

EU gender-based violence survey

Main findings

2024 edition



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1

Introduction and background information

Introduction and background information

This publication provides background information on the methodology development, and on the implementation of the EU survey on gender-based violence against women and other forms of inter-personal violence (EU-GBV). It also gives some initial results from the survey.

Violence directed against a person because of that person's gender, or violence that affects persons of a particular gender disproportionately, can be defined as gender-based violence (GBV). Women and girls, of all ages and backgrounds are the most affected by GBV ⁽¹⁾. Eliminating GBV and improving knowledge on the topic is one of the priorities of the European Commission, as the lack of comparable and reliable data can impede further policy developments.

The need for regular data on gender-based violence is highlighted in Directive (EU) 2024/1385 ⁽²⁾ of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 on combating violence against women, and domestic violence, that includes a provision to conduct population-based surveys at regular intervals to assess the prevalence and trends.

Development of the EU-wide survey on GBV started in 2016, pre-testing of the questionnaire was carried out in eight countries from October 2017 to March 2018. A pilot survey was conducted in 14 countries over the period 2018–2019. The main survey implementation started in 2020 and data collection was from September 2020 to March 2024 (wave 2021).

To ensure that high quality and comparable data are produced, the implementation of EU-GBV is based on a common questionnaire and methodology. The main concepts and definitions, as well

¹ For further details, see European Commission webpage, [What is gender-based violence](#)

² See [Directive \(EU\) 2024/1385 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 on combating violence against women and domestic violence](#)

as guidance on all technical and methodological aspects of this survey, are provided in the Methodological manual for the EU survey on gender-based violence against women and other forms of inter-personal violence (EU-GBV) ⁽³⁾.

Eurostat coordinated the data collection in 18 Member States (BE, BG, DK, EE, EL, ES, FR, HR, LV, LT, MT, NL, AT, PL, PT, SI, SK, FI), where the survey was implemented by National Statistical Authorities. Italy shared comparable data for the main indicators based on its national survey. For eight Member States (CZ, DE, IE, CY, LU, HU, RO, SE) the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) and the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) coordinated the data collection, which was carried out by private companies in accordance with the EU-GBV survey guidelines.

As the data collection (wave 2021) was planned over the period 2020-2023, based on national timetables, the survey data were published by Eurostat in batches (groups of countries) shortly after the validation process was finalised. The first dissemination included the countries who finalised the data collection in September 2022 ⁽⁴⁾ (BG, FR, LV, LT, NL, AT, SI), while EU-wide data was disseminated in November 2024. The publication of initial findings has been updated, now providing results for all Member States and at EU-level in the current publication.

³ Eurostat, Methodological manual for the EU survey on gender-based violence against women and other forms of inter-personal violence (EU-GBV), Eurostat, 2021 ([publication is available here](#)).

⁴ Eurostat, EU survey on gender-based violence against women and other forms of inter-personal violence – first results, Eurostat, 2022 ([publication is available here](#)).

2

Interpreting the EU-GBV survey results

Interpreting the EU-GBV survey results

Based on UN studies ⁽⁵⁾, a substantial amount of violent experience is not reported or officially recorded; it is therefore important to rely on a population survey in addition to police statistics.

Results of a violence against women survey conducted in 2013 ⁽⁶⁾ showed that only one third of victims of partner violence and one quarter of victims of non-partner violence contacted police or a support organisation following the most serious incidents of violence.

The EU-GBV survey (wave 2021) shows a similar trend: more victims of partner violence contact the police or a support organisation compared to victims of non-partner violence. However, when taking into account violent experiences carried out by any type of perpetrator over a lifetime, around one quarter of women contacted police or a support organisation as a result of at least one incident of physical or sexual violence (27 % out of all women who have experienced physical or sexual violence during their lifetime).

Most cases of violence experienced are not reported to the police, therefore not officially recorded.

