



# Improving the collection of national administrative data on femicide in the EU

## Understanding femicide

The term 'femicide' was introduced to highlight the gendered nature and dynamics of power and control within acts of lethal violence against women, differentiating it from the neutral term 'homicide' – which simply refers to the killing of a person (Russell, 1977; Fitz-Gibbon and Walklate, 2023).

Over the past four decades, the growing recognition of femicide as a global issue became evident in international policy and in the introduction of femicide laws in many countries, which raised social awareness and improved statistics on women's killings <sup>(1)</sup> (Pasinato and Pierobom de Avila, 2023). However, what is defined and counted as femicide reflects unique political and social contexts (Fitz-Gibbon and Walklate, 2023). Therefore, while the term femicide evolved to be widely employed in policy, law and advocacy globally, what is meant by it in practice differs. This means that femicide types that are not defined remain hidden behind general homicide data.

## Femicide – a hidden phenomenon

In the EU, femicide data is primarily derived from homicide statistics, which mainly allow for the identification of femicides committed by intimate partners or family members. This approach underestimates the true extent of femicide, hiding gender-related killings outside these relationships, such as killings of women in prostitution. Emerging research highlights the need to expand the category of femicide to capture the full extent of women killed by men's violence, ensuring a more accurate understanding and response to the phenomenon (Fitz-Gibbon and Walklate, 2023). Without comprehensive definitions and standardised data collection methods, many femicides remain uncounted.

<sup>(1)</sup> For example, in 2015, UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences, Dubravka Simonovic, called for the establishment of a 'femicide watch'; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women General Recommendation No 35 on gender-based violence against women; and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime statistical framework for measuring femicide. Regional level examples include, the Istanbul Convention and the Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on combating violence against women and domestic violence. In Latin America, femicide is criminalised in 18 countries. More recently in the EU, Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Malta, and Italy have introduced specific laws on femicide.

## Measuring femicide in the EU

Given the lack of a common measurement framework in the EU, in 2021, the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) proposed a femicide classification system (EIGE, 2021a). This system not only maps the contexts, femicide types, potential indicators and variables for harmonised and comparable administrative data collection in the EU, but also emphasises gender motivation, the circumstances of the victim and the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator while also accounting for broader structural and societal factors.

The following figure presents EIGE's proposal of the different contexts in which femicide can manifest.

### Contexts of femicide

**Interpersonal.** Linked to unequal power relationships with a perpetrator, in an intimate relationship, in a family or in an outside relationship with an authority figure.

**Sexual.** Due to sexual violence or linked to acts that are sexual in nature.

**Societal.** Linked to the violation of traditional gender roles, sexual norms and cultural beliefs, and discrimination. Examples include honour killings, deaths related to female genital mutilation or killings of transgender women.

**Criminal.** Committed in relation to gang-related and organised crime activities, such as trafficking in human beings, migrant smuggling or drug trafficking.

**Political.** Linked to groups opposing gender equality, to state violence or to the complicity of authorities.

### Expanding the contexts of femicide

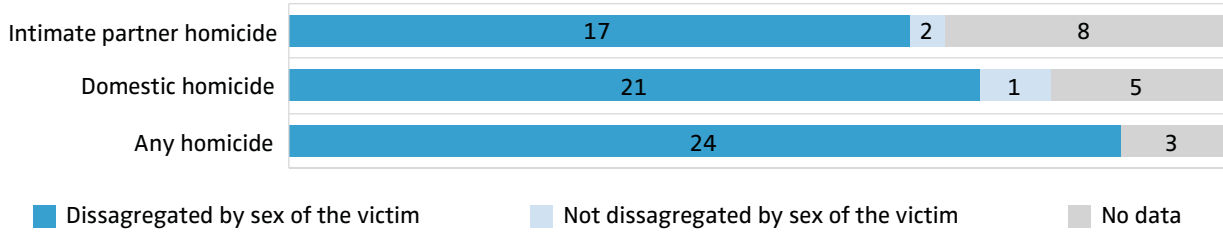
Recent literature has expanded the conceptual framework of femicide to include other critical contexts. Legal contexts, for example, highlight how women may be killed with impunity (such as the longstanding crisis in Ciudad Juárez (Godínez Leal, 2008)) or face heightened risks in jurisdictions where assisted dying is legal, with emerging evidence from Canada suggesting specific dangers for older and disabled women (The Other Half, 2024). Additionally, scholars have proposed an individual or personal context of femicide, encompassing women who die by suicide or suffer premature death due to the chronic impacts of male violence. These interpretations reflect growing recognition of the structural and systemic dimensions that underpin gender-related killings.

## Number of women killed in the EU

Between 2023 and 2024, EIGE conducted an EU-wide collection of national administrative data on intimate partner violence and domestic violence (EIGE et al., 2024).

