

SHEDDING LIGHT ON FEMICIDES

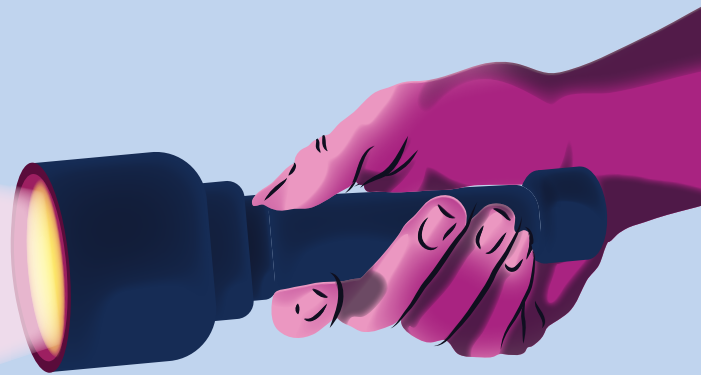


Centrale des syndicats
du Québec

There has been a sharp increase in femicides across Quebec and Canada, especially since 2020. Most occur in an intimate, marital or family context. This is closely related to an ongoing rise of domestic violence for over a decade now (in fact, there has been a 37% increase from 2014 to 2024). Women account for 76% of the victims.

On average, a woman is murdered by someone close to her every 12 days in Quebec. There is also a significant increase in the number of women murdered by their spouse or intimate partner across Canada.

It is against this backdrop that the CSQ has decided to focus on this issue. Defending women's rights and feminist activism has been a key priority at the CSQ for more than 50 years. As part of its *Together we see clearly. Let's act against violence* campaign, it sheds light on femicides and, most importantly, suggests ways to prevent them.



NAME IT TO BETTER UNDERSTAND IT

A femicide is the murder of a girl or a woman simply because she is a girl or a woman. In other words, it is the tragic outcome of a desire to dominate or exploit a victim specifically because of their gender.

What exactly does it mean to say that these women were killed simply because they were women? Femicides are not limited to murders committed in an intimate, marital or family context. Some women are murdered within the context of sexual exploitation or human trafficking. Femicides can also take the form of an attack or a mass murder, as was the case at Montréal's École Polytechnique tragedy in 1989, which remains the deadliest massacre in Canada, irrespective of the motive.

What these crimes have in common is that they stem from a direct link to the victims' status as girls or women.



A word that conveys misogynistic hatred

This is by no means a new issue, but the use of the word “femicide” to address this topic in the public sphere began fairly recently. Though the first documented use of the word “femicide” was in 1801, it was only reintroduced to the public at the 1976 International Tribunal of Crimes Against Women, and has become more widely used in the past 20 years. Its French equivalent, “féminicide,” only first appeared in a French dictionary in 2015. This public recognition is far from insignificant: it highlights the fact that, at its core, this is misogynistic hatred in its most extreme form. In other words, love or passion have absolutely nothing to do with it.

Misogynistic hatred conveys a sense of contempt and superiority towards girls and women. It manifests in sexist and domineering behaviour, a desire to control, exploit, silence or even destroy, through various forms of violence.

For instance, it might involve a woman who does not want to engage in sexual intercourse or decides to leave a man after many years to escape from

his control. Understanding this is a significant step forward compared to the days when this type of murder was mistakenly described as a “crime of passion” or a “lover’s quarrel gone wrong.”

Children are also exposed to this form of violence, which can lead to infanticides, particularly in cases where a partner kills the children along with the mother, or kills them to punish her for trying to flee.

It could also involve the murder of a girl who has slipped out of her family’s control, under the pretext of “honour,” or that of a young woman trying to escape a prostitution ring.

Sadly, women, girls and even babies have been murdered because of their gender for a very long time. In Ancient Rome, female infants were abandoned when people felt they had too many mouths to feed. In the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, women deemed too independent who refused to conform to the standards imposed by men were burned at the stake.

