



City Research Online

City St George's, University of London

Citation: Miles, C. & Cook, E. A. (2026). Non-intimate femicide in England and Wales: A 'continua' approach. *The British Journal of Criminology*, azag005. doi: 10.1093/bjc/azag005

This is the published version of the paper.

This version of the publication may differ from the final published version. To cite this item please consult the publisher's version.

Permanent repository link: <https://openaccess.city.ac.uk/id/eprint/37092/>

Link to published version: <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjc/azag005>

Copyright and Reuse: Copyright and Moral Rights remain with the author(s) and/or copyright holders. Copies of full items can be used for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge, unless otherwise indicated, provided that the authors, title and full bibliographic details are credited, a hyperlink and/or URL is given for the original metadata page and the content is not changed in any way. For full details of reuse please refer to [City Research Online policy](#).

Non-intimate femicide in England and Wales: A ‘continua’ approach

Caroline Miles^{1,*} and Elizabeth A. Cook²

¹Department of Criminology, University of Manchester, Williamson Building, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL, United Kingdom

²Violence and Society Centre, City St Georges’s, University of London, Northampton Square EC1V 0HB, United Kingdom

*Corresponding author: Caroline Miles, Department of Criminology, University of Manchester, Williamson Building, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL, United Kingdom. E-mail: caroline.miles@manchester.ac.uk

This article addresses ‘non-intimate femicide’ (NIF), referring to the killing of women and girls outside of family and intimate relationships. Despite substantial proportions of femicides involving non-intimate circumstances, there is a dearth of evidence, research and policy on NIF. Using Homicide Index data for England and Wales (2002–2022), this article provides original insight into the victim, perpetrator and incident characteristics in NIF cases, and reveals important differences between intimate and NIF, as well as high levels of missing or poorly recorded data. We argue for more accurate recording of NIF, alongside a ‘continua thinking’ approach to femicide research, which documents the killing of *all* women and girls across a range of intimate and non-intimate contexts.

Keywords: femicide, non-intimate femicide, counting/recording femicide, continuum of violence

Introduction

In the UK 2024 general election, a key pledge in the Labour Party’s winning manifesto was to halve violence against women and girls (VAWG) over the next decade. The first step towards this goal involved enacting ‘Raneem’s Law’ (after Raneem Oudeh, who was murdered by her ex-husband in 2018), which will see domestic abuse specialists embedded into police control rooms across England and Wales from 2025. However, violence and abuse experienced by women and girls incorporates a multitude of contexts outside of (as well as within) family and intimate relationships, and any strategy aimed at significantly reducing VAWG will need to extend beyond the domestic sphere, including lethal violence. Despite important advances in domestic homicide (DH) prevention in recent years, in the year ending March 2023, 55 per cent of adult women (16+ years) killed across England and Wales were *not* categorized as DH (ONS 2024). To this end, this article specifically addresses

the killing of women and girls outside of family and intimate relationships, referred to here as ‘non-intimate femicide’ (NIF). In the UK alone, there have been numerous high-profile killings of women and girls by male strangers in recent years (for example, Sarah Everard, Sabina Nessa, sisters Nicole Smallman and Bibaa Henry, and three girls, Bebe King, Elsie Dot Stancombe and Alice Dasilva Aguiar killed in Southport). These cases attracted high levels of public attention and fuelled campaigns to make public spaces safer for women or how to regulate purchases of weapons, as is often the outcome of intense media interest in particular femicides (Boonzaier 2023). Attracting less media attention are the killings of women and girls by men with whom they are acquainted but not intimately connected to (or in some cases, not recognized as such). There is currently a dearth of data, knowledge and policy aimed at preventing NIF, a problem which this article begins to redress.

Despite a growing body of international literature on femicide, the overwhelming focus of research and policy pertains to women killed by family members and current/former partners, who are widely documented as accounting for the majority of femicide victims (Dawson and Carrigan 2021; EIGE 2021; UNODC 2022; Walby *et al.* 2017; WHO 2012). According to the United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC 2022), of the 81,000 female homicide victims globally in 2021, approximately 56 per cent ($n = 45,000$) were killed by someone in their family. This majority is routinely used as a rationale for prioritizing DH in femicide studies, as well as in measures to prevent femicide, such as fatality reviews (which in England and Wales are multi-agency reviews commissioned into family and intimate partner killings or domestic abuse-related deaths). It is not our intention to minimize the problem of women and girls killed in domestic contexts. However, we argue that there is *also* an urgent need to focus on the 44 per cent, or 36,000 women, killed globally in 2021 outside of their family (UNODC 2022), about whom little is known.

The aims of this paper are three-fold. First, the paper aims to address the invisibility of NIF by presenting an analysis of women and girls killed outside of domestic contexts in England and Wales over a 20-year period (2002–2022), using nationally representative administrative data—the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Homicide Index (HI). The findings begin to fill a lacuna in knowledge around the victim, perpetrator and incident characteristics surrounding NIF and facilitate a comparison between IF and NIF in England and Wales. Our analysis makes an original and important contribution to understanding the ‘continuum of violence’ experienced by women and girls, coined by Kelly (1987) (originally in relation to sexual violence) and developed further by Boyle (2019). A continuum thinking lens centres the connections between multiple forms of violence and abuse, without creating hierarchies or assuming severity (Sisic *et al.* 2024), and brings to the fore the multidimensional nature of men’s VAWG.

We argue that by adopting a ‘continua of violence’ approach to femicide, which recognizes how ‘gender links violence at different points on a scale’ (Cockburn 2004: 43), a nuanced and inclusive understanding of femicide can be developed that is not restricted to those categorized as ‘intimate’ or ‘domestic’. As Yadav and Horn (2021: 2) state, ‘[t]he continuum of violence reflects a holistic understanding that interrogates the private and the public, the personal and the political, and blurs the distinction between war and peace’. In this way, we seek to recognize the ‘multiplicity of continuums’ (Boyle 2019: 19) that can stretch across numerous domains, including intimacy.

Secondly, our analysis highlights the problem of missing data, referring to the significant number of ‘unknowns’ surrounding NIF—more so than in cases of DH, where missing or poorly recorded data has been recognized as problematic (Dawson *et al.* 2024). A continua thinking approach aimed at documenting *all* forms of lethal VAWG requires consistently

recorded and transparent data that enables the nuances and grey areas of intimate relationships to be captured (see [Miles et al. 2025](#)). However, the lack of conceptualization, evidence and data currently available precludes a full understanding of NIF. We make the case for better recording of all killings of women and girls, so that a robust evidence base can be constructed around the contexts of women killed outside of domestic relationships.

Thirdly, we consider the implications of poor recording for ascertaining gender-related motivations, which are upheld as a fundamental requisite for a female homicide to be labelled as a femicide. This matters not only for the purpose of evidencing ‘femicide’, but for capturing intersections between *multiple* forms of VAWG, which occur on *multiple* axes ([Crenshaw 1989](#); [Sisic et al. 2024](#)), whether across space, time, or relationships.

Challenges in defining and measuring (non-intimate) femicide

Although Russell first used the term in 1976, femicide was officially defined by Caputi and Russell in 1990 as ‘the murder of women by men motivated by hatred, contempt, pleasure, or a sense of ownership of women’ (cited in [Russell 2008](#): 28). Subsequent definitions have maintained this political framing, emphasizing that many women are killed *because* they are women, as a result of gender norms and expectations as well as misogynistic attitudes ([Cullen et al. 2021](#); [Dawson and Carrigan 2021](#); [EIGE 2021](#); [Walklate et al. 2019](#); [Weil 2016](#)). In many countries, including much of Latin America, the term ‘feminicide’ goes further to highlight the role of the state in failing to protect women and the failure to prosecute men for killing women ([EIGE 2021](#); [Shalhoub-Kervorkian and Daher-Nashif 2013](#)). The inclusion of the term ‘girls’ has also become commonplace, recognizing that young girls and adolescents are also victims of femicide ([Dawson and Carrigan 2021](#)). Although it is widely recognized that femicides are mostly perpetrated by men, some applications include women and girls killed by men and women, due to the small number of gender-based killings by women—for example in the context of same-sex relationships (see [Dawson and Carrigan 2021](#)), dowry-related killings and so-called ‘honour’ killings, which may involve women as perpetrators, but are intended to maintain patriarchal structures ([Boyle 2019](#)).

