

PERPETRATORS AND VICTIMS OF HOMICIDE | YEARS 2018-2019

Homicides on the decline. Family related homicides are growing: victims mostly women, perpetrators men

In 2019, there were 315 homicides (345 in 2018): 204 men and 111 women. 19.7% (of which 17.6% male and 23.4% female) are foreign victims.

Homicides have been falling since the 1990s, especially those due to organised crime (29 in 2019, 9.2% of the total).

However, the number of family related and intimate partner related homicides is increasing: 150 in 2019 (47.5% of the total); 93 victims were women (83.8% of the total female homicides).

In court proceedings, the number of defendants for homicide in 'relational contexts' is increasing (246 in 2010, 271 in 2018).

0.53_{per 100,000}

Homicide rate in Italy: per 100,000 persons of the same sex, 0.70 men and 0.36 women

The EU countries with the lowest homicide rates are Italy, Croatia, Ireland, the Netherlands and Poland

101

The number of femicides in 2019

93.3%

The percentage of men among adult defendants for homicide in 2018

In absolute terms this is 676, it was 826 in 2014

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The report provides a picture of the characteristics of victims and perpetrators of homicides, with a specific focus on those occurring in the family and other relational contexts, thanks to the use of different sources in the judicial field: in particular, data from the Ministry of the Interior (which made it possible to estimate the number of femicides for the first time), the Public Prosecutor’s Offices, the Central Criminal Records Office and the Department of Penitentiary Administration (for the analysis of defendants, convicted and detained for homicide and for the observation of those occurring in a violent relational context) were used.

Continued decline in homicide victims, especially among men

Italy is today one of the safest countries in the world with respect to the risk of being a victim of intentional homicide. In 2019, the police force recorded 315 homicides (0.53 victims per 100 thousand inhabitants). Distinguished by gender, out of 100 thousand people of the same sex, 0.70 victims are male, and 0.36 are female.

If we compare the current data with those of 1991ⁱ, the peak year for homicides, from which a downward trend began, the reality has changed considerably. There were more than 6 times as many homicides (1,917 against the current 315), with a rate of 3.4 per 100 thousand inhabitants. 37.5% of homicides were attributable to mafia-type organisations. Now organised crime, while still a phenomenon to be monitored very carefully, is a less significant cause of the number of deaths (9.7% of the total in the five-year period 2015-2019).

The strong decrease in homicides and, in particular, the decrease in deaths due to organised and common crime, has mainly benefited men, who are more exposed in those contexts than women. In the early 1990s, there were 5 male homicides for every female murdered. In 2019, there were 204 male homicides and 111 female homicides.

In 2019, homicide rates were higher for men than for women in all age groups (in the 14-17 age group there were no victims). Among young people, the 18-24 year old class has a rate of 0.39 homicides per 100 thousand inhabitants, the 25-34 year old class is associated with the highest rate of 0.87 (1.19 for men and 0.54 for women, per 100 thousand inhabitants of the same age and sex). With increasing age, the rate decreases to 0.53 for the over-55s (0.63 between 35 and 54). Since the number of homicides in Italy is rather limited, its distribution by age can vary considerably from one year to another, due to occasional fluctuations.

KEY FIGURES: VICTIMS AND PERPETRATORS OF INTENTIONAL HOMICIDE

	VICTIMS OF HOMICIDE year 2019		VICTIMS OF FAMILY RELATED HOMICIDES year 2019		DEFENDANTS FOR HOMICIDE year 2018		DEFENDANTS FOR HOMICIDE IN RELATIONAL CONTEXT year 2018		CONVICTED OF HOMICIDE year 2018		CONVICTED OF HOMICIDE IN RELATIONAL CONTEXT year 2018	
	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%
Men	204	64.8	57	38.0	631	93.3	253	93.4	648	96.6	233	98.3
Women	111	35.2	93	62.0	45	6.7	18	6.6	23	3.4	4	1.7

Around one in five victims was a foreign national

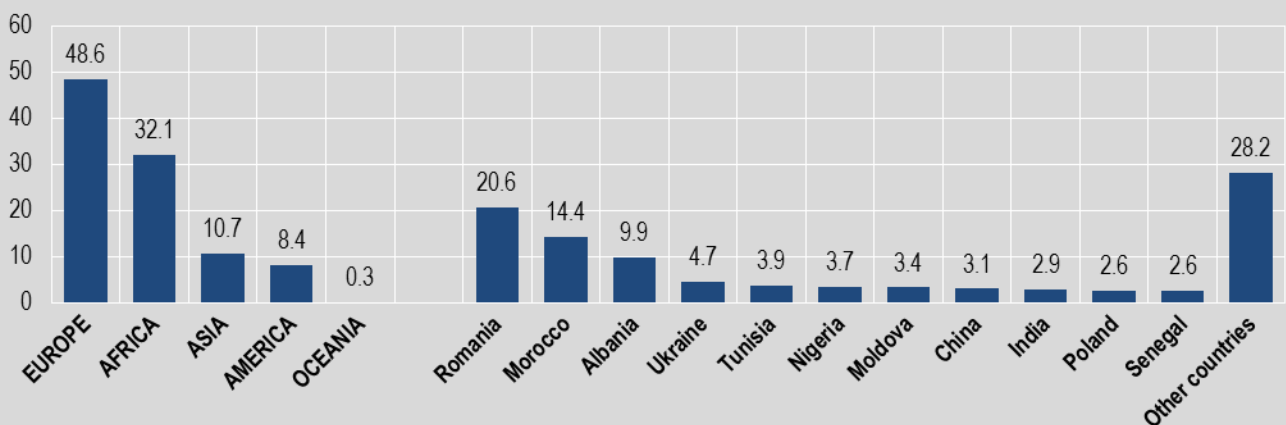
In 2019, 62 foreign nationals were victims of homicide (19.7%; 17.6% of victims among men and 23.4% among women).

As for the rates per inhabitant, caution should be exercised in their interpretation. In fact, from the calculation on the resident population, a rate of 1.24 homicides per 100,000 foreign residents (1.49 for men and 1.00 for women) would be obtained, on the basis of which the exposure to risk would be 2.3 times higher than that of Italians (more than double for men and almost three times for women). However, it is possible to assume that the rate is overestimated given the objective difficulty in determining the exact number of foreigners actually present in the country (for the percentage that has entered illegally or for those who have a legal visa or residence permit, but whose residence permit is no longer valid, to which must be added citizens of EU countries or equivalent for whom, in the case of a short-term presence, no visa or permit is required).

In the five-year period 2015-2019, foreign victims of homicide were mainly Europeans (48.6%) and Africans (32.1%). The most represented country is Romania (20.6% of the total number of victims), followed by Morocco and Albania (14.4% and 9.9%, respectively).

FIGURE 1. FOREIGN VICTIMS BY CONTINENT AND COUNTRY OF CITIZENSHIP.

Years 2015--2019, average percentages.



Source: Ministry of the Interior

Calabria holds the record for male homicides

The regional distribution of male homicides shows marked differences. In 2019, the national average was 0.70 intentional homicides per 100 thousand residents: the North and the Centre are well below this average, while the opposite is true for the South and the Islands. In greater detail, the area in which there are fewer homicides with men as the victim in relation to the population is the North-east (0.40 homicides of men per 100,000 male residents), followed by the Centre and the North-west (0.51 and 0.59 respectively). Quite different values characterise the Islands (0.91) and the South (1.15 homicides per 100,000 males).

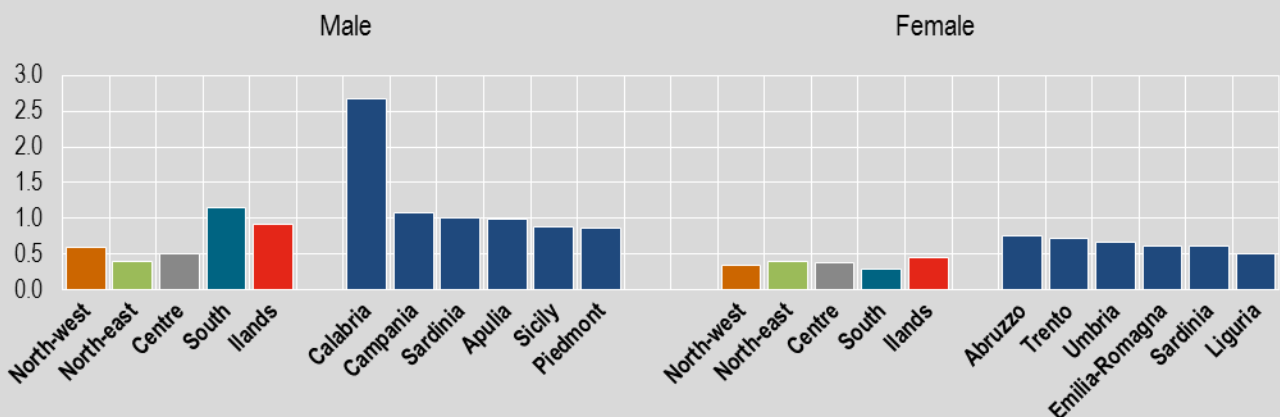
The islands both have high values (0.88 in Sicily and 1.01 in Sardinia), while the southern regions present different situations. In the demographically smaller regions, the phenomenon is practically absent: only one homicide in Basilicata (0.37 per 100 thousand men), two cases in Abruzzo (0.32) and none in Molise. On the contrary, Calabria, Campania and Apulia occupy three of the first four places in the regional ranking for homicides of men (the third is occupied by Sardinia). The region that stands out is Calabria with 2.68 homicides per 100,000 males, a value 2.5 times higher than the region that follows it in the ranking, Campania (1.07).

