

**“DATA COLLECTION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN  
AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE:  
TOWARDS THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE ISTANBUL CONVENTION”**

**Session: Data collection on violence against women and domestic violence: European practices**

TITLE:

**The Italian National Statistical Office Experience and Role in Addressing Violence against Women**

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**Abstract**

**Good data are very important in order to combat and to prevent VAW, but they are not enough. Istat carries out a very good population survey on VAW and have data on femicides (collected by the Ministry of Interior), but they are not enough to prevent and combat VAW. In this paper I will present the Italian data situation, their efficacy and inefficiency aspects, the needs for a new strategy in order to prevent and combat Violence Against Women, the contribute of the Italian government task force on statistical data, coordinated by Istat, the work done and the achieved results by this task force.**

## **1. The Italian Violence against women survey**

### *1.1 The aims*

The Istat VAW survey aims at detecting and describing:

- the volume and the characteristics of the extra-family violence and of domestic violence, in terms of number of events, dynamics and peculiarities of different violence events;
- the period violence took place, for example during life or in the last 12 months;
- victims' characteristics, their reactions to the violence event and physical, psychological and economic consequences of the suffered violence;
- violence perpetrators characteristics, in particular for domestic violence;
- incidence of the dark figure of violence, and reasons why violence is not reported to police;
- daily life contests where violence happens;
- how the violence happened, the relationship history for domestic violence;
- risk and protective factors both at an individual and at social level;
- social costs of violence, both directly than indirectly related to the victim and eventually to her sons and daughters, to the offenders, to society, measured according to some negative consequences as the victim not able to perform normal daily activities, to work, the use of social and health services, or according to direct costs of violence (medical and psychological expenses, material or legal expenses);

- violence suffered before 16th years of age.

### *1.2 Surveying violence against women: difficulties and possible solutions*

This survey does not deal with an easy topic. Studying domestic violence, instead, implies adopting methodological and procedural dedicated tools that take into consideration all relevant aspects with regard to the variables measured, way of posing questions, funnelling effects, use of specific terms and specific training for female interviewers. Dedicated surveys on violence against women are designed in such a way that eases women so that they can build up confidence with the interviewer who is trained to deal with these cases. Not all forms of violence women suffer from, such as psychological and economical violence are acknowledged by women themselves; in this respect the instrument used to collect data needs to address the problem in all its aspects.

Warning in implementing a dedicated survey measuring 'sensitive data' is essential in a cultural context that even if has changed in the last years and it is in constant evolution, is still biased with regard to gender roles within the family context and domestic violence issues.

The Italian context has changed during the last decades, but it's very different from the Anglo-Saxon one. Many taboos are no more present, but anyway it is not easy to speak about violence in family or about sex, even if in a violence frame. These are the reasons of some doubts arose about the survey feasibility and the reasons to begin a qualitative phase. The aim was to build a questionnaire apted to the Italian context, to understand more about survey feasibility (are women and the community ready to deal with violence matter?), women availability (are women ready to answer?) and women disclosure (are women ready to open themselves and to speak about their violence experience, if any?).

The safety citizens survey has demonstrated the women willingness and availability, but the no high rate of violence could give evidence to the existence of some problems.

So, to plan such a dedicated survey, ISTAT identified the need of a qualitative phase of the research which consisted of conducting focus groups with battered women, workers working in shelters and of conducting interviews with key people. Qualitative results were very helpful for the development of the best strategies to face all procedural and content based problems to address a complex survey dealing with sensitive data.

Before setting up such studies, there is a need of following essential steps, here outlined according to the procedure adopted by the Italian National Institute of Statistics:

- 1) Identification and definition of the phenomenon
- 2) Creation of useful indicators to measure the phenomenon under investigation
- 3) Identification of the population and sampling procedure
- 4) Qualitative studies to fully understand all possible aspects of the problem under investigation
- 5) Questionnaire development
- 6) Pilot stage of the study to test the instrument
- 7) Final survey

Due to these aspects, the first stage of the project regarding the implementation of the survey was carried out using qualitative studies, as the *focus group* technique and the in-depth interviews to key-professionals.

