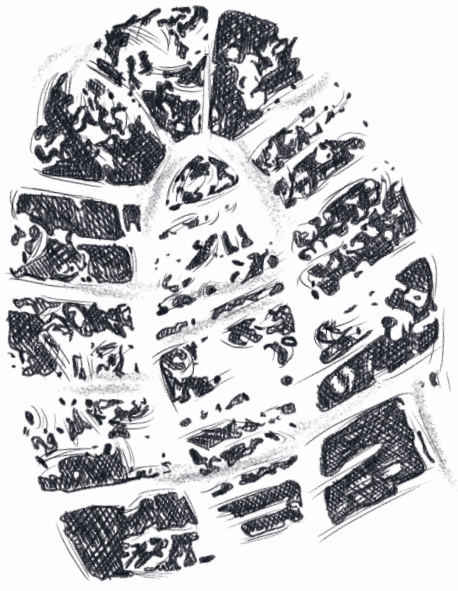
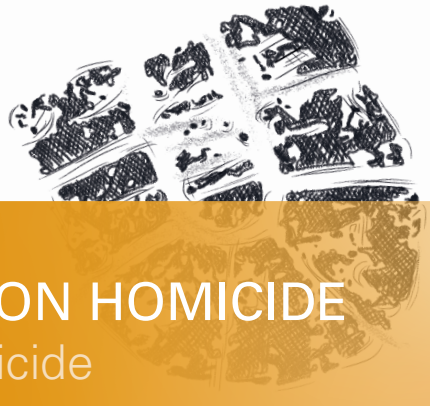
UNODC
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

UNODC Research





GLOBAL STUDY ON HOMICIDE

Understanding homicide

2019

UNITED NATIONS OFFICE ON DRUGS AND CRIME
Vienna

GLOBAL STUDY ON HOMICIDE

Understanding homicide:
typologies, demographic factors, mechanisms and contributors

2019

UNODC
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

Suggested citation: UNODC, Global Study on Homicide 2019 (Vienna, 2019)

Comments on the report are welcome and can be sent to:

Division for Policy Analysis and Public Affairs
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
PO Box 500
1400 Vienna
Austria
Tel: (+43) 1 26060 0
Fax: (+43) 1 26060 5827

PREFACE

The *Global Study on Homicide* is a search for solutions. By bringing together the available data, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime seeks to shed light on different phenomena, from lethal gang violence and the role of firearms to links with inequalities and gender-related killings, and in this way support targeted action. I hope that the research and analysis contained in the study are used in this spirit – not to designate "murder capitals" but to learn, understand and strengthen prevention.

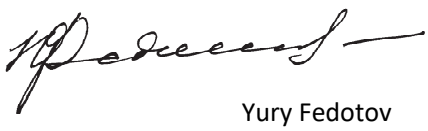
Criminal activity is responsible for many more deaths worldwide than armed conflict and terrorism combined. Unless the international community takes decisive steps, targets under Sustainable Development Goal 16 to significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates by 2030 will not be met.

The Americas continue to report high homicide rates. Young men are especially at risk, with a homicide rate for men aged 18 to 19 estimated at 46 per 100,000 – far higher than the risk faced by their peers in other regions. Firearms are also involved far more often in homicides in the Americas than in other parts of the world.

By contrast, Europe has seen a decline in the homicide rate by 63 per cent since 2002 and by 38 per cent since 1990. The rate in Asia has fallen by 36 per cent since 1990. Data collection overall has improved since the previous *Global Study on Homicide*, but there remain serious gaps in the availability of reliable data for African countries. There are also indications that homicide is underreported in the official statistics in Pacific countries.

This study offers particular insights into the gender-related killing of women and girls. "Femicide" represents just a small percentage of the overall number of homicides, but our analysis indicates that the drivers of this type of lethal violence require tailored responses. Killings carried out by intimate partners are rarely spontaneous or random, and should be examined as an extreme act on a continuum of gender-related violence that remains underreported and too often ignored.

The *Global Study on Homicide 2019* also documents successes in preventing and addressing lethal violence. In particular, the study offers examples of effective community-based interventions in settings afflicted by violence, gangs and organized crime. These accounts show that with targeted interventions backed by sustained engagement and trust between communities and law enforcement, bringing down homicide rates is possible.



Yury Fedotov

Executive Director, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The *Global Study on Homicide 2019* was prepared by the Research and Trend Analysis Branch, Division for Policy Analysis and Public Affairs, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, under the supervision of Jean-Luc Lemahieu, Director of the Division, and Angela Me, Chief of the Research and Trend Analysis Branch.

General coordination and content overview
Angela Me
Andrada-Maria Filip

Analysis and drafting
Karen Avanesyan
Tommaso Comunale
Jonathan Gibbons
Alexander Kamprad
Kristiina Kangaspunta
Theodore Leggett
Hanneke Schönberger
Antoine Vella

Editing
Luis Sundkvist

Data management and estimates production
Oualid Akakzia
Enrico Bisogno
Diana Camerini
Sarika Dewan
Salomé Flores Sierra
Smriti Ganapathi
Michael Jandl
Kirsty MacAulay
Stefanie Mavrakou
Beatriz de Moraes Rodrigues
Lea Ruiz Taladriz
Umidjon Rakhmonberdiev
Mateus Rennó Santos
Vania Salgadinho
Fatma Usheva
Lorenzo Vita

Cover design and production
Anja Korenblik
Suzanne Kunnen
Kristina Kuttnig
Fabian Rettenbacher

Administrative support
Iulia Lazar

Review and comments
The *Global Study on Homicide 2019* benefited from the expertise of, and invaluable contributions from, UNODC colleagues in all divisions and field offices. Particular thanks are owed to the Justice Section of the Division for Operations. The Research and Trend Analysis Branch also acknowledges the expert contributions of Renata Giannini, Robert Muggah and Mateus Rennó Santos.

The research for this booklet was made possible by the generous contribution of Sweden.

CONTENTS

SCOPE OF THE BOOKLET

Constituting the third part of the *Global Study on Homicide 2019*, this booklet provides an overview of the drivers of homicide and looks at the different typologies and mechanisms of homicide perpetration. The drivers of homicide are manifold and have to do with a number of factors: socioeconomic and environmental conditions, governance and the rule of law, political stability, demographics, and cultural stereotypes (particularly in relation to gender roles). Homicidal violence is also influenced by the availability of mechanisms such as firearms or sharp objects, and by the use of and trafficking in psychoactive substances. The links between homicide and socioeconomic and environmental factors, along with the ways in which these factors may drive homicide or contribute to its containment, are analysed in booklet 4, which focuses on the interactions between homicide and development.

This booklet presents an analysis of demographic factors, such as gender and age, which may act as either drivers of, or protective factors against, homicide. Looking at different typologies of homicide and the mechanisms that may be used to perpetrate homicide, the booklet seeks to help policymakers in the design of effective crime prevention interventions – a task that cannot be carried out properly without identifying the contexts in which homicide is perpetrated and the factors that drive it.

Three main typologies are considered: interpersonal homicide, crime-related homicide and sociopolitical homicide. Interpersonal homicide covers two broad types: homicide perpetrated within the family (by intimate partners or other family members), and other interpersonal homicide perpetrated outside the family. A few illustrative examples of other interpersonal homicide, such as homicide caused by disputes over access to land and by competition over resources, are provided. Crime-related homicide is mainly centred around property-related crime and homicide perpetrated by organized crime groups and street gangs. Sociopolitical homicide is exemplified by the killing of human rights defenders, social leaders and certain at-risk professionals, such as journalists and humanitarian aid workers.

The final part of the booklet contains a section on the types of mechanism (firearm, sharp object and “other mechanism”) used to commit homicide, which includes an analysis of homicide mechanisms in relation to other factors, such as the gender of victims and perpetrators. This part also addresses the propensity of individuals to commit crime, including homicide, under the influence of particular substances. Substance abuse, violence and antisocial behaviour are integrated into the analysis of homicide mechanisms through the lens of the tripartite framework proposed by Paul J. Goldstein in 1985.

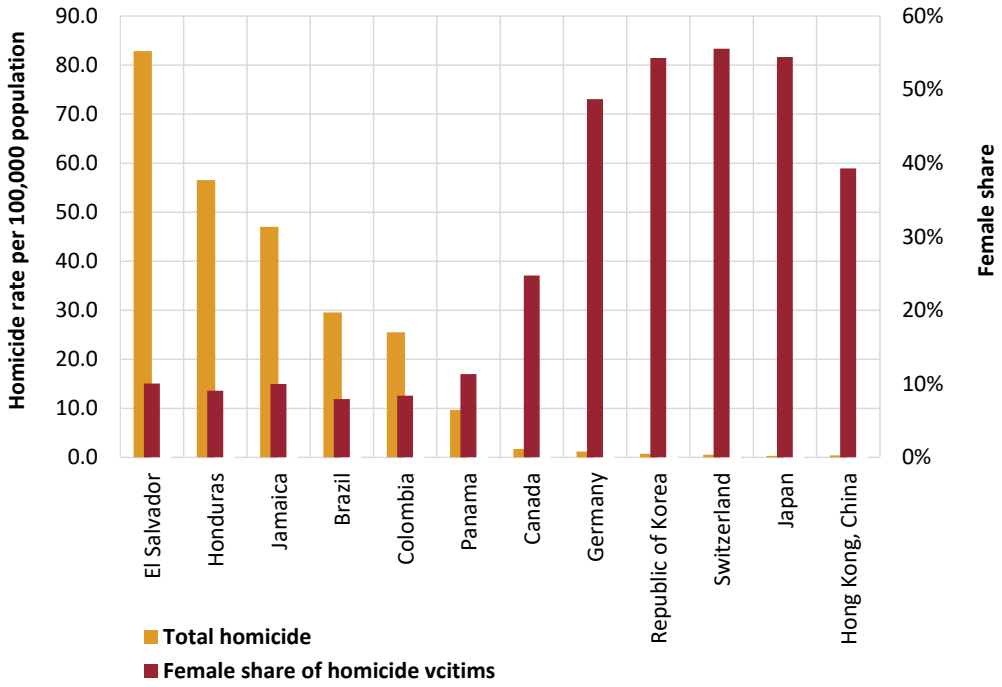
DEMOGRAPHICS AS A DRIVER OF HOMICIDE

Age and sex of homicide victims

Demographic factors influence the dynamics of homicide. They may drive certain types of homicide and act as protective factors against other types. For example, as shown in booklet 6 of this study, a large share of youth in the population is linked in certain regions to high levels of homicide. Similarly, booklet 2 points out that homicide does not affect women and men equally in each age group. Typically, rates of homicide are higher among males than among females, and younger age groups are disproportionately affected in comparison to others.

The difference between the shares of male and female homicide victims is striking in countries with high national rates of lethal violence. Generally speaking, the higher the overall homicide rate within a country, the higher the proportion of male victims out of all recorded homicide victims.

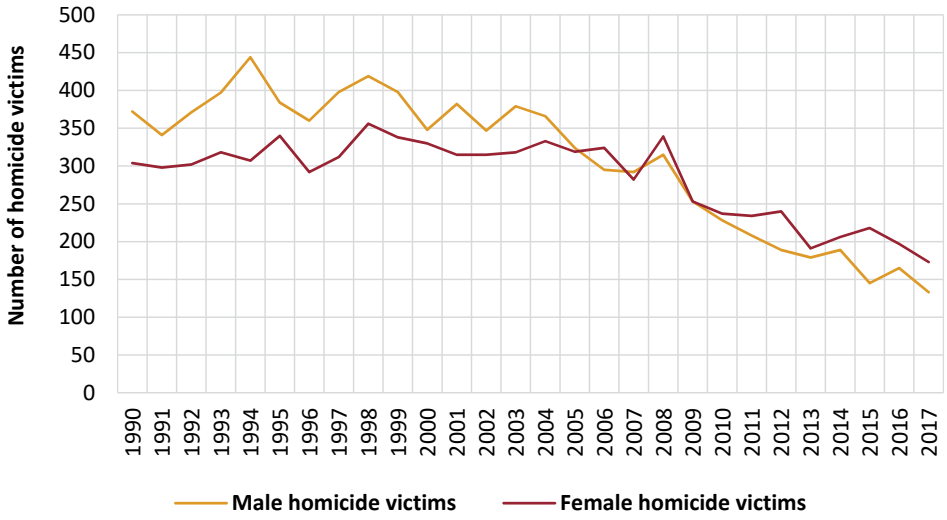
Figure 1: Female share of homicide victims and total homicide rate, selected countries, 2016



Source: UNODC homicide statistics.

In some societies, particularly in low-homicide countries in Asia, the odds of falling victim to homicide are similar for males and females. In Japan, for example, homicide rates for both sexes have been declining at about the same rate over the last decade. Whatever it is that is driving the number of homicides down in Japan appears to be affecting both males and females equally. The situation in the Republic of Korea and Hong Kong, China is similar. In Europe, the numbers of male and female homicide victims are close to equal in countries such as Germany and Switzerland.

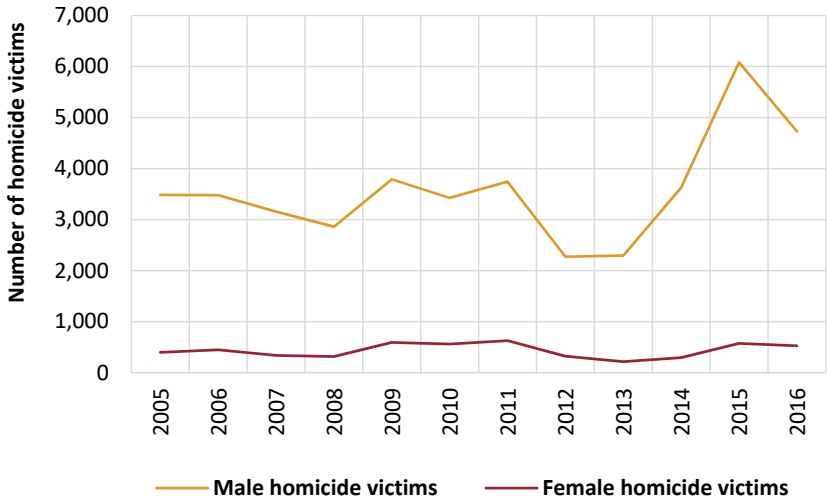
Figure 2: Number of male and female homicide victims, Japan, 1990–2017



Source: UNODC homicide statistics.

By contrast, in high-homicide countries, such as certain countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, male victims often outnumber female victims by a factor of 10:1 or more. When homicide rates increase in these countries, a large share of the additional victims are male, which points to a causal factor that selectively affects men. For example, in El Salvador between 6 and 12 times as many men as women were killed annually during the period 2005–2015. When the number of homicides increased rapidly between 2013 and 2015, over 90 per cent of the additional victims were male. In this case, the principal driver of the rising homicide rate was gang conflict, in which both perpetrators and victims are highly likely to be male.

Figure 3: Number of male and female homicide victims, El Salvador, 2005–2016



Source: UNODC homicide statistics

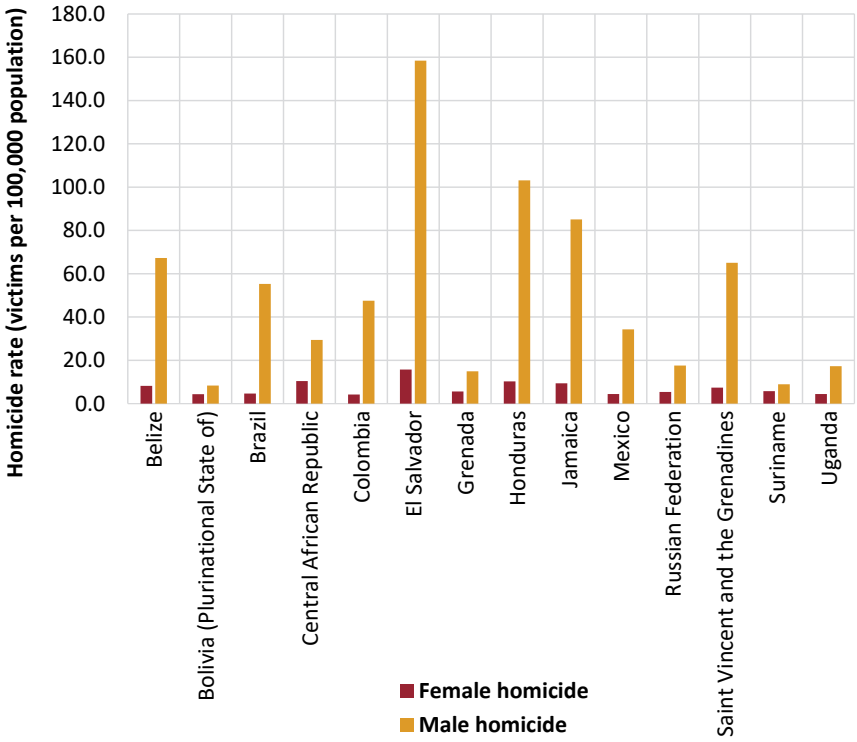
The dynamics behind female homicide rates are largely influenced by structural factors, such as sociocultural and gender biases, which change very little over long periods of time. When seeking to explain high female homicide rates, previous studies have pointed to such general predictors of violent crime as income equality, unemployment ethnic heterogeneity,[1] material deprivation, weak social integration and exposure to violence by the State.[2] The premise is that high levels of female homicide victimization can be

[1] Chon, D. S., "A spurious relationship of gender equality with female homicide victimization: a cross-national analysis", *Crime and Delinquency*, vol. 62, No. 3 (March 2016), pp. 397–419.

[2] Gartner, R., "The victims of homicide: a temporal and cross-national comparison", *American Sociological Review*, vol. 55, No. 1 (February 1990), pp. 92–106.

explained in the same way as overall homicide levels.[3] Therefore, factors related to general prosperity and social equality can influence the overall levels of both male and female homicide.[4] This situation is encountered in several Latin American countries, where social crises have increased homicide rates among both men and women.

Figure 4: Homicide rates, by sex, for countries with the highest female homicide rates, 2016



Source: UNODC homicide statistics.

In terms of the age and sex profile of the victims, young males are heavily affected. In Latin America, for example, the three countries with the highest overall homicide rates in 2016 exhibit extremely high rates among younger males. In El Salvador, the homicide rate in 2016 climbed to 296 per 100,000 for the age group 15–29 years and to 205 per 100,000 for the age group 30–44 years. This means that a 14-year-old boy in that country has a statistical risk of around 8 per cent of being intentionally killed in the next 30 years of his life. With homicide rates of around 200 per 100,000 for the age group 15–29 years, men in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Honduras face a similarly high risk of death through lethal violence.

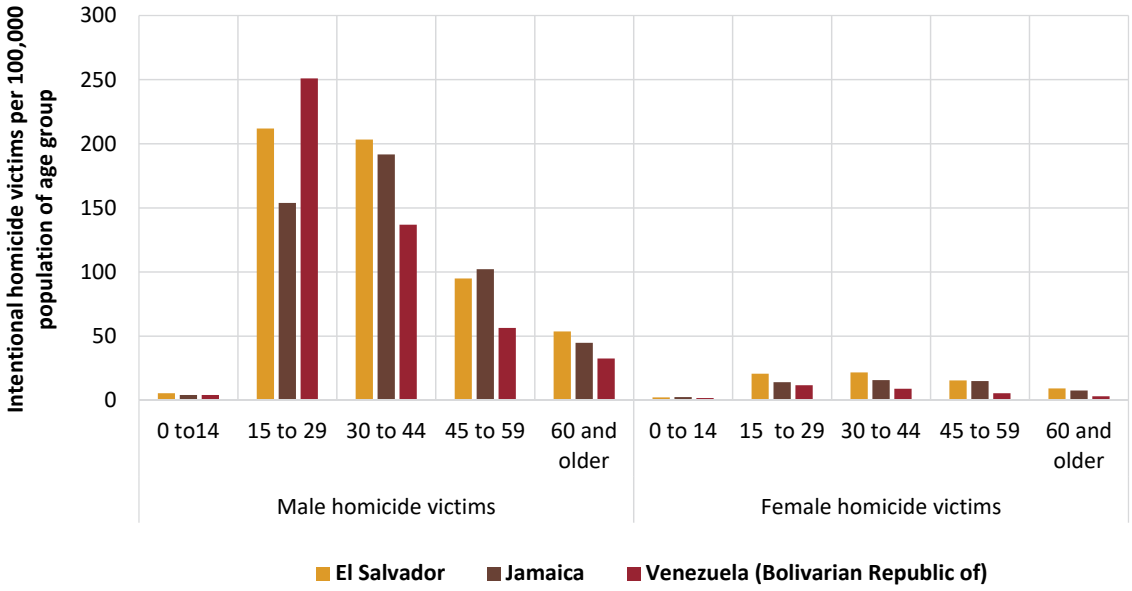
Earlier studies have attributed the extremely high homicide rates among people aged 29 years and under in Latin America to the fact that many of them have dropped out of school and are not working either (see booklet 4 of this study for a detailed discussion of *ninis*, a contraction of the Spanish phrase "ni estudian, ni trabajan", i.e. "they neither study nor work"). The concentration of extremely high violence among them means that *ninis* constitute an entire generation of young people who are at risk of social exclusion and who lack opportunities, resources and access to formal labour markets. The *nini* phenomenon has been found to contribute to crime, substance dependence and social disintegration. An uneven distribution of income, weak institutions and the proliferation of organized crime in the region all feed into this phenomenon.[5] The growing numbers of unemployed and socially deprived young men are believed to be contributing to the rise in violent crime, including homicide, in Latin America.

3 Lappi-Seppälä and Lehti, "Global homicide mortality trends by gender 1950–2010".

4 Ibid.

5 Hoyos de, R., Popova, A. and Rogers, H., "Out of school and out of work: a diagnostic of ninis in Latin America", Policy Research Working Paper, No. 7548 (World Bank, 2016).

Figure 5: Male and female homicide rate, by age group, selected countries, 2017

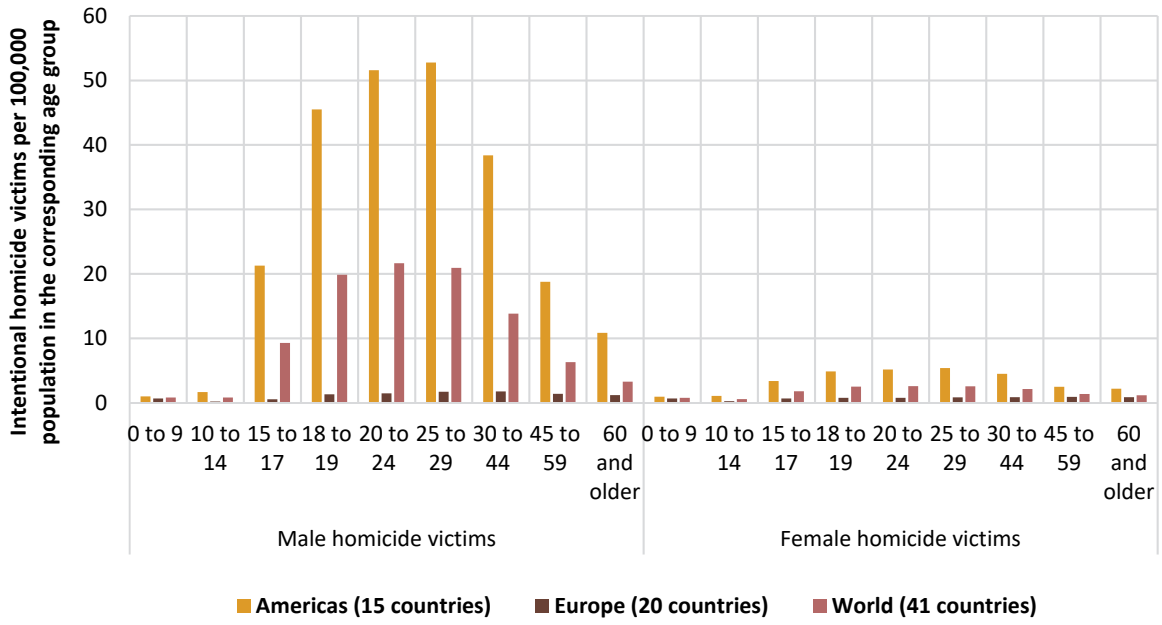


Source: UNODC homicide statistics.

Apart from the elevated risk of falling victim to homicide for adolescents and young adults, the intentional killing of children remains a serious concern for many countries around the world. Booklet 6 of this study analyses homicide among children and young adults in detail.

New data collected in recent years with finer age disaggregation for the two younger age groups (0–14 and 15–29 years) afford insights into the homicide risk for the age groups 0–9, 10–14, 15–17, 18–19, 20–24 and 25–29 years. These data are available for a limited number of countries worldwide (41) and are therefore only illustrative, as opposed to representative, for all the regions.

Figure 6: Male and female homicide rate, by age group and region, 2016 or latest available year



Source: UNODC homicide statistics.

BOX 1: Impact of age composition on homicide[a]

Understanding the changing patterns of homicide is challenging, because it is difficult to isolate the impact of any single factor among all the factors affecting a country at a given time. Several hypotheses have been proposed to explain the drop in crime observed in the 1990s across developed Western countries.[b] Although the impact of gun laws, incarceration, drug epidemics, innovations in policing, improvements in the economy, and demographics have variously been cited as possible causes,[c] social scientists continue to be unsure about what exactly is driving the international decline in homicide.

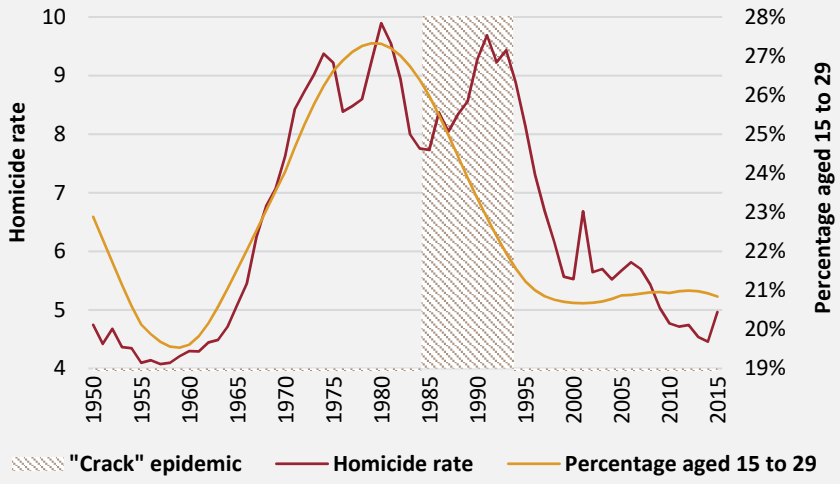
While some studies have linked the decline in homicide to changes in the age structure of the population,[d] it has also been argued that age structure plays only a limited role in explaining changing crime rates.[e] By contrast, in the present analysis it is argued that demographic factors are a major driver of homicide trends, and that the international homicide decline may have been a direct consequence of a global process of population ageing.[f]

At the individual level, age is one of the strongest predictors of criminal offending and victimization. A person's likelihood of becoming involved in crime changes considerably as he or she ages, sharply increasing from the end of childhood and reaching a peak in young adulthood, which is the most crime-prone cohort. In the United States of America, for example, individuals between the ages of 15 and 29 make up 20 per cent of the population, yet they account for 50 per cent of all those arrested for violent crimes.[g]

On average, the populations of countries are much older now than in the past. As health conditions improved, people began living much longer. At the same time, families began having a much smaller number of children, while a disproportionately large cohort born in the years following the Second World War (often referred to as "baby boomers") have aged beyond the most crime-prone age groups. Consequently, since the 1980s the proportion of the population between the ages of 15 and 29 years is declining steadily around the world.[h]

The following describes the relationship between age composition and homicide trends in a selected sample of countries for which long-term data are available. The figure below displays the trends in the United States over the 66 years between 1950 and 2015.

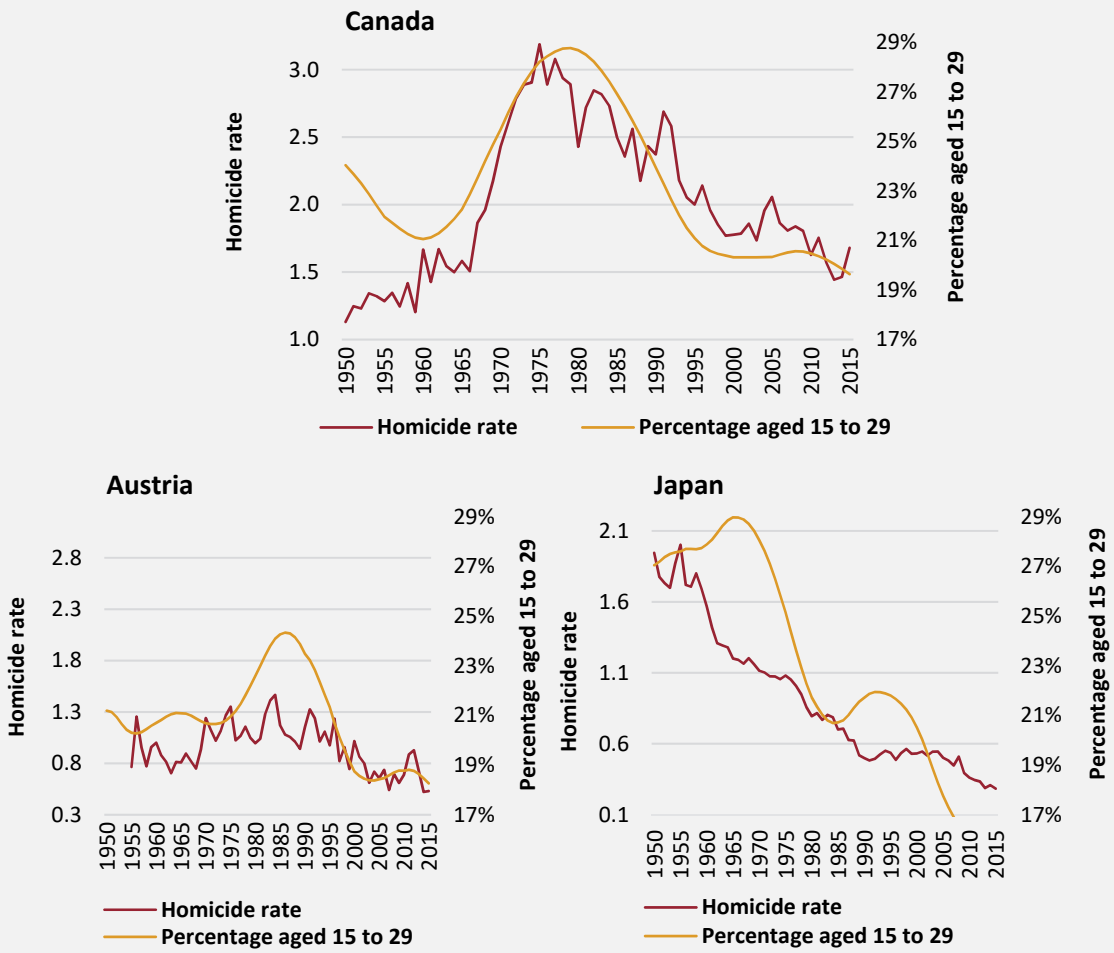
Homicide rate and share of population aged 15 to 29 years, United States, 1950–2015



Source: UNODC homicide statistics; World Health Organization (WHO) mortality statistics; United Nations, *World Population Prospects*.

For most of the period in question there is a strong and positive association between the share of young people aged 15 to 29 years and the homicide rate. During the 1960s, the homicide rate increased sharply, in parallel with an increase in the size of the youth population.[i] The youth population began to decrease in size in the 1980s, but homicides increased over that decade because of the brutality of a "crack" cocaine epidemic afflicting the United States at the time.[j] However, once the epidemic receded in the 1990s, the homicide rate started to decline again in parallel with the proportion of youth in the population. This means that the overall downward trend was probably just interrupted by the "crack" epidemic.

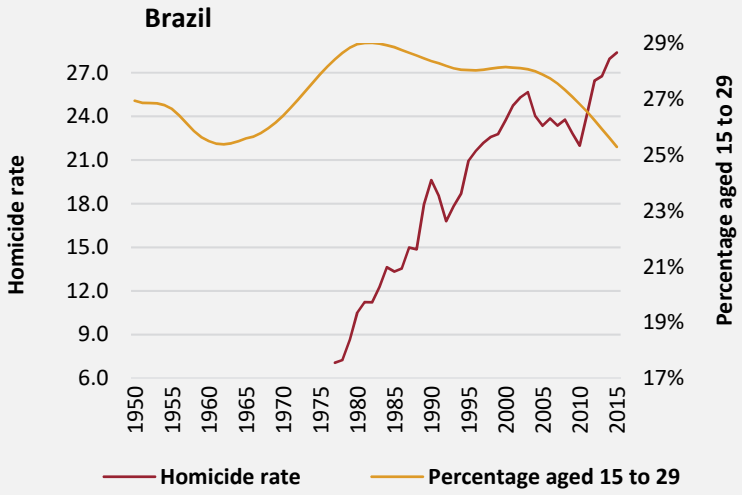
Homicide rate and share of population aged 15 to 29 years, selected countries, 1950–2015

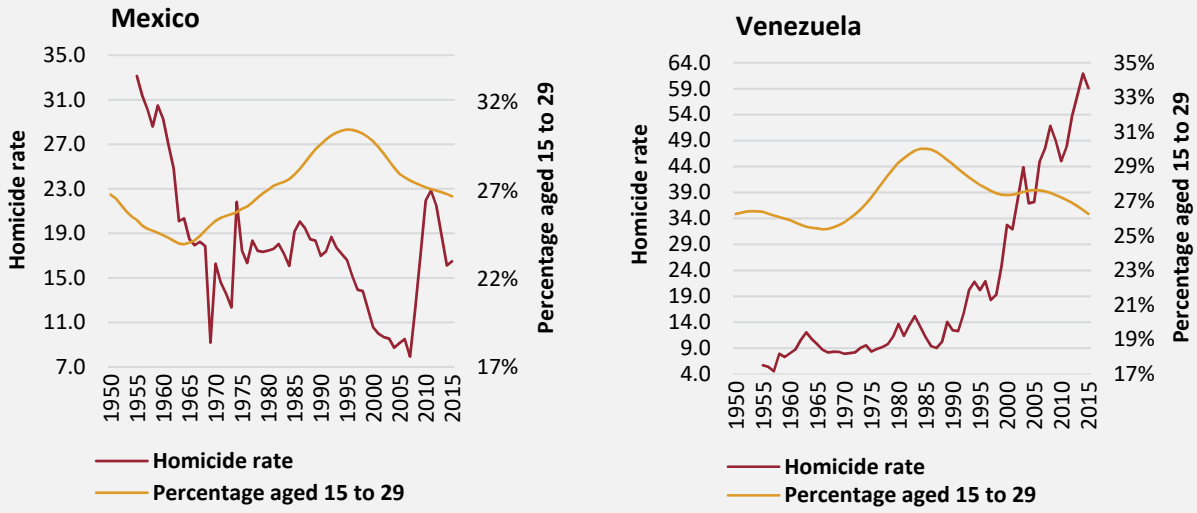


Source: UNODC homicide statistics; WHO mortality statistics; United Nations, *World Population Prospects*.

Austria, Canada and Japan are each in a different region. These countries do not necessarily share the same approach to criminal justice policies, yet over time all three experienced a strong decline in their homicide rates, which was strongly correlated with the proportion of their populations aged 15 to 29 years.

Homicide rate and share of population aged 15 to 29 years, selected countries, 1950–2015





Source: UNODC homicide statistics; WHO mortality statistics; United Nations, *World Population Prospects.*

There are, however, several countries in which the long-term relationship between age composition and homicide rate is not as clear-cut as in Austria, Canada and Japan. For example, Brazil, Mexico and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela have many characteristics in common. They are all in Latin America, they have some of the highest homicide rates in the world, and all three have been affected by social and economic instability in recent decades.[k] Yet, while all three countries are also experiencing a sizeable reduction in their youth populations, the homicide rate has not followed the same trend as in countries with greater social and economic stability, but has instead increased considerably in recent decades.

As the above two contrasting sets of countries suggest, age composition can strongly influence homicide trends. The effect of age, however, is only observable in the absence of other important factors that raise homicide levels. As illustrated by the crack epidemic in the United States, social phenomena can have a major impact on crime – an impact that may temporarily outweigh the influence of population ageing.

It is estimated that each increase of 1 per cent in the proportion of the population aged 15 to 29 years translates, on average, into a 4.6 per cent increase in the homicide rate (if macro-level socioeconomic factors, such as economic development, inequality and urbanization are taken into consideration).[l] The effect of age, however, may be tempered by the presence of destabilizing social, economic and governance dynamics, which can, at times, have a much greater influence on homicide trends than demographic forces. In this context, an ageing population can act as a protective factor against homicide, although social unrest, instability and other macro-level events can also nullify this benefit.

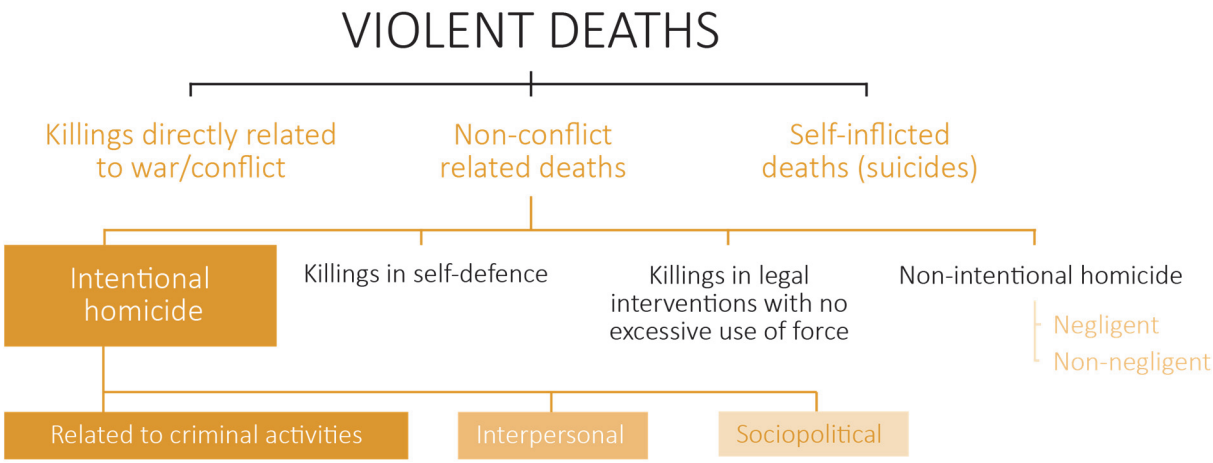
This contribution was provided by Mateus Rennó Santos, University of South Florida.

[a] Rennó Santos, M., "The impact of age composition in explaining the international homicide decline: a seven-decade longitudinal study", PhD dissertation, University of Maryland, 2019.
[b] Weiss, D. B. et al., "The 1990s homicide decline: a Western world or international phenomenon? A research note", *Homicide Studies*, vol. 20, No. 4 (November 2016), pp. 321–334.
[c] Farrell, G., Tilley, N. and Tseloni, A., "Why the crime drop?", *Crime and Justice*, vol. 43, No. 1 (2014), pp. 421–490.
[d] Rennó Santos, M. and Testa, A., "Global trends in homicide", in *Homicide and Violent Crime* (Bingley, United Kingdom, Emerald Publishing, 2018).
[e] Rogers, M. L. and Pridemore, W. A., "A comprehensive evaluation of the association between percent young and cross-national homicide rates", *British Journal of Criminology*, vol. 57, No. 5 (September 2017), pp. 1080–1100.
[f] Rennó Santos, "The impact of age composition in explaining the international homicide decline".
[g] United States Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Crime in the United States, 2015* (Washington, D.C., 2019).
[h] Kinsella, K. G. and Phillips, D. R., "Global aging: the challenge of success", *Population Bulletin*, vol. 60, No. 1 (Washington, D.C., Population Reference Bureau, 2005).
[i] Wellford, C. F., "Age composition and the increase in recorded crime", *Criminology*, vol. 11, No. 1 (May 1973), pp. 61–70.
[j] Blumstein, A., "Youth violence, guns, and the illicit-drug industry", *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*, vol. 86, No. 1 (Fall 1995), pp. 10–36.
[k] Briceño-León, R., Villaveces, A. and Concha-Eastman, A., "Understanding the uneven distribution of the incidence of homicide in Latin America", *International Journal of Epidemiology*, vol. 37, No. 4 (August 2008), pp. 751–757.
[l] This estimate was obtained by applying a fixed-effects regression model on a sample of countries for which data for the period 1960–2015 were available.

INTRODUCTION TO HOMICIDE TYPOLOGIES

Homicide in relation to other types of killings

Intentional homicide falls under the broader concept of "violent deaths", which also includes unintentional homicide, conflict deaths, other types of killings and suicides, as illustrated below:



The *Global Study on Homicide* uses the same definition of intentional homicide as the *International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes* (ICCS): ''Unlawful death inflicted upon a person with the intent to cause death or serious injury". This definition contains three elements that are important in characterizing the killing of a person as intentional homicide:

1. The killing of a person by another person (objective element)
2. The intent of the perpetrator to kill or seriously injure the victim (subjective element)
3. The unlawfulness of the killing, which means that the law considers the perpetrator liable for the unlawful death (legal element)

For international statistical purposes, all killings that meet the three criteria listed above are considered to be intentional homicides, irrespective of the specific definitions used by countries in their national legislation or other national practices.

The definitions used at the national and international levels may differ, and the concepts shown in the violent deaths framework above may overlap in three contexts: armed conflict, terrorism and killings by State authorities. From a statistical point of view there is a clear distinction between killings by State authorities that are considered to be legal interventions[6] and killings by State authorities that are considered unlawful and that must therefore be counted as homicide.[7] The definition in the *International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes* (ICCS) of intentional homicide includes "extrajudicial killings" and "killings caused by excessive use of force by law enforcement/State officials", but excludes killings due to legal interventions.[8] From a practical point of view, however, distinguishing between these two

[6] According to the ICCS classification, deaths caused by legal interventions refer to "deaths inflicted upon a person by the police or other law-enforcement agents, including military on duty, in the course of arresting or attempting to arrest lawbreakers, suppressing disturbances, maintaining order, and other legal action when the use of force by law enforcement is necessary to protect life". See UNODC, *International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes (ICCS): Version 1.0* (Vienna, 2015), p. 33.

[7] According to the ICCS classification, unlawful killings by State authorities refer to deaths resulting from "the use of force by law enforcement or other State officials that exceeded the limits, set by national and international standards, of what is strictly necessary and required for the performance of their duty". Ibid.

[8] Ibid.

categories may be a challenge for some national and international data systems. As a result, killings by State authorities considered to be homicide may be undercounted.[9]

In conflict situations, it is often difficult to disentangle lethal violence that is part of a conflict (including deaths from war operations), or of a lower-intensity continuation of conflict, from homicidal violence (both by combatants and non-combatants).[10] Similarly, it is sometimes difficult to separate typical combatant groups from organized crime groups and terrorist organizations,[11] and, by extension, the deaths associated with their violent actions. The separation of these types of death is further complicated by the difficulties inherent in the statistical recording of homicides in the context of large-scale conflicts.[12]

Killings by terrorists are deemed homicides under the ICCS classification if they meet the three criteria listed above (the specific category is sociopolitical homicide).[13] There can, however, be considerable ambiguity as to whether a particular intentional killing should be attributed to conflict, homicide or terrorism. There is no internationally agreed list of conflicts or of terrorist groups.[14] Insurgent groups may be classed as combatants, terrorists, or simply civilians, depending on the political context of the conflict. In practice, some countries do not include killings by groups they deem to be "terrorist" groups in their national homicide count.[15]

International data sets on conflict deaths and terrorism, on the one hand, and UNODC homicide statistics, on the other, have a certain degree of overlap. The same killing may meet the ICCS criteria, the criteria of the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) database and those of the Global Terrorism Database.[16] Violence stemming from terrorism is subject to a great deal of scrutiny by the international community. This can partly be attributed to the nature of the victimization, terrorism's impact on public life, and media and political attention, as well as the actual number of lives lost. However, it should be noted that homicide accounts for far more lives lost than other types of killings, including death by terrorist violence and conflict deaths. Crime is much more lethal than conflict, and terrorism fatalities are a small share of all victims of homicide recorded globally. By way of concrete comparison: in 2017, there were about 89,000 conflict deaths globally, and about 26,000 people were killed in terrorist attacks (this figure includes victims of terrorist attacks and perpetrators killed in the attacks).[17]

[9] See box on recording killings committed by police in the United States in booklet 2 of this study.

[10] UNODC, *Global Study on Homicide 2013* (Vienna, 2014).

[11] UNODC, "Unlawful killings in conflict situations", ICCS Briefing Note (Vienna, 2017).

[12] Kanis, S. et al., "A cautionary note about the use of estimated homicide data for cross-national research", *Homicide Studies*, vol. 21, No. 4 (November 2017), pp. 312–324.

[13] UNODC, *International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes*, p. 102.

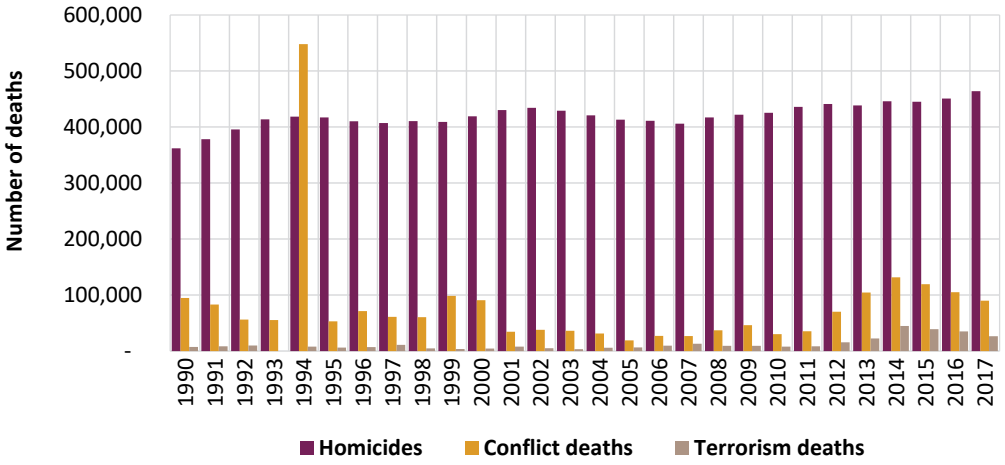
[14] The United Nations does produce a list of individuals and groups against which the Security Council has agreed to levy sanctions: the "1267 List" (named after Security Council resolution 1267 (1999)). However, this list is limited to Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and affiliated groups. Many countries regard militant nationalist groups within their borders as "terrorist" organizations, but there is no universal consensus on these classifications.

[15] For example, the Global Terrorism Database counted 3,521 terrorism deaths in Afghanistan in 2012, but the country itself reported only 1,948 homicides for that year.

