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Prevalence and consequences of violence against women

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Foreword

This publication has been produced on behalf of the Committee for Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (NAPE) and includes additional reviews of the material of the study on gender-based violence and domestic violence in Finland (in Finnish), which have been published during the autumn of 2024 and spring of 2025 as study summary publications on Statistics Finland's theme page about gender-based violence and domestic violence (both the page and publications in Finnish). The reviews carried out focus on themes that have received less attention in the report of the gender-based violence and domestic violence in Finland study from 2021. The themes examined deal with violence experienced in childhood, sexual harassment at work, violence experienced by young women, experiences of digital violence and online harassment, stalking, and communal violence, which means honour-related violence, forced marriages and attitudes towards genital mutilation in this context. With the project, the NAPE Committee aims to strengthen the knowledge base required by the Istanbul Convention on the prevalence of forms of violence against women in Finland.

NAPE Naisiin kohdistuvan väkivallan ja perheväkivallan torjunnan toimikunta

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1 Introduction

In 2021, the population's experiences and observations of violence and harassment were studied in Finland. The study was part of a Europe-wide survey project on gender-based violence coordinated by Eurostat, the Statistical Office of the European Union, which studied violence against women in more than 30 European countries between 2021 and 2024. The results of the Safety and wellbeing in Finland survey were published in 2023 in a study on gender-based violence and domestic violence in Finland in 2021. The study specifically responded to the data needs of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention), which was ratified by Finland.

The Europe-wide study focused on examining the experience of violence of women aged 18 to 74. The aim of the study was to cover different forms of violence as widely as possible, both in terms of violence experienced at the hands of a partner and from other sources. Questions included experiences of sexual violence, violence experienced in childhood, harassment and violence at work, and perceptions of the prevalence of violence and fears related to violence.

In Finland, the inclusion of men and young women in the study was also considered nationally important, and separate samples of men aged 18 to 74 and girls aged 16 to 17 were included. Questions of national importance that were not included in the EU survey were also added to the study. These included questions related to online harassment, various forms of communal violence, and knowing and using various services.

As the data collection was carried out during the coronavirus pandemic, it was also natural to ask respondents about their experiences of violence and harassment during the pandemic compared with before the pandemic. These results related to the time of the coronavirus pandemic have been discussed in the report The impact of the Covid-19 crisis on gender equality in Finland (Mesiäislehto et al. 2022). In Finland, in addition to Eurostat and Statistics Finland, the study was funded by the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, whose funding was a prerequisite for meeting national data needs.

The results of the study confirmed the perception of the prevalence of gender-based violence and domestic violence in Finland, and the experience of intimate partner violence did not seem to have diminished. In Finland, about a third (34%) of women aged 16 to 74 had experienced physical violence from a partner, and fewer than a fifth (18%) of men aged 18 to 74 had these experiences. Forty-three

per cent of women and 12 per cent of men reported experiences of sexual abuse. More than half (57%) of women and less than half (46%) of men had encountered physical violence, sexual abuse or threats by someone at some point their lives. Although both women and men face violence, the nature of the violence experienced is different in part. Women typically face domestic violence and sexual violence more than men, while it is more typical for men to face violence from strangers or those they hardly know.

The next EU-wide survey is planned for 2027, so it is expected that new comparative data on the prevalence of gender-based violence and domestic violence in the population will also be available in the future. The study material will also be used for research purposes, and we hope that the material will be used as extensively as possible.

This first section of the publication introduces the key concepts used in the study. The second section looks at violence experienced and witnessed in childhood. The third section is an overall review of violence experienced by young women. The fourth section focuses on sexual harassment in working life, and the fifth chapter examines the experience and detection of digital violence and online harassment. Stalking is discussed in section six, and communal violence in section seven. The result sections are structured so that each presents the key results first and then the recommendations made based on the results. The study material is described after the result sections.

Key concepts

Gender-based violence

Gender-based violence means that violence as a phenomenon affects different genders in different ways. Violence is gender-based – that is, it appears different for men and women, when considering the prevalence of violence, its forms, motives, consequences, victims and factors, for example.

Domestic violence

Domestic violence is violence in which the offender and the victim are in a close relationship. Domestic violence can be intimate partner violence, relationship violence or other domestic abuse. Domestic violence can be targeted at current or former partners, children, other relatives or loved ones. Domestic violence typically occurs privately and remains hidden.

In this study, domestic violence has been examined especially from the perspective of intimate partner violence. Domestic violence also includes violence committed by other close persons, both in the childhood home and in other close relationships.

Intimate partner violence

Intimate partner violence is violence exerted by a current or former partner, which means that the offender and the victim are or have been married, cohabiting or in a relationship. Intimate partner violence can also extend to former partners. In this study, intimate partner violence also includes relationship violence.

Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment is verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct that is of a sexual nature and unsolicited, and that intentionally or actually violates the psychological or physical integrity of a person, especially by creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or distressing environment.

Sexual violence

Sexual violence is violence in which the offender violates the victim's sexual integrity or right to self-determination. Sexual violence is diverse in nature and in addition to the use of physical force, may include coercion, intimidation and blackmail in various sexual acts, as well as the exploitation of the victim's condition due to intoxication, fatigue or fear. Sexual violence can also occur when someone is forced or pressured into sexual acts with a third party.

In this study, sexual violence refers to physically invasive forms of sexual violence, including rapes involving sexual intercourse, attempted rape and other sexual acts committed against the victim's will by the victim, the offender or a third party.

Online violence and harassment

Online violence and harassment refers to inappropriate or offensive communication, intimidation or the targeting of a person online or on social media. Targeting refers to a phenomenon in which one or more offenders urge or incite a large group to attack one person in different ways, such as sending hate messages via email or on social media or digging up and distorting private information.

Communal violence

Communal violence refers to violence in which the structures, power systems, norms and practices prevailing in a society or a smaller community within it undermine the rights and status of certain persons or groups of persons in relation to others, hinder the satisfaction of their basic needs, threaten their life, health or wellbeing, or otherwise cause them harm. It is typical of communal violence that the responsibility for the actions of individuals disappears behind the community, allowing those who violate the community rules to experience the threat of violence from the entire community.

2 Violence experienced and witnessed in childhood

Henna Attila & Miina Keski-Petäjä

Statistics Finland's study on gender-based violence and domestic violence in Finland in 2021 surveyed psychological and physical violence experienced and witnessed in childhood.

The prevalence of psychological and physical parental violence experienced and witnessed in childhood was surveyed by examining how many women aged 16 to 74 and men aged 18 to 74 reported that they experienced psychological or physical violence by their parents under the age of 15 or witnessed psychological or physical violence by their parents against each other.

Situations where a person under the age of 15 experienced belittling or verbal humiliation, or where they witnessed such behaviour by the father or mother towards each other, were counted as experiencing or witnessing psychological violence. Instances where the offender had attacked another by slapping, pulling hair, punching, kicking or throwing an object at them were counted as experiencing or witnessing physical violence. From acts directed at children under the age of 15, particularly serious instances of physical violence were those in which the parent intentionally hit or kicked hard, hit with an object such as a stick or belt, burned or stabbed.

In addition to psychological and physical violence by and between parents, experiences of sexual violence and stalking experienced under the age of 15 were mapped. Sexual violence experienced in childhood was investigated by asking women aged 16 to 74 and men aged 18 to 74 about the different acts they had encountered. Enticing to appear naked, touching intimate areas inappropriately and forcing sexual intercourse were some of the acts counted as sexual violence.

Stalking was defined as repetitive offensive or threatening behaviour directed against a person. Women aged 16 to 74 and men aged 18 to 74 were asked if someone had repeatedly sent them unsolicited messages or gifts that caused them fear, worry or anxiety, made outrageous, threatening or silent phone calls, made other persistent approach attempts, waited outside home, school or workplace, followed or observed them, damaged their property or pets, made offensive or embarrassing comments about them in public, or posted pictures, videos or sensitive information about them in a way that caused fear, worry or anxiety. Those reporting the stalking experiences listed above were asked if they had experienced any of the stalking incidents they mentioned when they were

under the age of 15. The results on the prevalence of stalking in childhood are based on how many of those who reported stalking experiences reported that at least some of the acts occurred when they were under the age of 15.

2.1 Key results

- Almost every other woman aged 16 to 74 and man aged 18 to 74 living in Finland reported that they had experienced psychological or physical violence committed by their parents under the age of 15. This corresponds to 1,888,000 people at the population level.
- Sixty per cent of women and half of men said they had witnessed psychological or physical violence between their parents under the age of 15.
- Fourteen per cent of women and four per cent of men reported experiencing sexual violence under the age of 15.
- One in three women and one in five men living in Finland reported experiencing stalking during their lives. Twenty per cent of women and 13 per cent of men who had experienced stalking reported experiencing it under the age of 15.
- Violence experienced and witnessed in childhood was typically reported by women and those under 35 years of age.
- The offender exerting physical violence, whether experienced or witnessed between parents, is typically the father.

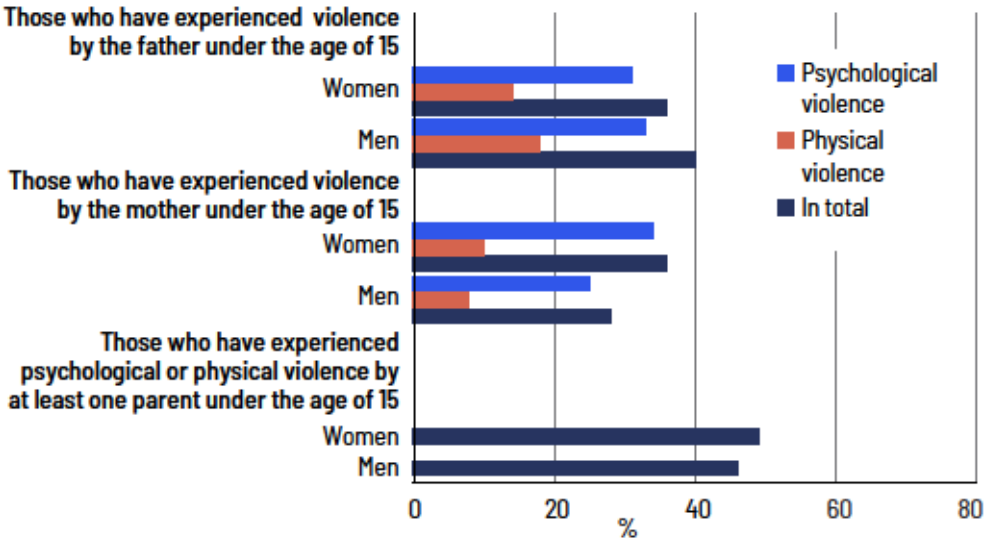
2.1.1 Experienced parental violence under the age of 15

As can be seen from Figure 2.1, about half the women (49%) and almost as many of the men (46%) reported experiencing psychological or physical violence by at least one of their parents under the age of 15. When examining the reporting of experiences of violence according to the parent's gender, women report psychological or physical violence as often from both the mother and the father, while men report violence by the father significantly more often than that of the mother: about a third (36%) of women reported experiencing violence by the mother under the age of 15, and an equal number (36%) of violence by the father, while more than a quarter (28%) of men reported violence by the mother, and 40 per cent of violence by the father.

A closer examination shows slight differences between women and men in the nature of the violence experienced. About a third of women reported psychological violence by both the mother (34%) and father (31%). Ten per cent of women reported physical violence by their mother and slightly more, 14 per cent, reported physical violence by their father. A third (33%) of men also reported psychological violence committed by their father, but slightly fewer (25%) reported psychological violence committed by their mother. About one in ten (8%)

men reported physical violence by their mother, but significantly more, about one in five (18%), reported physical violence by their father. (Figure 2.1.)

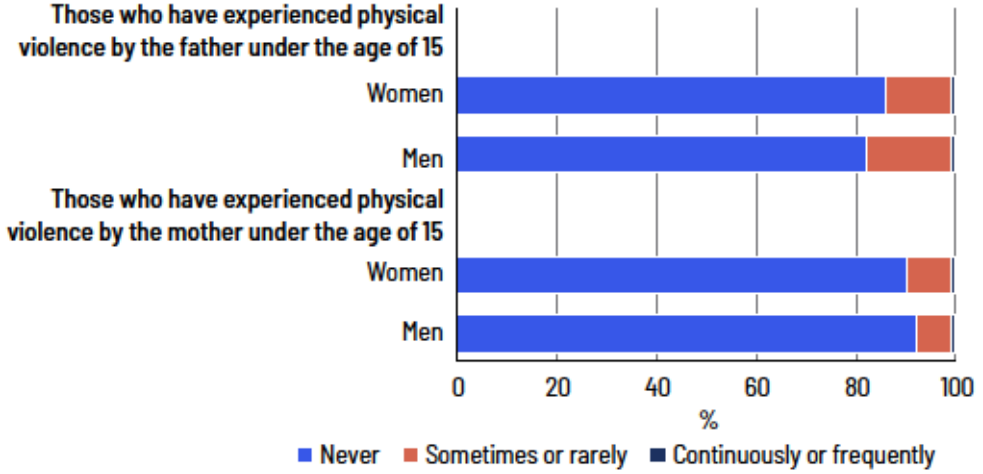
Figure 2.1
Those who have experienced psychological or physical violence by their parent under the age of 15, % of women aged 16 to 74 and men aged 18 to 74. N=7,565.



Source: Statistics Finland, Sukupuolistunut väkivalta ja lähisuhdeväkivalta Suomessa 2021

The majority of women aged 16 to 74 and men aged 18 to 74 said that they had not been subjected to physical violence by their parents when under the age of 15. The majority of those who reported physical violence by their parent said that violence occurred sometimes or rarely. One per cent of both women and men reported being continuously or frequently subjected to physical violence by both the mother and the father under the age of 15. (Figure 2.2.)

Figure 2.2
Those who have experienced physical violence by their parent under the age of 15, % of women aged 16 to 74 and men aged 18 to 74. N=7,565.



Source: Statistics Finland, Sukupuolistunut väkivalta ja lähisuhdeväkivalta Suomessa 2021

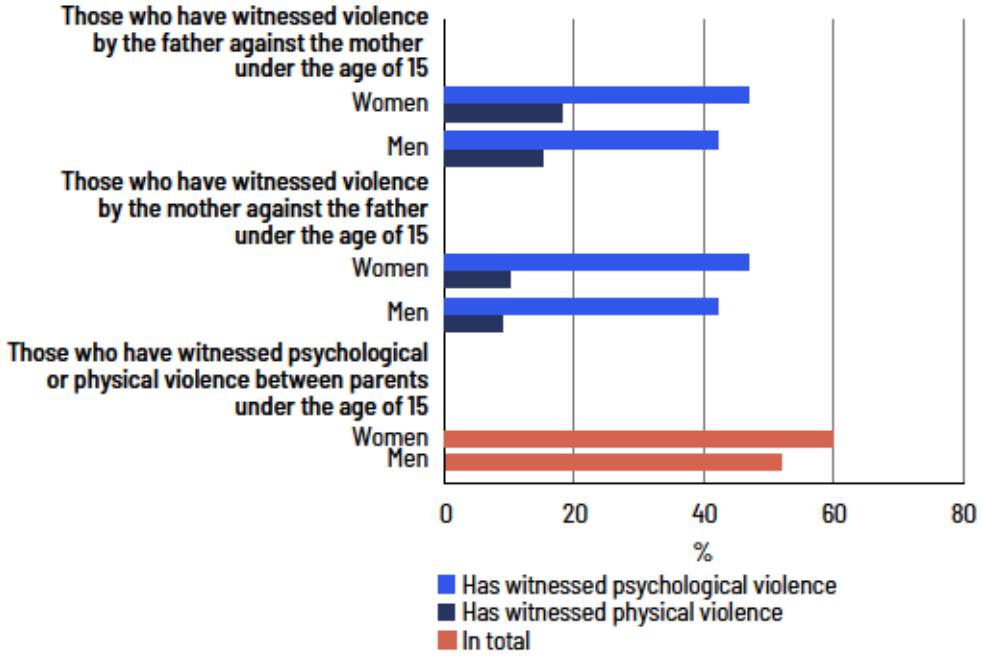
Those who had experienced psychological violence by their parents reported that they were subjected to psychological violence continuously or often, which is slightly more often than those who were subjected to physical violence. Psychological violence committed by the mother was experienced continuously or often by six per cent of women and two per cent of men under the age of 15, while psychological violence committed by the father was experienced continuously or often by six per cent of women and four per cent of men.

