

10 YEARS
of crime
victimization survey



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Women, the primary declared victims of physical or sexual violence

By describing the violence they have suffered over the two years prior to the "Living environment and security" (CVS) surveys, 18-75 year-old women reveal the extent to which they are more exposed than men to acts committed by someone they know – first and foremost their spouse or former spouse¹. Women are also more often victims of acts of a sexual nature, whatever form they may take.

Over the 2008 to 2016 survey campaigns, the annual average number of women between the ages of 18 and 75 who claimed to have been the victim of at least one act of a sexual nature² over the two years prior to the study stands at 1.7 million, and the number of women subject to physical violence or threats on at least one occasion at more than 2 million. Three out of four acts of a sexual nature are committed against women, whether within or outside the household (74%), whereas almost the same percentage of men (48%) as women (52%) claim to have been a victim of physical violence or threats.

For this type of offence, the proportion of women grows the closer her links with the perpetrator: 58% for physical violence outside the household but by an acquaintance and 66% for physical violence within the household. The gap between men and women is largest when the perpetrator of the physical violence (whether outside or within the household) is the spouse or former spouse: 72% of victims are women in this case.

In the 1970s in France, feminist movements denounced violence committed against women, and its analysis subsequently became a priority on public policy agendas³. All of the studies conducted on violence against women agree on the sheer number of forms this can take (physical, sexual, psychological, verbal or economic) in both private (within the household) and public (in the workplace or the street) settings⁴. Furthermore, these forms of violence remain behind the scenes for the most part – and are even brushed off as inconsequential in some instances⁵. In light of this, it becomes vital to gain an insight into this phenomenon through surveys conducted with victims, not least because of the low reporting rate.

In 2000, the first national survey on violence against women in France (Enveff) was carried out; the second, on gender relations and violence (VIRAGE), has just ended⁶. From the outset, so since 2007, the CVS survey has also been conducted along these lines by annually asking the French population about so-called "sensitive" victimisations (such as sexual violence) suffered over the two years prior to the survey, as well as crimes committed against the household (such as burglary) or the respondent (such as violent robbery or theft without violence)⁷.

The findings from the CVS surveys⁸ (conducted by Insee-ONDRP-SSMSI⁹) among 18-75 year olds living in metropolitan France bring to light the persisting over-representation of women in certain categories of violence.

- (1) The notion of spouse or former spouse should be understood in the broad sense (husband/wife, partner or boy/girl-friend). The spouse lives with the respondent, while the former spouse no longer does at the time of the survey, but may have done at the time of the assault. In 2016, the notion of "non-live-in spouse" was added, but we have not taken this on board in our analysis as the data between 2008 and 2015 only refers to the former spouse.
- (2) Acts of a sexual nature include indecent exposure, inappropriate behaviour (for example, one person trying to kiss another without their consent, or to fondle them) and sexual violence (rape and attempted rape as well as other forms of sexual assault including groping). Sexual harassment is not included in the scope of this study.
- (3) 2017 is the year for [violence against women in the Parisian region \(Ile-de-France\)](#).
- (4) Maryse Jaspard, *Les violences contre les femmes*, 2^e éd., Paris, La Découverte, «Repères», 2011, p.8.
- (5) Marylène Lieber, [«La double invisibilité des violences faites aux femmes dans les contrats locaux de sécurité français»](#), *Cahiers du Genre*, 2003/2, n°35, p.71-94.
- (6) Ined, [«Présentation de l'enquête Virage et des premiers résultats sur les violences sexuelles»](#), Working document, no.229, January 2017, 67p.
- (7) See the [2006 to 2016 annual reports of the ONDRP](#) and the [Letter from the Observatoire national des violences faites aux femmes](#).
- (8) See the *Methodological overview* p.4.
- (9) Insee: French National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies; ONDRP: French National Observatory of Crime and Criminal Justice and SSMSI: Ministerial Statistics Department for Internal Security

Over-representation of women among victims of “physical violence, threats or acts of a sexual nature”

Over the 2008 to 2016 survey campaigns, 14.7% of women claimed to have endured at least one of these forms of violence over the two years prior to the survey (11.4% of men) – accounting for 58% of victims.

