

**Report on Launch Conference on Violence against women across the EU
Abuse at home, work, in public and online
European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)**

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The survey is based on interviews with 42,000 women from across the 28 Member States of the EU. It reveals that violence against women and more particularly gender-based violence disproportionately affects women, families, friends and society as a whole.

The survey asked women about their experiences of physical, sexual and psychological violence, including incidents of intimate partner violence (domestic violence) and also asked about stalking, including through internet and mobile messages, sexual harassment, violence in childhood and fear of victimisation

The survey findings reveal that violence against women is an extensive but widely under-reported human rights abuse across the EU.

Overall, extent and nature of violence against women including intimate partner violence.

About 8% of women have experienced physical and /or sexual violence in the last 12 months before the survey interview and one in three women has experienced some form of physical and /or sexual assault since the age of 15

One in 10 women has experienced some form of sexual violence since the age of 15, and one in 20 women have been raped since the age of 15. Of those women in the survey who say they have experienced sexual violence since the age of 15, almost one in 10 indicate that more than one perpetrator was involved in the most serious incident of women who have been in a relationship with a man, 22% have experienced physical and/or sexual violence.

Of women in the survey who indicate they have been raped by their current partner, about one third (31%) say they have experienced six or more incidents of rape by their partner, Many have experienced several incidents of marital rape. Evidence shows that a significant number of women continue to be vulnerable in the aftermath of violent relationships. The survey results also show a relationship between a woman's partner's heavy alcohol abuse and increased violence. The findings show that repeated victimisation on many women's lives is a particular characteristic of intimate partner violence

Consequences of physical and sexual violence against women including intimate partner violence

Reporting rates of incidents of violence against women to the police and other services are low (between one in three and one in four). Women experience several incidents of abuse by a partner before they decide to report, whereas non-partner violence reporting is more likely. In particular the findings reveal the victim's lack of satisfaction with the police. The survey indicates that pregnant women are vulnerable to violence. The survey shows that 87% of women would find it acceptable if doctors routinely ask about

violence if patients exhibit certain injuries.

Compared to the number of women who contacted healthcare services as a result of violence, few women contacted victim support organisations or women's shelters. About one in four victims of sexual assault by either a partner or a non-partner did not contact the police or any other organisation after a most serious incident because of feelings of shame and embarrassment.

Psychological partner violence against women

Psychological violence by partner is widespread. The survey results show that two in five women (43%) have experienced some form of psychological violence, either by a current or a previous partner. 25% have been belittled, 14% whose partner has threatened to hurt them physically and 5 % whose partner has forbidden them to leave the house or locked them up or taken away their car keys. Employers and Trade Unions should consider adopting awareness raising and related training activities for responsible personnel to help them identify and respond to the needs of employees suffering from psychologically controlling behaviour by partner

Experience of stalking

The findings show that one in five women have experienced some form of stalking since the age of 15. However one in four stalking cases reported in the survey never came to the attention of the police.

Internet and the social media of victims of stalking 23% indicate in the survey that they had to change their email address or phone number in response to the most serious incidents. The police need to investigate where cyberstalking plays a role

Vulnerabilities of professional women alongside other women

Between 64% and 75% of women in a professional capacity or in top management jobs have experienced sexual harassment in their lifetime. One in 10 women have experienced inappropriate advances on social websites or have been subjected to emails or text messages (SMS), young women in particular.

Experiences of violence in childhood

The scale of childhood abuse and under-reporting

Just over one in 10 women (12%) has experienced some form of sexual abuse or incident by an adult before the age of 15. Some 27% of women have experienced some form of physical abuse in childhood before the age of 15 at the hands of an adult. In 97% of cases of sexual violence in childhood the perpetrator was male whereas in cases of physical violence only slightly more cases were attributed to men than to women

Ways forward

The study presents the EU and Member states with the most comprehensive EU-wide dataset on violence against women which can serve to inform policy responses and action based on the evidence of the findings themselves.

The European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS) provided the most recent studies carried out, following an earlier publication in June 2013. A summary of the key points of the CoE Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) was also highlighted during the Conference. So far only 4 Member States have ratified the Convention. It requires the ratification of at least 10 member states before it can come into force, after the necessary amendments are made in national laws in harmony with the Convention. However, reservations on the most sensitive aspects of the Convention by Member States can reduce the overall impact of the Convention

The CoE Convention is the first European legally-binding instrument devoted to violence against women. The Istanbul Convention recognises female genital mutilation (FGM) as a form of violence. Sanctions need to be effective, proportionate and dissuasive. Justification of the basis of culture, religion or tradition may not be used in order to lessen the punishment

Although the EU has several directives and has carried out vast research studies on violence against women, so far it has no binding instrument designed specifically to protect women from violence. The topic falls under the competence of National Governments. Parliament has repeatedly called for a European Strategy to counter violence against women including a legally binding instrument.

Recently, in its resolution of the 6 February 2013, Parliament called once again on the Commission to devise an EU strategy for tackling violence against women, which would include the drafting of a directive laying down minimum standards. Finally in January 2014 the FEMM Committee adopted a legislative initiative report with recommendations to the Commission on combating violence against women (rapporteur Antonija Parvanova, ALDE, Bulgaria)

The Conference was attended by representatives of governments of Member States, a vast number of leading women and men working on gender equality in the EU and representatives of national governments and organisations of countries outside the EU

Useful websites

<http://www.eprs.ep.parl.union.eu>

<http://epthinktank.eu>

ep@ep.europa.eu

Technical Report - <http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2014/vaw-survey-technical-report>

<http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2014/vaw-survey-results-at-a-glance>

fra.europa.eu

E-learning course on Female genital mutilation (FGM): www.uefgm.org