The aim was the achievement of the best methodology to address this topic.

The *focus groups* have been conducted with women who could provide, according to their role or position, an important contribution to better understand the problem of violence against women. In particular this sample consisted of: women victims of violence by their partners, workers at a shelter for battered women (these focus groups were done in different parts of Italy), interviewers with expertise in victimization surveys and women from 18 to 70 not belonging to any of the previous targets.

Interviews conducted with key-experts involved professionals who have been dealing with the problem of violence for several years: these were a public prosecutor belonging to a special unit working on cases of violence at the Court, a coordinator of a shelter for battered women, two lawyers specialized in criminal law and a police officer.

Each focus group was conducted with at least one psychologist and was video/audio recorded and then transcribed and, according to the group, different questions were posed, with the aim of learning about the content of the questionnaire and the procedural methods.

About the Content of the questionnaire the focus was on:

- ◇ What is domestic violence (especially psychological violence);
- ◇ Different expressions of violence (Economical violence, Psychological violence, Physical violence, Sexual violence);
- ◇ How women deal with violence, which is their perception;
- ◇ Early precursors of domestic violence and the cycle violence;
- ◇ The attribution of responsibility;
- ◇ Risk factors;
- ◇ Consequences of violence;
- ◇ The role of children or of other pushes in reporting or going out of violence;
- ◇ Prejudices and stereotypes.

About the procedural methods the stress was on:

- ◇ How to gain women's faith (for the training of interviewers);
- ◇ Feelings experienced from women as regards the survey;
- ◇ Characteristics of interviewers;
- ◇ The emotional impact on interviewers;
- ◇ What to ask and how;
- ◇ Wording and sequence;
- ◇ How to introduce the study;
- ◇ Length of the interview.

### *1.3 Results from the planning phase about the questionnaire: contents and structure*

#### *Psychological violence*

In the groups discussion conducted, it emerged that psychological violence, considered as a pattern of different behaviors such as humiliation, downgrading, threats, intimidations, is important to measure, because one of the most significant predictor of further (physical) violence, beside the fact that it represents its own form of violence. Most forms are not evident, women rarely recognized it as violence and because of *psychological violence* is not visible from a social point of view, it's difficult for women to speak about it and give vent to owns feeling. In fact, often it's

culturally accepted that a woman has not autonomous thoughts, that she has to do what her husband is asking; or that she is or thinks to be what her husband tell her.

To measure these types of violence it is important to look at different aspects of the daily life that could cover cases of violence. For instance questions as “He criticizes you for the way you look, dress, for instance by telling you that you are not very attractive, ugly, inadequate?” or “He criticizes you for the way you raise your child, look after the house or cook, for example by telling you that you are not a good mother or that you are incompetent “ or “He forces you what to wear, how to arrange your hair, how to behave in public?”

#### *Economic violence*

This kind of violence sometimes is neglected in surveys on violence against women. While it's a very important aspect, because women often completely depend from their husband, or they are excluded from the access to money, even if they work. A way to investigate this area is asking about the possibility to have access and/or to know the family income; other possibility concerns the use of money from the partner's account or from a shared account (by using credit card, cheque etc.).

#### *Wording and the questionnaire design*

With regard to the questionnaire, it emerged that questions measuring violence should be included gradually. From the most general to the most specific one. The language adopted should be clear and not redundant; questions should also adopt sentences not using jargons or other unclear questions. It's also important never use the words “violence”, “abuse” or “violent behaviours”. These words, because of their negative connotation, can provoke defensive behaviours and can freeze the relationship preventing the women's disclosure.

The methodological choose shared with other international surveys was to avoid to use the terms of “physical violence” or “sexual violence”, preferring to describe concretely acts and/or behaviors as to make women more easy to disclose their experience and to make different type of violence being known.

