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**FINES, EVICTIONS AND STOPS:
POLICE MANAGEMENT OF “UNDESIRABLES”
IN THE PARIS REGION**

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Fines, evictions, and stops:
police management of “undesirables”
in the Paris region

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This publication is a summary of research entitled « *Amendes, évictions, contrôles : la gestion des “indésirables” par la police en région parisienne* » (“Fines, evictions and stops: police management of ‘undesirables’ in the Paris region”) supported by the Defender of Rights and undertaken by Aline Daillère (CRIS, CESDIP) and Magda Boutros (CRIS, Sciences Po).

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SUMMARY

This report analyses police management of those considered to be “undesirable” in the Parisian urban space. It examines two tools used by the police to remove them from public spaces - eviction stops and repeat fines - which are used in particular against young, working-class men of colour.

The analysis is based on two empirical studies, which provide complementary data. The first examines evictions from the perspective of the police, based on a court file that revealed police instructions and practices of “stops and evictions of undesirables” in the 12th arrondissement of Paris. The second gives the perspective of the people targeted and is based on 44 interviews conducted with young people who had been repeatedly fined and subjected to ID checks by the police in a number of neighbourhoods in the Paris region. The interviews were supplemented by an analysis of a sample of more than 1,200 fixed penalty fines in the same neighbourhoods.

The results show that within the national police force, there is an institutional policy aimed at removing from the Parisian public space categories of the population defined by the police as “undesirable”, on the basis of their age, gender, ethnicity/race and economic insecurity. In the early 2010s, groups were mainly dispersed by means of ID checks/evictions, aimed at preventing certain people from remaining in public spaces, even if they were not committing any offence. From 2017 onwards, these same groups began to be repeatedly fined for offences relating to the use of public spaces

(anti-social behaviour, traffic offences, breaches of health regulations). This repeated issuing of fines has resulted in substantial debts, which can amount to more than €30,000 for teenagers or young adults.

Presented as “public order” measures, these practices target young men of colour from disadvantaged backgrounds for gathering in groups in public spaces in the neighbourhoods where they live, study or work.

Evictions and repeat fines are part of a wider context, in which a number of stakeholders have helped to encourage these practices. First of all, the legislator facilitates the use of these tools by extending police powers to stop and fine, whilst weakening judicial control. Secondly, local authorities encourage and legitimise these practices in the name of protecting the peace and quiet of “local residents”, a category from which they effectively exclude the young people targeted. Lastly, the judiciary exercises limited control over the actions of the police, as the existing means of remedy are largely ineffective due to their opacity, complexity and the substantial costs involved, as well as the presumption of truthfulness afforded police officer's reports.

The results highlight the major consequences of these practices for the people targeted. They are exposed to police harassment, their social and economic exclusion is reinforced and their distrust of state institutions is fuelled.

INTRODUCTION

Since the urban expansion that took place in the 19th century, public authorities have sought to control the presence and mobility of people within the country, particularly groups considered to be “undesirable”. This control is carried out both at the borders by regulating immigration and within the country through urban, housing and public order policies.

This report examines one of the policies for managing undesirables in urban spaces, namely the use of evictions by the police. This policy is implemented by the police officers in charge of maintaining public order, whose role is to regulate behaviour in public spaces that does not constitute a crime but does disturb the peace and quiet of residents, such as incivilities¹.

Since the 1990s, many cities around the world have focused on tackling small-scale urban disorder. Based on the “broken windows” theory, according to which the police must actively suppress such disorder in order to avoid creating a feeling of insecurity and a breeding ground for crime², new measures have been adopted to control the presence of people considered to be undesirable or dangerous. In the United States, several cities have adopted municipal decrees authorising the police to evict homeless people from city centres or deny them access to public parks³. In the United Kingdom, until 2014, police officers had a legal tool called anti-social behaviour orders, which allowed them to prohibit access to certain places for people considered uncivil – generally, young men from disadvantaged backgrounds – even if they had not committed a criminal offence⁴.

In France, measures to remove people from public spaces are not explicitly provided for by law (apart from exceptional measures such as

security perimeters). They are instead based on institutional practices and political priorities. This study looks at two police tools used to remove groups considered to be “undesirable”: identity checks used to evict certain people from public spaces (eviction stops) and the repeated issuing of fines to people for reasons related to their use of public spaces (repeat fines).

While many studies have shown that identity checks disproportionately target young men seen as Black or Arab and from working-class backgrounds⁵, few studies have looked at the use of ID checks as a means of removing people from public spaces. In addition, there are still few empirical analyses of the practice of issuing repeat fines, which has taken unprecedented proportions in recent years.

This study analyses the legal and historical context in which the practices of repeat fines and evictions have emerged, and then describes them empirically, in order to understand the procedures, circumstances, frequency and reasons for fines and evictions, as well as the overall amounts of debt related to the fines. It sets out to describe the characteristics of the target populations in order to identify the factors that characterise the groups that the police consider to be “undesirable”. The study also analyses the way in which practices for moving on undesirable people are influenced by (or co-constructed with) other stakeholders, and what the consequences are for the people targeted, in the short, medium and long term. Finally, it looks at the remedies available to those concerned and analyses the reasons why, overall, they remain ineffective.

METHODOLOGY

This research is based on the pooling of two studies on policing practices that have hitherto received little attention in the social sciences.

The first study is based on a criminal investigation conducted by the General Inspectorate of the National Police (IGPN) following a complaint for police violence and discrimination in the 12th arrondissement of Paris. The investigation file of several thousand pages includes a large number of internal documents from the 12th arrondissement police station for the years 2013, 2014 and 2015. It contains the daily instructions given to patrol units, which reveal the institutional policy of "evicting" populations labeled as "undesirable". The file also includes 284 intervention records, among them, 106 for which the police selected "Troublemakers - undesirables" as the reason for intervention from the options provided by the national police software. These records have enabled us to make a systematic comparison between this type of intervention and those for other motives (noise disturbance or nuisance). Lastly, the file includes written communications between the police station and other parties, as well as statements from all the people questioned as part of the legal investigation (76 police officers from the police station and 45 local residents and professionals), which reveal the rationale and justifications for these practices, as well as the role played by other local stakeholders.

The second study began in 2017. While four police officers from the 12th arrondissement were on trial for aggravated assault in the above-mentioned case, several young men from the neighbourhood alerted youth workers and local non-profit organisations about the fines they were beginning to receive in large

numbers, resulting in ever-increasing debts for them⁶. Similar problems of repeated fines were reported elsewhere in the Paris region⁷, in Isère⁸ and, to a lesser extent, by activists from non-profit organisations in Calais⁹.

The aim of this second study was therefore to examine the practice of issuing repeated fines in the Paris region. It was based on 44 semi-structured interviews conducted with young people who were given multiple fines between January 2019 and June 2024. The majority of these people live in Paris (39 of those surveyed) in five main neighbourhoods¹⁰. In each of these sites, the problems of repeat fines had been identified by institutional and non-profit sector stakeholders, who were able to establish contact with young people who had received multiple fines. The interviews enabled us to ask the affected people about the fines they had been given (amounts, reasons, contexts, etc.) and their impact on their daily lives. They also covered their social practices, the history of their relations with police officers issuing fines and any previous interaction with the criminal justice system.

In order to limit the selection bias that may result from the approach used to access respondents, these interviews were supplemented by quantitative data obtained from a sample of 1,226 fixed penalty fines. These fines concerned 84 young people, including those interviewed. Data was collected based on various written documents (initial penalty notices, increased penalty notices and/or payment status report drawn up by the French Treasury¹¹), which provided a range of information about the people fined (age, surname, amount owed) and the fine itself (reason, date, time, place of offence, class of offence, initial amount,

increased amount). The data helped to identify recurring dates, places and reasons for the issuing of fines or of the individuals fined, which the qualitative data alone were unable to objectify.

In both studies, the names of all respondents were anonymised. Particular attention was paid to analysing the age, gender and migratory origin (presumed from the surname¹²) of those evicted and fined.

RESULTS

1. LEGAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Identity checks and fixed penalty fines are often presented as relatively harmless tools in the fight against crime. However, the rationale behind their introduction and the laws governing them show that they actually serve multiple purposes, encouraging their use for dispersal purposes.

From the outset, identity checks have combined two central government objectives: combat crime and manage the presence and mobility of groups considered dangerous or undesirable for the national community. The first laws authorising identity checks in 1981 coincided with the widespread introduction of identity cards, which were themselves designed as a means of monitoring and controlling dangerous or “undesirable” populations (in the 1930s, this term referred to “foreign Jews” and in the 1960s, to “French Muslims from Algeria”)¹³.

Over the last few decades, the law has significantly extended the power of police officers to carry out identity checks. In addition to situations where there are reasonable grounds to suspect that an offence has been committed, checks may be carried out as a preventive measure, regardless of the person’s behaviour, and also “on requisition” by the public prosecutor, which authorises the targeting of any person in the locations and for the period determined by the judicial authority¹⁴. As a result, police officers have substantial discretionary powers when it comes to identity checks, giving rise to a significant risk of abuse. A number of studies have demonstrated the discriminatory nature of identity checks, which disproportionately target people perceived as Black or Arab¹⁵, and have highlighted the fact that in practice,

identity checks are used not only to surveil suspects or prevent public disorder, but also to gather information, assert police authority over certain sections of the population, punish, occupy territory and control the use of public spaces¹⁶. In 2016, the Court of Cassation found the French State guilty of grievous fault for discriminatory identity checks¹⁷, and in 2023, the Council of State recognised the existence of discriminatory identity checks, which cannot be reduced to isolated cases¹⁸.

Fixed penalty fines were introduced in 1926¹⁹ to punish less serious offences without overburdening the courts. Issued on the basis of a simple report by a police officer, the fixed penalty fine is a criminal penalty imposed without a trial, with the offender being notified at home of the amount of the fine that he or she must then pay or may contest.

Legislative developments surrounding the fixed penalty fine procedure have seen a gradual reduction in the involvement of judges and the granting of an increasingly significant role to the officer issuing the fine. Police officers thus become “judges of the street”²⁰ and are afforded powers that come with significant room for manoeuvre and extensive discretionary powers. In the current state of the law, decisions taken by officers, made in the street, without any adversarial process, do not have to be justified. Above all, they are taken with no real judicial control, given the ineffective nature in practical terms of the remedies available (see below).

This power is all the more extensive given that the scope of fixed penalty fines has expanded considerably over the last two decades. Initially introduced for road traffic offences, fixed penalty fines now apply to a very large number of lesser offences or misdemeanours (littering, noise nuisance, urination in public

spaces, etc.). Since 2016, they have also been applied to a growing number of misdemeanors, including drug use, collective occupation of part or all of a residential building and unlawful street vending²¹. This development is being contested by a number of stakeholders – particularly, the Defender of Rights, the French rights watchdog – who recommends abolishing the fixed penalty for misdemeanors (AFD)²².

