

VIOLENCE IN INTIMATE PARTNER RELATIONSHIPS DURING THE COVID-19 EPIDEMIC IN SLOVENIA

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Summary

Measures taken to restrain the spread of the coronavirus have significantly impacted people's well-being and behaviour, increasing thereby the likelihood of family violence, especially of violence against women. This paper tests the hypothesis that family violence has increased during the epidemic in Slovenia by analysing police datasets on reported cases of family violence in Slovenia during the pandemic. The results, which were confirmed by a series of t-tests, indicate that compared to a 10-year average, in 2020 there was an average number of reports of family violence, in contrast to a 20% lower number of reports in 2021. Similarly, the number of misdemeanours of family violence was almost average in 2020, and lower in 2021. Likewise, the number of restraining orders imposed in 2020 and 2021 was close to the above-mentioned 10-year average. Within a period of eleven weeks during both the first and the second lockdown period, there were higher instances of detected criminal offences and misdemeanours, whereas the number of restraining orders imposed and breached decreased.

Keywords: *Slovenia; family violence; intimate partner violence; epidemic; COVID-19; criminal offence; restraining order.*

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1 INTRODUCTION

At the time of writing, almost two years have passed since 11 March 2020, when the World Health Organization declared the Novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) outbreak as a pandemic. Based on the data researchers have collected on crime, we are witnessing global changes – among many others – in the scale and structure of crime during this pandemic era.

These changes are also apparent in violence perpetrated by the victim's intimate partner (hereinafter IPV). The heightened risk of IPV during the pandemic has been underscored by international organisations¹ and criminology scholars alike² as well as national criminal justice stakeholders (e.g. the Slovenian Police³).

That IPV increases in times of crisis is not a new notion. It has been recorded during previous epidemics, although none of the earlier epidemics (Z.I.K.A., AIDS, EBOLA) was quite as overwhelming as this one.⁴ Other crises also influenced IPV levels, especially natural disasters.⁵

In this paper, we examine how the epidemic of COVID-19 has affected IPV in Slovenia. To curb the spread of the virus, Slovenia, like other countries, introduced various measures such as the closure of schools, kindergartens, universities, and cultural institutions, the assembly ban and movement restriction between municipalities (and regions), and in the second lockdown even a night-time curfew (between 9 p.m. and 6 a.m., later changed to between 10 p.m. and 5 a.m.). In addition to these rules, the authorities advised citizens to work from home and avoid unnecessary social contacts

- 1 U.N. Women, Asia and Pacific, *COVID-19 and Ending Violence against Women and Girls, 2020*, <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/04/covid-19-and-ending-violence-against-women-and-girls>.
- 2 Frederick Buttell, and Regardt J. Ferreira, "The Hidden Disaster of COVID-19: Intimate Partner Violence", *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy* 12, no.1 (2020): 197, <https://doi.org/10.1037/tra0000646>; Caroline Bradbury-Jones, and Louise Isham, "The Pandemic Paradox: The Consequences of COVID-19 on Domestic Violence", *Journal of Clinical Nursing* 29, no. 13-14 (2020): 2047-2049, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jocn.15296>; Amber Peterman *et al.*, "Pandemics and Violence Against Women and Children", *Center For Global Development Working Paper* 528 (2020), <https://www.cgdev.org/publication/pandemics-and-violence-against-women-and-children>; Julia Brink *et al.*, "Intimate Partner Violence During the COVID-19 Pandemic in Western and Southern European Countries", *European Journal of Public Health* 31, no. 5 (2021): 1058-1063, <https://doi.org/10.1093/eurpub/ckab093>.
- 3 Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Slovenia, *Obeležujemo mednarodni dan boja proti nasilju nad ženskami*, Access 25th November 25, 2020, <https://www.policija.si/medijsko-sredisce/sporocila-za-javnost/sporocila-za-javnost-gpue/106650-obelezujemo-mednarodni-dan-boja-proti-nasilju-nad-zenskami>.
- 4 Joanie Mitchell *et al.*, "Intimate Partner Violence, H.I.V., and Mental Health: A Triple Epidemic of Global Proportions", *International Review of Psychiatry* 28, no. 5 (2016): 452-463, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540261.2016.1217829>; Kimberly Adams Tufts, Paul Thomas Clements, and Judy Wessell, "When Intimate Partner Violence Against Women and H.I.V. Collide: Challenges for Healthcare Assessment and Intervention", *Journal of Forensic Nursing* 6, no. 2 (2010): 66-73, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1939-3938.2010.01071.x>.
- 5 Mohsen Rezaeian, "The Association Between Natural Disasters and Violence: A Systematic Review of the Literature and a Call for More Epidemiological Studies", *Journal of Research in Medicine Science* 18, no. 12 (2013): 1103-1107.

(the recommended Stay-At-Home preventive measure).

Some of the public health measures were in place for a shorter period of time, rather than for the entire period during which the epidemic was declared in Slovenia. Thus, periods of stricter and less strict regimes alternated during the declared epidemic. There were two periods during which the strictest measures were in place (hereinafter: lockdown periods): the first occurred March and May 2020 and the second between October 2020 and January 2021. During these two periods, public life was halted as much as possible, limiting individuals to spending time in their own homes unless otherwise absolutely necessary. We have analysed the trends in IPV during the two lockdowns and compared them with long-term trends in IPV. Based on the analysis, we assess whether significant changes in numbers of reported IPV during the lockdowns can be detected. Finally, we relate the findings to those derived from international literature on IPV cases during the pandemic and explain the reasons for any discrepancies.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The first findings of studies examining changes in the rate and structure of crime in the early stages of the pandemic seem to show a reduction in criminality as a sum of all committed criminal offences.⁶

