



Counting to counter gender-based violence: Improving the collection of disaggregated administrative data

Understanding gender-based violence

Systemic discrimination, **unbalanced power relations**, harmful norms and stereotypes fuel the perpetration of gender-based violence (GBV). In the face of one of the most widespread human rights violations worldwide, **women and girls** remain the most exposed.

Addressing GBV and ensuring support and protection for victims require adopting **adequate policies and measures**, and monitoring and assessing their effective implementation. Accurate and possibly comparable EU-wide data can allow policymakers to understand the issue and put in place appropriate evidence-based responses.

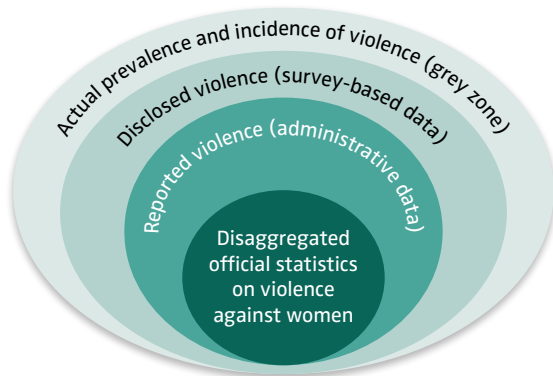
Under-reporting of violence against women

Various reasons, such as fear of retaliation, stigma and shame associated with being a victim, distrust in the legal system, possible economic dependence and lack of access to support services, all contribute to the under-reporting of violence. Therefore, violence against women remains paradoxically a **hidden yet pervasive issue**.

According to a recent population survey, in the EU **one in three women (30.7 %)** have experienced physical violence or threats and/or sexual violence over their lifetime, by any perpetrator. 63.7 % of them shared the episode with a friend or a close person, 20.5 % contacted a healthcare or social service, and **only 13.9 % reported the incident to the police** ([EU Gender-based Violence Survey: Key results](#)).

However, **low reporting rates** are not the only element contributing to masking the actual prevalence of GBV. In fact, even when women decide to report, their experiences are often made **invisible once again** by non-disaggregated data (e.g. statistics that do not distinguish the sex of the victim and/or perpetrator, or their relationship; Figure 1).

Figure 1 | Relationship between actual prevalence of violence against women and various data collection tools



Source: European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE).

Failure to recognise the gendered nature of violence in administrative data hampers the implementation of **effective policies** to address the issue, allocation of sufficient resources, provision of proper risk assessments and adoption of tailored preventive actions.

Filling the gaps in administrative data collection

To support police and justice sectors in collecting national-level administrative data on intimate partner violence (IPV) and domestic violence (DV), rape and femicide across the EU, and gather statistics on victims, offences, forms of violence and perpetrators, EIGE has developed **13 indicators**. A new data collection exercise was launched in 2023–2024; the results confirm not only the importance of data availability, but especially the **need for their disaggregation**.

Administrative data means information gathered by institutions during their routine operations. For instance, they are created when people interact with institutions in the police, justice and health sectors, and with support services.

During this latest administrative data collection exercise, **26 out of 27** EU Member States were able to provide data on IPV and DV. Yet not all of them can share properly disaggregated statistics when indicators ask for them, meaning that women’s experiences of violence – **even when reported** – are not fully captured.

In the EU, administrative data on GBV often do not differentiate between these two forms of violence, and **data on IPV become hidden within DV**. As a result, institutions in the police and justice sectors rarely have data available on violence between intimate partners.

Both types of violence can manifest in the forms of **physical, psychological, sexual and economic** violence ⁽¹⁾.

Administrative data specifically on IPV are important for understanding the **incidence and impact of GBV and the response** to it. They offer valuable insights into the nature of IPV and its overlap with other forms of violence against women. This information is crucial for policymakers to develop effective strategies.

