

**femicide census**  
profiles of women killed by men

THE FEMICIDE CENSUS:  
2017 FINDINGS

Annual Report on UK  
Femicides 2017



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## Foreword

On 2nd January 2012, Kirsty Treloar was stabbed to death in Hackney. She was just 20 years old. Kirsty's murder spurred me to start keeping a list of the names of women killed by men in the UK. This became a project that I called Counting Dead Women. I wanted to highlight that the women killed were not just statistics, not just numbers, but real women, who were loved and now mourned. I was angry seeing the killings of eight women in the first three days of the year referred to as 'isolated incidents' when I believe they are anything but. A year or so later, I was contacted by Clarissa O'Callaghan, the then Global Head of Pro Bono at international law firm Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer. She was interested in looking at the adequacy of the State's response to intimate partner femicide and wanted to build a picture of what was happening in the UK. Shockingly, the most comprehensive information she'd been able to find was my blog. We talked about how our interests were complementary and explored the idea of working together. We invited Women's Aid and Deloitte to join us as we knew they could bring important expertise to the team and in February 2015 we launched the Femicide Census. This is our third report.

Karen Ingala Smith

# Introduction

Our first report covered the killings of 936 women and girls aged 14 and over who had been killed by a man, or where a man was the principal perpetrator/suspect, in England and Wales between 2009 and 2015. The second looked at the killings of 113 women in 2016 in England, Wales and Northern Ireland; this year, we are pleased to have been able to include women killed in Scotland, so that we now cover the whole of the UK. This report looks at 139 women who were killed by a man or where a man is the principal perpetrator/suspect in the UK in 2017. The Femicide Census now holds the details of 1,246 women and girls and the men who killed them; we will be adding those killed in Northern Ireland and Scotland between 2009 and 2016. We thank Welsh Women's Aid, Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland and Scottish Women's Aid for their support.

Those of us involved with the Femicide Census have learned a lot about men's fatal violence against women and girls in the time we have been working together and there have been other changes that are reflected in this report. First, 2015 saw the introduction of the new offence of controlling or coercive behaviour in England and Wales. This resulted in the first conviction in 2017, for manslaughter by coercive control, of a man being held accountable for a woman's suicide. Scotland has recently passed its own Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018, which will allow controlling behaviour and psychological and emotional abuse to be prosecuted; this is to come into force in 2019. Northern Ireland, too, has drafted legislation but progress has stalled while the NI Assembly is not sitting. Second, although the links between men's violence against women and women's deaths by suicide have been acknowledged for some time, this is the first time that we have been able to include such a death in the Femicide Census. We are also aware of an additional woman's death by suicide in 2017 where the ex-partner was found guilty of assault and controlling behaviour and where the judge in the case attributed her death to this abuse. We know that in some cases coroners' reports and domestic homicide reviews have linked domestic violence and abuse to women's death by suicide. We hope in future to find more comprehensive ways of including women's death by suicide in our work.

Third, this year, for the first time, we've tried to look at 'overkilling': where the force and/or methods that a man used to kill a woman was greater than that required to kill her. It challenges the myth of accidental killings and highlights the brutality of the misogyny that men bring to their violence against women and sometimes an intent to

humiliate, brutalise, maim or desecrate. Overkilling crosses different contexts including intimate partner femicide, matricide, sexually motivated killings and those of older women – often in robberies – and is a phenomenon which merits further research and analysis.

One of the most significant changes in women killed by men in the UK in 2017 compared to the years we've previously looked at was the number of women killed in terrorist attacks. We had included the murder of Jo Cox in our report on 2016, but in 2017, 22 women and girls (of whom one is not included in our analysis because she was under 14) were killed in three separate attacks in Manchester and London. This is consistent with our inclusion of all women killed by men in the Femicide Census.

As we go into what will be the tenth year covered by the Femicide Census, our plan is to review the cases already in the database to reflect our own developing understanding and to ensure consistency and accuracy. Ideally, we'd like our next report to not only look at 2018 but also look at the cumulative picture of the ten years from 2009 to 2018.

One of the objectives of the Femicide Census is to develop the understanding of the different forms of men's violence against women and girls and the relationships between those forms through accurate and verifiable statistics. This, of course, is ultimately a stepping stone towards reducing men's violence against, and abuse of, women and girls, fatal or not. Because of the Femicide Census, we now know that between 2009 and 2017 in the UK:<sup>1</sup>

- A woman is killed every three days by a man
- A woman is killed by her male partner or former partner every four days
- A third of women killed by their male partner are killed after separation, of whom a third are killed in the first month and three quarters within a year.

This must surely tell us that it is long past the time to think of the killing of women by men as 'isolated incidents'. We urge activists, practitioners, public servants, politicians, policymakers and the media to reflect on this reality and cite the accurate statistics used here, but not to reduce a woman to a statistic or to give her killer the last word about her or excuses for his killing her. While it is important that we recognise that each woman or girl killed was someone's daughter and may also have been someone's mother, sister, friend, partner or lover, she, herself, was always someone in her own right.

<sup>1</sup> Please note that the Femicide Census currently only includes femicides in Northern Ireland from 2016, and those occurring in Scotland from 2017. Full UK data is currently only available for 2017.

# Dedication

2017 saw at least 139 women killed<sup>2</sup> by men in the UK. The annual Femicide Census is dedicated to the women who were killed by men last year and in previous years, and to the families and friends who have lost women dear to them at the hands of men.<sup>3</sup>

We aim for this report to be a voice for women whose stories were absent or not fully reflected in news reports and courtrooms. Women have a right to live free from violence and free from the threat of violence, and we call on the State to uphold this right. It is incumbent on the State to ensure that women have access to vital specialist services to escape from violence; to take women's experiences and disclosures seriously; to act on these and conduct adequate investigation; and to bring about prosecutions which hold perpetrators to account.

All quotes in this report have been taken directly from news reports on cases of femicide occurring or reported on in 2017. Names and other details relating to the identity of victims and perpetrators have been removed. Please note that some of these quotes contain explicit details of abuse (physical, mental, emotional, verbal and sexual) and violence/ methods of killing which may distress the reader.

- 2 At the point of publication of this report, a number of cases of femicide from 2017 could not be included as criminal proceedings were ongoing or cases were unsolved. It is therefore believed that 139 will not be the total number of cases of femicide for 2017. Please see 'Methodology' section.
- 3 In the list of names that follows, every effort has been made to ensure correct spelling; however, often media and official reports used alternative spellings of names so we apologise if a spelling used is not the preferred or correct spelling.

# The women killed by men in 2017 to whom this report is dedicated:

Alex Stuart	Elizabeth Merriman	Kanwal/Bernice Williams	Nell Jones
Alison Howe	Ella Parker	Karen Jacquet	Nicola Beck
Alyson Watt	Ellen Higginbottom	Karen Young	Nicola Campbell
Amandeep Kaur	Emma Day	Karina Batista	Olivia Campbell-Hardy
Amy Barnes, née Shimell	Eulin Hastings	Karolina Chwiluk	Olivia Kray
Andreea Cristea	Farnaz Ali	Katherine Smith	Patricia McIntosh
Angelika Klis	Florina Pastina	Katrina Evely	Pauline Cockburn
Anita Downey	Gemma Leeming	Kelly Brewster	Quyen Ngoc Nguyen
Ann Furneaux	Georgina Callander	Kerri McAuley	Rikki Lander
Anne Moore-Martin	Gillian (Nyasha) Zvomuya (Kahari)	Kiran Daudia	Romina Kalaci
Anne O'Neill	Hannah Cohen	Kirsty Boden	Ruby Wilson
Anne Searle	Hannah Dorans	Kirsty (aka Kirby) Noden	Sabrina Mullings
Anne-Marie James	Hazel Wilson-Briant	Kulwinder Kaur	Sara Zelenak
Arena Saeed	Humara Khan	Lea Adri-Soejoko	Sarah Jeffery
Asiyah Harris	Ilona Czuper	Leah Cohen	Sarah Pitkin
Avis Addison	Iuliana Tudos	Leanne Collopy	Shaeen Akhtar
Aysha Frade	Jane Hings	Leanne McKie	Sheila Morgan
Beryl Hammond	Jane Sergeant	Leonne Weeks	Simone Grainger
Beverley Bliss	Jane Sherratt	Linda Parker	Sinead Wooding
Beverley Hudson	Jane (Carolyn) Tweddle	Lisa Chadderton	Sobhia Tabasim Khan
Carolyn Hill	Janet Northmore	Lisa Lees	Sorrell Leczkowski
Catherine Kelly	Janice Griffiths	Lisa-Marie Thorton	Susan Fuller
Celine Dookhran	Janine Bowater	Louella Fletcher-Michie	Susan Westwood
Chloe Miazek	Jayne Toal Reat	Marie Brown	Suzanne Brown
Chloe Rutherford	Jean Chapman	Marjorie Cawdery	Teresa Wishart
Chrissy Kendall	Jessica King	Mary Steel	Tina Billingham
Christine Archibald	Jillian Grant	Megan Bills	Tracey Bowen
Concepta Leonard	Jillian Howell	Megan Hurley	Tracey Wilkinson
Courtney Boyle	Joanne Rand	Melanie Clark	Tracy Kearns
Demi Pearson	Jodie Willsher	Michelle Kiss	Tyler Denton
Dionne Clark	Julie Fox	Moira Gilbertson	Valerie Turner
Dzilva Butiene	Julie McCash	Molly McLaren	Vanessa James
Eilidh MacLeod	Julie Parkin	Monika Lasek	Vera Savage
Elaine McIver	Justene Reece	Nasima Noorzai	Vicki Hull
Elizabeth (Betty) Jordan		Natividad Nituan	Wendy Fawell

## Acknowledging women killed but not counted in the census<sup>4</sup>

### Women killed abroad<sup>5</sup>

Emma Kelty  
Hannah Bladon  
Jane Matthew  
Margaret Stenning  
Michele Anison  
Rebecca Dykes

### Unsolved<sup>6</sup>

Catherine Burke  
Hang Yin Leung  
Janet Moore  
Joy Green  
Lisa Nicholls  
Marika Sipos  
Rosemarie Stokes  
Samantha Blake-Mizen

### Young victims<sup>7</sup>

Saffi Roussos 8  
Shadia Salem 7  
Lacie Pearson 7  
Lia Pearson 3

- 4 At the time of going to print, the census realised one woman had been omitted but it was too late to change the details: Laura Jayne Stuart, from Denbigh, North Wales, aged 33 and mother of two, was ambushed and stabbed in the street by her ex-partner who then continued to kick her as she lay bleeding. He had a history of coercive controlling behaviour. He pleaded guilty to manslaughter and not guilty to murder but was sentenced to 31 years for murder.
- 5 Abroad: Some media reports have identified women from the UK killed abroad by men; however, we have not included them in the figures counted in the census. We realise there may be others who have not drawn any media coverage and we have not, to date, tried to systematically collect data for UK women killed abroad. Please see 'Methodology' section for more information.
- 6 Unsolved: Includes cases where women have been killed and there is some evidence to suggest a male perpetrator but nothing further is known.
- 7 Age: The Femicide Census only deals with women and girls aged 14 and over; exceptionally where a man has killed women and there are known to be girls under 14 also killed, their names are recorded in acknowledgement of their deaths but not added to the census.

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# The Femicide Census

Since the first Femicide Census report, *Redefining an Isolated Incident*<sup>8</sup>, was published in December 2016, the research project has continued collecting and analysing cases of femicide in England and Wales, and more recently Northern Ireland and Scotland. This report summarises findings of the 139 femicides committed in 2017, developing a robust knowledge base and adding to global calls for more research on femicide. The comparability and availability of data are key to defining and understanding femicide,<sup>9</sup> and its manifestations, causes and consequences. For this reason, the Femicide Census has been highlighted by the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women (UN SRVAW) as good practice in data collation. Accurate data therefore ultimately has the potential to contribute to the prevention of killings of women by men.

Femicide is generally defined as women being killed by men because they are women, though some definitions include any killing of women or girls by men.<sup>10</sup> In the Femicide Census we use this broader definition. A more in-depth look at the term 'femicide' and further reading on men's fatal violence against women and girls can be found in the 2017 report.

The census aims to provide a clearer picture of men's fatal violence against women – committed by partners, ex-partners, male relatives, acquaintances, colleagues and strangers – to aid the prevention of femicide and shed light on patterns and trends in men's fatal violence against women and girls.

Men killing women has continued each year at a substantial rate since we first started recording this in 2009. The Femicide Census collates the details of women killed by men to explore where lessons can be learned by viewing these cases together. By demonstrating, once again, that there are trends in cases of men killing women, from the relationship between the victim and perpetrator, to the context of the violence and method of killing and overkilling<sup>11</sup>, this report shows the need for state agencies and stakeholders to engage with the census and its findings. An urgent approach to preventing femicide is needed to reduce the number of women killed by men.

8 *Redefining an Isolated Incident*. Available at: <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/what-we-do/campaigning-and-influencing/femicide-census/>

9 UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women highlighted the Femicide Census as good practice in data collation – United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) (2017) Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences. <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N16/297/08/PDF/N1629708.pdf?OpenElement>

10 World Health Organization. [http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/77421/WHO\\_RHR\\_12.38\\_eng.pdf;jsessionid=995A0BB525F2D46A417A-9619CAD17B45?sequence=1](http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/77421/WHO_RHR_12.38_eng.pdf;jsessionid=995A0BB525F2D46A417A-9619CAD17B45?sequence=1)

11 For a more detailed explanation of this term, see the 'Method of Killing' section.

## Key Findings

At least 139<sup>12</sup> women were killed by 126 men in the UK between 1st January and 31st December 2017. At the point of publication of this report, there remain a number of cases that are as yet unsolved: cases where the criminal justice outcome is unclear; cases that are still under investigation; and cases where information was exempt from disclosure via police Freedom of Information (FOI) Act requests. It is therefore believed that the total of 2017 femicides is in fact likely to exceed this number.

