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The Statistical Invisibility of Honor Killing: A Comparative Assessment of Homicide Reporting across 40 Jurisdictions

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ABSTRACT

Honor-related deaths may remain in homicide totals but become unidentifiable by motive in published statistics. This documentary study examined selected official sources for 40 purposively chosen jurisdictions available by November 2026. Records were classified according to whether they contained honor-labelled fatal cases, broader honor-related markers, contextual homicide data, general crime data, or evidence that remained unresolved. Three records reported fatal honor-labelled cases, two supplied broader markers, fourteen provided contextual homicide information, fourteen offered general homicide or crime data, and seven remained unresolved. Direct measures differed in their statistical units. Pakistan counted Karo Kari cases, India registered murder cases assigned an honor motive, and Dutch police reviewed specialist files that included historical deaths. England and Wales published a broader series of honor-based abuse offences. No examined source established a complete, comparable, national victim series for 2020–2025. Identification bounds tested how unresolved records affected classification. The findings establish limits on public visibility of motive rather than evidence that homicide victims were omitted from national counts. Cross-national honor-killing rates remain unreliable without compatible victim-level definitions.

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INTRODUCTION

A national homicide total can be accurate while leaving the circumstances of individual deaths unknown. A woman murdered after refusing an arranged marriage may appear in police statistics simply as a victim of intentional homicide. Her death remains in the total, but the suspected reason for the attack cannot be recovered from the published figure. This is not a minor loss of descriptive detail. Legal definitions and counting rules already complicate comparisons of homicide across countries (Rogers & Pridemore, 2023). Buil-Gil et al. (2026) document variation in the counting of police-recorded homicide in Europe. A consistent total still leaves an unresolved question about the violence being measured. Fatal events can be counted reliably even where the information needed to distinguish honor-related killings is unavailable.

Honor killing refers to a claimed motive rather than a particular way of causing death. A person may be killed because relatives believe that conduct has damaged the family's reputation. The accusation can be based on rumor, and no breach of the alleged rule need have occurred. Family relationships alone are also insufficient to establish the motive. Aksoy and Szekely (2025) examine how honor norms and their enforcement shape lethal violence. Doğan (2020) describes the social consequences attached to alleged norm violations. Those explanations depend on information about why a victim was targeted. Where public homicide records retain only the legal offence, the motive remains inaccessible even though the death is counted.

The International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes includes qualifying honor killings within intentional homicide. A national total may therefore contain these deaths without publishing a separate honor-killing figure. The missing information concerns motive, not necessarily the fatal event. Neither the victim's sex nor a family connection to the offender proves an honor-related reason. Dawson and Carrigan (2021) discuss the importance of contextual information in identifying gender-related killings. Such information can narrow an inquiry, but it cannot establish a motive that was never assessed or recorded. Even a dataset with complete age and relationship fields may be unusable for this specific purpose if the underlying allegations about motive remain inaccessible. A homicide count and an honor-killing count measure different constructs.

Police, prosecutors, and statistical agencies may retain different information about the same death. An officer can attach an honor-related marker that disappears from a later public release. The British Home Office acknowledges inconsistent use of honor-related identifiers and reports offences extending well beyond fatal violence. Aplin (2017) and Bates (2021) describe the range of conduct classified as honor-based abuse. Its published totals cannot be read as deaths without knowing which offences were included and what statistical unit was counted.

A femicide classification may preserve the gender-related circumstances of a woman's death without identifying an alleged honor motive. Walby (2023) treats the measurement of femicide as an institutional problem, and Walklate and Fitz-Gibbon (2023) argue that bare death counts conceal important circumstances. Sarkar et al. (2025) describe barriers arising from coding practices and inconsistent definitions. Yet an intimate-partner homicide need not involve a claim about family reputation. Men, too, can be killed in disputes framed around honor. The boundaries of femicide and honor killing therefore overlap without becoming identical. Neither the victim's sex nor the relationship to the offender can replace evidence about the alleged motive.

Cases, incidents, referrals, and victims do not represent the same population. One investigation may involve several deaths, while a specialist referral may concern a person who survives. Kanis et al. (2017) warn against uncritical use of estimated national homicide data. Jiang et al. (2026) document discrepancies between homicide recorded by health and criminal justice institutions. Attaching a common label to different administrative units cannot resolve those differences. International comparisons of honor-related killing require an identifiable fatal unit and a consistent rule for including it.

Social-norm research has traced the pressures surrounding honor-related violence, while femicide research has examined which deaths administrative systems can classify. Public homicide statistics connect these fields only where they retain evidence of an alleged honor motive. The international classification accommodates such killings, but a national publication may expose only the total number of homicide victims. Elsewhere, it may publish a fatal case count or a broad honor-abuse marker that includes nonfatal conduct. These differences are observable without estimating an unknown number of killings. An unreported category cannot be treated as evidence of zero deaths, although the absence of an identifiable motive variable limits what can be learned from the published record.

Across forty purposively selected jurisdictions, official publications differ in the level of honor-related information they disclose. The sources come from four regional groups but do not represent a random sample or a complete inventory of each national recording system. Publication dates, original counting units, and reference periods remain attached to each observation. Some sources identify fatal cases directly. Others describe homicide victims without recording any honor-related motive in the selected release. Uncertainty in the remaining sources is retained rather than converted into a finding of nonreporting. The comparison concerns information accessible from identified publications, not the true prevalence of honor killing in the countries concerned.

RESEARCH METHODS

A structured documentary comparison covered forty purposively selected jurisdictions, with ten each in Europe and Eurasia, West Asia and North Africa, South and Southeast Asia, and a combined group of the Americas, sub-Saharan Africa, and Oceania. Public police statistics, national statistical agency releases, specialist publications, parliamentary responses, and official international data portals were screened for records available by November 2026. The primary reference period was 2020–2025. The unit of analysis was the selected source record linked to a jurisdiction, not the unobserved universe of homicide incidents within it. Source provenance, geographical coverage, year, original counting unit,

and documentary limitations were preserved in a forty-row companion dataset. Sources were not assumed to represent every recording system in the country.

Each source was classified by its strongest demonstrable public evidence. Category D identifies an explicitly honor-labelled fatal case or specialist fatal case file. Category B identifies an official honor-related marker too broad to yield a fatal victim count. Category R covers homicide publications with contextual victim information, while category H includes general homicide or crime reporting with no compatible honor-fatal measure in the inspected release. Category U records a source route insufficient for stronger classification. These codes describe retrieved materials and cannot establish national absence. The distinction between victims, murder cases, police offences, incidents, and specialist referrals was retained without conversion. A confirmed fatal series required more than a category name, and a complete national honor-killing victim numerator additionally required an explicit victim unit, national coverage, defined reference period, and ascertainment rule.

