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Childhood violence and its lifelong impact

2026 edition

 STATISTICAL
REPORTS



**Childhood
violence and
its lifelong impact**

2026 edition

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1

Introduction and background

Introduction

This publication provides an overview about the prevalence of gender-based violence focusing on childhood and adulthood experiences based on a European Union (EU) survey on gender-based violence and police data. It provides a short methodological overview of the data sources before summarising the main results on violence committed by non-partners and intimate partners as well as experiences before the age 15. It also looked into how violence experienced in childhood may impact adulthood including in terms of socio-economic outcomes and the likelihood of experiencing violence later in life.

Importance of the data and policy background

Ending gender-based violence continues to be a Commission priority. Collecting statistical data on gender-based violence is key to monitor policy efficiency and can help design new prevention measures. The need for regular data on gender-based violence is highlighted in Directive (EU) 2024/1385 ⁽¹⁾ of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 on combating violence against women and domestic violence.

Freedom from gender-based violence is the first principle of the Commission's roadmap for women's rights under the 2026-2030 gender equality strategy adopted on 5 March 2026 ⁽²⁾. Action taken under the Directive and the gender equality strategy is part of the EU's implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence

⁽¹⁾ 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](#).

⁽²⁾ See European Commission webpage, [Gender equality strategy](#).

against women and domestic violence ⁽³⁾ ('Istanbul convention'), to which the EU acceded in 2023.

The core message of the EU strategy on the rights of the child is that children have the right to live free from discrimination and intimidation ⁽⁴⁾. Combating violence against children is another key priority ⁽⁵⁾. A proposed EU directive on combating the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child sexual abuse material ⁽⁶⁾ lays down minimum requirements for how criminal offences are to be defined and for penalties and the protection of victims in this area.

Further measures taken by the EU to improve the rights of victims of crime include the 2020-2025 strategy on victims' rights ⁽⁷⁾ and Directive (EU) 2012/29 establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime ⁽⁸⁾. These documents on victims' rights include specific provisions on vulnerable groups, including children. EU policies aim to reduce the harmful effects of childhood violence on individuals and society in terms of long-term psychological harm, behavioural issues, economic hardship and public health concerns.

Research suggests ⁽⁹⁾ that experiencing abuse in childhood increases the risk of suffering and/or perpetrating intimate partner violence in adulthood, but the underlying reasons are not well understood. Various forms of childhood abuse – physical, psychological and sexual abuse as well as neglect – have been found to increase the occurrence of intimate partner violence in adulthood ⁽¹⁰⁾.

Nevertheless, childhood sexual abuse is the strongest predictor of sexual violence in adulthood. Someone who has suffered other forms of childhood abuse in addition to sexual abuse is at even greater risk of violent sexual experiences in adulthood ⁽¹¹⁾.

Witnessing violence between parents has also been found to increase the likelihood of perpetrating ⁽¹²⁾ and/or suffering intimate partner violence in adulthood. Several studies ⁽¹³⁾ have shown that witnessing violence between one's parents increases the propensity for experiencing

⁽³⁾ See Council of Europe dedicated page, [Istanbul Convention](#).

⁽⁴⁾ See European Commission webpage, [The EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child and the European Child Guarantee](#).

⁽⁵⁾ See European Commission webpage, [Combating violence against children and ensuring child protection](#).

⁽⁶⁾ See [Proposal for a Directive on combating the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child sexual abuse material](#).

⁽⁷⁾ See [Communication on EU Strategy on victims' rights \(2020-2025\)](#).

⁽⁸⁾ See [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](#).

⁽⁹⁾ Widom, C.S., Wilson, H.W. (2015). [Intergenerational Transmission of Violence](#). In: Lindert, J., Levav, I. (eds) *Violence and Mental Health*. Springer, Dordrecht.

⁽¹⁰⁾ Li, S., Zhao, F., Yu, G. (2019). [Childhood maltreatment and intimate partner violence victimisation: A meta-analysis](#). Elsevier Child Abuse and Neglect 88 212-224.

⁽¹¹⁾ Ports, K., Ford, D., Merrick, T. (2016). [Adverse childhood experiences and sexual victimisation in adulthood](#). Elsevier Child Abuse and Neglect 51 313-322.

⁽¹²⁾ Roberts, A., Gilman, S., Fitzmaurice, G., Decker, M., Koenen, K. (2010). [Witness of Intimate Partner Violence in Childhood and Perpetration of Intimate Partner Violence in Adulthood](#). *Epidemiology* 21(6): p 809-818.

⁽¹³⁾ Whitfield, C., Anda, R., Dube, S., Felitti, V. (2003). [Violent Childhood Experiences and the Risk of Intimate Partner Violence in Adults](#). Sage Publications; Ehrensaft, M. K., Cohen, P., Brown, J., Smailes, E., Chen, H., & Johnson, J. G. (2003). [Intergenerational transmission of partner violence: A 20-year prospective study](#).

Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 71(4), 741-753.; Gover, A., Kaukinen, C., Fox, K. (2008). [The Relationship Between Violence in the Family of Origin and Dating Violence Among College Students](#). Sage Publications.

intimate partner violence or dating violence. It has been theorised that this is due to 'learned helplessness', where a person begins to model victim behaviours or beliefs and then goes on to experience intimate partner violence themselves later in life ⁽¹⁴⁾.

⁽¹⁴⁾ Renner, L., Slack, K. (2006). [Intimate partner violence and child maltreatment: Understanding intra- and intergenerational connections](#). Elsevier Child Abuse and Neglect 30 599-617.

2

Methodology

Methodology

The statistical analysis presented in this report follows two main steps: a descriptive statistical analysis followed by regression models to estimate the association between childhood and adulthood experiences.

First, the prevalence of violence in adulthood and in childhood is presented based on survey data and police reports.

Second, regression models are used to analyse the association between childhood violence and violence experienced in adulthood. The Linear Probability Model was chosen as the main estimation method because it produces results that are straightforward to interpret: each coefficient represents a percentage point (pp) change in the probability of experiencing violence associated with a given characteristic, while all other characteristics remain constant. By contrast, the odds ratios produced by logistic regression – while statistically rigorous – are frequently misinterpreted and require conversion steps to express effects in probability terms ⁽¹⁵⁾.

Although logistic regression is formally better suited to estimating binary outcomes, the Linear Probability Model produces reliable and unbiased estimates of average effects when the outcome is fairly common ⁽¹⁶⁾. Given that the prevalence of the different forms of violence examined ranges from approximately 7% to around 30%, this condition is comfortably met.

⁽¹⁵⁾ Hellevik, O. (2009). [Linear versus logistic regression when the dependent variable is a dichotomy](#). *Qualitative & Quantitative* 43, 59-74.

⁽¹⁶⁾ Angrist, J.D. and Pischke, J.S. (2009). *Mostly Harmless Econometrics: An Empiricist's Companion*. Princeton University Press.

Data sources

Data on gender-based violence can be obtained from various sources, including administrative data on victims, as recorded by the police or support institutions, and survey data, which gives a broader picture of who has experienced gender-based violence based on respondents' replies.

Crime statistics, collected annually since 2014, provides the information on selected police recorded offences as defined in the 'International classification of crime for statistical purposes' (ICCS) ⁽¹⁷⁾. Variation of the crime figures between countries or years may be affected by different legal and criminal systems, national legislation as well as awareness in society and trust to institutions, which might impact reporting rates to the police.

The survey to collect data on gender-based violence at EU level ('the EU-GBV survey') was developed to meet the need for data highlighted in several EU policy documents. The survey methodology was developed in cooperation with national and international experts and main data users. The first data collection round ('wave 2021') ran from September 2020 to March 2024, coordinated by Eurostat in 19 Member States and by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) and the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) in 8 Member States ⁽¹⁸⁾.

To ensure high-quality and comparable data, the survey was implemented according to common methodological guidelines ⁽¹⁹⁾ and data are disseminated in Eurostat database ⁽²⁰⁾. The survey aimed to assess the prevalence of violence and the seriousness of violent incidents reported to the police and support services. It covered psychological, physical and sexual violence by intimate partners, physical and sexual violence by non-partners, sexual harassment at work, violence experienced in childhood and stalking by any perpetrator.

The EU-GBV survey was a random sample survey of persons living in private households. The targeted age group was 18-74 based on a nationally representative sample. Different data collection modes were allowed; however, face-to-face and computer-assisted methods were most recommended and the possibility to provide self-completion was highlighted.

The EU-GBV survey focuses on assessing the prevalence and seriousness of gender-based violence. The common guidelines on preparing and conducting the survey set specific requirements for collecting data on this sensitive topic.

Several international (e.g. UN and WHO) guidelines give specific recommendations on the collection of data on gender-based violence. This data collection exercise followed relevant

⁽¹⁷⁾ See Eurostat webpage, [Overview - Crime and criminal justice](#) and [International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes \(ICCS\)](#).

⁽¹⁸⁾ See Eurostat webpage, [Information on data - Gender-based violence](#).

⁽¹⁹⁾ Eurostat, [Methodological manual for the EU survey on gender-based violence against women and other forms of inter-personal violence \(EU-GBV\)](#), Eurostat, 2021.

⁽²⁰⁾ See Eurostat webpage, [Database - Gender-based violence](#).

guidelines on the selection of interviewers, training of survey staff, cooperation with national experts on the topic and ensuring the safety of respondents and interviewers ⁽²¹⁾.

Descriptive analysis

Data on the proportion of people who have experienced gender-based violence is crucial to be able to gauge the effectiveness of policies in this domain. Police data is used to present the wider picture, while survey-based data makes it possible to estimate the prevalence of violence based on respondents' replies.

The EU-GBV survey focuses on different types of violence and the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator. Prevalence is calculated as the proportion of people who reported having experienced violence in the survey out of the relevant population. Accordingly, the prevalence of intimate partner violence is calculated on the basis of people who have ever had a partner ('ever-partnered').

A comparison over time and between countries is challenging because not all violent experiences are reported or shared in the survey.

The EU-GBV survey results showed that around one quarter (27%) of all women having experienced physical or sexual violence in their lifetime had contacted the police or a support organisation. A higher prevalence of non-partner violence in some countries than in others could be due to differences in women's perceptions of what constitutes a degrading or humiliating sexual act.

Furthermore, younger women were more inclined to report having experienced violence in the survey than older women. For incidents that happened a long time ago this could be linked to recall issues, but a lower prevalence rate for older age groups could also relate to social norms, with respondents in some countries preferring not to share this kind of experience even in a survey.

It is necessary to point out that as the survey data depends on respondents' willingness to disclose their experiences, the results can only be a close proxy to the real prevalence of gender-based violence. Prevalence and respondent disclosure rates must therefore be considered in the light of the extent to which violence is tolerated in the wider community. In societies where people are more willing to talk about violent experiences, answers they give in the survey may reflect them more accurately ⁽²²⁾.

⁽²¹⁾ See metadata on Eurostat webpage for more information on definitions and concepts, methodology and quality of the survey, including mode of data collection, sampling and non-response, [Gender based violence against women \(gbv\)](#).

⁽²²⁾ Eurostat, [EU gender-based violence survey. Main findings](#), Eurostat, 2024.

Main concepts and definitions

The data on most relevant police recorded crimes on gender-based violence are used in this report.

Intentional homicide covers unlawful death purposefully inflicted on a person by another person, including serious assault leading to death and death as a result of a terrorist attack. However, attempted homicide, manslaughter, death due to legal intervention, justifiable homicide in self-defence and death due to armed conflict are excluded.

Regarding sexual violence recorded by police, **rape** refers to sexual intercourse without valid consent and **sexual assault** means another sexual violence not amounting to rape. It includes an unwanted sexual act, an attempt to obtain a sexual act, or contact or communication with unwanted sexual attention. It also includes sexual assault with or without physical contact including drug-facilitated sexual assault, sexual assault committed against a marital partner against her/his will, sexual assault against a helpless person, unwanted groping or fondling, harassment and threat of a sexual nature.

Sexual exploitation of children (persons aged 0-17) covers acts of abuse of a position of vulnerability, power or trust, or use of force or threat of force, for profiting financially, physically, socially or politically from the prostitution or sexual acts and it includes child pornography that means procuring, arranging, facilitating or controlling a child for the purposes of creating child pornography and/or possessing, disseminating, broadcasting, transmitting, exhibiting or selling this.

The main concepts used in this report based on EU-GBV survey are defined below, while the questions included in the survey are provided in Table 1 of the Annex.

Physical violence experienced in adulthood means the use of, or threats to use, weapons such as knives, guns or acid and any other forced action intended to cause harm. It also includes various harmful or fear-inducing acts such as pushing, shoving, hair-pulling, slapping, throwing objects, punching, beating with objects, kicking, burning, choking or strangling, as well as threatening behaviour that induces fear, i.e. frightening someone by threatening to harm them.

