



FEMICIDE IN ARGENTINA A PARTIAL REPORT FOR THE PERIOD FROM 1 JANUARY TO 31 OCTOBER 2019



In remembrance of The International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

The Argentine Ombudsman Femicide Observatory was created on November 15, 2016, aimed at monitoring and evaluating the compliance of national and international goals and targets regarding violence against women.

An in-depth review of the country's leading daily newspapers provides the basic information necessary to generate statistics on femicides / feminicides. However, when data collected exhibits difficulties in ascertaining the type of crime committed, considerable efforts are made to achieve accuracy of the facts by cross-checking that information with other official sources such as the Police, Prosecutors' Offices and hospitals whose success depends on the cooperation of the above-mentioned entities.

In this context, it must be recalled that our Ombudsman Office is the only Argentine national human rights institution recognised as such by the United Nations. The institution is entirely independent of the Government for the performance of its duties and is responsible for ensuring an adequate protection for the enjoyment of all human rights -and their due promotion, essential for the full realization of these rights-.

Accordingly, enter into agreements with other public and / or private bodies constitutes one of the main Observatory duties, a commitment intended to improve the quality of the information collected and to consolidate the statistical data available on femicides / feminicides at a national level.

The criteria adopted by our Office proceed from both the 26,485 Act and the Argentine Criminal Code (section 80, paragraphs 1, 4, 11 and 12). Also based on the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, Mrs. Dubravka Šimonović recommendations and the *Latin American Model Protocol for the Investigation of Gender-related killings of Women (Femicide / Feminicide)* developed by the OHCHR Regional Office for Central America with the support of UN Women.

Our reports compiled all cases of gender-related killings of women perpetrated by men, including transgender people, which fall into the category of femicides or suspected femicides. Moreover, those cases which are considered as "connected femicides" are also included therein.

When violence against women is silenced

A high death rate of sexually-abused girls have been occurred throughout 2019. The alarming level of vulnerability to violence that some of these girls had experienced led them to commit suicide.

In February 2019, V.D., a 15-year-old girl who lived in the Province of Salta committed suicide. After this tragic end, her 23-year-old older sister decided to break the cycle of violence that she and her two younger sisters had experienced by making allegations of sexual abuse against her father. V.D. had been systematically sexually abused by her 71-year-old father.¹

In July, M.A., a 13-year-old girl committed suicide in Merlo, a district of the Province of Buenos Aires, leaving behind two letters in which she claimed to have been sexually abused by a blood relative, among other extreme cruelties he had inflicted on her. Following a thoroughly examination of these claims, it was found that the child had been repeatedly abused by his uncle and he himself had made her pregnant. Some of her neighbours and friends testified that they themselves had previously reported the incident.²

In September, A.A.R., a 16-year-old girl, killed herself at a gas station in the Province of Misiones using the service weapon of her abuser. Surprisingly, the media drew a veil over the abuser's name.³

Now, it is becoming increasingly clear that our society tends to *naturalize* violent gender-based killings of girls and women. In addition to this long trail of violence, pain and abuse, a new category has been added to our report: the **Femicidal Suicide**.

UNICEF released a detailed report on teenage suicide. Risk factors are precisely described therein such as gender, family disruption, sexual assault and socio-economic and cultural aspects. Besides, intra-family violence, sexual assault and lack of family support have been identified, among others, as long-term / cumulative risk factors.⁴

As early as 2015, the results of an Argentine research showed that many women deaths reported as suicides could have been hidden femicides.⁵

1 Retrieved from: <http://elciudadanodetarija.com/horror-en-salta-se-suicidio-una-chica-de-14-anos-porque-su-papa-la-violaba/>

2 Retrieved from: <https://www.cronica.com.ar/policiales/La-nena-de-13-anos-se-ahorco-porque-estaba-embarazada-de-su-tio-20190717-0172.html>

