

THE ROLE FIREARMS PLAY IN **VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMAN**

3RD EDITION - 2024



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The role firearms play in violence against women | 3rd edition, 2024

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Introduction

Over recent years, Instituto Sou da Paz

has dedicated itself to monitoring and understanding the impact of guns in Brazil, stepping up efforts in this area in the wake of changes to legislation made by the former president Jair Bolsonaro, which led to an exponential increase in the number of firearms in circulation. We have been monitoring the impact of firearm violence since 2020, focusing specially on two specific population groups – women and black people – and analyzing the social and human toll of this type of violence for the public health system. One of the results of this work is the regular publication of the reports “The role firearms play in violence against women”, “Firearm violence and racism: firearms and racial inequality” and “The cost of firearm violence: public health spending on caring for shooting victims”.

Drawing on data from the country’s mortality information system and national notifiable disease surveillance system, key databases administered by the Ministry of Health, the third edition of the report “The role firearms play in violence against women” assesses and characterizes lethal and non-lethal firearm violence against women in Brazil. Following on from prior editions,¹ this report examines trends in firearm violence against women and describes the victim profile and main characteristics of these incidents, including the most common types of firearm violence, the context in which the violence took place and main perpetrators.

¹ The role firearms play in violence against women, 1st edition and 2nd edition.

More than 70% of assault-related deaths in Brazil involve firearms. According to data compiled from police records by the Brazilian Public Security Forum in 2023, this rate was 76% in 2022. Although most victims of firearm violence are male, it is important to lay bare the use of guns in the victimization of women amid the recent increase in the number of firearms in circulation due to the relaxing of gun control laws. The disastrous effects of loosening gun ownership rules are likely to be felt in the long-term, and exacerbate risk factors for domestic and gender-based violence.

Violence against women is a persistent social reality and manifests itself in different ways. According to the study “Visible and invisible: the victimization of women in Brazil”,² the most common type of violence suffered by Brazilian women is verbal abuse, being reported by 23.1% of respondents, followed by persecution (13.5%), threats (12.4%) and physical aggression, such as kicking, punching and pushing (11.6%). A significant proportion of women reported beating or strangling (5.4%) and receiving injuries from thrown objects (4.2%). Over 5% of respondents reported having been threatened with a knife or firearm, and 1.6% had been victims of stabbings or shootings during the 12 months prior to the interview.

This report therefore seeks to shed light on the role played by firearms in aggravating gender-based violence, emphasizing the importance of bolstering measures to control access to these weapons. As various studies have shown, guns are a risk factor for violence and their use results in high levels of lethality and huge social and human cost.³ It is therefore critical to acknowledge that the presence of firearms at home and easy access to guns are risk factors for domestic/family violence and violence against women and underline the importance of stepping up efforts to formulate and promote policies to effectively tackle this problem.

² Brazilian Public Security Forum, 4^a edition, 2023.

³ CERQUEIRA, D. The welfare cost of crime and violence in Brazil. The Brazilian Public Security Yearbook. São Paulo: FBSP, 2017; Instituto Sou da Paz. The health costs of armed violence, 2023.

METHODOLOGY

This edition presents the results of a time series analysis of data on violent deaths and non-lethal violence between 2012 and 2022 obtained from Ministry of Health information systems.

Brazil's mortality information system (SIM, acronym in Portuguese) provides consolidated data on deaths, while the national notifiable disease surveillance system (SINAN, acronym in Portuguese) furnishes data on mandatory notifications of cases of interpersonal and self-directed violence treated on the health system. SINAN data are systematically revised, with this report considering the latest figures from June 2023. The data from 2021 and 2022 are pending revision.

We outline trends in firearm violence over the study period and describe victim and incident profiles and the dynamics of cases of firearm violence against women in 2022. With regard to trends in violence, due to differences between the results of the 2022 census and previous population estimates, we avoid making comparisons using relative values (rates per population). Utilizing new data from the latest census disaggregated by sex, race and age, we provide national, regional and state snapshots based on the latest figures on gun violence against women.

It is worth noting that there has been a decline in the quality of reporting of deaths from external causes (assault, accident or suicide) in recent years, especially from 2018, when the number of recorded cases with an undetermined cause of death began to rise.

Between 2018 and 2022, there was an average of 3,718 violent deaths of women with undetermined cause each year, 69 of which involved a firearm. In 2022, there were 4,172 deaths of women with undetermined cause in Brazil, representing 13% of all female deaths from external causes, compared to only 9% in 2017; 3% of all female firearm deaths in 2022 were reported as deaths with undetermined cause, compared to 1.4% in 2017.

Differences in data quality across states and regions hamper the analysis of the impact of firearms on violent deaths, meaning that urgent steps are needed to promote the production of accurate and consistent data, which is essential for shaping effective policies to tackle crime.

SECTION 1

LETHAL FIREARM VIOLENCE

Deaths of women from assault by
firearm registered in the mortality
information system (SIM),
2012-2022



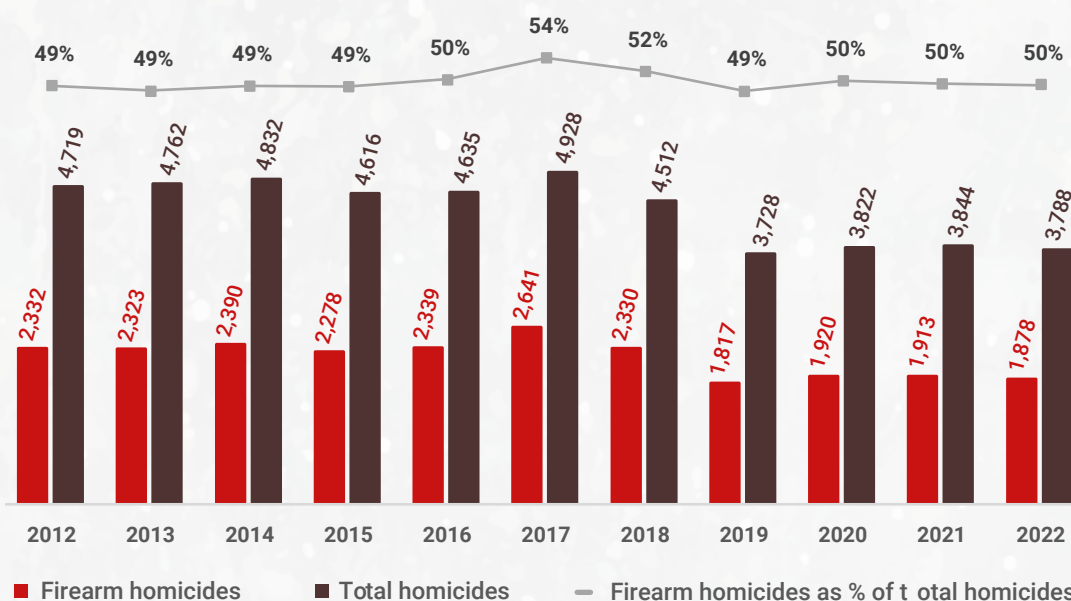
National snapshot

An average of 2,400 women died from firearm injuries in Brazil each year between 2012 and 2022. The overwhelming majority (92%) were victims of firearm homicide, with self-inflicted intentional firearm deaths and accidents accounting for only 4% and 1% of deaths, respectively, and the remaining 3% resulting from undetermined causes.

Given that there was an average of 4,400 female homicides each year during the same period, firearms were used in over half of the cases. The consolidated data for 2022 show that, despite annual variations in the number of incidents, this pattern persists, revealing that one in every two women murdered in Brazil is a victim of assault by firearm.

GRAPH 1

Total female homicides and firearm homicides, Brazil 2012-2022



Source: SIM/DATASUS

2022
2021
2020
2019
2018
2017
2016
2015
2014
2013
2012

2,200
women murdered
each year using a firearm



6
murders
per day



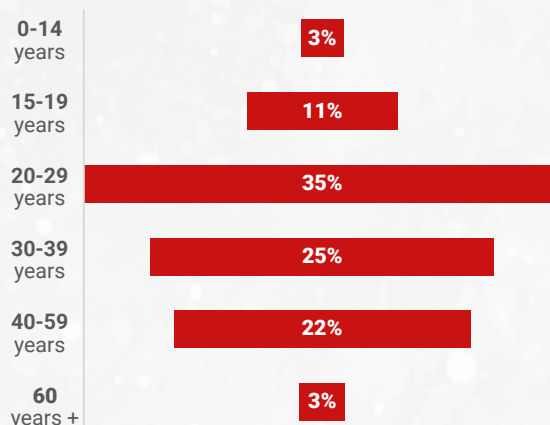
1
murder
every 4 hours



Young women (20-29 years) represent the largest proportion of female firearm homicide victims, followed by the 30-39 age group, with both groups together accounting for 60% of all deaths in 2022. Following the trend highlighted in past reports, shooting was the main method used to commit homicide across all ages except the 60 and over group, with rates being more pronounced in the 15-29 year age group. The second most common method used to commit homicide was a sharp or penetrating object (27% of all deaths), with the proportion of deaths from this method increasing with age (Graph 3).

GRAPH 2

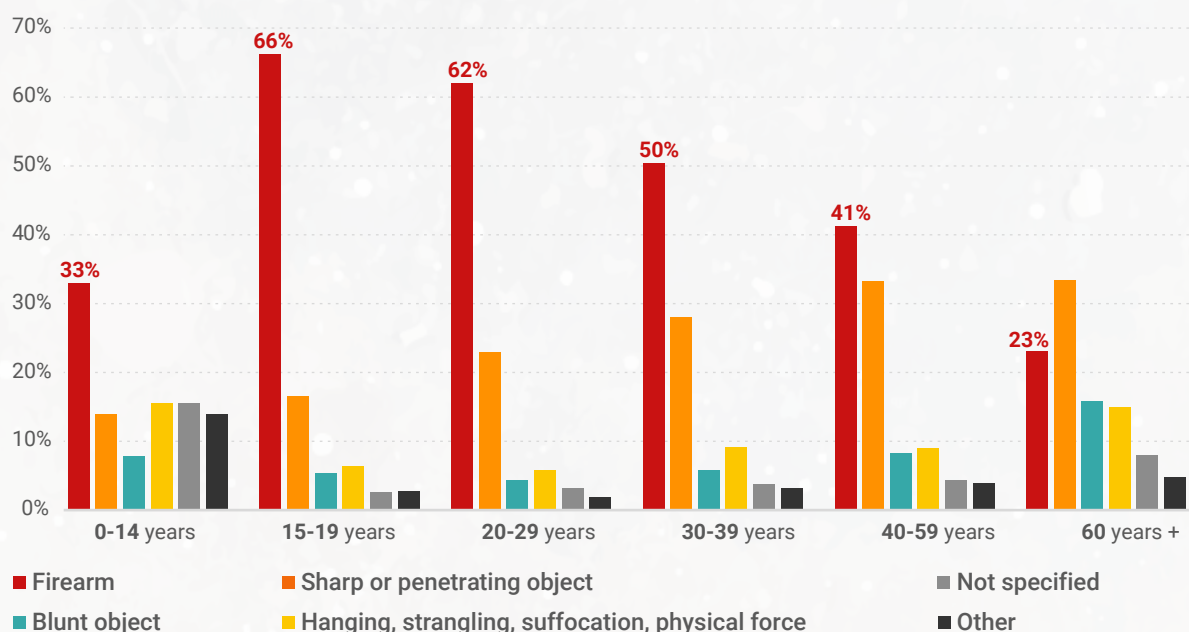
Female firearm homicides by age group, Brazil 2022 (%)



