

# **An observational study of family violence in Greece during CoVid-19 through Police data: The profile of heinous crimes between nuclear and extended family relationships**

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## **Abstract**

In Greece, the frequency of serious crimes within families has been alarmingly high during covid-19; nonetheless, no study has systematically investigated this subject at a national level. The current study aims to estimate the crime rates of family violence across the country and explore the profile of perpetrators and victims based on their sociodemographic characteristics and relationship status. Out of 372 crime cases reported to the Hellenic Police during 2020-2021, the highest crime rate is observed in the geographical area of the Ionian Sea with 13.45 per 100.000 population. Overall, there were 372 perpetrators with 89.5% of them being males and 386 victims with 83.6% of them being females. The majority of both groups (perpetrators and victims) were Greeks, whereas the prevalent age group for perpetrators was 46-60 (31.2%), and for victims was 36-45 (28.5%). Nuclear relatives outnumbered the extended ones regarding all groups of family violence crimes, however, there were no statistically significant differences. Lastly, our multivariate regression model indicated that the likelihood for Greeks to commit sexual abuse instead of rape was 3.27 times greater than immigrants. Younger perpetrators were 0.30 times less likely than elders to murder a relative rather than rape them, whereas they were 10833846.63 times more likely than elders to severely injure a victim as opposed to rape them.

**keywords: family violence, crimes, Police, family relationships**

## 1. Introduction

Violence amongst family members is a horrendous phenomenon where people suffer both physically and mentally in a regime of terror. The World Health Organization (WHO) has recently estimated that around 736 million women have been subjected to either physical or sexual violence within family context. Notably, 37% of women coming from underdeveloped and poor countries have experienced physical and/or sexual violence from their intimate partners (WHO, 2021). Tolerance of systematic abuse, behind closed doors, and the intention of women to dissimulate the abuser's criminal behaviour, may lead to extremely negative consequences concerning their physical and mental health (Coker et al., 2000; Taft et al., 2007). This could also be the case for children who are often witnesses of an abusive environment between adult family members (Hornor, 2005).

In the last 20 years, a series of studies have been mainly focused on the domestic violence (DV) victims. Hence, evidence-based research on the intimate perpetrators along with the degree of relationship with the victims has been strictly limited (McDermott & Garofallo, 2004; Gorde et al., 2004; Russel & Right, 2006; Hague & Mullender, 2006; Tamara, 2007; Grech & Burgess, 2011; Birdsey and Snowball, 2013; Akyazi et al., 2018; Karystianis et al., 2019; Donovan & Barnes, 2019).

The definition of DV remains unclear within the literature and it is used as an umbrella of various intra-familial abusive relations. According to Hornor (2005), DV may interchange with various names such as intimate partner violence (IPV), family violence (FV), marital abuse, wife beating and partner abuse. This is in line with Barnett et al. (2011) who added the terms of child-to-parent, parent-to-child and elderly abuse. Simultaneously, the Home Office (2013) determines as DV any incident of controlling, coercive or threatening behavior, violence, or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of their gender or sexuality. Owing to the fact that this research focuses mainly on nuclear and extended family violence relationships for which a more in-depth analysis is provided in Section 3, it would be useful to also highlight that DV and FV are used as interchangeable terms with the same meaning. For a matter of consistency and practical purposes the authors have picked to use the term of FV.

Meanwhile, heinous crimes such as rape, sexual abuse, and homicide which have been committed amongst relatives remain under-studied. Few studies endeavored to delve into FV perpetrator characteristics as there is serious difficulty acquiring data on this topic. Johnson et al. (2006), in a British study of 230 men who had been convicted of a FV offence used cluster analysis for four variables: psychopathology, interpersonal dependency, macho attitudes and narcissism. The analysis of which resulted in four subtypes of domestically violent offenders: low pathology, borderline, narcissistic and antisocial. The largest group was the antisocial offenders (47% of total) who were the most likely to have previous convictions, bad behaviours in the adolescent period, the highest rate of alcohol dependency, they were high on macho attitudes and moderate on the narcissism factor. They also pointed out that of the total sample, 60% pertained to the narcissistic and antisocial group of offenders. In addition, a study of Murrell et al. (2007) examined 1099 adult males who had been exposed to violence at different levels as children. The authors used modelling theory and found that the men who witnessed FV in their childhood were most likely to commit FV in their adulthood, the men who were abused as children were quite possibly to abuse children and the men who were abused were most likely to commit general violence. Ennis et al. (2017) discerned 105 files of IPV abusers into two groups. The first was the instrumental group which concerned those who used planned, goal-oriented and methodical violence, whereas the second was the reactive group in which offenders were acting out of anger in response to a perceived threat (i.e., sexual jealousy). The authors discovered that the instrumental group differentiated from the reactive by higher overall risk scores, IPV-supportive attitudes, offence characteristics and a lower prevalence of premature trauma.

