



Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability

Observatoire canadien du féminicide pour la justice et la responsabilisation

# #CallItFemicide

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



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Humanities Research  
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 CAN\_Femicide

 cfoja@uoguelph.ca

 CAN.Femicide

<https://femicideincanada.ca>



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### Report prepared by:

Myrna Dawson, Danielle Sutton, Michelle Carrigan, and Valérie Grand'Maison

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Silent Witness New Brunswick  
Silent Witness Nova Scotia  
Status of Women Council of the Northwest Territories

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



## Foreword

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The recent call by the United Nations for countries to create femicide observatories is a significant and urgent signal. Despite research done to date, and advances made, this issue remains a very serious and critical issue for women and girls in Canada and around the world.

The CFOJA was established to respond to this call. Its work is supported and strengthened by collaborations among researchers and an advisory panel of experts from across the country. This ensures that the work is both grounded in accurate statistical data and accompanied by a reliable and accessible presentation of information in a way that best reflects the realities of the women and girls who are killed by violence in Canada.

This was also the methodology undertaken several decades ago by the Women We Honour Action Committee when it conducted the original intimate femicide research in Ontario. This report is a testament to that earlier research and activism because those findings remain accurate and unchallenged. They have also created a solid foundation for ongoing research today.

Since this original study, much more research has been done on femicide, but little appears to have changed when it comes to how it occurs and why. Progress on prevention and on accountability has been slow to evolve. We have yet to meet the basic standard required to prevent these killings or to hold perpetrators accountable in a manner that would reflect widespread condemnation of these crimes.

This report contains critical information that builds on the earlier and ongoing work on femicide in Canada and internationally by highlighting current and emerging trends and issues that require further investigation and monitoring in the coming years.

We continue this work because we believe that femicide is preventable.

### **Maria Crawford**

Member, CFOJA Expert Advisory Panel

Member, Women We Honour Action Committee

Co-Author, *Woman Killing: Intimate Femicide in Ontario, 1974-1990* & *Woman Killing: Intimate Femicide in Ontario, 1991-1994*

### **Myrna Dawson**

Director, CFOJA

Member, CFOJA Expert Advisory Panel

Co-Author, *Woman Killing: Intimate Femicide in Ontario, 1991-1994*



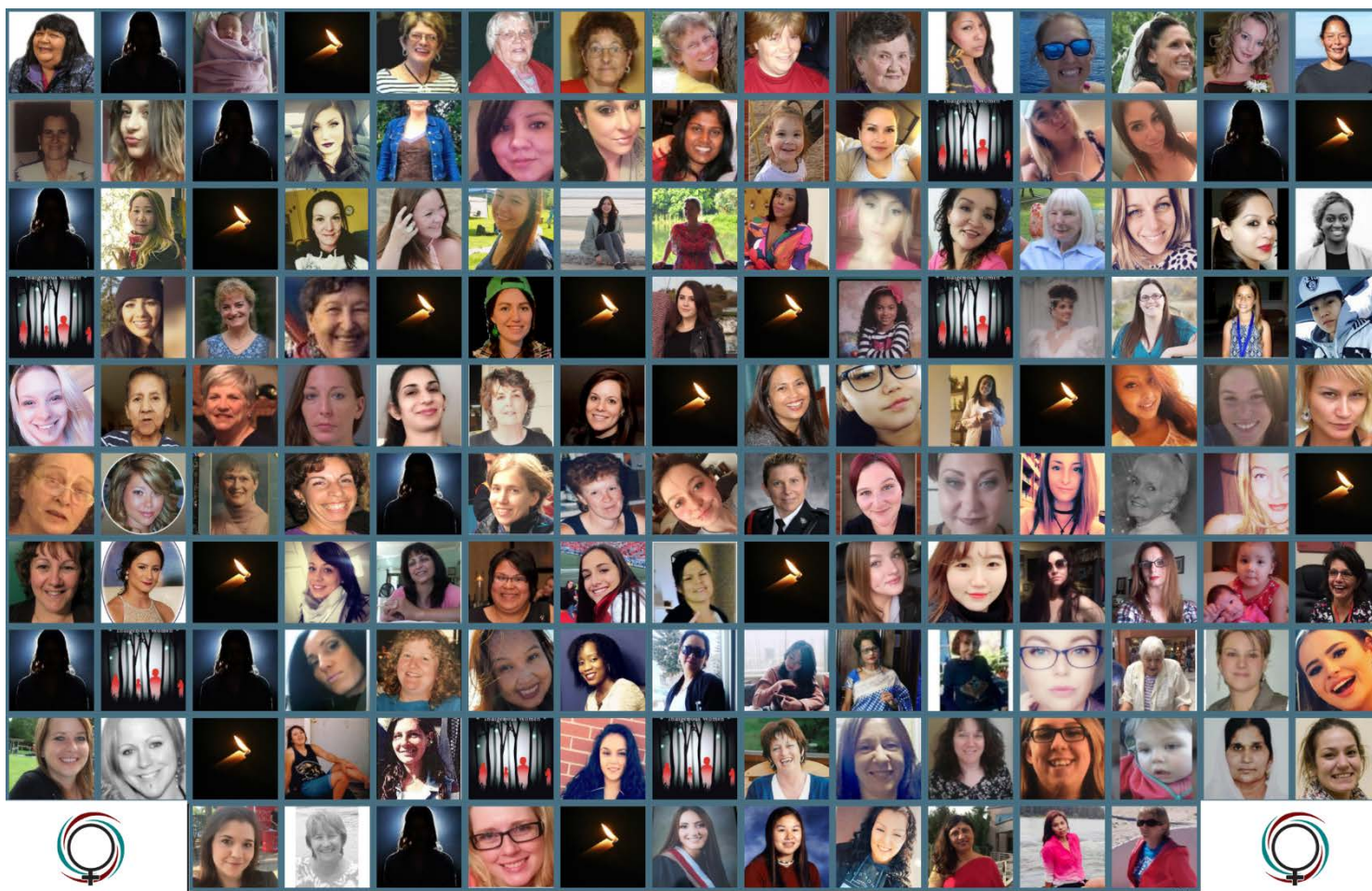
## Dedication

In 2018, 148 women and girls' lives were ended by violence. This report is dedicated to their memory, to the memory of all those women and girls who died due to violence perpetrated against them, and to the family and friends that the women and girls have left behind both to mourn and to celebrate their lives.

Beginning on November 25, 2018 - the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women - and continuing throughout the 16 Days of Activism, the Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability remembered each woman and girl who was killed by violence in Canada using #RememberMe. The image below represents all women and girls remembered.

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

### Femicide is Preventable!





## Executive Summary

The *Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability* (CFOJA) is the sole Canadian initiative responding to the United Nations call to establish femicide observatories<sup>1</sup> to more comprehensively and accurately document gender-related killings of women and girls or ‘femicide’. The CFOJA mandate is to establish a visible and national focus on femicide in Canada by: (1) documenting femicides as they occur in Canada; and, (2) monitoring state, legal and social responses to these killings. This is the CFOJA’s inaugural one-year report focusing on women and girls killed by violence in Canada from January 1 to December 31, 2018.

**Section I** discusses the evolution of the term ‘femicide’ internationally and in the Canadian context. For the latter, three key turning points are highlighted: (1) the mass femicide at École Polytechnique, Université of Montréal in 1989; (2) early research on intimate femicide in Ontario by the *Women We Honour Action Committee*; and (3) grassroots initiatives that drew national and international attention to missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. The section concludes with a description of the definitional parameters for femicide adopted by the CFOJA.

**Section II** focuses on all women and girls killed by violence in Canada in 2018 which were identified through media reports. Some highlights are as follows:

- In 2018, 148 women and girls were killed by violence in Canada. On average, every 2.5 days one woman or girl is killed in this country – a consistent trend for four decades.
- The highest rate of killing of women and girls was in Nunavut followed by the Yukon, New Brunswick and Manitoba. The lowest rate was in Quebec followed by British Columbia and Nova Scotia.
- Indigenous women and girls were overrepresented as victims, comprising about five percent of the population in Canada, but 36 percent of those women and girls who were killed by violence.

- Approximately 34 percent of women and girls were killed in rural areas whereas only about 16 percent of the population in Canada lives in rural areas.
- Women and girls aged 25-34 years were overrepresented as victims: 27 percent of those killed, but only 14 percent of the population.
- The most common method used when a woman or girl was killed was shooting (34%) followed by stabbing (28%) and beating (24%)
- Approximately 11 percent of the accused committed suicide following the killing – all of whom were male.
- Where an accused has been identified, 91% are male accused, consistent with national and international patterns.

**Section III** focuses on cases involving the killing of women and girls by male accused. Three types of femicide are focused upon in particular: (1) intimate femicide; (2) familial femicide; and (3) non-intimate femicide (i.e. perpetrated by male acquaintances and strangers). This section also introduces five gender-based motives/indicators for femicide: (1) misogyny; (2) sexual violence; (3) coercive-controlling behaviours, including jealousy and stalking; (4) separation/estrangement; and (5) overkill. Some highlights related to the most common type of femicide – intimate femicide – are as follows:

- Like global patterns, the home is the most dangerous place for women and girls with 53% killed by male partners and another 13 percent killed by other male family members. The remainder were killed by male strangers (21%) or acquaintances (13%).
- Intimate femicide victims in both Ontario (45%) and Alberta (16%) are overrepresented slightly relative to the proportion of Canadian women living in those jurisdictions (39% and 11% respectively). Intimate femicide victims in Quebec (10%) were underrepresented compared to the proportion of women living in that province (23%).
- A higher proportion of intimate femicide involved visible minority women compared to their representation in the population in contrast to the total sample of women and

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



girls killed where they were underrepresented as victims when information on race/ethnicity was known.

- Examining relationship status, the largest proportion of victim and accused were common-law partners (38%), followed closely by those who were legally married (36%) and then dating (27%). One in five of the intimate femicide victims were separated from the accused (22%).
- Like the total sample, shooting was the most common method in intimate femicides (35%).
- A higher proportion of accused committed suicide following the intimate femicide (27% compared to 11% of the total sample of women and girls killed by violence).

**Section IV** discusses some current and emerging research priorities for informed prevention. We focus first on situational factors that have emerged as more common in the 2018 cases: (1) intimacy; (2) rurality; (3) firearms; and (4) collateral victims. We then turn to various socio-demographic factors that were common in the 2018 cases or appeared in cases that highlighted groups of victims that may be more at risk of femicide, but for whom there has been little research attention. These include: (1) Indigenous women and girls; (2) immigrant women and girls; (3) older women; and (4) women and girls with disabilities.

**Section V** discusses future research planned by the CFOJA that will focus on the broader community- or societal-level factors that research has shown can work to facilitate, or prevent, male violence against women, including problematic attitudes, beliefs and stereotypes that impede prevention efforts. The three arenas examined will be: (1) the media; (2) the criminal justice system, particularly the courts; and, finally, (3) the legislative and policy contexts. All three arenas can play a powerful role in challenging, or entrenching, problematic attitudes, beliefs and stereotypes that work to perpetuate and maintain men's violence against women and girls.

**Section VI** remembers all women and girls killed by violence in Canada in 2018. We include quotes throughout the report from

family members and friends impacted by their deaths as one way of showing their lost potential and ongoing impacts on those they leave behind due to femicide.

The CFOJA research is ongoing. Early in 2019, we will complete data collection for women and girls killed by violence in Canada in 2016 and 2017. We will continue to document femicides of women and girls in our country for earlier years. We also continue to collect information on male homicides for comparative purposes. Therefore, future reports will aim: (1) to describe trends and patterns in femicide over time; (2) to compare the characteristics and circumstances surrounding femicide to that of homicide involving male victims; and (3) to identify and monitor current and emerging themes in femicide, including priorities for research and prevention.





## Introduction

At least 10,495 women and girls have been killed by violence in Canada since 1961 when official data began to be collected.<sup>2</sup> The deaths of countless other women and girls in our country have gone unrecorded in official statistics because their deaths have never been officially designated as a homicide, often despite family and friends knowing that they were killed by violence and by whom. Many other women and girls remain missing – for days, months, years – and are often presumed dead, or they have been killed, and their deaths have not been discovered. The deaths of all these women and girls – recorded or not – represent a small, yet crucial, group of those victims experiencing violence. They provide the unequivocal knowledge that most women and girls experience violence perpetrated primarily by men *because* they were women and girls.

This is the inaugural one-year report of the *Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability* (hereafter referred to as the CFOJA). The CFOJA was launched on Dec. 6, 2017 by the Centre for the Study of Social and Legal Responses to Violence ([www.violenceresearch.ca](http://www.violenceresearch.ca)) at the University of Guelph. The overall mandate of the CFOJA is to establish a visible and national focus on femicide in Canada. There are two overarching objectives: (1) To document femicides as they occur in Canada; and, (2) To monitor state, legal and social responses to these killings.<sup>3</sup> Addressing the first objective, this report focuses on women and girls killed by violence in Canada from January 1 to December 31, 2018, drawing from media reports.

### *Why focus on the killings of women and girls?*

The following points underscore why women and girls are the core focus of the CFOJA:

1. Global findings show that women and girls continue to bear the largest burden of gender-based violence and lethal

victimization which is attributed to the historical and ongoing impacts of entrenched gender stereotypes and inequality (UNODC, 2018).

2. When women and girls are killed by violence, it is almost always in the context of their intimate relationships with men and/or the result of men's sexual violence. For example, the World Health Organization (2002) emphasized that women bear the greatest burden of intimate partner violence worldwide (WHO, 2002). As such, the killing of women is significantly different from the killing of men, which is more commonly the result of male-on-male violence by acquaintances and strangers, a consistent finding documented nationally (David, 2017) and internationally (UNODC, 2013).
3. The phenomenon of femicide, what is also referred to as gender-related killings of women and girls, has been defined by the United Nations *Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences* (UN SRVAW) as the "most extreme form of violence against women and the most violent manifestation against women and their inequality" (UN General Assembly, 2016). Consequently, the UN SRVAW issued a call for all governments to set up a femicide watch or observatory to collect data as a crucial tool for the development of effective strategies to address this "serious human rights violation" (ACUNS, 2017: 1).

Femicide is, therefore, recognized worldwide as a distinct form of killing that warrants its own label and its own examination. It is also a type of killing for which international agencies have recently concluded that, globally, there has been "no tangible progress in both protecting and saving the lives" of women and girls killed by violence in recent years (UNODC, 2018: 56).

The *Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability* is the sole Canadian initiative responding to the international call to establish femicide observatories that can more comprehensively and accurately document these killings.

<sup>2</sup> Number for 2018 compiled by CFOJA. The number for 1961-1974 from *Homicide in Canada: A Statistical Synopsis* (1976). The number for 1975-2017 from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=3510007001>.

<sup>3</sup> For more information on the activities of the CFOJA, please visit <https://www.femicideincanada.ca/home/what>.



As part of this, an overarching goal of the CFOJA is to determine if there has been any tangible progress in our own country in protecting and saving the lives of women and girls.

## Structure of this report

Despite growing international recognition of femicide as a social, legal, public health and human rights problem, it remains a relatively new concept with growing visibility and recognition. To provide the broader context for the work of the CFOJA, **Section I** will discuss the evolution of the term ‘femicide’ internationally and in the Canadian context, concluding with the definitional parameters adopted by the CFOJA. The goal of this section is to increase public understanding about the importance of examining femicide as a distinct phenomenon.

As will be learned in this first section, the majority of femicide research has been inclusive when defining such acts, typically incorporating one of two approaches: (1) a focus on *all* killings of women and girls or “female homicide victims”; or (2) a focus on what is commonly perceived as the most obvious gender-motivated type of femicide – intimate femicide (Dawson & Gartner, 1998; McFarlane et al., 2002; Stout, 1992; UNODC, 2011, 2013). Both approaches are incorporated in this report.

Beginning with the broader approach, **Section II** focuses on the killing of all women and girls killed by violence in Canada in 2018 whose names we were able to collect from media reports.<sup>4</sup> A key reason for doing so is that it is often difficult to know at first if a woman or girl has been killed ‘because’ of their gender. Therefore, research often includes all killings of women and girls and works to differentiate those influenced by gendered contexts and motives from those that are not. Using information from media reports, this section describes temporal and geographic distributions as well as characteristics of the victims, the accused, and the relationships they shared, if any. The situational elements of the killings as well as the status of the case are also described.

**Section III** focuses on cases involving the killing of women and girls by male accused.<sup>5</sup> We begin this section by describing the

various relationships that women and girls shared with their male accused. This is followed by a more in-depth discussion of *intimate femicide* which occurs in the context of women’s intimate relationships with men and represents one of the most common types of femicide in Canada (David, 2017; Dawson, 2016a) and internationally (Sarmiento et al., 2014; UNODC, 2013). Also occurring in the context of intimate relationships, we next discuss women and girls allegedly killed by other male family members, killings referred to as *familial femicide* (Russell & Harmes, 2001), some of which may be connected to intimate femicide. Finally, we turn to a discussion of women and girls killed *outside* of their intimate relationships with men, referred to as *non-intimate femicide* which includes women and girls killed by friends, acquaintances, and strangers (Sarmiento et al., 2014).

Throughout this section, we seek to broaden public understandings of femicide by discussing some well-recognized gender-based motives/indicators for femicide. We draw from a comprehensive protocol that was developed in Latin America to aid in that region’s investigation of gender-related killings of women and girls; as such, we first briefly summarize their efforts. We focus on incidents which most clearly demonstrate gender-based motives/indicators, primarily drawing from media coverage of cases prior to 2018 in which perpetrators have already been convicted. We will continue to monitor 2018 cases to assess the role played by gender-based motives/indicators. However, we also recognize that societal apathy around the killings of women and girls allows femicide to continue. Therefore, we acknowledge that even incidents without clear gender-based motives/indicators, which subsequently may not be classified as a ‘femicide,’ could still be linked to, and result from, social and cultural contexts in which the lives of some women and girls are less valued.

**Sections IV and V** highlight some current and emerging priorities for femicide research and prevention. **Section IV** identifies key research priorities that emerged from the 2018 data. We focus, first, on situational factors that have emerged as more common in femicides: (1) intimacy; (2) rurality; (3) firearms; and (4) collateral victims. Next, we turn to socio-demographic factors that were common in the 2018 cases, or highlighted groups of

<sup>4</sup> As will be discussed below, comparing our number for 2018 to figures documented by Statistics Canada in previous years, it is believed that we have captured most, if not all the ‘officially’ known incidents of women and girls being killed by violence as discussed in more detail in Section II.

<sup>5</sup> ‘Accused’ will be used throughout the report. While charges have been laid in most cases, investigations are ongoing.



victims that may be more at risk of femicide, but for whom there has been little research attention. These include: (1) Indigenous women and girls; (2) immigrant women and girls; (3) older women; and (4) women and girls with disabilities.

**Section V** discusses the three key arenas in which the CFOJA will begin to examine the above priorities and related research questions in the Canadian context. These arenas include the media, the criminal justice system, specifically the courts, as well as provincial/territorial legislative and policy contexts. Only when we address the historical and ongoing challenges in these arenas will large-scale societal, community, and individual efforts at prevention of violence against women and girls be effective. That is because a key challenge to prevention efforts to date remains entrenched and harmful attitudes, beliefs and stereotypes that represent key contributors that work to facilitate and maintain violence against women and girls in its various forms (e.g. Flood & Pease, 2009; UNODC, 2018). The media, the criminal justice system, and government responses to violence against women and girls are three of the most transparent sites with which to examine the existence of, and role played by, problematic attitudes, beliefs and stereotypes when responding to violence.

**Section VI** remembers all women and girls killed by violence in Canada in 2018 (see <https://femicideincanada.ca/2018report>). On page 6, we dedicated the inaugural report to these women and girls as well as the thousands who have been killed before them in our country. We list the names of the 2018 victims that we were able to gather at the end of the report with the hope that readers will, by then, have a better understanding of their life and death. For some victims listed, it was not possible to remember them by name because they have not been identified and/or their names have not been released to the media. In

addition to remembering them in this section, we include quotes throughout the report (*and beginning below*) from family members and friends impacted by their deaths as one way of showing their lost potential lost and ongoing impacts on those they leave behind due to femicide. All quotes have been taken from media reports, and names and identifiers removed. These words can also represent all women and girls whose potential has been lost to Canadian society due to their deaths.

The CFOJA research is ongoing. Early in 2019, we will complete data collection for women and girls killed by violence in Canada in 2016 and 2017. We will continue to document femicides of women and girls in our country for earlier years. We also continue to collect information on male homicides for comparative purposes. Therefore, future reports will aim: (1) to describe trends and patterns in femicide over time; (2) to compare the characteristics and circumstances surrounding femicide to homicides involving male victims; and (3) to identify and monitor current and emerging themes in femicide, including priorities for research and prevention.

By remembering these women and girls and uncovering as much as we can about their deaths, we hope to contribute to a better understanding of the circumstances that lead to their killings, many of which are femicide. In turn, we hope to contribute to the growing international recognition that femicide continues to be a serious and persistent social, legal, public health, and human rights problem. By monitoring, and systematically examining, social and state responses to their killings, the CFOJA also seeks to increase transparency and accountability and, in turn, improve the way Canadian society frames and responds to femicide. In doing so, we hope to raise national and international awareness about femicide as an issue that requires attention in our own country and worldwide.

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*"It's really, really hard because just kind of how she died. It's something that no family wants to go through. She was an innocent person taken advantage of. She was probably so scared, so that's kind of why we're so upset. My family is absolutely heartbroken."*

*"My sister was the kind of person who would not admit defeat. She would defend just about anyone. The kindest kind of human. She supported all of her family and friends in trying times and helped people any way she could."*

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## SECTION I:

# The history and evolution of the term ‘femicide’

### *International context*

The term “femicide” was introduced publicly in the modern age<sup>6</sup> by violence against women feminist pioneer, expert and activist, Diana Russell, at the *International Tribunal of Crimes Against Women* to bring attention to violence and discrimination against women (Russell & Van de Ven, 1976). Its definitional parameters have changed somewhat over time, however. For example, in its earlier iterations, femicide was defined as “the murder of women by men motivated by hatred, contempt, pleasure, or a sense of ownership of women” (Caputi & Russell, 1990) and “the misogynistic killings of women by men” (Radford & Russell, 1992). More recently, this definition evolved to “the killing of one or more females by one or more males because they are female” as stated by Russell in her introductory speech to the *United Nations Symposium on Femicide* in November 2012 (Russell, 2012). At this event, the Vienna Declaration on Femicide was signed by 150 individuals, including various ambassadors and 10 Member States.<sup>7</sup>

Emphasizing that femicide comprises the killing of women and girls because of their gender, the following forms were identified specifically at this 2012 symposium:<sup>8</sup>

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

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

<sup>6</sup> The first documented use of the term ‘femicide’ was in a book by John Corry (1801) called *A Satirical View of London at the Commencement of the Nineteenth Century* where it was used to refer to the killing of a woman.

<sup>7</sup> See: <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/ngos/DCN5-Symposium-on-femicide-a-global-issue-that-demands-action.html>.

<sup>8</sup> This list is not exhaustive and has been expanded by others. For example, while killing because of race or racism is not captured directly above, others including the CFOJA include ‘racist femicide’ which refers to killings that occur because of hate or rejection of a woman’s ethnic or racial origins, real or perceived, or her genetic features (see also <https://www.femicideincanada.ca/about/types>).