[16] When people, for example, are killed by a terrorist group outside of conflict zones.

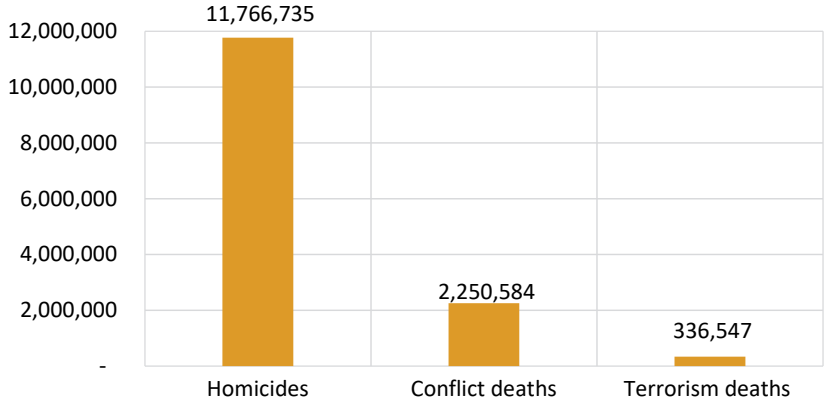
[17] Uppsala University, UCDP database. Available at https://ucdp.uu.se/?id=1&id=1 (accessed on 30 05 2019); National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), Global Terrorism Database. Available at https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/ (accessed on 30 05 2019). There may be considerable overlap in these figures, however, since the majority of the terrorist deaths occurred in the conflict areas of the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq.

Figure 7: Number of deaths caused by homicide, conflict and terrorism as recorded in international databases, 1990–2017



Source: Homicide data – UNODC homicide statistics; conflict death data – UCDP database; terrorism death data – Global Terrorism Database.

Figure 8: Number of deaths caused by homicide, conflict and terrorism as recorded in international databases, 1990–2017 (aggregated)



Source: UNODC homicide statistics; UCDP database; Global Terrorism Database.

Homicide typologies explained

The disaggregation of homicide into different typologies not only makes fluctuations in homicide rates easier to comprehend, but also helps in the design of effective homicide prevention policies.

Homicide can be classified according to various characteristics and principles, all of which have their pros and cons. Different approaches can be found in the scientific literature, in which a broad distinction is generally made between homicide perpetrated out of "instrumental" motives and that perpetrated out of "expressive" motives. Acting out of instrumental motives means that violence is not the primary goal of the criminal act, which serves another purpose, such as burglary or robbery, whereas acting out of expressive motives means that violence against the victim is the direct aim of the crime.[18] Another classification approach is based on assessing the relationship between those involved in a homicide, resulting in the two subtypes of domestic and non-domestic homicide. Domestic homicide presupposes some sort of domestic relationship between victim and perpetrator, and includes the killing of a child, a current or former partner, a parent or another family member.[19] Non-domestic homicide refers to

[18] Salfati, C. G., "The nature of expressiveness and instrumentality in homicide: implications for offender profiling", *Homicide Studies*, vol. 4, No. 3 (August 2000), pp. 265–293.

[19] Liem, M. and Koenraadt, F., *Domestic Homicide: Patterns and Dynamics* (Abingdon, United Kingdom, Routledge).

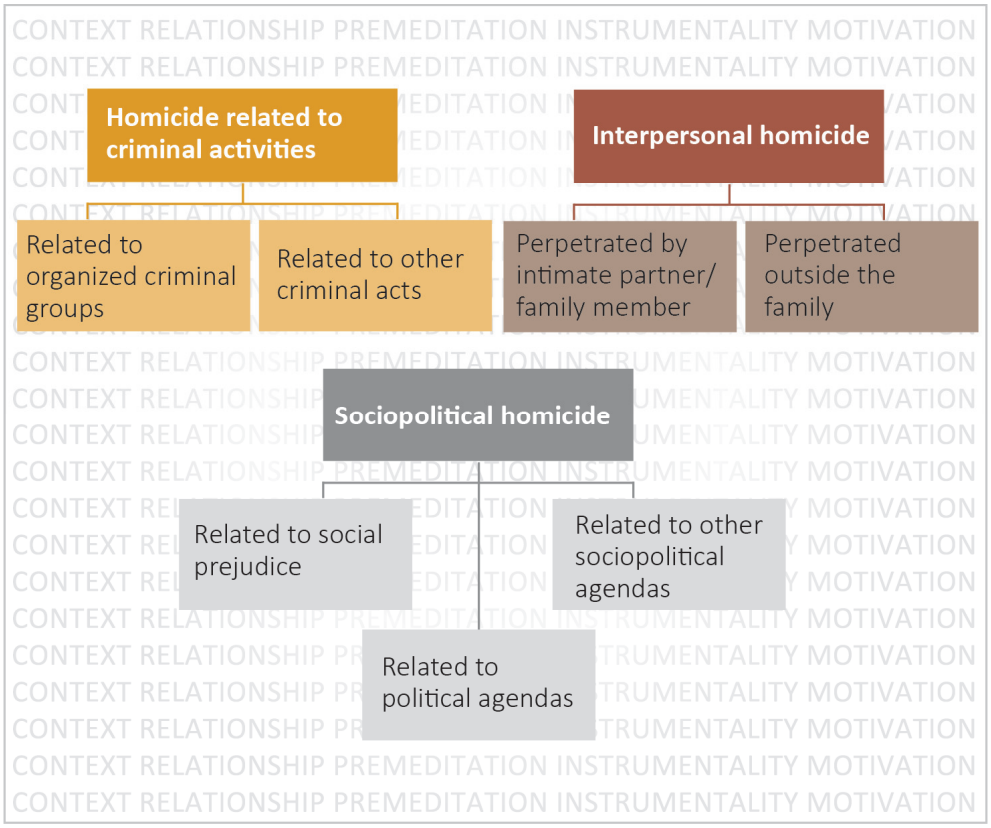
homicide committed outside the family and includes the killing of victims in the context of robbery, rivalry and disputes, nightlife violence, sexual assault and drug-related crime.

In this booklet, different types of homicide are considered separately because they require different policy responses and prevention strategies. The ICCS classification[20] has been used to define three homicide categories based on situational context and relationships between victim and perpetrator: interpersonal homicide, crime-related homicide and sociopolitical homicide.

In the analysis based on the three typologies, it is considered whether certain geographical areas are affected by some types of homicide more than others and whether certain homicide typologies are driven by certain patterns of homicide. These typologies, however, cannot explain all the drivers of homicide. There are overall structural drivers, including social conditions such as collective and individual poverty, inequality and the youthfulness of the population, all of which are known to be strongly related to homicide rates.[21]

Before looking more closely at the three different homicide typologies, it is worth emphasizing that it is not always possible to classify all homicides precisely. The categories are not clear-cut and may overlap in certain situations. Thus, a homicide may be classified as ''other interpersonal/outside the family" and "crime-related" at the same time. Moreover, some countries do not have the capacity to disaggregate homicide statistics in terms of typology. It is also difficult to classify unsolved homicides or homicides with multiple motives. Another vexed question is whether deaths related to terrorist activities or deaths occurring during conflict should be considered intentional homicides.[22]

A classification of intentional homicide



[20] UNODC, *International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes*. See also Bisogno, E., Dawson-Faber, J. and Jandl, M., "The International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes: a new instrument to improve comparative criminological research", *European Journal of Criminology*, vol. 12, No. 5 (September 2015), pp. 535–550.

[21] Ouimet, M., Langlade, A. and Chabot, C., "The dynamic theory of homicide: adverse social conditions and formal social control as factors explaining the variations of the homicide rate in 145 countries", *Canadian Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice*, vol. 60, No.2 (April 2018), pp. 241–265.

[22] In accordance with the definition of intentional homicide (see booklet 2 of this study), killings that take place in the context of armed conflict are in principle not considered intentional homicides.

Interpersonal homicide

This typology refers to homicide that occurs in the context of interpersonal conflict. The two main subcategories in this typology are intimate partner/family-related homicide and homicide related to other interpersonal conflicts. The victims of intimate partner/family-related homicide include current or former intimate partners, parents, siblings and children. Women are disproportionately victimized by this type of homicide, which is partly because intimate partner homicide makes up a large share of it.[23] Homicide related to other interpersonal conflicts refers to homicidal violence outside domestic relationships, in which the victim and perpetrator are friends, acquaintances, neighbours, slightly known to each other or complete strangers. This type of interpersonal homicide includes killings resulting from conflicts related to urban violence and property disputes, revenge-type killings, and lethal fights over the allocation of resources such as land.

Crime-related homicide

Within this broad typology there are two distinct types: homicides committed in the context of organized crime and gang violence, and homicides committed while perpetrating other, more "conventional" criminal acts such as robbery and sexual assault. Homicide committed during the perpetration of conventional crime tends not to be the main goal of the perpetrator, which is what distinguishes such killings from homicides perpetrated by organized crime groups. Although the main goal of organized crime groups is usually to generate illicit profit, they may commit homicide not only as part of their "day-to-day" activities but also for a variety of other reasons, ranging from the elimination of rivals or State representatives to a display of strength and for securing territorial control. In such cases, homicide is considered instrumental to achieving longer-term criminal goals and is typically the result of premeditation. Homicide related to organized crime groups and gang-related homicide seems to occur primarily between young men of similar ages and from low socioeconomic backgrounds.[24]

Sociopolitical homicide

This typology comprises homicides linked to social discrimination, political agendas, civil unrest and to broader sociopolitical motives. Homicide as a result of social prejudice, which includes hate crimes, refers to killings of individuals and groups who may be targeted because of their race, gender, ethnicity, religion or sexuality, or even on account of witchcraft allegations. Homicides related to a political agenda include killings perpetrated by terrorists, assassinations of politicians and the targeted killing of journalists for political reasons. Homicides related to broader sociopolitical motives include deaths caused by vigilante violence, unlawful killings by the police and extrajudicial killings, and killings due to communalism, casteism and class conflicts.[25]

Data on the three homicide typologies at the national, regional and global level draw on information provided by Member States in their answers to the United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems, the questionnaire based on the ICCS definitions. However, only a limited number of countries were able to provide data with the required level of granularity. This is particularly a problem in the case of sociopolitical homicides, which can represent a substantive share of total homicides in specific countries or regions for which detailed data are not available.

Types of homicide at the global level

The recording of homicide by type and the production of relevant data is still a challenging task and a limited number of countries are able to report information of that nature. In addition, large shares of homicide are recorded as "other (unspecified)" or "unknown" types of homicide, making estimates of homicide by type less accurate than estimates of total homicide. Furthermore, countries may produce data on specific types of homicide (such as homicide by intimate partner or other family members or homicide related to organized crime) as they are particularly relevant in the national context, and this self-selection

[23] Further details on how women are affected by intimate partner homicide can be found in booklet 5.

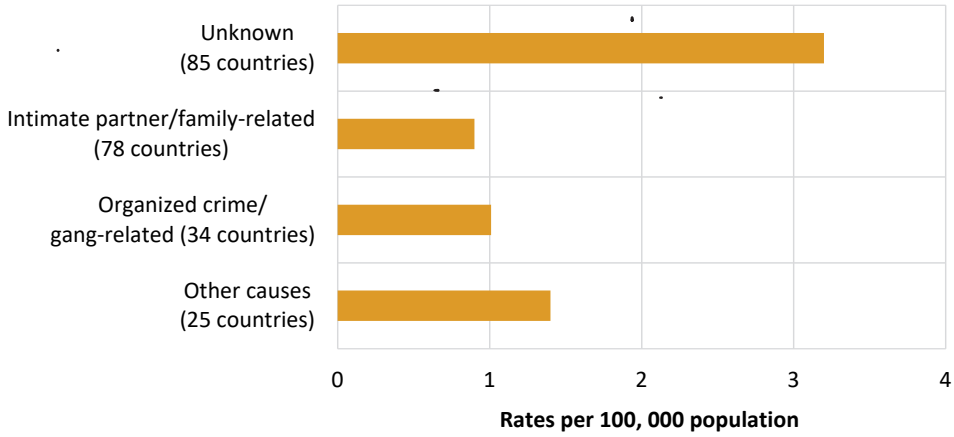
[24] Blok, A., *Honour and Violence* (Cambridge, Polity Press, 2001).

[25] UNODC, *International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes*. War- and conflict-related killings are also acts of sociopolitical violence, but they are not included in the above category because they fall outside the definition of intentional homicide.

reduces the representativity of available data. The production of global and regional estimates is therefore marred by limited data availability, lack of comprehensive data on homicide types and the selection bias of countries where such data are available.

In terms of homicide type, the most comprehensive data are available for intimate partner/family-related homicide (78 countries). Data on homicide related to organized crime/gangs (34 countries) are far harder to come by. The high rate of homicide of "unknown" type demonstrate the uncertainty around homicide typologies. Moreover, the comparability of homicide rates by type of homicide is limited as data refer to different subsets of countries. Rates of homicide committed during the perpetration of robbery or burglary are discussed in the section on homicide in the context of property-related crime.

Figure 9: Homicide rates, by type, 2016 or latest available year (selected countries)



Source: UNODC homicide statistics.
Note: The comparability of homicide rates by type is limited as data refer to different subsets of countries.

Based on available data, ranges in the share of the two most recorded types of homicide – organized crime/gang-related and intimate partner/family-related – can be calculated: an estimated 27 to 48 per cent of all homicides are intimate partner/family-related, while 16 to 34 per cent are caused by organized crime and gangs.[26] Based on these values, an average of roughly 65,000 killings each year over the period 2000–2017 were related to organized crime and gangs.

Types of homicide at the regional level

Despite the limitations, available data for the Americas and Europe[27] illustrate that the share of homicides falling under each type differs substantially, as does the rate relating to each type of homicide. In the Americas (based on data from 23 countries), the rate of intimate partner/family-related homicide is comparatively high (0.7 per 100,000 population), whereas the share of that type of homicide out of total homicides is, at between 13 and 20 per cent, below the global average. In Europe (based on data from 34 countries), intimate partner/family-related homicide accounts for a larger share of total homicides (between 36 and 76 per cent) than in the Americas, but the homicide rate relating to that type of homicide is much lower (0.3 per 100,000 population).

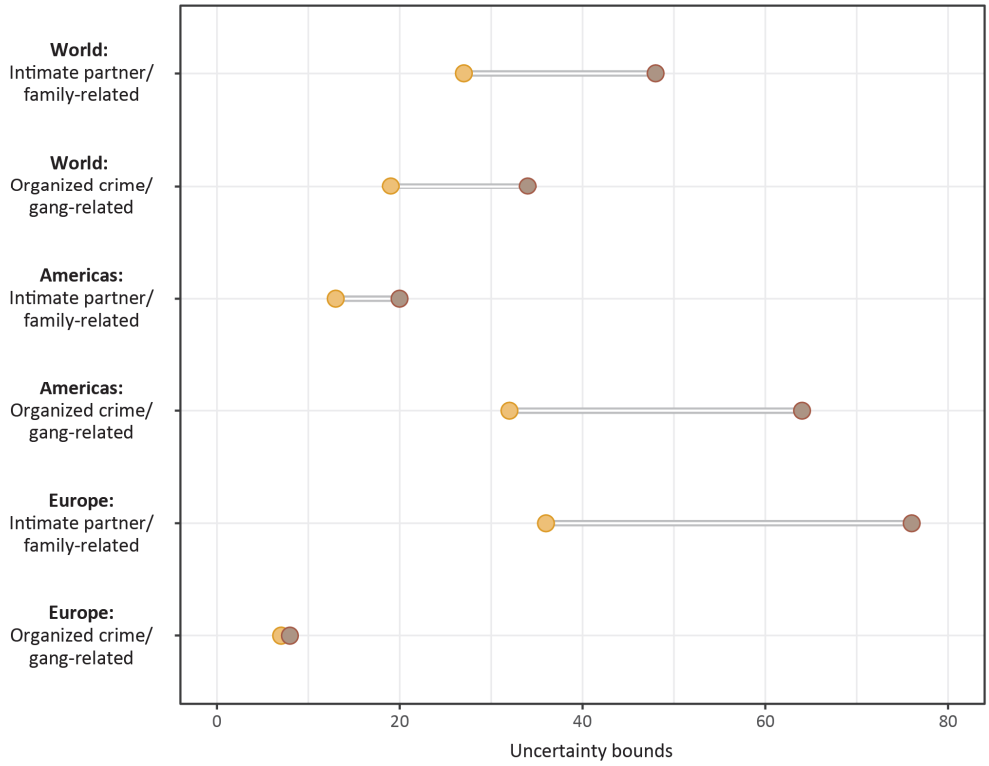
As for homicide related to organized crime and gangs, the rate in Europe (based on data from 14 countries) is very low (0.04 per 100,000 population) and that type of homicide also accounts for a small share (at least 7 per cent) of total homicides. By contrast, in the Americas (based on data from 13 countries) homicide

[26] The lower boundary of the range is computed by considering the percentage of homicides, for each type, on the total number of homicides while the upper boundary is computed by considering the percentage of homicide, for each type, on the total number of homicides with 'known' type (i.e. excluding the unknowns). The upper boundary has been computed only for those countries where at least three (intimate partner and family member, organized crime/gangs and robbery) out of six categories of homicide were known. This means that the upper bound was computed for a lower number of countries than the lower bound. For both lower and upper bounds the total value was computed as simple average of national values.

[27] Due to the limited data, no separate regional estimates on homicides by type can be computed for Africa, Asia and Oceania. However, a limited number of countries from these regions is included in the global total.

related to organized crime and gangs occurs at a rate of 1.6 per 100,000 population and accounts for at least 32 per cent of total homicides. However, when only those homicides for which the type is known are considered (the upper boundary), the share of homicide related to organized crime and gangs in Europe and the Americas can reach up to 8 per cent and 64 per cent, respectively.

Figure 10: Share of homicides, by type, selected regions, 2017 or latest available year



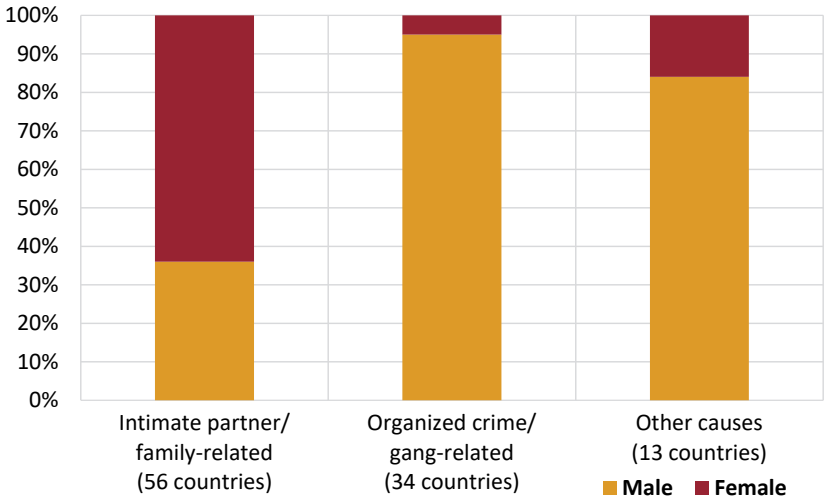
Source: UNODC homicide statistics.

Note: Number of countries used to compute respectively lower and upper bound: total intimate partner/family-related (78 and 27 countries), total organized crime/gang-related (34 and 27 countries); Americas: intimate partner/family-related (23 and 12 countries); Americas: organized crime/gang-related (13 and 12 countries); Europe: intimate partner/family-related (34 and 10 countries); Europe: organized crime/gang-related (14 and 10 countries).

Male and female victimization per homicide type

While the global male homicide rate is in general far higher than the female rate, the distribution of victims by sex is strongly influenced by the homicide type. Intimate partner/family-related homicide, for example, disproportionately victimizes women. Organized crime/gang-related homicide, on the other hand, is dominated by male-to-male violence. Data on homicide by type which are further disaggregated by the sex of the victim are only available for a limited number of countries. Available data show that female victims account for 64 per cent of all victims of homicide perpetrated by intimate partners or other family members, whereas, at 95 per cent, men account for the vast majority of victims of homicide related to organized crime and gangs. The share of male victims is also large in homicides related to other causes (84 per cent).

Figure 11: Shares of male and female victims for selected homicide types **and selected countries**, 2016 or latest available year



Source: UNODC homicide statistics.

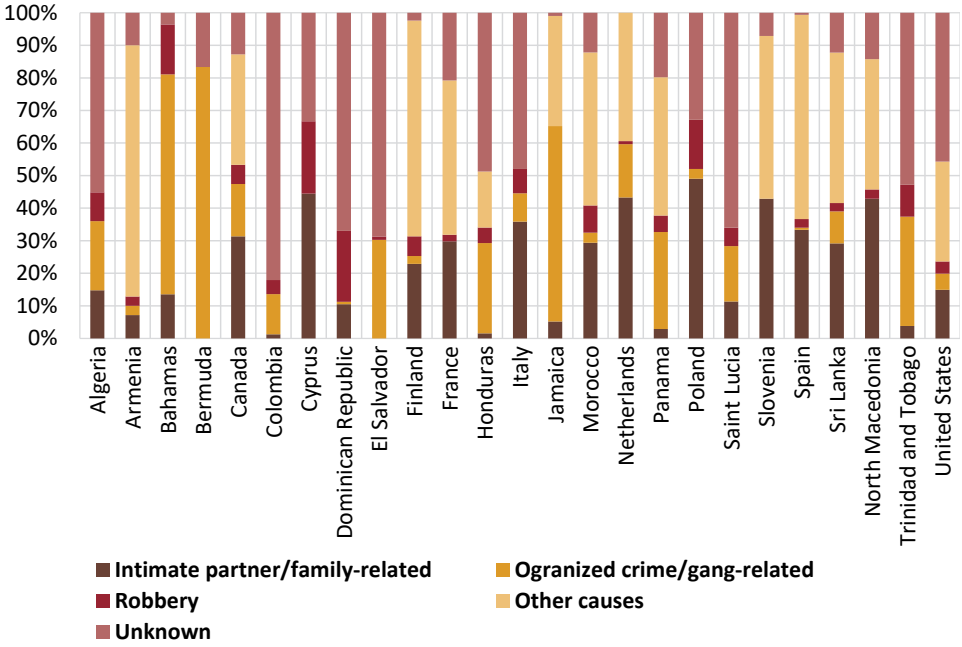
Homicide type and level

Various socioeconomic and governance-related factors influence high or low levels of homicide (see booklet 4 of this study). From the limited information available on homicide types it is clear that very high homicide rates are to be found in countries with high shares of homicide related to organized crime and gangs, where the victims are predominantly male. By contrast, in countries with a low level of homicide, violence occurs mostly in the context of interpersonal interactions, particularly within the family, rather than in a criminal environment.

Types of homicide at the national level

Global and regional averages of shares and rates for different homicide types mask considerable variations across countries. For example, countries in Latin America and the Caribbean with high or relatively high overall homicide rates, such as Bahamas, Colombia, El Salvador, Honduras, Jamaica and Panama, also have the highest shares of homicides worldwide related to organized crime and gangs. By contrast, in European countries with low homicide rates, the share of homicides related to organized crime and gangs is low: intimate partner/family-related homicide accounts for the largest share in those countries. The same pattern holds for Canada and the United States, where intimate partner/family-related homicide accounts for a much larger share than both homicide linked to organized crime and gangs and robbery-related homicide. The large share of homicides in the “unknown” category in many countries, however, illustrates the importance of improving the national methodologies used to classify homicides by type.

Figure 12: Share of homicides by type, selected countries, 2016 or latest available year



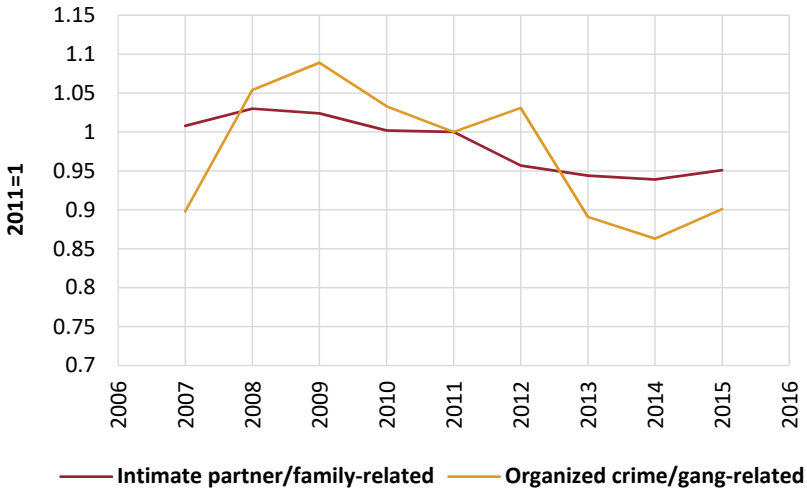
Source: UNODC homicide statistics.

Trends

The limited data available at the global level on homicide types do not permit global or regional analysis of trends. However, by looking at the small number of countries for which trend data are available for at least two homicide types for all years in a time series (nine countries), some trends in the evolution of the rates of different homicide types can be identified.

For example, the level of intimate partner/family-related homicide appears to be rather stable over time compared with homicide related to organized crime and gangs, the level of which can change considerably from one year to the next (figure 13). This may have to do with the fact that the underlying drivers of interpersonal violence are rooted in structural/societal factors, which take a long time to change.

Figure 13: Trends in homicide rates (index, 2011 = 1), selected countries, 2007–2015

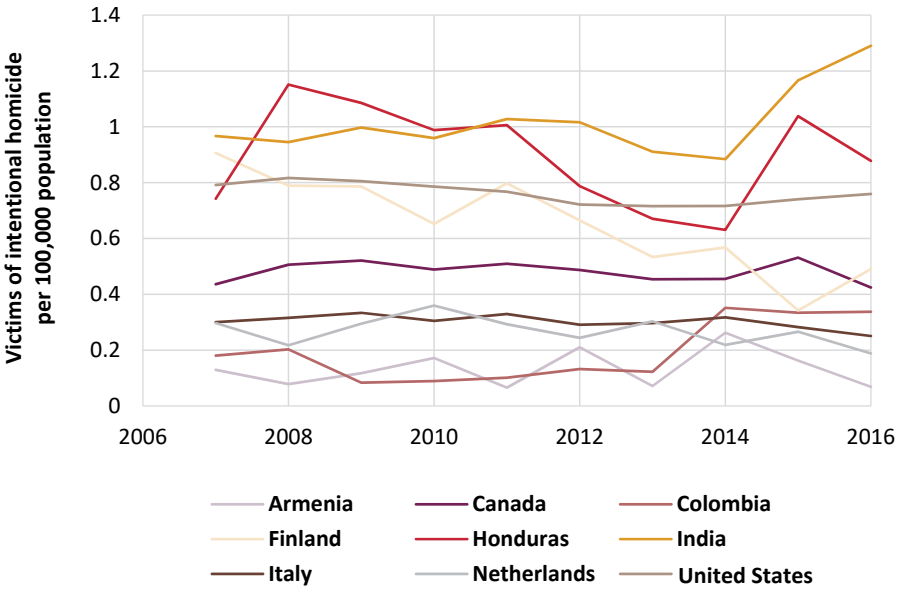


Source: UNODC homicide statistics.

A comparison of trends in intimate partner/family-related homicide in a few countries indicates that the variation of rates is not strong (figure 14). Nonetheless, countries such as India or Honduras with comparatively higher rates of homicide also display considerable variations from one year to another. In

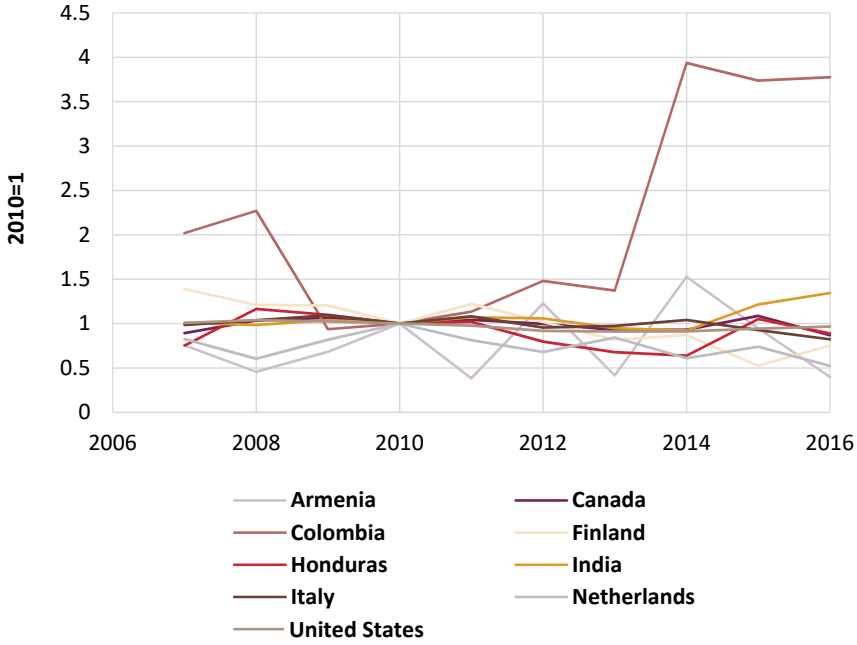
India and Colombia there has been some increase in the rate of intimate partner/family-related homicide over time, whereas a drop can be observed in Finland. The homicide rates in Canada, Italy and the United States are very stable over time, while Armenia shows minor fluctuations.

Figure 14: Trends in intimate partner/family-related homicide rate, selected countries, 2007–2016



Source: UNODC homicide statistics.

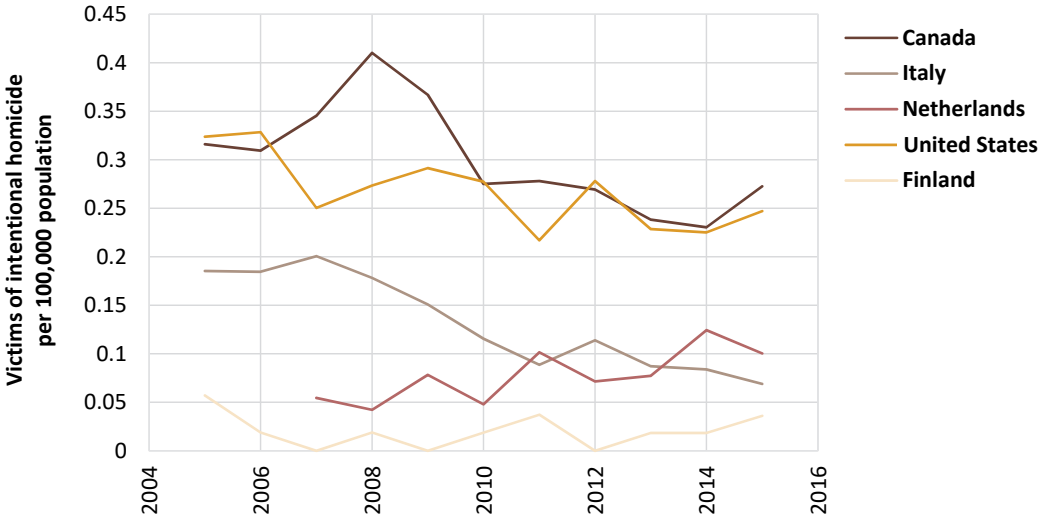
Figure 15: Trends in intimate partner/family-related homicide rate (index, 2010 = 1), selected countries, 2007–2016



Source: UNODC homicide statistics.

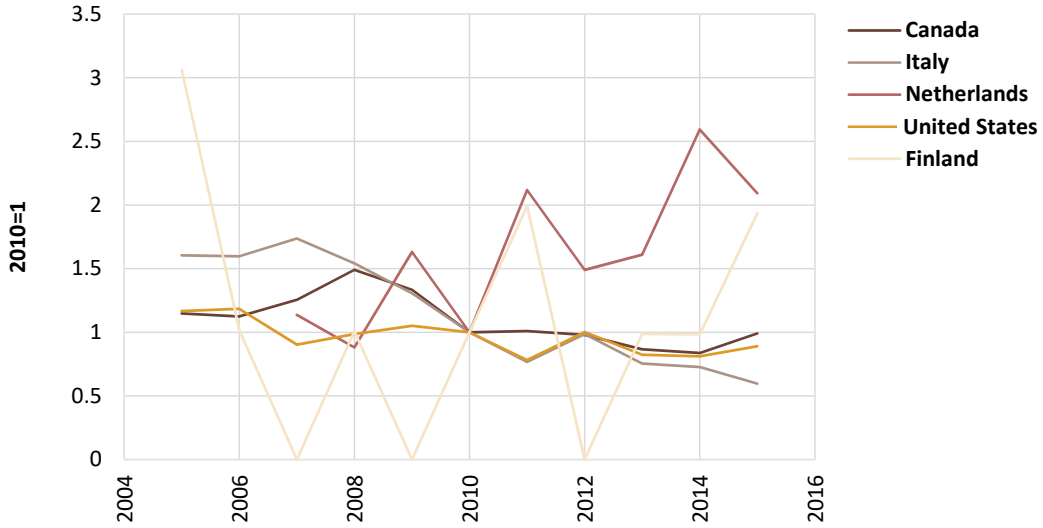
In the case of crime-related homicide, two major patterns can be discerned. Among developed countries with a low homicide level there has been a decrease in the rate of homicide related to organized crime and gangs in recent years. An exception is the Netherlands, where a slight increase can be observed (figure 16).

Figure 16: Trends in organized crime/gang-related homicide rate, selected developed countries, 2005–2015



Source: UNODC homicide statistics.

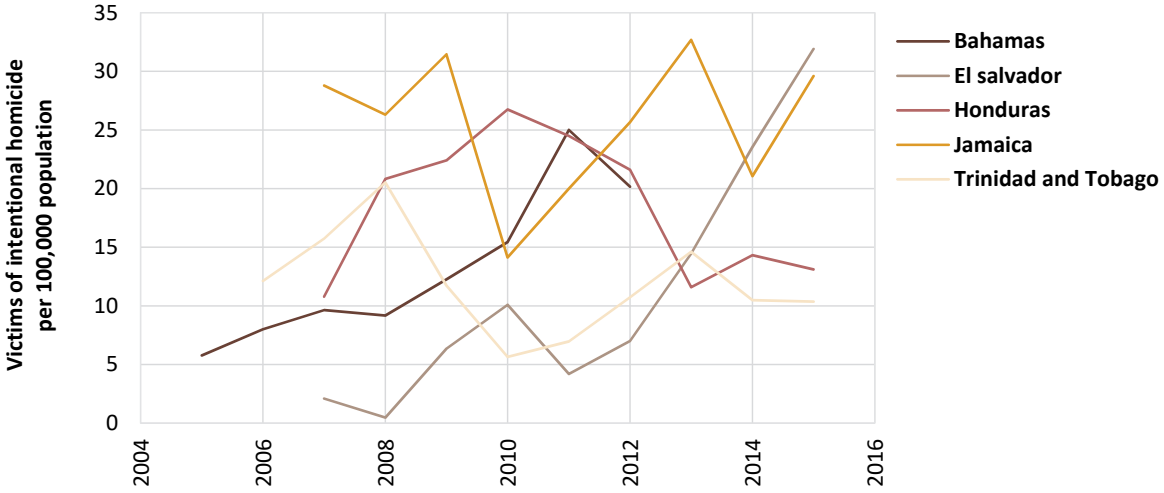
Figure 17: Trends in organized crime/gang-related homicide rate (index, 2010 = 1), selected developed countries, 2005–2015



Source: UNODC homicide statistics.

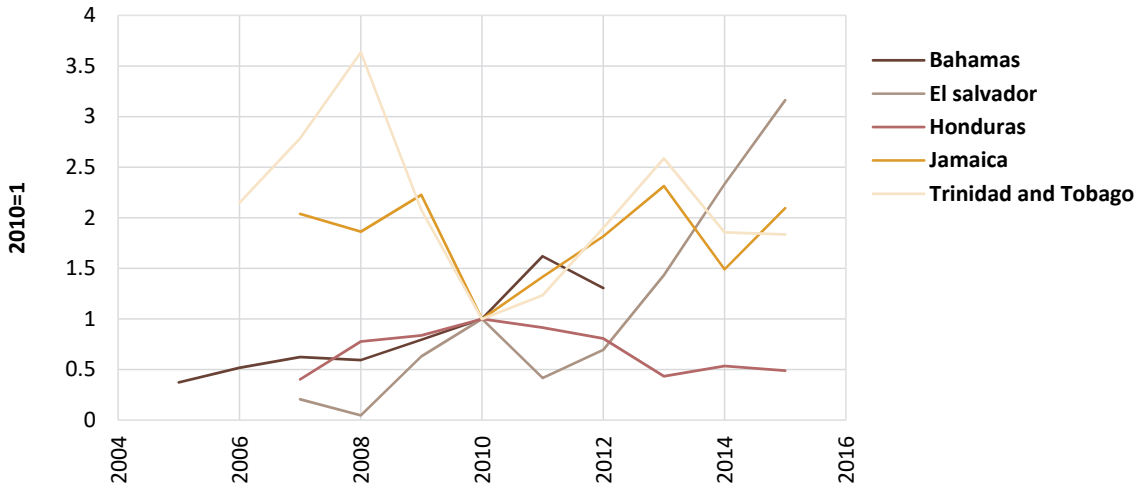
On the other hand, countries in Latin America and the Caribbean with high overall homicide rates and high levels of killings related to organized crime and gangs display rising trends (figure 18). For example, there has been a continuous and rapid growth of crime-related homicide in El Salvador, whereas in Jamaica the level of homicide perpetrated by gangs and organized crime groups has experienced some fluctuations, although it has always remained high. The rate of homicide related to organized crime increased in Honduras between 2007 and 2010 and then dropped. On the whole, trends in homicide related to organized crime and gangs are more dynamic than trends in intimate partner/family-related homicide.

Figure 18: Trends in organized crime/gang-related homicide rate, selected countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2005–2015



Source: UNODC homicide statistics.

Figure 19: Trends in organized crime/gang-related homicide rate (index, 2010 = 1), selected countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2005–2015



Source: UNODC homicide statistics.

The relatively stable trends in interpersonal homicide compared with other types of homicide together with the fact that countries with a high homicide rate display a much higher male homicide rate than female homicide rate, confirm "Verkko's static and dynamic laws", which are established concepts in criminology. According to "Verkko's static law", a higher level of homicide is accompanied by a smaller share of females among victims and perpetrators.[30] Similarly, "Verkko's dynamic law" states that changes in lethal violence can be explained in terms of male-to-male homicide, rather than homicide involving women as perpetrators or victims. These trends may be observed in historical data[31] spanning the period from the

[30] Verkko, V., "Homicides and suicides in Finland and their dependence on national character", Scandinavian Studies in Sociology, vol. 3 (Copenhagen, G. E. C. Gads Forlag, 1951).

[31] Eisner, M., "Modernity strikes back? A historical perspective on the latest increase in interpersonal violence (1960–1990)", *International Journal of Conflict and Violence*, vol. 2, No. 2 (2008), pp. 288–316; Spierenburg, P., "Long-term historical trends of homicide in Europe", in *Handbook of European Homicide Research: Patterns, Explanations, and Country Studies* (New York, Springer, 2012).

Middle Ages to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In accounting for these observations, Verkko argued that changes in the female homicide rate were driven mainly by changes in the role and status of women in society, both of which changed quite slowly over time.[32]

Given that interpersonal homicide typically displays a stable trend, it is male-to-male homicide, especially in the working age population, that explains changes in overall levels of homicide. Homicides between men are affected by volatile factors such as sociopolitical circumstances and crime to a greater extent than homicides involving women. The female rate is determined, rather, by less volatile drivers and is subject to slower and less pronounced changes.[33]

Criminal justice and policy responses

Understanding the specific characteristics and typologies of homicide is helpful for the design of policies aimed at bringing about a significant reduction in violence. Different types of homicide call for specific interventions. For example, efforts to prevent domestic homicide should focus mostly on intimate partner violence and child abuse.[34] Examples of successful interventions to prevent fatal child abuse include courses aimed at strengthening parenting skills and the provision of telephone hotlines that parents can call at times of crisis or stress. Some programmes have targeted high-risk and vulnerable parents, while others have focused on vulnerable children. As for intimate partner homicide, prevention efforts have often sought to raise awareness of the social norms that underpin domestic violence.[35] Tackling domestic and interpersonal violence may also involve policies to combat the abuse of alcohol and drugs.

Reducing gang-related homicide requires approaches that go beyond mere violence prevention. The use of focused deterrence strategies, for example, was pioneered in Boston in the United States to deal with an epidemic of gang homicides in the 1990s. Operation Ceasefire under the Boston Gun Project targeted the group at risk, namely young men, and reached out directly to gang members through a range of community services. The original project was not designed to stop gang-related violence as such, but rather to control retaliatory violence. Since most men acted in groups rather than individually, the use of a coordinated criminal justice response proved to be particularly effective. The Boston Gun Project sought to change the perpetrators' behaviour by, on the one hand, understanding the dynamics and conditions that led to crime and, on the other, by mobilizing the community and providing social services.[36] A systematic review of the efficacy of crime control efforts found that focused deterrence strategies were associated with a significant reduction in gang-related homicide.[37] The principal features that turned the Boston Gun Project into a success were its focus on the local community and the cooperation of law enforcement and social service agencies. Similar programmes launched in other cities in the United States also achieved positive results. The successful introduction of this approach in Scotland suggests that it could be beneficial in other Western countries, too.[38]

There are specific strategies focusing on street homicide – a broad category that includes killings associated with gang violence and drug markets. Several studies have found that crime and homicide are not distributed equally across space, but, rather, tend to be concentrated in hotspots. Accordingly, the focus of policy interventions has shifted from the investigation of individuals to dealing with criminogenic places. Thus, violence reduction strategies now typically include the deployment of street outreach workers to provide counselling, mentoring and mediating services to high-risk population groups. A good example is the Cure Violence model in the United States, which, instead of a traditional criminal justice approach,

[32] Verkko, V., "Homicides and suicides in Finland and their dependence on national character", Scandinavian Studies in Sociology, No. 3 (Copenhagen, G. E. C. Gads Forlag, 1951), p. 54.

[33] Lappi-Seppälä, T. and Lehti, M., "Global homicide mortality trends by gender 1950–2010", in *Women and Children as Victims and Offenders: Background, Prevention, Reintegration* (New York, Springer, 2016).

[34] Liem and Koenraadt, *Domestic Homicide*.

[35] Jewkes, R., "(How) Can we reduce violence against women by 50% over the next 30 years?", *PLoS Med*, vol. 11, No. 11 (2014).

[36] Kennedy, D. M., Deterrence and Crime Prevention: Reconsidering the Prospect of Sanction (New York, Routledge, 2008).

[37] Braga, A. A. and Weisburd, D. L., "The effects of focused deterrence strategies on crime: a systematic review and meta-analysis of the empirical evidence", *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, vol. 49, No. 3 (August 2012), pp. 323–358; Braga, A. A. et al., "The strategic prevention of gun violence among gang-involved offenders", *Justice Quarterly*, vol. 25, No. 1 (2008), pp. 132–162.

[38] Deuchar, R., Policing Youth Violence: Transatlantic Connections (London, IOE Press, 2013).

follows a public health-based approach and focuses on prevention. Although the success of such strategies varies, they do on the whole demonstrate that community outreach, together with conflict mediation, can help reduce street violence.[39]

Ultimately, the effectiveness of efforts to reduce the global burden of homicide depends on understanding what works, under what conditions, and for whom. There is no single panacea for dealing with homicide. A mix of tailor-made policies can bring down homicide levels, but their effects may be short- or long-term. That is why it is so important to disaggregate homicides by type.

[39] Webster, D. W. et al., "Effects of Baltimore's Safe Streets Program on gun violence: a replication of Chicago's CeaseFire Program, *Journal of Urban Health*, vol. 90, No. 1 (February 2013), pp. 27–40.

INTERPERSONAL HOMICIDE

A key feature of this homicide typology is that the killing is perpetrated in the context of an interpersonal conflict; as such, it is encountered in both the private and the public sphere. Interpersonal homicide manifests itself in interactions between people, be they intimate partners, family members, acquaintances or even strangers. A distinctive aspect of interpersonal homicide is that the action of intentionally killing another person is not instrumental to the accomplishment of a secondary goal, but is instead a way of resolving a conflict and/or punishing the victim.

The relationship between victims and perpetrators is a decisive element in distinguishing between different types of interpersonal homicide, such as intimate partner/family-related homicide and homicide related to other interpersonal causes. Where interpersonal violence is concerned, the largest burden of victimization is in the domestic sphere, among intimate partners and family members.

It is more difficult to assess the extent of other types of interpersonal homicide perpetrated outside the family sphere, since the data are not always disaggregated in terms of the relationship between victims and perpetrators. Moreover, homicide recording systems can vary considerably across countries. This means that, within the broader category of intentional homicide, it is not always possible to separate out the victims of other interpersonal homicide.

Among all the types of other interpersonal homicide, it is mass homicide and serial homicide that, because of their shocking nature, most often remain imprinted in the public consciousness. However, despite their high profile in the media, these two forms of homicide occur with low frequency and account for a very small share of the total number of homicides perpetrated worldwide.

Interpersonal homicide is the result of a multitude of factors, some of which are related to the family and domestic spheres, while others have to do with disputes that occur outside the family, including sporadic fights (triggered by e.g. alcohol and drug use), acts of revenge and quarrels over resources. In this type of homicide, victim and perpetrator are often known to each other.

Interpersonal homicide occurring within the family usually affects women to a greater extent than men, while male-to male violence takes place mainly outside the family (as with homicides in general). Interpersonal violence (particularly family violence) tends to dominate in countries with a low level of homicide where the female and male homicide rates are similar. Countries with a high level of homicide may still have a relatively high rate of interpersonal homicide, but other forms of homicide, especially crime-related homicide, are typically predominant. In such countries the male homicide rate is significantly higher than the female rate.

Homicides in the family

Family homicides, also known as domestic homicides, include homicides between intimate partners or between other family members (siblings, parents and children). The reported numbers of victims of intimate partner homicide and of homicide committed by family members are almost equal, but the shares of female and male victims across these two categories are considerably different.

Intimate partner violence predominantly affects women. While the majority of homicide victims worldwide are men, most of the victims killed by an intimate partner are women. Out of all the victims of homicide recorded by UNODC in 2017 in which an intimate partner was implicated, 82 per cent were women (more information can be found in booklet 5 of this study).

Interpersonal homicide outside the family

Interpersonal homicide outside the family is a type that is difficult to record and quantify because information on both the relationship between victims and perpetrators and on the situational context of the crime is not always readily available. Certain forms of interpersonal homicide outside the family occur

in situations in which the livelihoods of communities are threatened, and in which, consequently, relations between the inhabitants of such communities are under strain.

For example, interpersonal homicide may occur as a result of disputes over access to land and competition over resources that are essential for the survival of particular groups in society. Criminal groups may also seek to exert control over territories and resources in order to profit illicitly from them and exert pressure on communities residing in particular areas. Such dynamics can create hotspots of violence and situations of increased insecurity resulting in entire communities being driven off their lands.