To grasp the specific nature of violence committed against women, we have distinguished “physical violence or threats” (including during a theft or attempted theft) from “acts of a sexual nature”. On the one hand, violent robbery, physical violence (slaps, blows and other forms of physical violence) both within and outside the household, as well as threats, are therefore analysed together. On the other, we look more particularly at indecent exposure, inappropriate behaviour¹⁰ and sexual violence (rape, attempted rape and other forms of sexual assault including groping) both within and outside the household.

Every year between 2008 and 2016, an average of 1.7 million women claimed to have been the victim of at least one act of a sexual nature over the two years prior to the survey (fewer than 600,000 men) and more than 2 million of physical violence or threats on at least one occasion (fewer than 2 million men).

Women are significantly more exposed than men to acts of a sexual nature, and to more or less the same extent as them to physical violence or threats [1].

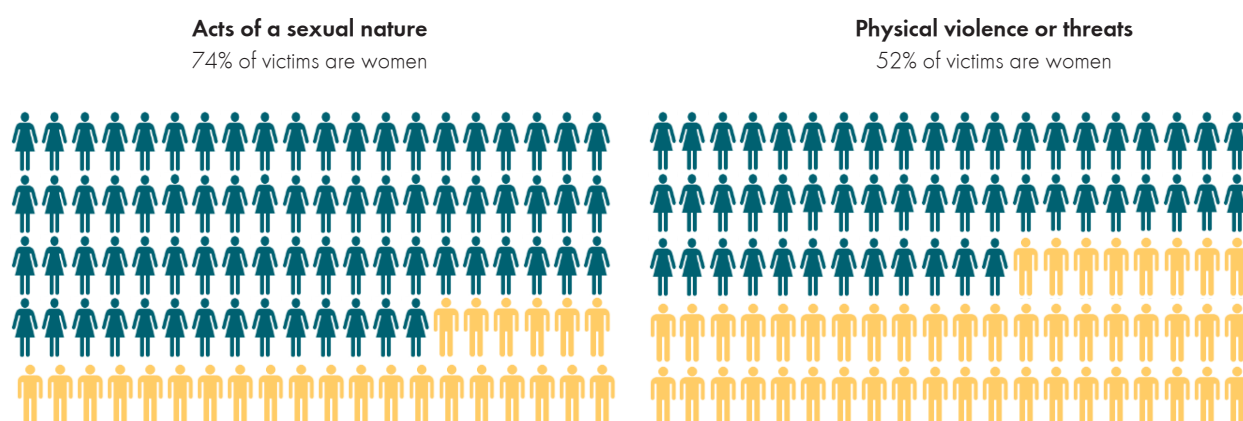
The victimisation rate of women for acts of a sexual nature over two years is almost triple that of men (7.5% vs 2.9% during the 2008 to 2016 surveys). The over-representation of women is a finding that is shared by other French surveys, such as VIRAGE. The trends characterising sexual violence, which are available on an annual basis via the CVS scheme, throw up a persisting gap between women and men ever since the first survey.

This structural difference can be found for each of the components of sexual violence [2]. More than 6 in 10 victims claiming to have been subject to at least one instance of indecent exposure are women. Likewise, women account for almost 8 in 10 victims of inappropriate behaviour, as well as for victims of sexual violence both within and outside the household.

Furthermore, women are also more likely to be a victim of intimate partner violence, committed by a spouse or former spouse¹¹. They account for just under two-thirds of victims of physical violence committed by the spouse (66%) and more than 90% for sexual violence (rape, attempted rape and other forms of sexual assault) by the spouse. This proportion also exceeds 90% regarding to violence outside of the household setting committed by a former spouse (91% for physical violence and 93% for sexual violence).

Accordingly, women are the main victims of physical or sexual violence on the part of a spouse or former spouse, irrespective of whether these assaults are committed within or outside the household. 72% of victims are women where physical violence is concerned and 92% where sexual violence is concerned [3].

1 Victims, by gender, according to the grouped offences (%)



Scope: 18-75 year-olds in metropolitan France who claim to have been the victim of at least one of the offences over the previous two years.

