



DECLINE IN FEMICIDE IN SOUTH AFRICA: EVIDENCE FROM THREE NATIONAL FEMICIDE STUDIES ACROSS 18 YEARS

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Background

- Femicide is the most extreme form and consequence of gender-based violence
- Limited research from Global South.
- Three national South African studies over 20 years allow for comparison across studies
- The South African femicide studies provide the only repeatable measure of the state of GBV in South Africa over time

NATIONAL FEMICIDE STUDIES BY THE GENDER AND HEALTH RESEARCH UNIT

1999

2009

2017

2020/21

COVID-19 hard lock-down period
in the field

How we define femicide in our research

BOX 1: Definition of Terms	
Femicide	Murder of women
Intimate-partner femicide (IPF)	Murder of women by an intimate partner (i.e. a current or ex-husband/boyfriend, same sex partner or a rejected would be lover)
Non-intimate partner femicide (NIPF)	Murder of women by someone other than an intimate partner (stranger, family member, acquaintance etc.)
Suspected rape murder	A murder of a women that occurred with a sexual component identified during investigation

Methods of the National Femicide Studies

Phase 1 Mortuary

- Sample of Mortuaries
- Identify murder cases from mortuary registers – female 14 years and older
- Collect data from mortuary files and autopsy report (age, sex, cause of death e.g firearm, evidence of rape etc)
- Collect the Crime Administration System (CAS) Number, and police station to link case to police

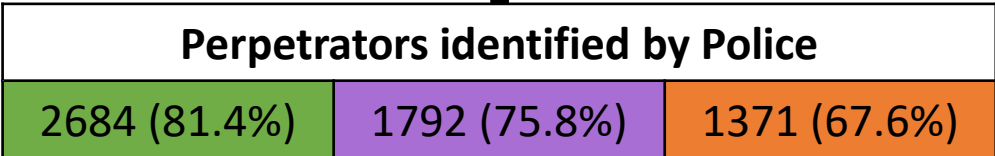
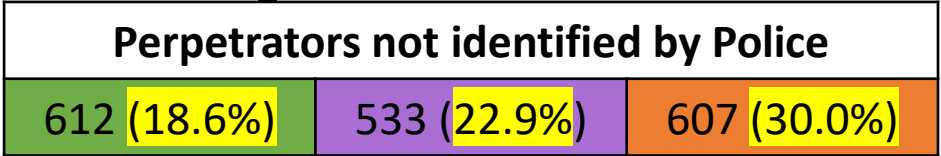
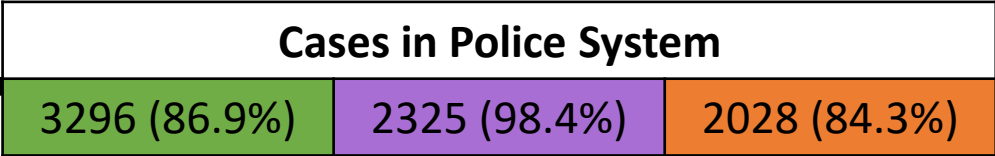
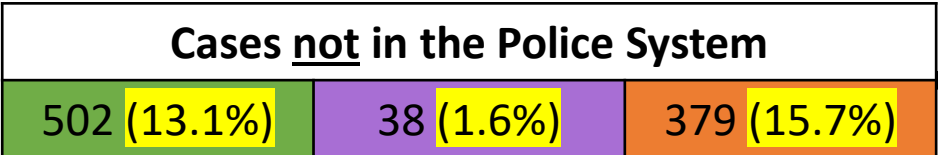
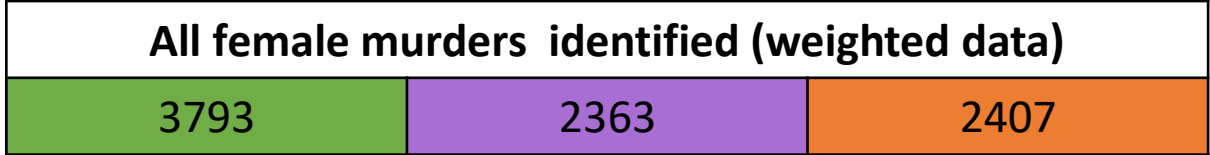
Phase 2 Police

- Identify the police station, the Investigator Officer (IO) using CAS number
- Interview the IO who extract the data from the murder docket
- Identify the perpetrator and the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator

Analysis

- Compare 3 studies
- Data was **weighted** to national estimates for 1999 and 2009 and a larger sample (81 mortuaries) in 2017 allow us to do provincial estimates
- Calculated age standardised femicide rates
- Incidence rate ratios (IRR) and 95% Confidence Intervals (95% CI) – to compare rates between years
- To avoid underestimation of intimate and non-intimate partner femicide we used **imputation** techniques to account for missing perpetrator data

	1999
	2009
	2017



Intimate Partner Femicide
 Non-Intimate Partner Femicide

	1999
	2009
	2017

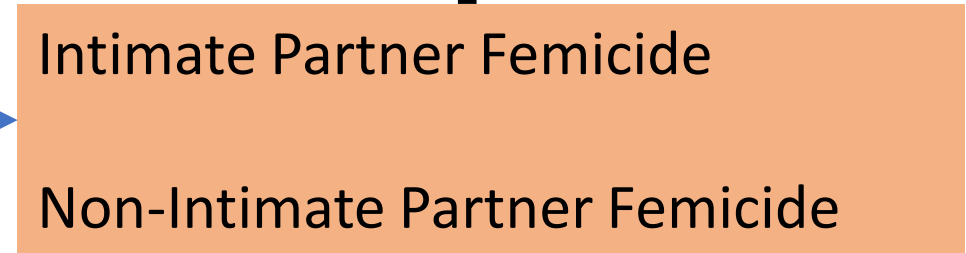
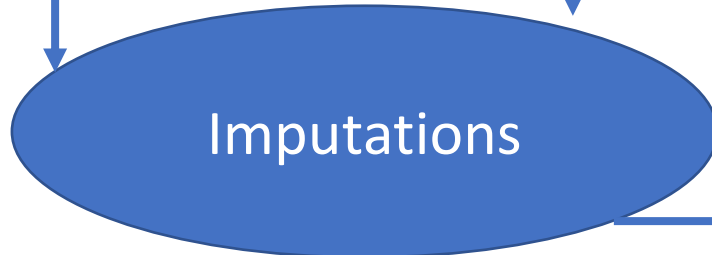
All female murders identified (weighted data)		
3793	2363	2407

