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article

Measuring violence to end violence: mainstreaming gender

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This article aims to mainstream gender into the measurement of violence, in order to assist the development of the theory of change needed to support actions to end violence. It addresses the division between gender-neutral and women-only strategies of data collection that is failing to deliver the quality evidence needed to address the extent and distribution of violence, developing a better operationalisation of the concepts of gender and violence for statistical analysis, and producing a checklist of criteria to assess the quality of statistics on gendered violence. It assesses the strengths and weakness of surveys linked to two contrasting theoretical perspectives: the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) Survey of Violence Against Women and the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW). It shows how the FRA Survey fails and how the ONS has limited the potential of the CSEW. It therefore offers a solution with a short questionnaire that is fit for purpose as well as ways of analysing data that escape the current polarisation.

key words violence • gender • survey • Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA)
• Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW)

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Introduction

The goal to end violence is widely accepted. This includes, but is not confined to, gender-based violence against women. Reducing and ending violence requires paying attention to its gender dimensions, which means concepts of both ‘gender’ and ‘violence’ are needed. These are, however, contested concepts, with a variety of interpretations that draw on different theoretical frameworks. To contribute to the ending of violence requires a theory of change that links specific empirically

identifiable actions in causal pathways. This requires data to test explanations, such as why rates of violence are higher or lower at different times, and in different locations, groups, policy regimes and social formations. Surveys are one of the most important data collection instruments, and data collected in surveys needs to be relevant to the theories and concepts of gender and violence being interrogated. In order to compare rates of violence over time and in different locations, groups, policy regimes and social formations, there needs to be consistency in this data collection over time and across different surveys.

What is the place of gender in this theory of change? The traditional criminological paradigm, which rendered gender invisible on the grounds that it was either not important to violence since this was predominantly from men to men or was a route to gender-neutrality, was challenged by the feminist project to end violence against women. This feminist project built its own paradigm, which raised awareness of the significance of the previously neglected gender-based violence against women through studies of women's experiences of men's violence (Kelly, 1988; García-Moreno et al, 2005). In turn, this 'violence against women' paradigm was challenged by those who argued that women were also violent, using surveys that included both men and women, but that also defined and measured violence very differently from criminal law (Straus, 1979; Archer, 2000). Studies on women only intrinsically cannot provide evidence on the gender distribution of violence. The current state of debate is at an impasse.

This article offers a way out of this by developing the methodology to assess the distribution of violence including its multiple gender dimensions. It is only by paying better attention to the concepts of gender and violence that techniques can be deployed to address the critical issues underlying these debates.

The focus of this article is the operationalisation of the concepts of 'gender' and 'violence' in survey methodology. A survey is one of the best ways to discover the extent and distribution of violence, including comparisons over time and between locations. The quality criteria for the components of a survey to measure violence against women and men are identified in this article from a review of the field. The best European contemporary examples of the specific 'Violence Against Women' surveys (the Fundamental Rights Agency [FRA] Violence Against Women: An EU-wide Survey) and generic surveys that capture violence (Crime Survey for England and Wales [CSEW], ONS) are then interrogated against these quality criteria. These two surveys are comparable in sample size of around 40,000, although the first has the challenge of being spread over 28 countries. The lessons learned from the explication of the quality criteria and the testing of the best European contemporary surveys against these are then used to propose our new third approach.

This proposed short survey of violence against women and men will enable comparisons of rates of gendered violence over time and place (for example, Europe). It is intended as a contribution to the methodology for collecting the data needed to develop and test a theory of change for gendered violence. Its implementation would mean evidence becoming available to adjudicate between the current competing paradigms.

Quality criteria

What is quality?

The quality criteria for statistics on gendered violence require the best definition and operationalisation of the concepts of ‘gender’ and of ‘violence’ and identification of the most appropriate units within which violence is measured. It further requires the specification of the minimum standards needed for the survey methodology to ensure accuracy and reliability of statistics and comparisons over time and between locations.

The five quality dimensions of the European Statistical System (ESS) are: ‘relevance; accuracy and reliability; timeliness and punctuality; accessibility and clarity; and coherence and comparability’. The ONS recommends using these in order to decide how well statistical ‘outputs meet user needs’, or whether they are ‘fit for purpose’ (ONS, 2013a, p. 7). We follow the ONS and ESS guidelines in statistical quality (ONS, 2013a, pp. 7–8), in particular, on ‘accuracy and reliability’ being ‘the closeness between an estimated result and the (unknown) true value’ (ONS, 2013a, p. 8) and ‘response rates’ as ‘a suitable quality indicator that may be used to give an insight into the possible extent of non-response bias’ (ONS, 2013a, p. 7).

What is gender?

