

SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE VICTIMS KILLED IN THE PLOVDIV DISTRICT OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA IN THE PERIOD 2008 – 2017

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SUMMARY

Homicide is one of the ways to take someone's life and to cause fear and uncertainty in society, but it has not been sufficiently studied.

Materials and methodology: The victims of 113 homicides committed in the Plovdiv District during the period 2008 – 2017 were studied. Their autopsies were carried out at the Forensic Medicine Department at Sveti Georgi University Multiprofile Hospital for Active Treatment – City of Plovdiv. The obtained results are processed statistically and are presented graphically.

It was found that the victims of homicide accounted for 2.72% of the autopsies performed in the Department for the same period. The dynamics of the homicides over the years show a pronounced downward trend. Victims of homicides were 75 men (66.37% ± 8.71%) and 38 women (33.63% ± 6.20%). Urban residents are 60 of the victims (53.09% ± 4.69%), while the residents of villages are 51 (45.13% ± 4.68%). Two of the victims are foreigners. There are 6 children and one adolescent among the victims and the rest are evenly distributed in the different age groups. The most common mean of homicide is a hard blunt object (42.48% ± 3.99%), and the most commonly used tools are sharp objects and firearms (24.78% ± 4.06%). In 13 cases, other methods were used.

Key words: *homicides, hard blunt and sharp objects, firearms.*

Homicide is an unlawful death intentionally caused by a person to another person. The consequences of this act create fear and insecurity in society.

The problem of homicide is world-wide and is being studied in many countries (3, 4, 6, 7, 8). A study by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime shows that the victims of deliberate homicide are more than the victims of war. Only in 2012 their number is nearly half a million (5, 9). Studies on this issue have also been made in Bulgaria, but they are scarce and are directed mainly at the killers (1). The successful prevention of the problem also requires attention to be paid to the victims of homicide.

The **AIM** of the present study is to make a social characteristic of the victims of homicides committed in the Plovdiv District during the period 2008-2017.

MATERIAL AND METHODOLOGY:

All autopsies of dead people with unknown causes of death from the Plovdiv District, the population of which is about 700,000 people, are carried out at the Forensic Medicine Department at the Sveti Georgi University Multiprofile Hospital for Active Treatment – City of Plovdiv. During the period 2007 – 2018, 4,162 autopsies were performed in the Forensic Department, of which 113 (2.72%) were of victims of homicide. For all of them, the following parameters were analyzed: gender, age, place of residence, means of committing the homicide. The murdered victims were classified by age in the following categories: children up to 10 years of age, adolescents up to 18 years of age, young adults aged 19 to 44, middle or mature ages 45 – 64 and adults over 65. By place

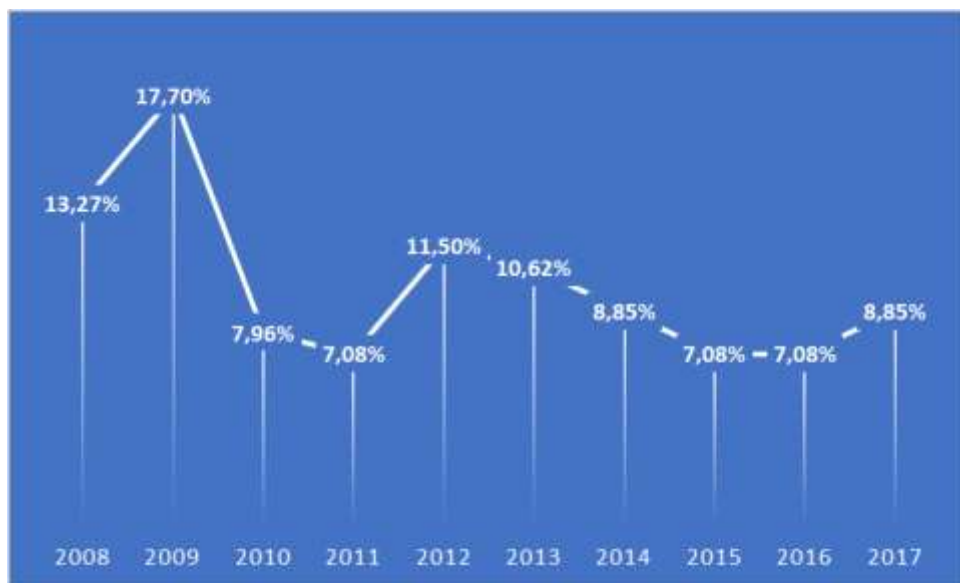
of residence the victims were divided into the following groups: residents of Plovdiv, residents of other cities, residents of villages and foreigners. The conclusions of the forensic expertise were used to determine the cause of the death of each victim.