Calabria has historically been characterised by very high homicide levels for men compared to the Italian average, and the decrease here has also been less intense than in other high-risk regions. Comparing the average data of the three-year period 2017-2019 with those of the three-year period 2014-2016, male homicides in Calabria decreased by only 0.9%, while in Campania (which started from a similar situation) the decrease was 52.1%, in Sardinia 43.1%, in Sicily 35.7% and in Apulia 7.7%. Between the two periods, murders of men increased in Piedmont (+23.6%).

For homicides of women, the distribution is not particularly diversified across the line. The distribution values range between 0.30 homicides per 100,000 resident women in the South and 0.45 in the Islands. At a regional level, the levels in Abruzzo (0.75 per 100,000 resident women, 5 cases) and in the Autonomous Province of Trento (0.72, 2 cases) stand out. This is followed by Umbria, Emilia-Romagna, Sardinia and Liguria. As mentioned above, since the number of homicides is quite low, significant variations in the rates may occur from one year to the next in the regions, especially in those with a smaller population. The lack of geographical contiguity observed among the most affected regions and the fact that women’s homicides occur mainly within the family and from the partner, suggests that their distribution is only marginally influenced by the general crime levels characterising the individual regions.

FIGURE 2. VICTIMS OF HOMICIDE BY GENDER AND GEOGRAPHICAL AREA AND REGIONS WITH THE HIGHEST INCIDENCE.

Year 2019, rates per 100,000 inhabitants with the same characteristics



Source: Ministry of the Interior

Family related homicides on the rise

In 2019, of the 315 homicides committed, 47.5% took place within the family or was perpetrated by a current or a former intimate partner, a value that has been steadily increasing over the years (+13.3% compared to 2018, +34.9% compared to 2017 and +126.5% compared to 2002, the year in which the historical data series began), also due to the increase in the number of cases in which the perpetrator was identified and the decrease in those attributable to perpetrators unknown to the victim.

Two factors stand out in particular: on the one hand, the number of men killed has decreased over the years, more often by persons unknown to them and whose murders often remain unsolved, while women are killed more within the family; on the other hand, murders by relatives have increased, including against men (in 2019, 22.5%, the same as for women).

The gender differences are however strong: family or intimate partner related homicides account for 27.9% of the total number of homicides of men and 83.8% of those with female victims; fifteen years ago, the same figures were 12.0% and 59.1% respectively.

Women were mainly killed by their intimate partners or ex-partners (61.3%): in particular, 55 homicides (49.5%) were perpetrated by a man with whom the woman was in a relationship at the time of her death (husband, cohabiting partner, boyfriend), and 13 (11.7%) by an ex-partner. Among the current partners, in 70.0% of the cases the murderer is the husband, while among the former partners, it is former cohabiting partners and ex-boyfriends that form the largest group.

In addition to homicides by intimate partners, there are homicides by other family members (22.5%, 25 women) and other acquaintances (4.5%; 5 victims). These values have overall remained stable over the years.

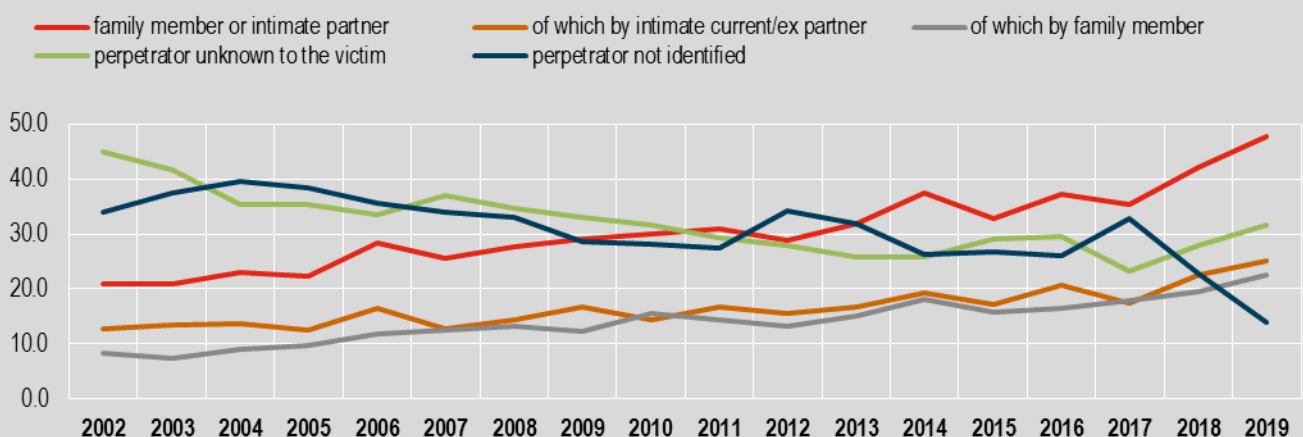
For women, the situation worsened further in the first half of 2020: murders of women accounted for 45.0% of total homicides, compared to 35.0% in the first six months of 2019, and reached 50.0% during the lockdown in March and April 2020. Women were mainly killed in intimate partner/family settings (90.0% in the first six months of 2020) and by partners or ex-partners (61.0%).

Men are mostly killed by unknown persons (43.1%) or by unidentified perpetrators (21.1%), situations that are, however, much in decline compared to the early 2000s. Comparing the average of homicides with male victims in the period 2017-2019 with the average of the period 2002-2004, the decrease is 57.0%. In particular, homicides with an unidentified perpetrator decreased by 70.0%, those by killers unknown to the victim by 63.0%.

Homicides of men due to common or organised crime, most frequently committed by strangers, halved in 15 years (from 0.65 per 100,000 in 2005 to 0.30 in 2019). Similarly, homicides of men with an unidentified perpetrator are falling sharply (from 0.77 in 2005 to 0.15 in 2019).

FIGURE 3. VICTIMS OF HOMICIDE BY VICTIM-OFFENDER RELATIONSHIP.

Years 2002--2019, percentages



Source: Ministry of the Interior, DCPC dedicated database of intentional homicides of the criminal police

Increasing number of women victims of intimate partners and ex-partners in the Islands

Male and female homicides are distributed differently across the nation. In general, in the South and Islands more men are murdered, in the North more women. However, in 2019, the rate of women victims of partners is higher in the Islands (0.36 per 100 thousand women, compared to 0.22 of the national average), followed by the North-east (0.25) and the North-west (0.23).

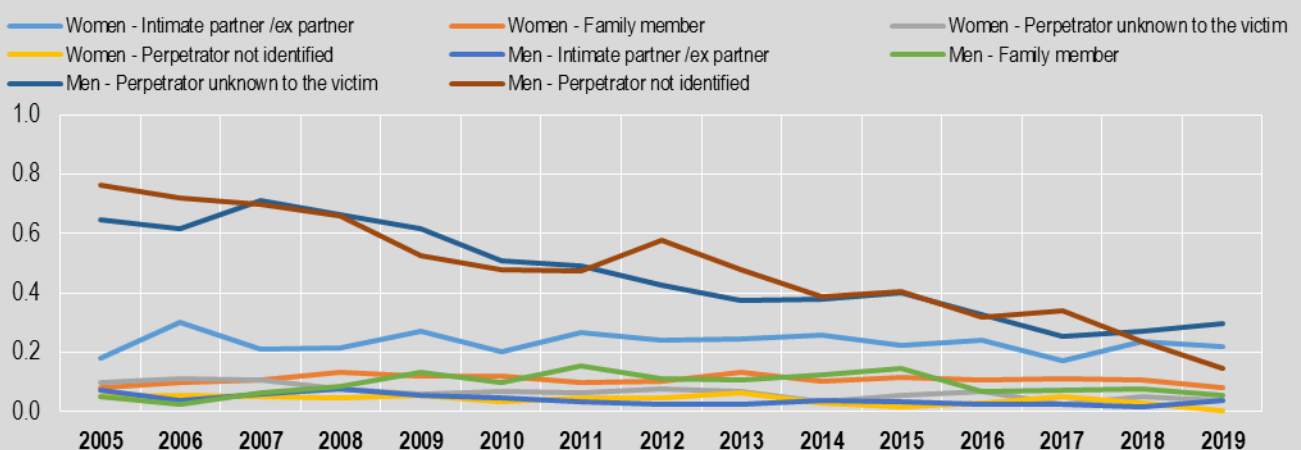
Among the regions, Abruzzo, Emilia-Romagna, Liguria, Sicily and Sardinia are above the average, with rates ranging from 0.45 to 0.36 per 100,000 women. The few homicides in Umbria, the province of Trento and Bolzano, and almost all those that occurred in Piedmont, Liguria, Marche, Tuscany, Campania, Calabria, Apulia and Sardinia are family-related. By contrast, no homicides of women were recorded in Basilicata in 2019.

