

Summary
Prevalentiemonitor
Huiselijk Geweld en Seksueel
Grensoverschrijdend gedrag
2022



Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek- en
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Prevalentiemonitor Huiselijk Geweld en Seksueel Grensoverschrijdend gedrag 2022 (PHGSG 2022).
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Summary

This summary covers the following:

- Reason for the study
- Design of the study
- Subject of the investigation
- Answers to the research questions
- Additional topics
- Social context of the research.

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 Sexually Inappropriate Behavior (PHGSG).¹ 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. The PHGSG was first conducted in 2020. The second measurement of this monitor has taken place in 2022. This report describes the results.

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 14.5 million people). One hundred thousand people were approached for the investigation. About 24 thousand people have completed the questionnaire, a response of 24.2 percent. This large number of respondents enables us to make reliable and detailed statements about the prevalence of domestic violence and sexually inappropriate behavior in the Netherlands.

¹ In 2020 the monitor was named 'Prevalence Monitor for Domestic Violence and Sexual Violence'. In 2022 its name has changed to 'Prevalence Monitor for Domestic Violence and Sexually Inappropriate Behavior'. This change took place because the occurrences that measure sexual inappropriate behavior are not only about sexual violence, but also about sexual harassment. Sexually inappropriate behavior is a better all-encompassing term to describe these different sexual occurrences.

3. Subject of the investigation

The PHGSG describes the nature and extent to which domestic violence and sexually inappropriate behavior occur in the Netherlands. The data are based on self-reporting, this means that the respondent reports about his/her own feelings and experiences. Domestic violence involves acts of violence such as coercive control, stalking by ex-partner, physical violence and sexually inappropriate behavior 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. Sexually inappropriate behavior includes all acts of sexual harassment and violence. Sexually inappropriate behavior 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 sexually inappropriate behavior 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, offline sexual harassment, online sexual harassment and physical sexual violence. The questions asked refer to violence experienced during a period of 5 years or in the 12 months previous to the survey. Since the fieldwork of this survey took place in March and April 2022, the annual prevalence of victimization relates to the period from March/April 2021 to March/April 2022. In addition, it is addressed to what extent this victimization is structural (i.e. at least monthly).

Further, it is described who the perpetrators are, what the consequences are for the victims, and with whom the victims talked about their experiences. Additional subjects are victimization of domestic violence and sexually inappropriate behavior during childhood, being a perpetrator of domestic violence or conducting sexually inappropriate behavior, and suspicion of domestic violence in the vicinity.

Victimization of domestic violence and sexually inappropriate behavior 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, the household’s prosperity level and urbanity of the municipality.

The relationship between the prevalence of domestic violence and sexually inappropriate behavior on the one hand and the perceived influence of the corona pandemic on one’s own life and the changes in the work and home situation during the pandemic on the other hand is also discussed.

4. Answers to the research questions

A number of objectives and related research questions have been formulated for this research in consultation with the WODC. These are answered below.

What is the nature and extent, measured over a period of one year, of victimization of domestic violence, sexual intimidation and sexual violence among the Dutch population aged 16 and older?

Annual prevalence of domestic violence

In 2022, 9 percent of the population aged 16 and older (nearly 1.3 million people) reported having been the victim of one or more forms of *domestic violence* in the past 12 months. Verbal aggression is not included in this prevalence figure. If verbal aggression were included, 33 percent would be victims of domestic violence. Six percent of the 16-plus population (more than 850 thousand people) has been a structural victim of domestic violence, i.e. they have experienced at least one form of domestic violence (almost) daily, weekly or monthly in the past 12 months. Also here, verbal aggression was not included in the prevalence figure.

If broken down into the various forms of domestic violence, 32 percent were victims of *verbal aggression in the domestic circle* (almost 4.6 million people). Twelve percent of the victims had to deal with this on a structural basis. Verbal aggression involves, for example, heated disagreements involving screaming or yelling, taunting or bullying, or belittling or humiliating.

Four percent of the 16-plus population (nearly 560 thousand people) said they had been the victim of *physical violence in the domestic circle* in the past 12 months, of which 10 percent indicated that this violence was of a structural nature. Physical violence refers to experiences in which violence was threatened, the victim was injured or attempted. The incidents range from threats of harm to attempted suffocation or injury from the use of weapons.