In some analyses, a broad interpretation of femicide is adopted in recognition of a lack of data around gender-based motivation. For example, in [Campbell and Runyan’s \(1998\)](#) introduction to a special journal issue on femicide, they outlined their approach as ‘cautiously avoiding inferences to motive without clear support from available data’ (p.347–348) and explained that for empirical purposes, the issue interpreted femicide as including ‘all killings of women, regardless of motive or perpetrator status’ (p.348). [Dawson and Carrigan \(2021\)](#) argue it is impossible to reduce femicide to sex/gender of the victim only, and capturing the context of killings is essential. However, there is a recognized problem of poor data quality that often makes it difficult for gender-based motivations to be ascribed, which has led to calls for improvements in data collection instruments for femicide across the globe ([Dawson and Carrigan 2021](#); [Dawson et al. 2024](#); [Walby et al. 2017](#)).

In addition to poor availability of contextual data, debates around how to define and operationalize ‘femicide’ arise from the broad variety of contexts in which women and girls are killed. Although the most common context involves current/former intimate partners ([Dawson and Carrigan 2021](#); [UNODC 2022](#); [UN and UNEGEW 2022](#); [Walby et al. 2017](#); [WHO 2012](#)), women and girls are also routinely killed in ‘honour’ and dowry-related killings; killings by family members; killings by friends, acquaintances, employers/employees; racist femicide (including police brutality against Black women); armed conflict; sexual murders; killings of Indigenous women; killing in the context of misogynist extremism;

killings relating to sexual orientation or gender identity; the systematic killing of women and girls; and femicides connected with gangs, organized crime, and human trafficking (Condry and Miles 2023; EIGE 2021; García-Del Moral 2018; Posey 2024; Shalhoub-Kervorkian and Daher-Nashif 2013; Walby *et al.* 2017; Walklate *et al.* 2019; WHO 2012).

These subtypes are commonly recognized as ‘gender-motivated’, a term informed by a growing body of research and protocols aiming to identify gender-based contexts characterizing femicide. Gender-related factors are broadly described as indicators of men’s entitlement over women, social norms surrounding ‘masculinity’, and the need to assert men’s power and control over women and girls (UN and UNEGEEW 2022). Drawing on the *Latin American Model Protocol*, Dawson and Carrigan (2021) developed a set of eight contextual characteristics (in addition to being killed by an intimate partner/family member) suggestive of ‘sex/gender-related motives or indicators’ (SGRMIs), with the intention that they may be used to identify, count, measure and distinguish femicides, and ultimately inform prevention strategies, albeit acknowledging that current recording practices do not always allow for these SGRMIs to be documented.

Moving away from NIF as a homogenous category

Compared to intimate femicide (IF), NIF receives considerably less attention in research, risk assessment and policy (WHO 2012), complicated by the fact that it is frequently defined by omission—everything *not* falling within often clearly defined categories of IF/DH (Miles, Cook, and Pullerits 2025). Where NIF is defined, it tends to be poorly and inconsistently conceptualized, without recognizing the range of contexts within which women are killed outside of intimate/familial circumstances. For example, the WHO (2012: 3) defines NIF as ‘[f]emicide committed by someone without an intimate relationship with the victim’, whilst the *Latin American Protocol* defines NIF as the ‘killing of a woman by a man unknown to her and with whom the woman had no relationship’ (Sarmiento *et al.* 2014: 15), excluding contexts in which women are killed by non-intimates with whom they have some kind of relationship.

Common examples of NIF in the literature include killings of women associated with gangs, organized crime, exploitation and trafficking; sexual homicides; femicides in the context of racist police brutality, armed conflict and misogynist extremism; killings of women accused of witchcraft; the killing of women aged over 65 years; the killing of women working in the sex industry, and systematic killing of women (Dawson and Carrigan 2021; Dobash and Dobash 2015; EIGE 2021; Posey 2024; UN and UNEGEEW 2022; WHO 2012). These forms of NIF are often the individual focus of research studies, rather than part of a broader examination on NIF. Despite incorporating NIF, often, these studies do not explicitly conceptualize them as NIF or substantively engage with the issue of victim-perpetrator relationship or the gendered contexts or circumstances in which these killings occur. For example, within the sexual homicide literature, research findings may report (in tables) the victim and/or perpetrator sex and relationship, but the data are not disaggregated by victim sex or victim-perpetrator relationship, and discussions tend to focus on crime scenes and methods of homicide rather than gender motivation (e.g. see Chopin and Beauregard 2020). Similarly, much of the eldercide literature, which includes killings by intimates, family members and non-intimates, either tends to focus on domestic eldercide (for example, see Bows 2019) or does not disaggregate by relationship. There are also examples of emerging forms of NIF, such as the killing of women in the context of incel-related violence or misogynistic extremism. However, these types of violence are more commonly studied within the context of homicide (e.g. Broyd *et al.*

2023) and are yet to be described as a form of femicide (see, for an exception, [Sauptura and Hayes 2023](#)).

Less often studied (and not tending to attract media or political attention) are the killings of women by colleagues/employers, neighbours, acquaintances/friends, and femicides in the context of casual, adolescent or same-sex relationships, which are not necessarily counted as intimate (see [Miles et al. 2025](#)). The most comprehensive data on NIF in the UK is recorded in the Femicide Census; a national database documenting all women killed by men since 2009, which collates data from media reports, social media posts, Freedom of Information request data from police, court reports, DHRs and serious case reviews. Published reports provide a breakdown of relationship data, although they do not include detailed analyses of femicide disaggregated by relationship, and tend to focus on intimate partner and adult family homicides. The 2025 report, *2,000 women*, revealed that 15 per cent of the first 2,000 women recorded in the database were killed by a man who they knew but was not a current/former partner or family member, and a further 9 per cent were killed by a stranger ([Ingala-Smith et al. 2025](#)). A further 2025 report presenting Femicide Census data for the 121 women killed by men in 2022 ([O'Callaghan et al. 2025](#)) states that 9 per cent of these women were killed by strangers and 20 per cent were killed by a known man who was not a former/current partner or family member.

There is a small body of international research providing some insight into NIF characteristics via broad comparisons with IF, although these studies vary considerably in their definitions and samples. For example, [Juodis et al.'s \(2014\)](#) comparison of DH and non-domestic homicide (NDH) perpetrators (including male and female victims) in Canada defined DH as involving a current/former partner as well as 'homicides involving the death of a person in an incident connected to DV' and 'all other homicides were considered NDHs' (p.300); [Fong et al.'s \(2016\)](#) study in Taiwan broadly compared femicides involving intimate versus non-intimate partners; [Loinaz et al.'s \(2018\)](#) comparison of intimate versus NIF in Spain defined NIF as involving 'no previous relationship' (p. 52); and [Zara et al.'s \(2019\)](#) comparative study in Italy defined IF as a woman killed by a person 'with whom she had been emotionally close' (p. 1927) and NIF as femicide by strangers or acquaintances. [Dobash and Dobash's \(2015\)](#) book, *When Men Murder Women*, disaggregated women who were killed in the UK into three categories, accounting for 90 per cent of their sample: intimate partner murders, sexual murders and murders of older women (aged over 64 years).

As a result of different conceptual approaches, it is difficult to draw comparisons across these studies. However, they do indicate important differences between IF and NIF, relating to risk factors, weapons, and levels of overkill ([Zara et al. 2019](#)); injury patterns ([Fong et al. 2016](#)); NIF being more likely to involve sexual violence ([Juodis et al. 2014](#); [Fong et al. 2016](#); [Zara et al. 2019](#)); and differences in victim/perpetrator characteristics, with IF victims reported as being younger ([Fong et al. 2016](#)), NIF perpetrators being younger ([Juodis et al. 2014](#); [Loinaz et al. 2018](#)), NIF perpetrators being more likely to have criminal convictions ([Juodis et al. 2014](#); [Loinaz et al. 2018](#); [Zara et al. 2019](#)) and exhibit antisocial behaviour ([Zara et al. 2019](#)) and more likely to display evidence of a criminal role, recklessness and higher levels of child adjustment problems and personality disorder ([Loinaz et al. 2018](#)). [Dobash and Dobash's \(2015\)](#) research found that despite similarities in the backgrounds of all perpetrators, men who killed intimate partners were different from sexual murderers and men who kill elderly women, with the former more likely to be educated and employed, less likely to have substance use problems, and less likely to have criminal records—in other words, less likely to meet the conventional, 'ideal offender' than men who killed older women or sexual murderers (see [Bows et al. 2024](#)).

