

FEMICIDE WATCH IN POLAND

**Case study results
for 2017-2023**



FEMICIDE
IN POLAND



The publication "Femicide in Poland. Report for 2017-2023" is the result of an original doctoral project carried out as part of scientific research conducted between 2017 and 2024 at the Faculty of Law and Administration of the University of Warsaw.

The research is an integral part of the scientific work of Alicja Serafin. The fragments published in the report constitute a part of her PhD dissertation "Femicide - criminal and criminological aspects of violence against women in Poland and Spain."

Learn more:

Website: www.femicideinpoland.pl

Mail: info@femicideinpoland.pl

Facebook: facebook.com/femicideinpoland

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Youtube: FemicideinPoland

Project author:

Alicja Serafin

Research supervisor:

prof. UW dr hab. Monika Płatek

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Alicja Serafin

Edition:

Alicja Serafin

Project Coordination:

Alicja Serafin

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NOBODY KILLS BECAUSE OF LOVE

Preface

Do you know how many women are being killed by their intimate partners or relatives in Poland? Are you sure that femicide refers only to the countries of the Global South? Are you sure that Polish authorities gather and publish data about femicide cases as they are obliged to by the binding international law?

This report is dedicated to the phenomenon of femicide in Poland. Until recently, this crime lacked a name that fully captured its complex nature. Today femicide is already recognized, standardized, and typified in UN, EIGE and WHO framework, criminal law of some European countries and almost all Latin American countries

In Poland, femicide remains unrecognised. The lack of classification and naming the problem doesn't mean that Poland is a country free from femicide. Femicides occur in Poland as well. They are happening both in private spaces (homes, gardens, basements) and public spaces (transportation, universities, parks, in front of offices, in garbage dumps).



NOBODY KILLS BECAUSE OF LOVE

The lack of typification of the statutory elements of femicide provokes a significant gap in the scope of its criminal recognition. Women, like men, die as a result of homicide. However, the specificity and criminological etiology of male and female homicides differ significantly.

In the report, in the section entitled Polish Femicides Map, I present in detail the results of 7 years of research on monitoring femicide cases in Poland. The research was conducted as part of my PhD studies at the Faculty of Law at the University of Warsaw in 2017-2025.

The report focuses on the key issues of femicide, explains how the killing of women differs from the ordinary type of homicide, and, most importantly, fills the femicide data gap that has existed for many years in Poland.

I hope that the report will initiate so much-needed discussion on better mapping and legal recognition of femicidal crimes in Poland.

Aliza Serafin

ABOUT ME:



I'm a PhD candidate at the Faculty of Law, University of Warsaw. I'm a lawyer, criminologist, linguist, latin americanist, and spanish sworn translator. In 2017-2018, as a scholarship holder from the University of Seville, I completed an internship at the Spanish courts for violence against women in Seville. I have been working on femicide topic since 2016. In 2023, I founded the Femicide in Poland Project (www.femicideinpoland.pl). It is the first polish think-tank dedicated to the phenomenon of lethal violence against women and gender-based homicides. I'm the author of the first polish scientific publications on femicide. I regularly share my knowledge about combating femicide at workshops and academic conferences in Poland and abroad (recently in Romania, Spain, UK, Austria, Greece and the US).

CHAPTER ONE

What is femicide?

Femicide is the killing of a woman because of her gender — the fact of being a woman.

In English, it is known as femicide/feminicide and in Spanish as femicidio/feminicidio.

How does femicide differ from ordinary homicide?

Femicide occurs when the characteristics of the murder of a woman include so called gender-based factors (*en. gender-based reasons; es. razones de género*).

Examples of gender-based factors in European criminal laws include:

- existing relationship between victim and perpetrator,
- kinship between victim and perpetrator,
- history of violence in other relationships ,
- misogynistic motivation,



relation or the
point of view
Femicide
sex-based hate
killing of women
female", though
thought for what



Other gender-based reasons

- the act was committed for a sexual reason
- the act was related to human trafficking
- the act was committed in the name of honour (honour killings)
- the act was committed on the basis to preserve "the family reputation" or for reasons related to religious beliefs or practices.
- the act was on the basis of sexual orientation, identity or expression (LGBT+ killings and transfemicides)



You don't have to meet all the conditions. The presence of any of these conditions results in the investigation or prosecution of the case with the use of protocols for femicide investigations. An example is the Latin American Model Protocol for the Investigation of Violent Gender-Based Deaths of Women (femicides/feminicides).



Legal international definition used globally:

According to the UN Vienna Declaration on Femicide of 26 November 2012, which has been in existence for over a decade, femicide is the killing of women and girls because of their gender, which may take the form of:

- the murder of women as a result of intimate partner violence (*intimate-partner femicides*)
- the torture and misogynist slaying of women
- killing of women and girls in the name of "honour"
- targeted killing of women and girls in the context of armed conflict (*femigenocides*)
- dowry-related killings of women (*cultural femicides*)
- killing of women and girls because of their sexual orientation and gender identity (*LGBT+ transfemicides*)
- the killing of aboriginal and indigenous women and girls because of their gender; (*indigenous femicides*)
- female infanticide and gender-based sex selection foeticide;
- genital mutilation related deaths
- femicides related to accusations of witchcraft (*historical/cultural femicides*)
- other femicides connected with gangs, organized crime, drug dealers, human trafficking and the proliferation of small arms



Right to life free from violence

§ UN Vienna Declaration on Femicide states that *"traditions and culture cannot be used as justifications for the violation of women's human rights, in particular the right to life and **the right to be free from violence**".*

§ It is further emphasised that: *"states have obligation to protect women as well as to prevent and prosecute femicide, to undertake institutional initiatives to improve the prevention of femicide and the provision of legal protection, remedies and reparation to women survivors of violence against women, in accordance with international treaties and to consider adopting and implementing legislation to investigate, prosecute, punish and redress femicide in line with the effective experience of some countries;*

States should adopt and implement laws to ensure diligent investigation, prosecution, punishment and reparation for victims' relatives in cases of femicide.

The Declaration calls upon states to design, implement and evaluate comprehensive strategies and programmes aimed at removing obstacles that prevent women and girls from enjoying their full rights.

The state policies should include public education programmes and interventions aimed at empowering women and girls as well as sensitizing men and boys, in order to change the mindset of societies.

Declaration urges states to conduct research on the role of gender-related causes (or motives) of femicide, including misogyny and to inform about the stage of implementation of the above-mentioned strategies and programmes.



The document that regulates femicide is only of a declaratory nature and does not have the force of a universally binding legal act. It means that the UN can only address calls or recommendations to member states.

However, states are bound by other ratified conventions on the protection of human rights, the prohibition of discrimination on the basis of sex and the prevention of violence, such as:

- Council of Europe Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (2014)
- The Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women (1994)
- UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1978)
- Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (1953)



The Role of the UN femicide Watch Initiative in Building Global Awareness on Femicide

An important political impetus that brought the phenomenon of femicide to the attention of international community and secured its permanent place on the SDG agenda in the context of combating violence against women was the UN initiative to establish femicide watch in every country (ang. UN Femicide Watch Initiative).

The appeal was issued in 2015 by the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, Dubravka Šimonović. She called on UN Member States to start establishing femicide watches and start gathering data at national level under the UN framework.

The aim was to create a global database on femicides and fatal violence against women.



ONE **FEMICIDE WATCH** IN EVERY COUNTRY TO END THE SHADOW PANDEMIC



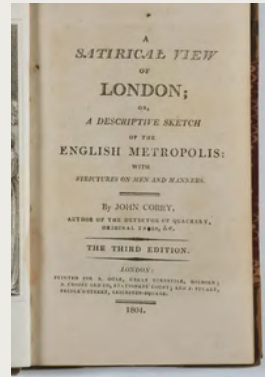
Over the past 10 years since the appeal was published, the level of understanding of femicide has gradually increased. New femicide watches are being established, tools for collecting data on gender-based femicides are being developed, and research on femicide and its prevention is being undertaken.

However, this is still insufficient to measure the problem globally. This is also due to the fact that data collection is not supported by the administrations of member states. States often rely on independent human rights institutions, civil society organizations, or academic institutions to assist them in this regard.

It is the NGOs, not state administrations, who are undertaking the titanic effort to establish femicide watches pro publico bono and report accurate data. Only a few countries have established dedicated units within their governments responsible for collecting data on femicides and cases of gender-based violence. Countries leading the way in this regard include Argentina, Mexico, Dominican Republic, South Korea, Pakistan and in Europe, Spain and Belgium.

The history behind the term femicide

The first documented use of the term appears in John Corry's 1801 book, "A Satirical Picture of London in the Early Nineteenth Century." The term "femicide" was used to refer to the murder of a woman. It subsequently appeared in Wharton's Law Lexicon, published in 1848, where the term was referred to the murder of a woman.

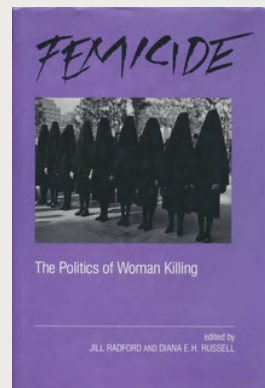


At the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, the concept of "mujercidio" (from Spanish *mujer* - woman; *homicidio* - homicide) began to be used in Spain, popularized in her press articles by the Spanish activist and writer Emilia Pardo Bazan (see her picture on the right).



In the 1970s, the term was introduced into academic circles by American Diane Russell, co-author of the book "*Femicide: The Politics of Women Killing*."

Russell together with Jill Radford, she defined femicide as the most extreme form of violence against women, stemming from hatred, contempt, a sense of masculine superiority, or a belief in the need to control women.



For the first time, the gender of the victim was recognized as a criminal motive for committing the crime. From this moment femicides began to be considered gender-motivated killings, rather than random, isolated incidents of violence perpetrated by men against women.

Femi(ni)cide Latin American Twist

Latin American women played a significant role in shaping the current concept of femicide. Among them, the Mexican Marcela Lagarde y de los Ríos and the Argentine Graciela Atencio are worth mentioning. In the 1990s, with the permission of the Mexican Academy of the Language (Academia Mexicana de La Lengua), two terms were simultaneously introduced into the dictionary of Mexican Spanish: *femicidio* and *feminicidio*. At the time, they were treated synonymously. The distinction was only recognized in the early 21st century by Marcela Lagarde y de los Ríos, a Mexican sociologist and parliamentarian. Thanks to her efforts and struggle of the other Mexican feminist activists, *feminicidio* was recognised as the separate gender-based type of homicide in Mexican law in 2012 – twenty years after its linguistic entry into dictionaries and common language.





In addition to the murder of a woman because of her gender (femicide), Lagarde y de los Rios suggests the need to speak about feminicide (feminicidio) and classifies it as:

- **crime against humanity directed against women because of their gender** (es. *crimen de lesa humanidad por razón de género*);
- **hate crime against women** (es. *crimen de odio*);
- **institutional state crime** (es. *crimen institucional de Estado*);
- **crime against humanity directed against women because of their gender** (es. *crimen de lesa humanidad por razón de género*)

The key importance in developing the above mentioned definition of femicide played the ruling of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in the Campo Algodonero case of 2009 (see the ICAHR ruling of 16 November 2009 in the case of González and Others v. United States of Mexico, Series C-205; hereinafter: Campo Algodonero Case).

In its ruling, the Court held Mexico responsible for failing to prevent the crime of femicide. The case concerned the murders of three (out of eight) identified Mexican citizens - Esmeralda Herrera Monreal, Laura Berenice Ramos Monárrez, and Claudia Ivette González. Their bodies were found on November 6, 2001, on the outskirts of Ciudad Juárez, in the Mexican state of Chihuahua. Despite the broader lack of definition of the term *feminicidio*, in 2009 the Court revoked to cruel circumstances of the murders of women from Campo Algodonero. These circumstances allowed the Court to classify these deaths as gender-based homicides (femicides).



Three factors played a key role in this classification:

- (a) **the prevailing atmosphere of violence against women** in Ciudad Juárez;
- (b) **the profile of the victims** - young women (some of them were teenagers) working in nearby factories;
- (c) **the course of the crime** - the brutality of the torture inflicted on the victims before their deaths and the ostentatious manner of abandoning the bodies, demonstrating a sense of impunity for the perpetrators, most likely belonging to organized crime groups and thus enjoying the protection of corrupted state authorities.

As a result of the ruling, Mexico was forced to create an appropriate legal framework to guarantee women's safety, develop action plans to combat violence against women, and develop an integrated prevention strategy that would allow the cooperation between state and federal authorities. This resulted in the passage of a law on June 14, 2012, which, in Article 325 of the Mexican Federal Penal Code, introduced a separate type of gendered-based homicide - femicide¹.



CÁMARA DE DIPUTADOS DEL H. CONGRESO DE LA UNIÓN
Secretaría General
Secretaría de Servicios Parlamentarios

CÓDIGO PENAL FEDERAL
Última Reforma DOF 16-07-2025

Capítulo V Feminicidio

Artículo 325. Comete el delito de feminicidio quien prive de la vida a una mujer por una razón de género.



Marcela Lagarde y de Los Rios

Femi(ni)cide is not just the act of murder. It is also a misogynistic system of violence against women that society accepts—in private, public, and institutional spaces. Calling the crime by its name is a battle half-won for women. The next step is measuring the actual number of femicides committed and doing all the possible things in order to combat them.

LA PATRIA ES PRIMERO



Mexican Parliament 2012
Mexico enacts the special law that recognises the femicide as the separate gender crime

CHAPTER TWO

Femicide in polish criminal law

In Poland, femicide doesn't exist in criminal law. The general provisions of articles 148, 155, and 156 of the Criminal Code are applied instead but they don't capture its complexity and gendered nature. Furthermore, no official or institutional measurement of femicides is being conducted. According to the EIGE Report, approximately 100-200 femicides occurred annually in Poland between 2016-2018. My research conducted from 2017 to 2023 confirms that this data is accurate. However, Poland is not included in the 2024 UN report, which includes data for 2023. The reason is not that lack of femicides, but rather a lack of data on institutional level.

