

EU GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE SURVEY



**Evidence for Policy
and Practice**

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Revised edition

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The logo consists of four horizontal bars of varying lengths, stacked vertically. The bars have a color gradient from dark blue on the left to bright orange on the right. The text 'EU' is positioned at the end of the first bar. The text 'GENDER-BASED' is positioned at the end of the second bar. The text 'VIOLENCE' is positioned at the end of the third bar. The text 'SURVEY' is positioned at the end of the fourth bar.

EU GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE SURVEY

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and Practice**

FOREWORD

Everyone has the right to live free from violence. Yet, for too many women in the European Union, this right remains unrealised. One in three women experience physical and/or sexual violence. Almost one in five face violence at the hands of their intimate partner. One in three are sexually harassed at work.

These are not just statistics: they represent real people and real experiences. They reveal the persistence of structural gender inequality across the EU – and the systemic nature of violence against women.

This deeper analysis of the second gender-based violence survey's findings lays bare uncomfortable truths. It places EU systems under a microscope – systems that too often fail to prevent abuse, fail to protect survivors and fail to deliver justice. The evidence is unequivocal. It provides the basis for shaping coherent, survivor-centred policies and support services.

Building on the EU's first major study on violence against women, by FRA in 2014, this report goes further and deeper. It not only tracks persistent patterns of abuse but also provides evidence in new areas. This includes a broader examination of sexual harassment and new findings on cyber harassment – forms of violence that are evolving as rapidly as the societies in which they occur.

Disappointingly, there has been no meaningful decline in the rates of violence in the last decade. It is likely that the true rates of gender-based violence are much higher than these data show. Barriers to reporting violence remain significant – fear, stigma, economic dependence and lack of trust in institutions. It is evidence of systemic failures.

This makes the contributions of the women who participated in this survey so powerful. Their testimonies expose what too often remains hidden. We owe each of them our deepest thanks and a commitment to act for change.

We also wish to acknowledge Eurostat's contribution to the jointly developed Eurostat–FRA–EIGE dataset on which this survey is based. While the analysis and opinions are those of FRA and EIGE, the dataset itself is the result of close and constructive collaboration.

The survey results come at a pivotal moment. EU Member States are designing measures to implement the EU Violence Against Women Directive, set to be complete by June 2027. Not all Member States have adopted the 2011 Istanbul Convention, and some are considering withdrawal. Even so, this is an opportunity to take decisive steps toward ending gender-based violence. It is a chance to ensure equal protection and eliminate policy disparities across the EU.

The new EU Violence Against Women Directive provides a strong legislative foundation: this survey provides the evidence. Member States must use this evidence to drive real, measurable change and alleviate the heavy burden that gender-based violence places on millions of women.

Sirpa Rautio
Director, FRA

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Terminology

- **Domestic perpetrator / domestic violence** – in the European Union gender-based violence (EU-GBV) survey, violence is defined as occurring in the domestic sphere if the perpetrator is the woman's intimate partner, a relative or another person living in the same household as the victim when the violence takes place.
- **Ever-partnered** – women who had an intimate partner at the time of the survey or who had had an intimate partner in the past.
- **Ever-working** – women who were employed or self-employed at the time of the survey or who had been employed or self-employed in the past.
- **Gender-based violence against women** – according to the Istanbul Convention, 'violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately' (1).
- **Intimate partner** – a person a woman is married to or in a relationship with (regardless of whether they cohabit), including dating partners.
- **Non-partner** – a person other than a woman's intimate partner, such as a relative, friend, acquaintance or stranger.
- **Violence against women** – according to the Istanbul Convention, 'a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women' referring to 'all acts of gender-based violence that result in, or are likely to result in, physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm to women'.

WHY IS THIS SURVEY NEEDED?

Violence against women – as shown by the [results of the European Union gender-based violence \(EU-GBV\) survey](#) conducted by Eurostat, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) and the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), published in November 2024 – is widespread and takes many forms. At its core, gender-based violence is a manifestation of a patriarchal system and is a violation of women's rights – with impacts on, for example, the right to human dignity, the right to the integrity of the person, the principle of non-discrimination, the right to equality between women and men and the right to an effective remedy and to a fair trial (Articles 1, 3, 21, 23 and 47 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, respectively).

The EU and its Member States have made significant efforts in the past decade to adopt and implement policies to prevent violence against women and to support victims. The need for such measures was underlined by the data published by FRA in March 2014 from its first EU-wide survey of violence against women. FRA's survey – based on interviews with 42 000 women – showed that many women in the EU experience violence at home and in public spaces but, despite the high number, very few incidents are reported to the police. In this regard, EIGE's work on intimate partner violence, domestic violence and specific forms of violence has supported Member States in improving the availability of administrative data on gender-based violence across the EU, including two data collection exercises (one in 2019–2020 and another in 2023–2024) for a [set of indicators developed for the police and justice sectors](#). EIGE has also proposed an [estimation of the cost of gender-based violence in the EU](#) and a [classification system for femicide](#).

Alongside FRA's publication of the first EU-wide survey data of violence against women, another milestone was achieved in August 2014, when the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence – the Istanbul Convention – entered into force. At the time of writing, most EU Member States have ratified the convention. In 2023 it was ratified by the EU, and in November 2025 the EU submitted its [baseline report](#) to the independent Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Grevio – part of the monitoring mechanism of the Istanbul Convention) on the measures taken to give effect to the provisions of the convention that come under EU competence. In parallel to the progress that has been made, the European Court of Human Rights has [delivered a number of judgments](#) (including against Member States) dealing with the rights of victims of violence against women. In the majority of cases, the court examined instances of violence against women under Articles 3 and 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (prohibition of torture and degrading and inhuman treatment, and right to respect for family and private life). The by-now well-established case-law obliges Member States to protect victims and investigate instances of violence against women.

Over a decade after FRA presented its survey results in 2014, the EU adopted Directive (EU) 2024/1385 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 on [combating violence against women and domestic violence](#) (the Violence against Women (VAW) Directive), which criminalises selected acts of violence and enhances support for victims. This directive complements the protections contained in Directive 2012/29/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 [establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime](#), and replacing Council Framework Decision 2001/220/JHA (otherwise known as the Victims' Rights Directive; hereafter the VRD). At the time of writing this report, negotiations were ongoing concerning revision of the VRD, as [proposed by the European Commission in 2023](#). In addition to these two directives, the EU's legal framework to combat gender-based violence and domestic violence includes various other legislative instruments ⁽²⁾.

Beyond legislative measures, ending gender-based violence was among the European Commission's priorities in its gender equality strategy for 2020–2025, and it is expected to remain

a priority for the forthcoming post-2025 gender equality strategy, as indicated for example in the 2025 roadmap for women's rights, which outlines some of the key issues to be addressed in the next strategy. The roadmap, presented by the European Commission, takes note of the EU-GBV survey results and is accompanied by a declaration of principles for a gender-equal society, which the Commission has invited all interested parties to endorse. [The declaration](#) 'reiterates, reaffirms and reinforces' the Commission's continued commitment to women's rights, and it identifies freedom from gender-based violence as a core principle, which involves the right of every woman and girl 'to security and to be treated with dignity, both on-line and off-line, in public and private life'.

Continued commitment to combating gender-based violence requires regular data collection to inform the implementation of policies and assess their effectiveness. As indicated in Article 44 of the VAW Directive, data collection by Member States can include both administrative statistics and population-based surveys, such as the current survey. While administrative statistics indicate the number of offences and the number of victims who come into contact with authorities such as the police, survey data can be used to assess the prevalence of violence – most of which is not reported to the police – and trends regarding the extent and impact of violence over time.

Given that most incidents of violence against women are not reported to the authorities, Eurostat, FRA and EIGE conducted the EU-GBV survey to ensure the availability of reliable and up-to-date data on gender-based violence against women. In most Member States, the EU-GBV survey was carried out by the national statistical authorities, but in eight Member States, where this was not the case, the data were collected by FRA and EIGE to ensure the availability of up-to-date results, covering all Member States, on the situation in the EU. The joint Eurostat–FRA–EIGE report on the key results of the EU-GBV survey – published in November 2024 – focused on the prevalence of violence across the EU, including physical and sexual violence perpetrated by intimate partners as well as other perpetrators, and sexual harassment at work. The current report expands on this by examining in more detail women's experiences with respect to various forms of violence covered in the survey, including psychological and economic violence, sexual harassment and stalking. The report also analyses the impact and consequences that violence has for victims, and their contacts with various services, such as medical care related to injuries or reporting violence to the police. These findings can contribute to measures aimed at supporting victims of violence by better understanding the multiple ways in which violence affects women. In addition to women's experiences during adulthood, the report presents results concerning violence that women have experienced in childhood – in the context of this survey, before the age of 15.

The report also analyses questions added by FRA and EIGE to the EU-GBV survey in the eight Member States where the two agencies jointly carried out the data collection, to provide further detail and inform the development of policies and data collection approaches for future surveys. These included additional information collected on sexual harassment outside the context of work, and questions on economic violence and technology-facilitated violence. Since these additional questions were only collected in the eight Member States where data collection was implemented by FRA and EIGE, the results stemming from these questions are not available at the EU-27 aggregate level.

The EU-GBV survey provides a model for EU-wide data collection that can help inform measures by the EU and Member States to combat gender-based violence against women. When the EU-GBV survey is repeated over time, the results provide information on trends and can be used to examine the effectiveness and impact of policies. At the EU level, the results of the EU-GBV survey have been integrated into the European Commission's 2025 report on gender equality in the EU, demonstrating how the data can be used to support the regular assessment of measures taken to prevent gender-based violence and protect survivors. The need to collect survey data on prevalence and trends in gender-based violence is also recognised in the VAW Directive, with Article 44(3) urging Member States to conduct population-based surveys at regular intervals. Eurostat supports Member States in this task, and in June 2025 it shared with the Member States the draft methodological guidelines for the next wave of the EU-GBV survey, with plans to carry out the data collection in 2027–2028 in all Member States. In sum, the future EU-GBV survey will continue to provide a solid basis for data collection to support policies and measures aimed at eradicating gender-based violence against women in the EU.

SURVEY IN A NUTSHELL

The results presented in this report represent the experiences of women in the 27 Member States with respect to different forms of violence, based on 114 023 interviews. In the report, results referring to the situation in the EU-27 (EU aggregate results) have been calculated based on data collected in all 27 Member States, where available. Survey datasets from Italy and the Netherlands were not available to FRA and EIGE for the analysis. In some cases, results for these two Member States have been provided by Eurostat; otherwise, the EU aggregate results have been calculated based on all the Member States for which data are available.

HOW WAS THE SURVEY CARRIED OUT?

EU-GBV survey implementation

Eurostat started to develop the EU-GBV survey in 2016 in consultation with the Member States. The first wave of data collection was implemented in 2020–2023 by the national statistical authorities on a voluntary basis. This is designated as ‘2021 wave’, reflecting the year when most of the Member States carried out their data collection.

Eurostat coordinated the data collection in 18 Member States where the national statistical authorities carried out the survey. Italy did not conduct the EU-GBV survey but agreed to share the data from its national survey on violence against women and the national victimisation survey with Eurostat as a data source; however, due to differences between the EU-GBV survey and the surveys in Italy, only a limited number of EU-GBV survey indicators are available for Italy. Eight Member States decided not to carry out the voluntary survey: Cyprus, Czechia, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Luxembourg, Romania and Sweden. To avoid data gaps and to ensure the availability of results for the EU-27, FRA invited EIGE to join forces to conduct the survey in these eight Member States.

Outside the EU, the survey has been carried out in Kosovo ⁽³⁾, Montenegro and Serbia; these results are included in Eurostat’s online database but are not included in this report. For more details on the survey methodology see Annex 1 and the survey metadata, which are available at https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/metadata/en/gbv_sims.htm.

Collecting data on gender-based violence

Surveys such as the EU-GBV survey provide a detailed and comprehensive picture of the range of offences and their consequences that women experience. In the EU-GBV survey, instead of asking women whether they had experienced violence or sexual harassment, for example, they were asked about experiencing specific acts. This is considered good practice in surveys that collect data on violence against women, particularly surveys that cover multiple countries, as it means that the results are not reliant on all respondents having the same understanding of what constitutes violence or sexual harassment. Throughout this report, examples are provided of the acts asked about in the survey to collect women’s experiences.

Some administrative data, including statistics on police-recorded crime, and generic crime victimisation surveys that ask questions to both women and men typically capture the victimisation experiences of women to a limited extent. This is particularly the case when those producing the statistics do not specifically set out to ensure that experiences of intimate partner and domestic violence are captured in detail, or when they do not use specific questions or appropriate measures to make women feel that they can safely disclose their experiences. In the EU-GBV survey, a number of measures were taken to help ensure that women would feel comfortable to share their experiences. These ranged from using trained female interviewers to careful wording of the questions.

ABOUT THE RESULTS

Reading the results

Some of the results presented in this report are also available in Eurostat's online database. Where this is the case, the tables and figures indicate the relevant Eurostat data code. Tables and figures that do not contain reference to Eurostat's online database present results that have been calculated for this report by FRA and EIGE, sometimes with the assistance of Eurostat, based on the EU-GBV survey microdata and data that were only collected in the eight Member States where FRA and EIGE carried out the data collection.

Reliability of the results

The survey results that are based on only a few sample observations or that have a higher rate of item non-response should be considered less reliable. Where this is the case, the results from the survey are not disseminated or a note draws attention to their limited reliability. Results are presented in brackets to denote limited reliability if they are based on 20 to 49 responses, and results based on fewer than 20 responses are not published (denoted in the tables with '—'). Results also appear in brackets if the variable in question has an item non-response rate between 20 % and 50 %. If the item non-response rate associated with the result exceeds 50 %, the result is not published.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The Istanbul Convention defines violence against women as 'a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women' meaning 'all acts of gender-based violence that result in, or are likely to result in, physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm to women'. It also provides a definition of gender-based violence against women: 'violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately'. The EU incorporated this definition into its secondary legal framework through the VAW Directive. The survey results in this report refer to experiences of violence against women, which include, as defined in the Istanbul Convention, acts of gender-based violence.

While gender-based violence affects people of all genders, not all people experience it to the same extent. As a complex phenomenon, the impact of violence can differ based on the gender of both the victim and the perpetrator, their relationship and the type of violence involved. At the aggregate level, people's experiences may also differ depending on other personal characteristics, such as age, disability, sexual orientation and ethnicity. These characteristics intersect with gender to create specific conditions that are related to people's risk of experiencing violence, which cannot be explained by observing the sociodemographic categories individually. Thus, this report takes an intersectional perspective on gender-based violence, and selected results are examined through the lens of logistic regression models, which take into account a number of factors that can contribute to a person's risk of experiencing violence.

Compared with men, women are more likely to experience violence by perpetrators in the domestic sphere, with many incidents taking place at home. Because of the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator, it can be difficult for victims to disclose their experiences and seek assistance, both with respect to reporting incidents to the police and when disclosing incidents as part of a survey interview – although every effort was made in the survey to allow women to disclose experiences of violence.

How to read these results: time frames used in the survey

The report refers to the prevalence of violence as the percentage of women who have experienced one or more incidents of a particular type of violence in a given time frame: 'lifetime', 'since the age of 15', 'in the 5 years before the survey' or 'in the 12 months before the survey'.

The prevalence of violence over the past 12 months can be used to analyse the most recent past and to compare results between different sources, including statistics on police-recorded incidents of violence, since these statistics are typically published on an annual basis. The five-year prevalence has been used in view of plans to repeat the survey data collection every five years, so that the five-year prevalence can be used for comparisons over time, while also providing a larger number of responses, which are needed to analyse the prevalence of certain rarer offences. The lifetime prevalence of violence is also important, as it reflects the burden of violence over the course of a lifetime, given that violence can have various long-term consequences, such as injuries, psychological repercussions or loss of income.

In the survey, women were asked whether they had experienced specific acts of physical, sexual or psychological violence committed by an intimate partner during their entire relationship. Similarly, the question concerning sexual harassment at work referred to experiences in their 'entire working life', and the question on stalking referred to experiences during the respondent's lifetime. In this report, these experiences are denoted as 'lifetime'. Experiences of violence in which the perpetrator was someone other than the woman's intimate partner (also referred to as a non-partner) were considered from the age of 15 years. The corresponding results are denoted in this report as experiences 'since the age of 15'. The cut-off age of 15 years is also used by the World Health Organization (WHO) when collecting data on violence against women (*).

For brevity, data that combine women's experiences with both intimate partners and non-partners are referred to as 'lifetime' experiences. However, experiences with non-partners included in this estimate relate to events that took place from the age of 15 years (and not before the age of 15). Experiences of violence collected in the section of the survey that focused on childhood (in the survey, before the age of 15) are analysed and reported separately.

(*) WHO, [*WHO multi-country study on women's health and domestic violence against women*](#), 2005.

Key findings and opinions

Member States are in the process of incorporating the VAW Directive into national law, with 14 June 2027 the deadline for adopting the necessary national legislation. At the time of writing, 22 Member States have ratified the Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention, which the EU ratified in 2023. Despite these milestones, surveys such as the EU-GBV survey show that violence against women continues to be widespread.

Drawing on selected key findings from the EU-GBV survey, FRA and EIGE formulated the following opinions. These opinions aim to support the EU and national policymakers to prevent and combat gender-based violence against women. For example, the survey findings can inform Member States when implementing the VAW Directive, the VRD and the Istanbul Convention. These opinions complement, reinforce and, sometimes, reiterate previous opinions and recommendations of FRA and EIGE from other published reports. The aim of these opinions is not to comprehensively address all findings from the survey but rather to highlight selected findings with specific calls for action, aligned with legal obligations.

Sexual violence should be criminalised based on consent-based definitions of rape and other sexual violence.

Respond effectively to physical and sexual violence against women, including women affected by intersectional discrimination

Close to one in three women in the EU (30.7 %) have experienced physical violence (including threats) and/or sexual violence during their adulthood (in the survey, since the age of 15). These latest results are broadly aligned with results published some 10 years earlier (in 2014) based on [FRA's 2012 EU-wide survey on violence against women](#). As a comparison of the two surveys shows, the overall rates of violence remain largely the same and millions of women across the EU experience physical and sexual violence during their lifetimes (for more detail, see *Violence against Women: An EU-wide survey – Main results*) (*).

Focusing specifically on rape, the EU-GBV survey data also reveal that current force-based definitions of rape that still prevail in some Member States fail to capture the majority of rape experiences, as evidenced by the prevalence of coercive rape (i.e. rape in the absence of overt use of force) versus rape involving overt force. Across the EU-27, 8.4 % of women have been raped when 'unable to refuse or under coercion' compared with 4.8 % who indicated that they were raped with the use of 'force or threats'. This indicates that violations of consent without overt physical force are nearly twice as common as force-based incidents. While the VAW Directive does not mandate a consent-based definition of rape, Article 35 of the directive encourages Member States to promote the role of consent in sexual relationships when implementing measures to prevent rape. At the same time, Article 36 of the Istanbul Convention requires parties to criminalise any



OPINION 1

Member States, in particular those that have ratified the Istanbul Convention, should criminalise sexual violence using consent-based definitions of rape and other forms of sexual violence, to ensure that women's experiences of coercion and inability to refuse are legally recognised as rape regardless of physical force or threats. Member States should undertake additional necessary steps to effectively promote the role of consent in sexual relationships when implementing measures to prevent rape, in line with Article 35 of the VAW Directive.

OPINION 2

Member States should review their laws and policies to ensure the existence of specific prevention, protection and support-related measures targeting women affected by intersectional discrimination, who experience a heightened risk of violence.

acts of a sexual nature that take place without the consent of one of the people involved, stating that ‘consent must be given voluntarily as the result of the person’s free will assessed in the context of the surrounding circumstances.’

The VAW Directive acknowledges that violence against women and domestic violence can be exacerbated when intersecting with discrimination based on a combination of sex and any other ground(s) of discrimination as referred to in Article 21 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. The VAW Directive calls on Member States to take this into consideration when adopting measures related to the individual assessment to identify victims’ protection needs, specialist support to victims, and training and

information for professionals likely to come into contact with victims. The EU-GBV survey data confirm that violence against women and domestic violence are exacerbated when they intersect with various characteristics that are protected with respect to discrimination. For example, women with disabilities face an elevated risk of experiencing sexual violence by an intimate partner during their lifetimes: 17.0 % compared with 6.6 % for women without a disability. Similarly, rates of physical violence are 19.1 % among women with disabilities versus 10.6 % for other women.

Combating intimate partner violence should be a priority when implementing the Violence against Women Directive and the Victims' Rights Directive.

Address the specific impact and consequences of intimate partner violence

Recital 11 of the VAW Directive recognises that domestic violence (including intimate partner violence) leads to serious psychological and physical trauma, with severe consequences for a victim's personal and professional life because the offender is typically a person known to the victim and someone the victim would expect to be able to trust. The directive acknowledges repetitive domestic violence, or the fact that it was committed against a vulnerable person given a situation of dependence, as aggravating circumstances (Article 11).

As with the VAW Directive, recital 18 of the VRD acknowledges that violence in close relationships can cause severe consequences because of the relationship of trust between the victim and the offender. Recital 38 of the VRD also acknowledges that some people can be at particularly high risk of harm – for example, people who experience repeat violence in close relationships. According to recital 57 of the VRD, particular care should be taken when assessing whether these victims are at risk of victimisation, intimidation and retaliation, and there should be a strong presumption that these victims will benefit from special protection measures.

Articles 8 and 9 of the VRD oblige Member States to provide specialist support services for victims of violence in close relationships. As a minimum, Member States must offer targeted and integrated support for victims, including trauma support and counselling.

Article 22(3) of the VRD indicates that individual assessments of victims' protection needs must pay particular attention to those victims who have suffered considerable harm, alongside other considerations, such as the need to pay attention to the needs of victims of gender-based violence, violence in close relationships and sexual violence. Specifically, Article 22(5) notes that the extent of the individual victim assessments may also need adapting depending on the severity of the violence and the harm suffered.

Data from the EU-GBV survey show that the impact and consequences of intimate partner violence, and hence the harm caused to victims by such violence, are severe. Women experience higher rates of physical injuries (9.8 %) due to intimate partner violence than due to non-partner violence (4.4 %). When analysing different types of injuries, further notable differences between intimate partner violence and non-partner violence appear, with intimate partner violence leading to more severe outcomes. Permanent physical injury and the need for or receipt of medical care are more prevalent in intimate partner violence.



OPINION 3

In line with the data showing that intimate partner violence, in general, has more severe and lasting consequences than non-partner violence, Member States should prioritise implementing the VAW Directive and its provisions on effective and dissuasive criminal penalties and the rules on aggravating circumstances, with a focus on cases of intimate partner violence.

Member States should pay due attention to ensure that their rules and practices are in line with the relevant provisions of the VAW Directive and the VRD on protecting and supporting victims of intimate partner violence. In this regard, the finding that substantial numbers of women require time off work due to intimate partner violence and struggle with caring tasks demonstrates the urgent need for Member States to establish comprehensive economic and related support mechanisms. These include implementing employment protection measures, financial assistance programmes and healthcare coverage that addresses both immediate medical needs and the lasting physical and psychological harm that is prevalent in cases of victims of intimate partner violence.

OPINION 4

Member States should implement integrated approaches to victims of violence – including violence perpetrated by intimate partners – and their use of substances such as alcohol or drugs as a coping mechanism for the effects of violence. These should combine mental health services, addiction support and trauma-informed care in line with obligations to provide the specialist support services necessary to comprehensively address victims' multiple needs under the relevant provisions of the VAW Directive and the VRD.

In addition to physical harm, the EU-GBV survey data show that a significant number of women indicate mental health issues, such as depression and anxiety, linked to intimate partner violence, with 9.6 % experiencing psychological consequences from intimate partner violence compared with 4.1 % from non-partner violence. The adverse impact of these and other consequences of violence to women in the EU is underlined by the high percentage of women affected by intimate partner violence. For example, the rates of physical violence by an intimate partner, calculated specifically for comparative purposes, range from 9.0 % to 39.3 % of ever-partnered women in the EU-GBV survey and from 12.4 % to 33.2 % in FRA's 2012 survey, depending on the country.

With reference specifically to employment, according to Article 36(6) of the VAW Directive, people in supervisory functions in the workplace and employers are to receive training about the effects of violence against women and domestic violence with respect to the impact it can have on employees. As the survey data show, intimate partner violence impacts women's ability to work, with 17.6 % needing time off due to intimate partner violence and 30.8 % unable to handle household duties. In addition, women often resort to using medication (25.8 %) and alcohol or drugs (17.1 %) to cope with the effects of intimate partner violence, highlighting the severity of their experiences.

Consistently, when comparing the results from the EU-GBV survey – on physical injuries due to violence, psychological consequences, need and/or receipt of medical attention, perceived severity of the last incident of violence experienced or feeling that one's life has been in danger – women across the EU disclose more harmful consequences of violence experienced in their intimate relationships than of non-partner violence. Crucially, intimate partner violence predominantly occurs repeatedly rather than as an isolated incident, which exacerbates its impact and – as a consequence – the need for specific responses.

Psychological violence, including economic control, and abusive behaviour should be addressed as a pattern of behaviour, not isolated incidents.

Undertake targeted actions against economic and psychological violence by intimate partners

Under Article 3 of the Istanbul Convention, intimate partner violence (as part of domestic violence) includes – in addition to physical and sexual violence – psychological or economic violence between current or former partners. Article 33 of the Istanbul Convention requires parties to the convention to criminalise intentional conduct that seriously impairs a person's psychological integrity through coercion or threats.

The provisions of the VAW Directive are aligned with the above, which advances harmonisation by establishing uniform criminal definitions across Member States; setting minimum standards for prevention, protection and support services (Articles 18–20 and 24–27); and acknowledging the recurrent nature of psychological and economic violence against women in intimate relationships (recital 38). These standards also align with the priority topics of Area F of the Beijing Platform for Action on promoting women's financial independence and women's entrepreneurship ⁽⁵⁾.

As the survey data show, whereas physical violence by an intimate partner affects a substantial number of women, with 10.7 % of ever-partnered women experiencing physical violence by intimate partners during their lifetimes (noting that 'ever-partnered' refers to women who at the time of the survey had – or in the past had had – an intimate partner), the extent of psychological violence is even higher, affecting 29.9 % of ever-partnered women during their lifetimes. Forms of psychological violence include being belittled, humiliated or called names (22.9 % compared with 25.8 % in FRA's 2012 survey, with some differences in the way the question was asked in the two surveys), being on the receiving end of anger for speaking with other men/women or being accused of being unfaithful without any reason (18.4 % in the EU-GBV survey), or being frightened or intimidated through acts like yelling or smashing things (12.8 % in the EU-GBV survey).

Crucially, intimate partner violence, including psychological violence, predominantly occurs repeatedly rather than being an isolated incident. For example, the survey shows that 50.8 % of victims of physical and/or sexual violence by their current partners experienced physical violence more than once, compared with 30.0 % who experienced a single incident. 12.7 % of ever-partnered women experienced psychological violence by their current or former partners often or all the time.

Among women who have experienced psychological violence by their current partners, 34.5 % have also experienced physical and/or sexual violence. In comparison, the prevalence of physical and/or sexual violence by the current partner is 0.9 % among women who did not experience psychological violence by the same partner.



OPINION 5

With psychological and economic violence recognised as part of domestic violence by the VAW Directive, Member States are required to align their national criminal legislation to fully capture these forms as significant aspects of violence against women. When doing so, Member States should ensure that, in their national law, criminal offences related to psychological violence account for patterns of behaviour rather than treating incidents in isolation.

Given that the expanded list of FRA–EIGE survey questions about different forms of economic violence against women reveals significantly higher rates of economic control and abusive behaviour, Member States and Eurostat should consider extending the list of economic violence questions in future rounds of the EU-GBV survey to more accurately capture women's experiences.

OPINION 6

The survey findings show a clear relationship between economic dependence and violence. Such a relationship necessitates very targeted legislative and policy measures. In this context, Member States should adopt specific risk assessment tools to better recognise the vulnerability of victims impacted by economic dependence and control. At the same time, Member States should ensure that such victims are referred to specialist support services that are equipped to address the multifaceted trauma that results from sustained psychological abuse and its intersection with economic control.

When introducing training for professionals (e.g. police and the judiciary, health and social care professionals, and specialised support services) in this area, Member States should ensure that relevant professionals are trained to recognise different forms of psychological and economic violence, which often occur alongside other forms of violence in a relationship.

Core EU-GBV survey questions revealed that 8.3 % of women in the EU experience economic violence – which can include, for example, a partner forbidding a woman from taking up employment or exerting excessive control over her expenses. However, using an expanded set of questions about forms of economic violence (as was done by FRA and EIGE in eight Member States) revealed a 20.3 % prevalence rate, indicating that the issue is more widespread than previously thought. Yet, as noted by Grevio in several of its baseline reports, there are gaps in terms of national legislation that recognises economic violence.

According to the EU-GBV survey data, economic dependence emerges as a critical vulnerability factor: women who economically depend on their current partners experience physical and/or sexual violence at a rate of 10.4 % during the relationship, compared with 3.4 % for financially independent women. These results align with previous findings from FRA's 2012 survey, which showed that women's economic vulnerability increased their risk of experiencing economic control and violence (reflected in EIGE's analysis of [financial independence and gender equality](#)). Women who depend on their current partners for basic needs, like food, housing, money or immigration status, face more than double rates of psychological violence – 21.1 % – compared with 9.3 % among independent women (see also EIGE's 2023 report *Understanding Economic Violence against Women* ⁽⁶⁾).

Women should have access to alternative options to report crime and receive support from trained professionals who deliver coordinated, holistic care.

Facilitate reporting of physical and sexual violence

The Istanbul Convention, the VRD and the VAW Directive all contain requirements that oblige states to adopt targeted measures aiming to facilitate reporting by women victims of violence (Articles 27–28 of the Istanbul Convention, Articles 4–5 of the VRD and Article 14 of the VAW Directive), alongside requirements to protect and support women victims of violence (Articles 18–25 of the Istanbul Convention, Articles 8–9 of the VRD and Articles 15–21 and 25–33 of the VAW Directive). The VAW Directive also requires Member States to put in place mechanisms for multi-agency coordination and cooperation that pertain to an individual assessment of victim protection and support needs, the provision of protection and support, guidelines for competent authorities and training for professionals.

Yet the EU-GBV survey results consistently show that a significant reporting gap exists, with 13.9 % of victims of physical and/or sexual violence contacting the police and 20.5 % reaching out to health or social services. Intimate partner violence presents significantly greater barriers to reporting than non-partner violence, where non-partner violence consistently shows higher disclosure rates. 7.3 % of women who experienced physical violence by their current partners reported the last episode of violence to the police and 11.0 % sought medical attention, compared with 20.8 % of women who reported the last episode of physical violence by a non-partner to the police and 15.9 % who contacted medical services. Reporting to police can vary by the type of perpetrator involved. While 6.1 % of women reported the most recent incident of physical and/or sexual violence by their current partners to the police, the reporting rate rises to 16.8 % in the case of violence perpetrated by a previous partner and 11.3 % when the perpetrator was a non-partner.

