

PROJECT INSIGHT

Firearm-related Gender-based Violence in the European Union

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KEY FINDINGS

- Some European Union (EU) member states—as well as the EU, through Eurostat—collect and publish useful and gender-disaggregated information about violent crimes, intentional homicides, or domestic violence. In addition to using different methodologies and definitions, however, available data does not always include information on the weapons used in the commission of such crimes, the relationship between victim and perpetrator, or the context in which the violence has occurred.
- Available data collected at the international, regional, and national level does not allow for a comprehensive picture of the trends and dynamics of gender-based violence (GBV), including firearm violence, within the EU.
- The EU is working to establish a common understanding of GBV at the EU level and among its member states, and to detail minimum standards for the criminalization of GBV against women and domestic violence—thus providing the opportunity to address the use of firearms to facilitate and commit GBV across the EU. These regulatory initiatives also have the potential to improve the availability of relevant information by promoting the collection of comparable data and the development of harmonized practices in collecting and reporting this information, which in turn will allow states to better monitor and adapt measures being taken to tackle GBV.
- These EU initiatives could benefit from establishing linkages with the existing EU framework for the control of the production, trade, and possession of firearms.

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Abbreviations

ATT	Arms Trade Treaty
CBS	Central Bureau for Statistics
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
EIGE	European Institute for Gender Equality
EU	European Union
FRA	Agency for Fundamental Rights
GBV	Gender-based violence
UNODC	UN Office on Drugs and Crime
UN PoA	UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects
WHO	World Health Organization

Introduction

Gender-based violence (GBV) affects people in every country around the world and can take many different forms, including: physical, mental, or sexual harm or suffering; threats of such acts; coercion; and other deprivations of liberty. While the risk of GBV increases in situations of crisis—such as in the aftermath of a natural disaster or during armed conflicts, where GBV is often used as a weapon of war—it remains a pervasive form of violence in every context. Almost one in three women worldwide has experienced some form of GBV at least once in her lifetime.¹ This also applies to the EU, where one in three women has experienced physical and/or sexual violence since the age of 15.²

Acts of GBV, both in conflict and non-conflict settings, can be perpetrated or facilitated by firearms and small arms.³ Moreover, firearm violence can have different gender implications in different contexts. Men, and younger men especially, are often both perpetrators and victims of firearm violence; however, factors such as gun ownership being predominantly male and a widespread presence of both legal and illicit firearms, especially in the home, can result in more frequent and more lethal violence against women, primarily in the context of domestic violence.

One of the key objectives of the EU Gender Equality Strategy (2020–25) is to end GBV. The European Commission pursued this strategy in March 2022 with a proposal for a directive on combating both violence against women and domestic violence.³ A better understanding of firearm violence and GBV in the EU can further support this directive and other policy responses. Providing additional data and analysis, identifying potential gaps, and ultimately ensuring a comprehensive understanding

a For the purposes of this paper, the terms “firearm” and “small arm” are used interchangeably. The term “firearm” is used in domestic contexts and in national laws governing the manufacture and transfer of such weapons, as well as civilian access to them; the term “small arm” is more commonly used to refer to the weapon an individual may use and carry in a military context. For further details on the use of these terms, see Parker, S. & Wilson, M. (2016), *A guide to the UN small arms process: 2016 update* (3rd edition), Geneva: Small Arms Survey, pp. 15–16. <https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/sites/default/files/resources/UNSAAP%20TEXT%20WEB.pdf>.

of the role that firearms play in different forms of GBV are all crucial to effective policy action.

This paper seeks to contribute to these efforts. It begins by providing an overview of what is commonly understood as GBV, its relationship with firearms, and how relevant policy instruments address this linkage. The paper then outlines tentative findings around the phenom

enon of gender-based firearm violence across the EU, drawing on a selection of data collected and made available by the EU or related agencies, international organizations, non-governmental actors, and national governments. Finally, it examines the applicable EU regulatory framework to identify possible gaps and ways in which this could be strengthened.

Methodological note

This paper is based on information from the following sources: (a) data on mortality rates, violent deaths, and intentional homicides at the global level from the World Health Organization (WHO), the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and the Small Arms Survey, as well as data on intentional homicides in the EU collected by Eurostat; (b) the Gunviolence.eu – Incident Monitor (hereafter referred to as the “Incident Monitor”);^a (c) surveys on GBV conducted or being conducted by EU agencies; and (d) national-level data from EU member states on homicides or violent deaths, violence against women, or GBV more broadly.

While all these sources combined help to provide a better picture of gender-based firearm violence in the EU, they also present some limitations. Statistics provided at the global level use regional groupings that are different from those used in the EU and often do not allow for

data to be disaggregated by the sex or gender of the victims, or by the methods used to perpetrate violence. The statistics also sometimes lack information on the context (such as the relationship between victim and perpetrator). Similar gaps are also visible in data collected at the national level that uses different methodologies and definitions. The Incident Monitor has the advantage of allowing information on relevant incidents to be collected rapidly and disaggregated (for example, by the gender of the victim and perpetrator or the type of crime) at the EU level. As the Incident Monitor is based on media sources, however, country-based results may be affected by media sensitivity in reporting on GBV in the national context. New EU-based surveys on GBV were still being conducted at the time of writing and so only partial results were available. These could represent another useful source in the future, however.

a The Incident Monitor (www.gunviolence.eu/incident-monitor) aims to collect media articles on firearm-related violence in all EU member states. It processes data in real time through an automated system that uses artificial intelligence. For more detailed information on the development and functioning of the Monitor, consult the methodological report: Cops, D., De Schutter, A. & De Smedt, T. (2023), Gunviolence.eu – Incident Monitor: Methodological report, Brussels: Flemish Peace Institute, <https://vlaamsvredesinstituut.eu/en/project-insight/#methodologicalreport>.

Useful concepts and definitions

Gender: “[T]he roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a given society at a given time considers appropriate for men and women. [...] These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialization processes. They are context/time-specific and changeable. Gender determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a woman or a man in a given context. [...] Gender is part of the broader socio-cultural context, as are other important criteria for socio-cultural analysis including class, race, poverty level, ethnic group, sexual orientation, age, etc.”^{a4}

Sex: “[T]he biological characteristics which define humans as female or male. These sets of biological characteristics are not mutually exclusive as there are individuals who possess both, but these characteristics tend to differentiate humans as males and females.”⁵ “Gender interacts with but is different from sex. The two terms are distinct and should not be used interchangeably. [...] Sex is often categorized as females and males, but there are variations of sex characteristics called intersex. The term ‘intersex’ is used as an umbrella term for individuals born with natural variations in biological or physiological characteristics (including sexual anatomy, reproductive organs and/or chromosomal patterns) that do not fit traditional definitions of male or female.”⁶

Understanding GBV and the role of firearms

What is GBV?

GBV is violence directed against a person because of their gender, or violence that affects persons of a particular gender disproportionately.⁷ Although there is no internationally agreed definition of GBV, the term is commonly used to indicate different harmful acts that are directed at one or more individuals on the basis of their gender. The term GBV initially emerged to highlight the linkages between gender-based discrimination and violence against women. It then broadened to encompass different types of violence that are rooted in “gender discrimination”, “gender role expectations”, and “gender stereotypes”, or “based on the differential power status linked to gender”.⁸ GBV can include sexual violence (such as sexual exploitation, rape, and honour killings) and other forms of physical violence (such as beatings and assault). It can also, however, refer to psychological or socio-economic violence (such as humiliations or unequal access to services and rights).⁹ To the extent that GBV can target an individual on the basis of their gender, including their gender identity or how their gender is expressed, men and boys can also fall victims of this type of violence. This is particularly evident in highly masculinized environments and can occur when men’s behavior is not perceived as conforming to society’s dominant views on masculinity.¹⁰ It also means that GBV has an impact on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and/or questioning (LGBTQ) individuals^a for expressing their gender in a way that is not considered in line with the “normalized” behaviour in society.¹¹

^a Other versions of this acronym include “I” to indicate “Intersex” people, and “+” to recognize non-cisgender and non-straight identities that are not included in the acronym. The acronym used in this paper refers to categories for which more research on the impact of GBV is available.

