

Article

# Femicide in a small Nordic welfare society: the case of Iceland

by

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to examine femicide cases in Iceland, which is a small Nordic welfare society. Cases of femicide were explored during a 30-year time period from 1986-2015. Femicide was defined as the murder of a woman by a partner, former partner or related to passion. Verdicts and news of the incidents were analysed. Verdicts were found using the search machine Fons Juries, run by a private legal company, which collected all verdicts from the Supreme Court from 1920, and all verdicts from the district courts existing in electric form. News that included murders of women was collected from websites of the main newspapers in Iceland. Eleven women were killed during this time period according to the definition used in this study. Most of the incidents happened in the home of the perpetrator, victim or both. Nearly all of them took place during the night or in the evening during weekends, with more incidents occurring during cold and dark months than brighter and warmer months. All of them took place in the capital city or in that area. Strangulation was the most common murder method, followed by stabbing the woman with a knife. Only one woman was shot, and that perpetrator was the only one who killed himself afterward. The mean age of the perpetrators was 29. Most of them had a low level of education or their education was unknown, and had a low paying job. Two-thirds of them were under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs when the incident happened and the majority had a psychiatric problem, mainly personality disorders or symptoms of such disorders, such as antisocial personality disorder. Even though it is rare, femicide incidents do exist in a small Nordic welfare society such as Iceland, despite an extensive welfare policy and gender equality.

## **Keywords:**

femicide, intimate partner homicide, risk factors, ecological model, Nordic country, social work

## **Introduction**

When a woman is murdered by a partner or former partner, it is either called intimate partner homicide (Smith, Fowler, & Niolon, 2014; Stöckl et al., 2013) or femicide (Beyer, Layde, Hamberger, & Laud, 2015), which is a more recent term. Some define femicide more widely, including violence against women that results in their death,

even though there is not necessarily a male perpetrator (Campbell et al., 2003; Marcuello-Servós, Corradi, Weil, & Boira, 2016). People who intervene in a violent relationship might be in danger of being killed as well (Smith et al., 2014), so when women are killed because they intervene in a violent intimate relationship, this might fall under the definition of femicide.

Researchers and scholars tend to look at this phenomenon from different perspectives, and focus on different aspects. Some scholars primarily look at this phenomenon from a theoretical perspective (e.g. Eriksson & Mazerolle, 2013; Frye & Wilt, 2001; Taylor & Jasinski, 2011). Some focus more on the prevalence rate and the comparison of rates among different areas or countries in the world or from a quantitative perspective, sometimes relating those findings to public policy (e.g. Corradi & Stöckl, 2014; Kristoffersen, Lilleng, Mæhle, & Morild, 2014; Stöckl et al., 2013; Violence Policy Centre, 2013). Some look at this phenomenon from a quantitative perspective, but evaluate risk factors or characteristics of the perpetrators and/or victims and/or factors in a social context (e.g. Bayer et al., 2015; Campbell et al., 2003; Dobash & Dobash, 2011; Dobash, Dobash, & Cavanagh, 2009; Dobash, Dobash, Cavanagh, & Lewis, 2004; Dobash, Dobash, Cavanagh, & Medina-Ariza, 2007; Liem, Barber, Markwalder, Killias, & Nieuwbeerta, 2011; Sabri et al., 2013; Sabri et al., 2014). Others emphasize this phenomenon from a more qualitative perspective, looking at a few cases and analysing the details of these cases (e.g. Elisha, Idisis, Timor, & Addad, 2010; Farr, 2002; Nicolaidis et al., 2013) in order to acquire a deeper understanding of this phenomenon. Furthermore, some scholars tend to focus on protective actions and what might prevent or decrease the number of femicide cases or murders of women by intimate partners (e.g. Bugeja, Dawson, McIntyre, & Walsh, 2015; Campbell, Glass, Sharps, Laughon, & Bloom, 2007; Garcia, Soria, & Hurwitz, 2007; Jewkes, 2002; Messing et al., 2014; Sharps et al., 2001; Smith et al., 2014). Moreover, there are scholars who have explored other issues related to this phenomenon, such as the media coverage of this phenomenon and the influence of the media on public policy (e.g. Comas-d'Argemir, 2015). All these types of research and coverage of this phenomenon are of course important in order to understand this phenomenon, predict it and find ways to prevent it.

