

1 **Brazil's Maria da Penha domestic violence police patrols:**
2 **A second-response innovation in preventing re-victimization**

3

4 **ABSTRACT**

5

6 This article examines an innovative domestic violence intervention: some 300 'second-
7 response' police patrols set up since 2015 by military police forces and municipal guards in
8 cities around Brazil. They enforce court-issued protection orders by paying repeat visits to
9 women at high risk, referring them to support services, and ensuring abusers stay away.
10 Drawing on interviews with officers who founded or now lead these patrols, and on local-
11 level police data and studies, the article analyses their origins and modus operandi, and
12 evaluates their impacts on victims, abusers, the community, and internal police force culture.
13 Available evidence shows that victims enrolled in these programmes are much less likely to
14 suffer repeated assault or femicide than those who are not. The article examines how this
15 intervention fits with the other elements of local protection networks and compares these
16 patrols to second-response police interventions developed elsewhere.

17

18 **KEYWORDS:** domestic violence; femicide; second-response policing; Brazil

19

20 INTRODUCTION

21

22 This article examines an innovation in police intervention in domestic violence in Brazil: the
23 300 or so patrols set up since 2015 by military police forces and municipal guards in cities
24 around the country. The main function of these second-response units, generally known as
25 ‘Maria da Penha’ (hereafter MdP) patrols after the eponymous 2006 law on domestic
26 violence, is to enforce court-issued protection orders by paying repeat visits to women at high
27 risk of further violence, referring them to support services, and ensuring that the abusers stay
28 away. The article analyses their origins and modus operandi and evaluates their impacts on
29 victims, abusers, the wider community, and internal police force culture. From a ‘what
30 works’ perspective, available evidence shows that victims enrolled in the MdP patrol
31 programmes are much less likely to suffer repeated assault or femicide than those who are
32 not. The article compares their approach to second-response police interventions developed
33 elsewhere and examines the degree to which this intervention contributes to the protection
34 networks provided by the state, the criminal justice system and civil society.

35

36 RESEARCH DESIGN

37

38 This research was designed firstly to map the emergence and operational characteristics of
39 the MdP patrols, and secondly to estimate their impact. Answering the first research objective
40 is complicated by the highly decentralized nature of law enforcement in Brazil: each of the 26
41 states and the Federal District operates both a military and a civil police force. One fifth of
42 Brazil’s 5,570 municipalities also operate a municipal guard, largely deployed in a preventive,
43 community policing role. There is no central database listing the location and active
44 operational status of MdP patrols, and very little published in the secondary literature, even
45 though some patrols have attracted ‘best practice’ prizes from government, civil society,
46 media outlets and international bodies. The number of MdP patrols in existence (as of June
47 2021) has been estimated by compiling data supplied by state-level military police forces and
48 gleaned from the state appellate courts, which often sign agreements with municipal guards
49 in the absence of military police initiatives. For the analysis of operational practices, the
50 article draws on primary data, including local ordinances and internal standing orders setting
51 out guidelines for local MdP patrols, data provided by police forces, and localized empirical
52 studies, often produced by police ‘pracademics’, that is, officers enrolled in academic
53 programmes in which they carried out primary research. In addition, between 2019 and 2021,

54 I conducted eleven formal interviews with pioneers/coordinators of the MdP patrols in São
55 Paulo city and in the states of Rio Grande do Sul, Minas Gerais, Maranhão, Paraíba, Bahia,
56 Mato Grosso and Espírito Santo, and with officers working with victim protection networks
57 in Ceará, Goiás, and Piauí states. Between 2016-20 I also engaged in informal conversations
58 with dozens of MdP patrol officers who were among the 450 participants in training sessions
59 that I ran whilst developing a police training manual on gender-based violence with the
60 Brazilian Forum on Public Safety (FBSP, 2020b). The latter's project of documenting 'good
61 practices' in policing gender-based violence also provided rich data from around the country.