Women and girls are particularly vulnerable to GBV, including lethal violence. For instance, studies conducted by UNODC show that, although men remain the primary victims of homicide, women and girls are the most affected by gender-related killings—particularly in the context of intimate relationships, within the family or the domestic sphere more broadly—owing to discriminatory social norms, harmful traditional practices, and other forms of gender-related discrimination.¹² Although this is not captured by UNODC studies, there are additional circumstances that can make specific groups of women and girls more at risk of experiencing GBV, such as having a sexual orientation other than heterosexual, belonging to an ethnic minority, or living with disabilities. The intersection of one or more of these characteristics is likely to heighten the risk of being exposed to GBV.¹³

Men and boys can also become targets because of their gender, suffering the impact of harmful social and cultural norms linked to masculinity.¹⁴ In this case, there are several “diversity” factors (such as age, disability, and sexual orientation) at play that, where intersecting, can multiply the risk of being subjected to GBV.¹⁵

Among the factors that can increase the likelihood and lethality of GBV is the presence of a firearm or small arm. Both in conflict and non-conflict settings, perpetrators armed with such weapons are more likely to commit lethal forms of GBV.¹⁶

Role of firearms in facilitating GBV

The ownership, use, and impact of firearms, as well as attitudes towards these weapons, have specific gender dimensions.¹⁷ These are linked with socially constructed concepts of “masculinities” and “femininities” that reflect power dynamics in which men as a group have power over women and over men that do not conform to these concepts. Such dynamics influence the different perceptions of men and women towards weapons and, thus, impact both levels and patterns of firearm ownership and instances of armed violence.¹⁸

Firearm possession often serves as a symbol of masculinity.¹⁹ Additionally, men are more represented than women in professions/employment sectors that involve the use of firearms (such as law enforcement), as well as in recreational activities where firearms are used (such as hunting).²⁰ Gun ownership as well as the use or threat of arms are often used as tools by men, especially young men from marginalized urban areas, to gain what they perceive as their role and space in society.²¹ Such an imbalance only exacerbates gender inequality between men and women; in certain circumstances, it also puts women and other more exposed groups (such as people with “non-conventional and diverse sexual or gender identities”) at high risk of being victims of lethal firearm violence or being threatened or intimidated.²²

As a result, the relationship between masculinity and firearms can have serious gender-related consequences for men, who are both more likely to use and to be killed or injured by a firearm. For women, the risk is more often related to other

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^a See also de Schutter, A. (2023), *Criminal gun violence in the European Union*, Project INSIGHT Research Paper, Brussels and Geneva: Flemish Peace Institute and Small Arms Survey.

forms of violence that are facilitated by firearms, especially within the family, the domestic sphere, or the context of intimate relationships.²³ In these contexts, when they are not used to kill, firearms are used to threaten and wield power over the victims, enabling not just physical but also emotional, social, and economic violence.²⁴ Similar patterns are visible in cases of GBV experienced by LGBTQ people, and especially transgender people.²⁵

There are also circumstances that make women (or individuals who face social discrimination more broadly) more likely to become the target of GBV outside of the domestic sphere. For instance, in contexts where urban violence is particularly widespread and accompanied by the presence of firearms in the streets, women are more likely to be victimized by organized or gang-related violence (for example, due to revenge attacks or punishments).²⁶

The radicalization of men into far-right ideologies underpinned by images of traditional masculinity, as well as misogynist, homophobic, transphobic, and other discriminatory views, has also led to acts of GBV.²⁷ These forms of radicalization often glorify firearm possession and their use against groups of individuals that are perceived as challenging the hegemonic model of masculinity pursued by these men.²⁸

In cases where such extremist views have resulted in episodes of violence, such as mass killings, firearms have often been used to perpetrate such acts.²⁹ Relevant examples include attacks perpetrated in the United States against a sorority house in Isla Vista, California, in 2012, and the 2016 mass shooting in Orlando, Florida, against sexually diverse people at a nightclub.³⁰ Similar episodes

have also occurred in Europe: in October 2022, for instance, two men were killed in a shooting outside a gay bar in Bratislava, Slovakia.³¹ A few months earlier, a deadly shooting had taken place at a gay bar in Oslo, Norway.³²

Overview of international policy instruments recognizing the link between GBV and conventional weapons

A number of arms control instruments for conventional weapons, including firearms, small arms, and light weapons, have recognized and sought to address the role these items play in facilitating or increasing the risks of GBV, including violence against women.³³ Particularly relevant developments occurred in connection with efforts to prevent or mitigate the risk of illicit trade in, and the diversion and misuse of, these weapons.^a

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While the 2001 UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (PoA)—a politically binding agreement outlining steps that states should take to counter the illicit trade in

and diversion of small arms and light weapons (SALW)—does not explicitly recognize the link between SALW and GBV, it represents one of the most important forums for normative discussions in this area.³⁴

The Firearms Protocol is the only legally binding instrument “to counter the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and

a For a comprehensive overview, see LeBrun, E. (Ed.) (2019), *Gender-responsive small arms control: A practical guide*, Geneva: Small Arms Survey, p. 23, <https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/sites/default/files/resources/SAS-GLASS-Gender-HB.pdf>.

components and ammunition at the global level”.³⁵ The protocol does not explicitly refer to or address GBV, although its provisions can nonetheless help to prevent GBV.³⁶ Furthermore, according to a separate resolution issued by the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, states parties to the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its protocols should “take a gender perspective” in the implementation of these documents.³⁷

Finally, the adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) in 2013 marked one of the most significant developments towards establishing a formal link between conventional weapons, including small arms and light weapons, and GBV. The ATT—which requires states parties to consider the risk that their arms exports may be used to commit or facilitate serious acts of GBV or violence against women and children—was the first international and legally binding treaty to recognize the link between the arms trade and GBV.³⁸

Main findings on gender-based firearm violence across the EU

The overview provided above suggests a growing recognition and awareness of the role that small arms and firearms can play in increasing the risk of or facilitating different forms of GBV.

Still, drawing a comprehensive picture of the dynamics and prevalence of gender-based firearm violence remains difficult, including in the EU. This is mostly due to a lack of comprehensive data, the use of different methodologies and definitions, and the fact that cases often go unre-

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ported.³⁹ Data from various sources is collected and made available by the EU or related agencies, international organizations, non-governmental actors, and national governments, that can help to partially fill this gap. This information includes details on the causes of mortality, data on homicides and violent deaths, crime statistics, and media reports on violent incidents involving firearms (such as those collected by the Incident Monitor). Taken together, this data does not allow firm conclusions to be drawn about the dynamics and prevalence of gender-based firearm violence in the EU. Nevertheless, it can help in sketching a tenta-

tive picture of the phenomenon beyond the national level and identifying gaps in information available to date.

The following section provides an overview of the relevant sources mentioned above that may provide information that is directly or indirectly relevant to obtaining a better understanding of GBV and firearms in the EU. The sources were selected based on public availability, language accessibility, and relevance. As such, the overview presented below is intended to be illustrative rather than comprehensive, as there are likely other sources that are not included.

International organizations and non-state actors

The WHO Mortality Database and the UNODC data on intentional homicides both provide relevant data collected by international organizations. The WHO Mortality Database can be used to investigate trends in mortality caused by intentional

violence, broken down by "country" and "sex".^a Relevant data available for EU member states for 2019–21 shows that, during this period, more men

died as a result of intentional violence than women (see Table 1).⁴⁰

Table 1 Average male and female death rate related to intentional violence in EU member states, 2019–21

Year	Average total - female	Average total - male
2019	0.7	1.4
2020	0.7	1.6
2021	0.8	2.1

Note: The data refers to the death rate per 100,000 population in EU member states for which data is available. For the period under review, data was not available at all times in every country. No data was available for this time period in some countries (Belgium, France, Ireland, Malta, and Sweden).