These studies give some insight into the characteristics of NIF and indicate that it is distinguishable from IF. However, none of the studies explicitly focus on NIF, nor do they disaggregate victim-perpetrator relationships beyond ‘non-intimate’. They are also limited in how much they inform us about the structural contexts of NIF and/or the extent to which NIF is motivated by gender. It is acknowledged by UNODC (2022) that current estimations of the prevalence of femicide likely underestimate the problem, as globally, in four out of ten intentional killings of women and girls, there is insufficient data recorded to identify them as gender-motivated, including data on victim/perpetrator relationship and the context of the killing. Similarly, the EIGE (2021) recognizes that some femicides go unrecognized due to poor recording, including Indigenous women and girls who go missing, older women whose deaths are presumed accidental, and the killing of LGBT people where misogyny is not identified. Dawson *et al.* (2024) analysis of the UNODC and UNEGEEW (2022) statistical framework found that notwithstanding the recognized lack of data on victim-perpetrator relationship, there were substantial problems with data pertaining to other SGRMIs at the community and societal level, which may be more relevant to NIF.

The lack of agreed definition, data, political focus and academic interest in the killing of women outside of domestic circumstances means that relatively little is known about the victims, perpetrators, incident characteristics and contexts surrounding NIF. With the exception of high-profile murders of women by strangers, which attract considerable media attention, women killed outside of the domestic sphere remain invisible, lacking a clear prevention strategy or fatality review. To this end, the definition of NIF operationalized in our research included all women and girls (aged ten and over) killed in circumstances not officially categorized as DH by the ONS, which covers England and Wales.

The ONS (2024) definition of DH includes victims aged 16 years and over killed by a perpetrator in one of the following categories: spouse, common-law spouse, cohabiting partner, boyfriend or girlfriend, ex-spouse, ex-cohabiting partner or ex-boyfriend or girlfriend, adulterous relationship, son or daughter (including step and adopted relationships), parent (including step and adopted relationships), brother or sister or other relatives. By omission, any women and girls killed outside of these contexts would be considered ‘non-intimate’. The ONS (2024) reports that in the year ending March 2023, 35 per cent of adult women victims of homicide were killed by current/former partners, and a further 10 per cent were killed by family members, meaning a total of 45 per cent femicides were ‘domestic’ and the remaining 55 per cent were not counted as domestic—in other words, were NIF.

As part of an ongoing drive by academics (including Dawson and Carrigan 2021; Dawson *et al.* 2024; Walby *et al.* 2017; Walklate *et al.* 2019) for VAWG to be more accurately recorded, the need for improved data on femicide has been highlighted, which ‘fully captures the nuances, and contextualizes the events leading to the death’ (Cullen *et al.* 2021: 2). We argue that this includes examining the contexts of NIF, so that all forms of killings of women and girls are recognized, even if they are not officially acknowledged as gender-motivated (due to a lack of data to enable such a categorization to be made). Foregrounding the notion of continuum thinking means making visible the intersections between forms of VAWG that compound and reinforce one another and pulling into focus the core threads of multiple, intersecting inequalities that permeate across women’s experiences of violence and abuse. In addition, this approach pushes back against binary thinking and polarization in debates on VAWG, some of which have long histories (e.g. the dichotomy of ‘public/private’ spheres of violence; see Pateman 1983). We argue that comparing intimate to NIF has implications for *how* we identify risk (and *who* is at risk) as well as how risk is shaped by relationship dynamics, contexts and circumstances (Dawson and Gartner 1998). This is key for identifying priorities for intervention and recognizing continuities between forms of VAWG of seemingly different ‘orders’.

Current study

Building on existing work advocating a ‘continuum thinking’ approach, which recognizes grey areas in women’s experiences, disrupts binary thinking, and avoids ‘othering’ (or in this case, invisibilizing) groups of women (Boyle 2019; Kelly 1987; Walklate and Fitz-Gibbon 2023) our research set out to explore the nuances of fatal violence against women outside of the domestic sphere. In this paper, we present findings from a British Academy and Leverhulme-funded research project on NIF in England and Wales, which received University ethical approval (Ref: 2023-17277-29751). The project incorporated a scoping review exploring how NIF is conceptualized and operationalized within existing literature; analysis of national HI data to examine victim, perpetrator and incident characteristics; and analysis of media reports of NIF. In this article, we focus upon our analysis of HI data on all women and girls (aged 10 years and over) killed in England and Wales during the 20-year period 2002–22. A lower age threshold of 10 years was adopted in order to capture the killing of adolescent girls as well as women, and in line with the inclusive World Health Organization definition of adolescence (WHO 2025).

Methods and data

The HI collates data for every recorded homicide across England and Wales. The database consists of variables, including those recording victim and suspect characteristics (e.g. sex, age, ethnicity, employment status), incident characteristics (for example, method, location, circumstance), and criminal justice outcomes. The dataset provided only included suspect characteristic data if a suspect was convicted (or died/took their own life prior to trial/conviction); hence, if no suspect was charged or convicted, the suspect data cells would be empty.

The Excel dataset provided by the Home Office contained records of all female homicide victims recorded over the 20-year period and included separate rows of data for every victim and every suspect (so in a case with three victims and one suspect, there would be three separate rows for each victim, meaning the suspect data would be duplicated—and vice versa for cases involving multiple suspects). After converting the dataset into SPSS, a data cleaning process removed all victims under the age of ten, all victims who were killed before the timeframe (but for instance, were only recorded between 2002 and 2022, which included the victims of Harold Shipman and the Hillsborough Stadium disaster), and creating three separate datasets: (1) a ‘victims’ dataset, including one row of data for every victim but removing duplicate victim data where there were multiple suspects (used for analyses of victim characteristics); (2) a ‘suspects’ dataset including one row of data for every suspect but removing duplicate suspect data where there were multiple victims (used for analyses of suspect characteristics); and (3) a ‘cases’ dataset including one row of data per event, removing duplicate data where there were multiple victims and/or suspects (used for analyses of incident characteristic). These datasets were used to explore femicide per se and to conduct a comparative analysis disaggregating femicide into intimate and NIF. A further three datasets (reflecting the above victim, suspect and incident datasets) were then created, including data for NIF only, which were used to conduct specific analyses of NIF.

Creating separate datasets in this way balances the effects of missing data while helping to ensure that these victims of femicide were not further invisibilized by excluding them from our analyses. For example, no suspect was charged for approximately one-third of NIF victims. By comparing IF and NIF, including separate analyses of cases where no suspect was charged, key differences and similarities can be identified across different types of VAWG. Furthermore, analysing multiple forms of femicide on a continuum means that they can be understood in relation to one another and that we can advance understanding of intimacy as well as non-intimacy.

Findings

Between 2002 and 2022, 3,627 women and girls (herein ‘women’) were recorded as homicide victims in England and Wales, 59.6 per cent ($n = 2,163$) of whom met the ONS definition of domestic homicide and 40.4 per cent ($n = 1,464$) of whom did not, falling into our category of ‘NDH’. The women were killed in 3,478 ‘events’ (some involving multiple suspects/victims). In total, 3,415 suspects were charged, and in 422 cases (involving 431 victims), no suspect was charged (indicating no suspect was identified, or was identified but not ultimately charged with any offence), and therefore no suspect data were available—these were all categorized as NIF, as the victim-suspect relationship for these cases was recorded as ‘no current suspect’ (therefore not meeting the criteria to be defined as intimate). Below, we present our findings according to three sets of analysis: (1) an exclusive analysis of the characteristics of NIF in England and Wales, (2) analysis of cases in which no suspect was charged, and (3) a comparison of IF and NIF.

NIF in England and Wales

Our sample of 1,464 NIF victims from 2002 to 2022 comprised all women and girls (aged ten years and over) killed across England and Wales in 1,361 events, including 431 victims (in 422 cases) for whom no suspect was charged (29.4 per cent). For these cases, there were no suspect or relationship data available. It is plausible that a number of these victims were killed by an intimate/kin relation; however, there is evidence that case characteristics, including victim-suspect relationship, impact upon homicide clearance rates, with DH most likely to be solved (Riedel 2008). We did not want to further invisibilize these women, so they were retained in our victim and case datasets.