62 With regard to impact, data must be treated with caution. Brazilian police recorded
63 3,730 female homicides in 2019 (FBSP, 2020a, p. 116). Around half were likely committed
64 by a current or former intimate partner, and should be classified as feminicides, which
65 Brazilian law distinguishes from female homicides and defines as murders motivated by
66 contempt for, or a discriminatory attitude towards, women, or committed within the context
67 of domestic violence (Macaulay, 2021, pp. 44-46). However, many local law enforcement
68 agencies still systematically under-record feminicides. As this improves, the number of
69 feminicides will appear to rise, whereas in reality this simply reflects changed recording
70 practices.

71 There are similar problems in relation to non-lethal domestic violence. In the first
72 half of 2020, women in Brazil reported 110,791 cases of bodily harm, and 238,174 cases of
73 threat to the police (FBSP, 2020, pp. 32-33). As these offences are persistently under-
74 reported, changes over time can be subject to confounding variables. For example, the Covid-
75 19 context of local lockdowns in Brazil in 2020 likely explains a drop of around 10 per cent
76 and 18 per cent in reports of bodily harm and threats in relation to 2019. Also, as the criminal
77 justice system response to domestic abuse improves and victims feel more confident to report
78 incidents, the numbers of reported incidents will rise. This, a lack of baseline victimization
79 surveys, and uneven police recording practices are major caveats to interpreting either time
80 series or comparative data across different jurisdictions. Thus, like most international studies
81 of police interventions in domestic violence, this article examines evidence from city-level
82 studies.

83

84 **CHANGING POLICE INTERVENTIONS IN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

85

86 As an offence, domestic violence has distinctive features that have shaped police approaches
87 to intervention. It encompasses a wide spectrum of abusive behaviours that interfere with the

88 autonomy, safety, and dignity of the victim. These include psychological, emotional,
89 financial, and sexual abuse, as well as physical assault, which can occur over a very long
90 period, creating victims who are unable, for many reasons, to escape their user. Women are
91 revictimized, showing up in police data individually as ‘hot dots’, their households as ‘hot
92 spots’ (Farrell, 2015; Pease et al, 2018).

93 Like victims, offenders are a heterogeneous group (Piquero et al, 2006). Some are
94 ‘escalators’, although intensification from verbal to physical violence may not be linear or
95 predictable. In many cases of femicide in Brazil and elsewhere, a verbal threat may be the
96 only harbinger of a deadly assault. Improved understanding of domestic violence as a form of
97 coercive control (Stark, 2009) or ‘patriarchal terrorism’ (Johnson, 1995) helps to explain such
98 behavior. In Rio de Janeiro, for example, 44 per cent of men accused of femicide in 2019
99 said they were motivated by rage at the victim ending their relationship (Mendes, 2020, p.
100 141), consistent with data from other states and international patterns. Conversely, some
101 abusers are ‘de-escalators’: an episode of violence may be followed by a ‘honeymoon’ period
102 of reconciliation. Victims recognise this lull in violence for what it is, a respite between
103 outbursts of abuse. And some abusers maintain a stable low, or high, level of abuse over a
104 prolonged period.

105 In response, victims become skilled managers of their own security (Monckton Smith,
106 Williams & Mullane, 2014). In seeking to maintain equilibrium, they may not seek help from
107 the police, or disengage after first contact, if the police intervention does not create a new,
108 safer equilibrium but instead provokes the abuser to further violence. As a minimum, then,
109 police interventions should do no harm, and not leave the victim more vulnerable. Police
110 response to domestic violence has also changed markedly since the 1970s. Reluctance to
111 intervene in ‘private’ family conflicts regarded as ‘not real crimes’ has, to a large extent, been
112 overridden by new laws that mandate the first-responder police attending an emergency call-
113 out to arrest the aggressor (Buzawa, 2012). These laws were encouraged by a landmark
114 experimental field study conducted in Minneapolis in the early 1980s that found that police
115 arrest had a deterrent effect on re-offending (Sherman & Berk, 1984). However, further
116 experiments revealed that arrests had no overall effect (Sherman et al, 1992a), a finding
117 confirmed in a more recent meta-analysis of 11 studies (Hoppe et al, 2020). In fact, arrest had
118 a negative effect on socially marginalized offenders with a non-conformist mindset, making
119 them more likely to re-offend (Sherman et al, 1992b).