Five percent of the 16-plus population (nearly 730 thousand people) were victim of *coercive control in the domestic circle* in the past 12 months. Due to its repeated nature, this form of domestic violence is by definition structural: it involves violence in which one person strongly dominates and controls the other. The victim may be denied certain freedoms by the other person, such as maintaining social contacts or having their own money. The perpetrator can also threaten to harm himself, the victim, or loved ones.

Two percent of the 16-plus population with an ex-partner (more than 170,000 people) indicated that they had been a victim of *stalking by an ex-partner* in the past 12 months. Due to its repeated nature, stalking is by definition a structural form of domestic violence, just like coercive control.

Annual prevalence of sexually inappropriate behavior

In 2022, 13 percent of the population aged 16 and older (more than 1.8 million people) was victim of one or more forms of *sexually inappropriate behavior* in the past 12 months. Two percent of the 16-plus population (270,000 people) was a structural victim of this.

Looking at the specific forms of sexually inappropriate behavior, 9 percent of the 16-plus population (almost 1.3 million people) reported having been a victim of *offline sexual harassment*² in the past 12 months. For 14 percent of the victims, the intimidation was of a structural nature. Offline sexual

² Offline sexual harassment is sexual harassment/intimidation that does not take place via internet. It is the counterpart of online sexual harassment. To emphasize this, the name of this specific form of violence has changed: in the PHGSG 2020 this form of sexual harassment was called 'non-physical sexual harassment'.

harassment concerns experiences with sexual harassment that took place in the 'real world', i.e. not online, and without physical contact between the perpetrator and the victim. Examples from this form of sexual harassment range from sexually suggestive comments to having to witness sexual acts.

Six percent of the population aged 16 years and older (930 thousand people) indicated that they have been victim of *online sexual harassment* in the past 12 months. Of the victims, 13 percent said they had been structurally affected by this. Online sexual harassment concerns unwanted sexual behavior that took place via the internet, for example via social media, WhatsApp, (video)chat or e-mail. Examples are sexually offensive comments or being forced to perform online sexual acts.

Four percent of the 16-plus population (almost 510 thousand people) said they have been a victim of *physical sexual violence* in the past 12 months. For 6 percent of the victims, this violence was of a structural nature. It concerns incidents in which transgressive physical contact took place, ranging from unwanted touching to rape.

Overlap between domestic violence and sexually inappropriate behavior

Domestic violence can be sexually inappropriate behavior, and vice versa, sexually inappropriate behavior can take place in the domestic circle. This overlap between domestic violence and sexually inappropriate behavior is small: 2 percent of the 16-plus population were victim of domestic sexually inappropriate behavior, while 8 percent were victims of domestic violence without sexually inappropriate behavior. Conversely, sexually inappropriate behavior for the most part does not take place in the domestic circle: 12 percent of the 16-plus population has been a victim of sexually inappropriate behavior outside the domestic circle. In 2 percent this happened within the domestic circle.

What is the trend of the annual prevalence of domestic violence, sexual harassment and sexual violence?

Development domestic violence 2020–2022

The annual prevalence of domestic violence in 2022 (9 percent) does not differ significantly from that of 2020 (8 percent). This also applies to the underlying forms of domestic violence: physical violence in the domestic circle (4 percent in both years), coercive control in the domestic circle (5 percent in both years) and stalking by an ex-partner (2 percent in both years). Also the annual prevalence of verbal aggression in a domestic environment in 2022 (32 percent) is comparable to that of 2020 (31 percent). Verbal aggression in a domestic environment is not included in the total figure for domestic violence.

Development sexually inappropriate behavior 2020–2022

On the contrary, the annual prevalence of sexually inappropriate behavior in 2022 differs significantly from that in 2020. It has increased from 11 to 13 percent. Especially experiences of sexual intimidation have been reported more often: between 2020 and 2022, the annual prevalence of offline sexual harassment increased significantly from 7 to 9 percent and that of online sexual harassment significantly from 5 to 6 percent. The annual prevalence of physical sexual violence has not changed significantly (from 3.3 percent in 2020 to 3.5 percent in 2022).

