

Profile of Rio de Janeiro's violent lethality perpetrators, Brazil (2015)

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Abstract *This study presents the profile of the perpetrators of deaths caused by intentional aggressions in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 2015, as per data from the State Civil Police (PCERJ) investigations. This is a quantitative, descriptive, and cross-sectional study. The information encompasses “premeditated murder”, “larceny”, “bodily injury followed by death” and “homicide caused by resisting police intervention”. The study analyzes the profile of the authors of each category, except homicides committed by police intervention. The crimes committed by police intervention were excluded from the total number of the 1,562 identified deaths. Only about 20% of the perpetrators of the 1,255 crimes investigated were identified. The data recognized show the relevance of drug traffickers and militiamen illegal activities in the deaths and interpersonal violence in domestic and community spaces and neighborhoods. A remarkable similarity is observed between the profile of violent lethality perpetrators and victims in the studied urban contexts: men, young people, and young adults aged 19-39 years, blacks, with low schooling, high levels of unemployment, and informal occupations.*

Key words *Social violence, Perpetrators, Violent lethality*

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Introduction

This work aims to contribute to the knowledge of the profile of violent lethality perpetrators in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and outline an analysis of the relationship between them and the victims, based on 2015. The chosen period is in line with the state public security system's methods that establish a minimum of 24 months as a reasonable parameter for elucidating homicides. The available data was limited to 2015 since the research that gave rise to this work started in 2017. The chosen approach was based on the hypothesis that this procedure would be able to highlight the profile of the violent lethality perpetrator, defined by the police authorities as "death resulting from intentional action", gathering theft followed by death or larceny, homicide from resisting police intervention, bodily injury followed by death, and premeditated murder. While four types of crime underpinning the concept are accounted for here numerically and proportionally, only three are analyzed in-depth. Deaths resulting from the activity of public security agents will be addressed in due time because they contain specificities that are not comparable with the others.

The perpetrators of the first three types of violent lethality are the central object of this study, given the relevance of aggression-related deaths globally², in Brazil^{3,4}, and Rio de Janeiro^{5,6}. Since homicides are the most severe event in categorizing violence, they are a universal indicator of this phenomenon¹, allowing comparisons between countries and internally. In this study, its meaning is restricted to aggression by one or more perpetrators against other people, in the most diverse contexts and motives that culminated in the victim's death, giving rise to the investigation by the civil police to define authorship and circumstances^{5,6}.

Rio de Janeiro recorded 18.5 premeditated homicides per 100 thousand inhabitants in 2015, the lowest rate in the last 25 years. This type of lethality also fell by 15.1% in the State (rate of 25.4/100,000) in the same period, the second-lowest recorded in the entire historical series started in 1991⁶⁻⁸. Situationally, 2015 was the last period of the proposed "Pacifying Police Units" (UPP) in the municipality and the State, which, regardless of any judgment made of them, managed to stop the excessive number of deaths in this social space⁹. In general, the literature on violent lethality in Public Health and Social Sciences addresses intentional deaths from the victim's perspective. The works lead to detailing a

widely spread profile of vulnerable groups, made up of young black men from the most impoverished strata, residing in the suburbs of urban centers¹⁰⁻¹⁷.

Almost no feedback is obtained from Brazilian scientific literature when looking at homicides from the perspective of those committing abuse. In general, works are restricted to particular niches, such as, for example, adolescent offenders, women abusers, or homicide-suicide perpetrators¹⁷⁻¹⁹. Duque et al.²⁰ and Minayo & Constantino²¹ are the few works that consider perpetrator and victim. The latter analyses the ecosystem of this phenomenon within a socio-geographic space, defined in its structures and interactive elements, surrounded by an external environment that, at the same time, differs from it and recognizes its specificity. The authors identify a psychic system coupled with this socio-physical space, and they are followed by other scholars on the topic^{21,22}. Both interact and enhance each other. Taking Rio de Janeiro as an ecosystem, it can be said that the municipality has a history, a spatial configuration, and a culture that influences the several expressions of violence leading to death, such as those addressed here.