Source: SIM/DATASUS

GRAPH 3

Female firearm homicides by method used and age group, Brazil 2022 (%)



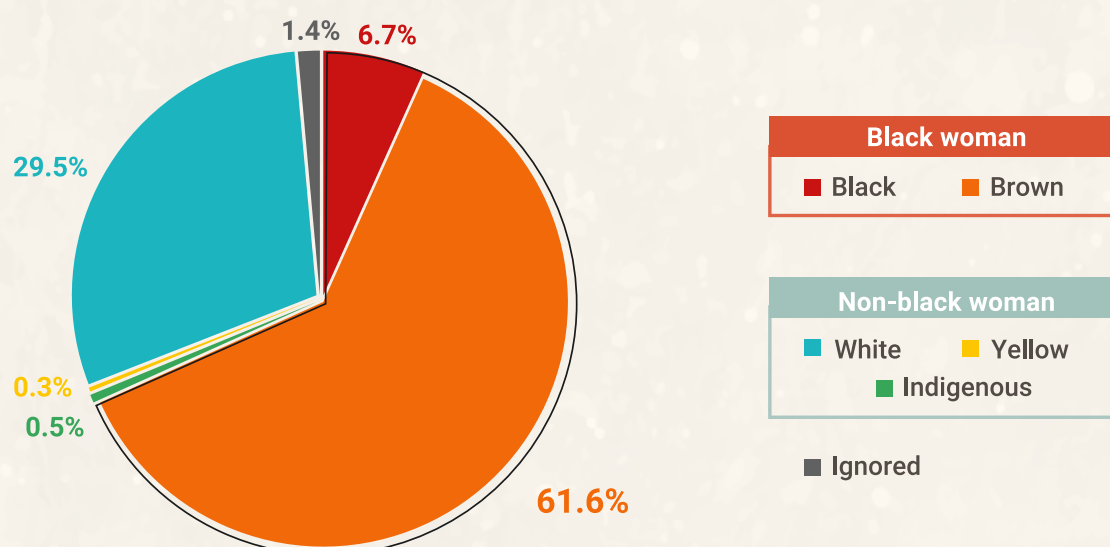
Source: SIM/DATASUS

Young and adult black women are the main victims of firearm violence

The majority of female homicide victims (overall and firearm homicides) were black. In 2022, this group accounted for 68.3% of all fatal victims of assault by firearm, meaning that almost 7 out of 10 female victims of gun murders in Brazil are black.

GRAPH 4

Female firearm homicides by race/color, Brazil 2022 (%)



Source: SIM/DATASUS

Although shooting is the main method used to commit homicide in both groups, an analysis of the data over time shows that black women remain more vulnerable to firearm homicide. The firearm homicide rate peaked in both groups in 2017 (57% in black homicide victims and 47% among non-black victims), when the country witnessed a peak in homicides.⁴

68%
of women
murdered using
a firearm are black

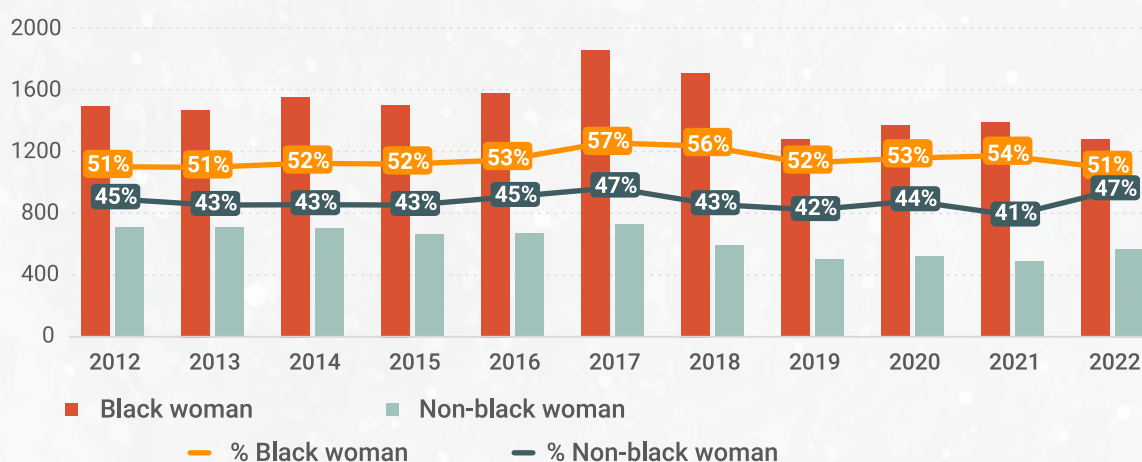
⁴ The category “black women” includes both black and brown women, while “non-black women” includes white, yellow and indigenous women.

After 2017, the female firearm homicide rate dropped back to around 50%, with rates remaining higher among black women. However, in 2022, the number and proportion of deaths from assault by firearm rose only among non-black women, reducing the gap between racial groups, with this year seeing the smallest proportional difference between the groups (51% among black women versus 47% in non-black women) (Graph 5).

The firearm homicide rate is higher among black women than in white women. However, this difference decreased in 2022, when the proportion of non-black women murdered using a firearm increased

GRAPH 5

Total number of female firearm homicides and firearm homicides as a proportion of total female homicides by race/color, Brazil 2012-2022



Female homicides
by method used,
Brazil 2022 (%)



Firearm
50%



Hanging,
strangling,
suffocation,
physical force
9%



Not specified
4%



Sharp or penetrating
object
27%



Blunt
object
7%



Other
4%



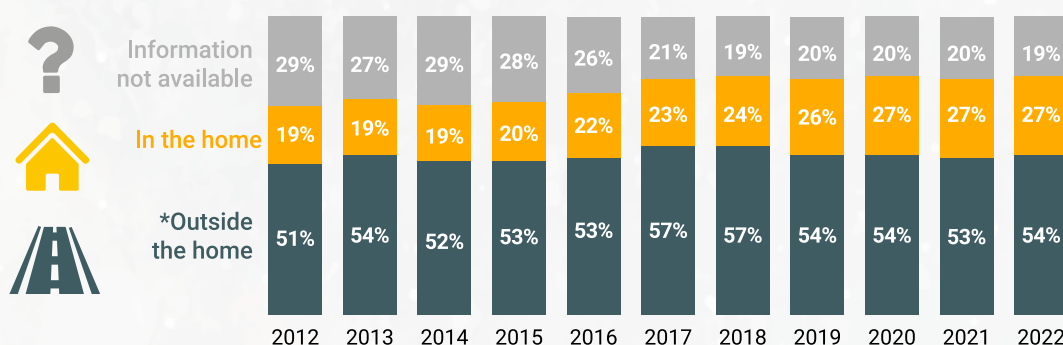
The **place in which assault incidents take place** is a relevant indicator for the analysis of gender-based violence. In general, the most common place of occurrence of firearm homicide is on a public street; however, women are more likely to be victimized in the home than men. In 2022, 27% of female firearm homicides were committed in the home, compared to only 12% among men. The data reveal that the percentage of firearm homicides committed in the home was highest in recent years (Graph 6). It is also interesting to note that the most common place of occurrence of firearm homicide among black women was on a public street (45% of cases), while among non-black women it was in the home (34% of cases).

The home is a place of risk for women: **27% of female firearm homicides in 2022 were committed in a house**

Another indicator of the impact of firearms is the proportion of female homicides in the home committed with firearms. In 2022, **41% of female homicides in the home** were committed using a firearm.

GRAPH 6

Female firearm homicide rates, in and outside the home, Brazil 2012-2022 (%)



Source: SIM/DATASUS

*The category outside the home includes public streets, schools, sports facilities, public institutions, shops and services, and other specified places.

The following graphs demonstrate that rates vary considerably between racial groups when it comes to place of occurrence of female firearm homicide. Among black victims, most homicides were committed on a public street (45%), followed by in the home (24%), while among non-black victims 34% of murders were committed in the home and 33% on a public street.

The data reveal that black women are two and a half times more likely to be murdered outside the home than in the home, while rates among non-black victims are similar both in and outside the home (Graph 8).

GRAPH 7

Female firearm homicides by place of occurrence and race/color, Brazil 2022

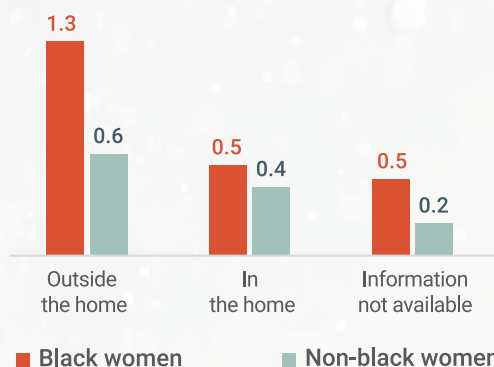


Source: SIM/DATASUS

While black women are much more vulnerable to firearm violence outside the home, the risk of non-black women dying from assault by firearm is similar both in and outside the home

GRAPH 8

Firearm homicide rates in and outside the home by racial group (black women and non-black women), Brazil 2022 (per group of 100,000 women)



Source: SIM/DATASUS

Finally, it is important to highlight the lack of information on the sexual orientation and gender identity of firearm homicide victims, concealing the grave acts of violence against LGBTQI+ people reported by human rights organizations. According to ANTRA, (the National Association of Transvestites and Transsexuals), 131 trans people were murdered in Brazil in 2022, 130 of whom were transvestites and trans women. Of these, 76% were black and 41% were killed using a firearm. These findings bring into question the issue of racism and gender-based violence (against people who identify as female), which is commonly committed with a gun and overwhelmingly on public streets.⁵



76%

The infographic features two overlapping circles. The larger circle on the left is red and contains the text '76%' and 'trans black woman'. The smaller circle on the right is a darker red and contains the text '41%' and 'with firegun'. In the background, there is a faint illustration of a person with long, wavy hair, possibly a trans woman, with their arms raised in a gesture of protest or celebration. A light blue transgender symbol is also visible in the lower-left background.

trans black
woman

41%
with
firegun



⁵ BENEVIDES, B. G. Dossier: murders and violence against Brazilian transvestites and transsexuals in 2022. ANTRA (National Association of Transvestites and Transsexuals). Brasília, DF: Distrito Drag; ANTRA, 2023.

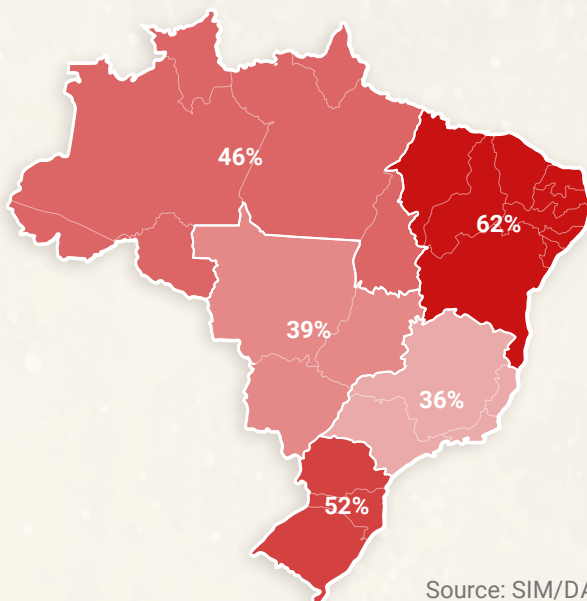
Regional snapshot

While female firearm homicides as a proportion of overall female homicides remained relatively stable over the study period (around 50%), regional rates varied considerably. In 2022 in the **Northwest** and the **South**, 62% and 52% of female homicides, respectively, were committed with a firearm.