Cases <u>not</u> in the police system		
502 (13.1%)	38 (1.6%)	379 (15.7%)

Cases in police system		
3296 (86.9%)	2325 (98.4%)	2028 (84.3%)

Perpetrators not identified by police		
612 (18.6%)	533 (22.9%)	607 (30.0%)

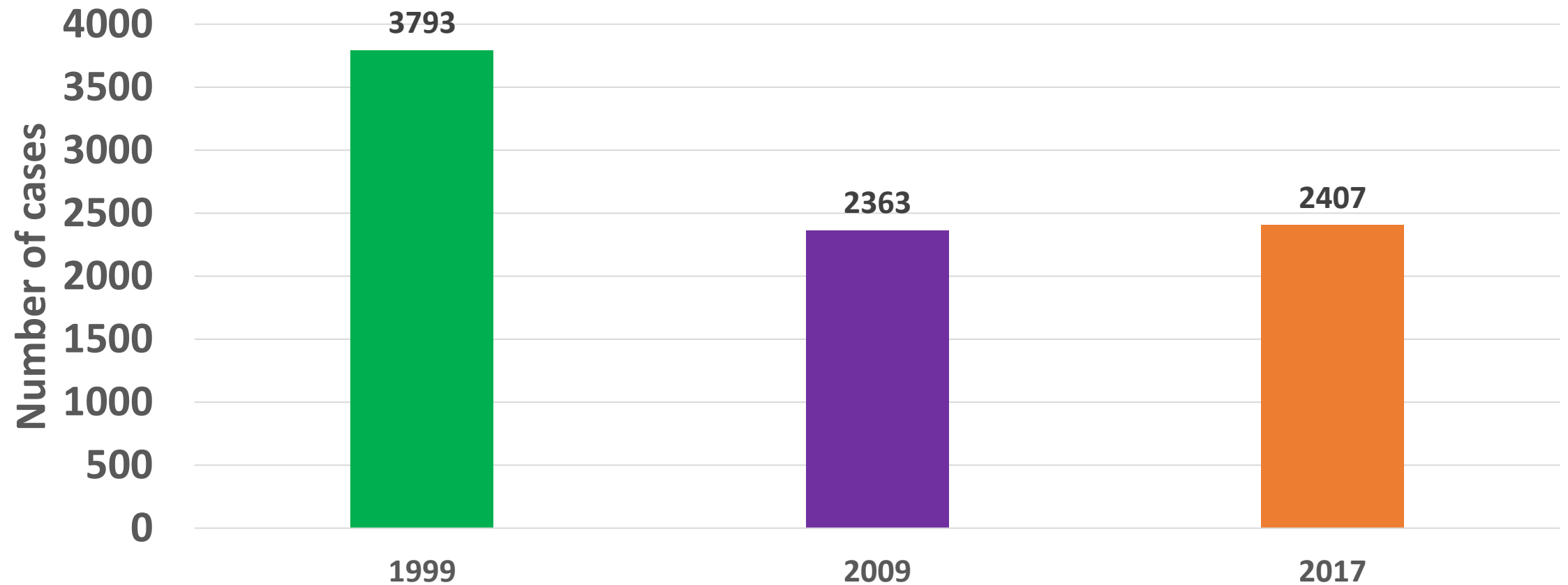
Perpetrators identified by police		
2684 (81.4%)	1792 (75.8%)	1371 (67.6%)



