

The epidemiology of intimate partner homicide in the Netherlands, 2009-2014



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Abstract

The aim of this research is to show the results related to case, perpetrator, and victim characteristics of 168 intimate partner homicide cases in the Netherlands between 2009 and 2014. The data for this study were extracted from newspaper articles, court rulings, and court records. Within the cases, 145 perpetrators were male and 23 perpetrators were female. The average age of the principal victims was 41.7 years, the principal perpetrators were on average 42.9 years old. The most common crime scene is the private home of the victim and/or the perpetrator (N = 142). Most victims were still in a relationship with the perpetrator, a third of the couples was separated at the time of the homicide. For most perpetrators the main motive to commit intimate partner homicide was 'separation'.

1. Introduction

Annually 47 people were murdered by their intimate partner in The Netherlands between 1992 and 2001. In that same period approximately 250 people were murdered each year, which means that one in five murder victims was killed by their partner or former partner (Nieuwbeerta & Leistra, 2007). Globally one in seven homicides and one third of female homicides are committed by an intimate partner, often the homicide is the culmination of intimate partner violence (Stöckl et al., 2013; Devries et al., 2013). Intimate partner homicide is a serious public health issue that needs more attention, because intimate partner homicide does not only take the victim's life but it has an enormous effect on the victim's children, other relatives, and friends (Lewandowski et al., 2004; Devries et al., 2013; UNODC, 2013).

In this research the definition from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention National Center for Injury Prevention and Control is used to classify an intimate partner. An intimate partner is "a person with whom one has a close personal relationship that may be characterized by the partners' emotional connectedness, regular contact, ongoing physical contact and sexual behavior, identity as a couple, and familiarity and knowledge about each other's lives" (Breiding et al., 2015:11). Intimate partner relationship are current or former: spouses, boyfriends/girlfriends, dating partners, or ongoing sexual partners (Breiding et al., 2015).

Intimate partner homicide can be categorized in intimate partner homicide, intimate partner homicide-suicide, and familicide. Intimate partner homicide-suicide occurs when the perpetrators kill themselves after they commit murder on their intimate partner (Banks et al., 2008). Familicide is when a culprit not only kills his intimate partner, but his child or children also (Liem & Koenraadt, 2008).

The Netherlands has overall reliable data on the number of intimate partner homicides, but in recent data information on victim-offender relationship is missing (Liem et al., 2013). There is no research on

epidemiological characteristics of intimate partner homicide in the Netherlands in recent years. Not only the nature and scope of intimate partner homicide after 2006 is understudied, but the trend in intimate partner homicide is unclear as well.

Intimate partner homicide is a paradoxical crime; how can one kill the person he or she is supposed to love the most. Intimate partner killing is a violation of human rights and a public health issue. Creating more insight in characteristics of both victims and perpetrators can help policymakers create policies which may help to prevent intimate partner homicide in the future. This research is conducted in the context of the capstone 'Intimate Partner Homicide'. To address the existing research gaps, this article aims to examine the epidemiology of intimate partner homicide, by comparing victim, offence and perpetrator characteristics in the Netherlands, in the period 2009-2014. By looking into existing research in the United States, Western European countries, and the Netherlands an overview of the epidemiology throughout the western world is created. In the discussion of this thesis this previous research will be compared to the collected data.

The main research question of this thesis is: *What is the epidemiology of intimate partner homicide in the Netherlands, in the period 2009-2014?*

2. Previous research

Prevalence

Intimate partner homicide is not an unique phenomenon, it is a global issue. Intimate partner homicide rates in countries in the Western world will give an impression of the scope of the problem. In eighteen high-income countries, that includes European countries, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States, the overall prevalence of intimate partner homicides is 19.42% of all male and female homicides (Stöckl et al., 2013).

It is important to realize that it is difficult to make a statement on the prevalence of intimate partner homicide, because the number of intimate partner homicides in all countries could be higher due to the fact that the murders that have not been solved were not included in the data (Smith et al., 2014; Corradi & Stöckl, 2014). Another possibility could be that it was not possible to classify the murders, because information on the victim-offender relationship was not present (Ganpat et al., 2011; Bundeskriminalamt, 2013). However, there will be an attempt to give an overview of the prevalence of intimate partner homicide in several Western countries.

In the United Kingdom each year on average 0.22 people per 100,000 inhabitants were victims of intimate partner homicide between 2000 and 2011 (Corradi & Stöckl, 2014). This is almost similar to Sweden in the period from 2003 to 2006, where 0.25 people per 100,000 inhabitants were the victim

of homicide committed by their intimate partners (Liem et al, 2013; Corradi & Stöckl, 2014). In 2013 every two days someone committed partner homicide in France, 0.28 people per 100,000 inhabitants were murdered by an intimate partner (UNODC Statistics, 2015; Corradi & Stöckl, 2014). In Germany the number of victims of partner killings was a bit lower, 0.16 people per 100,000 inhabitants were murdered by an intimate partner in 2012 (Corradi & Stöckl, 2014). Similar numbers were found in Spain in 2012, 0.18 people per 100,000 citizens were killed by their intimate partner (Ministerio de Sanidad, 2013; Torrubiano-Domínguez et al., 2015; UNODC Statistics, 2015). Much higher was the victimization rate in Finland between 2003 and 2009, an average of 0.53 people per 100,000 inhabitants were the victim of intimate partner homicide every year (Kivivuori & Lehti, 2012; UNODC Statistics, 2015; Statistics Finland, 2010). In Italy each year 0.12 people per 100,000 inhabitants were a victim of intimate partner homicide between 2000 and 2005 (UNODC Statistics, 2015; Corradi & Stöckl, 2014). In the Netherlands the average intimate partner victimization rate was 0.26 people per 100,000 inhabitants between 2002 and 2004 (Smit & Nieuwbeerta, 2007).

Different quantities are to be found in the United States, according to the US Bureau of Justice Statistics 45% of female homicides and 5% of male homicides are intimate partner homicides (Stöckl et al., 2013). In 2007 0.79 people per 100,000 inhabitants became a victim of their intimate partner in the United States (Smith et al., 2014).