Another comparison could be made between the number of police recorded violent sexual offences ⁽⁷⁾ and the number of women who reported any sexual violence in the survey. The number of women in the EU-GBV survey (wave 2021) who reported experience of sexual violence during the last five years is much higher than the number of violent sexual offences reported to the police during the same period. Of the ten countries where both figures are

⁵ For further details, see [UN Women webpage, Facts and figures: Ending violence against women](#).

⁶ FRA, Violence against women: and EU-wide survey. Main results, FRA 2014 ([publication is available here](#)).

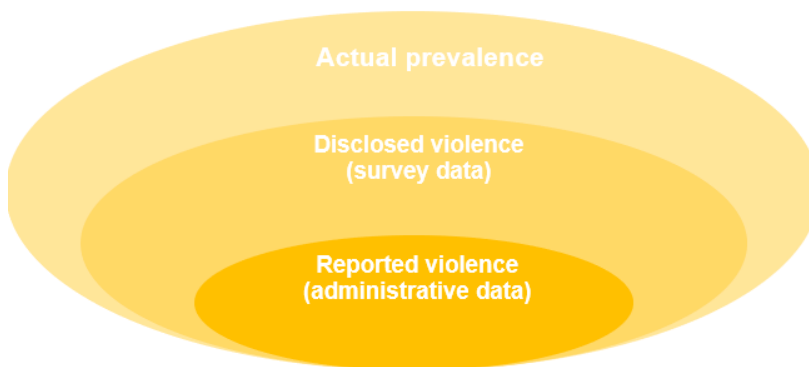
⁷ Eurostat, database, [table on number of police recorded violent sexual offences \(crim_hom_soff\)](#).

available, the number of offences reported to the police accounts for less than 5 % ⁽⁸⁾ of the total number of women who, in the survey, said that they had experienced any sexual act of violence.

However, it is necessary to point out that survey data itself might only be a close proxy to the real prevalence, as survey data depend on the willingness of the respondent to disclose any violence experienced.

FIGURE 1

Prevalence of violence by different data sources



Source: Eurostat, 2022 statistical report "EU survey on gender-based violence against women and other forms of inter-personal violence (EU-GBV) – first results"

eurostat 

To understand the prevalence of violence and disclosure rates by survey respondents, it is important to take into account the extent to which violence is tolerated in the wider community ⁽⁹⁾. Research has shown that respondents' attitudes might reflect earlier individual experiences of violence and thus normalisation over time, or socially desirable norms in the community, and therefore might not be comparable between countries ⁽¹⁰⁾.

For example, in societies where people are more willing to talk about violent experiences, answers may reflect more accurately such experiences, whereas in less aware communities it could be that people are less inclined to discuss violent experiences which do not reflect socially desirable norms.

The extent to which violence is tolerated in the wider community might influence the number of women who are willing to share violent experiences in the survey. Therefore, survey data itself might only be a close proxy to the real prevalence.

⁸ It is important to highlight that the counting unit for the police and survey data are different: number of offences are recorded by police (not persons), while number of persons who have experienced violence is counted in the survey. One person might report more than one offence to the police.

⁹ Waltermaurer, E., Public justification of intimate partner violence: a review of the literature, Trauma, Violence, & Abuse, 2012, volume 13 pages 167-175 ([publication is available here](#)) and United Nations, Guidelines for Producing Statistics on Violence against Women. Statistical Surveys, New York 2014 ([publication is available here](#)).

