



Evaluation of formal institutions' reactions on reporting and help-seeking behaviour following sexual violence based on a representative survey in Germany



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Changes in German Law

- **Marital rape**
 - criminalisation in Germany in 1997
- **Protection against Violence Act**
 - introduced in Germany in 2002
 - to protect victims from immediate threat of violence by restraining the perpetrator from contacting the victim
 - violent cohabitant can be expelled and banned from flat/house

Instruments

- **Brief personal interview**
 - demographics of participants
 - experiences of two selected criminal offenses (housebreaking, bodily harm)
- **Drop-off-questionnaire** in two versions (A and B) covering experiences of
 - child maltreatment and neglect
 - child sexual abuse (CSA)
 - physical partner violence
 - sexual violence
 - stalking (A: abbreviated version; B: long version)

as well as

 - own parental discipline methods (only version A; only applicable for participants who are upbringing/co-habiting with children of minor age)

Sample description

- **Quota sample: representativity in terms of**
 - federal state
 - area type (rural vs. urban areas)
 - age
 - sex
 - education
 - household size

Sample description

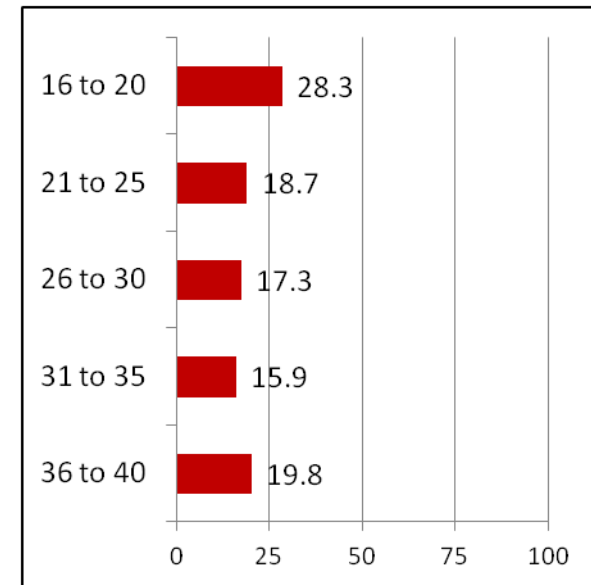
Total sample $N = 11.428$ (48.1% male)

Age $M = 27.0$ years
 $SD = 7.7$ years

Nationality 90.6% German
6.0% Turkish
3.3 % Russian

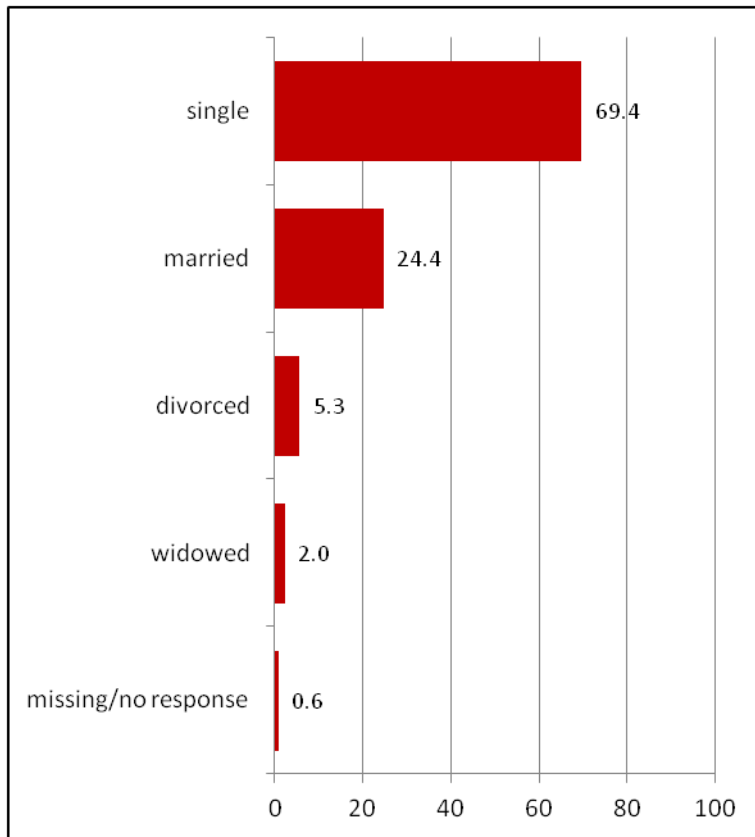
Migration background 80.3% none (German)
10.1% Turkish
9.6% Russian