Psychological violence by an intimate partner means various acts of emotional abuse and controlling behaviour. Examples include belittling and humiliating one's partner, forbidding them from working, seeing family or leaving the house, behaving in an intimidating way such as threatening to take their children or to self-harm, yelling and smashing objects.

Sexual violence experienced in adulthood means unwanted sexual intercourse by force or without consent, including attempted intercourse, and any other unwanted sexual behaviour found degrading or humiliating and unwanted sexual touching by non-partners.

A distinction is made between repeated violence and one-time violent incidents. **Repeated violence** means a series of similar violent episodes committed repeatedly by the same person(s) involving similar acts under similar circumstances.

Intimate partners are persons with whom a respondent has or has had an intimate relationship.

Psychological consequences of a violent experience include depression, panic attacks, concentration problems and problems sleeping or eating. **Physical consequences** include internal or genital injuries, miscarriages or any other type of injury due to physical or sexual

violence and other bodily harm caused by an external force such as burns, broken bones, cuts and scratches.

Telling someone about a violent experience means reporting it to the police, contacting a health, social or support service or confiding in a trusted person.

Sexual abuse in childhood means sexual violence perpetrated against a child up to the age of 15, such as forced sexual intercourse, unwanted sexual touching and posing naked.

Parents mean the persons that brought up a respondent, including stepparents, foster parents or grandparents in a parenting role. In the case of parents of the same sex, responses were gathered for parent 1 and parent 2 and these were processed as mother and father.

Experiences of **emotional abuse by parents and witnessing psychological violence between parents** mean acts such as belittling or humiliating with words. **Serious physical violence experienced in childhood** means violent acts such as burning or stabbing, hitting or kicking very hard and beating with an object committed by parents. **Physical violence between parents** means the father using physical force against the mother, or vice-versa, e.g. in the form of slapping, pulling hair, throwing things, hitting with fist or kicking.

Regression analysis

Regression modelling was used to assess the association between childhood abuse and exposure to violence in adulthood. The Linear Probability Model was the main estimation method used. However, logistic regression models were also estimated as a robustness check. The strategy is to progressively add sets of relevant socio-demographic and other controls. Once a set of variables has been added, the statistical significance of each variable was assessed. Variables that did not prove statistically significant were excluded from subsequent specifications, while significant variables were kept. This allowed for a transparent assessment of how childhood abuse coefficients evolved as controls were progressively added, ensuring that the final model included only those characteristics that contributed meaningfully to the analysis.

Statistical significance is assessed through p-values, which indicate the probability of observing a result at least as large as the one obtained, assuming that in reality there is no true association between the variable and the outcome (null hypothesis). A variable is typically considered statistically significant when its p-value falls below the conventional threshold of 0.05, meaning that there is less than a 5% probability that the observed association is due to chance alone. In this analysis, a stricter threshold of 0.01 was applied in most cases and the results are flagged with asterisks according to the standard reporting convention: * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.001$.

For methodological reasons, the sample in this section of the analysis was narrowed down to those with valid responses across all key variables, excluding non-substantive responses (e.g. 'don't know', 'not applicable' or questions left unanswered).

The modelling strategy follows a sequential specification approach. For the outcome of non-partner sexual violence only, a bivariate model is estimated as the first step, including only a childhood violence indicator to capture the raw association with adult victimisation. For both outcomes the subsequent steps are as follows: all childhood abuse variables are included simultaneously to account for overlap between different forms of childhood exposure to violence; basic socio-demographic controls (age, education, employment status and ability to afford

unexpected expenses) are then introduced; next, an extended set of socio-demographic characteristics is added (immigration and motherhood statuses); and finally, country fixed effects are included.

This stepwise approach allows for assessing the stability of the estimated associations across increasingly comprehensive model specifications.

The regression analysis relies on a set of variables capturing childhood violence experiences, socio-demographic characteristics, and other individual-level controls (variables are listed in Table 2 of the Annex, including their definitions, coding, and reference categories where applicable).

Main concepts and definitions

Non-partner sexual violence (SV), binary outcome variable. This variable captures all forms of sexual violence experienced in adulthood by a non-partner.

Intimate partner violence (IPV), binary outcome variable. This variable captures all forms of violence perpetrated by a current or former partner, including physical, psychological, sexual violence and threats.

Childhood sexual abuse, binary explanatory variable. This variable captures all types of sexual abuse experienced before the age of 15.

Emotional abuse, binary explanatory variable. This variable has several versions, distinguishing between experienced and witnessed, as well as the perpetrator (father, mother or parent).

Serious physical violence, binary explanatory variable. This variable has several versions, distinguishing between experienced and witnessed, as well as the perpetrator (father, mother or parent).

For more detailed definitions and variable construction, see Annex, Table 2.

3

Main results

Main results

The current chapter focuses on presenting the main results of statistical analyses, including the police recorded data, on experiences based on the EU-GBV survey as shared by women aged 18-74. The presented association between childhood and adulthood experiences is based on regression models of EU-GBV survey microdata ⁽²³⁾.

Prevalence of violence in adulthood

Police-recorded criminal offences

Gender-based violence is defined as violence directed against a person because of that person's gender, or violence that affects persons of a particular gender disproportionately.

The most severe form of gender-based violence against women is femicide, the killing of a woman or a girl because of her gender. Different forms of femicide include for example killings as a result of intimate partner or domestic violence, killings in sexual context and killings in context of power relations ⁽²⁴⁾.

In 2024, an average of 3.9 women per million inhabitants were victims of intentional homicide by an intimate partner or a family member, around double the average for men at 2.3 per million inhabitants. As shown in Figure 1, from 2015 to 2024, women in the EU have been victims of

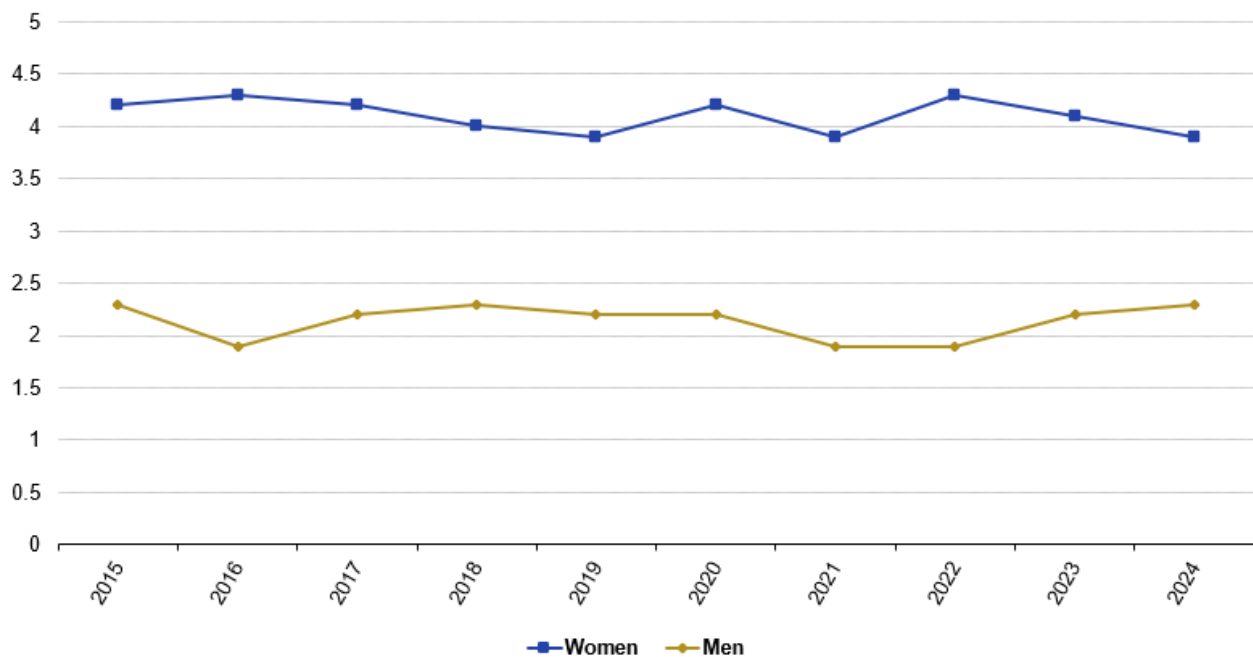
⁽²³⁾ The EU-GBV survey microdata excludes Italy as there was no available data; respondents who had left questions unanswered were excluded from the regression models.

⁽²⁴⁾ See EIGE webpage, [Femicide](#).

intentional homicide by family members or intimate partners more frequently than men, at a rate fluctuating between 3.9 and 4.3 per one million women compared to between 1.9 and 2.3 for men.

FIGURE 1

Victims of intentional homicide by family members or intimate partners
(police-recorded number of victims per one million inhabitants, 2015-2024)



Note: Calculated on countries that provided data and covering at least 70% of the EU population

Source: Eurostat (online data code crim_hom_vrel)

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Police data also shows that women are much more frequently victims of rape and sexual assault than men (Figure 2). In 2024, the recorded EU aggregate was 42.4 female rape victims and 66.7 female sexual assault victims per 100 000 inhabitants, compared with 4.8 male rape victims and 12.2 male sexual assault victims. This means that, in population-adjusted terms, women were almost 9 times more likely than men to be recorded as rape victims that year.

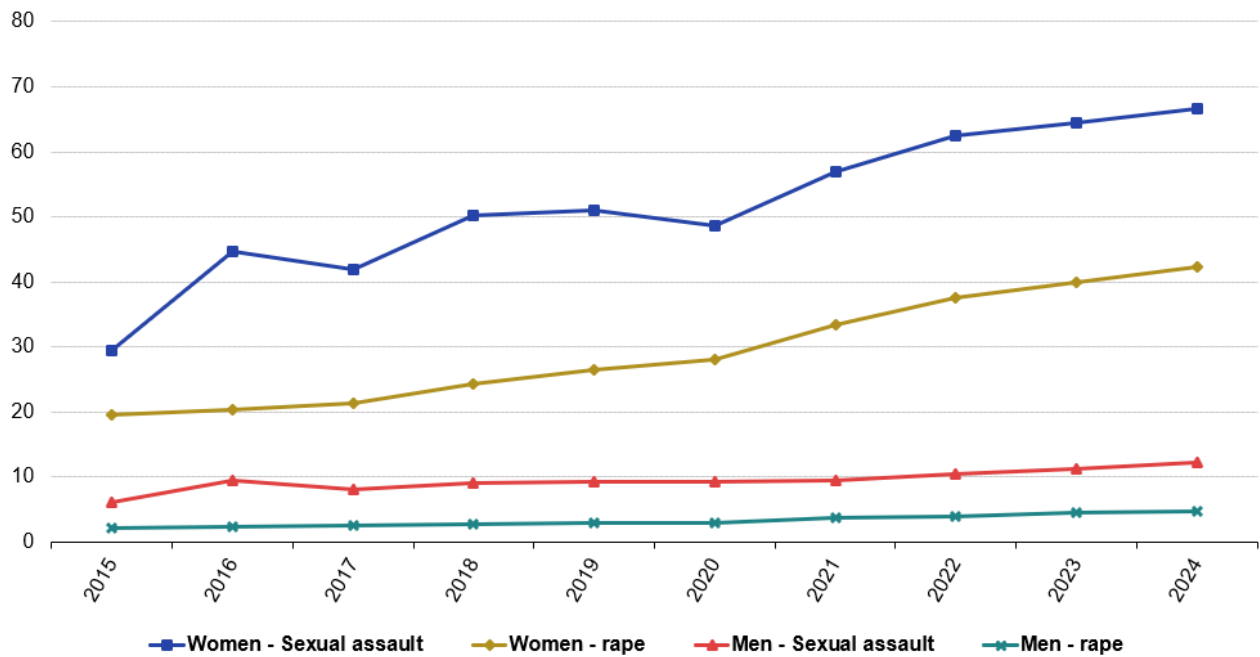
Victimisation rates rose more sharply for women than for men in absolute terms between 2015 and 2024 for both rape and sexual assault. This may partly be due to factors such as increased awareness and trust in the police, improved victims' support systems and changes in legislation that have helped create an environment where victims feel more supported, resulting in more cases being reported to police.

Although women and girls are the main victims of gender-based violence, it also causes severe harm to families and communities.

FIGURE 2

Victims of rape and sexual assault

(police-recorded number of victims per hundred thousand inhabitants, 2015-2024)



Note: Calculated on countries that provided data and covering at least 70% of the EU population
 Source: Eurostat (online data code crim_hom_soff)

Violence against women based on the survey data

To address the most pressing policy needs, the target population of the EU-GBV survey was women aged 18-74. This analysis of the survey results focuses on women, also because less than half of the participating countries included men in the survey population, resulting in limited data on men.