Poland also lacks of system for identifying this specific form of gender-based crime. This results in a significant gender-based data gap. It is worth recalling that Poland, as a signatory to international conventions, has a legal obligation to collect data on femicides. This obligation is imposed on Poland by the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (hereinafter referred to as the Istanbul Convention) of 2011, ratified by Poland on August 1, 2015. As a signatory, Poland is obliged to collect data on femicides and all forms of violence against women and domestic violence (including the cases where children or men).

FEMICIDES IN 2023

Global estimates of intimate partner/family member femicides



The data on femicide is to be collected gender-sensitively and with intersectional perspective. Despite the commitments the state made over a decade ago, there are currently no efficient, coherent, and reliable systems for collecting data on femicide cases. Poland remains a blank space in the latest 2023 UN report.



Criminal Code of the Republic of Poland

Article 148 - Homicide

§1 Whoever kills a human being shall be subject to imprisonment for no less than 8 years, 25 years of imprisonment, or life imprisonment.

§ 2 Whoever kills a person:

- 1.with particular cruelty,
- 2.in connection with taking hostage, committing rape, or robbery,
- 3.for motives deserving particular reprobation
- 4.with the use of firearms or explosives,

shall be subject to imprisonment for no less than 12 years, 25 years of imprisonment, or life imprisonment.

§ 3 Whoever kills more than one person in one act or has earlier been validly and finally convicted for homicide shall be also subject to the penalty specified in § 2.

§ 4 Whoever kills a person due to the influence of an intense emotion justified by the circumstances shall be subject to the imprisonment between 1 and 10 years.



Article 155 - Manslaughter

Whoever unintentionally causes the death of a human being shall be subject to the penalty of the deprivation of liberty from 3 months to 5 years

Criminal Code of the Republic of Poland

Article 156 - Grievous bodily harm resulting in death

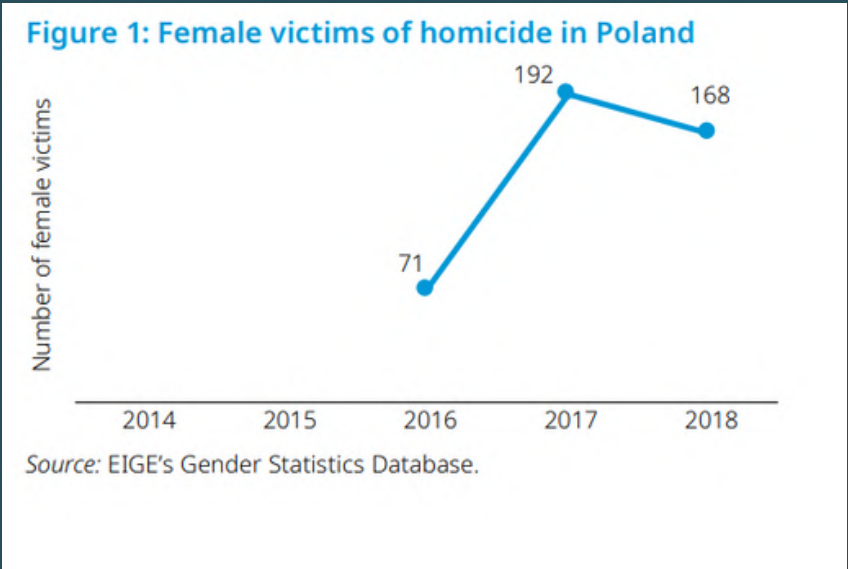
§ 1 Whoever causes grievous bodily harm in a form which:

1. deprives a human being of sight, hearing, speech or the ability to procreate, or
2. inflicts on another a serious crippling injury, an incurable or prolonged illness, an illness actually dangerous to life, a permanent mental illness, a permanent total or substantial incapacity to work in an occupation, or a permanent serious bodily disfigurement or deformation shall be subject to the penalty of the deprivation of liberty for a term of between 1 and 10 years. [...]

§ 3. If the consequence of an act specified in § 1 is the death of a human being, the perpetrator shall be subject to the penalty of the deprivation of liberty for a term of between 2 and 12 years.

Criminal Code of the Republic of Poland





In Poland, however, data on female homicide victims is only available from 2016, and there is no information on femicides resulting from intimate partner violence. Figure 1 presents data received by EIGE from the Polish police. It includes data on female homicide victims from 2016. It shows that the number of such victims almost tripled between 2016 and 2017. It is important to note that in addition to femicides, this figure also includes other non-gender-related homicides, such as robbery-related homicides or homicides in which the woman was a random victim.

art. 11 Istanbul Convention

Poland has a legal obligation to:



collect disaggregated relevant statistical data at regular intervals on cases of all forms of violence

art. 11 Istanbul Convention



Poland has a legal obligation to:

§ support research in the field of all forms of violence covered by the scope of the Convention in order to study its root causes and effects, incidences and conviction rates, as well as the efficacy of measures taken to implement this Convention

CHAPTER THREE

Polish Femicide Map



Polish Femicide Map is the first virtual map and database collecting comprehensive information on femicides and other homicides of women that occurred in Poland. I also map the cases of femicide attempts and femicidal violence.

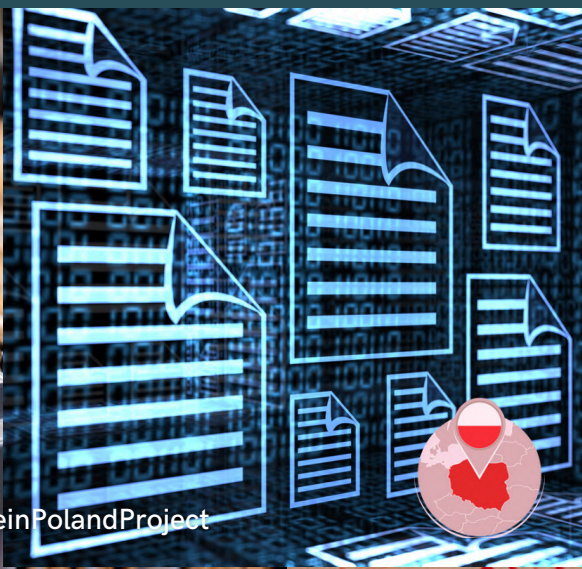
The aim is to bridge the existing gap in femicides (femicide gender gap). The map is an interactive tool organized in the form of flashcards. Data on the flashcards comes from monitoring femicide cases. The flashcards describe individual femicide cases and allow to estimate the true scale of the femicide phenomenon in Poland. The practice of using virtual maps in femicide monitoring projects has a long tradition among foreign non-governmental and international organizations such as the UN. Femicide in Poland project continues this good practice, striving to increase public awareness and sensitivity on the existence of femicide.





How is data on femicides collected in Poland?

In Poland, data on femicide is collected by the police, district courts, and prosecutors' offices. The Central Statistical Office also maintains its own statistics. This leads to so called statistical slide. The same crime is sometimes referred to and classified differently by different authorities. Unfortunately, there is still no body coordinating the process of data collection and information exchange between agencies.



Polish Femicide Map

Polish Femicide Map is the first continuously updated virtual map and database collecting comprehensive information on femicides and murders of women that have taken place in Poland.

Do you want to learn more about specific cases of femicide that occurred in Poland?

- 1. Enter our website and click the tab called **MAP**
- 2. You'll find there our **virtual Map with flashcards describing specific femicide cases** and the fruit of our several years of work on Femicide Cases Archive



Femicide Case N° X from Polish Femicide Map

No	DATE AND PLACE	X
1	CASE DESCRIPTION	X
2	VICTIM- PERPETRATOR RELATION	X
3	MODUS	X
4	CHILDREN	X
5	POSTFEMICIDAL SUICIDE OF PERPETRATOR	X
6	VIOLENCE BEFORE FEMICIDAL ACT	X
7	DRUGS OR ALCOHOL	X
8	SANITY	X
9	CHARGES/SENTENCE	X
10	EIGE CLASSIFICATION	X

SOURCES FROM MAPPING: [access: X]



What is the 3R golden rule on femicide mapping?

3R = RESEARCH, REGISTER AND REMEMBER
3Z = ZNAJDŹ, ZAREJESTRUJ, ZAPAMIĘTAJ!

The rule was introduced by programmer Catherine d'Ignazio in her book "Data Feminism," in which she describes AI tools and applications that help map, identify, and classify femicides.

The first "R" stands for research and encompasses broadly defined femicide mapping. It involves setting alerts on femicides, checking information sources, and verifying the accuracy of information about a given femicide case. Mapping is a time-consuming process because it must be thorough and meticulous to ensure no cases are missed or duplicated.



We map, name and count femicides, but we remember that femicides are not only numbers. Behind every crime stand a woman's life that has been stolen from her

Implementation of the second "R" - register involves recording the case on the Map, citing the circumstances of the criminal act. The classification of the femicide, its type (femicide type verification), and other variables are performed according to the adopted methodology for measuring femicide crimes (the most popular are UN or EIGE frameworks).

Implementation of the third "R" which stands for remember consists of commemorating or paying tribute to a murdered victim and their loved ones (femicide victim tribute). Remember, this isn't about shocking with macabre or sensationalism, but rather a call for reflection through socially sensitive storytelling, art, and an appeal to the authorities.



The report contains the first Polish database of femicides. The database is led with the understanding and awareness that behind the numbers are women who lost their lives as a result of violence. We are restoring their names. We are showing that these were women who desired a life free from violence. We are also providing the names of the perpetrators. Where possible, we include images of the victims to show they were real human beings with plans and dreams for the future.

While running the Polish Femicides Map, we do not dazzle with the macabre. We don't use dark counters or epitaphs with snitches. We support responsible, empathetic and inclusive storytelling about femicides. This is what commemoration through empowerment is all about. (remembrance through agency). We want our databases to be used in the future by authorities and other institutions responsible for counteracting violence against women.

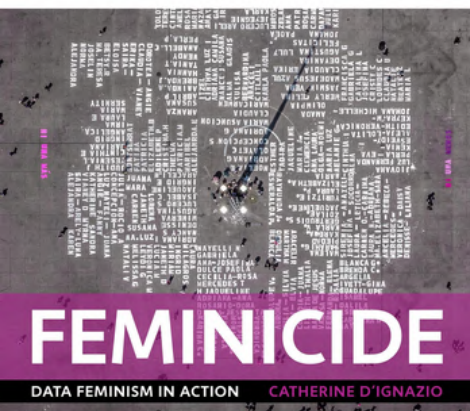
Methodology

To map femicide cases, I applied a dynamic approach known in criminology and forensics as femicide media and press monitoring. The final result was the mapping and creation of a database of three hundred cases of gender-based homicides of women reported in the Polish press. Based on criteria such as gender of the perpetrator and victim, the motivation of the crime, and the circumstances of their commission, I classified them as femicides. I applied the EIGE framework and typology on femicides.

I didn't collect data on femicides resulting from criminal acts other than violence or coercive control, such as female homicides motivated by robbery or other reasons unrelated to the victim's gender. These murders, unrelated to the victim's gender, remain classified as other female homicides.



COUNTING

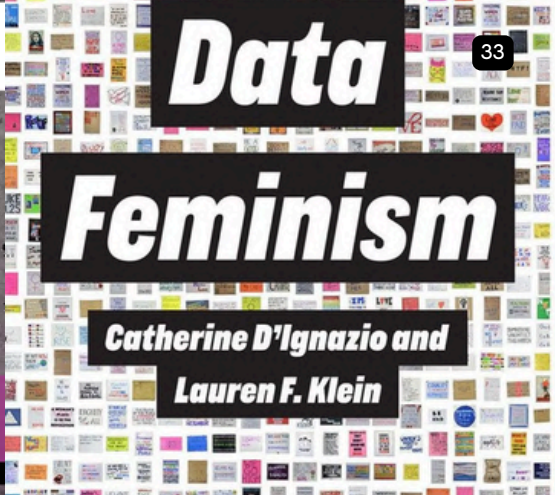


Data

33

Feminism

**Catherine D'Ignazio and
Lauren F. Klein**



In my research I applied the theory of data feminism

What is data feminism?

This concept combines feminist theory with data analysis. It aims for a more just and equal approach to data collection, analysis, and its use. Data feminism states that data is not neutral — it is always the result of choices that are fraught with biases, both in the collection and analysis processes.

Data feminism highlights the existing gap in criminal data regarding femicides. The theory of data feminism was developed by two American programmers, the aforementioned Catherine D'Ignazio and Lauren F. Klein, in their books "Data Feminism" and "Counting Femicide: Data Feminism in Action."

**Catherine D'Ignazio**

Director, Data + Feminism Lab, MIT

Lauren Klein

Director, Digital Humanities Lab, Emory

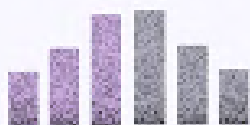
DATA FEMINISM

Data feminism emphasizes the importance of critical thinking on how data is being collected and represented, and aims to reduce the marginalization of groups that have traditionally been ignored or underrepresented. An important goal of this approach is to shift how we think about data and ensure that it is used to promote social justice, including the perspectives of individuals and minority groups that have previously been overlooked. It complies with the principle of intersectionality and draws attention to cross-sectional discrimination phenomenon.

