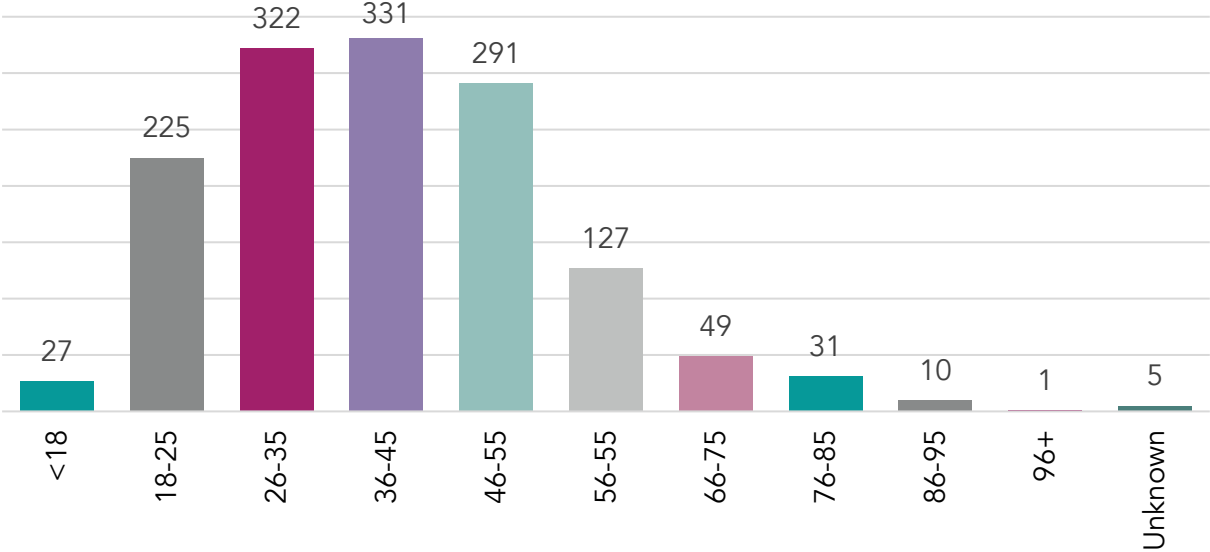


Figure 24: Age bands of perpetrators, 2009-2018



### 4.3. Occupation

- "An army officer-turned-solicitor who stabbed his wife to death after she found out he was cheating on her has convinced judges to cut his jail term."<sup>167</sup>
- "Bus driver [perpetrator's name], aged 42, was jailed for life this afternoon for murdering [the victim] at her Plymouth home in December last year."<sup>168</sup>
- "[A policeman] bludgeoned his girlfriend at least five times with a lump hammer just hours before they were due to fly out to their wedding in St Lucia."<sup>169</sup>
- "Builder strangled ex in her flat [...] He throttled the 41-year-old shop worker before stabbing her twice in the neck with a 15cm kitchen knife."<sup>170</sup>
- "A former UKIP councillor has been found guilty of murdering his wife, after he had an affair with their son's partner. [...] The ex-Royal Marine had denied killing [victim's name], 62, after she found out about the affair."<sup>171</sup>

The occupational and employment status of perpetrators were often not mentioned in media reports. In some cases, there were indicators of unemployment, but this was only recorded if there was specific mention in reports.

Unemployment was the most frequently mentioned employment status category of perpetrators. However, caution should be exercised with regard to any such finding, as the term "unemployed" can be used to refer to different things. The UK government uses the International

Labour Organisation definition, which defines unemployed people as those who are either "without a job, have been actively seeking work in the past four weeks and are available to start work in the next two weeks" or "out of work, have found a job and are waiting to start it in the next two weeks."<sup>172</sup>

This definition does not include the state of being "economically inactive", which refers to those who are not "available and seeking work" for a variety of reasons. These could include caring responsibilities, choosing not to

<sup>167</sup> <https://www.getsurrey.co.uk/news/local-news/jail-term-reduced-wife-stabbing-4807133> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>168</sup> <https://www.plymouthherald.co.uk/news/local-news/bus-driver-who-murdered-plymouth-327228> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>169</sup> <https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/pc-jailed-for-life-for-murdering-policewoman-935362> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>170</sup> <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/builder-strangled-ex-flat-left-6381741> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>171</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-suffolk-44861508> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>172</sup> <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/methodologies/aguidetolabourmarketstatistics> (accessed 15 November 2020).

seek external employment, mental or physical health-related barriers to employment, not wishing to work, living off other income, living off a partner or family member, retirement, or some sort of role in the informal economy.

However, it is rarely clear whether the term “unemployed” in the media reports is being used in the official capacity or as a catch-all term for someone who may be “economically inactive”. Where reports referred specifically to unemployment, cases were recorded accordingly, though given the loose use of the term and paucity of information in reports it should be recognised that some of these cases may be more accurately understood as “economically inactive”. However, these caveats notwithstanding, the numbers reported and categorised among perpetrators as “unemployed” are high. There may be a number of factors contributing to these numbers: the opportunistic killings of older women in robberies and theft, younger perpetrators living at home with parents, perpetrators with disabilities and/or physical and/or mental health issues which have implications for employment, perpetrators with problematic substance use, and/or perpetrators with previous histories of criminality. The World Health Organisation has identified unemployment as an individual-level risk factor for perpetrating femicide.<sup>173</sup>

The second most frequently occurring category was “Trade/manual trades”.

This is also a broad category and could include a range of self-employed, trade and private sector businesses. It is possible that some of these trade-based businesses may increase access and opportunity for some offences and potential victims. The next most commonly occurring occupational category was “Pensioner/retired” which may to some extent reflect the higher proportion of femicides occurring in a domestic violence context. In some of these cases involving older perpetrators and victims in a relationship, the cases were portrayed as “suicide pacts” and “mercy killings”: as discussed earlier these terms should not be used lightly or taken at face value. Any such femicide should be treated as a crime scene in the first instance at least and should be viewed in the context of the relationship history as it may be the culmination of many years of coercive control and domestic violence. The next most frequently occurring category was “Professional”: again, a broad category but obviously indicative of the fact that perpetrators are found across different social classes. Perpetrators with a known military background accounted for 3% of the total; those with a police background 1%.

Of the three perpetrators who worked in the “sex industry”, one was a “greeter” in a brothel who murdered the woman brothel keeper,<sup>174</sup> one was a male prostitute who killed his wife (who was also involved in prostitution),<sup>175</sup> and the

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<sup>173</sup> [https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/77421/WHO\\_RHR\\_12.38\\_eng.pdf;jsessionid=4DD39FB77FD32FE6CC03FE98F3A27D79?sequence=1](https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/77421/WHO_RHR_12.38_eng.pdf;jsessionid=4DD39FB77FD32FE6CC03FE98F3A27D79?sequence=1)

<sup>174</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-beds-bucks-herts-21578054> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>175</sup> [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wales/south\\_west/8497980.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wales/south_west/8497980.stm) (accessed 15 November 2020).

third was a bigamist who ran a “sexual massage service” with the victim.<sup>176</sup>

A comparison of perpetrator data with that relating to victims’ occupations reveals a number of notable differences. Among victims, “Pensioner/retired”, “Professional”, “Student”,<sup>177</sup> “Social work/healthcare/charity” and “Unemployed” feature sequentially. The highest proportion being “Pensioner/retired” may reflect the killings by sons of their mothers and by young men in the course of other crimes, combined with intimate partner abuse. Again “Unemployed” may be an imprecise category here as many women might be described as unemployed when in fact they are “economically inactive” (see above) due to family and caring responsibilities and barriers to the labour market. As indicated in the Victims chapter, women’s occupations were frequently omitted.

It is possible that the lack of data about occupation or the broad, undefined and

very brief references to occupation categories in media reports obscures what could be potentially significant indicators, patterns, trends, warning signs and prevention and early intervention avenues. For instance, there are indications that some men experience the lack, end, downgrading or loss of a job (for reasons including retirement or health issues) or having a lower paid or lower status job than a female partner as an affront to their sense of masculinity.<sup>178</sup> This can be a factor in how some men relate to female partners and family members: changes in employment status and income can be a stage four ‘trigger’ according to the eight-stage Homicide Timeline,<sup>179</sup> and (as noted above) the World Health Organisation has identified unemployment as a risk factor for perpetrating femicide. However, such considerations should not obscure the fact that men kill women across a wide range of employment and unemployment categories and statuses.

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<sup>176</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-dorset-31619344> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>177</sup> This number may be skewed somewhat by the age profiles of victims of the Manchester bombing in 2017.

<sup>178</sup> <https://cwasu.org/resource/if-only-wed-known-an-exploratory-study-of-seven-intimate-partner-homicides-in-engshire/> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>179</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-49481998> (accessed 15 November 2020).

Occupation	Number	% of total perpetrators
Unemployed/economically inactive	173	12
Trade/manual trades	113	8
Pensioner/retired	86	6
Professional	75	5
Military/ex-military/retired military	41	3
Taxi driver	32	2
Student	30	2
Hospitality/catering	25	2
Social work/healthcare/charity	18	1
Retail	16	1
Business owner/company director	15	1
Security officers	15	1
Factory worker	14	1
Police/ex-police/retired police	12	1
Administration	9	1
Cleaner	6	1
Farming/fisheries/equestrian	6	<1
IT	6	<1
Social care/childcare	6	<1
Sports/fitness	6	<1
"Handyman"	5	<1
Arts/literature/music/performing arts	4	<1
Teacher/education	4	<1
Airline pilot	3	<1
Call centre worker	3	<1
Pharmacist	3	<1
Sex industry	3	<1
Postal worker/delivery driver	2	<1
Bus/tube/rail	1	<1
Faith-based	1	<1
Journalism / media	1	<1
Volunteer	1	<1
<b>Total</b>	<b>735</b>	<b>52</b>

Figure 25: Perpetrator occupations, 2009-2018

Alternatively, the lack of good data on occupations can mean that myths and stereotypes about who is a victim and who is a perpetrator of violence against women and particularly domestic violence go unchallenged and indeed become entrenched, affecting access to safety and justice. For instance, it remains a stubborn presumption that domestic violence occurs more in the “lower classes”. This not only villainises and misrepresents working class people, but also reinforces unexamined assumptions and perceptions of agency

staff that may make it harder for some victims to access safety and justice. Services may disbelieve or blame certain victims, or conversely may be influenced by the apparent social status of certain perpetrators. Services may not be looking for, expecting or recognising domestic violence in groups which confound their stereotypes or indeed may be assuming it is normal in certain segments and failing to act. For all these reasons, the Femicide Census will continue to try to capture as much data as possible about occupations.

## 4.4. History of violence against women

- “A man who killed his girlfriend with a single punch has been told he may never be released from prison after it was revealed he has 23 previous convictions, many for domestic violence.”<sup>180</sup>
- “[The perpetrator], 34, was given a life sentence at St Albans Crown Court after admitting murder earlier this month. [The victim] had made claims of domestic violence to Hertfordshire Police and her husband had been arrested just months before she died.”<sup>181</sup>

Almost half the perpetrators (46%, n=658) were known to have histories of perpetrating abuse and violence against women. Perpetrators were only recorded in this category if there was specific mention of past violence against women or abusive behaviour in media reports or official documents. Given what is known about femicide, it

is likely that many more had such histories: a previous history of stalking or abuse and a pattern of coercive control within the perpetrator’s relationship with his victim have both been identified as stages in the eight-stage domestic homicide timeline,<sup>182</sup> Almost half the perpetrators (46%, n=658) were known to have histories of

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<sup>180</sup> <https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/ryan-ingham-jailed-violent-bully-7383687> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>181</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-beds-bucks-herts-30523482> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>182</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-49481998> (accessed 15 November 2020).

perpetrating abuse and violence against women. Perpetrators were only recorded in this category if there was specific mention of past violence against women or abusive behaviour in media reports or official documents. Given what is known about femicide, it is likely that many more had such histories: a previous history of stalking or abuse and a pattern of coercive control within the perpetrator's relationship with his victim have both been identified as stages in the eight-stage domestic homicide timeline,<sup>183</sup> and a previous history of abuse has also been identified by the WHO as a risk factor for perpetrating femicide.<sup>184</sup> In particular, the WHO cites threats to kill with a weapon and "forcing sexual intercourse on a partner" as specific risk indicators.<sup>185</sup>

This section differs from the "History of abuse experienced" outlined in the Victims section, as information here may involve perpetrators' history of abuse and violence against women other than the victim, including previous partners.

In the majority of cases, the police outcome was unknown or it was believed that the victim had not reported the offence(s). However, there was a general lack of detailed information in media reports. 9% of perpetrators were known to have had previous convictions for violence against women; a very small number of perpetrators were known to have received restraining orders (seventeen) or cautions (seven), but of course the numbers could be higher given the possibility of underreporting. It is not known how many perpetrators had breached restraining orders; however, the WHO has identified "mandated arrest for violation of restraining orders related to intimate partner violence" as a protective factor in preventing femicides.<sup>186</sup> It is notable that one of the police super-complaints precisely addressed the failure of police to act on their preventative and protective powers.

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<sup>183</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-49481998> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>184</sup> [https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/77421/WHO\\_RHR\\_12.38\\_eng.pdf;jsessionid=4DD39FB77FD32FE6CC03FE98F3A27D79?sequence=1](https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/77421/WHO_RHR_12.38_eng.pdf;jsessionid=4DD39FB77FD32FE6CC03FE98F3A27D79?sequence=1) (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>185</sup> See note at 267.

<sup>186</sup> [https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/77421/WHO\\_RHR\\_12.38\\_eng.pdf;jsessionid=4DD39FB77FD32FE6CC03FE98F3A27D79?sequence=1](https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/77421/WHO_RHR_12.38_eng.pdf;jsessionid=4DD39FB77FD32FE6CC03FE98F3A27D79?sequence=1) (accessed 15 November 2020).

Previous abuse/violence against women	Number of perpetrators	% of total perpetrators
Yes – police outcome unknown	236	17.0
Yes – not reported	180	13.0
Yes – convicted	137	10.0
Yes – no action taken	51	4.0
Yes – restraining order	17	1.0
Yes – under investigation	16	1.0
Yes – cautioned	7	0.5
Yes – not convicted	6	0.5
To be determined	4	0.3
Yes – community order	4	0.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>658</b>	<b>46.0</b>

Figure 26a: Perpetrators with a history of violence/abusive behaviour towards women, 2009-2018

#### 4.4.1. Perpetrators who had killed before

29 (2%) perpetrators who killed victims recorded in this report are known to have killed before. In twenty cases they had killed women, in nine cases men. In some cases, the perpetrators killed both victims within the timeframe of this report; in other cases, the first femicide or homicide was committed prior to 2009. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, one perpetrator was identified as a serial killer.<sup>187</sup> The possibility of a second serial killer was being examined at the time of writing this report.<sup>188</sup>

Killed before	Number
Yes – femicide	20
Yes – homicide	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>

Figure 26b: Perpetrators who had killed before, 2009-2018

In addition to the perpetrators who had killed before, one perpetrator killed another victim after the femicide recorded in this report. In this case, the perpetrator – who had killed his mother – killed the second victim abroad while attempting to evade arrest.<sup>189</sup> This second femicide has not been listed in the main data (see Methodology section on victims killed abroad).

<sup>187</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-bradford-west-yorkshire-11541168> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>188</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/aug/23/cheshire-police-examine-serial-killer-theory-in-five-couples-deaths> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>189</sup> <https://www.surreycomet.co.uk/news/12974503.sean-heiss-murder-trial-accused-brutally-killed-woman-in-spain-months-after-strangling-mother/> (accessed 15 November 2020).

## 4.5. Disability, health and problematic substance use

■ “[A psychiatrist] said she felt he did not pose a threat to himself or others. A mental health team was due to see him at home at 1130 BST on 30 April, but at 0830 BST he left the house [...] and attacked [victim’s name].”<sup>190</sup>

Approximately 10% (151) of perpetrators were reported in publicly available sources as having a disability. As noted in the Victims section, the UK legal definition of “disability” was used in recording disabilities where possible.<sup>191</sup> “Chronic disease” includes conditions such as cancer, diabetes and Alzheimer’s disease. Other forms of dementia may have been recorded as “Learning difficulty/impairment”, due to their effects on cognitive and memory functions. In the case of mental illness, this was recorded as a disability only where there was a medical diagnosis, e.g. of schizophrenia.

In cases of intimate partner femicides, it has been argued that diagnosis or deterioration of either partner’s mental or physical health can act as potential “triggering” factors.<sup>192</sup> A 2016 analysis of 24 Domestic Homicide Reviews examining perpetrator and victim characteristics found that fifteen out of 24 perpetrators and fifteen out of 24 victims had mental health issues.<sup>193</sup> However, it should be emphasised that such phenomena are to be understood as “trigger” events only in the context

of an abusive man already exerting coercive control over his female partner. There is no equivalent phenomenon of women diagnosed with mental or physical illnesses killing their male partners. Similarly, the diagnoses of men as having mental health conditions needs to be understood within the broader context of male violence against women and the knowledge that men commit femicide regardless of diagnosed mental health conditions.

Eight perpetrators were reported in news reports as having been diagnosed with Asperger’s Syndrome or autism.<sup>194</sup>

Disability	Number
Mental illness (diagnosed condition, e.g. schizophrenia)	116
Chronic disease	10
Physical impairment	6
Sensory impairment	6
Learning impairment	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>143</b>

Figure 27a: Disabilities of perpetrators, 2009-2018

<sup>190</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-beds-bucks-herts-11992902> (accessed 15 November 2020)

<sup>191</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/definition-of-disability-under-equality-act-2010> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>192</sup> Monckton-Smith, J. (2019) ‘Inter-partner femicide: Using Foucauldian analysis to track an eight stage progression to homicide’. *Violence Against Women*. August, 2019

<sup>193</sup> [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5ee0be2588f1e349401c832c/t/5efb6ce1d305a44006cb5ab9/1593535715616/STAD\\_V\\_DHR\\_Report\\_Final.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5ee0be2588f1e349401c832c/t/5efb6ce1d305a44006cb5ab9/1593535715616/STAD_V_DHR_Report_Final.pdf) (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>194</sup> Asperger’s syndrome and autism are not universally considered to be disabilities and therefore have not been included in the table.



Just over a quarter of perpetrators (392, 27%) were known to have health issues; some of these had problematic substance use (PSU) alongside mental health and/or physical health issues. Perpetrators have been recorded as having mental health issues rather than a disability where reference was made in publicly available sources to issues such as depression, but there was no evidence of a formal psychiatric diagnosis. Around a fifth (20%, 70) of perpetrators with mental health issues also had problematic substance use.

Health issue	Number
Mental health (inc. 70 PSU)	351
Physical health	41
<b>Total</b>	<b>393</b>

Figure 27b: Health issues of perpetrators, 2009-2018

Just under a fifth (18%, 263) of all perpetrators were known to have problematic substance use. Of these, over a quarter (27%, 70) also had mental health issues. The WHO identifies both “problematic alcohol use and illicit drug use” and “mental health problems” as risk indicators for perpetrating femicide,

with the latter a particular risk indicator for femicide-suicide, in which the male perpetrator kills himself after killing his female partner.<sup>195</sup>

Perpetrators were recorded as having problematic substance use both where there was specific reference to problematic use in available sources and also where substance use was directly related to the femicide – for example, if money stolen from the victim was used to buy drugs or alcohol, or where the perpetrator had been using drugs or alcohol prior or subsequent to killing the victim. In some cases, consumption of substances was identified as having induced psychosis; in other cases, the perpetrator killed the victim in the context of failing to take prescribed medication for a diagnosed condition.

Problematic substance use	Number
Problematic substance use: alcohol/illegal drugs/ prescribed drugs (inc. 70 MH)	261
<b>Total</b>	<b>261</b>

Figure 27c: Problematic substance use of perpetrators, 2009-2018

<sup>195</sup> [https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/77421/WHO\\_RHR\\_12.38\\_eng.pdf;jsessionid=4DD39FB77FD32FE6CC03FE98F3A27D79?sequence=1](https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/77421/WHO_RHR_12.38_eng.pdf;jsessionid=4DD39FB77FD32FE6CC03FE98F3A27D79?sequence=1) (accessed 15 November 2020).

## 4.6. Sexual orientation

■ “Two gay lovers from Wiltshire murdered a frail Italian landlady and threw her body in a river before using her money to buy groceries, CDs and sex toys, a court has heard. [...] The jury heard that [the victim] took [the perpetrator] in as a lodger in October 2008. Mr Meeke said when [the victim] was asked by [the perpetrator] if [his boyfriend] could move in, she refused.”<sup>196</sup>

As has been noted in previous sections, the overwhelming majority of femicides were carried out by men in the context of a heterosexual relationship – whether current or former – with the victim.

However, in a very small number of cases (1%), the perpetrator was known or believed to be either gay or bisexual, or to have been involved in same-sex relationships.

Relationship to victim	Sexual orientation of perpetrator			Total
	Gay/believed to be gay	Bisexual/believed to be bisexual	Believed to be gay or bisexual	
Spouse	1		1	2
Colleague/business associate	1	1		2
Former partner			1	1
Tenant/lodger	1			1
Flatmate			1	1
Friend/social acquaintance		1		1
Stranger – hired by perpetrator	1			1
Stranger		1		1
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>10</b>

Figure 28: Sexual orientation of perpetrators in femicides 2009-2018

<sup>196</sup> <https://www.swindonadvertiser.co.uk/news/4641160.landladys-body-dumped-by-gay-lovers-court-told/> (accessed 15 November 2020).

