



European Institute for
Gender Equality

GENDER EQUALITY INDEX 2024

Tackling violence against women,
tackling gender inequalities

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Gender Equality

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The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) produces independent research and shares best practice to promote gender equality and eliminate discrimination based on gender. As the EU agency for gender equality, we help people achieve equal opportunities so everyone can thrive, regardless of their gender and background.

We combine research, data and tools to help policymakers design measures that are inclusive, transformative and promote gender equality in all areas of life. We communicate our expertise and research effectively. We work closely with partners to raise awareness. We do this at the EU and national levels, and with EU candidate and potential candidate countries.

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Abbreviations

EIGE	European Institute for Gender Equality
EU	European Union
EU GBV survey	EU gender-based violence survey
FGM	female genital mutilation
GREVIO	Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence
pp	percentage point(s)



Country codes

BE	Belgium
BG	Bulgaria
CZ	Czechia
DK	Denmark
DE	Germany
EE	Estonia
IE	Ireland
EL	Greece
ES	Spain
FR	France
HR	Croatia
IT	Italy
CY	Cyprus
LV	Latvia
LT	Lithuania
LU	Luxembourg
HU	Hungary
MT	Malta
NL	Netherlands
AT	Austria
PL	Poland
PT	Portugal
RO	Romania
SI	Slovenia
SK	Slovakia
FI	Finland
SE	Sweden
EU-27	27 EU Member States

Note on numerical data

Numerical data in the report is rounded to whole numbers; therefore, small differences in percentages cited may not show or percentages may not add up to 100 %.

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External contributions

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Highlights

- Developed in 2017 as part of the Gender Equality Index domain of violence, the composite measure of violence seeks to synthesise the complexity of the extent of violence against women in an easy-to-understand measure. Based on data from the EU gender-based violence survey, the composite measure of violence was calculated for 12 EU Member States, with an average score of 31.9 points out of 100. The sub-domains of severity and disclosure, with scores of 44.0 and 33.5 points out of 100, contribute the most to the overall score. The composite measure accounts for disclosed violence rather than the true extent of violence against women.
- The update to the composite measure of the extent of disclosed violence has shown that, with a score of 31.9, violence against women is a prevalent, severe and under-reported phenomenon in the EU. For almost 57 % of victims, violence came with health consequences. A third of victims experienced violence from multiple types of perpetrators. Despite the impact of the #MeToo movement on women's ability to speak up, almost a third of women victims of violence had not disclosed the incident to anyone (31 %). An intersectional analysis also reveals the specific vulnerabilities of certain groups of women, with, for example, women with disabilities being at higher risk of violence from any perpetrator than women without disabilities.
- Since 2019, the EU has made it its mission to prevent and eliminate violence against women, which is reflected in its gender equality strategy (2020–2025), its accession to the Istanbul Convention in June 2023 and the adoption of the first directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence (Directive (EU) 2024/1385) in May 2024. All Member States have signed the Istanbul Convention, and all but five Member States (BG, CZ, LT, HU, SK) have ratified it. While there have been significant policy developments across all Member States, the rise of anti-gender movements has halted progress in some Member States.
- Specialised services are still grossly insufficient and fall short of meeting the level of need and upholding the legal commitments made by Member States. Against a backdrop of systemic challenges related to insufficient public funding, uneven geographical coverage and limited specialised support for women with complex needs, support services in the EU were affected in various ways by the cost-of-living crisis of 2022–2023. The main impacts were an increase in the volume and complexity of cases, the deterioration of staff morale and well-being due to intense workloads, and difficulties in covering essential operational costs such as energy and rent.
- The disclosed extent of violence against women is often described as the 'tip of the iceberg'. It is the visible manifestation of a large set of beliefs, values and behaviours acquired through socialisation. Among these are the media's portrayal and the public's perception of violence against women.
- In line with the Istanbul Convention, Member States have established mechanisms to oversee media coverage, and guidelines and codes of conduct have been developed in most Member States to promote fair reporting by the media on issues related to violence against women. However, most of these tools have been developed by civil-society organisations and are based on the self-regulation of media institutions.

- Public perceptions of violence against women have been crucial in shaping responses and prevention efforts, yet studies reveal persistent tolerance and victim-blaming attitudes across the EU. Flash Eurobarometer 544, conducted in 2024 and entitled ‘Gender stereotypes – violence against women’, found that, while most respondents reject physical and sexual violence, a significant proportion of the population still condones violent behaviours.
- Nearly half of respondents in the EU (43 %) believe women are partially responsible for the non-consensual sharing of intimate images. Financial control within intimate relationships is seen as acceptable by 46 % of men and 26 % of women, with workplace harassment deemed acceptable by 27 % of men and 15 % of women. Myths about sexual violence persist, including the beliefs that women under the influence of drugs or alcohol are to blame for their victimisation and that women exaggerate claims of sexual abuse. Gender differences are evident, with men consistently displaying greater tolerance for violence across various contexts.
- To explore the links between public attitudes towards violence against women and the overall levels of gender equality in Member States, four statements from Flash Eurobarometer 544 and scores from the Gender Equality Index 2024 were correlated. This analysis served to test the hypothesis that public attitudes towards gender-based violence could either determine support for policymaking on gender equality broadly or dictate resistance to such reforms ⁽¹⁾. The acceptability of violence against women among individuals could predict the non-prioritisation of or even pushback on gender equality policies at a collective and a societal level.
- The correlation analysis showed great differences between Member States in the acceptability of violence against women and demonstrated its links with gender equality. People living in countries scoring higher on the Gender Equality Index 2024 are less likely to accept violence against women than those living in countries with lower scores. Similarly, a higher share of people who find gender-based violence acceptable is likely to hamper a country’s progress in achieving gender equality.

⁽¹⁾ See the methodological note in Annex 7.

Introduction

The latest edition of the Gender Equality Index, the 2024 edition, highlights the fact that the EU is battling a host of emerging challenges, from increasing effects of climate change and extreme weather events to high geopolitical tensions, rapid digitalisation, volatile political situations and growing political extremism across the region (EIGE, 2024). It underlines that, while such phenomena claim the attention of decision-makers, they not only occur against the backdrop of long-standing gender equality issues such as violence against women but also make gender equality a more relevant and pressing issue than ever. Mounting evidence shows that when crisis strikes violence against women and girls intensifies.

Equality among women and men is one of the key values of the EU and a largely untapped catalyst for economic prosperity (EIGE, 2017a). Addressing the many manifestations of gender and intersecting inequalities in people's lives was a strong commitment of the 2019–2024 European Commission (European Commission, 2020a). Among these signs of inequality, the fact that millions of women in the EU continue to be exposed to serious forms of violence, including physical and sexual violence and femicide, due to their gender remains one of the most unacceptable forms of gender inequality.

This report provides an overview of the current state of violence against women in the EU, which is a thematic focus of the Gender Equality Index 2024. The first chapter examines recent legal and policy developments across the EU and its Member States, along with the availability of specialised support services for women victims of violence. The second chapter presents findings from the EU gender-based violence survey (EU GBV survey, 2021 wave) ⁽²⁾, offering a comprehensive view of the composite measure of violence developed as part of the domain of violence of the Gender Equality Index (EIGE, 2015, 2017b, 2017c). It includes an analysis of the extent of disclosed violence against women in the EU, including its prevalence, its severity and its under-reported nature. The final chapter explores societal attitudes towards and public perceptions of violence against women, and the media's role in shaping awareness of this violence. In addition, the chapter links public opinion with EU Member States' Gender Equality Index scores.

⁽²⁾ The EU GBV survey (2021 wave) includes results covering the 27 EU Member States (EU-27). The estimated EU-27 average results are based on data collected from a total of 114 023 women (18–74 years of age) across the EU. Data collection took place between September 2020 and March 2024. Eurostat coordinated the collection of data in 18 Member States, and the national statistical authorities of these countries carried out the survey. Italy agreed to share the data from its national survey to provide comparable data for the main indicators. For the remaining eight Member States, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights and the European Institute for Gender Equality took responsibility for data collection, following Eurostat's methodological manual. For more details on the survey methodology, see Annex 1 and the survey metadata, available at https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/metadata/en/gbv_sims.htm.

1. Legal and policy frameworks to tackle violence against women at the EU and national levels

Legal frameworks and public policies are an essential part of the arsenal to end violence against women. In recent years, key players across Europe have worked to get closer to creating a just and safe Europe for all women. To help tackle this challenge, several new legal frameworks have been introduced at the EU and national levels.

1.1. EU institutions are strengthening their commitment to ending violence against women

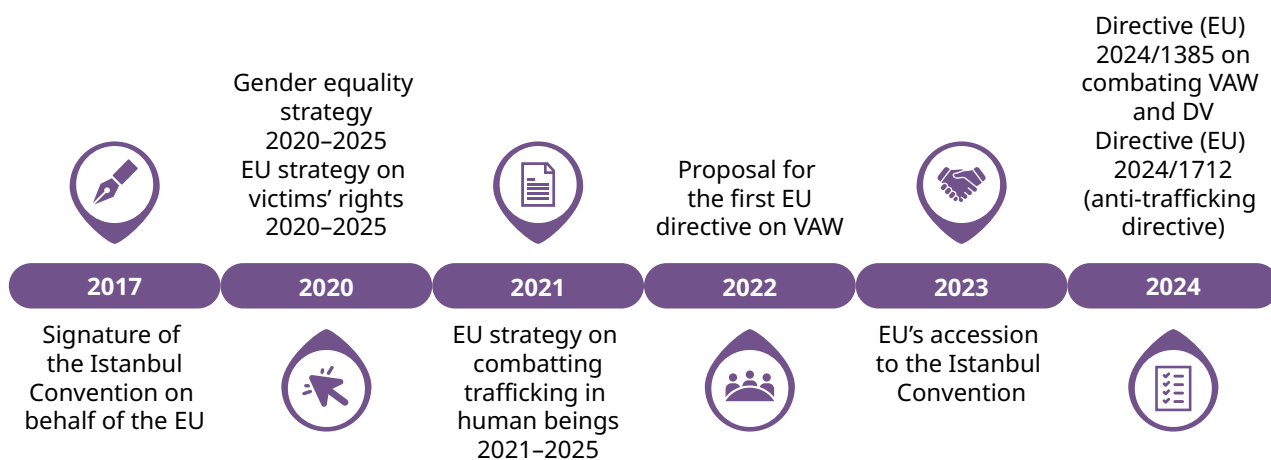
Since women's human rights achievements in the early 1990s (United Nations, CEDAW, 1992; United Nations, 1993), international stakeholders have consistently framed violence against women as a critical area of concern and its elimination as a strategic objective, crucial to achieving equality, development and peace (United Nations, 1995).

In synergy with international standards, the EU has demonstrated a long-standing commitment to eliminating inequalities between women and men, and different forms of violence against women. Ending violence against women has been consistently seen as a core value of the European community inherently linked to the equality of women and men and recognised as a fundamental rights issue (European Union, 2009). Nevertheless, despite the European Parliament's consistent calls for more decisive action, until recently the EU still lacked a comprehensive, holistic legal framework addressing this issue systematically (European Parliament, 2009, 2011, 2014, 2017). In consequence, legal protection mechanisms for victims of different forms of violence against women were dispersed across several EU directives and instruments (De Vido, 2016).

Strong incentives to further embed the elimination of violence against women in the EU political agenda and develop related EU-wide standards have resurfaced in recent years. In 2019, in the political guidelines *A Union that Strives for More – My agenda for Europe*, President Ursula von der Leyen highlighted the vulnerability of victims and stated the need for the EU to 'do all it can to prevent domestic violence, protect victims and punish offenders' (European Commission, 2019).

This unprecedented political commitment was reflected in the EU's gender equality strategy (2020–2025), which declared the need to end gender-based violence across the EU as a key priority of the European Commission (European Commission, 2020a). Putting violence against women high on the political agenda and consistently drawing EU stakeholders' attention to risks to gender equality led to several significant policy developments in this area of equality, as illustrated in Figure 1 (European Parliament, 2019a, 2019b, 2020, 2021a, 2021b).

Figure 1. Timeline of leading policy developments on violence against women in the EU (2017–2024)



NB: DV, domestic violence; VAW, violence against women.

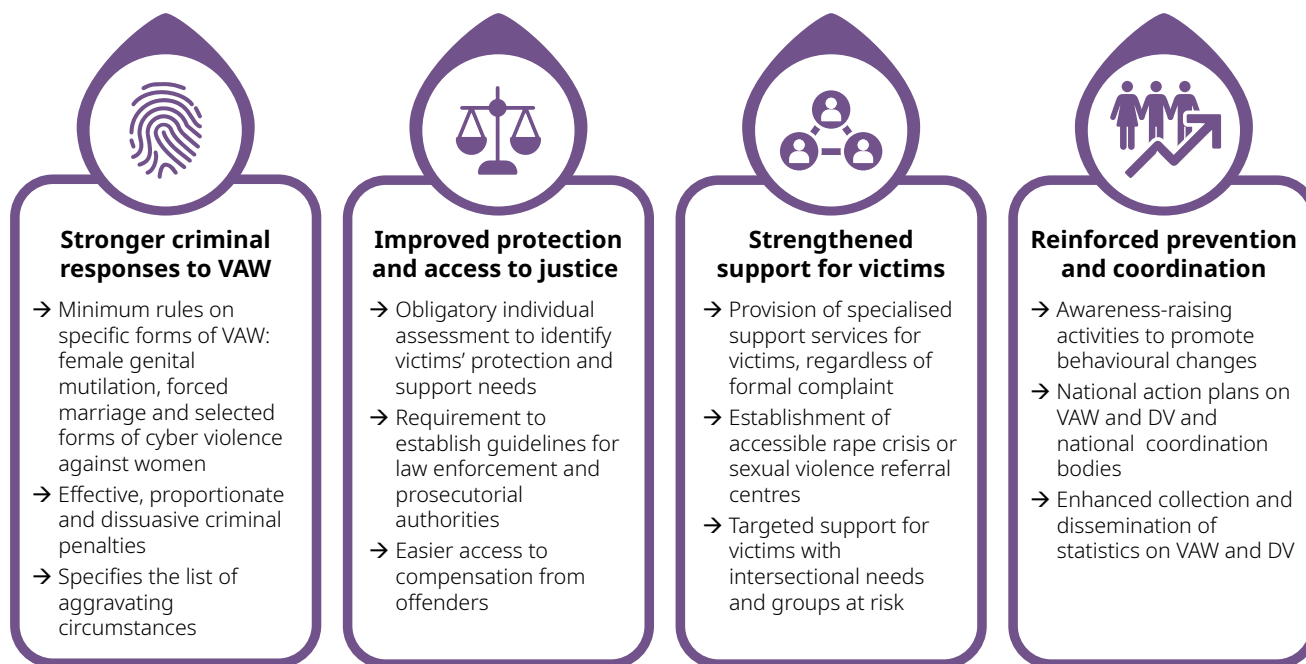
Source: Produced by the author.

The most momentous policy shift included bridging the EU's legal framework with the Council of Europe's Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence, widely known as the gold standard in combating violence against women and girls. This action was reflected in two major achievements: the EU's long-deliberated accession to the Istanbul Convention, concluded in June 2023, and long-awaited approval of the directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on combating violence against women and domestic violence (Directive (EU) 2024/1385) in May 2024 (Council of the European Union, 2023a, 2023b; European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2024). The European Parliament's and the Council's determination to take steps towards protecting women from violence more efficiently across the EU was welcomed by women's rights organisations, activists and those working with victims (European Women's Lobby, 2024; International Planned Parenthood Federation, 2024; WAVE, 2024a).

The first-ever directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence lays down much-needed foundations for more coherent prevention and protection standards throughout the EU (Picchi, 2022). To this end, the directive aims to complement previously existing EU legal and policy instruments to ensure that offences related to violence against women and domestic violence are tackled in a targeted way and that victims' needs are fully accommodated (European Commission, 2022a). This sectoral legislation – developed to complement cross-cutting instruments that apply to all victims – further advances the measures proposed among others in the EU's strategy on victims' rights (2020–2025), strategy on the rights of the child and strategy on combatting trafficking in human beings 2021–2025 (European Commission, 2020b, 2021a, 2021b) and in the revised EU anti-trafficking directive (entering into force in 2024).

The directive's provisions cut across four layers of policy: the criminalisation of and sanctions for selected offences related to violence against women, victims' protection, access to justice, and strengthening coordination and cooperation at the national and EU levels, as illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Four main components of the EU directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence (2024)



NB: DV, domestic violence; VAW, violence against women.

Source: Produced by the author.

More specifically, to achieve greater coherence between Member States' criminalisation frameworks, the directive obliges Member States to criminalise acts amounting to female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage, and gives particular attention to acts of violence against women linked to online spaces facilitated by technologies, such as the non-consensual sharing of intimate or manipulated material, cyberstalking, cyber harassment and cyber incitement to violence or hatred. Member States are also required to ensure that the perpetrator's acts are met with criminal punishments that are effective, proportionate and dissuasive and in line with maximum terms of imprisonment specified by the directive and to consider as aggravating circumstances several factors specific to violence against women.

Moreover, more emphasis is put on strengthening efforts to mitigate the harm of cyber violence, by ensuring that Member States have at their disposal effective measures to promptly remove or disable access to intimate or manipulated material that has been shared non-consensually, incites violence or hatred, or constitutes cyber harassment. To this end, the directive works in synergy with the Digital Services Act (Regulation (EU) 2022/2065) (European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2022).

From the perspective of victims, the directive brings further developments with regard to individual assessments to identify victims' needs for protection and support, and referral mechanisms, as well as comprehensively regulating Member States' obligations in the area of victim support. These developments largely build on the standards of the Istanbul Convention, especially in relation to specialised services offered to victims of sexual violence, shelters and 24-hour state-wide helplines. While the directive does not introduce a consent-based definition of

rape (initially included in the proposal launched in 2022) (European Commission, 2022a), the instrument encourages Member States to promote changes in behavioural patterns in sexual relationships to prevent rape.

EU institutions' commitment to adapt and implement ambitious violence against women legislation is largely mirrored at the national level, even if vast differences persist across Member States, as outlined in the following section.