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

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

The former UN SRVAW, Rashida Manjoo, was instrumental in developing a knowledge base around the topic of femicide and identifying various types of femicide. The current UN SRVAW, Dubravka Šimonović, has continued with this focus, identifying femicide prevention as an immediate priority and emphasizing the pressing need to collect comparable data on femicide that can be disaggregated by victim-perpetrator relationship, age and race/ethnicity of victims, as well as prosecution and punishment outcomes for perpetrators. To this end, the current UN SRVAW called upon all countries to establish femicide watches/observatories as a key mechanism for the systematic and detailed collection of data on femicide to inform the development of more effective prevention initiatives and to guide knowledge-based policymaking.<sup>9</sup>

Such watches or initiatives existed in some countries before this call (e.g. the United Kingdom,<sup>10</sup> Australia,<sup>11</sup> and Mexico<sup>12</sup>) and, most recently, on a regional basis (European Observatory on Femicide<sup>13</sup>).

## Canadian context

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

<sup>9</sup> See: <https://acuns.org/femicide-volume-vii-establishing-a-femicide-watch-in-every-country/>.

<sup>10</sup> See: <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/what-we-do/campaigning-and-influencing/femicide-census/> and <https://kareningalasmith.com/counting-dead-women/>

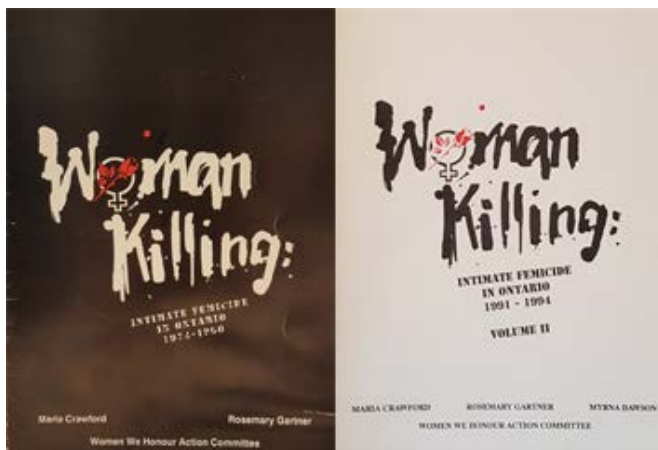
<sup>11</sup> See: <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/counting-dead-women-the-project-keeping-toll-of-australia-s-hidden-epidemic> and Cullen et al. (2019).

<sup>12</sup> See: <http://femicide-watch.org/players/national-observatory-femicide-mexico> and <https://justiceinmexico.org/femicidesinmexico/>.

<sup>13</sup> See: <http://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2018-03-20/education/The-European-Observatory-on-Femicide-launched-in-Malta-6736186593> and Weil et al. (2018).

dead and another 10 were injured before Lépine turned the gun on himself.

The gendered nature of this attack was largely overlooked by the media, however. In the aftermath of the killing, many people described Lépine's actions as the work of a madman, disconnecting the violence from his hateful and misogynistic attitudes toward women. In short, it was not acknowledged that he targeted his victims *because they were women* thereby largely ignoring the context of his actions. Regardless, these killings serve as a clear example of what femicide means or, in this case, mass femicide and the role of misogyny in such deaths. Since then, every year on December 6, Canadians come together to honour the victims of this mass femicide as well as other femicide victims in a *National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women*.<sup>14</sup>



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

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

Since then, this early ground-breaking, feminist-inspired research has been cited frequently in publications internationally. It also served as the impetus for the ongoing research project, *Femicide in Ontario*, which, in turn, is the core foundation of research being conducted by the CFOJA (Dawson, 2018). Where possible, data from this research will be used to provide some historical context to the 2018 trends and patterns discussed in this report.<sup>15</sup>

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

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*"She was a beautiful person, inside and out. She was just this amazing gift to all of our people."*

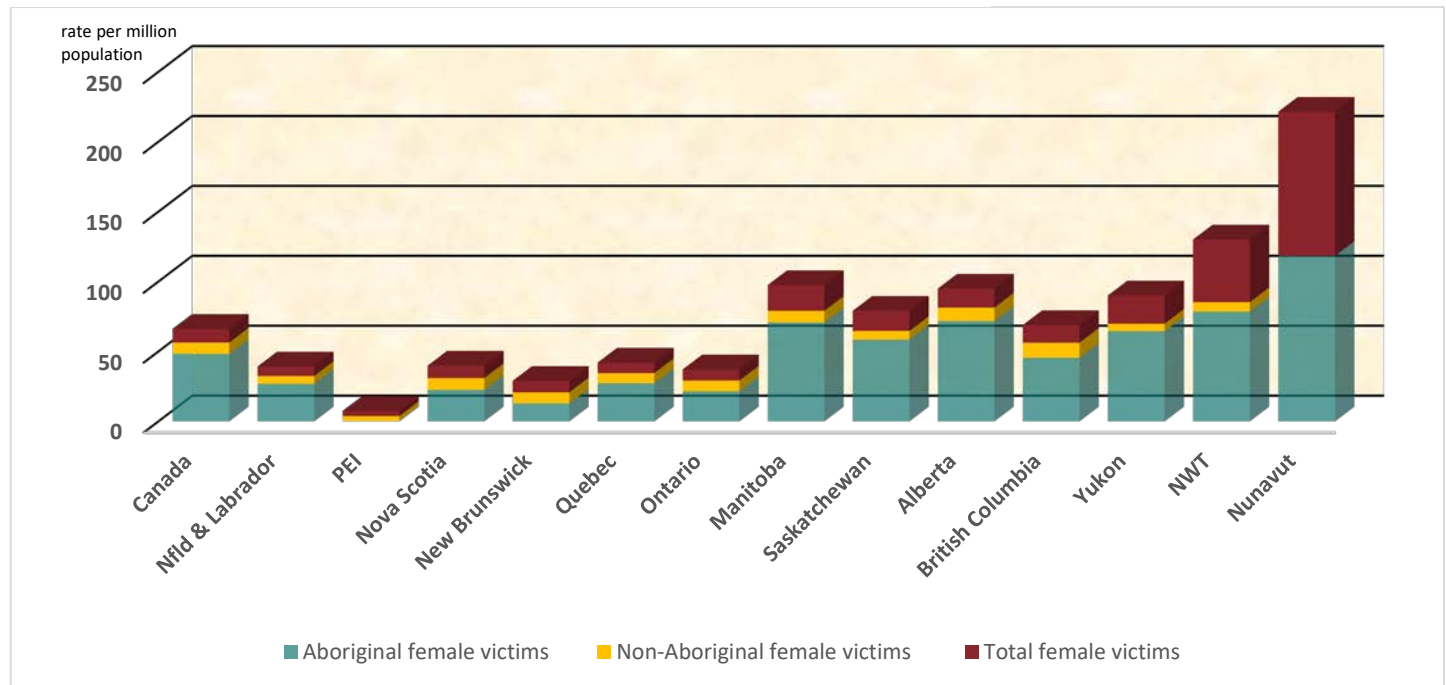
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<sup>14</sup> For more information, see: <https://cfc-swc.gc.ca/commemoration/vaw-vff/remembrance-commemoration-en.html>.

<sup>15</sup> While the *Femicide in Ontario* research focuses on one province in Canada, Ontario is the country's most populated province and, as such, typically represents close to one-third of the homicides that are documented annually. Therefore, while patterns are not generalizable to the country, they may reflect some of the dominant patterns over time.



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



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

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

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

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

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The Sisters in Spirit initiative also highlighted various systemic issues including the impunity<sup>16</sup> of many of the perpetrators, similar to that being documented in other world regions like Latin America and South Africa. Other key contributing factors identified are the violence that has been experienced for decades by Indigenous women and girls in Canada along with their families and communities due to “the intergenerational impact and resulting vulnerabilities of colonization and state policies” (e.g. residential schools, child welfare system) which is both historical and ongoing (NWAC, 2010: i).

More recently, the Legal Strategy Coalition (LSC) on Violence Against Indigenous Women (2015) examined over two decades of reports – a total of 58 reports containing 700 recommendations – focused on stopping violence against Indigenous women and girls. The report revealed that, despite general consensus about the root causes of violence against Indigenous women and girls, only a handful of the 700 recommendations have been fully implemented and there has been a complete failure to plan or implement the needed responses detailed in the recommendations. The LSC

analysis suggested a national inquiry examine the resistance to implementation of known and recommended measures to address violence against Indigenous women and girls, including the systemic barriers that must be addressed to bring about needed changes.

After repeated national and international calls for an inquiry into the treatment of Indigenous women and girls, the Canadian government launched the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in 2016.<sup>17</sup> The Inquiry’s interim report documented the continued high risk of violence experienced by Indigenous women and girls, which stems, in large part, from a failure of police and others in the criminal justice system to adequately respond to, or provide for, the needs of Indigenous women and girls (MMIWG, 2017). Serious concerns have been raised about the ability of the national inquiry to address systemic causes when its mandate includes no explicit reference to review police policies and practices or the criminal justice system more generally (LSC, 2018; Also see NWAC & FAFIA, 2016). The final report of the MMIWG Inquiry is scheduled for release in April 2019.

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

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

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

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<sup>16</sup> Impunity is defined as the exemption from punishment, or freedom from any consequences, for perpetrating injurious actions and, in this context, describes the inadequate, and often non-existent, actions by police, prosecution and the courts when responding to violence against women and femicide, particularly when victims are Indigenous women and girls (ACUNS, 2018; MMIWG 2017).

<sup>17</sup> For more information, see: <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1448633299414/1534526479029> where the Inquiry’s interim report is also available for download.





## *Defining the CFOJA research parameters*

Because the CFOJA is a new initiative, to be consistent with some international efforts, we begin by defining femicide as the killing of all women and girls primarily, but not exclusively, by men (see <http://www.femicideincanada.ca/home/what>).<sup>18</sup> We do so for three reasons:

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

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

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<sup>18</sup> This definition excludes deaths by car accident unless identified as intentional. We also exclude the deaths of women and girls who reside in Canada but were killed abroad unless both victim and accused were residents of Canada. For more information, see: <https://www.femicideincanada.ca/about/types>.

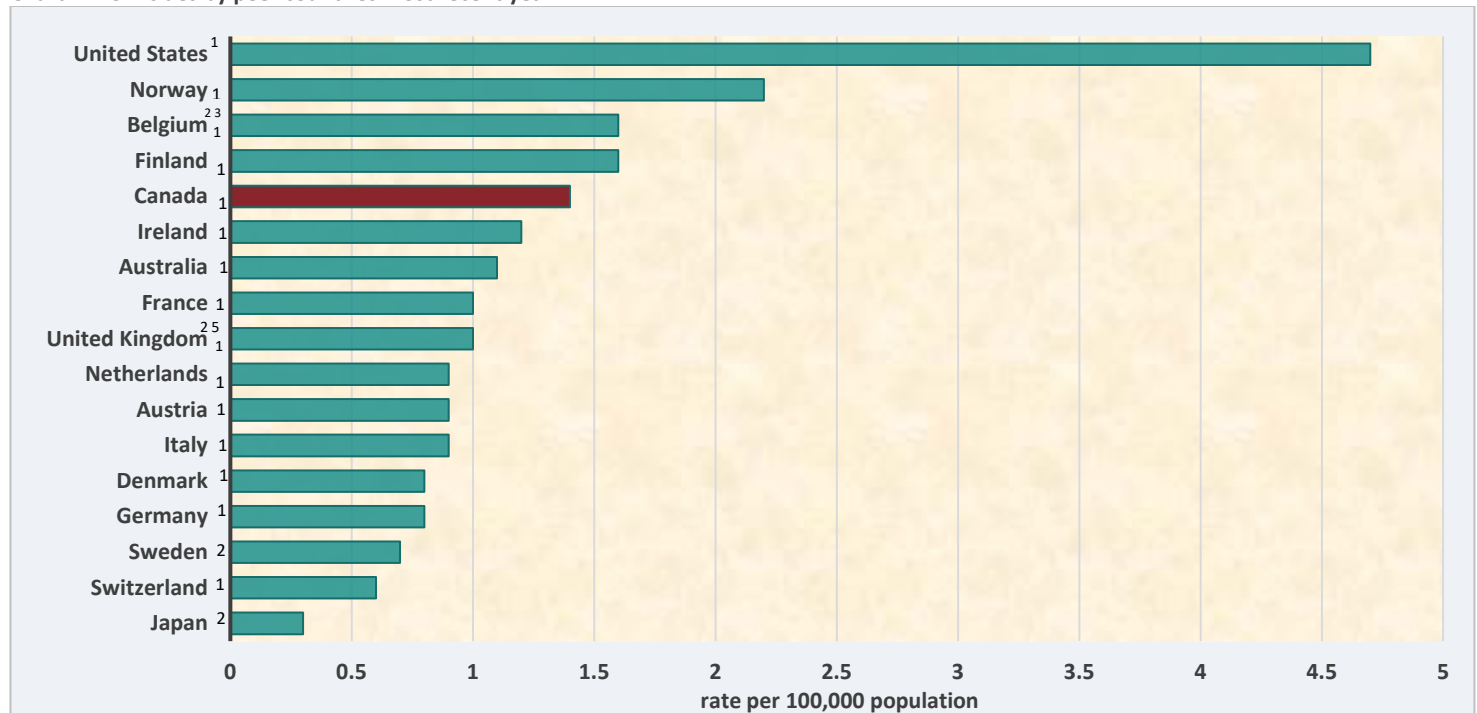


## SECTION II:

### Patterns in women and girls killed in Canada

It is commonly assumed that Canada is a safe country with low rates of violence, including homicide. When compared to rates of violence documented in the United States, this assumption appears valid. However, when comparing Canada to countries with whom we arguably have more in common than simple proximity (e.g. Australia, United Kingdom), our seemingly less violent existence is more easily challenged. Canada's homicide rate is higher than most of its peer countries (*see Chart 2*), ranking fifth highest among those compared (Cotter, 2014). Therefore, the peaceable (or not) context in which Canadians are perceived to live depends largely upon who is looking and from where. More importantly, it depends on whose experiences are being examined. For example, Indigenous peoples, as discussed above, and some urban black populations in Canada face homicide risks many times higher than other groups (Bania, 2009; Thompson, 2014).

Chart 2: Homicides by peer countries most recent year



1. Figures reflect 2012 data.

2. Figures reflect 2011 data.

3. Includes homicides committed during the Utoya Island mass shooting in July 2011. From 2001 to 2010, Norway's annual homicide rate fluctuated between 0.6 and 1.1 per 100,000 population.

4. Figures reflect 2013 data.

5. Includes England and Wales.

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

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



The same is true when examining the rate at which women and girls are killed in Canada; it is higher than that documented in some other countries, including Australia, Austria, Finland, Iceland, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom (UNODC, 2018: 14).<sup>19</sup> Further, the risk for certain groups of women and girls – particularly Indigenous and those living in rural, remote and northern regions – is much higher than that faced by other women and girls in Canada which will be discussed further below. In addition, although not yet systematically examined in the Canadian context, given the documented risk of non-lethal violence for other groups, femicide rates may also be higher for other women and girls, including older women and women and girls with disabilities.<sup>20</sup> As we discuss below, information is often not available to accurately examine femicide risk for these and other groups, underscoring the need for more attention to research and data collection priorities that can inform prevention, an issue we return to in Section IV.

Below, we examine the killings of all women and girls due to violence in 2018 to contribute to a better understanding of who is killed, by whom, how and, where possible, why? Our data were drawn from media reports. Research on the reliability and validity of media reports as a source of data is summarized and discussed in Appendix A. In short, this work has shown that media reports are as reliable and valid as official reports for specific types of information (e.g. gender, age, method of killing, location, etc.) and oftentimes more so when documenting the relationship between the victim and accused – a key element in understanding femicide (Walby et al., 2017). As such, we focus on these factors primarily. As cases proceed through the criminal justice system, we will update data using court documents and explore additional data collection strategies throughout 2019.

In 2018, 148 women and girls were killed by violence in Canada. This means that, on average, every 2.5 days one woman or girl is killed in this country – a consistent trend for four decades.<sup>21</sup> The 148 women and girls were killed in 133 incidents<sup>22</sup> involving 140 accused.<sup>23</sup>

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

- 1) We found information related to nine deaths of women and girls deemed suspicious by police, but no further information was available and/or investigations are ongoing. In addition, three other deaths were suspected femicide-suicides, but these cases have not yet been officially labeled as such and perhaps never will be publicly labeled as such. It is likely that most of these women and girls are femicide victims, but we have not added these deaths to our count. The CFOJA will continue to monitor these cases in 2019 and review their potential inclusion in subsequent reports.<sup>24</sup>
- 2) Some femicides may not yet be reported in the media and/or some women and girls may have gone missing or disappeared, some of whom may be undiscovered victims of femicide. These women and girls may never be discovered. This gap in knowledge has been clearly and effectively demonstrated by reports that highlight the number of missing or disappeared Indigenous women and girls (National MMIWG Inquiry, 2017; NWAC, 2010). While the exact number who have gone missing or been murdered is uncertain, estimates range from over 1,000 to nearly 4,000.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Only those countries for whom information was listed in the UNODC report and are arguably similar in many ways to Canada are noted above. Other countries with lower documented rates of killings of women and girls than Canada are Bosnia and Herzegovina, Czechia, and Slovenia.

<sup>20</sup> For example, a recent ACUNS (2017) publication highlighted the absence of research on femicide of older women despite their recognized vulnerability to violence. In addition, a recent Statistics Canada report underscored the growing recognition of the extent, nature and prevalence of gender- and disability-based violence for women with disabilities (Cotter, 2018), consistent with some international trends (e.g. Australia; Dowse et al., 2016).

<sup>21</sup> See <https://theconversation.com/everyday-terrorism-a-woman-or-girl-is-killed-every-other-day-in-canada-96329>.

<sup>22</sup> The number of victims exceeds the number of cases because some cases involved multiple victims as will be discussed below.

<sup>23</sup> These numbers are based on information available at the time of writing the report. This number does not include the 12 cases that remained unsolved at that time in which no accused had yet to be identified.

<sup>24</sup> We acknowledge that, for some women and girls, media reports highlight that family and/or friends are certain that the deaths of some of these women/girls are femicide.

<sup>25</sup> See: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/mmiw-4000-hajdu-1.3450237>.



Below, we begin by focusing on the 148 women and girls whose deaths have been ‘officially’ determined to be homicide to document trends and patterns in their killings. The CFOJA is confident that it has captured most, if not all, killings known to officials, with the caveats just noted, given similar numbers have been reported in previous years by Statistics Canada.<sup>26</sup>

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*“She was a loving, kind, outgoing person, always there when you needed someone to vent to and vice versa. She is a beautiful, smart young lady.”*

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## Temporal distributions

As shown in Table 1, the number of women and girls killed each month ranged from six victims in September to 17 victims in January with an average of 12 women or girls killed each month.

*Table 1: Monthly distribution of women, girls killed in Canada, 2018 (N=148)\**

Month	Women/Girls Killed N (%)
January	17 (11)
February	7 (5)
March	13 (9)
April	16 (11)
May	15 (10)
June	11 (7)
July	15 (10)
August	14 (9)
September	6 (4)
October	12 (8)
November	9 (6)
December	13 (9)
Total	148 (100)

*\*Percentage will not equal 100 due to rounding.*

Table 2 shows that the highest number of women and girls were killed on Friday with almost one in five killings occurring that day. Sunday and Monday were almost equally lethal for women and girls.<sup>27</sup> The fewest number of killings occurred on Tuesday (10%). When information was known (N=80), close to half took place during the day between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. (49%) followed by the late evening period from 9 p.m. to 2 a.m. (29%).<sup>28</sup> Research shows that victims of femicide killed outside by strangers are more likely to be killed at night or early morning whereas intimate femicide victims are more likely to be killed during the day (Sarmiento et al., 2014: 74, 84). It is likely that the day of the week and the time of the day are linked to the killings of women and girls, and most homicide victims, through their routine activities that bring them in closer proximity to those who kill them (Sisti et al., 2012).

<sup>26</sup> See: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=3510007001>.

<sup>27</sup> Percentages equal for Friday, Sunday and Monday due to rounding. Research seldom examines day of week killed, but our findings are similar to those of research conducted in Italy that found Sundays and Mondays most common for homicides (Sisti et al., 2012).

<sup>28</sup> Information was not yet available on time of killing in 46 percent of the cases. Sisti et al. (2012) found that the most common period for homicides to occur in Italy were the hours between midnight and 6 a.m.





Table 2: Distribution by day of week of girls and women killed by violence in Canada, 2018 (N=148)\*

Day of Week	Women/Girls Killed N (%)
Sunday	26 (18)
Monday	26 (18)
Tuesday	14 (10)
Wednesday	19 (13)
Thursday	18 (12)
Friday	27 (18)
Saturday	18 (12)
Total	148 (100)

\* Percentage will not equal 100 due to rounding.

## Geographic patterns

Table 3 shows the number and percentage of victims killed in 2018 as well as the proportion of the total population that is female in each province/territory and the subsequent rate of the killings of women and girls. The largest group of women and girls (44%) was killed in Ontario,<sup>29</sup> and is likely attributable to the fact that Ontario is Canada's most populated province. When adjusting for Ontario's female representation of the Canadian population (39%), the rate at which women and girls are killed in Ontario (0.90) is consistent with the national average (0.94 per 100,000 women and girls).<sup>30</sup>

Focusing on rates for other jurisdictions, Table 3 shows that the highest rate of killing of women and girls is in Nunavut followed by the Yukon where the majority of the population is Indigenous. The next highest rates are documented in New Brunswick and Manitoba. The lowest rate is in Quebec,<sup>31</sup> British Columbia, and Nova Scotia. Comparing these provincial/territorial distributions to that of general homicide rates in 2017, we found that the Yukon and Nunavut also had the highest homicide rate followed by Manitoba.<sup>32</sup> In contrast to rates of women/girls killed, however, New Brunswick had one of the lowest overall homicide rates.

Table 3: Geographic distribution of women and girls killed in Canada, 2018 (N=148)\*

Province	Number killed	% of victims	% female population	Rate of killing
Ontario	65	44	39	0.90
Alberta	20	14	11	0.95
Quebec	16	11	23	0.38
Manitoba	13	9	4	1.94
British Columbia	12	8	13	0.45
New Brunswick	8	5	2	2.08
Saskatchewan	6	4	3	1.04
Nunavut	4	3	<1	21.85
Nova Scotia	3	2	3	0.62
Yukon	1	1	<1	5.31

\*Percentage will not equal 100 due to rounding. There were no documented killings of women and girls in Newfoundland-Labrador, Northwest Territories or Prince Edward Island.

<sup>29</sup> These numbers include the eight femicide victims killed in Toronto on Monday, April 23, 2018; see <https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/24/americas/toronto-van-attack-victims/index.html>.

<sup>30</sup> National rate based on population of female residents in Canada in 2017.

<sup>31</sup> One case involved a woman killed in another country by her male partner. Because both resided in Canada, the case was included in this analysis.

<sup>32</sup> See Chart 2 at: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2018001/article/54980-eng.htm>.

