



Information on violation of women's rights in the Russian Federation

Femicid.net (НЕТ ФЕМИЦИДУ, NO TO FEMICIDE) – is an independent project. In 2019 the project began to collect news about femicide and publish data in the public domain. The project starts its work because the society doesn't have full and truthful information about the femicide in Russia and authorities refuse to acknowledge the femicide as a problem.

Researchers of the project looked at publically accessible news sites in all 84 regions of Russia (excluding the annexed Crimea and Sevastopol) and noted reports about killing of women. Then the information was checked on the websites of the prosecutor's offices, courts, and investigative committees. The resulting data was then entered into a table that reflected demography, social status, relations between the victim and the perpetrator, the circumstances of the crime, the course of the investigation and its conclusion.

The current information is based upon the data collected by the Femicid.net project up to the 23th of July, 2021 and covers the femicide news for the period of 2019-2021.

The situation with femicide in the Russian Federation still shows the failure of the State to comply with its obligations under Article 2 (non-discrimination), Article 3 (equality for women and men) and Article 6 (the right to life).

Femicide in the Russian Federation

As of the 23th of July, 2021, the femicid.net database contained:

1754 femicide news for 2019, including **1548** intimate femicide news (murders committed by relatives, intimate partners and acquaintances), **1630** femicide news for 2020 (**1442** intimate femicides) and **666** femicide news in 2021.

The crime could fall into our study in the form of news about the murder, search, investigation, trial, sentence, attempt to falsify the case. When new data appeared in the progress of the investigation, it was added to the table. The coefficient of femicide reported in the news, CNF, was calculated according to the standard formula that is used all over the world: the number of murders was divided by the number of female population in the district (region) and multiplied by 100 thousand. We calculated the coefficient for all detected cases of femicide in general and separately for those in which the killer was somehow related to the victim (coefficient of intimate femicide reported in the news, CNFi).

As of the 23th of July, 2021 the coefficient of femicide reported in the news (CNF) and the coefficient of the intimate femicide reported in the news (CNFi) for the Russian Federation: for the year 2019 CNF **2.27**, CNFi **2.00**, for the year 2020 CNF **2.11**, CNFi **1.86**.

The coefficients of different regions of Russia in 2020 vary a lot – from **12.17** in the Chukotka Autonomous Okrug and **5.31** in the Komi Republic to **0.13** in the Chechen Republic (the regions of the North Caucasus, where honor killings have been reported, however in these regions the lack of independent media is presented).

In the federal districts of Russia the situation is as follows:

Federal district	2019 (the collection of the data continues)		2020 (the collection of the data continues)	
	CNF	CNFi	CNF	CNFi
Russia	2.27	2.00	2.11	1.86
Far Eastern	4.01	3.61	3.30	2.82
Volga	2.60	2.37	2.47	2.21
Northwestern	2.78	2.36	2.99	2.63
North Caucasian	1.04	0.81	0.75	0.65
Siberian	2.36	2.19	2.18	2.00
Ural	2.49	2.20	1.99	1.85
Central	1.85	1.58	1.71	1.48
Southern	1.78	1.54	1.86	1.60

We want to emphasize that our CNF is calculated based on the news in the media and does not reflect the real situation with the murders. CNFi in our calculations is not only news about murders of women by “husbands”. Obviously, the real rate of femicides is several times higher. The decline in rates in 2020 is only due to the fact that we have not yet found all the news about the murders in 2020, since many of them (those that will generally become available to the public) appear in the open sources with a delay of 1-2 years or more.

Data on the relationship between the killer and the victim. As of the 23th of July, 2021 and for the period of the year 2020 we found mentions of **691** cases of femicide committed by an intimate partner, **66** – by a former intimate partner, **280** - by other male relatives (including **170** – son, **34** – grandson, **58** – close male relative) and **401** – by acquaintances. As for the category of “acquaintances”, as well as the category of “unknown” (**146**) and “unacquainted criminal” (**42**) – their intimacy or close connection of any kind to the victim is not excluded. We are still clarifying the data on the structure of intimate femicide in Russia in 2019. As of the 27th of July, 2021 and for the period of the year 2019 we found mentions of **720** cases of femicide committed by an intimate partner, **81** – by a former intimate partner, **314** by other male relatives (including **178** – son, **30** – grandson, **84** – close male relative) and **421** – by acquaintances, **1** – murder of a woman by police (a district police officer and his colleagues). Due to the emergence of new information, the category of “acquaintances”, as well as the category of “unknown” (**144**) and “unacquainted criminal” (**61**) have changed – their intimacy or close connection of any kind to the victim is not excluded.

