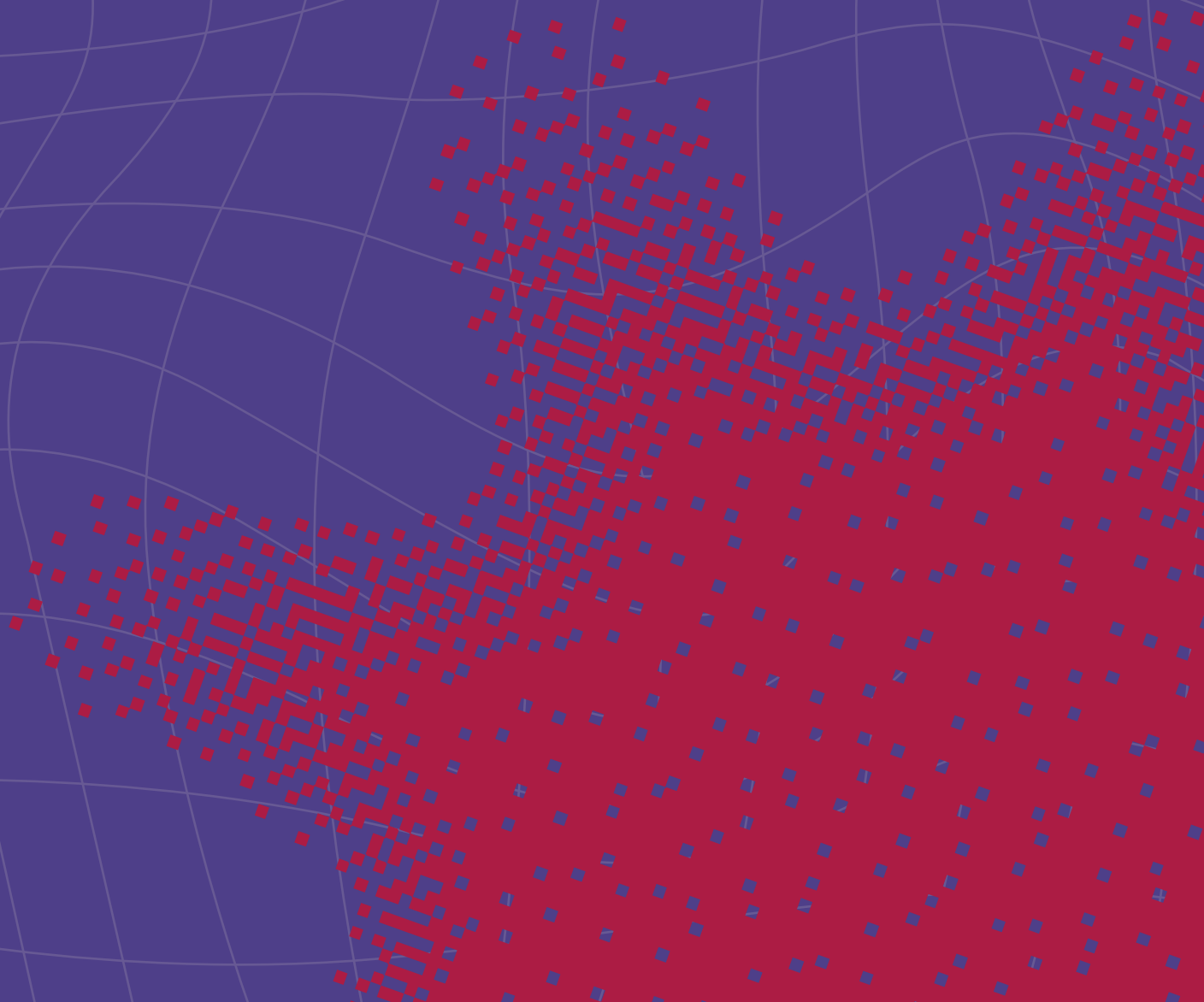


CHAPTER 1

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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“Every violent death is preventable, and it is our collective moral responsibility to achieve this goal. Building on Sustainable Development Goal 16.1, I invite each Member State to consider the ambitious target of halving violent death rates in their societies by 2030.”

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres
New Agenda for Peace

About the study

With Goal 16 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Member States committed to significantly reducing all forms of violence and related death rates. However, as United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres underscored in the 2023 *New Agenda for Peace* policy brief, the scourge of violence has continued to shape the lives and livelihoods of people, and not just of those in armed conflicts.

To support Member States and the international community in efforts to prevent violence and strengthen responses, the UNODC *Global Study on Homicide* offers a comprehensive examination of intentional homicide trends and patterns around the world and analyses the complex dynamics behind the numbers. The study delves into different aspects of homicide, including the extent of intentional homicide in absolute numbers and rates. It highlights regional and subregional trends, demographics, age and gender profiles of victims. It also explores the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on homicide trends. Chapter 4 analyses different dimensions of homicides related to criminal activities, interpersonal homicides and sociopolitically motivated homicides. An expanded special section looks at how organized crime is driving homicide trends in Latin America and the Caribbean.

In addition, the study considers the impacts of megatrends such as climate change, demographic changes, inequality, urbanization and technological shifts, with the aim of providing insights into how larger global developments may intersect with and influence homicide rates. The study also examines the criminal justice system's response to intentional homicide, seeking to identify areas for improvement and intervention.

2021 and 2022: a spike and differing regional developments

The global estimate for intentional homicides in 2021 is approximately 458,000 victims, averaging 52 individuals per hour. Despite the consistent stability in the global count of homicides over the past two decades, with the absolute number of homicides fluctuating between approximately 400,000 and 450,000 victims annually, the year 2021 stood out as exceptionally lethal.