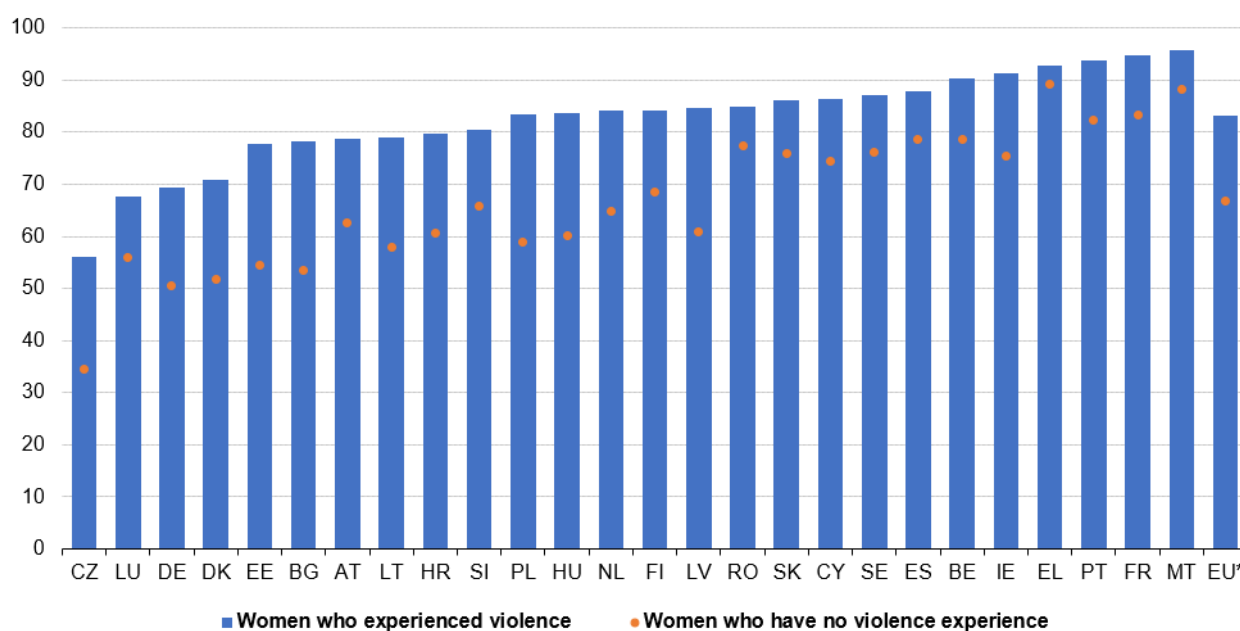
¹⁰ Jansen H.A.F.M., Prevalence surveys on violence against women. Challenges around indicators, data collection and use, UN women, 2012 ([publication is available here](#)) and Nayak, M.B., Byrne, C.A., Martin, M.K. et al., Attitudes Toward Violence Against Women: A Cross-Nation Study, 2003, Sex Roles 49, pages 333–342 ([publication is available here](#)).

Based on the EU-GBV survey (wave 2021), women who said that they had never experienced intimate partner violence in their lifetime were less of the opinion that intimate partner violence against women is common in their country (67 % at EU level), compared with women who have shared intimate partner violence experiences in their lifetime (83 % at EU level) (see Figure 2).

FIGURE 2

Proportion of women (18-74) of the opinion that intimate partner violence against women is common in their country

(percentage, wave 2021)



Note: Data for IT not available, estimated EU average does not include IT

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

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The share of women who believe that violence against women is common in their country varies significantly between different countries: this is the case for one third of women in Czechia who said they had not experienced any violence compared with 89 % in Greece. Women who have experienced intimate partner violence, are more likely than women who have not experienced intimate partner violence, to believe that such violence is common in their country, from 56 % in Czechia to 96 % in Malta.

Women who said that they had never experienced violence tend to believe that intimate partner violence against women is less common in their country.