Source: WHO Mortality Database (n.d.)⁴¹

The UNODC data on intentional homicide provides the rate or the number of victims, including incidents that involved the use of firearms. For this particular category, however, the publicly available database provides the number of victims but does not offer data disaggregated by sex.⁴² Available data for EU member states for the period 2019–21 shows a relatively low rate of intentional homicide, which—despite the use of different regional groupings—confirms a previous analysis conducted by UNODC indicating a declining trend in intentional homicides in Europe since the early 2000s.⁴³ UNODC also provides a more elaborated analysis of gender-related killings of women and girls. While stressing persisting gaps in sex-disaggregated data, available reports have confirmed that men remain globally the primary victims of homicide; however, women and girls are disproportionately affected by gender-motivated killings and lethal violence—particularly within the family and the private sphere—which have also involved, although not exclusively, the use of firearms.⁴⁴

Data collected by UNODC and other organizations is also used by the Small Arms Survey to elaborate estimates on global violent deaths.⁴⁵ These estimates now include the number of female victims of firearm killings. A comparison between this and the overall number of violent deaths by firearms in EU member states in 2019–2021 shows that female victims represent a relatively small percentage (an average of 27 per cent) of the overall number of firearm killings (see Table 2)—a pattern that can also be observed at the global level.⁴⁶ A previous gendered analysis conducted by the Small Arms Survey noted, however, that in high-income countries in Western Europe, where the overall rate of lethal violence and homicide has been decreasing over time, the proportion of female violent deaths tends to be higher. This analysis suggests that in this region, as well as at the global level according to UNODC data, women experience lethal violence mostly within the domestic sphere or in the context of intimate relationships. The report also notes that more attention needs to be paid to how data is collected to get a better understanding of the dynamics of GBV.⁴⁷

a The term "violence" encompasses various forms of assault, including, but not limited to, "assault by handgun discharge", "assault by rifle, shotgun, and larger firearm discharge", "assault by other and unspecified firearm discharge", as well as different forms of "sequelae of external causes of morbidity and mortality". See WHO (n.d.), International statistical classification of diseases and related health problems: 10th revision (ICD-10), ICD-10 codes: X85–Y09, Y871, <https://icd.who.int/browse10/2019/en#/X85–Y09>.

Table 2 Number of female victims of firearms and number of violent deaths by firearms in EU member states, 2019-2021

Country	2019		2020		2021	
	Number of female victims of firearm killings	Number of violent deaths by firearm	Number of female victims of firearm killings	Number of violent deaths by firearm	Number of female victims of firearm killings	Number of violent deaths by firearm
Austria	5	10	7	14	9	18
Belgium	14	67	14	68	13	67
Bulgaria	3	20	3	20	3	18
Croatia	7	17	5	13	3	8
Cyprus	0	2	0	3	0	6
Czechia	5	10	2	6	3	9
Denmark	1	3	1	3	1	3
Estonia	0	0	0	0	0	0
Finland	1	6	1	6	1	6
France	77	271	72	258	71	250
Germany	22	46	29	68	28	60
Greece	6	29	6	31	6	32
Hungary	0	3	0	8	0	2
Ireland	3	23	3	23	3	23
Italy	31	125	31	118	29	105
Latvia	2	6	2	6	2	6
Lithuania	0	2	0	3	0	3
Luxembourg	1	1	0	1	0	1
Malta	0	3	0	5	0	0
Netherlands	6	31	6	32	6	31
Poland	0	2	1	2	0	1
Portugal	13	28	13	26	13	28
Romania	0	0	0	0	0	0
Slovakia	5	13	1	3	1	3
Slovenia	1	3	0	0	0	0
Spain	21	61	15	44	16	46
Sweden	3	52	3	55	3	52
Total	227	834	215	816	211	778

Source: Small Arms Survey (n.d.)⁴⁸

EU-related agencies

Useful resources and information, particularly on GBV against women, are also available at the EU level, although there is currently no comprehensive and harmonized data on the phenomenon, including the impact of the presence and use of firearms. The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) developed the Gender Equality Index—a tool for measuring gender equality in the EU on an annual basis, but no score is currently given on the “domain of violence” due to “the lack of comparable EU-wide data”.⁴⁹ Nonetheless, there have been a few attempts to fill these gaps.

In 2014, the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) conducted an EU-wide survey on violence against women. The survey involved more than 40,000 women across the EU and asked them about their experiences of physical, sexual, and psychological violence, including domestic and intimate partner violence, since the age of 15 and during the 12 months preceding the interview.⁵⁰ The survey results noted that 8 per cent of the respondents “have experienced physical and/or sexual violence in the last 12 months before the survey interview”, and that “one in three women has experienced some form of physical and/or sexual assault since the age of 15”. Furthermore, 22 per cent of respondents “who are or have been in a relationship with a man [...] have experienced physical and/or sexual violence”.⁵¹ The survey does not, however, provide context on whether the violence was perpetrated or facilitated by a firearm. At the time of writing, FRA and EIGE were carrying out a new survey on violence against women in eight EU member states.^a Data collection is due to be completed in 2023 in order to feed into the 2024 update of the Gender Equality Index.⁵²

In 2016, Eurostat developed a survey questionnaire and a methodology to measure GBV against women in EU member states. Following a pilot survey conducted in 14 EU member states in 2018–19, the main EU-GBV survey was launched and began being implemented in 2020; the results will be shared at the end of 2023 (meaning that, at the time of writing, this data was not yet available).⁵³ This survey is intended to complement the data on violence against women being collected by FRA and EIGE. The EU-GBV survey measures GBV as defined in the Istanbul Convention,^b but also includes other forms of interpersonal violence and topics that are not covered by the Convention. The survey therefore covers the following: (a) violence by an intimate partner; (b) violence by a non-partner; (c) violence by a domestic perpetrator; (d) violence by any perpetrator; (e) sexual harassment at work; (f) violence experienced in childhood; and (g) stalking by any perpetrator.⁵⁴ Questions on whether the current or former partner, or anyone else living in the same household, has “a gun, rifle or other firearm or have access to those weapons”^c are included as optional fields in the survey.⁵⁵

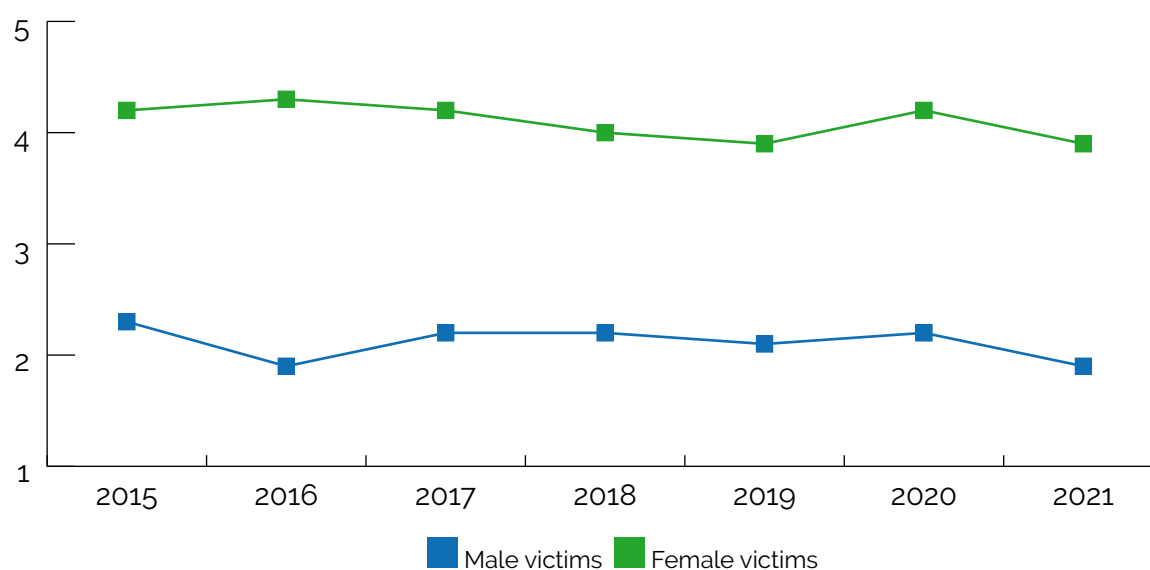
Other data collected by Eurostat, such as statistics on crime, can also be useful for providing additional context and background. The analysis of the latest available data on crime, covering 2021, confirms patterns of GBV that have also emerged from the statistics and analysis mentioned above—that is, that women are more vulnerable to violence, including lethal violence, in the domestic sphere. In 2015–2021, for example, female victims of intentional homicide “killed by family members or intimate partners (per million women) were 3.9 in 2021 while male victims were 1.8 (per million men)” (see Figure 1).⁵⁶

a These states are Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Hungary, Ireland, Luxembourg, Romania, and Sweden.