3 Retrieved from: <http://www.infoaguilares.com.ar/policiales/tenia-16-anos-y-su-padre-abusaba-de-ella-se-mato-de-un-disparo/>

4 Retrieved from: <https://www.unicef.org/argentina/media/5466/file/suicidio%20adolescente.pdf>

5 Retrieved from: <https://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/psicologia/9-273633-2015-05-28.html>

Quoting Jane Caputi and Diana Russell, femicide "*is not some inexplicable phenomenon*" (...) *it is an extreme expression of patriarchal 'force'. It, like that other form of sexual violence, rape... is a social expression of sexual politics, an institutionalized and ritual enactment of male domination, and a form of terror that functions to maintain the force of the patriarchal order*".⁶

Gender-based violence-related suicides are preventable cruel deaths. This view puts forward the urgent need for change in those social relations where male-supremacy exists, to the point that no value is given to woman's life just for being female and the sense of ownership and control of men over women is considered reasonable.⁷

Significantly, El Salvador is the only country in Latin America where the "feminicidal suicide" is penalized, and according to the UN, it is probably the only one all over the world.

'*Under this Act, suicides are perceived as potential effects of a long-term male domination motivated by hatred or contempt for the female condition*", in the words of Ms. Silvia Juárez, the Organization of Salvadoran Women for Peace's (known by its Spanish acronym ORMUSA) representative.⁸

In May 2019, in Jalisco, Mexico, the president of the Commission on Substantive Equality submitted a proposal to the State Congress intended to criminalize feminicidal suicide when such suicide has been preceded by any kind of gender-based violence inflicted by the perpetrator upon the victim.⁹

In Argentina suicide is viewed as a public health issue. Based upon the foregoing and also relied on other studies conducted in our country during last years, this Observatory deems critically important that suicides be considered as **feminicidal suicides** in those cases in which the prior existence of violence and abuse against women can actually be established.

6 Jane Caputi and Diana Russell, "*Advertising Femicide: Lethal Violence against Women in Pornography and Gorenography*" and "*Femicide: the Politics of Woman Killing*".

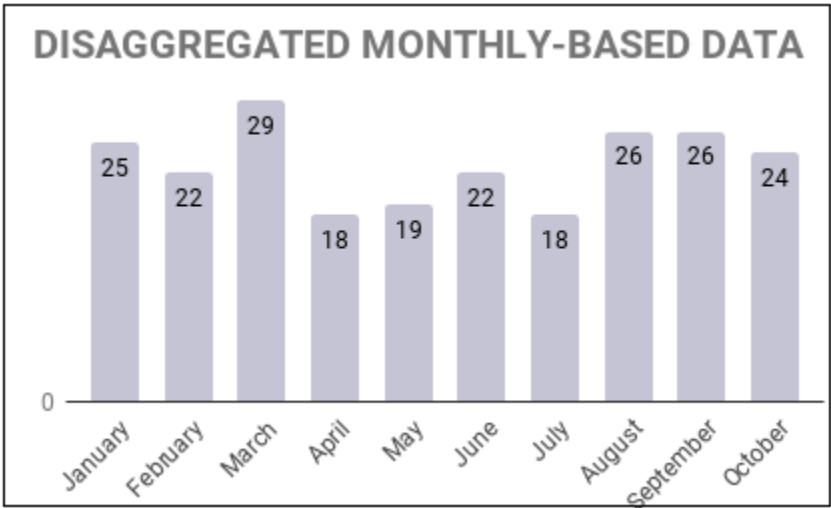
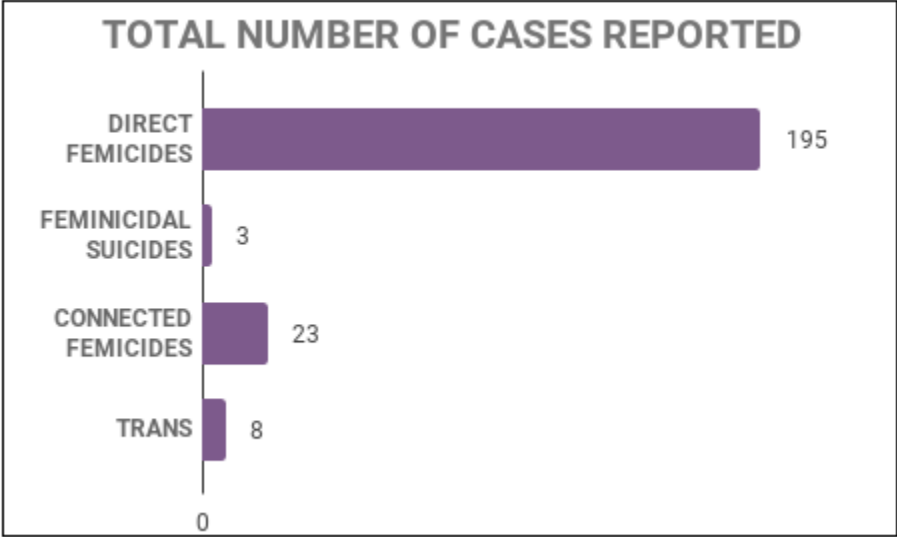
7 Excerpt from the book "*Violencias contra las mujeres: Desafíos y aprendizajes en la Cooperación Sur-Sur en América Latina y el Caribe*" (2015) [Violence against Women: Challenges and Learning on South-South Cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean] (2015).

