



CAPTURED QUEEN

Men's violence against women in "equal" Sweden
- a prevalence study

Eva Lundgren, Gun Heimer,
Jenny Westerstrand, Anne-Marie Kalliokoski

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Preface

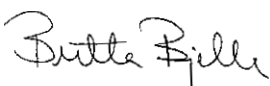
The Protection of Women's Integrity reform represents a legal and political milestone which has attracted attention even at international level. However, more rigorous legislation will not of itself solve the serious problem posed by men's violence against women in our society. The reform was therefore combined with calls for changes in basic education along with efforts at the further education level to disseminate awareness of power and violence in close relationships and thus create wider opportunities for professional treatment of both crime victims and offenders.

In conjunction with the Protection of Women's Integrity reform, the Government commissioned the Crime Victim Compensation and Support Authority (*Brottsoffermyndigheten*) to carry out a specific study of victims of men's violence against women. The Authority in turn commissioned Professor Eva Lundgren, incumbent of a government-appointed professorship specialising in violence to women, and Associate Professor Gun Heimer, Head of the Swedish National Center for Battered and Raped Women (*Rikskvinnocentrum*), to be responsible for conducting the survey.

The survey elicited a high percentage of responses despite the fact that many of the questions can only be described as intrusively personal. The era of reticence seems to have passed. Women of all ages are both able and willing to relate their experiences of threats and violence. The overall state of affairs collectively described by these women constitutes a massive challenge to the myth of Sweden as already a land of equality. It is a scenario of threats and violence amounting to serious breaches of women's human rights. The results of the study lend weight to the government's remarks in the Protection of Women's Integrity Bill urging the importance of increasing our understanding of the links between the culture of masculinity and violence against women.

These results are of concern to everyone, but they mark a special professional responsibility for staffs working in the judicial system, social services or health and medical services and also for scholars and educationists.

Read, reflect and act for protection of women's integrity.



Britta Bjelle, Director-General

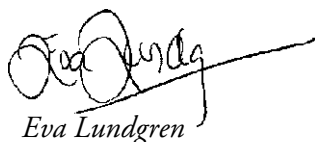
Introduction

In 1998, the Government and the Crime Victim Compensation and Support Authority (*Brottsoffermyndigheten*) granted funds for a study of the extent of violence against women. The study is the first of its kind in Sweden.

In the preliminary phase a questionnaire was designed and, after a pilot study, sent to 10 000 women. Selection, distribution and collection were handled in cooperation with Statistics Sweden (*Statistiska Central Byrån, SCB*). The responses were then processed statistically and the data compiled and interpreted. This initial report presents the main findings of the study.

Jenny Westerstrand, Graduate in Law, Uppsala University, acted as coordinator of the project, dealing with all aspects of the study, scientific as well as administrative. Anne-Marie Kalliokoski, Department of Sociology, Uppsala University, was responsible for processing the statistics. Maria Eriksson, Department of Sociology, Uppsala University, and Kristina Stensson, of the Swedish National Center for Battered and Raped Women, (*Rikskvinnocentrum*), Uppsala, took part in the project during the project's initial and final stages respectively. Thanks are due for their contributions to this project.

We also offer sincere thanks to all those women who responded to the questionnaire and by so doing helped to bring to light new and important knowledge on the subjects of men's violence against women, of women's experiences of violence, and of the connections between the various kinds of violence. We are convinced that the knowledge which we have gained and is now presented here will be of great service in combating violence.



Eva Lundgren
Professor of Sociology



Gun Heimer
Associate Professor/Chief Physician

Violent experiences in total

Almost every second woman, i.e. 46 per cent, has been subjected to violence by a man since her fifteenth birthday.

56 per cent of all women have been sexually harassed.

Nearly one woman in four between 18 and 24 years of age has been subjected to violence in the last year.¹

¹ Last 12 months period

A total of 46 per cent of all women have experienced violence by a man since their fifteenth birthday. Twelve per cent of women have been subjected to such violence *in the last year*.

Physical and sexual violence and threats

One woman in four, i.e. 25 per cent, has experienced *physical violence* on the part of a man since her fifteenth birthday. Five per cent have been subjected to physical violence *in the last year*.

One woman in three, i.e. 34 per cent, has been subjected to *sexual violence* by a man at least once since turning fifteen. Seven per cent have had such experiences in the last year.

Nearly one woman in five, i.e. 18 per cent, has experience of being *threatened* by a man since her fifteenth birthday. Four per cent of women have been threatened *in the last year*.