Case, perpetrator, and victim characteristics of intimate partner homicide

Gender

Previous research showed that women are more likely to be the victim of intimate partner homicide than in any other homicide. And the probability of a female perpetrator is bigger in an intimate partner homicide than in any other type of homicide (Reckdenwald & Parker, 2010; Jordan et al., 2012; Campbell et al. 2007). Smith et al. (2014) showed in their research in 16 states in the United States that between 2003 and 2009 two third of all intimate partner homicide victims were female. That result is corroborated by multiple other researches in the United States (Block & Christakos, 1995; DeJong, Pizarro & McGarrell, 2011; Shackelford, 2001; Gauthier & Bankston, 1997; Sabri et al., 2016). Wilson & Daly (1992) found that in the United States for every 100 married men who kill their wives, about 75 married women kill their spouse between 1965 and 1989. This spousal homicide rate is more than twice the ratio of other Western countries (Aldridge & Browne, 2003; Wilson & Daly, 1992). The pattern that women are at greater risk to be killed by an intimate partner or former partner than men is consistent across time and countries. (Dobash et al, 2004; Torrubiano-Domínguez, 2015; Kivivuori & Lehti, 2012; Leth, 2009; Oram, 2013). In the Netherlands research showed the same results, women are mainly involved in domestic homicides, especially as a victim. And most perpetrators of intimate

partner homicides are male (Nieuwbeerta & Leistra; 2007, Alisic, 2015; De Boer, 1990; Smit & Nieuwbeerta, 2007).

Age

According to a study of DeJong, Pizarro & McGarrell (2011) intimate partner murders in the United States are generally older than perpetrators of non-intimate partner homicide. Garcia et al. (2007) found in a literature review that the average age for female victims of intimate partner homicide in the United States is between 30 and 40 years old, male victims are between 40 and 50 years old. Smith et al. (2014) established that the mean age of all victims of intimate partner homicide was 38.5 years in the United States between 2003 and 2009 (Campbell et al., 2007; Banks et al., 2008; Sabri et al., 2016). Couples with a large age difference have a higher risk for intimate partner homicide and the perpetrator was usually older than the victim (Garcia et al., 2007; Banks, 2008). Men over 40 years old have a higher risk of becoming a perpetrator of intimate partner homicide (Shackelford & Mouzos, 2005; Sabri et al., 2016). Research showed that between 1974 and 1990 an age difference of 10 years or more between intimate partners was a risk factor for all victims of intimate partner homicide in Canada (Aldridge & Browne, 2003; Wilson, Daly & Wright, 1993).

European research demonstrated the same results, the mean age of offenders was about 40 years (Leth, 2009; Oram et al., 2013; Weizmann-Henelius, 2012). Leth (2009) showed an average age of 44.2 years old for victims in Southern Denmark between 1983 and 2007. Israeli research showed different results, the mean age of perpetrators was 36 years old and their victims were on average 34 years old. (Elisha et al., 2010). In the Netherlands Nieuwbeerta and Leistra (2007) also found different results, half of the perpetrators and victims of intimate partner homicide committed between 1992 and 2001 were part of the age group 26 to 40 and the average age for both groups was 35 years old (Smit & Nieuwbeerta, 2007).

Relationship

Findings of U.S. nationwide research between 1976 and 1994 showed that women in cohabiting relationships were nine time more likely to be killed by their intimate partner than married women. Within marriages the risk of intimate partner homicide decreases with the female victim's age (Shackelford, 2001). Cohabiting women and women going through a separation have higher rates of intimate partner homicide than married, already divorced, or dating couples in the United States (Campbell et al., 2007; Reckdenwald & Parker, 2010; Rodriguez & Henderson, 1995; Jordan et al., 2012; Garcia et al., 2007). This was contradicted by Jordan et al. (2012), female perpetrators were more likely to kill a spouse and male perpetrators were more likely to kill a former partner. Block & Christakos (1995) found in their research in Chicago that between 1965 and 1990 female victims were more likely

to be killed by a spouse or estranged partner. Male victims were more likely to be killed in a domestic gay relationship.

The same increased risks for cohabiting women was found in research in Canada between 1974 and 1990 and in Australia between 1989 and 2002 (Wilson et al., 1993; Wilson et al., 1995; Shackelford & Mouzos, 2005). Dobash et al. (2004) found that offenders in the United Kingdom between 1967 and 2000 were more likely to have intimate relationships that had broken down than perpetrators of non-intimate relationship homicides. Oram et al. (2013) concluded that two third of all perpetrators of intimate partner homicide in the United Kingdom between 1997 and 2008 were married. In a small scale research in Israel the same conclusions were drawn, nine perpetrators were married, followed by seven perpetrators going through divorce or already divorced, and four offenders lived together before the homicide (Elisha et al., 2010). Current Dutch research did not address the details of the relationship between victims and perpetrators of intimate partner homicide.

Motive

Male perpetrators of intimate partner homicide in the United States often have mental health problems and the motivation to kill an intimate partner is not for practical but for emotional reasons (Thomas et al., 2011). Jealousy, refusal, and infidelity of the partner are motives for men to kill their partners, but the most common motive for male perpetrators is separation (Campbell et al., 2007; Garcia et al., 2007; Block & Christakos, 1995; Wilson & Daly, 1992; Kivisto, 2015). Block and Christakos (1995) found that male perpetrators in Chicago between 1965 and 1993 were more likely than female perpetrators to murder a partner who threatened or attempted to leave the relationship. Female perpetrators in the United States kill their partners in self-defense or after years of abuse (Hattendorf et al., 1999; Gauthier & Bankston, 1997; Swatt & He, 2006; Reckdenwald & Parker, 2010; Campbell et al., 2007). Female perpetrators often feel trapped in the relationship and fear for their lives (Wilson & Daly, 1992).

Israeli research by Goussinsky and Yassour-Borochowitz (2012) came to the same conclusion when it comes to male perpetrators, they commit intimate partner homicide because they are jealous or do not want to separate from their partner (Elisha et al., 2010). The same result is found in research in the United Kingdom and in Western Norway (Dobash et al, 2004; Aldridge & Browne, 2003; Kristoffersen, 2014). Other studies showed that females in Western Norway mainly kill their partners to stop violent abuse (Kristoffersen, 2014). Weizmann-Henelius et al. (2012) found that in Finland between 1995 and 2004 quarrels increased the risk for intimate partner homicide in both genders and self-defense increased the risk for female offenders and decreased the risk among male offenders. They found that revenge decreased the likelihood for partner homicide for both genders. In the

Netherlands De Boer (1990) makes a distinction between four possible motives for intimate partner homicide: separation, convenience, result of physical abuse, or mental health problems.

Modus operandi

Firearms are the most used weapons in intimate partner homicide in the United States between 2003 and 2009 (Smith et al., 2014). These results can be found in different researches all over the United States and throughout different times (Banks et al., 2008; Campbell et al., 2007; Garcia et al., 2007; Jordan et al., 2012; Wilson & Daly, 1992). Block & Christakos found that the use of a knife in intimate partner homicides was most common in Chicago between 1965 and 1993, but firearms were used almost as many times as knives, DeJong et al. (2011) found the same results in their research in Newark, New Jersey. Sharp instruments are the second most used modus operandi, followed by hanging, strangulation, or suffocation. Roberts (2009) stated that female victims are twice as likely to be killed with a firearm than from strangulation, with a sharp instrument, or by any other method. But female perpetrators mostly kill their intimate partners with a knife (Swatt & He, 2006).