For men, the highest rates of homicides by strangers and unidentified perpetrators are again registered in the South and the Islands: respectively 0.42 per 100,000 and 0.44 for homicides by strangers (against 0.30 of the Italian average) and 0.42 and 0.22 for homicides with an unidentified perpetrator (against 0.15 of the national average).

At the regional level, the highest rates for homicides committed by unknown persons are found in Calabria (0.64 per 100 male residents) and Sardinia (0.63), followed by Campania and Apulia (0.47 and 0.41). The same regions also record the highest rates for male homicides with an unidentified perpetrator, with a peak of 0.96 in Calabria. As for homicides committed by relatives on men, the highest rates are found in Trentino-Alto Adige, Piedmont and Veneto.

FIGURE 4. VICTIMS OF HOMICIDE BY VICTIM-OFFENDER RELATIONSHIP AND GENDER.

Years 2005 - 2019, rates per 100,000 men and per 100,000 women



Source: Ministry of the Interior, DCPC dedicated database of intentional homicides of the criminal police

Female foreign nationals also killed mainly by intimate partners

In 2019, 53 Italian women (62.4% of the total number of Italian women killed; 53.4% in 2018) and 15 foreign women (57.7%) were killed by their intimate partners. While as many as 25.9% of Italian women are victims of a relative, foreign women are more exposed to violent dynamics with strangers and other non-family acquaintances (19.2% are victims of a stranger).

Also for men, homicides committed by relatives are becoming more frequent: 23.8% of cases among Italians (40 in 2019), against 16.7% among foreign nationals (6). Almost a quarter of the homicides of Italians remain unsolved (23.2% against 11.1% for foreign nationals). Foreign men are more often victims of strangers (66.7% against 38.1% for Italians).

Higher homicide risk in the family for younger and older people

For younger and older people, the greatest risk is posed by the family environment: in 2019, all underage victims were killed by a family member or relative (14 homicides among 0-13 year olds; no homicides detected among 14-17 year olds) and 37.0% of over-65s.

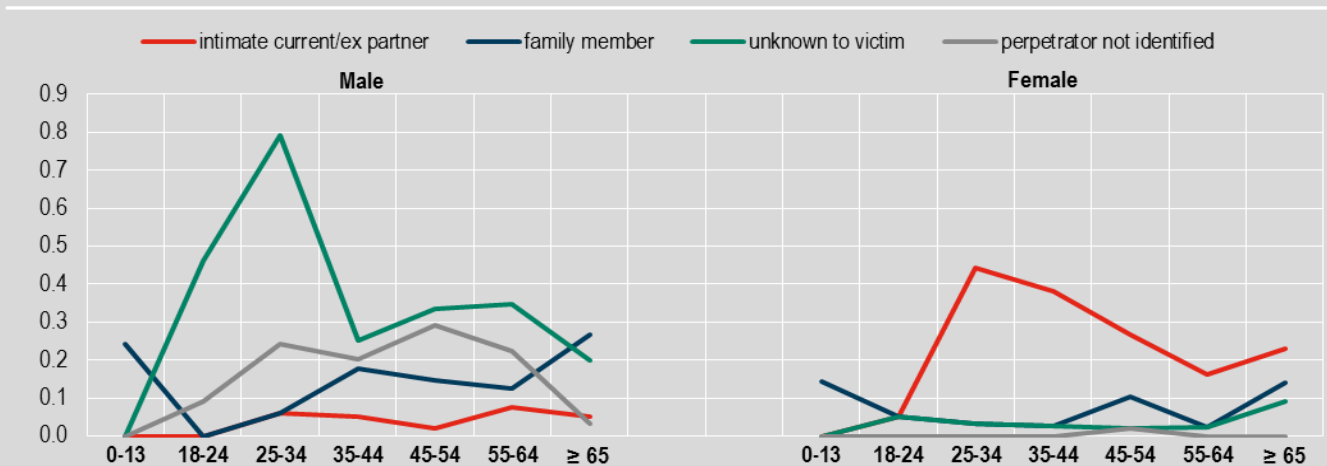
For the adult groupings, 44.4% of men over 65 and 29.6% of women were killed by a relative, while almost half of women of the same age were killed by an intimate partner (48.6%). The possibility of being killed by strangers (almost one fifth of cases) is not a negligible risk for women over 65.

82.4% of 25-34 year-olds, 78.9% of 35-44 year-olds, 70.0% of 55-64 year-olds and 65.0% of 45-54 year-olds were victims of intimate partners. Only 18-24 year-olds are killed equally by intimate partners, relatives and persons unknown to them (all in 33.0% of cases).

In contrast, males of all ages, with the exception of minors and the elderly, are predominantly killed by persons unknown to the victim, with a peak at 25-34 years old.

The rate of homicides for which a perpetrator has not been identified has halved for 25-34 year-olds (from 0.45 per 100,000 males of the same age in 2018 to 0.24 in 2019) and has almost disappeared for 18-24 year-olds (0.32 per 100,000 males of the same age in 2018, 0.09 in 2019).

FIGURE 5. VICTIMS OF HOMICIDE BY VICTIM-OFFENDER RELATIONSHIP, GENDER AND AGE GROUP. Year 2019, rates per 100,000 men and 100,000 women of the same age



Source: Ministry of the Interior, DCPC dedicated database of intentional homicides of the criminal police

Murders of women in Italy classified mainly as femicides

Femicideⁱⁱ, according to the statistical definition by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE, 2017ⁱⁱⁱ), is defined as “the killing of a woman by an intimate partner and the death of a woman as a result of a practice that is harmful to women”. The components of this definition are gender inequality and the gendered motivation of homicide. In other words, femicide is, according to the Istanbul Convention^{iv}, the murder of a woman because she is a woman.

The main types of femicide discussed in the literature are intimate partner homicide, homicide linked to sexual violence or sexual context, femicide of women over 65, racially motivated and homophobic femicide, homicides linked to traditional norms, such as honour or dowry homicides or linked to harmful practices (such as female genital mutilation), homicides linked to the criminal environment, such as women killed as victims of trafficking or prostitution or in any case in the context of criminal exploitation.

On the basis of these definitions, it is not yet easy to identify at a statistical level the descriptive variables that would help to detect femicides in the absence of specific legislation, which is however present in the 16 Latin American countries that, since 2007, have legislation dedicated to it (ECLAC, 2014^v) and in some cases encompasses the crime of femicide, in others it takes the form of an aggravating circumstance.

Essential variables to identify homicides include the characteristics of the victim and perpetrator, their relationship, the gender motivation of the homicide, the perpetrator’s previous history of domestic violence and previous sanctions, and the context and *modus operandi* by which the homicide occurred.

At the international level, both EIGE at the European level and the United Nations (UNWOMEN and UNODC) are preparing a classification to provide comparable data across countries. For example, UNWOMEN in 2020, through the Centre of Excellence for Gender Statistics (CEGS), prepared a set of 5 interrelated variables that allow to identify femicide. These data collection systems represent reference models from which Italy is still far away.

Using this framework, 93 of the 111 murders of women committed in 2019 can be classified as femicides (83.8% of the total). Concerning the remaining 18 female deaths committed in non-family settings, 8 victims are over 65 years old and therefore, given the vulnerability of this category, are considered as femicides, which would add up to 101 cases.

Unfortunately, there is currently no other data available to determine whether a homicide is gender-motivated: sexual violence before or at the time of the killing, disfigurement of the body, hate-based rage in the dynamics of the killing (*modus operandi*^{vi}) or, for example, association with other crimes such as sexual or labour exploitation of the victim or aiding or abetting prostitution or the victim’s activity as a prostitute.

Some of this information is, however, present with respect to the defendants.

FIGURE 6. CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR GENDER STATISTICS (CEGS) MINIMUM SET OF VARIABLES TO DETECT FEMICIDES. Year 2020

Victim characteristics (21 variables), including in addition to socio-demographic variables, sexual orientation, whether she was a sexual violence survivor, whether she was pregnant, whether she was a prostitute, etc.

