DOES THE LAW HELP TO DISCLOSE THE REALITY?
AN ANALYSIS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN THE CITY
OF KLAIPĖDA OVER THE PERIOD 2010 TO 2020

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Abstract

The article analyses the dynamics of domestic violence in the city of Klaipėda during the period from 2010 to 2020. The analysis of reported cases of violence is intended to reveal the functioning reality of the Republic of Lithuania's Law on Protection against Domestic Violence (LPADV) adopted in 2011, and to evaluate the fact that violence, as a conditionally marginalised phenomenon for a long time, is raised to the level of an actual social problem. In evaluating the dynamics of this phenomenon over the ten-year period, the authors reject the hypothesis that cultural traditions of violence have changed over the years. During the period analysed, domestic violence has established itself as one of the most widespread violent crimes in Lithuania, overshadowing other forms of violence. The article introduces four indicators of sociological assessment, which consist of the abuser's family situation, gender, recurrent criminality, and associations between age cohorts, in a focused manner, which reveals the social effects of the adoption of the law, demonstrating 'the disclosure' of the known but deliberately 'overlooked' reality by the LPADV. The analysis of segments of violence presented in the article suggests the development of specific measures for the prevention of domestic violence and programme strategies, because not only is the legal regulation of domestic violence significant, but so is the identification of target groups that go beyond popular stereotypes of this phenomenon. KEY WORDS: domestic violence, the Republic of Lithuania's Law on Protection against Domestic Violence, patterns of violence segments, abuser's family situation, gender, recurrent criminality rate, associations between age cohorts.

Anotacija

Straipsnyje analizuojama smurto artimoje aplinkoje dinamika Klaipėdos mieste 2010–2020 metais. Pristatant registruotų smurto atvejų analizę siekiama atskleisti 2011 m. priimto Lietuvos Respublikos Apsaugos nuo smurto artimoje aplinkoje įstatymo (toliau – ANSAAĮ) funkcionavimo realybę, įvertinant tą faktą, kaip smurtas, ilgą laiką buvęs santykinai marginalizuotu reiškiniu, iškeliamas į aktualios socialinės problemos lygį. Vertindami šio reiškinio dinamiką 10-ies metų laikotarpiu, autoriai linkę atmesti hipotezę, kad smurtavimo kultūros tradicijos per kelerius metus pasikeitė. Per analizuojamą laikotarpį smurtas artimoje aplinkoje įsitvirtino kaip vienas labiausiai paplitusių smurtinių nusikaltimų Lietuvoje, užgožiantis kitas smurto formas. Šiame straipsnyje pristatomas keturių rodiklių – smurtautojų šeiminė padėtis, lytis, pakartotinis nusikalstamumas ir amžiaus kohortų sąsajos – sociologinis įvertinimas, kuris atskleidžia socialinį įstatymo priėmimo efektą, kaip ANSAAĮ „ištraukė" į paviršių žinomą, bet sąmoningai „nepastebimą" tikrovę. Straipsnyje pateikiamų smurto segmentų analizė lemia konkrečių smurto artimoje aplinkoje prevencijos priemonių ir programų strategijų kūrimo prielaidas, nes svarbus ne tik smurto artimoje aplinkoje teisinis reglamentavimas, bet ir tikslinių grupių nustatymas, kuris peržengtų populiarius šio reiškinio stereotipus. PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI: smurtas artimoje aplinkoje, LR Apsaugos nuo smurto artimoje aplinkoje įstatymas, smurto raiškos segmentai – smurtautojų šeiminė padėtis, lytis, pakartotinio nusikalstamumo dažnis ir amžiaus kohortų sąsajos.

Introduction

The Republic of Lithuania's Law on Protection against Domestic Violence entered into force in December 2011. The LPADV has provided an opportunity to react swiftly to the threat of violence against a person/people, apply protection, and provide appropriate help and preventive measures. A substantial legal change in the law was the replacement of private prosecution by public prosecution. Prior to 2011, domestic violence was not considered a serious criminal activity for the public authorities to participate in by filing criminal charges. In the wording of the regulations and case law, violent activity was considered a household or family conflict that should be resolved itself, either by natural reconciliation or by the rational evaluation of the proceedings and the costs of the consequences to the overall family budget. For a long time, domestic violence was only a sociological and psychological problem, relevant at the level of micro-interaction, but not a public or legal problem which should be solved with the intervention of the state and the law enforcement authorities.

The criminalisation of domestic violence implies the recognition of the activity as criminal. It is a necessary condition for legally and efficiently punishing violent people, and to guarantee a legal remedy for victims of violence. At present, a victim is considered to be an individual who is entitled to get help from the authorities in order to help him/her get back to a full life. In this context, there is a growing awareness in society that domestic violence is a punishable crime. An especially significant aspect of domestic violence is that the LPADV expanded the range of people who turn to law enforcement. Prior to the adoption of the law, many people did not turn to the authorities, because they did not expect to get real help, lacked legal knowledge, and required the services of a lawyer, which had to be paid for in order to make an application. As a result of the new law, the authorities have professionals providing help, such as consultants, psychologists, lawyers and police, who always carry out a pre-trial investigation in connection with a registered incident.

The LPADV is not perfect. However, the fact that in a relatively short period of time since the law entered into force, the police have received lots of reports concerning domestic violence proves that the adoption of the law has already been socially well comprehended. The legal framework allows a phenomenon to be brought 'to the surface', which, in the absence of a proper legal environment, is often ignored as a not very important social problem. However, the increase in rates of reported domestic violence masks the structural causes and situational factors of this phenomenon, because the study of sociology examines trends in domestic violence, but not psychological or economic presumptions of the phenomenon.

It is understandable that a more detailed understanding of the empirical nature of the phenomenon, and the identification of more general features of abusers and victims, which should not be reduced to just the psychology or a stereotypical perception of men's natural inclination to abuse women, is crucial in order to undertake a proper sociological interpretation.

Forms of domestic violence are much more varied, not only in terms of the forms of violence, but also social roles, situational circumstances and legal qualifications. These social and demographic characteristics recur in the authors' work (for domestic violence in Klaipėda in the period 2010 to 2014, see Acus and Kraniauskas, 2022), but they now take on a clearer context. It is obvious that the mere existence of the law acts as a preventive measure, due to the majority of people being afraid to face the legal consequences of criminal activity. However, when identifying more specific structural segments of violence, and how violence is related to gender, age cohorts, age, matrimonial status and the probability of recurrence, it is possible to talk about the chance of strengthening the purpose of the law not only by changing domestic violence at the legislative level, but also by talking about effective preventive programmes which respond to situational factors.

