



Femicide *Watch.*

**An Analysis of Danish
Femicides in 2023**

By Center for Violence Prevention



Center for Violence Prevention

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PUBLISHER:

© Center for Violence Prevention
Prinsesse Charlottes Gade 45 kld., 2200 København N
CVR: 41393025
ISBN (digital): 97887-976830-3-3
Published: March 2026

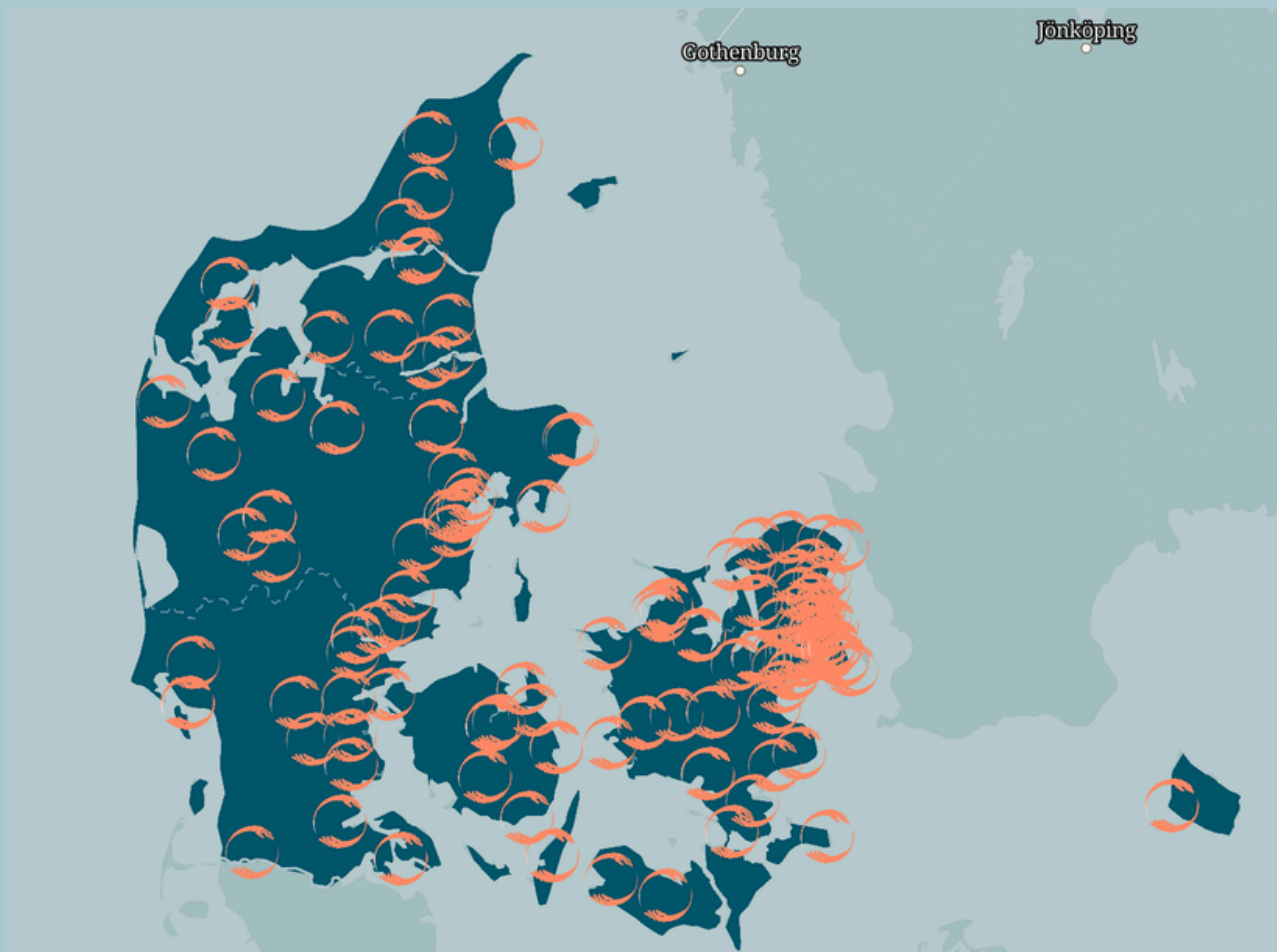
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Bjerregaard, D., Kjær, J., Berthelsen, F., & Zethsen, J. L. (2026). Femicide Watch: An Analysis of Danish Femicides in 2023. Center for Violence Prevention.

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In memory of the murdered women



See the mapping on www.femicidewatch.dk

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INTRODUCTION

Femicide describes female based murder of women, and represents the most extreme form of gender based violence against women. It is estimated globally that approximately 85,000 women were killed intentionally in 2023 (UNODC & UN Women, 2024). Experts in the area estimate that a femicide occurs as frequently as every 6 minutes (Dawson & Mobayed Vega 2023). The general underreporting and invisibility of the phenomenon has led to the UN's special report on violence against women and its consequences, Dubravka Šimonovic, in 2015 called on all the member states to establish a national Femicide Watch, with the purpose to collect and publish publicly available data on femicide. This should be done with a view to examining trends and formulating recommendations for the prevention of gender based killings of women.

The Danish state did not have a Femicide Watch, therefore the Center for Violence Prevention (CFV) created one in 2021. As in many other countries, the Danish state's current classification of femicide is limited to partner homicide. As in the majority of Europe, the state's current classification of femicide is limited to partner homicide. Only five European countries have specifically criminalized femicide, and Denmark is not one of them. In Denmark the limitation is due to the fact that there is no specific crime code for femicide. Another form of femicide remains overlooked, including femicide committed by a family member or femicide committed by strangers. On a practical level it means that a group of female victims become invisible. It also means that official Danish data is a part of the global problem with underreporting in the area: while the state registers around 8 - 11 partner homicides yearly including male victims (Ministry of Justice 2024), Femicide Watch Denmark registers on average between 12 and 13 yearly femicides.

When men kill women because they are women, this constitutes a violation of human rights principles such as the right to life, gender equality and non-discrimination; the right not to be subject to torture, inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment; and the right to live free from violence (Šimonovic). This human rights based focus could be crucial to understand the state's obligation to prevent men's violence and murder of women. The gender neutral approach to violence and murder in Danish national law not only hides the gendered nature of femicide, but weakens a sense of accountability and weakens prevention. In connection with the publication of this report Amnesty Denmark's Secretary General, Vibe Klarup states: "Denmark is a strong democracy with strong institutions that should be a guarantor of women's right to life, freedom and security".

Since its creation Femicide Watch has registered and documented 337 femicides in Denmark across partner homicide, family homicide, isolated homicide and other gender related types of homicide.

What is often common is that they are an accumulation of longer processes characterized by control, threats, stalking, physical violence, gaps in the system and lack of help. This knowledge creates an obligation. Femicide Watch's yearly analysis from 2021, 2022, and 2023 builds on reviews of experts and professionals as they identify necessary preventions. Femicide Watch therefore is not only a monitoring project but a prevention project.

Even though other forms of violent crime have been generally declining in Europe, the number of femicides in the last 20 years remain largely unchanged (Naudi et al., 2023). The possibilities for prevention exist but it requires that we act and implement them. Far too often, action plans are formulated that are never followed through, and civil society expertise is absent in government efforts against femicide (GREVIO 2024). The same applies to the unique insights that survivors and relatives can have and that the Center for Violence Prevention has encountered through interviews and support groups. This collective of knowledge resources can and should inform the development of policies, practices and prevention strategies in the work to prevent future murders of women. Most important of all, these developments and preventative measures should not further restrict women's lives, but rather give them the possibility to live a life where they do not need to structure their lives on how they can best avoid violence. This publication continues to work to combat gender based violence and femicide in Denmark. The goal is not only knowledge, but change.

READING GUIDE

This report is built so that it can be read as a whole and in sections. While the introduction presents challenges and objectives, the method section describes the data basis, criteria and ethical considerations. The mappings give a statistical overview of the homicide victims and the perpetrators as well as method, identification of motives, crime scene, sentencing etc. The analytical part reviews all the patterns, risks factors and the course of all homicide cases based on the relationship between the victim and perpetrator. These are followed by specific recommendations for future prevention. After the analysis, trends in the year's femicide cases are summarized, and then conclusion is presented. The conclusion summarizes the main points and general recommendations which are broader than the specific recommendations found in the analytical section. Recommendations are marked with an orange line throughout the report.