The characteristics of the perpetrator (18 variables), including in addition to socio-demographic variables, criminal record, history of violence, etc.

The victim-perpetrator relationship (9 types of relationships), including intimate partner, ex-partner, family member, acquaintance, colleague, friend, stranger, police officer, etc.

The *modus operandi* (5 variables), including further damage to the body and type of weapons used, desecration of the corpse, etc.

Circumstances (9 variables), including whether sexual violence occurred, mutilation of the body, whether the murder is related to an organised crime, etc.

Gender motivation (14 variables), including the victim’s intention to separate, pregnancy, child custody conflict, jealousy and possessiveness, honour motives, hate motives related to the victim’s sexual identity, previous domestic violence, criminal activities involved.

Slight increase in closed homicide cases

In 2018, there were 847 proceedings defined at the General Register of Prosecutors' Offices in which there was at least one offence of committed intentional homicide. For 401 of them, the case was dismissed, while the remaining 446 were prosecuted. In the last four years there has been a slight increase in the number of cases for which dismissal has been ordered.

Most proceedings have only one perpetrator registered in the proceedings. In 2018, in the case of proceedings for which prosecution has begun, 71.1% have only one defendant, while 13.2% have two. On the contrary, for proceedings that have been dismissed, 52.3% of proceedings have only one registered suspect while 18.7% have two.

Defendants for homicide mostly men

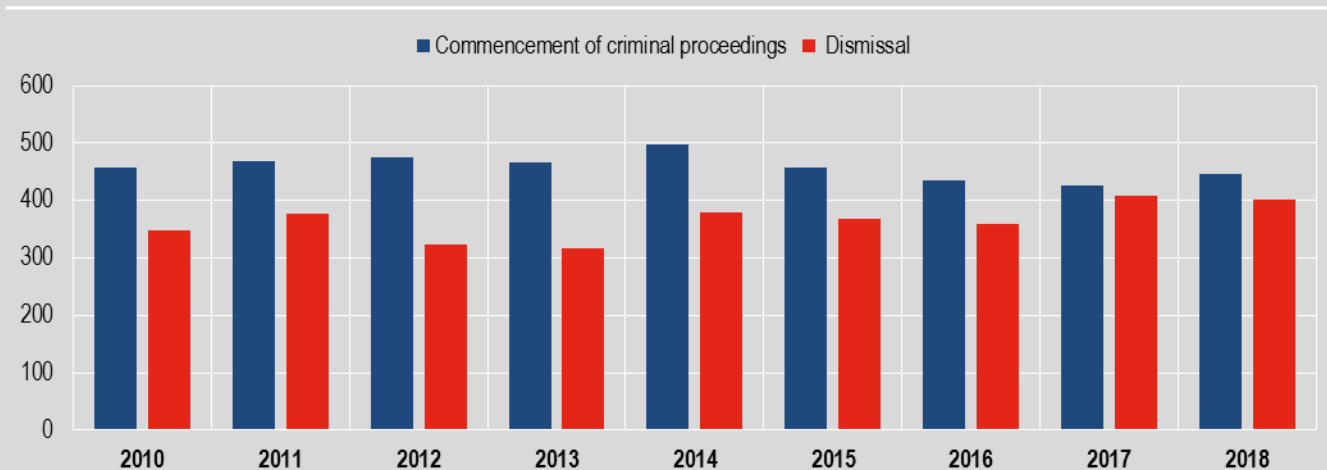
In 2018, there were 676 persons indicted for at least one crime of intentional homicide in the 'Adult' prosecution offices. There has been a substantial decrease in the number of defendants over the last four years; from 826 in 2014 to 676 in 2018.

Defendants are mostly men: in 2018, 93.3% were men compared to 6.7% women. 78.6% were born in Italy against 21.3% born abroad. The distribution by age shows greater numbers in the first classes and in particular the modal class is 25-29 years old.

Considering the types of crimes committed in conjunction with homicide, the 2018 data show that 34.6% of defendants are only charged with intentional homicide while 65.4% are also charged with other crimes. Among these, the most frequently charged offences are 'violation of the rules on weapons and explosives' (40.2% of those charged with at least one murder offence are also charged with committing violations of the rules on weapons and explosives), robbery (9.9%), receiving stolen goods (7.2%), voluntary injury (6.8%) and destruction and removal of a corpse (4.9%).

A particular analysis was made of these proceedings in order to identify homicide proceedings not related to property crimes (such as robbery, receiving stolen goods and theft), crimes in the context of drug dealing and production, organised crime and corruption offences. This is to highlight a specific category of homicides in violent contexts related to relationships.

FIGURE 7. PROSECUTIONS FOR COMPLETED INTENTIONAL HOMICIDE BY TYPE OF PROSECUTOR'S REQUEST. Years 2010-2018, absolute values



Source: Istat, Data collection on reported crimes for which the judicial authority has initiated criminal proceedings and on juveniles offenders

Homicides from ‘violent contexts’ on the rise

Not all homicides are the same: those of particular social relevance in ‘violent’ contexts, e.g. within the family, involve 271 defendants (40.1% of those charged with intentional homicide). These defendants are men in 93.4% of the cases and women in 6.6%. The defendants of this type of homicide were mostly born in Italy (82.7%, compared to the total of homicide cases; 78.6%, when considering all defendants with at least one homicide offence).

The trend in ‘violent context’ homicides over time shows a slight increase: the number of defendants in ‘violent context’ homicides increased from 246 in 2010 to 271 in 2018.

Considering the number of types of crimes committed, the 2018 data show that 11.8% of defendants are so only for intentional homicide, while 88.2% are also charged for other crimes (64.2% for two types of crimes, 21% for three types).

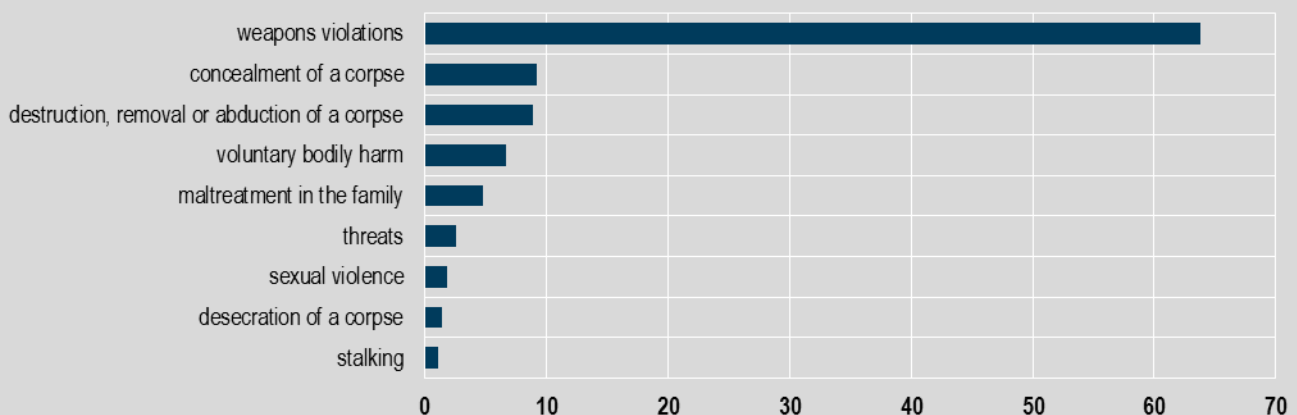
Defendants who committed several types of offences were also charged with violations of the rules on weapons (63.8%), concealment and destruction of a corpse (9.2% and 8.9% of cases respectively), voluntary bodily harm (6.6%) and maltreatment in the family (4.8%). In cases of maltreatment in the family, aggravated violence, stalking, sexual violence and group sexual violence, the defendants are only men.

Of particular interest are the aggravating circumstances that can be charged to defendants for intentional homicide in a violent relational context. The aggravating circumstance of homicide ‘against an ascendant or descendant’ (Article 576, paragraph 1, number 2 and Article 577, paragraph 1, number 1 of the Criminal Code) is charged to 13.7% of the defendants (in absolute value 37) and the aggravating circumstance ‘against relatives’ (Article 577, paragraph 2) to 5.2% (14 cases). The perpetrators charged for homicides aggravated by sexual assault (Article 576, paragraph 1, number 5) are instead 4 (1.5%). These aggravated homicides are also associated with other offences such as sexual violence and maltreatment in the family.

In the cases which have as an aggravating circumstance the homicide of a relative or of an ascendant or descendant (51 in total), on the other hand, 7 defendants (13.8%) and 4 defendants (7.8%) were associated with the offence of destruction of a corpse and of maltreatment in the family, abuse of the means of correction or discipline.

On the other hand, murders outside the ‘violent relational’ context are decreasing. The number of defendants fell from 296 in 2010 to 209 in 2018, similar to the decrease in mafia-related homicides and murders for robbery and theft found in police data.