Who are the perpetrators of domestic violence, sexual intimidation and sexual violence?

Domestic violence is most often committed by a partner or ex-partner. For coercive control in the domestic circle the percentages are slightly higher than for physical violence in the domestic circle. In the case of sexually inappropriate behavior, the perpetrators for the most part come from outside the domestic circle. For offline and online sexual harassment, more than half of the victims report that the perpetrator is unknown. On the contrary, for physical sexual violence, most of the victims (more than 70 percent) knows the perpetrator.

Perpetrators from outside the domestic circle that are mentioned relatively often are acquaintances from parties/going out, colleagues, dates, close friends, and – in the case of online sexual harassment | | online acquaintances.

In the case of sexually inappropriate behavior, the majority of the perpetrators are male. Also, for physical violence in the domestic circle, for coercive control in the domestic circle and for stalking by ex-partner the perpetrator is more often male than female. Though the difference is smaller here than in the case of sexually inappropriate behavior. In the case of verbal aggression in a domestic environment, there is no difference in gender of the perpetrator.

What are the consequences for the victims of domestic violence, sexual intimidation and sexual violence?

In 2022, 44 percent of the victims of physical violence in the domestic circle say that they (have) experienced consequences in the past 12 months. A large majority of 67 percent of the victims of coercive control in the domestic circle and of the victims of stalking by an ex-partner indicate this. The percentages for sexually inappropriate behavior are lower: for online sexual harassment, offline sexual harassment and physical sexual violence these are 24, 38 and 19 percent respectively. For physical sexual violence it should be noted that when only victims of sexual acts, such as unwanted sexual intercourse or forced prostitution (and the experiences of unwanted sexual touching and unwanted kissing are left aside) are taken into consideration, a large majority (71 percent) of the victims have experienced consequences.

For both domestic violence and sexually inappropriate behavior in total, and for most underlying forms, women are more likely to experience consequences than men.

With regard to the nature of the consequences, psychological problems are the most common in domestic violence, followed by relationship problems. Psychological problems are also the most frequently mentioned consequence of sexually inappropriate behavior, with sexual problems in second place.

When interpreting the figures on the consequences, it must be taken into account that within the various forms of domestic violence and sexually inappropriate behavior, the incidents can differ greatly in terms of seriousness and impact on the victim. For physical sexual violence, the investigated incidents range from, for example, unwanted kissing to sexual intercourse. It should be clear, and this is also apparent from the figures, that the consequences for the victims of the former incident are different from those for the victims of the latter incident.

To what extent do victims of domestic violence, sexual harassment and sexual violence talk to others about their experiences?

The majority of victims of domestic violence and sexually inappropriate behavior talk to someone about their experiences. Victims of domestic violence seek contact more often than victims of sexually inappropriate behavior. Depending on the type of crime, roughly 70 to 90 percent of the victims of domestic violence say that they have talked to someone, and 60 to 70 percent of the victims of sexually inappropriate behavior say this.

Victims mostly talk to people in their own informal circuit: especially with friends, partner, and – in the case of domestic violence – with other family members or relatives. Contrary to sexually inappropriate behavior, in the case of domestic violence, victims relatively often consult professional care providers such as (general) doctors, psychologists or social workers.

To what extent do victims of domestic violence, sexual intimidation and sexual violence report the violence themselves to Veilig Thuis or the police?

Relatively little contact is made with other institutes such as the police, Veilig Thuis and Centrum Seksueel Geweld. Depending on the type of offence, roughly 5 to 10 percent of the victims of domestic violence talk to the police, and roughly 1 to 2 percent of the victims of sexually inappropriate behavior do this. Depending on the type of offence, 3 to 5 percent of the victims of domestic violence and 0.2 percent or less of the victims of sexually inappropriate behavior talk to employees of Veilig Thuis. Professionals of Centrum Seksueel Geweld are consulted by 0.2 to 0.3 percent of the victims of sexual harassment and 0.6 percent of the victims of physical sexual violence.

Are there differences in the nature and extent of victimization of domestic violence, sexual harassment and sexual violence between different population groups (gender, age, migration background, and other relevant groups)?

