



## Latest SA femicide study highlights that gun control is integral to saving girls' and women's lives

*8 March 2022:* The third national femicide study released by the SA Medical Research Council (MRC) to mark International Women's Day shows the importance of gun control in protecting women and girls aged 14+.

Says Adèle Kirsten, Director of GFSA, "The latest MRC study is good news. It shows we have halved femicide in South Africa over the past 18 years. It also tells us that to further protect women and girls, we need a strong gun law that is well enforced with zero tolerance for corruption and fraud. This is one of the reasons GFSA supports proposed amendments to strengthen SA's gun law: it will help save lives."

Coinciding with the promulgation and implementation of the Firearms Control Act (2000), gun-related femicide (both intimate [the killer is a current, ex or rejected romantic partner] and non-intimate [the killer is anyone other than an intimate partner, includes a family member, friend, acquaintance or stranger]) almost halved between 1999 and 2009 (from 32.1% to 17.3%).

However, from 2009 gun-femicide increased by almost 5% (from 17.3% in 2009 to 21.8% in 2017). Unpacking this increase shows it is due to an 8% rise in non-intimate-firearm femicide (increased from 17.1% in 2009 to 25.3% in 2017), with intimate-firearm-femicide increasing slightly (from 17.4% in 2009 to 18.2% in 2017). While more research is needed to understand why there is this difference, the ready availability of guns in South Africa as a result of breakdowns in firearms control management means more women and girls are shot dead. Under-resourcing, poor planning as well as criminality involving fraud, corruption and theft dating to 2010/11 have made guns more available.

"With increased gun availability, more people, including women and girls, are being shot and killed," says Kirsten. While SA's femicide rate has remained largely unchanged between 2009 and 2017 (2,363 girls and women were killed in 2009, increasing to 2,407 in 2017) the proportion of women and girls that are shot and killed has increased."

She called on government to take urgent action to mop up the existing pool of firearms in SA, especially illegal guns. She added, "Mop-ups will only be effective if we close the taps leaking illegal guns into our communities. The biggest tap is legal guns held by the state and civilians, which means we have to urgently strengthen controls over legal guns and ammunition to stop them leaking into the illegal pool."

### NOTES

#### MRC's Third National Femicide Study

Available online at [www.samrc.ac.za/sites/default/files/files/2022-03-08/DecreaseFemicideSouthAfricaResearchBrief.pdf](http://www.samrc.ac.za/sites/default/files/files/2022-03-08/DecreaseFemicideSouthAfricaResearchBrief.pdf)

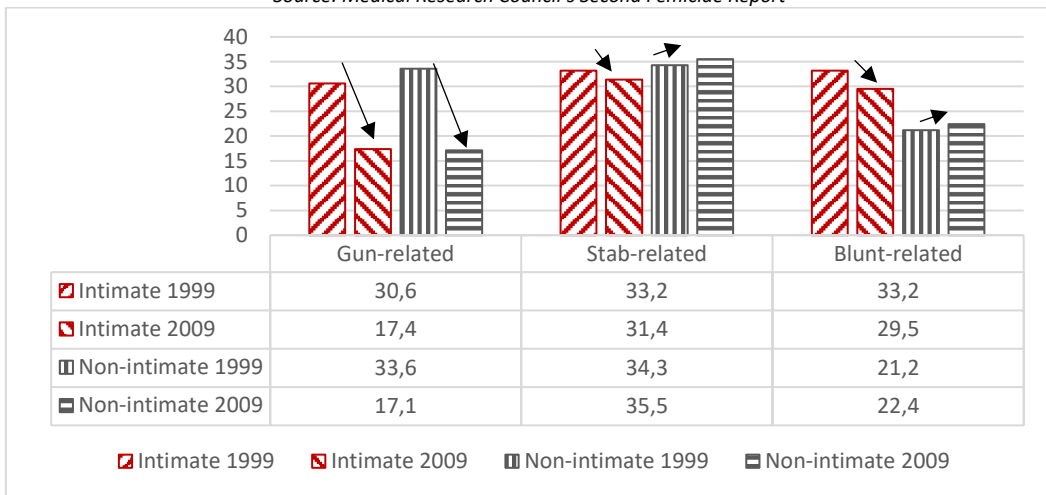
The study compares femicide data from 1999, 2009 and 2017, showing that:

- SA's Firearms Control Act (2000) continues to protect girls and women from being shot and killed by their intimate partner: Firearm-related intimate partner femicide almost halved between 1999 and 2009 (from 30.6% to 17.4%) and has remained stable since (very slight increase from 17.4% in 2009 to 18.2% in 2017).

- Urgent action is needed to protect girls and women from being shot and killed by non-intimates, which could include family members, friends, acquaintances and strangers: Non-intimate firearm femicide increased from 17.1% (2009) to 25.3% (2017).
- **Gun control saves lives:** Between 1999 and 2009, the number of women killed by their intimate partners in SA dropped from four to three a day. The MRC attributed this drop to stricter gun controls associated with the Firearms Control Act (2000) which resulted in a substantial decline in the number of women that were shot and killed by an intimate partner compared to deaths resulting from stab and blunt injuries (see Graph 1). Of significance is that gunshot-related deaths were not replaced by deaths from other weapons, indicating that weapon substitution did not occur, and that the overall benefit of reducing gun deaths is lives saved. This same trend can be seen in non-intimate femicide too as shown in Graph 1 below.

**Graph 1: Manner of death for intimate and non-intimate femicide in South Africa in 1999 and 2009 (%)**

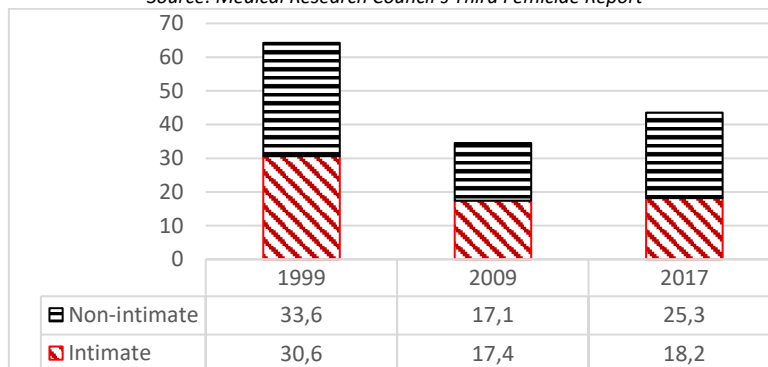
Source: Medical Research Council's Second Femicide Report



- **Poor enforcement kills:** As shown in Graph 2 below, firearm-related femicide (both intimate and non-intimate) has increased from 17.3% in 2009 to 21.8% in 2017. This increase is due to a marginal increase in intimate femicide (increased from 17.4% to 18.2%) and a significant increase in non-intimate femicide (increased from 17.1% to 25.3%). More research is needed to understand these different increases, but what is clear is that the ready availability of guns in South Africa as a result of breakdowns in firearms control management since 201/11 has meant that an increasing number of girls and women are being shot.

**Graph 2: Firearm-related femicide in South Africa in 1999, 2009, 2017 (%)**

Source: Medical Research Council's Third Femicide Report



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