Methods

A quantitative descriptive cross-sectional study was carried out, in which deaths classified as resulting from intentional abuse against third parties or due to violent lethality notified to the Civil Police of the State of Rio de Janeiro (PCERJ) in 2015 were investigated by the public security system of the State of Rio de Janeiro. Aragão²³ argues that cross-sectional studies allow the preliminary analysis of an association. Once the existing outcomes are identified, associated factors can be listed to varying degrees. The measure of association between exposed and unexposed, or "prevalence ratio" (PR), is extracted from the ratio between the several prevalence levels, which is what was done.

The study scenario is Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, which according to the 2010 Demographic Census, had 6,320,446 inhabitants at the time, distributed in a perimeter of 1,200,177 km² and a demographic density of 5,265.82 inhabitants/km². A population of 6,550,746 inhabitants was estimated for 2015, 3,360,629 females (52.9%) and 2,959,817 males (47.1%), with the following age profile: 26.75% up to 19 years; 16.78% 20-29

years; 29.58% 30-49 years, and 26.89% aged 50 or over. In 2010, life expectancy at birth in the municipality of Rio de Janeiro was 75.69 years. Ethnicity/skin color was distributed as follows: 51.2% white, 11.5% black, and 36.5% brown. The municipal homicide rate was 18.5/100,000 inhabitants in 2015.

Information on the circumstances of violent lethality deaths was collected from the PCERJ database, where occurrences records (ORs) are gathered. This database is called ROWEB (Internet-based Occurrence Record) and is accessible remotely with previous authorization and provision of an access password. Such a system is merely advisory and does not allow entering, altering, or removing data. The information contained in the ROWEB is entered there through an "Operational Control System" (SCO), which is restricted to the institution's officers preparing the ORs and the investigation process. Every crime reported to a Rio de Janeiro State Police Department entails drawing up an OR, which is assigned an exclusive number that accompanies it until the end of the investigation. The ROWEB System offers several filter search options and, among these, some were selected to be used in the research originating this work to better express violent lethality data.

The analysis consisted of reading all the 1,562 ORs classified as "violent lethality" and referring to "larceny", "bodily injuries followed by death", "premeditated murder", and "homicides resulting from resisting police intervention" recorded in 2015. Of the total, the first three subclassifications analyzed in this paper totaled 1,255 crimes. The documents were classified by crime according to their assigned legal system. The crime perpetrator was addressed, but the anonymity of the people involved was assured, avoiding the description of situations that would facilitate identifying those involved in the crimes as perpetrators or victims. The variables that trace the profile of the perpetrators were gender, age in the year of the lethal aggression, occupation/profession, schooling level, and ethnicity/skin color. The "previous relationship" between the perpetrator and the victim was also considered.

Data were analyzed using central tendency and variability measures for quantitative outcomes and relative frequencies for categorical outcomes. The standard adopted by the IBGE was used to categorize age: up to 19 years; 20-29 years; 30-39 years; 40-49 years; and 50 years or more. Simple grouping tables were used for categorical variables.

While considering multiple possibilities, the field "profession" was tabulated with the exposure of all variables presented in the records, besides the "other" option available in the system for entering data without classification described in the database. Variable "previous relationship" between author and victim was analyzed, with the possibility of a positive, negative, or unknown response. We also aimed to identify the homicide motive. The profile of certain types of death perpetrators has similarities, which allows their representativeness concerning other years and Rio de Janeiro's conflicting social reality.

Two-dimensional analyses were performed between two or more variables. Two (or more) datasets from the observation of the same variable were employed in some situations. There were qualitative or quantitative situations and cases in which one variable was qualitative and the other quantitative. A logistic regression model was used to investigate the profile of premeditated death perpetrators, using the logit transformation (Neperian odds logarithm) to prevent the function from assuming negative values. In the logistic regression analysis, the dependent variable (response) was dichotomous random and assumed a value of "1" if interest occurs and "zero" if not.