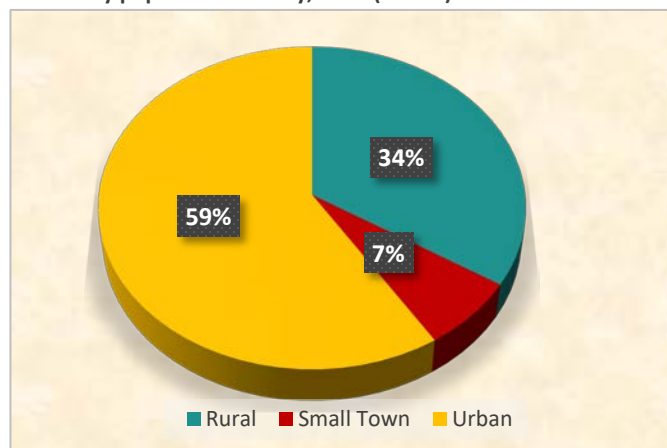


In 2018, based on available information, there were no known killings of women or girls by violence in Newfoundland/Labrador, the Northwest Territories or Prince Edward Island.

### *Urban/Rural Distributions:*

Our results showed that women and girls may be more at risk of femicide in rural areas than urban centres. Specifically, Figure 1 shows that 34 percent of women and girls were killed in rural areas,<sup>33</sup> whereas only about 16 percent of the population in Canada lives in rural areas (Beattie et al., 2018). When small towns<sup>34</sup> were included in the rural group, results demonstrated that overall 41 percent of women and girls were killed in non-urban areas compared to 59 percent in urban areas where just over 80 percent of the Canadian population lives.<sup>35</sup>

**Figure 1: Geographic distribution of girls and women killed in Canada by population density, 2018 (N=148)\***



\*Rural less than 10,000; small town greater than 10,000, less than 50,000; urban, 50,000 or more residents.

geographic variations in the availability, accessibility and utility of resources and services which are meant to help address various types of violence (Dawson, 2014; Dawson et al., 2010). At the most basic level, the implication of these variations is that women and girls experiencing, or at risk of, violence do not have equitable access to justice<sup>36</sup> and this may, in turn, increase their risk of femicide, an issue we return to in Section IV.

### *Demographic characteristics of victims*

**Age of the victim:** The victims ranged in age from less than one year old to 94 years old, with an average age of 40 years. Chart 3 shows that the largest proportion of victims was those aged 25 to 34 years (27%) followed by those aged 35-44 and 55-64, each representing 14 percent of the total sample. Those aged 18-24 and 65 and older each represented 13 percent of the victims. The smallest victim

These data are consistent with other research nationally and internationally. For example, the most recent homicide figures from Statistics Canada show that the rate of rural homicides (2.43 per 100,000 population) was 45 percent higher than the rate of urban homicides (1.67 per 100,000 population) in Canada in 2017 (Beattie et al., 2018). For this most recent year, the overall homicide rate in rural communities increased 31 percent compared to 2016 while there was only a one-percent increase in urban homicide rates. While urban/rural data have only been available since 2009, reports suggest that rates of crime in general are higher in rural compared to urban areas (Allen, 2018) and the same is true for homicide (Beattie et al., 2018).

The above geographic variations by province/territory and by urban/rural areas highlight the importance of understanding distinct provincial/territorial or regional legislative and policy contexts which are meant to address violence against women more broadly (Dawson 2010a, 2010b). It further emphasizes the need to understand

<sup>33</sup> Rural is defined as geographic regions with populations less than 10,000 and no proximity to a large urban centre.

<sup>34</sup> We define small towns as those with a population between 10,000 and 50,000 which are not proximate to larger urban centres.

<sup>35</sup> For more information on rurality and crime, including violence against women, see Donnermeyer & DeKeseredy (2013) and Pruitt (2007, 2008a, 2008b). Non-urban areas would include rural and most remote and Northern communities as well.

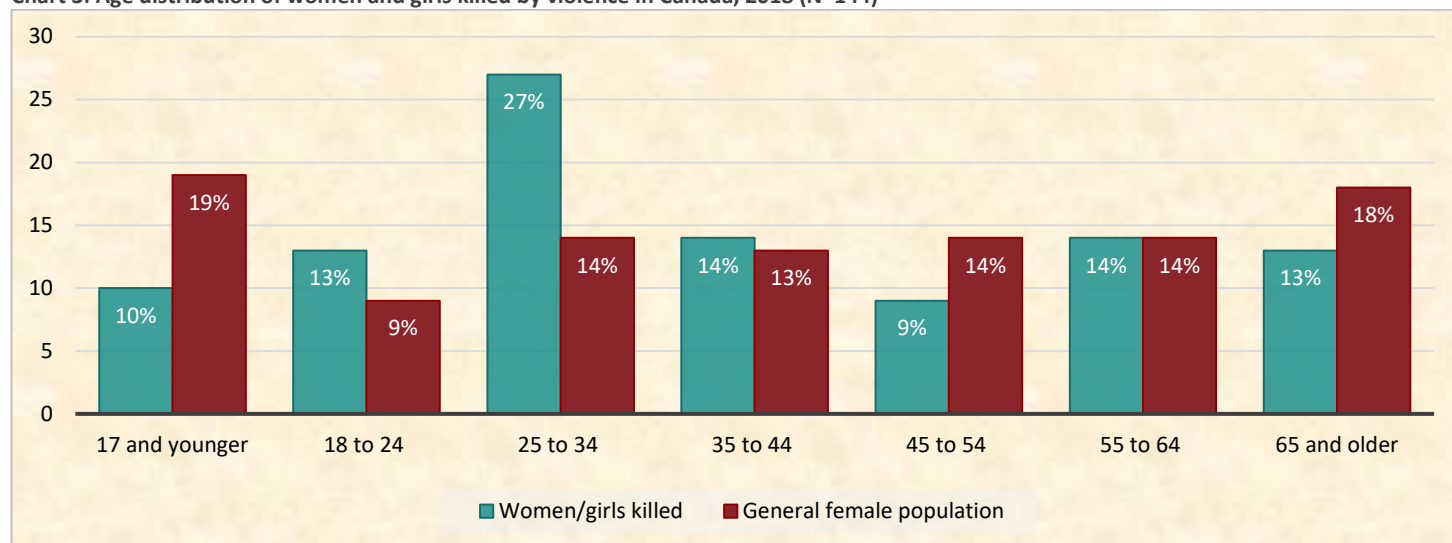
<sup>36</sup> 'Access to justice' is defined by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) as the "ability of people to seek and obtain remedy through formal or informal institutions of justice for grievances" (UNDP, 2004). Simply put, it is the premise that all people have access to the resources and services that are required to handle legal problems. While it is recognized as one of the most pressing justice issues in Canada today, and the focus of most stakeholders in the legal community, definitions and understandings of 'access to justice' vary (Farrow, 2014).



age groups were those aged 45-54 (9%) and aged 17 or younger (10%).

According to their representation in the population, also shown in Chart 3, some of these victim age groups are overrepresented as victims. Specifically, those aged 25-34 represent 27 percent of those killed, but only 14 percent of the population and those aged 18-24 represent 13 percent of those killed, but only nine percent of the population (Statistics Canada, 2019). The remaining victim age groups are consistent with, or underrepresented, based on their proportion in the populations.

Chart 3: Age distribution of women and girls killed by violence in Canada, 2018 (N=144)\*



\*Ages were not available for four victims

In recent years, there has been growing attention to the vulnerability of older women, particularly to femicide, given their increasing representation in the population (ACUNS, 2017). While cut-off age varies, 50 or 55 and older have been commonly used to define older women (e.g. ACUNS, 2017; Sutton & Dawson, 2017). Using the 55-and-older threshold, CFOJA data show that well over one-quarter (27%) of the victims were in this age group. While not overrepresented according to their proportion of the population, this means that more than one in four victims in 2018 were older women, a population subgroup whose proportions are expected to continue accelerating until 2031 (Hudon & Milan, 2016). However, it has been highlighted recently that there is an absence of research in Canada and internationally focusing on older women and their vulnerability to violence. We will return to this issue in Section IV when research priorities for violence prevention are discussed.

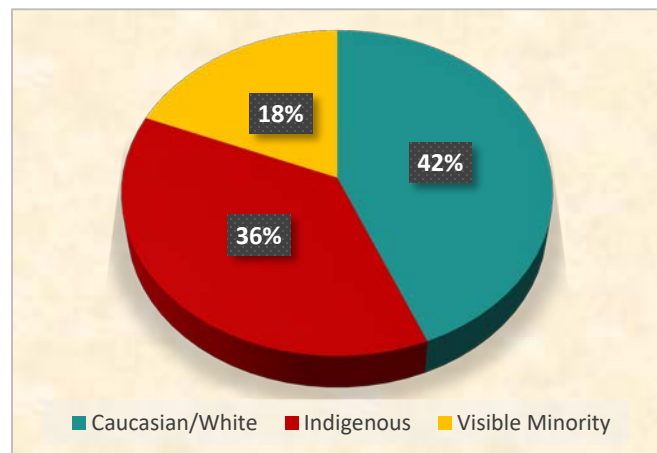
*"I was really proud of her for returning to school. She did not always have it easy, but I saw that she had managed to be happy. "*

**Race/ethnicity of the victim:** Information for race/ethnicity was missing in 40 percent of the total sample of women and girls killed. As shown in Figure 2, where information was known (N=93), 42 percent of the victims were Caucasian/white, 36 percent were Indigenous



women or girls<sup>37</sup>, and 18 percent were part of a visible minority<sup>38</sup> (see Appendix A for discussion on reliability of information about race/ethnicity in media reports).

**Figure 2 Race/ethnicity of women and girls killed by violence in Canada, 2018 (N=93)**



Comparing the above distributions to population figures in Canada, Caucasian/white victims were underrepresented (42% compared to 73% of population) as were victims with visible minority status (18% compared to 22% of population<sup>39</sup>). In contrast, and consistent with other research (NWAC, 2010), Indigenous women and girls (i.e. First Nations, Métis and Inuit) were overrepresented. Specifically, while they comprise about five percent of the population<sup>40</sup> in Canada, they represented 36 percent of those women and girls who were killed by violence in 2018.<sup>41</sup> This trend is not new but consistent over time (for more detail, see <https://femicideincanada.ca/about/trends>).

Any conclusions based on the above must be tentative at this time because as additional information becomes available, distributions may change. Further, the race/ethnicity of victims and accused may more likely be reported for some groups than others; for example, media may be less likely to report that a victim is 'white' and more likely to report on their Indigenous or visible minority status.

**Children:** Whether the victims had children was known in 60 percent of the cases.<sup>42</sup> Of those, 84 percent of the victims had at least one child. Of those with children, 17 percent had one child, 22 percent had two children, 21 percent had three children, and 13 percent had four or more children. Eleven percent had at least one child, but the exact number of children was not specified. Section IV will discuss children as one group of collateral victims of femicide or secondary victims which also includes surviving children and family members who are impacted long-term by these killings (see also, Alisic, 2018; Armour, 2002, 2003; Ferrara et al., 2015; Ferrara et al., 2018; Hardesty et al., 2008; Kapardis et al., 2017; Malone, 2007).

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*"(She) was full of life who loved life. She was hardworking too. (She) was such an energetic girl, smiling.  
At all times, even when things went wrong in her life, she was always ready to devote herself to her friends. "*

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<sup>37</sup> An additional four percent are believed to be Indigenous, but this has not been confirmed. We do not include these cases here resulting in a final total of 96 rather than 100 percent.

<sup>38</sup> Used by Statistics Canada and defined by the Employment Equity Act, the term 'visible minority' refers to "persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour" and consist mainly of the following groups: Chinese, South Asian, Black, Arab, West Asian, Filipino, Southeast Asian, Latin American, Japanese and Korean (see <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/concepts/definitions/minority01>).

<sup>39</sup> See <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/171025/dq171025b-eng.htm>.

<sup>40</sup> See <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-503-x/2015001/article/14313-eng.htm>.

<sup>41</sup> This proportion will increase to 40 percent if those involving victims believed to be Indigenous are confirmed.

<sup>42</sup> Only those victims aged 14 and older were included in this analysis.





## Demographic characteristics of accused

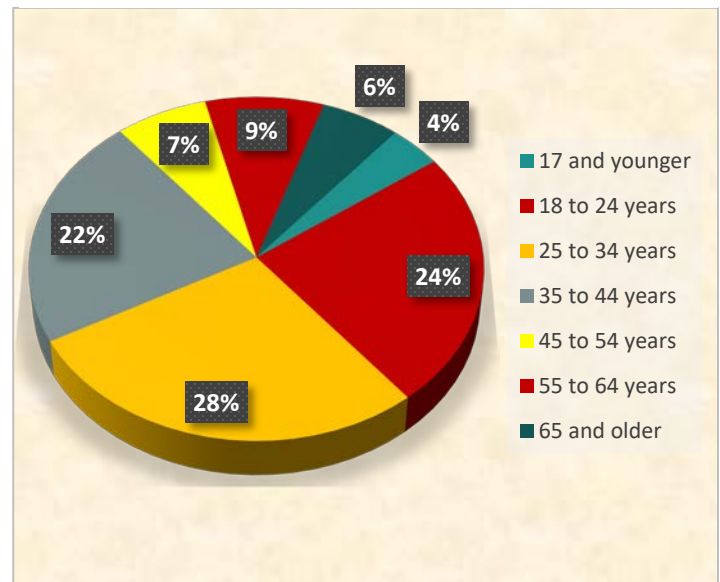
At the time of writing this report, 12 of the 133 cases remained unsolved with no accused identified. As such, the characteristics of the accused in these cases and what relationships they shared with the victims are unknown. These cases will be monitored for new information and data updated accordingly. Below, we focus on only those cases in which the accused was identified (N=121).

**Gender of the accused:** There was a total of 140 accused identified in the 121 cases, 85 percent were male accused (N=119) and 15 percent were female accused (N=21). Focusing on the primary accused,<sup>43</sup> 90 percent were men (N=109) and 10 percent were women (N=12), consistent with national figures (David, 2017).

**Age of the accused:** Focusing on 134 accused/perpetrators for which age was known, ages ranged from 15 to 90 years old, with an average age of 36 years. As shown in Figure 3, similar to victims, the largest proportion of accused were aged 25-34 (28%), followed by those aged 18-24 (24%) and 35-44 (22%), 55-64 (9%), and 45-54 (7%). The smallest accused/perpetrator age groups were at each end of the age continuum, with five accused 17 years old or less (4%) and eight accused aged 65 and older (6%).

**Race/ethnicity of the accused:** Information on race/ethnicity of the accused is missing in over two-thirds of the cases (71%), significantly more than for victims; therefore, the reliability of this information is not sufficient to report. Distributions may change significantly when additional information becomes available.

Figure 3: Age distribution of accused in cases of women and girls being killed in Canada, 2018 (N=134)\*



\*The age of the accused/perpetrator was unknown in six cases.

*"She had a strong zest for life, every year that she was in high school she got certificates, she was either on the principal's list or the honour roll. She got her first job when she was 15, I believe. She worked hard every weekend, after school, kept her studies up, saved money, bought her first car, she took pride in everything she did. And everybody that was around her loved her. The community, everybody that knows her, is devastated, is absolutely devastated. They can't think about one bad thing to say about her."*

<sup>43</sup> The primary accused designation is used when there were multiple perpetrators, but one perpetrator was more dominant in the killing and/or shared the closest relationship to the victim.

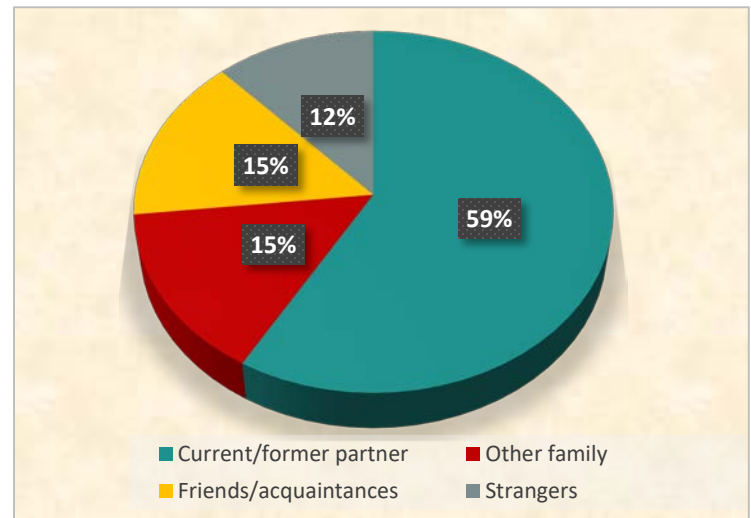


## Victim-accused relationship

The relationship between the victim and accused is one of the most common characteristics examined in violence research because it is often correlated with the circumstances of the incident and the characteristics of those involved (Silverman & Kennedy, 1993). Typically, when examining type of relationship, research has focused on single victim/single accused killings or, if multiple victims and/or accused, the primary victim and primary accused and we adopt this approach below.

In 2018, results showed that the relationship between the primary victim and the primary accused was known in over two-thirds of the cases (69%, N=83).<sup>44</sup> Focusing on these cases, Figure 4 shows that 59 percent of the primary victims were the current or former partner of the accused.<sup>45</sup> Other cases in which primary victim and accused were identified involved other family (15%), friends/acquaintances (15%) or strangers (12%).<sup>46</sup>

Figure 4: Distribution of victim and accused relationships in cases of women and girls killed in Canada, 2018 (N=83)



The above numbers are driven largely by cases involving male accused which comprised 94 percent of the cases (N=77). For the six cases involving primary female accused, the female victims were children (N=3), parents (N=2) and one acquaintance. Cases involving male accused will be discussed in more detail in Section III where cases involving only male accused are examined.

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*"Super, super nice people. When we moved here, they were the first family to come over and welcome us to the community with open arms and house warming gifts. Just wonderful people."*

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*"(She) was a very likable person, she always liked to laugh and joke around ... she had quite a few friends. She was a very good mother... She was a very proud grandma, she really was."*

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<sup>44</sup> Since investigations are ongoing and many details still pending, the relationship between the identified victims and their accused was not specified for 31 percent of the cases at the time of writing the report.

<sup>45</sup> Research shows that the closer the relationship between the victim and the accused, the more likely and the more quickly the case will be cleared by police (Trussler, 2010). As such, it is expected that, as cases are cleared (i.e. accused identified) or relationships become known, the proportion of women killed by male partners will decrease.

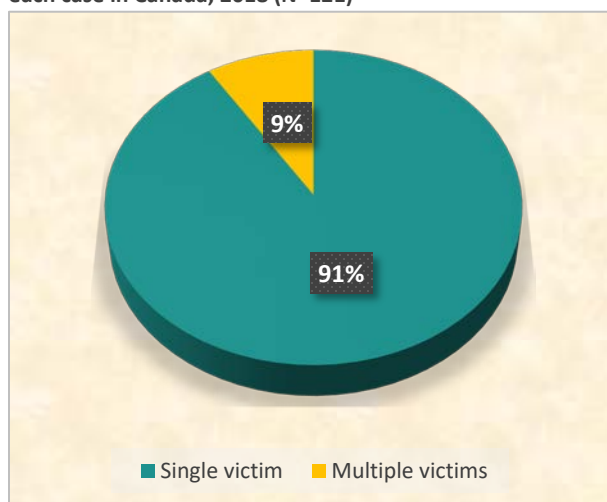
<sup>46</sup> Percentage will not equal 100 due to rounding. The stranger category includes three shootings by police and one woman's death occurred after being taken into police custody. Independent investigations into the four cases involving police were ongoing at the time of writing this report.



## Characteristics of the killing

**Number of victims:** Most of the 121 cases involved a single victim.<sup>47</sup> Specifically, in 2018, Figure 5 shows that a single victim was killed in 91 percent of the cases, with the remaining nine percent of the cases involving two (5%), three (3%) or four victims (1%). Multiple-victim cases primarily involved the primary target – usually a female intimate partner – as well as her and/or the perpetrator’s children/stepchildren or other family members such as parents. One exception was the case in which eight women and two men were killed in what has become known as the ‘Toronto Van Attack’.<sup>48</sup> In total, then, about one in 10 cases involved multiple victims.

Figure 5: Distribution of number of women and girls killed in each case in Canada, 2018 (N=121)



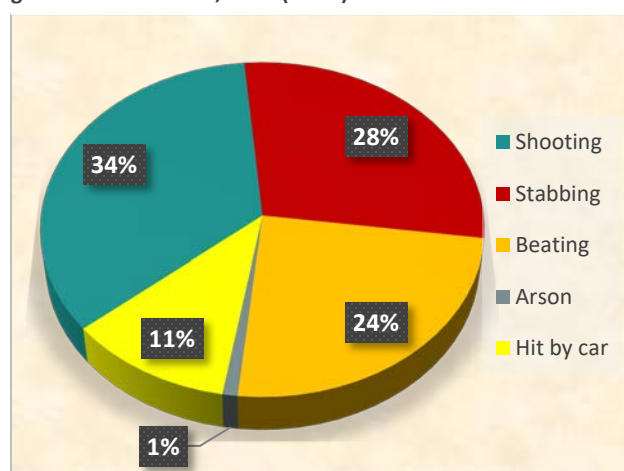
**Number of accused:** Most cases involved a single accused (90%) with the remaining cases involving two (7%), three (1%), or four accused (3%).<sup>49</sup> Among the 22 accused who were female, seven were co-accused.<sup>50</sup>

**Method of killing:** For cases with available information on method of killing (N=81), Figure 6 shows that the most common method used when a woman or girl was killed was shooting (34%) followed by stabbing (28%) and beating (24%). Arson and being hit by a vehicle comprise the remaining methods of killing.<sup>51</sup> Information on the type of gun used in shootings was available in only 40 percent of the cases, but where information was known, handguns and long guns were almost equally represented.

The most recent 2017 Statistics Canada homicide report found that the national increase in homicides committed with a firearm was evident in rural areas (Beattie et al., 2018). Specifically, the firearm-related homicide rate in rural areas increased 60 percent from the previous year and was 16 percent higher than the rate in urban areas (Beattie et al., 2018). This increase is largely attributable to gun violence in the rural areas of the Prairie provinces (Beattie et al., 2018).

Similarly, the greater likelihood that firearms were used in killings of women and girls in rural areas was evident in the 2018 data. That is, the proportion of killings by firearms was 42 percent in rural areas with populations less than 10,000, compared to 34 percent in urban centres.

Figure 6: Distribution of method of killing for all women and girls killed in Canada, 2018 (N=81)\*



\*Information on method of killing has not been publicly released in 46 percent of the cases

<sup>47</sup> Again, 12 of the 133 cases that remained unsolved are not included, leaving 121 cases.

<sup>48</sup> See: <https://globalnews.ca/video/4727479/man-accused-of-killing-10-in-toronto-van-attack-has-trial-date-set-for-feb-3-2020>

<sup>49</sup> Total percentage will not equal 100 due to rounding.

<sup>50</sup> Two cases involved two female co-accused with male co-accused and three cases involving a single female co-accused and male accused.

