



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

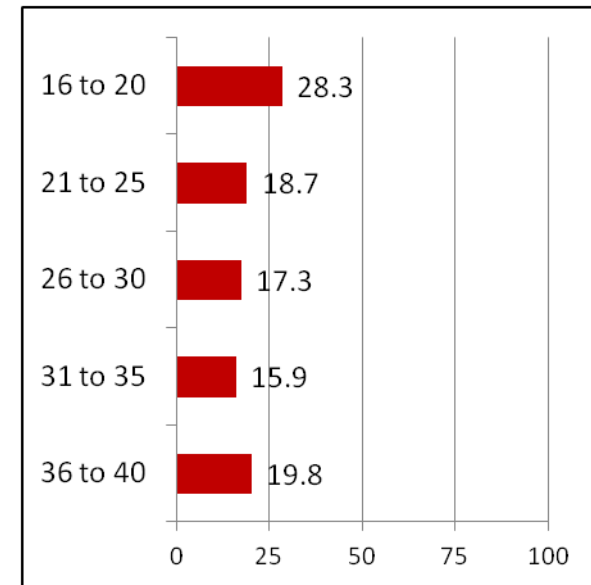
Total sample $N = 11.428$ (48.1% male)

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

Nationality 90.6% German
6.0% Turkish
3.3 % Russian

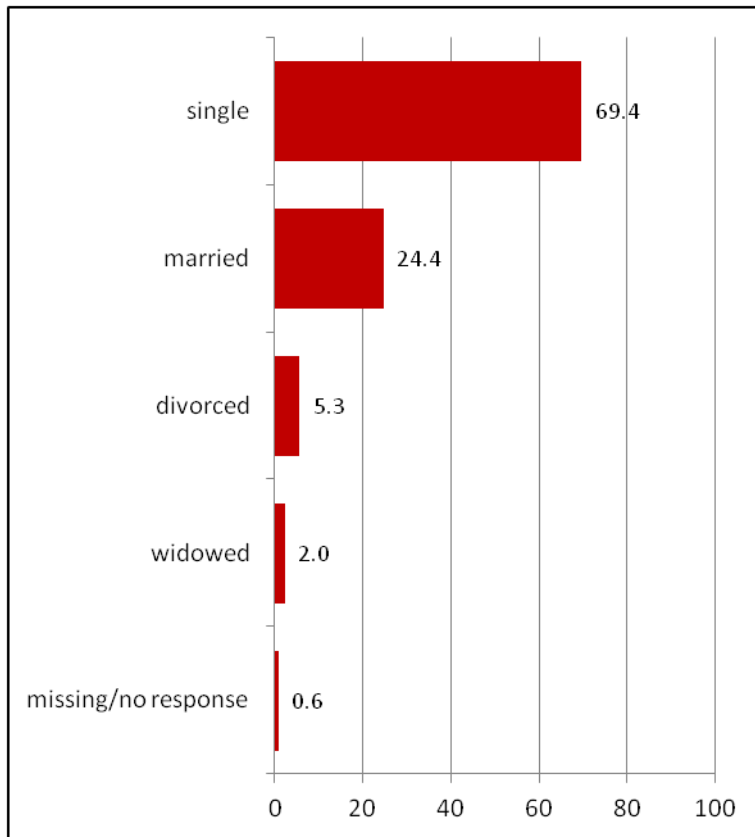
Migration background 80.3% none (German)
10.1% Turkish
9.6% Russian