FIGURE 8. DEFENDANTS CONVICTED OF CARRYING OUT AT LEAST ONE HOMICIDE IN ‘VIOLENT CONTEXTS’ WHO COMMITTED MULTIPLE TYPES OF CRIME BY TYPE OF ASSOCIATED CRIME. Year 2018, percentages



Source: Istat, Data collection on reported crimes for which the judicial authority has initiated criminal proceedings and on juveniles offenders

From the judicial data it is not possible to draw conclusions about femicides, since in the prosecution proceedings both damaged parties and victims are recorded; moreover, in many cases even the information about the simple sex of the victim is missing. In proceedings with at least one offence of intentional homicide defined in 2018, there were 1,276 victims/damaged parties associated with proceedings initiating prosecution (of which 409 females and 556 males) and 863 with dismissed proceedings (169 females and 292 males).

Most of those convicted of murder men aged 25-34

In the purviews of judgements entered in the Criminal Records in 2018 there are 747 sentenced intentional homicides for 671 persons convicted of committed intentional homicide.

Considering the purviews of judgements gender and age group at the time of the homicide being committed, it emerges that the female component among those convicted of homicide is 3.4% (i.e. 23 women) while the male component is 96.6% (i.e. 648 men), 85.1% of the total number of convicted persons.

When analysing sex and age group together, it emerges that among women convicted of murder more than half of them (56.5%) committed the crime between the ages of 35 and 44, while among men the age group most represented is that of 25 to 34 (for more than a third of convicted offenders, 218). For both sexes, more than three quarters of those convicted committed the murder between the ages of 18 and 44.

Most of those convicted of murder already have criminal records

71.8% of male offenders had a criminal record, while among women the percentage is much lower at 34.8%.

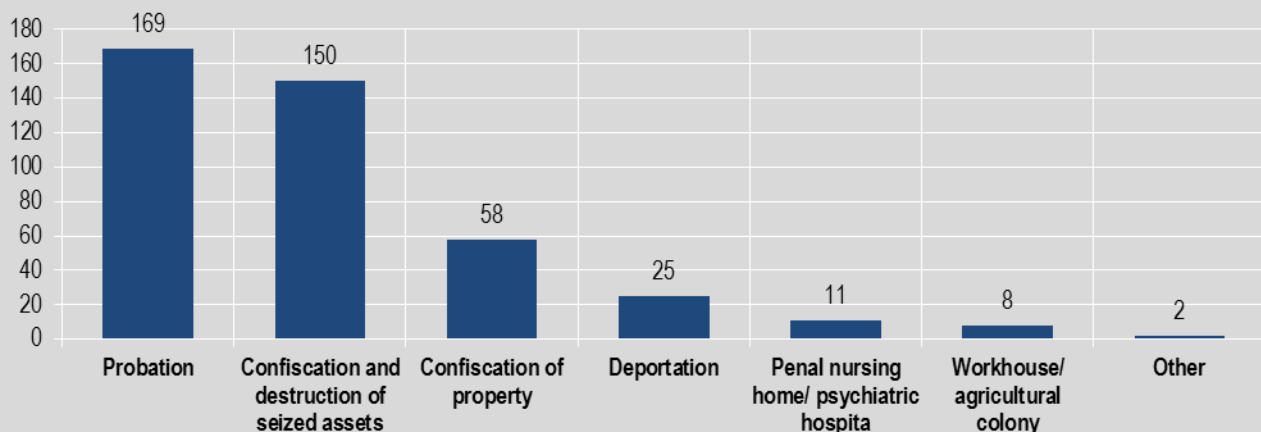
The analysis of the geographical origin of those convicted of homicide shows that the Italian component, for both sexes, is higher as a proportion of the total number of convicted persons. Convicted murderers are Italian citizens in 8 out of 10 cases (79.9%) (82.6% among women, 79.8% among men).

Campania is the region with the highest rate (207) per place of offence committed, followed by Sicily (77) and Lombardy (77).

More than half of those convicted of murder (56.3%) committed the crime no more than 6 years before the year of conviction. Convicted murderers who killed before 2012 account for 43.7%.

Several security measures were also applied in convictions for committed intentional homicide. Probation in 169 cases, confiscation or forfeiture and destruction of property confiscated from 208 convicted persons, as well as other measures applied to a lesser extent.

FIGURE 9. PERSONS CONVICTED OF COMPLETED INTENTIONAL HOMICIDE BY SECURITY MEASURES ORDERED. Year 2018, absolute values



Source: Istat, Data collection on persons convicted of a crime or misdemeanor with a final sentence

Aggravating circumstances in murder offences spread

Within the 671 purviews of judgements for intentional homicide, 1,781 offences were sentenced, of which 1,399 were violent offences. Of these, 747 were cases of committed intentional homicide, followed by 386 offences related to weapons and explosives violations. The other 266 sentenced offences, falling into 17 categories of offences, account for 19% of the violent offences sentenced within the homicide sentencing range.

For 1,047 of the 1,399 violent crimes sentenced in purviews of judgements with at least one committed intentional homicide, at least one aggravating circumstance has been identified among those provided for in Articles 576 and 577 of the Penal Code, which qualify, for instance, when the crime is committed against an ascendant or descendant, when it is related to sexual violence, against relatives or when it is committed by the stalker. Other subparagraphs of Articles 576 and 577 concern the manner of killing, premeditation, aggravated murder and other circumstances. At least one of these aggravating circumstances was recognised in 475 of the 671 cases where the defendant was convicted of committed intentional homicide.

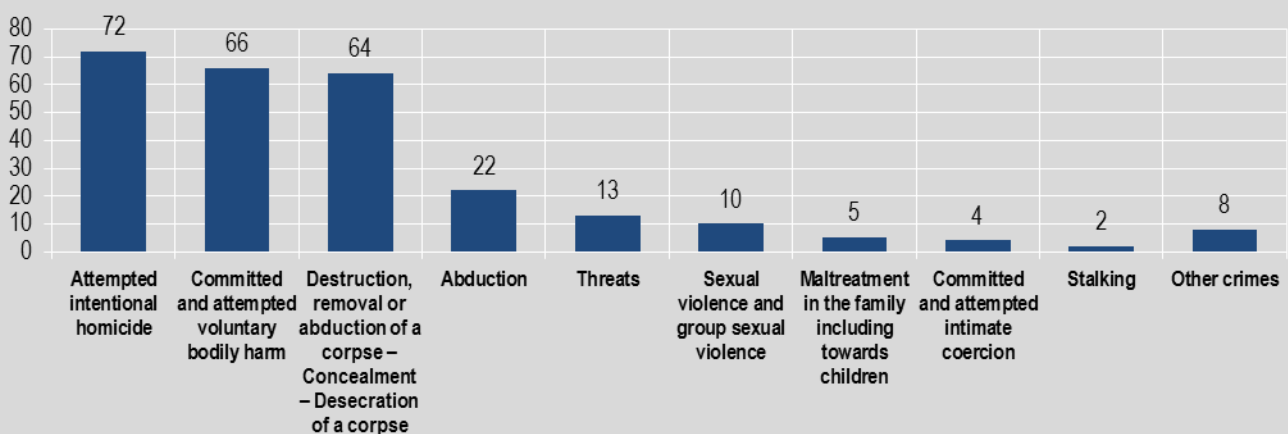
More men and more Italians among those convicted of murder in a violent context

Considering the convictions from which crimes against property, such as robbery, theft and burglary in the home, drug dealing, trafficking and production, corruption, usury and extortion as well as organised crime offences were excluded, it emerges that there were 237 convictions for homicides describable as linked to violent contexts in a relational context, since in the convictions, in addition to committed intentional homicide, other violent offences were sentenced, such as violation of the rules on weapons and explosives, committed and attempted intentional injuries, destruction, removal or abduction of a corpse (concealment), desecration of a corpse, kidnapping, threats, sexual violence and group sexual violence, maltreatment in family, including towards children, coercion, and stalking.

There were 209 convictions for at least one intentional homicide not attributable to violent contexts in a relational context, in which at least one offence against property was sentenced, such as robbery, burglary and housebreaking, or drug dealing, trafficking and production, corruption, usury and extortion or mafia-type criminal association. On the other hand, there were 222 convictions in which only the crime of intentional completed homicide was sentenced.

Focusing the attention on those convicted of homicides in a violent relational context, one notices the greater weight of the male component, which is almost equal to the totality of convicted persons (98.3%) against 1.7% of women, and of the Italian component (84.8% are of Italian origin while 15.2% are foreign nationals). These convicted persons also have several criminal records.