2.1.2 Witnessed violence between parents under the age of 15

More than half said they had witnessed psychological or physical violence between their parents when aged 15 or under: 60 per cent of women and 52 per cent of men. Of these, witnessing psychological violence was more common. About half the women (47%) and fewer than half the men (42%) reported that they had witnessed psychological violence both by the mother against the father and by the father against the mother.

Witnessing physical violence was less common, but many said they had also witnessed it. As children, people had witnessed violence by the father against the mother in particular: 18 per cent of women and 15 per cent of men said they had witnessed violence by the father against the mother. In turn, every tenth woman (10%) and man (9%) reported witnessing physical violence by the mother against the father. (Figure 2.3.)

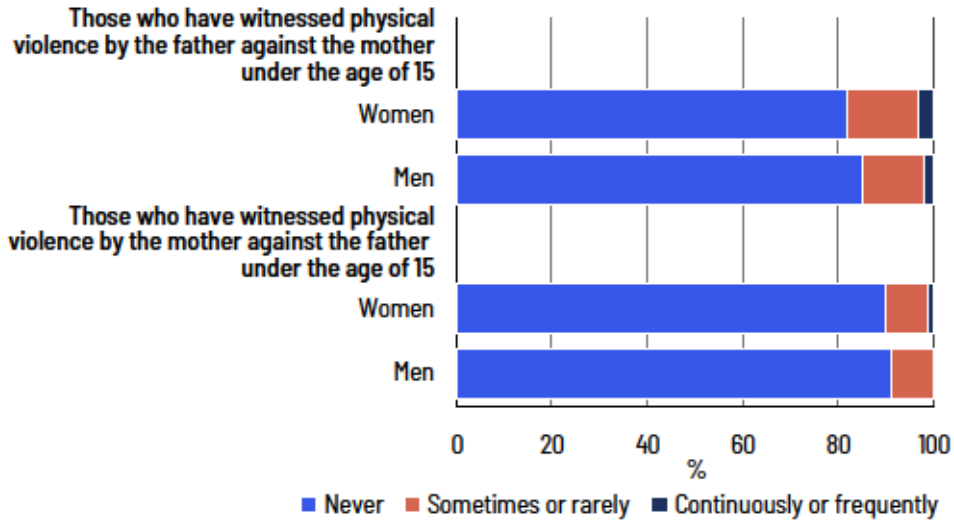
Figure 2.3
Those who have witnessed psychological or physical violence between parents under the age of 15, % of women aged 16 to 74 and men aged 18 to 74. N=7,565.



Source: Statistics Finland, Sukupuolistunut väkivalta ja lähisuhdeväkivalta Suomessa 2021

The majority of women aged 16 to 74 and men aged 18 to 74 said that they have not witnessed physical violence between their parents under the age of 15. The majority of those who witnessed one parent's physical violence against the other said that violence had occurred sometimes or rarely. However, three per cent of women and two per cent of men reported that physical violence by the father against the mother was continuous or frequent. Continuous or frequent violence by the mother against the father was reported very rarely (1% of women, 0% of men) (Figure 2.4.)

Figure 2.4
Those who have witnessed physical violence between parents under the age of 15, % of women aged 16 to 74 and men aged 18 to 74. N=7,565.



Source: Statistics Finland, Sukupuolistunut väkivalta ja lähisuhdeväkivalta Suomessa 2021

Psychological violence between parents was described as not only more common but also more frequent than physical violence. Psychological violence committed by the mother against the father was witnessed continuously or often by 12 per cent of women and six per cent of men under the age of 15, while psychological violence committed by the father against the mother was witnessed continuously or often by 14 per cent of women and seven per cent of men.

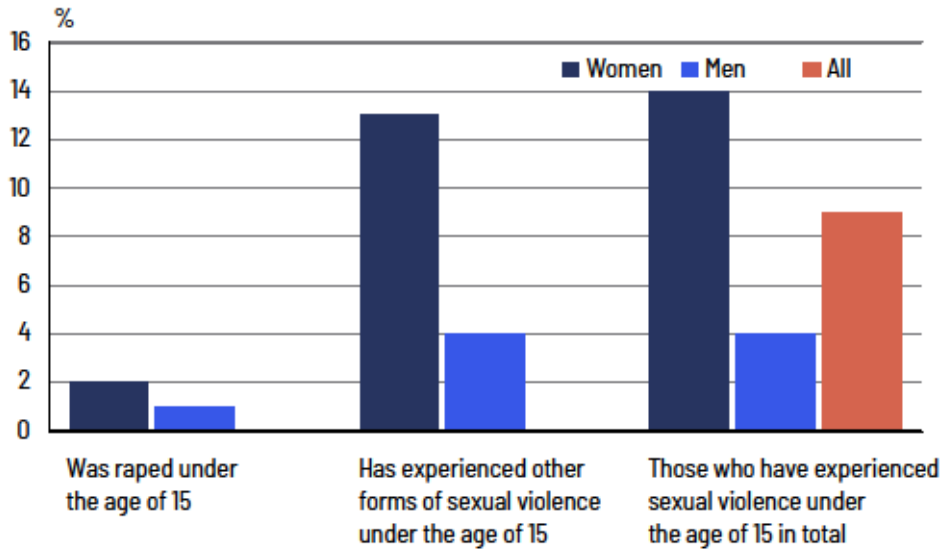
2.1.3 Sexual violence under the age of 15

Women reported relatively often that they had experienced sexual violence by an adult when they were under the age of 15: fourteen per cent of women and four per cent of men said that they had experienced different forms of sexual violence under the age of 15 – that is, about one in ten person aged 16 to 74.

Two per cent of women aged 16 to 74 and one per cent of men aged 18 to 74 reported that they had been raped by an adult when under the age of 15, which

means about 50,000 people at the population level. Rape was defined as sexual intercourse, so it excluded many different forms of sexual violence. These other forms of sexual violence such as being photographed naked or touching genitals were experienced under the age of 15 by 13 per cent of women and four per cent of men (Figure 2.5.)

Figure 2.5
Those who have experienced sexual violence by adults under the age of 15, % of women aged 16 to 74 and men aged 18 to 74. N=7,575.



Source: Statistics Finland, Sukupuolistunut väkivalta ja lähisuhdeväkivalta Suomessa 2021

Slightly more than half of those who had experienced sexual violence under the age of 15 said that they were aged 11 to 14 at the time of the first incident; one in three said that they were aged 6 to 10; and 15 per cent said that they were aged under six. About nine out of ten report a male offender, and one out of ten a female offender. The offender was someone they already knew for the majority (78%) of those who had experienced sexual violence.

The majority (67%) of those who had experienced sexual abuse under the age of 15 reported that they had not told anyone about their experiences. About one in four (23%) reported having told a friend, and three per cent said that they had told the police. People in younger age groups reported that they had told both friends and authorities about their experiences more often than those in older age groups.

2.1.4 Stalking experienced under the age of 15

One in three women and one in five men living in Finland reported experiencing stalking at some point in their lives. In total, six per cent of women aged 16 to 74 and two per cent of men aged 18 to 74 reported that they had experienced stalking under the age of 15. At the population level, this means a total of 165,000 people.

Examined by age group, stalking experienced under the age of 15 was most commonly reported by those aged 16 to 34, of whom about one in ten (8%) reported being stalked under the age of 15. Stalking experienced under the age of 15 was rarely reported by people aged 55 to 74, of whom one per cent reported that they had experienced stalking under the age of 15.

2.2 Recommendations

On the whole, it can be said that violence experienced and witnessed in childhood has been and remains prevalent in Finland. During childhood, experiences of violence have affected a large part of the population in one way or another.

Experiences of psychological violence are very common, but many have also experienced physical violence in their childhood. Only a minority of those who have experienced violence in childhood have told an outsider about their experiences.

Violence is characterised by intergenerational transmission. Violence experienced in childhood is particularly damaging because those who have experienced or witnessed violence as children are at greater risk of becoming victims of domestic violence later in life. According to our study, both experienced and witnessed violence are strongly related to intimate partner violence later in life, and especially if intimate partner violence occurs frequently, any children living in the same household are often involved in violence as either targets or witnesses.

As both experienced and witnessed violence in childhood have a wide-ranging impact on life, and the effects are intergenerational, prevention on the one hand and minimising the damage caused by actual violence on the other are at the heart of the actions that are required. It is important that society supports the means by which violence encountered by children is identified and addressed. In this study, it should be noted that even witnessing violence is harmful and accustoms the child to a culture of violence that may predispose them to violence later in life. Extensive efforts and resources must also be invested in the prevention of violence, which serves children and families.

In the fight against violence, it is of paramount importance that various acts of violence are identified as violence, and that people are encouraged to report them. Violence must not remain hidden. Our results may reveal that in the youngest age groups, violence is recognised and communicated more boldly than before. This trend needs to be further reinforced.

When examining experiences of violence, differences in responses between age groups are typical. Although older people report violence less frequently than younger people, the results do not necessarily reflect the actual amount of violence. Sharing past experiences in the present is associated with complex questions of remembering, identifying and sharing. For example, the underreporting of experiences of violence in such a study is possible because the individual or society has not regarded all acts as violence at different times, or people do not want to report experiences due to shame, guilt or for other reasons. In general, it is good to be aware that the study assessing experiences of violence does not accurately describe the prevalence of violence, but the past experiences of violence that people have identified, remembered and wanted to share in the study.

Yet there are also real differences between age groups, regarding the actual growth environments, for example. Reasons related to the use of the internet and the varied ways of online violence can also partly explain why, compared with older age groups, for example, a much larger percentage of those aged 16 to 34 said that they had already been stalked under the age of 15. Online harassment and violence in general is a phenomenon that particularly affects young people. The prevention of and fight against online violence must be an important part of the work against violence, especially with children and young people.

3 Overall review of young women's experiences of violence

Henna Attila, Marjut Pietiläinen & Aku von Bell

Violence experienced by young women is examined in relation to their experiences of physical violence and stalking in the workplace, in childhood, in a relationship and in other spheres of life. The review is limited to the experiences of women aged 18 to 25 at the time of the study. The age limit of 16 to 25 is used when examining childhood violence.

In this section, violence experienced by young women is discussed first in terms of sexual violence, physical violence and threats of violence within and outside relationships. Violence experienced by women aged 18 to 25 is compared with violence experienced by men aged 18 to 30 – in the reviews, the age limit for men was higher than for women to include a sufficient number of men to make meaningful comparisons. Finally, young women's experiences of stalking and violence witnessed and experienced in childhood are discussed.

Definitions

Mild and serious violence refers to various acts of physical violence such as hair pulling, shaking, pushing, hitting, kicking and strangling. The respondents themselves have not defined their experiences of violence as mild or serious, but the division has been made when analysing the results. Acts that result in a significant risk of death or serious injury have been considered as instances of serious violence. Serious violence thus includes any violence that has involved strangulation or the use of a weapon in a violent situation, for example.

Sexual violence refers to rape, attempted rape and other sexual acts that a person is forced or coerced to commit against their will.

Rape refers to an act in which a person is forced or coerced against their will into sexual intercourse involving vaginal or anal penetration, oral sex or penetration with objects.

Intimate partner violence refers to violence committed by a current or former partner or spouse.

Non-partner violence refers to violence committed by persons other than current or former partners. For example, the offender may be a relative, friend, study or work colleague, more distant acquaintance, neighbour or previously unknown person.

3.1 Key results

- Half (50%) of young women aged 16 to 25 have experienced violence: almost one in ten (8%) have experienced threats of violence; about one in five (22%) have experienced mild violence; and one in five (20%) have experienced serious violence or rape.
- For young women, the typical person threatening them with violence is most often a current or former partner. The offender exerting mild violence is most often a person other than the partner, and the offender exerting severe violence is as often a current or former partner as another offender.
- More than a third of young women have experienced stalking. The most common form of stalking experienced is unsolicited contacts.
- About one in ten young women have witnessed violence between parents under the age of 15.
- About one in seven young women have experienced physical violence by parents under the age of 15.
- The percentage of victims of serious sexual violence under the age of 15 is around one per cent. About 13 per cent of young women have experienced milder sexual violence in their childhood.

3.1.1 Sexual violence, physical violence and threats of violence experienced by young women

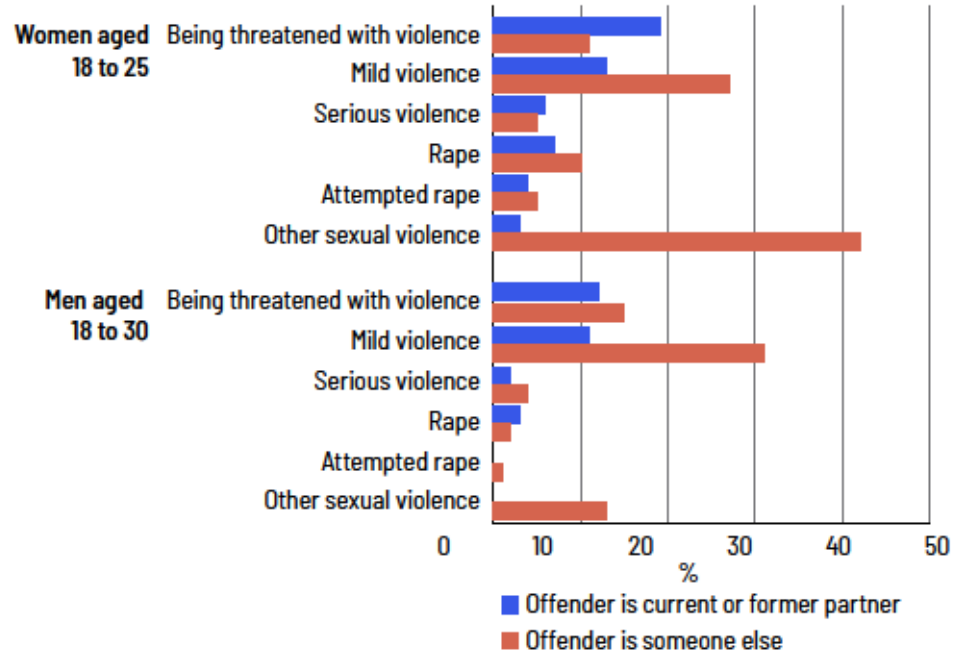
Young women's experiences of violence fall into two main categories: intimate partner violence and non-partner violence. Half of young women have experienced threats of violence, mild or severe physical violence or rape outside a relationship. For those who have been in a relationship, one in five women aged 16 to 25 (20%) and almost one in four women aged 18 to 25 (23%) have experienced similar violence by a former or current partner.

Less than a fifth have experienced threats of violence from a current or former partner, while one in ten women aged 18 to 25 have experienced threats from other sources. More than a quarter reported that they had experienced mild acts of violence from persons other than the partner, while approximately one in seven women aged 18 to 25 reported that they had experienced these acts from the partner. About five per cent of young women reported that they had experienced more serious forms of violence by a partner or another offender (Figure 3.1.)

When comparing the violence experiences of women aged 18 to 25 and men aged 18 to 30, it can be seen that the biggest differences are in the percentages of serious violence and sexual violence: compared with young men, about twice as many women have experienced rape or attempted rape, and about three

times as many women have experienced other forms of sexual violence. Young women experience serious violence from a partner three times more than men. Young women experience threats of violence more often from current or former partners than from others, while the opposite is true for men.