The large use of details when asking women if they have suffered violence, providing them various possible situations, places and perpetrators of violence, is a strategic choose to help victims to remember events happened many times ago and so decreasing a possible underestimate of the phenomena. Such an underestimate can be also caused by the fact that sometimes women do not consider themselves as victims and they have not developed the awareness regarding the suffered violence, while they can more easily recognize single facts and episodes actually happened.

Different types of crime analysed are presented with a screening procedure which helps to focus the attention on both the type of violence as well as on all possible perpetrators.

To correctly collect data about the number of *physical and sexual violence* the respondent has suffered during the reference period, the so called *screening technique* is used. This technique consists in asking the respondent a set of questions about the typology and the number of violent behaviors she has suffered during a specific period of time, without asking at the moment other details about them.

We decided that was necessary to ask 3 different screening questions about the type of suffered violence by type of perpetrator and then go more into details by asking “When did it happen?”, “How many times”. The first screening concern violence episodes perpetrated by strangers, relatives or known men, the second and the third concern violence from actual partners and/or former partners (if any).

The screening on violence by partners are inserted in the context of the relationship story, in order to avoid the impression of repetitive questions, causing tiredness, boredom and lack of co-operation.

About the sequence, questions about physical violence are presented gradually from the less serious to the most serious one, while questions regarding sexual violence are asked in the opposite way: the most severe is asked before. The reason of this methodological choice lies in the

possibility to limit the events duplication. The less serious episodes, asked as first, often contain the more serious one.

**Box: Example from questionnaire screening**

**Physical violence** data have been collected by the following set of questions, conveniently customized depending on the fact if violence by a non-partner or violence by the actual partner or an ex-partner were asked about:

- Has any man ever THREATENED to hurt you physically in a way that frightened you
- Since the age of 16, has any man ever THROWN SOMETHING AT YOU OR HIT YOU WITH SOMETHING that hurt or frightened you
- Has any man PUSHED OR GRABBED YOU OR TWISTED YOUR ARM OR PULLED YOUR HAIR in a way that hurt or frightened you
- Has any man SLAPPED, KICKED, BIT OR HIT YOU WITH A FIST
- Has any man tried to STRANGLE OR SUFFOCATE YOU, BURN OR SCALD you on purpose
- Has any man used or threatened to use a KNIFE OR GUN on you
- has any man ever been PHYSICALLY VIOLENT towards you in a way that I have not already mentioned

Data on **sexual violence** were obtained by the following set of questions:

- Has a man ever FORCED YOU INTO SEXUAL INTERCOURSE by threatening you, holding you down, or hurting you in some way

*If the interviewed woman answers no:*

- Has any man ever FORCED you INTO OTHER TYPES OF SEXUAL INTERCOURSE, for example anal sex also using hands or objects, or oral sex, that is using mouth
- Has any man ever ATTEMPTED TO FORCE YOU INTO SEXUAL INTERCOURSE by threatening you, holding you down or hurting you in some way
- Has any man ever forced or attempted to force you into SEXUAL ACTIVITY WITH SOMEONE ELSE, including being forced to have sex for money or in exchange for goods
- Has any man ever been sexually violent towards you in a way that I have not already mentioned

**Only for partners :**

- Did you ever had SEXUAL INTERCOURSES with Your PARTNER ALSO WHEN YOU DID NOT REALLY WANT IT because you feared his reaction
- Has Your PARTNER ever forced you into some SEXUAL ACTIVITY YOU FOUND DEGRADING OR THAT HUMBLED YOU

**Only for a man non partner**

- Has any man ever TOUCHED YOU SEXUALLY when you did not want him to in a way that was DISTRESSING to you

Furthermore, from the focus group emerged that is very important go in gradually into the relationship with the female interviewer: questions on the everyday life, leisure time, social networks, health are asked before those on violence at the aim to create a positive climate of trust between interviewer-interviewee; and questions on violence from the partner, in the section on the partner's characteristics, are asked after having spoken about their relationship and the psychological violence battery.