### Victims:

- 64 women (46%) were killed by their current or former partner; for women killed by men other than by terrorism, the percentage killed by their current or ex-partner would rise to 54.2%
- 30 women (21.6%) were killed by a stranger, including 21 women killed in terror attacks
- 24 women (17.3%) were killed by a man known to them (such as a social or business acquaintance, friend or neighbour)
- 10 women (7.2%) were killed by their sons, and 7 women (4.9%) were killed by another male family member (such as a brother, father, uncle, grandson or nephew)
- The greatest number of femicides occurred within the Greater Manchester, London Metropolitan and West Midlands police force areas
- 12 (55%) of those women killed by their ex-partner or ex-spouse were killed within the first month of separation and 19 (87%) in the first year

### Perpetrators:

- 90 (71.4%) of perpetrators were aged between 26 and 55
- In 66 (47.4%) cases men used a sharp instrument to kill their victims
- 'Overkilling' was evident in 58 (41.7%) cases
- 34 (25.4%) perpetrators pleaded not guilty to murder
- 74 (58.7%) perpetrators were found guilty of murder and 17 (13.5%) were found guilty of manslaughter

<sup>12</sup> In the box summarising the relationships between perpetrators and the 139 women they killed, the total adds up to 135 and not to 139; this is because in four cases not enough was known about the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim.

Femicide has been defined by the UN SRVAW as constituting ‘the most extreme form of violence against women and the most violent manifestation of discrimination against women and their inequality’.<sup>13</sup>

The UN SRVAW has called on all governments to set up a Femicide Watch to collect data as a crucial tool for the development of effective strategies to address this serious human rights violation, and for that data to be published annually. The Femicide Census provides such data and could assist the government in identifying commonalities and learning to help reduce and prevent femicide.



Figure 1: Women killed by men per calendar year

<sup>13</sup> UN General Assembly (23rd September 2016), *Violence against women, its causes and consequences*, A/71/398 (accessed 1st October 2017).

# Methodology

The Femicide Census gathers information on women and girls aged 14 years and over who have been killed, and where the principal charged or convicted perpetrator is a man.<sup>14</sup> The census is constantly being updated and currently contains information on 1246 women killed since 2009. Each report is based on the most complete data available at the time of publication, and this report is based on data currently available for femicides committed from 1st January to 31st December 2017 in the UK.

Data for the Femicide Census is primarily collected via Freedom of Information (FOI) requests submitted to UK police forces. This data is supplemented with information gained from publicly available sources such as news reports, court records, judges' sentencing remarks and through the data collected on Karen Ingala Smith's blog Counting Dead Women.<sup>15</sup> The detailed framework of the Femicide Census Project methodology and information on The Freedom of Information Act are outlined in the first report.<sup>16</sup>

Information has been collected on both victims and perpetrators in relation to the following categories: age, relationship, country of birth, method of killing, location of femicide, criminal justice outcomes and the police force area in which the woman was killed. Each death referred to in this report has been categorised through the identification of what was reported as the primary contextual factor. Information on other relevant contexts is also collected. For example, the murder of a woman might simultaneously be contextualised 'for financial gain' and 'sexually motivated' if there were indicators of both. This is not to justify or explain a killing but merely to provide some context which may help identify patterns, trends and risks and feed into information which may assist early intervention and prevention.

Since the first report, *Redefining an Isolated Incident*, further data is being collected in order to develop a robust and comprehensive database. Information pertaining to children of victims who are also killed, perpetrators' previous history of abuse and reported evidence of sexual violence are areas that the Femicide Census wishes to develop, though such information is not presented in this report and is not always recorded in public records or media reports.

## Rationale and decisions

A report of this nature inevitably involves decisions being made around definitions and parameters. As noted above, the census uses a broad definition of women killed by men, rather than the more limited definition of women killed by men specifically because they are women. However, within this broader definition, there are some groups of victims that have not been included in the database: these are discussed below.

## Women killed abroad

In some cases, there were media or other reports of women believed to be UK citizens who were killed abroad. These women have not been incorporated in the data. This is because it is not possible to undertake a comprehensive and robust analysis of all UK women killed overseas as well as in the UK with the available resources and lack of access to data overseas. The six UK women killed abroad in 2017 of whom we are aware are named at the beginning of this report.

## Unsolved

There are a number of possible or likely femicide cases which remain unsolved and where there is insufficient information to make a judgement on the perpetrator, or where an alleged perpetrator has been acquitted or the precise cause of death is unclear. A number of these cases are discussed in the 'Criminal Justice Progress/ Outcome' section.

<sup>14</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 name, age and criminal verdict have been recorded on the census but are not analysed in this report.

<sup>15</sup> K. Ingala Smith, Counting Dead Women. <https://kareningalasmith.com/counting-dead-women/>

<sup>16</sup> Available online at: <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/femicide-census>

## Death by dangerous driving

The Femicide Census does not currently capture every death of a woman caused by men's reckless or dangerous driving. Cases included in the database are those where the perpetrator deliberately targeted a woman in his driving: for instance, where a man deliberately reversed into and then drove over a woman, where a man killed himself and his partner by driving intentionally into a tree, and where a woman died as a result of a deliberate crash which was part of an insurance scam.

## Suicide of the victim

We are aware of two women who, in 2017, killed themselves where there was evidence of domestic violence as a potentially contributing factor. One of these cases retained in the census figures as a successful prosecution for manslaughter and stalking found that the woman had been driven to her death by her perpetrator's abuse for which he received a 15-year extended sentence. The other case is mentioned in the report but has not been included in the census numbers: please see 'Criminal Justice Progress/ Outcome' section.

On occasion, local authorities have taken the step of conducting a Domestic Homicide Review following suicide in cases where there is a suggestion of an abusive relationship. This has been welcomed by services supporting women and girls experiencing male violence that have long been aware of high levels of depression and suicidal ideation in female victims and also understand that there are cases where a coercive, controlling and abusive perpetrator may in fact urge a woman to kill herself. This was first noted in the Asian community which identified (Bhardwaj, 2001<sup>17</sup>) suicide rates in young Asian women as two to three times higher than in the general population and identified family conflict, including forced marriage, so-called honour-based violence and domestic violence as part of this picture.

A recent report by Refuge<sup>18</sup> found that almost a quarter of their clients had felt suicidal at one time or another, 18% had made plans to end their life, 3.1% had made at least one suicide attempt and 86% scored highly for clinical concern in relation to psychological distress.

Females attempt suicide more often than men but men are more often successful. This has fed into a greater focus on male suicides based on the higher numbers of successful attempts and at the same time has fed into beliefs that women's attempts are 'attention-seeking' or non-serious. In fact, global health studies examining suicide rates have highlighted that childhood sexual abuse, domestic violence, family conflict and sexual violence are major contributory factors in a substantial proportion of female suicides. They identify prevention of violence against women and girls as having the potential to reduce female suicides substantially.<sup>19</sup>

## Women in mental health/prison/immigration detention

A further six women who died in 2017 came to the attention of the researchers but are not included in the figures of the census. They had all been victims of varying forms and durations of male violence and in some cases questionable police or other state responses to that violence. They had also all come to the attention of state services while on probation and/or accessing, or trying to access, mental health support. The cause of death for five of the women was determined as suicide. One woman's cause of death was unclear with a number of factors being suggested but ultimately hypothermia was retained as cause of death.

INQUEST's recent report<sup>20</sup> found that although less than 5% of the prison population is made up of women, still 93 women died in prison between 2007 and 2017 and 116 women died while under probation supervision following release from prison between 2010/11 and 2016/17. Again, figures show that women who do enter custody are often survivors of male violence. Apparent causes of death recorded by the Ministry of Justice for deaths while on probation include 'self-inflicted', accidents, natural causes and homicides. INQUEST are 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. None of the 2017 cases have been included in the Femicide Census this year, but these are deaths that the census would want to look into in more detail in future reports.

17 Bhardwaj, J. (2001), 'Growing Up Young, Asian and Female in Britain: A Report on Self-harm and Suicide', *Feminist Review*, August 2001, Vol. 68, Issue 1, pp. 52-67

18 <https://www.refuge.org.uk/domestic-abuse-suicide-refuge-warwick-july2018-2/>

19 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4539867/>

20 INQUEST (2018), *Still dying on the inside, examining women's deaths in prison*.

## Terrorism

In addition, 2017 terrorist attacks by men (Westminster, London Bridge, the Ariana Grande concert in Manchester) resulted in the deaths of women, girls and men. The Femicide Census includes all women and girls (aged 14 and over) killed by men and so inclusion of female victims of terror attacks is consistent with that rationale. Moreover, it has been observed that men using violence in order to achieve or express their aims will often also have a history of violence against women.<sup>21</sup> Identifying the connections between fundamentalism and extremism and violence against women has been a feature of women's activism worldwide, as discussed by Bennoune (2008):

'Feminist international lawyers have argued that violence against women should be seen as a warning sign for armed conflict. The same may be said of terrorism. Groups that engage in these sorts of attacks on civilians as a whole often pursue misogynist agendas and carry out, or advocate, severe forms of violence against women.'

Furthermore, the Ariana Grande concert was likely to affect more girls and women as they are her primary audience.

## Limitations

The Femicide Census database is inevitably a work in progress. The data in the census will only ever be as complete as the information that is available publicly and is provided by the police and other authorities.<sup>22</sup> In 2017, and since the beginning of the Femicide Census Project, there has been an inconsistent level of responses to FOI requests from police force areas. The London Metropolitan Police Service are currently negotiating an information-sharing arrangement. Some police forces have provided incomplete responses to our FOI requests and so sometimes key aspects of data such as race and ethnicity and other details remain absent. As of mid-2017, data from Northern Ireland was collected on femicides committed and as of this year it also includes Scotland.

<sup>21</sup> Bennoune, K. (2008), 'Terror/Torture', *Berkeley Journal of International Law*, Vol. 26, Issue 1 pp. 47–50.

<sup>22</sup> The Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC), in particular, encourage the police to support the work of the Femicide Census Project. Recommendation 6 of the 2015 HMIC report *Increasingly everyone's business: A progress report on the police response to domestic abuse* noted: '[The Home Office] should also consider how forces can contribute effectively to and access the information held within the Femicide Census.' There has been limited progress on this recommendation.

## Context

Since last year's report new research, developments and additional contextual factors have emerged or come to prominence, some of which are summarised here.

### Domestic Abuse Bill

The Westminster Government is consulting on a Domestic Abuse Bill and Commissioner for England and Wales.<sup>23</sup> The Scottish Parliament passed the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 in February which will come into force in 2019. Northern Ireland has also drafted a Domestic Abuse Bill but there is currently no executive in place. Wales has a Violence Against Women Act, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015. The Westminster Government intends that this will deliver on its obligations under the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (also known as the 'Istanbul Convention'), which the Westminster Government has signed but not yet ratified. However, the bill seems to be narrowly focussed only on domestic violence and the criminal justice responses. There are some suggestions that are to be welcomed such as creating a more robust domestic abuse protection order where a breach is a criminal offence, the possibilities of a domestic violence offenders' register and widening the financial abuse category to economic abuse. The real strength of the Istanbul Convention though is its focus on male violence against women and girls and its holistic nature. It recommends much greater government accountability over the provision of support services, it supports the need for proportionate women-only and other specialist service provisions, and it affirms that services need to be open to all women within the jurisdiction and not dependent on immigration status. It also stresses the need for appropriate, accurate, disaggregated data of precisely the kind that the Femicide Census represents. It is especially disappointing that these points hardly feature in the bill consultation.

### Immigration

As this report demonstrates, data collated by state agencies relating to ethnicity, nationality and immigration status is frequently lacking. This is a major omission because we know that women with insecure immigration status, women with no recourse to public funds, refugee and asylum-seeking women, not to mention women who are

'over-stayers' or cannot show that they are legally here, face increased levels and severity of abuse and decreased access to support services, safety and justice. Please see the 'Race, ethnicity and immigration status' section for more information.

### Economic abuse, poverty and welfare reform

If a woman is without adequate independent financial resources, she is at increased risk of harm and abuse both from an abusive partner on whom she is dependent and from third parties identifying an opportunity to exploit her. Economic abuse can be a stand-alone form of abuse or more commonly one aspect of violence against women and girls and of controlling and coercive behaviour. Economic abuse can involve a range of behaviours. Sharp-Jeffs (2008) has identified four 'types' of economic abuse:<sup>24</sup>

- Preventing acquisition of economic resources
- Controlling access to/preventing use of individual/shared economic resources
- Refusing to contribute by withholding financial resources for the household
- Exploiting economic resources/generating costs.

When women experience economic abuse within a context of coercive control, they are at an increased risk of domestic homicide (Websdale, 1999).<sup>25</sup> However, economic abuse is commonly overlooked in risk assessments and since police responses to specific incidents often do not elicit a picture of the relationship over time, again this element of abuse may be overlooked. Similarly, in the cases examined in this report, there is often little or no explicit mention of economic abuse although there may often be suggestions that it is a feature of the violence a woman is experiencing.

The Westminster Government has made a series of economic policy choices and decisions to reduce the public spend and the public sector. This has included cuts to legal aid, reforms and caps to benefits (employment and housing) and a substantial reduction in the size of the public sector. This combination of factors has been identified repeatedly<sup>26</sup> as having a disproportionate impact on women. Of single-parent households, 90% are headed by women<sup>27</sup> and 73% of

<sup>23</sup> Scotland has a new act coming into force in 2019 covering coercive control and psychological abuse. Wales has a Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Act (2015) and Northern Ireland has also drafted domestic abuse legislation.