b Specifically, “GBV against women” and “domestic violence” are defined according to Article 3 of the Convention.

c According to the methodology used for the report, “[a] *firearm* should be understood in its widest meaning, and includes a gun, rifle, shotgun, pistol, sniper rifle, personal defence weapon, assault rifle, etc.” See Eurostat (2021), Methodological manual for the EU survey on gender-based violence against women and other forms of inter-personal violence (EU-GBV), <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3859598/13484289/KS-GQ-21-009-EN-N.pdf/1478786c-5fb3-fe31-d759-7bbe0e9066ad?t=1633004533458>, p. 183.

Figure 1 Male and female victims of intentional homicide perpetrated by a family member or intimate partner, per one million inhabitants, 2015-21



Source: Eurostat (n.d.)⁵⁷

Media reports collected by the Gunviolence.eu – Incident Monitor

Open sources and media articles can also be used to complement existing data, which in the case of understanding gender-based firearm violence is already limited. As part of Project INSIGHT, the Flemish Peace Institute, in cooperation with its research and operational partners, has developed a firearm violence monitor. The Incident Monitor has drawn information on firearm-related incidents that occurred since 2019 from media sources in the official languages of the EU. The data can be filtered by the gender of the victim and the perpetrator.

Some of the dynamics found in the data on firearm incidents involving a female victim recorded by the Monitor between 1 January 2019 and 28 May 2023^a correspond to those found in the other data

sets mentioned above. Of the reports identified by the Monitor, 95 per cent involved a male perpetrator, and 37 per cent mentioned that the violent incident occurred at home. The proportion of reports classified as “domestic” crimes was 30.5 per cent. Notably, in more than half of the incidents (53.5 per cent), the injuries were fatal.

Data available at the national level

In addition to statistics or data collected at the international or EU level, some EU member states also provide information on GBV at the national level, although both the quantity and quality of this data vary. This section provides a few examples of data collection undertaken by EU member states which were selected based on public availability, the information’s relevance to the scope of this paper, and language accessibility. In some

^a This data was drawn from the “analytics” section of the Incident Monitor on 11 August 2023. Data was sorted by date (1 January 2019–11 August 2023), place (all EU member states), and the gender of the victim (female). The analytics present data (the percentage of identified reports) by, inter alia, the gender of the perpetrator; the type of crime (such as terrorism, love dispute, domestic); the type of place (such as public or home); and the possible motive.

cases (as indicated in the text), these sources were complemented by data provided by EU member states in response to a request submitted by the Flemish Peace Institute as the coordinator of the consortium of research institutes implementing Project INSIGHT.

Following a data request submitted as part of Project INSIGHT, France shared figures on firearm homicides in 2020. The data shows that, during this period, men were the prevalent victims of firearm homicides compared to women (around 80 per cent of the total number of homicides). A more elaborated analysis of 2019–20 firearm homicides in France, published in November 2022 by the journal *Actualité Juridique Pénal* (AJ Penal), provides some additional context to this data.⁵⁸ For example, most firearm homicides in France occurred within the public space (57 per cent of cases), while only 25 per cent occurred at the victim's place of residence.⁵⁹ In these cases, homicides occurred primarily within the family sphere. In addition, in 2020, the French Ministry of Interior published a national study on violent deaths in the context of intimate relationships.⁶⁰ The study not only notes that women are the primary victims of violent deaths in these circumstances, but also provides an overview of the weapons used in documented cases. Firearms were used as frequently as cold weapons^a (in 30 per cent of cases each). Of the 41 perpetrators of homicides, 23 owned guns legally. The report also notes that it is men who privileged the use of firearms.⁶¹

In Italy, in February 2023, the Ministry of Interior published a study on national trends in GBV against women between 2019 and 2022.⁶² The Criminal Analysis Service of the national police analysed data on homicides based on information from a national database (Banca Dati delle Forze di Polizia) shared among different security forces. They were therefore able to elaborate more detailed information on the context and dynamics of GBV against women, particularly lethal violence.⁶³ The study notes that men remained the main victims

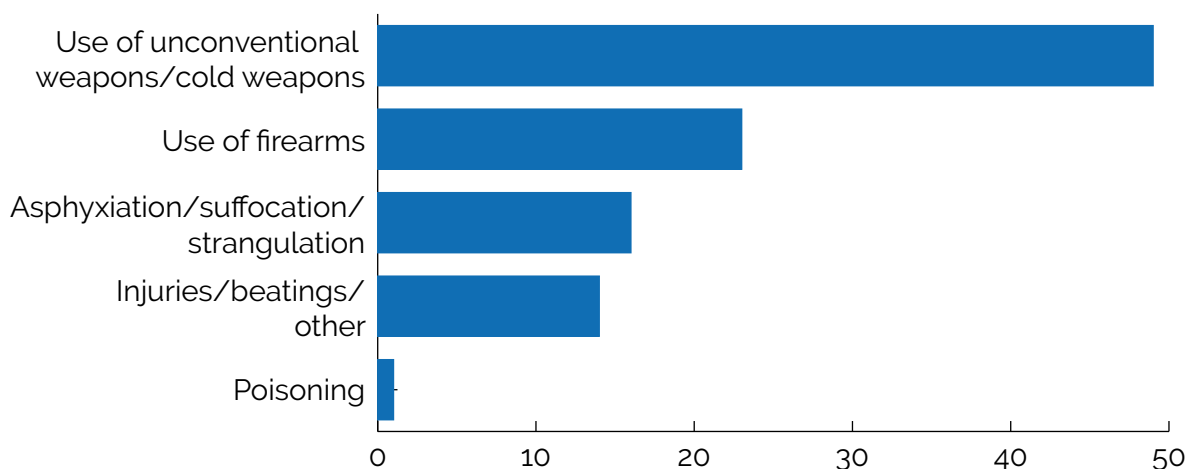
of homicide compared to women (0.67 versus 0.41 per 100,000 population). The number of female victims of intentional homicides in 2019–22 increased by 12 per cent, however, in contrast to a general decrease in victims of murders. For example, while the number of homicides occurring in the family or intimate relationships was lower than before, the share of female victims in these contexts increased.⁶⁴ This is the only typology of homicide for which the study also provides details of the type of weapons used, which in the majority of cases (103 in 2022) were cold weapons (49 cases), followed by firearms (23 cases) (see Figure 2).⁶⁵

In Germany, the Federal Criminal Police Office (Bundeskriminalamt) has collected and reported data on intimate partner violence since 2015. The most recent report, published in 2022 and covering cases of intimate partner violence that occurred in 2021, categorizes the incidents reported to the police by the gender of the victims and perpetrators and the different typologies of crime (such as murder, serious physical harm, physical harm resulting in death, or sexual violence).⁶⁶ Of the 143,604 victims identified in the report, the vast majority (80 per cent) were reportedly women, while the majority of the perpetrators were men (79 per cent). The report also notes that intimate partner violence in Germany in the last five years has increased by 3.4 per cent.⁶⁷ Although it does not clarify whether the violence has been committed or threatened by the use of firearms, the report does specify the number of individuals (13 out of 6,161 in 2021) registered for intimate partner violence-related offences who were carrying a firearm. It remains unclear, however, whether the weapon was legally or illegally detained.⁶⁸

The Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science publishes various types of information, based on data collected by the Central Bureau for Statistics (CBS), that is relevant for “social safety”—such as information on domestic and

a A cold weapon is intended here as any weapon that is not a firearm (bladed weapon, blunt weapon, etc.).