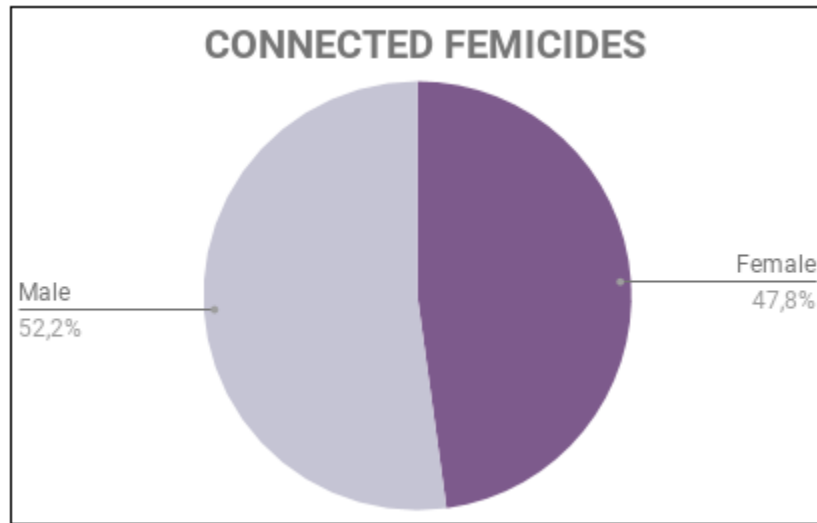
8 Retrieved from: <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-america-latina-45883882>

9 Retrieved from: <https://www.informador.mx/jalisco/Buscan-tipificar-el-suicidio-feminicida-en-Jalisco-20190512-0056.html>