<sup>24</sup> <http://survivingeconomicabuse.org/economic-abuse/>

<sup>25</sup> See Surviving Economic Abuse. <http://survivingeconomicabuse.org/economic-abuse/what-is-economic-abuse/>

<sup>26</sup> Women's Budget Group, Surviving Economic Abuse and the End Violence Against Women Coalition, *Universal Credit and Financial Abuse: Exploring the links.*

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.gingerbread.org.uk/policy-campaigns/publications-index/statistics/>

households subjected to housing benefit caps as of August 2018 are single-parent families. Women are substantially more likely to work in the public sector, which has traditionally been able to provide more flexible and parent friendly working; they are also traditionally more likely to have to rely on, and access services from, the public sector<sup>28</sup>.

The Citizens Advice Bureau has recently begun to operate an 'ASK' project that asks service users if they are currently, or have previously, experienced abuse. A recent evaluation<sup>29</sup> of participating CABs (England and Wales) found ASK had resulted in 22–30% of those asked disclosing, even though this was not their presenting issue (the main presenting issue being debts).

There is a whole raft of welfare reform changes which, the women's sector highlights, will create additional barriers to women being able to exit abusive relationships. If women do not have financial independence and cannot access adequate financial means, then they are in danger of having to stay with an abusive and controlling perpetrator on whom they are dependent, enhancing his capacity to abuse.<sup>30</sup> In some cases, women in poverty are sexually exploited by co-habitants, landlords<sup>31</sup> and other creditors; some have had to resort to prostitution<sup>32</sup> and it is well recognised that women in prostitution are killed at rates 12 times higher than women in the general population<sup>33</sup>.

### Holding the State to account<sup>34</sup>

There has been an increased focus on holding the State to account following some egregious state failures.<sup>35</sup> For instance, the Centre for Women's Justice<sup>36</sup> has recently been established in England and Wales. It is currently involved in a range of cases against the State for failings with regard to violence against women and girls. Cases include alleged Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) failings to adequately investigate a death that may be linked to domestic violence,<sup>37</sup> harsh sentencing of a woman who killed her husband after years of coercive control and abuse<sup>38</sup> and the recent well publicised case of the rapist,

John Worboys, which found an actionable, operational duty on the police to conduct adequate investigations in rape<sup>39</sup> and went on to challenge his parole, which has since been withdrawn. It is notable that increasing numbers of trust and grant funders have developed a 'strategic litigation' stream of work. Similarly, increasing numbers of women's sector organisations are receiving training on using legal remedies, considering hiring in-house lawyers and accessing funding around law-based streams of work.

### Pornography and legal reform

The Westminster Government has made, or is attempting to make, a number of changes to legislation that governs pornography and the taking and distribution of abusive imagery<sup>40</sup> although it faces much opposition as well as practical, logistical and attitudinal challenges in these attempts. It is, however, notable that, as discussed in the 'Context of Violence and Relationship' section, reports on several of these cases make reference to the perpetrator's collection and use of pornography, much of it of a specifically violent and degrading nature, including depictions of rape and strangulation of women and sexual abuse including rape of children and young girls.

### Online dating and other trends

In some cases, women were killed after a very short acquaintance – sometimes only a matter of hours – with a perpetrator, and where this contact was sexual in nature and claimed to be consensual by the perpetrator (see 'Context of Violence and Relationship' section). In some cases, media reporting has referenced rough sex, sex games, and bondage, domination and sadomasochism (BDSM) gone wrong where a woman had been killed by the perpetrator in a context of sexually motivated femicide. The normalisation of sadomasochistic sexual practices in both femicide defences and the wider culture merits further scrutiny. Similarly, online dating culture is mentioned in a number of femicide media reports, and again merits further analysis.

28 <https://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/ensure-women-not-hardest-hit-economic-downturn>

29 Balderston, S. (2018), *Citizens Advice Programme, "ASK" routine enquiry in gender based violence and abuse*, independent research evaluation, Lancaster University.

30 <https://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/universal-credit-risks-increasing-womens-vulnerability-to-financial-abuse-say-womens-groups/>

31 <https://blog.shelter.org.uk/2016/08/7172/>

32 <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/universal-credit-women-sex-work-prostitution-frank-field-esther-mcvey-a8584896.html>

33 Salfati, C. G. (2009), 'Prostitute Homicide: An Overview of the Literature and Comparison to Sexual and Non-Sexual Female Victim Homicide', pp. 51–68. In D. Canter, M. Ioannou, & D. Youngs (Eds.), *Safer Sex in the City: The Experience and Management of Street Prostitution. The Psychology, Crime and Law Series*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

34 The term 'the State' refers to central and local government, public sector workers in the exercise of their functions, and agencies contracted by the State to deliver on some of the State's obligations.

35 <https://www.theguardian.com/law/2018/sep/24/prosecutors-rape-cases-cps-crown-prosecution-service-conviction-rates>

36 <https://www.centreforwomensjustice.org.uk/>

37 <https://www.centreforwomensjustice.org.uk/news/2018/10/29/permission-hearing-mother-of-22-year-old-victim-challenges-decision-not-to-prosecute-suspect-for-her-death>

38 <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/sally-challen-court-case-women-abusive-relationships-coercive-control-precedent-a8234991.html>

39 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-43140827>

40 See All Party Parliamentary Group on Sexual Violence (2018), 'Report on Inquiry into pornography and impacts on young people'.

## Findings

This section introduces the findings on the 139 known UK femicides committed in 2017. We begin with an overview of the relationship categories, followed by an introduction to the demographics of the women in the census, including their age, country of birth, ethnicity, where they were from and where they were killed. The sections that follow give details on the contexts of violence and the perpetrator's relationship to the victim, findings on the method of killing, the location of the incident and post-separation femicides. Finally, findings on perpetrators of femicide are presented.

### Incidents of femicide and relationship of perpetrator to victim

The following figures give a breakdown of the 139 femicides in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland between 1st January and 31st December 2017 and more detail is found in the section on 'Context of Violence and Relationship'.

**64 women** (46%) were killed by their **current or former partner**; for women killed by male violence excluding the terror attacks, the percentage killed by a current or former partner would rise to 54.2%

**30 women** (21.6%) were killed by a **stranger**, including **21 women** killed in **terror attacks**

**24 women** (17.3%) were killed by a **man known to them** (such as a social or business acquaintance, friend or neighbour)

**10 women** (7.2%) were killed by their **sons**

**7 women** (4.9%) were killed by any other **male family member** (such as a brother, father, uncle, grandson or nephew)

In **4 cases** (2.9%), the **relationship** of the victim to the perpetrator was **unknown** or yet to be established

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# Victims

## Police force area

The number of women killed by men per police force area in 2017 are shown on the map at **Figure 2** and presented in the table at **Figure 3**.

These figures relate to the force area in which a woman was killed and where the force had jurisdiction to investigate the killing. Where a police force area is not included in the table, this means no relevant killing took place in that force area.

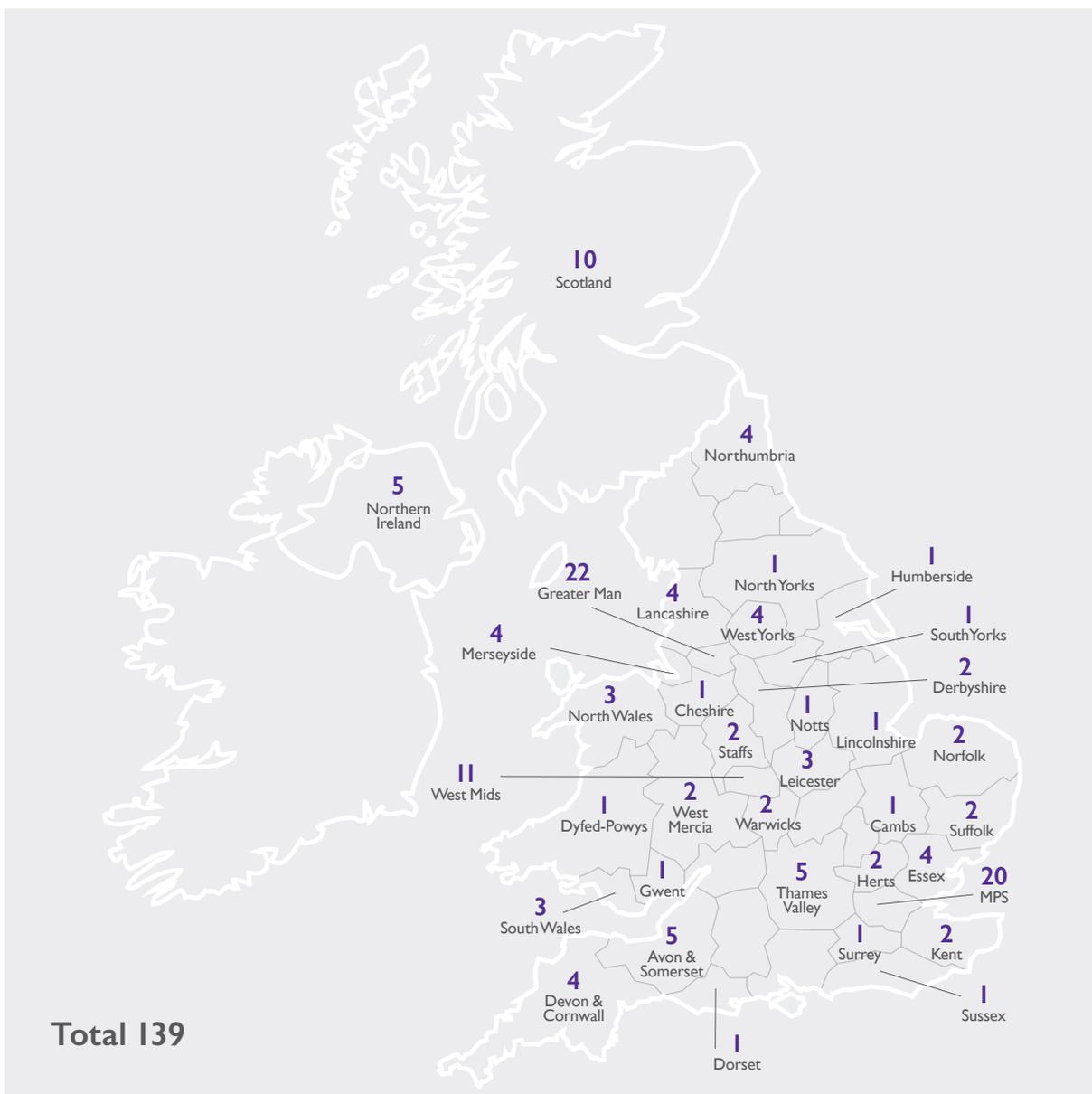


Figure 2: Femicides per police force area in 2017

Police force area	Total femicides	Police force area	Total femicides
Greater Manchester	22	Kent	2
Metropolitan Police Service	20	Norfolk	2
West Midlands	11	Staffordshire	2
Police Scotland	10	Suffolk	2
Avon and Somerset	5	Warwickshire	2
Police Service of Northern Ireland	5	West Mercia	2
Thames Valley	5	Cambridgeshire	1
Devon and Cornwall	4	Cheshire	1
Essex	4	Dorset	1
Lancashire	4	Dyfed-Powys Police	1
Merseyside	4	Gwent	1
Northumbria	4	Humberside	1
West Yorkshire	4	Lincolnshire	1
Leicestershire	3	North Yorkshire	1
North Wales	3	Nottinghamshire	1
South Wales Police	3	South Yorkshire	1
Derbyshire	2	Surrey	1
Hertfordshire	2	Sussex	1
		<b>Total</b>	<b>139</b>

Figure 3: Femicides per police force area in 2017

In 2017, the highest number of femicides occurred within populations served by the Greater Manchester, London Metropolitan, West Midlands and Police Scotland forces (n=22, 20, 11 and 10, respectively). In both Greater Manchester and London Metropolitan, terror attacks account for a number of victims (n=16 and 5, respectively).

## Rate of femicide

To highlight the proportion of femicides per area in 2017, the rate of femicide per 100,000 population has been calculated and presented on the map below, **Figure 4**<sup>41</sup> and in the table at **Figure 5**. Again if a police force area is not represented in the table, it is because no relevant killing was recorded there in 2017.

