



**FEM-UNITED**

united to prevent femicide in europe

# **Country report on femicide research and data: Germany**

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## Suggested citation

Schröttle, M., Arnis, M., Paust, I., Pölzer, L. (2021). Country report on femicide research and data: Germany. Institute for empirical Sociology (IfeS), at the Friedrich-Alexander University Erlangen - Nürnberg.

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Co-funded by



Co-funded by the  
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Bundesministerium  
für Familie, Senioren, Frauen  
und Jugend

This report was prepared in the context of “FEM-UnitED to prevent femicide in Europe”, a project funded by the European Union’s Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (2014-2020) and co-funded as part of “Gemeinsam gegen Gewalt an Frauen”, a federal innovation programme by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ). The content represents the views of the authors only and is their sole responsibility. The European Commission does not accept any responsibility for use that may be made of the information it contains.



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## The FEM-UnitED project

Femicide – the gender-motivated intentional killing of women – is not only the most extreme manifestation of gender-based violence (GBV) against women but also the most violent manifestation of discrimination and gender inequality.

Despite the magnitude of the problem, and calls by the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, data on femicide is not systematically collected in the EU and there is a lack of transnational tools for the study of femicide.<sup>1</sup> It is a notably under-researched subject and a common definition of femicide does not exist.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, harmful attitudes, behaviours and stereotypes, as well as a lack of understanding of the gendered dynamics of intimate partner femicide (IPF), impede prevention measures, including early and effective intervention.

The FEM-UnitED project aims to improve responses to intimate partner violence (IPV) and domestic violence (DV) in order to reduce harm to women and children and prevent femicide. The project aims to develop system-wide responses to IPV by creating an evidence base for raising public awareness and fostering multidisciplinary cooperation and capacity-building, adopting a gender-specific, victim-centred approach. In other words, FEM-UnitED is about creating evidence for collaborative policy change.

FEM-UnitED seeks to reinforce and contribute to international efforts – such as Femi(ni)cide Watch Platform<sup>3</sup> – by a) further developing quantitative and qualitative tools dealing with transnational and applied femicide data that measure the prevalence of femicide and related risk factors; b) identifying gaps in system responses to IPV/DV across partner countries; and c) initiating change through systematic stakeholder engagement that will result in specific commitments for action for femicide prevention based on the project's findings and results.

The FEM-UnitED partnership spans five EU countries and includes the University of Malta, the Cyprus University of Technology, the Institute for Empirical Sociology (IfeS) at the Friedrich-Alexander-University Erlangen-Nürnberg in Germany, the University of Zaragoza in Spain, and the University of Porto in Portugal. The project team also includes women's rights and gender equality NGOs, such as the Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies (Cyprus), the Women's Rights Foundation (Malta), and the UMAR – União de Mulheres Alternativa e Resposta (Portugal).

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<sup>1</sup> EIGE (2021a). *Measuring Femicide in the EU and Internationally: An assessment*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

<sup>2</sup> EIGE (2021b). *Defining and Identifying Femicide: A literature review*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

<sup>3</sup> Femi(ni)cide Watch Platform: <https://femicide-watch.org/>

This project builds on the work of the EU-funded project COST Action on Femicide across Europe (2014-2017)<sup>4</sup> that resulted in the establishment of the European Observatory on Femicide (EOF),<sup>5</sup> the first European-wide network monitoring cases of femicide and contributing to the prevention of femicide. The EOF has been systematically collecting data on femicide in Europe since 2020.

## 1. Femicide: Definition and research methodology

### 1.1 Definition of femicide

In national and international contexts, the term “femicide” has been used to politicise the killing of women and girls by men based on patriarchal beliefs, practices and power structures. Several definitions have been put forward, with the key denominator being the murder or killing of women because of their gender. Femicide is also understood to be motivated by a desire to subordinate women and girls, and to gain power and control over them. Broader definitions include the killings of women and girls by family members and in the context of sexual violence, prostitution, honour killings or other gendered forms of violence against women.

The term was first used by Diana H. Russell in 1976 at the first International Tribunal on Crimes against Women. Later, the concept of *feminicidio* was developed by the Mexican anthropologist and feminist Marcela Lagarde and has been used in Latin America since the 1990s with regard to the rise in extreme violence against and killings of women in Mexico, and the failure of state authorities to prosecute and punish perpetrators. The United Nations has used femicide/feminicide in its documents since the early 2010s to describe gender-related killings of women that can take many forms (e.g., intimate partner killings, honour killings, killings as a result of sexual orientation or gender identity). In 2021, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) published a brief on killings of women and girls by their intimate partner or other family members that explained the statistical framework used to measure gender-related killings of women and girls.<sup>6</sup> The brief recognised that while femicide has a clear conceptual meaning, it is challenging to operationalise it in statistical terms and even more so in a comparable way. In this report, common factors in the killings of women, including motives, modus operandi and the relationship between victim and perpetrator has been identified as indicative of femicide. The factors include: a) the perpetrators being intimate partners or otherwise related to the victim; b) a previous record of harassment or violence against the victim; c) deprivation of the victim’s freedom; d) use of force and/or mutilation; e)

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<sup>4</sup> COST Action IS1206: *Femicide across Europe* (2014-2017): <https://www.cost.eu/actions/IS1206/>.

<sup>5</sup> European Observatory on Femicide (EOF): <http://eof.cut.ac.cy/>.

<sup>6</sup> UNODC (2021). *Data Matters 3: Killings of women and girls by their intimate partner or other family members*. UNODC Research.

bodies being disposed of in a public space; f) hate crimes or sexual violence committed before the crime; g) the victim working in the sex industry; and h) victims undergoing some form of illegal exploitation.

In Europe, the term femicide, as well as the scientific work on its definitions, data collection, cultural issues, and advocacy and prevention was brought to the fore by the COST Action on “Femicide across Europe” in 2014,<sup>7</sup> and carried forward by the EOF and the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) since 2017. In 2021, EIGE proposed a classification system for femicide based on context, dividing the term into: a) interpersonal (e.g., intimate partner femicide); b) sexual (e.g., non-intimate partner sexual femicide); c) criminal (e.g., femicide in the context of organised crime); d) cultural (e.g., femicide related to sexual orientation and gender identity); and e) political femicide (denial of reproductive healthcare leading to death).<sup>8</sup>

The FEM-UnitED project, which was developed within the European research context, uses the term femicide to refer to the intentional killings of women because they are women. Femicide is analysed against the background of gender-specific power and hierarchy relations, and patterns of control. As killings of women are most often committed by male partners or ex-partners, the project focuses mainly on intimate partner killings of women or IPF.

## 1.2 Data collection and measurement tools

In the COST action study on femicide, comparative data and information from European countries were collected and analysed for the first time.<sup>9</sup> It was found that the official national data is not comparable between countries due to different legal definitions and/or different statistical frameworks for recording femicide cases.<sup>10</sup> The EOF has since collected more comparable and detailed information on the cases in a common database in order to further explore the root causes and background of femicide and to obtain important information for effective prevention across Europe.<sup>11</sup>

More specifically, the EOF has developed two data collection tools – one for quantitative data collection and one for qualitative information. These tools provide a commonly selection of variables for obtaining comparable data on femicide in Europe. Initially piloted in seven European countries, the tools have since been used more widely.

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<sup>7</sup> Weil S., Corradi C. & Naudi M. (eds.) (2018). *Femicide across Europe - Theory, research and prevention* (p. 17ff.). Bristol, Policy Press.

<sup>8</sup> EIGE (2021c). *Femicide: A classification system*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

<sup>9</sup> Weil S., Corradi C. & Naudi M. (eds.) (2018). *Femicide across Europe - Theory, research and prevention*. Bristol, Policy Press.

<sup>10</sup> Schröttle, M. & Meshkova, K. (2018). Data collection: Challenges and opportunities in S. Weil, C. Corradi & M. Naudi (eds.), *Femicide across Europe -Theory, research and prevention* (pp.33-52). Bristol, Policy Press.

<sup>11</sup> European Observatory on Femicide (EOF): <http://eof.cut.ac.cy/>.

In the FEM UnitED project, the quantitative and qualitative EOF data collection tools were used for data collection in 2019 and 2020 in five partner countries (Cyprus, Germany, Malta, Portugal and Spain) after further development and adaptation.

The project's data collection tools are described in the following sections.

#### **a) The quantitative data collection tool**

Quantitative data collection is based on seven categories (see Box 1) that include information about victims of femicide (women aged 16 and over), perpetrators, characteristics of the crime and relevant background information. An Excel database was used to compile information, and a detailed instruction sheet was provided for the national researchers to guide the data collection process. Sources were primarily media reports or police press releases as well as other available sources.

The data collected was then verified through additional information from the police and justice system. The information gathered was periodically updated and verified by the research team throughout the project timeline.

#### **Box 1: The quantitative data collection tool**

##### **1. Basic data**

Date and time of killing, as well as the city or region of killing.

##### **2. Characteristics of victim(s)**

Age group, marital status, occupation, employment, ethnic background, country of origin and disability.

##### **3. Additional victims**

Number of and relationship to additional victims killed during the femicide.

##### **4. Characteristics of perpetrator(s)**

Number of perpetrators, age group, gender, marital status, occupation, ethnic background, country of origin, mental health status and prior record of violent crimes.

##### **5. Victim–perpetrator relationship**

Nature of relationship, e.g., current or former intimate partner, spouse, other family member, or other relationship.

##### **6. Situational factors**

Area in which femicide occurred, crime scene, method of killing, witnesses, whether the victim was pregnant, context of sexual violence/rape, whether the perpetrator committed suicide after the murder, prior domestic violence or abuse by same perpetrator, description of forms/extent of prior violence, victim related factors (elderly/ill/suicidal), prior stalking, other situational factors (e.g., alcohol, revenge, jealousy) or any other significant factors.

## **7. Background information**

Did the incident occur after/during separation, how long after separation; did the perpetrator threaten to kill victim prior to femicide (with threats specified); were prior violence or threats known to the police; were there protection orders in place; were there previous convictions of the perpetrator for assaults/delicts; was the case known to the support system or others, and if so, what was the outcome of the trial; type of femicide and further comments.

Based on quality of the quantitative data collected within the context of the FEM-UnitED project, the quantitative data collection tool was evaluated as effective for collecting Information, even if information was not available for all variables, or was not available at that specific time (e.g. outcome of the investigation and/or trial). As a next step, the data collected may be supplemented as new information becomes available in the partner countries.

### **b) The qualitative data analysis tool and information collection**

The qualitative data collection tool was developed/adapted (by taking into account more factors) by the FEM-UnitED project partners to allow for analysis of the legal and policy framework, focusing on:

- Multiprofessional networks on preventing GBV and the social responses to victims;
- Legal framework on GBV;
- Effective measures for GBV prevention;
- Institutional protocols on identifying and/or reporting GBV;
- Gender values and data on gender (in)equality;
- Social and cultural norms around “the family” and around DV and GBV;
- Studies on the prevalence of DV in the countries;
- Studies on the media portrayals of femicide and GBV;
- Data on gender parity and differentials in politics/media/public figures at the national level;
- Impact of COVID-19 in legislation, service provision, measures and prevalence of femicide;
- Other relevant background information.

For the qualitative data analysis and information collection, specific case files of femicide in the partner countries were selected and analysed to explore in-depth the environmental, social,



legal and policy backgrounds that contribute to femicide, focusing on four main levels of analysis: the individual, proximate, institutional and societal levels (see Box 2).<sup>12</sup> The main aim was to achieve a holistic understanding of femicide, paving the way to propose recommendations for prevention at these various levels.

The four levels of analysis are presented below.

#### **Box 2: The qualitative data analysis tool and information collection**

##### **1. Individual level**

Data was collected with regard to the victim, the perpetrator and their relationship; the main characteristics and risk factors were analysed (e.g., previous separation or divorce, previous history of DV, coercion and control, victim's strategies of survival).

##### **2. Proximate level**

This includes the people in the social environment (family and friends) and social contexts (community, work, school) in relation to the victim and perpetrator. Here, an analysis was carried out as to whether or not social relations play an active role in supporting the victims. Furthermore, stereotypes and victim-blaming discourses were explored.

##### **3. Institutional level**

Information was collected on institutional responses (including the police, support systems, youth welfare offices and the judiciary), to determine how institutions performed in the specific case in relation to reducing risk, ensuring the victim's safety and punishing the offender.

##### **4. Societal level**

This includes the cultural, social and economic indicators related to the cases. Here, different aspects of patriarchal systems were analysed with regard to gender roles and gender equality, the social and economic situation of women, as well as gender stereotypes and values. This level also includes an analysis of media coverage.