Firearm homicide rates per 100,000 women were highest in the **North** and **Northwest**, well above the **national rate of 1.8** per 100,000 women, and lowest in the Southeast.

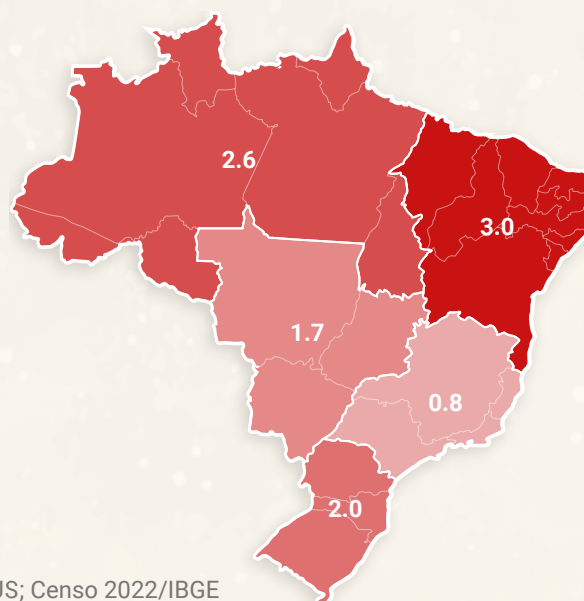
MAP 1

Female firearm homicides as a proportion of overall female homicides in 2022



MAP 2

Female firearm homicide rate per 100,000 women in 2022

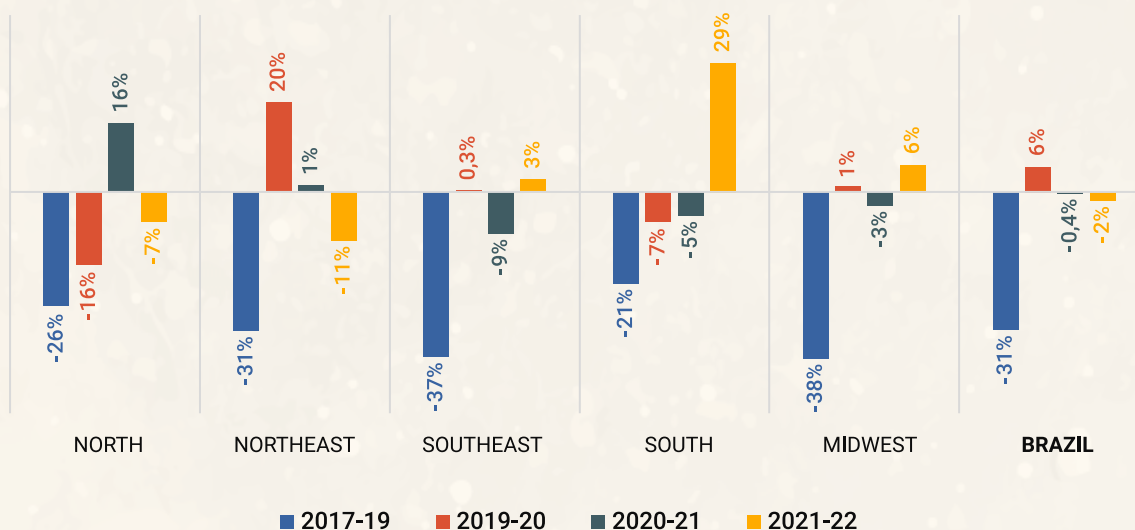


Source: SIM/DATASUS; Censo 2022/IBGE

Although national firearm homicide rates have shown a downward trend after peaking in 2017, regional rates have varied in recent years. Graph 9 shows fluctuations in the percent change in the number of female firearm homicides from 2019, probably associated with the local dynamics of firearm violence, with increases in the Northeast in 2020 (20%), the North in 2021 (16%), and the South in 2022 (29%). The increase in incidents in the South was driven mainly by the states of Paraná (+52%) and Rio Grande do Sul (+27%). The highest variations in the Midwest and Southeast were witnessed in the states of Mato Grosso (+77%) and Minas Gerais (+21%), respectively.

GRAPH 9

Percent change in the number of female firearm homicides in Brazil and regions, 2017-2019, 2019-2020, 2020-2021 and 2021-2022



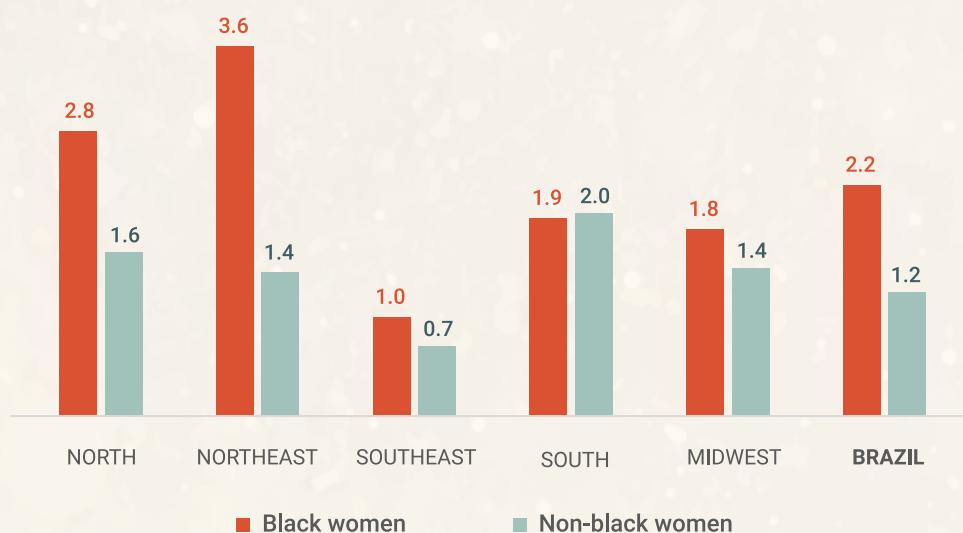
Source: SIM/DATASUS

In 2022, the firearm homicide rate among black women was almost twice as high as that in non-black women (2.2 per 100,000 compared to 1.2 per 100,000). Racial inequality is manifest across regions, with the widest disparities being found in the Northeast, where the rate in black women is 2.6 times higher (or +158%) than among non-black women, followed by the North. The only region where the firearm homicide rate is higher among non-black women is the South.

The region with the deepest racial disparities in firearm homicides is the Northeast

GRAPH 10

Female firearm homicide rate per 100,000 women by race/color, Brazil and regions, 2022



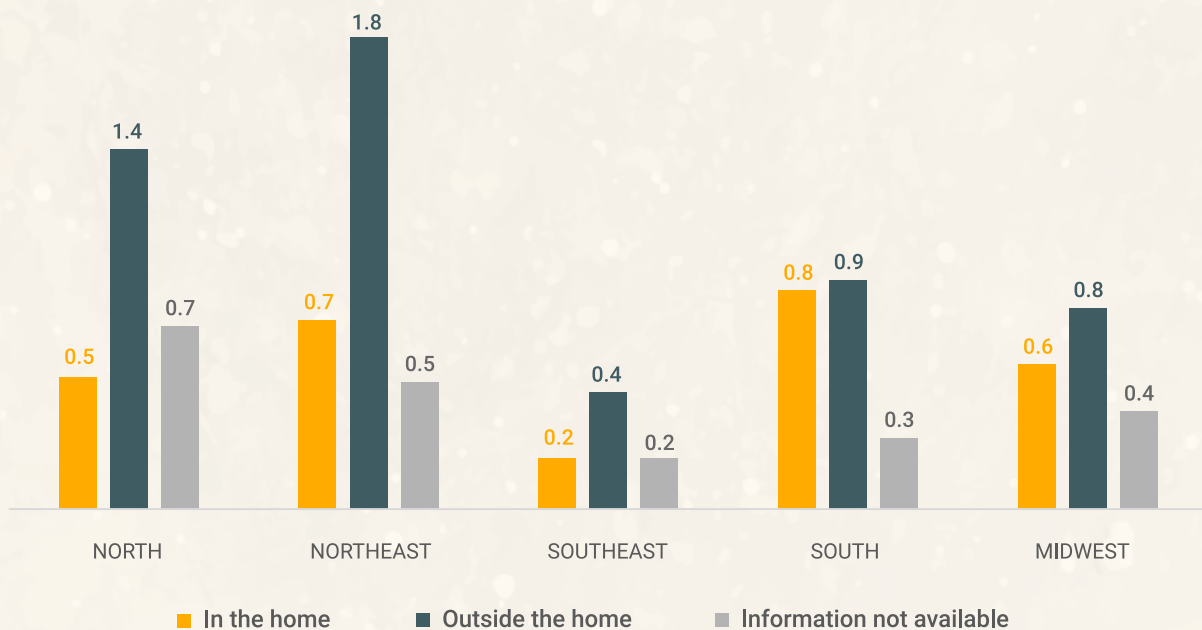
Source: SIM/DATASUS; Censo 2022/IBGE

The rate of firearm homicide outside the home is highest in the North and Northeast, while the state with the highest rate of firearm homicide in the home is the South, where the rate is close to that outside the home (0.8 compared to 0.9).

Firearm violence outside the home is more pronounced in the Northeast and North

GRAPH 11

Female firearm homicide rate in and outside the home per 100,000 women by region, 2022



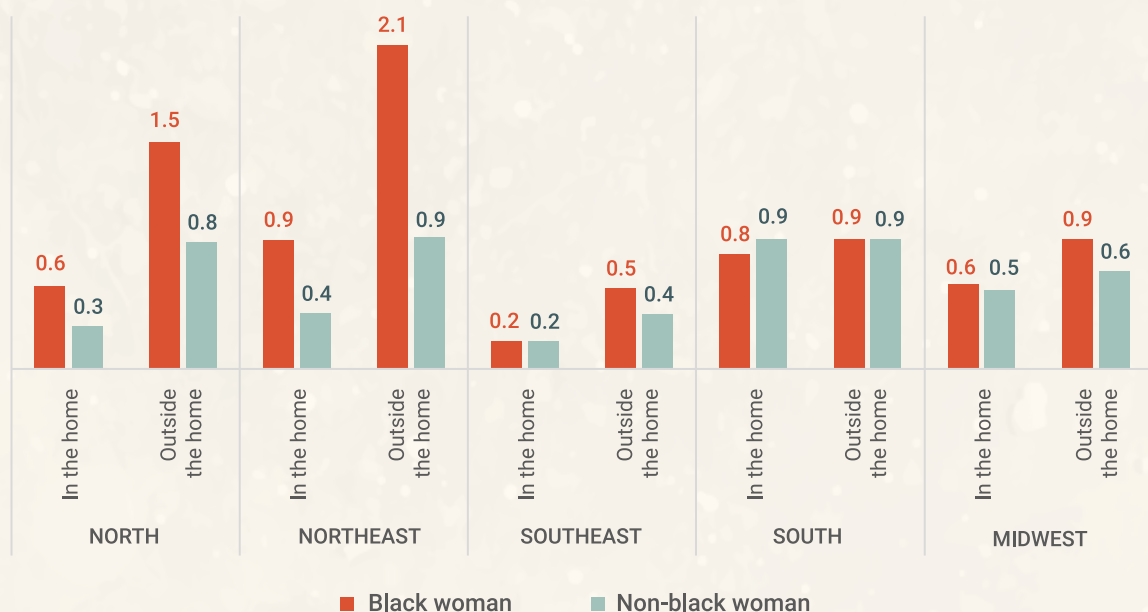
Source: SIM/DATASUS; Censo 2022/IBGE

The South stands out for the high rate of armed violence in the home

Firearm homicide rates are higher among black women both in and outside the home across all regions except the South and Southeast, where rates in the home are slightly higher among non-black women. In the North, Northeast and Southeast, rates for homicides committed outside the home are two to three times higher than in the home among both racial groups, while in the South non-black women are just as likely to be killed in the home as outside the home (0.9 and 0.9, respectively), and the difference in rates between place of occurrence is minimal among black women.