Researchers have also put their lenses on the FV in relation to children victims. According to Fantuzzo et al. (1997) children within a violent setting have crucial problems like poverty and low education. Additionally, Kaufman and Henrich (2000) suggested that FV may be a risk factor for physical abuse as they found that almost 40% of minors in their sample who witnessed FV were also battered. The severity of that child abuse may be predictive of the severity of violence appearing within a family setting (DiLauro, 2004). This is in line with Hornor (2002) highlighting that the fear of violence within families is one of the main reasons why a mother, as a nuclear relative to a child, could stay with an abusive intimate partner, when she is aware that her child is also sexually abused. As such, in cases like this, two nuclear relationships (child and batterer father, mother and batterer husband/partner) co-exist as time goes by. Likewise, children witnessing FV independently of the status

of the kin-relationship between family members tend to develop negative psychological effects, especially in cases where they are very young, the violence is frequent, and it is conducted close to them (Knapp, 1998).

Past studies indicated that older individuals are strongly associated with IPV. The rates of IPV in this population vary from 2% to 25% (National Committee for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, 2008; Sev`er, 2009). According to Beach (2016), when this phenomenon starts in the elderly could be associated with retirement, which may create new couple roles. Other researchers pointed out that FV is rather emotional than physical in the elderly (Roberto et al., 2014; Stöckl and Penhale, 2015). This finding is in line with Crockett et al. (2016) supporting that older women confront greater negative health consequences during their co-existence with their intimate partners. This has a strong effect on mental health and well-being (McGarry et al., 2016) and emerges with emotions of “worthlessness”.

At this point, a pivotal issue in the confrontation of various crimes within family settings is the role of the Police during FV investigations. Fleury-Steiner et al. (2006) corroborate that the documented reports about the number of perpetrators of abuse were insufficient. In 1979, a study by Dobash and Dobash highlighted that the apprehensions against perpetrators of violent crimes were more frequent than against spouse abusers. A Canadian study by Dawson and Holton (2014) underlined the importance of Police charging practices for FV incidents in Canada, finding that the Police commonly had a mediator role only when events of severe physical assault and death threats against women were committed. The Police decisions to confront effectively a FV incident are also related to other factors like the circumstances of the incident, the organizational status of the officers, the community/neighbourhood area, the Police station as a unit and the nationality of engaged parts in FV incident (Lee et al., 2013). Another crucial factor for the effectiveness of Police actions towards FV cases is the behaviour of Police personnel. Papakonstantis et al. (2007) found that the following criteria have a great impact on the officers' behaviours: official regulations, ethics, Police culture, education, the social perceptions of Police officers on the DV phenomenon and the stereotypes and prejudices accompanying the officers while entering the Police force.

As far as the topic of FV in Greece is concerned, there is still scarce empirical data. In 2006 and 2007, the first published national data upon men's and women's perpetration of IPV for an annual period brought to the surface

the prevalent forms of IPV in the Greek population. These were emotional aggression and sexual violence (Tzamalouka et al., 2006; 2007). Nevertheless, the first systematic approach regarding the individual characteristics of FV perpetrators was a cross-sectional study by Papadaki et al. (2009). This study examined 1122 adult urban citizens in Greece aged 18-65 in Greece. The study reported that early violent experiences in childhood, along with low self-esteem were associated with a high risk of physical violence against intimate partners. Finally, Petropoulos et al. (2016) attempted to develop a profile of FV offenders in Greece by exploring a sample of 19 Police directorates across the country with the main focus on the Kavala Police Directorate. The same study explored the characteristics of FV perpetrators under the Penal Mediation Program of a non-governmental organization entitled “Via-Stop” based in the city of Kavala, Greece. In that study, the offenders had a prior history of abuse which was unreported to the Police and attributed charges to the victims for family disintegration, and their predicaments, as well as did not take on any responsibility for their illegal actions.

Despite the increasing interest in research and addressing the issue of FV, there is little concentration on the relationships between the perpetrators and their victims in a family context. This happens especially when the latter has experienced severe crimes like rapes, sexual abuse, fatal physical violence, and even homicides, which are reported to the Police.

The present study intends to shed light on the profile of heinous crimes committed by perpetrators having either nuclear or extended relationships with the victims. The following objectives are addressed:

- (i) To illustrate a legislative background of FV in Greece along with the organizational status and the role of the Greek Police force in the confrontation of crimes committed in family contexts.
- (ii) To provide a coherent insight concerning the rates of FV crime cases at a national level.
- (iii) To conduct a preliminary descriptive analysis that concerns the profile of FV perpetrators and victims in Greece, relying on national representative data provided by the Hellenic Police Headquarters.
- (iv) To explore the family relationship profile between perpetrators and victims in relation to FV-committed crimes.

(v) To identify risk factors for FV crimes committed by members of families.

## **2. Legislative background, Police organizational status and the role of family violence crimes in Greece**

Notably, the crimes had been committed amongst relatives by 2006 in Greece were not charged under a specific law. All of these cases fell into the provisions of the Greek Penal Code, and they did not receive the consideration they required. Two years after the General Assembly of the United Nations in 2004 was conducted for the elimination of FV against women (UN General Assembly -58th sees: 2003-2004, 2004), the Greek state understood the criticality of the subject in question and proceeded with legal measures and restorative justice procedures against FV. This initiative led to the enactment of Law 3500 / 2006, called “Law for the Treatment of Domestic Violence and other Legislation”. That was the first Greek law by which crimes such as body injuries, threats, coercion, rapes, and sexual abuse started being strictly punished through articles 6-9 (Government Gazette, 2006).