These legislative changes have been supported by a series of technological developments that have greatly facilitated the use of fixed penalty fines and contributed to their widespread use, starting with the digitisation of the procedure for issuing fines. From 2011 onwards, electronic penalty notices have gradually replaced the old penalty stamp counterfoil books. Officers issuing fines now have a dedicated digital application in which they enter all the information relating to the offender and the offence recorded. A penalty notice is then automatically sent to the offender’s home address and processed by the national automated offence processing agency (ANTAI).

Set by law and by decree, the amount of these fines depends on the nature of the offence. Fines range from €11 (1st class) to €135 (4th class)²³. For misdemeanors, the amounts are higher (for example, €200 for drug use or occupying a building lobby, €750 for driving without insurance). If the fine is not paid within the 45-day period stipulated by law, the fine is increased to €35, €75, €180 or €375 for 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th class offences, and to €450 and €1,600 for fixed penalty notices.

The history and legislative framework of identity checks and fixed penalty fines, combined with the weakness of hierarchical and judicial controls, facilitate their use for the purpose of dispersing and moving on populations considered as “undesirable”.

2. IDENTITY CHECKS AND REPEAT FINES:

“DISPERSAL” TOOLS

Since 2010, several studies have revealed the existence of a policy through which certain populations, defined on the basis of ethnicity/race and/or socio-economic criteria, are removed from public spaces by the police. In Paris in particular, police officers have received instructions from their superiors to “evict undesirables”, “systematically evict Roma and homeless people” and to remove “migrants, Syrians, Roma, drug addicts and drug dealers”²⁴ from public transport areas. Our study reveals two police tools of removal: eviction stops and repeat fines.

EVICITION STOPS

The court file we studied shows that, in the 12th arrondissement police station, the public order units were instructed to carry out “ID checks and evictions of undesirables” on an almost daily basis during the period under study (2013 to 2015). These instructions have no legal basis. Neither the term “eviction”, nor “undesirables” exist in the French Code of Criminal Procedure, and the law prohibits discrimination on the basis of origin or economic situation²⁵. Although the term “undesirables” was officially removed from public policy after the Second World War²⁶, it continues to be used in a formalised way by the national police force as a whole, since it is one of the categories included in the digital software, under the heading “Nuisances and disturbances to public order”, alongside categories such as noise disturbance, neighbourhood disputes, traffic offences and miscellaneous nuisances²⁷. While some of the senior officers interviewed admitted during the criminal investigation that eviction has no legal basis, all of them defended the practice, arguing that it is necessary to respond to problems of “young people gathering or loitering” in certain sectors²⁸.

In practice, in the 12th arrondissement of Paris, eviction was a frequent and routine practice for the public order units: it was mentioned in almost a quarter of the reports included in the investigation file, and several reports noted "repeated evictions issued throughout the shift" involving the same group of young men.

The police²⁹ used three strategies to disperse them. They could carry out an identity check, generally accompanied by a frisk search, and then "ask people to move on"³⁰. Or they tried to "occupy the territory" with the aim of forcing people to leave³¹. A third approach consisted of taking individuals to the police station for an identity check, even when they already knew their identity, *"the aim being that when they are in the process of being booked at the station, they are no longer disturbing the neighbourhood"*³².

When questioned by the IGP, some officers stated that eviction must be *"justified by proven disturbances"*, but others admitted to dispersing people *"when no offences had been observed, but when the group caused a real nuisance to local residents and a feeling of insecurity"*³³. An analysis of the incident reports shows that, **on the ground, police officers regularly conducted evictions without observing any criminal or disorderly behaviour**, as illustrated by these summaries of their actions:

- Eviction of around ten undesirables. Without incident.
- Identity check of a group of young people at the swimming pool [X]. Individuals evicted. NTR [nothing to report].
- At the scene, we observed four individuals chatting calmly. We asked them to leave, which they did without incident.
- Requested to attend due to undesirables on VP [public highway]. At the scene, we move on ten or so individuals without difficulty. Good physiognomy.

Unlike interventions explicitly targeting "undesirables", during which police officers dispersed people even if they had not committed an offence, in the vast majority of interventions for other reasons (in particular noise or nuisances), they noted the noise but simply asked people to turn the volume down, without carrying out any ID checks or evicting them.

This suggests that there were two types of intervention: interventions justified by the *behaviour* of the individuals (most often noise or minor offences), for which the police almost never conducted evictions, and interventions justified by the *presence* of people considered undesirable, which systematically resulted in evictions, regardless of their behaviour.

REMOVAL BY MEANS OF REPEAT FINES

Since the mid-2010s, in the 12th arrondissement as in other areas of Paris and Ile-de-France, young people who had previously been subjected to ID checks and evictions have also begun to be repeatedly fined, situations they describe as forms of police harassment, abuse and discrimination. They can be fined up to several times in the same week or day for offences such as spitting, littering, noise, traffic offences and, between 2020 and 2022, offences related to the Covid-19 pandemic rules. Although barely of age or still minors, these young men accumulate a large number of fines and sometimes end up owing the State several thousand, or even in some cases, tens of thousands of euros.

As part of the research, out of 44 people interviewed, it was possible to collect fine statements ("payment status reports") from 19 people. These documents record between five and 102 fines per respondent, **i.e. an average of 38 fines per person. Amounts owed range from €2,000 to €32,500** (Table 1).

Together, these 19 respondents, with an average age of 20, have 716 fines to their name and owe the French State over €220,000.

Overall, the amounts of these debts are completely out of proportion to the minor nature of the offences that these fines punish.

TABLE 1

Known amounts of total debt related to fines

PSEUDONYM	AGE (AT INTERVIEW)	TOTAL DEBT (INCREASED FINES)	NUMBER OF FINES	PERIOD COVERED BY FINES
Ahmed	16 years old	€16,737	62	2022-2023
Sabah	17 years old	€2,610	8	2022-2023
Sadibou	18 years old	€2,145	12	2019-2022
Amadou	19 years old	€31,914	102	2019-2023
Omar	19 years old	€6,900	19	2020-2023
Pierre	20 years old	€13,210	40	2018-2022
Issa	21 years old	€2,550	12	2020
Samir	21 years old	€30,688	102	2020-2023
Jabari	22 years old	€2,905	5	2023
Aliou	22 years old	€4,671	18	2018-2022
Sofiane	22 years old	€32,134	84	2017-2022
Fayçal	22 years old	€7,113	23	2019-2023
Ousmane	22 years old	€5,190	15	2021-2022
Lamine	24 years old	€12,903	38	2017-2022
Abdel	24 years old	€14,766	44	2016-2021
Alioune	24 years old	€6,980	19	2019-2022
David	25 years old	€7,135	39	2014-2021
Aziz	27 years old	€3,240	11	2020
Koffi	32 years old	€16,191	63	2010-2022
TOTAL		€219,982	716 FINES	(MAINLY BETWEEN 2019 AND 2022)

Repeated at high frequency over short periods of time, the fines reach significant sums in the space of a few months. Abdel (24) received 44 fines between 2016 and 2021, including 18 between March and November 2020³⁴. These fines, which initially totalled €5,852, amounted to €14,766 after increases were applied. Amadou received his first fine when he was 14 years old. Since then, he has been fined at least 15 times per year, including 22 times between January and April 2021. At 19 years old, he has 102 unpaid fines, generating a debt of almost €32,000. Lastly, Ahmed received 62 fines between January 2022 (when he was 14) and June 2023 (when he was 16), resulting in a debt of more than €16,700. His fine statement shows large concentrations of fines over short periods of time. 31 penalty notices (i.e. half of the fines received) were issued in July and August 2022 alone. He was also fined ten times solely in the month of October 2022.

It should be added that these fines concern offences recorded during the day as well as in the evening. Noise disturbance, for example, is not just dealt with in the evening or at night. A large number of the fines collected during the study were for daytime disturbances.

In the cases examined, it is common for several fines to be issued at the same time for the same individual, thus forming **batch fines**. Noise nuisance (night-time or daytime disturbance), spitting ("spillage of unsanitary liquid") and dirtiness/mess ("dumping or abandoning rubbish") are frequently the subject of simultaneous fines, issued in batches of three, ironically described by one respondent as a "set menu"³⁵, as illustrated by an extract from Issa's fine statement (Table 2).

TABLE 2

Extract from Issa's fine statement (aged 18)

REASON	DATE	TIME
Unauthorised dumping of rubbish or objects in a public or private place	22/02/2020	17:32
Emission of noise affecting the peace and quiet of the neighbourhood or human health		
Breach of the ban on smoking in a covered and enclosed area open to the public		
Spillage of unsanitary liquids outside authorised areas		
Emission of noise affecting the peace and quiet of the neighbourhood or human health	16/03/2020	19:49
Disturbance, noise or abusive gatherings during the day that disturb the peace and quiet of residents	24/06/2020	16:50
Spillage of unsanitary liquids outside authorised areas		
Unauthorised dumping of rubbish or objects in a public or private place		
Disturbance, noise or abusive gatherings during the day that disturb the peace and quiet of residents	25/06/2020	21:32
Spillage of unsanitary liquids outside authorised areas		

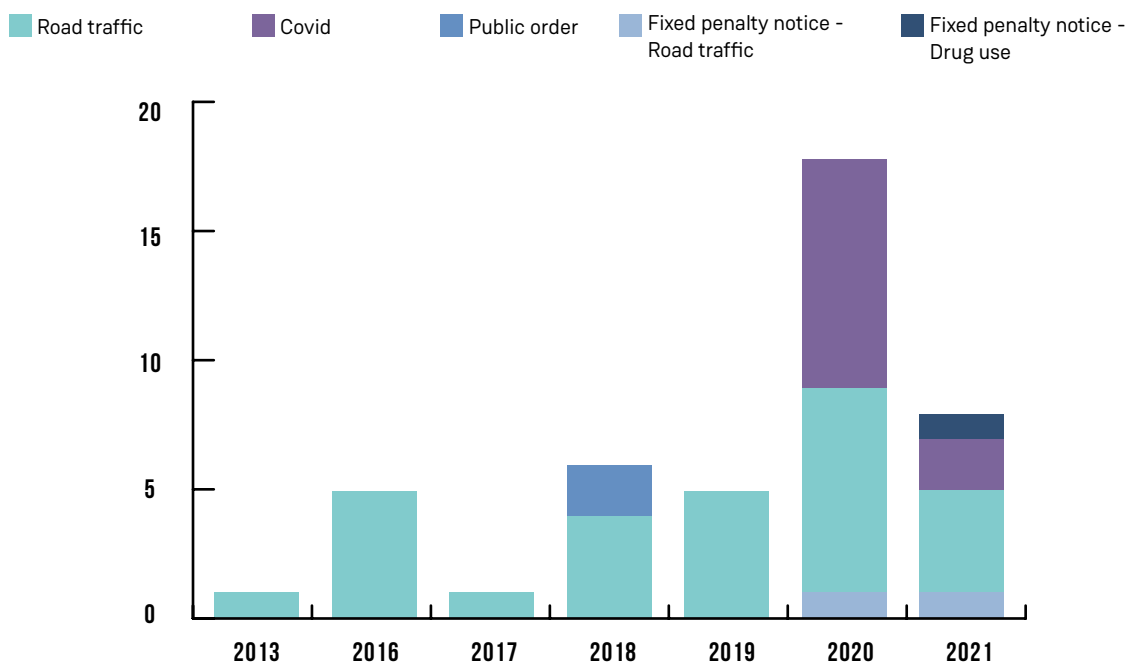
These “batches” are sometimes substantial. For example, in November 2017, when he was 19, Lamine received seven fines at the same time for traffic offences. A similar situation applies to Amadou, who was given eight fines at the same time for offences relating to the use of a scooter when he was 15 (initial amount: €464; increased amount: €1,236). Other cases of “batch fines” occurred during the Covid-19 pandemic period, in 2020 and 2021. On the evening of 1 March 2021, for example, Alioune (aged 21) was fined three times for travelling without a travel justification statement, gathering on a public thoroughfare and not wearing a protective mask (initial fine: €405; increased amount: €1,125).