The purpose of the article: to evaluate the dynamics of violence in the city of Klaipėda during the period 2010 to 2019 according to four structural indicators, the gender of the abuser, age cohort, family status and the recurrence of violence, based on an analysis of reported domestic violence misconduct.

The object of the article: cases of domestic violence.

Research methods: analysis of scientific literature, statutory instruments, statistical documents.

The structure of the article: the article consists of two parts, theoretical and empirical.

After the adoption of the LPADV in 2011, the characteristics of forms of domestic violence took on broader boundaries of expression. The scientific and practical relevance of the domestic violence problem was covered in the first article by the authors (Acus, Kraniauskas, 2022, 137–140); therefore, this is just a brief introduction to the characteristics of general forms of violence. According to Chomentauskas et al. (2017, 10–11), domestic violence is based on the controlling or forced behaviour of an abuser. Johnson's (2008) theoretical insights correlate with the content of Chomentauskas' assessment of violence.

The concept of physical violence includes ways in which pain and physical harm are inflicted on a person by means of throwing, shaking, pushing, hair pulling, beating, biting, pinching, hitting, causing injury by any object, etc. Depending on the harm or the pain inflicted, these forms of violence are governed by

articles of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Lithuania relating to damage to health (Articles 135–140 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Lithuania).

The typical expression of psychological (emotional) violence is extremely diverse, including yelling, humiliation, teasing, various accusations, shaming, distinction from other people, intimidation, threatening, the constant devaluation of an individual, manipulation, stalking, ignoring feelings, etc. By this kind of violence, it is intended to increase an individual's humility and dependence. According to the Criminal Code of the Republic of Lithuania, this kind of violence is usually governed as a threat to kill, serious health impairment or harassment (Article 145 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Lithuania).

Forms of sexual violence include not only rape. Every case when an individual is forced to engage in unsafe or humiliating sexual contact is considered sexual violence. Although the Criminal Code of the Republic of Lithuania has a separate section governing misconduct relating to a person's freedom of sexual decision and inviolability, sexual violence often occurring in a domestic environment is classified as inflicting physical pain or minor health impairment. In other words, sexual violence in a domestic environment rarely appears as a legally defined phenomenon in its own right.

Economic (financial) violence restricts an individual's access to help or to live a more independent life. Forms of expression include financial control, prohibition to acquire property, unilateral financial decision-making, reduced possibilities to support oneself, study, work or pursue a career, forcing to sign documents or to sell property, refusing to support children, refusing to provide information about the real financial situation of the family, etc. This kind of violence is harder to prove.

When presenting the above-mentioned forms of violence, it should be emphasised that physical violence prevails in a domestic environment when it is established in society in many countries.

1. Methodological access and empirical material

Empirical material comprises reports of domestic violence recorded by Klaipėda County Police Headquarters, which were added to the Departmental Register of Criminal Offences, and for which pre-trial investigations were initiated.

Since acts of domestic violence take on various forms, from physical violence, when a person suffers an injury, to symbolic and more refined expressions, in this article, the definition of violence is limited, and is associated with forms of violence described in the Criminal Code of the Republic of Lithuania for which an abuser is criminally liable. Among the cases of violence that are treated like this are:

1) crimes affecting human health (Articles 135–140 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Lithuania); and 2) crimes dangerous to human health and life (Article 145 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Lithuania). A more specific analysis of indicators of violence focusing on the abuser's age structure, age cohorts, family status and repeated violence is narrowed to a consideration of only cases of domestic violence reported by the police in accordance with Article 140 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Lithuania.

The vast majority of instances of domestic violence are classified as cases for which criminal liability is stipulated in Article 140 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Lithuania (inflicting physical pain or minor health impairment). However, the use of the Article as an indicator of domestic violence needs to be treated with caution. The Article often applies to cases of violence where the victim is a person who is not related to the abuser by family ties. A similar situation also applies to other Articles of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Lithuania, such as Article 135 (serious health impairment), Article 138 (minor health impairment), or Article 145 (threating to kill, serious health impairment or harassment). All the articles mentioned above (135, 138, 140 and 145) cover substantially about 98% of all cases of domestic violence, although they are applicable to the classification of other criminal activities as well. Because the Criminal Code of the Republic of Lithuania has no criminal articles devoted solely to domestic violence, each record made by Klaipėda County Police Headquarters in the Departmental Register of Criminal Offences for the period 2010 to 2019 was reviewed individually by the selection of cases of domestic violence.

In the Departmental Register of Criminal Offences, one incident can sometimes be submitted multiple times. Duplicate records were removed in order to identify only the incident itself. Sometimes duplicate records allowed for obtaining more detailed information, because one of them could lack information that was covered in more detail in another record in incidents that were reported to Klaipėda County Police Headquarters but happened elsewhere (in rural areas of the Klaipėda district, in other cities of Lithuania, abroad, or on international shipping).

A total of 3,871 cases of domestic violence reported in the city of Klaipėda in the period 2010 to 2019 were selected for the analysis.

It should be noted that incidents of violence, rather than specific people, are analysed in the article.

Theories explaining violence are used by researchers to carry out in-depth studies of the phenomenon; however, classic theories are usually applied when collecting statistical data and treated as instruments of analysis. These are anthropological (biological), psychological, social-psychological and sociological theories. The anthropological theory group looks for the causes of crime in human nature,

psychologists in an individual's impaired mental health, and sociologists in society. Substantial methodological presumptions in the article are related to access to anomie (Mertonas, 1997), social control theory (Reiss, 1951), social bond theory (Hirchi, 1969), and the theory of differential association (Sutherland, 1947). Some insights are based on strain, conflict and feminist theories.

