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**MEASURING VIOLENCE: INDICATORS FROM THE ITALIAN VIOLENCE
AGAINST WOMEN SURVEY**

Invited Paper

Submitted by ISTAT¹

Since the indicators on an issue produced in a country are strictly linked to the planning phase of the data collection, it's important to know you some information on the Italian violence against women survey. This, named "Women' safety survey", was carried out in 2006 interviewing by phone 60.000 women aged 16-70 years old. The survey represents the result of a partnership between ISTAT, the Institute that carried on the survey, and the Ministry for the Rights and the Equal Opportunities that provided financial support with funds from the National Operative Programme "Safety" and 'system actions' of the European Social Fund.

In February 2007 data were delivered regarding the scope, the prevalence, the nature of violence against women in Italy.

Focusing on the aims of the survey, it's easy to translate them in indicators and vice versa: the planned indicators become the desiderata that lead the survey.

Violence indicators are defined according specific characteristics of violence occurrence: the nature of violence, the authors of violence, the occurrence period, the reference periods, the intensity of violence, the seriousness, the consequences, the costs of violence, the violence reporting, the strategies to end violence, and many others.

Also violence risk factors are very important to be calculated.

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Indicators can be produced with different levels of detail, from the most general one (for example the violence prevalence rate in the life course) to the most specific one (for example, the threats rate during the 12 months previous the interview perpetrated by a friend).

Indicators can be used also for territorial understanding, to know more and to compare different geographical area.

An important issue to be evaluated is also the purpose of indicators; some can be useful for policy and legislative evaluation, others for the quantification of the phenomenon, others for the phenomenon comprehension.

A synergy should be created between policy makers and researchers, taking account of emerging needs and their possible implementation.

Comparisons among countries could require the computation of ad hoc indicators, as not every indicators thought at national level are suitable when compared with other countries.

At the same time, sometimes can happen that different countries to gain the same goal require much more specification and attentions. For instance in Italy due to disclosure problems the study of sexual violence has required to consider more specific and deepen questions than the International Violence against women Survey (IVAWS).

Some Italian issues used to build indicators

1. The nature of violence

The Italian survey considered different forms of violence:

- Physical
- Sexual
- Psychological
- Economic violence (partially)
- Stalking from partner

Each of this macro-category can be split up different violence forms, indicators can be created at general macro-category and micro-category level.

Physical violence is ranked from the less to the most serious one:

1. threat to be physically hit;
2. to be pushed, grabbed;
3. to be yanked or knocked with an object;
4. to be slapped, kicked, punched or bitten;
5. attempted strangulation, of a choking, burning;
6. threats with weapons.

Regarding some violence forms, at the aim to distinguish between things of different seriousness data are also collected separately for the item 2 (pushed, grabbed, twisted your arm, pulled your hair), for the item 4 (slapped, kicked, bit, hit you with a fist), for the item 6 (used a knife or a gun, threatened to use knife or gun).

As **sexual violence** all situations in which women are forced to do or suffer sexual acts of different nature, against their own will are considered:

- rape;
- attempted rape;
- sexual physical harassment;
- sexual intercourses with a third party;
- undesired sexual intercourses, suffered for fear of consequences;
- degrading and humiliating sexual activities (only for partner violence);
- other sexual violence forms not included before.

Psychological violence includes a battery of 20 questions that give us some data regarding a distort relationship:

- denigration;
- behaviour control;
- segregation strategies;
- intimidations;
- heavy financial restraint suffered by partner's side.

Stalking defined as persecutory behaviours by women partner at the moment of separation that particularly frightened them is collected according the following items:

- tried in a nagging way to talk to the woman against her will;
- repeatedly asked for appointments to meet her;
- waited for her outside home or at school or at work;
- sent messages, telephone calls, e-mails, mails or undesired presents;
- followed her or spied her;
- adopted other strategies.

In the Italian VAWS, verbal harassment, shadowing, acts of exhibitionism and indecent telephone calls are not detected, so that indicators only on sexual harassment will not be completed.

As it's possible to see, giving a prevalence rate of violence means to mix vary different forms of violence.