In England and Wales the most used modus operandi was a knife or strangulation (Aldridge & Browne, 2003; Dobash et al., 2004). Leths (2009) findings in Southern Denmark between 1983 and 2007 were that most offenders did not use a weapon, 28 percent of the offenders used a knife, and 18 percent used a firearm. In the Netherlands most perpetrators used a sharp object or strangulation to commit intimate partner homicide, a firearm was involved in one-quarter of all cases (Alisic et al., 2014; Nieuwbeerta & Leistra, 2003; Smit & Nieuwbeerta, 2007; Ganpat & Liem, 2012).

Alcohol and drugs

Substance abuse is an important risk factor for intimate partner homicide in the United States, both male and female offenders were reported to have problems with alcohol and drugs use (Jordan et al., 2012;) Banks et al. (2008) reported that one third of the victims of intimate partner homicide had consumed alcohol before the homicide. Almost half of the perpetrators of intimate partner homicide that committed suicide after the homicide had alcohol present in their blood. Garcia et al (2007) stated that men who were under the influence of alcohol were more likely to be violent toward their partners. Sharps et al. (2001) found that one fifth of the female victims of intimate partner homicide were under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or both when the homicide was committed. Seventy percent of the male perpetrators consumed alcohol, drugs, or both, prior to the crime. Campbell et al. (2007) found that drug use was a good predictor of intimate partner homicide in the United States.

In the United Kingdom Dobash et al. (2004) found that twenty percent of the perpetrators was drunk during the crime and ten percent of the victims was drunk at the time of the murder. A smaller part of

the offenders, eight percent, used illegal drugs at the time of the intimate partner homicide. Finnish research showed that 77 percent of male offenders and 81 percent of female offender of intimate partner homicide was intoxicated by alcohol and/or drugs during the offence. 62 percent of the victims of male offenders and 77 percent of the victims of female offenders was under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs during the homicide (Kivivuori & Lehti, 2012). Leth (2009) showed that fifty percent of the victims of intimate partner homicide in Southern Denmark had a chronic alcohol or drugs abuse problem. No research has been conducted to the alcohol and/ or drugs use and abuse of perpetrators and victims of intimate partner homicide in the Netherlands.

Homicide/suicide

Of all homicides followed by suicide in the United States, the majority is intimate partner homicide followed by suicide (Banks et al., 2008; Campanelli & Gilson, 2002; Hannah et al., 1998; Comstock et al., 2005; Campbell, et al. 2007; Biroscak et al., 2006). Multiple studies in the United states showed that depression is the most important reason for perpetrators to commit partner homicide-suicide (Roma et al., 2012; Campbell et al., 2003). Other motivations were separation, financial issues, health issues, or the believe that the victim cannot survive without the perpetrator (Salari, 2007). Intimate partner homicide-suicides occur more often among older couples and are more likely to involve firearms than other weapons (Banks, 2008; Bossarte et al., 2006; Malphurs & Cohen, 2002; Campbell et al., 2007; Barber et al., 2008).

Canadian research in Ontario between 1974 and 1994 showed that in 509 intimate femicide-suicides 57 percent of the victims and perpetrators were legally married (Dawson, 2005; Eke et al., 2011). Research in Australia found the same results for homicide-suicides committed between 1985 and 1989, most homicide-suicides were committed by the husband (Milroy et al., 1995). Weizmann-Henelius et al. (2012) only included suicide-homicide attempts in their research and their outcome was that 14 percent of male perpetrators of intimate partner homicide tried to commit suicide.

Liem and Koenraadt (2007) conducted a study on homicide followed by suicide in the period 1992-2005 in the Netherlands. They found that the majority of the homicide-suicide cases were intimate partner homicide-suicides motivated by amorous jealousy and the perpetrators were almost exclusively male. Liem and Roberts (2009) showed that men who attempted to commit suicide after committing intimate partner homicide, often deal with depression and had threatened to commit suicide prior to the crime. Their main motivation for the homicide-suicide was dependency on the victim and fear of abandonment.

Although there is a great amount of existing literature on intimate partner homicide explores gender, age, and relationship between victim and perpetrator, motive, modus operandi, substance abuse, and

homicide followed by suicide, there is no systematic research into the intimate partner homicide phenomenon in the Netherlands. In this study the epidemiology of intimate partner homicide in The Netherlands between 2009 and 2014 will be examined.

Table 1. Previous research Intimate Partner Homicide

Author(s)	Region	Period	Type data	N	Focus of research	Main findings
Banks, Crandall, Sklar & Bauer (2008)	New Mexico, USA	1993 – 2002	Case reports from the Office of the Medical Investigator for all females who died of homicide	124	Intimate partner homicide–suicide	Characteristics of intimate partner homicide–suicide differ from characteristics of intimate partner homicide alone; the age of the victim and perpetrator and the use of a firearm.
Block & Christakos (1995)	Chicago (Illinois), USA	1965 – 1993	The Chicago Homicide Dataset	2,556	Frequency and characteristics	African American men and women are most at risk of becoming a perpetrator or victim. Women are more likely to be the offender when alcohol is involved and in cases in which the weapon is a knife. The number of IPH is declining in Chicago.
Campbell et al. (2003)	11 cities, USA	1994 -2000	Police or medical examiner records	220	Frequency and characteristics	Risk factors for intimate partner femicide are perpetrator’s access to a gun and previous threat with a weapon, perpetrator’s stepchild in the home, and estrangement, especially from a controlling partner. Not living together and prior domestic violence arrest were associated with lowered risks. Gun use by the perpetrator and separation were significant incident factors.
Cheng & Horon (2010)	Maryland, USA	1993 – 2008	Death certificates, live birth and fetal death records, and review of medical examiner records	110	Characteristics of pregnancy-associated homicides	The majority of pregnancy-associated homicides were committed by current or former intimate partners, mainly during the first 3 months of pregnancy.
DeJong, Pizarro & McGarrell (2011)	Indianapolis (Indiana) & Newark (New Jersey), USA	1997 – 2005	Investigation files collected from the Newark Police Department (1997-2005) and the Indianapolis Police Department (1997-2001)	739	Frequency and characteristics	Intimate partner homicides are more likely to involve females both as victims and offenders when compared to non-IPH incidents. IPH homicides are more likely to be committed with weapons than non-IPH, but this finding only appears in Indianapolis homicides.
Dobash, Dobash, Cavanagh & Lewis (2004)	United Kingdom	1967 – 2000	UK Homicide Indexes, case files of murders, and qualitative interviews with imprisoned murderers	530	Frequency and characteristics	The characteristics of childhood and adulthood of the intimate partner murder group differs from the other homicide group and appears to be more “conventional.” The men in the intimate partner homicide group are more likely to have intimate relationships that had broken down, to have used violence against a female partner, and to “specialize” in violence against women.
Eke, Hilton, Harris, Rice & Houghton (2011)	Ontario, Canada	1997 – 1998	Violent Crime Linkage Analysis System (ViCLAS)	146	Characteristics of male perpetrators	42% of the perpetrators had prior criminal charges, 15% had a psychiatric history, and 18% had both.
Elisha, Idisis, Timor & Addad (2010)	Israel	1994 – 2005	In-depth interviews with inmates from Ayalon prison	15	Characteristics of male perpetrators	Three primary types of female intimate partner murderers are: the betrayed, the abandoned, and the tyrant.
Gallup-Black (2005)	United States of America	1980 – 1999	FBI Supplementary Homicide Report (SHR) public use data & U.S. Census	?	Rural and urban trends	Rates of family and intimate partner murder increased with rurality. Family and intimate partner murders were affected by population and proximity to a metropolitan area.