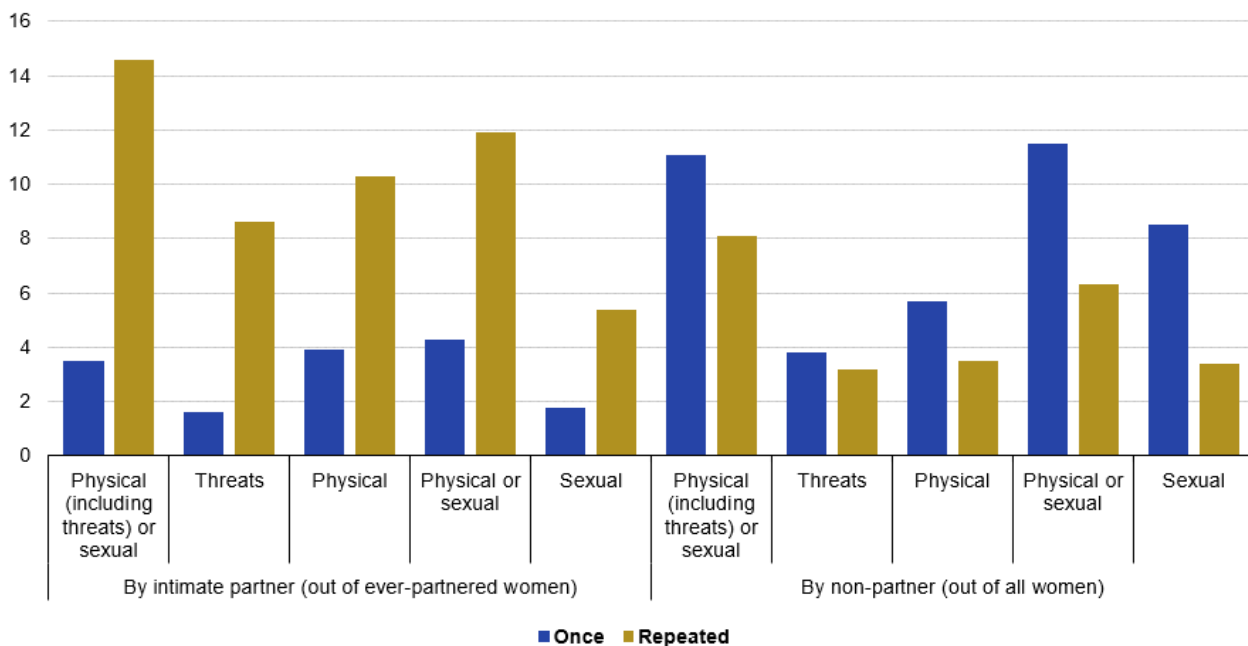
According to the survey, in 2021 around one third of women in the EU have experienced physical or sexual violence in adulthood. 1 in 5 women (20%) reported having experienced physical (including threats) or sexual violence by a non-partner. Among ever-partnered women, 18% had suffered physical or sexual violence (including threats) at the hand of a partner. If psychological violence is also considered, 32% of ever-partnered women had or had had a violent partner in their lifetime.

Looking at differences between age groups, 35% of women in the youngest age group (aged 18 to 29) reported having experiencing gender-based violence, compared with 24% in the oldest age group (aged 65-74). All younger age groups saw a similar pattern of higher prevalence of violence, regardless of whether the perpetrator was an intimate partner or a non-partner.

The type of perpetrator affected the seriousness of violence experienced by women in adulthood. EU-wide, repeated violence tended to be inflicted by an intimate partner, as opposed to once if the perpetrator was a non-partner. According to the survey, 15% of ever-partnered women had suffered repeated physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner, while 4% reported that this had happened once.

FIGURE 3

Proportion of women who have experienced violence by frequency of violence (percentage, wave 2021)



Note: Estimated EU average does not include IT due to availability of the data and PL, SK due to low reliability of the data.

Source: Eurostat (online data code `gbv_ipv_frq`, `gbv_npv_frq`). EU-GBV survey wave 2021, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA, EIGE.

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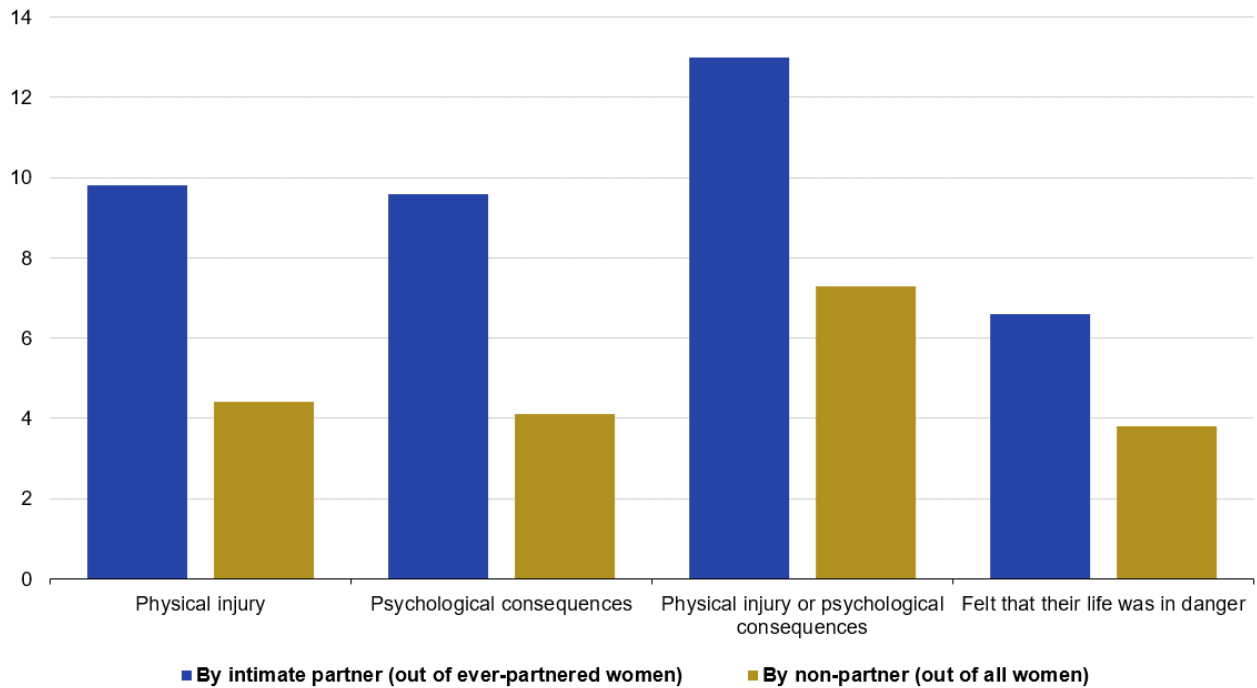
11% of women respondents reported having experienced non-partner physical or sexual violence once, while 8% had suffered this type of violence repeatedly.

Around every fifth woman has experienced physical or sexual violence by a non-partner, whereas 18% of ever-partnered women have experienced violence by an intimate partner. Intimate partner violence tends to happen repeatedly, as opposed to non-partner violence, which tends to occur only once although some repeated victimisation was reported.

The survey data also shows how seriously intimate partner violence affects women's physical and mental health. Based on the survey, 13% of ever-partnered women have experienced violence by an intimate partner that caused them physical injury or psychological suffering, and 7% feared for their lives during at least one incident involving an intimate partner (Figure 4).

FIGURE 4

Proportion of women who have experienced consequences due to violence (percentage, wave 2021)



Note: Estimated EU average does not include IT due to availability of the data and DK, FR, PL, SK due to low reliability of the data.

Source: Eurostat (online data code gbv_ipv_cnq, gbv_npv_cnq). EU-GBV survey wave 2021, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA, EIGE.



EU-wide, 7% of women in the survey reported having experienced physical or sexual violence at the hands of a non-partner that caused them physical injury or psychological suffering, while 4% of the surveyed women reported having feared for their lives in an incident of non-partner violence.

Both non-partner and intimate partner violence can have serious consequences, but this happens most often when the perpetrator is an intimate partner.

Prevalence of violence in childhood

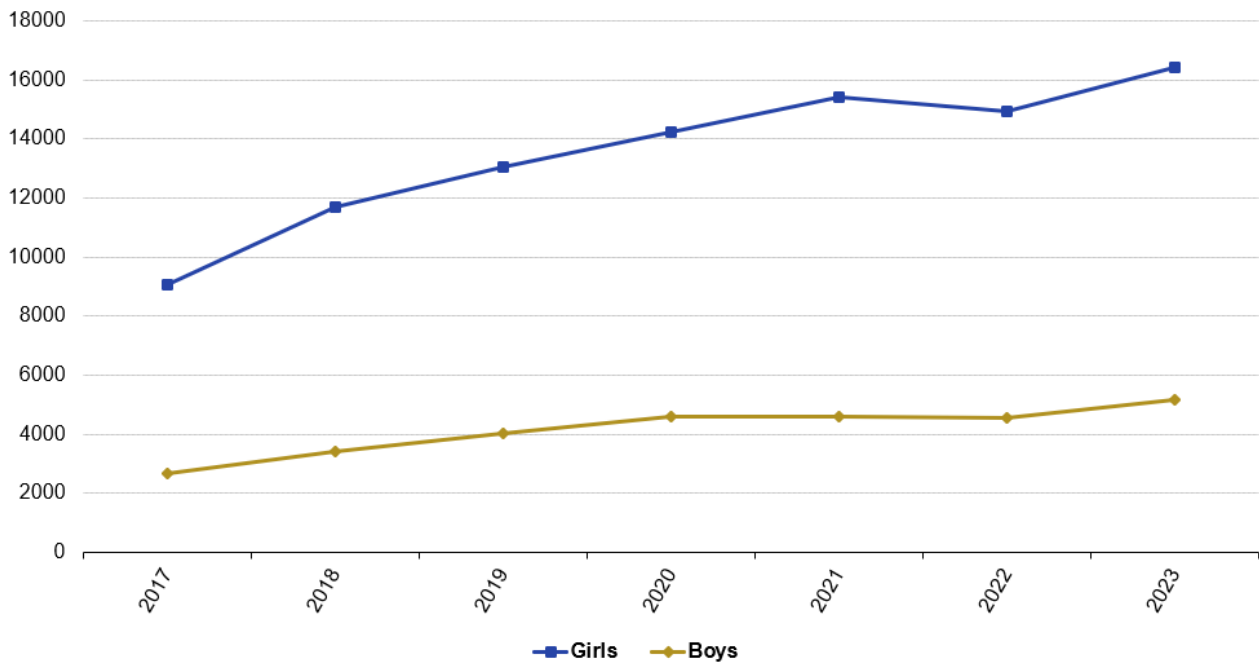
Police-recorded criminal offences

According to police records, in 2023 there were a total of 21 585 victims of sexual exploitation under the age of 18 in the 16 EU Member States for which data was available. Of these underage victims, 16 441 (76%) were girls. The proportion of girl victims has remained stable, varying between 76% and 77% from 2017 to 2023. The total number of recorded victims increased by

approximately 3 000 from 2020 to 2023, with the number of girls recorded as victims rising by 15% as compared to 12% for boys.

FIGURE 5

**Child victims (aged 0-17) of sexual exploitation by sex
(police-recorded number of victims, 2017-2023)**



Note: Calculated on countries that provided data and covering at least 70% of the EU population.

Source: Eurostat (online data code crim_hom_vage).

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In 2023 a total of 83 272 child pornography offences were recorded by the police in the 24 EU Member States for which data was available, a threefold increase since 2017. The number of recorded victims can differ significantly from the actual number of offences due to differences in recording methods. Also, changes to methods and to legislation can complicate any direct comparisons between years and between Member States.

