Data Impact Program

Vital Strategies | Bloomberg Philanthropies | DATA FOR HEALTH INITIATIVE

Analysis of deaths due to Gender - based violence: An autopsy - based cross-sectional study from Mumbai

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Background

NCRB report, 2021 Highlights

- 5,543 crimes were recorded in 2021 in Mumbai alone under IPC & Special and local laws (SLL)
- Total crime rate against women is 65.1 per 1 lakh population in the city
- There were 37 victims of murders in women (adult and children) and 2 victims of murder in transgenders

NCRB: National Crime Records Bureau
IPC: Indian Penal Code

NCRB report, Mumbai

The Department of Forensic medicine and toxicology, in collaboration with Bloomberg Philanthropies' Data for Health initiative, undertook an autopsy-based retrospective study

The aim was to understand the proportion and pattern of deaths due to gender-based violence among females (of all ages) and non-binary gender.

Research design

Study design: Retrospective, Cross Sectional Study

Sampling frame: Records of autopsies of female's & non-binary unnatural deaths, conducted between May 2017 to April 2022

Inclusion criteria:

- Unnatural deaths, accidental exposure to unspecified factors or intoxication, or injuries
- Deaths claimed to be due to suicides, accidents in which the nature of injury does not harmonize with history or autopsy findings

Working Definition

Deaths due to gender-based violence are "intentional homicides and abetted suicides of women, girls and non-binary gender perpetrated by intimate partners, other family members, or other identified or unidentified individuals, using methods or circumstances that suggest gender-based motivations

Data extraction

1

Data of women, girls & non-binary gender that died from unnatural causes were extracted from autopsy records

2

Most of the information was descriptive & in Marathi; it was translated to English

3

Information related to violence was mined from the detailed history in the records

4

Perpetrator details were validated from police records, where available

5

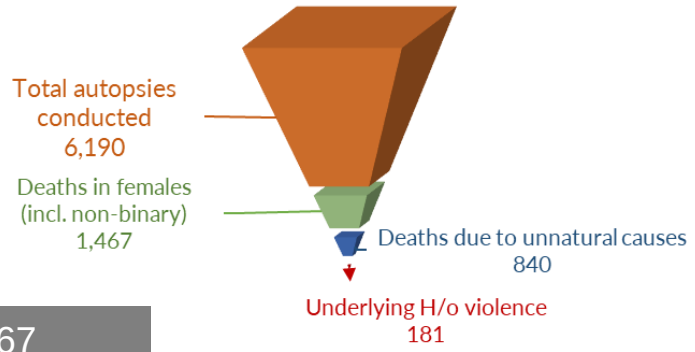
Data were structured and digitized

6

Data were analyzed and interpreted

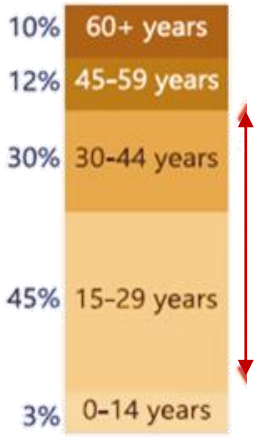
Data were de-identified to ensure personal identifiers were not exposed

Findings

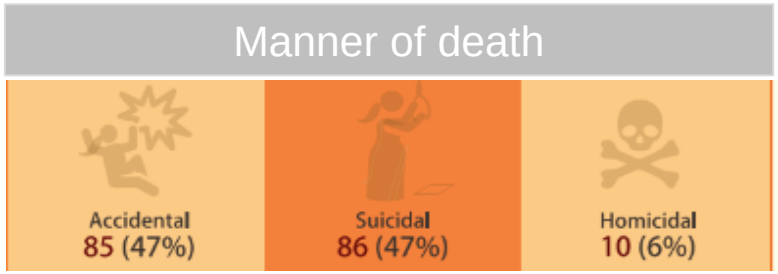


1,467 autopsies conducted on females

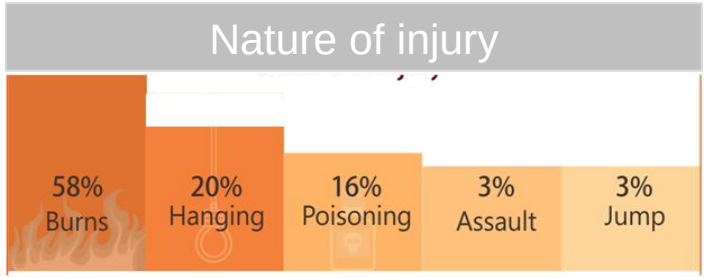
12.3% of autopsies on females had history of gender-based violence



