



Femicide in a capital city from northern Brazil: Sociodemographic profile of the victims and characteristics of the crime*


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Objective: to characterize the sociodemographic profile of victims of estimated femicide cases between 2018 and 2020 in a capital city from northern Brazil, as well as the characteristics of the crime. **Methodology:** a cross-sectional, quantitative, retrospective and descriptive study. Documents related to the deaths, made available by the Legal Medical Institute, were consulted. An exploratory analysis of the cases was performed using descriptive statistics. **Results:** a total of 136 suspected (90.1%) and 15 confirmed (9.9%) femicide cases were identified, totaling 151 estimated cases. Most of the victims were brown-skinned and single women, aged from 11 to 40 years old, with Incomplete Elementary School, performing low-paid or unpaid activities (self-employed, house chores or unemployed), and living in the northern and eastern regions of the municipality (higher violence and homicide rates in general). There were more occurrences at the homes, during the night, and from Saturday to Tuesday. The main cause of death was gunshot. **Conclusion:** it was possible to suggest strategies to work on socioeconomic and cultural issues related to the perspective of gender and vulnerability. It is necessary to facilitate and encourage women to seek education and job opportunities. It is also important to devise control policies for lethal weapons (firearms and others). Joint, interdisciplinary and intersectoral actions can protect women from this type of crime.

Descriptors: Violence Against Women; Gender-Based Violence; Gender and Health; Homicide.

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Feminicídio em capital do norte do Brasil: perfil sociodemográfico das vítimas e características do crime

Objetivo: caracterizar o perfil sociodemográfico das vítimas dos casos estimados de feminicídio, ocorridos no período de 2018 a 2020, em uma capital do norte do Brasil, e as características do crime. **Metodologia:** estudo transversal, quantitativo, retrospectivo e descritivo. Foram consultados documentos relacionados ao óbito, disponibilizados pelo Instituto Médico Legal. Realizou-se análise exploratória dos casos, por estatística descritiva. **Resultados:** foram identificados 136 casos suspeitos (90,1%) e 15 confirmados (9,9%) de feminicídio, totalizando 151 casos estimados. A maioria das vítimas era parda; solteira; 11 a 40 anos de idade; ensino fundamental incompleto; exercia atividades de baixa remuneração ou não remuneradas (autônomas, afazeres domésticos ou desempregadas); e residia na região norte e leste do município (com maiores taxas de violência e homicídio em geral). Houve mais ocorrências no domicílio; à noite; entre o sábado e a terça-feira. O disparo por arma de fogo foi a principal causa do óbito. **Conclusão:** foi possível sugerir estratégias para trabalhar questões socioeconômico-culturais relacionadas à perspectiva de gênero e vulnerabilidade. É necessário facilitar e incentivar as mulheres a buscar formação escolar e oportunidades de trabalho. É importante, também, criar políticas de controle de armas letais (fogo e outras). Ações conjuntas, interdisciplinares e intersetoriais podem proteger mulheres deste tipo de crime.

Descritores: Violência Contra a Mulher; Violência de Gênero; Gênero e Saúde; Homicídio.

Femicidio en una capital del norte de Brasil: perfil sociodemográfico de las víctimas y características del crimen

Objetivo: caracterizar el perfil sociodemográfico de las víctimas de los casos considerados femicidios, ocurridos entre 2018 y 2020 en una capital del norte de Brasil, y las características del crimen. **Metodología:** estudio transversal, cuantitativo, retrospectivo y descriptivo. Se consultaron documentos relacionados con los fallecimientos, proporcionados por el Instituto Médico Legal. Se realizó un análisis exploratorio de los casos mediante estadística descriptiva. **Resultados:** se identificaron 136 casos sospechosos (90,1%) y 15 casos confirmados (9,9%) de femicidio, 151 casos estimados en total. La mayoría de las víctimas era morena y soltera, de 11 a 40 años de edad, tenía educación primaria incompleta, realizaba actividades mal remuneradas o no remuneradas (actividades por cuenta propia, domésticas o desempleadas), y vivía en las regiones norte y este del municipio (con mayores índices de violencia y homicidios en general). La mayor parte de los homicidios ocurrió en el domicilio; por la noche; entre el sábado y el martes. Disparos de arma de fuego fue la principal causa de muerte. **Conclusión:** fue posible sugerir estrategias para trabajar temas socioeconómicos y culturales relacionados con la perspectiva de género y vulnerabilidad. Es necesario facilitar y alentar a las mujeres a buscar oportunidades educativas y laborales. También es importante crear políticas de control de armas letales (de fuego y otras). Las acciones conjuntas, interdisciplinarias e intersectoriales pueden proteger a las mujeres contra este tipo de crimen.

Descriptores: Violencia Contra la Mujer; Violencia de Género; Género y Salud; Homicidio.

Introduction

The killing of women resulting from gender relationships is commonly known as “femicide”. The term became part of contemporary vocabulary thanks to researcher, writer and activist Diana Russell, who first used the word in 1976 at the First International Court on Crimes Against Women, and defined a specific type of murder⁽¹⁾.