### 4.6.1. Transgenderism and transvestism

- "Cross-dressing murderer [perpetrator's name] [...] took [the victim] to the attic, bound her to a chair with tape, put tape over her mouth to stop her screams and placed glasses with taped-up lenses over her eyes. [...] then began to torture her and continued to brutalise her for thirteen days."<sup>197</sup>
- "[The perpetrator], 23, and [second perpetrator], 21, were today told they will spend at least 26 years behind bars after killing [the victim] in the house they shared in Stratford-upon-Avon. She was found 'drenched' in blood with stab wounds to her neck and her hands bound with tape on 3 February last year, a 'sadistic' killing that the pair carried out for 'perverted pleasure'."<sup>198</sup>

Three perpetrators were known to be "transgender" or transvestites: one identified as a woman; two others were cross-dressers. Of these three, two perpetrated particularly sadistic femicides, involving prolonged torture<sup>199</sup> and sexual torture.<sup>200</sup> The third killed his wife after she had discovered him wearing a dress, stockings and high-heeled shoes.<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/cross-dressing-killer-lists-woman-9980136>

<sup>198</sup> <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4156440/Transgender-woman-boyfriend-murdered-flatmate.html> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>199</sup> <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/cross-dressing-torture-murderer-names-9977965> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>200</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-coventry-warwickshire-38748599> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>201</sup> <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3219970/Cross-dressing-merchant-seaman-stabbed-wife-death.html> (accessed 15 November 2020).

## 4.7. Pornography, the sex industry and sadistic sexual practices

- “[The perpetrator] had stayed in the flat for twelve hours after her death – drinking, taking drugs and sending pornographic pictures and videos to other escorts.”<sup>202</sup>
- “Police found bondage items, including a strait jacket, black rope, handcuffs, ball gag, mask and incontinence pads in his bedroom.”<sup>203</sup>
- “The court heard [the perpetrator] had a string of previous convictions for sexual offences, beginning when he was just sixteen and he harboured perverted sexual fantasies involving the gagging, raping and murdering of women – which he acted out on [the victim].”<sup>204</sup>

Findings in this category do not reflect the total number of perpetrators who had potentially accessed pornography, women in prostitution (including webcamming), images of child sexual abuse or lap dancing/strip clubs. Given what is known about the prevalence of pornography consumption, the actual number is likely to be far higher. However, instances were recorded only where specific mention was made of use of the sex industry in media reports, usually in direct relationship to the femicide; for example, where the perpetrator killed a woman involved in prostitution, or where he had accessed pornography before or after the femicide. In one case, the perpetrator killed his partner after she had discovered he had images of child sexual abuse on his computer.<sup>205</sup>

Use of sex industry	Number
Prostitution	35
Pornography	35
Images of child sexual abuse	5
Lap dancing	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>76</b>

Figure 29a: Perpetrators’ use of pornography and sex industry, 2009-2018

There is an increasing body of work that examines how attitudes and exposure to pornography may contribute to a conducive context for rape, violence against women and misogyny. Recent studies find distinct sex-based differences with boys more likely to have seen and actively sought out pornography and more likely to view pornography in a positive light and as a learning tool.<sup>206</sup> Girls were less likely to

<sup>202</sup> <https://news.sky.com/story/city-banker-jailed-for-at-least-19-years-for-murdering-woman-with-a-pestle-11587803>

<sup>203</sup> <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/sex-obsessed-neighbour-knifed-elderly-8889451>

<sup>204</sup> <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/crime/9892514/Catherine-Gowing-vets-killer-previously-jailed-for-rape-and-sexual-assaults.html>

<sup>205</sup> <https://www.chroniclelive.co.uk/news/north-east-news/adam-julie-parkin-murder-jailed-13823172>

<sup>206</sup> Quadara, A., El-Murr, A. and Latham, J. (2017) The effects of pornography on children and young people: a snapshot (2017) Australian Institute for Family Studies (AIFS) <https://aifs.gov.au/publications/effects-pornography-children-and-young-people-snapshot> (accessed 15 November 2020).

have seen pornography; where they had seen it, they had not been looking for it or they had been shown it by others and had higher levels of distaste and discomfort about it. Some commentators describe how the lack of sex education covering respectful relationships enables pornography to fill the vacuum and act as a grooming and education tool for young people with

boys and men showing it to young women to try to persuade them to replicate the acts involved. Similarly, some studies suggest that men who use the sex industry have higher tolerance to misogynistic and sexist myths and stereotypes and may be more likely to show other criminal and offending behaviour including domestic violence.<sup>207</sup>

**Perpetrators' use of sex industry**

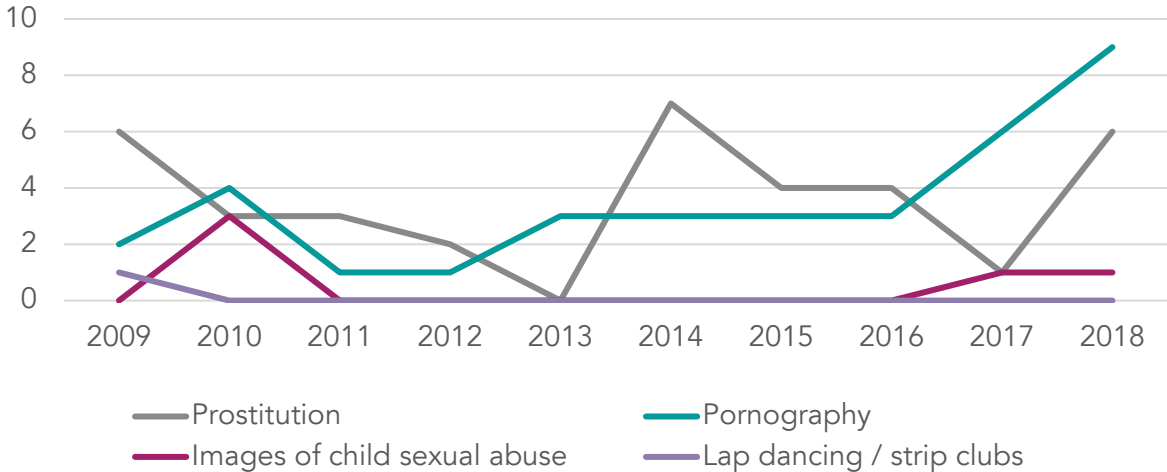


Figure 29b: Perpetrators’ use of pornography and sex industry, 2009-2018

The above line chart may show a possible upward trend overall but the numbers in question are small and there is a lot of variation so it is not possible to be conclusive from current data. The year 2018 appears to be highest for pornography use but it may be that media reports are providing more detail on this aspect of femicides than in previous years. There is an increasing body of work looking at the impacts of

pornography and the increasing normalisation and crossover between pornography and mainstream media. Relatedly, a number of campaigns have raised awareness about the use of strangulation and of bondage, domination and sado-masochism (BDSM) in current dating behaviours,<sup>208</sup> This is an area that the Femicide Census may investigate in more detail in coming years.

<sup>207</sup> Farley, M., Macleod, J., Anderson, L., & Golding, J. M. (2011). Attitudes and social characteristics of men who buy sex in Scotland. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, 3(4), 369–383. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0022645>  
<sup>208</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-50546184> (accessed 15 November 2020); <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/mother-tongue/11554595/Pornography-has-changed-the-landscape-of-adolescence-beyond-all-recognition.html> (accessed 15 November 2020).

### 4.7.1. Sadistic sexual practices

“It appears you harboured a desire for, and regularly put into practice, a particularly extreme form of sexual activity in that you enjoyed sadomasochism whereby you held the throats of sexual partners very tightly and regularly used a knife in the midst of sexual congress, usually by holding it against the throat of a woman. You kept a knife under your pillow for that purpose,’ [the judge] said.”<sup>209</sup>

In the case cited above, the perpetrator had just met the victim that day and they had been drinking and taking substances together before she returned to his flat. According to the perpetrator’s account, they had then had sex and the perpetrator produced a knife in the context of what the judge described as “bizarre and violent sadomasochistic sexual activity”,<sup>210</sup> which the perpetrator claimed was consensual. The perpetrator – who had a previous record of violence against women – stabbed the victim through her neck, fatally severing her jugular vein and carotid artery. He was sentenced to six years for manslaughter.

Approximately 2% (24) of perpetrators were reported as practising or having an interest in sadistic sexual practices: what has become known as “Bondage, domination/discipline, sadism/submission and masochism” (BDSM) sexual practices. In some cases, this was a feature in trials, where the “rough sex defence” (see next section) was argued by defence teams. The number of perpetrators recorded in this

category was low: the highest number of such cases (seven) was recorded in 2018; however, there was no clear general upward trend in terms of prevalence.

This area too is one which Femicide Census will scrutinise in coming years and where again the increasing normalisation of such practices is crossing over into mainstream media and social media, including film, literature, magazines, fashion, music, online blogs and publications,<sup>211</sup> including media targeted at teenage girls.<sup>212</sup> There are numerous examples of media portrayals of sadistic sexual practices as safe, “sexy” and enjoyable rather than as violence against women.<sup>213</sup> However, the more such practices are mainstreamed and normalised, the less remarkable and worthy of comment they become. This means that media reports and indeed advertising complaints, watchdogs and standards regulators are less likely to mention such practices or raise concerns about them.

<sup>209</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-humber-45140580> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>210</sup> See note 302 above.

<sup>211</sup> <https://www.healthline.com/health/healthy-sex/erotic-asphyxiation#What-is-it> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>212</sup> <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/bdsm-consent> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>213</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-50546184> (accessed 15 November 2020); <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/mother-tongue/11554595/Pornography-has-changed-the-landscape-of-adolescence-beyond-all-recognition.html> (accessed 15 November 2020).

## 4.8. Online dating, social media, cyberstalking and IT

- “[The perpetrator] had installed CCTV in his bedroom and bathroom and, when their relationship ended, he installed a tracking device in her car.”<sup>214</sup>
- “Using the ‘terrible weapon’ he took the life of [victim’s name], 36, who had become the object of his desire and who he had secretly filmed in the shower in their shared flat in Thornton Heath.”<sup>215</sup>
- “[The perpetrator] created the fake profile on Facebook and used pictures of a boy in his late teens. [...] When she met him, on 25 October last year, he kidnapped, raped and murdered her.”<sup>216</sup>

At least 135 (9%) perpetrators used technology in some connection to the femicide. This included using online dating apps to meet the victim or other women, with companies promoting this technology often failing to act responsibly when alerted to abuse;<sup>217</sup> use of social media to contact the victim or in some cases to threaten her or boast about the femicide after the event; using IT to stalk the victim, either by text, social media or through use of tracking devices; filming the femicide and attempting to share the video; and posting on social media after the femicide to try to evade justice. As with some other categories, this is likely to

be a considerable undercount given the very widespread use of social media and access to technological devices.

The enormous potential for technological advances to be used to the detriment of women and in particular to perpetrate violence – including coercive control – against women has been recognised by women’s groups and academic specialists.<sup>218</sup> The Femicide Census is keen to develop this area for future reports and to refine the categories in order to capture the full range technology assisted abuse.

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<sup>214</sup> <https://www.bournemouthcho.co.uk/news/8868189.obsessed-killer-alan-pickersgill-jailed-for-life-for-murdering-julie-bywater/> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>215</sup> <https://www.croydonadvertiser.co.uk/news/croydon-news/lucian-stinci-evil-killer-who-1305479> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>216</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2010/mar/08/peter-chapman-facebook-killer> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>217</sup> <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-10-12/tinder-dating-app-helps-sexual-predators-hide-four-corners/12722732?nw=0> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>218</sup> See for example <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/steapp/research/digital-technologies-policy-laboratory/gender-and-iot>

## 5. Criminal justice outcomes

### 5.1. Criminal justice charges

As discussed in the Methodology chapter, in order for a case to be included in the Femicide Census, perpetrators must generally have at least been charged with murder or manslaughter; cases were also included where the perpetrator had taken his own life prior to charges being brought but police were not looking for any other suspects and inquests reached an “unlawful killing” outcome. In a very small number of cases, it had been agreed that the perpetrator had killed the victim, but no charges had been brought due to the perpetrator being deemed unfit to stand trial. Regrettably, it was not possible to include cases where the woman had clearly been killed but no one had been charged or identified as the perpetrator; these cases were recorded as “unsolved”. Generally, cases where perpetrators had caused the death of victims through dangerous driving are not included, though two such cases were included where the incident occurred in the context of domestic abuse. (Please see the Methodology section for a full discussion of the criteria by which cases were included.) The overwhelming majority of perpetrators (1185, 84%) were charged with murder; 58 (4%) were charged with manslaughter; five (0.4%) with culpable homicide and two (0.1%) with causing death by dangerous driving (see note above). In 173 cases (12%) the perpetrator was not charged: in 153 of these cases this was because he had killed himself at the time of or

following the femicide; in the remaining cases it was because he was otherwise deceased, deemed unfit to stand trial or detained under the Mental Health Act, or shot dead by police. Other charges – such as attempted murder of other victims, rape and burglary – brought against the perpetrator in relation to the femicides are not always detailed in media reports, but where known these charges are also presented in the table (the total number of charges is therefore higher than the number of perpetrators).

#### Femicide charges

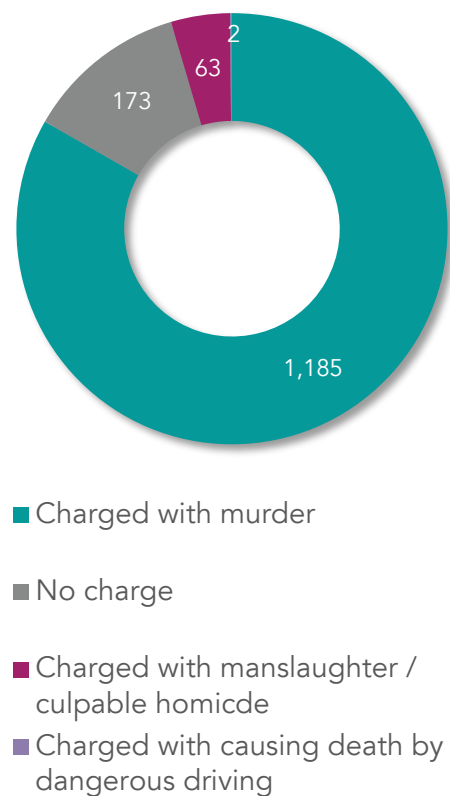


Figure 30a: Criminal justice charges in femicides, 2009-2018



Criminal justice charge	Total
Murder, including:	1185
• double murder (63)	
• multiple murder (13)	
No charge:	173
• Died by suicide at/after event (153)	
• Other – deceased (11)	
• Unfit to stand trial/detained under MHA (5)	
• Shot dead by police (4)	
Manslaughter	58
Attempted murder	40
Arson/arson with intent to endanger life	24
Rape	22
GBH/attempted GBH	13
Possessing an offensive weapon	13
Robbery	12
Burglary	10
Wounding with intent	7
Abduction/kidnapping	6
Assault	6
Child destruction	5
Culpable homicide	5
Prevention of lawful burial	5
Perverting the course of justice	4
Conspiracy to commit fraud	4
Causing death by dangerous driving	2
Obstructing a coroner	2
Affray	1
Conspiracy to murder	1
Fraud	1
Stalking	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,600</b>

Figure 30b: Criminal justice charges in femicides, 2009-2018

## 5.2. Pleas

- “[The perpetrator] had claimed [the victim] vanished after leaving him to start a new life in Belfast. When police launched a missing person inquiry seven months later he posted a message on Facebook saying ‘someone must know where she is please help’. [...] [The victim’s] family said [the perpetrator] had put a ‘cruel suffering’ upon their family by not revealing where her body is.”<sup>219</sup>
- “A man has been convicted of raping and murdering a mother-of-three in Dundee. Serial sex offender [perpetrator name], had denied killing 34-year-old [victim name] following a night out at Fat Sam’s nightclub in the city in February 2010. [The judge told the perpetrator:] ‘You have persistently lied and adapted your story and you have shown no remorse for what you did.’”<sup>220</sup>

Where known, pleas put forward by perpetrators are presented in the table below. It was a feature of many cases that perpetrators changed their plea over time, initially pleading not guilty to murder and subsequently pleading guilty at a much later stage, sometimes as the trial was progressing. For this

report, where there were plea changes, the latest of the sequence of pleas has been retained. Clearly, there can be sentencing implications for perpetrators in relation to whether he has pleaded guilty or not guilty to the crime and at what stage in the process he has done so.

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<sup>219</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-51443605> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>220</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-tayside-central-13645160> (accessed 15 November 2020).

Plea	Number	%
Not guilty to murder	427	30.0
Guilty to murder	296	21.0
Guilty to manslaughter – diminished responsibility	225	16.0
N/A – deceased <sup>221</sup>	184	12.0
Guilty to manslaughter	164	12.0
Unknown	33	2.0
No plea	32	2.0
Guilty to culpable homicide	15	1.0
Guilty to culpable homicide – diminished responsibility	14	1.0
Not guilty to manslaughter	13	1.0
Provocation (partial defence for murder)	7	0.5
N/A – unfit to stand trial / detained under MHA	5	0.4
Guilty to causing death by dangerous driving	1	0.1
Not guilty to causing death by dangerous driving	1	0.1
Not guilty to conspiracy to murder	1	0.1
Not guilty to culpable homicide	1	0.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,419</b>	<b>100</b>

Figure 31: Perpetrator pleas, 2009-2018

<sup>221</sup> Includes perpetrators who died in police custody or prison after being charged.

### 5.3. Perpetrator defences

- A man who faked his wife's suicide and was only caught after confessing to murder to a co-worker in the pub has been jailed for at least 17 years. [The perpetrator], 64, killed [the victim], 66, at their Swansea home on 7 April and made it look like a suicide. Police did not treat her death as suspicious until, one week before she was due to be cremated, [the perpetrator] told a colleague 'I had to strangle her'.<sup>222</sup>
- "A man who murdered his partner in a 'savage' hammer attack has been jailed for life and must serve at least 22 years. [The perpetrator] admitted killing [the victim], 46, in their home at Pen-y-ffordd, Flintshire, but denied murder. [...] After killing [the victim], he called 999 and told the operator he had 'murdered his missus'. [The perpetrator] said he had been drinking heavily for days before her death and only learned what he had done when his solicitor visited him in a police station. He denied fetching the hammer with the intention of attacking his partner and said he could only think it was in the house because he intended to fix the upstairs floorboards."<sup>223</sup>

Perpetrator defences are a new research area for the Femicide Census, and the findings are therefore indicative rather than comprehensive. The data on defences were collected only from 2013 onwards as part of the ten-year data review, so – with the exception of "rough sex defences" – are drawn from the cohort of 2013-2018 (824 perpetrators), rather than the whole set of 2009-2018 (1,419 perpetrators).<sup>224</sup> Defences are not always detailed in media reports, and it was only possible to record them where known: percentages have therefore not been

given as they would not be meaningful. Some perpetrators used more than one defence. As with pleas, changing defence arguments were quite common, with some perpetrators using one line of defence to police, and defence teams subsequently presenting a very different case at trial. For example, one perpetrator initially claimed that he had killed the victim in his sleep, but later changed his defence to a "rough sex defence".<sup>225</sup> Again, the later defence in a sequence is that retained for the purposes of this report.

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<sup>222</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-46136141> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>223</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-48347907> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>224</sup> The exception is data relating to the "rough sex defence", which has been collected across the whole dataset given its particular significance at the time of writing in terms of campaigns, emerging policy and legislation.

<sup>225</sup> <https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/8894671.murder-trial-jury-told-strangling-accused-changed-story/> (accessed 15 November 2020).

The most frequently used defence was “mental illness / diminished responsibility”, which occurred over

three times more frequently than the next defence argument, “blaming the victim”.

Defence	Number
Mental illness/diminished responsibility	167
Blaming the victim	63
Loss of control	58
Self-defence	51
Blaming third party/ies	51
Accident	43
Memory loss	32
“Consensual” violence (“rough sex defence”)	24
Injuries self-inflicted by victim	15
“Mercy killing”	14
“Couldn’t cope”	12
Provocation (as partial defence for murder)	8
Carried out while asleep	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>539</b>

Figure 32: Perpetrator defences, 2013-2018

### 5.3.1. The “rough sex defence”

**Fiona MacKenzie: founder of “We Can’t Consent to This” campaign**

“We Can’t Consent To This campaigns to end the success of so-called ‘rough sex’, or ‘consent’ claims as part of a defence to violence. We were first to research the full extent of these, in both homicides and non-fatal assaults. Only men have used ‘rough sex’ defences in the UK, and they have been doing so for 50 years. The violence used in these homicides is appalling, severe, sustained. It is incomprehensible that this was ever believed to be consensual.

Too often rough sex claims succeeded, with prosecution for manslaughter, a lighter sentence, or the death not treated as a crime at all. Lurid detail of the women’s alleged intimate life would be heard, and made into headlines: how she asked for the violence, but – of course – she knew the harm of what she was getting herself into. Although there was longstanding case law in England and Wales that should have stopped ‘consent’ as a defence to violence, later legal cases had loosened the effect of this,<sup>226</sup> and the CPS confirmed they would not prosecute that law.<sup>227</sup>

This year, after our cross-party campaign with MP Harriet Harman, the Government proposed law that you cannot consent to serious harm, or death.<sup>228</sup> This is huge, but this law will now need to be made to work, and Northern Ireland and Scotland must follow. This law was changed because the women’s stories needed to be brought together – with clear data on the terrible extent of these claims. And we were inspired to do this by the Femicide Census – and the sister project Counting Dead Women – which showed us how powerfully affecting these stories could be, and why they need to be told.”

