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MORE THAN 47,500 CASES OF WILFUL BODILY HARM AGAINST ADULT WOMEN BY PARTNERS OR EX-PARTNERS WERE RECORDED BY THE POLICE AND GENDARMERIE IN 2007, 31% MORE THAN IN 2004

Recorded cases of violence against women by a partner or ex-partner averaged 18.7 per 10,000 women in metropolitan and overseas France in 2007.

This rate was lower than 10 per 10,000 in 12 départements and neared 50/10,000 in Seine-Saint-Denis and French Guiana

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Since it was founded in November 2003, the French National Monitoring on Crime (OND) has made considerable use of statistical data on crimes and petty crimes recorded by the national police services and *gendarmerie* units and on people suspected of these crimes. To these it has added data from the victimisation studies made in partnership with INSEE.

For these two types of statistical source, the OND's approach consists in establishing a methodology for analysing data and distributing and commenting on the resulting indicators. For example, regarding physical crime, the OND uses data from the "Etat 4001" tool for recording crimes and petty crimes to make statistics on recorded cases of theft- and non-theft related physical violence, while using victimisation studies to assess the prevalence and frequency of violent theft and non-theft related violence, whether or not the victim has filed a complaint.

More than the numbers of recorded cases or the proportion of victims of a certain type of crime in a certain year, the OND is interested in trends in these figures over several years. This hinges on being able to compare data from one year to the next and on ensuring statistical continuity in data collection.

The OND reminds readers that short- and medium-term trends in the number of cases recorded by the police and *gendarmerie* should never be confused with trends in actual criminality. Recorded cases are what the police and *gendarmerie* know about committed crimes. This information is supplemented with the results of victimisation studies, used to measure the frequency of crimes by directly surveying a sample population. This enables the OND to measure the share of crimes that are reported.

Inspired by the British Crime Survey made by the UK Home Office, in January 2007 INSEE and the OND set up a yearly victimisation survey called "Living Environment and Security". This tool can be used to study all forms of violence, including acts committed by people close to the victim, including a partner or ex-partner. The OND published an article on this topic in November 2007¹. Its 2008 study, the results of which will soon be ready for analysis, will be used to further knowledge in this area.

On the specific question of conjugal violence, the OND has sought, since its report of March 2006², to bring together the different data available on complaints. Because "Etat 4001" does not include information on the link between the perpetrator and the victim, it cannot be used to distinguish between this type of violence and other recorded categories of violent crime. The OND thus had to address itself separately to the French central public security directorate (DCSP), the *Paris Préfecture de Police* (chief of police) and the central directorate of the national *gendarmerie* to compile statistics on recorded cases of conjugal violence.

Since then, while taking account of the methodological problems posed by the different methods used to count complaints of conjugal violence (see developments), the OND has attempted to establish common indicators for the range of bodies that record them. In this article, the OND looks at trends in the number of recorded cases of violence against adult women by a partner or ex-partner between 2004 and 2007. The OND analyses geographical disparities by comparing the number of complaints filed in each département with the population of adult women in the département.

It would be redundant to use this data to establish a ranking by département on violence against women by partners. Any active support structure or information policy serves to increase the number of complaints. This indicator alone cannot be used to discern whether violent acts or recorded violent acts are increasing. Thanks to the "Living Environment and Security" surveys, the OND will in the coming years have the information it needs to distinguish between the two.

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- (1) "Les victimes de violences physiques et de violence sexuelles en 2005 et 2006" (Victims of physical and sexual violence in 2005 and 2006) from the OND annual report of November 2007 [1].
(2) "Éléments de mesure des violences entre conjoints" (Measuring acts of conjugal violence) from the OND annual report of March 2006 [2].

MAIN INFORMATION

Based on data from the central public security directorate, the Paris chief of police and the central directorate of the national *gendarmerie*, the OND estimates that 47,573 cases of wilful bodily harm against adult women by a partner or ex-partner³ were recorded in metropolitan France and the four overseas *départements* in 2007. This type of violence accounted for 25.6% of all recorded cases of physical violence against people aged over 15 in 2007.

The OND has an estimate of the number of recorded cases of wilful bodily harm against adult women by a partner, by *département*, since 2004. In 2004, 36,231 such cases were reported – a number that rose 31.1% (12,835 additional cases) in 2007.