Reasons for not reporting to the police can vary by the type of violence experienced. According to the EU-GBV survey, victims of rape cited distinct reasons for not reporting non-partner violence: feeling embarrassed or self-blame (49.9 %, compared with 17.6 % of victims of physical violence), fear of the perpetrator or possible negative consequences for the victim or the perpetrator (23.8 %) and a belief that the police could not help (23.7 %). Victims of physical and/or sexual violence are less likely to report non-partner violence to the police if they did not perceive the incident as being serious. At the same time, many women who considered the violence by a non-partner a crime, or felt their life was in danger, or experienced violence that caused injuries or psychological impacts, did not report the incident to the police, despite the incident appearing severe. Few women indicated that they did not report the last episode of violence by a non-partner to the police because they had already reported to other authorities.



OPINION 7

To encourage women to report crimes, Member States should ensure that police and other justice practitioners receive training on victim-appropriate and gender-sensitive responses. In addition, Member States should consider establishing alternative reporting options, such as third-party reporting, and putting in place measures to proactively disseminate information on support and services to facilitate crime reporting.

Member States should regularly collect data to monitor the effectiveness of reporting mechanisms on violence against women, including administrative data from services as well as regular population-based surveys that capture unreported incidents and reasons for not reporting.

OPINION 8

Member States should coordinate sectors, such as healthcare, education and support services, to offer holistic support to victims, going beyond just reporting mechanisms and justice services.

Employers have a duty to ensure a workplace free from sexual harassment, including in digital work environments.

Increase efforts to combat sexual harassment, including cyber harassment, at work

OPINION 9

In order to combat sexual harassment at work more effectively, Member States should focus their efforts on timely transposition and implementation of the relevant provisions of the VAW Directive, including on the availability of specialist support for victims of sexual harassment at work in the form of counselling for victims and employers, as well as the provisions of other relevant EU secondary laws promoting women's workforce participation and violence-free workplaces, such as the EU Equal Treatment Directives (Council Directives [2000/78/EC](#) and [2000/43/EC](#)) ⁽⁹⁾, and relevant international standards.

To ensure that the relevant legal provisions are effectively applied in practice, Member States may consider establishing monitoring systems to assess the effectiveness of workplace harassment policies, including regularly auditing employers' compliance and establishing consequences for employers who fail to provide adequate support systems.

OPINION 10

Member States should oblige employers, particularly in sectors where female workers are most exposed to sexual harassment, to provide regular training programmes and awareness-raising campaigns on procedures against sexual harassment, working with the data findings that indicate that most incidents are perpetrated by men.

Member States should specifically call on employers to designate contact persons or departments for sexual harassment cases and to create accessible reporting mechanisms, including age-sensitive reporting systems with multiple channels to empower younger employees to report incidents of sexual harassment without fear of career repercussions.

Article 40 of the Istanbul Convention calls on parties to the convention to ensure criminal or other legal sanctions against sexual harassment, which is defined as unwanted conduct of a sexual nature that has the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person, in particular when creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. Such conduct can manifest itself in verbal, non-verbal or physical form.

The VAW Directive includes measures to tackle sexual harassment at work in cases that constitute a criminal offence under national law. Article 28 of the directive requires that Member States ensure the availability of counselling services for victims of sexual harassment at work, including information on ways to tackle incidents of sexual harassment at work. The same article also requires that such counselling services are available to the employers. According to Article 34(9), Member States must include in relevant national policies measures to address sexual harassment at work. When implementing this, Member States may consider targeted measures for workers most exposed to sexual harassment. Based on Article 36(6), people in supervisory functions in public and private sector workplaces must receive training to recognise, prevent and address sexual harassment at work. Article 45(3) notes that by 14 June 2032 the Commission will assess whether further measures on tackling sexual harassment in the workplace are necessary. Besides the measures that the VAW Directive sets out on sexual harassment at work, Article 7 of the VAW Directive on cyber harassment specifies the criminalisation of certain forms of intentional conduct using ICT (in any context, not limited to the workplace).

EU non-criminal law related to sexual harassment focuses on the work context. This includes [the directive on implementing the principle of equal treatment between men and women in the access to and supply of goods and services](#) (Council Directive 2004/113/EC), [the directive on the implementation of equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation \(recast\)](#) (Directive 2006/54/EC) and [the directive on the application of the principle of equal treatment between women and men engaged in an activity in a self-employed capacity](#) (Directive 2010/41/EU) ⁽⁷⁾. For example, Directive 2006/54/EC describes sexual harassment as a form of discrimination. Article 26 of the directive – on the prevention of discrimination – highlights the role employers and those responsible for access to vocational training have in preventing sexual harassment. Violence and harassment in the workplace are also covered by the [directive on health and safety at work](#) (Council Directive 89/391/EEC), which lays down the employer's obligation to ensure the safety and health of workers in every

aspect related to the work (Article 5) ⁽⁸⁾. In this regard, the employer is to evaluate any kind of health and safety risk to the workers, including psychosocial risks, and put adequate preventive and protective measures in place.

Other relevant international legal frameworks include the [Violence and Harassment Convention](#), 2019 (No 190), of the International Labour Organization (ILO), which has been ratified by 14 Member States. In 2024, the Council of the EU adopted a [decision inviting all Member States to ratify the ILO's Convention No 190](#) (Council Decision (EU) 2024/1018). The convention addresses sexual harassment and gender-based violence in the workplace, complemented by ILO Recommendation No 206 (2019), which provides [operational guidance](#) for its implementation.

Despite the various legal provisions described above, the EU-GBV survey – which focused on experiences of sexual harassment that took place in the work context – shows that nearly one third (30.8 %) of ever-working women in the EU have experienced sexual harassment at work in their lifetimes, with significant variations between Member States. However, it should be noted that, when they also asked about experiences of sexual harassment outside the context of work, both the 2012 FRA survey and FRA and EIGE's EU-GBV survey data collection in eight Member States show higher rates of all forms of sexual harassment (including workplace and non-workplace related): 54 % and 54.3 %, respectively.

Sexual harassment against women at work is overwhelmingly male-perpetrated, with men accounting for 88.3 % of all workplace sexual harassment incidents against women. A specific form of sexual harassment, namely sexual cyber harassment at work, affects 7.0 % of women who have worked, with 18.4 % experiencing repeated episodes, according to the EU-GBV survey data.

At the same time, the EU-GBV survey reveals that only 19.9 % of women indicated that their work offers training to inform workers about what to do if they have been sexually harassed. 33.2 % said there is a contact person at work, and 59.6 % knew where to seek help. Awareness of the designated contact point ranges from 73.4 % in one Member State to 4.9 % in another and is associated with knowing where to seek help. Finally, the data reveal that younger women, aged 18–29 and 30–44, tend to report incidents of sexual harassment at work to people in an official capacity less often (35.9 % and 33.2 % respectively, versus 42.9 % of women in the age group 45–64) despite younger women experiencing higher rates of harassment.

Member States should ensure that employers extend their anti-harassment policies and measures to cover digital workplace environments, including online harassment through work platforms and the interconnected nature of cyberviolence across multiple digital channels.

OPINION 11

When assessing the effectiveness of existing union measures to tackle sexual harassment in the workplace in line with Article 45(3) of the VAW Directive, the European Commission should consider actions, within its legal competence, that go beyond the legal assessment of the existing applicable rules in this area, in particular by undertaking data collection to understand how these rules work in practice and what the promising practices are. In this respect, the Commission should also take into consideration the existing monitoring data from Member States assessing the effectiveness of workplace anti-harassment policies.

Victims of cyberstalking should have access to user-friendly digital reporting tools. This includes effective reporting mechanisms set up by digital service providers.

Ensure tailored responses to cyberstalking

OPINION 12

In line with the existing EU legal frameworks, Member States need to ensure that their laws and policies effectively address the full spectrum of stalking behaviours, including cyberstalking. The specific nature of cyberstalking as it impacts on women, as reported in the survey data, should also be addressed in any measures adopted.

Member States should provide further training and sensitisation for professionals to enable the recognition of both conventional and technology-facilitated patterns of stalking, including its gendered manifestation.

OPINION 13

Member States should facilitate the reporting and further investigation of cyberstalking, including by implementing user-friendly digital reporting tools, while ensuring that law enforcement agencies possess the technical capacity to preserve and analyse digital evidence effectively.

The substantial burden on victims of cyberstalking includes, for some, having to change residence and their digital identity. This demonstrates the need for Member States to examine further ways to protect victims and to shift the burden away from the victims, to place responsibilities and repercussions on perpetrators, such as ensuring that protection orders effectively take into account people's digital lives.

Article 34 of the Istanbul Convention, on stalking, requires parties to the convention to criminalise intentional conduct that involves repeatedly engaging in threatening conduct against a person, causing them to fear for their safety. In the context of the Istanbul Convention, Grevio issued its [first general recommendation](#) on the topic of the digital dimension of violence against women in recognition of the increasing role that ICT tools have in people's lives, including the potential for using these tools to perpetrate and amplify acts of stalking.

In the EU, the VAW Directive includes cyberstalking among the acts Member States must criminalise (Article 6). The directive describes cyberstalking as intentional conduct where a person is repeatedly or continuously surveilled, without their consent or other legal authorisation, using ICT means. This can involve tracking or monitoring a person's movements and activities in a manner that is likely to cause serious harm to the person in question. In its Article 16(3)(h), the directive also requires particular attention to be paid to stalking as a risk factor when carrying out an individual assessment of a victim's support and protection needs. In its recital 45, the VAW Directive specifically calls on Member States to ensure that protection orders can, among other things, effectively prohibit the offender or suspect from contacting the victim or dependants through online interfaces. Moreover, in its [draft for a revised VRD](#), presented in 2023 (COM(2023)424 final), the European Commission proposal states that victims should be supported to report crimes using user-friendly digital tools, including the option to submit evidence online (draft Article 5a), which might be particularly relevant for women experiencing cyberviolence, including cyberstalking.

With relevance to certain acts of cyberstalking, the [Digital Services Act](#) (DSA; Regulation (EU) 2022/2065) ⁽¹⁰⁾, which entered into force in 2024, requires online platforms to implement systems combating illegal content distribution. Such systems should include user reporting mechanisms and collaboration with 'trusted flaggers'. The legislation specifically targets very large online platforms distributing pornographic content, requiring them to ensure that victims of non-consensual intimate-image sharing can effectively request content removal through expedited processing and prompt

action (recital 87). Under Article 34(1), very large online platforms must also conduct risk assessments examining illegal content dissemination and potential impacts on human dignity. However, while the DSA sets out to advance responses to harmful and illegal content online, its impact in practice in relation to cyberstalking – particularly regarding its impact on women – requires further assessment.

The EU-GBV survey results highlight that online violence against women has become widespread. Some acts of stalking experienced by women consist predominantly of cyberstalking, based on specific questions added to the survey by FRA and EIGE in eight Member States. For example, 80.2 % of women in the eight Member States who repeatedly received unwanted messages, letters or gifts indicated that this took place online, while 77.0 % of women who had highly personal information published about them indicated that it took place online. Specifically, 1.1 % of women had experienced someone sharing or threatening to share intimate photos or videos of them to cause them harm, including 0.7 % who had experienced this taking place online, across the eight Member States where FRA and EIGE conducted the survey.

While the survey did not collect specific data on the impact of cyberstalking, the impact of stalking in general on women's lives is significant according to the data. The data show that stalking experiences are often not reported to the police. In the EU-27, only 13.9 % of women who experienced stalking during their lifetimes reported it to the police. As for the consequences of stalking on victims' lives, the EU-GBV survey data show that one in five victims of stalking (21.6 %) by an intimate partner had to change their place of residence due to stalking, while one in three (34.7 %) had to change their telephone number, email address or social networking account, demonstrating the burden that stalking places on the victims.

OPINION 14

The EU and the Member States need to establish clear and binding obligations for digital service providers to prevent and respond to cyberstalking, including mandatory reporting mechanisms, the removal of harmful content and the suspension or termination of perpetrators' accounts. Additionally, digital service providers should be required to implement robust measures to protect victims, such as providing dedicated support channels, enhancing online safety features and ensuring transparency in their content moderation practices, in line with their obligations under the DSA.

Promising practices such as the 'Barnahus model' can help prevent secondary victimisation of child victims.

Effectively address childhood abuse and prevent cycles of abuse

OPINION 15

Member States should review their laws and policies to ensure that they effectively protect children from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation. They should particularly pay attention when transposing the relevant provisions of the VAW Directive obliging them to provide child-sensitive reporting mechanisms, specialised support services for child victims, and age-appropriate information provision and protection measures during legal proceedings.

Member States should protect children from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation as early as possible while, at the same time, implementing comprehensive screening protocols in healthcare settings to identify childhood sexual violence survivors. This could include routine screening in sexual health clinics, mental health services and domestic violence support services.

OPINION 16

Member States need to develop targeted prevention programmes addressing both mothers and fathers equally, acknowledging similar perpetration rates of physical and psychological violence. At the same time, Member States should note the survey finding that sexual violence in women's childhoods predominantly involved male perpetrators.

In order to effectively prevent secondary victimisation of child victims and to encourage the reporting of child abuse, Member States are encouraged to exchange and draw on promising practices that exist in this area, such as the Barnahus model.

Article 3 of the Istanbul Convention specifies that the provisions of the convention that refer to women also include girls under the age of 18. In addition, [the Council of Europe's Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse](#) (Lanzarote Convention), which all Member States have ratified, sets comprehensive legal standards to safeguard children from abuse. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, also ratified by all Member States, mandates the protection of children from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation.

Directive 2011/93/EU on [combating the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children](#) criminalises various forms of sexual abuse whether perpetrated by family members or strangers ⁽¹⁾. It establishes minimum sanctions and includes provisions for prevention programmes and victim assistance. In 2024, the European Commission published a [proposal for a revised directive on the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child sexual abuse material](#) (COM(2024) 60 final), having recognised the need to address societal and technological changes. Given that victims often do not report abuse until well into adulthood, the revised directive also addresses the statutes of limitations (Article 16 of the proposal).

The VAW Directive also includes significant provisions for child protection. It recognises children as victims of domestic violence both when directly targeted and when witnessing violence against a parent. Building upon the rights included in the VRD, the VAW Directive establishes child-sensitive reporting mechanisms and specialised support services for child victims, and requires age-appropriate information provision and protection measures during legal proceedings. In its draft for a revised VRD, presented in 2023, the European Commission proposed to further strengthen the rights of child victims, including their right to be protected against secondary victimisation by providing them with targeted, multi-agency support and protection services that should be provided in the same premises (building on the so-called Barnahus model, which has been examined, for example, in FRA's analysis of [integrated child protection systems](#)).

According to the EU-GBV survey findings, one third of women in the EU (32.9 %) experienced physical and/or psychological violence during childhood perpetrated by their parents. Specifically, 13.0 % experienced physical violence and 29.9 % experienced psychological violence. For physical or psychological violence perpetrated by parents, mothers and fathers exhibited similar rates of perpetration (24.6 % versus 25.0 %). One in three (33.9 %) women in the EU witnessed violence between their parents as children.

In the EU-27, 6.6 % of women experienced sexual violence during childhood. In particular, 1.6 % of women were raped before the age of 15, similar to the rate found in FRA's 2012 survey (1.4 % in the EU-27). However, only 5.9 % of victims of sexual violence before the age of 15 indicated that this was reported to the police. 93.9 % of perpetrators of sexual violence during women's childhoods were men. Women who experience sexual abuse in childhood are 3.2 times more likely to be sexually victimised by an intimate partner as adults, or 4.3 times more likely by a non-partner, than women who did not experience sexual abuse in childhood. The EU-GBV survey data underline that gender-based violence against women is a complex phenomenon that can occur throughout a woman's lifetime. Data on abuse experienced in childhood are essential for understanding the wider context of abuse.

OPINION 17

Given the cyclical nature of violence demonstrated in the data, Member States need to prioritise funding long-term psychological support for childhood violence survivors, specifically designed to break the cycle of victimisation and prevent the intergenerational transmission of violence.

**PHYSICAL AND SEXUAL
VIOLENCE AGAINST
WOMEN – SUMMARY
OVERVIEW OF ITS
PREVALENCE IN THE EU**

1



KEY FINDINGS

- Close to one in three women in the EU (30.7 %) have experienced physical violence (including threats) and/or sexual violence during their adulthood (in the survey, since the age of 15). The prevalence ranges from 57.1 % (Finland) to 11.9 % (Bulgaria) across the EU.
- Some one in five women in the EU have experienced physical violence (including threats) by a domestic perpetrator (19.3 %) and/or a non-partner (20.2 %).
- In most cases, the perpetrators of non-partner violence were men, and the violence often took place on private premises – for example, 54.9 % of women raped by a non-partner report that the incident took place in a private residence (either the victim's or someone else's home).
- Across the EU-27, 8.4 % of women have been raped while unable to refuse or under coercion, compared with 4.8 % who report that they were raped with the use of force or threats. 17.2 % of women in the EU have experienced sexual violence during their adulthood, including rape or other sexual attack. The prevalence ranges from 41.0 % (Sweden) to 3.4 % (Bulgaria).

In recent years, the EU and its Member States have strengthened their legal frameworks to prevent and combat gender-based violence against women, including physical, sexual and other forms of violence. Some of the main instruments of EU law relevant to this include the VRD and the VAW Directive (to be incorporated into national law by Member States by June 2027). These directives, and other EU legislation, are referenced in more detail in the following chapters of this report in terms of specific types of violence and their impact. Alongside the EU legislation, reference is also made to other relevant commitments, first and foremost the Istanbul Convention, which at the time of writing had been ratified by the EU and 22 of its Member States.

The widespread prevalence of violence in the lives of women across the EU was confirmed by the [results of the EU-GBV survey](#), which Eurostat, FRA and EIGE published in November 2024. The report showed that many women experience violence at home, at work and in public spaces, with perpetrators ranging from intimate partners to strangers. The results published by Eurostat, FRA and EIGE in 2024 focused on the prevalence of violence. Eurostat has also made those results available in its [online database](#).

Understanding the prevalence of violence is vital for understanding women's experiences of violence – its nature, impact and consequences – and the actions women take as a result of experiencing violence. This chapter starts by presenting selected prevalence results from the EU-GBV survey in a concise manner, to allow them to be considered as a benchmark when reading other findings presented in this report. The chapter also includes a note concerning the comparability of key prevalence rates between the EU-GBV survey and FRA's 2012 survey. The chapter describes in more detail physical and sexual violence perpetrated by people other than an intimate partner – in contrast to violence by an intimate partner, which is examined in [Chapter 2](#). Finally, the chapter presents summary results concerning cyberviolence.

1.1. PREVALENCE OF PHYSICAL AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN THE EU

Close to one in three women in the EU (30.7 %) have experienced physical violence (including threats) and/or sexual violence by any perpetrator ([Table 1](#)) – including women's current or former intimate partner(s) or people other than an intimate partner (non-partners). The prevalence ranges from 57.1 % in Finland, 52.5 % in Sweden and 49.1 % in Hungary to 19.7 % each in Czechia and Portugal, 16.7 % in Poland and 11.9 % in Bulgaria. These results are based on women's experiences during their lifetimes – namely, they concern women's adult lives, including experiences when women have been in a relationship with an intimate partner, or since the age of 15 with respect to non-partners.

TABLE 1 – PREVALENCE OF PHYSICAL VIOLENCE (INCLUDING THREATS) AND/OR SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN LIFETIME/SINCE THE AGE OF 15, BY TYPE OF PERPETRATOR (%)

Member State	Intimate partner	Domestic perpetrator	Non-partner	Any perpetrator
BE	17.1	19.7	19.1	29.1
BG	9.3	9.5	5.9	11.9
CZ	13.4	14.5	9.7	19.7
DK	25.7	14.1	38.2	47.5
DE	15.8	18.3	14.1	25.6
EE	21.8	26.3	20.6	33.1
IE	22.7	24.1	27.6	40.7
EL	21.7	24.7	24.8	36.5
ES	14.4	15.9	20.0	28.2
FR	17.7	19.4	26.1	34.5
HR	12.7	15.3	18.7	25.3
IT	13.6	14.1	24.8	31.7
CY	30.0	30.3	14.6	36.1
LV	16.1	16.9	13.9	25.1
LT	16.6	17.1	13.6	25.2
LU	26.6	30.0	33.7	45.4
HU	41.1	43.8	19.2	49.1
MT	14.6	16.2	15.1	24.4
NL	16.7	19.9	35.5	41.2
AT	17.1	20.0	27.5	35.7
PL	11.2	11.5	8.2	16.7
PT	10.3	11.5	13.1	19.7
RO	37.0	39.2	14.1	42.2
SI	13.4	14.9	16.0	22.5
SK	30.7	32.7	16.9	37.9
FI	33.8	36.3	46.5	57.1
SE	31.0	32.0	42.0	52.5
EU-27	17.7	19.3	20.2	30.7

Note: In the EU-GBV survey, respondents were asked about experiencing violence by an intimate partner during their lifetime, while questions concerning violence by non-partners asked about experiences since the age of 15.

Source: Eurostat, EU-GBV survey, 2021 wave, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA and EIGE. Eurostat online data codes: [gbv_ipv_type](#), [gbv_dv_type](#), [gbv_npv_type](#), [gbv_any_type](#).

What the survey asked about physical and sexual violence

In the EU-GBV survey, respondents were asked whether their current partners, any of their previous partners or someone else (non-partners) had ever done any of the following.

Physical

- Threatened to harm you in a way that frightened you?
- Pushed, shoved or pulled your hair on purpose in a way that hurt or frightened you?
- Thrown something at you or slapped you on purpose in a way that hurt or frightened you?
- Beat you with their fist or with an object or kicked you on purpose in a way that hurt or frightened you?
- Burned you on purpose?
- Tried to suffocate you or strangled you on purpose?
- Threatened to use or actually used a knife, a gun, acid or something similar against you?
- Ever used force against you in any other way than mentioned above, in a way that hurt or frightened you?

Sexual

- Forced you to have sexual intercourse by threatening you, holding you down or hurting you in some way? (By sexual intercourse, we mean here vaginal or anal penetration or oral sex or penetration with objects.)
- Made you have sexual intercourse when you could not refuse due to the influence of alcohol or drugs?
- Made you have sexual intercourse when you did not want to because you were afraid of what would happen if you refused?
- Made you have sexual intercourse with someone else by force, threat or blackmail (also in exchange for money, goods or favours)?
- Attempted to force you to have sexual intercourse by threatening you, holding you down or hurting you in some way but intercourse did not occur?
- Forced you to do something else sexual other than what is mentioned above that you found degrading or humiliating?

In addition, the set of questions concerning experiences with non-partners also included the following question as part of the set of questions on sexual violence.

Apart from what was mentioned above, has someone touched your genitals, breasts, bottom or lips when you did not want them to?

In addition to the overall prevalence of physical violence (including threats) and/or sexual violence, [Table 2](#) outlines the extent to which women are confronted with sexual violence by various perpetrators. The EU-GBV survey included a number of questions related to sexual violence, including questions on rape, attempted rape and other forms of sexual violence women experience during their adult lives. For example, 7.7 % of women in the EU have experienced sexual violence by their intimate partner. The results range from 17.6 % in Sweden, 14.6 % in Slovakia, 13.7 % in Hungary and 13.1 % in Luxembourg to 4.0 % in Slovenia, 3.5 % in Poland, 3.4 % in Portugal and 2.2 % in Bulgaria. A separate section of the survey asked about experiences of sexual violence in childhood; in the context of the survey, this refers to violence experienced before the age of 15. To examine the broader extent of sexual incidents experienced by women, [Table 2](#) also includes also the prevalence of sexual harassment at work.

TABLE 2 – PREVALENCE OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN LIFETIME/ SINCE THE AGE OF 15, AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN CHILDHOOD, BY TYPE OF PERPETRATOR (%)

Member State	Experiences in lifetime/since the age of 15				Experiences in childhood	
	Sexual violence (including rape and other sexual attack), by type of perpetrator				Sexual harassment at work by any perpetrator	Sexual violence by any perpetrator
	Intimate partner	Domestic perpetrator	Non-partner	Any perpetrator		
BE	7.6	8.7	11.5	16.1	32.9	8.4
BG	2.2	2.6	2.4	3.4	12.2	2.2
CZ	5.9	6.3	4.4	9.2	30.5	1.2
DK	12.0	5.7	28.8	33.3	46.4	12.4
DE	7.4	8.7	9.4	14.8	32.1	5.1
EE	8.5	11.8	12.8	18.0	33.3	5.5
IE	11.5	11.2	14.9	21.7	44.0	8.5
EL	5.9	7.3	14.5	18.1	42.6	8.1
ES	6.7	7.5	13.5	17.6	28.2	6.8
FR	8.9	9.6	16.8	21.6	41.1	11.3
HR	4.5	5.8	10.8	13.4	36.4	4.5
IT	n/a	5.7	17.7	18.8	14.76	n/a
CY	9.9	10.5	6.5	14.6	39.9	3.9
LV	4.4	4.6	5.9	9.0	11.0	2.2
LT	5.5	5.5	6.0	10.2	19.1	1.6
LU	13.1	14.2	23.0	30.0	52.9	14.8
HU	13.7	14.7	8.4	17.9	40.1	2.5
MT	5.2	5.8	7.3	11.1	27.1	4.5
NL	7.4	9.3	25.8	28.6	40.9	12.3
AT	7.0	8.3	20.1	23.7	26.6	7.1
PL	3.5	3.4	2.1	5.0	13.0	1.8
PT	3.4	3.4	3.9	6.4	12.3	3.5
RO	11.5	12.4	4.6	13.9	32.5	1.9
SI	4.0	4.2	6.7	9.6	31.7	6.6
SK	14.6	15.4	6.2	17.6	53.0	8.4
FI	10.1	12.7	34.2	37.3	53.7	13.7
SE	17.6	18.3	34.9	41.0	55.4	15.3
EU-27	7.7	8.2	12.9	17.2	30.8	6.6

Notes: Some indicators above are not available for Italy (denoted with n/a). The EU average for these indicators has been calculated based on data from other Member States. The definition of sexual harassment at work used in the data collection in Italy differs from the definition applied in the EU-GBV survey. In the EU-GBV survey, respondents were asked about experiencing violence by an intimate partner during their lifetime, while questions concerning violence by non-partners asked about experiences since the age of 15.

Source: Eurostat, EU-GBV survey, 2021 wave, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA and EIGE. Eurostat online data codes: [gbv_ipv_type](#), [gbv_dv_type](#), [gbv_npv_type](#), [gbv_any_type](#), [gbv_shw_occ](#), [gbv_ch_age](#).

Besides the overall prevalence of sexual violence in the EU-27, it is possible to calculate from the EU-GBV survey the prevalence of rape in the EU. As shown in the box '[What the survey asked about physical and sexual violence](#)', the set of questions related to sexual violence includes a question about experiencing rape that involved the perpetrator using physical force or threats, followed by questions describing rape that was committed when women were unable to refuse or were coerced to comply with the perpetrator. Article 36 of the Istanbul Convention requires parties to the convention to criminalise non-consensual penetration of a sexual nature and engaging in other non-consensual sexual acts or causing another person to engage in non-consensual acts of a sexual nature with another person. The questions included in the EU-GBV survey, taken together, describe non-consensual acts of a sexual nature as listed in the Istanbul Convention. However, since not all Member States fully apply this definition of Article 36 in their criminal law and others have revised their laws only recently ⁽¹²⁾, it is useful to examine women's experiences with respect to the type of rape they have experienced. Therefore, [Table 3](#) presents both the total prevalence of rape and the disaggregated rates: one for rape that involved the use of force or threats, and the second for rape that occurred when women were unable to refuse or under coercion. According to the EU-GBV survey, 9.2 % of women in the EU have been raped. The results range from 21.9 % in Sweden, 15.5 % in Finland, 15.4 % in Denmark and 15.3 % in Luxembourg to 3.6 % in Portugal, 3.3 % in Poland and 2.3 % in Bulgaria.

TABLE 3 – WOMEN RAPED IN THE EU DURING THEIR LIFETIME, IN TOTAL AND BY TYPE OF INCIDENT (%)

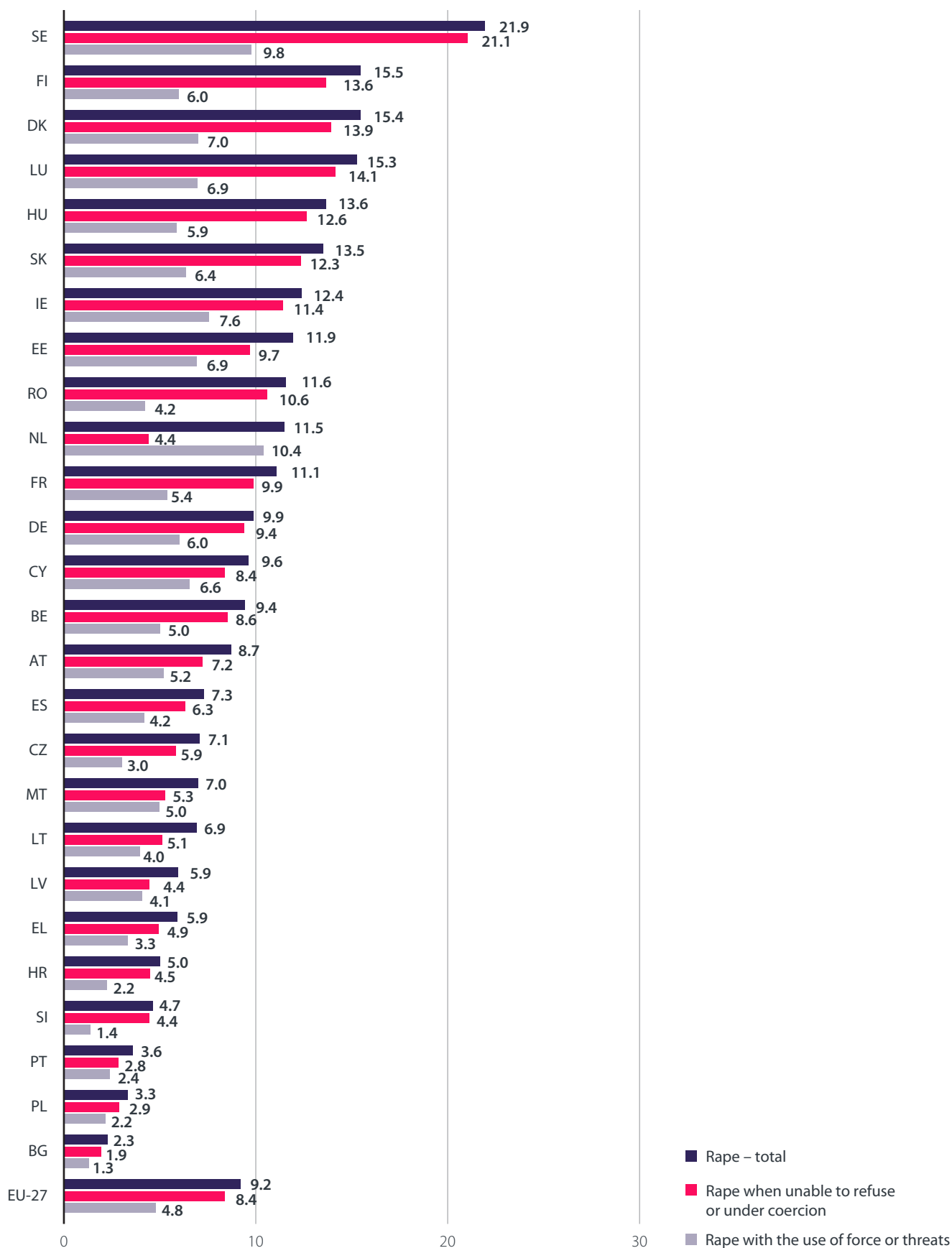
Member State	Rape – total	Rape with use of force or threats	Rape when unable to refuse or under coercion
BE	9.4	5.0	8.6
BG	2.3	1.3	1.9
CZ	7.1	3.0	5.9
DK	15.4	7.0	13.9
DE	9.9	6.0	9.4
EE	11.9	6.9	9.7
IE	12.4	7.6	11.4
EL	5.9	3.3	4.9
ES	7.3	4.2	6.3
FR	11.1	5.4	9.9
HR	5.0	2.2	4.5
CY	9.6	6.6	8.4
LV	5.9	4.1	4.4
LT	6.9	4.0	5.1
LU	15.3	6.9	14.1
HU	13.6	5.9	12.6
MT	7.0	5.0	5.3
NL	11.5	4.4	10.4
AT	8.7	5.2	7.2
PL	3.3	2.2	2.9
PT	3.6	2.4	2.8
RO	11.6	4.2	10.6
SI	4.7	—	4.4
SK	13.5	6.4	12.3
FI	15.5	6.0	13.6
SE	21.9	9.8	21.1
EU-27	9.2	4.8	8.4

Notes: Results for the Netherlands were calculated by Eurostat. Results for Italy are not available. The result for Slovenia concerning rape with use of force or threats has been suppressed because of a low number of responses (< 20).