2. Domestic violence in the city of Klaipėda: a sociological analysis

Rates of violent crime. Starting with an analysis of domestic violence in the city of Klaipėda during the period 2010 to 2020, in the context of selected indicators (abuser's family situation, gender, criminal record and associations between age cohorts), the general dynamics of violent crime and the expression of its forms in the period 2004 to 2021 (Fig. 1) in Klaipėda based on articles of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Lithuania are presented.
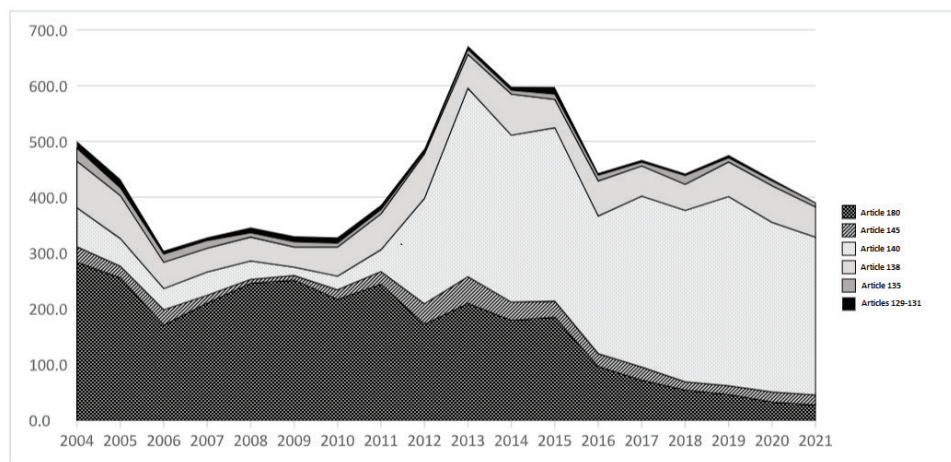

Figure 1. The dynamics of violent crime in Klaipėda from 2004 to 2021.
The number of crimes per 100,000 inhabitants
Source: Departmental Register of Criminal Offences. Data
archive of Klaipėda County Police Headquarters.

The chart above illustrates graphically the fact that crimes under Articles 129 to 131 of the Criminal Code (murder) during the period in Klaipėda declined steadily from 2004 to 2021 (especially after 2013), and their percentage in the overall figure for violent crimes also decreased. The figure for serious health impairment (Article 135 of the Criminal Code) remained practically unchanged, while the growth of minor health impairment (Article 138 of the Criminal Code) was not so drastic in the period from 2010 to 2020. However, an increase in violent crime

under Article 140 of the Criminal Code (infliction of physical pain or minor health impairment) is especially notable, and that can be explained by the entry into force of the LPADV in 2011. Amendments to the Criminal Code in 2015 also had an impact on the decrease in robberies (Article 180).
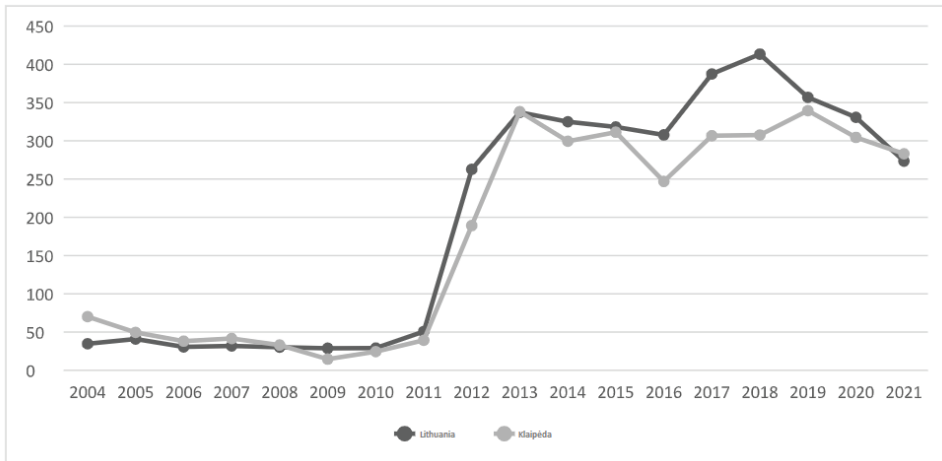

Figure 2. The dynamics of crimes reported under Article 140 in Lithuania and Klaipėda
Source: Departmental Register of Criminal Offences. Data
archive of Klaipėda County Police Headquarters.

The long-term trends show that only the number of very specific crimes has been growing in the structure of general violent crime since 2012. This growth is typical not only of Klaipėda[1]. The crimes qualifying under Article 140 are the ones that increase in number. As was mentioned earlier, Article 140 is applied the most frequently in order to record cases of domestic violence. It covers approximately 86% of statistics of all reported cases of domestic violence (see Fig. 3). Other cases of domestic violence are reported based on other articles in the Criminal Code classifying various instances of violence, from threats to murder, or the serious impairment of health.

Sociologically, such trends can be referred to as shifts in violence from the public to the private space. For a long period of time, violent crimes were reported in public places, and the two parties, abuser and victim, had no close links; however, after 2015, violent crimes have more often been reported in a domestic environment where the abuser and the victim knew each other very well. From a highly speculative point of view, the decline in violent crime in the streets of the city can

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[1]   This coincidence suggests that the data for Klaipėda and the conclusions based on it largely reflect processes taking place in Lithuania.
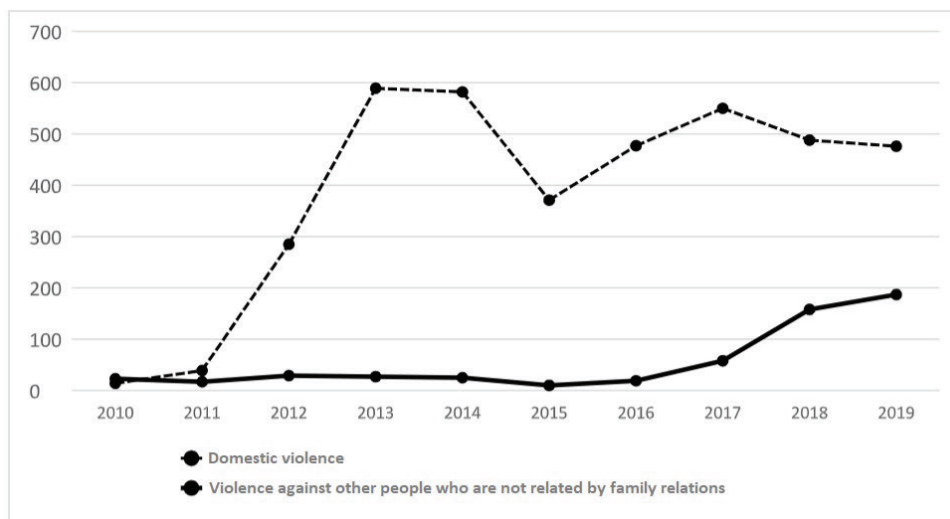
Figure 3. The dynamics of reported incidents classified in Article 140
by type of violence in Klaipėda
Source: Departmental Register of Criminal Offences. Data
archive of Klaipėda County Police Headquarters.