3

Prevalence of disclosed violence

Prevalence of disclosed violence

Prevalence of GBV against women by type of perpetrator

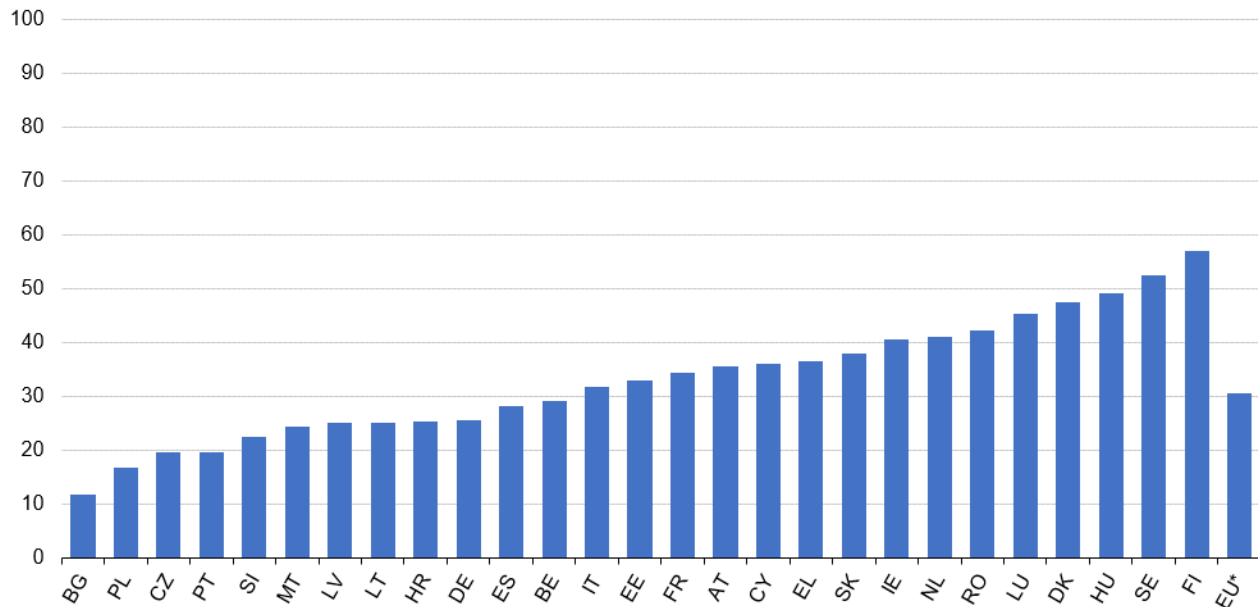
Results of the EU-GBV survey (wave 2021) show that 31 % of all women in the EU have experienced violence by any type of perpetrator during their lifetime. That is similar to what had been noted earlier, as based on previous research ⁽¹¹⁾, one in three women has experienced physical or sexual violence from the age of 15 years old.

Based on the EU-GBV survey (wave 2021), at least 12 % of women in Bulgaria and up to 57 % of women in Finland have said that they had experienced physical violence (including threats) or sexual violence during adulthood (see Figure 3).

¹¹ FRA, Violence against women: and EU-wide survey. Main results, FRA 2014 ([publication is available here](#)) and The World Bank webpage [Gender-based violence](#).

FIGURE 3

Proportion of women (18–74) who have experienced physical (including threats) or sexual violence during adulthood (percentage, wave 2021)



Note: Data for IT is based on their national survey 2014; estimated EU-average includes IT

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

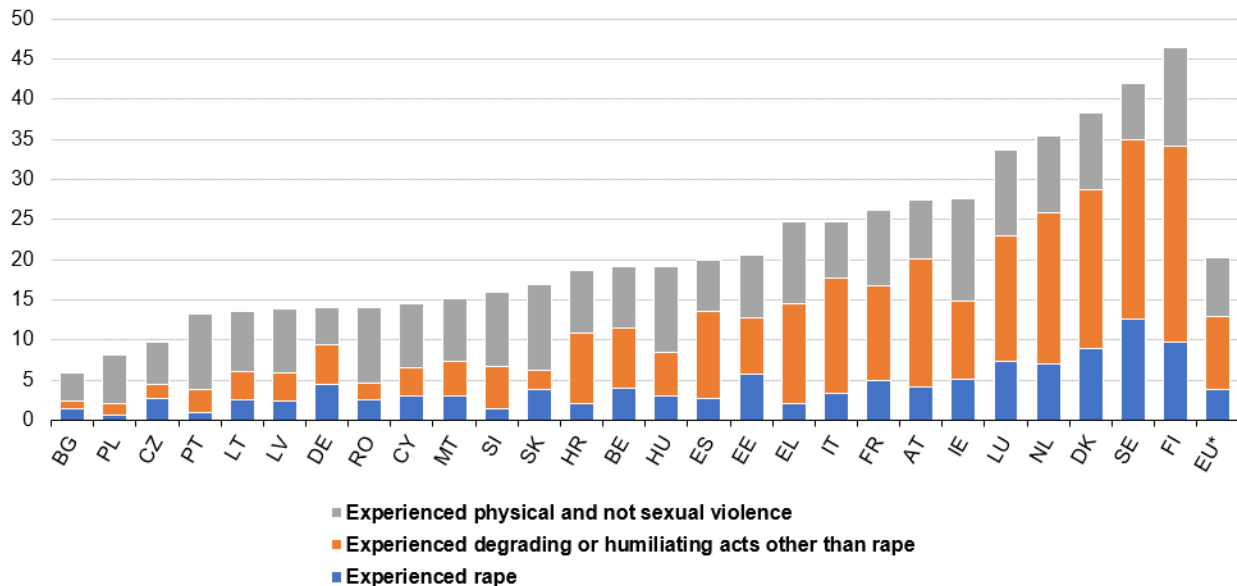
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The prevalence of gender-based violence is highest in Finland, Sweden, Hungary, Denmark and Luxembourg, where more than 45 % of women said that they had experienced physical violence (including threats) or sexual violence during adulthood by any type of perpetrator.