The respondents in this research were heavily fined during the period in which health regulations related to the Covid-19 pandemic were applied, between March 2020 and July 2022. Twice as expensive as 3rd class fines, which before 2020 accounted for

the majority of fines paid by respondents³⁶, “Covid” fines have considerably increased the debts of those who have been fined several times. For the 19 people for whom we have a payment status report, 155 “Covid” fines were recorded, accounting for a total of €58,125. Lamine, for example, who was 21 in 2020, was fined ten times for breaches of health regulations, accounting for more than a quarter of all his fines. Pierre (18 in 2020) was fined 26 times for breaches of health regulations (almost two-thirds of all his fines). Repeat offenders have seen the amount owed related to fines increase considerably in 2020 and 2021 (Chart 1). If we take all the respondents for whom we have an exhaustive payment status report (n=17)³⁷, we obtain an average of nine “Covid” fines per person between 2020 and 2022, well ahead of the average number of fines issued in the Paris urban area³⁸. **On average, these young people were 140 times more fined for Covid-related offences than the rest of the population in Île-de-France.**

CHART 1

Breakdown of Abdel’s number of fines, by year and by reason



The officers' repeated interaction with the young people they target has made it possible to **issue "remote" fines**, whereby police officers issue fines without leaving their vehicles. A number of young people explained that they had been fined unwittingly, without having been approached or subjected to ID checks by the police. This surprising procedure is made possible by the fact that the young people are frequently stopped and are known to the police, who can identify them (surname, first name and address) and send them penalty notices without first stopping them. The widespread use of electronic penalty notices in the mid-2010s has also encouraged this practice. The fine is now issued by the officer on a dedicated digital device and no longer has to be handed to the person. During the lockdown and health curfew periods in 2020 and 2021, for example, many people reported being fined for "travel outside of the home without appropriate supporting documents", without any check being made for a certificate. Abdul explained that he had been fined during the first lockdown in March 2020 while walking his dog, without having his ID checked and without the officers issuing the fines checking whether or not he had a travel justification statement³⁹.

Regardless of the methods used, people who are repeatedly fined associate the numerous fines they receive with a desire to keep them out of the public spaces they use.

3. DEFINING UNDESIRABILITY

If evictions and repeat fines target people simply for being in public spaces, then the question arises as to who are these groups that the police consider to be "undesirable"? The various pieces of evidence in this study make it possible to cross-reference two perspectives: the institutional point of view (who is considered "undesirable" by the police?) and the perspectives of the policed (what are their sociodemographic characteristics and why do they think they are being targeted?). These perspectives converge to uncover the profile of "undesirables": people defined on the basis of their age, gender, origin, physical appearance and the way they use public space. This suggests that the use of evictions and repeat fines are the result of discriminatory targeting.

UNDESIRABLES ACCORDING TO THE POLICE

To understand how undesirability is defined from the point of view of the police, an analysis was made of the profiles of the people identified as "perpetrators" in the intervention reports in the case file for the 12th arrondissement of Paris (n=182). We compared the characteristics of the people subjected to ID checks during interventions for the reason "Troublemakers - undesirables" with those of people listed in interventions for other reasons related to public order, in order to determine whether the profile of "undesirables" differs from that of the population generally targeted by the police. The comparison shows that, while on the whole the majority of people subjected to ID checks are young men whose names imply African or North African origin, among them the people considered undesirable are younger, more often men and more often of post-colonial immigrant background (see Table 3). In fact, they are **almost exclusively boys in their teens, the vast majority of whom have a name denoting a post-colonial immigrant background, especially sub-Saharan.**

Of those who are not considered “undesirable”, just over half have a European-sounding name and just over a quarter have a name of sub-Saharan origin. These proportions are reversed among the so-called “undesirable” profiles: just under a quarter have a name implying a European origin

and over half an African origin. The people designated as undesirables by the police are almost all French and born in France (37 out of 39), in a higher proportion than the people who are never described as such. So they are not immigrants, but rather descendants of immigrants⁴⁰.

TABLE 3

“Perpetrators” in the police reports of the 12th arrondissement

INDIVIDUALS STOPPED FOR ID CHECKS	GENDER	MIGRATORY ORIGIN	AGE IN 2014
NEVER LABELLED UNDESIRABLE (76)	82% men	52% from Europe 28% from Sub-Saharan Africa 20% from North Africa	4% under 13 46% aged 14-19 15% aged 20-25 35% aged 26 and over
LABELLED UNDESIRABLE TWICE OR MORE (39)	97-100% men	24% from Europe 55% from Sub-Saharan Africa 21% from North Africa	3% under 13 79% aged 14-19 10% aged 20-25 8% aged 26 and over
TOTAL (182)	86% MEN	42% FROM EUROPE 35% FROM SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA 23% FROM NORTH AFRICA	4% UNDER 13 54% AGED 14-19 23% AGED 20-25 18% AGED 26 AND OVER

Analysis also shows that of those considered undesirable and regularly subjected to evictions, the **vast majority are residents of the district in which they are stopped** (only six of the 39 lived outside the 12th arrondissement of Paris, including four in neighbouring arrondissements). Evictions are issued in three main locations in the district, all located in residential blocks with a high concentration of social housing, near the district's state secondary school, and far from the district's central avenues and squares where shops and Haussmann-style buildings are concentrated. An analysis comparing the locations where evictions are issued with the home addresses of the people targeted by the orders shows that the young people were moved on from the areas where they live and go to school, or, in their own words, "right next to home".

The police reports and hearings conducted by the IGPN also suggest that **it is the presence of these young men in groups (ranging from four to around twenty people) that triggers evictions**. Evictions are generally issued in the late afternoon and evening, after school. During their hearings, officers from the police station described these young people as, for the most part, not involved in delinquent activities, but explained that their mere presence in a group in the public space justifies the evictions, as it is considered to cause a nuisance for local residents (*"we're not dealing with gang leaders, but they are pests, people who create a nuisance wherever they go"*⁴¹). This nuisance is presumed by police officers, regardless of the behaviour observed on the ground. One commissioner, for example, acknowledges this in the following terms: *"It's true that when you arrive on scene, there's generally no noise. But we suspect that the people in question must have been a nuisance to the neighbours. The officers then move the young people on in order to stop the disorder"*. A law enforcement officers agrees: *"We ask them to leave because we know we'll*

*be called by local residents. It's a preventive step"*⁴³. Undesirability is therefore constructed on the basis of what the police consider to be the preferences of "local residents", a vague category that takes into account only certain residents and excludes others.

THE PROFILE OF THOSE WHO ARE REPEATEDLY FINED

These police sources can be cross-referenced with available data on people who receive multiple fines, drawing on interviews and fines. During the interviews, the socio-demographic characteristics, social practices and social and criminal trajectories of the interviewees were identified. The corpus of 1,226 fines issued to 84 offenders supplements this data in two ways: it enables us to analyse the origin of the person fined on the basis of their surname, and provides an indication of the number of fines issued to each person. Several results emerge from analysis of this data.

The people who are repeatedly fined in the study were all male. Although care must be taken due to the selection bias that can result from the sampling strategy, it should be noted that in none of the areas studied was there any mention of young girls being repeatedly fined, despite the fact that a significant proportion of those supported by specialised prevention services are young girls. This gendered targeting by the police, which has already been demonstrated in a number of studies⁴⁵, is also a point raised during interviews by those who are repeatedly fined.

All of the respondents are of North African or sub-Saharan African origin. The result is identical when the analysis is extended to the sample of 1,226 fines collected: all the surnames indicate foreign origin⁴⁶.

In interviews, many of the respondents believe that their skin colour is the main reason why they are targeted by the police. It is often their experiences of differential treatment that support this perception.

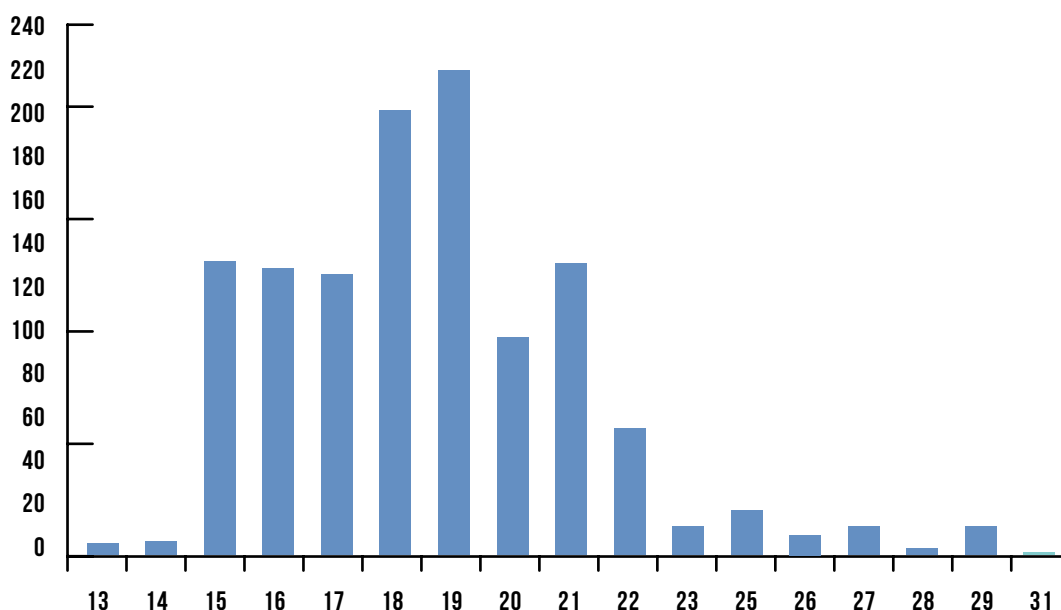
Haroun, for example, recounts that he was recently subjected to an ID check with a group of friends - all of whom were racialized as non-white - in a park near his home, while another group of young white men in the park nearby, who were no less noisy, were not asked to produce ID (*"And just next to us, there was a group, a larger group than ours.. but they weren't black or Arab (...) They were white, and they were much noisier than us"*)⁴⁷.

