

# femicide census

**\*\*Press Release - Embargoed until 00.01 on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2020\*\***

**\*\*We will release an embargoed copy of the report to selected contacts by 10am on 19<sup>th</sup> February. The embargo is until 00.01 on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2020. \*\***

## Report on 2018 Femicides

**The Femicide Census report on UK femicides in 2018 finds men who have already killed women are killing again – three men had already killed women before - and over half of perpetrators (52%) had a history of violence to women.**

- 149 women killed by 147 men in the UK in 2018
- 91 women (61%) were killed by their current or former partner
- 58 women (39%) were killed by men who were not or had never been intimate partners, including:
  - 12 women (8%) were killed by sons or step-sons; a further 5 women (3%) were killed by a son-in-law or ex son-in-law
  - 6 women (4%) were killed by a social acquaintance
  - 6 women (4%) were killed by other acquaintances
  - 6 women (4%) were killed by a neighbour or housemate
  - 2 women were killed on their first contact with a sexually motivated killer
  - 2 women were killed in the context of prostitution
  - Only 6% of femicides (9 victims) were committed by a stranger or where there was no known relationship between the victim and the perpetrator, 3 women were killed in the context of robberies/burglaries
- 41% (37 of 91) of women killed by a partner/former partner had separated or taken steps to separate from him with 30% of them (11/37) killed within the first month and 70% (24/37) killed within the first year post separation
- 102 femicides (68%) took place in the woman's house – which may (35%) or may not (33%) have been shared with the perpetrator
- 23 women (15%) were over 66-years-old when they were killed
- 16 men (11%) who killed women were known to use prostitution and pornography, including one man who accessed images of child sexual abuse
- Overkilling was evident in 56% of cases
- 52% of perpetrators had previous histories of violence against the victim or other women
- 3 men had previously killed a woman.

The report highlights that in over half the cases (52%) the perpetrator had previously been violent to women and that as many as 61% of the killings were committed by a current or former partner.

As in previous years most women were killed by men using a sharp instrument, followed by strangulation or asphyxiation and then by the use of a blunt instrument. In 68% of cases the killings took place in or immediately around (garage/garden) the woman's home. This may be her own home or a home shared with the perpetrator and includes not only private houses but sheltered housing, mixed hostels or care facilities.

Overkilling was again prevalent this year in as many as 56% of cases. Overkilling is defined as the use of excessive, gratuitous violence beyond that necessary to cause the victim's death. It may involve using more than one method of killing or it may involve one method but multiply repeated.

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The report highlights that media coverage of such cases often describes them as “frenzied” and as the result of “a loss of control”. However, killing women is the act of ultimate control rather than a loss of control. In one femicide the post mortem carried out on the victim established that most of the 70+ stab wounds inflicted were very shallow and in fact indicated a remarkably high degree of control. Similarly, some cases are described as suicide pacts/murder suicides and some cases involving older couples or a son killing an elderly mother are sometimes portrayed as mercy killings or being unable to cope with caring responsibilities or witnessing suffering. Yet this picture is undermined given that overkilling is often still present with, for instance, the victim dying of multiple injuries from a blunt instrument, or a knife, or in one case, the victim being thrown off a balcony to her death.

Karen Ingala Smith, Co-founder of The Femicide Census, said *“There is a high degree of normalisation of men’s violence against women and no end of excuses or rationales assumed and extended to perpetrators often without foundation. We urge media to be more professionally curious and to situate such killings in current research and in the context of what we know about the history of the relationship. For instance, robustly challenging the narratives that killers lay out in court, asking whether, in a so-called mercy killing or suicide pact, there has been a history of controlling behaviour or violence towards her.”*

*“In 52% of femicides in 2018, there was evidence of some sort, often from things victims had said to friends or families even if not actually in reports to police, to suggest a previous history of his violence and controlling behaviour towards her. In too many cases there was also evidence of his having a history of violence towards other women with 3 perpetrators having even previously killed another woman. Women are reaching out for help and many men are known to be dangerous to women but we don’t seem to be turning this knowledge into ways to save women’s lives”*