There has been increasing awareness of perpetrators claiming that the victim died as a result of “consensual” violence committed in the context of similarly “consensual” sexual activity: what has become known in common parlance as the “rough sex defence”. These defences are presented in the context of the increasing normalisation of men’s sexual violence against women

in heterosexual sexual activity: a 2019 survey found that more than a third of UK women under the age of 40 had experienced unwanted slapping, choking, gagging or spitting during “consensual” sex.<sup>229</sup> Following campaigning, the domestic abuse bill will include an amendment to highlight that a woman cannot consent to serious harm or fatal violence and rejecting

<sup>226</sup> <https://wecantconsenttothis.uk/cjs-e-and-w-2020> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>227</sup> <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/cps-backed-off-assault-charge-over-fear-of-rough-sex-defence-nk6ghgcs8> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>228</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-abuse-bill-2020-factsheets/consent-to-serious-harm-for-sexual-gratification-not-a-defence> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>229</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-50546184> (accessed 15 September 2020).

attempts by perpetrators to offer such a defence.

Clearly, in cases resulting in the death of the woman, the victim’s account cannot be heard in court and perpetrator accounts – often victim-blaming and luridly reported in the press – can greatly add to the distress of families.

24 perpetrators over the ten-year period used the “rough sex defence” (see chart below).<sup>230</sup> Cases where British women were killed abroad are not included. In two further cases, perpetrators were cleared of murder or manslaughter.<sup>231</sup>

**Perpetrators claiming 'rough sex' defence, 2009-2018**

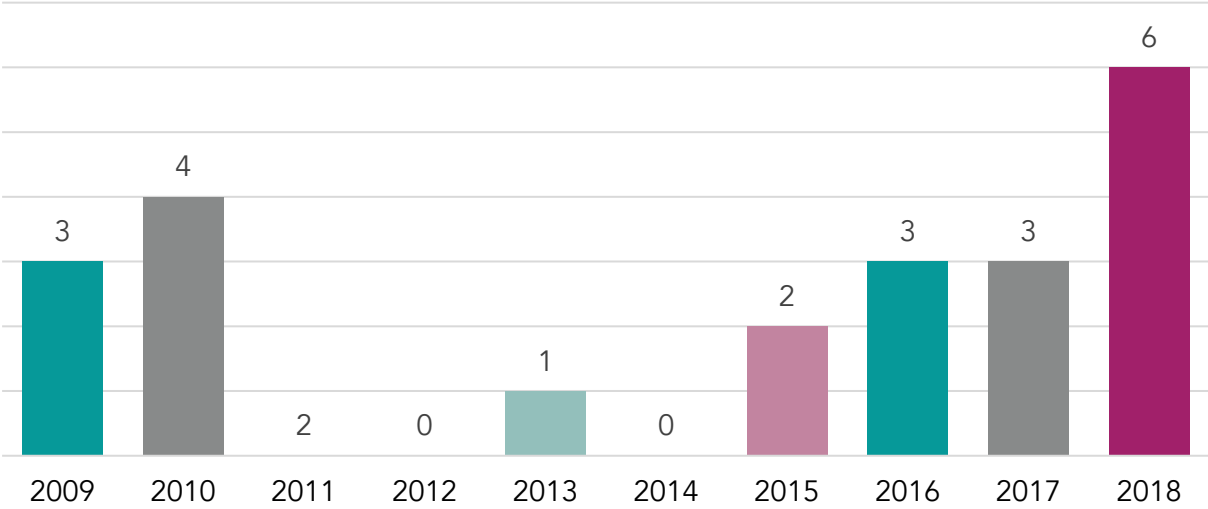


Figure 33a: Perpetrators claiming “rough sex” defence, 2009-2018

The table below presents criminal justice charges, pleas and criminal justice outcomes in cases where a “rough sex defence” was presented.<sup>232</sup> Some perpetrators were charged with additional offences including rape and prevention of lawful burial; these have not been included in the table as verdicts on additional charges were not always clear from reports. Sentences where perpetrators pleaded guilty to manslaughter were far lower than sentences issued in respect of murder

verdicts, ranging from 3.5 to six years compared to fifteen to 30 years. There are perhaps possible indications that sentences may be increasing in severity over the ten-year period for murder (though less so for manslaughter), but establishing whether or not this is the case would require each case to be studied in detail, taking into account any additional charges and examining the judge’s consideration of aggravating and mitigating factors.

<sup>230</sup> These figures do not include cases where the woman was killed outside the UK, or cases where the perpetrator pleads guilty and does not present a ‘rough sex’ defence, even if he has used it previously (for example, to family or police.)  
<sup>231</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-hampshire-28470900>; <https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/sex-game-gone-wrong-death-7375001>  
<sup>232</sup> Sentences are presented to the nearest half-year (rounded down).

Perpetrators presenting 'rough sex defence'	Charge	Plea	Verdict	Sentence
2009 – 3 2010 – 1 2011 – 1 2015 – 1 2016 – 1 2017 – 2 2018 – 5	Murder	Not guilty to murder	Guilty of murder	Life with minimum tariff: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 17 years</li> <li>• 15 years</li> <li>• 15 years</li> <li>• 19 years</li> <li>• 22 years</li> <li>• 18.5 years</li> <li>• 30 years</li> <li>• 19 years</li> <li>• 26 years</li> <li>• 18 years</li> <li>• 29 years</li> <li>• 17 years</li> <li>• 19 years</li> <li>• 18 years</li> </ul>
2010 – 1 2016 – 1 2018 – 1	Murder	Guilty to manslaughter	Guilty of manslaughter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4 years</li> <li>• 3.5 years</li> <li>• 6 years</li> </ul>
2010 – 2	Murder	Guilty to manslaughter	Guilty of murder	Life with minimum tariff: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 22 years</li> <li>• 15 years</li> </ul>
2011 – 1 2013 – 1 2016 – 1	Murder	Not guilty to murder	Guilty of manslaughter	Indeterminate – min 7.5 years <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 16 years + 4 on licence</li> <li>• 12 years</li> </ul>
2015 – 1	Murder	Guilty to murder	Guilty of murder	Life with minimum of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 26 years</li> </ul>
2017 – 1	Murder	Guilty to culpable homicide	Guilty of culpable homicide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6 years</li> </ul>

Figure 33b: Criminal justice outcomes where a "rough sex defence" claimed, 2009-2018



## 5.4. Criminal justice outcomes

### Criminal Justice Outcomes

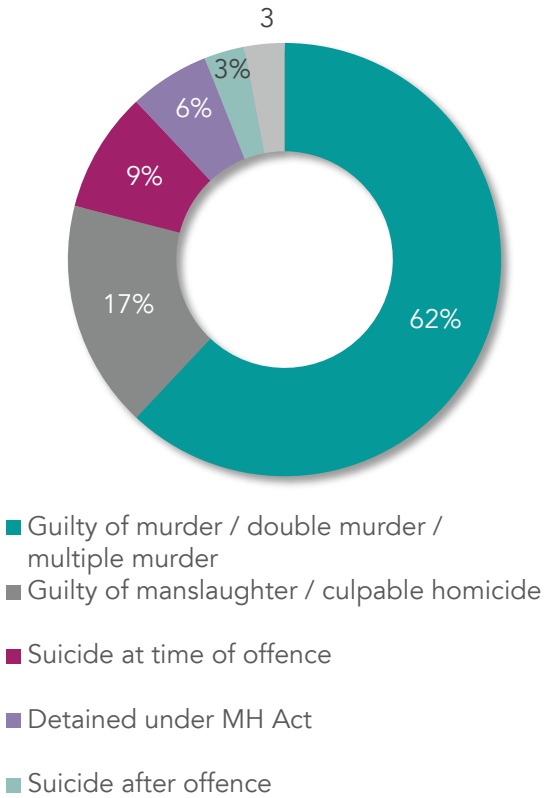


Figure 34a: Criminal justice outcomes, 2009-2018

Of the 1,419 perpetrators, a significant majority (62%, 884) were found guilty of

murder (including double and multiple murders). 17% (237) were found guilty of manslaughter, manslaughter on grounds of diminished responsibility, culpable homicide or culpable homicide on the grounds of diminished responsibility. 9% (130) of perpetrators died by suicide at the time of the femicide, and a further 3% (41) died by suicide some time after the event. 6% (90) were detained under the Mental Health Act. The remaining 3% of cases resulted in a number of other outcomes, including non-suicide deceased, trial ongoing, shot dead by police and trial of facts/issues.

The following table sets out a more detailed and comprehensive set of criminal justice outcomes for all perpetrators across the ten-year period, including (where known) criminal justice outcomes for other charges related to the femicide such as burglary and rape. As one perpetrator may have been charged with more than one offence, the total number of outcomes is greater than the number of perpetrators.

<b>Criminal justice outcome</b>	<b>Total</b>
Guilty of murder, including double murder (54), multiple murder (13)	884
Died by suicide at time of offence	130
Guilty of manslaughter	122
Guilty to manslaughter – diminished responsibility	93
Detained under Mental Health Act	90
Committed suicide after offence	41
Guilty of attempted murder	27
Guilty of rape	22
Guilty of arson/arson with intent to endanger life	20
Culpable homicide on grounds of diminished responsibility	12
Other – deceased	12
Guilty of robbery	10
Guilty of burglary	9
Guilty of culpable homicide	9
Guilty of GBH/attempted GBH	9
Guilty of possessing an offensive weapon	9
Awaiting trial/trial ongoing	8
Guilty of wounding with intent	7
Died in prison on remand	6
Died in police custody	5
Guilty of abduction/kidnapping	5
Unknown	5
Guilty of child destruction	4
Guilty of perverting the course of justice	4
Shot dead by police	4
Guilty of assault/assault occasioning ABH	3
Guilty of conspiracy to commit fraud	3
Guilty of causing death by dangerous driving (see note at 5.1 above)	2
Guilty of obstructing a coroner	2
Died in prison awaiting sentence	1
Guilty of affray	1
Guilty of conspiracy to murder <sup>233</sup>	1
Guilty of preventing lawful burial	1
Guilty of stalking	1
Not guilty of murder <sup>234</sup>	1
Other – case dismissed	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,562</b>

Figure 34b: Criminal justice outcomes, 2009-2018

<sup>233</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/apr/21/hired-killer-found-guilty-of-murdering-mother-of-five-in-new-forest-field> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>234</sup> <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/wife-killer-returns-live-house-1739664> (accessed 15 November 2020).

## 5.5. Sentencing

In the UK, the crime of murder carries a mandatory life sentence.<sup>235</sup> In manslaughter cases, the judge may impose other sentences, including a prison sentence to be served immediately, suspended imprisonment or a community sentence. However, the maximum sentence a judge can impose for manslaughter is imprisonment for life.<sup>236</sup> There are a number of factors that can serve to determine the nature and length of a sentence: sentencing guidelines, the maximum penalty, a guilty plea, aggravating and mitigating factors, the serious harm caused including the impact on the victim's family, the history and circumstances of the offender.<sup>237</sup> It is the law that for prison sentences other than life sentences, offenders serve half their sentence in prison and half on licence in the community and subject to recall to prison.<sup>238</sup> It was an unnerving aspect of compiling this report to realise just how many perpetrators would by now already be out of prison.

It is also the case that attempts to reduce costs to the criminal justice system can result in pressure to avoid or reduce prison sentences. This could include taking into account other programmes with which an offender complies such as restorative justice, mediation, healthy relationships, anger management, perpetrator programmes.

A total of 1,212 perpetrators received a prison sentence, a hospital order or were detained under the Mental Health Act in relation to the femicides (and other associated crimes, where relevant) that they had committed. As discussed earlier in this section, perpetrators may not have been sentenced for a number of reasons, such as where they died by suicide, a small number were shot dead by police or died from other causes prior to standing trial. In a very few cases the perpetrator was awaiting trial or sentence, or the trial was ongoing, at the time of writing the report.

Of those perpetrators who received a sentence, 934 were sentenced to life imprisonment. In fourteen cases these were whole life sentences. Figures 44a, 44b and 44c look specifically at murder and manslaughter sentences in intimate partner femicides. As can be seen, of 571 murder sentences, 290 were for eighteen years or less, and of these 27 were for twelve years or less. However, where perpetrators received a manslaughter verdict, the sentences were much more variable. Inevitably, this reflects the sentencing guidelines, which break down manslaughter and multiple elements with differing culpability impacting on sentencing. It is still noticeable though that manslaughter sentences in intimate partner femicides were often at the lower end of the available range. Of 105 manslaughter verdicts in intimate

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<sup>235</sup> <https://www.sentencingcouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/FINAL-Murder-sentencing-leaflet-for-web1.pdf> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>236</sup> <https://www.sentencingcouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/FINAL-Manslaughter-sentencing-leaflet-for-web1.pdf> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>237</sup> See Sentencing Council leaflets, notes 328 and 329 above.

<sup>238</sup> See note 329.

partner homicides, 83 perpetrators received eighteen years or less and (of these) 71 perpetrators received twelve years or less.

This report covers the period 2009 to 2018. As the inset piece by Adrian Howe points out, the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 led to a change in defences and a reduction in manslaughter verdicts in such cases. Certainly, these findings show a high number of murder verdicts with substantial sentences in this period and a smaller number of manslaughter verdicts but still with variable, and often quite low, sentences. However, we were not able to compare outside this period.

There is merit in a more detailed analysis of sentencing, some research suggests that sentencing for domestic violence homicides can be lower than we would see in stranger killings in public spaces.<sup>239</sup> Dr. Jane Monckton Smith says: "My own research has shown that sentencing for partners who claim they '**killed out of love**' is much lower." Table 44 shows the manslaughter and murder sentences in intimate partner homicides for this period.

The tables below show the sentencing for the following criminal justice outcomes:

- Guilty of murder on multiple counts (13)
- Guilty of double murder (54)
- Guilty of murder (817)
- Guilty of manslaughter (123)
- Guilty of manslaughter on grounds of diminished responsibility (93)
- Guilty of culpable homicide (9)
- Guilty of culpable homicide on grounds of diminished responsibility (12)
- Detained under the Mental Health Act (90)
- Other (Guilty of causing death by dangerous driving, guilty of conspiracy to murder)
- Sentencing of perpetrators in intimate partner homicides

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<sup>239</sup> Bond, C. and Jeffries, S. (2014) Similar Punishment: Comparing sentencing outcomes in domestic and non-domestic violence cases *Brit. Journal of Criminology* (2014) **54** p849-72

**Adrian Howe, honorary principal fellow, School of Historical and Philosophical Studies, University of Melbourne (2020-2022):**

"In the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, then solicitor general Harriet Harman led a largely unheralded feminist reform movement that revolutionised the law of murder in England and Wales. The reforms, incorporated in the Coroners and Justice Act 2009, abolished the defence of provocation, replacing it with a new 'loss of control' defence that expressly excluded sexual infidelity as a trigger for loss of control. The reform is significant in two respects. First, it was instigated with the specific purpose of depriving men of the historically mandated 'provocation by sexual infidelity' defence.

Harman was adamant about the sex-specificity of this defence and her reason for demanding its abolition. She explained that for centuries, the law 'has allowed men to escape a murder charge in domestic homicide cases by blaming the victim. Ending the provocation defence in cases of "infidelity" is an important law change and will end the culture of excuses.'<sup>240</sup> And furthermore, the 'provocation by infidelity' femicide was 'our own version of honour killings'. The reformers refused to brook any excuses for domestic violence. It was 'a terrible thing to lose a sister or a daughter, but to then have her killer blame her and say he is the victim of her infidelity is totally unacceptable. The relatives say "he got away with murder" and they're right.'<sup>241</sup> Despite virulent opposition from the legal and judicial fraternity within and without parliament, the reform bill was passed.

Second, the reform has operated in the manner it was intended. As such it is an excellent example of a law having intended consequences. My study of 400 cases of intimate partner femicide committed in England and Wales over the five-year period from January 2011 to December 2016 revealed that men are no longer getting away with murdering their wives or partners. Now that they can no longer plead 'infidelity' to mitigate homicide, it is very difficult for these defendants to avoid a murder conviction. The study revealed too that in most cases, a man's real motive for killing his wife is that she had left or was about to leave him."<sup>242</sup>

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<sup>240</sup> Quoted in R Verkaik 'Judge Backs Infidelity Defence for Killers' *The Independent* November 7, 2008.

<sup>241</sup> Quoted in G Hinsliff 'Harman and Law Lord Clash Over Wife Killers', *The Guardian* November 9, 2008.

<sup>242</sup> Chapter One in Adrian Howe and D. Alaattinoğlu (eds) *Contesting Femicide—Feminism and the Power of Law Revisited* Routledge Abingdon Oxon 2019

## Sentencing

Tables 35-43 showing sentencing outcomes for murder, manslaughter and culpable homicide verdicts, 2009 – 2018

### Guilty of multiple murder

Life sentence: minimum tariff (years)	Number of perpetrators
25	1
29	1
31	1
33	1
35	2
38	2
40	1
Whole life	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>

Figure 35: Guilty of multiple murder – minimum sentence

### Guilty of double murder

Life sentence: minimum tariff (years)	Number of perpetrators
14	1
18	1
19	1
20	1
21	1
23	3
25	4
26	2
27	4
28	1
29	3
30	8
32	3
33	2
34	3
35	5
36	1
37	1
38	1
40	2
Whole life	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>52</b>

Figure 36: Guilty of double murder – minimum sentence

## Guilty of murder

Life sentence: minimum tariff (years)	Number of perpetrators	Life sentence: minimum tariff (years)	Number of perpetrators
8	2	23	29
9	1	23.5	1
10	2	24	25
10.5	2	24.5	2
11	6	25	32
11.5	1	26	25
12	18	26.5	1
12.5	5	27	17
13	17	27.5	3
13.5	1	28	18
14	35	29	6
14.5	4	30	19
15	63	31	9
15.5	4	32	14
16	46	33	9
16.5	13	34	6
17	64	35	6
17.5	11	36	1
18	62	37	5
18.5	6	38	1
19	35	40	1
20	80	Whole life	10
20.5	2	IHO	2
21	27	HO (det.)	1
21.5	6	Unknown	1
22	54	N/A??	1
22.5	2	Awaiting sentence	3
		<b>Total</b>	<b>817</b>

Figure 37: Guilty of murder – minimum sentence

Guilty of manslaughter

Sentence: (years)	Number of perpetrators	Sentence: (years)	Number of perpetrators
1	2	10.5	2
1.5	2	11	3
2	2	12	9
2.5	2	13	4
3.5	3	13.5	1
4	5	14	2
4.5	2	15	7
5	6	16	2
5.5	2	17	3
6	13	18	2
6.5	3	20.5	1
7	8	21	1
7.5	6	Suspended sentences	3
8	5	Detained MHA	2
8.5	3	IHO	3
9	5	Awaiting sentence	1
9.5	1		
10	7	<b>Total</b>	<b>123</b>

Figure 38: Guilty of manslaughter – sentence



### Guilty of manslaughter on grounds of diminished responsibility

Sentence: minimum tariff (years)	Number of perpetrators
1	2
1.5	1
3	3
4	4
4.5	2
5	8
6	2
7	1
8	1
9	3
9.5	2
10	6
10.5	1
12	4
13	2
14	2
15	4
17	1
18	1
19	1
20	1
26	1
Det MHA	5
IHO	21
HO det	4
Suspended	6
Unkn.	1
Blank	2
Awaiting	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>93</b>

Figure 39: Guilty of manslaughter on grounds of diminished responsibility – sentence

### Guilty of culpable homicide

Sentence: (years)	Number of perpetrators
2	1
3	1
4	1
5	1
6	1
8.5	1
12.5	1
14	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>

Figure 40: Guilty of culpable homicide – sentence

### Guilty of culpable homicide on grounds of diminished responsibility

Sentence: (years)	Number of perpetrators
3	1
5.5	1
6	1
7	1
7.5	1
9	1
Det MHA	1
IHO	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>

Figure 41: Guilty of culpable homicide on grounds of diminished responsibility – sentence

Other (Guilty of causing death by dangerous driving, guilty of conspiracy to murder)

	Sentence: (years)	Number of perpetrators
Guilty of causing death by DD	7	1
	5	1
Guilty of conspiracy to murder	30 (life, min. tariff)	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>3</b>

Figure 42: Other criminal justice outcomes – sentence

Hospital Orders / Detained under Mental Health Act – outcomes

Sentence: (years)	Number of perpetrators
Indefinite Hospital Order	51
Detained under MHA	36
N/A	1
Blank	1
Unknown	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>90</b>

Figure 43: Detained under Mental Health Act – sentence

## Breakdown of Sentences for cases where primary context of violence is domestic (intimate partner violence), by Criminal Justice Outcome and Relationship Category

Sentences	Criminal Justice Outcomes & Relationship Category														
	guilty of manslaughter (including on grounds of diminished responsibility)					guilty of culpable homicide (including on grounds of diminished responsibility)					guilty of murder (including double murder and multiple murder)				
	Intimate	Known to each other	Family	No known relationship	Extended Family	Intimate	Known to each other	Family	No known relationship	Extended Family	Intimate	Known to each other	Family	No known relationship	Extended Family
Total	105	0	1	1	1	10	0	0	0	0	571	3	3	0	0
1 Year	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1.5 Years	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2 Years	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3 Years	3	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3.5 Years	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
4 Years	6	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
4.5 Years	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5 Years	7	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5.5 Years	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
6 Years	8	-	1	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
6.5 Years	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
7 Years	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
7.5 Years	4	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
8 Years	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
8.5 Years	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
9 Years	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
9.5 Years	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
10 Years	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-
10.5 Years	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-
11 Years	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	-
11.5 Years	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
12 Years	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	15	1	-	-	-

Criminal Justice Outcomes & Relationship Category

Sentences	guilty of manslaughter (including on grounds of diminished responsibility)					guilty of culpable homicide (including on grounds of diminished responsibility)					guilty of murder (including double murder and multiple murder)				
	Intimate	Known to each other	Family	No known relationship	Extended Family	Intimate	Known to each other	Family	No known relationship	Extended Family	Intimate	Known to each other	Family	No known relationship	Extended Family
12.5 Years	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-
13 Years	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	17	-	-	-	-
13.5 Years	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
14 Years	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	33	-	1	-	-
14.5 Years	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	-
15 Years	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	55	-	-	-	-
15.5 Years	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	1	-	-
16 Years	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	38	-	-	-	-
16.5 Years	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	-	-	-	-
17 Years	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	46	-	-	-	-
17.5 Years	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	11	-	-	-	-
18 Years	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	42	1	-	-	-
18.5 Years	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	-
19 Years	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	25	-	-	-	-
20 Years	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	56	-	1	-	-
20.5 Years	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
21 Years	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	20	-	-	-	-
21.5 Years	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-
22 Years	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	36	1	-	-	-
23 Years	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	18	-	-	-	-
24 Years	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	16	-	-	-	-
24.5 Years	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
25 Years	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	21	-	-	-	-
26 Years	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	16	-	-	-	-
27 Years	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	-
28 Years	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12	-	-	-	-

Sentences	Criminal Justice Outcomes & Relationship Category														
	guilty of manslaughter (including on grounds of diminished responsibility)					guilty of culpable homicide (including on grounds of diminished responsibility)					guilty of murder (including double murder and multiple murder)				
	Intimate	Known to each other	Family	No known relationship	Extended Family	Intimate	Known to each other	Family	No known relationship	Extended Family	Intimate	Known to each other	Family	No known relationship	Extended Family
29 Years	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	-	-	-
30 Years	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	11	-	-	-	-
31 Years	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-
32 Years	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	-
33 Years	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-
34 Years	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-
35 Years	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-
36 Years	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
38 Years	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-
Awaiting Sentence	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-
Detained Under the Mental Health Act	5	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hospital Order (specified period)	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Indefinite Hospital Order	6	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-
Suspended Sentence	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Unknown	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Whole Life Term	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	-

Figure 44: Breakdown of Sentences for cases where primary context of violence is domestic (Intimate partner violence)

## 6. Methodology

The Femicide Census collects information on the killing of women and girls aged fourteen years and over by men in the UK.<sup>243</sup> The census database is constantly being updated, as perpetrators are charged, trials held, verdicts reached, sentences issued and women continue to be killed by men. Each published report is based on the most complete data available at the time of writing. This Femicide Census report is the most extensive to date, presenting findings on femicides from the ten-year period 2009-2018 (inclusive).