Across the EU, not all Member States systematically collect or report data on the killings of women, which limits the availability of comprehensive information. As part of the data collection, 17 Member States shared data on women victims of intimate partner homicide, 21 provided data on domestic homicide and 24 submitted data on any homicide involving women, covering the period from 2014 to 2022.

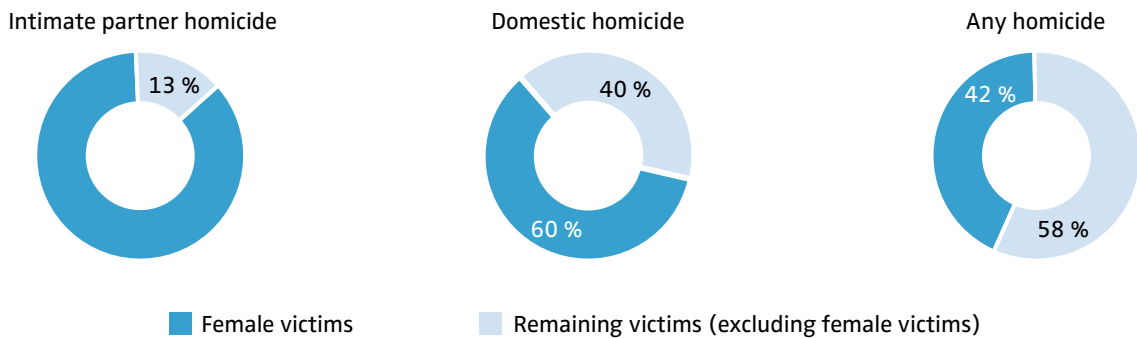
**Figure 1. | Number of Member States that shared data relating to victims and/or offences of homicide (2014–2022)**



Source: EIGE’s 2023–2024 data collection exercise on intimate partner violence and domestic violence.

Women are disproportionately affected by intimate partner homicide and domestic homicide recorded by police. In 2022, women represented most victims of intimate partner homicide (87 %) and domestic homicide (60 %), but only 42 % of victims of homicide by any perpetrator. The proportion of female victims of intimate partner homicide and domestic homicide highlights both the need for data collection disaggregated by relationship type and the need for a specific term, femicide, to capture these killings.

**Figure 2. | Average proportion of women victims of homicide in 13 Member States (2022)<sup>(2)</sup>**



Source: EIGE’s 2023–2024 data collection exercise on intimate partner violence and domestic violence.

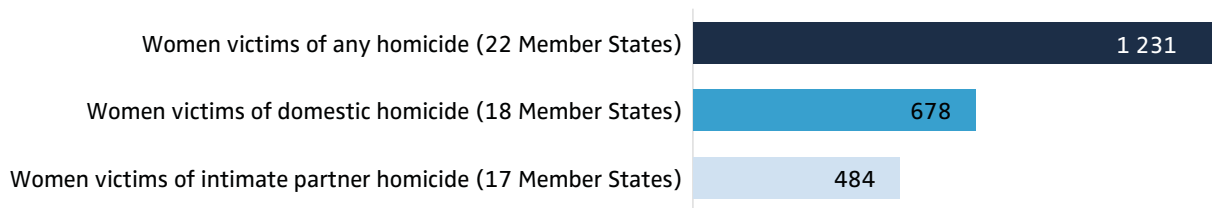
These were the only EU Member States that submitted data on female and total victims of homicide disaggregated by relationship for the year 2022.

### Femicide in 2022: weekly toll across the EU

In 2022, police in 22 Member States recorded 1 231 women victims of homicide. Of these, 678 women were killed in the context of domestic violence, as reported by 18 Member States – an average of nearly 13 women every week. Within this group, 484 women were killed by their intimate partners, according to data from 17 Member States, amounting to almost 10 women every week.

<sup>(2)</sup> Based on data from 13 Member States: Czechia, Germany, Ireland, Greece, Spain, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Slovenia, Finland and Sweden.

**Figure 3. | Number of recorded women victims of intimate partner homicide, domestic homicide and any homicide (2022)**



Source: EIGE’s 2023–2024 data collection exercise on intimate partner violence and domestic violence.

### Intimate partner femicide

Between 2014 and 2022, data collection efforts across Member States have shown notable progress in the measurement of femicide, particularly in disaggregating data by sex and the victim–perpetrator relationship. While in 2014 only 12 Member States were able to provide such detailed data, by 2019 this number had increased to 16. Over this nine-year period, a total of 4 217 women were recorded as having been killed by their intimate partners. Despite improvements in data quality, the figures have remained disturbingly stable year-on-year, underscoring the persistent and entrenched nature of intimate partner femicide across the region.