During that year, the African continent recorded the highest number of intentional homicides, with an estimated 176,000 victims, followed by the Americas with over 154,000 victims. Asia reported 109,000 intentional homicides, while Europe had 17,000 and Oceania 1,000.

Turning away from absolute numbers to homicide rates per 100,000 population, the Americas faced a higher risk of intentional killings than any other region, with an estimated rate of 15.0 homicide victims per 100,000 population, surpassing rates in Africa (12.7), Oceania (2.9), Asia (2.3) and Europe (2.2).

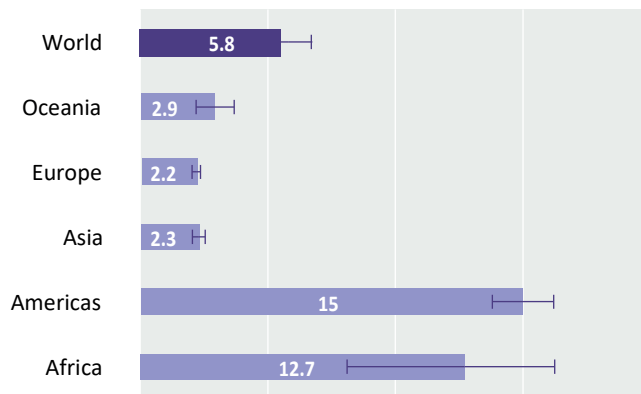
In terms of global distribution, Africa accounted for 38 per cent of all homicide victims in 2021, the Americas for 34 per cent, Asia for 24 per cent, Europe for 4 per cent and Oceania for less than 1 per cent. Notably, Brazil and Nigeria, which constitute only 6 per cent of the world population, contributed to 20 per cent of the global homicide toll. The top 10 countries with the highest absolute numbers of homicide victims collectively represented 58 per cent of global victims, despite constituting only 37 per cent of the global population.

The rise in homicide numbers in 2021 can be attributed to various factors. While the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on intentional homicides varied across countries and regions in 2020, the increase observed in 2021 can be partly linked to the economic repercussions of COVID-19-related restrictions. A rise in gang-related and sociopolitical violence also contributed to the escalation in several countries.

Available 2022 data show decreases in some subregions. For example, in Northern America, recent estimates suggest a 5.4 per cent decrease in homicides from 2021 to 2022. This decrease comes in the context of an increasing homicide rate over the past decade and recent surge in homicides in the United States of America.

Meanwhile, several countries in the Caribbean experienced a significant increase in homicidal violence in 2021 and

FIG. 1 Homicide rate (victims of intentional homicide per 100,000 population), by region, 2021



Source: Estimates based on UNODC homicide statistics.

Note: Uncertainty bands represent possible estimation errors due to the imputation of missing values at the country level. The bands do not represent probability confidence intervals. The estimates are based on the latest available data, which remain limited, especially in Africa and Asia. The size of the error bars provides an indication of the level of uncertainty that the estimates carry at the regional level.

2022, linked to crime and trafficking, access to firearms and ammunition and the expansion and fragmentation of gangs seeking to control territory.

Estimates indicate that Africa had the highest absolute number of homicides of any region in 2021, and available data suggest that the homicide rate is not falling, even as decreases have been registered in other regions. Furthermore, projections suggest that Africa – which will continue to have the youngest population in the world, the highest number of hot days and persisting inequality gaps – will remain particularly vulnerable to homicide.

Methodology

Global and regional estimates are based on the updated UNODC homicide statistics dataset, which draws on national data submitted to UNODC by Member States through the annual United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems (UN-CTS), along with other pertinent data sources. The estimates are produced based on available national data and through a statistical model imputing missing values at the country level.

The study adheres to the definition of intentional homicides outlined by the International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes (ICCS). According to the ICCS, intentional homicide is defined as the "unlawful death inflicted upon a person with the intent to cause death or serious injury." This classification encompasses various forms of intentional killings, including murder, honour killing, fatal serious assaults, deaths resulting from terrorist activities, femicide, infanticide and extrajudicial killings.

Trends over time – by region

The global trend in the homicide rate conceals substantial differences and disparities at the regional level, just as regional trends in the homicide rate obscure variations within subregions and between countries.

Since the early 1990s, homicide rates in the subregions of **Europe** have generally stayed below the global average. In Western Europe, the highest national homicide rate in 2021 (France) was approximately double the lowest (Switzerland). In Northern Europe, the highest rate (Latvia) was seven times greater than the lowest (Ireland), resembling the disparities observed in Central America, albeit at a considerably lower level. In Eastern Europe, the highest national homicide rate (Russian Federation) was 15 times higher than the lowest (Czechia), surpassing the disparity seen in the Caribbean.

Meanwhile, as Europe has seen a modest decline in its homicide rate over the past decade, **the Americas** have experienced greater fluctuations, including significant decreases since 2017. Nonetheless, by 2021 the homicide rate in the Americas remained over six times higher than that in Europe.

Over the past decade, trends in the homicide rate within the Americas have been diverging among subregions. In South America, the homicide rate has experienced a downward trend since 2017. This decline is primarily driven by a reduction in the annual number of homicides recorded in Brazil, the most populous country in the subregion. Brazil's homicides decreased from a peak of over 63,000 in 2017 to less than 46,000 in 2021. Peru and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela have also seen a decline in annual homicides in recent years. However, in contrast, countries like Colombia and Ecuador experienced considerable increases in homicidal violence between the end of 2020 and the end of 2021.