In particular, Article 6 of Law 3500 although it regulates all different types of body injuries, it does not mention fatal body injuries. This serious crime is regulated by the Greek Penal Code, Article 311, described as a severe body injury that finally results in the decease of the victim. Moreover, Article 9 of Law 3500 determines the crime of sexual abuse, which concerns every sexual behaviour or sexual act apart from sexual intercourse upon any family member without their consent. However, the crime of sexual abuse regarding individuals with disabilities is regulated by Article 8 par. 2 of Law 3500. That constitutes a prominent case of Article 9 of Law 3500 as the perpetrator who commits this crime relied on the abuse of the victim’s insanity or even the intellectual disability that makes the latter incapable of resisting and defending against this criminal behaviour. Rape is regulated by Article 8 par. 1 of Law 3500 in combination with the Greece Penal Code, article 336, described as any sexual intercourse without consent and under threats or physical abuse. Despite its clarity and coherence, one of its ambiguities is the fact that homicides between family members have not been strictly regulated by Law 3500 yet. It is possible to be charged only with the combination of the Greek Penal Code, article 299 “Intentional Homicide” and the aforementioned law determining as homicide every action through which the perpetrator took the life of a kin-relative. That is, Law 3500 does not plainly refer to murders between relatives.

It is worth noting that all crimes when committed within a family context, are prosecuted ex-officio (article 17). Although this provision of the law aimed at the protection of the victims because there were highly increased rates of FV cases, it was fiercely criticised (Artinopoulou, 2006: 80; Dinopoulos, 2006: 1051; Simeonidou-Kastanidou, 2006: 1013). Moreover, this law also mandates teachers to intervene and inform their school directors about a case of FV when they perceive or suspect by any means that a pupil has been subjected to violence by their family members. In this case, the informed headmaster of the school has the exclusive responsibility to keep the Public prosecutor or the Hellenic Police posted to investigate the incident (article 23). According to Pitsela and Chatzisprou (2013), Law 3500/2006 also regulates the matter of penal mediation in case an FV incident occurs. Until 2006, the so-called penal mediation- was activated only with article 122 of the Greek Penal Code in cases of juvenile delinquents since 2003 (Pitsela, 2008). However, the Greek legislator introduced penal mediation in cases of FV as a consequence of the European obligation built on the Council Framework Decision in 2001 on the standing of victims in criminal proceedings (Grozos, 2010; Zimianitis, 2011; Spyropoulos, 2011; Giovanoglou, 2011).

Furthermore, the years 2006 and 2018 signified pivotal progress in Greek legislation with respect to the management and punishment of violence within families. Specifically, in 2006, sexual harassment and assault were recognized for the first time in Greece as domestic sexual abuse and rape in a family context respectively; providing those perpetrators and victims have either blood or in-law bonds up to a fourth degree, even in the case that they are couples. In 2018, the Greek state enacted Law 4531/2018 ratifying the Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention on violence against women (Council of Europe, 2011). This law modified Article 1 of Law 3500/2006 in which the cohabitation between offenders and victims was one of the main requirements for its activation. Today, this requirement has been repealed.

Based on the evolution of Greek legislation the Hellenic Police did not remain neutral. Contrastingly, the Ministry of Public Order and Citizen Protection along with the Greek force -in the light of the conventional responsibilities of the country as an official member of the European Union- proceeded with organizational reforms to be more efficient. In an attempt of the Hellenic Police services modernization to respond more efficiently to the FV phenomenon, the first central service called the "Domestic Violence Department" was established in the Hellenic

Police Headquarters in 2019. In the same year, 72 new offices across the country were founded. Finally, six offices started operational function in 2021 (five in Athens, Greece and one in Thessaloniki, Greece). In other words, these six offices come directly in contact with perpetrators and victims in case an FV incident occurs in those two metropolises with pre-interrogative and investigative duties.

The Hellenic Police is organized into a total of 14 General Police Directorates (GPDs) each of whom coordinates the operational and administrative function of the Police directorates and generally covers different and large geographical territories of the country. Specifically, these are the GPDs of Attica, Thessaloniki, Eastern Macedonia & Thrace, Central Macedonia, Western Macedonia, Thessaly, Central Greece, North Aegean, Southern Aegean, Crete, Epirus, Ionian Sea, Western Greece and Peloponnese. Except for Attica and Thessaloniki GPDs, all the others do not include FV offices having operational activity as above. To this end, when an incident occurs, the local Police stations undertake the pre-interrogative and investigative responsibility. Subsequently, they report the outcome of the case to their Police directorates, with the latter falling into one of those 14 GPDs. All Police directorates have at least one administrative FV office which mainly supervises the local Police stations' investigations. Apart from FV offices and local Police stations, victims can also report FV incidents by calling the Emergency units and the Greek Hotline -100-. Finally, they can also send e-mails or SMS messages to the services above, mentioning the current state of play.