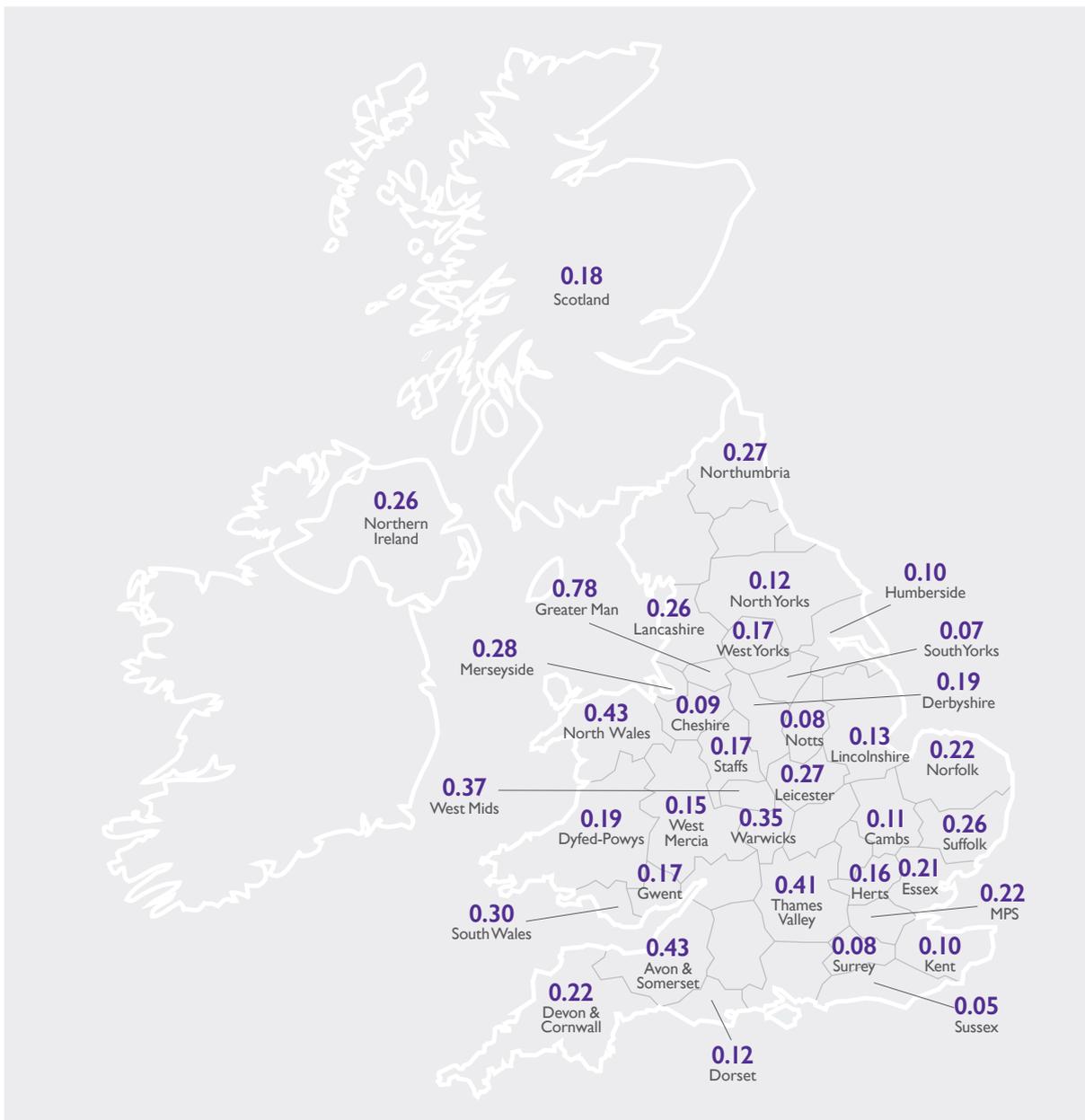


Figure 4: Femicides per police force area per 100,000 population in 2017

41 The femicide rate has been calculated by dividing the total number of femicides per police force area by the average population of the police force area. This result was then multiplied by 100,000.

For example:

$$\frac{\text{Total number of femicides in Lancashire (n=4)} \times 100,000}{\text{Lancashire police force area population (n=1,151,152)}} = 0.264$$

Police force area	2017 rate of femicide per 100,000	Police force area	2017 rate of femicide per 100,000
Greater Manchester	0.78	Dyfed-Powys Police	0.19
Avon and Somerset	0.43	Police Scotland	0.18
North Wales	0.43	Gwent	0.17
Thames Valley	0.41	Staffordshire	0.17
West Midlands	0.37	West Yorkshire	0.17
Warwickshire	0.35	Hertfordshire	0.16
South Wales Police	0.30	West Mercia	0.15
Merseyside	0.28	Lincolnshire	0.13
Leicestershire	0.27	Dorset	0.12
Northumbria	0.27	North Yorkshire	0.12
Lancashire	0.26	Cambridgeshire	0.11
Police Service of Northern Ireland	0.26	Humberside	0.10
Suffolk	0.26	Kent	0.10
Devon and Cornwall	0.22	Cheshire	0.09
Metropolitan Police Service	0.22	Nottinghamshire	0.08
Norfolk	0.22	Surrey	0.08
Essex	0.21	South Yorkshire	0.07
Derbyshire	0.19	Sussex	0.05

Figure 5: Femicides per police force area per 100,000 population in 2017

The five police force areas with the highest femicide rate in 2017 are presented in **Figure 6** below. While the Metropolitan Police Service and Police Scotland had two of the highest numbers of femicide in 2017, they do not in fact hold the highest rates of femicide per population for that year.

As mentioned above, 16 of the women killed under the administration of Greater Manchester Police were victims of terrorism. The remaining six femicides in this area include four women killed in the context of intimate partner violence, one sexually motivated femicide and one

young woman who was the victim of an arson attack in which three of her younger siblings also died. High rates of femicide were also evident under the administration of Thames Valley Police, which is in the top five for both number of victims and rate per population in 2017. South Wales also ranked highly two years running re femicide per population (fourth in 2016 and seventh in 2017). Further examination towards an explanation of high rates of femicide is recommended, particularly by the police force areas<sup>42</sup> with the highest number of women killed and those with the highest number of women killed per population.

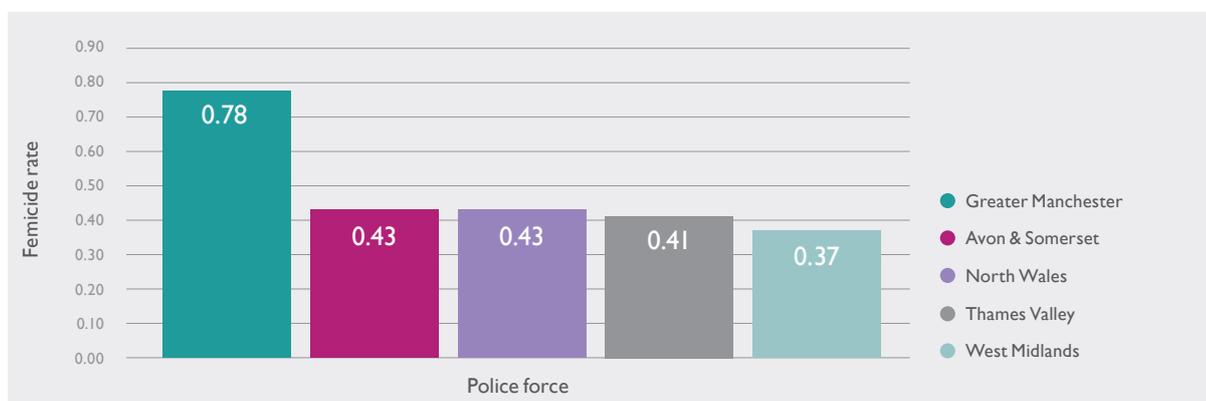


Figure 6: Police force areas with the highest femicide rates per 100,000 in 2017

<sup>42</sup> It is interesting to compare this data with the CPS's annual VAWG report 2017–18 (highest recorded rates of charges for domestic abuse were – in order – also London, Greater Manchester, West Midlands, West Yorkshire and South Wales. <https://www.cps.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/publications/cps-vawg-report-2018.pdf>)

### Country of birth

‘When [the victim] and the children departed, our smiles departed. She left a void in her family, we lost our most cherished sister and her children. We raised them in Yemen and they will never leave our memories.’<sup>43</sup>

Unless stated otherwise in publicly available information, it is assumed that a victim was born in the UK. Where known, the countries of birth of women killed between 2009 and 2017 are presented below in **Figure 7**. 113 (80%) victims were known or believed to have been born in the UK, including women of diverse ethnicities (see next section). In seven cases, victims’ country of birth was recorded as ‘unknown’, where there were indications that they may have been born outside the UK but definitive information was

not available. Four victims were born in Poland, two were from Australia and two were from Romania. Victims were also from a number of other countries, with one victim from each of the following countries being represented in the total: Afghanistan, Albania, Brazil, Canada, Lithuania, Moldova, Pakistan, Philippines, Vietnam, Yemen and Zimbabwe.

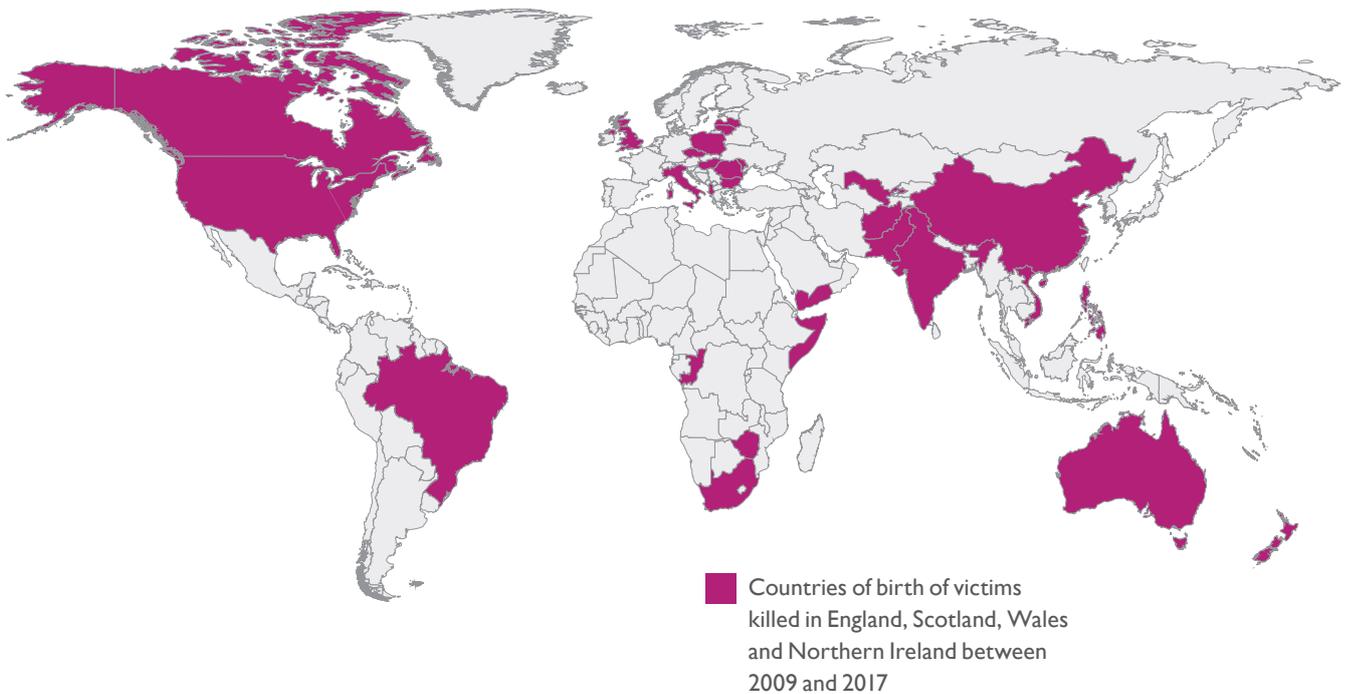


Figure 7: Countries of birth of women killed in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland between 2009 and 2017

43 <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5639571/Controlling-husband-murdered-wife-two-children-jailed-31-years.html>

## Race, ethnicity and immigration status

‘Shortly after 6pm, whilst both men were inside the house, [perpetrator 1] sent a text to [perpetrator 2] saying “We raping the Chink xxxx”.’<sup>44</sup>

The jury heard how ‘coercive’ [perpetrator name] made his 37-year-old partner wear a niqab to hide her injuries. Prosecutor [name] QC said he also prevented her from leaving the house. ‘She was not allowed to make eye contact with men at all. She was to lower her gaze. She should never touch any male person, even by accident,’ [the prosecutor] said.<sup>45</sup>

Very little meaningful data was received from police forces in England and Wales in relation to race and ethnicity.<sup>46</sup> Only nine forces submitted responses under this category (Cambridgeshire, Cheshire, Greater Manchester, Kent, Lancashire, Lincolnshire, Merseyside, Norfolk, Northumbria, Police Scotland and West Yorkshire) and the information was sparse and inconsistently collected across the different forces. Four victims were recorded as White; five as White British; four as White North European; three as White Scottish; three as White European; one as Asian; one as Asian-Pakistani; and one as ‘Oriental’ (it was particularly concerning to see this last category being used, as the term is not considered appropriate in data collection). In 37 cases, ethnicity was noted as ‘Not Recorded’, ‘Not Stated’ or ‘Missing Data’. No other responses were provided, and given no other data from the Metropolitan Police Service at the time of writing, the ethnicity and race of women killed in the most ethnically diverse area of the UK has not been captured.

Data on race and ethnicity has not been taken from press reports, as they were very seldom specified, and it would have involved potentially inaccurate assumptions. However, it is clear from a range of indicators that diverse ethnicities are represented in UK femicides.

Lack of information in this area prevents the census from capturing important data on race and ethnicity of victims, which in turn prevents use of the data to identify other issues, such as potential risk factors, specific disadvantages and barriers to support. Without common terminology for the classification of race and ethnicity across UK police forces, it will continue to be impossible to obtain an accurate assessment of the race and ethnicity of victims of femicide.

Information relating to immigration status is frequently lacking in media reports. 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 here face increased levels and severity of abuse and decreased access to support services, safety and justice. Perpetrators, and sometimes also their extended families, who are aware of a woman’s dependent or uncertain immigration status will use this as an additional means of controlling, intimidating and terrorising victims; the State can therefore in fact be complicit in, and facilitating, the abuse of women. The ‘hostile environment’ combined with the austerity agenda, which has disproportionately impacted on women, combined with the ‘Prevent extremism<sup>47</sup>’ agenda, together result in impeding women’s routes to safety and justice when facing violence.

