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# Women's violent casualties in Tijuana, Baja California, 1999-2005

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## *Resumen*

En este artículo se analiza el perfil de las muertes violentas en las mujeres de Tijuana, Baja California. Los datos provienen de fuentes forense, hemerográfica y del análisis derivado de los expedientes de homicidios dolosos. Se encontró que el rango de edad con mayor frecuencia en los homicidios de mujeres se da entre los 20 y los 34 años (42 por ciento). Sin embargo, en las mujeres el riesgo de morir víctima de un asesinato es más alto en menores de 15 años (20 por ciento). Las formas y medios de mayor frecuencia para asesinar a las mujeres son: heridas por lesiones y golpes (42.3 por ciento), disparo con arma de fuego (28 por ciento), asfixia mecánica y herida por arma blanca (28.8 por ciento).

*Palabras clave:* mortalidad, muerte violenta, feminicidio, Tijuana.

## *Abstract*

*Women's violent casualties in Tijuana, Baja California, 1999-2005*

In this article the profile of women's violent casualties in Tijuana, Baja California, are analyzed. Data come from newspaper and forensic sources, as well as from the analysis of deceitful homicides' files. It was found that the age range of homicides occurs between 20 and 34 years of age (42 percent). Nonetheless, in women the risk of dying from an attack is higher in those under 15 years of age (20 percent). The most frequent ways and means to assassinate women are wounds and blows from attacks (42.3 percent), gunshots (28 percent), mechanical asphyxiation and blades (28.8).

*Key words:* mortality, violent death, femicide, Tijuana.

## Introduction

Violence has become a daily topic and we are apparently less and less taken aback by that which occurs around us. It is common to watch news on robbery, brawls, kidnappings and deaths (killings, suicides, transit accidents, etc.). Although there is plenty of production on the topic, it is necessary to understand the special characteristics of the phenomenon in the regional and even local sphere, since that contributes to determine the

characteristics of the phenomenon of violence. This paper is located within this line and aims at analyzing the profile of the violent deceases of women in Tijuana, Baja California, being these one of the most evident expression of the situation that prevails in the bordering region with regard to violence. The data related to the 384 victims was collected from forensic sources, newspapers and the analysis derived from the files on intentional homicides, which is a methodology previously designed for the project called "Social Characterization of Violent Death in the Mexican Northern Border: the Case of Baja California 1999-2005".

## **Background**

The process of industrialization and demographic growth have created a new distribution of the population in Mexico since the middle of the XX century; it is mainly identified by a social growth that was the product of migration from rural areas to the city.

In the 40's an accelerated process of urbanization starts, it caused massive migration from the countryside to the city. In 1970, 59 percent of the population lived in urban areas, while in 2000 it was 75 percent of Mexicans (General Directorate of Statistics, 1972; INEGI, 1997, 2001).

These changes created a concentration in the zones with more attraction for the industry and urbanization, giving rise to metropolitan cities, such as Guadalajara, Monterrey, Mexico City and, later on, the intermediate cities that were the focus of more attraction in the 80's but did not achieve the expected development (Solís, 1997).

For more than two decades, cities located in the northern border have recorded important changes with regard to the socioeconomic situation of the country, a situation that was caused by the crisis of the 80's and which made thousands of residents of rural zones to migrate to cities aiming for better living opportunities. At the same time, migration of residents of urban zones starts, however in much modest quantities.

This population growth accelerates the occupation of the urban zone, where the population increasingly settles without the minimal security conditions. The city starts to extend and with it the demands for services, employment and housing, overcrowding problems, car accidents, criminality and insecurity increase as well.

This concentration of population in urban centers is considered the main cause of economic and social changes recorded in recent decades in Mexico and within these changes the rise in the deaths caused by violence stands out (Chías, 1997).

From 1980 on, organized criminality starts to be strengthened in bordering cities. It will depict them in the national sphere as headquarters for drug-traffickers that aim to control the drug markets in the U. S.: the adjacent municipalities to the U. S.' southern border, due to their strategic position, have given rise to the increase in the number of criminal organizations that carry out illegal activities beyond the local sphere based on those communities. On the other hand, its higher demographic growth has been accompanied by higher social problems, for instance addictions, gangs, violence inside families, high indexes of criminality in young population, people smuggling and gunrunning.<sup>1</sup>

One of these changes can be observed when analyzing the causes of death of the residents of the northern border and how its changes. From having the first positions, infectious-parasitic causes have been displaced by some other, such as violent ones (that consist of deaths from accidents, homicides and suicides), this due to a radical transformation of the main socioeconomic structures of the region, an aspect that will be discussed below.

Baja California is the state of the country with the highest incidence of federal offences, and the Federal District holds the fourth place, according to the figures provided by the national crime index produced by the Attorney-General's Office (PGR).

Offences related to drug trafficking and those that are part of the Federal Law of Firearms and Explosives are the most frequent, since they represent more than the half recorded in the country. From the ten states with higher incidence of offences in this diagnostic, five of them —Baja California, Sonora, Chihuahua, Quintana Roo and Tamaulipas— are border states, and another two —South Baja California and Sinaloa— are not, but are located in the northern zone of the country.

According to the report that includes pretrial investigations started by the PGR from January to November 2002, in this period 67,890 federal crimes were committed; they represent 66 crimes per each hundred thousand inhabitants, a number that is minor than those 73 crimes committed from January to December in 2001. Nevertheless, the report includes only crimes that belong to the

<sup>1</sup> For a detailed description of this perspective see *Ciudades* magazine num. 40.