Source: Eurostat, EU-GBV survey, 2021 wave, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA and EIGE.

Figure 1 illustrates the results presented in Table 3 and the variation in results across Member States regarding rape with use of force or threats, and rape that was committed when women were unable to refuse or under coercion. In some Member States with high total prevalence of rape, 40–50 % of women indicate that the rape involved the use of force; in Member States – such as Cyprus, Latvia, Malta and Portugal – with average or below average rates for rape, rapes with the use of force constitute more than two thirds of the total number of rapes. These differences may reflect actual differences in women’s experiences across Member States, but they may also involve differences in reporting and women’s perceptions related to sexual encounters, particularly in identifying situations where their consent was not confirmed.

FIGURE 1 – WOMEN RAPED DURING THEIR LIFETIMES IN THE EU, IN TOTAL AND BY TYPE OF INCIDENT (%)



Notes: Results for the Netherlands were calculated by Eurostat. Data are not available for calculating the results for Italy.

Source: Eurostat, EU-GBV survey, 2021 wave, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA and EIGE.

EU-GBV survey and the Nordic paradox

The results of FRA's 2012 survey on violence against women in the EU led researchers to examine the so-called Nordic paradox: a phenomenon whereby countries with high levels of gender equality, as measured by tools like EIGE's Gender Equality Index, also show a high prevalence of violence against women (*). This pattern is particularly evident in Nordic countries. Findings from the second wave of the EU-GBV survey are consistent with this pattern and offer further insight.

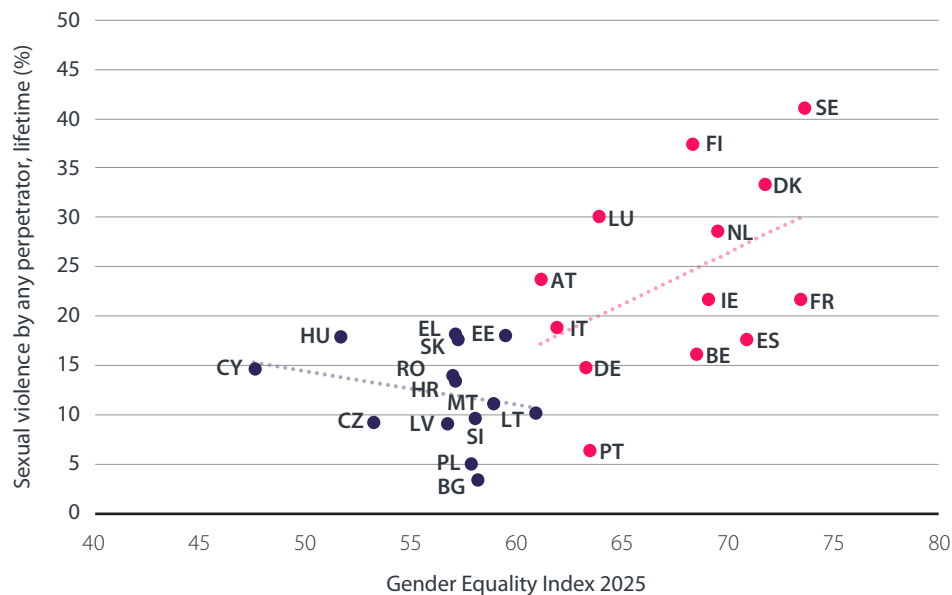
For instance, data regarding the rate at which women disclose sexual violence, as shown in [Figure 2](#), reveal two distinct clusters of Member States. One cluster, with high gender equality scores, shows a positive correlation with disclosure rates ($r = 0.46$), while the other cluster, characterised by low gender equality, shows a moderate negative correlation ($r = -0.25$).

These findings suggest that differences in women's willingness or ability to disclose sexual violence are closely linked to levels of gender equality. Disclosure rates tend to be higher in countries with greater gender equality – such as the Nordic states – while, in countries with lower gender equality, disclosure patterns are shaped by more complex social and cultural dynamics.

As already indicated in the report by Eurostat, FRA and EIGE on the key findings of the EU-GBV survey, a number of other factors can contribute to differences between countries and the patterns that emerge from the data, such as differences in the sociodemographic profiles of women in each Member State and differences in survey implementation nationally.

(*) See Gracia, E. and Merlo, J., '[Intimate partner violence and the Nordic paradox](#)', *Social Science and Medicine*, Vol. 157, 2016, pp. 37–30; Humbert, A. L., Strid, S., Hearn, J. and Balkmar, D., '[Undoing the "Nordic paradox": Factors affecting rates of disclosed violence against women across the EU](#)', *PloS ONE*, Vol. 16, No 5, 2021, e0249693.

FIGURE 2 – ASSOCIATION BETWEEN DISCLOSURE OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE BY ANY PERPETRATOR AND MEMBER STATES' GENDER EQUALITY INDEX SCORES



Note: Cluster on the left, $r = -0.25$; cluster on the right, $r = 0.46$.

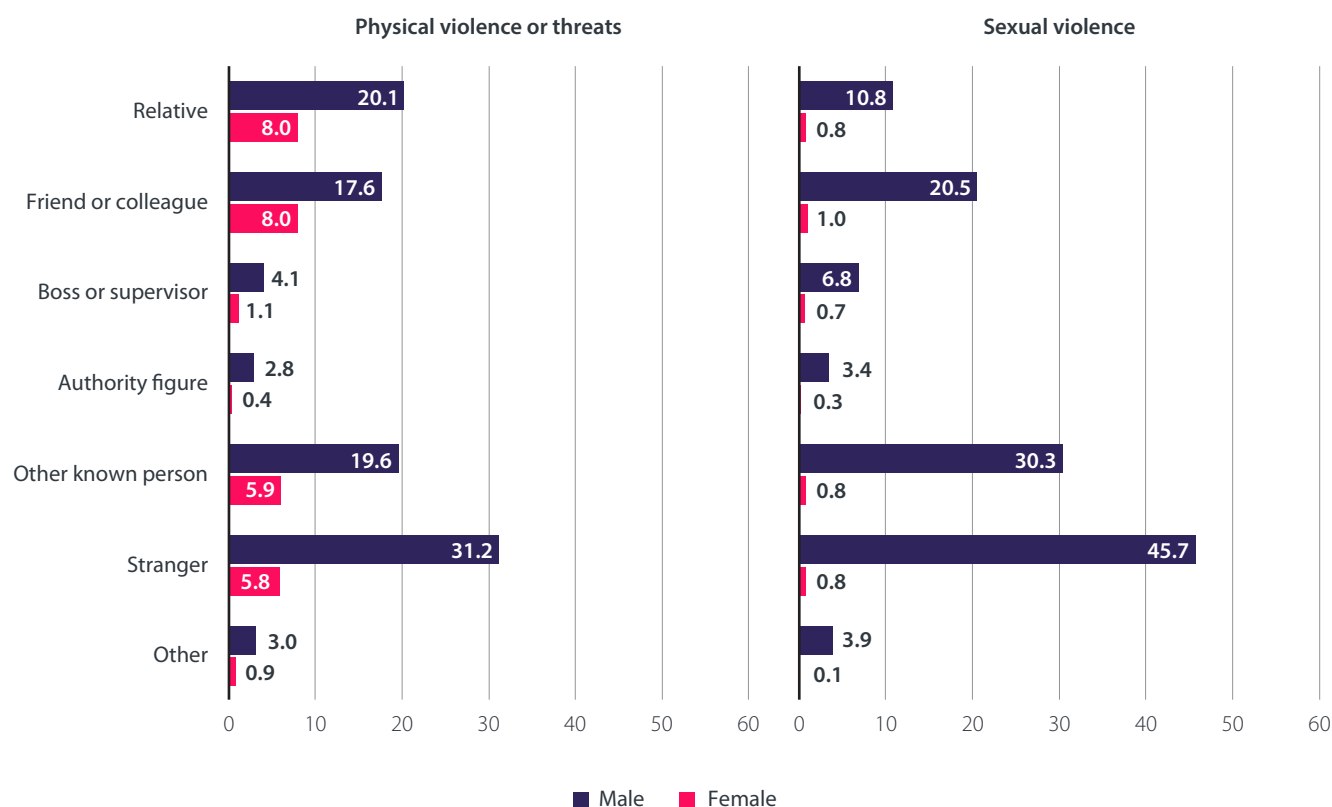
Sources: Eurostat, EU-GBV survey, 2021 wave, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA and EIGE; [EIGE, Gender Equality Index, 2025](#).

1.2. VIOLENCE PERPETRATED BY PEOPLE OTHER THAN AN INTIMATE PARTNER

The next chapter of this report focuses on physical, sexual and psychological violence by women's intimate partners. However, the EU-GBV survey also collected details concerning perpetrators of physical and sexual violence for incidents perpetrated by someone other than women's intimate partners. These non-partners include various people, ranging from acquaintances, friends and relatives to people from work or perpetrators who the women had never met before.

Examining the prevalence of violence by gender and type of non-partner perpetrator shows that most incidents of non-partner violence experienced by women are committed by a male perpetrator ([Figure 3](#)). While this is clearly the case for sexual violence, the results show that physical violence or threats against women are also predominantly committed by men, across all the non-partner categories used in the EU-GBV survey. For example, 31.2 % of women who have experienced physical violence or threats experienced it from a male stranger compared with 5.8 % who have experienced it from a female stranger.

FIGURE 3 – VICTIMS OF NON-PARTNER VIOLENCE, BY TYPE OF VIOLENCE, TYPE OF PERPETRATOR AND GENDER OF THE PERPETRATOR (EU-27, %)

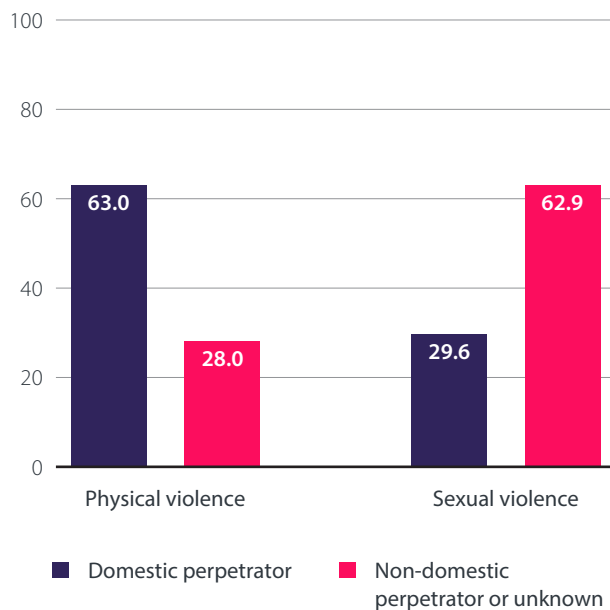


Note: Perpetrators in the authority figure category can include, for example, police officers, military personnel, doctors or religious leaders.

Source: Eurostat, EU-GBV survey, 2021 wave, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA and EIGE.

With respect to the last episode of violence that women experienced from a domestic non-partner perpetrator, two in three women (63.0 %) indicate that this involved physical violence or threats, while 29.6 % have experienced sexual violence (Figure 4). The opposite pattern can be observed for incidents perpetrated by non-domestic non-partners, among which sexual violence incidents outnumber incidents of physical violence.

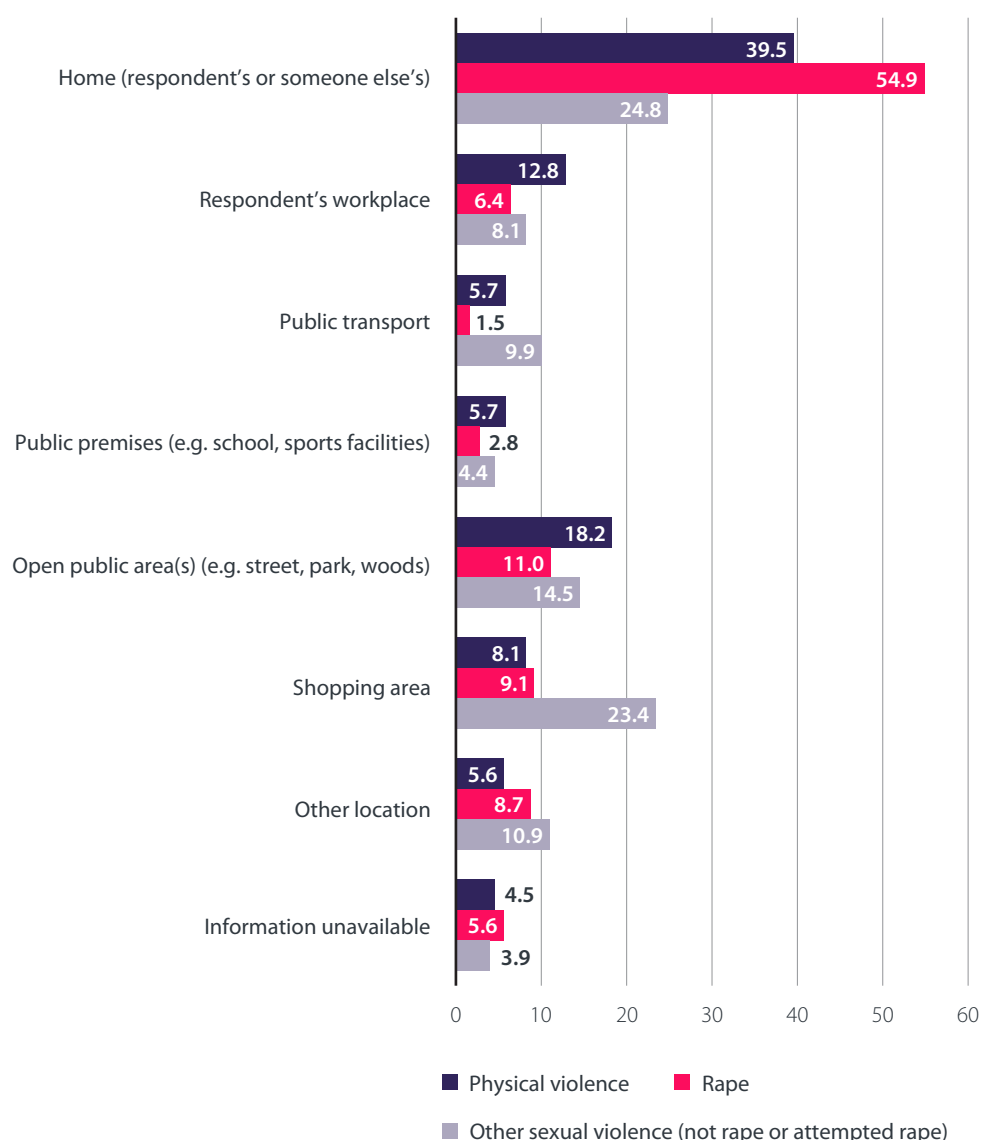
FIGURE 4 – TYPE OF NON-PARTNER VIOLENCE EXPERIENCED, BY PERPETRATOR CATEGORY (EU-27, %)



Source: Eurostat, EU-GBV survey, 2021 wave, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA and EIGE.

The most common location mentioned by women where violence by non-partners occurs is either the woman's home or the perpetrator's or someone else's private residence (Figure 5). This pattern is particularly pronounced for rape by non-partners, with over half of all incidents occurring in home settings, based on women's descriptions of the last episode of non-partner violence they experienced. For forms of sexual violence other than rape by non-partners, the locations vary, with shopping areas (e.g. shopping centres, shops or markets) being the predominant venue after home settings.

FIGURE 5 – LOCATION WHERE THE LAST EPISODE OF VIOLENCE BY A NON-PARTNER TOOK PLACE, BY TYPE OF VIOLENCE (EU-27, %)



Source: Eurostat, EU-GBV survey, 2021 wave, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA and EIGE.

1.3. CYBERVIOLENCE

The VAW Directive notes that 'cyber violence can have the effect of silencing women and hindering their societal participation on an equal footing with men'. The directive also indicates that ICT tools can be used to amplify cyberviolence in a way that causes profound and long-lasting harm. The directive requires Member States to criminalise four specific forms of cyberviolence across the EU: cyberstalking, cyber harassment, cyber incitement to hatred or violence and the non-consensual sharing of intimate or manipulated material.

Recognising the particular challenges of cyberviolence, Grevio selected the digital dimension of violence against women as the topic of its first general recommendation in 2021 in the context of the Istanbul Convention.

As part of the set of questions used to estimate the overall prevalence of sexual harassment at work, the EU-GBV survey included questions that refer to acts of sexual cyber harassment. Some questions concerning psychological violence perpetrated by an intimate partner and stalking also referred to technology-facilitated acts of violence. FRA and EIGE also included additional

survey questions in the eight Member States where the two agencies carried out the data collection, to provide for a more comprehensive perspective on experiences of cyberviolence. These results are presented in the relevant chapters of this report. In what follows, the results on cyberviolence are summarised to provide an overview based on questions from different parts of the survey.

— **Sexual cyber harassment**

- **At work.** Overall, 7.0 % of ever-working women in the EU-27 have experienced sexual harassment at work that involved the use of online tools. This could involve harassment using sexually explicit emails or other messages, or inappropriate advances via social networking services. More detailed results are presented in [Section 6.2](#) of this report.
- **Outside work.** Questions added to the survey in eight Member States (FRA–EIGE data collection) show that 11.7 % of women in those Member States have experienced sexual cyber harassment outside the work context. More details on these results are available in the box '[Sexual harassment outside work – additional questions that FRA and EIGE included in the survey in eight Member States](#)'.

— **Cyberstalking**

- In the eight Member States where FRA and EIGE carried out the survey, 8.5 % of women indicate that they have experienced cyberstalking. This is based on a question added to the survey where women could indicate if the stalking they have experienced took place online. More details on these results are included in [Section 7.1.1](#) of this report.
- In addition, in the eight Member States included in the FRA–EIGE data collection, women were asked, besides the acts of stalking listed in the EU-GBV survey, whether they had experienced someone repeatedly following them or spying on them remotely, such as through a tracking app, using a global positioning system (GPS) device or based on mobile phone location data. In total, 1.4 % of women in the eight Member States have experienced stalking of this nature.

— **Psychological violence perpetrated by an intimate partner**

- Among the questions included in the EU-GBV survey to calculate the prevalence of psychological violence by an intimate partner, women were asked whether their current or a former partner ever insisted on knowing where they go in a controlling way, including by monitoring women's location by social media or location tracking. Among ever-partnered women, 10.2 % have experienced this during a relationship. It should be noted that while the question provided respondents with examples that described the use of online tools, some of the experiences that women include here can also include controlling behaviour that did not use online tools.

— **Other acts of cyberviolence and abuse**

- The EU-GBV survey's extended questionnaire, which was used by FRA and EIGE in eight Member States, included a series of five additional questions related to selected abusive behaviours, followed up by a question to ask whether these experiences took place online. These could include acts carried out by intimate partners or non-partners. Further, to avoid overlap with other parts of the survey, the questions were placed towards the end of the questionnaire and respondents were asked to focus on experiences that they had not shared earlier in the interview. [Table 4](#) shows the results for each of the five questions included in the survey.

TABLE 4 – EXPERIENCING ABUSIVE BEHAVIOURS ONLINE AND OFFLINE (EIGHT MEMBER STATES INCLUDED IN THE FRA–EIGE DATA COLLECTION, %)

Question	Total – online or offline	Online
Somebody shared or threatened to share intimate photos or videos of you, real or manipulated, in a way that was meant to cause you harm	1.1	0.7
Somebody shared your personal information, such as your name, address or telephone number, in a way that was meant to cause you harm	1.0	0.7
Somebody spread comments about you that were false, in a way that was meant to cause you harm	5.2	2.4
Somebody tried to track your movements or spy on you, such as installing a tracking app on your phone, hiding a GPS tracking device in your bag or your pocket or accessing your mobile phone's location data without your permission	0.8	0.5
Somebody used abusive, sexist language about you because you are a woman, such as swear words or other derogatory terms specifically against women	9.0	2.5
Total for the five questions	12.3	4.6

Source: Eurostat, EU-GBV survey, 2021 wave, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA and EIGE.

As with other forms of violence covered in the survey, the survey results indicate that these forms of cyberviolence and abuse are predominantly perpetrated by men. The type of perpetrators most often associated with each act vary. Abusive, sexist language is most often attributed to a male stranger (54.8 %), while the male perpetrators of the other four acts most often involve a former partner.

**INTIMATE PARTNER
VIOLENCE – EXTENT
AND FORMS**

2



KEY FINDINGS

- 10.7 % of ever-partnered women in the EU have experienced physical violence by intimate partners during their lifetimes. 6.9 % have been raped by their intimate partner – a higher rate than for rape by a non-partner (3.8 %).
- Physical violence by an intimate partner often involves a pattern of repeated incidents. Physical violence occurs more than once for 50.8 % of victims where their current partner is the perpetrator and for 60.0 % of victims when perpetrated by a former partner(s).
- The extent of psychological violence is even higher than that of physical and/or sexual violence, experienced by 29.9 % of ever-partnered women. Psychological violence can include being belittled, humiliated or called names (experienced by 22.9 % of ever-partnered women), accusations of being unfaithful after speaking with other men/women (18.4 %), or being frightened or intimidated through acts like yelling or smashing things (12.8 %).
- Acts of psychological violence take place ‘often or all the time’ for 22.9 % of the victims when the perpetrator is the current partner, and for 40.4 % of victims these acts ‘sometimes’ happen, showing that psychological violence is often a pattern of behaviour instead of a one-time occurrence.
- Overall, 12.9 % of women in the EU have experienced frequent psychological violence by their current or former partner(s), which can be part of coercive control by the partner. The prevalence of frequent psychological violence by an intimate partner ranges from 23.3 % (Cyprus) to 5.9 % (Bulgaria).
- Psychological violence often occurs alongside other forms of violence. Among women who have experienced psychological violence by their current partners, 34.5 % have also experienced physical and/or sexual violence, compared with 0.9 % among women who do not experience psychological violence.
- Core EU-GBV survey questions capture economic violence at 8.3 %, but using an expanded set of questions (as was done by FRA and EIGE in eight Member States) reveals a 20.3 % prevalence, indicating that the issue is widespread.

Women are disproportionately affected by intimate partner violence. Article 46 of the Istanbul Convention ⁽¹³⁾ recognises violence committed against a former or current spouse or partner as an aggravating circumstance. The same applies to violence committed by a family member or another person cohabiting with the victim (domestic violence). The convention also laid crucial groundwork by defining and criminalising various forms of gender-based violence, including violence that may take place in an intimate relationship such as psychological violence, stalking, physical violence, sexual violence and economic abuse.

More recently, the EU has strengthened its legislative framework with the VAW Directive, which was adopted in May 2024. This directive represents a significant advancement by harmonising criminal definitions across Member States; establishing minimum standards for prevention, protection and support services (Articles 18–20, 24–27 and 34); and recognising the recurrent nature of the violence women often experience in intimate relationships (recital 38). The directive specifically recognises economic violence as a form of intimate partner violence, acknowledging how financial control serves as both a tactic of coercion (recital 12) and a barrier to escaping violent relationships (recital 19, Article 3(1)(d)). Member States have until June 2027 to incorporate the directive’s measures into national law.

The EU-GBV survey results examined in this chapter provide insights into the characteristics of victims and perpetrators of intimate partner violence, as well as the multifaceted nature of intimate partner violence. The impact of intimate partner violence is analysed in [Chapter 4](#) of this report. In addition to the results concerning the prevalence of physical and sexual violence by an intimate partner – in this chapter and earlier in [Chapter 1](#) – this chapter examines the results concerning the prevalence of psychological and economic violence perpetrated by intimate partners. This chapter also presents selected results on domestic violence – that is, violence perpetrated by an intimate partner, other family member or relative, or another person who was living in the same household as the victim at the time of the incident.

2.1. PHYSICAL AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE BY INTIMATE PARTNER

2.1.1. Physical violence

Across the EU, 10.7 % of ever-partnered women have experienced physical violence (including threats) by any partner during their relationship. In the survey, 'ever-partnered' refers to women who are in a relationship with an intimate partner or who have been in such a relationship in the past. This can include being married to a partner, living together without being married or dating somebody. Of those women who have a current partner, 4.4 % have experienced physical violence (including threats) by this partner. On the other hand, 20.6 % of those who have had one or more intimate partners in the past say that they have experienced physical violence (including threats) perpetrated by a former partner (this could involve one or more former partners).

The most common type of physical violence (including threats) by intimate partners is pushing (12.2 %), followed by threatening with physical violence (10.9 %), slapping (10.2 %) and beating (6.2 %) (Table 5). The questions used in the survey to ask about women's experiences of physical violence are listed in the box '[What the survey asked about physical and sexual violence](#)' (Chapter 1).

TABLE 5 – FORMS OF PHYSICAL VIOLENCE AND THREATS BY INTIMATE PARTNERS, EXPERIENCES DURING LIFETIME (EU-27, %)

Type of physical violence or threats	%
Threatened with harm	10.9
Pushed, shoved, hair pulled	12.2
Slapped, something thrown at the respondent	10.2
Beaten with a fist or an object, kicked	6.2
Burned	0.5
Suffocated or strangled	2.4
Knife, gun or acid use (or threatened with)	2.0
Other physical violence	1.8

Note: The results are calculated based on all ever-partnered women.

Source: Eurostat, EU-GBV survey, 2021 wave, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA and EIGE.

2.1.2. Sexual violence

Out of ever-partnered women across the EU-27, 6.9 % have been raped by their intimate partner – a current partner or a previous partner – during the relationship (Table 6). This includes sexual intercourse that took place with the use of force and other instances of sexual intercourse without the woman's consent (including situations where women were unable to give their consent). In addition to questions in the survey concerning different types of non-consensual sexual intercourse, the survey asked about other acts of sexual violence. When analysing the various forms of sexual violence asked about in the survey, noticeably, a larger share of women say their partner used intimidation (5.5 %) rather than force (3.6 %), pointing towards different power dynamics within intimate relationships. 2.2 % of women have experienced an attempted rape, and 2.5 % have experienced forms of sexual violence other than rape. The questions used in the survey to ask about women's experiences of sexual violence are listed in the box '[What the survey asked about physical and sexual violence](#)' (Chapter 1).

More women have experienced rape (in any form) by an intimate partner (6.9 %) than by a non-partner (3.8 %) during their lifetimes (or, for non-partner violence, since the age of 15). In fact, all forms of sexual violence are higher for intimate partner violence than for non-partner violence,

apart from ‘other sexual violence’. These results showcase the high prevalence of sexual violence within intimate relationships, and the importance of focused support for victims of intimate partner violence and of reflecting this in policy and law.

TABLE 6 – FORMS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE BY INTIMATE PARTNERS, EXPERIENCES DURING ONE’S LIFETIME (EU-27, %)

Type of sexual violence	%
Experienced rape (one or more of the four following acts)	6.9
Raped using force	3.6
Raped while unable to refuse due to intoxication	2.2
Raped using intimidation	5.5
Forced or coerced by the intimate partner to sexual intercourse with another person	0.7
Experienced attempted rape	2.2
Experienced other sexual violence	2.5

Note: The results are calculated based on all ever-partnered women.

Source: Eurostat, EU-GBV survey, 2021 wave, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA and EIGE.

Prevalence of intimate partner violence in the EU-GBV survey and FRA’s 2012 survey – selected comparisons

Table 7 presents selected results calculated from the EU-GBV survey and FRA’s 2012 survey (for notes concerning the comparability of the results between the two surveys, see Annex 2). The result related to physical violence by an intimate partner has been calculated specifically for the purpose of this comparison based on those acts that are broadly comparable between the two surveys. Therefore, the EU-GBV survey results differ from the prevalence of physical violence by an intimate partner that is presented elsewhere in this report and that is calculated according to the definition used by Eurostat. Also, in the questions used to calculate the results in **Table 7**, there are differences in how the acts are worded between the EU-GBV survey and the FRA survey. The results presented in **Table 7** exhibit varying patterns. In many cases, the results of the two surveys, carried out some 10 years apart, are similar, while in other cases the results differ; the direction of the difference depends on the Member State.

TABLE 7 – COMPARISON OF RESULTS FROM THE EU-GBV SURVEY AND FRA'S 2012 SURVEY ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, SELECTED INDICATORS (%)

Member State	Physical violence by an intimate partner (results based on selected acts of violence only)		Forced to have sexual intercourse by an intimate partner	
	FRA, 2012	EU-GBV survey, 2021	FRA, 2012	EU-GBV survey, 2021
BE	25.3	15.6	5.2	3.8
BG	24.7	9.0	5.1	1.0
CZ	20.0	10.2	4.2	(1.8)
DK	30.9	21.1	(2.8)	5.0
DE	22.1	14.5	4.0	4.2
EE	20.9	19.7	4.0	3.8
IE	17.7	20.1	(2.9)	6.3
EL	19.0	19.2	(2.4)	2.7
ES	12.4	12.8	(2.6)	3.3
FR	26.9	14.7	5.2	4.1
HR	13.4	10.9	(1.5)	(1.4)
CY	14.6	27.8	(3.0)	5.3
LV	33.2	15.3	4.0	2.6
LT	25.3	15.1	3.2	2.7
LU	24.3	22.2	(5.0)	5.3
HU	23.8	39.3	(1.8)	5.2
MT	14.6	13.8	(3.4)	3.5
AT	14.2	14.7	(3.0)	3.3
PL	13.6	10.6	(2.5)	2.0
PT	20.0	9.4	(2.5)	2.1
RO	25.2	35.4	3.5	3.4
SI	13.9	11.7	(1.1)	—
SK	23.3	27.2	4.7	5.6
FI	30.6	32.5	4.3	3.8
SE	27.6	26.0	4.1	7.4

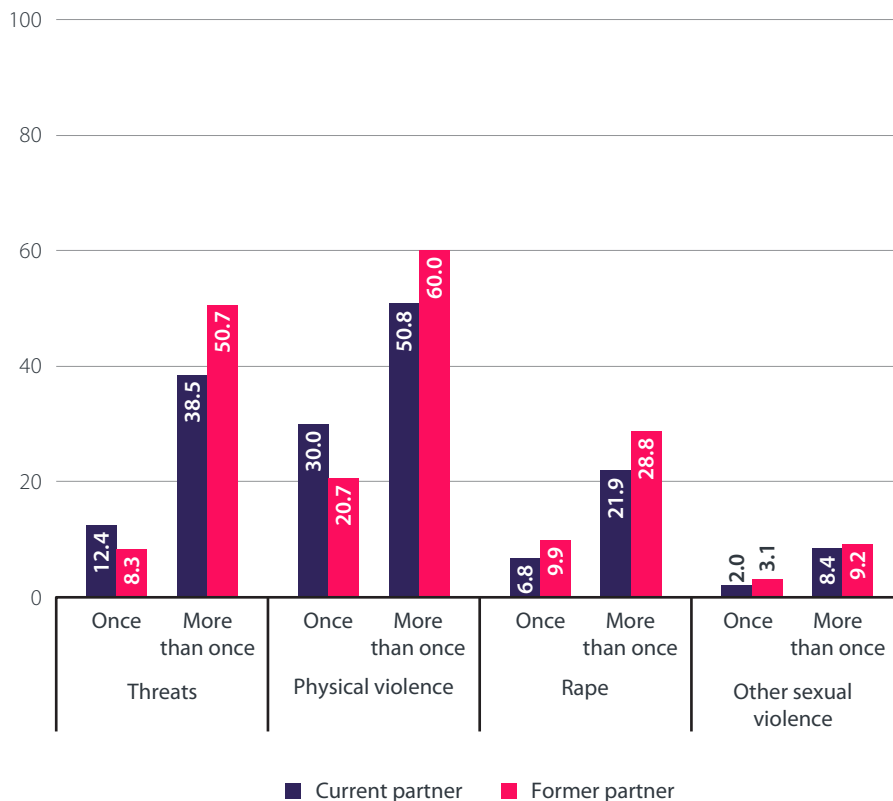
Notes: The results are calculated based on all ever-partnered women. Some results are displayed in brackets to suggest lower reliability (20–49 responses or item non-response between 20 % and 50 %). In both surveys, the questions on being forced to have sexual intercourse specify that this can include the perpetrator 'holding you down or hurting you in some way'. The EU-GBV survey additionally included situations where the perpetrator forced the victim to have sexual intercourse by using threats, whereas this was not included in the question used in FRA's 2012 survey. Italy and the Netherlands are not included in these results because EU-GBV survey microdata from these two Member States were not available for this analysis.