Figure 2 Number of intentional homicides committed in Italy and resulting in a female victim within family and intimate relationships, by modus operandi, 2022



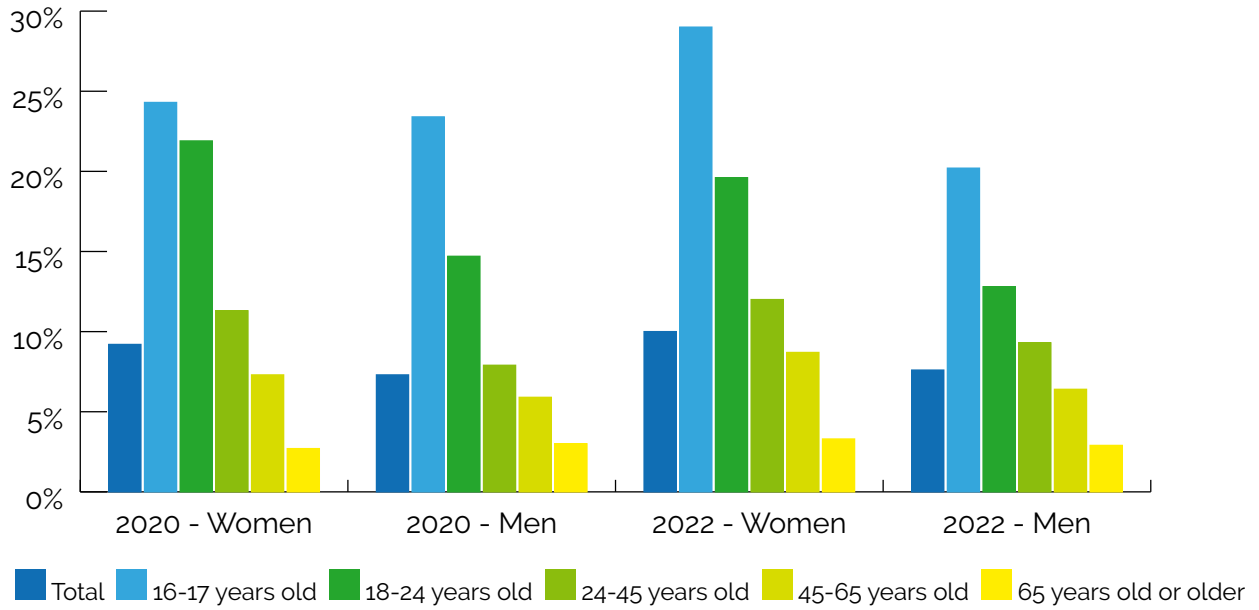
Source: Italian Ministry of the Interior (2022)⁶⁹

sexual violence, including violence affecting LGB individuals, on the number of victims of sexual and violent crimes, and on murder and manslaughter.⁷⁰ This data shows that, in both 2020 and 2022, women, particularly young women, were more likely to report having been victims of domestic violence than men (see Figure 3).⁷¹ Bisexual women and men were the most affected by domestic violence during this period (see Figure 4).⁷² In general, bisexual individuals, and particularly women, seem to be more at risk of being exposed to intimate partner violence or other forms of GBV.⁷³ Available data on murder and manslaughter, covering 2017–21, is also particularly indicative of gender-related dynamics of violence. Although men were victims of homicide

more often than women, the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator varied depending on the gender of the victim. For instance, the police were able to identify the perpetrator of 96 per cent of murders of women; in more than half of these cases (56 per cent), the perpetrator was a partner or a former partner.⁷⁴

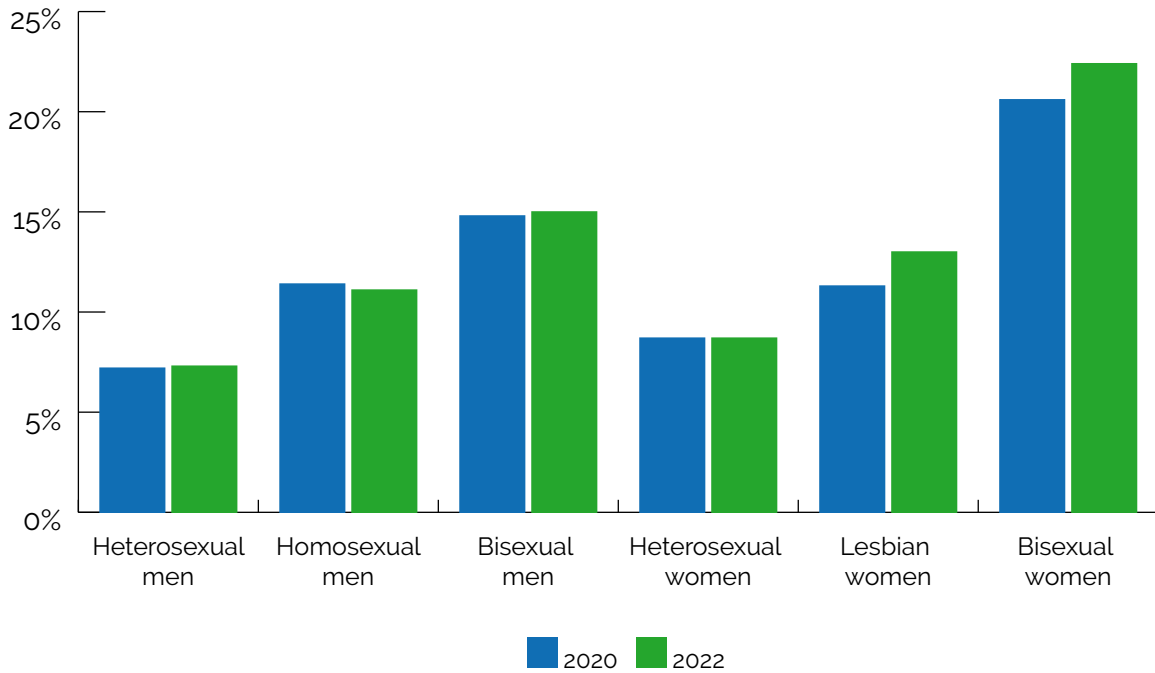
The CBS data set on “murder and manslaughter” also includes information on the “method” and location of the killing, as well as details of the gender of the victims. Based on the data covering 2019–21, when the victim was female and the method of killing was known, firearms were the least common method used (in roughly 12.5 per cent of cases; see Table 3).⁷⁵

Figure 3 Percentage of male and female victims of domestic violence and sexually transgressive behavior in the Netherlands, 2020-22 (share of population aged 16 or older)



Source: Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (n.d.)⁷⁶

Figure 4 Percentage of LGB victims of domestic violence and sexually transgressive behavior, 2020 and 2022 (share of population aged 16 or older)



Source: Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (n.d.)⁷⁷

Table 3 Victims of murder and manslaughter in the Netherlands, 2019-21, by gender, method, and location

Sex	Male and female	Male and female	Male and female	Male	Male	Male	Female	Female	Female
Year	2019	2020	2021	2019	2020	2021	2019	2020	2021
Total number of incidents	125	121	126	81	77	88	44	44	38
Age of victim									
20 years or younger	10	18	15	5	11	11	5	7	4
20 to 29 years	27	22	25	20	16	17	7	6	8
30 to 39 years	27	27	21	20	14	13	7	13	8
40 to 49 years	22	15	19	15	11	15	7	4	4
50 to 59 years	19	21	23	10	14	16	9	7	7
60 years or older	20	18	23	11	11	16	9	7	7
Method									
Hanging/strangulation/suffocation	6	14	16	1	3	3	5	11	13
Beating or kicking	22	25	14	10	16	8	12	9	6
Firearm	33	32	34	28	24	31	5	8	3
Stabbing or battle weapon	59	46	55	39	31	41	20	15	14
Other or unknown	5	4	7	3	3	5	2	1	2
Location									
House of the victim or other	61	74	81	28	32	50	33	42	31
Trade and services	6	2	4	5	2	4	1	0	0
Public road	42	33	28	37	33	25	5	0	3
Other or unknown	16	12	13	11	10	9	5	2	4