<sup>44</sup> <https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/r-v-unwin-and-mcfall-sentencing.pdf>

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-derbyshire-4375819>

<sup>46</sup> CPS VAWG report 2017–18 highlights repeated calls to police for improved data on gender, ethnicity, nationality of perpetrators and victims but finds no improvement and cites this as a major weakness and as an area for improvement. <https://www.cps.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/publications/cps-vawg-report-2018.pdf>

<sup>47</sup> This is the government’s counterterrorism agenda. There are concerns that state agencies may prioritise this agenda and that women experiencing violence from perpetrators believed to be associated with terror-related organisations may be deterred from accessing help.

### Age bands

The Femicide Census collects data on women and girls aged 14 years and over. **Figure 8** below shows that men kill women of any age, with 9 (6.4%) young women falling in the 14–17 age band and 20 (14.4%) women falling in the 66+ age band. The majority of women killed by men in 2017 were aged between 26 and 55 years old (82 women, 59% of total).

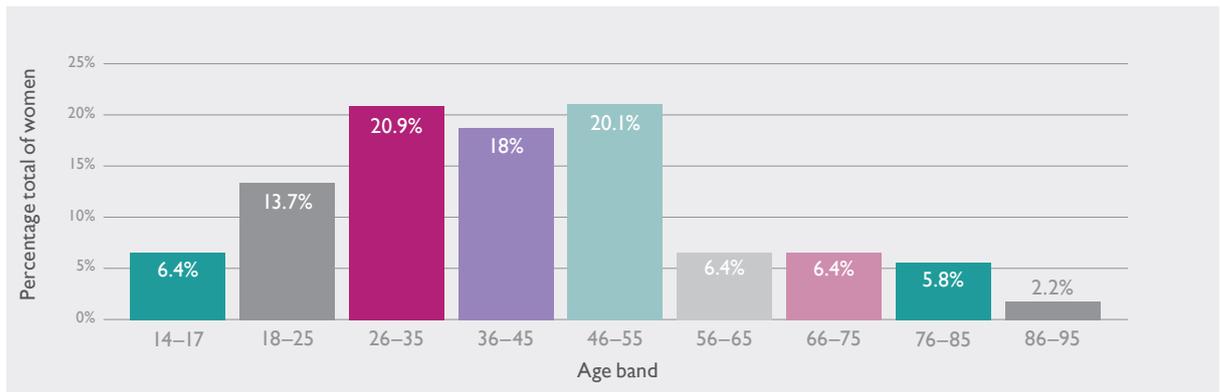


Figure 8: Age bands of women killed in the UK in 2017

## Children and pregnancy

'Sentencing him to life in prison, with a minimum term of 24 years, [the Judge] said he was satisfied the fatal attack was the culmination of a history of violence and coercive behaviour on [the perpetrator's] part. The court heard that the couple had three children and [the Judge] said they had been devastated by the loss of their mother.'<sup>48</sup>

'Identifying mum's body hit me really hard,' [the victim's teenage daughter] said. 'That's when I realised she wasn't coming home.'<sup>49</sup>

'Vanessa's daughter – my grand-daughter – recognises her mother in photographs and asks for her when she is upset. Sometimes she wakes up crying in the night saying that her mummy has gone.'<sup>50</sup>

A significant number of women, 41 (29.5%), had a child or children under the age of 18 when they were killed. In 9 (6.5%) cases, it was unknown whether the woman had a child or children under 18. The Femicide Census relied on press reports for this information, so there is some possible undercounting.

Data on adult children has not been collected. In one case, the victim cared for the perpetrator's children: she was not a legal stepmother to the children, though she could be seen as fulfilling that social role. One woman was identified as having been pregnant when she was killed.

48 <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/murdering-husband-who-showed-no-12600287>

49 <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/manchester-attack-survivor-takes-in-daughter-of-wendy-fawell-friend-killed-in-bombing-salman-abi-a7759956.html>

50 <http://www.murdermap.co.uk/pages/news/index.asp?NewsID=2011>

## Context of Violence and Relationship

'[The perpetrator] found it difficult accepting his wife enjoyed her work and meeting people.'<sup>51</sup>

'A paranoid husband who recorded his wife's every move has been jailed for her murder after his own tapes recorded her chilling screams and his botched cover up.'<sup>52</sup>

This section looks at the context of the femicides and the relationships between perpetrators and victims. Femicides have been presented according to the context in which men killed their victims, such as intimate partner violence, terrorism, sexually motivated killings and prostitution. There is of course no suggestion that such contexts in any way constitute a 'reason' for a perpetrator killing a woman; rather, they have been provided in order to help identify patterns in relation to circumstances, motivation and relationships.

As discussed in the 'Methodology' section, in some cases more than one context is relevant and identifying the primary context has inevitably involved a degree of judgement. Further work is being carried out to record all contexts of violence relevant in each case across the Femicide Census, in order to help identify possible patterns, trends and risks.

The primary context of violence has been cross-referenced with the perpetrator's relationship to the victim, as shown in **Figure 9**.

In 2017, 64 (46%) of the total 139 women were killed in the context of 'Domestic – intimate partner violence' by their current or former male partner or spouse. This percentage would be higher (54%) if looking at femicides excluding terror attacks. As in previous years, this category accounts for the majority of victims.

The second largest group of victims of femicide in 2017 were killed by strangers (30, 21.6%). The number in this category is more than triple that in 2016 (9) due to the number of women killed in the context of terrorism (21) in 2017. This category also includes four women killed by men in the context of sexually motivated killings. Two of these victims had met the perpetrators only hours beforehand, and both perpetrators claimed that the women died as a result of asphyxiation during 'consensual' sex. The normalisation of sadistic sexual practices in relation to femicide contexts, defences and sentencing is an area that merits further research.

Twenty-four (17.3%) women were killed by men known to them but of no familial or intimate relationship, such as a friend, neighbour, social or business acquaintance, housemate or 'sex buyer' in the context of prostitution. These men killed women in a range of contexts, including sexually motivated killings and financial gain.

Ten women (7.2%) were killed by their sons, more than double the number (3, 2.9%) killed in 2016. A further seven women (5%) were killed by other male family members: two women were killed by grandsons, one by a step-grandson, two by brothers, one by her father and one by her uncle, who in addition to being convicted of her murder was also convicted of kidnapping and raping her, and of the kidnapping, rape and attempted murder of another woman. One grandson subjected his grandmother to particularly brutal, extreme and mutilating violence.

Perpetrators' use of pornography was referenced in several media reports and trials. In a number of cases, the perpetrator had been viewing extreme, violent pornography prior to killing the victim; in one case, the perpetrator stabbed his wife to death after she confronted him about images of child sexual abuse she had found on his computer. Media reports<sup>53</sup> also made reference to perpetrators' use of social media and dating websites in relation to the femicides.

The context 'other' accounted for 13 (9.4%) femicides. This context is used to refer to cases where the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator may be known but the motive is unclear or it does not fit into the other categories. These include a number of apparently vengeful killings involving grudges held by the perpetrator against the victim, including work-based grudges and resentment, perceived disputes or where victims had challenged anti-social behaviour. Femicides in this category included some of the most brutal killings involving multiple methods of killing with multiple injuries inflicted.

The context 'unknown' accounts for 4 (2.9%) femicides. Very little information was available about these cases at the time of writing.

51 <https://www.leicestermercury.co.uk/news/leicester-news/jailed-thurmaston-man-murdered-wife-565560>

52 <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/twisted-killer-husband-who-abused-11884260>

53 When this report has relied on media for additional information, a minimum of three sources will have been consulted.

Primary context of violence	Perpetrator's relationship to victim						
	Grand total	Partner/ ex-partner	Son	Any other family member	Known (non-relative, non-partner)	Stranger	Unknown
Domestic – intimate partner violence	64	64					
Terrorism	21					21	
Other	13				10	3	
Domestic – child–parent	10		10				
Sexually motivated	9			1	4	4	
Unknown	4				2		2
Domestic – extended family	3			2			1
Other – mental health	3			1	1	1	
In the course of other crime – robbery or burglary	2				2		
Domestic – sibling–sibling	2			2			
Other – financial gain	2				2		
Authority figure – known	1				1		
Domestic – parent–child	1			1			
Intimate partner violence collateral	1				1		
Other – mistaken victim	1					1	
Prostitution/pornography	1				1		
Revenge against victim's family member	1						1
Grand total	139	64	10	7	24	30	4

Figure 9: The number of women killed per respective context of violence and the corresponding perpetrator relationship category, for women killed in the UK in 2017

## Women aged 66+

In 2017, 20 women aged over 66 were killed by men, including three victims aged over 85.<sup>54</sup> Mothers were killed by their sons in seven cases, men killed their female partners/spouses in five cases, women were killed by strangers in two cases, a further three were killed by acquaintances, a neighbour killed one woman and a grandson killed his grandmother. In one case, the relationship of the perpetrator to victim was unknown.

This finding merits further examination in future; other research has also highlighted killings of older women (Dobash & Dobash, 2015).<sup>55</sup> In their study of 271 men killing women, they found that,

‘Of the women murdered by men, older women were the most likely to have been bludgeoned to death and the most likely to have suffered 5 or more injuries. Their killers were the most likely to have been intoxicated at the time of the murder.

‘69% of women who were over 80 when they were murdered were also victims of sexual assault.

‘Murderers of older women were the least likely to express remorse or empathy.’

### Killed by sons

‘To lose someone in your life is bad enough, but for [the victim] to be killed by someone she loved and supported endlessly is the cruellest blow.’<sup>56</sup>

The largest group of women in this age band (35%, n=7) were killed by their sons, with sons now exceeding partner/spouses as the primary perpetrators in this category. In two of these cases there was evidence of ‘overkill’, with one son stabbing his mother 17 times, and another punching and kicking his mother before setting fire to her. One victim, aged over 90, was killed by her grandson who slit her throat repeatedly with a bread knife.

### Spouse/partner killings

Female spouses or partners in this age bracket were killed by their partner in five cases, with victims’ ages ranging from 67 to 88. There was evidence of ‘overkill’ in four of these cases, with multiple methods of killing being used in three such cases.

### Context of robbery, burglary or financial gain

‘Everyone knew her in the local area and she was much loved and respected by friends and neighbours alike. We as a family, including her grandchildren and great grandchildren, are devastated and heartbroken.’<sup>57</sup>

‘You brutally raped [the victim], before smothering her with one of her own pillows. At some point you removed her engagement and wedding rings, and pulled the crucifix from around her neck. You knew what you had done.’<sup>58</sup>

Of the three women killed during the course of a robbery or burglary, two were aged over 70 (the other woman killed in this context was aged 56–65). In both cases, the perpetrator lived locally and had ‘befriended’ the victim, doing odd jobs for payment. In both cases, the perpetrator raped the victim as well as murdering and stealing from her. In a further case the victim appeared to have been targeted and killed by two perpetrators for financial gain.

## Prostitution

‘[The Judge] added: “The blade of the Morphy Richards knife was left embedded in [the victim’s] neck after it snapped due to brutal force.” The court heard [the perpetrator] found another knife in her flat which he used to stab her before dragging her “feet first” into her shower where he “jammed her head into an unnatural angle” and continued to stab her inner thigh.’<sup>59</sup>

Women involved in prostitution are subjected to high rates of violence by men. In 2017, at least one woman was killed by a buyer in the context of prostitution, being subjected to a ‘brutal and sustained’ knife attack<sup>60</sup>. Seven further cases involved possible indicators of prostitution/sexual exploitation – brevity of acquaintance, transactions in relation to substances, economic hardship, sexual violence and ‘overkilling’ – though clear evidence was not established. It is not clear whether there has been a decision by police and media not to reference prostitution believing this may be stigmatising or whether simply not enough is known to be able to state involvement in prostitution. The Femicide Census, either way, believes killings of women involved in prostitution are not being adequately identified.

54 A breakdown of this age group can be found under ‘Age bands’ at page 24.

55 Dobash, R.E., and Dobash, R.P. (2015), *When Men Murder Women*, Oxford University Press.

56 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-coventry-warwickshire-44372175>

57 <https://www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/news/liverpool-news/killer-admits-raping-kirkby-nan-14511673>

58 <https://www.leicestermercury.co.uk/news/leicester-news/what-judge-told-murderer-rapist-1364641>

59 <http://www.kilburntimes.co.uk/news/crime-court/man-sentenced-to-life-imprisonment-for-murder-of-queen-s-park-escort-1-5253616>

60 <http://www.kilburntimes.co.uk/news/crime-court/man-sentenced-to-life-imprisonment-for-murder-of-queen-s-park-escort-1-5253616>

## Post-separation killings

'But when [the victim] could take no more, making the brave decision to end her marriage and find a new home for her children, [the perpetrator's] violence escalated into her brutal and ferocious murder at the hands of the man who was supposed to love her the most.'<sup>61</sup>

'The court heard that days earlier [the victim] had told her husband that she planned to leave him and had left the property. She arranged to return to the house on June 8 and her father waited outside as she went to collect belongings. But [the perpetrator] strangled [the victim] with a cable in the bedroom – and then called his mum to tell her what he had done.'<sup>62</sup>

In 2017, 22 women had separated or taken steps to separate when they were killed by their ex-partner. Over half (55%, n=12) of these women were killed within the first month of separation<sup>63</sup>, and 19 (87%) were killed within the first year of separation. **Figure 10** shows the 22 women known to have been separated at the time of the killing and the duration of their separation before the killing. This is just over a third of all women killed in the context of intimate partner femicide and is in line with previous findings of the Femicide Census.

