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**THE PRICE OF VIOLENCE. THE COSTS OF MEN'S VIOLENCE
AGAINST WOMEN IN FINLAND**

Submitted by Statistics Finland *

1. *The Price of Violence. The Costs of Men's Violence against Women in Finland* is a sequel to the first study: *Faith, Hope, Battering* (1998) examining men's violence against women. *The Price of Violence* estimates the societal costs that violence against women causes in the health care, social and justice sectors. Societal costs refer to the total costs in EUR caused by violence that are primarily financed from tax revenue. The study has been carried out in 1999-2000. The year 1998 was selected as the base year of data collection as far as such data were available.

2. Also similar studies have been carried out in other countries, applying different research designs. For example in the U.K., the costs of violence against women on one single day were assessed. However, it is not possible to arrive at comparable cost estimates in the public sector since the social sector, and the health care and law enforcement and criminal justice systems differ across countries.

I. Starting points of estimating the costs of violence against women

3. According to the report *Faith, Hope, Battering*, 40 percent of women have at some point of their adult lives been victims of physical or sexual violence or threats. The violence experienced by the women was concentrated in the couple relationships. One woman out of five had at least once experienced physical violence by the present partner. One-half of those who had

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been victims of partner violence had suffered some kind of physical injury from the assault, against one-third of those who had experienced non-partner violence. Little over one out of four women who had lived in a violent couple relationship had sought for help at a shelter, the police, a lawyer's or a legal aid office or other institutions.

4. *The price of violence* tried to assess the societal costs caused by violence against women in Finland. The focus was on the costs of producing the services. The aim was to compute an overall estimate. The study did not make assessments of particular victim categories. The study made, however, particular cost estimates for partner violence, since partner violence is a central form of violence against women.

5. The data was collected from two main sources: statistical material related to the activity of various organisations dealing with violence (budgets, annual activity reports, client and patient statistics) together with analytic reports and research reports based on these, and interviews with experts from agencies that deal with violence. The expert estimates were used to assess the proportion of such cost items that violence against women causes to different treatment and helping organisations, but which are not explicitly recorded as "violence".

6. Various kinds of statistical material was also retrieved from international and Finnish literature, through contact networks and from the informants. Databases of National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health (Stakes), Statistics Finland, and the Prison department were used for information that was not produced on a standard basis. Further, survey data was also central.

7. The costs were analysed in three sectors: health care, social work and the criminal justice system. In addition, there were calculations on indirect costs caused by violence against women, to specify different cost elements and to unravel the scope of the problem.

II. The costs of violence against women

8. Primarily the study estimated direct or immediate costs. Some analytic indirect costs were estimated, but they were not real in the sense that it would have been possible to find their genuine monetary or bookkeeping value. The time frame was one year and usually the focal year was 1998.

9. **Immediate costs** derive from the health care sector (non-institutional care, hospital care, medication), the social sector (shelters, crisis service, social work, couple and family therapy and other therapy), the criminal justice system (police, trial, prison) and other sources (e.g. intoxicant treatment, insurance and State Reserve compensations to victims of crime).

10. According to the study of *The price of violence* the immediate societal costs of violence against women, or the costs of producing the services assessed in this report amounted to 48 million EUR in 1998. The direct annual costs in the health sector amounted to 6,7 million EUR, those in the social sector were estimated at 14,8 million EUR and the costs of the law enforcement and criminal justice sector were 26,6 million EUR. Other costs amounted to 1,7 million EUR in national level. This sum does not comprise many elements that are traditionally understood to belong to direct costs, such as the victim's compensations for sick leave and subsidies for working inability or property damages.

11. **Indirect costs** denote estimated costs that have not actually happened, but that as a consequence of a death or an injury have had a negative effect on the total national theoretical working capacity, or the well-being of the population, the value of life, and which are often

understood as belonging to assessments of the costs of the phenomenon under scrutiny. Indirect costs of violence against women amounted to 61 – 111 EUR.

12. Other non-visible costs are inflicted in voluntary work. Such work is being carried out in many private institutions such as the Finnish Service for Crime Victims and in the non-institutional services organised by the shelters of the Federation of Mother and Child Homes and Shelters.

13. The price of violence was the first of its kind in Finland and a pilot study. The result was not quite satisfying firstly because the financial accounts of different authorities, institutions and other agencies do not, with a few exceptions, provide information on the costs of violence against women. Violence is not seen as a separate problem, and in cases where it is seen as a problem it is typically dealt with only after other possibly involved factors have been taken care of.

14. A second matter of difficulty is that financial costs, in the case of violence against women, are only an external aspect, and only one dimension of societal costs. It was not possible to find financial measures for mental health or psychological costs caused by violence.