120 Police forces then began following up with victims as a protection strategy. But such
121 second-response interventions, and literature detailing their impact, are much rarer. One

122 pioneering project was the Domestic Violence Home-Visit Intervention, started in New
123 Haven in 2000. Within 72 hours of a domestic violence incident being reported to the police,
124 a police-advocacy team comprising specially trained officers from the local community
125 policing unit and clinicians or social workers specialized in child trauma and protection,
126 would conduct a home visit (Stover et al, 2009). Over several visits, information about legal
127 and support services was given. The clearest positive impact was that victims were more
128 likely to access child support services and to report further offences to the police. However,
129 analysis of this and similar second-response interventions showed that they still did not
130 reduce the likelihood of repeat assault or encourage the victim to leave the abuser (Stover,
131 2012; Davis, Weisburd & Hamilton, 2010). A different approach is that taken by the Chula
132 Vista, California, police department, which implemented a ‘graduated response protocol’ for
133 domestic incidents between intimate partners. This attempted to avoid direct criminal justice
134 interventions and instead change the norms and behavior within the couple with educational
135 messaging, written warnings, in-person follow-up visits to suspects and victims, and
136 customized problem-solving. Findings showed a reduction in domestic violence crimes by 24
137 per cent (Schmerler et al, 2020), indicating that it is the nature and detailed procedures of the
138 police follow-through with victims and perpetrators that really matter, a point amply
139 demonstrated by the MDP patrols.

140

141 **BRAZILIAN POLICE INTERVENTIONS IN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

142

143 Despite Brazil’s very high levels of social violence and the poor reputation of its police
144 forces, the country has been a pioneer in offering new policing responses to gender-based
145 violence. In 1985 the world’s first ever ‘women’s police station’, was installed in the centre
146 of São Paulo (Santos, 2005). Run by the civil police, they multiplied across the country and
147 were emulated elsewhere, promising women a more sympathetic and effective environment
148 in which to report domestic or sexual abuse than ordinary police stations. However, their role
149 in potentially preventing revictimization has been limited by their relatively low number for
150 the size of the country, and spatial concentration in coastal, metropolitan areas. In 2019, only
151 417 municipalities reported having a women’s police station, a decrease from the 441
152 registered in 2014 (IBGE, 2020). The stations’ remit also varies: in some states women are
153 expected to report domestic or sexual violence only at a women’s station, in others, any
154 precinct will register a case. Some women’s stations will handle any crime committed against
155 a woman, not just domestic or sexual abuse, and some extend their remit to other vulnerable

156 groups such as children and the elderly, somewhat diluting their focus on gender-based
157 offences. Similarly, the other support structures, such as refuges for battered women, are also
158 unevenly distributed and relatively sparse. Thus, many victims of domestic violence will find
159 themselves unable to receive dedicated support from a women's police station or to leave
160 their homes and find safe accommodation.

161 On the other hand, the military police is the one law enforcement institution with
162 universal coverage across the national territory, with some 450,000 officers compared to the
163 civil police's 100,000. State military police forces also consistently report that domestic
164 violence incidents constitute the single largest category of calls to their emergency hotlines,
165 especially at night. In the first six months of 2019, the Rio de Janeiro police recorded 30,617
166 domestic violence-related calls (18.6 per cent of the total volume). Beyond the clear demand
167 for first response police action, the need for effective second-response intervention to enforce
168 court-issued emergency protection orders was also becoming clear (Azevedo et al., 2016).
169 Some 12 per cent of orders granted in Federal District between 2006 and 2012 were breached,
170 with no system for checking on victims or recording their reports of violations (Diniz &
171 Gumieri, 2016, p. 219). In the months leading up to the establishment of the MdP patrols as a
172 state-wide policy, Rio de Janeiro's state law enforcement agency was seeing over 5,000
173 military police units despatched a month to emergency calls relating to domestic violence.
174 Yet, only a very small percentage of those incidents – 8.2 per cent – ended up being officially
175 reported as crimes against women, due to victim reluctance to proceed (TJERJ, 2019).
176 Victims' loss of faith in the police after the initial contact also reflected how they were
177 treated. Qualitative interviews carried out in Porto Alegre with 21 women seeking assistance
178 with domestic violence, and 25 service providers inside criminal justice, health and social
179 work agencies, revealed a system that was disjointed, slow and unresponsive, and often
180 unsympathetic to the victim and her needs (Meneghel et al, 2011). The needs of victims,
181 alongside a number of other factors both internal and external to the military police, meant
182 that second-response police interventions emerged simultaneously in diverse states across
183 Brazil. This occurred in an organic and decentralized way, eventually crystallizing into the
184 MdP patrol model.