Regarding the violence details, we decided to go more in depth about the last episode of suffered violence (i.e. questions about consequences and cost of violence have been considered) and, as regards domestic violence, we chose to ask about the violence history and stalking too.

### *Stalking*

Also stalking is an important aspect often neglected. Many women are threaten or blackmailed after the separation. And many cases of violence, also very severe, happen during or after the separation. For these reasons some questions are inserted, for instance “Did your partner or any other partner ever stalk you after you separated or while you were separating, for instance did he follow you, threat you by phone, black mail you, send you unsolicited letters or gifts, in a way that frightened you?”. This topic is very important and in 2009, after the 2006 VAW survey results, a new law on stalking was ratified.

### *The violence history*

The choice to ask only about the most recent violence’s episode, even if good from a statistical point of view, it’s not completely satisfying. In fact, women, abused by their partners or by their former partners since a long time, appear emotionally frustrated when during the interview were asked to speak only about the last episode. This could be the less serious or the less relevant too. Furthermore women had suffered many years of violence had more problems in remembering the last episode characteristics. Then the decision was to go in depth on the violence history, to have a frame in which violence has occurred. For these reason, when a woman tells she has suffered repeated episodes of violence, some questions investigate about the timing and the dynamic of violence, the beginning, the escalating factors, violence during the pregnancy, reporting behaviour, economic cost, physical and psychological consequences, separation periods, violence witnessed by children.

### *Consequences, severity and social costs of violence*

Another important topic concerns social costs of violence. A apart from the physical and psychological consequences, it seems important to put attention to social and economic costs violence represents for women. Health assistance, psychological therapy, medical treatment, days of absence from work, days in hospital, days in which women are not able to perform daily activity are considered.

Other information regard what has happened, if there were other people involved, victim’s reaction, if victims suffered injuries and which kind of, if the victim felt her life in serious danger, if the author was drunk or drugged, if he used arms, if there were other people not directly involved.

### *Relation with police and violence awareness*

This aspects are also important to design policies: if the victim reported the fact to police or why she did not make it, consequent police actions, if after the report to the police there was an indictment and a conviction, victim’s satisfaction with respect to the police actions.

Awareness is also important, the question asks women if they considered the suffered violence a crime, something wrong but nit a crime or only something happened.

### *Characteristics of authors of violence*

Characteristics of authors of violence are very important to shed light on their profile. Different situations could be linked to different type of violence. Because of these reason, year and place of birth, scholar situation, occupational status and type of job are asked, as well as, alcohol consumption, problems with police, ownership of firearms, the aggressive behaviour used outside the family too.

#### *1.4 Results from the planning phase about the questionnaire: how to approach the woman*

With regard to the story provided by women, it is clear that in order to be able to talk about violence, several aspects need to be taken into account: acknowledging the violence subjected, 'anger' against the partner, faithfulness towards the interviewer, the absence of the (violent) partner during the interview. Women said, in fact, that it's easier for a woman to disclose violence if she is interviewed immediately after "*she had a fight*" or "*she might be piss off with him!*".

It's also essential to reassure the interviewee about her anonymity and the privacy issues, find the best time for her and to give her the possibility to verify who you are and why you are phoning, calling to a toll free number.

Furthermore it's very important to make a powerful and effective introduction and motivate towards the interview, understanding that the research is in the interest of the whole community, and give any possible restitution.

In Italy, we choose of not directly introducing the topic of the survey (violence) because of its sensitiveness. Some women could be frightened or feel themselves under judgement and could refuse the interview. We thought that it should be more effective to gradually introduce the violence theme: we talk about "personal safety" at the beginning, then we talk of "women safety" and at last, just before the screening questions, we speak about "facts or experiences that could happen in women's life". Other countries, for instance Canada, present the survey as a personal safety survey too. Furthermore, we regard very useful to say, before the screening questions: "I can call you back later or when you prefer if somebody will interrupt us or if you prefer to continue in another moment".