Differences in victimization of domestic violence between population groups

Young people are more often victims of domestic violence than older age groups. In 2022, 25 percent of 16 to 18 year olds have experienced domestic violence in the past 12 months; 16 percent of 18 to 24 year olds; and 3 percent of the 65-plus group were victims. Women are slightly more likely to be victims than men (10 to 8 percent). Heterosexual persons are less often victims than persons with a different sexual orientation. Furthermore, single parents are relatively often victims of domestic violence. The level of prosperity is also related to domestic violence: victimization in the domestic circle is more common among people in households with a lower level of prosperity.

The victimization of domestic violence does not differ according to migration background.

Differences in victimization of sexually inappropriate behavior between population groups

Young people are also more often victims of sexually inappropriate behavior than older age groups. The difference between age groups is even larger than for domestic violence: in 2022, 30 percent of 16 to 18 year olds; 33 percent of 18 to 24 year olds were victims; and 3 percent of those over 65. The male-female difference is also (much) greater: women are more than twice as likely to be victims

of sexually inappropriate behavior than men (18 against 8 percent). Almost half (46 percent) of young women aged 16 to 18 have been victims, and more than half (52 percent) of young women aged 18 to 24 years. Homosexual and bisexual persons are more often victims of sexually inappropriate behavior than heterosexual persons. Bisexual women in particular are relatively more likely to be a victim at 46 percent. Furthermore, people without a partner are more often confronted with sexually inappropriate behavior. People in households with a lower level of prosperity are also relatively often victims. Just as with domestic violence, the victimization of sexually inappropriate behavior does not differ according to migration background.

5. Additional topics

Domestic and sexually inappropriate behavior in childhood

In 2022, 22 percent indicated that they have been the victim of one or more forms of domestic violence and/or sexually inappropriate behavior in childhood, i.e. before the age of 12. The percentage who said they had experienced sexually inappropriate behavior in childhood was higher in 2022 than in 2020: the percentage of online sexual harassment in childhood increased from 2 to 3 percent, and that of offline sexual harassment and physical sexual violence in childhood both from 5 to 6 percent. The percentage who experienced domestic violence in childhood did not change between the two years. In 2022, the major part (17 percent) indicate that they had experienced physical violence in the domestic circle during childhood.

Childhood victimization is related to recent victimization. For example, more than a third (36 percent) of the victims of physical violence in a domestic environment, also experienced this before the age of 12. Of people who were not a victim in 2022, this is 16 percent.

Perpetrator of domestic violence and/or sexually inappropriate behavior

Two percent of the persons aged 16 years or older indicate that they have been physically aggressive, controlling and/or intimidating within the domestic circle in the past 12 months. This may also involve unwanted sexual behavior or stalking by an ex-partner. This is about 320 thousand persons. The percentage of self-perpetrators has not changed between 2020 and 2022.

Suspicion of domestic violence by someone else in the vicinity

In total, 15 percent indicate that they have suspected or witnessed domestic violence of someone close to them. Women say this more often than men: 18 to 13 percent. More than 8 in 10 say they have talked to someone about their suspicion or that they have witnessed it. The majority indicate that they have discussed this with the victim itself or with someone who knows the victim. People talked less often to the (suspected) perpetrator or to someone who knows the (suspected) perpetrator.

6. Social context of the research: covid and (media) attention

Impact corona pandemic

The first measurement of the PHGSG took place in March and April 2020, when the corona pandemic had just broken out and the government advised people to stay at home as much as possible. However, the reference period of 12 months prior to the study, used in the PHGSG 2020 to

determine annual prevalence, was for the most part outside the corona period, and there were obviously no restrictions and lockdowns at that time.

The follow-up measurement of the PHGSG took place in March and April 2022. Although most restrictive corona measures were released during this period, the reference period of 12 months on which the annual prevalence was determined did include moments of restrictive corona measures and lockdowns. This means that the figures for the annual prevalence of domestic and sexually inappropriate behavior for 2022 mainly relate to the corona period, while the prevalence figures for 2020 did not for the most part.

The corona pandemic in general and more specifically changes in the work or home situation appear to be related to the reported prevalence of domestic violence and sexually inappropriate behavior during that period.