### Domestic femicide

Similar progress has also been made in recording femicides committed within domestic relationships. In 2014, 13 Member States were able to provide such data; by 2022, this number had increased to 20. Between 2014 and 2022, police recorded a total of 6 903 female victims of domestic femicide across reporting Member States. However, challenges in data collection remain.

Firstly, within the 20 Member States that provide data on domestic relationships, two still cannot disaggregate by the specific relationship, meaning their data on domestic femicide includes both intimate partner and other family-related killings. Secondly, two Member States are still unable to disaggregate data by the sex of the victim and the perpetrator.

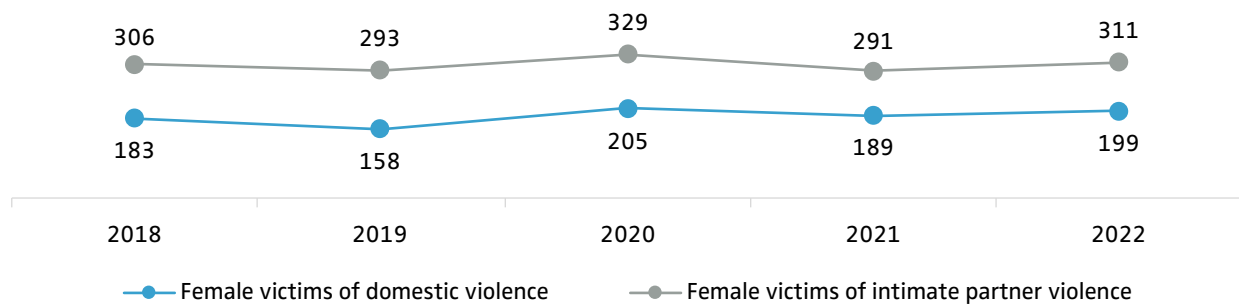
Despite these ongoing limitations, data from 17 Member States (with some gaps across years) indicates a total of 8 562 persons killed in the domestic sphere during this period, highlighting both the scale of the issue and the urgent need for more consistent and detailed data collection practices.

Data was deemed comparable only in 11 Member States, as only 11 Member States provided relationship and sex-disaggregated data for each year from 2018 to 2022. This data shows that, between 2018 and 2022, police recorded 1 530 women victims of intimate partner homicide<sup>(3)</sup>. During this same period, 934 women were killed by domestic perpetrators in these Member States<sup>(4)</sup>.

<sup>(3)</sup> Based on data from 11 Member States: Germany, Spain, Croatia, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia and Finland.

<sup>(4)</sup> The number of women victims of domestic homicides excludes the data on intimate partner homicides.

**Figure 4. | Number of female victims of intimate partner homicide and domestic homicide recorded by police in 11 Member States (2018–2022)**



Source: EIGE's 2023–2024 data collection exercise on intimate partner violence and domestic violence.

## Improving the availability of data in the EU

### Harmonising EU standards and procedures

Article 44 of [Directive \(EU\) 2024/1385](#) on combating violence against women and domestic violence establishes that Member States shall work with EIGE to collect data on violence against women and domestic violence and adhere to common standards on counting units, counting rules and the classification of criminal offences. Regarding femicide, Article 44 specifically refers to collecting data on 'the number of victims who have been killed due to violence against women or domestic violence.'

Despite numerous calls for action at the international and EU levels, femicide still remains under-reported and misclassified (EIGE, 2021b)<sup>(5)</sup>. The collection of national and regional-level administrative data on femicide is necessary to understand the scale of this phenomenon in Member States (EIGE, 2021c).

Accurate data on femicide raises awareness and increases political attention, helping policymakers develop more effective strategies for prevention, early intervention and response efforts. It helps identify victims most at risk, develop targeted laws and policies to address the underlying factors leading to femicide and ensure that such cases are effectively investigated and prosecuted.

**Most Member States have not yet established common legal definitions for femicide.** This hampers the measurement of femicide, which becomes hidden under general homicide statistics (EIGE, 2021b).

A growing number of Member States are now providing data disaggregated by sex and the victim–perpetrator relationship. These advancements are crucial in enhancing the ability to identify and analyse femicide cases more effectively. Nonetheless, there is still potential to further enhance data collection, for instance, by including descriptive variables related to the circumstances of the killings, which are essential for a more comprehensive understanding of femicide.