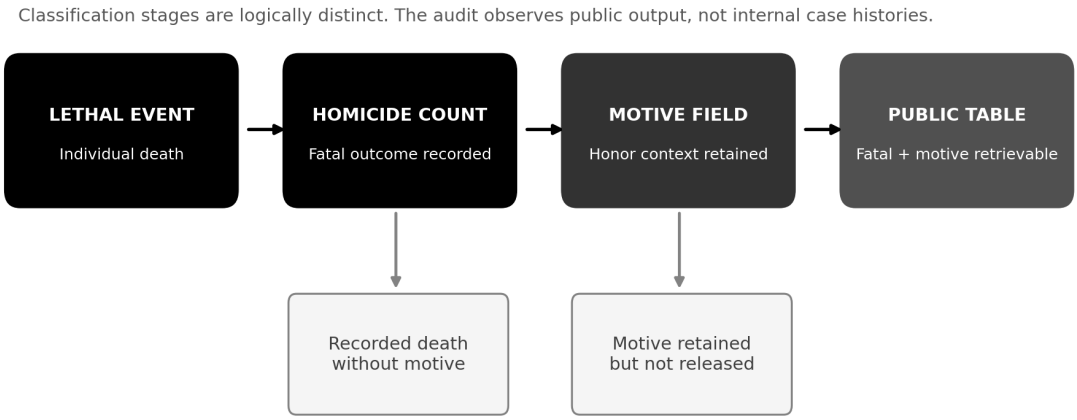
Frequencies were calculated across the forty records and within each selection region. Four source-specific series were examined separately because they use different counting units and reference periods. Public honor-related markers were distinguished from fatal case categories and the narrower classification of registered murder cases. Seven source records that could not be classified securely remained unknown rather than being coded as having no honor-related information. Logical upper bounds were obtained by allowing every unresolved record to meet the relevant identification threshold. These bounds describe the uncertainty left by incomplete documentation, not confidence intervals or estimates of sampling error. No independent double-coding coefficient was available. The records were unsuitable for a causal model or a comparable international honor-killing rate.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Death is Counted, the Motive is no Longer Recoverable

Intentional homicide classifies a fatal offence, while honor killing identifies an alleged motive that may remain disputed. Kadir (2026a) distinguishes offence elements from motive-dependent interpretations in comparative homicide law. Investigators can register a death as homicide without settling whether family reputation motivated the attack. An accurate published total may consequently contain no variable identifying the suspected honor-related circumstances. A count of deaths does not guarantee that their alleged motives can also be counted.

Honor killing belongs within the ICCS intentional-homicide category where the requirements of that category are met. A death may therefore contribute to an international homicide total without appearing in a separate public honor-killing series. An unlabelled homicide does not establish that honor played no part. Nor does a family relationship prove that it did. Kadir (2026g) examines why the Indonesian concept of siri' cannot simply be treated as interchangeable with a universal honor-killing label. The same difficulty arises in administrative coding. Picture 1 separates the fatal event from later motive identification and public release. Those stages cannot be reconstructed as a case history from an aggregate table alone.



Picture 1 A fatal event can remain in a homicide count while the honor-related motive is absent from the public statistical output. The boxes represent logical distinctions rather than reconstructed case histories.

An individual death may pass through several records before appearing in a published homicide total. Classification of the fatal event, recording of an alleged motive, and production of a public table are separate decisions. Omitting a death changes the homicide total. Omitting a suspected motive may leave that total unchanged while limiting what can be learned about the killing. A more precise population denominator will not restore information that has been lost at the classification stage. An honor-related police flag also cannot establish that a killing took place, since the flag may be used for nonfatal offences. Interpretation depends on both the point of recording and the unit to which the label applies.

An honor-related offence series can include threats and coercive conduct without identifying a single fatal case. A narrow keyword-based category may also miss incidents described through local concepts rather than the English word honor. Kadir (2026g) explains why siri' overlaps with honor killing without carrying precisely the same meaning. Classification depends on how an agency translates the evidence into its operational categories. Public documentation may describe the rule, yet aggregated totals rarely disclose the cases rejected or classified otherwise. The scale of such misclassification cannot be recovered from a published table without access to the individual files on which the table was based.

The same blank motive field may result from withheld data, an unused police marker, or an unresolved allegation. Investigators may store motive internally while releasing only an offence code. They may also lack evidence to apply the marker at all. Both situations look identical in an aggregate publication although they represent different administrative states. International classification standards cannot recreate information without a public link to the fatal event. An empty field therefore describes the inspected release, not an absence of honor-related cases in the country.

Table 1 Distinctions necessary for a defensible fatal honor-killing numerator

Construct	Observable meaning	Invalid substitution
Intentional homicide	Fatal unlawful violence counted under an explicit legal-statistical rule	Any general homicide victim as honor-motivated
Honor-labelled fatal case	Official fatal case assigned or suspected honor-related motive	Automatically identical to number of dead victims
Honor-related nonfatal offence	Recorded offence involving an honor-related context	Honor-killing victim
Relationship-based homicide	Victim and offender have specified personal relationship	Proof of an honor-related motive
Femicide classification	Gender-related killing under a disclosed methodology	Universal synonym for honor killing

Construct	Observable meaning	Invalid substitution
Publication missingness	A field is not recoverable from the reviewed release	Evidence that the event or record never existed

Sex and kinship can help identify cases warranting closer review, but neither provides a reliable honor-killing numerator. Even a comprehensive family-homicide series includes deaths arising from conflicts with no demonstrated connection to family reputation. Finley et al. (2025) develop a wider classification of homicide motives and emphasize the importance of evidence supporting each attribution. Treating every female victim killed by a relative as an honor-killing victim would impose an unverified motive on the record. Such coding would contaminate the numerator before any international comparison began, regardless of how accurately the total number of homicides was measured.

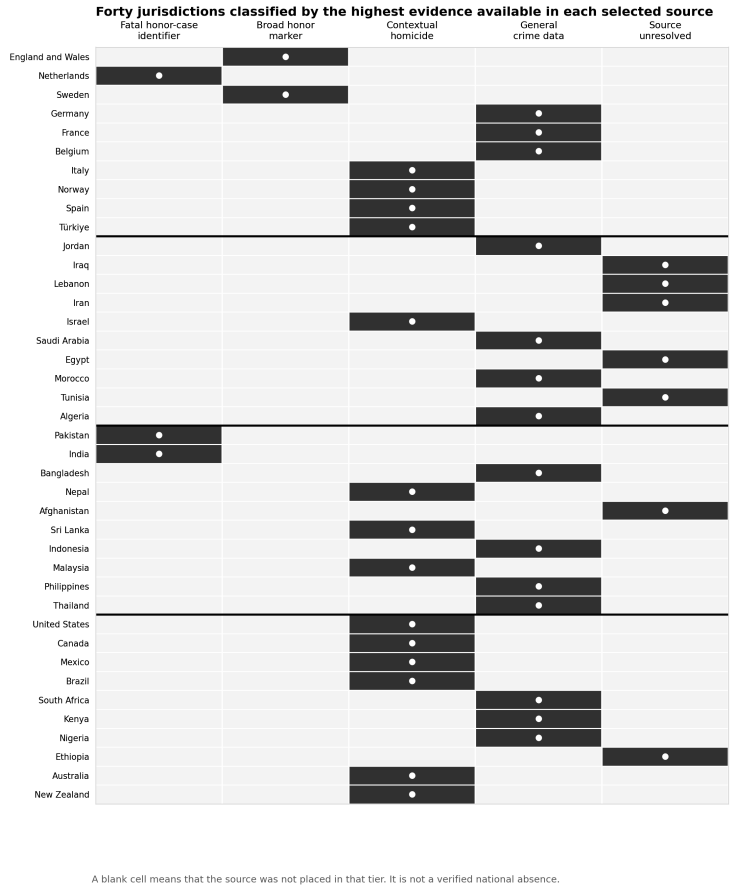
Forty Jurisdictions and Five Forms of Statistical Evidence

Explicit honor-labelled fatal cases or specialist fatal files were found in three of the forty selected source records. Two other publications supplied broader honor-related markers without a compatible fatal count. Fourteen contained contextual homicide information, and another fourteen supplied general crime or homicide totals. Seven source routes could not be classified securely. The distribution describes retrieved public documentation, not the full recording capacity of forty national institutions. The unresolved records are particularly important. Calling them nonreporting systems would confuse the limits of source verification with the absence of data held by a government agency.