#### *Interviewers*

One of the core element of this survey is the validity of data collection, referring to the actual interviewers: their expertise and their motivation. In this regard, it is important to focus our attention on a reduced number of female interviewers, well recruited, who are fully trained, supervised and are experienced, prepared and well-motivated.

In this regard, interviewers, beside the basic skills needed to conduct interviews, they need to be trained on the topic of the study. Becoming experts in the field of domestic violence will enable them to help the interviewee to feel at ease and disclose any violence suffered from. Special attention needs to be addressed with regard to the initial training and the ongoing supervision. Basic requirement to conduct this study could be identified as: relationship with the household contacted, communicating skills, skills to handle emotions, technical knowledge of the instrument used. The most effective training model reflects the needs and aims to be reached in the study through 6 days of theoretical training and two of technical one. Furthermore all interviewers will be constantly monitored and supervised by conducting *debriefings* and group discussions.

#### *1.5 The data collection phase*

Designing the new survey in 2014, we considered possible change to make in our survey. The attention to social changes and improvement is really important. The main differences concern the foreign women and disable women.

The survey was realised by phone with the aid of computers (CATI) for Italian women and face to face, by CAPI, for the main of foreign women. The sample was about 25.000 women 16-70 years old.

Violence against women estimates are representative for foreign women in general and regarding the first 6 citizenships resident in Italy (Rumania, Ukraine, Albania, Morocco, Moldavia and China). In 2006, we did not have representative data for migrants.

Data are collected also for women with disability.

The extremely sensitive subject required particular care to be taken about any phases of the process.

Quality monitoring was made daily during the whole 9 months period of the survey. Women were very collaborative, for 52.7% of interviewers women were very willingness, and for 32,4% respondents' willingness was good. Only 2.8% of interviewers declared little collaboration of women along the whole length of the interview. The interviews' interruption rate was 2.5% and the refusal rate was 16,1%. The last one is perfectly coherent with other similar surveys' refusal rates, as for example the Citizen's safety survey's one.

Interviewers were scheduled along all the day, so as to give the woman the possibility to choose the best moment to be interviewed. Much care has been given to women safety, from the first to the last contact. Women had the possibility to stop the call at any time, they could be contacted on their mobile, they could verify the authenticity of the call and of the survey by calling the toll free number, if they asked for it they could obtain information about addresses and phone numbers of the closest to them women shelter. Particular care was taken when selecting and training interviewers. The training consisted of front-desk lessons, exercises, role-playings (where participants, simulating interviewers and interviewee, simulate conditions similar to the correspondent actual ones). A specific psychological aid was assured to interviewers both during the training than during the data collection phase.

During interviews about 120 interviewers were involved, considering times as to assure a good turn over and to contain the psychological stress and related burn out risks.

## **2. The data scenario on Violence against Women**

The Italian framework on VAW is changed over the recent years: there is a new attention on VAW by the public, the media and the political scenario that can be fruitful in order to address the violence topic.

In this contest, the political side moved some steps forward. The Italian government assumed gender violence as an important issue of gender equality where to invest. They understand the importance of data, the importance of coordination, the importance of knowledge.

Firstly, there was the ratification on the Istanbul Convention to eradicate and combat VAW, secondly, it decided to establish a task force to address consciously the topic, a task force who put in network agencies responsible for the different aspects of the topic, Ministries, Institutions, Experts, ONG.

The task force was organized in subgroups. One of these was the group responsible for statistical data, that was coordinated by Istat.

In the following, I will shortly present you the work done by the data group and the achieved results.

Initially, the task force carried out an inventory of the existing sources of data on gender based violence, highlighting their pros and cons at the aim to focus on the policy needs in order to combat and prevent VAW.