Age cohorts

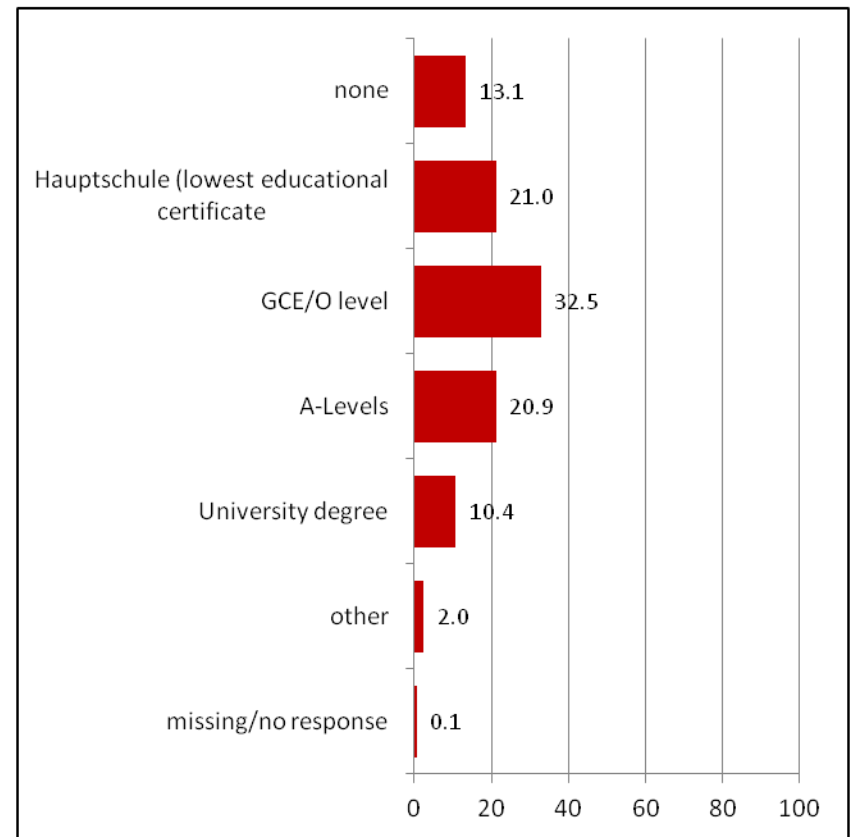


Sample description

Marital status

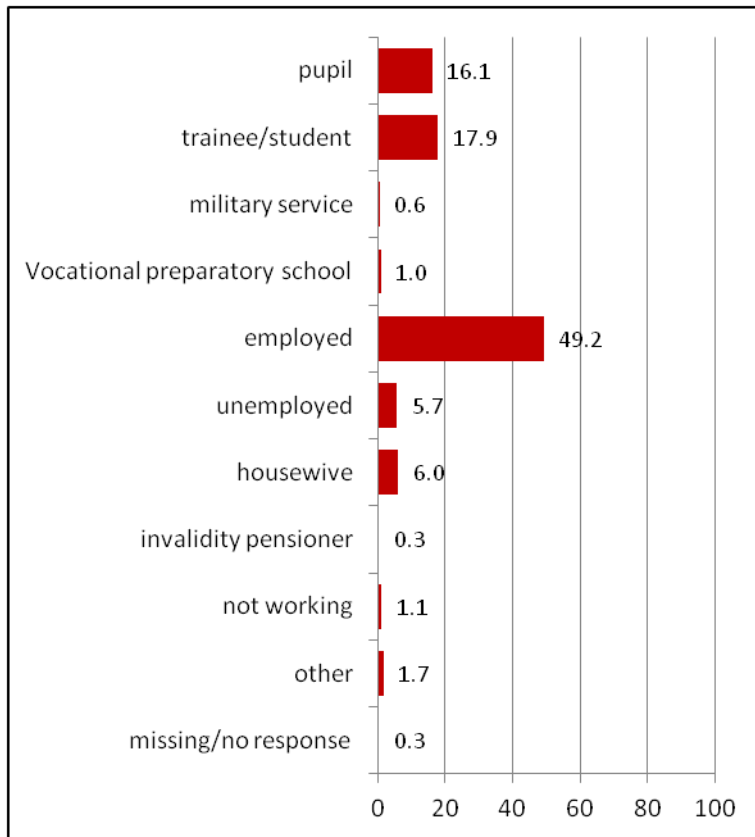


Highest qualification

