



Violence against Women: An EU-wide survey

Questions & Answers on the survey methodology

This is a brief overview of how the FRA survey on violence against women was carried out. Detailed information can be found in the [Technical Report](#).

1. Who were the survey respondents?

Over 42,000 women aged 18-74 years old were interviewed across the EU. This corresponds to 1,500 women per country (except Luxembourg with 900 respondents).

The lower age limit was 18 years due to the sensitive nature of the survey and the limitations in some Member States on interviewing women under 18 without parental approval.

A breakdown including socio-demographic characteristics is annexed in the main results report.

2. Why, when and how was the survey carried out?

The survey responds to a request for data on violence against women from the European Parliament, which was reiterated by the Council of the EU in its Conclusions on the Eradication of Violence against Women in the EU.

FRA designed the survey with input from academic experts and civil society representatives working on violence against women. A consortium – under contract to FRA following an open call for tender – extensively tested the survey in 2011, and carried out the fieldwork from March to September 2012. The consortium included Ipsos MORI, the European Institute for Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, affiliated with the United Nations and the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute. Ipsos MORI identified organisations in each EU Member State to manage the interviews locally.

Together with FRA, the consortium designed an interviewer training programme and trained the national trainers in February 2012. The national trainers trained selected female interviewers in each country. FRA and the contractors participated in some training sessions to monitor the training content.

The questionnaire was translated into local languages, which were used to interview respondents. Ipsos MORI compiled the data into a single data set for the initial EU-level comparative analysis. FRA carried out the final analysis.

3. How were respondents selected?

In each Member State the survey is based on a nationally representative sample of women. In countries where population registers could be used for sampling, a sample of individuals was drawn from the registers, and the interviewers could contact the selected women directly. In countries where such information was not available, researchers first drew a sample of households, and interviewers selected the respondent from eligible women in the household. People who were randomly selected for interviewing could not propose someone else to interview instead.

4. How was the privacy, anonymity and confidentiality of respondents assured?

The survey was carried out by professional interviewers, trained to ensure confidentiality. The survey data set does not contain any personal information which would enable respondents to be identified. Care was taken during the data analysis so that nobody can be recognised from the results.

5. How long was each interview?



The length of interviews with each respondent depended a lot on their experiences. For women who had experienced many incidents of violence the interview took longer than the planned 50 minutes. For someone who had not experienced any form of violence it was shorter.

6. Which topics were covered by the questionnaire?

The standardised survey used across all Member States included questions about physical, sexual and psychological violence, childhood victimisation, sexual harassment and stalking (including new media such as the internet). Women were asked to provide information about their own experiences of violence, how often this has taken place, and the consequences this has had on their lives. The survey also collected information about reporting and non-reporting to the police, and about women's use of other services that can assist victims.

7. Does the survey ask who commits the abuse?

The survey asked respondents about their experiences of violence by intimate partners – people with whom women are or have been married to, living together as a couple or in a relationship. It also asked about experiences from other people, such as strangers, acquaintances, colleagues or other people at work, or family members (other than the partner).

8. How did the survey measure physical/sexual/psychological violence?

Respondents were asked questions about specific violent acts which the respondent may have experienced – such as being kicked, slapped, hit, etc. Earlier research has shown that in this way respondents are more likely to remember and identify incidents of violence. The questions on experiences of violence did not use terms such as 'rape' or 'abuse' which respondents might understand in different ways.

9. How did the survey measure sexual harassment?

Respondents were asked whether they have experienced specific incidents, which they considered unwanted and offensive. This included being told sexually suggestive comments or jokes, unwelcome touching or kissing, or receiving sexually explicit emails or text messages.

10. How did the survey measure stalking?

Respondents were presented with a list of incidents, and asked whether the same person was responsible for these incidents. Among other things, the incidents included examples of repeatedly receiving offensive material (e.g. by mail or through the internet), threatening or silent phone calls, or cases where the respondent was repeatedly followed or where her property was tampered with.

11. How representative are the results ?

The respondents were selected based on random sampling. The results are representative of the experiences and opinions of 18-74-year-old women living in the EU.

12. Could the results be influenced by outside factors?

Only one woman per household was selected. Interviewers did not disclose the topic of the survey to other members of the household. The interviews were carried out in a place where only the respondent and the interviewer were present and they could not be disturbed.

Participation was voluntary. The interview could be interrupted or rescheduled to ensure that the interview was carried out in private. The respondent could say at any point whether she was comfortable to continue or not.

Respondents could also mention any experiences which they did not want to disclose in the interview in a self-completion questionnaire. The survey used only female interviewers.

13. How did you ensure the results are comparable?

To ensure comparability, FRA carried out a pilot study in 2010-2011 in six Member States – Finland, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland and Spain. The pilot was based on a draft questionnaire. A combination of methods was used to explore differences in how respondents in different countries may understand items in the survey. The results fed the further development of the questionnaire before it was finalised and translated for use in all Member States.

Differences between countries and within countries in rates of violence against women are also reported in other surveys e.g. the WHO's study on women's health and domestic violence, and the US national intimate partner violence and sexual violence survey.