### *2.1 Here some results: What policies do not need*

#### *Experience of data fragmentary*

Data on VAW measures are fragmented; there are different experiences at regional level. There are violence against women observatories in some regions, good isolated experiences. But just single experiences, every shelter and VAW service has its statistical data collection, some really advanced, some rudimental. Generally, data represents only a short view, only some hospitals and health services collect data on VAW. There is a dominant unawareness of data importance, that means a no correct identification of the problem, for instance in justice and police statistics.

#### *Compresence of excellence and disregarding towards data*

From the data panorama emerges too much emphasis to individual sensitivity on the topic, no follow up of victims, no common background in collecting data, no evidence of the most important

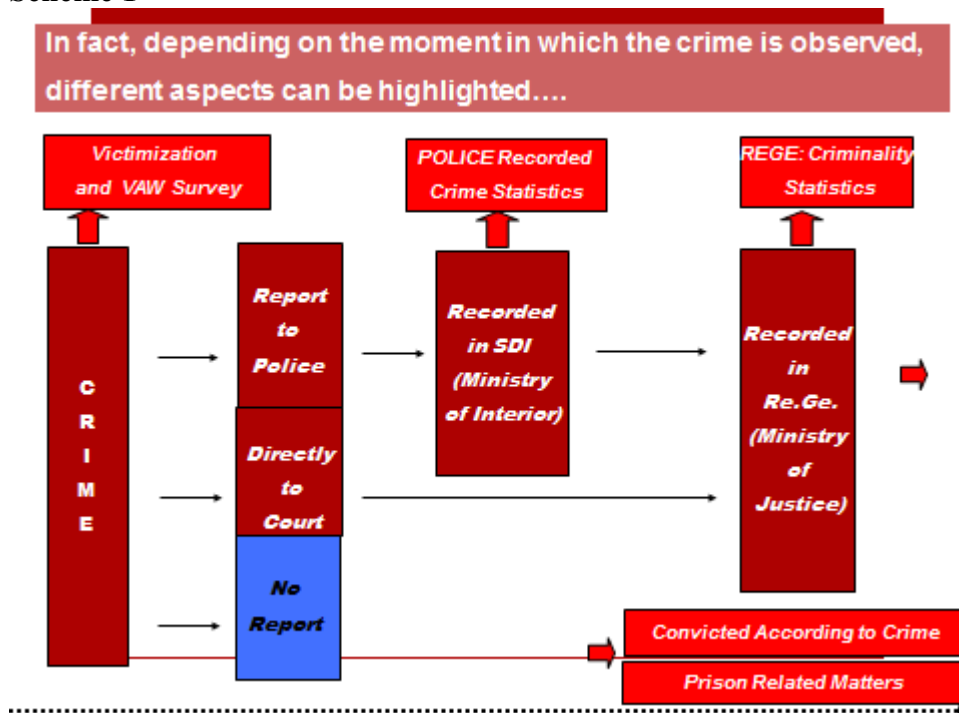


data, no guarantee for periodicity, rigorous methodology and high standard quality information and above all no coordination between the involved subjects. Everyone, in fact, moves without a direction.

*The administrative data panorama on VAW and Gender based violence*

This scheme is a presentation of what Istat collects on police and justice statistics from administrative data; data are different considering the level of investigation, if the report phase or the judiciary phase. Nevertheless, data on GBV are not really collected, since in Italy, it is not possible recognize if a crime is gender related, with the exception for homicides. There is not a specific article in the law, there has been a specific comma only for stalking, recently considered. We can only know the sex of the victim (Table 1), but what we need is the relationship between victim and perpetrator, as for homicides (Table 2).