## **2. Femicide in Germany**

Femicide in the context of killing women by their partner or ex-partner (intimate partner femicide; IPF) is widespread in Germany. In relation to other EU countries, Germany has in total the highest number of annual intimate partner femicide (IPF) cases, but in relation to the

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<sup>12</sup> The dimensions of analysis are an adaptation of Bronfenbrenner's (1974) ecological model.

number of cases per 100,000 inhabitants, it corresponds to the EU average.<sup>13</sup> According to official police statistics, in the past five years, between 122 and 147 women have been killed by their partner each year (in total, 815 women from 2015 to 2020). Every third day, a woman is killed by her intimate partner or ex-partner and at least every day an attempted killing is registered in the police statistics.<sup>14</sup>

Although in the past 20 years a lot of state actions had been taken to better safeguard women from DV (e.g., protection laws, inter-agency cooperation between the police and support services, perpetrator programmes, a 24-hour national helpline for women, and an expansion of the support system), the situation is still difficult for many women who try to separate from violent and/or controlling partners. Exacerbating the situation, shelter spots are few and hard to access, counselling centres are underfunded and the housing situation is poor. In addition, there are not enough perpetrator programmes nor nationwide effective prevention and intervention strategies for high-risk cases.<sup>15</sup>

Femicide is not a specific crime under the legislative framework in Germany and the cases of killings of women are not further qualified as murder, nor more harshly punished, due to the element of gender-based violence/gender specific abuse of power of control.<sup>16</sup>

As a consequence of increased actions of the EOF and several NGOs in recent years, the term “femicide” is appearing more regularly in the national discourse and media reporting. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of März 2021, there was a public hearing in the German government on the topic and it seems that stakeholders are getting mobilised to improve intervention and prevention strategies, as well as to ensure adequate sanctioning of the crime.<sup>17</sup>

### 3. The legal and policy background in Germany

#### 3.1 The legal framework on gender-based violence and femicide

In Germany, there is no legal definition of the killing of a woman due to gender; femicide is not codified explicitly in civil or criminal law. German legislation has a gender-neutral approach and thus does not provide an explicit reference to femicide or the gender-specific characteristic

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<sup>13</sup> Available at: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1096116/femicide-in-europe-in-2018>; [www.europeandatajournalism.eu](http://www.europeandatajournalism.eu) (based on EUROSTAT data)

<sup>14</sup> See official Police Statistics PKS; [https://www.bka.de/DE/AktuelleInformationen/StatistikenLagebilder/PolizeilicheKriminalstatistik/pks\\_no\\_de.html](https://www.bka.de/DE/AktuelleInformationen/StatistikenLagebilder/PolizeilicheKriminalstatistik/pks_no_de.html)

<sup>15</sup> See shadow report to the implementation of the Istanbul Convention, Alliance Istanbul Convention, 2021, Alternativbericht (frauenrat.de)

<sup>16</sup> Available at: [https://www.djb.de/fileadmin/user\\_upload/st21-01\\_IK-Bericht\\_e.pdf](https://www.djb.de/fileadmin/user_upload/st21-01_IK-Bericht_e.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> See documentation of the *Bundestag* first official hearing on the topic of femicide on the 1st of March: <https://www.bundestag.de/webarchiv/Ausschuesse/ausschuesse19/a13/Anhoerungen/822308-822308>

of the killing of women.<sup>18</sup>

Intentionally committed acts of violence against persons that result in the death of the victim are (regardless of the gender of the victim) sanctioned under the following offences:<sup>19</sup>

- murder (§211 Criminal Code - StGB) – life sentence
- manslaughter (§ 212 StGB) – 5-10 years imprisonment
- offences against the physical integrity (§223 ff. StGB) such as bodily harm resulting in death (§ 227 and § 231 StGB) – at least 3 years imprisonment.

Theoretically, it would be possible to classify IPFs as murders because of the murder criterion of base motives in cases where hatred or contempt of women on grounds of their sex is identified.<sup>20</sup> But in practice, the law often does not qualify IPF as murder, nor punish perpetrators with longer sentences.<sup>21</sup> Instead, killings of women during or after separation are rarely classified as murder (§ 211 StGB) nor considered as an aggravated offence, but more often as manslaughter (§ 212 StGB) or as an offence against physical integrity, in particular as bodily harm resulting in death (§ 227 and § 231 StGB).<sup>22</sup>

As the German Association of Women Lawyers stated in February 2021, the murder criterion of "base motives" is often denied, as is the criterion of malice. Even if case law tends to classify exclusive possessive claims of the perpetrator against the victim as "base motives", on the other hand, it negates them if feelings of despair and disappointment, inner hopelessness and the perceived injustice suffered are determining factors for the killing of the (ex-)partner or if the underlying motives cannot be investigated.<sup>23</sup> Base motives are also questioned if the separation was initiated by the woman and the accused, through the act, "deprives himself of what he actually does not want to lose". The German association of Women Lawyers has critiqued this case law rationale as "rather of a victim-blaming nature [which also] implicitly recognises patriarchal constructions of property". The second murder criterion of malice is

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<sup>18</sup> Available at: [https://www.djb.de/fileadmin/user\\_upload/st21-01\\_IK-Bericht\\_e.pdf](https://www.djb.de/fileadmin/user_upload/st21-01_IK-Bericht_e.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/state-report-from-germany/pdfa/16809f59c6> publication from 2020

<sup>20</sup> Base motives include: anger over refusal of sexual contact, killing the partner because the perpetrator wants their own freedom to seek another partner or jealousy when the perpetrator kills the victim to prevent the victim from seeking another partner. For further information see: <https://www.etl-rechtsanwaelte.de/stichworte/strafrecht-straftprozessrecht/niedriger-beweggrund>

<sup>21</sup> In 2014, to address the insufficient legal framework, a fundamental reform of the homicide offences was discussed. A comprehensive final report by a group of experts on the reform of homicide offences (sections 211 - 213, 57a StGB) with numerous proposed amendments was submitted to the then Federal Minister of Justice and Consumer Protection Heiko Maas in June 2015. However, the reform attempt failed due to contentious points within the governing coalition. The reform of homicide is therefore still under discussion. For further information see:

[https://www.bmj.de/DE/Ministerium/ForschungUndWissenschaft/ReformToetungsdelikte/ReformToetungsdelikte\\_node.html](https://www.bmj.de/DE/Ministerium/ForschungUndWissenschaft/ReformToetungsdelikte/ReformToetungsdelikte_node.html)

<sup>22</sup> See: [https://www.djb.de/fileadmin/user\\_upload/presse/stellungnahmen/st19-24\\_IK1\\_Femizide.pdf](https://www.djb.de/fileadmin/user_upload/presse/stellungnahmen/st19-24_IK1_Femizide.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> Statement by the German Women Lawyers' association, 25.02.2021, available at: [https://www.djb.de/presse/stellungnahmen/detail/st21-04#\\_ftnref5](https://www.djb.de/presse/stellungnahmen/detail/st21-04#_ftnref5)

denied if the woman was likely to be vulnerable due to prior DV, even if the killing was obviously planned by the perpetrator (as may be evident from the investigations). Furthermore, alleged provocation from the victim can be accepted as a mitigating circumstance to the crime. This legal practice is contrary to the values of the Istanbul Convention, according to which IPV is to be considered an aggravating circumstance under criminal law.<sup>24</sup>

### 3.2 Policies to prevent gender-based violence and femicide

In Germany a number of preventive measures (protective actions, strategies and concepts) have been put in place over the last 20 years on the state and federal levels to support victims of IPV and sexual violence.<sup>25</sup> Regarding the protection of women from DV, the Protection against Violence Act (*GewSchG*), which has been in force since 2002, was an important step, as it was implemented to better protect victims of DV and stalking. It ensures that in cases of DV, the perpetrator is removed from the home and facilitates police protection orders in cases of IPV and stalking (e.g., no-contact and no-proximity orders).

Another important step came in 2013 on the national level, with the *Act on the Establishment and Operation of a Nationwide Help Line for Violence against Women (VAW)* (*Gesetz zur Einrichtung und zum Betrieb eines bundesweiten Hilfetelefons bei Gewalt gegen Frauen - Hilfetelefontgesetz*).<sup>26</sup> Since then, more than 280,000 instances were registered of people seeking counselling via telephone, chat and email and almost 140,000 persons were referred to the support system.<sup>27</sup>

The German government has also implemented two national action plans (NAPs):

- The first strategic NAP was launched in 1999 to combat VAW; stakeholders were brought together at the federal level through a DV working group.<sup>28</sup>
- The second NAP was launched in 2007; it contained 135 measures to combat VAW through prevention, legislation, cooperation between institutions and projects,

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<sup>24</sup> A doctoral thesis by Julia Habermann is currently in progress to investigate whether intimate partner homicides are systematically punished more leniently than other homicides (results expected in 2022) Julia Habermann – Uni-Bochum, Faculty of Social Science – Doctoral thesis, forthcoming, (Stand: 24.2.21; Notification via e-mail); Habermann, J. (2019). Criminal verdicts as a source of information for collecting data on femicides:

<https://dspace.ceid.org.tr/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1/560/ekutuphane2.3.2.6.4.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

<sup>25</sup> Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/state-report-from-germany/pdfa/16809f59c6> publication from 2020; Protecting Women against Violence – Best Practices from all over Europe (bmfsfj.de) (BMFSFJ) (for Information to Germany see p. 45)

<sup>26</sup> Available at: [http://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/hilfetelefont/\\_1.html](http://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/hilfetelefont/_1.html); [www.hilfetelefont.de](http://www.hilfetelefont.de)

<sup>27</sup> Available at: <https://www.hilfetelefont.de/das-hilfetelefont/zahlen-und-fakten.html> (BFAZA)

<sup>28</sup> For more information, see Action plan of the federal government to combat violence against women (1999) (BMFSFJ): <https://www.bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj/service/publikationen/bekaempfung-von-gewalt-gegen-frauen-deutsch-und-englisch-80628>

networking of support services, work with perpetrators, awareness-raising among professionals and the general public, as well as international cooperation.<sup>29</sup>

Since 2007, no new NAP has been developed. However, there are official state guidelines on prevention, which have been published in the first state report on the implementation of the Istanbul Convention in 2020.<sup>30</sup> They include:

- Recommendations for necessary conditions for the implementation of the Protection against Violence Act (*Gewaltschutzgesetz – GewSchG*).
- Guidelines for the processing of applications under Book II of the Social Code (SGB II) for women victims of domestic violence.
- Recommendations for the prevention of domestic violence in schools.
- Guidance on the Act on Proceedings in Family Matters and in Matters of Voluntary Jurisdiction (*Gesetz über das Verfahren in Familiensachen und in den Angelegenheiten der freiwilligen Gerichtsbarkeit – FamFG*) in cases of DV.
- A number of publications from the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth that deal with the issue of VAW, provide information about it and offer help.<sup>31</sup>

NAPs to combat VAW were also developed and implemented on the federal state (*Länder*) level; while some cover the entire range of VAW and DV issues, others address specific aspects within the scope of the Istanbul Convention (see Annex 3.1 of the GREVIO - First State Report of the Federal Republic of Germany, BMFSFJ, 2020). A guidance for members of various professional groups (e.g., police and law enforcement) was produced and is very helpful for the implementation of the abovementioned legal framework. This includes guidelines for action, training, further education as well as cooperation with the support services.

Nevertheless, a comprehensive, strategic and effective primary prevention policy on VAW and DV has not yet been developed on the national and regional levels.<sup>32</sup>

Prevention programmes and supporting services or counselling centres foreseen by national and regional action plans for combating VAW, including work with perpetrators and risk management, are very important and broadly well regulated, at least on paper. In reality there

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<sup>29</sup> For more information, see Second Action Plan of the Federal Government to Combat Violence against Women (2007):

<https://www.bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj/meta/en/publications-en/second-action-plan-of-the-federal-government-to-combat-violence-against-women-95690>

<sup>30</sup> Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/state-report-from-germany/pdfa/16809f59c6> publication from 2020

<sup>31</sup> Available at: <https://www.bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj/themen/gleichstellung/frauen-vor-gewalt-schuetzen>

<sup>32</sup> Available at:

[https://www.bmj.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/Service/Formulare/Mehr\\_Schutz\\_bei\\_haeuslicher\\_Gewalt\\_ENG.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&v=6](https://www.bmj.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/Service/Formulare/Mehr_Schutz_bei_haeuslicher_Gewalt_ENG.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=6)

has only been moderate success in these measures. VAW prevention experts report low admittance rates to women's shelters and due to a lack of space; furthermore, protection offered to these women remains weak is not caught up by intervention and specialised counselling centres nationwide; furthermore, only few violent men engage with the perpetrator work (in the sense of changing their behaviour). Indeed, perpetrator-focused projects are not yet available nor funded nationwide. In reality, the majority of perpetrators are never reached by the perpetrator programmes and thus will not stop their violent behaviour.