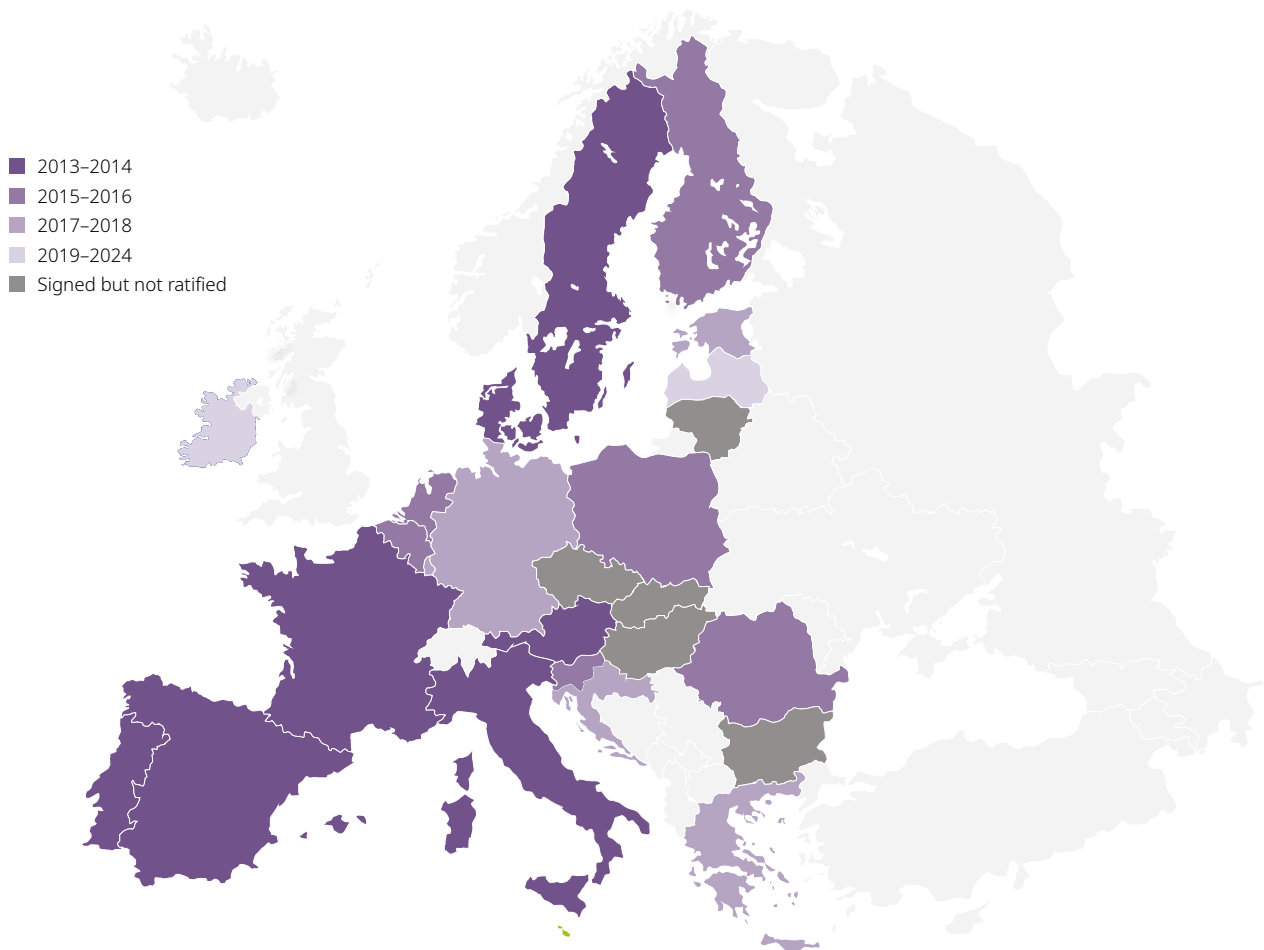
1.2. Legal and policy frameworks at the national level – patterns and systemic challenges

Persistent challenges in national policy commitments to end violence against women

Most Member States (21) ⁽³⁾ have current national action plans on violence against women. For the countries that do not, violence against women is usually covered in their broader national gender equality action plans, as, for example, in Bulgaria, Greece and Cyprus. Similarly, legislation on violence against women may differ greatly between countries. For example, a handful of Member States have a specific law on violence against women or specific provisions on violence against women in laws on domestic violence (e.g. ES, CY, LT); however, all have specific articles on various forms of violence. All Member States have a legal article on rape, even though only some define rape based on consent (e.g. BE, EL, ES, HR).

⁽³⁾ BE, CZ, DK, DE, EE, IE, ES, FR, HR, LV, LT, LU, MT, NL, AT, PL, PT, SI, SK, FI, SE.

Figure 3. Ratification status of the Istanbul Convention across the EU by year of ratification (2024)



Source: Produced by the author based on Council of Europe data.

All Member States and the EU have signed the Istanbul Convention and most have also ratified it (Figure 3). In 2011, 12 countries signed the Istanbul Convention ⁽⁴⁾. The first three Member States to ratify the convention in 2013 were Italy, Austria and Portugal. Germany, Ireland, Greece and Luxembourg were some of the first to sign; however, it took them significantly longer (over five years) to ratify the convention.

As of December 2024, all but five countries had ratified the Istanbul Convention. These five countries were Bulgaria, Czechia, Lithuania, Hungary and Slovakia. Latvia most recently ratified the Istanbul Convention, in January 2024, and the convention entered into force on 1 May 2024.

Over the past decade, greater opposition to the Istanbul Convention has been seen from anti-gender movements. In countries that have yet to ratify the Istanbul Convention, the debate often centres around wanting to protect the ‘institution of marriage between a man and a woman’, as the movements see the Istanbul Convention as a threat to their values (Amnesty International,

⁽⁴⁾ DE, IE, EL, ES, FR, LU, AT, PT, SI, SK, FI, SE.

2022). The Hungarian parliament, for example, cited concerns about the gender equality terminology used in the Istanbul Convention and voted in 2020 against ratifying the convention (The Advocates for Human Rights, NANE Women's Rights Association and Patent, 2021). Similarly, opponents in Czechia and Lithuania to ratifying the convention question the term 'gender', which they see as a threat to traditional family values and a danger to the education of children.

Significant differences in Member States' compliance with the Istanbul Convention

In addition to the five countries that have yet to ratify the convention, Latvia is the sixth Member State that has not undergone the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) evaluation process, as the country only ratified the Istanbul Convention in 2024. Six countries (DK, ES, AT, PT, FI, SE) have already completed the first thematic evaluation round, entitled 'Building trust by delivering support, protection and justice'. In five countries, the related reports were issued in 2023; in Spain, the report was issued in 2024.

Overall, GREVIO has observed positive developments in all countries. For example, Austrian criminal law covers a comprehensive list of criminal offences and provides extensive legal and psychosocial court assistance to victims of violent crimes and sexual offences. Poland has made stalking a specific criminal offence, which has resulted in a growing body of case-law including offline and online manifestations of harassment and stalking. In GREVIO's evaluation of Romania, it highlighted the first steps taken to address sexual violence through the adoption of a national strategy for preventing and combating violence.

However, GREVIO points to persistent and common challenges in many countries, such as the need to improve women-centred policies (e.g. BE, HR, NL), as violence against women is a systemic issue that often sees women as the victims of male violence. Furthermore, in the majority of Member States (e.g. DE, EL, PL, SE) intersectional needs remain unmet, often leaving migrant women, women seeking asylum, women with disabilities and Roma women, among others, in vulnerable situations and at risk of intersectional discrimination. Intersectional discrimination needs to feature more strongly in countries' national strategies.

National action plans on the prevention and elimination of violence against women vary in scope and focus

Most countries have national action plans, although they tend to have different focuses. For example, some plans recognise gender-based violence (e.g. CY, LU, MT), domestic violence and intimate partner violence (e.g. DK, PL, SI), or focus on gender equality generally, including measures to end violence against women (e.g. BG, EL, FR).

Overall, national action plans cover a variety of areas, such as developing measures to prevent and protect women against violence; assisting victims of violence against women and domestic violence; strengthening policies and legal measures; collecting data; addressing issues of sexual

misconduct; combating sexual violence and sexual harassment; tackling and preventing family violence; punishing perpetrators; and establishing a coordinated approach to tackling violence against women.

Progress in addressing specific forms of violence against women

Violence against women



The Istanbul Convention defines violence against women as ‘a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women and shall mean all acts of gender-based violence that result in, or are likely to result in, physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life’ (Council of Europe, 2011a, p. 3).

The majority of Member States do not have a specific law on violence against women. Spain’s legislation specifically addressing violence against women – its Organic Law 1/2004 on comprehensive protection measures – can be considered an exception. Generally, violence against women is criminalised as part of other legal provisions, for example through domestic violence laws.

Domestic violence and intimate partner violence



Domestic violence is described in the Istanbul Convention as ‘all acts of physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence that occur within the family or domestic unit or between former or current spouses or partners, whether or not the perpetrator shares or has shared the same residence with the victim’ (Council of Europe, 2011a, p. 8).

Domestic violence is criminalised in all Member States, but not always through a legal provision. Most domestic violence laws refer to family members and/or intimate relationships as well as including physical, sexual and psychological abuse, although verbal psychological violence may be considered a less serious crime (e.g. Slovenia) (Association for Nonviolent Communication and Association SOS Helpline for Women and Children – Victims of Violence, 2019, p. 9). In Bulgaria, domestic violence is only recognised in heterosexual relationships (Dunstan, 2023; Free Europe, 2023).

Countries such as Ireland and Sweden have also seen an increasing push towards using gender-neutral language when discussing domestic violence. These countries are working to make domestic violence services accessible to men and to have the same funding be made available for men’s services as women’s services.

Even though a Europe-wide protection order for survivors of violence exists, in reality this measure may not always be very effective, depending on the efficiency and response of judicial and law enforcement systems (European Commission, 2020b).

Sexual harassment



According to the Istanbul Convention, sexual harassment is ‘any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person, in particular when creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment’.

Some countries’ legislation on sexual harassment primarily focuses on the workplace (e.g. EL, LV), while other countries address sexual harassment generally. Finland’s newly amended criminal code on sexual offences broadened the definition of sexual harassment from involving only inappropriate touching to include perpetrators’ ‘verbal harassment, sending or showing a message or a picture, taking a picture or exposing himself or herself to another person’ (Ministry of Justice Finland, 2023).

Rape and consent-based rape laws



The Istanbul Convention describes rape as the ‘non-consensual vaginal, anal or oral penetration of a sexual nature of the body of another person with any bodily part or object’, and includes any ‘other non-consensual acts of a sexual nature with a person’ or ‘causing another person to engage in non-consensual acts of a sexual nature with a third person’. Article 36 of the Istanbul Convention clearly defines consent as being ‘given voluntarily as the result of the person’s free will assessed in the context of the surrounding circumstances’. In line with the Istanbul Convention, the legal definition of rape should reflect an emphasis on consent.

While all Member States have some legislation on rape, only around half have consent-based rape legislation (BE, DK, DE, IE, EL, ES, HR, LU, MT, NL, SI, FI, SE). However, in Greece, despite the law recognising consent-based rape, it distinguishes between two types of rape: as a result of violence and as a result of lack of consent. In many other Member States, for a crime to be considered rape, ‘the law still requires coercion, the use of force or threats of force to have been used – or the inability to defend oneself’ (Amnesty International, 2020). Therefore, countries, such as Estonia, France, Italy, Poland and Romania do not include consent in their legal definition of rape (EPRS, 2024).

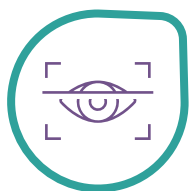
Femicide



The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) defines femicide as the killing of women and girls because of their gender (EIGE, 2016a).

In 2024, Croatia joined the only other three Member States (BE, CY, MT) that have implemented a legal definition of femicide (WAVE, 2024b). Belgium adopted the Stop Femicide Law in 2023, which enshrines a definition of femicide in law and enhances protection for abuse survivors (Plesea, 2023).

Stalking



Stalking is described in the Istanbul Convention as ‘the intentional conduct of repeatedly engaging in threatening conduct directed at another person, causing her or him to fear for her or his safety.

All Member States have introduced legal frameworks to criminalise stalking in one form or another, for example through harassment legislation (EIGE, 2022a). In some Member States, ‘the intimate partner or domestic context is recognised as an aggravating factor for stalking’ (EIGE, 2022a, p. 52). Italy, for example, first introduced stalking in its criminal code in 2009, defining a stalker as someone who ‘repeatedly threatens or harasses someone in such a way as to cause a serious and constant state of distress or fear or to provoke within the victim(s) a well-founded fear for his/her own safety or for the safety of relatives or partners, or to force the victim(s) to change his/her living habits’ (Polizia di Stato, n.d.). In comparison, Bulgaria, Estonia, France and the Netherlands do not have separate legal provisions on stalking. In the Netherlands, stalking falls under the offence of harassment, and in Bulgaria stalking only applies to intimate partners.

Forced marriage



Forced marriage, according to the Istanbul Convention, is the ‘intentional conduct of forcing an adult or a child to enter into a marriage’.

In more than half of Member States, forced marriage is recognised as a stand-alone offence; however, in some countries, including Denmark and Latvia, forced marriage is only criminalised when the victims are children.

Female genital mutilation



FGM refers to all procedures that involve the partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs, for non-medical reasons (WHO, 2018).

Denmark, Greece, France, Luxembourg and Portugal, among others, classify FGM as a stand-alone offence (28 Too Many, 2021). In countries where FGM is not classified as a separate offence, either there is no specific provision, which leaves FGM criminalised indirectly as a form of bodily harm, or FGM-related offences fall under other general criminal provisions. Portugal has taken big steps in the area of FGM through three consecutive programmes of action, which has made them a pioneer in this area (GREVIO, 2019).

Cyber violence



Cyber violence is gender-based violence that is perpetrated through electronic communication and the internet, and can take place through various online communications in many different forms (European Commission: Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, 2020).

Most countries are only now establishing legislation on cyber violence. Luxembourg's national action plan on equality, for example, includes cyber violence as a new area of focus. Germany has introduced some criminalisation in the digital dimension, for example of cyberstalking, unauthorised taking of pictures of private bodily parts, the sharing of images online and the use of stalkerware ⁽⁵⁾ (GREVIO, 2022). Across the EU, 'where cyber violence is covered by general offences, no specific reference is made to women' (EIGE, 2022b). Romania has legally defined cyber violence and, along with other countries (e.g. EL, CY, SI, SK), has implemented specific laws to target issues such as bullying, harassment and stalking in the online sphere (EIGE, 2022b). So far, legislation targeting cyber violence against women has only been adopted in Cyprus, Malta and Romania (EIGE, 2022b).

Significant progress has been made across the EU in addressing violence against women through national legislation. The increased recognition of psychological abuse and the introduction of legislation on new forms of violence, like cyber violence, are evident. Nevertheless, none of the Member States has achieved full compliance with the Istanbul Convention, and five Member States still have to ratify it. Overall, countries fall short in the implementation of intersectional approaches and the consistent application of consent-based rape laws. Addressing these legislative gaps will be crucial in ensuring that all forms of violence against women are adequately covered in law, allowing victims to receive the protection and support they need.

1.3. Specialised support services in the EU: still a long way to minimum provision

Support services are essential to protect women victims of violence against women from experiencing further violence, to address their immediate needs, and to help them recover and rebuild their lives. They play a critical role in limiting the impact of violence on women's physical, mental and economic well-being. The Istanbul Convention includes the obligation for states parties to provide access to both general and specialised support services. These should be adequately funded and resourced and meet specific quality standards ⁽⁶⁾. Services must be based on a gender-based understanding of violence against women, focusing on the safety and human rights of victims, and not be dependent on whether the victim has pressed charges or agreed to be a witness. This section presents an overview of the specialised services provided in Member States and the extent to which they meet the requirements set out in the Istanbul Convention. It also

⁽⁵⁾ Stalkerware is considered spyware – which is software that is downloaded onto a device to track somebody's activities – in the context of domestic violence.

⁽⁶⁾ Chapter IV of the Istanbul Convention states the obligations of states parties with regard to the protection and support of victims.

discusses the estimated level of unmet need for services and some of the systemic challenges these services face in supporting victims.

The information is based on the extensive data collected and validated by the Women Against Violence Europe network (Floriani and Dudouet, 2023).

Contrasting pictures across the EU depending on the type of service

All Member States provide specialised support services for women victims of violence. However, due to the diversity of legal and policy frameworks on violence against women (see Section 1.2), the provision of services and compliance with the standards set by the Istanbul Convention vary greatly across countries and types of services.

National helplines

Helplines allow women to discuss their experiences and fears with trained professionals, who can provide crucial moral support, information and referrals to further services, including shelters. The Istanbul Convention requires states parties to set up free state-wide helplines that operate 24/7. While not a formal requirement, the Istanbul Convention encourages states parties to offer support in several languages.

With the exception of Belgium, Czechia, Malta, the Netherlands and Poland, all Member States have national women's helplines (Table 1). In most Member States, helplines meet all three standards set by the Istanbul Convention (EIGE, 2016b, 2017b).

Table 1. Overview of national helplines supporting women victims of violence by Member State (2022)

Member State	HELPLINES				
	Number of national helplines	Free of charge	24/7 service available	Multilingual support available	Meet IC standards
BE	0	n/a	n/a	n/a	✘
BG	2	✓	✓	✘	✓
CZ	0	n/a	n/a	n/a	✘
DK	1	✓	✓	✓	✓
DE	1	✓	✓	✓	✓
EE	1	✓	✓	✓	✓
IE	2	✓	✓	✓	✓
EL	2	✓	✓	✓	✓
ES	1	✓	✓	✓	✓
FR	1	✓	✓	✓	✓
HR	2	✓	✓	✓	✓
IT	1	✓	✓	✓	✓
CY	2	✓	✓	✓	✓
LV	1	✓	✘	✓	✘
LT	1	✓	✓	✓	✓
LU	1	✓	✘	✓	✘
HU	3	✓	✘	✓	Not all
MT	0	n/a	n/a	n/a	✘
NL	0	n/a	n/a	n/a	✘
AT	1	✓	✓	✓	✓
PL	0	n/a	n/a	n/a	✘
PT	1	✓	✓	✘	✓
RO	1	✓	✓	✓	✓
SI	1	✓	✓	✓	✓
SK	1	✓	✓	✘	✓
FI	1	✓	✓	✓	✓
SE	2	✓	✓	✓	✓

NB: IC, Istanbul Convention; n/a, not applicable.

Source: Floriani and Dudouet, 2023.

In 2022, the European Commission launched a unique, EU-wide helpline number. The number, 116 016, was set up to ensure that women could access help and support regardless of where in the EU they were calling from. Upon launching the helpline, 15 Member States committed to connecting their national helpline to the number, with a view to connecting all EU national helplines by 2023 (European Commission, 2022b).

Women's centres

Women's centres provide a wide range of services, such as information; counselling; and legal, practical and socioeconomic support. In doing so, they aim to meet the needs of women victims of violence.

While not explicitly mentioned in the Istanbul Convention or in its explanatory report, the Council of Europe recommends setting up at least one counselling centre for survivors of violence against women for every 50 000 women in the population.

In 2022, an estimated 2 995 support centres were operating across the EU, run mainly by non-governmental organisations and government services. An EU average of 76 257 women in the population per centre falls short of the Istanbul Convention's recommendation. In 2022, only seven Member States met this recommendation (EE, ES, HR, LU, MT, PT, SE).

Women's shelters

Women's shelters provide immediate and accessible safe accommodation, medical services, legal aid and counselling for women victims of violence. In most cases, women can be accommodated with their children and for extended periods. The Istanbul Convention calls on states parties to provide shelters based on actual needs, but at least one shelter bed per 10 000 population (Council of Europe, 2011b, Art. 23, para. 135). The convention also recommends that such shelters be specialised for women victims of violence and provide support and services tailored to their complex needs.

Based on data from Women Against Violence Europe, in 2022, women experiencing violence and their children had access to an estimated 1 616 women's shelters in the EU, providing slightly over 27 000 beds (Table 2). Most shelters were accessible 24/7. In 13 Member States, accommodation in shelters was provided free of charge, and some countries asked women for a fee that was either fixed or income based.

Table 2. Provision of women’s shelters and their characteristics by Member State (2022)

Member State	SHELTERS							
	Total number	Women-only shelters	24/7 access available	Free of charge	Number of beds available	Estimated % of beds missing	Estimated population per bed	Meet IC standards
BE	56	39	Most	✗	2 521	0	4 608	✓
BG	13	13	✓	✓	128	81	50 644	✗
CZ	22	7	Only one	✗	200	81	52 584	✗
DK	85	70	Most	✗	878	0	6 690	✓
DE	380	380	Most	✗	2 720	67	30 602	✗
ET	18	18	✓	✓	170	0	7 834	✓
IR	—	21	Most	✗	149	71	33 960	✗
GR	22	22	Some	✓	410	60	25 512	✗
ES	n/a	276	✓	✓	3 639	23	13 035	✗
FR	111	54	Most	✗	4 905	28	13 855	✗
HR	25	11	Most	✓	346	10	11 163	✗
IT	n/a	431	Most	✓	3 200	46	18 447	✗
CY	5	4	✓	—	79	13	11 452	✗
LV	—	17	Most	✓	—	—	—	✗
LT	0	0	—	—	0	100	—	✗
LU	—	7	Most	Income based	219	0	2 947	✓
HU	53	0	—	—	304	69	31 872	✗
MT	6	5	✓	✗	95	0	5 484	✓
NL	73	25	Most	✗	1 300	26	13 531	✗
AT	32	30	Most	✗	839	7	10 702	✗
PL	37	1	✓	✓	633	83	58 278	✗
PT	37	35	Most	✓	631	39	16 406	✗
RU	156	114	Most	✓	1 260	34	15 113	✗
SL	29	26	Some	✗	432	0	4 878	✓
SK	N/a	9	Most	✗	183	66	29 698	✗
FI	29	1	✓	✓	230	59	24 123	✗
SV	282	—	Some	✓	1 653	0	6 323	✓
EU 27	1 471	1 616	Most	In 13 Ms	27 124	39	16 473	✗

NB: IC, Istanbul Convention; MS, Member State.