Regarding violence by a non-partner, 6 % of women in Bulgaria and up to 47 % of women in Finland have said that they had experienced physical violence (including threats) or sexual violence during adulthood (see Figure 4) by a person other than an intimate partner. The analyses of non-partner violence by type shows that the greatest differences between Member States concerning non-partner violence are seen in the prevalence of degrading or humiliating sexual acts other than rape.

FIGURE 4

Proportion of women (18–74) who have experienced physical (including threats) or sexual violence by a non-partner since the age of 15, by type of violence
(percentage, wave 2021)



Note: estimated prevalence of women who have experienced rape in IE, CY, PL, RO, SI is published with a flag as it is based on 20 to 49 sample observations; data for IT is based on their national survey 2014; estimated EU-average includes IT

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

eurostat

This tendency could be related to the general opinion of the wider community in the country regarding what level of violence is 'tolerated'.

The prevalence of non-partner violence might be higher in some countries because women in these countries are more aware of what constitutes violence and do not consider acceptable degrading or humiliating sexual acts by any type of perpetrator.

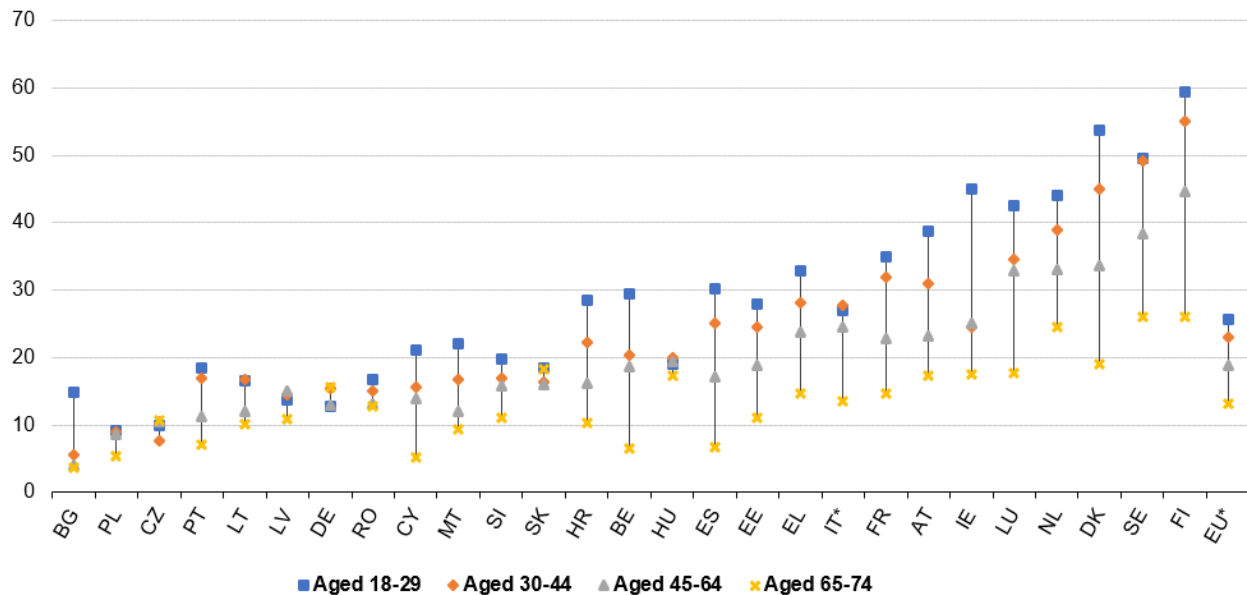
Prevalence of GBV against women by age of respondent