TABLE 1  
VIOLENT DEATH RATE BY 100 000 INHABITANTS, ACCORDING TO STATE,  
1999-2002

State	Population	1999 Casualties	Rate
National	99 241 872	54 096	55
Aguascalientes	942 109	454	48
Baja California	2 457 288	2 063	84
Baja California Sur	424 348	231	54
Campeche	695 277	389	56
Chiapas	4 026 512	2 323	58
Chihuahua	3 036 748	2 269	75
Coahuila	2 336 345	1 023	44
Colima	546 162	307	56
Federal District	8 812 768	4 810	55
Durango	1 508 553	811	54
Guanajuato	4 788 083	2 320	48
Guerrero	3 158 293	2 194	69
Hidalgo	2 261 061	1 190	53
Jalisco	6 431 591	3 673	57
Mexico	13 255 996	5 302	40
Michoacan	4 113 186	2 762	67
Morelos	1 594 843	969	61
Nayarit	953 931	540	57
Nuevo Leon	3 838 175	1 578	41
Oaxaca	3 549 091	2 362	67
Puebla	5 164 678	2 930	57
Queretaro	1 423 409	779	55
Quintana Roo	861 659	528	61
San Luis Potosi	2 317 156	1 213	52
Sinaloa	2 612 572	1 664	64
Sonora	2 245 908	1 473	66
Tabasco	1 917 412	1 321	69
Tamaulipas	2 808 990	1 542	55
Tlaxcala	969 131	494	51
Veracruz	7 127 691	3 148	44
Yucatan	1 664 957	680	41
Zacatecas	1 397 949	752	54

TABLE 1  
VIOLENT DEATH RATE BY 100 000 INHABITANTS, ACCORDING TO STATE,  
1999-2002 (CONTINUATION)

State	Population	2000 Casualties	Rate
National	100 569 263	51 693	51
Aguascalientes	960 504	431	45
Baja California	2 540 519	1 943	76
Baja California Sur	437 351	253	58
Campeche	709 412	382	54
Chiapas	4 097 136	2 206	54
Chihuahua	3 125 292	2 304	74
Coahuila	2 373 180	987	42
Colima	554 052	295	53
Federal District	8 813 141	4 370	50
Durango	1 518 633	669	44
Guanajuato	4 843 199	2 285	47
Guerrero	3 181 608	2 075	65
Hidalgo	2 285 148	1 117	49
Jalisco	6 504 688	3 493	54
Mexico	13 504 347	5 145	38
Michoacan	4 139 084	2 704	65
Morelos	1 616 869	863	53
Nayarit	962 073	580	60
Nuevo Leon	3 908 238	1 517	39
Oaxaca	3 582 180	2 083	58
Puebla	5 233 525	2 586	49
Queretaro	1 454 428	817	56
Quintana Roo	899 312	520	58
San Luis Potosi	2 338 436	1 200	51
Sinaloa	2 641 537	1 598	60
Sonora	2 287 867	1 400	61
Tabasco	1 944 503	1 242	64
Tamaulipas	2 869 400	1 582	55
Tlaxcala	986 932	431	44
Veracruz	7 164 716	3 149	44
Yucatan	1 689 180	708	42
Zacatecas	1 402 773	758	54

TABLE 1  
VIOLENT DEATH RATE BY 100 000 INHABITANTS, ACCORDING TO STATE,  
1999-2002 (CONTINUATION)

State	Population	2001 Casualties	Rate
National	101 826 249	51 589	51
Aguascalientes	978 249	394	40
Baja California	2 623 527	1 828	70
Baja California Sur	450 508	248	55
Campeche	723 304	353	49
Chiapas	4 165 798	2 030	49
Chihuahua	3 189 171	2 345	74
Coahuila	2 409 217	1 090	45
Colima	561 694	310	55
Federal District	8 812 401	4 500	51
Durango	1 527 734	747	49
Guanajuato	4 894 805	2 192	45
Guerrero	3 202 517	1 903	59
Hidalgo	2 307 970	1 139	49
Jalisco	6 573 440	3 548	54
Mexico	13 745 918	5 308	39
Michoacan	4 161 584	2 640	63
Morelos	1 638 020	852	52
Nayarit	969 825	612	63
Nuevo Leon	3 977 712	1 628	41
Oaxaca	3 613 032	2 140	59
Puebla	5 299 191	2 480	47
Queretaro	1 484 873	849	57
Quintana Roo	937 736	525	56
San Luis Potosi	2 357 119	1 151	49
Sinaloa	2 669 969	1 494	56
Sonora	2 329 425	1 485	64
Tabasco	1 970 535	1 246	63
Tamaulipas	2 929 861	1 417	48
Tlaxcala	1 004 430	461	46
Veracruz	7 196 588	3 172	44
Yucatan	1 713 182	732	43
Zacatecas	1 406 914	770	55

TABLE 1  
VIOLENT DEATH RATE BY 100 000 INHABITANTS, ACCORDING TO STATE,  
1999-2002 (CONTINUATION)