FIGURE 10. SOME VIOLENT CRIMES SENTENCED IN THE PURVEWS OF JUDGEMENTS WITH AT LEAST ONE CONVICTION FOR INTENTIONAL COMPLETED HOMICIDE. Year 2018, absolute values



Source: Istat, Data collection on persons convicted of a crime or misdemeanor with a final sentence

Number of convicted relational contexts homicides on appeal on the rise

Among those convicted of homicides in relational contexts, the percentage of those convicted on appeal increases (96.6% against 93.1% for all homicides) as well as the length of sentences.

Those convicted of homicides in 'violent relational contexts' received sentences of more than 10 years and life imprisonment more frequently than those convicted of other types of homicides: 89.9% compared with 85.5% received sentences of more than 10 years and 15.2% received life imprisonment (36 cases) compared with 12.3% of the others.

In addition, 170 out of 237 convicts were found to have at least one of the aggravating circumstances provided for in Articles 576 and/or 577 of the Criminal Code.

With regard to the security measures applied, they were all applied similarly or slightly more, in percentage terms, in all homicide convictions compared to homicide and violent family crime convictions: confiscation of property (8.6% vs. 9.7%), confiscation and destruction of property (22.4% vs. 18.1%), penal psychiatric hospital (1.6% vs. 1.3%), work/agricultural colony (1.2% vs. 0%), probation (25.2% vs. 24.5%), deportation (3.7% vs. 3.4%).

Far more men imprisoned for murder

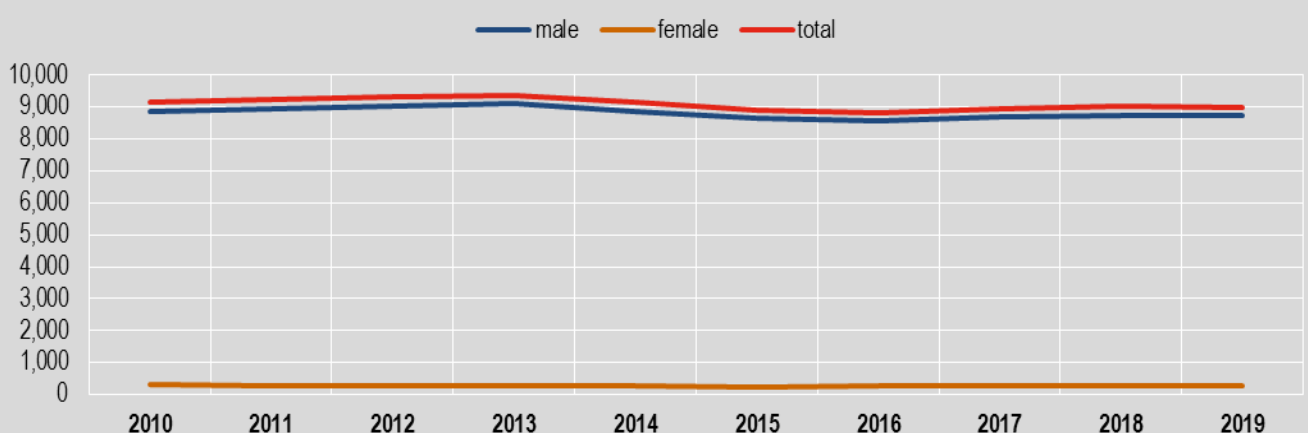
There are 9,003 inmates in prison for murder (including attempted murder) in 2019 (8,728 males and 275 females). It is not known how many of these inmates committed homicides against family members, intimate partners or gender-based violence. Unfortunately, in the data recording of articles 576 and 577, the relevant subparagraphs and paragraph numbers are not reported, thus preventing knowledge of the data concerning aggravating circumstances for homicides of relatives, ascendants and descendants, stalker homicides, and homicides related to sexual violence.

The joint analysis with other crimes shows that there are 99 homicides related to stalking, 177 to sexual violence and 249 to maltreatment in the family.

These prisoners, who in most cases are serving their sentences, had been in correctional facilities for an average of 9 years in 2019. The average length of sentence is between 14 and 19 years.

FIGURE 11. NUMBER OF ADULT PRISONERS IN ITALIAN PRISONS FOR INTENTIONAL HOMICIDE AND SEX.

Years 2010-2019, absolute values



Source: Ministry of Justice - Department of Penitentiary Administration

Europe has the lowest homicide rates

The United Nations Office on Drug Control and Crime Prevention (UNODC) estimated 464,000 intentional homicides in 2017 worldwide^{vii}. The average incidence is 6.1 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants and, if we distinguish the sex of the victim, we obtain considerably different values: 9.1 per 100,000 men (who make up 81.0% of the total number of victims) and 2.0 per 100,000 women.

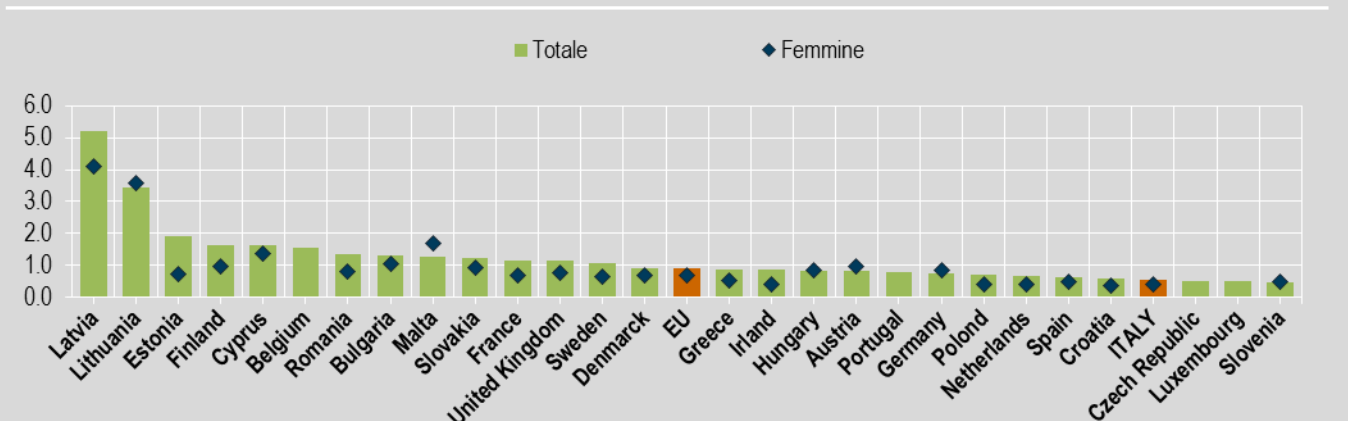
Homicides are distributed as follows: 37.0% in the Americas, 35.0% in Africa, 23.0% in Asia. The percentages for Europe (4.7%) and Oceania (about 0.2%) are much lower.

Central America, Latin America and the Caribbean area, taking into account the demographic dimension, are the sub-regions^{viii} where the incidence of the phenomenon is highest, with 26, 24 and 15 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants, respectively. In contrast, the lowest levels of homicide (around one victim per 100,000 inhabitants) are found in Europe (with the exception of Eastern Europe, where the rate in 2017 was 6 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants), East Asia and Oceania. The most homogeneous situation, considering the gaps between the rates of the individual states that make up the sub-regions, is in Western Europe.

In almost all countries, the homicide rate is higher for men than for women, especially where the incidence of homicides is higher. This is also explained by the different types of homicides that characterise countries with high and low levels per inhabitant. In countries with higher homicide rates, the proportion of homicides in which both perpetrator and victim are men is higher, often also in relation to the presence of organised crime, which traditionally has a male composition. In countries where the homicide rate is lower, homicides between partners and, in general, homicides within the family, in which the victim is almost always a woman, are more relevant in percentage terms.

In 2018, Italy was among the countries with the lowest homicide rate in the EU28. Considering the total number of homicides per 100,000 inhabitants, only Slovenia, Luxembourg and the Czech Republic (with values between 0.48 and 0.52) are in a better state than Italy (0.57). Latvia and Lithuania (with values of 5.22 and 3.45 respectively) are well above the EU average. Also for homicides with women as victims, Italy has a rather low rate (0.43 homicides per 100,000 women). Only 4 of the 24 EU countries for which data are available are in a better situation: Croatia, Ireland, the Netherlands and Poland (with values between 0.38 and 0.42).

FIGURE 12. VICTIMS OF INTENTIONAL HOMICIDE IN EU COUNTRIES (a). Year 2018, values per 100,000 inhabitants



Source: Eurostat, [crim_off_cat] and [crim_hom_soff] databases.
 (a) The EU figure for women refers only to countries for which data are available.

Glossary

Central Criminal Records Office: the office that collects and keeps the extracts of measures and annotations whose registration is prescribed in both criminal and civil matters. (Code of Criminal Procedure).

Convicted person: a person against whom a final conviction has been handed down. The convicted person is recorded when he is entered in the register of the Central Criminal Records.