Although the data show that crime – as a sum of different types of crime – has generally decreased, there are studies showing its possible displacement⁷ as well as an important increase in specific types of crime. This is particularly the case for various forms of cybercrime (increases in this type of crime are reported⁸ and family violence as explained below).⁹

Brink *et al.*¹⁰ have compared the official IPV data from the U.K., the Netherlands, France, Italy, Spain, Flanders, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Ireland and Portugal. Stay at home orders were implemented starting from 10 March 2020 (Italy) to 27

6 See for instance: Mane Gerell, Johan Kardell, and Johanna Kindgren, “Minor COVID-19 Association with Crime in Sweden, a Ten Week Follow Up”, *SocArXiv Papers*, <https://osf.io/preprints/socarxiv/w7gka/>; N.S.W. Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, *Crime Plummetts During COVID-19 Lockdown 2020*, https://www.bocsar.nsw.gov.au/Pages/bocsar_media_releases/2020/mr-COVID-19-crime-trends-in-NSW.aspx.

7 David S. Abrams, “COVID and Crime: An Early Empirical Look”, *Journal of Public Economics* 194, (2021): 104344, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2020.104344>.

8 For example, Harjinder Singh Lallie *et al.*, “Cyber Security in the Age of COVID-19: A Timeline and Analysis of Cyber-Crime and Cyber-Attacks During the Pandemic”, *Computers & Security* 105, (2021): 102248.

9 The articles that we found on this topic used several terms, sometimes even interchangeably: the majority used the term IPV, others used domestic violence, rarely family- or gender-based violence. All of the articles mentioned in this chapter used the first two terms: IPV or domestic violence. We included the latter because it was clear from the context that the authors meant violence between intimate partners by domestic violence since they used other terms for other members of the household.

10 Brink *et al.*, *Intimate Partner Violence During the COVID-19 Pandemic in Western and Southern European Countries*, 1059.

March 2020 (Ireland). Italy also implemented much more rigorous restrictions than the other countries; Germany, Spain, Switzerland, the Netherlands, and the U.K. implemented the least stringent restrictions, while the restrictions in other countries were moderate.¹¹ In more than half of European countries (6 out of 11), an increase in IPV was noted, in two countries no changes were reported, and in another two a decrease was noted. The majority of the countries that indicated an increase reported a significant increase of more than 40%, indicated by more calls to the helplines. All six countries with an increase were implementing low (Spain and U.K.) or moderate restrictions (Austria, Flanders, France and Ireland). Interestingly, Italy, with the strictest restrictions, had a decrease in reported IPV.¹² Belizzi *et al.*¹³ shed some light on these Italian statistics. They observe that the Italian national network of shelters for women subjected to gender-based violence, called D.I.R.E., reported a 74.5% increase in March 2020 compared to months before. Even more concerning, three-quarters of the women, who contacted the network, had never contacted them before (in 2018, the percentage of first-time callers was 22%). This shows that relying solely on official data may give a skewed picture of the social reality.

Silverio-Murillo *et al.*¹⁴ avoided this issue by using two sources: a domestic violence hotline and official police reports for Mexico City, Mexico. They noticed that the calls increased during certain weeks of the lockdown, whilst official reports of IPV declined and then rose back to pre-COVID levels.

Argentinian researchers¹⁵ conducted a confidential web-based survey between April and May of 2020. They surveyed approximately 1,500 women in quarantine who were at least 18, and had been cohabiting with a partner for a year or more. Of those, 58.7% reported emotional, 10.1% sexual, and 13.2% physical violence in general (before the quarantine), which was in line with previous studies; respondents, who quarantined with their partners reported higher incidences of all types of violence.¹⁶

An increased number of police reports has been detected in many countries and cities; in France, criminal complaints increased by 30%,¹⁷ in some U.S. cities by 10%

11 Brink *et al.*, *Intimate Partner Violence During the COVID-19 Pandemic in Western and Southern European Countries*, 1059.

12 Brink *et al.*, *Intimate Partner Violence During the COVID-19 Pandemic in Western and Southern European Countries*, 1059.

13 Saverio Bellizzi *et al.*, "Violence Against Women in Italy During the COVID-19 Pandemic", *International Journal of Gynaecology and Obstetrics* 150, no. 2 (2020): 258-259.

14 Adan Silverio-Murillo, Jose Roberto Balmori De la Miyar, and Lauren Hoehn-Velasco, "Families Under Confinement: COVID-19, Domestic Violence, and Alcohol Consumption", *S.S.R.N. Electronic Journal* (2020), <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3688384>.

15 Amelia M. Gibbons, Tommy E. Murphy, and Martin A. Rossi, "Confinement and Intimate Partner Violence", *Kyklos* 74, no. 3 (2020): 349-361, <https://doi.org/10.1111/kykl.12275>.

16 Gibbons *et al.*, *Confinement and Intimate Partner Violence*, 354.

17 Andrew M. Campbell, "An Increasing Risk of Family Violence During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Strengthening Community Collaborations to Save Lives", *Forensic Science International Reports* 2, (2020): 100089, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.fsir.2020.100089>.

to 35%,¹⁸ in New Orleans by as much as 37%,¹⁹ in Spain by 18%.²⁰ Police reports also increased in Italy, Canada and Germany.^{21, 22} In Brazil, the number of reports jumped by 40-50%,²³ and the number of calls also increased in Peru.²⁴ In the first week after introducing stricter measures, the number of calls to the leading victim assistance organisation (Refuge) in England increased by 25%, while the number of visits to their website increased by 150%.²⁵ In Slovenia, a study of emergency calls showed an overall steep incline in the first weeks of lockdowns, followed by a steep and significant decline as the epidemic continued. Calls related to IPV fell about 4% when compared to the pre-pandemic year.²⁶

2.1 The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Intimate Partner Violence

The reasons behind IPV are numerous and intertwined. Most often, the study of factors focuses on the individual characteristics of the perpetrator and the victim, on the characteristics of the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim, and on the social context.²⁷ This follows the widely accepted typology in all but one aspect; the latter distinguishes between narrower and broader social context, usually called the community and social context. Sánchez *et al.*²⁸ have introduced a comprehensive figure explaining this typology with different factors that influence IPV and are cumulative, like onion peels; at the core, they introduce individual factors, such as stress, impulsivity, anxiety, depression and mental health issues. Moreover, they include problems regarding the loss of employment, increase in unpaid work (child care), fear of the virus, alcohol and substance abuse, and financial strain.