The majority of people with repeat fines are aged between 15 and 22 (Chart 2).

The youngest offenders in this study were 13 when they received a fine; the oldest was 31. The average age of the entire sample of those fined is 18.6⁴⁸.

GRAPH 2

Age at time of offence (N= 1,174)



The perception of the young people targeted is in line with this: in their view, the ID checks and fines to which they are subject are particularly severe between the ages of 15 and 20. Younger people are of less interest to the police. Older people become less targeted and express the feeling that the frequency of ID checks and fines diminishes after a certain age (*"Basically, it goes away with age"*)⁴⁹.

Respondents are stopped and fined right next to their homes. The penalty notices and French Treasury payment status reports

collected show that, in each neighbourhood studied, the fines cover a handful of locations and are concentrated in small areas, corresponding to the public spaces frequented by the respondents and generally located in the immediate vicinity of their homes.

In the four main areas of Paris studied, at least three-quarters of the fines issued were in the district where the person lives. In the Lavandins district⁵⁰, 61% of the 540 fines collected were concentrated in an area of just 3.5 square kilometers and a third concerned just five streets or squares.

In the Dahlias district, 42% of fines were issued in an area of less than 1 square kilometer; 30% were issued on just three streets.

These observations can be applied even more precisely at the individual level. Take the example of Amadou who, at 19 years old, is one of the two respondents with the most fines (102 between 2019 and 2023). More than two-thirds of his fines were issued within 500 metres of his home⁵¹. The same applies to Lamine, three quarters of whose fines were issued in his home district (28 out of 38). In more than half the cases, the person was fined less than 300 metres from home.

These young men are rarely stopped and fined elsewhere. Yet, some of them point out that their social activities are not confined to the area where they live, that they also travel to other towns or districts, and sometimes frequent other public places where they are not stopped or fined. This is particularly true of road traffic offences. Driving without registration documents or insurance, driving a vehicle without a rear-view mirror or high-visibility jacket, driving a vehicle with a faulty indicator light/headlight or "decorated with a protruding, sharp or pointed external feature"⁵² are all offences that are likely to be committed beyond the local area. However, these offences are still mainly punished within fixed locations.

People who are repeatedly fined are particularly closely monitored and checked by the police, sometimes independently of any criminal activity. One of the possible hypotheses concerning the issuing of repeat fines is that the police are targeting these populations primarily to put a stop to illegal activities. As a result, the people targeted by repeat fines would be people who are "well known to the police and judicial authorities". To test this hypothesis, we analysed the respondents' self-reported criminal record (number of police arrests, judgements, convictions, prison sentences, etc.). Most of them have already been tried and sentenced in criminal court (including six who have already been imprisoned).

However, a number of young people with a lot of fines report that they have no criminal record. Madi, for example, estimates that he has received more than €10,000 in fines, and claims that he has never been taken to the police station and never stood trial. The same applies to Pierre, who owes €13,200 in fines (mostly related to Covid) and says he has had no dealings with the justice system. While this declarative information should be treated with some caution, it does qualify the assertion that the most fined individuals are also the most involved in delinquent activities.

However, one thing is certain: while not all young people who are repeatedly fined and arrested are known to the judicial authorities, they are known to the police officers operating in their neighbourhoods. The study indicates that the young people who are repeatedly fined and the police officers who punish them are highly familiar with one another. They are monitored constantly, making them "known to the authorities", sometimes independently of any illegal activity.

The majority of respondents felt that they were being stopped for ID checks and fined because they were present and visible in the public space.

Several respondents expressed the idea that police officers "don't like young people who hang around"⁵³ and that they quickly spot and get to know those who are frequently present in the public space in their area. In this respect, several respondents noted that the young people who receive the fewest fines are also those who are least present in the public space. In their view, what bothers the police is not so much young people hanging about "outside" as them being "in a group". A number of them say that they are rarely stopped or fined if they are alone in public spaces (*"Generally, when you're on your own, it's fine. But if you are in a group of four or five, there's a 50% chance you'll be fined"*⁵⁴). Among the fines collected as part of this study, it is not uncommon to find that several young people have been given several fines at the same time and in the same place.

Many of them express the feeling of being labelled as “thugs” or “delinquents” as soon as they are present in a group in a public space. For Azrane, Pierre and Salif, for example, just standing still in the street makes them suspicious in the eyes of the police and local residents alike, who easily suspect them of involvement in drug trafficking or other illegal activities. For David, the fact that he is of Algerian origin and a regular presence in the streets, squares and parks of his neighbourhood makes him “suspicious” in the eyes of the police, even though he has no criminal record⁵⁵.

The way they dress reinforces this suspicion.

A number of young men point out that certain items of clothing – such as tracksuits and trainers – increase the risk of being stopped and fined, an observation that has also been made in a number of previous research studies⁵⁶. According to the respondents, carrying a bag or wearing a hoodie, cap or neckerchief makes them particularly vulnerable to police targeting. Other items of clothing or accessories, on the other hand, reduce the likelihood of them being stopped for an ID check. Sofiane explains that he is subject to fewer checks when he wears glasses and a beret, as these accessories make him appear “more serious”. Sadibou, for his part, expresses the feeling that, depending on the style of dress he adopts, he is more or less subject to ID checks. While wearing a tracksuit and trainers, he knows that there is a good chance of being stopped (*“For example, now, I know that I can be stopped at any time”*), this is less the case when he comes home from work wearing jeans and/or a shirt⁵⁸. Yanis makes the same observation. A young man of Algerian origin, he describes himself as “pale-skinned” and as someone who could easily pass for “white” in certain contexts and with certain clothes. Usually wearing a tracksuit and trainers, he sometimes wears jeans or a shirt, situations in which he feels less likely to be checked and targeted by the police⁵⁹. Respondents often feel under suspicion because of the way they dress and

look⁶⁰. Associated with their presumed origins and skin colour, certain items of clothing categorise them as “thugs” in the eyes of the police.

To sum up, the police sources from the court files studied are consistent with the profile and perceptions of the young people who were repeatedly fined. The “undesirables” here are French teenagers and young men from post-colonial immigration backgrounds, whose clothing is associated with that worn by “young people from the suburbs”, and who gather in groups in the streets or public squares of the neighbourhood in which they live. These results confirm existing research on the discriminatory nature of identity checks, and supplement it by demonstrating that targeted checks are not limited to monitoring and controlling crime, but are also extended to controlling the presence of certain categories of the population in urban areas. These young people, whom the police categorise as “undesirables”, are seen as “not belonging” in the public spaces of these Parisian neighbourhoods.

4. CO-CONSTRUCTING “UNDESIRABLES”: THE ROLE OF LOCAL RESIDENTS AND MUNICIPAL AUTHORITIES

Police use of evictions happens within a wider context, in which other stakeholders play an important role, both in constructing the notion of “undesirables” and in the development of a policy of managing these groups through dispersal.

RESIDENTS: CONTRASTING VIEWS ON PUBLIC PEACE AND ORDER

In the 12th arrondissement of Paris, senior and patrol officers unanimously explained when questioned that the aim of moving on undesirables was to respond to citizens’ complaints, with a view to maintaining public order⁶¹.

However, as in many socially mixed neighbourhoods, there were major disagreements as to what constituted a public nuisance. As part of its neighbourhood survey, the IGPN questioned 35 people living or working in the neighbourhood about safety in the area. Responses reflect a wide range of opinions on safety and the way in which teenagers of colour in the public space are perceived.

On the one hand, some residents⁶² felt that the presence of gatherings of young people was problematic and regularly called on the police to intervene. The investigation file contains 27 letters from residents or tenants’ associations, reporting incivilities or criminal behaviour (noise, joyriding, drug dealing) attributed to “gatherings of young people” described as illegitimately “occupying” the public space. They contrast “young people” - who are deemed out of place - and “local residents” who are “*simply asking for the chance to live in a normal environment, with a minimum of peace and quiet*”. In their letters and during the investigation, these residents often described the young people in question using terms related to ethnicity (“*African and North African young men*”⁶³), or

terms revealing racial bias (“*vermin*”, “*gangs*”, “*riffraff*”). The majority of them say that, although these young people do not commit violence, their presence in groups is harmful because it generates a feeling of insecurity (“*I have not been attacked or insulted in the neighbourhood, but I feel unsafe because of the presence of groups of young people*”). This presence is also seen as detrimental to the area’s economic activity (“*it drives customers away*”) and impacting the value of property (“*it gives an atmosphere of an inner city housing estate and that’s damaging*”). These attitudes show that it is the combination of the racial profile and economic status of the groups that defines a category of the population as a “nuisance” in public spaces.

Conversely, some local residents and shopkeepers felt that most gatherings of young people do not cause problems, but that they are discriminated against by certain residents and by the police. In 2013, a local campaign was launched by young residents, specialist youth workers and neighbourhood activists to speak out about the violence and discrimination to which young people were subjected at the hands of the police through a neighbourhood public order unit. In support of the complainants, several local non-profit organisations formed a collective called “Place aux Jeunes”, whose main objectives were to strengthen dialogue between residents and promote measures to guarantee equal rights and access to public space.

Unlike the residents, who felt that they were being bothered and harmed by the gatherings of young people, the collective advocated an inclusive vision of public space that “makes a place” for the various populations present in the neighbourhood and protects discriminated groups. In a letter to the town hall, the collective asked how urban development projects “*work towards bringing residents closer together, rather than creating barriers that exacerbate mistrust and deepen misunderstandings*”, and called for measures to guarantee the autonomy of the elderly, give equal consideration to the interests of residents who rent and to those who own

their homes, and *“the proper social integration of young residents given the difficulties they encounter in the job market, which is very unfavourable to them”*.

In response to these contradictory demands, the police station set up a system for managing grievances differently.

On the one hand, complaints about juvenile incivilities were handled as public order issues and systematically triggered an operational response on the ground. Citizen reports were collected and managed by the operational coordination office (BCO), which sent written instructions to the local units to carry out “security operations” and issue “evictions of undesirables” in the sectors concerned. The units were required to draw up a report on their actions within a set timeframe, allowing the commissioner to write back to the complainant to inform him or her of the response to the complaint. This process was systematically deployed when the police station received grievances about incivilities committed by gatherings of young people, without the police checking the accuracy of the reports and even when the police considered that the complaint was unreliable.

On the other hand, when residents alerted the police station to police actions deemed abusive or discriminatory, these complaints were directed to the public relations and communications unit, and no administrative investigation was carried out. In 2013, young local residents, accompanied by their youth workers, asked to meet with representatives from the police station to report that they were being repeatedly stopped for no apparent reason, and often subjected to verbal, physical and occasionally sexual violence. They were granted a meeting with the police station’s Prevention and Communications Unit (MPC), a unit made up of two police officers whose role is to *“interface with the public”* and carry out prevention initiatives, including presentations in schools on road safety, high-risk behaviour and drugs. No members or heads of the field units who are in daily contact with young people were

present. At the IGPN hearing, the MPC officer explained that in response to the young people’s testimonies, he had explained why the police intervened repeatedly: *“I replied clearly that residents had a right to peace and quiet and that any disturbance of the peace at night justified police intervention, even on several occasions.”*

Thus, while complaints about juvenile anti-social behaviour are managed as a public order issue and systematically trigger an operational response, regardless of the reliability of the complaint, grievances about police action delegitimised, without any attempt to assess reliability or whether disciplinary or legal action should be taken, and are managed as a communications problem.