Violence during childhood based on the survey

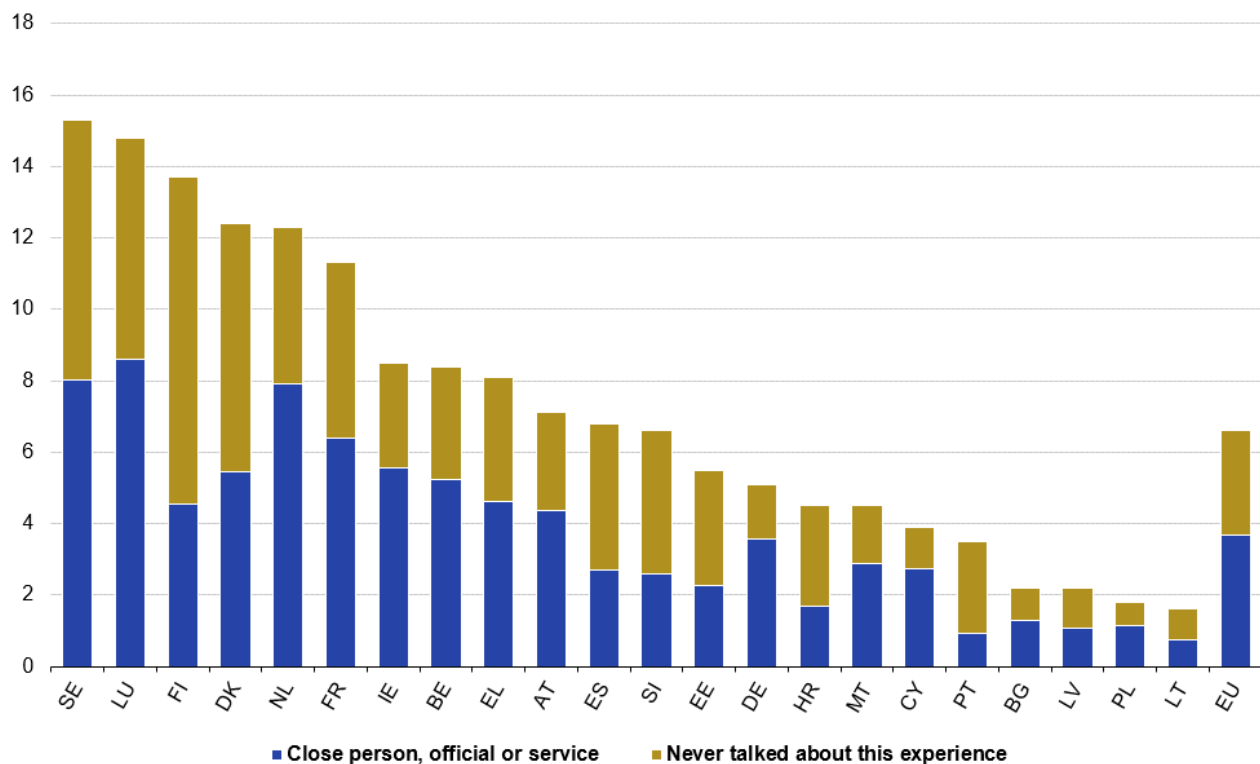
Sexual abuse by any person

On average, according to the survey, in 2021, 7% of women in the EU have experienced sexual violence before the age of 15. Again, the prevalence rate varies significantly from one Member State to another, possibly reflecting willingness to report violence rather than its actual prevalence. In 6 countries, Sweden, Luxembourg, Finland, Denmark, the Netherlands and France, over 10% of women reported having experienced violence in childhood.

Close to half of the women who had been sexually abused in childhood revealed this for the first time in the survey: 56% said they had talked to a close person, someone at school or a support service or had contacted the police. 14% had talked to a teacher or other school official, psychologist, social worker or pedagogue or had contacted health, social or support services or the police (Figure 6).

FIGURE 6

Proportion of women having experienced sexual abuse in childhood by talking to someone (percentage, wave 2021)



Note: Estimated EU average does not include IT due to availability of the data and SK due to low reliability of the data; data on reporting are not reliable for CZ, HU, RO, SK, therefore not presented on the graph.

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



Of women who had experienced sexual abuse in childhood, 1 in 10 (11% of all victims) said the first incident had taken place when they were under 6 years, 40% were aged 6 to 10 and 45% were older than 10 but under 15 years of age.

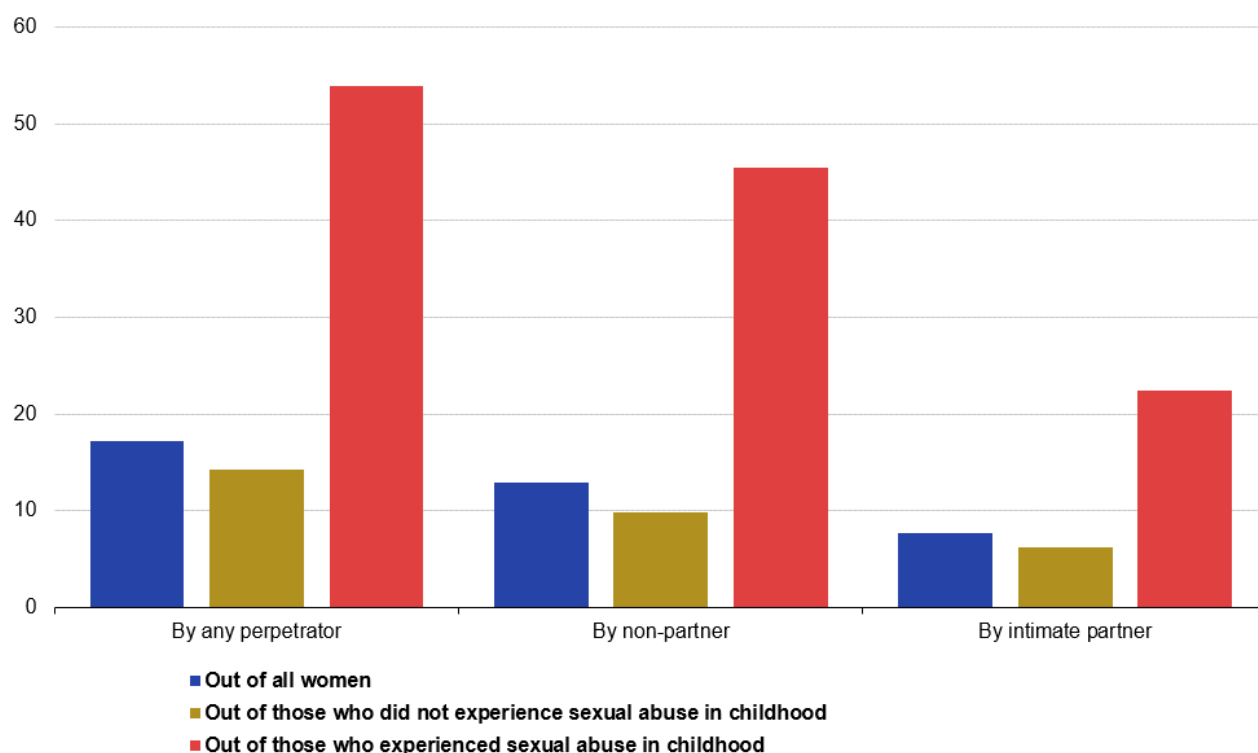
In the majority of cases, the perpetrator was someone the victim knew. Of all women, 6% had been sexually abused as a child by someone they knew, often a family member or relative (3% of all women), while less than 1% had been sexually abused by a stranger.

Around 7% of women in the EU have been sexually abused in childhood, often by a person they knew. In most cases, this was not reported to a school, health, social or support service official or to the police.

Of the 7% of women aged 18-74 who reported having been sexually abused in childhood, more than half (54%) had also experienced sexual violence in adulthood, either by an intimate partner or a non-partner (Figure 7). This is far above the average EU prevalence of sexual violence in adulthood (17%). Women who had not been sexually abused as children were less likely than all women to have experienced sexual violence as adults (14%).

FIGURE 7

Prevalence of sexual violence by perpetrator and experiences of sexual abuse in childhood (percentage, wave 2021)



Note: Estimated EU average does not include IT due to availability of the data; prevalence of intimate partner violence is calculated out of ever-partnered women.

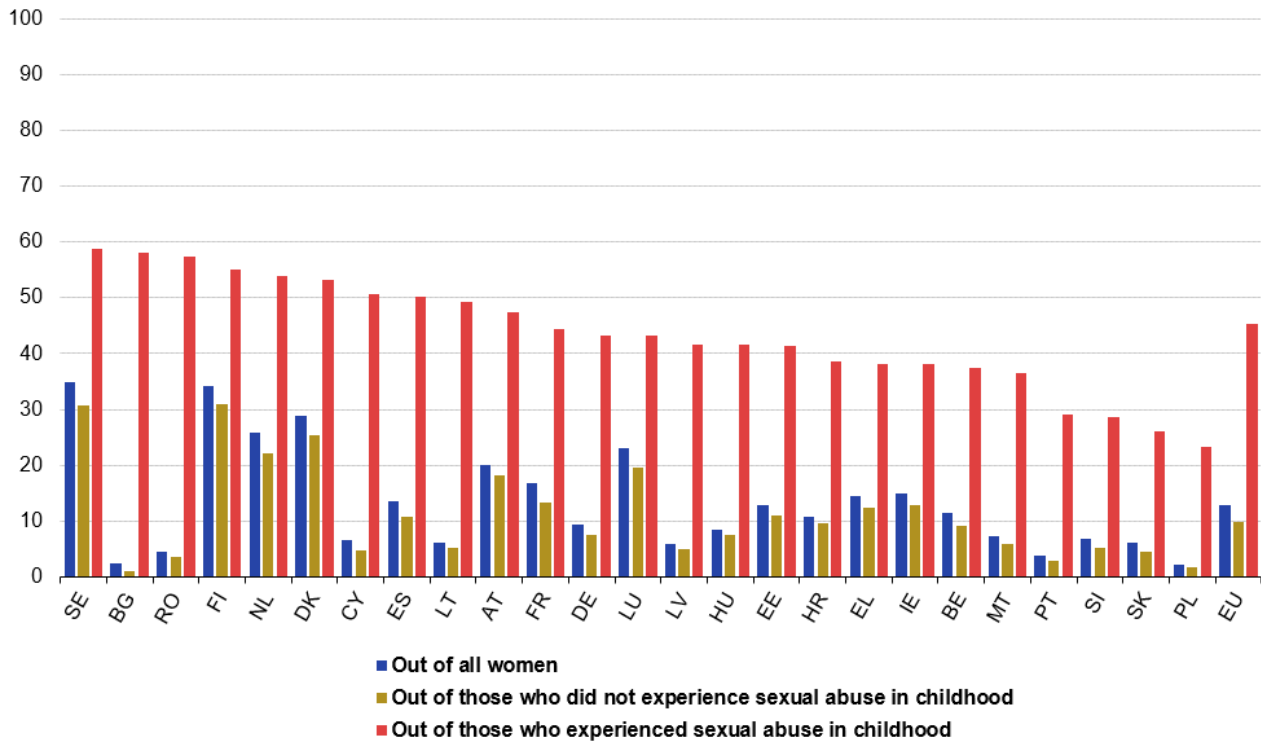
Source: Eurostat (online data code *gbv_ipv_type*, *gbv_npv_type*, *gbv_any_type*); extraction from microdata. EU-GBV survey wave 2021, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA, EIGE.

eurostat 

A comparison of the prevalence rate of sexual violence in adulthood by type of perpetrator between victims and non-victims of sexual abuse in childhood shows that the differences are more significant regarding non-partner violence. In all Member States for which data is available, the non-partner prevalence rate was significantly higher for women who had been sexually abused in childhood than for other groups (Figure 8).

FIGURE 8

Prevalence of sexual violence by a non-partner by sexual abuse in childhood (percentage, wave 2021)



Note: Estimated EU average does not include IT due to availability of the data; data for childhood victims are disseminated with flag due to low reliability for BG, CY, HU, IE, LT, LV, PL, RO, SI and not disseminated for CZ.

Source: Eurostat (online data code gbv_npv_type); extraction from microdata. EU-GBV survey wave 2021, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA, EIGE.



The trend is similar for both types of perpetrator – non-partner and intimate partner – in all EU Member States for which data is available and reliable (due to number of women who have experienced sexual abuse in childhood).

Emotional abuse or serious physical violence by parents

In addition to sexual abuse by any person, the EU-GBV survey focused on emotional abuse and serious physical violence inflicted by a parent. EU-wide, in 2021, 30% of women reported having experienced emotional abuse and 13% serious physical violence at the hands of their father or mother or both.

In terms of perpetrator, including for women who had been abused by both parents, it was slightly more common for a father to have inflicted violence than a mother: 22% of all women reported having been emotionally abused by their mother and 23% by their father, while 8% had experienced serious physical violence by their mother and 9% by their father. Although the frequency is quite similar for both parents, fathers therefore inflict violence slightly more often than mothers, in terms of both emotional abuse and serious physical violence.