Source: Floriani and Dudouet, 2023.

With one shelter bed available per about 16 000 population, the EU is falling behind the minimum standard set by the Istanbul Convention. This average masks a variety of national realities. For example, the highest rates of coverage of shelters per population are found in Luxembourg (1 shelter bed for 2 947 inhabitants) and Belgium (1 shelter bed per 4 608 inhabitants), while coverage is lowest in Poland, Czechia and Bulgaria (Table 2).

Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Luxembourg, Malta, Slovenia and Sweden meet the minimum standards of the convention. Other Member States report significant levels of missing shelter beds.

Cost-of-living crisis adds to long-standing systemic challenges

Specialised support services for women victims of violence in the EU face several systemic challenges that hinder their effectiveness and accessibility. These challenges are multifaceted, involving legal, financial, social and institutional factors.

Legal, financial and political challenges

Some countries lack robust legislation or fail to enforce existing laws effectively, leaving victims without sufficient protection. Additionally, public funding for these services is often unstable and inadequate. Many support organisations, mostly non-governmental organisations, frequently face financial uncertainty.

Changes in government or policy priorities can lead to fluctuations in support for services, including cuts to funding or shifts in focus away from gender-based violence. For example, as discussed in Section 1.2, in several Member States anti-gender movements have been increasingly vocal and influential in the public debate on gender equality and gender-based violence, which can negatively affect the level of priority given to addressing gender-based violence in the national political agenda.

Accessibility and availability of services to specific groups of victims of violence against women

The uneven geographical distribution of shelters, which are mainly located in countries' capitals or largest cities, makes rural areas particularly deprived. Women from marginalised communities, such as migrants, women with disabilities and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex (LGBTQI) individuals, encounter further obstacles, including language barriers, cultural differences and discrimination. These factors contribute to a situation where women in the most vulnerable positions often find it hardest to access the support they need.

Social and cultural barriers

Social and cultural barriers play a crucial role in limiting access to support. Stigma and victim-blaming attitudes, deeply ingrained in some communities, discourage women from coming forward. In addition, there is often a lack of awareness about available services, particularly among those who may benefit most.

Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis on women's support services

Women's specialised support services were greatly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The organisations dealt with increased demand for their services while adjusting to new ways of working. This included adjusting working conditions and service delivery models, implementing health and safety measures in shelters, and offering remote counselling and support options. The cost-of-living crisis refers to the recent dramatic rise in the prices of essential goods such as food, energy and housing. This situation was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which began in 2020, and the onset of the Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine in 2022, leading to high inflation rates across Europe.

In order to investigate the impact of the crisis on victim support, an online survey of service providers entitled 'Impact of cost-of-living crisis on specialised women's support services (2020 to 2023)' was carried out ⁽⁷⁾.

The survey received 32 responses from women's helplines, centres and shelters in 16 Member States ⁽⁸⁾. A majority of organisations (88 %) reported increased demand for their services, with over half noting a significant rise. Additionally, the crisis led to a marked increase in staff overtime (72 %), and a large proportion of respondents (59 %) expressed concerns about decreased staff morale and well-being.

Funding changes emerged as another impact, with 44 % of respondents reporting increases in state funding and 41 % seeing a rise in private donations. However, most organisations indicated that local funding levels remained unchanged. A major challenge was the decreased ability to cover essential operational costs such as energy and rent, which affected every second organisation (53 %). This financial strain also hindered many organisations from maintaining reserve funds, affecting their long-term sustainability.

The helpline services managed to maintain stable staff numbers, although increased workloads were evident. Over three quarters of helplines experienced a rise in calls and case complexity, with 63 % reporting a significant increase in case difficulty. The overall workload rose for 95 % of helpline providers, even though improved quality of support was noted by more than half of respondents (58 %).

Women's centres and shelters faced similar challenges. The majority (80 %) experienced a rise in the number of women they assisted, with a near-universal increase in case complexity. The demand for shelters increased (73 % observed extended stays for women) and the majority of shelters (93 %) reported more complex workloads. Despite these pressures, only a third of shelters increased their operational hours, underlining the ongoing resource shortages many organisations face amid the cost-of-living crisis.

⁽⁷⁾ The questionnaire is provided in Annex 4. It was distributed by email to specialised support providers in the 27 Member States.

⁽⁸⁾ BE, BG, CZ, DK, EE, IE, EL, ES, HR, IT, CY, LV, LT, HU, AT, PT.

2. Composite measure of the extent of violence against women in the EU

In 2015, EIGE presented its first attempt at populating the domain of violence of the Gender Equality Index by developing a composite indicator of violence against women for the domain (EIGE, 2015). The report did not provide scores for individual Member States but instead clustered them into three broad groups according to their levels of disclosed violence in relation to the EU average (EIGE, 2015, p. 131). For the third edition of the Gender Equality Index, a three-tiered structure of measurement was determined as the most likely to provide a comprehensive measurement of the phenomenon of violence against women in the EU, including (1) a set of indicators on the extent of violence against women that would form the composite measure, (2) a set of additional indicators covering a broader range of forms of violence and (3) a set of contextual factors for the advanced interpretation of the first and second sets of indicators. In this report, only the set of indicators aggregated into a composite measure are described ⁽⁹⁾.

The composite measure synthesises the complexity of the extent of violence against women in an easy-to-understand measure. The objective is to provide a comprehensive picture of (1) the prevalence of violence against women, (2) the impact of violence on women's lives and (3) women's readiness to disclose their experiences (EIGE, 2017b). The composite measure also serves to increase awareness of the phenomenon of violence against women; to monitor change in the phenomenon over time, if data are available; and to draw attention to the importance of holding Member States accountable for acting to eradicate violence against women.

The structure of the composite measure, the concepts measured and specific indicators are presented in Table 3. The calculation of the composite measure for 2024 differs in several ways from the calculation carried out in 2017 due to slight differences in methodologies between the EU-wide survey on violence against women carried out in 2012 by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights and the EU GBV survey (2021 wave) ⁽¹⁰⁾. These differences are mentioned in Table 3 and are further explained in Annex 1.

⁽⁹⁾ The complete framework for measuring violence against women is presented in the report *Gender Equality Index 2017 – Measurement framework of violence against women* (EIGE, 2017b).

⁽¹⁰⁾ Data collection took place between September 2020 and March 2024.

Table 3. Structure of the composite measure of violence against women and changes since the 2017 edition

Sub-domain	Concept measured	Indicators and data source used in 2024	Differences from the 2017 edition
Prevalence	Physical and/or sexual violence and femicide	Percentage of women having experienced physical and/or sexual violence by any perpetrator since the age of 15 (among those aged 18–74); EU GBV survey (2021 wave).	Physical and sexual violence include threats
		Percentage of women having experienced physical and/or sexual violence by any perpetrator in the past 12 months (among those aged 18–74); EU GBV survey (2021 wave).	
		Percentage of women victims of intentional homicide by a current or former partner or family member, per 100 000 inhabitants; Eurostat (crim_hom_vrel) (2021 wave).	No difference
Severity	Health-related consequences of violence and multiple victimisation	Percentage of women having experienced health-related consequences of physical and/or sexual violence since the age of 15 (among those aged 18–74); EU GBV survey (2021 wave).	Consequences for psychological health are captured only for cases of repeated violence
		Percentage of women having experienced health-related consequences of physical and/or sexual violence in the past 12 months (among those aged 18–74); EU GBV survey (2021 wave).	
		Percentage of women having experienced violence from several types of perpetrators (among those aged 18–74); EU GBV survey (2021 wave).	Types of perpetrators are categorised differently
Disclosure	Disclosure of violence to institutions and to anyone else	Percentage of women having experienced physical and/or sexual violence since the age of 15 and not having told anyone (among those aged 18–74); EU GBV survey (2021 wave).	Time frame is 'since the age of 15' instead of 'in the past 12 months'

Source: Produced by the author.

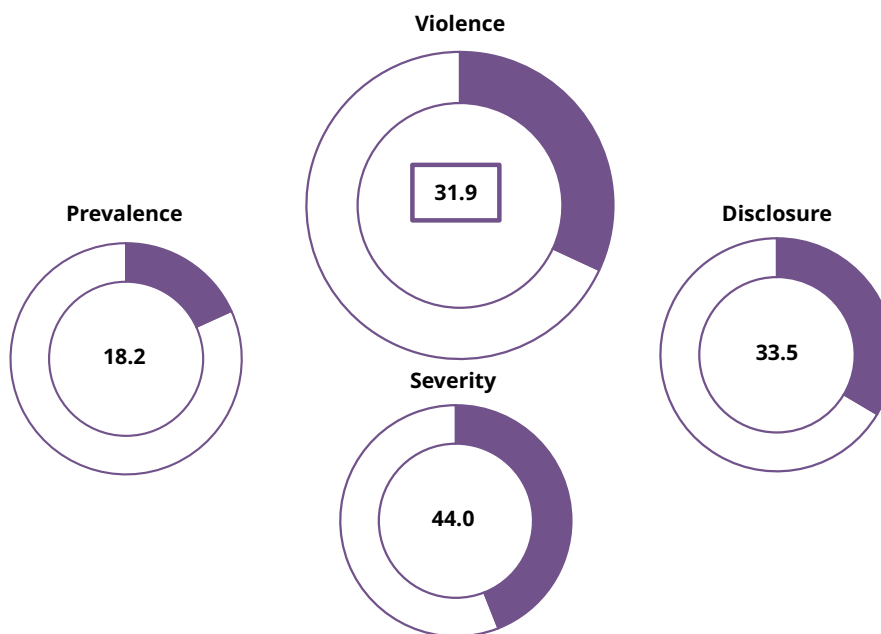
2.1. Composite measure scores

Unlike the general score of the Gender Equality Index, for which the higher the score the closer the country is to achieving equality between women and men in all areas of life, the composite measure of violence against women is interpreted in the opposite way. This means that the higher the score of the composite measure, the more serious the phenomenon of violence against women is in the country, reflecting how prevalent, severe and under-reported violence is. Using a scale of 1 to 100, the metric highlights the situation of Member States against two extremes, with 1 representing a situation in which violence is non-existent, and 100 representing the complete opposite situation, in which violence against women is extremely common, highly severe and not disclosed.

The composite measure is calculated based on the EU GBV survey (2021 wave). Since the willingness of respondents to disclose and discuss experiences of violence, especially when they have not shared them with anyone before, can depend on many factors – some of them related to the interview process (WHO and PATH, 2005) – it is important to note that the composite measure accounts for disclosed violence rather than indicating the true extent of violence in each country.

Figure 4 shows the overall scores for the composite measure and each of the three sub-domains for the 12 Member States for which the composite measure could be calculated (EU-12) ⁽¹¹⁾. The sub-domains of severity and disclosure have the highest scores and contribute the most to the overall score for the EU. The figure shows that for the 12 Member States violence against women is prevalent, severe and under-reported.

Figure 4. Scores for the composite measure of violence against women (points, EU-12)



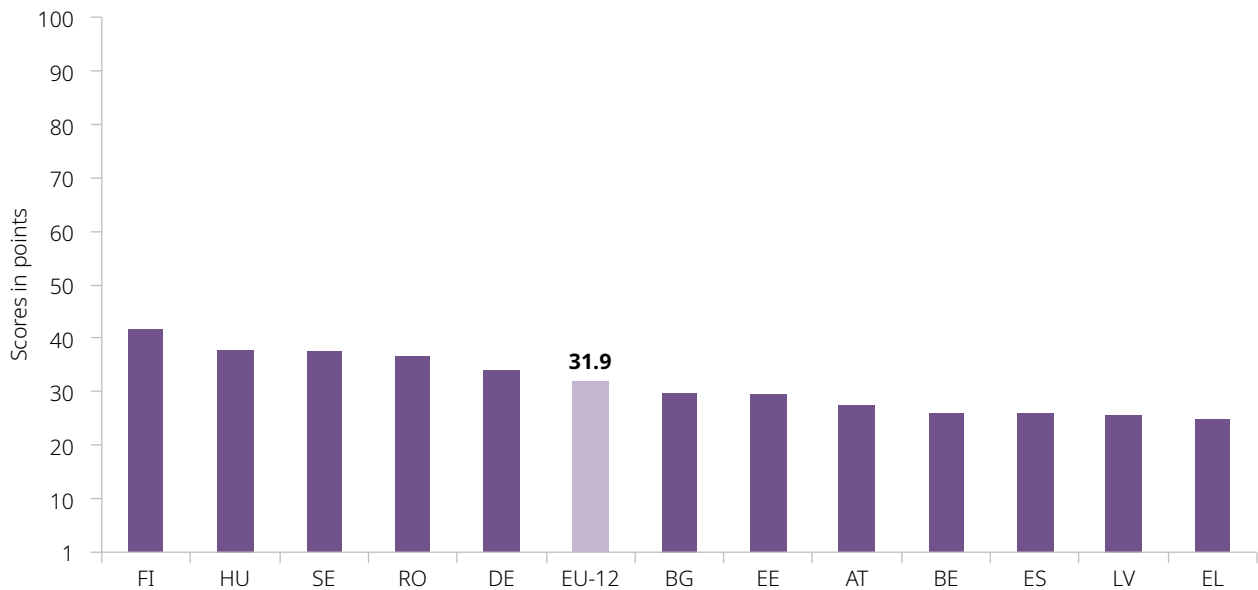
Source: Author's calculations based on the EU GBV survey (2021 wave).

Figure 5 presents these scores for each Member State. As the figure shows, the overall scores for the composite measure of violence range from 24.6 for Greece to 41.7 for Finland, with an EU average of 31.9. Overall, the figure shows that for the 12 Member States violence against women is prevalent, severe and under-reported.

Due to the complex nature of the phenomenon of violence and its aspects, the interpretation of the composite measure is not straightforward. Therefore, to better understand the scores, it is important to analyse the situations of countries at the sub-domain and variable levels.

⁽¹¹⁾ For more details on the methodology for calculations, please see Annex 1.

Figure 5. Scores for the composite measure of violence against women by Member State (points, EU-12)

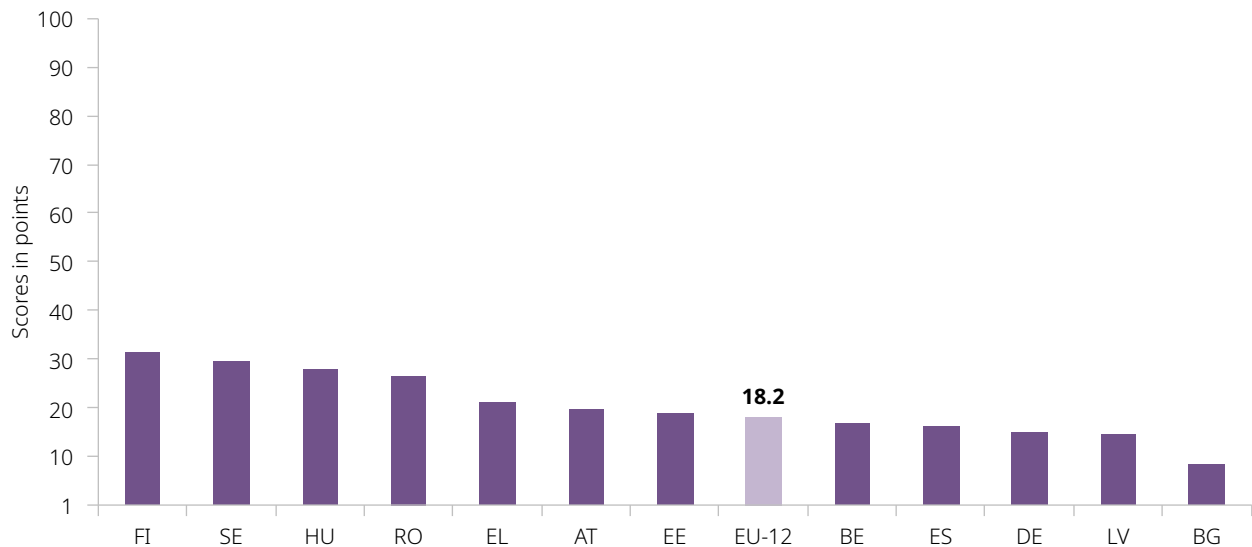


Source: Author's calculations based on the EU GBV survey (2021 wave).

2.2. Sub-domain of prevalence

The prevalence sub-domain indicates the percentage of women who have experienced violence across the EU. It is made up of three indicators, including the percentage of women having experienced physical violence (including threats) and/or sexual violence by any perpetrator in their lifetime, the percentage of women having experienced physical violence (including threats) and/or sexual violence by any perpetrator in the 12 months before the survey and the intentional homicide of women – that is, femicide ⁽¹²⁾. While the first two indicators are self-reported and may therefore be influenced by various biases, femicide is measured through official homicide statistics, providing a more nuanced view. For example, it is unlikely that a country such as Latvia, with the highest recorded number of femicides in the EU, would also have one of the lowest levels of reported sexual and physical violence in the EU. This discrepancy makes it likely that not all women in Latvia feel comfortable reporting gender-based violence. Therefore, it provides an example of systemic under-reporting (EIGE, 2017b, p. 35).

⁽¹²⁾ Femicide, although included in the theoretical framework of the study, was excluded from the calculation of the composite measure of violence against women in the EU in the current study due to a lack of official, comparable EU-wide data. Femicide is an important indicator of severe violence against women. When EU-wide data is available in the future, femicide will be included in the calculation of the composite measure.

Figure 6. Scores for the sub-domain of prevalence (points, EU-12)

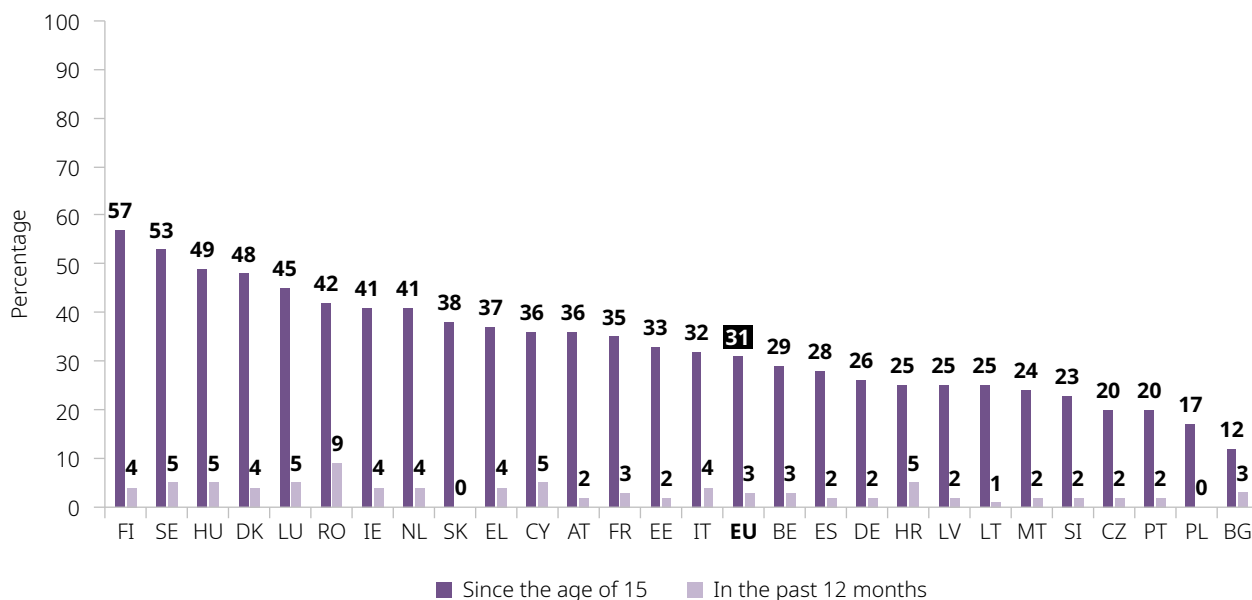
Source: Author's calculations based on the EU GBV survey (2021 wave).