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- 18 Brad Boserup, Mark McKenney, and Adel Elkbuli, "Alarming Trends in U.S. Domestic Violence During the COVID-19 Pandemic", *The American Journal of Emergency Medicine* 38, no. 12 (2020): 2753-2755, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajem.2020.04.077>.
 - 19 Buttell, Ferreira, *The Hidden Disaster of COVID-19*, 197.
 - 20 Farangis Sharifi, Mona Larki, and Robab Latifnejad Roudsari, "COVID-19 Outbreak as Threat of Violence against Women", *Journal of Midwifery and Reproductive Health* 8, no. 3 (2020): 2376-2379, <https://doi.org/10.22038/jmrh.2020.16036>.
 - 21 Sharifi, Larki, and Roudsari, *COVID-19 Outbreak as Threat of Violence against Women*, 2378.
 - 22 Campbell, *An Increasing Risk of Family Violence During the COVID-19 Pandemic*.
 - 23 Campbell, *An Increasing Risk of Family Violence During the COVID-19 Pandemic*.
 - 24 Jorge M. Agüero, "COVID-19 and the Rise of Intimate Partner Violence", *Working Paper 2020-05*, http://vox.lacea.org/?q=abstract/covid19_partner_violence.
 - 25 Bradbury-Jones, Isham, *The Pandemic Paradox*, 2048.
 - 26 Bogomil Brvar, and Mojca M. Plesničar, *Primerjalna analiza klicev na interventno številk 113 med leti 2019 in 2020* (Ljubljana: Inštitut za kriminologijo, 2021), <http://inst-krim.si/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Brvar-Plesni%C4%8D-Dar-Primerjalna-analiza-klicev-na-113-2020-2019.pdf>.
 - 27 Jasna Podreka, *Bila si tisto, kar je molčalo: intimnopartnerski umori žensk v Sloveniji* (Ljubljana: Znanstvena založba Filozofske fakultete, 2017); Deborah M. Capaldi *et al.*, "A Systematic Review of Risk Factors for Intimate Partner Violence", *Partner Abuse* 3, no. 2 (2012): 231-280, <https://doi.org/10.1891/1946-6560.3.2.231>.
 - 28 Odette R. Sánchez *et al.*, "Violence Against Women During the COVID-19 Pandemic: An Integrative Review", *International Journal of Gynaecology and Obstetrics: The Official Organ of the International Federation of Gynaecology and Obstetrics* 151, no. 2 (2020): 180-187, <https://doi.org/10.1002/ijgo.13365>.

Many of these factors were influenced by the pandemic.²⁹ The effect of the Stay-at-home policy is similar to that of a quarantine, which means a strict prohibition from leaving home. The psychological consequences of quarantine are multiple and far-reaching, from anger to depression³⁰ and post-traumatic stress disorder.³¹

Authors³² also mention the risk of alcohol (ab)use during pandemics as an inadequate response to stressors. The causal link between alcohol abuse and intimate partner violence is still the subject of debate in the criminology literature;³³ however, the correlation between alcohol consumption and violence in the family has been confirmed in several studies.³⁴

A diminishment of economic resources during a crisis leads to added stress, frustration, and conflicts between partners, which increases the likelihood of all forms of violence against women.³⁵ Declining family incomes have also been identified as an important factor for intimate partner violence during lockdowns in a study based on a survey of 1,502 women in Argentina;³⁶ a comparison of victimisation of women whose partners were in lockdown with women whose partners were not in lockdown showed a positive association between mobility restrictions and intimate partner violence.

The second layer in typography³⁷ is the relationship between the perpetrator and

29 See for example: Buttell, Ferreira, *The Hidden Disaster of COVID-19*, 197.

30 A survey of 3,500 adults in Croatia found that almost half of those surveyed faced varying degrees of depression, anxiety or stress due to measures to prevent the spread of the new virus. Nataša Jokić-Begić *et al.*, *Kako smo? Život u Hrvatskoj u doba korone: preliminarni rezultati istraživačkog projekta* (Zagreb: Odsjek za psihologiju Filozofskog fakulteta Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, 2019).

31 Nicole van Gelder *et al.*, “COVID-19: Reducing the Risk of Infection Might Increase the Risk of Intimate Partner Violence”, *EClinicalMedicine* 21, (2020): 100348, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eclinm.2020.100348>.

32 Samantha K. Brooks *et al.*, “The Psychological Impact of Quarantine and How to Reduce It: Rapid Review of the Evidence”, *The Lancet* 395, no. 10227 (2020): 912-920, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(20\)30460-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(20)30460-8); Catherine Kaukinen, “When Stay-at-Home Orders Leave Victims Unsafe at Home: Exploring the Risk and Consequences of Intimate Partner Violence During the COVID-19 Pandemic”, *American Journal of Criminal Justice* 45, no. 4 (2020): 1-12, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12103-020-09533-5>; Gelder van *et al.*, *COVID-19*, 100348.