Source: CBS (n.d.)⁷⁸

Following a data request submitted as part of Project INSIGHT, Spain provided information collected by the Ministry of Interior on gun violence incidents in 2021, including cases of domestic violence and GBV.⁷⁹ As explained in the report, the Spanish penal code distinguishes

between these two types of violence. “Domestic violence” is defined as all types of violence occurring within the family context, which excludes violence involving individuals living together but without any familial tie (such as students sharing an apartment). Violence within the context of

intimate same-sex relationships are also considered a form of domestic violence.⁸⁰ “GBV” refers to psychological or physical violence occurring within the context of an intimate relationship (that is either ongoing or has ended). Unlike cases of domestic violence, this definition does not cover violence occurring within a relationship between people of the same sex.⁸¹ In 2021, of the 2,780 crime incidents involving a firearm, 197 were classified as cases of domestic violence or GBV and the victims were predominantly women. Most of these were cases of ill-treatment/degrading treatment (149), but firearms were used in connection to homicides in 12 incidents.⁸²

In Sweden, the Crime Prevention Council (Brottsförebyggande rådet, Brå) is tasked with reporting on crime trends, including trends in deadly or fatal violence—such as violence involving the use

of firearms, violence in close relationships, murder, and manslaughter. The latest report on fatal violence, covering 2022, confirms a trend similar to that observed in other EU countries in terms of the gender of victims and perpetrators and the role of firearms. In Sweden, in 62 out of 63 cases in which firearms were used in incidents of fatal violence, the victim was a man or a boy. Between 2013 and 2022, the proportion of male victims of firearm violence varied between 84 and 98 per cent (see Table 4).⁸³ Men remained more generally the primary victims of murder and manslaughter in 2022 (80 per cent of the overall victims) and the gender distribution of victims has largely remained at the same level for the previous three years (see Figure 5). Similarly, the majority of perpetrators of lethal violence were also men.⁸⁴

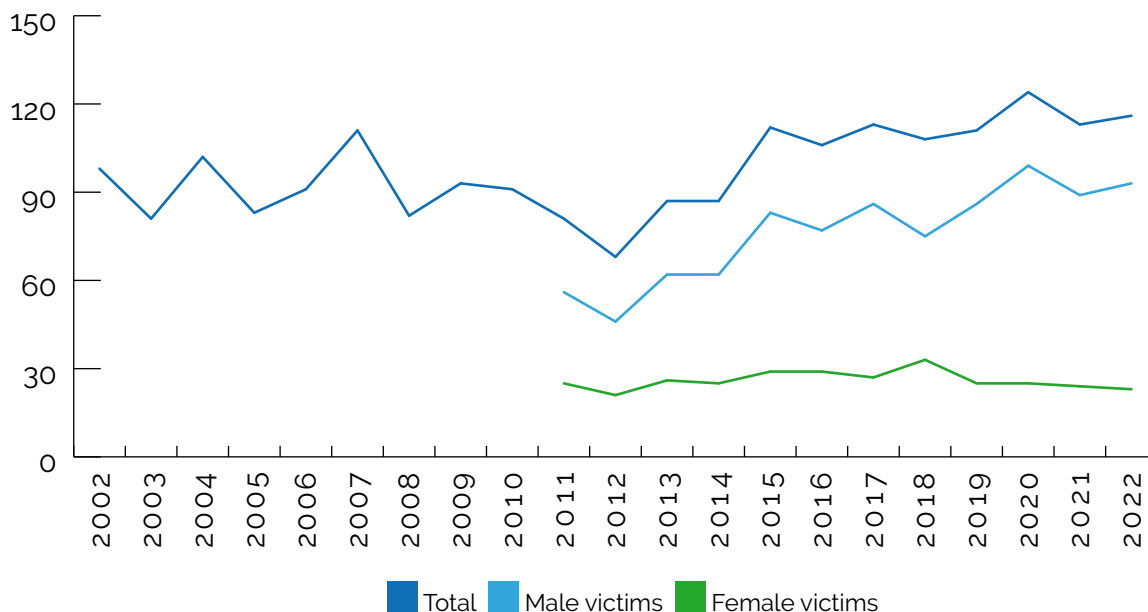
Table 4 Identified cases of fatal violence, by use of firearms and sex of victim, 2013-22

Year	Number of cases	Number of cases involving firearms	Number of cases against woman/girl involving firearms	Number of cases against man/boy involving firearms	Number of cases without firearms	Number of cases against woman/girl without firearms	Number of cases against man/boy without firearms
2013	87	25	4	21	62	22	40
2014	87	28	3	25	59	22	37
2015	112	33	2	31	79	27	52
2016	106	30	2	28	76	27	49
2017	113	40	1	39	73	26	47
2018	108	43	1	42	65	32	33
2019	111	45	5	40	66	20	46
2020	124	48	7	41	76	18	58
2021	113	45	2	43	68	22	46
2022	116	63	1	62	53	22	31

Source: Brottsförebyggande rådet (Brå) (n.d.)⁸⁵

a The Spanish legislative framework distinguishes between GBV (*violencia de género*) and intra-gender violence (*violencia intragénero*), and identifies different root causes for these two phenomena. See https://www.igualdad.gob.es/wp-content/uploads/2_Guia_Breve_Victimas_Violencia_Intragenero_lectura2ofacil.pdf.

Figure 5 Number of identified cases of fatal violence in Sweden, by sex of victim, 2011-22

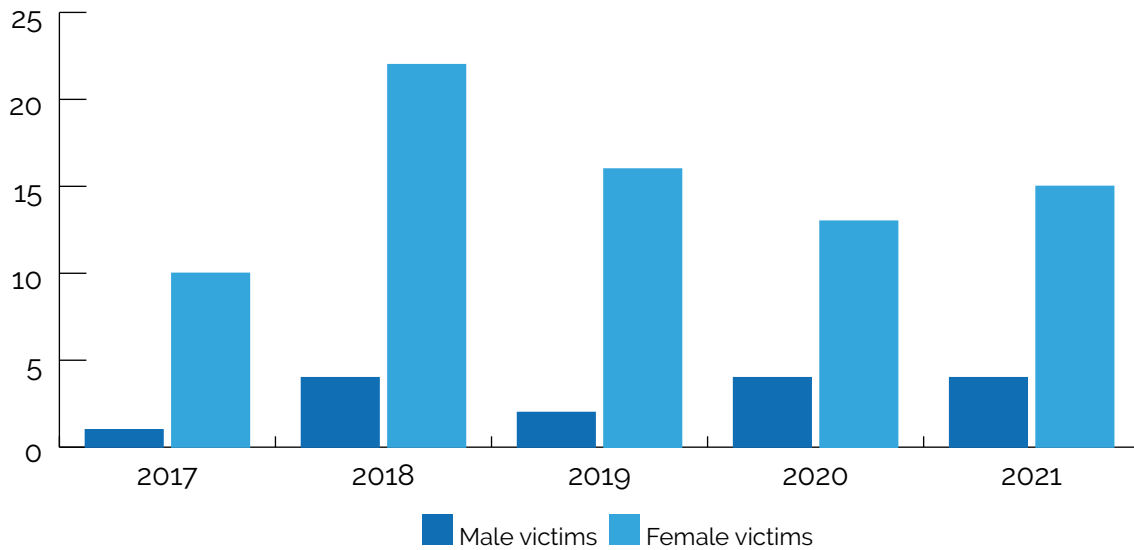


Note: The gender of the victim could not be determined for one of the cases in 2012.

Source: Brottsförebyggande rådet (Brå) (n.d.)⁸⁶

The picture changes when considering violence in close relationships. Brå data shows that in 2022, in the 80 per cent of cases where women were victims of assault, the perpetrator was someone they knew, or were familiar with. In cases where men were victims of similar crimes, these offences were predominantly committed by strangers (58 per cent of cases), and outside of the private sphere.⁸⁷ As noted by the Swedish police, however, the number of assaults against women perpetrated in the context of close relationships is likely to be an underestimate, as these cases often go

unreported.⁸⁸ In Sweden, women are also the main victims of fatal violence in the context of intimate relationships. In 2021, there were 15 such cases—compared to four involving male victims—which corresponds to almost two-thirds of all cases of fatal violence against women (see Figure 6).⁸⁹ The data on violence, including fatal violence, against women in the context of close or intimate relationships provides no additional detail on whether these acts were facilitated or committed by firearms.