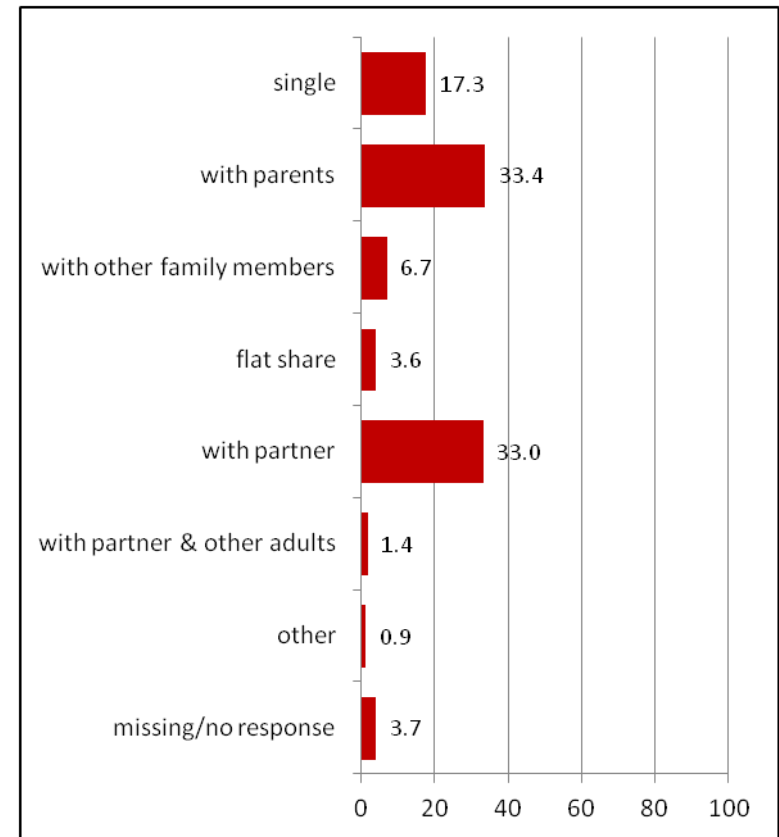


Sample description

Occupational status

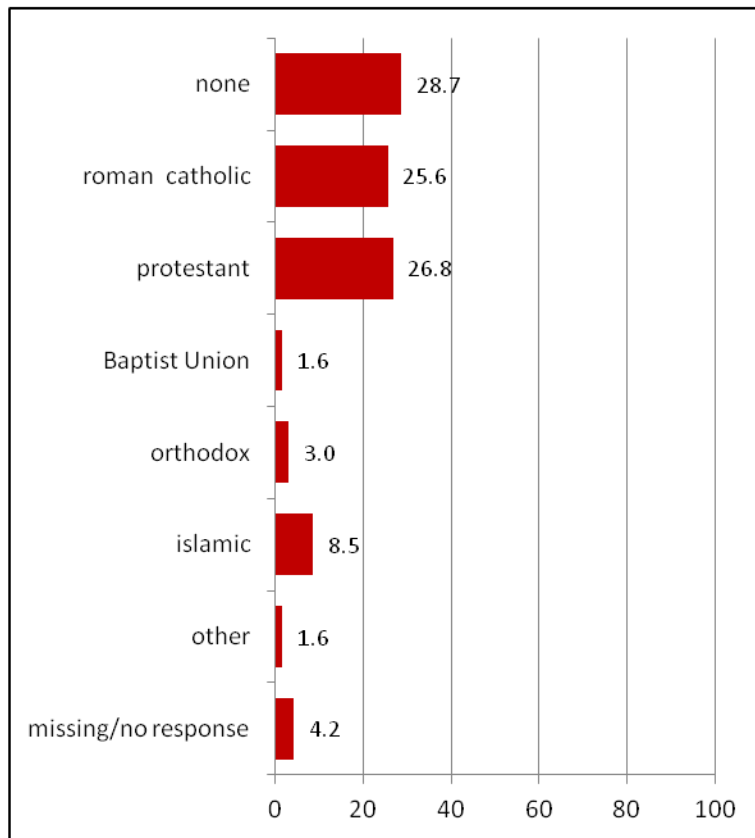


Housing situation