Table 1. Previous research Intimate Partner Homicide (continued)

Author(s)	Region	Period	Type data	N	Focus of research	Main findings
Jordan, Clark, Pritchard & Charnigo (2012)	United States of America	1990 – 2004	Institutional records	379	Characteristics of female perpetrators	Female perpetrators can have different reasons for violence and incarceration, not just the “ideal type” of battered woman who is an otherwise innocent passive abuse victim.
Kivivuori & Lehti (2012)	Finland	2002 – 2010	Finnish Homicide Monitoring System	836	Frequency and characteristics	Socially disadvantaged people are overrepresented in IPH as in other homicide types.
Leth (2009)	Southern Denmark	1983 – 2007	Danish Cause of Death Register and the archives at the Institute of Forensic Medicine at the University of Southern Denmark	137	Frequency and characteristics	Victims of intimate partner homicides are primarily women, often from socially disadvantaged families, the homicides are the result of an impulsive act, with the perpetrator often committing suicide.
Liem & Koenraadt (2007)	The Netherlands	1992 – 2005	National and regional newspapers	95	Frequency and characteristics homicide-suicide	Spousal homicide-suicide was predominant, followed by children homicide-suicide and familicide-suicide. The perpetrators across all categories of homicide-suicide were predominantly male; the victims were predominantly women and children.
Liem & Roberts (2009)	The Netherlands	1980 – 2006	Clinical records of forensic psychiatric hospital, the Pieter Baan Centre	341	Frequency and characteristics homicide-suicide	Perpetrators that attempted suicide were more likely to have a depression and to have threatened with suicide. Perpetrators in this group showed evidence of dependency on the victim and a fear of abandonment.
Nieuwbeerta & Leistra (2007)	The Netherlands	1992 - 2001	Database ‘Moord en doodslag 1992–2001’	2,389	Frequency and characteristics	The characteristics of all perpetrators and victims of 2,549 cases of homicide in the Netherlands between 1992 – 2001 were described in this research.
Oram, Flynn, Shaw, Appleby & Howard (2013)	England and Wales	1997 – 2008	United Kingdom Home Office, the Police National Computer, psychiatric court reports, and, for psychiatric patients, questionnaires completed by supervising clinicians	1,180	Frequency and characteristics	A minority of domestic homicide perpetrators had symptoms of mental illness at the time of the homicide. Most perpetrators, including those with mental illnesses, were not in contact with mental health services in the year before the offense.
Reckdenwald & Parker (2010)	United States of America	2000	Supplemental Homicide Files, Uniform Crime Reports, and Domestic Violence Service Directory	178	Frequency and characteristics	The factors that influence the incidences of intimate partner homicide differ for males and females. An increase in the number of legal services per 100,000 females is related to a decrease in male-victim intimate partner homicide as well as female-victim intimate partner homicide in 2000.
Roberts (2009)	United States of America	1985 – 2004	FBI Supplementary Homicide Report, Alcohol Epidemiologic Data System, and state-level firearm ownership rates	?	Frequency and characteristics	Alcohol consumption and firearm ownership increase both the incidence rates of IPH and IPH by firearm. Highly restrictive firearm carry laws also increase the incidence of IPH.

Table 1. Previous research Intimate Partner Homicide (continued)

Author(s)	Region	Period	Type data	N	Focus of research	Main findings
Sabri, Campbell & Dabby (2016)	United States of America	2000 – 2005	Newspaper articles collected by Asian & Pacific Islander Institute on Domestic Violence	125	Frequency and characteristics	Men were the perpetrators in 9 out of 10 cases of Asian IPHs. Gender differences were found in ages of victims and perpetrators, types of relationship between partners, and methods of killing. Most homicides occurred among Southeast Asians. East Asians had the highest proportion of suicides within the group.
Salari & LeFevre Sillito (2016)	United States of America	1999 – 2005	Newslink, a database with access to major-metro and daily newspapers and television news transcripts across the United States.	728	Frequency and characteristics homicide-suicide	In intimate partner homicide–suicide cases a known history of intimate partner violence was most common in young dyads, compared to other age groups. Suicide pacts and mercy killings are very rare. The majority of perpetrators were men who used firearms. There were differences in the primary intentions with young adults reflecting homicidal motive and elders were more often suicidal.
Shackelford (2001)	United States of America	1976 – 1994	Supplementary Homicide Reports and US Census Bureau	15,670	Frequency and characteristics	Women in cohabiting relationships are nine times more likely to be killed by their partner than women in marital relationships. Within marital relationships, the risk of IPH decreases with a woman’s age. Within cohabiting relationships, middle-aged women are at greatest risk. IPH perpetration rates are highest for young married men and for middle-aged cohabiting men. The risk of intimate partner homicide increases with greater age difference between partners.
Smith, Fowler & Niolon (2014)	16 states, USA	2003 – 2009	National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS)	3,350	Frequency and characteristics	Interaction with victims of intimate partner violence can help assess the potential for lethal danger, which may prevent intimate partner and corollary victims from harm.
Stöckl, et al. (2013)	66 countries	1990 - 2011	Databases: Medline, Global Health, Embase, Social Policy, and Web of Science	492,340	Frequency	Overall 13·5% of all homicides were committed by an intimate partner, and this proportion was six times higher for female homicides than for male homicides.
Swatt & He (2006)	Chicago (Illinois), USA	1995 – 1996	Chicago Women’s Health Risk Study, 1995 to 1998	85	Characteristics of male and female perpetrators	Females offenders were much more likely to have experienced prehomicide injury than males. Females were also more likely to use a knife than were males.
Torrubiano-Domínguez et al. (2015)	Spain	2005 - 2013	Federation of Separated and Divorced Women	515	Frequency	Intimate partner-related femicides decreased in some regions during the crisis period. The multilevel analysis does not support the existence of a significant relationship between the increase in unemployment in men and women and the decrease in IPF since the start of the economic crisis.
Weizmann-Henelius, et al. (2012)	Finland	1995 – 2004	Finnish National Authority for Medico Legal Affairs	642	Frequency and characteristics	Significant gender differences were found in four risk factors: employment, intoxication of victim, self-defense, and quarrel, mostly related to alcohol as a factor of the offense. Female IPH is linked to defensive reactions.