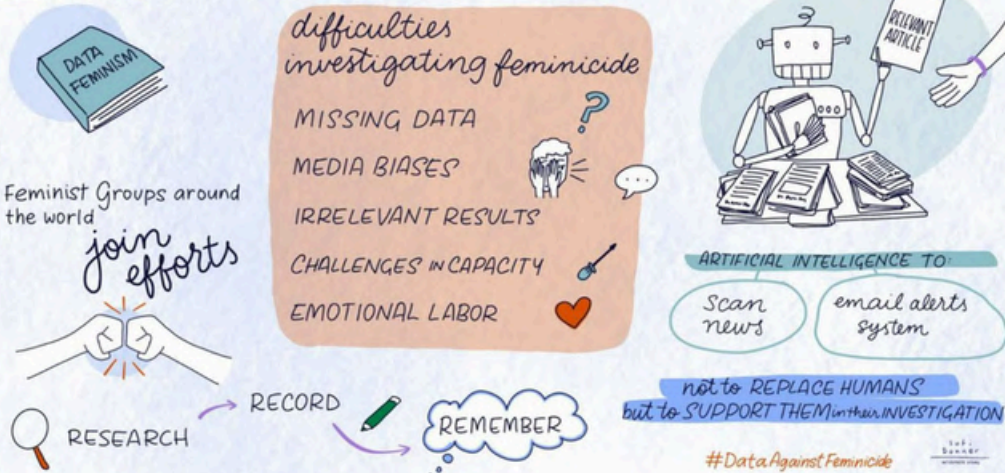


**“What isn’t counted,
doesn’t count”**

Catherine d’Ignazio

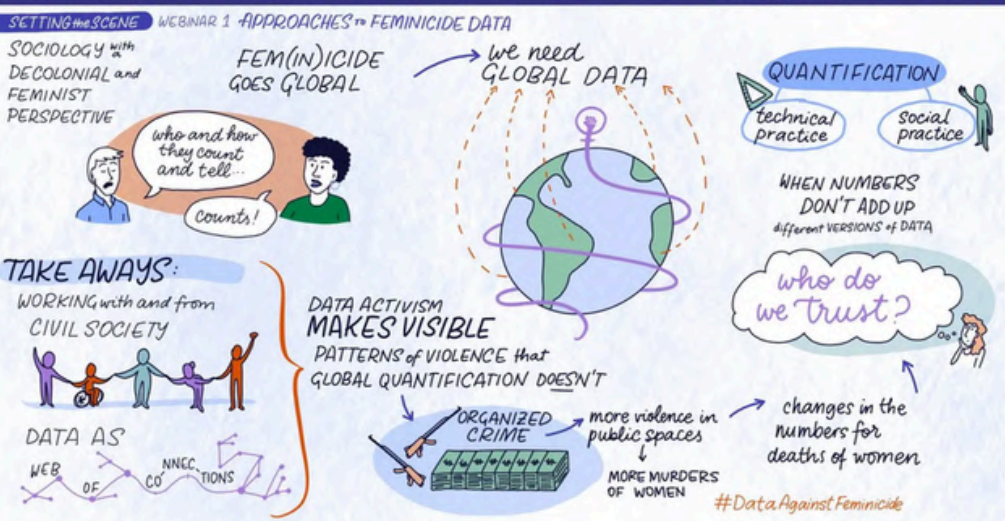


**DATA IS A
FEMINIST ISSUE**



What are the biggest challenges during mapping and recording?

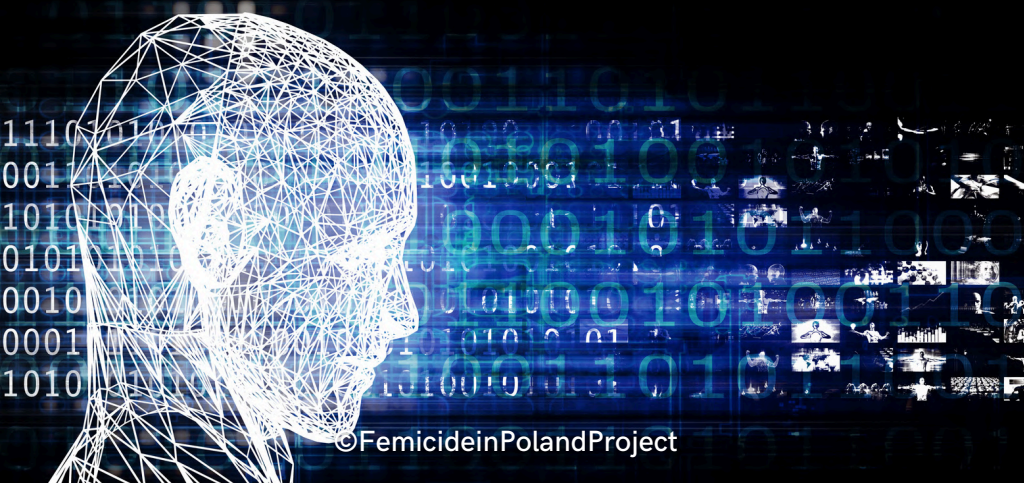
- missing data produced by underrecording and underreporting
- biases generated by media and press
- contradictory information or deepfake
- human resources and capacities
- emotional labour and trauma



To obtain more accurate results and ensure greater precision, each case of femicide described in the database and analyzed criminologically was based on several press sources from different media. This made possible the verification and access to a wider range of circumstances surrounding the homicide. By placing the cases within the database's timeframe - 2017-2023 - the primary and consistent point of reference for me was the moment of the crime, meaning the day when femicide happened.

At the same time, I recognize that the conducted study represents only a small fragment of a much broader criminal reality. A significant number of femicides remain unreported in the media, unreported to law enforcement agencies, or undetected, thus fall outside the research framework I have outlined. Nevertheless, I believe the results of this study may have significant cognitive significance from a criminological perspective.

I hope that they will provoke and open so much needed discussion in Poland on the quality of criminal data collection by the justice authorities. The idea is to start thinking about gender-based homicides of women as the separate type of crimes that should be legally recognised and then they can be effectively prevented.





During the research period that included years 2017-2023, I documented nearly 300 different types of femicides. The cases collected were at various stages of criminal proceedings, but a significant criterion was whether the suspects had been charged by the prosecutor.

For the purposes of this study, I employed several methods of search for femicide cases in the press.

The first was to set up an email alert for the phrases "murder of a woman," "killed his partner," "killed his wife," "killed his girlfriend," and "killed his family" in my Gmail inbox. This tool automatically sent me daily links to press articles containing these keywords and reporting new cases of femicides. A significant drawback of this tool, however, was that some of the femicide alerts also concerned countries other than Poland or historical matters, which automatically excluded them as potential research material.

The second method I used was a review of local and regional press from individual provinces. This allowed me to uncover homicide cases involving smaller communities that didn't reach the national press.

The third method I applied was a manual search of femicide cases on the websites of municipal and provincial police departments, regional and district prosecutors' offices, and courts. These cases appeared most often in the form of press releases, more or less detailed. It's worth noting that the database I created is based on cases from the last seven years (2017-2023).



Rzeszów. Norbert zabił swoją dziewczynę? Zadał 18-latce kilkadziesiąt ciosów nożami, później dusił. Prokuratura: to było zaplanowane

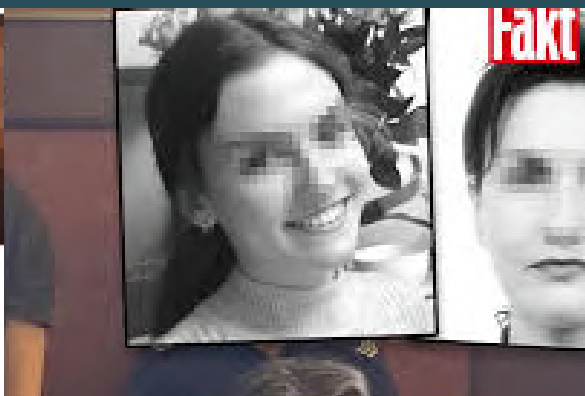


Zabił i poćwiartował byłą dziewczynę. Rusza proces 21-letniego Patryka D. z Gdańska

Nie chciała z nim być, więc ją zabił. Kaliszu wydał wyrok

Zabił dziewczynę tłuczkiem do mięsa,

Zabił matkę na oczach dziecka



Sądowy finał bestialskiego mordu dwóch kobiet. Sprawca jest wyjątkowo wyrachowany

MAKABRA W TARNOWIE

Wstrząsająca zbrodnia! Mąż zamordował żonę i córki. Nowe fakty przerażają

Zabił kobietę i wyrzucił ją na śmieci

Zabił żonę, bo go wyśmiała.

16-latek zabił dziewczynę, bo była w ciąży!

In the case of the most recent offences, this means that some of them have not yet reached court proceedings, and the guilt of their perpetrators (the accused in femicide cases) can only be presumed on the basis of the charges brought by the prosecution. For the purpose of classifying femicides, I used the conceptual framework developed and recommended by EIGE, which I translated into Polish.

EIGE distinguished 6 types of femicides:

- 1.intimate-partner femicide
- 2.interpersonal femicide or family-related femicide
- 3.sexual femicide
- 4.criminal femicide
- 5 political femicide
6. cultural femicide





MAP LEGEND :

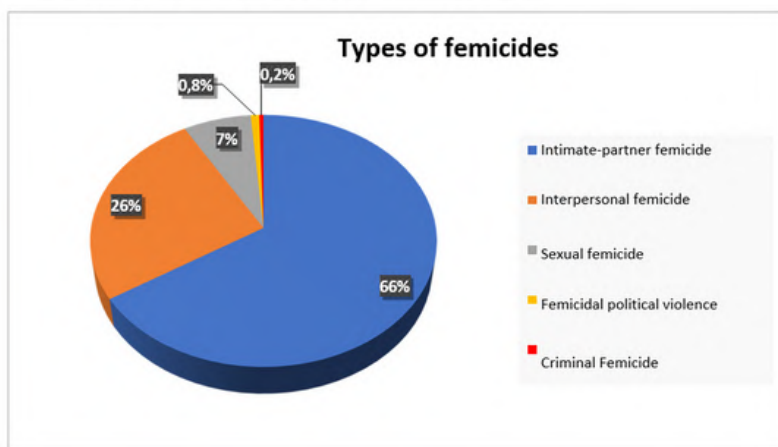
- years 2017-2019 – grey pin
- year 2020 – yellow pin
- year 2021 – red pin
- year 2022 – orange pin
- year 2023 – black pin
- femicide attempts – blue pin
- archival cases – (before 2017) – grey cross

Source: author elaboration, Femicide in Poland Project, map screen from 27th of May 2024

The analysis of approximately 300 femicide cases from 2017-2023 showed that the vast majority of these were cases of femicide committed by the closest partner aka *intimate-partner femicides* - 66%, or femicides committed by another family member - *interpersonal or family-related femicides*, which constituted 26% of the examined cases.

To a lesser extent, there were *sexual-related femicides* (7%), *criminal femicides* (0.2%), and cases of *femicidal political violence* (0.8%). The last category is related to Poland's restrictive abortion laws and the deaths of Poles as a result of the Polish state's violation of their basic reproductive rights regarding termination of pregnancy (*political femicides*). I didn't record any cases of cultural femicides in Poland reported in the press.

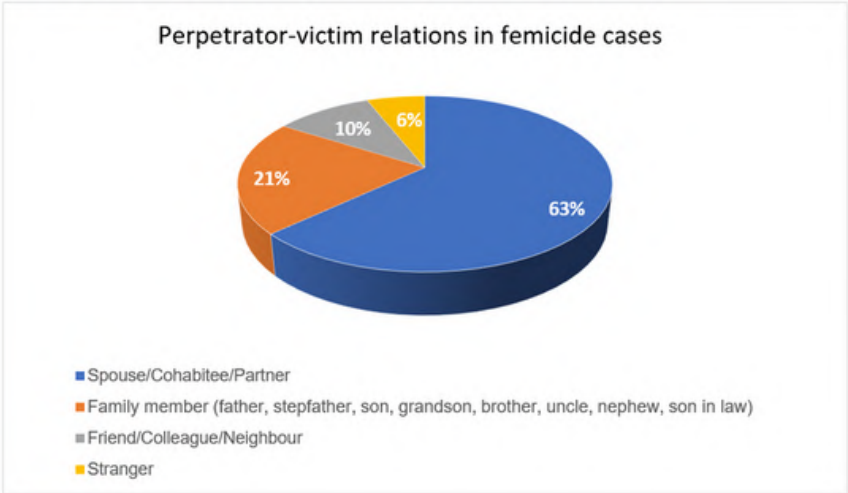
Graph 1. Types of femicides registered in Poland in 2017-2023



Source: Author's own elaboration, Femicide in Poland Project, 2024

A. Relation

Graph 2 Perpetrator – victim relations in femicide cases registered in Poland



Source: Author’s own elaboration, Femicide in Poland Project, 2024

Examining the most common nature of the relationships between the perpetrator and the victim of femicide, it can be seen that the overwhelming majority – as many as 63% – are spouses or individuals in an informal relationship with the victim, such as cohabitation, engagement, or other short-term or long-term intimate relationships.

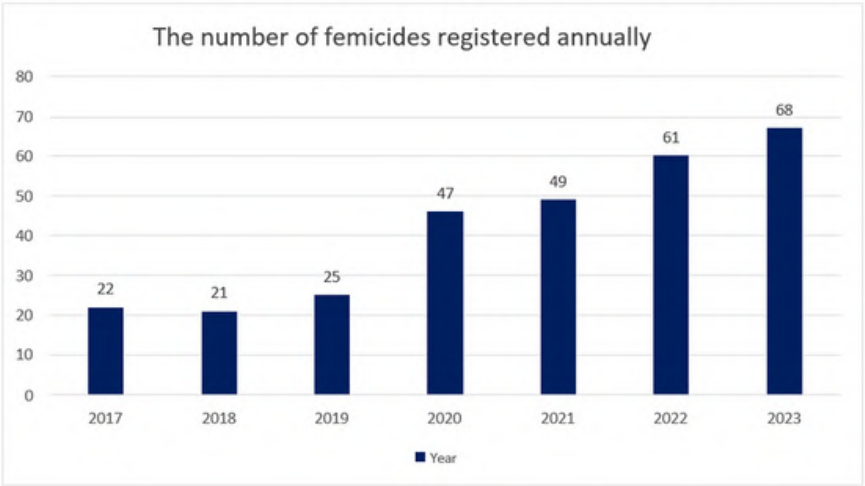
In 21% of the investigated cases, perpetrators were from the victim's closest family or extended relatives. In 10% of cases, the perpetrator was someone the woman knew – a neighbour, friend, or coworker. In only 6% of cases the women didn’t know the perpetrator.

The Polish femicide trend is also confirmed by the international research, which indicates that women are mostly killed by men they knew.

**In Poland, prevail
intimate partner
femicides.**

**Women are most
often killed by the
people close to
them, former or
current partners.**

Graph 3. The number of femicides registered annually in Poland during 2017-2023



Source: Author’s own elaboration, Femicide in Poland Project, 2024

Regarding the femicide rate by year, among the examined cases the highest number occurred in 2023 with 67 cases, followed by 2022 with 60 cases, and 2021 with 49 cases. In 2017, I recorded 22 cases of femicide, in 2018 there were 21, and four more in 2019.