Note. Since 2015, the increase observed in violence against others has not been very accurate, due to the limited possibilities to identify family relations between an abuser and a victim based on the fabula of reported misconduct. The category also includes cases where the relationship between an abuser and a victim was hard to determine. In the data displayed for the period 2015 to 2019, a number of markers identifying individuals, including names and surnames allowing for the identification of family relations between a victim and an abuser more clearly were removed, due to the General Data Protection Regulations.

be treated as the result of improved safety in public places, due to the increase in various technological surveillance and security measures in spaces in the city, or due to the improved prevention of violent behaviour in the early stages of human development, for example in schools. This means that violence in public places is becoming more incidental and situational, while changes in structural conditions no longer create clear social presumptions for one or another group in society to engage in misconduct, as was observable in the period from 1990 to 2010 (see Acus, Beteika, Kraniauskas, Spiriajevas, 2018). However, changes in public safety do not justify the rather sudden increase in domestic violence and the idea that at a certain point in time in a family relationship it appears more presumptuous for violence to occur. The increase itself (see Fig. 2) should probably be considered an illustrative effect of the adoption of the LPADV when the known, but for a deliberately long time 'not noticed' or 'ignored', reality was 'brought to the surface'.

It is necessary to draw attention to the fact that prominent social changes having an impact on an increase or decrease in criminality are mainly linked to important events in public life (a change in the state system, political movements, economic crises). The decrease in criminality may also be affected by the regulation of the legal framework. Since the entry into force of the law concerning domestic violence in 2011, it has had a great impact on the increase in reported crimes, but at the same time it is a presumption for shaping public opinion on violence and access to help. However, researchers can analyse changes in social behaviour not only in terms of social control but also by evaluating society's social lifestyle and norms, and family traditions. All in all, it could be claimed that the law shows the reality, but is it possible to change the social behaviour of society in ten years?

3. Social-demographic portrait of an abuser

A total of 3,871 cases of domestic violence were reported in Klaipėda in the period from 2010 to 2019 under Article 140 of the Criminal Code. Since the number of reported crimes greatly increased after the adoption of the LPADV in 2011, it encouraged the authors to analyse four key indicators of expressions of violence: the gender of the abuser, the associations between age cohorts, the family status of the abuser, and criminal record.

Until 2011, most scientific studies on domestic violence usually presented statistics on violence against women and children. Sociologists recall first the research presented by authors such as Kanopienė and Pavilionienė (1997), Purvaneckienė (1999), and Gustaitienė (2005). The abuser here was exclusively male. Nobody talked about violence by women against men, and if it was mentioned, then it was more often as an anecdotal situation confirming patriarchal attitudes.

Although Lithuanian society is slowly escaping from patriarchal attitudes, the main statistical contingent of abusers according to gender is men. Research carried out after 2011 cannot yet deny this (Stonienė, 2012; Vasiliauskaitė, 2013; Stonienė, Narkauskaitė, Aguonytė, 2013; Pilinkaitė-Sotirovič, Vaige, 2017; Grigaitė, Karalius, 2018; etc). In these studies, men also prevail as abusers. In this way, the image of a man as the abuser has become established in society.

During the period 2010 to 2019, out of all cases of violence in Klaipėda, 90.1% of abusers were men, and 9.9% were women. It is necessary to draw attention to the fact that not only do men carry out acts of violence against women and vice versa. For instance, about 70% of victims of violent women were men, and 30% were women (mothers, daughters, sisters, mothers-in-law, grandmothers). Meanwhile, violence by men against women is significantly greater: 92% of victims of violent men were women, and 8% were other men (fathers, grandparents, sons, brothers,
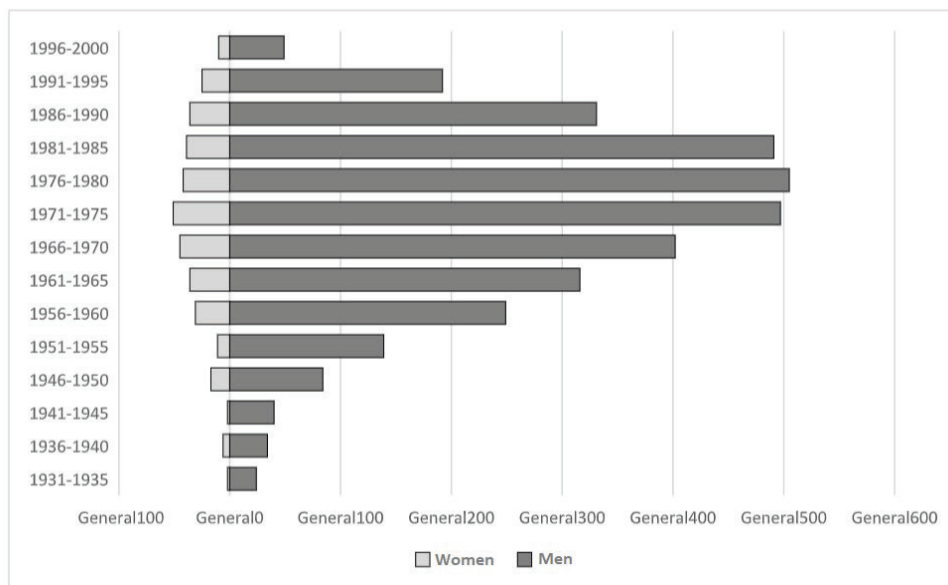
Figure 4. Cases of domestic violence in Klaipėda from 2010 to 2019.
The number of abusers by gender and cohort
Source: Compiled by the authors.

sons-in-law, sons of cohabitants, adopted children). These numbers show that the dynamics of violence cannot be reduced to gender alone. For the sake of interest, another fact may also be mentioned, namely that in 2013 in Klaipėda 6.3% of all abusers were women, and in 2019 the figure was 14.2%.

Will public intolerance of domestic violence have an impact on the change of the profile of the abuser? Will public intolerance also transfer to educational programmes in schools (preparation for family life, ethics, equal opportunities) and pre-school establishments? These questions remain open, but discussions have already been going on in society for a long time.

In research on violence, the need for an analysis of an abuser's age arises alongside the question of gender.