In Italy we decided to create an indicator of prevalence that elaborates together physical and sexual violence (per 100 women); two more specifics that deal exclusively with physical violence (threats included) and sexual violence and many other linked to different violence forms. Psychological violence and stalking are elaborated alone and only some analysis on their combination with physical and sexual violence are made.

Regarding the physical violence indicators, we decided to include threats, because we noticed this crime behaves as the other physical ones and not changes particularly the more general indicator.

2. Authors of violence

The main focus is on partner (current and previous) as the author of violence, but also details on violence from non partner are collected.

Defining partner violence is important to identify who is a partner (not all countries may have the same definition). In Italy we have three different categories, one for husband, one for cohabitant, one for fiancé. The last was a wide category in which we wanted to include every person with whom women have/had a relationship or a “sentimental engagement”; he can be a fiancé, a boyfriend, etc.

Women have to decide when asked how they feel in this kind of definition and accept it or not.

Data on non partners are subdivided in unknown persons, acquaintances, friends, colleagues, family friends, relatives, others.

Regarding relatives item, is possible to have indicators also for subcategories, as father, brother, uncle, grandfather.

Indicators are calculated for the main categories (partner/non partner) but also for each kind of author. The denominators of the rates have to be carefully chosen. They can be all women or only the exposed at risk, that is for instance: for partner violence women had/have at least one partner; for actual partner women have a partner at the moment of the interview.

3. Occurrence period and reference period

Different periods of occurrence are considered: as regards partner violence, the period is identified by the relationship, when considering the non partner violence the period is since the 16teen years old.

But also some forms of violence are collected before the 16^{teen} years old (forced sexual activities by everyone, physical violence by parents).

Women are asked for each type of violence suffered when happened the last episodes (in brackets and in last 12 months before the interview). For repeated partner violence, the year of the violence beginning is asked too.

According to the previous information, the prevalence rates are delivered in the *life course* and in the *12 last months* before the interviews.

This is also a choice result because many other periods can be used, for instance violence happened before 20 years ago or 10-20 years ago, or in the last five years.

A problem regarding indicators can be the management of telescoping effect. It is an important issue in victimization survey, but as regards violence phenomenon it is more disregarded. This is true for many countries, as it comes up from the inventory analysis (Genève, September 2006 – UNECE workshop on gender statistics). This can be due to irregularly that characterizes violence survey and to their different priorities. Nevertheless, when they will be periodically updated more methodological attentions and rigorousness will be paid to this aspect too.

4. Intensity of violence

This issue is one of the more complex one, it is not easy to regard at the quantification of violence suffered.

We ask the numbers of incidence, but often women answered don't know and in these cases a question is demanded "how often did it happen: every day/almost every day; one or more times a weeks (1-3); one or more times a month (1-3); one or more times a year; only in particular periods of the year but in repetitively way; don't know/don't remember; don't answer/refuse".

Looking at this answer, two principal problems emerge: the easier is how to merge the answers given; the more complex is a speculative one and it concerns the concept of intensity itself, suspended in a status between objective and subjective.

Some studies (Rand, M. and C. M. Rennison, 2002) underline the inconsistency of the number of episodes, showing that it is a subjective measure offered by victim as an estimate calculated a posterior based on a perceived frequency, where the remembering effect plays also an important role.

This problem regards above all the phenomenon address the series of incidents, as for example threats, assaults, violence where more easily the victim can suffer as series of crimes and not as single events. Series of incidents are characterised by recurrence and similarity, that is when the respondent has suffered at least three equal events and he does not have a detailed remembering for each single one. The few sureness of respondent about the actual number of suffered events, and about the precision of details of those events, caused the adoption of different strategies in various surveys. Sometimes they are counted as one, other times 3 or 6.

In Italy the incidence rates are not yet disseminated, we delivered only the rate of violence occurred more than once, by type of violence and type of offender, in the life course and in the 12 months.

We are studying the possibility to give an indicator of frequency calculating the percentage of violence suffered "1, 2, 3, more than 3 times", where the last category includes also the answers related to "how often it happened". But an other option is trying to translate the number value, sometimes very high, for example 30, 45, 97 in the qualitative items.