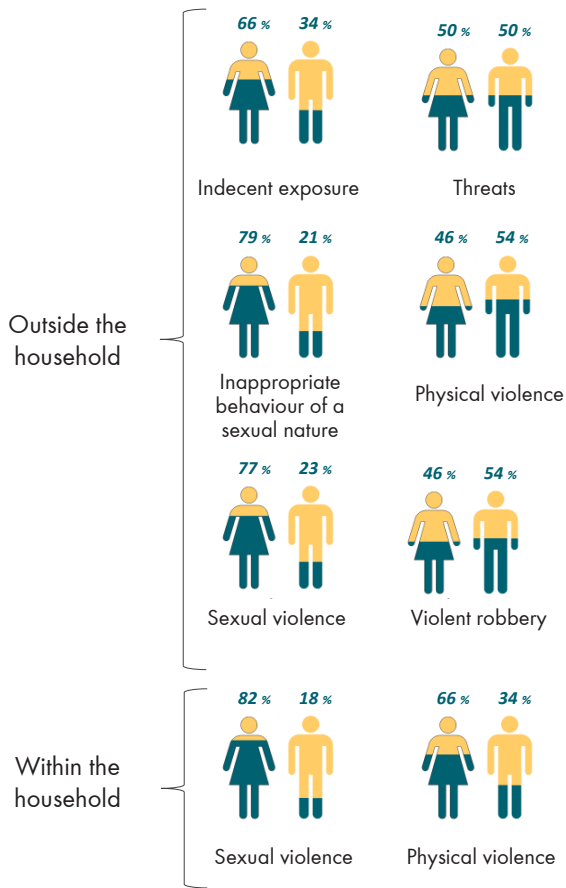
Source: 2008-2016 “Living environment and security” surveys, INSEE-ONDRP-SSMSI

Note: Acts of a sexual nature encompass indecent exposure, inappropriate behaviour (one person trying to kiss another without their consent for example) and sexual violence (rape, attempted rape and other forms of sexual assault). Physical violence or threats include robbery (with violence or threats), physical violence both within and outside the household, and threats.

(10) An example of inappropriate behaviour is when one person tries to kiss another without their consent.

(11) See TOURNIOL DUCLOS L. and LE JEANNIC T., «Les violences faites aux femmes», Insee Première, n° 1180, February 2008, 4p. and MORIN T., JALUZOT L. and PICARD S., «Femmes et hommes face à la violence. Les femmes sont plus souvent victimes d'un proche ou de leur conjoint», Insee Première, n° 1473, November 2013, 4p.

2 Victims, by gender, according to the type of offence (outside and within the household)



Scope: 18-75 year-olds living in metropolitan France who claim to have been a victim.
Source: 2008-2016 "Living environment and security" surveys, INSEE-ONDRP-SSM-SI.

Moreover, although overall, an almost equivalent proportion of men and women claim to have been the victim of physical assault or threats, when such violence is committed within the household, women are, once again, the most exposed (66% compared to 34% of men).

One of the distinctive features of violence against women therefore concerns the familiarity of the offender to the victim: most women know the perpetrator at least by sight – even as regards physical and sexual violence committed outside the household. This is a key characteristic that female victims do not share with male victims.

Female victims' perpetrators are known to them even outside of the household

80% of female victims of sexual violence (rape, attempted rape and other forms of sexual assault), both within and outside the household, know the perpetrator either personally or by sight¹². More specifically, in the case of sexual violence outside of the household, 7 in 10 female victims claim to know the perpetrator personally or by sight (43% of men). 38% of women who know the perpetrator personally report that this person was their former spouse (14% for men). Close relatives make up the next largest proportion (28% for women and 32% for men).

3 in 10 female victims claim there to be no relationship between them and the offender. Although, on rare occasions, this may mean that the offender is a neighbour or someone the victim knows in passing, in most cases the perpetrators are complete strangers as far as the victim is concerned.