Table 2 Source-evidence classification among the forty selected jurisdictions

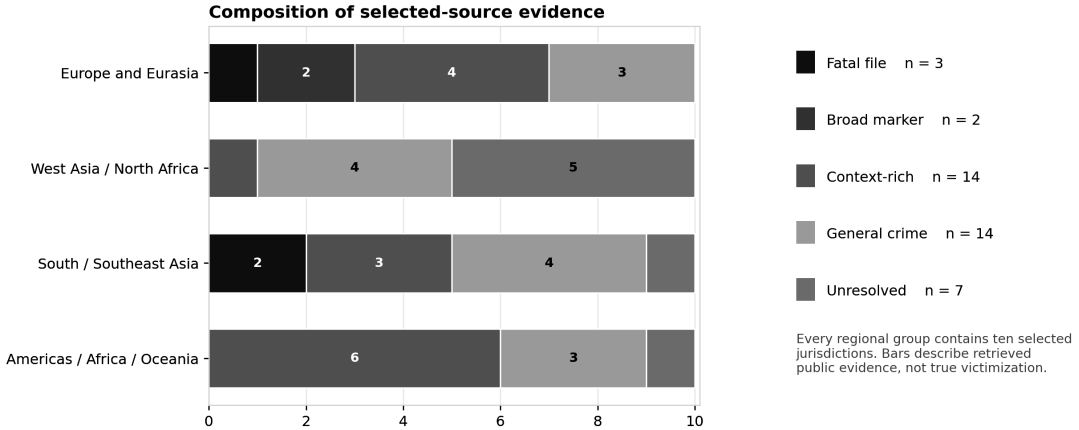
Evidence tier	Meaning in the selected official publication	Jurisdictions
D	Honor-labelled fatal case or specialist fatal case file	3
B	Public honor-related marker without a compatible national fatal numerator	2
R	Context-rich general homicide reporting, no honor-specific fatal figure confirmed here	14
H	General homicide or police offence reporting in examined source	14
U	National source screen unresolved or unsuitable for stronger inference	7

Pakistan and India provide identifiable administrative categories involving honor-related fatal cases. The Dutch expertise centre reports homicide or manslaughter files in which an honor motive was suspected, although those specialist files are not a national annual victim series. England and Wales uses an honor-based abuse identifier across a broader population of offences, many of them nonfatal. Sweden publishes information about honor-related oppression and legal recognition without a comparable annual count of honor-killing victims in the inspected release. Such figures arise from different entry rules and institutional purposes. They cannot be joined into a single homicide series merely because each source uses an honor-related label. The underlying evidentiary threshold may itself differ.



Picture 2 Highest source-level evidence classification for forty jurisdictions. Each row contains one affirmative tier. Unresolved refers to insufficiently verified source evidence and does not indicate zero national honor killings.

Italy, Canada, and Australia publish contextual information about homicide victims, but those details do not establish a comparable honor-killing count. Italy provides victim characteristics and relationships, while Brazil publishes a legally distinct femicide category. Fourteen selected source records contain contextual homicide information without a verified honor-related fatal numerator. Picture 2 also separates seven source routes whose status remains unresolved. Relationships and gender can be well documented while the alleged motive is unknown. Better description of victims does not itself establish how an investigative system identified the reasons for a killing.



Picture 3 Composition of retrieved evidence by purposive selection region. Each group contains ten jurisdictions. Regional differences concern the selected statistical releases, not the distribution of victims.

Honor-related labels occur among selected European and Asian sources, but the pattern does not establish regional differences in lethal violence. Some countries publish detailed victim information

without identifying honor-related motives. Each selection group contains ten jurisdictions in Picture 3. The bars describe the official releases reviewed, not the number of victims in the regions. Their proportions cannot support claims that any population is more prone to honor killing or that one country's entire recording system is inherently more accurate.

Belgium, France, and Italy publish different levels of detail on homicide. The Belgian Federal Police warns against summing overlapping offence categories. France reports an updated total of 976 homicide victims for 2024. Italy recorded 327 victims that year, including 116 women, and published information on victim–offender relationships. None of these figures identifies how many killings involved an alleged motive of family honor. Geographic proximity does not make the categories comparable. General homicide totals may be accurate while the motive-specific information needed here remains unavailable.

Canada recorded 788 homicide victims in 2024. Australia reported 435 in 2025, including 133 within a family or domestic violence category. Mexico recorded 33,550 homicides in 2024 and identified 3,739 female victims. Brazil published 1,450 femicide cases for 2024. None is a compatible honor-killing victim count. Family homicide, femicide, and female homicide identify different populations. Without individual-level evidence of motive and a shared inclusion rule, the figures cannot be converted into honor-related rates or used to rank the countries by such deaths.

Malaysia published 248 intentional homicide cases for 2025, compared with 237 in 2024. Jordan's annual yearbook reports police murder categories, and Kenya's economic survey lists homicide as a criminal offence. Saudi Arabia published an SDG homicide rate rather than an honor-specific fatal series in the source examined. Thailand and South Africa supplied broader crime information. These releases differ in the details they include and sometimes count offences rather than victims. None identifies an honor-killing total without an explicit field linking fatalities to the alleged motive.

Seven source routes could not be assigned a stronger evidence tier after the public-document review. Iraq's mortality portal provides death statistics but no verified national honor-related homicide series in the materials examined. The accessible justice and security publications from Lebanon likewise do not establish a compatible fatality measure. Source verification was also insufficient for Iran, Egypt, Tunisia, Afghanistan, and Ethiopia. Their classification is not a finding that honor killings are absent. Indonesia and Nepal fell within the general crime evidence tiers. The BPS crime report for Indonesia recorded 1,129 murder incidents in 2023 and 1,106 in 2024, while Nepal Police published broader crime and gender-violence categories. Neither source identified a national honor-killing victim count.