Based on the EU-GBV survey (wave 2021), 35 % of the youngest women in the EU (18-29) disclosed violent experiences by any type of perpetrator compared with every fourth woman (24 %) in the oldest age group (65-74).

This trend can be seen in the majority of countries (except for CZ and DE) when comparing the prevalence of non-partner violence by age group (see Figure 5).

FIGURE 5

Proportion of women who have experienced physical (including threats) or sexual violence by a non-partner since the age 15, by age group (percentage, wave 2021)



Note: estimated prevalence of women aged 18–29 for SI and BG and aged 65–74 for SI is published with a flag as it is based on 20 to 49 sample observations; data for IT is based on their national survey 2014; estimated EU-average includes IT

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

eurostat

As an example, in Finland where more women, than in other countries, shared experiences of physical violence, including threats, or sexual violence by a non-partner from the age of 15, 59 % of 18–29 year old women said that they had experienced violence by a non-partner compared with 26 % of women aged 65–74.

Prevalence rate for younger women (18-29) is higher compared with oldest age group (65-74).

Prevalence of sexual harassment at work

The EU Directive (2006/54/EC) ⁽¹²⁾ requires the monitoring of the important phenomenon of violence, with a specific focus on working life. The Directive defines sexual harassment as ‘any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person, in particular when creating an intimidating, hostile,

¹² For more information, see [Directive \(EU\) 2006/54/EC of 5 July 2006 on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation](#) (recast).

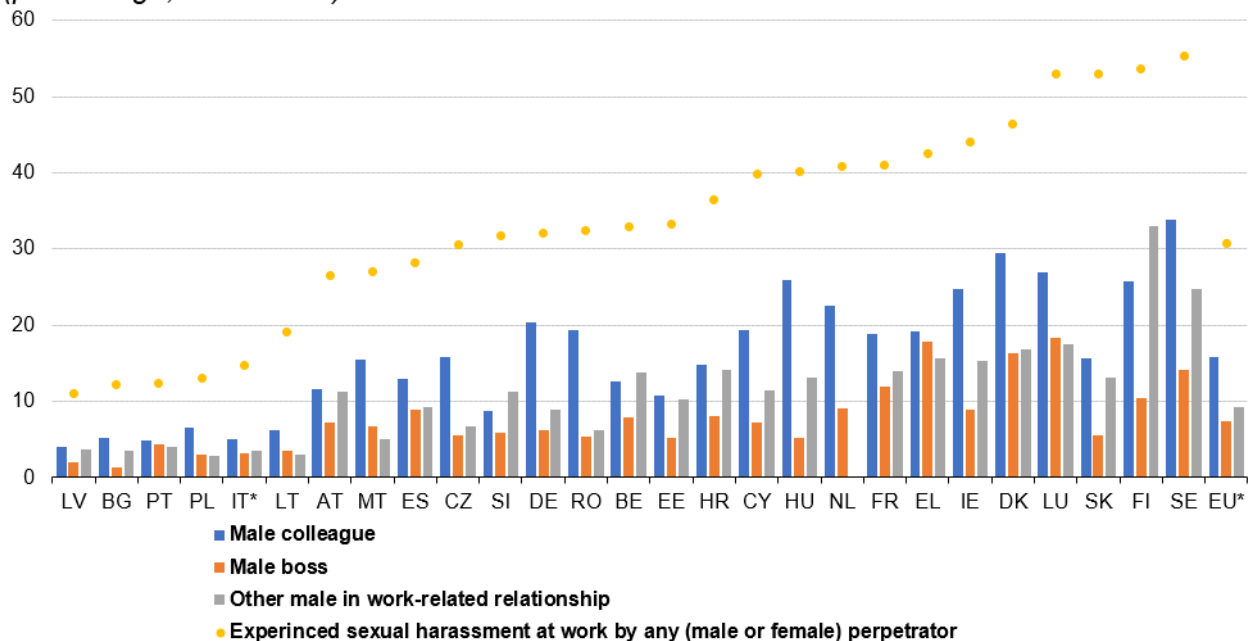
degrading, humiliating or offensive environment' (Article 2, 1 (d)).

