

Prevalentiemonitor
Huiselijk Geweld en Seksueel Geweld
2020
- Summary -



Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek- en
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Summary

1. Reason for the study

In 2019, a study into the prevalence of domestic violence and child abuse (Ten Boom & Wittebrood, 2019) was presented to the Dutch parliament. This triggered a process that resulted in the creation of this Prevalence Monitor for Domestic Violence and Sexual Violence (PHGSG). The Dutch Minister for Health, Welfare and Sport and the Dutch Minister for Legal Protection indicated that they believed it is important that research into the prevalence of domestic violence (and child abuse) is conducted more frequently than previously was the case (letter dated 5 February 2019). In addition, in response to the social #MeToo debate and the debate in the Dutch parliament on the Committee of Inquiry's report into Sexual Harassment and Abuse in Sports (De Vries Committee), a motion was passed in which, one of the conclusions was that there is no clear picture of the scale and development of cases of sexual harassment and sexual violence. One of the recommendations was that the government should periodically conduct quantitative scientific research, so that the extent of sexual harassment and sexual violence are continuously monitored and the effect of prevention policy can be established.

2. Design of the study

The figures in this PHGSG are based on an internet survey among a sample of the Dutch population aged 16 years and older (approximately 14.3 million people). The survey was conducted from the beginning of March to the end of April 2020. About a week after the start of data gathering a so-called "lockdown" due to the corona pandemic was declared. The possible effects of this lockdown on the investigation is be discussed in this publication.

One hundred thousand people were approached for the investigation. More than 30 thousand people have completed the questionnaire, a response of 30.5 percent. This large number of respondents enables us to make reliable and detailed statements about the prevalence of domestic violence and sexual violence in the Netherlands.

3. Subject of the investigation

The PHGSG describes the nature and extent to which domestic violence and sexual violence occur in the Netherlands. Domestic violence involves acts of violence such as physical violence, coercive control, stalking and sexual violence committed by someone in the domestic circle. The term "domestic circle" refers to the social relationship between victim and perpetrator, i.e. family members, relatives and (ex-)partners. "Domestic circle" does not refer to the location: the incidents do not necessarily have to have happened at home. Sexual violence includes all acts of sexual harassment and violence. Sexual violence can occur inside and outside the domestic circle, both in the "real world" and online.

In this monitor the following acts of domestic violence and sexual violence are discussed separately: verbal aggression in the domestic circle, physical violence in the domestic circle, coercive control in the domestic circle, stalking by an ex-partner, non-physical sexual harassment, physical sexual

violence, and online sexual harassment. The questions asked refer to violence experienced during the last year. The focus is on victimization. Since the fieldwork of this survey took place in March and April 2020, the annual prevalence of victimization relates to the period from March / April 2019 to March / April 2020. In addition, the following points are also included: to what extent this victimization is structural (i.e. at least monthly), who the perpetrators are, what the consequences are for the victims, and with whom the victims talked about their experiences. The figures on structural victimization are minimum estimates. It is unknown how many people were victim of multiple separate acts of violence that did not occur structurally, but still together add up to "structural violence". Victimization of domestic violence and sexual violence is broken down by relevant respondent characteristics such as gender, age, sexual orientation and migration background, as well as background characteristics such as position in the household, having children and the number of children, the household's prosperity level and urbanity of the municipality.

4. Results of the investigation

Verbal aggression in the domestic circle

In March / April 2020, nearly 1 in 3 (31 percent) people aged 16 or older reported having been a victim of verbal aggression in the domestic circle in the previous 12 months. This is nearly 4.5 million people. These incidents comprise, for example, heated disagreements involving shouting or screaming, taunting or bullying, or belittling or humiliating. For 1 in 10 victims the verbal aggression is structural, i.e. they experience it at least once a month.

Men and women experience verbal aggression in the domestic circle almost equally often. Young people experience it most often. When looking at sexual orientation, it appears that bisexual women often indicate that they have been victim of verbal aggression in the domestic circle. Verbal aggression in the domestic circle most often involves the partner. This is indicated by more than half of the victims.

Physical violence in the domestic circle

Four percent of the population aged 16 and older (more than 520 thousand people) said they had been a victim of physical violence in the domestic circle in the past 12 months. This concerns experiences in which there were threats of violence, the victim was injured or an attempt was made to do so. The incidents range from threats to cause pain to attempted suffocation or injuries caused by weapons. For more than 8 percent of the victims the physical violence was structural.

Women experience physical violence just as often as men. Especially the 16- to 18-year-olds are often a victim of physical violence (16 percent). Almost a third of all victims report that the partner committed the physical violence. Brothers are also often mentioned as the perpetrator. Almost half of the victims indicate that the physical violence had consequences. Psychological and relationship problems are reported by about 25 percent. Three quarters of the victims talked to someone about their experiences. Mostly this confidant is found in the informal network (partner, other family members or relatives, friends).