Homicide related to disputes over access to land and resources

Homicide may also be perpetrated in the context of disputes over access to land and resources. Such homicide can be regarded as a subtype of homicide related to other interpersonal conflicts.

One of the indicators of Sustainable Development Goal 1 ("End poverty in all its forms everywhere") is the proportion of the population with secure tenure rights to land. Ensuring access to land and securing property rights are crucial if people are to be able to sustain their livelihoods. High levels of lethal violence within a country may reflect an escalation of interpersonal strife as several people or communities compete over access to land and resources. Such a situation can easily be exploited by groups seeking to profit from the exploitation of resources and from the control they exert over a given territory.

Securing tenure rights to land remains a challenge in many countries, particularly in those where there has been a sudden decrease in the amount of land available (e.g. following environmental disasters) or where the rule of law is weak, and also during and after conflicts. Insecure land tenure can provoke disputes and result in high levels of violence.

The available data on homicide rarely allow specific share of homicidal violence related to land disputes to be determined, but a high level of violence and homicide associated with such disputes has been observed in some countries. For example, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) reported in 2014 that over 70 per cent of all serious crimes, including homicide, committed in the country were the result of land disputes.[40] The magnitude of land disputes is documented in existing studies, which point out that some 80 to 90 per cent of all criminal and civil disputes are resolved by the informal system, and that over 50 per cent of them refer to land ownership disputes.[41] According to UNAMA, the government institutions in Afghanistan do not have sufficient capacity to address the issue of land grabbing and support private land ownership rights.[42]

The enforcement of tenure rights to land is also a problem in Africa. There have been several reports in recent years of cattle raiders committing homicide in South Sudan, where fatalities reached their highest level in 2014 after the eruption of violent conflict. The number of fatalities only started to drop after the conclusion of a peace agreement in 2015.[43] In the absence of detailed data, it is not possible to estimate how many of the fatalities could be defined as homicide, but the nature of cattle raids suggests that most would fit the definition. Even though the fatalities occurred in the context of conflict, this example illustrates how criminal violence can surge in conflict settings and can cause even more fatalities than the conflict itself.

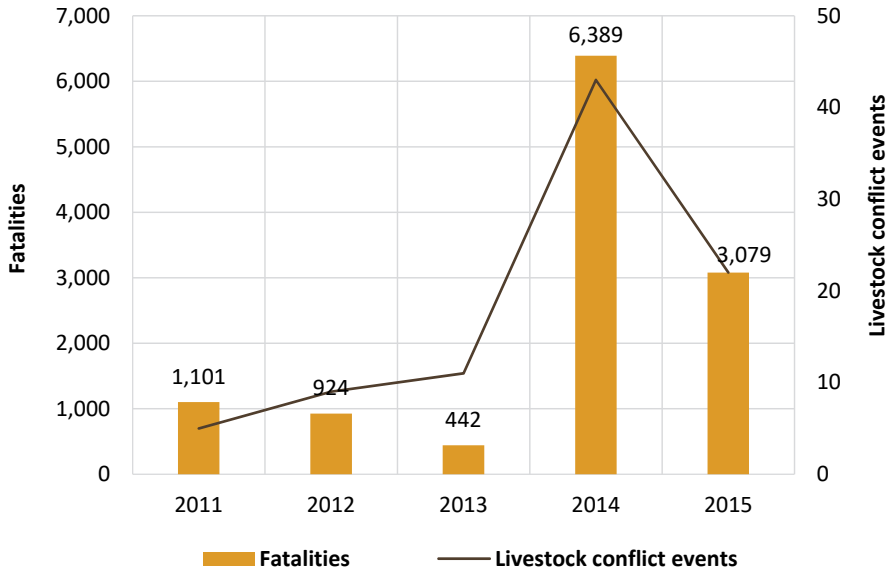
[40] UNAMA, *The Stolen Lands of Afghanistan and Its People: The Legal Framework* (2014), p. 10.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid., p. 6.

[43] Gebreyes, Y. A. et al., *The Impact of Conflict on the Livestock Sector in South Sudan* (FAO, 2016), p. 24.

Figure 20: Fatalities resulting from cattle raids in South Sudan, 2011–2015



Source: Gebreyes, Y. A. et al., *The Impact of Conflict on the Livestock Sector in South Sudan* (FAO, 2016), p. 25.

Conflict directly affected livestock markets in South Sudan, causing a negative impact on the livelihoods of livestock producers, middlemen, traders, butchers, market attendants and associated service providers, as well as on consumers.[44] It also drove up the price of livestock, which encouraged further cattle and livestock raiding.

In Somalia, land and property rights were the subject of acrimonious dispute both before and after the civil war that started in 1991.[45] In recent years, the high concentration of people in urban areas has fuelled conflicts over land, creating tension between clans, internally displaced persons and refugees.[46]

As for Latin America, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has noted how in Honduras, even after the conclusion of various episodes of armed conflict, such associated phenomena as forced displacement, violence and land dispossession have continued to affect individuals and entire communities.[47] Disputes over land have, however, also been linked to the activities of violent gangs, or *maras*. In Honduras, the task of guaranteeing the rights of internally displaced persons and refugees to property and land ownership is complicated by the prevailing conditions of internal displacement and the exercise of territorial control by various gangs.[48]

The emergence of oil thieves in the Niger Delta of Nigeria and especially in Mexico, where they are known as *huachicoleros*, is another example of a criminal activity related to the struggle for natural resources that has led to homicide and armed conflict.[49]

[44] Ibid., p. 52.

[45] Legal Action Worldwide, *Housing, Land and Property in Somalia: Persons of Concern in Somaliland and South-Central Somalia* (2014), p. 5.

[46] Ibid., p. 8.

[47] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Protection of Land, Territory and Housing of Forced Displacement Victims in Honduras* (2017), p. 4.

[48] Ibid., p. 7

[49] Organized crime groups in Mexico issue public statements through *narcomantas* (literally "narcoblankets"), which are typically written on blankets hung from major overpasses.

CRIME-RELATED HOMICIDE

Homicide in the context of property-related crime

The intentional killing of one person by another may take place in the course of other criminal activities. Outside of organized crime- and gang-related violence, crime-related homicide mostly involves property-related offences such as robbery and burglary. In this context, the perpetrator is typically motivated by personal gain, and the killing becomes instrumental to his or her economic goals. This distinguishes robbery- and other property-related homicide from dispute-driven homicides in which the killing of another individual, or at least the infliction of serious injury, directly motivates the offender.

Even though the offender's primary motivation when conducting property-related homicide may not be to kill the victim, the killing needs to be intentional in order for UNODC to count it as a homicide. This marks a distinction from the rules of "felony murder" that have long been applied in common law countries. These rules hold that any killing of another person, intended or unintended, as committed during the commission of other crimes, including robbery and burglary, amounts to homicide.[50]

Although property-related homicide may or may not involve a pre-existing relationship between victims and perpetrators, it is often characterized by a lack of any long-term situational context between the victim and the perpetrator, meaning that both were strangers to each other before the homicide was committed (also known as "stranger homicide").

Systematic research into property-related homicide is rare. However, very much like other types of homicide, and homicide in general, its occurrence may best be explained as the outcome of a combination of socioeconomic, cultural, individual and situational factors. Definitions of property-related homicide typically emphasize that the killing of another human being does not constitute the primary motivation of the offender. Hence, such homicides are often explained in the context of the underlying property crimes, to which they are in fact highly correlated. At first sight, the economic motivation of the offender may suggest that inequality and difficult economic conditions are the main drivers of property-related crimes, including property-related homicide; conclusive evidence for such a relationship remains essentially weak, however.[51] Beyond overarching socioeconomic explanations, property-related homicide is also frequently discussed from a more situational angle. Reference is frequently made, for example, to the use of weapons during the commission of property-related crimes.[52] It has also been suggested that drug consumption may be one of several factors that drive property-related crime and related homicide. This is exemplified by the commission of property-related homicide while under the influence of drugs, and also by "economic-compulsive homicide", meaning killings in the context of robberies or burglaries that are committed to finance drug consumption.[53] Such homicide needs to be distinguished from "systemic" drug violence that takes place in the context of drug markets and usually relates to gangs and organized crime as the last part of this booklet discusses.

Robbery-homicide, meaning homicide that is committed in the context of robbery, constitutes a major subcategory of property-related homicide, although it usually accounts for only a small share of all homicides that are committed in a country. Among a set of 61 mostly European and American countries that provided recent data on robbery-homicide to UNODC, an average of roughly 6 per cent of all homicides within countries were robbery killings. The proportion is similar in the different world regions. At almost 9

[50] Birdsong, L., "Felony murder: a historical perspective by which to understand today's modern felony murder rule statutes", *Thurgood Marshall Law Review*, vol. 32, No. 1 (2006), pp. 1–26.

[51] Fajnzylber, P., Lederman, D. and Loayza, N., "Inequality and violent crime", *Journal of Law and Economics*, vol. 45, No. 1 (April 2002), pp. 1–39.

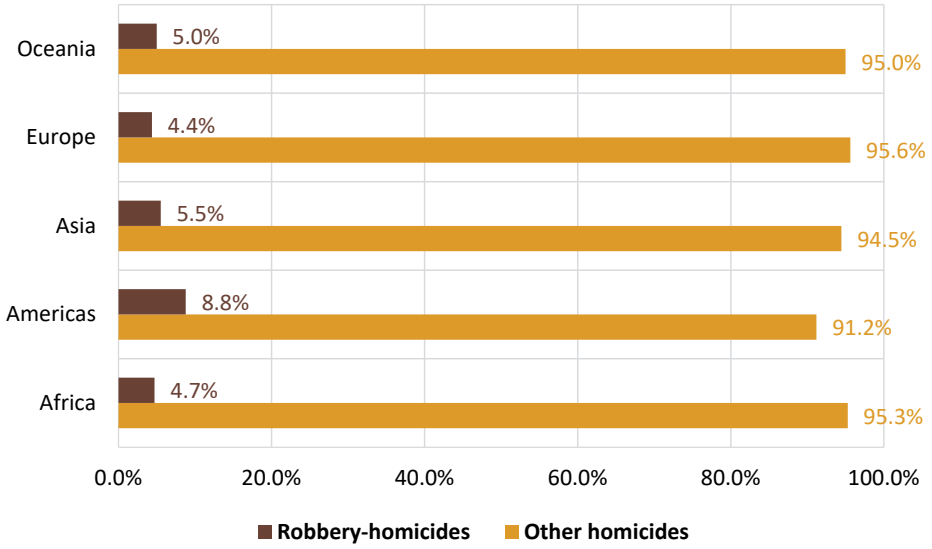
[52] Hepburn, L. M. and Hemenway, D., "Firearm availability and homicide: a review of the literature", *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, vol. 9, No. 4 (July 2004), pp. 417–440; Siegel, M., Ross, C. S. and King, C., "The relationship between gun ownership and firearm homicide rates in the United States, 1981–2010", *American Journal of Public Health*, vol. 103, No. 11 (November 2013), pp. 2098–2105; Monuteaux, M. C. et al., "Firearm ownership and violent crime in the US: an ecologic study", *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, vol. 49, No. 2 (August 2015), pp. 207–214.

[53] Brookman, F., Maguire, E. R and Maguire, M., eds., *The Handbook of Homicide* (Chichester, United Kingdom, John Wiley & Sons, 2017), p. 96.

per cent, however, the share of robbery-homicides in countries in the Americas was higher than in the other regions.

At the same time, it should be noted that the proportion of robbery killings varies more strongly within regions than between regions. Small countries, or rather countries with very few absolute numbers of homicide, are particularly prone to deviate from the average. This is not necessarily indicative of a fundamental pattern, but may instead be a statistical artefact because low absolute numbers of homicide make the respective countries less suitable for statistical analysis. In addition, there are also a number of Latin American countries with higher absolute numbers of homicide that exhibit comparatively large shares of robbery-homicide, thus contributing to the overall higher than average percentage in the Americas. Depending on the country and year, the share of robbery-homicide out of all homicides may reach 20 per cent and higher, while other countries within the same year and region, including the Americas, may experience no robbery-homicides at all in a given year.

Figure 21: Percentage of robbery-homicides out of all homicides, by region, 2013–2017 (61 countries; latest available year)



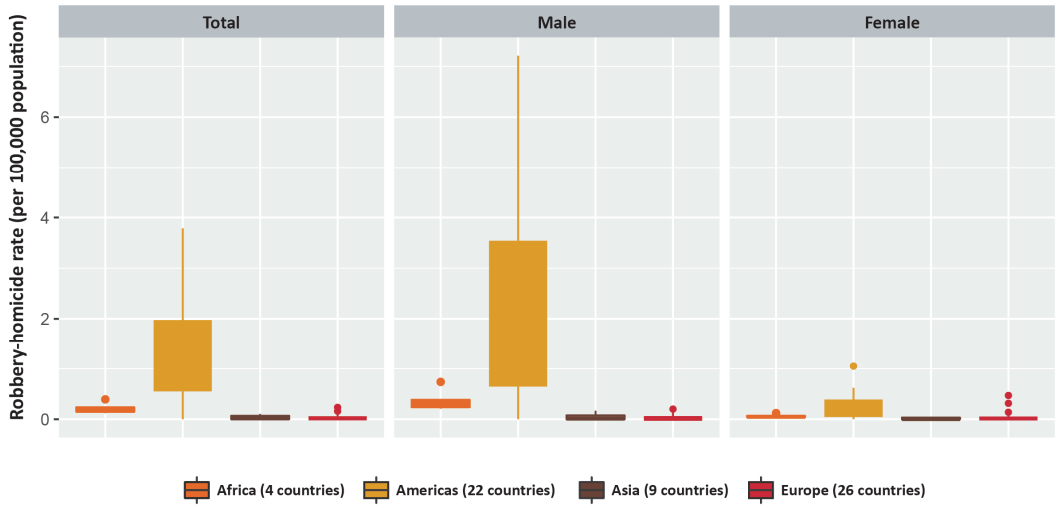
Source: UNODC homicide statistics.

There is considerable variance between and within regions as far as the robbery-homicide rate (number of robbery-homicides per 100,000 population) is concerned. Among the 61 countries which reported data on robbery-homicide to UNODC, the mean rate was 0.6. The mean total homicide rate for the same set of countries was 6.3.

At values of 1.4 and 20.5, respectively, countries in the Americas exhibit, on average, the highest rates of both robbery-homicide and total homicide. Depending on the country and year, robbery-homicide rates in the Americas reached as high as 3.8. As for the other regions, both the overall rates and the variance were lower than in the Americas. For four African countries, for example, the mean reported robbery-homicide rate was 0.2, while the mean total homicide rate for the same group of countries was 4.3. Countries in Asia and Europe exhibit, on average, lower robbery-homicide rates of 0.5 and 0.4, respectively — as well as lower overall homicide rates of 2.2 and 1.2, respectively.

As disaggregation by sex shows, men are more likely to become victims of robbery-homicide than women. On average, the share of women among victims of robbery-homicide within countries is roughly one quarter. At overall higher levels of robbery-homicide, the female share of victims was particularly low in the Americas, while many European countries exhibit a balanced sex distribution or even higher victimization rates for females than for males. At the same time, however, a regional comparison of the sex-specific robbery-homicide rates reveals that the risk of women becoming victims of robbery-homicide is much higher in the Americas than in Europe.

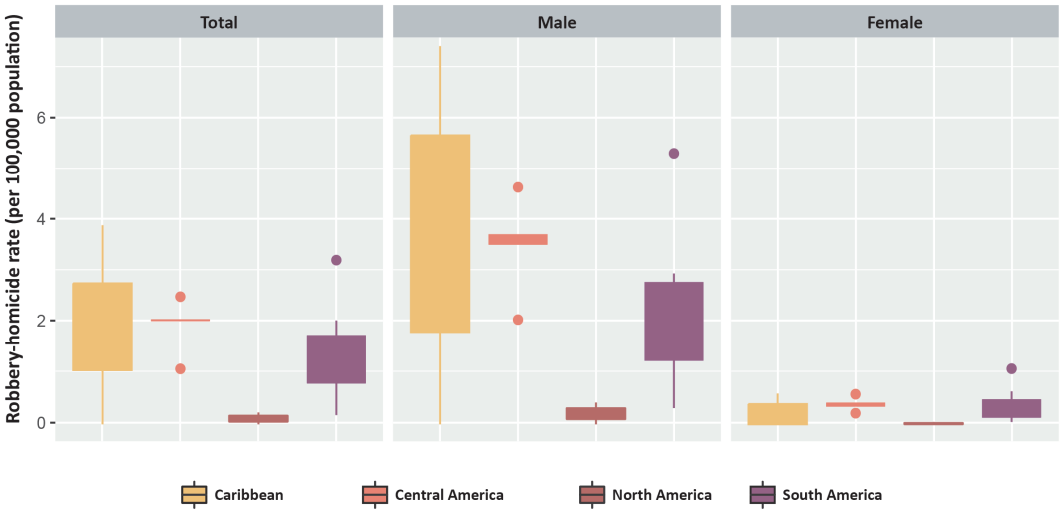
Figure 22: Distribution of robbery-homicide rates, by region and sex, 2013–2017 (61 countries; latest available year)



Source: UNODC homicide statistics.

Upon further disaggregating robbery-homicide rates in the Americas, it becomes apparent that differences between countries follow a subregional pattern. Comparatively high rates were reported in countries in Central America, the Caribbean and, to a lesser degree, in South America. Countries in North America, by contrast, showed rates below the regional average and closer to values reported by countries in Europe. As far as the sex distribution of victims of robbery-homicide is concerned, all American subregions show, on average, lower robbery-homicide rates for women than for men.

Figure 23: Distribution of robbery-homicide rates in the Americas by subregion and sex, 2013–2017 (22 countries; latest available year)



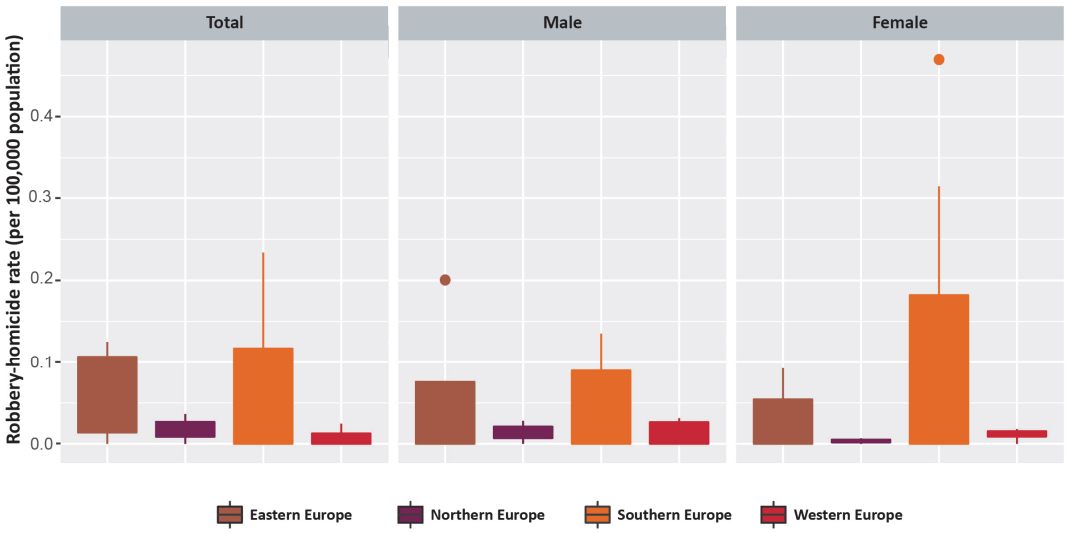
Source: UNODC homicide statistics.

The European subregions exhibit less heterogeneity than subregions in the Americas as far as robbery-homicide rates are concerned. This is true of both variance between subregions and variance between countries within subregions. On average, higher rates of robbery-homicide were reported by countries in Eastern and Southern Europe, while countries in Northern and Western Europe exhibit particularly low robbery-homicide rates and, in many cases, no robbery-homicides at all.

Countries in Eastern, Northern and Western Europe show lower robbery-homicide rates for women than for men. The sex distribution is more balanced, however, than that seen among countries in the Americas. A somewhat different picture emerges among Southern European countries, many of which show higher victimization rates for females than for males. These patterns may point to fundamental differences in

patterns of robbery-homicide victimization between European subregions. At the same time, they should not be overinterpreted, given that robbery-homicides are fairly rare in Europe. Again, particularly small countries and countries with very low numbers of robbery-homicide make the analysis prone to statistical error.

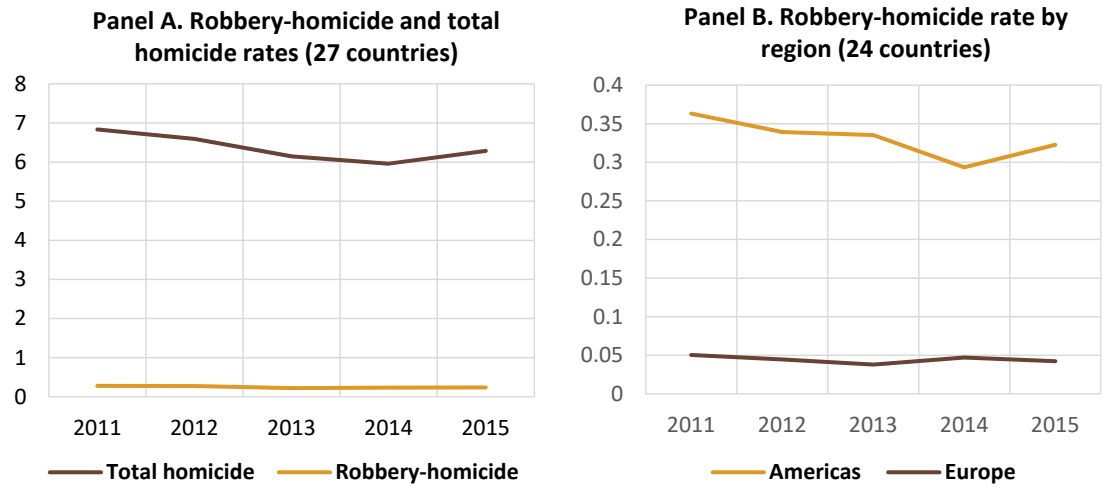
Figure 24: Distribution of robbery-homicide rates in Europe, by subregion and sex, 2013–2017 (26 countries; latest available year)



Source: UNODC homicide statistics.

Available time-series data for a limited set of 27 countries suggest that the robbery-homicide rate has been more stable than the total homicide rate over the past few years. Between 2011 and 2015, the average robbery-homicide rate remained largely constant at a value of approximately 0.2 per 100,000 population. In the same set of countries, the total average homicide rate declined between 2011 and 2014 before increasing again in 2015.

Figure 25: Trends in robbery-homicide and global homicide rates (A) and in robbery-homicide rates for the Americas and Europe (B), 2011–2015



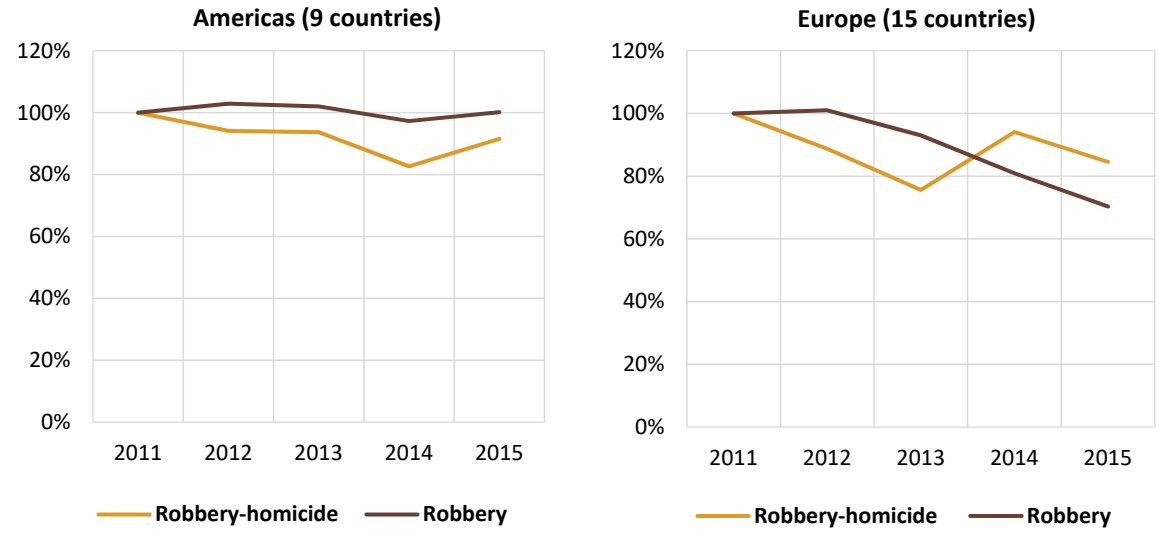
Source: UNODC homicide statistics.

While the robbery-homicide rate has remained stable in the countries for which data are available, there is considerable divergence between regions. Figure 26 compares the robbery-homicide rate between the populations of a set of 15 European countries and 9 countries in the Americas. The average rate in the Americas reached values up to seven times higher than in Europe over the period considered. Indeed,

among the 61 countries that provided recent data on robbery-homicide to UNODC, the 15 highest values were in the Americas.

Based on a limited sample of 24 countries, figure 26 shows the indexed change in the rates of robbery-homicide and robbery in the Americas and Europe. It has long been suggested that there may be a direct relationship between the occurrence of robberies and robbery-homicides, meaning that robbery-homicide may be an "intrinsic by-product" of robbery.[54] Robbery-homicides are sometimes colloquially described as "robberies gone wrong", i.e. robberies that resulted in the killing of the victim because the victim fought back or the offender lost control of the situation. Other escalating factors include intoxication and the use of weapons during the commission of robberies.

Figure 26: Indexed change in the robbery-homicide and robbery rates, by region, 2011–2015



Source: UNODC homicide statistics.

The use of weapons, especially firearms but also knives, has been described as a major escalating factor in the context of robberies ("armed robbery").[55] For the year 2013, 18 countries reported robbery-homicide counts disaggregated by type of weapon used: out of all the victims of robbery-homicide in those countries, 58.5 per cent were killed with a firearm. UNODC data suggest that robbery-homicide and firearm homicide are strongly correlated (correlation coefficients of 0.78 and 0.92, respectively). This association diverges between regions and is stronger in the Americas (0.88) than in Europe (0.55), which suggests that robberies occurring in the Americas are more likely to escalate into homicide than in Europe, and that the use of firearms during the commission of robberies could be an explanatory factor for the regional difference.

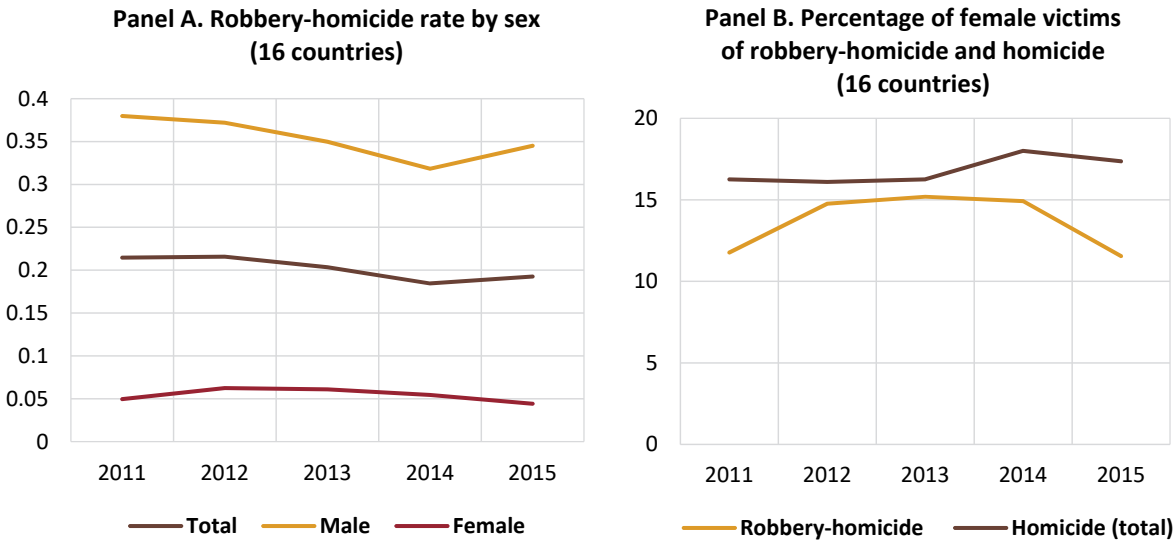
As previously indicated, victims of robbery-homicide are more often male than female. Based on a set of 16 countries for which time-series data were available, this pattern is stable over time. Between 2011 and 2015, the robbery-homicide rate was up to eight times higher for males than for females, with the percentage of female victims of robbery-homicide corresponding closely to the overall percentage of female homicide victims. It has been suggested that the lower share of female victims of robbery-homicide may be attributable to several factors, including situationally and culturally driven victim selection patterns on the part of offenders, a lower exposure of women to crime-prone environments, and generally a lower presence of women in the public sphere. Female victims may also be less inclined to fight back during robberies, making it less likely that robberies "go wrong" and escalate into robbery-homicides.[56]

[54] Cook, P. J., "Robbery violence", *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*, vol. 78, No. 2 (1987), pp. 357–376.

[55] Matthews, R., *Armed Robbery* (London, Willan, 2013).

[56] Lauritsen, J. L. and Heimer, K., "The gender gap in violent victimization, 1973–2004", *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, vol. 24, No. 2 (June 2008), pp. 125–147; Miller, J., "Up it up: gender and the accomplishment of street robbery", *Criminology*, vol. 36, No. 1 (February 1998), pp. 37–66; Deakin, J. et al., "Taxing on the streets: understanding the methods and process of street robbery", *Crime Prevention and Community Safety*, vol. 9, No. 1 (February 2007), pp. 52–67.

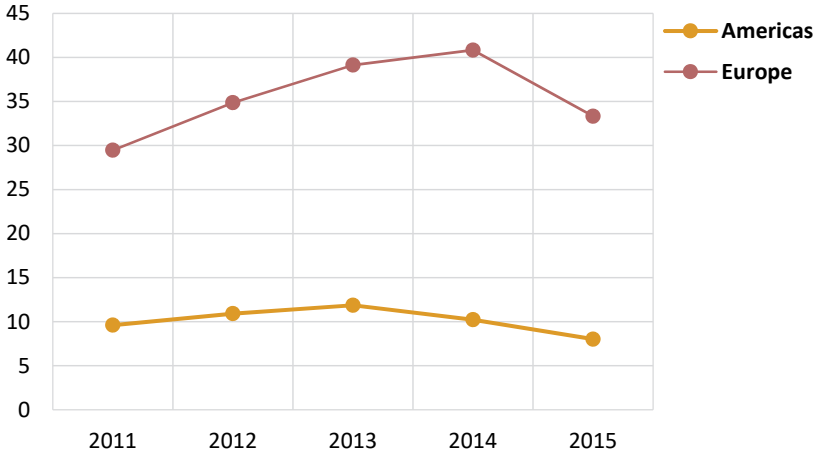
Figure 27: Robbery-homicide rate by sex (A) and percentage of female victims of robbery-homicide and homicide (B), 2011–2015



Source: UNODC homicide statistics.

It is important to note that the cultural and situational factors underlying the sex distribution of robbery-homicide victims may diverge between countries and regions, and that they may be masked by overarching socioeconomic factors. Regional differences in robbery-homicide rates can be seen in figure 27, which shows a significantly higher percentage of females among all victims of robbery-homicide in Europe than in the Americas. The share of female victims of robbery-homicide in the Americas has remained relatively stable, at around 10 per cent, in recent years. In Europe, men also account for the majority of victims of robbery-homicide, but the percentage of female victims has evolved more dynamically than in the Americas and at an overall higher level of between 30 and 40 per cent. The available data suggest that the percentage of female victims is higher when the overall robbery-homicide rate is lower. Of the 40 countries for which recent data were available, only 6 reported a greater proportion of female victims than male victims. The overall count of robbery-homicide victims was particularly low in all of those countries, and their reported proportions of female victims are therefore not likely to be indicative of any pattern.

Figure 28: Percentage of female victims of robbery-homicide, by region (14 countries), 2011–2015



Source: UNODC homicide statistics.

Homicide committed by organized crime groups and street gangs

Booklet 4 discusses the relationship between socioeconomic development and homicide. As pointed out there, some countries appear to be outliers, displaying homicide levels higher or lower than what one would expect from their level of socioeconomic development. This section in the present booklet looks at a number of such countries in which homicide levels are unexpectedly elevated, and considers how the nature and scope of lethal violence are influenced by the presence of organized crime and street gangs.

Defining organized crime

There is no universally accepted definition of "organized crime", and those definitions that do exist often fail to capture what is commonly meant by the term, which is a particular type of criminal organization or organized crime activity. The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime offers a definition of "organized criminal groups", encompassing those engaged in a wide range of profit-driven criminal enterprises.[57] The United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems used by UNODC to collect data on homicide related to organized crime largely follows this definition.[58] Some researchers see organized crime as a set of serious criminal activities providing illegal goods and services for profit.[59]

Organized crime may be characterized according to the structure of the groups or the type of illicit activities. The variety of groups and their aims, along with the wide range of illicit activities, make organized crime highly diversified. The opportunistic nature of criminal groups and the changing nature of illicit markets mean that organized crime is also quite versatile. Groups change their structure to adapt to new markets and national control policies, so the task of describing and understanding organized crime involves more than just describing groups. While there continue to exist some highly hierarchical groups, loose networks are emerging as more flexible and effective organizational structures for the perpetration of crime. This evolution can be seen in the way in which traditional mafia-type groups, typically with a rigid hierarchy and with a business model based on exploiting and controlling their local territory, have expanded their activities to transnational trafficking and moved to more flexible structures so as not to miss out on new opportunities.

Organized crime groups often claim control over a geographic territory and the political, economic, and social life in the controlled area.[60] They can also be described as territorial groups which regulate and "tax" both legal and illegal economic activity in the areas they control. Control usually requires the use or threat of violence and often also a hierarchical structure.[61] These types of organization are currently not very common and they survive mainly in countries where State control is weak or where corrupt authorities are willing to support their activities. Also, the transnational nature of current organized criminal activities does not favour groups that are rigid and operate only within a distinct geographical area.[62]

Organized crime nowadays is highly complex and flexible, and involves profit-making criminal activities that may take place anywhere in the world. These activities include the provision of goods and services in illegal markets, and fraud offences against public authorities and large companies aimed at generating illicit

[57] While not defining organized crime per se, Article 2 of the Convention reads: "(a) 'Organized criminal group' shall mean a structured group of three or more persons, existing for a period of time and acting in concert with the aim of committing one or more serious crimes or offences established in accordance with this Convention, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit; (b) Serious crime' shall mean conduct constituting an offence punishable by a maximum deprivation of liberty of at least four years or a more serious penalty; (c) 'Structured group' shall mean a group that is not randomly formed for the immediate commission of an offence and that does not need to have formally defined roles for its members, continuity of its membership or a developed structure".

[58] In the survey it is acknowledged that "definitions used by national law enforcement bodies may include additional elements and may in some cases deviate from this definition".

[59] Paoli, L. and Vander Beken, T., "Organized crime: a contested concept", in *The Oxford Handbook of Organized Crime* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2014).

[60] Paoli, L., "Introduction", in *The Oxford Handbook of Organized Crime*.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Ibid.

financial flows. Modern technology offers new means of making money, including cybercrime.[63] The groups involved in such activities could also be described as trafficking groups, which tend to be smaller criminal groups or loose networks focusing on moving commodities and services according to the laws of supply and demand in the criminal market. Violence in this context is almost always counterproductive because of the unwanted attention it generates. Like any legal business engaged in international trade, these groups remain flexible with regard to membership and trade routes.[64] Large hierarchical organizations, smaller criminal groups and loose networks may coexist and cooperate in a flexible way if it benefits them.[65] The European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol) reported in 2017 that even though most organized crime groups in Europe were hierarchically structured, 30 to 40 per cent of those operating internationally featured loose network structures and around 20 per cent existed only for a short period of time.[66]

Defining gangs

The word "gang" is frequently used informally to describe bands of delinquents, but it has no universally accepted definition.[67] Most groups described as gangs could be classed as territorial organized crime groups in line with the definition provided in the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, albeit with not so much emphasis on material gain as on a sense of common identity. Gangs often act against their pecuniary interest where matters of respect are concerned. At least three distinct categories can be distinguished: street gangs, prison gangs and outlaw motorcycle gangs.[68] However, depending on the definition used, many other types of groups could also be included, such as football hooligans,[69] athletic or boxing clubs,[70] fraternal societies,[71] ethnic or nationalist militias,[72] or even fans of certain rock bands.[73]

The United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems – used by UNODC to collect data on homicide related to gangs – has its own statistical definition for "gang" that focuses on street gangs and excludes prison and motorcycle gangs: "a group of persons that is defined by a set of characteristics including durability over time, street-oriented lifestyle, youthfulness of members, involvement in illegal activities, and group identity".

"Youthfulness" in this context should be interpreted liberally, since definitions of youth and adulthood vary in different contexts[74] and the age of gang members can range quite widely. For example, data from the

[63] Paoli and Vander Beken, "Organized crime"; Europol, *European Union Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment 2017: Crime in the Age of Technology* (2017).

[64] UNODC, *The Globalization of Crime: A Transnational Organized Crime Threat Assessment* (Vienna, 2010); UNODC, *Transnational Organized Crime in Central America and the Caribbean: A Threat Assessment* (Vienna, 2012).

[65] Savona, E. U. and Riccardi, M., eds., *Mapping the Risk of Serious and Organised Crime Infiltration in European Businesses: Final Report of the MORE Project* (Milan, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore/Transcrime, 2018).

[66] Europol, *European Union Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment 2017*.

[67] One commonly used definition was proposed by Walter Miller on the basis of 158 key informant responses from 6 cities in the United States: "a group of recurrently associating individuals with identifiable leadership and internal organization, identifying with or claiming control over territory in the community, and engaging either individually or collectively in violent or other forms of illegal behavior". See Miller, W. B., *Violence by Youth Gangs and Youth Groups as a Crime Problem in Major American Cities* (Washington, D.C., United States Department of Justice, 1975), p. 9.

[68] National Gang Intelligence Center, *National Gang Threat Assessment 2009* (Washington D.C., 2009).

[69] A number of examples of hooligan groups involved in organized crime are to be found in South-Eastern Europe. See Sullivan, J. P., "Gangs, hooligans, and anarchists: the vanguard of netwar in the streets", in *Networks and Netwars: The Future of Terror, Crime, and Militancy* (Santa Monica, California, RAND Corporation, 2001). Similarly, the National Violence Observatory in Honduras, combines killings by *maras* and *barras bravas* (football supporters) into a single analytical category.

[70] Such as Osmanen Germania in Germany. See Baden-Württemberg Police, "Schlag gegen Mitglieder der rockerähnlichen Gruppierung Osmanen Germania BC", 27 June 2017.

[71] As in Nigeria. See Ellis, S., *This Present Darkness: A History of Nigerian Organized Crime* (London and New York, Oxford University Press, 2016).

[72] Such as Betyársereg ("Army of Outlaws") in Hungary. See European Court of Human Rights (Fourth Section), *Case of R.B. v. Hungary*, Application No. 64602/1, Judgment, 12 April 2016.

[73] In the United States, subsets of fans of the music group Insane Clown Posse, referred to as "Juggalos", were reported to be active in 21 States and were formally recognized as a criminal gang in 4 States. See National Gang Intelligence Center, *2011 National Gang Threat Assessment: Emerging Trends* (Washington, D.C., 2011), p. 22.

[74] According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, adulthood starts at 18 years of age. "Youth", according to the United Nations, includes anyone aged 15 to 24 years. See the Secretary-General's report (1981) on International Youth Year (A/36/215). Conflict and

National Youth Gang Survey in the United States suggest that more than two thirds of urban street gang members are adults.[75] Research on street gangs in Trinidad and Tobago found that 87 per cent of members were adults.[76] Similarly, the leaders of Central American street gangs are often in their 30s and 40s.[77] A recent survey found that the average age of gang members in El Salvador was 25 years.[78] Street gangs in South Africa have long included members in their 30s and 40s.[79]

Between 2005 and 2017, 22 countries reported gang-related homicides to UNODC. Of these, just over half (12 of 22 countries) were in the western hemisphere. When it comes to the scale of the killing, however, the association with the Americas is overwhelming: 98 per cent of the gang-related murders reported by the 22 countries (29,053 out of 29,772) occurred in the western hemisphere. Many countries may have gang issues, but it is only in the Americas that gangs drive national homicide rates to so great an extent.[80]

BOX 2: Gangs and political violence

In some parts of the world, territorial organized crime groups, including street gangs, can become embroiled in the political process. Because of their influential role in the territories they control, they are able to deliver votes for political patrons and intimidate the opposition. In return, the elected officials they support provide access to State resources, such as housing and jobs, and some degree of protection from prosecution for a wide range of criminal activities. Such "voting gangs" were to be found, for example, in nineteenth-century New York,[a] and they have cropped up in the 1980s in the Jamaican constituencies referred to as "garrison communities". From the 1950s, these garrisons were directly aligned to one of the two major political parties vying for power in Jamaica. The violence generated by rivalries between these garrisons climaxed in the national election of 1980. Traditionally, each garrison was headed by an "area don", who channelled the political patronage to the community, organized the violence associated with elections, and acted as head of the organized crime group, or "posse", presiding over the garrison.[b] As direct political patronage began to fade in the 1980s, the dons and their posses began to focus on drug trafficking, but retained their political affiliation and connections.[c] These dons have often been revered as sources of support and security in the territories under their control, as could be seen in the 2010 riots, which required the declaration of a state of emergency in Kingston.[d] Similar situations have been documented in some areas of Nigeria,[e] Kenya[f] and Trinidad and Tobago.[g]

[a] Monkkonen, E. H., *Murder in New York City* (Los Angeles, California, University of California Press, 2001).

[b] Charles, C., "Garrison communities as counter societies: the case of the 1998 Zeeks' riot in Jamaica", *IDEAZ*, vol. 1, No. 1 (2002), pp. 29–43.

[c] Morris, P. K. and Graycar, A., "Homicide through a different lens", *British Journal of Criminology*, vol. 51, No. 5 (September 2011), pp. 823–838.

[d] See the "Report of the Commission of Enquiry appointed to enquire into events which occurred in Western Kingston and related areas in May 2010" (June 2016) at http://go-jamaica.com/TivoliReport/index.html.

[e] This is particularly true in the Niger Delta, where political office often goes hand in hand with access to a preferential share of national oil revenues. See Iwilade, A., "Networks of violence and becoming: youth and the politics of patronage in Nigeria's oil-rich Delta", *Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol. 52, No. 4 (December 2014), pp. 571–595.

lack of opportunity can significantly retard the development of young people, however, extending definitions of youth in some contexts. For example, the African Union's African Youth Charter recognizes as "youth" those between the ages of 15 and 35.

[75] National Gang Center, "Demographics: age of gang members, 1996–2011", National Youth Gang Survey. Available at www.nationalgangcenter.gov/Survey-Analysis (accessed on 30 May 2019).

[76] Katz, C. M. and Choate, D., "Diagnosing Trinidad and Tobago's gang problem", paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Society of Criminology, Los Angeles, California, January 2006.

[77] Federal Bureau of Investigation, "National and international leadership of MS-13 indicted in New Jersey for racketeering conspiracy", 17 July 2014.

[78] Cruz, J. M. et al., *The New Face of Street Gangs: The Gang Phenomenon in El Salvador* (Kimberly Green Latin American and Caribbean Center, Jack D. Gordon Institute for Public Policy, and Florida International University, 2017).

[79] Kinnes, I., "From urban street gangs to criminal empires: the changing face of gangs in the Western Cape", ISS Monographs, No. 48 (Pretoria, Institute for Security Studies, 2000).

[80] A series of studies of youth gangs in Europe were conducted in the late 1990s and 2000s by scholars from European countries and the United States under the Eurogang Program of Research. These studies found very little evidence of violence forming part of the institutional identity of European youth gangs. As noted by Klein, M. W., Weerman, F. M. and Thornberry, T. P., "Street gang violence in Europe", *European Journal of Criminology*, vol. 3, No. 4 (October 2006), pp. 413–437: "Reports of gang-related homicides are almost entirely absent from the Eurogang studies. The most persistent violence reported is of physical fighting, sometimes described as 'with the fists'." (p. 430).

[f] The Kikuyu nationalist group known as Mungiki achieved notoriety during the violence that followed the general elections in December 2017, but had already played a role in organized crime in the areas they controlled for some time before that. See National Crime Research Centre, *Final Report: A Study of Organized Criminal Gangs in Kenya* (Nairobi, 2012).

[g] Johnson, E., "Gangs are the new law in urban Trinidad and Tobago", Council on Hemispheric Affairs, 11 October 2013.

Organized crime as a driver of homicide

Can organized crime and gang conflict explain the "extra" homicides?

As discussed in booklet 4, there is a clear relationship between social justice and violence levels in most countries. Accordingly, inequality is a good predictor of homicide levels. However, some countries are affected by violence to a greater extent than what their levels of inequality or other social indicators would lead one to predict, particularly those in Latin America.

While inequality remains one of the most robust correlates of homicide, countries with high levels of income inequality exhibit a wide range of homicide rates. For example, Rwanda and Chile have high Gini coefficients, but very low homicide rates. Nevertheless, countries that have both high levels of inequality and a high prevalence of organized crime and gang activity generally all have very high homicide rates. This suggests that the presence of organized crime and gangs is the "hidden" factor that pushes the homicide rate up to values higher than what one would expect from a country's level of inequality and socioeconomic development.