Table 3 Forty jurisdiction-specific source records and their documentary limits

Jurisdiction	Tier	Official source	What is documented or remains unresolved
England and Wales	B	Home Office, 2026	HBA 3,145 offences and 2,001 non-crime incidents. No honor-fatal victim numerator in this bulletin
Netherlands	D	Dutch Police LEC EGG, 2026	757 referred honor-related cases. Four homicide or manslaughter case files included two historic cold cases
Sweden	B	Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention, 2026	Honor-based oppression or motive is recognized. This source is not a national fatal honor victim series
Germany	H	German Federal Criminal Police Office, 2026	2025 police recorded crime tables classify homicide offences. A distinct annual honor motive victim series is not shown in selected release
France	H	French Interior Ministry SSMSI, 2025	976 homicide victims in final 2024 release. No fatal honor subgroup extracted from this release
Belgium	H	Belgian Federal Police, 2026	National recorded crime portal. Intentional homicide honor-specific victims not demonstrated from selected series

Jurisdiction	Tier	Official source	What is documented or remains unresolved
Italy	R	ISTAT, 2025	327 homicide victims, 116 women and 211 men. Victim relationship available, honor motive not separately counted
Norway	R	Statistics Norway, 2026	National victim and registered offences portal. No honor-motive fatality series demonstrated
Spain	R	National Statistics Institute Spain, 2026	SDG 16.1.1 homicide rates by sex. No directly honor-identified fatal count in this series
Türkiye	R	TURKSTAT, 2026	Official SDG homicide rates by sex. No public fatal honor numerator in this document
Jordan	H	Jordan Department of Statistics, 2023	Murder and premeditated murder categories available. Counts are offences, not honor-specific victims
Iraq	U	Iraqi Ministry of Health dashboard, 2026	Mortality portal identified. A compatible national fatal honor count not verified from this screen
Lebanon	U	Lebanese Central Administration of Statistics, 2026	Justice-security statistics page located. A relevant current homicide table not verified in this screen
Iran	U	World Bank WDI, 2026	No suitable national honor-related statistical source verified during limited audit
Israel	R	Knesset, 2026	Murder victim statistics with sex detail. Honor motive not separated in consulted release
Saudi Arabia	H	General Authority for Statistics Saudi Arabia, 2026	SDG 16.1.1 series exists. Honor-specific victim numerator not shown
Egypt	U	World Bank WDI, 2026	National source not sufficiently established for a negative honor-count claim
Morocco	H	High Commission for Planning Morocco, 2026	Official SDG homicide rates. Motive-specific fatal numerator not available in selected table
Tunisia	U	World Bank WDI, 2026	National honor-specific data not established under this limited retrieval protocol
Algeria	H	United Nations SDG Data Portal, 2026	UN SDG country profile reports homicide rates. This does not reveal honor motif
Pakistan	D	Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2026	Karo Kari / honor killings cases 139, 308, 300, 276, 287. Not confirmed national fatal victim counts
India	D	Indian Ministry of Home Affairs, 2023	Official parliamentary response reports 92, 29, 24, 25, 33 registered murder cases 2017–2021
Bangladesh	H	Bangladesh Police, 2026	Crime-statistics portal identified. Completeness checks needed, no honor-specific fatal unit validated
Nepal	R	Nepal Police, 2025	Nepal Police Police Mirror and gender-based violence fact sheet publish offence and victim-context information. These reports do not establish a national honor-homicide victim numerator.
Afghanistan	U	World Bank WDI, 2026	WDI rates documented for 2020–21. No national honor fatal count verified

Jurisdiction	Tier	Official source	What is documented or remains unresolved
Sri Lanka	R	Sri Lanka Department of Census and Statistics, 2026	SDG sex-specific homicide indicator. Historical availability must not be confused with full 2020–25 coverage
Indonesia	H	Statistics Indonesia (BPS), 2025	Statistik Kriminal 2024/2025 reports 1,129 murder incidents in 2023 and 1,106 in 2024. A national honor-motive fatal numerator is not established by this publication.
Malaysia	R	Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2026	248 intentional homicide cases in 2025 compared with 237 in 2024. Not honor killings
Philippines	H	Philippine Statistics Authority, 2026	SDG 16.1.1 indicator portal, no honor fatal cases documented in inspected page
Thailand	H	National Statistical Office Thailand, 2025	Yearbook police crime categories, no honor fatal victim classification in inspected table
United States	R	Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2026	National homicide information published. No national honor-specific fatal series found in the selected release
Canada	R	Statistics Canada, 2025	788 homicide victims in 2024. Relationships and context studied, honor subset not reported here
Mexico	R	INEGI, 2026	33,550 recorded homicides in 2024, including 3,739 female victims. Not an honor numerator
Brazil	R	Brazil Ministry of Women, 2025	Reports 1,450 femicide cases in 2024. A femicide count cannot be substituted for honor killing
South Africa	H	South African Police Service, 2026	National recorded-crime series. No compatible honor motive victim rate confirmed
Kenya	H	Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2025	Economic Survey records homicide offence categories. Does not identify honor-specific fatal victims
Nigeria	H	Federal Ministry of Police Affairs Nigeria, 2026	Crime reports are available. Relevant honor-specific fatality table not verified
Ethiopia	U	UN SDG Data Portal, 2026	No compatible national honor motive case series validated in limited screen
Australia	R	Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2026	435 homicide victims, 133 family and domestic violence, neither is an honor count
New Zealand	R	New Zealand Police, 2024	Homicide Victims Report 2023 and historical series. No honor fatal count demonstrated in selected report

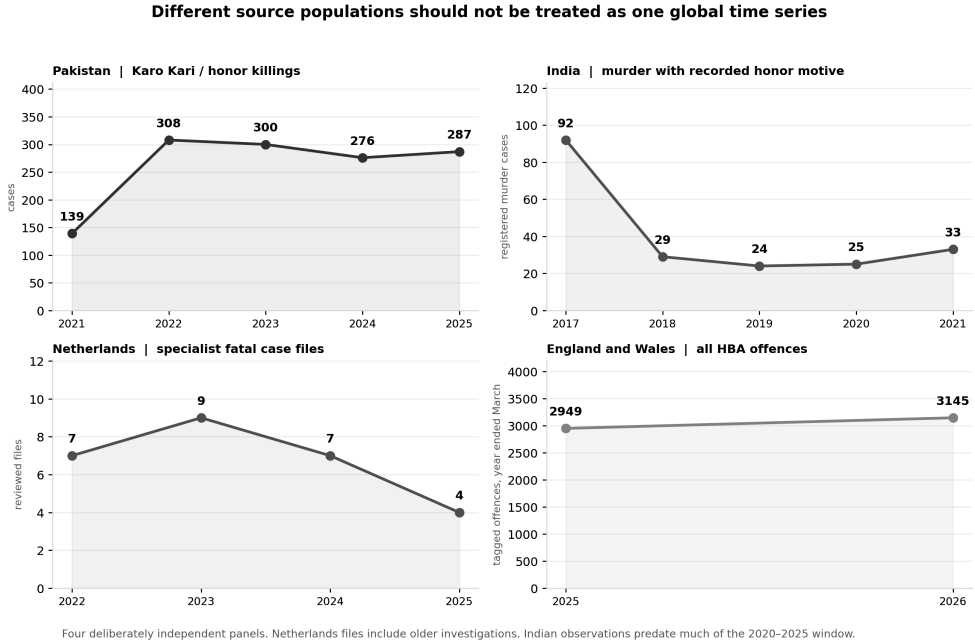
The forty-row matrix records each source's issuing authority, counting unit, reference period, and limitations. Those details matter because a case count cannot represent deceased victims without a documented conversion rule. Specialist referrals have another entry threshold, sometimes including threats without a death. Source addresses allow the classifications to be checked and unresolved records to be distinguished from confirmed categories. The absence of an honor-related figure in an inspected bulletin does not mean the country's police systems hold no such information. A record's title also cannot establish which population was counted.