### **3. Nuclear and extended family relationships**

According to Murdock (1949), the term “family” is defined as a social group of individuals characterised by common residence, economic cooperation, and reproduction. It encompasses at least two adults of both sexes, who maintain a socially acceptable sexual relationship along with one or more children, own or adopted, of the sexually cohabiting adults. As time goes by, this is not a rule of thumb as there is a general recognition of different family types divided by tribe, class, and gender (Thomson, 1992; Walker, 1993). As Allen and Demo (1995) underlined, some families also incorporate lesbian and gay individuals.

Furthermore, Smith (1995) pinpointed two significant concepts for the family. The first one was the structure which referred to the number of family members and their designated positions like parent, spouse, child and



other kin. The second was the function that concerned the manners in the family through which the physical and psychological needs are satisfied by their members.

In addition to the family structural concepts, Georgas et al. (2001) divided the family types as following: a.) Nuclear family members including mothers, fathers, and children, and b.) Extended family members including grandmothers/grandfathers, aunts/uncles, and cousins. That study further recognised the existence of many other family types like one-parent families, divorced families, and variations of the extended family or joint family, although did not include them for methodological reasons.

According to the literature, Article 1 of the Greek law 3500/2006 that defines the terms “family” and “kin relationships” as well as the data format conceded by the Hellenic Police, this study divided the kin relationships of family members into nuclear and extended. For methodological reasons, nuclear kin relationships incorporate married couples, civil partners, couples (constant companions), parents, children, and siblings. Extended kin relationships concern ex-married couples, ex-civil partners, ex-couples, grandparents, grandchildren, cousins, nephews, uncles/aunts, and other distant relatives.

## **4. Methods**

### **4.1. Study design and crime classification**

The inclusion criteria for the current observational study were: 1.) All cases should fall into the period 2020-2021, 2.) They also should be classified as a.) rapes, b.) sexual abuse, c.) homicides, d) fatal body injuries, e) sexual abuse for persons with disabilities, and f) other, 3.) The kin relationship between the perpetrators and the victims should be recorded, and 4.) All the cases should be distributed in the 14 GPDs.

From the statistical data given by the Hellenic Police, 372 solved FV cases were in alignment with the purposes of the current study. Due to the fact that 10 cases concerned the simultaneous commission of two crimes, they were incorporated into the main crime types by evaluating the penalization of each of them separately. Drawn on the provisions of Law 3500 and the Greek Penal Code, the crime with the highest retribution was considered for each mixed case to be added to one of the groups above. For instance, when there was one entry as homicide and rape, in this case, homicides have a higher degree of punishment than rapes in Greek legislation. As such, this

case was embedded in the main group of homicides. The same was followed for the other mixed crime cases in order for all of them to be classified into one group.

#### 4.2. Ethics

For the collection of the data, all required official processes with the Hellenic Police were followed and relevant written approvals were successfully obtained. This was according to the official procedures for data collection, which need to be followed in Greece. There is no requirement for additional written or oral approvals from an ethics committee. The research team complied fully with Law 4624/2019 about the General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (GDPR), on personal data protection. Under Article 30, this Law concedes the right to scientists to conduct research that involves personal data processes, with the requirement that the identity of individuals will be protected.

The research request, which was submitted, asked for access to this sensitive dataset. Sequentially, the written approval for statistical data provision and analysis was undersigned and provided by the Police Major-General of the Public Order Sector of the Hellenic Police Headquarters. No personal or identifiable data was included at any stage of the analysis. The present study is a retrospective one and does not have any interventional aspects, therefore, registration was not necessary.

#### 4.3. Procedure and data collection

The Domestic Violence Department of the Hellenic Police Headquarters is obliged to systematically gather statistics for FV incidents, across the country, through the internal information that is provided by the 14 GPDs. In past years, Police statistics concerning FV offences on a national scale were not available (Petropoulos et al., 2016). Nowadays, there is an integrated, new up-to-date internal Police database including data devoted on FV case files. However, it is worth noting that the sample provided by the administrative office of FV, located in the Hellenic Police Headquarters, has a coordinating role with all FV offices across Greece. However, it does not include cases from the Police Child Abuse Units during 2020-2021 that work exclusively on child abuse cases. Hence, this database does not include all children abuse cases within family settings, hence, the sample is relatively small compared to previous Greek studies (i.e., Agathonos & Browne, 1997).

The data was collected by the primary researcher who is serving as a Police Sergeant in the Hellenic Police and as a forensic-investigative scientific researcher. The data which were obtained, were not recorded for scientific research, therefore, the consistency with which details are recorded and the attention to them in some cases is limited (Canter & Alisson, 2003). Subsequently, a dichotomous approach was primarily used, based on the presence/absence of each feature. Such a method complies with precedented literature, which has documented that this approach can be used to guarantee maximum clarity and reliability when collecting and processing records not collected initially for research objectives (Almond & Canter, 2007).

#### 4.4. Data Classification

The sample consisted of 372 solved FV crime cases at a national level over the 2-year period from 01/01/2020 to 31/12/2021. Sociodemographic characteristics, such as, gender, nationality, age, and the year of incidents are reported for both the perpetrators and the victims.