In Central America, several countries historically associated with high homicide rates registered sharp declines, while others experienced increasing lethal violence. The national homicide trend in Mexico, which accounted for roughly 77 per cent of all homicide victims in the subregion in 2021, has driven the subregional trend over the past decade. Several smaller countries in the subregion, such as Honduras, Belize, Panama and El Salvador experienced reductions in homicidal violence in the wake of aggressive anti-gang interventions. By contrast, Costa Rica experienced a slight increase in homicide rates between 2019 and 2022.

Northern America has witnessed an uptick in the homicide rate over the past decade, particularly since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, with lockdown measures, changes in police-community relations and record gun sales in the United States cited as contributing factors. Following a nearly 30 per cent increase in homicides in the United States from the end of 2019 to the end of 2020, and a smaller rise of around 6 per cent in 2021, recent estimates based on the National Incident-Based Reporting System and the Summary Reporting System indicate a nationwide decrease in homicides by 6.1 per cent from 2021 to 2022. In Canada, the annual number of homicides has been steadily increasing since 2013. With a homicide rate of 2.1 per 100,000 population in 2021, Canada's rate remains over three times lower than that of the United States.

In **Africa**, the trend in the homicide rate has the greatest uncertainty due to limited time series availability. Based on available data, the region recorded a significant increase in homicides in 2021, which can be partially attributed to trends in Kenya and South Africa that may be linked to pandemic-related stressors such as unemployment. In South Africa, there were around 5,000 additional homicide

victims from 2020 to 2021, with a total of nearly 25,000, representing the largest absolute increase in Africa that year. Homicide figures in South Africa continued to climb in 2022, rising 8 per cent over the previous year and surpassing pre-pandemic levels by approximately 28 per cent. By contrast, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania observed reductions in homicidal violence, while in Northern Africa, Algeria and Morocco showed a steady increase in homicide rates over the past decade, albeit at significantly lower levels than other subregions in Africa.

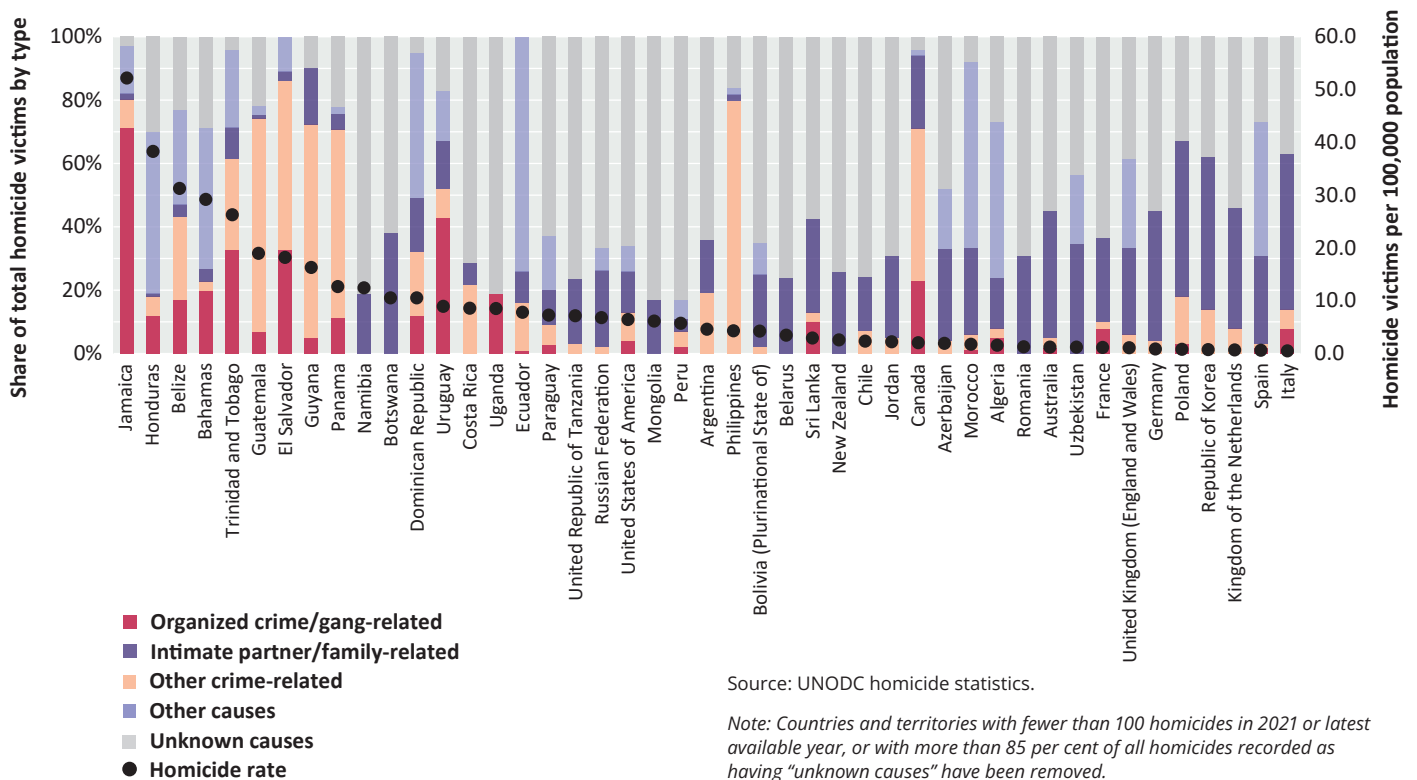
In **Asia**, subregional trends reveal different patterns, with Central Asia experiencing a significant decrease in the homicide rate, attributed mostly to reduced homicides in Kazakhstan, while Western Asia's homicide rate has shown little improvement over the past decade, fluctuating at a relatively high level of roughly 5 per 100,000 population. A decline in Asia's overall homicide rate over the past decade was disrupted in 2021 by a sharp increase in killings, notably in Myanmar. Other populous countries in the region, like China, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand have reported reductions in annual homicides over the past decade, contributing to the region's general downward trend prior to 2021. The two most populous countries in Southern Asia, India and Pakistan, have both seen moderate increases in homicide rates since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, which contrasts with the previous longer-term trend of continuous decline. It should also be noted that important data gaps remain in Asia; for example, Viet Nam has not reported homicide data since 2011.