185 Internally, operational thinking began to change with the spread of community-
186 oriented policing (COP) experiments that cropped up across Brazil in the 1980s and 1990s.
187 The international literature shows that COP approaches encourage greater attention to
188 preventive policing to protect vulnerable social groups. Thus, in the Federal District of
189 Brasília, the Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence second-response units developed

190 out of a COP literacy project run by the military police in a low-income neighborhood. It
191 quickly shifted focus to domestic violence prevention, and in 2011 the first military police
192 officers were trained for a dedicated patrol, with the project institutionalized in 2014 (TJ-
193 DFT & PMDF, 2015). Similarly, in nearby Goiás state, COP experiments in the early 2000s
194 led the military police to establish a community policing centre in 2013 (Pineiro, 2020, p.
195 115) to which the MdP patrols would later be attached.

196 Another driver was the adoption of North American problem-solving, data-led,
197 results-oriented, and preventive policing approaches, which relied on the quantitative and
198 qualitative analysis of crime data to identify hot spots. MdP patrols frequently start life as
199 pilot projects in hot spot areas. Some of the earliest, in Porto Alegre, were initiated in four
200 high-violence neighborhoods where a community policing programme already operated
201 (Grossi & Spaniol, 2019). In Minas Gerais and Rio Grande do Sul, two of the states where, in
202 the early 2000s, senior officers began to develop second-response policing projects on their
203 own initiative, they were spurred by data and literature on repeat victimization to identify
204 domestic violence as a policing priority (Moreira, 2006; Gerhard, 2014). In the former, the
205 officer was influenced by studies urging immediate intervention so that the aggressor did not
206 feel emboldened and victims were not left more vulnerable, processes that Pease (1998)
207 termed ‘event boosts’ and ‘flags’. He also took inspiration from first- and second-response
208 protocols developed by British police forces in the 1990s (Moreira, 2006).

209 Hot spot/hot dot data analysis also underpinned many state-level homicide reduction
210 initiatives developed in the last two decades. These brought together multiple stakeholders
211 across local government to design tailored strategies aimed at reducing murder rates in
212 particular localities or affecting specific social groups. While the vast majority of domestic
213 violence cases will not end in murder, prioritization of homicide reduction nonetheless
214 provided justification and dedicated resources for domestic violence policing because of
215 awareness that many femicide cases were the culmination of domestic violence cases that
216 had not received police attention. For example, in 2016, the law enforcement administration
217 of Espírito Santo state established the MdP patrols as part of the cross-government homicide
218 reduction programme, *Estado Presente*. At a local policing level, individual battalions
219 similarly developed projects that became the precursors of MdP patrols. In 2014, in Rio de
220 Janeiro state, the 10th battalion set up a tactical group called ‘Guardians of Life’ to tackle
221 homicides of children, the elderly, and women. The project soon focussed on preventing
222 intimate partner violence and femicide when crime report analysis demonstrated that
223 women constituted the bulk of vulnerable victims. The following year, the 38th battalion in

224 Três Rios copied the initiative, creating the model project on which the subsequent state-wide
225 MdP programme, created in 2019, was based (Guimarães & Barros, 2017; Mendes et al, 2020,
226 p. 149). As a result of these factors, in many states, the MdP patrols are institutionally
227 embedded within local, preventive COP units, and linked at headquarters to the state-wide
228 strategic planning and homicide reduction programmes. This enabled states such as Rio de
229 Janeiro, Goiás, Mato Grosso, Rio Grande do Sul and Minas Gerais to institutionalize the MdP
230 patrols and extend their coverage right across the state territory.

231 The main factor external to the police has been the 2006 Maria da Penha law on
232 domestic violence and women's movement pressure on the state to implement it. The law is
233 named after a victim of attempted femicide, whose husband remained at liberty years later
234 due to the slowness of the Brazilian courts. The Inter-American Commission on Human
235 Rights' review of her case included a stinging criticism of the Brazilian government, which
236 led to a broad-based feminist coalition developing a comprehensive law. This legislation gave
237 impetus to early versions of the MdP patrols by explicitly placing new responsibilities on the
238 police forces tasked with crime prevention and first response (military police and municipal
239 guards), not just on the police dedicated to investigation (the civil police).