Making women victims of violence visible

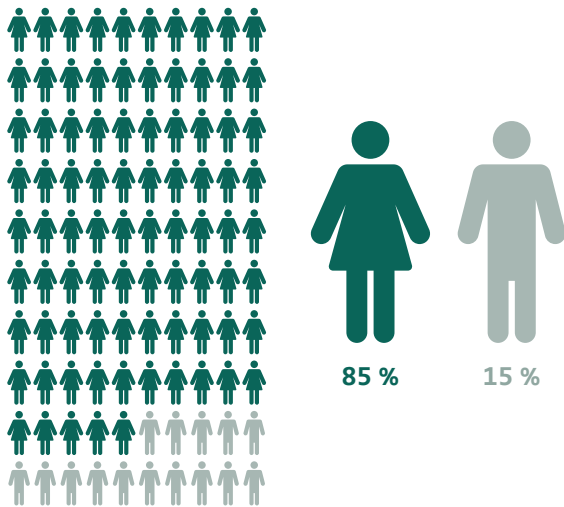
Most Member States collect data on victims of violence ⁽²⁾. However, only **sex-disaggregated data** can evidence the gendered element behind such forms of violence, which **disproportionately affect women and girls**. In 2022, for instance, **12 Member States** ⁽³⁾ recorded in total more than **500 000 victims** of IPV. Based on sex-disaggregated data, it is possible to disclose that on average **women represent 85 %** of all victims of IPV (Figure 2).

⁽¹⁾ Read more information about different forms of violence at European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), ‘Forms of violence’, EIGE website, accessed 20 December 2024, <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-based-violence/what-is-gender-based-violence/forms-of-violence>.

⁽²⁾ Twenty-one out of 27 Member States collect data on victims of violence. These countries are Bulgaria, Czechia, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Greece, Spain, France, Croatia, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia and Finland.

⁽³⁾ Twelve Member States shared data on female and total victims of IPV in 2022: Czechia, Germany, Ireland, Spain, France, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Portugal, Slovenia and Finland. For France, data refer to 2021.

Figure 2 | Sex-disaggregated average share of IPV victims recorded by police in 2022 (for 12 Member States)



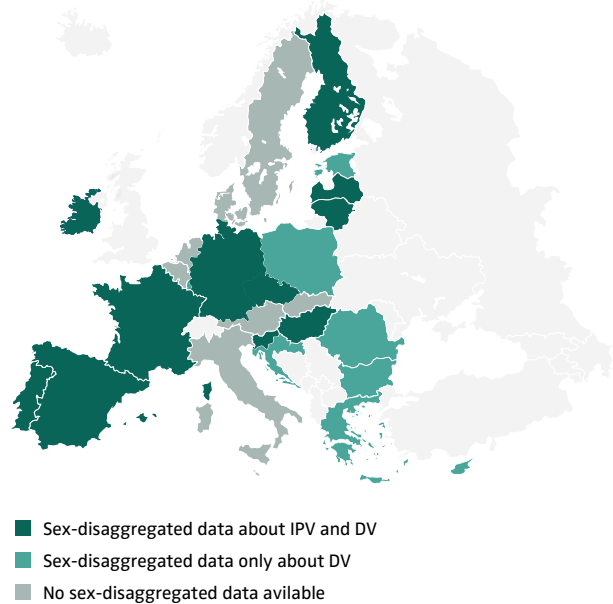
Source: EIGE.

Further disaggregation of data, for example by migrant background, age, disability and/or sexual orientation, would provide further evidence on **intersecting vulnerabilities** ⁽⁴⁾ of women victims of violence.

Recognising the proximity component

Once it has been established that women represent most GBV victims, significant information can be grasped from data disaggregated by their **relationship with the perpetrator and the latter's sex** (Figure 3) ⁽⁵⁾.

Figure 3 | Member States that shared sex-disaggregated data related to the annual number of victims of IPV and DV, as recorded by police



Source: EIGE.