Currently, the Federal Ministry for Women and Family Affairs promotes the expansion of support facilities for women affected by violence as well as the acquisition of suitable real estate for innovative housing projects for the federal funding programme "Together against Violence against Women".<sup>33</sup>

Furthermore, 17 years after the publication of the first study,<sup>34</sup> a new representative survey on VAW and men is planned, which, however, will no longer be conducted by independent feminist researchers like the first study, but by the Federal Criminal Police Office. Some feminist researchers and activists fear that this will lead to dismantling gender-critical perspectives on DV in future policies, research and data collection.

### 3.3 Official reporting on violence against women and femicide and institutional protocols

Germany has, to date, no official monitoring system that systematically collects information on VAW and femicide. Past proposals by experienced feminist researchers specialising in VAW to develop a comprehensive and independent monitoring body were unsuccessful in securing public funding. At present, a state-funded monitoring office at the German Institute for Human Rights is in the planning stage, but it is unclear whether it will employ empirically founded monitoring strategies.

The official resources that collect administrative data on GBV in Germany include:

- The **Police Crime Statistics (PKS)**,<sup>35</sup> collecting data on:

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<sup>33</sup> Available at: <https://www.bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj/themen/gleichstellung/frauen-vor-gewalt-schuetzen/hilfe-und-vernetzung>

<sup>34</sup> See: Müller, U. & Schröttle, M. (2004). Lebenssituation, Sicherheit und Gesundheit von Frauen in Deutschland. Eine repräsentative Untersuchung zu Gewalt gegen Frauen in Deutschland.

Available at:

<https://www.bmfsfj.de/resource/blob/84328/0c83aab6e685eeddc01712109bcb02b0/langfassung-studie-frauen-teil-eins-data.pdf>

<sup>35</sup> Available at:

<https://www.bka.de/DE/AktuelleInformationen/StatistikenLagebilder/PolizeilicheKriminalstatistik/bedeutungInhaltAussagekraft.html?nn=46948>;  
[https://www.bka.de/DE/AktuelleInformationen/StatistikenLagebilder/Lagebilder/Partnerschaftsgewalt/partnerschaftsgewalt\\_node.html](https://www.bka.de/DE/AktuelleInformationen/StatistikenLagebilder/Lagebilder/Partnerschaftsgewalt/partnerschaftsgewalt_node.html)

- homicides including details on victims and perpetrators, gender and the victim–offender relationship (also records on the number of women killed and their relationship to the perpetrator); and
  - all violent crime, including details on victims and perpetrators, gender and the victim–offender relationship, and violence by partners and ex-partners.
  - Analyses from the so-called “Intimate Partner Violence – Crime Statistics Analysis”, which has been published annually since 2015 and provides offence-specific data on intimate partner violence. Male and female victims (and perpetrators) of killings by intimate partners are documented. The analysis also includes information on suspects in offences under § 4 of the Protection against Violence Act.
- The **Criminal Prosecution Statistics** of the Federal Statistical Office,<sup>36</sup> providing information on convictions and sentences as well as completed proceedings conducted by the public prosecutors’ offices according to individual crime categories. The statistics provide information on the number of convicted and sentenced persons according to demographic and criminological characteristics. These statistics are not disaggregated for IPV or DV.

Due to the fact that the homicides of women and girls are not classified as "femicides", they are only recorded within the statistics of intimate partner homicides. Other killings of women and girls because of their gender, for example in the context of family violence, hate crimes or sexual offences, are not documented in official reports as femicides. Thus, there is a lack of documentation on femicide in the official national statistics. Furthermore, important additional information is missing on the following:

- the motives and backgrounds of the acts,<sup>37</sup>
- the measures taken by the police, and
- the measures taken by the support system.

It must be mentioned that no official case evaluations of femicides/homicides in the context of DV are conducted in Germany.

In the meantime, NGOs, women’s shelters, activists, as well as researchers in Germany have

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<sup>36</sup> Available at:

[https://www.bmj.de/DE/Service/Statistiken/Statistiken\\_node.html;jsessionid=E5B1EDCA9E58817558CB2573D47D9A4A.2\\_cid297](https://www.bmj.de/DE/Service/Statistiken/Statistiken_node.html;jsessionid=E5B1EDCA9E58817558CB2573D47D9A4A.2_cid297)

<sup>37</sup> Currently, a federal-state working group (BLAG) is working on the development of a uniform federal definition in the context of combating crimes specifically against women, which is to serve as a basis for the other areas to be worked on by the Standing Conference of the Ministers and Senators of the Interior of the States (IMK) in its mandate: statistics, prevention, combating measures and research needs. Baden-Württemberg is in charge of the commission. Further information is available in the first status report (LKA - BW, 2021) at: [https://www.innenministerkonferenz.de/IMK/DE/termine/to-beschluesse/20211201-03/anlagen-zu-top-11.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&v=2](https://www.innenministerkonferenz.de/IMK/DE/termine/to-beschluesse/20211201-03/anlagen-zu-top-11.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=2)



started to collect information on cases of femicide in recent years. Around 10 years ago, the autonomous women's shelter network (ZIF) was the first organisation in Germany to start collecting information on cases of women killed.

Scientific data and case collection was first implemented by national researchers of the EOF in 2020 (coordinated by Monika Schröttle and Christiana Kouta). The EOF databases cover all killings of women. In-depth information on the cases is collected in a way that also makes transnational comparison possible and contains information relevant for prevention. Further non-governmental entities such as "One Billion Rising", as well as journalists, have also started to collect information on cases of femicide in recent years.

### 3.4 Research on femicide

In Germany, research on VAW has been conducted since the 1980s, very often funded by ministries on the state levels, and sometimes by the EU. Until recently, very little scientific research was conducted that focused on femicide or killings of women.

The studies on VAW in Germany have been on the one side qualitative studies focusing on experiences of women with the support, medical and intervention systems, as well as on the multidisciplinary groups dealing with VAW.<sup>38</sup> On the other, quantitative studies have been conducted on the prevalence of VAW,<sup>39</sup> on the health consequences of violence, as well as on violence against marginalised women like migrant women and women with disabilities.<sup>40</sup> Another important research area has been the evaluation and analysis of the current support systems and intervention strategies.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> See for example the studies of the research institute soffi-f (<http://soffi-f.de/gewalt-paarbeziehungen-hauesliche-gewalt/>), as well as the studies of the institutes ZOOM (<https://prospektive-entwicklungen.de/abgeschlossene-projekte/>) and IfeS

(<https://www.ifes.fau.de/forschungsfelder/gender-gewalt-und-menschenrechte/>)

<sup>39</sup> See: Müller, U. & Schröttle, M. (2004). Lebenssituation, Sicherheit und Gesundheit von Frauen in Deutschland. Eine repräsentative Untersuchung zu Gewalt gegen Frauen in Deutschland. Available at: <https://www.bmfsfj.de/resource/blob/84328/0c83aab6e685eeddc01712109bcb02b0/langfassung-studie-frauen-teil-eins-data.pdf>

<sup>40</sup> See: Müller, U. & Schröttle, M. (2004). Lebenssituation, Sicherheit und Gesundheit von Frauen in Deutschland. Eine repräsentative Untersuchung zu Gewalt gegen Frauen in Deutschland. Available at: <https://www.bmfsfj.de/resource/blob/84328/0c83aab6e685eeddc01712109bcb02b0/langfassung-studie-frauen-teil-eins-data.pdf>; Hornberg, C., Schröttle, M., Bohne, S., Khelaifat, N. & Pauli, A. (2008): Gesundheitliche Folgen von Gewalt unter besonderer Berücksichtigung von häuslicher Gewalt gegen Frauen. Gesundheitsberichterstattung des Bundes. Vol 42. Berlin: Robert-Koch-Institut. Available at: [https://pub.uni-bielefeld.de/download/1857826/2656432/Gesundheitliche\\_Folgen\\_von\\_Gewalt.pdf](https://pub.uni-bielefeld.de/download/1857826/2656432/Gesundheitliche_Folgen_von_Gewalt.pdf); Schröttle, M., Hornberg, C., Glammeier, S., Sellach, B., Kavemann, B., Puhe, H. & Zinsmeister, J. (2012): Lebenssituation und Belastungen von Frauen mit Beeinträchtigungen und Behinderungen in Deutschland – Kurzfassung. Berlin: Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend. Available at: <https://pub.uni-bielefeld.de/download/2528934/2645954/Lebenssituation-und-Belastungen-von-Frauen-mit-Behinderungen-Kurzfassung.pdf>

<sup>41</sup> Available at: <https://www.bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj/service/publikationen/evaluation-des-hilfetelefone-gewalt-gegen-frauen--163428>



The first study on femicide in Germany was conducted by the forensic psychologist Luise Greuel; it was a qualitative analysis of 69 cases of intimate partner killings of women in the year 2005.<sup>42</sup> Greuel found that these killings were frequently planned and largely independent of the victim's behaviour; the decision to commit the crime itself was usually made (long) before the ultimate act of killing. In half of the cases, no prior DV was known to the police.<sup>43</sup> The offenders had no specific perpetrator profiles in relation to social status, education and migration background, mental health issues, alcohol- or drug-abuse or criminal backgrounds. The analysis highlighted that the risk assessment that had been developed for DV cases might not be suitable to predict femicide; this is because the deciding factor is not the escalation of violence, but the emergence of a conflict and the resulting escalation of a psychological crisis on the part of the perpetrator (during and after the separation or loss of control over the woman). Greuel found that perpetrators with depressive and suicidal tendencies, high dependency of self-esteem on the female partner, as well as those with narcissistic grievances enter into a crisis mode when it becomes clear that the woman will separate from them and/or escape from their control. Signs of an increased risk in the run-up to the femicide are cognitive constrictions such as having tunnel vision or an extreme fixation on the partner by the perpetrator, accompanied by stalking and/or threats to kill (the victim, or even third parties) or commit suicide, or a conspicuous withdrawal from social and professional life.

The study clarifies that risk factors differ from those of DV. Thus, a more differentiated and integrated analysis of complex patterns of conflict and behaviour is necessary to predict and prevent IPF. Greuel made a first draft of risk assessment for IPFs in relation to the specific risk factors and perpetrator groups.<sup>44</sup> One risk factor that was included was in cases of planned separation without prior DV.

Apart from Greuel's study, no further in-depth research was conducted on femicide in Germany until the EOF started their systematic case collection in 2020. Journalists and activists have also written on the topic in 2020 and 2021, specifically on motives and backgrounds of the femicide cases, as well as on support and interventions prior to the crimes, but the publications are not science-based and need to be evaluated as such.

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<sup>42</sup> Greuel, L. (2009): Forschungsprojekt "Gewalteskalation in Paarbeziehungen." Institut für Polizei und Sicherheitsforschung (IpoS).

Available at: [https://polizei.nrw/sites/default/files/2016-11/Gewaltesk\\_Forschungsproj\\_lang.pdf](https://polizei.nrw/sites/default/files/2016-11/Gewaltesk_Forschungsproj_lang.pdf)

<sup>43</sup> Greuel, L. (2009): Forschungsprojekt "Gewalteskalation in Paarbeziehungen." Institut für Polizei und Sicherheitsforschung (IpoS), (p. 109).

Available at: [https://polizei.nrw/sites/default/files/2016-11/Gewaltesk\\_Forschungsproj\\_lang.pdf](https://polizei.nrw/sites/default/files/2016-11/Gewaltesk_Forschungsproj_lang.pdf)

<sup>44</sup> Greuel, L. (2009): Forschungsprojekt "Gewalteskalation in Paarbeziehungen." Institut für Polizei und Sicherheitsforschung (IpoS), (p. 112ff).

Available at: [https://polizei.nrw/sites/default/files/2016-11/Gewaltesk\\_Forschungsproj\\_lang.pdf](https://polizei.nrw/sites/default/files/2016-11/Gewaltesk_Forschungsproj_lang.pdf)

### 3.5 The support and intervention system

Since the late 1990s, Germany has developed a number of actions, plans, legal instruments and initiatives for the prevention of VAW, as well as improved intervention and support, which are also established by the federal states.<sup>45</sup> While a differentiated support and intervention system has been established, gaps still exist and there has been no visible decrease in VAW.

