

Acts of exhibitionism

Although there have been few studies on exhibitionism¹ in both the French and English-language literature, this type of offence is not uncommon. An American study estimated that, out of a sample of 459 students, more than 40% of women had been victims of exhibitionism in their lifetime (Clark et al., 2016).

Through the use of the "Living Environment & Security" (CVS) survey, we are able to assess the scale of this phenomenon in France. In fact, more than 560,000 people between the ages of 18 and 76 claim to have been a victim of this offence in 2017, which is 1.3% of the population living in Metropolitan France. However, law enforcement has recorded fewer than 6,200 victims of sexual exhibitionist acts in 2017 (Guedj, 2019). As such, there is a wide gap between the reality of the situation and police and gendarmerie data.

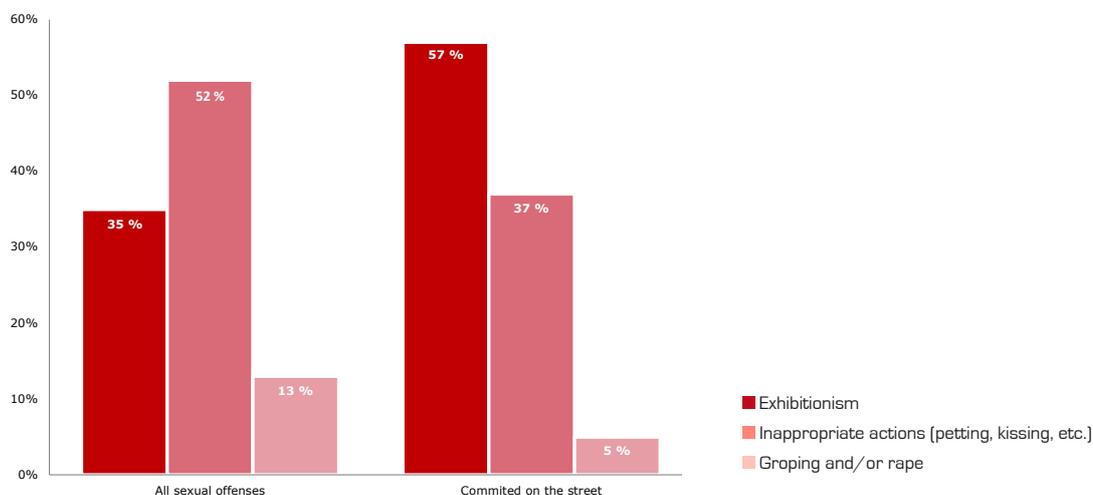
This Flash sets out to provide statistics on this paraphilia, much of which still occurs far below the authorities' radar.

Exhibitionism: a sexual offence committed against a high number of victims

Over the 2010-2017 period, 35% of the 18-76 year olds who claim to have been a victim of sexual offences outside the household² were victims of exhibitionism [1]. This therefore makes exhibitionism the second most common type of sexual offence after "inappropriate sexual behavior", which particularly includes unwanted petting and kissing.

Over the same period, victims of exhibitionism accounted for 57% of the victims of sexual offences committed on the street. Thus, among the different types of sexual offences committed on the street, exhibitionism was the one with the highest number of victims.

1 Types of sexual offences outside the household



Source: «Living Environment & Security» surveys from 2012 to 2018, Insee-ONDRP-SSMSI.

Scope: Victims of sexual offences outside the household over the previous two years, aged between 18 and 76 years old, living in Metropolitan France.

Note: The total number of victims does not equal the sum of the three columns, since it is possible for someone to have been a victim of more than one type of sexual offence.

Reading note: 35% of victims of sexual offences outside the household, between 2010 and 2017, were victims of exhibitionism.

(1) In this Flash, we analyse exhibitionism as defined in the CVS surveys (see Sources and definitions).