**Scheme 1**



**Table 1. Violent crimes by sex of the victims**

CRIMES	Percentage of female victims
Homicides	30,1
Attempted homicides	21,2
Battery, beating	48,1
Assault	40,6
Threat	45,2
Stalking	77,1
Sexual violence	90,2

Data from SDI – Ministry of Interior

**Table 2. Homicides, by sex and victim-perpetrator relationship, years 2002-2013 (rates by inhabitants)**

<b>RELATIONSHIP VICTIM PERPETRATOR</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>
	<b>RATE FOR 100.000 MALES</b>											
Partne	0,04	0,06	0,09	0,07	0,04	0,05	0,07	0,05	0,04	0,03	0,02	0,02
Ex-partner	-	-	0,00	0,00	-	0,01	0,01	0,01	0,01	0,00	0,00	0,00
Relatives	0,10	0,11	0,09	0,12	0,16	0,17	0,14	0,12	0,16	0,17	0,13	0,12
Other known person	-	-	0,03	0,05	0,02	0,06	0,08	0,13	0,10	0,16	0,11	0,11
Unknown for the victim	0,79	0,83	0,75	0,65	0,62	0,71	0,66	0,62	0,51	0,49	0,43	0,37
No identified	0,73	0,89	0,92	0,77	0,72	0,70	0,66	0,53	0,48	0,47	0,58	0,48
Total	1,65	1,89	1,88	1,67	1,56	1,70	1,63	1,46	1,29	1,33	1,28	1,11
	<b>RATES PER 100.000 FEMALES</b>											
Partner	0,24	0,27	0,23	0,17	0,30	0,21	0,19	0,24	0,15	0,23	0,19	0,19
Ex-partner	-	-	0,01	0,01	0,00	0,01	0,03	0,04	0,06	0,04	0,06	0,05
Relatives	0,09	0,08	0,13	0,08	0,10	0,11	0,13	0,12	0,12	0,10	0,10	0,13
Other known person	-	-	0,02	0,03	0,03	0,02	0,02	0,06	0,09	0,08	0,05	0,07
Unknown for the victim	0,24	0,23	0,14	0,10	0,11	0,11	0,08	0,06	0,07	0,07	0,07	0,07
No identified	0,06	0,07	0,08	0,05	0,06	0,05	0,05	0,06	0,04	0,05	0,05	0,06
Total	0,64	0,65	0,63	0,44	0,60	0,50	0,49	0,56	0,52	0,55	0,52	0,58

*Data from Homicides database – Ministry of Interior*

Even if aware of problems, Istat could not change alone the situation, it was a power problem. We needed an institutional designation and only the Government – Department For Equality opportunity - could make it. The decision survived even if different legislature came on and the task force continued its work.

## 2.2 Here some results: what policies need

### *A new policy approach: attention to the importance of data*

According to the new approach, data are recognized as an essential tool for gender equality policy planning, in particular the need is for good data for designing good policies.

Consequently, the need is for regular data, that means periodically updated in order to monitor the phenomenon; high quality data, that means collected towards a sound methodology according to the specific sources; standardized data, in order to have comparable across countries and over time; speaking data, that means to have meaningful data suitable to well describe the phenomenon, using core variables and indicators that can well represent the phenomenon; coordinated data at the aim of

having intelligible and comprehensive data, usable from the task force in order to face and to cope in an efficacy way with GBV.

The government decision was the task force establishment on VAW measurement. The aim of the task force was to identify data useful to design adequate policies:

- to eradicate and combat VAW violence;
- to protect victims;
- to help victims in escaping from violence and cope with suffered violence;
- to help in care, to help the re-integration;

More concretely, data are essential to measure the volume of VAW, understanding causes, monitor VAW, monitor the victims' protection.

#### *A network work*

Istat coordinated the group and acted in partnership with all involved actors, all the Institutions: Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of health, Ministry of Army, Ministry of work and Ministry of Social Politic; with ONG (shelters, 1522, VAW services); with VAW experts, as academic and lawyers.

It was a long and difficult work, first of all to share the same language and the same aims. The purpose was to assume a wider view to go behind the limits of the "little garden".

#### *The task force steps*

The task force steps were:

- the identification of data gaps;
- the measuring and understanding of the gaps by type of agency;
- giving input for policies;
- designing input for the Piano nazionale Antiviolenza, that is a mandatory, funded national VAW actionPlan

#### *Identifying the gaps*

The task force analyzed the real situation of data on abused women and the protection system, looking at identifying the gap, what there is versus what there is not in the data, looking for the best practices, looking for the best periodicity, the experiences on the territory, the topic representativeness.