The problem of age cohorts is quite rarely considered in cases of domestic violence, because violence is more commonly referred to as the result of the dynamics of the psychological relationship, and those solving the problem rely on presumptions whereby the central role is up to the individual. By specifying a more sociological category of 'generations' or 'age cohorts', it is possible to evaluate not only the empirical domination of one or another cohort, but also to raise new questions that may help us to understand and solve issues of domestic violence more effectively:

- can we see the effect of age when analysing the structure of the abuser's age, while a person matures and ages biologically and is more likely to be involved in situations that activate violent behaviour, and eventually violence declines together with a loss of energy. If violence is only linked to the age range, it allows us to predict that the structure of the abuser's age should remain more or less stable in the long term;
- can we observe the effect of cohort in the structure of the abuser's age that violence is more typical of a specific generation (e.g. those born between 1966 and 1985), and declines slowly in society with the ageing of a specific generation. This presupposes the hypothesis that violent behaviour is more of a learned practice that changes little over a person's life.

The problem of compatibility and experience (social learning) of age cohorts still awaits a deeper demographic, sociological and psychological analysis in the context of domestic violence. It can be treated as a corresponding challenge for researchers. However, the empirical data provided by the authors already allows us to consider these theoretical questions.

Before proceeding to an evaluation of age and cohort effect, it is worth pausing briefly at two indicators of domestic violence that are closely associated with the age of the abusers. These two indicators are *the family status of violent men* and *recurrent (repeated) cases of violence.*

The vast majority of cases of domestic violence are caused by conflicts between adult partners (husband and wife, cohabitants of different genders). However, the long-term dynamics of reported cases of violence reveal the changing content of this phenomenon as a social problem. The changes show not only the change in the legal discourse, but also transformations in the public imagination of what is considered to be a solvable public problem, and what type of abuser is demonised in the consciousness of the public. If until 2010 the main concern of society was the adult man's violence against younger victims, such as a father abusing his minor children, or an abusive stepfather, then since 2012 cases of violence where the abusers appear to be other family members (grandson, son, brother) have been recorded more often. These are new structural positions that require a reconsideration of the prevailing interpretation of domestic violence that older men establish their power and control over younger ones by means of violence (see Figs. 5a and 5b).

An interesting fact is that more and more cases have been recorded in which an abuser is a cohabitant. In 2019, cohabitant violence was around 50% of all cases of domestic violence in Klaipėda, while spousal violence was 25%. One more significant trend is emerging in Klaipėda, and that is violence by adult children against their parents, which reached around 8% of all reported cases of domestic violence
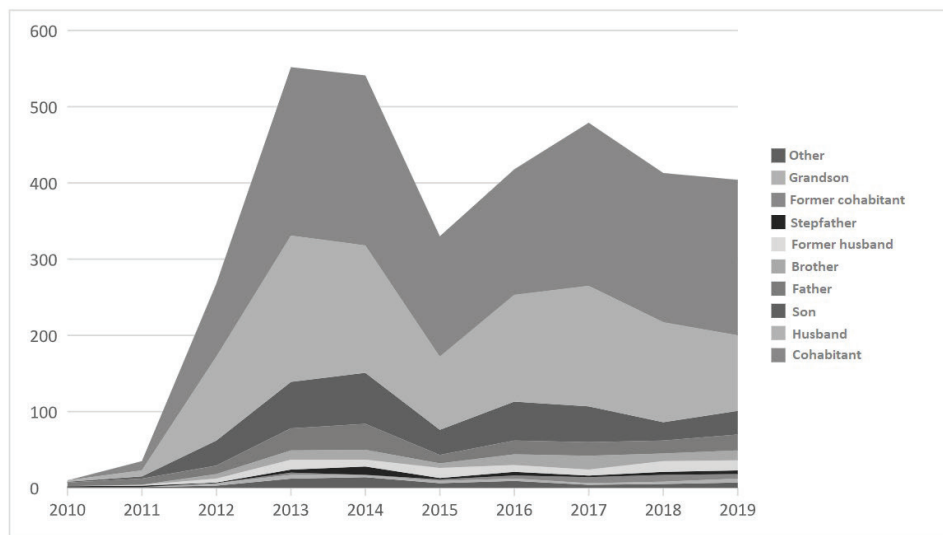
Figure 5a. The family status of violent men and its dynamics in
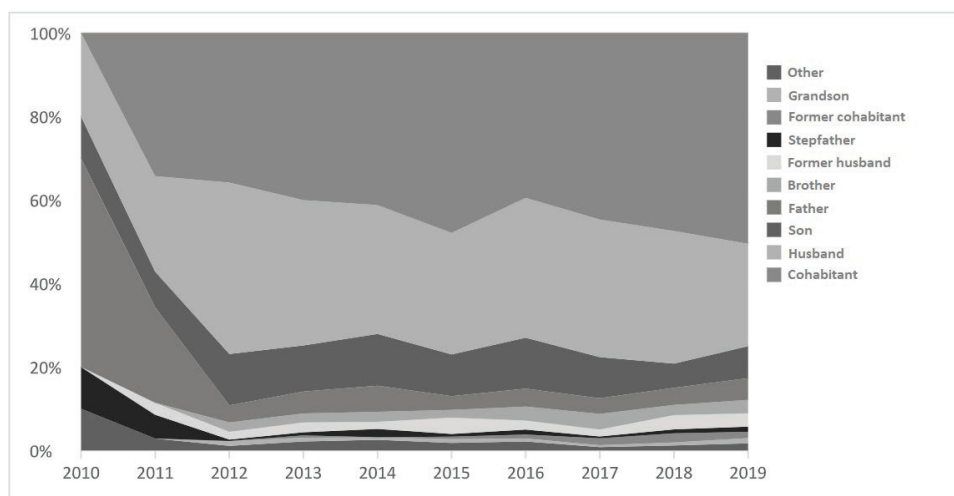Klaipėda during the period 2010 to 2019 (absolute numbers)

Figure 5b. The family status of violent men and its dynamics in Klaipėda during the
period 2010 to 2019 (percentage of the total structure of abusers)
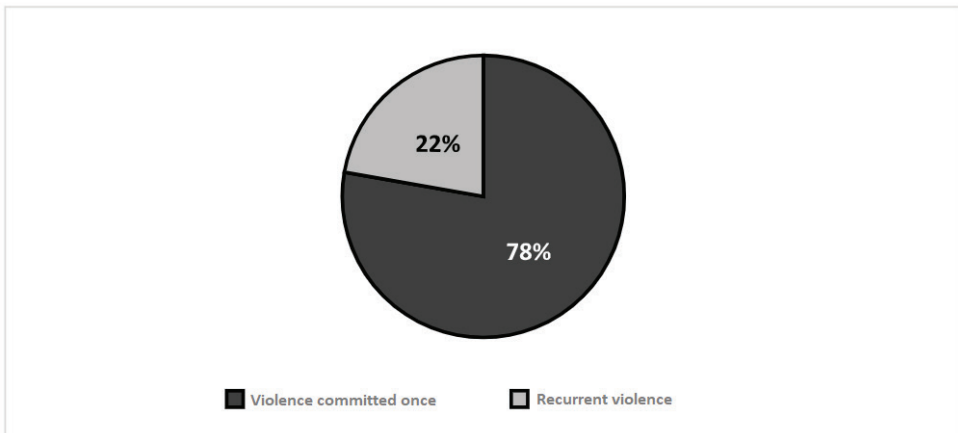*Source*: Departmental Register of Criminal Offences.