Age cohorts

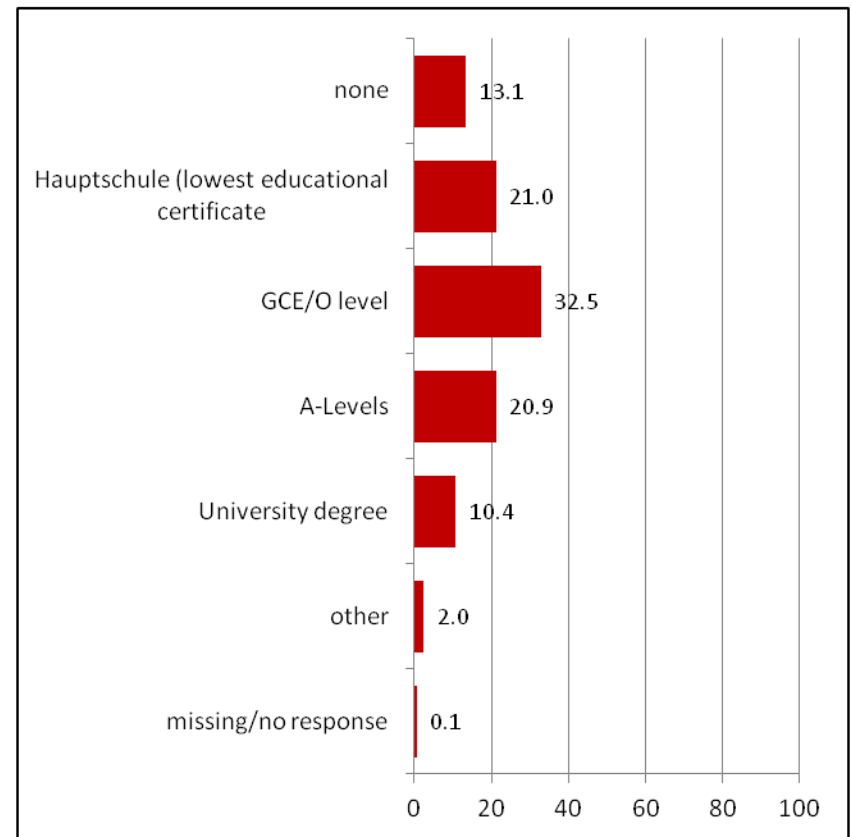


Sample description

Marital status

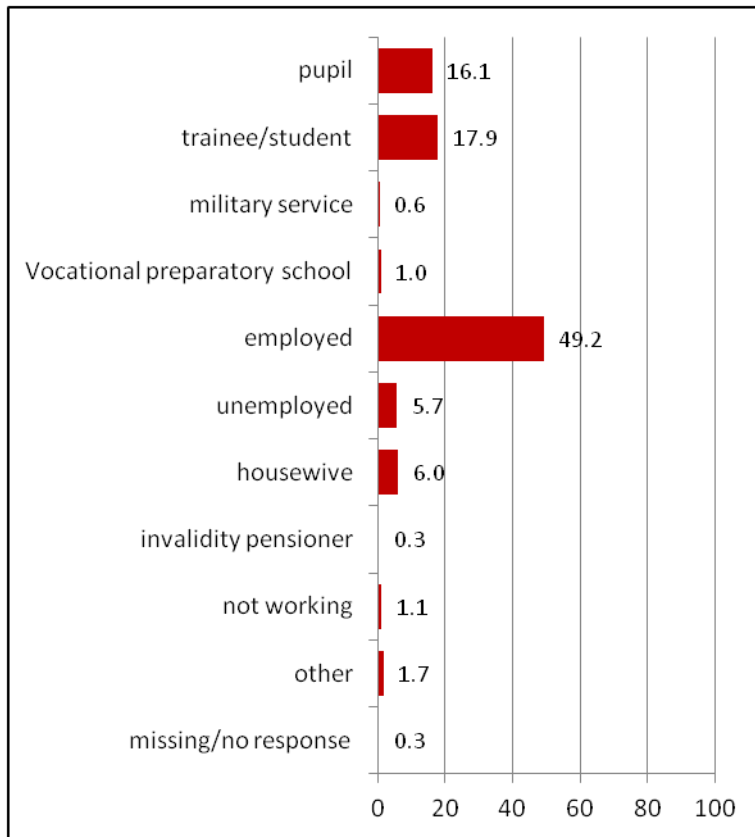


Highest qualification

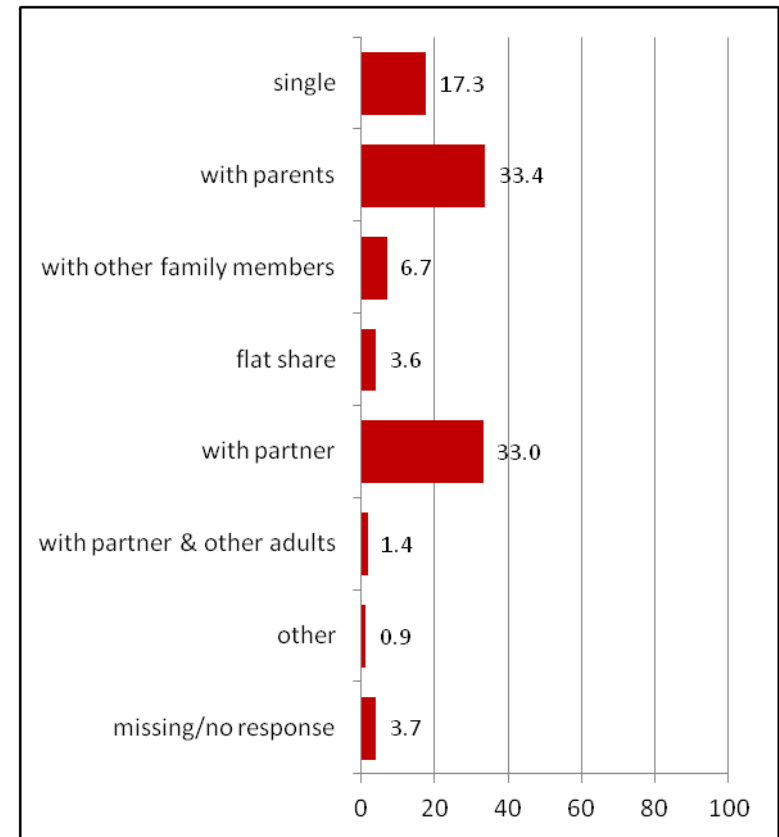