The overall score for the sub-domain of prevalence is 18.2 (Figure 6); however, Member States' prevalence scores range from 8.3 in Bulgaria to 31.4 in Finland. The higher the score of the sub-domain, the higher the extent of violence disclosed by women. However, the higher score in Finland is not an indication that women in Finland experience almost four times as much violence as women in Bulgaria; instead, it could indicate that women in Finland feel more comfortable reporting their experience of violence against women in the survey. The higher percentage of women in Nordic countries reporting violence against women, while they are living in some of the EU's most gender equal societies, can be explained by the Nordic paradox. The Nordic paradox refers to the coexistence of high levels of gender equality and of violence against women (Gracia et al., 2019; Wemrell et al., 2019). Even though the Nordic paradox has yet to be explained and understood, Gracia et al. (2019, p. 29) suggested various theories to explain the paradox. These theories include 'multi-level complexity', meaning that interpersonal violence against women is affected by factors such as household dynamics, social networks, the neighbourhood women live in, their work environment and so much more than solely the level of gender equality in a country (Gracia et al., 2019, p. 29). Another explanation may also be that women in more gender-equal countries are more likely to recognise and report gender-based violence (Gracia and Merlo, 2016, p. 29). Similarly, Castro et al. (2024) found further possible explanations for the Nordic paradox; among the four examples they give are the 'macro–micro disconnect' between individual beliefs and societal norms, and the 'backlash effect', which refers to men's reaction to increases in gender equality (Castro et al., 2024, pp. 7–8).

In comparison, the countries ranking among the lowest and that directly follow Bulgaria, with the lowest score, in the prevalence sub-domain include Latvia (14.4), Germany (14.8) and Spain (16.1). At the opposite end of the scale, the three Member States following Finland, with the highest prevalence score, are Sweden (29.5), Hungary (27.8) and Romania (26.5).

One in three women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence in the EU

Figure 7. Percentages of women having experienced physical and/or sexual violence by any perpetrator since the age of 15 and in the previous 12 months (% , aged 18–74, EU-27)



Sources: Author’s calculations based on the EU GBV survey (2021 wave) (EU) and a national survey (Italy) that did not follow the EU GBV survey’s methodology (Istat, 2024), including women aged 18–70.

On average, about a third of women (31 %) in the EU indicated that they have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by any perpetrator since the age of 15 (Figure 7). However, significant differences between countries exist. In countries such as Bulgaria, Poland, Portugal, Czechia, Slovenia and Malta, under 25 % of women responded that they had experienced physical and/or sexual violence by any perpetrator since the age of 15. In comparison, more than half of the women surveyed in Sweden (53 %) and Finland (57 %) indicated that they had experienced violence, closely followed by Hungary (49 %), Denmark (48 %), Luxembourg (45 %), Romania (42 %), Ireland (41 %) and the Netherlands (41 %). This does not necessarily indicate that women in countries with a higher response rate experience more violence. Instead, it indicates that in these countries women feel more able to share their experiences openly, in line with the Nordic paradox (explained above).

The data disaggregated by type of perpetrator do not show significant differences across the EU. However, the differences between intimate partner violence and non-partner violence are highest in Hungary, the Netherlands and Romania. In the Netherlands, the prevalence of non-partner violence is higher than intimate partner violence by 19 percentage points (pp). In comparison, for both Hungary and Romania the prevalence of intimate partner violence is higher than non-partner violence, by 22 pp and 23 pp, respectively.

Young women experience physical and/or sexual violence at the highest rate

The percentage of women having encountered physical and/or sexual violence by any perpetrator in the 12 months before the survey is significantly lower than the percentage experiencing this since the age of 15, due to the shorter time frame. On average in the EU, 3 % of women report having experienced physical and/or sexual violence by any perpetrator in the 12 months before the survey.

Young women are in one of the most vulnerable positions. For both lifetime prevalence and prevalence in the previous 12 months, women aged 18–29 years most often report experiencing gender-based violence across all age groups. For example, 7 % of women between 18 and 29 years old report having encountered physical and/or sexual violence in the 12 months before the survey. The prevalence is highest in Romania (9 %), whereas in other Member States it ranges from 2 % to 5 %. In two thirds of cases, the perpetrators are intimate partners.

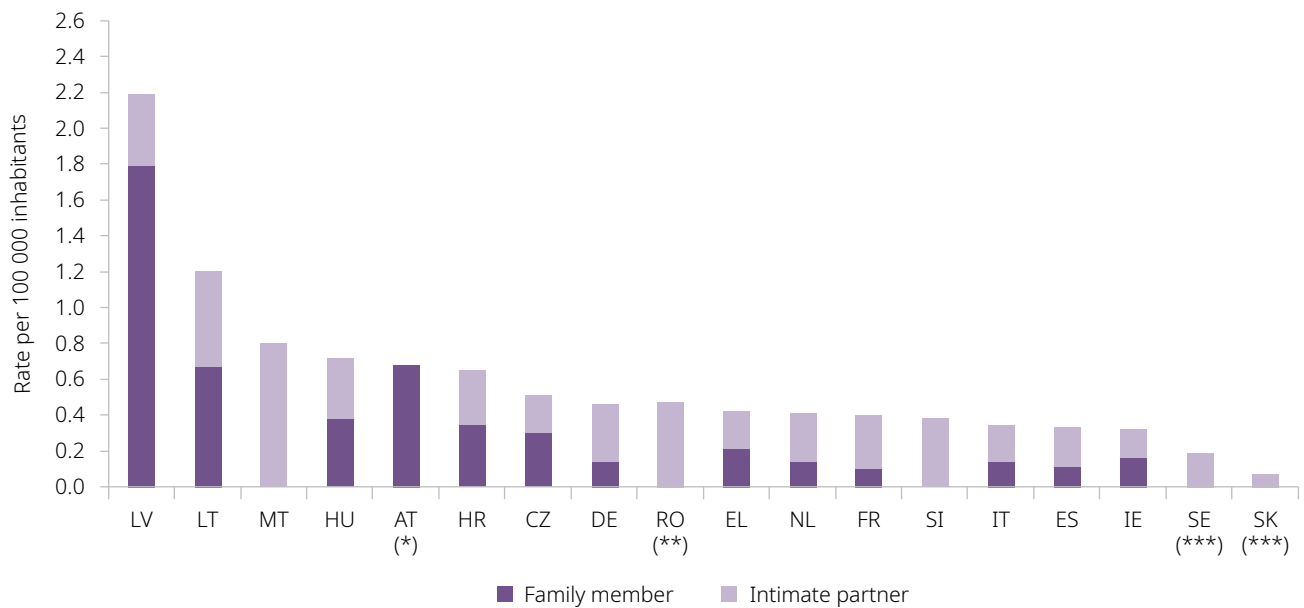
Tackling femicide requires strengthened legislation and consistent monitoring across the EU

Femicide is the most extreme form of violence against women. As previously outlined, only four Member States have femicide-specific legislation. Croatia adopted it most recently in 2024 (see Section 1.2). According to a report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and UN Women, in 2022 approximately 2 300 women in Europe were killed by intimate partners or family members (UNODC and UN Women, 2023). In the EU, the number of femicides is captured as the number of women victims of intentional homicide by an intimate partner, a relative or a family member (Figure 8) ⁽¹³⁾. Due to the existence of different legal definitions, comparing data on femicide across the EU comes with great challenges. Since 2013, the number of countries providing data on women victims of intentional homicide by an intimate partner or a family member has gradually increased, showing a growing awareness of femicide. In 2022, Latvia recorded the highest number of femicides per 100 000 inhabitants (Figure 8), followed by Lithuania and Malta. Malta and Slovenia only recorded femicides by intimate partners ⁽¹⁴⁾.

⁽¹³⁾ Data is collected from Eurostat and reflects official crime statistics from all Member States, including statistics from the police, prosecution services, courts and prisons. The data collected shows the number of intentional homicides; data on victims is disaggregated by sex and reflects their relationship with the perpetrator – that is, intimate partner or family member.

⁽¹⁴⁾ According to Eurostat (2023), 'Intimate partners are persons with whom a respondent has or had an intimate relationship', and the term "'Family member or relative'" includes blood relatives like parents and children, and other blood relatives that can be cohabitating or non-cohabitating, as well as other household members or relatives by marriage or adoption (e.g. siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, nephews, nieces, in-laws, etc.):

Figure 8. Women victims of intentional homicide by a family member, a relative or an intimate partner in Member States with available data (rate per 100 000 inhabitants, 2022)



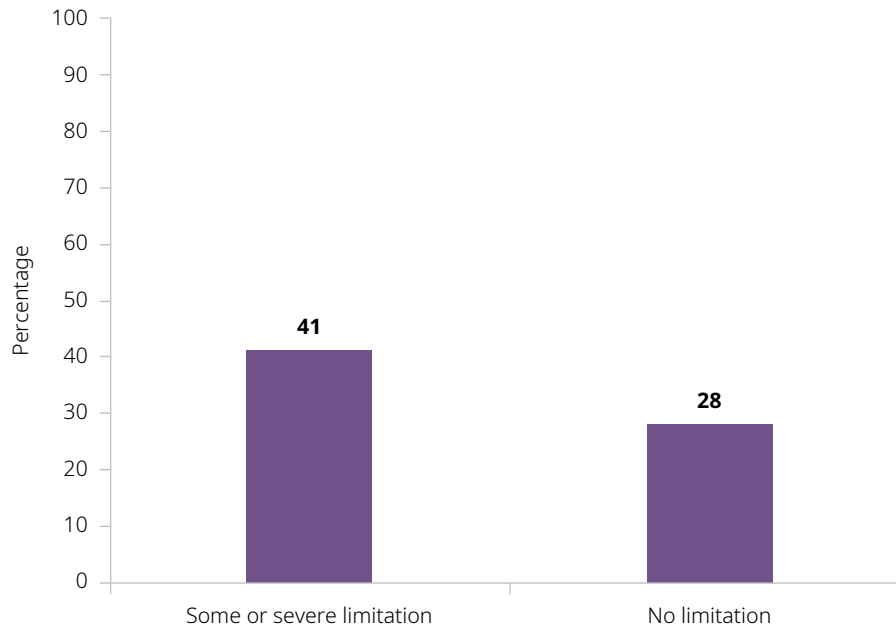
- (*) Data on the number of women victims of intentional homicide by an intimate partner in 2022 is not available for Austria.
- (**) Romania provided the total number of women victims of intentional homicide, but the data was not disaggregated by type of perpetrator.
- (***) Data on the number of women victims of intentional homicide by family and relatives in 2022 is not available for Slovakia or Sweden.

Source: Eurostat (crim_hom_vrel).

Marginalisation heightens women’s vulnerability to violence

Even though violence against women can affect all women, women from minority communities are often affected disproportionately (FRA, 2014; EIGE, 2019, 2020a, 2022a, 2022b). For example, the majority of research on violence against women concentrates on women aged 15–50, even though older women are particularly vulnerable to violence (Kalokhe et al., 2017). Much of the research reflects the experiences of violence of older people generally (without a gendered focus), while other research focuses solely on violence experienced by women in institutional facilities, without considering violence perpetrated by intimate partners or other family members (Meyer, Lasater, and García-Moreno, 2020, pp. 2–3).

Figure 9. Percentages of women with some or severe and no limitations having experienced physical and/or sexual violence by any perpetrator since the age of 15 (% , aged 18–74, EU-27)



NB: No data was available for Italy.

Source: Author's calculations based on the EU GBV survey (2021 wave).

Similarly, women with disabilities are often under-represented in research on violence against women, yet they are disproportionately affected by violence (Dowse et al., 2016). Some factors that may explain the heightened vulnerability of older women and women with disabilities include social exclusion and isolation; reliance on partners, family members and/or carers; and a lack of economic independence, which can compound reliance on abusers (Meyer et al., 2022, pp. 1–2). On average in the EU, women with some or severe limitations on their activities (41 %) are more likely to have suffered physical and/or sexual violence by any perpetrator in their lifetime than women with no activity limitations (28 %) (Figure 9).

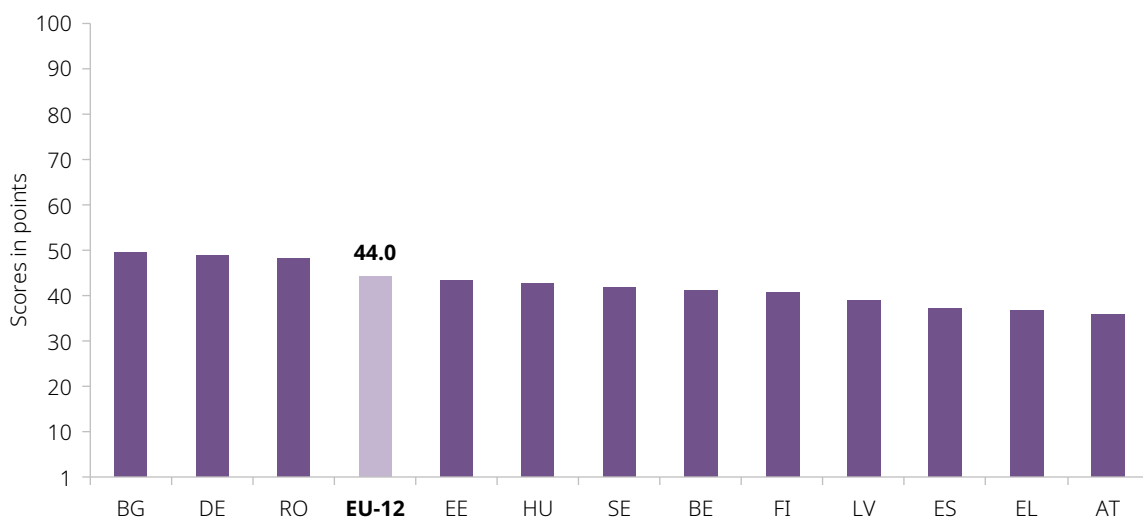
Furthermore, natural disasters and global crises can elevate known risk factors for violence, which can exacerbate gender-based violence in areas with a significant disaster risk (Cerna-Turoff et al., 2019, p. 2). Overall, disasters disproportionately affect women and girls, and violence against women can increase in the context of disasters (Thurston, Stöckl, and Ranganathan, 2021, p. 1). Van Daalen et al. (2022) note that an increase in gender-based violence 'has been observed in both natural and human-caused crises and disasters, due to socioeconomic instability, structural power inequalities, health-care inaccessibility, resource scarcity, breakdowns in safety and law enforcement, and increases in (perceived) stress' (van Daalen et al., 2022, p. e504). Similarly, during the COVID-19 pandemic, intimate partner violence increased especially in communities in vulnerable situations. This impact was particularly felt during lockdowns and while other COVID-19-related social distancing regulations were in place, as victims were left isolated and had less access to support services (EIGE, 2022c).

2.3. Sub-domain of severity

The severity sub-domain seeks to capture the intensity of violence experienced by women. To this end, two dimensions are explored: the health consequences ⁽¹⁵⁾ of both physical and/or sexual violence against women (since the age of 15 or in the previous 12 months) and multiple victimisation by any perpetrator. The latter variable measures the likelihood of women experiencing violence from several types of perpetrators in their social, professional or personal lives.

Figure 10 presents the scores for the severity sub-domain for 12 Member States. The EU score stands at 44 points, and scores range from 35.7 in Austria to 49.3 points out of 100 in Bulgaria.

Figure 10. Scores for the sub-domain of severity by Member State (points, EU-12)

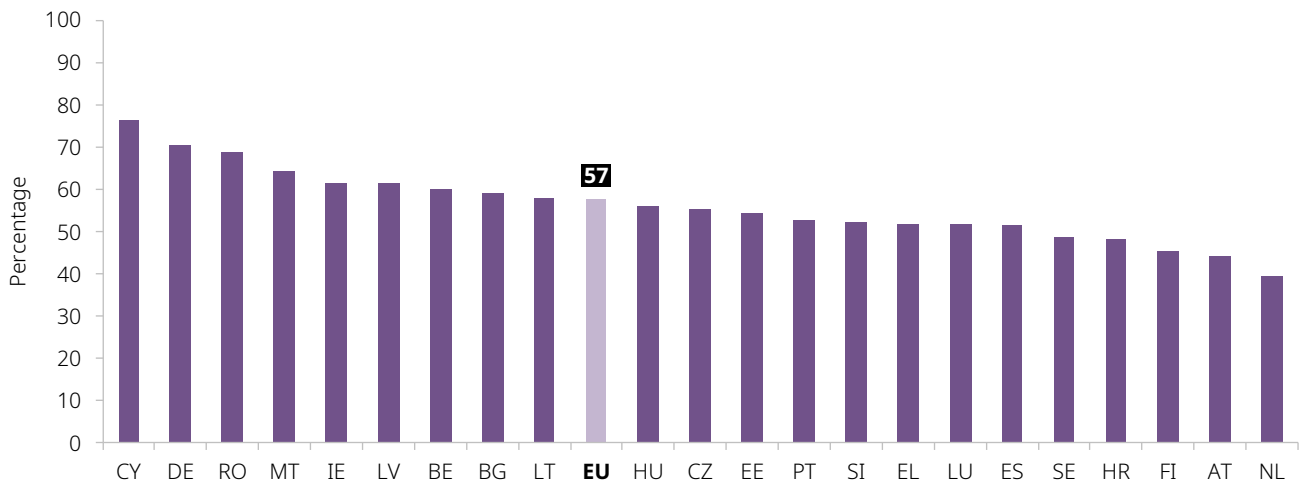


Source: Author's calculations based on the EU GBV survey (2021 wave).

At the EU level, for 57 % of women victims physical and sexual violence resulted in health consequences (Figure 11). The percentage ranges from 39 % in the Netherlands to 76 % in Cyprus. This corroborates EIGE's work on the costs of violence against women, with an estimated cost of EUR 289 billion yearly for the EU at large. This amount includes lost economic outputs, service utilisation and personal costs. About a third of this amount was attributed to services, for example, in the health, social and criminal justice sectors (EIGE, 2021). The percentage of women facing health consequences is acknowledged as being an underestimation, as significant shares of women do not disclose violence and/or do not seek help.

⁽¹⁵⁾ Health-related consequences are measured through two questions in the EU GBV survey (2021 wave). Women who have experienced physical and/or sexual violence are asked if they have experienced physical injuries resulting from the violence and/or psychological consequences (e.g. mental health issues, such as depression, panic attacks, sleeping or eating disorders, problems with concentration). In the case of both physical and sexual violence, women are asked about the most recent incident of violence since the age of 15 and in the past 12 months. However, for the 12-month time frame, psychological violence is not included (not measured in the survey).