This study was based on a risk factor model by Belsky (1980), which he developed from Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological model. In this model there are four levels: a) individual factors, b) family factors, c) social factors and d) cultural factors. Risk factors and protective factors exist on all levels and interact both within and between levels. Theories as well as public policies can be a part of the model. For example, the feminist perspective could be reflected in the model, since patriarchal views can be defined as cultural risk factors in the ecological model (Author, 2005). Attitudes and behaviours are therefore reflected through cultural views in a given culture (Agathonos-Georgopoulou, 1992). Since this model is wide, emphasizing risk factors and focuses on maltreatment, it was believed to be appropriate as a base for the exploration of risk factors in this study.

Previous research has shown that the major contextual factors or risk factors for femicide are previous domestic violence (Campbell et al., 2003; Dobash & Dobash, 2011; Dobash et al., 2004; Dobash et al., 2009), including previous nonfatal strangulation (Campbell et al., 2003), access to firearms (Campbell et al., 2003; Smith et al., 2014), threats (Campbell et al., 2003), witnessing violence as a child in the home (Dobash et al., 2004; Dobash et al., 2009; Author, 2006), relationship problems (Dobash et al., 2009), low educational status (Campbell et al., 2003), unemployment (Campbell et al., 2003), periodic employment (Dobash et al., 2004), blue-collar jobs (Dobash et al., 2004), prior crimes (Dobash et al., 2009), large age differences (Farr, 2002), specific ethnicities (Beyer et al., 2015; Dobash et al., 2009; Sabri et al., 2013; Sabri et al., 2014), pregnancy (Krulewitch, Roberts, & Thompson, 2003), having a stepchild in the home (Campbell et al., 2003), leaving an abusive partner (Campbell et al., 2003; Dobash et al., 2009), jealousy (Campbell et al., 2003; Dobash & Dobash, 2011; Dobash et al., 2009), possessiveness (Dobash & Dobash, 2011; Elisha et al., 2010; Nicholaidis et al., 2003), lack of empathy (Dobash & Dobash, 2011), alcohol problems (Dobash et al., 2004; Farr, 2002; Kivivuori & Lehti, 2012) and drug abuse (Campbell et al., 2003; Dobash et al., 2004; Farr, 2002) as well as personality disorders (Elisha et al., 2010). Minimizing the violence and denying it have also been found to be strong risk factors for intimate partner homicide (Dobash et al., 2009).

Social support has the role of reducing risk factors, and is extensive within the Nordic countries (Kamerman & Kahn, 1995). In addition, gender equality is very high there according to the Global Gender Gap Index (World Economic Forum, 2016). It therefore follows that violence against women and cases of femicide should be lower there than in other countries. Interestingly though, the incidence rate of violence against women does not seem to be lower in the Nordic countries than in other countries (Gracia & Merlo, 2016), including Iceland (Karlsdóttir & Arnalds, 2010). It is possible that other factors, such as alcohol abuse, might better explain the high rate of violence against women in these countries (Gracia & Merlo, 2016). It is also possible that extensive social support helps women leave violent relationships, and prevents them from being killed. In a recent study conducted in Iceland, a high ratio of those who were violent to a partner, and had children in the home, were foreigners (Árnadóttir, 2013). It would have been possible to explain the high domestic violence rate with an extensive number of foreigners as perpetrators with different social and cultural backgrounds. However, the fact that domestic violence rates are lower in other European countries than in some of the Nordic countries does not fit with that explanation. Even so, the femicide incidence rate is in fact considerably lower in the Nordic countries than in Europe (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2011), including Iceland, which according to this study is only 0.267 per 100,000 (Author, 2017) compared to 14.9 per 100,000 in Europe (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2011). Hence, it seems that a social policy which supports women who need to leave a violent relationship (Johnson & Hotton, 2003) is important in reducing femicide rates. If women are less economically dependent upon men, they have more freedom to leave such relationships.

Iceland is a small Nordic welfare society, with a total population of only 340,000 inhabitants (Hagstofa Íslands, 2016a). Femicide had not been studied in Iceland before this study was conducted. Thus, it was believed to be interesting to explore to what extent femicide does exist there, and what characterizes femicide in such a society. Are there similar factors that can be identified in a context there, such as in larger countries that provide less social support to their citizens?