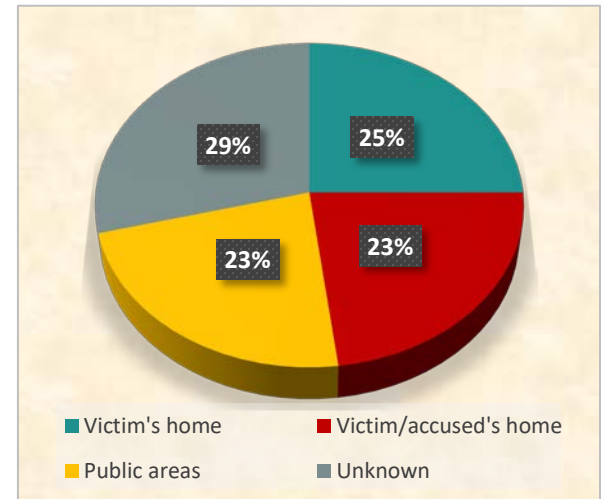
<sup>51</sup> The latter method includes the eight women killed by an accused driving a van in Toronto. When these cases are removed, the proportion of women and girls killed by shooting increases to 38 percent followed by stabbing 32 percent and beating at 26 percent.



**Location:** In total, Figure 7 shows that close to one half (48%) of the women and girls were killed in their own home, including 25 percent in her own home and 23 percent in a home she shared with the accused. This is consistent with a recent United Nations report that found, worldwide, the home is the most dangerous place for women and girls (UNODC, 2018), an issue we will return to below. About one in five killings of women and girls (23%) occurred in more public areas such as parks or outdoor locations, hotel rooms, restaurants/bars, institutions, or businesses. The remaining 29 percent of the victims were killed in unknown locations, with 17 percent of these victims being discovered in fields/parks, cars, or rivers/lakes.

**Suicide:** Results showed that 11 percent of the 140 accused (N=16) committed suicide following the killing – all of whom were male. In 13 of these 16 cases (81%), their victims were current or former female partners. In the remaining three cases, one victim was an acquaintance of the accused, another was a stranger, and the final case involved an unspecified relationship between the victim and accused.

Figure 7: Patterns in the location in which the woman or girl was killed in Canada, 2018 (N=148)



### Case outcome/status

Among those cases where the accused did not commit suicide (N=105), three accused died or were killed before they could be charged. In the remaining 102 cases, second-degree murder charges have been laid in 53 percent of the cases (N=54) and, in 32 percent of the cases (N=33), first-degree murder charges were laid. Nine percent of the cases resulted in charges of manslaughter (N=9). Outcomes could not be determined for five percent of the cases (N=6).

In the next section, we examine only those cases that involved women and girls and male accused, introducing several well-documented gender-based motives/indicators for femicide.

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*"My grandmother and mother were both very sweet ladies. I will always remember my mother's generosity and how she could get along with just about anyone."*

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*"My mother is a very caring woman, she's never hurt anyone and never bothered anybody."*

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## SECTION III:

### Understanding gender-based motives/indicators for femicide

The phenomenon of femicide is not new; however, its dramatic rise in international attention is unprecedented, and largely due to the situation in Latin America where more than half of the countries with high femicide rates are located (Laurent et al., 2013; Nowak, 2012). As a result, there are corresponding efforts to identify what gender-based motives/indicators can distinguish femicide from the more general category of 'homicide'. One of the most comprehensive efforts to date is *The Latin American Protocol for the Investigation of Gender-Related Killings of Women (Femicide/Feminicide)* which documents in a detailed manner how a femicide might be identified, including gender-related motives and indicators that capture the various circumstances and types of violence that may be specific to femicide and its subtypes (e.g. intimate femicide, familial femicide) (Sarmiento et al., 2014).

While the protocol is specifically targeted to assisting with the investigation of femicide by the criminal justice system in a specific world region, it provides a crucial starting point for understanding the benefits and challenges of defining and measuring femicide internationally. One way that it does so is by describing in detail the gendered dimensions of femicide and explaining the circumstances and motivations behind these gender-motivated killings which distinguish them from the broader category of homicide. The protocol argues that, although femicide manifests in different ways, there are gender-based motives/indicators that are common in most femicides which highlight how these killings are rooted in hatred and/or discrimination toward women or girls and a failure of the criminal justice system to protect them from violence. To support their protocol, the authors draw from the wealth of evidence-based knowledge that has been accumulated in recent decades on femicide.

The protocol explains that gender-based motives/indicators for femicide can range from the types and location of injuries sustained by victims, the location of killings, the history of the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator, as well as the circumstances surrounding the killing. In addition, the special circumstances of victims are also important to consider; for example, social norms, in combination with a lack of social supports that typically make some groups of women more at risk than others (e.g. women and girls with disabilities, elderly women, immigrant women and transgender persons) (Sarmiento et al., 2014). The common theme across femicides is that they reinforce cultural norms that emphasize what it means to be a woman, including notions of subordination, femininity, fragility, and sentimentality (Sarmiento et al., 2014). It further captures what it means to be a man, including the role of male entitlement, misogynistic attitudes, and coercive-controlling behaviours,<sup>52</sup> the latter primarily in the context of their intimate relationships (Sarmiento et al., 2014).

The protocol also identifies indicators that may be more common in a subtype of femicide. For example, in cases of intimate femicide, as will be discussed further below, victims may be killed in the process of separation, or attempting to separate, and/or in the context of chronic and ongoing domestic violence, including physical, sexual, psychological and emotional violence, with or without elements of coercive control (Johnson et al., 2019; Stark, 2007). In non-intimate femicide, sexual violence and/or mutilation may be common (Sarmiento et al., 2014).

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*"A beautiful young loving mother was taken from us and left behind are children with even more questions as we pick up the pieces from this tragic event."*

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<sup>52</sup> Coercive control is type of non-physical abuse that is used to instill fear and compliance in a partner through regular patterns of behavior that are employed in the vast majority of cases by men against women in abusive intimate partner relationships (see Stark, 2007)





The identification of gender-based motives/indicators is not an exact science because the presence or absence of a single indicator does not determine whether the killing is femicide. In addition, the number of indicators should not be used to determine whether the killing is a femicide nor should the protocol's list of factors be considered exhaustive, particularly since it has been generated in a specific world region. However, based on significant research, the protocol can act as a guide to determine when available evidence supports the classification of a killing as a femicide. Therefore, it provides a solid foundation upon which to build a better understanding of what is meant by the term 'femicide' for professionals, particularly those investigating such killings, and for the media, who often frame these killings for the general public.

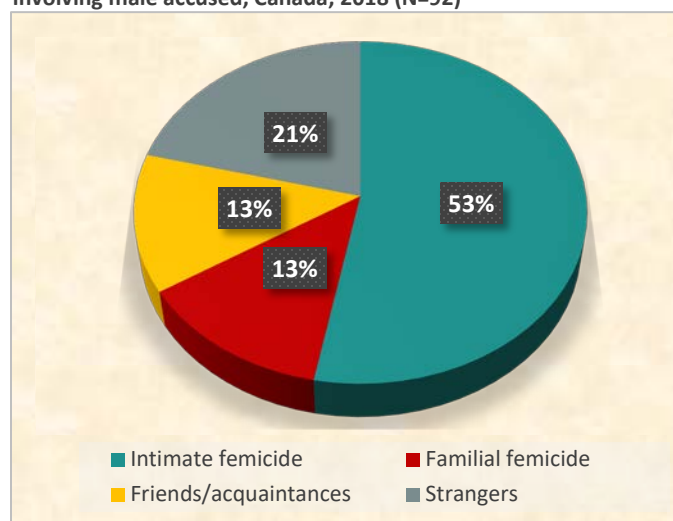
In this section, we begin by describing the types of relationships women and girls shared with the male accused. Next, we examine the most common type of femicide – intimate femicide – followed by familial femicide before moving to a discussion of femicides that occur outside the context of intimacy. Where possible, we include examples to illustrations why these killings occurred '*because they were women and girls*,' warranting the term 'femicide' rather than 'homicide'. To do so, we draw from media coverage reporting information known at the time, primarily of cases that have been resolved by the courts.

### *What relationships did women and girls share with male accused?*

In the 121 cases in which an accused was identified, there were 136 women and girls killed, 124 of which were killed by a male accused or where a male was the principal accused/suspect (91%).<sup>53</sup> For 26 percent of these victims (N=32), the relationships have not yet been identified. Therefore, the discussion below focuses on the remaining 74 percent of the victims (N=92).

Reflecting national and international patterns over time, Figure 8 shows that the largest proportion of women were killed by male partners (53%) – also referred to as intimate femicide (N=49) which is consistent with prior research.<sup>54</sup> Another 13 percent involved a woman or girl killed by a family member (but not an intimate partner), referred to as familial femicide (N=12). In total, then, in 2018, where information was known, 66 percent of the male accused shared an intimate or familial relationship with their victim (N=61). This figure is slightly higher than recent global findings that showed 58 percent of the women and girls were killed by intimate partners or family members (UNODC, 2018: 10). These patterns clearly show that women and girls in Canada are most at risk in the context of their intimate relationships with men – an issue we will return to below. Comprising the third category – non-intimate femicides – the next largest group of victims and their accused were strangers (21%) followed by acquaintances (13%).

Figure 8: Distribution of victim-accused relationship in cases involving male accused, Canada, 2018 (N=92)



Each of the three categories – intimate femicide, familial femicide and non-intimate femicide (including strangers and acquaintances) are discussed separately below, highlighting some basic trends and patterns. First, however, we discuss two of the most common gender-based motives/indicators which cut across all types of femicide, regardless of the relationship between the victim and her accused: (1) misogyny; and (2) sexual violence.

<sup>53</sup> The 12 cases which remained unsolved and for which no accused had been identified are excluded.

<sup>54</sup> This is lower than earlier research on intimate femicide in Ontario which found that at least 63 percent of the killings were intimate femicides (Gartner et al. 1999). However, the early study excluded girls aged 14 and younger whereas this victim age group is included in the current report.



## Gender-based motive/indicator #1: Misogyny

Misogyny (or misogynistic attitudes) refers to hating or having strong prejudice against women and may be expressed in a variety of ways including overt expressions of hate in verbal or written statements as well as more subtle ways such as the belief that women are sexual objects. Misogyny or related attitudes have been key elements of the definition of femicide from its early iterations to more current definitions. Therefore, misogyny – the hatred of women – is often described as the overarching motive for femicide. For example, as the authors of the Latin America protocol write:

The factors that differentiate the crime of femicide from the homicide of a man, and even from the common homicide of a woman, reveal that aim of the killing is to entrench and perpetuate the patterns that have been culturally assigned regarding what it means to be a woman: subordination, weakness, sentimentality, delicateness, femininity, etc. This means that the femicidal agent and his actions draw on cultural patterns rooted in the misogynist ideas of male superiority, discrimination against women, and disrespect toward her and her life. These cultural elements and system of beliefs make the perpetrator believe that he has sufficient determinative power over the lives and bodies of women to punish them, and ultimately, to preserve social orders of inferiority and oppression. These same cultural elements allow the perpetrator to feel reinforced in his manhood through this conduct (Sarmiento et al., 2014; 35-36).

The role of misogyny is often difficult to explain in public discussions surrounding femicide, despite its clear presence in the mass femicide in Montreal in 1989.<sup>55</sup> More recently, the use of this term and its role in the killing of women and girls – and, indeed the term ‘femicide’ – have re-emerged. On April 23, 2018, a man – the accused is Alek Minassian – drove a van into a crowd of people in Toronto, killing eight women and two men (see *Textbox 1*). Just before, it is alleged that the male accused posted the following to Facebook: “The Incel rebellion has already begun! We will overthrow all Chads and Stacy’s! All hail the supreme gentleman Elliot Rodger”<sup>56</sup> (Zimmerman et al., 2018: 1).

Those who have researched Incel, short for ‘involuntarily celibate,’ indicate that it is a violent political ideology based on a new wave of misogyny and white supremacy (Zimmerman et al., 2018: 1). The group itself is beyond the scope of this report other than to

### Textbox 1:

## Misogyny as a gender-based motive/indicator for femicide?

In the spring of 2018, according to media reports covering the high-profile event, a male rented a van, driving it down a busy street and sidewalk during lunch hour in a large city in Ontario, killing eight women and two men and severely injuring another 16 people. The victims ranged in age from 22 to 94 years old. The male was arrested shortly afterwards, following a brief standoff with a single police officer and was subsequently charged with 10 counts of first-degree murder and 16 counts of attempted murder. When speculating on his motive, according to media reports, conflicting accounts were provided by those who knew him. Some argued that he was not a terrorist, but rather was struggling with mental health issues whereas others argued that the attack was motivated by misogyny because the accused was associated with an online subculture known as Incels. Incels are self-identified involuntary celibate men who reportedly blame women for their celibacy. While not eliminating the possibility of mental illness, media reports appear to lend some credence to the role of misogynistic attitudes as, at least, part of the explanation for the accused’s actions. The accused allegedly openly discussed on his Facebook page his disdain for women and support for the Incel Rebellion. His trial is scheduled for February 2020. Regardless of what motives are ultimately identified during trial, the event and the public discussion surrounding it have brought the term ‘misogyny’ into the public domain in a manner not seen since Marc Lépine’s 1989 mass femicide.

(see: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/toronto-van-attack-suspect-court-appearance-1.4931352>)

<sup>55</sup> See: <http://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/april-2018/misogynistic-killings-need-public-label/>

<sup>56</sup> For information on Elliot Rodgers, see <https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-elliott-rodger-incel-20180426-story.html>



underscore that the van attack on April 23 is now frequently used as an example of the undeniable link between misogyny and violence against women. The eight femicides that occurred on April 23 are among the 148 women and girls killed in 2018 in Canada. These are referred to as *stranger femicides* (Russell & Harmes, 2001).

Misogyny is also a common and core element of intimate femicide – the killing of women by their current or former male partners. It may present as a singular motivation in such cases or work in combination with other gender-based motives/indicators which will be discussed in more detail in the subsection ‘*Patterns in Intimate Femicide*.’

### *Gender-based motive/indicator #2: Sexual violence*

A second gender-based motive/indicator that cuts across all types of femicide, and a clear demonstration of misogynistic attitudes in violence against women and girls, is men’s perpetration of sexual violence which, in the case of femicide, ends with the death of a woman or girl. Like misogyny, sexual violence distinguishes femicide from the killings of men. Research shows that the violence in femicides is much more likely to be sexualized than when men are killed (Corradi et al., 2016; Gartner et al., 1999; Morrison et al., 2004; Widyono, 2008). For example, femicide victims are much more likely to be sexually assaulted (i.e. raped), sodomized, sexually mutilated, and/or to be found partially or completely unclothed after their killing than are male victims of homicide (see also Beauregard & Matineau, 2012). As expected given recency of cases, information on presence of sexual violence is not available in most cases, but it was noted in media reports for three cases (see *Textbox 2*).

These three cases do not reportedly involve victims and accused who were intimate partners; however, sexual violence does also occur in intimate femicides although its presence may not be noted or documented as often compared to cases of non-intimate femicide. In part, that may be due to the legacy of patriarchal legal doctrines which continue to see women as the property of men in the context of their intimate relationships, including strong beliefs that sexual violence or rape cannot be perpetrated by a man against his female partner and, particularly, by a husband against his wife (Randall & Venkatesh, 2015; Venkatesh & Randall, 2017). Put simply, some sexual violence may not be noticed or believed to be sexual violence if the killing occurred between intimate partners and, specifically, was perpetrated by a man against his wife.

There has been a growing recognition of the role of sexual violence against women in their intimate relationships, however. A review

## **Textbox 2:**

### **Sexual violence as a gender-based motive/indicator**

- According to media reports, a lone female employee was attacked while working in an isolated business establishment. Media reported that a co-worker found the victim unconscious, beaten, sexually assaulted and half-naked. Sources cited that the victim may have known her attacker because the business was open to all in the community.
- A femicide investigation began after a young woman was found dead in her apartment. Her young child was also reported to have been found in the apartment but was uninjured. According to media reports, her attacker broke into her home, entered the child’s bedroom and instructed them to stay in bed. The child reportedly had never seen the man before. Her attacker then proceeded to the victim’s room. It is reported that her child heard screaming but was too scared to leave the room. When the child awoke the next day, the mother was dead.
- In a small community, the body of a young woman was found in her home by police. Media reports revealed that it is believed her attacker broke into her home, sexually assaulted her, and then shot her in the head. Media reports indicate that the Crown believes the femicide began with a sexual assault, but it is not known if the victim was selected at random.

*Note: While accused have been identified and charged in these cases, investigations are ongoing, and facts have yet to be proven in court.*



study on risk factors in cases of intimate femicide<sup>57</sup> demonstrated that previous rape of the victim was one of the strongest risk factors (Spencer & Stith, 2018). Similarly, another recent review concluded that intimate partner sexual violence was associated with a greater risk of femicide and should be given special consideration in the risk assessment and management of intimate partner violence (Barker et al. 2018; see also, Campbell et al., 2003; Henry, 2010; McFarlane et al., 2005). These findings support early research on intimate femicide in Ontario that found, where information was available, in 27 percent of the cases, victims had been raped, sodomized, or sexually mutilated; in another 22 percent of the cases, the victim's body was found partially or completely unclothed (Gartner et al., 1999).

There is surprisingly little research that has systematically examined men's sexual violence against female partners, perhaps due to the tendency for sexual violence research and intimate partner/domestic violence research to often be conducted as if these were separate phenomenon. Furthermore, it may be that sexual violence is more stigmatized, silenced, and obscured from social consciousness than even intimate partner or domestic violence. Determining the role of sexual violence as one gender-based motive/indicator for femicide generally, and intimate femicide specifically, will be a research priority in future work of the CFOJA.

Below, we turn to a discussion of basic trends and patterns that we can document in intimate femicide before turning to gender-based motives/indicators that are more commonly noted for this subtype of femicide.

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*"She was a very positive person anyone would want to be around. A rare kind of person. She would do anything for anyone ... We will all miss her dearly."*

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### *Patterns in intimate femicide*

Intimate femicide occurs in all countries although patterns in these killings can differ within and across countries. However, regardless of world region, all violence against women in the home, including intimate femicide, stems from gender norms that reinforce men's role as the family authority and justifies their use of violence to maintain control of women and children. This fact has once again been underscored in a recently-released report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2018) entitled, *Global Study on Homicide: Gender-related Killing of Women and Girls*.

As described in the UNODC report, global research on femicide demonstrates that individual men who adhere to traditional views about gender roles are more likely to perpetrate violence and, in the case of intimate femicide, the killing is typically the culmination of chronic, ongoing violence even when there may not have been an obvious gender-related element (UNODC, 2018). For this reason, even when the killing is not deemed as intentional, killings of women by intimate partners are considered femicide because of the cultural and social inequalities between men and women that condone men's use of violence against women (UNODC, 2018).

Reporting on international trends and patterns, the UNODC (2018) reported that, in every world region, women and girls faced a significant risk of lethal violence at home. In fact, in most regions, the home was the most dangerous place for women and girls at the hands of those they should have been able to trust, primarily male family members and intimate partners. Globally, rates of intimate femicides are four to five times higher than rates of intimate partner homicide of male victims and global rates of intimate femicide tend to remain stable, even when the overall homicide rate drops, suggesting a serious and persistent threat to women and girls even during relatively peaceful periods (UNODC, 2018).

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<sup>57</sup> The study does not use the term 'intimate femicide,' but their focus is male perpetration and female victimization in intimate partner homicides.



Similar to these international trends, our 2018 data show that women in Canada also have most to fear from men they know and should be able to trust – their male partners – representing more than half of those killed (53%). Below, we discuss trends and patterns in the 49 cases of intimate femicide and discuss some of the most common gender-based motives/indicators of this femicide subtype, again using cases to illustrate, where possible.

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*"She was quiet. She was reserved. But once you got to know her she was a firecracker. She'd make you laugh until you almost wet yourself."*

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**Geographic and temporal patterns:** Consistent with the pattern of women and girls killed overall, the largest group of intimate femicides occurred in Ontario (45%) followed by Alberta (16%) and Quebec (10%). Intimate femicide victims in both Ontario and Alberta are overrepresented slightly relative to the proportion of Canadian women<sup>58</sup> living in those jurisdictions (39% and 11% respectively). Intimate femicide victims in Quebec were underrepresented compared to the proportion of women living in that province (23%). These findings are consistent with findings documented in a recent report on domestic homicides in Canada from 2010-2015 which found similar rates over a five-year period (Dawson et al., 2018).<sup>59</sup>

Furthermore, a high proportion of intimate femicides occurred in rural areas or small towns proportionate to their representation in the population with 37 percent occurring in such areas compared to 63 percent in urban areas. This is again similar to similar trends reported for the period from 2010 to 2015 where 42 percent of intimate partner homicides occurred among rural, remote and northern populations (Dawson et al., 2018).

With respect to temporal patterns, and aligned with general patterns noted in Section II, most women were killed on a Friday (25%), with a smaller proportion killed on either a Sunday, Wednesday or Thursday (16% each). The fewest number of killings occurred on Tuesday (6%) or Saturday (8%). When the information was available, the largest proportion of women and girls were killed during the day between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. (40%) followed by the late evening period from 9 p.m. to 2 a.m. (30%), like patterns generally as noted above.

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*"[She] had a heart of gold and would do anything for anyone. She spent hours every week at her son's hockey and soccer games."*

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**Age of victims and their accused:** The victims ranged in age from 19 years to 76 years old with an average age of 42 years. Chart 4 shows that the largest proportion of victims were again aged 25 to 34 years (25%); however, the next largest victim age group were those aged 45-54 (21%) which was one of the smallest groups when examining the total sample of women and girls killed. Those aged 18-24 (17%), 35-44 (14%) and 55-64 (15%) were almost equally represented among victims of intimate femicide. The smallest group of victims were those aged 65 and up at eight percent. Similar rates have been reported over time from 2010 to 2015 where the majority of victims were in the 25-to-34-year age category (Dawson et al., 2018).