The long-ignored femicides of Indigenous women and girls

One cannot talk about femicides in Quebec and Canada without addressing the reality of missing or murdered Indigenous women and girls, an issue that has been ignored for far too long. Indigenous girls and women are particularly vulnerable to all forms of violence. In 2024, a third of all murdered women in Canada were Indigenous, even though they account for only 4% of the population. They also account for 11% of missing persons cases.

In 2019, [the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls](#) highlighted the deep-rooted causes of this extreme violence, which forms part of a continuum of violence affecting victims who are not only girls or women, but Indigenous as well. The analyses also highlight the widespread impunity that perpetrators often enjoy when the victim is an Indigenous girl or woman (for example, trivialization, botched investigations or utter ignorance).

The final report published 231 Calls for Justice, namely specific measures to put an end, once and for all, to violence against Indigenous women and girls (see *Useful resources section*).



UNDERSTAND IT TO BETTER PREVENT IT



The issue of femicides goes beyond a series of individual cases. It is a societal problem that forms part of the broader spectrum of all other forms of violence against girls and women.

Femicide is driven by discrimination against women and girls, unequal power relations, gender stereotypes or harmful social norms.
– UN Women

Before their murder, victims are generally subjected to other types of violence: harassment, domestic and/or sexual violence, etc. A better understanding of the issue is essential to prevent femicides and ensure that the actions taken by social services, healthcare services, law enforcement, and the justice system are directed in the right direction.

Here is one example based on several real-life cases:

A woman is seriously injured by her spouse. He tells the police that he acted under the influence of uncontrollable suffering after learning that she wanted to leave him. Police officers who lack adequate training on domestic violence do not instinctively investigate further. They treat the event as a sudden act of desperation and release

the spouse pending possible criminal proceedings, which are not automatic.

Within the hospital system, in the absence of mechanisms to detect domestic violence, the victim might leave with her abuser, who has come to pick her up, leaving her even more isolated and vulnerable.

We also have a role to play, both as a society and a labour union. It is important to be able to recognize possible signs of domestic violence and to reach out to offer the necessary support to those affected by it (see *Useful resources section*).

TAKING ACTION AGAINST FEMICIDES



If you think you are a victim of domestic violence or suspect that someone else is, please contact SOS violence conjugale (24 hours a day, 7 days a week):

→ **1 800 363-9010**

This service is available in several languages, including certain Indigenous languages.

The best way to tackle violence is to prevent it. The CSQ, like other organizations specializing in this field, encourages you to share this information and raise the following issues with your elected representatives:

→ **Inclusion of 10 days of paid leave in the Act respecting labour standards (ALS) to escape domestic violence.**

In order to prevent murders in a domestic context, it is essential to provide victims with the tools and resources they need to protect themselves. The facts show that the risk of femicide increases significantly when the victim tries to leave an abusive relationship. When seeking shelter, every hour and every day counts, provided she has access to support and resources.

These days of paid leave would provide the victim with the time needed to take the necessary steps, without any loss of income or risk of jeopardizing her employment. Such a measure would also help raise employers' awareness of this issue and show them in practical terms how they can support victims at this critical time.

Quebec is, in fact, lagging behind in this area: currently, victims are provided only two days of paid leave, and only if said leave has not already been taken for other reasons (illness, personal day off, etc.). Most Canadian provinces and territories allow three to five days of paid leave to victims of intimate partner violence. The federal public service, for its part, offers ten days of paid leave to employees who are victims of violence.

→ **Work closely with all relevant stakeholders on a national strategy to raise awareness and prevent violence based on gender and sexual identity, as well as violence against Indigenous women and girls, including measures to support victims.**

Measures called for by organizations specializing in domestic violence:

→ Maintain or ensure the implementation of the Calls for Justice of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls report that fall under municipal and provincial jurisdiction

→ Ensure adequate and sufficient funding for support and shelter services for victims of domestic and family violence

→ **Adopt the “Gabie Renaud bill” (Bill 4)**

In May 2026, the Government of Quebec tabled Bill 4, the “Gabie Renaud bill”, which would allow a person concerned about the dangerousness of an intimate partner to access certain confidential information from the police in order to assess risks to their own safety.

