



## Criminality rates in those sentenced for femicide in Mexico

Niveles de criminalidad en personas sentenciadas por el delito de femicidio en México

Níveis de criminalidade em pessoas condenadas pelo crime de feminicídio no México

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### Abstract

**Introduction:** Violence against women is a problem that affects the worldwide population, with its maximum expression being femicide. Due to the recent and unequal legislation regarding this phenomenon, recent studies have focused on identifying types of aggressors where criminal behavior plays an important role as a risk factor. Likewise, very few studies exist with people who have committed femicide. **Objective:** To determine the criminality rates in those sentenced for the crime of femicide. **Materials and methods:** A list with 20 dimensions was used to evaluate 62 people arrested for the crime of femicide. **Results:** 4 levels of criminality were found, which can be classified from low to high; the principal indicators that marked differences between these levels were domestic violence and a history of alcohol and drug use. **Conclusion:** The indicators that marked the differences between the levels of criminality are a history of intimate partner violence used to resolve conflicts which is associated with use of alcohol and psychoactive drugs.

**Keywords:** Violence against women; criminality; femicide. (Source: DeCS, Bireme).

### Resumen

**Introducción:** La violencia en contra de la mujer es un problema que afecta a la población mundial, teniendo su máxima expresión a través del feminicidio. Debido a la reciente y desigual legislación de este fenómeno, estudios al respecto son recientes y han girado en torno a determinar tipologías de agresores donde la criminalidad juega un papel importante como factor de riesgo. Así mismo, existen muy pocos estudios directos con personas que han cometido feminicidio. **Objetivo:** Conocer el nivel de criminalidad en sentenciados por el delito de feminicidio. **Materiales y métodos:** A través de una lista con 20 dimensiones se evaluó a 62 personas privadas de su libertad por el delito de feminicidio. **Resultados:** Se encontraron cuatro niveles de criminalidad que van de baja a muy alta, los principales indicadores que marcan la diferencia entre estos niveles son los que se refieren a la violencia de pareja e historia de consumo de alcohol y drogas. **Conclusión:** Los indicadores que marcan la diferencia entre los niveles de criminalidad, se encuentran una historia de violencia hacia la pareja como una forma de resolver conflictos, asociada al consumo de alcohol y sustancias psicoactivas.

**Palabras clave:** Violencia contra la mujer; criminalidad; feminicidio. (Fuente: DeCS, Bireme).

### Resumo

**Introdução:** A violência contra a mulher é um problema que afeta a população mundial, tendo sua expressão máxima por meio do feminicídio. Devido à recente e desigual legislação sobre o fenômeno, os estudos a respeito são recentes e têm girado em torno da determinação de tipos de agressores onde a criminalidade desempenha um papel importante como fator de risco. Da mesma forma, são poucos os estudos diretos com pessoas que cometeram feminicídio. **Objetivo:** Conhecer o nível de criminalidade em condenados pelo crime de feminicídio. **Materiais e métodos:** Através de uma lista com 20 dimensões, foram avaliadas 62 pessoas privadas de liberdade pelo crime de feminicídio. **Resultados:** Foram encontrados quatro níveis de criminalidade, que variam de baixo a muito alto, sendo que os principais indicadores que fazem a diferença entre esses níveis são aqueles relacionados à violência por parceiro íntimo e histórico de uso de álcool e drogas. **Conclusão:** A criminalidade surge como uma categoria de análise, que busca explicar algumas características nas pessoas que cometeram esse crime, porém, é preciso considerar outros fatores como cultura, estrutura social e características da população reclusa por feminicídio.

**Palavras chave:** Violência contra a mulher; comportamento criminoso; feminicídio. (Fonte: DeCS, Bireme).

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## Discussion

The results of the current study coincide with those of Dixón *et al.*<sup>(12)</sup>, y Holtzworth-Munroe y Stuart<sup>(13)</sup> in that criminality plays an important role in the biography of those who commit femicide. The criminality indicators which were present in the participants of this study include: history of previous incarcerations; violence with non-relatives; violence and harassment of one's partner; substance and alcohol use; and instrumental gains from committing the crime.

The concurrence of these indicators facilitated the establishing of criminality levels identified as "very high", which have not been reported previously. The majority of participants fell into medium and high levels and taking into account that 70% of participants committed femicide against their intimate partner, which contradicts previous findings where femicide delinquents were classified as "only family" or femicide of intimate partners showed low criminality levels.

Based on these results, the population incarcerated for the crime of femicide almost falls into the classifications of "borderline or dysphoria" and "generally violent"<sup>(13)</sup>, who present with moderate and high levels of criminality, respectively, with the two last subtypes being a great risk factor for committing femicide.

According to Dawson y Dawson<sup>(21)</sup> and Santos<sup>(22)</sup>, within the criminality indicators that mark the differences in levels, they propose the dimension identified as *violence*, which includes a history of intimate partner violence, threats of homicide against one's partner, isolation of the victim, and escalation of violence. This concurs with the result found in the present study where participants showed a history of violence, harassment, and that the crime took place during an argument with one's partner, with this last indicator not being reported previously in other countries. Nevertheless, this can be explained by certain norms and cultural beliefs, which influence the type of violence committed by the aggressor against the partner in different countries. This can be interpreted as a deficient situational response due to the lack of effective strategies in conflict resolution.

Another relevant indicator is substance and alcohol use, which can play a double role since these can be both the facilitators of violence and precipitants of femicide.

The results of this study agree with those reported by Buteau *et al.*<sup>(16)</sup>, Aguilar<sup>(7)</sup> and Matías *et al.*<sup>(15)</sup>, since the participants had a history of substance use and had committed the crime while under the influence of drugs and alcohol. Mathews *et al.*<sup>(23)</sup>, believes that these men often use their substance use as an excuse to act violently towards their partner and even commit the crime.

The indicator of obtaining personal gain from the crime such as through money or prohibiting the victim from informing authorities of illegal activities or simply removing the victim from one's life because she is an obstacle for other plans<sup>(12)</sup> was found in this study. This indicator discredits substance use as an

excuse to commit the crime since this indicator implies a certain degree of conscious planning. Lastly, admission of the crime showed small differences between two levels, which could be explained through the levels of criminality as can be expected with high and very high levels of criminality in that these individuals have experience with denying their crimes, creating alibis, and creating an appearance of innocence.

## Conclusion

It can be highlighted that men who commit the crime of femicide are a population rarely studied, who theoretically present homogeneity and various possibilities in classification. Thus, the criminality arises as a category of analysis, which tries to explain certain characteristics in people who have committed this crime. Nevertheless, it is necessary to consider other factors such as culture, social structure, individual characteristics of the imprisoned population.

In reference to the indicators that mark the differences between the levels of criminality, a history of violence towards one's partner to resolve conflict is one of these. In addition, a history of alcohol and substance use can be found. It is these same indicators that makes one thing that not all indicators carry the same weight in risk factors for committing femicide, especially a history of intimate partner violence, which requires a more exhaustive study as and explanation of this phenomenon.

The main limitation of this study is related to the sample used since it is small and specific to a single federal entity, which has no national representation. Despite this, it is important to highlight that few studies such as the present one, have gathered information on criminality with individuals incarcerated for the crime of femicide, involving the perpetrator in a direct manner, since the majority of studies base their analysis on penitentiary documents which require multiple studies to identify this phenomenon.

Studies such as the present one are required to identify the factors of criminality, which are involved in femicide that can be used to prevent an episode of lethal violence as well as develop programs of reintegration for exconvicts.

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