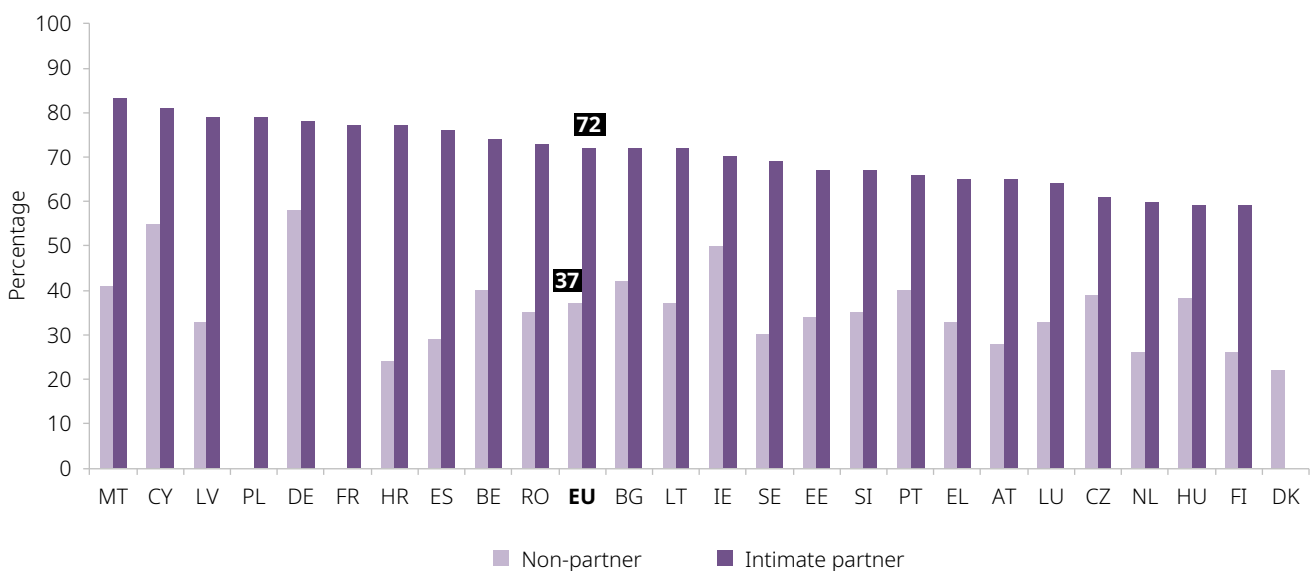
Figure 11. Percentages of women having experienced health consequences of physical and/or sexual violence since the age of 15 (% , aged 18–74, EU-27)



NB: No data was available for Denmark, France, Italy, Poland or Slovakia.
 Source: Author’s calculations based on the EU GBV survey (2021 wave).

In all Member States, women whose most recent incident of violence was caused by an intimate partner were more likely to experience health consequences than women for whom the perpetrator was a non-partner. At the EU level, almost twice as many women experienced health consequences of violence by an intimate partner than by a non-partner (Figure 12).

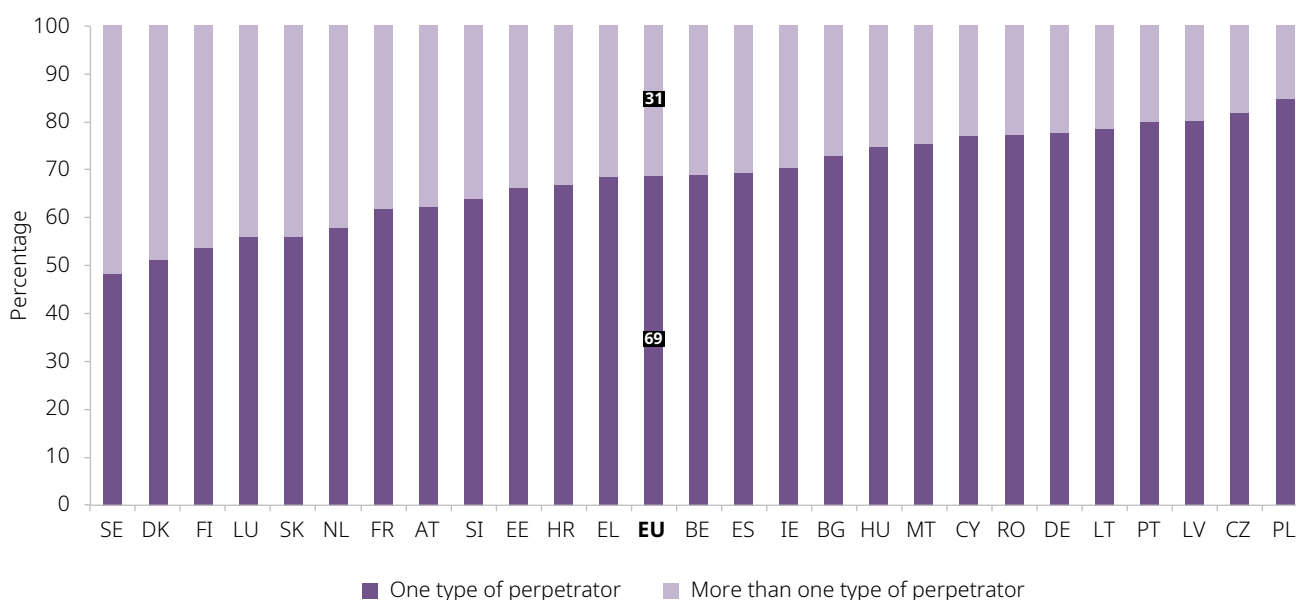
Figure 12. Percentages of women having experienced health consequences of physical and/or sexual violence since the age of 15 by perpetrator and Member State (% , aged 18–74, EU-27)



NB: No data was available for Italy or Slovakia. Data was missing for non-partner violence for France and Poland and for intimate partner violence for Denmark.
 Source: Author’s calculations based on the EU GBV survey (2021 wave).

In addition to health consequences, multiple victimisation is another aspect of the severity of violence included in the composite measure of violence. It seeks to capture if women are affected by violence in several aspects of their lives and in the context of several types of relationship. Figure 13 shows that in the EU the majority of women victims of violence have experienced sexual and/or physical violence from one type of perpetrator (69 %). About 31 % of them have suffered violence from several types of perpetrators. Percentages range from 15 % in Poland to 52 % in Sweden. This information provides valuable evidence to contextualise prevalence data, highlighting that about one third of women who experience victimisation have encountered violence in multiple contexts, such as in a previous relationship or by a non-partner. It underscores the complex and multifaceted nature of violence against women.

Figure 13. Percentages of women having experienced violence from one or several types of perpetrators (% , aged 18–74, EU-27)



NB: No data was available for Italy.

Source: Author’s calculations based on the EU GBV survey (2021 wave).

Suffering of marginalised women remains overlooked

The severity of gendered violence may differ greatly in each incident. For example, for women with disabilities surveys have found that the violence they experience is often a daily occurrence – that is, almost a routine; nevertheless, the violence is rarely addressed by caretaking staff or judicial representatives (Dowse et al., 2016, p. 342). LGBTQI women are disproportionately affected by violence due to their intersecting identities as queer women, and their experiences are often overlooked. Trans women and other gender-diverse individuals often suffer structural violence, particularly sexual violence (Bayrakdar and King, 2023; Boe, Jordan and Ellis, 2024). Trans individuals are ‘more likely to experience incidents of discrimination, harassment and violence than cisgender LGB [lesbian, gay or bisexual] individuals’ in Germany, Portugal and the United Kingdom (Bayrakdar and King, 2023, p. 153). This is particularly true for trans women of colour, who are

disproportionately affected by racialised violence against women (Sherman et al., 2022, p. 891). Women's intersecting identities may subject them to severe forms of violence and prevent them from seeking support in their vulnerable positions.

2.4. Sub-domain of disclosure

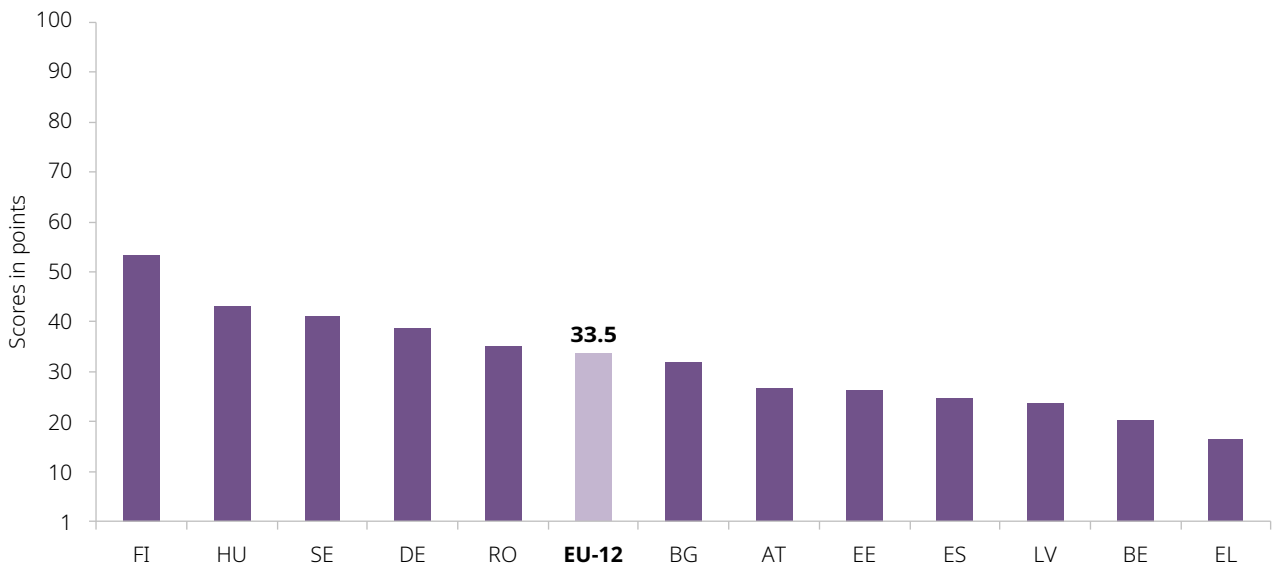
A myriad of factors may influence women's decisions to disclose acts of violence, including broader social and cultural contexts such as norms, gender inequalities, general levels of impunity and trust in institutions. In the past few years and in the wake of the #MeToo movement, millions of women have chosen to brave the stigma associated with violence against women and speak up about their experiences of violence in intimate relationships, at work, at school or in public places. The movement generated widespread public debate and led entire sectors – such as politics and governance, academia, the arts and sports – to critically examine their complacency with regard to certain abusive behaviours (FEPS, 2018; European Women's Lobby, 2019; Levy and Mattsson, 2019; On The Move, IETM and FACE, 2022). Over the past five years, this far-reaching social movement has been credited with generating a significant increase in the reporting of sexual violence and sexual assault (Levy and Mattsson, 2019; EIGE, 2025).

The victims, and their immediate social and demographic environments, may also dictate whether they disclose their experiences. Disclosure rates may also vary depending on the type of perpetrator, the nature of the violence and other circumstances. Data on disclosure offers insight into the actual prevalence of violence, extending beyond officially surveyed cases.

The sub-domain of disclosure indicates the percentage of women who have experienced physical and/or sexual violence in the 12 months before the survey and have not told anyone about the most serious incident ⁽¹⁶⁾. The higher the score for this sub-domain, the less likely women are to discuss their experiences of violence with institutions or individuals. In other words, the higher the score, the more hidden and underestimated the phenomenon of violence against women is likely to be. The sub-domain of disclosure for the 12 Member States has a score of 33.5 points out of 100 points. Member States' scores range from 16.5 points in Greece to 53.2 in Finland (Figure 14).

⁽¹⁶⁾ The percentage of women who have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by any partner since the age of 15 and haven't told anyone of the most serious incident is not included in the composite measure for statistical reasons.

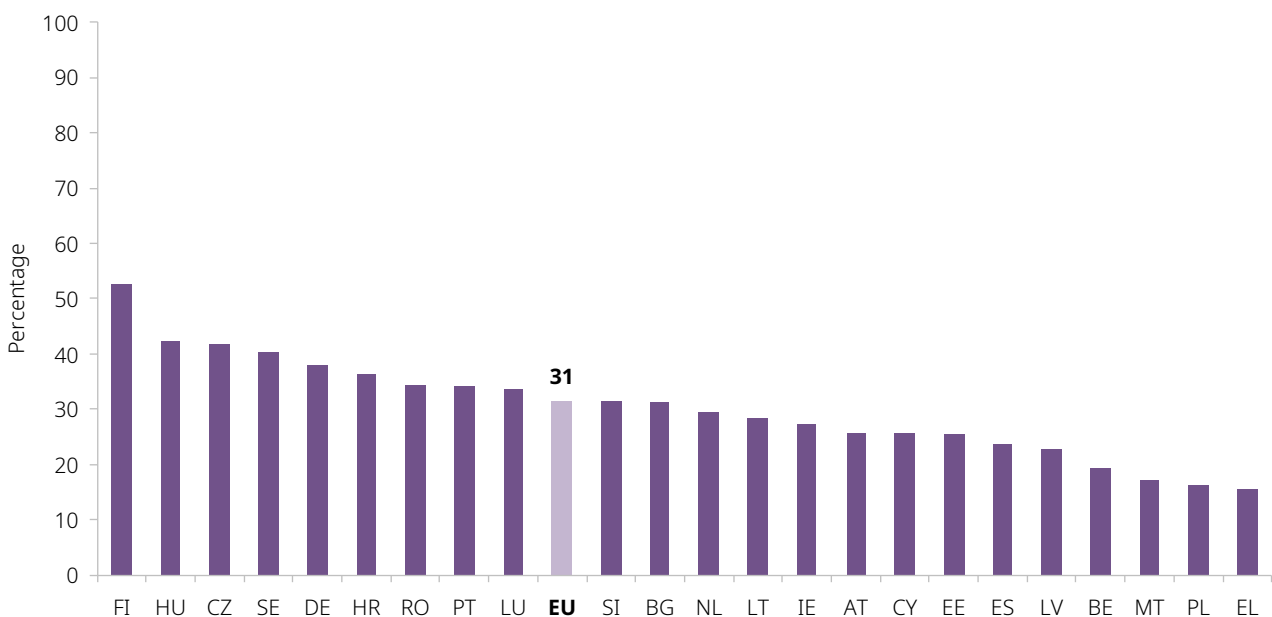
Figure 14. Scores for the sub-domain of disclosure by Member State (points, EU-12)



Source: Author's calculations based on the EU GBV survey (2021 wave).

At the indicator level, due to data quality issues, disclosure relates to women's experiences of violence since the age of 15 rather than the more recent time frame (of the previous 12 months), included in the original measurement framework (see Table 3). The indicator still shows that in the EU about a third of women (31 %) who had experienced sexual and/or physical violence since the age of 15 had not mentioned that experience to anyone before the interview (Figure 15). The percentage ranges from 16 % in Greece to 53 % in Finland.

Figure 15. Percentages of women having experienced physical and/or sexual violence since the age of 15 and not having told anyone (% , aged 18–74, EU-27)



NB: No data was available for Denmark, France, Italy or Slovakia.

Source: Author's calculations based on the EU GBV survey (2021 wave).

The type of perpetrator also affects the disclosure rate. A lack of reporting of violence was more likely among women who experienced physical or sexual violence from a non-partner (38 %) than among those who experienced violence from an intimate partner (31 %).

This data corroborates findings from EIGE and the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights showing that 64 % of women in the EU disclosed incidents of violence to a person close to them (FRA, EIGE and Eurostat, 2024). In the EU, most women willing to disclose their experience and seek help approached health or social services (21 %), followed by the police (14 %) and support services (6 %).

Intersecting inequalities as systemic barriers to reporting violence against women for marginalised women

While women who are members of minority communities may be disproportionately affected by violence against women, intersecting inequalities may also make it harder for them to report the violence they have suffered. Minority communities remain under-represented in surveys, since quantitative research often does not capture the complexity of intersecting inequalities; therefore, to better understand all factors influencing violence against women, contextualisation is important (OSCE, 2019, p. 11). Contextualisation is also relevant to understanding why women may be hesitant to speak out against violence; for example, in some cultures intimate partner violence may be conceived as a private matter and therefore not for public discussion, or women may fear being stigmatised and shamed (Dartnall and Jewkes, 2013, pp. 4–5; OSCE, 2019, p. 11).

Most societies still incorporate at least some form of victim blaming when it comes to violence against women, as Chapter 3 shows. This leads to women not feeling comfortable enough to report gender-based violence, furthering the vicious cycle of violence against women (Gracia, 2014, pp. 380–381). Furthermore, to better understand violence against women one has to be aware of its unequal effects on women from intersectional minority communities. However, the disproportionate prevalence of violence against women among those who are marginalised remains largely under-reported, due to small sample sizes (Dowse et al., 2016, p. 342). For example, some marginalised women may not trust the police due to past negative experiences with them, contributing to chronic under-reporting (Rollè et al., 2019). Queer women in particular may hesitate to speak out against intimate partner violence, because they fear not receiving appropriate support or bringing shame to the LGBTQI community and worsening negative attitudes towards and stigmatisation against the community (Murray et al., 2007; Brown, 2008).

Women of colour, Roma women and migrant women may suffer greater violence. Women without legal status in their country of residence may be less likely to report violence against women, especially if they are not protected by the legal system of their country of residence or if their legal status is dependent on an abusive partner (Richie, 2004, pp. IV-1-1–IV-1-5). Furthermore, women who are forced to flee their home due to a conflict and have to seek asylum in another country may be at greater risk of violence. OSCE (2019, p. 83) found that, when comparing various forms of violence, ‘women are more vulnerable to violence when their partner has been involved in conflict’. Roma women who experience violence rarely report it to official authorities, like the police, because of previous negative experiences with them (Council of Europe, 2022).

3. Societal attitudes towards violence against women and links with gender equality gains

Public perceptions and media reporting, which are associated with policy and legal developments, provide the bedrock for change in social norms. The high prevalence of violence against women shows the importance of addressing it; however, this emphasis is not always reflected in the media. The information reported in the media may not reflect the actual prevalence of violence and impact of public and policy responses. Victim-blaming attitudes persist, especially in countries with lower gender equality, making it more difficult to achieve sustainable change.

3.1. Reporting on violence against women by the media

The media is an institutional source of power and influence in the process of gender socialisation (UN Women and UNICEF, 2022a). More specifically, media narratives can play an essential role in shaping public perceptions of violence against women and in influencing attitudes (see Box 1) (Flood and Pease, 2009; Wright and Tokunaga, 2016). The media's reporting on and narratives around violence against women can either perpetuate harmful stereotypes and normalise violence against women (Santaemilia and Maruenda, 2014; Karlsson et al., 2021) or contribute to greater awareness and prevention (Fairbairn, 2015, 2020; Simons and Khan, 2018).

Intimate partner violence tends to be significantly under-reported in the media and is often reported with regard to isolated incidents rather than discussed in a wider social context (Meltzer, 2023). The tendency of the media to only report the most serious cases of intimate partner violence, such as femicide, and to under-report the majority of the less severe instances of violence against women leads to misperceptions of the prevalence and severity of violence against women among the public (Meltzer, 2021).