Criminal conspiracy: occurs when three or more persons associate for the purpose of committing several offences.

Criminal proceedings: the set of steps and acts aimed at ascertaining and affirming criminal liability in respect of a given conduct which the legal system classifies as a criminal offence.

Criminal prosecution: the activity exercised by the Public Prosecutor when the preconditions for requesting the dismissal of the crime do not exist. This exercise takes different forms depending on the procedure applied or the type of offence charged. The ways of exercising criminal prosecution with regard to the rite applied are distinguished into ordinary (ordinary proceedings: request for committal for trial, decree of summons to trial) and special (special proceedings: request for application of the penalty on request, so-called 'plea bargaining', immediate trial, decree of conviction, summary judgement).

Defendant: the person (or subject) to whom the public prosecutor attributes a criminal offence and against whom he initiates criminal proceedings with a request for committal for trial.

Domestic violence: acts of violence within the family environment. The criminal code takes domestic abuse into account (Article 572 Criminal Code), but many forms of family violence may relate to injuries, threats, private violence, and/or stalking. In Italy, with the exception of homicides, it is not possible to trace the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator of the violence, so it is an underestimated phenomenon in the source of police reports.

Geographic breakdown of Italy:

North-west: includes Piedmont, Valle d'Aosta, Lombardy and Liguria

North-east: includes Trentino-Alto Adige (the autonomous provinces of Bolzano and Trento), Veneto, Friuli Venezia Giulia and Emilia-Romagna

Centre: includes Tuscany, Umbria, Marche and Lazio

South: includes Abruzzo, Molise, Campania, Apuglia, Basilicata and Calabria

Homicide in 'relational contexts': a particular analysis of the proceedings was made, considering the types of crimes committed in conjunction with homicide, in order to identify homicide proceedings not related to property crimes (such as robbery, receiving stolen goods and theft), crimes in the context of drug dealing and production, organised crime and corruption offences. This is to highlight a specific category of homicides in violent contexts related to relationships.

Institutions of prevention and punishment: penitentiaries where detention is served either on remand or in execution of a sentence following a final conviction.

Intentional homicide: crime committed by a person who causes the death of a person. It may be the result of premeditated or non-premeditated action (in cases provided for by law), and the consciousness and will to cause death must be present.

Judicial authority: the authority responsible for the administration of criminal, civil and administrative justice.

Mafia-type criminal association: A mafia organisation is an organisation whose members use the power of intimidation deriving from the bonds of membership and the atmosphere of coercion and conspiracy of silence that it engenders to commit offences, to acquire direct or indirect control of economic activities, licences, authorisations, public procurement contracts and services or to obtain unjustified profits or advantages for itself or others, or to prevent or obstruct the free exercise of the right to vote, or to procure votes for itself or others at elections.

Police forces: bodies of the State that have, among their many tasks, that of maintaining public order and security. There are currently four police forces in Italy with national jurisdiction, as well as other bodies with local jurisdiction. Of the four police forces with national competence, two have a civil organisation (the Polizia di Stato, under the Ministry of the Interior, and the Penitentiary Police, under the Ministry of Justice) and two have a military organisation (the Carabinieri Corps, under the Chief of Defence Staff for military tasks and functionally under the Ministry of the Interior for public order and security tasks, and the Guardia di Finanza Corps, under the Ministry of Economy and Finance). The Carabinieri Corps was elevated to the rank of Armed Force in the year 2000, and in 2016 it absorbed the State Forestry Corps, previously a civilian-run police force under the Ministry of Agricultural Food and Forestry Policies.

Methodological note

Introduction

The data examined here on homicide victims come from the databases of the Ministry of the Interior: the Investigation System (Sistema di indagine-SDI) and the operational dedicated database of intentional homicides of the criminal police (Direzione centrale della polizia criminale DCPC). Based on the methodology used for the data collection, each victim corresponds to one homicide, therefore an occurrence with several victims is translated in the same number of homicides as the number of victims.

Databases are used for operational purposes and therefore data may change in following extractions. A possible change may be the classification of the crime during the investigation, although should be noted that only the judicial authority will define its precise legal classification through the judicial chain. For example a case initially classified as completed homicide can be designed as unintentional homicide after further investigations or a case recorded by the police forces as attempted homicide can become a committed homicide due to the following death of the victim.

The statistical methodology adopted corresponds to a homicide crime for each victim, therefore an event with several victims will result in several homicides, equal in number to the number of victims.

The sources of data on perpetrators of the homicides are the data collection on criminal proceedings in the prosecutor offices and convicted persons, carried out by Istat and the Central Criminal Records Office, and the data collection on prisoners by the Ministry of Justice, Department of Penitentiary Administration.

The definition of homicide

There may be an inclination to believe that the term 'homicide' is self-explanatory. In fact, when trying to give a comprehensive definition, the task proves not to be easy because of the many facets that the homicidal event may have in reality.

In homicide cases, it is customary to distinguish the offence charged with regard to the subjective element (the presence of intent) in the action performed.

From a legal point of view, it is not always the case that when someone causes the death of another person, a murder has been committed, and there is not always a punishable party. A well-known requirement for personal criminal liability is the 'capacity to understand and to desire', i.e. the requirements that must be present at the same time in order for a person to be prosecutable (Article 85 of the Italian Criminal Code), as they assess his ability to distinguish lawful from unlawful conduct. In the absence of these criteria, there can be no conviction, but security measures may be ordered, such as confinement in a psychiatric hospital for as long as the person is diagnosed as 'socially dangerous' to the community. In addition to the capacity to understand and to desire, consciousness and intent of the conduct are required (regardless of whether doing an action, or omitting to do an action, which led to death). This is a general principle of Italian criminal law (Article 42 of the Criminal Code), which covers all intentional and negligent offences. Thus a person who causes the death of another is not punishable if the fact is due to an accident, force majeure or physical compulsion¹.

A person who kills in self-defence is also not punishable (where the conduct of the perpetrator is necessary and proportionate to the offence: Article 52 of the Italian Criminal Code).

Killings in the course of wars and killings due to the application of the death penalty (in states where it exists) by order of the judicial authority are generally not considered as homicides. There are also some offences, other than homicide, for which the event of the 'death' of the victim constitutes an aggravating circumstance, such as the unintended consequence of arson (death as a consequence of another crime).

In a nutshell, three main types of crime can be distinguished: wilful or intentional homicide (intent to kill), non-intentional homicide (injuries or blows leading to the death of the victim as an unintended event), and involuntary homicide. For the first two categories, the crime can be either completed or attempted. Under some legislative regimes, further distinctions are made. In the present analysis, only completed intentional homicide has been considered. The data have partly been taken from the homicide database of the Ministry of the Interior – Central

¹ A person may be of sound mind but not punishable because there was no consciousness and intent (culpability) to cause the event. In the case of an accident (an unforeseeable event that makes the occurrence of the event inevitable, as in the case of a driver who, due to a sudden and unforeseeable illness, loses control of the vehicle and causes the death of one or more persons) and in force majeure (the consequence of uncontrollable natural events), the person who has committed the fact is not punishable (Article 45 of the Italian Criminal Code). In the case of physical coercion, on the other hand, where the offence is committed by a person under the action of physical violence which he cannot resist or escape, it is the perpetrator of the violence who is liable for what has been committed by the person under duress (Article 46 of the Italian Criminal Code).

Directorate of Criminal Police (DCPC). Since these data are used for operational purposes, they are subject to changes that may emerge in subsequent extracts.

At the international level, definitions may also include other offences, such as infanticide or non-intentional homicide, both in accordance with the indications provided by international bodies collecting data and due to the diversity of judicial systems and data availability in individual countries². The differences in the judicial systems, the different methods of collection and the multiplicity of social, cultural and environmental situations that characterise the various countries, do not allow for a rigorous comparison of crime data. However, in the case of homicide, the differences between the definitions³ in the various countries are less pronounced than for other types of crime, so that homicide data can be considered accurate and comparable.

The definition of femicide

The term 'femicide' was first publicly introduced in 1976 by Diana Russell, who defined femicide as 'the murders of women by men motivated by hatred, contempt, pleasure or a sense of ownership of women' and as 'the killing of females by males because they are females'. The latter definition is from 2011ⁱⁱ and aligned with the Istanbul Convention. The debate is actually very rich in literature and there is no agreement on definition, just think that the terms *femicide* and *feminicide*, the latter in use in Latin America (introduced by Marcel Lagarde in 2006), sometimes assumed the quality of synonyms, sometimes instead refer one to gender-motivated murder of women and the other to gender-based violence against women in general.

Crime statistics and victim data

Crime statistics have been providing information since 1955 on crimes and persons reported to the Judicial Authorities, and since 2007 on the characteristics of perpetrators and victims of crimes, and are an indispensable source for knowledge of the criminal phenomenon.

