The global prevalence of intimate partner homicide: What is the scale?

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Improving health worldwide
www.lshtm.ac.uk
Why should we study intimate partner homicide?

Homicide mortality
In 2000, an estimated 1.6 million people worldwide lost their lives to violence. Around half of these deaths were suicides, nearly one third were homicides, and about one-fifth were casualties of armed conflict.

Overall, men are more likely to be killed by any perpetrator

Women are more likely to be killed by an intimate partner than men
Homicide ↔ IPV

• Most extreme health outcome of IPV
• The majority of women who are killed by an intimate partner have a reported history of intimate partner violence (Campbell 2003)
• Men who are murdered by their intimate partner often have a track record of domestic abuse (Serran 2004)
Aim

To estimate the prevalence of female and male intimate partner homicide across the world
Systematic review

Search strategy:

1. (partner or partners or ex-partners or ex-partner or husband or husbands or wife or wives or co-habiting or common-law or married or marital or marriage or divorce or divorced or couple or couples or boyfriend* or girlfriend* or spouse or spouses or lover or spousal)

2. partner violence/ or marriage/

3. 1 OR 2

4. (murder* or killings or killing or genocide* or deaths wrongful or wrongful deaths or death wrongful or homicide* or wrongful death or femicide or uxoricide or spousal homicide)

5. Homicide

6. 4 OR 5

7. 3 and 6

8. limit 7 to yr="1990 -Current"

Databases
Embase: 1190
Medline: 939
Social Policy & Practice: 105
Global Health: 83
Web of Science: 866

After removing duplicates:
2167 abstracts

263 full-texts

118 includes

163 includes

Additional includes through hand search of same authors and reference lists: 38
Statistical offices

Searched web pages and contacted statistical offices in every country around the world
Dear Heidi Stoeckl,

Thank you for visiting the Belize Police Department Website. We apologize for the late reply. In regards to your request on Statistics of Homicide according to victim offender relationships, we regret to inform you that we have not been keeping track of this for all cases. Our statistics on the website was gathered manually and not standardized across the board for all criminal records. This year, our criminal records has been standardized and are now entered electronically into a database. This new method should improve our statistics therefore, this kind of suggestion is taken seriously.

Your request and interest in the matter has given us an idea and we will consider it for future use. We apologize for not being able to provide further statistical information, and we thank you for your contribution in fight against crime.
The back story to the paper was interesting as well. Cincinnati is a medium sized midwest city and had at the time one of the highest gun violence and homicide rates in the country. Ohio and Kentucky have very lax gun control laws. No one had really looked at women among trauma patients (shootings, stabbings) so I picked that as a project. I sat in the ER at night interviewing trauma patients who were shot, and all the women trauma patients regardless of cause of injury. After 2 weeks I noticed relatively few intimate partner violence victims. I then obtained the coroner records and saw why - the women shot by intimate partners were mostly all dead. Most were shot multiple times in the head and never even came to the hospital, they went from the house to the coroner. It was a sad and shocking realization that had not been picked up before.
## Data issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of data</th>
<th>Data issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Police data</td>
<td>Might not know until they fill out the form, might not report, might get it wrong, mainly based on police data, but are sometimes updated on a regular basis. Investigate the body, similar issues to police data, only convicted perpetrators, not all cases go to court, does not consider homicide-suicide cases.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National statistics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mortuary data</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Court data</td>
<td>Same issues as with court data, normally only conducted with current prisoners, issues of access.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prison data</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analysis

• We selected one estimate per country-year using a quality assessment decision algorithm - if there was more than one estimate available for one country per year we used the estimate with the highest quality (representativeness, complete information and by gender, information on all age groups and with inclusive definitions of intimate partner and homicides)

• The median prevalence of intimate partner homicide among all homicides was calculated by country and region overall, and for women and men separately.

• We calculated different scenarios for dealing with homicide cases for which the data is unknown
How many female murder victims are killed by their partner? 
>35%

How many male murder victims are killed by their partner? 
~ 5 %

How many male or female murder victims are killed by their partner? 
> 14%
% of women murdered by their intimate partner among all female homicides

