

Local governments fight against femicide

INTRODUCTION

The International Observatory of Violence against Women (↳[OIVF](#)) presents in this factsheet theoretical thematic elements to understand the impact of violence against women in the public space, while sharing practical examples of local governments to combat them, with the aim of encouraging other territories to adopt them and take measures against this kind of violence.

Femicide, definition and scope

Every 11 minutes, a woman or girl is murdered by a member of her own family. In 2020, the UN recorded ↳[47.000 women murdered by their family and/or spouse](#). In 2021, **56% of women murdered in the world were victims of their partner or a family member**. These statistics show that women are primarily at risk within the family and marital home and that their partners are the main perpetrators of these crimes.

Femicide does not arise unexpectedly. It only occurs because social norms tolerate, minimise or even encourage violent and extreme behaviours and practices resulting from male domination over women, which are very often caused by dynamics that have existed for a long time within societies.

Having consolidated data available on femicide means we can specify the relationship between the aggressor and the victim (marital, family, social, etc.) and **adapt prevention and protection policies** to different scenarios. The figures also highlight the accumulation of vulnerabilities that overexpose certain women to the risk of femicide (indigenous, disabled, migrant and pregnant women, etc.).

However, it is still difficult to obtain, compare and aggregate data on femicide at the international level. Legal definitions and statistical frameworks vary from one country to another. Reports are often underestimated due to the absence of a protocol for ↳[recording murders](#). Recording the number of femicides in public spaces is particularly lacking.

According to recommendations by the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, we should systematise the collection of data on femicide, and the publication thereof, and help create Femicide Observatories.

Local governments can highlight femicide at this level by publishing the numbers in their territory. This means reporting a reality in order to oppose it, rather than stigmatising a territory. Qualitative studies allow recommendations to be formulated.

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS TAKE ACTION

How can femicide be quantified at local level? Study and analysis of measures to protect women at risk – Observatory of Violence against Women, Seine-Saint-Denis Departmental Council, France

In collaboration with the Bobigny public prosecutor's office and the association ↪ [SOS Victimes 93](#), the Observatory carried out a study on the effectiveness of the protection system called ↪ [Téléphone Grave Danger](#) (Serious Danger Helpline, TGD) assigned by the public prosecutor,

enabling the security forces to intervene in 4 minutes. The study focuses on women saved thanks to the TGD between 2018 and 2024, and on the femicides that could thus be avoided thanks to this system tested since 2009 in this region.

Women and Gender Equality Observatory – Bogotá, Colombia

Bogotá provides ↪ [a gender-based data collection service](#) in its territory. The local diagnoses published periodically bring together a variety of information by

district. Counting femicides from sources in local prosecutors' offices allows the improvement of prevention policies to be monitored.

The World Health Organization (WHO) highlights four types of femicide: **intimate, honour killing, dowry-related, and non-intimate**, analysing the relationship between aggressors and victims. They are all based on a common denominator: aggressors consider themselves entitled to punish a woman when they believe that she has behaved in a way that transgresses gender norms.

Intimate femicide is the murder of a woman or girl by her intimate partner or former partner. In most cases, the death of the victim was preceded by violence within the couple, even if it was not always previously identified. In 2022 in France, ↪ [31% of women murdered had reported previous violence](#). **Thus, governments' knowledge of the facts is not always sufficient to protect victims and requires any disclosure of violence to be taken into account starting with the first statement.** All studies identify a history of domestic violence as the main risk factor for femicide. *Systematic questioning* is recommended to make progress in early identification of victims.

Honour killing involves the murder of a girl or woman by a member of her family because she has committed or is suspected of having committed a sexual or behavioural transgression in relation to gender norms and stereotypes, such as adultery, sexual relations or pregnancy outside of marriage, her refusal to submit to a forced marriage – or even because she has been raped.

Dowry-related femicide involves the murder of young wives by their in-laws due to conflicts related to the dowry given to the husband, which is considered insufficient.

It would be pertinent to include two additional situations in this WHO category: **infanticide of newborn girls, and the death of girls and women as a result of female genital mutilation**. These violent deaths are often not listed as femicide, but are the result of patriarchal violence carried out by the community against girls because they are girls.

Non-intimate femicide. It involves crimes committed by a person who has no intimate or family connection with the victim. The crimes can be committed in isolation, as in the case of massacres in the United States or [↳Canada](#) specifically targeting girls and women. They also involve situations of systematic murder of women. From 1993 to 2013, 1,441 women were brutally murdered in Ciudad Juárez, on the border between Mexico and the United States. Most of these crimes remain unsolved, creating a climate of total impunity for the aggressors and the endless reproduction of this violence.