People who say the corona pandemic has affected their lives, are more likely to be victims of domestic violence and sexually inappropriate behavior, than those who say it hasn't. People for whom the corona pandemic has led to a different work situation – for example, working more from home, working less, working more – also more often indicate that they have been victims of domestic violence and sexually inappropriate behavior, than people whose work situation remained unchanged. And also valid for the situation at home; people for whom something has changed at home during the corona pandemic have been more often victims of domestic violence and sexually inappropriate behavior, than people for whom the home situation did not change.

With regard to sexually inappropriate behavior, the differences between people who have or have not experienced any influence on their lives as a result of the corona pandemic and who have or have not experienced changes in their work or home situation are greater than with domestic violence.

However, when it comes to the *nature* of the impact of corona on life and in particular the nature of the change in work and home situations during the pandemic, the results are less clear-cut and sometimes seemingly counter-intuitive. For example, people who were less at home during the corona pandemic say that they were more often victims of domestic violence and sexually inappropriate behavior, than people who were at home more during the pandemic. However, it could also be that other circumstances were of influence, such as the fact that the partner, children or other family members were at home more during the pandemic.

Media attention for sexual harassment

Just before the survey in April/May 2022, there was another social theme which in 2020 was less topical: the attention for sexually inappropriate behavior in the media. This was partly in response to an episode of the television program BOOS in January 2022, about events surrounding the program The Voice of Holland. The public debate about this may have influenced the way in which people perceive sexual harassment and sexual violence – also retrospectively – and will consider themselves as victims of it. Although it is not possible to fully attribute the increase in victimization of sexually inappropriate behavior measured in the PHGSG 2022 to this media attention (after all, there may also have been an actual increase in victimization), there are indications that the attention to this theme has led to an increased reporting of sexually inappropriate behavior.

For instance, the PSGHG data show that the percentage of the people who claim to have been a victim of sexually inappropriate behavior in childhood, increased between 2020 and 2022., while the reporting of victimization of domestic violence in childhood has remained unchanged. It seems

unlikely that within a two-year period between the PHGSG studies, the perceived victimization of sexually inappropriate behavior in childhood actually increased. It is more likely that the increased awareness as a result of the media attention on this theme has retrospectively led to an increased reporting of sexually inappropriate behavior in childhood.

Something similar applies to the reported five-year prevalence of victimization. Here the percentage of people aged 16 and older who say they have been a victim of sexually inappropriate behavior in the last five years has clearly increased between 2020 and 2022. While this again is not the case for the victimization of domestic violence. In this case too, it seems – at least partly – unlikely that within a two-year period between the two PHGSG studies, the perceived victimization of sexually inappropriate behavior over the longer reference period of five years would clearly increase. Here too, it seems that greater awareness of this theme has led to the fact that victimization of sexually inappropriate behavior in the past is still more frequently reported.

Help organizations also see an increase in reports of sexually inappropriate behavior since the revelations surrounding The Voice of Holland (Nu.nl, 2 October 2022). For instance, up until October 2022 Slachtofferhulp Nederland received more than ten thousand reports. That is an increase of more than 10 percent compared to previous years. Since the BOOS episode, Centrum Seksueel Geweld (CSG) has reported a 35 percent increase in the number of acute victims and an 80 percent increase in the number of non-acute victims. Mores, the helpline for unwanted behavior for the Dutch cultural and creative sector, has also noticed an increase. For example, in 2020 there were a total of 97 reports in 2020, the following year, partly due to the pandemic, only 57, and in 2022 up to and including June already 180 reports. The organization Perspectief Herstelbemiddeling, for victims of sexual offenses, deals with about fourteen hundred cases each year. In 2020, 10 percent of these were about sexual abuse and sexually inappropriate behavior. In 2022, this applies to more than 33 percent of the cases.

Although there was also increased media attention for domestic violence in 2022, for instance at the beginning of the year when a famous Dutch rapper, Lil Kleine, was accused of abuse of his girlfriend, yet this media attention does not seem to have had the same impact as the increased attention to sexually inappropriate behavior. Indicative of this is that the reported prevalence of domestic violence has not increased between 2020 and 2022.