Gender-based violence in the time of Covid-19: calls to the 1522 helpline

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Outlines

WHY monitor Gender Based Violence during lockdown?

HOW to monitor the phenomenon?

WHAT are the results?
The existing crisis of VAWG is likely to worsen in the context of COVID-19. Emerging data shows that since the outbreak of COVID-19, reports of violence against women, and particularly domestic violence, have increased in several countries as security, health, and money worries create tensions and strains accentuated by the cramped and confined living conditions of lockdown.

National Statistical Offices was invited to monitor phenomenon and increased vulnerability of victims.
ISTAT carried out periodical surveys but the lack of time between these surveys do not allow collect data and information especially during specific and dramatic periods as COVID19 pandemic period.

In order to give information about the trend of the violence against women during COVID19 period, ISTAT used data set storage of national helpline 1522 adopting alternative sources of statistical information.

1522 is the helpline provided by the Department for equal opportunities of the Presidency of the Council to support and help victims of gender-based violence and stalking.

The analysis of data from calls to 1522, especially when compared with the same period of previous years, can provide useful information on the evolution of the phenomenon during the lockdown.
1522 helpline: types of calls

1522 helpline provides (by phone and chat) first aid in case of emergency and useful information to users asking help and occurring gender based violence and stalking.

**Valid calls**
- coming from interlocutors who call for information or to ask support for oneself, for other people who are part of one's friend and/or parental network

**Not valid calls**
- (nuisance calls) as coming from users whose purpose is not to ask for help but to joke or denigrate
- for errors made unintentionally

**Reasons of the call**
- **Victimes**
- **Users**

Depending on the reasons, calls are classified into three macro-group
1522 calls 2020: an exponential rise

- Compared with the period 1 March - 28 Jun of the previous year (2017-2018-2019), requests for help registered a marked increase.
  - (+119,6%) going from 6.956 to 15.280 Valid telephone and chat calls
- Not valid call decreasing
- Joke and harass (-30%) going from 5.139 to 3.585

Chat help requests has increased fivefold (+539%) going from 417 to 2.666 Chat request
Compared with the period 1 March - 28 June of the previous year (2017-2018-2019), requests for help registered a marked increase concentrated in particular on the period 22 March to 30 of May.
Why? Reasons for calling

Compared to the same period of the previous year:

- (+117%) from 2.257 to 4.899 requests from victims of violence
- (+64%) going from 315 to 519 requests for help from victims of stalking
- (+75%) jump from 2.080 to 3.655 requests of information on 1522 service
- (+80%) grown up from 1.037 to 1.872 requests of information on anti-violence centres
- (+402,3%) from 593 a 2.979 information and advice to various and heterogeneous needs for help

**Effect of the awareness campaign of department of equal opportunity, by television and social media « #liberapuoi»**
During the lockdown the call trend throughout the day and week remains unchanged.
Violence mostly occurs at home

Home is a place where violence occurs most often: 92.5% of cases in 2020 (+3% compare to 2019)

74.0% Violence had lasted for years

18.2% Violence lasted for months

Data are stable over time!
Types of violence and change in behaviour

Violence reported to the helpline was mostly of a physical and psychological kind:

- **Physical violence** (50.5%) + 3% on 2020
- **Psychological** (38.4%) - 1.9% on 2020

Changes in behaviour by victims following the violent act:

- **Serious intimidation** (23.6%) + 6%
- **Fear for one's own safety** (41.6%) + 2.6%
Reports of abuse are still few...

Based on what victims told to the 1522 operators:

Victims that **DID NOT report** increased (+3.5%) → from **80.4%** in 2019 to **83.9%** (4.738) in the same period of 2020 (2.212)

**Why victims don’t report?**

- **She/He has nowhere safe to go**
- **Does not want to compromise the family**
- **She/he went back to the abuser**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does not want to compromise the family</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She/He is afraid of being misjudged by her family</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She/He is afraid</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She/He has nowhere safe to go</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She/He has no faith in law enforcement</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She/He was asked by the Police not to report it or withdraw it</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She/He went back to the abuser</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Witnessing violence**

59.4% (3,801) of the requests for help come from victims with children.  
56% (2,128) from victims with minor children.

50.6% (1,923) of the victims with children reported cases of violence witnessed.

9.4% (354) of victims reported cases of violence suffered by children.

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**Type of reaction of the children**

- **Apprehension/anxiety** + 8.1%
- **Aggressiveness** + 1%
- **Sleep disorders** + 1%

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Transfer of the calls

Shelters and anti-violence center
Social Service
Police
Emergency health service
Others

2017  2018  2019  2020
Going deeper on data: some remarks

First contact

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Yes (%)</th>
<th>No (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>72.4</td>
<td>27.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>78.4</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>75.2</td>
<td>24.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>82.3</td>
<td>17.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Victims calls for the first time?

Who Calls

Phone calls are often interrupted before the end of the conversation, and in many cases those missing values cannot be ascribed to either a desire not to answer or an interruption of the call.
Data from administrative sources: the police statistics

✓ Data were decreasing during the lockdown: maltreatment, sexual violence, stalking reports

  But increased again in May and June

✓ Homicide decreased for both men and women

  But homicide of women decreased less than those of men, especially those perpetrated by partners and family members