Not all countries shared data disaggregated by victim–perpetrator relationship; however, from the data that were shared, it is clear that the **closer the relationship**, the higher the probability that women will be subjected to male violence. Looking at Member States able to provide sex-disaggregated data, women amount to 85 % of victims of IPV (12 Member States), 76 % of victims of DV (20 Member States) ⁽⁶⁾ and 47 % of victims of any perpetrators (13 Member States) ⁽⁷⁾ (Figure 4).

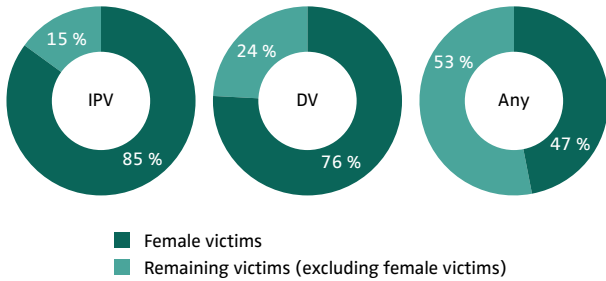
⁽⁴⁾ EIGE (2024), *Quality considerations for EIGE's Gender Statistics Database (2nd edition): Evolving trends in producing gender equality data and intersectional perspectives*, EIGE, Vilnius.

⁽⁵⁾ Roughly a third of Member States shared data on male perpetrators of IPV or DV recorded by police for crimes against women. Most countries either shared data relating to male perpetrators against total victims (both female and male) or shared no data at all about gender in these forms of violence.

⁽⁶⁾ These countries are Bulgaria, Czechia, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Greece, Spain, France, Croatia, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia and Finland.

⁽⁷⁾ Twelve Member States shared data on female and total victims in any relationship in 2022: Czechia, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Spain, Croatia, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Hungary, Slovenia and Finland. For France, data refer to 2021.

Figure 4 | Average percentages of female and other victims of violence by intimate partner, domestic and any perpetrator, as recorded by the police in Member States that shared sex-disaggregated data for 2022



Source: EIGE.

Drawing attention to the **context** in which violence is committed can allow policymakers to put effective measures in place and to identify patterns of support seeking and gaps in services. Further, gathering the sex of both victims and perpetrators can help to identify those **most at risk** of experiencing violence and those **most likely to commit** it.

Measuring the spillover of violence

One of the challenges in collecting accurate and comparable administrative data is related to the way in which Member States **count victims, offences and perpetrators** of violence. Even if not commonly used by countries in this exercise, the principal offence rule may be applied, recording only the most serious crime in cases with multiple offences ⁽⁸⁾.

In the EU, **31.8 % of women** have experienced physical violence or threats and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime. For most of them, this involved **repeated incidents** of violence (14.6 %), while for 3.5 % it was a single incident ([EU Gender-based Violence Survey: Key results](#)).

This can affect the recording of violence against women by underestimating its true extent, emphasising only the seriousness of physical violence and hiding the fact that many women experience violence as a **repeated, cumulative phenomenon**, not an isolated one.

Properly counting victims and perpetrators and recording the related offences has a crucial impact when it comes to figuring out the **scale of violence** against women and its spillover effect. An example is provided in Figure 5, where the data showcase how one perpetrator may be responsible for harming multiple victims and committing various offences.

Figure 5 | Sex-disaggregated data related to victims, offences and perpetrators of IPV as recorded by the police in Spain for 2022



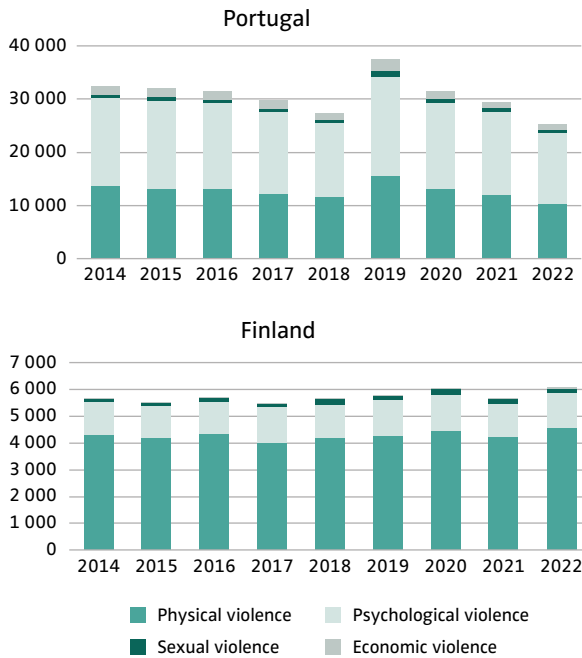
Source: EIGE.