240 The law is novel in emphasizing protection and prevention (46 articles) over penal
241 aspects such as mandatory arrest and punishment (four articles). Articles 10 and 11 further
242 stipulate that the first-responder police must assist a victim who has been, or is about, to be
243 assaulted; get her to a hospital, a safe place or a police station; and escort her back home to
244 retrieve her belongings, if necessary. Article 22 empowers the courts to grant a wide range of
245 measures intended to assist the victim, keep her and her children in their own home, where
246 possible, and get her social welfare, health and legal assistance. The 'urgent protective
247 measures' that the judge can decree include removal of the aggressor from the family home,
248 and restraining orders prohibiting him from contacting or coming near the victim. The law's
249 emphasis on protective and preventive provisions gave police a reason to work with local
250 victim support networks and legitimated new initiatives. In Rio Grande do Sul, in 2011, a
251 senior military police commander set up 'Operation Peaceful Family' to enforce the
252 protection orders in her area. This attracted the attention of the state governor, who invited
253 her to roll out the project in the capital. Thus, in July 2012, the very first patrols to bear the
254 name of Maria da Penha were launched. They have since spread to all regions of Brazil
255 through a process of horizontal policy mobility and transfer between police forces, with the
256 patrol founders in Rio Grande do Sul and in Bahia, which copied the former's model,
257 becoming the key multipliers of the project.

258

259 **HOW THE PATROLS FUNCTION**

260

261 Broadly speaking, all of the MdP patrols function in the same basic way because their
262 primary duty is to provide the protection, enforcement and prevention outlined in the law. A
263 woman reports domestic violence, either through an emergency hotline, or in person at a
264 police station. After an assessment of her situation, a request for urgent protective measures
265 is made to the court. The local MdP patrol receives the details of the case and visits the
266 victim's home. The patrol team, generally composed of a male and a female officer, speaks to
267 the victim to inform her of her rights and refer her to other partners in the local support
268 network. The perpetrator is separately informed that he is at risk of arrest if he breaks any of
269 the court orders. Thereafter the patrol visits the victim at home, or at work, periodically over
270 a set period of time. The visits may be weekly, but could be less or more frequent, and can be
271 pre-arranged, or unscheduled. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the patrols have made much
272 greater use of electronic communication to check on their clients' welfare.

273 The operating practices of the MdP patrols in different states and municipalities vary
274 slightly, depending on the configuration of local institutional partnerships. For example, risk
275 assessment and triaging of priority cases to pass on to the MdP patrol command may be
276 carried out, variously, by the first response police, the officer in charge of the police precinct
277 receiving the complaint, the women's police station chief, the prosecutor's office, or by the
278 court (especially if this is a specialist Family and Domestic Violence Court), either by the
279 judge alone, or in conjunction with its multidisciplinary professional team. Different agencies
280 use different risk assessment forms, although there have been attempts to standardize these
281 (Macaulay, 2021, pp 94-96).

282 Police have up to 48 hours to file a request for protective measures and the court has
283 up to 48 hours to make a decision. Once granted, the courts either inform the aggressor and
284 victims of the order, which they must then collect in person, or deliver the information
285 through court officials or the police. However, domestic violence situations can be volatile,
286 and this four-day wait leaves the victim exposed. Thus, in some locations the MdP patrols
287 will visit victims as soon as a report has been made, or a request filed for protection. Some
288 states now have fast-track protocols and will process a request for a restraining order within
289 four hours.

290 Whilst local inter-agency arrangements are *sui generis*, there have been attempts, led
291 by one of the key multipliers of the MdP patrols, Major Denice Santiago, to standardize the

292 service offered to victims. She provides to other states and municipalities setting up patrols
293 Bahia's model Technical Cooperation Agreement, which outlines the distinct and
294 interlocking responsibilities of the various criminal justice system agencies and local
295 government bodies. It specifies patrol operating practices in relation to initial risk assessment,
296 data collection, and reporting on the victim's status, providing standardized forms, so that
297 information can be recorded properly and shared through the criminal justice system locally
298 and with other states, via national databases of victims and offenders.