#### *Identifying solutions*

The task force identified the best data able to represent the problem:

- looking at possible solutions for each agency (ONG included) and their feasibility
- establishing measures to address the VAW topic for measuring VAW and gender's stereotypes; monitoring VAW and victims protection system; measure and monitor all justice aspects.

Then, the adopted measures became part of the VAW Action Plan that was approved by the government.

In this way, the procedure was planned from simple technical measures that became political input that have to be adopted and funded by the government.

The work and the proposal of the task force was direct to achieve the actions effectiveness.

#### *The proposal*

The task force identified the necessity to create an **Informative system on VAW**, a comprehensive tool, periodically updated, developed and managed by Istat, in coordination with the VAW network. This system is supposed to be as a storage for data (micro, macro and metadata) and analysis reports and it has to be built on several sources: population surveys, administrative data, shelters and ONG data.

The proposal considers as one of the main data sources, the **VAW survey**, at the aim to have high quality data on violence prevalence, frequency, severity, causes, risk factors, violence witness, violence dynamic, consequences and costs. The VAW survey needs a regular periodicity, at least of 4 years, in order to monitor the phenomenon and recognize eventual cultural and social changes.

Another important aspect regards the knowledge of country's culture, gender stereotypes and attitudes towards violence. In order to achieve this information, a **Quali-quantitative Survey on gender violence stereotypes** is needed. The survey considers two different targets: citizens and operators in social/health services. Since the survey should be periodically updated, stakeholders will be able to monitor opinions, sensitivity and stereotypes towards violence over time, in order to plan good policies and monitor their implementation.

This survey also aims to investigate some aggressive behavior in the population.

Other important data sources are represented by **data of victims seeking for help in shelters**.

The data collection on victims went to shelters, crisis center and VAW services (ONG) will be harmonized, *i.e.* based on the same variables across the several shelters, regular and updated, at least annually.

The best is a continuous flow of data, at the aim of monitoring the real follow up of the victims, between shelters in the territory, between different services, emergency services, hospital and police and justice places.

Furthermore, on similar basis, there will be collected **data from 1522 protection number and data from hospitals emergencies, social and health public services**.

Data from hospital emergencies and health or social public service, were not very useful till now, because they were not able to tell us if the women was a victim of a gender based crime or not.

With this new proposal, Hospital and emergency care will adapt some new procedures in order to recognize this kind of victims, asking them the victim-perpetrator relationship.

Moreover there will be collected **data from police statistics and justice statistics**. Also in this case it is not yet possible to recognize the gender based violence, because it is not known the victim-perpetrator relationship. The most important task force request was to ask to the Ministries of Justice and Interior to collect this really important information, that combined with the sex of the victims and of the perpetrators is essential to identify gender based violence and VAW. Then annual data will be collected.

Very important data are also those on criminal careers; follow up of judicial proceedings, follow-up of the victims in the reporting and judicial itinerary.

In conclusion it is very important that a super partes institution coordinates the task force, as the National Statistical Office, that is also a good guarantee for assessing the data quality. The long interaction between Istat and the Department of Equal Opportunity has been really productive.

Furthermore, to achieve good results, it is very important to work side by side with all the subjects involved, to share common proposals with ONG and Institutions and it is central to share common definitions.

These steps ask for important changes in the data sets and databases, changes that are expensive too. For these reasons, changes have to be funded and in Italy it is possible only if they become part, as input, of the VAW action plan. The political will needs to be funded and supported.

### **3. In conclusion**

At the end of the task force work, we can assess that the key issue is to develop and to reinforce the deep relationship between data users and data producers. The lesson learned on VAW coordination is a very good example of good practices in gender equality.

It is essential a constant network work to understand the emerging needs, to find measurement solutions, to translate them in political input, that will be funded and this is the only way to have a successful approach on gender equality measurement.