5. Seriousness

The adoption of a indicator of seriousness is also a very challenge issue, subjective and objective measures of seriousness can be collected regarding violence.

Questions aimed at this purpose are for example:

- Taking everything into account, how serious was this incident for you at the time? Was it very serious, somewhat serious or not very serious?
- Were you physically injured?
- Were you injured so badly that you needed medical care (even if you didn't get it)?
- Did you feel that your life was in danger (during this incident)?

The results, coming up from this tools, can be used in different ways: ranked items of seriousness can be built, as well factorial analyses can be used. The last ones are efficient in identifying the latent dimensionalities of the different meaning of concepts measured.

Other information could be useful in measuring seriousness, for instance the reporting behaviour or the getting in touch with shelters or other specialised agency or the use of alcohol or medication or professional counselling as an help to cope with this experience, or the regarding to the incident as a crime, but all of them can not be used or are not coherently meaningful even in very serious cases, consequently affecting negatively data on seriousness.

In Italy, we delivered the main descriptive data regarding seriousness; only recently we began to address the possibility to construct an indicator, based on all the mentioned questions.

Furthermore it have to be said that data on seriousness are on the last episodes and not on the all violence experiences. Only indicators ranking the different forms of violence suffered according to the seriousness concept can address this aspect.

Seriousness is analyzed in partner and non partner violence, type of violence (threats, physical violence, sexual violence) and also according to different reference period.

6. Consequences and costs of violence

The considerations underlined for seriousness indicators can also be made regarding consequences and costs of violence.

But as regards this issue Italian survey has different questions concerning the partner and the non partner violence, as they differ very much in their circumstances.

7. General versus specific indicators

Indicators can be general as well as specific. They can give information on the entire universe under examination, for instance women 16-70 years old, but also regarding some restricted population subgroup, for example the youngest or the elderly, the women that work or live in the metropolitan area. The choice derives from the indicators purposes.

Specific rates are calculated by the different levels of the geographical area, as well as by victims' characteristics (age, civil status, level of education, professional status, etc).

The choice of denominators is also an other important aspect to be addressed, not only for the specific rates where specific denominators are linked with specific numerators, but also to build indicators on women or on victims.

8. Conclusions and remarks

In conclusion it emerges that studying indicators represents a very difficult task, it's important to plan them beforehand, many specifications are needed, the context is very important too, as well as their aims.

From a comparative point of view, it is better to start with simple and detailed indicators. The general ones can hide different choices.

A prevalence rate of violence don't tell us for instance which kinds of violence are considered in it.

Starting clarifying the variables chosen can be an idea, but the homogeneity of their collection have to be guaranteed.

One of the best option can be defining the best indicators can be used in a specific framework. Regarding violence measured through survey this means to carry out surveys with a common core questions on violence, but also in these case many methodological warnings have to be paid and it also require time and costs.

On the other hand, working on data already achieved is possible but the investment in terms of known metadata must be higher and not always possible.

This means to check definitions, to use very simple and disaggregated indicators, as that regarding rape.

An other point is the possibility and the request to monitor social change, consequently indicators have to be updated. Annual or at least periodical updating is suggested.

Not taking account of violence survey, indicators can be calculated from other sources, for instance the administrative ones. Our penal code have different laws to identify violence, both sexual and physical, but for different reasons and in a comparisons perspective the only one that can be used seems the female homicide (number or rate per 1.000/100.000 unit), excluding also in this case the attempts; the female homicide perpetrated by a partner or a family members or others.