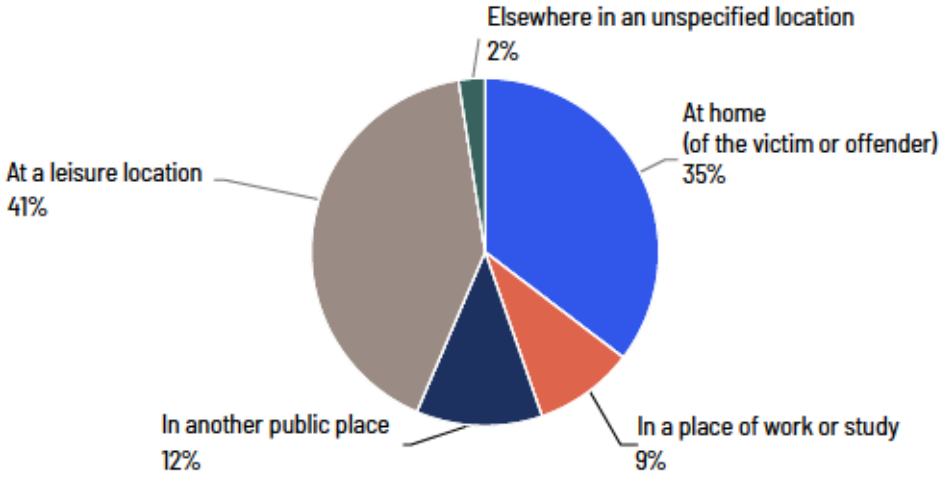
Figure 3.1
Prevalence of violence experiences in life by severity, type and aggressor of violence experienced, % of women aged 18 to 25 and men aged 18 to 30. Women N=507, men N=232.



Source: Statistics Finland, Sukupuolistunut väkivalta ja lähisuhdeväkivalta Suomessa 2021

Figure 3.2 shows the distribution of locations of non-partner violence experienced during the last five years for victims who have been able to specify the location when answering the survey. Young women are typically subjected to non-partner violence in locations related to leisure activities (41%), such as venues for hobbies, restaurants or shopping malls. The second most common location is the home of the victim or offender (35%). Other locations include public places unrelated to leisure activities (12%), as well as study and work places (9%). (Figure 3.2.)

Figure 3.2
Location of the latest violence experienced outside a relationship, % of the women aged 18 to 25 who have experienced non-partner violence. N=127.



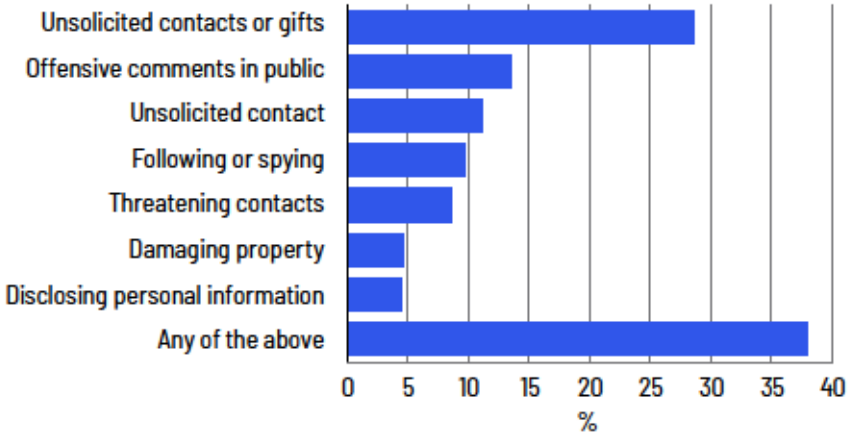
Source: Statistics Finland, Sukupuolistunut väkivalta ja lähisuhdeväkivalta Suomessa 2021

3.1.2 Stalking experienced by young women

In the Istanbul Convention, stalking refers to repetitive behaviour towards another person based on which the victim has reason to be afraid or feel threated in relation to their safety. Stalking is therefore repeated harassment, which may also include acts that are legal as isolated instances but illegal if repeated.

Stalking has been experienced by 38 per cent of women aged 18 to 25 (Figure 3.3.) The most common forms of stalking are unsolicited contacts or gifts (29%) and offensive comments made in public (14%). One in ten young women has experienced threatening contacts, unsolicited contact, and following and spying.

Figure 3.3
Experiences of stalking broken down by mode, % of women aged 18 to 25. N=507.

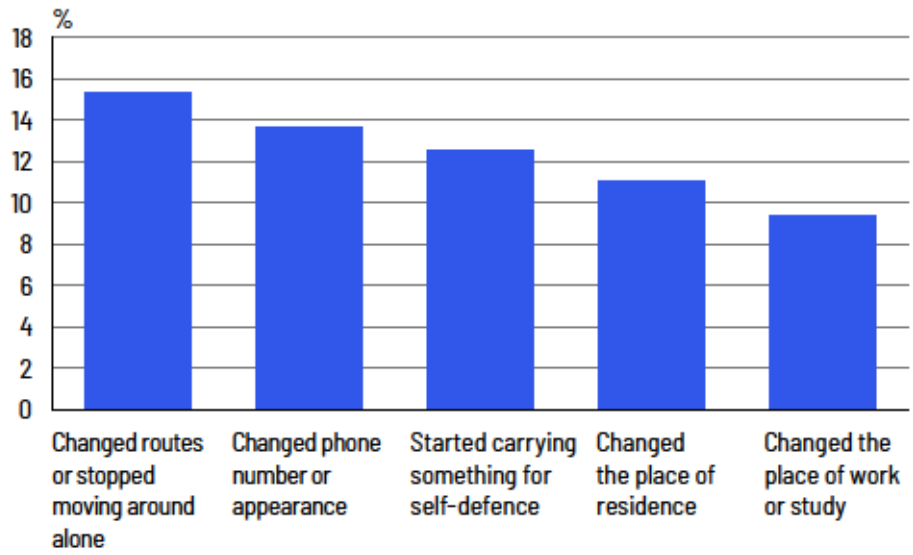


Source: Statistics Finland, Sukupuolistunut väkivalta ja lähisuhdeväkivalta Suomessa 2021

In about 80 per cent of stalking cases, the stalker is a man, whereas it is a woman in about 15 per cent of cases. Approximately half (46%) of young women who have experienced stalking report that the persecutor was a friend or someone they already knew, and approximately half (47%) report that the stalker was a stranger. About one in ten (8%) young women have been stalked by a partner or relative.

Figure 3.4 illustrates how often and in what way young women who have been stalked have changed their behaviour as a result of stalking. The typical changes as a result of stalking are changes related to public transport, changes in appearance or contact information, and arming oneself. Around one in ten young women have moved or changed their place of work or study due to stalking.

Figure 3.4
Consequences of stalking, % of women aged 18 to 25 who have experienced stalking. N=178.



Source: Statistics Finland, Sukupuolistunut väkivalta ja lähisuhdeväkivalta Suomessa 2021

3.1.3 Violence experienced by young women in their childhood

Violence experienced in childhood refers to violence experienced under the age of 15. The topic is relevant, as violence experienced early can have a very significant impact on an individual's later course of life and wellbeing.

Figure 3.5 shows the prevalence and frequency of physical and psychological violence by parents experienced by women aged 16 to 25. The comparison includes the experiences of childhood violence of women and men over 35 years of age. The most significant differences between the comparison groups are

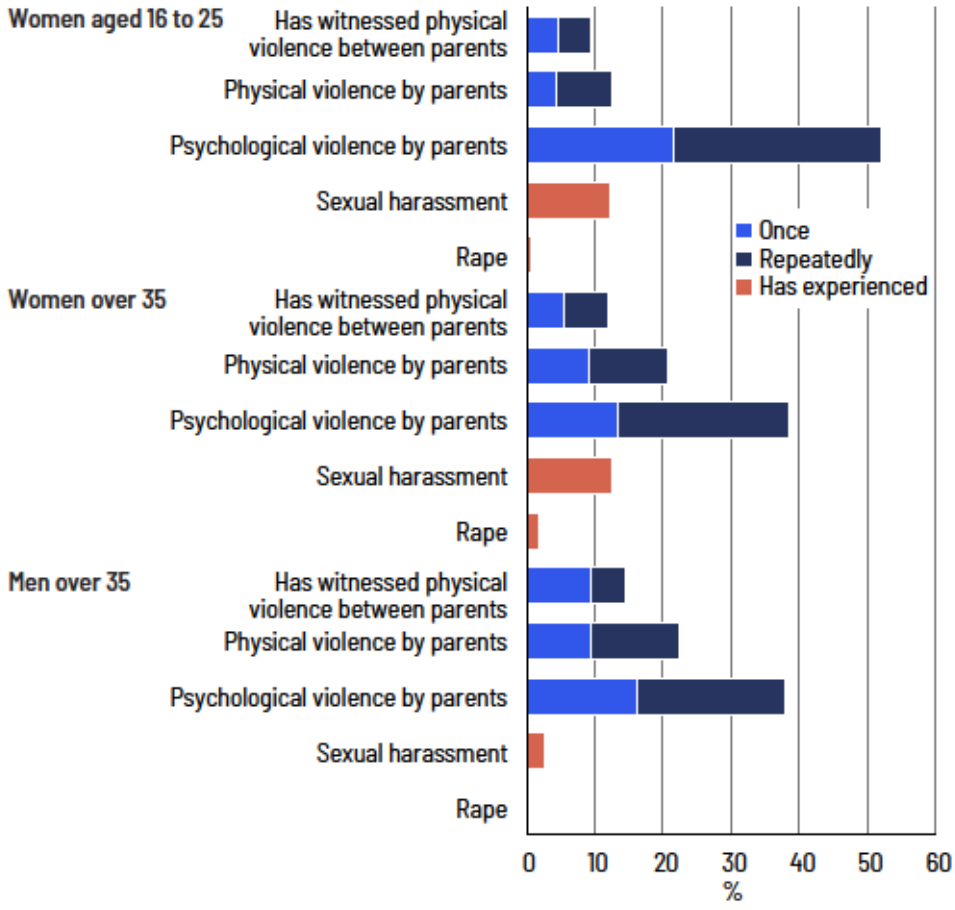
the age-specific differences in the experience of physical and psychological violence by parents, as well as the gender-based difference in exposure to sexual violence.

Slightly more than one in ten (13%) women aged 16 to 25 reported experiencing physical violence by their parents in childhood, while one in five (20%) women and men aged over 35 reported these experiences. Meanwhile, young women reported more psychological violence by parents than women aged over 35 – for women aged 16 to 25, every other woman has experienced it at least once, and less than a third of women have experienced it repeatedly. For comparison, fewer than 40 per cent of both women and men aged over 35 have experienced psychological violence by their parents.

The biggest differences between men and women are in the experience of sexual harassment: more than one in ten women and about one in thirty men have experienced sexual harassment in childhood. (Figure 3.5.)

Figure 3.5

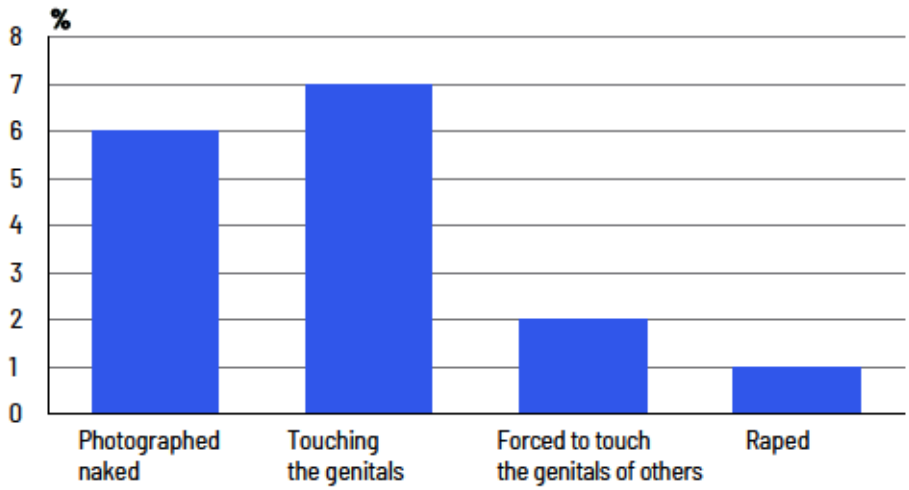
Figure 3.5. Prevalence of domestic violence experienced and witnessed in childhood, as well as sexual violence experienced under the age of 15, % of women aged 16 to 25 and of women and men aged over 35. N=1 089.



Source: Statistics Finland, Sukupuolistunut väkivalta ja lähisuhdeväkivalta Suomessa 2021

Seven per cent of women aged 16 to 25 have had their genitals touched when they were under the age of 15, and six per cent have been photographed naked. About two per cent report being forced to touch other people's genitals under the age of 15, and about one per cent report being raped as a child (Figure 3.6.)

Figure 3.6
Forms of sexual violence experienced under the age of 15, % of women aged 16 to 25. N=2,055.



Source: Statistics Finland, Sukupuolistunut väkivalta ja lähisuhdeväkivalta Suomessa 2021

3.2 Recommendations

Based on the results, young women are highlighted as targets of violence in almost all areas of life, and the percentage of those who have experienced violence is increased especially by the sexual abuse commonly experienced in different spheres of life and at different ages.

The high percentages of young women who have experienced violence are startling, but they also offer hope in international comparisons. Violence faced by young women across Europe and the rest of the world may not include national differences as great as international comparisons suggest, but in countries such as Finland reporting high levels of violence, young women tend to recognise different forms of violence and can share their experiences in the study without fear of negative consequences. By continuing to discuss facing violence and its impact, we can further raise awareness of what is and is not acceptable, and what people's own rights and those of others are. Thus, those who have experienced violence are better able to identify their experience and seek help and support.

The openness of young women to their experiences gives hope that in the future, fewer and fewer will be left without support because they remain silent about the violence they have experienced. Despite this hope, a key conclusion on the prevalence of experiences reported by young women is that despite years of work against violence and to promote gender equality, the experience and threat of violence continues to hinder the growth of many girls and young women into adulthood.

In addition to young women who have experienced and are experiencing violence, it would be good to look at boys and men. Attitudes that allow violence do not occur in a vacuum but are influenced by many phenomena of society and social life. Mostly, boys and men use violence against girls and young women, and it is impossible to eradicate the phenomenon by focusing only on the victims and their characteristics and actions.

Yet boys and men should be considered not only as offenders but also as targets of violence, as it may be more difficult for them than for girls to share their experiences due to cultural and social norms, and to seek support for victims of violence. Without intervention or other interference, experienced and witnessed use of violence, especially in childhood, as a tool for resolving conflicts can also become a method of choice in adulthood in one's own close relationships. If the numerous harms caused by violence are to be reduced, it would be good to allocate resources to breaking the intergenerational chain of this violence.

4 Sexual harassment at work

Marjut Pietiläinen & Aku von Bell

Sexual harassment is still experienced unfortunately often in working life, as several studies have shown (e.g. Attila et al. 2018; Sutela et al. 2019; Lyly-Yrjänäinen 2023). The study on gender-based violence and domestic violence in Finland from 2021 also showed that experiences of sexual harassment in working life were quite common (Attila et al. 2023).

This chapter examines the prevalence, manifestations, settings, victims and offenders of sexual harassment experienced in working life, as well as the prevalence and channels of reporting harassment.

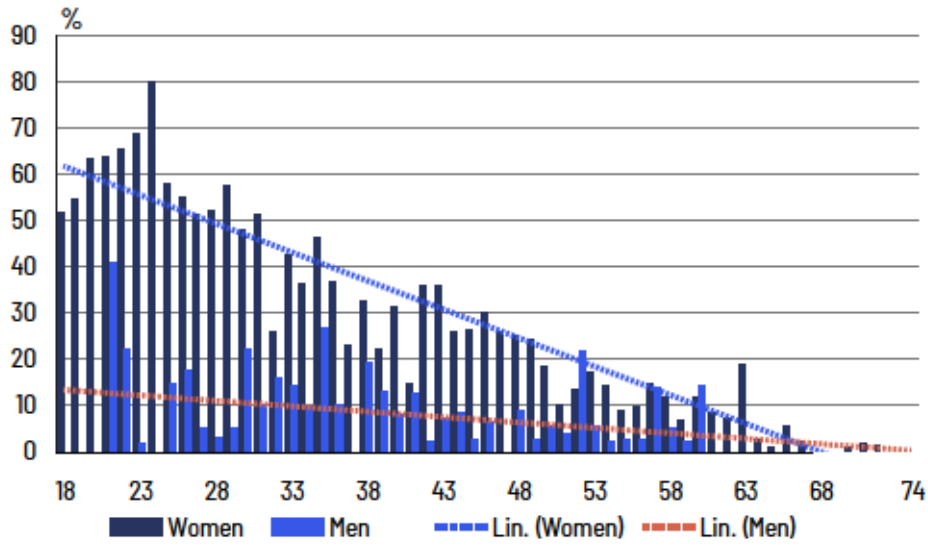
4.1 Key results

- Sexual harassment is experienced especially in work tasks involving customers or persons in a similar position to customers.
- The majority of sexual harassment offenders are men: 94 per cent of women who have experienced sexual harassment have experienced it from men, and a third of men who have experienced sexual harassment have also experienced it from another man.
- Based on further analyses of the study, women experience sexual harassment from a supervisor or employer mainly in male-dominated sectors and in those with equal gender distribution.
- Based on the material, instructions at the workplace or a designated harassment contact alone are insufficient to reduce the experience of harassment. However, both can be recommended for workplaces, as the harassment contact is the second most likely party to be notified of harassment. In addition, employees who have instructions or a harassment contact at their workplace are significantly more likely to know to whom to report a harassment situation than employees with neither.

