

# 52 MORE THAN A NUMBER:

52 Femicides in 52 Weeks  
in One Province



2021-2022 FEMICIDE IN ONTARIO REPORT  
A Report by the Ontario Association of Interval & Transition Houses

## BACKGROUND

Since 1990, OAITH has tracked over 950 media reported femicides across Ontario to bring awareness about gendered violence and killings. Over the last 10 years, OAITH's definition of femicide has intentionally evolved as we remain responsive and critically analyze contemporary understanding of gender constructs, relationships between victims and perpetrators, intersecting social identities and how power, control and hatred emerge in motivations for these killings. Previous research has identified the need to collect data on five gender dimensions of violence including, sex of the victim, sex of the perpetrator, their relationship, sexual aspects to the violence, and gender motivations (Walby et al., 2017). Currently OAITH's definition of femicide refers to killings in which cisgender men have been charged or deemed responsible in the death of a woman, child or gender-diverse individual. Further to this, OAITH examines and tracks demographics relating to victim

race, culture, age, relationship, cause of death, geography and prior history of violence. These demographics are analyzed however they are limited based on how and what is included in media reports.

A femicide could be perpetrated by a current or former husband or boyfriend, a son or a nephew or by a man who is a coworker, friend or acquaintance. The nature of the relationships may be unknown and violent gendered crimes, including sexual violence, that may have occurred prior to the killing. In some cases, there may have been no known relationship between the victim(s) and perpetrator(s) but they appear to have been targeted specifically because of their gender. The gendered-motivation behind femicide deaths "refers to the root causes – such as stereotyped gender roles, discrimination towards women and girls, inequality and unequal power relations between women and men in society – that characterize the

specific context in which such killings take place" (UNODC, 2022). This does not refer to the "subjective intent of the perpetrator", although in some cases there may be evidence of a specific bias and/or hatred towards women, but rather speaks to the root causes of violence that are present within society (UNODC, 2022).

Advocates push to include 'femicide' in Criminal Code after Anoka Street murders

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are grateful to Dr. Mavis Morton, Associate Professor, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Guelph, for her partnership with OAITH's femicide data collection and for her comments and feedback as a reviewer for this report.

## PURPOSE

This report uses data collected from the 2021-2022 Annual Femicide List, 2021-2022 Media Analysis and our database to analyze ongoing femicide trends in Ontario including; the impacts of negative, incomplete or inaccurate media framing on public awareness, understanding and the conceptualization of gender-based violence (GBV) and femicide.

Further, this report will also examine factors associated with femicide victims, perpetrators and the victims' relationship with the perpetrator. These factors provide valuable insight

to emerging and continuing femicide trends, as well as highlight potential risk factors and areas for future study.

The two most common sources of information used to identify the number of femicides that occur in a given year are coroner's data and/or mainstream media reports. OAITH uses local, regional and national media reports (i.e. newspapers and television) to track, analyze and produce an annual femicide list and media analysis. The femicide lists that OAITH creates are only partial and based on information publicly available in media reports.

## LIMITATIONS OF FEMICIDE REPORTING

A limitation of OAITH's femicide work is the reliance on media-reported femicide data. Media reporting often relies on police reported data and information, which is limited due to a

range of issues including pending investigations, ongoing court proceedings, publication bans or requests from the victim's family to not report information. This can create omissions and errors within the collected data that can lead to many gaps in the available femicide data. Due to the fluid nature of this data set, OAITH continues to monitor the media for emerging details surrounding femicide cases and continues to track and revise newly confirmed femicides in Ontario.

Currently, femicide data is not collected by the criminal justice system, as femicide is not defined as a unique and distinct criminal charge within the Criminal Code of Canada (Criminal Code, 1985). Although intimate partner (IP) homicide data is collected and reported by the Uniform Crime Reporting Survey and available from Statistics Canada (2021) this information is not available in the year that the IP homicides occurred. Due to



the absence of femicide specific current data, OAIH's femicide research relies on media reported femicide cases and details to identify current femicide trends in the province. Reported femicide rates may be lower than they actually are, due to limitations within media coverage, and therefore it is important for police departments to be transparent and forthcoming about femicides that are occurring throughout the province. Failure to publish press releases about gender-based killings contributes to the underestimation of femicide rates and also reinforces the narrative that GBV is a matter of private concern and not public safety.

## Media Analysis

The media has an integral role to play in shaping public awareness and perception of societal issues (Gillespie et al., 2013). Through the dissemination of information related to crimes, such as femicides and the details surrounding these cases, the media has an opportunity to improve the public's understanding of prevalent and serious social and political issues, such as GBV, and to connect survivors all across the province with local resources and supports. Previous research has examined the ways in which media sources frame news stories reporting on cases of femicide and has identified a number of ways in which these incidents are both negatively and positively framed, often through the source of the information, the content within the news



story and the language used to describe the events and/or the victim (Carlyle, Scarduzio, Slater, 2014; Lee & Wong, 2019; Eastal et. al., 2021). The media frames that have been identified in previous academic research that the OAIH Femicide Media Analysis uses include:



## POSITIVE FRAMES

- ✓ **Victim Humanized:** Describing and remembering the woman positively and acknowledging how she impacted the lives of others.
- ✓ **Picture of Victim:** A positive or neutral picture of the woman in the news report.
- ✓ **Gendered Social Problem:** Contextualizing femicide as a social and/or political problem rooted in gender inequality.
- ✓ **Labelled a Femicide:** Labelling the killing as a femicide or specifically as violence against women.
- ✓ **Violence Against Women (VAW) Help Information:** Information about women's shelters or other violence against women resources and supports.

VS

## NEGATIVE FRAMES

- ✗ **Victim Blaming:** Attributing blame to the victim directly or indirectly by emphasizing her role in the femicide, or indirectly by excusing/justifying the perpetrator.
- ✗ **Individualized:** Portraying the femicide as an individual aberration, isolated or seemingly random event and not connected to larger societal issues.
- ✗ **Voice of Authority:** Relying on traditional voices of authority, such as law enforcement and government officials to be cited over or instead of the voices of friends, family or violence against women experts.
- ✗ **Violence against women (VAW) History Undocumented:** Failing to address any history of power and control, abuse and/or violence by the perpetrator. This is particularly relevant, as research suggests that history of violence is the most significant risk-factor for femicide.
- ✗ **Racialization:** Misrepresentation or stereotyping of people into groups by reference to their skin colour or physical features, or race/ethnicity.

The OAITH Femicide Media analysis involves the collection and analysis of national, local and television media sources. National news sources can include newspaper articles from the highest circulation including the *Toronto Star*, *The Globe and Mail* and *The National Post*. Local news sources are selected based on the source that is the closest geographical proximity to the city or town in which the femicide occurred. Television sources include news reports that have been broadcast and/or published on CBC News, CTV News and Global News. As a part of the OAITH 2021-2022 Femicide Media Analysis, a total of 123 articles and media sources were reviewed, coded and analyzed based on the media frames and corresponding criteria noted above. This analysis is done annually in partnership with Dr. Mavis Morton, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Guelph.

