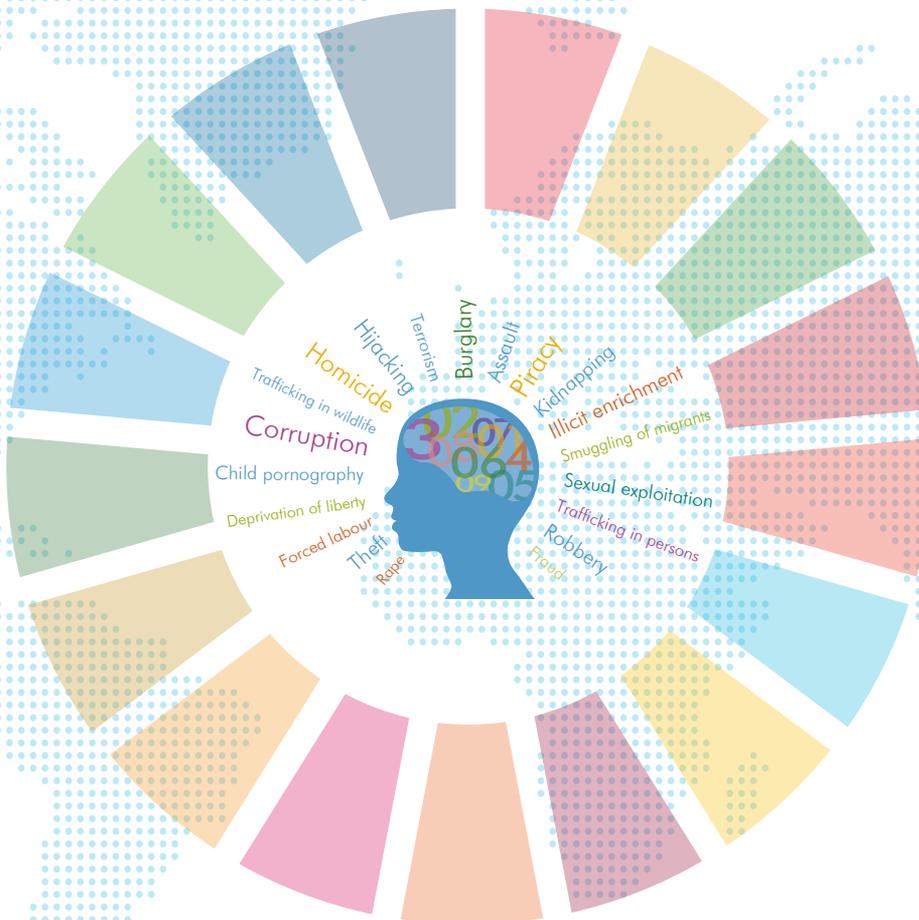




ICCS BRIEFING NOTE

Measuring violence against women and other gender issues through ICCS lenses



MEASURING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND OTHER GENDER ISSUES THROUGH ICCS LENSES

Introduction

Gender has an important place within the framework of the International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes (ICCS). It does so by taking into account the different ways in which inequalities between women and men, gender roles and attitudes can influence criminal behaviours. The classification is designed to systematically record the gender-bias dimension of all offences to facilitate the measurement of violence against women and girls, gender-based violence against boys and men and other gender-relevant issues. It does so by listing offences which are defined by gender-biased actions (for example sexually motivated crimes) and by providing a list of characteristics to include in the recording of each offence to reveal episodes of gender-based violence (such as situational context, motive, sex of offender, sex of victim, and relationship between victim and perpetrator). A number of tools have been included in the ICCS to capture the various ways in which gender-bias can affect crime and make it visible in the production of current statistics.

Through the implementation of the ICCS, statistics on crime become more relevant for a number of gender-relevant issues, such as:

- Violence against women: with the adoption of the behaviour-based approach of the ICCS, national statistics on a number of criminal offences affecting women can be produced in a standardised and comprehensive manner. While taking into account that existing data sources (e.g. dedicated surveys on Violence against Women, Victimization Surveys or Police-recorded data) can capture the extent of violent crimes towards women to a different extent, the ICCS provides a common definitional framework;
- Analysis of the gender dimensions of crime: with the systematic recording of the ICCS disaggregating variables, such as the sex of victims and perpetrators or different modus operandi of male vs. female offenders, can be analyzed;
- Monitor gender equality (or lack of) in the operations of the criminal justice system: if the ICCS is implemented across all data sources on crime and criminal justice system, it is possible to produce comparable statistics on gender-based crimes as well as on persons arrested, convicted and sanctioned for the same crimes, thus allowing the monitoring of the criminal justice response to those crimes.

