

7. Safety¹

The safety of citizens is a key dimension in the construction of individual and collective well-being. The sense of insecurity of the population and the fear of being victim of criminal acts can greatly influence the personal freedoms of each, the quality of life and development of the territories.

Perception of safety depends not only on the level of crime, but also on the degradation of the context in which people live, on the type of control exercised by the police on the territory, on the sense of personal vulnerability. The issue of physical and sexual violence suffered by women inside and outside the home is also closely linked to personal safety and quality of life.

Objective and subjective indicators that measure the evolution of safety in Italy show a general tendency towards improvement.

In the European context, Italy ranks among the countries with the lowest incidence of homicides, while with regard to burglaries and robberies the rates are still high compared to other countries, despite the improvements achieved in the last decade.

Moreover, deep territorial inequalities persist: homicides are more widespread in the South of Italy, even though they have declined sharply over time, while burglaries and pickpocketing prevail in the Centre and in the North. The level of security perceived by the population is higher in small towns than in large urban areas.

In 2020, the limitations imposed by the lockdown had a positive effect on some forms of crime and on the perception of safety among the population, except in the case of violence against women. The number of telephone calls for help to the public utility number 1522 has risen sharply, partly because of the increase in information and awareness campaigns against violence and stalking promoted in support of women.

Subjective perception of safety improves

An analysis of the perceptions of the population reveals an overall positive trend, both compared to the previous year and analysing long-term data. All the indicators of the perception of safety referring to the area in which people live are improving: the perception of safety when walking alone in the dark increases and the perception of degradation and risk of crime decreases (Figure 1).

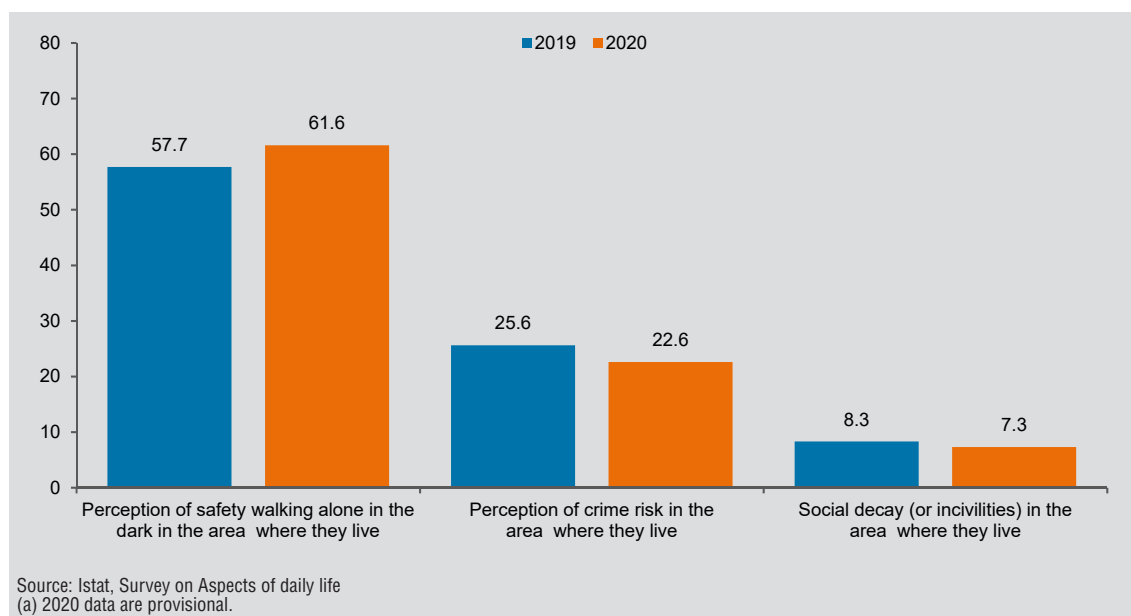
In 2020, due in part to the limitations imposed by the pandemic, the positive trend that began in the last three years consolidates.

The percentage of people who say they feel very or fairly safe when walking alone in the dark in the area where they live stands at 61.6% (it was 57.7% in 2019).

Among the positive signs, there is also the decrease in the perception of degradation of the area where people live. In 2020, 7.3% of the population claims to have seen at least one element of decay: people who take or sell drugs, vandalism against the public good, prostitutes looking for clients. This is the lowest value since 2010.

¹ This chapter was edited by Miria Savioli, with contributions from: Isabella Corazziari, Maria Giuseppina Muratore and Franco Turetta.

Figure 1. Perception of safety in the area where people live: people aged 14 and over feeling very or quite safe walking alone when it is dark, people aged 14 and over who often see elements of social and environmental decay, households declaring a very high or quite high risk of crime. Years 2019 and 2020 (a). Per 100 persons aged 14 and over or per 100 households



The share of households stating that the area in which they live is very or fairly at risk of crime also declines, standing at 22.6% (it was 25.6% in 2019).

Significant differences emerge in the level of security perceived by the population with respect to the size of the municipality of residence: people residing in municipalities with up to 2,000 inhabitants feel safer, perceive a lower risk of crime, and report less social and environmental degradation, compared with those living in larger municipalities. In municipalities with up to 2,000 inhabitants, the proportion of persons aged 14 and over who are very or fairly safe when walking alone in the dark in the area where they live is 20 percentage points higher than that found in the centres of large urban areas (73.5% vs. 53.4%). Similarly, perception of crime risk is much lower in small municipalities (6.9% vs. 40.5%) as the social decay rate (1.4% vs. 15.9%) (Figure 2).

It is interesting to note, however, that the most significant improvements recorded in the last year are found in the most critical areas, such as the centres of large urban areas.