33 Kathryn Graham *et al.*, “Alcohol May Not Cause Partner Violence but It Seems to Make It Worse: A Cross National Comparison of the Relationship between Alcohol and Severity of Partner Violence”, *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 26, no. 8 (2011): 1503-1523, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260510370596>; Silverio-Murillo, Balmori De la Miyar, and Hoehn-Velasco, *Families under Confinement*.

34 Katja Filipčič, “Miti o nasilju v družini”, *Revija za kriminalistiko in kriminologijo* 51, no. 3 (2000): 197-206.

35 Kaukinen, *When Stay-at-Home Orders Leave Victims Unsafe at Home*, 6.

36 Santiago M. Perez-Vincent *et al.*, “COVID-19 Lockdowns and Domestic Violence. Evidence from Two Studies in Argentina. Technical note IDB-TN-1956”, *Inter-American Development Bank* (2020), <https://publications.iadb.org/publications/english/document/COVID-19-Lockdowns-and-Domestic-Violence-Evidence-from-Two-Studies-in-Arentina.pdf>.

37 Sánchez *et al.*, *Violence against Women During the COVID-19 Pandemic*, 182.

the victim; it is connected to increased dependence,³⁸ spending more time together, which in turn can mean increased control behaviour as well as decreased social contact and peer support – idea also supported by other authors.³⁹

The third layer⁴⁰ is that of community. In the context of the pandemic, this layer emphasises a lack of access to social networks/social support as well as restricted access to health services. Although various support systems exist (police, N.G.O.s, social services), victims find it more difficult to contact them due to the constant surveillance of the perpetrator or the changed or limited way these institutions operate.

Due to the pandemic measures, counselling, mental health services and social services have started to operate remotely. This change in working practices has placed a new barrier in front of victims of violence. The potential presence of the perpetrator in a shared home made it impossible for victims to talk about the abuse over the phone or use online tools near the perpetrator. Access to support services was further hampered for victims of violence who lacked access to modern technologies.⁴¹ Moreover, women who needed medical attention due to violence also did not visit a doctor for fear of being infected with the new virus.^{42, 43}

Lastly, the fourth layer in the scheme⁴⁴ is the societal layer. This is where the pandemic has had the strongest impact, including a health, economic and social crisis, movement restrictions, less access to the justice/protection system, etc. Moreover, the pandemic led to unemployment, economic vulnerability, and the strengthening of xenophobic and racist discourses.⁴⁵

Peterman *et al.*⁴⁶ distinguish pathways through which a pandemic could lead to increased IPV: disaster and conflict-related unrest, exposure to exploitative

38 Dwindling economic resources not only increase the risk of violence, but are also the reason why women do not leave a violent partner. In a Slovenian survey conducted during the pandemic, as many as 15% of women answered that their survival during the covid-19 pandemic was even more dependent on their partner, while 11% had this dependence established earlier. Ana Pavlič, *Vzdušje v intimno-partnerskih odnosih in družinah v času karantene in povečane negotovosti* (Ljubljana: Inštitut za preučevanje enakosti spolov, 2020), <http://ipes-si.org/blog/2020/06/08/raziskava-vzdušje-v-intimno-partnerskih-odnosih-in-druzinah-v-casu-karantene-in-povecane-negotovosti/>.

39 Gelder van *et al.*, *COVID-19*, 100348.

40 Sánchez *et al.*, *Violence against Women During the COVID-19 Pandemic*, 183.

41 Jennifer Koshan, Janet Eaton Mosher, and Wanda Ann Wiegers, “COVID-19, the Shadow Pandemic, and Access to Justice for Survivors of Domestic Violence”, *Osgoode Hall Law Journal* 57, no. 3 (2021): 739-799.

42 Silverio-Murillo, Balmori De la Miyar, and Hoehn-Velasco, *Families under Confinement*.

43 On the other hand, access to alcohol, drugs and weapons, risk factors for intimate partner homicide (Biljana Simeunović-Patić, and Sladana Jovanović, “Intimnopartnerski umori v Srbiji: pojavne značilnosti, dejavniki tveganja in spolne (ne)simetrije”, *Revija za kriminalistiko in kriminologijo* 68, no. 1 (2017): 33.), has also been restricted during the pandemic. However, we should note that restrictions on alcohol consumption in public places (closure of bars, restaurants, etc.) do not necessarily mean lower alcohol consumption at home.

44 Sánchez *et al.*, *Violence against Women During the COVID-19 Pandemic*, 184.

45 Koshan *et al.*, *COVID-19, the Shadow Pandemic, and Access to Justice for Survivors of Domestic Violence*, 769.

46 Peterman *et al.*, *Pandemics and Violence Against Women and Children*.

relationships due to changing demographics, reduced health service availability, virus-specific sources of violence, exposure to violence and exploitation, and violence perpetrated against health workers. These pathways are dependent on the virus – how aggressive it is and on the fact that the pandemic has reached a more extensive penetration in society. Furthermore, authors⁴⁷ put forward three channels of IPV; the first channel is connected to the inability of the victim to flee the abusive behaviour, the second channel stems from social isolation, furthering mental disorders and limiting monitoring of the services and the third channel relates to the economic insecurity. However, a large study⁴⁸ indicated that only prolonged exposure to partner and a drop-in family/partner income had a measurable influence on reported IPV.

In the study of IPV across Europe,⁴⁹ the authors conclude that low to moderate intensity restrictions to reduce the spread of the virus are likely to have impacted the increase in IPV, while high-intensity restrictions may have masked this increase. This explains the decrease in reported IPV in Italy, which had the strictest restrictions. As the authors⁵⁰ warn: ‘high-intensity limits can also make it more difficult to report violence and seek help’.