Femicide represents the final stage of successive domestic and gender-based violence against women, which ultimately results in their death. It is therefore preceded by physical, sexual and psychological abuse, as an attempt to subjugate and dominate women within a patriarchal and misogynistic cultural pattern that has become normalized throughout generations. From the patriarchal perspective, abusive practices see men as holders of power to determine and punish those who present any deviation. The gender ideology alone is insufficient to guarantee obedience of the potential victims to the patriarchs’ dictates⁽²⁾.

Therefore, the conceptual elaboration around gender is a construction of the relational dimension in the exercise of femininities/masculinities, always pointing towards the historically-given power imbalance, with dominance of the masculine⁽³⁾. In this sense, “the patriarchal gender order does not operate alone; it constitutes the cultural milieu in which gender-based violence takes place, the mortar that builds several inequalities, including those between men and women”⁽²⁾. Therefore, femicide expresses an unrestricted assertion of ownership, as if a woman and an object were equal: by destroying her identity through disfigurement or mutilation of her body; by lowering her dignity when subjected to torture and cruelty situations; and by subjugating a woman’s intimacy and sexuality through sexual violence followed by murder^(1,4-5).

Regarding the national legislation that ensures women’s rights, the Maria da Penha Law (Law No. 11,340/2006⁽⁶⁾ and the Femicide Law (Law No. 13,104/2015)⁽⁷⁾ stand out, where the first one creates mechanisms to curb domestic/family violence against women, while the second describes the death circumstances that involve domestic/family or gender-based violence (inferiorization due to being a woman) and the respective punishments.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), Brazil ranks 5th among the 83 countries with data on femicide, only surpassed by El Salvador, Colombia, Guatemala and Russia⁽⁸⁾. In Brazil, in 2019 alone, 1,244 women were victims of femicide, which represents 33.3% of the 3,737 cases recorded by the Civil Police in the same year⁽⁹⁾. In 2020, out of a total of 3,913 female homicides in Brazil, 1,350 were

considered femicides, representing 34.5% of the total of women murdered⁽¹⁰⁾.

National research studies have revealed that the profile of femicide victims is characterized by women of childbearing age, of mixed race/ethnicity, with few years of study, and who work in low-paid or unpaid activities. Most of them were killed by gunshots at their homes or in public places^(4,11-12). A study conducted in a rural area from the state of Rio Grande do Sul indicated that, in addition to unequal gender relations, deaths can also be associated with violence resulting from social isolation contexts, poverty conditions and lack of job opportunities, among other contributing factors that reinforce women’s vulnerability⁽¹³⁾.

In this way, femicide is a phenomenon that needs to be explored in Brazilian research studies due to its significant magnitude, complexity and multidimensional impacts. Thus, the current study becomes relevant by providing new evidence, enabling a local overview of cases, as well as evaluating the relationship of the crime with domestic and gender-based violence against women. In addition to that, it can be an important source for the production of a reliable database, aimed at characterizing the profile of the population most exposed, forms of occurrence, main aggressors and other information related to the crime. It may also allow conducting studies that may guide the implementation of public policies to prevent and address the problem.

Considering the above, the objective of this study was to characterize the sociodemographic profile of the victims of estimated femicide cases between 2018 and 2020 in a capital city from northern Brazil, as well as the characteristics of the crime.

Methodology

Type of study

The study was cross-sectional, quantitative, retrospective and descriptive in nature.

Locus

Forensic Medicine Institute (*Instituto Médico Legal*, IML) in the city of Manaus, Amazonas (AM), Brazil.

Period

From July to November 2021.

Population

Victims of estimated (suspected and confirmed) femicide cases recorded in the IML from January 2018 to December 2020.

Selection criteria

Retrospective primary records were intentionally selected, comprising 290 cases of female homicides. The cases excluded were those outside the established time frame and those not classified as possible femicides.

Definition of the sample/participants

Of the 290 occurrences, 139 were discarded according to the exclusion criteria. Out of these, 21 were deaths due to falls, 17 due to suicide, 10 due to robbery resulting in death, 9 female homicides outside Manaus, 8 male homicides, 5 due to overdose, 5 traffic accidents, 5 natural deaths, two accidental firearm discharges, two infanticide cases, one domestic accident, and 54 deaths that were not clarified. Therefore, the sample consisted of 151 estimated femicide cases, of which 136 (90.1%) were suspected and 15 (9.9%) were confirmed.

The confirmed cases were those that presented records of the "femicide" or "homicide - domestic violence" crime in the data source. In order to select the suspected cases, the documents of female homicides (intentional and/or unintentional) were consulted, with emphasis on the informant's testimony (mostly a victim's family member) that reported suspicion of the woman's death by a partner or former partner, as well as crimes that occurred in domestic or family violence environments, as described in Law No. 13,104/2015⁽⁷⁾, qualifying the crime of femicide.