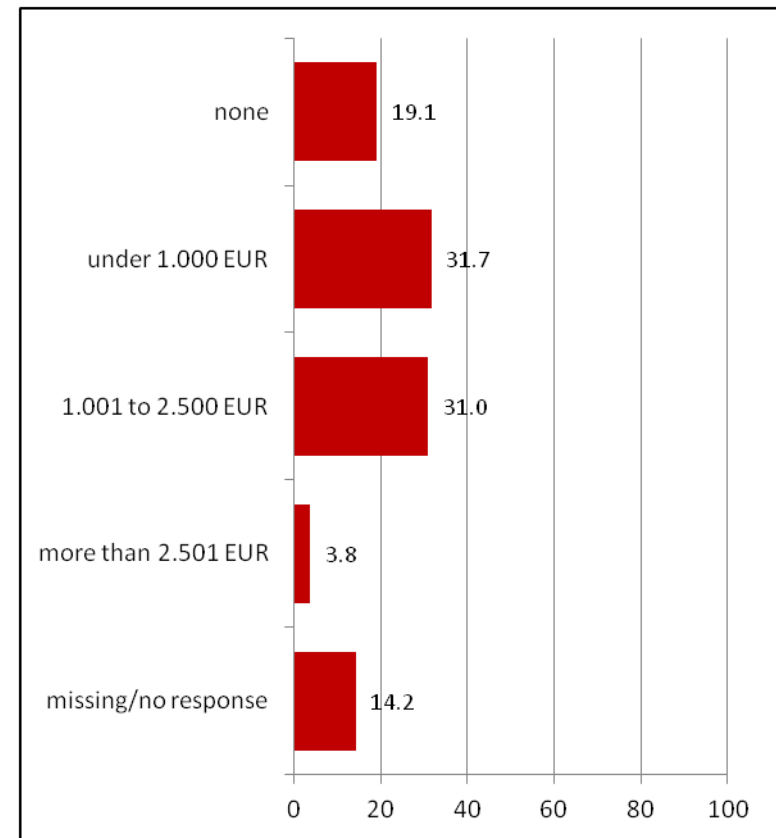


Sample description

Religion

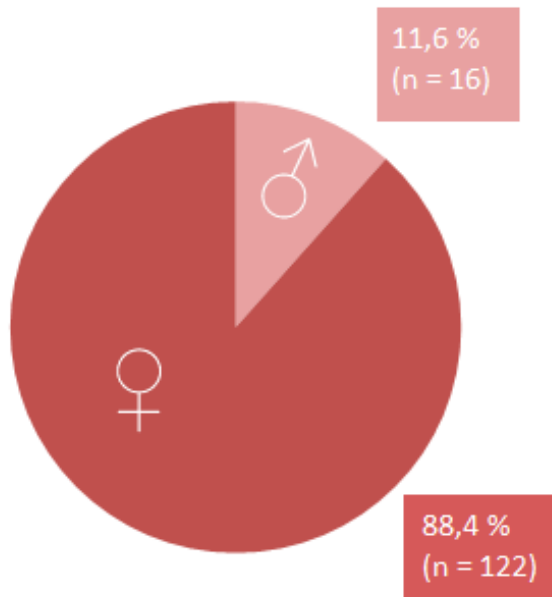


Monthly earnings (net)