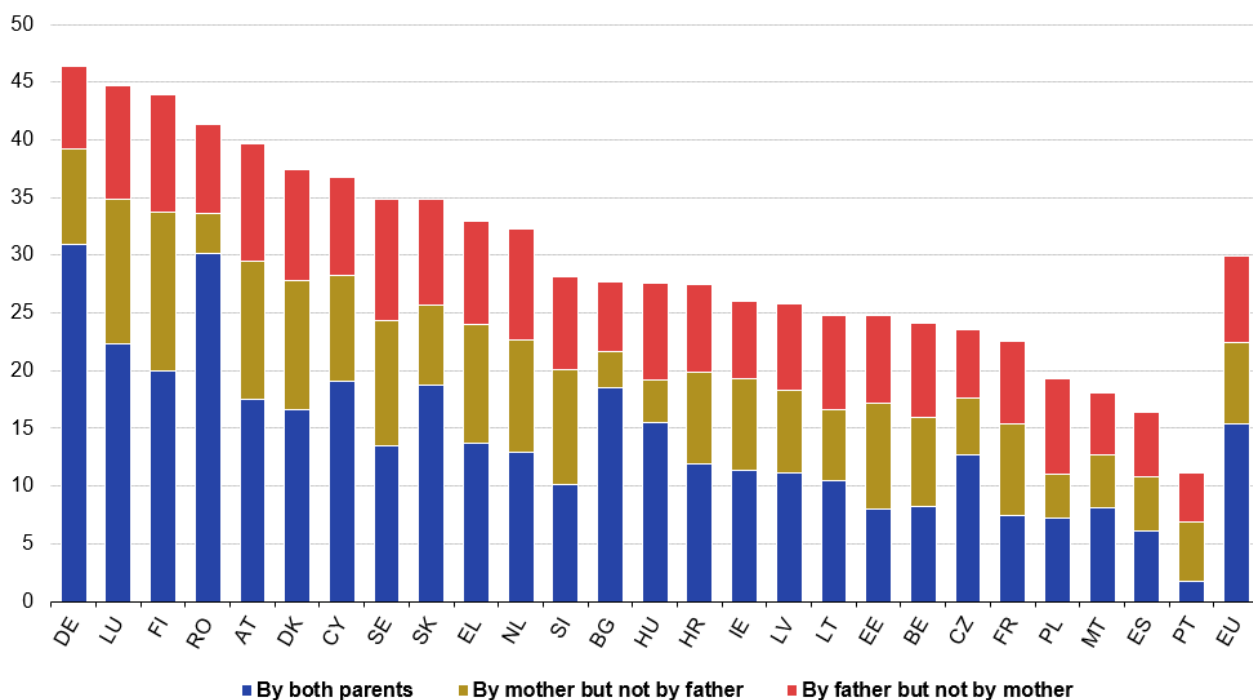
Of the 22% of women who reported having been emotionally abused by their mother, 17% experienced this all the time or often, 42% sometimes and 41% rarely, while of the 23% of women who had been emotionally abused by their father, 20% said this happened all the time or often, 41% sometimes and 39% rarely.

Similarly, of the 8% of women who had suffered serious physical violence by their mother, 18% experienced this all the time or often, 48% sometimes and 34% rarely. In comparison, of the 9% of women who had experienced serious physical violence by their father, 20% experienced this all the time or often, 42% sometimes and 37% rarely.

Around half of the women who had been emotionally abused said they had experienced this at the hands of both parents, corresponding to 15% of all women. EU-wide, 7% of all women had been emotionally abused only by their mother and 8% only by their father. Differences in the distribution of perpetrators were small between Member States (Figure 9).

FIGURE 9

Proportion of women who were emotionally abused by their parents
(percentage, wave 2021)



Note: Estimated EU average does not include IT due to availability of the data.

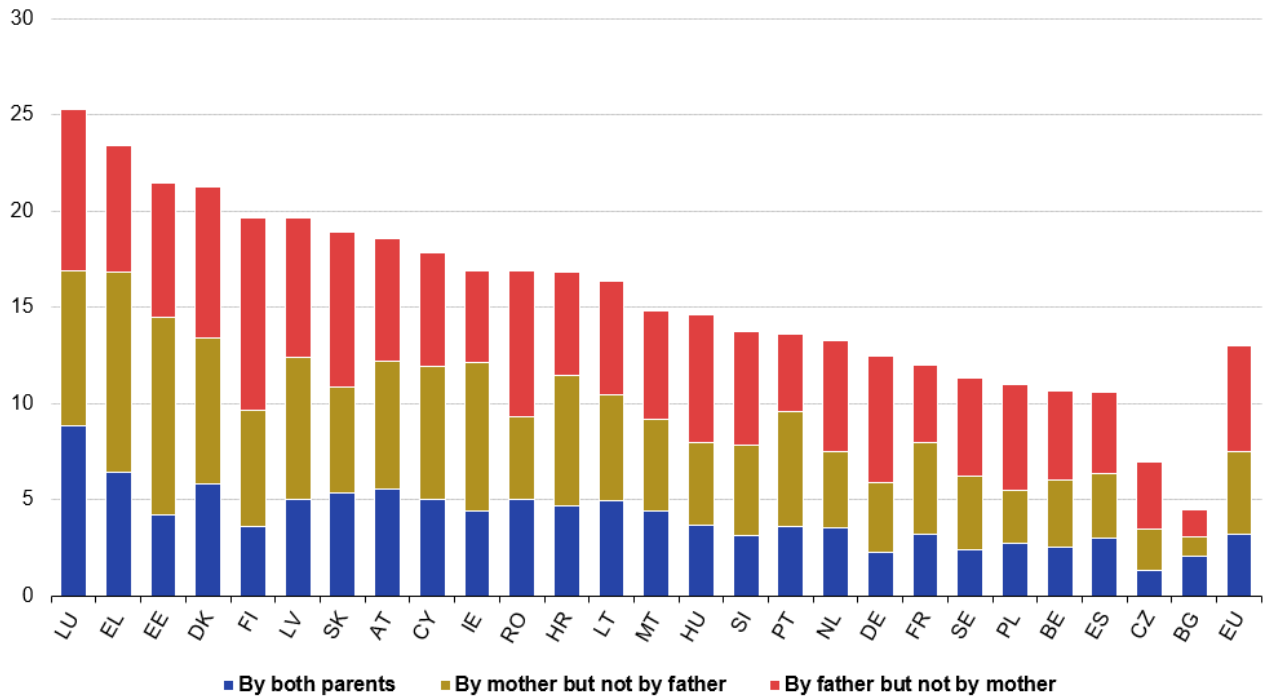
Source: Eurostat (online data code gbv_ch_ps); extraction from microdata. EU-GBV survey wave 2021, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA, EIGE.

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Regarding serious physical violence, 3% of all women had experienced this at the hands of both parents, 4% by their mother only 6% by their father only. The breakdown of perpetrators was similar in all Member States for which data is available (Figure 10).

FIGURE 10

Proportion of women who have experienced serious physical violence by parents (percentage, wave 2021)



Note: Estimated EU average does not include IT due to availability of the data; data disseminated with flag due to low reliability by both parents for CZ, IE; by mother for CZ.

Source: Eurostat (online data code gbv_ch_ph); extraction from microdata. EU-GBV survey wave 2021, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA, EIGE.



EU-wide, 33% of women in the EU reported having experienced either emotional abuse or serious physical violence, or both, at the hands of both parents. Emotional abuse was more common, as 20% of all women had been emotionally but not physically abused. 10% of women had experienced both types of violence.

In terms of perpetrator the trend is similar: 16% of women report having been emotionally but not physically abused by their father and 17% by their mother. 7% of women had experienced both type of violence at the hands of their father only and 5% at the hands of their mother only.

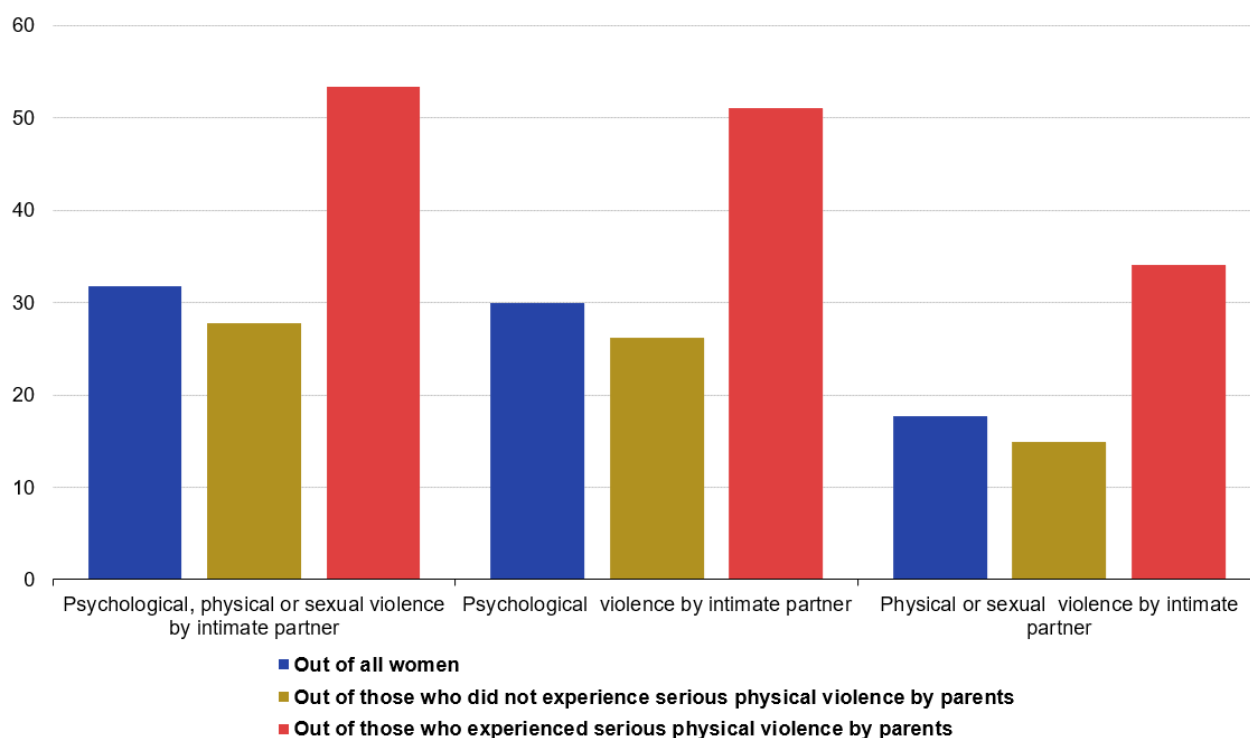
Of all women, 33% have suffered violence by a parent. In the survey, 30% reported that they had been emotionally abused, 13% had suffered serious physical violence and 1 in 10 had been both emotionally and physically abused by a parent. Parent violence is similar in type and frequency whether perpetrated by a father or by a mother.

Of the 33% of women in the EU who had experienced emotional abuse or serious physical violence by their parents as children, close to half (46%) had also been psychologically, physically or sexually abused by an intimate partner. This prevalence rate is significantly higher than the EU average (32% of all women). By contrast, of women who had not been abused by their parents, 24% had experienced intimate partner violence as adults (Figure 11).

By type of violence inflicted by parents, serious physical violence was found to lead to the highest prevalence of psychological, physical or sexual intimate partner abuse of women in adulthood, at a rate above half (53%) of this group (Figure 11).

FIGURE 11

Prevalence of intimate partner violence by serious physical violence by parents (percentage, wave 2021)



Note: Estimated EU average does not include IT due to availability of the data; prevalence of intimate partner violence is calculated out of ever-partnered women.

Source: Eurostat (online data code gbv_ipv_type); extraction from microdata. EU-GBV survey wave 2021, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA, EIGE.

The prevalence of intimate partner violence is higher among women who have experienced violence in childhood. Of women who had suffered serious physical violence by parents, more than half were also psychologically, physically or sexually abused by an intimate partner as adults.

Violence witnessed between parents

Witnessing violence between one’s parents in childhood appears to be associated with experiencing violence later in life. EU-wide, an average 35% of women reported having witnessed some form of violence between their parents in childhood; 30% had witnessed violence inflicted by their father on their mother and 23% by their mother on their father.