Instruments used to collect the information

A Data Recording Protocol was developed by the researchers based on the documents consulted. As sources for such notes, the following printed documents were used: Death Certificate (DC), Police Report (PR), Request for Necropsy Examination, and Corpse Recognition, Removal and Release Guide, among others attached to the case.

Data collection

It was carried out twice a week in a room with a computer, a desk and a chair, aided by an intern from the institution.

Study variables

To analyze the sociodemographic profile of the victims, the following variables were selected: *age group* – age clusters in full years old; *race/skin color* – the reference adopted was the one suggested by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (*Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística*, IBGE): white, black, mixed-race, Asian, indigenous; *marital status* – living conditions, marital status and nature of

the union: single, married/living together (formal or informal stable union), separated/divorced, widowed; *schooling* – education is divided into higher and basic education (early childhood education with daycare and preschool, nine-year Elementary School, and three-year High School, according to Law No. 11,274/2006 of the National Education Guidelines and Bases⁽¹⁴⁾), using the following variables: Elementary School, High School and Higher Education (these three categories being classified as complete and incomplete); *occupation* – according to the Major Occupational Groups from the Brazilian Classification of Occupations [(*Classificação Brasileira de Ocupações*, CBO – Ministry of Work and Employment)]; *origin* – place of birth; and *area of residence* – geographically divided into seven zones: North, South, East, West, Midsouth, Midwest, and rural areas.

For the information about the crime, the variables were as follows: *location* – where the crime and/or death occurred (home, public road, hospital, others); *day of the week*; *time of day* – morning, afternoon, and night; *underlying cause of death* – codes in the range of X85 to Y09 from the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-10), which identify aggressions and include homicide and injuries inflicted by another person, using any means and with the intention of harming (hurting) or killing.

Data treatment and analysis

The findings collected were stored in a database using the Microsoft Excel 2019 software and, subsequently, exploratory analyses of the cases were performed through descriptive statistics of quantitative parameters, with absolute and relative frequencies calculated.

Ethical aspects

The study was conducted after due agreement of the Manaus IML and approval of the Committee of Ethics in Research with Human Beings of the Ribeirão Preto Nursing School, University of São Paulo, under opinion number 4,830,475/2021.

Results

The study included 151 estimated femicide cases, of which 136 (90.1%) were suspected occurrences and 15 (9.9%) were confirmed. The distribution of all 151 cases in the years under study was 39 (25.8%) records in 2018, 61 (40.4%) in 2019 and 51 (33.8%) in 2020, as shown in Figure 1. The annual mean of femicide cases was 50.3, of which 45.3 were suspected and 5 were confirmed.

The information related to the femicide perpetrators was only identified in 19 (12.6%) cases. These perpetrators were male, born in Manaus or another Amazonian municipality, and were the victims' partners or former partners.

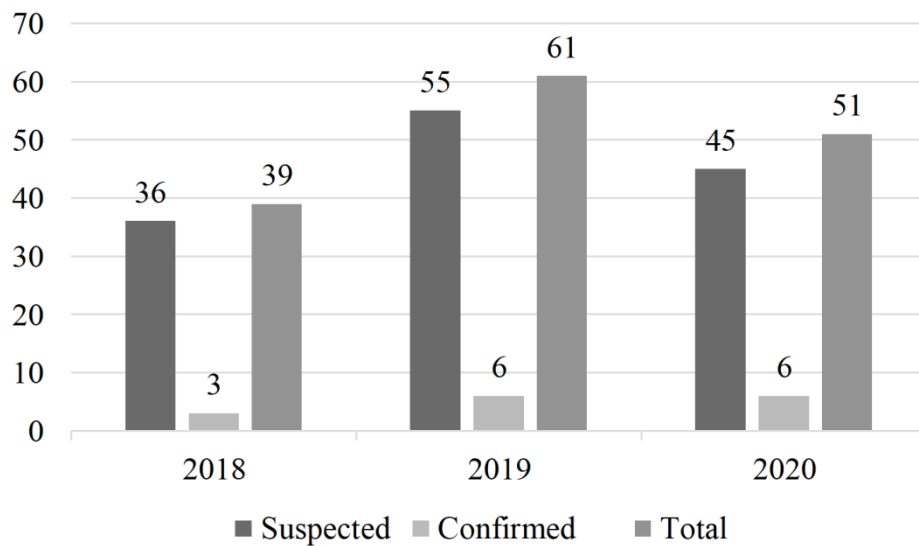


Figure 1 - Suspected and confirmed femicide cases recorded at the Forensic Medicine Institute (IML) (2018-2020). Manaus, AM, Brazil, 2021

Referring to the sociodemographic profile of the victims presented in the study (Table 1), their age varied from 10 to 78 years old, with a mean of 31, median of 27 and mode of 26. The predominant age group was from 21 to 30 years old (54 - 35.8%) and from 11 to 20 years old (38 - 25.2%) when they were killed. Regarding race/skin color, 132 (87.4%) were brown-skinned, 15 (9.9%) were white-skinned and four (2.7%) were black-skinned. There were no Asian or indigenous women. The victims' marital status was single in 131 (86.7%),

married or a stable union in 16 (10.7%), and there were three (1.9%) widows and one (0.7%) separated/divorced woman. The schooling level observed was low, as most of the victims had not completed Elementary School (71 - 47%), around one out of four had finished High School (38 - 25.2%), and only a small percentage had completed Higher Education (5 - 3.3%). As for occupation, the highest frequencies were as follows: 40 (26.6%) self-employed, 34 (22.5%) unemployed, 31 (20.5%) students and 20 (13.2%) house chores.