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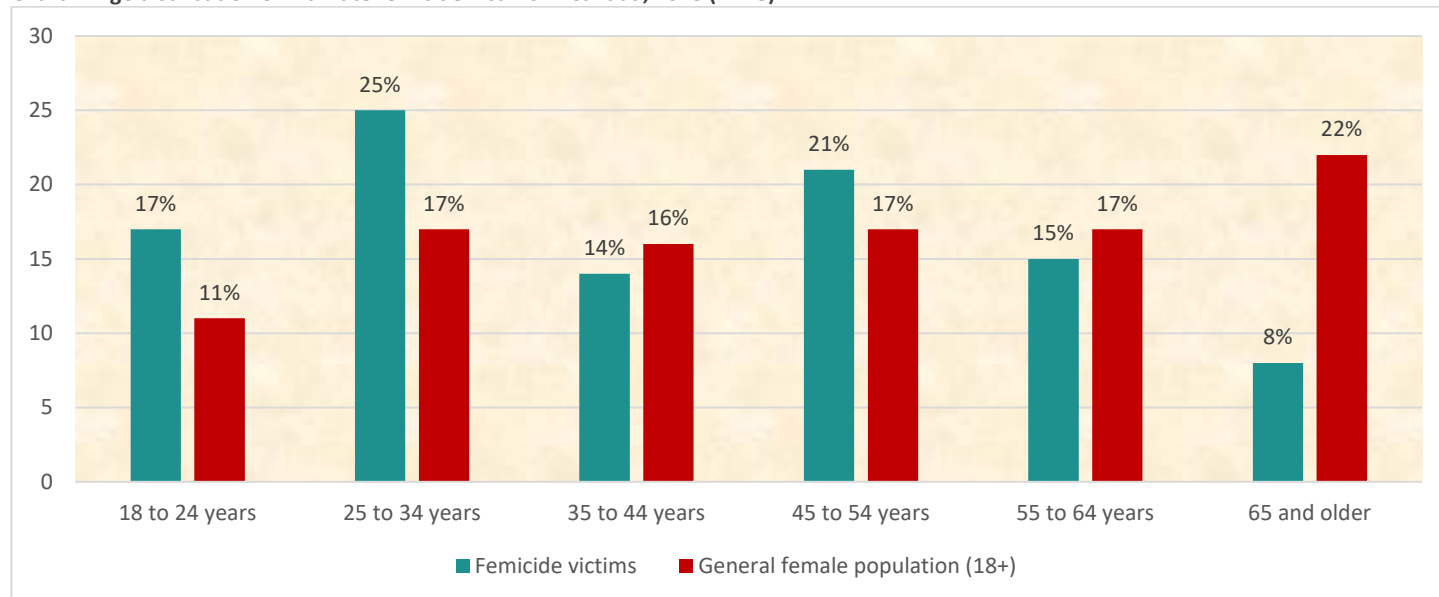
<sup>58</sup> Only women aged 18 and older in each jurisdiction were included.

<sup>59</sup> This study examined domestic homicides involving both female and male victims and children killed in the context of domestic homicide (see [www.cdhipi.ca](http://www.cdhipi.ca)).





Chart 4: Age distribution of intimate femicide victims in Canada, 2018 (N=48)\*



\*Age was missing for one victim.

Given that intimate femicide cases, by definition, involve women victims who were intimate partners with their male accused, it is expected that accused aged groups would demonstrate similar age patterns (Adinkrah, 2014; Stout, 1991). The youngest accused in this sample was 21 years old and the oldest was aged 81 with an average accused age of 44 years, slightly older, on average than their victims. While accused aged 25-34 also represented one of the largest age groups, accused aged 35-44 were equally represented. In contrast to victims for which those aged 45-54 were the second largest group, accused in this age category represented the smallest category along with those aged 18-24 years. A higher proportion of accused were aged 55 and older (31%) compared to victims (23%). Similar rates were found over a six-year period from 2010 to 2015 where the largest proportion of accused were between the ages of 25 and 34 years old, followed by those aged 35 to 44 years (Dawson et al, 2018).

**Race/ethnicity of victims and accused:** Information for race/ethnicity remains missing in the majority of cases (43%); where known, some differences emerge in intimate femicides compared to the total sample of women/girls killed by violence. A higher proportion of intimate femicides involved white/Caucasian victims compared to the total sample (50% compared to 42% respectively). Similarly, a higher proportion of these types of femicides involved visible minority victims (29% compared to 18% respectively). This differs from the total sample of women and girls in which visible minority victims were slightly underrepresented compared to their representation in the population (18% and 22% respectively). In contrast, a lower proportion of intimate femicides involved Indigenous women compared to their representation in the total sample (21%

and 36% respectively), underscoring research that suggests these women and girls have as much to fear from acquaintances and strangers as they do from partners (NWAC, 2010).

Again, information on race/ethnicity of the accused was missing in more than two-thirds of the cases; however, when information for both victim and accused were available (N=14), results shows that most intimate femicides involved victims and accused of the same race/ethnicity (93%, N=13); although seldom examined, this is consistent with US research (Ferraro & Boychuk, 1992).



**Children:** Victims of intimate femicides were more likely to have children (90%) than the total sample (84%). This information remained missing in most cases for the accused.

**Table 4: Distribution of each relationship type in cases of intimate femicide in Canada, 2018 (N=45)\***

Relationship type	N (%)
Legal spouse	13 (29)
Common-law spouse**	14 (31)
Dating	8 (18)
Estranged legal spouse	3 (7)
Estranged common-law spouse	3 (7)
Estranged dating	4 (9)
Total	45 (100)

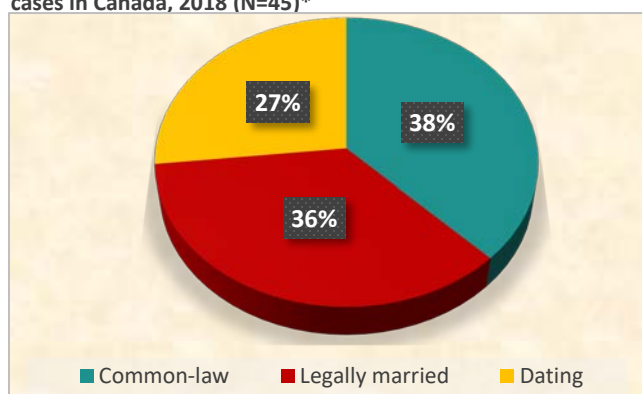
\*Percentages do not equal 100 due to rounding.

\*\*Common-law defined as victims and accused living together for greater than one month.

**Relationship status and state:** Table 4 shows that intimate femicides comprise a broad spectrum of relationships. Two key differentiating factors are relationship status and relationship state (Dawson & Gartner, 1998). Relationship status refers to whether the victim and accused were/had been legally married, common law partners, or dating. Relationship state refers to whether the victim and accused were currently in a relationship or separated at the time of the killing. In 10 percent of the cases, while the relationship was intimate, the status and state were unknown.

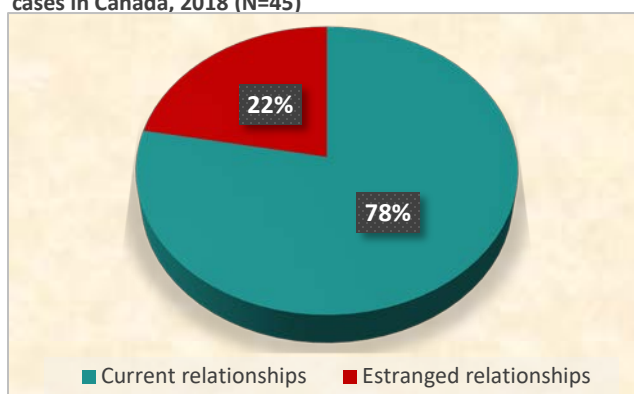
Focusing first on relationship status, among the 45 intimate femicides for which status or state were known, Figure 9 shows that 38 percent were/had been common-law partners,<sup>60</sup> 36 percent involved legally-married couples, and 27 percent were/had been dating. Examining relationship state, Figure 10 shows that 78 percent were currently in a relationship when the femicide occurred, 22 percent were separated.

**Figure 9: Distribution of relationship status in intimate femicide cases in Canada, 2018 (N=45)\***



\*Percentages do not equal 100 due to rounding

**Figure 10: Distribution of relationship state in intimate femicide cases in Canada, 2018 (N=45)**



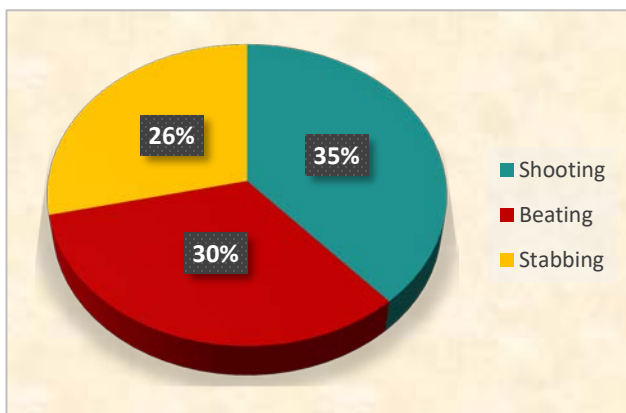
<sup>60</sup> Common-law is defined in this report as those victims and accused who had been living together for more than one month.



**Number of victims and accused:** In the 49 intimate femicides, 90 percent involved a single victim and 100 percent involved single accused. Two victims were killed in four percent of the cases and three victims in six percent of the cases. When multiple victims were killed, they were all family members of the primary victim and/or accused (i.e. children, parents or step-parents).

**Method of intimate femicide:** Consistent with patterns in the total sample, Figure 11 shows that shootings were the most common method of killing in 35 percent of the cases. However, in contrast to the total sample, beatings were the next most common method of killing (30%) followed by stabbings (26%). These rates differ from those found during in a six-year period where stabbing was the most common form of intimate partner homicide, including both female and male victims, followed by shooting, strangulation and beating (Dawson et al., 2018).

Figure 11: Distribution in method of killing in cases of intimate femicide in Canada, 2018 (N=49)



**Location of intimate femicide:** The majority of intimate femicides occurred in the woman's home (25%), the home she shared with her accused (42%), or the home of the accused (2%), meaning that more than two-thirds (69%) of the intimate femicides occurred in the home, underscoring the home as a "dangerous domain" for women (Johnson, 1996).

**Accused suicide and case status:** Compared to the total sample of cases, a higher proportion of the accused commit suicide following the intimate femicide (27% compared to 11% respectively). This is consistent with earlier intimate femicide research in Ontario that found 28 percent of the perpetrators committed suicide following the femicide (Dawson, 2005: 80).

Examining those cases in which the accused did not commit suicide, 61 percent of the accused have been charged with second-degree murder, 22 percent with first-degree murder, and 11 percent with manslaughter. Information was not available in the remaining cases.

*"She's a lovely woman and she loves her kids so much and she works so hard for them."*

### Gender-based motives/indicators in intimate femicide

Various explanations have been offered to explain the risk that women face in their relationships with men and most highlight the role of male entitlement, power, control, and/or domination (e.g. for review, see Johnson & Dawson, 2011). For example, some argue that male violence against women partners is an adaptive strategy for males who feel they are experiencing a loss of status and/or control in the relationship (Daly & Wilson, 1988). Violence becomes more likely "when men believe they have a right to control, but feel they are at risk of losing control, of their female partners' reproductive capacities" (Spencer & Stith 2018: 2; see also Daly & Wilson, 1988; Seran & Firestone, 2004). These fears become most evident when the man suspects infidelity (actual or not) or when a woman attempts to leave or has left the relationship. Other theorists view violence as the ultimate resource available to men when other means of exerting control over female partners are exhausted. Additionally, others suggest that, for men, the rewards of violence against their wives or female partners are greater than the costs, largely due to society's failure to effectively sanction such violence. These explanations capture themes that resonate in the experiences of women who become victims of intimate femicide as shown in



some of the common gender-based motives/indicators below.

### *Gender-based motive/indicator #3: Coercive-controlling behaviours*

Coercive-controlling behaviour is almost exclusively perpetrated by men against women in the context of their intimate relationships (Ansara & Hindin, 2010; Myhill, 2015). Thus, it is a highly gendered – male – behaviour that encompasses an interplay of physical and sexual violence and/or psychological, emotional and financial abuse, that leads to women to experience injuries, intimidation, and/or daily fears (Johnson et al., 2019). In fact, men who use such tactics often do not need to resort to physical violence to achieve control of their partners; rather they accomplish this through fear of potential consequences if she does not comply (Stark, 2007). However, attempts to measure coercive control and its presence in women's relationships with men are difficult and varied.

Recent work by Johnson et al. (2019) examined the role of coercive-controlling violence in intimate femicide cases by interviewing a sample of Australian men convicted of such killings. Their study focused on four common measures of coercive control: (1) controlling/proprietary behavior; (2) psychological abuse; (3) sexual jealousy; and, (4) stalking. They found that almost half of those interviewed were controlling/proprietary, two-thirds were psychologically abusive, one-quarter exhibited sexual jealousy, and one-fifth stalked their victims prior to the killing (Johnson et al., 2019: 14). They further noted that men with a known history of intimate partner violence were significantly more likely than those without such a history to use a variety of coercive-controlling behaviours. Concluding that coercive control was evident in much male partner violence against women, they argued that these behaviours were possible because they were perceived as widespread and socially acceptable in contexts where physical violence was not. Consequently, the authors concluded that many coercive-controlling behaviours may often go unnoticed as red flags for the lethal violence that ultimately occurs.



**Jealousy:** One facet of coercive control as noted above is sexual jealousy. This has been well-documented as a motive for intimate femicide in prior research (Aldridge & Browne, 2003; Belfrage & Rying, 2004; Campbell et al., 2003), but rarely evident in female-perpetrated intimate partner homicides of men. The role of male jealousy is explained using what is referred to as male sexual proprietariness theory, based in the evolutionary perspective (Daly & Wilson, 1988; Wilson & Daly, 1993). For

example, Wilson and Daly (1988) identify male sexual proprietariness as the dominant motive in the killing of wives across cultures and historical periods, stemming from the "tendency to think of women as sexual and reproductive 'property' that they can own and exchange."

Drawing from this perspective, an extreme expression of male proprietariness is intimate femicide; put simply, if unable to control or coerce a female partner through other means, a man may exert ultimate control over her by killing her. As part of this, sexual jealousy may occur if the accused believes that the victim is involved in an affair, regardless of whether it is true (Block & Christakos, 1995; Chimbos, 1998). Sexual jealousy may also arise when the victim expresses that she wishes to end the relationship or leaves the male partner (Crawford & Gartner, 1992; Dobash et al., 2007; Wilson & Daly, 1993), an issue we will return to later (see Textbox 3).

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*"(She) was a beautiful person - caring, funny and she loved all kinds of crafts...our families were close ... I'm heartbroken."*

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### Textbox 3:

#### Coercive-controlling behaviours as a Gender-based motive/indicator for femicide

In 2013, a young man found the body of his mother in her Ontario home. She had been severely beaten, had a large gash on her head, her jaw and 14 ribs were broken, her liver ruptured, and she died from manual strangulation. The same day that her body was discovered, a man whom she had dated for four months was questioned by police. He became hysterical, asking the police what happened, screaming “I love her! Tell me what happened!” Two days later, he was brought into the police station and charged with first-degree murder. This charge was laid largely because her murder occurred within the context of criminal harassment.

At first their relationship was good; he would bring her flowers and take her out for dinner, but their relationship had deteriorated in the weeks and months before her death. Her mother testified at his trial that he would call or text her 25 to 30 times a day. According to court documents, there was one incident about six weeks prior to her murder, where the man assaulted the victim because he thought she was flirting at the bar. The day before her murder, she had shared her concerns with family and friends that he was stalking her, constantly driving past her home and peering into her windows late at night. This resulted in the victim wanting to change her locks and officially end the relationship. However, she feared ending the relationship because he had suicidal tendencies and had told her “if I can’t have you, nobody can.” The night before her murder, the victim went to a house party, not knowing her boyfriend would be there. The victim left to return home and the perpetrator followed shortly afterwards, in his own car.

The Crown attempted unsuccessfully to admit evidence at trial to reveal his jealous, controlling and violent tendencies with previous intimate partners, but the perpetrator argued that he was not jealous, just old fashioned. Despite the inadmissibility of this evidence, the Crown argued that the man was “becoming desperate. He knew she wanted out and he was going to do everything he could to prevent that from happening.” Evidence was presented at trial that the last moments of her life were horrific. Her boyfriend chased her around her home until she could run no further, and that was when the murder occurred. The jury found him guilty of first-degree murder and was to life imprisonment with 25 years without the possibility of parole. The case concluded with the Crown stating: “[The victim] was not the first woman to be victim of his selfish, possessive rage, but she will be his last.”





Male proprietariness, or male sexual jealousy, has been placed at the centre of many empirical and theoretical analyses in Canada, Australia, Great Britain, and the United States (see review, Johnson & Dawson, 2011). This empirical work challenges many of the popular notions about the characteristics of such crimes; for example, the belief that they are explosive, unplanned, and unpredictable ‘crimes of passion.’ This research also contests the validity and logic of arguments about sexual symmetry in intimate partner violence because of the distinct differences between intimate partner killings by men and by women. For example, in addition to sexual jealousy, stalking is also a risk factor for intimate femicide, but not for female-perpetrated intimate partner homicide of men which is why it is identified as a gender-based motive/indicator as discussed next.

---

*"Her daughter is her life, she would do anything for that little girl, and always make sure she is safe,"*

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**Stalking:** Research has documented that stalking may be a stronger risk factor of intimate femicide than non-lethal forms of intimate partner violence (Campbell et al., 2003; Campbell et al., 2007; McFarlane et al., 2002). In Canada, stalking is a form of criminal harassment, described as “repeated or unwanted attention that causes a person to fear for their personal safety or for the safety of someone they know” (*Criminal Code*, 1985: s. 264). It may occur separate from, or in combination with, other forms of obsessive and coercive-controlling behaviours. It is primarily perpetrated by men in current or former relationships with their female partners. With the rise in technology in recent years, stalking has taken on new forms, including unwanted texts and other social media messages and use of electronic tracking devices (Burczycka & Conroy, 2018). It is also often the case that there are court orders in place which require that perpetrators stay away from their victims, particularly in cases where they are separated as discussed next.

#### *Gender-based motive/indicator #4: Separation*

Separation has been recognized as a significant risk factor for intimate femicide in Canada and internationally (Campbell et al., 2007; Garcia et al., 2007; Gartner et al., 1999; McFarlane et al., 2002; Ellis et al., 2015; Quintanilla et al., 2016; Wilson & Daly, 1993). Separation killings are motivated by a desire to prevent the victim from leaving, to regain or reassume the power in the relationship, or to punish the victim for ending the relationship (Brownridge, 2006). Some studies show that separated women may be at a much greater risk for femicide than married or single women (Wilson & Daly, 1993; Ellis & DeKeseredy, 1997; Gartner et al., 1998). For example, Canadian studies have found that up to 31 percent of the killings of women in Canada were committed by ex-partners (Dawson & Gartner, 1998; Johnson & Hotton, 2003). Furthermore, women are at the greatest risk of lethal violence within the first several months following their separation (Johnson & Hotton, 2003; Wilson & Daly, 1993) (see Textbox 4).

The 2018 data depicted similar trends. For the 45 victims for whom

#### **Textbox 4:**

#### **Separation as gender-based motive/indicator for intimate femicide**

In the spring of 2017, a 33-year-old woman and her teenage daughter were murdered by the woman’s former, long-term intimate partner and the teenager’s father, in the family home in a small town in central Canada. The victims were shot multiple times, including many fatal shots, with a .22 caliber rifle that the perpetrator borrowed from his neighbour. The 60-year-old perpetrator turned himself in to the police one day later, after confessing to the killing to a friend, who alerted the authorities. The police found the woman and the girl dead at the scene.

The perpetrator was charged with two counts of first-degree murder. The couple had separated at the beginning of the year, and the woman had recently begun seeing a new male partner and was in the process of leaving the family home. The perpetrator pled guilty in 2018 to two counts of second-degree murder and was sentenced to life imprisonment with 17 years before being eligible for parole. The judge expressed concern about the perpetrator’s lack of remorse.



relationship state was known, separation was identified as a factor in 10 of these cases, representing 22 percent of victims of intimate femicide. In at least two of these cases, media reported that the victim had taken out a no-contact order against the perpetrator, suggesting she feared for her life prior to her killing. As noted above, separation killings are often preceded by stalking of the victim, with some studies suggesting that separated victims may be at greatest risk of stalking (McFarlane et al., 2002). Killing as a result of pending or actual estrangement is almost exclusively a male phenomenon that underscores, not only the role of sexual jealousy, but the perception of women as property that can be disposed of if no longer within their control (DeKeseredy et al., 2017; Ellis et al., 2015). Put another way, it is largely only women who are killed when trying to end an intimate partner relationship, highlighting this as a gender-based motive that is distinct to femicide.

Due to increased risk post-separation, ongoing education and outreach are priorities to inform women about their risk and the services available to help reduce the risk of lethal violence. Although the victim leaving the perpetrator may increase the immediate risk of intimate femicide, research guided by the exposure reduction hypothesis<sup>61</sup> (Reckdenwald & Parker, 2012) suggests that leaving an abusive relationship will decrease the risk of intimate femicide overall as long as supports are in place for the victims (Dugan et al., 2003). In addition, it is increasingly recognized that the role of separation may be underestimated because it is not always known or documented that a woman was attempting to leave or had told her male partner that she was going to leave but had not had the opportunity to do so before she was killed. In such cases, the role of separation is still paramount and crucial to understanding the distinct femicidal contexts in which women are killed.

### *Gender-based motive/indicator #5: Overkill*

Early work on femicide in Ontario (Dawson & Gartner, 1998; Gartner et al., 1999) as well as more recent research internationally (e.g. Long et al., 2018) has found that one of the distinguishing features of femicide, and intimate femicide specifically, is the extent and nature of the violence done to the victim (Gartner et al., 1999; Long et al., 2018). Unlike when women kill intimate partners or much male-on-male violence, femicides often involve multiple methods of killing and/or excessive violence which is typically far more than is necessary to cause death. For example, a perpetrator may both beat and bludgeon a victim over a prolonged period or, alternatively, the perpetrator may inflict an excessive number of stab wounds beyond which were needed to kill the victim. The early research noted this was sometimes referred to as ‘overkill’ by some coroners or other officials responding to such deaths (Gartner et al., 1999). In the 2018 cases, at least eight cases demonstrated evidence of overkill as reported by the media, including excessive use of shooting, stabbing or multiple methods. For example, one victim was reportedly stabbed by her estranged male partner 40 times before her throat was cut and was shot twice (see also Textbox 5).

#### **Textbox 5:**

#### **‘Overkill’ as a gender-based motive/indicator for intimate femicide**

In early 2017, officers were called to an urban home in Ontario after a woman found her sister deceased, having suffered 30 stab wounds the night before. The victim’s estranged husband was arrested on the scene and later charged with second-degree murder. By the end of the year, he had pled guilty to second degree murder and was sentenced to life imprisonment without the possibility of parole for 12 years. In his confession, he stated that he went to his estranged wife’s home to tell his children their grandmother had died the previous day. After the children went to bed, he took a kitchen knife and stabbed the victim repeatedly in her neck, face, and upper body. The pathologist noted several defensive injuries to her hands and arms. Following her death, her estranged husband took the children to his home for his night, leaving her relatives to make the discovery. He had previous convictions for assaulting the victim in the past but maintained regular contact with her because of their young children. [See also Textbox 3]

<sup>61</sup> The exposure reduction framework is premised on the well-documented finding that chronic and persistent violence in intimate relationships often precedes intimate partner homicide. Based on this finding, researchers have argued that mechanisms that help abused partners exit from violent relationships or inhibit the development of such relationships in the first place may reduce the rate of lethal victimization between intimate partners (Dawson et al., 2009; Dugan et al., 1999, 2003)



Similarly, using police data, a recent Canadian study by Beauregard and Martineau (2012) shows that overkill in cases of sexual homicide appears to occur with greater frequency in Canada compared to previous studies from other countries. Specifically, overkill was present in 43 percent of the cases and, the authors further noted that more than one-third of the sample was Indigenous (Beauregard & Martineau, 2012). However, these authors indicated that “inflicting more grievous bodily harm on the victim than is necessary to cause death” (Geberth, 1996) needs to be distinguished from a perpetrator who may merely be ineffective, having to inflict a large number of wounds before finally killing the victim.