The age range of the NIF victims (recorded for all victims) was 10–100 years, with a mean age of 47. Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of victim age groups, revealing that the largest proportion of victims were in the 26–35 category, accounting for 17.4 per cent of victims. However, almost one in five victims were 76+ (accounting for 18.8 per cent of victims), and over one quarter (25.8 per cent) were 66+.

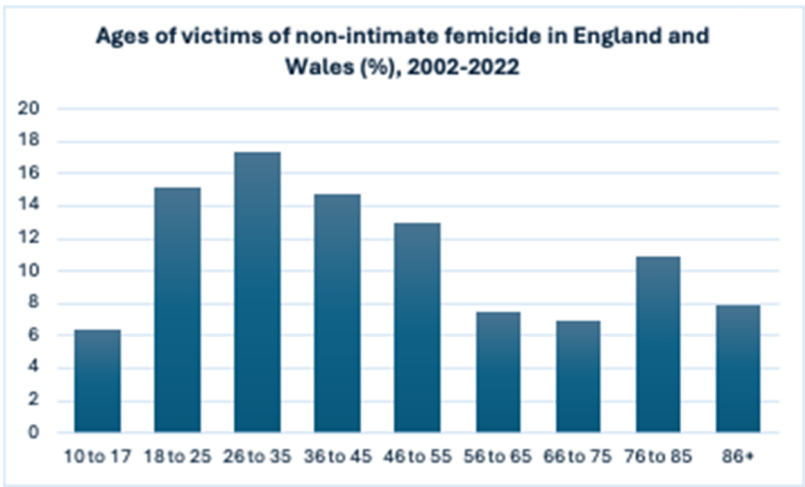


Fig. 1 Ages of victims of non-intimate femicide in England and Wales, 2002–2022

Table 1 Relationship between victim and suspect in NIF in England and Wales, 2002–2022

Victim-suspect relationship	Frequency	Percent
Friend or social acquaintance	352	24.0
Stranger	347	23.7
Prostitute/client	40	2.7
Business associate	30	2.0
Casual sexual partner	29	2.0
Carer, health worker and patient	26	1.8
Customer/client	17	1.2
Criminal associate	7	0.5
Lover's spouse	2	0.1
Emotional rival (not elsewhere specified)	1	0.1
Relationship not known	182	12.4
No current suspects	431	29.4
Total	1464	100.0

The recorded ethnicity of victims revealed that the majority (78 per cent; $n = 1,142$) were White¹, with 6.3 per cent recorded as Asian, 6.3 per cent as Black, 3.8 per cent as 'other' and 5.7 per cent recorded as 'not known'. High levels of missing data meant that the analysis of victim employment status was limited in meaning, with 12.9 per cent recorded as employed, 13.7 per cent as unemployed, 14.2 per cent as retired, 4.9 per cent as students, and 52.9 per cent as 'not known'. Similarly, the recording of victim occupation was compromised by high levels of missing data (27.2 per cent recorded as 'not known'), and very few specific occupations listed, including medical staff (1.9 per cent), police officer (0.3 per cent), prison officer (0.1 per cent), security staff (0.2 per cent) and sex worker (4.9 per cent). 16.9 per cent NIF victims had their occupation recorded as 'other occupation' and 48.4 per cent as 'no current occupation'.

For 431 victims, no suspect was charged. This meant that for these victims, accounting for 29.4 per cent of our NIF victim sample, no victim-suspect relationship was recorded (although data surrounding the circumstances of the killings were provided). As shown in Table 1, for a further 182 (12.4 per cent) victims, the relationship was recorded as 'not known', meaning that for 41.8 per cent of NIF victims, there are no data on the victim-perpetrator relationship. For 347 victims (23.7 per cent), the relationship was recorded as 'stranger', and for 504 victims (34.4 per cent), another form of non-intimate relationship was recorded. The most frequent relationship was 'friend or social acquaintance', which was recorded for 24 per cent ($n = 352$) victims. As we have argued elsewhere (Miles *et al.* 2025), this category creates challenges due to the broad range of relationships it encompasses, from distant acquaintances to neighbours, colleagues, long-term friends, casual, online or adolescent dating relationships, and same-sex relationships not recognized as intimate. There is also a case for categories, such as 'emotional rival', 'casual sexual

¹ This compares to 69 per cent of all homicide victims in the year ending March 2023, and 82 per cent of the population in England and Wales according to the 2021 Census.

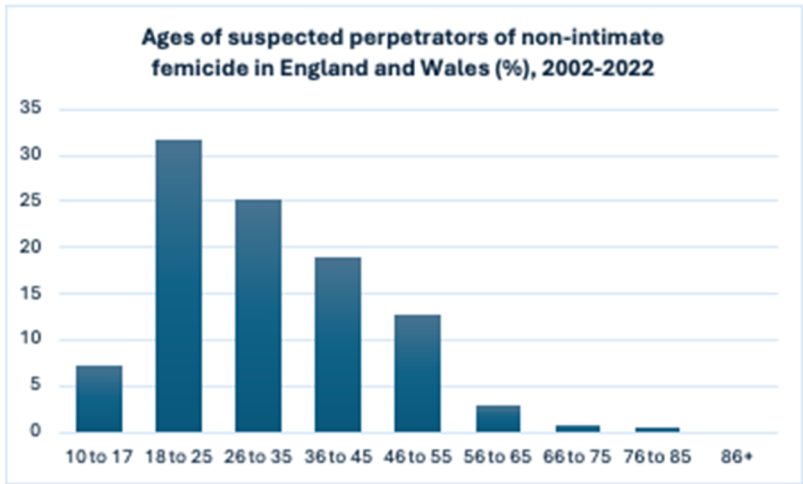


Fig. 2 Ages of suspected perpetrators of non-intimate femicide in England and Wales, 2002–2022

partner’ and ‘lover’s spouse’ to be counted as a DH, recognizing the continuum of intimacy and contemporary forms which intimate relationships may take.

The data on suspect characteristics were similarly compromised by high levels of missing data. Four hundred twenty-two out of 1,643 total suspects were not charged, meaning no data were available for these suspects, and they were therefore removed from the suspect dataset. Of the 1,221 suspects who were charged, data were only available for the 869 suspects who were convicted of a homicide offence and the 43 suspects who died or took their own lives before the trial (total $n = 912$). For the 309 suspects who were charged with a homicide offence but acquitted or convicted of a lesser offence (e.g. causing death by dangerous driving), no suspect data were available. In total, there were no suspect data for 45 per cent ($n = 731$) of 1,643 potential suspects for NIF (422 who were not charged and 309 who were acquitted or convicted of a lesser offence).

Of the 912 suspects for whom data were available, 88.3 per cent ($n = 805$) were recorded as male (in comparison to 92 per cent suspects for all homicide; see ONS 2024) and 11.6 per cent as female ($n = 106$)², aged 13–84, with a mean age of 32 (and none recorded as ‘not known’ for sex or age). As illustrated in Figure 2, the most common age group for NIF suspects was 18–25 (31.7 per cent), followed by 26–35 (25.2 per cent). Despite one quarter of NIF victims being 66+, only 1.2 per cent suspects were this age, indicating that older NIF victims are killed by young perpetrators. In relation to ethnicity, 70 per cent suspects were recorded as White (compared to 68 per cent of all homicide offenders; see ONS 2024), 13 per cent as Black, 10.9 per cent as Asian and 3.5 per cent as ‘other’, with just 2.0 per cent recorded as ‘not known’. Employment status data were only available for 845 suspects, 32.4 per cent ($n = 274$) of whom were recorded as unemployed or economically inactive, 21.1 per cent ($n = 178$) as employed, 5.6 per cent ($n = 47$) as students, 1.2 per cent ($n = 10$) as retired, and 39.7 per cent ($n = 336$) as ‘not known’. The high level of unknowns limits the meaningfulness of the analysis, but these statistics point to NIF being overwhelmingly perpetrated by young (mostly White) men, even when victims are older.

² One ‘suspect’ was recorded as ‘corporate, company’.

Table 2 Location of NIF in England and Wales, 2002–2022

Location	Frequency	Percent
Residential	642	47.2
Public places	279	20.5
Other location	33	2.4
Location unknown	407	29.9
Total	1361	100.0

The HI includes variables recording whether the suspect had a previous homicide or serious conviction. Again, there were high levels of missing data for these variables, with ‘not known’ recorded for 42.8 per cent ($n = 390$) suspects in relation to a previous homicide conviction and 43.3 per cent ($n = 395$) in relation to a previous serious conviction, limiting what can be inferred about the criminal backgrounds of NIF perpetrators. Just 1.3 per cent ($n = 12$) suspects were recorded as having a previous homicide conviction and 13.6 per cent ($n = 124$) suspects as having a previous serious conviction.