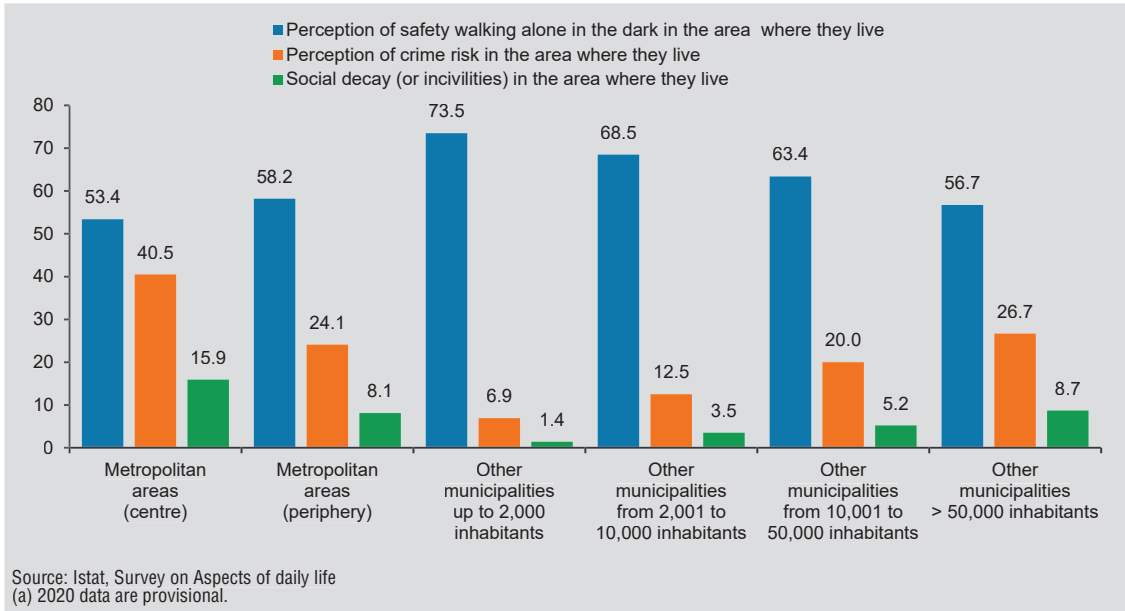
Perception of safety is not evenly distributed across the population, but it varies by gender, age and educational attainment.

Nearly three-quarters of men feel safe walking alone in the dark in the area where they live compared to just over half of women (51.6%). The situation is also different in relation to different ages: the most insecure are the elderly, while young people and adults perceive safer.

Perceptions of safety are highest among people having completed tertiary education (68.6%), especially males (80.3% compared to 59.4% of female college graduates) and lowest among people with at most a lower secondary school diploma (56.5%), especially among females (46.5%).

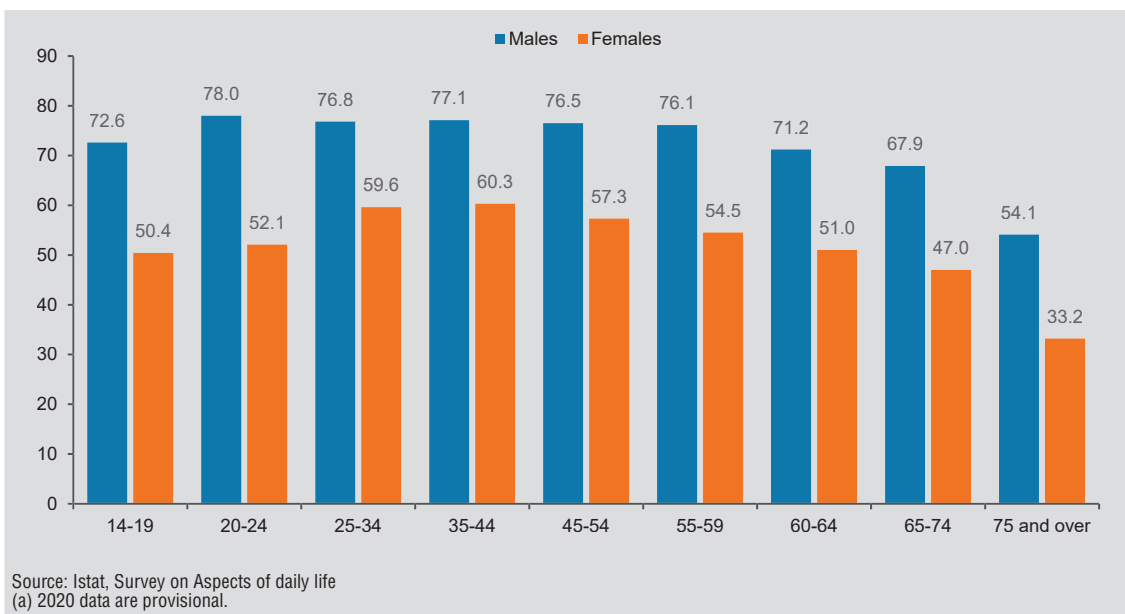
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Figure 2. Perception of safety in the area where people live: people aged 14 and over feeling very or quite safe walking alone when it is dark, people aged 14 and over who often see elements of social and environmental decay, households declaring a very high or quite high risk of crime by municipality size. Year 2020 (a). Per 100 persons aged 14 and over or per 100 households



Between 2019 and 2020, perceptions of safety increase among both males and females and across all age groups up to age 74, with the greatest improvement among those aged 35-59 (Figure 3).

Figure 3. People aged 14 and over feeling very or quite safe walking alone when it is dark in the area where they live by gender and age group. Year 2020 (a). Per 100 persons aged 14 and over



Decline in homicides continues, but only men's homicides decline in the first 6 months of 2020

During the first 6 months of 2020, the overall number of homicides decreased by 18.6% compared to the same period in 2019 (131 homicides in 2020 compared to 161 in 2019). However, this decrease only affected male victims, who decreased by 31.4%, while female victims experienced a slight increase (+5.4%)². The same trend is seen for homicides occurring in the family/affective sphere, which decreased by 5.5% (69 homicides in 2020 compared to 73 in 2019), but again, the decrease affected only men (-43%), compared to a 17.8% increase in homicides of women occurring in the family/affective sphere (53 homicides in 2020 compared to 45 in 2019).

In the first 6 months of 2020, in full lockdown, the proportion of women killed out of the total reached 45%, while it was about one-third of the victims in the first 6 months of 2019. The data for the first half of 2020 confirm that the majority of homicides of women occur in the family/affective sphere: 89.8% of women, in fact, were killed in this context, while the share of homicides of men occurred in this context is much lower at 22.2%. Moreover, the analysis of data related to the author of the homicide shows a growth by 12.5% of women killed by partners or ex-partners.