Three Direct Reporting Regimes with Different Denominators

The Pakistan Bureau of Statistics published a Karo Kari or honor-killing case series in its 2026 gender compendium. The reported annual entries were 139 in 2021, 308 in 2022, 300 in 2023, 276 in 2024, and 287 in 2025, giving 1,310 cases across five years. These entries represent administrative cases rather than a separately verified number of deceased victims. Although the series spans consecutive reference years, its publication date does not alter the year of each recorded event. Nor does the increase between 2021 and 2022 establish a corresponding rise in underlying violence without evidence that reporting coverage and case classification remained stable.

An official Indian parliamentary reply of March 2023 contains state and union territory counts of cases registered under murder with a motive described as honor killing. The national totals were 92 in 2017, 29 in 2018, 24 in 2019, 25 in 2020, and 33 in 2021. The decline after 2017 cannot be read as a validated drop in underlying violence without reviewing policy and reporting changes. Kadir (2026c) compares criminal law in Pakistan, India, and Nepal, although a legal comparison by itself cannot repair the source and unit differences.

The Dutch expertise centre handled 757 suspected honor-related referrals during 2025. Four reviewed files concerned homicide or manslaughter, including two historical events. Five victims were associated with those four files, but not all deaths occurred in the reporting year. The referral count measures specialist workload across forms of violence, not the incidence of fatal attacks. Nor do the reviewed files establish a complete national series of newly killed victims. All three numbers are meaningful only with their original administrative units and date conventions.



Picture 4 Four independent administrative series with distinct populations, time conventions, and counting units. Axes are intentionally separate. No cross-national prevalence comparison is supported.

Pakistan's honor-labelled case series covers 2021–2025, while the parliamentary figures available for India end in 2021. Dutch specialist reviews include historical investigations. England and Wales, by contrast, counts honor-based abuse offences, many of them nonfatal. Picture 4 keeps the source-specific units and time conventions separate. Different panels may contain different numbers without implying different levels of risk. The administrative populations diverge before any population denominator is introduced. A single combined trend would conceal the rules that produced the figures.

Table 4 Direct numerical observations and their non-interchangeable statistical units

Source and years	Reported numerical observations	Unit and boundary
Pakistan 2021–2025	139, 308, 300, 276, 287	Karo Kari / honor-killing cases, not victim-level prevalence

Source and years	Reported numerical observations	Unit and boundary
India 2017–2021	92, 29, 24, 25, 33	Registered murder cases with honor motive, older window
Netherlands 2022–2025	7, 9, 7, 4	Specialist-reviewed homicide or manslaughter files, cold cases possible
England and Wales 2024/25–2025/26	2,949, 3,145	All HBA-tagged offences, many nonfatal

The Home Office release published on 5 November 2026 gives 3,145 honor-based abuse offences for the year ending March 2026, following 2,949 in the preceding reporting year. It separately records 2,001 non-crime incidents. The Home Office warns that police systems and training have changed the propensity to apply an honor-related marker, particularly after a major London recording-system change in February 2024. The annual change is not a valid estimate of change in the underlying prevalence of abuse. It is still less a measure of completed honor killings. Kadir (2026d) examines honor killing in Western diaspora jurisdictions, but the English data require the administrative interpretation supplied by the Home Office itself.

The Unit Firewall and the Case-Year Problem

A killing involving two victims may produce one incident record, a single case file, and two victim entries. Truong et al. (2023) document related variation in research on domestic homicide. Repeated coercive acts may also generate several police offences without any death. A specialist centre can receive a referral about suspected abuse before a criminal prosecution begins. These totals are produced by different institutional processes. Aggregation may remove the links among cases, offences, and deceased victims, making reconstruction impossible from the public series. Two identical numbers can therefore describe entirely different populations of events and people.

The Dutch review associated five deceased victims with four homicide or manslaughter files. The case-to-victim difference is important because one file can concern multiple deaths, a distinction also made by Boyd et al. (2024) in Canadian familicide research. Referrals describe another population altogether. They are generated when suspected honor-related violence reaches a specialist unit, including allegations that never involve a completed homicide. The annual referral workload cannot be converted to fatal incidents by adjusting the denominator. Nor is the five-victim figure interchangeable with four administrative files. Both counts are valid for their stated units, but they answer different questions.

Four Dutch murder or manslaughter files were associated with five victims in the 2025 specialist review, but two files concerned historical events. Treating five victims as the number killed during 2025 would incorrectly place old deaths into a current-year numerator. Treating the 757 referrals as homicide cases would be worse, since the referral population contains various suspected forms of honor-related violence. The two errors run in opposite directions. One displaces the timing of fatalities. The other confuses fatal with nonfatal events. A comparison becomes defensible only after both the original unit and the date convention are recorded.

Pakistan's compendium reports annual entries for 2021–2025 but was published in 2026. Using the publication date as the year of every event would distort the series. Later release may reflect investigation, compilation, or routine quality assurance. The record must therefore retain a separate reference year and publication year. Changes after reclassification or renewed investigation may also require the agency to revise earlier counts. A stable published total is not proof of an unchanged underlying incidence. Conversely, a new number can arise from an altered reporting rule rather than a change in violence.

England and Wales reports years ending in March, while Pakistan's annual entries appear in a later compendium. Dutch reviews can include homicide files reopened decades after the deaths occurred. Sweden's evaluation examines legal proceedings for a different offence and uses another reference period. Aligning these figures under the same calendar label would hide the distinction between a death, its registration, and a subsequent review. Reclassification or improved police tagging can also change a reported series without changing the frequency of lethal attacks. A comparison needs the original date convention, not merely a shared year printed on its horizontal axis.

Dutch police may classify an alleged honor motive as suspected while seeking specialist advice. Investigative information recorded at that stage does not have the same evidentiary standing as a court's later conclusion. An allegation may be narrowed, revised, or rejected as new evidence emerges. Kadir (2026f) examines how judgments resolve disputed honor-related narratives, a process different from the original administrative marker. Combining early suspicions with judicially established motives would change the population counted. A publication that distinguishes those stages can retain uncertainty without treating every initial allegation as proven.



Picture 5 Original units of eight source regimes. Honor-related and general homicide labels are not interchangeable, even when ordinary-language descriptions use the same word for a case.

One homicide incident may involve several victims, while one criminal case may contain several offences. A specialist referral can concern a threat rather than a death. Picture 5 identifies the statistical units used by eight sources without placing them on one numerical scale. Equal published counts would not be comparable unless inclusion rules, reference dates, geography, and units matched. Even the ordinary word case may refer to different administrative objects. An offence total cannot be assumed to count deceased people.

Table 5 Counting-unit firewall for selected source regimes

Publication	Unit	What the reader must not infer
Home Office HBA bulletin	Offence or non-crime incident	The number is a victim count
Dutch specialist center	Referral and reviewed case file	All referred episodes are fatal or occurred this year
Pakistan gender compendium	Honor-related police case	One case equals one death or all events were recorded
Indian parliamentary response	Murder case with honor motive	The series is continuous through 2025
ISTAT homicide report	Homicide victim	Every family or femicide victim died for honor
Australian police victim data	Homicide victim or domestic-violence subset	Domestic homicide is identical to honor killing

Legal Categories do not Automatically Produce Public Statistical Categories

Sweden's honor-based oppression provisions are reflected in offence and prosecution information, but the evaluated material does not provide a compatible annual national victim count for honor killing. England and Wales applies an honor-related flag across distinct offences rather than using one comprehensive honor-based abuse offence in prosecution guidance. The Dutch expertise centre preserves specialist information that does not appear as a corresponding category in general homicide totals. A legal classification can therefore be operational within an institution without becoming a publicly available victim-level statistic. The existence of a statute or administrative label says little by itself about whether an agency publishes a fatality series.