Meanwhile, in **Oceania**, the homicide rate has remained comparatively stable over the last ten years, except for a surge in 2019 in New Zealand due to the Christchurch Mosque shootings. Australia and New Zealand are the only countries in the subregion with reliable trend data.

Homicide deaths outnumber conflict-related and terrorist killings

Globally, intentional homicides contribute to a significantly higher number of deaths than conflict-related and terrorist killings combined. Between 2019 and 2021, an annual average of approximately 440,000 deaths resulted from intentional homicide; the annual average number of conflict-related deaths was 94,000, while the estimated annual average number of deaths attributed to terrorism during the same period was 22,000. This indicates that homicides accounted for approximately five times as many deaths as armed conflict and 20 times as many deaths as terrorism during the specified timeframe. Moreover, despite an increase of more than 95 per cent in the number of conflict deaths recorded from 2021 to 2022, which was primarily the result of escalating conflicts in various countries such as Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Mali, Somalia and Ukraine, available homicide data indicate

FIG. 2 Share of homicides by type, selected countries, 2021 or latest available year



that the global burden of homicide in 2022 was still double that of conflict deaths.

Recording statistics on violent deaths during large-scale conflicts is complicated, and disentangling lethal violence related to the conflict itself from homicidal violence by both combatants and non-combatants is often difficult. Additionally, distinguishing between typical combatant groups, organized crime entities and terrorist organizations, and between the deaths resulting from their violent actions, can pose further challenges.

Organized crime and trafficking can rapidly drive homicides up – or down

Nearly 40 per cent of global homicides are connected to crime, mainly organized crime and gang-related violence. From 2015 to 2021, organized crime caused around 700,000 deaths, comparable to casualties resulting from armed conflicts. While the majority of these deaths occurred in the Americas, organized-crime related homicides are prevalent worldwide.

In 2021, 8 of the 10 countries with the highest homicide rates in the world were in Latin America and the Caribbean. Persistently high levels of lethal violence in the region are attributed to complex dynamics relating to criminal groups competing for control over illegal markets, structural

issues like weak rule of law, social inequality and youth unemployment, and factors such as record-breaking drug production and firearms.

The surge in cocaine production since 2020 and the expansion of transnational criminal organizations have led to increased rates of lethal violence. One of the more concerning examples is Ecuador, which following years of relatively low homicide rates has seen a 407 per cent increase in homicides between 2016 and 2022, which can be attributed to intensifying violent competition among rival drug trafficking gangs.

While drug transshipment through the Caribbean is not new, the region has faced renewed challenges, with large-scale trafficking, including through the Dominican Republic, resurging due to rising European demand. The Caribbean has also seen a significant increase in the extent and intensity of gang violence. In 2022, the Turks and Caicos Islands reported 28 murders by 28 October, compared to 13 homicides for all of 2021. Jamaica's 2022 homicide rate reached 53.3 per 100,000, with around 70 per cent linked to organized criminal groups or gangs. Saint Lucia recorded a homicide rate of 36.7 per 100,000 in 2022, a slight decrease from the previous year, while Saint Vincent and the Grenadines reported 40.4 per 100,000. Trinidad and Tobago's rate rose to 39.5 per 100,000 in 2022, driven by the splintering of larger gangs into small violent factions, and the Bahamas reported a rate of 31.2 per 100,000.

Haiti's 2022 homicide rate surged to 18.0 per 100,000, a 35 per cent increase from 2021, mainly due to soaring gang violence.

In contrast to the Caribbean, some Central American countries, including Honduras and El Salvador, have seen stabilizing or declining homicide rates. Notably, Costa Rica deviated from this trend, with an increase in homicides to 12.8 per 100,000 in 2022 due to organized crime groups vying for control of the port of Limón, a key node for trafficking to Europe.

In South America, homicide trends varied, with countries known for high rates witnessing declines and those with historically low violence experiencing increases. Colombia saw a slight drop from 25.7 per 100,000 in 2021 to 25.4 per 100,000 in 2022, after a notable increase a year earlier with higher rates in areas where armed groups like ex-Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) and Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) were active. Brazil's rate remained steady at 21.3 per 100,000 in 2021, the second lowest since 2000, but violence persisted in the northeast and north due to tensions between drug factions. Argentina reported a rate of 4.3 per 100,000 in 2022, a slight decline from 4.6 per 100,000 in 2021, while areas including Santa Fe province and the city of Rosario in particular experienced a surge in homicides, also attributed to rivalries between local drug factions.