The trend grew steadily from 2004 but accelerated strongly in 2006, and in 2007 in particular. The three successive annual increases were 2.1% in 2005, 10.9% in 2006 and 16% in 2007. This 16% corresponds to 6,558 more recorded cases of violence against women by a partner in 2007 than in 2006, or more than half of the increase recorded over three years.

In the same period, recorded cases of physical violence against over-15s also rose – by 28% from 144,100 in 2004 to 184,500 in 2007 (+40,371 cases).

Thus it is not so much by the intensity but by the acceleration, particularly in 2007, in the rise of recorded cases of wilful bodily harm against women by a partner since 2004 that sets this category apart from other violent acts. Between 2006 and 2007, recorded cases of wilful bodily harm rose 4.8%, three times less than violence against women by a partner.

HOW TO INTERPRET THESE TRENDS?

The OND's first hypothesis concerns information collection. It may be that, through a process of raising awareness on conjugal violence, the police and the *gendarmerie* are

now more exhaustive in their detection of cases of conjugal violence.

The second hypothesis is based on changes in legislation. In May 2006, the legal system in France broadened the notion of aggravating circumstances of violent acts committed by a partner or common-law husband of wife, to include ex-partners and ex-common law husbands and wives as well as people linked by a civil pact of solidarity. Cases that previously were not recorded as offences, since they resulted in a full sick leave period equal to or less than eight days, are under the new law considered as crimes, which may explain part of the increase.

This argument is reinforced by the data gathered by the public security services, which established that the only increase between 2004 and 2007 was in the number of acts of wilful bodily harm against women by a partner resulting in full sick leave of less than eight days (+39.4%). The same acts resulting in a full sick leave period of more than eight days decreased, by 7.6%.

These two hypotheses have in all likelihood had an impact on the acceleration of the increase. But in themselves they cannot explain the phenomenon as such, given that the phenomenon concerns not just violent acts by a partner but all acts of violence qualified by the OND as non-theft related.

Explaining an increase in recorded cases of violent acts requires that direct surveys of the population are made in parallel, to determine the share and number of people who say they have been victims of violence whether or not they filed a complaint.

These surveys, known as victimisation studies, provide information on the share of victims that file complaints, known as the complaint rate. The number of recorded cases is a result of this rate: if it rises while at the same time the number of victims remains stable, the number of recorded cases will follow the same trend. If we do not measure trends in complaint rates, it is impossible to assert that the rising number of complaints results from a rising number of victims.

THE RESULTS OF THE VICTIMISATION STUDY ON VIOLENT ACTS AGAINST WOMEN OR MEN AGED 18 TO 60 COMMITTED BY A PARTNER

As part of the yearly victimisation studies developed by the OND in partnership with INSEE, "Living Environment and Security",

more than 10,000 people aged 18 to 60 were interviewed on acts of physical violence they may have suffered in the 2005-2006 period. Because this survey was the first of the series, it is not yet possible to establish a trend that can be compared with the trend in recorded cases. However, we can, using survey answers, estimate the number of victims and the complaint rate for 2005 and 2006..

Around 2.3% of women aged 18 to 60 interviewed between January and March 2007 said they had been victims of physical violence by a partner or ex-partner in 2005/2006. Their number is estimated at 410,000, or just under 48% of the women who said they had been victims of at least one act of physical violence in the same period.

No more than 21% of women aged 18 to 60 who said they had been victims of violence from a partner or ex-partner filed a complaint. This complaint rate varies according to the relationship of the victim's couple. Women suffering physical violence from their current partner filed a complaint in less than 9% of cases, while a complaint was filed over 50% of the time for violent acts committed by ex-partners.

We evaluate that around 85,000 women aged 18 to 60 filed a complaint against a partner or ex-partner in 2005-2006. This figure, furnished by the survey, is consistent with the number of recorded cases of violence against adult women by a partner in 2005 and 2006 in metropolitan France (or a little over 75,000).

The percentage of men aged 18 to 60 saying they were victims of violence inflicted by a partner or ex-partner in 2005-2006 is estimated at 0.7%, or just under 130,000 of the total population. Practically no male victims filed a complaint for the violent act.