3. Methods

Data sources

The aim of this research is to create insight in the nature and extent of intimate partner homicide in the Netherlands in the period 2009-2014. The collection of the data for analysis required several steps.

Elsevier

Annually the magazine *Elsevier* publish an overview of the murders committed in the past year in the Netherlands, those overviews are the basis of this research. The homicide overviews are based on reports of the Dutch news agency (ANP) and provide information about perpetrator and victim characteristics, the relationship between perpetrator and victim, and about where, when, and how the homicide was committed. The cases coded as partner killing, other familial killing, sexual killing, and unknown are checked to make sure these homicides were or were not intimate partner homicides.

Media

For every intimate partner homicide additional newspaper articles were retrieved from the newspaper database LexisNexis. The keyword that are used, are the offense data, location, and the name of the victim. Not only ANP articles were used, for every case national and regional newspapers were consulted too. The newspapers and online news websites that were used in this research are, inter alia; Algemeen Dagblad, Algemeen Nederlands Persbureau, Amersfoortse Courant, at5.nl, BN/DeStem, Brabants Dagblad, dichtbij.nl, Dagblad De Limburger, Dagblad van het Noorden, De Gelderlander, De Gooi- en Eemlander, De Telegraaf, De Twentsche Courant Tubantia, De Stentor, De Volkskrant, Eindhovens Dagblad, Elsevier, Haarlems Dagblad, hartvannederland.nl, Het Parool, hvzeeland.nl, IJmuider Courant, Leeuwarder Courant, Leidsch Dagblad, Metro, Nederlands Dagblad, Noordhollands Dagblad, NRC Handelsblad, nu.nl, om.nl, Omroep Brabant, Omroep Gelderland, Omroep West, politie.nl, Provinciale Zeeuwse Courant, Reformatorisch Dagblad, rijnmond.nl, RTL Nieuws, rtdvrenthe.nl, rtvnh.nl, rtvoost.nl, rtvutrecht.nl, Soester Courant online, Spits, and Trouw. And by using online homicide list¹, we were able to add six extra cases to this research.

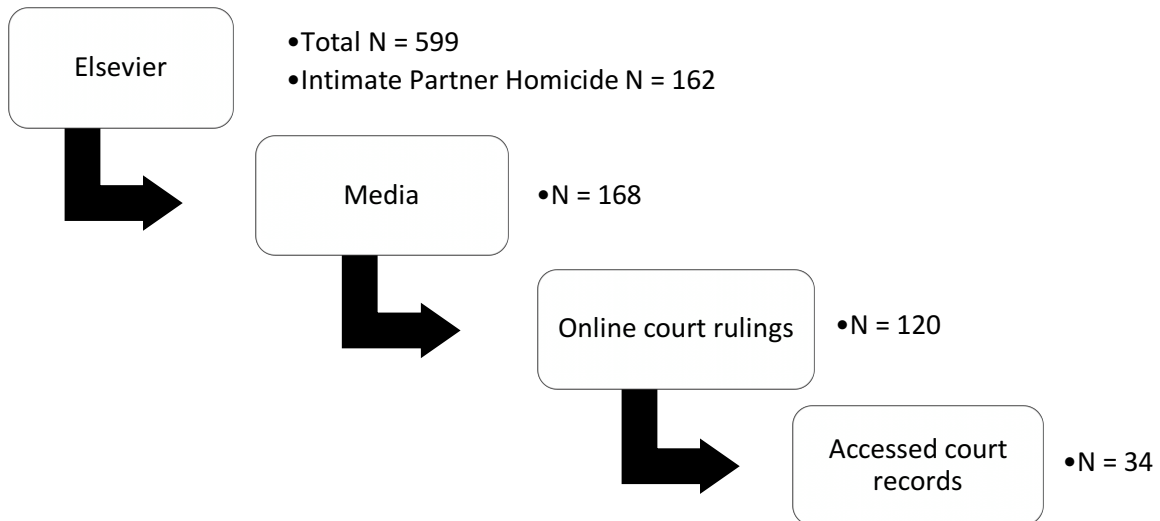
Online court ruling

The online homicide lists provided court case numbers (European Case Law Identifier-number) for the intimate partner homicide cases. With those court case numbers we could retrieve the online court

¹ Those online homicide lists are moordzaken.com and pasteurella.blogspot.com.

rulings via <http://uitspraken.rechtspraak.nl/>. An overview of the used online court rulings can be found in Appendix A.

Figure 1. Number of cases per data source



Court records

Via the thesis supervisor we obtained permission to access the confidential information at the courts. With the acquired court case numbers we accessed and inspected the court records at courts across the Netherlands. By doing so, more information on the perpetrator, victims and cases was obtained. Due to a tight thesis schedule and the labor intensiveness of the coding of the court records, not all eleven courts and the corresponding court records could be accessed. For this research the available court records of the courts of Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, North Netherlands, North Holland and East-Brabant were used. Not all requested court records were available for inspection, the reason was that the records were requested by the attorney, the suspect, or someone else, but sometimes there was no particular reason for the unavailability of the records.

Table 2. Number of accessed intimate partner homicide court records per court

Court	N
Amsterdam	2
Rotterdam	13
The Hague	1
North Netherlands	5
North Holland	1
East-Brabant	12

Inclusion criteria

The intimate partner homicides the court classified as murder (art. 289 and 291 WvS) and manslaughter (art. 287, 288 and 290 WvS) have been included in this research. The cases where the perpetrator is convicted for assault leading to death (art. 302 WvS) are not included in this research.

Cases that were included in this research are intimate partner homicide cases in which the perpetrator is prosecuted or committed suicide. When an appeal is pending to decide whether the perpetrator committed the homicide we did not include these cases in the research. When someone kills not only their partner but other people at the same time, we included the case in this research, the intimate partner is the principal victim in that case. In the event that the perpetrator ordered someone to kill the perpetrator's partner and this perpetrator is convicted for this crime, the case is used for this research, the intimate partner is the principal perpetrator in those cases.

Coding

The characteristics of the victims, offenders and cases are coded with a uniform validated European coding system, the European Homicide Monitor Guidebook (Ganpat et al., 2011). For the coding of the cases we used the court records and court rulings as the leading information source, because this source was deemed most reliable. The second most reliable source were newspaper articles, the information retrieved from newspapers was in most cases complementary. When there was no court ruling or no available court ruling, we used the information provided by newspaper articles as leading source. When there was only one article, or multiple small articles available, we only coded the information that came from a reliable source, like De Volkskrant, NOS, or NRC. When the only source was, for example, tabloid newspaper 'de Telegraaf', we did not use the information and coded the information as 'unknown'.