In 70 (50.4%) of the total femicide cases, the category of 'post-separation' was not relevant, as the perpetrator was not an intimate partner or ex-partner; this number is particularly high due to the number of female victims killed in terror attacks in 2017. In 45 cases there was no evidence that the victim had taken steps to separate from the perpetrator, and in two cases it was not known whether she had taken steps to separate.

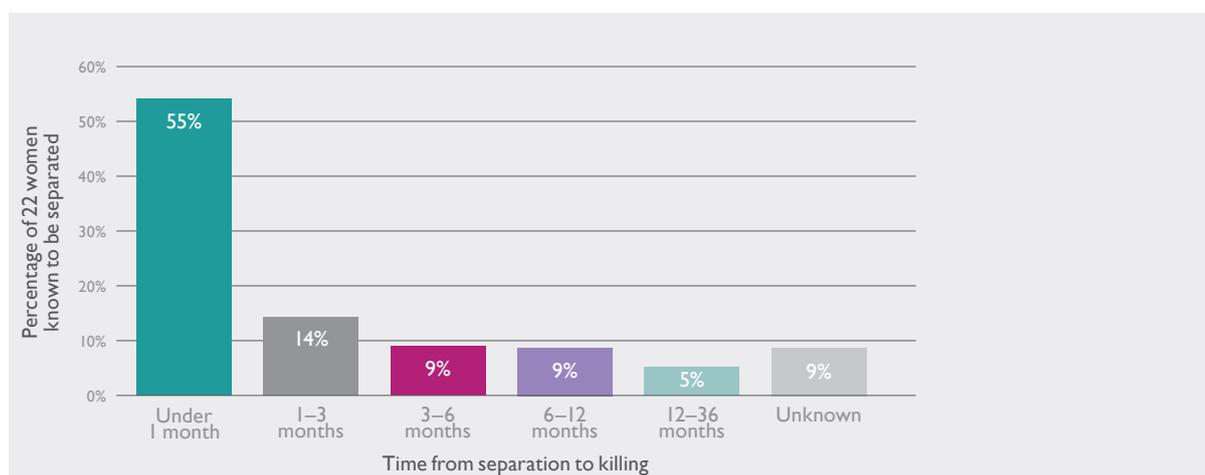


Figure 10: The length of time between separation and killing for the 22 women killed in 2017 following separation from their partner

<sup>61</sup> <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/twisted-killer-husband-who-abused-11884260>

<sup>62</sup> <https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/vengeful-killer-christopher-jeffery-strangled-13982121>

<sup>63</sup> Separation is recognised as a high-risk indicator in the CAADA Dash Risk Register for domestic violence. <http://safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Dash%20risk%20checklist%20quick%20start%20guidance%20FINAL.pdf>

## Location of Incident

'[The victim] arrived to what should have been the safety of her own home at 2.21pm. I'm satisfied you attacked her very shortly after she came through the door.'<sup>64</sup>

'It was a ferocious attack where she was bludgeoned to death with a lump hammer, causing catastrophic injuries to her as she was working on a sewing machine in her own house, a place where she was entitled to feel safe and secure.'<sup>65</sup>

2017 is the second year that the Femicide Census has collected details on the location of the act of femicide. The data indicates that in 2017 the most dangerous place for a woman was the home that she shared with her male partner or ex-partner or her son.

As presented in **Figure 11** below, 32.4% of women killed in 2017 were killed at the home that they shared with the perpetrator, in the majority of cases their partner or spouse. 26.6% were killed where they lived independent of the perpetrator. The percentage of women killed in outdoors/public spaces (22.3%) was significantly higher than in 2016 (7%), mainly due to the number of women killed in terror attacks.

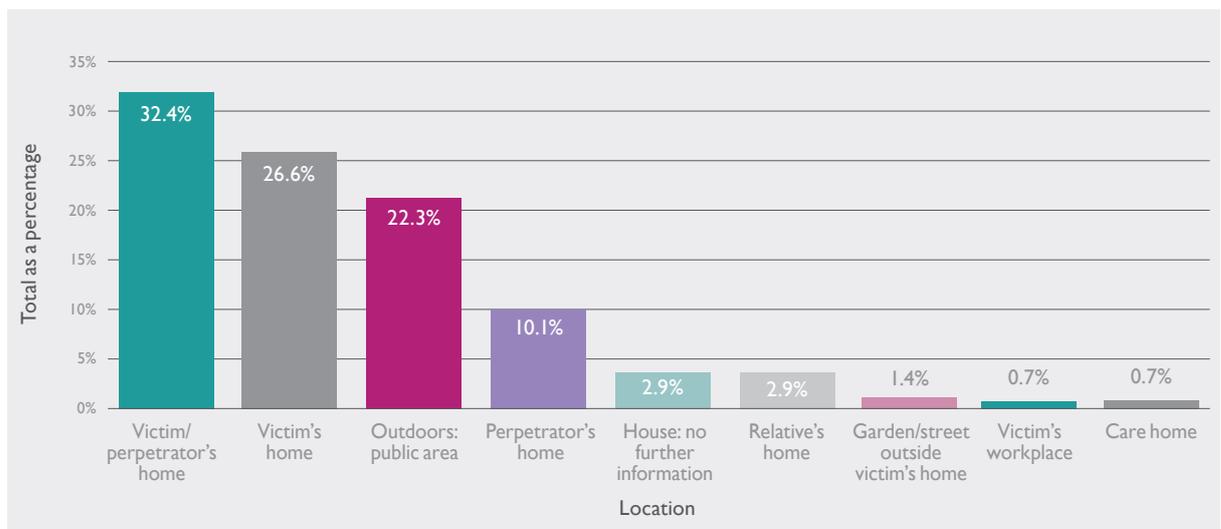


Figure 11: Location of incidents of femicide committed in 2017

<sup>64</sup> <https://www.leicesterm Mercury.co.uk/news/leicester-news/what-judge-told-body-suitcase-1159341>

<sup>65</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-lancashire-40856427>

Location	No. of women	Percentage
Victim/perpetrator's home	45	32.4%
Victim's home	37	26.6%
Outdoors: public area	31	22.3%
Perpetrator's home	14	10.1%
House: no further information	4	2.9%
Relative's home	4	2.9%
Garden/street outside victim's home	2	1.4%
Victim's workplace	1	0.7%
Care home	1	0.7%
Total	139	100%

Figure 12: Location of incidents of femicide committed in 2017

**Figure 13** shows the location of incident for the 22 women killed by their ex-partner following a separation in 2017. The majority of these women, 45.6% (n=10), were killed in their own homes. The second largest group of women, 31.8% (n=7), were killed in the home they still shared with their partner following a separation.

'[Victim] was in the process of separating from [perpetrator] and was living with family members at the time of her death. In the early hours of the morning, [victim] was inside her former home when she was brutally attacked by [perpetrator]. During this attack she was stabbed three times.'<sup>66</sup>

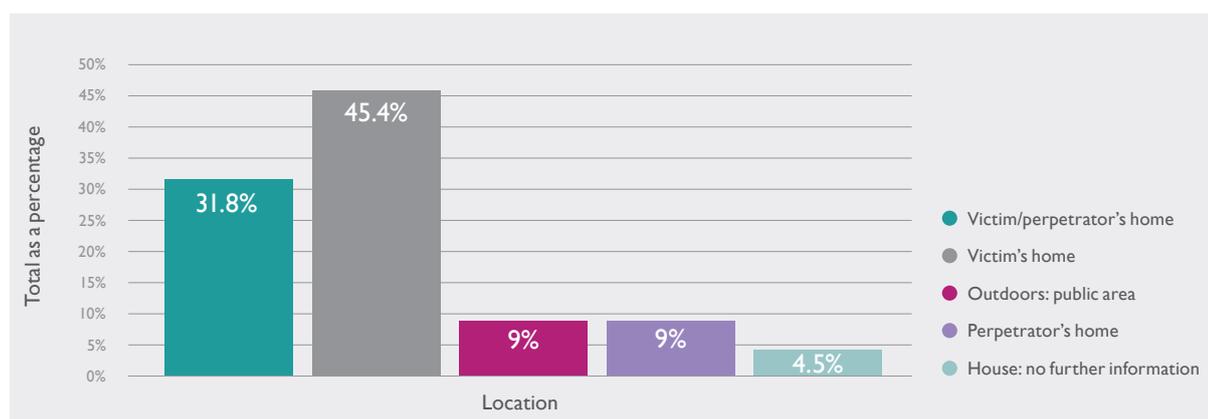


Figure 13: Location of incidents of femicide committed by an ex-partner in 2017

66 <https://www.bristolpost.co.uk/news/bristol-news/estranged-husband-asiyah-harris-jailed-1263189>

# Method of Killing

‘[The perpetrator] viciously murdered his wife by stabbing her in the eye and heart before slitting her throat. . . She suffered 27 different stab wounds and nearly had her spinal cord severed during the horrific attack.’<sup>67</sup>

In the 139 incidents of femicide committed in 2017 there were 14 methods of killing used. As presented in **Figure 14** below, one method was used in 117 (83.9%) cases; two methods were used in 13 (9.3%) cases; three methods were used in four (2.9%) cases; four methods were used in one (0.7%) case; and in four (2.9%) cases the method(s) used were unknown, generally because of the length of time that had elapsed before the body was discovered.

As in 2016, men most commonly used a sharp instrument to kill women: this was used in 66 (47.4%) cases. The high rate of using a sharp instrument to kill women indicates that the commonly held perception of knife crime as a youth issue needs to be revised. Other methods men used to kill women in 2017 included: strangulation/asphyxiation (28 cases, 20.1%); explosion (16 cases, 11.5%, these being cases of terrorism); blunt instrument (15 cases, 10.8%);

other – head injuries (10 cases, 7.2%); kicking or hitting without a weapon (10 cases, 7.2%); arson – setting fire and causing death by fire (4 cases, 2.9%); motor vehicle (3 cases, 2.2%); burning or scalding (2 cases, 1.4%); secondary cause resulting from assault (2 cases, 1.4%); causing to fall against a hard surface (1 case, 0.7%) and poisoning via alcohol or drugs (1 case, 0.7%). In 4 cases (2.9%) the method of killing was categorised as ‘unknown’, and in 3 cases (2.2%) as ‘other’: one of these cases involved acid being thrown over the victim. As illustrated above, men sometimes used more than one method of killing.

In a number of cases the method of killing involved the use of everyday household objects – one woman was battered over the head by her partner with a wooden vase her son had made for her; another woman was strangled by her partner using the cord of her hair straighteners. The mundane and personal nature of these ‘weapons’ gives a sense of the constant insecurity and danger surrounding women who are being subjected to violence in their own home.

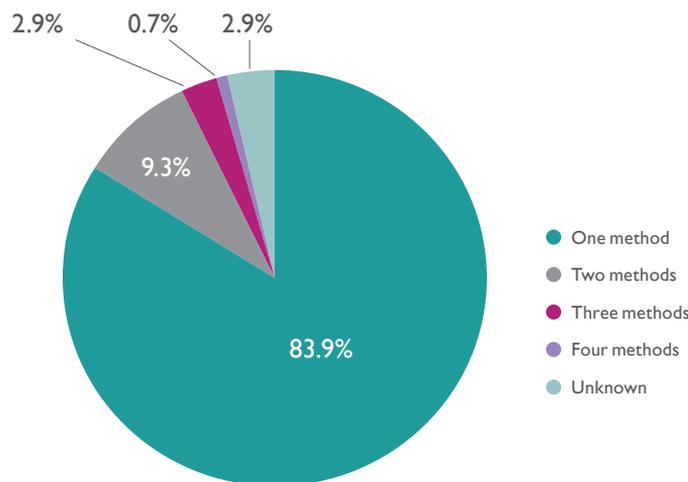


Figure 14: The number of methods of killing used in femicides committed in 2017

67 <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5532239/Jealous-husband-viciously-murdered-wife-jailed-life.html>

## Overkilling

'She had been beaten so badly that she suffered around 70 injuries to her head and face. And if that wasn't enough, she was also tied up and gagged in what must have been a terrifying ordeal that left her dying a slow and painful death.'<sup>68</sup>

'[The perpetrator] inflicted 19 injuries on mother-of-two [victim], choking her and punching her in the face in a "sustained and brutal assault". She was "battered virtually beyond all recognition".'<sup>69</sup>

'Overkilling' is the term used to describe the use of gratuitous violence that goes further than that necessary to cause the victim's death.<sup>70</sup> In total, overkilling was evident in 58 (41.7%) cases. In addition to the 18 (12.9%) cases where perpetrators used multiple methods to kill their victims, there was evidence of overkilling in 40 (28.8%) cases where a single method had been used. Killings were frequently described in court and media reports in terms of involving a 'frenzied' or 'ferocious' attack. For example, where men killed women solely with a sharp instrument, they frequently stabbed victims multiple times: 13 specific references were made to men stabbing women over 20 times, with one report stating that a victim was stabbed 175 times.

Similarly, where a blunt instrument was used, several victims were variously reported as being 'hit 40 times with an axe', 'bludgeoned repeatedly', 'battered virtually beyond all recognition' and suffering 'catastrophic head injuries'. Where men killed through hitting or kicking without a weapon, they inflicted multiple and extensive injuries on several victims (36, 59, 60, 'more than 60' and 70 injuries were specified in reports).

In a number of cases, perpetrators subjected victims to violence including rape and other sexual violence prior to killing them. There was also evidence in a number of cases of perpetrators further violating victims' bodies after killing them, through dismemberment, mutilation, desecration, means of disposal and prevention of lawful burial.