National data on recorded cases of violence against adult men is available only from the *gendarmerie*. In 2007, out of a total 13,862 recorded cases of violence against adults by a partner, 11,545 of the victims were women and 2,137 men, or 16.7%. In 2006, this share was 14%. It increased by 2.7 percentage points in one year because, between 2006 and 2007, the *gendarmerie* reported a 42.1% rise in wilful bodily harm against men, compared with a 26.1% rise for women.

••• (3) For the rest of the article, for reasons of clarity and brevity, the idea of "ex-partner" will be considered implicit (see "definitions").

FROM 6.1 RECORDED CASES PER 10,000 WOMEN IN THE CREUSE DÉPARTEMENT TO 50.1/10,000 IN THE SEINE-SAINT-DENIS DÉPARTEMENT

The metropolitan and overseas police and gendarmerie recorded an average 18.7 cases of wilful bodily harm for 10,000 adult women (or 18.7‰) in 2007. This rate varied strongly within the country. In the Creuse département (6.1‰) and 12 other départements, it was under 10‰, while in two others, Seine-Saint-Denis (50.1‰) and French Guiana (49.1‰), it was around 50‰.

The rate was under 15‰ in most départements, stretching in a band between Franche-Comté to Brittany, via Auvergne. Departments where the rate exceeded 20‰ were in northern France (and northern Paris in particular) including Eure (22.2‰) and Pas-de-Calais (23.2‰). The rate was higher than 25‰ in the Somme (27.4‰) and Val d'Oise (30.9‰) départements.

Other French zones where the rate for this crime exceeded 20‰ in 2007 were to be found in the south – for example in Bouches-du-Rhône (25.3‰) and Gironde (20.5‰) – and overseas. The rate was at least 5 points higher than

the national average in the three island overseas départements of Guadeloupe (23.8‰), Martinique (24.5‰) and Reunion (28.9‰).

A range of other indicators have to be taken into account when interpreting these rates, such as the share of violent acts on women by a partner in all violent acts and the trend in the number of recorded cases since 2004. Analysis of these indicators in the Seine-Saint-Denis département suggests that an active policy of fighting against conjugal violence – based in particular on encouraging people to file complaints – has contributed to the considerable increase in the number of recorded cases.

THE NATIONAL MONITORING CENTRE ON CRIME

DEPARTMENT



Organization

The National Monitoring Centre on Crime (OND) is one of the Institute's three departments.

Its strategic independence is ensured by a National Crime Council, which is at liberty to decide on and set the objectives of the studies and research in the areas covered by the OND, which takes into account the requests of the Ministry of the Interior.

The Council's mission is to define a strategy that will guarantee the reliability and relevance of statistical data on security.

This Council has 29 members: 17 representatives of civil society, including national and local elected officials, academics and researchers, media professionals, representatives of associations, professional bodies and private organisations (French Banking Federation, the Union Sociale pour l'Habitat), whose activities are affected by crime; 11 representatives of ministries (Defence, Justice, Interior, Finance, Transport, Urban Affairs, Overseas Dependencies, Research and Education); and the INHES director, in an advisory capacity.

The Minister of the Interior inaugurated the National Crime Council of the National Monitoring Centre on Crime on 4 November 2003. Its chair is Alain Bauer, a criminologist, who is assisted by the vice chair, François-Noël Buffet, senator of Rhône.

Missions and Resources

The National Monitoring Centre on Crime has the following missions:

- 1 – Collect statistical data on crime from all ministerial departments as well as public and private organisations that have direct or indirect knowledge of facts or situations concerning attacks on persons or property;
- 2 – Use the collected data to make global or specific crime analyses;
- 3 – Pass on the findings of these analyses to the concerned ministries and to OND's partners;
- 4 – Ensure that indicators, data collection and data analysis are consistent;
- 5 – Facilitate exchanges with other monitoring organisations and in particular the Urban Problem Area Monitoring Unit (ONZUS);
- 6 – Lead a network of correspondents;
- 7 – Organise the dissemination of these data to the public

Methodology

The National Crime Monitoring Department is focused on the collection of statistical data. It compiles a complete list of available sources. When the OND obtains statistics, it determines to what extent they can account for the phenomena it is studying. Its methodology is thus to draw on a variety of sources, especially the results of crime victim surveys, which the OND has conducted since January 2005 in collaboration with France's statistical bureau, INSEE, and which was expanded in 2007.

Furthermore, since January 2006, the OND has published monthly bulletin on the crime recorded by the police and *gendarmerie* in the country.