There are three approaches to gender in surveys of violence. The first is to treat gender as not important, or endeavour to reach gender neutrality, thus making gender rarely seen or even invisible; for example, as recommended by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) International Classification of Crimes for Statistical purposes (ICCS) (UNODC, 2015). This is the traditional approach for official crime statistics, although many generic crime surveys collect data that could be gender disaggregated. The second approach is to focus on women, collecting data about only women’s experience of violence. This has performed a useful corrective to the neglect of gender, raising awareness about the gendered nature of violence (see, for example, WHO, 2005). However, one of the weaknesses shared by both these approaches is that it is not possible to compare the distribution of violence against women and against men. The third approach is that of gender mainstreaming (European Commission, 1996; Council of Europe, 1998), to make gender dimensions visible within all surveys and the official statistics produced using these data, so it is possible to see the proportion of violence that is against women and against men and their different rates of change.

Gender means more than the sex of the victim (Johnson, 2015). At least four gender dimensions should be included, so that the ‘gender-saturated’ nature of violence can be addressed (Walby and Towers et al, 2017). First is the sex of the victim; second is the sex of the perpetrator; third is the relationship between perpetrator and victim (intimate partner or other family member; acquaintance; or stranger); and fourth is whether there is a sexual aspect. A further, possible, fifth dimension is whether there is an identifiable gender motivation.

What is violence?

Issues in the definition of violence include: the anchor of the framework; the boundary between violence and non-violent forms of coercion; whether violence is defined as an action alone or requires the combination of action and harm; and how repetition is addressed.

Anchor of the framework

The measurement framework requires an anchor.

International law is based on principles and negotiations between states in international forums, potentially representing the widest consensus. This includes the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on Discrimination against Women and the Declaration on Ending Violence against Women. In the Council of Europe, this is developed in the European Convention of Human Rights, jurisprudence in the European Court of Human Rights, and the Istanbul Convention, although while implemented, has not yet been ratified by all 47 states.

National crime codes, based on national-level decisions in parliaments as to the boundary between criminal and non-criminal conduct, are applied in national criminal justice systems. These tend towards alignment with international law when the repercussions of cases adjudicated in international courts are felt at national level. In the European Union (EU), since the Treaty of Lisbon, this process has been aided by the move towards mutual recognition of judicial decision-making in some areas, including trafficking, child sex abuse and for domestic protection orders.

An alternative anchor is the UNODC (2015) ICCS. This classification of crime, in modified form, is being mobilised by Eurostat for statistical purposes in the EU.

Some researchers have produced their own preferred definitions, such as Straus' Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS) (1979).

We prefer to anchor the framework in law, since this offers the widest and deepest consensus for definitions, following Walby and Towers et al (2017). There is a move, far from complete, towards convergence on legal and crime classifications. While there is a move toward convergence in law, there is no such move in alternative concepts and definitions, including for the CTS.

Action and harm

In law, both action and harm are needed to define an action as violence and to determine the type of violence. If a specific action always leads to the same seriousness of harm, it might be reasonable to use action as a proxy for harm, but if a specific action can give rise to harmful consequences that vary in their levels of seriousness, this is not a reasonable assumption.

In the research led by Straus (1979), the CTS focuses only on actions, excluding the harm caused, thereby implicitly assuming that any given action will always lead to the same level of harm.

However, this assumption in the CTS of a stable relationship between action and harm is mistaken. In particular, gender mediates the relationship between act and harm. An act by a man on a woman tends to cause a more serious harm than the same act by a woman on a man. The British Crime Survey found that a minor

physical act led to physical injury in 49% of cases where the victim was female and 36% where the victim was male; a severe physical act led to physical injury in 77% of cases where the victim was female and 56% where the victim was male (Walby and Allen, 2004, pp. 37–38).

Thus, if the definition of violence is confined to the act alone, the disproportionate harm of the act when the victim is female cannot be seen. By erasing the harm from the definition of violence, the CTS distorts the gendering of domestic violence, typically underestimating the harmfulness of an act from a man to a woman and overestimating the harmfulness of an act from a woman to a man.

The critique of the CTS by Dobash et al (1992) argued that the absence of ‘context’ caused a gender distortion in the findings on the distribution of the violence. Several subsequent surveys attempted to address this critique of gender bias, modifying the CTS by adding questions about context to the questionnaire (see, for example, WHO, 2005). But this addition does not address the more important gender-distorting aspect of the CTS, which is defining violence by the act alone rather than using a combination of act and harm. Adding context to the CTS does not remove the gender-biasing effects of defining violence by act alone.

Further, the CTS potentially includes some actions where there was no intention to cause harm, which is also gender-biasing (Ackerman, 2016).

Violence should be defined by both action (including intention) and harm, not action alone.