The results obtained were statistically processed and presented graphically

RESULTS:

The victims of homicide are unevenly distributed over the years. Their number is the highest in 2009 – 20 people, and the smallest in 2011, 2015 and 2016 when eight homicides were committed. The dynamics of the homicides over the years are unstable, but with a pronounced downward trend. The exception is 2017 when a slight increase is registered (Figure 1).

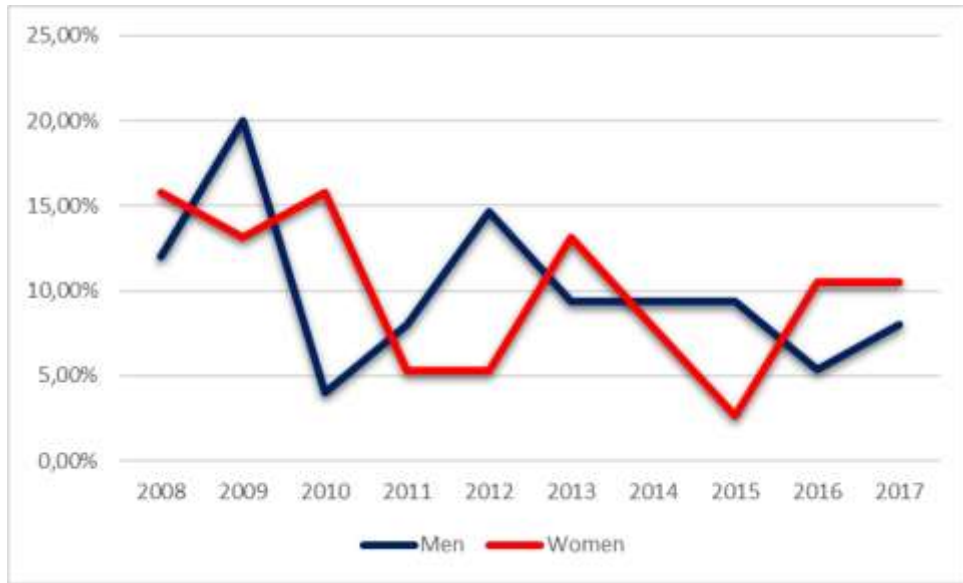
Fig.1. DYNAMICS OF THE HOMICIDES COMMITTED IN THE PLOVDIV DISTRICT



Out of the 113 people killed 75 (66.37% ± 8.71%) are men and 38 are women (33.63% ± 6.20%). The male/female ratio is 2:1. Most men died in 2009 – 15 (20.00% ± 4.61%) and in 2012. The number of men killed ranges from 15 people (2009) to 3 people (2010).