GRAPH 12

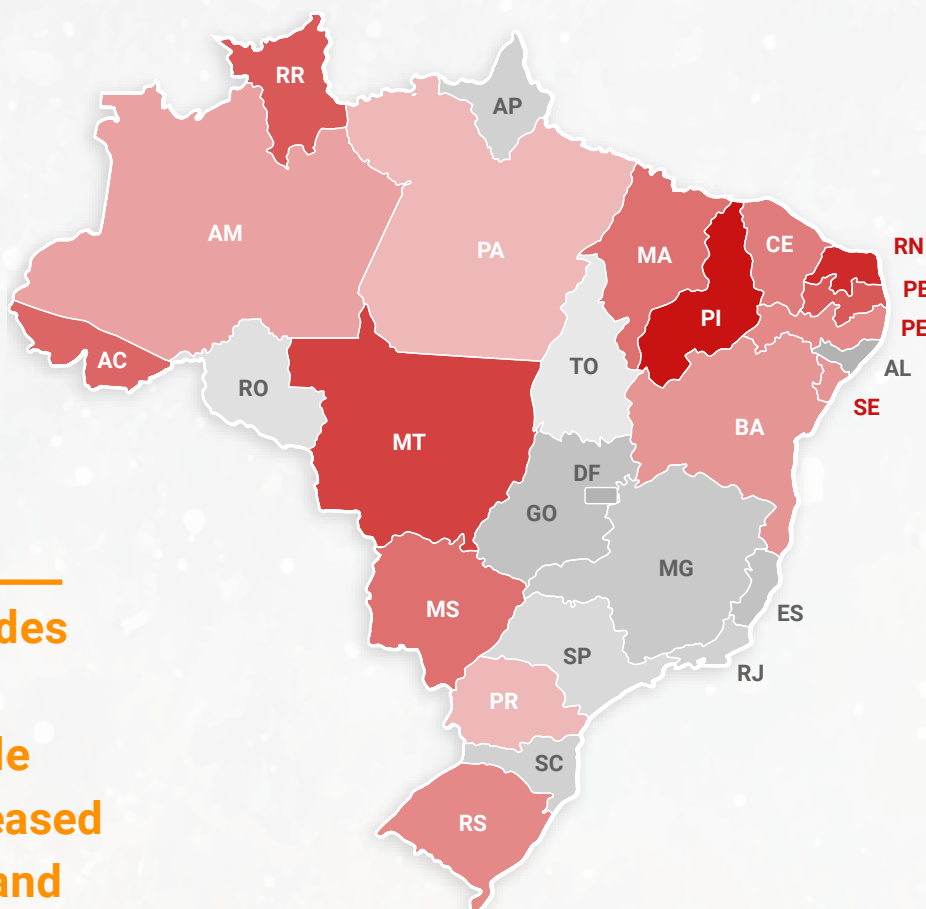
Firearm homicide rate per 100,000 black women and non-black women in and outside the home across regions, 2022



Source: SIM/DATASUS; Censo 2022/IBGE

State snapshot

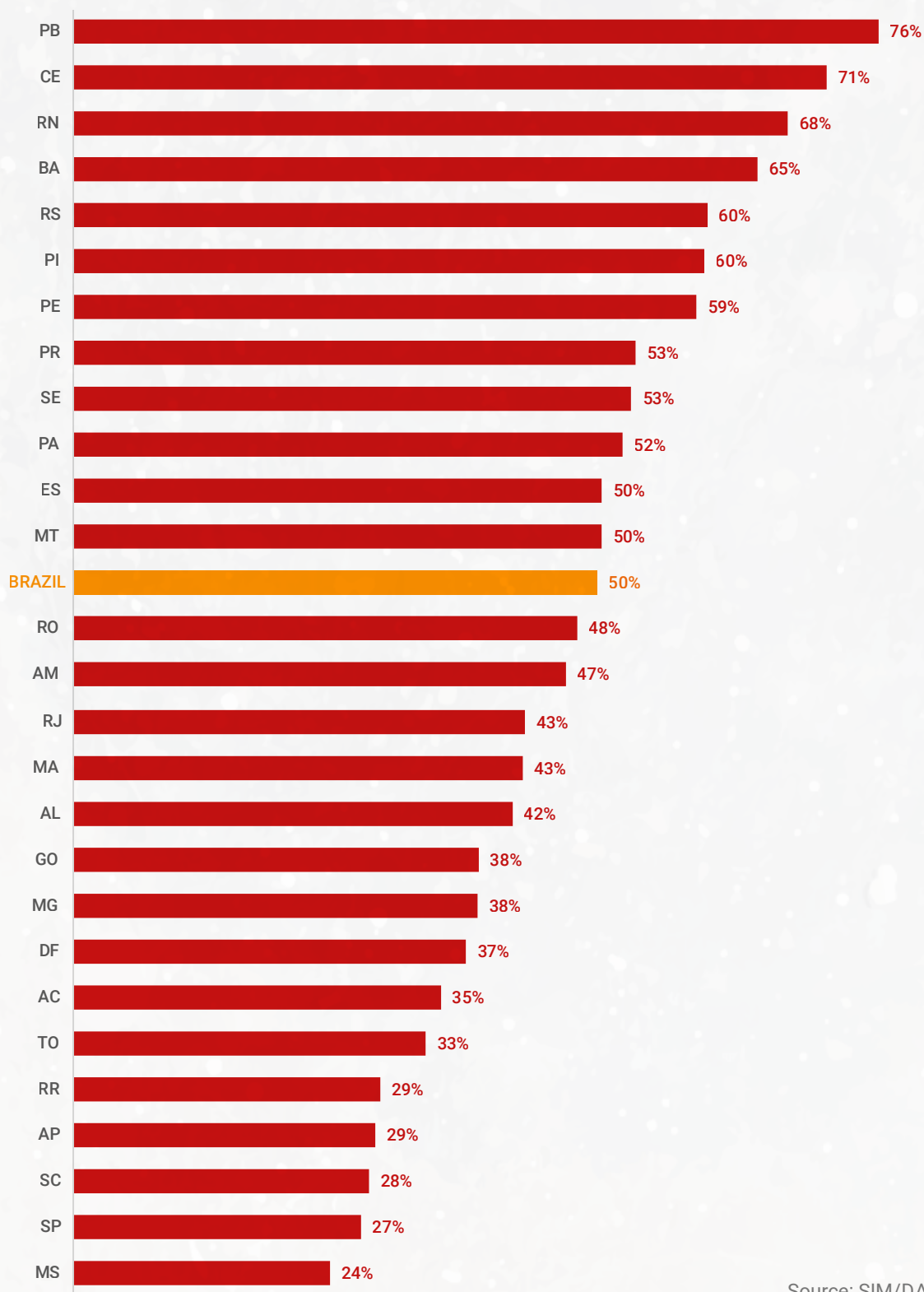
In addition to regional differences, it is important to highlight state variations in firearm homicides as a proportion of overall female homicides and racial disparities in victimization. Graph 13 shows that firearm homicides as a proportion of overall female homicides in 2022 ranged from 24% in Mato Grosso do Sul to 76% in Paraíba, with rates increasing in 16 states between 2012 and 2022. The state with the highest reduction was Alagoas (-34 percentage points), followed by Goiás, the Federal District and Espírito Santo.



Firearm homicides as a proportion of overall female homicides increased between 2012 and 2022 in 16 states

GRAPH 13

**Firearm homicides as a proportion of total female homicides
in Brazil and across states, 2022**



Source: SIM/DATASUS

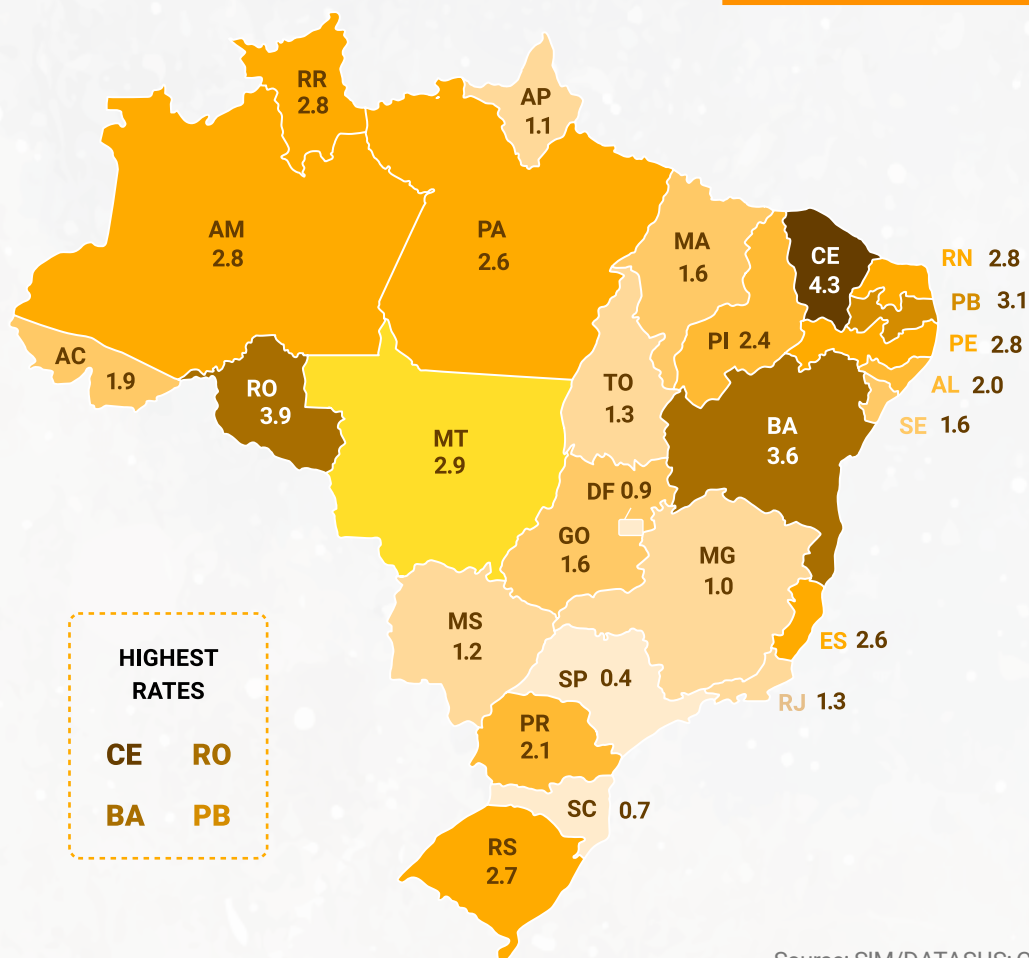
The regions with the highest female firearm homicide rate per 100,000 women are the Northeast and North, with the states of Ceará, Rondônia and Bahia having particularly high rates. The states with the highest rates in the Midwest, Southeast and South were Mato Grosso do Sul, Espírito Santo and Rio Grande do Sul, respectively.