4.1.1 Prevalence of sexual harassment at work

More than half (54%) of women and around one in seven (14%) men aged 18 to 74 who have been or are working have experienced sexual harassment at work. It is experienced especially by young women, of whom up to 80 per cent (Figure 4.1) have these experiences. The likelihood of men experiencing sexual harassment also decreases with age, but not as sharply as for women.

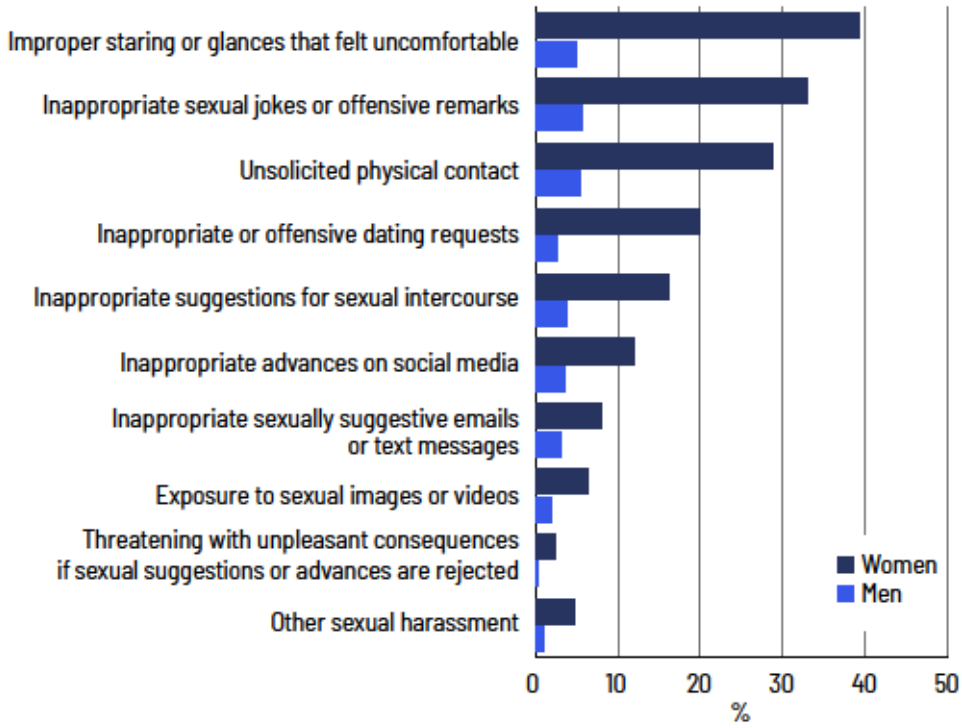
Figure 4.1
Those who have experienced sexual harassment at work in the last five years by gender and age, % of women and men aged 18 to 74 who have been or are working. N=5,844.



Source: Statistics Finland, Sukupuolistunut väkivalta ja lähisuhdeväkivalta Suomessa 2021

Sexual harassment at work manifests itself in many different ways. The most common forms of harassment are inappropriate staring or glances that make their target uncomfortable (22%), inappropriate sexual jokes or offensive remarks (19%), and unsolicited physical contact (17%). Women experience all forms of sexual harassment significantly more often than men (Figure 4.2.)

Figure 4.2
Those who have experienced sexual harassment at work in the last five years by gender and the form of harassment, % of women and men aged 18 to 74 who have been or are working. N=5,844.



Source: Statistics Finland, Sukupuolistunut väkivalta ja lähisuhdeväkivalta Suomessa 2021

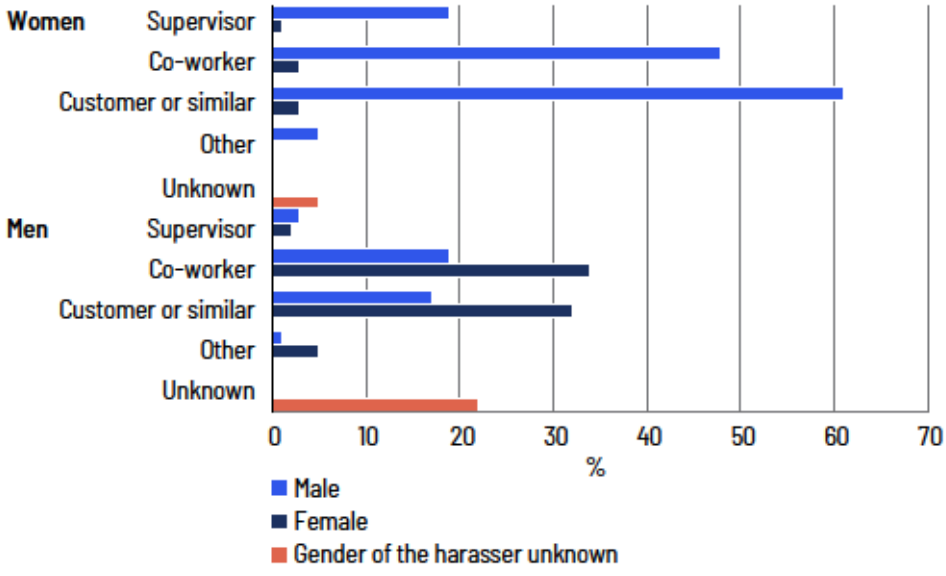
In working life, sexual harassment is mainly experienced from customers or persons comparable to customers, such as patients, pupils, students or travellers (57%), and from co-workers (49%). The majority of those who have experienced sexual harassment – 82 per cent – have experienced harassment from men, 17 per cent from women, and nine per cent from a stranger.

In working life, women and men face sexual harassment from various offenders. Ninety-four per cent of women who have experienced sexual harassment at work have experienced harassment by a man. Correspondingly, 59 per cent of men who have experienced sexual harassment in working life have experienced harassment by a woman, and about one in three (34%) by another man.

Women are more likely than men to experience sexual harassment from customers (62% of women, 40% of men) and supervisors (20% of women, 5% of men). However, being sexually harassed by a co-worker is almost equally likely for women and men (49%). In contrast, experiencing harassment from a stranger is more typical for men (22%) than for women (5%).

When considering sexual harassment experienced by women and men at work based on the offender and gender, it is found that men play a major role as offenders of sexual harassment experienced at work. Although men typically experience sexual harassment from women rather than men, the role of men in harassment experienced by men is not negligible – unlike the role of women in harassment experienced by women (Figure 4.3.)

Figure 4.3
Those who have experienced sexual harassment at work by the position of the perpetrator and sex, % of women and men aged 18 to 74 who have experienced sexual harassment at work in the last five years. N=2,560.



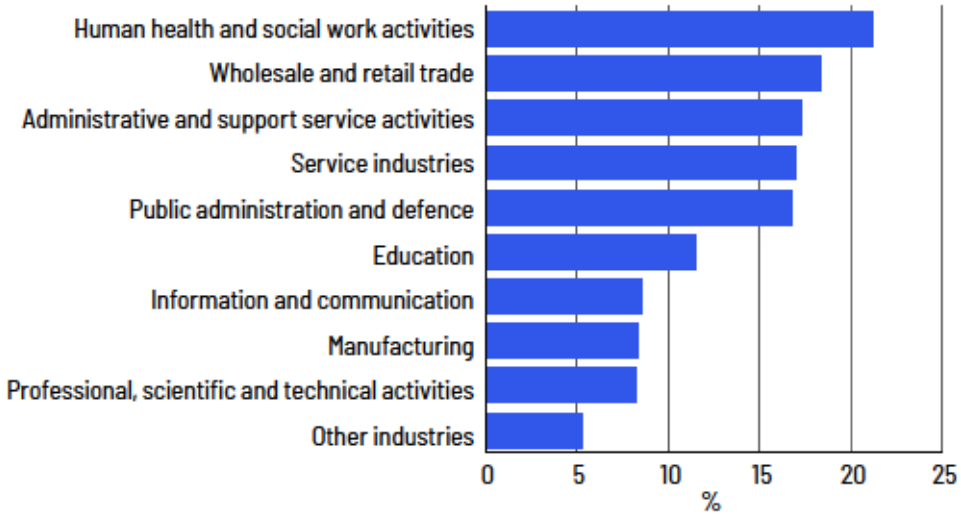
Source: Statistics Finland, Sukupuolistunut väkivalta ja lähisuhdeväkivalta Suomessa 2021

4.1.2 Sexual harassment in different industries, work communities, tasks and roles

In the following, the experiences of sexual harassment in the current job are examined. In this case, the subject of the examination is everyone in an employment relationship at the time of the study. Twenty-one per cent of employed women and six per cent of employed men have experienced sexual harassment in their current job.

There are also differences in experiencing sexual harassment between industries. Persons working in human health and social work activities, and wholesale and retail trade especially experience harassment (Figure 4.4.) In these industries, the job typically involves a lot of customer work.

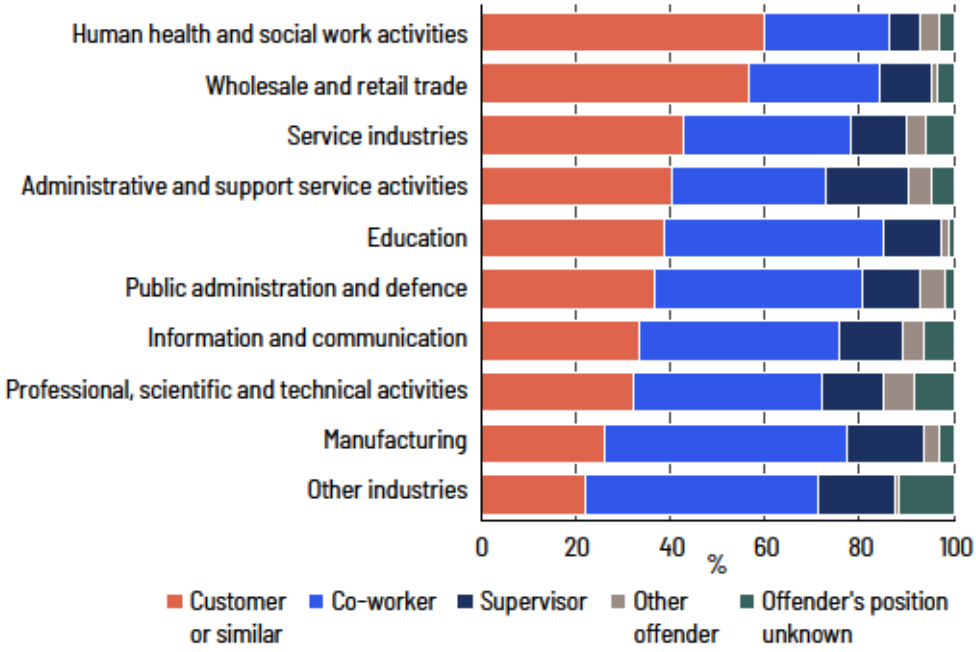
Figure 4.4
Those who have experienced sexual harassment in their current job in the last five years by industry, % of working women and men aged 18 to 74. N=3,576.



Source: Statistics Finland, Sukupuolistunut väkivalta ja lähisuhdeväkivalta Suomessa 2021

Figure 4.5 shows the percentages of offender groups of harassment in different industries. In industries involving a lot of customer work, the offenders are often customers, while in other industries, co-workers are the main offenders.

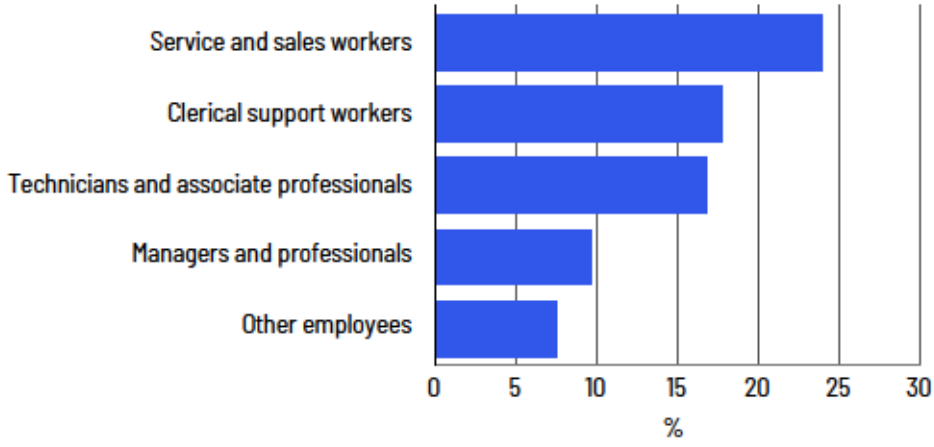
Figure 4.5
Those who have experienced sexual harassment in their current job by industry and the position of the harasser, % of women and men aged 18 to 74 who have experienced sexual harassment at their work in the last five years. N=572.



Source: Statistics Finland, Sukupuolistunut väkivalta ja lähisuhdeväkivalta Suomessa 2021

However, an examination of the industry alone does not yet give the whole picture of experiencing sexual harassment because within one industry, there are also various tasks and roles, where the amount of customer work varies. Examined by occupation, those working in customer service and in associative professional roles in healthcare especially experience sexual harassment in their work (Figure 4.6.)

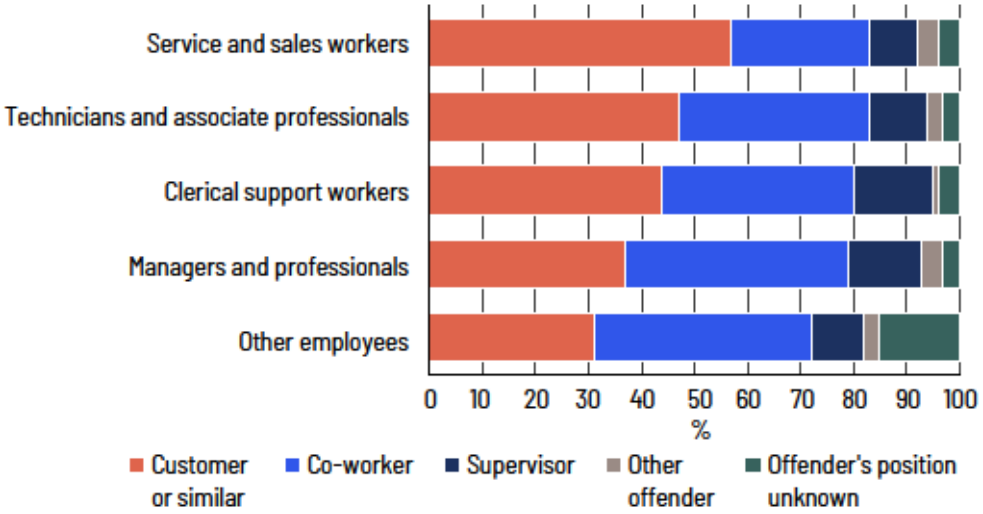
Figure 4.6
Those who have experienced sexual harassment in their current job in the last five years by occupational group, % of working women and men aged 18 to 74. N=3,576.