If we consider 2019, 315 homicides were committed in Italy, 0.53 per 100 thousand inhabitants. The homicide rate recorded a further decrease compared to 2018 when it stood at 0.57 per 100 thousand inhabitants (for a total of 345 homicides), confirming the long-term downward trend.

The decrease was concentrated in the regions of the South, while in the Centre and in the North the homicide rate remained stable.

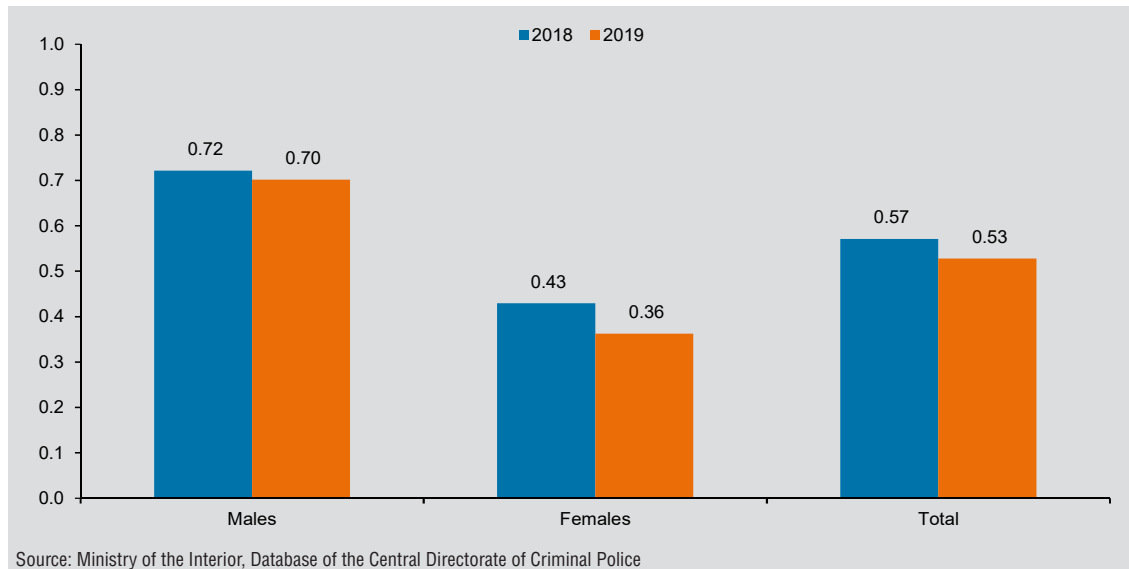
The South continues to register the highest rate of homicides (0.70 compared with 0.44 per 100 thousand inhabitants in the Centre-North), despite the fact that in the long term the greatest decrease is observed in this geographic area.

In Italy, the homicide rate is very small compared to other European countries. In fact, Italy ranks among the countries with the lowest incidence of homicides, with a value that is far below the European average (0.57 homicides per 100 thousand inhabitants in 2018 compared to an average of Eu28 countries of 0.93). In 2019, there were 204 male and 111 female homicide victims (0.70 and 0.36 homicides per 100 thousand inhabitants of the same sex, respectively). Between 2018 and 2019, the downward trend in the homicide rate of both men (it was 0.72 in 2018) and women (0.43 in 2018) is confirmed (Figure 4).

Although for males the incidence of homicides is still about double that for women, progress over time has been notable. For women, who started from a more favourable situation, the decrease has instead followed a much slower pace and it is due to a reduction in the number of victims by unknown or unidentified perpetrators, rather than to a decrease in the number of victims within the family.

² Source: Ministry of the Interior, <https://www.interno.gov.it/it/stampa-e-comunicazione/dati-e-statistiche/report-violenza-genere-e-omicidi-volontari-vittime-donne>.

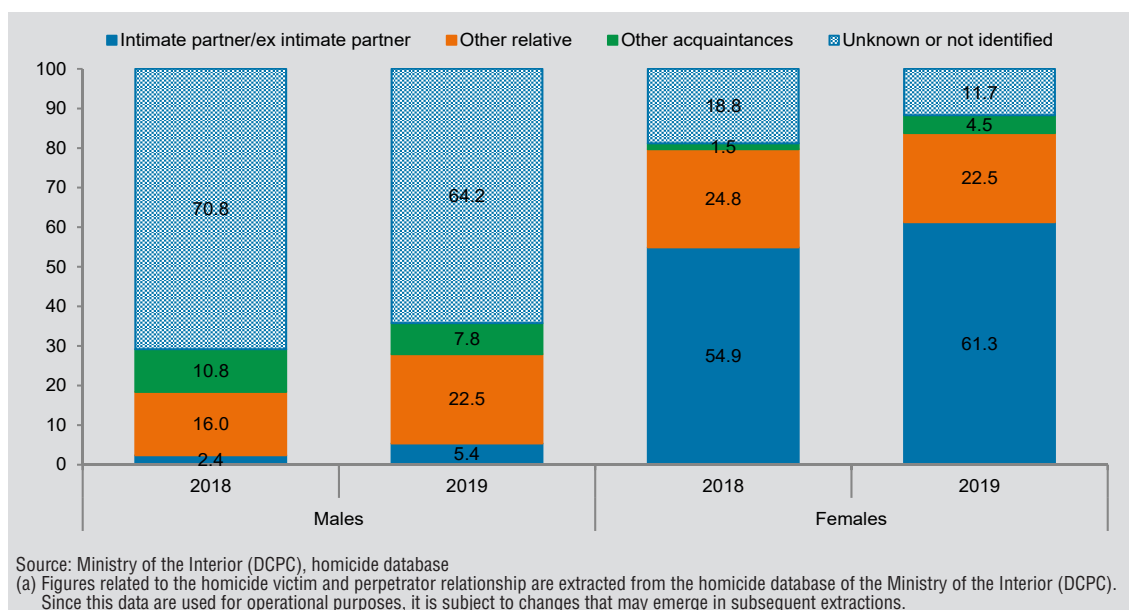
Figure 4. Homicide rate by gender - Years 2018-2019. Per 100,000 inhabitants of the same gender



When examining the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim of homicide, strong differences remain between women and men: while women are killed mainly within the family, men in most cases are victims of an unknown perpetrator or one not identified by law enforcement (Figure 5).