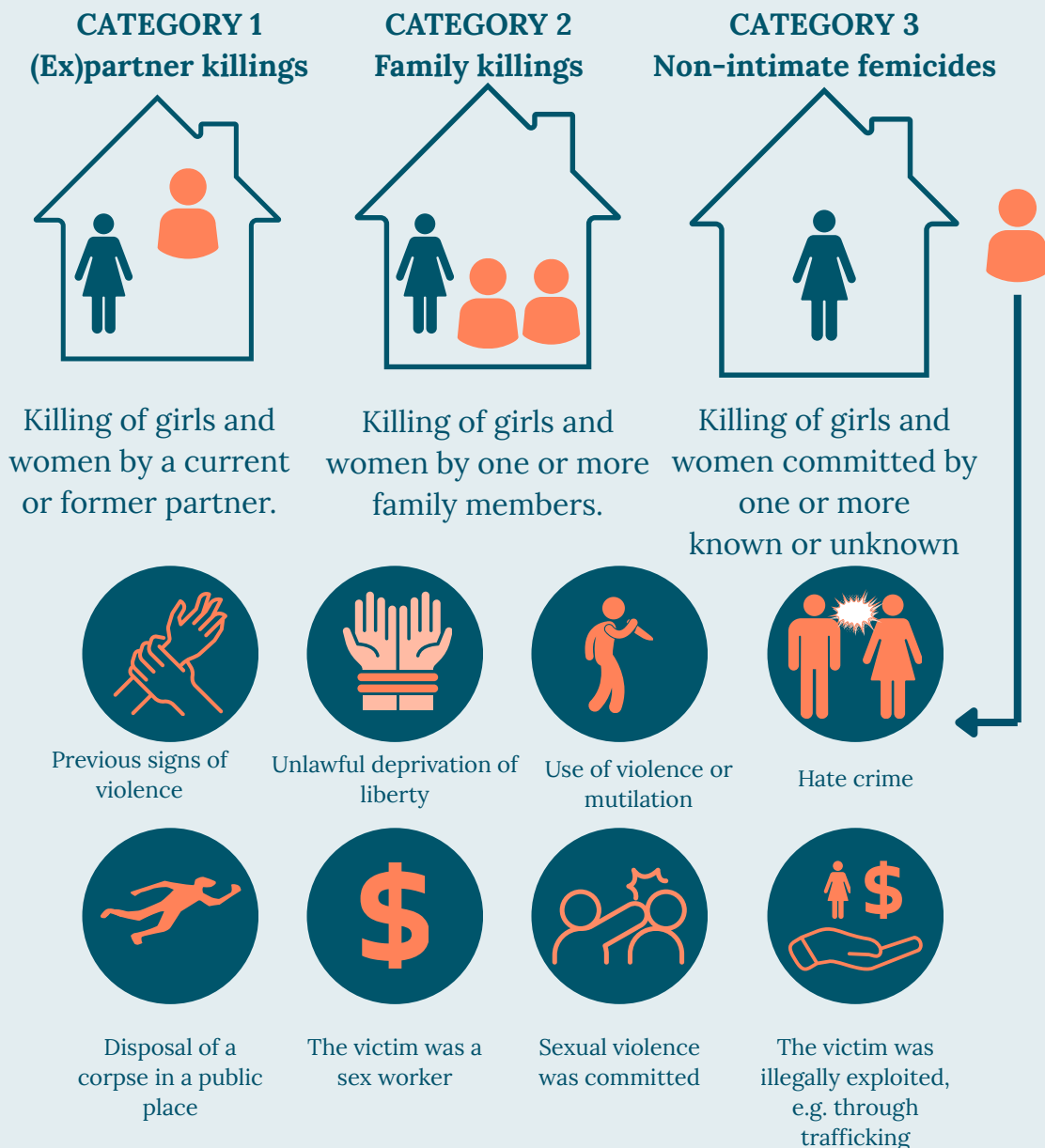
METHOD

Different classifications of femicide exist. Femicide Watch Denmark operates from an understanding of femicide that is consistent with the UN's framework of the phenomenon. The UN statistical framework has been developed by UN Women in collaboration with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and aims to promote and improve data collection regarding femicide (UNODC & UN Women, 2022). According to the UN's framework of femicide, or women homicide, the crucial factor is a gender based motive for homicide. These can consist of ideologies about men's rights and privileges over women, social norms concerning masculinity; the need to exercise a degree of control or power; to enforce gender roles, prevent, discourage or punish what the perpetrator considers unacceptable behaviour for a woman (ibid). Femicide occurs in many different places and contexts, both in the private and public sphere, and in different relationships between the victim and the perpetrator. The gender related motive in a femicide is not always explicit, therefore UNODC and UN Women (2022) presents three categories overall for femicide:

According to this framework, femicide is divided into the following categories:

- Femicide from a current or previous partner e.g. spouse, partner or sexual partner.
- Femicide from another family member e.g. from a son, father or uncle.
- Femicide from another known or unknown perpetrator, where at least one of the following criteria is met:

- Where the victim has previously been exposed to physical, psychological or sexual violence by the perpetrator.
- The victim was exposed to a form of exploitation such as trafficking or slavery.
- The victim was in a situation where she was deprived of liberty e.g. kidnapping.
- The victim was a sex worker.
- The victim was exposed to sexual violence either before or after the killing.
- The killing was followed by mutilation of the corpse e.g. indecent handling with a corpse.
- The victim's corpse was disposed of in a public space.
- The killing constituted a gender based hate crime e.g. motivated by transphobia or homophobia.



The murder cases analyzed in this report are selected based on the UN's above criteria. According to Femicide Watch Denmark's statistics, partner and ex-partner homicides of women account for (Category 1) 65% of registered femicides in the last 25 years. In the same period, family related femicides (Category 2) accounts for 10% of all femicides. In the remaining 25% of cases, the killings are committed by other known or unknown perpetrators (Category 3) e.g. acquaintances, neighbours, colleagues, customers, strangers etc.

The possibility for unreported cases exists in the area. Suspicious deaths of women are also registered on an ongoing basis by Femicide Watch Denmark, however, they are not categorized or referred to as femicide until there are developments in the case that fits the necessary criteria for femicide. Femicide committed by female perpetrators are also included in Femicide Watch Denmark's statistics, however, these perpetrators are very rare and almost always operate together with male perpetrators

DATABASE:

The mapping of femicides in Denmark is carried out through continuous monitoring of murders and suspicious deaths of women, and the data mapping and information builds on access to documents in court rulings, police press releases, media reports and testimonies from relatives. The court rulings vary in detail and length, and especially in confession cases the sentences are shorter than in other cases. In addition, there are no convictions in cases where the alleged perpetrator committed suicide in connection with the murder.

Data from the cases consist of:

- Basic information including the date, time and place of the homicide.
- Victim's characteristics and background information, and whether there were other victims in connection with the femicide.
- Perpetrators characteristics and background information.
- Situational factors, including details about the crime scene, killing method, witnesses, and motive, but also details about, for example: pregnancy, sexual violence in connection with the killing, perpetrators suicide, as well as the influence of alcohol or substances,
- Background information, possible relation or history between victim and perpetrator, including previous violent incidents, threats or stalking, separation, previous convictions in the same category of femicide, and other comments.

The data categories are based on the analytical framework developed in connection with The European Corporation in Science and Technology (COST) Action-Research Project Femicide Across Europe (2013-2017) (See Naudi et al., 2023).

The systematic data collection aims to point out trends with a view to identifying opportunities for future prevention. The femicide phenomenon exists in all parts of the world, however, there are variations on how the killings happened and which women are at the highest risk (Dawson & Mobayed Vega, 2023). As gender roles are a social construct, the specific characteristics of femicide are also influenced by social and cultural relationships in which the killings occurred - and therefore these killings should be interpreted beyond their immediate individual context (OHCHR & UN Women, 2014:6).

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Working on femicide raises fundamental ethical questions. When one researches the killing of women, you work with both human loss and complex stories, which cannot and should not be reduced to statistics or sensationalism. It requires constant consideration for those who remain, for the women who can no longer tell their own stories, and for the ethical pitfalls that can arise when the consequences of violence are documented, analyzed and communicated. There are significant differences in the availability of the material in the cases. This applies to access to files in the court rulings, where it has not been possible to gain access to these in 5 of the 13 cases. In addition, two suspected perpetrators have committed suicide, and therefore there is no existing court rulings. In cases where Femicide Watch Denmark has contact with the relatives, detailed background information and a description of the course of events exist, while the precise age of two of the victims from 2023 are still unknown. Those different levels of insight are not themselves unusual, and throughout the report it is emphasized when gaps in the knowledge exist.

Using case material provides knowledge about the characteristics of both the victim and the perpetrator. The material contains in depth information about the situation and background of the killing, including the perpetrators explanation and the relationship between the victim and perpetrator, previous reviews, the events leading up to the killing and other relevant factors. This knowledge makes it possible to understand how risks develop over time and where the system could have intervened. At the same time the case material can paint an incomplete and distorted picture since the victim is not there to tell their own story. Furthermore, access to the case material involves extensive administrative requirements and procedures. The detailed descriptions of violence, the lack of protection for the victim and the actual killing can be psychologically stressful for the person who reviews the material.

This analysis does not publish the names of the women who have been killed nor the names of the perpetrators. This is done in consideration for the relatives who remain, who often describe the public and media sensationalism surrounding the case as difficult. Each of the women who has been killed represents a personal and collective loss for those who have been left behind, and for the communities that they were a part of but also for wider society and the state which also must deal with the violence that continues to be carried out against women in the country.

MAPPINGS

VICTIMS

In 2023, 12 women became victims of femicide as well as one woman who was subjected to a possible femicide. The analysis includes 13 cases, which is equivalent to one femicide per month. The youngest victim was 18 years old, while the oldest was 99 years old. In addition, the homicides are geographically distributed throughout Denmark.



65-year-old woman
killed 15th February
in Sabro



73-year-old woman
killed 21st February
in Otterup



53-year-old woman
killed 20th April
in Beder



57-year-old woman
killed 21st June
in Fårevejle



elderly woman
killed 15th July
in Helsingør



75-year-old woman
killed 22nd July
in Årslev



23-year-old woman
killed 24th July
in Brabrand



18-year-old woman
killed 3rd September
in Brabrand



26-year-old woman
killed 3rd October
in Frederiksberg



51-year-old woman
killed 25th October
in Holstebro



elderly woman
killed 6th December
in Albertslund



99-year-old woman
killed 9th December
in Christiansfeld



81-year-old woman
killed 27th December
in Frederiksberg

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN VICTIM AND PERPETRATOR:

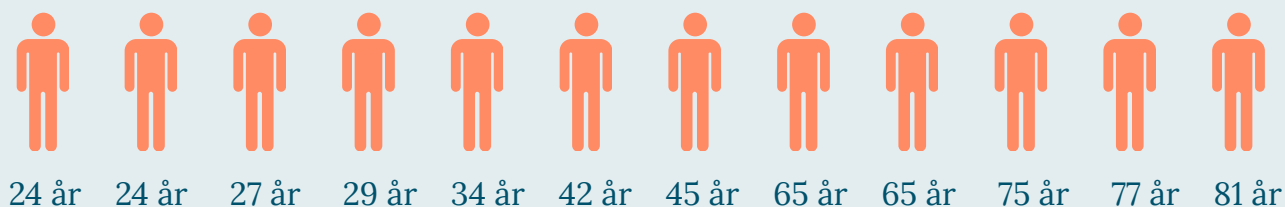
Out of 13 cases, the same perpetrator has been convicted in two of the cases. Therefore, there are 12 perpetrators in 13 homicides in 2023. These had the following relationships to the victims:

- **2 of the 12** perpetrators were **ex-partners** of the victim.
- **4 of the 12** perpetrators were **partners** of the victim.
- **1 of the 12** perpetrators had **no relation** to the victim.
- **1 of the 12** perpetrators had **friendly relations** with the two victims.
- **2 of the 12** perpetrators were **sons** of the victim.
- **1 of the 12** perpetrators had a **family connection** to the victim.
- **1 of the 12** perpetrators had a **known relation** to the victim.