The framework that most consistently uses this concept of ‘action + harm’ is that of criminal law: violent crimes are defined by the combination of the action and the harm caused. This differentiates actions that cause different levels of harm.

Repetition

Violence is an event that is often repeated, especially if the perpetrator knows the victim (domestic relation or acquaintance) (Farrell and Pease, 2007, 2010; Walby et al, 2014). Yet there is often an assumption of one victim, one crime and one perpetrator, leading to the significance of repetition being underestimated. Repetition is gendered, in that female victims are more likely to suffer repeated attacks from the same person than men. For example, in England and Wales, Walby and Towers (2017) found that three-quarters (76%) of victims experiencing repeat domestic violent crime were female, and 83% of high-frequency victims of domestic violent crime (10 or more crimes in a year) were female. This means that ignoring repetition biases findings in the direction of gender symmetry, underestimating the significance of the greater frequency of violence against women.

There are four approaches to counting repetition. One approach is to ignore repetition and count only the victims. This is often based on the conceptual and theoretical preference for analysis focused on victims rather than events, and is common in ‘prevalence’ surveys of violence against women (UNECES, 2006). Counting victims only is also the consequence of treating domestic violence as a course of conduct of coercive control, where multiple coercive events are considered to make up *one* course of conduct (Walby and Towers, 2017). A second is to include repetitions, but to ‘cap’ these (either at the reporting stage or at the analysis stage), that is, to limit them to a pre-set maximum (the ONS historically capped repeated crimes captured by the CSEW at five per crime type to reduce fears of year-to-year

volatility in estimates, although this is under review; see ONS, 2016a). A third is to ask about frequency but to group repetitions into a limited number of categories, such as once, two to five and more than six (FRA, 2014a). This is sometimes done on the methodological grounds that victims find it hard to remember the exact number of violent events. A fourth is to count the repetitions and include all of them when making estimates of the extent and distribution of violence (Walby et al, 2014, 2016). The CSEW has, since its inception in 1982, asked respondents to report the total number of repeated events they were subject to in the previous 12 months, thus providing evidence that the methodological objection that respondents are unable to or should not be asked to do this is not well founded. Indeed, the latest evidence from a study on the US National Crime Victimization Survey (Planty and Strom, 2007; Planty and Langton, 2013) finds no evidence that respondents who are subject to repeat victimisation systematically over- or under-report the number of crimes they have experienced. Planty and Strom (2007) conclude ‘[I]t seems more logical to trust what a respondent reports and to err in reporting this information than to dismiss it all and exclude these victimisations. Exclusion creates a larger and more serious error than inclusion’ (p 98).

The implications of these different approaches for the summary picture of the gender relations in violence over time are identified by Walby et al (2016). They find that only the last approach, counting repetitions and including them all in the estimates, makes visible the rise in violent crime since the economic crisis of 2008 and further that this is driven by an increase in domestic violent crime and an increase in violent crime against women, while violent crime against men continues to fall. Thus Walby et al (2016, Table 4, using data from England and Wales) report slope estimates of 0.1650 for domestic violent crime against women, 0.0467 for all violent crime and 0.1297 for all violent crime against women, (once exponentiated) suggesting the rate of domestic violent crime against women increased by 17.9% per year, all violent crime against women increased by 13.8% per year and all violent crime increased by 4.7% per year between 2008/09 and 2013/14. The slope estimate of -0.0271 for violent crime against men, (once exponentiated) suggests this has been decreasing at a rate of 3% per year between 2004/05 and 2013/14. These diverging trajectories of violence against women and men are only visible when all repeated events (crimes) are included in the analysis.

Each violent event should be counted.

What unit of measurement?

There are three units of measurement, each of which is needed: event, victim and perpetrator. All three are needed for two reasons. First, they are needed to address the pattern of repetition discussed above. And second, they are essential for reliable statistics on ‘conviction rates’ in criminal justice and other systems.

What kind of survey instrument?

There are several technical aspects of survey methodology that are important in ensuring the consistency that is essential when attempting to compare between social groups, over time and across locations, including the wording and framing of questions; sampling frame; sample size; response rate; reaching respondents; and confidentiality

(Walby and Myhill, 2001; Walby, 2005; ONS, 2013b; UNESCO, 2006; UN Statistical Commission, 2009). Consistency is necessary for the purposes of comparison, which matters for testing theory and evaluation of policy.

Wording and framing of questions

The way in which questions are worded affects whether or not respondents disclose violence. Questions that use detailed behavioural descriptions and avoid the use of terminology that is stigmatised are more likely to lead to disclosure. For example, the term ‘rape’ is stigmatised and respondents either will not use it or do not recognise their own experiences as ‘rape’ (Koss, 1993).