Last but not least, the pandemic has also affected the functioning of the justice system. The Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice report shows that in almost every country globally, courts have operated on a limited basis or have even been closed at some point during the pandemic. This means, among other things, that there is a backlog in the prosecution of criminal offences (including IPV). In many countries, IPV cases were not a priority during the period of limited court activity. Even when general lockdown measures were lifted, court hearings and trials have continued to be postponed due to COVID infections or quarantines. The point at which a case is resolved in court has thus been delayed during the pandemic, undermining the victims’ trust in the justice system.⁵¹

3 THE EXTENT OF IPV IN SLOVENIA

3.1 Research Methods

We studied the extent of IPV in Slovenia during the COVID-19 pandemic by analysing police data on reports of the criminal offence of family violence under Article 191 of the Criminal Code [KZ-1] (2008) in the period from January 2019 to August 2021. To see if the lockdown periods resulted in different patterns of reported

47 Peterman *et al.*, *Pandemics and Violence Against Women and Children*.

48 Gibbons *et al.*, *Confinement and Intimate Partner Violence*, 358.

49 Brink *et al.*, *Intimate Partner Violence During the COVID-19 Pandemic in Western and Southern European Countries*, 1060.

50 Brink *et al.*, *Intimate Partner Violence During the COVID-19 Pandemic in Western and Southern European Countries*, 1062.

51 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *The Impact of COVID-19 on Criminal Justice System Responses to Gender-Based Violence Against Women: A Global Review of Emerging Evidence* (Vienna: UNODC, 2021), https://www.unodc.org/documents/commissions/CCPCJ/CCPCJ_Sessions/CCPCJ_30/E_CN15_2021_CRP2_e_V2102901.pdf.

violence, we looked at the lockdown periods more closely – from March to June 2020 and October to January 2021, to be exact to include the periods of stringent lockdowns. We obtained the data from the Slovenian Police; they provided us with daily data on detected criminal offences for the aforementioned period and the same period in 2019. To have a wider context for the number of criminal offences of family violence, we also obtained data on other criminal offences in the same way.

For the same period, the Police also provided us with data on reports of family violence as a misdemeanour under Article 6, paragraph 4 of the Protection of Public Order and Peace Act - ZJRM-1 (2006) and on restraining orders imposed under Article 60 of the Police Duties and Powers Act - ZNPPol (2013).⁵² To calculate trends in the movement of total crime, separate criminal offences, misdemeanours under ZJRM-1 (2006), and the imposed restraining orders, we used police data published annually on detected crime in the first six months of each year from 2012 to 2021.⁵³

The data were analysed using the IBM SPSS Statistics 22 software tool. Whether there was a statistically significant difference in the number of previously mentioned criminal offences, misdemeanours and police measures compared to the long-term average was checked by a one-sample t-test. According to the findings from abroad (mentioned in the previous chapter of this article), we expected to confirm the hypothesis that IPV had increased during the lockdowns.

3.2 Results

3.2.1 The Variation in The Number of Criminal Acts During the Two Lockdowns

We looked at the lockdown periods more closely: the first lockdown covered the period from 20 March to 31 May 2020 and the second lockdown lasted from 18 October to 31 December 2020. We have separated the total observed period from January 2019 to the end of August 2021 into even 11-week periods to match with the two periods of lockdown (Table 1). These new variables, containing weekly sums of 13-time slots, each containing 11 weeks, were checked for normality of distribution. Afterwards, we conducted a one-sample t-test to check if the sums of lockdowns one and two were statistically significantly different compared to the rest of the sums.

52 ZNPPol enables the police to impose a restraining order prohibiting the person in question from approaching a particular place or person if there are reasonable grounds to suspect that the person has committed family violence (that constitutes either a criminal offence or a misdemeanour).

53 *Policija*, Access 1st April 2022, www.policija.si/o-slovenski-policiji/statistika.

Table 1 Family Violence (Criminal Offences and Misdemeanours), Restraining Orders and Breached Restraining Orders: Means (M), Standard Deviations (SD) And Numbers of Offences / Misdemeanours (N) for a Period from January 2019 to End of August 2021 and First / Second Lockdown Period Separately (source: Police)

	PERIOD FROM JANUARY 2019 TO END OF AUGUST 2021 – ALL		FIRST LOCKDOWN PERIOD	SECOND LOCKDOWN PERIOD
	M	SD	N	N
Family violence - criminal offence	283.5	38.2	297	333
Family violence - misdemeanour	575.5	57.5	689	572
Restraining orders	205.4	14.54	193	181
Breached restraining orders	87.2	26.8	81	56

Table 2 One-Sample Tests for First Lockdown Period Between 20 March and 31 May 2020 - Values of T-Tests, Significance Levels, Means and Standard Deviations (source: Police)

	T	DF	SIG. (2-TAILED)	MEAN DIFFERENCE
Family violence under Article 191 KZ-1 (Test Value = 297)	-1.277	12	.226	-13.538
Misdemeanours under ZRJM, Article 6, paragraph 4 (family violence) (Test Value = 689)	-7.115	12	.000	-113.462
Imposed restraining orders (Test Value = 193)	3.091	12	.009	12.462
Breached restraining orders (Test Value = 81)	.838	12	.419	6.231

Table 3 One-Sample Tests for Second Lockdown Period Between 18 October and 31 December - Values Of T-Tests, Significance Levels, Means and Standard Deviations (source: Police)

	T	DF	SIG. (2-TAILED)	MEAN DIFFERENCE
Family violence under Article 191 KZ-1 (Test Value = 333)	-4.672	12	.001	-49.538
Misdemeanours under ZRJM, Article 6, paragraph 4 (family violence) (Test Value = 572)	.222	12	.828	3.538
Imposed restraining orders (Test Value = 181)	6.068	12	.000	24.462
Breached restraining orders (Test Value = 56)	4.199	12	.001	31.231

The mean score for family violence under Article 191 KZ-1 was not statistically significantly lower than the score of first lockdown, 297 cases in 11 weeks, but there was a statistically significant difference for the second lockdown, with 333 cases in 11 weeks.