Figure 6 Number of victims of fatal violence by a partner/former partner in Sweden (2017-21)

Source: Brottsförebyggande rådet (Brå) (n.d.)⁹⁰

The various figures discussed above confirm some of the already established assumptions around GBV, and particularly GBV against women. For instance, men and boys remain the primary victims of violence, including lethal violence, intentional homicides, and particularly violence occurring in public spaces.

Men and boys also appear to be the main casualties of firearm violence, when this information is available. Different dynamics emerge in the private and domestic sphere and the context of intimate relationships. In

such cases, the proportion of women and girls falling victim to violence, including deadly violence, is disproportionately high and, in some countries, even increasing. Gaps in available data and the variety of methodologies used, however, make it difficult to draw a comprehensive picture of the prevalence and dynamics of GBV, as well as the role of firearms in committing or facilitating this form of violence in the EU. First, figures on GBV or domestic violence, when available, appear

Gaps in available data and the variety of methodologies used, make it difficult to draw a comprehensive picture of the prevalence and dynamics of GBV.

to focus primarily on violence against women and girls in the context of heterosexual relationships. Consequently, very little is still understood about forms of GBV affecting other categories of individuals (such as heterosexual men or members of the LGBTQ community) that, as noted above, are

nonetheless greatly exposed to the risk of such violence, including in the presence of firearms.⁹¹ The same applies to how different factors, including ethnicity, intersect with each other, possibly heightening the risks of GBV. Furthermore,

when details on GBV against women and girls, or other categories, are available, it is not always clear whether firearms were used in connection with the recorded acts of violence, either in private or public contexts. Finally, while there is a better understanding of the dynamics of domestic violence and intimate partner violence against women, little information is available on the circumstances in which violence against women is perpetrated outside of these contexts.

The EU regulatory framework: status and potential gaps

The available information on gender-based firearm violence in the EU does not make possible to draw a comprehensive and comparative picture of the prevalence and dynamics of the phenomenon. This information does, however, provide some illustrative examples of the contexts in which these episodes may occur. It also helps to identify the factors that could heighten the risk of gender-based firearm violence, and highlights the need for more systematic and (to the extent possible) harmonized data collection and reporting methods. Against this background, a series of regulatory instruments can support the EU in mitigating or preventing the risk of firearms being used to facilitate or commit GBV against women and other individuals at risk, such as people with diverse sexual orientation and gender identity and expression. These include both tools that have been developed, or are currently being discussed, that aim to tackle gender-based discrimination and violence against women more broadly as well as the longer-established EU framework for the control of the manufacture, trade, and possession of firearms and small arms. The following sections provide an overview of these tools and seek to identify ways in which they could contribute to addressing gender-based firearm violence in the EU, as well as potential gaps and opportunities for synergies.

EU framework to address gender-based discrimination and violence

The EU has developed, or is currently developing, instruments that aim to tackle gender-based discrimination and violence more specifically. These include the GBV-related surveys mentioned above. In addition, the EU Gender Equality Strategy for 2020–2025 is also a key document in this context.⁹² One of the strategy's key objectives is to end GBV, and particularly GBV against women. The document outlines a series of actions that the EU should take to achieve this goal, such as measures to prevent and combat GBV, to support victims, and to hold perpetrators accountable. To this end, the strategy calls for cooperation among different actors in the areas of criminal justice and victim support and, importantly, upon EU member states to collect data on GBV.⁹³

One of the main outcomes of the adoption of the Gender Equality Strategy was the proposal, submitted by the Commission in March 2022, of an EU Directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence.⁹⁴ The proposal aims to introduce minimum standards across the EU for the criminalization of certain forms of violence against women, including rape, female genital mutilation, and certain forms of cyber violence. The text addresses violence against women and domestic violence either between intimate partners or between other family members. In both cases of domestic violence, “women are disproportionately represented as victims [...] due to the underlying pattern of coercion, power and/or control”.⁹⁵ Nonetheless, the explanatory memorandum of the proposal recognizes that anyone can potentially become a victim of GBV “regardless of their sex or gender”.⁹⁶ For instance, it states that, in the case of domestic violence, victims can include men, younger or older people, children, and LGBTIQ+ persons.⁹⁷

a In the original proposal, the term “gender” is generally used to refer to “socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for women and men”. See European Commission (2022), Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on combating violence against women and domestic violence, COM(2022) 105, final 2022/0066 (COD), <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52022PC0105>.

The text also indicates a series of factors that, when intersecting, can also exacerbate GBV against women and domestic violence, noting that LBTQ women, “women with disabilities and women with a minority racial or ethnic background” are particularly at risk.⁹⁸

The proposal provides some useful references that could address the risk of firearms being used to facilitate or perpetrate acts of GBV and domestic violence. One of the key points relates to victim protection measures, which may include orders “prohibiting the offender or suspect to [...] possess firearms or deadly weapons, where necessary”.⁹⁹ In addition, the use or threat of using a weapon in the commission of the offence is regarded as an aggravating circumstance. When making individual assessments to identify victims’ protection needs, the proposal also prescribes the need to consider the risk of weapons being used.¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, the text follows on directly from the Gender Equality Strategy and includes among its objectives the improvement of data collection on violence against women and domestic violence cases at the EU level, such as through the disaggregation of data by sex and age of the victims, and their relationship with the offender(s).

In June and July of 2023, following the launch of the Commission’s proposal, both the Council of the EU and the European Parliament adopted their positions before entering negotiations on the final text. The Parliament’s position expands on many of the points proposed by the Commission—for example, by widening the definition of rape and adding sexual assault, intersex genital mutilation, forced sterilization, and forced marriage to the list of different forms of GBV. The Parliament advocates for a stronger consideration of “the increased risk of violence faced by victims of intersectional discrimination based on both sex and gender” and the inclusion of aggravating circumstances for GBV targeting victims on the basis of their “sexual orientation, gender expression or identity, sexual characteristics, skin color”.¹⁰¹ Finally, the Parliament also proposes enhancing data collection to

determine whether the victims belong “to a vulnerable group” or are affected by disability.¹⁰² In comparison, the “general approach” adopted by the Council appears more conservative.¹⁰³ One of the Council’s most controversial amendments is the deletion of rape from the list of offences that the directive would criminalize at the EU level. The Council’s suggested amendments also erase the definition of “gender” from the Commission’s proposal but proposes to use this term exclusively throughout the text while eliminating the term “sex”.¹⁰⁴ In addition, the amendments to the text proposed by the Council’s position, while maintaining provisions on “data collection and research”, require data to be disaggregated only by the type of offence, thus erasing references to other useful elements to understand patterns of GBV in the EU.¹⁰⁵

Maintaining the language proposed by the Commission—or even expanding on it as proposed by the Parliament—would, however, be in line with commitments that EU member states have already taken in the context of the AIT and the UN PoA.¹⁰⁶ Ideally, such statistics should also indicate the weapons used in the commission of GBV, and whether they were held legally—information that, as mentioned above, is already included in some national data sets.

EU framework on control of firearms and small arms and light weapons, and its role in addressing GBV

While firearms and small arms largely overlap from a technical perspective, the term “firearm” is used by the EU to refer to weapons destined for civilian use, while “small arms and light weapons” refers to items that are “specially designed for military use”.¹⁰⁷ EU policies and standards developed by different institutional actors and introducing controls over the manufacture, trade, and possession of these items have reflected this distinction.