‘Screeners’ and ‘gateways’ are used in surveys to avoid respondents being asked questions not relevant to them. However, care needs to be taken to ensure that any use of these devices does not filter out respondents inappropriately, thereby reducing the number of opportunities for respondents to disclose violence.

The ‘Violence Against Women’ surveys are typically more sophisticated in these issues than generic surveys. This expertise needs to be taken up by generic surveys measuring gender-based violence.

Sampling frame

The sampling frame should be consistent across the groups and locations under investigation. It should be comprehensive and not biased against parts of the population that are most vulnerable to violence. In particular, there is a long-standing concern as to the exclusion of those who are, temporarily, not staying in their permanent place of residence, since this may be a result of domestic violence (see Jewkes et al, 2010, for how this can be addressed).

Sample size

The sample size should be appropriately large. The ONS practice when analysing its crime survey is that no cell should normally contain fewer than 50 cases (ONS, 2013b, p. 79). Some forms of violence are infrequent and some groups of victims are very small in certain locations; surveys need to be consistently delivered over time so that data can be periodically aggregated into sufficiently large numbers for analysis. The CSEW had a sample size of 34,880 (0.08% of the population of England and Wales) in 2012/13 (Walby et al, 2015), and the US survey 160,000 (0.05% of the population of the US) in 2015 (US Bureau of Justice). This is sufficient to disaggregate violent crime by the sex of the victim, but, in a single sweep, is not always sufficient for all forms of violence, for example, rape, or for all forms of disaggregation, for example, domestic violent crime against men. Thus multiple sweeps of data are required to analyse all forms of violence disaggregated by the sex of the victim: this requires data to be consistently collected.

Response rate

The response rate should be high and consistently high across the different social groups and countries that might be compared. The response rate for the CSEW is 70% (ONS, 2016b) and for the US survey, 87% (Truman and Langton, 2015).

Reaching respondents

Each respondent should be reached in exactly the same way, especially across the social groups and countries that might be compared, so as to avoid spurious variations in rates of disclosure.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is important in facilitating the disclosure of sensitive experiences, such as those concerning gender-based violence. Confidential self-complete methods such as Computer Assisted Self-Interviewing (CASI) produce higher disclosure rates than less confidential methods such as face-to-face interviewing. For example, the CASI delivered Intimate Violence module of the CSEW has a disclosure rate of domestic violence around four times higher than that elicited by the face-to-face Victim Form module for the same sample population (Walby and Allen, 2004; Walby et al, 2014).

Producing statistical indicators from data

There are issues in how headline summary indicators are abstracted from the mass of data collected (Walby, 2008) in the process of producing quality statistics, including ‘accuracy’.

The best way to produce ‘accuracy’ in relation to high-frequency victims is contested. The traditional approach by the ONS has been to ‘cap’ the number of repeat events (crimes) at five (ONS, 2013b, p. 15) on the grounds that including more produces spurious variability in estimates of trends. Walby et al (2016) showed that using three-year moving averages meant that all crimes reported (to the CSEW survey) could be included while reducing volatility to that of the same order as the official capping method (Walby et al, 2016, Table 2). Including all crimes reported to the survey produces more accurate statistics on the extent and distribution of violence in any given year. Including all violent events in estimates shows greater gender asymmetry in domestic violent crime than when they are capped. ONS is reviewing the cap.

Summary of quality criteria

The following are the most important of the quality criteria for statistics on gendered violence that compare variations in the rate of gendered violence over time and between countries.

- Gender dimensions
 - Sex of the victim

- Sex of the perpetrator
- Relationship between perpetrator and victim (intimate partner or other family member; acquaintance; or stranger)
- Whether there is a sexual aspect
- Definition of violence
 - Anchored in (criminal) law
 - Includes both action and harm simultaneously, addressing seriousness
 - Addresses repetition by counting all violent events
- Unit of measurement is all of:
 - event
 - victim
 - perpetrator
- Survey instrument
 - Careful wording and framing of questions
 - Sampling frame is consistent and comprehensive
 - Sample size is appropriate (large)
 - Response rate is high and consistent across groups being compared
 - Each respondent is reached in the same way
 - Confidentiality
- Producing indicators from survey data
 - Disaggregate by the four gender dimensions
 - Disaggregate by different forms of violence
 - Include all violent events reported to survey in estimates (no capping)

Do existing surveys meet the quality criteria?

As discussed above, there are two major models of survey relevant to violence against women and men: specialist Violence Against Women surveys and generic (Crime and Health) surveys. The aim of the Violence Against Women survey model is to discover the proportion of the female population who are victims of violent and coercive actions (Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, 2004; FRA, 2014a; García-Moreno et al, 2005; HEUNI, 2013; Johnson, 1996; Johnson et al, 2008). The aim of the generic Crime and Health survey model is to discover the extent and distribution of violence in the population (US Bureau of Justice; Truman and Langton, 2015; ONS, 2016b). Each model has developed over many years.