## **Method**

This study included all cases in which a woman had been killed by a partner, former partner, a boyfriend/girlfriend, a person that the woman had a sexual relationship with or if a murder took place which included a male perpetrator and a woman as a victim; consequently, the crime could be considered a crime related to passion or intervention (see Dobash & Dobash, 2012). During this time period, a total of 16 women and girls were killed by an intimate person. Of the two girls killed during this time period, only one of them could be considered a femicide case. For this reason, the murders of girls were excluded from the analyses.

Two papers have been written based on the data of this study. One that described the dynamics and the context of the femicide cases (Author, 2017) and this article, which describes the risk factors of perpetrators, the characteristics of the victims and the characteristics of the context they occurred in.

### *Design*

In this study, the content of existing documents was analysed by transforming qualitative into quantitative data. This method is called content analysis (Rubin & Babbie, 2005). In a different part of this study, a qualitative analysis of the data was conducted (Rubin & Babbie, 2005), but the results of that part of the study have been written in a different paper (Author, 2017).

### *Data collection procedure*

All verdicts, which included the murder of a woman according to the above exclusion criteria during a 30-year-period from 01.01.1986 to 31.12.2015, were analysed. Since Iceland is a small country, and the femicide cases were rather few, it was decided to have such an extensive time period in order to receive sufficient information about this issue. Additionally, written media coverage about the cases was also analysed. First, a list of murders in Iceland on Wikipedia was followed to find cases to use in this study. When the researcher realized that the list did not include all femicide cases, the search machine Fons Juries was used. Fons Juries is a search machine run by a private company which has collected all verdicts from the Supreme Court in Iceland from 1920, as well as all verdicts from the district courts that exist in an electric format. Verdicts were selected that contained the murder of a woman according to paragraph 211

(murder) in the general criminal laws no. 19/1940 [Almenn hegningarlög nr. 19/1940]. Verdicts were also included which involved severe physical assaults according to paragraph 218 in the same laws if they resulted in the death of a woman. Moreover, confirmation from the police was obtained, indicating that there were no additional femicide cases that had taken place without verdicts, from the year 1999, which is when the police began using a national computer system. However, it cannot be ruled out that any women or girls have been murdered between 1985 and 1999 without verdicts existing in these cases, for example if cases were dismissed during that time period. Finally, news about these femicide incidents were looked up on the Internet, and all written media coverage in the main newspapers in Iceland on the cases was read and analysed. Femicide cases in general were also looked up on the Internet, as well as media coverage on femicide, by using relevant keywords. The data collection took place from 2015 to 2016. Even though the verdicts and the media coverage can be accessed by anyone, the study was reported to The Data Protection Authority in Iceland (number S8297).

### *Sample*

As noted before, available records and media were analysed (Rubin & Babbie, 2006). A total of 16 women and girls (14 women and two girls) were murdered in Iceland during this time period. Eleven out of 16 cases were analysed, which fulfilled the criteria in this study. None of the cases included same-sex partners. The cases that were excluded involved the following: a) a woman who was mentally retarded and stabbed to death by a friend who also was mentally retarded. According to witnesses, they had been friends for many years and had never been in a romantic or sexual relationship; b) a woman who was 80 years old was killed by a 26-year-old perpetrator who was a stranger; c) an 11-year-old girl was killed by her psychotic mother, who tried to kill her brother as well. He lived, but was severely wounded; d) a woman was killed by a man with whom she was not in a romantic or sexual relationship. It is believed that the motive was related to the fact that he had robbed her, and that she was going to press charges against him; e) an infant girl was killed by her father while her mother was working. That case was excluded because it was the only case that could be considered as femicide involving a girl who was an infant, and thus was unlike the other cases.

## **Results**

### *The incidents*

First, information about the 11 incidents themselves are covered. Most of the incidents took place during the night or between midnight and 10 a.m. Only one incident took place during the day between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m., and only two in the evening between 6 p.m. and midnight. In addition, most incidents took place during the weekend, from Friday evening through Sunday evening. Interestingly, more femicide cases took place during colder and darker months (seven cases) compared to brighter and warmer months (four cases). The number of cases was equally distributed over the decades. However, they did seem to occur in periods. For example, three incidents occurred in 1988, two in 2000 and two others in 2004. There were long time periods within this 30-year-period in which no femicide cases occurred. Most of the incidents took place in the home where both the perpetrator and the victim were living, the victim's home or the perpetrator's home. Only two incidents took place in a different location. Interestingly, all incidents took place in the capital city, the capital city area or less than an hour's drive from the capital city (Graph 1).