In 6 of the 13 homicides the perpetrator is a partner or ex-partner of the victim which is the most common relationship in femicide in Denmark (Bernsen et al., 2022) and globally (UNODC & UN Women, 2024). On one occasion in 2023, it was a remote murder where the perpetrator had a customer relationship with the victim. In addition, there are also two cases of matricide, where a son kills his own mother.

PERPETRATOR: GENDER & AGE

In all cases of femicide in 2023 the perpetrators were men. Compared to the previous year, of the 13 perpetrators in femicide cases in 2022, there was one woman among them. In the mapping of femicide in the period between 2000 - 2021 (Bernsen et al., 2022) it is extremely rare to see a female perpetrator. In the rare cases where women have been convicted of femicide in Denmark and in all cases it has involved some form of collaboration with a man.



The ages of the perpetrators range from 24 years old to 81 years old in the 2023 cases. Five of the perpetrators were 65 or older. Four of the perpetrators were in the 30's and 40's. Three perpetrators were in their 20's.

MOTIVE

In nine of the cases from 2023 the motive for the homicide is unknown. The perpetrators motive is not always presented in court or in the media, and in cases where the perpetrator committed suicide in connection with the homicide the motive can remain unknown. At the same time the perpetrators description of the course of events and the cause may be unreliable. Motives for homicide are rarely simple, but often consist of complex interactions between a range of causes, circumstances and incentives.

In 2 of the 13 cases, separation was the trigger factor for the killings and in both cases they were committed by the victim's former male partners. In general, a separation and jealousy were common motives in (ex)partner homicides of women (Bernsen et al. 2022; Hedegård Thomsen 2020; Monckton - Smith 2020), and therefore it cannot be ruled out that more than 2 of the 6 (ex)partner femicides from 2023 were motivated by emotions such as these. However, the motive in a case cannot be determined with certainty, unless the perpetrator, relatives, police or court rulings point in a specific direction, and in this analysis such cases are categorized as having an "unknown" motive when it cannot be identified with certainty. This is also the case, where the perpetrator has committed suicide, as this leaves both the investigators and relatives with unanswered questions. Moreover, two of the perpetrators in 2023 claimed to have acted in the victim's own interest - both of these perpetrators were in a partner relationship with the victim. One of the murders was a sexual remote killing. Similarly, one murder was motivated by an inheritance dispute.

HOMICIDE METHOD

The women murdered in 2023 were mainly killed by strangulation and sharp violence, which are the most frequently used methods of murder in femicide in Denmark (Bernsen et al., 202:10), but also by poisoning.

Strangulation covers the blockage of oxygen through the airways, and this analysis does not differentiate between suffocation by choking (e.g. by hands) or strangulation with tools. Strangulation was the method of murder in 3 of the cases this year.

Sharp violence includes, among other things, cuts, stab wounds and gunshot wounds. Sharp violence was the method of murder in 6 of the femicides, of which one of the homicides included both sharp and blunt violence. **Blunt violence** includes, among other things, punches, kicks or blows with blunt instruments. One of the murders was caused by violence that resulted in death. In the cases from 2023, where the method of murder was sharp violence, it is often vital parts of the woman's body that the perpetrator harms such as the upper body, neck and head.

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Poisoning in this analysis covers the ingestion of harmful substances that have fatal consequences. While poisoning can happen accidentally, for example, by consuming cleaning agents, poisonous plants or overdosing on prescribed medicine, intentional poisoning is used as a method of murder. Poisoning is different from other methods of murder in the way that it is often hidden and difficult to detect. At the same time, it can also take place over a long period of time without authorities, the healthcare system or the victims themselves knowing. Three women were killed by poisoning in 2023.

LOCATION OF THE CRIME:

- **6 of the 13** murders were committed in the **victim's home**.
- **4 of the 13** murders were committed in a **shared home**, that the perpetrator and victim shared
- **2 of the 13** murders were committed in the **perpetrators home**.
- **1 of the 13** murders were committed in the **victim's workplace**.

The most common crime scene was in the victim's own home. In 10 of the cases the woman was killed in her own home, and in 4 of the cases she shared an address with the perpetrator, either permanent or temporarily. The two women who were killed by the same perpetrator both died in his home. In addition, one woman was killed in her workplace.

SUICIDE:

- **2 of the 12** perpetrators **committed suicide** in connection with the murder.
- **2 of the 12** perpetrators **attempted suicide** after the murder.
- **3 of the 12** perpetrators **had suicidal thoughts** after the murder.

Two of the twelve perpetrators committed suicide in connection with the murders. These femicides are also referred to as murder - suicides (or femicides - suicides). In two other cases the perpetrator attempted to commit suicide after the murder but failed, and a further three perpetrators thought about suicide in connection with the murder i.e. they either planned or considered suicide. Out of the seven perpetrators that committed, attempted to commit or thought about suicide, six of them were partners or previous partners of the victim. One of the perpetrators committed suicide a year and a half after the murder, before the case came to the court.

JUDGEMENT AND PUNISHMENT:

In nine of the thirteen femicides a perpetrator was prosecuted. Two of the killings were committed by the same perpetrator, and three of the perpetrators committed suicide (two in connection with the murder and one afterwards).

- 1 perpetrator was convicted of negligent homicide (§241).
- 7 perpetrators were convicted of manslaughter (§237), 4 of which were sentenced to special measures (§16).
- 1 perpetrator was convicted of violence resulting in death (§246) but was sentenced to special measures (§16).

Five of the perpetrators received psychiatric treatment judgements of indefinite duration. Two perpetrators were sentenced to twelve years in prison, and one perpetrator was sentenced to thirteen years. One single perpetrator was sentenced to two and a half years in prison.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ABUSE

Five of the perpetrators had different forms of psychological challenges. Two were depressed, one had anxiety and thoughts of being targeted; one had schizophrenia; and one was declared insane in court but his diagnosis is not stated. In addition, two perpetrators had substance abuse issues and one had used steroids. Furthermore, at least three perpetrators were under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs during the murder. Two perpetrators had impaired cognitive function.

In four of the femicides it is known for certain that had been in contact with healthcare services prior to the murder, either through psychiatry or their own doctor. Two of the perpetrators were in contact with their own doctor in connection with anxiety and depression, respectively. In one case two weeks had passed from when the perpetrator had started treatment to when the murder was committed. The two perpetrators who had been in contact with the psychiatry system before the murders had both previously been hospitalized - one for treatment for schizophrenia and the other at an addiction center and psychiatric emergency department. The latter tried to register for psychiatric emergency care after the murder, but was referred to an addiction center instead. In addition to these perpetrators, one perpetrator lived in a residential facility for the elderly.

ANALYSIS

RELATIONSHIPS

The relationship between the victim and the perpetrator in femicides is often significant, as the female victims often know their perpetrators beforehand. For this reason, women are also more likely to be killed in their own homes (UNODC, 2011; 57-58). In the following, trends in the relationships between the victim and the perpetrator in all femicide cases from 2023 will be reviewed and analyzed.

EX-PARTNER HOMICIDE

The category of partner homicide is by definition gender neutral, and generally covers all homicide in partner relationships, regardless of the victim or perpetrator's gender. However, the category of partner homicide is one where the portion of female victims is highest (Justitsministeriet, 2024; 46). This analysis only includes homicide cases of female victims.

Ex partner homicide is by definition considered a gender based homicide in that a woman is killed because she is a woman. Although the underlying emotions in (ex)partner homicide - jealousy and the need for control - are in themselves gender neutral emotions, the tendency to kill one's partner is deeply gender stereotypical for men (WHO 2013: 26-27; Justitsministeriet, 2020: 38). The jealousy element is often also gender based, when it concerns the maintenance and enforcement of specific gender roles.

THE EIGHT STAGES IN (EX)PARTNER HOMICIDE

Based on 372 murders of women committed by a partner or ex-partner in England between 2012-2015, British criminology lecturer Jane Mockton-Smith (2020) presents a timeline consisting of eight stages that are continuous in the time leading up to (ex)partner murder committing a murder. Research indicates that these murders are typically not committed on impulse or affect. On the contrary, partner homicide is often the culmination of a preceding period of psychological or physical violence, threats or stalking. Perpetrators motivation is most often a need for control, which is why a perceived loss of control can change the perpetrator's mindset and escalate violence increase the risk of partner homicide (Monckton-Smith, 2020). Overall, the eight stages can be described as a staircase where the motivation to commit violence is linked to the motivation to kill. The eight stages are as follows:

GRAPH:

Prehistory 2. Quick Progress 3. Control in the Relationship 4. Triggers 5. Intensification and Escalation 6. Change in Mindset 7. Planning 8. The Murder.

The first stage relates to the perpetrators' violent behaviours in previous relationships e.g. control, threats, or stalking. It can also be that the perpetrator has previously been violent towards other people. The second stage reflects the beginning of the relationship where a recurring theme is the speed of the relationship's development. The third stage looks at the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim. The perpetrator becomes more and more controlling and manipulative over their partner e.g. in relation to finance, in social contexts and/or emotionally. During the fourth stage a trigger is activated in the relationship. For example, it can be that the victim wishes to end the relationship, begins to resist control or the perpetrator becomes jealous. In the fifth stage the conflict escalates.



This can be expressed in the form of intensified stalking, threats of suicide and increased control. The sixth stage is characterized by the perpetrator changing their mindset; here thoughts of revenge or murder arise, often against the background of an irreversible loss of control. In the seventh stage the perpetrator begins to plan the murder; this can vary greatly in length and detail - some murders are carefully planned, other murders are planned within a few hours. This leads to the final and eighth stage, murder of the (ex)partner, and sometimes the victims or their shared children (Monckton-Smith, 2020).

The following review of the eight stages uses examples from two of the cases from 2023, including a case of a 26 year old woman and a case of a 51 year old woman, both who were killed by their former partners. The analysis is based on news articles, court rulings and interviews with relatives. In the case of the 26 year old woman, no court ruling exists because the suspected perpetrator committed suicide in connection with the murder. The analysis is therefore based on interviews with the woman's relatives published in Politiken (2024). In the case of the 51 year old woman Femicide Watch Denmark interviewed the woman's sister to gain more of an accurate insight into the course of events.