Table 1 - Sociodemographic profile of the victims of suspected and confirmed femicide cases recorded in the IML* (2018-2020). Manaus, AM, Brazil, 2021

	Suspected		Confirmed		Total	
Age group (years old)	N [†] (136)	% [‡]	N [†] (15)	% [‡]	N [†] (151)	% [‡]
0-10	1	0.7	0	0	1	0.7
11-20	30	22	8	53.3	38	25.2
21-30	51	37.5	3	20	54	35.8
31-40	23	16.9	3	20	26	17.2
41-50	14	10.3	1	6.7	15	9.9
51-60	10	7.6	0	0	10	6.6
61-70	5	3.7	0	0	5	3.3
71-79	2	1.5	0	0	2	1.3
Race/Skin color						
White	14	10.3	1	6.7	15	9.9
Brown	119	87.5	13	86.6	132	87.4
Black	3	2.2	1	6.7	4	2.7
Marital status						
Single	121	89	10	66.7	131	86.7
Married/Stable Union	11	8.1	5	33.3	16	10.7
Separated/Divorced	1	0.7	0	0	1	0.7
Widowed	3	2.2	0	0	3	1.9

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	Suspected		Confirmed		Total	
Schooling	N [†] (136)	% [‡]	N [†] (15)	% [‡]	N [†] (151)	% [‡]
Incomplete Elementary School	64	47	7	46.6	71	47
Complete Elementary School	16	11.7	0	0	16	10.6
Incomplete High School	10	7.6	2	13.3	12	8
Complete High School	34	25	4	26.7	38	25.2
Incomplete Higher Education	3	2.2	1	6.7	4	2.6
Complete Higher Education	5	3.7	0	0	5	3.3
No schooling	4	2.9	1	6.7	5	3.3
Occupation						
Group 4 [§]	20	14.7	0	0	20	13.2
Group 3	8	5.9	0	0	8	5.3
Group 2 [¶]	5	3.7	1	6.7	6	4
Group 1 ^{**}	5	3.7	0	0	5	3.3
Student	27	19.8	4	26.7	31	20.5
Self-employed	38	28	2	13.3	40	26.6
Retired/Pensioner	4	2.9	0	0	4	2.6
Unemployed	27	19.8	7	46.6	34	22.5
Not recorded	2	1.5	1	6.7	3	2

*IML = *Instituto Médico Legal* (Forensic Medicine Institute); [†]N = Absolute frequency; [‡]% = Relative frequency; [§]Group 4 = Paid or unpaid domestic tasks, retail saleswomen; ^{||}Group 3 = Fundamental level technician; [¶]Group 2 = Medium level technician; ^{**}Group 1 = High level technician

Most of the victims [133 (88%)] were from the state of Amazonas, with 92 (60.9%) from Manaus and 41 (27.1%) from other municipalities. In relation to the remaining 18 (12%) cases, 17 (11.3%) were from other states and one (0.7%) came from another country. Regarding the place of residence, according to the division of the city into zones, 78 (71.6%) of the victims lived in the North and East zones, 34 (22.6%) in the South and Midsouth, 31 (20.5%) in the West and Midwest, and 8 (5.3%) in rural areas.

Table 2 expresses the information related to the crime. Regarding the days of the week, there were

99 (65.5%) confirmed or suspected femicide cases between Saturday and Tuesday and 52 (44.5%) between Wednesday and Friday. In relation to the time of day, 80 (53%) were during the night, 26 (17.2%) in the afternoon and 19 (12.6%) in the morning. There was no record of the period of the day in 26 (17.2%) cases. Regarding the underlying causes of death, the most frequent ones were aggressions by firearm discharge (71 - 47%), by a sharp or piercing object (35 - 23.3%), by hanging, strangulation and suffocation (20 - 13.2%) and use of physical force (13 - 8.6%). There was no record of the underlying cause of death in 12 (7.9%) cases.