68 <https://www.coventrytelegraph.net/news/local-news/cocaine-murder-lies-how-death-14282921>

69 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-norfolk-42169534>

70 Mitchell, C., and Anglin, A. (2009), *Intimate Partner Violence: A Health-Based Perspective*, p. 325, Oxford University Press.

# Perpetrators

There were 126 perpetrators of femicide in the UK during 2017. Some men killed more than one woman, and in some cases more than one man was responsible for killing one woman.

## Age bands

Of the 126 perpetrators of femicide, the overwhelming majority were aged under 56 (88.9%, n=112), with most falling within the 26–55 age band (71.4%, n=90).

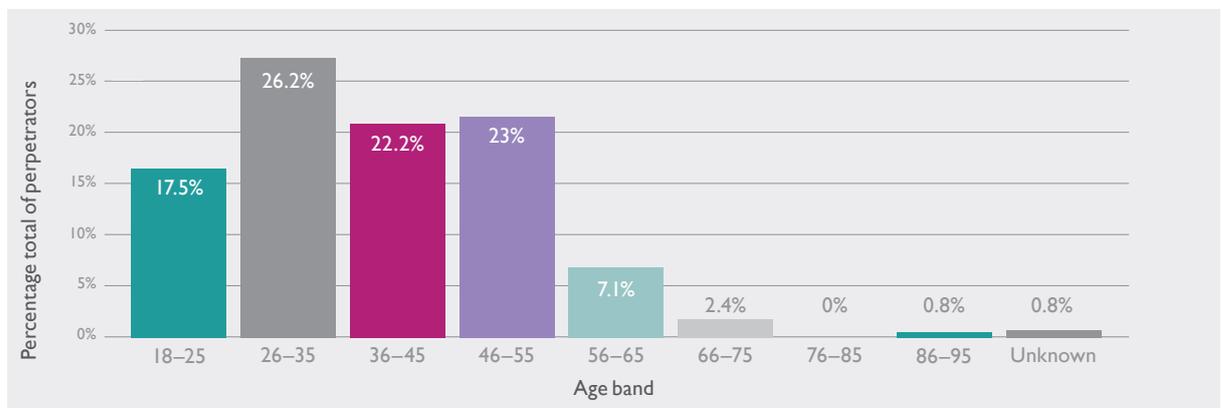


Figure 15: Age bands of perpetrators of femicide in 2017

It is notable that only four (3%) perpetrators were aged 66 and over, while a substantially higher number of victims (19, 13.3%) were in this age band. This reflects the significant number of older women killed by their son or grandson, or by younger male intruders during a burglary.

## Criminal Justice Progress/Outcome

“This is a deeply sad case, where a man, failing to see a way of managing ongoing issues with mental health, has instead chosen to kill his own daughter and tried to kill another;” [the Detective Chief Inspector] said.<sup>71</sup>

**Figure 16** shows the number of charges, convictions and types of criminal justice outcomes or progress for perpetrators of femicide in 2017, sourced predominantly through publicly available information.<sup>72</sup> Although there were a number of women reportedly killed in 2017 where the perpetrator and criminal justice outcome remains unknown (see below),<sup>73</sup> where progress has been made in terms of charges and convictions this has been recorded. The outcomes in the table refer specifically to the act of killing; further crimes relating to the femicide such as rape, stalking or burglary have not been included.

Seventy-four (58.7%) perpetrators were found guilty of murder, including one perpetrator who died in prison while awaiting sentence. Seventeen (13.5%) perpetrators were found guilty of manslaughter, eight on the grounds of diminished responsibility; the two perpetrators convicted of culpable homicide<sup>74</sup> also includes one who was found guilty of this crime on the basis of diminished responsibility. Two of the perpetrators charged with murder have been deemed medically unfit to stand trial; in one of these cases the trial has been delayed, in the second a ‘trial of issue’<sup>75</sup> will take place instead of a criminal trial. One perpetrator charged with murder died in custody prior to any trial taking place.

Criminal justice progress/outcome	Total
Guilty of murder	74
Guilty of manslaughter	17
Committed suicide at time of offence	12
Charged with murder	7
Charged with attempted murder and conspiracy to murder	2
Committed suicide after offence	4
Shot dead by police	4
Charged with culpable homicide	2
Charged with manslaughter	2
Guilty of culpable homicide	2
Total	126

Figure 16: List of convictions, charges and types of criminal justice outcomes or progress for perpetrators of femicide in 2017

71 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-kent-42942954>

72 As of 28 November 2018 when this report was finalised, the criminal proceedings against a number of perpetrators had not been concluded or investigations are ongoing. The database will be updated on receipt of further information.

73 These cases were not included for analysis in this report. See ‘Methodology’ section.

74 ‘Culpable homicide’ is a verdict applied in Scotland. It is committed where the accused has caused loss of life through wrongful conduct, but where there was no intention to kill or ‘wicked recklessness’. This may also be considered where in law the accused is found to be of ‘diminished responsibility’ because of some mental illness, or where there was provocation. <https://www2.gov.scot/Publications/2004/12/20339/4756>

75 The ‘trial of issue’ will seek to establish whether the individual has caused the unlawful deaths of the victims, rather than whether he is guilty of a crime.

## Unsolved cases

As mentioned in the ‘Methodology’ section, this year, as in previous years, a number of suspected femicides have not been included in the data, due to investigations remaining in early stages, cases remaining unsolved or as yet inconclusive outcomes regarding any suspects involved. These include one case where a woman died as a result of substance toxicity; one where a woman had been tied up and stabbed to death; one where the cause of the fatal injury was not established; and one where no information was available. In three further cases arrests have been made but the suspects have not as yet been charged. As more information becomes available, the census is updated as appropriate.

## Cleared cases

This year, as every year, there were a number (four in 2017) of further cases where men were cleared of murder or manslaughter but where interactions between the men and the women before their deaths had raised concerns. The Femicide Census is keen to look into such cases in more detail in the future with a view to having a clearer perspective on what may be contributory factors leading to the deaths of women. By way of example, in the data now gathered covering the period 2009–2018, there have been instances where a woman has died following a serious assault and in the context of a history of violence but where it cannot be established that that particular assault was the cause of death. There have been instances where a woman has been injured or in the cross-fire of a shooting incident or after taking toxic substances and where the men involved have not sought help for the woman in such conditions who has subsequently died. Similarly, there have been cases where a woman has taken her own life in the context of an abusive relationship and where the judge or coroner has suggested that the victim had been driven to take her own life. In such cases there have not been convictions for murder or manslaughter so these cases have not been recorded in the figures reported on, but the census continues to honour these women’s memories and be alert to women’s deaths in such circumstances.

## Pleas and sentencing

‘Just before 8pm that night [the perpetrator] sent a “sinister” text to another friend which read: “Yeah man I ready for jail pal. Gonna do best I can for now. Play the game but then go mental when needed.”’<sup>76</sup>

‘He suggested he was not of sound mind at the time of the killing and pleaded not guilty on the grounds of diminished responsibility. However, we demonstrated a degree of advanced planning – notably taking the axe out in the car that night – and the jury quickly found him guilty.’<sup>77</sup>

For the second year running, data has been collected on pleas entered in court by the perpetrators of femicides. As with the criminal justice outcomes and convictions, this information has been sourced through publicly available information and not through the FOI requests to the police who do not always provide this information (see **Figure 17**).

In 34 cases, perpetrators pleaded not guilty to murder but 28 went on to be found guilty of murder; two were found guilty of manslaughter; three remained charged with murder and one died awaiting sentence.

In 27 cases, perpetrators pleaded guilty to murder and were found guilty of murder.

In a further 27 cases, the perpetrator pleaded guilty to manslaughter: 15 of these were pleas on the basis of diminished responsibility. Of the 27 manslaughter pleas, 13 were found guilty of murder and 14 were found guilty of manslaughter.

<sup>76</sup> <https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/darren-merriman-murder-elizabeth-rochdale-14552879>  
<sup>77</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-birmingham-42067631>

Plea	No.	Verdict/outcome	Notes
Not guilty to murder	34	28 guilty of murder (includes 1 who died in prison awaiting sentence) 2 guilty of manslaughter 3 (remain) charged with murder 1 charged with murder (died in police custody)	2 defendants remaining charged with murder have been deemed unfit to stand trial (see previous section) 1 is awaiting a new trial
Guilty to murder	27	27 guilty of murder	
Guilty to manslaughter – diminished responsibility	15	7 guilty of murder 8 guilty of manslaughter on grounds of diminished responsibility	
Guilty to manslaughter	12	6 guilty of murder 6 guilty of manslaughter	
No plea/unknown	13	6 guilty of murder 3 charged with murder 1 charged with manslaughter 1 charged with culpable homicide 2 charged with attempted murder and conspiracy to murder	
Not guilty to manslaughter	2	1 guilty of manslaughter 1 charged with manslaughter	
Guilty to culpable homicide	2	1 guilty of murder 1 guilty of culpable homicide	
Guilty to culpable homicide with diminished responsibility	1	1 guilty of culpable homicide with diminished responsibility	
N/A	20	12 committed suicide at time of offence 4 committed suicide after offence 4 shot dead by police	
Total	126		

Figure 17: Pleas and outcomes

Sentences were broad-ranging, with the lower range including seven years in a manslaughter case in which a man reversed into a woman, then drove over her and left the scene after she had intervened to try to keep the peace in a row between him and her son. The higher end of the murder sentencing scale included 15 sentences of over 30 years, the highest being two whole life sentences for two men who subjected their victim to a horrific, prolonged ordeal of rape and torture before murdering her by placing her near lifeless body in a car and setting fire to it. Both of these men had served previous life sentences for murder. A man with a previous conviction for the manslaughter of a former partner was given a 21-year sentence for murdering his partner. A man who abducted, raped and murdered his niece and abducted, raped and attempted to murder her friend received a 40-year minimum sentence.

A substantial proportion of the sentences were in the higher range (see **Figure 18**). The generally higher rate of sentencing perhaps reflects the still relatively high proportion (41) of perpetrators who attempted unsuccessfully to plead not guilty to murder or manslaughter. These higher sentences are also a welcome reflection of the gravity of the offences, and may reflect the application of the new Sentencing Guideline on Domestic Abuse, which states: 'The domestic context of the offending behaviour makes the offending more serious because it represents a violation of the trust and security that normally exists between people in an intimate or family relationship.'<sup>78</sup> They may also relate to the findings made earlier of the frequent occurrence of both overkill and disrespectful treatment of bodies after the killing.

It has not been possible to examine the consistency of sentencing in this report, but future reports might look into this to see whether particular characteristics of the victim or perpetrator or particular relationships between victim and perpetrator may be influencing sentencing, alongside usual considerations of mitigating and aggravating factors.

78 [https://www.sentencingcouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/6.4143\\_SC\\_Domestic\\_Abuse\\_Paper\\_WEB.pdf](https://www.sentencingcouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/6.4143_SC_Domestic_Abuse_Paper_WEB.pdf)

Guilty of murder		Guilty of manslaughter		Guilty of culpable homicide	
Minimum sentence (years)	Perpetrators	Minimum sentence (years)	Perpetrators	Minimum sentence (years)	Perpetrators
11	1	5	1	6	1
12	1	7	1	Held in state hospital on interim compulsion order	1
14	3	8	1		
15	3	9.3	1		
16–16.5	6	10	2		
17–17.5	6	10 (+5 on licence)	1		
18–18.5	7	11 (half to be spent in prison, half in community)	1		
19	3	12	1		
20	4	13	1		
21	2	13 (+5 on licence)	1		
22	4	17	1		
23	3	Indefinite hospital order/ detained under MHA	4		
24–24.5	5				
26	2				
27	3				
28	2				
29	1	Remanded in custody while hospital order is considered	1		
30	2				
31	3				
32	2				
33	2				
35	1				
37	1				
40	2				
Whole life sentence	2				
Died in prison awaiting sentence	1				
Awaiting sentence	1				
Hospital order/ detained under MHA	1				
<b>Total</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>

Figure 18: Sentencing outcomes

## Summary of Findings

This is the third Femicide Census; with each year's data the picture of femicide becomes a little clearer, but also each year new areas are added and findings generate additional areas for future research and analysis.

Data year-on-year reaffirms an increasingly familiar picture of the routine and unexceptional nature of men's killing of women. Of particular concern is the high level of overkill used in femicides in 2017, featuring in 42% of cases.

The 2017 femicides show a variation on the norm in that a substantially higher number of women and girls were killed by a stranger (22%) but this, to some extent, reflects killings arising from terrorist events this year and included in the census. 139 women were killed by men in 2017. Of these, 21 were killed in terror attacks. Momentarily setting aside the terror attacks, the total number of women killed by men in 2017 would be 118. Of these, 54% were killed by their current or former partner. The total of 118 women killed (excluding terror attacks) might suggest a slight drop in the number of femicides for 2017, though the role of current or ex-partner as perpetrator remains high. However, slight changes in this year's data cannot be counted as a trend or pattern.

We are keen to highlight that the significance of the Femicide Census is that it does not only count women killed in intimate partner violence but all instances of women killed by men.