To determine whether the area of the crime is urban or rural, we used the criterion of 1,500 inhabitants per square kilometer in the municipality. The area where the crime is committed is urban when there are over 1,500 inhabitants per square kilometer and rural when there are less than 1,500 inhabitants (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2016a). In case of multiple modus operandi, the fatal method was coded. The methods in the coding manual are listed in the same order as they are mentioned in the International Classification of Diseases (Ganpat et al., 2011). When the fatal modus could not be determined in autopsy or we did not have sufficient information about the fatal modus operandi, we coded the method highest up on the list. For example, if the victim has been stabbed (value 8) and kicked (value 13), we chose value 8. In this research January, February, and March are coded as winter months. April, May, and June are coded as spring, July, August, and September are summer months, and October, November, and December are coded as autumn.

If the perpetrator felt like the relationship was a close personal relationship with emotional connectedness, regular contact, ongoing physical contact and sexual behavior, the case was included in this study. In one case the perpetrator thought he had a relationship with a prostitute, the feelings were not mutual, but we included the case because the perpetrator experienced the relation as an intimate partner relationship.

For the variable 'motive' we coded only one motive per case. The leading sources for finding the motive were the court records, if those records were not available we used court rulings, and the final option was information provided by newspaper articles. Court records and court rulings often only use one motive for homicide, which was coded in this research. But newspaper articles often mention multiple motives. In case of multiple motives, the newspaper articles often referred to a main motive for the homicide, that motive is used in this research.

In some homicides the perpetrator said the reason to commit homicide was because the victim was nagging, in those cases we coded this as 'triviality motive'. When the motive was anger or an escalated argument we coded 'other motive'. If the sanction for the crime was no prison sanction, but only long term psychiatric care, the motive we coded is 'mental illness/psychological disorder'. If the perpetrator felt threatened in the situation prior to the homicide, the coded motive is 'threatened'.

It must be kept in mind that it is possible that some errors may not have been detected. The data is collected from multiple sources, coded by three different researchers, and few variables, for example motive, have some room for interpretation and this can make it possible that coding of different cases may have been done slightly different. In order to prevent errors, we deliberated on how to code if one of the researchers had questions on the coding or the researchers disagreed on the coding.

4. Results

Case characteristics

Between 2009 and 2014 there were 168 intimate partner homicides in the Netherlands. On average 28 cases per year have occurred. Smit and Nieuwbeerta (2007) counted 129 intimate partner homicide cases in their research between 2002 and 2004, that is an average of 43 cases in that time period. Nieuwbeerta & Leistra (2003) found that between 1992 and 2001 474 intimate partner homicides took place, in that time period an average of 47,4 cases per year occurred.

Table 3. Intimate partner homicide in the Netherlands, 2009-2014 (N = 168)

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	Total
Cases	23	38	31	31	26	19	168
Victims	26	41	38	34	28	20	187
Male	7	9	6	8	1	5	36
Female	19	32	32	26	27	15	151
Perpetrator	27	38	31	35	28	22	181
Male	23	33	27	27	27	19	156
Female	4	5	4	8	1	3	25
Cases with one victim and one perpetrator	22	36	27	29	25	18	157
Cases with multiple victims	1	2	4	2	1	1	11
Cases with multiple perpetrators	2	0	0	2	2	1	7

In this research 46 homicides classified as murder are by the court and 82 cases are regarded manslaughter. For the remaining 40 cases it is not clear under what type of homicide they can be classified. In 118 instances the perpetrator did not commit suicide after the killing of their partner, but in 19 cases the perpetrator did a suicide attempt, and in 31 cases the homicide was followed by a successful suicide.

More than half of the intimate partner homicides were committed inside the private home of the victim and the perpetrator (N = 89). In 41 cases the homicide occurred in the private home of the victim and in 12 cases the crime scene was the private home of the perpetrator. Most partner killings occurred during the spring months (N = 49) followed by the winter months (N = 45), during summer and autumn the least partner homicides took place. More intimate partner homicides occurred in a rural area (N = 100) than in an urban area (N = 68). Most crimes have happened in the province South Holland (N = 46) followed by the province North Brabant (N = 34). In the province Drenthe only 2 cases of intimate partner homicide occurred between 2009 and 2014.

Table 4. Case characteristics intimate partner homicide in the Netherlands, 2009–2014 (N = 168)

	N	%
Crime scene		
Private home of victim and perpetrator	89	53
Private home of perpetrator	12	7
Private home of victim	41	24
Private home of other person	4	2
Hotel or motel	2	1
Park, forest or recreational area	5	3
Shop, restaurant, other place of entertainment and amusement	2	1
Street, road, public transportation or other public place	7	4
Other	6	2
Urban or rural area		
Urban	68	40
Rural	100	60
Region		
Groningen	6	4
Friesland	4	2
Drenthe	2	1
Overijssel	10	6
Gelderland	20	12
Flevoland	4	2
Utrecht	9	5
North Holland	20	12
South Holland	46	27
Zeeland	6	4
North Brabant	34	20
Limburg	7	4
Season the crime was committed		
Winter	45	27
Spring	49	29
Summer	37	22
Autumn	37	22
Did the perpetrator commit suicide?		
No	118	70
Yes	31	19
Suicide attempt only	19	11

Principal victim characteristics

The focus of this research is on the principal victims and perpetrators of intimate partner homicide. Thus, when analyzing victim characteristics only the principal victims will be taken into account.

The majority of the victims of intimate partner homicide are female, 138 female victims compared to 30 male victims. The average age of the victims of intimate partner homicide is 41.7 years old. A small part of the victims is under the age of 25 (N = 29) and only 14 victims were over 65 years old at the time of the homicide. The vast majority of the victims (N = 116) was still in a relationship with their perpetrator at the time of the homicide. One third of the victims was married to the perpetrator (N = 58) and 16 victims were divorced from their offender.

In this study there were no cases that involved a female homosexual relationship, but there were male homosexual relationships between the victim and the perpetrator (N = 7). One of those victims was married to the offender, five victims were killed by their boyfriend, and in one case the marital status was unknown.