In this section we interrogate the best European contemporary examples of the specific ‘Violence Against Women’ surveys: the FRA Violence Against Women: An EU-wide Survey (FRA, 2014a, 2014b), which built on a long tradition, including the Canadian Violence Against Women Survey (Johnson, 1996), the International Violence Against Women Survey (Johnson et al, 2008; HEUNI 2013), and the World Health Organization (WHO) Multi-country Study on Women’s Health and Domestic Violence Against Women (WHO, 2005; García-Moreno et al, 2005) and generic surveys: the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) (part of a tradition that encompasses crime surveys in the US [US Bureau of Justice], Australia [Australian Bureau of Statistics and Canada [Statistics Canada]], and health surveys in Denmark (Helweg-Larsen, 2010) and the global South (Demographic and Health Surveys Program, see www.dhsprogram.com) against the quality criteria set out above, and

summarised in Table 3 below. (Note that data from both the FRA and CSEW surveys is available to researchers for secondary analysis.)

FRA Violence Against Women: An EU-wide Survey

The FRA survey, conducted in all EU member states, including the UK, is a classic example of the ‘Violence Against Women’ survey model.

Gender dimensions

On the gender dimensions the FRA survey performs well in recording the sex of the victim, the sex of the perpetrator and whether there is a sexual element; however, because the survey is limited to women only, comparisons between violence against women and against men cannot be made. The sex of the perpetrator is recorded and published in the official findings (see, for example, FRA, 2014a, p. 48). Distinctions in the relationship between perpetrator and victim are recorded, in particular if this is an intimate partner or other family member, but also for a range of acquaintances, including work colleagues and supervisors; peers; doctors and healthcare workers; clients, customers or patients; and teachers, trainers or coaches. Sexual violence is recorded separately from physical non-sexual violence, including rape and attempted rape.

Definition of violence

On the definition of violence the FRA survey performs badly, as do most ‘Violence Against Women’ surveys. The definition of violence and the distinctions between different types is not anchored in criminal or other bodies of law, but rather in a modified version of the CTS. As a consequence of using the CTS the definition of violence is based on actions alone. Harms are recorded separately, rather than as part of the definition of violence (see the discussion of law, crime and the CTS above).

Unit of measurement

The unit of measurement is focused on counting victims. While events are counted, they are not individually counted, but rather grouped into categories of one, two to five, or six or more: thus high-frequency victims are not visible. The number of perpetrators is also counted using categories (‘one’, ‘two’, ‘three or more’).

Survey instrument

There is careful wording and phrasing of questions so as not to use stigmatising language and the use of filters and gateway questions is kept to a minimum.

The same questions were asked of each respondent, each time by a trained interviewer, in a face-to-face setting.

The sampling frame was slightly different in different countries (FRA, 2014b, p. 12). It did not include women staying temporarily with friends or family, so lacked comprehensiveness.

The sample size was too small to support some of the conclusions drawn from the survey data. The sample totalled 42,000 for the EU (0.01% of the EU population: Eurostat, 2016) with around 1,500 in each member state. While 42,000 respondents is a sufficiently large sample for the EU as a whole for many forms of violence, it is too small to robustly compare member states, too small to compare by severity of violence within member states, and too small to analyse less frequent forms of violence, such as rape, even at EU level. Indeed, the FRA draws attention to the particularly small cell counts in some countries.

The response rate was low and varied between member states. The overall response rate was only 42%, and ranged from 18.5% in Luxembourg to 84% in Hungary. There is a statistically significant correlation between the response rate to the FRA survey and the disclosure of violence (see Table 1). Thus there is no robust evidence base for FRA's claims of different rates of lifetime violence between EU member states.

Respondents were reached in different ways rather than in an identical way. Approaches to respondents varied by member state as to whether there was an initial approach by telephone (Finland, Sweden and Denmark) or not (the other 25 member states). There is a statistically significant correlation between the method used to contact the respondent (initially by telephone or not) and the rate of disclosure of violence (see Table 2). This means there is no robust evidence base for FRA's claim that there were higher rates of violence in the Nordic countries.

Table 1: Response rate and disclosure of violence against women

Type of violence	N	Pearson correlation	Sig(2-tail)
All VAW life	28	-0.505	0.006
All VAW last year	28	-0.381	0.046

Notes: IPV = intimate partner violence; VAW = violence against women; N = number of countries.