### Aims and objectives

The aim of the Femicide Census is to develop an authoritative knowledge base on the incidence, nature and circumstances of UK femicides, in order to increase awareness and understanding of men's violence against women and ultimately to contribute to preventing femicides. We have made this information available to strengthen the arms of policy makers, state agencies, local authorities, the third sector, the media, feminist activists and campaigners, lawyers and the public in general in taking action to prevent men's violence against women, including future femicides.

### Ethical issues

A research project of this nature involves many ethical considerations and difficult decisions. At the heart of the project are

the violent endings of women's lives. Every case that is entered on the database involves the story of a woman's personal experience of violence, terror and suffering that is impossible for most of us to imagine. Equally, each case involves the story of terrible grief experienced by bereaved families and friends.

Gathering information on each femicide for what is primarily a quantitative report inevitably involves the transformation of each woman's life and death into data. This is potentially a dehumanising process. However, the Femicide Census team remain mindful of the reality of the life and death of each woman behind the media reports and Freedom of Information (FOI) Act police responses. The driving principle in populating the database and writing the reports is a sense of respect for the women at the heart of the project, with the aim of honouring their lives and, it is hoped, to contribute to preventing future deaths.

This driving principle informs the various ethical issues and decisions that inevitably arise as the project progresses. At each stage of the project, decisions must be taken as to what information is collected and how findings are presented. For example, should cases be anonymised in the report? Should case studies be included? What is the correct balance in terms of ensuring respect for victims and grieving loved ones, alongside the aim

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<sup>243</sup> In the very few cases where women are known to have been sentenced or charged alongside male perpetrators for their involvement in the killing of women, details on their names, ages and criminal verdicts have been recorded on the census but are not analysed in this report. In all such cases, men have been charged as the principal offender.

of producing the most meaningful and useful report possible?

Such considerations resulted in a number of practical decisions being taken. It was felt that including case studies would not be appropriate at this stage, as there was a risk of causing further distress to bereaved loved ones, whether of those victims whose stories were included or those whose stories were not. However, it was also felt that presenting the lives and deaths of victims primarily as numbers and percentages was also not doing justice to their experiences. We have therefore named all victims of femicide whose deaths are included in this report as a mark of commemoration and recognition of their lives.

We have also included illustrative quotations and examples from media reports in sections in order to convey a qualitative sense of the content, alongside numerical charts and tables. These quotations and examples are drawn from publicly available sources; they have been anonymised, but references are provided. There was also an element of judgement involved in selecting these quotations and examples, and deciding how much distressing information should be included. We are conscious that some of the quotations draw attention to extreme violence and other disturbing content, and have aimed for a balance in terms of appropriately informing readers while not wishing to potentially cause further pain to families or to alienate the reader with repeated graphic accounts of extreme violence.

We hope that we have struck the right balance in terms of the report's content and presentation, but we are aware that this is an ongoing issue that involves a level of subjective judgement.

### The term "femicide"

The definition of femicide used in the Femicide Census includes any killing of a woman or girl aged 14 or over by a man. This is a broader use of the term than those femicide projects which limit the femicides they include to those where it is believed that a man has killed a woman specifically because she is a woman. The Femicide Census uses the broader definition in recognition of the fact that all women killed by men are victims of male violence in a society in which male violence is a symbol of sex inequality.

Fourteen was chosen as the minimum age for a case to be included on the database. This decision was made in an attempt to exclude filicide cases (in which fathers were not motivated by the sex of their child but as a form of extreme emotional abuse of women partners) from primary victims.<sup>244</sup> We look at all children killed in the context of intimate partner femicide in the "Other victims" section of the "Femicides" chapter. Further, the census wished to include young women killed by men or boys in the context of heterosexual relations, dating culture and intimate relationships.

As the findings illustrate, femicides usually involve the specific targeting by a man of an individual woman or women. However, in some cases men or

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<sup>244</sup> The killing of a daughter or son by the parent.

boys have also been killed in the same incident. Due to the nature of the project, only the women in these cases are included on the database, but the deaths of male children or adults are recorded under the “Other victims” section. Similarly, the Census documents where perpetrators have killed before, recording both female and male victims (see “Perpetrators” chapter) in order to capture the extent of violent criminality of the respective perpetrators. This is of particular relevance to criminal justice outcomes and sentencing.

## The database

Information gathered from each case is stored as data on the custom-built platform Relativity, a sophisticated, interactive software database hosted and created by the multinational, professional services network, Deloitte.<sup>245</sup> The platform has been used as the primary analytical tool in compiling this report as it facilitates analytical searches and statistical breakdowns, allowing comparisons and parallels to be drawn between cases and over time. Findings drawn from the data collected on Relativity are presented in the tables and charts in this report. The Office for the Regulation of Statistics recognises the Femicide Census as a robust source of data on which the civil service may draw with confidence.

## Data collection

The cases included in the census are initially sourced by Karen Ingala Smith in her Counting Dead Women project, which she began in 2012 and has maintained since. Counting Dead Women is a pioneering and innovative project: documentation of men killing women had never been done before. The project started a process which, through the intervention of Clarrie O’Callaghan, then of Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer LLP, led to the development of the Femicide Census and has amplified understanding of the killings of women by men. It is a sad testament on our society that Counting Dead Women and the Femicide Census remain the only projects which seek to bring together all the killings of women by men in the UK.

Core data on the femicides are collected via requests submitted to all UK police forces under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).<sup>246</sup> Information sought from police forces includes: a list of the names of all women killed within the respective police force area, their age and ethnicity, the names of the accused, dates of death, the relationship between the victims and their perpetrators, and (if identified) the method(s) of killing.<sup>247</sup> However, information received from police forces is sometimes incomplete or in a few cases refused altogether, and other official documents are not always available. The decision to limit the information requested via FOIs was

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<sup>245</sup> <https://www2.deloitte.com/uk/en/legal/about-deloitte-uk.html> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>246</sup> The situation with the Metropolitan Police Service differs from this arrangement: see “Femicides by police force area” in the Femicides chapter.

<sup>247</sup> In 2018, police forces were also asked to provide information on any records of previous violence / abuse committed by the perpetrator. However, responses to this question were very sparse.



made to reduce the likelihood that a more burdensome request would give a legitimate reason for refusal to comply. This core data from the police is supplemented with information obtained from publicly available sources such as news reports, court records, judges' sentencing remarks, reviews and inquiries.

The Femicide Census uses a minimum of three media reports per case: the data collection involves balancing the need for detail on each case alongside working with what is sometimes salacious, racist and sexist media reporting. It is also the case that at the time of the incident there is usually relatively little information in the public domain and the media are careful in what they report so as not to risk jeopardising a future trial or facing libel charges. It is only at, and after, the trial that the detail of the case is made public as media report what is said in the trial. This can lead to headlines reporting the defence and prosecution arguments; with the victim being deceased, the defendant's voice is inevitably louder and their version of events more detailed. This can lead to a somewhat one-sided representation in the media and is another reason why the Femicide Census urgently wants more publicly verified, official documentation to be centrally gathered and easily searchable and accessible. To try to counter these possible biases in the media and gather as much information as possible, the Femicide Census generally selects media reports from diverse publications with different political stances. Given the reliance of the census on media reports and their tendency to provide most detail when covering trials, it is

relevant that the economic situation of many news publications means that court reporters do not always attend local trials.

Information is entered as data on Relativity, where it is noted as being either verified (i.e. data coming from, or otherwise verified by, police or another public authority), or not verified (i.e. coming from publicly available sources, including newspaper articles). The information that remains unverified includes further details relating to the femicides, victims, perpetrators, criminal justice outcomes and sentencing.

## Database review

As with any major research project, researching the cases and gathering information is an ongoing, iterative and continuously developing process. It is the nature of good research that initial assumptions, questions and areas of inquiry change, evolve and are refined as the research progresses and themes and patterns emerge. Due to the generosity of funders, we were able to employ a second part-time researcher in 2018. In late 2019, the team was further increased, resulting in a team of a part-time senior researcher and two part-time researchers. This created the capacity to deliver a planned review of existing data, begin the work on this ten-year report, and continue with our annual data collection and analysis.

The research team are constantly alert to possible emerging themes and elements of the femicides that may not yet be being captured under existing data categories. In order to ensure that the most meaningful, comprehensive

and accurate data were being collected, a review of the database was undertaken with new categories added and the range of data entry options within the categories expanded in order to capture more detailed and accurate information.

### Review of existing data

Coinciding with the database review, an exercise was undertaken to fill information gaps in the database, in preparation for the ten-year report. This involved systematically re-researching all femicides from 2009 to 2018, filling in missing information, updating cases as necessary, reviewing all previously unsolved cases and sending further FOI requests to the Police Service of Northern Ireland and Police Scotland, in order to include femicides from 2009 to 2015 (Northern Ireland) and 2009 to 2016 (Scotland) that had not originally been included on the database. These cases were then researched by the team and included alongside cases from England and Wales.

### Rates of femicide

In order to get a picture of prevalence of femicide across the country and within particular police force areas, the Femicide Census calculates the rate of femicide for each police force area. The value of a ten-year report is that it can provide average annual rates calculated across a ten-year period; most available statistics cover just one or two years and can therefore be misleading. A challenge to establishing the rate over ten years is that population figures in each area may have changed somewhat during that period, and in some cases police force area boundaries may also

have shifted. This was addressed by calculating the average population per police force area using available population figures across a number of years.

### Limitations of the Census

As noted above, the Femicide Census database is a work in progress, constantly evolving. The findings from the census reflect the information that is known and available at any given time. Therefore, whilst every effort is made to ensure accurate and precise information is included, clearly some findings related to individual cases may be subject to change as new information emerges.

In addition to the caution expressed above that the Census is forced to rely quite heavily on media, many of the limitations of the census relate to limitations of available, accessible, publicly verified information. As noted above, information received from police forces can be sparse, inaccurate or incomplete. Other official documents are not always available or are difficult to access. In particular, there is a paucity of data regarding ethnicity. There is usually no central, easily searchable and free resource via which to access official documents such as Domestic Homicide Reviews, Independent Office for Police Conduct reports (IOPC) and coroners' reports. Coroners' reports, even where they are available, often fail to specifically reference the history or role of male violence against women in contributing to the death, and violence against women, or even domestic violence, are not included as search terms. The Coroners' Notices to Prevent Future Deaths are extremely brief and

again rarely address remarks to the context of violence. Inquest findings are not always possible to find and judges' sentencing remarks tend to only be published for high profile cases.

Moreover, there are a number of deaths of women in which there may have been a history of violent, abusive and coercively controlling behaviour but where the cause of death is not attributed to that violence and/or cases which are not identified as domestic violence and do not attract a domestic homicide review at all. Domestic homicide reviews are also not gathered centrally, they are not always published and even where published are often only available for a very short period of time. Misogynistic killings outside of the

context of domestic violence are not subjected to a domestic homicide review even though some of the factors that would be identified may be very similar. It is hoped that the relatively new role of Domestic Abuse Commissioner may go some way to rectifying this gap in disaggregated data, transparency and accountability.

The Femicide Census, by definition, collects information on femicides. If the same data were collected about men killing men and women who kill, it may well complement our data and highlight important sex specific differences in homicide perpetration and sentencing. For this reason, we welcome the forthcoming report into Women Who Kill by the Centre for Women's Justice.

**Dr. Jane Monckton Smith, senior lecturer in criminology, University of Gloucestershire:**

"The Hidden Homicide Project looks at cases where family members have raised concerns around the circumstances of a death of a loved one, especially in the context of domestic abuse. One of the first tasks for any officer receiving a report of a crime, or attending a crime scene is to identify if a crime has occurred and what that crime might be. It has been found that a victim's social status can impact on the rigor with which a crime is investigated. It can also lead to assumptions about the nature of the crime, or if there is a crime at all. The presence of coercive control and domestic abuse prior to an intimate partner homicide is well documented as a risk marker, as is the strong association with separation. But even where there is clear evidence of such abuses, and clear evidence that the deceased was attempting to leave the relationship, in many of our cases, questions were not asked by professionals and no context put around the presenting facts. This has led to some deaths being assessed as non-suspicious. In some cases, it is years later when family pressure leads to an investigation that the suspicious circumstances become clear. By this time crucial evidence is often lost.

In our cases so far, there are some key concerns which include: ignoring the testimony of children present; making assumptions where cause of death is attributed to accident, drug intoxication, falls and accidents, or suicide; automatic believing of a potential suspect's explanation. In one case, a victim was said to have stabbed herself to death, and even with a witness saying otherwise the case was not investigated. In one case, a woman was said to have had an epileptic fit and strangled herself in bed sheets whilst attempting to leave with her children; in another case a woman who died of traumatic head injury caused with an axe was assumed to have been a victim of a burglary gone wrong, despite a legitimate line of enquiry being the suspicious actions of her husband as they went through a divorce. Such deaths are not recorded together anywhere and often only come to attention through campaigning of families or others. We therefore have no reliable source for the scale of the issue.

Assumptions about the victims that are detrimental, and a failure to appreciate the role of domestic abuse in domestic homicide, dominate the responses to these deaths. There should be more professional curiosity when a sudden and unexpected death occurs in the context of domestic abuse and an attempt to leave an abusive partner by the deceased. We can only speculate as to the scale of the issue, but it is not insignificant in the context of recorded numbers of homicides. In this study we are looking into at least 20 such cases so far over a period of less than ten years. It is likely much higher."

## 6.1. Criteria for inclusion

In at least 52 cases a woman has died in suspicious and violent circumstances but the case remains unsolved with no perpetrator found or charged. In a further minimum of 65 cases, a woman has died but an alleged perpetrator has been cleared or charges were later dropped – for instance, where a case was initially thought to be suspicious but was later found to be natural causes or the cause of death is not attributed to male violence, despite such violence being in a woman’s history.

Taken together, that is 65 cases where alleged perpetrators were cleared, charges dropped, other cases where no charges were brought and 52 unsolved cases, this means no one has been held responsible for the premature, and often violent, deaths of 117 women in the UK. The Femicide Census gathered details on the deaths of 1,425 deaths women in this ten-year period. Were we able to include these additional 117 women that would make 1,542 women killed with as many as 8% inadequately explained. That would suggest that in one of every 13 suspected femicides, no man is held to account. These women, and those who loved them, have not seen justice. This is a significant failing. This section discusses the criteria by which cases would be included or excluded.

The minimum criterion for a case to be included in the Femicide Census is that a man must have been charged with, or convicted of, manslaughter or murder of

a woman or girl over 14.<sup>248</sup> In cases where a perpetrator dies before a charge is brought – for example, if he kills himself at the time of the femicide – then such a case is included if police are not looking for any other suspects and/or an inquest reaches an “unlawful killing” verdict.

These criteria mean that at any given point a number of cases where a man may have killed a woman cannot be included in the main database. We believe that many such cases could fall into a category of “hidden homicides”<sup>249</sup> – cases that are not included in official statistics. Examples include when the murder of a victim only comes to light many years after her death, where the case has been reclassified as suspicious; where the victim has been driven to suicide by a violent partner or stalker; or where the victim has died and it has not been possible to prove that she had been killed by a perpetrator rather than died due to an accident or other cause of death, for example if she has fallen from a balcony or window. In total, 117 such cases are not currently included in the main database, the main categories of which are discussed below.

### 6.1.1. Death by dangerous driving

Women killed by men’s dangerous driving are generally not included in the census, although these cases frequently

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<sup>248</sup> There are some very rare exceptions to this, which are decided on a case by case basis, as discussed in this section and in the Criminal Justice Outcomes chapter.

<sup>249</sup> <https://janems.blog/2017/09/22/hidden-homicide/> (accessed 15 November 2020).

display similar hallmarks to other contexts in which men kill women.<sup>250</sup>

Cases where the method of killing was a motor vehicle and which resulted in a murder or manslaughter conviction have been included in the census. Two further cases have been included where the perpetrator was found guilty of causing death by dangerous driving, but where the offence was committed in the context of domestic abuse.<sup>251</sup>

### 6.1.2. Women killed abroad

Over the ten-year period, at least 37 women from the UK were killed abroad by men. These include a number of high-profile cases, and two cases where the perpetrator presented a “rough sex” defence at trial.<sup>252</sup> However, women from the UK who have been killed abroad are not currently included in the census. The rationale for this is that such cases involve different justice systems; it would not be possible to send FOI requests to all police forces across the world and therefore the data would be inconsistent. The data would also be very likely to disproportionately exclude

black and minority ethnic women, whose deaths tend to receive less attention than those of young white women.<sup>253</sup>

### 6.1.3. Unsolved cases

At the time of writing, at least 52 cases remained unsolved across the ten-year period: these include cases where attackers had not been identified,<sup>254</sup> including cases where the victim had clearly been murdered. In one such case, the victim had been stabbed and burned, but the police did not initially treat the death as suspicious. The failure to initially treat and secure the scene of the death as a possible crime scene can result in vital time and information being lost and the loss or contamination of what might otherwise be vital evidence<sup>255</sup>. A number of unsolved cases involved the extremely brutal killing of older women.<sup>256</sup> In eight unsolved cases, the method of killing had not been determined; five cases involved “kicking/hitting/stamping”, three “strangulation/asphyxiation” and three “sharp instrument”.

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<sup>250</sup> See for example: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1364506/Salim-Chand-Hit-run-driver-killed-church-going-grandmother-jailed-9-years.html> (accessed 15 November 2020); <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3234035/Drunk-driver-jailed-killing-Valentine-s-Day-date-second-night-crash-just-weeks-end-previous-driving-ban.html> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>251</sup> <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1286518/Haulage-boss-crushed-jealous-wife-death-wheels-26-tonne-truck.html> (accessed 15 November 2020); <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-south-east-wales-38936006> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>252</sup> <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/09/25/car-salesman-claimed-wife-died-sex-game-gone-wrong-admits-killed/> (accessed 15 November 2020); <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/feb/21/grace-millane-man-jailed-for-life-for-killing-of-uk-backpacker> (accessed 15 November 2020). See Criminal Justice Outcomes section for a discussion of the “rough sex” defence.

<sup>253</sup> <https://kareningalasmith.com/2018/12/11/we-need-to-stop-the-hierarchy-of-dead-women/> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>254</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-beds-bucks-herts-51053050> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>255</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-cambridgeshire-31411629> (accessed 15 November 2020);

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-cambridgeshire-31436332> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>256</sup> See for example: <https://www.lancashiretelegraph.co.uk/news/9999001.killers-set-burnley-womans-bed-alight-still-large/> (accessed 15 November 2020); <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3554113/Frail-widow-76-murdered-home-tried-fight-burglar-tortured-money-hid-safe-didn-t-trust-banks.html> (accessed 15 November 2020);

<https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/emma-winnall-murder-moseley-remains-9326878> (accessed 15 November 2020).

### Kirsty and Liz Spencer, family of Dawn Rhodes:

"She was born 43 years ago this November and I loved her from the moment I set eyes on the 6.1/2lb baby girl. The last, much wanted child to complete the family.

From baby to child to young woman to wife to mother, she made me mad, she made me sad. she made me laugh, she made me cry. On occasions she made me cringe but at other times she made me feel so proud. She was a good person.

Her baby years went by without too much incident; she was determined, looked cherubic but was clumsy. Later, falling off a piano stool (requiring stitches in her head), falling through a plate glass window (scratches on her bottom!!), falling through ice after running onto a frozen pond – no lasting effects except a long-term love affair with water, later joining a swimming club and entering school and county galas.