Coercive control in the domestic circle

Coercive control is an act of domestic violence in which one person strongly dominates and controls the other. The victim may be denied certain freedoms by the other, such as maintaining social

contacts or having their own money. Perpetrators can also threaten to hurt themselves, the victim, or loved ones. Five percent of the population aged 16 and older (more than 680 thousand people) has been victim of coercive control in the domestic circle in the past 12 months. Women are more often victim of coercive control than men, and young people more often than older people. Bisexual people are also relatively often affected.

Partners and parents are most often mentioned as perpetrators. More than six in ten victims indicate that the coercive control had consequences. Psychological problems are reported most often (by about 40 percent). Eight out of ten victims talked to someone about their experiences. This is most often done with a friend (more than 40 percent), followed by the partner or other family members or relatives, and professional care providers such as (family)doctors or social workers (together around 35 percent).

Stalking by ex-partner

Two percent of the population aged 16 and older with an ex-partner (190 thousand people) indicated that they had been a victim of stalking by an ex-partner in the past 12 months. Women are more likely to be affected than men, and young people more often than older people. Young women in particular are relatively often victim (10 percent of 16- to 18-year-old women). The stalking had consequences for more than half of the victims. Most often psychological problems were reported (almost 40 percent). Nine out of ten victims talked to someone about their experience. Most often this was a friend (58 percent). Within the domestic circle, victims talk more often with another family member or relative than with their own partner (44 against 29 percent). Three out of ten victims consult a counselor.

Non-Physical Sexual Harassment

Seven percent of the population aged 16 and older (approximately 975 thousand people) said they had been victim of non-physical sexual harassment in the past 12 months. These are experiences with sexual harassment in which there was no physical contact between the perpetrator and the victim and which took place in the "real world", so not online. Non-physical sexual harassment can be anything from explicit sexual comments to having to watch sexual acts. For 13 percent of the victims the harassment was structural, that is they experienced it at least once a month. Women are more often victim than men, and young people (especially 18- to 24-year-olds) more often than older people. Young women are confronted with non-physical sexual harassment relatively most often: 33 percent of 18 to 24 year old women reported having experienced non-physical sexual harassment. Also bisexual women are victim rather often. The incidents can take place inside and outside the domestic circle. 89 percent of the victims indicate that they have been non-physically sexually harassed only by persons outside the domestic circle. For 5 percent it only happened inside the domestic circle, and for 5 percent both inside and outside their own circle.

More than half of the victims say they were sexually harassed by a stranger. Almost one in six victims had consequences, especially psychological problems. Two thirds of the victims talked about the experiences; most talked with a friend (43 percent). Professional care providers were approached less often (6 percent).

Physical sexual violence

Three percent of the population aged 16 and older (470 thousand people) said they had been victim of physical sexual violence in the past 12 months. These are acts of sexual harassment and sexual

violence involving physical contact that range from unwanted touching to rape. For four percent of the victims the physical sexual violence was a structural (at least once a month).

Similar to non-physical sexual harassment, women are more often victim than men, and young people (particularly 18- to 24-year-olds) more often than older people. Young women experience physical sexual violence most often: 22 percent of 18 to 24 year old women have been victim in the past 12 months. Physical sexual violence can occur inside or outside the domestic circle. For a vast majority of victims (85 percent) the violence was perpetrated by someone outside the domestic circle. For 10 percent the perpetrator came from inside the domestic circle and for 3 percent of the victims the perpetrators came from both inside and outside the domestic circle.

Forty percent indicated that the sexual violence was committed by a stranger; for 22 percent someone the victim met during an evening out was involved. For 25 percent of the victims the physical sexual violence had consequences. It should be noted that most cases in the category 'physical sexual violence' involve unwanted kissing or unwanted sexual touching. Physical violence involving explicit sexual acts is more likely to have consequences: more than six out of ten victims report that they experienced consequences, most often including psychological problems. Seven out of ten victims of physical sexual violence talked to someone about their experiences. Victims talked mostly with a friend, followed by the partner. Professional care providers were called in by less than one in ten of the victims.

Online Sexual Harassment

Five percent of the population aged 16 and older (770 thousand people) indicated that they have been victim of online sexual harassment in the previous 12 months. This comprises unwanted sexual behavior that took place via the internet, for instance via social media, WhatsApp, (video) chat or e-mail. Examples include malevolent sexual comments or being forced to perform sexual acts online. For 11 percent of the victims the online sexual harassment is structural, that is it occurred at least once a month.