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Figure 6. The ratio of men committing violence once to men repeatedly committing violence (Klaipėda, the period 2010 to 2019)
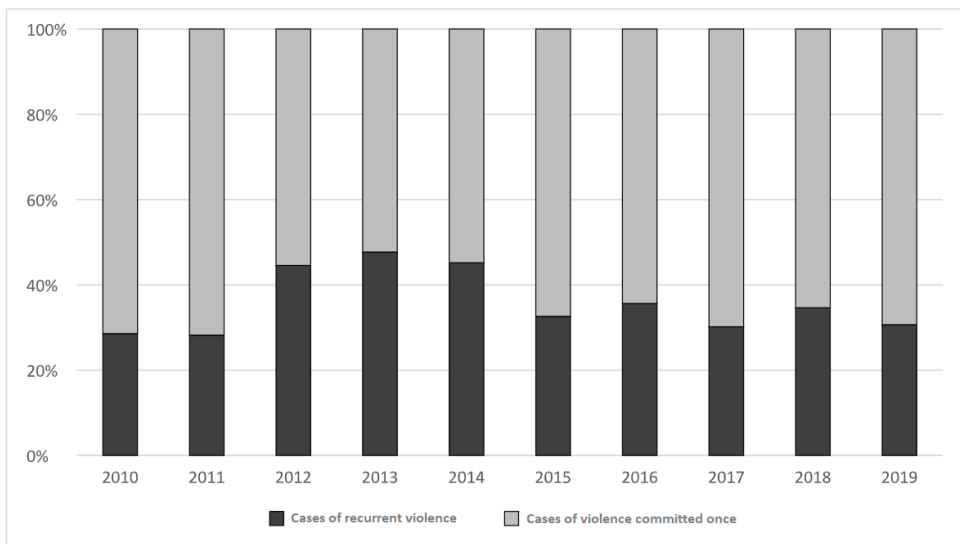*Source:* Compiled by the authors.

Figure 7. The dynamics of the ratio of cases of violence committed once to recurrent cases of violence in Klaipėda during the period 2010 to 2019
Source: Compiled by the authors.

in 2019. Prior to the law coming into force in 2011, it was rarely thought about, even though this form of domestic violence has always existed, especially when individuals addicted to alcohol and drugs commit violence.

Recurrent violence constitutes around a third of all reported cases (see Figs. 6 and 7). When comparing 2013 with 2019, it seems that the law on protection against domestic violence adopted in 2011 has had a positive effect in terms of curbing abuse. However, it is not as obvious as it would be possible to expect in the long term. An evaluation of the impact of police intervention in violent family conflicts as a preventive measure cannot be carried out. This requires additional data on the provision of help and judicial decisions, which could be considered as feedback. On the other hand, it confirms the presumption that the issue of recurring violence requires permanent attention, because the practice of social learning is still deeply rooted in the daily life of society.
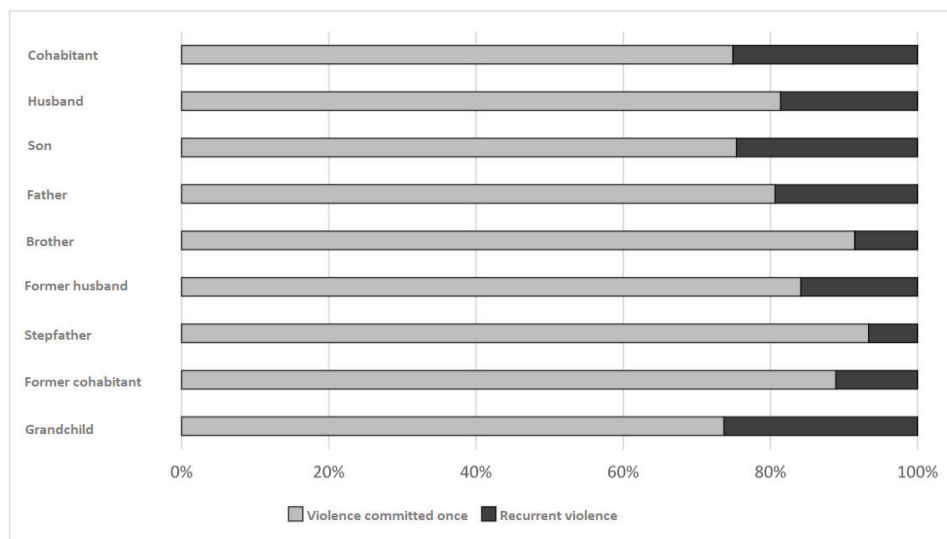

Figure 8. The percentage of repeatedly violent men based
on their family status in the general structure
Source: Compiled by the authors.

Does the status of an abuser have an impact on violence recurring? Is it possible to say that a certain configuration of family relationships is more likely to experience repeat violence? The fiercest are violent grandchildren, sons and cohabitants, among whom cases of violence are especially likely to recur (Fig. 9). This means that if a person has raised his/her hand once against his/her grandmother, mother,

father or cohabitant, it is more likely that he/she will use violence against them again.[2]

The dominance of violent cohabitants in the general structure of abusers, and in terms of recurring violence, is sociologically very interesting. These trends allow us to hypothesise that the family as an institution (a structure of organisational coexistence) is more efficient in terms of violence management and control than a relationship between cohabitants, which is less legally binding and easier to terminate.