Source: Statistics Finland, Sukupuolistunut väkivalta ja lähisuhdeväkivalta Suomessa 2021

Figure 4.7 shows even more precisely from whom members of different occupational groups have experienced sexual harassment in their current work. More than half (57%) of those working in service and sales occupations have experienced harassment from customers or similar persons. Harassment by customers has been experienced least in manual worker occupations, as well as in the roles of managers and professionals. Yet sexual harassment encountered in these occupational groups was slightly more common from co-workers than in other occupational groups. In service and sales, co-workers were less often behind the harassment. Although sexual harassment from supervisors was less common than that from customers or co-workers, about one in ten people had experienced it: slightly more often clerical support workers, as well as managers and professionals than people in other occupational groups.

Figure 4.7
Those who have experienced sexual harassment in their current job by occupational group and the position of the harasser, % of women and men aged 18 to 74 who have experienced sexual harassment at their work in the last five years. N=572.



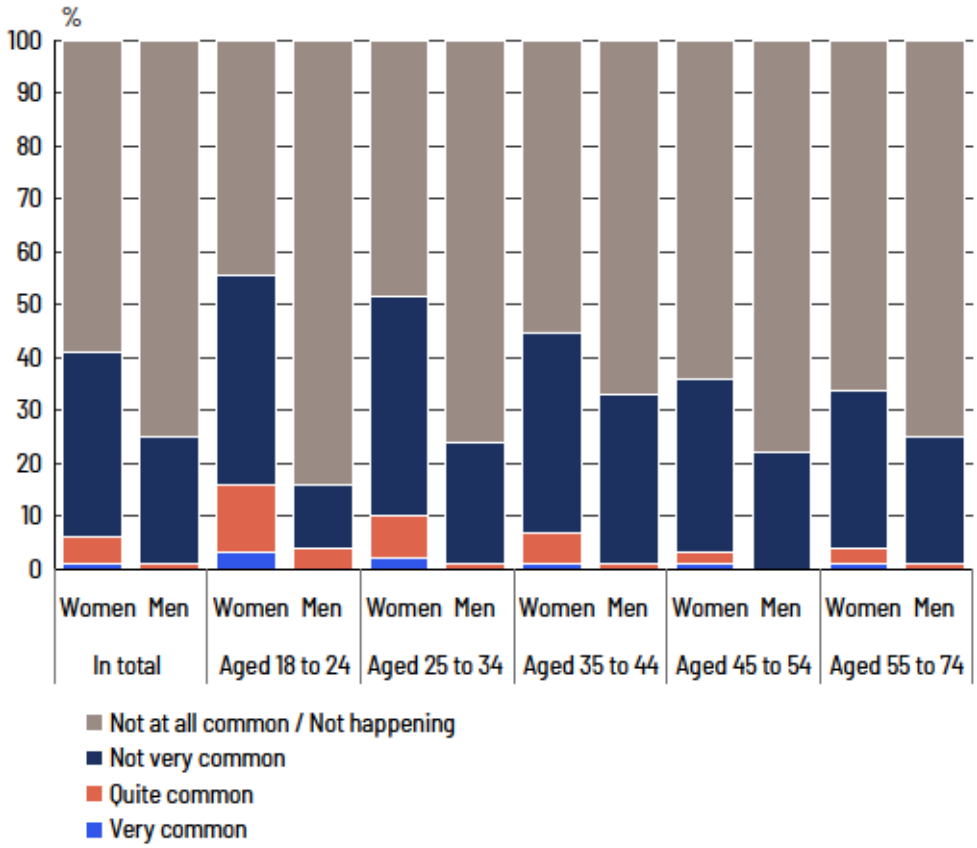
Source: Statistics Finland, Sukupuolistunut väkivalta ja lähisuhdeväkivalta Suomessa 2021

4.1.3 How common is sexual harassment at work perceived to be?

Although sexual harassment in the workplace is relatively common, and a rule rather than an exception in some employee and age groups, employees themselves do not consider it to be very common: only four per cent of employees consider sexual harassment to be very or fairly common in their current or most recent workplace, while 67 per cent consider that harassment is not common at all or does not even occur. However, there are differences between population groups in this regard.

The differences between genders and age groups are statistically significant. Women consider harassment more common than men in all age groups (Figure 4.8.) In particular, women aged 18 to 24 consider harassment to be significantly more common than men in the corresponding age group.

Figure 4.8
Views on the prevalence of sexual harassment in current or most recent job by age group, % of women and men aged 18 to 74 who have been or are working. N=5,821.

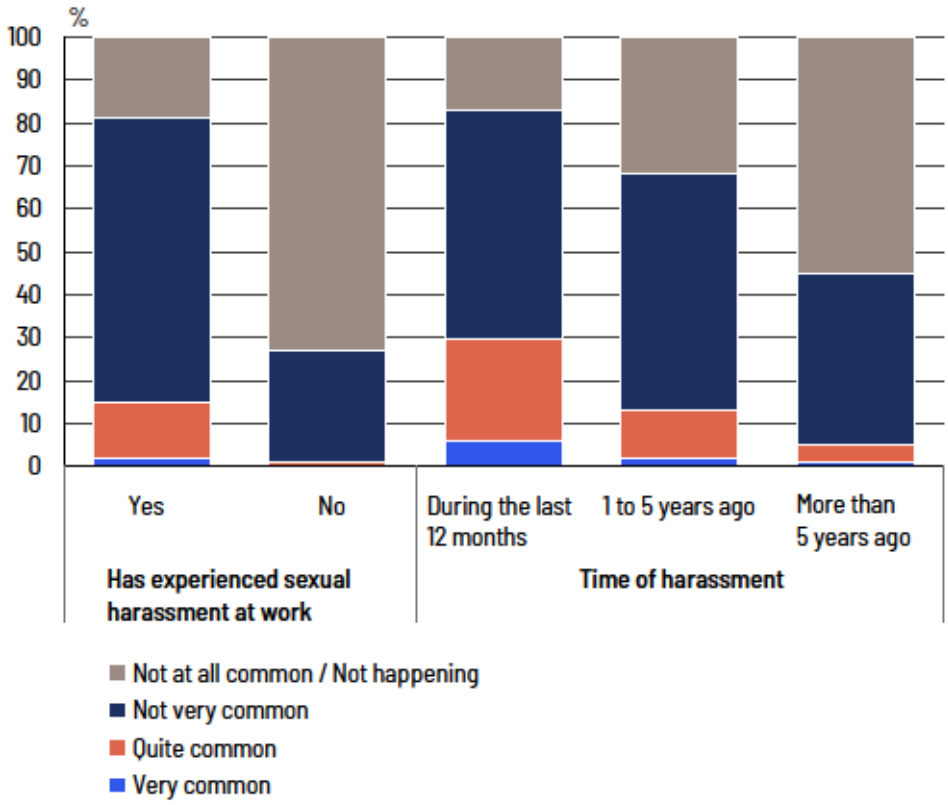


Source: Statistics Finland, Sukupuolistunut väkivalta ja lähisuhdeväkivalta Suomessa 2021

Although men's and women's perceptions of the prevalence of sexual harassment at work differ, the difference is not very significant. It could be expected to be significantly higher, as more than half of women report having experienced sexual harassment at work at least once.

When comparing the perceptions of harassment of the people who have experienced harassment in their current job or in the last 12 months with those of others, there is a significant difference in perceptions (Figure 4.9.) It can be concluded that sexual harassment therefore remains hidden to some extent, as those who have not personally experienced harassment do not consider it as common as those who have experienced it. However, if the experience of harassment has remained isolated, and a longer time has since elapsed, even those who have experienced harassment may think that harassment has occurred in an unusual situation and may not be part of a more common occurrence.

Figure 4.9
Views on the prevalence of sexual harassment in current or most recent work, broken down by experiencing harassment and the time of the most recent harassment experience, % of women and men aged 18 to 74 who have been or are working and of women and men aged 18 to 74 who have experienced sexual harassment at work. N=5,821/3,550.



Source: Statistics Finland, Sukupuolistunut väkivalta ja lähisuhdeväkivalta Suomessa 2021

4.1.4 Sexual harassment of women by supervisors

The harassment from supervisors experienced by women more often than men appears to be related to sexual harassment experienced in male-dominant sectors and in sectors with equal gender distribution, i.e. in the so-called equal sectors (Figure 4.10.) Harassment experienced from co-workers is also highlighted in male-dominant industries.

Industries that are predominantly male include manufacturing, information and communication, and the industries defined as other industries in Figure 4.10, i.e. agriculture, forestry and fishery; mining and quarrying; electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply; water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities. The sectors with equal gender distribution include the service industries, as well as public administration and defence.

Figure 4.10
Those who have experienced sexual harassment in their current job by industry and the position of the harasser, % of women and men aged 18 to 74 who have experienced sexual harassment at their work in the last five years. N=518.



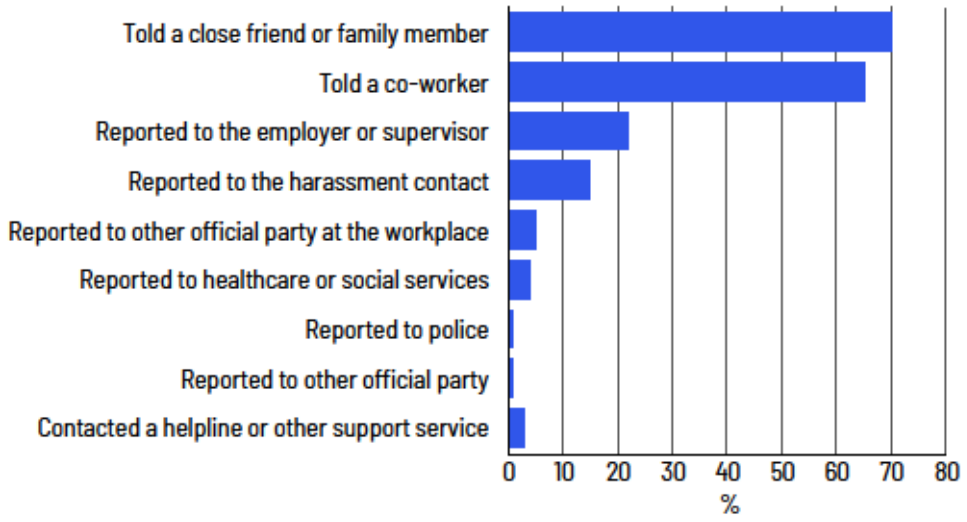
Source: Statistics Finland, Sukupuolistunut väkivalta ja lähisuhdeväkivalta Suomessa 2021

4.1.5 Reporting sexual harassment and workplace instructions and a harassment contact

In the study, only those respondents who had experienced harassment in the previous 12 months (10% of women and 8% of men) were asked about reporting harassment or telling someone about it.

The harassment is probably disclosed either to a close person (70%) or to a co-worker (65%). Telling these parties is probably more about seeking support than the actual attempt to report sexual harassment. If reporting only to the supervisor counts as actual whistleblowing, only about a third (32%) have reported the harassment they have experienced. Just over a fifth (22%) reported harassment to their supervisor, and 15 per cent reported it to the workplace harassment contact in addition to or instead of the supervisor. Up to five per cent of those who have experienced harassment report to other parties (Figure 4.11.)

Figure 4.11
Those who have reported sexual harassment to various parties, % of women and men aged 18 to 74 who have experienced sexual harassment in the last 12 months. N=234.



Source: Statistics Finland, Sukupuolistunut väkivalta ja lähisuhdeväkivalta Suomessa 2021

The harassment contact can therefore be considered the most important official party in the workplace, to whom harassment may have been reported if the matter has been taken forward. Approximately every other (49%) workplace had a harassment contact. In addition, those who had experienced harassment were asked whether there were instructions at the workplace on how to act in harassment situations. About every other workplace (52%) had instructions in place.

Thirty-nine per cent of workplaces have both a harassment contact and instructions; as many workplaces do not have either. Approximately one in ten (13%) employees have instructions on the topic but no harassment contact, and one in ten (9%) workplaces has a harassment contact but no instructions.

It will be interesting to see if the percentage of people who have experienced harassment in their current workplace varies depending on whether there are instructions and/or a harassment contact at the workplace. There does not seem to be much difference in the percentages: sexual harassment in the current workplace accounted for about 14 per cent, with the exception of those whose workplace offered instructions but did not have a contact person (22%).

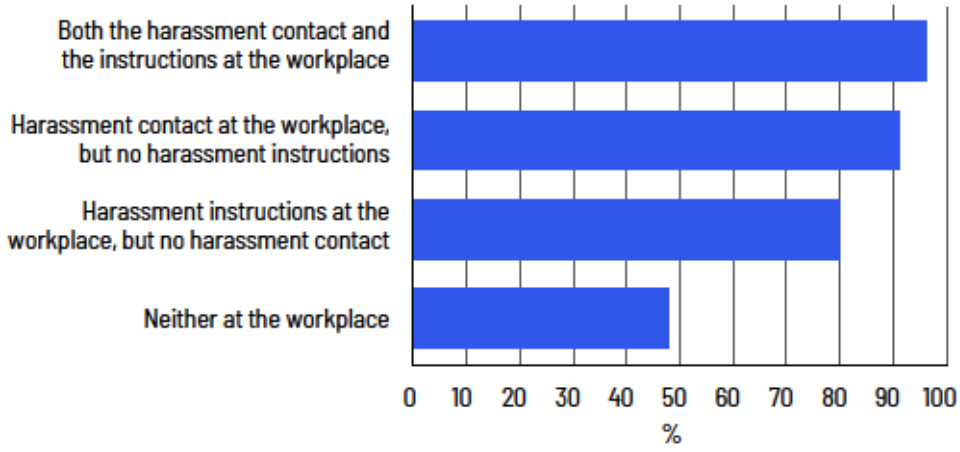
Although the availability of instructions and a harassment contact do not seem to be related to the amount of harassment experienced, it does not directly indicate the ineffectiveness of these means in preventing harassment. For example, it is unlikely that the presence of a harassment contact and instructions at the workplace as such would prevent harassment experienced from customers, which is quite typical in working life. However, they are of primary importance,

especially because those who have experienced harassment know whom to contact and what to do if they encounter or witness harassment.

A workplace harassment contact and sexual harassment instructions could be expected to prevent harassment by co-workers and supervisors. Such a connection could not be detected in the material. For example, however, it should be noted that equality and non-discrimination plans are not required for employers with fewer than 30 employees, which in Finland includes the majority of employers. These workplaces may therefore also lack instructions or a harassment contact.

Although the material does not directly support the notion that a harassment contact or instructions related to sexual harassment at the workplace would prevent sexual harassment, it supports the idea that those working in the workplaces that took care of the instructions or the appointment of a harassment contact have a significantly better understanding of how to seek help than those whose workplaces lack either (Figure 4.12.)

Figure 4.12
Employees who said that they know where to seek help in case of harassment, broken down by the availability of harassment instructions and a harassment contact at the workplace, % of working women and men aged 18 to 74. N=3,260.



Source: Statistics Finland, Sukupuolistunut väkivalta ja lähisuhdeväkivalta Suomessa 2021

4.2 Recommendations

Sexual harassment experienced in working life is a serious problem from which employees should be protected, and no one should have to face it at work. As the Ombudsman for Equality instructs, it is the employer's responsibility to ensure that the employee is not subjected to sexual or gender-based harassment in their working life.

Intervening in harassment by customers or other similar persons can be challenging. Few workplaces are prepared to distance their customers with instructions or regulations, but employees should nevertheless be protected as effectively as possible and provided with the means to cope with harassment situations. The workplace should have clear instructions on how to act in a harassment situation and where to seek help. Based on the results, a harassment contact is a particularly important party to whom employees can report harassment incidents, and who can provide support and guidance for clarifying the situation. From the employer's perspective, centralising harassment under one person can also help perceive the overall situation better and ensure that situations are appropriately and uniformly addressed.

As the implementation of the EU Whistleblower Directive progresses, organisations employing more than 50 people will be required to establish an anonymous whistleblowing channel. At the time of the data collection, the implementation of the directive in Finland remained ongoing, and even in the data collection, reporting through an anonymous reporting channel had yet to be surveyed. It is very possible that some organisations have already voluntarily used such a channel before the requirement. However, an anonymous reporting channel can be expected to lower the reporting threshold because in this case, the employee will not have to fear direct retaliation or the shame caused by the experience if it becomes public in the work organisation.