She had an adventurous spirit, joining Adventure Scouts and participating in their outdoor pursuits, taking a Drama Course at College, joining Amateur Dramatic societies and escaping into other characters, the weirder the better.

She never really had time for many boyfriends. Just the one!!! She married him. She made the most beautiful 'medieval' bride.

She was a mum at 30. She adored being a mum and was a good one. Life was always busy. She worked very hard. She hated housework, and wasps. Christmas was her favourite time of year. She loved to give rather than receive. A snapshot of a loving, much loved daughter. Her life was made up of so much more.

She married her killer and 20 years later he took her life. Without remorse or consequence.

Her name was Dawn."

#### 6.1.4. Cleared cases / charges dropped / no charges brought

There were 65 cases which fell into a frequently complex area where the criminal justice process did not result in a conviction. In some cases, the accused was cleared; in other cases, an assumption of suicide was made or charges were dropped or no charge was brought against the suspect. However, the reasons for any of these outcomes may be quite complex; in some cases, it

was agreed that the actions of the suspect had contributed to the death of the victim, but it was not always possible to ascertain the cause of death conclusively. In other cases, there was no dispute that the actions of the suspect had resulted in the victim's death, but either it was decided that the perpetrator was unfit to stand trial, or that he could benefit from a self-defence or "mercy-killing" argument, or there was no public interest in a trial being held. This is a complex legal area, which will be outlined briefly in this

section. Whether or not a case could be included in the main database was decided on a case-by-case basis, with the general principle that if it was agreed by criminal justice authorities that a man had killed a woman, the case would be included.

### 6.1.5. Suspected perpetrator cannot be charged with murder or manslaughter

Where a perpetrator kills himself at the time of the offence, or before he can be arrested and charged, obviously no trial can take place. Where the inquest results in an “unlawful killing” outcome, and the perpetrator is known, the case is included in the main database.<sup>257</sup> Where another verdict is reached – such as “accidental death”, “unascertained” or a narrative or open verdict – the case is generally not included.

In some cases, the perpetrator is deemed by the judge – on advice from psychiatric reports – to be unfit to stand trial (see Criminal Justice Outcomes chapter). In such situations, a “trial of issues” or “trial of facts” may be held, in which the trial is held to determine the facts of what happened, rather than to determine the guilt or otherwise of the accused. Where there is no dispute that the actions of the man concerned

caused the death of the victim, the case has been included in the census.

Cases where the victim died as a result of arson sometimes remained unsolved or ambiguous after the principal suspect had been cleared of manslaughter or murder.<sup>258</sup> In some cases there was no dispute that the actions of the perpetrator had led to the death of the victim, but charges against the perpetrator were dropped or a guilty plea to a lesser charge was accepted.<sup>259</sup> In one case, two women died following an incident of arson in a hospice; the inquest found the victims were “unlawfully killed”, but the perpetrator – who also died before a trial could take place – had only been charged with arson rather than manslaughter. The inquest found that the fire “was started ‘either deliberately or through gross negligence’ by [the male patient] in the early hours with a cigarette lighter which set fire to a bed.”<sup>260</sup> The outcome of the inquest suggested some culpability on the part of the hospice, which was fined £250,000 “after admitting safety breaches.”<sup>261</sup>

There were a number of cases in Northern Ireland where charges against the accused were dropped,<sup>262</sup> or trials did not result in a conviction.<sup>263</sup> In one case, a perpetrator accused of murdering three women was acquitted twice when the trials collapsed, and in

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<sup>257</sup> If the perpetrator is not known, or a charged suspect has been cleared, the case cannot be included in the database. See for example: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-sussex-10954564> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>258</sup> <https://www.kidderminstershuttle.co.uk/news/14286417.updated-mark-moat-cleared-of-manslaughter-of-tragic-sandra-nowocinska/> (accessed November 2020); <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-sussex-10954564> (accessed November 2020).

<sup>259</sup> <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2049281/Family-couple-burned-death-arsonist-say-human-rights-victims-rights-face-trial.html> (accessed November 2020).

<sup>260</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-sussex-50491361> (accessed November 2020).

<sup>261</sup> See note 112 above.

<sup>262</sup> <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/charges-dropped-against-man-accused-of-killing-girlfriend-laura-marshall-36662550.html> (accessed November 2020).

<sup>263</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-20943608> (accessed November 2020).



the third case he was never brought to trial due to a lack of evidence.<sup>264</sup> These cases could therefore not be included in the database. The same perpetrator was also facing a further 45 charges of sexual offences – “including three for rape, eight for gross indecency with or towards a child, and 14 for indecent assault on a female” – but he died before he was due to stand trial.<sup>265</sup>

There were also instances where victims died following an incident of male violence or intrusion, but the cause of death could not definitively be attributed to the incident even if it was considered to be a contributory factor. Several of these cases involved older women. A 90 year old victim died of a brain haemorrhage following a burglary, and while the coroner concluded that the stress “probably contributed” to her death, manslaughter charges against the perpetrators were dropped.<sup>266</sup> In another case, a man was cleared of murdering an 80-year-old woman, even though the victim told police he had attempted to suffocate her.<sup>267</sup> A care worker was charged with the attempted murder of two women aged 81 and 73 respectively, but these cases could not be included in the census as, although they died subsequently, the cause of death was not attributed to the incident.<sup>268</sup> In two cases, women were found to have died from natural causes;

although one victim was “covered in bruises”,<sup>269</sup> and in the second case the coroner stated that “injuries caused by her being beaten up had contributed to her death”,<sup>270</sup> no one was ever charged for the assault.

Further cases that could not be included in the main database include those where a woman fell to her death from an apartment balcony, but the exact circumstances of the fall remained uncertain.<sup>271</sup> One such case did not go to trial, in spite of the victim previously receiving a threatening text message from her partner, who was in the apartment at the time of the incident.<sup>272</sup> Two men were cleared of killing a woman after she was caught in gunfire from two rival gangs and died after a bullet ricocheted off a wall and hit her.<sup>273</sup>

Similarly, there were instances where the cause of death could not be ascertained, and although perpetrators were found guilty of crimes relating to, or associated with, the victim’s death, they were not convicted of murder or manslaughter. Frequently, these cases involved drugs overdoses, where perpetrators had supplied the substances. In one case, two men in their late 20s were found guilty of supplying MDMA to a sixteen-year-old girl, whom they then videoed while she was suffering the effects of the drug and left her to die on the backseat of their

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<sup>264</sup> <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/leslie-ross-death-as-suspect-in-murders-of-three-women-takes-his-secrets-to-grave-family-of-victim-tell-of-their-despair-36309336.html>

<sup>265</sup> See note 116 above.

<sup>266</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-birmingham-31028517> (accessed November 2020).

<sup>267</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-lancashire-21758565> (accessed November 2020).

<sup>268</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-glasgow-west-49673547> (accessed November 2020).

<sup>269</sup> <https://www.barkinganddagenhampost.co.uk/news/crime-court/inquest-into-death-of-gitana-matukeviciene-of-rutland-gardens-dagenham-1-5984939> (accessed November 2020).

<sup>270</sup> <http://www.camdennewjournal.co.uk/article/vicky-walton-inquest-cause-of-injuries-that-contributed-to-death-are-unexplained> (accessed November 2020).

<sup>271</sup> <https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/tv/who-aimee-spencer-how-die-15831608> (accessed November 2020).

<sup>272</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-48201955> (accessed November 2020).

<sup>273</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-44241133> (accessed November 2020).

car while they “drove around buying beer and calling escorts” without assisting her.<sup>274</sup> In a case showing striking similarities to this one, an older perpetrator supplied a younger woman with drugs and videoed her in distress after taking the substance and then failed to get help. He was initially found guilty of manslaughter by gross negligence but the conviction was subsequently overturned by the Court of Appeal.<sup>275</sup> In a further case, a perpetrator was cleared of culpable homicide but found guilty of reckless conduct in supplying drugs to two women who both died after taking the substances.<sup>276</sup> In still another case, an inquest returned a narrative verdict after a young woman and her abusive older partner had both been found dead from a drugs overdose. The coroner said that “the circumstances of how they took the drugs and what their intentions were, were unclear”. However, the violent partner had previously told the victim’s mother that “he would kill her daughter with drugs, then kill her, before killing himself.”<sup>277</sup> In a case where the perpetrator had beaten the victim with a rolling pin so severely that he told police “I think I’ve killed my girlfriend”,<sup>278</sup> the coroner concluded that her death was drug-related.<sup>279</sup>

Other examples of where the cause of death could not be ascertained, despite it being known or clear that at some stage the perpetrator had assaulted the victim,<sup>280</sup> include one where it was inconclusive as to whether the victim had been assaulted or had fallen,<sup>281</sup> and one case where the perpetrator had hidden the victim’s body in an airing cupboard for more than a year and her body was too decomposed for a cause of death to be established, though there were indications of possible strangulation.<sup>282</sup> One perpetrator had subjected the victim to a sustained attack resulting in 86 injuries; however, the coroner found that she had ultimately died from a chest infection. The perpetrator pleaded guilty to grievous bodily harm.<sup>283</sup>

Two exceptional cases were included in the database in spite of the absence of a murder or manslaughter conviction. In the first case, a perpetrator who admitted stabbing his wife 120 times was cleared of murder on grounds of “insanity”.<sup>284</sup> Since there was no dispute that he had killed the victim, the case is included in the census. In the second case, the perpetrator was found guilty of conspiracy to murder, having recruited another man to carry out the killing.<sup>285</sup>

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<sup>274</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-leicestershire-42166410>

<sup>275</sup> <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8638873/Rappers-conviction-killing-Holby-City-actors-daughter-Louella-Fletcher-Michie-overturned.html>

<sup>276</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-glasgow-west-23975341>

<sup>277</sup> <https://www.devonlive.com/news/devon-news/torbay-problem-tragic-fatal-story-3325020>

<sup>278</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-nottinghamshire-46531283>

<sup>279</sup> See note 130 above.

<sup>280</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-lancashire-40402465> (accessed November 2020).

<sup>281</sup> <https://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/news/15114237.mystery-surrounds-cause-womans-fatal-head-injuries/> (accessed November 2020).

<sup>282</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-manchester-40163746> (accessed November 2020).

<sup>283</sup> <https://www.thetelegraphandargus.co.uk/news/15697668.marie-johnston-died-from-chest-infection-after-attack-at-cottage-in-soaper-lane-shelf/> (accessed November 2020).

<sup>284</sup> <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/wife-killer-returns-live-house-1739664> (accessed November 2020).

<sup>285</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/apr/21/hired-killer-found-guilty-of-murdering-mother-of-five-in-new-forest-field> (accessed November 2020).

### 6.1.6. Hidden homicides: men's violence against women and suicide

With one exception, women who had taken their own lives in the context of experiencing male violence were not included in the database. However, given emerging knowledge of the relationship between domestic violence and suicide, it is apparent that the “hidden homicides” in this area greatly increase the numbers of women who have died as a result of male violence. It was only possible to include one of these many victims in this report, where the perpetrator was convicted of manslaughter.<sup>286</sup> In another landmark case, the perpetrator was jailed for coercive control rather than manslaughter, even though the judge stated that his behaviour “drove [the victim] to hang herself”.<sup>287</sup>

There is increasing recognition of women who take their own life following experiences of male violence, including domestic abuse, sexual violence and stalking. According to domestic abuse charity Refuge, almost 30 women every day attempt suicide as a result of

domestic abuse, and three women every week taken their own lives to escape abuse.<sup>288</sup> A large-scale study conducted by the charity with Warwick University found that a quarter of the charity's clients had experienced suicidal thoughts, 18% had made plans to end their life and 3.1% had made at least one suicide attempt.<sup>289</sup> Earlier research suggests that black, Asian, minority ethnic and migrant women experiencing domestic abuse may be at even greater risk of suicidality.<sup>290</sup> Research also suggests that women who are survivors of rape are ten times more likely than the general population to attempt suicide<sup>291</sup>. The case of Eleanor de Freitas is a particularly disturbing example.<sup>292</sup> There is also evidence to suggest an increasing number of suicides among young women alongside the rise in online abuse, bullying and sexual harassment and objectification they face.<sup>293</sup> The potential links between domestic abuse and suicide have been very explicitly made in France, where perpetrators whose partners commit suicide could face up to 20 years imprisonment.<sup>294</sup>

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<sup>286</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/apr/29/police-failed-justene-reece-stalking-victim-driven-to-suicide-watchdog-finds> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>287</sup> <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5591589/Mothers-heartbreak-daughter-driven-suicide-former-soldier-boyfriend.html> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>288</sup> <https://www.refuge.org.uk/our-work/campaigns/more-refuge-campaigns/taking-lives/> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>289</sup> <http://www.nspa.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/New-Suicide-Report2c-Refuge-and-University-of-Warwick.pdf> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>290</sup> Southall Black Sisters (2011) ‘Safe and Sane: A Model of Intervention on Domestic Violence and Mental Health, Suicide and Self-Harm Amongst Black and Minority Ethnic Women’, Middlesex: SBS.

<sup>291</sup> Kilpatrick, D.G., Edmunds, C.N., & Seymour, A.K. (1992). Rape in America: A report to the nation. Arlington, VA: National Victim Center and Medical University of South Carolina.

<sup>292</sup> Eleanor initially reported a rape but later chose not to progress the case. The man against whom she had made the allegation then sought to bring a private prosecution against her for what he alleged was a “false allegation”. The CPS then intervened. Although they do not generally encourage private prosecutions, in this instance they decided to pursue the prosecution rather than drop it. On the eve of the case going forward, Eleanor, who suffered mental health issues, killed herself. Even thereafter the man against whom she had made the allegation then tried to bring libel proceedings against her father and other support services.

<sup>293</sup> <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/suicides-teenage-girls-young-women-rise-figures-a9698296.html>

<sup>294</sup> <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/domestic-abuse-suicide-france-20-year-sentence-a9177621.html> (accessed 15 November 2020).

## Activist and campaigner addressing women's suicides after male violence:

"I have attempted suicide. Once was immediately following flashbacks of a rape occurring 21 years ago. How would you have known that had I not survived to tell you?"

Seven years ago, I started collating cases of female suicides after men's violence. I commemorate the women and girls online and make them visible. After liaising with coroners' offices and Professors, I concluded that measuring their deaths with numerical accuracy is impossible. It would take inordinate resources to achieve this. I rely on local journalism. Here, I use a few lesser known cases to illustrate difficulties with causation and quantifying these deaths.

In 2013, I researched the repeat victimisation of women abused by more than one partner, which remains a research gap. Sonia Richards, 27, was seriously abused and A&E regularly treated her injuries. Sarah Nash, 34, lived in poverty in temporary accommodation. Kelly Taylor, 38, was disabled and forced into prostitution. All three were abused by multiple perpetrators and subsequently died by suicide.

Jamie-Leigh Elder, nineteen, killed herself just three months after her father raped her. But years elapsing since incidents is a risk to lost connections. In 2007, Wendy Ellis stood trial for the murder of her violent partner. She was unanimously acquitted, having acted in self-defence. Last November, she killed herself.

Denise Tanner, 52, took an overdose four days after police incorrectly told her that her partner was released. In fact, he was still on remand for offences against her and all charges dropped after her death. Bethany Wood, eighteen, also overdosed. Police had attended her address multiple times for "domestic incidents", including the night she died. Coroners concluded that both deaths were drugs related.

Male violence impacts more people than its immediate victims. Talisa-Rose Smith, 27, suffered PTSD after her friend was murdered by her husband. She ended her life the following year. Alisha Watts, eighteen, took her own life the year after threatening to expose a male worker while a psychiatric inpatient. He has since been charged with six counts of sexual activity with a person with a mental disorder.

Suicide is complex and rarely caused by a single factor. ONS publishes self-reported data from the Crime Survey (England and Wales). An estimated 74,808 women attempted suicide having experienced abuse in the last 12 months.<sup>295</sup>

ONS are reviewing this survey. I have proposed data collection from victims after experiencing domestic abuse in their lifetime.

These deaths might not be counted but their lives count. These women and girls mattered. Women's specialist services need appropriate funding. We need to ask the right questions.

I am founding a charity for sex-tailored suicide prevention called Not Invisible Not Alone (NINA). See [www.wearenina.org](http://www.wearenina.org) for information.

### 6.1.7. Premature deaths in the context of male violence/patriarchy

There are a further number of women who die prematurely in the context of male violence and harmful patriarchal practices. These deaths do not meet the criteria for being included in the Femicide Census. Some of the myriad ways in which women's lives may end, or be ended, prematurely under patriarchy include deaths of women in prison and under probation supervision following release from prison.<sup>296</sup> It is known that women who enter custody are often survivors of male violence. Of the 22 deaths of women in prison in 2016 recorded by the Ministry of Justice, twelve were self-inflicted, seven non self-inflicted, and three were awaiting classification.<sup>297</sup> INQUEST, a charity providing expertise on state-related deaths and their investigation, is increasingly positioning these deaths as

engaging state responsibility and complicity in the context of human rights law. This seems an appropriate and proportionate lens through which to examine these deaths.

Pressure to conform to norms of femininity and associated harmful "beauty" practices can also lead to premature death. During the ten-year period of this report, at least two British women died abroad as a result of buttock "enhancement" procedures,<sup>298</sup> and one woman died in the UK following breast implant and "tummy tuck" surgery.<sup>299</sup> A controversial medical practice involving the implantation of what has been termed "grotesque and deadly"<sup>300</sup> vaginal mesh is the subject of an independent clinical review in Scotland, following the death of a woman who had undergone the procedure and the ill-effects experienced by many others.<sup>301</sup>

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<sup>296</sup> INQUEST (May 2018). *Still Dying on the Inside: Examining Deaths in Women's Prisons*. <https://www.inquest.org.uk/still-dying-on-the-inside-report>.

<sup>297</sup> Coles, D., Roberts, R., Cavcav, S. (2018) *Still Dying on the Inside: Examining Deaths in Women's Prisons*. May 2018, London

<sup>298</sup> <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1355080/Claudia-Aderotimi-thought-illegal-implant-make-hip-hop-star.html> (accessed 15 November 2020); <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-leeds-50516637> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>299</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-norfolk-50207045> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>300</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-edinburgh-east-fife-45430625> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>301</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-51604450> (accessed 15 November 2020).

**Sophie Naftalin, partner specialising in civil actions against the police and other public authorities, Bhatt Murphy Solicitors:**

“Following a sudden or unexplained death, it is the duty of the Coroner to investigate and ensure that the relevant facts are exposed to public scrutiny.<sup>302</sup> The Coroner must answer four statutory questions: who the deceased was, when she died, where she died and how she died.<sup>303</sup> If there is an arguable case that any state agency knew, or ought to have known, that the deceased’s life was at risk, then the Coroner must look at the broader circumstances of the death (also known as an Article 2 inquest).<sup>304</sup> A Coroner also has a power – if evidence reveals that there is a risk of other similar deaths occurring in the future – to make a Report to Prevent Future Deaths directly to a person or agency that has the power to take action to eliminate or reduce that risk.<sup>305</sup>

In practice, the police will attend a death and an assessment will be made very quickly whether the death is suspicious or non-suspicious. This decision will govern how the case is investigated. The coroner will be notified of the death, but if he or she is not informed by the police that the matter is suspicious, it will not be treated as such and no forensic post-mortem will be requested.

A powerful example of this are the cases of Caroline Devlin and Susan Nicholson, both victims of Robert Trigg in 2006 and 2011 respectively. Sussex Police concluded very early on in both cases that they were not suspicious and it was only thanks to a lengthy campaign by Susan’s family that Trigg was ultimately convicted in 2017 of Susan’s murder and Caroline’s manslaughter. The High Court has recently ruled that an Article 2 inquest should be held into Susan’s death.<sup>306</sup>

In cases of sudden or unexplained deaths after domestic violence – often apparent suicides or overdoses – a common experience is where the family believe that perpetrator has been involved in the death but because the death is not treated as suspicious from the outset, crucial evidence is lost. The perpetrator is not questioned, the scene is not secured, forensics are not taken, neighbours are not spoken to, phone records are not reviewed. Accordingly, a disturbing catch-22 arises: the family are unable to justify their suspicions because, having concluded from the start that the case was not suspicious, the police have not secured any of the evidence. By the time the inquest is held, the family have limited evidence upon which to explore their concerns. The scope of the inquest is limited and the circumstances which led to the death receives insufficient public scrutiny.

On a more systemic level, there is a growing body of research that establishes a link between domestic abuse and suicide.<sup>307</sup> Coroner’s courts have an essential role to play in scrutinising apparent suicides that follow domestic abuse and the extent to which agencies understand suicide to be a risk factor for victims. The coroner’s power to make Reports to Prevent Future Deaths is a tool that could be used to identify where agencies are failing victims and improve practice and support. Instead, families are being let down by police investigations which within minutes rule out the possibility that the deceased was a victim of crime, and coroner’s inquests that limit the scope of the enquiry and therefore do not examine the broader systemic issues at play.

As legal aid is not available for representation at inquests that do not engage Article 2, many of these families will be without legal representation. Often, they will be unable to advocate for themselves or navigate their way through the complex array of investigative processes that follow such a death, including a police investigation, an inquest and a possible Domestic Homicide Review.

Not all suicides in this context will disclose a criminal offence. But we cannot rule out that a number of them may do: they are simply not being properly investigated. By limiting the scope of their inquiries, both police and coroners are letting down victims of domestic abuse, and allowing perpetrators to avoid accountability for their actions.”

<sup>302</sup> *R v HM Coroner for North Humberside ex p Jamieson* [1995] 1 QB at para 14.

<sup>303</sup> s 5(1) Coroners Justice Act 2009.