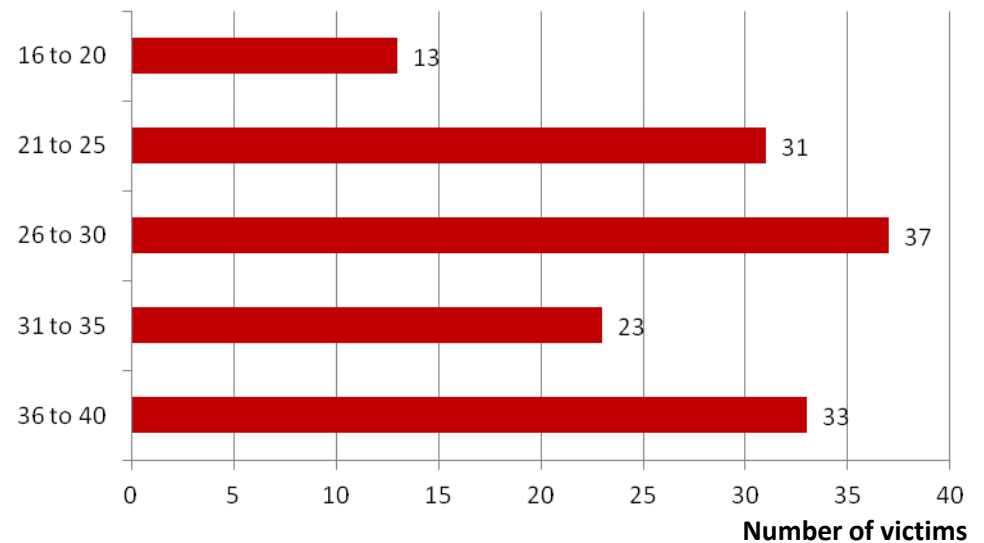
Victim characteristics

Sex ratio



Age

Age in years $M = 29.3$ years ($SD = 6.6$); Range 17 to 40 years



Offenders

Relationship of offender to victim (Percentages; weighted data; multiple responses)

| | All | Men | Women |
|------------------------|------|------|-------|
| Husband/wife | 14.9 | | 16.8 |
| Partner | 18.8 | 40.5 | 15.9 |
| Ex-partner | 34.3 | 15.0 | 36.8 |
| Other household member | 3.0 | 9.5 | 2.1 |
| Other known person | 30.9 | 45.3 | 29.0 |
| Stranger | 9.9 | 17.9 | 8.9 |

Number of offenders per victim (weighted data)

| | N | Percent |
|-------------|-----|---------|
| 1 offender | 121 | 87.6 |
| 2 offenders | 13 | 9.4 |
| 3 offenders | 3 | 1.9 |
| 4 offenders | 2 | 1.1 |

Age of Offender and victim

Mean age at first incident overall and by gender (weighted data)

| | All | Men | Women |
|-----------------|----------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Victim | 23.6 (5.5) | 23.1 (5.6) | 23.7 (5.5) |
| Offender | 29.7 (8.5) | 26.3 (7.2) | 30.2 (8.6) |

Note: Standard deviation in brackets

Average duration and range between first and last incident (duration per victim; weighted data)

| | All | Men | Women |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Average duration in years | 2.3 (3.3) | 1.8 (3.1) | 2.4 (3.3) |
| Range in years | 0 to 16 | 0 to 10 | 0 to 16 |

Note: Standard deviation in brackets

Consequences of the sexual assault

Sexual violence can have various consequences. Please tick all consequences applying to you at the last incident.

| | All | Men | Women |
|-------------------------------------|------|------|-------|
| No consequences | 10.2 | 23.3 | 8.4 |
| Inpatient treatment of injuries | 1.6 | | 1.8 |
| Ambulant treatment of injuries | 7.6 | 6.9 | 7.7 |
| Pain | 36.4 | 28.0 | 37.5 |
| Bruise | 29.8 | 26.8 | 30.2 |
| Injury/bleeding in the genital area | 20.6 | 26.8 | 19.8 |
| Sprain | 2.7 | 6.9 | 2.1 |
| Internal injury | 1.5 | | 1.7 |
| Strong shock | 17.7 | 7.9 | 19.0 |
| Strong feelings of anxiety | 38.2 | 9.5 | 41.9 |
| Feelings of humiliation | 57.5 | 31.0 | 61.0 |
| Other | 11.0 | 14.0 | 10.6 |
| Women's shelter | -- | -- | 4.4 |
| Miscarriage | -- | -- | 3.5 |

Note: Percentages may add up to more than 100 because participants were asked to check all applicable response options.