State	Population	2002 Casualties	Rate
National	103 039 964	52 084	51
Aguascalientes	995 441	509	51
Baja California	2 705 614	1 801	67
Baja California Sur	463 617	272	59
Campeche	736 839	396	54
Chiapas	4 231 931	2 124	50
Chihuahua	3 251 773	2 493	77
Coahuila	2 444 201	1 123	46
Colima	569 244	274	48
Federal District	8 812 585	4 451	51
Durango	1 535 788	810	53
Guanajuato	4 942 304	2 306	47
Guerrero	3 220 736	1 884	58
Hidalgo	2 329 806	1 040	45
Jalisco	6 638 523	3 628	55
Mexico	13 983 714	5 130	37
Michoacan	4 181 275	2 610	62
Morelos	1 658 624	819	49
Nayarit	977 249	707	72
Nuevo Leon	4 045 812	1 506	37
Oaxaca	3 641 774	2 147	59
Puebla	5 362 134	2 538	47
Queretaro	1 514 721	786	52
Quintana Roo	976 188	521	53
San Luis Potosi	2 373 030	1 230	52
Sinaloa	2 696 968	1 524	57
Sonora	2 370 065	1 415	60
Tabasco	1 996 050	1 195	60
Tamaulipas	2 989 530	1 412	47
Tlaxcala	1 021 719	517	51
Veracruz	7 225 341	3 182	44
Yucatan	1 737 031	845	49
Zacatecas	1 410 337	889	63

Source: calculations based on information from INEGI: Books of demographic statistics, 12-16, 2000-2004 and Conapo: Basic demographic indicators 1990-2030.



TABLE 2  
VIOLENT DEATH RATE BY 100 THOUSAND INHABITANTS,  
MEXICALI-TIJUANA, 1999-2005

Years	Population	Violent deaths	Rate
1999	1 210 820	1 021	84.32
2000	1 238 057	922	74.47
2001	1 281 129	811	63.30
2002	1 323 685	877	66.25
2003	1 365 801	957	70.07
2004	1 407 528	956	67.92
2005	1 448 944	1 011	67.77
Total		6 555	

Source: *Caracterización social de la muerte violenta en la frontera norte de México: el caso de Baja California 1999-2005*, IIS-UABC. Own elaboration based on autopsy certificates, Semefo, Baja California. Calculations based on *Proyecciones de población total por municipios 2000-2030*, Conapo.

Attorney-General's Office; it does not include those of the common jurisdiction—such as kidnappings and homicides—whose observance depend on the local authorities.

In the study period, in Baja California there were 8,082 crimes of federal jurisdiction that represent a rate of 322 offences per each hundred thousand inhabitants. This makes the state have the highest crime index in the country.

Between 1999 and 2000, Baja California had the highest rate of violent deceases per each 100,000 inhabitants in the national environment (table 1). On its own, the municipality of Mexicali, capital of the state, between 1999 and 2002 had a rate that placed it as the center of the population with one of the highest rates of violent deceases, a rate that is above that of important towns of the zone, such as Tijuana (table 2).

Based on the vital records (INEGI, 1997) we can state that violent deaths in Baja California have taken the first place as causes of mortality, just as in the rest of the country, but with very specific local characteristics, among which it

is important to highlight the social stratification mainly influenced by the geopolitical situation of Mexicali and Tijuana, as well as the economic structure of the region, an increment in the index of migration and a high degree of unemployment at a national level.

Consequently, we retake the idea that violent deceases in women are one of the extreme expressions of social violence and constitute one of the most important problems in the local and regional sphere.

### **Methodology of the study**

With regard to the techniques and methods employed to support this project, it is adequate to mention the sources and their use, as well as point out that we aim at having the most precise data at all times, referring with this to the fact that all the databases were verified through a very strict cross-comparison process.

1. Recording of all the violent deceases that occurred in the Tijuana municipality during the period from January 1st, 1999 to December 31st, 2005.
2. Sources: Forensic Medical Service (Semefo), Attorney-General's Office of the State (PDJE), National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Computing (INEGI) and the most-sold newspapers of the town under study.
3. Unit of analysis: information of the deceased people under conditions of a violent kind that include age, sex, date and place of decease (street, suburb), sort and cause of death, toxicological study, injury that caused death, location, as well as the characteristics of the method used to commit suicide.
4. Sample framework of the files of the intentional homicides created by the PGJE.

### **Violence in the national and international environments**

In 1996, the 45<sup>th</sup> World Health Assembly declared violence as an increasing problem of public health in the world. The WHA49.25 resolution highlights the magnitude of the problem and the significant consequences that violence causes to individuals, families and society as a whole (WHO, 1996).

According to the World report on violence and health, more than a million and a half people in the world lose their life each year in events related to interpersonal violence, self-inflicted violence or collective violence (Krug, 2002).

By 2001, at worldwide level around 849 thousand suicides and 500 thousand annual homicides were calculated, from which 39 and 23 percent, respectively, occur to women. At international level, there are 1.7 more deceases recorded from suicides than from homicides, but that is not the case in all of the countries. In countries with higher income, the risk of dying as a victim of a suicide is higher than in countries with lower income, where the opposite phenomenon occurs. For instance, in Latin America, where a fourth of the homicides of the world take place, three out of four violent deceases are related to homicides. Nevertheless, regardless of the part of the world where there are more suicides or homicides, the risk of dying from one of these causes is always higher among men than women (WHO, 2002).

In our country, violence has also claimed several victims annually. According to statistics from the National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Computing and the Secretariat of Health (INEGI/SSA), in 2001 approximately four thousand suicides were recorded, and two thousand deceases in which the intent of the lesion was unknown. 12 percent of the homicides and 18 percent of the suicides were women.