The NIF case characteristic dataset was used to analyse the location, method and circumstances surrounding NIF cases ($n = 1,361$). Table 2 illustrates the recorded offence location (using the ‘offence location group’ variable), revealing that despite the lack of intimate/kin relationship, almost half (47.2 per cent, $n = 642$) NIF cases occurred within residential locations, with just 20.5 per cent ($n = 279$) recorded as occurring in public places. These figures suggest that women are most at risk of being killed in private spaces, even in non-intimate circumstances. When broken down further using the more detailed variable for ‘offence location’, 38.1 per cent NIF cases were recorded as taking place within a house, 6.1 per cent in a nursing/care home and 3.4 per cent in a hospital/school/church. The location was recorded as ‘unknown’ for 29.9 per cent cases ($n = 407$).

Similarly, there was a lot of missing/poorly recorded data for the case circumstances, with 29.9 per cent ($n = 407$) recorded as ‘unknown’, 10.3 per cent ($n = 140$) as ‘circumstances not elsewhere specified’, and 7.3 per cent ($n = 100$) as ‘other known circumstances’. In 47.5 per cent of cases then, no circumstance was recorded, making it difficult to ascertain the context surrounding NIF and the extent of gender-motivation. For cases in which a circumstance was attributed, the most frequent responses were ‘reckless act’ (8.0 per cent cases), ‘sexual’ (7.6 per cent cases), ‘in the course of another crime’ (6.7 per cent cases), ‘domestic dispute’ (4.6 per cent cases) and ‘long-running dispute’ (4.4 per cent cases), which provide some insight, albeit limited, into the context of NIF. For the 62 (4.6 per cent) cases recorded as involving a ‘domestic dispute’, the recorded victim-suspect relationship included strangers, friends/acquaintances, business associates, ‘emotional rival’, ‘casual sexual partner’ and ‘lover’s spouse’ (as well as ‘no current suspect’); indicating that these cases were not erroneously in the NIF category.

Table 3 shows the array of means by which women are killed in non-intimate contexts, revealing that sharp instrument is by far the most common method, accounting for 20.9 per cent ($n = 284$) cases (compared to 41 per cent all homicides; see ONS 2024). The next most common methods include strangulation (9.7 per cent; $n = 132$), blunt instrument (7.8 per cent; $n = 106$), negligence/neglect (7.2 per cent; $n = 98$), and causing to fall against a hard surface (6.5 per cent; $n = 88$). Again, there were missing data for method, with 13.3 per cent ($n = 181$) cases recorded as ‘not known’ and 4.3 per cent ($n = 58$) cases as ‘other’.

Table 3 Method of killing used in NIF in England and Wales, 2002–2022

Method	N	%
Sharp instrument	284	20.9
Strangulation	132	9.7
Blunt instrument	106	7.8
Negligence or neglect	98	7.2
Causing to fall against a hard surface	88	6.5
Hitting or kicking	77	5.7
Arson	76	5.6
Poisoning (drugs, etc.)	67	4.9
Suffocation	59	4.3
Struck by motor vehicle	55	4.0
Shooting	43	3.2
Drowning	16	1.2
Exhaust fumes	10	0.7
Burning, scalding	7	0.5
Explosion	4	0.3
Other	58	4.3
Not known	181	13.3
Total	1361	100.0

Cases of NIF where no suspect was charged

The 431 victims (comprising 422 cases) for whom no suspect was charged were retained in the dataset, acknowledging the risk that some of these victims may have been DH but were not categorized as such as there was no victim/suspect relationship recorded. Although there were no suspect/relationship data for these cases, there were data on victim and case characteristics. In order to understand more about these victims, we performed a victim-focused analysis on this subset of 431 women, which yielded an interesting set of results indicating that many of these femicides represent a particular subtype of NIF. In relation to age (available for all victims), as Table 4 illustrates, almost one third (30.6 per cent, $n = 132$) of these victims were over 76 and a further 9.3 per cent ($n = 40$) were aged 66–75—thus, a significant proportion ($n = 172$; 39.9 per cent) of femicide victims for whom no suspect is charged are elderly women. For ethnicity, 83.5 per cent were recorded as White, 4.2 per cent as Black and 3.2 per cent as Asian, with ethnicity recorded as ‘not known’ for 8.4 per cent. Not surprisingly, 21.3 per cent were recorded as retired and 17.6 per cent as unemployed or economically inactive, although for over half of victims (51 per cent), their employment status was ‘unknown’.

In terms of the contexts surrounding these femicides, the location (using the ‘offence location group’ variable) was recorded as ‘unknown’ for 18.6 per cent victims (substantially lower than the 29.9 per cent for NIF per se), with 62.9 per cent recorded as occurring in residential locations (higher than the 47.2 per cent for NIF per se), 16 per cent in public locations and 2.6 per cent in an ‘other’ location. When disaggregated further using the

Table 4 Victim age group for NIF where no suspect was charged in E&W 2002–2022

Age	Frequency	Percent
10–17	11	2.6
18–25	31	7.2
26–35	65	15.1
36–45	64	14.8
46–55	51	11.8
56–65	37	8.6
66–75	40	9.3
76–85	69	16.0
86 +	63	14.6
Total	431	100.0

‘offence location’ variable, 46.2 per cent victims for whom no suspect was charged were killed within a house/dwelling, 14.2 per cent in a care/nursing home and 6.5 per cent in a hospital, church or school. The analysis of method also produced interesting results: although for 23.9 per cent victims, the method was ‘unknown’, a very low proportion were killed using a sharp instrument (5.3 per cent compared to 20.9 per cent for all NIF), 17.4 per cent through negligence or neglect (compared to 7.2 per cent all NIF), 10.4 per cent from falling against a hard surface (compared to 6.5 per cent all NIF) and 5.6 per cent by strangulation (compared to 9.7 per cent all NIF cases). There were substantial missing data for the circumstance, with 39 per cent recorded as ‘unknown’ and 17.7 per cent as ‘other’, ‘circumstances not elsewhere specified’ or ‘other known circumstances’. Beyond these categories, the most frequently recorded circumstances were ‘corporate manslaughter’ (5.1 per cent), ‘reckless act’ (4.2 per cent) and ‘relating to professional activity’ (3.7 per cent).

Combined, these findings indicate a specific subtype of NIF involving older women killed within residential settings for whom no suspect is charged. Little is known about the method, although it appears that many involve negligence/neglect or women dying after being caused to fall against a hard surface. The lack of data for victim-suspect relationship (and suspects per se) makes it impossible to understand more about the contexts of these femicides and whether they might be defined as killed *because they are women*. Two plausible contexts are that these women are killed by carers or in the context of another crime, such as a robbery or burglary of their home. The findings resonate with Dobash and Dobash’s (2015) category of elderly women (aged 65+ years), whom they highlighted as a particularly vulnerable group killed outside of domestic contexts due to their intersecting gender and age. They also add to the argument made by Bows (2019) and Miles *et al.* (2023) that elderly women are marginalized and invisible in measuring femicide.

Comparison of intimate and NIF

The continuum of violence can be used to better understand how different forms of men’s violence against women relate to one another, as well as how they weave throughout different contexts and circumstances. To examine how NIF relates to IF, we conducted a comparative analysis of key victim, suspect and case characteristics, using our sample of 3,627 femicide victims killed in 3,478 homicide events in England and Wales between 2002 and 2022 ($n = 1,464$ victims in 1,361 cases categorized as NIF; $n = 2,163$ victims in 2,117

cases categorized as IF). Due to space constraints within this article and our aim to primarily focus upon NIF, we present here select findings, where cross-tabulations and chi-square tests revealed statistically significant differences between IF and NIF.