Box 1. Digital narratives around violence against women in Spain and Poland

Communications Lab analysis of digital narratives around violence against women

EIGE's Communications Lab initiative, supported by the Comms Hub ⁽¹⁷⁾, looked at the digital narratives surrounding violence against women, abortion and comprehensive sexuality education across three of the most popular social media platforms in Spain ⁽¹⁸⁾ and Poland ⁽¹⁹⁾. Conducted from 15 September to 15 November 2023, a study conducted through the initiative used data analytics to understand how various narratives and counter-narratives develop and evolve online on different platforms. The study found that in both countries narratives around violence against women develop differently from one social media platform to the next (with Instagram being the space that tends to encourage relevant conversations the most) and that online discourse can shape and be shaped by sociopolitical events. In Spain, the #SeAcabó movement, which was ongoing at the time of the study, triggered intense discussions around violence against women, sexism and consent. A backlash soon developed, with victim-blaming and immigrant-blaming narratives erupting, thus reflecting the politicised nature of discussions on violence against women. In Poland, the study took place in the context of parliamentary elections. Digital narratives on violence against women were often overshadowed by discussions on sexual and reproductive health and rights, and especially abortion rights. As noted in an observation from Spain, online discussions on violence against women are often framed as an external issue linked to immigration rather than a systemic, domestic societal concern.

More generally, across the EU, research highlights persistent problematic practices in reporting on violence against women in the media, including sensationalism, victim-blaming discourses, the romanticisation of violence and a lack of recognition of the systemic nature of this type of violence (Montiel, 2014; Vaughan et al., 2015; Taccini and Mannarini, 2024).

Article 17 of the Istanbul Convention recommends the involvement of the private sector and the media in the prevention of violence against women and domestic violence (Council of Europe, 2011a). It also encourages the media to define and adopt guidelines as well as standards for self-regulation to avoid perpetuating negative gender stereotypes and encourage the fair and non-sexist portrayal of women. The explanatory report to the convention also calls for measures to be implemented to prevent sexual harassment in the media sector (Council of Europe, 2011b). To this end, European and international agencies have issued a range of recommendations and guidelines to better guide media professionals towards more ethical reporting on cases related to violence against women (UN Women and UNESCO, 2019; Council of Europe, 2020a, 2020b; Gligorijević, Pavlović, and Knežević, 2021; UN Women and UNICEF, 2022b).

Through the Beijing Platform for Action, all Member States have committed to promoting greater gender equality in the media (EIGE, 2013, 2025). This commitment includes four main components:

⁽¹⁷⁾ <https://comms-hub.org/insights/>.

⁽¹⁸⁾ <https://comms-hub.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Mapping-Online-GBV-Narratives-in-Spain.pdf>.

⁽¹⁹⁾ https://comms-hub.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/VF_-Poland-GBV-Digital-summary-30-April-Version.pdf.

decision-making, working conditions, gender-based violence and gender stereotypes in the media (EIGE, 2020b).

All Member States have established regulatory authorities tasked with overseeing media coverage at the national level (Annex 5). More than half of them (16) were found to have guidelines or recommendations for media professionals on the gender-sensitive portrayal of violence against women. Some of these guidelines were produced by the regulatory authorities themselves ⁽²⁰⁾ or by independent associations or civil-society organisations ⁽²¹⁾. Some regulatory authorities have adopted internal strategies to improve gender equality in their work (Box 2).

Box 2. Promising practice for reporting on violence against women by the media: Ireland

Promising practice: Ireland

In 2024, Coimisiún na Meán, Ireland's commission for media regulation, adopted its first gender, equality, diversity and inclusion strategy for the audio and audiovisual media sector. Developed through extensive consultations, it includes four pillars: workplace/culture, representation/content, engagement and development. The main objective of the strategy is to ensure that the media landscape represents the diversity of Irish society and is accessible to all within it ⁽²²⁾. It seeks to foster a positive working culture, promote diverse voices and combat stereotypes and hate speech.

Fourteen Member States have observatories on violence against women that use information from the media to report violence (Annex 5). They monitor various forms of violence against women, particularly femicide. Two observatories showed particularly promising practices (Boxes 3 and 4).

Box 3. Promising practice for reporting on violence against women by the media: Italy

Promising practice: Italy

The **Independent Observatory on Media against Toxic Narratives of Gender Violence**, established in October 2023, is an initiative of the United Free Autonomous Journalists. It was set up to monitor and challenge harmful gender-based violence narratives in national and local newspapers, promoting responsible reporting ⁽²³⁾.

⁽²⁰⁾ For example in the case of Cyprus, where the Code of Conduct for the Promotion of Gender Equality and Combating Stereotypes was developed by the CRTA, in collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, in 2021.

⁽²¹⁾ This was found to be the case in the following Member States: BE, DK, EL, ES, FR, HR, IT, MT, AT, PL, PT and SI.

⁽²²⁾ <https://www.cnam.ie/gender-equality-diversity-and-inclusion-strategy/>.

⁽²³⁾ <https://giulia.globalist.it/documenti/2023/10/28/nasce-losservatorio-indipendente-sui-media-contro-la-narrazione-tossica-della-violenza-di-genere/>.

Box 4. Promising practice for reporting on violence against women by the media: Spain

Promising practice: Spain 

The **Women's Image Observatory** actively combats the sexist representation of women in advertising and the media in Spain. It receives complaints regarding inappropriate content and works diligently to address them and remove such content ⁽²⁴⁾.

3.2. Physical and sexual violence against women are generally rejected by the EU population

Public attitudes towards violence against women are a key indicator of changes in gender norms

Violence against women is a complex issue influenced by many factors within society. These factors work at different levels, including the societal, institutional, community and personal levels, and need to be addressed at each level to stop the cycle of violence (Heise, 1998).

At the personal and relationship levels, this means focusing on people's experiences, attitudes, knowledge and skills to help them understand and prevent different types of violence (Coumarelos, Weeks and Bernstein, 2023).

Public perceptions influence personal, community and institutional responses (Fishbein and Ajzen, 2011). Studies have shown that opinions expressed are not necessarily robust predictions of behaviour (Kelman, 2017). However, an awareness of these perceptions is crucial to inform and manage institutional responses to these forms of violence and to design interventions preventing them (Albarracin and Shavitt, 2018). Ending violence against women therefore requires a long-term commitment with appropriate interventions that target the needs of each region (Heise, et al. 1999).

The systematic collection of comparable data on public perceptions of violence against women helps monitor the progress of prevention policies and can contribute to drafting and refining interventions. In the EU, such systematic data collection has not yet been achieved (European Commission, 2015). While some data is collected ⁽²⁵⁾, the effort is not systematic and the data is not always comparable.

Despite significant progress in policy developments at the EU and national levels (see [Sections 1.1](#) and [1.2](#)) and a growing understanding of violence against women, public perception studies have

⁽²⁴⁾ <https://www.inmujeres.gob.es/en/observatorios/observimg/home.htm>.

⁽²⁵⁾ See, for example, European Commission (2016, 2024).

consistently indicated persistent tolerance of violence against women in general (European Commission, 2015; UNECE and UNFPA, 2023).

Research has shown that people in the EU tend to perceive violence against women as common; however, the perceived prevalence and views on acceptability and criminalisation vary across studies (Vazquez et al., 2021). Victim-blaming attitudes in situations of sexual violence or rape have been reported as 'particularly worrisome' in the EU (European Commission, 2015, p. 14).

Data from the 2024 Flash Eurobarometer 544, on gender stereotypes, shows that, despite the overall rejection of physical and sexual violence by most respondents, large segments of the population show persistent tolerance of violent behaviour across the Member States (European Commission, 2024). This section analyses public perceptions of different forms of violence against women in more detail (12 questions are presented in [Annex 6](#)).

Sexual violence is widely found to be unacceptable but tolerance for subtler forms of violence against women is still high in the EU

Levels of acceptance of various forms of violence against women vary considerably. The highest level of acceptance was found for the non-consensual sharing of intimate images. Nearly half of EU respondents (43 %) agree that if women share intimate pictures of themselves with someone, they are at least partially responsible for the images being shared online. The acceptance rate of this form of violence is very high in Latvia and Lithuania: more than 70 % of participants take a victim-blaming stance on sharing intimate images without consent. Meanwhile, Italy and Sweden have acceptability rates below 30 %.

Economic violence within intimate partnerships was found to be acceptable for 36 % of respondents, while 21 % of respondents consider sexist, demanding or abusive replies justified if women share their opinions on social media.

This shows that some forms of violence against women are yet to be consistently recognised as violence by society (e.g. non-consensual sharing of intimate images, online sexist hate speech or economic violence). However, as part of a continuum of violence, the acceptance of such forms of violence tends to encourage tolerance towards progressively more serious forms of violence against women. The results confirm the existence of a rape culture in which the public normalises sexual harassment and sexual violence and undermines the credibility of rape claims (17 %).

Sexual harassment was also found to be acceptable by around 17–20 % of respondents, with sexual harassment at work being less normalised than in other contexts. About 20 % of EU respondents consider it acceptable, at least in some circumstances, for men to make suggestive comments about a female colleague's appearance at work. Furthermore, about 17 % of respondents consider it acceptable for men to body gaze, ogle, catcall or whistle at women, at least in some circumstances.

Eleven per cent of respondents hold stereotyped perceptions of intimate partner violence, believing it is a private matter that should be dealt with by the family. Tolerance of physical violence is lower, yet 7 % of respondents agree that a man occasionally slapping his wife or girlfriend is acceptable. The least acceptable violent behaviour is related to sexual violence within intimate partner relationships, in which only 5 % of participants agree a husband or boyfriend can have sex with his wife or girlfriend without her consent.

While sexual violence against women is widely considered unacceptable in the EU, myths around sexual violence are still prevalent. About 17 % of EU respondents hold the view that women often exaggerate claims of sexual abuse or rape, and 16 % believe that if under the influence of alcohol or drugs women are partially responsible for experiencing sexual violence. One in ten (9 %) agree that women often say 'no' to a sexual proposal but mean 'yes' (i.e. playing 'hard to get').

Men and women tend to hold different views on the acceptability of violence against women

Studies on public perceptions of violence have consistently identified gender differences in participants' responses. Men tend to express greater tolerance towards violence against women than women (European Commission et al., 2015). In contrast, women show greater awareness of the magnitude and severity of intimate partner violence, which some research attributes to women perceiving a greater risk of victimisation and overall fear of violence (Warr and Stafford, 1983; Worden and Carlson, 2005). Some studies also report that women tend to hold more progressive attitudes towards violence, especially intimate partner violence (Yang et al., 2021). In Europe, according to the 2016 Special Eurobarometer 449(on gender-based violence), women are more likely than men to recognise different forms of violence and are less tolerant of violent behaviour (European Commission, 2016).

Flash Eurobarometer 544, entitled 'Gender stereotypes – violence against women', also features important gender differences (European Commission, 2024). Across a series of statements on violence against women, male respondents are generally more tolerant of this type of violence than female respondents (Figure 16).

Among all forms of violence against women included in the survey, the non-consensual sharing of intimate images is the most widely accepted (by 45 % of men and 42 % of women) and the gender gap is smaller than for other forms of violence. The largest gender gap is found in relation to financial abuse in intimate partner relationships, with a large proportion of male respondents finding it acceptable for a man to control his partner's finances (46 %). Only 26 % of female respondents share that view.

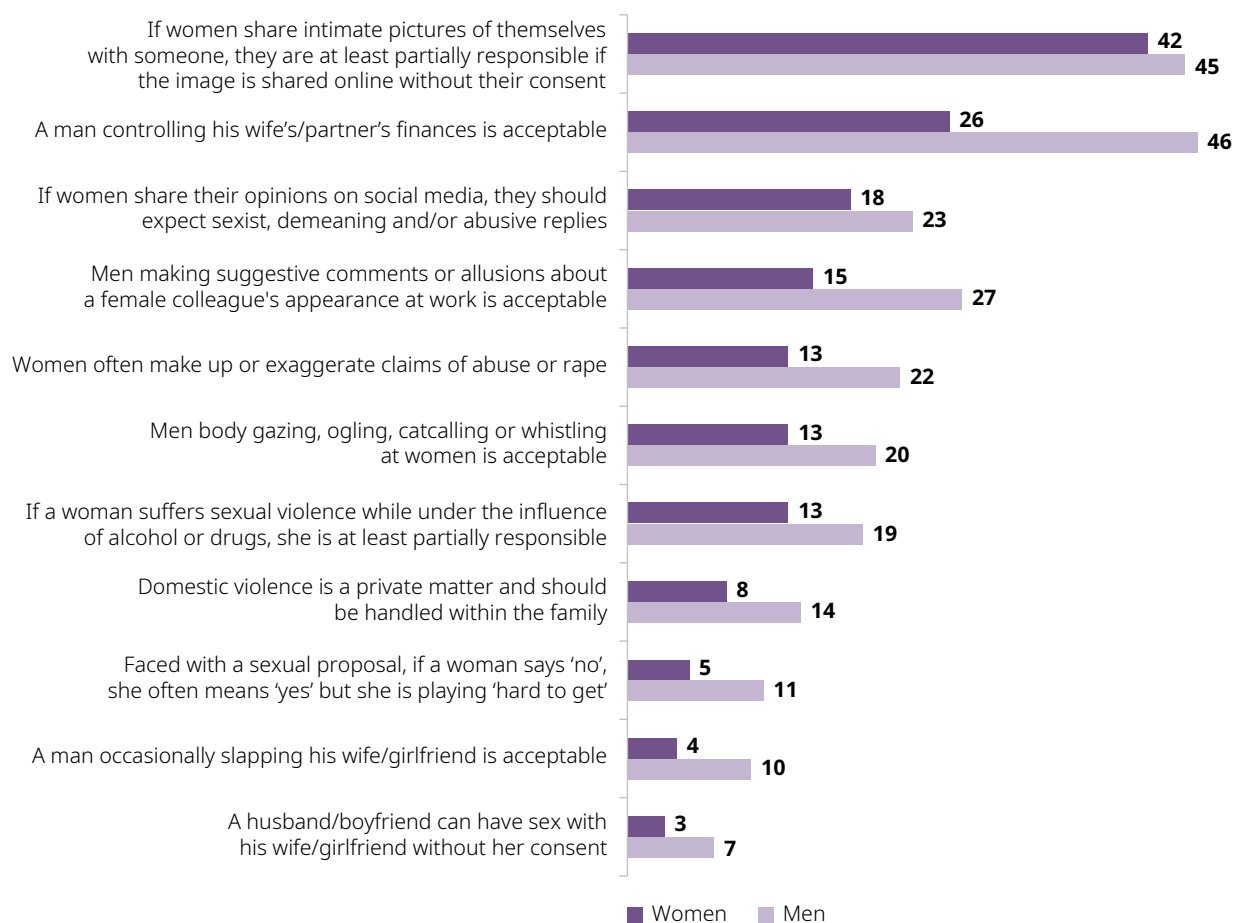
Nearly one in four (23 %) men and 18 % of women agree that if women share their opinions on social media they should expect sexist, demeaning and/or abusive replies.

Sexual harassment is one of the forms of violence that respondents find most acceptable, at least under certain circumstances. Sexual harassment in general (men body gazing, catcalling or whistling at women) is considered acceptable by 20 % of male respondents, compared with 13 % of female respondents. Workplace harassment is found to be acceptable by 27 % of men, almost double the percentage for women participants (15 %) (Figure 16).

Responses regarding sexual violence also demonstrate important gender differences. For example, the perception that women might say ‘no’ to a sexual proposal while actually meaning ‘yes’ is more than twice as high for men (11 %) as for women (5 %). A similar pattern is found in perceptions of false sexual abuse claims. About 13 % of women and 22 % of men agree women often make up or exaggerate these claims.

Intimate partner violence is also more recognised by women as unacceptable behaviour than by men. For example, the acceptance of sexual violence within a relationship for men is more than double that for women (7 % compared with 3 %).

Figure 16. Percentages of women and men replying ‘acceptable, at least under certain circumstances’ to a series of statements on violence against women (% , aged 18+, EU-27, 2024)



Source: Author's calculations based on Flash Eurobarometer 544, 'Gender stereotypes – violence against women', 2024.

Perceptions of the prevalence of domestic violence follow the same trend as the 2016 Eurobarometer, when women were more likely to say that domestic violence was common in their country than men (81 % of women compared with 68 % of men) (European Commission, 2016). In the 2024 survey, 78 % of women and 63 % of men indicated domestic violence to be somewhat common.

Victim-blaming attitudes are particularly common among men under 45

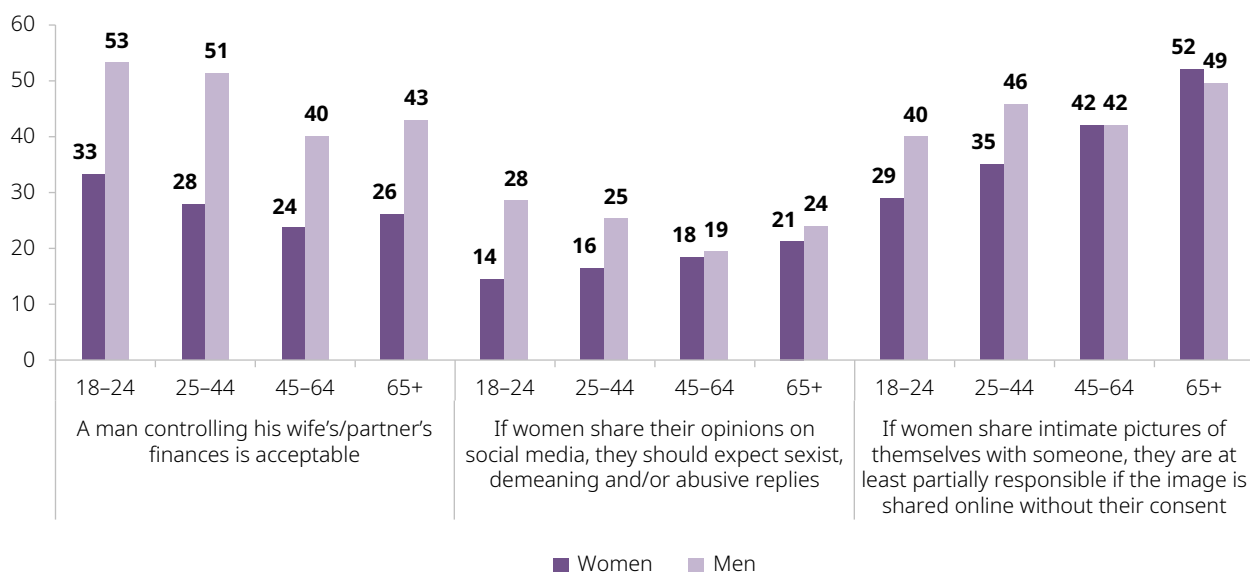
Research on public perceptions of violence against women shows that a higher proportion of older people tend to normalise violence than middle-aged adults or young people (European Commission, 2015). Across most questions in the 2016 Eurobarometer on gender-based violence, participants over 55 years old (both women and men) tended to victim-blame at higher rates and felt less of a need to see related acts criminalised under law (European Commission, 2016).

Results from the recent Eurobarometer show a different trend. In almost all questions, men aged 18–24 and 25–44 have more stereotyped perspectives and entrenched victim-blaming attitudes than older men. Gender differences in the acceptance of all forms of violence against women are also largest in these age groups.

The condoning of economic violence within intimate partnerships has the largest gender gaps in all age groups (e.g. 20 pp among 18- to 24-year-olds, 23 pp among 25- to 44-year-olds). Every second male respondent (53 % aged 18–24, 51 % aged 25–44) find it acceptable for a man to control his partner's finances (Figure 17). The smallest gender gaps are found within the 45–64 age group for most forms of violence.

Stereotyped perceptions of intimate partner violence are particularly low among women aged 65 years or older, among whom only 6 % believe that it is a private matter to be dealt with by the family, while 19 % of men aged 25–44 years agree with that statement.