By the end of June 2024, I recorded 28 femicides in Poland, 6 attempted femicides and 4 femicides of Polish women abroad. The number recorded mid-year may suggest an increase compared to previous years (in 2017, 2018, and 2019, a similar number was observed only on a yearly basis, not in the first half).

However, it should also be taken into account that the monitoring was carried out from December 2022 to June 2024, and covered the years 2017-2023, the years that preceded the femicide alert installation.

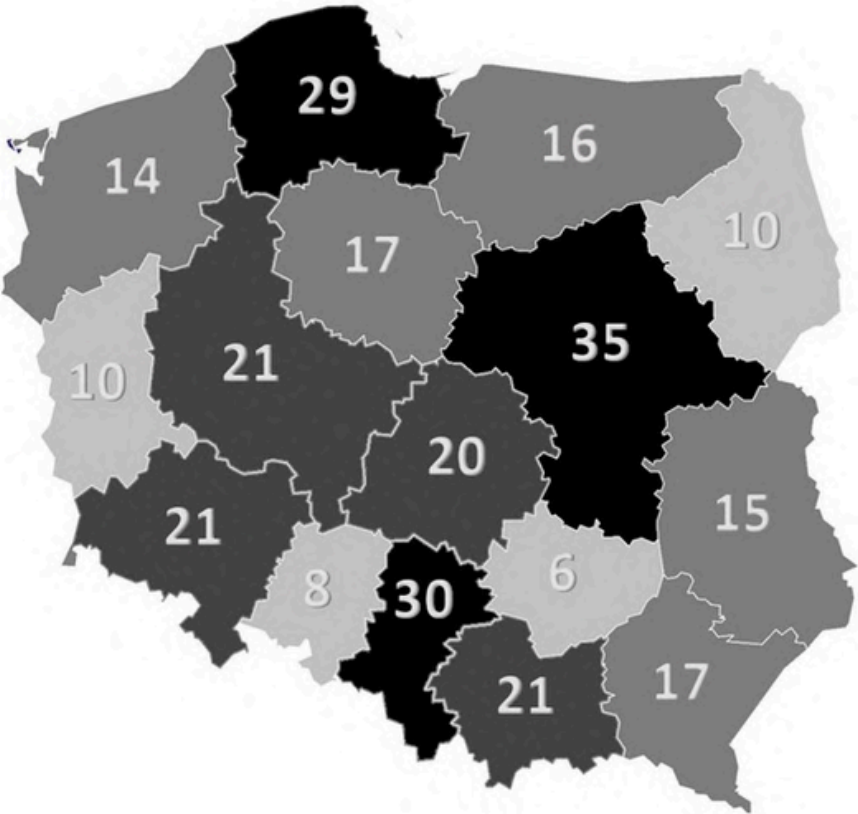
B. Geographic distribution

The next step in the analysis of the collected data was the attempt to create a spatial, geographic distribution of femicides at the level of regions and voivodeships in Poland.

The largest number of cases – as many as 35 (12%) – occurred in the Masovian Voivodeship, followed by the Silesian Voivodeship with 30 cases (10.3%), and the Pomeranian Voivodeship with 29 (10%).



NUMBER OF FEMICIDES IN DIFFERENT REGIONS (VOIVODESHIPS) IN POLAND IN 2017-2023



- 29 and more
- 20 and more
- less than 20
- 10 and less

Source: Author’s own elaboration, Femicide in Poland Project, 2024

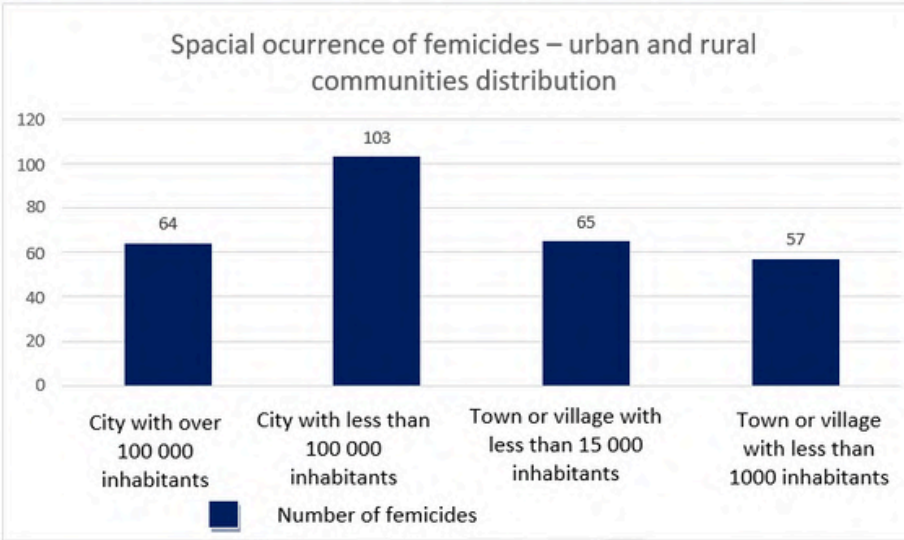


The fewest cases (fewer than 10) were recorded in the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship - 6 (2%) and in the Opolskie Voivodeship - 8 (3%).

It should be noted that the spatial distribution of femicides in many voivodeships (8 out of 16) was very similar, with a dozen or so cases each, which shows that this is universal problem affecting residents across different regions of Poland.

In the case of the Masovian Voivodeship, an important factor may be the largest concentration of population around the Warsaw agglomeration and the fact that this voivodeship covers a relatively large area.

Graph 4 Spatial occurrence of femicides – urban and rural communities relations



Source: Author’s own elaboration, Femicide in Poland Project, 2024

The majority of the investigated femicide cases occurred in larger cities with populations exceeding 15,000 – 167 cases. In small-towns or rural communities with populations below 15,000 (65 cases), and even below 1,000 (57 cases), a total of 122 femicides occurred. The study revealed that the highest number of femicides occurred in medium-sized cities with populations between 15,000 and 100,000 – 103 cases. In cities with populations exceeding 100,000, which were most often the seats of regional governments or larger industrial agglomerations, I recorded 64 cases of femicides.

The reader may be concerned about the relatively high number of femicides in the smallest towns and villages with populations under 1,000. I should mention that in the initial version of establishing the study criteria, I considered a rural community to be an entity with fewer than 15,000 inhabitants, in accordance with encyclopedia data. However, due to the numerous cases of femicides in these smallest rural settlements, with populations of several hundred, I decided it was worth noting this aspect as well and include the category of rural entity with populations under 1,000.



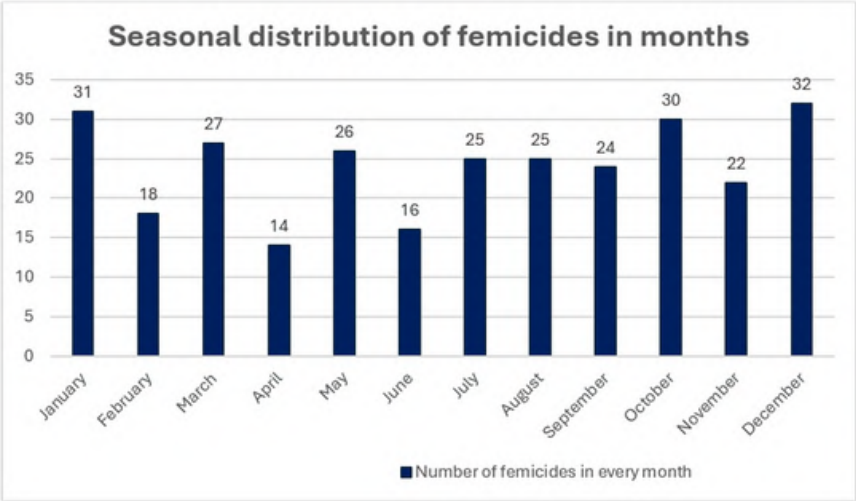
More than 58% from investigated cases of femicides took place in towns with up to 15 thousand inhabitants.



In 36% of cases, femicides occurred in medium-sized towns (up to 100,000 inhabitants).

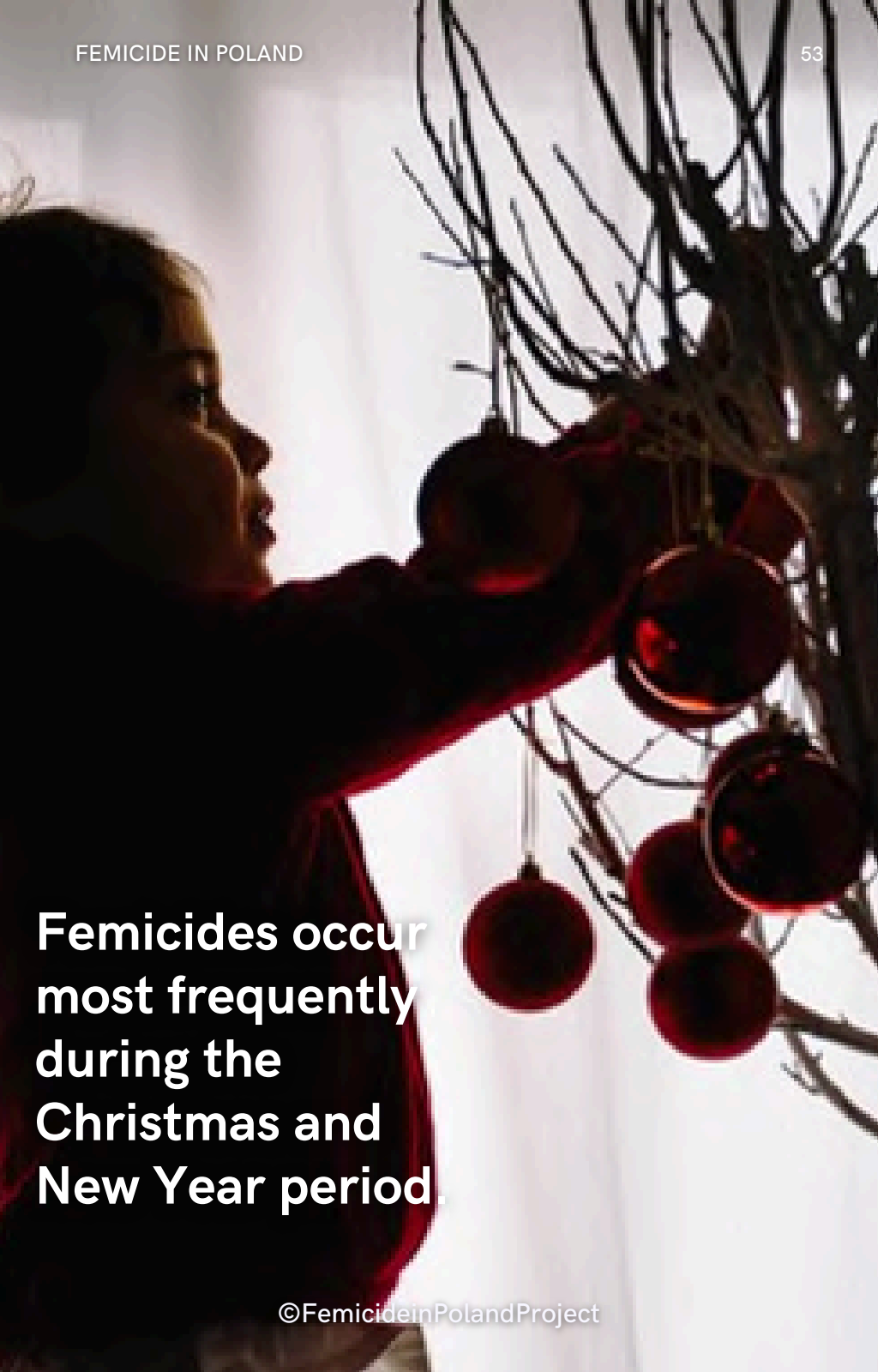
C. Seasonal distribution

Graph 5. Seasonal distribution of femicides in months



Source: Author’s own elaboration, Femicide in Poland Project, 2024

When we look at the data showing the periods of the year in which the highest number of women are killed, the collected cases indicate that the escalation of violence leading to femicides in Poland most often occurs around the New Year period — in December (32 cases), January (31 cases), and October (30 cases). Among the summer months, the highest number of femicides takes place in May, July, and August. The December–January trend observed in Poland is not unique; it corresponds with findings from other countries and aligns with the experiences of international experts. Research indicates that an increase in the number of killings of women can be observed not only during the Christmas period but also during times of pandemic-related restrictions and even after major football tournaments. .

A young girl with dark hair, wearing a red dress, is shown in profile, reaching up to hang red, spherical Christmas ornaments on a bare, dark branch. The background is a soft, out-of-focus white, suggesting a snowy or brightly lit indoor setting. The lighting is dramatic, with the girl's face and the ornaments catching the light.

**Femicides occur
most frequently
during the
Christmas and
New Year period.**

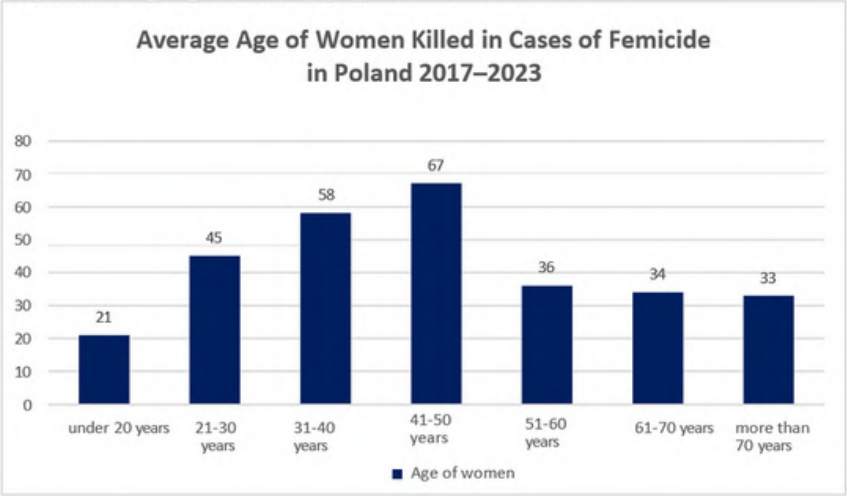
However, it is not these events themselves that provoke violence, but rather the fact that they create conditions allowing perpetrators to spend more time at home with their families, which in turn gives them greater opportunities to exercise power and control over their partners. The Christmas holiday period also makes it more difficult for victims to report violence. School closures during the holiday break also mean greater difficulty for children to report incidents of violence to someone outside their family.