Our comparison of age revealed that the mean age of NIF victims is higher than for IF victims (47 years for NIF compared to 44 years for IF); however, the age of NIF victims peaks at 26–35 years (17.4 per cent all NIF victims) compared to 36–45 years (22.1 per cent) all IF victims. The higher mean age appears to be explained by the proportion of older victims killed in non-intimate circumstances: 18.8 per cent ($n = 275$ of 1,464) NIF victims were 76+, compared to only 7.3 per cent ($n = 157$ of 2,163) IF victims, and 25.5 per cent NIF victims compared to 15.3 per cent IF victims were 66+. These differences were statistically significant (chi-square value = 177.213, $df = 8$, $p < 0.001$). The analysis of suspect characteristics also revealed significant differences between IF and NIF, with NIF suspects more likely to be female (11.6 per cent compared to 4 per cent of IF) and younger: the mean age of NIF suspects was 32, peaking at 18–25, whilst the mean age of IF suspects was 43, peaking at 36–45 (chi-square value = 352.641, $df = 8$, $p < 0.001$). There was also evidence of NIF perpetrators being more likely to have a previous serious conviction: although compromised by high levels of ‘unknown’ (43.3 per cent for NIF and 32.9 per cent for IF), 13.6 per cent of NIF suspects were recorded as having a previous conviction compared to 9.2 per cent of IF suspects. Suspects were also significantly more likely to take their own lives following an IF (14.5 per cent cases) compared to NIF (1.8 per cent cases). Relatedly, IF cases were significantly more likely to be recorded as linked to the mental state of the suspect (19 per cent) compared to NIF cases (8.9 per cent), although again, there was a high level of missing data for this variable (38.4 per cent unknown for NIF and 30.8 per cent unknown for IF cases).

In relation to the context of IF and NIF, significant differences (chi-square value = 226.257, $df = 3$, $p < 0.001$) were found in the location of the killing (Table 5). IF is more likely to occur in residential settings (68.3 per cent compared to 47.2 per cent NIF) and less likely to occur in public places (5.9 per cent compared to 20.5 per cent NIF). There are also slightly less missing data for IF (24.2 per cent unknown compared to 29.9 per cent for NIF).

For method of homicide, there were statistically significant differences (chi-square value = 630.550, $df = 3$, $p < 0.001$) between IF and NIF, with NIF *less likely* to involve sharp instruments (20.9 per cent compared to 44.5 per cent IF), blunt instruments (7.8 per cent compared to 10.7 per cent IF) and strangulation (9.7 per cent compared to 17.1 per cent IF); but *more likely* to result from negligence/neglect (7.2 per cent compared to 1.2 per cent IF), causing to fall against a hard surface (6.5 per cent compared to 1.0 per cent IF), arson (5.6 per cent compared to 2.0 per cent IF), poisoning (4.9 per cent compared to 1.0 per cent IF)

Table 5 Location of killing in England and Wales by whether NIF or IF, 2002–2022

Location	NIF		IF	
	N	%	N	%
Residential	642	47.2	1445	68.3
Public places	279	20.5	125	5.9
Other location	33	2.4	34	1.6
Location unknown	407	29.9	513	24.2
Total	1361	100	2117	100

or being struck by a vehicle (4.0 per cent compared to 0.6 per cent IF). There were also more unknowns for NIF, accounting for 13.3 per cent cases compared to only 3.6 per cent IF cases.

Finally, comparison of the circumstances illustrated statistically significant differences (chi-square = 1292.914, $df = 33$, $p < 0.001$), including substantially higher levels of unknowns for NIF (29.9 per cent cases) compared to IF (15.8 per cent cases). The most notable differences are summarized as follows: NIF was found to be *more likely* to involve circumstances recorded as a reckless act (8.0 per cent compared to 0.8 per cent IF), a sexual motive (7.6 per cent compared to 1.1 per cent IF), in the course of another crime (6.7 per cent compared to 0 per cent IF) or arson (3.7 per cent compared to 0.7 per cent IF); but *less likely* to involve a domestic dispute (4.6 per cent compared to 39 per cent IF), domestic abuse (1.2 per cent compared to 5.8 per cent IF) or jealousy/possessiveness (0.4 per cent compared to 3.7 per cent IF).

To summarize, a number of important and statistically significant differences were found in our comparative analysis of IF and NIF for victim/suspect age, location, method and circumstances, providing evidence that they are distinctive phenomena. Crucially, the analysis revealed that although there are high levels of missing data for all femicide, there are substantially more unknowns for NIF, with approximately one-third of data missing for key variables around the location and circumstances surrounding the killings, in addition to a lack of suspect data for over one-third of cases. This places severe limitations on the ability to ascertain whether these cases might be motivated by gender, reinforcing our decision not to exclude and further invisibilize the women who are killed by unknown perpetrators.

Discussion

This article presents the first exclusive analysis of NIF in England and Wales, providing original insight into the extent, nature and context of the killing of women outside of the domestic sphere. The central focus of lethal VAWG policy and research continues to be on that perpetrated by intimate partners and relatives, which has been established as accounting for the majority of fatal violence against women and girls. However, we argue that there is an urgent need to expand the remit of femicide research, policy and prevention work to account for *all* women and girls who are killed, regardless of the context or circumstance in which this occurs.

Our analysis adopted a continuum thinking approach to highlight the connections, similarities or otherwise, between different forms of VAWG. We demonstrated that NIF spans a multitude of contexts, from stranger killings to the killing of friends, colleagues, neighbours, sex workers and relationships not recognized as intimate. The opaque category of 'friend or social acquaintance' accounts for one quarter of all recorded relationships, yet reveals little about the context or motivation for the killing. Reflecting the broad range of subtypes of NIF, our analysis revealed that high proportions of victims fall within the 18–25 and 26–35 age categories; however, over a quarter of victims were aged 66+, highlighting the risk posed to older women by non-intimates. Despite occurring outside of the domestic sphere, almost half of NIF incidents occurred in residential settings, and only one-fifth were recorded as occurring in a public place (with missing data for almost one-third of cases), reinforcing that women are most at risk in private spaces, even in non-intimate circumstances. This finding also reinforces Boyle (2019) and Cockburn's (2014) calls for recognizing 'multiplicity' in continua, where we understand violence as transcending binaries of intimate and non-intimate and occurring in grey areas. Cases of older women who are killed in residential settings by non-intimates indicate that specific vulnerabilities and risks emerge at the intersection of age, gender, relationship, location, and health and social care

needs. For example, the killing of older women by acquaintances provides important context as to how perpetrators seek to gain 'legitimate' means of social access to older victims, such as doing 'odd jobs' around the house, or being a caregiver or assistant (Dobash and Dobash 2015). These cases underline the need to look 'across' multiple types and locations of VAWG, as well as temporally, recognizing that changes in dependency (financial and otherwise), social isolation and physical health are likely to occur in later life and shape women's experiences of violence.

Our findings provide evidence that a significant proportion of NIF victims are older women, killed within private locations, and are frequently undetected, with 40 per cent of cases where no suspect was charged involving victims aged 66+, and two-thirds occurring in residential settings. Although no suspect or suspect-victim relationship data were available for these femicides, the data that were available indicated that many of these women may have been killed by carers or in the course context of another crime, such as burglary of their home. This supports the Femicide Census analysis of data on 2,000 women killed by men (Ingala-Smith *et al.* 2025), which found that older women were more likely to be killed by a considerably younger stranger in the context of a burglary. The report also highlights that these killings often involved overkill and sexual violence, indicating a clear 'misogynistic intent', as opposed to 'collateral damage' (p.27). The only other research specifically highlighting the vulnerability of older women from non-intimates is that by Dobash and Dobash (2015), who categorized women over 65 as a specific subtype of women killed by men (separate to women killed by intimate partners), and found that they were mostly killed by men living locally who were unemployed and intoxicated at the time of the killing.

These findings make two important contributions to knowledge about NIF: first, despite well-established notions of women being most at risk from strangers and in public spaces (when not killed in domestic contexts), the majority of women killed in non-intimate circumstances are killed in residential settings and by people known to them in some capacity. Secondly, there appears to be a subtype of NIF for which no suspects are apprehended, involving older women killed in residential settings, with very few involving sharp instruments (which account for the majority of femicides involving other contexts). These findings, characterized by high levels of unknowns due to missing data, are also relevant to the literature on elder abuse. Although research has highlighted the problem of DH amongst older women (e.g. Bows 2019), the killing of older women in NDH contexts remains a comparatively silent issue.