In 2019, 88.3% of female homicides result from a known person. This figure increased comparing to 2018 when it stood at 81.2%. Specifically, more than 6 in 10 women were killed by their current or former partner, 22.5% by a family member (including children and parents), and 4.5% by another person the woman knew (friends, colleagues, etc.). The situation is very different for men: in 2019, only 35.7% were killed by a known person (only 5.4% by a partner or former partner), while 64.2% were killed by a stranger or perpetrator not identified by police.

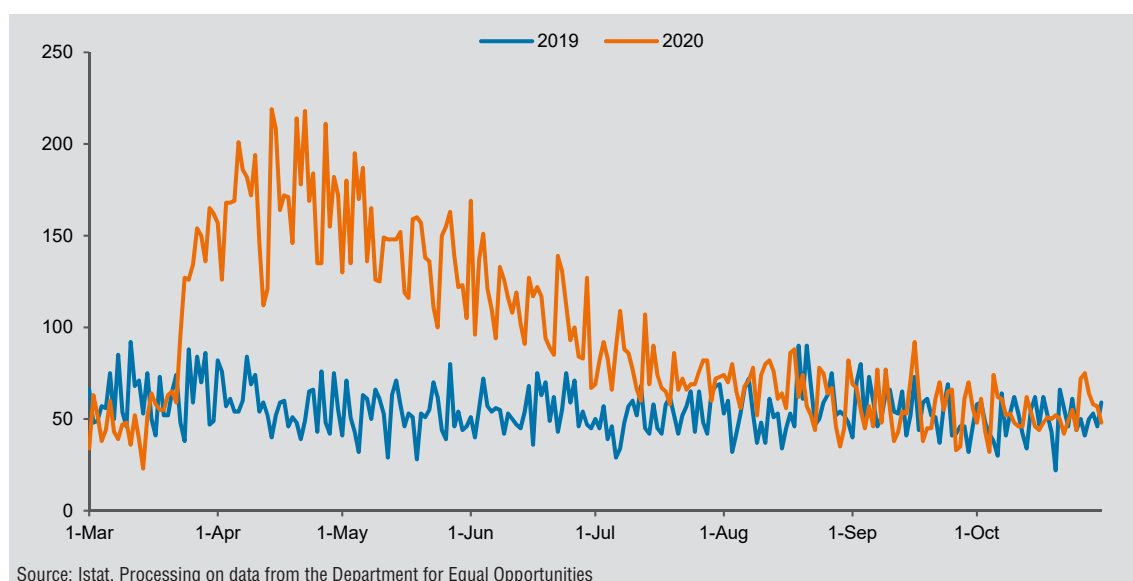
Figure 5. Victims of homicide by relationship with the murderer and gender (a). Years 2018 and 2019. Per 100 victims of the same gender



During March-October 2020, there was a sharp increase in women's requests for help to 1522 helpline

During the lockdown, social isolation, economic difficulties, intra-family tensions, as well as reduced accessibility to prevention and protection services, may have increased the risk of violence against women, which, as we have seen, develops mainly within the home. During the lockdown, the public utility number 1522³ against violence and stalking, made available by the Department for Equal Opportunities of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, has represented a tool of great support to victims of violence, also thanks to the information and awareness campaigns against violence and stalking. These campaigns, broadcast on television channels and relaunched on social media between the end of March and April 2020, reinforced the message of the importance of seeking help to get out of violence. Data collected by 1522 show a large increase in the request for help during the lockdown. Beginning on March 23, the number of valid calls to 1522 showed an exponential increase before decreasing with reopenings occurred from May onward⁴ (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Number of valid calls to the 1522 number. Years 2019 and 2020. Reference period March-October. Absolute values



The number of valid calls by phone and via chat in the period from March to October 2020 increased significantly over the same period last year (+71.9%), from 13,424 to 23,071 (Figure 7). The growth in chat requests for help quadrupled from 829 to 3,347 messages. Among the reasons for contacting the toll-free number, “reports of violence” tripled, while calls for “requests for help by victims of violence” and “requests for help by victims of stalking” doubled (Figure 8).

³ The public utility number 1522 is active 24 hours a day, every day of the year; it is free of charge from fixed and mobile networks. Reception is available in Italian, English, French, Spanish and Arabic.

⁴ Sources: Istat, Dataset the helpline 1522 during the pandemic period (March-October 2020) <https://www.istat.it/en/archivio/250811>; Ministry of the Interior, <https://www.interno.gov.it/it/stampa-e-comunicazione/dati-e-statistiche/report-violenza-genere-e-omicidi-volontari-vittime-donne>.

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Together, these three reasons account for 49.9% of valid calls (a total of 11,511) and, in the period between March and October 2020, grew 102% overall compared to the same period in 2019. Calls for information about National Violence Centres are also growing (+65.7%).

Figure 7. Number of valid and invalid calls (misdials, pranks, and harassment) to the 1522 number. Years 2017-2020. Reference period March-October. Absolute values