The Christmas holiday period also makes it more difficult for victims to report violence.



D. Age

Graph 6. Average age of femicide perpetrator in Poland



Source: Author’s own elaboration, Femicide in Poland Project, 2024

Turning to elements of the criminological and victimological profile, the average age of women who fell victim to femicide in Poland during the studied period was 45 years.

The women most at risk of becoming victims of femicide were, in order of frequency, those aged 41–50 (40s) — 51 cases among those examined — followed by women aged 31–40 (30s) with 47 cases, and then women aged 21–30 (20s) with 36 cases.

There were also 67 recorded cases of so-called senior femicides — killings of women aged over 61.

The average age of women who die as a result of femicide in Poland is 45 years old.

The average age of femicide perpetrator is around 41.

The study also included cases in which the victims were girls under the age of 18 — that is, teenage girls and children.

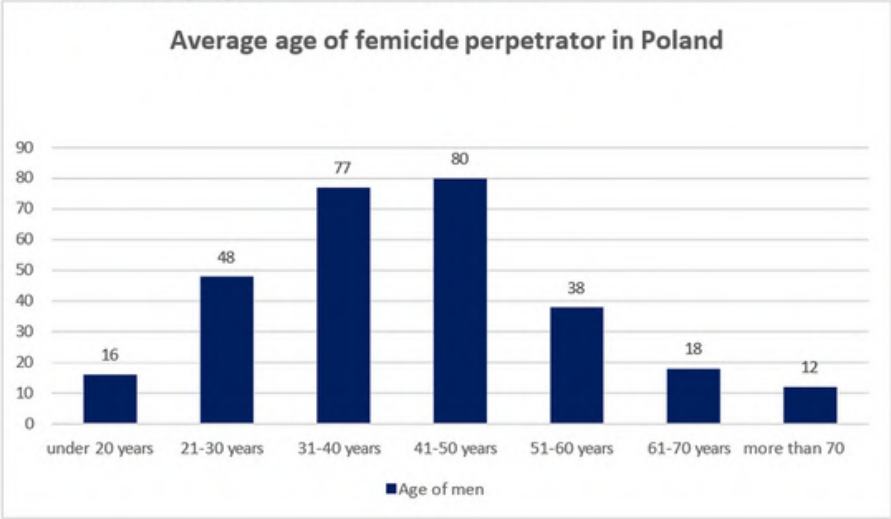
In the case of teenage victims, the perpetrator was most often a current or former boyfriend, whereas in cases involving young girls, the perpetrator was typically the father.

According to the United Nations definition, child femicides refer to the killing of girls under the age of 14 by men who abuse a relationship of trust, responsibility, or authority over the child.

The age group of 41–50 years, which appears most frequently among femicide victims in Poland, also corresponds to the average age reported in studies from other countries — 47 years in Spain, 45 years in the United Kingdom, and 42 years in Canada. In contrast, research conducted in Israel showed an average age of 38 years, while Italian statistics indicate that the highest number of victims killed by their partners were older women — seniors over the age of 65.



Graph 6. Average age of femicide perpetrator in Poland



Source: Author’s own elaboration, Femicide in Poland Project, 2024

Regarding the perpetrator profile, the average age of men convicted of femicide in Poland was 41 years — three years younger than the average age of the victims.

The most common perpetrators were men in their forties (aged 41–50), responsible for 80 cases. They were followed by men in their thirties (aged 31–40) with 77 cases, and men in their twenties (aged 21–30) with 48 cases.

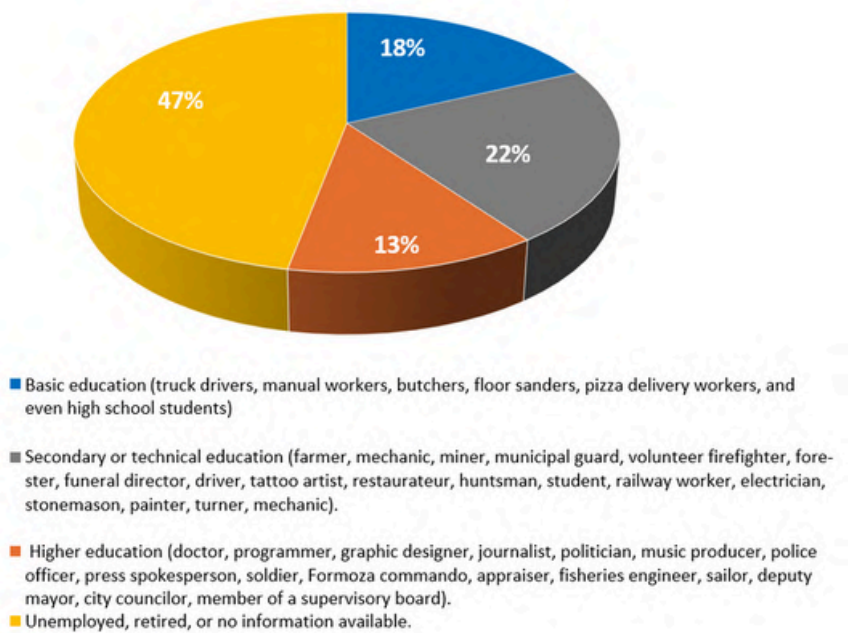
The lowest probability of committing femicide was observed among men over the age of 70, with 12 recorded cases. Men aged 51–60 were perpetrators in 38 cases, while those aged 61–70 were responsible for 18 cases during the study period.

Young men — including minors — under the age of 20 accounted for 16 cases.

E. Education and profession

Graph 7. Average Educational Level of Femicide Offenders in Poland

Educational Level of Femicide Offenders in Poland



Source: Author’s own elaboration, Femicide in Poland Project, 2024

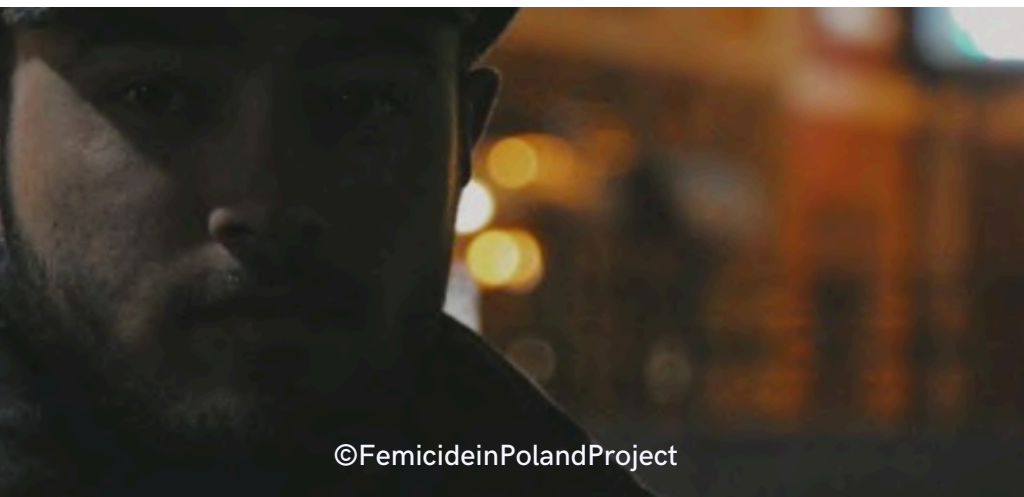
In Polish Femicide Map, I also attempted to examine the average level of education of both perpetrators and victims of femicide. Unfortunately, since the research material was sourced from press reports, it was not always possible to find references to the occupations of those involved in femicides. For this reason, it should be acknowledged that this chart may have certain limitations due to the unavailability of complete data.

In 49% of cases involving perpetrators and 47% of cases involving victims, I found no information regarding employment status; in other instances, the individuals were unemployed or retired. Nevertheless, I consider providing this information to be an essential and integral part of the study, as it shows that behind the statistics and the raw numbers of femicides are real people.

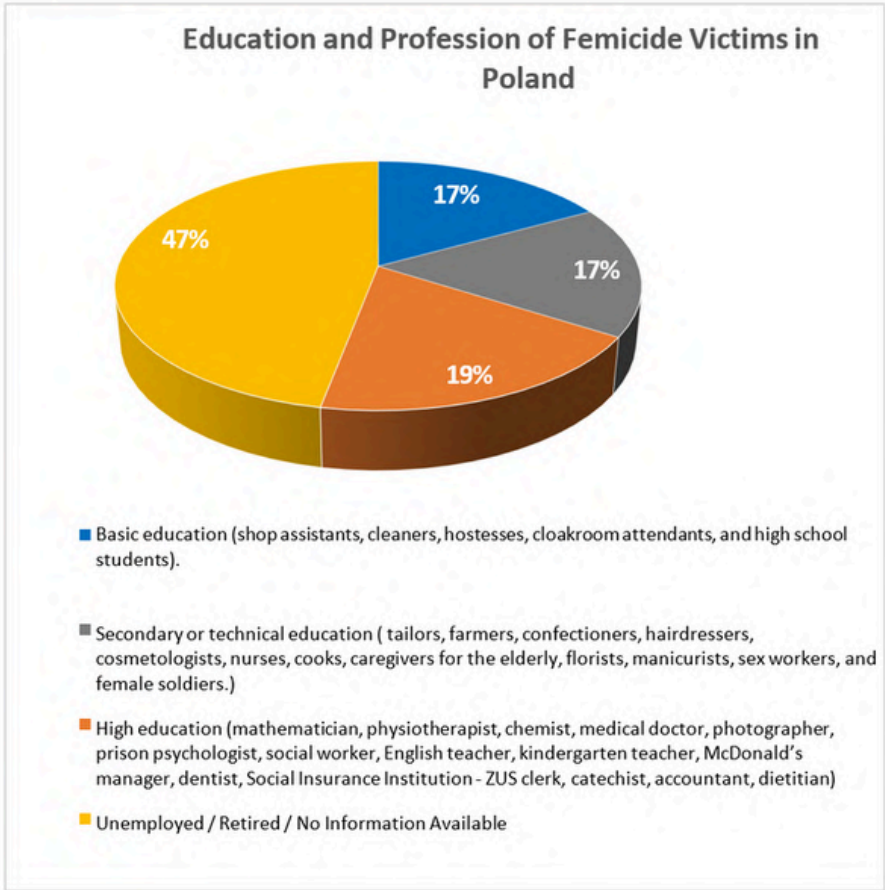
Based on the available data, the most common level of education among perpetrators was secondary or technical education (22%), typically preparing them for specific professions such as farmer, mechanic, electrician, firefighter, or miner.

The second most frequent level of education was primary education (18%), usually associated with manual labor. Among this group of perpetrators were truck drivers, floor sanders, stonemasons, car painters, retired pizza delivery workers, and tattoo artists.

At the lowest end of the scale, though not significantly less frequent than those with only primary education, were perpetrators with higher education — accounting for 13% of cases. Among them were, for example, doctors, programmers, IT specialists, journalists, politicians, automotive appraisers, fisheries engineers, deputy mayors, and city councilors.



Graph 8. Education and Profession of Femicide Victims in Poland



Source: Author’s own elaboration, Femicide in Poland Project, 2024

When examining the education level of femicide victims, it can be observed that the majority — almost 20% — unlike the perpetrators, had higher education. Among them were mathematicians, physiotherapists, chemists, doctors, photographers, social workers, English teachers, kindergarten teachers, managers, catechists, and even prison psychologists with doctoral degrees. In second place — tied at 17% each — were victims with secondary and primary education.

Among the women with vocational or secondary education were, among others, seamstresses, farmers, hairdressers, beauticians, nurses, cooks, caregivers for the elderly, manicurists, and enlisted soldiers. The victims with only primary education included shop assistants, cashiers, hostesses, cleaners, high school students, and cloakroom attendants.

These findings also challenge a stereotype frequently perpetuated in the media — that domestic violence and killings occur mainly among the least educated, socially disadvantaged individuals who abuse alcohol and are colloquially referred to as “pathological” cases.

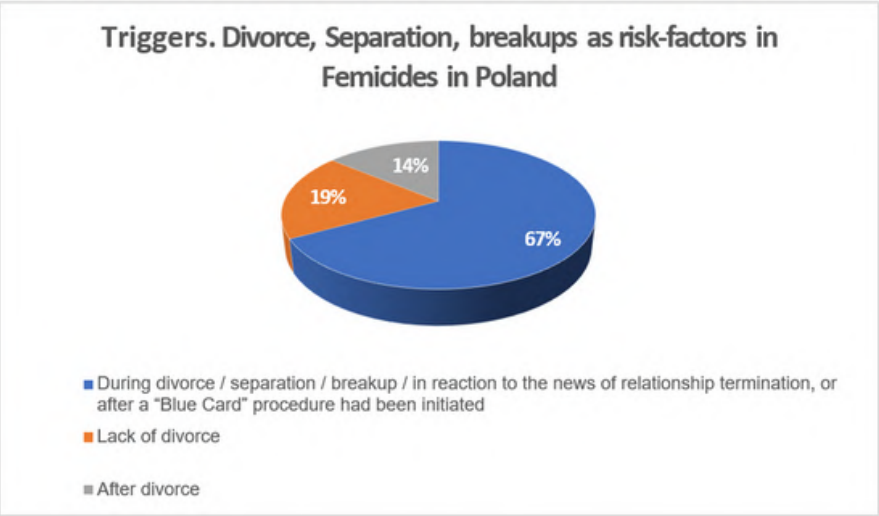
In reality, gender-based violence can affect any woman, including those with higher or professional education, and the perpetrator may just as well be an educated or otherwise socially respected partner.



F. Triggers

The vast majority — 67% — of intimate partner femicides (committed by current or former partners) occurred during divorce, separation, or breakup. This shows that the prospect of separation from a partner is the most common trigger — a factor that significantly increases the risk of femicide. It is precisely during the breakup process that women’s lives are at the greatest risk.