São Paulo, Santa Catarina and the Federal District were the states with the lowest rates in 2022 (below 1.0 per 100,000 women).

MAP 3

Female firearm homicide rates
per 100,000 women overall
across states, 2022

The state with the highest
female firearm homicide
rate is Ceará, followed by
Rondônia and Bahia



Source: SIM/DATASUS; Censo 2022/IBGE

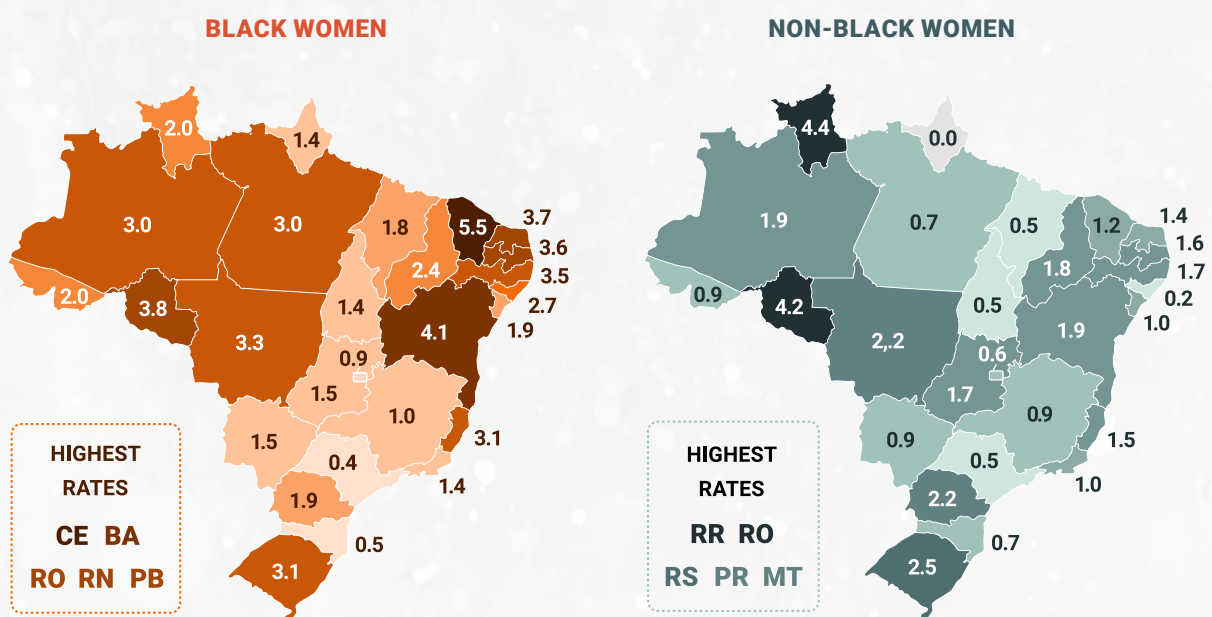
The data reveal that risk of victimization is higher among black women in most states, with only six states (Rondônia, Roraima, São Paulo, Paraná, Santa Catarina and Goiás) showing higher firearm homicide rates among non-black women.

Racial disparities were highest in Amapá, where firearm homicide only affected black women, and Alagoas, where the firearm homicide rate in this group is 13 times higher than among non-black women. In the states of Ceará and Pará, the rate is more than four times higher among black women.

In contrast, in the states of Roraima and Santa Catarina, the firearm homicide rate among non-black women is more than two times and 1.6 times higher than in black women, respectively.

MAPS 4 E 5

Female firearm homicide rates per 100,000 by race/color across states, 2022



Source: SIM/DATASUS; Censo 2022/IBGE

SECTION 2

NON-LETHAL FIREARM VIOLENCE

Firearm violence reported in
the national notifiable disease
surveillance system (SINAN),
2012-2022



National snapshot

In Brazil, the registration of cases of violence against women treated in health facilities in the national notifiable disease surveillance system (SINAN) is mandatory, allowing for the monitoring of non-lethal firearm violence and broadening the depth and breadth of the indicators used to measure the impact of firearms on violence against women.

In 2021 and 2022, 409,900 and 507,200 cases of violence were registered in the SINAN, respectively. This violence was either self-directed (30% of cases) or interpersonal (70%), where violence is committed by a third party. The latter includes various types of violence and forms of assault. Of the cases involving firearms (around 8,500 in 2021 and 9,700 in 2022), 91% were cases of interpersonal violence. In 43% of cases of interpersonal violence involving firearms, the victims were women.

This section presents the results of the analysis of cases of interpersonal non-lethal firearm violence against women at national level drawing on data from the SINAN.

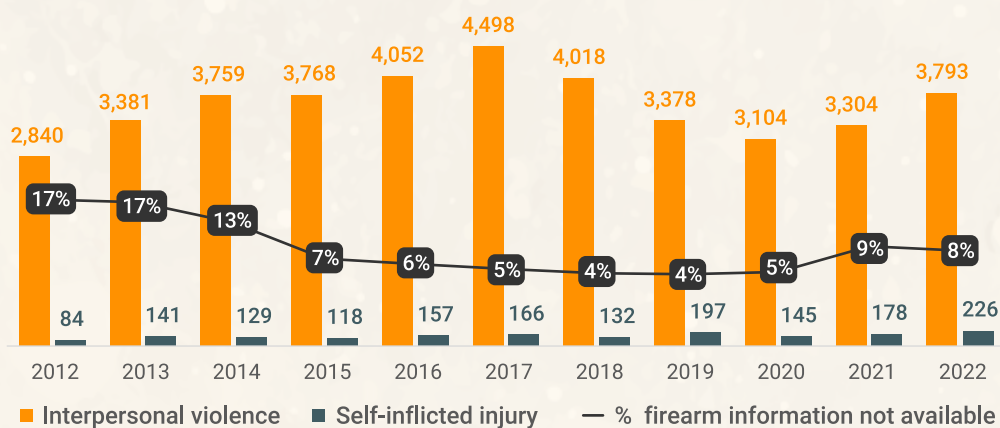
**In 2022, there
were almost
3,800
notifications of
non-lethal firearm
violence against
women in Brazil**

Graph 14 shows that, in line with trends in homicides, the number of cases of non-lethal firearm violence against women peaked in 2017, followed by a fall from 2018 to 2020 and rising once again in 2021.

It is worth noting that 2020 was characterized by long periods of social isolation due to the measures implemented in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, hampering access to public services in general. The fall in the number of cases observed in 2020 may therefore be due to underreporting in the SINAN caused by a reduction in the use of health services in cases of domestic and family violence. The following years saw a resurgence in the reporting of cases of firearm violence, with an increase of 6.4% in 2021 and 14.8% in 2022. It is also worth noting that the percentage of cases where information on the use of a firearm was not available was highest in the last two years of the time series.⁶ However, the number of cases in 2022 returned to the level witnessed in 2019, with almost 3,800 reports of firearm violence against women.

GRAPH 14

Reports of non-lethal firearm violence against women, Brazil 2012-2022.



Source: SINAN/DATASUS

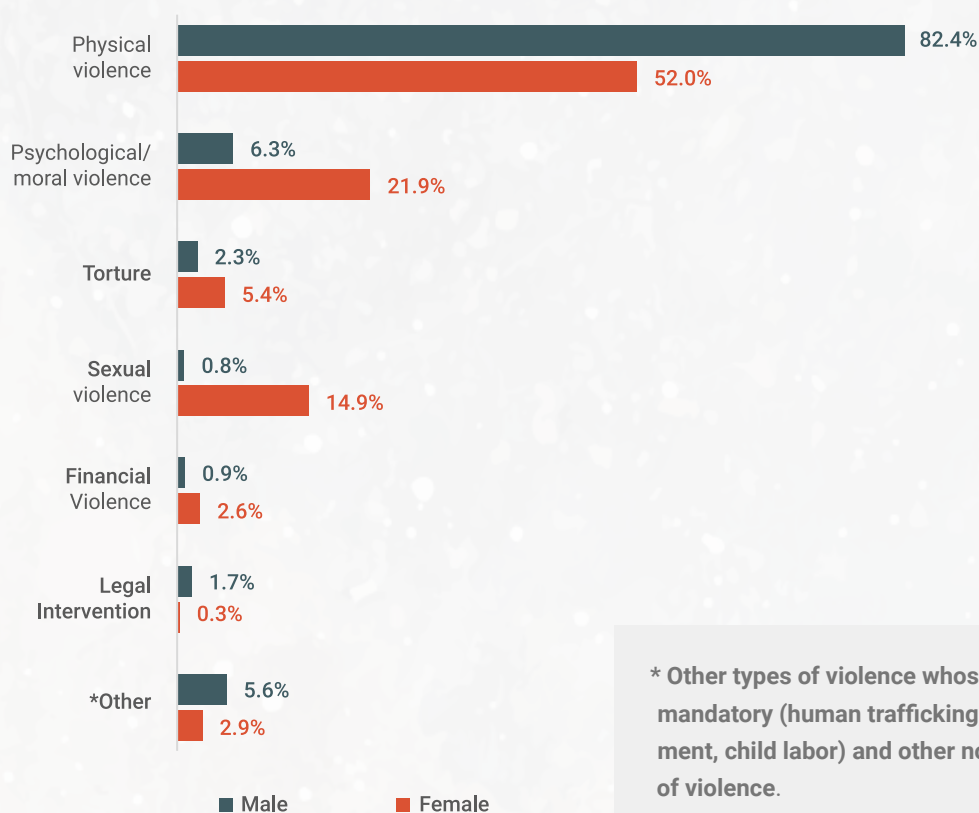
⁶ According to the SINAN, the data for 2021 and 2022 were updated in 2023 but remain subject to revision. Search performed on 21/01/2023.

The most common types of non-lethal firearm violence against women are physical violence, psychological/moral violence and sexual violence. The most common type of violence reported was physical violence (52% of all reports), followed by psychological/moral violence (22%) and sexual violence (15%).

Although mandatory reporting of violence against men in the SINAN includes only specific groups such as children and adolescents, gender differences in firearm violence are striking and therefore warrant attention. The most common types of firearm violence committed against men are physical violence and violence resulting from legal intervention, while women experience physical violence and less visible forms of violence, such as psychological/moral violence and sexual violence.