Continuing with misdemeanours, the variation of reported misdemeanours of family violence under Article 6, paragraph 4 of ZRJM was statistically significantly lower than the score of first lockdown, with 689 cases in 11 weeks, but not for the second one, with 572 cases in 11 weeks.

The sums of imposed restraining orders were statistically significantly higher from the sum of the first lockdown, in which there were 193 cases in 11 weeks, and even more so for the second one, with 181 cases in 11 weeks.

Lastly, the sums of breached restraining orders were not statistically significantly higher from the sum of the first lockdown, 81 cases in 11 weeks, but were statistically significantly higher for the second one, with 56 cases in 11 weeks.

3.2.2 Deviations from the Ten-Year Average (2012-2021)

Relying on one specific moment in time in assessing trends is risky and may quickly lead to unreliable conclusions. More precisely, we would be inclined to attribute any change in trends to the lockdowns, when they might in fact be a piece of a long-term trend.

In the first six months of 2020, family violence under Article 191 of KZ-1 was slightly above the ten-year average (749 offences compared to 732.2 ± 137.5) but entirely below the average in 2021 (127 offences less) (Tables 5 and 6). These differences were statistically significant.

For the number of family violence misdemeanours and the number of measures taken by police officers due to family violence (which constitutes either a criminal offence or misdemeanour) – restraining orders under Article 60 ZNPPol (2013), we also performed a t-test to determine whether the number of misdemeanours and measures deviated from the long-term average. We took the number of misdemeanours and number of measures in the first six months of each year in the last ten-year period.

Compared to the ten-year average of the number of family violence misdemeanours ($1,419.4 \pm 159.2$), the first six months of 2020 was almost on average with 1,441 offences, whilst 2021 numbers were by far the lowest in the ten years – 1,104 misdemeanours, surpassing even the lower confidence interval of difference (Tables 5 and 6).

The number of imposed restraining orders in the first six months of 2020 and 2021 are only slightly above (490 in 2020) and below (437 in 2021) the long-term average (461 ± 49.9), compared to the ten-year period (Tables 5 and 6).

Table 5 Family Violence (Criminal Offences and Misdemeanours) and Restraining Orders: Means (M) and Standard Deviations (SD) for Years 2011-2020 and First Half-Year Periods of 2012-2021 (Source: Police)

	YEARLY PERIOD 2011-2020		FIRST HALF-YEAR PERIOD 2012-2021	
	M	SD	M	SD
Family violence - criminal offence	1488.4	212.1	732.2	137.5
Family violence - misdemeanour	3092.2	353.1	1419.4	159.2
Restraining orders	958.1	82.3	461.7	49.9

Table 6 Family Violence (Criminal Offences and Misdemeanours) and Restraining Orders: Values of T-Tests (T), Significance Levels (P), Means (M) and Standard Deviations (SD) for Ten-Year-Period 2011-2020 (Source: Police)

	t	p	M	SD
Family violence - criminal offence	16.843	.00	732.20	137.473
Family violence - misdemeanour	28.191	.00	1419.40	159.217
Restraining orders	29.238	.00	461.70	49.936

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Definitions

Slovenian criminal law incriminates severe forms of family violence as a criminal offence under Article 191 of KZ-1 (2008) and minor forms of family violence as a misdemeanour under of Article 6, Par. 4 of ZJRM-1 (2006). The distinction between the criminal offence and the misdemeanour is an important legal issue. It affects the process of dealing with the perpetrator and the various sanctions that can be imposed on the perpetrator. However, from the point of view of determining the extent of family violence, the significance of these differences is fading. Thus, in our research, we considered both the extent of family violence as a criminal offence and the extent of family violence as a misdemeanour when determining the extent of family violence.

Furthermore, in the article, we were interested in IPV against women. The criminal offence and misdemeanour in question cover not only violence against women, but also violence against other family members. Victims of an offence under Article 191 of KZ-1 (2008) may also be other adult family members (such as partners, adult children and parents). Under Article 6, Par. 4 of ZJRM-1 (2006), victims of a misdemeanour may be adult and minor family members. In the analysis, we covered

all reports of criminal offences and misdemeanours, regardless of which of the above family members were involved as their victims. However, data from the Police and the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs show that more than 80% of victims of family violence are women. In comparison, about 99% of perpetrators of family violence are men.⁵⁴ National surveys also show similar data on family violence.⁵⁵ Considering all this, we conclude that the data on the incidents of family violence as criminal offences and as misdemeanours primarily represent IPV against women. For further research, however, the question remains as to the more precise share of this specific type of violence in both criminal offences and misdemeanours.

4.2 Changes in Crime Trends

The analysis of police data was divided into two parts. First, we compared the scope of the criminal acts (criminal offences and misdemeanours) from January 2019 to August 2021. These weekly data were sectioned into 13 even periods, to match the two 11-week periods of epidemic declaration in Slovenia, which occurred from 20 March 2020 to 31 May 2020 and 18 October to 31 December 2020. The changes found abroad show a decline in crime overall on the one hand⁵⁶ and an increase in some types of crime, including IPV, on the other.⁵⁷

In parallel with the findings from other countries, incidents of family violence as a criminal offence increased by 5% in the first lockdown period and by 18% in the second lockdown period. The volume of reported misdemeanours of family violence increased by 19% in the first lockdown and decreased by 1% in the second. The number of imposed restraining orders decreased by 6% in the first lockdown period and 12% in the second; this was mirrored in breached restraining orders – a decrease of 9% in the first lockdown period was followed by a decrease of 36% in the second lockdown period.