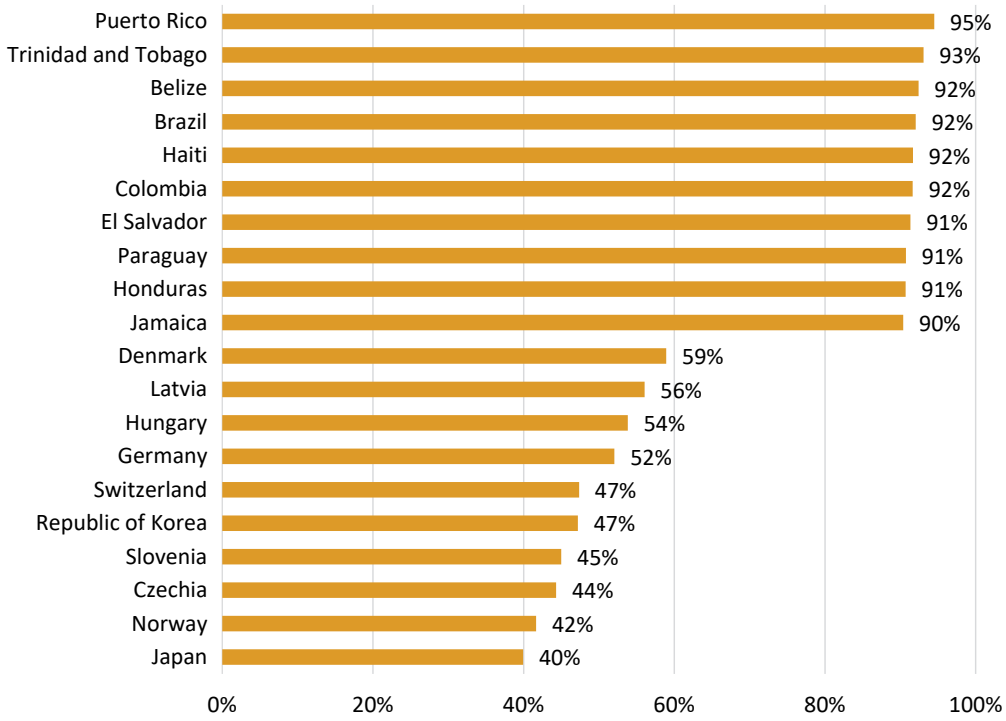
To test this hypothesis, the relationship between homicide levels, social indicators and some indicator of organized crime activity would have to be studied. Only a few countries provided UNODC with data on homicides known to be related to organized crime and gang activity. This poor response rate may be due to the fact that countries without known organized crime or gang problems have no reason to keep record of such homicides, or also to the fact that some countries do not have the capacity to record homicide typology in their national crime statistics system.

The countries that reported a large share of homicides involving organized crime or gangs are concentrated in Latin America and the Caribbean, which is also the region with the highest recorded homicide rates in the world.

As argued above, the predominance of males in some high-homicide countries suggests a large share of homicide related to organized crime or gangs. Most organized crime groups and gangs are male-dominated,[81] and both the perpetrators and the victims of their violence are likely to be male. In countries with less violence related to organized crime, the ratio of male to female homicide victims is closer to parity. Countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have the largest share of male homicide victims among their victim populations, with many upwards of 85 per cent. These are generally the same group of countries that report a large share of homicides related to organized crime or gangs.

[81] Groups involved in trafficking in persons appear to be exceptional in this regard. In 2014, women made up 37 per cent of all the individuals convicted worldwide of trafficking in persons. See UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2016* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.16.IV.6).

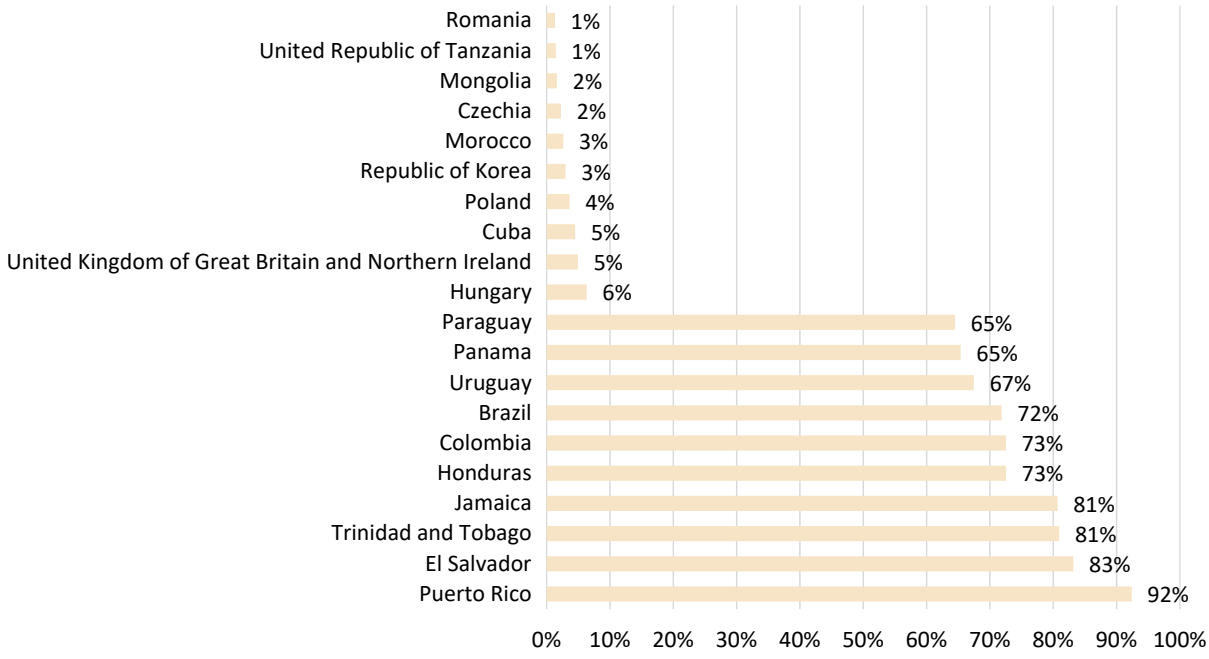
Figure 29: Top ten and bottom ten countries in terms of share of male victims among total victims of homicide, 2015



Source: UNODC homicide statistics.
Note: Countries with fewer than 20 recorded homicide victims in the reported period have been excluded.

A similar pattern can be seen with regard to the share of homicides committed using firearms. Again, many of the countries that reported a large share of homicides related to gangs and organized crime also appear among the countries with the largest shares of firearm homicides.

Figure 30: Top ten and bottom ten countries in terms of share of firearm homicide victims, 2015



Source: UNODC homicide statistics.

In short, it is usually the same countries that report the largest shares of homicides related to organized crime and gangs, the largest shares of male victims and the largest shares of firearm homicides. Most of them are located in Latin America and the Caribbean; they are among the countries with the highest homicide rates in the world.

The primary source of income for many territorial organized crime groups is some form of "taxation", often framed as "protection money".[82] This involves legal and illegal businesses paying money regularly to the organized crime group in exchange for protection from other criminals and/or the State, as well as from the organized crime group itself.[83] In addition, the group may provide other governance services in the area it controls. For example, it may act as a guarantor of transactions that take place outside the regular legal system, punishing those who default on their agreements and collecting unpaid debts.[84] Through their connections to corrupt officials, they can also provide an "umbrella" or "roof" for all kinds of shady commercial activities.[85]

This type of business structure generates violence in at least two ways. In order to be taken seriously, the group needs to demonstrate its ability to respond with violence to any challenges to its authority (e.g. non-payment of taxes or debts). It also needs to be able to protect its primary asset – its territory – from rival individuals and groups, including the State. Once a group has firmly established control over an area and negotiated borders with its rivals, however, very little violence may be required for it to preserve its authority. In effect, the more highly organized the crime, the lower the homicide levels associated with it. In these cases, violence is mainly associated with destabilization, which may be caused by a variety of factors, including new sources of income, succession struggles, conflict with rival groups and conflict with the State.[86]

Homicide and drug trafficking

Large-scale organized criminal activities, including international drug trafficking, can take place without much violence when the criminal structures are stable and corruption is endemic. A good example of this can be seen in South-Eastern Europe. During the 1990s, the simultaneous shocks of the Yugoslav wars and the transition to a market economy allowed organized crime figures in various countries in the Balkans to negotiate with the State authorities and to entrench themselves in positions of relative impunity.[87] As a result, they were able to oversee the trafficking of large volumes of heroin to Europe. Thus, between 2009 and 2012 an estimated total average of 6,800 kg of pure heroin was exported from countries in Southern Europe to be trafficked to other countries along the Balkan route.[88] The total monetary value of illicit opiates trafficked on the Balkan route has been estimated at an average of $28 billion per year.[89] Drug trafficking on the Balkan route has generally been accompanied by very little violence, however.

Following a spike after the fall of the Berlin Wall, homicide rates in most South-Eastern European countries have been low and declining. The average national rate in these countries in 2015 was about 1.4 victims per 100,000 population, which is about the same as in France.

[82] This pattern can be seen all over the world. For China, see Wang, P., "Extra-legal protection in China: how 'guanxi' distorts China's legal system and facilitates the rise of unlawful protectors", *British Journal of Criminology*, vol. 54, No. 5 (September 2014), pp. 809–830; for Japan, see Milhaupt, C. J. and West, M., "The dark side of private ordering: an institutional and empirical analysis of organized crime", *University of Chicago Law Review*, vol. 67, No. 1 (2000), pp. 41–73; for the Russian Federation, see Frye, T. and Zhuravskaya, E., "Rackets, regulation and the rule of law", *Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization*, vol. 16, No. 2 (October 2000), pp. 478–502; for Brazil, see Arias, E. D., "The dynamics of criminal governance: networks and social order in Rio de Janeiro", *Journal of Latin American Studies*, vol. 38, No. 2 (May 2006), pp. 293–325.

[83] Ibid.

[84] Gambetta, D., *The Sicilian Mafia: The Business of Private Protection* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1993).

[85] This is seen, for example, as one of the primary functions of the Chinese *tongs*, which use the *baohusan* ("protective umbrella") mechanism. See Wang, "Extra-legal protection in China". Russian mafia groups refer similarly to a *krysha* ("roof"). See Frye and Zhuravskaya, "Rackets, regulation and the rule of law".

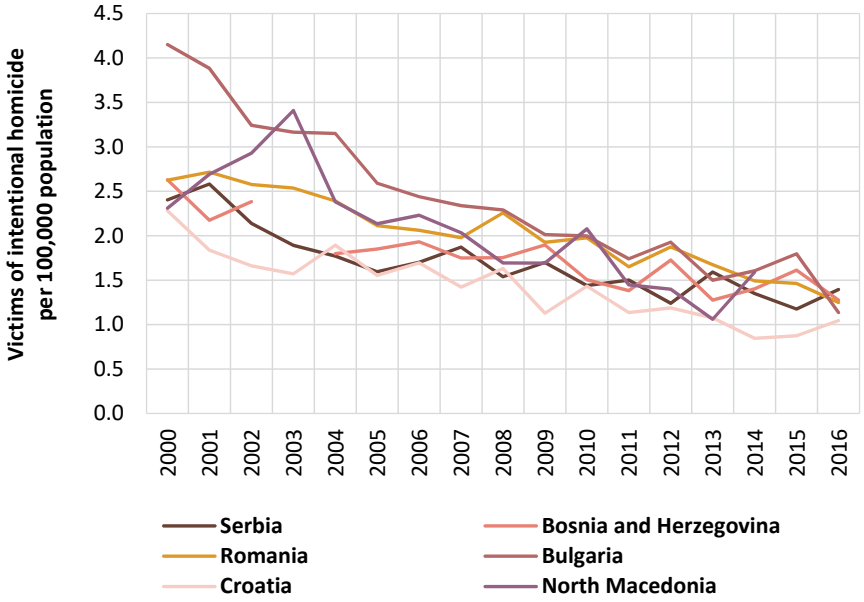
[86] Calderón, G. et al., "The beheading of criminal organizations and the dynamics of violence in Mexico", *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 59, No. 8 (December 2015), pp. 1455–1485; Guerrero Gutiérrez, E., "La raíz de la violencia", *Nexos*, 1 June 2011; UNODC, *Transnational Organized Crime in Central America and the Caribbean*.

[87] UNODC, *Crime and Its Impact on the Balkans and Affected Countries* (2008).

[88] UNODC, *Drug Money: The Illicit Proceeds of Opiates Trafficked on the Balkan Route* (2015), pp. 68–70.

[89] Ibid., p. 9.

Figure 31: Homicide rates in South-Eastern Europe, selected countries, 2000–2015



Source: UNODC homicide statistics.

By contrast, violence is generally consequent upon any type of change that produces instability in the balance of power between organized criminal groups. A number of factors can cause such instability, including changes in the size of illicit markets,[90] the death or incarceration of high-profile leaders,[91] and law enforcement action that weakens one group relative to another.[92] Illicit drug flows are a source of substantial income for those who control them, and shifts in drug trafficking dynamics can be highly destabilizing, although not all homicide related to organized crime has its roots in drug trafficking.

A striking example of destabilization caused by shifts in illegal drug markets can be seen in what happened in Mexico and the Northern Triangle countries of Central America between 2007 and 2011. In 2007, Mexico initiated a crackdown on the drug cartels, which had ramifications for countries up and down the cocaine supply chain.[93] A series of high-level arrests led to succession struggles and fragmentation within some of the major cartels.[94] Existing and emerging cartels moved to capitalize on this weakness, and homicide levels in Mexico spiked, especially around some of the major drug import and export centres.[95] Between 2007 and 2011, the number of homicides tripled in Mexico. This rapid change cannot be attributed to slow-moving social indicators, such as income inequality: it can only be explained by organized crime. According to data from the National Public Security System, more than half of the homicides committed in Mexico between 2007 and 2012 were due to organized crime.[96]

[90] See the example of Honduras between 2007 and 2011 discussed below.

[91] Calderón et al., "The beheading of criminal organizations and the dynamics of violence in Mexico".

[92] For example, in 2008 it was alleged that Mexican enforcement action improved the situation of the Sinaloa Federation relative to their rivals, emboldening them to step up their violence. See Grillo, I., *El Narco: Inside Mexico's Criminal Insurgency* (New York, Bloomsbury Press, 2011), pp. 117–118.

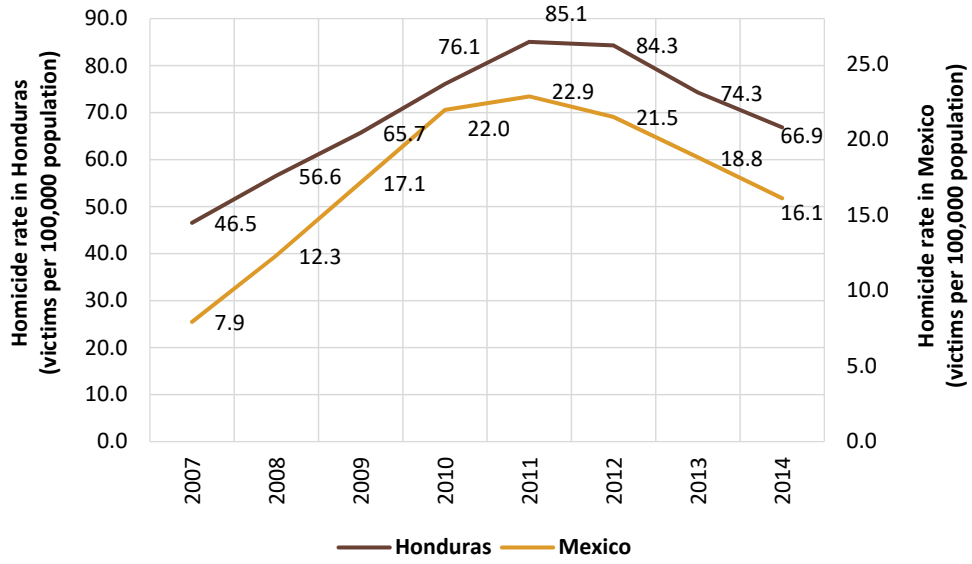
[93] The restriction of the cocaine supply can clearly be seen in data from the United States. An analysis of prices and consumption rates suggests a severe cocaine shortage, reflected in rapidly falling purity levels and a consequent rise in the cost per unit of pure cocaine, which doubled over the period 2006–2009. See UNODC, *The Globalization of Crime*, pp. 86–92.

[94] Grillo, *El Narco*.

[95] For example, in 2007 there were 136 homicides linked to organized crime in Ciudad Juarez, a key *plaza* ("turf") for drug trafficking. In 2008, there were 1,332, nearly 10 times as many, and by 2010, the figure had reached 2,738. See Vilalta, C. and Muggah, R., "Violent disorder in Ciudad Juarez: a spatial analysis of homicide", *Trends in Organized Crime*, vol. 17, No. 3 (September 2014), pp. 161–180.

[96] Rodríguez Ferreira, O., "Violent Mexico: participatory and multipolar violence associated with organised crime", *International Journal of Conflict and Violence*, vol. 10, No. 1 (2016), pp. 40–60 (47).

Figure 32: Homicide rates in Honduras and Mexico, 2007–2014



Source: UNODC homicide statistics.

This instability among the cartels in northern Mexico forced a rearrangement in cocaine logistics, increasing the importance of Central America to the trafficking chain.[97] While much of the flow had previously skirted along the coasts, the new routes diverted the drugs through the landmass of Honduras and Guatemala.[98] After the 2009 coup d'état in Honduras, cocaine flights departing from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela that had previously landed in the Dominican Republic were diverted to parts of Honduras.[99]

A new kind of proxy war broke out, this time sponsored by the two dominant Mexican cartels at the time: the Sinaloa Federation and the Zetas.[100] Local groups supplying these rivals fought over the best trafficking routes, particularly landing zones and border crossings.[101] The increase in homicide rates in Honduras paralleled that in Mexico, although at a much higher level, with the rates reaching particularly high values in those parts of Honduras and Guatemala where cocaine was imported and exported. As can be seen in map 1 below, high homicide rates were reported in 2011 in the municipalities along the coast of Honduras (where cocaine was landing and then transiting by land) and along both sides of the border with Guatemala.[102] These municipalities are often rural areas where low levels of homicide would otherwise be expected.

The overall flow of cocaine appears to have peaked around 2011 and declined in subsequent years. While overall cocaine seizures rose in 2014, analysis of cocaine movements suggests that the actual volumes transiting Honduras continued to decline. The number of killings associated with organized crime halved between 2012 and 2013. At the municipal level, the situation in many of the contested border areas (such as those in the Department of Copán) began to improve drastically.

97 For a full description of these dynamics, see UNODC, *Transnational Organized Crime in Central America and the Caribbean*.

98 Maps of these routes can be found, together with a discussion of specific changes over time, in ibid., pp. 31–44.

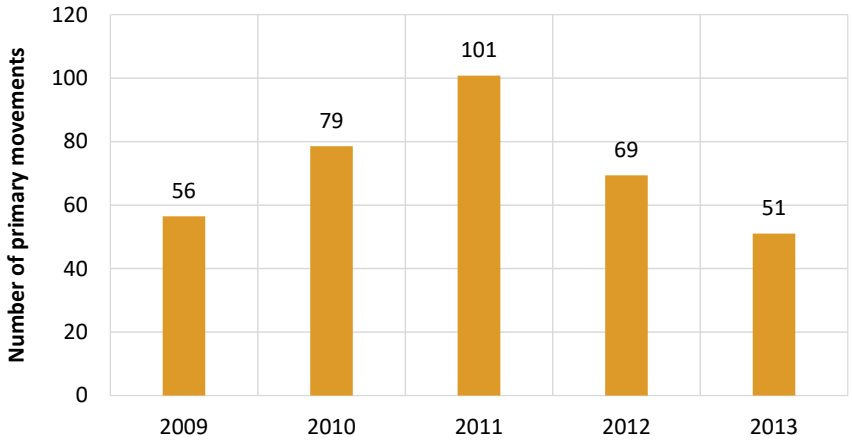
99 Ibid., p. 32. This diversion is clearly reflected in reports based on the United States Government's tracking of suspicious flights.

100 Ibid., pp. 22–23. (Details of individual Zetas members arrested in Guatemala during this time period are included in the report.)

101 Ibid. (See the border crossing areas in the maps below.)

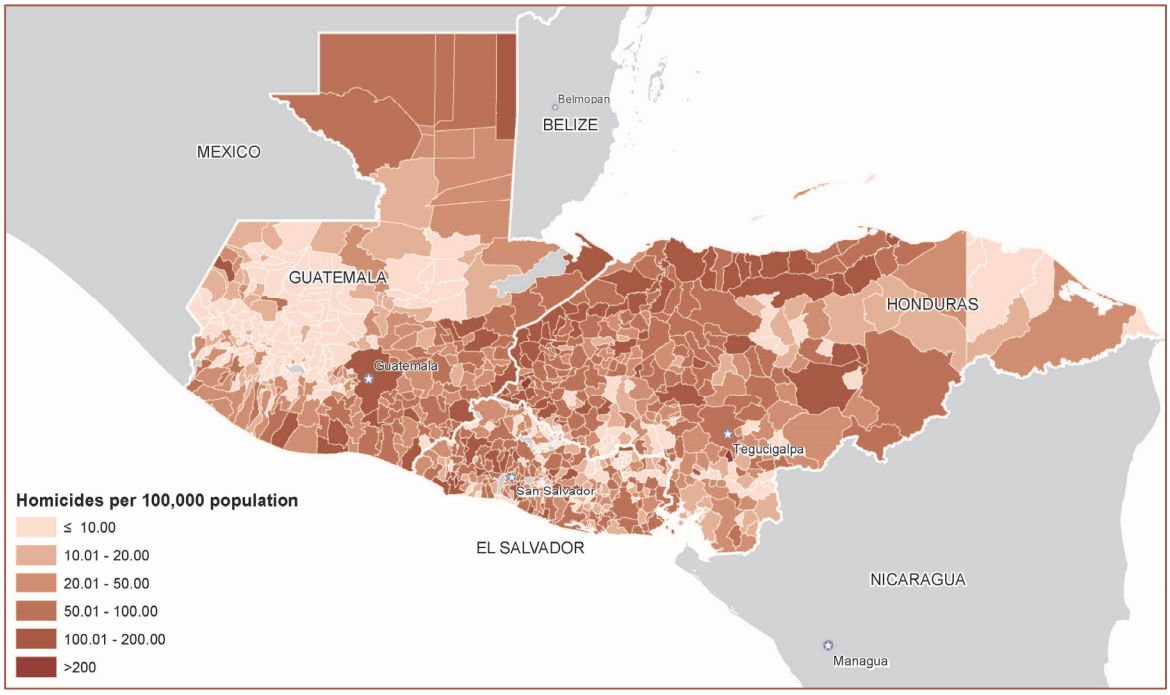
102 Ibid, p. 70. (Route information was gathered through interviews with law enforcement agencies conducted in the region in 2011.)

Figure 33: Number of non-commercial air shipments of cocaine into the "transit zone" between Central America and the United States that first landed in Honduras, 2009–2013



Source: United States, Office of National Drug Control Policy, *Cocaine Smuggling in 2013* (Washington, D.C., 2015).

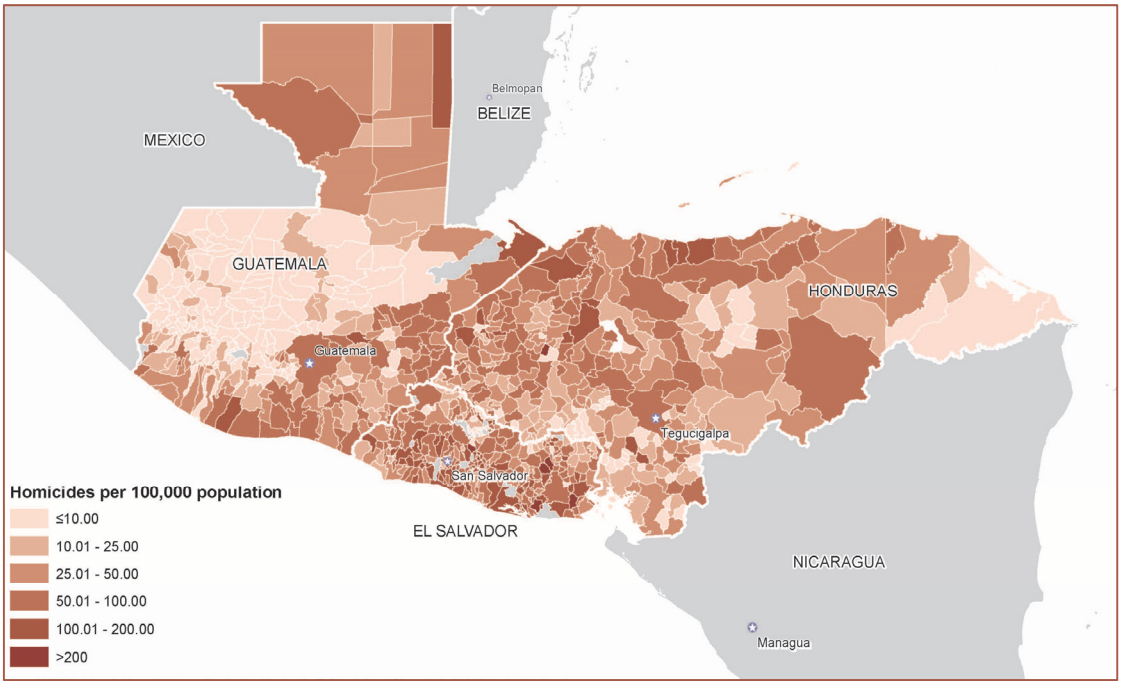
Map 1: Municipal homicide rates, Northern Triangle of Central America, 2011



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Source: UNODC homicide statistics.

Map 2: Municipal homicide rates, Northern Triangle of Central America, 2016

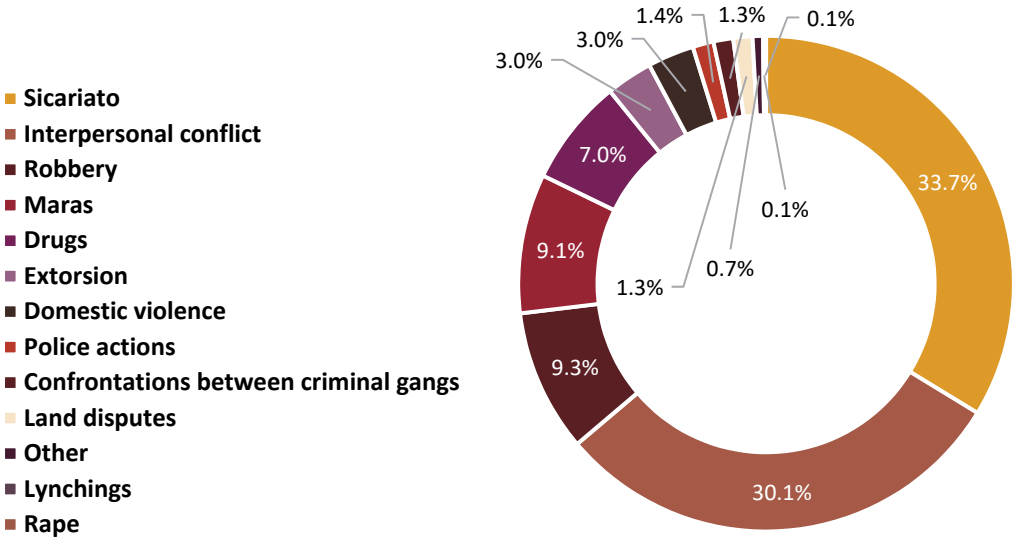


The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Source: UNODC homicide statistics.

The level of homicidal violence related to organized crime further declined in 2016. According to analysis by the National Violence Observatory in Honduras, among those cases where the motive was known, 69 per cent were committed by professional hitmen (*sicariato*)[103] in 2010. Both the share and the number of *sicariato* killings have declined since that time; they accounted for just 35 per cent of the total in 2016.

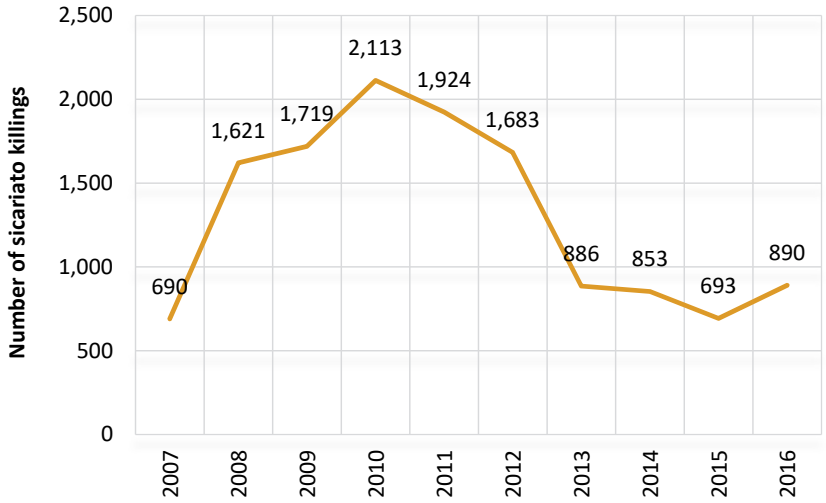
Figure 34: Share of homicides by possible motive out of all homicides for which motive was known, Honduras, 2016



Source: National Violence Observatory (Honduras).

[103] *Sicariato*, which translates as "contract killing", is also referred to as the "settling of scores" (*ajuste de cuentas*) and connotes assassinations or executions associated with organized crime.

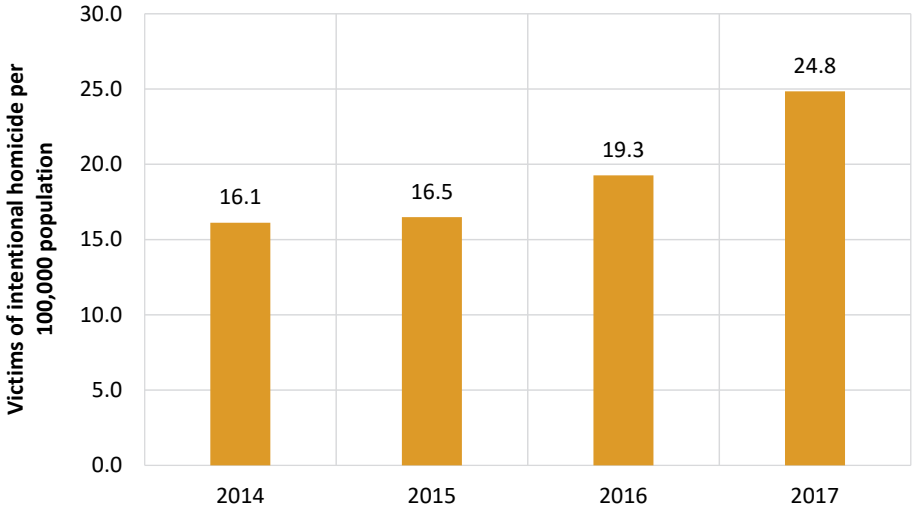
Figure 35: Number of organized crime killings in Honduras, 2007–2016



Source: National Violence Observatory (Honduras).

Homicide rates in Honduras have continued to fall, but those in Mexico began to rise again in 2015, and by 2017 had reached an all-time high, with over 30,000 homicides. This appears to be due to the increasing disorganization of crime, as the dominant cartels of five years ago have fragmented and diversified. The head of the Sinaloa Federation, which dominated numerous drug markets for years, was extradited to the United States in 2017, and many of the leaders of the Zetas cartel were killed or arrested between 2012 and 2018. The market disorganization caused by these blows against the upper echelons of the major cartels appears to have reversed the declining trend,[104] and homicide rates began to climb again between 2014 and 2017.

Figure 36: Homicide rates in Mexico, 2014–2017



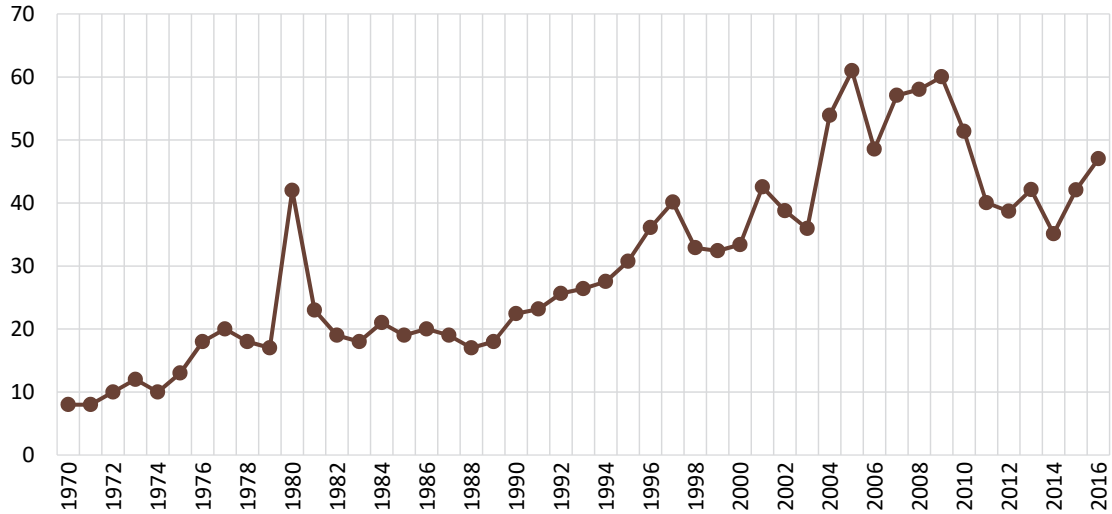
Source: UNODC homicide statistics.

A similar fragmentation of organized crime occurred in Jamaica when cocaine revenues declined at the beginning of the new millennium. The Jamaican posses (see box 2 above) had been involved in trafficking and retailing cocaine to the United States from around 1980, and this trade had flourished during the boom years of the 1980s and early 1990s. From 2000 onwards, however, the cocaine flow shifted to Mexico. The estimated cocaine flow through Jamaica dropped from 11 per cent of the cocaine supply in the United

[104] Calderón, L., Rodríguez Ferreira, O. and Shirk, D. A., *Drug Violence in Mexico: Data and Analysis through 2017* (San Diego, California, Justice in Mexico, 2018).

States in 2000[105] to 2 per cent in 2005 and 1 per cent in 2007.[106] This dwindling of the cocaine flow through Jamaica was accompanied by a rise in the homicide rate.[107]

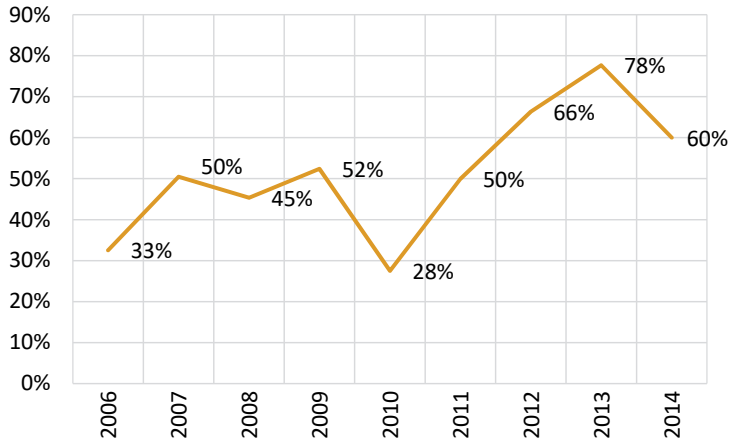
Figure 37: Homicide rates in Jamaica, 1970–2016



Source: UNODC homicide statistics.

Although the causes for this increase are unclear, they appear to be related to the destabilizing effect of the loss of drug revenues, a major source of income and authority for the area dons. This loss facilitated the proliferation of lesser criminals focused on more direct means of deriving funds, such as robbery and extortion. The number of criminal groupings clearly increased and conflict broke out among them. In 2013, the Minister for National Security of Jamaica pointed out that some 50 conflicts between and within gangs had been the primary driver of recent homicide increases.[108] According to data provided to UNODC, 78 per cent of the homicides committed that year were attributable to gangs.

Figure 38: Share of gang-related homicides in Jamaica, 2006–2014



Source: UNODC homicide statistics, based on reports from the Jamaican Government.

[105] The retail value of the cocaine supply in the United States was estimated at $44 billion in 2000. Control of 11 per cent of that market represented a very lucrative source of income for the Jamaican posses in a country with a population of just 2.6 million. See Kilmer, B. et al., *What America's Users Spend on Illegal Drugs: 2000–2010* (Washington, D.C., Office of National Drug Control Policy, 2014).

[106] UNODC, *Transnational Organized Crime in Central America and the Caribbean*, p.40.

[107] Small Island Developing States are often subject to high and volatile homicide rates, and many experience large seasonal influxes of tourists that add to the potential victim pool while not adding to the population against which the rate is calculated. For these reasons, high homicide rates in the Caribbean must be interpreted with some caution.

[108] Dunkley-Willis, A., "Bunting blames gang feuds for murder spikes", *Jamaica Observer*, 11 September 2013.

BOX 4: The online police statistics system in Honduras: an essential tool for generating security plans and strategies

The National Police of Honduras operates an online system for the collection of statistical data at the national level on criminal incidents and police interventions. Known as SEPOL (from the Spanish name, "Sistema Estadístico Policial en Línea", or "Online Police Statistics System"),[a] it provides reliable data that can be used to develop analyses and strategies in support of public security policies aimed at preventing and combating crime.

Design and development of the application began in June 2012, and by January 2013 the first functional version of SEPOL was ready for centralized data entry by the Statistics Department of the National Police. Before SEPOL was launched, information reported by the various police stations involved a recording process that was very slow and that led to many inconsistencies, which meant that crime data were not properly recorded and monitored. In 2017, SEPOL became fully operational; the data servers are now owned by the National Police of Honduras.

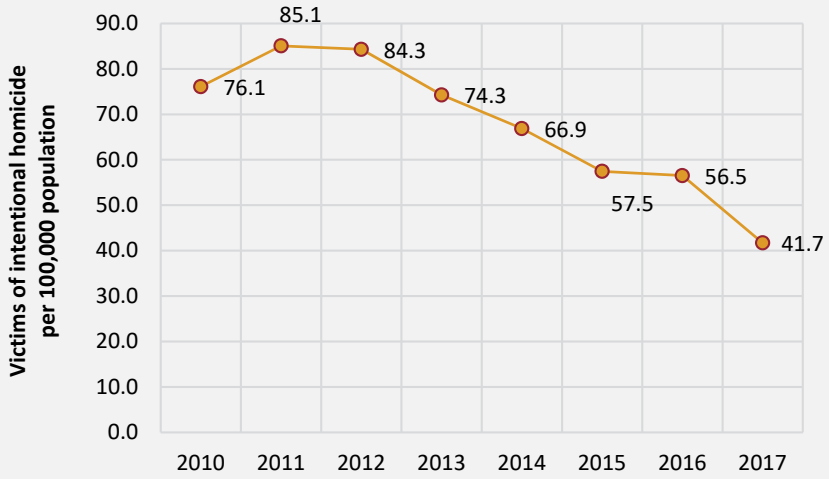
SEPOL is a good example of effective recording and also of the "open data" concept. Public users are able to access statistical information through a dedicated website, www.sepol.hn, which has resulted in an enhanced institutional image for the National Police and in recognition of the system as an official source of information at the national and international levels.

Over the years, there have been many challenges in terms of technology, human resources and the integration of information; however, those challenges have been gradually resolved through multidisciplinary teamwork both vertically and horizontally throughout the police institutions.

SEPOL produces highly reliable data thanks to the multisectoral input. Homicide data are verified in collaboration with various organizations, such as the National Register of Persons, the Directorate General of Forensic Medicine and the National Violence Observatory, which is based at the National Autonomous University of Honduras and is supported by various donors.

The data in SEPOL indicate that the homicide rate in Honduras has decreased by 50 per cent over the past five years, from 85.1 per 100,000 inhabitants in 2011 to 41.7 in 2017.

Homicide rate in Honduras, 2010–2017



Source: UNODC homicide statistics and National Police of Honduras.

According to the National Police of Honduras, this drastic reduction has been achieved thanks to a transition from a policy of intensive deterrence to a new approach based on prevention. Specific actions have included:

A full-scale police offensive against crime

Police action was concentrated in those areas where gangs operated. A joint offensive by law enforcement agencies was based on a strategy of dismantling the financial structures of those gangs and reduction of crime in general.

A strong operational focus on dismantling large criminal structures

Various large-scale operations designed to dismantle major criminal structures were undertaken, with the support of elite corps from the military and police. These operations included interventions by the Public Prosecution Service and the establishment of security policies and legislation that resulted in the extradition of persons involved in powerful criminal structures.

A strict process of police reform

The National Police was reorganized and turned into a reliable and efficient organization, leading to visible results. An amendment to the National Police Act was introduced in 2013.[b]

Reform of the prison system

The construction of prison infrastructure that is more appropriate to the system's needs and that prevents the involvement of prisoners in crime outside the prison system was a key factor in the reduction of violence.

An increase in budget funds allocated to the fight against crime

The introduction of a security tax has made it possible to provide greater financial support to the Ministry of Security and the Ministry of Defence, and also to institutions such as the Public Prosecution Service and the judiciary, which now have improved human and technological resources at their disposal for combating crime.

New legal mechanisms

Reform of the Criminal Code and the training of prosecutors, judges and members of the Technical Agency for Criminal Investigation and the Directorate for Combating Drug Trafficking have both had an impact on criminal structures.

Cooperation with civil society

The introduction of a community policing system has enabled closer contact with civil society and community leaders, who have collaborated with police forces to provide information on security issues. This has led to the creation of special police strategies.

Currently a coexistence analysis is being developed for a new citizen security and coexistence policy, extending the scope of the homicide indicator so that it also serves more generally as a social erosion indicator.

[a] Available at www.sepol.hn/index.php.

[b] Honduras, Decree No. 25-2013. Available at www.tsc.gob.hn/web/leyes/Reforma_art_112_ley_policia_nacional.pdf.

Gangs and their contribution to the homicide rate[109]

While street gangs seem to fit the definition of organized crime groups in many respects, their relationship to violence is different. They are driven more by identity than profit, and their identity is often asserted through violence against rival groups.

While violence is generally bad for criminal business, it is an important part of street gang life. It is a way of demonstrating virility and asserting dominance. In effect, street gangs seek conflict, and most define themselves in opposition to rival groups.[110] Frederic Thrasher, in his classic study of over a thousand gangs in Chicago in the 1930s, observes:

"The gang is a conflict group. It develops through strife and thrives on warfare … In its struggle for existence a gang has to fight hostile groups to maintain … its property rights and the physical safety of its members. Gang warfare is usually organized on a territorial basis. Each group becomes attached to a local area which it regards as peculiarly its own and through which it is dangerous for members of another gang to pass. Gangs engage in a struggle for existence which takes the form of frequent and bitter feuds. The original

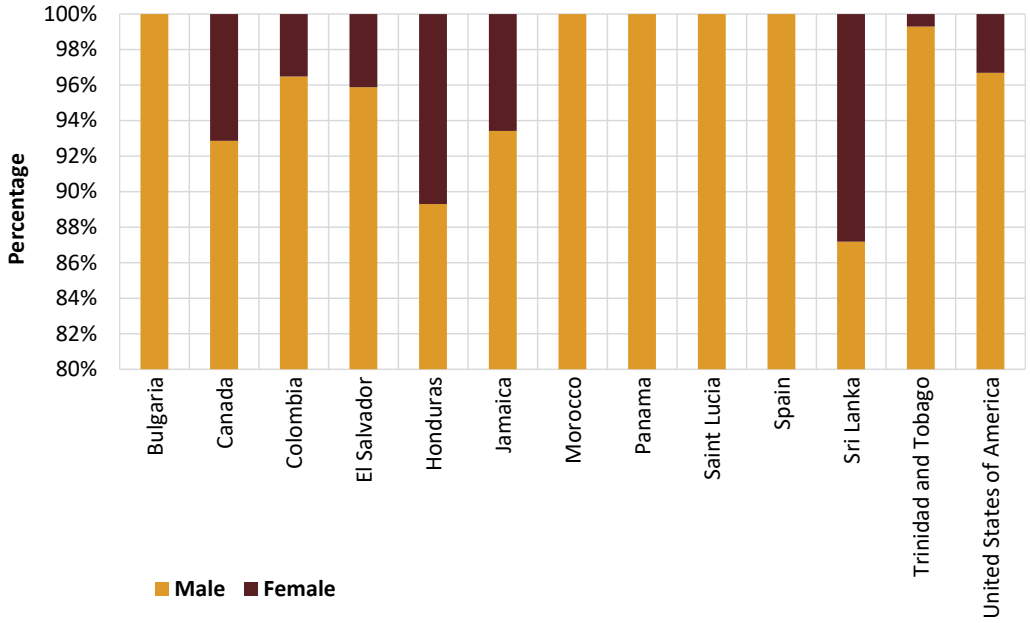
[109] As noted above, 98 per cent of the gang killings recorded between 2005 and 2017 occurred in the Americas. Accordingly, the following discussion focuses on that region.

[110] The best-known street gangs come in oppositional binaries: the Crips versus the Bloods in the United States; MS-13 versus Barrio 18 in Central America; the Americans versus the Hard Livings in South Africa; Comando Vermelho versus splinter groups and the Primeiro Comando da Capital in Brazil.

causes for such a war may be forgotten … Anger, hatred, and thirst for revenge are continually stimulated by repeated insults and aggressions. A killing by one side calls for a killing by the other."[111]

What was true in the 1930s seems to be equally true today. It appears that most victims of homicides by gang members are gang members themselves, often killed in cycles of reprisal originating in minor disputes.[112] In most countries, upwards of 90 per cent of gang homicide victims are male, as indicated by UNODC data. Criminal justice statistics from El Salvador show that, in 2015, members of the two main rival gangs were killed in nearly identical numbers.[113]

Figure 39: Share of male and female victims of homicide linked to gangs, 2017 or latest available year from 2013–2016



Source: UNODC homicide statistics.

It has been argued that street gangs tend to form in cities, particularly in overcrowded and isolated ghettos or public housing complexes where competition for resources causes neighbouring young men to band together in order to compete with similarly situated groups.[114] In these instances, gangsterism often starts out as an urban housing issue. Many street gangs carry the name of the street or neighbourhood from which they emanate.[115] Young men from the same neighbourhood may be assumed to be gang members whether or not they actually are, and many in fact join street gangs defensively as a result.[116] In the United

[111] Thrasher, F. M., *The Gang: A Study of 1,313 Gangs in Chicago* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1936), pp. 173–175.

[112] Few national data sets contain information on the gang affiliation of both the victim and the perpetrator, but qualitative research, such as Leovy, J., *Ghettoside: A True Story of Murder in America* (New York, Spiegel & Grau, 2015), highlights this fact: "[Los Angeles Police] Officers couldn't help noticing … [how] so few gang homicides stemmed from drug deals – and so many from infighting."

[113] Victims from Barrio 18 totalled 921 in 2015, compared with 912 from MS-13 (data provided to UNODC by the Public Prosecution Service of El Salvador).

[114] Hagedorn, J. and Rauch, B., "Housing, gangs, and homicide: what we can learn from Chicago", *Urban Affairs Review*, vol. 42, No. 4 (March 2007), pp. 435–456. Hagedorn and Rauch show how housing policy in Chicago, in contrast to that of New York and Los Angeles, served to promote gang violence. The destruction of major public housing complexes displaced gang members into other areas, exacerbating competition. See also Leggett, T., "Still marginal: crime in the coloured community", *South African Crime Quarterly*, No. 7 (March 2004), pp. 21–25; and Leggett, T., "No one to trust: preliminary results from a Manenberg crime survey", *South Africa Crime Quarterly*, No. 9 (September 2004), pp. 31–36.