An honor-related motive may affect sentencing even where the published homicide statistics contain no variable for it. Police can also mark an offence as honor-related although prosecutors use the ordinary murder provision. Sweden's legislative framework and the wider tagging practice in England and Wales illustrate how different agencies apply distinct classification rules. The legal treatment of a motive is therefore insufficient evidence that fatal victims can be retrieved under that label from annual statistics. The administrative link must be documented separately from the statute.

Victim characteristics cannot establish an honor motive simply because an official record lacks a specific classification. Age, sex, family relationship, migration background, or method of killing may be relevant to an investigation. None proves that a death was intended to defend family reputation. A police marker may capture a suspected motive even if the charge is ordinary murder, while a named offence may leave no corresponding variable in annual publications. Replacing those missing variables with demographic assumptions would import untested stereotypes into the numerator. The fatal case and the evidence supporting the alleged motive need an explicit administrative link.

Honor-related control can involve coercion and punishment long before an incident becomes fatal. Khan and Morris (2026) describe the conduct covered by honor-based abuse, while Villacampa et al. (2026) examine social attitudes surrounding such violence. Barmaki (2021) considers psychological accounts of honor-related offending. These perspectives do not authorize the assignment of a motive from ethnicity or religion. A fatal case needs an evidenced connection to alleged reputational control before it enters an honor-killing series. The social circumstances of a victim may warrant investigation, but they do not stand in for the investigative finding.

Family pressure may inform a homicide investigation without establishing the particular motive attributed to the offender. Khatib et al. (2020) and Doğan (2020) describe the pressures and sanctions that can surround perceived breaches of social norms. Statistical coding based only on a community label would instead reproduce assumptions about the people being studied. The evidence remains tied to the individual death and the circumstances documented in its case record. Coercive control can be part of a gender-related killing without an honor motive having been alleged or substantiated.

A victim of an honor-related killing may also be male. Gender-related homicide classifications offer more contextual information than an undifferentiated murder count, and Dawson et al. (2024) examine the practical limits of applying such classifications. Sex or victim–offender relationship nevertheless identifies a different feature of the event from the alleged honor-related motive. Kadir (2026j) distinguishes honor killing from intimate-partner femicide in judicial classification. The two categories can overlap in individual cases, although neither is a complete substitute for the other. A sound administrative record may therefore require separate, linked fields for the relationship, gender-related circumstances, and the motive under investigation.

Sweden's legal treatment of honor-based oppression does not produce a corresponding annual victim-level honor-killing series in the official material examined. An aggravating motive can appear in police records or court decisions without being retained as a field in public homicide tables. Pakistan presents a different difficulty. Its named Karo Kari category is visible, but the reported unit is an administrative case rather than a confirmed number of deceased victims. The Swedish material relates to legal proceedings, whereas the Pakistani counts come from a statistical compendium. Neither more explicit legislation nor more explicit case labels guarantees a compatible national victim numerator. A classification can be meaningful in criminal proceedings and still remain unusable for comparison with another country's fatality data.

Kadir (2026b) compares legal responses to honor killing in Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia. The official statistical materials reviewed for those jurisdictions do not establish a common national count of honor-related homicide victims. That absence of compatible published data cannot establish that the

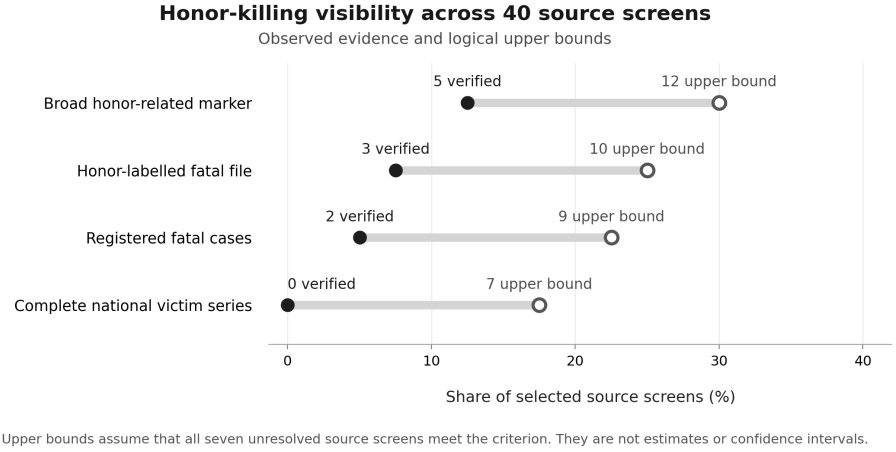
laws are ineffective or that the killings are absent. Criminal law doctrine, administrative publication, and the incidence of violence are different objects of inquiry. Comparative legal analyses of Pakistan, India, Nepal, and Western diaspora jurisdictions by Kadir (2026c, 2026d) likewise concern legal treatment rather than equivalent statistical populations.

The Indonesian concept of siri' may help explain the social meaning attributed to a particular killing, but it cannot establish that all deaths in a community share that motive. Kadir (2026g) compares siri' with honor killing while preserving their different meanings. Kadir (2026i) likewise distinguishes social relationships from homicide categories in Indonesia. A local concept becomes statistically relevant only when documented facts connect it to the fatal event. An individual's community background does not supply that evidence on its own.

Statistical Identification and Evidentiary Uncertainty

Only five of the forty inspected source records exposed an honor-related identifier, and just three of these contained fatal cases or specialist fatal files. None provided a complete national victim-level honor-killing series across 2020–2025. Ordinary homicide publications were more readily identifiable, but their victim or relationship fields did not provide the missing motive. Seven sources remained unresolved under the verification rules. An unverified source cannot be counted as either a reporting success or a nonreporting institution. The observed contrast therefore concerns the accessibility of distinct statistical objects, not an inferred number of honor killings in each country.

Seven unresolved source records change the range of defensible comparisons. Among the thirty-three sources assigned a verified tier, three met the fatal-case threshold. The share is 3 of 33 when unresolved records are excluded and 3 of 40 when all selected jurisdictions remain in the denominator. A logical maximum of 10 of 40 would require every unresolved record to qualify, which has not been observed. Picture 6 also distinguishes the Dutch specialist files from the narrower class of registered fatal murder cases. The intervals describe limits imposed by documentary uncertainty. They assign no probability to an unresolved record and do not measure sampling variation or national prevalence.



Picture 6 Logical identification bounds under seven unresolved source screens. Filled circles identify minimum verified counts and open circles the upper limit if all unresolved sources qualified. These are not estimates or confidence intervals.

A broad honor-related identifier was verified in five source regimes, though only three met the fatal-case or specialist-file standard. Under the narrower rule requiring registered murder or Karo Kari cases, Pakistan and India were the two qualifying sources. The seven unresolved records leave logical upper bounds above each observed count, as shown in Picture 6. Those hypothetical additions have not been verified. More importantly, the two registered case series still have different coverage and reference periods. Neither can be divided by national population and compared as an equivalent honor-killing victim rate. The identifying rule and original unit would both have to match.