In terms of psychological violence, 34% of women had witnessed this between their parents in their childhood. 30% had witnessed their father inflict violence on their mother and 22% by their

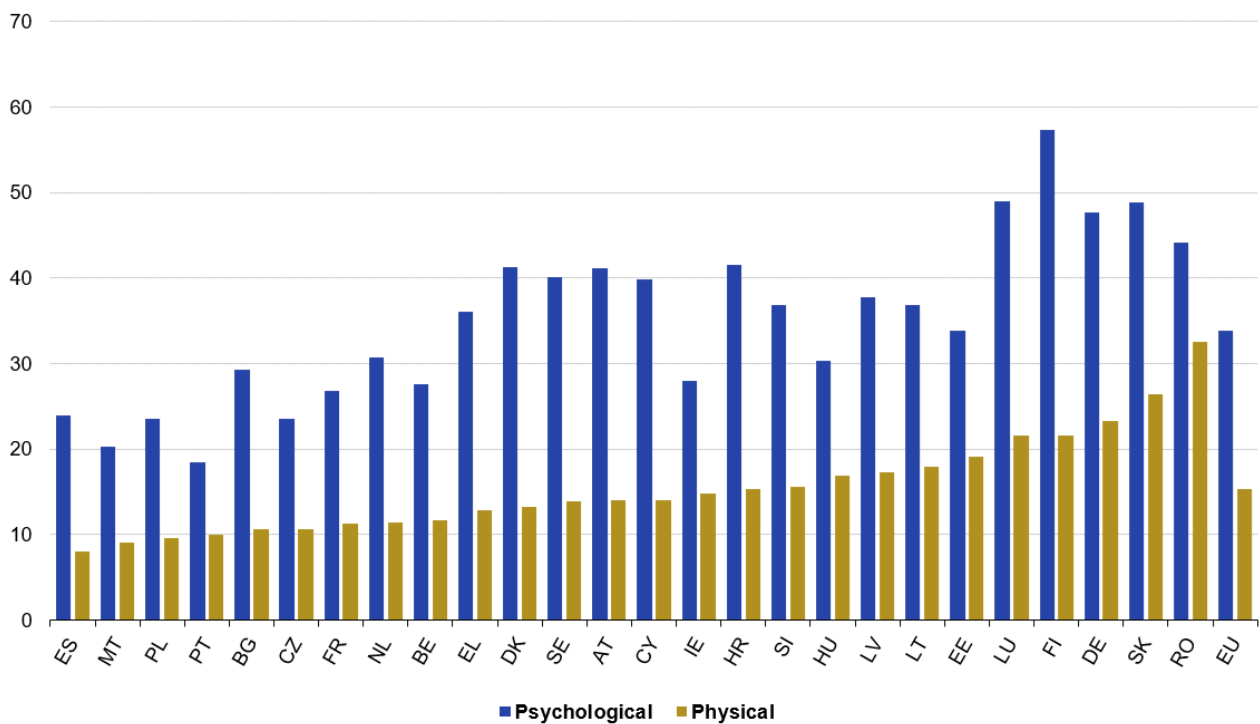
mother on their father. In Finland, over half of women had witnessed psychological violence between their parents in childhood, as had over 45% of women in Luxembourg, Slovakia and Germany (Figure 12).

In all EU countries, psychological violence between parents is witnessed more often than physical violence.

By comparison, 15% of women in the EU had witnessed physical violence between their parents; 13% had witnessed their father inflict violence on their mother and 7% their mother on their father. The prevalence rate was highest in Romania, where a third of women had witnessed physical violence between their parents. In Slovakia, Germany, Finland and Luxembourg the prevalence rate was over 20%, while Spain, Malta, Poland and Portugal had the lowest rates, ranging from 8% to 10% (Figure 12).

FIGURE 12

Proportion of women who have witnessed violence between parents in childhood (percentage, wave 2021)



Note: data for IT not available; Estimated EU average does not include IT.

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



Psychological violence was the most common form of violence between parents witnessed in childhood. 19% of women reported having witnessed psychological violence only, while 15% had witnessed both psychological and physical violence between their parents.

EU-wide, 18% of women had witnessed their parents inflict violence on each other. 12% had witnessed their father inflict violence on their mother while 5% had witnessed their mother inflict violence on their father.

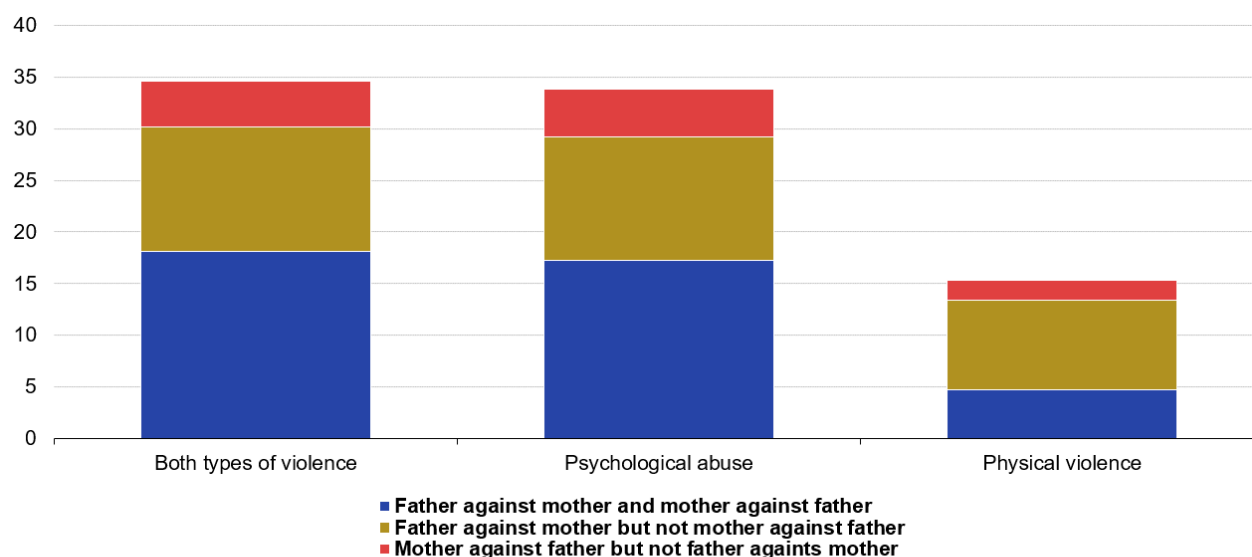
Similar prevalence rates were found for psychological abuse between parents witnessed in childhood. 17% of women had witnessed their parents psychologically abuse each other, 12% had witnessed their father abuse their mother and 5% had witnessed their mother abuse their father (Figure 13).

A different picture emerges for physical violence between parents witnessed in childhood. EU-wide, 5% of women had witnessed their parents inflict physical violence on each other, 9% had witnessed their father inflict violence on their mother and 2% their mother on their father (Figure 13).

FIGURE 13

Proportion of women who have witnessed violence between their parents in childhood, by perpetrator and type of violence

(percentage, wave 2021)



Note: data for IT not available; Estimated EU average does not include IT.

Source: Eurostat (online data code gbv_ch_vbp); extraction from microdata. EU-GBV survey wave 2021, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA, EIGE.

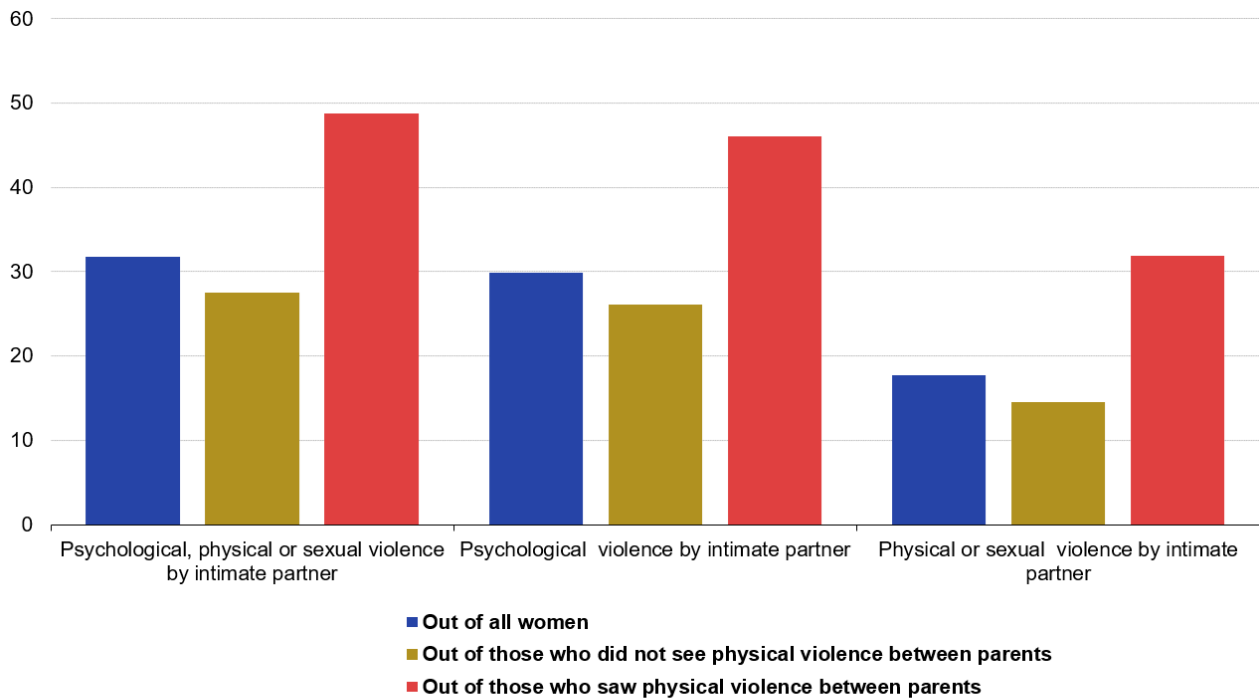
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As already stated in the chapter on violence experienced in adulthood, 32% of ever-partnered women have experienced some type of violence by an intimate partner. Of the women who reported having witnessed violence between their parents in childhood, 45% had also experienced violence at the hands of an intimate partner, as opposed to 23% of women who had not witnessed violence between their parents.

In terms of the type of violence, 49% of women who had witnessed physical violence between their parents in childhood had also suffered some type of intimate partner violence, as opposed to 28% of women who had not witnessed physical violence between their parents. The prevalence rates do not vary significantly in proportion according to the type of intimate partner violence.

FIGURE 14

Prevalence of intimate partner violence by witnessing physical violence between parents (percentage, wave 2021)



Note: Estimated EU average does not include IT due to availability of the data; prevalence of intimate partner violence is calculated out of ever-partnered women

Source: Eurostat (online data code gbv_ipv_type); extraction from microdata. EU-GBV survey wave 2021, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA, EIGE.



EU-wide, 42% of women reported having either experienced violence at the hands of their parents or witnessed violence between their parents. 25% had both suffered violence and witnessed it in childhood, 6% had suffered violence but not witnessed it and 9% had not suffered violence but had witnessed it between their parents.

Of the women who had both suffered and witnessed violence in childhood, 48% had also been victims of intimate partner violence in adulthood, as opposed to 21% of women who had neither suffered violence at the hands of their parents or witnessed it between them.

Of the women who had both experienced and witnessed violence as children, 46% had been psychologically and 27% physically or sexually abused by an intimate partner as adults. By comparison, of women who had not experienced violence in childhood, 20% had been psychologically and 12% physically or sexually abused by an intimate partner.

Association between violence in childhood and in adulthood

The analysis presented in this section is based on estimates made using sequential regression models across five specifications for the non-partner sexual violence outcome and four for the intimate partner violence outcome (variables are listed in Table 2 of the Annex,).

For the non-partner sexual violence outcome, Model 0 captured the raw association between childhood sexual abuse and adult victimisation. Model 1 included all childhood abuse predictors for both outcomes; Model 2 added sociodemographic controls, i.e. age group, educational level, employment status and ability to afford unexpected expenses; Model 3 added immigration status and presence of children in the household; and Model 4 introduced country fixed effects.

The coefficients can be interpreted directly as percentage points (pp) changes in the probability of experiencing violence associated with each predictor, holding all other variables constant.

Both outcome variables as well as the predictors are constructed as binary composite indicators, taking the value of 1 if an experience is reported and 0 if not. These indicators were used to assess the following associations:

Outcome variables

- sexual violence by non-partner
- intimate partner violence (psychological, physical or sexual)

Predictors

- sexual abuse before age 15
- emotional abuse by one's father or mother
- serious physical violence inflicted by one's father or mother
- witnessed psychological violence between one's parents (father against mother or mother against father)
- witnessed physical violence between one's parents (father against mother or mother against father)

Composite variables were created for the intimate partner violence outcome, combining conceptual familiarity and comparable effect sizes.

Women giving an invalid response across all component variables were excluded from the analysis.

Childhood sexual abuse and non-partner sexual violence

Childhood sexual abuse

Childhood sexual abuse is the strongest predictor of non-partner sexual violence across all model specifications. In the bivariate model (Model 0), women who had experienced childhood sexual abuse had a 33.5 pp higher probability of reporting non-partner sexual violence in adulthood compared to those who had not, with childhood sexual abuse alone explaining 6.2% of the total variance in the outcome ($R^2 = 0.062$). As additional controls were introduced, the coefficient attenuated progressively, to 29.8 pp in Model 1, 28.1 pp in Model 2, 27.9 pp in Model 3, and 23.3 pp in the fully specified Model 4. This can be interpreted as follows: a woman who was sexually abused in childhood has a 23.3 pp higher probability of being sexually abused by a non-partner as an adult than a woman who was not sexually abused as a child.