[115] For example, Barrio 18 is named after 18th Street in the Rampart district of Los Angeles; the Grape Street Watts Crips come from Grape Street in the Watts neighbourhood of Los Angeles; and the Two Six comes from 26th Street in Chicago. This is also true outside the Americas, e.g. in London, where gangs of mixed ethnicity typically adopt the name of the borough in which they live or its postcode. See Pitts, J., *Reluctant Gangsters: The Changing Face of Youth Crime* (Cullompton, Devon, Willan Publishing, 2008). Recent studies suggest that territorial solidarity has given way to more profit-oriented activities. See Whittaker, A. et al., *From Postcodes to Profit: How Gangs Have Changed in Waltham Forest* (London Southbank University, 2018).

[116] In discussing the reasons for joining gangs, the Chicago Crime Commission argues: "These motivating factors include protection from other gangs or neighborhood violence …" (Chicago Gang Commission, *The Gang Book* (Chicago, Chicago Crime Commission, 2018, p.

States, conflict between rival street gangs may be framed as a contest for criminal economic opportunities, but they are more often about matters of "respect", and "disrespecting" rival groups is a core street gang activity.[117]

In addition to street gangs, prison gangs can play a strong role in homicide on the streets. Prison gangs may evolve in response to governance problems in prisons and can be initially formed as prisoners' rights groups.[118] Some studies from the United States trace the evolution of prison gangs as prison populations boomed during the 1980s, explaining how these gangs extended their authority to the streets. Prison gangs, which often include senior street gang members serving lengthy sentences, offer protection and privileges to street gangs that pay them cash tributes, and use these street members to threaten gangs that refuse to be taxed. In this way, prison gangs provide a kind of umbrella organization to neighbourhood groups that were previously not associated. Accordingly, prison gangs have the power to produce and reduce homicide, both in the prisons and on the streets.[119]

Since gang conflict is bad for the drug business, the growing influence of prison gangs on the streets may have played a dampening effect on homicide in some cities in the United States. This can be seen most clearly in Los Angeles, the city where gangs such as the Crips, the Bloods, Mara Salvatrucha and Barrio 18 were formed. Los Angeles reported 838 homicides in 1995, of which 408 were associated with gangs (49 per cent).[120] However, by 2018, the number of gang-related homicides in the city had dropped to 128. The reasons for this decrease are manifold, but one important factor is believed to have been a decline in street gang membership during the late 1990s. Another factor was a decision by prison gangs to limit homicide among their street members in order to maximize drug sales and the related cash tributes.[121]

274). In her recent study of violence in Watts, Los Angeles, Jill Leovy observes: "Gangs could seem pointlessly self-destructive, but the reason they existed was no mystery. Boys and men always tend to group together for protection. They seek advantage in numbers." (*Ghettoside*). One of the founders of the Crips gang in the United States argued that it had formed defensively: "… my intent was to, in a sense, address all of the so-called neighboring gangs in the area and to put, in a sense – I thought I can cleanse the neighborhood of all these, you know, marauding gangs. But I was totally wrong. And eventually, we morphed into the monster we were addressing." (Interview with Stanley Tookie Williams by the journalist Amy Goodman, *Democracy Now*, 30 November 2005). In a study of gang members in the Cape Flats of South Africa, it is pointed out: "… the bulk of the members joined the gang for defensive reasons, including revenge." (Leggett, T., "Terugskiet (returning fire): growing up on the street corners of Manenberg, South Africa", in *Neither War nor Peace: International Comparisons of Children and Youth in Organised Armed Violence* (2005)).

[117] In the United States, the flashing of gang signs at rivals and disrespect for the tags and symbols of these rival gangs are a common source of conflict. Compare also the recent rise of "drill gangs", whose sole purpose appears to be to show disrespect to rival drill gangs though music for the purposes of provoking violence and selling songs. See Chicago Gang Commission, *The Gang Book*, p 314. For more details, see Stuart, F. and Fishman, E., "Dispatches from the rap wars", *Chicago Magazine*, 19 September 2016.

[118] See e.g. a recent ethnographic study of the Primeiro Comando da Capital in Brazil: Biondi, K., *Sharing this Walk: An Ethnography of Prison Life and the PCC in Brazil* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press, 2016).

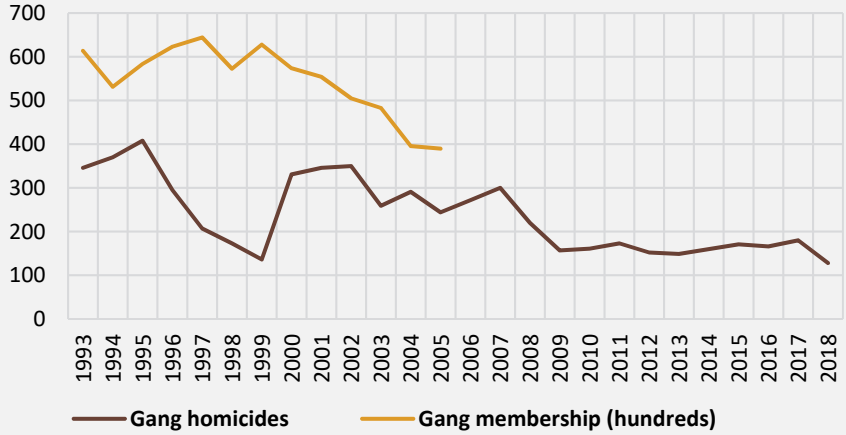
[119] Skarbek, D., *The Social Order of the Underworld: How Prison Gangs Govern the American Penal System* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2014).

[120] Los Angeles Police Department, Gang Statistics Archives.
Available at www.lapdonline.org/crime_mapping_and_compstat/content_basic_view/31590 (accessed on 22 June 2019).

[121] Blatchford, C., *The Black Hand: The Story of Rene "Boxer" Enriquez and His Life in the Mexican Mafia* (New York, Harper, 2009).

BOX 5: Prison gangs in the United States

Number of gang-related homicides and estimated number of gang members (hundreds) in Los Angeles, United States, 1993–2018

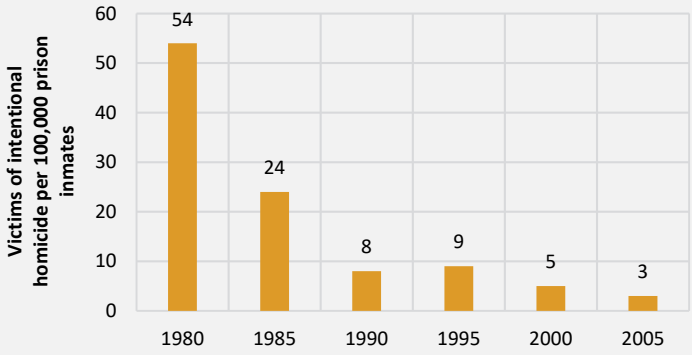


Source: Los Angeles Police Department, Gang Statistics Archives (accessed in December 2018).

Prison gangs have heavily influenced the character of gang violence across the Americas, including the United States. The Mexican Mafia ("La Eme") was founded in the 1950s but grew to have an outsize influence in Californian prisons in particular. It has always been run by a small group of inmates, many of whom are serving life sentences, and has managed to sell protection to a wide range of powerful street gangs, including both Mara Salvatrucha and Barrio 18. Collectively referred to as *Sureños*, these groups frequently include "13" in their name (for "M", the 13th letter of the alphabet) as a sign of affiliation and protection, as in MS-13. La Eme's rival prison gang is Nuestra Familia, which controls the gangs identifying as *Norteños*. Since homicide is bad for the drug business on which they rely for income, the prison gangs have an interest in resolving disputes peacefully, both in and out of prison. They may be partly responsible for the dramatic reduction in homicide in prisons in the United States between 1980 and 2000,[a] and a parallel decline in gang-related homicide on the streets, at least among Latino gangs in California.[b]

If so, a similar reduction in homicide rates has not occurred in the home countries of the California gang members. MS-13 and Barrio 18 may themselves have led to a polarization of formerly unrelated street gangs in Central America, after members from both groups returned home following the end of the civil wars, both voluntarily and involuntarily.[c] Recent surveys have suggested that these deportees do not play a prominent role in the modern gang structure.[d] Rather, they seem to have influenced the culture of the gangs and provided a means by which local groups were divided into opposing camps.[d]

Homicide rate in state prisons in the United States, 1980–2005



Source: United States Bureau of Justice Statistics.

[a] Skarbek, D., *The Social Order of the Underworld: How Prison Gangs Govern the American Penal System* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2014). According to the Bureau for Justice Statistics, homicide rates in State prisons in the United States dropped by 93 per cent from 1980 to 2002. See Mumola, C. J., "Suicide and homicide in State prisons and local jails", Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report, NCJ 210036 (August 2005).

[b] See figure above, which shows the decline in gang-related homicide in Los Angeles.

[c] After the end of the civil war in El Salvador in 1992, tens of thousands of refugees who had fled to the United States returned home. In 1996, the United States expanded the scope of criminal deportation, and many more Salvadorans were returned involuntarily. Between 2003 and 2015, the United States deported over 300,000 criminal deportees to the three countries of the Northern Triangle of Central America, in roughly equal numbers. Since the population of Guatemala is more than the other two countries combined, these deportees comprise a larger share of the populations of El Salvador and Honduras. In El Salvador and Honduras, deportees since 2003 represented about 1.5 per cent of the national population.

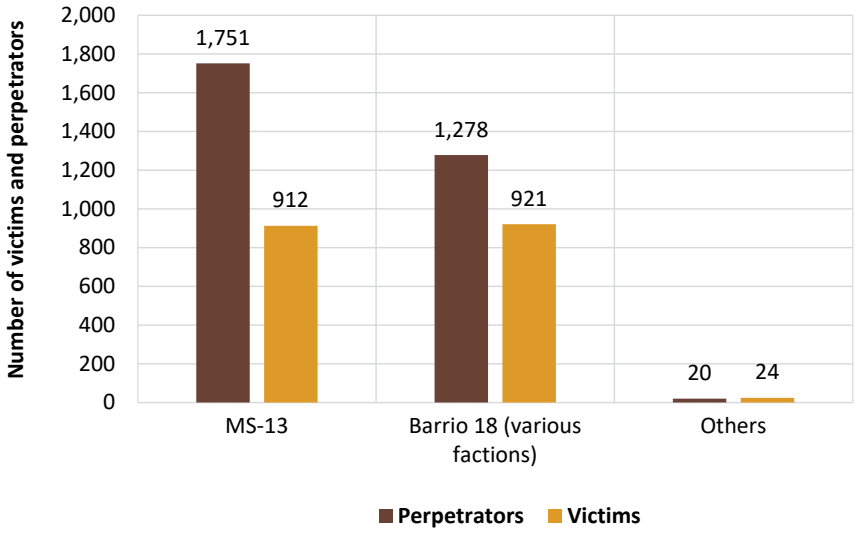
[d] Cruz, J. M., "Central American *maras*: from youth street gangs to transnational protection rackets", *Global Crime*, vol. 11, No. 4 (2010), pp. 379–398.

[e] "La mano dura" ("Hard hand") was the name given to a series of measures taken in El Salvador to suppress gang activity, including mass incarceration. For a discussion of the impact of this policy, see ibid.

Gangs are of particular concern in Honduras and El Salvador, but the impact of gangs on El Salvador is particularly severe. There were about 7,000 *mara* members in Honduras in 2015;[122] El Salvador has about ten times as many, despite being a smaller country.[123] In Honduras, only 22 per cent of respondents in a survey conducted in 2014 felt that their neighbourhood was affected by gangs –half of the value recorded in El Salvador.[124] A 2015 review of homicides in Honduras found that only 5 per cent could be connected to *mara* activity.[125]

By contrast, in El Salvador homicidal violence is very closely tied to *mara* conflict. Between 2014 and 2016, about one third of all homicide victims were known to be gang members. Known gang members are also implicated in a similar share of the homicides, with members of MS-13 being the suspects in a significantly greater number of homicide cases in 2015. These include only cases where the perpetrator gang was known, and so may not reflect the full extent of these gangs' contribution to homicide. Analysis of the data at the municipal level shows that the vulnerability of either side is geographically dependent. In some cities, such as San Miguel, MS-13 members were killed in greater numbers in 2015, while in others, such as Apopa, Barrio 18 members made up the majority of those killed.

Figure 40: *Mara* members as victims and perpetrators of homicide in El Salvador in 2015



Source: Public Prosecution Service of El Salvador.

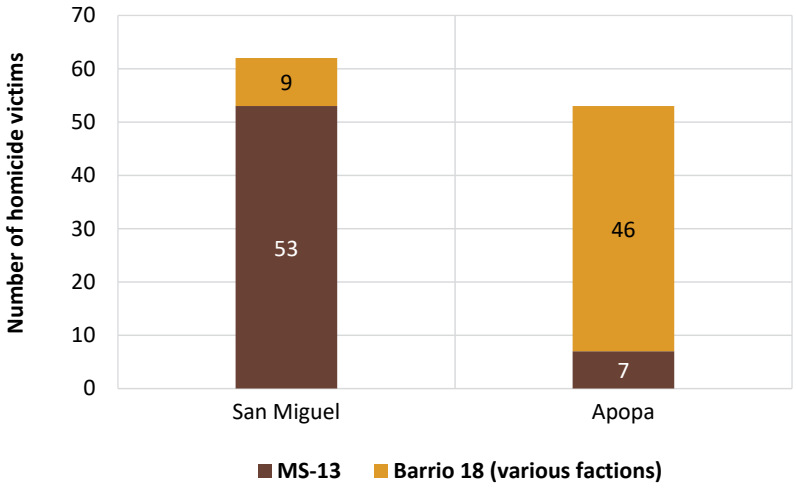
[122] United States Department of State Bureau of Diplomatic Security, *Honduras 2015 Crime and Safety Report* (2015).

[123] Standing at 6.4 million in 2019, the population of El Salvador is also smaller than that of Honduras (9.5 million).

[124] Fundaungo, R. C. M., Cruz, J. M. and Zechmeister, E. J., *Cultura política de la democracia en El Salvador y en las Américas, 2014: Gobernabilidad democrática a través de 10 años del Barómetro de las Américas* (United States Agency for International Development, 2015).

[125] Observatorio de la Violencia, *Mortalidad y Otros*, Boletín, No. 40, February 2016.

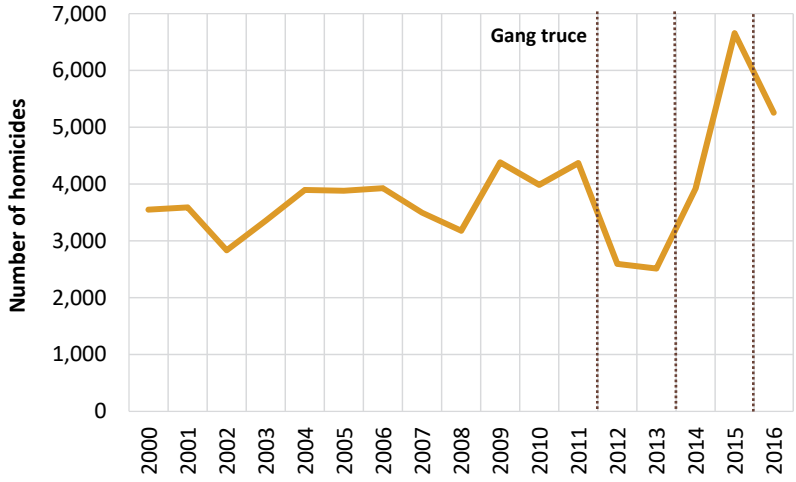
Figure 41: Number of homicide victims by *mara* affiliation in municipalities with the highest *mara*-related homicide counts in 2015



Source: Public Prosecution Service of El Salvador.

Because gang members are responsible for such a large share of the homicides, they have great control over the levels of homicide experienced by El Salvador. This is reflected in the way that peace agreements between imprisoned *mara* leaders affected homicide rates throughout the country. In March 2012, various imprisoned gang leaders agreed to a truce, and by the following year homicide levels had fallen by 40 per cent. This truce fell apart in 2014, however, and 2015 saw record homicide levels in El Salvador. In March 2016, the two gangs MS-13 and Barrio 18 announced that they were unilaterally imposing a ceasefire on their members in order to avoid the emergency measures threatened by the Government.[126] The numbers of homicides recorded in April, May, June and July were about 40 per cent lower than in March. The rate of homicide reached during the truce is comparable to the rate that El Salvador would be expected to have on the basis of its level of socioeconomic development (see booklet 4).

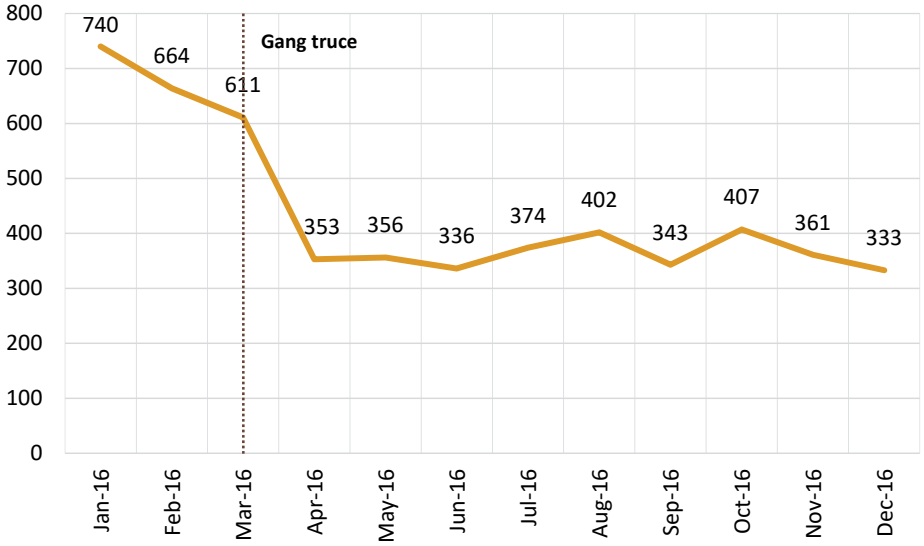
Figure 42: Number of homicides in El Salvador, 2000–2016



Source: UNODC homicide statistics.
Note: The data for 2015 came from the National Police via the Transparency Portal of the Supreme Court of Justice of El Salvador: www.transparencia.oj.gob.sv/es.

[126] Diario La Página, "Pandillas anuncian cese de violencia", video, 26 March 2016.

Figure 43: Number of homicides in El Salvador by month in 2016



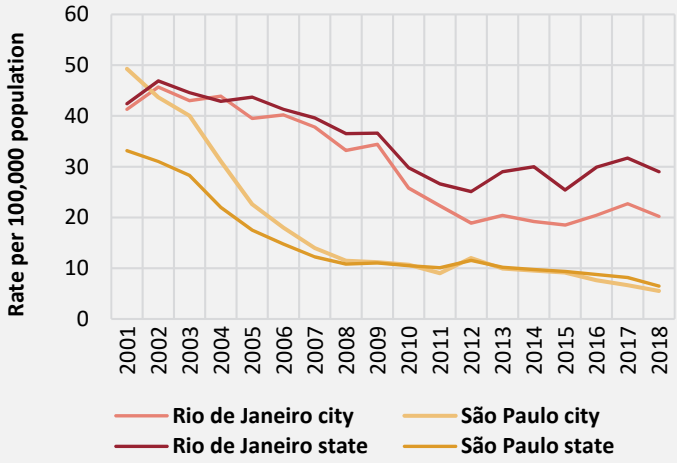
Source: National Police of El Salvador.

Owing to its large size and its high homicide rates, Brazil experiences more homicides than any other country in Latin America. In 2015, some 58,000 people were murdered, which is comparable to the total annual number of conflict deaths that occurred worldwide from 2000 to 2017 (60,000).[127] One in seven homicides worldwide are perpetrated in Brazil. The country is also home to some long-established gangs, the largest of which trace their origins to the prison system.

BOX 6: Homicide reduction in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro: what worked and why?

With more than 86 per cent of the population living in urban areas, Brazil is home to many of the world's most murderous cities.[a] There is surprising heterogeneity in lethal violence across Brazil's urban agglomerations. Between 2001 and 2018, the country's largest city, São Paulo, experienced a steep decline in homicide levels.[b] On the other hand, Rio de Janeiro, experienced a sharp drop in the homicide rate over the period 2008–2015, but since 2016 there has been a gradual increase again. It is legitimate to ask what went right and, equally important, what went wrong?

Homicide rates in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2001–2018)



Source: Rio de Janeiro State Institute of Public Security; São Paulo State Secretariat for Public Security.

[127] Based on data from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program.

The extent to which violent crime has decreased in São Paulo is staggering. The megacity of 12 million residents has registered an 89 per cent drop in the homicide rate since 2001. No other large municipality in Brazil has experienced so dramatic a decline. Meanwhile, the oscillations in Rio de Janeiro's homicide rate are no less remarkable. The city of six million people saw its homicide rate decline by 66 per cent from 2009 to 2015, dropping to an historic low of 18.5 per 100,000, before shooting back up to over 40 per 100,000 by 2018.[c]

A key factor behind São Paulo's success was sustained and targeted investment to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the State's public security architecture. Successive governors and public security secretaries prioritized oversight of the Military and Civil Police, education and training of new recruits, and smarter deployment of existing assets. Likewise, mechanisms were introduced to incentivize and improve cooperation between the Civil and Military Police, particularly in relation to investigation.

Another positive feature of Sao Paulo's approach was its commitment to evidence-informed and community-centred policing. Specifically, police forces adopted real-time crime-mapping technologies to identify hotspots. In order to improve the assimilation of information, police battalions assigned designated officers to monitor performance indicators and allocate assets and resources on the basis of objectively determined needs. Police commanders introduced guidelines to restrict the use of force, coupled with mandatory training in human rights and an emphasis on "defensive" police tactics. Furthermore, the State authorities adopted community policing strategies, including advisory committees made up of civil society representatives.[d]

It is worth stressing that the characteristics of criminal violence are quite distinct in São Paulo relative to other large Brazilian cities. For one, the State and its capital city have long been dominated by a single powerful drug-trafficking organization, the Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC). Unlike in Rio de Janeiro, where several gangs and militia groups compete over territories and markets, PCC exerts a powerful degree of control and influence over poorer neighbourhoods and prisons in São Paulo.[e] PCC instils such fear precisely because of its credible threat to punish transgressions with lethal force.

Structural socioeconomic factors also play a role in shaping the dynamics of crime. For example, São Paulo benefited from comparatively favourable economic conditions over the past two decades, particularly when compared with Rio de Janeiro. The State and metropolitan area registered falling unemployment rates and lower youth population, whereas Rio de Janeiro suffered governance challenges and economic crises. São Paulo is Brazil's economic powerhouse, and while negatively affected by the country's spectacular economic downturn between 2014 and 2016 in particular, it did not experience the dramatic tumult of Rio de Janeiro caused by that city's heavy dependence on oil and tourism revenues.

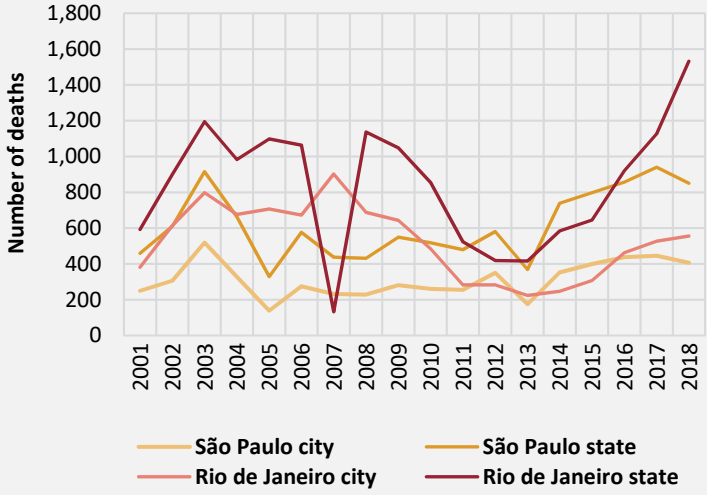
Rio de Janeiro has experienced challenges in the political and economic sphere. Innovative strategies for reducing violent crime introduced since 2008 were either prematurely interrupted or abandoned owing to lack of funds. The Pacifying Police Units programme that had contributed to declining homicide was frozen after 2016 for that reason. Meanwhile, the "system of targets" that had fostered cooperation between Civil and Military Police and incentivized violence prevention across the State also ran out money. After hosting such megaevents as the World Cup in 2014 and the Olympic Games in 2016, the State was literally bankrupt.

Unlike São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro suffers from a higher degree of disequilibrium in its criminal markets. Rather than just one faction, there are three principal gangs – the Comando Vermelho, Amigos de Amigos and Third Pure Command – which are constantly vying for control over drug transit and retail areas.[f]

The implementation of the Pacifying Police Units programme and system of targets since 2008, and subsequently a federal military intervention in 2018, generated uneven crime reduction effects. After a year-on-year declining trend, between 2015 and 2018, the homicide rate stabilized in metropolitan Rio de Janeiro, but climbed by 14 per cent in smaller and mid-sized cities across the State.[g]

Notwithstanding these contrasting trends, both São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro register exceedingly high rates of killings due to interventions by the Military and Civil Police. Despite some sharp drops between 2001 and 2018, police killings in São Paulo actually increased by 85 per cent (851 deaths) in 2018.[h] Roughly one in five killings in São Paulo occur in the course of a police intervention.[i] Significantly, despite fluctuating homicide trends in Rio de Janeiro since 2015, the number of police killings in 2018 was three times higher than in 2001.[j] Approximately one in four violent deaths in Rio de Janeiro in 2018 were a result of police intervention (1,532).[k]

Deaths resulting from police action in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2001–2018)



Source: Rio de Janeiro State Institute of Public Security; São Paulo State Secretariat for Public Security.

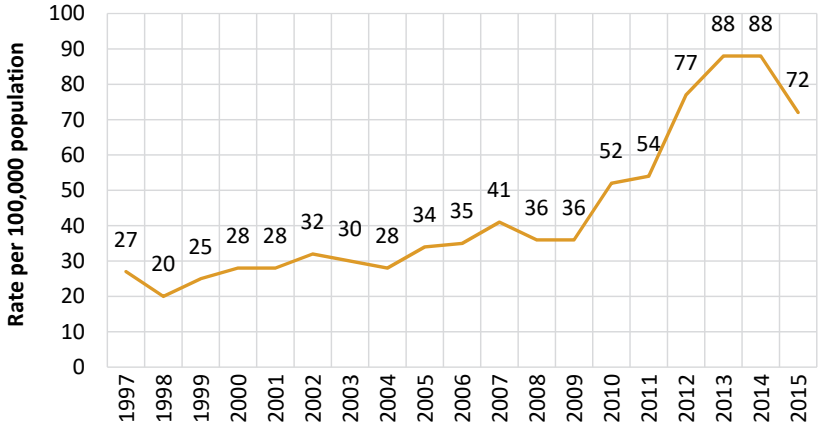
This contribution was provided by Renata Giannini and Robert Muggah, Igarapé Institute.

[a] Institute of Applied Economic Research (IPEA) and Brazilian Forum of Public Security (FBSP), *Atlas da Violência 2018 – Políticas Públicas e Retratos dos Municípios Brasileiros* (Rio de Janeiro, 2018).
[b] São Paulo State Secretariat for Public Security, "Statistical data on the State of São Paulo". Available at www.ssp.sp.gov.br/Estatistica/Pesquisa.aspx.
[c] Rio de Janeiro State Institute of Public Security, "Security statistics". Available at www.ispdados.rj.gov.br/estatistica.html.
[d] For a detailed account of São Paulo's public security policies, see Risso, M. I., "Intentional homicides in São Paulo City: a new perspective", *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development*, vol. 3, No. 1 (2014), pp. 1–12.
[e] Nunes Dias, C. C., *PCC: Hegemonia nas Prisões e Monopólio da Violência* (São Paulo, Saraiva, 2012).
[f] Muggah, R., "A state of insecurity: the case of Rio de Janeiro", *Cadernos de Campo*, No. 22 (January/July 2017), pp. 75–110.
[g] Rio de Janeiro State Institute of Public Security, "Security statistics". Available at www.ispdados.rj.gov.br/estatistica.html.
[h] São Paulo State Secretariat for Public Security, "Statistical data on the State of São Paulo". Available at www.ssp.sp.gov.br/Estatistica/Pesquisa.aspx.
[i] Ibid.
[j] Souto, L., "Rio teve 36% mais mortes em confrontos com a policía durante intervenção", Empresa Brasil de Comunicação, 19 January 2019.
[k] Rio de Janeiro State Institute of Public Security, "Séries históricas anuais de taxa de letalidade violenta no estado do Rio de Janeiro e grandes regiões" (2019).

Most of the violence in Brazil today takes place not in the largest metropolitan areas, where the most notorious prison and street gangs were formed, but in the north-east of the country. The increase in the homicide rate in that region since about 2009 has been truly dramatic. For example, Fortaleza, the capital of the State of Ceará and the fifth largest city in Brazil, has seen the homicide rate triple over the past twenty years, with the steepest rise occurring after 2009. Similar increases can be observed in many port and waterway cities in the north-east.[128] More research, however, is required to determine the contribution of drug conflict to these escalating homicide rates.

[128] For example, the town of Altamira on the Xingu River in the State of Pará had a homicide rate of less than 10 victims per 100,000 population in 1997, but this rose to 125 in 2015. Similarly, the city of Ananindeua on Marajó Bay, also in the State of Pará, went from a rate of 19 per 100,000 in 1997 to 122 in 2015. In the State of Bahia, the city of Porto Seguro on the Atlantic coast went from 27 per 100,000 in 2017 to 92 in 2015. In the State of Maranhão, the city of São José de Ribamar, also on the Atlantic coast, went from 8 per 100,000 in 1997 to 74 in 2015. The homicide rates in the coastal capitals of five north-eastern States – Maranhão, Rio Grande do Norte, Paraíba, Alagoas and Sergipe – increased by an average of 41 percentage points between 1997 and 2015. All these data are from the Mortality Information System maintained by the Health Surveillance Secretariat within the Ministry of Health.

Figure 44: Homicide rates in Fortaleza, Brazil (1997–2015)

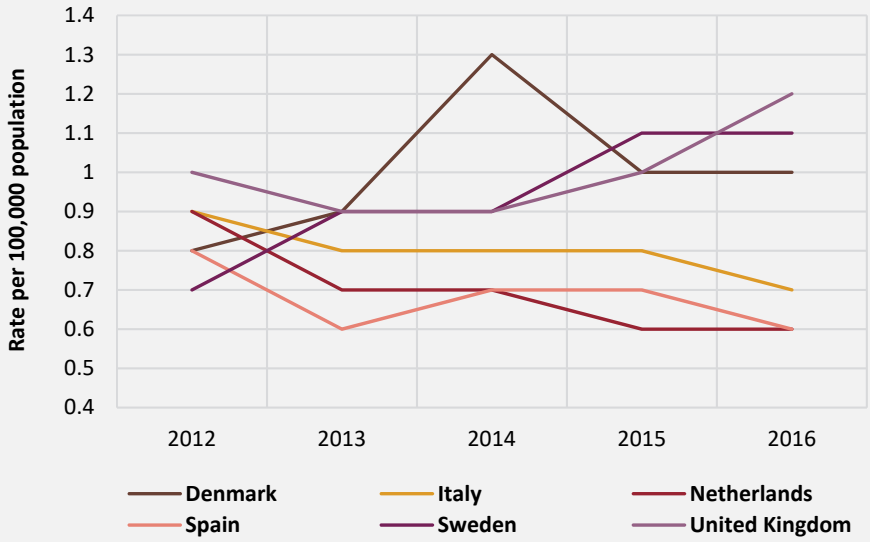


Source: Ministry of Health/Health Surveillance Secretariat, Mortality Information System.

BOX 7: Homicide and gang violence in Europe

In recent years, a number of European countries have experienced increasing use of weapons and gang violence. This trend has sparked widespread media attention and general concern over public safety. In some of these countries, conflicts between armed gangs appear to have contributed to rising levels of lethal violence; in others, the levels of homicide have fluctuated, or even decreased, though the continuous presence of criminal gangs has caused social alarm. The figure below presents recent developments in homicide rates in countries where there have been concerns with regard to gangs and gang violence.

Homicide rates in some European countries with reported gang violence, 2012–2016



Source: UNODC homicide statistics.

For the purpose of the present analysis, the term "gang" is taken to refer not just to street gangs made up of young people[a] but also to groups of adults involved in illegal activities and criminal offences, such as outlaw motorcycle gangs.[b] However, organized crime groups, such as drug trafficking organizations, mafias and other covert networks are excluded.

Violent crimes, weapons and criminal gangs in countries with rising or fluctuating homicide trends

In Sweden, Denmark and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland there has been a notable increase – or fluctuation – in the levels of homicide and other violent crimes resulting from interpersonal

violence and criminal gang activity. The surge in violence has been accompanied by a reported increase in the use of potentially lethal weapons such as firearms, knives and explosives.

The proliferation of such weapons has been especially evident in Sweden. This Nordic country has experienced rising levels of homicide since 2012, recording the highest number of cases in 2017 (113 offences).[c] Studies reveal that the majority of lethal violence incidents (75 per cent) occurred in the metropolitan areas of Stockholm, Gothenburg, and Malmö. This increase in homicide appears to be partly due to an increased use of firearms: 40 gun-related deaths occurred in 2017, 33 per cent more than in the previous year. Further, Sweden has experienced a peculiar phenomenon in peacetime: the use of combat weapons. The Swedish Police recorded 77 cases of hand grenade detonations between 2011 and 2016.[d] This unusual type of violence may be explained by several contributing factors: low price and ease of access to such weapons, mild sanctions for explosives crimes, and conflicts between gangs.[f]

Gang activity is not a recent phenomenon in Sweden: outlaw motorcycle gangs have existed in the country since the 1990s.[g] Alongside these, Sweden has seen the emergence of unstructured and less experienced street gangs – smaller criminal groups resembling loosely organized American street gangs.[h] Research on Swedish street gangs shows that most are ethnically heterogeneous, small (50 or fewer members), composed of adults rather than juveniles, and with versatile offending behaviour.[i] While it is difficult to establish a clear relationship between increasing shootings and hand grenade attacks with gang activity, law enforcement agencies and researchers have linked the rise in gun violence to the competition between rival groups striving to control parts of the criminal market. Gang-related homicides are often perpetrated with the use of guns,[j] and the risks of lethal and non-lethal gun violence are especially high among young males in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.[k]

A number of measures have been taken in response to the increased number of deaths related to gun violence and the use of explosives, including amendments to the explosives laws in 2018, a weapons amnesty and "Stop Shooting" campaigns (e.g. in Malmö).

In recent years, an escalation in violent crime and gang conflicts has also been reported in Denmark, which has experienced increasing, albeit fluctuating, homicide rates since 2012. According to Statistics Denmark, in 2017 the number of homicides increased by 16 per cent (to 65 offences) compared with the two previous years.[l] Street gangs and outlaw motorcycle gangs have been involved in homicides and shootings. As in Sweden, preventive measures have been implemented in Denmark to reduce gun and gang violence, including: temporary closure of motorcycle gangs' clubhouses, weapons amnesties, gang exit programmes, and tougher penalties for weapons offences.[p]

In the United Kingdom, the mortality rate in interpersonal conflicts increased by almost 22 per cent in 2016 compared with the previous year (from 649 offences in 2015 to 791 in 2016), as indicated by the data provided to UNODC. The rising homicide rate has also been due to an increase in the use of knives and other sharp instruments. In fact, despite a decrease in overall crime levels, since 2014 the number of conflicts involving knives has continued to rise.[q] According to the Office for National Statistics, in England and Wales between July 2017 and June 2018 knife offences increased by 12 per cent (to 39,332) compared with the previous year.[r] Lethal violence resulting from the use of knives and other sharp weapons increased by 25 per cent (to 280 fatal stabbings), accounting for 40 per cent of total homicides.[s] Knife crime has primarily affected London, with 168 knife offences for every 100,000 inhabitants in 2017–2018 (a rise of 18 per cent since 2016–2017).[t] Furthermore, this type of violent crime has disproportionately affected young black people and ethnic minorities. The increase in fatal violence and knife crime may have been driven by a number of influencing factors, including (but not limited to): the effect of social media (i.e. recording of live videos) and related visibility for young adults, cuts in police budgets, loss of funding designated to youth services, drugs and profits, and gang violence.[u]

Studies on gangs in London have indicated that social exclusion, unemployment, lack of education, and exposure to racism and violent victimization are among the factors prompting young people to become involved in gangs, which provide them with an alternative source of identity and personal fulfilment.[v]

More recently, criminal gangs operating in the drugs market in London have become particularly violent, as reflected in increasing knife crime and homicide among drug dealers (and users). These gangs are, moreover, keen to travel to suburban areas to meet the increasing demand for drugs.[w] This new and growing drug supply model, known as "county lines",[x] has seen drug gangs and organized crime networks exploiting vulnerable young people and adults as couriers to transport drugs from major cities to rural areas.[y] To raise awareness of the risks related to knife carrying and tackle the phenomenon of county lines, the Government has launched media campaigns and has continued to fund the Ending Gang Violence and Exploitation programme.[z]

Violent crimes and criminal gangs in countries with decreasing homicide levels

The Netherlands, Spain and Italy have registered decreasing levels of homicide since 2012. Nonetheless, such countries have also been affected by violent crimes and criminal gang activity. Thus, the Netherlands has seen decreasing homicide rates – 0.5 per 100,000 population in 2016, down from 0.8 in 2012, according to data provided to UNODC – but at the same time also increasing criminal activity by some outlaw motorcycle gangs. Such gangs have existed in the country since the 1970s, though it is more recently that they have started to be perceived as a public threat, with concerns raised over their alleged involvement in organized crime (extortion, drug trafficking). Studies carried out in the Netherlands to date have not found evidence that such groups should be classified as criminal organizations, though they have highlighted the disproportionate involvement of gang members in crime compared with other bikers.[aa] Future studies may shed more light on the association between this type of gang membership and violent crime, and also inform better criminal justice approaches.

Southern European countries, such as Spain and Italy, have experienced gang violence but decreasing levels of homicide. Since 2012, Spain has registered declining homicide rates (0.6 per 100,000 population in 2016 compared with 0.8 in 2012, according to data provided to UNODC), though in 2017 the number of reported cases of lethal violence increased (to 308 offences, up from 294 in 2016).[bb] As for Italy, the homicide rate has continued to fall since 2012, with a 8 per cent decrease in 2017 (to 368 offences) compared with the previous year (400 offences).[cc]

In Spain, the Ministry of the Interior released, in 2018, the first in-depth analysis of 632 homicides for the period 2010–2012.[dd] This analysis showed that the majority of homicides were motivated by interpersonal violence (78 per cent) and were committed using weapons (59 per cent). Of the total number of homicides, 18 per cent involved other criminal activities, above all robbery (7.8 per cent), and to a lower extent criminal groups (1.4 per cent) and gangs (0.8 per cent).[ee] While homicides related to criminal groups and gangs did not account for a large proportion of the total, they were more likely to involve young people, as both perpetrators and victims.[ff] Moreover, such incidents of lethal violence tended to attract widespread public attention because they often occurred in public places as a result of conflicts between drug gangs.

The analysis further showed that 10.7 per cent of homicides (68 offences) were drug-related and, in particular, positively associated with drug selling or drug trafficking.[gg] In Spain, escalating violence associated with drug gangs has recently not only caught the attention of the media and law enforcement agencies, but also led to protests by local residents.[hh] One of the areas most affected has been Costa del Sol, a popular tourist destination on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea.[ii] In Malaga, between January and November 2018, 15 homicides were recorded among criminals who were involved in drug trafficking from Colombia and other Latin American countries.[jj]

Violent crimes in some Southern European cities have also been related to the growth of “Latin” street gangs. These gangs are well-established groups, originally from the United States and Latin America, that are predominantly composed of Hispanic young adults and juveniles. On the one hand, some researchers argue that these groups – such as the Latin Kings – have been socially constructed as criminal organizations, while in fact they are organizations providing a sense of belonging and strong group identity to Latino immigrants facing social exclusion.[kk] On the other hand, law enforcement agencies have found Latin gangs to be responsible for several incidents of violent and serious crime, including murder, attempted murder, robbery, and drug trafficking.[ll] Major Spanish cities such as Madrid and Barcelona have been affected by Latin street gangs, alleged transnational criminal organizations with contacts with their country of origin (e.g. El Salvador, Ecuador, the United States). Increasing levels of gang-related violence, along with relevant judicial evidence, have prompted the Spanish Supreme Court to ban some Latin gangs as criminal organizations, and the central Government to deport gang members convicted of various crimes.[mm]

Since the early 2000s, Latin street gangs have also emerged in Italian cities such as Genoa and Milan. In Milan, the law enforcement agencies identified about 4,000 Latin gang members over the period 2006–2010. In 2010, the Juvenile Court of Milan convicted a Latin gang on the grounds that it was a criminal organization – the first such ruling in Italy.[nn] More recently, police investigators found additional evidence that such groups – the notorious Salvadoran Mara Salvatrucha, 18th Street, Latin Kings, Ñetas and Trinitarios – consist of criminal organizations with a hierarchical structure and an internal division of roles. While it is difficult to obtain reliable figures on gang-related crimes, there has been an increase in violent crimes in public places since 2011. In Milan, conflicts between rival groups have resulted in murders, attempted murders and robberies involving the use of bladed weapons (e.g. machetes). Some Latin gangs were also found to be involved in drug-related crimes such as street-level drug dealing and drug trafficking.

In Spain and Italy, various factors may have contributed to prevent the evolution of Latin gangs into more organized forms of criminal groups as in some Latin American countries where they pose a serious national security threat. Thus, countries such as El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala have suffered seriously from gang activities not just in terms of homicide, robbery and protection rackets, but also in terms of human smuggling and trafficking of weapons. A study on gang violence argues that "[it] is not necessarily a way to counter the state but a way of participating in modes of wealth accumulation and redistribution that have been essential to the workings of Central American states".[oo] Further, weak prison systems and institutions have been unable to deal efficiently with the problem of prison gangs. Compared with Latin American countries affected by gang violence, which are often characterized by a weak rule of law and poor governance, European countries have experienced lower levels of poverty and street violence. These factors, along with intelligence activity and the greater efficiency of the judicial system, have helped keep gang violence under control in European countries.

In conclusion, some European countries in which the presence and violence of gangs have attracted public attention have experienced increasing or fluctuating levels of homicide in recent years, while in others these have tended to decrease. Lethal violence has been associated with the rising use of weapons and the presence of gangs, but it is unclear to what extent violence related to criminal groups' activities and the presence of street gangs has contributed to higher levels of homicide. European countries experiencing lethal violence related to weapons and criminal gangs have developed various prevention strategies alongside police crackdowns to reduce the number of homicides and violent crimes taking place on the streets. Repressive law enforcement interventions may be a solution in the short term; however, in the long term, preventive programmes aimed at vulnerable young people and adults to promote social inclusion and desistance from gang involvement can reduce gang violence.

[a] Scholars have long debated the characteristic features of gangs. To date, there seems to be consensus on the definition developed by the Eurogang Research Network, a group of scholars interested in comparative research on gangs across countries, which is as follows: "a street gang is any durable, street-oriented youth group whose involvement in illegal activity is part of its group identity". See Klein, M. W. and Maxson, C. L., Street Gang Patterns and Policies (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 4. See also Weerman, F. M. et al., *Eurogang Program Manual: Background, Development and Use of the Eurogang Instruments in Multi-Site, Multi-Method Comparative Research* (2009).

[b] While the United States Department of Justice considers all outlaw motorcycle gangs to be criminal organizations, researchers stress the importance of investigating each individual group or chapter to assess whether it is an outlaw motorcycle club comprising criminals or a criminal gang. For more information on such gangs, see Bain, A. and Lauchs, M., eds., Understanding the Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs: International Perspectives (Durham, North Carolina, Carolina Academic Press, 2017).

[c] Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention, *Kriminalstatistik 2017: Konstaterade fall av dödligt våld – En granskning av anmält dödligt våld 2017* (Stockholm, 2018).

[d] Sturup, J., Gerell, M. and Rostami, A., "Explosive evidence: a near-repeat study of hand grenade detonations and shootings in urban Sweden", *European Journal of Criminology*, 2019.

[f] Sturup, J., Gerell, M. and Rostami, A., "Explosive evidence: a near-repeat study of hand grenade detonations and shootings in urban Sweden".

[g] Rostami, A., "Policing gangs and organized crime: reflections on conceptual confusion and its consequences from two Swedish case studies", in *Gang Transitions and Transformations in an International Context* (Springer International Publishing, 2016).

[h] For research on gangs in Stockholm, see Sarnecki, J. and Pettersson, T., "Criminal networks in Stockholm", in *The Eurogang Paradox: Street Gangs and Youth Groups in the U.S. and Europe* (Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001). See also Leinfelt, F. and Rostami, A., *The Stockholm Gang Model: PANTHER – Stockholm Gang Intervention and Prevention Project, 2009–2012* (Stockholm, Polismyndigheten i Stockholms län, 2012).

[i] Rostami, A., Leinfelt, F. and Holgersson, S., "An exploratory analysis of Swedish street gangs: applying the Maxson and Klein typology to a Swedish gang dataset", *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, vol. 28, No. 4 (November 2012), pp. 426–445.

[j] Khoshnood, A. and Väfors-Fritz, M., "Offender characteristics: a study of 23 violent offenders in Sweden", *Deviant Behavior,* vol. 38, No. 2 (2017), pp. 141–153.

[k] Sturup, J. et al., "Increased gun violence among young males in Sweden: a descriptive national survey and international comparison", *European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research*, 2018.

[l] The year 2018 has been excluded because only data for the first three quarters of the year are available. For more information, see: Statistics Denmark, "Criminal offences". Available at www.dst.dk/en/Statistik/emner/levevilkaar/kriminalitet (accessed on 7 January 2019).

[p] For a complete list of the 28 initiatives promoted by the Danish Government, see the "Gangs behind bars" report (in Danish only): Denmark, Ministry of Justice, *Bander bag tremmer: 28 initiativer mod rocker- og bandekriminalitet* (Copenhagen, 2017).

[q] United Kingdom, Her Majesty's Government, *Serious Violence Strategy* (2018).

[r] United Kingdom, Office for National Statistics, "Crime in England and Wales: year ending June 2018", Statistical Bulletin (release date: 25 April 2019).

[s] Ibid.

[t] Allen, G. and Audickas, L., "Knife crime in England and Wales", Briefing Paper, No. SN4304 (House of Commons Library, 9 November 2018).

[u] Dearden, L., "Why is knife crime increasing in England and Wales?", *The Independent*, 27 April 2018. See also Warrell, H., "Why England is facing a rising tide of knife crime", *Financial Times*, 20 November 2018.

[v] Densley, J. A. and Stevens, A., "'We'll show you gang': the subterranean structuration of gang life in London", *Criminology and Criminal Justice*, vol. 15, No. 1 (February 2015), pp. 102–120.

[w] United Kingdom, *Serious Violence Strategy*; United Kingdom, National Crime Agency, *County Lines Violence, Exploitation and Drug Supply 2017: National Briefing Report* (London, 2017).