Although our study (to the best of our knowledge) is the first to specifically focus on NIF in England and Wales, research across the globe comparing IF and NIF has reported a number of differences in terms of methods, risk factors and victim/perpetrator characteristics. Our comparative analysis also indicated that IF and NIF are statistically distinctive phenomena. Supporting Zara *et al.* (2019), we found that NIF perpetrators used specific methods, with higher levels of killing by negligence, causing to fall, arson and poisoning, but significantly lower levels of sharp/blunt instruments and strangulation. Supporting Loinaz *et al.* (2018), our findings indicated significantly higher levels of recklessness amongst NIF perpetrators, as well as sexual motivations (supporting the findings of Juodis *et al.* 2014; Fong *et al.* 2016; Zara *et al.* 2019). We also found statistically significantly higher levels of NIF occurring in the course of another crime compared to IF, which has not been identified in previous literature, and supports the scenario of older women being killed in the context of a burglary of their home. Improved recording about the contexts of these killings would assist in ascribing gender motivations in NIF cases.

Like for Juodis *et al.* (2014) and Loinaz *et al.* (2018), our findings found that NIF suspects tend to be younger, with only 1.2 per cent recorded as aged 66+, and also more likely than

IF suspects to have previous criminal convictions (supporting Dobash and Dobash 2015; Juodis *et al.* 2014; Loinaz *et al.* 2018; Zara *et al.* 2019). However, despite previous research identifying higher levels of mental health problems amongst NIF perpetrators (Loinaz *et al.* 2018), our analysis revealed that IF perpetrators were more likely to take their own lives following the killing, and IF incidents were more likely to be linked to the mental state of suspect, compared to NIF incidents. Despite involving higher proportions of victims aged 25–36, NIF victims comprised substantially higher proportions of older victims compared to IF. Overall, these findings add to existing international literature, providing clear evidence of the different contexts surrounding NIF and for the need for distinctive and nuanced prevention strategies, which recognize the particular risks posed to women of all ages from people who they know in non-intimate capacities, as well as from strangers.

Recent work has highlighted the poor level of available data on VAWG and emphasized the need to improve the recording of femicide (e.g. see Cullen *et al.* 2021; Dawson and Carrigan 2021; Dawson *et al.* 2024; EIGE 2021; Walby *et al.* 2017; Walklate *et al.* 2019). Perhaps the most important finding from our analysis was the high level of missing data across a number of variables. This poor recording points to the relative invisibility of women killed in non-intimate contexts, who, unless deemed newsworthy (often young women killed by strangers in apparently ‘random’ attacks), are not subject to media, research or policy attention, and for whom no fatality reviews are conducted. The lack of quality data and analysis pertaining to NIF means that there is limited knowledge surrounding patterns or risk factors, no awareness or ability to measure the extent to which they are gender-motivated, no coordinated review of the contexts of NIF, and consequently, no forum for lessons to be learned that might lead to the prevention of future deaths.

We argue that this invisibility also speaks to the relationship between violence and *representations* of violence that Boyle (2019: 27) notes when arguing for *plural* continuums of violence. Continuum thinking, as Boyle and Cockburn conceptualize, is not about the conflation of material and symbolic forms of violence (such as erasure, silencing, or othering), nor about ranking their severity (Sisic *et al.* 2024). Rather, continuum thinking pulls through common threads and patterns of misogyny (ageist, homophobic, racist, ableist) across different forms of VAWG to recognize how they reinforce, normalize and legitimize one another. This means demonstrating, as Hearn *et al.* (2022: 574) write:

[H]ow those discourses, voices, perceptions, memories and so on impact back on the production and reproduction of violence. The material physical doing of violence, and people’s difficult and diverse relationships to that doing, in turn affects the construction and very recognition of violence, and what counts as violence.

Seeing violence on a continuum requires that we also *respond* to violence as a continuum. Continuum thinking has already encouraged a push away from binaries, such as public/private, online/offline and carceral/anti-carceral, but siloed thinking across VAWG still persists in both theory and practice.

We argue for a shift away from typologies of femicide categorizing them as intimate or non-intimate, which do not recognize the fluidity of contemporary notions of intimacy and create a binary approach. This leads to some femicides—categorized as ‘domestic’ typically according to heteronormative conceptualizations of ‘intimacy’—being subject to extensive review and prevention strategy, whilst all those not falling within the intimate category are rendered somewhat homogenous. As our analysis has shown, as well as failing to recognize certain types of relationship as intimate, this may be particularly dangerous to older women, who are rendered invisible as potential victims. Following Cockburn’s (2004) notion of ‘continua’ of VAWG, we argue for the need to see multiple axes, parallels, and

connections between the various contexts in which femicide occurs. Continua thinking can offer a balance of both recognizing how experiences of violence and abuse *relate* to one another while avoiding their conflation (Boyle 2019). Taking this multidimensional approach, we can avoid binaries (for example, public *versus* private, or intimate *versus* non-intimate) and make visible the core patterns of gender inequality that permeate *across* women's experiences of violence and abuse and intersect with many other forms of inequality, such as age, ethnicity, sexuality, geography and more.

Conclusion

The research underpinning this article derives from the first exclusive study of NIF in England and Wales, presenting a statistical analysis of the victim, suspect and incident characteristics for all cases involving women who were killed by non-intimate partners or family members between 2002 and 2022. If the current UK Labour Government are to succeed in their 2024 pledge to halve VAWG over a ten-year period, it is crucial that they focus on the whole continuum of lethal VAWG, including those killed by strangers and people known to them in some capacity who are not intimate partners or family members. NIF accounts for substantial proportions of female homicide victimization and although a key focus in recent years has been on learning more about the contexts of DH, the pathways leading to and circumstances surrounding the killing of women outside of intimate and kin relationships remain to a large extent unknown. Recent work to improve the recording of femicide and measure sex/gender motivations acknowledges some non-intimate contexts of femicide; however, in order to fully understand the gendered contexts of NIF, it is essential to improve the quality of data recording for all forms of femicide and to mainstream sex/gender motivation data collection across the whole continuum of femicide.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Sally McManus for her helpful comments on a previous draft of this paper and the anonymous reviewers of this journal. We are grateful to the Home Office Crime Analysis Unit for providing access to the Homicide Index data used in this article.

Conflict of interest: There are no conflicts of interest to disclose

Funding

This study was funded by a British Academy/Leverhulme 2022–23 Small Research Grant (SRG2223\231309). Cook's time to conduct this study was supported by the UK Prevention Research Partnership (Violence, Health and Society; MR-VO49879/1), an initiative funded by UK Research and Innovation Councils, the Department of Health and Social Care (England) and the UK devolved administrations, and leading health research charities. The funders held no role in the design or conduct of this review.

References

- Boonzaier, F. A. (2023), 'Spectacularising Narratives on Femicide in South Africa: A Decolonial Feminist Analysis', *Current Sociology*, 71: 78–96. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00113921221097157>