Besides the information collected from the occurrence record, others were sought in the field called "fact dynamics" in the registration forms, which consists of the brief description of the investigated events made by the police officer responsible for making the occurrence record, including day, time, place and a summary of the crime circumstances. These data are essential for the investigator to understand the death context. This reading contributed a lot to the feeding of two other variables: "previous relationship between the perpetrator and the victim" and, if so, the "relationship type". In situations with more than one perpetrator for the same death, the bond of greater proximity would prevail and extend to the others.

The information was stratified concerning the type of bond, context, or circumstance causing the aggression as a strategy to better group by similarity and proximity per the type of relationship identified in the reading of the occurrence dynamics. Among these were some self-explanations such as "family member" and "spouse", while others required clarification. The term "acquaintance" was used when the perpetrator and the victim had known each other before, and the profile was not included in any other classifica-

tion. Two other independent words, “trafficking” and “militia”, were used to categorize the perpetrators of homicides with motives linked to these two illegal activities that are a reality of Rio de Janeiro and usually stem from disagreements within the groups, disputes with rivals, and consummated murders, also to display strength and legitimacy in the territory. The circumstance of the aggression causing death was evidenced, even in situations where there was no link between the perpetrator and the victim or in which it was not possible to determine it. For example, the result of some deaths did not prove to have been caused by trafficking but by the victim’s presumed belonging to a rival faction. In this situation, the circumstance was classified as linked to drug trafficking. The same rationale guided this outcome as the variable “previous relationship” explained before.

Results

Table 1 shows the demographic data of violent lethality perpetrators – minus the deaths resulting from resisting police intervention in Rio de Janeiro in 2015 – by gender, age group, ethnicity/skin color, education, and proximal perpetrator-victim relationship. The internal differentiation between all these variables for each crime, including the clarification level, is described in Table 1.

It is relevant, initially, to show the low elucidative index of the profile of the perpetrators of all types of crimes: only 246 of the 1,255 violent deaths had at least one qualified perpetrator, which represents about 20% of cases clarification, generating a total of 391 featured cases. Only 217 (approximately 18%) of the 1,200 premeditated homicides reached the identification of at least one perpetrator, totaling 340 qualified. The authors were recognized in 25 (57%) of the 44 larceny death cases, generating 46 identified authors. Finally, only four of the 11 deaths from bodily injuries followed by death had at least one qualified perpetrator (36%), with five perpetrators in total numbers. The profile of the perpetrators according to the variables studied is described below.

Gender and Skin Color – The profile of the perpetrators show male supremacy: 367 men (94%) and 24 women (6%). Brown-colored perpetrators prevailed (165, 42%), followed by white (118, 30%) and 92 (24%) black. Sixteen people (4%) did not have this information recorded.

When considering the model population representation by ethnicity/skin color used by the IBGE that gathers blacks and browns, this group adds up to 257 perpetrators, 66% of the total. The same profile of perpetrators and victims is found concerning gender and ethnicity/skin color, and only victims are widely documented.

Age group – The 20-29 years age group includes almost half of the perpetrators, 185 (47%), followed by the 30-39 years, with 103 (26%), and the 40-49 years age group, with 51 people (13%). The remaining 52 perpetrators (14%) are diluted in the other age groups: 29 (8%) up to 19 years; 12 (3%) 50-59 years; and nine (2%) aged 60 or over. Age was not specified in two cases (1%). The 20-29 years age group is also the group with a higher number of victims, as observed in the literature.

Schooling – The schooling analysis shows that 159 perpetrators had up to elementary school level, but only 43 had completed it. Eighty-two had a high school level, but only 47 had completed it. Fourteen perpetrators had a Higher Education level, with six graduates and eight with an incomplete level. This variable was not completed in 35% of the records of the 391 perpetrators, a gap due to problems with feeding the database with homicides in general, the impossibility of checking this item with the perpetrator, or the perpetrator’s refusal to provide such information.