The classification of the FV crimes across Greece was drawn on the distribution of the 14 GPDs which has been designed by the Hellenic Police to cover all the Greek geographical territory and are the following: 1. Attica, 2. Thessaloniki, 3. Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, 4. Central Macedonia, 5. Western Macedonia, 6. Thessaly, 7. Central Greece, 8. North Aegean, 9. Southern Aegean, 10. Crete, 11. Epirus, 12. Ionian Sea, 13. Western Greece, and 14. Peloponnese.

The initial kin relationship status (siblings, nephew, parent, grandparent, child, grandchild, cousin, uncle-aunt, civil partners, ex-civil partners, married couples, ex-married couples, couples, ex-couples, distant relatives, and others) included all the possible relations provided through the data format of the Hellenic Police. Our study re-coded the initial kin relationship status into a dichotomous variable: a) Nuclear kin relationships, and b) Extended kin relationships referred as “Nuclear and Extended Relationships”. This design was structured for methodological and practical reasons, and it is in alignment with the literature mentioned in Sub-Chapter 4.3, as the most appropriate technique assuring maximum clarity and reliability when the records are not gathered for research purposes. The nuclear kin relationships group included married couples, civil partners, couples (constant companions), parents, children, and siblings. The extended kin relationships group involved ex-married couples,

ex-civil partners, ex-couples, grandparents, grandchildren, cousins, nephews, uncles/aunts, and other distant relatives.

The classification of age was also based on the data format of the Hellenic Police with the following categories: a. 0-7, b. 8-13, c. 14-18, d. 19-21, e. 22-25, f. 26-30, g. 31-35, h. 35-45, i. 46-60, k.61-75 and l. 76+. Nonetheless, the sample of this study involved only adult perpetrators, and as such, we proceeded with a further division into three greater categories: a. 19-45, b. 46-60 and c. 60+ used in our multinomial logistic regression model.

For the classification of 372 cases the categorical variable “FV crime cases” was divided into six subgroups: rape, sexual abuse, homicide, fatal body injury, sexual abuse regarding persons with disabilities and others. We followed this design to classify them in proportion to the 14 GPDs.

Lastly, the FV crime type (rape, sexual abuse, homicide, fatal body injury, sexual abuse regarding persons with disabilities and other) was also a categorical variable with six subgroups to coherently depict the crimes committed in family contexts. That was used in association with “Nuclear and Extended Relationships” to explore the family relationship profile between perpetrators and victims in relation to FV crime types.

#### 4.5. Statistical analyses

For descriptive statistics, frequencies were computed for categorical variables. For FV crime case rates per 100.000 population, we consulted the latest version of the Hellenic Statistical Authority census for the Greek population both in total and divided into 14 geographical regions.

Fischer’s exact test was used for the bi-variable analysis between the nuclear and extended kin relationships and the FV crime status since some cells had an unexpected count of less than five equal to 20%. Variables in terms of perpetrators that exerted a statistically significant effect on the FV crime cases were entered simultaneously as predictors in a multinomial logistic regression model with the FV crime cases as the outcome variable. Odds ratios with their confidence intervals are presented. Statistical significance was set at  $p < 0.05$ . Our analysis was conducted using the SPSS statistical software (Version 28).

## 5. Results

### 5.1. Family violence crime rates at national level

Initially, the total sample of this study included 372 FV cases in terms of heinous crimes. These crimes were committed by perpetrators who had either nuclear or extended kin relationships with the victims, over a 2-year period from 2020 to 2021. One of the main objectives of this study, was to portray such a phenomenon at a national scale. **Table 1** depicts the DV crime rates per 100.000 population.

The Greek population across the country is 10.432.481 (Hellenic Statistical Authority, 2022). Out of 372 solved crime cases, there were 372 perpetrators and 386 victims during 2020-2021. Amongst 14 GPDs covering the policing of all geographical areas in Greece, the rates have fluctuated between 1.60 and 13.45. The highest DV crime rate per 100.000 population is 13.45 in the Ionian Sea GPD, which has in its geographical jurisdiction all the islands of the Ionian Sea. The lowest rate is 1.56 in the Central Macedonia GPD having in its geographical jurisdiction the prefectures of Pella, Kilkis, Serres, Chalkidiki, Pieria and Imathia. The Attica GPD, with the largest population in its geographical jurisdiction, has 3.88/100.000 marginally higher than the national crime rate which is 3.57/100.000.

### 5.2. Preliminary Descriptive Analysis

As this study was based on representative data given by the Hellenic Police Headquarters, the sociodemographic profile of perpetrators and victims is presented in **Table 2** via frequencies and percentages. The majority of perpetrators were males (89.5%). Greeks (79%) were considerably more than immigrants (21%). The prevalent age group was 46-60 (31.2%). However, very young adults aged 19-21 and the elderlies aged 76+ comprised the minorities (1% and 2.2%). The perpetrators prevailed in 2021 (70.2%) compared to 2020 (29.8%).