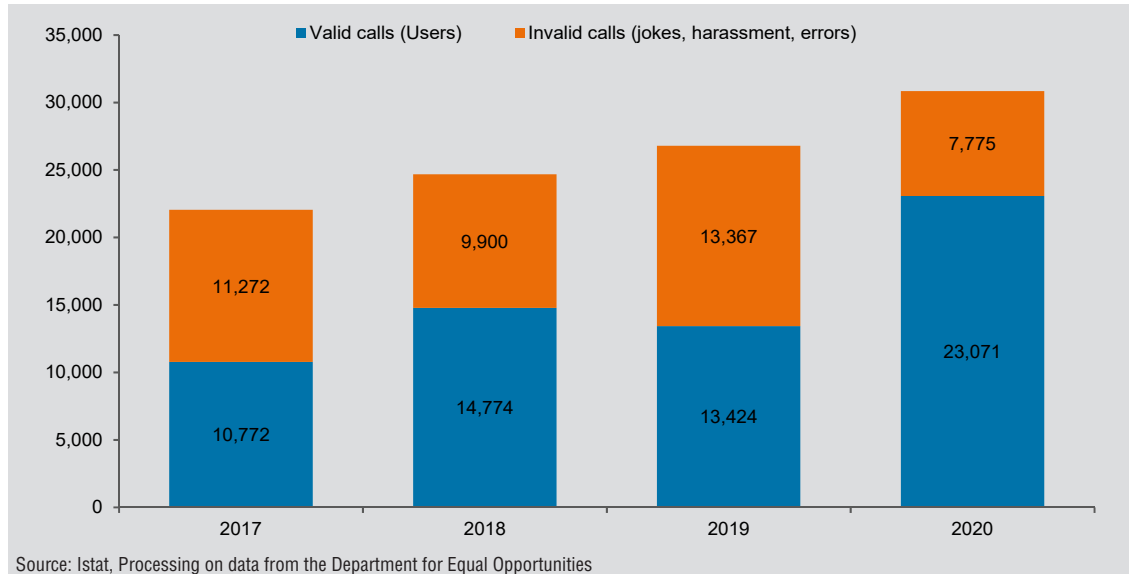
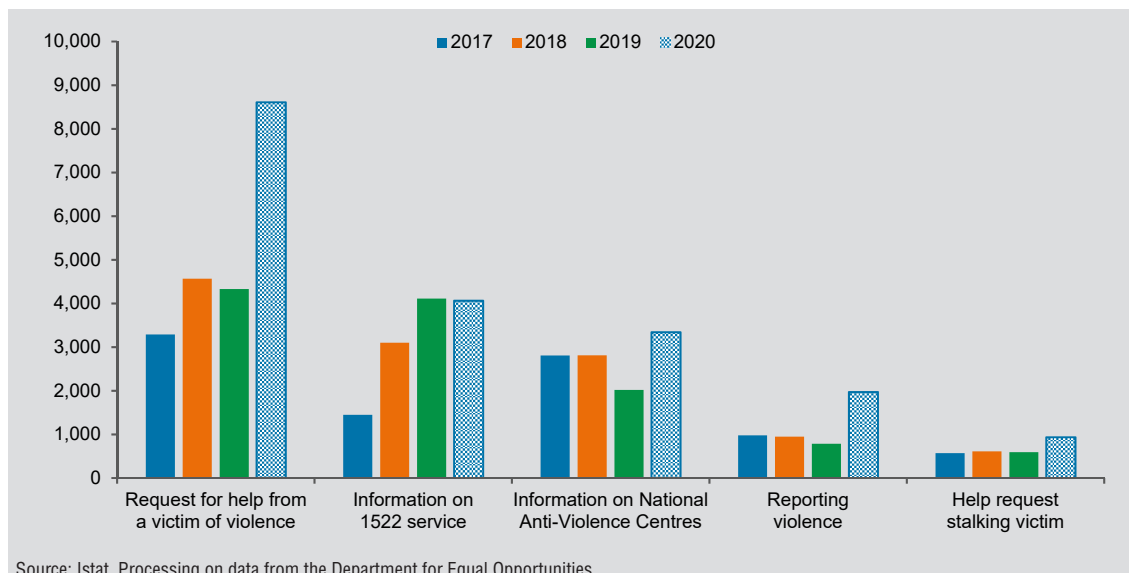


Figure 8. Reasons for calling the 1522 number. Years 2017-2020. Reference period March-October. Absolute values



The violence described by those seeking help and support is primarily physical and psychological (86.2% of victims).

Comparing the March-October period of 2020 with the same period of the previous year, we see a growth in physical violence in particular and a slight increase in sexual violence. 2020 data confirm that the place where violence most frequently occurs is the home of the victim: 85.6% of victims declare, in fact, that the violent act occurred in their own home.

The share of victims who report to the police the violence suffered continues to remain very low: only 14.3% claim to have filed a complaint to which must be added a 2.6% of victims who have filed a complaint but then withdrawn it.

Among those who do not denounce the violence suffered, more than half of the victims indicate fear or motivations that fall within the family context: 28.7% indicate fear in general or fear of the reaction of the author of the violence, while the negative consequences that can be generated in the family context are declared by 26.1% of the victims. 55% of the victims state that they have children: in 5 cases out of 10 the children have witnessed the violence and in 10.4% they have suffered the violence.

Despite the increase in calls for help to 1522, during the lockdown period there is no increase in the number of reports to the police of “spy crimes” related to gender-based violence⁵ such as acts of persecution, mistreatment of family members and cohabitants and sexual violence. These crimes, in fact, decrease during the months of lockdown: in particular, the reports of persecutory acts and sexual violence record a consistent decrease in the months of March and April and then increase again in the months of May-June, without, however, reaching the levels reached in the same period of the previous year.

Burglaries, pickpocketing and robberies continue to decline, not just under the lockdown

