



Femicide in Turin between 1970 and 2012

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Introduction

In the 1960s, gender concept and female role developed highlighting sexual inequalities in the relationship between males and females. These inequalities resulted from the position that women historically (o throughout history) had relative to males leading roles in family and society. In patriarchal families of the nineteenth century, even when a woman had a job, there was an indisputable male leading role; legally, husbands had for a long time a huge decision-making right over their wives and their children and women only got the right to vote after the Second World War; until the last decades of the twentieth century, women did not get a fair salary at work because society did not believe in a complete female independence. With this in mind, there was a need to identify the violence perpetrated by men against women in order to gain awareness of the phenomenon. In 1990, Diana Russell coined the term "femicide" to describe the murder of a woman by a man, because she is a woman, following his aggressive, misogynous or discriminatory behaviors.

In this study, we analyze the features of murders involving males as perpetrators and females as victims, occurred in Turin between 1970 and 2012. Our goal is to determine whether the law and cultural changes that took place in Italy during that period had an impact on the rate of these crimes. In addition to this, victims' features and characteristics of femicides will be taken into consideration as secondary aims.

Materials and Methods

The archives of the Institute of Legal Medicine and those of the Central Morgue of Turin were examined together with the stories reported in local newspapers to better understand the circumstances in which such crimes occurred. Information collected was classified according to the following criteria: where crimes took place, weapons used, details about the perpetrators (including their motivations), victims' ages and nationalities. Furthermore, crimes were also divided into femicides and homicides to compare the two categories.

Results and Discussion

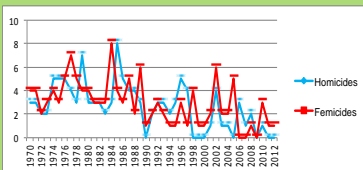


Figure 1. Comparison between femicides and homicides, on an annual basis

Decade	Homicide	%	Femicide	%	Total
1970-1979	39	48.75	41	51.25	80
1980-1989	38	48.1	41	51.9	79
1990-1999	22	53.65	19	46.35	41
2000-2009	13	40.62	19	59.38	32
2010-2012	1	16.66	5	83.34	6
	113	47.47	125	52.53	238

Table 1. Number of events and relative percentage in each category, stratified by decade

According to our findings, femicides were more frequent than homicides (125 compared to 113 cases); the rate of violent deaths decreased over time and moreover, for femicides in particular, their frequency seems to have decreased getting pretty near to zero in the period from 2006 to 2009 and then increasing again during the last three years considered in this study (Figure 1). Furthermore, considering an aggregation of cases by decades, alongside a constant reduction of homicides, it is evident that the number of femicides has remained the same in the last 20 years (Table 1).

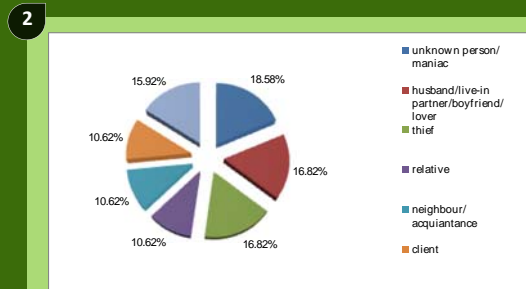


Figure 2. Homicide's perpetrator

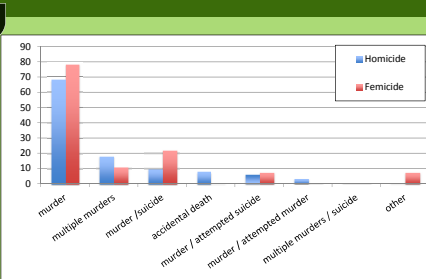


Figure 4. Classification of homicides and femicides

A little more than 60% of both homicides and femicides had a woman as the sole victim; but, whereas the second typology of homicide is multiple homicide (15,93%), with femicide murder-suicide is the second most frequent kind, observed in 17,6% of the examples (Figure 4).

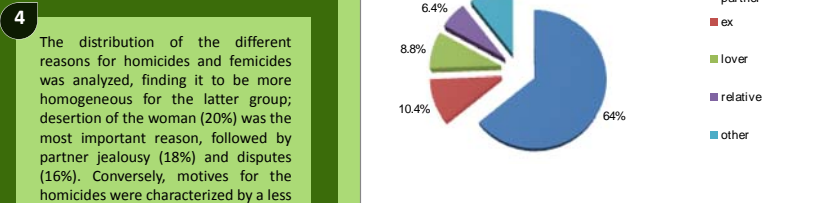


Figure 3. Femicide's perpetrator

As for the perpetrator with homicide, an homogeneous distribution was observed between six typologies such as stranger, husband or boyfriend, relative, thief, neighbour and client (Figure 2). Instead, regarding the perpetrators of femicides a clear prevalence was observed of husband or live-in partner in about 64% of cases (Figure 3).

As regards to the victims' ages, there was a discrepancy within the two groups: most of the homicides took place against women over the age of 65; while femicides were concentrated in an age range of 25 to 50. On the contrary, the nationalities of the victims in both groups were evenly distributed and about 90% are Italian women.

As for the locations where the femicides took place, there was a prevalence of couples' home (in 41% of examples), followed by the victim's home (24%) and in the street (13%).

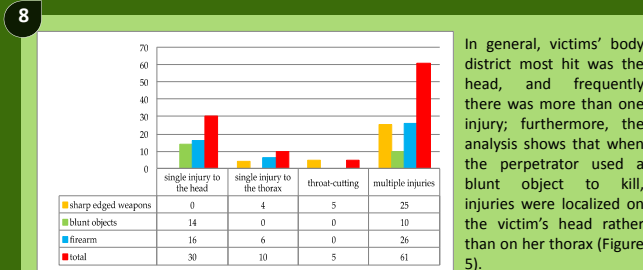


Figure 5. Injuries and weapons

In general, victims' body district most hit was the head, and frequently there was more than one injury; furthermore, the analysis shows that when the perpetrator used a blunt object to kill, injuries were localized on the victim's head rather than on her thorax (Figure 5).

Conclusion

In conclusion, analysis of the results shows that the introduction of divorce law (1970) did not alter the trend of femicide, which decrease only after the ban of mitigating circumstances for "honor killing" (1981). Furthermore, the average age of the victims of femicide between 25 and 50 years old is younger than the one of the victims of homicide because younger women are probably more self-confident, more affirmed at work, more autonomous causing friction with the partner. The prevalence of injuries multiplicity is probably linked to a psychological aspect of rage, highlighting the perpetrator's goal of hitting and injuring the victim in the most serious and worst possible way.

Finally, our results are similar to national ones, in particular:

- the average age of femicide victims is between 25 and 50;
- in most cases it is a single murder followed by suicide or attempted suicide by the killer;
- the murderer is usually the partner or ex;
- the motive is framed in a feeling of jealousy, rejection, abandonment or separation;
- the use of firearms and bladed weapons exceeds other types of weapons;
- using atypical weapons is frequent and this confirms the domestic character of the crime;
- there are mainly multiple injuries, concentrated on the head, which emphasizes the intent to offend seriously;
- the highest number of murders takes place in the home of the couple or the victim's home.

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