The pattern of attenuation was the greatest when country fixed effects were added in Model 4 (approximately 4.6 pp), confirming that country-level factors contribute significantly to the association alongside the individual-level relationship.

A woman who was sexually abused as a child has a 23.3 pp higher probability of experiencing non-partner sexual abuse as an adult than a woman who was not sexually abused as a child.

Other childhood violence predictors

All remaining violence predictors other than sexual abuse also showed a positive association with non-partner sexual violence in adulthood. Both experiencing emotional abuse and witnessing psychological violence perpetrated by one's mother were the second strongest predictors in Model 1 (5.2 pp), attenuating to 4.3 pp for having been emotionally abused by one's mother and 3.1 pp for witnessing one's mother perpetrate psychological violence against one's father in the fully specified Model 4. Severe physical violence had a stable coefficient of between 4.8 pp to 4.4 pp across all specifications if the perpetrator was the father, while there was a slight upward trend from 4.4 pp in Model 1 to 5.5 pp in Model 4 if the perpetrator was the mother. Having been emotionally abused by one's father shows smaller but consistent effects, ranging from 3.5 pp in Model 1 to 2.6 pp in Model 4.

Sociodemographic controls

Introducing education, age group, employment status and the ability to afford unexpected expenses as controls in Model 2 improved model fit meaningfully, with R^2 increasing from 0.089 to 0.116. Women with secondary education had a 2.1 pp higher probability and women with tertiary education an 8.8 pp higher probability of falling victim to non-partner sexual violence than women with primary or lower secondary education. When country fixed effects were introduced in Model 4, these differentials attenuated (to 2 pp and 6.3 pp respectively), suggesting this is a significant confounding variable in the education gradient.

A strong negative gradient was observed relative to the youngest age group (18-29). In Model 2, the probability of experiencing non-partner sexual violence was 7.4 pp lower for women aged 30-

44, 9.8 pp lower for women aged 45-59 a probability, and 13.5 pp lower for women aged 60 and above. These differentials attenuated with the introduction of country fixed effects in Model 4 (-4.5 pp, -7.9 pp and -11.8 pp, respectively) but remained substantial, suggesting that younger women face considerably higher exposure to non-partner sexual violence and/or are more likely to report this across all EU Member States.

Employment status showed a slight negative association with non-partner sexual violence, with employed women reporting marginally lower rates than non-employed women (-3.3 pp and -0.06 in Model 2 and Model 4, respectively, but statistically significant only in Model 2). The employment category 'other' shows a positive and significant association of 2.8 pp in Model 2 and 1.1 pp in Model 4. Ability to afford unexpected expenses showed an inconsistent but statistically significant trend across all models: positive in Models 2 and 3 (women who can afford unexpected expenses), it turned negative in Model 4 (-1 pp). This reversal upon the introduction of country fixed effects suggests that the positive association in earlier models reflected compositional differences across countries, i.e. both affordability and reporting rates tend to be higher in wealthier countries.

Among the extended sociodemographic controls, immigrant status showed a small negative association (-1 pp) in Model 3, increasing to -2.8 pp in Model 4), most likely owing to underreporting among immigrant women due to language barriers or cultural differences in how abuse is perceived and reported. Having children showed a negative association (-2.8 pp in Model 3, -1.7 pp in Model 4). The 'not reported' category showed a large negative coefficient in Model 3 (-8.2 pp) attenuating substantially and losing statistical significance in Model 4 (-0.2 pp). Again, this suggests compositional differences between countries.

Country fixed effects and overall model fit

Introduction country fixed effects in Model 4 produced the largest single improvement in model fit, with R^2 increasing to 0.166 from 0.118 in Model 3, an improvement of nearly 5.0 pp. This confirms that substantial cross-national variation persists in non-partner sexual violence prevalence and reporting after controlling for all individual-level characteristics, reflecting genuine differences in prevalence, reporting culture and legal definitions across EU Member States.

Childhood violence and intimate partner violence

Childhood violence predictors

All five childhood violence variables were highly significant across all model specifications ($p < .0001$), with their coefficients showing remarkable stability as controls were progressively added. This provides strong evidence that the association is robust and independent of sociodemographic characteristics and country-level context.

Childhood sexual abuse was the strongest predictor by far, associated with an 18.6 pp higher probability of intimate partner violence in Model 1, attenuating modestly to 17.9 pp in Model 2, 17.7 pp in Model 3, and 15.2 pp in the fully specified Model 4 with country fixed effects. The attenuation from Model 3 to Model 4 reflects the country-level component of the association, in line with the pattern observed for non-partner sexual violence.

Witnessing psychological violence between parents emerged as the second strongest predictor, with a coefficient of 13.1 pp in Model 1, declining to 11.6 pp in Model 4. This is a markedly different pattern from that observed for non-partner sexual violence, where witnessing psychological violence was a consistently weaker predictor than directly experienced emotional abuse. In particular, witnessing violence between one's parents in childhood appears to engender a considerable risk of falling victim to intimate partner violence in adulthood. This is in line with intergenerational transmission theories of domestic violence, whereby girls who witness violence between their parents are more likely to find themselves in violent partnerships as adults.

Childhood sexual abuse is the strongest predictor of intimate partner violence, followed by witnessing emotional abuse between one's parents, which is associated with a 11.6 pp higher probability of suffering intimate partner violence later in life.

The effect size of emotional abuse and serious physical violence inflicted by a parent in childhood was broadly similar, at 11.4 pp and 10.7 pp, respectively in Model 1 emotional abuse attenuated slightly to 10.4 pp in Model 4 while physical violence remained stable at 10.7 pp. The similar effect size for this outcome is noteworthy, suggesting that both forms of direct parental violence inflicted on a child engender a comparable risk of adult intimate partner victimisation. This contrasts with the pattern for the sexual violence outcome, where childhood sexual abuse is the dominant predictor by far compared to other predictors.

Witnessing physical violence between parents had a positive and significant coefficient of 3.5 pp in Model 1, declining slightly to 3.0 pp in Model 4. This finding differs from the negative and suppressed coefficients observed when witnessing father physical violence, as opposed to mother's, were entered separately alongside variables related to having been physically abused in earlier models. The multicollinearity was substantially reduced when, rather than parent-specific variables, witnessing physical was entered as composite indicator alongside the composite variable of having been physically abused, revealing a true positive association. This confirms that witnessing physical violence in childhood carries an independent positive risk of adult intimate partner victimisation even after accounting for directly experienced childhood abuse.

Sociodemographic controls

Of all controls, financial affordability had the strongest sociodemographic association with intimate partner violence, with an 8.6 to 8.8 pp lower probability of victimisation for women who could afford unexpected expenses than for those who could not across Models 2 and 3, attenuating slightly to 8.0 pp in Model 4. This effect is considerably larger than the affordability effects observed for non-partner sexual violence, suggesting a particularly strong link between financial precariousness and intimate partner victimisation. This is in line with the broader

literature showing that economic dependency and financial vulnerability are major risk factors for remaining in a violent partnership ⁽²⁵⁾.

Education showed a modest positive gradient relative to the lowest education group, with a 2.8 pp higher probability of victimisation for women with secondary education, as compared to 4.1 pp for women with tertiary education in Model 2, both attenuating substantially when country fixed effects were added (1.4 pp and 2.0 pp respectively in Model 4). This much smaller education gradient compared to non-partner sexual violence is consistent with intimate partner violence being less affected by reporting and recognition differences across education levels.

The age group control showed a consistent negative gradient relative to the youngest women, with rates of intimate partner violence declining progressively in older age groups, attenuating when country fixed effects were added. Employment was positively associated with reporting intimate partner violence (+2.7 pp for employed women in Model 2), possibly because economically independent women are better able to recognise and disclose violence. Immigrant status showed a small negative association (-0.9 pp in Model 3, -1.0 pp in Model 4), consistent with the outcome for non-partner sexual violence. Having children showed a negative association compared to not having children (-2.8 pp in Model 3, -1.6 pp in Model 4), while the 'not reported' category showed a large negative coefficient in Model 3 (-9.2 pp) that fully attenuated in Model 4 (0.5 pp, non-significant), again reflecting compositional country-level differences.

Country fixed effects

Country fixed effects revealed substantial and statistically significant cross-national variation in intimate partner violence that persisted after controlling for all individual-level childhood, sociodemographic and financial characteristics. In contrast to the non-partner sexual violence outcome, model fitness increased by less than 2 pp (from 0.11 in Model 3 to 0.132 in Model 4).

Compared to Germany, the reference category, there were no statistically significant differences for Spain, Lithuania or Portugal although they had positive coefficients. Malta and Latvia had negative coefficients compared to Germany, but again these were not statistically significant.

Countries where the probability of intimate partner violence was substantial and statistically significant relative to Germany included Hungary, which reported the highest probability (+26.8 pp, $p < .0001$), followed by Finland (+16.7 pp), France (+15.7 pp), Slovakia (+15.9 pp), Sweden (+14.8 pp), Cyprus (+13.6 pp), Luxembourg (+12.4 pp), Romania (+12.0 pp) and Denmark (+11.2 pp). Significantly higher rates than in Germany were also found in Estonia (+9.0 pp), Greece (+8.2 pp), the Czech Republic (+7.1 pp), Austria (+6.3 pp), Belgium (+5.1 pp), Ireland (+5.2 pp), and the Netherlands (+2.3 pp).

By contrast, Bulgaria (-8.3 pp), Poland (-6.5 pp), Croatia (-2.0 pp), and Slovenia (-3.3 pp) showed significantly lower probabilities of intimate partner violence relative to Germany.

⁽²⁵⁾ Saunders, D. G. (2021). Barriers to leaving an abusive relationship. In Handbook of interpersonal violence and abuse across the lifespan: A project of the national partnership to end interpersonal violence across the lifespan (NPEIV) (pp. 2841-2863). Cham: Springer International Publishing.

The spread from -8.3 pp (Bulgaria) to $+26.8$ pp (Hungary) is substantial. It could reflect a combination of genuine cross-national differences in intimate partner violence prevalence and systematic variation in information disclosure behaviour, legal definitions, and survey response culture from one Member State to another. As with the other outcomes, these country fixed effects are treated as nuisance parameters in the present analysis, included to ensure unbiased estimation of the individual-level childhood predictors of primary interest.

4

Conclusions

Conclusions

Police data for the last decade shows that every year, around 4 women per million inhabitants are victims of intentional homicide by an intimate partner or a family member, around twice the rate for men. Women are also almost 9 times more likely than men to be recorded as rape victims.

However, as not all cases are reported to the police, the EU-GBV survey was developed to estimate the prevalence of gender-based violence across the EU. Based on the 2021 data collection round, 1 in 3 women has faced physical or sexual violence in adulthood, often repeatedly if the perpetrator is an intimate partner, as opposed to once if the perpetrator is a non-partner. It needs to be pointed out, however, that the survey data can only serve as a close proxy to the real prevalence of gender-based violence. The results of the survey depend on multiple factors, first among them the willingness of respondents to disclose that they have suffered or witnessed gender-based violence.

Based on the available police data on criminal offences in 16 Member States, at least 21 000 children (aged 0-17) experienced sexual exploitation in 2023; more than 3 out of 4 were girls. Also, the police recorded over 83 000 child pornography offences in the 24 Member States for which data was available. Based on the survey, 7% of women in the EU experience sexual violence before the age of 15, often committed by a person they know. However, sexual abuse during childhood often goes unreported, meaning that the administrative data recorded by the police, a school official or by health, social or support services does not give the full picture.

Around half of the women who were sexually abused in childhood also suffered sexual violence as adults, either by an intimate partner or a non-partner. This prevalence is much higher than for women who were not sexually abused in childhood. Similarly, the survey shows that 1 in 3 women was emotionally or physically abused by their parents in childhood and that these women are more likely to fall victim to intimate partner violence later in life.

Over a third of women have witnessed violence between their parents in childhood. Fathers were more likely than mothers to be the perpetrator, and psychological violence between one's parents was more commonly witnessed than physical violence. Again, witnessing violence between one's

parents in childhood increases the probability of suffering intimate partner violence in adulthood.

The regression analysis findings highlight childhood sexual abuse as the most significant risk factor for falling victim to non-partner sexual violence or intimate partner violence in adulthood.

The second most important risk factor is witnessing emotional abuse between parents.

Ending gender-based violence and violence against children is a key EU priority, and access to regularly updated statistical data is essential to be able to monitor policy effectiveness and guide prevention efforts. The survey provided strong evidence that childhood exposure to violence is linked to later victimisation, highlighting the need to further strengthen data collection to inform targeted policy decisions in this area.