3 Victims of a spouse or former spouse, by gender, according to the type of offence

Sexual violence by spouse or former spouse outside and within the household

92% of victims are women



Physical violence by spouse or former spouse outside and within the household

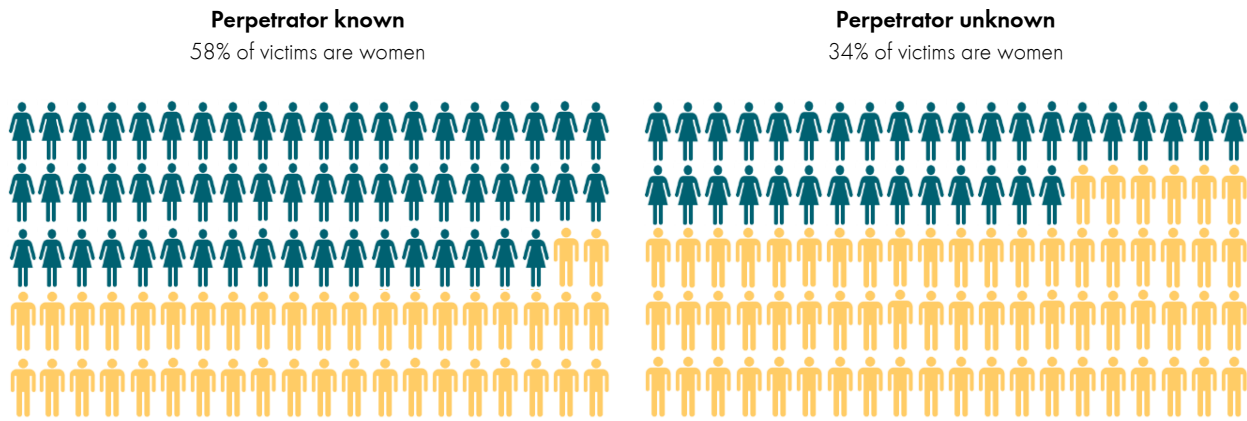
72% of victims are women



Scope: 18-75 year-olds living in metropolitan France who claim to have been a victim.
Source: 2008-2016 "Living environment and security" surveys, INSEE-ONDRP-SSM-SI.

(12) The description of a victimisation incident concerns the most recent assault.

4 Victims of physical violence outside the household, by gender, according to relationship with the perpetrator



Scope: 18-75 year-olds living in metropolitan France who claim to have been the victim of physical violence outside the household.
Source: 2008-2016 "Living environment and security" surveys, INSEE-ONDRP-SSMSI.

Inappropriate behaviour demonstrated outside of the household, such as fondling or one person trying to kiss another without their consent, tends more to be committed by someone known personally or by sight (64% of female victims). Furthermore, such behaviour is carried out in public places (14% in the street and 12% on public transport) and in private (15% at the respondent's home and 13% at someone else's home).

In addition, and unlike other forms of sexual assault, women are victims of indecent behaviour in the street (35%) or on public transport (14%).

In the same way as for acts of a sexual nature, the relationship between victims and perpetrators of physical violence outside the

household differs between women and men. Women claiming to be victims overwhelmingly report knowing the perpetrator personally or by sight (58% of victims) [4] compared with male victims (42%). For 46% of women who know their attacker personally, this person is a former spouse (10% for men).

Although women are exposed just as much as men to physical violence outside the household, they are more likely to know the perpetrator personally or by sight. Accordingly, this connection may be linked to the fact that the characteristics of violence committed against women outside the private sphere are similar to those committed within the household.

Methodological overview

The "Living environment and security" (CVS) victimisation surveys have been conducted jointly by Insee and the ONDRP since 2007, and with the Ministerial Statistics Department for Internal Security (SSMSI) since 2015. Every year, some 15,000 households living in metropolitan France are asked about assaults of which they may have been victim over the past two years. One of the household's members, aged 14 or over, is then designated to answer the questionnaire on individual victimisations (violent robbery or theft without violence, physical violence outside of the household, etc.). If this respondent is between the ages of 18 and 75, s/he completes a self-administered questionnaire on so-called "sensitive" assaults - i.e. sexual violence outside of the household or physical and sexual violence within the household. In this study, the findings are based on the compilation of the 2008-2016 surveys, which enables structural results.

To look more particularly at the proportion of female victims of violence, we have chosen to group together variables from these questionnaires within three indicators. The first, bearing

on "physical violence or threats", corresponds to robbery or attempted robbery (with violence or threats), physical violence outside the household, threats outside the household and physical violence within the household. The second indicator is based on "acts of a sexual nature" which groups together indecent exposure, inappropriate behaviour (one person trying to kiss another without their consent for example), sexual violence (rape, attempted rape and other forms of sexual assault, including groping) both within and outside the household. The third, "physical violence, threats or acts of a sexual nature", groups together these first two indicators.

To study the relationship between victims and perpetrators, we have focused on the characteristics of the most recent assault for physical violence or threats outside the household (including robbery) as well as on sexual violence committed outside the household. Nevertheless, since it is not possible to distinguish the characteristics of the most recent assault for physical and sexual violence within the household, the analysis looks at this category as a whole.