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ESTIMATING PREVALENCE IN EUROPE: LESSONS  
LEARNED FROM A PILOT PROJECT IN ITALY AND  
BELGIUM

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# DEFINITION OF FGM PREVALENCE (EIGE)

The prevalence of FGM in any of the Member States of the EU is defined as:

‘the number of women and girls in that country who have undergone FGM at a certain point in time expressed as the proportion of the total number of women living in the country but originating from countries where FGM is practiced, *and their female descendants.*’

# INDIRECT METHODS TO ESTIMATE FGM PREVALENCE IN EUROPE

Majority of prevalence estimations in Europe use indirect estimation methods using secondary sources to estimate the absolute number of women originating from a country where FGM is practiced

Absolute number based on:

- population register (Dubourg et al., 2011; Dubourg & Richard, 2014; Köszeghy, 2012, Terre des Femmes, 2015)
- birth register (Macfarlane & Dorkenoo, 2014; Dorkenoo et al., 2007; Dubourg et al., 2011; Dubourg & Richard, 2014; Baillot, 2014; Korfker et al., 2012)
- child protection register (Exterkate, 2013)
- register of asylum seekers (Dubourg et al., 2011; Dubourg & Richard, 2014; Exterkate, 2013)
- national census (Dorkenoo et al., 2007; Macfarlane & Dorkenoo, 2014; Baillot, 2014)
- Or a combination of different sources

# INDIRECT METHOD COMMONLY USED

## Extrapolation-of-fgm-countries-prevalence:

- = the FGM prevalence rate in the countries of origin (for women and girls age 15 to 49, as reported by the DHS and MICS)
- $\times$
- Multiplied by: the total number of girls and women in the country of destination coming from or born to a mother originating from one of the countries where FGM is practiced, as retrieved from the different previously mentioned registers.

# STRENGTHS OF INDIRECT ESTIMATION METHODS

- Cheap
- Not complex
- Reliable approximation of the estimated number
- Trends
- Impact for prevention programs

# LIMITATIONS OF INDIRECT METHODS

- Migration related data: no common used definition of ‘migrant’
- Ethnicity not taken into account
- Confusion first and second generation
- Influence of migration
- Fluctuations in migrant flows difficult to take into account
- Asylum seekers and undocumented migrants?

# DIRECT ESTIMATIONS OF FGM IN EUROPE

- Andro et al., 2009; Farina, 2010; Farina & Ortensi, 2015; Ortensi et al., 2015
- Interviews:
  - Recruitment through gynecological cabinet (Andro et al. 2009)
  - Facility-based and snowball sampling (Farina, 2010; Farina & Ortensi, 2015)
- Sample of women born in countries where FGM is practiced + specific geographical area.



# DIRECT ESTIMATION 2017

- Developed by ICRH, INED and Bicocca University in collaboration with PI's prevalence studies from NL, PT, ..
- Published in: Leye E, De Schrijver L, Van Baelen L, Andro A, Lesclingand M, Ortensi L, Farina P. Estimating FGM prevalence in Europe. Findings of a pilot study. Research Report, 2017 + (forthcoming papers)
- Method tested: Time location sampling combined with respondent driven sampling
- Method tested in Italy and (limited) Belgium
- Number of recommendations formulated for direct estimations

# TARGET POPULATION

- Survey conducted among:
  - Women from selection FGM countries living in the host country with (8-10 nationalities)
  - With at least one parent born in an FGM country
  - Age  $\geq 18$
  - Both legally resident and undocumented migrants (random)

# TLS + RDS: MIXED METHOD

- TLS: Useful for collecting information on a hard-to-reach population
- RDS: use of probability snowball sample method

# LESSONS LEARNED FROM DIRECT ESTIMATION METHOD TESTING

- Use facility based and snowball sampling
- Prepare fieldwork
- Longitudinal approach advisable
- Choice and training of interviewers important
- Multicentre approach

## LESSONS LEARNED (CONT.)

- Coordinator to be appointed
- Choose main communities
- Use stratification in sample design
- Questionnaire
- Language

# CONCLUSION

# STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS OF DIRECT ESTIMATION METHODS

- Controlling for limitations of indirect estimations: ethnicity, impact of migration, fluctuating prevalence figures in county of origin, first/second generation confusion, general context....
- But:
  - Sensitive topic to talk about: fear of stigmatization, legislation
  - Careful of suggestive questions
  - Social desirability
  - Influencing factors on the success of the interview: Intensive training, speaking the same language and knowledge of local terminology, same ethnic background

# METHODOLOGIES FOR THE ESTIMATION OF FGM PREVALENCE IN EU

- A matter of choice, financial means and objectives of the estimation (policy, prevention plans, funding,...)
- relatively low number of women who have undergone FGM  
=> nationwide randomization is not feasible
- Countries of migration with low expected prevalence:  
indirect method
- Countries of migration with high expected prevalence: direct method



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