Sample description

Occupational status

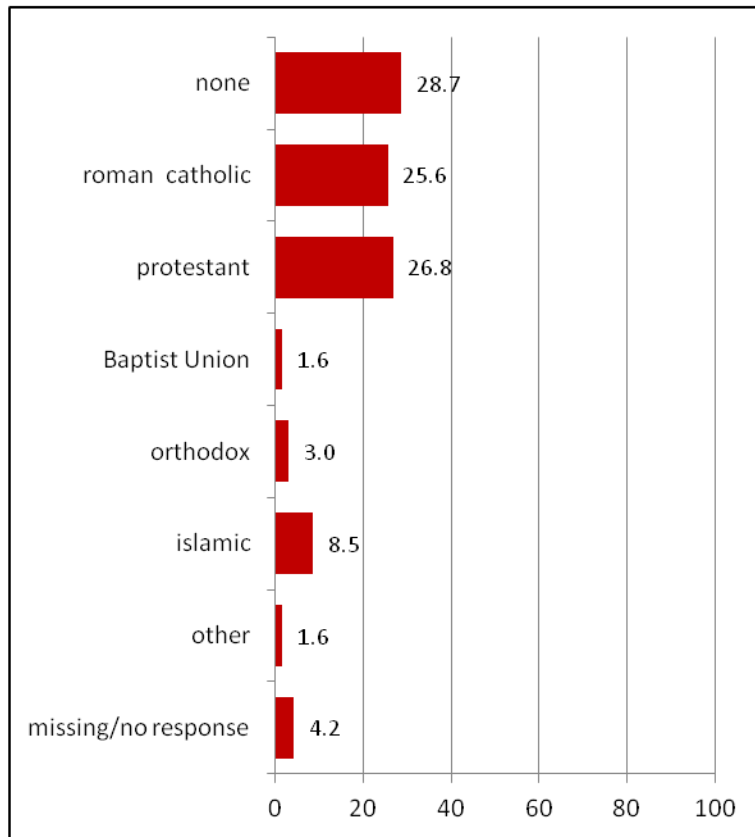


Housing situation

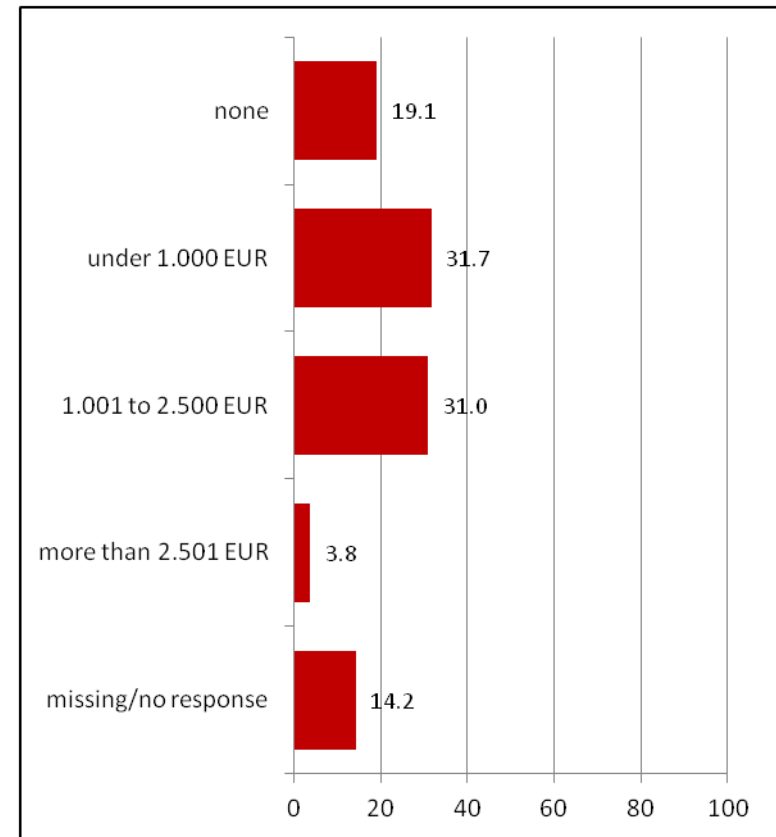


Sample description

Religion

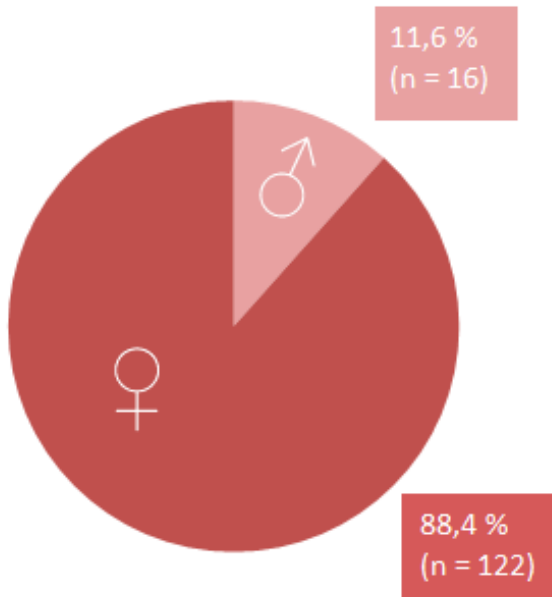