#### a) The police

In the federal state police systems, there are departments responsible for crime prevention and for victim protection. In cases of IPV, measures have been introduced to allow the temporary removal of the perpetrator from the home (*Platzverweis*), for up to a maximum of 14 days. However, only some cities or regions have specialised police units for dealing with GBV or DV (e.g., in Berlin and Munich). Nevertheless, the police across Germany are well-trained for interventions in cases of DV. Police officers assess the risk by using questionnaires or checklists for measures against DV; such risk assessment is crucial for police intervention, as well as for offering further support to the victim in cooperation with counselling and intervention centres.<sup>46</sup>

#### b) The justice system

In the German justice system, DV victims are treated in a gender-neutral way. Violence in the family or in a partnership is sanctioned under criminal law, but without a specific focus on DV or the gender of victim and perpetrator. The law enables victims to act as witness and actively participate in criminal proceedings, as well as to be represented by a lawyer and to appear as co-prosecutor throughout.<sup>47</sup>

Police officers (less so judicial officers) are meant to receive general but also specialist training for responding effectively to the victims' needs (adults and children); nevertheless, access to police and justice remains very limited for certain groups, such as women with disabilities, homeless women, older women as well as migrant women with precarious residence status and female refugees, as mentioned in recent reports.<sup>48</sup>

Another problem is that judicial professionals, such as family courts who hold decision-making power on the protection of women and children and about custody in the context of separation, are often not trained or specialised to deal with IPV or strategies to deal with perpetrators.

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<sup>45</sup> Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/state-report-from-germany/pdfa/16809f59c6> publication from 2020

<sup>46</sup> Available at: <https://www.buendnis-istanbul-konvention.de/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Alternativbericht-BIK-2021.pdf>

<sup>47</sup> Available at: [https://www.djb.de/fileadmin/user\\_upload/presse/stellungnahmen/st19-28\\_IK5\\_Strafverfolgung.pdf](https://www.djb.de/fileadmin/user_upload/presse/stellungnahmen/st19-28_IK5_Strafverfolgung.pdf)

<sup>48</sup> Available at: [https://www.djb.de/fileadmin/user\\_upload/st21-01\\_IK-Bericht\\_e.pdf](https://www.djb.de/fileadmin/user_upload/st21-01_IK-Bericht_e.pdf);  
(<https://www.buendnis-istanbul-konvention.de/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Alternativbericht-BIK-2021.pdf>)

Thus, women are often not effectively protected in high-risk situations during and after separation. The tendency to grant custody even to dangerous and violent fathers and partners, endangers women. This has long been criticised by NGOs and activists, but the situation has not been addressed.<sup>49</sup>

### c) Support system

Despite the advocacy and lobbying by women's groups since the 1970s, the issues of VAW and DV were historically unaddressed in policymaking at the municipal and federal state level in Germany, because these were considered a private matter.<sup>50</sup> This began to change in the 1990s and nowadays women affected by violence have access to various specialised counselling centres.

There are a total of 750 counselling centres for women affected by violence in Germany,<sup>51</sup> providing counselling, support and accompanying for women victims of domestic and/or sexual violence. The centres fall in the following categories:<sup>52</sup>

- Women's counselling centres advising on various forms of violence.
- Women's emergency centres specialised in sexual assault.
- Intervention centres active within the framework of police protection and the Protection against Violence Act.
- Specialised counselling centres for victims of trafficking in women.
- Specialised counselling for specific forms of violence such as forced marriage.<sup>53</sup>

The organisations and support services for women affected by violence are most often NGOs (i.e., they are run by welfare organisations and registered autonomous women's associations, or by municipal authorities).<sup>54</sup> Cross-regional and national networks include:

- the Association of Women's Shelters (*Frauenhauskoordination e.V./FHK*)
- the Federal Association of Women's Counselling Centres and Women's Emergency Calls e.V.
- the Central Information Point of Autonomous Women's Shelters

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<sup>49</sup> Available at: [https://www.djb.de/fileadmin/user\\_upload/st21-01\\_IK-Bericht\\_e.pdf](https://www.djb.de/fileadmin/user_upload/st21-01_IK-Bericht_e.pdf);  
(<https://www.buendnis-istanbul-konvention.de/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Alternativbericht-BIK-2021.pdf>)

<sup>50</sup> Available at: [https://www.statistik-bw.de/FaFo/Familien\\_in\\_BW/R20194.pdf](https://www.statistik-bw.de/FaFo/Familien_in_BW/R20194.pdf)

<sup>51</sup> Available at: [https://www.djb.de/fileadmin/user\\_upload/st21-01\\_IK-Bericht\\_e.pdf](https://www.djb.de/fileadmin/user_upload/st21-01_IK-Bericht_e.pdf)

<sup>52</sup> Available at:  
<https://www.bmfsfj.de/resource/blob/174020/475825b323ffd386faebcf47d7472c54/bedarfsanalyse-und-planung-zur-weiterentwicklung-des-hilfesystems-zum-schutz-vor-gewalt-gegen-frauen-und-haueslicher-gewalt-data.pdf>

<sup>53</sup> Available at: <https://www.bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj/themen/gleichstellung/frauen-vor-gewalt-schuetzen/hilfe-und-vernetzung/hilfesystem-und-vernetzungsstellen-80640>

<sup>54</sup> Available at: <https://www.bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj/themen/gleichstellung/frauen-vor-gewalt-schuetzen/hilfe-und-vernetzung/hilfesystem-und-vernetzungsstellen-80640>

- the Federal Coordination Circle against Trafficking in Human Beings e.V.
- the umbrella organisation of migrant women's organisations<sup>55</sup>
- the Federal Working Group on Perpetrators of Domestic Violence e.V.

Most women's shelters in Germany are run by NGOs: The majority are members of a welfare organisation (*Paritätischer Wohlfahrtsverband*) but act independently. Others are run by women's aid associations and church associations. There are a total of 336 women's shelters and 72 safe houses in Germany – with varying regional densities, according the GREVIO–First State Report of the Federal Republic of Germany (BMFSFJ, 2020).

As a key support for women affected by IPV, women's shelters have been expanded and developed over many decades. They offer women and their children the possibility to escape from DV and to find a safe place at least for a certain period of time. This gives them the opportunity to reorganise their lives. In addition, women's shelters offer those affected by violence psychosocial counselling, accompaniment to authorities such as the police and family courts, as well as other comprehensive assistance.<sup>56</sup> According to an interim report by the federal government, every year about 15,000 to 17,000 women and their children find protection and support in women's shelters – that means about 30,000 to 34,000 persons.<sup>57</sup>

Despite the diverse support offered to women affected by violence, it must be mentioned that many women cannot get immediate support and protection because the system does not have sufficient resources in terms of space in women's shelters and capacity in the support centres. Furthermore, there is no long-term state funding for these institutions.<sup>58</sup>

The Istanbul Convention specifies the need for one shelter spot (i.e., a bed) per 7,500 inhabitants or one family room per 10,000 inhabitants. With one women's shelter place – on average – per 12,000 inhabitants in Germany, there is a clear gap in supply; furthermore, women's shelters have not been set up in more than 100 districts and cities, introducing stark regional differences. Almost every second application for admission to a women's shelter is rejected. The capacity of these shelters is far from sufficient and should be expanded two- to threefold. For this reason, a publicly funded programme is currently being implemented to create more shelter places for women.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Available at: <https://www.damigra.de/en/dachverband/ueber-uns/>

<sup>56</sup> Available at: <https://www.bundestag.de/resource/blob/648894/7fe59f890d4a9e8ba3667fb202a15477/WD-9-030-19-pdf-data.pdf>

<sup>57</sup> For more information, see <https://www.bmfsfj.de/resource/blob/84048/%20a569e13f4b5782dc9ab63f5ad88239bb/bericht-der-bundesregierung-frauenhaeuser-data.pdf>

<sup>58</sup> Available at: <https://www.buendnis-istanbul-konvention.de/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Alternativbericht-BIK-2021.pdf> and <https://rm.coe.int/shadow-report-germany-solwodi/16809f7cfd>

<sup>59</sup> See: [https://www.djb.de/fileadmin/user\\_upload/st21-01\\_IK-Bericht\\_e.pdf](https://www.djb.de/fileadmin/user_upload/st21-01_IK-Bericht_e.pdf)

According to the Association of Women's Shelters legal provisions and financial contributions differ between federal states and between municipalities; at present, it is rather dependent on the federal state whether and how a woman affected by violence receives shelter.<sup>60</sup>

A nationwide VAW helpline was set up in Germany in 2013 to provide direct support and counselling to women affected by violence. The helpline acts as an anonymous counselling service and is available year-round, free of charge, and in 18 languages. With its accessible counselling services it is also explicitly aimed at women and girls with disabilities.<sup>61</sup>

The counsellors are all women and trained in women's rights and dealing with victims of VAW. The helpline is used by women affected by violence, persons from their social environment and also by professionals in the field (for example from the health sector) who need help and advice.<sup>62</sup>

However, the existing specialised counselling and intervention centres at the regional level, which serve as central contact points for women where they live remain to be severely underfunded.

### 3.6 Multidisciplinary networks on preventing gender-based violence and femicides

Multidisciplinary networks are important for the prevention IPV against women and femicide. In Germany, there is a long tradition of multidisciplinary networks on the regional and municipal levels. They hold roundtables on VAW bringing together the support and police systems, perpetrator workshops, psychologists and therapists, as well as the youth welfare offices and child support systems; these stakeholders exchange knowledge and take decisions for improved support, intervention and prevention. However, the roundtables are not focused on femicide or specific cases, instead they more broadly tackle GBV and VAW.

Currently there's no systematic nationwide procedure to improve interventions in high-risk cases, but various frameworks have been developed regionally by the police and NGOs. These aim to identify high-risk cases of DV and stalking and implement effective multidisciplinary measures for intervention. A best practice example exists in Rhineland-Palatinate – in high-risk cases known to the police, professionals from various field intervene in an effort to stop

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<sup>60</sup> See also: Wissenschaftlicher Dienst des Deutschen Bundestages, Sachstand „Frauenhäuser in Deutschland“, WD 9 - 3000 - 030/19, 27 May 2019, p. 4; En: Scientific Service of the German Bundestag, State of Affairs "Women's Shelters in Germany", WD 9 - 3000 - 030/19, 27 May 2019, p. 4).

<sup>61</sup> Available at:

<https://www.bmfsfj.de/resource/blob/163426/f45aea5cf43fafef72f11780973978e5/evaluation-des-hilfetelefon-gewalt-gegen-frauen-data.pdf>

<sup>62</sup> Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/state-report-from-germany/pdfa/16809f59c6> publication from 2020

the violence, to punish the perpetrators and avoid further victimisations.<sup>63</sup> Similar intervention projects have been developed in other cities and regions as well.

The federal government supports the nationwide networking of the women's support centres and shelters by funding their cooperation and networking centres. Two national networks are currently funded:

- The Association of Women's Shelters<sup>64</sup>
- The Federal Association of Rape Crisis Centres and Women's Counselling Centres and Women's Emergency Calls in Germany (bff e.V.)<sup>65</sup>

The networking centres pool the expertise and professional competence of the institutions supporting women affected by violence in Germany and contribute to political discourse, public awareness and legislation.<sup>66</sup> They ensure that structures are created that enable support institutions to act efficiently and cost-effectively at the local level. Through awareness-raising campaigns and training on the topic of VAWG, networking centres inform the public about the services offered by their members.

The associations above are also part of the Federal-State Working Group on Domestic Violence, which is an inter-ministerial working group of stakeholders on national and federal state levels. The main tasks of the working group include:<sup>67</sup>

- A regular exchange of information on the various actions taken at the federal and state level, by local authorities through NGOs, as well as by national and international bodies;
- an analysis of the specific problems in combating VAW;
- the development of recommendations for combating DV; and
- proposals for the further development and evaluation of anti-violence policy measures.

Under "Together against Violence against Women" – a federal government programme – the Federal Ministry for Women's Affairs is making 135 million euros available from 2020 up to 2023 for the following purpose: <sup>68</sup>

- to expand the capacity of women's shelters;
- to increase access to existing women's and counselling centres;
- to support the development of transitional services; and

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<sup>63</sup> Available at: <https://www.buendnis-istanbul-konvention.de/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Alternativbericht-BIK-2021.pdf>

<sup>64</sup> Available at: <https://www.frauenhauskoordination.de/>

<sup>65</sup> Available at: <https://www.frauen-gegen-gewalt.de/de/>

<sup>66</sup> Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/state-report-from-germany/pdfa/16809f59c6> publication from 2020

<sup>67</sup> Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/state-report-from-germany/pdfa/16809f59c6> publication from 2020

<sup>68</sup> For more information, see <https://www.bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj/themen/gleichstellung/frauen-vor-gewalt-schuetzen/bundesfoerderprogramm-gegen-gewalt-an-frauen-190078>

- to promote pilot projects, such as professional qualifications or the further development of counselling services.