Table 2 – Day of the week, time of day and underlying cause of death of the suspected and confirmed femicide cases recorded in the IML* (2018-2020). Manaus, AM, Brazil, 2021

Recorded in the IPE (2018-2020): Manaus, AM, Brazil, 2021						
	Suspected		Confirmed		Total	
Day of the week						
Monday	20	14.7	2	13.3	22	14.6
Tuesday	21	15.4	4	26.7	25	16.5
Wednesday	13	9.6	4	26.7	17	11.3
Thursday	15	11	2	13.3	17	11.3
Friday	18	13.2	0	0	18	11.9
Saturday	25	18.4	1	6.7	26	17.2
Sunday	24	17.6	2	13.3	26	17.2

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Time of day	Suspected		Confirmed		Total	
	N [†] (136)	% [‡]	N [†] (15)	% [‡]	N [†] (151)	% [‡]
Morning [§]	16	11.8	3	20	19	12.6
Afternoon	24	17.6	2	13.3	26	17.2
Night [¶]	71	52.2	9	60	80	53
Not recorded	25	18.4	1	6.7	26	17.2
Underlying cause of death**						
Gunshot or other unspecified weapon aggression	69	50.8	2	13.3	71	47
Aggression by sharp or piercing object	27	19.8	8	53.4	35	23.3
Aggression by physical force	11	8.1	2	13.3	13	8.6
Aggression by hanging, strangulation and suffocation	17	12.5	3	20	20	13.2
Not recorded	12	8.8	0	0	12	7.9

*IML = Instituto Médico Legal; †N = Absolute frequency; ‡% = Relative frequency; §Morning = From 06:00 am to 11:59 am; ||Afternoon = From noon 05:59 pm; ¶Night = From 06:00 pm to 05:59 am; **Underlying cause of death = Classified by ICD-10 in the range from X85 to Y09

In Figure 2 it can be seen that the location with the highest occurrence of crimes (75 - 49.7%) and deaths (57 - 37.7%) was the home, followed by public roads with 53 crimes (35%) and 44 deaths (29.1%). There were 29

(19.3%) deaths but no crimes in hospitals. Other places, such as vacant lots and wooded areas, had 18 crimes (12%) and 15 (9.9%) deaths. There was no record of the crime scene in 5 (3.3%) cases and of the place of death in 6 (4%) cases.

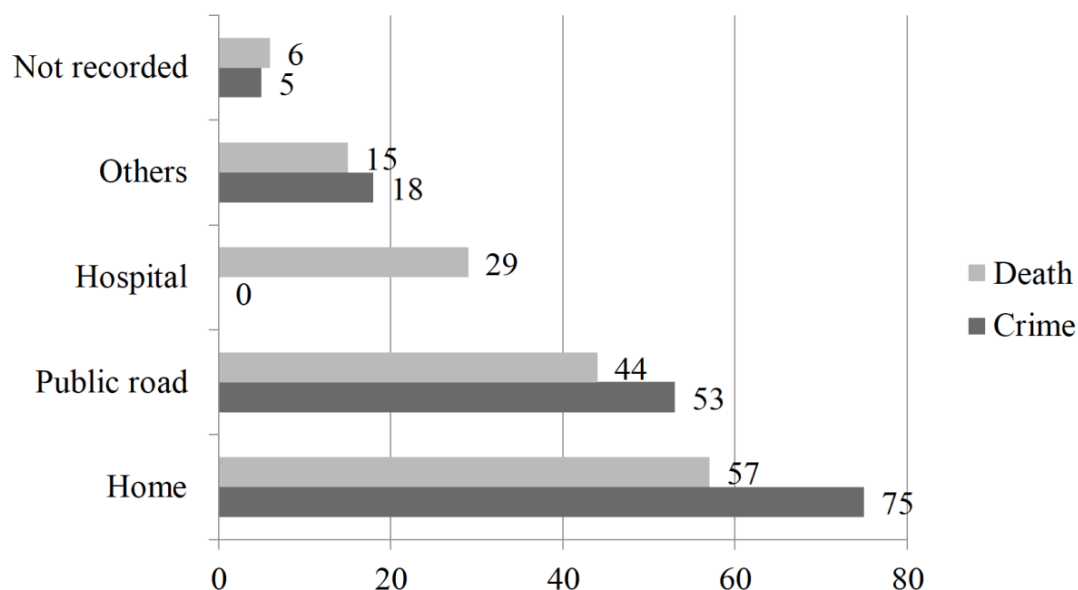


Figure 2 – Comparison of the crime scene and of the deaths in the suspected and confirmed femicide cases (n = 151) recorded in the Forensic Medicine Institute (IML) (2018-2020). Manaus, AM, Brazil, 2021

Discussion

Searching for reliable data on femicide is a challenge for researchers. Definition of the sample herein studied corroborates the difficulty identifying femicides. Out of 290 cases of female homicides, 139 were discarded because they did not meet the possible femicide criteria. It is probable that some of these cases, classified as other types of violent deaths (suicides, accidents and unexplained deaths), may have been unidentified femicides. As confirmed cases, in which the “femicide”

or “homicide - domestic violence” crime was reported, 15 occurrences were found, which accounted for 9.9% of the total selected. The search was expanded, including suspected cases, by consulting documents of intentional and/or unintentional female homicides, resulting in the inclusion of 136 situations, which corresponded to 90.1% of the total sample of 151.