GRAPH 15

Types of non-lethal firearm violence reported by gender, Brazil 2022 (%)



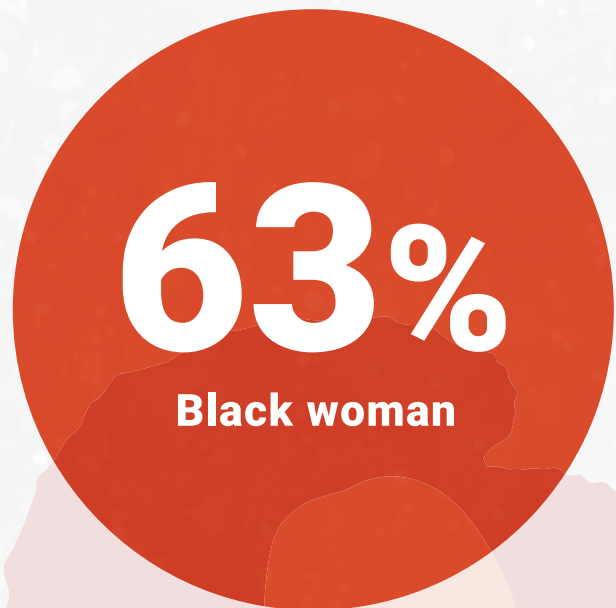
Source: SINAN/DATASUS

Victim profile

The racial profile of female victims of non-lethal firearm violence is similar to that of female firearm homicide victims, with the majority of victims being black (63%, compared to 68.3% of victims of female firearm homicide). This difference is due to the fact that the percentage of cases where information on race/color was ignored is higher in the SINAN than in the SIM (8% versus 1.4%).



**Non-black
woman**



Black woman



Information
on race/color
not available

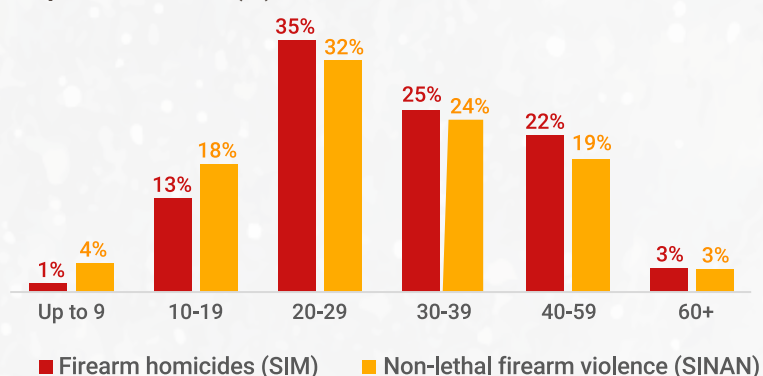
**“Black woman” include
both black and brown women**

**“Non-black woman” include white,
yellow and indigenous women**

The age profile of female victims of non-lethal firearm violence is also similar to that of female firearm homicide victims; however, unlike in the older age groups, children and adolescents account for a higher proportion of non-lethal firearm violence compared to firearm homicide (Graph 16).

GRAPH 16

Female firearm homicide and non-lethal firearm violence against women by age group, Brazil 2022 (%)

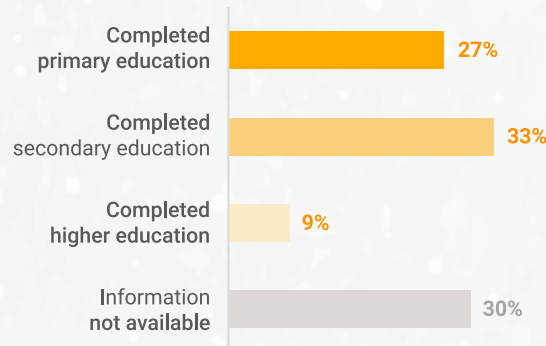


Source: SIM and SINAN/DATASUS.

Most female victims of non-lethal firearm violence (60%) were in the low to medium education bracket. However, information on education level was not available in 30% of cases. It is worth noting that 21% of non-black victims of firearm violence had completed higher education, compared to only 10% of black women.

GRAPH 17

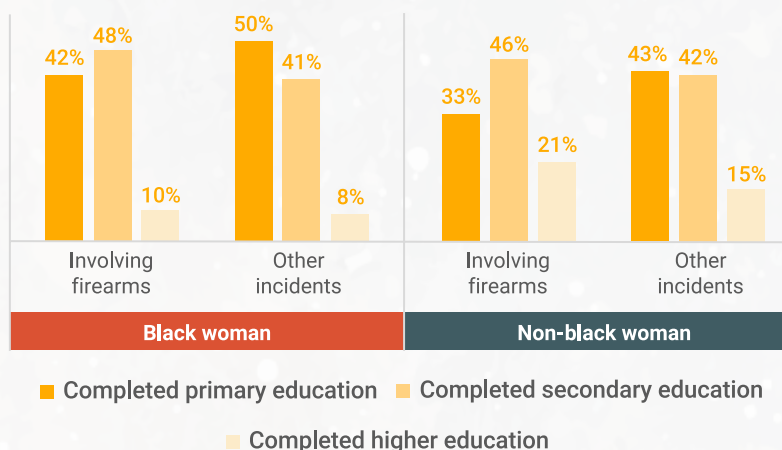
Notifications of non-lethal firearm violence against women by level of education, Brazil 2022 (%)



Source: SINAN/DATASUS

GRAPH 18

Notifications of violence against women (armed and other forms) by education level and race/color, Brazil 2022 (%)



Cases without information on education level not included

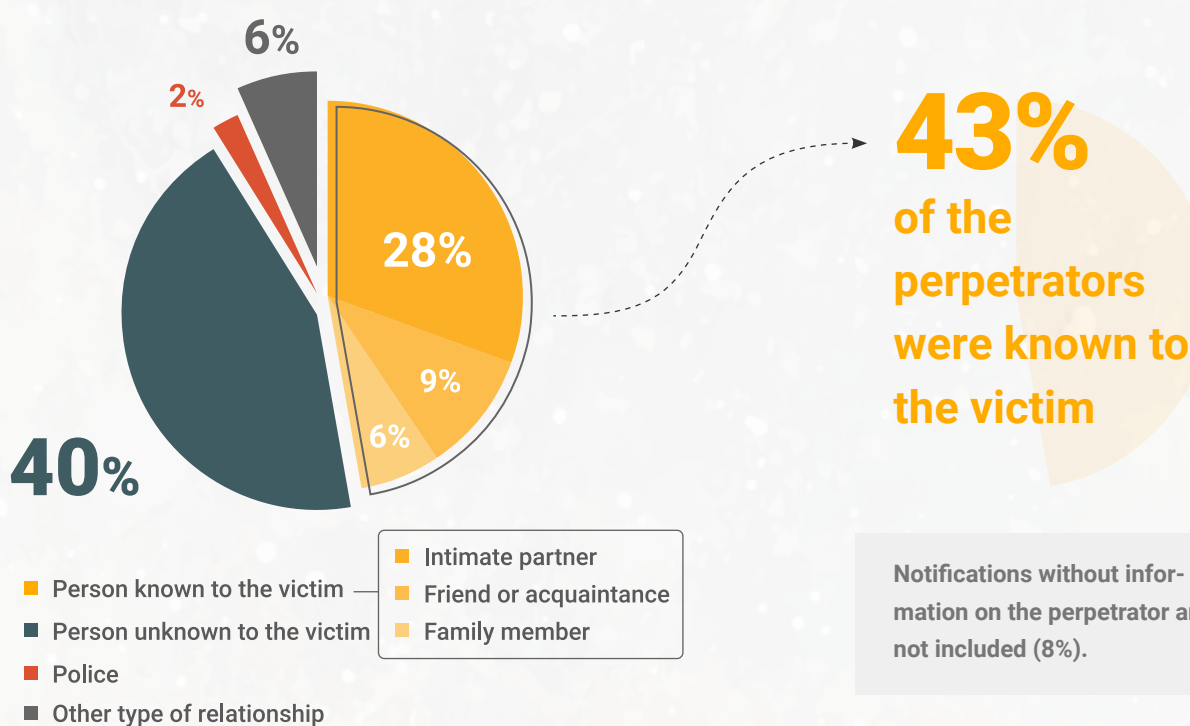
Source: SINAN/DATASUS

Perpetrator profile

In 2022, almost half the perpetrators (43%) of non-lethal firearm violence against women were known to the victim (partner, friend/acquaintance, or family member). Intimate partners stand out in this group, with partners or ex-partners accounting for 28% of all cases. In one in every 3.6 cases of non-lethal firearm violence against women the perpetrator was a partner or ex-partner. The last four years have seen an increase in the proportion of cases of firearm violence committed by intimate partners (Graph 20).

GRAPH 19

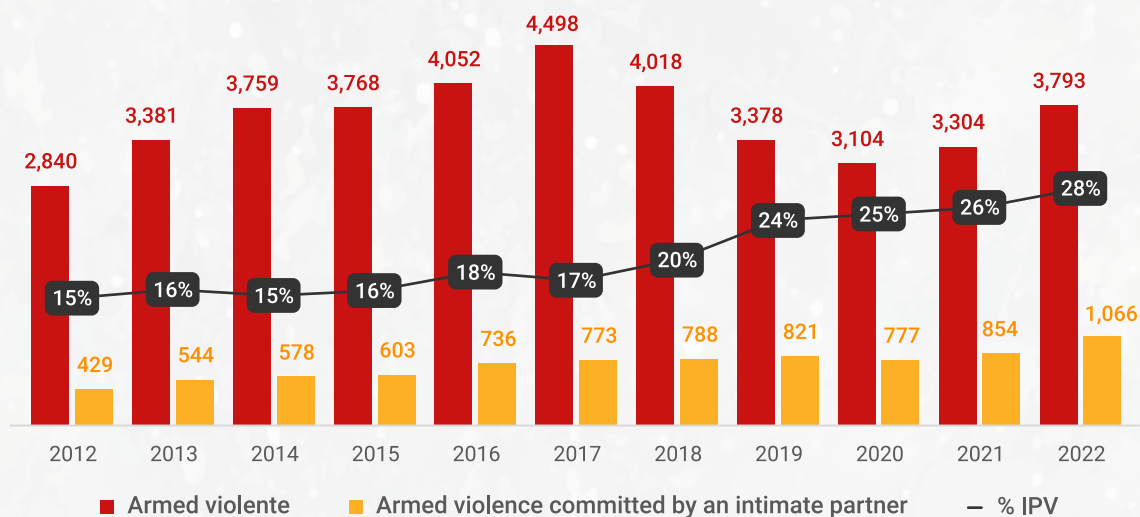
Non-lethal firearm violence against women by perpetrator, Brazil 2022 (%)



Source: SINAN/DATASUS

GRAPH 20

Non-lethal firearm violence against women committed by an intimate partner (IPV),
Brazil 2012-2022



Source: SINAN/DATASUS

The percentage of cases where information on the perpetrator was not available fell from 26% in 2012 to 12% in 2018, and 11% between 2019 and 2020, rising to 16% in 2021, and dropping once again to 13% in 2022.