Table 2: Method of initial contact and disclosure rate of violence against women

Type of violence	Mode of contact	N	Mean	t	df	Sig(2-tail)
IPV life	Telephone	3	30.00	-3.133	26	0.004
	F2F	25	20.12			
IPV last year	Telephone	3	4.67	-0.527	26	0.603
	F2F	25	4.20			
All VAW life	Telephone	3	48.33	-3.943	26	0.001
	F2F	25	29.88			
All VAW last year	Telephone	3	10.67	-2.782	26	0.010
	F2F	25	6.96			

Notes: IPV = intimate partner violence; VAW = violence against women; N = number of countries.

The survey did not offer confidentiality of the respondent from the interviewer. There was an interesting side exercise using a more confidential method, but this is not used for the main findings.

Conclusion

The FRA survey shares the classic strengths and weaknesses of the ‘Violence Against Women’ survey model. Its strength has been in successfully raising awareness at the EU level of the significance of violence against women, thus assisting in taking forward policy and research development. The FRA survey collects data on perpetrators, which is rarer in generic Crime and Health surveys, as well as whether there was a sexual element to the violence. Its main weaknesses are its use of the CTS, which produces a gender bias and entails a lack of alignment with legal (criminal) definitions of violence (and thus with statistics from the criminal justice system); the restriction to women only, which means that there are no comparisons with men; the sample sizes are too small to support the intended analyses; and the uneven methodological practices in survey implementation in different member states seriously undermine any claim to robust comparisons of rates of violence across member states.

Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW)

The CSEW (formerly the British Crime Survey) is a world-leading example of a generic crime survey. It was established in the 1980s and now runs on an annual basis.

The data collected from respondents is significantly more detailed than that which is routinely published in ONS reports. In the discussion below we distinguish between ONS published statistics and the more comprehensive data that is collected, and thus the potential statistics that could be derived and published using CSEW data.

Data on violence is collected in two parts of the survey: the Victim Form module, and an Intimate Violence module. The Intimate Violence module has most of the weaknesses of the ‘Violence Against Women’ surveys like the FRA, including its gender-biasing effects discussed above, because of its use of the CTS and failure to collect data on repeated events, even though it is also asked of men. While the Intimate Violence module does use CASI and thus has higher disclosure rates than the face-to-face Victim Form module, nevertheless, the focus of the analysis below is on the data collected by the vastly superior Victim Form module.

Gender dimensions

The CSEW collects data on the sex of the victim, but this is not included in most of the published data (under review). The CSEW collects data on the sex of the perpetrator in a sub-set of the victim forms (long, but not short), but does not include this in most published data. The CSEW collects data on the relationship between perpetrator and victim (domestic relation – intimate partner or other family member; acquaintance; stranger) and publishes this for a sub-set of crimes, enabling a category of domestic violent crime to be identified (although this is not published in gender-disaggregated form). The CSEW collects data on sexual offences, including rape and other sexual assault, but does not publish statistics on sexual offences.

Definition of violence

The CSEW Victim Form module uses definitions of violence that are consistent with criminal law in England and Wales (which hold 89% (ONS, 2014) of the population

of the UK). This means that it includes both actions and harms in the definitions, for example, violence with injury and violence without injury.

Unit of measurement

The CSEW routinely collects data using both crime (event) and victim as units of measurement; limited data is collected on the perpetrator, but none is published. Most data is published by crime (event) and some by victim (prevalence rate).

Repetition is addressed by counting all violent crimes and including these in the raw data set; however, there is a difficulty with the published figures as a result of ‘capping’. The ONS does not use all reported crimes in its published estimates, but rather caps these at a maximum of five per Victim Form. This practice is subject to critique (Farrell and Pease, 2010; Walby et al, 2014) and review (ONS, 2016a; Towers et al, 2016). Capping is a common technique used in the estimation of crime rates from survey data, but this practice is now being reviewed and revised; for example, the US practice of capping data to produce estimates from the National Crime Victimization Survey has also been subject to critique, review and revision (Planty and Strom, 2007; Planty and Langton, 2013).

Survey instrument

There is generally careful wording and framing of questions. However, there is some inappropriate use of filters, for example, anyone living in a single-person household for 12 months or more is excluded from the gateway question on force or violence by a household member (ONS and TNS, 2014, p. 37).

The sampling frame is generally consistent and comprehensive, except in respect of the non-inclusion of those staying temporarily with friends and family. The sample size is reasonable for some purposes, but for trend analysis of violent crime to include high-frequency victims requires drawing on three years of data with current sample sizes. The response rate is high (around 70%; see ONS, 2016b). Each respondent is reached in the same way. There is no confidentiality between interviewer and respondent in the Victim Form module where data is collected face-to-face. However, the CSEW does use a confidential method (CASI) for other modules so confidentiality could potentially be extended to the Victim Form module.