Sources: Eurostat, EU-GBV survey, 2021 wave, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA and EIGE; FRA gender-based violence against women survey dataset, 2012.

2.1.3. Occurrence of violence by type of partner and type of violence

Figure 6 outlines the prevalence of various types of violence (threats, physical violence, rape and other sexual violence), distinguishing whether violence occurred once or more than once, and the type of intimate partner perpetrating it. For every type of violence, the results show that, in an intimate relationship, experiencing multiple incidents of violence is much more common than experiencing it only once.

FIGURE 6 – OCCURRENCE OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE, BY TYPE OF VIOLENCE AND PERPETRATOR (EU-27, %)



Notes: The results have been calculated based on all ever-partnered women who have experienced physical violence (including threats) or sexual violence by their current or any previous partner. The categories of violence are not mutually exclusive – for example, a person who has experienced physical violence and threats is accounted for in both categories.

Source: Eurostat, EU-GBV survey, 2021 wave, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA and EIGE.

Of all the types of violence analysed, the overall prevalence of physical violence is higher than sexual violence in terms of experiences with both current and former partners. Situations where physical violence happened only once in the relationship are mentioned by 30.0 % of women regarding their current partners and 20.7 % regarding a former partner. This pattern is reversed when focusing on repeated incidents (i.e. violence that occurred more than once). For example, 60.0 % of women victims of physical violence by a former partner indicate it happened more than once, compared with 50.8 % of victims of physical violence by a current partner. These results highlight repeated violence occurring in past relationships. When comparing women's experiences with current and former partners, it is necessary to take into account that the category 'former partners' can include multiple people and thus – in the case of some women and their relationships – multiple violent perpetrators.

The prevalence of rape is also higher in past relationships and particularly with respect to rape as a repeat occurrence. In the case of single incidents, the prevalence drops to 9.9 % for rape perpetrated by former partners and 6.8 % by current partners (28.8 % former partner versus 21.9 % current partner).

2.2. PSYCHOLOGICAL VIOLENCE BY AN INTIMATE PARTNER

Article 3 of the Istanbul Convention identifies acts resulting in psychological or economic harm to women, including threats and coercion, as gender-based violence. When perpetrated by a victim's spouse or partner, these constitute domestic violence. Article 33 calls for the criminalisation of conduct that seriously impairs psychological integrity through coercion or threats, while Article 46 considers severe psychological harm an aggravating circumstance.

The convention's explanatory report emphasises that psychological violence should be viewed as a course of behaviour – an abusive pattern over time rather than a single event (paragraph 181) ⁽¹⁴⁾. It notes similarities with earlier Council of Europe and UN definitions, while adding the concept of economic harm, which can relate to psychological violence. The VAW Directive specifically addresses economic violence (recitals 12 and 19, Article 3(1)(d)) and acknowledges that domestic violence frequently involves coercive control – such as economic abuse – regardless of whether the perpetrator currently lives or has ever lived with the victim (recital 12).

In the EU-GBV survey, questions on experiencing selected acts of psychological violence (including acts of economic violence) were asked in the context of acts carried out by women's current or former intimate partners. However, other acts of violence included in the survey, such as physical and sexual violence, sexual harassment and stalking, can also cause psychological or economic harm. Therefore, women who had experienced physical or sexual violence, for example, were asked in the survey whether the violence resulted in any psychological consequences. The results concerning psychological consequences of other violent acts are examined elsewhere in this report, in the chapters that focus on various other acts of violence.

What the survey asked about psychological and economic violence

In the survey, respondents were asked whether their current partners or any of their previous partners had ever done any of the following:

- belittle and humiliate you, call you names while alone together or in front of other people;
- forbid you from seeing your friends, or from being occupied with hobbies or other activities;
- forbid you from seeing your family of birth or your relatives (grandparents, uncles, aunts);
- insist on knowing where you are in a controlling way or tracking you via GPS, phone, social network, etc.;
- get angry if you speak with another man/woman or accuse you of being unfaithful without any reason;
- expect you to ask for permission to leave the house or lock you up;
- forbid you to work;
- control the whole family's finances and excessively control your expenses;
- keep or take away your ID card / passport in order to control you;
- do things to scare or intimidate you on purpose, for example by yelling and smashing things;
- threaten to hurt your children or someone else you care about;
- threaten to take away your children / deny custody;
- threaten to harm themselves if you leave them.

Of the listed acts, forbidding the respondent from working and excessively controlling her expenses and family finances can be analysed as forms of economic violence. In addition to these, FRA and EIGE developed additional questions on economic violence, which were added to the survey in the eight Member States where FRA and EIGE jointly carried out the data collection. For details, see [Section 2.2.2](#).

2.2.1. Prevalence of psychological violence by an intimate partner

Close to one in three women (29.9 %) have experienced one or more acts of psychological violence at the hands of their intimate partner ([Table 8](#)). Here and later in this chapter, the results refer to women who had an intimate partner at the time of the survey interview or who had had an intimate partner in the past. Intimate partners can include a partner through marriage, a

person with whom women are living without being married or someone they otherwise are in a relationship with. Of those women who had a current partner, 11.6 % have experienced psychological violence by this partner. 35.8 % of those who have had one or more intimate partners in the past say that they have experienced psychological violence perpetrated by a former partner (this could mean one or more former partners). In the 12 months before the interview, 4.9 % of ever-partnered women experienced psychological violence by their intimate partner. The prevalence ranges from 11.6 % in Finland, 10.7 % in Romania and 9.6 % in Luxembourg to 3.4 % each in Malta and Portugal and 2.7 % in Poland.

TABLE 8 – WOMEN WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED PSYCHOLOGICAL VIOLENCE (INCLUDING ECONOMIC VIOLENCE) BY AN INTIMATE PARTNER (EU-27, %)

Member State	Lifetime	Last 12 months
BE	29.9	5.8
BG	19.4	3.9
CZ	31.3	5.6
DK	41.9	6.1
DE	30.0	4.3
EE	39.4	5.8
IE	33.2	(4.8)
EL	40.4	6.4
ES	27.6	4.0
FR	27.9	4.0
HR	26.9	5.2
IT	22.5	n/a
CY	42.6	9.2
LV	28.8	4.1
LT	29.5	4.2
LU	45.3	9.6
HU	52.1	6.8
MT	24.6	3.4
NL	31.8	(4.4)
AT	36.9	5.4
PL	19.1	2.7
PT	21.8	3.4
RO	45.5	10.7
SI	26.3	4.6
SK	48.9	—
FI	50.2	11.6
SE	44.9	6.0
EU-27	29.9	4.9

Notes: The results are calculated based on all ever-partnered women. Data are not available for calculating the 12-month result for Italy. The 12-month result for Slovakia has been suppressed because of a low number of responses (< 20). Results for the Netherlands and the EU-27 total were calculated by Eurostat. The 12-month rate for the EU-27 excludes Italy and Slovakia.

Source: Eurostat, EU-GBV survey, 2021 wave, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA and EIGE.

The most common type of psychological violence experienced is feeling belittled or humiliated by one's partner – 22.9 % of women in the EU-GBV survey and 25.8 % of ever-partnered women in FRA's 2012 survey have experienced this type of violence (however, there are some differences between the two surveys in how the question was asked). This is followed by the partner being jealous for no reason (18.4 %), intimidation (12.8 %), being forbidden to see family or friends (11.5 %) and having one's movements monitored (10.2 %) ([Table 9](#)). The acts of psychological violence asked about in the survey are listed in the box '[What the survey asked about psychological and economic violence](#)'. Women who have experienced psychological violence have often experienced a combination of different acts among those listed in the survey: 32.5 % have experienced two or three acts, 27.3 % four to six acts and 13.7 % seven or more different acts, compared with 26.5 % who have experienced only one act of psychological violence.

TABLE 9 – PSYCHOLOGICAL VIOLENCE BY A CURRENT AND/OR FORMER PARTNER, BY TYPE OF ACT (EU-27, %)

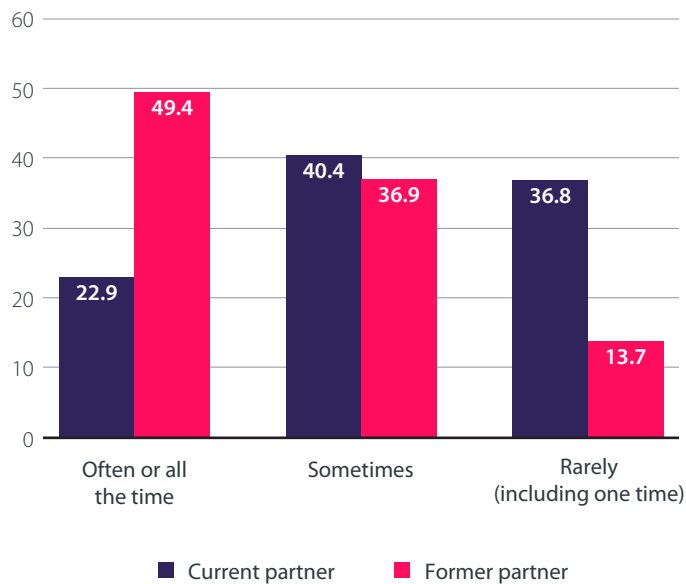
Type of psychological violence	Prevalence
Belittled, humiliated, called names	22.9
Met with anger if one spoke with other men/women, accused of being unfaithful	18.4
Scared or intimidated through behaviour such as yelling or smashing things	12.8
Forbidden from seeing friends or engaging in hobbies	11.5
Pressured into sharing where one goes in a controlling way; location monitored via social media or location tracking	10.2
All family finances and one's expenses controlled	7.3
Threatened with harming themselves	6.6
Forbidden from seeing family or relatives	5.4
Expected to ask for permission to leave the house or being locked up	5.2
Threatened with having children taken away or custody denied	3.2
Threatened with hurting the children or another close person	2.9
Forbidden from working	2.6
ID card or passport confiscated	1.1

Note: The results are calculated based on all ever-partnered women.

Source: Eurostat, EU-GBV survey, 2021 wave, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA and EIGE.

To an extent, it can be expected that the rate of psychological violence by a former partner is higher than the rate with respect to the current partner, because former partners can mean more than one person, depending on the number of past intimate partners, and in some cases the presence of psychological violence may have contributed to the decision to terminate the relationship. However, the psychological violence experienced repeatedly by former partners also had higher rates, which indicate a pattern of behaviour as opposed to a one-off occurrence. While 22.9 % of women indicate that one or more acts of psychological violence by their current partner happen often or all the time, this is the case for 49.4 % of women who have experienced psychological violence by a former partner ([Figure 7](#)).

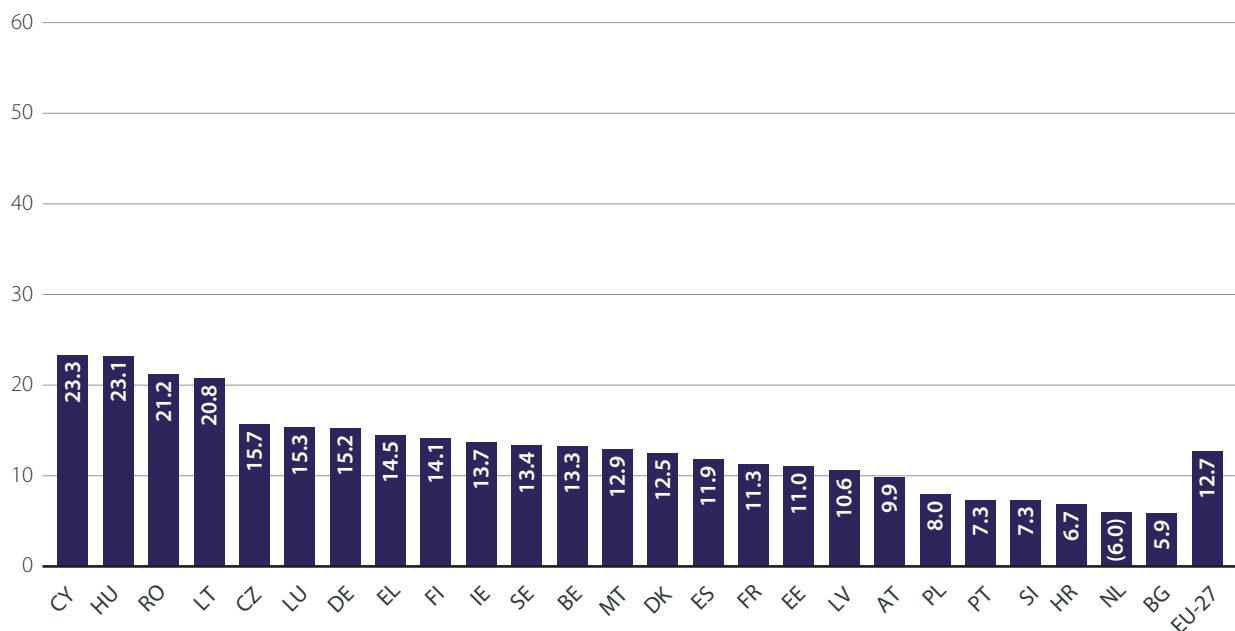
FIGURE 7 – PSYCHOLOGICAL VIOLENCE BY INTIMATE PARTNER, BY TYPE OF PARTNER AND FREQUENCY OF VIOLENCE (EU-27, %)



Source: Eurostat, EU-GBV survey, 2021 wave, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA and EIGE.

Psychological violence should be seen as a pattern of behaviour that occurs over time. It is therefore relevant to examine the survey data focusing on repeated experiences of psychological violence. 12.7 % of women who have a current or former partner experience frequent psychological violence, occurring either often or all the time (Figure 8). The prevalence of frequent psychological violence by an intimate partner, during women's lifetimes, ranges from 23.3 % in Cyprus, 23.1 % in Hungary, 21.2 % in Romania and 20.8 % in Lithuania to 6.7 % in Croatia and 5.9 % in Bulgaria.

FIGURE 8 – WOMEN WHO EXPERIENCED PSYCHOLOGICAL VIOLENCE BY A CURRENT AND/OR FORMER PARTNER(S) 'OFTEN' OR 'ALL THE TIME' (%)



Notes: The results are calculated based on all ever-partnered women. Data are not available for calculating the result for Italy. The result for Slovakia has been suppressed because of a low number of responses (< 20). The results for the Netherlands and the EU-27 total (excluding Italy and Slovakia) were calculated by Eurostat. The result for the Netherlands is displayed in brackets to suggest lower reliability (20–49 responses or item non-response between 20 % and 50 %).

Source: Eurostat, EU-GBV survey, 2021 wave, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA and EIGE.

Of women who have experienced psychological violence by their current partners, 42.2 % indicate that the violence has taken place within the past 12 months, whereas 26.3 % say that it happened 1–5 years ago and 26.6 % say that it took place more than 5 years ago. That is, some two in five women who have experienced psychological violence by their current partners experienced it recently, while for other women the psychological violence has occurred at some point in their intimate relationship but not recently.

One in three women who have experienced psychological violence by their current partners indicate that this has not been the only form of violence in their relationship. Specifically, of women who have experienced psychological violence by their current partners, 34.5 % have experienced physical violence (including threats) or sexual violence by this partner. In comparison, among women who have not experienced psychological violence by their current partners, 0.9 % have experienced physical violence (including threats) or sexual violence. That is, in a relationship, physical and sexual violence almost always takes place in the presence of psychological violence. This shows that, in intimate relationships, physical and sexual violence are rarely isolated incidents. They typically occur alongside patterns of psychological abuse, which often precede, accompany or intensify the physical or sexual forms of violence.

2.2.2. Economic violence by intimate partners

The questions included in the EU-GBV survey concerning psychological violence included two acts of economic violence. The first referred to the situation where women have been forbidden by their partners to work (experienced by 2.6 % of women in the EU-27), and the second referred to the partner exerting full control over family finances and excessively scrutinising a woman's expenses (experienced by 7.3 %). Overall, in the EU-27, 8.3 % of women have experienced one or both of these acts of economic violence. However, psychological violence in general can also discourage women from seeking employment outside the home and being in charge of their own financial resources. For example, it can be very difficult for a woman to find work outside the home if the partner jealously monitors her movements, is often jealous about who she is with and with whom she speaks, or takes away her ID card or passport.

Besides the two questions included in the EU-GBV survey, there are other ways in which economic violence can manifest in a relationship (see, for example, EIGE's 2024 report on financial independence and gender inequality, for a more in-depth analysis of forms of economic violence, that is, economic control, exploitation and sabotage ⁽¹⁵⁾). To provide a more detailed account of the various forms economic violence could take, FRA and EIGE included additional questions in the questionnaire that was used in the eight Member States where the two agencies jointly coordinated the data collection.

FRA–EIGE questions on economic violence

In eight Member States, the respondents were asked whether their intimate partner had ever done the following:

- discouraged or actively interfered with your employment or education;
- hidden or withheld money from you, lied about shared property and assets, or kept financial information from you;
- prevented you from having access to a bank account;
- taken your wages, pension, financial aid, disability payment or other support payments from you;
- stolen money from you or forced you to give them money or access to your debit or credit card, or convinced you to lend them money but did not pay it back;
- built up debt without your knowledge, when you would be fully or partly responsible for it – for example by leaving bills unpaid.

Of these six specific manifestations of economic violence, the most commonly experienced is having money or information about finances withheld from the respondent or being presented

with misleading information about property and assets – experienced by 10.2 % of women in the eight Member States (Table 10). This is followed by the partner building up debt that women would be fully or partly responsible for (9.0 %).

TABLE 10 – OTHER FORMS OF ECONOMIC VIOLENCE BY ANY PARTNER (EIGHT MEMBER STATES, %)

Type of economic violence	Prevalence
Hidden or withheld money from you, lied about shared property and assets, or kept financial information from you	10.2
Built up debt without your knowledge, when you would be fully or partly responsible for it – for example by leaving bills unpaid	9.0
Stolen money from you or forced you to give them money or access to your debit or credit card, or convinced you to lend them money but not paid it back	6.9
Discouraged or actively interfered with your employment or education	6.4
Taken your wages, pension, financial aid, disability payment or other support payments from you	5.1
Prevented you from having access to a bank account	4.6
Any of the above	17.7

Note: The results are calculated based on all ever-partnered women.

Source: Eurostat, EU-GBV survey, 2021 wave, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA and EIGE.

Based on the EU-GBV survey questionnaire's two questions on economic violence, in the eight Member States, 10.6 % of women have experienced economic violence by an intimate partner. If these experiences are considered together with the experiences captured by the six other forms of economic violence included in the FRA–EIGE questionnaire, the prevalence of economic violence rises to 20.3 % of ever-partnered women. That is, the more comprehensive set of questions results in a doubling of the prevalence rate compared with the shorter, two-question definition of economic violence included in the EU-GBV questionnaire.

2.3. DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

In the context of the EU-GBV survey, a domestic perpetrator means not only intimate partners and family members but any perpetrator who lived in the same household as the respondent during violent incidents. Given this, results for domestic violence include violence perpetrated by intimate partners unless otherwise specified and are calculated without limiting the sample to women who have had intimate partners.

Like intimate partner violence, domestic violence is included in both the Istanbul Convention and the VAW Directive. For example, Article 3(b) of the Istanbul Convention refers to domestic violence as involving ‘all acts of physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence that occur within the family or domestic unit or between former or current spouses or partners, whether or not the perpetrator shares or has shared the same residence with the victim’. The distinction between domestic violence and intimate partner violence helps to illustrate the different underlying causes, mechanisms and gendered risks of the two types of violence. For example, EIGE’s recent policy brief on improving the collection of disaggregated administrative data showcases how women were the majority of victims of both intimate partner violence and domestic violence (as measured through administrative judicial and police data) in 2022 ⁽¹⁶⁾, but the proportion is even more pronounced for intimate partner violence than for domestic violence (85 % and 76 %, respectively). Domestic violence encompasses more than intimate partner violence; it also includes family violence and must be addressed within a broader conceptual and policy framework. Understanding the specific contexts in which violence occurs is essential for effective legal and policy responses.

Across the EU, 19.3 % of women experience physical and/or sexual domestic violence during adulthood. Physical violence is more frequently mentioned (11.1 %) than sexual violence (8.2 %). While these figures reflect lifetime prevalence, more recent experiences are less common, with 2.1 % of women disclosing incidents in the past year and 5.9 % in the past five years. The vast majority of domestic violence is perpetrated by intimate partners (97.4 %), with only 2.6 % committed by other domestic perpetrators, such as family members or cohabitants.

In terms of the sociodemographic characteristics of women who have experienced domestic violence, the results show similar risk factors described earlier in this report concerning victims of intimate partner violence. These include a higher prevalence of domestic violence among women with disabilities, those living in cities and those who were born in a Member State other than the one where they currently live.

The analysis of perpetrators reveals that domestic violence is predominantly committed by men, who account for approximately 82.5 % of cases on average across Member States, with this proportion ranging from 73.8 % to 97.9 % depending on the Member State. Female perpetrators represent the remaining 17.5 % of cases.

The COVID-19 pandemic and intimate partner violence

The COVID-19 pandemic led many Member States to take unprecedented measures to contain the spread of the virus, starting in March 2020. The pandemic created conditions that intensified risk factors for intimate partner violence (*). Public health restrictions, including lockdowns and quarantine measures, inadvertently trapped many women in shared homes with abusive partners, while simultaneously reducing access to support networks and formal services (**). At the same time, economic stressors, social isolation and increased household tension exacerbated existing power imbalances within relationships.

In the eight Member States where FRA and EIGE jointly conducted the data collection, the survey interviews took place in 2023–2024, when the pandemic was no longer as pressing a concern. To examine the impact of the pandemic on women's experiences of intimate partner violence, FRA and EIGE included additional questions in their data collection on this topic. The following results assess how the pandemic and the measures taken to combat it impacted women's experiences of intimate partner violence.

The survey reveals divergent patterns depending on relationship status and violence type. Violence from former partners predominantly increased (40.2 %) or remained unchanged (43.0 %) during the pandemic, with only 5.6 % of respondents indicating a complete cessation of violence (Figure 9). Violence from current partners showed greater variation. While 53.7 % of respondents experienced no change, a notable 31.0 % indicate decreased violence, compared with just 9.6 % experiencing an increase. This suggests that cohabitation during lockdown did not uniformly exacerbate intimate partner violence.

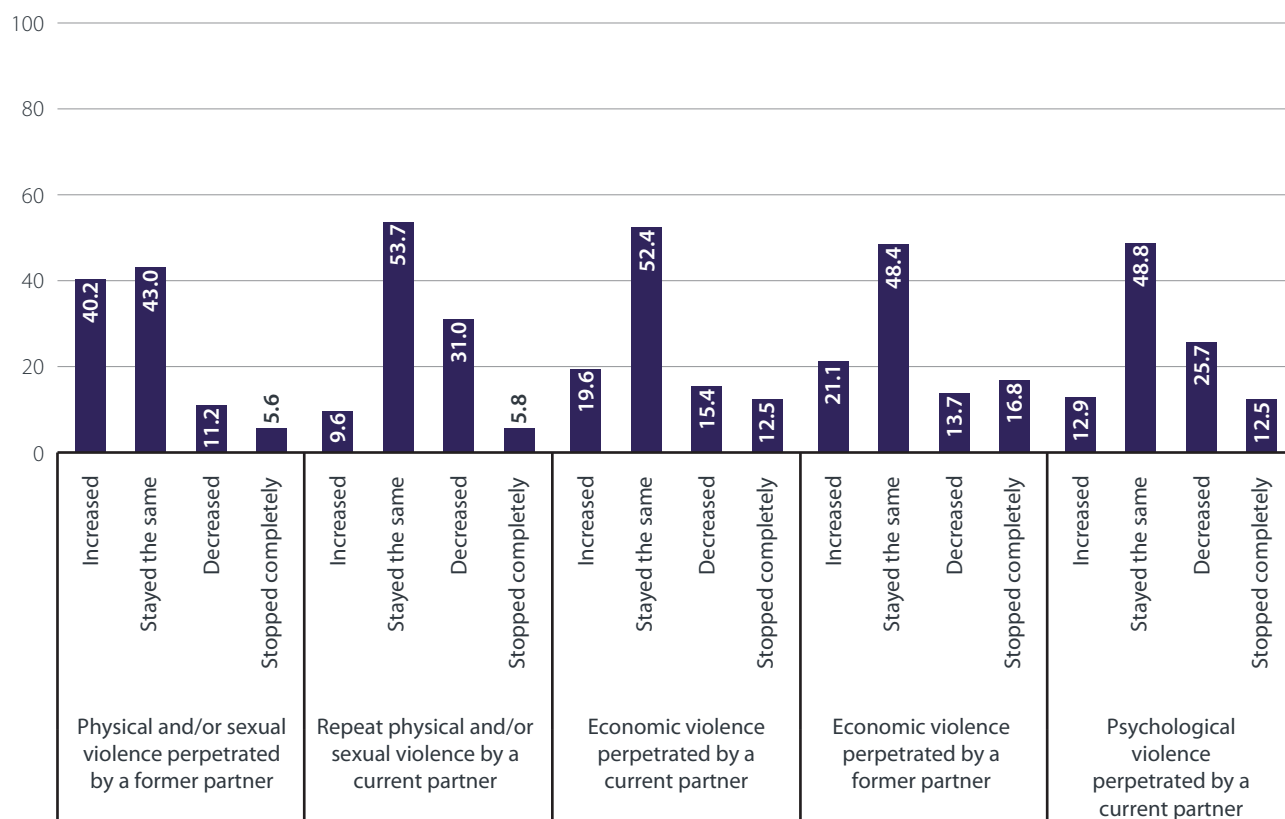
Economic violence emerged as a significant pandemic-related concern. Approximately one in five women experienced increased economic violence from both current (19.6 %) and former partners (21.1 %), probably reflecting pandemic-related economic pressures. With respect to current partners, 52.4 % of women experienced continued, unchanged economic violence during the pandemic, while 15.4 % saw a decrease. Patterns concerning former partners are broadly similar (48.4 % say that violence continued unchanged; 13.7 % say that violence decreased). More details concerning the way the survey asked about economic violence and women's experiences overall beyond the time of the pandemic are available in Section 2.2.2 of this report.

Psychological violence from current partners increased for some (12.9 %) but more commonly decreased (25.7 %), with 48.8 % of respondents indicating no change and 12.5 % noting that the psychological violence stopped. These data challenge the simplified narrative of pandemic-driven violence escalation. While increases occurred – particularly from former partners and in the form of economic abuse – the overall picture is more nuanced, varying notably by relationship dynamic and violence type. This complexity remains salient given that support services were simultaneously restricted.

(*) Heise, L. L., 'Violence against women: An integrated, ecological framework', *Violence against Women*, Vol. 4, Issue 3, 1998, pp. 262–290; WHO, *Preventing Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence against Women: Taking action and generating evidence*, 2010.

(**) Peterman, A., Potts, A., O'Donnell, M., Thompson, K., Shah, N. et al., 'Pandemics and violence against women and children', *Center for Global Development Working Paper 528*, April 2020.

FIGURE 9 – CHANGE IN THE OCCURRENCE OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC – PHYSICAL AND/OR SEXUAL VIOLENCE, ECONOMIC VIOLENCE AND PSYCHOLOGICAL VIOLENCE (EU-27, %)



Note: The results are calculated based on all ever-partnered women.

Source: Eurostat, EU-GBV survey, 2021 wave, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA and EIGE.

**WOMEN WHO HAVE
EXPERIENCED INTIMATE
PARTNER VIOLENCE –
CHARACTERISTICS AND
VULNERABILITY**

3



KEY FINDINGS

- Women with disabilities face an elevated risk of intimate partner violence during their lifetimes. They experience sexual violence by an intimate partner at a rate of 17.0 % compared with 6.6 % for women without a disability, and physical violence at a rate of 19.1 % (versus 10.6 % for women without a disability).
- 3.7 % of young women (aged 18–29 years) experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner in the 12 months before the survey compared with 0.9 % of women aged 65–74. Similar differences are observed with respect to psychological violence: 7.8 % of women aged 18–29 experienced this in the 12 months before the survey compared with only 2.3 % of women aged 65–74.
- Among women who are not EU nationals, 3.6 % experienced intimate partner violence in the 12 months before the survey compared with 2.0 % of women who were born in the Member State where they were interviewed. Women born in another Member State than where they are living show the highest lifetime sexual violence rate (10.8 %).
- Economic dependence emerges as a critical vulnerability factor, with women who are dependent on their current partners experiencing physical and/or sexual violence at a rate of 10.4 % during the relationship compared with 3.4 % for financially independent women.
- Women who depend on their current partners for basic needs like food, housing, money or immigration status face more than twice as high a prevalence of psychological violence (21.1 %) as independent women (9.3 %).
- 42.2 % of women whose current partner has been confronted by the police due to their aggressive behaviour (in any situation) experience physical and/or sexual violence, compared with 4.0 % of women whose partner has not been in such a situation.

The background information collected from the respondents allows for an examination of various sociodemographic and other relevant relationships in the data, thus identifying the groups of women more likely to be at risk of various types of violence. The sociodemographic information collected in the survey includes personal details such as age and education, information about the place where women live (urban or rural) and information related to select groups in the population, such as people with disabilities (in the survey, women who experience limitations to their usual activities) and women with a migrant background (based on country of birth and citizenship).