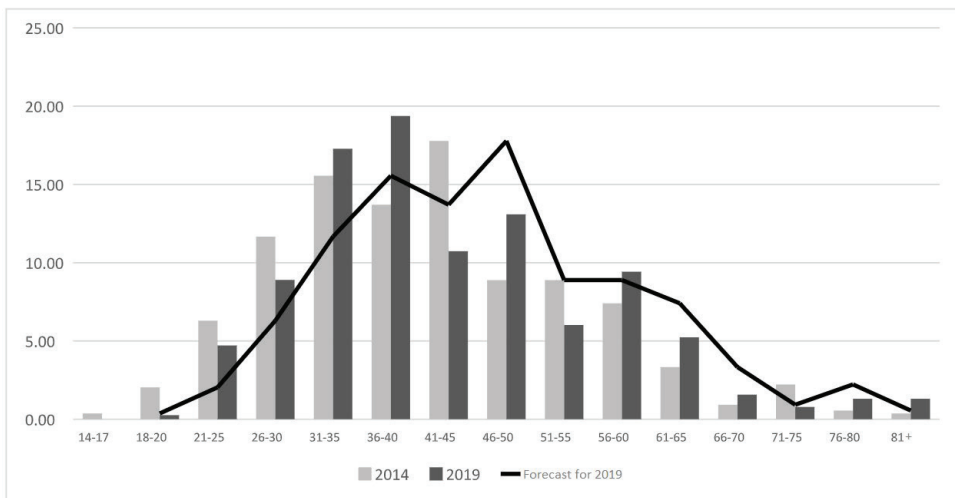## 4. The search for the age range and the effect of the cohort

Figure 9. The structure of ages of violent men in 2014 and 2019

As was mentioned above, an attempt can also be made to explain domestic violence by means of the age of the abusers. On one hand, violence can be comprehended as being characteristic of a particular age range in which tension generated and accumulated in a family relationship shows in violent behaviour. If it has more to do with age, then the violence should grow consistently in each group of older people, while the age structure should remain relatively constant. On the other hand, the dominance of a certain age group can also imply the effect of the cohort that violent reactions to conflict situations formed at some time in youth or early

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[2]   It should be noted that these groups are very different in size (see Fig. 5a). For instance, among all violent men, the number of cohabitants ranges from 30% to 50%, the number of sons carrying out violence against their own parents is around 8% to 10%, while the number of violent grandchildren does not even reach 1% of all abusers.

adulthood are, first of all, formed by practices of the structural environment that remain a relatively stable pattern of behaviour for almost all the life of the individual. It is possible to talk here about the learned culture of violence. If we look for the effect of the cohort, then one or several cohorts should always remain dominant in the long term, regardless of the ageing of members of a cohort. Each interpretation implies not only different violence forecasts and preventive measures; therefore, the question whether we can see the effect of the cohort or age range while looking at the structure of the abuser's age is pivotal.

What can be said about violent men's ages in Klaipėda in 2014 and 2019, and how can it be interpreted (see Fig. 8)? When looking for the age effect, the dominance of a certain age group becomes rather obvious in the statistical data. This is the 26 to 50 age range. This interval of time is linked with active family relationships, procreative behaviour, and active establishment in the labour market; therefore, various conflicts might arise. When comparing all the age groups in a perspective of five years, the expected result is identical, implying that the dominant age groups will remain the same. However, this is not the case. According to data from 2014, the predicted distribution of abusers by age in 2019 (the black line in Fig. 8) does not correspond to the reality (the age group columns representing data from 2019). The shift in the age structure within five years, which should display the shift of each cohort in age scale and coincide with the curve indicating prediction, is problematic and challenging, particularly in the next age groups. In the age groups between 25 and 40, there is significantly more violence than predicted, while in the age groups between 41 and 55, there is less violence. This trend is particularly surprising, because it is well known that the creation of family relationships is more and more often delayed. In the case of age effect, the columns for 2019 should coincide with the black line.

However, the general curve of the 2019 age structure (columns representing the size of abusers' age groups in 2019 are depicted in Fig. 8), which is depicted as rising, then falling, afterwards increasing slightly, and finally decreasing, is very similar to the prediction (the black line in Fig. 8). This means that in the absence of additional data, the age effect, which can be linked to normative human development or accumulated aggression, which shows in progressively later age groups, can hardly be taken as a very strict explanatory factor of violence. However, neither can it be removed from the interpretation due to the more general determining factors of yearly variations.

Which cohort's behaviour remains stable in the long-term perspective compared to behavioural changes in other cohorts? Which one shows the biggest changes? In Table 1, the percentage of cases of violence is provided in different men's cohorts, showing what part of a cohort is in the general age structure of violence

Table 1. The percentage of cases of violence in different men's cohorts. The dynamics and changes during the period 2012 to 2019

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	The change during the period from 2012 to 2019
1931-1935	1.53	0.55	0.37	0.62	0.74	0.43	1.28	0.79	-0.75
1936-1940	2.68	1.10	1.85	0.31	0.50	0.22	0.51	1.31	-1.37
1941-1945	1.53	1.10	1.30	2.15	1.24	0.87	0.77	0.52	-1.01
1946-1950	3.45	2.94	2.59	2.15	2.72	2.82	2.04	1.57	-1.88
1951-1955	4.98	4.59	3.89	3.08	4.46	3.69	5.10	3.93	-1.05
1956-1960	7.28	9.72	8.52	8.00	7.92	6.07	6.38	4.45	-2.83
1961-1965	8.81	11.74	9.63	8.92	7.92	8.89	9.18	9.16	0.35
1966-1970	11.11	12.84	11.48	16.31	11.39	10.85	12.50	8.64	-2.47
1971-1975	20.31	15.78	17.22	12.00	14.36	15.62	10.97	12.04	-8.26
1976-1980	13.03	16.33	15.19	16.31	14.36	15.84	13.01	15.45	2.42
1981-1985	13.41	12.11	13.33	15.38	14.60	13.45	16.84	18.85	5.44
1986-1990	8.81	7.71	9.07	8.62	8.91	11.71	10.97	14.14	5.32
1991-1995	2.68	3.49	5.00	5.23	6.93	7.81	8.16	6.81	4.12
1996-2000	0.38	0.00	0.56	0.92	3.96	1.74	2.30	2.36	1.97
TOTAL	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	

(in percentage), and to what extent it remains stable in the long term. The change that occurred in the period 2012 to 2019 can be treated as an indicator of stability or change in a specific cohort:

- Stability when a margin approaches 0 implies that a cohort carries a similar pattern of behaviour over the course of ten years. This means that we have a cohort which has more or less mastered violent behaviour, remains stable in its behaviour, and spends the rest of its life with similar violent practices. Based on these presumptions and empirical data, it is possible to claim that the effect of a cohort is observed among those born in 1961–1965, 1951–1955 and 1941–1945.
- Greater differences in the indicators for the years 2012 to 2019 indicate that changes take place within a specific cohort. The most prominent growth in change is observed in younger cohorts, which can be linked to the peculiar accumulation of aggression and the creation of family relationships. The greatest change in terms of the relative decline of violent behaviour is observed among those born between 1971 and 1975, where a modification of behaviour is observed. It is not yet clear what it is related to, but it stimulates the search for a sociological interpretation.
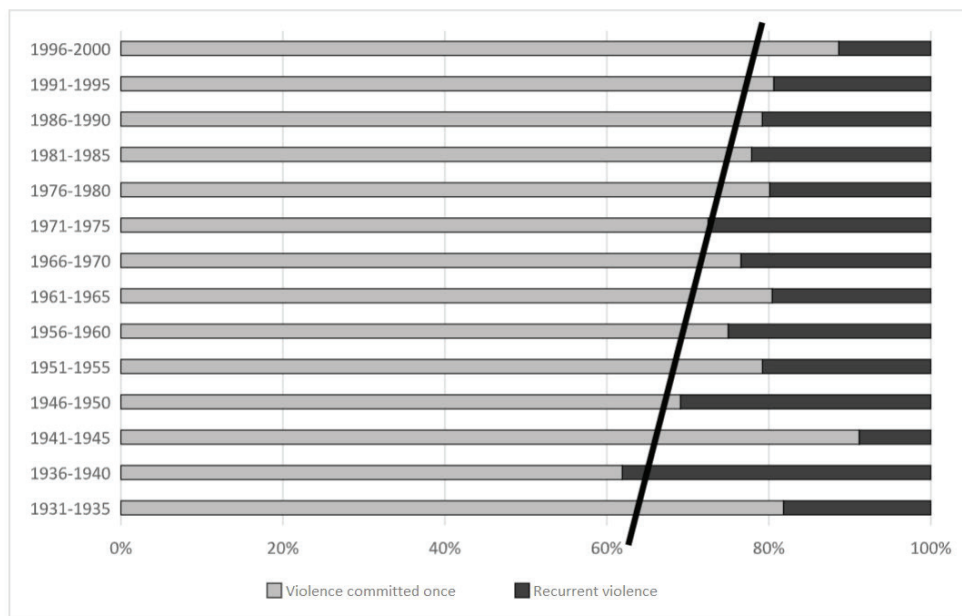
Figure 10. The percentage of men repeatedly committing violence in the general structure of abusers. The distribution is based on cohorts

In Fig. 10, it is visually evident that the percentage of men repeatedly committing violence increases gradually in older generations. It is difficult to determine sociologically whether this is the effect of cohort or age. There is no clear answer, because changes in cohorts among those born between 1931 and 1970 are very uneven due to a slight surge every five years. When carrying out further research, it would be appropriate to divide the cohorts into bigger parts of around ten or 20 years, instead of five, because it would allow the behaviour of those born in a certain period of time to be bound to the historical period which formed or influenced it. It would also be possible to reevaluate the influence of demographic changes and presumptions of the establishment of legal norms.

Conclusions and insights

According to the analysis of reported domestic violence, and based on the dynamics of violence in the city of Klaipėda during the period 2010 to 2019, it can be said that the law helps to actualise long-term social issues, and raise them from being an invisible phenomenon to the level of public concern. This proves the analysis of 3,871 reported cases of domestic violence carried out by the authors.

One of the structural indicators of domestic violence is the gender of the abuser. Many scientific studies about domestic violence in Lithuania up to 2011 empha-

sised violence against women and children. In this way, the image of a violent man is established in society. However, the statistics provided by the authors show that the stereotypical portrait of an abuser as an adult man carrying out violence against younger victims is changing in society. The main statistical contingent of abusers according to gender remains men; however, women carrying out violence against men and women are increasingly contributing to the violence statistics as well. The social profile of victims also changes, and in the period from 2010 to 2020 violence by adult children against ageing parents is evident in the statistical data, even though it is very rarely talked about in the general discourse about domestic violence. Violence by adult children against their own parents accounted for around 8% of all cases of domestic violence in 2019. Until 2011, it was rarely thought about, even though this expression of domestic violence has always existed, especially when individuals who are prone to violence suffer from addictions.

The family status of an abuser is undergoing certain transformations as well. Around 50% of violent men have the status of cohabitant, and in the long term the number has always grown. Around 25% of violent men are in a registered marriage and use violence against their spouse. The family status of cohabitants is highly debatable in sociological and legal terms; however, data provided in the article allows us to hypothesise that the family as an institution (a structure of organisational coexistence) is more efficient in terms of controlling violence than a relationship between cohabitants, which is less legally binding and more difficult to manage by legal measures.

Recurring violence constitutes around one third of all reported cases. When comparing statistics from 2013 and 2019, it can be claimed that the law on protection against domestic violence adopted in 2011 has had a positive effect in terms of curbing abusers in the domestic environment. However, an evaluation of the impact of police intervention in violent family conflicts as a preventive measure cannot be carried out. The fact that every third case of violence is carried out by an individual who has used violence more than once and has been the subject of a pre-trial investigation certainly raises questions concerning the effectiveness of prevention.

The problem of age cohorts in domestic violence remains an open question. On one hand, some empirical data would suggest a sociological interpretation on the practices of violence formed and the culture of violence existing in certain cohorts (e.g. born between 1965 and 1985). This would allow us to expect that instances of violence will decrease in the long term. However, the justification of the claim requires data for a significantly longer period of time, covering at least 20 years, and methodological experimentation with the determination of cohort limits. On the other hand, the search for an age range effect leads us to the rather grim conclu-

sion that violent behaviour will never be eliminated, for it is the result of conflicts appearing and accumulating in the course of family relationships. Sociologically, such a deterministic view should be questioned, and the analysis should be complemented by demographic data on the age of partnership and marriage arrangements, and the percentage of abusers in a specific age group.

The analysis of structural indicators presented in the article raises not only sociological questions. This is the value of the article. In order to create a safe, violence-free environment in society, it is necessary to examine psychological, economic, sociocultural and regulatory framework approaches at theoretical and practical levels. It requires a strategy of complex research in Lithuania, and sociological interpretations are not sufficient for this.

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