Figure 1

Comparison of National, Local and Television Media's Use of Positive Media Frames

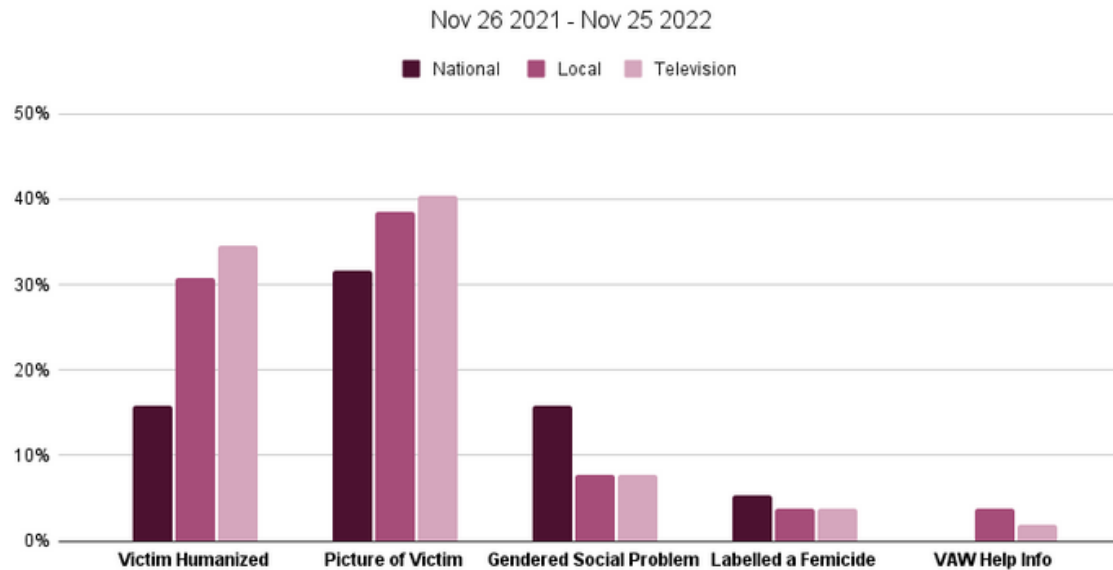


Figure 1 provides a comparison of national, local and television media's use of positive media frames. The most commonly used media frame that positively frames femicide cases was the inclusion of a positive picture of the victim and including context that would humanize the victim. The least commonly used media frame was the inclusion of VAW help info such as local services or support

lines. Only a small percentage of articles identified femicide cases as a gendered social problem and fewer articles labelled the killing as a femicide.

While 40% of articles included positive pictures and provided details and contexts that humanized the victims, more can be done to improve public awareness and understanding about the connection between the killings, GBV and femicide. In the absence of providing information that situates these types of deaths within the context of a wider social and political problem these cases can be misunderstood to be a random, isolated or one-off occurrence and as such minimizes collective responsibility in addressing the current rates of GBV and femicide (Gillespie et al, 2013). Framing or labelling these

deaths as femicides, or lethal-forms of GBV, is also critical in increasing public awareness and the contextualization of these deaths within a larger gendered social problem. By labelling these deaths as femicides it situates these killings as a gendered form of violence that is rooted in misogyny, patriarchal values and ideologies, power and control and draws a common thread across what may otherwise be understood as isolated and random killings (Coradi et. al, 2016).

While only three articles examined within the 2021-2022 media analysis included VAW help information, this is an important way to connect survivors with potential life-saving supports and it may also assist in contextualizing these deaths within the broader context of GBV. When comparing OAITH's media analysis over the last four years there has been little to no change in the proportion of articles that have

included VAW Help Info, with total percentages ranging between 2% and 3%. As the media has the potential to play a significant role in disseminating information and shaping public opinion (Lee & Wong, 2019,), it could be beneficial for media agencies to develop and implement frameworks and policies related to the inclusion of VAW Help Information within femicide reporting. These frameworks could assist reporters and journalists in their reporting by outlining examples of cases that would meet the definition of femicide and should include information regarding local supports and services. Policies can also include standardized lists of provincial and local services to facilitate easy access among journalists and to minimize delays in reporting.

Figure 2 provides a comparison of the media's use of negative media frames. The most commonly used negative frame continues to be violence against women (VAW) history undocumented

as well as an overreliance on voices of authority. The least commonly used negative frames included framing the incident as an isolated or individualized event and victim blaming. Similar to last year, no media articles used frames that would link their death to their race or perpetuate harmful racial stereotypes.

While the limited use of racialization, victim blaming, and individualized frames in femicide media reporting is promising, the majority of media articles and sources continue to use an overreliance on traditional voices of authority, such as police and other state managers like government officials. Previous research has identified a number of issues with the over reliance on traditional voices of authority, such as police or other state actors, within femicide reporting. In particular, the overreliance on these voices reinforce dominant narratives



related to GBV or femicide and situate the violence solely within the context of a “patriarchal institution” such as police and the criminal justice system rather than situating the violence within a gendered societal problem rooted in gendered power imbalances (Easteal, Holland and Judd, 2014). As a result of this framing, femicide cases are often contextualized as one-off or isolated incidents, rather than as a lethal outcome of GBV. To address this, previous recommendations have called on the media to utilize non-traditional sources of information, such as local GBV experts, including staff from shelters, sexual assault centres and other community-based services (Femicide Reporting Recommendations, 2021).

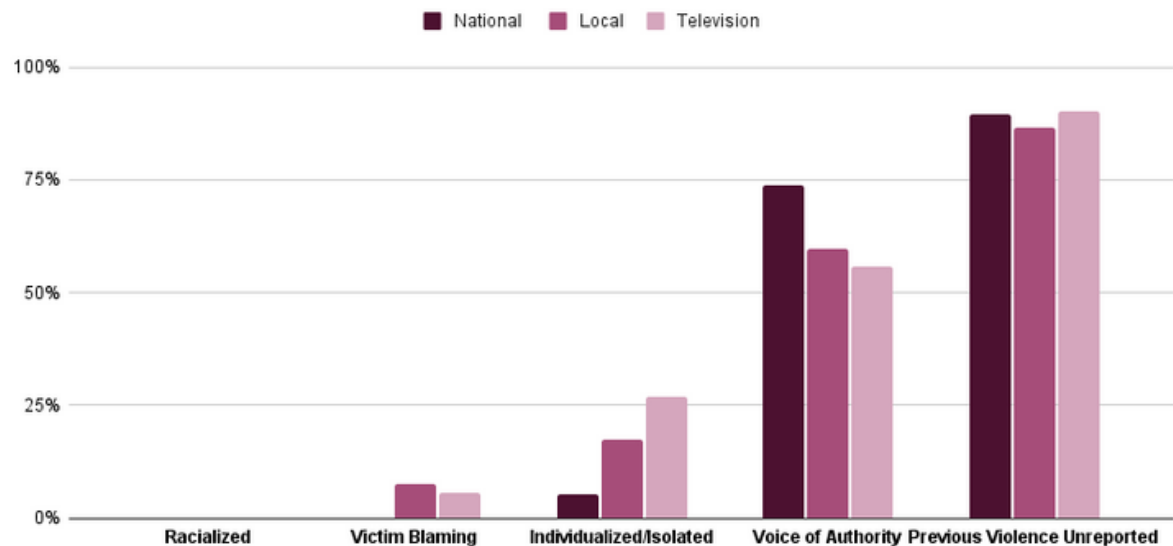
Figure 2 illustrates that the majority of all news sources about femicides do not provide information about any history of violence between the perpetrator and the victim. While

there may not be a history of violence among all perpetrators, it has been a documented risk-factor within previous femicide research (DVDRC, 2019). [OAITH’s Femicide Media Reporting Recommendations](#) suggest that media sources follow up and further investigate to determine if there was a previous history of gendered violence and/or criminal charges as a way to inform community members, and potentially survivors experiencing violence, about the risk of lethality for those experiencing violence (“Femicide Reporting Recommendations”, 2021).

Figure 2

**Comparison of National, Local and Television Media's Use of Negative Media Frames**

Nov 26 2021 - Nov 25 2022



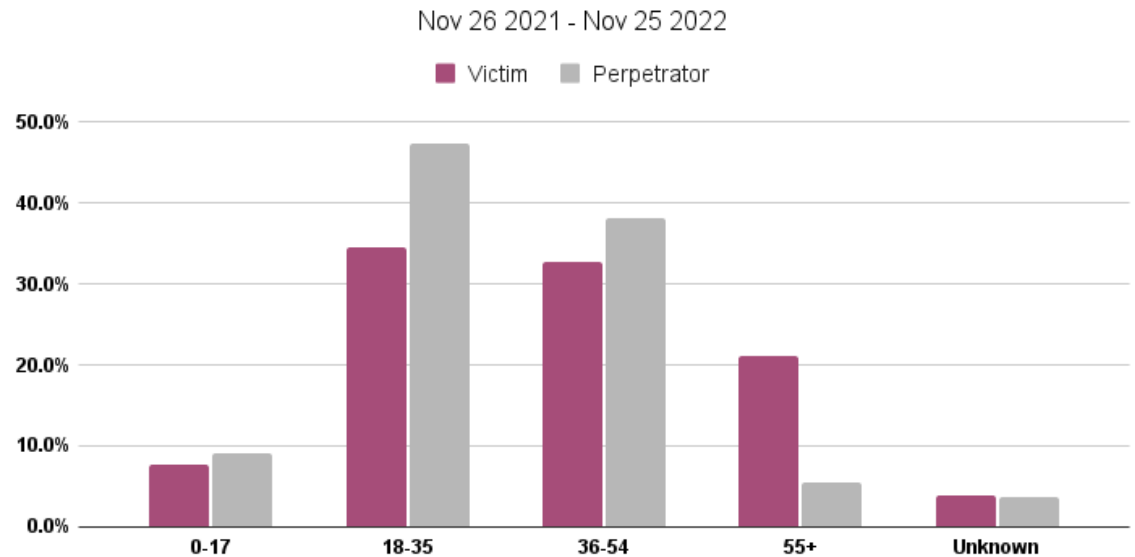
## Victim and Perpetrator Age Comparison

A total of 52 women and girls were included in [OAIH's 2021-2022 Annual Femicide List](#). Femicide victims killed in 2021-2022 ranged in age from eight years old to 88 years old and the average age among femicide victims was 40.8 years old. As illustrated in Figure 3, femicide victims were most commonly between the ages of 18 and 35 (34.6%) and 36 and 54 (32.7%). Compared to last year, there has been a decrease in the number of older women who have been killed in Ontario, accounting for 21.2% of all femicide deaths this year compared to 36.2% as reported last year (OAIH, 2022). Young girls ages 17 and younger accounted for 7.7% of all femicide cases. In an additional 3.8% of cases no identifying information regarding the victim was provided, including their age.

A total of 55 suspected perpetrators have been included in the following analysis. In some cases, multiple individuals have been charged and in two cases the suspected perpetrator was deemed responsible for more than one femicide. The perpetrator has been identified to be a man in 92.7% of femicide cases. Women accounted for 3.6% of perpetrators charged in relation to the victim's death and the perpetrator's identity has not been specified within 3.6% of cases. The majority of femicides continue to be perpetrated by younger men. This year, nearly half, or 47.3% of all perpetrators deemed responsible in femicide deaths were between the ages of 18-35. A large proportion of men deemed responsible in femicide deaths were

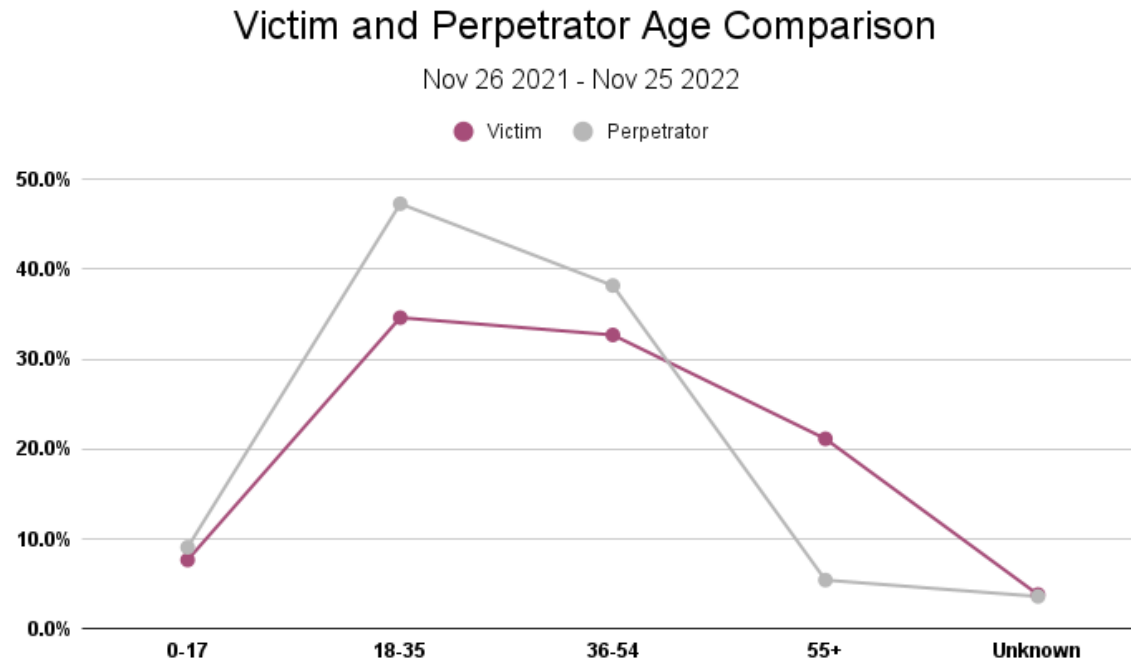
Figure 3

### The Majority of Femicide Victims and Perpetrators Were between 18-54 Years of Age



also between the ages of 35-54 (38.2%). The least common age categories among femicide perpetrators were ages 17 and under (9.1%) and men ages 55 and older, which accounted for 5.5%. A total of 2 (3.6%) cases, at the time of publication, have not yet disclosed information regarding the suspected perpetrator's age.

Figure 4



A number of recommendations to emerge from the Inquest into the Deaths of Carol Culleton, Anastasia Kuzyk and Nathalie Warmerdam aim to address violent behaviour and attitudes, increase access to supports and services for men and enhance system and perpetrator accountability. The data provided in Figures 3 and 4 highlights key age groups that can be targeted within ongoing awareness campaigns as well as program development. For example, recommendations to create a 24/7 hotline for men who need support to prevent them from engaging in IPV can be targeted and promoted for men between the ages of 18 and 54 as these age groups are the most likely to perpetrate violence within the province (The Office of the Chief Coroner for Ontario, 2022). Education and prevention initiatives can similarly be targeted to younger boys, under the age of 18, to address harmful ideologies and prevent violent behaviours from occurring.



## Child Femicide Victims

Based on available media reports, between November 26, 2017 and November 25, 2022, 18 children have been killed who are captured in our femicide data. While the majority of these cases involve girls aged 17 and younger, there have also been inclusions of boy children who have been killed within the context of intimate partner violence (IPV). While these femicides have been perpetrated by a number of different relationship types, in 38.9% of these cases, the child was killed by their father or the mother's former or current intimate partner. At times, the child victims were killed with their mothers and often there was a documented history of violence towards the mother prior to these killings. Four girl child victims were included within the 2021-2022 Annual Femicide List (Finucane, 2022; Monteiro & Seto, 2022; Toronto Star, 2022; Yogaretnam, 2022). Since the publishing of the annual femicide, one additional femicide case involving a

boy child has also been confirmed and included within our femicide database (CBC News, 2022). Out of these cases, 60% were perpetrated by a family member and in 40% of cases the suspected perpetrator was deemed to be the father of the victim. In both of these cases the fathers were also found dead as a result of suicide.

These findings align with previous research into the killings of children, which has indicated that these types of killings are most often perpetrated by a male family member, often the victim's father. Furthermore, research has identified a number of factors that are commonly seen among child victims who are killed within the context of IPV. Often these cases involve a documented history of GBV by the perpetrator, including past violence towards the child's mother, and in some cases the child was killed while trying to intervene or protect their mother. In other cases, the child may have been killed as form of revenge

towards the child's mother and may have been killed within a murder-suicide (David et. al., 2017).

This year, the Chief Coroner for Ontario announced that an inquest will be held into the death of Keira Kagan, a young girl who was killed by her father in 2020. This announcement comes as the Domestic Violence Death Review Committee found that Keira was likely to have been killed by her father as a form of intimate partner violence perpetrated against Keira's mother and ultimately Keira (CBC News, 2023). This inquest will provide valuable insight into and solutions to address potential systems gaps and missed opportunities across multiple systems, including the family court and child welfare systems.

## Victim and Perpetrator Relationship Comparison

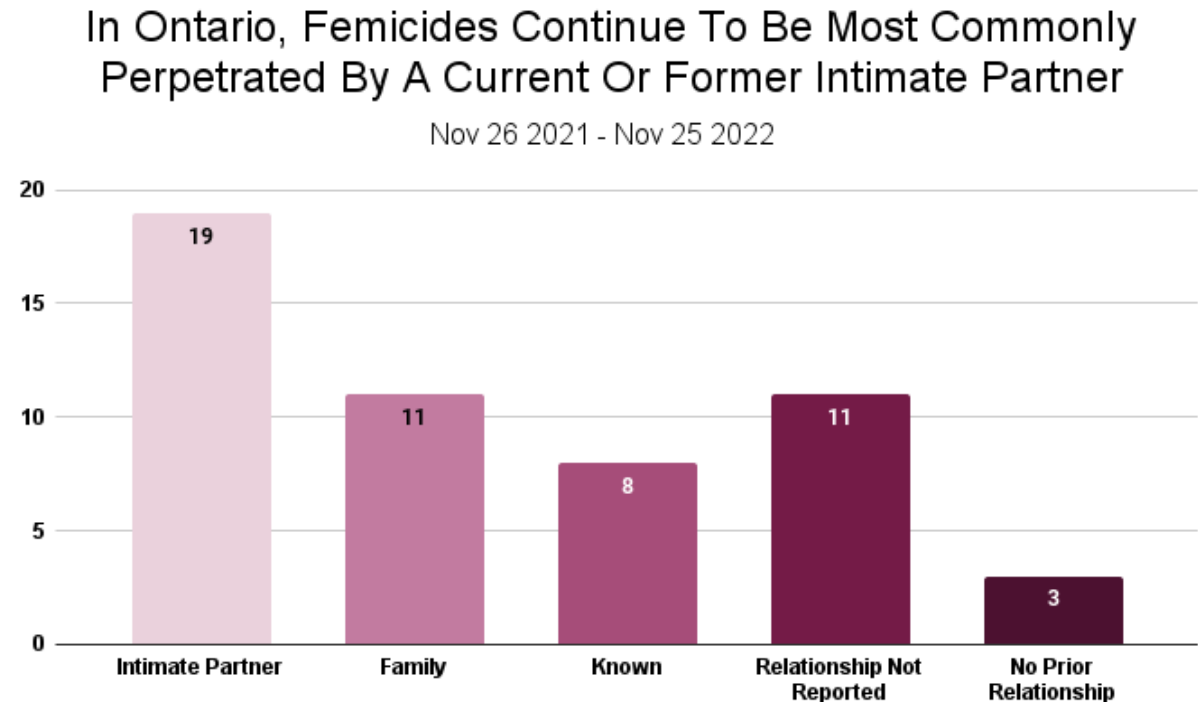
Previously, OAITH coded provincial femicide data within four femicide relationship categories: intimate partner, family member, another man known to them and unknown. The unknown category included cases where relationship details had not been disclosed in the media report and in cases where it was indicated there was no prior relationship. To better clarify this data, OAITH has removed the unknown category and included two new categories that better describe the types of femicides they are categorizing: Relationship Not Reported, in which relationship details are not provided and/or are protected by court publication bans and No Prior Relationship, in which police and media reports explicitly state that the victim and perpetrator were not previously known to each other. This new categorization will better assist us in reporting back to the community how often relationship details are not released.

Figure 5

Victim/Perpetrator Relationship	Number	Percent
Intimate Partner	19	36.5%
Family	11	21.2%
Known	8	15.4%
Relationship Not Reported	11	21.2%
No Prior Relationship	3	5.8%

While femicides continue to be most commonly perpetrated by current or former intimate partners (36.5%), women and girls continue to experience violence from a number of different relationships. In 21.2% of cases, a male family member, including a father, son, grandson, nephew and brother, has been deemed culpable in the victim’s death. A man who had a known relationship to the victim, such as an acquaintance or roommate, has been charged or deemed responsible in 15.4% of femicide cases. No relationship details have been released in 21.2% of cases and no prior relationship existing between the victim and the perpetrator in 5.8% of cases. Due to the high proportion of cases in which relationship details have not yet been reported, the current rates of femicides perpetrated by an intimate partner, family member or other known relationship may be higher. Currently in Ontario there is no mechanism to review femicide cases that are perpetrated by family members unless they occur within the context of IPV, such as in the death of a child by their father. OAITH’s femicide data continue to report high rates of femicide that is perpetrated by other family members including, sons and grandsons, nephews and brothers. Further provincial review of these cases may be beneficial in identifying existing gaps in services and creating recommendations that seek to improve system collaboration and safety outcomes by addressing this type of violence.

Figure 6



## Cause of Death

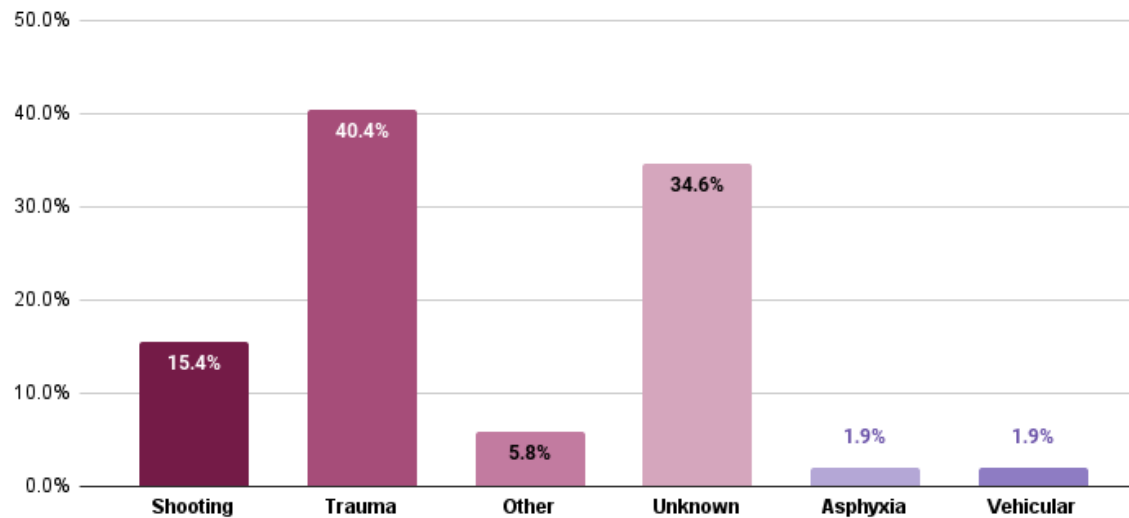
When examining the cause of death among femicide victims in Ontario, trauma continues to be the most commonly reported cause of death provincially (40.4%). Similarly, data from the Domestic Violence Death Review Committee (DVDRC) has found trauma to be the most common cause of death among cases reviewed within their mandate (DVDRC, 2019). Shooting has been reported as the cause of death in 15.4% of cases and asphyxiation/strangulation and vehicular deaths each accounted for 1.9% of femicide cases. In 5.8% of femicide deaths the cause of death has been coded as “other” which includes arson-related deaths and at times other causes of death not otherwise listed.



Figure 7

### Trauma Was The Most Commonly Reported Cause of Death Among Femicide Victims

Nov 26 2021 - Nov 25 2022



A third of femicide cases (34.6%) have been coded as having an unknown cause of death. This is one limitation of relying on media reported data as compared to coroner data, as this information may not be readily available at the time of the police press release or not disclosed or protected by court publication bans. The current cause of death trends are similar to trends within intimate partner femicides as reported by the DVDRC, however the trends examined by the DVDRC review only intimate partner femicides. Further data collection on cases in which the cause of death has been coded as unknown within OAITH’s femicide data, would be beneficial in understanding cause of death trends among other types of femicide, such as femicides perpetrated by family members, other known men and strangers.

While not the most commonly reported cause of death, the number of shooting deaths remain consistent when compared to last year’s data. Previous research into the cause of death in femicide cases in relation to the community population has identified some key differences among rural areas and small population centres. A previous examination of cause of death trends found that within rural areas and small populations the cause of death among femicide victims was more commonly reported to be as a result of a shooting, as opposed to trauma (Femicide in Ontario: November 26th, 2017–November 25th, 2020, 2021). One possible explanation for this difference is the access to guns in rural communities, as gun ownership may be more common and normalized within these communities due to the prevalence of livestock ownership and hunting, compared to more densely populated urban settings (Nonomura & Baker, 2021).

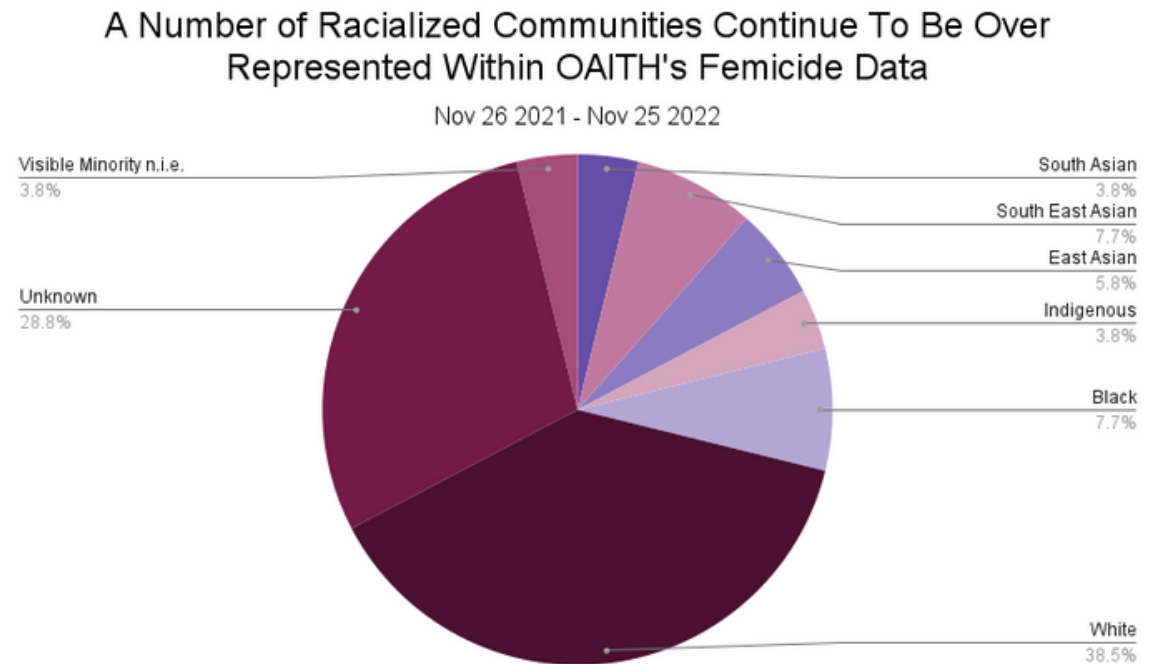
When examining the cause of death within various population centres within 2021-2022 data there were limitations to the analysis due to the large proportion of cases where the cause of death has not been publicly disclosed. In 100% of cases from a rural area and 62.5% of cases within a small population centre the cause of death was coded to be unknown and as a result the true rates of shooting deaths within these population centres cannot be determined. The lack of data provided regarding the victim's cause of death is a limitation of utilizing media reports to collect femicide data as opposed to coroner's data. This limitation may be more prevalent within smaller and rural communities potentially due to limited media coverage or attention on femicide cases.

A number of specific recommendations related to firearms emerged through the recent Inquest into the Deaths of Carol Culleton, Anastasia Kuzyk and Nathalie Warmerdam, including

recommendations for crown opposition to variation requests for firearms, a review of the current framework for bail and probation conditions in IPV cases involving gun ownership to prioritize survivor safety as well as recommendations to the Chief Firearms Officer with specific revisions and review of the current Possession and Acquisition Licence (PAL) process ([The Office of the Chief Coroner for Ontario, 2022](#)).

## Victim Race

Figure 8



In order to collect race-based data among femicide victims, OAITH relies on media reported and publicly available information. Due to a lack of available data, a large proportion (28.8%) of cases remain coded as unknown and this data may include errors and/or omissions. Due to the large number of cases in which no race-based information has been collected the following data is likely to be an underestimate of the true rates of violence that racialized communities are experiencing.

Given the available data, femicide victims were most commonly White, accounting for 38% of all femicide victims. Despite this, White victims are underrepresented within Ontario femicide data when compared to Statistics Canada’s Ontario-based population data as illustrated within figure 9 (Statistics Canada, 2021). When comparing the rates of victims compared to the general population, there continues to be overrepresentations of Black and Indigenous victims within OAITH’s femicide data. Although Statistics Canada categorizes Filipino separately from South East-Asian, when these categories are combined there remains an overrepresentation of victims in OAITH’s data for victims who were identified to be South-East Asian as well, including victims who were identified to be Filipino and Vietnamese. In cases where the victim’s race was coded to be Visible Minority not identified elsewhere (n.i.e), the victims were identified to be Guyanese.

Figure 9

	% of Ontario Population	Victim Race	% of Femicide Victims
White	65.7%	White	38.5%
South Asian (India, Pakistan)	10.8%	South Asian (India, Pakistan)	3.8%
West Asian (Iran, Afghanistan)	1.5%	N/A	
Chinese	5.8%	East Asian (China, Japan)	6.0%
Filipino	2.6%	N/A	
South East Asian	1.2%	South East Asian (Philippines, Vietnam)	7.7%
Black	5.5%	Black	7.7%
Visible Minority, n.i.e.	0.9%	Visible Minority, n.i.e.	3.8%
Indigenous	2.9%	Indigenous	3.8%
		Unknown	28.8%

While there are many limitations to the Figure 9 data set, the over-representation of racialized victims, including Black, Indigenous, South-East Asian and Guyanese femicide victims, may signify existing gaps in services or unique barriers that are being faced among these populations. Recent recommendations from the Inquest into the Deaths of Carol Culleton, Anastasia Kuzyk and Nathalie Warmerdam have reinforced the importance of ensuring that risk assessment and intervention programs among perpetrators of violence cannot use a one-size fits all approach, and must be able to meet the unique needs and circumstances of a range of populations (The Office of the Chief Coroner for Ontario, 2022). While further research into the above trends would be beneficial, similar recommendations could apply to survivor-focused services and supports to ensure that services are not only low-barrier and accessible but also meet the diverse needs of Ontarians. Recommendations for

greater access to culturally appropriate and safe services, which have been included in OAITH's Priorities related to the The National Action Plan to End GBV (2022), could also improve access to service as well as safety outcomes, for survivors belonging to racialized communities who experience disproportionate rates of GBV and femicide.

## Femicide Location

Within OAITH's femicide work, data is also collected on the location of where femicide victims were reported to be killed and/or found. Similar to previous years, femicide victims continue to be most commonly killed inside or outside of a residence, which could belong to the victim, the perpetrator or both. There was a 4% increase in the number of victims that were reported to be killed and/or found in an outdoor public location, with the percentage increasing to 21.2% this year compared to 17.2% the previous year. Femicide victims were least likely to be

killed inside a public location, such as a place of work.

Previous femicide research has found that victims killed in organized crime related femicides are often disposed of in public places, as a way to further objectify victims and to further coercion and threats to others in the community (Etherington & Baker 2015). When examining how this research applies to Ontario femicide data, a further examination of the relationship type among victims reported to be killed outdoors showed this location of death was present among all relationship types. However, when reviewing the most common femicide type what emerged is femicides where the type of relationship was not reported. Further police disclosure and details regarding the relationship between the victim and perpetrator would be useful in identifying the context of this violence and this information would help to place more value on the victim. Previous research has



noted that victims may be indirectly blamed in their deaths when they are killed outside of an intimate relationship and/or due to a past criminalization, substance use or other behaviour that does not fit within existing gendered norms and as a result may be deemed to be less newsworthy (The Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability (CFOJA), 2020 & Gilchrist 2010).

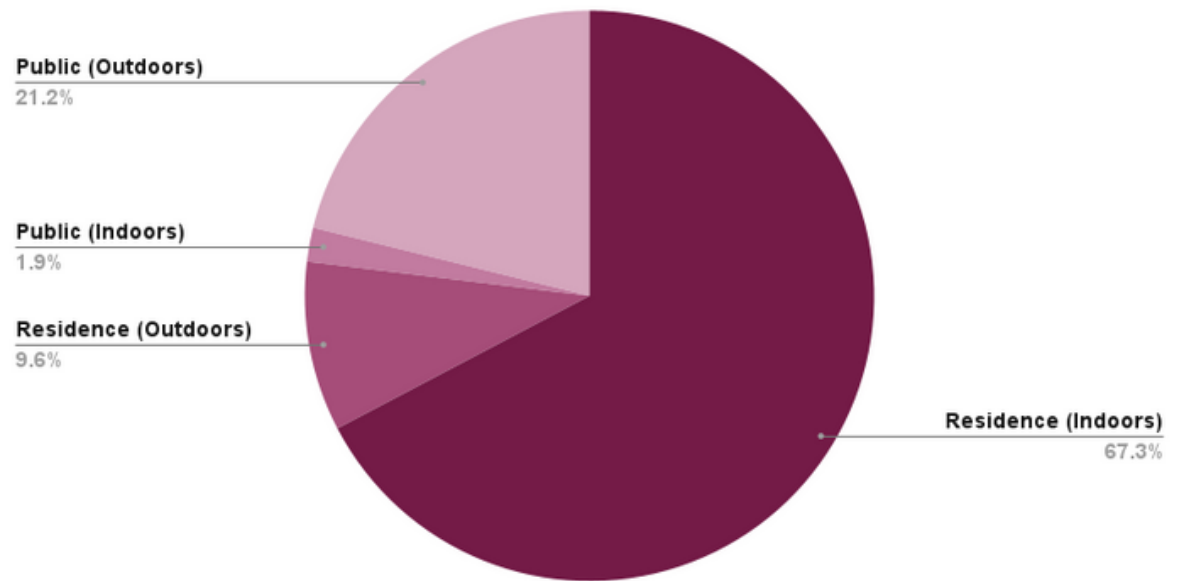
When examining the race of victims reported to be killed and/or found outside, over 50% of all victims belonged to racialized communities. The victim's race was reported to be South East Asian in 27.3% of these cases. Additionally, one victim was identified as Black, one victim was identified as Indigenous and one victim was identified as East Asian, each accounting for 9.1%

of all femicide cases in which the victim was killed and/or found outside. In 18.2% of cases no information regarding the victim's race has been reported. Further research into this emerging trend will be beneficial to understand the types of femicides that these victims are experiencing to inform targeted prevention and intervention initiatives for those who are experiencing violence from sources other than an intimate partner.

Figure 10

**Femicide Victims Were Most Commonly Killed Inside a Residence**

Nov 26 2021 - Nov 25 2022



As illustrated in Figure 10, the large proportion of femicides that have occurred within a place of residence, or a home, reinforces the need for greater access to safe and affordable housing within the province and throughout Canada. Despite Canada's recognition of the right to adequate housing as a fundamental human right (Government of Canada, 2019), the housing crisis has only worsened, with reports of 1 bedroom units averaging for \$2,130 in Ontario and \$2,573 for two-bedroom rentals (National Rent Report, 2023). There is also limited rent-geared to income housing stock within Ontario with some regions reporting between 10 to 20 year waitlists to access rent-geared to income units (Ruby, 2023 & Niagara Regional Housing, 2023). The lack of affordable and safe housing, coupled with increasing market rental rates continues to be a barrier for survivors trying to escape violence. The lack of housing has also impacted shelters capacity to support survivors transitioning out of shelter and/or transitional housing back into the

community and to support new intakes within the shelter (Maki, 2019) This bottleneck effect is being seen provincially in Ontario (Gervais, 2021) and throughout Canada (Field, 2022).

With the majority of femicides in Ontario continuing to occur within a home, it remains clear that home is not a safe place for many. The current lack of safe and affordable housing not only creates barriers to escaping violence but may also to having lethal consequences within the province. In light of this, it will be imperative that future policies aimed at addressing GBV and preventing femicide uphold and prioritize the right to safe and affordable housing throughout Canada.

## Femicide Geography

While there are varying definitions of rural areas, OAITH utilizes Statistics Canada's population centre definitions to categorize population sizes (Statistics Canada, 2019). Femicide cases were most commonly reported (69.2%) in large urban population centres with populations of 100,000 or greater, which is not surprising given that these geographic areas are more densely populated. A smaller proportion were reported in medium population centres (13.5%) with populations ranging from 30,000 to 99,999. Small population centres and rural areas combined, accounted for (17.3%) of femicide cases. Individuals living in smaller and rural communities have unique experiences of violence and face a number of barriers to accessing services or escaping violence due to their geographic location (Jeffrey et. al., 2019).

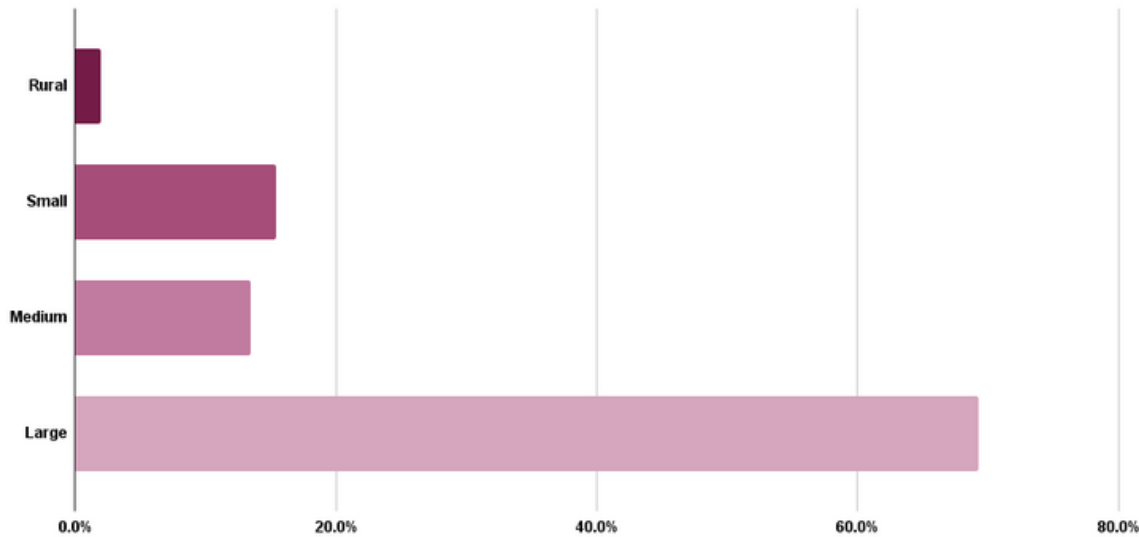
The city the femicide occurred in was also categorized based on population center size. The categories are as follows:

- Large Population Center:** Population >100,000
- Medium Population Center:** Population: 30,000-99,999
- Small Population Center:** Population: 1,000-29,999
- Rural Population Center:** Population <1,000 or population density of 400/ sq km

Figure 11

While Femicides Most Commonly Occurred Within A Large Population Centre,  
 17.3% of Femicides Occurred in A Small Population Centre or Rural Area

Nov 26 2021 - Nov 25 2022



Previous research has explored a number of unique risk factors and experiences of violence for those living in rural, northern and remote communities, including stigma and traditional beliefs surrounding stereotypical gender roles, increased isolation, a lack of anonymity and increased victim blaming (Biesenthal & Sproule, 2000). Survivors may also face a number of barriers that are exacerbated related to their location including limited or non-existent affordable public transportation, limited cellular coverage, livestock responsibilities and limited specialized services (Nonomura & Baker, 2021). These barriers create challenges for those experiencing harm, as well as for those who are perpetrating harm as they may not have access to supports and services such as shelter or counselling, compared to if they were living in an urban setting with greater access to transportation and specialized services.

As Anastasia Kuzyk, Nathalie Warmerdam and Carol Culleton all lived within rural communities located within Renfrew County, a number of recommendations to emerge from the Inquest into the Deaths of Carol Culleton, Anastasia Kuzyk and Nathalie Warmerdam aim to address the unique risk factors and improve safety outcomes for survivors living in rural communities. Increased funding to rural community-based services to assist in mitigating unique rural barriers, increased public awareness and training regarding rural experiences of violence with a focus on rural survivors and experiences, greater access to cellular coverage and transportation as well as satellite offices to improve access to services, such as police, within rural, remote and northern communities ([The Office of the Chief Coroner for Ontario, 2022](#)).

Figure 12

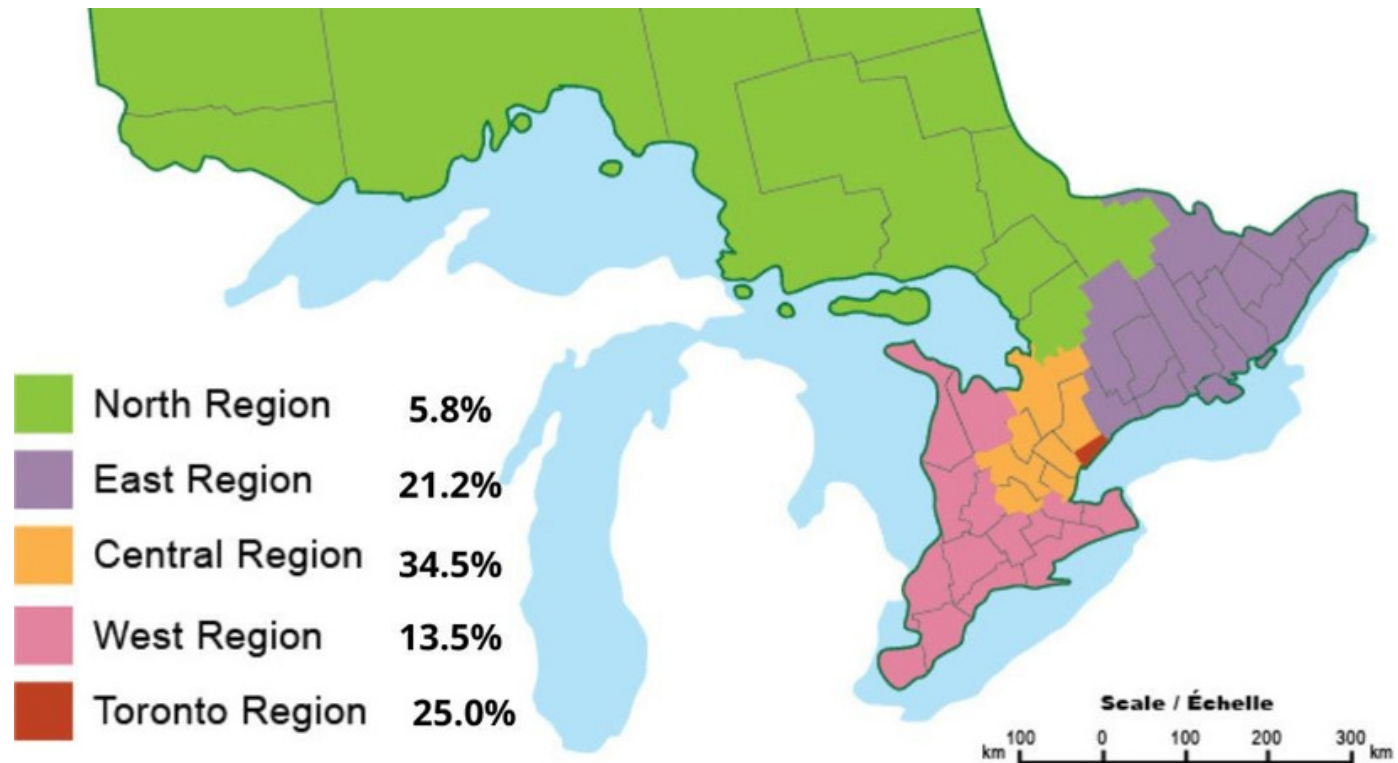


Figure 12 outlines the proportion of femicide cases in relation to the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) regions. As illustrated within this map, femicide cases most commonly occurred within the Central and Toronto Regions, accounting for over half (59.5%) of all femicide cases included within the 2021-2022 Annual Femicide List. The East Region had the third largest proportion of femicide cases, accounting for 21.2% of femicide cases. The West Region accounted for 13.5% of femicide cases, while the North Region accounted for 5.8% of femicide cases. Further regional research among survivors and service providers may help to identify gaps in services or unique regional circumstances that might be contributing to high rates of GBV and femicide. More specifically, regional data regarding housing wait times, access to shelter, mental health supports and childcare as well as barriers associated with family court and/or criminal courts, would be helpful in understanding unique regional challenges and availability of services that may be increasing risk for survivors.

## History of Violence

For years, researchers have examined various risk factors that can increase the risk of perpetration and/or exposure to lethal violence, many of which have been included in validated risk assessment tools that are used across various systems and community-based services. (Campbell, Ward-Lasher et. al., 2017). In Ontario, the Domestic Violence Death Review Committee has been tasked with reviewing femicide cases perpetrated by a current or former intimate partner and developing recommendations that aim to prevent future femicides from occurring. Through this research the DVDRC has identified a number of risk factors, among both femicide perpetrators and victims, that may predict the potential for lethal violence within intimate partner relationships. Among all cases reviewed by the DVDRC in Ontario between 2003-2018 there was a history of IPV in 71% of the reviewed cases. The risk factors included history of violence

perpetrated against family members, as well as against other non-familial or intimate relationships. Previous threats to kill the victim, threats involving a weapon, previous assaults with a weapon and failure to comply with authority, e.g. violation of court orders, have also been listed as risk factors for potential lethal violence, or femicide. Within this data set, 70% of cases involved seven or more identified risk factors, reinforcing the need for implementation of DVDRC recommendations to ensure no further lives are lost in preventable femicide deaths (DVDRC, 2019).

According to media reports, 8 femicide victims, included in the 2021-2022 OAITH Annual Femicide List were killed by a man who had a previous history of violence perpetrated towards past or current partners, family members as well as other men known to them. Data on seven different perpetrators

deemed responsible in these deaths regarding previous histories of violence was compiled from testimony from surviving family members and friends as well as police and court reported data regarding previous charges. In all but one of these cases, media reports indicated the perpetrator had a previous criminal record of gendered violence with previous charges including assault and assault with a weapon, sexual assault, criminal harassment, uttering threats, break and enter, and failure to comply with release orders. Due to the reliance on media reported data to collect information regarding past histories of violence this data may include omissions, and may underestimate the true number of perpetrators who had a history of violence.

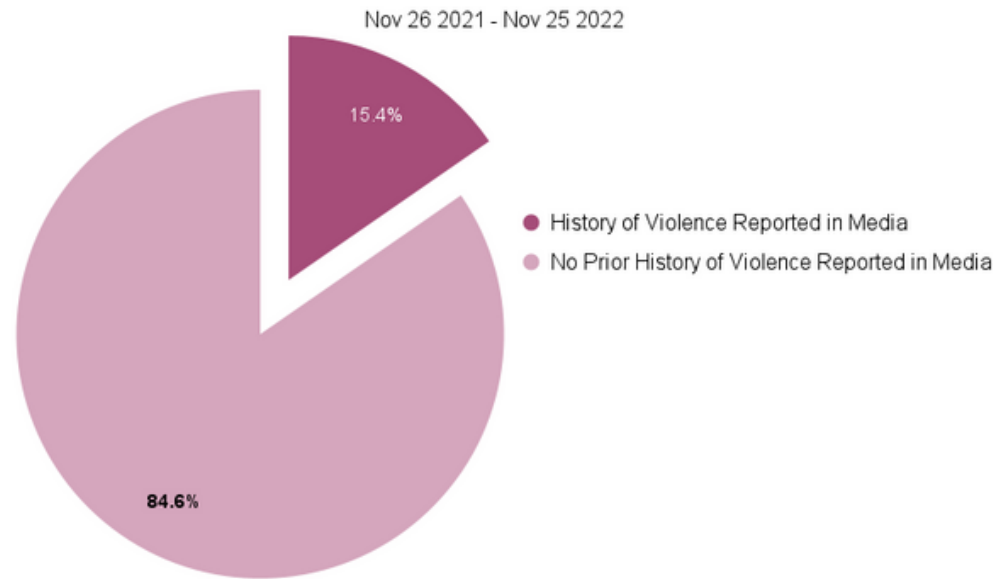
Given the well documented link between histories of gendered violence and future perpetration of femicide, it is imperative that criminal



justice systems and correctional services, including police, crown attorneys, bail and probation, criminal court and family court systems, social services such as housing and income supports, and community based services for women, children and men work collaboratively to assess risk among perpetrators and those who are experiencing harm. This data could help to improve outcomes for survivors when used to inform system responses including safety planning as well as bail, plea bargaining and sentencing.

Figure 13

**In At Least 8 Femicide Cases, Media Reports Identified The Accused Perpetrator Had A Prior History of Violence**



Several recommendations emerged through the Inquest into the Deaths of Carol Culleton, Anastasia Kuzyk and Nathalie Warmerdam with the goal of enhancing system oversight and improving collaboration and coordinated case management. One specific recommendation to emerge from the inquest called for increased communication between survivors and the criminal justice system, namely probation officers to assist with safety planning. This type of system collaboration and information sharing could identify changes to risk for the survivors, for

example custodial release, and support enhanced risk mitigation through safety planning ([The Office of the Chief Coroner for Ontario, 2022](#)). A recommendation was also made to the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario for the creation of a tool that would assist systems in making “informed decisions about privacy, confidentiality, and public safety” which could help to facilitate greater information sharing among systems and service providers in cases of intimate partner violence ([The Office of the Chief Coroner for Ontario, 2022](#)). Further recommendations regarding the exploration of a common risk assessment framework and/or training could assist with enhanced system collaboration and communication and ultimately improve safety outcomes for survivors ([The Office of the Chief Coroner for Ontario, 2022](#)).

## Inquest into the Deaths of Carol Culleton, Anastasia Kuzyk and Nathalie Warmerdam

On June 28, 2022, a jury presented 86 recommendations aimed at addressing GBV and preventing future femicides from occurring within Ontario as a part of a provincial inquest into the deaths of Carol Culleton, Anastasia Kuzyk and Nathalie Warmerdam. The inquest took place following the killing of three women in Renfrew County by their former intimate partner. The recommendations aim to address system gaps, improve system collaboration and oversight, prioritize survivor safety and femicide prevention through survivor-led supports, public education, and violence intervention programs, as well as to address and mitigate unique risk factors and barriers that survivors in rural areas experience.

For over 25 years, hundreds of recommendations have emerged from 5 different femicide inquests in

Ontario. Despite the meaningful work that is done within each inquest to develop these recommendations, death inquest recommendations in Ontario are not legally binding and there is no current mechanism to oversee and ensure implementation of these recommendations. As a result, many of the recommendations have not yet been implemented, and many continue to be seen in subsequent death inquests. As a way to monitor ongoing femicide inquest recommendations and to track repeat recommendations that continue to not be implemented within Ontario, OAITH has created the following tracking tool, which includes recommendations from five different femicide inquests spanning over 25 years. The implementation of these recommendations will be paramount as Canada and Ontario moved toward the implementation

of a National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence to ensure meaningful action to address the root causes of violence and femicide are addressed and to ensure no further lives are lost in preventable femicide deaths.

[Inquest Recommendations Comparison Chart](#)

There are a number of initiatives and projects that are currently researching femicides and other homicides in Canada and throughout the world. The following resource list includes a number of projects that are currently tracking femicides and other killings in Canada.

### Safe Passage-Tracking of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, Transgender, Gender-Diverse and Two-Spirit Peoples

Safe Passage is a community-driven, trauma-informed, and survivor centered initiative created by the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) that tracks cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, transgender, gender-diverse, and Two-Spirit people (MMIWG2S+), monitors ongoing safety concerns, provides distinctions-based safety resources, educates the public and media about the MMIWG2S+ genocide, and commemorates and honours our stolen loved ones.

[safe-passage.ca](https://safe-passage.ca)

### Trans Murder Monitoring

The Trans Murder Monitoring (TMM) project reports on homicides of trans and gender-diverse people throughout the world.

[transrespect.org](https://transrespect.org)

### Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability

The Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability tracks and reports on femicides throughout Canada.

[femicideincanada.ca](https://femicideincanada.ca)

### Black Femicide Canada Council

The Black Femicide Canada Council (BFCC) was established as a response to the ongoing calls from Black women, girls, gender-diverse and trans (B-WGGDT) communities in Canada for transformative truth-telling, justice, accountability and action that acknowledges, understands and redresses the anti-Black gender-based violence we experience. The role of the Black Femicide Canada Council is to provide guidance, strategic direction and to raise awareness of the femicides of B-WGGDT people in Canada. The Council is comprised of B-WGGDT experts across sectors and works closely with allies who are equally committed to dismantling systemic anti-Black gender-based violence (aBGBV) and increasing recognition of Black femicides in Canada. The BFCC operates within an intersectional, decolonial and anti-Black racism framework, with a view to creating public policies that protect B-WGGDT people in Canadian systems and institutions.

Contact [nneka@womenatthecentre.com](mailto:nneka@womenatthecentre.com) and [tope@womenatthecentre.com](mailto:tope@womenatthecentre.com) for further information.

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