Summary of the prevalence of domestic violence in the Netherlands, February 2009

In the context of domestic violence policy, it is important to have a new and reliable estimate of the dimensions of the phenomenon. This study has been conducted to supplement a victim study and perpetrator study. It is no simple matter to measure the dimensions of domestic violence, particularly because so few victims are willing to file charges, which leads to under-reporting, i.e. the dark number in registrations. The aim of the capture-recapture methods used in this study is to estimate the size of the under-reporting. Adding up the reporting and under-reporting then yields an estimate of the total population. Estimates have been made using these methods in any number of policy fields, e.g. concerning illegal arms, illegal aliens and the homeless.

A preliminary study recommends basing the estimated figures on the repeated appearance of victims and perpetrators in the Integrated Interactive Databank for Strategic Operational Information (GIDS-Kubus). In addition, the options for linking the GIDS-Kubus and the Injury Information System (LIS) have been examined. The Injury Information System is an extra source of information, where data are accumulated via a different channel than for the GIDS-Kubus. The outcome of this preliminary study is negative.

The main research questions are:

1. What is the estimated quantity of domestic violence in the Netherlands?
2. What is the estimated quantity of domestic violence in the Netherlands differentiated according to the numbers of incidents, victims and perpetrators?

The estimates we present have been calculated using one variant of the methods that make use of one registration, i.e. the Zelterman regression model. We make an effort to estimate the number of individuals (victims and perpetrators) who have *never* been observed on the basis of data on individuals (victims and perpetrators) who have been observed *at least one time*. Estimates have also been made with another variant, the zero-truncated Poisson regression model commonly referred to as the Poisson model. The estimates made with the Zelterman are generally somewhat higher than those made with the Poisson model. There are however important advantages to the Zelterman model. If we have to assume that important information about the relevant population is missing from the data, the Zelterman model provides a better estimate than the Poisson model.

The estimates have been made using data from incidents that were reported and charges were filed about. No data on domestic violence were provided on the Haaglanden police region for this study. The size of the total population in this region was approximated using data from the Amsterdam-Amstelland, Rotterdam-Rijnmond and Utrecht police regions, the other three regions where the metropolitan areas are located.

Estimates have been made of the number of suspects and number of victims. The estimates have been made for three periods of a year from mid-2004 to mid-2007. Distinctions were also drawn as regards specific features of the estimated populations, i.e. the sex and age of the individual suspect or victim, the type of violence used, the type of victim of domestic violence, the part of the country where the incident occurred and the ethnic background of the suspect and victim. In this summary, we solely address the total estimates and the estimates of the types of victims the perpetrators of domestic violence target. Both types of estimates have been made on the basis of data on files charged and police reports.

Domestic violence estimates often include the number of incidents. With capture-recapture methods using only one file rather than various ones, it is impossible to make any statements about incidents. By definition, incidents are one-time events and cannot be repeatedly observed within one and the same registration. This research cannot yield any new information about the average number of registered incidents per suspect or per victim. This is why we have decided not to make any statements about numbers of incidents.

In the first column, Table 1 shows the estimated figures on the annual number of suspects of domestic violence in the Netherlands. The other columns show how the estimates are constructed, i.e. from an estimate using capture-recapture methods on the basis of registered suspects in the GIDS-Kubus with reliability intervals and a derived estimate for the Haaglanden region. The table shows that in recent years in the Netherlands (including the Haaglanden police region), an annual estimated 100,000-110,000 individuals are domestic violence suspects. In the Haaglanden region, the approximate figure is 8,000-10,000 suspects. For the first year, 2004-2005, there are almost an estimated 105,000 suspects, and for each of the two following years, more than 110,000.[1]

Table 1. Estimated Annual Number of Suspects in the Netherlands (with and without additional estimate regarding the Haaglanden region), All Cases with 95% Reliability Interval

Period	the Netherlands	Estimate not including Haaglanden	Minimum	Maximum	Approximate figure for Haaglanden
2004 – 2005	104,013	95,722	90,397	101,047	8,291
2005 – 2006	110,730	101,668	96,598	106,738	9,062
2006 – 2007	112,708	102,540	97,858	107,221	10,168

Domestic violence often targets the partner or ex-partner. A total of 55-60% of the suspects target their partner or ex-partner as victim. A total of 8-10% of the suspects target children and 5% of the suspects use domestic violence against their parents (Table 2).

Table 2. Estimated Annual Number of Suspects in the Netherlands According to Type of Victim, All Cases

	2004 – 2005		2005 – 2006		2006 - 2007	
partner or ex-partner	52,303	55%	60,350	59%	66,057	61%
friend of the family	2,383	2%	4,449	4%	4,202	4%
child	9,473	10%	7,819	8%	8,831	8%
elderly person	1,053	1%	1,025	1%	1,090	1%
parent	4,697	5%	5,398	5%	6,910	6%
other relative	10,968	11%	9,523	9%	9,197	8%
miscellaneous	14,834	15%	13,091	13%	6,237	6%
					102,524	
	95,712	100%	101,655	100%		100%

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[1] The tables give the exact outcomes of the estimates. The fact that the figures are rounded off according to a standard procedure does not detract from the apparent precision that the exact figures suggest. It is better not to use the figures too precisely.

In the first column, Table 3 shows the estimated annual figures on the number of victims of domestic violence in the Netherlands. The other columns show how the estimates are constructed, i.e. from an estimate using capture-recapture methods on the basis of registered suspects in the GIDS-Kubus with reliability intervals and a derived estimate for the Haaglanden region.

The table shows that more victims are estimated than suspects. The ratio is approximately three to almost four victims to every two suspects.

In recent years, there were an annual estimated 160,000 – 200,000 victims of domestic violence in the Netherlands (including the Haaglanden police region). In the Haaglanden region, 10,000 -15,000 were estimated using a method other than the capture-recapture method. For the first year, 2004-2005, there were an estimated 160,000 victims and in the two following years, more than 175,000 and 197,000 respectively.

Table 3. Estimated Annual Number of Victims in the Netherlands (with and without Haaglanden region), All Cases with 95% Reliability Interval

Period	Netherlands	Estimate not including Haaglanden	Minimum	Maximum	Estimate for Haaglanden
2004 - 2005	161,074	150,922	139,859	161,987	10,152
2005 - 2006	176,700	166,097	156,183	176,011	10,603
2006 – 2007	197,273	182,654	171,222	194,086	14,619