On several occasions, the involved victims were more than one nonetheless, these were negligible. To this end, the victims in total were 386. Female victims (83.6%) predominated compared to males (16.4%). Regarding their nationality, Greek victims (75.4%) were immensely more than immigrants (24.6%). The most common age group was 36-45 (28.5%), whilst youngsters aged 0-7, 8-13 and 14-18 were minorities (1.3%, 3.1% and 5.4%). The victims aged 76+ (5.2%) were also few. In terms of the annual periods, the percentage of victims in 2021 (69.2%) was abundantly higher than those in 2020 (30.8%).

### 5.3. The family relationship profile in relation to the committed FV crimes

The profile of kin relationships was analyzed on the basis that perpetrators and victims have either nuclear or extended relations within family contexts. For this reason, our current study grouped them into nuclear and extended relatives. This was computed after taking into consideration the existing literature and the Greek legislator who enacted the legislative provisions regarding the management and confrontation of the FV phenomenon in Greece. The results are listed in **Table 3**.

The FV crimes that were committed by nuclear relatives (282) were roughly three-fold compared to the extended ones (104). The highest percentage of crime incidents was recorded for sexual abuse for both nuclear and extended relatives (52.5% and 46.2%). In contrast, fatal body injuries (1.4%) were similar to sexual abuse in terms of persons with disabilities (1.4%) at the bottom of percentages for nuclear relatives. Fatal body injuries also had the lowest proportion in the extended relative's subgroup. However, Fischer's exact test indicated no statistically significant differences between the two types of relatives ( $\chi^2 = 5.06, p = .39$ ). Please see **Table 3**.

### 5.4. Risk factors for FV crimes

The variables in terms of perpetrators and victims which seemed to generate a statistically significant association with FV crimes status were entered into a multinomial logistic regression model in an endeavour to probe their independent effects. The results are depicted in **Table 4**.

With respect to the independent effects on FV crimes, the analysis flagged three factors with statistically significant influence. Greek perpetrators displayed increased odds of committing sexual abuse instead of rape. More specifically, their odds were 3.27 times higher than immigrants. At the same time, perpetrators aged 18-45 were 30 times less likely than those aged 60+ to commit a homicide rather than rape. Lastly, the likelihood for perpetrators between 18 and 45 was 10833846.63 times greater than those 60+ to be engaged in a fatal body injury case instead of rape.

## 6. Discussion

In the majority of European countries, the confrontation of heinous crimes committed by perpetrators who have kin relationships with their victims is assigned to the responsibility of the Police. That is also the case in Greece, where the effective management of the FV phenomenon is on the top priority for the Hellenic Police. Notably, the Ministry of Public Order and Citizen Protection with the Hellenic Police have established new services. Despite its coordinating and supervisory role, the central department has now kept a national data set for all crimes committed across the country.

Based on this data set, this is the first study which presents rates for serious FV crimes across Greece during 2020-2021. This is in contrast to Petropoulos et al. (2016), where the authors illustrated FV rates per 10.000 population for 2011 in 19 Police Directorates due to the lack of national data. The highest FV crime rates mainly apply to the geographical regions of the Ionian Sea (13.45/100.000), Western Macedonia (7.06/100.000) and North Aegean Sea (6.18/100.000). These are mainly rural areas with low population density, and their alarming figures may indicate that rurality impacts FV. Such a finding aligns with previous research showing that rurality also affects IPV (Van Hightower & Gorton, 1998; Peek-Asa et al., 2011; Edwards, 2015; Strand & Storey, 2019).

Investigating the sociodemographic profile of FV perpetrators and victims, it seems that middle-aged Greek males were most prevalent in the FV perpetration group, whilst younger age Greek females were in the FV victimization group. In terms of perpetrators' gender figures, these findings are in line with previous studies (Hester, 2009; Petropoulos et al., 2016; Quann et al., 2006; Ministry of The Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization General Secretariat for Gender Equality, 2005); this is also the case for the gender figures of the victims (Walby, 2004; Elkin, 2019; Elkin, 2021). Moreover, individuals aged 36-45 were more likely to be victims within families. This result lends support to previous conducted international research (Caetano et al., 1995, Petropoulos et al., 2016; Peraica et al., 2020, Cao et al., 2013).

Although the Greek study of the General Secretariat for Gender Equality (2013) indicated a 47% increased tendency for FV women victims, surprisingly the current state of play has not changed at all. Our current study similarly corroborated that the FV phenomenon in Greece - especially when it concerns serious crimes- had a

considerably increasing tendency. The growing numbers virtually reflect that extreme violence within Greek families has been deeply rooted for years now.

The topic of relationships in association with the FV phenomenon remains an understudied area (People, 2005; Felson et al., 2006; Peraica et al., 2020). As such, this study endeavored for the first time to divide the family tree between perpetrators and victims into nuclear and extended kin relationships bringing to the surface that nuclear relatives are more prone to heinous crimes than the extended ones. Notably, in all subgroups of crimes, perpetrators who had nuclear relationships with their victims outnumbered those with extended ones. These findings echo points cultivated during the pandemic with at least two major lockdowns in Greece, stressing out that extremely violent behaviors especially for core family relationships have emerged. However, further long-term research is necessary to provide a wider insight related to the repercussions of Covid-19 on FV.