USEFUL RESOURCES

Here are some useful resources to better understand, prevent or take action against femicides and intimate partner violence:

12 jours d'action contre les violences faites aux femmes

12joursdaction.com

Annual campaign (November 25 to December 6) designed to raise public awareness and encourage people to reflect on violence against women. The CSQ is a member of the event's organizing committee. (In French only)

Project MMIWG2S+ Mapping – Quebec Native Women

faq-qnw.org/en/projects/mmiwg2s-mapping

Information and research file, produced by Quebec Native Women in partnership with the Université du Québec en Outaouais, that maps and documents the realities, from 1950 on, of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and 2-Spirit people across Quebec.

Cliquez Justice cliquezjustice.ca

Canadian portal providing straightforward information on the rights and obligations of citizens who need to deal with everyday legal matters. It offers educational resources for teachers, including two modules on domestic violence. (In French only)

Conseil du statut de la femme – Resource Guide on Domestic Violence

csf.gouv.qc.ca/ressources-externes/répertoire-outils-en-violence-conjugale

Online directory listing tools for prevention, consultation or intervention, produced by organizations that support women and girls who are victims of domestic violence, with the aim of promoting the sharing of information. Although this website is only available in French, certain organizations do provide tools and information in English.

CSQ – La violence conjugale, c'est aussi notre affaire!

lacsq.org/dossiers/violence-conjugale/

Online information prepared and designed by the CSQ to better understand the issue of domestic violence, raise awareness in the workplace, provide information on employers' responsibilities, and offer tools for union action as well as to better work with victims and perpetrators. Tool templates for unions are also available. (In French only)

Regroupement des maisons de femmes victimes de violence conjugale – Mieux comprendre la violence conjugale

maisons-femmes.qc.ca/violence-conjugale

Network of 47 member shelter houses based across Quebec and committed to upholding women's right to physical and psychological integrity. The website provides a comprehensive guide to help better understand various aspects of domestic violence (coercive control, post-separation violence, etc.) and lists member shelter houses for victims. (In French only)

Finding a transition and shelter house

maisons-femmes.qc.ca/maisons-membres

Although this website is only available in French, some transition and shelter houses do provide information in English

National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

mmiwg-ffda.ca/

Website of the National Inquiry that includes a variety of information on its mandate, vision and mission, its final report, its key recommendations, etc. Videos, educational and artistic resources are also provided.



Fédération des Maisons d'hébergement pour femmes (fmhf.ca)

Organization that brings together, supports and represents shelters throughout Quebec to better promote and advocate for the rights of abused women and their children. The Federation also provides a toolbox designed to better understand and recognize patterns of violence against women and to raise awareness among various sectors. Although this website is only available in French, some shelters do provide information and services in English.

Portrait des Québécoises: Violence – Conseil du statut de la femme

A briefing paper by the Conseil du statut de la femme presenting statistical data on the situation of women in Quebec. The 2024 edition focuses on violence against women and compiles data on violence in intimate relationships, sexual violence, etc. (In French only)

Email: info@fmhf.ca

Qu'est-ce qu'un féminicide? – MAJ, Radio-Canada

Radio-Canada website featuring news for younger people. The website includes an article designed to help readers better understand what femicide is. (In French only)

Vigie « meurtres conjugaux » - Le Devoir

Quebec newspaper Le Devoir drew inspiration from a similar project by French newspaper Libération to compile a list of femicides committed by a partner, ex-partner, significant other or former significant other. This compilation aims, using information gathered from police forces and other media outlets, to provide as accurate a picture as possible of this tragic reality. (In French only)

The Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability (femicideincanada.ca)

A civil society initiative, led by feminists, whose goal is to secure social changes in order to empower girls and women as well as promote sex/gender equality. The observatory aims to help prevent femicides across Canada.

SOS violence conjugale (sosviolenceconjugale.ca/en)

Organization whose mission is to help ensure the safety of victims of intimate partner violence, reduce this type of violence and its consequences by offering services to victims, the general population and anyone affected by this issue.

Telephone: 1 800 363-9010

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