Monthly earnings (net)



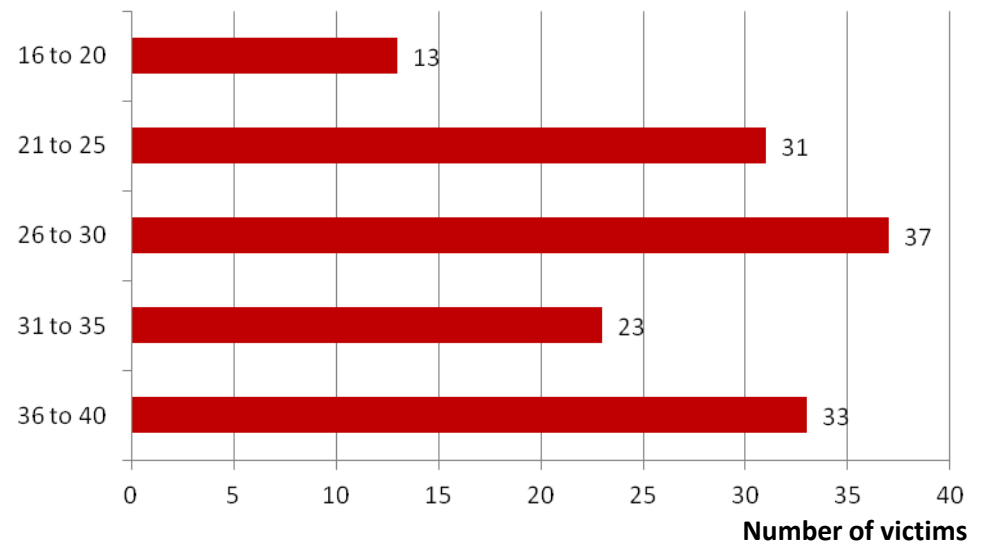
Victim characteristics

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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