It is also essential for the employer to commit to the fact that sexual harassment is unacceptable in the workplace. Determined communication on the subject would certainly play a key role in eradicating and preventing sexual harassment by co-workers and supervisors. For employers, this can also be an advantage in recruitment and employee engagement. As sexual and gender-based harassment experiences at work have been shown to increase the risk of prolonged sick leave (Blindow et al. 2021), preventing sexual harassment at work is also in the interest of employers – both in terms of productivity and wellbeing at work.

5 Experiencing and witnessing digital violence and online harassment

Aku von Bell & Marjut Pietiläinen

With digitalisation, more and more people are exposed to digital violence and online harassment. Online harassment is a growing problem with serious consequences, both online and offline.

The study investigated both the prevalence of online harassment in different spheres of life and its consequences. This section first presents the results of the prevalence of online harassment in the population, after which the differences between genders and age groups in online harassment settings and types are discussed in more detail. Finally, we delve into the consequences and effects of online harassment.

Definitions

Digital violence refers to a phenomenon in which a person is harassed, controlled, watched or tracked using technology.

Digital violence and harassment that takes place online refer to inappropriate or offensive communication, intimidation or targeting of a person online or on social media.

Targeting refers to a phenomenon in which one or more offenders urge or incite a large group to attack one person in different ways such as sending hate messages via email or on social media or digging up and distorting private information.

5.1 Key results

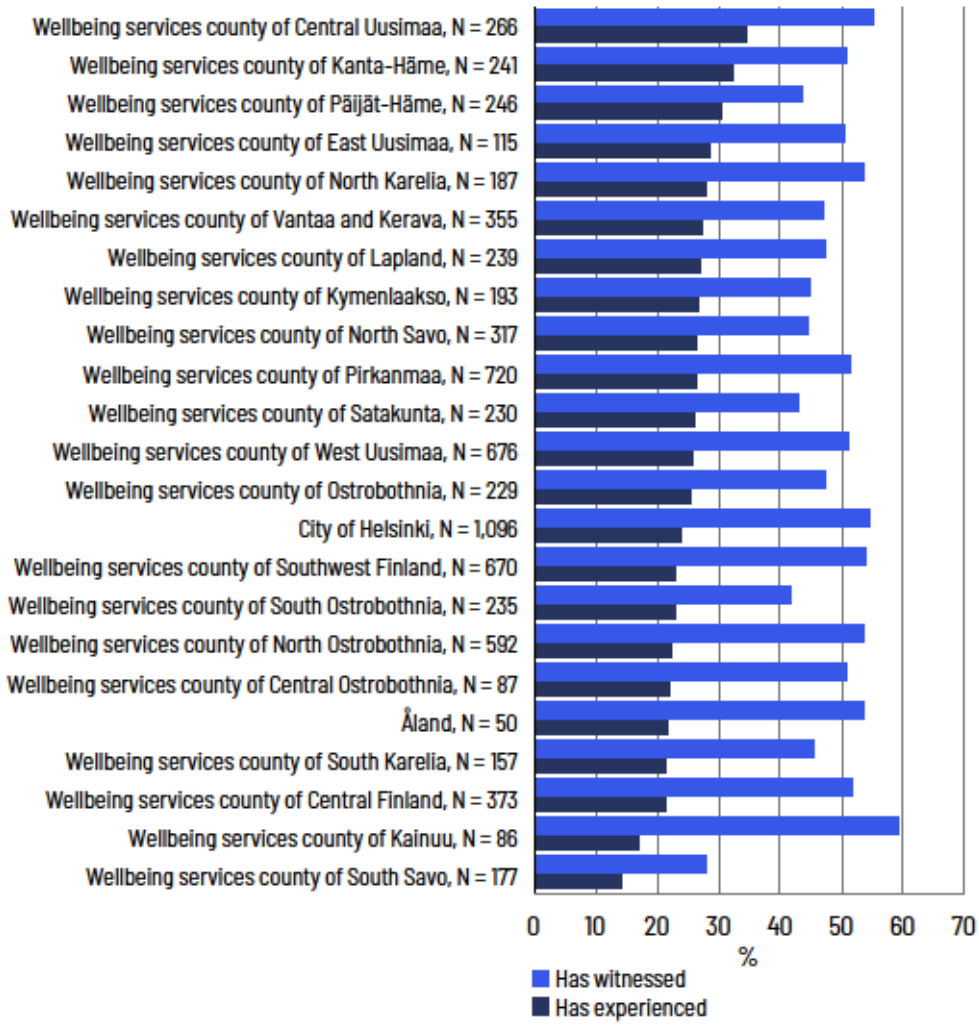
- Half the people living in Finland have witnessed online harassment, and one in four have experienced it themselves.
- Young people face online harassment significantly more than older age groups in their leisure time and studies.
- Approximately a third of those who have experienced and witnessed online harassment report that they have restricted their participation in online and social media discussions.

- Approximately a sixth of those who have experienced and witnessed online harassment report that they have completely stopped using some online platforms.
- Of those who had experienced online harassment, about one in three reported that the harassment experienced online caused them mental symptoms.
- Of those who have experienced online harassment, one in twenty reported that they had refused a position of trust or work because of online harassment.

5.1.1 Prevalence of online harassment

Half (50.1%) of those living in Finland have witnessed online harassment, while one in four (25.1%) have themselves been a victim of online harassment. Online harassment is witnessed and experienced nationwide (Figure 5.1.) There are no significant differences between wellbeing services counties, but the differences are explained by the variation in the demographic structure of the respondents by wellbeing services county.

Figure 5.1
Percentage of people who have witnessed and experienced online harassment by wellbeing services county, %. N=7,537.



Source: Statistics Finland, Sukupuolistunut väkivalta ja lähisuhdeväkivalta Suomessa 2021

Both witnessing and experiencing online harassment are significantly related to age: Of people aged 18 to 24, 81.7 per cent have witnessed and 42.4 per cent have experienced online harassment, while 58.2 per cent of people aged 35 to 44 have witnessed and 26.0 per cent have experienced online harassment. The younger a person is, the more likely they are to have both witnessed online harassment and been a victim of it.

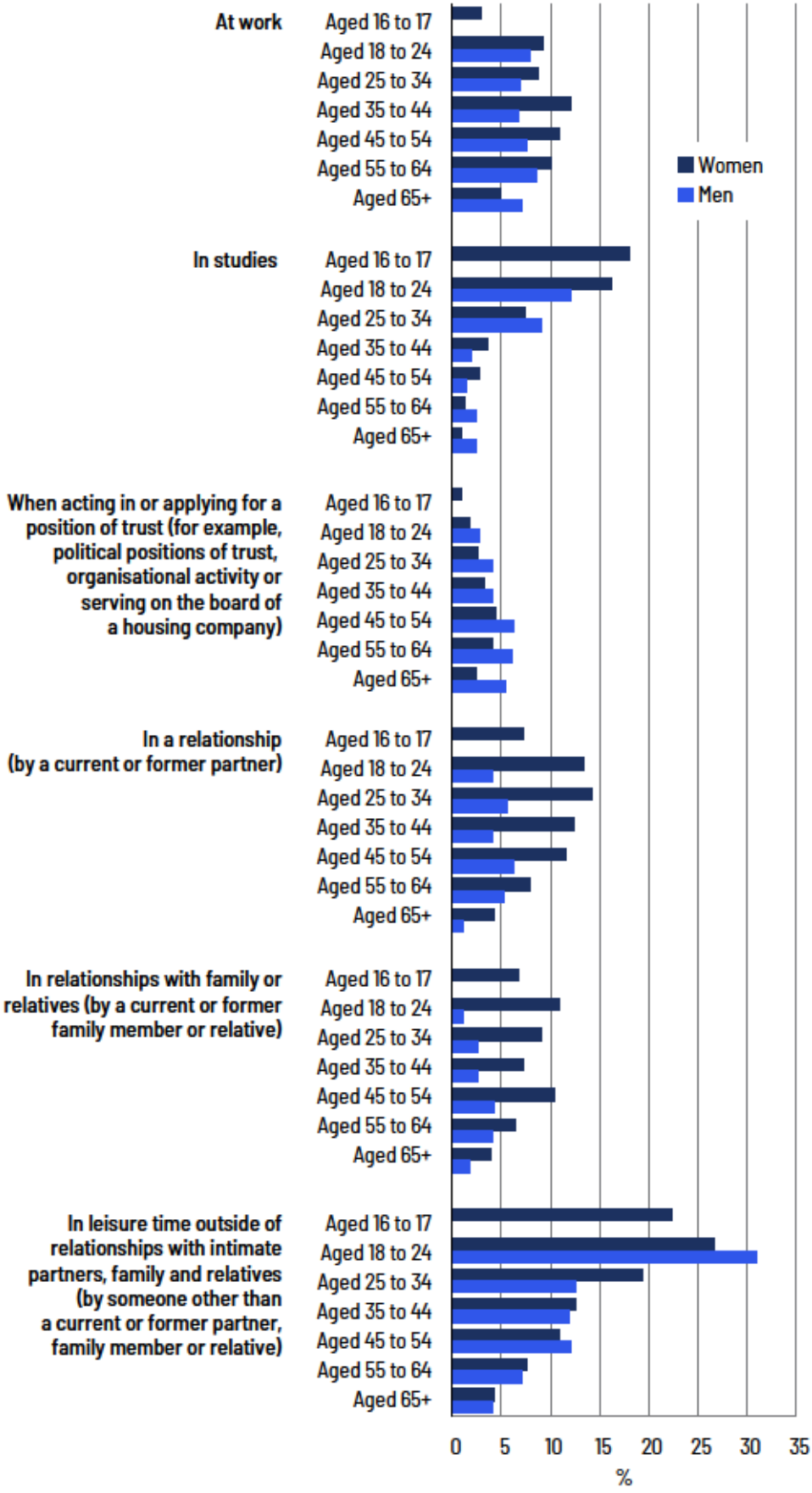
There is no significant difference between genders regarding witnessing online harassment: 51.8 per cent of women and 48.3 per cent of men have witnessed it. Women are slightly more likely to have experienced online harassment (27.1%) than men (23%).

Instead, there is a difference between women and men, especially regarding where harassment is experienced, what kind of harassment is experienced, and what kind of effects it has.

5.1.2 Situations where online harassment is experienced

The biggest differences between the genders occur in harassment situations related to the relationship with a partner and relationships with family members or relatives: 14.1 per cent of women have experienced online harassment related to them, but significantly fewer men, 6.4 per cent (Figure 5.2.) The difference between the genders can also be observed in other experiences of intimate partner violence and domestic violence, as 20.0 per cent of women and 13.7 per cent of men who have experienced online harassment report having experienced domestic violence or intimate partner violence in the last five years. Men are slightly more likely to experience online harassment in positions of trust (4.9%) than women (3.2%).

Figure 5.2
Percentages of those who have experienced online harassment frequently or occasionally in different situations, broken down by gender, %. N=7,557.



Source: Statistics Finland, Sukupuolistunut väkivalta ja lähisuhdeväkivalta Suomessa 2021

Another significant difference is related to the age of the respondents and the harassment experienced during leisure time. Whereas 20.4 per cent of respondents under the age of 35 had experienced online harassment in their leisure time, the corresponding percentage was 8.7 per cent for respondents over the age of 35.

5.1.3 Types of online harassment

Gender differences are also reflected in the forms of experienced online harassment. The most typical forms of harassment are inappropriate public or private comments, which are the most common forms of harassment for both women and men in all the surveyed age groups. However, men experience slightly more public harassment than women, while harassment experienced by women is significantly more frequent in private.

Online harassment related to intimate relationships experienced by women seems to emphasise harassment through private messaging, as 55.9 per cent of those who had experienced online harassment by loved ones had experienced it. In contrast, for those who had no experience of harassment related to intimate relationships, the percentage of those who have experienced harassment through private messaging was 36.9 per cent. Those who have experienced harassment in intimate relationships were typically women under the age of 35.

Those who have experienced harassment in positions of trust are mainly men (60.7%) and over 55 years of age. In positions of trust, harassment seems to be more related to inappropriate comments in public: 57.7 per cent of those who were victims of online harassment in a position of trust had experienced it, while 42.7 per cent of other online harassment victims had experienced it. Correspondingly, targeting was slightly more common among those who had experienced harassment in positions of trust (16.2%) than others (11.2%). For those who have experienced targeting, harassment experienced at work is emphasised, as 48.9 per cent of them have experienced online harassment at work, while 30.9 per cent of those who have not experienced targeting have experienced online harassment at work.

Those subjected to threats of physical violence against themselves or people close to them were mainly women (63.7%) and under the age of 35. Of those who have experienced threats, 62.1 per cent have experienced online harassment in intimate relationships, while 37.7 per cent of those who have not had similar experiences have experienced threats. For those who had experienced threats, 62.3 per cent said that the experiences were related to online harassment in leisure time, while for those who had not experienced threats, the experiences were significantly less related to leisure time (46.0%).

5.1.4 Effects of experiencing and witnessing online harassment

There are significant differences in the consequences of witnessing and experiencing online harassment. Of those who had experienced online harassment, 33.6 per cent reported that the harassment caused them mental symptoms, while only 9.2 per cent of those who had witnessed harassment reported this. In addition, experiencing online harassment seems to produce more effects outside the digital world, i.e. withdrawing from work or positions of trust, seeking help in a social environment or reporting to the authorities.

For women, witnessing harassment alone appears to reduce or limit severely participation in online or social media discussions, with 63.8 per cent of women reporting such effects, compared with 42.8 per cent of men reporting similar effects.

The main difference between the genders in the experience and witnessing of online harassment is related to how the harassment is perceived to affect the victim. Men (43.4%) felt significantly more often than women (27.9%) that they had not been affected in any way by the experience of harassment. Similarly, 44.8 per cent of men who witnessed online harassment reported that they had not been affected in any way by it, compared with only 24.2 per cent of women. For example, of women who experienced online harassment, one in ten (9.9%) had sought help for harassment from work, friends, the organisation sector or social and health services, but significantly fewer men (4%) had done so.

5.2 Recommendations

Online harassment especially affects young people, who spend a lot of time online and on social media. Although there is little difference between the genders in the amount of witnessing or experiencing online harassment, online harassment is a form of gender-based violence, as there are significant differences between the genders in the types of situations and ways in which online harassment is witnessed and experienced, and in the effects that harassment has. Women experience threats against themselves or their loved ones more often than men, and this typically has more varied effects.

For men, online harassment typically appears as public comments and targeting related to work or positions of trust. Men reported more often than women that they were not affected by experiencing or witnessing online harassment. Men who experienced online harassment also reported less often than women that they had sought help. Online harassment remains partly hidden from

the authorities, as only seven per cent of those who have experienced online harassment report it to them.

As digital violence and online harassment are relatively new phenomena, they are not yet very well recognised and are not always addressed. The opportunities to monitor and intervene in harassment, especially when carried out via private messages, are limited if harassment is not reported to the authorities or the administrators of online platforms.

Moreover, the line between the private and public space is not completely clear online and on different digital platforms, so it is also unclear who has the right to determine what kind of interaction in the space is appropriate.

Cooperation between different operators is key to eradicating online violence and harassment. Open discussion and raising awareness play an essential role both in helping victims of online violence and harassment and in making what is and is not acceptable in our society visible.

6 Stalking

Henna Attila & Marjut Pietiläinen

In Statistics Finland's study of gender-based violence and domestic violence in Finland from 2021, women aged 16 to 74 and men aged 18 to 74 were asked whether they had experiences of repeated receipt of unsolicited messages or gifts that caused fear, worry or anxiety, repeated exposure to serious, threatening or silent calls, repeated and persistent attempts to get in touch, repeated waiting outside the home, school or workplace, repeated following or being observed, repeated damage to property or pets, repeated offensive and embarrassing comments made in public, and unsolicited publication of pictures, videos or sensitive information.

This section first examines the prevalence of stalking experiences in the population, then presents results on the different forms of stalking, stalkers, its duration and frequency, and finally on its consequences.