Table 6 Evidence coding rules, the object measured, and mandatory uncertainty markers

Code	Source-specific criterion	Inference allowed
D	Fatal honor-labelled case or specialist file count	Some fatal cases have a public honor link, not complete victim numerator

Code	Source-specific criterion	Inference allowed
B	Broader official honor-related marker	A public marker exists, not all tagged offences are homicide
R	Detailed homicide victim or contextual data	Homicide is observable, honor motive may not be
H	General homicide or crime category	A baseline crime category is visible in selected source
U	National retrieval unresolved or unsuitable	Do not infer source absence equals country absence

An index that treats every unknown variable as zero would rank the completeness of the available documentation rather than the national systems themselves. Public accessibility, fatal-case specificity, statistical unit, and reporting continuity describe different features of a publication. They are not interchangeable quantities, and assigning them equal weights would reflect a research choice rather than an observed property of homicide reporting. Table 6 retains each source-level decision and its uncertainty separately. A specific claim about honor-killing visibility can then be evaluated against the information actually needed to support it, instead of resting on a single composite score.

A conviction-based honor-killing series excludes allegations that never reach trial. Police may identify a suspected motive before an arrest, whereas court records cover a much smaller set of cases. Kadir (2026h) discusses the selection effects of homicide research based on cleared cases. Judgments may contain detailed accounts of motive but omit difficult or unresolved killings. Their narrative richness cannot turn the resulting count into a measure of all deaths. The stage at which a case enters a dataset matters as much as the category attached to it.

Translations and local administrative terminology complicate independent assessment of honor-related categories. An oppression offence may concern nonfatal conduct, while female homicide data may omit motive entirely. Source descriptions were checked for internal consistency, but the forty classifications were not independently recoded by a second assessor. An inter-coder agreement coefficient would therefore be inappropriate. Krippendorff (2011) distinguishes agreement from the information captured by a coding scheme. Clear source provenance and explicit category thresholds make the available classifications inspectable, although they do not replace an independent reliability study. The remaining uncertainty is reported through separate evidence categories rather than a spurious measure of agreement.

A missing public motive field is not a randomly missing individual observation. Some jurisdictions suppress sensitive cells to protect privacy. Others release only the legal classification although police retain investigative context. Cases reaching trial may also contain fuller accounts of motive than unresolved killings. Rubin's (1976) discussion of missing-data mechanisms explains why absent information cannot be assigned a value without assumptions about how it became missing. The comparison consequently separates unknown source status from a reported zero. Missingness may vary with investigative progress and with the sensitivity of the suspected motive itself. Those features make straightforward statistical imputation especially questionable. A general female homicide figure provides no credible conversion factor for honor killings.

The verified broad-marker count is five of forty, but the logical upper limit is twelve if all seven unresolved sources qualify. For fatal cases, the corresponding bounds are three and ten. These intervals do not describe sampling uncertainty, nor do they imply that any unresolved source actually meets the rule. They expose the effect of incomplete verification on the comparison. Reporting one percentage would conceal how strongly the apparent availability of honor-related data depends on the source search. The lower bounds remain observed classifications. The upper bounds remain conditional possibilities rather than additional empirical findings.

Identification of an honor-related motive may depend on family testimony, the victim's circumstances, investigative progress, and the standard of evidence applied. Kadir (2026f) describes how judgments resolve disputed accounts at a later and more selective stage than initial police classification. These processes can determine which killings acquire an official honor-related label. The reviewed records cannot establish which pathway is most influential in any country. A public motive field is meaningful only if the process by which cases enter the table is understood. In particular,

unresolved cases may receive less contextual attention than files that eventually reach court, even if the fatal event was recorded reliably. Missing witnesses or contested accounts can leave the motive unclassified.

Table 7 Threshold-specific identification and logical uncertainty bounds

Threshold	Observed screened sources	Interpretation
Any official honor-related public marker	5 confirmed, 12 maximum if seven unknown sources qualify	Broad marker does not identify a victim of fatal violence
Honor-labelled fatal file or case measure	3 confirmed, 10 logical maximum	Pakistan and India record cases, Dutch records specialist files
Strict registered fatal case without Dutch specialist files	2 confirmed, 9 logical maximum	Sensitivity to administrative population and verification threshold
Complete national honor-fatal victim series verified	0 confirmed, 7 logical maximum	No inspected source satisfied all criteria for 2020–2025
Unresolved sources	7 of 40	Unknown status retained and never assigned a national zero

Why Homicide Rates cannot Fix Missing Motives

A homicide rate cannot be turned into an honor-killing rate merely by choosing a plausible proportion. The missing quantity is the number of fatal events whose motive is established under a comparable coding rule. A country with abundant sex-disaggregated homicide data may still lack this numerator. Kadir (2026e) documents the geographic distribution of recorded homicide in Indonesia, while Kadir (2026i) examines social relationships and legal categories. Those distinctions are valuable for describing lethal violence but cannot retrospectively infer honor motive from an aggregated murder count.

A specialist referral is not a fatal event, even if the same agency also handles homicide investigations. The numerator for a homicide rate consists of deaths within a defined population and period, while a rate for honor-related killing additionally requires a consistent motive rule. Better population denominators cannot correct a numerator assembled from nonfatal offences or mixed administrative cases. Rogers and Pridemore (2023) show how recording choices affect comparative homicide inference. For honor killing, the mismatch occurs before the rate is calculated. The records must first identify the relevant fatal victims, not merely a category whose name suggests that those victims may be included.

Italy's victim–offender relationship data permit questions about familial homicide but do not establish which killings involved a suspected honor motive. Reliable national homicide statistics may omit a variable needed for another research question, a problem in comparative measurement (Rogers & Pridemore, 2023). The problem is not statistical noise that can be smoothed by a larger sample. It is a mismatch between the available field and the concept being studied. Comparisons based on sex, relationship, or the method of killing could therefore classify victims accurately on those dimensions while still assigning the wrong motive. A national honor-killing rate would remain unidentified.

Reported honor-related case counts can change after police training, changes in coding rules, or the reopening of earlier files. The social incidence of violence might remain unchanged through any of those administrative shifts. Aksoy and Szekely (2025) examine the social conditions associated with honor killing, but those mechanisms cannot be inferred from changes in a publication alone. A reported zero requires a stated inclusion rule and a defined observation period. A table with no motive field is different, while privacy suppression creates another outcome. Treating these three situations as interchangeable would distort both temporal trends and cross-national comparisons.

A reported zero means no event satisfied a stated rule within a specified population and period. An absent field offers no such observation. A suppressed small cell may reflect confidentiality rather

than a zero, while its exact value remains undisclosed. These distinctions should remain visible in research datasets instead of being replaced by an unqualified zero or a generic missing value. Associating unclassified records with national culture or religion would be particularly hazardous before the reporting process is established. If additional training makes police better at recognizing honor-related motives, reported counts may rise without a corresponding increase in lethal violence.

The Home Office openly reports changes in how police identify and tag honor-based abuse. The metropolitan recording-system change in February 2024 is especially important because it can raise the observed number of tagged offences without a matching change in victimization. A rise from 2,949 to 3,145 offences between the latest two reporting years cannot support a claim that honor killings increased. Those offences include nonfatal abuse, and the recording mechanism changed. Confusing better recognition with growing incidence would turn an administrative improvement into an apparent crime trend.