### *Characteristics of violence against a partner*

Even if it is true that the term violence can be expressed in several ways, the one referred to women is an object of great interest on the side of the international community. A broadly accepted definition is that included in the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women "...any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women..." (Velzeboer *et al.*, 2003: 4). From this definition it is spoken about different kinds of violence against women, among them, violence based on gender, intrafamilial violence (that also includes children and elderly) and violence against the partner. This last has, among other characteristics, the following:

1. It is mostly exercised by men; there is a higher risk for women with known men.
2. Most women that have been attacked physically by their partner will generally be victims of multiple violent acts in the course of time.
3. Violence against women goes beyond the socioeconomic level, religion or ethnical origin.

4. Men who attack their partners physically show a marked behavior of control over someone (Velzeboer, Ellsberg, Clavel and García, 2003: 5).

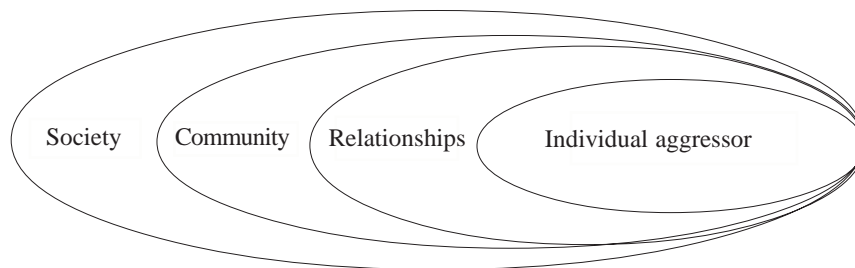
This, along with other reflections allowed authors such as Heise *et al.* (1999) to present a model that aims to cover a range of factors that influence the violence against the partner (figure 1).

Violence against the partner is produced in all the countries, in all cultures and in all social levels without exception, nevertheless some populations (for instance, groups that have a low income) have a higher risk than others (González and Gavilano, 1999: 35-49).

Apart from the physical aggressions such as blows; this kind of violence includes forced sexual relations and other forms of sexual coercion as well as bad psychic treatment, such as intimidation and humiliation, controlling behavior, such as isolating the person from her family and friends or restrict the access to the information and assistance.

Although women can attack their masculine partners and there are also violent attacks in partners of the same sex, partner violence is tolerated in an overwhelming proportion by women and inflicted by men. In 48 interviews of demographic base performed all around the world, between 10 and 69 percent of the women mentioned having been the object of physical aggressions from a male partner at some time in their lives (Heise and Gottemoeller, 1999).

FIGURE 1  
ECOLOGICAL MODEL OF FACTORS ASSOCIATED TO VIOLENCE  
AGAINST A PARTNER



As mentioned before, most of the victims of physical aggressions are subject to multiple violent acts during long periods of time (Ellsberg, 2000: 1595-1610) and tend to experience maltreatment of more than one kind. Moreover, it is considered that a third part of women between 16 and 49 years have been victims of sexual abuse, and almost a half have been threatened, insulted or experienced the destruction of their property.

Facts that trigger violence all around the world are very similar in the relationships in which there is maltreatment. (Schuler, 1996: 1729-1742). Among them we find disobedience or arguments with the male partner, to ask him about money or his feminine friends, not to have food ready on time, not to take care of children or house satisfactorily, refuse to have sexual relations and suspicion of infidelity. Many factors have been related to the risk of a man offending his partner physically. Among individual factors, previous cases of violence in the family of the male stand out in many studies (above all the fact of having seen his mother being hit) and the abuse of alcohol by the father (Johnson, 1996). In the interpersonal sphere, the more constant indicators of violence in the couple are conflicts or discord in the relationship and a low income level (Ellsberg, 1999: 241-244). Up to this moment there is not certainty regarding the relationship between low income levels and the risk of violence. It can be due to the fact that this reason is a simple reason for marital discord or that they make it difficult for women to abandon violent or unsatisfactory relationships. It can also be a consequence of other factors that accompany poverty, such as overcrowding or despair.

Women are particularly vulnerable to maltreatment inflicted by the partner in societies where there are significant inequalities between women and men, rigidity in the roles of genders, cultural norms that support the right of the man to keep sexual relations with independence from the feelings of the woman and soft sanctions for these behaviors (Levinson, 1989). These factors can determine the difficulty or danger of a woman to abandon a relationship in which maltreatment exists, and not even when she does it, is her security warranted, since violence can continue, and increase, after having left her partner (Jacobson, 1996: 371-392).

For instance, in Japan, a study based on 613 maltreated women demonstrated that less than 10 percent of them suffered only physical violence and 57 percent had suffered both physical and psychic maltreatment as well as sexual abuses (Yoshiyama and Sorenson, 1994: 63-77). In Korea, 38 percent of the wives reported having received physical maltreatment during the year previous to the study —1992—; Europe is not exempt from this situation, a sample of it are the

results of a survey performed during 1993 in the Islington district, in London, that indicates that 25 percent of women had been hit or lashed by their partner or former partner at a moment in their lives; in Switzerland, Guillo (1997) worked with a sample of 1,500 women between 20 and 60 years of age, having a partner, finding that 20 percent were physically attacked (García, 2001: 8). Spain also has highly remarkable data: in 2006, the Inspection Service of the General Council of the Judiciary examined 88 cases of deaths from domestic and gender violence (having a total of 91 victims); from these 77 —84.6 percent— corresponded to death from domestic and gender violence (where the partner or former partner had participated), in 49.4 percent they were marriages or partners, while in 8.8 percent the relationship was only an engagement.