Graph 9 Triggers. Divorce, Separation, and Breakup as Factors in Femicide in Poland



Source: Author’s own elaboration, Femicide in Poland Project, 2024



In 67% of cases of intimate partner femicide, the couple was separated or in the process of divorce. A trigger can also be the mere news of the woman's desire to end the relationship.



In this context, it is important to mention the phenomenon of post-separation violence — a form of abuse that occurs after the end of a relationship. In Poland, sociologist Justyna Tomczyk writes about post-separation violence, describing it as “a subcategory of domestic violence that occurs as a consequence of separation.”

Post-separation violence constitutes a significant life event — a turning point — as it radically alters the existing intra-family structure. The decision to separate, to initiate legal proceedings, or a court ruling on separation, whether in contentious or non-contentious proceedings, may trigger brutal attacks, harassing and controlling behaviours, coercion, and various other forms of abuse by the partner.

As Tomczyk emphasizes, contrary to simplified beliefs, separation does not end previously existing violence but often extends and intensifies it. It may serve as a significant trigger for violent behaviour and lead to the escalation of abuse against a partner.



In many of the cases I analysed, even the mere mention of divorce triggered panic, aggression, and violence on the part of the perpetrator. In nearly 20% of cases — that is, in every fifth case — the perpetrators committed femicide several years after the divorce.

However, this period was not one of complete lack of contact between the victim and the abusive partner; a characteristic feature was the ongoing harassment of the woman. This is well illustrated by the case of 47-year-old huntress Iwona M. from Chłopowo (West Pomeranian Voivodeship), who was shot dead by her ex-husband with her own hunting rifle, more than a decade after their divorce. During that time, the perpetrator repeatedly stalked and threatened her (Case No. 130, Polish Femicide Map).

Among other identified triggers in cases of intimate partner femicide were: the perpetrator learning that his partner had initiated a “Blue Card” procedure, the partner’s decision to move out of the shared residence, disputes over contact with children, financial bankruptcy, and suspicion of infidelity.



As shown by the cases collected in the Polish Femicide Map, the triggers in interpersonal femicides other than intimate partner killings (that is, those committed by another family member) often included the perpetrator learning that the partner was pregnant or, in the case of femicides of elderly women, the victim's criticism of the perpetrator's lifestyle or attempts to admonish him.

At times, violence was triggered by trivial reasons — for example, when a son murdered his mother simply because she refused to comply with his demands or tried to set boundaries.

The motivation behind men's killings of women is often shame — when they feel ridiculed, humiliated, or diminished by a woman. This dynamic frequently appears in cases of femicide with a sexual background. I observed this motivation in several cases of femicides of sex workers in Poland



G. Crime scene

In terms of the location of the crime, I distinguished three classic categories: **private spaces** (home, apartment, plot of land, garden), **public spaces** (park, street, shop, public office, highway, waste container), and **isolated spaces** (forest, river, pond, abandoned building, swamp). I also identified an additional category — **means of transport** (car, bus, motorcycle).

As shown by the results of the femicide monitoring, the vast majority of femicides in Poland (71%) occur in private spaces — homes, apartments, plots of land, or gardens. The home, which should evoke a sense of safety, becomes for women experiencing intimate-partner or family member violence a deadly trap — the place where they most often lose their lives.

Graph 10 Crime scene in femicide cases in Poland



Source: Author’s own elaboration, Femicide in Poland Project, 2024

A woman with long brown hair, wearing a reddish-brown long-sleeved shirt, is lying face down on a dark, reflective kitchen floor. Her head is turned slightly to the right, and her eyes are open, looking towards the camera with a somber expression. The background is a kitchen with white tiled walls, a dark countertop, and various kitchen items like a kettle and a toaster. A bright light source, possibly a window or a lamp, is visible in the background, creating a strong glow and casting shadows. The overall mood is somber and tragic.

**Most femicides
in Poland occur
at home.**

In 14% of the examined Polish cases, femicide occurred in a public space. Among the most characteristic examples are: the femicide of 44-year-old Natalia S. from Świnoujście, who was stabbed to death by her former partner, 36-year-old Mateusz N., in front of the Prosecutor's Office and in the presence of their 8-year-old son (Case No. 27, Polish Femicide Map); the femicide of 35-year-old Urszula P., who was killed by her ex-husband while working at a Żabka convenience store in Sochaczew (Case No. 21, Polish Femicide Map); and the femicide of 57-year-old Małgorzata W. from Łódź, who was stabbed to death by an unknown man while walking her dog in one of the city's parks (Case No. 207, Polish Femicide Map).

The third most common location for femicide was an isolated area. In such cases, perpetrators most frequently chose forest complexes, abandoned urban buildings (such as garages or housing estates), or areas near water — ponds, rivers, or swamps — which could provide temporary concealment of the victim's body.

In the last category, femicides took place in means of transport. The confined space of a vehicle — such as a car, bus, airplane, or boat — naturally reinforces and shapes the perpetrator's advantage (particularly when he is the driver) over the victim, increasing the likelihood of exploiting her vulnerable situation.

It should be noted that a vehicle may serve multiple criminological functions: as the scene of a homicide, as the means by which it is committed, or as an instrumental tool facilitating the act. The perpetrator may employ a vehicle to surveil or pursue the victim, to restrain her within its confined space for the purpose of committing the offence, or to intentionally strike and kill her by means of vehicular impact.

The latter scenario, in which a vehicle is used to run down the victim, has been documented in the Polish Femicide Map. Perpetrators also employ vehicles to carry out so-called suicidal femicides: they deliberately provoke a traffic collision in which they kill themselves together with the female victim inside the vehicle. The latter scenario has also been observed in several attempted femicide cases in Poland.

In September 2022, a resident of Rybnik (Silesian Voivodeship) disabled the passenger-side airbag for his wife and deliberately initiated a head-on collision with a truck.

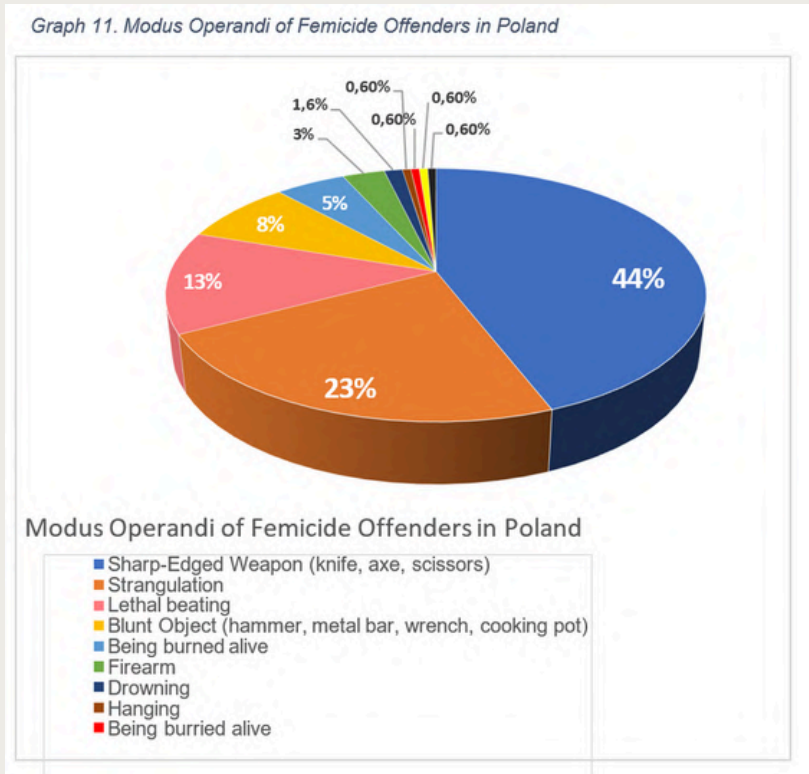
Just a month earlier, a 52-year-old and sober resident of Świdnik Duży (Lubelskie Voivodeship) picked up his wife from work. When she told him that she wanted to separate, he began accelerating the car to increasingly high speeds. He caused a collision and crashed the vehicle into the wall of the church where they had been married. Prior to the incident, he reportedly told his wife: "If you don't want to be with me in life, we'll be together in the grave."



H. Modus operandi

The perpetrators most frequently used sharp instruments as their modus operandi in femicides — knives, axes, scissors, and saws — which were present in as many as 44% of the cases in the database. Sharp instruments caused instantaneous or rapid death of the victims as a result of exsanguination or severe organ damage.

The second most common method was strangulation — occurring in 23% of the cases. Strangulation is often identified as a distinct trigger risk factor in intimate partner violence and may constitute a direct precursor to femicide itself. Women who had previously reported violence or spoken about it to family members frequently mentioned being strangled as one of the components of prior femicidal violence.



The *modus operandi* most frequently used in polish femicides is sharp object such as: knife, axe or scissors.



**Women die from bleeding
caused by stab wounds, from
being strangled or from being
beaten to death.**

Another *modus operandi* of femicide was fatal beating — accounting for 13% of cases in recent years. One of the most brutal examples of this type was the femicide of 64-year-old Maryla B. from Elbląg. The woman, who was experiencing homelessness, was beaten to death in the city center by 26-year-old Kamil D. According to the case records, “acting with direct intent to deprive the victim of life, the perpetrator repeatedly struck Maryla B. with his fists all over her body — including the head and neck, chest, limbs, torso, and anal area — as a result of which the victim sustained multiple injuries, including extensive bruising to both sides of the head and face, damage to the acromioclavicular joint, liver rupture, anal wall tear, and bilateral rib fractures in the anterior sections.” (Case No. 69, Polish Femicide Map).

The fourth most common method of femicide involved the use of a blunt instrument (such as a hammer, metal rod, or wrench) and — perhaps surprisingly, yet clearly reflected in the collected cases — burning the partner alive (8% of cases). In the latter category, the perpetrators either set the entire apartment on fire with the woman inside (1 case) or used fire as a means to destroy evidence, unaware that the victim was still alive (2 cases).

A particularly brutal femicide occurred on 14 July 2017 in a forest near Tomaszów Mazowiecki, where 34-year-old Dominika was murdered (Case No. 159). The investigation established that Rafał S. had taken the woman, whom he already knew, into his car. They drove toward a forested area. He intended to have sexual intercourse with her, but when the woman began to laugh at him, he flew into a rage. Although Dominika apologized, he repeatedly punched her in the head and then kicked her several more times. He placed a belt around the unconscious woman’s neck, dragged her into the forest, covered her with the car’s roof lining, poured oil over her body, and set it on fire. Forensic experts who performed the autopsy determined that the cause of death was burning (Case No. 159, Polish Femicide Map).

The loss of consciousness was caused by a brain hematoma resulting from the blows inflicted. The court had no doubt that Rafał S. acted with particular cruelty and with the intent to deprive the woman of her life. Moreover, a significant trigger for the attack was the woman's reaction — her laughter — which provoked a sense of shame in the perpetrator.

In another femicide case, where the *modus operandi* involved burning the victim alive, the perpetrator consciously and deliberately watched the woman's brutal death by fire. This case concerned 39-year-old Anna K. from Kraków (Case No. 123, Polish Femicide Map). As in the Tomaszów Mazowiecki case, the trigger was sexual in nature — specifically, the woman's refusal to engage in sexual activity with her former partner. While drinking alcohol in a garden shed, the woman's ex-husband proposed an intimate encounter. When she categorically refused, he beat her, stripped her naked, tied her legs with pieces of clothing, and bound her hands to a nail driven into the wall. He then set fire to the bed on which she lay and ignited other parts of the shed. When the woman continued to refuse, he threw two aerosol deodorant cans into the fire, which exploded and accelerated the spread of the flames over her body.





The fifth most common modus operandi in femicide cases was the use of a firearm — the killing of a female partner by shooting. In total, the use of firearms was recorded in six cases (3%) of femicide in Poland. In one of these cases, the weapon used belonged to the victim herself, who worked as a gamekeeper.

Ranked sixth, each representing 1% of cases, were drowning, intentional vehicular homicide, and hanging, with two instances of each method recorded.

In the least frequent category — 0.5% of cases — were cases of victims being thrown from a balcony and of victims being buried alive.

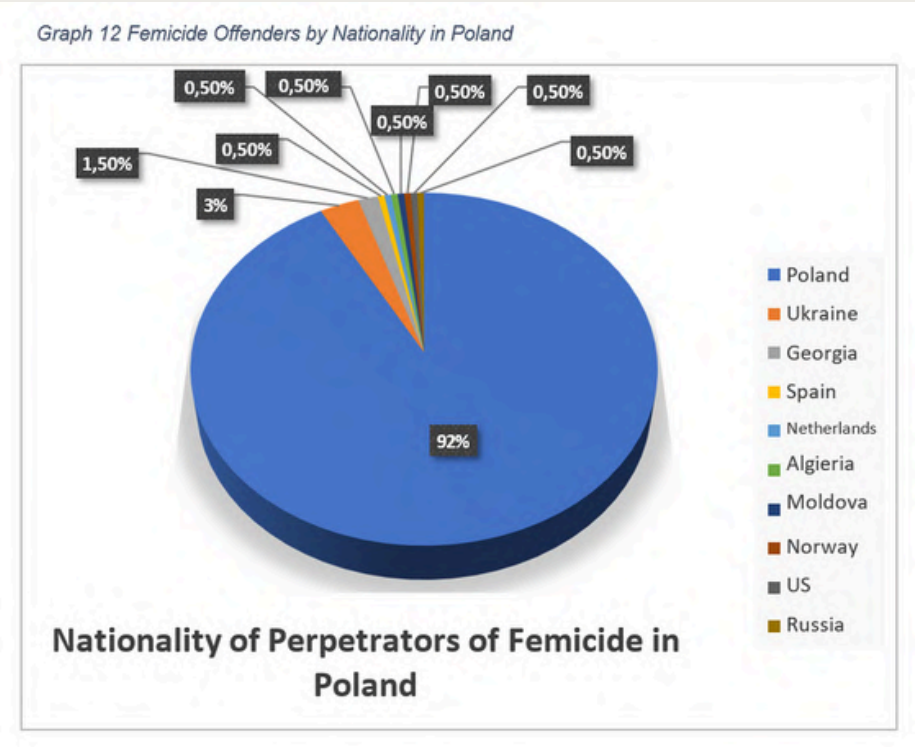
This last type of femicide occurred in the case of 42-year-old Monika W.S., who was beaten with a hammer and buried alive in a ditch by her former partner, 41-year-old Mariusz P. (Case No. 40, Polish Femicide Map). The modus operandi of killing by throwing the victim from a balcony occurred in the case of 49-year-old Weronika Cz.-K., who was pushed from a balcony by her husband, 52-year-old Wojciech K. Both the perpetrator and the victim were medical doctors (Case No. 56, Polish Femicide Map).