Following the example of foreign authors, the increase in family violence could also be confirmed for Slovenia based on such data. Both more severe forms of family violence (representing a criminal offence) as well as milder forms of family violence (representing a misdemeanour) increased.⁵⁸ While the increase itself is not unexpected, the decrease in the number of restraining orders on the other hand is – further research into the question of why the number of restraining orders imposed has been reduced seems necessary.

54 Government of the Republic of Slovenia (Vlada RS), *Zakon o spremembah in dopolnitvah Zakona o preprečevanju nasilja v družini, predlog*, EVA: 2016-2611-0006, prva obravnava (2016).

55 Mateja Sedmak, and Ana Kralj, “Nevarna zasebnost - nasilje v družinah v Sloveniji”, *Družboslovne razprave* 22, no. 56 (2006): 93-110; Vesna Leskošek *et al.*, *Nasilje nad ženskami v Sloveniji* (Maribor: Aristej, 2013).

56 Gerell *et al.*, *Minor COVID-19 Association with Crime in Sweden, a Ten Week Follow Up*.

57 Campbell, *An Increasing Risk of Family Violence During the COVID-19 Pandemic*, 100089; Buttell, Ferreira, *The Hidden Disaster of COVID-19*, 197.

58 The presented findings partly differ from the results of the analysis presented in our paper Katja Filipčič *et al.*, “Intimnopartnersko nasilje v času pandemije COVIDA-19”, *Revija za kriminalistiko in kriminologijo* 72, no. 1 (2021): 65-78, which covered only part of the first lockdown period.

4.3 Further Analysis

However, we have taken into account the warnings of some authors⁵⁹ that conclusions about crime trends that are not based on established statistical methods can be premature or misleading. Therefore, we studied the changes in the extent of IPV during COVID-19 more in-depth by using the t-test as an established statistical method and taking into account the six-month average of crime over ten years.

Before embarking on the interpretation of our findings, let us emphasise: the identification of changes in crime during the COVID-19 period with same-length periods of the last three years has its limitation. Only the consideration of a more extended period allows thoroughly reliable conclusions to be drawn about changes in crime. Whether such an approach will confirm the expectations of an increase in IPV against women in many countries cannot be predicted. It is necessary to wait for in-depth analyses of the first data presented in the introductory part of this paper.

The separate t-tests, conducted for all observed criminal offences, misdemeanours and restraining orders, paint an interesting picture. The number of criminal offences of family violence as a criminal offence was not statistically significantly higher in the first lockdown (an increase of 5%), but has gone significantly up in the second lockdown, with an increase of 17%. Next, the number of reported misdemeanours of family violence as a misdemeanour was statistically significantly higher in the first lockdown at 19.8%, but the second lockdown showed a decrease of less than 1%. The number of imposed restraining orders was significantly lower in the first lockdown, by 5.8%, and even more so for the second one, by 11.8%. Similarly, the number of breached restraining orders was statistically significantly lower in the first lockdown with a 7.1% decrease, but was 35% lower for the second one, a statistically significant difference.

The t-tests conducted on the number of reported offences, misdemeanours and imposed restraining orders in the first six months of each year from 2012 to 2021 give us another view. The criminal offences under family violence were almost average in the first six months of 2020 but 17.4% below the average in 2021 (a total of 127 offences less) and the difference was statistically significant. The number of family violence misdemeanours in the first six months of 2020 was almost average with 1,441 criminal offences, whilst 2,021 numbers are by far the lowest in the ten years – 1,104 misdemeanours, with a decrease of 22.2%. The numbers of restraining orders in the first six months of 2020 and 2021 were both close to the averages.

With the t-test approach we, therefore, confirmed most of our findings:

(1) the scope of family violence as a criminal offence increased during both lockdown periods,

(2) the scope of family violence as a misdemeanour increased during the first lockdown, whereas

(3) the number of restraining orders imposed and breached decreased.

On the other hand, t-tests show a slight reduction in family violence as a

59 Matthew P. J. Ashby, "Initial Evidence on the Relationship Between the Coronavirus Pandemic and Crime in the United States", *Crime Science* 9, no. 1 (2020): 6, <https://crimesciencejournal.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s40163-020-00117-6>.

misdeemeanour during the second lockdown (while simplified calculations showed an increase of family violence misdemeanours during both lockdowns).

However, the interpretation of the findings obtained by more in-depth statistical methods still requires a great deal of caution. The police statistics on which the extent of crime is based (both in the foreign literature and in our paper) reflect only the reported cases. In contrast, the extent of unreported crime is unknown. The gap between the crime reported and the actual extent of crime is particularly large for all forms of domestic violence. According to U.N. estimates,⁶⁰ less than 40% of female victims of intimate partner violence seek any help; among those who seek it, most turn to family and friends for help, and less than 10% seek help from the police.

Therefore, our findings on the extent of the increase in reported intimate partner violence against women during the COVID-19 lockdown periods may well represent only the tip of the iceberg. Experience from other countries shows that during the pandemic, assistance interventions diminished due to the tighter control of perpetrators of violence, the fact that the victims' economic dependence on their abusive partners increased due to job loss and an uncertain future, and the inability of many victims to report violence through the usual channels (such as via telephone call). It is therefore vital that victims are well-informed about where and how they can seek help.⁶¹ Above all, care must ensure that victim support organisations are accessible for extended periods and in innovative post-pandemic ways.⁶²

Last but not least, the frequency of reporting is also influenced by entrenched beliefs that reinforce gender inequality. During the COVID-19 epidemic, the Institute for the Study of Gender Equality⁶³ conducted a small study that did not cover a

60 United Nations Economic and Social Affairs, *The World's Women 2015: Violence Against Women. Chapter 6* (New York: United Nations, 2015), <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/chapter6/chapter6.html>.