Women are more often victim than men, and young people more often victim than older people. Young women in particular are relatively often confronted with it: 29 percent of 16 to 18 year old women said they had experienced online sexual harassment in the previous 12 months. Bisexual people (especially bisexual women) and gay men are relatively often victim. For more than nine out of ten victims the perpetrator comes from outside the domestic circle. Half of the victims indicate that the perpetrator was a stranger; three out of ten say it was someone they had met online. The majority (over 80 percent) of victims say their experience of online harassment had no consequences. More than 60 percent of the victims talked to someone about what they experienced on the internet, especially in the informal network (friend, partner or family / relatives). As a result of these experiences, little contact is sought with professional care providers (approximately 5 percent).

Domestic violence and sexual violence compared by perpetrators, consequences and contacts

For all acts of domestic violence the perpetrator is more often a man than a woman. This also applies to all acts of sexual violence, though the differences are larger. Victims of domestic violence indicate more often that the incidents had consequences for them than victims of sexual violence. The majority of victims of domestic violence and sexual violence talk to someone about their experiences. Victims of domestic violence more often seek contact than victims of sexual violence. The victims mostly talk to people in their own, informal circuit, such as friends, partners and other family or relatives. Professional care providers such as (family) doctors, psychologists or social

workers are consulted more often for domestic violence than for sexual violence. Relatively little contact is sought with other authorities, such as the police, Veilig Thuis or Centrum Seksueel Geweld.

Total domestic violence and total sexual violence

In 2020, 8 percent of the population aged 16 and older reported having been victim of one or more acts of domestic violence in the past 12 months. This amounts to 1.2 million people. Verbal aggression is not included in the prevalence rate of domestic violence. If verbal aggression were included, then 33 percent would have been victim of domestic violence. 11 percent of the population aged 16 and older has been a victim of sexual violence in the past 12 months. This equates to 1.6 million people.

Domestic violence can be sexual and - vice versa - sexual violence can take place in the domestic circle. However, this overlap between domestic violence and sexual violence is small: 1 percent of the population aged 16 and older (162 thousand people) was a victim of domestic sexual violence, while 8 percent was a victim of domestic violence that had no sexual connotation. On the other hand, sexual violence does for the largest part not take place in the domestic circle: 10 percent of the population aged 16 and older has been the victim of sexual violence outside the domestic circle. For 1 percent this happened inside the domestic circle.

Six percent of people aged 16 or older (820 thousand people) have been a structural victim of domestic violence, that is, they have experienced at least one act of domestic violence (almost) daily, weekly or monthly in the past 12 months. Due to the repeated, structural character of stalking and coercive control in the domestic circle, by definition these acts of violence are seen as structural victimization. Around one percent has been a structural victim of sexual violence (185 thousand people) and 0.2 percent has been structural victim of domestic sexual violence (27 thousand people). Domestic violence victimization decreases with age, i.e. 24 percent of 16- to 18-year-olds has been victim compared to 3 percent of people over 65. Women have been a victim slightly more often than men (9 to 7 percent). Heterosexuals have been less often victim than people with a different sexual orientation. Young people experience sexual violence more often than older people. This affected 26 percent of 16- to 18-year-olds, 30 percent of 18- to 24-year-olds, and 3 percent of people over 65. Women are twice as often victim of sexual violence than men (15 to 7 percent). Heterosexuals are less often victim than homosexuals and bisexuals. Bisexual women in particular are relatively often victim of sexual violence (44 percent).

Domestic and sexual violence in childhood

In 2020, 22 percent of the population aged 16 and older indicated that they had been a victim of one or more acts of domestic and / or sexual violence in their childhood, i.e. before the age of 12. Most of them (16 percent) experienced physical violence in the domestic circle in their childhood. Childhood victimization correlates with recent victimization. For instance, more than a third (35 percent) of people aged 16 or older who have been victim of physical violence in the past 12 months also experienced this before they were 12 years old. For people who have not been a victim in 2020 this is 15 percent.

Perpetrator of domestic and / or sexual violence in a domestic circle

Two percent of people aged 16 or older (290 thousand people) indicate that, in the past 12 months, it has happened that they themselves were physically aggressive, controlling and / or intimidating in the domestic circle. This also includes unwanted sexual behavior or stalking by an ex-partner.

5. Client, contractor and supervisory committee

The PHGSG was carried out by Statistics Netherlands on behalf of the WODC. The research is supervised by a committee that, in addition to representatives of Statistics Netherlands and WODC, consists of content specific experts and methodological experts from scientific institutions (Amsterdam UMC, Erasmus University Rotterdam, Utrecht University and Verwey-Jonker Institute) and representatives of the Dutch Ministry of Justice and Security and the Dutch Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport.

The publication will be released as a web publication and in PDF form, and is available via the website of Statistics Netherlands and the WODC.