With respect to risk factors associated with FV, precedented studies have investigated the subject matter from various angles. Many of them have mostly explored whether FV can be predicted or not by gender (Carlsson et al., 2021; Belfrage & Rying, 2004; Sabri et al., 2014; Whitaker et al., 2007; Archer, 2000), age (Hajian et al., 2014; Johnson., 2014), race in late life (Paranjape et al., 2009; Souto et al., 2016; Cianelli et al., 2013), employment status and educational level (Ahmadi et al., 2016; Castro et al., 2008; Cao et al., 2013; Han et al., 2017), stress and burden of spouse or partner (Gil et al., 2015) and cultural factors in the late-life of IPV (Souto et al., 2016). At the same time, in the literature, the issue of correlation between cognitive and physical impairment along with IPV in late life has emanated in the last 10 years (Roberto et al., 2014; Yan et al., 2015; Beach et al., 2016; Altman, 2017). Our study relied on the fact that the sample consisted of solved FV crime cases. We used multinomial logistic regression analysis to reveal predictors through which some crimes may be more likely to be committed within families.

Our results show that Greeks are more susceptible than immigrants to commit sexual abuse rather than rape. A possible explanation for that finding might be twofold. Firstly, the wrong attitudes and beliefs in some cultures are broadly and persistently held and that facilitates the justification and denial of male sexual aggression against women (Longsway & Fitzgerald, 1994). Secondly, marital rape is perceived as less serious than other rape forms and sequentially is less likely to be considered a crime (Rebeiz & Harb, 2010; Simonson & Subich, 1999).



Moreover, our analysis showed that younger perpetrators are less likely than elders to murder relatives as opposed to rape them, and contrastingly, are more prone than elders to exert fatal injuries rather than commit rapes. Nevertheless, to the best of our knowledge, such an analysis has not been made before, and further research is necessary to validate the current results.

This study should also account for some limitations. The socioeconomic and educational status of perpetrators and victims were not presented as this information was not provided by the Hellenic Police. Additionally, the type of counselling, which the victims might have received after the crime report to the Police, was not investigated, as this information was not recorded in the received dataset and would add great value to the study. Another limitation is that the data format did not include crime recidivism details. Subsequently, we did not have the opportunity to examine the level of FV criminal proclivity during that period. Our study did not provide details about the investigations' outcome (perpetrators' apprehension, perpetrators' level of retribution) as the Hellenic Police kept this information strictly confidential. Therefore, there is no clear insight regarding the effective Police management of FV crimes in the country. Finally, we would refrain to generalize the results of this study as the FV case recordings were time-limited over two years (2020-2021).

## **7. Conclusion**

Despite its shortfalls, this study opened a new window for the FV crimes exploration in Greece drawn on nationwide data. It offers for the first time a clear insight into the FV crime rates per 100.000 population indicating that the crucial areas are in the mainland (Western Macedonia) and islands (the Ionian Sea and the Northern Aegean Sea) -rural- areas. Consequently, it points out that severe FV crimes are ingrained in nuclear kin relationships rather than extended in the Greek society. However, as criminality within family contexts is continually evolved, keeping a database of FV crime rates will facilitate the policymakers to focus on areas requiring more attention and effective intervention.

These empirical facts should further mobilize the law enforcement authorities to collaborate with non-governmental organizations, that provide psychosocial and legal support to enforce an integrated and effective management plan for FV victims. As the range of the traits of these victims varies (Petropoulos, 2016), the authors

recommend that the Greek Police force also needs to further train its personnel via integrated educational programmes. These programmes must be both victim and perpetrator centred as the Police manage these populations from different angles. These programmes should be addressed not only to Police supervisors but also to the staff investigating such cases. Priority should be given especially to those officers who serve in the operational offices against FV. The main purpose of such courses must be the risk-based decision-making related to FV incidents as it is the key element for the overall successful response to crime incidents (Trujilo & Ross, 2008). In that way, Police officers will effectively enhance their interventions when called for help and law enforcement, in such incidents as front-line responders and potential responses, will not be downplaying or disregarding victims' complaints (Purcell et al., 2002). This is critical for the Greek legislative system in terms of the Police role against FV violence since it comprises the single official organization in which FV victims usually ask for effective solutions and legal sanctions against their intra-familial batterers.