[x] "'County lines' is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more importing areas [within the UK], using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of 'deal line'" (United Kingdom, *Serious Violence Strategy*, p. 48).

[y] Ibid. See also Coomber, R. and Moyle, L., "The changing shape of street-level heroin and crack supply in England: commuting, holidaying and cuckooing drug dealers across 'county lines'", *British Journal of Criminology*, vol. 58, No. 6 (November 2018), pp. 1323–1342; Robinson, G., McLean, R. and Densley, J., "Working county lines: child criminal exploitation and illicit drug dealing in Glasgow and Merseyside", *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, vol. 63, No. 5 (April 2019), pp. 694–711.

[z] United Kingdom, Her Majesty's Government, *Ending Gang Violence and Exploitation* (2016).

[aa] Blokland, A. et al., "Not your average biker: criminal careers of members of Dutch outlaw motorcycle gangs", *Trends in Organized Crime*, vol. 22, No. 1 (March 2019), pp. 10–33.

[bb] Spain, Ministry of the Interior, *Anuario Estadístico del Ministerio del Interior 2017* (Madrid, 2018).

[cc] Italy, National Statistics Institute, "Crimes reported by the police forces to the judicial authority", I.Stat database. Available at http://dati.istat.it/ (accessed on 2. 7.2019).

[dd] Spain, Ministry of the Interior, *Informe Sobre el Homicidio en España 2010–2012* (Madrid, 2018).

[ee] Ibid.

[ff] Data from the Ministry of the Interior show that of the total number of homicides involving young people (40), half were gang-related.

[gg] Santos Hermoso, J., Pena Trenco, Y. and González, J. L., "Homicidio relacionado con drogas: una tipología de la violencia", poster presented at the 12th National Congress of Criminology SEIC-FACE, Oviedo, Spain, June 2018.

[hh] Cañas, J. A., "How drug gangs in southern Spain are increasingly crossing the line", *El País*, 9 February 2018.

[ii] Ortega Dolz, P. and Sánchez, N., "Narco warfare on the rise on Spain's Costa del Sol", *El País*, 11 December 2018. See also Clarkson, W., *Costa del Crime* (London, John Blake, 2006).

[jj] Sánchez, N., "Man shot in Marbella amid wave of drug-related crime", *El País*, 21 November 2018.

[kk] Giliberti, L., "Latin gangs in Spain? Immigrant youth groups, stigma and symptoms", *Revista Española de Investigaciones Sociológicas*, No. 148 (October–December 2014), pp. 61–78. See also, Feixa, C. et al., "Latin Kings in Barcelona", in *Street Gangs, Migration and Ethnicity* (Devon, Willan Publishing, 2008).

[ll] Ortega, Doloz, P. and Sánchez, N., "How police brought down the most dangerous gang on the Costa del Sol", *El País,* 4 December, 2018.

[mm] Barroso, J. F., "Madrid begins deporting Latino street gang members", *El País*, 12 March 2015; Fabra, M., "Spain bans 'dangerous' Latin American street gang Dominican Don't Play", *El País*, 12 February 2014.

[nn] Moyersoen, J., "Le bande di giovani latino-americani: dalle origini del fenomeno al primo impatto con la giustizia minorile a Milano", *Minorigiustizia*, No. 3 (2016), pp. 130–140.

[oo] Méndez, M. J., "The violence work of transnational gangs in Central America", *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 40, No. 2 (2018), pp. 373–388.

SOCIOPOLITICAL HOMICIDE

According to the *International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes* (ICCS), sociopolitical homicide is a typology of intentional homicide related to political agendas, these being a set of values, beliefs or issues that are advocated by a political or ideological organization.[129] This typology is probably the most difficult to identify and record as a separate subset of homicides in national and international statistical systems. It may represent a significant share of all homicides in only a few countries where sporadic or chronic political instability produces a large number of intentional killings. However, this cannot be assessed globally with great certainty because political instability often goes hand in hand with the lack of political will or technical capacity to record homicides specifically related to the pursuit of a political agenda. Sociopolitical homicide can be divided into three broad types:[130]

- Intentional killings resulting from violence triggered by prejudice towards subpopulation groups that are targeted because of their characteristics, beliefs or values (defined also as hate crime).
- Intentional killings perpetrated to pursue a political agenda, including killings by terrorist groups and killings that target population groups which represent, promote or are somehow perceived to obstruct a certain political discourse (such population groups may include politicians, journalists or human rights defenders).
- Intentional killings during civil unrest, i.e. during a situation of violent hostilities between two or more parties that does not amount to an internal armed conflict.[131] Such hostilities may include riots or other sporadic acts of violence linked to strikes or protests/demonstrations that turn violent. Although not all killings in such situations may constitute homicide, some do fall into this category. This type of sociopolitical homicide includes mob violence, vigilantism, unlawful killings by the police, excessive use of force by law enforcement officers and extrajudicial killings.

Given the paucity of data, it is not possible to quantify the extent of sociopolitical homicide at the national or international level. Among the three main types of sociopolitical homicide, sufficient information can be obtained only for homicide perpetrated to pursue a political agenda, namely by looking at specific categories of victims or perpetrators. The limited data available on homicide by law enforcement officers and the challenges related to the underreporting of such killings are discussed in booklet 2 of this study. In the following sections, various examples of sociopolitical homicide are provided in order to illustrate some of its characteristics.

The killing of human rights defenders

The targeted killing of human rights defenders falls into the category of sociopolitical homicide. It has a political connotation and is aimed at suppressing a political agenda centred on the protection of people's fundamental rights. At the international level, the definition of human rights defenders is enshrined in the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (the "Declaration on Human Rights Defenders"), adopted in 1998.[132] Even though the definition provides a wide scope for interpreting who is to be considered a "human rights defender", it is made clear that these are people striving to protect human rights, by themselves or in association with others. Furthermore, the definition explicitly refers to the State's duty to ensure protection for all those who exercise their rights under the Declaration.[133]

There are no official global statistics on killings of human rights defenders, but Amnesty International reported that "in 2016, at least 22 countries saw people killed for peacefully standing up for human rights"

[129] UNODC, *International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes*, p. 102.

[130] Ibid.

[131] Ibid., p. 17.

[132] A/RES/53/144. According to the Declaration, "Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to promote and to strive for the protection and realization of human rights". Moreover, "everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to benefit from an effective remedy and to be protected in the event of the violation of those rights".

[133] A/RES/53/144, annex, article 2.

and that "in 63 countries, they faced smear campaigns".[134] It would therefore appear that this type of sociopolitical homicide affects quite a wide range of countries, although cases are rarely recorded as such.

The attacks, intimidation and smear campaigns that human rights defenders are subjected to vary, depending on the context in which they operate and the particular risks they face. Human rights defenders themselves come from many walks of life – they include community leaders, journalists, lawyers, victims of abuse and their families, and environmental and women's rights activists. Despite the progress made by Governments in supporting their work and implementing legal mechanisms to ensure their safety, human rights defenders all over the world continue to face challenges when carrying out their work, in contexts such as the promotion of freedom of expression, protection of the environment, and the promotion of gender equality and women's rights.

Women can also be subjected to attacks and even lethal violence when they are engaged in public activities and campaigns aimed at defending their human rights. Despite the significant progress achieved on gender equality, resistance to the work of women human rights defenders has emerged on multiple levels. The specific forms of this resistance are linked to wider political developments. Women human rights defenders are targeted for reasons that are closely related to the specific contexts in which they operate.[135]

Given the increasing depletion of natural resources, the environment has become a new frontline for human rights. In many parts of the world, social and community leaders are striving to protect the environment and promote alternative ways of economic development. A report by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders indicates that Latin America and Asia have become the most dangerous regions for environmental human rights defenders: 151 killings were documented there between 2011 and 2016.[136] Amnesty International has reported the killing of environmental human rights defenders in Africa, Asia and Latin America.[137]

Human rights defenders are subjected to lethal violence in many parts of the world, but there are very few countries that comply with public accountability and record cases of such killings. Aside from the reporting undertaken by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights,[138] Colombia is one of the few countries that record cases of killings of human rights defenders. The Ombudsman's Office of Colombia (Defensoría del Pueblo de Colombia) recorded 343 killings of human rights defenders and social leaders between 1 January 2016 and 22 August 2018,[139] while 164 such killings are said to have occurred in 2018.[140]

In Mexico, the National Human Rights Commission recorded 285 attacks on human rights defenders, including instances of harassment, assault, robbery and cybercrime during the first ten months of 2017.[144] In 2012, the Congress passed a federal law establishing a national mechanism to protect the life, dignity, freedom and safety of human rights defenders and journalists. Despite such measures and also despite campaigns to raise public awareness of the threats faced by these groups, they have continued to be subjected to lethal violence. Some human rights defenders in Mexico are targeted specifically on account of their gender, most notably the various women activists who have launched campaigns to combat widespread violence against women and gender-related killings. Significantly, more than 43 women human rights defenders and journalists are reported to have been killed between 2010 and 2017.[145]

Since data on the number of attacks and killings of human rights defenders are only available for a very small number of countries, it is not possible to give an accurate estimate of the magnitude of this problem.

[134] Amnesty International, *Human Rights Defenders under Threat: A Shrinking Space for Civil Society* (2017), p. 5.

[135] A/HRC/40/60, paras. 23–28.

[136] A/71/281, paras. 34–38.

[137] Amnesty International, *Human Rights Defenders under Threat: A Shrinking Space for Civil Society* (2017), p. 5.

[138] A/HRC/37/3/Add.3, para. 8–15.

[139] http://www.defensoria.gov.co/es/public/contenido/7399/Homicidios-de-líderes-sociales-y-defensores-de-DDHH.htm

[140] Ombudsman's Office of Colombia, "En 2018 han sido asesinados 164 líderes sociales y defensores de derechos humanos", 13 December 2018.

[144] A/HRC/37/51/Add.2, para. 16.

[145] Ibid., para. 53.

Professionals at risk of being killed at work: journalists and humanitarian aid workers

As professionals who often work in insecure environments, mostly in response to natural or human-caused disasters, both journalists and aid workers are prone to certain risks that can threaten their safety and even their lives. Over the last few years, the risks faced by those exercising their right to express opinions and disseminate information have been cause for growing concern.[146] Some professionals may be killed in war or conflict zones or in situations of civil unrest, while others may become specific targets of homicidal violence. The killing of journalists and humanitarian aid workers often occurs in the context of numerous other violations, which include kidnappings, arbitrary detention, torture, intimidation and harassment, both offline and online, and seizure or destruction of material.[147]

The safety of journalists and their role in promoting inclusive and sustainable societies was recognized in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. As part of Sustainable Development Goal 16, target 16.10 calls for ensuring public access to information, and one of its two corresponding indicators, 16.10.1, measures progress on this target by looking at the number of cases of killing, kidnapping, enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention and torture of journalists, associated media personnel, human rights activists and trade unionists.[148] In connection to this, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) monitors attacks on journalists and draws attention to the elevated risk of being killed that members of the profession face.

The killing of journalists and humanitarian aid workers has consequences beyond the loss of individual lives. UNESCO considers the killing of journalists an attack on the human right to free expression.[149] Violence against aid workers greatly restricts access and mobility on the ground and often results in suspended, reduced or even terminated humanitarian activities, thus placing the lives and well-being of the hundreds of thousands of vulnerable people who depend on them at risk.

Killing of journalists and other media workers

In 2016 and 2017, UNESCO recorded 182 killings of journalists worldwide. Overall, the number of killings over the period 2016–2017 was lower than in the previous two-year period. In 2017, the largest number of killings took place in the Asia and the Pacific region (40 per cent of all killings), while in 2016, the largest number of killings occurred in the Arab States[150] (34 per cent). The other African subregions, Europe, North America and Oceania each accounted for fewer than 10 per cent of all killings in both years. The two countries with the highest number of killings in 2016 and 2017 were Mexico and Afghanistan. During both those years, Iraq, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen also reported relatively higher numbers of journalists killed than in the past.[151]

[146] UNESCO and University of Oxford, *World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development: 2017/2018 Global Report* (Paris, UNESCO, 2018).

[147] UNESCO, "2018 DG report on the safety of journalists and the danger of impunity", document CI-18/COUNCIL-31/6/REV 2.

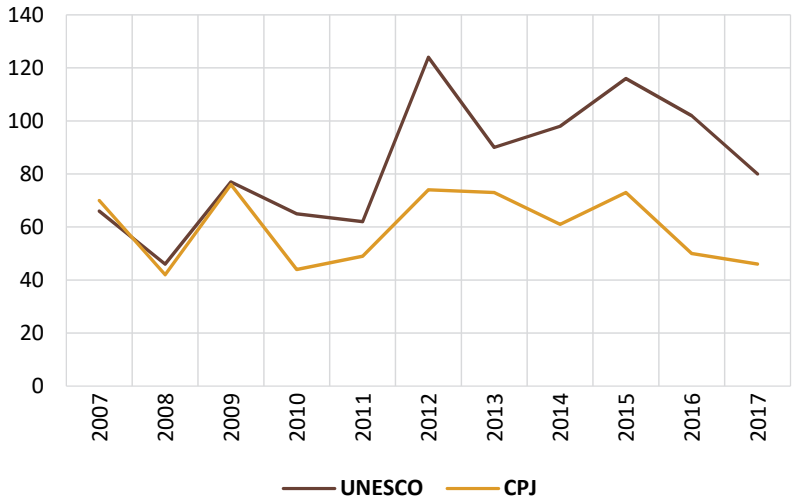
[148] UNESCO and University of Oxford, *World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development: 2017/2018 Global Report*, p. 160.

[149] Ibid., p. 134.

[150] UNESCO defines the Arab States region as comprising Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Malta, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

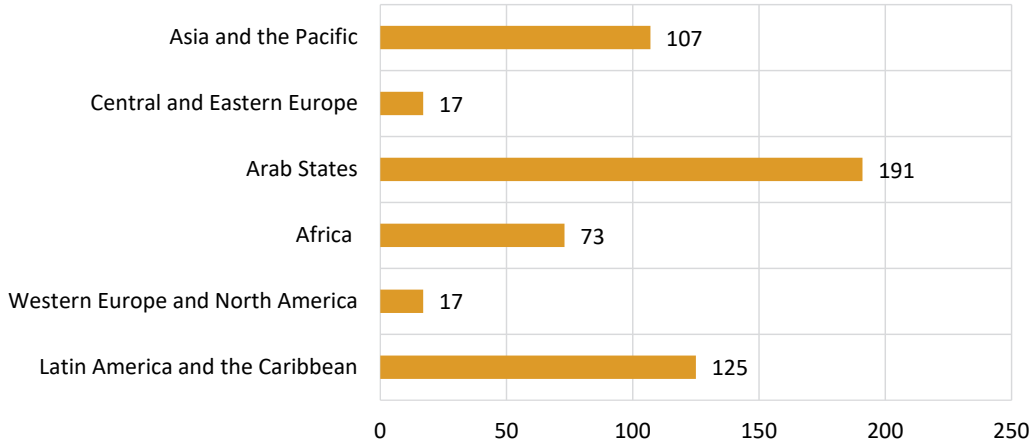
[151] UNESCO, "2018 DG report on the safety of journalists and the danger of impunity", p. 8.

Figure 45: Number of journalists killed in the line of duty, 2007–2017



Source: UNESCO statistics; CPJ database.
Note: CPJ – Committee to Protect Journalists.[152]

Figure 46: Number of journalists killed, by region, 2012–2016



Source: UNESCO and University of Oxford, *World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development: 2017/2018 Global Report* (Paris, UNESCO, 2018), p. 136.

In 2017, the vast majority (86 per cent) of journalists who lost their lives were men. The percentage of journalists killed that year who were women (14 per cent) is considerably lower than their overall representation in the profession. This may be due to the fact that women journalists are less frequently assigned to work in dangerous areas.[153] Over the last decade, the share of journalists killed who are women has risen, from 4 per cent in 2012, 10 per cent in 2016, to 14 per cent in 2017. Another stable trend is that the vast majority of journalists killed were local journalists, with only 2 in 10 being foreign correspondents. As for location, most killings of journalists (56 per cent) from 2012 to 2016 occurred in countries that were experiencing armed conflict.[154] However, a steady increase in the number of journalists killed outside

[152] The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) is an independent, non-profit organization that promotes press freedom worldwide. It keeps statistics on the death of every journalist who it is reasonably certain was killed in direct reprisal for his or her work; was killed in crossfire during combat situations; or was killed while carrying out a dangerous assignment such as coverage of a street protest. Journalists killed in accidents such as car or plane crashes are not included. In monitoring the killing of journalists, UNESCO uses a broad definition of the term "journalist" to include reporters, camera operators, photojournalists, television presenters, columnists, editors, broadcasters, radio presenters and other members of the media. From the CPJ and UNESCO data it is not always possible to differentiate between journalists who were victims of intentional homicide and those who were victims of war or conflict.

[153] UNESCO and University of Oxford, *World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development: 2017/2018 Global Report*, p. 154.

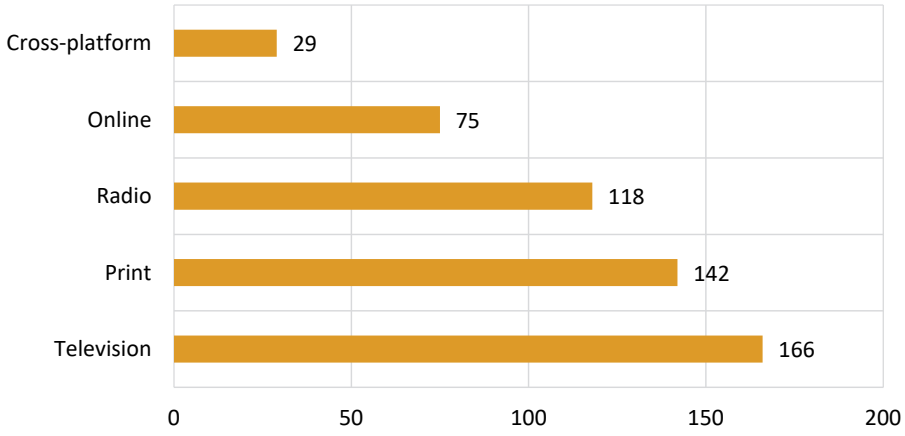
[154] Ibid., p. 140.

armed conflict zones has been observed in the last few years; in 2017 a majority (55 per cent) were killed in countries not experiencing armed conflict.

In order to further draw attention to the threats confronted by journalists, UNESCO recently launched the Observatory of Killed Journalists, an online database which also gives the status of the judicial inquiries into their deaths.[155]

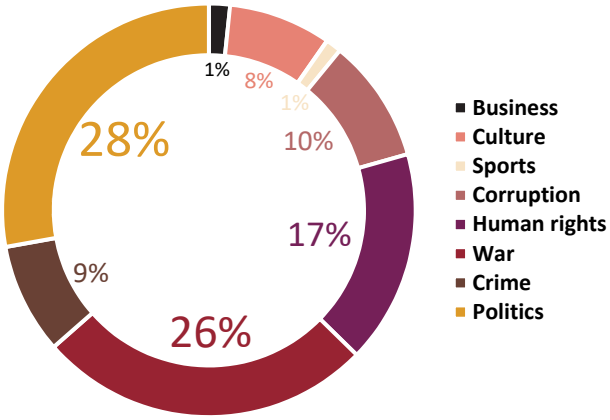
Besides UNESCO, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) also tracks events around the world in which journalists are killed because of their professional activities, and takes note of the type of media and of the topics the journalists were working on. Overall, television journalists constituted the largest victim group: over the period 2012–2016, 166 of the 530 journalists killed were working for television channels (31 per cent), followed by journalists working in print media (142; 27 per cent) and, in third place, by those working for radio stations (118; 22 per cent). Data from the last few years indicate that the topics that journalists were covering at the time of their killing were mostly (local) politics (28 per cent), human rights (26 per cent) and war (17 per cent). According to CPJ, the main source of the violence aimed at journalists in recent years has been political groups (39 per cent), followed by military officials (17 percent) and unknown sources (16 per cent).

Figure 47: Type of media for which journalists killed were working, 2012–2016



Source: UNESCO and University of Oxford, *World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development: 2017/2018 Global Report* (Paris, UNESCO, 2018), p. 141.

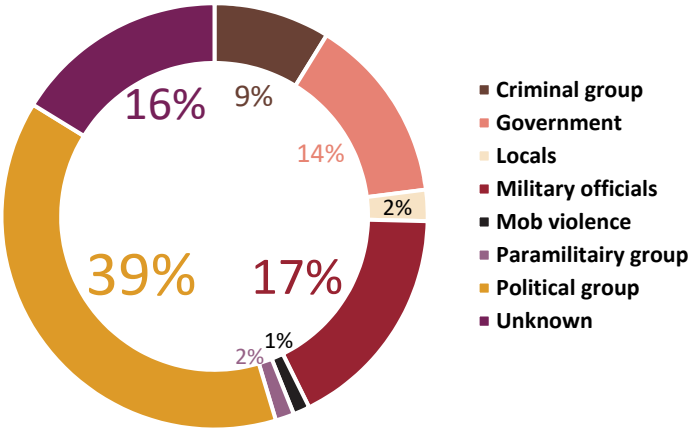
Figure 48: Topics covered by journalists at the time of their killing, 2014–2017



Source: CPJ database. Available at https://cpj.org/data/.
Note: In some cases journalists were working on more than one topic at the time of their death.

[155] See https://en.unesco.org/themes/safety-journalists/observatory.

Figure 49: Suspected sources of violence against journalists (2014–2017)



Source: CPJ database. Available at https://cpj.org/data/.

Lastly, given that news organizations increasingly rely on freelance journalists, it is worth noting that a growing proportion of journalists killed were freelancers. UNESCO has found that over the past five years, 113 freelance journalists were killed, representing 21 per cent of the total. Freelance journalists are particularly vulnerable: they often work on stories alone and in dangerous environments, and do not enjoy the same level of assistance and protection as staff journalists.[156]

Impunity for crimes against journalists

Significant steps have been taken to raise awareness of, and counter, violence against journalists through the United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity. Since 2012, the United Nations General Assembly, the Human Rights Council and the Security Council, along with UNESCO, have adopted 12 resolutions or decisions related to the safety of journalists. Despite the attention devoted to this issue, impunity for the killing of journalists continues to be widespread, with the vast majority of such homicides (9 in 10) remaining unresolved.[157] Even though a greater proportion of cases were reported as resolved in 2017 (11 per cent of the total) relative to the previous year (8 per cent), this proportion remains very low. Regionally, the highest proportion of resolved cases can be found in Europe and North America, followed by Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and the Arab States.[158] Noticeable progress has been made by countries in reporting the killing of journalists. In 2017, 74 per cent of UNESCO Member States responded to the Director-General's request for information on the status of judicial inquiries into killings of journalists, compared with just 30 per cent in 2013.

Killing of humanitarian aid workers

Like journalists, humanitarian aid workers can be subjected to physical attacks in direct connection with their work, which may result in kidnapping, serious injury or even death. Aid workers are at greater risk than other professions of becoming victims of homicide. Most humanitarian organizations have grown accustomed to operating in violent settings and areas of civil unrest. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), drawing on data from the Aid Worker Security Database, the magnitude of the violence and the types of threats faced by aid workers have changed over the years.[159]

There is no global information on the number of aid workers who have fallen victim to homicide. There are data on the number of aid workers killed, but such cases may not all meet the definition of homicide. The Aid Worker Security Database provides data on (violent) attacks in general, but does not provide data

[156] UNESCO and University of Oxford, *World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development: 2017/2018 Global Report*, p. 141.

[157] Ibid., p. 142.

[158] UNESCO, "2018 DG report on the safety of journalists and the danger of impunity", p. 21.

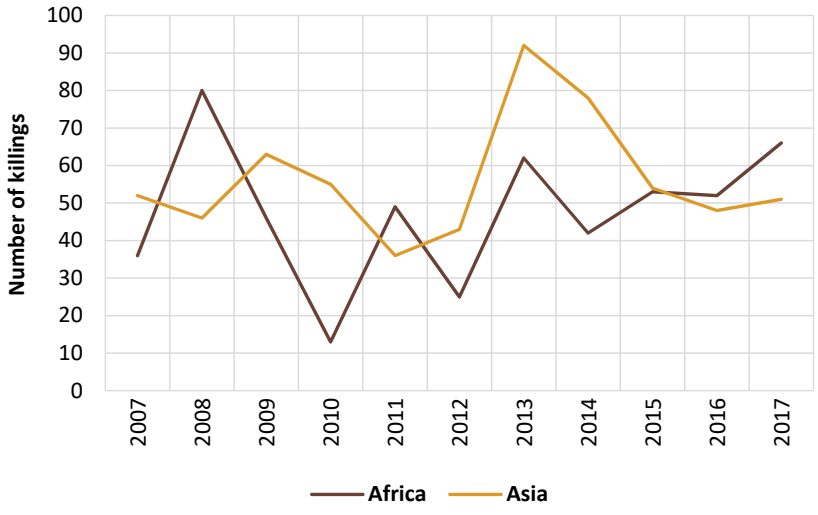
[159] Stoddard, A., Harmer, A. and Czwarno, M., *Aid Worker Security Report: Figures at a Glance 2018* (Humanitarian Outcomes, 2018).

specifically on intentional homicides. The available data show that most of the violence is targeted at individuals. Seventy per cent of attacks (including non-lethal kidnapping and injuries) have just one victim. The data indicate an increase in lethal attacks against aid workers until 2013, followed by a decline in the years up to 2015. In 2017, however, the number of aid workers killed in attacks rose slightly once again.

Figure 50: Number of incidents and number of humanitarian aid workers attacked or killed (2007–2017)

Source: Aid Worker Security Database, 2007–2017.
Note: The data for 2014–2017 are from Stoddard, A., Harmer, A. and Czwarno, M., Aid Worker Security Report: Figures at a Glance 2018 (Humanitarian Outcomes, 2018).

Figure 51: Number of humanitarian aid workers killed, by region (2007–2017)



Source: Aid Worker Security Database, 2007–2017.
Note: Other regions had fewer than 50 incidents and fewer than 20 killings during the period 2007–2017.

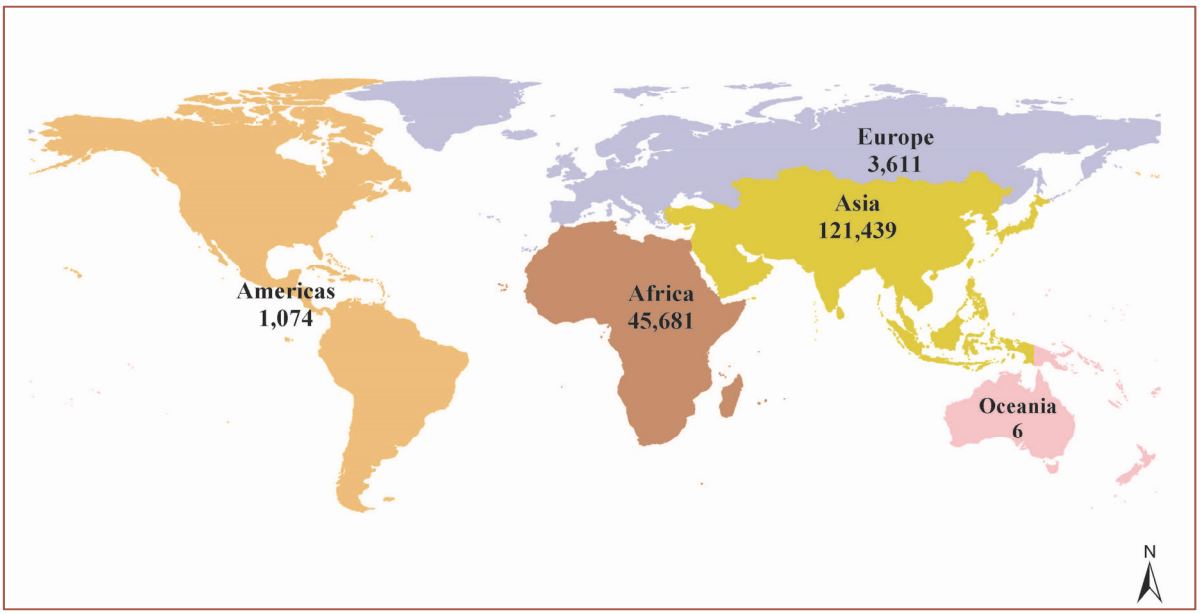
According to data from the Aid Worker Security Database, more than 100 aid workers have been killed every year since 2013. Most of the killings that took place between 2007 and 2017 were in Africa and Asia; the other regions reported fewer than 50 incidents during that whole period. Lethal attacks on aid workers in 2017 mainly took place in Afghanistan, the Syrian Arab Republic and South Sudan. In fourth and fifth place, the Central African Republic and Nigeria both reported a higher number of lethal attacks on aid

workers in 2017 (14 and 10, respectively) than in 2016. The methods typically used in lethal attacks are shooting and aerial bombardment, followed by bodily assault and kidnap-killing. Shootings mainly occurred in Afghanistan, South Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic; however, aerial bombardment was the most common means of violence affecting aid workers, according to the Aid Worker Security Database.

Killings by terrorist groups

In the vast majority of countries there are no consistent and comparable national data reported on the homicides perpetrated by terrorist groups. It is therefore not possible to obtain a global picture of terrorism-related homicides that meet ICCS criteria of what constitutes an intentional homicide. The very limited data existing at the national level are difficult to aggregate owing to the lack of a globally agreed definition of terrorism. The United Nations Security Council, regional organizations and Governments of Member States have designated numerous armed groups as "terrorist" groups, and international treaties define terrorist offences, but national, regional and international approaches to the labelling of groups as terrorist vary. Some idea of the scale of killings related to terrorism is given by the Global Terrorism Database, which recorded 26,445 killings in terrorist incidents in 2017. The map below shows the distribution of fatalities from terrorist incidents across the globe.

Map 3: Total number of fatalities from terrorist incidents as defined in the Global Terrorism Database, by region, 2010–2016



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

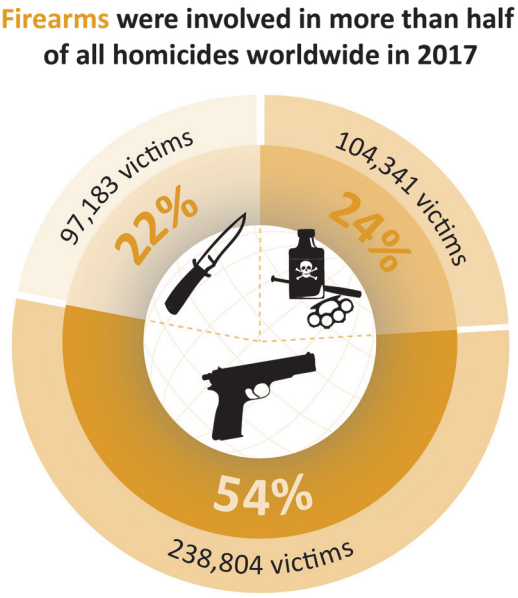
Source: Global Terrorism Database (GTD).

GTD defines a terrorist attack as the threatened or actual use of illegal force and violence by a non-state actor to attain a political, economic, religious, or social goal through fear, coercion, or intimidation. Practically, this means that in order to consider an incident for inclusion in the GTD, all three of the following criteria must be fulfilled: the incident must be intentional – the result of a conscious calculation on the part of a perpetrator; the incident must entail some level of violence or immediate threat of violence - including property violence, as well as violence against people; the perpetrators of the incidents must be sub-national actors. The database does not include acts of State terrorism. The definition of a terrorist attack used by the GTD does not coincide with the United Nations definition. The map represents an illustrative example of available data, giving an overview of all intentional killings resulting from terrorist incidents between 2010-2016.

MECHANISMS OF HOMICIDE PERPETRATION

Overall picture – global and regional

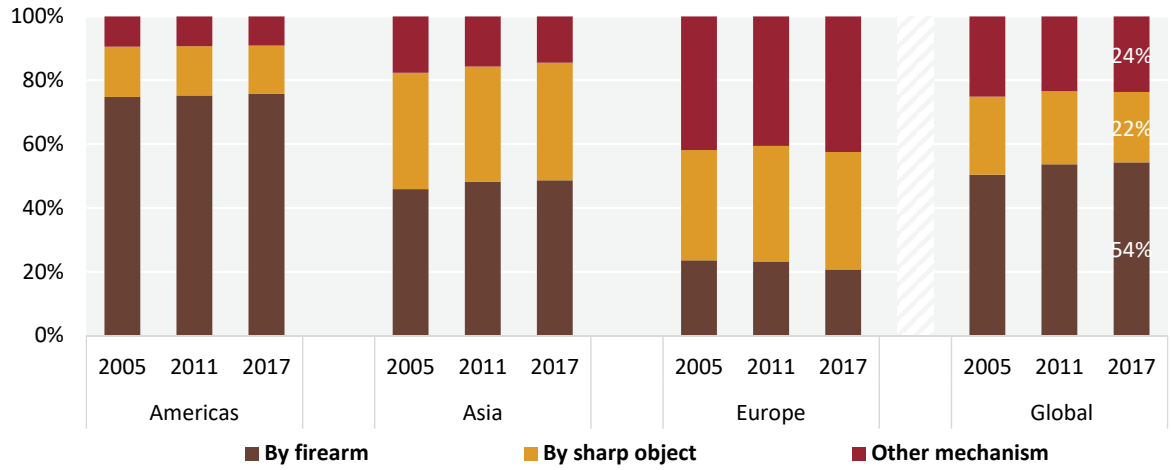
UNODC data distinguish between three different kinds of mechanism used in perpetrating homicide: firearms, sharp weapons (including knives) and "other" mechanisms (in which case no further details are available). National data may also include homicides perpetrated using an unknown mechanism.



Note: The number of homicide victims shown in the infographic above excludes those killed by unknown mechanisms, which amount to roughly 23,500 victims.

Excluding homicides of unknown mechanism, more than half (roughly 54 per cent)[160] of homicides worldwide in 2017 were perpetrated with a firearm, and slightly more than a fifth (22 per cent) were perpetrated with a sharp object.

Figure 52: Distribution of homicides by type of mechanism, worldwide and in selected regions, 2005, 2011 and 2017

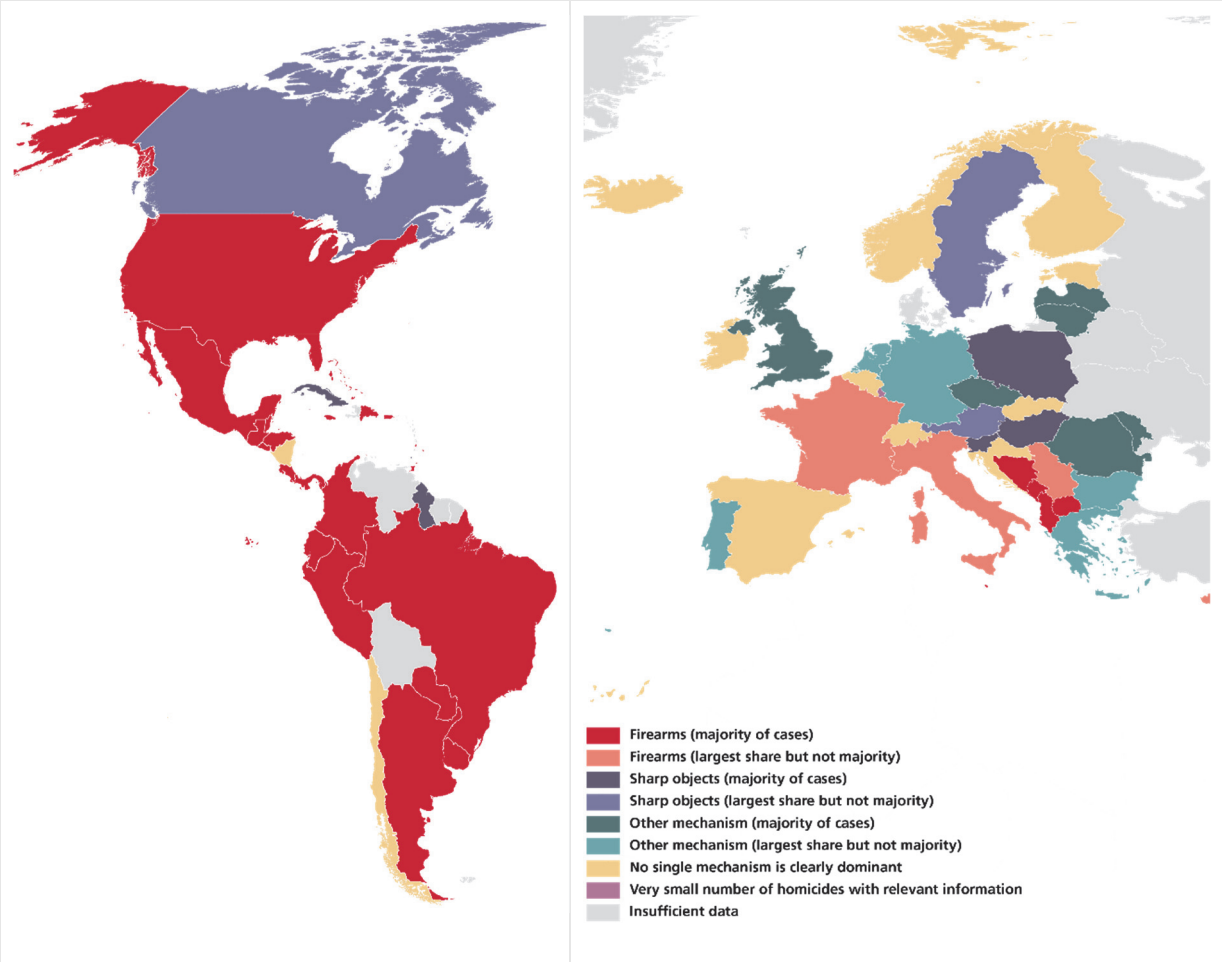


Source: UNODC homicide statistics.
Note: These calculations adjust for homicides of "unknown" mechanism by assuming that the distribution among homicides of known mechanisms is also representative of the remaining homicides (of "unknown" mechanism).

[160] These best estimates adjust for homicides of "unknown" mechanism by assuming that the distribution among homicides of known mechanisms is also representative of the remaining homicides (of "unknown" mechanism).

Since 2005, the distribution of homicides by mechanism has remained relatively stable at both the regional and global level, although notable differences can be observed across regions. In the Americas, firearms are involved in approximately three quarters of homicides. They also constitute the mechanism most frequently used in the perpetration of homicide in Asia, although the picture is much less uniform in that region, because sharp objects are used in slightly more than a third of cases. In Europe and Oceania, mechanisms other than firearms or sharp objects account for the largest share of homicides. UNODC estimates indicate that firearms as a mechanism in the perpetration of homicide are also prominent in Africa, where they account for approximately 40 per cent of homicides (roughly on a par with homicides perpetrated using mechanisms other than firearms or sharp objects); however, the availability of relevant data (breakdowns of homicide by mechanism) is limited for countries in this region and this estimate should thus be interpreted with caution.

Map 4: Most prevalent mechanism* used in the perpetration of homicide in the Americas and Europe, 2013–2016

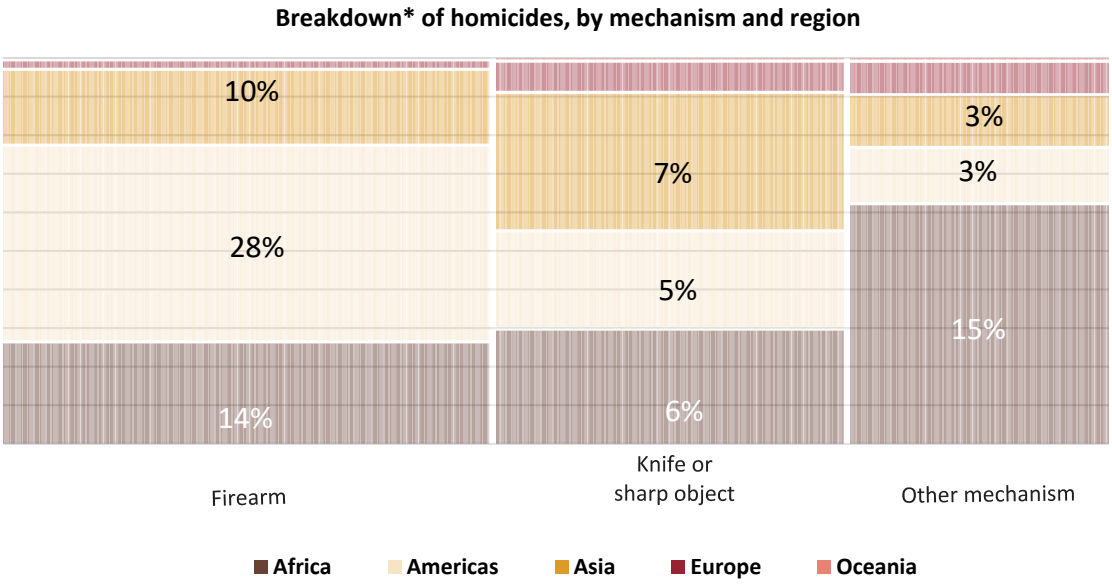


*The calculation presupposes three categories of mechanism (firearms, sharp objects and other); only cases where a reliable breakdown into these three categories was available are considered. The calculation adjusts for homicides of "unknown mechanism". The boundaries and names shown and the designation used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. A dispute exists between the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and North ern Ireland concerning sovereignty over the Falkland Islands (Malvinas)

Source: UNODC homicide statistics.

In absolute terms, in 2017, firearm homicides in the Americas alone accounted for roughly a quarter of all homicides worldwide, while homicides in Africa perpetrated using firearms and other mechanisms each constituted approximately one seventh of the global total.

Figure 53: Intentional homicides in 2017, by mechanism and region

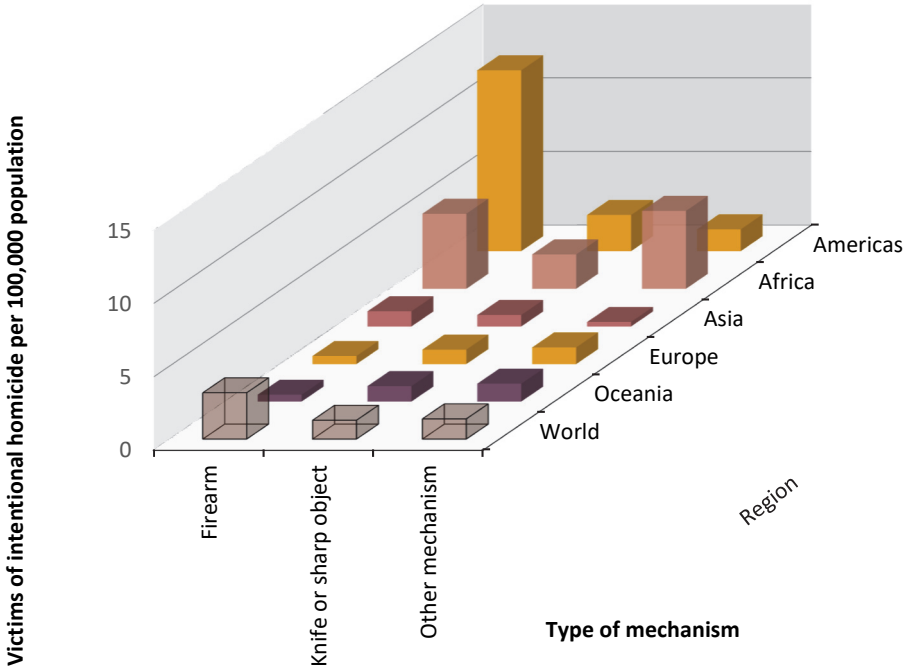


*These calculations adjust for homicides of "unknown" mechanism by assuming that the distribution among homicides of known mechanisms is also representative of the remaining homicides (of "unknown" mechanism).

Source: UNODC homicide statistics.

Note: Based on data from 120 countries or territories (10 in Africa, 40 in the Americas, 23 in Asia, 44 in Europe and 3 in Oceania).

Figure 54: Homicide rates** for specific mechanisms, worldwide and by region, 2017



** These values should be regarded as lower estimates, since they do not include homicides of unknown mechanism, which make up between 2 and 9 per cent of total homicides in each region.

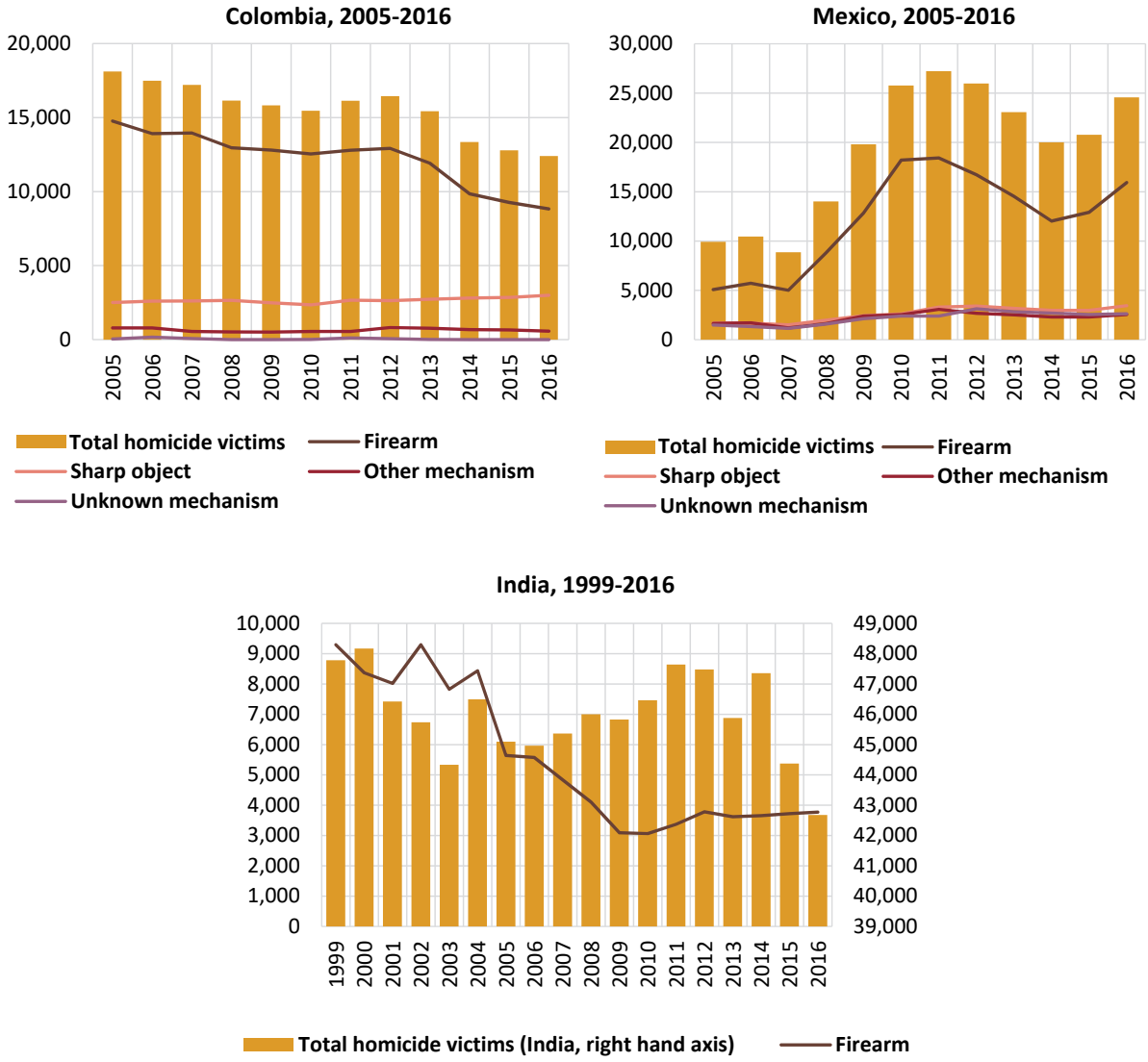
Source: UNODC homicide statistics.