<sup>304</sup> with reference to the right to life as set out in Article 2 of the European Convention of Human Rights

<sup>305</sup> Schedule 5, s7 of the Coroner’s and Justice Act 2009.

<sup>306</sup> *R (on the application of Skelton) v Senior Coroner for West Sussex* [2020] EWHC 2813 (Admin).

<sup>307</sup> See for example: ‘Domestic Abuse and Suicide: Exploring the links with Refuge’s client base and work force’ by Ruth Aitken and Professor Vanessa E. Munro from Warwick Law School, or

## 6.2. Media representations of femicide

- “[The detective inspector] said: ‘This was a tragic incident which resulted in the death of an elderly lady.’”<sup>308</sup>
- “Pensioner, 84, beat wife to death because he couldn’t cope with her dementia any more”<sup>309</sup>
- “Dad of five stabs girlfriend to death because he wasn’t allowed to hold baby”<sup>310</sup>
- “‘Evil killer’ who stabbed disabled woman to death and left mother critically injured is jailed for life”<sup>311</sup>
- “Jealous husband who knifed estranged wife is jailed for at least 16 years”<sup>312</sup>
- “Savage dad battered ex-lover’s mum to death after ‘drunkenly convincing himself his children were at risk’”<sup>313</sup>

As noted earlier, the Femicide Census relies heavily on media reports for information on cases of femicide. The methodological challenges of this degree of reliance on media are discussed in the methodology chapter. However, it is helpful to highlight here some of the media reporting context of these femicides. The use of racist and sexist, sensationalist language in media reporting of male violence against women have been the subject of a number of campaigns,<sup>314</sup> and while

analysis of media representation is not currently the focus of the Femicide Census, some recurring themes and patterns are outlined below. It should be noted that these themes and patterns are evident not only in language used by journalists but also in comments made by police, judges, barristers and other commentators. The language used in relation to femicide is therefore reflective of societal attitudes and stereotypes across a wide range of social groups and discourses.

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<http://safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Spotlight%207%20-%20Mental%20health%20and%20domestic%20abuse.pdf> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>308</sup> <https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/local-news/erdington-man-who-killed-mother-152664> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>309</sup> <https://metro.co.uk/2019/05/10/pensioner-84-beat-wife-death-couldnt-cope-dementia-anymore-9497684/> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>310</sup> <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/dad-of-five-stabs-girlfriend-to-death-1079678> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>311</sup> <https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/evil-killer-who-stabbed-disabled-11952875> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>312</sup> <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/jealous-husband-who-knifed-estranged-1068324> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>313</sup> [www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/savage-dad-battered-ex-lovers-9172487](http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/savage-dad-battered-ex-lovers-9172487) (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>314</sup> <https://www.welevelup.org/press> (accessed 15 November 2020); <https://janegilmore.com/category/fixedit/> (accessed 15 November 2020).

## 6.2.1. “She could be a difficult person”: Blaming the victim

- “A jilted husband told pals at work he was going home to shoot his wife, then blasted her to death with a shotgun just hours later... [Friends of the perpetrator] believe the dad-of-two snapped after spending the next three stressful months under the same roof as the 47-year-old teacher”<sup>315</sup>
- “‘You are not by nature an aggressive or suicidal man and you did your best to cope with her moods,’ [the judge] told the defendant. ‘Evidence shows how she could behave. She could be a difficult person whether affected by alcohol or not.’”<sup>316</sup>
- “Describing [the victim] as easy prey because she was drunk, the judge added: ‘It was a terrible mischance that your paths crossed, on an impulse you saw your chance and you took it.’”<sup>317</sup>

The language of reports and commentators quoted in reports frequently implied that the victim was somehow responsible for her own death through her actions. Such reports presented the femicide as a consequence of the victim’s actions or attributes, including: leaving the perpetrator,<sup>318</sup> beginning a new relationship,<sup>319</sup> having an abortion,<sup>320</sup>

using alcohol<sup>321</sup> or other substances,<sup>322</sup> asserting herself,<sup>323</sup> being involved in prostitution,<sup>324</sup> having a “chaotic life”<sup>325</sup> or being “naïve”<sup>326</sup> or “difficult”.<sup>327</sup> Such reports tended to present perpetrators’ accounts of victims’ actions as fact rather than as his version of events recounted in court, frequently in an effort to minimise his culpability.

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<sup>315</sup> <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/cabbie-told-pals-he-was-going-to-shoot-1053490> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>316</sup> <https://www.getsurrey.co.uk/news/local-news/ashtead-solicitor-jailed-life-after-4814543> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>317</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-north-west-wales-13119857> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>318</sup> See note 2.

<sup>319</sup> <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/couples-loving-picture---but-six-1109403> (accessed 15 November 2020); <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-north-east-wales-11758370> (accessed 15 November 2020);

<https://www.thescottishsun.co.uk/news/1078126/asghar-buksh-glasgow-dixon-avenue-wife-death-trial/> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>320</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-edinburgh-east-fife-14634176> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>321</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-north-west-wales-13119857> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>322</sup> <https://www.thescottishsun.co.uk/news/1646315/murder-dundee-flat-samurai-krzysztof-gadecki/> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>323</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-25133917> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>324</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-25133917> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>325</sup> <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8694327/Freezer-killer-36-guilty-double-murder.html> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>326</sup> <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2527150/Psychopath-killed-Russian-lover-hockey-stick-row-Christmas-presents-two-weeks-released-prison.html> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>327</sup> <https://www.getsurrey.co.uk/news/local-news/ashtead-solicitor-jailed-life-after-4814543> (accessed 15 November 2020).



## 6.2.2. "A frenzied attack": Minimising perpetrator agency and responsibility

■ "Evil [perpetrator name], who had been engaged to [the victim] and had a son with her, became enraged and launched a fatal attack just days before Christmas last year. The happy family snap was taken just six months before he murdered her in the bath in a jealous fit of rage."<sup>328</sup>

The language used in media reports often served to "other" perpetrators, minimising their moral agency and responsibility for their crimes. A number of linguistic features contributed to this effect. Perpetrators were sometimes represented as monstrous: "evil", "brutes",<sup>329</sup> "sex fiends",<sup>330</sup> "thugs",<sup>331</sup> "warped and perverted",<sup>332</sup> and "psychopaths".<sup>333</sup> This was particularly evident in cases where the perpetrator was a stranger or not a British national or deemed to be working class, and in stark contrast to more sympathetic representations of perpetrators that similarly served to minimise their responsibility (see below). The lexicon serves to construct perpetrators, especially "foreign" or ill-educated perpetrators, as having demonic or animalistic qualities or a psychological condition that renders them intrinsically different and distinct from other men, and therefore beyond the realm of responsibility and moral agency.

Alongside the "brute" lexicon describing perpetrators was a corresponding lexicon referring to their actions in terms of "frenzy", "rage" or "savagery". Certainly, the actions being described involved extreme and very serious violence. However, such vocabulary – which was very common – serves to construct the violence perpetrated as something beyond the control of the perpetrator, rather than as an act of ultimate control. Emotions like jealousy were also referred to in this context, with the emotion – rather than the perpetrator – "driving" the act of killing.<sup>334</sup> The agency of perpetrators of intimate partner femicides was further minimised through the use of terms such as "volatile relationship" or "turbulent relationship", projecting the behaviour of the perpetrator onto the abstract "relationship" and thus implying that the victim was equally responsible, even when there was a known history of abuse by the perpetrator.<sup>335</sup>

<sup>328</sup> <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/couples-loving-picture---but-six-1109403> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>329</sup> <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/dumbbell-killer-who-bludgeoned-wife-7059835> (accessed 15 November 2020); <https://www.thesun.co.uk/archives/news/636296/jail-brute-kills-mum-two-days-after-release/> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>330</sup> <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/cop-warrant-blunder-sealed-fate-1104652> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>331</sup> <https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/tracey-topliss-abusive-boyfriend-who-8876294> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>332</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-south-west-wales-19623977> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>333</sup> <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2527150/Psychopath-killed-Russian-lover-hockey-stick-row-Christmas-presents-two-weeks-released-prison.html> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>334</sup> <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/jailed-for-lifehusband-who-stabbed-wife-to-death-in-bed-28687887.html> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>335</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-manchester-30956729> (accessed 15 November 2020).

### 6.2.3. "A gentle giant of a guy": Sympathetic representations of perpetrators

- "[The perpetrator] was a gentle giant of a guy. He used to be happy-go-lucky and loved a carry-on but his marriage split sucked the life out of him. He was devastated."<sup>336</sup>
- "Father strangled his own daughter as he couldn't let her suffer with her mental health problems"<sup>337</sup>
- "When talking with the operator he said he 'just could not cope' with his mother's illness. [The perpetrator] had told the court that his mind had been in turmoil before carrying out the attack."<sup>338</sup>

In contrast to the "brute" and "thug" narratives outlined above, some news reports portrayed perpetrators in a sympathetic light, or quoted friends and neighbours of the perpetrator whose comments similarly represented him as sympathetic. Typically, such representations concerned perpetrators who were white, British, middle class

and with some standing or power. It was also more likely to apply to perpetrators who had killed their wives or mothers, sometimes in the context of a so-called "mercy killing" or in a scenario where a main defence argument was that the perpetrator was unable to cope with his domestic situation, such as his wife's illness.

### 6.2.4. "Bizarre sex game": Sexualising the femicide/victim

As discussed in the Femicides section below, several femicides were sexually motivated, and involved sexual violence. However, some media reporting of such femicides went into a degree of detail about this aspect of the femicide that appeared gratuitous,<sup>339</sup> and also reported the perpetrator's account at face value. Details of the perpetrator's account of the victim's

sexuality<sup>340</sup> or sexual behaviour<sup>341</sup> were also sometimes salacious and reported as fact, rather than as the perpetrator's version of events to which the victim was of course unable to respond. The effect of this sexualised detail around the femicide also contributed to victim-blaming narratives, implying that the victim's behaviour had contributed to her death.

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<sup>336</sup> <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/cabbie-told-pals-he-was-going-to-shoot-1053490> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>337</sup> <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/father-strangled-daughter-couldnt-suffer-11961396> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>338</sup> <https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/local-news/erdington-man-who-killed-mother-152664> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>339</sup> <https://www.kentonline.co.uk/kent/news/prostitute-murdered-with-belt-d-a67818/> (accessed 15 November 2020); <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2527150/Psychopath-killed-Russian-lover-hockey-stick-row-Christmas-presents-two-weeks-released-prison.html> (accessed 15 November 2020); <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/sex-toy-tape-and-ties-found-on-boat-used-by-dead-couple-8104396.html> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>340</sup> <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5947595/Estate-agent-murdered-wife-boasted-lesbian-fling-jailed-life.html> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>341</sup> <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/10335985/millionaire-property-tycoon-killed-lover-appeal/> (accessed 15 November 2020).

### Gemma Aitchison on her sister, Sasha Marsden:

"I remember the day I saw my sister on the list [the Femicide Census]. Emotional, I was angry at the reality that meant she was there, I still am. But more than that. I can only speak for myself, but to me it said she matters, what happened to her matters, her life mattered and having her name there was part of making a change so it doesn't keep happening. Like her name was part of holding the state to account for failing her. A voice amongst others shouting together that what happened to them matters and deserves to be heard. Because make no mistake, she died because she was a teenage girl and the state, beyond tokenism, doesn't care about the lives of women and girls. A few women murdered a week has been seen as the acceptable status quo for decades now. The collateral damage of being female.

Her name and picture showing her as a person and what was done to her and by whom. Not "teen girl dies", but holding the perpetrator to account. He did this to her. That's important. We need to name the problem to begin to prevent it. We need to ask why men are perpetrators in the majority. We need to give our boys the tools not to be the same and hold corporations like Pornhub to account for calling filmed abuse entertainment and mitigating circumstances for murder.

Many more women and girls have been killed since she was taken and futures she can never have, have happened for everyone else in a world that has moved on. But she's part of something that still impacts the world. She didn't do this important work but she's part of it, they all are.

Women and girls are human beings. Not disposable, replaceable objects to be used and discarded. They deserve safety, access to justice, consent, respect. They deserve better than those on that list. We loved them. And they all matter. Listen to them."

## 7. Context

“Globally, the prevalence of different manifestations of gender-related killings is reaching alarming proportions. Culturally and socially embedded, these manifestations continue to be accepted, tolerated or justified—with impunity as the norm. States’ responsibility to act with due diligence in the promotion and protection of women’s rights is largely lacking as regards the killing of women.”<sup>342</sup>

Femicide, the killing of women and girls by men,<sup>343</sup> is not confined to any particular jurisdiction or political context, although numbers and rates vary across the globe. According to a report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, an average of 137 women across the world are killed every day by a partner or family member, and a total of 87,000 women were intentionally killed in 2017.<sup>344</sup> Of these, approximately 30,000 victims were killed by a male intimate partner and another 20,000 by a relative. The same report found that the largest number of all women killed worldwide by intimate partners or other family members was in Asia, followed by Africa, the Americas, Europe and Oceania. However, in terms of the rate of femicide per female population, women ran the greatest risk of being killed by an intimate partner or other family member in Africa, followed by the Americas. Europe was the region where the risk was lowest.<sup>345</sup> Within Europe, France, Germany, Northern Ireland and

Romania have all been cited as appearing to have particularly high numbers of femicide,<sup>346</sup> although as mentioned in the previous section, such statistics should be approached with caution as different measurements may be used in different countries, numbers can vary significantly year on year, and raw numbers without reference to population sizes can be misleading. Nonetheless, what remains clear is that men killing women is a worldwide and persisting phenomenon.

The findings of this report should primarily be seen in this global context. Further information in this section relates to the specific political and social context of the United Kingdom across the ten-year period from 2009 to 2018.

### Violence against women and girls in the UK

Men kill women within a wider context of endemic sex discrimination and male violence against women and girls. In

<sup>342</sup> Manjoo, R. (2012) Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences

<sup>343</sup> Ingala Smith, K. (2018) Femicide p161, chapter 12 in *The Routledge Handbook of Gender and Violence*, Ed. Lombard, N92018

<sup>344</sup> Gender related killing of women and girls, 2019 [https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/gsh/Booklet\\_5.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/gsh/Booklet_5.pdf). See also: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-46292919>

<sup>345</sup> [https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/gsh/Booklet\\_5.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/gsh/Booklet_5.pdf), p.10

<sup>346</sup> See for example: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-49586759> ; <https://www.euractiv.com/section/justice-home-affairs/news/france-and-germany-have-high-femicide-rates-compared-to-rest-of-eu/>; <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1096116/femicide-in-europe-in-2018/>

2018, 1.3 million women in England and Wales were victims of domestic abuse,<sup>347</sup> and 2018 saw a five-year high in domestic violence killings.<sup>348</sup> Approximately 85,000 women every year are raped, or experience attempted rape or sexual assault by penetration,<sup>349</sup> while only one in 65 rapes results in a suspect being summonsed or charged.<sup>350</sup> More than 100,000 women and girls in the UK are at risk of, and living with the consequences of, female genital mutilation.<sup>351</sup> In 2018, the Foreign office handled 1,507 cases of forced marriage and of course in many such cases failure to comply with a forced marriage presents the additional risk of so-called honour-based violence.<sup>352</sup> There are no reliable figures for the scale and extent of prostitution and trafficking in the UK, but women in prostitution are twelve times more likely to be murdered than women in the general population.<sup>353</sup>

Male violence against women is normalised and naturalised through the mainstreaming of pornography, fashion and beauty practices, arts and media, customs and traditions, and increasingly through new norms of performance and display of femininity and masculinity conveyed via social media. The role of information technology in assisting abusive behaviour, promoting

pornographic, violent and abusive practices as normal in sexual relations, and distributing sexualised imagery (consenting or otherwise) all contribute to a conducive context for violence against women and impunity for perpetrators. This contrasts with those relatively rare cases where a woman kills a man in domestic violence context. A forthcoming report by Centre for Women's Justice examines women who kill in more detail.

### UK political context

The ten-year period addressed in this report saw political shifts spanning the demise of a Labour government that had been in office since 1997, leading to a coalition government of Conservatives and Liberal Democrats (2010) and then to the Conservative governments of Theresa May (2016) and Boris Johnson (2019). That is three general elections and many momentous points along the way, not least the 2014 Scottish Independence Referendum and 2016 United Kingdom European Union Membership Referendum ("Brexit referendum"). The first year of this report, 2009, saw the final full year of the Labour government, following the financial crisis and global economic recession of 2008-2009. 2010 saw the election of the new Conservative/Liberal

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<sup>347</sup> <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/domesticabuseinenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2018#prevalence-of-domestic-abuse> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>348</sup> <https://inews.co.uk/news/uk/domestic-violence-killings-uk-deaths-statistics-highest-level-338243> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>349</sup> <https://rapecrisis.org.uk/get-informed/about-sexual-violence/statistics-sexual-violence/> (accessed 15 November 2020).

These 2013 figures are likely to be even higher in the latter years of this ten-year report:

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/283100/recorded-rape-offences-in-england-and-wales/> accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>350</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/law/2019/jul/26/rape-cases-charge-summons-prosecutions-victims-england-wales> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>351</sup> [https://www.city.ac.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/282388/FGM-statistics-final-report-21-07-15-released-text.pdf](https://www.city.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/282388/FGM-statistics-final-report-21-07-15-released-text.pdf) (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>352</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/882532/Forced\\_Marriage\\_Unit\\_Statistics\\_2018\\_revised\\_final.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/882532/Forced_Marriage_Unit_Statistics_2018_revised_final.pdf) (accessed 18 November, 2020).

<sup>353</sup> Salfati, C.G., James, A.R., Ferguson, L. (2008) Prostitute homicides: a descriptive study *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* Vol 23, Issue 4

Democrat coalition government. This led to the introduction of sweeping and severe cuts in public spending known as “austerity” measures,<sup>354</sup> and associated ideological patterns of privatisation, competitive tendering and commissioning. These measures were immediately recognised by groups such as the Fawcett Society and the Women’s Budget Group as having a disproportionate impact on women,<sup>355</sup> with the most marginalised women hit hardest,<sup>356</sup> Unsurprisingly, this combination of measures “meant that third sector and public sector services that cater for women and families who experience domestic violence [were] hard hit in a variety of different ways”,<sup>357</sup> with organisations losing start-up funding, sustained funding, funding for staff positions and in some cases being forced to close altogether.<sup>358</sup> The UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Professor Philip Alston, highlighted this in his report on the UK in 2018 saying it was as if “a group of misogynists in a room” had designed their policies.<sup>359</sup>

This period also saw the rise of right-wing, populist and nationalist movements across Europe and US. The UK too experienced similar trends with the rise (and to a lesser extent fallback) of groups like UK Independence Party and the English Defence League.<sup>360</sup> The

Conservative Party’s pledge, in their general election manifesto of 2015, to hold a referendum on EU membership was widely understood to be in response to this influence, and, following the Conservative victory in that same general election, in June 2016 the people of the UK voted, by a narrow majority, to leave the European Union. During this period the UK opposition Labour party also experienced significant change internally and was riven with divisions between centre and left, north and south, pro and anti-Brexit. At the same time, the Labour party was confronted with allegations of anti-Semitism and came up short repeatedly on addressing women’s issues despite the obvious impact of the political and economic climate on women.

As has been widely documented, the outcome of the Brexit referendum had an extremely polarising effect, with its impact evident in what felt like an increasingly divided country. There was a marked increase in racially and religiously aggravated crimes in the wake of the Brexit vote,<sup>361</sup> which occurred at the height of a raft of immigration legislation and the establishment of the “hostile environment”. The referendum brought in an era of ongoing political uncertainty as protracted negotiations with the

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<sup>354</sup> <https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2015/05/On-line-Catalogue23139.pdf>

<sup>355</sup> <https://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/the-impact-of-austerity-on-women>; <https://wbg.org.uk/blog/austerity-hits-women-harder/>

<sup>356</sup> <https://www.womensmediacenter.com/news-features/the-most-marginalized-women-in-the-uk-have-been-disproportionally-affected-by-austerity-measures>

<sup>357</sup> <https://eprints.mdx.ac.uk/17353/1/From%20Pillar%20to%20Post%20-%20Understanding%20the%20victimisation%20of%20women%20and%20children%20who%20experience%20domestic%20violence%20in%20an%20age%20of%20austerity.pdf>, p.11

<sup>358</sup> <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/5050/austerity-and-domestic-violence-mapping-damage/>

<sup>359</sup> <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/11/16/welfare-system-cruel-misogynistic-un-expert-warns-damning-report/>

<sup>360</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-21614073>

<sup>361</sup> <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/brexit-hate-crimes-racism-eu-referendum-vote-attacks-increase-police-figures-official-a7358866.html>

European Union failed to reach agreement resulting in a change in Tory leadership.

Falling just after the period of this report, it is worth noting that Johnson's Government, in its frustration at the Brexit deadlock, took controversial steps including attempting to bring in an extended prorogation of Parliament in the run up to the Brexit deadlines. However, the UK Supreme Court ruled this unlawful and quashed it on 24 September 2019 in *R (Miller) v. The Prime Minister and Cherry v. Advocate General for Scotland*.<sup>362</sup> This set the tone for a combative response from the Conservatives, making it clear they wished to further review and limit such powers as Judicial Review and such areas of law as equality and human rights and legal aid. It is also worth noting here that again, though it falls outside the period of this report, early 2020 (the time of writing) saw the arrival of the coronavirus, lockdown and recession. Future Census reports may reflect the extent to which these events exacerbate the scale and extent of violence against women and girls and the impact on support services on which these women rely.

## Legislative and policy developments

During this time of political upheaval and uncertainty, there were a number of legislative and policy developments of particular relevance to this report. It is not possible to go into them all in detail but we highlight a few areas here.

