



Research In the News

Questions
About
the Article ?

DATA ON RAPE IN THE EUROPEAN UNION DIFFICULT TO COMPARE

Most data available for the European Union (EU) nations, of which there are 28, are relatively easy to compare. But information on rape and domestic violence is different. In fact, most individual EU member states that do collect such data often have generally relied on police reports, not on surveys. As such, countries that are working hard to improve conditions for rape victims and victims of IPV tend to have increasing rates of victimization because more victims are willing to come forward. As such, comparing the true magnitude of victimization for these crimes across EU countries is virtually impossible.

1. How would the different cultures across countries affect how survey researchers could ask questions to estimate the prevalence of rape and other sexual assault victimizations?
2. Would cultural difference affect the way individuals respond to these types of surveys across countries? How so? Is it possible to compare estimates of rape and IPV across countries?

Source: Loftus, L. (2011, October 24). Data on rape in E.U. difficult to compare. *The New York Times*. Retrieved June 12, 2012, from <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/25/world/europe/data-on-rape-in-eu-difficult-to-compare.html>

intimate partner violence (IPV), changed the way IPV was handled by law enforcement agencies across the United States and across the globe. No longer were parties simply separated at the scene, but mandatory arrest policies were implemented in many jurisdictions across the country, which “swamped the system with domestic violence cases” (Williams & Houghton, 2004, p. 438). In fact, some states now see thousands of perpetrators arrested annually for assaults against their intimate partners. Many jurisdictions are attempting to more objectively determine whether these perpetrators present a risk of future violence should they be released on parole or probation.

Kirk Williams developed one instrument to determine this risk, which is called the Revised Domestic Violence Screening Instrument (DVSI-R) (Williams, 2012). To determine the effectiveness of the DVSI-R in predicting recidivism, Stansfield and Williams (2014) used a huge dataset that would be deemed Big Data, since it contains information on 29,317 perpetrators arrested on family violence charges in 2010 in Connecticut and is continuously updated for recent arrests and convictions. To measure the risk of recidivism for new family violence offenses (NFVO), the DVSI-R includes 11 items; seven measure the behavioral history of the perpetrator, including such things as prior nonfamily assaults, arrests, or criminal convictions; prior family violence assaults, threats, or arrests; prior violations of protection orders; the frequency of family violence in the previous six months; and the escalation of family violence in the past six months. The other four items include substance abuse, weapons or objects used as weapons, children present during violent incidents, and employment status. The possible range of the DVSI-R is 0 to 28, with 28 representing the highest risk score.

To examine how the DVSI-R predicted future arrests, Stansfield and Williams (2014) used two measures of recidivism during an 18-month follow-up: rearrests for NFVO and rearrests for violations of protective or restraining orders only. Results indicated that of the over 29,000 cases, nearly one in four (23%) perpetrators were rearrested, with 14% of those rearrested for a violation of protective order. Perpetrators who had higher DVSI-R risk scores were more likely to be rearrested compared to those with lower risk scores. As you can see, using Big Data to improve decision making by criminal justice professionals is not a thing of the future; it is happening now. The availability of Big Data and advanced computer technologies for its analysis mean that researchers can apply standard research methods in exciting new ways, and this trend will only continue to grow.