Occupation – Almost half of the perpetrators (180, 46%) had no information about “occupation” in the OR. When this first option is combined with “unspecified/others”, this number rises to a total of 243 (62%). Only 38% of the perpetrators were qualified concerning their activities. Two problems were that most of the perpetrators were not linked to regular productive activities and the police are less concerned with clarifying this item in the OR. The lack of clarity in the information on “occupation” suggests that the term “others” may include “odd jobs” but also illegal activities such as drug trafficking and participation in militias. It is important to note that 33 occupations were listed for 38% of the perpetrators with identified occupation: “bricklayer/assistant”, “self-employed” (5%); “shopkeeper” (4%); “military police” (4%); “student” (4%); and “housekeeper” (1%). It should be clarified that the authorship of police officers as perpetrators noted here refers to those who committed crimes not classified as “resistance acts”. For this reason, they were classified in other categories of violent lethality perpetrators.

Table 1. Sociodemographic data of explained violent lethality authors in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 2015.

Category	Number of perpetrated cases	Number of identified perpetrators	Gender	Age group	Ethnicity/Skin Color	Schooling	Previous relationship (Y/N)
Bodily injury followed by death	04	05	Male-80%	20-29 years-40% 30-39 years-40%	Brown-40% White-40%	High School.-60% Elementary School.-40%	Yes-80%
Larceny	25	46	Male-100%	20-29 years-59% 10/19 years-17%	Brown-37% Black-28%	Incomplete Elementary School-39% Unspecified-39%	No-96%
Premeditated murder	217	340	Male-93%	20-29 years-46% 30-39 years-28%	Brown-43% White-30%	Unspecified-35% Incomplete Elementary School-28%	Yes-72%
General total	246	391	Male-94%	20-29 years-47%	Brown-42%	Incomplete Elementary School-30%	Yes-75%

Source: ROWEB/PCERJ.

Type of attacks – This segment of the analysis combines three categories: “theft followed by death”; “bodily injury followed by death”; and “premeditated murder”. The latter comprises a variety of behaviors and a system of subclassification of deaths: (1) by the means used (cold weapon, firearm, asphyxiation, clubbing, and burn); (2) who is the victim in the case of femicide; and (3) “others”, all not described in the types mentioned above. We could establish the mean number of perpetrators by type of aggression, which helps us understand why some types have a higher number of qualified perpetrators.

Graph 1 shows that the mean number of perpetrators per victim reaches 2.3 in the case of clubbing-related homicide, where nine perpetrators were qualified for four deaths. Then, larceny, with 46 perpetrators and 26 victims (mean of 1.8); and homicide by firearm with 156 perpetrators and 99 victims (average of 1.6). The overall mean was 1.5, with 391 qualified perpetrators and 266 victims.

We also analyzed the likelihood of “previous relationship” and “relationship type” between perpetrator and victim. Some types of crime are characteristic of people living close together. These two variables were jointly analyzed, thanks to the link they acquire to understand premeditated murders. We considered the number of occurrences (246), the total number of victims (265), and the 391 authors. A previous relation-

ship was identified between both parties in 166 (68%) cases, corresponding to 246 records. It was impossible to determine the existence or not of a previous bond in ten events (4%).

The results point out that almost all the occurrences happened among close people in some types of aggressions, as follows: cold weapon use (43 out of 44); asphyxiation (10 out of 10); clubbing (four out of four); bodily injury followed by death (three out of four); burning (one out of one); and femicide (one out of one). Worth mentioning is that the “femicide” category is underrepresented because Federal Law 13.104 of March 9, 2015, addressing femicide and its specific notification had just been approved by the National Congress when researching the material for this work was carried out. This explains the single case captured by ROWEB.

Fifty-two of the 83 firearm homicide records reported previous relationships between the perpetrator and the victim. While with a smaller proportion of this issue compared to the previous types, the fact that both the author and the victim knew each other in two-thirds of the cases is relevant. The “others” option also showed the relevant existence of a previous relationship between the perpetrator and the victim (53 out of 76). The category “theft followed by death” is different from this dynamic due to its peculiar features. Only one of the 25 records showed a previous relationship. The distribution was as

follows in the ORs in which it was not possible to confirm or refute the existence of a bond: four homicides by firearms; theft followed by death; and five homicides classified as “other”.