The chapter starts by examining the prevalence of intimate partner violence perpetrated among women in various sociodemographic categories, adding detail to the results presented earlier in Chapters 1 and 2. The presentation of results focuses first on women victims of physical and/or sexual violence, and then victims of psychological violence. This is followed by an analysis of risk factors that are associated with experiencing physical, sexual and psychological violence by an intimate partner, the characteristics of intimate partners as perpetrators of violence and factors related to the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator. The chapter closes with a focus on intimate partner violence that took place during women's pregnancies.

3.1. VICTIMS OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE AND THEIR CHARACTERISTICS

3.1.1. Victims of physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner

Table 11 presents the prevalence of violence for women in selected sociodemographic categories, including the prevalence of (1) physical and (2) sexual violence by an intimate partner during their lifetimes and (3) either or both within the 12 months preceding the survey.

TABLE 11 – PHYSICAL AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE BY ANY PARTNER DURING ONE’S LIFETIME AND IN THE 12 MONTHS BEFORE THE SURVEY, BY WOMEN’S SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS (EU-27, %)

Respondent characteristics	Categories	Violence by an intimate partner		
		Sexual violence – lifetime	Physical violence – lifetime	Physical and/or sexual violence – 12 months
Age	18–29 years	10.0	11.4	3.7
	30–44 years	7.3	11.6	2.0
	45–64 years	7.6	12.3	1.4
	65–74 years	5.3	10.5	0.9
Highest level of education completed	Lower secondary or lower	9.5	11.3	2.9
	Upper secondary or post-secondary but not tertiary	7.4	12.9	2.1
	Tertiary	7.1	10.2	1.4
Limitation in usual activities (*)	Severely limited	17.0	19.1	2.8
	Limited but not severely	11.3	15.8	2.4
	Not limited at all	6.6	10.6	1.9
Country of birth	Same as country of residence	7.5	11.4	2.0
	Other Member State	10.8	14.8	1.7
	Non-EU country	9.5	11.6	2.8
Citizenship	National	7.5	11.5	1.9
	Non-national but EU	9.0	12.9	1.8
	Non-national and not EU	10.0	10.9	3.6
Degree of urbanisation	Cities	8.3	12.5	2.1
	Towns and suburbs	7.8	10.8	2.2
	Rural areas	6.7	11.1	1.9
Employment status	Employed	7.5	11.7	1.8
	Unemployed	11.4	14.6	3.7
	Economically inactive	7.5	10.7	2.1

(*) Limitation in usual activities is used as a proxy measure for disability.

Source: Eurostat, EU-GBV survey, 2021 wave, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA and EIGE.

The analysis reveals distinct sociodemographic patterns in intimate partner violence experiences. Younger women aged 18–29 face significantly higher recent physical and sexual intimate partner violence rates in the past 12 months than women aged 65–74 (3.7 % versus 0.9 %). Women with the highest level of educational achievement experience less of all types of violence, while differences in terms of women's education are small.

Having a disability substantially impacts the likelihood of being the victim of intimate partner violence. The lifetime prevalence for women with disabilities experiencing sexual violence by intimate partners is 17.0 %, and 19.1 % for physical violence, compared with 6.6 % for sexual violence and 10.6 % for physical violence for women without activity limitations. Additional risk factors include lower educational attainment, non-EU citizenship, urban residence and unemployment, with unemployed women facing twice as high a rate of recent intimate partner violence as employed women (3.7 % versus 1.8 %).

3.1.2. Victims of psychological violence by intimate partners

The analysis reveals sociodemographic differences in women's experiences of psychological violence by any partner ([Figure 10](#)). Most notably, women with disabilities face significantly higher prevalence rates, with 45.6 % of women whose usual activities are severely limited experiencing psychological violence, compared with 28.8 % of those without limitations. Age differences show that younger women (those aged 18–29 years) experience higher rates at 34.4 % versus 25.4 % for the oldest age group, with this gap widening when examining experiences within the 12 months before the survey. Other sociodemographic factors – including education level, citizenship and degree of urbanisation – show relatively small differences between groups.

FIGURE 10 – PSYCHOLOGICAL VIOLENCE BY ANY PARTNER DURING ONE’S LIFETIME AND IN THE 12 MONTHS BEFORE THE SURVEY, BY WOMEN’S SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS (EU-27, %)



Note: The results are calculated based on all ever-partnered women.

Source: Eurostat, EU-GBV survey, 2021 wave, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA and EIGE.

3.1.3. Sociodemographic characteristics of women victims of intimate partner violence

Overall, when examining all the forms of violence that women experience in their intimate relationships, several patterns emerge. Older women face a significantly lower likelihood of experiencing intimate partner violence, with women aged 65–74 years experiencing 67 % less physical violence, 90 % less sexual violence and 60 % less violence of any kind than 18- to 29-year-old women. Completing higher education reduces the probability of experiencing sexual violence, as does living in the countryside. Urban-dwelling women experience a higher prevalence of intimate partner violence than their rural counterparts.

Financial security proves protective, with women who can afford unexpected expenses having a lower probability of experiencing any form of violence, while partner-dependent women face a higher risk of intimate partner violence. However, this is not the case for financially secure older women, who are more likely to experience physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner. Social support is crucial: women who have someone to discuss personal matters with experience a 30 % lower physical violence risk and a 33 % lower combined violence risk. Infrequent social contact (monthly or less) is associated with 42 % higher sexual violence, 22 % higher physical violence and 19 % higher combined violence rates. Women with long-standing health problems face a 40 % higher sexual violence risk, a 51 % higher physical violence risk and a 59 % higher combined violence risk, with disability (activity limitations) further increasing the risk of intimate partner violence (see more in Annex 3, Table A2).

3.2. THE PARTNER AND THE RELATIONSHIP

In addition to examining the results with respect to the women victims' profiles, it is relevant to examine the perpetrators and their sociodemographic characteristics, and the various questions included in the survey concerning the relationships between women and their partners. The EU-GBV survey gathered more details about women's current partners than about their previous partners, and, since the latter can mean multiple people with different characteristics (e.g. age and education), the following analysis focuses on the relationships between women and their current partners.

3.2.1. Physical and/or sexual violence by the current partner

[Table 12](#) presents an overview of women's experiences of physical and/or sexual violence by their current partners during their lifetime, with respect to the characteristics of the partner and the relationship.

TABLE 12 – PHYSICAL AND/OR SEXUAL VIOLENCE WOMEN HAVE EXPERIENCED FROM THEIR CURRENT PARTNERS DURING THE RELATIONSHIP, BY CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PARTNER AND THE RELATIONSHIP (EU-27, %)

Current partner's characteristics		Prevalence of physical and/or sexual violence during the relationship
Sex	Male	7.1
	Female	0.2
Age (years)	Up to 29	3.4
	30–44	4.6
	45–64	5.2
	65 or more	5.2
Country of birth	Same as country of residence	4.7
	Other EU Member State	6.4
	Non-EU country	6.1
Citizenship	National	4.7
	Non-national but EU	5.1
	Non-national and not EU	7.2
Highest level of education completed	Lower secondary or lower	7.0
	Upper secondary or post-secondary but not tertiary	5.4
	Tertiary	2.9
Employment status	Employed	4.5
	Unemployed	9.7
	Economically inactive	5.2
Ever in trouble with police owing to aggressive behaviour	Yes	42.2
	No	4.0
Characteristics of the women, their current partners and the relationship		
Respondent dependent on current partner for money, food or something else	Yes	10.4
	No	3.4
Respondent's and her partner's employment status	Both unemployed	5.7
	Only respondent employed	5.9
	Only partner employed	6.6
	Both employed	4.0
Respondent's and her partner's educational attainment	Both with same educational attainment	4.9
	Current partner has lower educational attainment	5.1
	Respondent has lower educational attainment	4.6

Note: The results are calculated based on all ever-partnered women.

Source: Eurostat, EU-GBV survey, 2021 wave, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA and EIGE.

Male partners are significantly more likely to perpetrate violence (7.1 %) than female partners (0.2 %), with the most striking risk factor being previous police involvement for aggressive behaviour, which is associated with violence rates of 42.2 % versus 4.0 % for those without such history. Unemployment also emerges as a risk factor, with unemployed partners showing violence rates of 9.7 % compared with 4.5 % for employed partners.

Educational attainment demonstrates a protective effect, as partners with tertiary education have violence rates of 2.9 % compared with 7.0 % for those with secondary education or less. Economic dynamics also play a crucial role, with dual-employment couples showing the lowest violence rates, at 4.0 %, while the respondent's economic dependence on the partner is associated with higher violence prevalence, at 10.4 % compared with 3.4 % for financially independent women.

The risk of violence progresses as relationship duration increases, with women in 1- to 4-year-relationships reporting a 3.2 % prevalence, while those in relationships of 10 years or more face a rate of 5.4 %. This suggests that violence risk accumulates over time through entrenched control patterns, escalating behaviours or reduced options for leaving established violent relationships (Table 13).

TABLE 13 – WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES OF PHYSICAL AND/OR SEXUAL INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE, BY DURATION OF RELATIONSHIP WITH CURRENT PARTNER (EU-27, %)

Duration of relationship with current partner (completed years)	Physical and/or sexual violence by current partner
1–4	3.2
5–9	3.8
10 or more	5.4

Source: Eurostat, EU-GBV survey, 2021 wave, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA and EIGE.

Among women who have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by their former partners, the majority (87.6 %) say that the violence started during the relationship, while 9.1 % indicate that it started during the separation process. A minority of women (3.3 %) say that violence by their former partner first took place after the relationship had already ended.

3.2.2. Psychological violence by the current partner

Women experience higher rates of psychological violence from unemployed partners than employed partners (17.4 % versus 10.7 %). Partner education shows similar patterns, with those having lower secondary education or less associated with 14.9 % prevalence versus 9.2 % for partners with tertiary education. Partners born in another Member State than where they were living at the time of the survey show a somewhat higher prevalence of violence, at 19.0 %, than non-EU born partners (13.4 %) or those born in the same Member State (11.2 %).

Partners who have been questioned by the police for aggressive behaviour present dramatically elevated rates of violence, with 54.9 % of women experiencing psychological violence, compared with 10.6 % of women whose partners have had no police contact. More intensive psychological violence, occurring often or constantly, affects 26.3 % of women whose partners have had police involvement versus only 2.0 % of those without such history. Women depending on their current partners for basic needs, like food, housing, money or immigration status, experience a 21.1 % psychological violence prevalence compared with a 9.3 % prevalence among independent women.

Relationship duration shows a gradual increase in psychological violence prevalence from 8.2 % in 1- to 4-year relationships to 9.8 % in 5- to 9-year relationships and 12.7 % in relationships lasting 10 years or more, suggesting that psychological violence often begins early in relationships.

Age at first marriage and violence by an intimate partner

The EU-GBV survey included an optional question concerning the respondent's age at the time when she got married for the first time. For the purposes of this report, the data are only available for the eight Member States where FRA and EIGE carried out the data collection. However, these results show that women are more likely to experience psychological violence by an intimate partner the earlier they got married. Of the women in the eight Member States who married for the first time when they were under 20 years old, 53.4 % have experienced psychological violence by an intimate partner, compared with 33.4 % for women who first got married when they were 20–29 years of age and 32.6 % when women were 30 years old or older at the time of their first marriage. A similar pattern can be observed for physical and sexual violence by an intimate partner. Of the women who married for the first time when they were under 20, 18.7 % have experienced this type of violence, compared with 4.6 % of women who were 20–29 years old or 4.0 % of women who were 30 or older at first marriage.

3.3. VIOLENCE DURING PREGNANCY

The EU-GBV survey explored whether intimate partner violence occurs during pregnancy, with women indicating if they had ever been pregnant during the relationship. The analysis focused on physical and/or sexual violence by partners who had been violent at some point, distinguishing between current and former partners.

Among women who have experienced violence from a current partner and been pregnant during the relationship, 74.0 % report that no violence occurred during pregnancy. However, 26.0 % experienced violence at least once while pregnant. Of these, 12.5 % say that the level of violence remained the same and 10.8 % report a decrease (Table 14). Similar trends were observed among women with violent former partners. While 71.8 % did not experience violence during pregnancy, 28.2 % indicate that violence occurred during that time.

TABLE 14 – WOMEN EXPERIENCING VIOLENCE FROM CURRENT AND/OR PREVIOUS PARTNER(S) DURING PREGNANCY (EU-27, %)

Experience of repeated violence during pregnancy	Current partner	Previous partner
Violence stayed the same	12.5	12.1
Violence decreased	10.8	10.0
Violence increased	(1.4)	4.6
Violence started	(1.3)	1.5
Partner was not violent during pregnancy	74.0	71.8

Note: Some results are displayed in brackets because of lower reliability (20–49 responses or item non-response rates between 20 % and 50 %).

Source: Eurostat, EU-GBV survey, 2021 wave, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA and EIGE.

The data reveal that violence initiation during pregnancy remains relatively uncommon across both partner types (1.3 % with current partners, based on a low number of responses; 1.5 % with former partners). More commonly, existing patterns of violence either continue unchanged or decrease during pregnancy.

**IMPACT AND
CONSEQUENCES OF
PHYSICAL AND/OR
SEXUAL VIOLENCE**

4



KEY FINDINGS

- Women experience higher rates of physical injuries (9.8 %) due to intimate partner violence than due to non-partner violence (4.4 %). Both the need for medical care and suffering permanent physical harm are more prevalent in intimate partner violence.
- A significant number of women indicate experiencing mental health issues, such as depression and anxiety, linked to intimate partner violence, with 9.6 % experiencing psychological consequences from intimate partner violence compared with 4.1 % from non-partner violence.
- Compared with non-partner violence, intimate partner violence more often involves repeated episodes, which can be reflected in the consequences violence has. For example, 10.3 % of women in the EU have experienced repeated episodes of physical violence by an intimate partner, compared with 3.5 % of women experiencing this from non-partners.
- Intimate partner violence impacts women's ability to work, with 17.6 % needing time off due to intimate partner violence and 30.8 % unable to perform household duties. Women often resort to using medication (25.8 %) and alcohol or drugs (17.1 %) to cope with the effects of intimate partner violence, highlighting the severity of their experiences.

The Istanbul Convention defines violence against women as gender-based acts causing or likely to cause physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm (Article 3), with severe harm constituting an aggravating circumstance for sentencing (Article 46). The VAW Directive recognises that such violence creates lasting consequences across all life domains, constituting serious fundamental rights violations with enduring impacts on victims and society (recital 11). The directive mandates stricter penalties for offences involving cruelty, vulnerability or repetition (Article 6) and requires tailored support addressing intersectional factors like disability or minority status (Article 11). The VRD emphasises that violence in close relationships causes severe consequences owing to the relationship of trust between victim and perpetrator (recital 18), requiring individual assessments of protection needs with particular attention paid to victims suffering considerable harm (Article 22(3)) and adapted support services addressing severity and harm (Articles 9 and 22(5)).

This chapter examines the various ways in which physical and sexual violence impact the lives of victims, in terms of both the immediate consequences of violent incidents and the long-term effects.

The analysis of the survey results related to the impact and consequences of violence against women focuses on violence perpetrated by intimate partners and other persons (non-partners), and highlights the physical, psychological and social impacts that women face as a result of the violence they experience.

Building on the results presented in earlier chapters concerning the prevalence of violence committed by intimate partners, other domestic perpetrators and non-partners, the EU-GBV survey results presented in this chapter illustrate the extent to which women experience various consequences (physical, psychological, social and economic) of violence. The data also help assess the severity of the violence and its consequences for women. According to Eurostat, the severity of violence experienced by women was defined in the survey as a multidimensional concept including the nature of the acts, fear for life, seriousness of injuries, frequency and consequences ⁽¹⁷⁾.

Each form of violence that women describe in the survey can encompass impacts ranging from minor to major, for example in terms of injuries and their impact on women's lives. Severity is also subjective, based on the victim's personal experience and perception. Some victims may find long-term psychological trauma more impactful than physical injuries. The survey included questions about women's perceived severity of violent episodes, with respect to incidents perpetrated by intimate partners and non-partners and their experience of feeling that their life was in danger.

The chapter also addresses coping mechanisms women might use to deal with intimate partner and non-partner violence. Additionally, in the eight Member States where data collection was carried out by FRA and EIGE, the questionnaire included information on consequences for work life and daily activities, and patterns of behaviours that some women adopt in their daily lives due to their fear of violence. Finally, the chapter provides insight into characteristics at the population level of women who may find themselves more vulnerable to experiencing violence.

4.1. EXTENT OF CONSEQUENCES OF PHYSICAL AND/OR SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Research consistently demonstrates the extensive health impacts of intimate partner violence, including significantly higher probabilities of reporting poor self-perceived health, compromised mental health and increased activity limitations.

Across the EU, 13.1 % of women have experienced physical injuries because of violence during their lifetimes, while 11.8 % mention experiencing psychological consequences. Additionally, 9.2 % feel their life has been in danger due to violence by any perpetrator. As an example of the range of results across the Member States, the highest percentage of women feeling that their life was in danger due to violence by their intimate partner can be found in Romania (16.1 %), followed by Cyprus (12.3 %) and Hungary (10.9 %), while the lowest results are in Czechia (2.9 %), the Netherlands (2.6 %) and Bulgaria (2.4 %) ([Table 15](#)). The sections that follow examine in more detail the impact of violence and the nature of its consequences concerning the overall extent of physical injuries and psychological consequences.

TABLE 15 – EXTENT AND NATURE OF SELECTED CONSEQUENCES OF PHYSICAL AND/OR SEXUAL VIOLENCE, BY TYPE OF PERPETRATOR (EU-27, %)

Member State	Sustained physical injuries		Experienced psychological consequences		Felt their life was in danger	
	Intimate partner	Non-partner	Intimate partner	Non-partner	Intimate partner	Non-partner
BE	9.5	4.8	9.6	5.3	6.8	5.2
BG	5.6	2.0	3.2	0.5	2.4	0.9
CZ	5.3	1.5	5.5	1.7	2.9	1.6
DE	10.9	4.3	8.3	4.4	6.6	3.2
EE	11.7	4.9	9.2	3.7	7.8	6.0
IE	11.9	7.2	13.2	8.9	8.3	8.2
EL	8.3	4.2	11.4	5.9	8.3	7.9
ES	6.6	3.8	9.3	3.9	5.9	4.3
HR	6.2	2.5	6.8	3.0	4.0	3.0
CY	10.0	2.2	21.1	6.7	12.3	4.9
LV	10.0	3.4	9.3	2.1	8.3	6.3
LT	10.3	3.9	6.3	2.0	5.5	3.3
LU	11.2	5.5	13.0	7.5	7.9	8.6
HU	20.2	4.5	12.9	4.1	10.9	2.3
MT	8.7	3.6	10.1	4.4	8.2	6.1
NL	6.7	7.1	7.2	4.5	2.6	4.5
AT	8.6	5.9	7.6	4.0	4.9	4.1
PL	—	—	—	—	5.0	2.6
PT	5.1	3.3	5.5	3.2	3.2	3.4
RO	23.3	3.5	16.3	2.0	16.1	2.8
SI	6.9	4.0	6.5	2.7	3.8	2.5
FI	14.4	9.4	12.2	5.9	7.1	5.4
SE	15.4	5.6	15.5	7.7	8.1	7.4
EU-27	9.8	4.4	9.6	4.1	6.6	3.8

Notes: Some results have been suppressed because of a low number of responses (< 20) or item non-response over 50 % (denoted with '—'). Data are not available for calculating the results for Italy. Results for Denmark, France and Slovakia are not available due to the way the survey was implemented in these three Member States.

Source: Eurostat, EU-GBV survey, 2021 wave, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA and EIGE.

4.2. PHYSICAL INJURIES

The physical consequences of violence can be categorised as either short-term or long-term impacts ⁽¹⁸⁾. Short-term consequences might include minor injuries like small cuts and bruises, while long-term consequences could involve persistent health issues, such as vision or hearing loss. Examples of serious physical injuries included in the survey are broken bones or fractures, injuries to the head, or internal or genital injuries, any of which may require hospitalisation or surgery and have the potential to cause prolonged disability or even death. For women, violence may result in pregnancy-related impacts like miscarriage or becoming pregnant as a direct result of sexual violence.

The EU-GBV survey results show that 9.8 % of ever-partnered women in the EU have suffered physical injuries from an incident of physical and/or sexual violence perpetrated by their intimate partner. Further, 4.4 % of women in the EU overall have suffered physical injuries from physical and/or sexual violence by a non-partner.

54.7 % of victims of intimate partner violence have sustained one or more injuries, compared with 22.2 % of those who have experienced violence by a non-partner. [Table 16](#) examines the types of injuries women experienced due to the last incident of physical and/or sexual violence in their intimate relationships or in incidents related to non-partners.

TABLE 16 – TYPE OF PHYSICAL INJURIES EXPERIENCED BY WOMEN WHO EXPERIENCED PHYSICAL AND/OR SEXUAL VIOLENCE – LAST EPISODE OF VIOLENCE BY AN INTIMATE PARTNER OR NON-PARTNER (EU-27, %)

Type of physical injury	Intimate partner violence	Non-partner violence
Bruises, black eye, pain in some part of the body or a bleeding nose	26.5	6.5
Cuts, scratches or burns	8.9	2.8
Fractures, broken bones, broken nose or teeth	2.2	0.4
Head or brain injuries	1.8	0.5
Internal injuries	1.3	0.6
Genital injuries	4.5	1.4
Miscarriage	0.8	0.1
Pregnancy	4.9	0.4
Other injuries	0.5	0.4

Note: The results are based on experiences of ever-partnered women (for any partner violence) and all women (for non-partner violence).

Source: Eurostat, EU-GBV survey, 2021 wave, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA and EIGE.

Women report that the most recent incident of intimate partner violence was more likely to result in physical injuries than violence by non-partners, with the latter typically causing less severe harm, such as bruises or scratches.

In addition to injuries, the need for medical attention and the presence of permanent physical harm serve as indicators of violence severity. Serious injuries can disrupt victims' lives, leading to hospitalisation, job loss, withdrawal from education or reduced social interaction. Survey responses show that women more frequently require medical attention following violence by an intimate partner than by a non-partner. This includes both met and unmet medical needs. Similarly, reports of permanent physical harm are more common among those harmed by intimate partners, highlighting the more severe consequences of such violence ([Table 17](#)).

TABLE 17 – NEED FOR MEDICAL CARE DUE TO PHYSICAL AND/OR SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND WHETHER VIOLENCE RESULTED IN PERMANENT PHYSICAL HARM TO WOMEN, BY TYPE OF PERPETRATOR (EU-27, %)

Access to medical care and type of injuries caused by violence	Current partner violence	Former partner violence	Non-partner violence
Medical care received	1.7	5.3	3.4
Medical care not received but was necessary	3.4	4.5	2.8
Permanent physical harm (*)	1.8	11.6	0.7

(*) Permanent physical harm was calculated for repeated partner violence and the last episode of non-partner violence, due to the structure of the EU-GBV survey. This asymmetry may affect comparability and underestimate the proportion of women who experience consequences from non-partner violence episodes beyond the most recent.

Note: The percentages reported for former versus current partners cannot be compared directly, as former partner violence might refer to more than one person perpetrating the violence, in contrast to a single current partner.

Source: Eurostat, EU-GBV survey, 2021 wave, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA and EIGE.

4.3. PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSEQUENCES

Research indicates that people who experience higher rates of intimate partner violence tend to have worse mental health symptoms. Factors like gender and childhood experiences can affect this connection. The psychological consequences of intimate partner violence can include depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety and stress. Emotional responses to intimate partner violence can include sadness, depression and feelings of unhappiness.

In the EU-GBV survey, women were asked if they experienced a range of consequences, such as depression, panic attacks, sleeping or eating disorders, problems with concentration or other psychological consequences of violence ⁽¹⁹⁾. When looking at women who have experienced violence by different types of perpetrators, 9.6 % experience negative psychological consequences because of an intimate partner's violence, whereas 4.1 % experience such consequences following non-partner violence.

Questions on the impact of psychological violence in the FRA–EIGE questionnaire

Experiencing psychological consequences increases with the intensity of psychological violence; namely, psychological consequences are experienced often or all the time by 32.1 % of women who have experienced frequent psychological violence, compared with 4.4 % of those who have experienced psychological violence less often or never in the relationship. These results refer to the experiences of women in the eight Member States where FRA and EIGE carried out the EU-GBV survey.

4.4. CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLENCE ON WOMEN'S WORK AND OTHER USUAL ACTIVITIES

The impact of violence on women's work life and daily activities can be profound and multifaceted. The survey asked a series of questions about consequences related to women's ability to take care of the home or needing time off from work or studies due to violence. About one in six women who have experienced intimate partner violence find themselves needing time off from

work or education (17.6 %) due to the last episode of violence (Table 18). This figure is notably higher than the 9.6 % of women who face similar disruption to their lives as a result of non-partner violence. Additionally, intimate partner violence significantly hampers women's ability to perform housework or care for children, with 30.8 % of victims unable to perform these tasks at least some of the time. Non-partner violence has a similar impact for 19.9 % of its victims. One in five victims (21.4 %) indicate that there are limitations to their usual activities due to violence by an intimate partner, compared with 12.4 % of those subjected to non-partner violence. Furthermore, more women mention they felt the need to take medication, or consume alcohol or drugs, following the last episode of violence by an intimate partner than by a non-partner.

TABLE 18 – CONSEQUENCES OF THE LAST EPISODE OF VIOLENCE FOR WOMEN'S WORK LIFE AND USUAL ACTIVITIES, BY TYPE OF PERPETRATOR (EU-27, %)

Consequences of the last episode of violence	Intimate partner violence	Non-partner violence
Time off from work or education	17.6	9.6
Inability to perform housework or childcare	30.8	19.9
Limitations to usual activities	21.4	12.4
Using medication to cope	25.8	10.3
Using alcohol or drugs to cope	17.1	9.9

Note: The results are based on experiences of ever-partnered women (for any partner violence) and all women (for non-partner violence).

Source: Eurostat, EU-GBV survey, 2021 wave, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA and EIGE.

4.5. EXPERIENCING REPEAT VICTIMISATION

4.5.1. Repeated episodes of violence

In the EU-GBV survey, an episode of violence is defined as a single violent situation during which one or more violent acts may occur. For example, if a person is raped and beaten, this is considered one episode comprising two acts, of which one is sexual violence and the other is physical violence. Repeated violence, on the other hand, refers in the survey to violent episodes perpetrated by the same person(s) under similar circumstances over time. It is important to distinguish between these concepts to accurately capture the nature and frequency of violent incidents ⁽²⁰⁾.

In the survey, women were asked if they had experienced different types of violence perpetrated by an intimate partner or a non-partner repeatedly (more than one episode) or whether it was a single episode of violence. Table 19 details these results by Member State.

The results show that repeated physical and sexual violence in intimate partner and non-partner contexts varies across the EU. In the EU-27, overall, 10.3 % of ever-partnered women have experienced repeated physical violence by an intimate partner, compared with 3.5 % who have experienced repeated physical violence by a non-partner. Further, 5.4 % have experienced repeated sexual violence by an intimate partner and 3.4 % by a non-partner. As an example of the range of results across Member States, 25.4 % of women in Hungary have experienced repeat physical violence by an intimate partner, followed by 24.2 % in Romania, 17.8 % in Cyprus and 17.2 % in Finland. The lowest rates of repeated physical violence by an intimate partner are in Czechia (5.6 %), Croatia (5.6 %) and Bulgaria (4.0 %).

TABLE 19 – REPEATED EPISODES OF PHYSICAL AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE, BY TYPE OF PERPETRATOR (%)

Member State	Intimate partner violence		Non-partner violence	
	Repeated episodes of physical violence	Repeated episodes of sexual violence	Repeated episodes of physical violence	Repeated episodes of sexual violence
BE	10.2	5.8	3.8	2.2
BG	4.0	0.8	1.0	—
CZ	5.6	3.2	2.5	1.6
DK	10.2	6.4	4.0	3.5
DE	10.6	6.3	3.4	4.6
EE	12.6	5.8	2.2	1.9
IE	13.2	7.7	7.4	4.5
EL	12.0	3.6	4.8	2.3
ES	7.3	4.6	2.2	2.4
FR	8.7	5.9	4.4	3.5
HR	5.6	2.7	2.7	1.8
CY	17.8	6.9	5.0	3.3
LV	11.6	3.4	1.8	0.7
LT	10.2	3.6	2.4	0.7
LU	11.1	7.2	6.0	5.9
HU	25.4	8.7	7.0	4.3
MT	9.7	4.1	3.1	2.4
NL	7.4	4.3	3.6	3.4
AT	7.9	3.6	3.6	3.6
PL	7.7	2.7	—	—
PT	6.4	2.6	2.1	1.0
RO	24.2	8.4	3.5	2.4
SI	6.2	2.6	2.8	2.1
FI	17.2	6.3	4.3	3.7
SE	13.6	12.1	4.4	9.4
EU-27	10.3	5.4	3.5	3.4

Notes: Some results have been suppressed because of a low number of responses (< 20) or item non-response over 50 %, denoted as '—'. Data are not available for calculating the results for Italy and Slovakia.

Source: Eurostat, EU-GBV survey, 2021 wave, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA and EIGE.

4.5.2. Women experiencing violence from different types of perpetrators

Women may be subjected to physical and/or sexual violence by different types of perpetrators (i.e. intimate partners (current or former), non-partners or a combination), leading to cumulative harm. These experiences reflect the pervasive and cumulative nature of gender-based violence and its lasting impacts on women. Therefore, from the perspective of the victims, experiencing repeated violence from one type of perpetrator can differ significantly from the situation where violence is experienced in various contexts (e.g. at home by the current partner and/or the former partner(s), and outside the home by non-partners). The EU-GBV survey allows for the calculation of results for women who have experienced both intimate partner and non-partner violence,

taking into account the type of violence experienced: physical violence or threats, sexual violence or a combination of physical and sexual violence. Women who have experienced violence by two or more types of perpetrators (i.e. violence taking place in different contexts) indicate more often that their experiences involved both physical and sexual violence (6.3 %) as opposed to only physical violence or threats, or only sexual violence ([Table 20](#)).

TABLE 20 – EXPERIENCING VIOLENCE IN ONE CONTEXT OR TWO OR MORE CONTEXTS (DETERMINED BY THE TYPES OF PERPETRATORS INVOLVED), BY TYPE OF VIOLENCE (EU-27, %)

Forms of violence experienced	Number of contexts	
	One context (violence by current partner or previous partner or non-partner)	Two or three contexts (violence by current partner and/or previous partner and/or non-partner)
Sexual	13.9	2.4
Physical, including threats	14.6	1.7
Physical, including threats, or sexual	23.6	6.3

Source: Eurostat, EU-GBV survey, 2021 wave, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA and EIGE.

Further analyses reveals that childhood trauma creates lasting vulnerability to adult violence, with women who experienced childhood sexual abuse facing an over three times higher risk of sexual violence in several contexts later in life ([Chapter 8](#)). Similarly, any childhood physical or emotional abuse roughly doubles the risk of women experiencing various forms of violence in adulthood (see Annex 3, Table A3).

4.6. PERCEPTION OF THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE LAST VIOLENT EPISODE AND FEELING THAT ONE’S LIFE WAS IN DANGER

Earlier in this chapter, the severity of violence was examined in terms of physical injuries caused by violence and the impact on women’s ability to carry out tasks at work and at home. In addition, the EU-GBV survey asked women directly about their own perceptions concerning the seriousness of the last episode of violence and whether the respondent felt that her life was in danger during the episode. The results concerning women’s own views of the seriousness of violence highlight differences between intimate partner violence and non-partner violence. According to the data, 64.5 % of women perceive the last violent episode of an intimate partner as serious or very serious. In contrast, 55.0 % of women indicate the same degree of seriousness with respect to the last violent episode perpetrated by a non-partner. Further, 6.6 % of women felt that their life was in danger during the last episode of intimate partner violence, while 3.8 % say that this was the case in the last episode of non-partner violence. These results further highlight that, consistently, women indicate more negative consequences from and perceptions of intimate partner violence than non-partner violence.