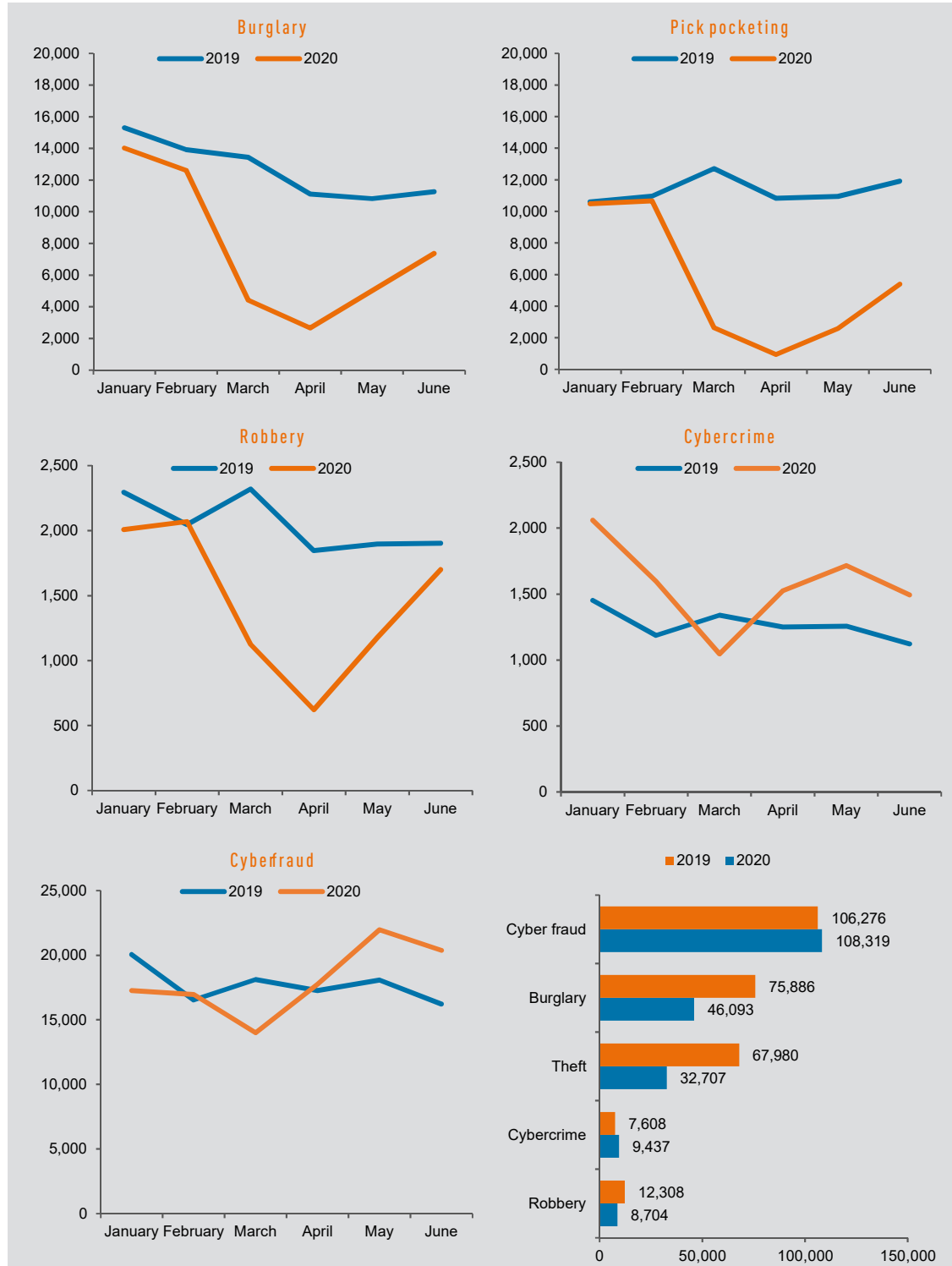
The data of citizen complaints to the Police Forces and those of the investigative activity of the Police Forces show a strong reduction in crimes in the first half of 2020 compared to the same period of the previous year (Figure 9).

An expected result, a direct consequence of the travel restrictions imposed by the health emergency, which mainly concerned predatory crimes: the number of thefts decreased (-51.9% of pick pocketing and -39.3% of the burglaries) and that of robberies (-29.3%). On the contrary, computer crimes registered an increase (+24%).

Restrictions on freedom of movement were an exceptional occurrence, which only temporarily affected certain forms of crime and only limited to the period of closure: with the gradual reopening and relaxation of restrictive measures, in fact, crimes began to rise again.

⁵ The Central Directorate of the Criminal Police of the Department of Public Security, the Criminal Analysis Service carries out an analysis of all criminal episodes related to gender violence. In particular, the so-called “spy crimes” related to gender violence are analyzed, including persecutory acts, mistreatment of family members and cohabitants and sexual violence.

Figure 9. Crimes reported or investigated by Police. Years 2019 and 2020 (a). Reference period January-June. Absolute values



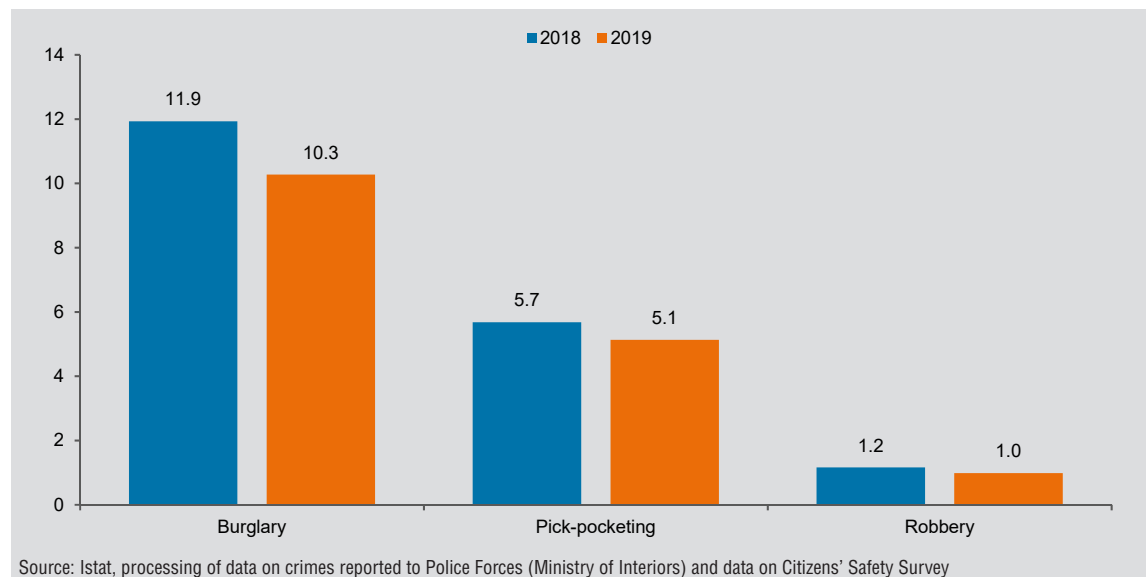
Source: Ministry of the Interior
 (a) 2020 data are provisional.

Data disaggregated by month show a sharp decline in the number of burglaries, pick pocketing, and robberies during the lockdown period with the lowest peak in April and a gradual recovery beginning in May. In June 2020, the number of robberies returned almost to June 2019 levels, while burglaries and especially pick pocketing continued to be affected by the lockdown in May and June 2020 as restrictive measures gradually began to decline. In June 2020, however, the number of residential burglaries and especially pick pocketing were still lower than in the same period in 2019.

Cyber frauds and cybercrimes were much less affected by the lockdown period: only in March 2020 were they lower than in the same month of 2019, and in April they started to rise again. In April-June, the values recorded in 2020 are higher than in 2019, partly reflecting the increased use of computer equipment.