15. Thus the costs of violence against women were difficult to assess and the resulting cost estimates were regarded very conservative and, consequently, underestimates. The cost estimates proper must, in many respects, remain only rough approximations. Therefore the study recommended that costs should be assessed for one specific locality. This would make it possible to be more specific about all locally active agencies that are working with violence problems. Information retrieved by means of a detailed municipality-level study could be used for concrete development work for the prevention of violence.

III. A study at the municipal level

16. A third study was made at the municipal level: *The costs of violence in a municipality. A case study of violence against women and its costs in the City of Hämeenlinna 2001, based on estimates provided by authority representatives.* The study assessed the costs caused by violence during the month of November in the year 2001. Different helping agencies recorded on a data collection sheet all client contacts that involved violence against women.

17. The one month costs of violence against women in the City of Hämeenlinna in November in 2001 multiplied by 12 months (and for estimates from the school multiplied by 10 since the school is closed during two summer months) and corrected with the factor of 0.69 projecting the costs to national level (the national average was 69 % of the Hämeenlinna rate), showed that the figures deriving from *The price of violence* were low. The comparable annual direct costs of Hämeenlinna at national level were: 17,7 million EUR for the health care sector, 48,5 million EUR for the social sector and 24,9 million EUR for the criminal justice sector. The total sum (91 million EUR) was twice the amount that the researchers arrived at in the previous study at national level (48 million EUR).

18. The calculus concerning the criminal justice sector in Hämeenlinna was based on register data and services for which fixed prices were set, and therefore the costs could be assessed in a more comprehensive fashion than in the social sector. The costs were roughly the same size in both studies. One reason for lower estimate of criminal justice sector costs as compared with the national study may be that there were no homicides in the Hämeenlinna 2001 data.

19. In contrast, the social sector costs of violence against women in Hämeenlinna were 3.5 times the estimate from the national study where many aspects of the social sector could not be estimated. In the Hämeenlinna study, also the estimates of the costs in the health care sector were considerably higher, or 2.6 times the level found in the national study. The difference is largely explained by the fact that the Hämeenlinna study also included psychiatric treatment.

IV. Reliability

20. The figures of national study *The price of violence* are underestimates because it was often impossible to distinguish the costs caused by violence against women from other expenditure of the institutions, in particular in the social sector. It is also possible that, for instance, the real reason of hospital visits is not always recorded correctly in the patient information system.

21. The study at national level showed that a large part of the costs of violence against women is caused by partner violence. An accurate distinction between partner and non-partner violence cannot be made since couple relationships are difficult to record in an unambiguous manner. About two-thirds of the violence costs of the health care sector and about one-half of those of the criminal justice sector seem to be caused by partner violence.

22. When assessing the reliability of the results, it is no doubt relevant to know how certain it is that violence was involved. In Hämeenlinna, in more than 90 per cent of the cases the violence was certain. The proportion of uncertain cases was smallest in the health care sector. The uncertain cases from the health care sector are primarily from the realm of psychiatric treatment. In such cases, the problem was often psychological violence that is difficult to define. Police also reported of incidents where interventions had been made already before the violence had occurred.

23. The figures of city of Hämeenlinna transferred to a miniature of Finland may give somewhat higher estimates than the reality of the whole country. Hämeenlinna is a middle-sized Finnish city and the services of the city are available also for the neighbouring municipalities. It is assumed that the violence against women in the case of Hämeenlinna stays on a bit higher level than in other municipalities in Finland. Out of the violent crimes recorded by the police in Hämeenlinna in the year 2000, 133 incidents were directed against women, corresponding to a 5.4 incidents per 1,000 Hämeenlinna women annually. The corresponding rate for the whole country was 3.7 incidents per 1,000 women in 1997 (Heiskanen and Piispa 1998).

24. A common way to assess the size of the costs is to compare them with the costs caused by some other problem. There is no good reference point to the costs of violence against women, because a large proportion of the violence remains hidden. In the early 1990s, accidents were estimated to cause an annual cost of almost 760 million EUR if sick leave and subsidies for working disability are not included. Even this reference is inadequate since annually nearly 900 women are killed, and 380,000 women are injured in accidents.

25. An obstacle hampering the study of the costs of violence against women is the circumstance that violence against women is frequently not dealt with as a problem of its own. The problem may be intertwined with many other problems, such as alcohol problems, depression and helplessness. Violence also remains a hidden problem and victims tend to conceal it as they fail to seek help, or they hide the real reason of their visit for instance when they go to see a doctor. The calculations are further obscured by the fact that violence is often not recognised. Partly this problem overlaps with the circumstance that violence is not recognised as an independent problem; however, behind the difficulty of recognition there are many cultural

and attitudinal factors. In statistics this is reflected in that many sources do not distinguish between women and men.

Sources:

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