homicide rates (see Figure 2). With a rate of 12.0 per 100,000 people, El Salvador is the country with the highest femicide rate, followed by Jamaica (10.9), Guatemala (9.7), and South Africa (9.6). In countries marked by high levels of lethal violence, women are more frequently attacked in the public sphere, including by gangs and organized criminal groups; in this context, femicides often take place in a general climate of indifference and impunity.

**Intimate partner violence**

The majority of perpetrators of femicides are male, frequently family members or friends of the victim, and often a current or former intimate partner. The close relationship between perpetrators and victims can sometimes facilitate identification of the author of the crime.

A sample study of 54 countries and territories providing information on relationships between perpetrators and victims of femicide reveals that the proportion of IPV-related lethal violence is rather low in countries with high femicide rates. For example, in El Salvador and Colombia, which feature among the countries with the highest femicide rates, only three per cent of all femicides are committed by a current or former intimate partner, whereas in Cyprus, France, and Portugal (all countries with low or very low femicide rates) killings of women by former and current partners account for more than 80 per cent of all cases (Alvazzi del Frate, 2011, pp. 129–30).

Strikingly, the majority of IPV-related femicide victims experienced prior violence and physical abuse from the same perpetrator (Campbell et al., 2003, p. 1091).

IPV-related victimization often leads to self-directed violence. In the United States, for example, 35 to 40 per cent of victims who survived domestic violence attempted to commit suicide at some point during or after the termination of the abusive relationship. Research conducted in the European Union reveals that of all cases of deaths occurring in the wake of spousal violence, 42 per cent were due to suicide (Psytel, 2010, pp. 9–10).

**Firearms**

Firearms play an important role in lethal violence. The *Global Burden of Armed Violence 2008* estimates that on average 60 per cent of all homicides are committed with firearms (Geneva Declaration Secretariat, 2008, p. 5). The display of firearms—as a means to intimidate, threaten, or coerce someone—is a predictor of their actual use.