Femicide methods. Among the methods of murder in 2019 the methods that prevailed were: beaten – **630**, stabbed – **606**, strangled – **181**. The data for 2020 is, so far as follows: stabbed – **578**, beaten – **593**, strangled – **142**.

Places of femicide. Among the places of murder in 2019 prevailed: shared housing – **610**, victim’s housing – **364**, murderer's housing – **93**. Among the places of murder in 2020 prevailed: shared housing – **740**, victim's housing – **296**, street – **93**.

Difficult cases. In 2019 in **198** cases other people were injured, and in **53** cases femicide was committed collectively, that is, by several killers. In 2020, these numbers are **185** and **32** respectively.

Femicide cover-up campaign. Almost all government statistics on violence published in Russia do not correspond to the reality – officials continue to say that hundreds of women die at the hands of intimate partners every year, they hide femicide in the category of deaths under the term “external causes of death,” as we detailed in the last year's report. The information campaign designed to conceal femicide is primarily characterized by the lack of labeling of femicide and avoidance of the word “femicide” in any possible way, replacing it with “domestic violence”, “murder of passion”, “intimate or domestic murder”, “alcoholic murder”.

Responsibility of journalists. We studied previous attempts of journalists to influence unethical descriptions of femicides, and also developed our own methodological materials for the Russian media that wish to improve the quality of their news (video lectures, articles with illustrations, presentations). We write letters to the editors of the newspapers and magazines that are known for their special love for "sensationalism" and try to transmit the importance of adhering to the ethical codes. We plan to continue to study the language that is used by the femicidal media and share our work with the press. A case that we discovered in 2020 shows another side of the problem – femicidal fakes. The newspaper of the Agapovsky district “Zvezda” (chief-editor – Elena Vladimirovna Vashkevich) published an article named “Rating of the most sinister crimes of 2020 in the Chelyabinsk region”. Out of the 10 news stories 7 turned out to be fake, invented based on the criminal news of past years. The newspaper continues its work and it is just one of many thousands of provincial media, which are full of articles that violate the law.

Responsibility of the authorities. In 2021, we also examined the “first reports” of femicide, the source of which in Russia is most often the Investigative Committee. Often, local media reprint the messages of the IC without changes. Of the 119 cases studied in January, 33 news stories contained indirect or direct accusations of the victim, 113 – the “voice of power”, in 115 cases the problem was presented as a local one, in 101 cases the history of previous violence was not documented, 15 cases contained myths about love, fidelity, jealousy and honor. Only in 4 news stories “the voice of relatives and friends” was heard, and one of them contained information about helping loved ones. This “first news” formed the basis for all subsequent communications on the case. We wrote to the Investigative Committee with concern that the rhetoric of news articles affects the level of femicide in the country and may contribute to new killings, and we received a response. We were told that they would like to see the Russian evidence that the media can influence femicide (data from international studies, apparently, were not enough).

On February 25, 2021, we addressed the Investigative Committee in order to convince the authorities about the importance of the ethical presentation of the first news. We also presented them the results of the scientific data on the influence of media on femicide rates in different countries and our own calculations. After submitting this we received a response from the Inspector of the Department for Information Support of the Press Department, E.V. Kabysheva, that the coverage of the course of the investigation of criminal cases is carried according to the "requirements of the Russian legislation." The materials attached to the letter were ignored: "since research materials are not attached, it is not possible to objectively assess the situation... Please, kindly provide these materials as well as the factual information proving that the published messages can provoke femicide." We plan to continue our research on femicide news language as well as our dialogue with government officials.