Consequences of the sexual assault

Besides the immediate, short-term consequences of such an incident one can also be affected by long-term consequences.

| | Yes, in the past (but not any more) | | | Yes, still continuing | | | No | | | Missing | | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------------|------|------|--------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|---------|------|------|
| | A | M | W | A | M | W | A | M | W | A | M | W |
| Not feeling safe anymore | 19.4 | 9.5 | 20.7 | 4.9 | -- | 5.6 | 47.3 | 63.0 | 45.3 | 28.3 | 27.4 | 28.5 |
| Anxiety | 31.3 | 28.0 | 31.7 | 14.9 | 6.9 | 16.0 | 28.1 | 45.8 | 25.8 | 25.7 | 19.3 | 26.6 |
| Physical consequences | 19.3 | 11.3 | 20.3 | 5.4 | -- | 6.1 | 43.7 | 51.7 | 42.6 | 31.7 | 37.0 | 31.0 |
| Sexual problems | 25.1 | 28.6 | 24.7 | 24.8 | 23.4 | 25.0 | 26.8 | 28.7 | 26.6 | 23.2 | 29.3 | 23.7 |
| Interpersonal problems | 21.3 | 29.7 | 20.2 | 23.0 | 16.5 | 23.8 | 30.6 | 34.6 | 30.1 | 25.2 | 19.3 | 25.9 |
| Tried to move out, but couldn't | 12.9 | 16.5 | 12.4 | 4.1 | -- | 4.7 | 56.4 | 56.1 | 56.6 | 26.6 | 27.4 | 26.5 |

Note: Participants were asked to check all response options applying to them following the last incident.

Help seeking

Who have you discussed this last incident with?

| | All | Men | Women |
|-----------------------------------------------|------|------|-------|
| With nobody | 11.7 | 20.5 | 10.5 |
| With offender | 16.2 | 7.2 | 17.4 |
| With family member | 20.5 | | 23.2 |
| With best friend (female) | 41.0 | 26.7 | 42.9 |
| With best friend (male) | 8.4 | 27.6 | 5.9 |
| With other friend/acquaintance | 10.4 | 15.1 | 9.8 |
| With colleagues | 2.2 | 7.9 | 1.5 |
| With religious leader | 3.0 | 10.3 | 2.1 |
| With victim support services/self-help groups | 8.9 | | 10.0 |
| With medical practitioner/psychotherapist | 19.5 | 9.5 | 20.9 |
| With lawyer | 10.0 | | 11.3 |
| Other | 11.0 | 8.1 | 11.4 |

Note: Percentages may add up to more than 100 because participants were asked to check all applicable response options.

Reporting behaviour

Has the incident been reported to the police/prosecution?

| | All | Men | Women |
|----------------|------|------|-------|
| No | 66.0 | 80.7 | 64.1 |
| Yes, by myself | 10.8 | -- | 12.2 |
| Yes, by others | 2.3 | -- | 2.6 |
| Missing | 20.9 | 19.3 | 21.1 |

Reporting behaviour by relationship of offender to victim

| | n | Not reported | Reported | Missing |
|--------------------------------|----|--------------|----------|---------|
| Husband/wife | 19 | 61.6 | 29.9 | 8.5 |
| Partner | 21 | 64.6 | 17.9 | 17.6 |
| Ex-partner | 41 | 85.6 | -- | 14.4 |
| Other members of the household | 3 | -- | -- | 100 |
| Other known person | 29 | 65.9 | 13.3 | 20.8 |
| Stranger | 8 | 42.6 | -- | 57.4 |

Note: based on cases in which only one offender was named; cases with multiple offenders were excluded

Reasons for reporting

Why have you or your friends/members of your family informed the police or prosecution about the incident?