Based on the EU-GBV survey (wave 2021), of all women who have ever worked, at least every third women in the EU (31 %) has experienced unwanted behaviour with a sexual connotation in the workplace. The proportion of women who have ever worked and who have experienced any unwanted behaviour with a sexual connotation in the workplace varies between 11 % in Latvia to 55 % in Sweden.

Most perpetrators are male and in the majority of countries, most sexual harassment happens between colleagues (except in BE, SI, FI): from 4 % in Latvia to 34 % in Sweden and 16 % at EU level. Many women have also experienced unwanted behaviour with a sexual connotation by their male boss in the workplace. The percentage of women in the EU who have reported such an experience during their lifetime is 7 %.

FIGURE 6

Proportion of women who have ever worked (18–74) and who have experienced sexual harassment at work, by type of perpetrator (percentage, wave 2021)



Note: estimated prevalence of women in NL who have experienced sexual harassment at work by other male is not published as it is based on less than 20 sample observations; data for IT is based on their national survey 2014; estimated EU-average includes IT

Source: Eurostat, EU-GBV survey wave 2021, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA, EIGE. Eurostat online data codes: gbv_shw_perp, gbv_shw_occ

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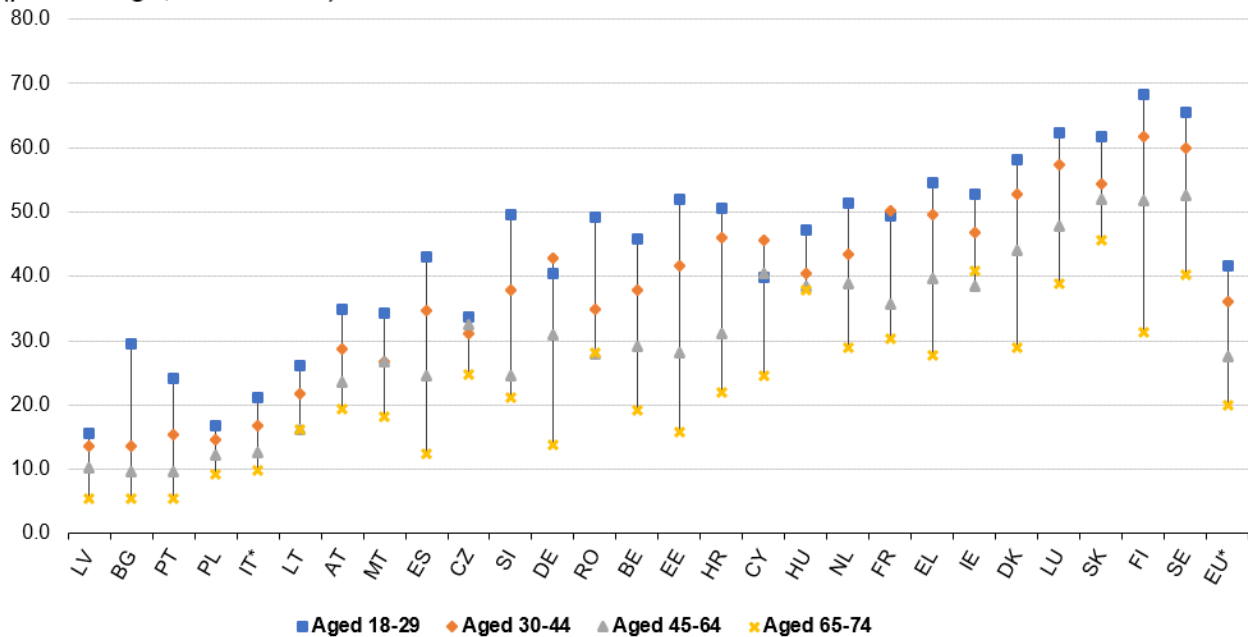
Similarly, as with other types of violence, younger women are reporting more experiences of unwanted behaviour with a sexual connotation in the workplace. In the EU, 42 % of women who have ever worked in the youngest age group (18–29) reported in the survey that they had experienced unwanted behaviour with a sexual connotation during their working life, this percentage is half the amount (20 %) for the oldest age group (65–74).