TOWN HALL: AMPLIFYING CERTAIN GRIEVANCES AND MINIMISING OTHERS

The arrondissement town hall played an important role in implementing the policy of evictions, amplifying the grievances of residents inconvenienced by youth groups and minimising the concerns of those who advocate a more inclusive public space.

The documents included in the investigation file show that, when it received letters from residents complaining of incivilities or minor disturbances, the town hall forwarded them to the police station, along with specific requests for action and a deadline by which the police station had to send a written response to the town hall. This enabled local councillors⁶⁴ to respond to requests from constituents and show that they were taking action. For example, in a letter replying to a complaint from a resident about the noise caused by young people in a local square, the elected representative states that he *“does not have direct authority over the police”* but nevertheless indicates that he had asked the central police commissioner *“that his departments step up their vigilance in the neighbourhoods”* and that he had invited him to give *“firm instructions to his staff so that any night-time disturbance observed in the*

area is systematically fined, including when minors are involved". He also asked the police to summon the manager of a grocery shop *"to remind him of his obligations to ensure public order and peace and quiet in the vicinity of his business"*. Finally, he asked the Prefect to issue an order banning the sale of alcohol after 9pm and its consumption in the square and adjacent streets from 2pm.

Conversely, when other residents alerted the town hall to abusive or violent police action against these same young people, the municipal authorities played down these complaints and made no request to the police station. In 2013 and 2014, young local residents, accompanied by specialist youth workers, were granted meetings with a number of municipal councillors responsible for youth, safety and prevention. Two elected representatives interviewed by the IGPN explained that they had listened to the young people, who told them about what they considered to be serious incidents (*"they said they were threatened, intimidated and insulted [racial slurs]. They also said that they had been beaten up for no reason and that they had been stopped for an ID check for no reason. They also said officers looked at their mobile phones, which were also thrown on the ground"*). Nevertheless, they said that they had told them that the police action was surely justified (*"I told them they were doing their job and that the police were probably responding to requests from local residents and the public prosecutor"*). Contrary to the town hall's response to complaints about juvenile anti-social behaviour, when confronted with the young men targeted by the police, the elected representative explained that as the town hall had no hierarchical power over the police, *"it was not my role to lodge complaints on their behalf or to reprimand the police"*.

By their own admission, neither of the two elected representatives took notes at these meetings, reported them in writing to the police station or contacted the young people again afterwards.

We can see here how the town hall can play an important role in the policy of evictions, by relaying and legitimising certain citizens' grievances whilst playing down others, insisting on presumed incompetence.

In short, police practices of evicting certain populations are shaped and legitimised by other institutional actors, who, along with the police, construct the figure of undesirables in the public space - those who, because of their age, gender, economic insecurity and racial profile, "don't belong" there.

5. CONSEQUENCES OF REPEAT FINES AND EVICTIONS

According to many of the respondents, the repeated ID checks and fines to which they are subjected are intended to dissuade or prevent them from using the public spaces in their neighbourhoods. Hichem and Sekou, both aged 19, think that the police are fining them in order to “get them out” of the public square where they meet up with their friends⁶⁵. For Demba and Amadou, the message from the police is clear: they “don’t have the right to be on the streets” or “to stay here”⁶⁶.

Although they have unanimously accepted that the best way of avoiding fines is to stop being in the public space, the young people targeted are not changing their social practices. The study shows that evictions and repeat fines have no effect on the presence of these young people on the streets. Given the vital nature of these outings, their understanding that they have a “right” to use and occupy public spaces like any other person and the apparent normality of their activities (*“it’s like going to a bar”*), young people continue to gather in the streets, parks and squares near their homes, despite repeated police interventions⁶⁷.

However, if the repeated ID checks and fines have no effect on the presence of the young people targeted in public spaces, they do place them in a particularly vulnerable situation.

ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES: EXCESSIVE DEBT AND TAXATION

Given the economic, family and social circumstances of young people who are repeatedly fined, the fines they receive weigh heavily on their available resources. The burden of the fines is measured primarily in terms of what they represent in the lives of these individuals, and increases as their economic resources diminish. The burden represented by these fines is all the greater when they are repeated. It undermines the future of the young people concerned and is experienced as a lasting obstacle in their lives. For Hossine, the fines prevent him from getting out of both the neighbourhood

where he grew up and his social and economic insecurity (*“It’s hard enough for us to get out of the neighbourhood, but they think: “No, we’ll add this as well. You’re going to stay where you are and, at the same time, you’re going to pay”*).

Young people who are repeatedly fined often find themselves unable to pay their fines. The fines are then increased and lead to the implementation of debt recovery procedures by the central government services, which have a long-term impact on the young people concerned.

If a fine is not paid within 45 days, it is increased and passed on to the French Treasury, which is then responsible for recovering the debt owed to the State. To do this, the tax authorities can delegate to a judicial officer (formerly known as a bailiff) the task of seizing the amount of money owed at the debtor’s home. Whilst undertaking research for this study, several respondents explained that they had received letters announcing the imminent visit of a bailiff to the family home.

The authorities can also carry out an “administrative seizure by third party holder” (*saisie administrative à tiers détenteur - SATD*), a procedure that allows them to seize sums owed to them by contacting a third party who may be holding the debtor’s money.

Money owed can thus be deducted directly from the income of people who have been issued with repeat fines when they are in employment: part of the debtor’s salary is then paid to the French Treasury to repay the debt⁶⁸. Lamine, for example, has experienced this first hand. Born in France to Malian parents who both work as cleaners, he remained in full-time education until the end of secondary school and has been working as a garbage collector for Paris City Council since February 2020. He owes €12,900 in fines and has part of his salary withheld at source every month⁶⁹. When the debtor is not in paid employment, the tax authorities may seize certain social benefits, such as unemployment benefit or

sickness benefit payments⁷⁰. Abdel, aged 24, explains that part of his back-to-work allowance was deducted to pay back some of his fines⁷¹.

Money owed to the State may also be deducted by the public accountant directly from the bank account(s) of the debtors. The public finance department then sends an SATD notice to the identified bank and informs the person concerned that a seizure order has been issued. In this case, access to the debtor's bank account is frozen for a fortnight and the bank is ordered to pay the sum requested to the Treasury, provided that funds are available in the account⁷². Issa explains, for example, that the grant he had been paid for his school year in 2020-2021 (€460)⁷³ was deducted from his account. Similarly, Timéo had €750 deducted from his account after an SATD measure concerning two fines⁷⁴, as did Abdul, who had €670 euros deducted⁷⁵. Some banks also charge a fee each time an SATD procedure is initiated. The fee may not exceed 10% of the amount due, up to a maximum of €100. Abdul and Issa were charged €20 and €100 respectively in bank charges following SATD notices.

FLYING UNDER THE RADAR OF THE STATE

In turn, these collection procedures give rise to avoidance practices in which people who are repeatedly fined try to elude the tax authorities by making themselves invisible to the State, by "flying under the radar".

One strategy is to disappear from the banking system. Faced with the risk of having debts forcibly collected, many respondents avoid opening or maintaining a bank account in their own name. Some explain that they have turned to alternative banking systems such as opening a *Compte-Nickel* (a payment account that can be opened at certain stores that are members of the "Compte-Nickel" network) or a foreign neo-bank such as *Revolut* or *N-26*. These online banks, which appeared in the 2010s, were at one time considered out of reach for the French tax authorities⁷⁶.

Others have kept a bank account in their name in France, but do not deposit any money in it. Moussa, Medhi and Hichem explain, for example, that they withdraw their entire salary in cash every month as soon as it is paid by their employer. Sadibou, who lives with his 20-year-old sister and his sick, unemployed mother, works as a care assistant, earning between €1,000 and €1,200 net per month. He also explains that he withdraws his entire salary each month so that he can use it to support his family⁷⁷.

These countermeasures require those concerned to be constantly vigilant. David explains, for example, that he has set up an alert on his bank's mobile application and says that he makes sure that there is *"never more than ten euros in [his] account for more than an hour"*: he withdraws the amount of his salary or the social security benefits he receives almost instantly, or transfers it into his mother's account, which requires him to carry out sometimes complex administrative manoeuvres. To enable his car insurance to be debited monthly, he has arranged with his father that on the 10th of each month (the day the insurance is debited), his father will transfer the amount due from his bank account, which David will then repay in cash. Similarly, to pay his school fees, he asked a family member with the same name as him to pay by cheque, and then reimbursed him in cash⁷⁸.

A second strategy is to avoid declared work.

Being heavily in debt and having their income from work deducted by the tax authorities for fines they deem to be unfair discourages some of those who are repeatedly fined from taking steps to integrate and work. Abdul, for example, has had a difficult experience of this. At 26 years old, he estimates that he owes between €5,000 and €8,000 in fines.

Diagnosed with a serious illness in 2020, he returned to paid employment in October 2022, after more than two years out of work. In his first month of work, he was deducted the sum of €700 – half his salary – and explains that this dissuaded him from keeping his job (*“If I kill myself so that they can take €700 from me every month, I might as well stay on RSA (active solidarity income)”*)⁷⁹.

Several respondents expressed the feeling of having to work “for nothing” or “as a volunteer”, simply to pay their fines. For example, Amadou’s debt reached €32,000, which equates to more than 22 months’ full-time salary at the minimum wage, or almost two years’ work devoted solely to paying the fines. Abdel, who at the age of 24 owes €15,000 in fines, reckons that he would have to pay a year’s salary to settle the money he owes⁸⁰.

In light of these risks, many people with repeat fines prefer to work in jobs paid off the books and engage in illegal employment. Abdel, for example, works full-time as a delivery driver for the equivalent of the minimum wage and explains that he only half of his salary is paid through official accounts and the other half is paid cash in hand. By hampering their chances of finding work, fines ultimately increase the risk of irregular practices by driving young people to work illegally.

In the most extreme cases, the need to find the resources to pay off the fines owed and the slim hope of being able to do so with the salaries they can earn given their low level of qualifications encourage some of those concerned to **consider taking part in criminal acts**. Abdel (24), for example, says he might “do something stupid” to pay off his €15,000 in fines owed. Other respondents pointed out that there is great temptation to turn to illegal acts as a way of paying off fines more quickly.

CONSEQUENCES FOR RELATIONS WITH THE POLICE

For the young people concerned, the fines they receive are associated with a **strong sense of injustice**. In addition to their recurrence, which is frequently experienced as a form of harassment, injustice is very often expressed when recounting the unfounded issuing of fines. Several young people explain that they are regularly punished for non-existent offences. They refer to a series of “phony fines”, “bogus fines”, “made-up fines” or “unfounded fines”. Some people feel that they have been punished in the absence of proof that they committed an offence, simply because the place where they were found was dirty. Others complain that offences are treated differently depending on who commits them: at the same volume, the noise generated by these young men is far less tolerated than by others and is systematically perceived as a “disturbance”.