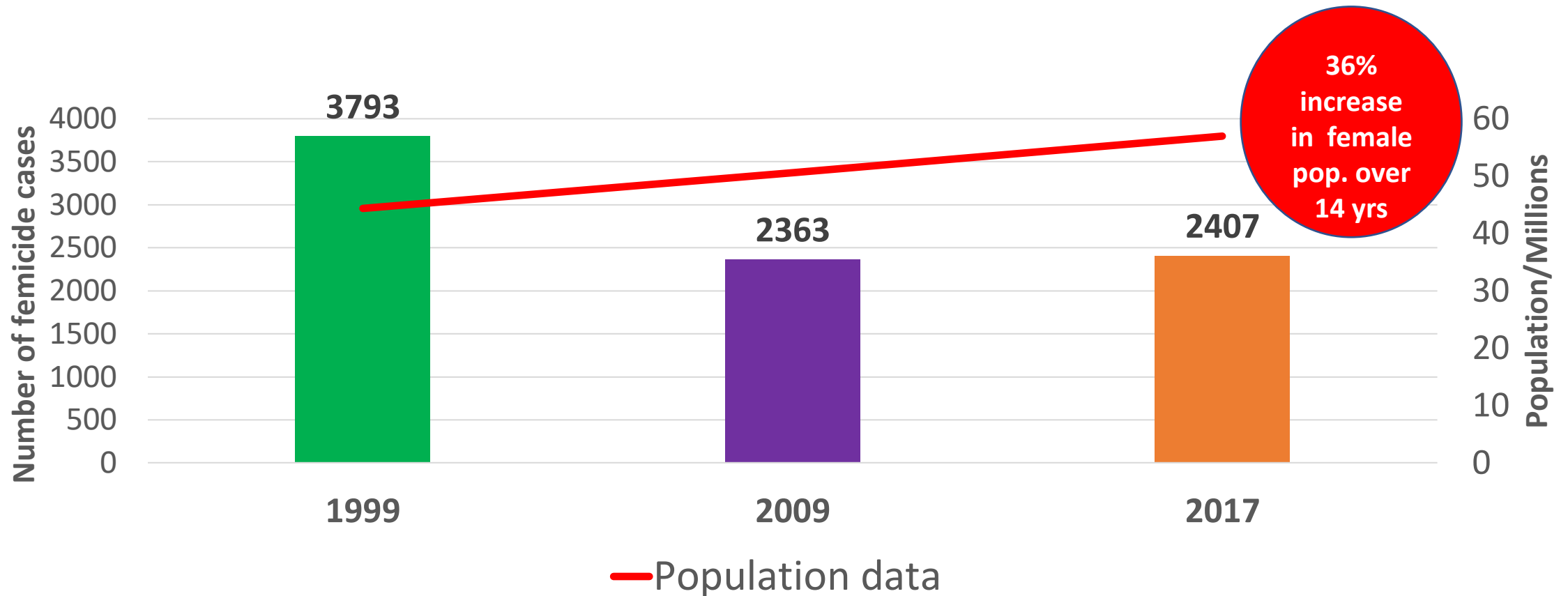


The Results

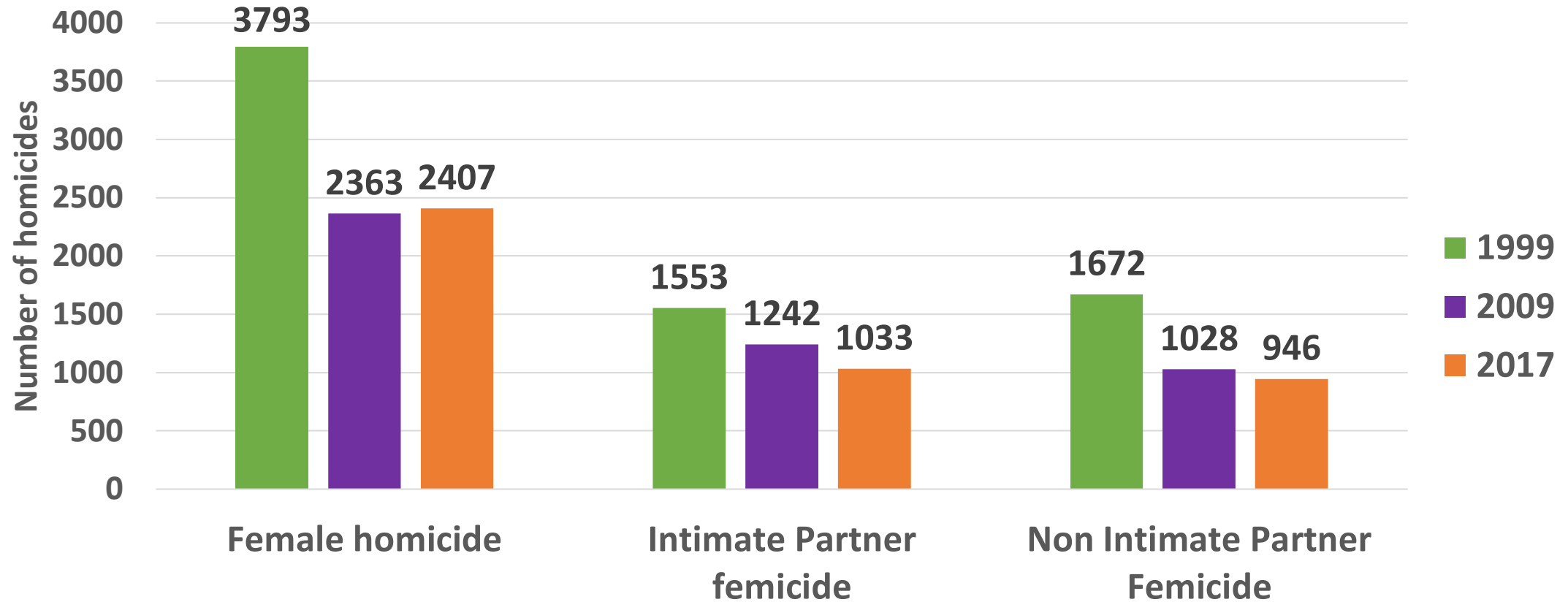
Estimates of number of femicides in South Africa: 