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## IN 2008, 7 IN 10 OF ALL PEOPLE ACCUSED OF CRIMES AND MISDEMEANOURS WERE ADULT MEN

Over 5 years, the number of accused adult males increased faster than the number of juvenile males. However, the increases in the number of juvenile males accused of offences involving violence or threats (excluding robbery) are higher

Julie BOÉ, OND statistician

A few weeks after the publication of the statistics relating to charges and people accused for the year 2008 (see «Grand Angle 16» [1]), the Observatoire National de la Délinquance (OND) - French national monitoring centre on crime – is continuing to analyse the accusation data, this time looking at gender and age.

The concept of «accusation» (see definitions) is an identified state in the crime statistics that is common to both the police and the gendarmerie; it is known as «état 4001». It is not something that is laid down in the code of penal procedure, as being interviewed under caution is, since accusations are recorded before any legal decision about prosecution has been taken.

A person is considered accused on the basis of a methodology (see developments) and not on the basis of an objective situation with regard to the author of a crime or misdemeanour. The characteristics of the accused, whether juvenile or adult, male or female, are not those of the «offender» in the legal sense but those of people that, from the point of view of the police and gendarmerie, have sufficient evidence against them to suppose that they may have committed the offence of which they are accused. Similarly, only some of the authors of offences are taken in for questioning, accused, prosecuted and then finally convicted. The accusation statistics, as well as those for convictions, reflect only the characteristics of the offenders known to the authorities.

Since 2007 and in partnership with INSEE, the OND has been conducting annual victimisation surveys, known as «environment and security surveys» with a view to incorporating the information that the statistics miss, in particular when victims have not made a complaint. In the November after the data has been collected, the OND publishes the initial results of the survey for that year in its annual report.

Comparisons have been made in the 2008 annual report between the number of charges following complaints and the estimated number of incidents reported by the people questioned for the survey. The victimisation surveys provide a tool that measures the characteristics of victims, whether or not they reported the incident (see article «Victims of physical violence in the environment and security surveys 2007 and 2008» [2]).

There are parallel surveys with the aim of questioning individuals about offences they have committed. These «self reported criminality» surveys make it possible to study the profile of the people that state they have committed offences. However, there is no mechanism equivalent to national victimisation surveys in relation to «self reported criminality». This is because of the nature of the questions that for the survey consist of identifying involvement in offences.

The projects in existence that interest the OND usually consist of questioning people between the ages of 15 and 25 outside the home setting, for example in educational establishments, on the basis of the most widespread self reported criminality model.

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There are therefore no national data to complement the accusation data, as is the case with the victimisation survey and charges recorded by the police and *gendarmerie*.

The absence of additional data means employing a certain amount of prudence in terms of extrapolating the information about accusations to offenders. Consequently, rather than the figures themselves it is the variations over time in the accusation statistics that provide an indication of the trends, which in all probability are valid, including in relation to offenders.

It is better to consider qualitative rather than quantitative information. For example if for a given type of offence, the proportion of juveniles accused is particularly high or low in relation to the average, the hypothesis could legitimately be put forward that this observation can be generalised to offenders, even though there is no direct information about them.

Making the data available, which the present «*Grand Angle*» is involved in and which is one of the main missions of the OND, offers readers and in the first instance journalists the opportunity of making their own interpretations and their own presentations. They may on occasion contradict the methodology advocated by the OND. This freedom should not encourage the OND to publish less but, as it already does, to vigorously pursue its educational efforts along with each publication.

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## MAIN LESSONS

### Developments between 2003 and 2008 in the number of people accused of crimes and misdemeanours on the basis of gender and age

Of the 1 172 393 people accused of crimes or misdemeanours in 2008 1 817 405 were adult males, i.e. 69.7%. The numbers of accused male juveniles and of females – both juveniles and adults – is almost equal: in 2008 177 772 male juveniles were accused (i.e. 15.2%) and 177 216 females, of which 147 167 were adults (12.6% of accusations) and 30 049 juveniles (2.6%).

The number of accusations steadily increased between 2003 and 2008 for all ages and genders. However the rate of increase varied depending on the category of the accusation. In 5 years the number of male adults increased by nearly 25%, i.e. 162 667 more accusations.

This increase is mainly due to accusations resulting from offences discovered as a result of the action of the police services: between 2003 and 2008 the number of male adults accused as a result of offences discovered as a result of police action went from 212 500 to 316 500, i.e. up 49%. This increase of over 100,000 accusations over the 5 year period represents 64% of the variation in the total number of adults accused over the period in question. Male adults are the sole group among those accused in which more than half of the increase comes from offences discovered as a result of the action of the police services. It notably increased their relative proportion within all accusations for these offences. It reached nearly 82% in 2008.

In 2003, fewer than 122 000 adult females were accused of crimes or misdemeanours. The number increased by 20.7% over 5 years, i.e. a rate of increase just lower than that for adult males but which is on the basis of a very different number of accusations (25 244 more accusations). The proportion of adult females in the total number of accusations has hardly changed in 5 years (minus 0.1 of a point).