I. Nationality

The monitoring results showed that the vast majority of femicide perpetrators were Polish nationals (92%), followed by citizens of Ukraine and Georgia.

Further cases (one each) involved foreign nationals from both European countries — such as Spain, the Netherlands, Moldova, and Norway — and non-European countries, including the United States, Russia, and Algeria.

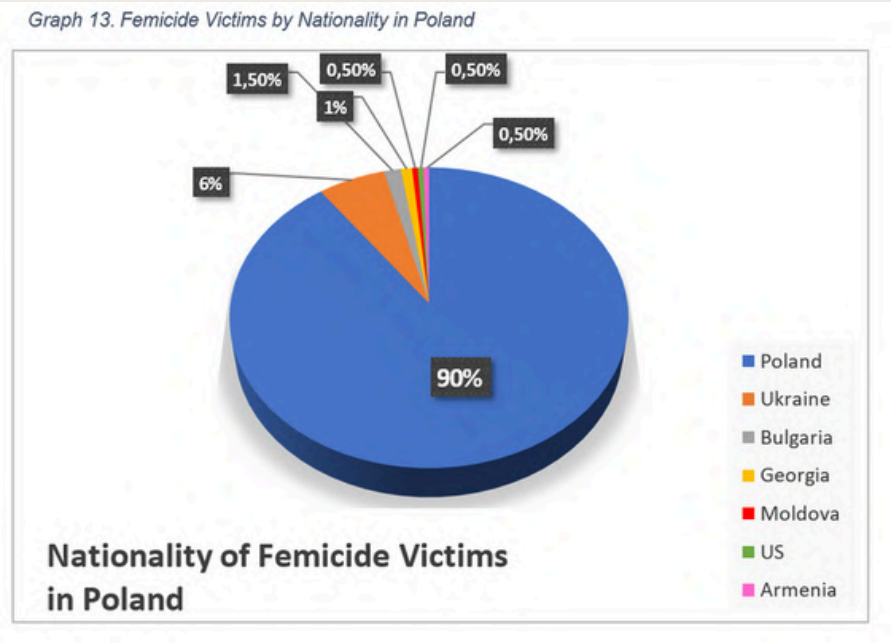
Foreign perpetrators were most often employed in Poland in seasonal work (as in the cases of the citizens of Georgia and Moldova).



Source: Author’s own elaboration, Femicide in Poland Project, 2024

In most cases, the perpetrators had partners, wives, or children of Polish nationality (citizens of Spain, the Netherlands, Norway, and Algeria). In one case, the perpetrator did not previously know the victim (a citizen of Georgia), while in another, the victim had moved to Poland in search of her Polish roots and was murdered by her own son (Case No. 58, Polish Femicide Map).

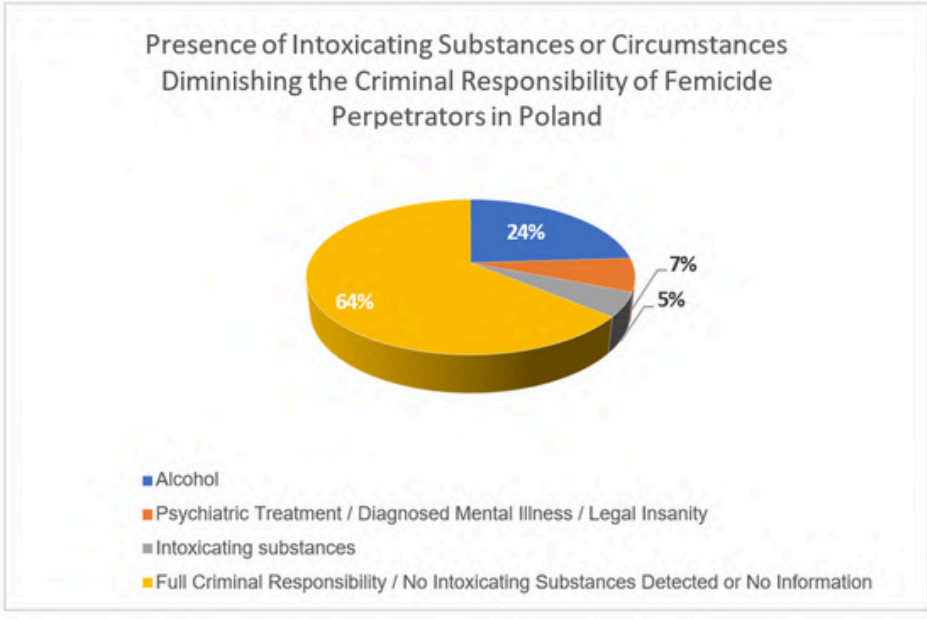
In the case of Ukrainian citizens, femicides in Poland most often involved Ukrainian women close to them — women whom the men visited in Poland and who were attempting to rebuild their lives after war experience.



Source: Author’s own elaboration, Femicide in Poland Project, 2024

J. SANITY

Graph 14. Presence of Intoxicating Substances or Circumstances Diminishing the Criminal Responsibility of Femicide Perpetrators in Poland



Source: Author’s own elaboration, Femicide in Poland Project, 2024

Regarding both the mental and physical condition of femicide perpetrators, the findings show that in 64% of cases the perpetrators were fully sane — meaning they were sober and aware of the consequences of their actions. Alcohol intoxication was present in 24% of cases, while intoxicating substances (narcotics or non-alcoholic psychoactive drugs) were detected in 5% of perpetrators. In 7% of cases, the perpetrators were found to be insane, of diminished responsibility, or were referred for psychiatric treatment.

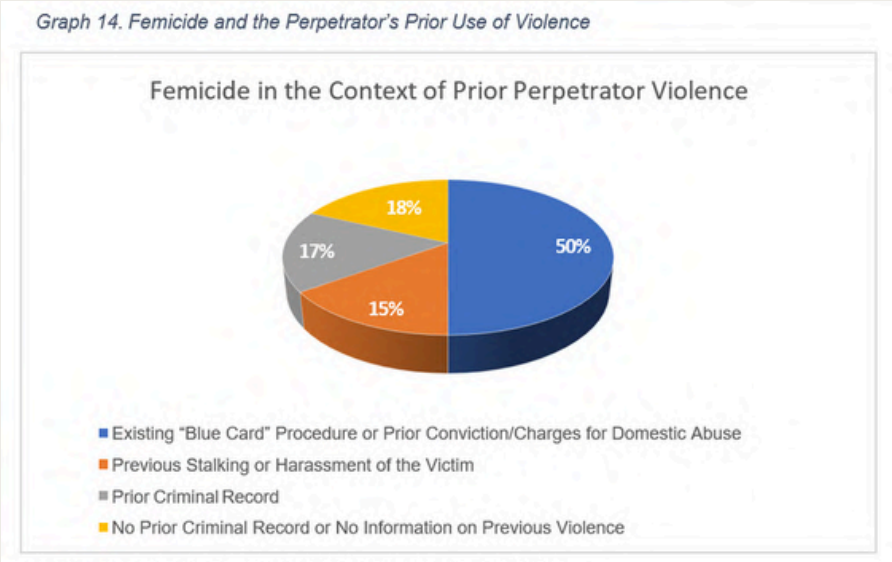
These findings demonstrate that, contrary to common stereotypes, alcohol is neither the sole nor the most frequent cause of femicides. The so-called trigger risk factors should therefore be sought elsewhere.

More than 60% of the perpetrators of femicide were sane at the time of committing the act.

This means that alcohol or other drugs are not always the trigger.

K. HISTORY OF VIOLENCE

In more than half of the cases, the perpetrators had previously been subject to a “Blue Card” procedure or had received a conviction for domestic abuse against their partner. When other forms of prior violence are also taken into account — such as the perpetrator’s previous harassment of the partner — this number rises to more than three-quarters of all cases (65%). This result indicates that gender-based killings of women (femicides) in Poland are a consequence of unaddressed prior violence against women, which may have taken the form of both physical abuse and harassment. Furthermore, as illustrated in the chart, in 17% of cases the perpetrators had prior criminal convictions, meaning that the femicide was committed under conditions of recidivism. In only 18% of cases was there no record of criminal history or any information on previous violence. These findings demonstrate that in the vast majority of cases, the risk of femicide could have been foreseen on the basis of earlier incidents of violence.



In 65% of femicide cases, the perpetrators had previously used other forms of violence against their partners.

Red flags are most often coercive control, stalking or physical violence such as strangulation or beating.

In many cases, these femicide risk factors are so recurrent and distinctive that, metaphorically speaking, they form a kind of “chronicle of a death foretold.” Experts and police forensic specialists in homicide cases emphasize that effective prevention is possible when such risk situations are properly identified and addressed in time.

In many cases, the victims themselves intuitively sense that the violence is escalating. They are therefore able to recognize an increasing sense of danger and to alert the relevant services at an early stage.

This brings us to the issue of the effectiveness of intervention mechanisms. By intervention mechanisms, I refer to the measures undertaken by law enforcement agencies to provide victims with basic safety frameworks — both at the stage of leaving a violent partner (through a rapid institutional response and the isolation of the victim from the perpetrator) and during the subsequent post-separation period, in order to protect the woman and her children from potential post-separation violence.

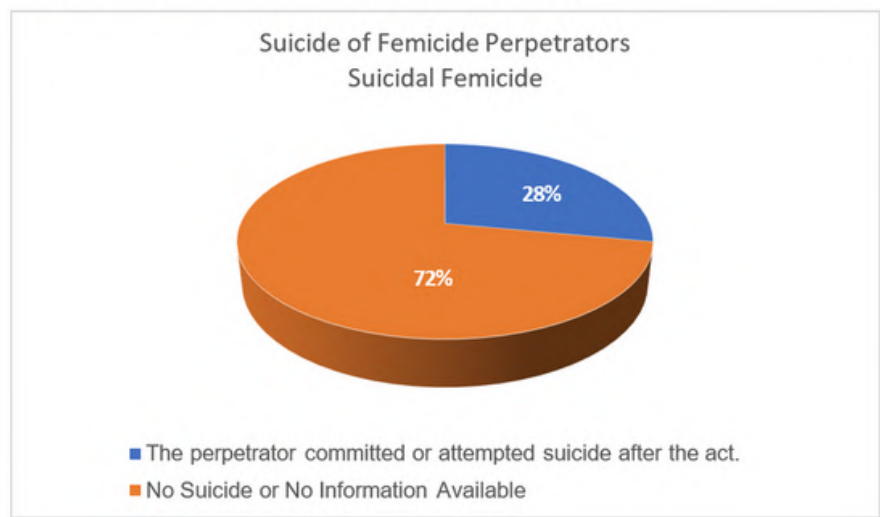


L. Postfemicidal suicide

Every fourth perpetrator (28%) decides to take their own life after committing the act. Such circumstances are often mistakenly referred to in the press and media as extended suicide. This term constitutes a form of linguistic manipulation — it symbolically distorts and unjustly softens the reality of the crime that has occurred.

What happens when femicide — often accompanied by the killing of children, and sometimes the entire family, including pets — is reduced to the term extended suicide? The moral and legal proportions of the act become reversed.

Graph 15 Suicide of Femicide Perpetrators (Suicidal Femicide)



Source: Author’s own elaboration, Femicide in Poland Project, 2024

One in four perpetrators of femicide took or attempted to take their own life after the act.

By using the term extended suicide, both the sender and the recipient of the message lose sight of the crucial fact that a homicide has taken place beforehand, and that before the perpetrator's suicide, other individuals had already lost their lives.

The linguistic image that remains is therefore limited to the perpetrator's suicide following the femicide — an event in which he becomes the central figure. The victimized partner or family members, those who lost their lives, are reduced merely to the adjective "extended". Consequently, public attention shifts away from the crime itself and instead focuses on the perpetrator's suicidal death.

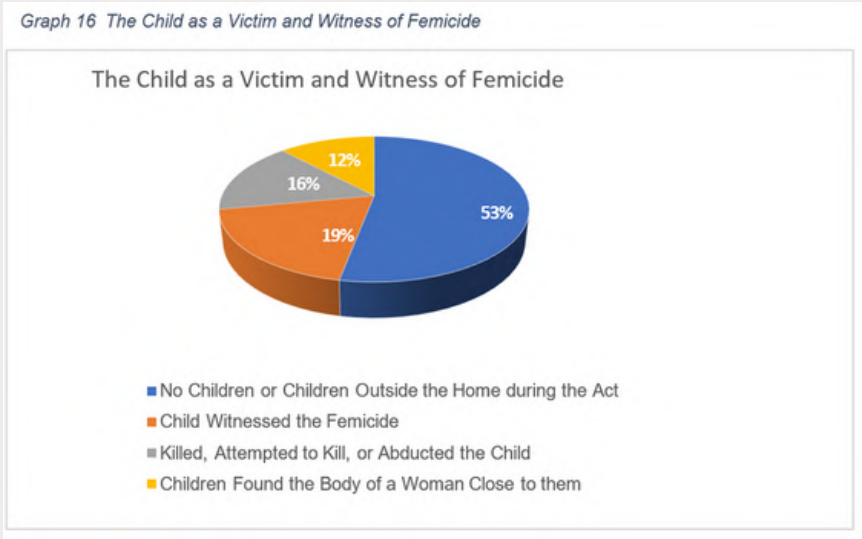
In this way, the term "extended suicide" is misleading and inaccurate, as it deprives the victims of their agency and renders the suffering and deaths of the murdered family members invisible. When using this term — perhaps unintentionally, or by repeating it after someone else or the media — we must remain aware that it places the perpetrator and his suicide at the center, rather than the victims themselves.