Table 5. Principal victim characteristics intimate partner homicide in the Netherlands, 2009–2014 (N= 168)

	N	%
Gender		
Male	30	18
Female	138	82
Age		
<18	2	1
18 – 24	27	16
25 – 34	28	17
35 – 44	46	27
45 – 54	33	20
55 – 64	18	11
65+	14	8
Relationship with perpetrator		
Husband	8	5
Ex-husband	1	< 1
Boyfriend	16	10
Ex-boyfriend	4	2
Wife	50	30
Ex-wife	16	10
Girlfriend	42	25
Ex-girlfriend	29	17
Prostitute (previous or present)	1	< 1
Male partners or ex-partners of the same sex (civil status unknown)	1	< 1

Principal perpetrator characteristics

When analyzing perpetrator characteristics only the principal perpetrators of intimate partner homicide were taken into account. Men committed 145 intimate partner homicides in the Netherlands between 2009 and 2014, and only 23 women killed their partners in that period. The average age of the perpetrators of intimate partner homicide is 42.9 years old. Most offenders (N = 51) were between 45 and 54 years old and only a small group was under the age of 25 (N = 15) or older than 65 (N = 11).

Most homicide were committed while the perpetrator was not under influence of alcohol or drugs. In twenty cases in this study there were ‘sure indications’ the perpetrator consumed alcohol at the time of the homicide. In ten cases there were ‘sure indications’ the offender was under the influence of drugs while committing the homicide.

The professional status of the offenders in this study is often unknown (N = 97). It is known that 41 perpetrators did have a job at the time of the homicide, four perpetrators were enrolled in school and

five offenders were retired. Seventeen perpetrators in this study were unemployed and two were sick-listed or disabled at the time of the intimate partner homicide.

Table 6. Principal perpetrator characteristics intimate partner homicide in the Netherlands, 2009-2014 (N = 168)

	N	%
Gender		
Male	145	86
Female	23	14
Age		
<18	0	-
18 – 24	15	9
25 – 34	35	21
35 – 44	35	21
45 – 54	51	30
55 – 64	20	12
65+	11	7
Unknown, but over 15 years old	1	1
Professional status		
Working class	28	39
Intermediate	4	6
Managers and professionals	9	13
Retired	5	7
Unemployed	17	24
Sick-listed or disabled	2	3
Student	4	6
Military service	0	-
Housewife/-husband	2	3
Asylum seeker	0	-
Unknown	97	-
Under influence of alcohol at the time of the crime?		
No	108	76
Yes, some indications exist	14	10
Yes, there are sure indication	20	14
Unknown	26	-
Under influence of drugs at the time of the crime?		
No	117	84
Yes, some indications exist	13	9
Yes, there are sure indication	10	7
Unknown	28	-

The perpetrators motive to kill their intimate partner was in 54 cases unknown. In 38 cases the main motivation for the intimate partner homicide was separation. An example of such a case occurred in January 2009, a 48-year-old woman is murdered by her 48-year-old husband. A couple of months before the homicide she told her husband she wanted a divorce. In addition, she told her husband, two days before the incident, she met someone else with whom she wanted to share her life. The perpetrator could not bear the fact that his marriage was over and decided to murder his wife, the mother of his children.

In 32 cases the motive was 'other', this includes cases with an angry perpetrator, a quarrel between the victim and perpetrator, or an escalated argument. An example is a case in January 2013, in her private home a 44-year-old female is killed by her a 35-year-old boyfriend. During an argument he beats her unconscious with a pan and sets her on fire to cover his tracks.

Contrary to what one might think, in only eleven cases the motive for the partner killing was 'mental illness'. In those cases the perpetrators were found mentally ill and could not be held responsible for their actions. Those offenders were send solely to a long term psychiatric institution.

Table 7. Principal perpetrators motive and modus operandi in intimate partner homicide in the Netherlands, 2009-2014 (N = 168)

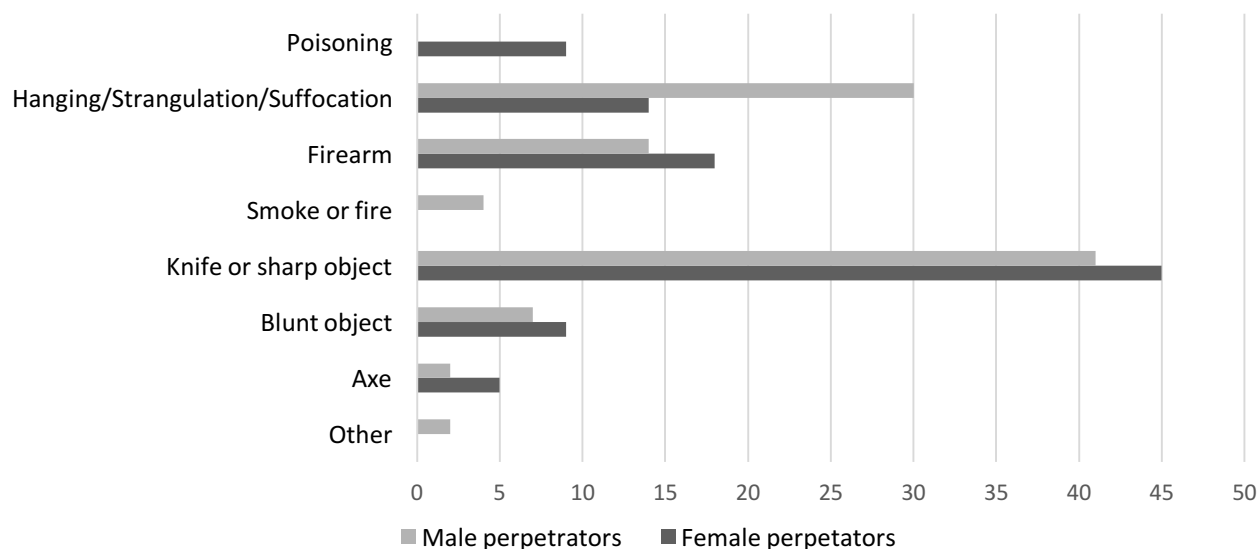
	N	%
Motive		
Revenge	6	5
Jealousy	13	11
Separation	38	33
Triviality	7	6
Threatened	5	4
Mental illness/psychological disorder	11	10
Altruism	2	2
Other motive	32	29
Motive unknown	54	-

The most used modus operandi in intimate partner homicides was a knife or other sharp object (N = 64). In 43 cases the perpetrators modus operandi was hanging, strangulation, or suffocation. Both male and female perpetrators most commonly used a knife or sharp object, men used a knife or sharp object in 54 cases and women in 10 cases.

The case of a 19-year-old female who was killed by her 24-year-old boyfriend is an example of a case with the use of a knife as modus operandi. At the police station the perpetrator turned himself in, he stated that he had murdered his girlfriend. In a quarrel the perpetrator stabbed his girlfriend and autopsy reveals that she had 85 stab wounds distributed over the abdominal area, chest, and neck.

Other modus operandi used by men were hanging, strangulation, or suffocation (N = 40) or a firearm (N = 18). Women used a firearm (N = 4), hanging, strangulation, or suffocation (N = 3), poisoning (N = 2), or a blunt object (N = 2) to murder their intimate partners. For example, in 2009 a 53-year-old female perpetrator poisoned her 60-year-old husband by putting hair restorer in his liqueur.