1999-2017 (weighted)



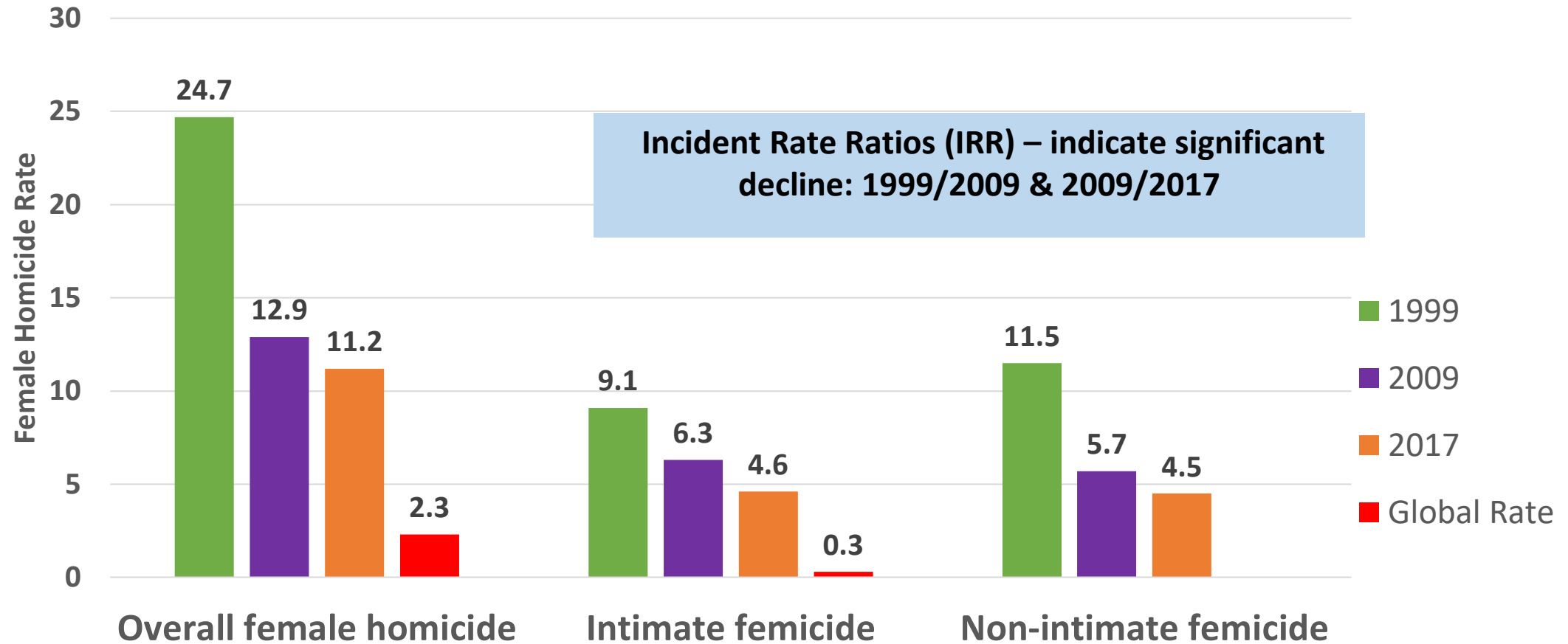
Femicide estimates and population growth in South Africa from 1999-2017