Homicide by firearm – It was relevant to verify the type of link between perpetrators and victims to understand better the profile of the aggressors due to the most significant number of records, victims, and qualified perpetrators (83, 99, and 156, respectively) (Table 2).

The combined analysis of the two variables, homicides by firearms and type of relationship, reveals that 81 qualified perpetrators (52%) killed using firearms due to involvement in drug trafficking in several situations: internal settlement of accounts, the dispute between rival groups for territorial dominance, debt collection and demonstration of strength, corroborating what was found by Dirk and Moura¹².

Militia-linked authors (16) appear in third place and represent 10% of the total, in the circumstances similar to those that drug trafficking-motivated murders. Therefore, when gathering these two activities related to criminal organizations, we arrive at almost a hundred qualified perpetrators (97), representing about two-thirds of the total of those who committed homicide with firearms.

The high number of perpetrators in drug trafficking-linked deaths is noteworthy: sometimes, six, seven, or even eight perpetrators were recorded for only one case⁵. This attribution of the same act between several people has been verified in many cases involving militia and drug

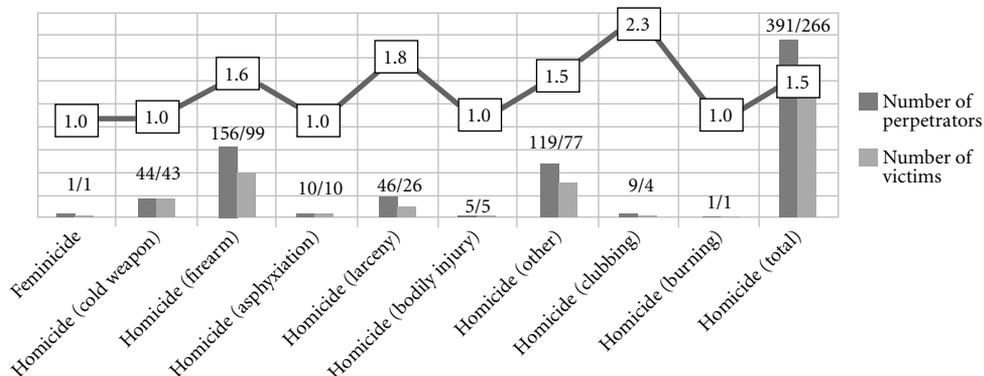
trafficking. It can be explained by the difficulty of the investigation in defining the effective participation of each perpetrator in the aggression. For this reason, the notifying police officers usually use the resource to hold the local leaders of the gangs accountable, as they understand that any fact of this nature only occurs with knowledge, consent, and their direct or indirect participation. However, they are often not present physically at the time of the aggressions, as mentioned by Araruna¹³.

Very common in clashes between traffickers and militiamen, firearms were also relevant in the configuration of interpersonal violence: they were used to attack and kill by 22 perpetrators classified as acquaintances (15% of the total), besides seven more classified as family members

Table 2. Distribution of homicide by firearm and relationship type between perpetrator and victim.

Relationship type	Frequency	Relative frequency
Trafficking	81	52%
Acquaintance	22	15%
Militia	16	10%
Spouse	5	3%
Police activity	9	6%
Unknown	11	7%
Family member	7	4%
Unspecified	5	3%
General total	156	100%

Source: ROWEB/PCERJ.



Graph 1. Relationship between the number of perpetrators and number of victims by type of aggression, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 2015.

Source: ROWEB/PCERJ

and five as spouses, totaling 34 aggressors (22%), only lagging behind the deaths in which the bond specification was generated by the connection with trafficking and militia activities. The other types of relationship accounted for approximately 16% of all firearm-related deaths: 11 were unknown (7%); nine were related to police activity (6%), and five were unspecified (3%).