Living in fear – questions added by FRA and EIGE to the survey in eight Member States

The EU-GBV survey questionnaire that FRA and EIGE implemented in eight Member States included selected questions about action women can take in view of perceived risk of becoming a victim of physical and/or sexual violence. This can include women avoiding certain streets or areas or avoiding going to places where there are no other people around (e.g. parks or car parks). Across the eight Member States for which data are available, 20.2 % of women avoid certain streets or areas often or all the time, and 23.4 % avoid places where no other people are present and which therefore are perceived as places where nobody would be available to intervene if women were attacked (Table 21). These results reflect various situations where women feel compelled to consider their safety and make decisions based on the perceived risk of experiencing violence. This can involve choosing routes that take more time or not participating in professional or social events, resulting in women limiting their participation in society.

TABLE 21 – WOMEN AVOIDING, OFTEN OR ALL THE TIME, CERTAIN PLACES OR SITUATIONS DUE TO THE RISK OF PHYSICAL AND/OR SEXUAL ATTACK (EIGHT MEMBER STATES, %)

Member State	Avoid certain streets or areas	Avoid places where there are no other people around
CZ	14.7	20.0
DE	22.7	25.4
IE	28.5	35.0
CY	11.5	12.8
LU	16.2	25.5
HU	6.3	7.2
RO	20.9	23.5
SE	14.1	20.4
Total	20.2	23.4

Source: Eurostat, EU-GBV survey, 2021 wave, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA and EIGE.

**REPORTING
EXPERIENCES OF
PHYSICAL AND/OR
SEXUAL VIOLENCE,
CONTACT WITH
SERVICES, AND
AWARENESS OF AND
ACCESS TO SUPPORT**

5



KEY FINDINGS

- There is a notable reporting gap; 13.9 % of victims of physical and/or sexual violence contacted the police and 20.5 % reached out to health or social services, but most victims did not report the violence or seek formal support.
- Intimate partner violence is reported significantly less than non-partner violence; non-partner violence consistently shows higher disclosure rates. 7.3 % of women who experienced physical violence by their current partners reported the last episode of violence to the police and 11.0 % sought medical attention, compared with 20.8 % of women who reported the last episode of physical violence by a non-partner to the police and 15.9 % who contacted medical services.
- Victims of rape cite distinct reasons for not reporting non-partner violence: feeling embarrassed or self-blame (49.9 %), fear of retaliation from the perpetrator or other consequences (for oneself and/or the perpetrator) (23.8 %) and the belief that the police could not help (23.7 %).
- Victims of physical and/or sexual violence are less likely to report non-partner violence to the police if they did not perceive the incident as being serious. At the same time, many women who considered what happened a crime, who felt that their life was in danger or who experienced violence that caused injuries or psychological impacts did not report the incident to the police despite the incident appearing severe.

While reporting violence to the police or other authorities can help trigger protective and legal measures, victims should have access to support and assistance regardless of whether they file a formal complaint, in line with the principles of the Istanbul Convention and Article 8(5) of the VRD. This can include starting a formal investigation, informing the victim about their rights – including the availability of protection measures – or activating other service providers. Incidents of violence recorded by the police appear in the official statistics, which helps monitor how police respond to crimes that come to their attention, especially when the statistics are disaggregated, for example by gender, region or type of violence.

Moreover, victims who think legal action is not the most effective recourse against intimate partner violence can be less likely to report it ⁽²¹⁾. Victims' motivation might also focus on obtaining safety rather than justice, and reporting can trigger a complex mechanism of actors (judiciary, lawyers, etc.) that do not necessarily prioritise safety but rather focus on criminal investigation. Furthermore, women who report may not necessarily obtain the help they need. The psychological burden caused by violence can also make it difficult for victims to reach out to authorities for assistance ⁽²²⁾.

A victim's decision to report violence often depends on their relationship with the perpetrator; reporting intimate partner violence can have serious consequences, including fear of retaliation, financial hardship following separation and complex custody negotiations if children are involved ⁽²³⁾. These factors create significant barriers to disclosure. Similar challenges can arise in other contexts where power imbalances exist. For instance, victims may hesitate to report workplace harassment for fear of job loss, or individuals with disabilities may avoid reporting abuse by carers because they rely on them for daily support ⁽²⁴⁾. Other external conditioning factors might include the lack of (adequate) specialist support services.

People's willingness to contact the police can also vary between Member States. FRA's Fundamental Rights Survey asked respondents about their willingness to take action when witnessing selected crimes, including intimate partner violence ⁽²⁵⁾. Specifically, the survey asked whether respondents would be willing to directly intervene if they saw a crime taking place, call the police or give evidence in court based on what they saw. The results show that in some countries people prefer intervening directly, while in others this is not the case and people instead prefer involving the police. Additionally, EIGE's report on intimate partner violence and witness intervention examined factors that facilitate witness intervention – such as the victim's cooperation and an increased understanding of intimate partner violence – and barriers to witness intervention, such as negative perceptions of the police and judicial systems or a misconception of intimate partner violence as a private matter ⁽²⁶⁾.

This chapter examines the extent to which women reported physical and/or sexual violence to the police, contacted other service providers or talked about their experiences with other people. Reporting rates are further analysed by type of violence and perpetrator. The chapter also provides an overview of the reasons women indicated in the survey for not reporting their experiences.

5.1. REPORTING PHYSICAL AND/OR SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Of the various organisations and services to which women can report physical and/or sexual violence or seek formal support, women in the EU most often reach out to health and social services, followed by the police (Table 22). Altogether, 26.7 % of victims engaged with some form of formal support, including police, healthcare or social services, or other organisations such as victim support services. At the same time, close to two in three women who have experienced violence seek informal support by talking about it to a person they are close to, such as a friend or a family member. In total, 68.2 % of victims either disclose to someone or contact services, leaving 31.8 % who had not shared their experience with anyone before the survey.

TABLE 22 – REPORTING PHYSICAL AND/OR SEXUAL VIOLENCE TO POLICE OR CONTACTING OTHER SERVICES AND SUPPORT (EU-27, %)

Service, organisation or other source of support contacted / reported to	Women victims of physical and/or sexual violence who disclosed it
Police	13.9
Health or social services	20.5
Other organisations (e.g. victim support organisation or a helpline)	6.4
Friend, family member or someone else	63.7

Source: Eurostat, EU-GBV survey, 2021 wave, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA and EIGE.

In FRA's 2012 survey, women were asked about the most serious incident of physical and/or sexual violence that they had experienced. 20 % of victims of intimate partner violence indicated that this incident came to the attention of the police, while this was the case for 19 % of incidents of non-partner violence. However, since FRA's survey focused on the most serious incident experienced and the EU-GBV survey results refer to reporting any incident (irrespective of perceived seriousness), the results of the two surveys are not comparable.

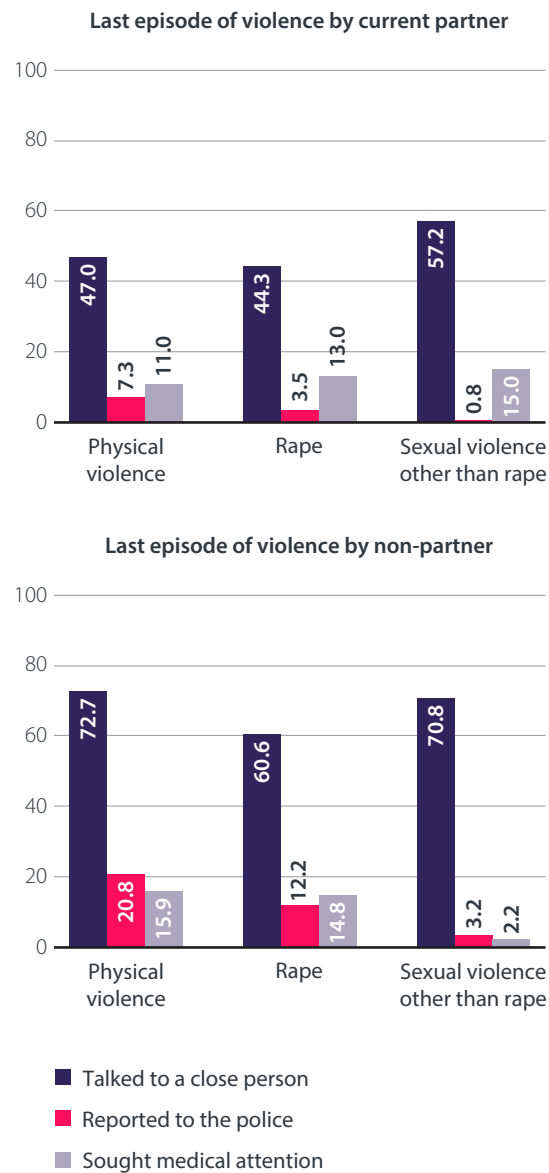
5.2. REPORTING INCIDENTS BY TYPE OF VIOLENCE EXPERIENCED AND BY TYPE OF PERPETRATOR

Besides examining rates of reporting violence by type of perpetrator, the rates can also be analysed with respect to the type of violence experienced – that is, women who have experienced physical violence (and not sexual), and those who have experienced sexual violence. The results presented earlier in this chapter look at the extent to which any incident of violence is reported to the police (or discussed with other service providers or people close to the victim) during a woman's lifetime. The analysis that follows focuses on women's most recent experience of physical or sexual violence, as this allows one to examine the characteristics of these incidents in more detail.

Comparing women's experiences of violence perpetrated by the current partner and a non-partner shows that violent incidents by one's intimate partner can be more difficult to disclose. Whereas 72.7 % of women talked to a person close to them about the last incident of physical violence by a non-partner, fewer than half (47.0 %) talked to a close person about the most recent incident of physical violence perpetrated by their current partners (Figure 11). Similarly, rates of reporting to the police and seeking help from medical services are higher among victims of violence by a non-partner than violence by a current partner. Overall, 6.1 % of women reported to the police the most recent incident of physical and/or sexual violence by a current partner, 16.8 % in the case of any previous partner and 11.3 % when the perpetrator was a non-partner. The only exception from this pattern – that is, higher rate of contact with service providers following violence committed by a non-partner than by the current partner – as shown in Figure 11, concerns women's experiences of sexual violence other than rape perpetrated by their current partners and seeking medical attention as a result. This departure from the general pattern described above could be due to incidents of sexual violence other than rape being in some way qualitatively different in the context of intimate partner violence from typical incidents of non-partner violence that fall in this category.

Higher rates of reporting non-partner violence to the police, or talking to a close person or healthcare service providers, could indicate less stigma associated with non-partner violence than with violence perpetrated by an intimate partner. In terms of reporting violence to the authorities, the lower rate of reporting intimate partner violence could also indicate less trust in authorities' capacity to provide effective support to victims of intimate partner violence. Victims talk with people close to them about rape by a non-partner less often than about physical violence or other sexual violence that did not involve rape.

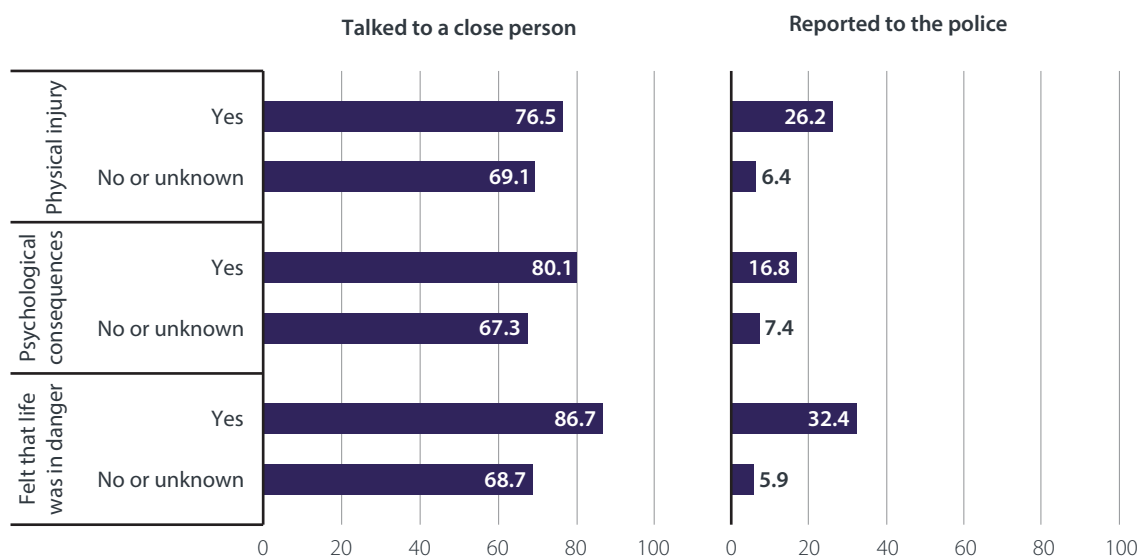
FIGURE 11 – WOMEN WHO TALKED ABOUT THE LAST EPISODE OF VIOLENCE, REPORTED IT TO THE POLICE OR SOUGHT MEDICAL ATTENTION, BY TYPE OF VIOLENCE AND PERPETRATOR (EU-27, %)



Source: Eurostat, EU-GBV survey, 2021 wave, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA and EIGE.

While women are less likely to discuss rape than other sexual violence, 25.1 % of victims of rape consider their last incident very serious versus only 8.7 % of victims of other sexual violence incidents. Severity influences women's decisions to discuss and report incidents. Women more readily share severe experiences involving physical injuries, psychological consequences or life-threatening situations with close contacts. However, severity has a greater impact on decisions about reporting to the police, with 26.2 % of injured women reporting incidents compared with just 6.4 % of uninjured women (Figure 12).

FIGURE 12 – TALKING TO A CLOSE PERSON ABOUT THE LAST EPISODE OF NON-PARTNER VIOLENCE OR REPORTING IT TO THE POLICE, BY SELECTED INDICATORS OF THE EPISODE’S SEVERITY (EU-27, %)



Source: Eurostat, EU-GBV survey, 2021 wave, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA and EIGE.

5.3. REASONS FOR NOT REPORTING VIOLENT INCIDENTS

Women have different reasons for not reporting incidents to the police, depending on what kind of violence happened to them. [Table 23](#) focuses on women’s reasons for not reporting non-partner violence, given that these results can also be broken down by type of violence. The survey collected non-reporting reasons for intimate partner violence, but limited responses prevented detailed analysis by current versus former partners compared with non-partner incidents.

Victims of rape cite distinct reasons for not reporting non-partner violence: feeling embarrassed or self-blame (49.9 %), fear of retaliation from the perpetrator or other consequences (for oneself and/or the perpetrator) (23.8 %) and the belief that the police could not help (23.7 %). 37.9 % of rape victims consider the incident insufficiently serious to report – a lower rate than physical violence victims (49.0 %) and victims of sexual violence other than rape (71.5 %). Other sexual violence included attempted rape and being forced to perform other sexual acts that were perceived as degrading or humiliating, as well as – in the case of non-partner violence – incidents where somebody touched respondent’s genitals, breasts, bottom or lips without consent. The reasons uncovered in the survey align with findings from WHO ⁽²⁷⁾ that show how psychological trauma, social stigma and lack of knowledge about available services and how to access them are major barriers to reporting violence and accessing justice.

TABLE 23 – REASONS FOR NOT REPORTING THE LAST EPISODE OF VIOLENCE BY A NON-PARTNER, BY TYPE OF VIOLENCE (EU-27, %)

Reason	Last episode of violence perpetrated by a non-partner		
	Physical violence	Rape	Sexual violence other than rape
Reported to other authorities instead of police	3.3	—	(0.9)
Police would not be able to help	12.4	23.7	16.3
Belief that police would not do anything or would not believe the victim; dislike of the police	20.1	29.3	20.0
Discouraged from reporting by someone	6.9	—	2.9
Fear of the perpetrator or the consequences (for oneself or for the perpetrator)	16.3	23.8	5.5
Embarrassment/self-blame	17.6	49.9	18.1
Not serious enough, not something to report to the police, not necessary to report	49.0	37.9	71.5
It was a private/family matter, resolved it oneself	20.9	17.7	15.2
Other reasons	7.5	6.2	3.4

Note: Some results have been suppressed because of a low number of responses (< 20) or item non-response over 50 % (denoted with '—'), and some results are displayed in brackets to suggest lower reliability (20–49 responses or item non-response between 20 % and 50 %).

Source: Eurostat, EU-GBV survey, 2021 wave, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA and EIGE.

Victims of physical and/or sexual violence are less likely to report non-partner violence to the police if they do not perceive the incident as being serious (71.5 %). At the same time, many women who considered what happened a crime, who felt that their life was in danger or who experienced violence that caused injuries or psychological impacts did not report the incident to the police despite the incident appearing severe (Table 24). A few women indicate that they did not report the last episode of violence by a non-partner to the police because they had already reported it to other authorities. This suggests that statistics on police-recorded incidents of non-partner violence against women have little overlap with data collected by other services. That is, these different sources of administrative data are complementary as opposed to covering the same incidents and victims.

TABLE 24 – REASONS FOR NOT REPORTING THE LAST EPISODE OF VIOLENCE BY A NON-PARTNER, BY SELECTED INDICATORS OF THE EPISODE’S SEVERITY (EU-27, %)

Reason	Last episode of violence perpetrated by a non-partner			
	It was a crime	Felt that life was in danger	Physical injury	Psychological consequences
Reported to other authorities	—	(3.8)	2.9	2.7
Police are not able to help	22.7	19.6	19.0	20.3
Dislike of police	43.5	34.8	21.1	28.6
Discouraged by someone	(4.2)	(5.0)	6.4	5.0
Fear	9.5	25.8	22.4	20.4
Blame	26.4	29.4	30.7	33.3
Incident was not serious	51.0	42.4	36.4	48.5
Private matter	11.3	15.8	19.2	19.3
Other reasons	8.5	7.9	7.1	7.6

Note: Some results have been suppressed because of a low number of responses (< 20) or item non-response over 50 % (denoted with ‘—’), and some results are displayed in brackets to suggest lower reliability (20–49 responses or item non-response between 20 % and 50 %).

Source: Eurostat, EU-GBV survey, 2021 wave, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA and EIGE.

Of the results above, it is notable that, of the respondents who felt that what happened to them was a crime, 43.5 % indicate that they did not report it to the police because they disliked the police, while 51.0 % say that the incident was not serious. That is, for many victims of non-partner violence, the perception of the episode as a crime does not mean that they consider the episode serious enough to report to the police, or their negative views of the police stop them from reporting the violence they experienced. Episodes of violence that result in physical injuries are more likely to be considered serious.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

6



KEY FINDINGS

- Nearly one-third (30.8 %) of ever-working women in the EU have experienced sexual harassment at work in their lifetimes, with significant variations between Member States. Results range from 55.4 % (Sweden) to 11.0 % (Latvia).
- Sexual harassment against women at work is overwhelmingly male-perpetrated, with men accounting for approximately 88.3 % of all sexual harassment incidents against women at work.
- A specific form of sexual harassment, namely sexual cyber harassment at work, affects 7.0 % of women who have worked, EU-wide, with 18.4 % of them experiencing repeated episodes.
- Only 19.9 % of women indicate that their work offers training to inform workers what to do if they have been sexually harassed. 33.2 % say that there is a contact person at work, and 59.6 % know where to seek help. The awareness of the designated contact ranges from 73.4 % in Ireland to 4.9 % in Hungary and is associated with knowing where to seek help.
- Younger women (18- to 29-year-olds) report incidents at lower rates than older women (37.0 % versus 47.3 %) despite experiencing higher rates of sexual harassment.

This chapter provides an overview of the EU-GBV survey results concerning sexual harassment at work across the EU. This includes incidents occurring in any location related to work activities – not limited to physical workplaces – and can involve sexual harassment by a range of perpetrators, such as supervisors, colleagues or clients. EU legislation prohibits sexual harassment in the context of work (including self-employment) (Directive 2006/54/EC on the [implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation \(recast\)](#) and Directive 2010/41/EU on the [application of the principle of equal treatment between men and women engaged in an activity in a self-employed capacity](#)), [vocational training and the supply of and access to goods and services](#) (Council Directive 2004/113/EC). The Istanbul Convention requires parties to the convention to ensure that sexual harassment is a punishable offence, without distinguishing whether sexual harassment takes place at work or in another situation. Alongside these measures, in March 2024 the Council of the EU invited Member States to ratify the ILO's Convention on Violence and Harassment in a in work context ⁽²⁸⁾.

Finally, the VAW Directive – to be incorporated into national law by 14 June 2027 – addresses sexual harassment at work through counselling services for victims and employers (Article 28); the integration of measures into national policies, with targeted measures for high-risk workers (Article 34(9)); and mandatory training for supervisory staff to recognise, prevent and address incidents (Article 36(6)). The Commission will assess whether further measures are needed by 14 June 2032 (Article 45(3)). Additionally, Article 7 criminalises cyber harassment using ICT means, including the sending of unsolicited sexual material likely to cause serious psychological harm and the non-consensual publication of personal data such as intimate images.

Questions in the EU-GBV survey concerning sexual harassment focus on experiences that took place in the work context – including sexual harassment in the workplace or another work-related context. Later, the chapter includes the results regarding sexual harassment outside work, based on questions FRA and EIGE added to the survey and collected responses to in eight Member States, to allow for a more comprehensive perspective on women's experiences (as was the case in FRA's 2012 survey on violence against women, which asked about sexual harassment experiences without a focus on incidents taking place in a particular context such as at work). Besides the prevalence of sexual harassment, the chapter also looks into women's perceptions of how widespread sexual harassment at work is in their Member State, and the extent of reporting experiences of sexual harassment to various authorities and services.

What the survey asked about sexual harassment

The EU-GBV survey asked women about their experiences of sexual harassment in their working lives. The results concerning the prevalence of sexual harassment have been calculated as a percentage of women (aged 18–74 years) who are currently employed or self-employed or have had a job in the past. The survey asked women the following question.

During your entire working life, have you ever experienced any of the following unwanted behaviours:

- inappropriate staring or leering that made you feel uncomfortable;
- exposure to sexually explicit images or videos that made you feel offended, humiliated or intimidated;
- indecent sexual jokes or offensive remarks about your body or private life;
- inappropriate suggestions to go out on a date, which made you feel offended, humiliated or intimidated;
- inappropriate suggestions of any sexual activity;
- unsolicited physical contact (e.g. close proximity, touching body parts, kisses/hugs or something else that you did not want);
- inappropriate advances on social networking websites;
- inappropriate sexually explicit emails or text messages;
- somebody threatening you with unpleasant consequences if you refused sexual proposals or advances;
- other similar behaviour at work (with a sexual connotation) not mentioned, which made you feel offended, humiliated or intimidated?

6.1. PREVALENCE OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT AT WORK

The findings on sexual harassment at work reflect experiences of ever-working women – namely all those who at the time of the survey were employed or self-employed or had worked in the past. Nearly one in three ever-working women in the EU-27 (30.8 %) have experienced sexual harassment at work in their lifetimes, with 4.3 % indicating that they had experienced it in the 12 months before the survey. Rates vary significantly between Member States. Sweden (55.4 %), Finland (53.7 %), Slovakia (53.0 %) and Luxembourg (52.9 %) have the highest lifetime prevalence; Portugal (12.3 %), Bulgaria (12.2 %) and Latvia (11.0 %) have the lowest.

Women aged 18–29 experience workplace sexual harassment at higher rates (41.6 %) than older groups, with rates declining to 36.0 % for ages 30–44 and 19.9 % for ages 65–74. This pattern reflects both the fact that many older women are retired and responding based on past experiences and evolving recognition and reporting practices that affect how different age groups identify and disclose harassment experiences. Generational differences in awareness and recognition of sexual harassment significantly impact reporting patterns ⁽²⁹⁾. Some researchers have also recently suggested that younger workers' higher prevalence rates may also reflect their greater exposure to digital forms of harassment, which have increased substantially in the post-COVID era of remote and hybrid work arrangements ⁽³⁰⁾.

Moreover, the survey asked if the experience was a one-time event or repeated. For 11.0 % of women in the EU-27, sexual harassment at work was a **one-time event** (ranging from 26.5 % in Finland and 24.0 % in Luxembourg to 4.9 % in Poland and 4.6 % in Bulgaria). For 18.4 % of women, the sexual harassment consisted of a **series of episodes** (40.7 % in Slovakia, 33.4 % in Sweden and 29.9 % in Ireland, in comparison with 5.4 % in Latvia, 5.0 % in Bulgaria and 4.2 % in Poland) (Table 25). These patterns of repeated harassment are particularly concerning, as recurring harassment experiences can lead to more severe psychological and physical outcomes than an isolated incident ⁽³¹⁾. In FRA's 2012 survey on violence against women, 55 % indicated that they had experienced sexual harassment, in any situation, since the age of 15, and 32 % of the victims said that sexual harassment was perpetrated by someone from an employment context, such as a colleague, supervisor or client. Given the differences in the way FRA's 2012 survey and the

EU-GBV survey asked about sexual harassment, the comparability of the results between the two surveys is limited.

TABLE 25 – INCIDENCE OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT AT WORK, AMONG EVER-WORKING WOMEN (%)

Member State	Singular episode	Repeated episodes
BE	14.5	15.8
BG	4.6	5.0
CZ	6.9	19.5
DK	16.1	25.4
DE	5.9	26.1
EE	(11.3)	(8.5)
IE	13.6	29.9
EL	15.6	26.3
ES	9.7	16.6
FR	18.7	17.3
HR	13.2	17.1
CY	13.5	25.6
LV	5.2	5.4
LT	7.9	8.5
LU	24.0	27.8
HU	11.3	28.2
MT	8.5	18.0
NL	(9.6)	(10.5)
AT	16.0	10.2
PL	(4.9)	(4.2)
PT	5.0	6.9
RO	14.1	17.5
SI	17.0	13.0
SK	12.3	40.7
FI	26.5	25.5
SE	21.0	33.4
EU-27	11.0	18.4

Notes: Some results are displayed in brackets to suggest lower reliability (20–49 responses or item non-response between 20 % and 50 %). Data are not available for calculating the results for Italy.

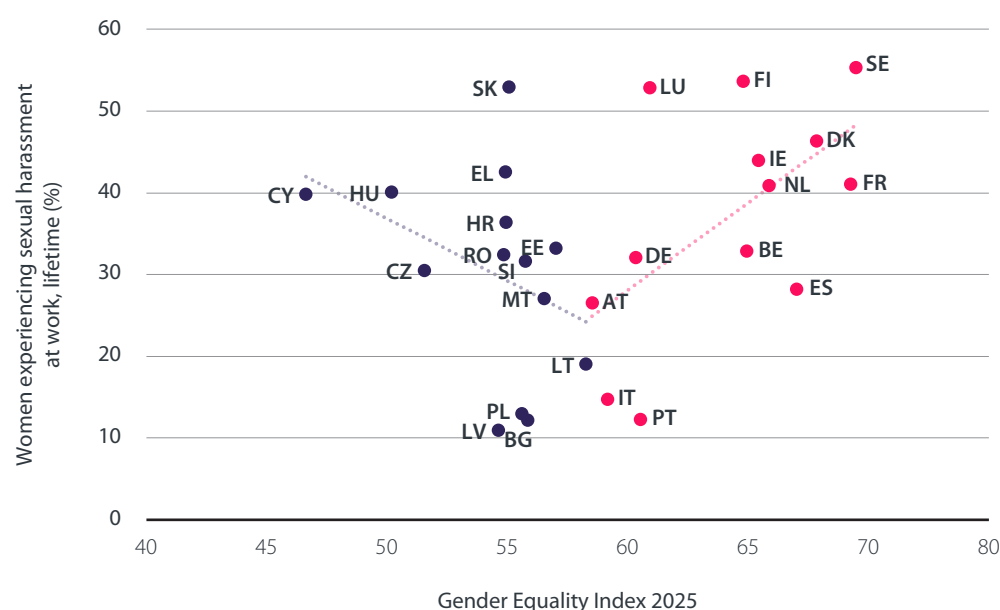
Source: Eurostat, EU-GBV survey, 2021 wave, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA and EIGE. Eurostat online data code: [gbv_shw_frq](#).

Differences in the prevalence of sexual harassment at work across Member States may be related to several interconnected factors. The recognition of sexual harassment in each Member State's laws and its prominence in policy discussions and political debates may influence women's awareness that sexual harassment is a form of discrimination that violates fundamental rights, affecting how women disclose such experiences in surveys. Survey estimates of the prevalence of sexual harassment at work can depend on cultural norms around perceiving, defining and disclosing violence against women, including sexual harassment.

Sexual harassment at work and the Nordic paradox

Earlier in this report, the box '[EU-GBV survey and the Nordic paradox](#)' examined the Nordic paradox, focusing on the prevalence of sexual violence by an intimate partner and gender equality. A similar analysis with respect to the prevalence of sexual harassment at work shows that the two clusters found in relation to sexual violence also appear in relation to, and can shed light on, women's experience of sexual harassment at work. [Figure 13](#) shows that one cluster of Member States with high scores on the Gender Equality Index is associated with a high level of disclosure of sexual harassment at work, as demonstrated by the positive correlation ($r = 0.58$). On the other hand, the cluster of Member States characterised by lower Gender Equality Index scores show a negative correlation ($r = -0.37$), which signals more complex dynamics at play.

FIGURE 13 – ASSOCIATION BETWEEN SEXUAL HARASSMENT AT WORK AND THE GENDER EQUALITY INDEX



Note: Cluster on the left, $r = -0.37$; cluster on the right, $r = 0.58$.

Sources: Eurostat, EU-GBV survey, 2021 wave, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA and EIGE; [EIGE, Gender Equality Index, 2025](#).

6.2. FORMS AND TYPES OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT AT WORK

The survey collected women's experiences using a detailed list of sexual harassment acts, whether physical or digital, verbal or non-verbal, occurring during work activities regardless of location (see box '[What the survey asked about sexual harassment](#)'). Digital communication extends workplace harassment beyond regular hours into private life, blurring traditional work-life boundaries while creating digital evidence trails ⁽³²⁾. The most common sexual harassment acts are staring or leering (24.8 %), sexual jokes and remarks (19.1 %) and unwanted physical contact (13.9 %).

The EU-GBV survey questions on sexual harassment at work include acts of harassment that specifically involved the use of (1) online communication – being exposed to sexually explicit emails or other messages – and (2) inappropriate advances via social networking services. Based on these two questions, [Table 26](#) shows the prevalence of sexual cyber harassment that women in the EU-27 have experienced, alongside results concerning other sexual harassment acts

mentioned in the survey. Sexual cyber harassment, measured through sexually explicit emails/ messages and inappropriate social media advances, shows the highest rates in Slovakia (21.1 %), Sweden (20.2 %) and Luxembourg (19.5 %), with the lowest rates in Latvia, Bulgaria and Poland (all under 2.0 %).