When the methods of the homicides are explored, it can be seen that five women were strangled, three were stabbed to death and one was shot. In that particular case the man shot himself afterwards, which was the only femicide-suicide case. However, two other perpetrators made unsuccessful suicide attempts. In two femicide cases, different methods were used. In one case, the perpetrator banged the head of a woman onto the floor, while in another case a woman was thrown off a balcony from a high building. In six cases, no one was present when the femicide incident took place. Nonetheless, in four out of 11 cases, a child or children were present, either the perpetrator's children or his stepchildren. In only one case was there another person who attempted to stop the perpetrator without success.



Graph 1: Geographical location of the femicide cases



*The perpetrators – risk factors*

*Cultural, demographic and social factors*

All of the perpetrators were Icelandic, with the exception of one who was from Eastern Europe, which is similar to the ratio of foreigners (1.6% to 7.4%) who lived in Iceland during this time period (Hagstofa Íslands, 2016b). Ethnicity was the only cultural factor available in the data, with demographic factors consisting of the age of the perpetrators. The perpetrators were from 20 to 51 years old, although the age of one was unknown. The mean age of the perpetrators was 29.4. Education and employment can be considered as either demographic factors or social factors. Most of the men seemed to have only finished elementary school, except for one who had a university degree. He was also the only one who had a white collar job. One perpetrator was self-employed, and five had a blue collar job. The employment was not known for three of the perpetrators, and one was unemployed.

### *Individual risk factors*

In six cases, the perpetrator was under the influence of alcohol when the murder took place. In one case, the perpetrator was under the influence of illegal drugs at the time of the incident, whereas in another the perpetrator was under the influence of both alcohol and illegal drugs. Hence, in only three cases was the perpetrator sober at the time of the incident, but in one of those cases he had recently been under the influence of alcohol and drugs. In three cases, the perpetrator was diagnosed with antisocial personality disorder or showed symptoms of such a disorder. Three of the perpetrators were diagnosed with personality disorders that were not specified. In one of the above cases, the perpetrator was diagnosed with dysthymia, in addition to personality disorder symptoms. Furthermore, an additional perpetrator had been diagnosed with ADHD, depression and paranoid schizophrenia, and another with paranoid schizophrenia. Consequently, of the 11 perpetrators, eight had been diagnosed with psychiatric disorders.

In three of the 11 cases, there was no information about former appeals and sentences in the verdicts. In two cases the perpetrators had no prior convictions, and in one case the perpetrators had prior convictions for physical or sexual assault. In two cases, the perpetrator had prior convictions for other types of crimes, and in three cases the perpetrator had been convicted for both physical assault and other crimes. Thus, in more than half the cases, the perpetrator had been convicted of physical assault, other crimes or both. That ratio could be higher, since there was no information about former convictions in three cases.

### *Sentences*

Two perpetrators were evaluated as having a severe psychiatric illness at the time of the incident, and were thus judged not guilty. One of the perpetrators killed himself after he killed the victim, so there was no sentence in that case. The other eight perpetrators were sentenced to a jail term from eight to 18 years. The one who received 18 years was sentenced for both rape and murder. The mean time of the sentences was 13.4 years. The sentences were shorter in the earlier years, and had a tendency to become longer. One of the perpetrators received a shorter sentence than the others during the last decade, for 11 years. He and his wife were in the process of getting a divorce, and his wife had started to date other men before he had moved out of the

home. At the district court, the sentence for murder was reduced because of 'a great insult that the victim had caused him', according to the 74<sup>th</sup> paragraph in General Criminal Law no. 19/1940, and because he was 'emotionally upset' because of it according to the 75<sup>th</sup> paragraph in the same law. However, the sentence was increased at the Supreme Court, which did not take into account that the perpetrator had been greatly insulted, but did take into account that he was emotionally upset.

### *Characteristics of the victims*

#### *Cultural, demographic and social factors*

Two of the 11 women were foreigners, which is a little bit higher than the ratio of foreigners who lived in Iceland during this time period (Hagstofa Íslands, 2016b). The victims were between the ages of 19 to 35 years of age. The mean age of the women was 26.4. Three of the women had a secondary school degree, one had an elementary school degree and the education of the other women was unknown. Three women were in a paid job, one was disabled, and the employment status of other women was unknown.