Producing indicators from the survey data

The Victim Form module collects the data needed to produce the indicators and statistics recommended in this analysis. However, ONS policy limits the production of published statistics so that few reach the public domain. ONS policy prioritises statistics from the module on ‘Intimate Violence’, but these are severely limited by its failure to use crime codes and to collect information on the number of events, thereby producing statistics that contain serious gender distortions and that are incompatible with other data from the criminal justice system.

Table 3: Quality criteria: FRA, ONS published statistics and CSEW potential statistics

Quality criteria	FRA	ONS published statistics	CSEW potential statistics
Definition of gender			
Sex of victim: men and women	No	No	Yes
Sex of perpetrator	Yes	No	Limited
Perpetrator–victim relationship	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sexual aspect	Yes	Yes	Yes
Definition of violence			
Anchored in law	No	Yes	Yes
Action + harm simultaneously	No	Yes	Yes
Repetition: counts all events	No	Capped at 5	Yes
Unit of measurement			
Event (crime)	Limited	Capped at 5	Yes
Victim	Yes	Yes	Yes
Perpetrator	Yes	Limited	Limited
Survey instrument			
Careful wording and framing	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sampling frame consistent and comprehensive	No	Yes	Yes
Sample size appropriate	Not for all forms of violence and gender dimensions	Not for all forms of violence and gender dimensions	Not for all forms of violence and gender dimensions
Response rate consistently high	No	Yes	Yes
Respondents reached in same way	No	Yes	Yes
Confidentiality	No	No	No
Indicators from survey data			
Disaggregate by the four gender dimensions	Yes	No	Yes
Disaggregate by different forms of violence	No	Yes	Yes
All reported events included	Yes (grouped)	No	Yes

Note: Nuances on these summary judgements are detailed in the text. ONS is reviewing the cap and its statistics on domestic abuse in 2016-17.

Conclusion

The Victim Form module of the CSEW meets most of the quality criteria while ONS official statistics seriously limits their usefulness as indicators of the extent, distribution and trends in violent crime and their gender dimensions. It is thus necessary to distinguish between the current 2017 ONS published statistics and the CSEW potential statistics that could be derived and published using the data collected by the Victim Form module.

Figure 1: proposed short questionnaire on violence

1) What is your sex?

- Female
- Male

2) In the last 12 months has someone hit or attacked you in a way which caused a PHYSICAL INJURY, for example, a cut or scratch, black eye, broken bone, nose or teeth?

- Yes
- No

a) [If yes] How many times did this person hit or attack you in the past 12 months in a way which caused a PHYSICAL INJURY?

- Once
- More than once
[if more than once] How many times? (for example, once a month is about 12 times; once a week is about 50 times; twice a week is about 100 times)

b) Who did this to you?

- Current or ex-intimate partner (husband/wife/partner/boyfriend/girlfriend/dating partner)
- Other family member (father/mother/brother/sister/cousin/uncle/aunt/other relative, including step and in-laws)
- Acquaintance (someone you know at least by sight, for example, friend, colleague, neighbour, GP, client, someone in your community)
- Stranger (someone you do not know at all, even by sight)

c) What sex was this person?

- Male
- Female

3) In the last 12 months has someone hit or attacked you in a way which DID NOT cause a physical injury?

- Yes
- No

a) [If yes] How many times did this person hit or attack you in the past 12 months in a way which DID NOT causes a physical injury?

- Once
- More than once
[if more than once] How many times? (for example, once a month is about 12 times; once a week is about 50 times; twice a week is about 100 times)

b) Who did this to you?

- Current or ex-intimate partner

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- (husband/wife/partner/boyfriend/girlfriend/dating partner)
- Other family member
(father/mother/brother/sister/cousin/uncle/aunt/other relative, including step and in-laws)
- Acquaintance (someone you know at least by sight, for example friend, colleague, neighbour, GP, client, someone in your community)
- Stranger (someone you do not know at all, even by sight)

c) What sex was this person?

- Male
- Female

4) In the last 12 months has someone THREATENED to hit or attack or kill you in a way that actually frightened you?

- Yes
- No

a) [if yes] How many times did this person THREATEN to hit or attack or kill you in the past 12 months in a way that actually frightened you?

- Once
- More than once
[if more than once] How many times? (for example, once a month is about 12 times; once a week is about 50 times; twice a week is about 100 times)

b) Who did this to you?

- Current or ex-intimate partner
(husband/wife/partner/boyfriend/girlfriend/dating partner)
- Other family member
(father/mother/brother/sister/cousin/uncle/aunt/other relative, including step and in-laws)
- Acquaintance (someone you know at least by sight, for example friend, colleague, neighbour, GP, client, someone in your community)
- Stranger (someone you do not know at all, even by sight)

c) What sex was this person?