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*"She had a big heart, she had a future. She loved her boys will all her heart."*

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## Familial femicide

This section focuses on those women and girls killed by accused who were family members, but not intimate partners – most often referred to as familial femicide. There were 16 cases involving 17 victims in 2018 which fell into this category.<sup>62</sup> To be consistent with above sections, percentages will be reported, but we caution that they are based on small numbers – also provided – and should be interpreted accordingly. Given small numbers, no figures are provided in this section.

**Geographic and temporal patterns:** The largest group of familial femicides occurred in Ontario (35%, 6 victims) and Quebec (35%, 6 victims) followed by Alberta (18%, 3 victims). The remaining two familial femicides occurred in Manitoba (6%) and British Columbia (6%). The majority of these occurred in urban centres (81%, 13 victims) and two victims were killed in a small town (13%). There was one familial femicide documented in a rural area (6%).

With respect to temporal patterns, one-third of the familial femicides occurred on Wednesday (29% or 5 victims) with the next most common days being Sunday, Monday and Thursday (18% or 3 victims on each day). Each of the other days had one familial femicide. Where information was known<sup>63</sup>, almost two-thirds of all familial femicides (60%) occurred during the daytime hours (6 a.m.-6 p.m.), with three cases (30%) occurring in the nighttime period (9 p.m. – 2 a.m.) and one case occurring in the early evening (6 p.m. – 9 p.m.).

---

*"You could tell she would treat everybody with respect, not a showboat, she didn't have an edge."*

---

**Age of victims and their accused:** The victims ranged in age from less than one year old to 84 years old with an average age of 35 years. The largest age category comprised those aged 17 or less (47%, 8 victims) followed by 55-64 (24%, 4 victims) and 65 and up (18%, 3 victims). The remaining two cases involved victims aged 35-44 (6%) and 45-54 (6%). While numbers are small, a clear pattern emerges whereby familial femicides are more likely to involve young girls 17 and younger (47%) or older women (55 and older represented 42%).

The youngest accused in familial femicides was 18 years old and the oldest was 40 years old with an average age of 31 years, representing, on average, a much younger age demographic for accused (compared to 35 in the total sample and 44 in the intimate femicide sample). Most accused were in the 25-34 age group (47%, 8 cases) followed by those aged 35-44 (35%, 6 cases) and three

<sup>62</sup> This figure differs from the 12 victims discussed in the previous section due to five collateral victims who were killed in addition to the *primary* victim in the homicide case.

<sup>63</sup> Information was not available in six cases (38%).



cases in the 18-24 aged group (17%).

**Race/ethnicity of victims:** Information for the victim's race/ethnicity was missing in 29 percent (N=5) of the sample. When available, results showed that 50 percent were white/Caucasian (N=6), with three Indigenous victims and three in the visible minority category (25% each). Information remained missing in too many cases to report on race/ethnicity of the accused.

**Victim-accused relationship:** Familial femicides encompass a wide range of victim-accused relationships. Of these 17 victims, seven were mothers of the male accused (41%), six were children of the male accused (35%), two were step-children (12%) and two were other family (12%).

**Number of victims and accused:** In the 17 familial femicides, almost two-thirds (65%, N=11) involved a single victim and all but one involved a single accused. Two victims were killed in just under a quarter of the cases (24%, N=4) and three victims were killed in 12 percent (N=2) of the sample.<sup>64</sup>

**Method of familial femicide:** The most common method of familial femicide was stabbing (53%, N=9) followed by beatings (24%, N=4) and information was missing for four victims (24%).<sup>65</sup>

**Location of familial femicide:** Mostly all of the familial femicides occurred in the woman or girl's home (29%, N=5) or the home she shared with her accused (53%, N=9). The remaining cases either occurred in the accused's home (6%, N=1), an unspecified residence (6%, N=1), or an unknown location (6%, N=1).

**Accused suicide and case status:** None of the accused in the cases of familial femicide committed suicide following the killing. Examining the outcomes, then, 71 percent of the accused were charged with second-degree murder (N=12) and 29 percent with first-degree murder (N=5).

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*"She had an audacious sense of humour. She was an all around funny girl...  
Everyone gravitated to her."*

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## Non-intimate femicide

This section focuses on cases of non-intimate femicide in which the woman or girl did not share an intimate partner or familial relationship with the male accused, capturing primarily acquaintance and stranger femicide. There were 21 cases in 2018 involving 31 victims which fell into this category, eight of which were killed on April 23, 2018 in the van attack in Toronto. Given this mass femicide represents what is (hopefully) an atypical case, some of the analysis below excludes these victims or provides distributions with and without these victims. Again, to be consistent with above sections, percentages will be reported, but we caution that they are based on small numbers – also provided – and should be interpreted accordingly. Again, no figures are provided in this section.

**Geographic and temporal patterns:** The largest number of non-intimate femicide victims occurred in Ontario (55%, 17 victims), including the eight women killed in the van attack in Toronto on April 23, 2018. Quebec had the next largest proportion with three non-intimate femicide victims (10%,) followed by two each in Alberta, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and British Columbia

<sup>64</sup> Percentages will not equal 100 due to rounding.

<sup>65</sup> Percentages will not equal 100 due to rounding.



(comprising 7% each of the total non-intimate femicides). Saskatchewan had one non-intimate femicide (4%).<sup>66</sup> The majority of these killings occurred in urban centres (71%, 22 cases) and the remaining occurred in rural areas (29%, 9 cases).<sup>67</sup>

With respect to temporal patterns, one-third of the cases (N=10) occurred on Monday, including the eight women killed in the April 23 mass femicide. When this case is removed, most cases occurred on Friday or Sunday (26% or six cases each). Four cases occurred on a Tuesday (17%), three cases occurred on Saturday (13%), two on Monday with one non-intimate femicide each occurring on Wednesday and Thursday. Where information was known<sup>68</sup>, 12 of the victims (55%) were killed during the daytime hours (6 a.m.-6 p.m.), another six victims (27%) were killed during the nighttime period (9 p.m.- 2 p.m.), with the remaining four victims either having been killed in the early evening (6 p.m. – 9 p.m.) or early morning period (2 a.m. – 6 a.m.).

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*"She loved doing things with her kids. (She) lived for her granddaughter... she was so proud she had finally become a grandmother, she was very kind-hearted, she would take anyone off the street, if they needed a place to stay, she would let them stay."*

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**Age of the victims and their accused:** The victims ranged in age from 10 to 94 years old with an average age of 41 years. The largest age category comprised those aged 25-34 (30%, 9 victims) followed by those aged 18-24 (23%, 7 victims), 55-64 (13%, 4 victims), 17 and younger or 35-44 (7%, 2 victims in each age category). The smallest group of victims were aged 45 to 54 years old (N=1).

The youngest accused in the non-intimate femicide cases was 17 years old and the oldest was 90 years old with an average age of 34 years. Most accused were in the 18-24 or 25-34 year age category (27% each, N=6), followed by accused aged 17 and younger (14%, N=3), 45-54 (9%, N=2), 35-44 (9%, N=2). The remainder were older than 55 years (14%, N=3).<sup>69</sup>

**Race/ethnicity of victims:** Similar to previous analyses, information for the victim's race/ethnicity was missing in 42 percent (N=13) of the sample. When available, results showed that 61 percent were white/Caucasian (N=11), 22 percent were Indigenous (N=4) and 17 percent were visible minorities (N=3). Again, these figures must be treated with caution due to the high proportion of missing information for this variable.

**Victim-accused relationship:** The category of non-intimate femicide<sup>70</sup> is comprised of a range of relationships, evenly distributed across the broad categories of friends/acquaintances and strangers with 50 percent each of the sample of non-intimate femicides (or 12 cases each). Within the friends/acquaintances category, relationships ranged from housemates/roommates, co-workers, neighbours, and more distant acquaintances. Within the stranger category, victims and accused/perpetrators had no prior interaction, including the four victims whose death involved the police.<sup>71</sup>

**Number of victims and accused:** In the 24 non-intimate femicides<sup>72</sup>, 75% (N=18) involved a single victim and 83% involved a single accused. Almost one-fifth of cases involved the murder of two or four victims in a single incident (8% each, N=2). The remaining two cases involved the death of three or eight victims (4% each, N=1).

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<sup>66</sup> With the above eight victims removed, Ontario continued to have the largest number of non-intimate femicide victims (39%), followed by Quebec (13%), then New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Manitoba, Alberta, and British Columbia (9% each) and Saskatchewan had one (representing 4% of all non-intimate femicides).

<sup>67</sup> The distribution is 60 percent urban and 40 percent rural with the April 23 mass femicide case removed.

<sup>68</sup> Information was not available in eight cases (27%). These patterns count the eight mass femicide victims as one case.

<sup>69</sup> The age of the accused was unknown in four cases.

<sup>70</sup> This discussion counts the April 23 mass femicide only once given that all eight victims shared a stranger relationship with the single accused.

<sup>71</sup> Given that current information is based on media reports only, and investigations ongoing, these cases will remain in the non-intimate femicide category like all other outstanding investigations until official determinations are made.

<sup>72</sup> This figure counts the April 23 mass femicide only once.





**Method of non-intimate femicide:** The most common method of non-intimate femicide was shooting (73%, N=11). The remaining methods were equally distributed between stabbings, beatings, being hit by a car, and an “other” method (7% each; N=1). Information was missing on the method of killing for nine victims (38%).

**Location of non-intimate femicide:** Half of all non-intimate femicides occurred in a public, or semi-public, area such as outdoor locations, business establishments, inside a vehicle, or institutions (50%; N=12). The remaining victims were killed in their own home (21%; N=5), the home they shared with the accused (8%; N=2), or someone else’s residence (8%; N=2). The exact location was unknown in the remaining 13 percent of cases (N=3).

**Accused suicide and case status:** Two accused in non-intimate femicide cases committed suicide following the killing (8%). Examining other outcomes, then, 32% percent of the accused were charged with second-degree murder (N=7) and 41% percent with first-degree murder (N=9). This information was not specified in the remaining cases (27%, N=8).

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*“She was very humble. She cared more about the people around her than herself. She was a genuinely nice kind person. (She) would have wanted a sense of calm. She wouldn’t want people to feel anger for other people.”*

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*“(She was) very giving, very unselfish person who was the caregiver and ‘lifeline’ for her parents. She was a loving mother, sister, daughter and wife. As a sister, she was somebody I looked up to. Someone who put her family ahead of herself.”*

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## SECTION IV:

### Current and Emerging Research Priorities for Informed Prevention

This section identifies and discusses current and emerging research priorities that have been identified in this report for which further research is needed if more informed intervention and prevention is to occur. We focus first on situational factors that have emerged as more common in the 2018 cases: (1) intimacy; (2) rurality; (3) firearms; and (4) collateral victims. We then turn to various socio-demographic factors that were common in the 2018 cases or appeared in cases that highlighted groups of victims that may be more at risk of femicide, but for whom there has been little research attention. These include: (1) Indigenous women and girls; (2) immigrant women and girls; (3) older women; and (4) women and girls with disabilities. We discuss each of these factors separately but acknowledge that they often work together to increase the risk of violence. They may also work in combination at multiple levels because violence is a multi-faceted phenomenon that arises out of the interplay of individual, family, community, and socio-cultural factors (Heise, 1998).<sup>73</sup>

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*“She’s just always so loving, just looking at everyone in a very helpful way.  
There couldn’t be anybody better than that.”*

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#### *Research priorities: Situational risk factors for femicide*

##### **Intimacy and femicide**

In Canada, and internationally, it is well-documented that intimacy is a risk factor for women and girls; that is, women and girls are most at risk of experiencing violence, and death, at the hands of those they know – and know well – primarily male partners and family members. The data presented in this report show that intimacy continues to be a risk factor for women and girls: 53 percent of the male accused were the victim’s male partner and another 13 percent were a male family member of the victim.

International research shows that these types of killings are often treated more leniently by the criminal justice system (ACUNS, 2018) and, in Canada, similar trends have been documented (Dawson, 2016a). In 1996, legislation was introduced in the form of an amendment to Section 718.2 of the *Criminal Code* of Canada which stipulates that an offender who abuses a spouse or child may be subject to harsher penalties. Judges should now consider the existence of a spousal or parental relationship between an offender and their victim as an aggravating factor at sentencing.<sup>74</sup> The extent to which this is occurring is unclear.

It is argued that these differential responses may stem from the role played by common stereotypes about these crimes that exist in society more generally, including those who work in the criminal justice system (Dawson, 2006, 2016b). While there have been significant social and legal transformations that work to challenge such stereotypes, their ongoing legacy creates an environment in which intimacy continues to be a risk factor for women and girls. Compounding this risk, and related to these stereotypes, are common

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<sup>73</sup> Here we refer to the ecological framework (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1979; WHO, 2002) as well as the intersectional framework (Crenshaw, 1991) which allows one to simultaneously consider and apply the intersecting identities/factors that lead to experiences of victimization and perpetration at multiple levels simultaneously. Please also see: <https://www.femicideincanada.ca/preventing>

<sup>74</sup> Included in Bill C-75 introduced in 2018 are proposed amendments that seek to modernize this language by including the term ‘intimate partner’ to also capture dating relationships and to see former intimate partners included with current partners.



attitudes and beliefs that some types of male violence against women and related behaviours are acceptable or, at the very least, tolerable. Future research needs to systematically explore the validity of these stereotypes as well as how they may lead to variations in punishment for such crimes. We focus in more detail on one of the most damaging of these stereotypes to illustrate further (see *Textbox 6*).

**‘Crime of passion’ stereotype:** Historically, communities and criminal justice systems have tolerated, and even condoned, men’s use of violence against their intimate partners (Sheehy, 2000; Grant, 2010). In cases of intimate femicide, the seriousness of these killings has been diminished by labelling killings as “hot-blooded” or as “crimes of passion” (Howe, 2013). A crime of passion is defined as a killing that arises as a result of anger or another strong emotion, decreasing the blameworthiness of the perpetrator. This stereotype has been used most often in the context of separation and/or suspected or actual infidelity (Howe, 2013). Labelling femicide as a crime of passion is especially problematic because it diminishes the accused’s responsibility, on both moral and legal grounds. In Canada, this stereotype has been engrained into the criminal justice system through the defence of provocation (Sheehy, 2000; Dawson, 2006).

The term “crime of passion” may also suggest that the violence perpetrated against the victim was a one-time event. For example, a common stereotype in cases of intimate femicide is that these killings were unplanned, emotional reactions committed in the heat of the moment (Dawson, 2006). However, it is well documented that intimate femicides are often the result of repeated expressions of violence (McFarlane et al., 2002; Stout, 1992). Furthermore, research on the premeditation suggests that intimate femicides are as likely to be, or more often, premeditated than non-intimate femicides (Dawson, 2006). While a crime of passion cannot be used as a full defence for femicide, it remains a factor in sentencing (Dawson, 2015; Grant, 2010). Research on sentencing in Canada demonstrates that men still receive a discount for killing their intimate partners in comparison to killings of strangers or non-intimate partners (Dawson, 2015; Grant, 2010). Therefore, continuing to challenge stereotypes rooted in patriarchal notions, such as crimes of passion, is paramount for achieving justice for femicide victims and to overcome unequal notions surrounding the value of women’s lives.

## Textbox 6:

### Not a ‘Crime of Passion’?

In 2017, a woman arrived at her estranged husband’s home in a Western Canadian province to pick up their daughter as part of a custody handover. While her son, mother, and boyfriend waited in the car, the woman approached the front door of her estranged husband’s home and rang the bell. Her estranged husband had a shotgun which he fired once through the door with their daughter waiting nearby. He then shot the victim four more times before walking to the RCMP detachment to turn himself in. The woman and her ex-partner had been separated for two years and were in the process of divorce at the time he killed her. It was reported that after the separation, he developed a major depressive disorder and attempted suicide following the breakup. The victim had plans to move out of the city for a fresh start with her children, away from her estranged husband. Originally charged with first-degree murder, the perpetrator pled guilty to second-degree murder reportedly to spare his daughter from having to testify. Citing the fact that she was killed in front of their daughter, the judge sentenced the perpetrator to life imprisonment without eligibility for parole for 22 years.

## Femicide and rurality

Only recently have researchers begun to systematically examine variations in urban and rural homicide, but there is already significant evidence that the characteristics and context of killings differ depending on where it occurred (Hunnicut, 2007). In addition, research has also begun to establish the importance of place in the study of intimate partner violence and homicide (Dawson et al., 2018; DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2009; Gallup-Black, 2005; Jennings & Piquero, 2008; Peek-Asa et al., 2011; Weisheit et al., 2006;) and femicide,



## Textbox 7:

### Rurality and femicide

In 2017, in a rural area of a western Canadian province, a woman returned to a farm house she had once shared with her estranged husband to collect her belongings. They had been separated for about eight months. One of her sons was also there when the victim was shot. Her son performed CPR, desperately trying to save his mother, who was later pronounced dead. Within two days, her death was deemed a homicide and her estranged husband was charged with first-degree murder. Although reportedly having no memory of the homicide, the perpetrator pled guilty to second-degree murder and was sentenced to life imprisonment with 18 years without possibility of parole. On the day of her murder, the perpetrator had met with his lawyer to discuss the impending divorce and learned that the victim would be picking up her belongings later in the day. He returned home and began drinking. He was captured on his video surveillance system measuring the height of a barbeque and a planter in front of the house. He then hid on the property, armed with a rifle, waiting for the victim to arrive in the location he measured. Due to the perpetrator's reported cognitive disability, the judge accepted his plea to the lesser charge but increased the period of parole ineligibility to account for the elements of planning in his estranged wife's death.

in particular (Beyer et al., 2015; Gillespie & Reckdenwald, 2015; Sinauer et al., 1999). This work has also demonstrated increased prevalence of these incidents in rural areas in addition to distinctions in how these killings occur from urban areas (Dawson et al., 2018; Bouffard & Muftic, 2006). It has also shown that rural areas have not experienced similar declines in these types of killings as in urban areas (Beattie et al., 2018; Jennings & Piquero, 2008).

Findings in the current study add further confirmation to the growing body of literature that highlights rural living is not necessarily peaceful in its pastoral setting; rather, it poses greater risks of crime, including femicide, and particularly by firearms (see Textbox 7). However, this situation is not new. In a 2008 Senate report on rural poverty in Canada, family violence in rural Canada was identified as one of two pressing crime-related issues that required federal government attention and “inadequate access to services” was identified as a key factor contributing to this ongoing problem (Senate Canada, 2008: 239).

Ten years later, there remains limited research or data that can provide systematic and concrete evidence that documents the extent of the problem facing rural Canadians. The recent Statistics Canada release on homicide in 2017 documented the significant increase in the homicide rate in rural communities (31%) compared to urban centres (1%), but little information was provided on what types of homicide or victims were impacted. For example, what proportion of these rural homicides were intimate femicides? A recent report from the *Canadian Domestic Homicide Prevention Initiative with Vulnerable Populations* found that nearly one-quarter of the domestic homicides that occurred in Canada from 2010-2015 involved those living in rural, remote, or Northern communities (Dawson et al, 2018: 30). Furthermore, these killings, primarily of women, were most likely to involve firearms (Dawson et al., 2018: 31). This underscores the importance of disaggregating rural and urban homicides nationally to better understand these patterns.

The Senate report referenced above also recommended that “the federal government fund academic and community-based, action-oriented research into the causes of, and response to, domestic violence in rural Canada. Further, it recommended that the federal government should take a leadership role, through its Family Violence Initiative, and support regional forums that bring together federal, provincial/territorial and community leaders, non-governmental organizations, front-line service providers, and survivors of domestic violence to develop appropriate response to family violence in rural areas” (Senate Canada, 2008: 239). Recent funding announcements suggest there may finally be some movement on this front.<sup>75</sup> Parallel efforts should more systematically examine violence against women, including gender-related killings of women and girls, in a variety of non-urban contexts given that such areas are often distinct in many ways.

<sup>75</sup> See: <https://globalnews.ca/news/4723257/gender-based-violence-funding/>.



## Firearms and Femicide

The role of firearms' legislation (i.e. gun control) on rates of violent crime continues to be debated in Canada (Langmann, 2012) and internationally (e.g. Hurka & Knill, 2018; McPhedran, 2016), particularly focusing on intimate femicide and intimate partner homicide (e.g. Zeoli et al., 2017; Zeoli et al., 2018). However, a recent, in-depth review of risk factors for intimate femicide demonstrates that one of the strongest risk factors remains whether the perpetrator has access to a gun and perpetrator's previous threat with a weapon (Spencer & Stith, 2018; Campbell et al., 2003). Emphasizing the impact of a combination of factors, this research consistently shows that women are more likely than men to be killed by an intimate partner, guns are the most commonly-used weapon in such killings, and this is even more evident in rural intimate femicides. In short, intimacy, rurality, and firearms work together to compound the risk of femicide for women and girls.

The role of firearms in femicide has not been systematically examined in Canada, but the early research examining intimate femicide in Ontario showed that guns were used in one-third of the cases (Gartner et al., 1999). This is consistent with the 2018 data where information was available: 34 percent of the killings of all women and girls involved firearms and 35 percent of intimate femicides only (see *Textbox 8*).

Given the recent increase in rural homicides in 2017 documented by Statistics Canada (Beattie et al., 2018), specifically those involving firearms, whether possession, or use, of firearms is a risk factor for femicide is a priority research question. Furthermore, when examining the number of collateral victims in cases of femicide as discussed next, whether and how firearms increases lethality for the woman or girl targeted as well as those around her is also an important question.

## Femicide and its collateral victims

Another feature that distinguishes intimate femicide from female-perpetrated intimate partner killings is the number of people that die in the incident. When women are killed by male partners, they are often the primary target, but not always the only victim and, in some cases, may survive the attack, but others do not (see *Textbox 9*) (Campbell et al., 2009; Gartner et al., 1999). Often referred to as collateral victims (Meyer & Post, 2013), additional victims may also be referred to as a type of femicide if they are women or girls. However, these collateral victims may also be men and boys (e.g. victim's new partner, male child/ren). There is a growing body of literature on collateral victims and much of this work focuses on intimate femicide, but other terms may also capture the types of cases involving collateral victims such as familicide.