Another form of femicide must be included in the list: “forced suicides”. These are situations in which women who are victims of sexual and gender-based violence commit suicide. Only India and France recognise this violence as a crime. Various [↳studies](#) estimate that between 11% and 12.5% of women who commit suicide or attempt suicide in the world do so because of the intimate-partner violence they have suffered. This violence seriously degrades the quality of life of the victims, and their physical and mental health, leading to suicide. The aggressor is responsible for making them decide to take their own life. In [↳India](#), this phenomenon is mainly linked to forced marriages and dowry problems that push brides to end their lives after having been abused. In France, forced suicides refer to situations in which women who are victims of violence are forced to end their lives because they are trapped by a partner who controls their entire life, leaving them with no possibility of escape.

Femicide also **has consequences for the children of victims**. They may be murdered at the same time as their mother. They are also direct or indirect witnesses to the crime. Seeing one of your attachment figures killed by the other is one of the most difficult traumas to overcome. Children are left orphaned and must therefore be recognised as joint victims of femicide, and public authorities must care for them appropriately, psychologically, educationally and in the family.



Protecting victims from the private to public sphere

Trained professionals: assessing the danger and protecting

What characterises aggressors is that they are unpredictable and dangerous. When a victim reports violence, the immediate response must be a solution to protect her.

All professionals (social support, police, justice, health, etc.) must be trained to identify the **factors that aggravate the danger**. For intimate femicide, the periods of change are high risk (pregnancy, new job, separation). In the case of separated couples, it has to do with resuming contact with the father due to visitation rights and accommodation for the children. In the context of honour killing, the victim's opposition to family expectations is a powerful trigger (unapproved romantic relationship, social behaviour considered pernicious, loss – real or supposed – of virginity, etc.). In general, the possession of firearms, the consumption of psychotropics and alcohol are additional risk factors; however, they are never the reason for femicide.

Danger assessment enables the identification of scenarios in order to guide victims towards protective measures. This practice requires the **training of services** (social,

police, judicial, care and shelter, etc.) and, sometimes, the development of tools to assist in analysis.

In addition to these assessments, **operational measures are needed to protect victims at risk of femicide**. This includes close support but also **regulation of the prohibition of contact between the aggressor and the victim**, as well as trials and sentences in the event of non-compliance.

How can professionals be trained to provide better care for victims?

Local governments must provide tools that allow victims who are outside the protection systems to be identified through systematic questioning. They complement quality training and professional support.

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS TAKE ACTION

SAAT, identifying to provide better support – Bogotá, Colombia

In collaboration with the forensic services (UMJ) of the Public Ministry of Bogotá, the city has created an **identification and assessment system** of victims at risk of femicide, the Early Warning Service (SAAT). When victims go to the forensic medical services, in addition to examining the injuries, the services carry out an analysis

of the danger factors of the victim's situation (social, economic, medical, relationship with the aggressor, etc.). The assessment is sent to the city's specialised services, which establish appropriate follow-up. In cases of high risk of femicide, this follow-up will be especially detailed and strengthened.

Local governments and associations are raising awareness among residents about the consequences of violence by paying tribute to missing women.

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS TAKE ACTION

Femmages, highlighting the unspeakable, demanding justice – Ciudad Juárez, Mexico

In Ciudad Juárez, the Municipal Institute for Women and the **Red Mesa de Mujeres de Ciudad Juárez**, with the agreement of the victims' families, set up the Memorial Campo Algodonero. This project aims to honour the lives of women who have been found dead as well as those who are missing, with works of art, murals, and so on. In addition, the Municipal Institute for Women and the Red

Mesa de Mujeres offer specialised support to the mothers of women who are victims of femicide or who have been missing for more than 10 years, giving them the dignity necessary to access justice, seek out truth, and obtain reparations. Individual or group psychological support is also provided, as well as group and family integration activities.

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS TAKE ACTION

Femicide protocol – Observatory of Violence against Women, Seine-Saint-Denis Departmental Council, France

The Seine-Saint-Denis Observatory of Violence against Women coordinates a [↳system of emergency assistance for children](#) whose mothers have been victims of femicide. By court order, the children are admitted to the paediatric ward for 8 days and are given post-traumatic care. This measure allows the children to receive adequate treatment.

Moreover, for every woman murdered by her (ex)spouse in Seine-Saint-Denis, the Observatory, together with the association [↳SOS Femmes 93](#), organises a silent march in the city where the crime occurred

and issues a press release to pay tribute to the female victim and make femicide visible to the actors involved (council, family members, associations, etc.).

De plus, pour chaque femme tuée par son (ex) conjoint en Seine-Saint-Denis, l'Observatoire avec l'association [↳SOS Femmes 93](#), organise une marche silencieuse dans la commune où a eu lieu le crime, avec un communiqué de presse pour rendre hommage à la femme victime et rendre visible les féminicides les acteurs mobilisés (la Municipalité, les proches, les associations...).



And you, what are you doing on a local level? Tell us about your experience!

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