The trend is more visible in countries where less women shared their experiences of unwanted behaviour with a sexual connotation in the workplace i.e. Bulgaria, Latvia and Portugal. In Bulgaria, 30 % of women aged 18–29 reported in the survey that they had experienced unwanted

behaviour with a sexual connotation during their working life compared with 5.5 % in the age group 65–74.

FIGURE 7

Proportion of women who have ever worked and who have experienced sexual harassment at work, by age group
(percentage, wave 2021)



Note: estimated prevalence of women who have experienced sexual harassment at work in BG for age group 18–29 and in SI for age group 65–74 is published with a flag as it is based on 20 to 49 sample observations; data for IT is based on their national survey 2014; estimated EU-average includes IT

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

eurostat 

A lower prevalence rate for older age groups might be connected with social norms existing in their country: several researchers have pointed out that when sexual harassment is more accepted as a socially normal behaviour, women do not consider this kind of behaviour as sexual harassment at work.

4

Conclusions

Conclusions

The aim of the EU-GBV survey is to address the data collection requirements of the Istanbul Convention ⁽¹³⁾ by developing a survey questionnaire and methodology in order to measure gender-based violence (as defined by the Convention), which is expanded to also cover the types of violence and perpetrators.

However, it is important to point out that the survey data itself serves as a close proxy to the real prevalence of gender-based violence, as the successful conclusion of the survey depends on multiple factors, but mostly on the willingness of the respondent to disclose any violence experienced. To understand the real prevalence of violence and disclosure rate, it is, firstly, important to take into account the extent to which violence is 'tolerated' in the wider community. It appears, for example, that in some countries the prevalence of non-partner violence might be higher because women in these countries are more aware of what is acceptable behaviour and do not consider degrading or humiliating sexual acts acceptable.

Furthermore, as previously mentioned, the data disseminated can only be considered as an important proxy of prevalence rates since direct comparison between countries needs to take into account the important differences in national contexts, such as cultural differences, 'tolerance' of certain types of violence, trust in governmental institutions, etc.

As the prevalence rates do not reflect the differing dynamics and consequences of violence, a wide range of indicators collected in the survey are disseminated in the Eurostat's online

¹³ For more information about the text of the Istanbul Convention, see [Council of Europe, Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence](#), Istanbul 2011.

database (¹⁴) that will allow a deeper analysis of the types of violence, the frequency, severity, seriousness and reporting of partner and non-partner violence, as well as the indicators on sexual harassment at work (prevalence, frequency, reporting, opinion), violence in childhood and the indicators on knowledge of support services and general opinion.

¹⁴ Data are disseminated in Eurostat's online database under sub-domain [Gender-based violence against women](#)

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EU gender-based violence survey

This report provides background information on the methodology development and on the implementation of the EU gender-based violence survey. It also gives some main findings from the survey. The survey implementation started in 2020 and data collection took place from September 2020 to March 2024 (wave 2021). To ensure that high quality and comparable data are produced, the survey is implemented based on common questionnaire and methodology. The first results were disseminated in September 2022, while EU-wide data was published in November 2024.

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