Figure 17. Percentages of women and men who tend to agree or fully agree with selected statements on violence against women, by age group (% , aged 18+, EU-27, 2024)



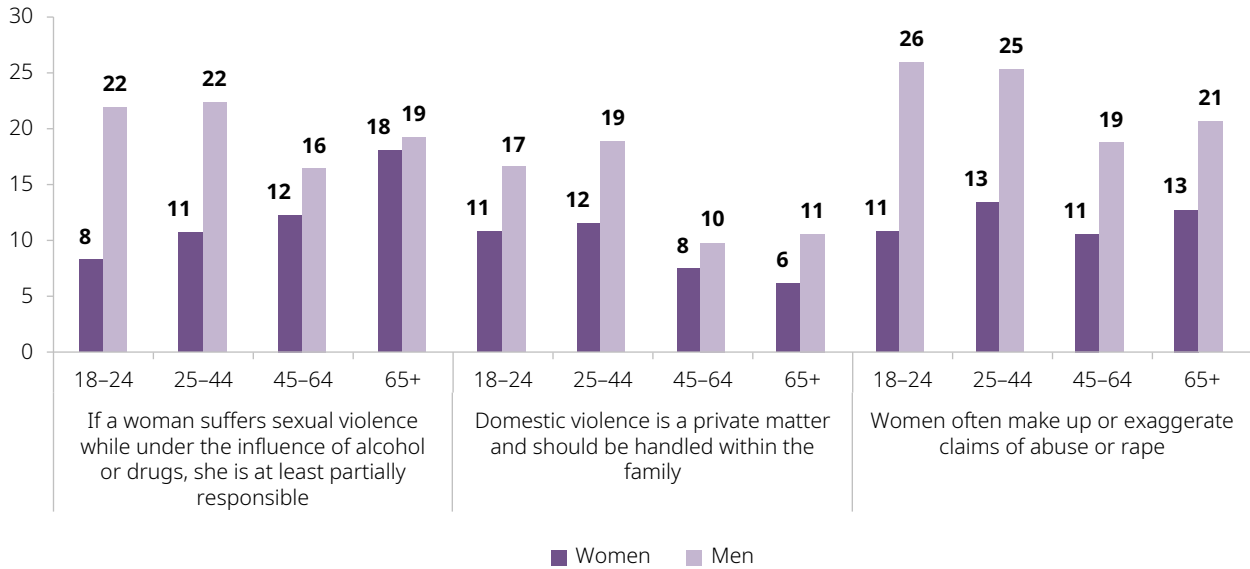
NB: Respondents were asked 'To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?': 'A man controlling his wife's/partner's finances is acceptable' (Q1_5); 'If women share their opinions on social media, they should expect sexist, demeaning and/or abusive replies' (Q3_1); 'If women share intimate pictures of themselves with someone, they are at least partially responsible if the image is shared online without their consent' (Q3_3).

Source: Author's calculations based on Flash Eurobarometer 544, 'Gender stereotypes – violence against women', 2024.

Myths around sexual violence that undermine the credibility of rape claims are especially prevalent among men aged 18–24 and 25–44, among whom 26 % and 25 %, respectively, hold the view that women often exaggerate claims of sexual abuse or rape (Figure 18). In addition, 22 % of men in both age groups believe that if under the influence of alcohol or drugs women are partially responsible for experiencing sexual violence. Among female respondents, the belief about women under the influence increases with age, from 8 % in the 18–24 age group to 18 % among women aged 65 years or older, while the belief of women exaggerating abuse or rape is stable, at around 11 %–13 %, across age groups.

Large percentages of women and men over 45 tend to hold victim-blaming views. The only statement for which female respondents are more tolerant of violence than male respondents, and for which men aged 18–24 and 25–44 do not have the highest levels of victim-blaming attitudes, relates to the non-consensual sharing of intimate images. The highest level of tolerance of violence was found among people aged 65 years or older, among whom half of respondents agreed that if women share intimate pictures of themselves with someone they are at least partially responsible for the images being shared online (52 % of women and 49 % of men).

Figure 18. Percentages of women and men who tend to agree or fully agree with selected statements on sexual and intimate partner violence, by age group (% , aged 18+, EU-27, 2024)



NB: Respondents were asked ‘To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?’: ‘If a woman suffers sexual violence while under the influence of alcohol or drugs, she is at least partially responsible’ (Q3_5); ‘Domestic violence is a private matter and should be handled within the family’ (Q2_2); ‘Women often make up or exaggerate claims of abuse or rape’ (Q2_1).

Source: Author’s calculations based on Flash Eurobarometer 544, ‘Gender stereotypes – violence against women’, 2024.

3.3. A higher level of gender equality goes hand in hand with lower acceptance of violence against women

The previous section highlighted the differences in public attitudes towards violence against women, varying greatly based on forms of violence and the gender and age of the respondents. The analysis showed that many forms of violence against women are still widely considered acceptable across Member States in the EU, at least under certain circumstances.

The aim of this section is to discuss whether public attitudes towards violence against women are associated with the overall levels of gender equality in Member States. Flash Eurobarometer 544 and the 2024 Gender Equality Index were correlated to test the hypotheses that public attitudes towards gender-based violence constitute support for policymaking on gender equality broadly or constitute resistance to such reforms ⁽²⁶⁾. The acceptability of violence against women at the individual level could be predictive of the non-prioritisation of or even pushback on gender equality policies at the collective and societal levels.

The analysis aimed to understand whether countries that have a higher Gender Equality Index are more likely to find abusive behaviour towards women unacceptable. This would provide an

⁽²⁶⁾ See the methodological note in Annex 7.

understanding of whether people in countries that are generally seen as more gender equal would be more likely to disagree with selected statements related to violence against women. After correlating all 13 Flash Eurobarometer 544 statements with the 2024 Gender Equality Index, 7 were found to have a statistically significant correlation. Out of these seven statements, the four with the greatest gap in highest and lowest acceptability of violence against women among the Member States were selected for further analysis and description (Table 4) ⁽²⁷⁾.

Table 4. Statements from Flash Eurobarometer 544 selected for use in the correlation analysis

Question number	Statement
Q1_5	What do you think about each of the following situations? A man controlling his wife's/partner's finances
Q3_1	To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? If women share their opinion on social media, they should accept that they elicit sexist, demeaning and/or abusive replies
Q3_3	To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? If women share intimate pictures of themselves with someone, they are at least partially responsible if the image is shared online without their consent
Q3_5	To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? If a woman suffers sexual violence while under the influence of alcohol or drugs, she is at least partially responsible

The correlation of all four statements with the Gender Equality Index was moderately to highly negative, clearly indicating that in countries with lower Gender Equality Index scores people's acceptance of violence against women is higher. This poses the hypothesis that if a society is considered more gender equal people in the country are less likely to tolerate abuse towards women. Simultaneously, individuals finding violence against women acceptable may further hinder progress in the area of gender equality in a country or society as a whole.

Furthermore, in countries with greater awareness of violence against women, preventative measures can be taken and women victims will feel more comfortable speaking out and seeking support, as indicated by the Nordic paradox ⁽²⁸⁾. This could also be theorised for the acceptance of violence against women. In countries where respondents generally indicate higher acceptance of violence, women may be less likely to speak up against gender-based violence, as they may either have internalised the normalcy of violence against women themselves or be hesitant to speak out, fearing a lack of support. As a result, as long as violence against women is perceived as acceptable,

⁽²⁷⁾ 'What do you think about each of the following situations? A man controlling his wife's/partner's finances'; 'To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? If women share their opinion on social media, they should accept that they elicit sexist, demeaning and/or abusive replies'; 'To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? If women share intimate pictures of themselves with someone, they are at least partially responsible if the image is shared online without their consent'; 'To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? If a woman suffers sexual violence while under the influence of alcohol or drugs, she is at least partially responsible'. Further reflections on the methodology of the correlation analysis can be found in Annex 7.

⁽²⁸⁾ See Section 2.2.

the cycle of violence continues, ‘as aggressive men fail to be punished and abused women fail to get much needed support’ (Ferrer-Pérez and Bosch Fiol, 2013, p. 506).

Figure 19. Correlation of the Gender Equality Index 2024 with Flash Eurobarometer 544 results, based on the question ‘What do you think about each of the following situations? A man controlling his wife’s/partner’s finances’



NB: $r = -0.55$.

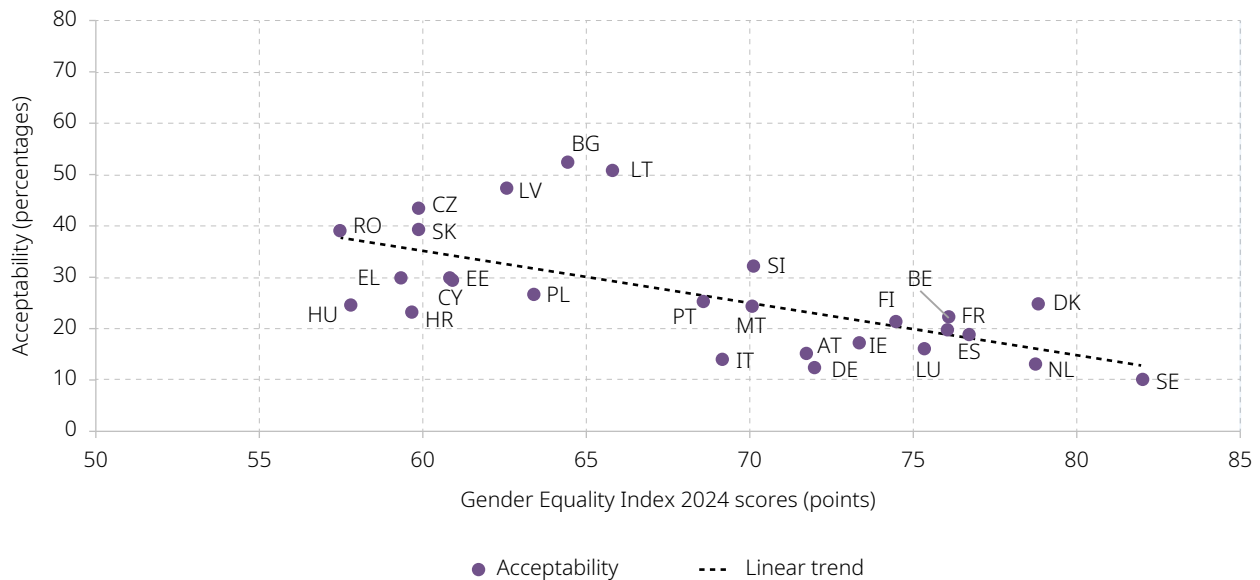
Sources: Author’s calculations based on EIGE’s Gender Equality Index 2024 and Flash Eurobarometer 544, ‘Gender stereotypes – violence against women’, 2024 (‘What do you think about each of the following situations? A man controlling his wife’s/partner’s finances’ (Q1_5)).

The correlation between the acceptability of economic violence and the Gender Equality Index was moderately, but statistically significantly, negative. In countries with a higher Gender Equality Index 2024 score, the share of people accepting economic violence against women is lower. People living in more gender-equal countries tend to be more likely to oppose a man controlling his wife’s/partner’s finances.

In Sweden – the highest-ranking country in the Gender Equality Index 2024 – 28 % of the respondents view the specific situation of controlling your partner’s finances as acceptable (Figure 19). In comparison, in the lowest-ranking country (RO), 38 % of respondents find the statement acceptable. An even greater difference in the acceptability of the given statement can be found between Ireland (with a Gender Equality Index of 73) and Cyprus (with a Gender Equality Index of 61), as only 21 % of respondents from Ireland find the controlling actions acceptable, compared with 63 % of respondents in Cyprus.

There are some interesting outliers, in particular the Netherlands and Belgium. These states both belong to the top five countries in terms of Gender Equality Index 2024 score, yet 58 % of respondents from the Netherlands and 50 % of respondents from Belgium find it acceptable for a man to control his wife’s/partner’s finances.

Figure 20. Correlation of the Gender Equality Index 2024 with Flash Eurobarometer 544 results, based on the question ‘To what extent do you agree with the following statements? If women share their opinion on social media, they should accept that they elicit sexist, demeaning and/or abusive replies’



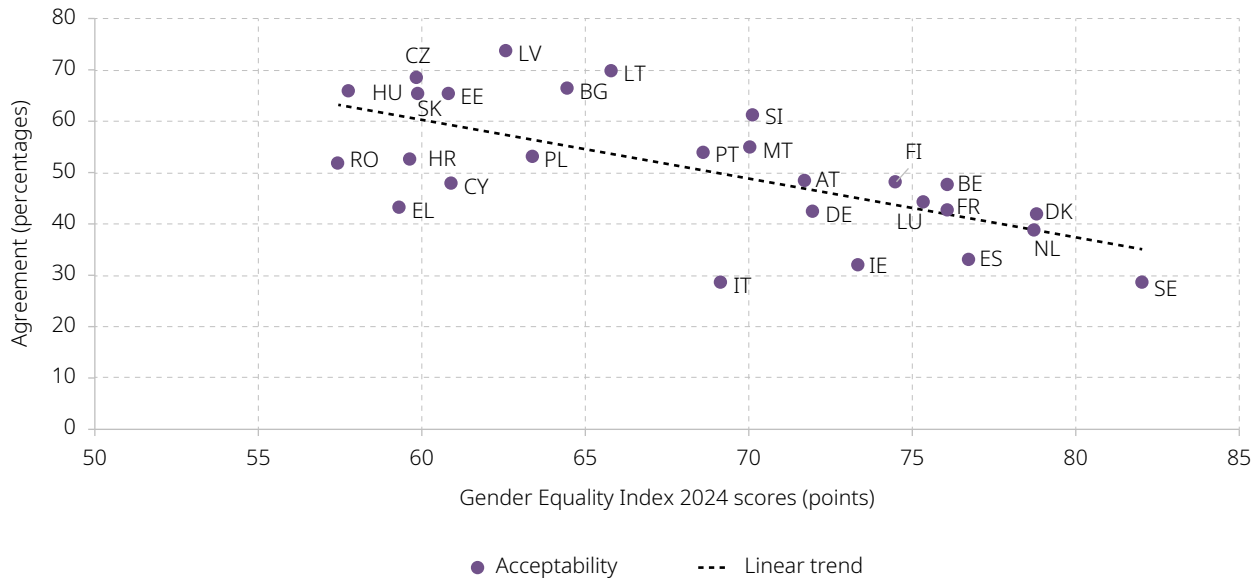
NB: $r = -0.64$.

Sources: Author’s calculations based on EIGE’s Gender Equality Index 2024 and Flash Eurobarometer 544, ‘Gender stereotypes – violence against women’, 2024 (‘To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? If women share their opinion on social media, they should accept that they elicit sexist, demeaning and/or abusive replies’ (Q3_1)).

The correlation between the acceptance of cyber harassment against women for sharing their opinion on social media and the Gender Equality Index 2024 (Figure 20) is high and negative. In Sweden, only 10 % of respondents agree with the statement, while in countries such as Bulgaria (52 %), Lithuania (51 %) and Latvia (47 %) the level of acceptance is around five times higher.

Reflecting on the abuse women suffer online, Sobieraj (2020, p. 140) considers cyber harassment an immense cost of women participating in public conversations. Cyber violence may even prevent women from engaging online or may push women out of the digital sphere completely, directly resulting in greater inequality for women (Sobieraj, 2020). Not only can online harassment have severe mental health impacts, but if such a large percentage of respondents believe women should accept abuse, women may be less likely to speak out against gender-based violence, preventing them from receiving support.

Figure 21. Correlation of the Gender Equality Index 2024 with Flash Eurobarometer 544 results, based on the question ‘To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? If women share intimate pictures of themselves with someone, they are partially responsible if the image is shared online without their consent’



NB: $r = -0.66$.

Sources: Author’s calculations based on EIGE’s Gender Equality Index 2024 and Flash Eurobarometer 544, ‘Gender stereotypes – violence against women’, 2024 (‘To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? If women share intimate pictures of themselves with someone, they are at least partially responsible if the image is shared online without their consent’ (Q3_3)).

The correlation between the Gender Equality Index 2024 and the statement on the non-consensual sharing of images further reflects on harassment and abuse against women in cyberspace. Figure 21 portrays a highly negative correlation, following a similar trend to previous statements. Although in general agreement with this statement seems to be higher than with previous ones, the levels of agreement range from 29 % to 74 % across Member States.

In comparison, while only 12 % of respondents from Germany agree that women should accept online harassment if they share their opinion (Figure 20), 42 % of the respondents from the same country agree that if women share intimate pictures of themselves with someone, they are then at least partially responsible if the image is shared online without their consent. In Italy, which has a Gender Equality Index score of 69 and is placed at the centre of the Gender Equality Index 2024 rankings, only 29 % of respondents tolerate the non-consensual sharing of images.

Figure 22. Correlation of the Gender Equality Index 2024 with Flash Eurobarometer 544 results, based on the question ‘To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? If a woman suffers sexual violence while under the influence of alcohol or drugs, she is at least partially responsible’



NB: $r = -0.70$.

Sources: Author’s own calculations based on EIGE’s Gender Equality Index 2024 and Flash Eurobarometer 544, ‘Gender stereotypes – violence against women’, 2024 (‘To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? If a woman suffers sexual violence while under the influence of alcohol or drugs, she is at least partially responsible’ (Q3_5)).

Figure 22 presents the correlation between a victim-blaming statement (i.e. seeing women as at least partially responsible for the violence they experience) and the Gender Equality Index 2024. As with previous statements, attitudes generally vary across countries based on how high or low they rank in terms of their Gender Equality Index.

The negative correlation shows the higher a country is in the Gender Equality Index ranking, the less likely respondents from that country are to agree that women under the influence of alcohol or drugs are at least partially responsible for the sexual violence they suffer. Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia and Bulgaria have the highest acceptance of this statement in the EU (Figure 22). Portugal and Italy have a comparatively low level of acceptance, while ranking more in the middle of the Gender Equality Index.

Overall, this statement was least accepted by the majority of respondents, indicating that the more severe violence is the less likely it is to be accepted across the EU.

The correlation analysis showed great differences between Member States in the acceptability of violence against women and its links with gender equality. People living in countries with a higher Gender Equality Index 2024 are less likely to tolerate violence against women. Similarly, a high share of people who find gender-based violence acceptable is likely to hamper progress in achieving gender equality in the country in question.

Conclusions

Over the past few years, the EU has made important strides in aligning its legal framework with international instruments. The adoption of milestone legal instruments, including the accession of the EU to the Istanbul Convention and the adoption of the directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence (Directive (EU) 2024/1385), have provided the EU with comprehensive tools to tackle violence against women. The commitment to adapting and implementing ambitious legislation to combat violence against women on the part of EU institutions is largely mirrored at the national level, even if vast differences persist across Member States.

Despite significant progress in legislative and policy developments to end violence against women in the past decade, the level of implementation of the Istanbul Convention varies across the EU. This is most visible in terms of the significant disparities that exist in the availability and quality of services available to women experiencing violence. The most widely accessible service remains national helplines, but the provision of women's centres and shelters is still a long way from being sufficient to address the level of need.

Societal attitudes play an essential role in combating violence against women. Gender-sensitive reporting by the media can promote greater awareness of the systemic nature of violence against women and encourage reporting on the part of victims and bystanders. While Member States have established mechanisms to oversee media coverage, and guidelines and codes of conduct are widely available to promote fair reporting by the media on issues related to violence against women, more work is needed to move away from self-regulatory approaches to deliver a stronger impact.

Public attitudes are another key element of societal attitudes likely to be a catalyst for achieving a society free of violence against women. Recent data from Eurobarometer shows that sexual and physical violence is overall considered unacceptable by most people in the EU. However, several forms of violence, including financial control, hate speech and the non-consensual sharing of intimate images, still garner acceptance from significant shares of the EU population. Gender and age are important factors, with women systematically having lower levels of acceptance of violence against women than men.