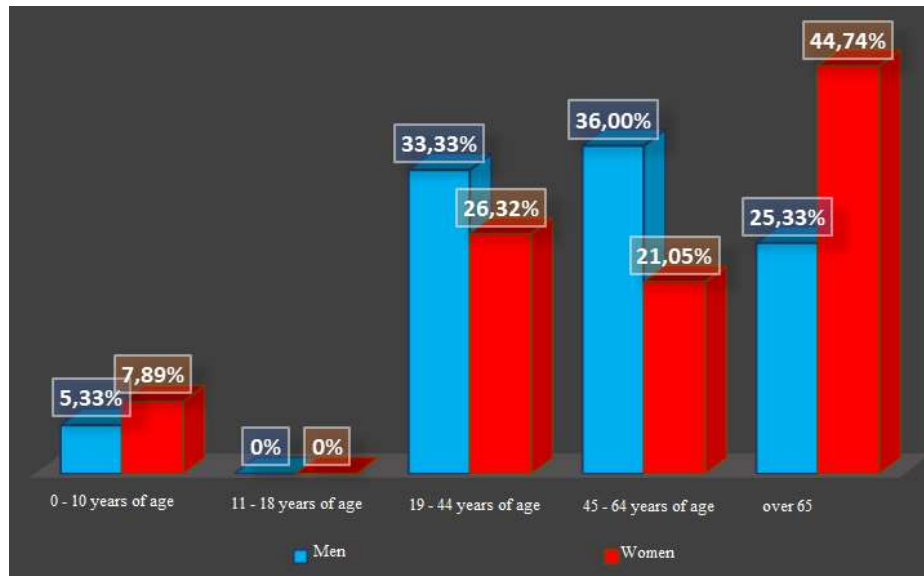
The dynamics of homicides in both genders is unstable. It is worth noting that the maximum in one of the genders corresponds to the minimum in the other gender and that the maximum of women manifests one year after the maximum of men (Figure 2).

Fig.2. DYNAMIC DISTRIBUTION OF GENDER-BASED HOMICIDES



There are 6 children among the victims of homicide, but there are no teenagers. The distribution of the total number of deaths in the remaining age groups is approximately the same. There are, however, some differences in the distribution of victims among the different age groups by gender. The most vulnerable group that often fall victim of homicides is that of elderly women over 65, unlike the group of elderly men. The groups of young women (up to 44) and mature men are also at risk (Figure 3).

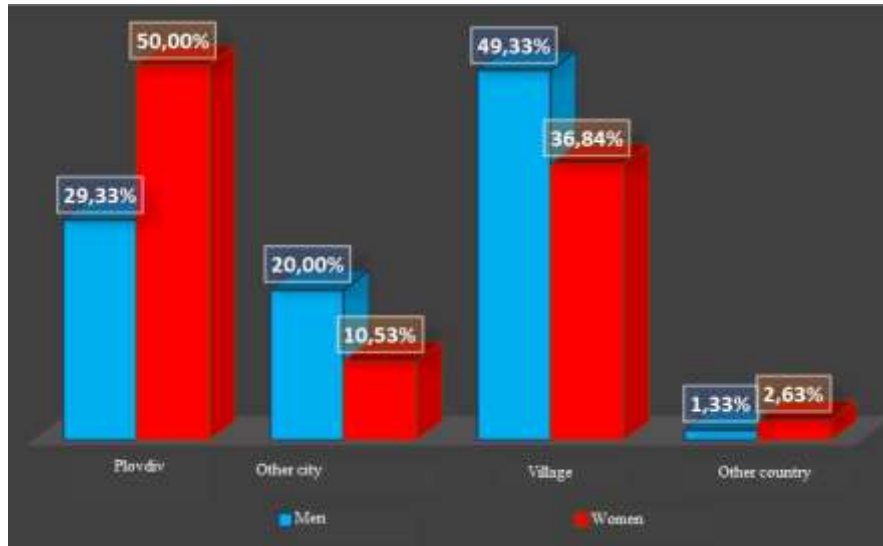
Fig. 3. DISTRIBUTION OF VICTIMS OF HOMICIDES BY AGE AND GENDER



60 of the victims (53.09% ± 4.69%) live in the cities of the Plovdiv District, and 51 – in the villages (45.13% ± 4.68%). There is also one resident of Ukraine and one resident of Turkey among the victims. The majority of the victims in the cities are residents of the City of Plovdiv, where half