Figure 2. Gender perpetrators of intimate partner homicide and modus operandus in percentage, the Netherlands 2009 - 2014 (N = 168)



5. Discussion

Main findings

This study has examined 168 cases of intimate partner homicide committed between 2009 and 2014 in the Netherlands, representing approximately 28 cases per year. Collecting the data for analysis required multiple sources, i.e. the Elsevier overviews, newspaper articles, online court rulings, and court records.

The results demonstrate that in 145 cases the principal perpetrator was male, whereas women only account for 23 intimate partner homicides. The main victims were predominantly female (N = 138) and in 30 cases the main victim was male, since there were 7 male-male intimate partner homicides. These findings are consistent with results from studies conducted in the United States (Campbell et al., 2003; Smith et al., 2014; Reckdenwald & Parker, 2010) and other Western countries (Torrubiano-Domínguez, 2015; Kivivuori & Lehti, 2012; Leth, 2009). In previous Dutch research the outcomes are similar: in most cases women are the victim and men the perpetrator of intimate partner homicide (Nieuwbeerta & Leistra, 2003; Smit & Nieuwbeerta, 2007).

Furthermore, the average age of the principal victims was 41.7 years old, the principal perpetrators were on average 42.9 years old. This mean age of perpetrators corresponds with outcomes of European research (Leth, 2009; Oram et al., 2013; Weizmann-Henelius, 2012, Leth, 2009). Smith et al. (2014) found in their research in the United States a slightly lower average victims age of 38.5 years old. The outcomes of this research are consistent with the conclusions of Shackelford & Mouzos (2005): men over 40 years old have a higher risk of becoming a perpetrator of intimate partner homicide.

Previous Dutch research of Nieuwbeerta and Leistra (2007) and Smit and Nieuwbeerta (2007) showed different outcomes. The average age for both victims as perpetrators in their research was 35 years old.

Other results from this study were the findings that most intimate partner homicides occurred in the private home of the victim and/or the perpetrator. Most couples were still in a relationship; a third was still married. About 10 percent of the couples were legally divorced and 20 percent were no longer in a relationship with each other. The main motive, wherein it was known, was 'separation', which is in line with international research (Campbell et al., 2007; Garcia et al., 2007; Block & Christakos, 1995; Dobash et al, 2004; Kristoffersen, 2014). In this research we found only 11 cases with a perpetrator with a mental illness who could not be held responsible for its actions.

In contrast to international research (Jordan et al., 2012; Banks et al., 2008; Kivivuori & Lehti, 2012; Leth, 2009), principal perpetrators in this study were in only a few cases under the influence of alcohol or drugs during the homicide. There were 31 homicides followed by a successful suicide and 19 cases were followed by a suicide attempt only. International research found higher counts of intimate partner homicide-suicide in the United States (Bank, 2008). Liem and Roberts (2009) found lower counts of intimate partner homicide followed by suicide or suicide attempts in the Netherlands between 1992 and 2001.

An important observation is the decline in number of intimate partner homicides per year. Between 1992 and 2001 the average in the Netherlands was 47,4 cases of intimate partner homicide per year and the average between 2002 and 2004 was 43 cases per year (Nieuwbeerta & Leistra, 2003; Smit & Nieuwbeerta, 2007). In another study of Nieuwbeerta and Leistra (2007) found a total of 603 intimate partner homicides between 1992 and 2006, on average 40 homicides per year occurred in that period. They noticed there was a decline in intimate partner homicides from 2001 onwards. This study showed an average of 28 intimate partner homicides between 2009 and 2014. Unfortunately, we were not able to determine a trend line, because the exact number per year were not available for the period 1992–2004. And we need to bear in mind, a few cases which occurred in 2014 were not included in this study, since they were not solved yet or still in appeal.

The decline in intimate partner homicides is not an unique phenomenon, all homicides in the Netherlands are at the lowest point in over twenty years (Liem & Leissner, 2015). In 2014 only 144 homicides occurred, this is in stark contrast with the end of the twentieth century (1996 – 1999), which witnessed an average of 230 homicides per year (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2016b). This trend is similar to other Western European countries and the United States (Eurostat, 2014; Blumstein, Rivara & Rosenfeld, 2000). A changing lifestyle could be the explanation for the homicide drop in the

Netherlands, since the arrival of personal computer people spent more time indoors, which leads to a smaller homicide victimization risk (Liem & Leissner, 2015; Aebi & Linde, 2014). But then again, most intimate partner homicide victims were killed inside their private home.

Another explanation for the decline of intimate partner homicide rates in the Netherlands could be the government campaign to combat domestic violence. The campaign calls on those involved, victims, perpetrators, and bystanders, to contact the hotline 'Veilig Thuis' when they have a suspicion of domestic violence. But this campaign did not start until 2012, it can only explain a further decline of intimate partner homicide from 2012 onwards.

A third option could be the reduction of economic deprivation and marginalization. People experience strain when feel there is an unequal distribution of opportunities and they lack resources, skills, or financial independence. When the economic deprivation reduces and one is able to take care of himself, it is easier to terminate an abusive relationship (Reckdenwald & Parker, 2012). On the other hand, the main motive for intimate partner homicide is 'separation'. Termination of abusive relationships could still lead to the killing of an intimate partner.

Limitations

Due to a tight schedule for this master thesis and the labor intensiveness of the coding of the court records not all eleven courts in the Netherlands could be visited. Besides, in the given timeframe the courts were not able to retrieve all needed court records.

In 48 cases the court rulings or court records were not available, in those cases we were relying on newspaper articles. Malphurs and Cohen (2002) pointed out that it is important to treat conclusions from newspaper data with caution, because the newspaper search engine is dependent on the number of newspaper included in the search, and on variability in editorial decisions to publish intimate partner homicide stories. As the information in the newspaper articles was not always comprehensive enough, there is still a great deal of information in this study unknown, i.e. motive and profession. Not all cases in 2014 could be included, as they were not solved or still in appeal. If one should conduct this study again in a few years, the results of this research could be slightly different, because more cases will be solved and could be included.

Recommendation for further research

Many studies into intimate partner homicide have been conducted in the United States, however there is less research about Western European countries. In the Netherlands only a small number of studies have been conducted into intimate partner homicide.

This study is a good start for further research into the epidemiology of intimate partner homicide in the Netherlands, and could be used to find correlations between different variables and intimate partner homicide. In addition, it will also be interesting to find an explanation for the downward trend of intimate partner homicide, or even for all forms of homicide.

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Appendix A. Overview of online court rulings

Table 8. Overview of intimate partner homicide European Case Law Identifier numbers

13/525822-09
13/420822-09
23/004472-10
23/004965-10
09/925015-09
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10/700328-12
02/800315-12