For instance, under the EU’s Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), EU member states have driven the development of instruments to regulate extra-EU exports of military items, including “military-grade firearms and SALW [small arms and light weapons]”.¹⁰⁸ Relevant standards are currently encoded in the Council Common Position 2008/944/CFSP “defining common rules governing control of exports of military technology and equipment”.¹⁰⁹ The Common Position includes eight criteria for the assessment of arms export control-related risks, including the risk of weapons being used to commit serious violations of international humanitarian law and human rights (as provided by Criterion 2). Although the text of the Common Position does not, unlike the ATT, explicitly mention the risk of GBV, the User’s Guide accompanying the EU Common Position indicates that GBV-related risk assessments should be considered when examining Criterion 2.¹¹⁰

The European Commission has been responsible for the development of common policies regu-

lating the international trade (through Regulation 258/2012) and private possession and intra-EU transfers (through Directive 91/477/EEC) of civilian firearms within the framework of the EU common commercial policy.¹¹¹ The EU Firearms Action Plan tackles firearms trafficking and currently covers the period 2020–25.¹¹² Some of these instruments and documents contain language that may be relevant for GBV-related issues. For instance, the Firearms Directive includes a generic requirement for granting firearms licences to people that “are not likely to be a danger to themselves or others, to public order or to public safety” with “the fact of having been convicted of a violent intentional crime [...] considered to be indicative of such danger”.¹¹³ The Firearms Action Plan, which refers to both the EU and South-east Europe partners,^b contain references to gender-related actions, such as to “fully integrate gender concerns in firearms control policies”. These actions are, however, indicated as “specific” for these partners, thus making it unclear whether similar commitments apply to EU member states.¹¹⁴

At the EU level, policymaking related to the control of firearms and that of SALW have followed separate tracks. The 2018 EU Strategy Against Illicit Firearms, Small Arms & Light Weapons and their Ammunition aimed to overcome such divisions. In particular, it sought to promote an integrated approach to the internal and external threats posed by the illicit acquisition and proliferation of SALW and firearms, encompassing areas covered by both the EU’s firearms and SALW policy frameworks.¹¹⁵ One of the strategy’s guiding principles is the inclusion of “gender and diversity aspects in small arms and light weapons control projects and actions”.¹¹⁶ Furthermore, among the actions that the EU commits to undertake as part of international cooperation and assistance, the document

a After undergoing several amendments, the Firearms Directive is now codified as the Directive (EU) 2021/555 of the European Parliament and of The Council of 24 March 2021 on control of the acquisition and possession of weapons, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32021L0555>. In 2022, the EU Commission presented a new proposal for a recast regulation on the import, export, and transit of firearms to make amendments to Regulation 258/2012; the process is still ongoing: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train/theme-internal-market-and-consumer-protection-imco/file-regulation-on-import-export-and-transit-measures-for-firearms-\(recast\)](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train/theme-internal-market-and-consumer-protection-imco/file-regulation-on-import-export-and-transit-measures-for-firearms-(recast)).

b South-east Europe partners are the Western Balkans region, Moldova, and Ukraine.

notes efforts to “systematically mainstream gender considerations in the design of new projects relating to the fight against gun violence and SALW [small arms and light weapons] control in general, and the sharing of good practices in this regard”.¹¹⁷ As an example of this, in 2018 the Council adopted a decision to fund an international project “in support of gender mainstreamed policies, programmes and actions in the fight against small arms trafficking and misuse, in line with the Women, Peace and Security agenda”.¹¹⁸

Taken together, EU firearms and small arms control-related instruments can therefore play an important role in reducing or preventing gender-based firearm violence within the EU. While most of the discussions and reasoning at the EU level on GBV-related issues have taken place in the context of EU SALW control-related tools that have an external dimension, the blurred distinction between small arms and firearms allows some of these ideas to be applied to EU instruments focused on firearms. One of the main challenges in creating connections and synergies, however, remains the two separate institutional structures in which these two sets of instruments are framed.

As noted above, although the legislative process is still ongoing, the emerging EU framework to address gender-based discrimination and violence includes, or could include, components promoting a better understanding of gender-based firearm violence in the EU and measures to prevent and address this phenomenon. There is therefore potential to establish some linkages with the EU firearms and small arms control-related framework in order to complement and reinforce these efforts. For instance, the explanatory memorandum of the Commission’s proposal for an EU Directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence includes sections outlining

how the scope of the Directive is consistent with both EU existing policy provisions in the same thematic area as well as with other EU policies.

Taken together, EU firearms and small arms control-related instruments can play an important role in reducing or preventing gender-based firearm violence within the EU.

No reference is made, however, to EU firearms and SALW control-related instruments.¹¹⁹ In order to make the scope of the Directive as comprehensive as possible, EU legislators

should consider adding language referring to the widely acknowledged linkages between armed violence and GBV—something that already guides EU external action in the field of SALW control-related assistance and EU arms export control policies.¹²⁰

Conclusion and implications

The EU has long established a framework setting standards for controls over the manufacture, trade, and possession of firearms and small arms. It also actively promotes such standards in non-EU countries, and its external action in the field is particularly sensitive to gender mainstreaming in firearms and small arms control-related policies. At home, the EU is taking steps both to tackle GBV against women and domestic violence through the development of a dedicated regulatory framework, and to improve understanding of the phenomenon through EU-wide surveys. This context offers several opportunities:

Improving data collection on the impact of firearm-related violence on GBV: The gendered impact of armed violence, as well as the role of small arms and firearms in facilitating or exacerbating the risk of GBV, has been progressively acknowledged by states, including EU member states, in different settings and forums. The lack of comparable national data, however, makes it difficult to draw a comprehensive picture of the

phenomenon in the EU. Ongoing discussions on the EU Directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence offer the opportunity to fill this gap through provisions on “data collection and research” that could promote the creation of gender-disaggregated statistics that would also help to determine the impact of other risk factors and the use of firearms in committing or facilitating GBV.

Promoting a consistent use of relevant terminology:

This ongoing legislative process could also initiate a wider discussion about terminology and the use of key terms (such as gender and sex) consistently across EU policy instruments and documents.

Creating stronger linkages between SALW/firearms control-related tools and EU initiatives promoting gender equality and tackling GBV:

Making such linkages explicit would make it possible to establish a comprehensive framework to achieve gender equality and tackle GBV against women and other individuals at risk. This would

also be in line with relevant commitments made by the EU and EU member states in the field of human rights, arms control, and international development, and would strengthen their efforts to support gender mainstreaming initiatives in various fields outside of the EU.

The launch of the EU Gender Equality Strategy and the proposal for an EU Directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence therefore creates momentum for improving the general public’s, policymakers’, and other interested stakeholders’ understanding of the impact and role of firearms in facilitating GBV in the EU, and to adopt the neces-

sary responses. At the same time this process will benefit from the body of expertise and knowledge that has been developed on the topic, the existing EU framework on firearms and SALW controls, as well as the good practices in terms of data collection that have already been adopted by some EU member states.

The launch of the EU Gender Equality Strategy and the proposal for an EU Directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence creates momentum for improving the general understanding of the impact and role of firearms in facilitating GBV in the EU.

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Project INSIGHT

Project INSIGHT is an initiative that aims to prevent violence by enhancing the visibility of firearm violence in the European Union. With an online knowledge platform (www.gunviolence.eu) as its primary tool, the project also entails the creation of eight research reports on various themes of firearms violence. Project INSIGHT is funded by the European Union's Internal Security Fund - Police.

Project INSIGHT is coordinated by the Flemish Peace Institute. The Flemish Peace Institute was established in 2004 as a para-parliamentary institution within the Flemish Parliament. It provides thorough analyses, informs and organizes the debate and promotes peace and the prevention of violence. In the past the institute has coordinated other EU-funded projects on firearms such as SAFTE, DIVERT and TARGET.

The publication process of the Project INSIGHT research reports was supervised by the Small Arms Survey. The Small Arms Survey strengthens the capacity of governments and practitioners to reduce illicit arms flows and armed violence through three mutually reinforcing activities: the generation of policy relevant knowledge, the development of authoritative resources and tools, and the provision of training and other services.

Other partners in the Project INSIGHT-network include Textgain, SIPRI, and the Institute of Security and Global Affairs at Leiden University. The project also receives support from the Belgian Federal Police, Europol, European Firearms Experts, Dutch National Police and SEESAC.

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