STAGE 1: A HISTORY WITH VIOLENCE

In the available court rulings there has been limited knowledge in relation to the perpetrators previous history of violence which is why it can be difficult to know the specifics about this particular stage. Therefore, previous cases of violence have not necessarily been registered or reported, which can make it difficult to detect.

In the case of the murder of the 26 year old woman a history of violence can be seen as a particularly prominent risk factor, when the 29 year old perpetrator had previously been convicted of the attempted murder of his brother (Politiken 2024). However, she chose not to inform her family about this, which is why the family did not have the opportunity to discover this risk factor. Monckton-Smith (2020) describes that the victims do not often believe that their or acknowledge previous partners accounts of violence, despite knowing the perpetrator's history. In other words, in many cases there is a tendency to neglect or excuse violence - even if it's known.

In the case of the 51 year old woman, her sister describes that she first became aware of previous violence after the murder, where the perpetrator had been physically violent towards an ex-partner. Therefore, it is not always the case that neither the woman nor her relatives are aware of previous episodes of violence.

STAGE 2: QUICK PROGRESS

Monckton-Smith (2020) describes how the perpetrator is often attentive and caring at the beginning of the relationship in order to gain loyalty from the victim. The relationship develops rapidly during this phase.

LOVEBOMBING

Lovebombing is often seen at the beginning of controlling relationships and is characterized by an excessive degree of attention, such as gifts, compliments, and grand declarations of love. However, not all relationships that begin this way will develop into an abusive relationship. The controlling aspect stems from the unequal power dynamic created through lovebombing, where the recipient may find it difficult to set boundaries in the relationship later on. Consequently, these types of relationships often progress rapidly, with the abuser isolating their partner and thereby creating a state of dependency.

Source: National Universe for Life Without Violence (LULU)

The twenty six year old's family describes their first impression of the perpetrator as charming and helpful, and that he made her feel loved (Politiken 2024). When they began their relationship the perpetrator was still serving his sentence for attempted murder, which might have prevented the relationship from developing quickly. However, they moved in together immediately after his release.

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In the case of the murdered 51 year old woman, the woman's sister described that the relationship developed quickly, and the perpetrator started to shower the woman with flowers and compliments. From the outside they looked like romantic gestures, however, it was to a degree beyond the ordinary.

Due to the romantic gestures and constant attention it can be difficult for relatives to detect that the relationship has become controlling. According to Monckton-Smith (2020) this plays into heterosexual romantic discourse of "great love" where jealousy and possessive behaviour is considered romantic. This stage is used by the perpetrator to establish trust and loyalty. Early signs of controlling behaviour can be hidden under the guise of a romantic yet possessive relationship.

STAGE 3: CONTROL IN THE RELATIONSHIP

After the initial phase in the relationship Monckton-Smith (2020) describes that the victim must now constantly prove their loyalty to the perpetrator. This happens especially when the perpetrator controls the woman's routines, where a breach of this is considered a challenge to his control.

In the case of the 26 year old woman there were clear signs of control in the relationship (Politiken, 2024). After the murder, the woman's relatives described that the perpetrator was possessive and did not want her going to parties where other men would be present, otherwise he would threaten to leave her ([Politiken.dk](#)). The woman was considered a possession (see OHCHR & UN Women 2014), where the perpetrator can decide what she is allowed to do and who she associates with.

The sister of the 51 year old woman experienced that the perpetrator did not want the woman to have her attention directed at anyone other than him in social settings, and that he wanted to have her for only himself. Jealousy can be used by the perpetrator to isolate the woman from the outside world. The sister also began to notice changes in the 51 year old woman. Where she used to be outgoing, she now only focused her attention towards the perpetrator, and she began to express views that did not sound like her own. In this stage, the victim's relatives can often notice a change in their behaviour, however, the control itself may be hidden and difficult to pinpoint.

In most cases from 2023, the relatives state that there had been no violence in the relationship or that the perpetrator was not generally violent. This is not an unusual pattern and can indicate that it is difficult for relatives to detect the violence but also that patterns can look different than expected e.g. in cases where the violence was mainly psychological not physical.

STAGE 4: TRIGGERS

In both the cases of the 26 year old woman and the 51 year old woman, it was the women themselves who ended the relationships. In the case of the 26 year old woman, the breakup was due to the perpetrators infidelity (Politiken, 2024). This might have been a possible trigger for the further escalation of violence (see stage 5). In Monckton-Smith's (2020) research men who had killed their (ex)-partners overwhelmingly stated that the killing was due to separation or that the women had otherwise withdrawn from the relationship. When the woman makes a decision to the relationship, this also breaks the perpetrators perception that the woman is his property and of his "right" to the woman. Monckton-Smith (2020) losing control also links to losing status. Thus, there is a loss of face for the abuser when the woman breaks control. The separation is met with resistance and can therefore result in the perpetrator not accepting that the relationship is over and unable to let go.

STAGE 5: INTENSIFICATION AND ESCALATION

The scaling of violence can be both in terms of severity and frequency and is used in an attempt to regain control (Monckton-Smith, 2020).

In the period after the break up the perpetrator repeatedly visited the 26 year old woman at her workplace and home while also sending letters and messages (Politiken, 2024). Later he demanded the phone he had given her back and squeezed her hand until it hurt. A couple of days later, he offered to drive her to work but then refused to drop her off. The 26 year old woman's friends and family followed her to work and spent the evening at her place so that she would not be alone if the perpetrator showed up.

In the case of the 51 year old woman the perpetrator contacted her after the breakup to such an extent that she considered deleting her social media. In addition, she saw him drive past her residence several times. The perpetrator also threatened to commit suicide in an attempt to get her back.

A perpetrator's threat of suicide may indicate a risk factor, as it is not uncommon for perpetrators who kill their female partner or ex partner and then attempt suicide to have threatened only to harm themselves beforehand, without necessarily threatening the victim in advance (Salari & Sillito 2016: 31). The threats of suicide may help to arouse empathy from the victim. In the case of the 51 year old woman the perpetrator did not commit suicide.

STAGE 6: THOUGHTS OF MURDER AND REVENGE

According to Monckton-Smith (2020) it can be difficult to determine a specific time when thoughts of murder and revenge emerge in the perpetrator. This is ultimately only something the perpetrator knows. Since it is generally difficult to say something about the perpetrators mindset it can be also difficult for the women themselves to assess when there is a risk of further escalation towards murder. In both the case of the 26 year old woman and the 51 year old woman, their relatives state that the women felt sorry for the perpetrators rather than being afraid of them (Politiken, 2024). Monckton-Smith (2020) describes that possessive behaviour such as stalking and threats are normalized and justified because it is considered an expression of the perpetrator's unrequited love. It can, therefore, be difficult for the victim of violence to determine when the mindset moves from thoughts about regaining control to thoughts of murder.

STAGE 7: PLANNING

In the case of the murder of the 26-year-old woman the police assessed that the murder was not planned (Politiken, 2024). According to several witnesses the perpetrator had been in the area around her apartment for several days leading up to the murder and kept an eye on her. Similarly, the perpetrator in the case of the 51-year-old woman broke into the woman's home with a key that she did not know he had in his possession. In both cases it is not known what the perpetrator's original plan was, but both perpetrators illegally entered the women's homes, which is why they potentially intended to harm the women. Monckton-Smith (2020) describes that the planning phase can last anywhere between a few hours to several months, therefore, it is difficult to assess exactly when the perpetrator made the decision to commit murder. In the case of the 51-year-old woman nine days passed from the time she broke up with the perpetrator until he killed her. In another case from 2023 (See section on Mercy Killing) the perpetrator published a column signed by himself and the victim arguing for the right to assisted suicide three months before her murder. This suggests several months of planning, although it is not known exactly when the decision was made.

STAGE 8: THE MURDER

All (ex)partner homicides in 2023 were committed in either the woman's home or their shared home. The methods of murder range widely with one shooting, two women were killed by stabbing (one of the murders also involved blunt force), two women were killed by strangulation and one woman was killed by an overdose. Monckton-Smith (2020) describes that in (ex)partner killings it is not uncommon to see excessive use of violence. This also demonstrates the perpetrator's intention to kill at that moment, e.g. by using more than one killing method (sharp violence and blunt force). In two of the partner homicide cases, the perpetrator was declared insane and sentenced to psychiatric treatment. In both cases there was no evidence of violence in the relationship leading up to the murder in the available material.

RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION OF PENDENT TO CLARE'S LAW IN DENMARK

In England and Wales the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (also known as Clare's Law) was introduced in 2014, giving individuals the right to seek information about an (ex)partner's previous history of violence from the police. The legislation is named after Clare Woods who was killed by her ex-partner in 2009. Clare's Law aims to inform potential victims of domestic violence and homicide about relevant information in their partner's criminal records and convictions for the purpose of prevention.

STRENGTHENING OF THE GENERAL POPULATION'S RECOGNITION OF EARLY SIGNS OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

Intimate partner violence remains a taboo subject in the Danish context, despite political and media focus on the subject. Figures from the EU gender-based violence survey (FRA, Eurostat & EIGE, 2024) show that half of women in Denmark have been exposed to violence or threats of violence, and a quarter report that the perpetrator of violence was a partner. The stigma surrounding the subject among people should be addressed and de-stigmatized through knowledge-based conversations and presentations on warning signs and tools for prevention.

SYSTEMATIC SCREENING OF WOMEN AT HIGH RISK

Authorities should introduce the systematic use of screening tools in high risk cases, and these should constitute a minimum standard when a person affected by violence approaches the police. In countries such as England and Finland the *Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference* (MARAC) model is used, where a screening is followed by meetings between representatives of different sectors, who together draw up a plan for the woman at risk. In England, this method has been extremely effective in preventing fatal violence e.g. by reducing repeat violence in 60% of cases, and resulted in the complete end to violence in 45% of the cases (EIGE, 2015). At the same time, the method is extremely cost effective.

REGISTRATION OF PERPETRATOR'S SUICIDE THREATS AS A RISK INDICATOR

Both reports from relatives and existing research (Salari & Sillito 2016) show that threats of suicide by an abusive partner can indicate a risk, even if the individual does not directly threaten the victim. Threats of suicide by an abusive partner or ex-partner should automatically trigger a response from the authorities, who should be educated and informed about the typical risks associated with this type of threat.