The number of estimated femicide cases included in this research was 39 (25.8%) in 2018, 61 (40.4%) in 2019 and 51 (33.8%) in 2020, with an annual mean of 50.3 occurrences (Figure 1). Therefore, there was

a 36.1% increase in the number of cases in 2019, considering the findings of 2018. In 2020, there was a 16.4% decrease when compared to 2019, but a 23.5% increase if we consider 2018. According to diverse information from the 2021 Brazilian Public Security Yearbook⁽¹⁰⁾ on femicides in Brazil, between 2016 and 2020, a 45.3% increase in these crimes was observed, rising from 929 to 1,350, respectively.

When presenting the results (Tables 1 and 2), the confirmed and suspected cases were separated to show the differences in each group. However, the findings of the observed variables showed similar distributions in the groups, except for the underlying cause of death, where in approximately half of the confirmed cases the means used was a melee weapon, while in the suspected ones it was a firearm.

Although femicide is included in the Brazilian legislation, to the present day there is no category in the Mortality Information System (*Sistema de Informações sobre Mortalidade*, SIM), produced by the health system, which provides quantified information about this crime in its data, as the legal typification is under responsibility of the criminal justice system institutions. For this reason, other sources have been used to obtain an overview of the cases, such as the Public Security State Departments (including the IMLs), the Criminal Analysis Observatory, the Coordination Office for Statistical Information and Criminal Analysis, the IBGE and the crossing of SIM data with those in the Notifiable Diseases Information System (*Sistema de Informação de Agravos de Notificação*, SINAN)^(10,15).

As in other countries, in Brazil, the SIM has no information about the victim's relationship with the perpetrator, nor about the reasons for the crime. Nearly 40% of the female homicides worldwide are perpetrated by partners or former partners, although this finding can be seen as a conservative estimate given the difficulty obtaining good quality information⁽⁴⁾. On the other hand, suspected cases may not be considered femicides by the authorities responsible for their investigation and prosecution (Civil and Military Police and Courts of Justice), causing only confirmed cases to be presented in official statistics^(10,16). In the current study, in only 19 (12.6%) of the cases surveyed there were data identifying the perpetrator as a partner or former partner, although without any record regarding the reason for the femicide.

In 2020, the highest rates of Brazilian femicides were in the states of Mato Grosso (3.6/100,000) and Mato Grosso do Sul (3/100,000), and the lowest ones were found in Ceará (0.6/100,000), Rio Grande do Norte (0.7/100,000) and São Paulo (0.8/100,000)⁽¹⁰⁾. It is estimated that Manaus has 2,255,903 inhabitants, and that 51.21% of them are women⁽¹⁷⁾. By relating

them to the data from this study, the femicide rate in the municipality is approximately 4.4/100,000 women, which shows that Manaus has a high rate when compared to the states that lead the ranking of this problem. In the state of Amazonas, the femicide rate was 1.8 *per* 100,000 women in 2020⁽¹⁰⁾. The discrepancy between the femicide rates *per* 100,000 women found in Manaus (4.4/100,000) and those in Amazonas (1.8/100,000), the state of which it is the capital city and which concentrates nearly 58.3% of its total population, deserves attention. Among the hypotheses to understand these differences and the reduction in the number of cases, it is necessary to remember that the legislation on femicides in the country dates from 2015, but the data provided by the states depend on the progress made in the investigation and typification of gender-based violence in each of these states.

Another factor that may have influenced the discrepancies in the results was the COVID-19 pandemic period, when social distancing measures were implemented and some public services underwent adaptations to offer remote care. This may have impaired the evaluation and notification of domestic violence cases related to the death of women by intimate or former partners. There may have been certain concealment of motivations for the femicide crime, such as jealousy and non-acceptance of the end of the relationship, feelings of possession and violation of the woman's freedom^(5,18). In addition to that, the physical distancing measures, remote work and unemployment made it difficult for women to seek information and professional help to deal with intimate partner violence, or even to plan how to get out of this situation^(19,20).

On the other hand, in a study conducted in Mexico on crimes against women before and after the COVID-19 lockdown, it was found that there was a reduction in episodes of domestic violence against women, returning to previous levels shortly after. In turn, regarding femicide, the researchers observed that the rates remained stable during the lockdown period, decreasing by 20% in the post-lockdown period in Mexican states with higher rates of male job losses. However, this reduction was not statistically significant and showed an increase in the last months studied. The researchers also concluded that the towns where alcohol sales were prohibited were associated with greater declines in violence against women. Other factors during the pandemic period, related to the reduction in these crimes, were the fear of infection risks and the lower likelihood of victim-criminal matching⁽²¹⁾.

Most of the women (118 - 78.2%) included in this study were between 11 and 40 years old when they were killed. This finding corroborates other studies conducted in Brazil⁽¹¹⁻¹²⁾. Diverse information from 2020

of the Latin America and Caribbean Gender Equality Observatory from 18 countries reveals that femicide occurs throughout women's life cycle. However, there is higher occurrence during reproductive age, with more cases in the age group from 15 to 44 years old⁽²²⁾.