- Male
- Female

5) In the last 12 months has someone penetrated your vagina, mouth or anus with their penis, fingers or an object when you made it clear that you did not agree or when you were not capable of consenting?

- Yes
- No

a) [if yes] How many times did this person penetrate your vagina, mouth or anus with their penis, fingers or an object when you made it

clear that you did not agree or when you were not capable of consenting?

- Once
- More than once

[if more than once] How many times? (for example, once a month is about 12 times; once a week is about 50 times; twice a week is about 100 times)

b) Who did this to you?

- Current or ex-intimate partner (husband/wife/partner/boyfriend/girlfriend/dating partner)
- Other family member (father/mother/brother/sister/cousin/uncle/aunt/other relative, including step and in-laws)
- Acquaintance (someone you know at least by sight, for example friend, colleague, neighbour, GP, client, someone in your community)
- Stranger (someone you do not know at all, even by sight)

c) What sex was this person?

- Male
- Female

6) Have you experience other incidents of violence in the past 12 months that you have not yet told us about?

- No
- Yes

[if yes] Redirect to the start of this form

Now we would like to ask you about whether you have experienced incidents of violence earlier in your life: [ALL QUESTIONS ABOVE REPEATED BUT WITH PREFACE: *DURING YOUR LIFETIME, EXCLUDING THE PAST 12 MONTHS*]

Proposed new third approach: data collection module for analysis of violence against women and men

A proposal for a short questionnaire that would enable the collection of the required data on violence against women and men to meet the quality criteria set out above is offered below.

This should be conducted using CASI, with automatic direction to the next question of interest premised on the answer of the respondent. It proposes surveying women and men on their experiences of four forms of violence over specified time frames (past 12 months and lifetime): physical violence causing a physical injury; physical violence not causing a physical injury; a credible threat of physical violence; and rape. All respondents should be asked each initial question regarding their experience of these four types of violence.

Conclusion

Two approaches to the measurement of violence have developed, corresponding to two approaches to the conceptualisation of violence: violence against women and violent crime (or health consequences of violence). The differences are not solely

technical but are linked to fundamental issues in gender theory and practice. There has been a tendency for these different approaches to produce the evidence that supports rather than tests these fundamental issues. In addition, while generic crime surveys have generated much relevant data, the summary statistics that are produced by official bodies, such as the ONS, do not put into the public domain the full richness of the data that is collected by the surveys.

A third approach is offered here, which synthesises the strengths of both approaches and offers a way to mainstream gender dimensions into major approaches to crime and health. This third approach is to generate the data that is needed to test the theories that underpin both other approaches.

There is a paradox in the use by 'Violence Against Women' surveys of a modified version of the CTS developed by Straus for family violence together with victims as the unit of measurement rather than the legal definition of violence developed through democratic debate, legislation and case law and with events as the unit of measurement. The CTS obscures gender asymmetry in the experience of violence by its sole focus on action to the exclusion of harm as compared with the legal definition that incorporates both action and harm. The use of the victim rather than event (crime) as the unit of measurement obscures the gender asymmetry in the frequency of assaults on the same person in domestic violence and other forms of violence against women. Thus the 'Violence Against Women' surveys use a methodology that obscures gender asymmetry in both the seriousness and frequency of violence relative to that obtained when legal categories are used.

In this article, the concepts of gender and of violence have been carefully specified. The concept of gender goes beyond a focus on women alone, including both women and men as potential victims of violence so that they might be compared. Further dimensions of gender are included: the sex of the perpetrator, the gender-saturated context of the relationship between perpetrator and victim (intimate partner or other family member; acquaintance; or stranger), and whether there is a sexual aspect to the violence. The definition of violence is anchored in law, which includes both action and harm, and addresses repetition by counting all violent events.

The new proposed survey instrument required to implement the collection of data is organised through this operationalisation of the concepts of violence and gender. A list of the core questions and how they are organised is offered. The proposal includes:

- the collection of data using units of event (crime), victim and perpetrator;
- the sampling frame needs to be consistent and comprehensive, and the sample size needs to be appropriately large;
- the response rate needs to be high and consistent across the groups being compared. Each respondent needs to be reached in the same way. Confidentiality needs to be provided to the respondent;
- the production of summary statistics and indicators from the survey needs to include all the violent events reported to the survey, rather than only those below an arbitrary cap, as well as being disaggregated by the various forms of violence and the gender dimensions;
- the routine collection of data and production of statistics using this third approach would enable the further development of the theory of change needed to underpin the policy and politics to move towards the ending of violence.

Note

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