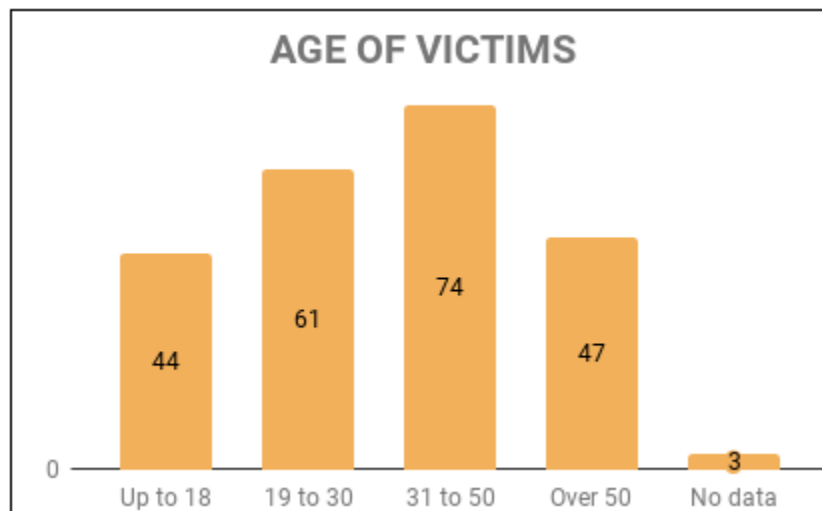
The results achieved so far are shown below. The graphics capture femicide data for the period January 1 - October 31, 2019.

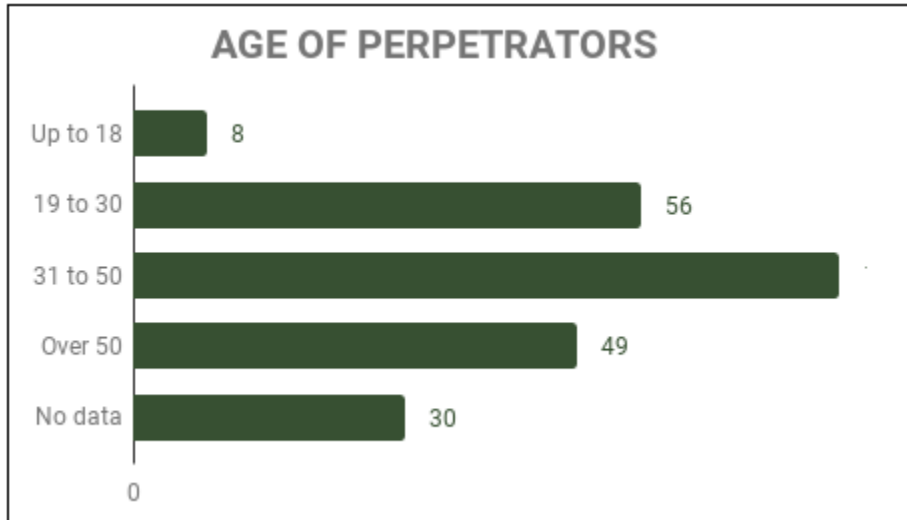
During the months watched, **229 victims were reported, including 3 feminicidal suicides, 23 cases of connected femicides and 8 trans / transvesticides.**