299

300 IMPACT

301

302 So, do the MdPs work? Just as there is no national database of where the patrols are in
303 operation, there is also no national-level study of their impact. Like the second-response
304 experiments in the USA cited above, studies tend to be city-level, consist of time-restricted
305 snapshots, and there are no quasi-experimental studies. The quality of the data provided by
306 police departments and used in such studies is highly variable (Grossi & Spaniol, 2019, p.
307 323), creating benchmarking and methodological problems. Yet, overall, there is a
308 consistency of reported findings across Brazil. Available evidence suggests that the MdP
309 patrols have had a positive impact at several levels, firstly, and directly, on the victims and on
310 the abusers; secondarily, on the local communities where they operate, and thirdly, on the
311 police institutions and their attitudes towards community-oriented, preventive police work
312 and domestic violence intervention.

313 For the victims there are two metrics of success. One can be objectively measured: no
314 further unwanted contact with the abuser and thus no need to report further abusive incidents
315 to the police. There is also the subjective dimension of the victim's personal sense of safety.
316 Recognising this aspect of their role the patrols in Espírito Santo conduct *visitas*
317 *tranquilizadoras* ('reassurance visits'). There is consistent evidence that enrolment in the
318 MdP patrol programme reduces revictimization. Police data from Manaus showed that of 628
319 women in the programme between September 2014 and February 2017 only 7 per cent had
320 suffered renewed violence (Silvestre, 2018, p. 112). A study in Belém do Pará compared
321 police records for 154 women served by the MdP patrol between 2016 and 2019. Prior to
322 enrolment, 22 per cent of women had reported three incidents to the police, and 16 per cent
323 had reported four. After enrolment, 60 per cent reported no further incidents, and 22 per cent
324 reported only one further incident (Bernardo, 2019 p. 110). Similarly, interviews with 37
325 MdP programme clients in Vila Velha, Espírito Santo state, found that 65 per cent had not

326 had to call the police again (Braga, 2017, pp. 43-53). This study replicated an earlier
327 questionnaire employed by one of the pioneers of the patrols, Lt Col Nádia Gerhard whose
328 extensive study surveyed the impact on 147 of the 1,468 women assisted by the MdP patrol
329 between October 2012 and October 2013 in Porto Alegre (Gerhard, 2014, pp. 144-161). In
330 terms of user satisfaction, 94 per cent of respondents rated the service as good or excellent in
331 Porto Alegre, as did 87 per cent in Vila Velha. The overwhelming majority – 88 and 95 per
332 cent respectively – reported that the restraining order alone had not been sufficient to make
333 them feel safe, and 91 per cent and 78 per cent agreed that they felt safer enrolled in the
334 programme.

335 The primary objective of the patrols is to enforce the stay-away order, that is, to
336 influence the behavior of the abuser. Data provided by police forces typically give the
337 number of arrests for violations. In the early days of the MdP patrols, a high number of
338 arrests was often presented as demonstrating police success in the task of enforcement.
339 However, increasingly a *low* number of arrests is being heralded as success in the task of
340 deterrence (Hanashiro & Sobral, 2017, p. 40). In relation to the offender, the relevant metric
341 is now prevention, not detention. The two studies above revealed that in 86 per cent of cases
342 in Porto Alegre the order was being respected (65 per cent in Vila Velha). Like the Chula
343 Vista project cited above, the police also employ behavioral modification tools. Police forces
344 are also increasingly using electronic tagging to monitor the movements of abusers, alerting
345 the wearer, the victim and police if they come within a certain range of the victim. As
346 violation of a protection order became an imprisonable offence in 2018, abusers themselves
347 will take evasive action to avoid a breach.