TABLE 26 – SEXUAL CYBER HARASSMENT AND OTHER SEXUAL HARASSMENT AT WORK, AMONG EVER-WORKING WOMEN (%)

Member State	Sexual harassment using online tools	Sexual harassment that did not involve the use of online tools
BE	8.1	31.6
BG	1.8	12.1
CZ	6.6	29.4
DK	10.6	45.3
DE	6.2	31.8
EE	14.2	30.7
IE	14.3	42.9
EL	10.8	42.0
ES	6.4	27.7
FR	5.5	40.9
HR	12.3	34.6
CY	13.1	37.5
LV	(1.3)	10.7
LT	2.2	18.9
LU	19.5	50.8
HU	12.1	39.3
MT	5.6	26.9
NL	9.0	40.2
AT	8.0	26.1
PL	1.8	12.6
PT	2.1	12.0
RO	7.8	32.0
SI	12.3	29.7
SK	21.1	49.8
FI	15.3	52.4
SE	20.2	52.8
EU-27	7.0	31.9

Notes: One result is displayed in brackets to suggest lower reliability (20–49 responses or item non-response between 20 % and 50 %). Data are not available for calculating the results for Italy.

Source: Eurostat, EU-GBV survey, 2021 wave, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA and EIGE.

Besides the two acts of sexual cyber harassment included in the EU-GBV survey, other sexual harassment acts may occur either online or in person – however, the EU-GBV survey does not make such a distinction. In the eight Member States where FRA–EIGE coordinated the data collection, women were asked additionally if any of the other sexual harassment at work (i.e.

other than sexually explicit emails/messages and inappropriate social media advances) took place online. This could involve, for example, indecent sexual jokes or offensive remarks made online, or sending women sexually explicit images or videos online that made them feel offended, humiliated or intimidated. In total, out of the EU-GBV survey questions on sexual harassment at work, six questions described acts that could take place either online or offline. Of ever-working women in the eight Member States (FRA–EIGE data collection) who have experienced one or more of these six acts of sexual harassment at work, 25.6 % say that they experienced them online. Whereas, in these eight Member States, 8.3 % of ever-working women have experienced sexual harassment that involved sexually explicit emails/messages or inappropriate social media advances, when other online experiences of sexual harassment are added, the prevalence of online sexual harassment at work rises to 9.4 %.

According to the data, 27.2 % of ever-working women have experienced workplace sexual harassment by men, while 30.8 % have experienced harassment by any perpetrator. This suggests that most workplace sexual harassment against women is male-perpetrated (88.3 %). Looking into these results in more detail, 15.8 % of ever-working women in the EU have been sexually harassed by male coworkers, 7.4 % by male bosses/supervisors and 9.3 % by other men in work contexts like clients or customers.

6.3. REPORTING SEXUAL HARASSMENT AT WORK

78.0 % of ever-working women who have experienced sexual harassment at work have talked to someone close to them – such as a colleague or a friend – about what happened, while only 37.3 % reported the incident to an official body or authority ([Table 27](#)). This could involve reporting the incident of sexual harassment to the police, or contacting the person(s) at work designated as a contact person in case of sexual harassment, a healthcare or social service provider, or a labour union, for example. This means that across the EU-27 the prevalence of sexual harassment at work remains largely unknown to those in the position of ensuring a safe work environment for everyone.

TABLE 27 – EVER-WORKING WOMEN WHO IN THE 12 MONTHS BEFORE THE SURVEY REPORTED EXPERIENCING SEXUAL HARASSMENT AT WORK, BY PERSON / SUPPORT SERVICE THEY REPORTED TO OR CONTACTED (%)

Member State	Any person or service	Official body (support/ health/social service, police or officials at work)	Unofficial (colleague, close person or someone else)
BE	86.8	33.6	84.1
BG	83.8	(51.3)	(51.8)
CZ	79.8	(39.2)	73.1
DK	88.9	26.5	88.3
DE	93.1	(53.6)	76.3
EE	87.8	37.0	85.9
IE	87.0	(55.0)	87.0
EL	83.1	27.5	80.6
ES	84.1	37.3	79.1
FR	81.2	29.0	78.5
HR	88.2	(20.5)	87.8
CY	(64.0)	—	(60.5)
LV	(86.7)	(45.4)	(77.9)
LT	77.2	(29.7)	74.2
LU	90.1	33.7	87.7
HU	75.2	(26.8)	74.6
MT	72.4	(30.1)	65.7
NL	89.6	41.3	89.0
AT	86.9	39.8	86.0
PL	75.0	(38.2)	74.1
PT	(46.4)	(28.5)	(31.6)
RO	66.3	(29.3)	61.7
SI	86.0	(35.4)	86.0
SK	—	—	—
FI	90.0	32.0	88.8
SE	86.8	37.9	86.2
EU-27	83.4	37.3	78.0

Notes: Some results have been suppressed because of a low number of responses (< 20) or item non-response over 50 % (denoted with '—'). Data are not available for calculating the results for Italy.

Source: Eurostat, EU-GBV survey, 2021 wave, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA and EIGE. Eurostat online data code: [gbv_st_occ](#).

In general, younger women, aged 18–29 and 30–44, tend to report incidents of sexual harassment at work to people in an official capacity less often (39.8 % and 40.4 %, respectively, versus 53.3 % of women in the age group 45–64); conversely, older women, aged 45–65, are less likely to discuss what has happened to them with close persons (56.6 % compared with 64.3 % of younger women (age group 18–29)).

The EU-GBV survey did not ask women about their reasons for not reporting sexual harassment at work to the police or why they decided not to contact any other relevant organisation

following the incident. Research has shown, however, that barriers to formal reporting can include fear of retaliation, concerns about not being believed and uncertainty about procedural outcomes – particularly among young people, who often occupy more precarious positions ⁽³³⁾, and others in vulnerable employment situations or marginalised groups ⁽³⁴⁾. In FRA's 2012 survey, among women who did not report or talk to anyone about the most serious incident of sexual harassment they had experienced – at work or outside work – many indicated that they were able to deal with the situation themselves, without help from others (52 %), or that they considered the incident not serious enough to report (30 %), while 13 % said that they did not report or talk to anyone due to shame or embarrassment they felt concerning the incident.

6.4. SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF WOMEN WHO EXPERIENCE SEXUAL HARASSMENT AT WORK

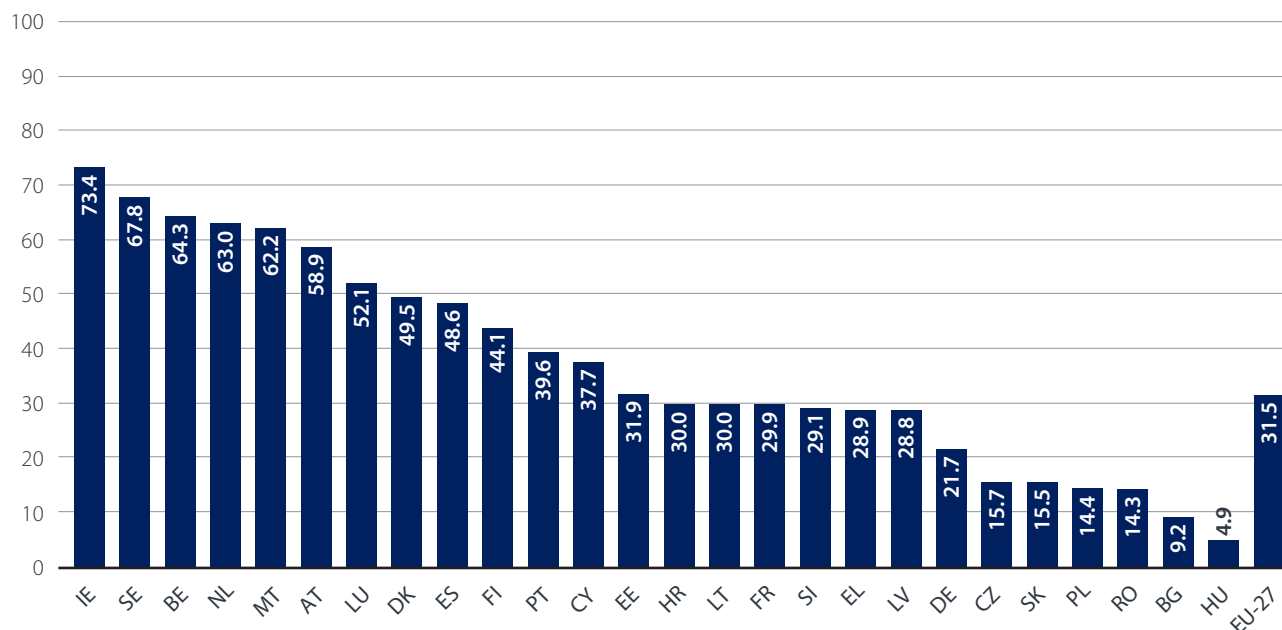
It is important to understand which women are more likely to experience sexual harassment at work. These factors may include contextual aspects, especially regarding the workplace, and women's sociodemographic characteristics. Analyses show that women with a fixed-term contract have a 15 % higher probability of experiencing sexual harassment at work (compared with women with permanent contracts), in line with previous research on the relationship between employment security and vulnerability to harassment ⁽³⁵⁾.

Other significant characteristics include age, with women in the oldest age group having a 50 % lower probability of being harassed at work than the youngest women. Tertiary education is associated with a 54 % higher probability of experiencing sexual harassment at work than lower levels of education, and women residing in cities have a higher likelihood of sexual harassment at work than women in rural areas. Women who have experienced sexual harassment at work also tend to declare it as more common (that is, something that occurs also to other people in their workplace). Women who are citizens of a non-EU country have a 43 % lower probability, according to the survey, of experiencing sexual harassment at work (see Annex 3, Table A4).

6.5. PERCEPTION OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT AT WORK, AWARENESS OF SUPPORT AND TRAINING AVAILABILITY

In addition to personal encounters, women were asked about the prevalence of sexual harassment at work in their Member States. Only 9.4 % of ever-working women across the EU-27 consider workplace sexual harassment to be fairly or very common, while 90.6 % view it as uncommon (answers 'not very common' and 'not common at all/does not occur' in the survey). Notably, Member States with high harassment rates (Finland, Luxembourg, Slovakia and Sweden) show average or below-average perception of sexual harassment at work as common. As for other types of sexual violence, women in some Member States may be more willing to disclose sexual harassment experiences thanks to stronger institutional support systems, legal frameworks or confidence that reporting will lead to appropriate action. Regarding workplace measures, 19.9 % of ever-working women know of available harassment training, 31.5 % confirm that designated contact persons/departments exist and 58.6 % know where to seek help. Awareness of designated contacts ranges from 73.4 % in Ireland to 4.9 % in Hungary ([Figure 14](#)).

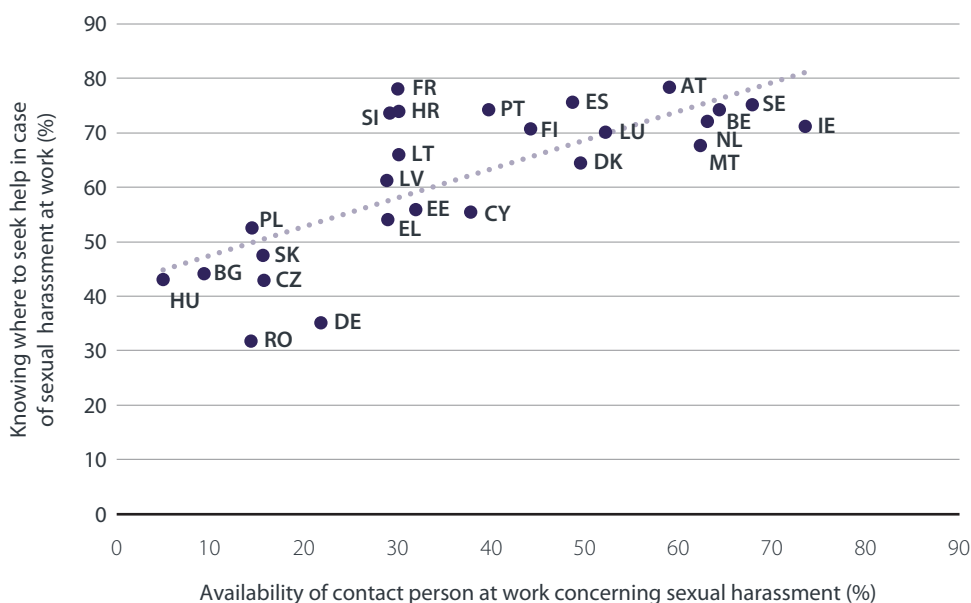
FIGURE 14 – AVAILABILITY OF A CONTACT PERSON OR DEPARTMENT AT WORK TO WHOM EXPERIENCES OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT CAN BE REPORTED (%)



Note: Data are not available for calculating the result for Italy.

Source: Eurostat, EU-GBV survey, 2021 wave, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA and EIGE.

FIGURE 15 – RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN KNOWING WHERE TO SEEK HELP FOR SEXUAL HARASSMENT AT WORK AND THE AVAILABILITY OF A CONTACT PERSON AT WORK CONCERNING SEXUAL HARASSMENT



Notes: $r = 0.74$, $p < 0.001$. Data are not available for calculating the result for Italy.

Source: Eurostat, EU-GBV survey, 2021 wave, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA and EIGE.

Member States scoring high on both knowledge of where to seek help and availability of a contact person or department at work include Belgium, Denmark, Ireland, Malta and Sweden, while Member States scoring low on both measures include Bulgaria, Czechia, Hungary and Romania. Organisational infrastructure – including accessible reporting mechanisms, clear policies and regular training – is essential for reducing harassment ⁽³⁶⁾. The significant correlation

between having a designated contact person or department for cases of sexual harassment at work and women knowing where to seek help underscores the importance of creating visible and accessible reporting pathways ⁽³⁷⁾ (Figure 15).

Sexual harassment outside work – additional questions that FRA and EIGE included in the survey in eight Member States

The questionnaire used by FRA and EIGE for the data collection in eight Member States asked women about sexual harassment experiences outside work in addition to what women had already shared in the survey about their experiences at work. It asked about the same sexual harassment acts regarding non-work-related experiences as in the work context, with the main differences being that women were asked to focus on any personal encounters with sexual harassment outside work. This section of the survey also included questions concerning the perpetrators of sexual harassment and the locations where these incidents took place.

Overall, the results point to variation in the prevalence of sexual harassment outside work across the eight Member States, with 45.4 % of women in the eight Member States having experienced it (from 69.4 % in Luxembourg to 39.6 % in Romania). Prevalence of the most common form of sexual harassment outside work (inappropriate staring or leering) is highest in Luxembourg (59.9 %) and Sweden (58.7 %) and lowest in Czechia (35.0 %) and Romania (33.5 %) (Table 28). For the second most common form of sexual harassment – unsolicited physical contact – the prevalence rates vary from 44.9 % (Sweden) to 13.1 % (Romania).

Of the two acts of cyber harassment asked about in the survey, 11.7 % of women have been met with inappropriate advances on social networking websites, and the same percentage have received inappropriate, sexually explicit emails and text messages.

The overwhelming majority of perpetrators are male. 42.8 % of women in the eight Member States have experience of being sexually harassed outside work by a male perpetrator, compared with 1.6 % of women who have encountered sexual harassment by a female perpetrator, noting that, in some instances (e.g. online), women may not know the sex of the perpetrator.

Looking at locations where sexual harassment happened – other than incidents that were related to work – to women in the eight Member States, public spaces feature prominently as locations where harassment occurs, with open areas like streets and parks (17.6 % of women experience sexual harassment in this setting), shopping areas / restaurants / hotels (18.8 %) and public transport (10.0 %) being the most common locations.

Finally, women could indicate whether they had experienced a change in sexual harassment outside work during the COVID-19 pandemic. While 9.8 % of women mention that sexual harassment increased during that time, a larger proportion experienced decreased harassment (28.4 %) or a complete cessation (12.2 %). The majority (36.2 %) report unchanged harassment levels, with 13.5 % noting a single incident during the pandemic. These findings suggest that pandemic mobility restrictions reduced the opportunity for sexual harassment – which often takes place in public spaces like streets, shopping areas or public transportation – although the restrictions also came with many negative effects, including the inability to meet with friends and family, and loss of income.

Across all forms of sexual harassment (either at work or outside work), 54.3 % of women in the eight Member States say that they have experienced these unwanted behaviours at some point in their lives.

TABLE 28 – SEXUAL HARASSMENT EXPERIENCED BY WOMEN OUTSIDE WORK (EIGHT MEMBER STATES, %)

Sexual harassment act	CZ	DE	IE	CY	LU	HU	RO	SE	Total of eight Member States
Inappropriate staring or leering that made you feel uncomfortable	35.0	37.3	41.2	46.5	59.9	42.9	33.5	58.7	38.8
Exposure to sexually explicit images or videos that made you feel offended, humiliated or intimidated	3.2	6.0	16.2	10.5	18.4	9.3	7.8	21.9	7.9
Indecent sexual jokes or offensive remarks about your body or private life	19.9	23.7	33.2	25.5	40.4	23.8	20.8	39.4	24.6
Inappropriate suggestions to go out on a date, which made you feel offended, humiliated or intimidated	12.2	15.9	23.1	20.0	24.8	19.6	16.4	25.4	17.0
Inappropriate suggestions for any sexual activity	11.8	14.4	25.1	14.5	26.6	24.6	12.1	30.6	16.2
Unsolicited physical contact, e.g. close proximity, touching body parts, kisses/hugs or something else that you did not want	16.4	26.5	35.5	21.3	39.7	18.2	13.1	44.9	25.0
Inappropriate advances on social networking websites	10.0	8.9	19.0	14.1	27.2	18.4	8.8	30.5	11.7
Inappropriate sexually explicit emails or text messages	10.0	8.9	19.0	14.1	27.2	18.4	8.8	30.5	11.7
Somebody threatened you with unpleasant consequences if you refused sexual proposals or advances	(1.3)	2.9	5.5	(2.9)	6.6	3.2	(2.7)	8.1	3.3
Other similar behaviour outside the workplace not mentioned yet that made you feel offended, humiliated or intimidated	—	—	(1.9)	—	4.6	—	—	5.0	0.9
Experienced sexual harassment outside work	41.3	43.4	51.9	49.8	69.4	49.4	39.6	68.6	45.4

Note: Some results have been suppressed because of a low number of responses (< 20) or item non-response over 50 % (denoted with '—'), and some results are displayed in brackets to suggest lower reliability (20–49 responses or item non-response between 20 % and 50 %).

Source: Eurostat, EU-GBV survey, 2021 wave, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA and EIGE.

STALKING

7



KEY FINDINGS

- Close to one in five women in the EU (18.5 %) have experienced stalking in their lifetimes, ranging from 32.4 % (Slovakia) to 8.5 % (Lithuania).
- In the 12 months before the survey, 5.4 % of young women in the EU (aged 18–29 years) experienced stalking, compared with 0.6 % of women aged 65–74 years.
- In the eight Member States where FRA and EIGE collected the data, 80.2 % of women who repeatedly received unwanted messages, letters or gifts indicate that this took place online, while 77.0 % of women who had had highly personal information published about them indicate that it took place online.
- Over four in five victims of stalking (84.6 %) indicate that the perpetrator was a man.
- Stalking experiences are often not reported to the police. In the EU-27, only 13.9 % of women who have experienced stalking during their lifetimes reported it to the police.
- One in five victims of stalking (21.6 %) by an intimate partner have had to change their place of residence due to stalking, while one in three (34.7 %) have had to change their telephone number, email address or social networking account.

Stalking seriously undermines victims' sense of safety and can be perpetrated by former partners, acquaintances or strangers. It involves repeated, persistent efforts to control the victim's actions or movements to demonstrate one's power over the victim and force the victim in their daily life to pay constant attention to the perpetrator and their actions. The Istanbul Convention (Article 34) requires states to criminalise repeated threatening conduct that causes fear for one's safety. This issue is addressed in the explanatory report of the convention which clarifies that stalking includes repeated following, unwanted communication, surveillance, property damage and/or spreading false information online, even if individual acts may not be criminal on their own. The VAW Directive reinforces this by requiring Member States to criminalise cyberstalking. Article 6 defines cyberstalking as repeated or continuous surveillance of a person's movements or activities by means of ICT, without consent or legal justification, and where such conduct is likely to cause serious harm. Additionally, Article 16 mandates that stalking behaviour be considered in individual risk assessments for victim protection.

The proposed revised VRD emphasises attention to stalking behaviour in individual assessments and supports digital reporting tools with online evidence submission (Article 5a, revised Article 22). The DSA requires platforms to combat illegal content distribution, with expedited removal processes for non-consensual intimate images (recital 87, Article 34(1)), while the EU's 2020–2025 gender equality strategy recognises that widespread online violence against women is impacting engagement in public discourse.

In the EU-GBV survey, the questions concerning stalking asked women whether they had experienced repeated actions by the same person that caused fear, alarm or distress. In addition to the seven acts of stalking listed in the EU-GBV survey, the questionnaire used by FRA and EIGE included an additional item, asking women whether they had experienced stalking that involved someone following or spying on them remotely (for more details, see the box '[What the survey asked about stalking](#)'). This item was added to reflect the VAW Directive in which cyberstalking is described in terms of the perpetrator monitoring the victim's movements or activities, while the questions of the core EU-GBV survey were developed before this directive was adopted.

This chapter starts by presenting the prevalence of stalking overall, and specifically with respect to selected groups in the population according to women's sociodemographic characteristics. Acts of cyberstalking are examined based on data collected by FRA and EIGE in eight Member States. The chapter then describes the perpetrators of stalking and the nature of the stalking women have experienced, before moving on to present the rate of stalking experiences reported to the police and reasons for not reporting. The chapter ends with a focus on the action taken by the victims because of the stalking they experienced.

7.1. EXTENT OF STALKING

In the EU-27, one in five women (18.5 %) have experienced stalking during their lifetimes, while 7.3 % experienced it in the 5 years before the survey and 2.8 % experienced it in the 12 months before the survey ([Table 29](#)). This includes women who have experienced one or more acts of stalking out of the seven acts listed in the core EU-GBV survey questionnaire. The prevalence of lifetime experiences of stalking ranges from 32.4 % in Slovakia, 29.7 % in Finland and 29.4 % in Sweden to 10.6 % in Poland, 10.4 % in Bulgaria, 10.2 % in Latvia and 8.5 % in Lithuania. The EU-GBV survey and FRA's 2012 survey on violence against women indicate similar rates of stalking during women's lifetimes (18.5 % and 18 %, respectively). However, the questions asked in the two surveys partly differ (moreover, the results of FRA's survey refer to the situation across 28 countries – the current EU-27 and the United Kingdom). Compared with the 12-month prevalence of stalking of 2.8 % in the EU-GBV survey, FRA's 2012 survey found 5 % of women in the EU-28 had experienced stalking in the 12 months before the survey.

Women who indicated that they have experienced stalking at some point in their lives were also asked whether any of these experiences concern the time when they were under 15 years old. According to the survey, 3.5 % of women in the EU-27 have experienced stalking before the age of 15.

TABLE 29 – WOMEN WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED STALKING BY ANY PERPETRATOR IN THEIR LIFETIMES OR IN THE 5 YEARS OR 12 MONTHS BEFORE THE SURVEY (%)

Member State	Lifetime	Past 5 years	Past 12 months
BE	22.7	9.5	4.3
BG	10.4	5.7	3.0
CZ	12.2	7.0	(2.4)
DK	23.5	8.5	3.1
DE	13.8	7.0	(2.2)
EE	18.3	7.7	3.2
IE	21.7	9.2	(3.5)
EL	26.1	9.2	3.6
ES	19.2	7.8	3.1
FR	23.8	8.3	3.6
HR	18.5	7.1	2.8
CY	25.8	9.4	(3.8)
LV	10.2	5.0	2.1
LT	8.5	3.3	(1.1)
LU	27.0	10.4	4.0
HU	22.2	7.7	(2.2)
MT	25.2	9.6	3.6
NL	21.6	(6.6)	(2.9)
AT	21.9	(5.7)	(1.9)
PL	10.6	(2.9)	(1.1)
PT	23.8	9.0	3.1
RO	13.3	5.8	(2.2)
SI	19.3	7.0	(3.3)
SK	32.4	13.9	4.8
FI	29.7	10.2	4.1
SE	29.4	11.4	4.4
EU-27	18.5	7.3	2.8

Notes: Some results are displayed in brackets to suggest lower reliability (20–49 responses or item non-response between 20 % and 50 %). Data are not available for calculating the results for Italy.

Source: Eurostat, EU-GBV survey, 2021 wave, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA and EIGE. Eurostat online data code: [gbv_st_occ](#).

What the survey asked about stalking

In the survey, women were asked to indicate whether they have experienced one or more acts that could be considered stalking. This was done by asking the following question: during your lifetime, has the same person repeatedly done one or more of the following things to you in a manner that caused you fear, alarm or distress?

- Sent you unwanted messages (including messages on social media), emails, letters or gifts?
- Made obscene, threatening, nuisance or silent telephone calls?
- Tried insistently to be in touch with you, waiting or loitering outside your home, school or workplace?
- Followed or spied on you in person?
- Intentionally damaged your things (car, motorbike, mailbox, etc.) or the belongings of people you care about or harmed your animals?
- Made offensive or embarrassing comments about you publicly (including on social networks)?
- Published photos, videos or highly personal information about you?

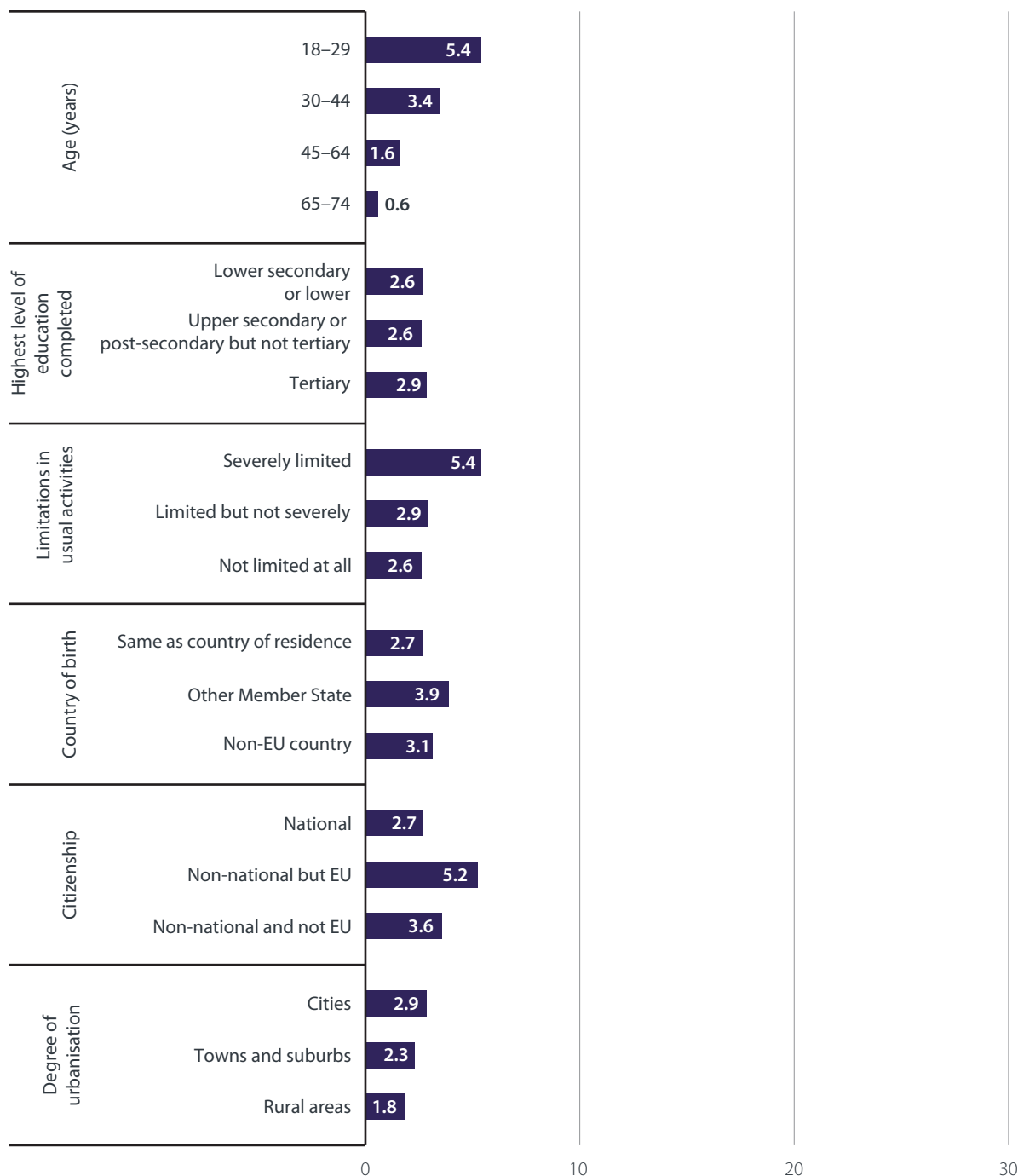
In addition to these seven acts of stalking listed in the core EU-GBV survey questionnaire, in the eight Member States where FRA and EIGE carried out the survey, the following item was added to the list.

- Followed or spied on you remotely, such as installing a tracking app on your phone, using a GPS device or accessing your mobile phone's location data?

The survey distinguishes between stalking involving remote communication and stalking involving physical proximity. Across the EU, 15.4 % of women have experienced stalking through calls, messages or similar actions without direct contact, while 10.1 % have experienced in-person acts, such as loitering, following or property damage. Among lifetime stalking victims, 42.8 % have experienced only one of the seven listed stalking acts, 40.0 % have experienced two to three and 17.3 % have experienced four or more, sometimes involving multiple perpetrators.

Many more women in the youngest age group experience stalking than older women. Based on the survey, 5.4 % of 18- to 29-year-old women experienced stalking in the 12 months before the survey compared with 0.6 % of 65- to 74-year-old women (Figure 16). Other sociodemographic characteristics of women associated with higher rates of stalking include having a disability (in the survey, asked in terms of limitations in usual activities) and being a citizen of another Member State than the one where they live.

FIGURE 16 – STALKING IN THE 12 MONTHS BEFORE THE SURVEY, BY WOMEN’S SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS (EU-27, %)



Source: Eurostat, EU-GBV survey, 2021 wave, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA and EIGE.

7.1.1. Additional questions in eight Member States on cyberstalking

The EU-GBV survey questionnaire does not clearly distinguish cyberstalking from stalking that takes place without online means. That is, several of the questions capture experiences that can include both online and offline acts of stalking. However, in the eight Member States where FRA and EIGE carried out the data collection, women who have experienced stalking could indicate whether it took place online or not.

The results show that cyberstalking is a widespread form of stalking that can involve receiving – by social media, email or other online means – unwanted messages, comments, calls or gifts, or can include the publication of one’s personal photos or videos. In the eight Member States overall, 8.5 % of women have experienced cyberstalking during their lifetime. For some acts of stalking that the survey asked about, cyberstalking represents the majority of women’s experiences ([Table 30](#)).

TABLE 30 – STALKING THAT TOOK PLACE ONLINE OUT OF ALL EXPERIENCES OF STALKING, BY TYPE OF ACT (EIGHT MEMBER STATES, %)

Type of act	Share of stalking experiences that took place online
Unwanted messages (including messages on social media), emails, letters or gifts	80.2
Obscene, threatening, nuisance or silent calls	48.2
Somebody making offensive or embarrassing comments about the person publicly (including on social networks)	55.8
Published photos, videos or highly personal information about you, online or elsewhere	77.0

Notes: In the EU-GBV survey, stalking experiences were collected by asking respondents whether they had experienced one or more of the seven acts of stalking listed in the survey. FRA and EIGE’s additional question about whether stalking took place online was asked for four of the seven acts of stalking (i.e. the four acts shown in the table), where the act could take place either online or offline and did not require the victim and perpetrator to be in the proximity of each other.