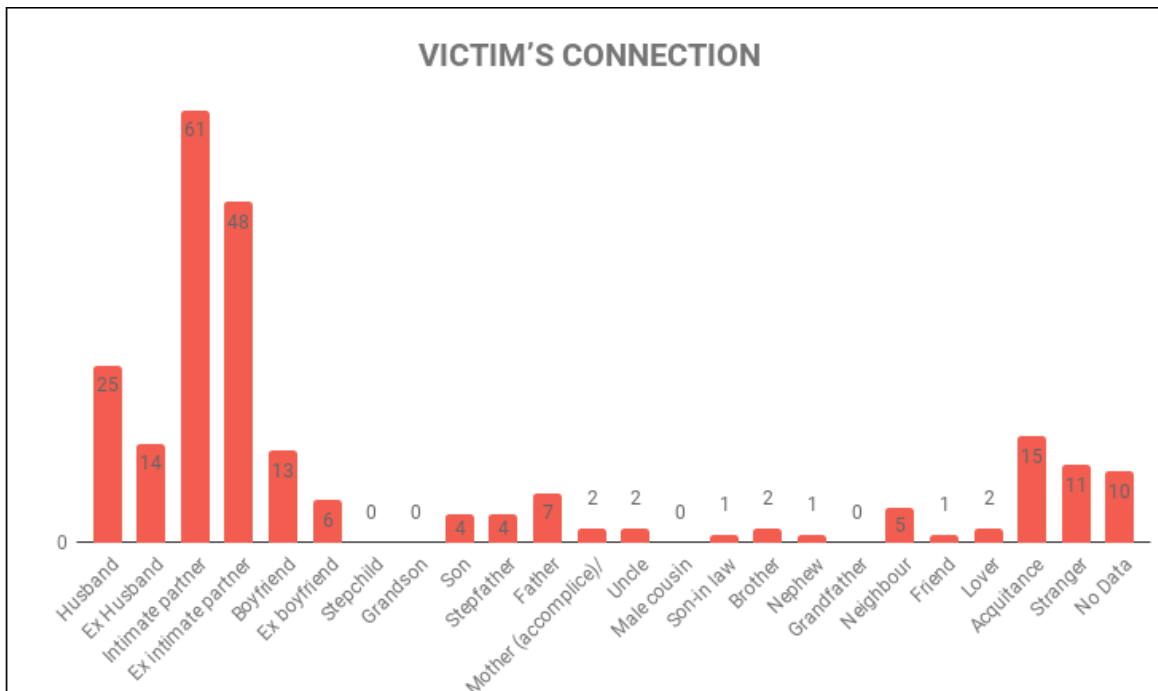


Victims' personal particulars could be verified by the available data and made it possible to identify in some, but not all, cases the age of victims and perpetrators. Remarkable, the range of victims under 18: **44 cases**.