However, the presence of organized crime does not always lead to high rates of homicidal violence. While Latin Amer-

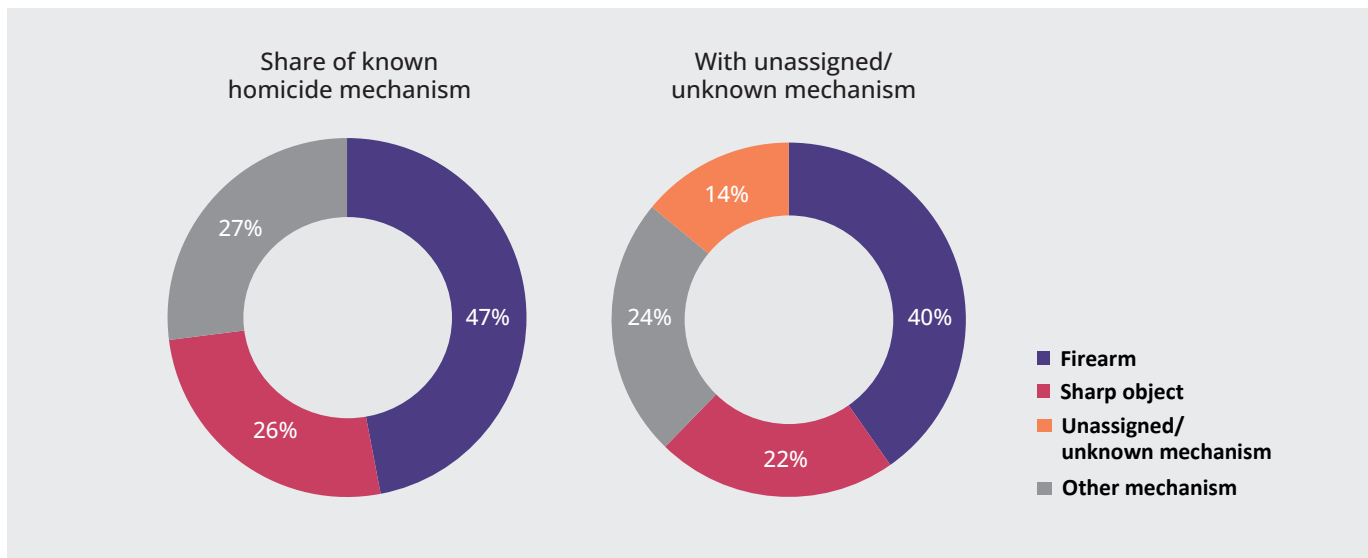
ica, the Caribbean and certain African countries often show higher organized crime-related homicide shares, some regions like Asia and Europe have lower shares. Lower levels of organized crime-related homicide do not necessarily indicate less organized crime presence but rather could be the outcome of different “management” approaches. For instance, Southeast European countries on the Balkan Route, a major heroin trafficking corridor, do not exhibit high homicide rates.

Organized crime groups in Asia, like the Japanese Yakuza, are prominent but national homicide rates remain low (e.g., 0.23 per 100,000 in Japan in 2021). Dominant criminal groups can influence violent crime by controlling territory and markets. For example, in Brazil's São Paulo, areas dominated by the Primeiro Comando da Capital experienced fewer violent crimes. And in Mexico an analysis of municipal-level data indicates that a very high presence of organized crime has led to lower levels of homicide.

Firearms linked to increases in homicide

High rates of lethal violence in Latin America and the Caribbean are significantly influenced by access to and misuse of firearms. Unlike bladed weapons and blunt objects, firearms escalate the speed and scale of intentional and unintentional homicides. The key determinant is not merely the availability of firearms, such as ownership, but rather encompasses weak oversight and control and

FIG. 3 Global shares of homicides by type of mechanism, including unassigned/unknown mechanism, and by type of known mechanism, 2021



Source: Estimates based on UNODC homicide statistics.

Note: The shares without an unassigned/unknown mechanism are based on the assumption that the distribution of homicides with an assigned mechanism is representative of the ones with unassigned/unknown mechanism.

associated impunity. Criminal factions often procure and misuse handguns as well as semi- and automatic rifles, amplifying disputes. Studies from Belize, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago reveal varied motives for obtaining illicit firearms, including personal protection, peer pressure, criminal activities and financial considerations. Organized criminal groups acquire firearms through diverse means, including domestic sources, private dealers, black markets or diversion from law enforcement and military stocks. Firearms in the Americas are also frequently sourced from foreign countries, particularly North America and Western Europe, through legal and illegal channels. The “iron” pipeline involving networks from the United States to the Caribbean, Central America and South American countries is a focus of growing attention, as highlighted in a 2023 “War on Guns” declaration from heads of government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

Latin American and Caribbean countries record the highest proportion of gun-related homicides globally. In 2021, there were at least 89,100 gun-related homicide victims in the region, with specific rates per 100,000 of 9.3, 16.9, and 12.7 per 100,000 in the Caribbean, Central America and South America, respectively. The use of firearms in homicides ranged from 67 per cent in the Caribbean to 70 per cent in South America in 2021. The association between higher firearm use and increased homicide rates is evident, underscoring the role of firearms in the region's elevated levels of violence.

Firearms are also an enabler of crime and violence in the Sahel, where a vicious cycle of firearms trafficking and conflict is evident. In Nigeria, firearms were the most prevalent mechanism of killing in 2016 and 2019, the only years for which data are available, accounting for some 47 and 40 per cent of all homicides respectively in those years. Firearms are not the most prevalent homicide mechanism in Europe, only accounting for approximately 12 per cent of recorded homicides. However, the region has recently experienced an increase in lethal violence linked to organized criminal groups, attributed to increased drug production in South America and increased trafficking to supply European consumers. Certain geographies, particularly areas with prolific drug markets, are highlighted as at-risk areas by law enforcement, notably including coastal cities like Antwerp, Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Hamburg, which serve as transit hubs for drug trafficking. The increasing visibility of acts of violence, including torture, has raised concerns about the strategic threat of violent organized crime in the European Union.

Sweden has experienced unprecedented levels of gang violence and firearm-related deaths in recent years. There were 391 shootings in Sweden, 63 of which were fatal in 2022. The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention reported that Sweden had among the highest levels of firearm-related deaths in a study of over 20 European

countries. Although research connects the increase in gun-related violence to conflicts related to illegal drug markets and criminal gangs, uncertainties persist about the extent of organized crime's involvement in Swedish homicides, and the country does not provide official data to UNODC on this matter.