In one in every 3.6 cases of non-lethal firearm violence against women in 2022 the perpetrator was a partner or ex-partner

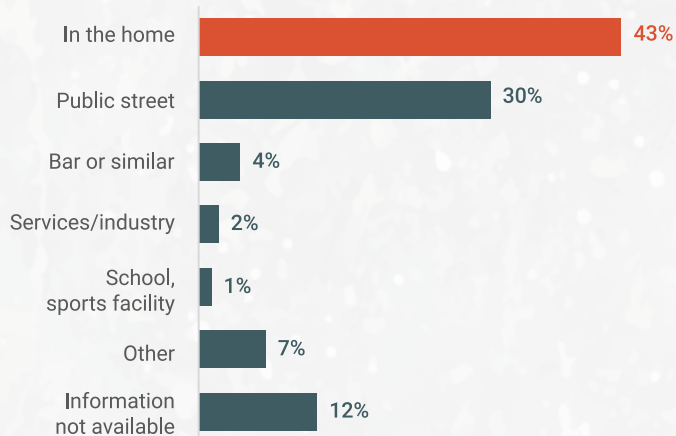
Incident profile

In 2022, 43% of cases of non-lethal firearm violence against women occurred in the home and 30% on a public street. Psychological/moral firearm violence occurs mainly in the home (61% of cases), while cases of physical violence are evenly distributed between in the home and outside the home. Although sexual violence occurs mainly outside the home, a large percentage of these incidents take place in the home.

The data on perpetrator and place of occurrence of non-lethal firearm violence reveals the risk posed to women by the presence of firearms at home. **Intimate partners account for half of the cases of firearm violence committed in the home, followed by family members (10%) and friends/acquaintances (9%).** In 22% of cases, the perpetrator is unknown to the victim and in 9% the perpetrator has another type of relationship with the victim. In contrast, the most common type of perpetrator in cases of firearm violence committed on a public street or other places outside the home is unknown persons.

GRAPH 21

Notifications of non-lethal firearm violence against women by place of occurrence, Brazil 2022 (%)

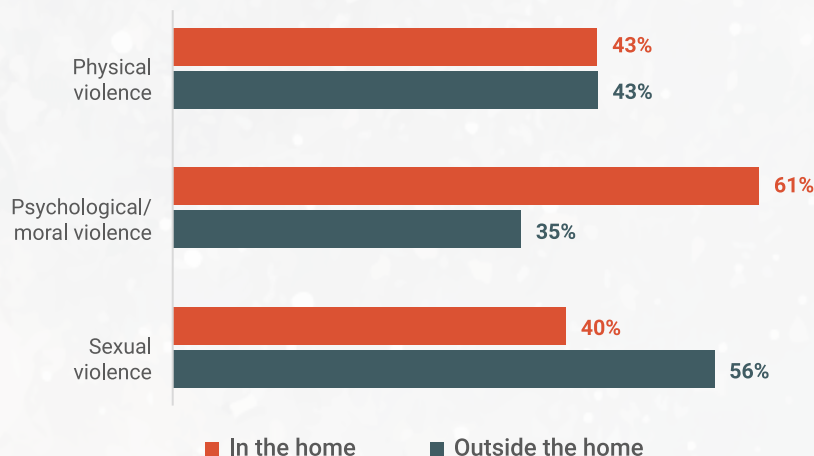


Source: SINAN/DATASUS

The most common place of occurrence of non-lethal firearm violence is in the home, where guns are associated with other forms of violence against women

GRAPH 22

Notifications of non-lethal firearm violence against women by type of violence and place of occurrence (in and outside the home), Brazil 2022 (%)



Source: SINAN/DATASUS

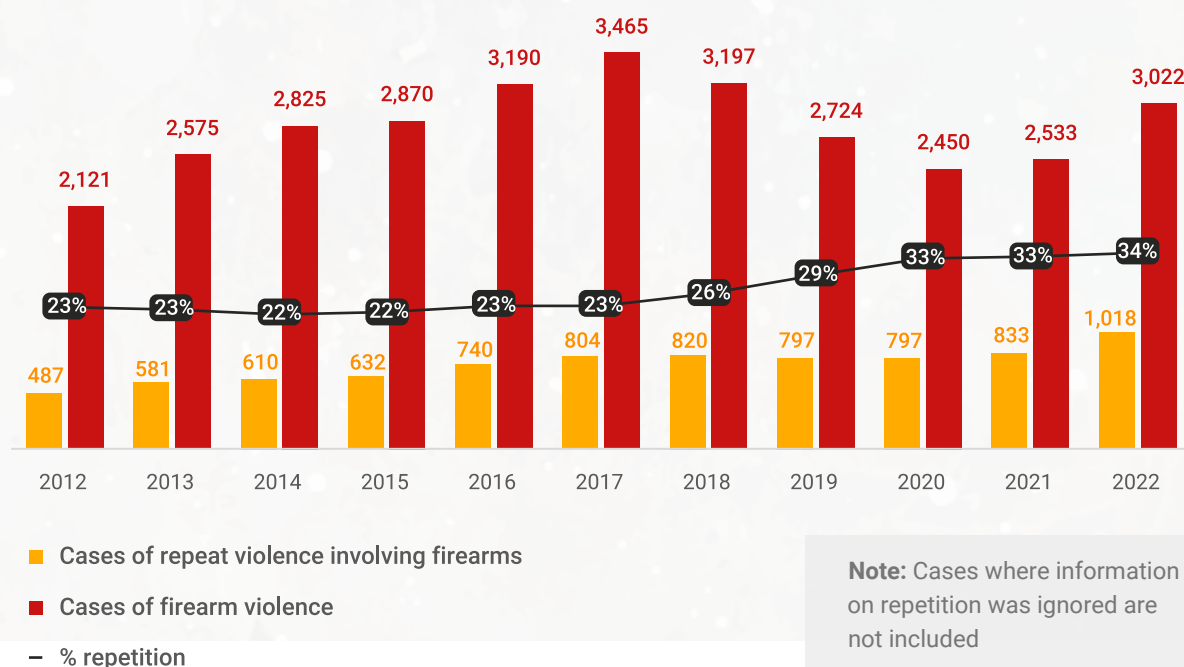
The totals for type of violence do not add up to 100% because there were cases where information on place of occurrence was not available.

Characteristic of the dynamics of domestic violence, repetition was present in **one-third** of cases of non-lethal firearm violence, the highest proportion recorded in the last three years. Considering that global estimates suggest that 27% of women have experienced physical or sexual intimate partner violence in their lifetime, this indicator demonstrates that the presence of firearms at home poses a risk of death to women who are victims of domestic violence.⁷ Access to guns in a context of domestic violence, which tends to escalate over time if not stopped, heightens the risk of serious injury given the lethality of these weapons.

**One-third
of cases of
non-lethal
firearm violence
were repeat
violence**

GRAPH 23

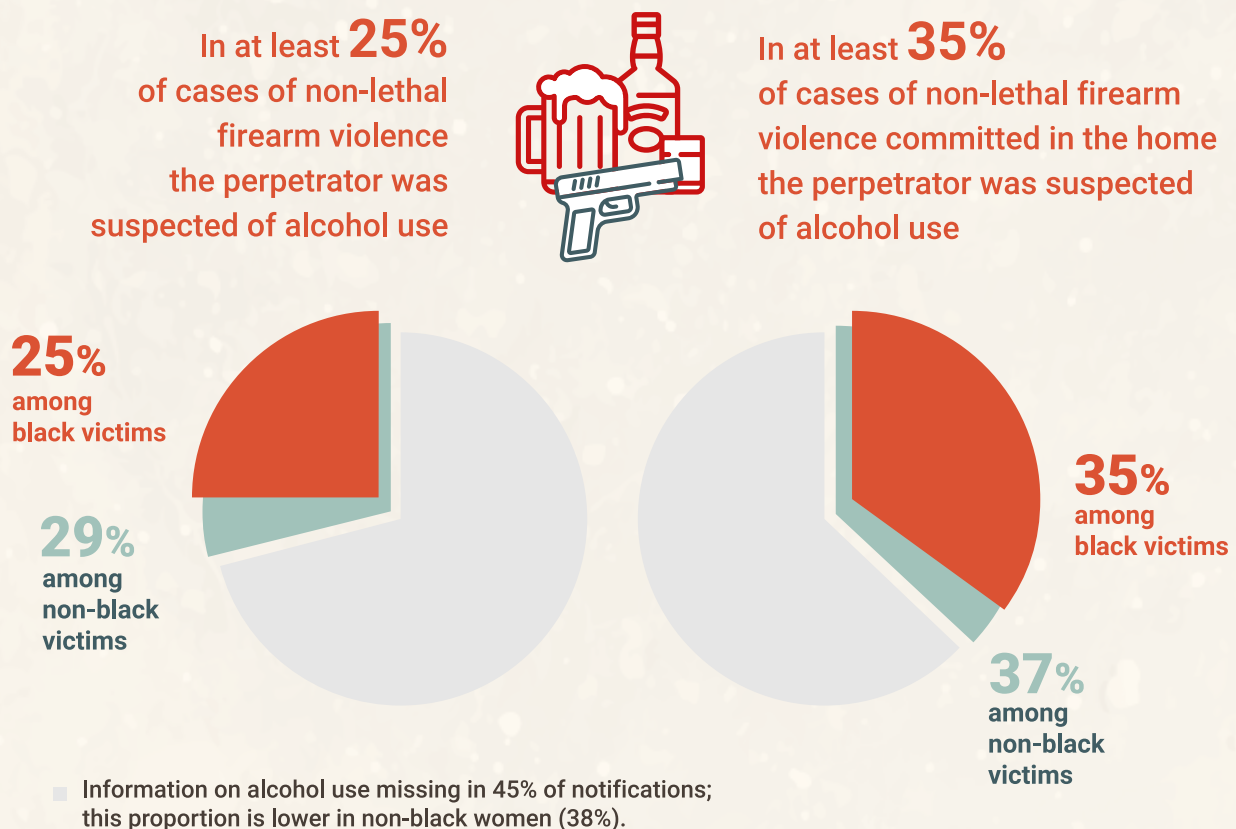
Repeat violence involving firearms as a proportion of firearm violence against women, Brazil 2012-2022



Source: SINAN/DATASUS

⁷ World Health Organization, 2021.

Finally, considering that among other factors occurring at individual, family, community and wider society levels alcohol abuse is a risk factor for violence against women,⁸ it is worth noting that in at least 25% of cases of non-lethal firearm violence in 2022 the perpetrator was suspected of alcohol use, and half of these incidents were repeat violence. In cases of violence committed in the home, this rate jumps to 35%. Although the proportion of cases with missing data on alcohol use is high (45% of all notifications), this indicator reveals that overlapping risk factors are at play – alcohol use and access to guns – heightening the risk of firearm violence against women.



⁸ World Health Organization, 2016.

Final considerations

The resumption of a responsible arms control policy by the new government in 2023 – reversing measures easing gun access and weakening rules on possession and carrying firearms introduced by the Bolsonaro administration (2019-2022) – facilitates the discussion of the need to strengthen the prevention of gender-based firearm violence as part of policies on gun control and protection of women.

Firearms are a risk factor for violence, especially homicide. The use of these weapons is associated with crime, and armed conflict results in high mortality rates, especially among men. Besides gun use in crime, which also affects women, firearms are a risk factor for lethal and non-lethal domestic and intimate partner violence.

It is not easy to identify the nature of firearm violence – and whether it is gender-based or not – especially in the cases of death. The information in death records is not enough to characterize the motive for killing. This information should be detailed in the criminal justice system during the police inquiry and processing of the case, elucidating the perpetrator, motive and dynamics of the crime. However, given the country's low homicide clearance rate, this information is missing in most cases. According to our report **Mapping impunity**, a mere 35% of the 40,000 murders committed in the country in 2021 were cleared, with considerable variations in rates across states.⁹

⁹ Instituto Sou da Paz. Mapping impunity - why Brazil needs a national homicide clearance rate. 6th edition, 2023.