MERCY KILLING

A single female homicide in 2023 has been referred to in the media as a possible mercy killing. A mercy killing is generally characterized by a person providing euthanasia to a person who is usually terminally ill, and where the motive is compassion. Active euthanasia is illegal in Denmark according to Section §239 of the Penal Code with a penalty of imprisonment up to three years.

SECTION 239 OF THE CRIMINAL CODE

Anyone who kills another person at their specific request is punished with imprisonment for up to 3 years.

In the case from 2023, the victim and the perpetrator were 80 and 81 years old, respectively, and had a partner relationship (Danmarks Radio, 2025). The perpetrator killed the victim by poisoning her and according to his own account he then tried to take his own life in the same way but did not succeed. The perpetrator was charged in the case and in 2025 he died by suicide before the case came to court. He admitted to killing the woman at her request.

Unique to homicide-suicide cases is that they are almost exclusively committed by men, and that the victims are almost exclusively their (current or former) female partner or their children (Salari & Sillito, 2016; Dawson, 2021). In femicide-suicides, especially in cases involving older couples, recurring themes are the notion of altruistic motives or a joint decision. However, existing research in the field (Salari & Sillito, 2016), show that these killings are often driven by the perpetrator's own suicidal idealization (e.g. motivated by his own health problems) and a neglect of the victim's autonomy and wishes. The perpetrator perceives himself and the victim as dependent on each other, and that the female partner constitutes his property or an extension of himself, who also must die to complete the suicide. These perpetrators are also often described by acquaintances and social circles as friendly and non-violent men on the outside (ibid).

In murder cases the victim is not there to tell their story and the perpetrator's narrative can become the defining story of the murder. In the case mentioned from 2023, the perpetrator participated in public debate through columnists and the publication of a book in connection with the murder. Particularly special for the case was the joint publication of a column by the perpetrator and victim (Politiken, 2023) in a newspaper three months before the murder, which argued for the right to active euthanasia.

At the same time, mercy killings can also be confused with so-called relief of burden killings, which occur when the victim is considered to be a burden to the perpetrator. Research indicates that these often occur in caregiving relationships (Dawson, 2021: 24), and that older people with memory impairment are especially at risk (Salari & Sillito, 2016: 27).

RECOMMENDATIONS TRAINING IN THE RECOGNITION OF WARNING SIGNS AMONG CARE STAFF

CAREGIVERS

Caregivers should be trained in the warning signs, specifically in the groups of citizens that they treat and support. This type of training should be consistent, ongoing and available in both educational settings and workplaces.

CALL FEMICIDE, FEMICIDE

The gender-based killing of a woman should be called what it is. The media has a responsibility to not participate in or reproduce romanticized and altruistic explanations for the motives for the murder of women. This applies not only to cases that are quickly labeled as mercy killings based on the perpetrator's story, but to all femicide cases.

FAMILY HOMICIDE

As with (ex)partner homicide, women are also at a higher risk of being killed by a family member than men are (UNODC, 2011: 57-61). According to Femicide Watch Denmark's calculations, family related homicides account for 10% of all femicides committed in Denmark over the past 25 years. In the following, homicides of women committed by family members in 2023 will be reviewed.

MATRICIDE

Matricide describes the killing of a woman by her young or adult child, typically her son. British research suggests that matricide constitutes its own unique phenomenon separate from the general category of "patricide" because female victims of patricide are often 10-20 years older than male victims (Condry & Miles, 2023). The Ministry of Justice's report on family homicide also points to a clear gender trend "In comparison with other types of homicide, the victim is often a parent of the perpetrator and often a woman, while relatively many of the perpetrators are mentally ill" (Justitsministeriet, 2020: 2).

In 2023 there were two cases of matricide in which a son killed his mother. In both cases the perpetrators were men in their 40's, while the victims were 65 and 75 years old, respectively (Ekstrabladet, 2023; see Appendix 1).

Victims of matricide are often further marginalized by their age. Existing research on homicide of the elderly, including the homicide of older women, cites social isolation, physical frailty and reduced mobility as risk factors (Rogers & Storey, 2019). The two victims in 2023 were both killed with sharp violence (knife stabs) in the neck or nape region.

In both cases the male perpetrators were declared insane at the time of the crime in court and were sentenced to psychiatric treatment without a fixed maximum term (TV2 Østjylland, 2023, see Appendix 1). Victims of matricide are often vulnerable through their status as mothers to sons with mental illness. In both matricide cases in 2023, the perpetrator lived with the victim either temporarily or permanently. Matricide is often seen in connection with the mother's role as the primary caregiver for the perpetrator, where this closeness further exposes her to being subjected to deadly violence (Condry & Miles, 2023). In 1 of the 2 cases in 2023, the perpetrator's medication dose was reduced in agreement with the contact person but not in agreement with his own doctor (see Appendix 1). The mother was not specifically informed about this but her closeness to the perpetrator as a parent meant that she was the one who had to deal with the possible consequences of medication withdrawal. It cannot be ruled out in these cases that the female victims were subjected to violence by the perpetrator before the murders. In one of the cases, a neighbor had heard noises and cries for help from the woman's home several times, and had consequently contacted the police in fear that the woman would be killed (Ekstrabladet, 2023). In the other case, relatives described that the perpetrator had a history of self-harm but also of throwing objects in a fit of rage (see Appendix 1). However, it is mentioned in the written judgement in the case that the perpetrator subjected the victim to blows before the murder. The victim's reaction was to remove herself from the situation and go into another room and talk on the phone.

Her controlled reaction indicated that this was not the first violent incident to occur. Bushra Hanif (2025) uses the concept of controlled resistance to describe how people exposed to violence try to protect themselves, maintain dignity and exercise resistance in subtle ways, rather than be passive recipients. Hanif emphasizes that resistance is not necessarily an explosive physical act, but instead consists of controlled strategies that are used to navigate a violent relationship or situation in order to protect themselves, their loved ones and seek safety - for example, through emotional withdrawal, creating distance, making phone calls out of reach of the perpetrator, covert communication, or planning an exit strategy.

This group of mothers find themselves at a crossroads of factors such as their gender, age and health problems, as well as their proximity as mothers to mentally ill men. Older women are often more invisible in research and legislation, and therefore there is no expanded language to address the situation they face. “Domestic Violence” or “Violence in the home” is often associated with partner violence or parents who use violence against their children. Women who are subjected to violence by their sons enter into a different relationship dynamic with their perpetrator. Furthermore, it is not uncommon for cases like these - where the perpetrator had psychiatric diagnoses, was declared insane at the time of the crime, or was sentenced to treatment - to be framed as individual, unique events that could not be prevented or foreseen due to the perpetrator's immediate lack of criminal responsibility.

RECOMMENDATIONS

INCREASED PSYCHIATRIC SUPERVISION WHEN FAMILY MEMBERS (SUCH AS MOTHERS) ACT AS PRIMARY CAREGIVERS FOR ADULTS WITH PSYCHIATRIC DIAGNOSES

When a woman assumes the role of primary caregiver for their adult son with psychiatric diagnoses, psychiatric supervision would take into account her health and well being. In the meeting with the female relative, professionals should carry out a systematic screening to identify signs of violence. Therapists should talk to the woman about the relationship with her son to map out a possible history of violence and to talk to her about whether she feels fear of future violence. Intersectoral cooperation should support the reporting of violent episodes and initiate an investigation. At the same time, the woman should be informed about changes in treatment, including changes in medication, as long as she acts as a primary caregiver or plays a role in her son's treatment.

OTHER FAMILY HOMICIDE

Of the three family related murders, one occurred outside of the mother and son relationship. This murder was committed by the nephew of the 53 year old female victim's husband (TV2 Østjylland, 2024). The murder took place in the woman's home, where the 34 year old perpetrator approached the couple and stabbed the woman to death in front of her husband. The overall conflict that caused the murder was an inheritance dispute. During the trial it emerged that the perpetrator felt cheated by the murdered woman's husband and that the perpetrator told him that he should be glad that he did not go after his children. He thus killed his uncle's wife for revenge. The gender based motive is that the perpetrator considered his uncle's wife (and their children) to be his uncle's property, which he wanted to take from him in order to punish him. The course of action suggests that the perpetrator equated the woman's life with the inheritance that was being taken from him.

REMOTE HOMICIDE

In 2023 there was 1 remote killing where the victim and perpetrator had no relationship prior to the murder. The killing took place at a massage parlour where the victim worked and the perpetrator was a customer (see Appendix 1). The perpetrator had been partying for several days and under the influence of drugs at the time of the crime. The perpetrator bought a massage and oral sex.

He stated that at one point they had intercourse but later he could not remember it. It is also unknown whether there was consent or not, as she scratched him, and he killed her by strangulation because according to his own account, he became angry about it.

The female victim in the case was a Thai migrant (see Appendix 1). This could have affected her vulnerability in many ways. First and foremost, Asian women are often hypersexualized through popular culture stereotypes which contributes to their objectification and portrays them as amoral, and for some people, disposable (Hwang & Parreñas 2021). Second, it is not unusual for migrant women to work in unregulated professions or under precarious working conditions, and it is not unusual for migrant women to include sex work as part of their migration strategy (Sharma 2005; Plambech 2007). Women who engage in sex work are also often stigmatized through their profession. This stigmatization leads to dehumanization and a lack of protection for women who perform the work (Bachlakova 2020; jf. Mbasalaki 2023). When specific groups of women are dehumanized the violence against them may appear justified by the perpetrator (Scaptura & Hayes 2023).

RECOMMENDATIONS

BETTER PROTECTION OF MIGRANT WOMEN

Women who have migrated to Denmark regardless of whether they are undocumented, have temporary or permanent status, or have citizenship, have the right to report violence or other crimes without having to fear for their ability to remain in the county. Undocumented or precarious conditions of residence can deter women from reporting perpetrators. Impunity sends a signal to perpetrators that they can continue to commit violence against women without consequences.

BETTER PROTECTION OF WOMEN IN VULNERABLE OCCUPATIONS

Women working in vulnerable or unregulated professions must be protected. This is best done by listening to the needs of the women in the professions concerned articulate themselves, but also to what representatives and advocates for specific groups of women point out. When it comes to sex work it is often suggested for improvements in the area include less criminalization and recognition of sex work as a profession on an equal footing with other professions.