Regarding the "race/skin color" variable, brown skin was predominant (132 - 87.4%). Most of the female population in Manaus self-declares as brown-skinned, justifying the finding. National studies indicate that black-skinned and mixed-race women are more susceptible to being victims of femicide^(4,11-12). The 2020 Brazilian Public Security Yearbook also pointed out that, in 2019, 66.6% of the victims of femicide in Brazil were black-skinned and mixed-race women⁽¹⁰⁾. This population group is subjected to a situation of socioeconomic vulnerability that includes precarious housing, education and employment conditions. In addition to that, exposure to racism and its consequences exacerbate the risk of being victims of violence with injuries and death as results. Therefore, there is a need to implement intersectoral public policies to provide preventive and supportive assistance to this population segment^(10,12).

In relation to marital status, single women were the largest group of victims, as also indicated in the literature^(12,23). Single women can be victims of dating violence or in romantic and sexual relationships. This situation can make it difficult to report and notify these cases, and even to identify femicide, leading to its underestimation.

In this context, European studies⁽²⁴⁻²⁶⁾ that analyzed the intensity of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) against women in the escalation to femicide identified that, before the crime, only one-third of the victims had contacted the Police or another organization. Escalation to femicide is more likely in an intimate and affectionate relationship between the victim and the aggressor, with the aggressor being known to the victim. Thus, the longer and closer the relationship between them, the higher the risk of IPV ending in femicide and for the crime to be perpetrated in an extreme and severe way⁽²⁷⁾. In nearly 90% of the femicide cases in Brazil in 2019, the perpetrators were the victims' partners or former partners⁽⁹⁾.

The difficulty for a victim to separate from the perpetrator of violence before femicide occurs can be justified by the fear of breaking the family bond and their financial and emotional dependence on their partner. This can lead women to remain in a violent relationship that can result in femicide^(15,20,28).

Most of the victims in this study had incomplete or complete elementary schooling (87 - 57.6%). This condition was observed in the Northeast region⁽¹²⁾ and in the Brazilian context⁽¹⁰⁾, where 70.7% of the victims had only completed Elementary School, where only

7.3% had completed Higher Education. This is related to socioeconomic vulnerability, gender-based violence and femicide.

In the literature, a number of studies show that the schooling level is a factor that contributes to the reduction in the number of femicide cases. The higher the women's schooling level, the greater their access to information and opportunities for employment and income, resulting in economic independence and empowerment. Thus, it is reinforced that the prevention strategies for this type of violence need to prioritize educational policies^(4-5,10,12); this is also perceived from the victims' occupation before the crime, as a large part (94 - 62.3%) worked in low-paid or unpaid jobs (self-employed, house chores or unemployed).

It is important to highlight that a few decades ago, women's access to formal employment was extremely limited. Throughout the history of Brazil, at various times, the dominant male role has been imposed in an objective and symbolic way through the socialization of roles, meaning that women were expected to remain in the domestic (private) space, while men explored public spaces and assumed the role of head of the family and financial provider. This domination is naturalized and justified by biology and by the anatomical differences between the bodies, leading to a socially constructed variation between the genders and to a consequent social division of labor. Therefore, a near impossibility is established for women to exercise a truly structural change in their condition, given the way they are dominated⁽²⁹⁾. By being considered as some thing, or a part or less than someone else, women end up becoming invisible to the eyes of society and the State, which eases violations of their fundamental rights as human beings and citizens⁽³⁰⁾. These socially constructed differences reproduce inequality, discrimination and the structural subordination of women, who end up occupying subordinate and secondary positions.

True women's emancipation involves their liberation from all forms of exploitation, whether in the fields of economy, politics, sex or culture. Only economic emancipation may not be sufficient, as it is possible for the patriarchal system to continue to exist, leading to a series of consequences in the relationships between men and women. The International Women's Day celebrates the achievements towards gender equality, which have emerged from feminist struggles; as recent historical landmarks in Brazil include the promulgation of laws such as the following: Maria da Penha Law (Law No. 11,340/2006), Femicide Law (Law No. 13,104/2015), Female Sexual Harassment Law (Law No. 13,718/2018) and Political Violence against Women Law (Law No. 14,192/2021)^(6-7,31-32). Regarding the public policies, women have achieved advances in the sense that

actions are being launched for the female population with emphasis on programs to combat violence, promote health and provide incentives in the education, work, culture, tourism, sports, science and research, economy and innovation areas.

In turn, femicide has a common root in the subordination and oppression occupied by women in the hierarchy of social roles⁽⁵⁾. On the other hand, women in situations of violence may present higher rates of absenteeism and work delays, leading to reduced productivity. Like a vicious cycle, these situations interfere with their professional activities, rendering them more vulnerable and financially dependent, thus compromising their autonomy⁽⁴⁾. Therefore, low schooling, income inequality and gender inequality are factors that predispose to violence^(27,33-35).