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**Table 1.** Family violence heinous crimes in Greece

	FV Crime cases Frequency	Rate per 100.000
General Police Directorates	N=372	3.57
Attica	147 39.5%	3.88
Thessaloniki	39 10.5%	3.57
Eastern Macedonia & Thrace	15 4%	2.67
Western Macedonia	18 4.8%	7.06
Central Macedonia	11 3%	1.56
North Aegean	12 3.2%	6.18
Southern Aegean	6 1.6%	1.85
Ionian Sea	27 7.3%	13.45
Western Greece	25 6.7%	3.89
Central Greece	18 4.8%	2.97
Epirus	8 2.2%	2.50
Thessaly	11 3%	1.60
Crete	23 6.2%	3.73
Peloponnese	12 3.2%	2.04

**Table 2.** Sociodemographic characteristics for perpetrators and victims.

	Perpetrators	Victims
Gender	N=372	N=386
Male	333 89.5%	63 16.4%
Female	39 10.5%	323 83.6%
Nationality	N=372	N=386
Greek	294 79%	291 75.4%
Immigrant	78 21%	95 24.6%
Age	N=372	N=386
0-7	0 0%	5 1.3%
8-13	0 0%	12 3.1%
14-18	0 0%	21 5.4%
19-21	4 1%	13 3.4%
22-25	18 4.3%	17 4.4%
26-30	29 7%	40 10.4%
31-35	33 7.9%	41 10.6%
36-45	112 26.9%	110 28.5%
46-60	130 31.2%	81 21%
61-75	37 8.9%	26 6.7%

76+	9 2.2%	20 5.2%
Year	N=372	N=386
2020	111 29.8%	119 30.8%
2021	261 70.2%	267 69.2%

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**Table 3.** The relationship profile between perpetrators and victims in relation to the committed FV crimes

	Nuclear and Extended Relationships		
	Sample	Nuclear Relatives	Extended Relatives
DV Crime Status	N=386	N=282	N=104
Rapes	89 23.1%	58 20.6%	31 29.8%
Sexual abuse	196 50.8%	148 52.5%	48 46.2%
Homicides	81 21%	62 22%	19 18.3%
Fatal Body Injury	5 1.3%	4 1.4%	1 1%
Sexual abuse (person with disabilities)	7 1.8%	4 1.4%	3 2.9%
Other	8 2.1%	6 2.1%	2 1.9%

**Table 4.** Odds Ratio (OR) and 95% Confidence Interval (CI) of FV crime status

	b (SE)	Odds Ratio	(95% CI) OR	
			Lower	Upper
<b>Sexual abuse</b>				
Intercept	17.33 (1749.80)			
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	-17.51 (1749.80)	2.48	0.00	-
Female		1.00		
<b>Age</b>				
18-45	-0.69	0.50	0.19	1.35
46-60	0.04	1.04	0.37	2.94
60+		1.00		
<b>Nationality</b>				
Greek	1.19(0.33)***	3.27	1.72	6.23
Immigrant		1.00		
<b>Nuclear &amp; Extended Relatives</b>				
Nuclear relatives	.49(0.30)	1.57	0.87	2.82
Extended relatives		1.00		
<b>Homicides</b>				
Intercept	17.20(1749.80)			
<b>Gender</b>				



Male	-17.44(1749.80)	2.67	0.00	-
Female		1.00		
Age				
18-45	-1.23(0.55)*	0.30	0.10	0.86
46-60	-0.46(0.57)	0.64	0.21	1.96
60+		1.00		
Nationality				
Greek	0.73(0.39)	2.07	0.96	4.46
Immigrant		1.00		
Nuclear & Extended Relatives				
Nuclear relatives	0.45(0.36)	1.56	0.77	3.17
Extended relatives		1.00		
Fatal Body Injury				
Intercept	-2.82(1749.80)			
Gender				
Male	-17.98(1749.80)	1.56	0.00	-
Female		1.00		
Age				
18-45	16.20(0.97)***	10833846.63	1634709.37	71800061.03
46-60	17.53(0.00)	41010775.32	41010775.32	41010775.32
60+		1.00		
Nationality				

Greek	0.75(1.16)	2.12	0.22	20.61
Immigrant		1.00		
Nuclear & Extended Relatives				
Nuclear relatives	0.70(1.15)	2.01	0.21	19.23
Extended relatives		1.00		
Sexual abuse (Person with disabilities)				
Intercept	-1.44(6039.79)			
Gender				
Male	-17.82(1749.80)	1.83	0.00	-
Female		1.00		
Age				
18-45	16.84(5780.77)	20621100.71	0.00	-
46-60	-0.10	0.91	0.00	-
60+		1.00		
Nationality				
Greek	0.32(91)	1.38	0.23	8.28
Immigrant		1.00		
Nuclear & Extended Relatives				
Nuclear relatives	-0.48(0.86)	0.62	0.12	3.33
Extended relatives		1.00		

Other

Intercept	-1.39(5355.95)			
Gender				
Male	-17.41(1749.80)	2.76	0.00	-
Female		1.00		
Age				
18-45	16.16(5062.06)	10397030.01	0.00	-
46-60	16.77(5062.06)	19249209.80	0.00	-
60+		1.00		
Nationality				
Greek	-0.53(0.76)	0.49	0.13	2.61
Immigrant		1.00		
Nuclear & Extended relatives				
Nuclear relatives	0.44(0.85)	1.55	0.29	8.27
Extended relatives		1.00		

Note. Reference Category: Rape.  $R^2 = .17$  (Cox & Snell),  $.19$  (Nagelkerke). Model  $\chi^2(25) = 70.33$ ,  $p < .001$ .

\*Statistical finding at  $p < .05$ . \*\*\* Statistical finding at  $p < .001$ .