61 RTV SLO, for example, made an important contribution to informing victims in Slovenia, producing a special video during the lockdown period, raising public awareness of the increased dangers of domestic violence and providing victims with information on where to seek help. In the period between April 14th 2020 and May 6th 2020, it was broadcast 238 times, on average almost 13 times a day. Information about the broadcast of the video was provided by Ms. Natalija Gorščak, director of Television Slovenia, for which we thank her.

62 For example, the Slovenian Association for Nonviolent Communication, a non-governmental, non-profit and humanitarian organisation working to prevent and reduce violence and its consequences, has extended its telephone counselling to 24 hours a day. (Društvo za nenasilno komunikacijo, *Obvestilo o razširitvi telefonskega svetovanja*, 10th April 2020, <https://www.drustvo-dnk.si/zelite-izvedeti-vec/novice/204-obvestilo-o-raz%C5%A1iritvi-telefonskega-svetovanja.html>). In some countries, police have also sought new ways to make it easier for victims to contact them, e. g. encouraging delivery staff and postal workers to notice signs of violence (U.N. Women, Asia and Pacific, *COVID-19 and Ending Violence against Women and Girls*) or launching codeword schemes (Ivana Kottasova, and Valentina Di Donato, "Women are Using Code Words at Pharmacies to Escape Domestic Violence During Lockdown", *CNN*, 6th April 2020, <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/04/02/europe/domestic-violence-coronavirus-lockdown-intl/index.html>; Manuel Eisner, and Amy Nivette, "Violence and the Pandemic, Urgent Question for Research", *Violence Research Centre, University of Cambridge*, <https://www.vrc.crim.cam.ac.uk/news/violence-pandemic-hfg-research-and-policy-brief>).

63 Pavlič, *Vzdušje v intimno-partnerskih odnosih in družinah v času karantene in povečane*

representative sample.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, its findings colour in the picture provided by official data. We point out that as many as 30% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed, and 24% could not define or clearly (dis)agree with the statement that women in times of crisis (such as COVID-19) need to be particularly patient and need to calm down any tense situations in the family and intimate partnership. It is impossible not to agree with Pavlič, who concluded: “It is necessary to stop at these figures and to state that it is inappropriate for any community to help perpetuate perceptions of women that portray them as part of the population whose opinions and needs must always come second to the care and happiness of others and related perceptions of violence against women that normalise it by placing the responsibility for it on women.”⁶⁵

5 CONCLUSION

We estimate that our data collected so far on IPV in Slovenia in the COVID-19 period, which show the extent of reported family violence, do not necessarily show the whole picture. We believe that the COVID-19 period further widened the gap between reported and actual violence. Therefore, it will be interesting to monitor the trends in reports of domestic violence after the normalisation of the situation, when the control over victims in the family will no longer be so intensive. It is possible that at that time reports of violence that occurred under the stricter public health regime will increase beyond the extent presented in this paper.

Moreover, the coming years will bring additional data regarding the prosecution and judicial decisions on cases of domestic violence. However, better insight into the extent of IPV will need to be gained in other ways than just by studying the data collected by the police and the judiciary. One such option is gathering information on perceived violence from professionals who assist victims in NGOs, safe houses and social work centres. Above all, a more extensive victimological study will have to be carried out, which will also take into account a more significant number of data, with the help of which it will be possible to perform more complex statistical analyses. Therefore, our research findings primarily represent a starting point for further research into IPV during COVID-19. Only a more comprehensive picture of what is happening in this area will give a definitive answer to the question implied in our article’s title.

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64 The survey was conducted online and was answered in one month by 628 females, 73 males and one person who does not identify within the binary sex division.

65 Pavlič, *Vzdušje v intimno-partnerskih odnosih in družinah v času karantene in povečane negotovosti.*

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Sažetak

NASILJE U INTIMNIM PARTNERSKIM ODNOSIMA TIJEKOM EPIDEMIJE COVID-19 U SLOVENIJI

Mjere poduzete za suzbijanje širenja koronavirusa uvelike su utjecale na dobrobit i ponašanje ljudi, što je dovelo do vjerojatnosti porasta nasilja u obitelji, posebice nasilja nad ženama. U našem članku predstavljamo analizu policijskih podataka o prijavljenim slučajevima obiteljskog nasilja, koju smo proveli s ciljem uočavanja potencijalnih promjena u učestalosti obiteljskog nasilja koje se događalo u tom razdoblju. U usporedbi s desetogodišnjim prosjekom, prijave o 'nasilju u obitelji' kao kaznenom djelu bile su prosječne 2020., ali su bile oko 20 % manje u 2021. Broj prekršaja nasilja u obitelji bio je gotovo prosječan u 2020., dok je 2021. bio manji. Broj izrečenih mjera zabrane približavanja u 2020. i 2021. bio je blizu desetogodišnjeg prosjeka. U razdoblju od 11 tjedana prvog i drugog razdoblja ograničene slobode kretanja broj većine uočenih kaznenih djela i prekršaja bio je veći. Zabrane približavanja su u tim razdobljima izricane i kršene u manjem broju. Ovi su rezultati potvrđeni nizom t-testa. U razdoblju izolacije povećan je broj prijava nasilja u obitelji (kao kaznenog djela i prekršaja), dok je smanjen broj policijskih zabrana prilaska.

Ključne riječi: *Slovenija; nasilje u obitelji; partnersko nasilje; epidemija; COVID-19; kazneno djelo; zabrana približavanja.*

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