### Equalities

The 2010 Equality Act outlawed discrimination on the basis of nine protected characteristics,<sup>363</sup> and introduced a public sector duty to promote equality and to safeguard single sex exemptions as appropriate.<sup>364</sup> In spite of this – and perhaps unsurprisingly because such legislation is not designed to address enduring structural inequality – there appeared to be little progress in increasing equality between women and men,<sup>365</sup> or indeed across other areas of inequality including wealth and income inequality.<sup>366</sup> In addition, 2017 saw the introduction of mandatory gender [sex] pay gap reporting, with quite shocking results in many sectors. Just by way of example, Birmingham City Council were found liable to pay out £757 million in an equal pay claim in November 2012.<sup>367</sup> Other high-profile cases included the battle by older women concerning age-related state pension rights.<sup>368</sup>

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<sup>362</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-49810261> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>363</sup> <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/equality-act/protected-characteristics> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>364</sup> <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/public-sector-equality-duty#h2> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>365</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/inequality/2017/oct/11/uk-no-further-forward-on-tackling-gender-inequality-eu-league-table-shows> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>366</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/nov/27/parts-of-england-have-higher-mortality-rates-than-turkey> (accessed 15 November 2020).; <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2019/dec/05/gap-between-rich-and-poor-grows-alongside-rise-in-uks-total-wealth> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>367</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-birmingham-20294633> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>368</sup> <https://www.which.co.uk/news/2020/09/women-hit-by-state-pension-age-rise-defeated-in-court-of-appeal/> (accessed 15 November 2020).

In 2018, proposals to reform the 2004 Gender Recognition Act mobilised a broad-based movement of women across the UK concerned about the threat to women's single-sex spaces and services, and women's sex-based rights and protections. This became a heated area of public debate which saw many other areas of discussion on women's rights squeezed out.

### Public services and procurement

A key plank of conservative economic and social policy involves "shrinking the state"<sup>369</sup> and in this context a raft of new legislation was brought in: Localism Act 2011, the Public Bodies Act 2011, the Charities Act 2011, and the Public Services and Social Values Act 2012. The combination of responding to the banking crisis and recession with a conservative ideology saw the introduction of "austerity" measures, and major reforms: Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishing of Offenders Act 2012 (LASPO); local government reforms; and Welfare reforms. Problems with the transition to Universal Credit meant that many families with children experienced increasing hardship, with those "at greater risk of poverty: lone parents, families with very young children, larger families, those with a disability and those in low-paid work" facing further reductions in income.<sup>370</sup> Such economic stresses among couples and families can exacerbate pre-existing coercive and abusive tendencies, and cuts to services and legal aid present

additional barriers to women's access to safety and justice.

Similarly, investment in specialist units and services in public and non-governmental organisation (NGO) sectors was misguidedly portrayed as too costly despite strong invest-to-save arguments and multiple evaluations highlighting the long-term effectiveness of specialist expertise. The value of specialist teams, single points of contact and experts is recognised in every sector from the military and the health service through to policing and NGOs. However, frequently such experts are deemed too challenging, demanding and critical precisely because of their expertise and often they are deemed an expensive luxury despite in fact identifying and delivering targeted and effective support which represents a long-term saving. The short-termist search for large-scale, generic, "gender-neutral", one-size-fits-all economies of scale; the attempt to lever in finances and provision from a wider range of depoliticised groups often lacking any expertise in the area; and the adoption of competitive tendering, privatisation and commissioning all combined to decimate specialist services.<sup>371</sup>

### Laws relating to policing and to violence against women and girls

A number of laws relating to policing came into being. The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011,<sup>372</sup> drawing heavily on US policing experiences, established a system of

<sup>369</sup> <https://academic.oup.com/cjres/article/11/3/389/5146445> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>370</sup> <https://cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/files/Austerity%20Generation%20FINAL.pdf>, p.98 (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>371</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/public-leaders-network/2016/mar/16/budget-cuts-domestic-violence-services-bme> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>372</sup> <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201516/cmselect/cmhaff/844/844.pdf> (accessed 15 November 2020).



locally elected Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs). Reviews of the impact of this measure have raised doubts over whether they have met their stated aim of creating more locally democratic and accountable policing. On the contrary, they have highlighted the politicised nature of many such positions and the actively undemocratic nature of populist and majoritarian appointments, with resultant impacts skewing priorities and funding.<sup>373</sup> In any such popularity contest, unpopular and/or poorly understood issues and issues affecting those who experience discrimination and marginalisation will rarely be prioritised, except should a personality choose to champion them.

The Police Detention and Bail Act 2011 covers a range of issues particularly relating to bail and other potentially protective measures with relevance for violence against women. Further legislation regarding police conduct was passed, the Police Complaints and Conduct Act came into force in 2012 (but is undergoing further review currently in 2020) and the Police and Crime Act in 2017 updating measures around investigations of police conduct. In 2018, a new scheme enabling police super complaints was brought in to help hold police to account. Interestingly, three of the four super complaints to date have been brought by specialist women's organisations and relate directly to violence against women (police responses under the Modern Slavery Act, police failure to use

protective measures, domestic violence perpetrators among police). The fourth also arose out of poor police practice handling domestic violence cases and prioritising information sharing with immigration over policing.

Indeed, the Conservative administrations in this period have been very active on immigration with an act in 2014 and a further act in 2016. This period also saw the deliberate establishment of the "hostile environment",<sup>374</sup> which has led to much criticism and numerous legal challenges (several of them successful),<sup>375</sup> and has detrimental impacts on the ability to access and enforce their rights to safety and justice for migrant women.

In 2015, the UK passed the Modern Slavery Act which broadly gave domestic effect to the Council of Europe Convention on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings 2005 which UK had ratified in 2008. The Anti-Trafficking Monitoring Group has published a series of reports assessing how UK is performing in addressing trafficking and a recent police Super Complaint directly challenges police performance under the Modern Slavery Act. The Policing and Crime Act 2009 is the most recent piece of legislation addressing prostitution but many of the previous laws and, in particular the Sexual Offences Act 2003, also apply. There is a continued debate about what the legal regime for prostitution should be in the UK, it is largely an area that no Government wishes to enter in any

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<sup>373</sup> Lister & Rowe, (2013) <https://doi.org/10.1080/10439463.2013.868461> (accessed 15 November 2020); McDaniel (2017) <https://doi.org/10.1177/0032258X16685107> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>374</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2013/oct/10/immigration-bill-theresa-may-hostile-environment> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>375</sup> <https://www.politics.co.uk/comment-analysis/2017/11/22/the-fightback-against-may-s-hostile-environment-has-begun> (accessed 15 November 2020).

decisive fashion. However, in Northern Ireland it is illegal to pay for sex as of June 2015 and in England and Wales it is a strict liability offence to pay for sex with a coerced or exploited person (since 2009).

Other violence against women and girls measures and legislation include an update to the 2004 Domestic Violence Crime and Victims Act in 2012 to jointly hold carers/parents responsible where it is not clear which parties maybe responsible in the death of a child. The 2004 Domestic Violence Crime and Victims Act had included a requirement to carry out Domestic Homicide Reviews on every death resulting from or involving intimate partner homicide and, more recently suicides in a violent context, and this became operational in 2011. DHRs examine the circumstances, events and agencies involved leading up to the event and in the response to the event with a view to identifying whether every opportunity to intervene, prevent and protect was taken or not and what lessons could be learned.

Additional measures were implemented in 2014 to expand existing forced marriage provisions. The Crown Prosecution Service identifies the domestic nature of domestic abuse as an abuse of trust and so as an aggravating factor yet this does not seem to feature in how cases are discussed, prosecuted or sentenced. In 2013, the definition of domestic violence was extended to cover 16-year olds. 2014 introduced Clare's Law – a domestic violence disclosure scheme with a right to ask and a right to know about an individual's previous convictions on domestic violence. The UK signed the Council of Europe

Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) but to date has yet to ratify it. However, in the meantime a Domestic Abuse Bill is progressing through parliament currently and a Domestic Abuse Commissioner UK role has been established since 2019. The Domestic Abuse Bill has been the subject of much activity including particular concerns that it should have been a Violence Against Women Bill to be more in line with CEDAW and the Istanbul Convention. There are attempts to incorporate a number of amendments, one of the most significant being ensuring that it applies to all victims of violence against women, whereas it is currently drafted to the exclusion of migrant women. UK nations are in slightly different places with VAWG legislation: since 2015, Wales has had a Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act and Scotland has had the Domestic Abuse Scotland Act since 2018. Northern Ireland is currently working through the process with the domestic abuse and family proceedings bill 2020 (Northern Ireland). The Serious Crime Act 2015 also made coercive control an offence in England and Wales. Coercive control is already included in the Domestic Abuse Scotland Act and will be included in the Northern Ireland bill.

The Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015 introduced changes to sentencing and further sentencing reforms are proposed for 2020. Sentencing is seen as complicated, lacking transparency and inconsistent. Reforms to homicide defences looking at murder,

manslaughter (culpable homicide in Scotland) and diminished responsibility went some way to addressing some of the issues but there remains a lack of clarity in the public mind about how such decisions are reached and increasing numbers of Unduly Lenient Sentencing challenges. This is a difficult area for governments who are torn between attempting to balance rehabilitation with punishment of offenders and protection of the public. They need to ensure that those in prison should be there rather than prison being used to mop up other issues like mental health and problematic substance use. At the same time, they are seeking to reduce the size of the prison population and the expenses of administering the criminal justice system on the one hand while not wishing to appear “soft on crime” on the other. This has seen increasing attempts to look for alternatives such as out of court disposals, cautions and programmes like anger management, mediation, restorative justice and perpetrators’ programmes particularly for high volume, repeat and “low impact” offending which seems to be where domestic violence is often placed.

### **Cultural context and related societal trends and developments**

To varying extents there is a conducive cultural context for male violence against women and girls in every country. In the UK, this is characterised by high levels of normalisation, glamorisation, sexualisation and celebration of violent and degrading

practices. Pornography, sado-masochism, prostitution and misogyny are increasingly mainstreamed and blurred in film, arts, music, gaming and television. The language of agency and autonomy and choice continues to be used, often disguising or ignoring structural inequality, discrimination and harm. There is an entrenched resistance to identifying and addressing women’s inequality with violent, intimidating and silencing threats and abuse whenever women speak up in public about public or state matters generally and particularly when they address women’s rights specifically. Media coverage continues to focus disproportionately on women’s looks, dress and appearance and reporting on violence is often victim-blaming, ill informed, stereotyped, judgemental and ignorant. There is still no analysis of violence against women as a pattern of discriminatory behaviour informed by the continued hierarchical positioning women as subjugated.

However, there are some interesting examples of communities developing alternatives to some of the more established norms. While this is not the place for a detailed discussion of alternative social structures, it is worth highlighting that these findings are perhaps a reminder that there examples around the world of groups of people, and women particularly, setting up co-operative or other communities.<sup>376</sup> These include: ideological and political communities challenging capitalistic and individualistic societies, building green living environments, developing a sense of community and cooperation,

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<sup>376</sup> <https://cohousing.org.uk/information/research/> (accessed 15 November 2020).

overcoming the financial difficulty of independent living, building in care, support and social contact to overcome isolation as well as specifically to escape male violence. Here in the UK the Older women's Co-housing community has been operative for some time, whereby older single women established a co-operative housing community for women.<sup>377</sup> Another example set up in direct response to male violence against women is the village of Umoja, Kenya where women have provided a safe haven for girls fleeing forced marriage and female genital mutilation.<sup>378</sup> The women of Rojava also provide a fascinating example of women-only communities, in which positions of power are held only by women.<sup>379</sup> This challenges the intersection between patriarchy and capitalism.<sup>380</sup>

## Research

During this period there have been a number of reports and studies which have helped drive forward knowledge and understanding about men's violence against women. A few of these are mentioned here:

- Karen Ingala Smith started Counting Dead Women in 2012, from which the Femicide Census evolved.<sup>381</sup> There is now data on all killings of women by men since 2009. This report covers 2009 to 2018 inclusive
- Standing Together undertook an analysis of Domestic Homicide Reviews in 2016 and updated this in 2020 at the time of going to print<sup>382</sup>
- Dr. Jane Monckton Smith produced an eight-stage homicide timeline in 2019 to analyse domestic violence homicides and is currently examining hidden homicides<sup>383</sup>
- Refuge produced a report in 2018 on rates of suicide among domestic violence victims<sup>384</sup>
- Inquest produces annual reports on deaths of those in custody and those on release from custody but under probation, and in 2019 highlighted women killed or dying by suicide in violent relationships<sup>385</sup>
- There is increasing interest in experiences of violence against women directed at older women with new publications by Dr. Hannah Bows, *Violence Against Older Women* and by Amanda Holt, *Kinship Care*.
- Technology assisted abuse is a growing area of concern. University College London's research report "Gender and IoT" (2018) is just one

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<sup>377</sup> <https://www.owch.org.uk/> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>378</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2015/aug/16/village-where-men-are-banned-womens-rights-kenya> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>379</sup> <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/tagged/revolution-in-rojava/> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>380</sup> <https://mesopotamia.coop/coops/jinwar/> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>381</sup> <https://femicidescensus.org/> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>382</sup> [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5ee0be2588f1e349401c832c/t/5efb6ce1d305a44006cb5ab9/1593535715616/STAD\\_V\\_DHR\\_Report\\_Final.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5ee0be2588f1e349401c832c/t/5efb6ce1d305a44006cb5ab9/1593535715616/STAD_V_DHR_Report_Final.pdf) (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>383</sup> <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/killing-partner-is-crime-similar-to-a-school-shooting-s9vtwp9q5> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>384</sup> <https://www.refuge.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/NEW-Suicide-Report-HIGH.pdf> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>385</sup> <https://www.inquest.org.uk/moj-stats-oct2019> (accessed 15 November 2020).

of the projects looking at the ways in which technology can assist abuse<sup>386</sup>

- Women's Aid has also been highlighting the deaths of children in domestic violence relationships with its report "Nineteen Child Homicides" (2016)<sup>387</sup>
- In an overlap with some of the campaigns and activism cited below, Hannah Bows and Jonathan Herring recently published a review of the "rough sex defence" in *The Journal of Criminal Law*,<sup>388</sup> and Helen Bichard et al have published an analysis of the effects of non-fatal strangulation<sup>389</sup>

## Campaigns

The campaigns, activism and evidence base that combine to bring about change arise from the experiences of women subjected to violence, and of those supporting and advocating for them. Women locally, nationally and internationally need to be able to find each other, talk to each other, share their stories and experiences, and strategise and act together. This is one reason why the attack on women's organising, women's single-sex spaces and on women speaking out on these issues in public can be so damaging. There is not space here to include ten

years' worth of activism and campaigns but again we highlight a few examples:

- There have been campaigns, protests and coverage of femicide all around the world. including in Mexico, Turkey, Colombia, Italy, France, South Africa and Spain
- There have been demonstrations against rape, sexual violence and sexual harassment worldwide, including in India, South Africa and the Americas; the Chilean feminist anthem "Un Violador en Tu Camino" ("A Rapist in Your Path") has become a worldwide phenomenon;<sup>390</sup> there was extensive coverage of so-called "mattress protest", a performance piece by Columbia University student Emily Sulkovicz highlighting campus rape;<sup>391</sup> and the global Me Too campaign created a focus for discussion of sexual violence and sexual harassment<sup>392</sup>
- There is a resurgence of feminist activist groups worldwide from 4B in South Korea (the name translates as "Four Nos" and encourages women to refuse dating, marriage, sex and childrearing),<sup>393</sup> to radical feminist conferences (such as those organised by RadFem Collective in the UK);<sup>394</sup> women's political parties, such as the Women's Equality Party

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<sup>386</sup> <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/steapp/sites/steapp/files/giot-report.pdf> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>387</sup> <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Child-First-Nineteen-Child-Homicides-Report.pdf> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>388</sup> <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0022018320936777> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>389</sup> <https://psyarxiv.com/c6zbv/> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>390</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/feb/03/the-rapist-is-you-chilean-protest-song-chanted-around-the-world-un-violador-en-tu-camino> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>391</sup> <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/07/24/media-circus-surrounding-mattress-girl-case-changed-conversation-sexual-assault> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>392</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/newsbeat-53269751> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>393</sup> <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-7763087/Four-Nos-feminism-swoops-South-Korea.html> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>394</sup> <http://www.radfemcollective.org/> (accessed 15 November 2020).

in the UK,<sup>395</sup> have been established; feminist think tanks such as the Women's Budget Group have highlighted the disproportionate negative impact on women of social and economic policies;<sup>396</sup> and marches such as Million Women Rise<sup>397</sup> and Reclaim the Night<sup>398</sup> have manifested mass public protest against misogyny

- There are a range of active feminist campaigns, including We Can't Consent to This, challenging the attempt to use "rough sex" as a defence to rape, violence and murder; campaigns to make non-fatal strangulation a standalone offence;<sup>399</sup> campaigns to abolish the "no recourse to public funds" rule;<sup>400</sup> and campaigns to create a register of domestic violence offenders<sup>401</sup>
- There are a number of campaigns challenging cultural normalisation of violence against women and challenging the way in which media report it, such as Fixed It,<sup>402</sup> Everyday Sexism,<sup>403</sup> and Level Up<sup>404</sup>
- There has also been an upturn in legal challenges in the UK

addressing cases relating to violence against women. The law on freedom of expression has been shaped by the Supreme Court ruling in *Stocker v. Stocker*, which reversed a previous ruling that Nicola Stocker had libelled her husband by posting on Facebook that "he tried to strangle me" in reference to an instance of non-fatal strangulation, limited an attempt to use libel law to silence women;<sup>405</sup> *Lachaux v. Independent Print Ltd*, which also addressed whether reports of a man abusing a woman amounted to defamation, found in favour of the claimant while increasing the protections available to media organisations by establishing that claimants must demonstrate "serious harm".<sup>406</sup> Judicial review has been used to scrutinise decisions relating to violence against women, such as in the case of *Jordain John-Baptiste*, whose family challenged the CPS over its choice not to prosecute her boyfriend regarding her death in a fall when he was present (Lord Chief Justice Lord Burnett ruled that the CPS decision was "reasonable");<sup>407</sup>

<sup>395</sup> <https://www.campaignlive.co.uk/article/womens-equality-party-quest-reach-switched-off/1667391> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>396</sup> <https://wbg.org.uk/> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>397</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/11/million-women-rise-thousands-march-through-central-london> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>398</sup> <http://www.reclaimthenight.co.uk/> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>399</sup> <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5801/cmpublic/DomesticAbuse/memo/DAB06.pdf> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>400</sup> <https://southhallblackisters.org.uk/campaigns/immigration/abolish-no-recourse-to-public-funds-campaign/> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>401</sup> <https://paladinservice.co.uk/serial-perpetrator-register-and-order/> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>402</sup> <https://janegilmore.com/category/fixedit/> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>403</sup> <https://everydaysexism.com/> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>404</sup> <https://www.welevelup.org/> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>405</sup> <https://www.lawgazette.co.uk/legal-updates/guidance-on-libel-for-the-social-media-age/5070307.article> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>406</sup> <https://globalfreedomofexpression.columbia.edu/cases/lachaux-respondent-v-independent-print-ltd-and-another-appellants/#:~:text=Lachaux%20brought%20defamation%20proceedings%20against,Standard%20had%20twelve%20defamatory%20meanings.&text=The%20newspapers%20then%20appealed%20to%20the%20Supreme%20Court.> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>407</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-48201955> (accessed 15 November 2020).

judicial review was also used to challenge the parole board's decision to release serial rapist John Worboys, in this case successfully, forcing the parole board to reconsider;<sup>408</sup> and at the time of writing, a judicial review is underway into the legality of housing male prisoners in female accommodation after a transgender inmate sexually assaulted a female prisoner.<sup>409</sup> There have been successful appeals for women convicted of murder who have been able to demonstrate that

they should have been able to plead to manslaughter, including the case of Stacey Hyde (who was established on appeal to have acted in self-defence),<sup>410</sup> and that of Sally Challen (whose appeal increased awareness of the effect of coercive control on women).<sup>411</sup> The Centre for Women's Justice, established in 2016, has been among the organisations playing a leading role in these challenges.<sup>412</sup>

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<sup>408</sup> <https://theconversation.com/parole-for-black-cab-rapist-john-worboys-overtuned-in-victory-for-crowdfunded-judicial-review-94137> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>409</sup> <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/inmate-sues-government-over-keeping-trans-women-in-prison-t7w2t5lx8> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>410</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/law/2015/jun/11/stacey-hyde-there-are-many-more-who-need-their-cases-re-examined> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>411</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2019/dec/10/sally-challen-release-prison-husband-murder-appeal> (accessed 15 November 2020).

<sup>412</sup> <https://www.centreforwomensjustice.org.uk/> (accessed 15 November 2020).

## 8. Conclusions and Recommendations

### Women and Girls

Despite an increased focus on men's violence against women, particularly domestic violence and abuse, it still remains the case that if a woman is killed, the person most likely to have killed her is her current or former partner. Furthermore, there is little suggestion that any intervention over the past ten years has had a significant impact or even any impact at all on the number of women being killed by men.

The Femicide Census has never been solely about intimate partner femicide, but we recognise the dominance of this relationship between perpetrator and victim in men's fatal violence against women. The UK remains one of the few countries in Europe that has not ratified the Istanbul Convention, which critically draws upon the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), recognising that men's violence against women and girls will not be eradicated without fundamentally addressing sex inequality and the beliefs, attitudes and institutions that underpin it. Accordingly, we urge further and continued challenge to sex-based structural inequality and the recognition of the importance of socially constructed gender/sex role stereotypes and men's violence against women and girls in maintaining sex inequality.