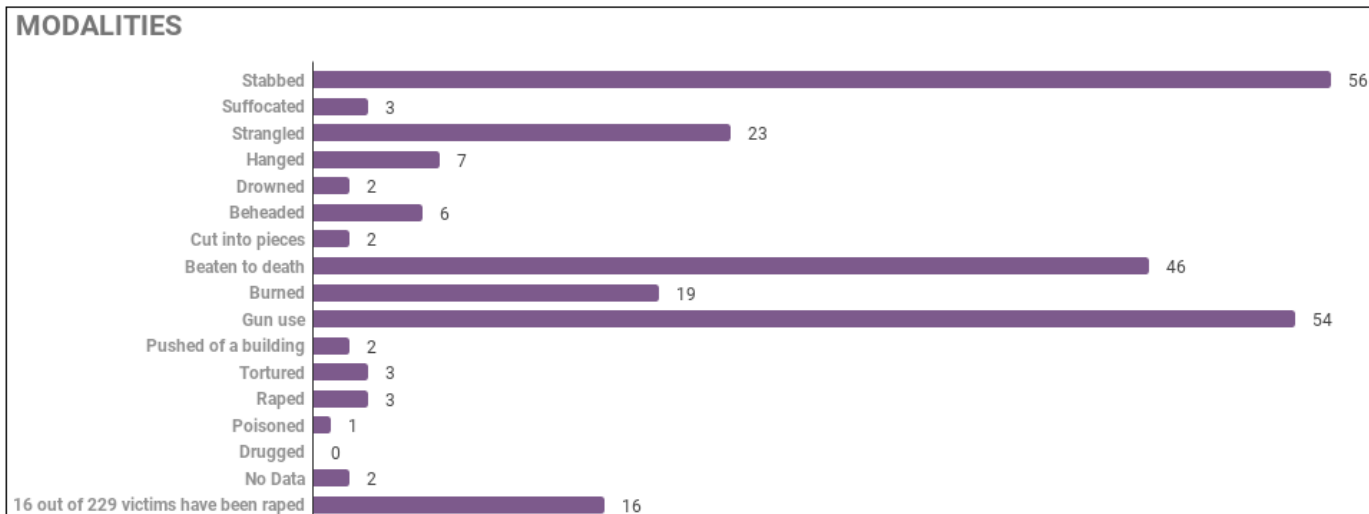




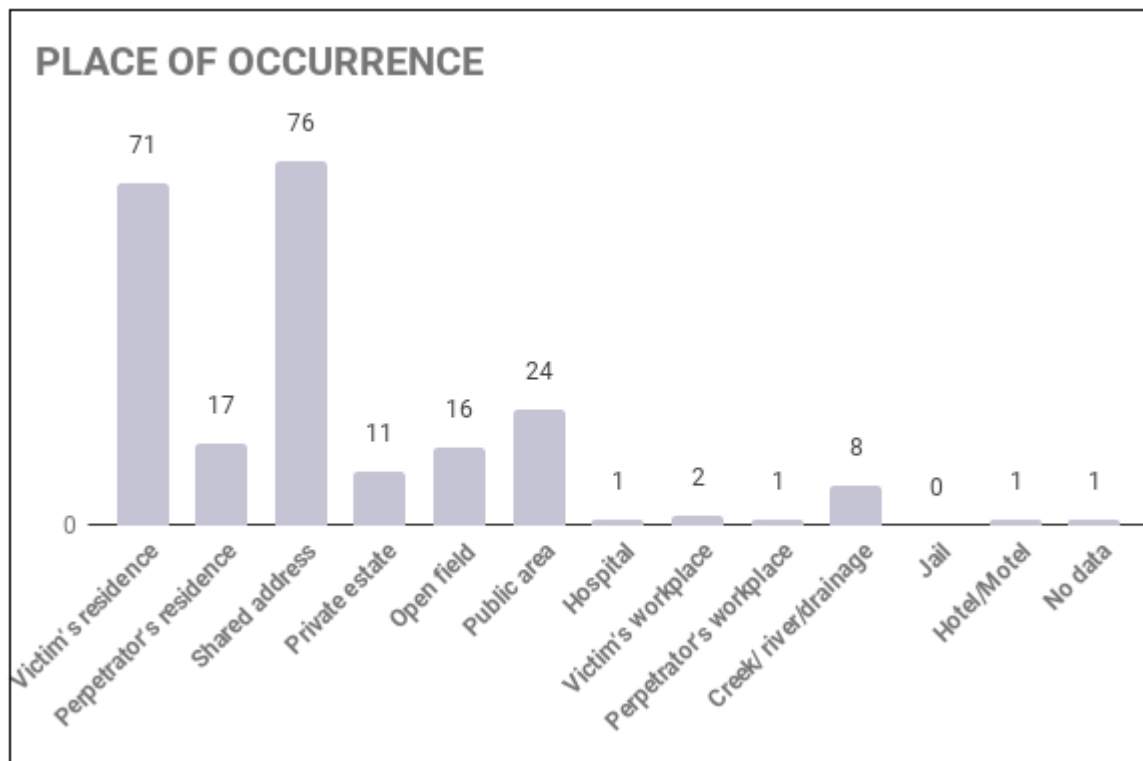
A pre-existing victim-perpetrator relationship in a high percentage of cases led us to conclude that most femicides occur within the close circle of victims. Perpetrators and victims were not aware of one another in only 11 cases.