Almost all the interviews expressed a feeling of injustice: injustice in the sense of an absence of justice (impossible to take the matter to court or useless to invoke the law, see *below*) and in the sense that they consistently perceived the police as feeling above the law and as abusing their powers arbitrarily. This sense of injustice is also experienced in being constantly reduced to the inferior status of “undesirable” in the public space. Feeling that they were mostly targeted on the basis of ethnicity, the people interviewed expressed a strong sense of exclusion, often compounded by a sense of police impunity. The economic, fiscal and legal impact of the large number of fines they receive confirms and exacerbates this perception of injustice.

As a result, the majority of respondents said that **they did not trust the police** and that they would not call the police if they were the victim of a crime, preferring in many cases to settle the dispute themselves. Hichem, Kemyl and Sadibou explained that if they were faced with a problem, they would not call the police, preferring to take the law into their own hands⁸¹.

A large proportion of respondents said that they had learnt to **run away from police officers**⁸² over time, as a result of their experience of being stopped and fined. According to some respondents, the practice of issuing repeat fines accentuates the need to keep away from the police. Hichem, for example, explains that, for fear of being fined, he stays "on the lookout" and tries as far as possible to keep out sight of police officers (*"I'll need to lie low if I don't wanna get fined"*). After a bad experience, Kemyll said that he systematically started running whenever he saw police officers during the March 2020 lockdown, even though he had a travel justification form (*"around here, they don't talk, they don't try to find out if everything's in order.. It's better to try to and get away so you don't get fined than to stay there and get fined"*).

In some cases, the police respond to these attempts to flee by giving chase, which poses two risks for the young people: that of being involved in an accident while trying to get away and that of being knocked about if the police catch up with them. In the 12th arrondissement, there are reports of these dangerous chases. For example, during an intervention on a Monday in April 2015 at 9.30pm, police officers described chasing a young man they did not know but who was running away from them. They continued, even though he was *"taking risks by crossing the road between vehicles"* on several occasions. A police officer noted that he used tear gas once he had caught up with the young man, before tackling and holding him on the ground, handcuffing him and frisking him.

Generally speaking, the use of ID checks/evictions and repeat fines aggravate tensions between the young people targeted and police officers, and create **conditions conducive to police harassment**. Because they target people in the places where they live, work or study, evictions are bound to be repeated: the people targeted have no choice but to return to the places from which they are regularly moved on. This targeting is clear

from the register of police reports from the 12th arrondissement of Paris, where the same people are repeatedly checked and dispersed, sometimes several times a day. In several summaries of interventions, police officers note that they check the same *"gang of young individuals hanging around all day on esplanade [X] and the surrounding areas"* and indicate that they are called *"on a daily basis for this band in order to move them on from all the places where they decide to hang out (squat)"*.

These repeated interactions between the same police officers and the same young men generate what Marwan Mohammed calls a "perverse familiarity", resulting in a low-intensity conflict involving exchanges of glances and provocations⁸³. The criminal complaint alleges a number of illegal acts committed by police officers, who were assigned to "evict undesirables": verbal attacks (including racist insults uttered publicly on social media), physical violence (blows, chokeholds and tear gas sprayed in the face) and, in some cases, sexual violence or inappropriate touching during frisk searches. Some of these acts have been the subject of judicial convictions, in particular the acts of unlawful violence and detention outside the legal framework⁸⁴. Although the courts did not find that sexual violence had been committed due to insufficient evidence, several police officers admitted during their hearings that security searches, which were systematic for this group, could be accompanied by frisk of private parts "above the clothes" (*"My colleagues may sometimes touch their testicles through their clothes when they searched the groin area"; "I may sometimes perform searches on the crotch"*).

In short, while repeat fines do not actually remove the people targeted from public spaces, it does have serious financial consequences, leading them to hide from the State and the tax authorities.

Moreover, these practices tend to favour the development of tensions with police officers and encourage situations that expose them to police harassment.

6. BREAKING THE DEADLOCK?

APPEAL PROCESSES THAT REMAIN INEFFECTIVE

IN PRACTICE

One finding emerges from our research: while respondents express a sense of injustice and perceive police actions as forms of illegality, in practice, taking their case to court proves extremely difficult, if not impossible.

CHALLENGING VIOLENCE AND DISCRIMINATION: AN UPHILL BATTLE

Challenging discriminatory identity checks and evictions through the courts often presents complainants with a huge uphill battle and the risk of reprisals. As other studies have shown, many complaints are not seriously investigated and cases are dropped⁸⁵. In the case of the 12th arrondissement in Paris, the young men targeted succeeded in obtaining an investigation thanks to the efforts of various parties. This included a large number of stakeholders and resources, through which a system for collecting evidence of unlawful police acts (witness statements, videos, medical certificates) was set up. This enabled 18 complainants to file complaints about 44 different incidents that occurred over a three-year period. The complaint, which received extensive media coverage, led to a full-scale investigation.

These efforts led to two high-profile trials that put the issue of police harassment of young men of colour on the agenda. However, while the civil proceedings resulted in the State being found guilty of a series of serious offences, the police officers involved were acquitted by the Court of Appeal in the criminal proceedings. They then lodged a

complaint against the complainants for false allegations, a procedure which resulted in the conviction of four complainants in 2022 (an appeal against this conviction is pending at the time of writing).

APPEALING AGAINST FINES: COMPLEX AND OPAQUE PROCEDURES

With regard to the repeat fines, the veracity or legality of which they often dispute, many of the respondents have encountered major difficulties in taking their case to court. Created from the outset as a means of relieving the courts of mass litigation and preventing them from becoming overloaded, the fixed penalty fine system was designed to restrict access to the courts and de facto complicate – if not render impossible – any form of legal remedy⁸⁶.

In practice, an appeal can be lodged in one of two ways: through an online complaints platform on the website of the French National Agency for Information Systems Security (ANTAI), or by a registered letter with acknowledgement of receipt. On the surface, the process seems simple, but in practice, the rest of the procedure is out of the control of the litigant, for whom it remains difficult to understand and unclear, as the Defender of Rights has already noted⁸⁷.

Once this has been done, an appeal (“request for an exemption”) is examined by a member of the public prosecutor’s office (OMP), a police officer acting under the authority of the public prosecutor. In theory, the latter can only rule on the admissibility of the appeal and has only three options: reject the appeal if it does not comply with the formal rules imposed⁸⁸ (absence of a statement of reasons, appeal made after the deadline, appeal not accompanied by the original fixed penalty notice, documents sent by ordinary post), cancel the fine, or forward the application to the police court if it complies with all the formalities imposed. In practice, however, officers of the public prosecutor’s office tend to exceed their

powers and take it upon themselves to rule on the merits of applications, rejecting en masse the proceedings brought by litigants against fixed penalty fines. Condemned by the highest authorities, rulings have been made against these illegal practices on several occasions by the Court of Cassation and the European Court of Human Rights⁸⁹. To all intents and purposes, however, these practices continue⁹⁰. Although individuals may in such cases bring proceedings against the prosecuting authority, the specific nature and complexity of such an appeal make it highly unlikely.

While the complexity of these remedies hinders access to the law for adults, it is even more the case for minors, who rarely have the resources to find out about their rights and take action against illegal fines. Official statistics confirm the rare occasions on which this first stage is successful. According to the Court of Audits, in 2016, less than 3% of appeals against fixed penalty fines resulted in the matter being referred to the police court. On the contrary, 90% of appeals were declared inadmissible by the public prosecutor's office and resulted in a decision to convert the initial fine into an increased fixed penalty fine, without the appeal being referred to the judge⁹¹.

In the rare cases where the public prosecutor's office refers the case to the magistrate, the magistrate can a decision in the form of a penal order without the accused having the opportunity to explain his or her case in a public hearing. The person deprived of a trial can then contest this decision and ask to be heard by lodging an "opposition to a criminal order". However, this procedure requires the prejudiced appellant to undertake additional procedures, which are all the more complex as they are subject to their own formalities, distinct from those of the "request for an exemption".

COSTLY PROCEDURES

The majority of respondents said that the procedure for appealing against fines was cumbersome and complex, something they felt acted as a strong deterrent. First of all, embarking on this path requires a great deal of commitment on the part of those concerned, which is costly in terms of time and energy, and is often seen as excessive in relation to what is at stake. The cost is also financial: accessing the legal system means paying court fees (€31 in the police court and €127 in the criminal court) and, in the case of a fixed penalty notice, a deposit equal to the amount of the fine⁹². There are also lawyer's fees if the person decides to seek the advice of a legal professional. Contesting a fine also means running the risk of having the penalty increased if the judge finds against the offender⁹³. These risks and costs are multiplied as many times as there are fines to be contested, thus increasing the burden on individuals who wish to have their case examined by the courts.

THE PROBATIVE VALUE OF POLICE STATEMENTS AND THE INEQUALITY OF ARMS

When it is envisaged, legal action has little chance of succeeding: in addition to the complexity and cost of these appeal procedures, there is a legal presumption that police statements are true. As regards fines, this difficulty arises from the law itself. For minor offences, a fixed penalty fine is a police notice which, according to the Code of Criminal Procedure, is "admissible proof in court"⁹⁴. The information it contains is therefore considered to be true, unless proven otherwise. The law thus establishes the principle that the penalty notice is presumed to be true, and thus implies a presumption of guilt on the part of the offender, who is obliged to prove the false or erroneous nature of the notice by means of written evidence or witness statements.

Unless there is exceptionally clear evidence, it is extremely difficult for an individual to overturn the charges brought against him or her in a police penalty notice. How can you prove, for example, that you are not responsible for spitting or throwing rubbish on the public highway, if a police penalty notice states that you are? Apart from rare cases in which an alleged offender has formal proof that he was unable to commit the offence of which he or she is accused⁹⁵, proceedings to appeal against a fixed penalty fine have very little chance of success. Demonstrating that an offence has not been committed is all the more difficult for people who have been convicted several times, as the number of times they have already been fined further undermines their credibility. In interviews, respondents expressed a shared feeling that, no matter what they said or did, their words would not be believed in court up against those of police officers.

Despite these obstacles, a number of young people who had been fined took steps to appeal against offences with the help of volunteers or professionals. In rare cases, some people have managed to get a few of their fines cancelled. This was the case for Imarou, whose first name and surname were frequently misspelled on penalty notices, which led to several of them being cancelled⁹⁶.

In the vast majority of cases, however, these proceedings are unsuccessful. Some of the young people fined said that they had never received an explicit response to their appeal, but explained that they had simply received an increased penalty notice, from which they had deduced that their appeal had been rejected.