| | All | Men | Women |
|-----------------------------------------------|-----|-----|-------|
| To be protected by the police | 3.8 | -- | 4.3 |
| So the person couldn't enter my place anymore | 4.9 | -- | 5.6 |
| Because I was angry | 4.0 | -- | 4.5 |
| So the person gets punished | 9.6 | -- | 10.9 |
| So the person couldn't do it again | 8.6 | -- | 9.8 |
| Didn't know what else to do | 2.3 | -- | 2.6 |
| Because it happened so many times before | 5.9 | -- | 4.7 |
| Others convinced me to do it | 3.5 | -- | 4.0 |
| Other | 1.6 | -- | 1.8 |

Note: Percentages may add up to more than 100 because participants were asked to check all applicable response options.

Reasons for non-reporting

Why haven't you reported the incident to the police or prosecution?

| | All | Men | Women |
|---------------------------------------------------------|------|------|-------|
| Incident wasn't serious enough | 15.2 | 41.1 | 11.8 |
| Incident was a family matter | 11.2 | 11.6 | 11.1 |
| Didn't want the offender to get punished | 5.8 | 6.9 | 5.7 |
| Offender apologized and promised to not do it again | 14.0 | 17.1 | 13.6 |
| Didn't think they could do much to help | 12.2 | 19.9 | 11.2 |
| Incident was embarrassing | 34.6 | 37.7 | 34.2 |
| Acquaintances convinced me not to do it | 3.4 | | 3.8 |
| Offender asked me not to inform the police | 2.6 | | 3.0 |
| Offender threatened me | 6.6 | 6.9 | 6.6 |
| Scared of court proceeding | 12.0 | | 13.6 |
| Feared that living together would become more difficult | 8.8 | 6.9 | 9.0 |
| Police knew about it anyway | | | |
| Previous reports were not effective | 1.8 | | 2.0 |
| Other | 14.7 | 31.3 | 12.5 |

Note: Percentages may add up to more than 100 because participants were asked to check all applicable response options.

Actions following the incident

Which actions were taken following the incident?

| | All | | Incident reported | | Incident not reported | |
|----------------------------------------------------|------|------|-------------------|------|-----------------------|------|
| Nothing | 38.5 | 2.91 | 7.4 | 4.00 | 56.4 | 2.89 |
| Apology/compensation | 16.8 | 2.43 | 14.4 | 3.44 | 22.7 | 2.29 |
| Counseling/therapy for the offender | 2.7 | 1.94 | 7.5 | 1.00 | 2.5 | 2.50 |
| Counseling/therapy for the family and the offender | 0.8 | 1.00 | | | 1.3 | 1.00 |
| Counseling/therapy for me | 8.1 | 1.59 | 25.1 | 1.50 | 7.3 | 1.64 |
| Offender moved out | 11.0 | 1.10 | 24.9 | 1.32 | 11.7 | 1.00 |
| Moved out myself | 12.5 | 1.17 | 17.8 | 1.27 | 15.5 | 1.13 |
| Imprisonment without parole | 0.8 | 2.97 | 6.5 | 2.97 | | |
| Imprisonment on parole | 2.0 | 2.97 | 15.5 | 2.97 | | |
| Victim-offender-mediation | 1.2 | 2.30 | 9.1 | 2.30 | | |
| Proceeding still pending | 3.4 | 3.34 | 26.1 | 3.34 | | |
| Other | 5.7 | 1.94 | 15.8 | 4.00 | 5.5 | 1.00 |

Note: The figures in the right columns indicate the average satisfaction with the actions taken, rated on a 4-point scale (1 = very satisfied to 4 = very dissatisfied)

Appropriate responses from the victims' perspective

If you were free to decide: Which of the following actions would you have considered appropriate as response to the last incident?