The main objective is to facilitate the accessibility and functioning of support services to better reach women affected by violence.<sup>69</sup>

Though these programmes and networks are highly relevant for the prevention of IPV against women and partly also for the prevention of femicide, none of the networks except for the federal innovation programme "Together against Violence against Women", which is co-funding the present work (BMFSFJ) focuses explicitly on femicide. It would be important for the future to evaluate the nationwide support and intervention actions, as well as the (multidisciplinary) networks with regard to their concrete contribution to effective femicide prevention.

### 3.7 Femicide and VAW in the media

Despite the increased coverage on DV in the German mass media, killings of women are regularly sensationalised and even romanticised by using phrases such as "crimes of passion", "love tragedies" or "family tragedies". As a result, killings of women tend to be perceived as a private matter or isolated cases rather than as part of a social and gender-based problem.

A recent study on media reporting on VAW confirms that cases are presented as isolated events, rather than being reported as part of the structural problem of VAW.<sup>70</sup> The media also tends to provide more coverage to extreme cases like femicides and severe physical violence, and less often on topics like stalking and sexual harassment, though the latter are more prevalent in society.

Overall, media reporting excludes any critical analysis of the societal structures that have enabled the crimes and does not demand prevention of said crimes. However, some positive changes can be seen as more and more journalists are applying feminist critique to target and focus on VAW; they are also increasingly avoiding terms like "family drama" or "tragedy", and instead reporting on the patriarchal patterns of the crimes and consciously use the term femicide.

Especially in 2020 and 2021, there was increased attention towards femicide as a consequence of NGO pressure and awareness-raising projects on the prevention of femicide, including the EOF, the One Billion Rising campaign and the NGO campaign *Keine mehr* (no

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<sup>69</sup> Available at: <https://www.bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj/themen/gleichstellung/frauen-vor-gewalt-schuetzen/hilfe-und-vernetzung/hilfesystem-und-vernetzungsstellen-80640>

<sup>70</sup> See Meltzer C. (2021): [https://www.otto-brenner-stiftung.de/fileadmin/user\\_data/stiftung/02\\_Wissenschaftsportal/03\\_Publikationen/AP47\\_Tragische\\_Einzelfaelle.pdf](https://www.otto-brenner-stiftung.de/fileadmin/user_data/stiftung/02_Wissenschaftsportal/03_Publikationen/AP47_Tragische_Einzelfaelle.pdf)

more, *ni una más* in Spanish).<sup>71</sup> These actions have led to more critical media reporting on the gender dimensions and patriarchal backgrounds of femicide.

### 3.8 Gender values and gender (in)equality

Though there has been an improvement in the levels of education and professional opportunity for girls and women in the past 20 to 30 years, and gender stereotypes are increasingly questioned by younger generations, gender equality remains elusive, especially with regard to material, infrastructural/institutional and social resources and traditional task and role divisions between men and women. Germany's ranking on the Gender Equality Index has remained relatively low over the last seven years: its recent score was 67.5 out of 100 points.<sup>72</sup>

According to the social scientist Regina-Maria Dackweiler, DV victims in rural areas are more likely to cover up their experiences of violence because of shame, fear and taboos.<sup>73</sup> Expectations around having a stable and reliable marriage and family and the role of women in this setting are higher than in the urban context. Close ties in the community and friendships between men can also lead to the protection of violent men.<sup>74</sup>

That is not to say that women experiencing violence in urban environments are much better off; patriarchal and conservative values are also prevalent in towns and cities, hindering women from leaving violent partners; similar patterns can also be found in modern and highly educated environments.

The desire to maintain relationships, even if they are destructive, has arguably even increased against the backdrop of insecure living conditions. This will be further discussed in the next section with regard to the COVID-19 situation.

### 3.9 Impact of COVID-19 on legislation, service provision, measures and prevalence of femicide

As of the first lockdown mandated by the German government in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the media painted an alarmist picture of a dramatic increase in DV without checking against empirical evidence. Steinert et al.'s study (2020) examined the impact of the lockdown and social distancing policies across German states (*Bundesländer*) on violence against women and children. It did so by: a) conducting an online survey with 4,000 households across

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<sup>71</sup> Available at: <https://keinmehr.wordpress.com/>

<sup>72</sup> Available at: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1209683/the-eu-gender-equality-index-by-country/>

<sup>73</sup> See: Research project (2020-2024):

<https://www.hs-rm.de/fileadmin/persons/amerklex/Projektflyer-2022.pdf>

<sup>74</sup> See: <https://heyday-magazine.com/2020/06/06/radikal-und-offen-ein-intimes-interview-ueber-hauesliche-gewalt/>



Germany to quantify the prevalence of violence and by examining whether being quarantined at home along with poor mental health, economic insecurity, changes in partners' earnings and employment status, and increased childcare responsibilities exacerbated the risk of DV; b) examining the variations in state laws on social distancing and home quarantine behaviour to assess the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on violence against women and children; and c) using triangulation of the survey data with administrative data from helplines and counselling services for survivors of domestic abuse, as well as from police records.<sup>75</sup>

The main results of this study were:

- Most women are unaware of sources of support.
- Telephone counselling services were inaccessible due to a controlling partner monitoring the victim's activity.
- The potential for conflict and violence in households with children was significantly higher.
- Psychological stress can be a risk factor for DV.
- COVID-19 favours risk factors for DV.<sup>76</sup>

The issue with this study is that it lacks pre-COVID data for comparison and therefore cannot provide valid information on an actual increase of VAW. The online survey was conducted between 22 April and 8 May 2020 and thus covers only the first lockdown period. In light of the timeframe of the study, it is perhaps unrealistic to conclude that VAW had increased in the early stage of the COVID restrictions.

Furthermore, another consequence of the lockdowns in the first year of the pandemic is that the use of shelters and general support centres actually decreased, while the use of helplines increased. It is more likely that women who were already being affected by IPV were receiving less in-person support, but it doesn't necessarily mean that more women became at risk of IPV. As VAW often appears and/or escalates in situations of separation, this risk factor was declining, while the risk factor of isolation was increasing. Thus, it is improbable that the COVID-19 situation contributed to higher rates of IPV, or if it more likely that it worsened the situation of women who were already experiencing violence by their partner before the lockdown.

In the police statistics for 2020, there was no steep increase in femicides compared to 2015-2019. Some researchers fear that VAW and femicides could actually increase in 2021 and

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<sup>75</sup> For further information about the study, see: "The Impact of Covid-19 Violence against Women and Children in Germany" at: <https://www.hfp.tum.de/globalhealth/forschung/covid-19-and-domestic-violence/>

<sup>76</sup> See also: <https://www.presseportal.de/pm/16314/4611700>

2022 once lockdowns cease, as perhaps this is the timeframe in which more women will choose to leave their violent or controlling or otherwise abusive partner.

During the first COVID-19 lockdown in Germany, the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ) started an online initiative called “Stronger than Violence” (*Stärker als Gewalt*). Within this initiative was a campaign run in 26,000 supermarkets that had the slogan “Not safe at home?” (*“Zuhause nicht sicher?”*). Women (or men and perpetrators of violence) affected by DV were informed about available support services through the initiative’s website (BMFSFJ, 2021).<sup>77</sup>

On 20 November 2020, the German Presidency of the Council of the EU held an informal meeting of EU Gender Equality Ministers. The topic of a Europe-wide helpline, where victims of VAW and DV could access help gained broad support. The Gender Equality Ministers “also exchanged best practices to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic such as guidelines on first contact with victims, access to victim support services, and awareness-raising campaigns”.<sup>78</sup>

## 4. Prevalence of femicides in Germany

### 4.1 Data sources and methods of data collection

#### 4.1.1 Data sources on the prevalence of femicides

In Germany, the official police statistics collect the number of cases of murder, manslaughter and bodily harm resulting in death. An annual report on IPV documents the number of victims of several types of violent crime against both women and men through current/former intimate partners, including murder and manslaughter. It reports the number of female and male victims, their age group, nationality, drug or alcohol use, marital and household status, as well as possible disabilities and health problems of the victims<sup>79</sup>. Another source on suspected perpetrators are police statistics that are not combined with the victim statistics.<sup>80</sup> The annual report on IPV provides some information on the suspects of IPV in general, but no specified information on perpetrators of murder/ manslaughter in relation to femicide. Thus, no official

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<sup>77</sup> For more information, see <https://staerker-als-gewalt.de/english>

<sup>78</sup> Available at:

[https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/aid\\_development\\_cooperation\\_fundamental\\_rights/annual\\_report\\_ge\\_2021\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/aid_development_cooperation_fundamental_rights/annual_report_ge_2021_en.pdf), p.7

<sup>79</sup> For more information see:

[https://www.bka.de/DE/AktuelleInformationen/StatistikenLagebilder/Lagebilder/Partnerschaftsgewalt/partnerschaftsgewalt\\_node.html](https://www.bka.de/DE/AktuelleInformationen/StatistikenLagebilder/Lagebilder/Partnerschaftsgewalt/partnerschaftsgewalt_node.html)

<sup>80</sup> The German Police Crime Statistics (PKS) official website available at:

[https://www.bka.de/DE/AktuelleInformationen/StatistikenLagebilder/PolizeilicheKriminalstatistik/pks\\_no\\_de.html](https://www.bka.de/DE/AktuelleInformationen/StatistikenLagebilder/PolizeilicheKriminalstatistik/pks_no_de.html)

case-related statistics on victims and perpetrators of femicides is documented in Germany, nor is case-related information on prosecution or the outcomes of trials.

Some NGOs have started to collect their own information on femicide cases, but the lists provide very few details and are not based on scientific analysis.<sup>81</sup>

For this project, in Germany and in the other FEM-UnitED project countries, a systematic quantitative data collection on femicides was conducted, building on the knowledge and tools of the EOF. The cases were investigated to review all available information from the media (local or federal), police reports and the justice system. As in the other countries of the project, case details were collected and filed into the data collection tool (an Excel table) as a first step. Additional investigations were then conducted a few months later in order to update the data files with any further information on the prosecution and/or outcomes of the trials. Finally, the number of cases in the files were compared with the number of cases in the police statistics for discrepancies.

For Germany, the number of IPV cases in the FEM-UnitED-Excel file and in the police statistics are almost the same for 2019, but different for 2020. Going forward in the context of the present project the information from the EOF and FEM-UnitED data files will be validated in collaboration with the police and other stakeholders so as to further improve the quality of the data.

#### 4.1.2 The EOF data collection tool

The EOF data collection tool provided good overall valuable information on femicide. However, there were some gaps in categories that have a strong impact on the study of femicide, such as the prevalence of DV prior to the killing (which may be considered a precursor to femicide) or whether the case was already known to police officers or other institutions. As a result, these columns in the file were frequently filled in with “Not known”. Yet, gathering this data remains important and the category should remain in the EOF data collection tool. In later data collection actions, information from the support systems and other professionals could also be systematically included in order to improve the case knowledge.

One could add further information on the question if the victim had children, because the latter can be seen as passive victims of the killings. An important addition would also be a category for killings within the family as a potentially relevant type of femicide; these cases occurred quite often (mostly sons killing their elderly mothers; the perpetrators were exclusively male).

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<sup>81</sup> See for example: <http://www.onebillionrising.de/>

To summarise, the categories of the EOF tool were adequately structured and complete for collecting useful information on femicide; these could lead to an online tool that allows for the collection of further data and statistical analysis on femicide across European countries.

## 4.2 Sources outlining prevalence of femicide

### 4.2.1 Official national statistics

Police crime statistics from 2019 concerning DV in intimate partner relationships showed that the number of victims of IPV (women, men and others) has increased by 11% between 2015 and 2019. Concerning female victims specifically, the number has grown from 104,290 cases of bodily harm in 2015 to 114,903 in 2019. However, there is a degree of uncertainty over the extent to which this can be traced back to increasing rates of violence amongst partners or to increased rates of reporting by victims to the police and other institutions over time.

In relation to intimate partner killings, the federal crime office reported 117 cases of DV against women that resulted in the death of the victim in 2019. These cases include 111 cases of murder and manslaughter against women and 6 cases of bodily harm resulting in death.<sup>82</sup> The number is very close to the number of cases in the 2019 data collected this project (109 cases).

The official 2020 report on IPV has not yet been published (at the time of writing this document), but for this project, some data on intimate partner killings was gained from the general police statistics: in 2020, 139 killings of women by current or former partners have been registered. Meanwhile, in the 2020 EOF data collection for this project, only 116 cases of women being killed by partners have been identified. The discrepancy of more than 20 cases is difficult to explain without further information but may be partially attributed to the time period of recording cases being slightly different between the EOF and the police; cases by the latter are registered following completion of the police investigation, when the case is sent to the state prosecutor, while the EOF registers the case at the actual date of the killing. This might explain the inconsistency in the number of cases in the two-year period, but it cannot fully explain the discrepancies of cases in 2020.