On the other hand, men and women are affected by violence in different ways. While men tend to be victims of violence predominantly perpetrated in public spaces, women suffer every day from a phenomenon that manifests itself within their own homes, in private spaces, mostly perpetrated by their partners or former partners^(8,10). This study found that 75 (49.7%) of the femicides happened at the victims' homes. Latin American studies show that women living in urban areas are more likely to suffer from domestic violence and to be victims of femicide in intimate relationships^(18,36).

There was a higher concentration of records in the North and East of Manaus, with 78 (71.6%) occurrences. These areas present the highest violence and homicide rates in general, due to the high number of invasions (houses not authorized by the City Hall), appropriation of neighborhoods by criminal factions, and easy access to firearms⁽³⁷⁾.

Nearly half of the studied femicides were during the night (80 - 53%), corroborating the findings of the 2021 Brazilian Public Security Yearbook⁽¹⁰⁾. At night, people are generally gathered at home or attending social or casual events or parties. On these occasions, there may be higher consumption of alcoholic beverages and other psychoactive substances that are directly related to the emergence of conflicts that can lead to situations of domestic violence between partners or former partners, culminating in femicides. In addition to that, days off from work, school and other activities tend to concentrate on weekends, sometimes extended, which may justify the finding of 99 (65.5%) occurrences between the end and beginning of the week (Saturday, Sunday, Monday and Tuesday).

In this research, firearm use was the main cause of death in femicides with 71 (47%) cases, followed by melee weapons with 35 (23.3%) cases, corroborating findings from the literature^(4,11-12,38). However, data from the 2019 and 2020 Brazilian Public Security Yearbooks⁽⁹⁻¹⁰⁾

show the prevalence of melee weapons, especially blunt or sharp objects such as knives, scissors, pocket knives and pieces of wood. Melee weapons were used in 53.6% and 55.1% of the femicides perpetrated in the country in 2019 and 2020, respectively, whereas firearms were employed in 26.9% (2019) and 26.1% (2020) of the cases. It is to be noted that the differences in the data regarding the means employed for the femicides are due to the sources consulted in each cited reference. Some sources used health data, such as the SIM and the SINAN, while others resorted to data from the Public Security Department. Despite the divergence regarding the means causing the deaths, the study results and the references cited emphasize the relevance of public policies for the control of both firearms and melee weapons^(4,24-25,27). It is also understood that loosening access to firearms can lead to an increase in femicides^(10,16).

The house was the locus for most of the crimes, with 75 (49.7%) episodes, which confirms findings from other studies^(11,24-25). In 2019, nearly 59% of the femicides were in the home setting⁽⁹⁾. A subsequent national survey also showed that women are killed more frequently at their homes, and that this condition is fundamental for measuring femicide cases⁽¹⁰⁾. The aggressors may prefer to act in this environment because, generally, they are alone with the victim and feel more secure in consolidating the act, reducing the possibility of the woman asking for help or escaping from the imminent situation of death.

The records showed that 75 (49.7%) crimes and 57 (37.7%) deaths occurred at the victims' homes, and that 53 (35%) crimes and 44 (29.1%) deaths were on public roads (Figure 2). According to the data presented, the crime scene was not the same as the place of death. It is possible that some victims were taken to health care facilities or other locations where they later died.

Among the limitations of this study, we highlight that 139 deaths were excluded because they did not meet the criteria for possible femicides at the data collection moment, as they were under investigation or for not having an outcome. Another limitation was the absence of records for some of the variables under study (occupation, time of day, underlying cause of death, crime scene, and place of death). In addition to that, in only 19 (12.6%) of the cases studied it was possible to find some information related to the perpetrator of the femicides, although without any mention of what motivated them to commit the crime.

Conclusion

Despite the knowledge already produced about femicide, conducting research on the topic is a challenge, especially in the search for reliable data. The recording systems of the health and public security sectors have

gaps, especially in qualifying the crime and identifying and characterizing the perpetrators and their motivations. Therefore, there is a risk of underestimating the number of femicides and the profile of both victims and aggressors. However, this study was able to show findings that corroborate the scientific literature and the data presented in health and public security sector statistics.

The characterization of the profile of women victims of femicide in a Brazilian municipality over a three-year period produced a reliable database that can serve as a source for conducting studies on the topic. The study contributed with diverse information that can encourage and guide the implementation of public policies to prevent and confront the problem.

The results of this research serve as a source of information and contribute to advancing knowledge about femicide in the health, social assistance and legal sectors. Using punitive measures to fight against this type of crime does not seem to be sufficient to reduce its prevalence. With the data from this study, it was possible to suggest strategies to address socio-economic-cultural issues related to the gender perspective and vulnerability. It is necessary to facilitate and encourage women to pursue educational opportunities and job opportunities. It is also important to devise policies to control lethal weapons (firearms and others). Joint, interdisciplinary and intersectoral actions can establish conditions to protect women from this type of crime. The best start to achieve success in this regard is not tolerating any form of violence.

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