#### *Individual factors*

Four of the women were not under the influence of alcohol or drugs at the time of the incident, three were under the influence of alcohol and two were under the influence of drugs. In two cases, it was unknown whether they were under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Information about the psychiatric problems of the victims were not found.

#### *Family factors – perpetrators and the victims*

The age difference between the perpetrator and the victim was more than five years in three cases. The man was 25 years older than the woman in one case, nine years older in another case, whereas the woman was eight years older than the man in one case. In four cases the perpetrator was the victim's current partner. In three cases the couple was dating, had just met each other and were starting to have an intimate or sexual relationship. In three cases, the perpetrator was the victim's former partner or the couple was in the process of separating. In one case, the victim was a friend of the perpetrator's former girlfriend who had intervened.

It was known that the perpetrator had been physically violent to the victim in the past in three cases and emotionally abusive in one additional case. In another case the perpetrator had raped his former girlfriend and killed her friend later. Thus, in five of 11 cases it was known that the perpetrator had been violent in an intimate relationship with the victim or the victim's friend. In three additional cases, the perpetrator was dating the victim for the first time, and hardly knew the victim before he killed her. In the remaining three cases, it was not known if the perpetrator had been violent to the victim before the incident took place. This might be because of insufficient information in the verdicts, or because the victim had not told anyone about having been abused.

## **Discussion**

During the three decades studied, there was an equal distribution of the number of murders during each decade, but with more murders occurring during some time periods than others. In the author's opinion, there was nothing happening during those periods in particular in Iceland that could help explain this. Looking at risk, it seems that if there was any time period that was dangerous, it was during the night on weekends. Furthermore, more incidents took place during the dark and colder winter months from October through March than during the brighter and warmer months from April through September. Daylight hours in Iceland from April through September are from 13 to 21 hours, whereas daylight hours from October through March are from four to 11 hours (Timeanddate.com). Winter darkness can have different effects on people, including effects on mood (doktor.is, n.d.). Consequently, a lot of darkness may contribute to an increase in these murders during wintertime. The cold could have also contributed to them as well. Since the cases are few, it should be noted that these thoughts are only speculations. It might be mentioned that the murder rate in Greenland is extremely high (Myers et al., 2013). Greenland is a very cold country with a lot of darkness during wintertime. Of course other unknown cultural factors may also contribute to the high murder rate there as well.

Interestingly, all of the murders took place in the capital city of Reykjavík, in the capital city area or in an area within an hour's driving distance from the capital city. Thus, no murders in intimate relationships took place in other areas in the countryside during

this 30-year period. Most homicides in Greenland from 1985 to 2010 took place in an urban area or within 80% of such an area (Christensen, Thomsen, Høyer, Gregersen, & Banner, 2016). Nonetheless, homicides have been more common in rural areas in the US (Myers et al., 2013). A study conducted in 39 countries showed that wife beating was more likely to be considered as acceptable in rural areas than in urban areas (Tran, Nguyen, & Fisher, 2016). Since rural areas might be more traditional, patriarchal views are likely to be more prominent there than in urban areas. Violence against women is more likely to occur in patriarchally organized families with traditional gender roles (Finkelhor, 1983; Smith, 1990). Moreover, a stronger patriarchal ideology by the male perpetrator has been related to more intense wife beating (Smith, 1990). However, what might explain the higher numbers in urban than in rural areas is increased stress. Additionally, it is possible that there are more opportunities to get drunk late at night in urban areas. The late opening hours of pubs and dances in urban areas might contribute to the explanation why femicide takes place, especially in cases where the couple has just met and started an intimate sexual relationship (Author, 2017). Again, these thoughts are speculations, although there may be different but important social risk factors in both rural and urban areas.

The location where the incidents took place was similar to what has been evident in other studies, namely in the home in a majority of the cases (Dobash et al., 2004; Frye & Wilt, 2001; Kristoffersen et al., 2014; Smith et al., 2014). The most common method was to strangle and stab the victim with a knife. In only one case was the victim shot, and that was the only case where the perpetrator committed suicide after he had committed femicide. This is very different from what has been shown in studies conducted in the US, where the most common method is to shoot the woman to death (Smith et al., 2014; Violence Policy Centre, 2011). However, two more perpetrators made a suicide attempt following the incidents, which has been shown to be less likely to be successful when a firearm is not used (Liem et al., 2011).