### 4.2.2 Reports from NGOs

As mentioned, homicides of women and girls are not classified as "femicides" in the German justice and police reporting systems; instead, they are recorded as female intimate partner homicides. Analytical reviews of femicide cases are also not carried out officially in Germany. Nevertheless, some NGOs, women's shelters and activists, as well as national researchers

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<sup>82</sup> See official police statistics, PKS 2020, [https://www.bka.de/DE/AktuelleInformationen/StatistikenLagebilder/Lagebilder/Partnerschaftsgewalt/partnerschaftsgewalt\\_node.html](https://www.bka.de/DE/AktuelleInformationen/StatistikenLagebilder/Lagebilder/Partnerschaftsgewalt/partnerschaftsgewalt_node.html)

have started to collect case-based information on femicides. It has to be mentioned that the data collected by some NGOs include only intimate partner femicides and no other killings of women that might also be qualified as femicides.

NGOs that work in areas of GBV and DV tend to focus on lobbying and advocacy, specifically, exerting pressure on political parties and governments to change legislation and policies on VAW (including femicide). For example, the *One Billion Rising* project, that also operates globally, focuses on awareness-raising campaigns and information initiatives (one of them providing online collection of cases of femicide in Germany).

The first empirical data collection based on annual cases of killings of women was implemented by EOF's national researchers in 2020. In-depth information on all killings of women began to be collected in a way that makes also international comparison possible.

#### 4.2.3 Prevalence of femicide based on EOF data collection

The Germany-specific data collected by the EOF tool within this project includes 360 cases of women killed in 2019 and 2020 (see Table 1):

- 177 women killed in 2019
- 183 women killed in 2020

The annual population-based rate for both years was between 0.21 and 0.22 cases per 100,000 inhabitants.

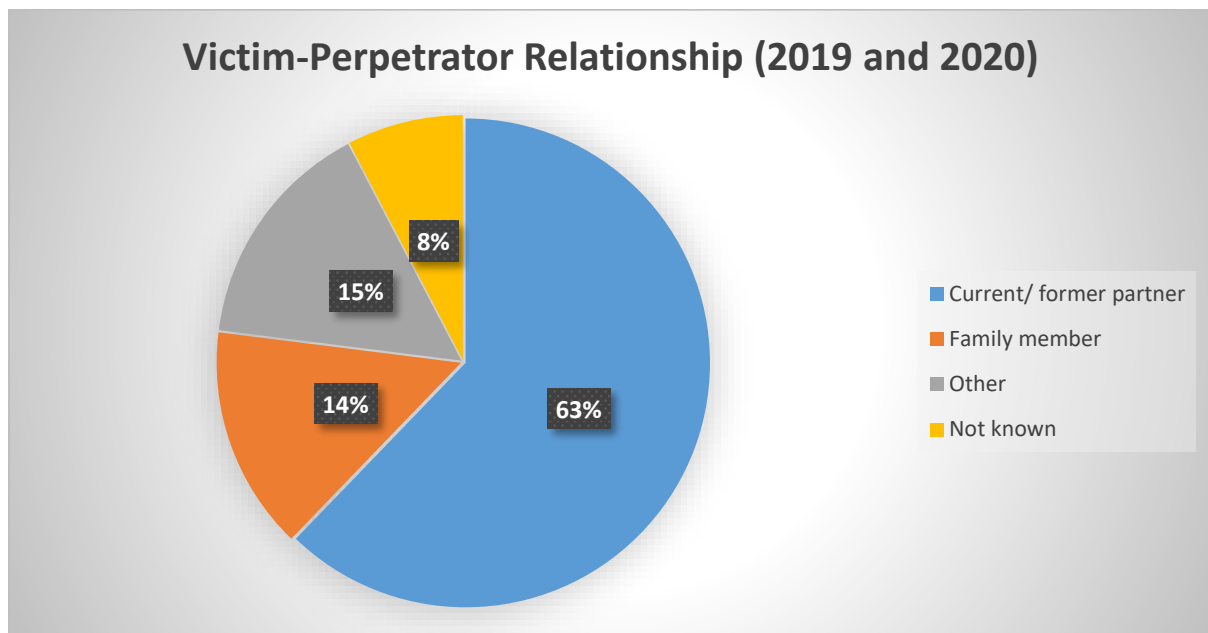
**Table 1: Women killed in Germany in 2019 and 2020**

Year	All women killed (age 16+) N=360	Rate per 100,000 inhabitants	Number of women killed by family members and (ex-)partners	Number of women killed by (ex-)partners
2019	177	0.21	139	109
2020	183	0.22	138	116
<b>Total 2019 and 2020</b>	360	0.22	277	225

#### 4.2.4 Victim-perpetrator relationship and types of killings

As illustrated in Graph 1, 63% of the women had been killed by current or former intimate partners (109 cases in 2019 and 116 cases in 2020). Fourteen percent had been killed by other family members (30 women in 2019 and 22 women in 2020); these were almost exclusively (except in one case) perpetrated by male family members and in 62% by the son of the victim. Fifteen percent had been killed by other known or unknown persons; in almost

half of these cases, the perpetrators were little known or unknown to the victim. For the rest of the cases, the victim–perpetrator relationship was not known.

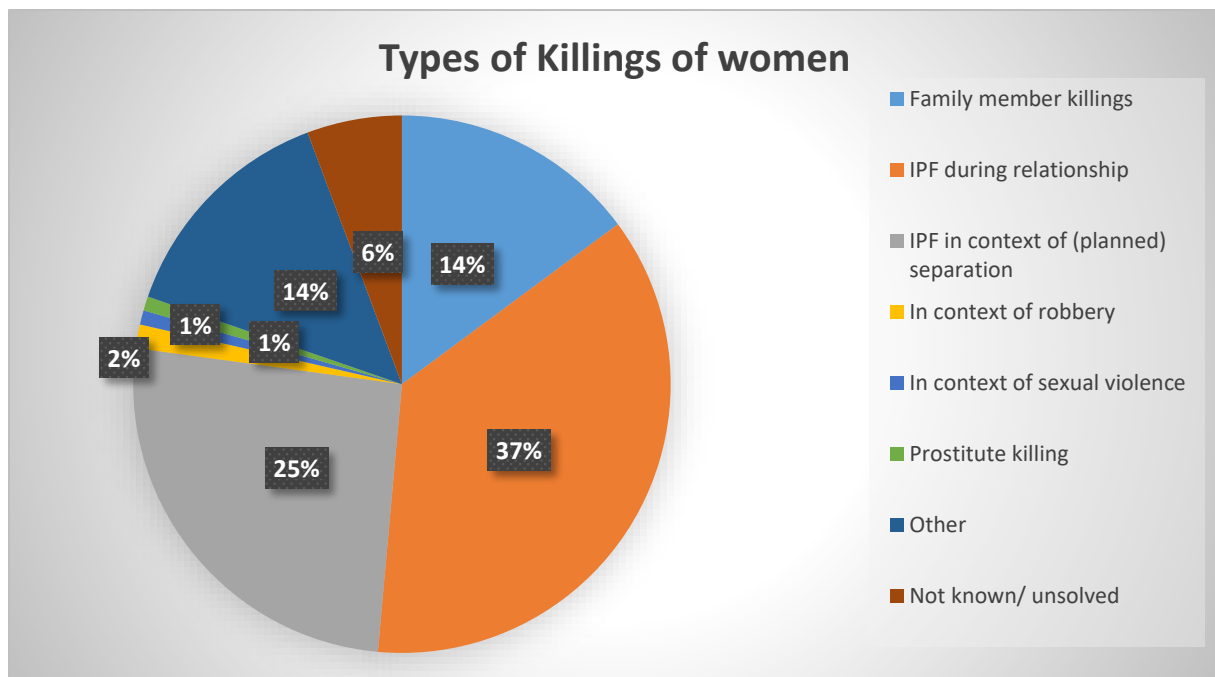


**Graph 1: Victim-perpetrator relationship (2019 and 2020)**

Looking at the types of the killings of women (see Graph 2), we can see that in more than three quarters of the cases the women were killed in the context of close relationships, with 63% being intimate partner femicides and 14% killings by family members. The higher number of cases of IPF during the relationship (37%) in relation to IPF in the context of planned separation (25%) should be treated cautiously, as it was often unknown whether the women had planned to separate.

Other killings of women are either relatively rare (like killings in the context of robbery, sexual violence or prostitution, each 1-2%), or have other backgrounds (14%); some cases (6%) have not yet been fully categorised by type. Also, in cases outside the family and intimate partner relationships, 98% of the perpetrators were male. All types of femicide have clear gender dimensions concerning the perpetrator's gender.

Almost two thirds of the killings of women are IPFs or femicides in the context of sexual violence or prostitution, and thus are clearly embedded in patriarchal contexts of power and control over women. This could also be the case for a number of the cases of killings of women by family members, which has to be further investigated.



**Graph 2: Typology of killings of women (2019 and 2020)**

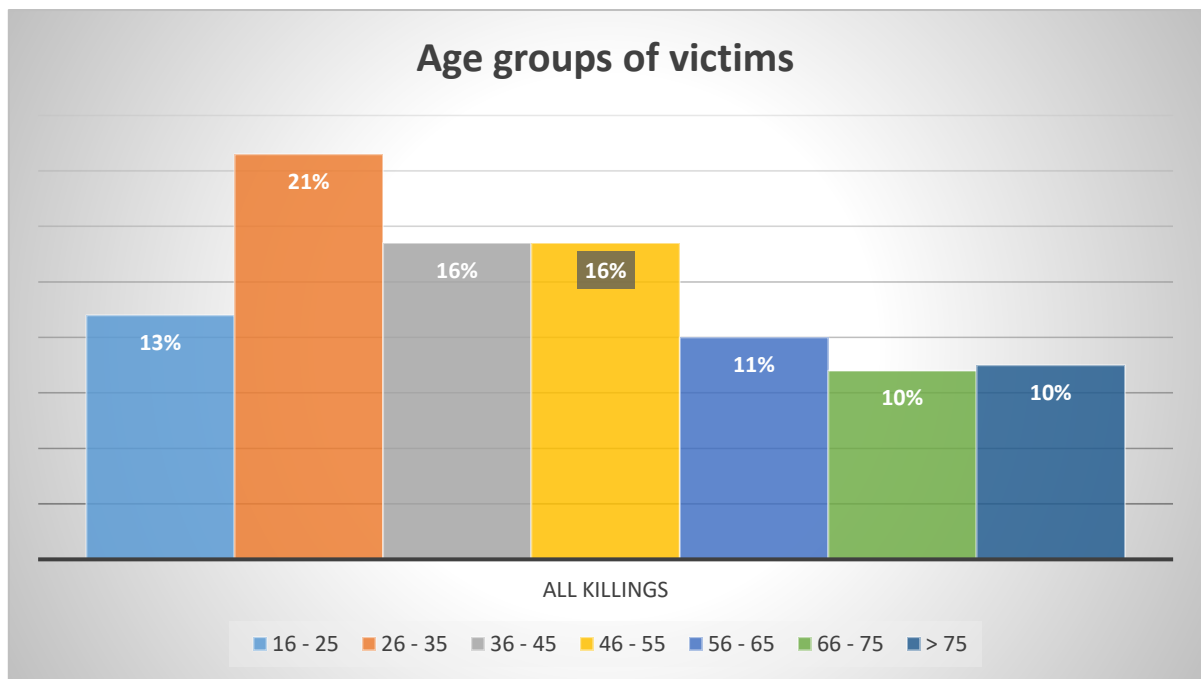
## **5. Quantitative analysis of femicide cases**

### **5.1 Additional victims in the femicide cases**

In addition to the 360 women who were killed in Germany in 2019 and 2020, in 12% of all cases additional victims had been killed. Of the 87 additional victims, 10 were young or adult children of the women, 31 were other family members, 8 were friends and 38 other persons.

### **5.2 Age of women killed**

As can be seen in Graph 3, women of all ages had been killed. One third of the victims (34%) were 16 to 35 years old, one third (32%) 36 to 55 years old and almost one third (31%) were aged 56 or older. In 3% of the cases, the age of the victim was not known.



**Graph 3: Distribution by age groups of victims**

Victims of IPF tended to be younger and victims of killings by a family member significantly older than the average of women killed. The fact that women who were killed by family members are in the majority older and the perpetrators were very often their sons and grandsons (71% of the cases) sheds new light to the analysis of femicides.

Also, for victims of killings outside of intimate partner and family contexts, the relatively older age is significant and underlines the high risk of older women in relation to killings by those who are other than intimate partners. In further gender critical analysis, it should be checked if older men are at similar risk to be killed by their family members/children and if there are relevant gender dimensions in the killing of older family members. Thirty-seven percent of the female victims of killings by family members were elderly women (with about 10% of them in need of care).