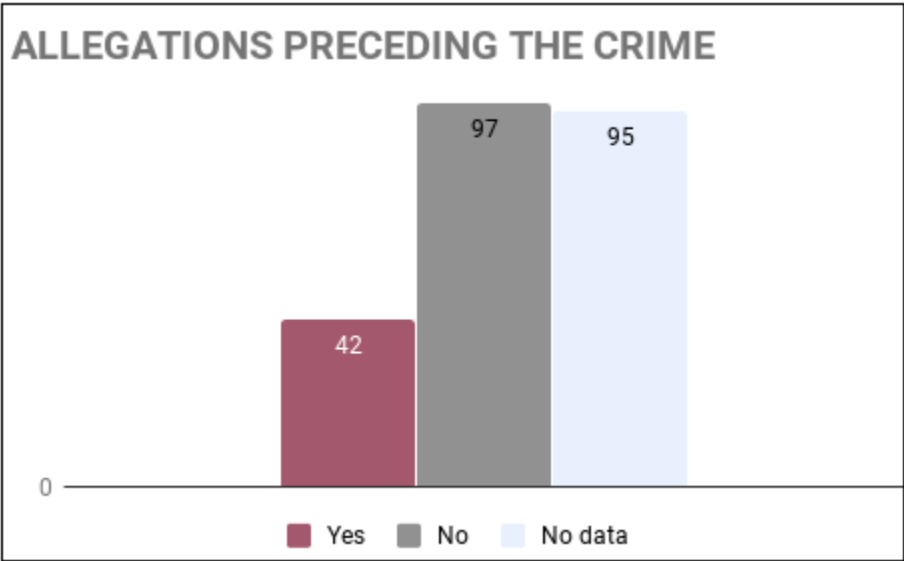
As to modalities, **16 victims out of 229 were raped**. The most frequent methods used to kill are the following: stabbing (56), gun use (54) and beaten to death (46).



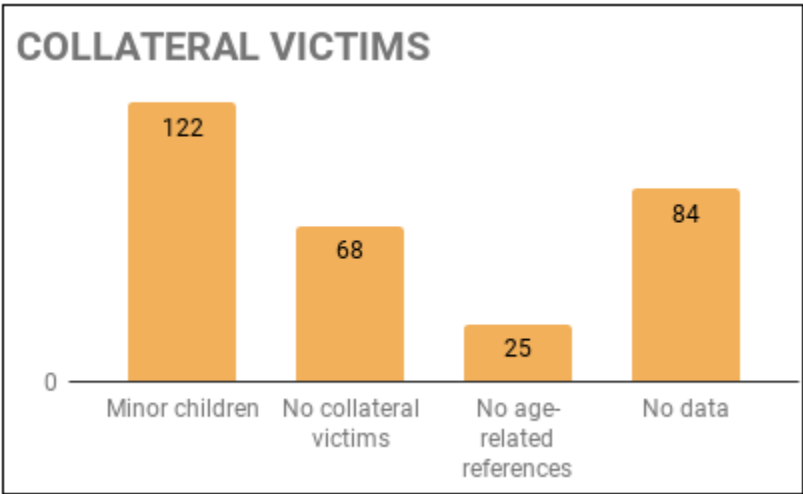
As regards places where events took place, the information gathered showed that 147 killings occurred inside the couple's or the victim's home.



42 cases of femicide were reported that could have been avoided if women had been assisted from the very moment in which the first complaint was lodged by them.