Gender dimensions of homicide

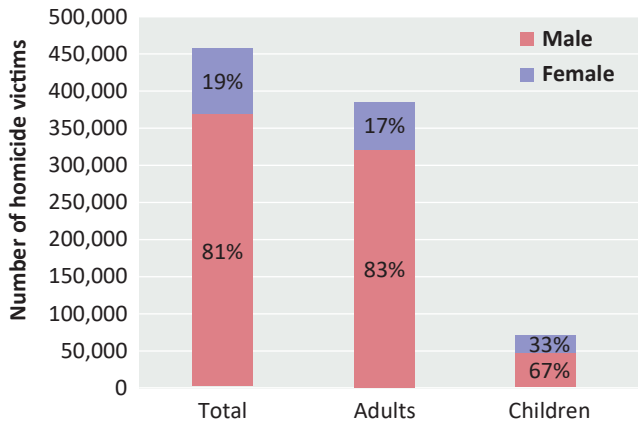
Gender and age serve as reliable indicators of the potential risk of homicide, with young males showing a higher risk compared to other demographic groups. In countries with high homicide rates, such as Brazil, Colombia, Jamaica and Nigeria, male victims significantly outnumber females. In contrast, in countries with low homicide rates like China, Germany, Japan, the Republic of Korea and Switzerland, males and females share a more evenly distributed risk of homicide.

In 2021, most global homicides (81 per cent) targeted men and boys, with women and girls comprising a significantly smaller share (19 per cent). However, women and girls are disproportionately affected by homicide perpetrated by intimate partners or family members, which accounts for 56 per cent of all female homicide victims. This highlights the home as the most dangerous place for women and girls. Moreover, 40 per cent of female homicide cases lack information on the victim-perpetrator relationship, potentially indicating that homicide by family members or intimate partners is responsible for still more victims.

Conversely, men and boys are more at risk of being killed by someone outside their family, with only about 11 per cent of male homicide victims in 2021 killed by intimate partners or family members, and with similar uncertainties in cases without information on the victim-perpetrator relationship. That women are disproportionately affected by homicidal violence in the family is a pattern observed in all world regions. However, in regions with lower overall intentional homicide rates, including both familial and non-familial violence, such as Europe and Asia, the proportion of male homicides related to family violence is higher, nearing 20 per cent. In contrast, in regions with very high levels of homicidal violence, like Africa, the share decreases to below 10 per cent.

Research indicates that intentional killings of young children are predominantly committed by family members, linked to gender stereotypes, family violence and parental mental health issues. As children age, the risk shifts to non-family-related homicide, especially for young men in the Americas facing organized crime and gang violence. Globally, children below the age of 18 represent over 15 per cent of homicide victims (around 71,600 in 2021), with males comprising over two-thirds of child homicide victims.

FIG. 4 Global number and share of male and female homicide victims among adults and children, 2021



Source: UNODC homicide statistics.

The gender disparity in child homicide rates increases with age: there tends to be parity in the homicide rate among male and female child victims aged 0-9 years, while in older age groups males become significantly more likely than females to fall victim to homicide. Domestic violence tends to affect male and female young children similarly, while among older children, more exposed to non-domestic homicide risks, young males exhibit higher vulnerability.

Interpersonal violence outside the family

Interpersonal homicide outside the family is challenging to systematically quantify due to limited information on the victim-perpetrator relationship and situational context. Instances can arise in communities facing threats to livelihoods, resulting in strained relations. Land disputes, often driven by insecure land tenure, can also contribute to violence.

In the North Rift counties of Kenya, deaths from cattle rustling surged by 170 per cent from 2020 to 2021 among pastoralist communities facing increased competition due to droughts. In India, disputes over property or land constitute 16 per cent of interpersonal murders, spanning various sectors and involving both common and private lands.

Water access disputes, exacerbated by population growth, economic expansion and climate change, have led to increased violence. Data from the non-governmental organization The Pacific Institute indicate a significant increase in incidents of violence linked to water resources since 2015, with most of these events reported in Southern Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa and Central America. While systematic global data

on homicides from such disputes are lacking, specific country data reveal significant concerns, including over 1,700 violent deaths in Nigeria in 2018 due to conflicts between farmers and pastoralists over water and land. In India, almost 300 interpersonal murders from 2019 to 2021 are attributed to water-related conflicts.

“Defenders” at risk

Sociopolitical homicide encompasses killings by terrorist groups and targeted assassinations of individuals, including human rights defenders, environmental advocates, community leaders, journalists and humanitarian aid workers. Global data on this type of homicide are limited, with less than 20 per cent of countries reporting to UNODC through the UN-CTS. However, in countries experiencing political instability, sociopolitical homicides may constitute a significant proportion of total homicides, as seen in Nigeria and Mali. Human rights defenders are particularly vulnerable to sociopolitical killings, making them one of the groups most at risk.

Humanitarian aid workers face significant dangers and threats in their work, including kidnappings, injuries and deaths. Data from the Aid Worker Security Database show that annual aid worker casualties had been on a downward trend since 2017, but the total number of fatalities from 2017 to 2022 was higher than the period from 2010 to 2016. While outside the period covered in this report, 2023 saw the largest number of United Nations aid workers killed – 100 people - in any conflict in the history of the organization, with the start of hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel in October 2023 until 12 November 2023. In the years 2021-2022, the majority (63 per cent) of killings of aid workers occurred in South Sudan, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Somalia and Ethiopia, with these numbers significantly surpassing those of the previous three years. In 2022, Ukraine also witnessed a notable number of lethal attacks on aid workers. The attacks vary in context but are often politically motivated, with a majority of victims being national staff. Shooting was the most common method used in lethal attacks in 2021, accounting for 69 per cent of cases, followed by airstrikes and shelling at 9 per cent.