Familicide refers to the killing of multiple close family members in quick succession, most often female partners, children, and/or parents (Liem et al., 2013; Websdale, 2010). International research shows that familicide is almost exclusively committed by men and

### Textbox 8: Firearms and Femicide

In 2017, a male who was allegedly at odds with his family, went on what appears to be a revengeful shooting mission that left three women dead in two separate Quebec villages. The victims were identified as his stepmother, sister-in-law and a friend of his sister-in-law who was visiting from Ontario. The gunman first went to the home of his stepmother, bound and shot her. He splashed gas on his father who managed to escape and called police from a neighbour's home. The perpetrator left, driving a few kilometres to his sister-in-law's home. Upon arrival, he shot his sister-in-law and her friend. A toddler was also present but unharmed. The perpetrator then set fire to the home and fled the scene. He was arrested shortly after and charged with three counts of first-degree murder, attempted murder, forcible confinement and arson causing danger to human life. Media coverage revealed that the perpetrator once lived with his brother and sister-in-law, but following his brother's death, his sister-in-law asked him to move out. This resulted in the perpetrator feeling spurned, as evidenced by his Facebook posts and information provided by neighbours. His sister-in-law was fearful of him and her friend moved in temporarily as a safety precaution. Subsequent media and court coverage revealed how the perpetrator felt he had nothing left to lose, already having lost his job, savings, his home, and brother. Last year, he pled guilty to the first-degree murder of his stepmother, two counts of second-degree murder for the deaths of his sister-in-law and her friend, and the attempted murder of his father. He was sentenced to life imprisonment with 25 years without parole.





is often, but not always, followed by the perpetrator's suicide (Karlsson et al., 2018; Liem et al., 2013; Websdale, 2010). Some of the 2018 incidents appear to align with this definition based on media reports. For example, in one province, a man is accused of killing his girlfriend, his mother and his step-father. In another incident, a Central Canadian man is accused of killing his estranged female partner and her two children, a girl and a boy. These two cases and the case in Textbox 9 highlight a common thread across all three incidents – the female partner appears to have been the primary target, but other victims – two women, two men, a young girl and a young boy – are also victims of what appear to align with gender-based motivated killings. The women and girl are counted as femicide victims, but what about the two men and the boy? The term 'collateral victims' does not seem to capture the fact that, in some cases, men and boys are killed simply because they were associated with a woman.

There are other collateral victims, however, including what is often an extensive network of family and friends that are left behind. For example, although it is not yet known if the victim had children in about 40 percent of the 2018 cases, where this information was known, 172 children were left without a mother in 2018<sup>76</sup> and some without a father or male guardian if he was the perpetrator and committed suicide following the femicide. If he is the accused, and did not commit suicide, depending upon the outcome of the case, some portion of these children may lose their father or male guardian if incarcerated. There is surprisingly little research examining the impacts on children left behind following femicides, but it has drawn more attention recently (Alisic et al., 2015, 2018; Ferrara et al., 2015; Ferrara et al., 2018; Jaffe et al., 2013; Kapardis et al., 2017). This research has demonstrated that children reported a range of psychological, academic, social and physical outcomes (Alisic et al., 2015), impacts that may be far-reaching as these children grow.

### *Sex work/prostitution killings<sup>77</sup>*

Internationally, it is recognized that women and girls who are sex workers or are involved in prostitution have the highest rates of femicide of any set of women ever studied (Sarmiento et al., 2014; Brewer et al., 2006). At this time, there are no known killings of women and girls in 2018 who were sex workers or involved in prostitution based on available information. However, heightened forms of stigma and insecurities associated with being criminalized create a context of precarity for sex workers, including targeted forms of violence. Such violence was highlighted vividly in the past several years with the femicide of Cindy Gladue (see Textbox 10). Her death

## **Textbox 9: Collateral victims of femicide**

In early 2018, police discovered a retired couple dead and their adult daughter with serious injuries at their rural home in Ontario. The daughter's estranged partner was arrested at the scene and charged with two counts of first-degree murder, forcible confinement and sexual assault with a weapon. He later pled guilty to two counts of first-degree murder and kidnapping. At his sentencing hearing, it was revealed how the perpetrator attacked his estranged partner in the driveway of her home, tied her up and brought her inside. Her mother came to investigate, and the perpetrator shot her in the leg, hitting a major artery before shooting her again in the back of the head. Her father had mobility issues and was lying in bed when the perpetrator entered his room and shot him several times in the head. Their daughter called 911 twice while her hands were bound, before the perpetrator sexually assaulted her (with a rifle) in their former matrimonial bedroom. He claimed to have committed the murders because she had "taken everything from him." They used to live together with her parents, had plans for building a house and were all involved in the mortgage. Following a series of disagreements, the perpetrator moved out of the home and the family attempted to buy his share of the property, but he refused to sell. The day before the murders, his lawyer informed him that he was only entitled to one-third of the property and that amount would not cover his credit card debt. In sentencing the perpetrator to life imprisonment with 25 years without parole, the judge called him "evil" and described his actions as incomprehensible.

<sup>76</sup> This is a conservative estimate. When it was known that woman had children, but not how many, we counted only one child.

<sup>77</sup> Consistent with the UN approach, the CFOJA acknowledges both sex work and prostitution, using the former to recognize and promote the rights of female sex workers and the latter to recognize the context of trafficking in persons and the sexual exploitation of women and girls (UNODC, 2018: 36).



and the subsequent ongoing social and legal responses clearly demonstrate how women and girls killed in the context of sex work/prostitution are marginalized and discriminated against as well as the frequent impunity of their killers. This marginalization is often further compounded by other intersecting identities, also evident in this case given that Cindy Gladue was an Indigenous woman.

While little research has examined the killings of sex workers due to violence in Canada or elsewhere, perhaps signaling the value with which society views women engaged in sex work/prostitution, including their deaths, Statistics Canada reported that between 1991 and 2014, there were 294 homicides of sex workers (Rotenberg, 2016). Underscoring the ongoing impunity of their killers, these figures also demonstrated that one in three (34%) homicides of sex workers remained unsolved, compared to a much lower proportion of unsolved cases among homicides that did not involve sex workers (20%).

The case of Cindy Gladue provides just one example of what often happens when perpetrators are charged and processed by the courts, including what is often Canada's failure to address systemic discrimination in the criminal justice system.

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*"My kids loved her. She loved kids. She always had a smile on."*

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*"She was just smiling the whole time. The sun came out at just the perfect time.  
You could tell that she felt beautiful.  
That day was all about her.  
She felt like a star."*

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## Textbox 10:

### The Treatment of Cindy Gladue:

### Canada's Violation of Indigenous Women's Rights in Life and in Death

Cindy Gladue was born in Athabasca, raised in Calling Lake, and later moved to Edmonton, Alberta. She was an Indigenous woman and the first-born child in her family. She was a mother of three children, a daughter, sister, aunt, cousin, and friend. As her Mom describes her: "She was a lot like you and I. She loved life, she had a family, dreams, emotions. She was kind, caring and funny. She was a beautiful woman inside and out and she was loved deeply" (Our Breaking Point, 2016). Cindy Gladue bled to death as a direct result of a wound inflicted upon her by Bradley Barton in 2011. Barton was acquitted of murder and manslaughter in Ms. Gladue's death, despite admitting that he had caused the 11-centimetre wound in her vaginal wall that resulted in her death. In the trial proceedings, defence counsel, Crown counsel, and the trial judge all contributed to the dehumanization and violation of the dignity of Ms. Gladue and her family. Throughout the trial, both Crown and defence counsel referred to her as the "prostitute," the "Native girl", and "Native woman." As affirmed by the Alberta Court of Appeal [R v Barton, 2017 ABCA 216 (CanLII)], sexism and racism were permitted to shape the court proceedings allowing negative biases and stereotypes against Indigenous women to be presented to the entirely non-Indigenous jury.

Crown counsel was permitted to introduce into evidence a portion of Cindy Gladue's sexual organs – human remains – to be viewed by the jury. The Crown and expert witnesses referred to the preserved tissue of a portion of her vaginal wall, her pelvic tissue as a "specimen" that the jury should consider as "real evidence" – as relevant and material to the trial proceedings. Kaye (2017: 463-464) observes this was "an act of complete dehumanization" that "led many Indigenous people to ask, 'how can we reconcile with a state that continues to perform violently against us? How can we reconcile with an abuser?'" Cree Metis Elder Lynda Budreau-Smaganis stated: "Her mother sat through that trial and listened to the evidence and it was really disturbing." In response to the admission, commentators have suggested that "no dead white woman would have been treated in such an objectifying, degrading, and dehumanizing manner – that Ms. Gladue's sexual organs were deemed an appropriate "specimen" for the Court precisely because she was an Indigenous woman" (Legal Strategy Coalition, 2018). Barton was acquitted of all charges regarding the death of Cindy Gladue, but this decision was successfully contested at the Alberta Court of Appeal.

Upon appeal, the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women (IAAW) and the Women's Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF) intervened before the Alberta Court of Appeal on established principles of law, arguing the instructions to the jury on the laws of consent were wrong in law, as was the admission of Ms. Gladue's sexual history and the derogatory references to her. The Court of Appeal agreed, holding that the jury was invited to apply discriminatory beliefs about the sexual availability of Indigenous women, particularly those who exchange sex for money. Barton was ordered to stand trial again on a charge of murder. Then Barton was given leave, alongside numerous interveners, to appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada. The appeal was heard in the fall of 2018 and the family – alongside their supporters and observers – continue to wait for the decisions. This case is but one example of the way colonial gendered violence plays out in the lives of Indigenous women and the desperate need for systemic changes to prevent their further dehumanization within Canada's systems of justice.





## *Research priorities: Intersectionality and femicide – Socio-demographic risk factors*

### **Femicide of Indigenous women and girls**

In the past decade, the marginalization, and subsequent increased vulnerability, of Indigenous women and girls to violent victimization has come to the forefront of national and international attention. Beginning with the work of Amnesty International and the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC)<sup>78</sup>, as discussed above, and continuing with the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Inquiry, findings consistently demonstrate that this group of women and girls face significantly higher risk of all types of violence, including femicide. Internationally, the UN SRVAW has categorized these killings as a form of femicide that occurs in the context of social, cultural, economic and political marginalization these women and girls face which exacerbates their vulnerabilities.

In Canada, historical and ongoing impacts of colonization, systemic discrimination, poverty, and other inequalities lead to Indigenous populations in general, including men and boys, being overrepresented as victims of violent crime.

The relative impunity for crimes against Indigenous women and girls compared to crimes for non-Indigenous victims also continues to be well-documented (MMIWG Inquiry, 2017). For example, despite solve rates being similar in previous years, according to official statistics, by the end of 2017, “just over three quarters (76%) of homicides involving an Aboriginal female victim were solved by police compared to 84% for non-Aboriginal female victims” (Beattie et al., 2018: 14; see also Trussler, 2010). There is an absence of research on what happens to femicides involving Indigenous women and girls that do result in charges and proceed through the court system, but what research does exist paints a dismal picture.<sup>79</sup>

Similarly, the 2018 data discussed above demonstrates that little appears to be changing for Indigenous women and girls, at least with respect to femicide. They continue to be overrepresented as femicide victims compared to other groups of women and girls, largely due to ongoing systemic discrimination, underscoring the need to recognize equally-important identities that intersect with gender to compound risk of femicide. In addition to being at greater risk than other women and girls, some research has shown that violence against Indigenous women and girls is also often more brutal (Amnesty International, 2009). This trend will be monitored in subsequent reports when more information on the 2018 incidents become available. Other patterns have also begun to emerge from the review of media reports on these deaths that suggest other forms of differential treatment in social and legal responses to these victims.

First, when names of victims were not identified and/or released publicly to the media in 2018, an overwhelming proportion of the victims were Indigenous women or girls. Specifically, there were 16 cases in which the victim's names were not released publicly and nine of these cases (56%) involved Indigenous victims and another three cases involved victims believed to be Indigenous, but this has yet to be confirmed. If confirmed, however, 12 of the 16 cases (75%) for which names were not publicly released involved Indigenous

<sup>78</sup> The initiative documented that, by 2010, over 582 Indigenous women and girls across Canada had been murdered or went missing (NWAC, 2010). The RCMP later documented 1,017 Indigenous women and girls were killed between 1980-2012, but others report the number to be closer to 4,000 (<https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/mmiw-4000-hajdu-1.3450237>). Regardless, key contributing factors identified are violence experienced by Indigenous women and girls, their families and communities for decades due to “the intergenerational impact and resulting vulnerabilities of colonization and state policies” (e.g. residential schools, child welfare system) (NWAC, 2010: i). These factors have perpetuated and maintained violence against Indigenous women and girls along with inadequate and oftentimes absent state responses. The numbers continue to grow.

<sup>79</sup> For example, see: <https://aptnnews.ca/2018/11/28/people-who-kill-indigenous-women-punished-less-than-those-who-kill-non-indigenous-women-senators-study-finds-2/>. There is a dearth of research on determinants of charges, convictions, and sentences in Canada and internationally for all crimes, including homicide. The UN SRVAW has highlighted this as a priority for future research (ACUNS, 2018).



women or girls. This trend varied across the country, largely occurring in those provinces/territories where there were higher proportions of the population who were Indigenous women and girls (e.g. Manitoba, Nunavut).

While the reasons for not identifying these victims remains unclear, there has been a growing and problematic trend whereby officials, police or otherwise, are deciding as a policy, or on a case-by-case basis, that they will not release homicide victims' identities publicly. This trend, largely arising over the past year and justified primarily by referring to restrictions imposed by privacy legislation, has drawn some negative responses. For example, in Saskatchewan, Regina police reversed their decision not to name homicide victims – with some exceptions – following concerns expressed by that province's justice minister who expressed that these names should be released.<sup>80</sup> In Alberta, Senator Paula Simons is questioning the decision by Edmonton police to withhold names of some victims.<sup>81</sup> While discussions continue about the pros and cons of releasing victims' names publicly, the 2018 data for women and girls killed by violence suggest that some transparency about whose names will and will not be released may be warranted.

Second, investigations are ongoing, but it appears that there may be greater obstacles in the investigation of those deaths, foul play or otherwise, of Indigenous women and girls. For example, in 2018, we documented nine deaths deemed 'suspicious' and 12 killings that remained unsolved at the time of writing this report. With respect to suspicious deaths, information on victim race/ethnicity was known for seven cases of which four were Indigenous women or girls. Of the 12 unsolved cases, the victim's race/ethnicity was known in nine cases; of these, four cases involved Indigenous women/girls, three involved other racial minorities, and two cases involved White/Caucasian victims. These emerging patterns are supported by recent official data that documented differential clearance or solve rates for Indigenous and non-Indigenous victims in 2017 as discussed above. Ongoing monitoring and data collection will determine whether this trend remains consistent over time.

The severity of the situation for Indigenous women and girls in Canada was highlighted by the UN SRVAW last year after her Canadian visit following which she called for urgent actions in her 'end of mission' statement.<sup>82</sup> When presenting her findings, Dubravka Šimonović stated that violence against women in Canada remains a "serious, pervasive and systematic problem," and that "Indigenous women...are overtly disadvantaged with their societies...face marginalization, exclusion and poverty because of institutional, systemic, multiple, intersecting forms of discrimination..."<sup>83</sup> While recognizing that an inquiry is ongoing, Šimonović highlighted that many changes had been recommended previously and urged action immediately.

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*"She was always looking out for everybody else. Even though she didn't have much herself, she always wanted to be there for her family."*

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### *Immigrant and refugee woman and girls*

Comparably little attention has focused on the femicide risk of immigrant/refugee women in Canada. This gap in knowledge may be due to restrictions placed on collecting data on race/ethnicity in earlier years and/or the difficulty in finding data sources that reliably capture data on race/ethnicity (Thompson, 2014). Alternatively, existing research suggests that rates of some types of violence such as domestic violence may not be higher among immigrant/refugee women compared to other populations (e.g. Rossiter et al., 2018) and, as a result, they may not have been perceived as a priority focus in previous years.

<sup>80</sup> <https://leaderpost.com/news/local-news/regina-police-service-temporarily-reverses-decision-not-to-name-homicide-victims>.

<sup>81</sup> <https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/senator-wants-edmonton-police-to-release-homicide-victims-names-1.4235431>.

<sup>82</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=22981&LangID=E>.

<sup>83</sup> See: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/un-special-rapporteur-violence-against-women-1.4637613>.





The 2018 data in this report focused on visible minority status as one way to capture groups of women and girls that were not white/Caucasian or Indigenous. We acknowledge this is not an adequate proxy for immigrants/refugees, but we focus on this variable here to illustrate this group as an emerging research priority. While data were missing in a high proportion of cases, as noted, the 2018 data appear to support previous research: visible minority women and girls were underrepresented, according to their representation in the population (16% compared to 22% respectively). However, when examining intimate femicides, visible minority women and girls were overrepresented as victims (29%) compared to their representation in the population (22%).

In recent years, the challenges immigrant/refugee women face when they experience intimate partner or domestic violence, such as cultural or language barriers, are increasingly being documented (Alaggia et al., 2009; Rossiter et al., 2018). This may enhance their risk of femicide, particularly by male partners, if they are unable to get the help they need when experiencing violence. With growing immigrant/refugee populations, it will become crucial to better understand the numerous barriers these women and girls may face in both disclosing their victimization by male partners as well as in reporting this violence to access services and supports. This group is one of four vulnerable groups being focused on by the CDHPVP discussed above and has been identified as a priority focus in recent funding announcements by the federal government.<sup>84</sup>

### *Older women*

Although violence against older women is common worldwide, it has received little attention to date and it is currently one of the most widespread, but unpunished crimes, affecting older women across all groups and nations (ACUNS, 2017). For example, researchers in the US conducted telephone interviews with hundreds of women aged 55 years and older who were living in community care clinics in three states (Fisher & Regan, 2006). Their results revealed that nearly half had experienced at least one form of abuse since turning 55 years old, many of which experienced multiple types of abuse at the hands of their spouses and/or caregivers (Fisher & Regan, 2006).

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

### **Textbox 11: Femicide and older women**

In the winter of 2017, an elderly woman suffering from Alzheimer's was stabbed to death in her sleep by her grandson. He also murdered his mother. The killings took place in the apartment of the perpetrator's mother, where he lived since his release from prison a few months earlier. The 35-year-old man called 911 himself and was arrested at the scene of the crime. He was charged with two counts of first-degree murder and pleaded guilty in February 2018, receiving a sentence of life imprisonment with 25 years without parole.

At his hearing, he read a twenty-page statement claiming that his mother abused him during his childhood, explaining that he was merely treating his mother how he was treated, letting go of "four tons of accumulated rage". The victim's sister and her daughters did not believe the claims of the accused, indicating that the accused's mother feared living with her son, but felt like she could not ask him to move out. The man was under the influence of drugs at the time of the killings. It was also reported that the accused had a history of violence towards strangers.

<sup>84</sup> See <http://cdhpi.ca/SSHRC/about-sshrc> and <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/liberal-government-gender-based-violence-1.4929851>.



Focusing on femicide, research shows that the majority of older women are killed by intimate male partners or other family members, often sons (Allen et al. 2018; Bows, 2018; Dawson, 2017; Krienert & Walsh, 2009; Sutton & Dawson, 2017) (see *Textbox 11*). This is consistent with the results demonstrated in this report. Because older women are most often killed by a close relative, femicides tend to occur within the victims' home, a finding that is not true of older male homicide victims (Krienert & Walsh, 2009). In addition, risk factors such as caregiver burnout, a history of domestic violence in the relationship, and the poor health of the victim are often documented in cases of femicide-suicide and 'mercy killings' involving female victims (Canetto & Hollenshead, 2000; Malphurs & Cohen, 2005). Therefore, when attempting to identify preventative measures for such a vulnerable population, it is crucial for practitioners to understand and educate women on how social isolation and limited mobility may actually increase opportunities for her caregiver and/or spouse to inflict potentially lethal violence (Krienert & Walsh, 2009).

In contrast, older male homicide victims are rarely killed by intimate partners (Allen et al. 2018; Krienert & Walsh, 2009). As noted, given this population is increasing rapidly, more focused research and violence prevention initiatives are needed to target this group of women. Existing research rarely distinguishes between older female and male homicide victims, often grouping the two together under the umbrella term "eldercide" (Krienert & Walsh, 2009). This is problematic because, as this section has illustrated, the homicide of older individuals is a gendered crime that requires insight into how risk is experienced differently by older males and females.

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*"Happiness is not a destination to reach, but a way to travel. That was your philosophy, cousin!  
You are beautiful in those landscapes you loved so much."*

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### *Women and girls with disabilities*

Several cases in 2018 underscored the vulnerability to violence of women and girls with disabilities, some of whom were also older women, but this is not always the case. For example, in 2018, a 52-year-old woman was rushed to the hospital where she died about a week later. It is alleged that her oxygen supply, which she needed to breathe, had been intentionally cut off. An accused has been identified and the investigation is ongoing. Few, if any, studies, however, have examined disabilities as a risk factor for femicide.

Documenting their vulnerability to non-lethal violence, a recent Statistics Canada release, *Violent victimization of women with disabilities, 2014*, underscores the growing recognition of the extent, nature, and prevalence of gender-based and disability-based violence for women with disabilities (Cotter, 2018), consistent with international trends (Dowse et al. 2016). Similarly, the Canadian Association for Community Living declared that 80 percent of women with disabilities will have experienced violence in their lifetime (CACL, 2017). This research demonstrates that experiences of violence for women/girls with disabilities cut across private and domestic settings to public settings such as state or institutional facilities.

Furthermore, studies have demonstrated that women with disabilities are more likely to experience violence at the hands of an intimate partner than are able-bodied women (Ballan, 2017; Cotter, 2018) and experience violence perpetrated by non-intimate partners, including family members, caretakers, service providers and strangers (Ballan, 2017). It has also been shown that they tend to stay in situations of abuse longer due to physical and financial dependence (Ballan, 2017) as well as barriers imposed by perpetrators, lack of physical access to service organizations and inaccessible information (Thiara et al., 2012). These increased risks stem from ableist attitudes that portray women with disabilities as weak, or pitiful, as well as over or under sexualized. The abuse is sometimes also justified by intimate partners, family members and other caregivers as a normal reaction to burden of care they perceive the woman imposed on them (Odette & Rajan, 2013).

A growing body of research suggests that violence against women/girls with disabilities is routine yet rarely adequately addressed by those in a position to do so. Moreover, disability policies advancing accessibility and inclusion tend to take a gender-neutral approach (Mays, 2006). In fact, arguing for a comprehensive human rights framework and approach, Frohmader et al. (2015) argue that:



violence perpetrated against women and girls with disabilities falls through a number of legislative, police and service delivery 'gaps' as a result of the failure to understand the intersectional nature of the violence that they experience, the vast circumstances and spaces in which such violence occurs, and the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination which make them more likely to experience, and be at risk of, violence (p. 11-12).

Similarly, in the concluding observations from Canada's initial report to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), the United Nations declared that the government must adopt a violence prevention strategy that integrates the intersections of marginalization experienced by women with disabilities (CRPD, 2017). In summary, it is essential to recognize the gender-specific and disability-specific forms of violence that women with disabilities experience in order to tailor services and resources that address their needs and protect their lives.

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*"She's just always so loving, just looking at everyone in a very helpful way.  
couldn't be anybody better than that."*

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*"I just remember laughing. We always had just good times, even if she was in a bad  
mood. Once you met her and got to know her, you realized that she's ...  
a good person to be around and have in your corner."*

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*"I feel horrible that this could happen to one of the nicest girls I had ever known.  
Literally, she never fought with anyone or disliked anyone. She was a quiet girl ...  
She loved to hang out with friends and always had a smile on her face.  
She was such a sweet, loving young woman."*

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## SECTION V:

### Future Research and Conclusions

It is recognized that femicide is only the tip of the proverbial iceberg, representing the extreme end of a continuum of male violence against women and girls; therefore, it is linked in key ways to non-lethal forms of violence against women and shares similar contributing factors. In particular, as stated by the UNODC:

“...the violence experienced by women is influenced by conditions of gender-based discrimination, often reflected in patterns attributable to gender-related killings of women, whereby structural factors influencing such discrimination are encountered at the macrolevel of social, economic, and political systems” (UNODC, 2018: 25).

