Interpersonal inmate violence in French prisons: results of the Tartare survey

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Objectives To describe physical inmate violence in prisons and to determine factors associated with it (being victim and being perpetrator).

Methods All inmates of a prison for prisoners awaiting trial (Bordeaux, France) were eligible for this cross-sectional study. 375 inmates have been face-to-face interviewed by an experienced psychologist. Socio-demographic data, imprisonment conditions, health status and healthcare utilisation, mental health, impulsivity, aggressiveness, interpersonal violence (victim and perpetrator status) and suicidal behaviours were documented.

Results Of them, 24% were victim of physical violence at least once a month and 10% perpetrated physical violence at least once a month. Being victim of physical violence was associated with perpetrating it (adjusted OR=2.4), suffering from anxiety or depression (adjusted OR=4.0), having attempted suicide during imprisonment (adjusted OR=5.3), being widow, divorced or separated (adjusted OR=3.4), suffering from sleep disturbance (adjusted OR=2.1) and practicing indoor sports (adjusted OR=1.9). Those who had two friends or more in the prison were less likely to be victim of physical violence (adjusted OR=0.5). Perpetrating physical violence was associated with using drugs (adjusted OR=4.4), practicing indoor sports (adjusted OR=2.6), being between 18 and 25 year old (adjusted OR=4.0) and being incarcerated for more than 24 months.

Discussion These results could help to improve violence screening in prisons. However, all data were self-reported but have been improved using data recorded by the prison administration when they were available.