Tailoring prevention and support response

Changes in wider society can impact on the rates of gender-based violence over time. Such changes can occur for a number of reasons (changes in the law, awareness raising campaigns, changing levels of public tolerance of violence and so on). Without disaggregated data Member States face **difficulties in making sense of the impact** of these kind of changes. The annual numbers of female victims of IPV are given for Portugal and Finland in Figure 6.

⁽⁸⁾ The principal offence rule was applied to count the annual number of victims by 8 Member States, of offences by 13 Member States and of perpetrators by 9 Member States.

Figure 6 | Annual numbers of female victims of physical, psychological, sexual and economic violence by an intimate partner, as recorded by the police in Portugal and Finland for 2022



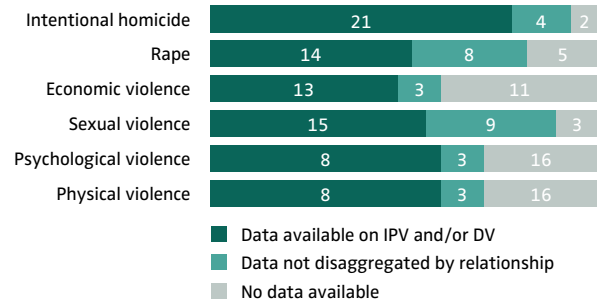
Source: EIGE.

When these kinds of data are collected, they can help gauge the **effectiveness of policies** and interventions in place. In addition, they provide a much more detailed picture of the most urgent measures to put in place when dealing with **prevention, and support and protection** of women, which should be tailored to the spread of specific forms of violence ⁽⁹⁾.

Notably, during this data collection exercise, **most Member States shared data** relating to female victims of different forms of violence, especially rape and intentional homicide.

⁽⁹⁾ As for economic violence, which is one of the main reasons that constrain women’s ability to leave abusive relationships, previous EIGE work identified a general lack of awareness and understanding of the phenomenon and its gendered nature in the EU. Overall, online discourses relating to economic violence are less frequent than discussions about more overt forms of violence. Read more in EIGE, ‘Understanding economic violence against women – The need for harmonised definitions and data in the EU’, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2023, https://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/EIGE_Factsheet_EconomicViolence.pdf.

Figure 7 | Number of Member States sharing data on female victims of different forms of violence disaggregated by type of relationship



Source: EIGE.

Ensuring effective protection of victims

When it comes to implementing tailored responses to violence against women, effective protection in the aftermath of their decision to report is key. At the legal level, the fastest remedy to protect persons at risk of any form of violence is provided by **national and European protection orders**. Through a wide range of measures, national authorities can prohibit, restrain or prescribe certain behaviours by the perpetrator.

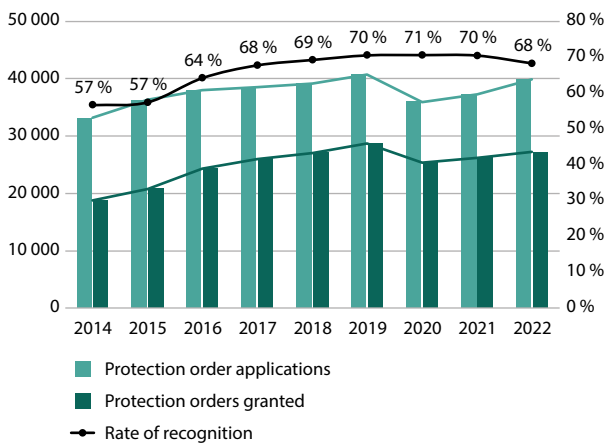
These measures can be prolonged when victims decide to travel or move to another Member State, based on the EU rules on **mutual recognition of protection measures**, among them Directive 2011/99/EU on the European Protection Order, when dealing with criminal matters.