Close-relationship homicides expose the difficulty of resolving conflicts and disagreements between close people (acquaintances, family members, and spouses), directing outcomes to avoidable tragedies and often for futile reasons. Unfortunately, the study shows that access to weapons in society in Rio de Janeiro is not restricted only to public security agents on duty or during their free time and to those involved in criminal activities such as drug trafficking and militia. The research reinforces the thesis that, besides the direct relationship between access to these means by criminal groups and violent deaths, this resource is also adopted, to a large extent, in the solution of day-to-day conflicts by citizens who carry weapons, whose outcome is fatal.

Discussion and final considerations

We sought to deepen the quantity, specificity, and characteristics of the perpetrators of intentional violent lethality in Rio de Janeiro. We should mention that the relevance of this work is addressing the perpetrators, a barely studied topic since most of the research is interested in the victims.

The profile of the ascertained violent lethality perpetrators in the municipality in 2015 consisted predominantly of men (94%), with a mean age of 30.7 years, concentrated in the 20-29 and the 30-39 years' age groups (these age groups plus those of young people under 18 accounted for 81% of the perpetrators), with low education and high records of unemployment or under-occupation and participation in criminal activities and practices. Its characteristics are similar to the profile of victims of violent deaths in the same urban space. That first sentence may sound obvious. However, finding similar characteristics in the perpetrator-victim dyad results from a thorough study of each criminal record of homicides in 2015, which allowed showing this statement. The hypothesis that accompanied the work is that groups of a similar profile confront each other and sacrifice themselves for dominance of territory, weapons, power, and presence when

they fight in the illegal market^{4,5-21}. However, the study points out that not only militiamen and traffickers kill each other. Deaths due to futile or interpersonal reasons (39% of the total) show the spread of a conflictive environment in society, fueled by weapons among civilians, and the latter is responsible for 22% of violent deaths⁵. The several types of violence are mutually potentiating, and conflicting environments are spaces for aggressive experiences and practices both within families, conjugal relationships, work, neighborhoods, and society^{3,5,18-25}.

Rio de Janeiro is a violent municipality. More than that, it has a reputation for being violent. Although it is not the one with the highest homicide rates in the country, the fear of visiting it, living there, establishing a business in its territory tags along. Thus, as Minayo and Constantino¹⁹ point out, we should flee from the idea of criminalizing only the so-called deviants. In contexts of intense perception of violence is a community with loose and fragmented bonds, difficulties in achieving common goals and solving problems such as poverty, territorial deterioration, excessive residential mobility, and ethnic heterogeneity. It is as if fatalism marks a kind of local criminogenic identity, often assumed by society, echoed by the media, and used politically by local authorities who tend to try the magic of social transformation through the police^{5,20-22}.

We highlight the low percentages of elucidation of crime perpetrators and the insufficient completion of the OR, which hinders a more reliable analysis of homicide dynamics and contributes to impunity, one of the significant public security problems in Rio de Janeiro. Noteworthy is the little attention given to the item "occupation" in the records: 180 (46% of the total) of the ORs did not specify it, which is not just a problem in public security, as it also occurs in health information systems.

However, despite the flaws, we could observe that most perpetrators whose activity was noted – those who engaged in trafficking, in the militia, and who committed murder for theft or interpersonal reasons – are primarily unemployed or working in the informal sector. This result suggests that the militia and drug trafficking recruit their workers in this group^{5,11-13,18,21,22,24-26} since the activities they develop hinder simultaneous participation in some productive legal occupation.

Regarding the ethnicity/skin color variable, a large concentration is observed in the "brown and black" group, with 66% of qualified perpetrators against 31% registered as white and 3%

without information, which is similar to the profile of the victims. In other words, the black population does not appear in this local violence setting only as a victim. It is also significantly represented as a perpetrator, mainly due to participation or proximity to groups involved in illegal activities, which is a very delicate conclusion because it may suggest a criminalization of black people, who are already so vulnerable in Brazilian society. Therefore, data must be contextualized historically, understood from the inequality and social degradation conditions in which many people live and the few opportunities they find in a highly competitive society^{5,19}.