When cultural, demographic and social factors are considered, only one of the perpetrators was a foreigner, which is a similar ratio to that in a Norwegian study (Kristoffersen et al., 2014), and is similar to the ratio of foreigners in Iceland (Hagstofa Íslands, 2016b). Thus, cultural factors related to ethnics did not seem to be risk factors in this study. The mean age of the perpetrators was 29.4, which is slightly lower than

in other studies (Campbell et al., 2003; Dobash et al., 2007; Kristoffersen et al., 2014), and significantly lower than in a Finnish study (Kivivouri & Lethi, 2012). Similarly to results of other studies (Campbell et al., 2003; Dobash et al., 2007; Kivivuori & Lethi, 2012), the SES status of most of the perpetrators was low.

The individual risk factors related to the perpetrators were important in this study. Two-thirds of the perpetrators were under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs when they committed the offence. Alcohol abuse has been shown to be a risk factor in previous studies (Dobash et al., 2004; Farr, 2002; Kivivuori & Lethi, 2012). Furthermore, the majority of the perpetrators had been diagnosed with a psychiatric disorder. Over half of them had unspecified personality disorders, symptoms of it, an antisocial personality disorder or symptoms of it. In addition, two had been diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia, which is similar to the results of a study conducted by Elisha et al. (2010). It can be debated as to whether antisocial personality disorder is a psychiatric disorder or not. The American Psychiatric Association (2013) lists the diagnostic criteria which reflect a lack of empathy and a focus on one's own needs. In fact, one of the criteria is the following 'a pervasive pattern of disregard for and violation of the rights of others' (p. 659).

In known cases, the majority of the perpetrators had prior convictions for crimes, in some cases physical assault. As a result, it seems that a history of crimes, including but not limited to physical assaults, could be an important individual risk factor for femicide. The sentences seem to be quite similar, but have had the tendency to get longer over the years. They were from eight up to 16 years, with the exception of one which was 18 years, but that verdict included a sentence for rape as well.

When cultural, demographic and social factors of the victims are considered, they do not seem to have been important or unknown. Two of the 11 women were foreigners. As noted above with regard to the perpetrators, this is similar to the results of a Norwegian study, and slightly higher than the ratio of foreigners who lived in Iceland during these years (Hagstofa Íslands, 2016b). The age of the victims did not seem to be unusual. The education of the victims was unknown in more than half the cases, though only three of them had a secondary degree. In addition, the employment status was not known for seven of the 11 women. Three were employed and one was

disabled. For this reason, the social factors regarding the victims were in large part unknown.

Considering individual factors among the victims, nearly half the victims were under the influence of alcohol or drugs when they were killed. The high ratio of alcohol use is similar to findings of studies conducted by Sabri et al. (2013, 2014). Even so, few known psychiatric problems were found in the data regarding the victims.

When family factors are explored, it can be seen that there was a large age difference in one-third of the cases, which has shown to be a risk factor (Farr, 2002). In some of those cases, it was known that there had been previous violence, as other studies have shown to be a risk factor (Campbell et al., 2003; Dobash & Dobash, 2011; Dobash et al., 2004; Dobash et al., 2009). There were also different dynamics in the femicide cases related to the type of relationship, which can be read in more detail in a different article (Author, 2017).

#### *Strengths and limitations*

This study is based on available data from judges and media, and is limited to the information in those resources. It would have been desirable to have more extensive information about social and cultural factors, especially about social support in the cases. In addition, the limited number of cases makes it difficult to interpret the results. One strength of this study is the fact that this an innovative study. It is the first study conducted on femicide in Iceland. The study provides important information about women who have been killed in intimate partner relationships in a small Nordic welfare society, about the perpetrators and about the circumstances. Even though there was not extensive information about social and cultural factors in the data, the information about individual risk factors were rather extensive.

#### *Conclusion*

In this small Nordic welfare society, femicide cases do exist, although they are rare. A strong social policy may prevent some cases from taking place. The rate of interpersonal violence is rather high, despite the fact that Iceland is one of the top countries in terms of gender equality. Interestingly, there seem to be similar risk factors in the small country of Iceland as in other countries, despite the extensive social

support provided in this country. However, a strong social policy might reduce the number of femicide cases by providing social support, which makes it financially possible for women to leave violent relationships before they become fatal.



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