Myths around violence against women and victim-blaming attitudes are still prevalent, especially among men under 45. This could indicate that the documented emerging ideological divide between women and men in younger generations in terms of values, lifestyle and political stances also applies to the issue of violence against women. This divide tends to manifest in differing views around climate action and sustainable lifestyles (EIGE, 2023, forthcoming), gender equality, and sexual and reproductive rights, and it is often attributed to the impact of lived experiences on world views.

The findings of the correlation analysis highlight that the acceptability of violence against women is lower in countries with higher levels of gender equality, as measured by the Gender Equality

Conclusions

Index. In other words, in countries where gender equality is high, people are less likely to condone violence against women. This, again, illustrates that progress towards a gender-equal EU is key to eradicating violence against women. Alongside working towards the full implementation of the Istanbul Convention and the directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence, advancing gender equality in care, facilitating women's participation in decision-making and promoting gender-sensitive employment and social protection policies all contribute to building societies in which the prevention and eradication of violence against women is prioritised.

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Annexes

Annex 1. Methodological note on the composite measure of violence against women

This annex sets out the basis for the calculation of the composite measure of violence against women, as included in the conceptual framework of the Gender Equality Index. A more detailed explanation of the conceptual framework of the composite indicator on violence against women is included in the methodological report (EIGE, 2017c).

The indicators included in the composite measure, developed in 2017, were selected according to the same specific criteria applied to the indicators of the Gender Equality Index (individual level, outcome based, no more than 10 % of values missing). In addition, the selection of indicators reflected the need to focus on the main forms of violence (1) for which comparable and valid data is available, (2) that potentially concern all women in the general population, (3) whose inclusion does not decrease the meaningfulness of the composite measure, (4) that are widely criminalised and (5) for which the comparison of data between Member States is possible.

To ensure the highest statistical robustness of the composite measure, the number of variables was kept to a minimum.

In 2024, with updated data from the EU GBV survey (2021 wave) ⁽²⁹⁾ becoming available for all Member States, updating the composite measure of violence became possible. Due to slight differences in methodologies between the EU-wide survey on violence against women conducted by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights in 2012 and the EU GBV survey (2021 wave), several slight changes had to be made to the variables. These differences are mentioned in Table 5.

⁽²⁹⁾ The EU GBV survey (2021 wave) includes results covering the EU-27. The estimated EU-27 average results are based on data collected from a total of 114 023 women (18–74 years of age) across the EU. Data collection took place between September 2020 and March 2024. Eurostat coordinated the collection of data in 18 Member States, and the national statistical authorities of these countries carried out the survey. Italy agreed to share the data from its national survey to provide comparable data for the main indicators. For the remaining eight Member States, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights and EIGE took responsibility for data collection, following Eurostat's methodological manual. For more details on the survey methodology, see the survey metadata, available at https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/metadata/en/gbv_sims.htm.

Table 5. Indicators of the composite measure of violence against women and changes since the 2017 edition

Sub-domain	Indicators and data source used in 2024	Denominator	Differences from the 2017 edition
Prevalence	Percentage of women having experienced physical and/or sexual violence by any perpetrator since the age of 15 (among those aged 18–74); EU GBV survey, 2021 wave (Eurostat (gbv_any_type)).	All respondents (aged 18–74)	Physical and sexual violence include threats
	Percentage of women having experienced physical and/or sexual violence by any perpetrator in the past 12 months (among those aged 18–74); EU GBV survey, 2021 wave (Eurostat (gbv_any_occ)).	All respondents (aged 18–74)	
	Percentage of women victims of intentional homicide by a current or former partner or family member, per 100 000 inhabitants; Eurostat (crim_hom_vrel).	100 000 inhabitants	No difference
Severity	Percentage of women having experienced health-related consequences of physical and/or sexual violence since the age of 15 (among those aged 18–74); EU GBV survey, 2021 wave (Eurostat (gbv_any_cnq)).	Respondents having experienced physical and/or sexual violence since the age of 15 (among those aged 18–74)	Consequences for psychological health are captured only for cases of repeated violence
	Percentage of women having experienced health-related consequences of physical and/or sexual violence in the past 12 months (among those aged 18–74); EU GBV survey, 2021 wave (Eurostat (gbv_any_cnq)).	Respondents having experienced physical and/or sexual violence in the past 12 months (among those aged 18–74)	
	Percentage of women having experienced violence from several types of perpetrators (among those aged 18–74); EU GBV survey, 2021 wave (microdata calculations).	Respondents having experienced physical and/or sexual violence (among those aged 18–74)	Types of perpetrators are categorised differently
Disclosure	Percentage of women having experienced physical and/or sexual violence since the age of 15 and not having told anyone (among those aged 18–74); EU GBV survey, 2021 wave (Eurostat (gbv_any_rp)).	Respondents having experienced physical and/or sexual violence since the age of 15 (among those aged 18–74)	Time frame is 'since the age of 15' instead of 'in the past 12 months'

Source: Produced by the author.

The variable associated with the disclosure of recent physical and sexual violence had to be excluded from the calculations and was replaced by one indicating the disclosure of lifetime physical and sexual violence.

The composite measure was computed in a similar way to that used in the 2017 edition (EIGE, 2017c, p. 26). Variables within each sub-domain were aggregated using an arithmetic mean. The sub-domain values were then aggregated using an arithmetic mean. No weights were applied. The same calculations were used, which are included below.

For indicators:

$$\Gamma_{(x_i)} = 1 + 99 \cdot [Y_{(x_i)}]$$

For the composite measure:

$$I_i^{\text{violence against women}} = \frac{\sum_{s=1}^3 \left(\sum_{v=1}^{n_s} \frac{\Gamma_{(X_{iv})}}{n_s} \right)}{s}$$

$$i = 1, \dots, 27$$

$$v = 1, \dots, 7$$

$$s = 1, \dots, 3$$

n_s = number of indicators in the subdomains

Due to data quality issues, especially unreliable data and missing data for certain variables, and the quality criterion of a maximum of 10 % of values missing, the composite measure could only be calculated for 12 Member States (see Chapter 2).

Annex 2. Legal frameworks on violence against women across the EU

Table 6. Characteristics of EU Member States' legal frameworks on violence against women

Member State	Specific law on violence against women	Specific article on domestic violence	Specific law on femicide	Specific article on rape	Legal definition of rape based on consent	Specific article on sexual harassment	Specific article on stalking	Specific article on forced marriage	Specific article on FGM
BE	x	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
BG	x	✓	x	✓	x	x	x	✓	x
CZ	x	✓	x	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	x
DK	x	x	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
DE	x	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
EE	x	✓	x	✓	x	✓	x	✓	✓
IE	x	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
EL	x	x	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
ES	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
FR	x	✓	x	✓	x	✓	x	x	✓
HR	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
IT	x	x	x	✓	x	x	✓	✓	✓
CY	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓
LV	x	x	x	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	x
LT	✓	✓	x	✓	x	✓	✓	x	x
LU	x	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓
HU	x	✓	x	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓
MT	x	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
NL	x	x	x	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	x
AT	x	x	x	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓
PL	x	x	x	✓	x	x	✓	✓	x
PT	x	✓	x	✓	x	x	✓	✓	✓
RO	x	✓	x	✓	x	✓	✓	x	x
SI	x	x	x	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	x
SK	x	x	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x
FI	x	x	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x
SE	x	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Source: Produced by the author.

Annex 3. National action plans and strategies on violence against women across the EU

Table 7. Characteristics of EU Member States' national action plans and strategies on violence against women

Member State	Current national action plan / strategy			Training	
	Period	Duration (years)	Focus	Availability	Mandatory for some professionals
BE	2021–2025	5	Gender-based violence	✓	✓
BG	2023–2024	2	Equality between women and men	✓	✗
CZ	2021–2025	5	Prevention of domestic violence	✓	✓
DK	2023–2026	4	Partner violence and partner murder	✓	✓
DE	2020–2024	5	VAW, although current government is working on a review	✓	✓
EE	2021–2025	5	Prevention of violence	✓	✗
IE	2022–2026	5	Domestic sexual and gender-based violence, with a focus on the intersectional perspective	✓	✓
EL	2021–2025	5	Gender equality	✓	✓
ES	2022–2025	3	A state pact against gender-based violence	✓	✓
FR	2023–2027	5	Equality between women and men	✓	✗
HR	2023–2028	6	VAW and domestic violence	✓	✗
IT	2021–2023	3	VAW; government is expected to review the NAP	✓	✓
CY	2024–2026	3	Gender mainstreaming in public policy	✓	✓
LV	2024–2029	6	VAW and domestic violence	✓	✗
LT	2024–2026	3	Prevention of domestic violence	✓	✓
LU	2023–2027	5	VAW	✓	✓
HU	2021–2030	10	Strengthening of the role of women in families and society	✓	✗
MT	2023–2028	6	Gender-based violence and domestic violence	✓	✗
NL	2022–2025	4	Gender-based violence	✓	✗
AT	2021–2024	4	VAW; newly elected government is expected to update the NAP	✓	✗
PL	2024–2030	7	Prevention of domestic violence	✓	✓
PT	2018–2030	13	Equality and non-discrimination	✓	✓
RO	2018–2021	4	Domestic violence; working on implementing a new NAP	✓	✗
SI	2023–2028	6	Domestic violence and VAW	✓	✗
SK	2022–2027	6	VAW	✓	✗
FI	2022–2025	4	A plan for implementing the Istanbul Convention	✓	✗
SE	2017–2026	10	Prevention and countering of men's VAW	✓	✓

NB: NAP, national action plan; VAW, violence against women.

Source: Produced by the author.

Annex 4. Survey questionnaire on the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on specialised women's support services (2020–2023)

Section 0. Details

- Country:
- Did you work in a women's support service organisation between 2020 and 2023? (Yes/no)
- Name of the organisation:
- Does your organisation manage one or more of the following?

	Yes	No	Not sure
Women's helpline(s)			
Women's centre or counselling service			
Women's shelter(s)			

Section 1. General impact of cost-of-living crisis on the operational capacity of your organisation

How was your organisation affected by the following between 2020 and 2023?

Mark the most appropriate choice based on your knowledge of your organisation.

	Strong decrease	Moderate decrease	Low decrease	No impact	Low increase	Moderate increase	Strong increase	I don't know
Demand for services								
Staff numbers								
Staff salary								
Staff overtime								
Capacity to make salary adjustments in line with inflation								
Ability to pay for overtime								
Morale and well-being of staff members								

	Strong decrease	Moderate decrease	Low decrease	No impact	Low increase	Moderate increase	Strong increase	I don't know
Capacity to retain qualified staff or recruit new staff members								
Overall effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery								
State funding								
Local funding								
Private donations								
Funding monitoring requirements								
Capacity to maintain organisation's reserve funds								
Capacity to cover operational costs (e.g. energy, food, rent and maintenance bills)								
Any other								

Section 2. Impact on specific services for women

This section focuses on the services you offer (women's helplines, women's centres or women's shelters).

Was the women's helpline run by your organisation affected by the following between 2020 and 2023?

Mark the most appropriate choice based on your knowledge of your organisation.

	Strong decrease	Moderate decrease	Low decrease	No impact	Low increase	Moderate increase	Strong increase	I don't know
Staff numbers								
Operational hours/ days of the helpline service								
Number of calls								
Complexity of cases								
Overall workload								
Quality of support provided								
Any other								

Was the women's centre or counselling service run by your organisation affected by the following between 2020 and 2023?

Mark the most appropriate choice based on your knowledge of your organisation.

	Strong decrease	Moderate decrease	Low decrease	No impact	Low increase	Moderate increase	Strong increase	I don't know
Staff numbers								
Operational hours/ days of the service								
Number of women being supported								
Complexity of workload								
Quality of support provided								
Others: allow for additional impacts								

Women’s shelter(s)

What kind of shelter does your organisation run?

Short-term or emergency shelter	
Long-term shelter	
Other – which?	

Was the women’s shelter run by your organisation affected by the following between 2020 and 2023?

Mark the most appropriate choice based on your knowledge of your organisation.

	Strong decrease	Moderate decrease	Low decrease	No impact	Low increase	Moderate increase	Strong increase	I don’t know
Staff numbers								
Operational days of the shelter								
Number of women in shelter								
Length of the stay of the women in shelter								
Complexity of workload								
Quality of support provided								
Any other								

Section 3. Optional questions

And finally, some optional questions that would provide important context.

1. Have you had to make any adjustments to your service delivery model or programmes in response to the cost-of-living crisis? Could you please explain how? For example, was there a need to scale down the provision of your services?
2. Please include any additional information, reports or resources regarding the general impact of the cost-of-living crisis on the operational capacity of your organisation or any other women’s specialist support service in your country from 2020 to 2023 (in any EU language).
3. Please provide any other information or context you would like us to take into account relating to the effects of the cost-of-living crisis on your operational capacity.

Annex 5. Overview of mechanisms related to reporting on violence against women by the media in the Member States

Table 8. Characteristics of EU Member States' national mechanisms on violence against women in the media

Member States	Regulatory authority/agency overseeing media coverage	Manuals, guidelines or recommendations	Observatories on violence against women relying on data from the media
BE	✓	✓	✓
BG	✓	✗	✗
CY	✓	✓	✗
CZ	✓	✗	✗
DE	✓	✓	✗
DK	✓	✓	✓
EE	✓	✗	✓
EL	✓	✓	✓
ES	✓	✓	✓
FI	✓	✗	✗
FR	✓	✓	✓
HR	✓	✓	✓
HU	✓	No info	✗
IE	✓	✓	✓
IT	✓	✓	✓
LU	✓	✗	✗
LV	✓	✗	✗
LT	✓	✗	✓
MT	✓	✓	✓
NL	✓	✗	✗
AT	✓	✓	✓
PL	✓	✓	✗
PT	✓	✓	✓
RO	✓	✗	✗
SE	✓	✓	✗
SI	✓	✓	✓
SK	✓	✗	✗

Source: Produced by the author.

Annex 6. Data on public perceptions of violence against women

Table 9. Original responses to Flash Eurobarometer 544, on gender stereotypes, and grouped responses used in this report (% , 18+, EU-27)

What do you think about each of the following situations?	Original responses				Grouped		
	I find it unacceptable	I find it acceptable under certain circumstances	I find it acceptable	Don't know / prefer not to answer	Unacceptable	Acceptable, at least in certain circumstances	Don't know / prefer not to answer
Q1_2. Men body gazing, ogling, catcalling or whistling at women	82	13	4	2	82	17	2
Q1_3. Men making suggestive comments or allusions about a female colleague's appearance at work	78	17	3	2	78	20	2
Q1_4. A man occasionally slapping his wife/girlfriend	92	4	3	1	92	7	1
Q1_5. A man controlling his wife's/partner's finances	63	30	6	2	63	36	2

Source: Author's calculations

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?	Original responses					Grouped		
	Totally agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Totally disagree	Don't know / prefer not to answer	Agree	Disagree	Don't know / prefer not to answer
Q2_1. Women often make up or exaggerate claims of abuse or rape	4	13	29	43	10	17	72	10
Q2_2. Domestic violence is a private matter and should be handled within the family	5	6	15	72	3	11	87	3

Source: Author's calculations.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?	Original responses					Grouped		
	Totally agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Totally disagree	Don't know / prefer not to answer	Agree	Disagree	Don't know / prefer not to answer
Q3_1. If women share their opinion on social media, they should accept that they elicit sexist, demeaning and/or abusive replies	6	15	22	52	6	21	74	6
Q3_2. A husband or boyfriend can have sex with his wife or girlfriend without her consent	2	3	12	81	2	5	93	2
Q3_3. If women share intimate pictures of themselves with someone, they are at least partially responsible if the image is shared online without their consent	14	29	19	34	4	43	53	4

Annexes

	Original responses					Grouped		
Q3_4. Faced with a sexual proposal, if a woman says 'no', she often means 'yes' but she is playing 'hard to get'	3	6	17	69	6	9	86	6
Q3_5. If a woman suffers sexual violence while under the influence of alcohol or drugs, she is at least partially responsible	4	12	18	63	4	16	81	4

Source: Author's calculations.

Annex 7. Methodological note on the correlation analysis

The correlation analysis utilised data from Flash Eurobarometer 544, on gender stereotypes, and the most recent Gender Equality Index (from 2024). To begin with, 13 statements⁽³⁰⁾ related to violence against women were selected, and for each of these the answer options were combined into 'Unacceptable' and 'Acceptable' or 'Agree' and 'Disagree' categories. 'Unacceptable' was its own answer category; however, 'Acceptable' included 'Acceptable under certain circumstances' and 'Acceptable'. Similarly, both 'Agree' and 'Disagree' are the combined results of respondents selecting 'Totally (dis)agree' and 'Tend to (dis)agree'. The options were combined to gain a clearer insight into respondents' acceptance of violence against women. As a next step, all questions were disaggregated by Member State, gender and age to examine how respondents perceived violence against women based on these factors. Additionally, the Eurobarometer age groups were recoded into four new categories: 18–24 years, 25–44 years, 45–64 years and 65 years and older. This adjustment was made to ensure compatibility with the Gender Equality Index.

Next, the 13 statements on violence against women were correlated with the Gender Equality Index scores at the country level to test the following hypothesis: individuals residing in countries with higher Gender Equality Index scores are less likely to consider statements about violence acceptable than those residing in countries with lower Gender Equality Index scores. The analysis revealed that responses to most statements indicate a significant correlation with the Gender Equality Index, showing that greater acceptance of violence against women is associated with lower levels of gender equality in the Member States investigated. The analysis was also carried out by sex. While there are significant gender differences in the acceptability of the individual statements related to violence, there are hardly any significant differences in the correlation by sex. Therefore, it was decided that the current correlation analysis in the study would focus only on the acceptance and agreement of all respondents regardless of sex.

For this analysis, the Pearson correlation coefficient (r) was used, which measures the strength and direction of the linear relationship between two variables. A positive value ($r > 0$) indicates that as one variable increases, the other tends to increase, while a negative value ($r < 0$) means that as one variable increases, the other tends to decrease. A value of 1 or -1 indicates a perfect linear relationship, while $r = 0$ suggests no linear relationship. The absolute value of r indicates the strength of the relationship, meaning that the higher this value, the stronger the linear relationship. It is important to keep in mind that this coefficient measures only linear relationships and does not imply causation.

In this analysis, a score of ± 0.4 was considered to indicate a statistically significant correlation. There was a statistically significant correlation for 7 out of the 13 statements analysed. Out of these seven statements, four were picked for the final analysis. Almost all seven statements had similar moderate-to-high negative correlation coefficients; therefore, the statements with the

⁽³⁰⁾ Eleven of these thirteen statements are referred to in Annex 6. The other two statements are as follows: 'What do you think about each of the following situations? A man controlling his wife's/girlfriend's activities or relationships (e.g. mobile phone use, activities on social media, etc.)' (Q1_6); and 'In general, how common do you think intimate partner violence against women is in [your country]?' (Q4).

most significant differences in acceptability were chosen, to indicate the clearest results. The four selected statements ⁽³¹⁾ were picked because they had the greatest gap between lowest and highest acceptability in Member States, which enabled a stronger analysis.

Each of these four statements demonstrated a negative correlation between the Gender Equality Index 2024 scores and acceptability or agreement, with Pearson coefficients of less than -0.5 . This indicates that in countries with higher Gender Equality Index scores, there is a lower acceptance of or agreement with statements that imply violence or control, proving a good argument to support the initial hypothesis. This outcome reinforces the negative relationship between gender equality and tolerance for violence-related attitudes.

⁽³¹⁾ 'What do you think about each of the following situations? A man controlling his wife's/partner's finances'; 'To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? If women share their opinion on social media, they should accept that they elicit sexist, demeaning and/or abusive replies'; 'To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? If women share intimate pictures of themselves with someone, they are at least partially responsible if the image is shared online without their consent'; 'To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? If a woman suffers sexual violence while under the influence of alcohol or drugs, she is at least partially responsible.'

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