Gender tools in the ICCS

The unit of classification of the ICCS is the act that constitutes a criminal offence. Each criminal act is defined on the basis of behavioural descriptions (rather than legal categories) and this allows building a common classification for statistical purposes

across different jurisdictions. For example, the concept of “sexual violence” may refer to different legal categories in the criminal laws of different countries, while the definition of “sexual violence” (and its various sub-categories) in the ICCS is strictly based on a description of the behaviour of those committing the act. All criminal acts have been defined and classified following standard principles common to all statistical classifications, such as mutual exclusivity, exhaustiveness, orderly structure and statistical feasibility.

The fact that gender is not always visible in the actual behaviour to commit a certain crime requires a broader approach to produce data on gender-bias offences. The gender dimension of crime is therefore incorporated in the ICCS in three main ways:

- by establishing precise definitions of some specific crimes that have a gender-bias connotation (for example, rape, sexual assault, harassment, trafficking in persons for sexual exploitation);
- by including the gender motivation as an important disaggregating variable;
- by including other gender-relevant disaggregations (such as the victim-perpetrator relationship) that can provide relevant information on the gender-bias element of crimes.

Besides identifying a number of offences with a clear gender-bias connotation, offences related to violence against women and gender-based violence are recorded in the ICCS through a number of disaggregating variables (so called ‘tag’ for short-hand). Horizontal tags are a fundamental tool of the ICCS, which try to capture the multi-dimensional nature of crime and attempt to delve into the motives and drivers of criminal behaviours. Several ‘tags’ are included in the ICCS, respectively on the crime event, the victim and the perpetrator and they are a flexible recording instrument to be used when needed. For example, it is fundamental to record sex and age of victims of rape, sexual assault or homicide, while the type of weapon is usually not applicable in economic or environmental crimes. The ICCS gives equal importance to classifying offences according to its framework and to record information on the horizontal tags.

The first relevant tag to measure gender based violence is the one on crime motive¹, which identifies gender as one of the drivers of committing a given crime. Other important tags that are directly relevant to examine the gender dimension of crime and produce relevant statistics are:

- Victim-perpetrator relationship (which includes “current and former intimate partner/spouse” to help the measurement of partner-violence)
- Situational context (which includes “intimate partner/family related” to measure partner-violence)

¹ Possible motives for crimes are : illicit gain, hate crime, gender-based, interpersonal conflict, political agenda, other motive, not applicable, not known

- Sex and age of victim and perpetrator

Thanks to this approach, it is possible to record and count gender-related criminal offences in a comprehensive manner. ‘Gender’ is not considered as a discriminating criterion in building the four levels of the classification because the gender-bias dimension is not always explicit in the factual behaviour identifying crimes. Tags and disaggregating variables provide more comprehensive information to identify all crimes committed with a gender-bias motivation².

Recording gender characteristics of victims and perpetrators in relation to a particular crime adds value to collected data, allowing for a more thorough, in-depth analysis, and a comparable system of data collection across countries. For example, a recent report on administrative data collection in Europe on rape, femicide, and intimate partner violence in EU Member States indicates that data on rape are disaggregated by the sex of the victim in almost all EU Member States³. However, not all countries are also recording information about the relationship between victims and perpetrators for rape cases.

This is exactly the kind of gap the ICCS aims to fill. Namely to ensure that a number of disaggregating variables, such as the sex of victims and perpetrators and the relationship between them, are applied to all criminal offences.

The ICCS is currently implemented in a growing number of countries with a view to improving data on crime and criminal justice. UNODC closely monitors this implementation. It collects feedback and suggestions on possible inconsistencies and gaps that may emerge at country level so that they can be addressed in future modifications of the ICCS 1.0. UNODC welcomes proposals on the addition of gender-bias related crime types to the ICCS framework.⁴ All proposals will be submitted to the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) to the ICCS.

² Some authors have criticised the ICCS as it “...does not include gender in its four tiers of classification, but it does include it in its secondary, optional tags. This marginalises gender to ‘context’ and excludes it from the core concepts on which the classification is built. Gender becomes something about which information is collected on an optional basis, as a secondary tag, not a primary code in the classification”. Sylvia Walby, Jude Towers, Susie Balderston, Consuelo Corradi, Brian Francis, Markku Heiskanen, Karin Helweg-Larsen, Lut Mergaert, Philippa Olive, Emma Palmer, Heidi Stöckl and Sofia Strid (2017), *The Concept and Measurement of Violence against women and men*, Policy Press, p.45

³ Administrative data collection on rape, femicide, and intimate partner violence in EU Member States, European Institute for Gender Equality 2017, p. 3, available at: <http://eige.europa.eu/rdc/eige-publications/administrative-data-collection-rape-femicide-and-intimate-partner-violence-eu-member-states>

⁴ For example the inclusion of a separate crime category for “Female Genital Mutilation” can be envisaged.