

The non-reporting of sexual violence victims to the authorities

According to the "Living Environment & Security" (CVS) survey, it is estimated that each year, between 2011 and 2017¹, 235,000 18-76 year olds, on average, were victims of sexual violence² (which is 0.5% of the population). 78% of these victims stated in the survey that they did not report the offence to the police or gendarmerie, 16% stated they did³ and 6% did not specify [1].

in the questionnaire are not mutually exclusive, the respondents may cite as many reasons as they wish.

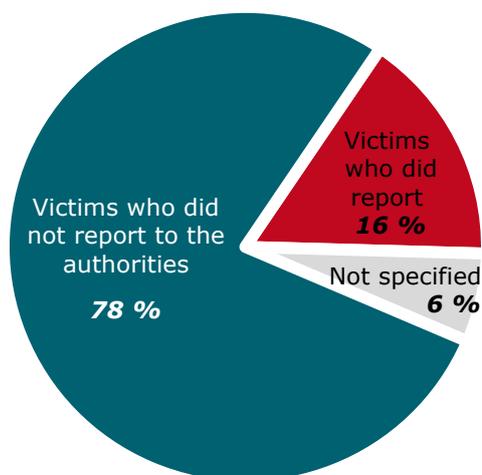
The main reason given by the victims of sexual violence is that "it would have been pointless". 72% of victims who did not go to the police or gendarmerie mentioned this reason [2].

"It would have been pointless"

The victims who state that they did not go to the police or gendarmerie are asked to specify why among the suggested reasons in the questionnaire⁴. As the options available

In 69% of cases, victims preferred to find another solution, and in just over half the cases, they said they did not report the offences to avoid further hardship (56%).

1 Proportions of victims who did and did not go to the police or gendarmerie



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

Scope: Respondents claiming to have been a victim of sexual violence over the two years prior to the survey, aged between 18 and 76 years old and living in Metropolitan France.

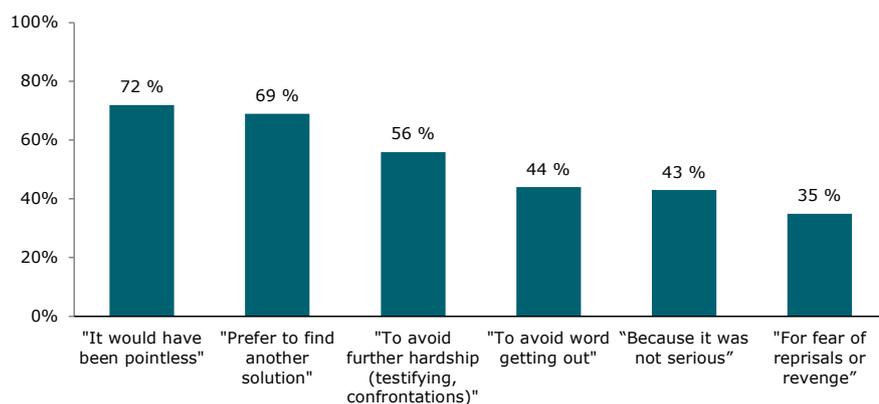
(1) Prior to and including the 2016 CVS survey, only French-speaking respondents were asked about the details of the sexual violence they endured. Our study population therefore comprises French and non-French-speaking victims for 2017 and 2018 but solely French-speaking victims for 2012-2016.

(2) Whether or not the violence was committed by someone living with the victim at the time of the survey. To find out more, see Source & Definitions.

(3) Even if they did not file a complaint.

(4) The reasons given are: "to avoid word getting out", "because you prefer to find another solution", "for fear of reprisals, of revenge", "because it would have been pointless", "because it was not serious", "to avoid further hardship (testifying, confrontations)".

② Reasons given by the victims to explain why they did not go to the authorities



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

Scope: Respondents claiming to have been a victim of sexual violence over the two years prior to the survey, aged between 18 and 76 years old and living in Metropolitan France, who did not go to the police or gendarmerie to report the offence.

Reading note: 72% of sexual violence victims who did not go to the police or gendarmerie to report the offence felt "it would have been pointless".

Rape victims are more reluctant for fear of reprisals or revenge

The proportion of victims claiming to have been raped that stated they did go to report the offence to the police or gendarmerie is not significantly different from the proportion of victims of other sexual violence. However, rape victims are more fearful of reporting the offence to the authorities than other victims. Nearly half of those who did not report the offence to the police or gendarmerie cited fear of reprisals or revenge (49% versus 30% for victims of other sexual violence). Similarly, these victims are relatively more likely not to have gone to the authorities to avoid word getting out (53% versus 40% for the other sexual offence victims) and to avoid further hardship (65% versus 54%).

Reasons differ depending on the relationship to the offender

The proportion of victims who reported the sexual violence to the police or gendarmerie does not significantly differ between those who lived with their abuser at the time of the offence and those who did not. However, when the victim and offender lived together, the main reason cited for not reporting the offence to the police or gendarmerie was the preference to find another solution. This reason is given by 76% of victims of sexual violence committed by someone living with them at the time of the offence, versus 66% of those who were not living with their abuser.

On the other hand, when explaining why they did not report the offence to the authorities, victims who did not know their offender are less likely to say that they preferred to find another solution, wanted to avoid word getting out or were afraid of reprisals. To be more exact, 48% of victims who did not report the offence and did not know their abuser say they preferred to find another solution, compared to 74% who did know their offender, and 27% of these victims wanted to avoid word of the assault getting out versus 48% of victims who knew their offender. Lastly, 22% of victims who did not know their offender cited fear of reprisals as the reason stopping them from going to the police or gendarmerie, versus 39% who did know their offender.

SOURCE AND DEFINITIONS

Methodological details

The data comes from the "Living Environment & Security" survey, conducted jointly by the French National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies, (Insee) and French National Observatory of Crime and Criminal Justice (ONDRP) every year since 2007, and with the Ministerial Statistical Department for Internal Security (SSMSI) since 2014. In order to perform more detailed analyses, the datasets from the 2012 to 2018 surveys have been compiled. Unless mentioned otherwise, differences presented during comparison are significant at the 1% level.

Sexual violence

Sexual violence as defined by the CVS survey includes unwanted sexual touching and relations, committed or attempted through the use of violence, threats, coercion or surprise.

Situations described

Only offences committed over the two years prior to the survey are described (to be more exact, the most recent act of sexual violence suffered outside the household, and all sexual violence offences within the household). As we are studying the actions taken following the offence, when a respondent has endured sexual violence both within and outside the household, we have considered these situations separately and thus counted the victim twice in our sample (except for the estimated number of victims).



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