

Some 437,000 people murdered worldwide in 2012, according to new UNODC study.

Men made up almost 8 out of every 10 homicide victims, women accounted for vast majority of domestic violence fatalities

10 April 2014 – (London/Vienna) - Almost half a million people (437,000) across the world lost their lives in 2012 as a result of intentional homicide, according to a new study by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

Launching the *Global Study on Homicide 2013* in London today, Jean-Luc Lemahieu, Director for Policy Analysis and Public Affairs, said: “Too many lives are being tragically cut short, too many families and communities left shattered. There is an urgent need to understand how violent crime is plaguing countries around the world, particularly affecting young men but also taking a heavy toll on women.”

Globally, some 80 per cent of homicide victims and 95 per cent of perpetrators are men. Almost 15 per cent of all homicides stem from domestic violence (63,600). However, the overwhelming majority - almost 70 per cent - of domestic violence fatalities are women (43,600). “Home can be the most dangerous place for a woman,” said Mr. Lemahieu. “It is particularly heart-breaking when those who should be protecting their loved ones are the very people responsible for their murder.”

Over half of all homicide victims are under 30 years of age, with children under the age of 15 accounting for just over 8 per cent of all homicides (36,000), the Study highlighted.

The regional picture

Almost 750 million people live in countries with the highest homicide rates in the world - namely the Americas and Africa - meaning that almost half of all homicide occurs in countries that are home to just 11 per cent of the earth’s population. At the opposite end of the spectrum, 3 billion people - mainly in Europe, Asia and Oceania- live in countries where homicide rates are relatively low.

The global average murder rate stands at 6.2 per 100,000 population, but Southern Africa and Central America recorded more than four times that number (30 and 26 victims per 100,000 population respectively), the highest in the world. Meanwhile, with rates some five times lower than the global average, East Asia, Southern Europe and Western Europe recorded the lowest homicide levels in 2012. Worryingly, homicide levels in North Africa, East Africa and parts of South Asia are rising amid social and political instability. In an encouraging trend, South Africa, which has consistently high rates of homicide, saw the homicide rate halve from 64.5 per 100,000 in 1995 to 31.0 per 100,000 in 2012.

Homicides linked to gangs and organized criminal groups accounted for 30 per cent of all homicides in the Americas compared to below 1 per cent in Asia, Europe and Oceania. While surges in homicide are often linked to this type of violence, the Americas saw homicide levels five to eight times higher than Europe and Asia since the 1950s.

The gender bias

Globally, the male homicide rate is almost four times higher than for females (9.7 versus 2.7 per 100,000) and is highest in the Americas (29.3 per 100,000 males), where it is almost seven times higher than in Asia, Europe and Oceania (all under 4.5 per 100,000 males). In particular, the homicide rate for male victims aged 15-29 in South and Central America is over four times the global average rate for that age group. More than 1 in 7 of all homicide victims globally is a young male aged 15-29 in the Americas.

While men are mostly killed by someone they may not even know, almost half of all female victims are killed by those closest to them. In Asia, Europe and Oceania the share of victims from domestic violence is particularly important. In all these regions, the majority of female homicide victims are killed at the hands of their intimate partners/family members (in Asia and Europe, 55 per cent, and in Oceania, 73 per cent). For example, in Asia, 19,700 women were killed by their intimate partners or family members in 2012. When only looking at intimate partner violence, the overwhelming majority of homicide victims are women (79 per cent in Europe).

The causes of homicide

The consumption of alcohol and/or illicit drugs increases the risk of perpetrating homicide. In some countries, over half of homicide offenders acted under the influence of alcohol. Although the effects of illicit drugs are less well documented, cocaine and amphetamine-type stimulants have been associated with violent behaviour and homicide.

Firearms are the most widely used murder weapons, causing 4 in 10 homicides globally, whereas about a quarter of victims are killed with blades and sharp objects and just over a third die through other means (such as strangulation, poisoning etc.). The use of firearms is particularly prevalent in the Americas, where two thirds of homicides are committed with guns, while sharp objects are used more frequently in Oceania and Europe.

Post-conflict societies awash in arms and grappling with weak rule of law and impunity are conducive to organized crime and interpersonal violence. Haiti, for example, saw homicide rates double from 5.1 in 2007 to 10.2 per 100,000 in 2012. In South Sudan, the homicide rate in 2013 was, at over 60 per 100,000 people, among the highest in the world. In contrast, in Sierra Leone and Liberia, where reconciliation processes and anti-crime strategies are taking root, security is gradually improving.

Conviction rates

The global conviction rate for intentional homicide is of 43 convictions per 100 homicides. However, disparities exist across regions, with a conviction rate of 24 per cent in the Americas, 48 per cent in Asia and 81 per cent in Europe.

For more information please contact:

In Vienna: Preeta Bannerjee, Public Information Officer, Phone: +43 699 1459 5764

Email: [preeta.bannerjee \[at\] unodc.org](mailto:preeta.bannerjee@unodc.org)

For media interviews in London: Karen Davies, Communications Officer for the UK and Ireland United Nations Regional Information Centre (UNRIC), Mobile: +32 473 26 22 55

Email: [davies \[at\] unric.org](mailto:davies@unric.org)