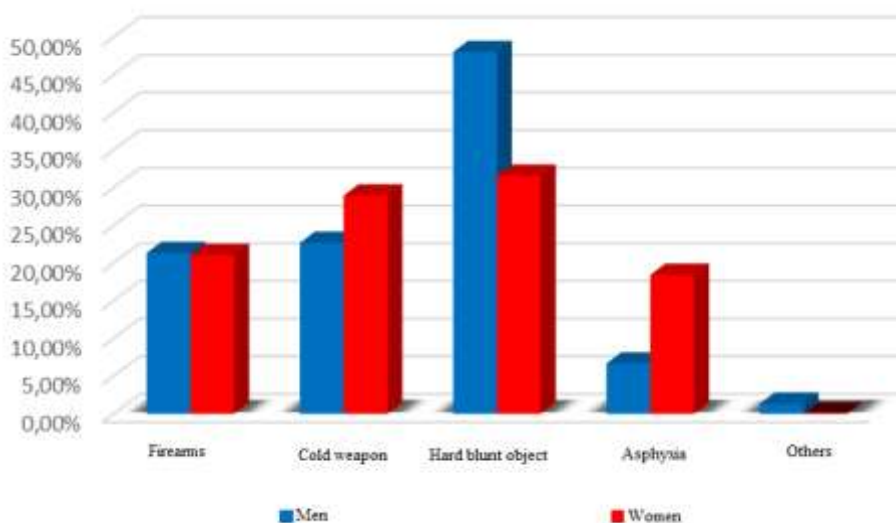
the population of the district lives. The distribution of victims by place of residence and gender shows an increased risk for men living in the villages and the women living in Plovdiv (see Figure 4).

Fig. 4. DISTRIBUTION OF VICTIMS BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE AND GENDER



There is a wide variety of ways in which someone’s life can be taken. The causes of death are divided into five groups – injuries with firearms, injuries with sharp objects, injuries with hard blunt objects, asphyxia from suffocation, strangulation and other ways. The most common cause of death is from injuries with hard blunt objects – 48 people (42.48% ± 3.99%), and the most commonly used method of killing is asphyxia – 12 people (10.62% ± 2.9%). Half of the male victims died from injuries with hard blunt objects, and in the smallest part (5) the cause was asphyxia. The victims of injuries with hard blunt objects in women are 12 (31.58% ± 7.54%). In the group of those who have died of asphyxia and sharp objects, the relative share of women is greater than that of men. A significant difference in the relative share of men and women cannot be registered only in the cause of death by firearms. In one case gas was thrown over one man and he was lighted (Figure 5).

Fig. 5. CAUSE OF DEATH OF VICTIMS



DISCUSSION:

The study shows the level of homicides in the Plovdiv District of the Republic of Bulgaria during the period 2008 – 2017. The defined indices of the homicides in the Plovdiv District correspond to the official data for the country (5). They are lower than those for other countries in the world (5, 9). Official statistics (5, 9), as well as research (3, 4, 6, 7, 8), establish domination of the homicides of men over those of women. Differences are established in the ratio between them, which is due to living conditions, ethnopsychology, religion, etc. The male/female 2:1 ratio established in the Plovdiv District is close to that established in the neighboring Greece of 1.6:1 (8). The group of the youngest (3, 4, 5, 7, 9) is at the highest risk of homicides. In the Plovdiv District the elderly women who are the most vulnerable are at the highest risk of homicides. Hot temper and use of alcohol and drugs are one of the reasons for conflicts among young men which in some cases end up tragically. The increased number of homicides in rural areas makes the villages a risky group. Some ¼ of the area's population lives in the villages, but 45% of the homicides are committed there. Unemployment, low incomes and use of homemade alcoholic beverages are among the reasons that increase the risk of homicides among men in the villages. It was established that women living in Plovdiv are more often victims of homicides than those who live in the villages or in smaller cities. The reason for this can be found in the dynamics of life, lack of money, alcohol, drugs and others, which are more prevalent in the cities.

CONCLUSIONS:

1. The dynamics of homicides in the Plovdiv District shows a downward trend.
2. Women aged over 65 living in Plovdiv are at increased risk of becoming victims of homicide.
3. Working-age men living in villages are more often victims of homicide than those living in the cities.
4. Hard blunt objects are used most often for homicides.

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