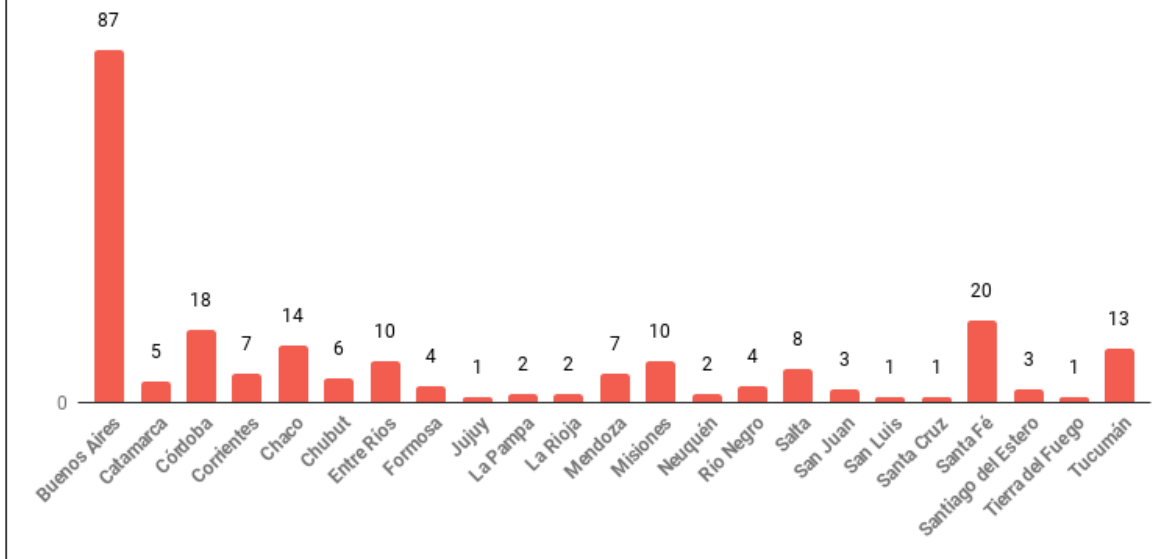


Regarding collateral victims, 122 minor children were left motherless. On the other hand, the child victims' age has not been reported in some cases.

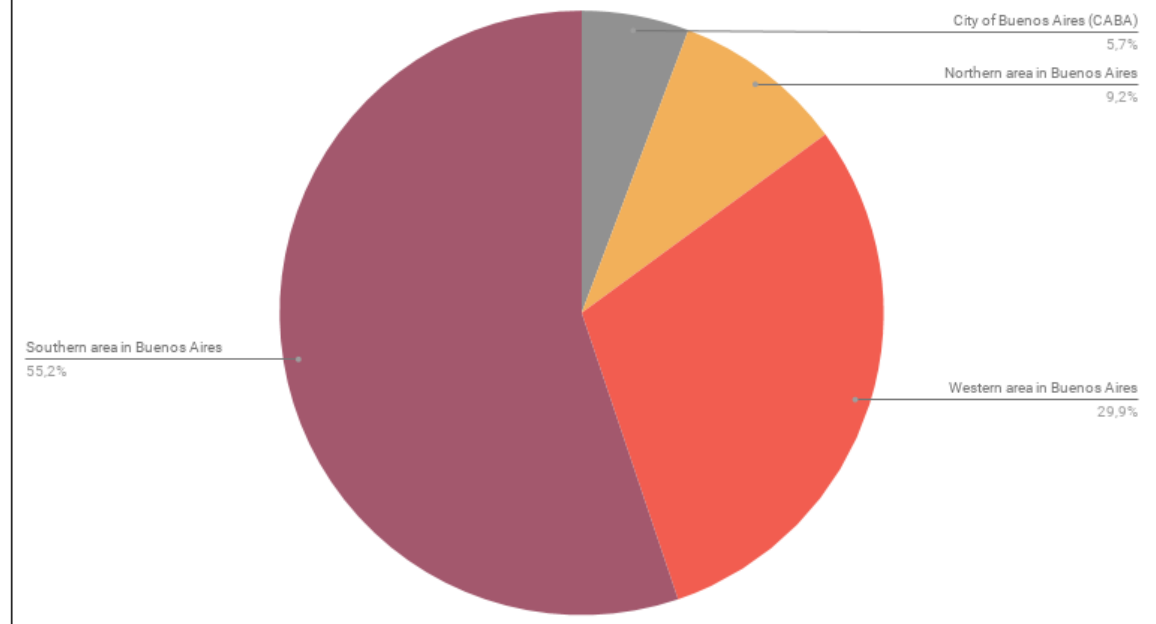


As regards the number of cases reported in our country, 87 cases have been confirmed in Buenos Aires, the province showing the highest record in number of femicides; followed by Santa Fe (20), Córdoba (18), Chaco (14) and Tucumán (13).

DISAGGREGATED PROVINCE-BASED DATA



Buenos Aires (both the Capital City and the Province)



This report provides information that could be updated later as investigation and prosecution of cases progress