In Latin America, one of the most violent regions of the world, Costa Rica stands out since 49 percent of the interviewees of a study indicated to have been hit during pregnancy and 7.5 percent suffered abortions as a result of this. In Haiti and Nicaragua, 28 percent of women (1997/98), and 41 percent in Colombia (2000) have experienced violence from their partner or another person.

According to data from the Pan-American Health Organization in 34 countries of the American continent, the rate of mortality by homicides and injuries that have an intentional cause on women in Mexico between 1997 and 2002 is of 2.7, positioning our country in the 14<sup>th</sup> place. It shall be highlighted that countries such as Bolivia, Haiti and Honduras do not have information about the topic (table 3).

In a study performed in Mexico it was proved that around half of women that had been victims of physical aggressions also had suffered sexual abuses by their partner (Granados, 1996).

As a complement to this, the numbers provided by the National Survey on Dynamics and Relationships at the Households (2003) indicates that:

55 of each 100 women who were victims of violence from their partner experience more than one kind of violence... from them, 33 of each 100 suffer two kinds, 16 of each 100 experience three kinds, and six of each 100 experience four kinds of violence, that is, emotional, economic, physical and sexual violence ([http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/notas/vi\\_317461.html](http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/notas/vi_317461.html), November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2005).

Other results of the survey stand out with regard to Baja California, which is placed at the second position at a national level in the percentage of women with at least one violent event; in terms of emotional violence it also holds the second place; with regard to economic violence it is in the third place; in the case of physical violence, sixth place; and in sexual violence the seventh.

TABLE3  
MORTALITY CAUSES, MORTALITY RATE  
ESTIMATED BY 100 000 INHABITANTS

Country	Traffic accidents 1997/2002, lay			Accidents, excluded traffic 1997/2002 lay		
	Women	Men	W/M*	Women	Men	W/M*
Argentina	5.1	16.5	0.3	11.8	24.6	0.5
Bahamas	6.9	23.2	0.3	8.3	19.9	0.4
Belize	8.5	52.8	0.2	11.1	34.5	0.3
Bermuda	4.0	21.3	0.2	7.1	18.7	0.4
Brazil	9.9	38.5	0.3	8.9	30.1	0.3
Canada	5.7	14.3	0.4	15.4	20.4	0.8
Chile	5.5	23.3	0.2	9.3	27.5	0.3
Colombia	11.1	37.4	0.3	10.1	27.6	0.4
Costa Rica	6.5	30.6	0.2	10.6	20.2	0.5
Cuba	6.3	23.3	0.3	24.6	28.8	0.9
Dominica	8.3	22.4	0.4	5.5	16.9	0.3
Ecuador	9.4	31.0	0.3	12.4	39.3	0.3
El Salvador	13.1	46.1	0.3	9.1	27.7	0.3
United States	9.9	22.8	0.4	14.7	23.6	0.6
Granada	2.2	8.5	0.3	8.9	30.8	0.3
Guatemala	2.0	8.1	0.2	9.4	30.8	0.3
Guyana	1.7	11.2	0.2	12.4	35.4	0.4
Haiti	6.0	11.1	0.5	5.9	9.2	0.6
Caiman Islands	8.8	17.2	0.5	5.5	24.1	0.2
Turks & Caicos Islands	18.0	17.0	1.1	9.8	36.9	0.3
Virgin Islands (EU)	4.4	29.8	0.1	8.8	22.1	0.4
Virgin Islands (RU)	5.3	7.6	0.7	5.3	48.0	0.1
Mexico	6.7	26.1	0.3	10.5	34.4	0.3
Nicaragua	6.8	27.1	0.3	12.7	38.7	0.3
Panama	6.9	28.5	0.2	7.7	24.3	0.3
Paraguay	6.2	20.5	0.3	9.5	26.3	0.4
Peru	7.0	21.5	0.3	13.3	36.9	0.4
Puerto Rico	6.3	24.5	0.3	7.8	32.5	0.2
Dominican Republic	8.3	35.2	0.2	6.2	17.1	0.4
Saint Kitts and Nevis	1.6	21.5	0.1	38.3	150.4	0.3
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	3.1	9.7	0.3	9.0	26.6	0.3
Saint Lucia	7.4	27.2	0.3	5.4	28.5	0.2
Trinidad and Tobago	5.2	16.9	0.3	6.8	19.4	0.4
Uruguay	7.0	22.8	0.3	19.2	46.3	0.4
Venezuela	8.6	31.7	0.3	8.3	19.5	0.4

NB: lay: last available year. \* Ratio women/men. z Zero magnitude.

Source: Pan-American Health Organization, 2006, *Género, salud y desarrollo en las Américas. Indicadores básicos 2005*.

TABLE 3  
MORTALITY CAUSES, MORTALITY RATE  
ESTIMATED BY 100 000 INHABITANTS (CONTINUATION)