Despite the recognition of these macro-level factors, examinations of femicide often focus on the individuals involved and relationship or situational factors. This focus is also reflected in this CFOJA report. This emphasis in much research, including our own, stems, in part, from the greater ability to collect information on individual-level characteristics (e.g. gender, age, marital status, cause of death) compared to broader community- or societal level factors (e.g. available resources/services, peer influences, etc.). However, there are various ways that these broader social structural or community-level factors can be explored, and this is the long-term goal of the CFOJA, given their importance for violence prevention.

We have identified three key arenas with which to examine the broader community- or societal-level factors that can work to facilitate, or prevent, male violence against women. Focusing on femicide as our unit of analysis, these three arenas are: (1) the media; (2) the criminal justice system, particularly, the courts; and, finally, (3) the legislative and policy contexts. All three arenas can play a powerful role in challenging, or entrenching, problematic attitudes, beliefs and stereotypes that work to perpetuate and maintain men’s violence against women and girls. We briefly discuss these below in the context of future research and the priorities described above.

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*“(She) was a beloved member of our family, she enjoyed a professional career and was highly regarded in her work. She was a caring and generous person, always ready to entertain and host family events and take care of those around her. Her interests lay in music, travel, her beautiful garden and lovely home, and especially friends and family. She will be deeply missed.”*

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*“She was their daughters’ biggest advocate ...  
 She had a strong belief the girls had rights to every opportunity.  
 She didn’t give you a choice but to listen [to her].  
 We all like to think we’re super moms, but she did it better.”*

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narratives not only diminish the perpetrator's responsibility by shifting blame to the victim, but they also reinforce notions that violence against women is rare or that they are largely isolated acts, ignoring the gender inequalities that connect all femicides.

In their most essential form, news reports are neatly packaged templates that, regardless of their veracity, allow the broader public to easily categorize, label, and make sense of events (Gillespie et al., 2013). As news coverage is the primary method for disseminating information on femicide, accurate reporting, including causes and prevention, is key to educating the public and shifting patriarchal and other problematic attitudes.

To respond to the above need for further research, one key priority for the CFOJA is to identify, highlight and examine how femicides are portrayed in the media and how these portrayals contribute to everyday understandings of femicide as one form of violence against women and girls. The goal is to confront biases, and the societal silences that surround violence against women so that we can begin to improve prevention efforts and increase access to support and safety for survivors.

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*"(She) was a devoted mother, daughter and sister. She cherished and loved her children, working tirelessly every day to provide for them and their families."*

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## Femicide and the Courts

As noted, the way nation states respond to femicide has become the focus of international attention, particularly in Latin America where more than half the countries with high femicide rates are located (Laurent et al., 2013; Nowak, 2012). As a result, the establishment of specialized investigation and prosecution units has been recommended by the Special Rapporteur on violence against women to address the perceived impunity for those who perpetrate femicide (United Nations, 2011). In addition, some countries have passed legislation pertaining to femicide or codified femicide as a crime (Laurent et al., 2013). These are positive steps because it is recognized that those who impose the law must recognize the seriousness of violence before society can effectively respond. Data for assessing the impact of these changes on national, regional or local responses to gender-related killings of women and girls are not readily available, however.



Similar to other countries, some Canadian research has documented that cases involving perpetrators who kill female partners appear to result in shorter sentences than those who kill women with whom they shared more distant relationships (e.g. acquaintances or strangers; Dawson, 2016a). It is also believed that there are variations in responses to femicide, depending on where the victim is killed – referred to as the 'geography of justice' – and particularly differences between urban and rural jurisdictions. However, there has been little effort to systematically document or explain these variations at the provincial/territorial or national levels so firm conclusions are not yet possible. To respond to these gaps, one key research stream being undertaken by the CFOJA is to address the above questions by systematically tracking court responses to femicide as they occur throughout the country.

We also need to understand how current attitudes, beliefs and stereotypes may contribute to varying state or criminal justice responses to femicide generally, but also specifically when certain groups of women and girls are killed. In Canada, inadequate state responses as well as historical and current impacts of colonization have been identified as contributors to the high femicide rates faced by Indigenous women and girls (NWAC, 2010). The Supreme Court of Canada has, on several occasions, identified that systemic discrimination against Indigenous people remains in the Canadian legal system. However, no systemic remedies have been provided by the Court or by the government to effectively address such inequalities (LSC, 2018). Of particular importance, the LSC identifies that Indigenous women are "discriminated against in Canada's criminal justice system regardless of whether their contact with this system



is as an individual facing criminal accusation or victimization” (LSC, 2018: 5). In part, this is due to the legislative and policy contexts within which women and girls experience violence and which may determine their access to justice in life or death discussed next.

## Legislative and Policy Contexts

**International Context:** At the international level, the CFOJA will work to identify how Canada compares to other countries in its response to violence against women and girls, including femicide. At one time, a world leader in its fight against violence against women and girls, it is not clear whether this claim can still be made (Weldon, 2002). For example, in a 2013 international scan of legislation relating to violence against women, countries were identified if they had legislation containing key components recommended by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and the United Nations (UN) that would help strengthen violence against women prevention and to provide better integrated victim protection, support and care were identified. Authors Ortiz-Barreda and Vives-Cases (2013) included countries if they had legislation targeting violence against women (VAW), including the use of any of the common terms related to VAW, such as intimate partner violence, and referred to at least two of the six sectors identified as integral to violence against women interventions for victim protection, support, and care (i.e. education, health, judicial system, mass media, police and social services).

Emotional Assault Defendant  
Women Pain Verbal Children  
Physical DOMESTIC  
Justice Grief VIOLENCE  
Argument Court Abuse  
Cohabitation Psychological  
Partner Alcohol Sexual Rage  
Help Victim Rights Threats  
Safe House Spousal Social  
Hotline Awareness Survivor

Based on the above criteria, Canada was not identified as one of those countries. At the time of the above study, Canada’s *Family Violence Initiative* was the relevant framework. Recently, the Canadian Government has implemented *It’s Time: Canada’s Strategy to Prevent*

*and Address Gender-Based Violence (GBV)* which “builds on current federal initiatives, coordinates existing programs and lays the foundation for greater action on GBV.”<sup>85</sup> It remains to be seen whether Canada would fare better if the international scan was conducted again today given that there continue to be repeated calls for a national action plan on violence against women and girls (Canadian Network of Shelters & Transition Houses, 2013).<sup>86</sup>

As another example, the *Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women*, known as the Convention of Belém do Pará entered into force in 1995 and was widely ratified by member states.<sup>87</sup> It is described as the world’s first binding international treaty that establishes that women have the right to live a life free of violence and that violence against women constitutes a violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

In 2008, a *Declaration on Femicide* was adopted by the Committee of Experts to the Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention (MESECVI), which states that femicide represents the most severe manifestation of violence and discrimination against women in Latin America and the Caribbean. In 2013 and 2015, the United Nations General Assembly adopted two resolutions on gender-related killing of women and girls, encouraging member states to adopt strategies and responses to address violence against women and reduce the risk of gender-related killings, including the criminalization and prosecution of gender-related violence and ensuring “that appropriate punishment for perpetrators of gender-related killing of women and girls are in place and are proportionate to the gravity of the offence.”

<sup>85</sup> See: <https://cfc-swc.gc.ca/violence/strategy-strategie/index-en.html>.

<sup>86</sup> See: <http://nawl.ca/en/actions/entry/joint-letter-calling-on-the-prime-minister-to-enact-a-national-action-plan>.

<sup>87</sup> For more information, see: <http://www.oas.org/en/mesecvi/convention.asp>





## Conclusion

While femicide is rare, compared to other forms of violence against women, it remains a common focus among the range of violent behaviours that men perpetrate against women and girls because it is less often affected by reporting or recording biases. This allows for better documentation, including more detailed information on the incidents and those involved. The result is more informed information for the development of intervention and prevention initiatives as well as within-country and cross-national comparisons to monitor trends and patterns and emerging priorities. In addition, rates of lethal violence, like femicide, are often used as a social barometer of sorts for other forms of violence, signaling positive or negative trends.

Despite this, data on femicide remain difficult to access and collect, particularly in some world regions or for some groups of women and girls. In addition, it remains difficult to get much information beyond, for example, gender and age of the victim; date, location, and cause of death; and, if an accused is identified, sometimes the relationship that they shared (Walby et al., 2017). In many countries, this is the best-case scenario, but these data are usually collected by official agencies and not easily accessible by researchers. Statistics Canada collects relatively comprehensive information on all homicides that occur; however, these data are limited in scope for determining whether the case was a gender-related killing or femicide.

If time and resources allow, some official agencies and/or researchers can access a variety of data sources to triangulate information, sometimes producing a more complete picture of the femicide. This is most often the case for intimate femicide, the primary focus of domestic violence death review committees in some jurisdictions in several countries (e.g. Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States; see Dawson, 2017). However, except for a handful of committees, the focus is solely on victims killed in the context of domestic or family violence, excluding a significant proportion of femicide victims.

Recent international work has identified strategies that can be applied within and across different countries to improve the availability, collection and monitoring of femicide data (Vives-Cases et al., 2016). These include “political will, technical specific requirements and the involvement of different actors—governments, mass media, police bodies, courts and professionals, who are in charge of identifying, registering and monitoring” (Vives-Cases et al., 2016: 34). Priority clusters of actions were also identified within this range of strategies and, according to experts’ assessment, “Institutionalizing national databases” was found to be most relevant, while “media coverage” was rated most feasible, the latter of which has been adopted as a first step by the CFOJA.

The authors of this international study concluded that a firm political commitment was required before any of the practical or technical steps could be progressed forward. With such a commitment, the evidence produced and the strategies that follow can contribute to increased public awareness and demand for public health sector responses. Political will can also lead to concrete information about risk factors and risk groups to guide police, legal, educational, and political forces in the development of prevention strategies and services to combat femicide and other forms of violence against women.

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

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*“(She) was a wonderful, young, energetic, bubbly person who adored her little daughter. We loved having (her) work in our office. She sincerely is a beautiful human being. She always had a smile on her face. She was always willing to do more to make sure we were always okay.”*

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*“My daughter was loving, careful and trusting.”*

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## Section VI

### Remembering Women and Girls Killed by Violence 2018

Barbara Kovic, 76, Etobicoke, ON (Jan 3)  
 Kristen Faye Cantre, 32, Indigenous, Makwa Sahgaiehcan First Nation, SK (Jan 7)  
 Name not released, 40, Indigenous, O-Chi-Chak-Ko-Sipi First Nation, Crane River, MB (Jan 7)  
 Arlène Girard, 56, Sherbrooke, QC (Jan 8)  
 Louise Earle, 62, Brighton, ON (Jan 10)  
 Baljit Thandi, 32, Brampton, ON (Jan 12)  
 Avtar Kaur, 60, Brampton, ON (Jan 12)  
 Elaine Bellevue, 61, Mississauga, ON (Jan 13)  
 Holly Marie Hamilton, 29, Hamilton, ON (Jan 14)  
 Jan Singh, 70, Oakville, ON (Jan 17)  
 Angel Sandine Beaulieu, 22, Indigenous, Winnipeg, MB (Jan 18)  
 Deidra Ann Smith, 35, Highlands East Township, ON (Jan 21)  
 Deborah Irene Yorke, 63, Dartmouth, NS (Jan 21)  
 Hoden Dahir Said, 30, Brampton, ON (Jan 27)  
 Claire Hébert, 58, Gatineau, QC (Jan 28)  
 Name not released, 35, Indigenous, St. Theresa Point, Island Lake, MB (Jan 28)  
 Yun Yu, 61, LaSalle (Montreal), QC (Jan 28)  
 Safaa Marina, 53, Nepean, ON (Feb 4)  
 Agnes Sutherland, 62, Indigenous, Timmins, ON (Feb 4)  
 Maria Da Gloria Da Silva DeSousa, 81, Orleans, ON (Feb 10)  
 Ulla Theoret, 55, Ryerson Township, ON (Feb 23)  
 Raija Turunen, 88, Ryerson Township, ON (Feb 23)  
 Chelsey Tegan Alice Rose Bien, 25, Indigenous, Kwanlin Dün First Nation, YK (Feb 26)  
 Brenda Joyce Richardson, 77, Kenora, ON (Feb. 26)  
 Name not released, 21, Thicket Portage, MB (Mar 2)  
 Alicia Marie Lewandowski, 25, Mississauga, ON (Mar 5)  
 Esozinam Assali, 27, North York, ON (Mar 6)  
 Janice West, 62, Wiarton, ON (Mar 6)  
 Krassimira (Krissy) Pejcinovski, 39, Ajax, ON (Mar 14)  
 Venallia (Vana) Pejcinovski, 13, Ajax, ON (Mar 14)  
 Name not released, 9, Indigenous, Wemindji, QC (Mar 15)  
 Ruma Amar, 29, North York, ON (Mar 17)  
 Jennifer Lynne Semenec, 45, Springhill, NS (Mar 20)  
 Nadia El-Dib, 22, Malborough, AB (Mar 25)  
 Name not released, 51, Thompson, MB (Mar 26)  
 Raena Kalee Henry, 28, Indigenous, Squamish, BC (Mar 27)  
 Marian Fischer, Morris-Turnberry, ON (Mar 29)  
 Anne Rainville, 61, Marathon, ON (Apr 5)  
 Naomi Bartlette, 33, Moncton, NB (Apr 6)  
 Rosalie Gagnon, 2, Charlesbourg, QC (Apr 18)  
 Mary Lou Clauson, 61, Midale, SK (Apr 20)  
 Mary Elizabeth (Betty) Forsyth, 94, North York, ON (Apr 23)  
 Beutis Renuka Amarasingha, 45, North York, ON (Apr 23)  
 Andrea Bradden, 33, North York, ON (Apr 23)







Geraldine Brady, 83, North York, ON (Apr 23)  
 So He (Sohe) Chung, 22, North York, ON (Apr 23)  
 Anne Marie D'Amico, 30, North York, ON (Apr 23)  
 Ji-Hun (Ji Hun) Kim, 22, North York, ON (Apr 23)  
 Dorothy Marie Sewell, 80, North York, ON (Apr 23)  
 Brittany Vande Lagemaat, 25, Kildare (Edmonton), AB (Apr 23)  
 Emily-Ann Anderson, 25, Sept-Îles, QC (Apr 23)  
 Kaylee Anderson Tooma, 2, Sept-Îles, QC (Apr 23)  
 Keri Smith, 36, Richmond, BC (Apr 30)  
 Name not released, 22, Indigenous, Iqaluit, NU (May 6)  
 Bigue Ndao, 33, Edmonton, AB (May 7)  
 Laura Jean Victoria Wigelsworth, 27, Vanastra, ON (May 10)  
 Name not released, 61, LaSalle (Montreal), QC (May 15)  
 Josephine Pelletier, 33, Indigenous, Calgary, AB (May 17)  
 Name not released, Indigenous, Fishing Lake Métis Settlement, AB (May 19)  
 Name not released, 23, Flin Flon, MB (May 19)  
 Angela Turner, 50, Charleswood, MB (May 21)  
 Abbegail Judith Elliott, 21, Toronto, ON (May 23)  
 Elisabeth Salm, 59, Ottawa, ON (May 24)  
 Rhoderie Estrada, 41, East York, ON (May 25)  
 Name not released, Iqaluit, NU (May 27)  
 Freda Joyes, 74, Spruce Grove, AB (May 27)  
 Christine Lynnette Barker, 36, Winnipeg, MB (May 28)  
 Heeley Rae Balanga, 35, Kawartha Lakes, ON (May 29)  
 Name not released, Indigenous, Taloyoak, NU (June 8)  
 Brandy Sandra Robillard, 24, Indigenous, Black Lake First Nation, SK (June 10)  
 Victoria Selby-Readman, 28, Toronto, ON (June 10)  
 Autumn Marie Taggart, 31, Windsor, ON (June 10)  
 Chloé Labrie, 28, Kuujuaq, QC (June 12)  
 Autumn Miranda Andy-Cheena, 15, Indigenous, Mishkosiminiziibiing (Big Grassy) First Nation, ON (June 13)  
 Darlene Norma Cardinal, 43, Lac La Biche, AB (June 22)  
 Nicole Chouinard, 71, Laval, QC (June 23)  
 Jenas Nyarko, 31, Toronto, ON (June 24)  
 Chantelle Almeida, 26, Vaughan, ON (June 29)  
 Michelle Marcino, 56, Buck Lake, AB (June 29)  
 Chloé Bellehumeur-Lemay, 22, Lanaudière, QC (July 1)  
 Ashley MacLean Kearse, 22, Cole Harbour, NS (July 2)  
 Crystal Louise McFadyen, 37, Saskatoon, SK (July 6)  
 Carla Rutherford, 64, Dundas, ON (July 9)  
 Carrie Shannon Paton, 38, Blue Quill (Edmonton), AB (July 12)  
 Carolyn Campbell, 52, Toronto, ON (July 12)  
 Alyssa Lightstone, 20, Newmarket, ON (July 21)  
 Reese Fallon, 18, Toronto, ON (July 22)  
 Julianna Kozis, 10, Toronto, ON (July 22)  
 Rama Gauravarapu, West Kelowna, BC (July 22)  
 Aaliyah Rosa, 7, Langley, BC (Jul 22)  
 Brigitte Pelletier, 54, Dundee, NB (~July 28)  
 Kim Racine, 24, St-Isidore-de-la-Prairie, QC (July 29)  
 Taylor Toller, 24, Calgary, AB (July 26)  
 Shawn Boshuck, 52, Calgary, AB (July 31)  
 Chelsea Lynn De Forge, 31, Vancouver, BC (Aug 1)  
 Nancy Morgan, 59, Terrace, BC (Aug 2)  
 Amanda McClaskin, 36, Muskoka Lakes Township, ON (Aug 3)



Bobbie Lee Wright, 32, Fredericton, NB (Aug 10)  
 Sara Mae Helen Burns, 43, Fredericton, NB (Aug 10)  
 Ellie May House, 31, Indigenous, Paul First Nation Reserve, AB (Aug 14)  
 Elena Marcucci, 84, Etobicoke, ON (Aug 18)  
 Wendy Allan, 51, Kawartha Lakes, ON (Aug 19)  
 Edresilda (Edra) Haan, 58, Kitchener, ON (Aug 22)  
 Sandra Anne Finn, 70, Peterborough, ON (Aug 22)  
 Amelie Christelle Sakkalis, 28, Boston Bar, BC (Aug 22)  
 Amelia Corrie Sainnawap, 31, Thunder Bay, ON (Aug 22)  
 Colleen Maxwell, 73, Toronto, ON (Aug 29)  
 Danielle Marie Faye Big George, 23, Indigenous, Big Island First Nation, ON (Aug 30)  
 Josiane Arguin, 34, Montréal, QC (Sep 1)  
 Destiny Joy Andersen, 17, Jacksonville, NB (Sep 11)  
 Candice Kennedy-Faguy, 35, Moncton, NB (Sep 22)  
 Lindsay Marie Jackson, 25, Indigenous, Duvernay, AB (~Sep 22)  
 Xiuyan Chen, 42, Mississauga, ON (~Sept. 25)  
 Name not released, 57, Berens River, MB (Sep 26)  
 Aspen Pallot, 19, Richmond, BC (Oct 4)  
 Anida Magaya, 42, Surrey, BC (Oct 5)  
 Ophélie Martin-Cyr, 19, Yamachiche, QC (Oct 9)  
 Emilie Maheu, 26, South Glengarry, ON (Oct 11)  
 Betty Ann Cup, 72, Indigenous, Iskatewizaagegan Shoal Lake 39, Kenora, ON (Oct. 12)  
 Name not released, Indigenous, 16, Regina, SK (Oct 14)  
 Name not released, 17, Igloolik, NU (Oct 17)  
 Robyn Garlow, 30, Hamilton, ON (Oct 20)  
 Baby Isabelle, 3 weeks old, Toronto, ON (Oct 21)  
 Candace (Cree) Stevens, 31, Indigenous, Upper Derby, NB (Oct 27)  
 Irene Jeannine Kelly Barkman, 32, Indigenous, Thunder Bay, ON (Oct. 29)  
 Ashley Chantal McKay, 25, Indigenous, Thunder Bay, ON (Oct 30)  
 Linda Santos, 47, Mississauga, ON (Nov 1)  
 Name not released, 25, Galahad, AB (Nov 2)  
 Melissa Trudi (Trudy) Miller, 37, Oneidas of Thames, ON (Nov 4)  
 Diane McLeod, 67, Elliot Lake, ON (Nov 15)  
 Nicole Porciello Hasselmann, 34, Burnaby, BC (Nov 16)  
 Hailey Dugay, 20, Gimli, MB (Nov 17)  
 Trina Bird, 25, Indigenous, Montreal Lake Cree Nation, SK (Nov 17)  
 Annie Little, 53, Indigenous, Winnipeg, MB (Nov. 23)  
 Elizabeth Poulin, 87, Vancouver, BC (Nov. 24)  
 Christine St-Onge, 41, Los Cabos, Mexico (Dec 4)  
 Mackenzie Petawaysin, 3, Edmonton, AB (Dec 5)  
 Mary Lafleche Petawaysin, 6 months, Edmonton, AB (Dec 5)  
 Lisa Marie Kubica, 38, Winnipeg, MB (Dec 6)  
 Samantha Sharpe, 25, Suncild First Nation, AB (Dec 12)  
 Darcie (Darcii) Lynelle Hayden Muchikekwanape, 15, Indigenous, The Pas, MB (Dec 14)  
 Laurie-Anne Grenier, 27, Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, QC (Dec 15)  
 Name not released, 90, Kelowna, BC (Dec 19)  
 Maria Araujo, 83, Mississauga, ON (Dec 21)  
 Sylina Ann Curley, 43, Indigenous, Calgary, AB (Dec 21)  
 Crystal Ann Tracey, 52, St. Stephen, NB (Dec 24)  
 Stacey Perry, 29, Calgary, AB (Dec 25)  
 Wenlan Bu, 49, Edmonton, AB (Dec 28)





## Appendix A

### *Data sources*

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

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

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

Newspapers, on the other hand, are more likely to report the social and contextual details of the homicide as the investigation unfolds to construct an interesting story for their audiences (Shon & Lee, 2016). Another study by Genovesi et al. (2010) found that newspaper articles provided more context on the homicide circumstances than what was noted in medical examiner files.



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

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

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

1. Certain homicides may not receive coverage while others are sensationalized (Parkin & Gruenewald, 2017; Salari & Sillito, 2016).
2. Related to the first point, minority homicide victims and victims residing in low socio-economic communities are less likely to receive media coverage (Parkin & Gruenewald, 2017). However, it is important to recognize that these limitations are drawn from US-based literature. It is possible that Canadian news outlets report on most homicides given their relative infrequency compared to US homicide rates; however, the level of detail will likely vary by the characteristics of the victim and accused and the region of the country.
3. Journalists typically rely on police sources and may not interview those who knew the victim/perpetrator personally or contact violence against women agencies who may have been working with the victim, accused and/or the family (Fairbairn & Dawson, 2013; Richards et al., 2014; Taylor, 2009). Therefore, the information shared by police may not be an accurate reflection of the interpersonal history of those involved, especially when there was a limited amount of police contact prior to the homicide (Taylor, 2009).



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