HOMICIDE COMMITTED BY AN ACQUAINTANCE

In 2023 three women were killed by acquaintances. In two of the cases, the murders were committed by the same perpetrator by poisoning (TV2 Nyheder, 2025). Both the perpetrator and the two women were under 25 years old. In the third case, a 99 year old woman in a nursing home was killed by a 75 year old male resident (see Appendix 1). The latter is categorized as a possible femicide as the gender related circumstances of the murder are ambiguous.

DOUBLE HOMICIDE

In the double homicide with the same perpetrator, the perpetrator was convicted of negligent homicide by poisoning when both women were found dead at his residence after an overdose one month apart (TV2 Nyheder, 2025). The first murder of a 23 year old was initially treated by the police as an accidental overdose, however, when another young 18 year old woman was found dead at the same address of the same young man within a short span of time, the cases were treated as suspicious by the police.

The murders can be categorized as indirect femicides because both deaths were drug related and the result of neglect.

DIRECT AND INDIRECT FEMICIDE

Femicide can be divided into the categories of direct and indirect femicide (OHCHR & UN Women 2014: 14-15):

Direct femicide includes (ex)partner homicide; misogynistic femicide; honor related murder; murder during conflict or war; murder related to dowry; murder based on the woman's sexual orientation or gender identity; infanticide and sex selection; and murder related to ethnicity or indigenous people.

Indirect femicide includes categories such as deaths due to unsafe abortions; maternal mortality; deaths due to harmful practices (e.g. female genital mutilation); deaths related to human trafficking, organized crime and gang related crime; deaths due to neglect, starvation or abuse, and intentional acts or failure to act committed by public officials or government representatives.

In both cases, the perpetrator had given the women drugs that he paid for, and neglected to provide the women with the necessary help when the women overdosed (TV2 Nyheder, 2025). He waited to call 112, and in one of the cases he left his apartment several times during the night to move his car and contacted others after he realized the woman was dead. Before her death, the perpetrator had an SMS correspondence with a friend who expressed concern that another woman could die in the man's care. The perpetrator expressed that he was not responsible for how many drugs the women took and that "then I will kill her" (ibid).

The perpetrator also took pictures of the two women when they were dead (TV2 Nyheder, 2025). A picture of the 23 year old woman undressed in his bed was found on the perpetrator's phone with the text "hehe" written over the picture, after he had sex with her. It is unclear if the 23 year old woman was conscious at the time. Later, the perpetrator took a picture of the woman after finding her dead and wrote across the picture " I think she's dead" and sent it to others. He also took a video of the dead woman. In the case of the 18 year old woman, the perpetrator also took pictures of her. He did this in the days leading up to the woman's death while she was under the influence of drugs or unconscious, but he also took pictures of her after she died.

The perpetrator's interest in the victims may have been both gendered and sexual, as both victims were young women and were not, for example, men or older women. The perpetrator's behaviour in connection with the killings suggests a view of women, where they are treated like objects to be used, neglected and discarded (see OHCHR & UN Women, 2014). During the trial, the women were described as "experienced junkies" by the perpetrator's defence lawyer and argued for an acquittal (TV2 Nyheder, 2025). Instead, the perpetrator was sentenced to 2.5 years in prison for negligent manslaughter under § 241 of the Danish Criminal Code.

PENAL CODE § 241

Anyone who negligently causes the death of another person is punished with a fine or imprisonment for up to 4 months or under aggravating circumstances with imprisonment for up to 10 years.

In connection with the publication of this analysis, Anette Nancke from Redernes Crisis Center Fyn states: " It makes a big impression on me that it is argued that because 'you are an experienced junkie' you can expect it to happen, and it almost appears as a permissible act. It is unacceptable that because you suffer from addiction, there are no consequences for someone selling you drugs that are deadly, and that you even die from, while the pusher looks on without doing anything other than filming". Women with addiction problems or women who are in abusive environments may be particularly vulnerable to violence and abuse.

This gendered vulnerability and the need for extra protection are generally recognized when drop off centers, hostels, and state funded drug intake rooms that are specifically for woman are established around the country to protect them from rape, assault, and violence committed by men (Indenrigs- og Sundhedsministeriet, 2024).

RECOMMENDATIONS

FUNDING OF SERVICES AND SECURE FRAMEWORKS FOR WOMEN WITH ADDICTION

Women with addictions may be particularly vulnerable to male violence, including robbery, sexual violence and murder. The state, regions and municipalities must continue to fund drop in centers, shelters and drug intake rooms specifically for women to reduce the risks of violence and to ensure that they can consume drugs in safe, clean and secure environments. This also includes free distribution of injection and inhalation equipment, as well as test kits to check the quality of the drug, and easy access treatment.

STOP VICTIM BLAMING

Victim blaming makes the victim responsible for the violence perpetrated against her. Victim blaming can be based on her clothing choice, behaviour, choices and occupation. Such narratives are harmful to women's right to self determination and create narratives that women deserve to be subjected to violence.

POSSIBLE FEMICIDE: HOMICIDE AT NURSING HOME

A femicide in 2023 was committed in a nursing home , where a male resident with dementia subjected a female resident to fatal violence (see Appendix 1). According to the nursing home staff, the perpetrator had thrown, tossed or pushed the woman out of her apartment at the nursing home.

The perpetrator often entered the woman's apartment in the nursing home but had not previously been violent. Before the woman died in the hospital she said that the perpetrator had been angry and hostile, and that she had been lying on the floor for ten minutes while the perpetrator had been nearby. The nursing stand found him standing next to her. In sentencing him to detention, the court emphasized that despite his dementia, he should have known that subjecting a woman of that age to violence could take her life.

Ageing is a gendered experience, meaning that growing older as a woman and growing older as a man can be different experiences. Older women face different challenges than older men due to their gender, both separately and in combination with their aging (Dawson, 2021). While the motive may not have been gendered, the circumstances of the murder may have been gendered. The perpetrator was a man more than twenty years younger than her. The gendered circumstances of the murder may therefore be up to the individual's interpretation, and therefore not definitively categorized as a femicide but rather a possible femicide.

RECOMMENDATIONS

VIOLENT TREATMENT AND DIAGNOSES

Authorities, health professionals and staff in residential facilities should have specialized knowledge about how exposure to violence, age and gender affect vulnerability. Older women may be at risk because of their gender, even when the motive behind the homicide or assault is not explicitly gendered. A strengthened gender sensitive approach can improve risk assessments and prevention.

EARLIER AND MORE PRECISE ASSESSMENT OF RESIDENTS

There is a need for systematic and early diagnoses especially of men who move into residential care without clarification of dementia or other cognitive challenges. Early assessment contributes to better risk assessments, tailored support and prevention of violent incidents.

REVISION OF LEGISLATION: STRENGTHENED SECURITY PROCEDURES AND FLEXIBLE FRAMEWORKS FOR RESIDENTIAL OFFERS

The legislation regulating residential care should be reviewed with a view to creating a better balance between residents' rights and safety of both residents and staff. More residents exhibit violent or borderline behaviour without being investigated and residential care lacks tools and options to prevent risk. Residential care must be able to take more flexible security measures when there is a clear risk of harm. Today, legislation limits the possibilities to detain residents even when there is documented risk. A differentiated model where particularly vulnerable residents, for example residents with violent behavior, can be better supported so that they are not at risk of violence.

TRENDS

PSYCHIATRIC DISAGNOSES AND CONVICTIONS

The review of the 13 murders of women in Denmark in 2023 shows that several of the perpetrators had either been given a psychiatric diagnosis prior to the murder, were declared insane at the time of the crime, or were sentenced to psychiatric detention. Almost half of the perpetrators had a known mental illness, while a large proportion had unresolved mental health conditions. In five of the cases, the perpetrators were declared legally insane under Section 16 of the Danish Criminal Code and sentenced to psychiatric treatment without a maximum term. The cases included schizophrenia and psychotic depression. In other cases, the perpetrators were sentenced to prison sentences even though there mental health problems such as abuse and suicidal idealization, and the problems often played together along with interpersonal conflicts.

Although research in the field indicates that there is no clear link between mental illness and femicide (Caroppo et al., 2024), the mapping shows that mental disorders are frequently present among perpetrators, especially in certain categories of femicide, such as matricide. This indicates that mental illness plays a role although not as an isolated cause. The question should therefore not be whether mental illness has an impact, but how it has an impact. Research shows that the simultaneous presence of drug and/or alcohol abuse, severe psychiatric diagnoses or other multimorbidity significantly increases the complexity and risk of violence (Oram et al. 2013; Selin & Shannon 2024; Kamphuis et al., 2012). Examples of this are also seen in this report, where a number of perpetrators, in addition to a diagnosis, were also under the influence of intoxicating substances at the time of the crime. In addition, in many of the murder cases, a number of acute symptoms were also seen in the perpetrators such as paranoia, delusions and depressive breakdowns which in combination with the circumstances of separations, jealousy and escalation of conflict, lack of or recently discontinued treatment, social marginalization, or somatic illness etc. (Oram et al. 2013; Selin & Shannon 2024) provides more of an explanation than the psychiatric diagnoses alone.

In addition, something like sleep deprivation which is also seen in people with psychotic symptoms and/or when taking intoxicating drugs can constitute a risk factor for outwardly reactive and violent behaviour (Kamphuis et al., 2012). This means that the presence of mental illness does not in itself constitute a risk factor, but in interaction with other factors has an impact on how the person with a psychiatric diagnosis perceives and reacts in certain situations (Caroppo et al., 2024).

Secretary General of Better Psychiatry Jane Alrø Sørensen states in connection with the publication of this analysis : “Murdercommitted by people with mental illness could in many cases could have been avoided with the right detection and risk assessment, early intervention, adequate treatment and support. And this also requires that we take the concerns of relatives seriously. As relatives often see warning signs long before the system does.