6.1 Key results

- Stalking, that is, constant unsolicited contacts, threats, following, watching or similar harassment, has been experienced by one in three women and one in five men living in Finland. This translates to 596,000 women and 372,000 men.
- Stalking is most typically experienced by women and those under 35 years of age – 39 per cent of women aged 25 to 34 have had experiences of stalking.
- In the majority of cases, the stalker is a man.
- A quarter of women and fewer than a fifth of men who have experienced stalking report that they have experienced stalking from a current or former partner.
- For half of those who have experienced stalking, the offender has been a friend, relative or another acquaintance.
- Stalking is usually not reported to the police. The most typical reason is that the act has not been considered sufficiently serious.

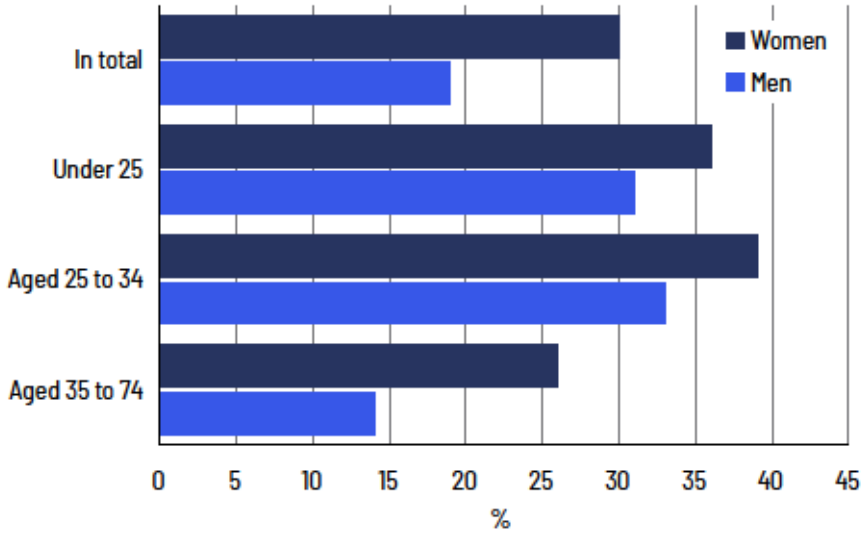
6.1.1 Prevalence of stalking

One in three (30%) women aged 16 to 74 and one in five (19%) men aged 18 to 74 have experienced stalking at some point in their lives. Women aged 25 to 34 are stalked especially often: 39 per cent of them have had these experiences. In addition to gender, experiences of stalking vary significantly by age group: At least one in three women and men under the age of 35 have had these

experiences, compared with one in four women (26%) aged 35 to 74 and 14 per cent of men aged 35 to 74. (Figure 6.1.)

Women report more often than men that they have had stalking experiences under the age of 15. A fifth (20%) of women who have experienced stalking said that at least some of the stalking experiences had occurred before their 15th birthday. Similarly, 13 per cent of men reported that at least some of the experiences took place before they turned 15.

Figure 6.1
Prevalence of stalking by age group, % of women aged 16 to 74 and men aged 18 to 74. Women N=6145, men N=1430.



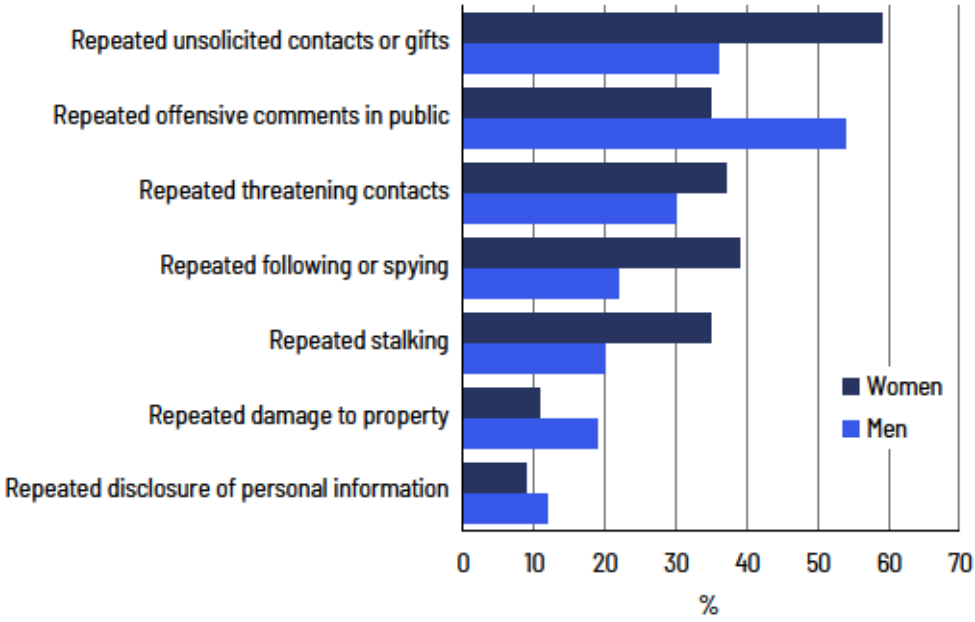
Source: Statistics Finland, Sukupuolistunut väkivalta ja lähisuhdeväkivalta Suomessa 2021.

6.1.2 Forms of stalking

Stalking is typically unsolicited contact or gifts. These have been received by 59 per cent of women and 36 per cent of men who have experienced stalking. For men, the most common form of stalking is repeated offensive comments in public, received by 54 per cent of the men and 35 per cent of the women who have experienced stalking. Offensive comments in public can mean social media posts, for example. In addition to unsolicited contact and gifts, women experience following, spying and stalking more frequently than men. In addition to offensive comments in public, men report that they have suffered property damage more frequently than women. (Figure 6.2.)

Typically, the women and men who have experienced stalking have experienced one or two forms of it, but one in five has experienced three, and one in four has experienced four or more forms.

Figure 6.2
Forms of stalking experienced in life, % of women aged 16 to 74 and men aged 18 to 74 who have experienced stalking. Women N=1,800, men N=245.



Source: Statistics Finland, Sukupuolistunut väkivalta ja lähisuhdeväkivalta Suomessa 2021.

6.1.3 Stalkers

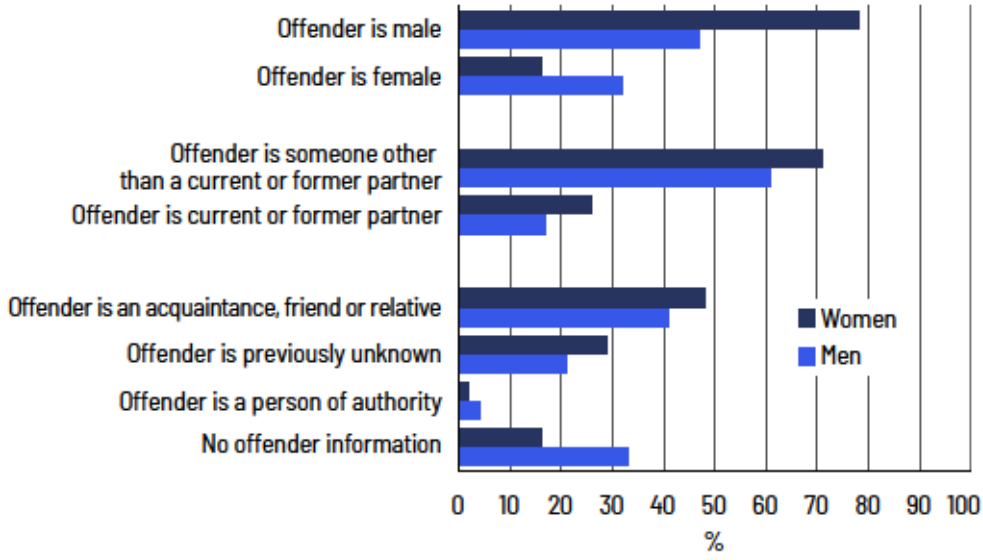
In stalking experienced by both women and men, the stalker is typically a man. The majority of the women who have been stalked (78%) have been stalked by a man, and fewer than a fifth (16%) by another woman. About half (47%) the men who have been stalked have been stalked by another man, and about a third (32%) by a woman. (Figure 6.3.)

More than a quarter (26%) of the women and just under a fifth (17%) of the men who have experienced stalking during their lives have experienced it from at least one former or current partner. In addition, the majority of the women (71%) and well over half the men (61%) who have experienced stalking have experienced it from at least one person outside the relationship, such as an acquaintance, relative or previously unknown person. The majority of these stalkers outside the relationship are acquaintances, friends or relatives of the victim: almost half (48%) of women and 41 per cent of the men who have experienced stalking have had experiences of stalkers belonging to this group.

The second most common stalker group outside the relationship are previously unknown persons, and stalking by these people has been experienced by approximately one in three (29%) women and one in five (21%) men. The rarest experience of stalking is from a person in authority, such as a teacher or coach – two per cent of the women and four per cent of the men who have experienced stalking report these experiences.

Stalking by a completely unknown person has been experienced by one in three (33%) men who have experienced stalking and fewer than one in five (16%) women who have experienced stalking. If no information is available about the offender, it is often a case of anonymous online stalking, for example. It should be noted that it is equally likely that the offender is someone close to the victim or an unknown person.

Figure 6.3
Offenders of stalking experienced in life, % of women aged 16 to 74 and men aged 18 to 74 who have experienced stalking. Women N=1,800, men N=245.



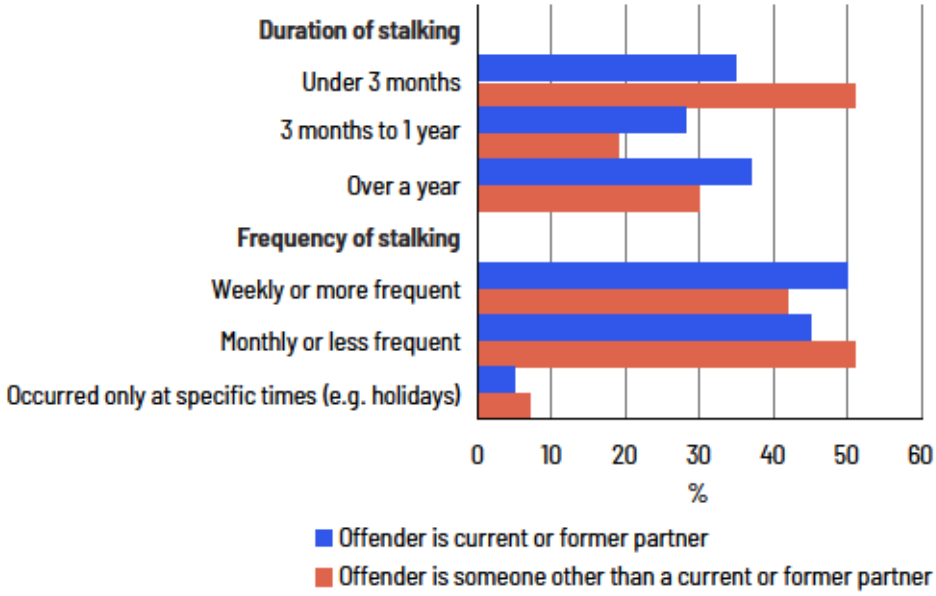
Source: Statistics Finland, Sukupuolistunut väkivalta ja lähisuhdeväkivalta Suomessa 2021.

6.1.4 Duration and frequency of stalking

Stalking by former or current partners is typically both longer-lasting and more frequent than stalking by other stalkers. The most recent episode of stalking by a former or current partner has lasted more than a year in more than a third (37%) of cases, fewer than three months in about a third (35%) of cases and something in between in fewer than a third (28%) of cases. In contrast, the most recent episode of stalking by those other than a former or current partner has typically lasted under three months (51%). In a third (30%) of cases, it has lasted more than a year and something in between in a fifth (19%) of the cases. (Figure 6.4.)

In stalking by a former or current partner, its frequency is fairly evenly distributed between weekly or more frequent (51%) and monthly or less frequent (45%) stalking. Meanwhile, stalking by those other than a former or current partner occurs typically monthly or less frequently (51%) than weekly or more frequently (42%). For both offender groups, the rarest (5–7%) is for acts that occur only at certain times such as holidays. (Figure 6.4.)

Figure 6.4
Duration of the most recent stalking incident and the frequency of stalking by offender, % of women aged 16 to 74 and men aged 18 to 74 who have experienced stalking during their life. Women N=1,800, men N=245.

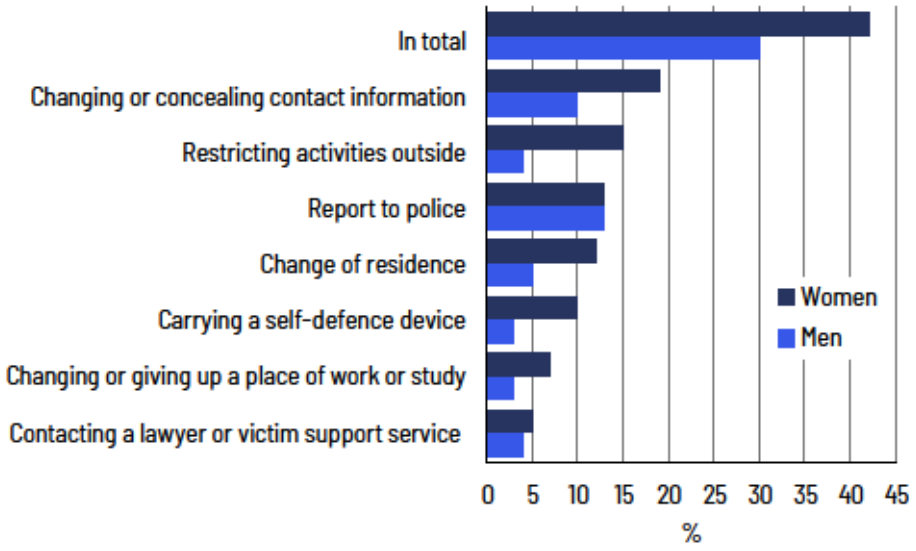


Source: Statistics Finland, Sukupuolistunut väkivalta ja lähisuhdeväkivalta Suomessa 2021.

6.1.5 Consequences of stalking

Forty-two per cent of the women who have experienced stalking report that the latest instance of stalking has affected their activities, while just under a third of men (30%) do so. The most typical consequences for women are changing or concealing contact information (19%), restricting activities outside (15%), reporting to the police (13%), changing their place of residence (12%) and carrying a self-defence device (10%), which are reported by at least one in ten women who have experienced stalking. Similarly, for men, the most common consequences of stalking are reporting to the police (13%), changing or concealing contact information (10%), changing their place of residence (5%), restricting activities outside (4%) and contacting a lawyer or victim support service (4%). (Figure 6.5.)

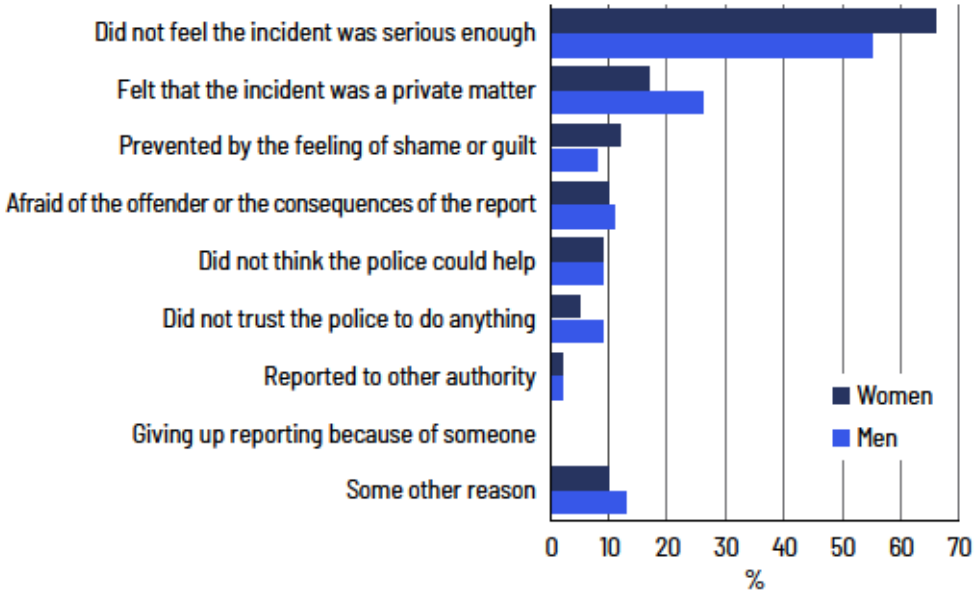
Figure 6.5
Consequences of the most recent stalking incident, % of women aged 16 to 74 and men aged 18 to 74 who have experienced stalking in their life. Women N=1,800, men N=245.