Data on homicides of environmental defenders is predominantly sourced from Global Witness, a non-governmental organization that has been estimating such incidents globally since 2012, based on searches in national and international databases, media sources and reaching out to local organizations in the relevant countries. This method has limitations, potentially leading to an underreporting of homicides and geographic bias due to reliance on media and civil society reporting. According to Global Witness, there have been 1,733 killings of environmental defenders globally since 2012, with 39 per cent involving indigenous persons and 11 per cent women. The Americas account

for 68 per cent of these homicides, followed by Asia (25 per cent), Africa (6 per cent) and Europe/Oceania (less than 1 per cent).

UNESCO's indicator 16.10.1 under SDG 16 monitors cases of harm to journalists. Between 2018 and 2022, killings of journalists were 25 per cent lower on average compared to the preceding five years, with 2021 marking the lowest toll since 2008. Spikes in killings, notably in 2022, were linked to conflicts in Ukraine and reporting on crime, corruption and violence in Mexico and Haiti. Male journalists accounted for over 90 per cent of victims. Latin America, the Caribbean and Asia have seen the highest average number of journalist killings since 2015. Notably, Northern Africa and Western Asia experienced a decline in journalist deaths since 2015 due to reduced armed conflicts.

Warning signs: SDG target to halve violence will not be met if trends continue

The homicide rate is a crucial indicator agreed by Member States for measuring progress towards target 16.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals to significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere. In a more "optimistic" scenario, considering 2021 as an exceptional year with no influence on future trends, projections of homicide rates to 2030 suggest a global rate of around 4.6 per 100,000 population by 2030 – a modest 23 per cent decrease compared to the 2015 rate of 5.9 per 100,000 population. This falls well short of the SDG target, which has been interpreted to mean a minimum 50 per cent reduction in the homicide rate by 2030.

Based on historical trends, the downward movement in the global homicide rate is projected to continue until at least 2030. Nonetheless, this study reveals numerous factors and megatrends that could impede the projections of historical trends. The narrative is complex – for example, continued population growth may lead to an absolute increase in the number of homicides by 2030 despite declining rates. Moreover, when analysing a spectrum of demographic, socioeconomic and climate-related factors, it is plausible that homicide rates might escalate in specific regions, such as Africa, or Southern Asia. This contrasts with potential declines in other parts of the world. Nevertheless, there are justifications for anticipating a general decrease in homicide rates by the year 2100.

The future landscape of homicide will be influenced by factors such as increased life expectancy, declining fertility rates, shifting urbanization patterns and evolving socioeconomic dynamics. These megatrends are bound to affect different regions in the world in various ways. Regions considered "hot spots" for violence, like Latin

America and the Caribbean, may become less at risk compared to areas in Sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia undergoing major transitions. The impact of accelerating technological transformation, social media exposure, job automation and climate shocks on homicidal violence is hard to predict. An analysis of the potential effects of climate change, change in age structure and inequality on homicide rates until 2100 in this study highlights Africa as the most vulnerable region, thanks to a growing proportion of young people (15-29) which is expected to increase until 2035, slower reductions in inequality and a concentration of climate-related shocks and stresses combined with weaker response capacities.

Criminal justice responses to homicide

Globally, data from 82 countries in 2021 reveal that there are four persons convicted for every 10 intentional homicide victims. Regional variations persist where data are available, with eight persons convicted in countries of Europe, fewer than two in countries of the Americas, and almost six for the same number of victims in countries of Asia. These patterns, consistent over the years, suggest chronic impunity in the Americas compared to other regions, although differences across countries and the possibility of one perpetrator killing multiple victims or one victim being killed by multiple individuals should also be taken into account.

Although the number of suspects brought into formal contact with the police has remained stable, there was a slight decrease in the average rate of suspects brought into formal contact with the police for intentional homicide in countries with available data for 2021, particularly in the Americas.

In 91 countries with data for 2021 or a recent year, an average of 4.1 persons were prosecuted for intentional homicide per 100,000 population compared to 3.3 victims, with countries in the Americas with data prosecuting 17 persons per 100,000, and countries with data in Europe prosecuting only 2.7 per 100,000. Globally, the number of persons prosecuted remained relatively stable, and during the COVID-19 pandemic, there was no significant drop – in fact, some countries even experienced an uptick in prosecutions. Notable exceptions include El Salvador, which saw a 57 per cent decline in prosecutions for intentional homicide in 2021 compared to 2018, potentially influenced by changes in the legal landscape and the impact of measures to combat gang-related crime.

Some Latin American and Caribbean countries, grappling with rising violent crime, are resorting to "states of emergency", deploying the military alongside law enforcement and engaging citizens in crime control, and in some cases

raising concerns about potential excessive use of force and human rights violations. Anti-crime measures as well as changes in criminal groups – splintering or consolidating control – can influence levels of violence, underscoring the complex relationship between state actions and crime dynamics.

In countries primarily in Europe, data for the years 2017-2021 show fluctuations in the number of convictions for intentional homicides. While there were decreases in convictions in 2019 and 2020, a majority of these countries reported an increasing or stable number of convictions in 2021. This trend is observed not only for intentional homicides but also for other crimes like rape and drug trafficking. Despite a slight increase in 2021, there was an average of 20 per cent fewer convictions for intentional homicide in countries with data than in 2018.