### 5.3 Further characteristics of the victims

Further characteristics of victims show a great diversity in terms of employment, profession and ethnic/national backgrounds of the victims but as this information is not available for most cases (see Table 2), the data is not valid. No indication for a greater risk for ethnic minority women was found (in 19% of the cases, an ethnic minority background was documented, which is not higher than the rate in the general population; but this has to be treated cautiously as for more than 70% of the victims we don't have information on ethnic backgrounds).

Those who belonged to ethnic minorities often originated from Afghanistan (12), Poland (6), Romania (5) and Syria (5). Only four women with disabilities had been documented, but this



is not necessarily representative, as information on disabilities is unknown for 99% of the cases. More relevant is the high rate of elderly, ill or suicidal victims (18% of all victims, 39% of victims of killings by family members, 14% of IPF victims and 17% of victims of killings in other contexts belonged to that category). Vulnerable groups seem to be at a higher risk.

**Table 2: Nationality of victims**

<b>Victim's nationality</b>	<b>N=360</b>	<b>%</b>
German nationals	38	10%
Ethnic minority Background	67	19%
Not known	255	71%
<b>Total</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>100%</b>

## 5.4 Characteristics of the perpetrators

### 5.4.1 Number of perpetrators per case

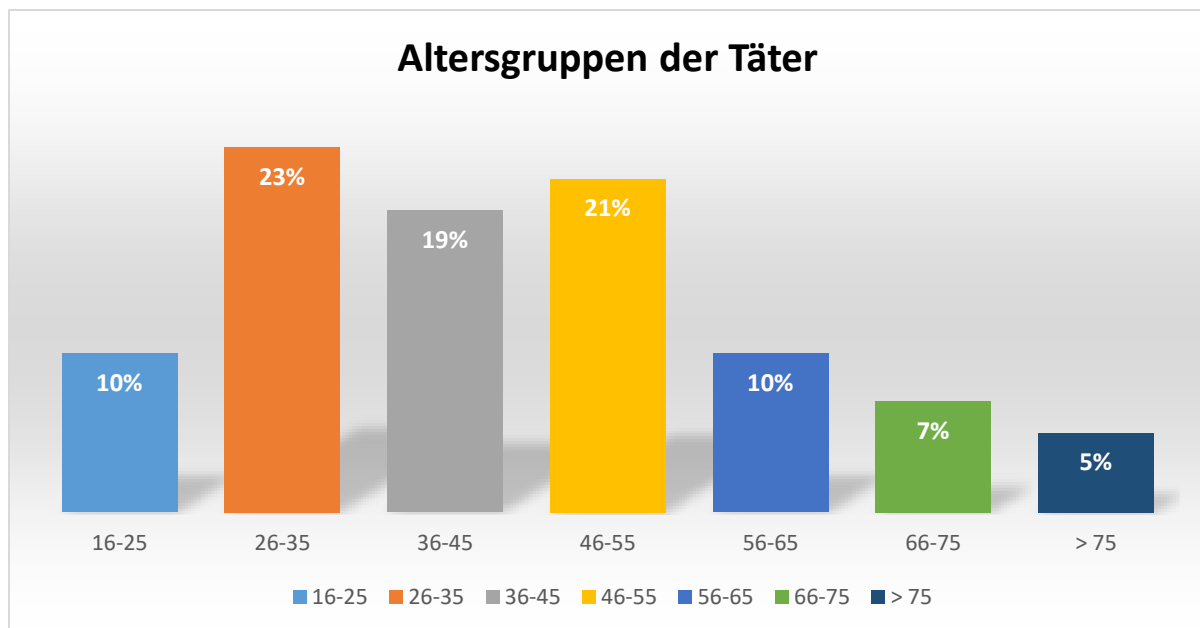
In 96% of the cases, one perpetrator was identified, in 2%, two or three perpetrators. In total, 353 perpetrators were documented; in 10 cases, no information on the perpetrator(s) was available.

### 5.4.2 Gender of the perpetrators

The killing of women is clearly gendered in relation to both victims and perpetrators. 99% of all perpetrators where the gender is known (N=347) were male; only two female perpetrators were identified in the 2019 and 2020 cases.

### 5.4.3 Age of the perpetrators

One third of the perpetrators (33%) were 16 to 35 years old, 40% were 36 to 55 years old and 23% were aged 56 and older; for 5% of the perpetrators, age was not known (see Table 3 and Graph 4 below). Interestingly, for IPFs, the most prevalent age group of perpetrators are men between 35 and 55, while for family killings of women, the most prevalent age group is between 18 and 35. For other cases, the middle-aged group was more prevalent.



**Graph 4: Distribution by age group of offenders**

#### 5.4.4 Other characteristics of the perpetrators

The marital and employment status, as well as the ethnic backgrounds of the perpetrators were not known for the majority of cases. However, no indication was found that unemployed men or those with a low occupational status or men with a migration background are more present in the sample than in the average population. For 22% of the perpetrators, an ethnic minority background was identified; this is not higher than the average rate in the population. The list of occupations of the perpetrators shows a high number of men working in skilled jobs and also in management positions.<sup>83</sup> Low social status was not identified as relevant risk factor. This corresponds with the research of Greuel with regard to social status, no specific perpetrator profile in cases of femicide can be found.<sup>84</sup>

The mental health status of the majority of the perpetrators is unknown. However, 27% of the perpetrators were diagnosed with a mental health issue such as schizophrenia, depression, among others. This information should however be interpreted cautiously as it can be used as a defence strategy by the perpetrator.

<sup>83</sup> Professions of perpetrators included: (TV)-Veterinarian, architect, artist, café owner, carpenter and joiner, choir director, clerk, computer scientist, construction worker, cook, craftsman, dog breeder, employee in the Parliament, entrepreneur, facility manager, farmer, furniture remover, gardener, heating contractor, hotel management, IT specialist, lawyer, legal analyst, logistics, machine builder, machine operator, management of a hospital in Kazakhstan, mechanical engineer, medical doctor, metalworker, not specified, offset printer, photo artist, pizza maker, procurer, programmer, renting holiday homes, rich businessman, taxi driver, teacher, trainee, truck driver, TÜV-manager, waiter and cleaning help, was paid in the form of cocaine, working in french fries shop, works for food manufacturer, works in waste incineration plant, works in workshop for the disabled.

<sup>84</sup> See: [https://polizei.nrw/sites/default/files/2016-11/Gewaltesk\\_Forschungsproj\\_lang.pdf](https://polizei.nrw/sites/default/files/2016-11/Gewaltesk_Forschungsproj_lang.pdf)

#### 5.4.5 Further background information on cases of intimate partner femicides

As Table 3 shows, in about a third of the cases of IPF (31%) the crime was perpetrated in the context of a (planned) separation (in 8% during separation and in 23% after separation). This information has to be treated cautiously, as for many cases it is not known whether the women wanted to or had plans to separate.

Three quarters of the cases of IPF (74%) were carried out in the victim's and/or perpetrator's home. The most prevalent methods of killing were with a sharp instrument (42%) and strangulation (16%). Witnesses were present in 27% of the killings.

**Table 3: Further background information on cases of IPF**

Further background information on cases of IPF	IPFs (N=225)	%
Killing in the context of separation (as far as is known)	70	31%
<b>Area / location of femicides</b>		
• Perpetrator's home	12	5%
• Victim's home (garden/street)	42	19%
• Shared home	113	50%
• Other (other house, elsewhere outdoors, care home)	45	20%
• Not known	13	6%
<b>Method of killing</b>		
• Strangulation	36	16%
• Sharp instrument (knife/axe)	95	42%
• Firearm	19	8%
• Other (unknown)	29	13%
• Unknown	46	20%
<b>Witnesses</b>		
Prior domestic violence by same partner (not known in 92% of the cases)	17	8%
Prior stalking (not known in 88%)	13	6%
Prior threats to kill the woman (not known in 97%)	6	3%
Prior violence or threat known to the police (not known in 87%)	24	11%

For 87-97% of the cases, there is no information available whether prior DV, threats or stalking was known to the police or to another person. In 11%, prior violence or threats were known to the police. In 3%, there was knowledge that the perpetrator threatened to kill the woman prior to the femicide. Further investigations of the trials might find more information of prior violence, stalking or threats in the cases.

## 5.5 Institutional knowledge in advance of the killings and institutional reactions

### 5.5.1 Prior case knowledge

The analysis shows that in the majority of the cases, no institutions were involved prior to the crime. As mentioned above, this has to be interpreted extremely cautiously as further sources are needed to get reliable and comprehensive information on this aspect. In relation to the cases of women killed:

- Eight percent of the perpetrators had committed prior crimes (for 88% this was unknown); these perpetrators had been convicted for bodily harm against women or other persons, and some of them for DV, murder and sexual violence.
- Five percent of all perpetrators were known for DV against the victim prior to the murder (86% unknown).
- Five percent had committed stalking (often in the context of separation); for 81%, this was unknown.

If we focus on intimate partner killings of women, we find the following specifics:

- In 16% of the cases, mental health problems of the perpetrator were known (like alcohol addiction, drug abuse, depression, bipolar disorders, dementia, schizophrenia, suicidal and trauma disorders).
- In 8% of the cases, prior DV by the perpetrator against the victim or against former partners was known.
- In 11%, prior threats and/or violence were known to the police.
- In 3% of the cases, protection orders had been issued.
- Two percent of the cases were known to the support systems (such as women's shelters and institutions other than the police).
- Seven percent of the cases were known to others (family members, neighbours, friends).
- In 21% of the cases, the perpetrator committed suicide after the killing.

Even though we found higher rates of cases known to the institutions prior to the crimes through further case analysis, this study, in line with Greuels' research results, points out that

a majority of cases could not have been prevented by the police or the justice and support systems and that prior DV might not be the main risk factor.

### 5.5.2 Trial proceedings

Table 4 below gives an overview of the outcome of the cases – at the time of the study – regarding trial proceedings. It shows that for about half of the cases, there is an unknown outcome, no outcome yet, or no trial because the perpetrator committed suicide; this was true for 51% of all cases, for 58% of killings perpetrated by intimate partners, for 51% of other family killings and for 33% of killings by other persons (this result is connected with the high rate of suicide following intimate partner killings, see Table 5, first 3 lines).

For those cases, where the perpetrator was found guilty (see lines 4 and 5), in half of the cases the killings were qualified as manslaughter and in the other half as murder. The relative percentage of cases qualified as murder is lower in cases of IPF (44%) than in cases of other killings (70% when family members and 63% when other perpetrators had committed the crimes; rates recalculated from lines 4 and 5). The rate of family members who were remanded to a psychiatric institution is relatively high (27%, see line 6).

**Table 4: Trial results**

Results of the trials	All cases	IPF	Family members	Other
No outcome yet	12%	11%	14%	10%
No trial (suicide)	16%	21%	14%	6%
Not known	23%	26%	23%	17%
Guilty of manslaughter	12%	15%	6%	6%
Guilty of murder	12%	12%	14%	10%
Mental health institution	9%	4%	2%	9%
Killed by the police	0%	0%	0%	0%
Not guilty	1%	0%	0%	3%
Other	2%	2%	2%	3%
Trial	10%	7%	2%	23%
Unsolved	2%	1%	0%	5%

## 5.6 Summary of quantitative analysis

The quantitative analysis provides clearly more insight into the cases of women killed in Germany for the years 2019 and 2020 than could be gained from the official police crime statistics alone.

In total, 360 women were killed, 63% by current or former intimate partners, and another 14% by other family members. The rates correspond with the worldwide proportions of women killed in contexts of DV and especially by intimate (ex-)partners, which makes the crimes clearly gendered and an expression of inequality and patriarchal control.

Interestingly, a high rate of killings by other (in general male) family members was found, perpetrated by sons and partly grandsons against elderly women. Other forms of femicide e.g., in the context of sexual violence and/or prostitution are relatively rare, as well as killings by unknown persons.

Femicides are sometimes also accompanied by killings of other persons like children, other family members, new partners or friends of the victim. This was the case in 12% of all femicides; in total, 87 additional victims were killed.

Women of all ages have been killed, with about one third being 16 to 35 years old, one third middle-aged between 36 and 55, and one third older than 55 years. Victims of IPF tend to be a little younger and victims of killings by other family members relatively older than the average of all women killed.

Victims and perpetrators of femicide alike have no typical socioeconomic profile; they belong to all educational, occupational and social levels; the rate of migrants seems to be similar what is found in the average population. The only clear factor is gender. With only two exceptions, the killings of women were perpetrated by men.

The relationship status between victim and perpetrator prior to the femicide is often not known. Only one third of the cases supplied information on whether the women had separated or had planned to separate from their partner, so this might not be a representative picture. Sixty percent of IPFs were perpetrated by current partners and about 40% by former partners.