### Older women

Women live slightly longer than men in the UK and the mortality age has been rising. While official data does now

count over 60s, it still does not count over 75s and those in institutions. Yet, as this report shows, significant proportions of femicides involve older women. This is still not well publicised, and care homes, vulnerable adult social workers, GPs and other services working with older people need better training and awareness about elder abuse. Many older women experiencing abuse from their partner have lived with this for several years and may see no way out or even have normalised it in their minds.

Sons, grandsons and stepsons are commonly living with elderly women when they have no financial means to look after themselves, when they have mental health issues, when their relationships have broken down, and when they are bailed or released to these addresses. There is little or no help, supervision, mental health support or risk assessment of either potential perpetrator or potential victim in such a situation. Many older and elderly women are appalled and ashamed to suffer at the hands of their own children and do not wish to be make their own child's life harder, making it very difficult to ask for help. Often it is not clear that domestic violence and abuse services are available to women who are being abused by their sons or grandsons.

In other cases, elderly women who may need support with everyday tasks, but do not reach the threshold for services, are "befriended" by locals and neighbours who are in fact taking advantage of this gap in provision and exploiting them.



These gaps in understanding the scale, extent and manifestations of elder abuse and the lack of access to specialist support, mental health services, problematic substance use services and home help all help contribute to create opportunity and impunity for perpetrators.

### **Unsolved cases, hidden homicides, suicides and “mercy killings”**

The scene of a death of a woman should be secured and treated as a crime scene in the first instance to allow gathering of and to prevent contamination. This includes so-called “mercy killings”, deaths relating to problematic substance use, fatal falls whether from height or against surfaces and objects, and suicides. There needs to be a robust and thorough interrogation of the relationship and dynamics of the parties and their histories so as to surface any possibility of this having been a suspicious death in the context of a coercively controlling or abusive relationship.

This applies across all aspects of the criminal justice system – police, CPS, courts, sentencing and coroners. The failure to investigate and appropriately charge cases and to record the contributory factors leading up the death or killing of a woman is enabling impunity for perpetrators and breaching the right to safety and justice for women and their loved ones.

In France, if a woman dies by suicide and it is found that she was suffering from violence and abuse from her partner in the run up to the suicide, he may be sentenced for up to 20 years. In

the Femicide Census we generally cannot include the many suicides that arise in a context of male violence. However, we have retained one such case in which, unusually, the coroner stated that the violence she experienced at the hands of her partner had driven her to take her own life. Such a thorough, robust and insightful analysis of the situation and resultant investigation, charges and inquest are sadly all too rare and very overdue.

### **Perpetrator responsibility**

Who are the perpetrators? They are overwhelmingly men known, and often loved and trusted, by the women they kill. Only around 8% are strangers. They are husbands, partners and exes; sons, stepsons and grandsons; neighbours and locals; colleagues, friends and dates. Who do they kill? They kill not only the woman targeted, but often also other women and occasionally men and children they associate with her. This needs to be better known and publicised so that women and their children, families and loved ones, and the services that should support them can properly locate, and act against, the source of the threat, believing and protecting those at risk.

Perpetrators make choices, often repeatedly, to be violent, controlling and abusive. Yet we rarely scrutinise the behaviour and choices of perpetrators or risk assess their likelihood of committing violence. On the contrary; we “risk assess”, scrutinise, police and often disbelieve and blame women for the violence to which they, and sometimes their children, are subjected.

However, we have an increasing body of research and experience into what may be factors for increased risk of perpetration among those men already inclined to violence, abuse and misogynistic attitudes and beliefs. Dr. Jane Monckton Smith's homicide timeline, the Children and Woman Abuse Studies Unit of London Metropolitan University, Standing Together Against Domestic Abuse, WHO, Respect (an accredited perpetrator's programme) and now the Femicide Census have all identified some of these risk factors. Men who already hold very stereotypical views about the roles of the sexes and about what constitutes their identity as a man, and who see some aspect of that status threatened are at increased risk of escalating violence when:

- Losing a job, wealth, status, respect or control
- Losing a relationship (partner/ children)
- Losing health (mental or physical)
- Losing freedom (to do as he wishes or as he feels is his right)
- Facing a prosecution for a criminal, fraudulent or other shaming offence
- He has a prior history of domestic or sexual violence which may include use of prostitution, pornography and the sex industry
- He has problematic substance use

This is knowledge we can and should be using to monitor men and to engage early with them to prevent escalation, to alert and protect women, and to properly focus on how some men may

turn to violence and abuse of women and others to make themselves feel better or when they fail to respond appropriately to life challenges.

### **Support Services for women subjected to male violence**

Inevitably the first demand here is for more and better resourcing for both public services and for independent, specialist, women-only and BME services. Our findings also suggest the need to consider the development of services targeting women from Eastern European and post-communist/post-Soviet nations. Single-sex provision is essential for women at risk of homelessness, women trying to get out of prostitution and trafficking, women trying to recover from sexual or domestic violence, women recently released from prison and women needing residential or community-based mental health or problematic substance use services. Specialist services supporting women and girls subjected to men's violence should be supported to apply the single sex exemptions permitted within the Equality Act and to prioritise delivery of trauma-informed services that prioritise the well-being of women and girls.

Service design (across public services, emergency services and NGOs) needs to be better shaped and resourced to meet service-users' needs. That may mean different ways of engaging with women as well as reviewing availability at weekends and during holiday periods. Accessible, effective and reliable services depend on adequate resourcing and on expert staff with specific training, skills and experience.

## Data, transparency and accountability

The Femicide Census is itself a response to a major data gap and consequently a transparency and accountability gap. It is a finding not only of the final report but throughout the course of this project that there are huge gaps and failings in the duty to gather, analyse and publicise detailed, sex-disaggregated data. It has been very difficult to find available, searchable, publicly verified and accurate official sources.

The Government needs to collate and publish sex-disaggregated data on men's violence against women. Homicide statistics appear to be beginning to move in this direction, but recognition of men's violence against women and girls as a systemic issue of discrimination and inequality is still lacking.

Police data generally, including FOIs, should scrupulously and consistently record ethnicity and other equalities and discrimination data.

Inquiries, reviews, complaints, investigations and lesson learning exercises need to be held at a central, available, searchable site (or sites). Outcomes and changes made as result of such exercises need to be monitored, measured and publicised, with consequences for inaction. This relates to Independent Office for Police Conduct investigations, police complaints and internal reviews, Domestic Homicide Reviews, inquests and notices to prevent future deaths. To some extent, the new role of Domestic Abuse Commissioner may help drive up

data and transparency standards and is welcome.

Global, comparative data on the scale and extent of men's violence against women and of femicides needs to be gathered and publicised. To some extent, the European Institute for Gender Equality and UN Women are working on this, and more states around the world are gathering data on femicide and violence against women. We welcome such initiatives.

## Criminal Justice System

There are several points to make in addition to the above, but we highlight a few areas of concern here. It is difficult to pinpoint specific recommendations when there is a need for a wholesale review of practice.

There are a raft of policies, laws, measures and guidance for police, CPS, sentencing, parole and probation – but there is also a major implementation gap. All four police super complaints have directly arisen from poor practice with women victims of violence, and in particular one of the super complaints focused on police failure to enforce protective measures. Measures such as Clare's Law, injunctions, occupation orders, restraining orders, non-molestation orders, panic rooms, sanctuary schemes, bail conditions and arrest for breach of orders are only effective if they are easily accessible to victims and activated and enforced by services. New laws and proposals, which we support, include ensuring all women (including women with no recourse and other immigration statuses) can benefit from the domestic abuse bill, proposals for non-fatal strangulation as a

standalone offence, development of a domestic violence offenders register and exemption from criminalisation for women victims of violence. However, if these worthy ideas are not acted on, or if they are usurped and used by perpetrators with complicity of state agencies against victims, then they are not only of no help but become actively harmful.

The CPS is already facing a legal challenge over what appears to be a secret change of policy on rape charges. It has also faced legal challenges over a failure to charge a man for abuse of his girlfriend who was killed by falling from the apartment they were in, and a legal challenge for choosing to pursue a private prosecution over an alleged false allegation of rape by a woman with mental health issues who later died by suicide. In several circumstances, the CPS has not pursued charges, or has gone for or accepted lesser charges with concomitant lesser sentences.

There are question marks over the sentencing of men who are found guilty of manslaughter, particularly when compared with sentences of women found guilty of manslaughter. There is also increasing research seeming to show that killings of women by men in a domestic violence situation receive lower sentences than other homicides. This is despite the fact that there is guidance in sentencing that situates domestic violence as a breach of trust which can, and should be, an aggravating factor. Similarly, while "use of a weapon" is an aggravating factor in public places, there is no equivalent in a domestic situation where in fact anything and everything is a weapon.

There are some discussions now about reviewing how parole operates. Certainly there is little transparency about this process yet, ample evidence that men who use violence against women are repeat offenders with serious implications for women on their release. The ground-breaking legal challenge by women to the parole of John Worboys is an important illustration of the weaknesses of current parole practice.

Probation too has failed women. Women who are ex-offenders are often left with no support, exposing them to abusive relationships at the hands of men which are often precisely what led them to prison in the first place. Men on probation are not supervised properly and are able to harass, abuse and, in some cases, even kill women on release. Men are also often bailed or released to the homes of their partners or mothers, putting these women at risk.

As already indicated, coroners often fail to acknowledge the role of men's violence against women and girls in contributing to the death or killing of a woman. All too often, notices to prevent future deaths make no recommendations concerning the history of violence, even though it is a feature of the case. In too many cases, a woman may suffer severe violence (including beating and strangulation) but only die some days later, and the coroner will not cite the assault as contributory to the death, instead delivering an open or unascertained verdict. Similarly, where a woman who experiences multiple disadvantage (such as homelessness, problematic substance use, prostitution and/or mental health issues) is preyed on,

targeted, exploited or abused and later dies, coroners often imply the death was due to her “lifestyle” and not to the perpetrator of the assault. And as indicated, coroners are often too quick to accept suicide at face value and not cite the contributory nature of a history of violence.

## Media

There are already codes of conduct, guidelines and good practice concerning media reporting generally, and reporting on men’s violence against women and girls specifically. These are little known about and even less adhered to or enforced.

Media reporting needs to respect good practice. Complaint and accountability mechanisms need to be simplified, publicised, strengthened and enforced. All media reporting of men’s violence needs to be contextualised in the wider context of systemic violence, discrimination and inequality as opposed to “unpredictable, tragic, isolated incidents” with “no cause for wider public concern”. It should include clarity as to who are the perpetrators and the scale and extent of men’s violence against women and girls. The hierarchy of victims, dependent upon their race, age and relationship with the perpetrator, needs to end.

## Technology

Social media, cloud technologies and “Internet of Things” have become increasingly integrated in daily life. Their acceptance has created new opportunities for abusers: online abuse, tracking apps, non-consensual image sharing, stalking devices, remote control security, remote control devices,

spyware, pornography, dating apps, hidden cameras, the move towards a cash-free society and online banking all offer avenues for the monitoring or control of women.

While a few companies have responded to this potential and are attempting to consider how to proof their products against such abuse, many appear either not to have thought about it or not to care. Some actively market their products for precisely these functions. Many, from extreme sites like Pornhub to everyday dating apps, and to some extent Facebook and Twitter, have failed to deal with abuse of their platforms despite it being reported and catalogued for some time.

A holistic strategy on the digital society should be designed, with standards and mechanisms that require companies to think through and take steps to prevent the use or abuse of their products by perpetrators, to provide support and assistance to victims affected, and to enforce accountability for companies that fall short.

## Actions

We have picked from the above a few areas where we think we can concentrate our efforts, or support others’ efforts, to campaign and advocate for change:

### Government and policing

- The government to mandate that each police force have a designated senior homicide officer responsible for actions relating to all femicides in each police force area

- Officers to meet six-monthly to discuss, report and act on strategies to reduce the number of femicides
- Treatment of scene of death of a woman as a crime scene

### Data capture

- Each police force to respond uniformly to the Femicide Census and to capture the same data
- Central, easily searchable and accessible site for DHRs
- Central, easily searchable and accessible site for ethnicity; crimes to be recorded in the sex (not chosen gender) of the perpetrator and the victim; and CJS to use standardised system to capture socioeconomic class

### Crime and justice process

- Treatment of the scene of death of women as a crime scene
- Sentencing to enact the principles that domestic violence is a breach of trust and an aggravating factor; that everyday objects are “weaponised” in domestic violence; and also to recognise the aggravating nature of use of a knife in domestic violence as in the public sphere
- Consistent and increased use of existing VAWG prevention measures (such as non-molestation and occupation orders, bail conditions and injunctions, Clare’s Law, and sanctuary schemes) and robust use of attached power of arrest for breaches
- Improved and expanded risk assessment and monitoring of men

with a history of violence against women, in particular those known to be particularly violent and to have multiple victims

- Coroners’ to make explicit link to role of VAWG in contributing to death
- Improved awareness of elder abuse and the sex differences in its perpetration

### Technology and media

- Better accountability and standards from tech companies regarding online abuse, dating apps, online harassment, image-based sexual abuse
- Improved and contextualised media coverage to include helpline numbers, a true picture of who are the perpetrators and statistics about scale and extent of violence against women

### Support services for women subjected to male violence

- Single-sex services for women and girls
- Long-term, sustainable funding for independent specialist services responding to all forms of men’s violence against women and girls
- Support services and legal remedies to be accessible to all women, including those with no recourse to public funds

### Legal and policy

- Ratification of Istanbul Convention

- Policy initiatives that place all forms of men’s violence against women and girls in a coherent strategy recognising the central role of structural sex inequality
- Due consideration to initiatives suggested by the women’s specialist VAWG sector such as a domestic violence offenders register, non-fatal strangulation as a standalone offence and non-criminalisation presumption for women committing offences in a context of coercive control
- Reinforce access to justice and the mechanisms that enable this, notably legal aid and judicial review

As stated in the foreword, the data shows that the number of women killed per year, the methods used, the contexts in which women are killed and their relationships with the men who kill them have remained constant over the ten-year period. The Femicide Census is not prepared to accept that this is inevitable and that we should merely be grateful that the numbers have not increased. The title of this report is an actual quote from a woman predicting her own killing, and too many of the women in this report and their loved ones may equally have said, and certainly thought, something similar. Our findings confirm the view of the Femicide Census that this is indeed one of the greatest public policy failures of the decade.

## 9. Glossary

BDSM	Bondage, discipline, sado-masochism
BME	Black and minority ethnic (also BAME)
BAMER	Black and minority ethnic and refugee
CCTV	Close circuit television
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
CERD	Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
CJS	Criminal justice system
CPS	Crown Prosecution Service
DAC	Domestic abuse commissioner
DASH RA	Domestic abuse, stalking and harassment risk assessment
DCMS	Department for Digital, Culture Media and Sports
DFE	Department for Education
DHR	Domestic homicide review
DHSC	Department for Health and Social Care
DV	Domestic violence
DVA	Domestic violence and abuse
DWP	Department for Welfare and Pensions
EEA	European Economic Area
EU	European Union
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IOPC	Independent Office for Police Conduct
IPCC	Independent Police Complaints Commission
IPH	Intimate partner homicide
LA	Local Authority
LASPO	Legal Aid Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act
LGBT	Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender
MAPPA	Multi agency public protection arrangements
MARAC	Multi agency risk assessment conference
MASH	Multi agency safeguarding hub
MHCLG	Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government
MOPAC	Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime
MVAWG	Male violence against women and girls
NGO	Non-governmental organisations
ONS	Office for National Statistics



ORS	Office for the Regulation of Statistics
PCC	Police and Crime Commissioner
PSU	Problematic substance use
SV	Sexual violence
UN	United Nations
UNSRVAW	United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women
VC	Victims' Commissioner
WHO	World Health Organisation

## Testimonials for the Femicide Census

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“The Femicide Census professionally and judiciously produces ground-breaking work measuring and analysing violence against women (VAW) and gender-related killing in the United Kingdom, in order to contribute to knowledge, strategy, policy and practices. This work is a culmination of ongoing efforts to help end the most severe manifestation of VAW: femicide. Further, the utilization of the information from the Femicide Census is relevant to create advocacy tools based on concrete data and to provide a resource for academics, journalists, policymakers and others working to combat femicide and violence against women.”

**Fatma Uysal, co-editor of the Femicide publication series, UNSA Vienna**

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“Using responses from police forces to FOI requests and publicly available sources, such as media reports, with a minimum of three sources for each case, the Femicide Census provides a detailed and trustworthy account of the shockingly high number of women killed by men in the UK. The Femicide Census can be relied on, and should be used by; researchers, lawyers, policy makers and activists to bring about positive change. We are all responsible for ending violence against women and girls and the Femicide Census is an essential tool for evidencing the role of violence in upholding the structural nature of inequality and discrimination.”

**Dr. Miranda Horvath, Middlesex University and Violence Against Women and Girls Research Network**

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“The femicide census is an invaluable source of information for lawyers, academics, campaigners and policy makers as it provides detailed disaggregated data on a range of issues relevant not only to the murders of women but to the wider issues associated with male violence against women. It is also an invaluable tool for holding the state accountable in relation to violence against women and girls.”

**Harriet Wistrich, Centre for Women’s Justice**

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“The work carried out by the Femicide Census project is of the upmost importance in shining a spotlight on the devastating and deadly consequences of violence against women and girls. This report not only highlights the shockingly high number of women who are killed by men every year, but also evidences that there has been no sign of a decline in femicide over a decade-long period. This is extremely concerning. The vast majority of women are killed by men who they are currently, or have previously been, in a relationship with. We owe it to the lives of all of these women to ensure that the government and partner agencies focus on the gendered nature of domestic abuse and wider forms of violence against women and girls to ensure that anyone subject to abuse is provided with the all the support they need.”

**Nicole Jacobs, Domestic Abuse Commissioner**

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“I first heard Karen Ingala Smith speak about the Counting Dead Women project at a conference in 2015 and I was struck by the importance of her work in telling the stories of these women and their families and in using the data to try to understand the worldwide problems of male violence against women. I also felt that this urgently needed work should be, but probably never would be, conducted by the police or by government. The Counting Dead Women Project has become the Femicide Census. The results of the ten-year femicide report are shocking particularly in how little has changed in the rate of femicide in the UK. I hope that this thorough and well-researched report will be an important tool for change.”

**Edith Eligator, Independent supporter**

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“To many, including some in power, each femicide is a single horror, noted only momentarily. The Femicide Census reveals the sickening scale of these femicides and suggests the system and cultural factors preventing its decline. It uncovers the recurring and haunting patterns including overkill and body violation and notes that it has long-lasting effects on those left behind. It should make us so, so angry.”

**Frank Mullane, CEO, Advocacy After Fatal Domestic Abuse**

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“As Victims’ Commissioner I feel strongly that, while I wish it were not necessary, the Femicide Census fills a shameful gap in the UK’s armoury to record, challenge, address and prevent femicides. The lack of detailed, disaggregated data collected about femicides by the State has long represented missed opportunities for appropriate understanding, prevention and prosecution of femicides. The Femicide Census provides a vital service and I commend it to any policy maker or practitioner addressing male violence against women.”

**Vera Baird QC, Victims’ Commissioner, former PCC Northumbria and former Solicitor General.**

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“We are very proud to have been able to help make the Femicide Census a reality – it has been a shocking and humbling experience for us. We’ve done it in honour of the women who have been killed, and in the belief that it will help to prevent further killings. Each Femicide Census report identifies stark patterns and trends in the killing of women by men and we believe that this creates an impact and a legacy rooted in one simple tried and tested premise: that information brings knowledge and knowledge can bring change.”

**Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer LLP**

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“The Femicide Census is a ground-breaking and crucial project. It has revealed the scale of an issue hitherto given minimal forensic attention. The gathering of the names of women killed not only serves to starkly reveal the scale of the issue, it has also provided an invaluable source for research. Without the Femicide Census and the work of Karen Ingala Smith in painstakingly collecting the names of dead women and putting them all together in one place, our risk assessment practices and understanding of this public health and criminal justice issue would be years behind where they are. The Femicide Census is one of those projects that has survived and gained prominence despite official support, especially in the early days, and not because of it. Now it is part of our landscape, providing the evidence we need to make the critical arguments to save the lives of women in the future.”

**Dr. Jane Monckton Smith, senior lecturer in criminology, University of Gloucestershire**

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“Women’s Aid has been proud to be part of the Femicide Census development with Karen Ingala Smith over the past five years, with invaluable support from Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer LLP and Deloitte LLP. We are pleased that due to the success of the Femicide Census, this important resource is now an independent entity. The Census is globally recognised as a critical tool for defining and understanding femicide, its manifestations, causes and consequences. The Census gives voice to each woman who has been killed by men’s fatal violence and we urge both policymakers and practitioners to fully engage with this landmark ten-year report”

**Nicki Norman, CEO (interim), Women’s Aid**

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“The Femicide Census shines a much-needed spotlight on the tragedy of male violence towards women and girls in our society. The data from the Census and from other sources is quite clear, not only about the extreme harm caused to women and girls by male violence, but about the shocking scale of this problem – domestic abuse alone accounts for around a tenth of all crimes reported to the Metropolitan Police each year, causing untold damage to individuals, families and communities. Through the Mayor’s VAWG strategy, we’re determined to do everything we can, working together with victims, the police, justice agencies, councils, VAWG sector partners and communities to tackle these devastating crimes and their causes in London.”

**Sophie Linden, Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime, London**

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“It has been our absolute privilege to work alongside the Femicide Census for the past five years. We are pleased that our involvement in organising information has aided the Femicide Census to undertake their essential work and shine a much needed light on this hugely important issue. Our people are proud to play a part in supporting this vital cause.”

**Barrie Allan, Director, Deloitte LLP**

# femicide census