This data collection makes it possible to respond to the ever-growing demand for statistical information, especially at international level, and makes it possible to monitor the phenomenon of crime in general, and its main actors, i.e. the perpetrators and victims.

Territorial analysis is also important and of increasing interest, for example the system of indicators for territorial development that uses data from police statistics to establish regional policies.

Current regulatory framework

Regulatory reference: Administrative Circular 558/C/D. 3/2-1888/900(165) of 6/11/2003 of the Ministry of the Interior (Policy Act).

Data collection: Number of crimes reported to the judicial authority by police forces (code National Statistical Programme: INT-00062) - Data Controller: Ministry of the Interior.

Re-processing: Crimes reported by the Police to the Judicial Authority (National Statistical Programme code: IST-01002) - Data Controller: Istat.

Information gathering and content

The data collected refers to the crimes committed and attempted, and to the information connected to them (certain characteristics of the victims and perpetrators, circumstances), as well as certain elements concerning the control activity (identification of persons and vehicles, etc.). The Police Forces operating on the national territory (including DIA (Anti-Mafia Investigation Directorate), Municipal Police, Provincial Police and Coast Guard), register them in the SDI (acronym of *Sistema Di Indagine*: 'Investigation System'). This computerised system, created mainly for investigative purposes, allows monitoring the trend of crimes, both traditional and emerging ones. More specifically, the data relate to the reports/complaints of crimes received by the law enforcement agencies from citizens or which have emerged thanks to the investigative action of the Police Forces.

² In 2015, the UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime) introduced the ICCS (International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes), a classification based on a set of predefined categories, to which the statistical or institutional bodies of each individual country have the task of tracing, with the greatest possible accuracy, the crimes provided for in their legal system. One of the main objectives of this classification is to facilitate international comparability of crime data.

³ Intentional homicide is normally considered to be the event (not ordered by the judicial authority) that causes the death of a person, limited to cases where there is intent on the part of the perpetrator to kill or cause serious injury.

For more information consult this link: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/metadata/en/crim_off_cat_esms.htm

In the case of homicides, the information is also included in a separate database (existing in this form since 2002), which is more complete, and which also makes it possible to know the alleged motive, to distinguish between common and organised crime homicides, and above all to study the relationship – for those homicides where the perpetrator is known – between the perpetrator and the murder victim, thus making it possible to know how many women are killed by partners or relatives, or how many men are killed by strangers, and so on.

Since these data are used for operational purposes, they are subject to changes that may emerge in subsequent extracts.

Data processing

Since the content of the database is constantly evolving, due to updates linked to investigations and orders by the judicial authorities, the most relevant statistical information on crimes and reports (number of perpetrators) is transferred from the SDI database to a specific environment (STATDEL) at a set time, and then processed in the form of frequency tables and transmitted to Istat. The validation process involves checking the completeness and consistency of the data, both in relation to past trends and by means of a general comparison with other sources, such as data from the Public Prosecutor's Office. This phase is followed, if necessary, by the request for verification of anomalous situations and probabilistic imputation where there are sporadic missing data. The modalities of some variables are also brought back to the official classifications. This is followed by a computer processing of the data to transform them into a format suitable for feeding the i.stat database. The procedure described is repeated in a substantially similar manner for the demo-social characteristics of the perpetrators and victims, which are the subject of a separate and subsequent submission by the Ministry of the Interior. The data are disseminated annually, but the Ministry of the Interior can query the database in real time.

Data dissemination

Istat's main dissemination tool is the I.Stat datawarehouse. The main results are also published annually in widely circulated Istat volumes (*Annuario statistico italiano [Italian Statistical Yearbook]*, *Noi Italia*, *Italia in cifre*, *Rapporto BES*, *Rapporto SDGs*) and occasionally in other Istat publications. The Ministry of Interior release the *Annuario delle statistiche ufficiali dell'amministrazione dell'interno* on an annual basis. They are also periodically disseminated by international bodies such as EUROSTAT for some data on violent and predatory crime, such as 'Statistics in Focus' and reports on money laundering and human trafficking data, at UNECE in the gender statistics database, for UNODC in the homicide report and in the Crime Trend Survey reports.

The data were published between 1955 and 2004 in the *Annuari di statistiche giudiziarie penali*, and subsequently in the I.Stat datawarehouse (part of the data, prior to 2010, is present in the form of Excel tables).

Data are usually disseminated in absolute values, so that they can be used independently by users. They are combined with values adjusted for population size, usually ratios per 100,000 inhabitants, and percentage variations to analyse the time trend. For each type of crime, the proportion of crimes of which the perpetrator was discovered in the year of reference is also proposed as an indicator. This is calculated as the percentage ratio between the number of crimes of a type (e.g. robberies) committed in the year, of which at least one perpetrator is discovered, and the total number of crimes of that type (all robberies) committed in the year. Obviously, before the final pronouncement of the Judicial Authority, it is only possible to speak of presumed perpetrators. The indicator previously described must be read with attention, since it underestimates the effective proportion of crimes 'solved' by the Police Forces, inasmuch as it does not consider those committed in the year of which the perpetrator is discovered in subsequent years. On the other hand, it has the advantage of not being affected by borderline situations (actually verifiable in small territorial areas for infrequent crimes), in which the discovery of the authors of crimes committed in previous years is recorded against the absence of crimes of that type in that year, which would lead to an apparent logical paradox.

Coverage and geographical detail

The data collection has a full coverage. The available territorial detail includes national, regional and provincial data, and, among municipalities, only those that are provincial capitals. Statistics on crime in municipalities other than provincial capitals are collected by the Ministry of the Interior, but they are not released. When adding crimes in several territories, the number may not correspond to the number of crimes in the corresponding geographical aggregate i.e. the sum of crimes in the provinces may not correspond to the number of crimes in the corresponding region. The reason is that in some cases the geographical attribution may be not possible in detail, but only with reference to a wider area.

Databases and thematic systems

I.STAT: the datawarehouse of ISTAT: <http://dati.istat.it/>

Historical series: <http://seriestoriche.istat.it/>

Volumes

Delitti, imputati e vittime dei reati. La criminalità in Italia attraverso una lettura integrata delle fonti sulla giustizia, Anno 2021

Crimes, defendants and victims (<https://www.istat.it/it/files/2017/10/Delitti-imputati-e-vittime-dei-reati.pdf?title=Delitti%2C+imputati+e+vittime+dei+reati+-+04%2Fott%2F2017+-+Volume.pdf>)

Annuario Statistico Italiano: <https://www.istat.it/it/archivio/annuario+statistico+italiano>

Victims of homicide, 2018 (<https://www.istat.it/en/archivio/243192>)

Data collection on 'reported crimes for which the judicial authority has initiated criminal proceedings'

The collection of data extracted from the computer archives of adult public prosecutors' offices aims to produce statistics on criminal proceedings for which prosecutions are closed or initiated in the prosecution offices. Information is collected on the persons under investigation (age, gender, place of birth) and the offences ascribed to them (crimes or misdemeanors and place of the offence committed) according to an analytical or synthetic classification of offences.

'Data collection on persons convicted of a crime or misdemeanor with a final sentence'

Data collection on convicted offenders with a final judgement entered in the criminal record in the reference year, type of offences and misdemeanors committed and main characteristics of the convicted offenders and of the judgment.

ⁱ This figure is taken from the Istat Vital statistics on causes of death.

ⁱⁱ Diana Russell, "Femicide" -- The power of a name. The Women's Media Center website at womensmediacenter.com. 2011. Online at Dianarussell.com: Femicide -- the Power of a Name. Jill Radford & Diana E. H. Russell (Eds.), Femicide: The Politics Of Woman Killing, New York: Twayne Publishers, 1992 and Buckingham, England: Open University Press, 1992.

ⁱⁱⁱ EIGE 2017, Glossary of definitions of rape, femicide and intimate partner violence, Vilnius: EIGE; EIGE 2017: Terminology and indicators for data collection: Rape, femicide and intimate partner violence, Vilnius: EIGE.

^{iv} The Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, known as the 'Istanbul Convention', was adopted by the Council of Europe on 11 May 2011 and entered into force on 1 August 2014, following the achievement of the required number of ten ratifications. Italy ratified it in 2013, with Law No. 77 of 27 June 2013.

^v Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), 2014, Annual Report 2013-2014. Confronting violence against women in Latin America and the Caribbean (LC/G.2626), Santiago, Chile, 2014.

^{vi} An interesting analysis conducted on the homicide database of the Ministry of Interior in 2016 and on homicide sentences (2015) had shown that the brutality of the woman's killing, often perpetrated with bare hands or with several lethal methods, as well as further damage to the body after death, were distinctive features of violent deaths of women.

^{vii} Global Study on Homicide 2019; <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/global-study-on-homicide.html>

^{viii} Excluding sub-regions in Africa, due to incomplete data.

For technical and methodological information

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