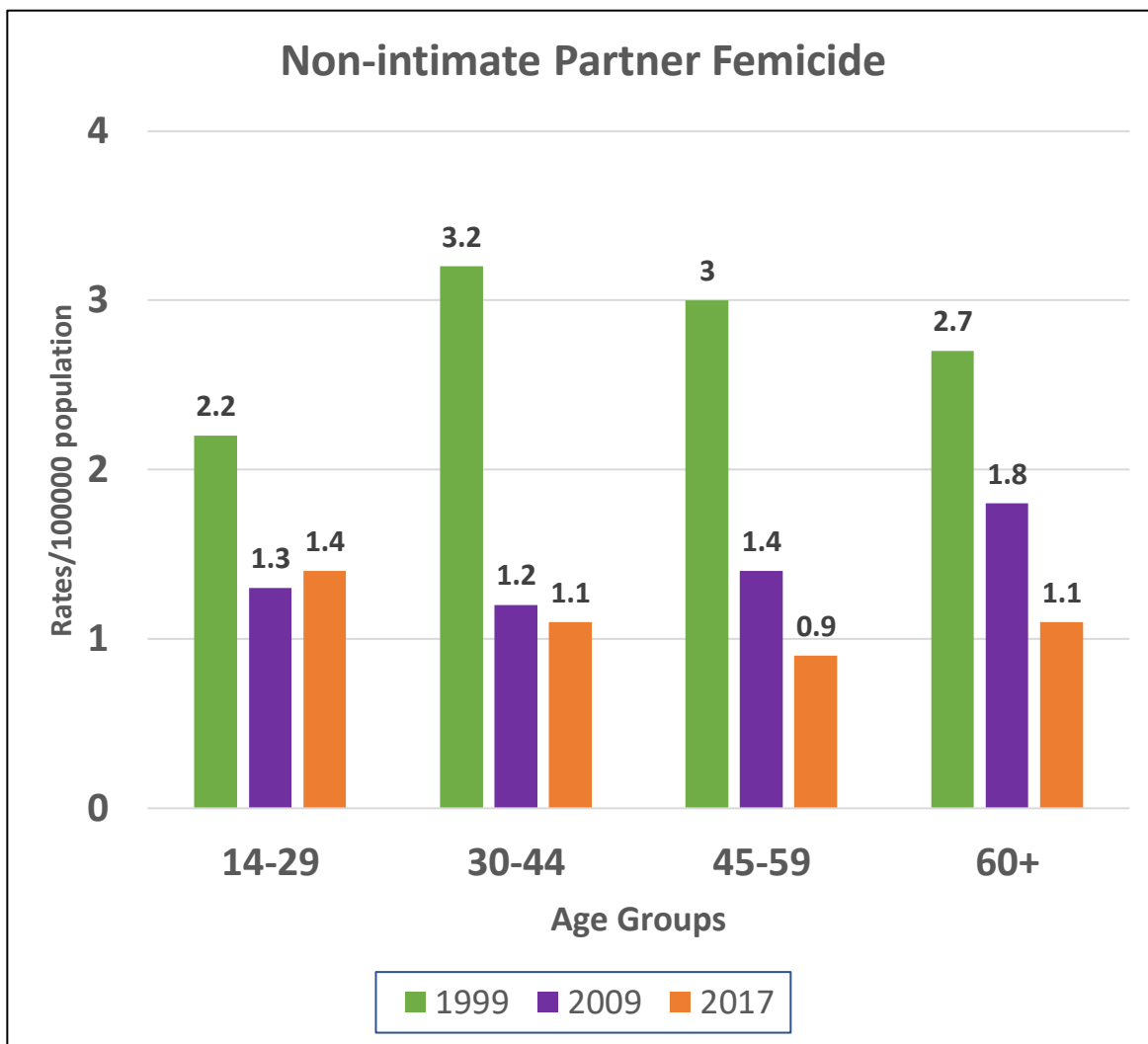
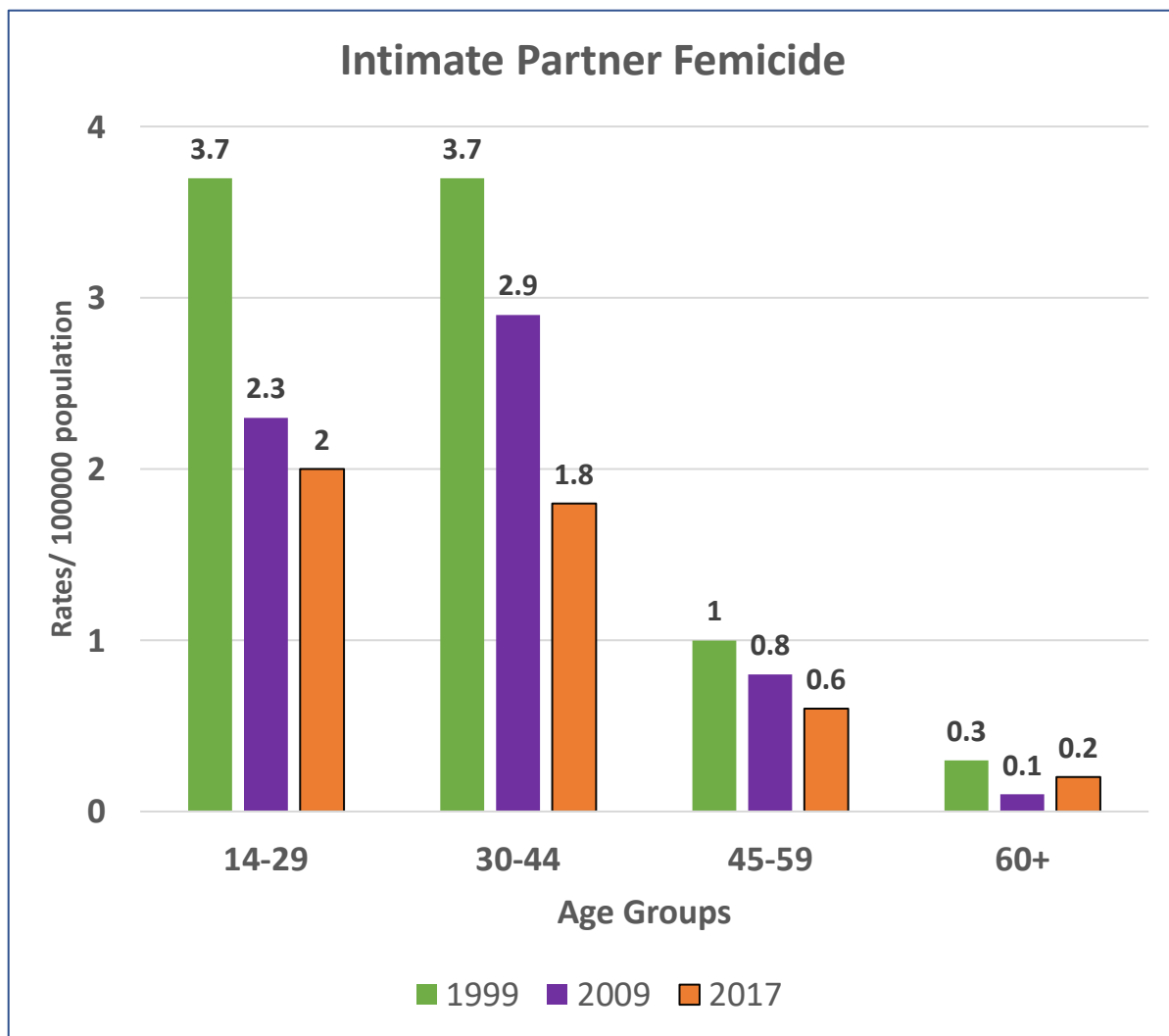
Intimate Partner Femicide and Non-Intimate Partner Femicide estimates



