

# Researchers recognize activists' work using data science to monitor and challenge feminicide

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Femicide, the most extreme outcome of gender-related violence, is a worldwide problem. In 2017, 87,000 women were intentionally killed.

However, we don't know how many of these killings were gender-related. We need to know information like who the women were and what their relationship was to their killer, for example. This missing contextual data is key to understanding gender-related violence, researchers publishing in *Patterns* on June 16 argue. The authors detail the efforts of ten organizations working to make the data about these killings complete.

"Activists from the United States, Puerto Rico, Spain, Bolivia, and Brazil described how official government data was often absent, incomplete, or inaccurate due to undercounting and underreporting because of lacking or narrowly-framed legislation," say the authors.

This gap in knowledge in part stems from femicide's visibility problem. The murders of Black or Indigenous women and girls are often not covered by the media because they are not seen as being newsworthy, and many countries do not keep comprehensive information about the murders of women and girls.

The team, led by Catherine D'Ignazio, the director of the Data + Feminism lab at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, explores the concept of counterdata, data that compiles incidents of gender-related killings from diverse sources. "This data has the goal of enacting alternative epistemological approaches to [data science](#) that center care, memory, and justice," they write.

The authors acknowledge the tremendous toll that this [data collection](#) can take on the activists who collect it. "It is not easy to read ten cases of femicide and put them on a table, disaggregate them, have to put a name, age, circumstances, and all that detail, without it affecting you emotionally," says one activist the team interviewed.

The authors pose this question to the fields of critical data studies, data

science, and [human-computer interaction](#): "How can our fields support and sustain the already existing practices of counterdata activists to heal their communities and to hold the state, corporations, and the media accountable for their role in upholding oppression and violence?"

**More information:** Catherine D'Ignazio, *Femicide & Counterdata Production: Activist efforts to monitor and challenge gender-related violence*, *Patterns* (2022). DOI: [10.1016/j.patter.2022.100530](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.patter.2022.100530).  
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