In Poland, no comprehensive government-level guidelines or instructions have yet been developed regarding the way femicides should be addressed in the media. As part of the Femicide in Poland project, I am currently working on a report titled "Femicide in the Polish Press," which will include recommendations on how to make the language used in discussions and reporting on violence against women more sensitive and responsible for Polish journalists and media professionals.

M. Child and femicide

When studying the phenomenon of femicide, it is essential not to overlook the role and situation of children who are exposed to femicidal violence affecting the women closest to them within the family. Children also play various roles in femicide cases and may become both indirect and direct victims.

According to media monitoring data, in half of the cases the children were outside the home at the time of the femicide, or the woman or couple had no children at all. Every fourth child witnessed the femicide of their mother, grandmother, or another close female relative. In four cases, the perpetrators killed their partners who were pregnant, taking the lives of both the mother and the unborn child. In 16% of the cases, the perpetrator directly targeted the child — either attempting to kill, killing, or abducting them.



Source: Author’s own elaboration, Femicide in Poland Project, 2024

In almost every fifth case of femicide in Poland, a child was an eyewitness.

Femicide perpetrators are increasingly using vicarious violence. They threaten to kill or kidnap children to inflict even more pain on their mothers.

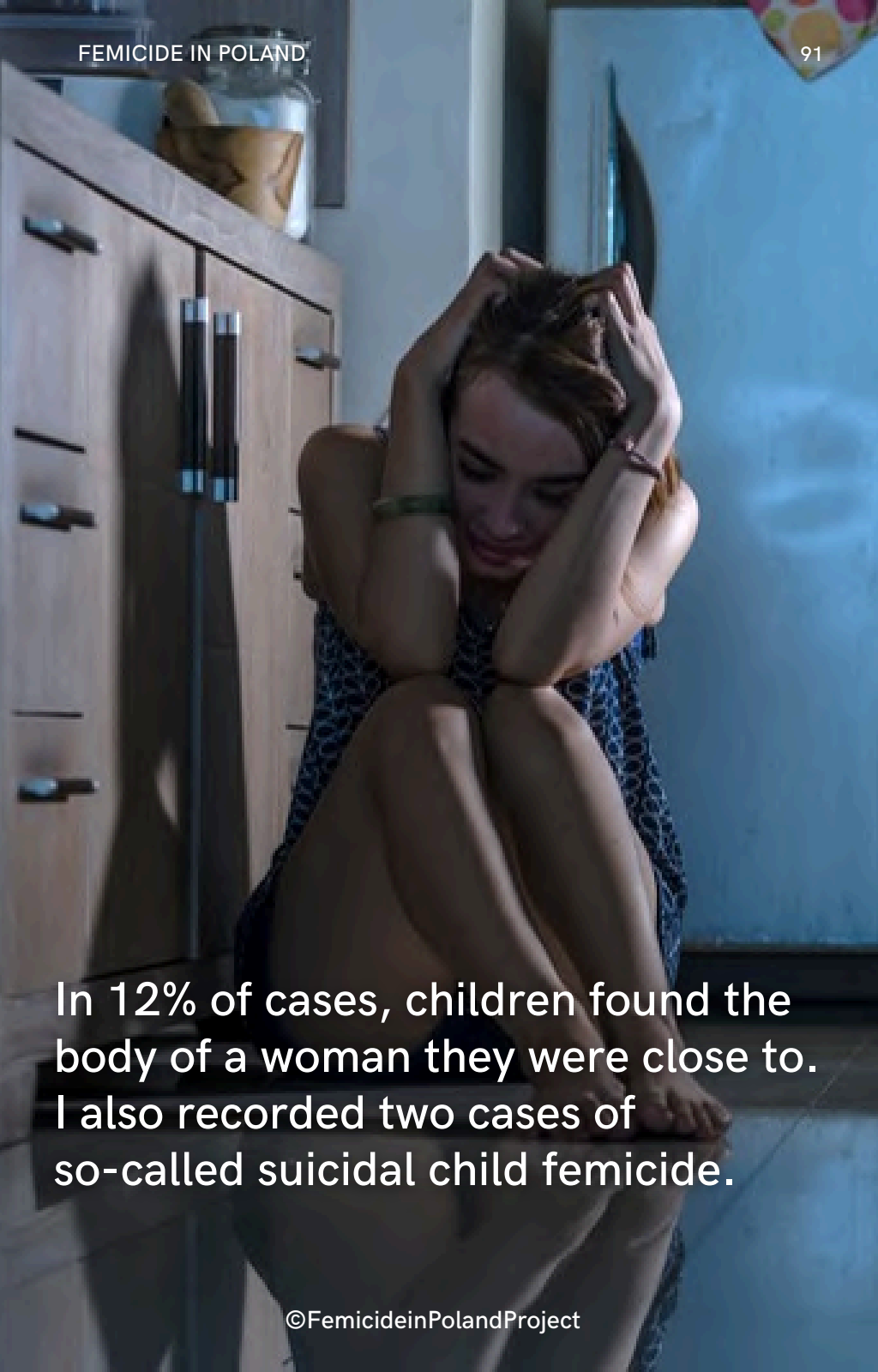
In the Polish Femicide Map, two cases of child abduction were recorded. In both instances, the perpetrator first killed the child's mother and then fled with the child. In one of these cases, the perpetrator — a Norwegian citizen — abducted his own daughter. A European Arrest Warrant was issued against him after he fled with the girl to Denmark (Case No. 50, Polish Femicide Map).

In 12% of the cases, children discovered the body of a woman close to them. Among the analysed cases, I also recorded two instances of so-called suicidal child femicides, in which the father of a girl killed the child in order to inflict suffering on the mother and then took his own life. Additionally, one case of substitute femicide was identified, where the perpetrator killed his daughter in front of the mother without committing suicide.

In the latter case, the femicide took place in Jastrzębie-Zdrój. The victim was the 24-year-old adult daughter of the perpetrator's former partner, who was stabbed to death while walking her dog (Case No. 112, Polish Femicide Map).

In 19% of the cases, children witnessed the femicide of a woman close to them. It is worth noting that, in the context of the recent amendment to the Polish Act on Counteracting Domestic Violence, such children are no longer regarded merely as witnesses but as direct victims of violence.

The Polish legislator has recognized that witnessing violence — particularly in the extreme form that femicide represents — can, due to the emotional bond between the child and the parent, constitute a profound trauma and leave lasting psychological consequences well into adulthood. Consequently, children who witness violence against their mother are granted the legal status of victims of violence and are entitled to protection under the law.

A woman with long brown hair, wearing a dark blue patterned dress, is crouching in a room. She has her hands pressed against her temples and her head bowed, suggesting a state of distress or despair. The room features a wooden cabinet with multiple drawers on the left and a window with a blue curtain in the background. The lighting is soft and indoor.

In 12% of cases, children found the body of a woman they were close to. I also recorded two cases of so-called suicidal child femicide.

CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusions

In light of the empirical data collected through media monitoring, it becomes evident that many of the femicide cases I analysed were the final outcome of years of unaddressed or ineffectively addressed violence.

The perpetrators had often previously abused their partners or mothers, and the final event — the femicide — was not an isolated incident but rather the result of an accumulation of pre-existing risks (femicide risk factors).

Deaths of women resulting from intimate partner femicide or femicide committed by another family member can be prevented at earlier stages of violence escalation.

A particularly important element in risk mapping is the trigger — the immediate factor that precedes the femicide — such as informing an abusive partner of the intention to separate, to file for divorce, or of a pregnancy.

Furthermore, as demonstrated in this study, despite the absence of official state-level data on femicides, it is possible — based on case monitoring from recent years — to construct a general criminological profile of perpetrators and a victimological profile of victims.



Killings of women resulting from intimate partner or family related femicide can be prevented at earlier stages of violence escalation.

A. PROFILING ATTEMPT



How many femicides are perpetrated in Poland?



Who are the victims?



Who are the perpetrators?

Between 2017 and 2023, I examined 293 cases of femicide. Estimates from the continuously updated Polish Femicide Map and data from the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) indicate that approximately 100 to 200 femicides occur in Poland each year.

The average Polish femicide perpetrator is a 41-year-old man with secondary or vocational education, while the victim is typically a 44-year-old woman with higher education. Both most often live in a medium-sized city with a population of under 100,000 and are in the process of divorce, separation, or relationship breakup.

In the majority of femicide cases, the perpetrators are mentally competent — able to control their actions and understand their consequences — and sober at the time of the crime. This finding challenges the common belief that violence most often occurs in alcohol-related environments. Most femicide perpetrators in Poland do not commit suicide, in contrast to trends observed in other countries. In the rare cases where they do, they often take with them all those who witnessed the act.

In several cases, the perpetrators detonated an entire tenement building with their family inside, turned on the gas, or barricaded themselves in the apartment to prevent emergency or police services from responding in time. Femicides most often occur in the home. For women, the home is the most dangerous place, as in cases of intimate partner femicide they are left alone with the perpetrator. The most common *modus operandi* observed in femicide cases involved stabbing or inflicting injuries with a sharp object.



B. CONSTANT MAPPING

The findings presented within the Polish Femicide Map represent only a drop in the ocean, intended to raise awareness of the scale of this phenomenon in Poland. The absence of coordinated databases at the police, prosecutorial, and judicial levels further deepens the existing femicide data gap in the country.

To thoroughly examine the phenomenon of femicide in Poland, continuous monitoring of cases at the police, prosecutorial, and judicial stages would be necessary. However, this is a complex task that requires time and may be affected by the statistical error or bias mentioned earlier.

Unfortunately, Poland still lacks a unified database accessible to all organizations and experts working on domestic violence. Such a system would enable the rapid exchange of information and help prevent the phenomenon of statistical delay.



This is already the case in other countries such as Spain, Belgium, Croatia, and Italy, where femicide mapping carried out by multiple institutions and non-governmental organizations reveals noticeable differences between governmental and NGO statistics — with the latter being more accurate and comprehensive.

C. NAMING THE CRIME AND COORDINATION OF DATA ANALYSIS INSTITUTIONS

However, the collection of data on the number of femicides will not begin as long as the justice system remains rigidly confined within the existing legal framework of domestic violence. A shift in approach is necessary — one that recognizes lethal violence as a complex issue affecting women, children, and men individually. Each member of the family unit should be given equal consideration and be separately accounted for in both statistical records and prevention programmes.

Another significant issue, as previously discussed, is the lack of institutional coordination in the flow of data between Municipal Social Welfare Centres, County Family Support Centres, the police, the prosecution service, the courts, and probation officers handling individual family cases.

The chaos prevailing in the current process of data collection and statistical reporting on domestic violence — as demonstrated by the results of my survey “10 Questions about Femicide for the Polish Justice System” — shows that virtually every institution maintains its own databases and publishes separate statistics. This raises doubts as to whether these figures represent reliable data or merely serve a decorative or procedural function.

The above circumstances confirm that the phenomenon of femicide has not yet been formally recognized in Poland. There is also no legal definition of femicide that could serve as a basis for the systematic collection of statistical data by law enforcement agencies.

Identifying and naming the problem — by introducing filters or categories that distinguish gender-related killings of women from ordinary homicides — is also crucial at the preventive level. As Myrna Dawson, the founder of the Canadian Femicide Observatory, writes: "If the first step — naming the problem — does not occur, prevention becomes a challenge. You cannot fight what is not recognized by the system."

This observation can also be applied to the Polish context. In the absence of a legal definition and statistical data on femicide-related crime, law enforcement agencies fail to recognize the underlying cause for which some women are deprived of their lives — their gender. As a result, a gender gap emerges, making it practically impossible, or at least significantly more difficult, to effectively prevent femicide.

In short, what can we do to start addressing the lack of data on femicides?

- We must begin by implementing the provisions of the Istanbul Convention, binding on Poland since 2015, which require the collection of data on all forms of violence against women and domestic violence — including femicides.
- We must start naming, mapping, and counting femicides, in line with the United Nations' call: Name it! Count it! Prevent it!
- We must also raise awareness and systematize knowledge among institutions about what femicidal violence is, the gender-related motives that distinguish femicide from ordinary homicide, and the high-risk factors and triggers that precede femicides in Poland.

Polish Femicide Map



LET'S DO THIS TOGETHER!

Let's name, count and prevent femicides !

Our database counts over 500 cases of femicides from Poland!

Do you know about femicide case that isn't included in our Map?

Contact us!

Write us: info@femicideinpoland.pl

Invitation to cooperation

If :

- the goals of the Femicide in Poland project are important to you.
- you are seeking clarification, expert commentary, and a broader perspective on the concept of femicide.
- you are an activist or an advocate aiming to promote understanding of femicide in Poland, Europe, and worldwide.
- you plan to hold a workshop, training session, or lecture addressing femicide or other forms of gender-based violence against women.
- you are a journalist and want to learn how to report on cases of violence against women in a factual, stereotype-free, and above all, non-stigmatizing and non-trivializing way.

Invitation to cooperation

If you:

- want that your company or products support our project
- work in software development and would like to help us build consistent databases on femicide.
- are developing a strategy, drafting a legal act, managing a project, or participating in an initiative that requires specialist knowledge on preventing gender-based violence and femicide.
- want to get involved in the project in a different way.



FEMICIDE IN POLAND

WE RESPECT OUR AUTHORS AND SOURCES:

Literature:

Legal acts:

- 1.UN Vienna Declaration on femicide from 1 February 2013 E/CN.15/2013/NGO/1
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- 3.Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, adopted in Istanbul on 11 May 2011 (Istanbul Convention), Journal of Laws of the Republic of Poland 2015, item 961.
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- 5.Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (Convention of Belém do Pará), adopted in Belém do Pará, Brazil, on 9 June 1994.
- 6.Latin American Model Protocol for the Investigation of Gender-Related Killings of Women (Femicide/Feminicide), United Nations and Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), 2014.
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- 8.TheCriminal Code, Act of 6 June 1997 (Journal of Laws of the Republic of Poland 2025, item 383, consolidated text).

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2. d'Ignazio *Counting Femicide: Data Feminism in Action* The MIT Press 2024
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5. EIGE *Femicide: a classification system* Vilnius 2021
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Femicide in Poland Project

info@femicideinpoland.pl

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