% of men murdered by their intimate partner among all male homicides
% of women murdered by their intimate partner among all female homicides
% of men murdered by their intimate partner among all male homicides
% of IPV murders among all homicides
Conservative estimates of intimate partner homicide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prevalence of intimate partner homicides among male and female homicides</th>
<th>Total homicides of included studies</th>
<th>Conservative estimates (missing cases are regarded as non-partner homicides)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Worldwide (n=32)</td>
<td>492,340</td>
<td>13.54% (9.24-18.23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High-income countries (n=18)*</td>
<td>476,537</td>
<td>14.92% (9.24-18.23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa (n=4)</td>
<td>4,861</td>
<td>7.31% (5.65-18.31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Americas (n=3)</td>
<td>5,112</td>
<td>0.72% (0.64-9.65)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Mediterranean (n=0)</td>
<td>..</td>
<td>..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-income and middle-income Europe (n=2)</td>
<td>419</td>
<td>10.98% (9.68-12.28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast Asia (n=2)</td>
<td>601</td>
<td>18.75% (11.26-18.75)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Pacific (n=3)</td>
<td>4,810</td>
<td>4.82% (4.82-9.84)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prevalence of intimate partner homicides among all female homicides</th>
<th>Total homicides of included studies</th>
<th>Conservative estimates (missing cases are regarded as non-partner homicides)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Worldwide (n=63)</td>
<td>133,691</td>
<td>38.55% (30.84-45.31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High-income countries (n=36)</td>
<td>115,515</td>
<td>41.19% (30.84-44.45)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa (n=4)</td>
<td>6,219</td>
<td>40.11% (38.55-41.67)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Americas (n=15)</td>
<td>9,658</td>
<td>40.54% (7.51-54.84)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Mediterranean (n=2)</td>
<td>887</td>
<td>14.41% (5.26-23.56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-income and middle-income Europe (n=3)</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>20.00% (1.82-37.78)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast Asia (n=1)</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>58.75% (58.75-58.75)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Pacific (n=2)</td>
<td>1,132</td>
<td>19.12% (19.12-21.29)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prevalence of intimate partner homicides among all male homicides</th>
<th>Total homicides of included studies</th>
<th>Conservative estimates (missing cases are regarded as non-partner homicides)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Worldwide (n=28)</td>
<td>373,077</td>
<td>6.28% (3.13-6.34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High-income countries (n=18)</td>
<td>364,410</td>
<td>6.28% (3.13-6.34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa (n=3)</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>4.12% (1.55-6.38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Americas (n=2)</td>
<td>4,580</td>
<td>0.43% (0.00-6.54)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Mediterranean (n=0)</td>
<td>..</td>
<td>..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-income and middle-income Europe (n=2)</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>3.59% (3.18-4.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast Asia (n=1)</td>
<td>334</td>
<td>0.87% (0.87-0.87)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Pacific (n=2)</td>
<td>3,292</td>
<td>1.33% (1.33-2.78)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
If missing data is considered...

% of IPV murders among all female homicides: 
> 45%

% of IPV murders among all male homicides: 
6%

% of IPV murders among all homicides: 
>17%
Trends in homicide and intimate partner homicides in the USA

[Graph showing trends in homicide and intimate partner homicides in the USA from 1975 to 2005.]
Focus on intimate partner homicides - USA

Total Homicide IPV
Total Homicide IPV Female
Total Homicide IPV Male
Trends in homicide and IPV homicides in the UK

- Homicide_total_male
- Homicide_total_female
- Homicide_IPV_female
- Homicide_IPV_male

Line chart showing the trends in homicide and IPV homicides in the UK from 1990 to 2010.
Trends in homicide and IPV homicides in Australia

- **Total number**
  - Homicide total male
  - Homicide total female
  - Homicide IPV female
  - Homicide IPV male

- **2004**
  - Homicide total male: 179
  - Homicide total female: 87
  - Homicide IPV female: 49
  - Homicide IPV male: 16

- **2005**
  - Homicide total male: 188
  - Homicide total female: 113
  - Homicide IPV female: 59
  - Homicide IPV male: 15

- **2006**
  - Homicide total male: 185
  - Homicide total female: 81
  - Homicide IPV female: 42
  - Homicide IPV male: 23

- **Legend**
  - Blue: Homicide total male
  - Yellow: Homicide total female
  - Red: Homicide IPV female
  - Blue: Homicide IPV male
The age component: Intimate partner femicide in South Africa

![Bar chart showing the age distribution of intimate partner femicide cases in South Africa. The chart displays the number of cases for different age groups: 14-29, 30-44, 45-59, and 60-99. The blue bars represent the total number of homicides, and the red bars represent intimate partner violence femicides. The age groups are listed on the x-axis, and the number of cases is listed on the y-axis.]
Beyond the prevalence data...

**Murder of collaterals** in intimate partner conflict.

[Murder—mother-in-law] [He] raped and strangled his mother-in-law immediately after release from prison for a conviction for assaulting his partner [victim’s daughter].

“After I knocked her [murder victim] about the head, I knifed her. She just wouldn’t shut up.” [He] objected to mother-in-law’s “interference.”

(Dobash & Dobash 2012)
Beyond the prevalence data...

Children of murdered partners

We have an odd relationship. I go over . . . *Obviously* if he calls me and needs something, I would go over. . . . He doesn’t have anybody else. It’s not going to hurt me. . . I’m not diminished by that. He is still my father. Regardless of what our relationship is and the feeling is certainly different than what I think it is supposed to be for a father, but he’s all I’ve got and I’m all he’s got ... (Laughton 2008)
Conclusions

• Men are by far more likely to be killed by any perpetrator than women
• Intimate partner homicide affects women more than men, in many countries a third to a half of the homicides of women are committed by intimate partners.
• Approximately 5-10 percent of male homicides are committed by intimate partners
• Missing data is an important, not to be neglected issue
Recommendations

Data collection

• Limited compilation of routine data on intimate partner homicide – especially outside high income countries
• Important that data systems routinely integrate questions on perpetrator of homicide
Recommendations

Policy

• Increase awareness that reducing IPV reduces homicides
• IPV services need to be increase their awareness of the danger women are into when they are in and leave abusive relationships
EVERY WOMAN, MAN AND CHILD HAS A RIGHT TO BE FREE FROM VIOLENCE OF ANY KIND

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