An important cross cutting finding is that even where mental illness is included, time, available help and retention in treatment are central to prevention. Studies indicate that many perpetrators have had contact with psychiatry relatively shortly before the murder (Oram et al., 2013); a window for intervention that is not always utilized in practice. At the same time, research warns against stigmatization: Excessive focus on”monitoring” people with mental illness can overshadow effective measures such as substance abuse treatments, social support, targeted risk assessments and cross sectoral cooperation (Weir, 2021). It is therefore important to point out that most perpetrators are not mentally ill and that people with mental illnesses are not more violent than other people. Mental illness simply plays a role in a wide range of risk factors that influence the circumstances of a murder, which is why it is important to incorporate this into preventive efforts.

“IT CLICKED”

An explanation that appears at regular intervals across femicide is the perpetrator’s own description of “it clicked” at the moment of the crime when he killed the victim. This is a way of indicating the momentary loss of control and judgement of the perpetrator, who then resorts to deadly violence. In the cases from 2023, this explanation is used by at least two of the perpetrators but interestingly neither of these two perpetrators were found to be insane or sentenced to treatment. The model of the explanation “it clicked” becomes a way of indicating impulsiveness and uncontrollability, but in both cases there were signs that the perpetrator had planned to harm the woman in advance, for example, by bringing a weapon to the victim’s residence or breaking into the victim’s home while she was sleeping.

Male perpetrator’s phrasings such as “it clicked” function as a way of disclaiming responsibility or avoiding describing the feelings, actions and choices that preceded the violence. Women’s descriptions of violence also occur but less frequently contain this type of “I lost control” explanation. In contrast to men’s violence, women’s violence reflects conscious choices to a greater extent than impulsive emotion reactions or passive victim positions, which challenges stereotypical assumptions about gendered reaction patterns (Kruttschnitt & Cabrone-Lopez, 2006). perpetrator is given more weight than the surrounding cultural and structural circumstances that make it possible for women to be killed (OHCHR & UN Women, 2014: 37).

Seen in this light, the explanation “it clicked” is not only a gendered explanatory framework but also an expression of personal responsibility displacement, where the action is placed outside the perpetrator’s own control and can become a way of distancing oneself from responsibility, intensity and intention in the act of violence. As already mentioned, intentionality and long term planning can often be demonstrated through the course of action and strategically planned staging methods of killing, even if the perpetrator relies on explanatory models that convey loss of control, spontaneity and predictability. At the same time, there are associations between the loss of control and a crime of passion motive due to the outburst of emotions, the relationship between perpetrator and victim or the pathology of the individual perpetrator is given more weight than the surrounding cultural and structural circumstances that make it possible for women to be killed (OHCHR & UN Women, 2014: 37).

MURDER METHOD AND PROFILE SYMPTOMS

Research suggests that the way a murder is carried out is sometimes linked to the perpetrator's mental state and symptom profile. Systematic reviews show that people with psychosis and schizophrenia more often use sharp tools such as knives, while people with affective disorders such as depression or bipolar disorder more often kill by suffocation, drowning or other forms of blocking the air supply (Minero & Snitch, 2017). This trend may be related to the fact that psychotic symptoms such as delusions and hallucinations can provoke sudden, violent and outward aggression, where an accessible tool such as a knife is used. In contrast, affective disorders are often characterized by intense emotional states such as despair, desperation or loss of control in close relationships, which can result in more "close contact" methods of murder. In the 5 cases from 2023, where the perpetrator was sentenced to psychiatric treatment, three perpetrators used sharp violence (stabbing) and one used suffocation. In none of the 3 cases, where poisoning was used as a murder method, was the perpetrator declared legally insane.

It is important to emphasize that the diagnosis itself cannot explain the choice of method. Instead, it is the acute symptoms that matter the most at the time of the crime and the sequence of events leading up to the murder. For example, paranoid fear, depressive breakdowns, drug abuse or acute relational conflicts may have greater explanatory power than the formal diagnoses alone. In addition, factors such as the availability of weapons, social circumstances and victim relationships play a significant role in shaping the actual method of murder.

Overall, the research shows that the choice of method in femicide must be understood from a complex interplay between psychological symptoms, current courses, relational dynamic and contextual factors. A nuanced approach that integrates psychiatric, social and relational perspectives is therefore necessary to understand and prevent this type of homicide.

RECOMMENDATIONS

IDENTIFICATION AND TREATMENT OF ABUSE AND COMORBIDITY IN FAMILY AND INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE CASES

Systematic screening of abuse in connection with diagnoses should result in a link to quick treatment courses at relevant institutions and outpatient services. This should also be facilitated and strengthened through bridging between psychiatry, addiction treatment, the municipality, the police and civil society.

STRENGTHENED PERPETRATOR FOCUSED APPROACH IN RISK ASSESSMENT

When violence, separation, and/or stalking escalate in family and intimate partner violence cases, interventions should focus on the perpetrator, while creating safety plans for the victim. These measures should be systematically coordinated across the sectors.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN RISK FACTORS AND CASUAL EXPLANATIONS

People with psychiatric diagnoses should not be further stigmatized and a distinction should be made between risk factors and causal explanations in femicide cases based on data driven research. A crucial part of this work consists of systematic data collection to continue to identify missed opportunities for prevention.

VULNERABILITY OF ELDERLY WOMEN

At least five of the thirteen femicide cases in 2023 were committed against older women aged 60 years old or over. This number may be higher as the ages of two of the women killed are not known for certain, however, they have been described as elderly, and both murders were committed by the women's 65 year old partners. This means that about half of the women killed in 2023 were aged 60 or over.

Women's risk of being killed increases with age, while men's decreases (Rogers & Storey, 2019). The perpetrators of the murders of older women in Denmark in 2023 were mainly the victim's sons (2) or current partners (4). Unlike younger groups of women, research suggests that older women are at higher risk of being killed by current partners rather than former partners (Dawson, 2021). At the same time, murders of older women by partners may indicate a longer history of violence, either physical or psychological, throughout their lives in relation to the perpetrator (OHCHR & UN Women, 2014: 50).

Despite violence against older women being one of the most widespread forms of crime in the world, it is only recently that violence against them as a group has been recognized as a widespread phenomenon (Dawson, 2021). Of 131 government reports of violence against women only 13 acknowledge risks for older women (Hemblade & Platzer, 2017: 5). Women of all ages are covered by Danish legislation, but currently there is no separate legislation that specifically protects older women.

The Council of Europe Convention on Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) Article. 4, Paragraph 3 states that the Convention shall be implemented without discrimination on the basis of age, and Article. 12, paragraph 3 of the Convention describes that there shall be a special focus on vulnerable persons, which according to the legislative history/the travaux préparatoires for the Convention includes vulnerability due to old age. At the same time, the UN Convention on the Rights of Women (CEDAW) stipulates the states have a duty to prevent violence, abuse and exploitation of older women and to ensure access to legal aid and prosecution for older women according to its general recommendation no. 27. It is not only in legislation that older women represent an overlooked group. In research and popular culture, older women are often overlooked. This invisibility must be identified at the intersection of gender and age.

RECOMMENDATIONS

INCLUSION OF ELDERLY WOMEN IN LEGISLATION IN LINE WITH INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS

Violence against older women must not further be made invisible by society. Therefore, there must be legislation that specifically includes older women in its formulation in line with international law, and that sends a sign to perpetrators of violence that there is no impunity for violence against older women.

SCREENING AND RISK ASSESSMENTS AT OLDER WOMEN'S MOST FREQUENT POINT OF CONTACT

Professionals who have the most frequent points of contact with older women, e.g. doctors, nurses, caregivers, social workers, and assistants should be trained in recognition signs and risk assessments for older women. Implementation should take into account the age of the women, and what specific barriers this group of women faces in order to better understand and address them.

AUTHORITIES MUST BE TRAINED IN RECOGNITION

It is not only health professionals that should be trained, but also police and courts that should be trained in the specific signs and identification of violence against older women, as well as the barriers they face. Professional education and training should be consistent, continuous and across sectoral.

CAREGIVING RELATIONSHIPS MUST BE RISK ASSESSED

When a caregiving relationship exists in an older woman's home, whether she is caring for her son or her male partner is caring for her, it should be examined whether the person taking on the caregiving role is sufficiently capable of this. Caregiving should be recognized as a profession that requires skills, and when these skills are not there, circumstances may arise that in coexistence with other individuals and shared challenges, lead to homicide.

CONCLUSION

Femicides in Denmark represent complex challenges, where the causes cannot be limited to one area, one sector, one event or one type of relationship. Prevention must, therefore, incorporate overlapping risk factors, unpredictable points of contact and changing actors across the police, health, psychiatry, social authorities and civil society. There is no simple solution, but the murders can be prevented through systematic, coordinated and data informed efforts.

The mapping of femicide in 2023 shows that most women are killed by a current or former partner. Several of the cases develop over time, with danger signs such as control, violence, manipulation, threats and isolation appearing before the fatal outcome. From a risk perspective, these murders are rarely unexpected: Many murders occur in connection with a breakup or separation, where the perpetrator acts based on a perceived loss of control and in the act, regards the victim as someone he controls. Entitlement is the key concept and the gendered motive will rarely be found in a perpetrator's explicitly misogynistic statements made in connection with the murder, but in the underlying structures that made it possible for a man to feel justified in killing a woman who does not do what he believes she should do. This entitlement is repeated across the categories of femicide. Possible individual motives also reflect broader social, economic, and gendered power structures, with women in caregiving relationships, female sex workers, migrant women and women with addictions being particularly vulnerable.

A "structure" in this context refers to a systematic disparity between the widespread misogyny in society and the way in which the state, through legislation, practice and priorities, enforces policies to protect against hatred and violence against women. This means that while misogyny is expressed in social norms, cultural expectations, and everyday practices, this reality is not consistently reflected in the political and institutional mechanisms that should protect women. This creates a gap between

- Society's actual patterns of misogyny, and
- The state's handling of hatred, violence and the risk of femicide.

The structure is manifested, among other things, in the fact that women's experiences are undervalued, that legislation and case law are often gender neutral in ways that overlook inequality, and that violence against women is not treated as a systemic problem, even when cultural and social reality points to the contrary.