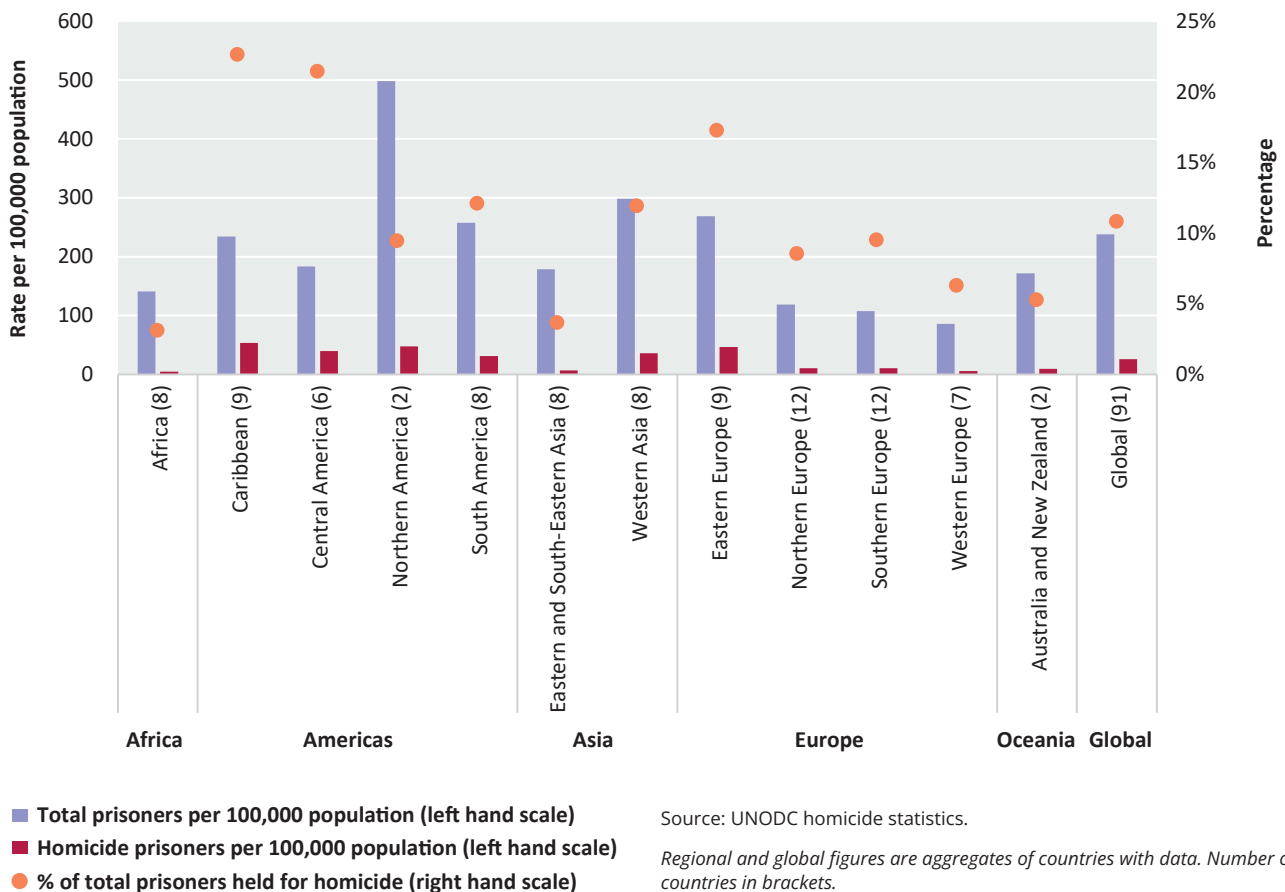
To evaluate the state's response to violence, understanding the progression of cases through the criminal justice system — arrest, prosecution, conviction and detention — is crucial. Attrition occurs as cases and suspects decrease at each stage due to various reasons, such as lack of evidence

or witnesses. Measuring individuals at each stage requires data from multiple agencies, presenting challenges like discrepancies and statistical gaps.

Notwithstanding these obstacles, tracking arrests, prosecutions and convictions compared to the number of victims offers valuable insights into the criminal justice system's effectiveness and resource needs. High attrition at the prosecution stage may indicate a need for more resources or training. Homicides without arrests, prosecutions or convictions contribute to impunity, potentially reflecting weak rule of law or challenges in solving cases involving certain types of homicides, such as those linked to organized crime. High homicide rates may strain law enforcement capacities, hindering effective investigation and processing of cases.

The persistence of stable or increasing numbers of intentional homicides and prosecutions, coupled with decreasing convictions, may suggest a backlog of pre-trial detainees for intentional homicide, emphasizing the need to address related challenges and uphold the principles of the rule of law and equal access to justice.

FIG. 5 Rate of prisoners detained per 100,000 population, rate of prisoners detained for homicide per 100,000 population and percentage of prisoners convicted of homicide, as a percentage of total prisoners, in selected regions and countries, 2021 or latest year available



Based on data from 91 countries, 11 per cent of the prison population is sentenced for intentional homicide, with significant regional variation. In the Americas, particularly in the Caribbean and Central America, the number of homicide prisoners exceeds the global average. Northern America, with a high total prison population, has 47 homicide prisoners per 100,000 population. In Europe, Eastern European countries have higher rates of both total prisoners and homicide prisoners per 100,000 population compared to other subregions. Australia and New Zealand have a similar number of homicide prisoners per capita as Northern, Southern and Western Europe, but a higher rate of total prisoners, resulting in a lower share of prisoners held for homicide. In Western Asia, the number of homicide prisoners per 100,000 population is higher than the global average, with a share of persons held for homicide out of all prisoners of 12 per cent. Limited data in other regions hinders drawing conclusive comparisons. Globally, there were more than 11 million persons incarcerated in 2021. This would indicate that there could be more than 1 million persons in prison for intentional homicide in the world.