5

Annexes

TABLE 1

Concepts based on EU-GBV survey wave 2021 questionnaire

Concept	Question(s)
Psychological violence by intimate partner	<p>Has any partner ever done following ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... 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 that you are 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 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/to deny custody? ... threaten to harm himself/herself if you leave him/her?

Concept	Question(s)
Physical violence by intimate partner/non-partner	<p>Has any partner ever done the following ... / Since you were 15, has someone other than your intimate partner ever done the following ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... threatened to harm you in a way that frightened you? ... pushed, shoved you 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 his/her 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 knife, gun or acid or something similar against you? ... has ever used force against you in any other way than mentioned above, in a way that hurt or frightened you.
Sexual violence by intimate partner/non-partner	<p>Has any partner ever done the following ... / Since you were 15, has someone other than your intimate partner ever done the following ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... 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 you did not want because you were afraid of what might 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 the intercourse did not occur? <p>FOR NON-PARTNER: ... apart from what was mentioned above, has someone touched your genitals, breasts, bottom or lips when you did not want to?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... forced you to do something else sexual than mentioned above that you found degrading or humiliating?
Telling about violent experiences	<p>Did you ever speak about any of these episodes to a friend, family member or a relative?</p> <p>Did you ever speak about any of these episodes to health services (doctor, nurse) or to social services?</p> <p>Did you ever call a helpline or contact a victim support organisation when any of these episodes happened?</p> <p>Did you report any of these episodes to the police?</p>
Psychological consequences	<p>As a consequence of what happened to you, did you ever suffer any psychological consequences? For instance, depression, panic attacks, problems with concentration, problems in sleeping or eating or other consequences.</p>

Concept	Question(s)
Physical consequences	Thinking about these episodes did you ever suffer any of the following things as a result of what happened to you? Have you had bruises or a black eye or pain in some body parts or a bloody nose? ... cuts/scratches/burns etc.? ... fractures, broken bones, broken nose/teeth? ... head or brain injury? ... internal injuries? ... genital injury? ... miscarriage? ... a pregnancy as a consequence? ... other physical injury.
Feeling that life was in danger	Did you feel that your life was in danger during these episodes?
Psychological violence by parents	Before you were 15 years-old, how often did your / father / mother / belittle or humiliate you with his words?
Physical violence by parents	Before you were 15 years-old, has your / father / mother / ever intentionally hit or kicked you very hard or beaten you with an object like a stick or belt, or burned you or stabbed you?
Sexual abuse before age 15	Before you were 15 years-old, did anyone, male or female do following ever make you posed naked in front of any person or in photographs, video or an internet webcam when you did not want to do this? ... ever touch your private parts - genitals or breasts - when you did not want them to? ... ever make you touch his/her private parts - genitals or breasts - when you did not want them to? ... ever force you to have sexual intercourse when you did not want to?
Telling about sexual abuse during childhood	Did you speak about any episode to a family member or a relative? ... a friend, a schoolmate or neighbour? ... someone at school (teacher, psychologist, social workers, pedagogue)? ... the health services (doctor, nurse) or to the social service? ... or called a helpline or contacted a victim support organisation? ... or contacted police? ... someone else?
Witnessing violence between parents in childhood	How often have you seen or heard during your childhood your / father / mother / ... 1 ... belittling or humiliating your / mother / father / with his words? 2 ... using physical force against your / mother / father / (e.g. slapped, pulled hair, threw things, hit with fist, kicked)?

TABLE 2

List of variables included in the regression models

Type	Variable	Value	Model	Notes
Dependent	Sexual violence by non-partner (SV)	0; 1	SV (0-4)	0 – did not experience 1 – experienced
Dependent	Intimate partner violence (IPV)	0; 1	IPV (1-4)	0 – did not experience 1 – experienced
Childhood violence	Sexual abuse in childhood (before the age of 15)	0; 1	SV; IPV (0-4)	0 – did not experience 1 – experienced
Childhood violence	Emotional abuse by mother	0; 1	SV (0-4)	0 – did not experience 1 – experienced
Childhood violence	Emotional abuse by father	0; 1	SV (0-4)	0 – did not experience 1 – experienced
Childhood violence	Emotional abuse by parent	0; 1	IPV (1-4)	0 – did not experience 1 – experienced
Childhood violence	Serious physical violence by father	0; 1	SV (0-4)	0 – did not experience 1 – experienced
Childhood violence	Serious physical violence by mother	0; 1	SV (0-4)	0 – did not experience 1 – experienced
Childhood violence	Serious physical violence by parent	0; 1	IPV (1-4)	0 – did not experience 1 – experienced
Childhood violence	Witnessed psychological violence by father (against mother)	0; 1	SV (0-4)	0 – did not experience 1 – experienced
Childhood violence	Witnessed psychological violence by mother (against father)	0; 1	SV (0-4)	0 – did not experience 1 – experienced
Childhood violence	Witnessed psychological violence (by parent(s))	0; 1	IPV (1-4)	0 – did not experience 1 – experienced
Childhood violence	Witnessed physical violence by father (against mother)	0; 1	SV (1)	0 – did not experience 1 – experienced
Childhood violence	Witnessed physical violence by mother (against father)	0; 1	SV (1)	0 – did not experience 1 – experienced
Childhood violence	Witnessed physical violence (by parent(s))	0; 1	IPV (1-4)	0 – did not experience 1 – experienced

Type	Variable	Value	Model	Notes
Socio-demographic	Educational level	0; 1; 2	SV; IPV (2-4)	0 – Less than primary, primary and lower secondary education (levels 0-2) (reference category) 1 – Upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education (levels 3 and 4) 2 – Tertiary education (levels 5-8)
Socio-demographic	Age group	0; 1; 2; 3	SV; IPV (2-4)	0 – aged 18-29 (reference category) 1 – aged 30-44 2 – aged 45-59 3 – aged 60-74
Socio-demographic	Employment status	0; 1; 2	SV; IPV (2-4)	0 – not employed, including unemployed, unable to work, fulfilling domestic tasks (reference category) 1 – employed 2 – other, including retired, student, on military service and non-response options.
Socio-demographic	Affordability of unexpected expenses	0; 1; 2	SV; IPV (2-4)	0 – not able to afford unexpected expenses 1 – able to afford unexpected expenses 2 – not reported
Socio-demographic	Immigrant status (based on country of birth)	0; 1	SV; IPV (3-4)	0 – national 1 – non-national
Socio-demographic	Having children (having own children in household)	0; 1; 2	SV; IPV (3-4)	0 – has no children 1 – has children 2 – not reported
Other characteristics	Country fixed effects		SV; IPV (4)	Categorical variable controlling for unobserved country-level heterogeneity

TABLE 3

Association between childhood abuse exposure and sexual violence from non-partner (SV)
(EU women aged 18-74, wave 2021)

Variable	Model 0	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Sexual abuse in childhood	0.335***	0.298***	0.281***	0.279***	0.233***
(standard errors)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Serious physical abuse by father	NA	0.048***	0.045***	0.045***	0.044***
(standard errors)	NA	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Emotional abuse by father	NA	0.035***	0.028***	0.027***	0.026***
(standard errors)	NA	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Serious physical abuse by mother	NA	0.044***	0.048***	0.049***	0.055***
(standard errors)	NA	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Emotional abuse by mother	NA	0.052***	0.053***	0.052***	0.043***
(standard errors)	NA	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Witnessed psychological violence by mother	NA	0.052***	0.037***	0.037***	0.031***
(standard errors)	NA	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Witnessed psychological violence by father	NA	0.019***	0.085***	0.087***	0.014***
(standard errors)	NA	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Witnessed physical violence by mother	NA	-0.003***	NA	NA	NA
(standard errors)	NA	(0.003)	NA	NA	NA
Witnessed physical violence by father	NA	-0.045***	NA	NA	NA
(standard errors)	NA	(0.002)	NA	NA	NA
Educational level: Less than primary, primary and lower secondary	NA	NA	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Educational level: Upper, post-secondary but non-tertiary	NA	NA	0.021***	0.020***	0.020***
(standard errors)			(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Educational level: Tertiary	NA	NA	0.088***	0.089***	0.063***
(standard errors)	NA	NA	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Age: 18-29	NA	NA	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.

Variable	Model 0	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Age: 30-44	NA	NA	-0.074***	-0.059***	-0.045***
(standard errors)	NA	NA	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Age: 45-59	NA	NA	-0.098***	-0.088***	-0.079***
(standard errors)	NA	NA	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Age: 60-74	NA	NA	-0.135***	-0.138***	-0.118***
(standard errors)	NA	NA	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Employment status: Not employed	NA	NA	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Employment status: Employed	NA	NA	-0.033*	-0.005	-0.006
(standard errors)	NA	NA	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Employment status: Other	NA	NA	0.028***	0.026***	0.011***
(standard errors)	NA	NA	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Affordability of unexpected expenses: No	NA	NA	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Affordability of unexpected expenses: Yes	NA	NA	0.016***	0.015***	-0.010***
(standard errors)	NA	NA	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Affordability of unexpected expenses: Not reported	NA	NA	0.024***	0.025***	-0.024***
(standard errors)	NA	NA	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Immigrant status: No	NA	NA	NA	Ref.	Ref.
Immigrant status: Yes	NA	NA	NA	-0.010***	-0.028***
(standard errors)	NA	NA	NA	(0.002)	(0.002)
Having children: No	NA	NA	NA	Ref.	Ref.
Having children: Yes	NA	NA	NA	-0.028***	-0.017***
(standard errors)	NA	NA	NA	(0.001)	(0.001)
Having children: Not reported	NA	NA	NA	-0.082***	-0.002
(standard errors)	NA	NA	NA	(0.004)	(0.004)
Country fixed effects	No	No	No	No	Yes

Note: NA - not applicable. Variable not included in the model

Source: Eurostat (extraction from microdata), EU-GBV survey wave 2021, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA, EIGE.

TABLE 4

Association between childhood violence exposure and intimate partner violence (IPV)
(EU women aged 18-74, wave 2021)

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Sexual abuse in childhood	0.186***	0.179***	0.177***	0.152***
(standard errors)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Emotional abuse by parent	0.114***	0.110***	0.109***	0.104***
(standard errors)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Serious physical abuse by parent	0.107***	0.112***	0.112***	0.107***
(standard errors)	(0.003)	(0.003)	0.003)	(0.003)
Witnessed psychological abuse by parent(s)	0.131***	0.125***	0.125***	0.116***
(standard errors)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Witnessed physical abuse by parent(s)	0.035***	0.032***	0.032***	0.030***
(standard errors)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Educational level: Less than primary, primary and lower secondary	NA	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Educational level: Upper, post-secondary but non-tertiary	NA	0.028***	0.029***	0.014***
(standard errors)	NA	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Educational level: Tertiary	NA	0.041***	0.042***	0.020***
(standard errors)	NA	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Age: 18-29	NA	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Age: 30-44	NA	-0.035***	-0.021***	-0.017***
(standard errors)	NA	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Age: 45-59	NA	-0.035***	-0.051***	-0.043***
(standard errors)	NA	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Age: 60-74	NA	-0.060***	-0.096***	-0.083***
(standard errors)	NA	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Employment status: Not employed	NA	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Employment status: Employed	NA	0.027***	0.025***	0.020***

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
(standard errors)	NA	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Employment status: Other	NA	0.019***	0.016***	0.008**
(standard errors)	NA	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Affordability of unexpected expense: No	NA	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Affordability of unexpected expense: Yes	NA	-0.086***	-0.088***	-0.080***
(standard errors)	NA	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Affordability of unexpected expense: Not reported		-0.083***	-0.081***	-0.078***
(standard errors)	NA	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Immigrant status: No	NA	NA	Ref.	Ref.
Immigrant status: Yes	NA	NA	-0.009**	-0.010***
(standard errors)	NA	NA	(0.003)	(0.003)
Having children: No	NA	NA	Ref.	Ref.
Having children: Yes	NA	NA	-0.028***	-0.016***
(standard errors)	NA	NA	(0.002)	(0.002)
Having children: Not reported	NA	NA	-0.092***	0.005
(standard errors)	NA	NA	(0.005)	(0.006)
Country fixed effects	No	No	No	Yes

Note: NA - not applicable. Variable not included in the model

Source: Eurostat (extraction from microdata), EU-GBV survey wave 2021, data collection coordinated by Eurostat, FRA, EIGE.

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Childhood violence and its lifelong impact

This publication provides an overview about the prevalence of gender-based violence focusing on childhood and adulthood experiences. The report provides a short methodological overview of the data source, continuing with the main results on violence experienced by non-partners and intimate partners as well as experiences before age 15. It also gives main results on the impact of childhood experiences on adulthood including socio-economic outcomes and an estimated likelihood to experience violence during adulthood.

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