Country	Homicide and wounds intentionally inflicted by other person 1997/2002 lay		
	Women	Men	W/M *
Argentina	1.9	12.0	0.2
Bahamas	3.8	28.9	0.1
Belize	2.7	17.6	0.2
Bermuda	2.1	4.5	0.5
Brazil	5.1	54.0	0.1
Canada	0.8	2.3	0.3
Chile	1.3	10.0	0.1
Colombia	12.7	143.5	0.1
Costa Rica	1.9	11.2	0.2
Cuba	3.2	8.3	0.4
Dominica	1.7	6.0	0.3
Ecuador	3.9	37.6	0.1
El Salvador	9.1	87.6	0.1
United States	3.0	10.2	0.3
Granada	2.2	1.1	2.0
Guatemala	3.7	41.6	0.1
Guyana	1.6	10.1	0.2
Haiti	nd	nd	nd
Caiman Islands	z	8.8	z
Turks & Caicos Islands	13.4	4.2	3.2
Virgin Islands (US)	4.4	47.1	0.1
Virgin Islands (UK)	z	20.5	z
Mexico	2.7	20.5	0.1
Nicaragua	2.9	22.3	0.1
Panama	2.7	23.7	0.1
Paraguay	3.6	26.8	0.1
Peru	1.2	7.8	0.2
Puerto Rico	3.1	35.7	0.1
Dominican Republic	2.1	16.6	0.1
Saint Kitts and Nevis	6.4	19.8	0.3
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	5.5	16.2	0.3
Santa Lucia	3.4	35.5	0.1
Trinidad and Tobago	4.2	17.2	0.2
Uruguay	2.0	8.3	0.2
Venezuela	2.2	27.1	0.1

NB: lay: last available year. \* Ratio women/men. z Zero magnitude.

Source: Pan-American Health Organization, 2006, *Género, salud y desarrollo en las Américas. Indicadores básicos 2005*.



A study performed in Baja California with a random sample of 2000 families provides a classification of risk factors: primary causal efficacy, associated risk factors, as well as factors that contribute to the perpetuation of the problem. The risk factors with primary causal<sup>2</sup> are constituted by cultural and educative aspects on which violence is constructed as naturalized way in the relationships of interpersonal power. The most frequent threatens from men to a woman are based on events such as not preparing food on time or not to clean the house, while she is irritated when he doesn't help with the housework. The results also show problems in the conflict management inside the couple, considering that the option of speaking or talking when the couple is irritated is third in terms of importance. Regarding the factors associated and that increase the probability of conflict, there are those related to stress (economic, labor and social). The fact that the partner works long hours or that he does not provide enough money for the household expenses or that he does not care about the money is a reason for the woman's annoyance, likewise, the fact that the woman works is an important aspect for the irritation of the male partner. There are aspects that contribute to the perpetuation of the problem, for instance, the lack of adequate legislation or difficulties to enforce it, lack of training for the existent personnel and lack community support networks.

Said study mentions that despite the fact that a significant proportion of families mentioned to have experienced conflicts that lead to physical aggression recently, as well as needed the institutional support to resolve conflicts, there is not a culture of pressing charges, not even in families that have a high level of conflictivity and violent action.

It is remarkable that violent behavior tendencies in Tijuana are above those of the state in general. For instance, while in the state on average 12.2 percent families mentioned to have familiar conflicts that required certain institutional support to solve them, in Tijuana there was a need for this support in 17.8 percent familiar units. Families in Baja California that stated to have had conflicts that derived in physical aggressions recently added that violence occurred between partners and among siblings. Violence in the couple occurred in 6.5 percent of the families, and among siblings, in 5.24 percent, while that in Tijuana the proportion was between 8.5 and 6.5 percent, respectively. On the other hand,

<sup>2</sup> See Jorge 2004. "Violence in the familial context as social problem" in Corsi, Jorge (comp.) *Maltrato y abuso en el ámbito doméstico. Fundamentos teóricos para el estudio de la violencia en las relaciones familiares*, Argentina, Paidós.

conflictivity indexes<sup>3</sup> and violent action<sup>4</sup> were calculated in that study. They have a significant presence in the state and more in Tijuana city.

In some cases, these indexes are higher in women than in men; nevertheless, the most recurrent actions of women are no to talk to the partner, while the main reaction of the male partner is to argue. But, what happens when extreme facts occur and the woman dies?

### **Study case: Tijuana, Baja California**

It is important to clarify that presenting the consequences of the violent facts through definitions is to a great extent a partial vision of the reality, since despite the fact that behind any decease there are numerous physical, sexual and psychological aggressions, in other cases the outcome was not a decease. Given the pressing need to revise completely and exhaustively all the sources of information; records of deceases, analysis of newspapers and studies on homicides were used as a way to approach to the detailed knowledge of the impact of violence on women in the municipality under study.

The compulsory questions for the research topic are: Is this bordering zone more violent than before? Who is more prone to die from a violent event? In which areas of the region are there more homicides? What are the most frequent characteristics of the violent events?

In Baja California, during the period of study (1999-2005), a total of 10,644 victims from violent deaths were recorded in the two most important towns of the region (Mexicali and Tijuana),<sup>5</sup> from which 1,535 were women (14.42 percent) and almost a half of it were homicides (table 4).

<sup>3</sup> The index of conflictivity is obtained of the summation of the aspects that recently bothered any of the partners. Among them: one of them does not work, a jealous partner, the partner gained weight, one of them does not obey, earns more money, etc. Values of the indexes range from zero to three. Zero means that there is neither problem nor action nor reaction towards it; three is the highest risk.

<sup>4</sup> The index of violent action makes reference to the reactions that take place as a result of the annoyance of any of the partners. They can be: not to talk to the other partner, shout, insult, hit or throws away things, argue, talk or chat.

<sup>5</sup> According to the XXI General Census of Population and Housing 2000, these towns concentrated 79.4 per cent of the population from Baja California.

In the Tijuana municipality, during the previous seven years there have been almost seven thousand deaths caused from violent events. Most of them have been murdered men (2, 335), while among the feminine victims there were 382 deaths related to a violent event (66 percent homicides, 19 percent overdoses and 15 percent suicides).