When femicide is analyzed in isolation as single incidents, this deeper connection is lost. Murders are committed by individual perpetrators, but they are motivated, shaped and legitimized by social norms, notions of gender and cultural expectations of relationships and control. Seen in this light, it is not surprising that femicide in Denmark has shown stability over time: the problem is not only lack of prevention at the individual level, but is deeply rooted in normative gender structures that continue to shape attitudes, institutions and practices in the Nordic countries. Particularly vulnerable groups of women whose killings are shaped by specific circumstances include:

OLDER WOMEN

Killings of older women typically occur in partner relationships or family relationships. The risk increases when a primary caregiving relationship exists, for example, where she is caring for her adult son, or where she is cared for by a male partner. These circumstances are also shaped by mental illness, pressure and lack of support.

MINORITY GROUPS OF WOMEN

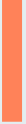
Migrant women, female sex workers and women with addictions face social marginalization and stigmatization. These groups of women may also lack trust in the police and the authorities' prioritization of their protection.

WOMEN IN SEPARATION

The risk increases significantly for women who leave their abusive partners. Early detection is crucial in these cases and requires targeted initiatives as a "one size fits all" model does not reflect the risks and needs of this group.

At the same time, the mapping shows that a number of homicides involve mental illness, abuse, or instability in the perpetrator, where systematic violations and treatments and follow up processes have played a direct role. However, a perpetrator's abuse or mental illness does not automatically cancel out the structural circumstances of which the perpetrators are also products.

The report's overall review shows that more femicide occurs in situations where contact with authorities or the healthcare system has previously been identified, but without the risk assessment being identified or followed up on sufficiently. The lack of common standards in identifying the danger signs, combined with authorities' inconsistent information and sharing practices, means that potentially preventable opportunities can be missed.

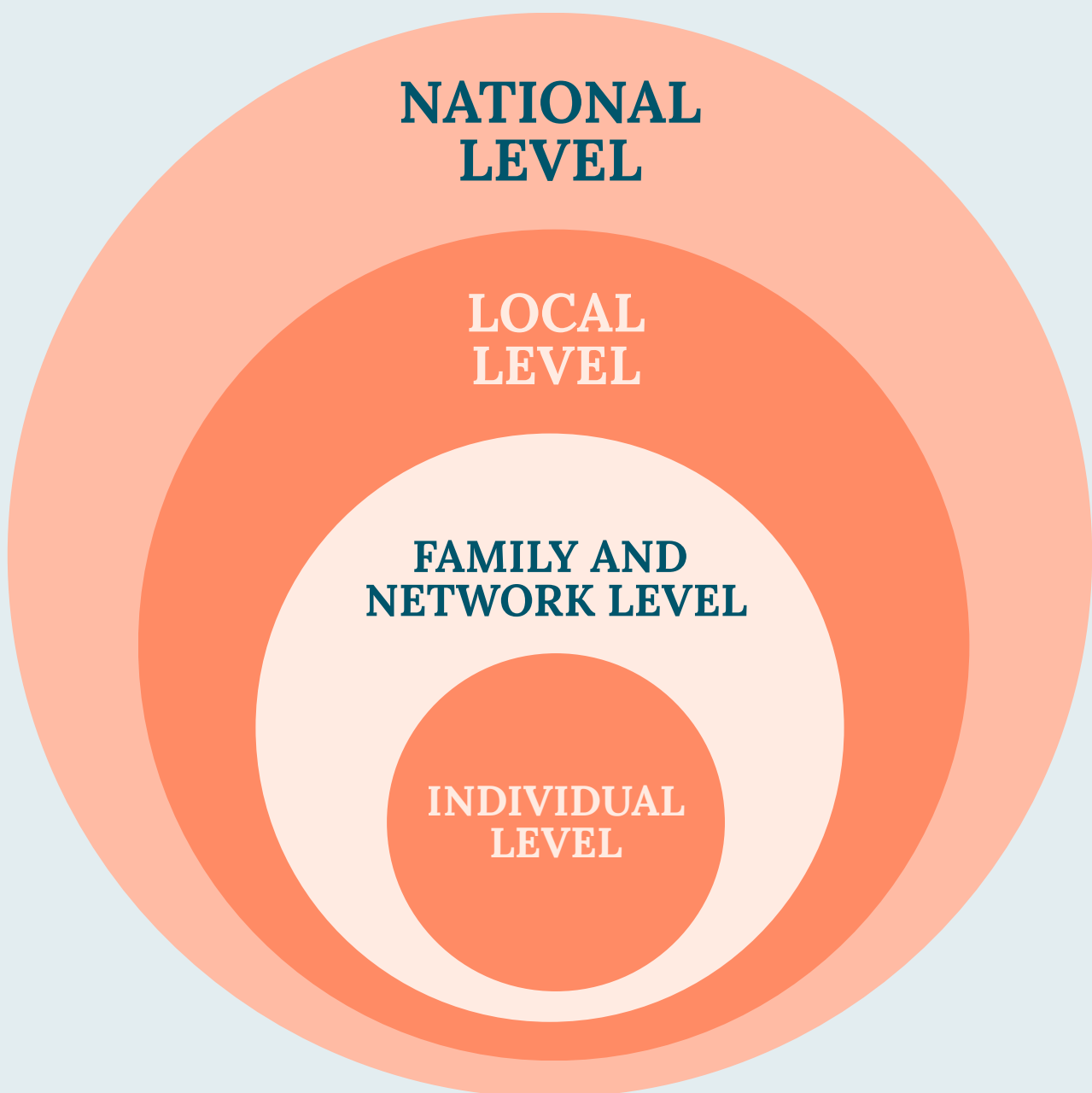


Morten Kjærum, adjunct professor and founder of the Institute for Human Rights, comments in connection with this publication: “The report clearly shows the state is not fully fulfilling its responsibility to protect all women from violence, including those who often fall outside of the system’s attention, such as women with mental health challenges and addiction, sex workers and migrant women. The analysis points to the need for more systematic and cross-sectoral effort, where authorities, social services and civil society collaborate on prevention and early protection. This is crucial in a state governed by the rule of law, where the right to life, health and security must apply to everyone equally”.

RECOMMENDATIONS

PREVENTION ON FOUR LEVELS

The causes of violence against women exist at several different levels; therefore, the prevention of violence against women and femicide also requires focused efforts at these levels. Several organizations and authors recommend utilizing the ecological model, which describes the ecosystem of drivers for violence against women (OHCHR & UN Women 2014; Dawson, 2021; Brysk & Moreira, 2023).



INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

EARLY SOCIALIZATION FOR EMOTIONAL REGULATION

Much gender based violence against women is rooted in men's feelings of jealousy, loss of control, and entitlement. The use of violence to discipline women who do not meet men's expectations is a societal problem rooted in gendered norms, but which can be partially addressed by early and proactive socialization of children and adolescents, for example, by teaching them about bodily autonomy, consent, harmful gender stereotypes, and non violent conflict management (see also Bay & Schmidt, 2024; Center for Voldsforebyggelse & L'æil du loup, 2024).

FAMILY AND NETWORK LEVEL

STRENGTHEN THE POPULATION'S KNOWLEDGE ABOUT EARLY SIGNS OF VIOLENCE

Relatives of victims of violence can help prevent homicide if they know how to look out for and how to talk about the subject in a constructive way. By breaking down taboos and training in identifying early signs and risk factors, civil society can help prevent deadly violence and homicide. This must be done through implementation and funding in schools and educational institutions, and also in organizations and workplaces.

LOCAL LEVEL

TRAINING IN THE RECOGNITION OF WARNING SIGNS FOR SPECIFIC GROUPS OF WOMEN

Professionals and authorities should receive training on what specific signs, risks and barriers look like for the groups of women they work with, whether they are older women, migrant women, women with addictions, women in caregiving relationships, women in sex work, or women going through a separation. This professional training and education should be consistent, continuous and available in both educational institutions and workplaces. Data on how many professionals have completed the specialized training in violence prevention should be available.

CROSS SECTORAL COLLABORATION

Systematic identification, screening and support must be part of and facilitate cross sectoral collaboration.

Risks must be identified by professionals with expertise in violence, who must have the opportunity to share information and initiate cross sectoral efforts with a view to providing specialized support to victims of violence and the perpetrators of violence in areas where there is a need for systematic use of screening tools in specific circumstances, e.g. when women enter into caregiving relationships with male family members, or when a woman is separated from a violent partner.

NATIONAL LEVEL

INTRODUCTION OF EQUIVALENT TO CLARE'S LAW

Legislation that allows women and relatives to gain information into a partner's past history of violence for prevention purposes, proactively protect women, and ultimately save their lives.

INCLUSION AND PROTECTION OF SPECIFIC GROUPS OF WOMEN IN LEGISLATION

Women who face specific barriers must be included and protected by legislation in line with international human rights law. Such legislative measures must ensure that different groups of women have equal access to protection, regardless of identity related differences and barriers, such as age, occupation, migration status, health, residence or relationship to the perpetrator.

INTRODUCTION OF NATIONAL MONITORING BODY

The Danish state should establish a monitoring body to report on Denmark's implementation of articles of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention), as seen in Finland (see Valtioneuvosto, 2022). This body could also usefully report on the implementation of EU Directive 2024/1385 on combating violence against women and domestic violence, which Denmark has committed to incorporating into its national legislation, and ensure that relevant data in the area of gender based violence are provided to Eurostat, the European Institute for Gender Equality ((EIGE), the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) and the UN.

STOP EXCUSES FOR FEMICIDE

Femicide should be called femicide, and deadly violence against women should not be romanticized or excused through victim blaming. The responsibility for this cultural change is shared by the civil population, politicians, authorities, organizations, institutions, professionals, researchers and the media.

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APPENDIX 1: COURT RULINGS

THE COURT IN GLOSTRUP, JUDGEMENT OF 13TH NOVEMBER 2024, CASE NO. S25-2741/2024

THE COURT IN HELSINGØR, JUDGEMENT OF 24TH OF MAY, CASE NO.1-980/2024

THE COURT IN HOLBÆK, JUDGEMENT OF 4TH JUNE 2024, CASE NO. 60-3994/2023

THE COURT IN HOLSTEBRO, JUDGEMENT OF 22ND MAY 2024, CASE NO. 5-990/2024

THE COURT IN KOLDING, JUDGEMENT 29TH OCTOBER 2024, CASE NO. 3-3901/2024

THE COURT IN SVENDBORG, JUDGEMENT OF 5TH MARCH 2024, CASE NO. R5-2833/2023