348 The close monitoring of the abuser has also inhibited lethal violence, as one of the
349 features of femicide is the tendency of aggressors to stalk the victim. Most MdP
350 programmes reported, in their data or interviews, that there had been not a single femicide,
351 actual or attempted, of a woman enrolled in the programme (Hanashiro & Sobral, 2017, p. 40;
352 Hanashiro & Schlittler 2019, p. 47). Overwhelmingly, the victims of femicide are those
353 women who have not reported abuse to the police and therefore have no restraining order.
354 Recent state-level data confirms this: 93 per cent of the 30 femicide victims in 2019 in
355 Mato Grosso do Sul had no protection order at the time of their murder (Roca, 2020). In Rio
356 Grande do Sul, 94 per cent of 79 femicide victims in 2020 held no restraining order and 82
357 per cent had not previously reported any domestic abuse to the police (DPGV/DIPAM, 2021).

358

359 Clearly, one of the most effective ways to prevent femicide in the context of
360 domestic abuse to increase women's confidence in reporting to the police. The visibility of
361 the patrols, with their specially badged vehicles, as well as the word-of-mouth effect from
362 satisfied service-users, tends to spur other women in the community to report domestic abuse
363 to the police for the first time. In Porto Alegre, 70 per cent of respondents said that at least
364 one of their neighbors had done so (40 per cent in Vila Velha). The two studies also showed
365 that trust in the police rose markedly. Most official reports show a surge in reporting of
366 domestic violence and a concomitant rise in the number of protection orders issued where
367 patrols are active. In Mato Grosso, the courts issued an average of 61 protection orders a
368 month in 2019, which tripled to 190 a month in 2020.

369 The accessibility and visibility of the patrols, which also conduct routine patrolling
370 and policing work, have also led to greater trust in, and legitimacy for, a police presence in
371 communities that are either neglected or overpoliced. This has the additional effect of
372 validating community-oriented and preventive work within the military police, where there is
373 still significant resistance. It furthermore validates law enforcement work on domestic
374 violence, which is often seen as 'not real policing', a sinecure, and a waste of police
375 resources. The patrols are also having some impact on gendered police cultures. Their
376 proliferation has prompted the promotion of more women to command positions, whilst
377 programmes have been developed inside some forces to deal with police officers who are
378 themselves domestic abusers (Schlittler, 2019). Bahia, Maranhão and the Federal District
379 military police now also have units dedicated to supporting female officers around domestic
380 violence, sexual harassment and other forms of bullying and discrimination. That said, the
381 military police's highly militarized and macho culture remains embedded and reproduced in
382 their training, hierarchy and internal discipline. The fact that a great deal of routine police
383 patrol work involves informal conflict resolution and social assistance, and that second-
384 response policing is centred on care for victims, is unlikely, in the absence of deeper
385 structural reforms, to override police cultures built around masculinity and the use of force. It
386 is more likely that the MdP patrols will create a bounded sub-culture within police forces,
387 much like the community-policing initiatives, which exist in parallel with the dominant
388 police ethos.

389

390 **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

391

392 The MdP patrols represent a significant innovation as a second-response intervention in
393 situations of domestic abuse from which Northern countries could learn. There are
394 similarities to the US experiments mentioned earlier: the law mandates arrests for offences
395 involving physical injury, the patrols make visits to the household post-offence, and they
396 consciously seek to modify the conduct of the abuser. However, there are points of difference.
397 The patrols' focus on enforcement of the protection order means that they are not just victim-
398 focussed but also offender-focussed. With regard to the victim, the patrols' follow-up is more
399 prolonged than in US models and tailored to individual circumstances. By deploying
400 additional tools of focussed deterrence policing such as electronic tagging, they shift the onus
401 of compliance onto the offender, removing the burden of personal safety work from the
402 victim. This shift had already been established, in principle, by the Maria da Penha law which
403 enabled the civil police and the courts to constrain the movements of the abuser, and the
404 patrols have provided the necessary enforcement. Thus, the MdP patrols do not just improve
405 survivors' trust in the police to report further offences, but also significantly reduce the
406 likelihood of re-offending on the part of abusers.

407 The women's police stations constituted an important earlier innovation in offering
408 women an alternative first-response institutional space in which to report domestic violence
409 and get help (Carrington et al, 2020). However, the evidence is weak that, by themselves,
410 they prevent further victimization, including femicide (Perova & Reynolds, 2017), given
411 that women have to seek out the investigative police after the fact. The MdP patrols
412 developed to fill the enforcement gap and form a necessary, although not sufficient, element
413 of local municipal protection networks set up to assist survivors of domestic violence. These
414 consist of the agencies of the criminal justice system (police stations, prosecutor's and public
415 defender's offices, the local courts), state-provided social services, NGOs and voluntary
416 groups. The patrols depend on these networks: expansion of the scheme to more cities is
417 always contingent on robust local partnerships. They also add a much-needed enforcement
418 dimension to these pre-existing services.