*“It is important to honour the names and lives of the women killed but it is galling to have to report such a catalogue of violence and abuse year after year. Every year we make recommendations and every Domestic Homicide Review points out lessons to be learned - yet they seem to go unheeded.”*

*“It’s also important that we challenge received wisdom about seeing leaving a violent relationship being a straightforward way that women can remove themselves from the danger of a violent partner. 41% of women killed by someone who was, or had been, an intimate partner had left him already or were taking steps to separate from him, with 30% of these women killed within the first month and 70% killed within the first year post separation.”*

*“For every woman killed there are thousands of women living in violent, controlling and abusive relationships. The closure and under-resourcing of specialist women-only services and refuges and of public services means that even where women may want to leave, they may struggle to find the help, support and safety they need and to which they are entitled. We know how violence against women works, we know what sorts of interventions and support women need, we know the critical role played by sex-inequalities, we have drawn all the lessons and made all the recommendations. We need implementation and the resources that go with that, we need to be making ambitious changes to women’s status in society and men’s entitlement, we need to robustly challenge sex role stereotypes - and we need women to be believed, respected and valued and perpetrators to be held to account.”*

**\*\*Ends\*\***

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## Spokespeople:

Karen Ingala Smith - Founder of [Count Dead women](#) and of co-founder of The Femicide Census, CEO of [nia](#), a London-based charity supporting women and girls subjected to sexual and domestic violence including prostitution. [info@femicidescensus.org.uk](mailto:info@femicidescensus.org.uk)

## End notes

### 1. Femicide Census

The Femicide Census Project produces a uniquely comprehensive report every year of women killed by men in the UK. It includes data on method and location of killing, details about victims and perpetrators and information about criminal justice outcomes. The Femicide Census is the only source of detailed data on the killings of women by men and aims to highlight patterns and trends which can feed into policy and service responses and in particular prevention and early intervention.

Karen Ingala Smith started “Counting Dead women” in 2012. The following year Clarrie O’Callaghan then head of Pro Bono at Freshfields, Bruckhaus, Deringer LLP contacted Karen. She was interested in looking at State responses to femicide and the most comprehensive data was to be found on Counting Dead Women. In 2015, the Femicide Census was launched with the help of Deloitte who provided a tailor-made database and in partnership with Women’s Aid.

Over the last five years the Femicide Census has become established as the leading articulation of men’s fatal violence against women in the UK. We are now ready to take the Femicide Census into its next phase as an independent entity lead by Karen Ingala Smith and Clarrie O’Callaghan.

This is our fourth report.

- 2. Why 2018?** The Femicide Census annual reports try to capture as much information as possible not only about the killing but about the criminal justice outcomes. Inevitably therefore the report comes at least a year after the killings covered in the report so as to capture cases that have gone to trial as far as possible.
- 3. Sources:** The report draws on Freedom of Information requests from the police as well as other official documentation where available and multiple media reports.
- 4. Criteria for inclusion:** The Femicide Census reports on killings by men of girls and women over age 14. Cases included are those where a male has been charged, or convicted of manslaughter or murder. Note, therefore, that the census is reporting not only on cases of domestic abuse, though these form the majority of such killings, but also other killings arising from male violence such as killings of women in the course of burglary, using a woman in prostitution, revenge and feuds and sexually motivated attacks.
- 5. Aim -** The Femicide census aims to capture as much detail as possible about the killings of women by men with view to identifying patterns and trends and to help inform legislative, policy and practice changes to improve the response to violence against women and develop more prevention and early intervention.

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6. Previous reports can be found at [www.femicidescensus.org](http://www.femicidescensus.org)
7. Anyone worried about their relationship or that of a friend or family member, can contact the Freephone 24-hour National Domestic Violence Helpline on 0808 2000 247 or visit [www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk).