Number of homicide victims globally in 2021

458,000

19% 81%
Number of homicide victims by region in 2021

- **Africa**: 176,000
- **Americas**: 154,000
- **Asia**: 109,000
- **Europe**: 17,000
- **Oceania**: 1,000
## Key Figures at a Glance

### Global Homicide Rate

- **Rate per 100,000 population**
  - **2021**: 5.8

### Global and Regional Homicide Rates

#### in 2015 and 2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>2015 Rate per 100,000</th>
<th>2021 Rate per 100,000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Americas</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oceania</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Global and Regional Homicide Rates by Sex

#### in 2021

- **Rate per 100,000 male population**
  - **Americas**: 3.4
  - **Africa**: 4.6
  - **Asia**: 1.5
  - **Europe**: 1.2
  - **Oceania**: 1.2
  - **World**: 2.7

- **Rate per 100,000 female population**
  - **Americas**: 27
  - **Africa**: 20.8
  - **Asia**: 3.2
  - **Europe**: 3.4
  - **Oceania**: 4.1

- **Rate per 100,000 male population**
  - **Americas**: 27
  - **Africa**: 20.8
  - **Asia**: 3.2
  - **Europe**: 3.4
  - **Oceania**: 4.1
Global trend in total number of homicide victims 2000–2021

Homicide rate in the Americas by sex and age group in 2021

Homicide rate in Europe by sex and age group in 2021
KEY FIGURES AT A GLANCE

Rates of homicide, persons suspected, and persons convicted of homicide, by region, 2021 or latest available year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Victims of homicide</th>
<th>Persons brought into formal contact</th>
<th>Persons convicted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Americas (25 c.</td>
<td>17,9</td>
<td>7,7</td>
<td>3,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia (17 c.)</td>
<td>2,6</td>
<td>1,5</td>
<td>4,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe (35 c.)</td>
<td>2,5</td>
<td>2,8</td>
<td>2,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global (82 c.)</td>
<td>4,4</td>
<td>4,7</td>
<td>1,8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Shares of suspects brought into formal contact with the police for intentional homicide in the Americas and Europe, 2021 or latest year since 2017, by age

Americas (26 countries) in percent
- 0-17: 33,6%
- 19-24: 25,1%
- 25-29: 19,6%
- 30-44: 11,8%
- 45-59: 6,9%
- 60+: 2,9%

Europe (30 countries) in percent
- 0-17: 42,1%
- 19-24: 12,5%
- 25-29: 12,8%
- 30-44: 7,5%
- 45-59: 2,7%
- 60+: 22,7%

YEARS
Share of homicides by type of mechanism
Global and regional overview

- **40%** committed by firearm
- **22%** committed by sharp object
- **24%** committed by other mechanism
- **14%** committed by Unassigned/unknown mechanism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mechanism</th>
<th>Global</th>
<th>Europe</th>
<th>Asia</th>
<th>Americas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Firearm</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharp object</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unassigned/unknown</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Share of homicides by type, global and regional
Overview in 2021 (or latest year available)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Intimate partner/family-related</th>
<th>Other interpersonal</th>
<th>Organized crime/gang-related</th>
<th>Other crime-related</th>
<th>Sociopolitical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>World</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Americas</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Map 1

Homicide rate by country or territory, 2021
(or latest available year since 2016)

Homicide victims per 100,000 population

- 25 - 52.1
- 10 - 25
- 3 - 10
- 1 - 3
- < 1
- No data

Legend:

Highest homicide risk

Lowest homicide risk
Source: UNODC homicide statistics.

Note: The following countries and territories count offences instead of victims: Belgium, Benin, Burundi, Cameroon, Congo, Côte d’Ivoire, Gibraltar, Guam, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Kyrgyzstan, Lesotho, Philippines, Thailand, United States Virgin Islands, Zambia.

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Final boundary between the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan has not yet been determined. Dotted line represents approximately the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties. A dispute exists between the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland concerning sovereignty over the Falkland Islands (Malvinas).
**Map 2**

**Most prevalent mechanism used in the perpetration of homicides**
In the Americas 2021 (or latest year available)

![Map of most prevalent mechanism used in homicides in the Americas 2021](image)

**Most prevalent mechanism**
- **Firearm (majority of victims)**
- **Firearm (largest share but not majority)**
- **Sharp object (majority of victims)**
- **Sharp object (largest share but not majority)**
- **Other mechanism (majority of victims)**
- **Other mechanism (largest share but not majority)**
- **No data**

Source: UNODC homicide statistics.

*The boundaries and names shown and the designations 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 Northern Ireland concerning sovereignty over the Falkland Islands (Malvinas).*
Map 3

Most prevalent mechanism used in the perpetration of homicides
In Europe 2021 (or latest year available)

Source: UNODC homicide statistics.

Note: In Iceland and Ireland, the data refers to the most prevalent mechanism in the last 3 years.
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.
KEY MESSAGES

Without targeted action to prevent homicide, the world will fail to deliver on SDG pledges to reduce violence

- An average of 52 people lost their lives to homicidal violence every single hour in 2021, which was an exceptionally lethal year with an estimated 458,000 intentional homicides globally. The spike is linked, in part, to the economic consequences of COVID-19 restrictions and a rise in organized crime and gang-related and sociopolitical violence in multiple countries.

- Available 2022 data show decreases from the record high levels recorded the previous year. Nonetheless, for more than 15 years, there has been little improvement in the absolute number of homicide victims at the global level, which has fluctuated between some 400,000 and 450,000 victims annually.

- Target 16.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals to “significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere” by 2030 could be translated to a minimum 50% decrease in the global homicide rate. The reduction in the number of intentional homicides is pivotal for achieving SDG target 16.1. An “optimistic” projection based on the period 2015-2020 – excluding the 2021 death toll – suggests that the 2030 homicide rate will only be 23% lower compared with 2015, falling well short of the SDG target.

Response

- World leaders at the SDG Summit 2023 adopted a Political Declaration to accelerate implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The Declaration reaffirmed the need to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies and highlighted factors “which give rise to violence, insecurity and injustice, such as inequality, corruption, poor governance and illicit financial and arms flows”, that are addressed in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

- Experiences in violence prevention from different countries underscore the need for evidence-based interventions at different administrative levels, including specific programmes for neighbourhoods with high levels of homicidal violence. The area of intervention is also contingent to the type of intentional homicide. Actions to reduce violence against women, including the gender-related killing of women and girls, differ from those designed to reduce organized-crime and gang violence. Interventions may also be systematic, such as alcohol restriction and strict gun laws, or more targeted, for example by providing vocational skills to young men at high risk of engagement in violence. Mental health may also play an important role in intentional homicides, especially interpersonal homicides. Interventions should therefore also look at improving the circumstances of disadvantaged patients, treating substance abuse and reducing access to weapons.

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**Trends in and projections of the global homicide rate (by sex, 2000–2030)**

![Graph showing trends in global homicide rate](image)

*Note: Projections for years 2022–2030 represent linear extrapolations of trends observed for years 2015–2020 ("optimistic scenario", solid line) and for years 2015–2021 ("pessimistic scenario", dashed line).*
Homicide responsible for more violent deaths than armed conflict

- Globally, homicide accounts for many more deaths than conflict-related killings and terrorist killings combined. Crime-related activities were responsible for at least a quarter of all homicides in 2021.

- An annual average of around 440,000 deaths worldwide were caused by intentional homicide in 2019-2021, of which an estimated 22,000 can be attributed to terrorism. The annual average number of conflict-related deaths in this period was 94,000, not including the lives lost in the Ukraine conflict.

- Despite a more than 95% increase in conflict deaths recorded between 2021 and 2022 – primarily due to escalating wars in Ukraine and Ethiopia – available homicide data for the year 2022 indicate that the global burden of homicide that year was nonetheless twice as large as the burden of conflict deaths.

- Classifying deaths in conflicts involves distinguishing between lawful and unlawful killings, which present different policy and justice considerations. The challenges posed by conflict classifications underscore the complexity of understanding intentional homicides and conflict-related deaths and the interlinkages between criminal and conflict violence.

Response

- Member States and the United Nations should dedicate greater resources to comprehensively address persistent violence outside armed conflicts, as called for in the United Nations Secretary-General’s New Agenda for Peace policy brief. Furthermore, due to the impact of criminal violence and other forms of violence, such as gender-based violence, in conflict settings, they should also integrate non-conflict violence prevention approaches in conflict prevention and resolution.

- Support for the implementation of the International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes (ICCS) could help to improve reporting and support more targeted responses to homicidal violence.
KEY MESSAGES

- An estimated 22% of intentional homicides globally with information on their situational context are caused by organized criminal groups/gangs. In the Americas, organized crime-related homicides represent half (50%) of all homicides with information on the situational context.
- Between 2015 and 2021, organized-crime related homicides killed almost as many people as armed conflicts, with about 100,000 victims annually for both categories.
- In countries, provinces or cities with the presence of multiple organized criminal groups/gangs, competition over criminal activities can lead to rapid and substantial increases in intentional homicides. This is highlighted by the spike in homicides in Ecuador and Haiti in the last few years. In addition, criminal organizations, notably gangs, are also contributing to rising homicide numbers. In contrast, the consolidation of criminal activities by a single group can lead to a reduction of violence.

ORGANIZED CRIMINAL GROUPS/GANGS CAN HAVE SUDDEN AND SHARP IMPACTS ON THE NUMBER OF INTENTIONAL HOMICIDES

- Organized-crime related homicide is the lethal, local manifestation of a transnational threat. The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime represents the sole global legal instrument to prevent and address organized crime challenges. The Convention enjoys near-universal adherence (192 Parties) and is supplemented by three protocols – the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children; the Protocol against Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air and the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition.
- UNODC has developed the Organized Crime Strategy Toolkit to support Member States in the development of comprehensive strategic frameworks to prevent and combat organized crime.

Global distribution of homicide, by situational context, 2021 or latest year available

- Intimate partner/family-related
- Other interpersonal
- Other crime-related
- Organized crime/gang-related
- Sociopolitical
Regional treaties like the Escazú Agreement in Latin America and the Caribbean as well as initiatives by the UN Environment Programme and resolutions from the UN Human Rights Commission reflect growing recognition of the importance of safeguarding human rights defenders and other individuals from socio-politically-motivated homicide.

Humanitarian aid workers continue to face threats, with a higher average number of fatalities over the period 2017–2022 than 2010–2016.

Since the start of hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel in October 2023 and until 12 November 2023, over 100 UNRWA employees have died. This represents the highest number of United Nations aid workers killed in any conflict in the history of the organization.

Environmental defenders, working to protect natural resources, face considerable risks. The Americas report the highest number of such homicides between 2012 and 2021, with indigenous individuals reported to comprise 39% of the victims during that period.

Journalists worldwide are facing growing dangers, with 44% of deaths in 2022 occurring in conflict zones and areas dealing with crime, corruption and environmental reporting. Male journalists account for over 90% of victims, and impunity for these killings remains high at 86%.

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Response

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KEY MESSAGES

Women continue to be most at risk of deadly violence at home

- Homicidal violence has a clear gender dimension. While in 2021 most homicides worldwide were committed against men and boys (81%), women and girls were disproportionately affected by homicidal violence in the home: they represent approximately 54% of all victims of killings in the home and 66% of all victims of intimate partner killings.
- Roughly four in ten killings of women and girls do not have information on the victim perpetrator relationship, and the actual number of women victims of intimate partner and family-related homicide could be much higher.

Response

- Global data availability on gender-related killings is gradually increasing: while 74 countries had at least one data point on female intimate partner/family-related homicide in the period 2009-2015, this increased to 99 countries in the period 2016-2022. The UN system has taken concrete steps to assist Member States in improving data collection and reporting, including through the introduction and support for implementation of the Statistical framework for measuring the gender-related killing of women and girls.
- In-depth multi-stakeholder reviews of gender-related killings of women and girls have been introduced in several countries, including Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Portugal, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States. Multi-sectoral committees conduct regular in-depth reviews of deaths or homicides related to domestic violence, often with the involvement and participation of families and social networks of victims, with the aim of improving institutional responses and preventing future killings. See the joint UNODC/UN Women 2023 research brief, Gender-related Killings of Women and Girls (Femicide/Feminicide).

Share of male and female homicide victims, overall and killed by intimate partners/family members, 2021

| 2021 | Male | 81% | Female | 19% |

Share of male and female homicide victims killed by intimate partners or other family members, 2021

11% killed by intimate partners or other family members
56%
Men, mostly young, remain the most likely victims and perpetrators of homicide

- Age-disaggregated homicide estimates in the Americas and Europe suggest that young men are most at risk. In 2021, young men aged 15-29 years in the Americas were those most at risk of homicide, with an estimated rate of 53.6 male victims per 100,000 male population – twice the average male homicide rate in the Americas (27) and more than five times the global male homicide rate (9.3).
- Men accounted for 81% of the victims of intentional homicide globally in 2021, and some 90% of the suspects brought into formal contact with the police for intentional homicides in 2021 were men.
- The correlation between the aggregate homicide rate and the proportion of male victims is also observable at the national level. Nations characterized by elevated overall homicide rates also tend to exhibit a higher proportion of male victims.
- Globally, children under 18 make up about 15% of homicide victims (71,600 in 2021). Male children, comprising 67% of child victims, account for a lower share than adult men (83%). Gender differences in homicide rates increase with age. While young children generally share similar homicide rates, older men become more vulnerable to non-domestic violence, particularly organized crime and gang-related incidents, compared to women. The overall homicide rate increases with age, and the sex disparity between male and female homicide rates becomes pronounced after the age of 14.
- Young males are the most at risk of being involved in organized-crime related homicides, both as victims and offenders.

Response

- Violence prevention programmes should focus on providing support to young men to prevent them from being lured into a subculture of violence, including in organized crime or gangs, and those already involved need to receive help through social work and rehabilitation programmes (see UNODC Global Study on Homicide 2019).
KEY MESSAGES

The Americas present a greater risk of criminal violence per capita than any other region

- The Americas have the highest regional homicide rate in the world, and high rates of homicidal violence related to organized crime.
- The subregional homicide rate in the Caribbean has declined by approximately 19% over the past decade but 2022 data from several countries show an increase (e.g., the number of homicides increased by 35% in Haiti from 2021 to 2022). Central America continues to be the subregion with the highest and most volatile homicide rate.
- Controversial states of emergency and public security interventions together with gang violence prevention programmes are credited with both reductions and increases in lethal violence in the region.
- Firearms persist as the prevailing identified mechanism of homicide on a global scale. In the Americas, firearms were used in an estimated 75% of killings recorded in 2021. By comparison, firearms were used in 17% of homicides in Europe and 18% in Asia.

Response

- Amid mounting public concern with violent crime and low trust in police, some Latin American and Caribbean governments are enacting “states of emergency” in response to organized crime and violent gangs. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has expressed concern about the human rights impacts of states of emergency introduced to address organized crime and violence, while the Secretary-General’s New Agenda for Peace policy brief notes that over-securitized responses can be counterproductive and can reinforce the very dynamics they seek to overcome, as their far-reaching consequences – blowback from local populations, human rights violations and abuses, exacerbation of gender inequalities and distortion of local economies – can be powerful drivers for recruitment into terrorist or armed groups.
Several “megatrends” - including those associated with demographic, economic, technological and climatic trends - do not necessarily point to rising homicide around the world and may contribute to continued general decline in homicide in the longer term. However, effects will vary by location.

Based on projections examining the effects of climate change, ageing and economic inequality on homicide rates until the year 2100, Africa emerges as the most vulnerable region, due to a younger population (aged 15-29) which is projected to increase until 2035, slower projected reductions in economic inequality and the concentration of climate-related shocks and stresses combined with weaker response capabilities.

Africa already had the highest absolute number of homicides of all regions of the world in 2021, and available data suggest that the homicide rate is not falling, even as decreases have been registered in other regions. Furthermore, 2022 data from populous countries such as Kenya and South Africa show the number of homicides has remained at a high level or is increasing. While terrorist attacks are the cause of a significant share of homicides in Nigeria, interpersonal and crime-related homicides are the most prevalent types of homicides in countries such as Algeria and South Africa. Nonetheless, substantial data gaps in the region pose challenges to precisely assessing the extent and type of homicidal violence in Africa.

Natural resource scarcity is already having an impact on intentional homicides, with competition over resources leading to an increase of violence. For example, disputes over access to water are a prominent driver of interpersonal homicide, with substantial increases reported in Southern Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa and Central America.

Climate responses and development interventions should seek to address and mitigate risk factors for violence and homicide. The 2020 report of the UN Economist Network, *Shaping the Trends of Our Time*, further highlighted the importance of policies that can influence a single megatrend as well as other megatrends interacting with it, so that interventions can generate more effective, mutually reinforcing changes and greater impacts.

Limited data availability remains an obstacle to assess the extent and the causes of intentional homicides in various countries, particularly in Africa. This, in turn, is hampering the formulation of effective interventions to address homicidal violence. Enhancing the collaboration of criminal justice system agencies and national statistical offices to improve data collection and analysis is, therefore, crucial to develop evidence-based policies to reduce homicides and other forms of violence.