As a result, many young people who are repeatedly fined feel discouraged by the difficulty of the appeal procedures and the slim hope of seeing them succeed. Given the complexity of these procedures, there is a shared feeling among respondents that everything is done, both in the fixed penalty fine procedure and in identity checks, to dissuade citizens from taking legal action. At a dead end, with no hope of seeing debt that affects their daily lives cancelled, some of them finally resolve to pay the sums demanded by the authorities, even though they believe that they have not committed all the offences of which they are accused or report abuse or discrimination on the part of the officers issuing the fines. At that point, they approach the Treasury to set up a payment schedule, sometimes over a period of many years.

CONCLUSION

This research highlights police practices for removing certain populations considered to be “undesirable” from public spaces in Paris. It looks at two methods of dispersal – eviction stops and repeated fines – when they target young men of colour in socially-diverse neighbourhoods.

It reveals that there is an institutional policy, in several Paris police stations, of “evicting undesirables” from public spaces. Until the mid-2010s, police officers used identity checks and verification procedures on the instructions of their superiors to keep certain groups out of public spaces. From 2017, as the scope of the fixed penalty fine was extended, the practice of repeat fines targeting the same groups for reasons related to their use of public spaces was added, resulting in fine-related debts of up to more than €30,000 for teenagers or young adults.

The study shows that the vast majority of “undesirables” who are removed and repeatedly fined are French teenagers and young men from post-colonial immigrant and working-class backgrounds, who gather in groups in the public spaces of their local neighbourhood. This result confirms and supplements existing work on discriminatory identity checks, and shows that police targeting is not limited to crime control, but also tends to regulate the presence of certain categories of population in urban areas, because they are considered to disturb the peace or public order, regardless of their behaviour.

While the police are at the heart of these dispersal practices, this research shows that they are not the only parties involved. Some local residents, as well as the municipal authorities, contribute to categorising part of the population as “undesirable” on the basis of age, gender, racial profile and economic insecurity. They help to legitimise the idea that these people “don’t belong” in the public spaces of their own neighbourhoods, and can therefore be regularly removed and fined. This demonstrates the importance of placing police practices in context, in order to understand how outside parties can influence their implementation and how these practices can, in turn, legitimise discourses that call for the social exclusion of marginalised populations. They show how abusive police actions are part of a “system” made up of multiple actors who together reproduce and entrench social and racial inequalities.

Evictions and repeat fines have no effect on the presence of the young people targeted in the public space. On the other hand, they have dramatic long-term consequences. Repeat fines have a major and lasting economic impact on people who are already in fragile economic situations, and who are often unable to pay the amounts demanded. The enforced debt collection procedures implemented by the State lead to forms of “avoidance of the system”, which keep those concerned away from the job market and lead them to avoid conventional banks.

These police practices also aggravate the feeling of injustice and mistrust towards the police, and heighten tensions between police officers and their targets, since they require officers to check and fine the same young people on an almost daily basis.

Although they perceive the repeated checks, evictions and repeat fines to which they are subjected as abuses of power and discrimination, few young people are able to assert their rights before the courts. The procedure for contesting fines is complex, opaque and not very effective in practice.

Police notices are admissible proof in court until proven otherwise, which means that the offender is presumed guilty and must prove that the penalty notice is false or misleading. Police officers have extensive powers to carry out identity checks and issue fixed penalty fines. As it is difficult for a judge to review their use, these tools raise questions about the potential for their arbitrary and discriminatory use.

NOTES

¹ James Q. Wilson, *Varieties of Police Behavior: The Management of Law and Order in Eight Communities*, Publications of the Joint Center for Urban Studies (Cambridge, Mass.) London: Harvard University Press, 1976).

² James Q. Wilson, George L. Kelling, *Les vitres cassées*, in *Connaître la police : Grands textes de la recherche anglo-saxonne*, par Jean-Paul Brodeur et Dominique Monjardet (Paris: La Documentation Française, 1982), pp. 233-55.

³ Katherine Beckett, Steve Herbert, Penal Boundaries: Banishment and the Expansion of Punishment, *Law & Social Inquiry*, 2010, 35, no.01: pp. 1-38.

⁴ Aurélie Binet-Grosclaude, Les anti-social behaviour orders en Angleterre et au Pays de Galles: un exemple de dérive des politiques criminelles participatives, *Archives de politique criminelle*, 2010, no. 32: pp. 229-43.

⁵ Fabien Jobard, René Lévy, John Lamberth, et al., *Measuring discrimination based on appearance: an analysis of identity checks in Paris*, *Population* 2012, Vol. 67, no. 3, pp. 423-51. Defender of Rights, *Enquête sur l'accès aux droits, volume I. Relations police / population : le cas des contrôles d'identité*, 2017.

⁶ Collectif Place aux jeunes, blog Échos du 12. *Verbalisation des jeunes habitants : un facteur de fragilisation des foyers modestes*, 9 October 2018.

⁷ Mediapart, «À Argenteuil, des policiers musellent des habitants à coups de procès-verbaux», 10 December 2017.

⁸ *Le Monde*, «À Vienne, dans l'Isère, la tension entre jeunes et police vire au drame», 26 December 2017.

⁹ Auberge des Migrants, Utopia 56, Help Refugees et Refugee Info Bus, «**Le harcèlement policier des bénévoles**», 2018; Amnesty International, «**La solidarité prise pour cible. Criminalisation et harcèlement des personnes qui défendent les droits des migrantes et des réfugiés.e.s dans le nord de la France**», 2019.

¹⁰ 35 respondents live in one of these five neighbourhoods. Four respondents live in other Parisian neighbourhoods. Finally, five respondents live in a suburb of Paris.

¹¹ The Public Finances Directorate General provides people who so wish with a "payment status report", a document summarising all the person's outstanding tax debts and their origin. In Paris, the "Trésorerie de Paris Amendes 2^e division" produces status reports summarising all unpaid increased fixed penalty fines. These status reports indicate the reason, date, time and amount of each fine for an individual.

¹² In the absence of other data, the use of surnames and first names as an indicator of migratory origin is a common approach in social sciences. It was also validated by the Court of Cassation in a discrimination case, where the plaintiff provided evidence that his employer discriminated against employees with non-European sounding names (ruling of 14 December 2022, number 21-19.628).

¹³ Emmanuel Blanchard, *Les "indésirables". Passé et présent d'une catégorie d'action publique*, ed. by GISTI, *Figures de l'étranger. Quelles représentations pour quelles politiques ?* 2013, pp. 16-26; Aurélie Audeval, Indésirable, une catégorie d'action publique internationale, *Cahiers de l'ethnopolé - Migrations, Frontières, Mémoires*, 2019, pp. 9-15.

¹⁴ Article 78-2 al 8 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. For a summary of the legal framework for identity checks in France, see Defender of Rights, «Contrôles d'identité : que dit le droit et comment mettre fin aux contrôles discriminatoires ?» (online).

¹⁵ Fabien Jobard, René Lévy, John Lamberth, et al., Mesurer les discriminations selon l'apparence : une analyse des contrôles d'identité à Paris, *Population*, 2012, Vol. 67, no. 3: pp. 423-51; Defender of Rights, *Enquête sur l'accès aux droits, volume I. Relations police / population : le cas des contrôles d'identité*, 2017.

¹⁶ Jérémie Gauthier, Origines contrôlées, *Sociétés contemporaines*, 2015, No. 97: pp. 101-27; Jacques De Maillard et al., Les logiques professionnelles et politiques du contrôle. Des styles de police différents en France et en Allemagne, *Revue française de science politique*, 2016, 2: 271-93; Laurent Bonelli, *La France a peur : Une histoire sociale de «l'insécurité»* (Paris: La Découverte, 2010).

¹⁷ Court of Cassation, Civil Chamber 1, three rulings of 9 November 2016.

¹⁸ Council of State, Decision no. 454836. The Council did however note that this discrimination cannot be considered "systemic" or "widespread". The Defender of Rights intervened in these and other cases concerning discriminatory identity checks. Decision MDS 2016-132 of 29 April 2016; Decision 2020-102 of 12 May 2020; Decision 2021-195 of 29 October 2021. See also the Court of Audits report « Les contrôles d'identité : une pratique généralisée aux finalités à préciser », December 2023.

¹⁹ Decree-Law of 28 December 1926 concerning the unification of powers in matters of traffic policing and the conservation of public roads, *Journal Officiel* of 30 December 1926, p. 13698 et seq.

²⁰ Aline Daillière, Le policier, juge de la rue. Les amendes forfaitaires ou l'expansion du discrétionnaire, *Revue Délibérée*, 2023, 20, no. 3: pp. 62-67; see also Renée Zaubermann, La répression des infractions routières : le gendarme comme juge, *Sociologie du travail*, 1998, 40, no. 1: pp. 43-64.

²¹ Law no. 2023-22 of 24 January 2023 on the orientation and programming of the Ministry of the Interior (known as the LOPMI) extends the application of the fixed penalty fine procedure to 85 new offences.

²² In its *Framework Decision of 30 May 2023*, the Defender of Rights recommended putting an end to the fixed penalty fine procedure for misdemeanours or minor offences and reverting to a judicial procedure for all misdemeanours in order to respect the rights and equality of all users.

²³ In March 2020, during the first lockdown, the offence of "repeat offence within 15 days" gave rise to the unprecedented creation of a fixed penalty fine for a 5th class offence and was punishable by a fixed penalty fine of €200, increased to €450 in the event of non-payment within the time limit (Decree no. 2020-357 of 28 March 2020 relating to fixed penalty fines for 5th class offences punishing the breach of measures decreed in the event of a serious health threat and the declaration of the state of health emergency).

²⁴ Defender of Rights, *Decision no. 2021-054 of 9 March 2021, no. 2019-090 of 2 April 2019 and no. 2018-077 of 21 February 2018*; See also the decision of the Judicial Court of Paris, 28 October 2020.

²⁵ European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, article 14; Law no. 2008-496 of 27 May 2008 containing various provisions for adaptation to EU law in the field of anti-discrimination, article 1.

²⁶ Emmanuel Blanchard, Les "indésirables". Passé et présent d'une catégorie d'action publique. In GISTI. Figures de l'étranger. Quelles représentations pour quelles politiques ? Aurélie Audeval, « Indésirable, une catégorie d'action publique internationale », *Cahiers de l'ethnopolé - Migrations*, 2019, pp. 9-15.

²⁷ National Delinquency Observatory, Report on criminality in France, 2013.

²⁸ This echoes the findings of the Defender of Rights' survey « *Étude déontologie et relations police / gendarmerie - population : la nécessité d'asseoir une confiance réciproque* », published in 2024, concerning law enforcement officers' perceptions of legal and ethical rules.

²⁹ All the policemen and policewomen quoted are in the masculine gender to preserve their anonymity.

³⁰ IGPN hearing of a police lieutenant.

³¹ IGPN hearing of a police sergeant.

³² IGPN hearing of a police sergeant.

³³ IGPN hearing of two police captains.

³⁴ Of these 18 fines, nine relate to health restrictions imposed from 17 March 2020 in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

³⁵ Interview with Hichem (19 years old).