A summary of this year's findings highlights the following:

- There were high rates of overkill (42%) with excessive violence being used to kill women, in some cases involving multiple methods of killing and post-killing violation of the body.
- A sharp instrument was used in most cases of femicide (47%).
- Women were most likely to be killed between the ages of 26 and 55.
- 14% of victims were over 66, with women in this age band being killed by their sons, partners, grandsons and men in the local community 'befriending' them or gaining access to them.
- Women are still most likely to be killed by their partner or ex-partner (46%); this would be 54% if subtracting the terrorist attacks which killed 21 women in 2017.
- A significant proportion of women were killed by someone they know but who was of no familial or intimate relation to them (17%).
- Women were killed by their sons (7%) or other male family members (5%).
- Perpetrators were most likely to be aged between 26 and 55.
- Of the victims who had separated or taken steps to separate, 87% were killed in the first year post-separation, 69% within the first three months and 55% within the first month.
- Women were most likely to be killed in the place they live (59%) whether in the own homes that they do not/ no longer share with their perpetrator (27%) or in the home they share with the perpetrator (32%).
- Whilst 61 perpetrators pleaded either not guilty to murder or guilty only to manslaughter, in fact 41 of these were found guilty of murder, and 53% of all perpetrators were found guilty of murder.
- Perpetrators can expect serious sentences if found guilty of murder, with 30% receiving minimum life sentences of 20 years or more and two receiving whole life sentences.
- Sentences for manslaughter ranged from minimum terms of five to 17 years, while four perpetrators convicted of manslaughter were subject to indefinite hospital orders or detained under the Mental Health Act.

# Recommendations

## I. Legislative measures and associated implementation

### i) Domestic abuse legislation

As outlined elsewhere, the four nations are at different stages in their domestic abuse legislation. Scotland passed legislation<sup>79</sup> in February 2018, to come into force in 2019. Wales has had relevant legislation since 2015 and has an 'Ask and Act' policy and violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWDASV) legislation and National Advisor, requiring public servants to be proactive around identifying, acting on and preventing violence against women. Northern Ireland has drafted legislation but the NI Assembly is not currently operational. The Westminster Government will be bringing forward a Domestic Abuse Bill with a commissioner role covering England and Wales.

In order that the proposed Domestic Abuse Bill covering England and Wales is able to match the government's stated ambition for it to be 'transformative', it is essential that the findings and learning from the Femicide Census are considered carefully by the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice to help ensure the legislation can work towards preventing future femicides.

- Governments and parliaments in all four nations to enact, deliver and monitor their relevant legislation to the highest standards – incorporating learning and best practice such as facilitating victimless prosecutions, placing a duty on public sector workers to proactively identify and act on domestic abuse with relevant training and funding, including for specialist organisations, integral to delivery.
- Domestic abuse legislation to be fully implemented by state agencies for early prevention and intervention as well as for prosecution, conviction, sentencing and compensation<sup>80</sup>. Criminal and/or civil orders (such as domestic violence protection orders, non-molestation orders, sanctuary schemes and occupation orders or similar initiatives as used or developed across the four nations) need to be in place and enforced and breaches criminalised to protect women in their homes from abusive partners or ex-partners.
- The Westminster Government to ratify and implement the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combatting Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (the Istanbul Convention) at the earliest possible point.

### ii) Equalities impact assessments

All relevant policy proposals to be subjected to independent, specialist scrutiny from the earliest stages, to help identify and minimise their potential to exacerbate the risk of violence and abuse experienced by women.

Policies and measures also need to be scrutinised once in operation and where they are found to be disproportionate, discriminatory and increasing risk to women should be paused and reviewed.

A number of policies are already the subject of campaigning across the four nations for their disproportionately negative impact on women experiencing violence and abuse. These include, but are not limited to, the way that Universal Credit is paid, the impact of benefit caps, the two child limit to tax credits and the 'rape clause' exemption, the shared accommodation rate for private renters, the 'under-occupancy penalty', reforms to housing support models for temporary, homeless and refuge accommodation<sup>81</sup>, legal aid reforms and other public service reductions, and the presumption of child contact with fathers with a history of violence against women.

- An independent panel of experts to undertake an analysis of any potential discriminatory and negative impacts of all major policy reforms, particularly for women experiencing, or at risk of, male violence.
- Where the Westminster Government's own impact assessments and evaluations of welfare-related policies show a disproportionate impact on women, further analysis to be undertaken to ascertain the particular impact on women experiencing domestic abuse – their ability to flee abuse or rebuild their lives after exiting an abusive relationship – and appropriate action taken to mitigate any unintended consequences.
- The new Domestic Abuse or VAWG Commissioner for England and Wales to be independent, well-resourced and able to compel cooperation and action on matters outlined above.

<sup>79</sup> This legislation was identified as the 'Gold Standard' by the leading expert in coercive and controlling behaviour, Dr Evan Stark.

<sup>80</sup> Compensation should be an additional disposal where meaningful, not a primary disposal or substitute for other disposals. In many cases, money has been taken or extorted from the victim as part of financial abuse.

<sup>81</sup> Welsh Women's Aid have developed an alternative proposal, a ring-fenced Homelessness and Housing-Related Support grant.

## 2. Funding and commissioning

- The Westminster Government and devolved administrations to work with specialist organisations to develop a long-term, sustainable funding model for specialist domestic abuse and VAWG services. This must include funding for specialist services (e.g. women-only, BME, exiting prostitution) and be in line with Istanbul Convention requirements (proportionate, needs-based, specialist, independent and not dependent on immigration status).
- The Westminster Government and devolved administrations to scrutinise all relevant national and local commissioning practices for their quality and impact on women and on the specialist women's sector, and to ensure training and accountability for commissioners.

## 3. Data

All staff in state agencies and public bodies should be required, trained and resourced to collate and provide appropriately detailed, accurate and consistent data, in line with UN human rights legislation. This is to ensure reliable, robust, comparable UK-wide data sets with which to inform policy and decisions, including resource allocation, and to inform preventative action. This applies across all equalities data and all public services but is particularly necessary with regard to police data. The forthcoming Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation, and the new Commissioner, could assist in shaping and enforcing this. While this is a broad recommendation, three specific areas are raised here:

- Police forces, at least in each nation and preferably across all four nations, to establish common definitions and data collection for monitoring across equalities categories of both victims and perpetrators.
- Police forces need to ensure that all data relating to killings of women by men is sufficiently detailed, disaggregated by sex and recording any relationship between victim and perpetrator, and that they cooperate with timely sharing of information with the Femicide Census.
- Coroners and procurators fiscal, where appropriate, to issue notices to prevent future deaths<sup>82</sup> and include reference to violence against women and girls and remarks to relevant agencies concerning VAWG. Such records to be publicly available and searchable by VAWG or domestic abuse terms.

## 4. Stage agencies and the public sector

We support calls for regular, face-to-face training, policy and guidance renewal with professionals across all relevant state agencies and the public sector about the dynamics and impacts of violence against women and the implications for how public services should respond to VAWG cases and for women's ability to access safety and justice. Again this is a broad recommendation but some specific elements across all four nations include:

- Public services, particularly the police, to proactively elicit information that identifies the history and patterns of abuse and coercive control on the part of the perpetrator towards the victim.
- Public services, including police, social services, health, housing and other relevant agencies, to review and implement learning from domestic homicide reviews, serious case reviews, coroners' notices to prevent future deaths, Fatal Accidents Inquiries, Police Complaints reports and recommendations to other police forces and local authorities following the death or suicide of a woman after men's violence.
- Public services, including police and other relevant agencies, to scrutinise suspects' and perpetrators' past histories to ensure that previous accounts of violence against women and girls, use of the sex industry and pornography, and coercive control in relationships are properly identified, considered and presented where relevant.

## 5. Media

While it is beyond the scope of this report to include an analysis of media accounts of femicide, we recognise the influence of the media in shaping attitudes and assert that the media has a key role to play in raising awareness about the scale, extent and patterns involved in men's killing of women. Repeated reliance on the tropes of 'tragic deaths' or 'isolated incidents' fails to reflect the cumulative and discriminatory nature of male violence against women, neither does it appropriately contextualise men's killing of women. Much reporting of male violence against women and girls replicates victim-blaming and perpetrator-excusing narratives and relies on stereotypical language and imagery. Worse, in some cases, reporting seems to revel in violence, particularly where sexual violence has also been involved, almost as entertainment. The Leveson Report highlights some of these issues<sup>83</sup> and there remain many lessons that the media could learn to make a more helpful and informed contribution.

<sup>82</sup> In England, coroners can produce a 'Notice to Prevent Future Death' and highlight areas of concern that may have contributed to the death or could have been handled better by relevant agencies.

<sup>83</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/270939/0780\\_i.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/270939/0780_i.pdf) (see page 22)

- Ensure reports do not contain ‘victim blaming’ or stereotypical descriptions or imagery.
- Refrain from quoting uncritical, and even valorising, comments about the perpetrator from neighbours or colleagues, who are unlikely to know anything about his abusive behaviour.
- Recognise that knife crime is not only significant in harm and killings of young people, but also a key feature in killings of women by men.
- Challenge police reports that a femicide was an ‘isolated incident’ or ‘that the population shouldn’t be alarmed’.
- Contextualise the killing in the wider pattern of femicides and challenge relevant authorities about accountability, strategies and actions to reduce the number of femicides.
- Follow best practice guidance produced by the VAWG sector to assist media reporting.<sup>84</sup>

## 6. Areas for possible future research

This report has identified some areas which may or may not come within the remit of future Femicide Census reports but are worthy of further exploration by researchers:

- Consistency and application of guidelines in sentencing (see ‘Pleas and sentencing’ section).
- Deaths of women in other circumstances such as suicides or in various forms of state detention.
- The relationship of ethnicity, nationality and immigration status to femicide.
- Deaths of women after sex-specific medical and cosmetic interventions<sup>85</sup>.
- Perpetrators’ previous histories of violence and use of the sex industry, including online pornography.
- Deaths of women following male violence where this may be a contributory factor even if no conviction is secured.
- Myths, public attitudes and media representations of femicide.

## Closing reflections

This reflection is placed last, as both a conclusion and a rallying cry.

It is a striking and well-documented fact that a high proportion of women are killed by their current or former male partner. The location of the killing is frequently the house where the victim had been or was still living with the perpetrator, or her own home after separation from him. It is also horrifying that 42% of femicides are overkillings in terms of multiple methods and excessive force, brutality and desecration used in and after the killing.

The Women’s Movement grew from women providing solidarity and support to other women subjected to male violence. This included not only developing essential refuge accommodation and support services, but also wider activities. These were based on principles of women-only spaces and solidarity, self-worth and respect between women. They included consciousness-raising, collective living, challenging heteronormativity and challenging the status quo around social norms.

Research and practice has found that women thrive in a supportive environment with other women and that this is crucial to women being able to rebuild their own lives after violence and abuse<sup>86</sup>. It has also found that the most significant factor in combatting male violence against women is the presence of autonomous women’s movements.<sup>87</sup>

To reduce, prevent and end femicide, the women’s movement and its allies must therefore be properly resourced, and the case for independent, specialist support including women-only spaces articulated and sustained. The census tells us that in our society men’s violence against women and girls is not only routine, but tolerated and normalised. Only the radical transformation of attitudes, law, policy and practice required across our society, with commitments and actions to match, will eradicate men’s fatal violence against women and girls.

84 See: Bindel, J. (2006), *Press for Change: A guide for journalists reporting on prostitution and trafficking* (CATW) <https://docplayer.net/28715385-Press-for-change-julie-bindel.html>; Marhia, N (2008), *Just Representation? Press reporting and the reality of rape* (Eaves) [http://i1.cmsfiles.com/eaves/2012/04/Just-Representation\\_press\\_reporting\\_the\\_reality\\_of\\_rape-d81249.pdf](http://i1.cmsfiles.com/eaves/2012/04/Just-Representation_press_reporting_the_reality_of_rape-d81249.pdf); Zero Tolerance: Advice for Journalists <https://www.zerotolerance.org.uk/work-journalists/>

85 Such interventions may include surgical procedures involving vaginal mesh, or cosmetic procedures such as breast or buttock implants.

86 WRC, *Why Women* (2018) <https://www.wrc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/WRC-Report-2018-FULL-24th-May-2018-1.pdf> and see Covington, S. (2002) ‘Helping Women Recover: Creating Gender-Responsive Treatment’ in *The Handbook of Addiction Treatment for Women: Theory and Practice* S.L.A. Straussner and S. Brown (Eds.), Jossey-Bass (2002).

87 Weldon, S.L., and Htun, M. (2013) ‘Feminist mobilisation and progressive policy change: why governments take action to combat violence against women’, *Gender & Development* Vol. 21, 2013 – Issue 2: Feminist solidarity and collective action.

# Glossary

CPS	Crown Prosecution Service
FOI request	Requests submitted under the framework of the Freedom of Information Act
IPCC	Independent Police Complaints Commission
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UN SRVAW	United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls

## Karen Ingala Smith

Karen Ingala Smith is the Chief Executive of **nia**, a London-based charity championing an integrated approach to addressing all forms of men's violence against women and girls. Karen has been recording and commemorating UK women killed by men since January 2012 in a campaign called Counting Dead Women.

## Women's Aid England

Women's Aid England is the national charity working to end domestic abuse against women and children. Over the past 44 years, Women's Aid England has been at the forefront of shaping and coordinating responses to domestic violence and abuse through practice, research and policy. We empower survivors by keeping their voices at the heart of our work, working with and for women and children by listening to them and responding to their needs. We are a federation of over 180 organisations that provide just under 300 local life-saving services to women and children across the country. We provide expert training, qualifications and consultancy to a range of agencies and professionals working with survivors or commissioning domestic abuse services, and award a National Quality Mark for services which meet our quality standards. We hold the largest national data set on domestic abuse and use research and evidence to inform all of our work. Our campaigns achieve change in policy, practice and awareness, encouraging healthy relationships and helping to build a future where domestic abuse is no longer tolerated. The 24-hour National Domestic Violence Helpline on 0808 2000 247 (run in partnership with Refuge) and our range of online services, which includes the Survivors' Forum, help hundreds of thousands of women and children every year.



women's aid  
until women & children are safe



delivering cutting edge services  
to end violence against women and children