The lack of homicide clearance is therefore a factor that prevents a deeper understanding of the dynamics of lethal violence against women and the creation of effective prevention policies.

The data from the SIM and SINAN on the place of occurrence of incidents of assault by firearm provide important insights into the dynamics of this type of violence. Although femicide is also committed on public streets and violence not motivated by gender also occurs in the home, violence committed in the home is more likely to be gender-based, while that committed outside the home is more likely to be crime-related.

Firearms increase the risk of death of women, being responsible for half of female homicides in Brazil. Currently, the country has an arsenal of over 1.2 million guns in the hands of “CACs” (collectors, sport shooters and hunters) and almost 1 million active licenses issued for firearms for self-defense. These figures grew exponentially during the Bolsonaro administration (2019-2022), when numerous measures were introduced to ease gun access and weaken the control of firearms. Between 2018 and 2022, the number of licenses issued for CACs and firearms for self-defense jumped by 260% and 184%, respectively. This trend was observed across all regions, but rates were more pronounced in the North and Midwest. With regard to gun access, based on the current registry of purchased guns with a valid license (CACs and self-defense), the rate of firearm ownership in the South and Midwest is 2.3 and 2.2 per 100,000 population, respectively, which is more than twice the national rate (1.1).¹⁰

In this context, non-lethal firearm violence is a key indicator of the risk to women posed by the presence of firearms at home. Our findings show that, in 2022, the non-lethal firearm violence victim profile was the same as that of firearm homicide victims. In 43% of these cases the perpetrator was known to the victim (intimate partners, friends and acquaintances or family members – most commonly the former) and one-third of cases were repetitions.

¹⁰ Instituto Sou da Paz. Database on gun licenses in the country. Source: The army and federal police, obtained under the Access to Information Act. The data on CACs are organized by military region, meaning that they do not include every state and are not stratified according to geographical region. The military regions that encompass the Midwest states also include data from Tocantins and a small part of Minas Gerais. The regions encompassing the states in the North also include Maranhão. The data on guns held for personal defense provided by the federal police are stratified by state.

Another study investigating factors associated with the death of women who had previously reported intimate partner violence using data from the SIM and SINAN for the period 2011-2016/2017 reported that more than 2,500 women died within 6.9 years after notification. The main cause of death was homicide, possibly intimate partner femicide. In other words, previous reports revealing the vulnerability of these women did not generate an adequate response from the social services, law enforcement and justice systems to prevent their death, and the main risk factor for death was the use of a firearm.¹¹

The fact that our findings show that levels of repeat violence remained high in 2022 clearly shows an urgent need for an effective government response to this problem, providing adequate support and assistance to vulnerable women, especially when there is the presence of a firearm.

Violence against women is a global phenomenon involving factors occurring at a cultural and wider society level that create social expectations and gender inequality. Prevention measures are therefore required on various fronts. It is essential to advance the implementation of current measures that have yet to be fully adopted by the institutions that make up the criminal justice system and promote the production of data to enable their monitoring and evaluation.

In this sense, when reporting an incident, Federal Law 13880/2019, which has been incorporated into the Maria da Penha Law, requires authorities to verify whether the perpetrator has a license to carry or possess a firearm, include this information in the incident report and report the incident to the institution responsible for issuing the license (the federal police or army). Furthermore, the court should require the immediate confiscation of the firearm. Strengthening the implementation of these measures by the operators of the criminal justice system, including the police, prosecutors and judges, and establishing or enhancing the flow of data on the confiscation of firearms from perpetrators are essential steps forward in protecting women from firearm violence.

¹¹ PINTO, I.V. et al.. Factors associated with death in women with intimate partner violence notification in Brazil. *Ciência & Saúde Coletiva*, 26(3):975-985, 2021.

Along the same lines, based on suggestions put forward by the National Council of Justice and National Council of Public Prosecutors in 2019, Law 14149/2021 created the national risk assessment form for women who are victims of domestic and family violence. The form aims to identify risk factors and support the work of the operators of the criminal justice system towards protecting victims. Two of the criteria used in the assessment refer specifically to the presence of firearms: does the history of violence include threats involving firearms; and does the perpetrator have access to a firearm. Answering yes to these questions escalates the case to the highest level of risk. Used mainly by the civil police when recording an incident, the form may also be used by operators of the Public Prosecutor's Office and court system if not used in the police investigation stage. As a protection measure, it is vital to disseminate this law and raise awareness among operators to ensure the application of this instrument, create record flows and share information to enable effective monitoring of cases according to risk status, and produce evidence to inform the formulation of public policies and functioning of victim protection networks.

Finally, it is important to highlight that the increase in the number of deaths from external causes with undetermined cause recorded in the SIM, especially from 2018, reveals a decline in the quality of data. These are cases of violent deaths where it was not possible to confirm the intentionality of the violent act that led to death: i.e. whether it assault, suicide or an accident. This problem was highlighted by the Atlas of Violence, which draws attention to the number of "hidden homicides" among deaths with undetermined cause between 2011 and 2021.¹² Poor data quality therefore leads to distortions in firearm violence rates nationally and across states and regions.

¹² Atlas of Violence 2023. CERQUEIRA, D. e BUENO. S. (coord.). Brasília: Ipea e FBSP, 2023.

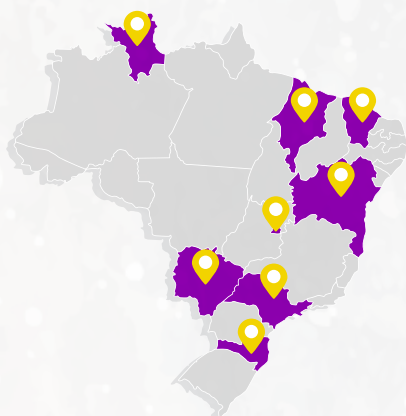
Federal Law 13880/2019, incorporated into the Maria da Penha Law, requires authorities to verify whether the perpetrator has a license to carry or possess a firearm and the immediate confiscation of the firearm. It is essential to strengthen the implementation of this law

Although the number of deaths with undetermined cause involving a firearm is small and these deaths are concentrated in only a few states, underreporting of cases of homicide in general among violent deaths with undetermined cause may hamper the analysis of the impact of firearm violence. The table in the appendix shows the quality of information on violent deaths by state. There is an urgent need to identify bottlenecks that lead to a loss of data quality and resume processes that enhance the information available on violent deaths, which is essential for informing prevention policies.

Violence against women is a complex phenomenon that requires structural changes to ensure its total eradication. However, the measures mentioned above (use of the national risk assessment form, precautionary confiscation of firearms from perpetrators and production of high quality data) can be used by the government to provide an immediate response aimed at interrupting the cycle of violence and protecting women's lives.

Women's support services

If you're a victim of domestic violence, or know someone who is, be sure to report it. The following national initiatives provide free help and support.



Casa da Mulher Brasileira (Woman's safe house)

Federal government service created in 2015 offering round the clock comprehensive humanized care to women subjected to violence. The Casa da Mulher Brasileira offers a range of specialized services, including screening, counselling, promotion of financial autonomy, and facilitating access to police stations, courts, public prosecutor's offices and public defender's offices. Currently, there are eight Casas in operation across Brazil in Curitiba (PR), Fortaleza (CE), Campo Grande (MS), São Paulo (SP), Boa Vista (RR), Ceilândia (DF), São Luís (MA) and Salvador (BA); in addition to five state government-run Casas in Ceará and Maranhão.

The safe houses can be contacted via the Women's Support Center hotline *Painel 180*.

www.gov.br/mulheres/pt-br/ligue-180



(61) **996-100-180**
"Dona Maria"

Women's support helpline – 180

Receives reports of abuse against women and provides guidance to victims, directing them to specialized services provided by the local support network. A WhatsApp number (61 996-100-180) for reporting abuse was launched in April 2023. The Ministry of Women recommends saving the number using a woman's name to ensure discretion and to delete messages immediately to make sure perpetrators do not have access.



Mapa do Acolhimento (The Welcome Map)

A network connecting women subjected to gender-based violence with psychologists and lawyers who provide voluntary assistance. The initiative provides support for cis and trans women aged over 18 living in Brazil who cannot afford counselling or legal assistance.

Find out more here:

www.mapadoacolhimento.org



Justiceiras (The Vigilantes)

This initiative connects women in need of assistance to a free online network of volunteers who provide legal, psychological, social and medical support.

Click here for help or to volunteer:

www.justiceiras.org.br



Tamo Juntas (We're in this together)

Feminist organization made up of female professionals (lawyers, social workers, psychologists, educators, doctors, dentists) who provide voluntary assistance to women subjected to violence. The organization also holds events, courses, and discussion groups with the aim of promoting educational spaces and raising awareness about gender equality and human rights for girls and women.

Click here for help or to volunteer:

www.tamojuntas.org.br



APPENDIX

Deaths with undetermined cause as a proportion of deaths from external causes. Brazil and states, 2022

Number of deaths with undetermined cause		Deaths with undetermined cause as % of deaths from external causes	Number of deaths with undetermined cause involving a firearm		Deaths with undetermined cause involving a firearm as % of deaths from external causes involving a firearm	Deaths with undetermined cause involving a firearm as % of total deaths with undetermined cause	
RJ	776	23,7%	SP	31	21,5%	PR	6,4%
PE	339	21,2%	PR	9	6,2%	PA	4,3%
SE	65	19,2%	ES	2	3,7%	MA	4,0%
SP	1.074	17,0%	MG	4	3,4%	SP	2,9%
MG	545	16,2%	BRAZIL	62	3,0%	CE	2,9%
CE	209	15,5%	CE	6	2,9%	RS	2,7%
BA	333	15,4%	RJ	3	2,6%	ES	1,7%
ES	117	13,6%	PA	2	1,8%	BRAZIL	1,5%
RN	54	13,5%	MA	1	1,8%	GO	1,0%
BRAZIL	4.172	13,0%	GO	1	1,6%	MG	0,7%
MS	49	9,2%	RS	2	1,2%	RJ	0,4%
PI	36	8,1%	BA	1	0,4%	BA	0,3%
GO	97	7,7%	RO	0	0,0%	RO	0,0%
RO	19	6,8%	AC	0	0,0%	AC	0,0%
PR	141	6,3%	AM	0	0,0%	AM	0,0%
AL	25	6,2%	RR	0	0,0%	RR	0,0%
SC	65	5,4%	AP	0	0,0%	AP	0,0%
PA	47	5,2%	TO	0	0,0%	TO	0,0%
TO	13	4,9%	PI	0	0,0%	PI	0,0%
AP	5	4,9%	RN	0	0,0%	RN	0,0%
RR	5	4,6%	PB	0	0,0%	PB	0,0%
PB	22	3,9%	PE	0	0,0%	PE	0,0%
RS	74	3,8%	AL	0	0,0%	AL	0,0%
MT	22	3,6%	SE	0	0,0%	SE	0,0%
MA	25	3,1%	SC	0	0,0%	SC	0,0%
AM	9	2,2%	MS	0	0,0%	MS	0,0%
DF	6	1,6%	MT	0	0,0%	MT	0,0%
AC	0	0,0%	DF	0	0,0%	DF	0,0%

Source: SIM/DATASUS.