As it can be observed in graph 1, the tendency of mortality from a violent cause in women in Tijuana is not very stable. The standardized rate by age shows decreasing tendencies in the homicides in two moments: during 2000 and in 2004; in contrast, suicide and overdoses show slight changes up to recent times, when it has started to decrease.

Despite the fact that there have been variations in the number of victims of violent acts each year, in the last seven years (2, 555 days) in the Tijuana municipality there have been, on average, three women and 29 men murdered each month.

Between 1999 and 2005, the annual average of homicides in men was of 333, but from 2002 they increased almost in a constant way. Violent deaths occur in young population. Consequently, the impact in years of productive life or in the number of orphans that murdered young men and women create is significant.

In the case of women, the range of age in which homicides concentrate is between 20 and 34 years (42 percent). Thus, the risk of dying from a murder is higher for younger than 15 (20 percent).

If one compares the mortality from homicides in each of the federal states, one can observe that the variation in absolute and relative terms decreases, reducing the gap between entities that are in the extremes of the ranking.

Regarding the most frequent ways and means to murder women, it can be stated that they have not changed. In table 5, one can observe that injuries from hits (42.3 percent) are the most common way of homicide aggression, while the second cause is that related to firearms (28 percent), followed by mechanical suffocation (16.2 percent) and injuries caused by sharp instruments (12.65 percent).

Regarding the most common ways for women to commit suicide in our country, there is not much diversity. Most of them choose hanging, poisoning or firearms. To a lesser extent, they choose to jump from high altitudes, to step in front of moving vehicles or to use sharp objects.

Data on deaths from gender homicide violence show that it is necessary to look for actions that stop the increase recorded during the last years in the region.

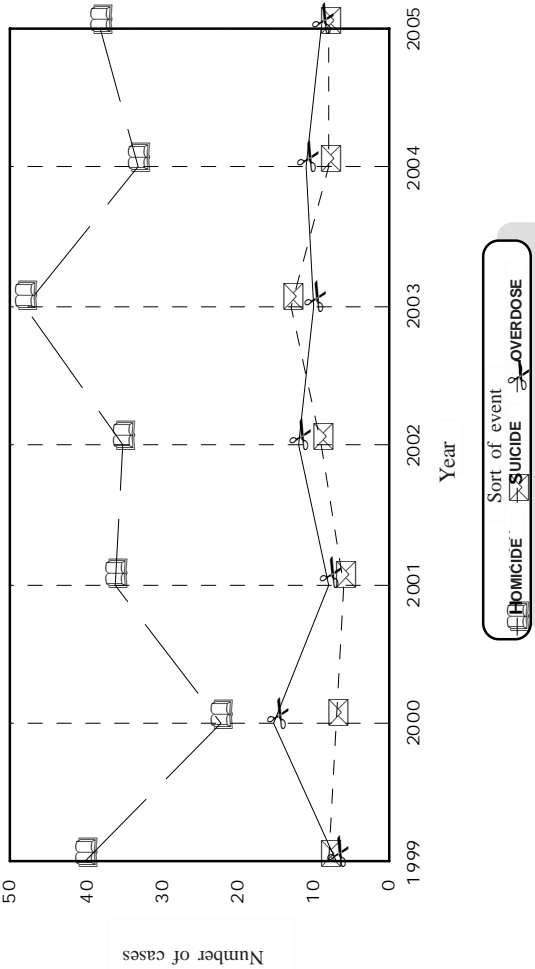
TABLE 4  
 TYPOFDEATHBY GENDER: MEXICALI-TIJUANA, 1999-2005

Type of death	Analysis variables	Gender		Total
		Man	Women	
Homicide	Number of events	3 350	376	3726
	% per sort of event	89.90	10.10	100.00
	% gender	36.80	24.50	35.00
	% of the total	31.50	3.50	35.00
Accidental	Number of events	1 387	321	1708
	% per sort of event	81.20	18.80	100.00
	% gender	15.20	20.90	16.00
	% of the total	13.00	3.00	16.00
Suicide	Number of events	696	87	783
	% per sort of event	88.90	11.10	100.00
	% gender	7.60	5.70	7.40
	% of the total	6.50	0.80	7.40
Overdose	Number of events	1 282	109	1391
	% per sort of event	92.20	7.80	100.00
	% gender	14.10	7.10	13.10
	% of the total	12.00	1.00	13.10
Traffic accidents	Number of events	2 394	642	3036
	% per type of event	78.90	21.10	100.00
	% gender	26.30	41.80	28.50
	% of the total	22.50	6.00	28.50
Total	Number of events	9 109	1535	10644
	% per sort of event	85.60	14.40	100.00
	% gender	100.00	100.00	100.00
	% of the total	85.60	14.40	100.00

Source: *Caracterización social de la muerte violenta en la frontera norte de México: el caso de Baja California 1999-2005* Project. Institute of Social Researches of the Autonomus University of Baja California. Own elaboration based on the study of autopsy certificates, Forensic Medical Service (*Servicio Médico Forense, Semefo*) of Baja California 1999-2005.

Graph 1

Mortality by homicides, suicides and overdose in Women in Tijuana 1999-2005



Source: Social Characterization of Violent Death in the Mexican Northern Border Project: The Case of the City of Tijuana, Baja California (1999-2005) IIS-AUBC

TABLE 5  
CAUSE OF DEATH IN WOMEN'S HOMICIDES, TIJUANA, 2000-2005

Cause	Number of data	Percentage
Firearm wound	71	28.06
Blade wound	32	12.65
Mechanical asphyxia	41	16.20
Injuries and blows	107	42.30
Other	2	0.79
Total	253	100.00

Source: *Caracterización social de la muerte violenta en la frontera norte de México: el caso de Baja California 1999-2005*. IIS-UABC. Own elaboration based on the study of autopsy certificates, Semefo, Baja California 1999-2005.