In 2017, [a study carried out by the European Parliament Research Service](#) revealed that in 2010 **over 100 000** women residing in the Union were covered by protection measures related to GBV. Yet, at the time, the study identified **only seven European Protection Orders**.

However, **very few Member States** shared data during this exercise regarding the numbers of protection orders applied for by or granted to women victims of IPV and DV ⁽¹⁰⁾.

An example is provided by Spain, which shared data on protection orders for female victims of male violence in intimate partner relationships (Figure 8).

Figure 8 | Data related to protection orders (applied for and granted) for female victims of male violence in intimate partner relationships, as recorded by the justice sector in Spain



Source: EIGE.

Collecting data on national protection orders allows for a broader analysis and **assessment** of instruments providing for the mutual recognition of these measures across the EU.

Following the journey of perpetrators

To avoid the invisibilisation of women’s experiences of violence and to assess interventions, outcomes and processes involving victims and perpetrators, **dataset linkages among the police and justice sectors** represent a huge opportunity.

- Regarding **victims**, linking datasets can provide for a better understanding of the referral pathway followed by survivors, the gaps and challenges

⁽¹⁰⁾ These countries are Spain, Luxembourg and Finland. (In Luxembourg, data relate to protection orders for victims in cases that include IPV and DV. It is not confirmed whether all victims experienced these forms of violence.)

they may face, and the factors associated with a higher probability of not reporting or reporting multiple experiences of violence.

- Regarding **perpetrators**, structured institutional practices of collecting data on different stages of the justice chain make it possible to analyse prosecution and conviction, grasp insights into recidivism factors and improve risk assessments and monitoring mechanisms.

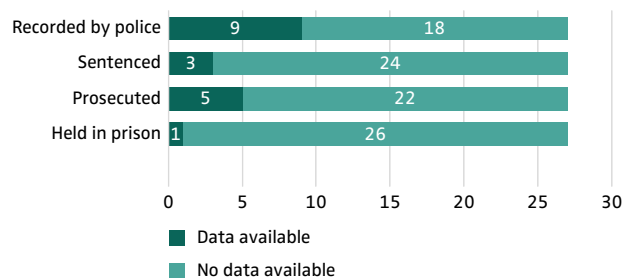
For linked datasets **to be feasible**, Member States should have common unique identifiers of individuals, suitable administrative registers easily accessible to statisticians and a high level of public acceptance of data linking and sharing.

Making male perpetrators accountable

As male perpetrators go through their journey in the criminal justice system, from the initial recording stage until the final phase, **data availability becomes increasingly scarce**. In fact, only a third of Member States could provide data on the annual number of recorded male perpetrators of IPV against women (**9 out of 27**).

In addition, even fewer Member States managed to share data recorded by the justice sector on male perpetrators **prosecuted, sentenced and held in prison** or with a sanction involving a form of deprivation of liberty for **IPV against women** (Figure 9).

Figure 9 | Numbers of Member States able to provide data on male perpetrators prosecuted, sentenced and held in prison or with a sanction involving a form of deprivation of liberty for IPV against women



Source: EIGE.

Comparing data collected across the Union

Even with the Member States' data on IPV and DV that they have provided during this exercise, it is **still not feasible** to compare the figures shared across countries. Although not yet comparable, administrative data can provide **crucial information** to national authorities, allowing them to assess how public services respond to women victims' needs and to monitor trends and social changes over time.

However, the need for **reliable and comparable data** on violence against women across Member States has been constantly recognised to inform policymakers and assist them in designing and implementing effective measures.