Victim rates for 2019 also show that predatory crimes (burglary, pickpocketing, and robbery) continue a downward trend: in 2019, the victim rate for burglary stands at 10.3 per 1,000 households, compared to 11.9 in 2018, pick pocketing stands at 5.1 victims per 1,000 population (5.7 in 2018), and robbery stands at 1 victim per 1,000 population (1.2 in 2018) (Figure 10).

Figure 10. Households that were victims of burglaries and persons that were victims of robberies and pickpocketing. Year 2019. Burglaries per 1,000 households, and robberies and pickpocketing per 1,000 population



However, compared to the European context, Italy ranks among the countries with a problematic situation (with respect to police reporting data)⁶. According to the latest data available for European comparison, in 2018, with 316 reported residential burglaries per 100 thousand inhabitants, our country ranks seventh in the Eu28 ranking, while with regard to robberies⁷ Italy occupies the eighth position with 51 reported robberies per 100 thousand inhabitants.

Predatory crimes are distributed differently throughout the territory. Victims of pickpocketing in the Centre are 3.4 times higher than in the South: 8 versus 2.3 victims per 1,000

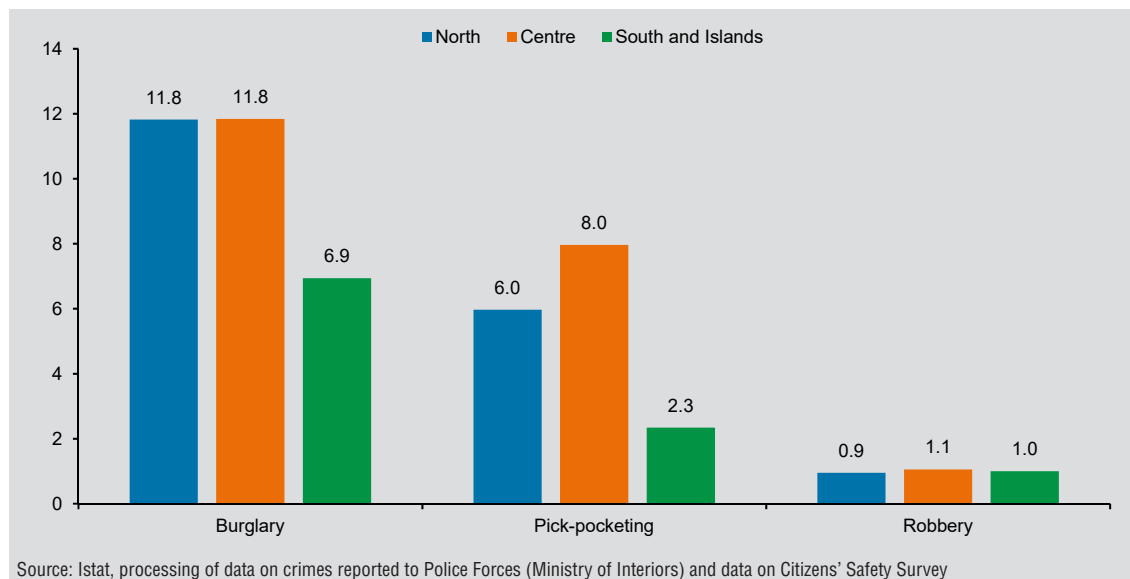
⁶ Data for each country could also reflect differences in citizens' willingness to report to the police, regulatory peculiarities and the procedural and organisational rules of individual Countries.

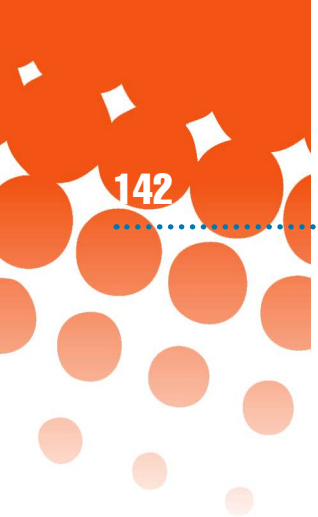
⁷ The figure refers to the sum of robberies and pick pocketing.

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inhabitants. Burglaries are more widespread in the Centre-North, where there are 11.8 victim per 1,000 households, against 6.9 in the South. For robberies, differences are much smaller: the highest value is registered in the Centre with 1.1 victims per 1,000 inhabitants and the lowest in the North with 0.9 victims, while the South is in an intermediate position (1 victim per 1,000 inhabitants) (Figure 11).

Figure 11. Households that were victims of burglary and persons that were victims of robbery and pickpocketing by geographic breakdown. Year 2019. Burglaries per 1,000 households, and robberies and pickpocketing per 1,000 population