419 The patrols also constitute a vital form of tertiary prevention. They go to the victim,
420 rather than vice versa, and they deploy secondary prevention tools such as risk assessment in
421 shaping their service response to clients. To some extent, like the women's police stations,
422 they contribute to primary prevention strategies, with patrol members giving talks about
423 domestic violence in schools, civil society organizations and state bodies. In Bahia, male
424 MdP patrol officers run preventive awareness sessions for men in areas reporting high levels
425 of domestic violence (Bueno & Brigagão, 2018). However, primary prevention requires a

426 major cultural shift in Brazilian society around women's status, rights and bodily autonomy,
427 and is a task far beyond the remit of the criminal justice system (Pasinato, Machado & Ávila,
428 2019). From a critical feminist criminological perspective, the patrols throw up paradoxes.
429 On the one hand, the focus on protection and prevention means that, after the first offence,
430 they are arresting fewer aggressors for re-offending or violation of the court order and are
431 able to divert these men into therapeutic and behavioral solutions, rather than jail. On the
432 other hand, the protection framework also invites a paternalistic view of abused women as
433 both 'innocent' and vulnerable, which partly explains why socially conservative police
434 officers continue to support and advocate for these patrols. But, does it matter if a good
435 policy is pursued by some for the wrong reasons as long as it works for the victims?

436 User satisfaction surveys indicate that an immediate need is being met by the patrols,
437 but this does not negate the poor, discriminatory, uncomprehending or condescending
438 treatment that domestic violence victims still encounter within the criminal justice system,
439 even from those professionals who are supposed to be specialized in handling gender-based
440 violence (IJSN, 2019, p. 60). Inadequate specialist training means that victims are frequently
441 still subjected to sexist, racist, classist and transphobic prejudices when trying to claim their
442 right to social and physical protection. Police often have a very superficial understanding of
443 domestic violence and of the Maria da Penha law. Specialist training programmes is
444 generally provided to officers who volunteer for the MdP patrols but can vary from minimal
445 to very comprehensive and regular. As the patrols become more institutionalized in their
446 force, sessions on domestic violence are also now being incorporated into basic training for
447 new recruits.

448 Although the existence of the MdP patrols has improved local collaboration between
449 the military or municipal police and the civil police and courts, police work is often still
450 balkanized, with officers often unclear about the specific responsibilities of other partners and
451 how to work with them to meet victim needs more seamlessly. Inter-agency coordination and
452 coverage in a dispersed criminal justice system remain the biggest challenges to improving
453 the support given to domestic violence victims. Just as the women's police stations have
454 limited geographical coverage, so MdP patrols based in the major cities are limited in their
455 reach. In order to cover rural areas, therefore, all military police need training on domestic
456 violence first-response intervention, whilst some states are engaging municipal guards in
457 small towns to perform the second-response patrol task. Military police in Minas Gerais and
458 Bahia have been developing specific outreach tools to engage women in agrarian, indigenous
459 and black rural communities, in acknowledgement of their distinctive cultures (Santos, 2019).

460 The strongest finding and recommendation derived from the above account is that
461 comprehensive domestic violence legislation that empowers police to enforce, protect and
462 prevent, rather than just mandates the arrest of offenders, is necessary to enable effective
463 second-response interventions. The second recommendation is that equal attention should be
464 given to both victim and abuser, given that the former's primary concern is with the latter's
465 conduct. The third is that follow-up should be prolonged and repeated, if necessary. The
466 fourth is that close working partnerships between different agencies, including those of the
467 justice system, should encourage harmonised and standardized working practices that
468 improve information-sharing, and prevent victims from falling through the cracks. Taken
469 together, these measures can improve women's personal safety and increase their autonomy
470 and wellbeing, which, ultimately, should be the aim of any criminal justice sector policy to
471 tackle the persistent problem of domestic abuse.

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