## Conclusions

Violence against women has been analyzed from different perspectives, among them, death, but this kind of interpretation of the situation faces difficulties due to the lack of uniform and reliable data.

The social consequences of violence are serious and affect not only to the victims, but also to those who are in their environment (parents, children, and friends), since children have high probabilities of reproducing the pattern they live in the childhood. On the other hand, among female victims of a partner there is a significant percentage that says to have also been attacked in the paternal home.

Mexico has one of the highest rates of homicide per inhabitant in the world that is why there is more fear among the population, this in turn may change the daily activities, to which one should add the lack of opportune attention from the authorities.

Specifically, homicides of women represent a serious problem when we face the disadvantage of it in comparison to the different scenarios that are adverse to it, for instance: in the parental home, when being attacked by a member of the family, the aggressive behavior which many women are subject to in their relationships as partners is well known. In both circumstances violence can be

economic, verbal, psychological and physical and its maximal expression is death.

In Baja California we are not exempt from suffering that situation, being necessary to define the profile of the victims, and therefore, to identify and to know the characteristics of the event becomes a pressing need. For Tijuana, the first clues indicate that young women are murdered in full productive age, but it is also remarkable that those younger than 15 are the group with higher incidence. Another finding is the cause of death, and as mentioned before, the most common way of aggression are injuries and hitting, that means the use of the medical services in a repeated way, nevertheless, when the case is not seen as it should, it can lead to a fatal ending, the lack of awareness on the side of women and their environment creates a vacuum in the way those situations shall be resolved, at this point starts the responsibility of different agents that get involved in the case, family, friends, health and police personnel, but above all the woman that is victim of violence, which from fear, embarrassment or ignorance allows the extension of the maltreatment until there is not a solution.

Considering this, the need to set out campaigns that allow the society to understand violence and its implications is more evident.

Even if there are significant vacuums in the full knowledge of the relation between violence and gender and violent death, it is urgent to do research on this, we can state that it is possible to prevent violence and to alleviate its consequences. Frequently is violence foreseeable and avoidable, and although it is hard to establish a direct causality, certain factors seem to be predictive of a specific kind of violence. To identify and to measure them can warn the decision-making authorities about the need to act. Also, the panoply of instruments to intervene increases as the research directed towards this specific problems increases. All around the world, authorities tend to act only after violent deceases have occurred. Nevertheless, to intervene in preventing, specially in the activities of primary intervention that operate before problems occur, might turn out to be more effective with regard to the social cost and to provide considerable and lasting benefits.

In order to design intervention it is essential to understand the context of violence of gender and its relation with the violent decease. All societies suffer it, but their context—that is, the circumstances in which it is produced, its nature and the attitude of the society to it— widely varies from one place to another. Wherever there are plans to create programs for the prevention of violent deaths, it is necessary to know the context of violence in order to adapt the intervention

of the population at which it is aimed. Different kinds of violence are closely related to one another and do frequently share risk factors. Unfortunately, research and prevention activities for the different kinds of deaths have frequently been developed isolated from each other. If this fragmentation is overcome, it is very probable that the scope and efficiency of the interventions will increase. The resources shall be concentrated on the most vulnerable groups. Violence, as many other social problems, is not neutral. All social classes experience it, but research systematically shows that people with lower socioeconomic level have a higher risk to experience it. If violence is to be prevented, there shall be an end to the abandonment of the needs of the population with lower income that in most societies tend to receive less attention from the different state services of protection and assistance.

Self-indulgence is another barrier to combat violence. It encourages it to a great extent and constitutes a big obstacle to respond. That occurs, specially, with the attitude that considers violence (just as the problem of inequality between sexes, closely related to it) as something immutable in human society. Self-indulgence before violence is frequently reinforced by one's own interest, as in the case of men, to whom many societies provide green light to, under the argument of "applying punishments for misbehavior", maltreat women. Reduction of violence, both interpersonal and collective, depends on combating self-indulgency towards it. The political compromise to put a stop to violence is vital for the initiatives in the public sphere. Even though it is significant that which base organizations, individuals and institutions can achieve, the success of the initiatives undertaken in a governmental context depends on the political compromise. This is as important in the national environment, where political, legislative and general financing decisions are made, as in the municipal governments, on which lie the responsibility of the daily administration of policies and their programs.

It is frequently necessary for many sectors of the society to make a sustained effort to achieve the political compromise to face violence against women that is far from being inevitable. There is much to do to prevent it, the country has not still gauged to its full extent the magnitude of the task nor has the tools to carry it out, but the general base of knowledge is broadening and much useful experience has been already acquired. The ignorance of the social impact that the phenomenon of violent death has on a region, reflects the lack of diagnosis of violence at the most elemental level and especially on the measurement of its incidence. If there is not a consensus at a fundamental level, an accepted and



shared base of statistical evidence on the size of the phenomenon, it would be hard to expect something close to an agreement in terms of explanations, theories on its causes, and much less on the public policies adequate to prevent or control the phenomenon, although it is worth mentioning that, without an adequate theoretical basement, statistics would result in information more than explanations, this paper aims to contribute to this base of knowledge.

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