Indicators

1. **Intentional homicide rate:** Number of intentional homicide on total population per 100,000.
Source: Ministry of the Interior - Database of the Central Directorate of Criminal Police
2. **Burglary rate:** Victims of burglaries per 1,000 households: the number of victims is calculated using data on victims who reported burglary to the police, adjusted by the number of non-reporting victims from the Citizens' Safety Survey, using a specific correction factor by geographical area.
Source: Istat, Processing of data on crimes reported to Police Forces (Ministry of Interiors) and data on Citizens' Safety Survey.
3. **Pick-pocketing rate:** Victims of pick-pocketing on total population per 1,000: the number of victims is calculated using data on victims who reported pick-pocketing to the police, adjusted by the number of non-reporting victims from the Citizens' Safety Survey, using a specific correction factor by geographical area and by sex and age group.
Source: Istat, Processing of data on crimes reported to Police Forces (Ministry of Interiors) and data on Citizens' Safety Survey.
4. **Robbery rate:** Victims of robberies on total population per 1,000: the number of victims is calculated using data on victims who reported robbery to the police, adjusted by the number of non-reporting victims from the Citizens' Safety Survey, using a specific correction factor by geographical area and by sex and age group.
Source: Istat, Processing of data on crimes reported to Police Forces (Ministry of Interiors) and data on Citizens' Safety Survey.
5. **Physical violence rate:** Percentage of women aged 16-70 victim of physical violence in the last 5 years before the interview on total women aged 16-70.
Source: Istat, Women Safety Survey.
6. **Sexual violence rate:** Percentage of women aged 16-70 victim of sexual violence, including physical sexual harassment, in the last 5 years before the interview on total women aged 16-70.
Source: Istat, Women Safety Survey.
7. **Intimate partnership violence rate:** Percentage of women aged 16-70 victim of physical or sexual violence by the partner or ex-partner in the last 5 years before the interview on total women aged 16-70 who have or had a partner.
Source: Istat, Women Safety Survey.
8. **Worries of being victim of a sexual violence:** Percentage of people aged 14 years and over who are very or quite worried of being victim of a sexual violence.
Source: Istat, Citizens' Safety Survey.
9. **Perception of safety walking alone in the dark:** Percentage of people aged 14 and over feeling very or quite safe walking alone when it is dark in the area where they live.
Source: Istat, Survey on Aspects of daily life.
10. **Concrete fear rate:** Percentage of people aged 14 and over who are afraid of becoming concretely a victim of crime in the last 3 months.
Source: Istat, Citizens' Safety Survey.
11. **Social decay (or incivilities) rate:** Percentage of people aged 14 and over who often see elements of social and environmental decay in the area where they live. They often see at least one element of decay among the following: people who take drugs, people who sell drugs, vandalism against the public good, prostitutes looking for clients.
Source: Istat, Survey on Aspects of daily life.
12. **Perception of crime risk:** Percentage of households declaring a very high or quite high risk of crime in the area where they live on the total number of households.
Source: Istat, Survey on Aspects of daily life.

Indicators by region and geographic area

REGIONS AND GEOGRAPHIC AREAS	Homicide rate (a)	Burglary rate (b)	Pick-pocketing rate (c)	Robbery rate (c)	Physical violence rate (d)	Sexual violence rate (d)
	2019	2019	2019	2019	2014	2014
Piemonte	0.6	12.2	6.1	1.0	6.3	6.2
Valle d'Aosta/Vallée d'Aoste	0.0	4.7	0.8	0.3	7.0	3.9
Liguria	0.5	8.9	6.1	0.9	7.8	7.6
Lombardia	0.4	11.5	6.5	1.1	6.1	6.6
Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol	0.4	9.4	2.7	0.5	6.8	5.1
<i>Bolzano/Bozen</i>	<i>0.2</i>	<i>9.1</i>	<i>3.5</i>	<i>0.6</i>	<i>6.9</i>	<i>5.9</i>
<i>Trento</i>	<i>0.6</i>	<i>9.7</i>	<i>1.9</i>	<i>0.5</i>	<i>6.7</i>	<i>4.3</i>
Veneto	0.3	12.0	5.1	0.6	5.0	6.2
Friuli-Venezia Giulia	0.3	8.6	2.0	0.5	5.9	5.9
Emilia-Romagna	0.5	14.7	7.6	1.1	8.2	6.7
Toscana	0.4	16.4	9.7	1.1	8.9	4.5
Umbria	0.6	14.8	3.9	0.6	8.0	6.9
Marche	0.3	9.5	1.8	0.4	7.8	5.0
Lazio	0.5	9.1	9.1	1.3	9.1	6.8
Abruzzo	0.5	8.8	1.8	0.4	9.3	9.1
Molise	0.0	6.3	1.5	0.2	7.7	7.1
Campania	0.6	6.7	4.2	2.1	8.4	8.8
Puglia	0.7	8.5	1.8	0.7	6.8	5.3
Basilicata	0.2	3.8	0.8	0.2	4.3	6.5
Calabria	1.5	5.2	0.8	0.3	4.6	4.7
Sicilia	0.6	7.2	2.0	0.8	5.7	5.2
Sardegna	0.8	5.1	1.0	0.4	6.6	5.2
North	0.4	11.8	6.0	0.9	6.4	6.4
Centre	0.4	11.8	8.0	1.1	8.8	5.9
South and Islands	0.7	6.9	2.3	1.0	6.9	6.5
Italy	0.5	10.3	5.1	1.0	7.0	6.4

(a) Per 100,000 inhabitants;

(b) Per 1,000 households;

(c) Per 1,000 inhabitants;

(d) Per 100 women aged 16-70;

(e) Per 100 women aged 16-70 who have or have had an intimate relationship with a partner;

(f) Per 100 persons aged 14 and over;

(g) Per 100 households;

(*) Provisional data.

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Intimate partnership violence rate (e)	Worries of being victim of a sexual violence (f)	Perception of safety when walking alone in the dark (f)	Concrete fear rate (f)	Social decay (or incivilities) rate (f)	Perception of crime risk (g)
2014	2016	2020 (*)	2016	2020 (*)	2020 (*)
4.7	33.7	61.9	2.6	8.1	18.9
3.6	16.3	79.3	4.7	2.3	7.2
6.2	26.1	69.4	5.0	4.5	17.8
4.6	32.4	61.3	9.5	8.9	24.4
4.5	19.5	75.0	4.6	3.5	9.9
4.9	20.3	73.3	5.0	3.5	10.5
4.2	18.6	76.6	4.3	3.5	9.2
4.4	29.9	65.3	7.6	4.6	19.6
3.0	26.0	67.8	4.3	2.5	10.4
5.9	28.5	57.7	8.5	8.6	25.2
4.9	29.1	65.3	6.4	7.7	18.6
5.2	26.5	63.8	5.0	4.3	18.4
4.3	19.7	67.0	6.5	4.3	18.1
5.7	37.8	53.0	7.9	12.9	30.9
7.6	28.5	63.6	4.9	6.3	18.6
6.9	23.1	73.6	4.6	2.5	8.5
5.8	23.1	55.3	5.2	7.3	34.6
4.6	22.2	61.8	5.8	6.5	26.6
4.4	24.6	79.6	6.9	2.4	11.4
2.4	34.4	68.3	4.7	5.4	18.3
4.6	24.1	58.5	4.3	5.5	19.6
4.4	23.0	70.9	3.8	4.2	10.1
4.8	30.3	62.9	7.2	7.2	21.2
5.2	31.9	59.4	7.0	9.5	24.6
4.9	24.6	61.3	4.9	6.0	23.5
4.9	28.7	61.6	6.4	7.3	22.6