Accurate recognition, identification and recording of femicide cases require the collection of key descriptive variables. These include the victim's sex and age, marital status, race and ethnicity, migration status, the nature of the victim–perpetrator relationship, and relevant contextual factors such as alcohol use and any known history of intimate partner violence. Literature also highlights several risk factors associated with femicide, including a prior history of abuse, cohabitation rather than marriage, significant age differences between partners, periods of

<sup>(5)</sup> See for instance the UN femicide watch initiative (<https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-violence-against-women/femicide-watch-initiative>) or the European Cooperation in Science and Technology action 'Femicide across Europe' (<https://www.cost.eu/actions/IS1206/>).

separation or estrangement, the perpetrator's unemployment and issues related to substance abuse or mental illness (EIGE, 2021b). Including such supplementary information in femicide data collection enhances the development of effective risk assessment tools and supports the evaluation of current prevention policies and interventions.

Furthermore, there is a lack of standardised methods for collecting and categorising femicide data. While all homicides or killings are recorded, differences arise in counting rules, classification criteria and the identification of gender-related motivations behind killings of women. Data suggests that women are more likely to be killed in private spaces, but femicides by perpetrators outside the family are often under-reported. These can include femicides by a non-partner outside of the home or sexual femicides. This indicates that national data collection systems may be misclassifying such cases, limiting the visibility of certain types of gender-related killings.

## Actions to define and measure femicide

In recent years, there has been significant progress across the EU in defining and measuring femicide. More Member States are moving towards criminalising femicide or improving data collection efforts, demonstrating a growing commitment to addressing gender-related killings.



In **Belgium**, the parliament adopted the #StopFemicide law in 2023 (State Secretary for Gender Equality, Equal Opportunities and Diversity, 2023). The law includes measures to produce official femicide statistics accompanied by annual reports and biannual recommendations for policymakers, along with measures to protect victims of gender-based violence.



In **Cyprus**, amendments in 2022 to the Law on Violence Against Women (2021) recognise femicide as a crime distinct from homicide and as a form of violence against women (Pavlou and Shakou, 2022).



In **Croatia**, the government announced changes to the Croatian Criminal Code in 2023, which entered into force in 2024. These amendments introduce femicide as a special criminal offence (Tesija, 2023).



In **Malta**, a legal definition of femicide was introduced through amendments to the Criminal Code of the Republic of Malta in 2022. In accordance with the criminal code, a homicide is considered femicide if a woman is killed due to intimate partner or domestic violence, honour, gender-based motives or sexual violence (Walkey et al., 2022).



In **Italy**, a draft law, which establishes femicide as a distinct and separate criminal offense in criminal law, was accepted by the government in 2025. Compared to homicide, femicide will be punishable by a more severe sentence<sup>(6)</sup>.



In **Spain**, the Government Delegation against Gender-based Violence established a femicide classification system in 2021. Spain became the first country in Europe to officially measure and disseminate data on the prevalence of different forms of femicide (Ministry of Equality in Spain, 2022).

Between 2022 and 2024, Spain recorded 72 femicides committed by men outside of intimate relationships. Of these, 60% were classified as family femicides, 26% as social femicides (following a non-sexual assault committed by a non-partner or non-family member), 13% as sexual femicides (committed by a non-partner), and 1% as vicarious femicides<sup>(7)</sup>.

In addition, Spain records all minors killed as a result of any form of violence against women, 13 such cases were documented between 2022 and 2024.

<sup>(6)</sup> Statement by President Meloni on femicide as a crime in its own right, available at <https://www.governo.it/en/articolo/statement-president-meloni-femicide-crime-its-own-right/27907>.

<sup>(7)</sup> Vicarious femicide is understood as the murder of an adult woman by a man as a means to cause harm or damage to another woman on the basis of gender. <https://violenciagenero.igualdad.gob.es/violenciaEnCifras/victimasmortales/notas-metodologicas/>

## Recommendations to improve national administrative data collection on femicide

### Recommendations for the EU

- Ensure Member States work with EIGE to collect national data on femicide as part of Article 44 of Directive (EU) 2024/1385.
- Uphold commitments to the Istanbul Convention and ensure Member States comply with Article 11 on data collection.

### Recommendations for Member States

- Adopt legal definitions recognising that femicide is a distinct form of violence.
- Adapt data recording systems to include key breakdowns on sex, age and the victim–perpetrator relationship.
- Public bodies should analyse the gender dimension of femicide, along with its causes and consequences.
- Ensure coordination between administrations, equality bodies, civil society and universities to collect and analyse femicide data, and issue policy and practice recommendations.
- Support continuous data collection and capacity building through dedicated funding.
- Report femicide data annually ensuring reports are publicly available.
- Promote integrated data collection that links gender-related killings to other forms of violence against women, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of femicide within the broader context of gender-based violence.
- Collect data on all forms of femicide in line with EIGE's classification system to ensure a more complete picture of the phenomenon.

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**European Institute for Gender Equality**

Gedimio pr. 16  
LT-01103 Vilnius  
LITHUANIA

[eige.europa.eu](https://eige.europa.eu)

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