The severity of the sentences. In 2020 we continued to study the sentences that the killers receive for committing femicide. Thousands of femicide cases remain in the "gray" zone and are written off by the police as deaths caused by external causes. Only thanks to publicity and persistent demands of citizens these cases receive some type of real sentences. In the overwhelming majority of cases known to us the killer ends up in prison for a term of **49 to 144 months (480)**, without receiving any rehabilitation, and after that he is free to repeat the same crimes (2019). Sentences that do not reflect the social danger of femicide contribute to the idea that women are second-class citizens and make them defenceless against the law and society. Sentences for making a post on social media, for theft, for violence against animals might be more severe than in a femicide case. For example, in 2021 a sentence was passed in a murder case in the Yaroslavl Region (the body was found in a landfill in November 2020). The killer strangled

the woman up to the point of breaking her cervical vertebrae, he then threw her into a garbage container while she was still alive. The woman later died in a garbage truck pressed by a hydraulic compacting shovel. The court sentenced him for "attempted murder" to **5 years** in a general regime correctional colony. Sadly, there was no public reaction to the sentence.

The situation in prisons. In the Russian prisons criminals are not rehabilitated, on the contrary, they are subjected to humiliation and torture, that resulting in the prisons being essentially a "factory" of femicide. The most studied data for 2019 and up to date show that in **161** cases the killers were convicted before at least 1 time, in **18** – at least 2 times, in **24** cases – at least 3 times, in **97** cases – repeatedly. In total for 2019 we can be certain about **97** cases of femicide that were a relapse committed by a killer previously convicted for gender violence and it is not always the first relapse. In **1454** cases, we simply do not know if there were any previous problems with the law (just as we do not know about the rest of the cases, which amount to at least 3000). The huge number of relapses is a marker of the state of the penitentiary system in Russia.

The health care situation. Psychiatric care and rehabilitation for patients with addictions in Russia is in a deplorable state. **836** femicide news items (2019) report the killer's alcoholism, **38** - report drug addiction. In **52** cases (2019), femicide was committed by a person with some kind of a mental illness, who did not receive any proper medical and social support either. In **156** cases (2019), the killer had **2** or more diagnoses (in our study, we consider psychopathologies such as sadism (in **92** cases 2019) and jealousy (in **161** cases 2019) as diseases).

Unfinished murders. This year we also started counting the **unfinished femicides**. It turned out that the age, the degree of familiarity with the offender, the place of the episode, the methods of femicide, the number of victims – literally everything is different from the completed femicide. Once again this fact indicates the importance of a closer study of the entire spectrum of gender violence (for prevention and eradication). We will provide these data later, but they are already available in our open database.

More data on femicide. The current situation with the femicide in Russia is reflected by the publicly open statistics of our project on the website Femicid.net. Our database is completely open and contains data on femicide by districts, regions, by age, family and social status of victims and murderers, method and place of murder, presence of mental illnesses, investigation progress and sentences, etc. Of course, there could be errors in our data, since we work with a huge amount of contradictory material. However, we try to find errors as quickly as possible. We are also preparing a photo memorial of femicide victims in Russia.

In 2021, another human rights group in Russia, the Consortium of Women's NGOs, published a different type of analysed data. Unlike our project they do not study each case separately. With the help of a computer program they analyzed 2,000 sentences dictated by the Russian courts in 2018 and concluded that there were at least **5,000** victims of "domestic violence" per year in Russia, which is 20 times more than the data provided by the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

Conclusions. In the year that has passed since our last report, conservative values have become even more rooted in Russia. Society has taken a step towards greater patriarchy and women's lack of rights. The Russian government continues to promote "traditional family values," perpetuating stereotypes about gender roles and increasing inequality between the sexes, which leads to discrimination. There is still no effective state program for fighting against gender violence in the Russian Federation. There is no legislation to ensure equality between women and men, no laws against femicide. There is no ministry that would defend women's rights and promote equal opportunities. Women are scarcely represented in executive positions, and in a rare case to occupy them, they perform functions that serve the patriarchy.

We believe that it is necessary to change the rhetoric of the Investigative Committee, to introduce the definition of "femicide" into the official terminology, to understand the problem as global, not local. It is important to show a previous history of violence in order to end the victims' accusations. It is also very important that the news should include expert comments and information about where the victim of violence can turn for help. Instead of a bureaucratic bureaucracy, the news reported by the authorities should be the way to deal with the murder of women.