Age-standardised Femicide rates/100 000 female population across 3 South African studies

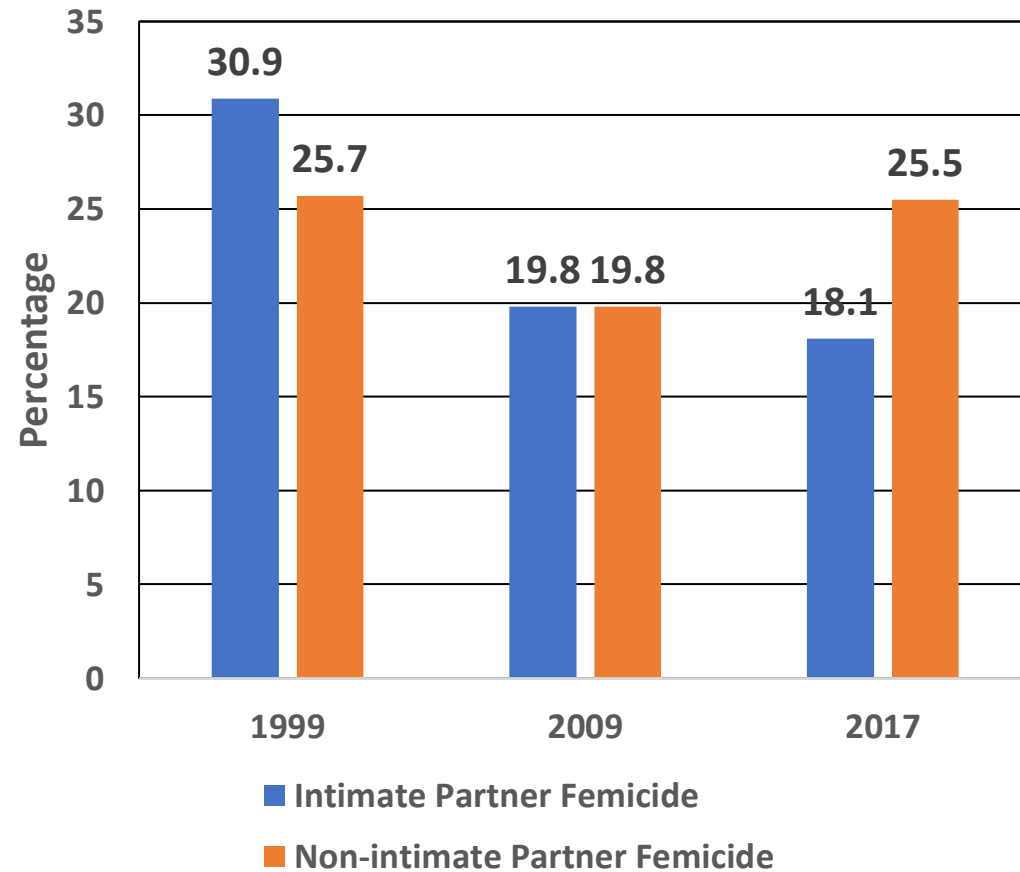


Intimate and Non-Intimate partner femicide rates across age groups

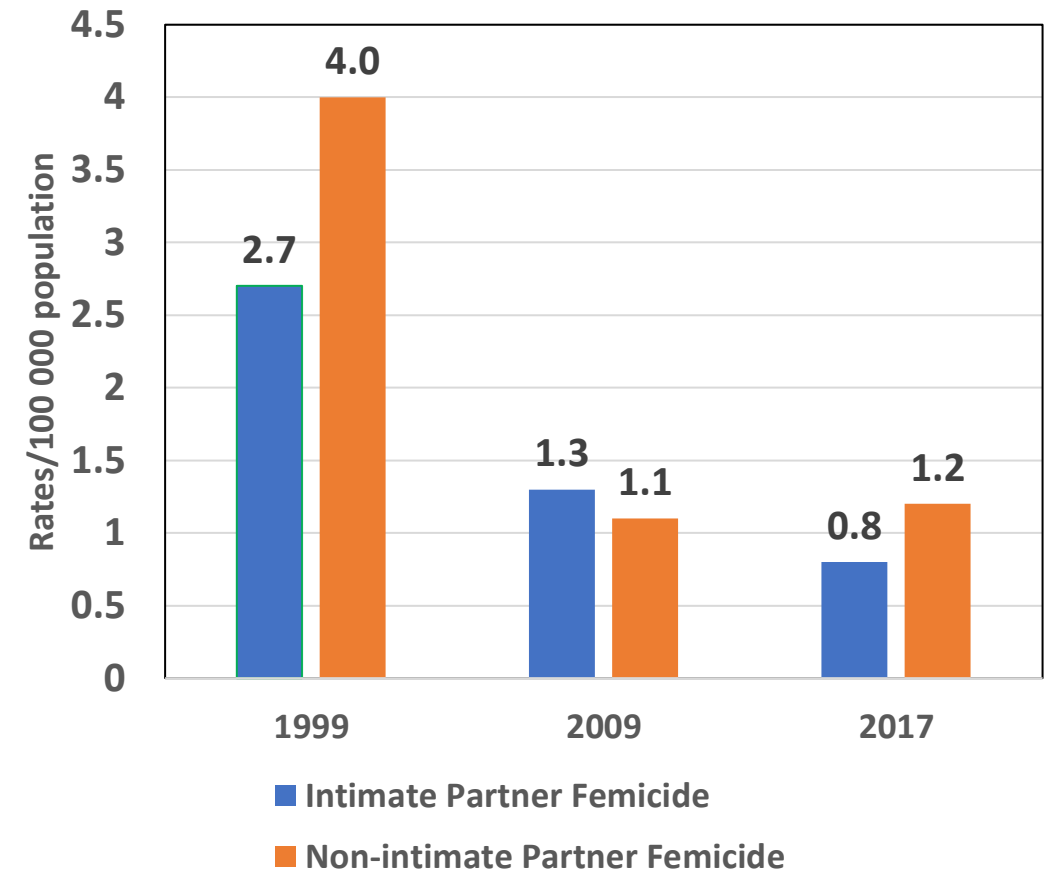


Firearm-related Femicides

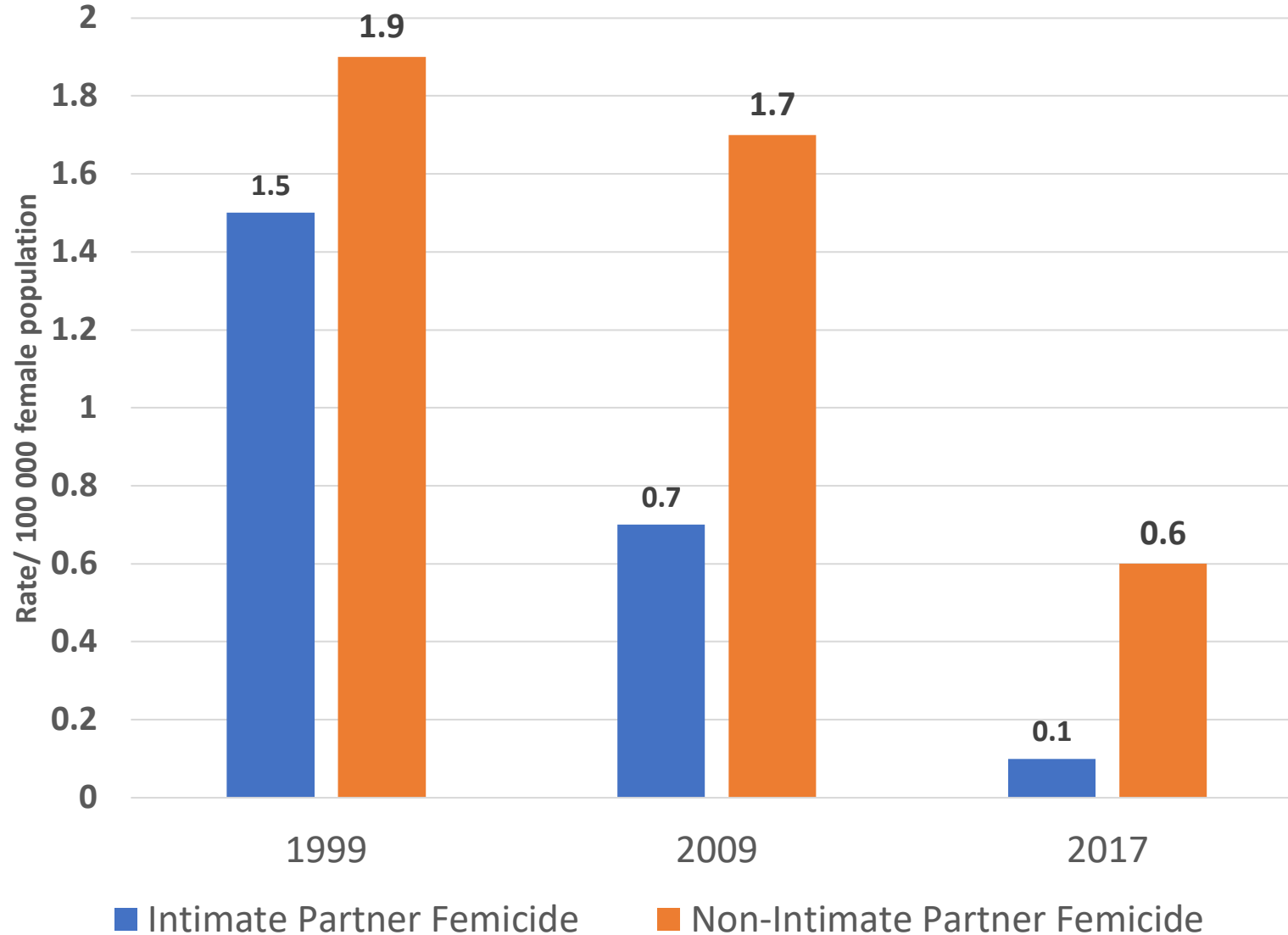
Proportions



Rates/100 000 female population 14 yrs and older



Sexual Femicides



Rape femicides rates showed a similar downwards trend with higher rates consistently found for non-partner femicide

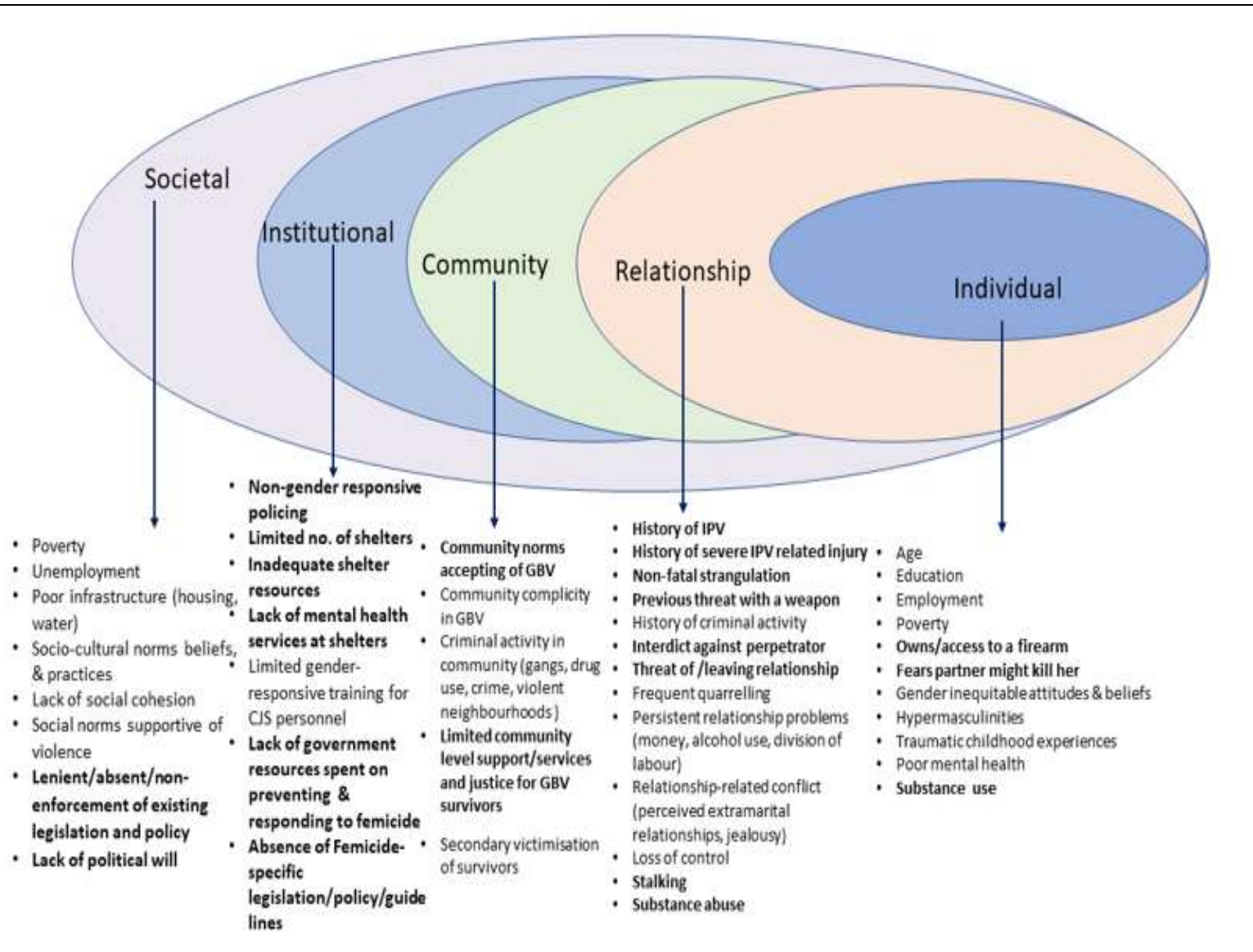
Developing a
national
femicide
prevention
strategy for
South Africa

- ***An evidence and practice-informed approach to preventing femicide***

Nwabisa Shai and Leane Ramsoomar



DRIVERS OF FEMICIDE IN SOUTH AFRICA: SOCIO- ECOLOGICAL MODEL



- Amidst national efforts (civil, legislative, financial incl. NSP-GBVF), problems persist for example:
- Limited femicide-specific prevention & response strategies
- Lack of consensus on definitions
- Limited surveillance, evidence-based femicide prevention programming
- No specialised technical training for femicide response personnel
- Poor enforcement of existing legislation (e.g., firearms, or DV) & absence of femicide-specific policy & guidelines incl. absence of specialized division for the management & investigation of femicides.
- No danger/risk assessment tool to prevent GBV cases from escalating to femicide