- Bows, H. (2019), 'Domestic Homicide of Older People (2010–15): A Comparative Analysis of Intimate-partner Homicide and Parricide Cases in the UK', *The British Journal of Social Work*, 49: 1234–53.
- Bows, H., Bromley, P. and Walklate, S. (2024), 'Practitioner Understandings of Older Victims of Abuse and Their Perpetrators: Not Ideal Enough?', *The British Journal of Criminology*, 64: 620–37.
- Boyle, K. (2019), 'What's in a Name? Theorising the Inter-relationships of Gender and Violence', *Feminist Theory*, 20: 19–36.
- Brodie, N. (2021), 'Ideal Victims and Familiar Strangers: Non-intimate Femicide in South African News Media', *African Journalism Studies*, 42: 82–99.
- Broyd, J., Boniface, L., Parsons, D., Murphy, D. and Hafferty, J. D. (2023), 'Incels, Violence and Mental Disorder: A Narrative Review with Recommendations for Best Practice in Risk Assessment and Clinical Intervention', *BJPsych Advances*, 29: 254–64.
- Campbell, J. and Runyan, C. W. (1998), 'Femicide: Guest Editors' Introduction', *Homicide Studies*, 2: 347–52.
- Chopin, J. and Beauregard, E. (2020), 'The Unusual Victim: Understanding the Specific Crime Processes and Motivations for Elderly Sexual Homicide', *Journal of Forensic Sciences*, 65: 535–43.
- Cockburn, C. (2004), 'The Continuum of Violence: A Gender Perspective on War and Peace', in W. Giles and J. Hyndman, eds., *Sites of Violence: Gender and Conflict Zones*, 24–44. London: University of California Press.
- _____. (2014), 'A Continuum of Violence: Gender, War and Peace', in R. Jamieson, ed., *The Criminology of War*, 357–75. London: Routledge.
- Condry, R. and Miles, C. (2023), 'Who Counts? The Invisibility of Mothers as Victims of Femicide', *Current Sociology*, 71: 43–59.
- Crenshaw, K. (1989), 'Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics', *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 139–67.
- Cullen, P., Dawson, M., Price, J. and Rowlands, J. (2021), 'Intersectionality and Invisible Victims: Reflections on Data Challenges and Vicarious Trauma in Femicide, Family and Intimate Partner Homicide Research', *Journal of Family Violence*, 36: 619–28.
- Dawson, M. and Gartner, R. (1998), 'Differences in the Characteristics of Intimate Femicides: The Role of Relationship State and Relationship Status', *Homicide Studies*, 2: 378–99.
- Dawson, M., Angus, H. and Zecha, A. (2024), 'Identifying Femicide Using the United Nations Statistical Framework: Exploring the Feasibility of Sex/Gender-related Motives and Indicators to Inform Prevention', *International Sociology*, 39: 309–31.
- Dawson, M. and Carrigan, M. (2021), 'Identifying Femicide Locally and Globally: Understanding the Utility and Accessibility of Sex/Gender-related Motives and Indicators', *Current Sociology*, 69: 682–704.
- Dobash, R. E. and Dobash, R. (2015), *When Men Murder Women*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- EIGE (2021), 'Defining and Identifying Femicide: A Literature Review', European Institute for Gender Equality, available online at https://EIGE.europa.eu/publications-resources/publications/defining-and-identifying-femicide-literature-review?language_content_entity=en
- Fong, W. L., Pan, C. H., Lee, J. C. I., Lee, T. T. and Hwa, H. L. (2016), 'Adult Femicide Victims in Forensic Autopsy in Taiwan: A 10-year Retrospective Study', *Forensic Science International*, 266: 80–5.

- García-Del Moral, P. (2018), 'The Murders of Indigenous Women in Canada as Femicides: Toward a Decolonial Intersectional Reconceptualization of Femicide', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 43: 929–54.
- Hearn, J., Strid, S., Humbert, A. L. and Balkmar, D. (2022), 'Violence Regimes: A Useful Concept for Social Politics, Social Analysis, and Social Theory', *Theory and Society*, 51: 565–94.
- Ingala-Smith, K., O'Callaghan, C., Elliott, K., Allen, R., Jaso, V. and Harvey, H. (2025), *2000 Women*, available online at <https://www.femicidecensus.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/2000-Women-full-report.pdf>
- Juodis, M., Starzomski, A., Porter, S. and Woodworth, M. (2014), 'A Comparison of Domestic and Non-domestic Homicides: Further Evidence for Distinct Dynamics and Heterogeneity of Domestic Homicide Perpetrators', *Journal of Family Violence*, 29: 299–313.
- Kelly, L. (1987), 'The Continuum of Sexual Violence', in J. Hanmer and M. Maynard, eds., *Women, Violence and Social Control*, 45–60. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Loinaz, I., Marzabal, I. and Andrés-Pueyo, A. (2018), 'Risk Factors of Female Intimate Partner and Non-intimate Partner Homicides', *The European Journal of Psychology Applied to Legal Context*, 2018avonline: 1–7.
- Miles, C., Condry, R. and Windsor, E. (2023), 'Parricide, Mental Illness, and Parental Proximity: The Gendered Contexts of Parricide in England and Wales', *Violence against Women*, 29: 87–111. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10778012221077127>
- Miles, C., Cook, E. and Pullerits, M. (2025), 'Change, Intimacy, and Relationships: Implications for Measuring Intimate and Non-Intimate Femicide', in K. Fitz-Gibbon and S. Walklate, eds, *Femicide: Problems, Possibilities and Prevention*, 29–42. Leeds: Emerald Publishing.
- O'Callaghan, C., Ingala-Smith, K., Allen, R., Jaso, V. and Elliott, K. (2025), 'Femicide Census 2022', available online at <https://www.femicidecensus.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/2022-Femicide-Census-Report.pdf>
- ONS (2024), 'Homicide in England and Wales: year ending March 2023, ONS', available online at <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/homicideinenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2023>
- Pateman, C. (1983), 'Feminist Critiques of the Public/Private Dichotomy', in S. I. Benn, G. F. Gaus, eds, *Public and Private in Social Life*, 281–303. London: Routledge.
- Posey, B. M. (2024), 'Black Femicides Matter: Conceptualizing the Killings of Black Girls and Women as Structural and Cultural Violence', *Homicide Studies*, 28: 313–40.
- Riedel, M. (2008), 'Homicide Arrest Clearances: A Review of the Literature', *Sociology Compass*, 2: 1145–64.
- Russell, D. E. (2008), 'Femicide: Politicizing the Killing of Females', *Strengthening Understanding of Femicide*, 27: 27–32, available online at: <https://cpcjalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/10k-FemicideReport.pdf#page=36>
- Sarmiento, C., Lorenta Acoste, M., Roth, F. and Zambrano, M. (2014), 'Latin American Model Protocol for the Investigation of Gender-related Killings of Women (Femicide/Feminicide)', *OHCHR and UN Women*, available online at <https://lac.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Americas/Documentos/Publicaciones/LatinAmericanProtocolForInvestigationOfFemicide.pdf>
- Scaptura, M. and Hayes, B. (2023), 'Systems of Power and Femicide: The Intersection of Race, Gender, and Extremist Violence', in M. Dawso and Mobayed Vega, eds., *The Routledge International Handbook on Femicide and Feminicide*, 80–8. London: Routledge.
- Shalhoub-Kervorkian, N. and Daher-Nashif, S. (2013), 'Femicide and Colonization: Between the Politics of Exclusion and the Culture of Control', *Violence against Women*, 19: 295–315.

- Sisic, M., Tastsoglou, E., Dawson, M., Holtmann, C., Wilkinson, L. and Falconer, C. (2024), 'The Continuum of Gender-based Violence Experienced by Migrant and Refugee Women in Canada: Perspectives from Key Informants', *Frontiers in Sociology*, 9: 1420124.
- UNODC (2022), 'Gender-related Killings of Women and Girls (Femicide/Feminicide): Global Estimates of Gender-related Killings of Women and Girls in the Private Sphere in 2021 Improving Data to Improve Responses', UNODC, available online at https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/briefs/Femicide_brief_Nov2022.pdf
- UNODC and UNEGEEW (2022), 'Statistical Framework for Measuring the Gender-related Killing of Women and Girls (Also Referred to as "Femicide/Feminicide")', UNODC, available online at https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/statistics/Statistical_framework_femicide_2022.pdf
- Walby, S., Towers, J., Balderston, S., Corradi, C., Francis, B., Heiskanen, M., Helweg-Larsen, K., Mergaert, L., Olive, P., Palmer, E. and Stöckl, H. (2017), *The Concept and Measurement of Violence against Women and Men*, Bristol: Policy Press.
- Walklate, S., Fitz-Gibbon, K., McCulloch, J. and Maher, J. (2019), *Towards a Global Femicide Index: Counting the Costs*. London: Routledge.
- Walklate, S. and Fitz-Gibbon, K. (2023), 'Re-imagining the Measurement of Femicide: From 'Thin' Counts to 'Thick' Counts', *Current Sociology*, 71: 28–42.
- Weil, S. (2016), 'Making Femicide Visible', *Current Sociology*, 64: 1124–37.
- WHO (2012), Understanding and Addressing Violence Against Women Intimate Partner Violence, World Health Organization, available online at <https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/77432/?sequence=1>
- WHO (2025), Adolescent Health, World Health Organization, available online at https://www.who.int/health-topics/adolescent-health/#tab=tab_1
- Yadav, P. and Horn, D. M. (2021), 'Continuums of Violence', in T. Vayrynen, S. Parashar, E. Feron and C. Confortini, eds., *Routledge Handbook of Feminist Peace Research*. London: Routledge.
- Zara, G., Freilone, F., Veggi, S., Biondi, E., Ceccarelli, D. and Gino, S. (2019), 'The Medicolegal, Psycho-criminological, and Epidemiological Reality of Intimate Partner and Non-intimate Partner Femicide in North-West Italy: Looking Backwards to See Forwards', *International Journal of Legal Medicine*, 133: 1295–307.