³⁶ Aline Daillière, *La justice dans la rue. Du pouvoir contraventionnel des policiers*, Master 2 thesis in Political Science, Université de Versailles-Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines, 2019.

³⁷ For the purposes of this calculation, we removed from the database the respondent Aliou, whose payment status report did not contain a detailed record of the reasons for the fines, and the respondent Jabari, whose fines fell outside the period of Covid-related health restrictions (2023).

³⁸ According to the French Ministry of the Interior, the police recorded 65 "Covid" offences per 1,000 inhabitants in the Paris urban area in March 2020 and July 2022. In Paris, the rate was 114 offences per 1,000 inhabitants (Source: Ministerial statistics department for Internal Security, *Interstat no. 45, November 2024*).

³⁹ Abdul, 26 years old. Estimates that he owes between €5,000 and €8,000 in fines.

⁴⁰ Some elements of the investigation file suggest that homeless people were also sometimes considered undesirable and moved on, but we have too little data on this category in the police records to be able to make a detailed analysis.

⁴¹ IGPN hearing of a law enforcement officer.

⁴² IGPN hearing of a police commissioner.

⁴³ IGPN hearing of a law enforcement officer.

⁴⁴ Patrick Dubechot, La prévention spécialisée et les filles : une attention qui s'amplifie, une représentation de leurs problèmes qui perdure, *Vie sociale et traitements*, 2009, 103 (3), pp. 90-97.

⁴⁵ See, for example : Fabien Jobard et al., Mesurer les discriminations selon l'apparence : une analyse des contrôles d'identité à Paris, *Population*, 2012, Vol. 67 (3), pp. 423-451; Nicolas Jounin et al., Le faciès du contrôle Contrôles d'identité, apparence et modes de vie des étudiant(e)s en Île-de-France. *Déviance et Société*, 2015, Vol. 39 (1), pp. 3-29; Sophie Peaucellier et al., Les contrôles d'identité et les jeunes Parisiens. Une exploitation du volet parisien de l'enquête Escapad 2010, *Questions Pénales*, 2016, no XXIX.2 h 7; Defender of Rights, Enquête sur l'accès aux droits - volume I - Relations police / population; Mathilde Darley, Jérémie Gauthier, Une virilité interpellée? En quête de genre au commissariat, *Genèses*, 2014, no. 97 (4), pp. 67-86.

⁴⁶ As in the investigation into the trial in the 12th arrondissement presented above, we used the *Namsor* application and the first and last names of the people fined as a proxy to surmise their gender and migratory origin.

⁴⁷ Haroun, 18 years old. Estimates that he owes €6,000 in fines.

⁴⁸ Average calculated based on a sample of 1,174 fines where the age of the offender was known.

⁴⁹ Haroun, 18 years old. Estimates that he owes €6,000 in fines.

⁵⁰ Neighbourhoods are anonymised.

⁵¹ In the case of Amadou, no address was noted on the fine notice on 16 occasions. This 69% rate is therefore a minimum.

⁵² "Driving a motor vehicle equipped or adorned with a protruding, sharp or pointed external element" (NATINF: 22 617) is punishable under article R 317-23 of the Highway Code.

⁵³ Sabah, 17 years old. Owes €2,600 in fines; Sadibou, 19 years old. Owes €1,200 in fines.

⁵⁴ Azrane, 27 years old. Estimates that he owes €1,200 in fines.

⁵⁵ David, 25 years old. Owes €7,100 in fines.

⁵⁶ Fabien Jobard et al., Mesurer les discriminations selon l'apparence, *Population*, 2012, Vol. 67 (3), pp. 423-451; Nicolas JOUNIN et al., Le faciès du contrôle, *Déviance et Société*, 2015, Vol. 39 (1), pp. 3-29; Sophie Peaucellier et al., Les contrôles d'identité et les jeunes Parisiens. Une exploitation du volet parisien de l'enquête Escapad 2010, *Questions Pénales*. CESDIP, 2016, no XXIX.2 h 7

⁵⁷ Sofiane, 22 years old. Owes €32,500 in fines.

⁵⁸ Sadibou, 19 years old. Owes €1,200 in fines.

⁵⁹ Yanis, 17 years old. Estimates that he owes €10,000 in fines.

⁶⁰ Assane, 16 years old. Estimates that he owes €4,000 in fines.

⁶¹ IGPN hearings of senior officers from the police station.

⁶² All the residents mentioned are referred to in the masculine gender to preserve their anonymity.

⁶³ This terminology ("African") reflects the terminology used in the police force.

⁶⁴ All local councillors are listed in the masculine form, to preserve their anonymity.

⁶⁵ Hichem and Sekou, both aged 19. Hichem estimates the total amount of his fines at €7,000. Amount owed in fines unknown for Sekou.

⁶⁶ Amadou, 17 years old. Owes €16,000 in fines; Demba, aged 21. Estimates that he owes €600 in fines.

⁶⁷ On the importance of access to leisure, sport and public spaces for children, see in particular the report by the Defender of Rights, *«Le droit des enfants aux loisirs, au sport et à la culture»*, November 2023, 93 pages; Report by the French High Council for Families, Children and the Elderly (HCFA), *«Quelle place pour les enfants dans les espaces publics et la nature?»*, October 2024, 254 pages, p. 41 et seq.

⁶⁸ However, the sum paid to the employee cannot be less than the "account balance protected from seizure", which is the equivalent of the amount of the active solidarity income (RSA).

⁶⁹ Lamine, 24 years old. Owes €12,900 in fines.

⁷⁰ Voluntary redundancy payments, retirement pensions, surviving spouses' pensions, disability pensions and solidarity allowances for the elderly may also be seized. However, some forms of income cannot be seized. This is the case, for example, with the disabled adults' allowance (AAH), redundancy payments or severance pay, the specific solidarity allowance (ASS), the employment allowance and the active solidarity income (RSA).

⁷¹ Abdel, 24 years old. Owes €15,000 in fines.

⁷² After seizure, the sum available in the account cannot be less than the amount of the "account balance privileged from seizure" (equivalent to the amount of the RSA).

⁷³ Issa, 21 years old. Owes €1,200 in fines.

⁷⁴ Timéo, 18 years old. Amount of fines owed unknown.

⁷⁵ Abdul, 26 years old. Estimates that he estimates that he owes between €5,000 and €8,000 in fines.

⁷⁶ In reality, these banks cooperate with the French tax authorities, which have the power to order the seizure of accounts held by these banks. When an SATD notice is issued, the French tax authorities must obtain the approval of a French judge, who then contacts a judge in the country concerned to freeze and seize the funds. The procedure, which has recently been simplified, can now be completed in just a few days.

⁷⁷ Sadibou, 19 years old. Owes €1,200 in fines.

⁷⁸ David, 25 years old. Owes €7,100 in fines.

⁷⁹ Abdul, 26 years old. Estimates that he estimates that he owes between €5,000 and €8,000 in fines.

⁸⁰ Abdel, 24 years old. Owes €15,000 in fines.

⁸¹ Jérémie Gauthier, Marion Guenot, *Solliciter les forces de l'ordre : évolutions et inégalités relatives à l'accès au service public policier*, *Éclairages*, 2025.

⁸² This flight response has been the subject of a number of sociological studies. See Alice Goffmann, *On the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014); Kamel Boukir, *Le politique au bout de la matraque. Fuir la police, obéir, résister : entre déviance et citoyenneté*, *Politix* 2019/1, no. 125: pp. 135-59.

⁸³ Marwan Mohammed, Laurent Mucchielli, *La police dans les « quartiers sensibles » : un profond malaise, dans Quand les banlieues brûlent... Retour sur les émeutes de novembre 2005*, *Sur le vif* (Paris: La Découverte, 2007), p. 107.

⁸⁴ The criminal justice system convicted three police officers of aggravated assault at the initial trial, but the Court of Appeal subsequently acquitted the defendants. The civil courts found the State guilty of serious misconduct for five acts of illegitimate and/or disproportionate violence, and nine acts of detention in police premises outside the framework provided by law.

⁸⁵ Amnesty International, *France : des policiers au-dessus des lois*, Amnesty International Publications, 2009; ACAT, *L'ordre et la force : enquête sur l'usage de la force par les représentants de la loi en France*, 2016; Ivan Du Roy, Ludovic Simbille, *Décès suite à une intervention policière : les deux-tiers des affaires ne débouchent sur aucun procès*, *Basta!*, 16 July 2020.

⁸⁶ Aline Daillière, *L'amende forfaitaire, arme du (non-) droit*, *Champ pénal*, 2022, no. 26.

⁸⁷ With regard to minor offences and misdemeanours, see the reports of the Defender of Rights on traffic fines: *Amendes et circulation routière, état des lieux des recommandations du Défenseur des droits*, July 2016; *Décision 12-R003 of 12 June 2012 and Rapport sur les suites réservées à la décision 12-R003 du 12 juin 2012*. *Framework Decision no. 2023-030 of 30 May 2023* points out the specific difficulties associated with the procedure for appealing against fixed penalty notices (AFD) and recommends a series of legislative amendments.

⁸⁸ Article 530-1 of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

⁸⁹ Jean-Paul Cere, *La procédure de l'amende forfaitaire et le droit d'accès à un tribunal*, *Recueil Dalloz*, n° 39 (14 November 2002): 2,968; Defender of Rights, *Décision 12-R003 du 12 juin 2012 and Rapport sur les suites réservées à la décision 12-R003 du 12 juin 2012*.

⁹⁰ Xavier Anonin, *La spécialité contraventionnelle en matière pénale*, Doctoral thesis, law, Université Aix-Marseille, 2018.

⁹¹ Court of Audits, *La gestion des amendes de circulation: une dématérialisation achevée, des insuffisances à surmonter*, Annual Public Report, February 2018, p. 174.

⁹² Article 495-20 of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

⁹³ In the event of a conviction, the judge may not impose a fine for an amount less than the amount of the contested fine (article 530-1 of the Code of Criminal Procedure for misdemeanour fines; article 495-21 of the Code of Criminal Procedure for criminal fines). In criminal law, legal terms ("quantums") apply to fines and sentences. In the case of drug use, for example, if guilt is confirmed by the criminal court, a sentence of up to one year's imprisonment and a €3,750 fine may be imposed (article L.3421-1 of the Public Health Code).

⁹⁴ Article 537 of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

⁹⁵ For example, a volunteer from a non-profit organisation cites the case of a young person who, having been fined for not having a travel justification statement in Paris during lockdown, was able to prove that he was on a course in the south of France at the time of the incident by presenting a certificate of attendance provided by the management of his training centre.

⁹⁶ Imarou, 20 years old. Amount of fines owed unknown.

As part of its remit set out in the *loi organique* [framework law] of 29 March 2011, the Defender of Rights supports studies and research related to its various areas of competence:

- Defence and promotion the rights of users of public services;
- Defence and promotion of the rights of the child;
- Anti-discrimination and promotion of equality;
- Ensuring compliance with professional ethics by persons exercising security activities;
- Guidance and protection for whistleblowers.

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