Source: Statistics Finland, Sukupuolistunut väkivalta ja lähisuhdeväkivalta Suomessa 2021.

Slightly more than every tenth (13%) woman or man who has experienced stalking has reported the latest stalking incident to the police. Sixty-six per cent of the women and 55 per cent of the men who did not report said they did not report because they did not feel the incident was sufficiently serious. For women, other common reasons for not reporting include the feeling that it is a private matter (17% of those who did not report), feelings of shame or guilt (12%), fear of the offender or of possible consequences of reporting (10%) and not believing the police can help (9%). Correspondingly, for men, other common reasons for not reporting the most recent stalking experience include the feeling that it is a private matter (26% of those who did not report), fear of the offender or of possible consequences of reporting (11%) and the suspicion that the police cannot help (9%) or will do nothing (9%). (Figure 6.6.)

Figure 6.6
Why the latest stalking experience was not reported to the police, % of women aged 16 to 74 and men aged 18 to 74 who did not report the latest stalking experience to the police. Women N=1,468, men N=164.



Source: Statistics Finland, Sukupuolistunut väkivalta ja lähisuhdeväkivalta Suomessa 2021.

Of those who reported their most recent stalking experience to the police, fewer than half (40%) reported that the stalking ended after the report. About one in five reported both a decrease in stalking (21%) and its continuation as before (21%), and more than a tenth (13%) reported an exacerbation of stalking after reporting it to the police. In five per cent of cases, the impact of reporting the continuation of the stalking to the police remained unclear, possibly due to the recentness of the report.

6.2 Recommendations

Few people living in Finland have the opportunity to opt out of all communication channels without unduly complicating everyday life, which is why people are also vulnerable to stalking through digital channels in particular. In addition, stalking also has a significant physical dimension, particularly affecting women, which is likely to increase both the psychological burden on the victim and the real risk to life and health in the event that the stalker decides to use physical violence. Every tenth woman who has experienced stalking has reacted to her latest stalking experience by arming herself with a self-defence device.

When one in four young people and adults under the age of 75 living in Finland, that is, almost a million people, have experiences of stalking, we are talking about a significant problem. Despite this, only a little more than every tenth

person who has experienced stalking says that they have reported the latest incident to the police. The majority of those who did not report the incident to the police justify it because they did not consider the incident sufficiently serious to report an offence. However, about one in ten of those who did not report it says that it was because of feelings of shame and guilt, fear of consequences, or their belief in the inability of the police to help.

The reasons for not reporting stalking provide good grounds for intervening in the phenomenon. The reporting of a crime should be supported so that those acts that are minor as individual instances but generally fulfil the characteristics of stalking are dealt with at all stages of the criminal process with due seriousness, and that a person considering reporting a crime can be confident that the police have the appropriate means and will to intervene in stalking. Instead of separate acts, the authorities should be able to identify stalking for what it is: a manifestation of violence aimed at controlling and disrupting the life of the person targeted.

7 Communal violence

Henna Attila

For the first time, the study mapped the prevalence of experiences of communal violence in the entire population. Communal violence refers to violence or the threat of violence accepted by a family, extended family or other community and directed against an individual, the purpose of which is to control the activity of the individual or punish them for violating the expectations of the community.

Among the forms of communal violence, the study mapped forced marriages, honour-related violence and attitudes towards female and male genital mutilation.

Statistics Finland's origin classification has been used to define the origin of persons, where all persons who have at least one parent born in Finland are counted as persons of Finnish origin. Those who are considered to have a foreign background are those both of whose parents were born, or the only known parent was born, outside Finland. The origin of adopted children is classified according to the adoptive parents.

This section examines the different manifestations of communal violence. First, the respondents' experiences of forced marriage are examined. Observations and experiences of honour-related violence are then presented. Finally, the attitudes of women and men towards the non-medical circumcision of girls and boys are discussed.

7.1 Key results

- According to the results, approximately one per cent of persons under the age of 75 living in Finland who are or have been married have entered into marriage against their will. Most of the persons who have entered into marriage against their own will have married as a result of persuasion or pressure. At the population level, very few people have experienced direct coercion. In total, about 23,000 people living in Finland have experience of being pressured or coerced into marriage.
- Nearly one in ten (8%) people aged 16 to 74 has witnessed or experienced honour-related violence. Honour-related violence is experienced and witnessed most among the youngest age groups – that is, among people aged 16 to 34. In Finland, more than one in ten people under the age of 35 know at least one victim or offender, have personally experienced honour-related violence or witnessed someone close to them becoming a victim of it.

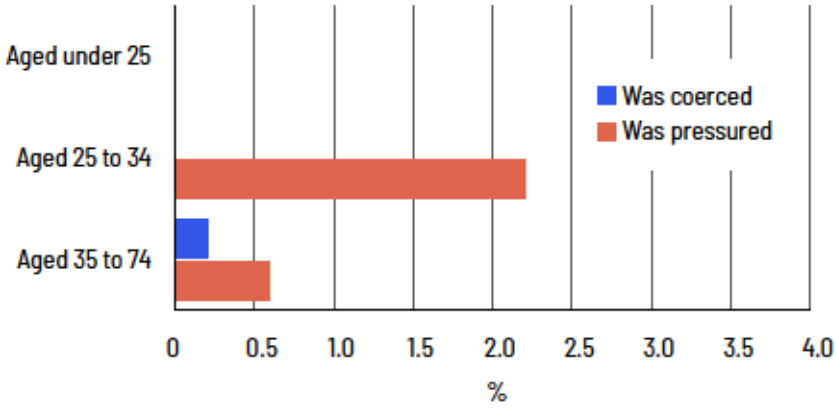
- Experiencing and witnessing honour-related violence is most common among people with a foreign background, but the phenomenon is not limited to them. Particularly in younger age groups, the experiences of children born and raised in Finland are emphasised. At the population level, the phenomenon affects a total of about 325,000 people living in Finland, of whom about 80,000 have experienced honour-related violence or its threat themselves.
- The attitude towards non-medical circumcision of girls and boys, i.e. genital mutilation for cultural reasons, is mainly negative. On average, both women and men are more tolerant of male genital mutilation than that of girls.
- As expected, the perception of female genital mutilation (FGM) is more negative than non-medical circumcision of boys and men, especially due to the suffering caused by FGM and the variety of health problems it causes. However, attitudes are more permissive, especially among men under the age of 50, with four per cent of them thinking that female genital mutilation may be acceptable in certain circumstances. The percentages are lower for women and those over the age of 50.

7.1.1 Forced marriages

Figure 7.1 shows the prevalence of coercion or pressure into marriage by age group. At the population level, the phenomenon is rare: slightly less than one per cent of women aged 16 to 74 and men aged 18 to 74 who have ever married reported experiencing pressure into marriage, and 0.2 per cent reported that they were forced to marry.

People aged 25 to 34 reported slightly more experiences of being pressured into marriage than others – just over two per cent of them have married because of the pressure. In addition to pressure, a small proportion of people aged 35 to 74 has experience of coercing into marriage. Among people under the age of 25, the phenomenon is completely invisible at the population level.

Figure 7.1
Prevalence of coercion or pressure into marriage by age groups, % of women aged 16 to 74 and men aged 18 to 74 who have married. N=3,954.



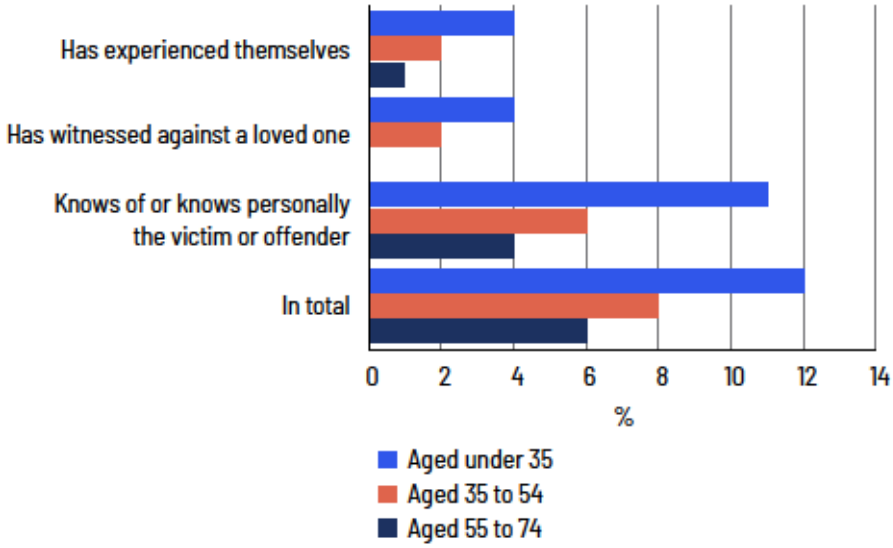
Source: Statistics Finland, Sukupuolistunut väkivalta ja lähisuhdeväkivalta Suomessa 2021.

7.1.2 Honour-related violence

Almost one in ten (8%) people aged 16 to 74 has witnessed or experienced honour-related violence in Finland. Honour-related violence is experienced and witnessed most among the youngest age groups – that is, in the age group of people aged 16 to 34. Four per cent of them have experienced honour-related violence or its threat themselves, four per cent have witnessed honour-related violence or its threat against a partner or another close person, and 11 per cent know of or know personally at least one victim or offender of honour-related violence. Honour-related violence affects more than one in ten (12%) people under the age of 35 in Finland. (Figure 7.2.)

An examination by origin shows that experiencing and witnessing honour-related violence is most common among people with a foreign background. Of them, people in the oldest age group, that is, people aged 55 to 74, have witnessed and experienced it themselves most. It has been experienced less in younger age groups of people with foreign background, but the number remains quite high.

Figure 7.2
Honour-related violence or its threat experienced and witnessed during life by age group, % of women aged 16 to 74 and men aged 18 to 74. N=7,569.



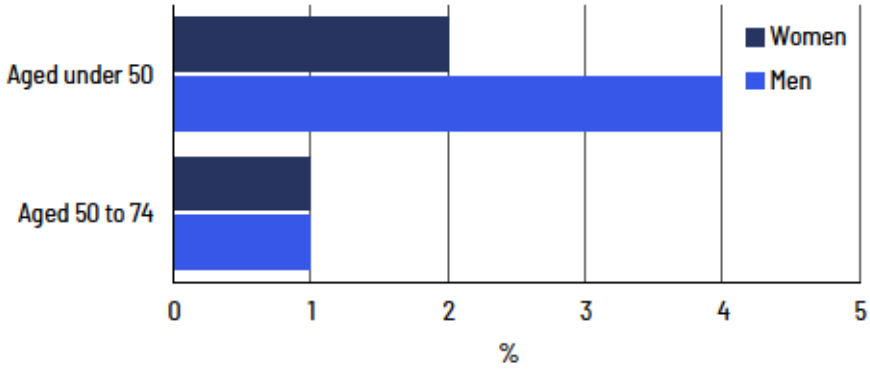
Source: Statistics Finland, Sukupuolistunut väkivalta ja lähisuhdeväkivalta Suomessa 2021.

7.1.3 Attitude towards female and male genital mutilation

The attitude towards non-medical circumcision of girls and boys, i.e. genital mutilation for cultural reasons, is mainly negative. On average, male genital mutilation is more tolerated among both women and men than that of girls: on average, 16 per cent of women and 18 per cent of men accept male genital mutilation in certain circumstances, while two per cent of women and three per cent of men accept female genital mutilation.

Attitudes seem to vary somewhat with age and gender. Male and female genital mutilation is viewed much more critically in older age groups than in younger ones. Compared with older age groups, however, there are many more people under the age of 50 who think that female genital mutilation, that is, removing or otherwise damaging external genitalia for non-medical reasons, may be acceptable in certain circumstances. Men thought this way more often than women (Figure 7.3.)

Figure 7.3
Those accepting female genital mutilation* in certain circumstances, % of women aged 16 to 74 and men aged 18 to 74. Women N=6,106, men N=1,423.



*Partial or total removal or damage to women's external genitalia for non-medical reasons
Source: Statistics Finland, Sukupuolistunut väkivalta ja lähisuhdeväkivalta Suomessa 2021.

7.2 Recommendations

Although forced marriages are scarcely visible at the population level, it is noteworthy that this does not mean that the phenomenon is absent in Finland. A demographic study is generally unable to obtain information about phenomena concerning very restricted groups of people. To reach those belonging to groups susceptible to forced or coerced marriage, it would be necessary to conduct research focusing on them instead of the entire population.

Honour-related violence is a visible problem at the population level in Finland. In addition to direct victims and offenders, it involves many other people – more than 300,000 people living in Finland. We are therefore discussing a significant problem and even now, many people live under its shadow. A more effective response to honour-related violence requires a better recognition of the phenomenon, both by the authorities and by ordinary citizens. Here, it would be a good idea to turn to the experts and NGOs who know the topic best. People facing honour-related violence should be confident that they can report their experiences, and that the authorities will take it sufficiently seriously. Above all, eradicating honour-related violence requires changes in attitudes in communities where the phenomenon is currently accepted.

The higher permissiveness of female genital mutilation in particular among younger age groups is worrying given the consequences of female genital mutilation and regarding the future. Of course, it is noteworthy that the permissive attitudes reported in the study may also indicate ignorance or indifference. However, based on other research, it is known that girls are sent from Finland to be mutilated abroad, and if this development is to be addressed, the first task is to reduce the ignorance and indifference associated with the phenomenon at all levels of society.

Conclusion

The further reviews now conducted have confirmed the results of the population survey on gender-based violence and domestic violence in Finland from 2021, which showed that violence and harassment remain a problem in Finland, and that the gender-based nature of violence remains a reality even today. The gender-based nature of violence is reflected in the different nature and manifestation of the violence faced by women and men. Women and men of different ages also face violence in different ways.

In a European comparison, Finland appears to be one of the most violent countries in Europe. However, it can be assumed that violence also occurs elsewhere, but it is probably underreported. For example, how violence is reported in different countries in the survey is influenced by the identification of violence, trust in the authorities (including the statistical authority), how the survey is conducted, cultural factors and the availability of support services (including shelters). In Finland, as in other Nordic countries, the authorities are trusted. Young people especially are well aware of violence, and services are available.

The study of gender-based violence and domestic violence in Finland from 2021 and the additional analyses now made of the data provide strong statistical evidence of the prevalence and manifestations of forms of violence against women and men, as well as the gender-based nature of the phenomenon in Finland. However, describing the current situation is insufficient, but more permanent monitoring is needed to support decision-making, monitor the development of the phenomenon and the effectiveness of measures, and strengthen the knowledge base of the prevalence of forms of violence against women required by the Istanbul Convention.

International statistical cooperation promotes the compilation of statistics on the topic and its harmonisation, and Finland is involved in this work. Eurostat, the statistical office of Europe, is planning the next data collection on gender-based violence (EU GBV Survey) for 2027. In turn, the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) promotes the implementation of Article 44 of the Directive on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (2024/1385).

Research material

The analyses are based on the data of the study of gender-based violence and domestic violence in Finland from 2021 conducted by Statistics Finland. The study is part of the Europewide Gender-Based Violence project, which examines violence experienced by women aged 18 to 74 and its forms. The national survey also included additional samples to examine experiences of violence of men aged 18 to 74 and women aged 16 to 17.

In Finland, the data collection was conducted as an online survey based on population sampling at the turn of 2021 and 2022. In addition to the questions from the European study, national questions and areas of interest were included in the study in Finland. The sample of the study was 25,000 people living in Finland, and the response rate was 30 per cent. The material contains responses from a total of 7,575 people. The material has been weighted to correspond to the Finnish population.

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