The data on education point out that the highest concentration of perpetration is in the groups with the lowest level of education, which allows for at least two reflections. First, a lower level of education may mean more difficulty in resolving conflicts peacefully^{1,5}. Second, it facilitates the inclusion of perpetrators in groups linked to the militia and drug trafficking^{3,4,19-22,24}. On the contrary, a direct link was found between an increase in the level of education and a lower likelihood to be qualified as a perpetrator of homicide. The higher school and professional training levels influence the greater capacity for conflict resolution and the possibilities of finding formal employment¹.

The identification of close ties before the aggression causing death is also a strength of this study. A specific variable evidenced that 64% of the qualified perpetrators in the three categories of crime already had some type of relationship with their victims, whether interpersonal ties or as a result of continued criminal activity in the militia and drug trafficking. In the case of personal ties, the percentage was 39%, including family members (6%), acquaintances (24%), and spouses (9%), reflecting an increase in crimes in specific social spaces, a kind of acculturation by violence, and within them, an intensely conflicting environment^{2,5}.

A relevant but not an unprecedented aspect of the work is the evidence of high proportions of homicides with the use of firearms: 52% of those linked to drug trafficking, which together with the militia add up to 62%, to which the 22% for theft and interpersonal violence are added. According to Cano et al.⁹, the deaths committed by militiamen are certainly much higher than those recorded because they act discreetly, disappearing with disaffected ones.

The above findings do not agree with the idea of social determinism, neither concerning

individuals nor the municipality. Although the adverse conditions of most people joining criminal groups are real, the daily life of Rio is full of examples of impoverished individuals living in areas dominated by traffickers and militias who study, work, and can project themselves. As Sartre recalls in his last interview with "*Le Nouvel Observateur*" (February 1980)²⁷: "Each one is always responsible for what they did to them [...]. That is the definition I would give of freedom: this small movement that makes a social being totally conditioned, a person who is not the totality of what he received from his conditioning. That made Jean Genet a poet, although he was strictly conditioned to be a thief" (Sartre, p.3)²⁷.

In general, we can say that perpetrators and victims are not necessarily previously linked to crime, drug trafficking, and militia. However, these activities have great bearing on the results found here due to the resources of coercion and legitimation of traffickers and militiamen. In the coexistence of part of the population in socially degraded environments lacking social opportunities, a form of violent communication tends to predominate and contributes to situations of disagreements or interpersonal differences culminating in homicide. As Kubrin et al.²² affirm, there is an effect of reciprocity between the behavior of the social system and that of subjects: fear and insecurity generate a low cohesion and participation, curbing people's willingness to engage in formal or informal social control. Thus, a kind of cynicism is created vis-à-vis legal norms. In this social control vacuum, offenders tend to assume power and use cruel sanctions on those who disrespect them, creating a crime subculture²¹.

Another point to comment on is the influence of the external environment on the social system. The effects of macroeconomic and macro-social policies influence crime and informality rates in violent locations. There is empirical evidence that divestment in a given place (Rio de Janeiro case) increases the number of unemployed and poor people, causes demographic instability and a growing number of unsafe housing and informal occupations. A vicious circle is created: economic and tourism opportunities flee, and residents' territorial and social isolation grows^{21,22,24}.

Finally, it is essential to reflect on the role of social interventions to bring about changes in reducing homicide rates²⁸. Arresting perpetrators is not enough. World history is full of examples of what works^{1,26}. There are also successful examples in Brazil^{9,25,29}. One of the most consistent is the

intervention of the “*Fica Vivo*” (Stay Alive) Program of the State of Minas Gerais in areas that combine a high concentration of homicides and preventive and repressive actions. This program includes community participation and social support to solve local issues and focus on young people, both for social actions and repressive actions through the police and legal system. An

impact assessment carried out by Peixoto et al.²⁹ indicates that the *Fica Vivo* program managed to reduce crime and homicides in all six implementing areas, showing that the condition for overcoming an environment of violence depends on investing social, political, and personalized proposals combined with repressive actions by the State. Rio de Janeiro should invest correctly!

Collaborators

RSA Marins worked on data description and statistical analysis. MCS Minayo analyzed the material and was responsible for the final elaboration of the text.

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