| | All | Men | Women |
|----------------------------------------------------|------|------|-------|
| No action | 8.0 | 34.8 | 4.5 |
| Apology/compensation | 15.4 | 18.0 | 15.0 |
| Financial compensation | 0.3 | | 0.4 |
| Counseling/therapy for the offender | 4.0 | | 4.5 |
| Counseling/therapy for the family and the offender | 0.8 | | 0.9 |
| Counseling/therapy for me | 3.6 | | 4.0 |
| Offender should move out | 8.2 | | 9.3 |
| Move out myself | 1.2 | 6.9 | 0.4 |
| Imprisonment without parole | 7.2 | | 8.2 |
| Imprisonment on parole | 0.7 | | 0.8 |
| Financial penalty | 1.6 | | 1.8 |
| Victim-offender-mediation | 1.5 | | 1.7 |
| Other | 5.1 | 4.4 | 5.2 |
| Combination of multiple actions | 17.4 | 16.5 | 17.5 |
| Missing | 25.0 | 19.3 | 25.7 |

Note: Participants were asked to only choose the one action that they personally consider the most important.

Risk of revictimisation

| | DV: Revictimization in adulthood | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|----------|-----------|
| | <i>B</i> | <i>p</i> | <i>OR</i> |
| Child Sexual Abuse | 2.26 | < .001 | 9.55 |

Note: $N = 11.428$; Nagelkerke $R^2 = .08$

Knowledge of relevant German Laws

| Knowledge of the law | Criminal liability of marital rape (1997) | Violence Protection Act (2002) |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| | yes | 86.0 |
| no | 13.3 | 56.1 |
| Don't know | 0.7 | 0.9 |

Knowledge of the criminal liability of marital rape by experiences of sexual violence

| Knowledge of the law | Experiences of sexual violence | |
|----------------------|--------------------------------|------|
| | yes | no |
| yes | 82.4 | 86.8 |
| no | 17.6 ^a | 13.2 |

$$\chi^2 (1, N = 11.302) = 4.97, p < .05$$

Note: ^a Deviation from expected frequencies is statistically significant

Knowledge of the Violence Protection Act (2002) by experiences of sexual violence

| Knowledge of the law | Experiences of sexual violence | |
|----------------------|--------------------------------|------|
| | yes | no |
| yes | 39.5 | 43.5 |
| no | 60.5 | 56.5 |

$$\chi^2 (1, N = 11.283) = 1.77, n.s.$$

Summary

- **perpetrator** predominantly ex-partner or other known person
- **consequences:** women suffer more from negative mental health effects (anxiety); both women and men suffer from sexual and interpersonal problems
- **reporting rate:** for women in Germany slightly higher than in England & Wales (14.8% vs. 11%);
 - highest reporting rates when husband/wife is perpetrator
 - reasons for reporting: punishment of perpetrator, prevention of further assaults
 - reasons for non-reporting: shame, incident wasn't serious enough; exemption from punishment for offender no important role
- **help-seeking:** gender of supporting person for males less important, women explicitly seek support from persons of the same gender (best female friend); professional counselors play less important role

Summary

- **satisfaction with actions taken:** victims are particularly dissatisfied when incident was reported, but nothing happened afterwards
 - most frequent and satisfying actions when incident was reported: therapy/counselling for victim, perpetrator moves out, victim moves out
 - actions when incident wasn't reported: no actions taken, apology/compensation, victim moves out
 - in general, spatial separation is experienced as very satisfying
- **appropriate responses:** apology/compensation; spatial separation; combination of different actions
 - female victims prefer punishment for perpetrator
 - male victims prefer that no actions be taken or an apology
 - in terms of spatial separation, female victims prefer the perpetrator to move out, whereas male victims move out themselves
 - low ratings for financial compensation and imprisonment on parole

Summary

- **laws for the protection of victims of (sexual) violence:** the longer the law was enacted the better it is known by the victims
 - victims of sexual violence have less knowledge of the laws than non-victims
- **revictimisation:** victims of child sexual abuse have an almost ten times higher risk of becoming a victim of sexual violence in adulthood

Policy implications

- **support services tailored to the needs of male victims**
- **Little use of professional psychosocial support services:** more active promotion of support services/counselling; ensure availability
- **more intensive and tailored promotion of relevant laws/protective measures to target groups**
- **promotion of restorative justice:** victim-offender-mediation; support for spatial separation
- **Support for coping with past experiences of sexual abuse and protection of children:** prevention of sexual violence in adulthood

Contact

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