Note: Based on data from 120 countries or territories (10 in Africa, 40 in the Americas, 23 in Asia, 44 in Europe and 3 in Oceania).

Global analysis by homicide mechanism

In some countries with high homicide counts, the number of homicides perpetrated with firearms is more erratic than the number of homicides perpetrated with other mechanisms. The number of firearm homicides drives the total homicide trend in some countries and it may be quite irrelevant in others. In some countries with high homicide rates, such as Colombia and Mexico, homicides perpetrated with a firearm determine the overall trend in the total number of homicides, while in other countries, such as India, homicides perpetrated with a firearm have a limited impact on overall homicide levels and may follow a pattern quite different from that of the total homicide rate.

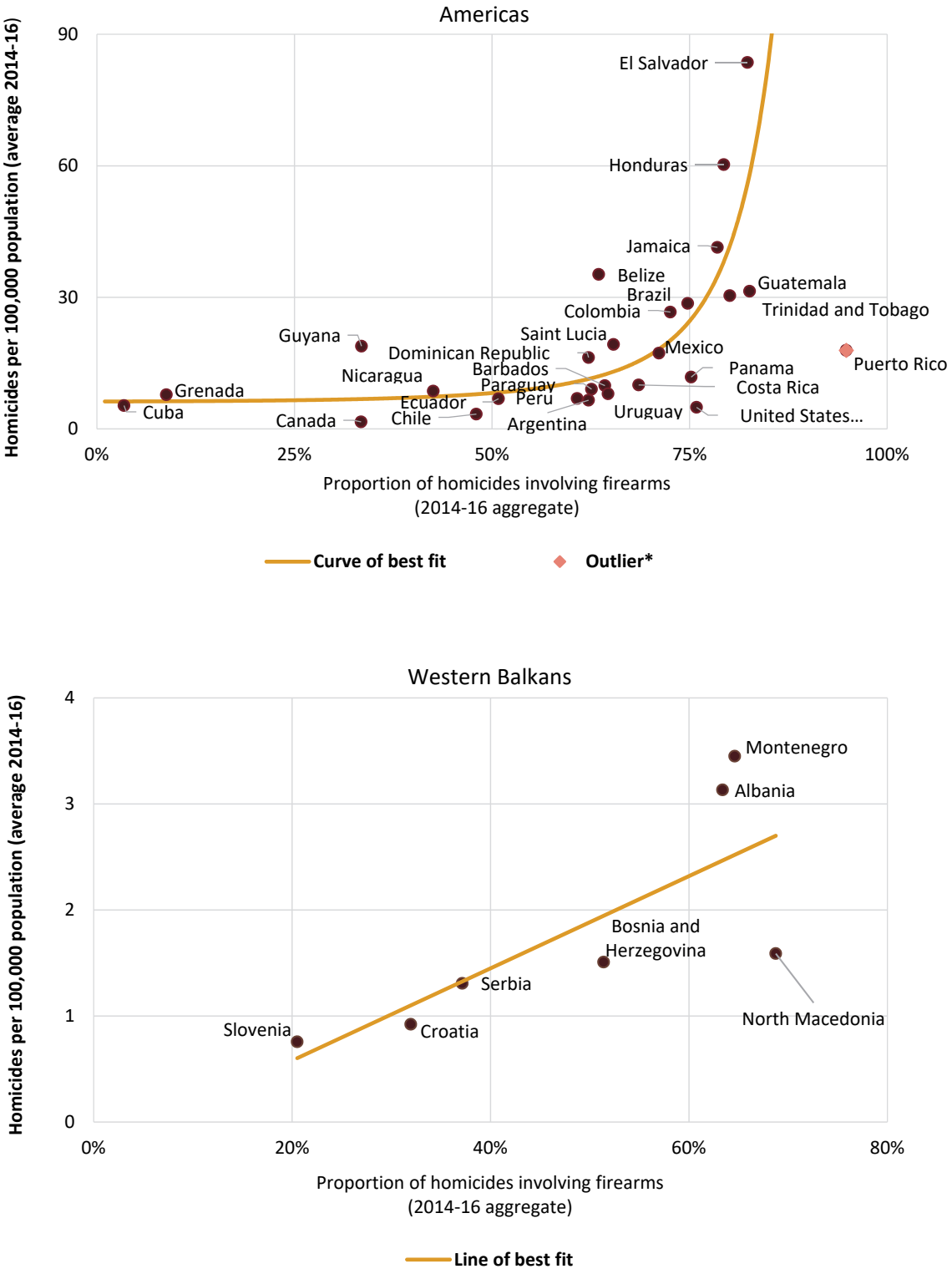
Figure 55: Notable national trends in homicides involving firearms (in relation to other mechanisms)



Source: UNODC homicide statistics.
Note: For India, data specific to mechanism were available only for firearms.

Regional and subregional analysis suggests that firearms can play a role as an enabler of high levels of homicide, while sharp objects and other mechanisms tend to be the predominant mechanism for homicide in countries with lower homicide rates.

Figure 56: Homicide rate versus proportion of homicides involving firearms,[a] selected regions, 2014–2016



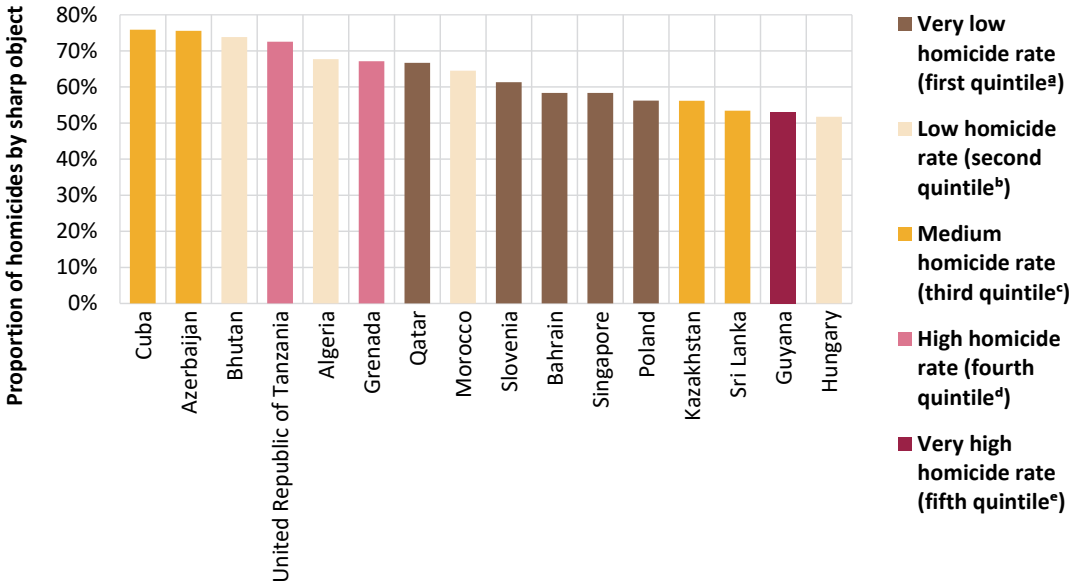
Source: UNODC homicide statistics.

*Puerto Rico was not included in the best-fit model.

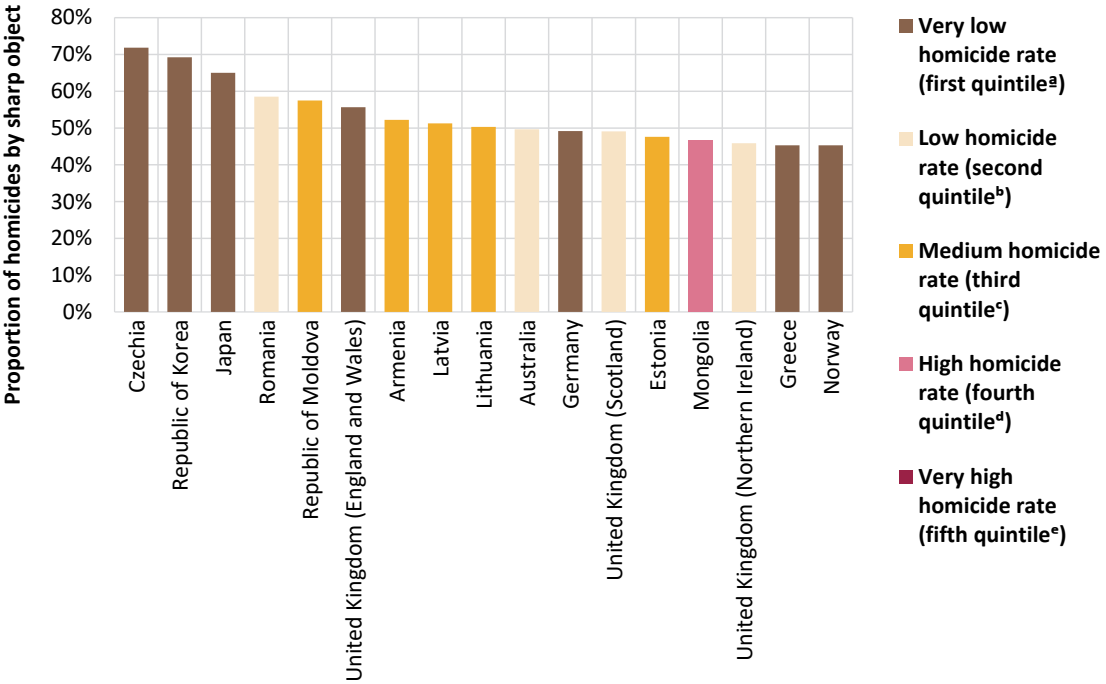
[a] Percentages represent a best estimate adjusted to account for homicides with "unknown" mechanism. The calculations presuppose three categories of mechanism (firearm, sharp object and other) and only cases that can be classed reliably into one of these categories are considered. These datapoints are aggregated over 2014–2016.

Figure 57: Countries or territories with highest shares of homicides by sharp objects and mechanisms other than firearms and sharp objects

Countries in which homicides by sharp object accounted for more than half of homicides, * distinguished by underlying homicide rate, 2013-2016



Countries or territories in which homicides by means other than firearms or sharp object accounted for a high proportion of homicides,* distinguished by underlying homicide rate, 2013-16 (top 17 countries/territories)



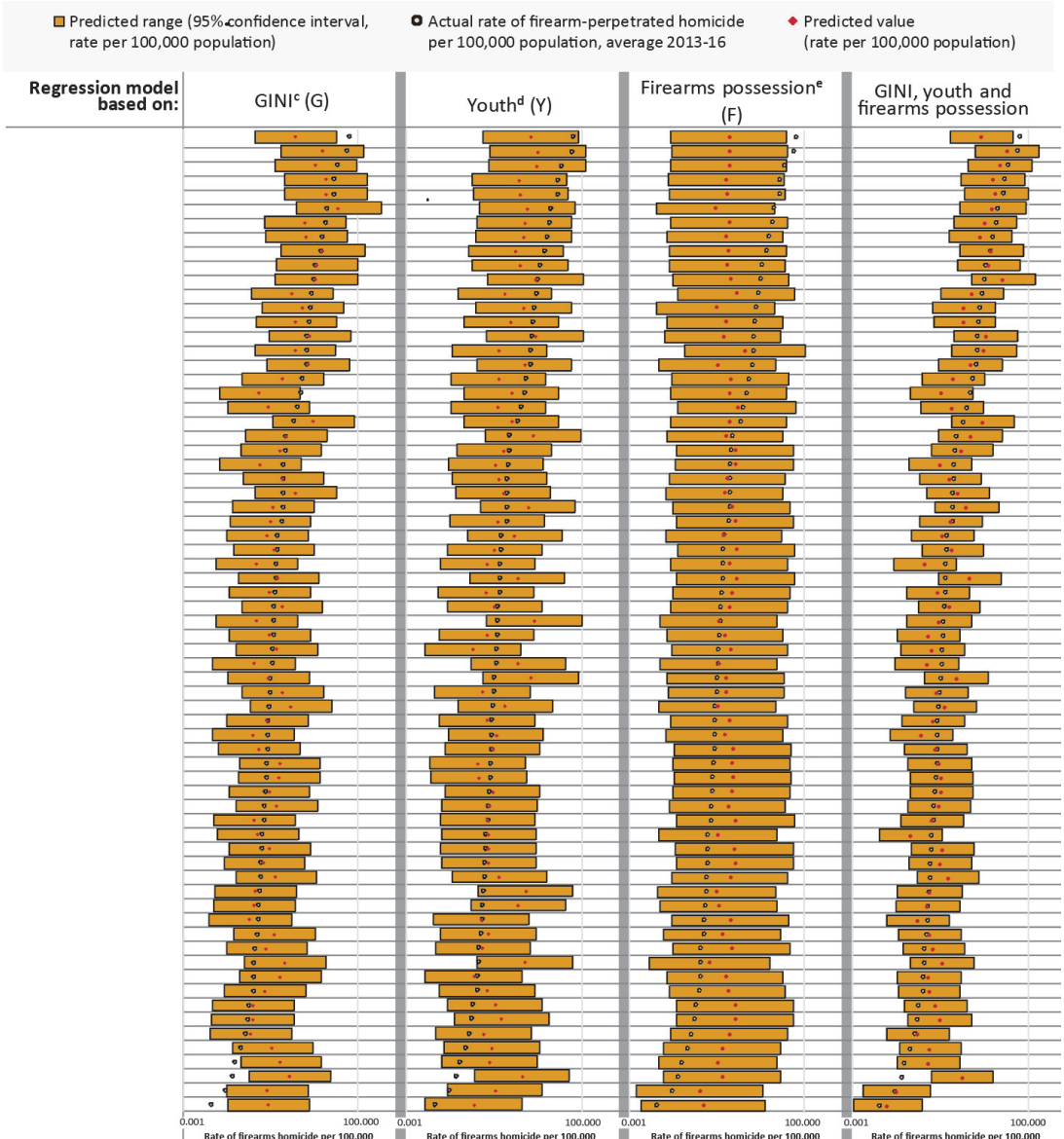
[a] 0–1.00 per 100,000 population	[b] 1.01–2.25 per 100,000 population	[c] 2.26–6.13 per 100,000 population	[d] 6.14–9.81 per 100,000 population	[e] 9.82–72.73 per 100,000 population

* Percentages represent a best estimate adjusted to account for homicides with "unknown" mechanism. The calculations presuppose three categories of mechanism (firearm, sharp object and other) and only cases that can be classed reliably into one of these categories are considered. These datapoints are aggregated over 2013–2016.

Source: UNODC homicide statistics.

Focusing specifically on firearm-related homicides, three factors appear to explain, with statistical significance, the global variability in the rate of homicide perpetrated using firearms: income inequality (as measured by the Gini coefficient); the proportion of youth among the general population; and the rate of civilian-held firearms per person.

Figure 58: Firearm-perpetrated homicide rate[a] modelled in terms of social and economic indicators, predictions in comparison with actual values, 2013-16 averages[b] (multiple regression, 69 countries)



Regression model based on:	GINI[c] (G)	Youth[d] (Y)	Firearms possession[e] (F)	GINI, youth and firearms possession
Equation	$Ln(Z) \sim 0.19G - 18.93$	$Ln(Z) \sim 28.18Y - 18.23$	$Ln(Z) \sim 0.46Ln(F) - 10.91$	$Ln(Z) \sim 0.14G + 17.62Y + 0.65Ln(F) - 19.55$
R^2	0.549	0.387	0.068	0.751
P-values	$G: 3.5 \cdot 10^{-13}$; Intercept: $9.5 \cdot 10^{-35}$	$Y: 1.2 \cdot 10^{-8}$; Intercept: $2.9 \cdot 10^{-28}$	$Ln(F)$: 0.030; Intercept: $3.8 \cdot 10^{-30}$	$G: 1.9 \cdot 10^{-10}$; $Y: 2.2 \cdot 10^{-6}$; $Ln(F): 1.5 \cdot 10^{-7}$; Intercept: $1.9 \cdot 10^{-37}$
Equation, after standardization	$Ln(Z) \sim 1.44\hat{G} - 12.00$	$Ln(Z) \sim 1.21\hat{Y} - 12.00$	$Ln(Z) \sim 0.51\hat{L} - 12.00$	$Ln(Z) \sim 1.08\hat{G} + 0.76\hat{Y} + 0.72\hat{L} - 12.00$

[a] The calculation for homicides perpetrated by firearms presupposes three categories of mechanism (firearm, sharp object and other) and adjusts for cases of unknown mechanism. The rate per population, averaged over 2013–2016, is represented by the variable *Z*.

[b] For some countries, data were not available for each of the four years in the 2013–2016 timespan.

[c] Gini coefficient, represented by the variable *G*. In cases where data were available for at least one year in the 2013–2016 timespan, the average of all such values was used. In other cases, in view of the lack of comprehensive recent data and the relative stability of this indicator, the most recent value was taken, though dating to not earlier than 2008. The variable $\hat{G}$ represents the standardization of the 69 values of *G*.

[d] Proportion of population aged 15–29 years, averaged over the period 2013–2016 and represented by the variable *Y*. The variable $\hat{Y}$ represents the standardization of the 69 values of *Y*.

[e] Estimated number of firearms held by civilians, per population, represented by the variable *F*. Data were available only for 2017 and were used as a proxy for 2013–2016. The variable *Ł* represents the standardization of the 69 values of *L* = Ln(*F*).

Sources: World Bank (Gini coefficient); United Nations Population Division (population data); Small Arms Survey (estimates of civilian holdings of firearms); UNODC homicide statistics.

Figure 59: Rate of homicide not related to firearms,[a] modelled in terms of inequality[b] and proportion of youth[c] among the general population, averages for 2013–2016[d] (multiple regression)

Equation	$\text{Ln}(\dot{z}) \sim 0.038G + 12.4Y - 15.2$
R^2	0.591
P-values	G: 0.0018; Y: $1.1 \cdot 10^{-7}$; intercept: $1.5 \cdot 10^{-44}$
Equation, (after standardization)	$\text{Ln}(\dot{z}) \sim 0.289\hat{G} + 0.530\hat{Y} - 11.1$

[a] The calculation presupposes three categories of mechanism (firearm, sharp object and other) and adjusts for cases of unknown mechanism. The rate per population, averaged over 2013–2016, is represented by the variable $\dot{z}$.

[b] Inequality was measured in terms of the Gini coefficient, represented by the variable *G*. In cases where data were available for at least one year in the 2013–2016 timespan, the average of all such values was used. In other cases, in view of the lack of comprehensive recent data and the relative stability of this indicator, the most recent value was taken, though dating to not earlier than 2008. The variable $\hat{G}$ represents the standardization of the 69 values of *G*.

[c] Proportion of population aged 15–29 years, averaged over the period 2013–2016 and represented by the variable *Y*. The variable $\hat{Y}$ represents the standardization of the 69 values of *Y*.

[d] For some countries, data were not available for each of the four years in the 2013–2016 timespan.

Source: World Bank (Gini coefficient); United Nations Population Division (population data); UNODC homicide statistics.
Note: Civilian holdings of firearms was considered as a potential predictor of the homicide rate alongside inequality and the proportion of youth, but was found not to be statistically significant.

However, the influence of the proportion of firearms in civilian possession on the rate of homicide perpetrated using firearms, although statistically significant, appears to be secondary to other factors of a socioeconomic character. By considering countries in more homogenous groups, as measured by their socioeconomic characteristics (e.g. by grouping them into developed or developing countries), a better understanding of the impact of civilian firearm possession on homicide can be arrived at. Statistical models suggest that in developing countries, a 1 per cent increase in the rate of possession[161] of firearms can lead to an increase of 1.13 per cent[162] in the rate of firearm homicides (all other relevant factors being equal), and hence of the total homicide rate. In developed countries, a 1 per cent increase in the rate of possession of firearms is accompanied by a 0.74 per cent increase in the rate of firearm homicides.[163]

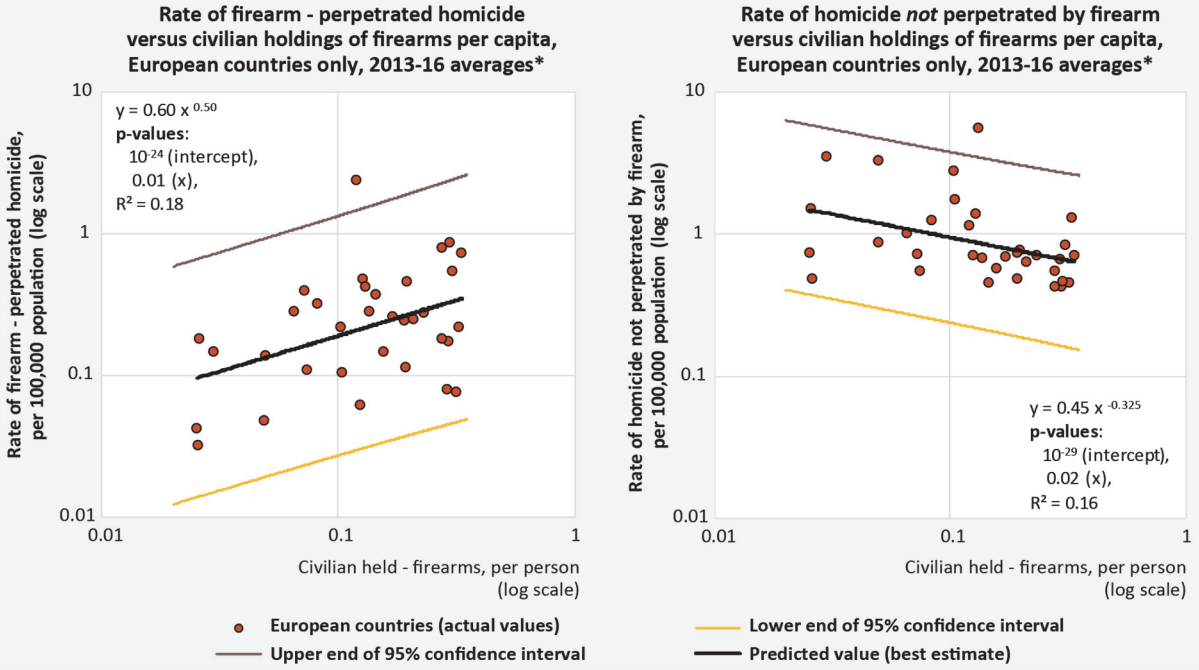
When considering Europe specifically, the overall impact of civilian firearm possession on homicide remains similar. However, when analysing firearm and non-firearm homicides in parallel (see box 8) it appears that while some (but not all) homicides are likely to occur independently of the mechanism, there is a predilection for firearms when these are available.

[161] Number of civilian-owned firearms per person.

[162] 95% confidence interval: 0.58–1.68 per cent, based on 39 countries selected depending on the availability of data.

[163] 95% confidence interval: 0.47–1.00 per cent, based on 39 other countries.

BOX 8: Interchangeable modality of homicides in Europe?



* The calculation of homicide rates presupposes three categories of mechanism (firearm, sharp object and other) and adjusts for cases of unknown mechanism. The categories "sharp object" and "other" are considered jointly for the purposes of calculating the rate of homicide not perpetrated by firearm. The population-specific rates were averaged over 2013–2016 (only those years for which reliable breakdowns were available were considered). For civilian ownership of firearms, given the lack of a time series and the relative stability of this indicator, data for 2017 were considered as a proxy for 2013–2016.
Source: Small Arms Survey (estimates of civilian ownership of firearms); UNODC homicide statistics.

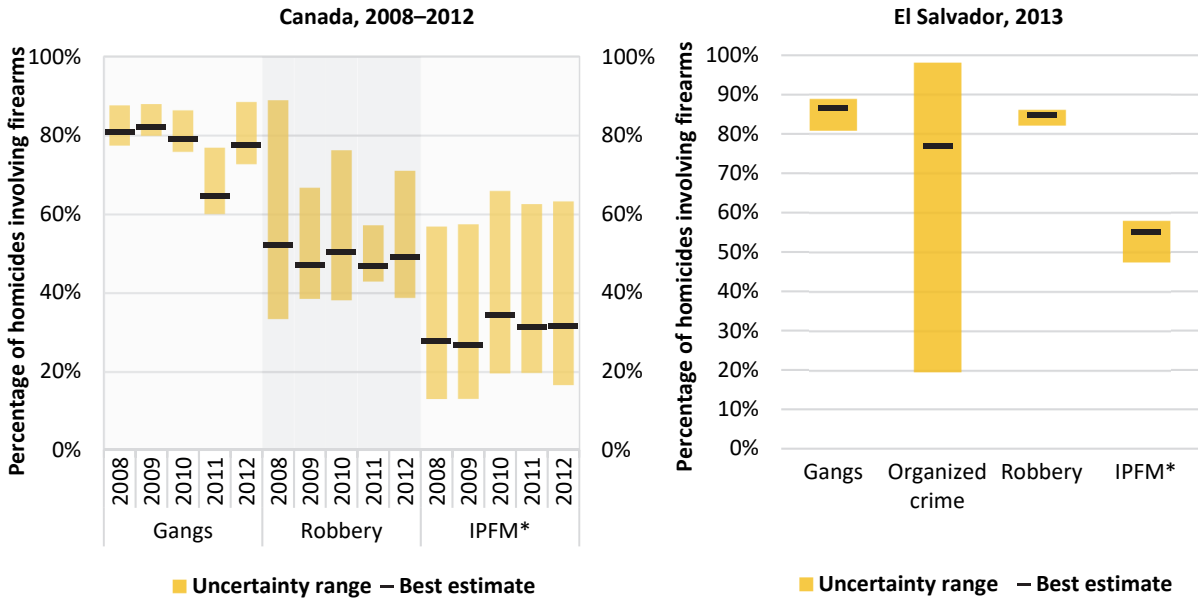
The above analysis considers homicides by firearm and other homicides separately, in each case in relation to civilian-held firearms per capita. In both cases, a statistically significant association emerges, but in opposite ways: the impact of firearm possession is incremental in the case of homicides by firearm and decremental in the case of other homicides. One possible interpretation for this is a tendency for some perpetrators to prefer firearms as a mechanism. The strength of the association is reflected in the slope of the lines of best fit. Given that the positive association with firearm homicides is stronger than the negative association with other homicides, even in this special case of Europe the overall impact in terms of all homicides remains that of a positive association.

While the analysis of the impact of firearm possession on homicide uses the best available data, it should be kept in mind that the measure of the number of firearms per capita does not distinguish between different types of firearm, nor does it necessarily correspond in a straightforward manner to the number of persons who own a firearm, since a single individual may possess many firearms. Moreover, both registered and unregistered firearms are considered in the aggregate and illicitly held firearms are included alongside licit firearms.

Homicide mechanism, gender and situational context

In the context of homicide, it is plausible that certain mechanisms are more closely associated with certain situational contexts. For example, whether a homicide is a crime of passion or whether it occurs in the context of organized crime will probably have an impact on the likelihood of a certain type of weapon being used (or not). Since examining these types of association requires a simultaneous breakdown of homicide data by situational context and mechanism, which is seldom available, a global assessment is not possible; however, certain patterns can be observed by looking at country-specific data.

Figure 60: Proportion of homicides involving firearms, by situational context



*Intimate partner or other family member.

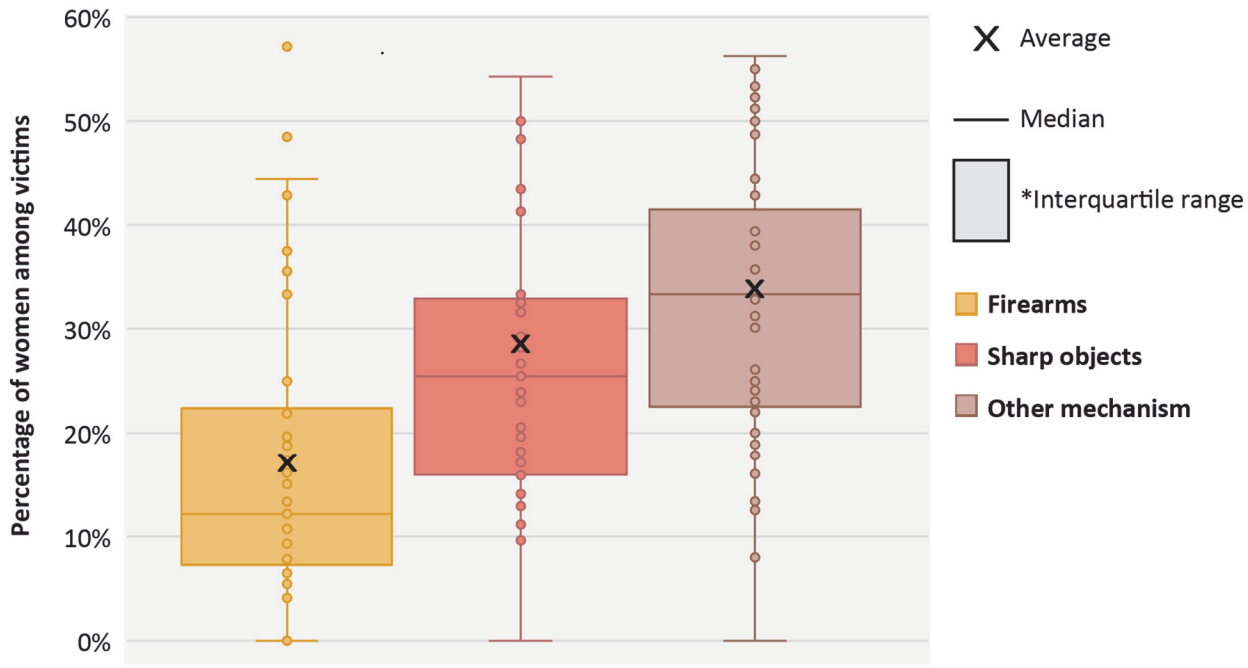
Source: UNODC homicide statistics.

Note: Estimates are based on a parallel disaggregation of homicides by situational context and mechanism. Within each situational context, the breakdown by mechanism was available for the mechanisms "firearm" and "sharp object", but not for "other" (or unknown) mechanisms. The uncertainty range in obtained by making extreme assumptions about the mechanism in the remaining share of homicides, which were unaccounted for in the breakdown. The best estimate is obtained by applying to this share the estimated proportion of homicides involving firearms among all homicides (independently of situational context, except for homicides of unknown mechanism).

Despite significant uncertainty as to the actual levels, data collected in Canada show that, in relative terms, firearms are more closely associated with homicide committed in the context of gang-related violence than with robbery-homicides and homicides perpetrated by intimate partners or other family members. A similar, though not identical, pattern emerges from data collected in El Salvador, which confirm a weaker association between firearms and homicide perpetrated by intimate partners or other family members than between firearms and homicide related to gangs, robbery and, probably, also to organized crime; however, the association between firearms and robbery was stronger than in Canada and more similar to the association with gang homicide.

The mechanism used to perpetrate homicide may also have a bearing on the sex of both victims and perpetrators. While women constitute a minority of victims of homicide overall, there is a clear progression in the proportion of women among homicide victims depending on the type of mechanism used, with the smallest proportion of women among victims of homicides perpetrated with a firearm, a larger proportion among victims of homicide perpetrated with a sharp object, and the largest among "other" homicides.

Figure 61: Proportion of women among homicide victims, by type of mechanism, common range* among 45 countries with available data, 2015–2016

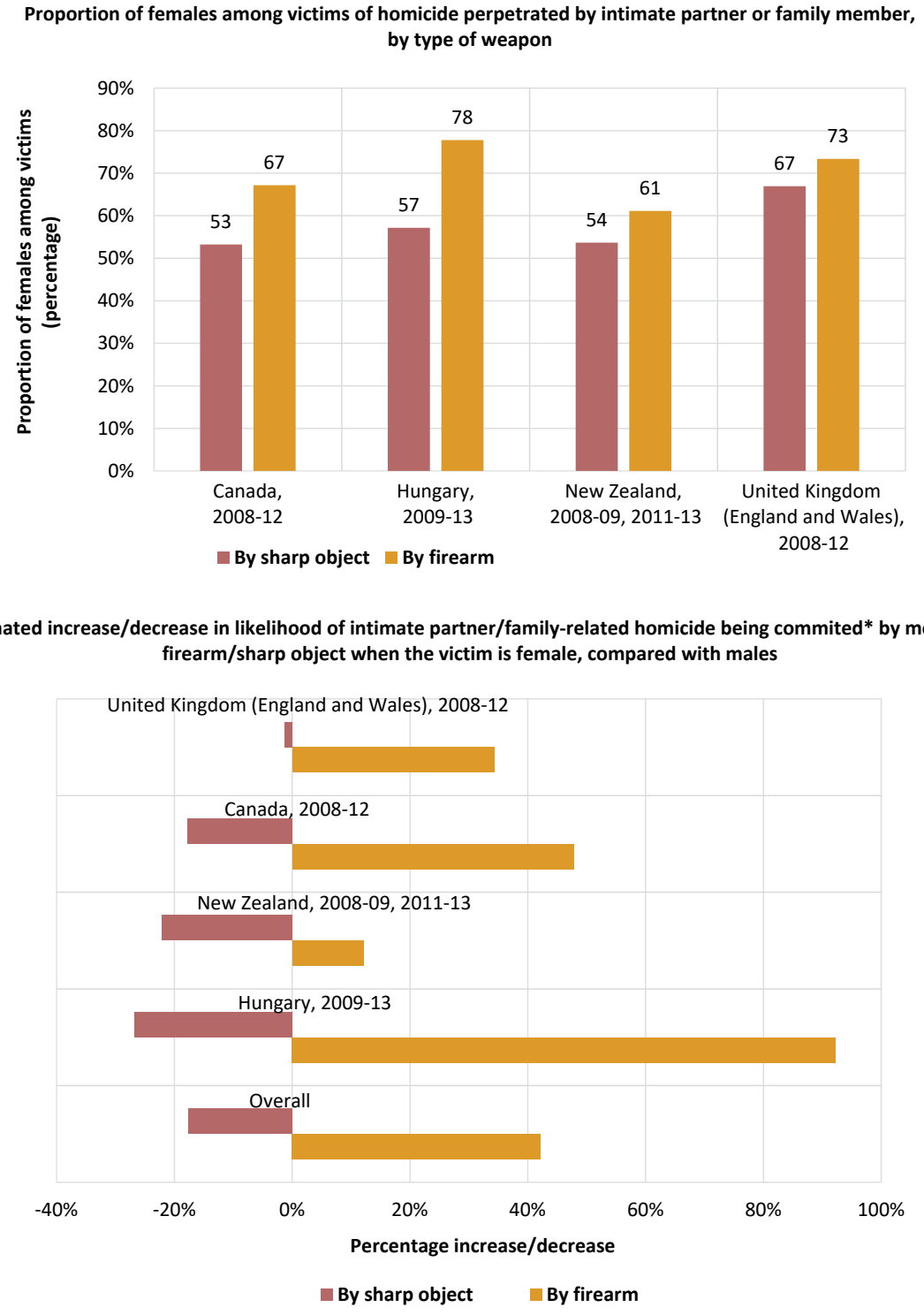


* The interquartile range ("common range") represents the middle half of the datapoints; in other words, it excludes data from the lowermost quartile and the uppermost quartile.

Source: UNODC homicide statistics.

When focusing only on intimate partner/family-related homicide, it should be noted that women constitute the majority of the victims. Although data enabling a cross-disaggregation of intimate partner/family-related homicides by mechanism and sex are very limited, country-specific data suggest that such homicide is more likely to be perpetrated with a firearm, and less likely to be perpetrated by means of a sharp object, when the victim is female. Considering that the majority of cases are intimate partner homicides, and that the majority of victims and perpetrators are not of the same sex, it can be concluded that men are more likely than women to use a firearm when killing their female partners, and women are more likely to resort to a sharp object when killing their male partners, despite the "equalizing" effect of a firearm, which renders physical strength largely irrelevant. The reasons for this are unclear; one possible explanation is that men are more likely to kill premeditatedly, another that women tend to have less access to, and familiarity with, firearms than men.

Figure 62: Relationship between gender and mechanism in intimate partner/family-related homicides, selected countries, 2008–2013



Source: UNODC homicide statistics.

*IPFM homicide refers to homicide perpetrated by an intimate partner or family member.

DRUGS AND ALCOHOL AS CONTRIBUTORS TO HOMICIDE

Substance abuse, violence and antisocial behaviour, through the lens of Goldstein's tripartite framework

Goldstein's tripartite framework[164] posits three mechanisms by which drugs can be linked to crime, in particular to violent crime: "psychopharmacological", "economic-compulsive" and "systemic".

The psychopharmacological link refers to a potentially increased inclination or vulnerability to commit crime while under the influence of certain substances. This is mainly understood to refer to substances that influence an individual's readiness to engage voluntarily in criminal acts, but may also include substances that impair cognitive and psychomotor functions and therefore increase the likelihood of unintentionally committing crimes through negligence, in (potentially fatal) situations such as driving under the influence of psychoactive substances.[165]

The economic-compulsive link refers to a purported mechanism whereby individuals who are dependent on substance use are more likely than others to engage in acquisitive crime in order to fund their addiction. Such acquisitive crime (e.g. robbery, burglary, other forms of stealing) may or may not be violent.

Given the effects of substance use on an individual's behaviour, both the psychopharmacological and the economic-compulsive mechanism are also plausible in the context of alcohol use.

The systemic link refers to crime generated as a consequence of the efforts of drug traffickers to maintain their illicit supply chains and to ultimately make a profit by delivering to their clients at a price. Clients can be consumers as well as other drug traffickers, including street-level drug dealers, at later stages of the supply chain. Given the readiness of traffickers, who are by definition already operating outside the law by supplying drugs, to engage in illegal behaviour, and the potentially very high profits involved, the systemic link can manifest itself in very serious, brutal and dramatic ways as drug traffickers and drug trafficking organizations resort to violence in order to intimidate competitors, exercise discipline among their own ranks, assert control over territory and trafficking routes, and even challenge the State and its law enforcement forces.

The systemic link presupposes an illicit supply chain and so is unlikely to be observable in the case of alcohol, which is legally available in most countries, even though illegal supply chains for alcohol do exist (e.g. contraband).

By contrast, analysis of the limited data available on the link between homicide and the economic-compulsive and psychopharmacological effects of drugs shows that the role of alcohol in homicide eclipses that of drugs, mainly owing to the more widespread use of alcohol, which can also occur in parallel with the use of drugs. The literature and some of the data suggest, however, that heavy episodic drinking (also known as "binge drinking") is a better predictor of violent behaviour than the quantity of alcohol consumed.

Drug use appears to have a stronger association with acquisitive rather than violent crime. The relative strength of the association of drug use with acquisitive and violent crimes appears to reflect in part their known effects on the brain and their dependence-inducing character. While it is fair to say that drug use can lead to crime, it is also important to recognize that the link between drug use and crime can also be explained partly by marginalization as a mediating factor.

[164] Goldstein, P. J., "The drugs/violence nexus: a tripartite conceptual framework", *Journal of Drug Issues*, vol. 15, No. 4 (October 1985), pp. 493–506.

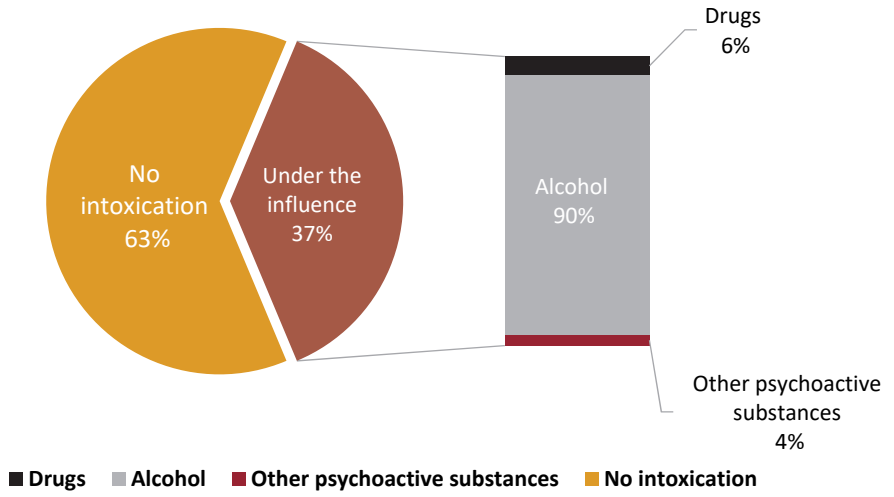
[165] Psychoactive substances are substances that, when taken in or administered into one's system, affect mental processes, e.g. cognition or affect. They include alcohol, drugs (which are regulated under the three main international drug control conventions) and new psychoactive substances.

Understanding systemic violence related to drug trafficking is more complex. A comparison of data on drug flows and homicide rates reveals different patterns in which drug flows may trigger violence in some countries yet not in others. As discussed in earlier parts of this booklet, violence seems to be driven more by changes that destabilize drug markets than by the quantities of drugs actually trafficked.

Economic-compulsive and psychopharmacological links between psychoactive substances and homicide

The economic-compulsive and psychopharmacological links both refer to the impact of drug use on the behaviour of users. The quality and coverage of national data linking homicides with the use of psychoactive substances are limited and do not allow a causal relationship between the use of such substances and criminal behaviour to be established in rigorous fashion. However, the available data do illustrate the concomitance of the use of psychoactive substances with violent behaviour and suggest that intoxication, in particular, is a major factor in homicide offences; the data also show great variability among countries.

Figure 63: Influence of psychoactive substances among homicide perpetrators, latest available data, 2012–2015

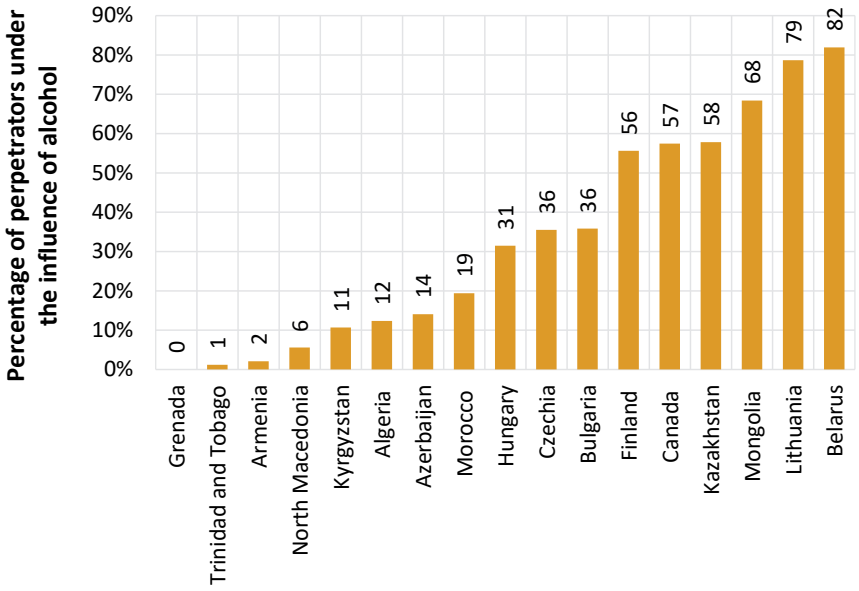


Source: UNODC homicide statistics.
Note: Based on data from 17 countries that provided sufficiently detailed relevant breakdowns of homicide perpetrators. For each country, only the most recent data, up to 2015, were considered. The breakdown into "under the influence"/"no intoxication" adjusts for unknown cases. The breakdown into three kinds of intoxication adjusts for cases in which multiple types of substance were involved.

Data from 17 countries yield an estimate of 37 per cent of homicide perpetrators being under the influence of a psychoactive substance when committing the offence, the vast majority of whom tended to be under the influence of alcohol. These estimates are in line with a meta-analysis of 23 independent studies,[166] which found that, on average, 37 per cent of homicide offenders were under the influence of alcohol when committing the offence.

[166] Kuhns, J. B. et al., "The prevalence of alcohol-involved homicide offending: a meta-analytic review", *Homicide Studies*, vol. 18, No. 3 (August 2014), pp. 251–270.

Figure 64: Proportion of homicide perpetrators under the influence of alcohol, latest available data, 2012–2015



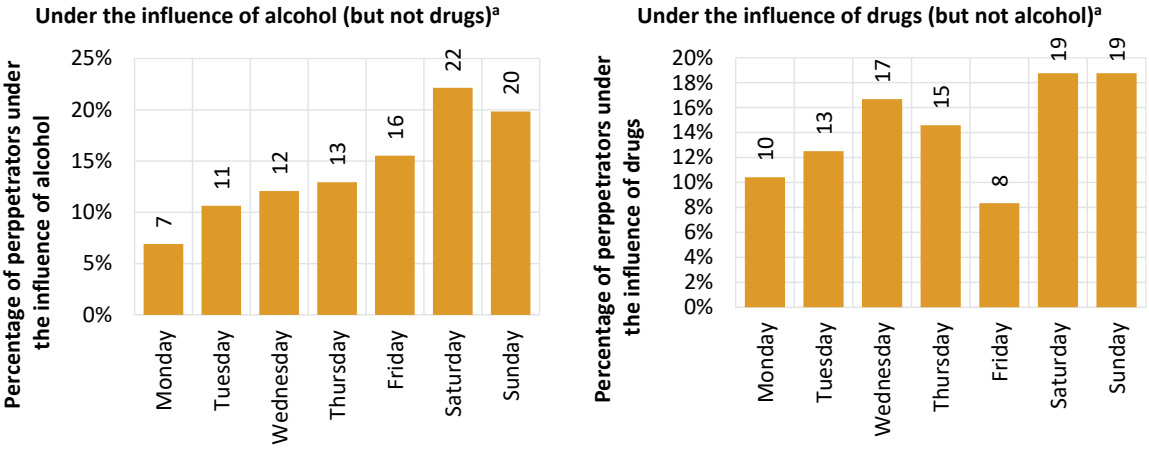
Source: UNODC homicide statistics.
Note: Overall, about a third of homicides are committed under the influence of alcohol, although the limited data available also show large variability across countries. This probably reflects different patterns of alcohol use among countries, different policies on alcohol, and different testing and recording practices.