The ICCS framework supports standardized classification of intentional homicide, but it cannot guarantee that a national statistical release retains alleged honor-related motives. A country's homicide rate may have a reliable population denominator and a consistently defined total. Neither feature identifies the subset associated with family reputation. A female homicide rate multiplied by an assumed honor-related share would merely substitute a conjecture for an unobserved numerator. Case-level evidence and a transparent motive rule are necessary before the subset can be estimated. Standardization of the parent category is useful, though it does not resolve the separate problem of identifying its motive-specific component.

The alternative of counting only prosecuted honor killings would not solve the measurement problem. Those cases depend on criminal justice selection, evidentiary sufficiency, prosecutorial decisions, and the availability of a charge or sentencing identifier. A sentencing database may produce more detailed motive narratives than police statistics yet contain only cases reaching a certain stage. Combining these two populations demands explicit linkage and source-specific coverage rules. The same restraint applies to using news reports. Such reports can support qualitative case discovery, but media attention varies across regions and cases. Without a transparent ascertainment protocol, a media-derived count cannot silently substitute for a national administrative numerator.

Building an Honor-Sensitive Homicide Statistical System

Victims are the appropriate primary counting unit for an annual honor-related homicide measure. Information about suspected motive should be linked to the death and identify the stage at which investigators assessed the evidence. A case can remain marked as suspected without being presented as a judicially established finding. Retaining that distinction would allow agencies to report uncertainty rather than forcing an unsupported yes or no classification. A separate murder offence is not necessary for preserving the information. Administrative systems can attach contextual markers to ordinary homicide records and publish carefully aggregated data, provided that the inclusion rules are documented.

A linked motive field would allow public homicide statistics to distinguish suspected, substantiated, rejected, and unknown honor-related circumstances. Annual tables should state whether they count victims or cases and identify both the year of death and the year in which a file was reviewed. The Dutch records reveal the consequences of combining historical deaths with a current-year specialist workload. Small fatality counts also create risks of identification, especially in closely connected communities. Disclosure limits and aggregation can protect individuals without treating suppressed information as a true zero. Statistical transparency does not require the publication of identifiable case histories.

An honor-related motive field should identify who assigned the label and at what point in the investigation. A police marker entered after an initial report can support risk assessment without satisfying the standard applied later by a court. Both classifications may be valid if their evidentiary status is retained. Statistical agencies should also record revisions after a file is reopened. Otherwise a later change in the published count may reflect reclassification rather than a new killing. Data revisions should be linked to the original reference year instead of appearing as fresh events. Public releases need not disclose identifiable case histories, but they can explain how the classification changed. EIGE (2021b) and UN Women–UNODC (2022) provide related guidance on gender-related killings, although the honor-related motive requires its own operational rule.

Pakistan, India, and the Netherlands make honor-related fatal cases visible through different institutional routes. The Pakistani and Indian series use registered cases, whereas the Dutch information comes from specialist files, including historical deaths. England and Wales captures a larger population of honor-related offences that cannot be treated as fatal cases. Across the other inspected sources, general homicide information is easier to find than a comparable motive-specific victim series. The seven unresolved records limit how far even that availability comparison can be extended. A national rate remains out of reach where the recorded unit, coverage, or reference period differs from the intended fatal victim measure.

Femicide reporting frameworks already recognize the need for documented classification rules and information about victims. The European Institute for Gender Equality (2021b) and UN Women and UNODC (2022) provide relevant examples. Honor-related killing introduces a further uncertainty because the alleged motive may change status as the investigation progresses. A single yes-or-no category would obscure whether the assertion was suspected, supported, rejected, or left unresolved. Retaining those statuses would allow statistical reporting without treating an early police assessment as a judicial finding. The same approach would reduce pressure to present contested motive labels as undisputed facts.

A victim identifier should remain linked to the event and to the administrative record containing the alleged motive. Subsequent police assessments or judicial findings could update the evidentiary status without creating a fictitious new death. The date of the killing must remain distinct from the date on which an honor-related motive was identified and from the year of publication. Relationships and victim characteristics would provide useful context but should not replace the motive field. Aggregated releases could then report categories of evidentiary status while withholding personally identifiable details. Such linking would improve the interpretation of trends without requiring the disclosure of private case histories.

Table 8 Minimum reportable data standard for honor-sensitive homicide monitoring

Data field	Minimum reporting rule	Measurement value
Victim and event IDs	Store linked pseudonymous unique identifiers	Prevents cases being treated as persons
Fatal outcome	Identify completed homicide separately from attempts	Protects numerator specificity
Honor motive flag	Indicate suspected, confirmed, rejected, or unknown	Prevents inference from silence
Victim relationship	Publish relationship separately from motive	Keeps relational and motivational constructs distinct
Dates	Keep event, death, referral, and publication years	Allows historical cold-case correction
Source and coverage	Document police or specialist selection frame	Limits unjustified generalization
Public disclosure	Publish a de-identified annual victim total and metadata	Enables comparable audit

An honor-related label may originate in an offender's account, an investigator's inference, or a later court finding. Relatives may reject the explanation altogether. More than one motive can also be relevant to a single death. A statistical system that permits multiple contextual fields would preserve these possibilities better than mutually exclusive categories of domestic violence, femicide, and honor killing. Kadir (2026j) examines problems arising from the judicial classification of honor killing and intimate-partner femicide. Clear metadata about the source and evidentiary status of a motive would allow public statistics to retain uncertainty without presenting an administrative label as a settled cultural explanation.

No defensible ranking of national honor-killing risk can be calculated from the different counts of offences, cases, specialist files, and homicide victims examined here. Their populations diverge before differences in the incidence of lethal violence can be assessed. A higher count may reflect wider police recognition, an earlier reporting stage, or greater coverage rather than higher underlying risk.

The available sources do not isolate those explanations. Comparative work on honor norms would consequently inherit measurement bias if it treated published figures as equivalent national fatality rates. The proposed comparison is meaningful only after the fatal victim unit and motive rules have been made consistent.

CONCLUSION

Public identification of honor-related homicide differed sharply among the forty selected source regimes. Pakistan and India published categories of honor-related fatal cases, while a Dutch specialist unit reported selected homicide or manslaughter files, including deaths from earlier years. England and Wales used a broader honor-based abuse identifier. Several other jurisdictions published detailed homicide information without a separately verified honor-related fatal victim count in the inspected release. Seven source routes could not be assigned a stronger classification. These findings concern publicly accessible statistical evidence rather than the presence or absence of internal police records. Different counting units and reporting periods prevent the observed cases, offences, referrals, and victims from being combined into comparable national rates.

Honor-related killings may remain within homicide totals after the evidence of motive becomes inaccessible in public statistics. Differences in event dates, administrative review years, and family-homicide categories can make apparently comparable records misleading. Published statistics need a traceable link between each fatal event, the unit counted, and the evidentiary status of an alleged honor-related motive. Without those fields, the visibility of honor killing is limited even where deaths are reliably counted. The forty-source comparison identifies where such information can be recovered from selected official releases. It does not establish that an unreported category is absent from national crime records, and the unresolved observations cannot legitimately be represented as zero.

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