¾ of the victims were aged between 15-44 years

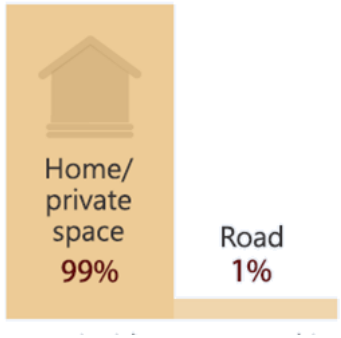


Most victims died by suicide or accidents

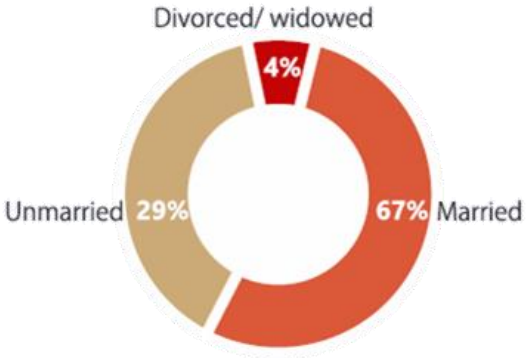


6 out of 10 victims died of burns

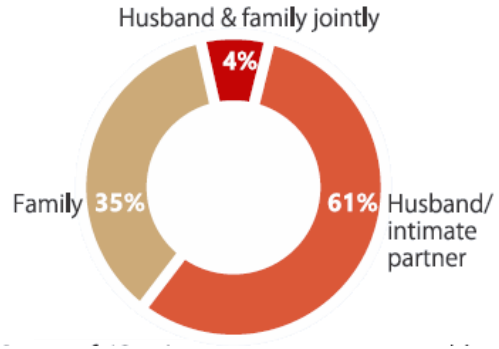
Findings



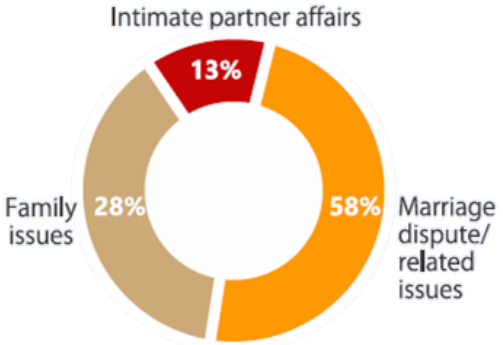
Most incidents took place in homes or private spaces



2/3rd of the victims were married



6 out of 10 crimes were perpetrated by husbands or intimate partners



In 6 out of 10 instances, the underlying reason was marital discord or dispute

Challenges

- Data extraction from handwritten paper format in local language
- Incomplete data related to victim's and perpetrators socio demographic status
- Lack of contextual data of the acts of violence of victim's death
- Biases in recognizing underlying gender-based violence in suicidal and accidental deaths
- Non-reporting of violence due to socio-cultural factors at the time of inquiry poses a barrier to the investigation and in-depth documentation of the cases
- Limited access to police records for data validation

Conclusion

1.

Gender-related killings is a brutal manifestation of the continuum of violence

2.

Women and girls are most likely to be killed by those closest to them

3.

More investigation into injuries due to burns can shed light on social factors related to violence

4.

Comprehensive data on gender-related violence can inform protection and response measures

There is a dire need to strengthen administrative data collection and improve the quality of death reporting to generate reliable estimates for gender-based violence

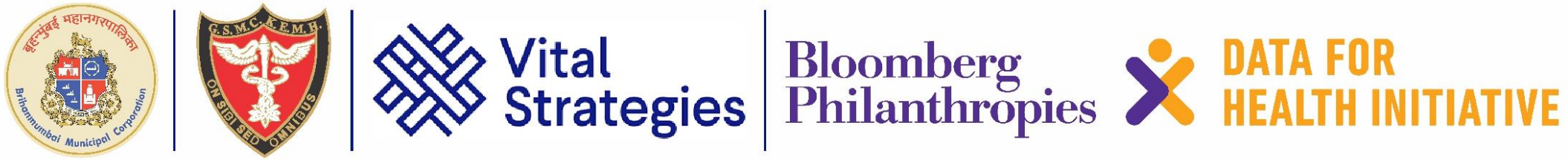
Recommendations

At the institutional level

- Standardize data collection tool
- Digitize data of all violent or unnatural deaths
- Conduct qualitative inquiry into factors associated with unnatural deaths during history taking or autopsy

At the systemic level

- Build capabilities of relevant personnel (health and police) and first-line responders to identify, elicit and record sensitive information related to GBV
- Develop mechanism that allows regular engagement with sector-specific personnel
- Establish a technical review committee comprising relevant experts to review data on unnatural deaths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Thank You