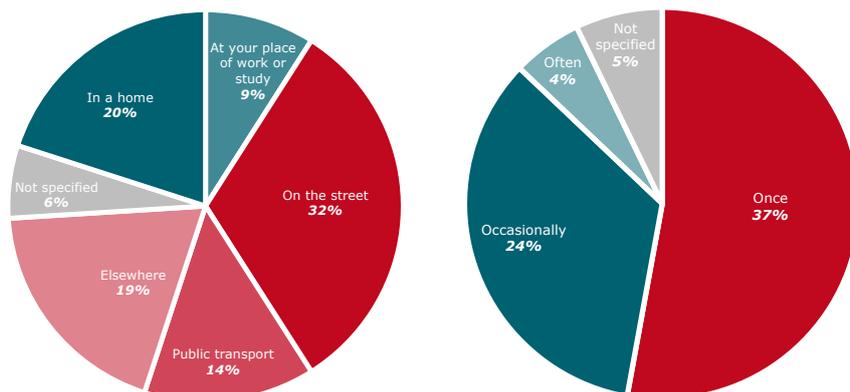
(2) Sexual offences outside the household include acts of exhibitionism, inappropriate sexual behavior (petting, kissing, etc.), sexual touching and rape, committed by someone who was not living with the victim at the time of the survey.

A majority of exhibitionist acts are committed on the street

The three most common locations for exhibitionism are the street, a home³, or public transport. Indeed, for 32%, 20% and 14% of victims of exhibitionism between 2010 and 2017, the most recent incident they were exposed to was on the street, in a home, or on public transport respectively [2].

Moreover, 28% of exhibitionism victims report having been a victim of such an act more than once over the two years prior to the survey, of which 4% claim to have “often” been a victim of such acts [2].

2 Proportion of victims according to the location and frequency of exhibitionist acts



Source: “Living Environment & Security” surveys from 2012 to 2018, Insee-ONDRP-SSMSI.

Scope: Victims of exhibitionist acts over the previous two years, aged between 18 and 76 years old, living in Metropolitan France.

Note: Not specified = don’t know/refusal.

Reading note: 32% of victims of exhibitionism between 2010 and 2017 say that the most recent incident happened in the street.

Victim profiles

Over the 2010-2017 period, 66% of the respondents claiming to have been a victim of exhibitionism are women and 34% are men. Women are therefore more likely to be victims of exhibitionism than men. The victimisation rate confirms this, as 2.5% of women have been victims of an exhibitionist act versus 1.3% of men.

Moreover, it can be noted that the youngest individuals are more likely to be victims of this type of sexual offence, since the highest victimisation rate is observed among 18-25 year olds (3.6% versus 1.6% on average for the rest of the population).

Survey limitations

A study conducted in Florida (Longo & Groth, 1983) shows that 65% of the men found guilty of exhibitionism had committed these acts in front of children. This means that solely studying the potential victims of exhibitionism among the ages of 18 and 76 could overlook a significant proportion of victims of this paraphilia.

[3] This encompasses the answers “at your home”, “at somebody else’s home” and “in your apartment block”.

[4] Original question in French: “En année n-2 ou en année n-1, est-il arrivé qu’une personne - qui ne vit pas actuellement avec vous - se livre à une exhibition sexuelle ?”.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Longo, R. E., Groth, A., N. (1983). Juvenile Sexual Offenses in the Histories of Adult Rapists and Child Molesters. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 27, pp. 150-155.

SOURCES AND DEFINITIONS

CVS survey

This study draws on the “Living Environment & Security” surveys (Insee, ONDRP, SSMSI) from 2012 to 2018. The questions refer to the two years prior to the survey (N-1 and N-2). Non-French speakers are taken into account from the 2017 survey and, after weighting, the sample is representative of the 18-76 year old population living in Metropolitan France.

Since the CVS survey depends on the respondents’ claims, perceptions in terms of safety or the phenomena experienced may vary according to different characteristics – not least of which is the respondents’ gender.

Exhibitionism

Respondents considered to be victims of exhibitionism answered “yes” to the question: “Last year, or the year before, not including the people who currently live with you, has a person ever engaged themselves in a sexual exhibition, such as, for example, by undressing in front of you without your consent?”⁴.

Exhibitionism, formerly known as indecent exposure, is the act of exposing one’s body parts that are not normally exposed to another person, in a public place; under Article 222-32 of the French Criminal Code it is punishable by a one-year prison and €15,000 fine.



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