Barriers contributing to the hampering of data collection in EU Member States include lack of standard definitions and methods of data collection; scarcity of data disaggregated by sex, age, relationship and form of violence; poor coordination between institutions and specialised support services; resource constraints and societal attitudes.

Harmonising data collection across the European Union

In May 2024, the EU adopted [Directive \(EU\) 2024/1385](#) on combating violence against women and domestic violence, laying down rules to prevent and combat the phenomenon. **Article 44** includes provisions on minimum rules for comprehensive data collection and dissemination on violence against women and DV.

From 2027 onwards, Member States will be obliged to collect the required administrative data on an annual basis, based on **common standards** developed by EIGE in cooperation with relevant national bodies, experts and support services.


These measures are crucial for **ensuring consistent and comprehensive data collection** across the EU, which will enhance the understanding of the prevalence and nature of the issue. This, in turn, will inform more effective policies and interventions to combat these issues and support victims.

Good practices to keep counting


With its long-standing commitment to administrative data collection, EIGE can **effectively support Member States** in improving their methodologies and systems to gather comprehensive statistics with [several resources](#).


Overall, administrative data on violence against women can benefit from various good practices. **Some examples** of how Member States are implementing these measures are provided below.


Develop laws and policies requiring the regular collection of administrative data on IPV and DV disaggregated by sex, age and type of relationship.

 **Luxembourg.** Article III of the [Domestic Violence Act](#) (2003) stipulates that 'The Minister of Justice, the Police, the Public Prosecutor's Office and the Domestic Violence Victim Support Service shall compile annual statistics disaggregated by sex, age and relationship between perpetrator and victim'.

Ensure coordination between national institutions and organisations collecting and disseminating administrative data on IPV and DV.

 **Ireland.** The [Third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence](#) includes a 'pillar' on policy coordination and data collection, laying the groundwork for the establishment of the Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence Agency in 2024 (under the Department of Justice), which will partner with the Central Statistics Office to coordinate data collection.

 **Lithuania.** The [Law on Protection against Domestic Violence](#) (2011, amended in 2021) establishes that state and municipal institutions, agencies and NGOs shall organise research, collection of statistical data on domestic violence and analysis of these data.

 **Spain.** [Regular coordination](#) takes place between institutions in the police and justice sectors, and support services, to compile and publish data on victims of GBV.

Establish publicly available databases and reports to publish statistics on IPV and DV and support the analysis of these forms of violence.



Czechia. [The statistical yearbook on GBV](#)

(compiled by the Department for Gender Equality at the Office of the Government)

displays police statistics categorised by typology used by police, with references to sections of the criminal code where applicable.



Germany. The Federal Criminal Police Office publishes annual [federal situation reports on domestic violence](#). It contains information on

victims of violence committed by intimate partners and domestic perpetrators, by type of offence. Data within the reports are disaggregated by sex, age and offence.

Closing recommendations to improve administrative data collection on violence

Recommendations for the European Union institutions

- Ensure that Member States adhere to the requirements outlined in **Article 44** of Directive (EU) 2024/1385 on combating violence against women and DV.
- Adhere to the commitments of the **Istanbul Convention** and ensure that all Member States are held accountable for upholding Article 11 on data collection.



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Recommendations for Member States

- Adapt data-recording systems to incorporate **specific breakdowns** essential for identifying IPV and DV, including as a minimum data on the sex of the victim and perpetrator and on the type of relationship.
- Analyse the **gender dimension** of IPV and DV, and their causes and consequences, in cooperation with national statistical institutes, ministries of the interior, justice and equality, governmental and independent equality bodies and other public bodies.
- Facilitate **coordination** between administrations, equality bodies, civil society and universities, to collect data on violence against women, analyse results and issue policy proposals.
- Ensure the continuity of data-gathering activities, statistical capacity building and training through dedicated **funding** for administrations that collect data on IPV and DV.
- Based on the data collected, ensure that competent authorities **regularly report** on IPV and DV, make the analyses publicly available and use them as a basis for developing further measures against IPV and DV.

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