Some examples of Italian indicators

the prevalence rate

Women aged 16 to 70 who have suffered physical or sexual violence by men, by period of happening, type of authors and type of violence - Year 2006 (per 100 women with the same characteristics)

	During lifetime*			Last 12 months		
	Any authors	Partner or ex partner	Not partner	Any authors	Partner or ex partner	Not partner
Physical or sexual violence	31.9	14.3	24.7	5.4	2.4	3.4
Physical violence	18.8	12.0	9.8	2.7	1.7	1.1
Sexual violence	23.7	6.1	20.4	3.5	1.0	2.6
Rape or attempted rape	4.8	2.4	2.9	0.3	0.2	0.2
Rape	2.3	1.6	0.8	0.2	0.1	0.0
Attempted rape	3.3	1.3	2.3	0.2	0.1	0.2

* Violence by not partner are collected by age 16th

type of violence

Women aged 16 to 70 victims of physical violence by a man, by period and typology of suffered violence – Year 2006 (per 100 women victims of sexual violence)

	During lifetime*	Last 12 months
Pushed, yanked, grabbed, having an arm twisted, or her own hair pulled	56,7	58,0
Threatened to be hit	52,0	44,8
Slapped, kicked or bitten	36,1	20,8
Hit with objects	24,6	23,6
Use or the threat to use pistols or knives	8,1	5,2
Other physical violence	5,9	2,5
Attempted strangulation and burning	5,3	2,6

Women aged 16 to 70 victims of sexual violence by a man, by period and typology of suffered violence – Year 2006 (per 100 women victims of sexual violence)

	During lifetime*	Last 12 months
Sexual harassments	79,5	72,1
Undesired sexual intercourse perceived as violence	19,0	21,9
Attempted rape	14,0	7,2
Rape	9,6	4,5
Degrading and humiliating sexual intercourses	6,1	4,2
Sexual violence in other ways	3,3	1,9
Forced to have sexual acts with other people	1,6	0,4

Partner violence

Women between 16 and 70 years of age victims of physical or sexual violence by a partner, by perpetrator, moment in which the crime was perpetrated and typology of violence – Year 2006 (per 100 women with the same characteristics)

	Current or ex partner	Current partner	Ex partner	Husband/ cohabitant	Fiancé	Ex husband/ex cohabitant	Ex fiancé
DURING LIFETIME							
Physical or sexual violence	14.3	7.2	17.4	7.5	5.9	22.4	13.7
Physical violence	12.0	5.9	14.6	6.2	4.5	20.5	10.8
Sexual violence	6.1	2.5	8.1	2.6	2.0	10.7	6.1
Rape or tempted rape	2.4	0.5	3.7	0.6	0.1	5.2	2.6
Rape	1.6	0.4	2.4	0.5	0.0	4.2	1.5
Tempted rape	1.3	0.3	2.0	0.3	0.1	2.5	1.6
Total victims of violence (a.v. in thousand)	2,938	1,187	1,921	1,000	187	723	1,250
LAST 12 MONTHS							
Physical or sexual violence	2.4	2.3	1.1	1.9	3.8	0.9	1.1
Physical violence	1.7	1.5	0.9	1.3	2.6	0.8	0.9
Sexual violence	1.0	1.0	0.4	0.9	1.3	0.4	0.4
Total victims of violence (a.v. in thousand)	499	373	127	254	119	30	100

non partner violence

Women between 16 and 70 years of age victims of physical or sexual violence by a non partner, by kind of violence suffered, period and kind of perpetrator - Year 2006 (per 100 women and per 100 victims with the same characteristics)