THEORY OF CHANGE: FEMICIDE PREVENTION IN SOUTH AFRICA

Impact	Fewer women, girls & gender non-conforming persons in South Africa die from femicide	ASSUMPTIONS
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measurable progress in building evidence base on what works to prevent femicide in South Africa • Measurable evidence of effectiveness of femicide prevention & response interventions at multiple levels • Healthier & more positive relationships between couples • Dominant community norms changed to protect women, girls, & gender non-conforming persons from femicide • Strengthened individual & institutional capacity to effectively prevent & respond to femicide. • Sustained political will to end femicide in South Africa, with adequate resources 	
Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased number of women, girls & gender non-conforming persons recognizing femicide risk & linkages to support services • Increased availability & use of substance abuse programmes • Decreased fire-arm related femicides in relationships • Increased availability &/or implementation of effective couples' programmes • Increased community practices promoting & modelling non-violent & gender-equitable norms • A suite of evidence-based interventions to effectively prevent & respond to femicide • Institutionalized national femicide surveillance system • Increased political will, and state resources for optimal prevention & response to femicide across all sectors • A suite of aligned legislation, policies, & guidelines to prevent & respond to femicide in South Africa 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence-based policy & practice is needed to prevent femicide • Decision-makers use research evidence to inform their decision making • There is a conducive national framework for inter-sectoral collaboration to prevent & respond to femicide.
Inputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritised multi-sectoral research programme on what works to prevent & respond to femicide • Optimal implementation of National prevention strategy on Gender-Based Violence & Femicide • Adaptation, development or scale up of couples' programmes <p>Better gun control as per the Firearms Control Act (FCA)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustained community-level norms change programmes that support survivors of violence in preventing femicide • Implement national surveillance program to measure magnitude & types of femicide. • Building political will, civil society & media advocacy for femicide prevention across all sectors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening individual, community & institutional capacity will result in a reduction in femicide • All sectors recognise the need to address structural factors (poverty, unemployment etc.) as foundational in preventing femicide.
Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited understanding of what works to prevent & effectively respond to femicide • Gun ownership • Substance abuse • Lack of awareness of danger signs for femicide (e.g. non-fatal strangulation) • Community norms accepting of GBV • Absence of femicide-specific policies & guidelines, • Lack of political will to prioritise femicide prevention at global, national, & local government levels 	
Problem statement	<p>Femicide is the most extreme & severe form of GBV globally & is highly prevalent in South Africa. Most perpetrators of femicide are not convicted & incarcerated. Although there have been national efforts to address GBV through civil, legislative, & financial resources, femicide-specific prevention & response strategies remain extremely limited. There is a lack of consensus on definitions of femicide & limited surveillance. There is limited evidence-based femicide prevention programming & specialised technical training for femicide response personnel. Poor enforcement of existing legislation, & the absence of femicide-specific policy & guidelines, including the absence of specialized division for the management & investigation of femicides in SAPS, undermine efforts to effectively prevent & respond to femicide nationally & eliminate impunity for perpetrators.</p>	

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES FOR THE NATIONAL FEMICIDE PREVENTION OVER 5 YEARS

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE ONE: STRENGTHEN LEGISLATION AND DEVELOP FEMICIDE-SPECIFIC POLICY AND GUIDELINES TO PREVENT AND RESPOND TO FEMICIDE

- Review and develop **femicide-prevention** national policy framework with implementation plans.
- Review, enforce and monitor** existing legislation to ensure that it is responsive to femicide prevention.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE TWO: PROVIDE LEADERSHIP & ACCOUNTABILITY FOR FEMICIDE PREVENTION

- Provide **political leadership, dedicated resources & accountability** through sustainable, multi-sectoral **collaboration** and **action** to prevent & respond to femicide

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE THREE: PRIORITISE FEMICIDE SURVEILLANCE & BUILD KNOWLEDGE OF WHAT WORKS TO PREVENT FEMICIDE

- Prioritize, develop and coordinate an **integrated Information System** to monitor femicide in SA
- Set up surveillance system using integrated administrative data from relevant departments (Femicide Watch)
- Set up a rapid response tracking mechanism to track and monitor femicide cases using unique identifiers from police reporting to end of CJS systems

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE FOUR: IMPLEMENT A TARGETED, CONTEXT-SPECIFIC FEMICIDE PREVENTION PROGRAMME

- Prioritize & implement a **research agenda** on **what works** to prevent femicide-
- Review** current IPV risk assessment tool and safety plan for femicide prevention and adapt it for SA
- Implement adapted** risk assessment tool and safety plan for femicide prevention as an **emergency measure** within the **sectors**
- Implement **femicide-specific** public awareness raising campaign

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE FIVE: STRENGTHEN INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY TO PREVENT FEMICIDE

- Provide **specialised training** to the **CJS** on **femicide-specific guidelines**.
- Set up a **dedicated** and **specialized femicide-specific unit** for management, investigation, prosecution & sentencing of **femicide cases**.

Conclusion

- South Africa continues to have a huge problem of femicide with 3 women killed per day by an intimate partner
- However, we have shown that there has been a reduction in femicide over 18 years, with a sustained downwards trend among women murdered by intimate partners.
- We have also seen how Gun Control Act had had a substantial impact - decreasing all forms of femicide but the current challenges in implementing the ACT is being reversed for non-intimate femicide but continuing to afford some protection for women in intimate relationships.
- Our findings are a strong indicator that the efforts of the women's movement in South Africa and dedicated Government policies and programming to combat GBV are reaping rewards in a reduction in intimate femicide.
- We have also shown tracking femicide is an effective tool for countries to monitor progress in their interventions to eradicate gender-based violence

Acknowledgements

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