Juveniles – both male and female – are the two categories that demonstrate the clearest variations: the number of female juveniles accused increased by more than 27% over the 5 year period (6 412 more female juveniles accused), which is higher than that for adults, whether male or female. On the other hand, the increase in the number of male juveniles accused was proportionately lower than in the other two categories: it was up around 13.9% between 2003 and 2008. In terms of numbers, it corresponds to 21 647 additional accusations made against juvenile males in 5 years.

The discrepancy observed between accusations in respect of male adults and male juveniles between 2003 and 2008 produced an increase in the proportion of male adults in relation to the total number of accused people (up 1.2 points in 5 years) and a fall in the proportion of male juveniles (minus 1.1 points). In 2003, 68.5% of the accused were male adults and 16.3% male juveniles. The proportion of juvenile females changed very little (up 0.1 of a point).

Offences involving violence or threat (excluding robbery) are responsible for more than half the increase in the number of juveniles accused – whether male or female: 59.3% of the increase in the number of male juveniles and 55.5% of the increase in the number of female

juveniles can be explained by their involvement in deliberate acts of physical violence (excluding robbery).

Over 5 years, the number of female juveniles accused of violence or threats (excluding robbery) more than doubled (up 101.1%, i.e. 3 558 more accusations), and the number of male juveniles increased by 51.5% (12 830 more accusations). In 2008, 7,079 female juveniles and 37 762 male juvenile were accused of these offences, respectively representing 3% and 15.9% of the accusations. These proportions are up on 2003: they were then 2% for female juveniles and 14.4% for male juveniles.

The proportion of adult males among those accused of offences involving violence and threat (excluding robbery) fell, going from 73.8% in 2003 to 71% in 2008, not because the numbers fell but because these accusations increased less sharply than in the other categories: 31.8% in 5 years, i.e. 40 574 more male adults accused. In comparison, the proportion of female adults was fairly stable (up 0.3 of a point). In 2008, female adults represented 10.1% of physical assault accusations (excluding robbery).

Between 2003 and 2005, the number of accusations in respect of property crime offences increased fairly uniformly: up 4.6% for juveniles – male and female – up 2.5% for adult males and up 2.2% for adult females. Since 2005, the number of accusations fell 5.3% for adults and 1.4% for juveniles. On the other hand, the number of females accused continued to increase: between 2005 and 2008 it rose by 10.5% for juvenile females and 3.5% for adult females, notably because of «simple theft» type property crimes including shoplifting.

Consequently the proportion of females increased in relation to property crime offences. In 2003, 10.8% and 4.4% of accusations for this type of offence related to adult and juvenile females respectively. In 2008 the same proportions were 11.4% and 5.1%. Note that the increase was mainly concentrated between 2007 and 2008.

With regard to accusations for fraud or economic and financial offences (excluding labour legislation), the increase in the number of adults was more pronounced than in the number of juveniles, very few of whom indeed were accused of this type of offence. Over 5 years the number of adult females accused was up by 24.5% (4 556 more accusations) and the number of male adults accused up by 19.5% (9, 355 more accusations).

In 2003, 68.5% of accusations in respect of fraud or economic and financial offences (excluding labour legislation), were adult males, 26.5% adult females, 3.5% male juveniles and 1.5% female juveniles. In 2008, the proportion of adult females increased by almost 1 point at 27.4% of accusations, and the proportion of adult males fell by 0.6 of a point, whereas as the proportion of juveniles changed

very little (minus 0.1 of a point for both male and female juveniles).

### **The spread of accusations on the basis of age, gender and type of offence in 2008**

The proportion of adult males accused varies considerably depending on the type of crime or misdemeanour. Although it is over 80% for offences discovered as a result of the action of the police services, it is under 60% for property crime offences. In terms offences involving violence and threats (excluding robbery) or fraud and economic and financial offences (excluding labour legislation), it is nearly 70%, i.e. the average level for all crimes and offences.

Of the 310 068 people accused of property crime offences in 2008, 171 250 were adult males, i.e. 55.2% of all accusations, and 87 778 were juvenile males, i.e. 28.3%. For some categories of property crime offences, the proportion of juvenile males rises to nearly 40%, or even higher than this threshold. It is 36.3% for motor vehicle related theft and 39.2% for theft with violence, with an even higher proportion, 43.8%, for theft with violence without a weapon. It is particularly high, nearly 50%, for criminal damage and

vandalism aimed at public property. In comparison, few juveniles were accused of offences discovered as a result of the action of the police services: under 10% of accusations in 2008.

Like male juveniles, female juveniles are more widely represented in property crime offences (5.1% of accusations) than in offences such as fraud and economic and financial offences (1.4% of accusations) or offences discovered as a result of the action of the police services (0.8%). Among property crime offences, the proportion of female juveniles is notably higher for accusations of pick pocketing (23.9% of accusations were female juveniles), shop lifting (14%) or theft with violence without weapon against women (11.4%).

In 2008, adult females represented one accusation in 8 overall (12.6%). For some offences this average figure is much lower, for example offences discovered as a result of the action of the police services (7.6%). It sometimes reached over 25%, i.e. one accusation in 4: 26% of accusations for shop lifting relate to adult females and this rate, which is 27.4% for fraud and economic and financial offences (excluding labour legislation), reached almost 40% for just cheque related offences.

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