Knowledge about prior violence, threats and stalking were also not available for the majority of cases; further investigation of the court records would shed more light on this aspect. In 8% of IPFs, prior DV had been reported (based on information from the media, press reports from the police and other sources); in 11%, threats or prior violence was known to the police, and in only 2% was support system involvement documented.

The low level of institutional involvement prior to the crimes makes it difficult for the police and the support system to intervene and prevent the crimes. Additionally, more research is needed

to find out if prior intervention could have been possible by other institutions (e.g., doctors and medical care) or by friends, neighbours and other family members.

The analysis of the cases in the EOF database shows that further information should be systematically collected on the cases in order to broaden knowledge and develop improved prevention strategies.

## **6. Qualitative analysis of femicide cases**

In the following, two cases are described and analysed in more detail and then compared with each other to find out where similarities or differences can be found.

### **6.1 Case one**

#### **6.1.1 Characteristics of the victim, the perpetrator and their relationship**

The victim was Sabine D., a 34-year-old woman living in a small city in the north of Germany. She worked in a supermarket.

The perpetrator was her partner, a man in his early 50s and of German citizenship. He was unemployed, occasionally earning money with small jobs. He used to be a member of a biker gang but he was disgraced and therefore excluded from the group. He was described by the neighbours as bad-tempered and extremely jealous. They avoided contact with him.

The victim and perpetrator were in a relationship for almost 10 years, which was described as unequal by the neighbours. They also said that while at the beginning she was open and cheerful, as the perpetrator began to cause frequent arguments, she became quieter and more withdrawn. This and the controlling behaviour of the partner are indications of an abusive relationship. The perpetrator was described as being driven by extreme jealousy, progressively isolating the victim from her social support network: friends, neighbours, family. He was also described to be jealous of the victim's 17-year-old daughter.

The neighbours often heard fighting, yelling and other loud noises. Friends advised Sabine D. to move into a women's shelter. The more they pressured her to remove herself from the dangerous relationship, the more closed off she became.

#### **6.1.2 Coercive control and victim's strategy to deal with perpetrator**

It appears to the social network that the perpetrator was manipulative and controlling, wanting to isolate his partner from social contacts. He once strangled her to the point where she spat blood. After that incident, the victim refused to share a bedroom with him. She slept on the couch from this incident onwards. She also often pretended to sleep so that he would not talk to her or touch her. Fearing for her life, she started hiding sharp objects like knives from him.

Only sometimes she forgot to remove the knife she would use at work from her apron. This ultimately became the murder weapon. When he eventually killed her, it was considered likely that the offense had been premeditated, as he knew where the only sharp object in the house was located. He had planned the crime; it was also mentioned that he had made specific threats to the victim regarding taking her life and her daughter's.

#### 6.1.3. Previous help-seeking and reports to the authorities

The victim had probably not sought professional help from the police or a support system. She did however tell friends who were interviewed after the murder.

#### 6.1.4 Family, formal and informal networks

The only information about the victim's family is that she had a 17-year-old daughter who was in the apartment at the time of the incident. She woke up because she heard her mother choking after being stabbed in the neck. She was a witness in court and still carries long-term trauma.

#### 6.1.5 Social and economic status

The victim was employed as a cashier in a supermarket. The perpetrator was unemployed and occasionally worked cash-in-hand on casual jobs. Only the nationality of the perpetrator is stated as German. By the first name of the victim, it is possible to assume that she is a German citizen.

#### 6.1.6 Official reports and risk assessment

When the police gets involved, they have a duty to provide information to the victim; in some regions, a risk assessment procedure is implemented. Very few cities have specific mobile phones for victims who are in serious danger. In the case of Sabine, no prior police involvement was documented, nor any risk assessment implemented by supporting institutions.

#### 6.1.7 Social and cultural norms relevant to the specific case

Due to the victim having regular employment, she might have had a measure of financial independence and perhaps also higher education than her partner who had no secure or regular income. The fact that he had been part of a biker gang where often extreme traditional and masculinist violent mentalities are cultivated contradicts the socially subordinate position towards his wife and in society. Poor self-confidence might have contributed to extreme jealousy and his attempts to control his partner.

Also, in Germany, male identity is still connected with expectations of a superior position relative to women in general, and female partners in particular.



## 6.2 Case two

### 6.2.1 Characteristics of victim, the perpetrator and their relationship

The victim was a 22-year-old woman named Hanna who had emigrated from Eritrea a few years prior to the femicide. The victim had learned German very quickly and worked a lot, although it was not specified what her work exactly was. There is no further information about her education.

The name of the perpetrator is unknown. His family also emigrated from Eritrea in 1973; it is unclear whether he was born there or in Germany. He was 47 years old when he killed the victim, and 25 years older than her. There is no information about his education or employment. He was married twice before and already had three children. The victim and perpetrator met in the summer of 2019, around a year before he killed her. They spent a little holiday in a hotel for two days but when she found out that he had been married twice before, had three children and could not prove his latest divorce with paperwork to her, she decided to sever ties with him. He even asked her to marry him and have his children, but for religious reasons, she refused.

### 6.2.2 Coercive control and victim's strategy to deal with perpetrator

After her refusal, his excessive stalking started. He started by sending her hundreds of text messages, called her frequently, stalked her and at the end threatened her with a hammer in the spring of 2020. The victim did not press charges after the threat or during the stalking. There is no information available on how she dealt with the situation.

### 6.2.3 Previous help-seeking and reports to the authorities

Information about this topic was not available.

### 6.2.4 Family, formal and informal networks

The perpetrator had been married twice before and had three children. There is no further information about the victim's family or if they emigrated with her. The victim had a lot of friends who were also called in for the trial; they had made t-shirts with pictures of Hanna on them to show their support. She was a person of faith, so she was probably a member of a religious group. There is no information available on the perpetrator's informal network.

### 6.2.5 Social and economic status

Both victim and perpetrator were of Eritrean origin. He came to Germany in 1973, his year of birth, and she only a few years prior to the crime. The victim was killed in a city where she lived in a bright, neat apartment building (urban residence). There is no information about the

perpetrator's residence. The social and economic status of both victim and perpetrator are not documented in the sources.

#### 6.2.6 Official reports and risk assessment

In the specific case, no risk assessment or police involvement were documented. The victim had the option to call the police to make an effort towards stopping the perpetrator from stalking her. Perhaps she did not know of that option or she did not trust in the authorities because of her status as a foreigner.

#### 6.2.7 Social and cultural norms relevant to the specific case

It's unclear how big a role the cultural backgrounds of both victim and perpetrator played in the case. The perpetrator, like some German perpetrators, had not accepted the victim's rejection, possibly due to his unwillingness to recognise the self-determination of women. The fact that he had been a long-term resident of Germany could suggest that the cultural norms of his family might be less relevant. Perhaps he was driven by the cultural norm that a man has a right to get what he wants.

### 6.3 Comparative analysis of the cases

#### 6.3.1 Characteristics of victim, perpetrator and their relationship

The cases differ in relation to the life situation and relationships of victims and perpetrators, as in the second case a relationship was rejected at a very early stage by the woman – it existed only in the perpetrator's mind; in the first case, however, a close intimate partner relationship had existed prior to the crime, which became progressively more abusive.

In both cases, social insecurity might have been relevant: in the first case, from the side of the male partner who had no secure occupation and was perhaps more dependent on his partner than he could bear, in the second case, from the side of the victim who was relatively new in the country and perhaps less familiar with her rights and with police intervention strategies against stalking.

In both cases the victim was much younger than the perpetrator (15 to over 20 years).

#### 6.3.2 Coercive control and victim's strategy to deal with perpetrator/previous help seeking and reports to the authorities

According to the available information, in both cases patriarchal values and the wish to control played a major role: in the first case, the perpetrator was part of a biker gang and characterised by extreme jealousy leading to isolating and controlling behaviour against the partner; in the

second case, the perpetrator, who had several partners and children by different women, chose not to respect the self-determination of the victim who had rejected a relationship with the perpetrator.

Both victims did not involve the police and/or the support system, although close friends tried to encourage them to do so. In the first case, the attempt of friends to convince her to seek help exacerbated her withdrawal from society and her self-isolation.

### 6.3.3 Family, formal and informal networks

In the first case, the perpetrator forced the victim to push away close family members (even her daughter) and friends in order to isolate her. Her social contacts therefore found it increasingly challenging to reach her and convince her to get help. In the second case, the woman had a network of friends that might have supported her, but as a recent migrant it might have been more difficult to expect support from the side of the police or support systems.

### 6.3.4 Social and economic status

The social and economic status of both victims did not seem particularly disadvantageous and seemed to allow an independent life. For one of the perpetrators, this was not the case. On the other hand, not enough information is available on the education, or social and economic status of the persons involved.

### 6.3.5 Official reports and risk assessment

For both cases, no official risk assessment was conducted as the victims had not involved the police or other support system.

### 6.3.6 Social and cultural norms relevant to the specific cases

In both cases, not enough information is available about the victims' and perpetrators' social and cultural values. In the first case, traditional and at the same time unsettled masculinities might have fed the motivation to control and finally kill the woman. In the second case, perhaps traditional gender roles and values might have been influencing the perpetrator's actions (perpetrator and victim had the same culture of origin).

Both cases also indicate that the relative independence of a woman might be a risk factor for the escalation of IPV, and whether the offence is likely to be lethal, when the controlling partner is rejected or feels that they are losing control.

## 7. Conclusions and preliminary recommendations

The study shows that despite the introduction of extensive legal measures, as well as improved support and intervention, there was no decrease in DV or IPF in Germany over the years 2019 and 2020.

Going forward, it would be useful to pinpoint the root causes of these cases that could have an impact on the possibility of a reduction of VAW and killings of women, specifically in terms of early intervention and changes in perpetrator behaviour and attitudes. Therefore, further state-funded in-depth research is necessary on incidents of femicide to gain more insight on what could have been helpful to prevent them. For the European data collection systems and the research, more case-specific information should be provided by the institutions, especially prosecutors and courts in regard to the investigation and trials.

Intervention and prevention strategies should take into account that only in the minority of cases the police or the support systems were involved prior to the crimes. Therefore, the close social environment and perhaps also the medical care system might play a key role in preventing femicide; often, family members, neighbours and friends are the only persons who know about the dangerous situation or predict the risk. Concrete strategies should be developed to help social networks to support the victims and stop the perpetrators.

The case analysis and prior research on the topic all suggest that perhaps prevention strategies and risk assessment for DV may not actually prevent a femicides, especially in cases where no prior violence was perpetrated or known to third persons. Therefore, risk factors and warning signs of femicide have to be communicated to the public, but also to relevant professionals (e.g., family lawyers, doctors, psychotherapists and youth welfare offices). Besides that, more specific support should be provided for both women and men in situations of separation and in relationships with extreme controlling behaviour of the partner.

The media, as well as all educational institutions, should address the deeper roots of the problem and contribute to a better understanding of the emergence of male violence and control over women and their destructive consequences. Visions of positive and constructive masculinities and gender relations have to be further developed in order to stop the ongoing violence against women and girls, as well as the desire to subordinate and dominate persons because of their gender.

These are just some preliminary thoughts for further discussion on a European level. The recommendations we can put forward to prevent and combat VAW are broadly the same as those that have already been communicated to authorities and institutions over the last 30 to

40 years. What matters is a deeper understanding of the issue and change that is effected on the structural level.

These following initial steps are proposed to introduce more effective and targeted prevention strategies on femicide:

- **Provide more information for potential victims and perpetrators and people in their social environment on:**
  - a) warning signals in relation to male behaviour in the context of separation or loss of control over a woman (e.g., threats to kill or harm, threats to commit suicide, extreme emotional reactions as a consequence of the separation and of intention to revenge)
  - b) possibilities to influence the situation.
- **Provide more information about warning signals** to recognise potential danger of femicide **and options for action to improve the situation of women for institutions** like youth support systems, police, crisis and support services for separation and divorce, psychosocial counselling centres, lawyers and psychotherapists.
- **Improve risk assessment and multi-agency response in high-risk cases of stalking and threats against the partner** (also in cases where no prior DV is known).
- **Early prevention in schools, education systems and youth work** in regard to:
  - a) dealing with expectations around gender roles and power imbalances
  - b) rethinking masculine identity and its relation to control and violence
  - c) dealing with separation, disappointment and loss of control in (heterosexual) relationships (dealing with big life changes)
  - e) early self-protection for women in difficult and abusive intimate relationships.
- **Inclusion of media and cultural institutions** in strategies to inform about risks and prevention measures and for transforming destructive gender relationships.

**More integrated and targeted recommendations will be formulated at a later stage of this project and after a number of workshops and discussions with stakeholders, NGOs and other professionals from the national and international contexts.**

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