The literature suggests that the link between violent behaviour in general and alcohol is better explained in terms of heavy episodic drinking rather than overall alcohol consumption. For example, based on a sample of 85 countries, one study detected no statistically significant relationship between national alcohol consumption and the homicide rate, but it did find that hazardous consumption patterns were associated with an increase in the homicide rate.[167]

Some data at the national level corroborate the above finding. For example, data from Scotland suggest that the role of alcohol in facilitating homicide appears to be linked to its recreational use. Indeed, over the period 2007–2008 to 2016-2017, among individuals believed to have committed homicide under the influence of alcohol (but not drugs), more than half of the cases involved homicide perpetrated at the weekend. In the case of drugs, the share of homicides perpetrated at the weekend was not so large and the overall pattern was different, with Wednesday being a peak.

[167] Weiss, D. B., Testa, A. and Rennó Santos, M., "Hazardous alcohol drinking and cross-national homicide rates: the role of demographic, political, and cultural context", *Journal of Drug Issues*, vol. 48, No. 2 (April 2018), pp. 246–268.

Figure 65: Distribution of individuals accused of homicide and known to be under the influence at the time of the offence, by day on which the offence was committed, Scotland, 2007–2008 to 2016–2017

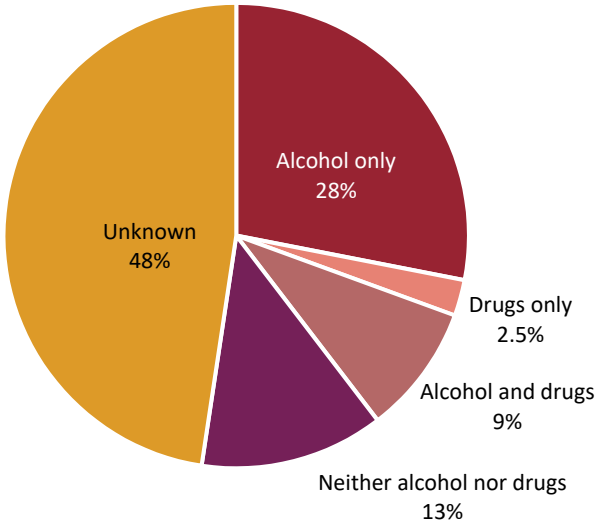


Source: Scotland, Safer Communities Directorate, *Homicide in Scotland 2016–17* (Edinburgh, 2017).

[a] Individuals under the influence of both drugs and alcohol are excluded.

Based purely on individuals' known status of intoxication, the same data also suggest that alcohol consumption frequently occurs alongside drug use when homicides are committed under the influence of a substance. For example, over the period 2012–2013 to 2016–2017, among individuals accused of homicide in Scotland, 17 per cent were under the influence of both alcohol and drugs, 54 per cent were under the influence of alcohol (but not drugs) and 5 per cent were under the influence of drugs (but not alcohol). Thus, more than three quarters of people who were known to be under the influence of drugs were also under the influence of alcohol.

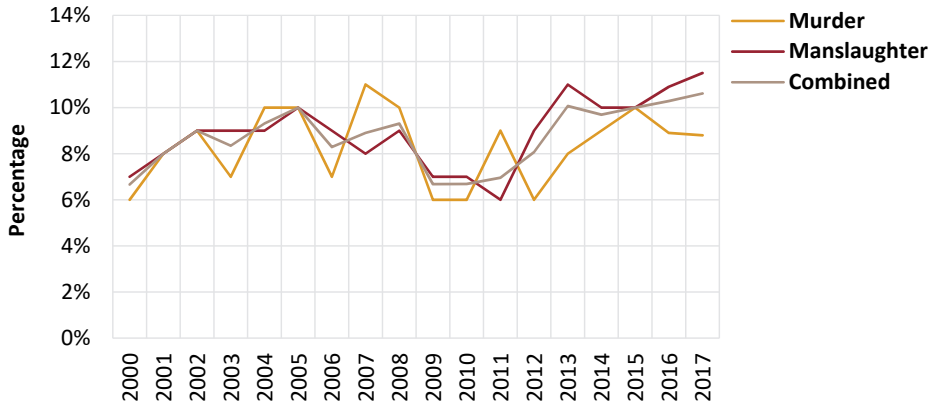
Figure 66: Status of intoxication of individuals accused of homicide, Scotland, 2012–2013 to 2016–2017



Source: Scotland, Safer Communities Directorate, Homicide in Scotland 2016-–17 (Edinburgh, 2017).

Data from Germany also illustrate the association between drug use and violent behaviour, with a significant proportion of those arrested for murder and manslaughter in that country being users of "hard drugs". This does not imply, however, that the crimes were committed under the influence of those drugs.

Figure 67: Percentage of "hard drug" users among those arrested for murder and manslaughter in Germany, 2000–2017



Source: 2000–15: European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction; 2016-17: Federal Criminal Police Office.
Note: The term "hard drug" excludes cannabis products, psilocybin and certain medical preparations.

In general, given that different psychoactive substances have different pharmacological effects, this could be expected to be reflected in different patterns of association with different types of criminal behaviour. In the case of drug use as a causal agent for criminal behaviour, stimulant drugs such as cocaine and methamphetamine could be expected to be more closely associated with violent crime, while the economic-compulsive link would be expected to be driven to a certain extent by the dependence-inducing ("addictive") nature of drugs. However, a number of factors may render these links more complicated:

- Some criminal acquisitive behaviour can also be violent (e.g. robbery at gunpoint), thus obscuring the distinction between the pharmacological and the economic-compulsive mechanisms, at least in terms of measurement.
- The use of dependence-inducing substances can also affect an individual's inclination towards violent behaviour because of the physical and emotional distress – including irritability, anxiety and agitation – experienced during withdrawal, even if the substance does not have stimulant properties (e.g. heroin).
- The simultaneous use of multiple substances makes it difficult to ascribe the causality clearly and meaningfully to a specific drug, especially if the interaction with another substance alters its pharmacological properties.
- Most importantly, the association between drug use and violent/criminal behaviour may be in part attributable to social marginalization (in terms of dimensions such as poverty, employability, mental health, education, family background, homelessness and criminal history) as a mediating factor. In other words, the association between drugs and crime is also explained to a certain extent by the self-propagating mechanisms underlying marginalization and antisocial behaviour, including violence, acquisitive crime and drug use. For example, a sex worker (typically living on the margins of society) or a young person growing up in a deprived neighbourhood is more likely than others to engage in acquisitive crime because of his or her limited employability and low income, to be exposed to and partake in a culture of violence as a means of survival, and to engage in drug use as an escape mechanism. A downward spiral of drug use ensues because of poor education, limited exposure to prevention campaigns and limited access to treatment.[168]

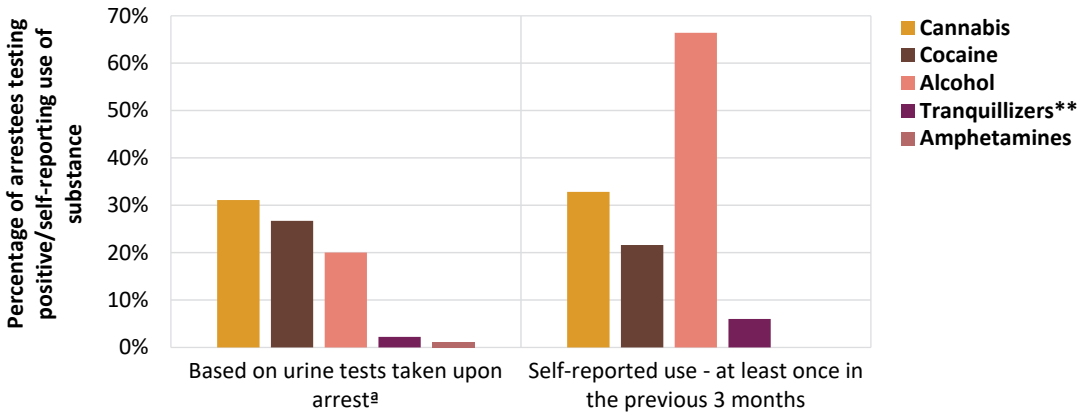
Nevertheless, the role of drug use as a causal agent for criminal behaviour has been investigated extensively in the literature and confirmed with a certain degree of rigour in some contexts. Some of the better documented patterns of causation relate to cocaine use, especially in connection with acquisitive

[168] A discussion of the links between drug use and social marginalization may be found in UNODC, *World Drug Report 2016* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.16.XI.7), chapter 2.

crime (despite the stimulant property of cocaine, which would suggest a link to violent crime via the psychopharmacological mechanism), and the link between heroin use and acquisitive crime.[169]

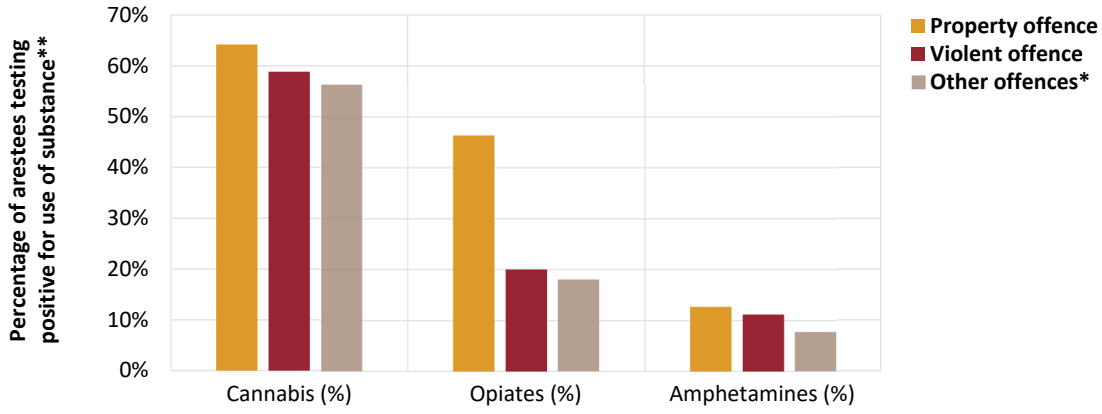
Studies of such causation often rely on microdata with a wealth of detail, complexity and cross-referencing that goes far beyond what is to be found in the aggregate data available at the international level. However, some of the international data do illustrate how the extent and patterns of association of drug use with criminal behaviour differ across drugs and type of crime. One such source is the International Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring (I-ADAM) programme, a partnership of criminal justice organizations across eight countries[170] that implemented, around the year 2000, a standardized drug surveillance system focused on arrestees. The system involved the conduct of confidential interviews and analysis of urine specimens that were carried out on a voluntary and anonymous basis.

Figure 68: Drug use among a sample* of arrestees in Chile, 1999



Source: Arrestee Drug Monitoring Program I (I-ADAM), US Department of Justice.
*Note: *Based on a sample of 134 male arrestees from three detention centres in Santiago. Includes arrestees detained for drug-related offences.*
[a] Urine tests from a subset of 90 arrestees.
** Urine tests refer specifically to benzodiazepines.

Figure 69: Urinalysis results among a sample[a] of arrestees in Australia, by substance and by type of offence, 1999

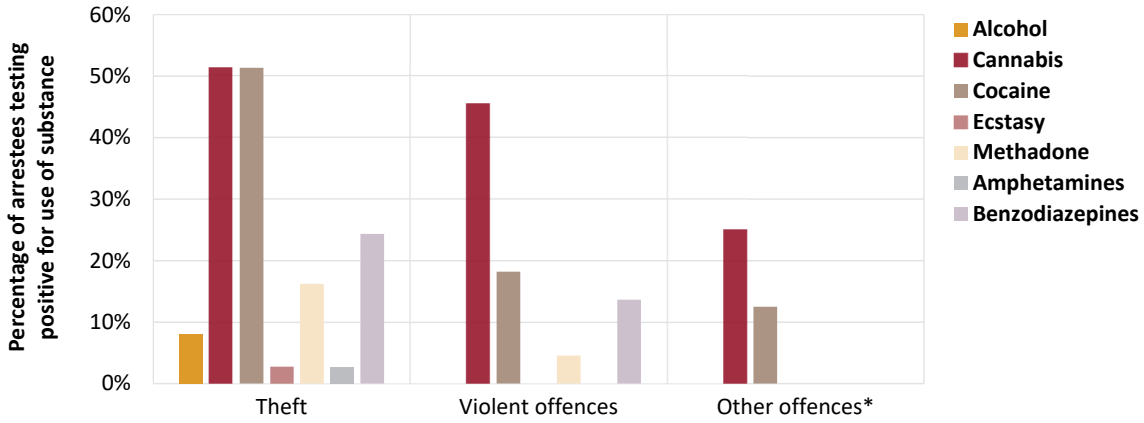


Source: Arrestee Drug Monitoring Program I (I-ADAM), US Department of Justice.
Note: [a] 821 males arrested in Queensland (Southport), Western Australia (East Perth) and New South Wales (Bankstown and Parramatta).
*Excluding drug offences and traffic offences.
** Equal weight assigned to each of Queensland (Southport), Western Australia (East Perth) and New South Wales. The value for New South Wales was derived as a simple average of the percentages for Bankstown and Parramatta.

[169] An overview of literature on this topic can be found in United States, Office of National Drug Control Policy, *Improving the Measurement of Drug-Related Crime* (Washington, D.C., 2013). See also Caulkins, J. P. and Kleiman, M. A. R., "Drugs and crime", in *The Oxford Handbook of Crime and Criminal Justice* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011).

[170] The eight countries were: Australia, Chile, Malaysia, Netherlands, South Africa, United Kingdom (England and Wales), United Kingdom (Scotland) and United States.

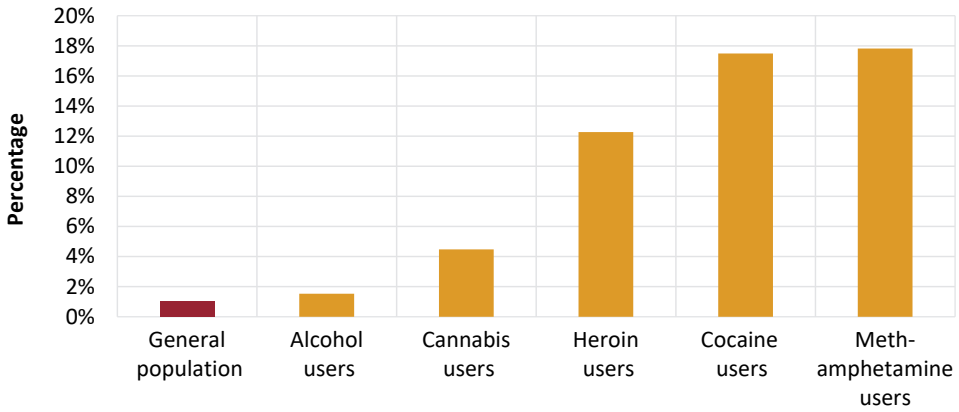
Figure 70: Urinalysis results among a sample of arrestees in the Netherlands, by substance and by type of offence, 1999**



Source: Source: Arrestee Drug Monitoring Program I (I-ADAM), US Department of Justice.
* Excluding sexual offences and drug offences.
**80 arrestees.

The data collected under the I-ADAM programme clearly show high levels of drug use among arrestees. Moreover, they tend to show, for a given substance, a stronger association with acquisitive offences than with violent offences. It is more challenging, though, to compare the strength of association across substances for a given type of offence. The reason for this is that the "baseline" is different for different drugs, meaning that their prevalence among the general population can vary greatly. For example, far more people in the general population use cannabis than cocaine, and this would need to be taken into account when comparing the data for those two drugs.

Figure 71: Proportion of individuals who attacked someone with intent to cause serious harm in the past year, among general population and intensive users of psychoactive substances, United States, 2015



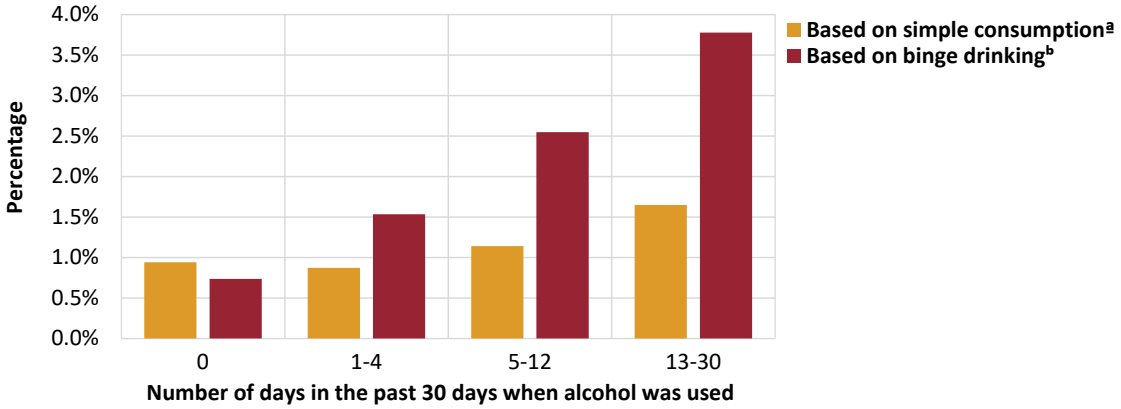
Source: UNODC elaboration of data from United States, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), *2015 National Survey on Drug Use and Health* (2016).

Note: "Intensive users" refers to those who used a substance at least 10 times over the previous month.

Data from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health conducted in the United States in 2015 corroborate the psychopharmacological as well as the economic-compulsive mechanism. For example, figure 71 provides some confirmation of the psychopharmacological link in that the proportion of individuals who attacked someone tended to be noticeably higher among intensive users of psychoactive substances than in the general population. Because the same definition of "intensive user" was applied consistently for all substances when analysing the data, the size of the relevant population group varied considerably across substances. It should be noted that the data include cases where the violent act may not have been committed under the influence of the substance in question. Nevertheless, the pattern that emerges is in line with the known effects of the drugs, with a higher propensity to violent behaviour among users of the

stimulant drugs, cocaine and methamphetamine. This suggests that intoxication does indeed play a role in violent crime, though it is not the only relevant factor, as shown by comparing the data for heroin and cannabis.

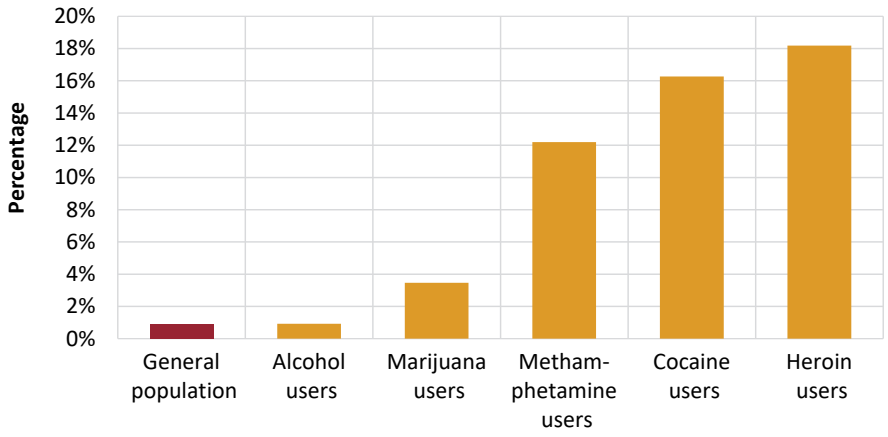
Figure 72: Proportion of individuals who attacked someone with the intent to cause serious harm in the past year, by intensity of alcohol use, United States, 2015



Source: UNODC elaboration of data from United States, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), *2015 National Survey on Drug Use and Health* (2016).
[a] In this metric, users are categorized according to the number of days they consumed alcohol (in the previous 30 days).
[b] In this metric, users are categorized according to the number of days (in the previous 30 days) on which they engaged in binge drinking, defined as the consumption, for males, of five or more alcoholic beverages and, for females, of four or more such beverages, within the space of a few hours of each other.

Although alcohol use measured in terms of frequency does not show a strong link with violent behaviour, the association between alcohol and violent behaviour becomes clearer if one distinguishes between different patterns of alcohol use, i.e. binge drinking versus general consumption. Figure 72 suggests that binge drinking explains violent behaviour better and that, in the United States, it is a better predictor of antisocial behaviour than general alcohol consumption.

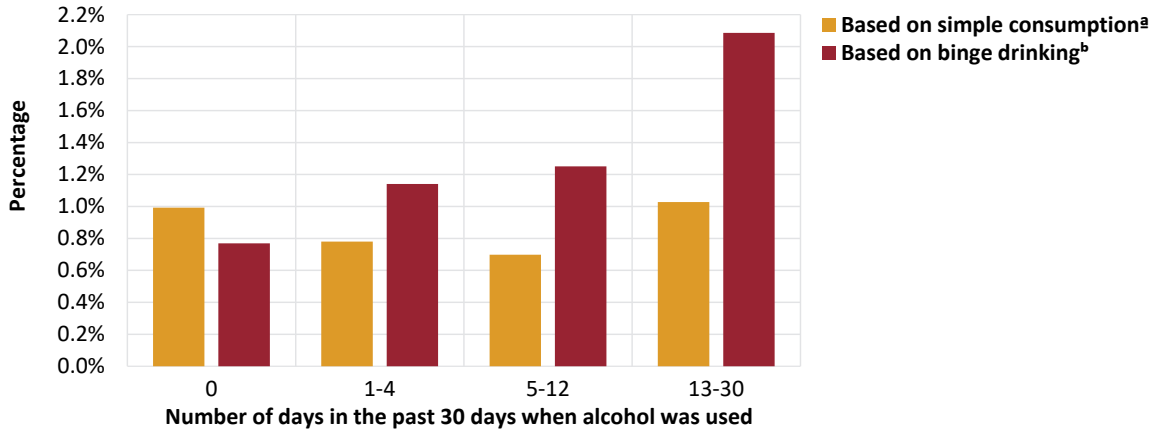
Figure 73: Proportion of indviduals who attempted to steal* in the past year, among general population and intensive users of psychoactive substances, United States, 2015



Source: UNODC elaboration of data from United States, SAMHSA, *2015 National Survey on Drug Use and Health* (2016).
*"Stealing" is defined as having stolen or tried to steal anything worth more than $50.
Note: "Intensive users" refers to those who used a substance at least 10 times over the previous month.

The data from the 2015 National Survey on Drug Use and Health also corroborate a link between substance use and stealing. The proportion of individuals who engage in stealing tends to be considerably higher among substance users than in the general population, which may reflect how users need to finance their addiction. The different proportions for the various drugs appear to be driven by the dependence-inducing character of the substance in question, as well as by its price. It cannot be taken for granted, though, that the crime has actually been committed after use of the substance in question.

Figure 74: Proportion of individuals who attempted to steal* over the past year, by intensity of alcohol use, United States, 2015

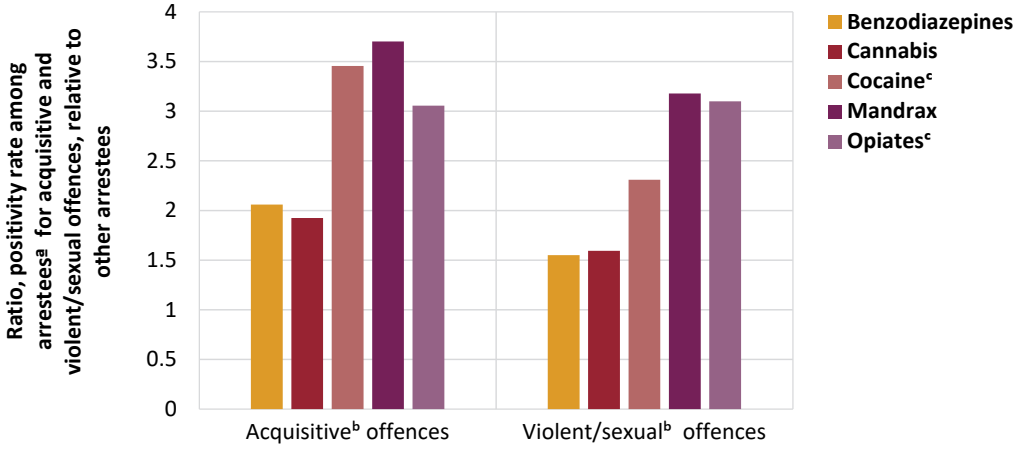


Source: UNODC elaboration of data from United States, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), 2015 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (2016).
* "Stealing" is defined as having stolen or tried to steal anything worth more than $50
[a] In this metric, users are categorized according to the number of days they consumed alcohol (in the previous 30 days).
[b] In this metric, users are categorized according to the number of days (in the previous 30 days) on which they engaged in binge drinking, defined as the consumption, for males, of five or more alcoholic beverages and, for females, of four or more such beverages, within the space of a few hours of each other.

With the exception of the subpopulation that did not use alcohol at all, the relationship between alcohol use and stealing reflects that between alcohol use and violence, i.e. the likelihood of stealing clearly increases with an increase in the frequency of binge drinking, while such a relationship does not emerge for general alcohol consumption. However, it cannot be ruled out that stealing in this context is, to some extent, an expression of antisocial behaviour rather than a mechanism for financing alcohol use.

While the previous figures allowed for comparisons across substances (for a given kind of offence) and across offences (for a given substance), figures 75 and 76, based on data from South Africa and the United States, compare the strength of drug-offence association by type of drug and type of offence simultaneously. Significantly, the association between cocaine use and acquisitive crime emerges as the most prominent one across all types of drug and for all the different types of offence considered.

Figure 75: Estimated increased likelihood of testing positive for drug use among those arrestees[a] for violent/sexual and acquisitive offences, relative to other arrestees, South Africa, 1999–2000

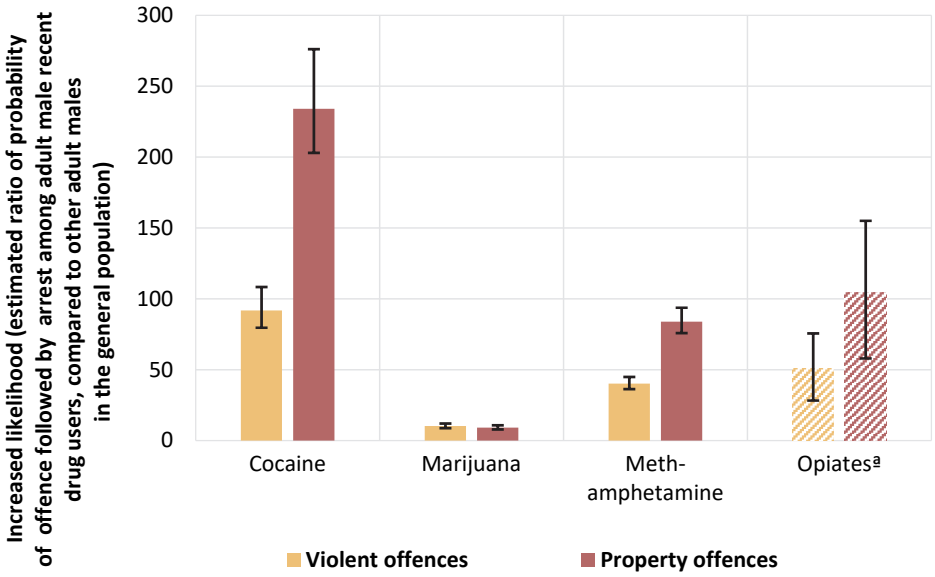


Source: UNODC elaboration of data provided by Medical Research Council of South Africa.

[a] Based on urinalysis carried out on a total of 1,648 arrestees at 10 police stations in South Africa tested within the framework of the International Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring (I-ADAM) programme. Those arrested for drug-related offences, such as possession of drugs, are excluded.
[b] Some offences are considered to have both an acquisitive and a violent nature.
[c] Because of the low positivity rates for cocaine and opiates, these estimates should be interpreted with caution.

Indeed, figures 75 and 76 confirm a stronger association between drug use and acquisitive crime than between drug use and violent crime. This reflects, to some extent, the known properties (psychopharmacological and dependence-inducing) of the substances in question and their tendency to be linked to a specific type of criminal behaviour (violent or acquisitive). For example, the use of expensive drugs such as cocaine is more likely to be linked to property crime than violent crime, whereas cannabis use does not seem to have so strong an association with either property or violent crime as the use of other drugs. However, because of the variability of the detection window in the urinalysis test, which is far wider for cannabis than for other drugs, the comparison between drugs needs to be interpreted with caution.

Figure 76: Estimates* of increased likelihood of committing an offence resulting in arrest among adult male recent drug users, by drug type and type of offence, United States, 2013**



Sources: Arrestee Drug Monitoring Program II (ADAM-II), US Department of Justice; UNODC elaboration of data from United States, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), 2013 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (2014) and 2015 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (2016).

*Based on results of urinalysis, undertaken within the framework of the Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring II (ADAM-II) programme, among a sample of male arrestees in five counties in the United States in 2013, and UNODC elaboration of data from the National Surveys on Drug Use and Health, conducted by the United States Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) in 2013 and 2015.

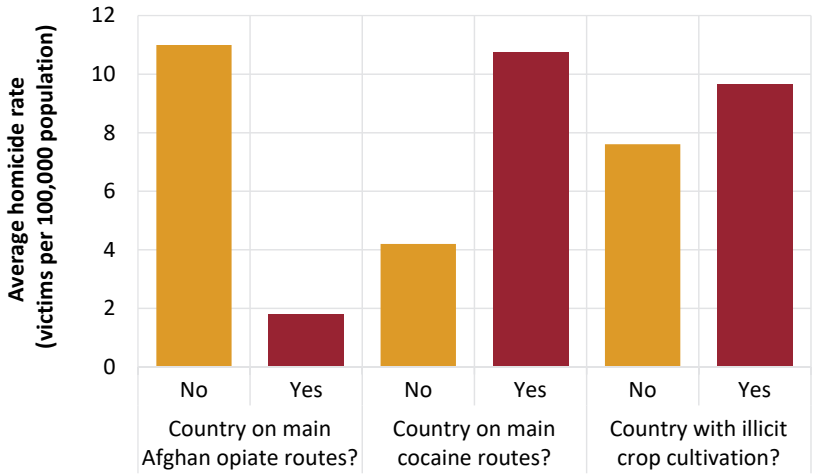
** " Adult male recent drug users" refers to male users, aged 18-64 years, who consumed the drug in question at least once during the positivity window for urinalysis, namely: 2-3 days for cocaine and opiates; 2-4 days for methamphetamine; and 7-30 days for marijuana. Due to the variability of the positivity window, the comparison across drugs needs to be interpreted with caution.

ª The uncertainty for opiates reflects in part adjustments for incomplete coverage of the opiate user population by household surveys.

The systemic link between drugs and violence

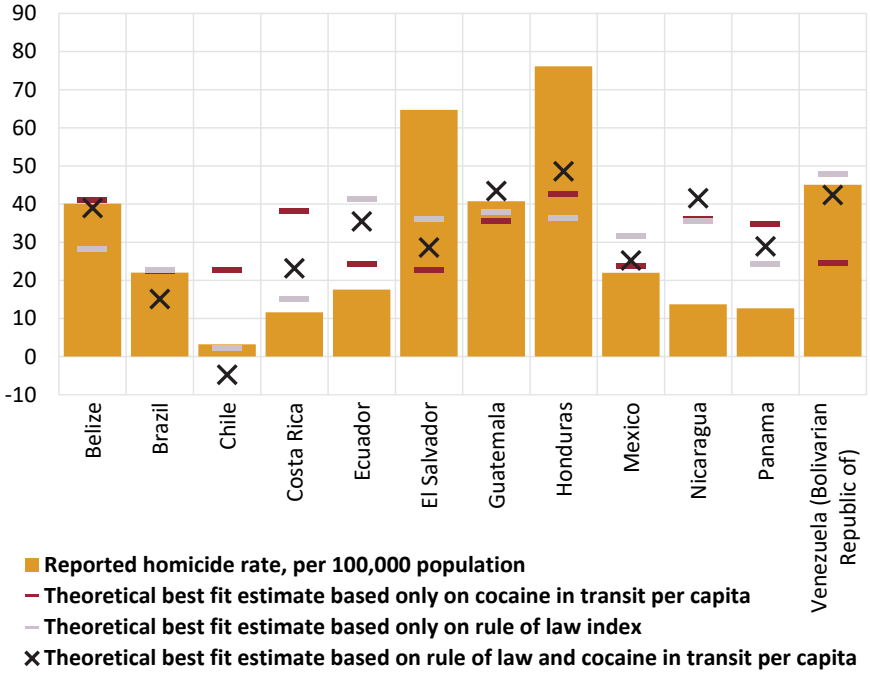
The systemic link has to do with violent confrontations involving people engaged in the drug supply chain. Although this link is hard to measure, in some countries violence associated with the drug trade accounts for a significant share of homicides; however, a clear association between drug trafficking and homicide cannot be established, since there are also countries with a high level of drug trafficking but a relatively low level of homicide, and vice versa.

Figure 77: Average homicide rate in relation to the location of the illicit supply chain of drugs, 2013–2016



Source: UNODC homicide statistics.

Figure 78: Homicide rate in selected transit countries, modelled in relation to the rule of law and the amount of cocaine in transit, 2010



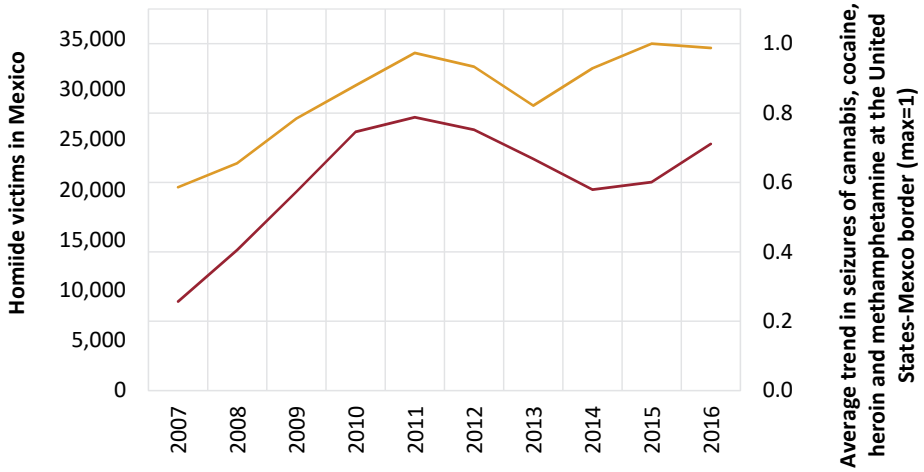
Source: Homicide data from UNODC homicide statistics.
Estimates of the flow of cocaine in transit based on United States, Office of National Drug Control Policy, "Cocaine Smuggling in 2010", January 2012.

An analysis of the links between drug trafficking and homicide can be made taking Latin America and cocaine as an example. Assuming that homicide levels can be predicted on the basis of the quantities of

cocaine trafficked in countries, and also on the basis of those countries' "rule of law index" (Worldwide Governance Indicators Project), a comparison of the actual homicide level reported by countries with the estimates obtained by modelling provides an idea of the relationship between these variables. Figure 78 shows that some countries in Latin America, such as Ecuador and Nicaragua, have a low homicide rate relative to their volume of cocaine trafficking, while others, such as El Salvador and Honduras, have a higher rate than what one would predict from their volume of cocaine trafficking. This suggests that the same quantity of drugs flowing through different countries may have a different impact on violence in each of those countries.[171]

Factoring in the rule of law, along with the volume of cocaine trafficking, can help explain the actual level of homicide in a country better, but there are still outliers, such as El Salvador and Honduras, with comparatively higher levels of homicide that cannot be explained in terms of drug trafficking and the rule of law index.

Figure 79: Homicides in Mexico versus seizures of drugs at the United States-Mexico border, 2007–2016



Source: Homicide data from UNODC homicide statistics. Data on drug seizures from United States Office of National Drug Control Policy.

It is also challenging to explain trends over time in levels of systemic drug-related homicide in relation to the magnitude of the supply chain. Mexico is a good example of the erratic relationship between drug trafficking and homicide levels. A comparison of drug seizures at the United States border (reported by United States authorities), as a proxy for drug flows in Mexico, with homicide rates shows that drug flows did have a positive association with homicide in the period 2007–2013, but there was a sudden change after 2015, when rising levels of homicide were not apparently linked to drug flows.

Interpretations differ as to why drug flows trigger violence in some contexts but not in others. As discussed earlier in this booklet, what seems to have an impact on homicide is not so much the quantities of trafficked drugs as changes in flows that destabilize the market and drive violence among drug trafficking organizations, or between drug trafficking organizations and State authorities.

The "destabilization" effect can also be seen when analysing homicidal violence together with drug prices. One study found statistically significant positive associations between drug-related homicide and heroin prices in the United States and four European countries. These could be explained in terms of the impact of changes in prices on the profitability of the drug trade, the expected benefits of using violence, and the consequent shift in the balance between the monetary returns and the risk connected with committing the

[171] The reasons for differences in the levels of violence associated with drug trafficking are discussed earlier in this booklet.

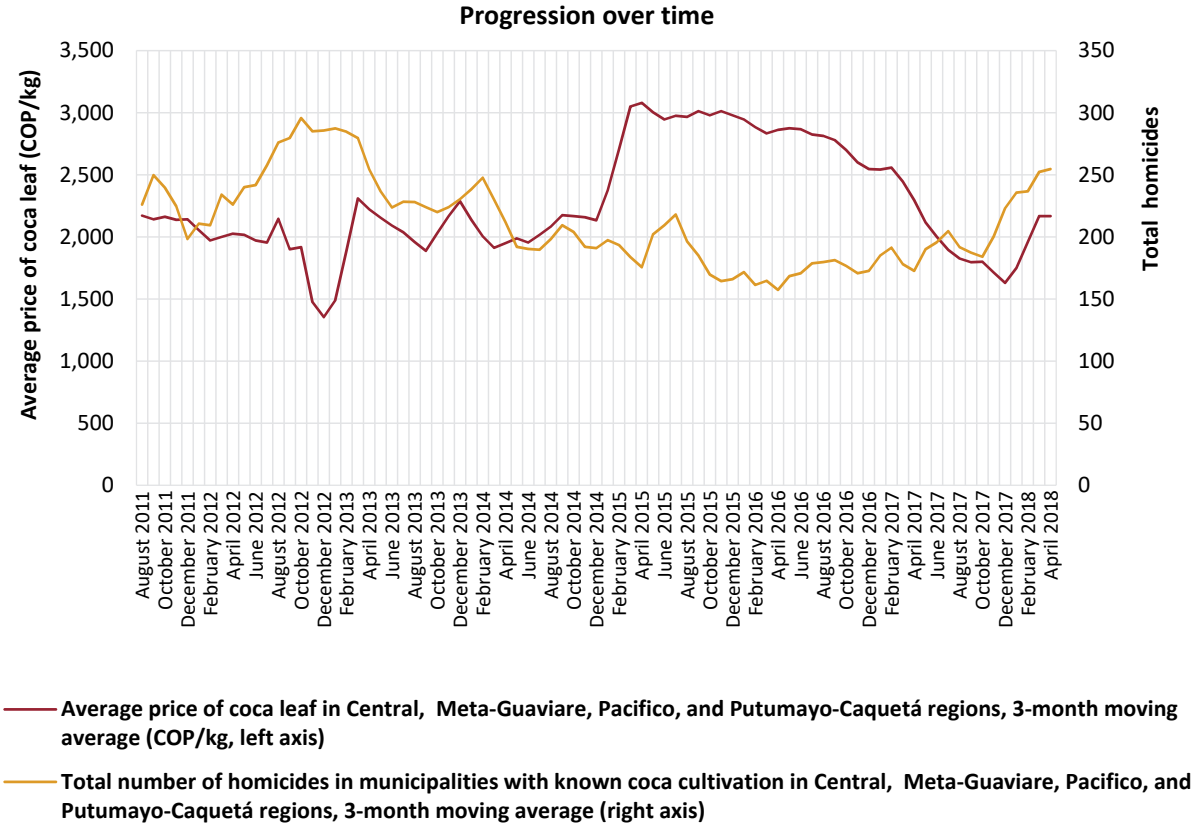
crime. Moreover, an increase in prices could also be indicative of a shortage in supply, which itself may generate violence among competing groups as they strive to maintain supply levels.[172]

In the context of the illicit cultivation of drug crops and the production of plant-based drugs that takes place in areas affected by violence, there appears to be a recurrent pattern of negative association between drug prices and violence. One study of Afghanistan, for example, concluded that high opium prices led to a reduction in conflict, a phenomenon explained in terms of an increase in the opportunity cost of joining rebel groups and engaging in armed conflict, which made this less attractive than participation in the illicit opium industry.[173]

Another study looking at Afghanistan concluded that opium prices had little impact on violence while, conversely, violence (measured in terms of security incidents) had a strong negative impact on the price of opium. This could be attributed to a supply and demand mechanism, whereby violence reduces demand by disrupting trade, while simultaneously increasing supply by undermining rule of law. In this case it is the drug market, and drug prices in particular, that is influenced by violence, rather than the opposite.[174]

A negative association also emerges from an examination of coca leaf prices in relation to homicides in four key coca-producing regions of Colombia (see figure 80).

Figure 80: Coca leaf price in Colombia in relation to homicides in municipalities* with known coca cultivation, by month, August 2011–April 2018 (Central, Meta-Guaviare, Pacifico, and Putumayo-Caquetá regions only)



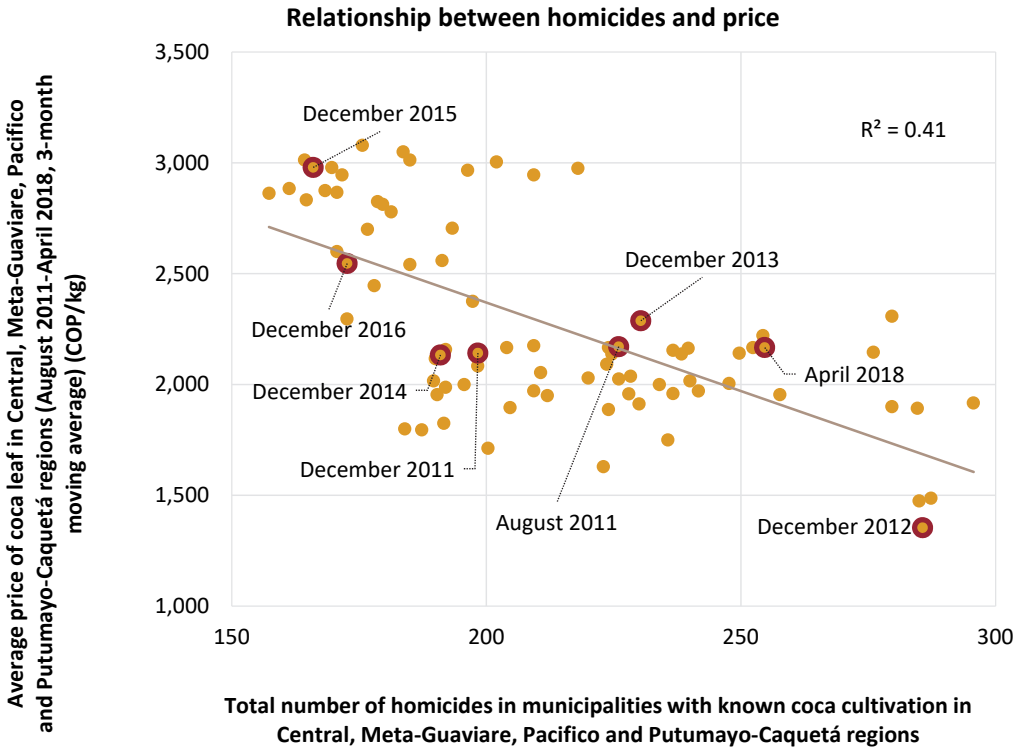
Average price of coca leaf in Central, Meta-Guaviare, Pacifico, and Putumayo-Caquetá regions, 3-month moving average (COP/kg, left axis)

Total number of homicides in municipalities with known coca cultivation in Central, Meta-Guaviare, Pacifico, and Putumayo-Caquetá regions, 3-month moving average (right axis)

[172] Sarrica, F., "Drugs prices and systemic violence: an empirical study", *European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research*, vol. 14 (2008), pp. 391–415.

[173] Gehring, K., Langlotz, S. and Kienberger, S., "Stimulant or depressant? Resource-related income shocks and conflict", Working Papers, No. 652 (University of Heidelberg, Department of Economics, 2018).

[174] Bove, V. and Elia, L., "Drugs and violence in Afghanistan: a panel VAR with unobserved common factor analysis", *Defence and Peace Economics*, vol. 24, No. 6 (2013).



Source: Source: Homicide data from Colombia, Ministry of National Defence; coca cultivation from UNODC illicit crop monitoring in Colombia (SIMCI).
* The determination of whether a municipality was affected by coca cultivation was based on data for 2017.

Drug-related systemic crime can also be found in consumer markets and in relation to the retail trade. In Scotland, for example, a homicide is recorded as “drug-related” if it is motivated by a need to obtain drugs or money for drugs, if the victim is a consumer or supplier of drugs, if it is committed in order to steal proceeds of the drug trade, or if it is a consequence of rivalry between drug users and/or dealers. This category therefore includes elements of both the systemic and the economic-compulsive link. Based on this definition, data provided by the Scottish Government indicate that, from April 2012 to March 2017, 15 per cent of homicide victims were victims of drug-related homicides, and that 89 per cent of victims of drug-related homicides were male, compared with a male share of 76 per cent for homicide victims in general.

UNODC
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

UNODC Research

Vienna International Centre, PO Box 500, 1400 Vienna, Austria
Tel: +(43) (1) 26060-0, Fax: +(43) (1) 26060-5866, www.unodc.org

Since the publication of the previous edition in 2014, the *Global Study on Homicide* has been expanded into a special six-booklet format, five of which are dedicated to thematic areas relevant to the study of the ultimate crime.

Booklet 1 of the *Global Study on Homicide 2019* summarizes the content of the five subsequent substantive booklets by reviewing their key findings and highlighting a set of policy implications derived from the analyses presented in them. Booklet 2 provides an overview of international homicide counts, rates, trends and patterns, and of criminal justice responses to homicide. Booklet 3 examines drivers and mechanisms of, and contributors to, homicide, and looks at the different homicide typologies. The latter is done in an effort to improve understanding of the contexts in which homicide is perpetrated, as this can inform more effective policymaking. Booklet 4 analyses the relationship between homicide and development with reference to the Sustainable Development Goals by looking in detail at the main pillars of development and their reciprocal relationship with homicide and violence. Booklet 5 gives an overview of the scope of gender-related killings of women and girls. It contains an in-depth analysis of killings perpetrated within the family sphere and also examines forms of gender-related killings perpetrated outside the family sphere. Booklet 6 deals with the homicide of children, adolescents and young adults, and covers different types of child killings within and outside the family.

As in previous years, the *Global Study on Homicide 2019* is aimed at improving understanding of this complex phenomenon and at providing policymakers with an updated dataset of cross-national data that evaluates the scale of homicide globally.

The statistical annex is published on the UNODC website: https://www.unodc.org/gsh/