Source: Eurostat, EU-GBV survey, 2021 wave, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA and EIGE.

Another additional question used by FRA and EIGE asked whether the respondents had experienced someone following or spying on them remotely, such as by installing a tracking app on their phone, using a GPS device or accessing their mobile phone location data. In the eight Member States overall, 1.4 % of women have experienced stalking of this nature – that is, having someone follow or spy on them remotely.

In conclusion, in the eight Member States overall, 15.7 % have experienced stalking based on the seven acts described in the core EU-GBV survey questionnaire. If the additional FRA–EIGE item on having one’s location tracked is added to this, the total prevalence of stalking during women’s lifetimes is 15.9 %. Since including the additional act of stalking changes the overall prevalence only slightly, this suggests that many of those who have had their location tracked have also experienced other acts of stalking, demonstrating that perpetrators can seek to assert control over their victims in multiple ways.

7.2. PERPETRATORS OF STALKING

Stalking is predominantly perpetrated by men. Among women who have experienced stalking during their lifetimes, 84.6 % have been stalked by men compared with 13.4 % who indicate that the perpetrator was a woman. Among all ever-partnered women, 5.1 % have experienced stalking by an intimate partner during their lifetimes – usually a former partner – while 13.6 % have been stalked by non-partners. Out of women who have experienced stalking by a non-partner, 86.6 % indicate male perpetrators and 17.5 % female perpetrators (with some who have experienced stalking by both male and female perpetrators). Most stalking by non-partners is committed by someone the victim knows. Among women in the EU, 9.3 % have been stalked by someone they already knew, compared with 4.1 % who have been stalked by a stranger. Further, taking into account the gender of the perpetrators, 8.1 % of women in the EU-27 have experienced stalking by a male perpetrator known to them, while only 2.0 % have been stalked by a female perpetrator known to them. Similarly, more women in the EU have experienced stalking by male strangers (3.9 % of women in the EU during their lifetimes), compared with 0.3 % of women who have experienced stalking by female strangers. These figures highlight that stalking is not only gendered but also more often committed by individuals familiar to the victim.

Of women in the EU-27 who have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by a former partner, 21.9 % have additionally experienced stalking by a former partner, compared with 3.4 % of women who have been stalked by a former partner but have not experienced physical and/or sexual violence by a former partner. Of the women in the EU-27 who have experienced psychological violence by their former partners, 19.0 % say that they have experienced stalking by a former partner, compared with 1.6 % who have experienced stalking but no psychological violence by a former partner.

7.3. FREQUENCY OF STALKING ACTS

Stalking by an intimate partner happens with higher frequency than stalking by a non-partner. Of the victims of stalking by an intimate partner, 76.0 % indicate that, during the time when the stalking occurred, acts of stalking took place at least monthly. In comparison, 60.9 % of victims of stalking by a non-partner say that it happened at least monthly. Some two in three women who have been stalked by a non-partner (65.2 %) indicate that the longest episode of stalking lasted six months or more, a higher proportion than the 43.8 % women who report being stalked by an intimate partner for six months or more (Table 31). Women who have been stalked by an intimate partner indicate a shorter total duration of stalking than women who experienced stalking by a non-partner. It is possible that stalking by an intimate partner – which often involves a former partner – in a majority of cases takes place during the break-up and finishes within six months, while stalking by non-partners continues in most cases over six months.

TABLE 31 – DURATION OF THE LONGEST EPISODE OF STALKING, BY TYPE OF PERPETRATOR (EU-27, %)

Type of perpetrator	Less than six months	Six months or more
Intimate partner	56.2	43.8
Non-partner	34.8	65.2

Source: Eurostat, EU-GBV survey, 2021 wave, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA and EIGE.

7.4. REPORTING STALKING TO THE POLICE AND REASONS FOR NOT REPORTING

In the EU, 13.9 % of women who experience stalking during their lifetimes report it to the police. When including those who contact a lawyer or victim support services, the total rises modestly to 16.7 %. Among women who reported the most recent stalking episode, 39.5 % express satisfaction with the police response, while 28.9 % are partly satisfied and 26.9 % are dissatisfied. These satisfaction levels do not vary significantly based on whether the perpetrator was an intimate partner, another known person or a stranger. As a result of reporting the stalking experienced, most women indicate an improvement in the situation: 43.7 % say that the stalking stopped after reporting, and 23.7 % have seen a reduction; however, 1 in 5 (21.9 %) have experienced no change, and 1 in 20 (5.2 %) report an escalation. The remaining respondents did not provide an answer.

Women who did not report stalking to the police could specify in the survey the reason(s) why they decided not to contact the police. This question was asked in the survey with respect to the most recent episode of stalking (i.e. a series of events) and could involve one or more different stalking acts. The most cited reason for not reporting stalking to the police is the view that the stalking was insufficiently serious, followed by women saying that they consider what happened a private or family matter or they were able to resolve the situation themselves (Table 32).

TABLE 32 – REASONS FOR NOT REPORTING THE MOST RECENT EPISODE OF STALKING TO THE POLICE (EU-27, %)

Reason	Prevalence
It was not serious	45.6
It was a private or family matter / solved it myself	23.2
Embarrassment/(self-)blame	16.1
Police would not do anything / would not believe me / dislike of police	12.2
Fear of the perpetrator / fear of consequences (for oneself or the perpetrator)	10.9
Police would not be able to help	9.6
Discouraged by someone	4.0
Reported to other authorities instead	2.2
Other reasons	5.7

Source: Eurostat, EU-GBV survey, 2021 wave, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA and EIGE.

The likelihood of reporting stalking varies by the perpetrator's identity. Women stalked by strangers are more likely to view the incidents as not serious; 55.8 % cite this as the reason for not reporting, compared with 34.0 % of those stalked by intimate partners (Table 33). In contrast, 30.9 % of women stalked by an intimate partner consider it a private matter or believe they can resolve it themselves, compared with 17.8 % for stranger-perpetrated stalking. Additionally, 18.9 % of women stalked by intimate partners feel that the police would not act or believe them.

TABLE 33 – REASONS FOR NOT REPORTING THE MOST RECENT EPISODE OF STALKING TO THE POLICE, BY TYPE OF PERPETRATOR (EU-27, %)

Reason	Intimate partner	Other known person	Stranger
Reported to other authorities instead	1.8	2.7	0.7
Police would not be able to help	10.6	8.4	10.2
Police would not do anything / would not believe me / dislike of police	18.9	11.0	9.4
Discouraged by someone	5.3	4.7	1.7
Fear of the perpetrator / fear of consequences (for oneself or the perpetrator)	19.3	11.2	5.4
Embarrassment/(self-)blame	22.9	18.3	7.5
It was not serious	34.0	46.8	55.8
It was a private or family matter / solved it myself	30.9	23.5	17.8
Other reasons	4.2	5.2	4.9

Source: Eurostat, EU-GBV survey, 2021 wave, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA and EIGE.

Fear of the perpetrators and consequences if reported are a concern particularly when the perpetrator is an intimate partner – this is mentioned as a reason for not reporting stalking by 19.3 % of women stalked by an intimate partner, compared with 5.4 % of those stalked by a stranger. It is also worth noting that 22.9 % of women who did not report stalking by an intimate partner to the police mention feeling embarrassed or blaming themselves for what happened, a response that is less common when the perpetrator was another known person or a stranger (18.3 % and 7.5 %, respectively).

7.5. ACTIONS TAKEN AS A RESULT OF STALKING

7.2 % of women in the EU who have experienced stalking have sought help from a lawyer or victim support service. The survey did not specify whether women contacted a lawyer or victim support services after contacting the police – which would suggest that the police refer them – or whether women contacted these services first.

25.1 % of women in the EU who have experienced stalking by any perpetrator change their telephone number or email address or close their social networking account due to the stalking. 29.2 % take some protective measures such as stopping going out alone, changing their usual route when going to work or school, or carrying something to protect themselves (scissors, a knife, pepper spray, etc.). 15.7 % change their place of residence, job or place of study, or stop working or studying.

Stalking by an intimate partner more often forces women to take such action than stalking by other perpetrators (Table 34). This pertains to measures aiming at 'hiding' oneself from the perpetrator by changing one's telephone number or social media account, place of residence or place of work – all measures that incur emotional, financial and/or social costs for the victim.

TABLE 34 – MEASURES TAKEN IN RESPONSE TO STALKING, BY TYPE OF PERPETRATOR (EU-27, %)

Measure taken	Intimate partner	Other known person	Stranger
Changed telephone number, email address or social networking account	34.7	22.0	19.7
Stopped going out alone or changed route	24.6	20.3	20.2
Started carrying something to defend oneself	17.2	16.2	15.7
Changed place of residence	21.6	8.2	2.5
Changed job or school or stopped working/studying	13.0	10.4	2.6

Source: Eurostat, EU-GBV survey, 2021 wave, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA and EIGE.

**CHILDREN AND
VIOLENCE**

8



KEY FINDINGS

- A third of women in the EU (32.9 %) experienced physical and/or psychological violence during childhood perpetrated by their parents. Specifically, 13.0 % experienced physical violence and 29.9 % experienced psychological violence.
- Mothers and fathers perpetrate physical or psychological violence at similar rates (24.6 % versus 25.0 %, respectively).
- 6.6 % of women in the EU experienced sexual violence in their childhood. A clear majority of the perpetrators of the sexual violence are men – 93.9 %.
- One in three (34.6 %) women in the EU witnessed violence between their parents when they were children.
- Women who experienced sexual abuse in childhood are 3.2 times more likely to be sexually victimised by an intimate partner as adults, or 4.3 times more likely by a non-partner.

This chapter examines the forms of violence that children may experience, at home or elsewhere, based on women's childhood experiences (in the context of the EU-GBV survey, 'childhood' is before the age of 15) and information respondents share concerning children living in their households.

The VAW Directive (recital 13, Article 10) acknowledges that children who witness domestic violence are themselves victims, suffering long-term psychological harm that can affect their development and well-being. This recognition aligns with fundamental principles established in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, particularly Article 19, which requires states parties to protect children from all forms of violence, both physical and mental. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has further clarified in [general comment No 26 \(2023\)](#) that 'children must be protected from all forms of physical and psychological violence and from exposure to violence, such as domestic violence'.

[The directive on combating the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child pornography](#) (Directive 2011/93/EU) criminalises sexual abuse and exploitation of children by family members or strangers, establishing minimum sanctions and requiring prevention programmes and victim assistance. Furthermore, in 2024, the European Commission proposed a revision of the directive to address societal and technological changes ⁽³⁸⁾.

This protective framework is reinforced by the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Convention), which establishes comprehensive protection measures extending beyond sexual violence to encompass broader child protection principles. The Lanzarote Convention requires assistance for victims in their physical and psychosocial recovery, with measures that take due account of the child's views, needs and concerns. When parents or carers are involved in abuse, the convention mandates intervention procedures that may include removing the alleged perpetrator or the victim from the family environment, determined in accordance with the best interests of the child. The convention also establishes preventive measures through awareness-raising activities and reporting mechanisms that enable the identification and protection of at-risk children, while ensuring that investigations and criminal proceedings adopt a protective approach that respects children's rights and avoids aggravating trauma.

The convergence of these international instruments establishes a clear legal foundation for recognising children who witness domestic violence as victims in their own right, entitled to protection, support and remedial measures that address both their immediate safety and their long-term psychological recovery.

The results reflect the experiences of women who were asked in the EU-GBV survey to share their experiences of violence before the age of 15, including situations where they were exposed to physical, sexual or psychological violence. The survey asked about sexual violence in childhood that could have involved any perpetrator, ranging from family members to acquaintances and strangers. Questions on physical and psychological violence referred to incidents where the perpetrator was the victim's mother or father. Given that the survey followed a slightly different approach to sexual violence from its approach to physical and psychological violence, the corresponding results are presented in separate sections in this chapter. The chapter also draws upon data collected elsewhere in the survey, where women who had experienced violence by their intimate partner were asked whether children living in the same household had ever seen or heard these incidents, and whether the intimate partner had ever been violent towards the children. Related results concerning intimate partner violence during a woman's pregnancy – a risk to the health of the woman and the unborn child – are presented earlier in this report ([Section 3.3](#)). The chapter also examines patterns in women's experiences of violence in childhood across Member States.

8.1. PREVALENCE AND PATTERNS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN CHILDHOOD

The EU-GBV survey results show that, overall, 6.6 % of women experienced sexual violence during childhood (before the age of 15) ([Table 35](#)). The data show notable variations in prevalence across Member States. The rates are higher, more than twice the EU average, among women in the Nordic Member States – Sweden (15.3 %), Finland (13.7 %) and Denmark (12.4 %) – while a similar rate can also be found in Luxembourg (14.8 %). Conversely, Czechia (1.2 %), Poland (1.8 %) and Romania (1.9 %) show substantially lower rates. This geographic pattern aligns with research that identified higher disclosure rates in Nordic countries, potentially reflecting differences in reporting mechanisms rather than differences in actual prevalence ⁽³⁹⁾. The EU-GBV survey also shows that 1.6 % of women in the EU were raped before the age of 15 – this is in line with FRA's 2012 survey on violence against women, which showed that 1.4 % of women were raped before the age of 15. In FRA's survey, the question concerning sexual violence before the age of 15 referred to incidents perpetrated by an adult, while in the EU-GBV survey the relevant question did not pose limits in terms of the perpetrator's age.

TABLE 35 – WOMEN WHO EXPERIENCED SEXUAL VIOLENCE (INCLUDING RAPE) DURING CHILDHOOD (%)

Member State	Women who experienced sexual violence in childhood
BE	8.4
BG	2.2
CZ	(1.2)
DK	12.4
DE	5.1
EE	5.5
IE	8.5
EL	8.1
ES	6.8
FR	11.3
HR	4.5
CY	(3.9)
LV	2.2
LT	(1.6)
LU	14.8
HU	(2.5)
MT	4.5
NL	12.3
AT	7.1
PL	1.8
PT	3.5
RO	1.9
SI	(6.6)
SK	8.4
FI	13.7
SE	15.3
EU-27	6.6

Notes: Some results are displayed in brackets to suggest lower reliability (20–49 responses or item non-response between 20 % and 50 %). Data are not available for calculating the result for Italy.

Source: Eurostat, EU-GBV survey, 2021 wave, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA and EIGE. Eurostat online data code: [gbv_ch_age](#).

The survey data show that childhood sexual violence against women in the EU is overwhelmingly perpetrated by men; 6.2 % of women report experiencing childhood sexual violence by male perpetrators, while only 0.4 % report experiencing childhood sexual violence by female perpetrators (meaning that 93.9 % of perpetrators of childhood sexual abuse against women are men). Most incidents (86.4 %) involved someone known to the victim rather than a stranger (13.6 % of cases), aligning with prior research on childhood sexual abuse dynamics ⁽⁴⁰⁾.

55.7 % of women disclosed their experiences to someone, but only 13.5 % reported to official bodies or support services, reflecting a significant institutional reporting gap ⁽⁴¹⁾. Disclosures were most often made to family members or friends and schoolmates (Table 36). As for involving authorities, women were most likely to turn to the police (5.9 %), social service (6.7 %) or a person from school (6.8 %).

TABLE 36 – WOMEN WHO EXPERIENCED SEXUAL VIOLENCE DURING CHILDHOOD (BEFORE THE AGE OF 15), BY THE AUTHORITY / PERSON / SUPPORT SERVICE TO WHOM THEY DISCLOSED (EU-27, %)

Person or service	Prevalence
Family member	37.1
Friend or schoolmate	26.2
Person from school	6.8
Social service	6.7
Victim support service or helpline	1.7
Police	5.9
Other	4.6
Did not report to police or contact other service or person for support	44.3

Note: Results calculated by Eurostat.

Source: Eurostat, EU-GBV survey, 2021 wave, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA and EIGE.

8.2. PHYSICAL OR PSYCHOLOGICAL VIOLENCE BY PARENTS DURING CHILDHOOD

Analysis of the results concerning the physical and/or psychological violence committed against women by their parents during childhood shows that more women were confronted with psychological violence (29.9 %) than physical violence (13.0 %). In total, one in three women (32.9 %) indicate that their mother, father or both parents used physical and/or psychological violence against them when they were under the age of 15, across the EU (Table 37). The results vary between Member States, as women in Luxembourg (49.4 %), Finland (48.9 %) and Germany (47.6 %) have the highest rates, while Portugal (17.6 %) and Spain (20.2 %) have the lowest rates. These variations may reflect differences in the social acceptance of certain disciplinary practices and reporting behaviours ⁽⁴²⁾.

TABLE 37 – WOMEN WHO EXPERIENCED PHYSICAL AND/OR PSYCHOLOGICAL VIOLENCE FROM THEIR PARENT(S) DURING CHILDHOOD (BEFORE THE AGE OF 15), BY TYPE OF VIOLENCE (%)

Member State	Physical violence	Psychological violence	Physical and/or psychological violence
BE	10.6	24.0	26.2
BG	4.5	27.7	28.0
CZ	7.0	23.4	25.3
DK	21.3	37.4	42.9
DE	12.4	46.4	47.6
EE	21.4	24.8	34.5
IE	16.9	25.9	30.3
EL	23.4	33.0	40.9
ES	10.6	16.4	20.2
FR	12.0	22.6	25.7
HR	16.8	27.5	32.8
CY	17.9	36.8	38.5
LV	19.7	25.9	33.2
LT	16.3	24.8	29.6
LU	25.3	44.7	49.4
HU	14.6	27.7	30.3
MT	14.8	18.1	24.9
NL	13.3	32.3	34.6
AT	18.6	39.7	42.6
PL	11.0	19.3	22.4
PT	13.6	11.1	17.6
RO	16.9	41.3	43.7
SI	13.8	28.1	30.8
SK	18.9	34.8	39.3
FI	19.7	43.9	48.9
SE	11.3	34.9	36.8
EU-27	13.0	29.9	32.9

Note: Data are not available for calculating the results for Italy.

Source: Eurostat, EU-GBV survey, 2021 wave, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA and EIGE. Eurostat online data codes: [gbv_ch_ph](#), [gbv_ch_ps](#), [gbv_ch_phps](#).

The data on women's parents as perpetrators show relatively similar rates of physical and/or psychological violence perpetrated by mothers (experienced by 24.6 % of women) and fathers (25.0 %) (Table 38). This pattern is similar to that found in FRA's 2012 survey, while it contrasts with some research that has found fathers more likely to perpetrate physical violence and mothers more likely to perpetrate psychological violence ⁽⁴³⁾.

TABLE 38 – WOMEN WHO EXPERIENCED PHYSICAL OR PSYCHOLOGICAL VIOLENCE BY THEIR PARENTS DURING CHILDHOOD, BY TYPE OF PERPETRATOR AND TYPE OF VIOLENCE (EU-27, %)

Perpetrator	Physical violence	Psychological violence	Physical and/or psychological
Mother	7.5	22.4	24.6
Father	8.7	22.9	25.0

Source: Eurostat, EU-GBV survey, 2021 wave, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA and EIGE.

8.3. INTERGENERATIONAL PATTERNS AND WITNESSING VIOLENCE

Children who see violence between their parents or guardians may grow up to perceive such acts as a normal part of a relationship. Witnessing violence can otherwise inform or influence the way they interact with their intimate partners later as adults. The survey results show that witnessing violent behaviour between one's parents is common. One in three women in the EU (34.6 %) say that when they were under 15 years of age they witnessed one or more instances when either or both of their parents used violence against the other. The highest rates were found in Finland (58.1 %), Luxembourg (50.1 %) and Slovakia (49.8 %) and the lowest in Malta (20.6 %) and Portugal (19.2 %) (Table 39). The data distinguish between witnessing violence perpetrated by fathers (30.1 %) and by mothers (22.5 %).

TABLE 39 – WOMEN WHO HAVE WITNESSED VIOLENCE (PHYSICAL OR PSYCHOLOGICAL) BETWEEN THEIR PARENTS DURING CHILDHOOD (BEFORE THE AGE OF 15), BY TYPE OF PERPETRATOR (%)

Member State	Mother	Father	Either parent
BE	16.5	23.6	28.1
BG	19.1	28.4	29.3
CZ	15.6	21.1	24.8
DK	29.4	33.9	42.4
DE	35.4	43.2	48.6
EE	21.8	30.9	35.6
IE	19.1	23.5	28.8
EL	22.2	31.5	36.5
ES	13.1	21.3	24.3
FR	15.1	22.1	27.5
HR	27.0	38.3	42.1
CY	27.1	37.0	40.8
LV	29.5	35.8	38.0
LT	27.1	34.7	37.8
LU	32.9	43.7	50.1
HU	21.3	28.5	31.0
MT	12.2	18.6	20.6
NL	18.7	25.8	31.5
AT	25.2	37.6	41.7
PL	14.1	21.7	24.0
PT	7.2	17.7	19.2
RO	33.0	42.7	44.8
SI	23.5	33.5	37.6
SK	36.9	43.9	49.8
FI	45.8	47.4	58.1
SE	28.8	31.2	40.8
EU-27	22.5	30.1	34.6

Note: Data are not available for calculating the results for Italy.

Source: Eurostat, EU-GBV survey, 2021 wave, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA and EIGE. Eurostat online data code: [gbv_ch_vbp](#).

8.4. CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES OF VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN ADULTHOOD

Experiencing violence in childhood can increase a person's vulnerability to adult victimisation, according to the cycle of violence hypothesis ⁽⁴⁴⁾. The mechanisms behind this relationship are multifaceted, involving both individual and social factors. A logistic regression analysis provides insights into the relationship between childhood experiences of violence and subsequent sexual violence victimisation in adulthood (for details of the logistic regression model see Annex 3, Table A5). The analysis reveals a pattern: women who experienced sexual abuse as children are

much more likely to face sexual violence again as adults. Specifically, childhood sexual abuse more than triples the likelihood of experiencing sexual violence from an intimate partner and more than quadruples the risk of experiencing violence from non-partners, such as strangers or acquaintances. Similarly, women who were physically or emotionally abused by their parents during childhood are more than twice as likely to experience sexual violence in their adult relationships, whether from partners or non-partners. These findings support existing research showing that early traumatic experiences make individuals more vulnerable to becoming victims of violence later in life, creating a cycle where childhood trauma increases the risk of adult victimisation ⁽⁴⁵⁾.

8.5. CHILDREN OF RESPONDENTS WHO HAVE BEEN EXPOSED TO VIOLENCE BY A WOMAN'S INTIMATE PARTNER

In the EU-GBV survey, women were asked whether – to the extent they are aware – their children have ever seen or heard an intimate partner being violent towards the respondent. The results show that violence between partners is rarely secret from children living in the household. Some 80 % of children have at least occasionally (often, sometimes or rarely) seen or heard episodes of violence perpetrated by the woman's intimate partner (Table 40).

TABLE 40 – WOMEN WHO SAY CHILDREN LIVING IN THEIR HOUSEHOLD HAVE WITNESSED INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE, BY PERPETRATOR OF VIOLENCE (EU-27, %)

Frequency of witnessing intimate partner violence	Current intimate partner	Former intimate partner(s)	Any intimate partner
Saw/heard episodes rarely	21.6	27.5	26.1
Saw/heard episodes sometimes	36.9	37.7	37.6
Saw/heard episodes often	15.6	15.4	15.5
Do not think that they saw/heard episodes	25.9	19.4	20.9

Source: Eurostat, EU-GBV survey, 2021 wave, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA and EIGE.

Among women who have experienced partner violence from their current intimate partner and had children in the household, 25.9 % report that the children have not witnessed the abuse. This figure drops to 19.4 % in cases involving former partners. These numbers may underestimate children's exposure, as some may have been aware of the violence without the respondent's knowledge. The survey also asked whether violent partners had been abusive towards children in the household. Results show that, in many cases, violence extended beyond the women to the children as well (Table 41). The substantial proportion of children experiencing abuse in households where intimate partner violence is occurring highlights the potential intergenerational impact of intimate partner violence.

TABLE 41 – CHILDREN AS VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE BY A WOMAN'S INTIMATE PARTNER WHO HAD ALSO BEEN VIOLENT TOWARDS HER, BY PERPETRATOR OF VIOLENCE (EU-27, %)

Frequency of children experiencing violence	Current intimate partner	Former intimate partner(s)	Any intimate partner
Rarely	17.8	22.5	21.4
Sometimes	29.8	21.3	23.2
Often	6.8	4.0	4.7
Do not think that this happened	45.6	52.2	50.8

Source: Eurostat, EU-GBV survey, 2021 wave, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA and EIGE.

To understand the risk of intimate partner violence occurring when children are residing in the household, a logistic regression analysis was conducted (Annex 3, Table A6). This involved the same model as presented earlier in this chapter, with one additional variable included, namely the age of the children residing in the household (women with no children living in the household formed the comparator category). Only experiences with current partners were included, as there was no possibility of estimating the children's age at the time of former partner violence. The analysis reveals that women with older children are significantly more likely to experience violence from their current partners. Specifically, women with children aged 7–15 are about 57 % more likely to experience violence, and women with children aged 15 and older are about 30 % more likely than women without children at home. Interestingly, having very young children (aged 0–6) does not increase the risk. There can be various explanations for these results. For example, women with children may be less willing or able to leave their current partners, children may be used by perpetrators to coerce victims (e.g. threatening to take away the custody of the children from women) or inflict violence, children (especially older ones) may not be biologically related to a current partner (increasing the chance of intimate partner violence) or parental stressors could increase vulnerability to intimate partner violence.

CONCLUSION

The pervasive nature of violence against women and intimate partner violence across the EU is a pressing concern that demands renewed attention and action. The EU-GBV survey findings underscore the need for a comprehensive and multifaceted approach to address these issues. The Istanbul Convention provides a comprehensive framework for preventing violence against women and domestic violence, protecting victims and holding perpetrators accountable. The VAW Directive, once incorporated into national law, will complement the Istanbul Convention and offer additional protection. While the EU's ratification of the Istanbul Convention expands its implementation, efforts should be made to have the remaining Member States ratify the convention, to ensure consistency in the legislation countering violence against women and domestic violence across the EU.

Building on the existing legislative framework, including the Istanbul Convention, the VAW Directive and the VRD, it is essential for the Member States to prioritise the implementation of measures that prevent violence against women, provide vital support and protection for victims and ensure that perpetrators are held fully accountable. In many cases, violence against women and intimate partner violence remain hidden from the national authorities, meaning authorities need to take steps to actively identify victims and inform them and those at risk about their rights and the available support measures.

The forms of sexual violence examined in the EU-GBV survey range from rape, through forcing a person to participate in humiliating and degrading sexual acts, to sexual harassment. The evidence clearly demonstrates that coercive rape (in the absence of overt force) is substantially more prevalent than force-based incidents. This underscores the need to implement consent-based definitions of sexual violence. Such a move would effectively address the current legal fragmentation and align with Article 36 of the Istanbul Convention, which compels parties to criminalise any sexual act lacking consent.

The survey results highlight the significance of economic violence, emphasising that this form of violence against women must not be ignored. Violence against women, including economic violence, places a considerable burden on the victims, as shown by the results related to the impact and consequences of violence, ranging from economic disadvantage to adverse impacts on victims' health. The need for a comprehensive approach with respect to policies and measures on violence against women is reflected in the VAW Directive's call for training at the Member State level on coordinated multidisciplinary cooperation, which should be stressed when implementing the directive. While intimate partner violence often occurs in a private setting, many incidents of non-partner violence and sexual harassment take place in a public setting (including online) or at work; this stresses the need to involve all relevant actors in preventing and tackling violence, in line with their respective areas of responsibility and spheres of influence.

Moreover, the VAW Directive's provisions on stricter penalties for offences involving cruelty, vulnerability or repeated violence should be implemented with urgency. This is to recognise the serious nature of intimate partner violence and its lasting consequences, as highlighted by the survey's findings. The implementation of these provisions should be guided by the principles of the Istanbul Convention and the VRD, which emphasise the need for effective and dissuasive criminal penalties and support for victims of violence. The survey shows that many victims of violence continue to perceive that what happened was not serious enough to be reported to the police, among other reasons for not reporting incidents of violence. Victims should not be left with this perception. Instead, authorities need to take proactive and decisive steps to ensure that women have a chance to be heard and that violence that often feeds on a sense of shame and vulnerability does not go unpunished.

Comprehensive approaches to tackling violence against women should give due regard to and seek to benefit from the opportunities available through other relevant instruments of EU law, beyond the VAW Directive and the VRD. For example, when implementing the DSA's provisions on cyberviolence, an enhanced focus should be placed on cyberviolence in intimate relationships,

particularly given that former male partners account for a substantial proportion of perpetrators of unauthorised GPS tracking and non-consensual intimate-content sharing. Current risk assessment mechanisms for very large online platforms should address the interconnected nature of cyberviolence affecting women – of all ages, but young women and girls in particular – with attention paid to stalking behaviours, of which many incidents occur online.

In conclusion, the findings and opinions contained in this report – based on the EU-GBV survey data from Eurostat, FRA and EIGE – provide robust evidence from which to formulate courses of action to address and combat violence against women at the levels of the EU and individual Member States, aligned with obligations under EU and international law. Given that little has changed in the overall prevalence rates of violence reported by the EU-GBV survey and FRA's 2012 survey on violence against women (published in 2014), it is clear that further efforts are needed to make sure that women in the EU, including women victims of violence, see the benefits of the protections afforded to them in law.

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

DSA	Digital Services Act
EIGE	European Institute for Gender Equality
EU-GBV survey	European Union gender-based violence survey
FRA	European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights
GPS	global positioning system
Grevio	Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence
ILO	International Labour Organization
VAW Directive	Violence against Women Directive
VRD	Victims' Rights Directive
WHO	World Health Organization

COUNTRY ABBREVIATIONS

BE	Belgium
BG	Bulgaria
CZ	Czechia
DK	Denmark
DE	Germany
EE	Estonia
IE	Ireland
EL	Greece
ES	Spain
FR	France
HR	Croatia
IT	Italy
CY	Cyprus
LV	Latvia
LT	Lithuania
LU	Luxembourg
HU	Hungary
MT	Malta
NL	Netherlands
AT	Austria
PL	Poland
PT	Portugal
RO	Romania
SL	Slovenia
SK	Slovakia
FI	Finland
SE	Sweden

Endnotes

- (¹) Council of Europe, '[Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence](#)', Istanbul, 2011.
- (²) These include the Anti-trafficking Directive (Directive 2011/36/EU), the European Protection Order (EPO) Directive (Directive 2011/99/EU), the Compensation Directive (Council Directive 2004/80/EC), three international protection directives (Directives 2013/33/EU, 2011/95/EU and 2008/115/EC), three directives related to equal treatment and equal opportunities (Directives 2006/54/EC, 2004/113/EC and 2010/41/EU) and Regulation (EU) No 606/2013 on mutual recognition of protection measures in civil matters. The European Commission's list of relevant legal instruments also includes the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which the EU ratified in 2010. Article 16 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, concerning freedom from exploitation, violence and abuse, requires states parties to pay attention to gender-based aspects of all forms of exploitation, violence and abuse; states parties must ensure that protection services are gender-sensitive and that gender-specific needs are considered in measures aiming for the recovery, rehabilitation and social reintegration of persons with disabilities who become victims of exploitation, violence or abuse.
- (³) This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.
- (⁴) FRA, [Violence against Women: An EU-wide survey – Main results](#), Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2014.
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