PERPETRATORS	PHYSICAL OR SEXUAL VIOLENCE		PHYSICAL OR SEXUAL VIOLENCE WITHOUT SEXUAL HARASSMENT		PHYSICAL VIOLENCE		SEXUAL VIOLENCE		SEXUAL HARASSMENT		RAPE C ATTEMPT RAPE
	Since 16 year-old to today	Last 12 months	Since 16 year-old to today	Last 12 months	Since 16 year-old to today	Last 12 months	Since 16 year-old to today	Last 12 months	Since 16 year-old to today	Last 12 months	Since 16 year-old to today
	FOR 100 WOMAN WITH THE SAME CHARACTERISTICS										
Known person	12.8	1.6	8.4	0.9	6.7	0.8	8.5	0.9	6.7	0.9	2.3
<i>A relative</i>	2.1	0.2	1.5	0.2	1.7	0.2	0.5	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.2
<i>An acquaintance</i>	6.3	0.7	3.7	0.3	2.6	0.3	4.3	0.5	3.3	0.4	1.2
<i>A friend</i>	3.0	0.4	2.1	0.3	1.6	0.2	1.7	0.3	1.1	0.2	0.5
<i>A family friend</i>	0.4	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.1
<i>Work colleague</i>	2.6	0.3	1.1	0.1	0.8	0.1	2.1	0.2	1.8	0.2	0.3
<i>Does not specify</i>	0.5	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.1
Unknown man	15.3	2.0	4.2	0.4	3.6	0.4	13.4	1.7	12.9	1.7	0.7
Non partner	24.7	3.4	11.6	1.3	9.8	1.1	20.4	2.6	18.9	2.5	2.9
FOR 100 VICTIMS OF THE SAME CRIME											
Known person	51.9	46.6	71.8	71.9	68.5	69.6	41.5	36.2	35.4	35.2	77.9
<i>A relative</i>	8.5	6.6	16.3	16.1	17.3	18.0	2.6	0.9	1.6	1.0	6.7
<i>An acquaintance</i>	25.4	20.9	31.7	25.8	27.1	23.2	21.2	18.7	17.3	17.6	42.9
<i>A friend</i>	12.2	12.5	18.2	20.0	16.1	17.1	8.4	10.4	6.0	9.8	15.9
<i>A family friend</i>	1.6	0.8	1.7	0.3	1.5	0.3	1.4	0.9	1.2	0.9	1.9
<i>Work colleague</i>	10.6	7.6	9.1	9.1	7.9	9.7	10.4	7.0	9.7	7.0	10.0
<i>Does not specify</i>	2.0	1.0	3.6	2.2	3.5	2.5	0.9	0.3	0.5	0.3	2.5
Unknown man	62.0	58.3	35.6	30.1	37.3	31.8	65.6	66.4	68.3	67.5	23.1
Non partner	5,221	725	2,457	271	2,062	238	4,305	549	3,981	528	610

violence indicators by region

Women between 16 and 70 years of age victims of physical or sexual violence by any man, by kind of violence suffered, period in which the violence was perpetrated and region of residence of woman (for 100 women of the same region)

	Physical or sexual violence during lifetime	Physical or sexual violence in the last 12 months	Physical violence	Physical or sexual violence	Rape or attempted rape
REGIONS					
Piemonte	33,6	5,4	18,3	26,5	5,2
Valle d'Aosta	34,6	3,6	20,1	24,3	5,9
Lombardia	34,8	5,2	20,1	25,6	4,7
Trentino Alto Adige	32,2	4,2	19,0	24,4	5,8
<i>Bozano - Bozen</i>	<i>31,1</i>	<i>4,8</i>	<i>19,9</i>	<i>22,7</i>	<i>7,1</i>
<i>Trento</i>	<i>33,1</i>	<i>3,6</i>	<i>18,1</i>	<i>26,0</i>	<i>4,6</i>
Veneto	34,3	5,7	19,6	26,0	5,7
Friuli Venezia Giulia	33,9	6,1	20,1	24,7	4,7
Liguria	35,4	4,1	19,9	26,6	6,4
Emilia Romagna	38,2	7,0	23,1	29,6	6,9
Toscana	34,7	5,6	20,8	26,4	5,8
Umbria	28,6	6,4	17,3	21,8	4,9
Marche	34,4	7,5	20,1	25,2	4,7
Lazio	38,1	5,8	21,3	29,8	4,8
Abruzzo	27,6	6,0	15,6	21,6	4,0
Molise	24,8	5,9	14,1	19,3	4,3
Campania	29,8	5,8	18,6	20,0	3,7
Puglia	24,9	5,0	15,8	17,6	4,3
Basilicata	23,6	4,8	14,4	16,2	3,3
Calabria	22,5	3,1	13,6	15,4	2,7
Sicilia	23,3	4,8	14,2	16,5	3,3
Sardegna	27,1	4,1	15,3	20,3	4,4
Italy	31,9	5,4	18,8	23,7	4,8