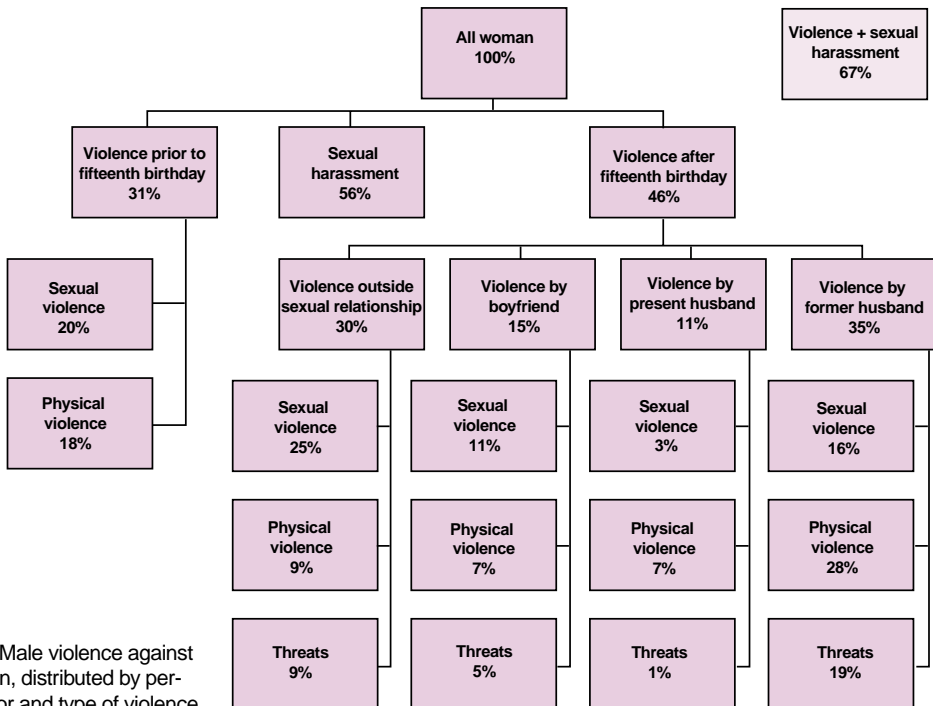


Fig 1. Male violence against women, distributed by perpetrator and type of violence.

Age	Violence last year %	n
18-24	22.4	934
25-34	12.2	1536
35-44	10.9	1530
45-54	8.5	1620
55-64	9.2	1304
Total	11.9	6926

Table 1. Women subjected to violence in the last 12 mths, various age groups, and number of abused women as proportion of all women (row per cent).

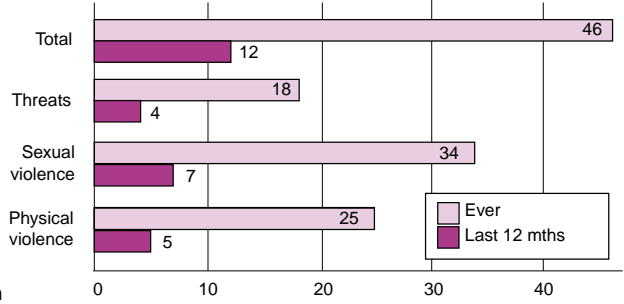


Fig 3. Women subjected to violence since turning fifteen, by type of violence (%). N=6 926.

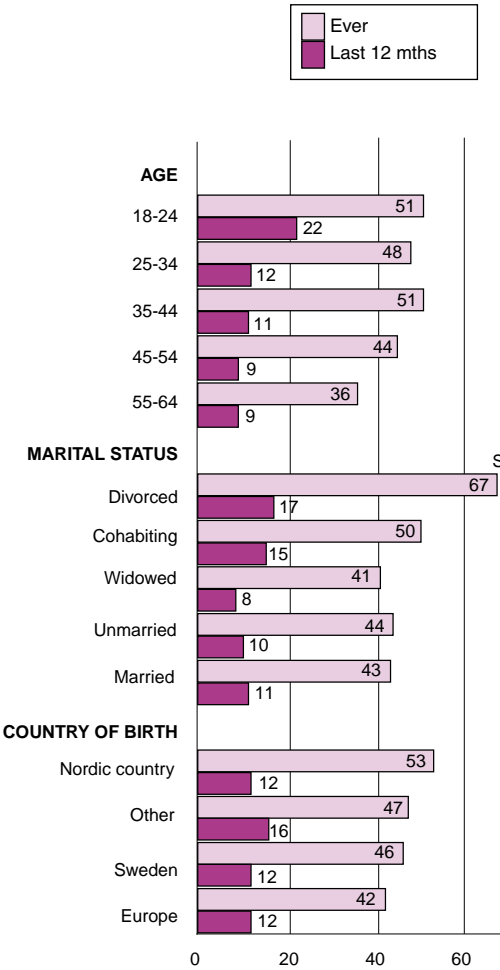


Fig 2. Women subjected to violence by a man since turning fifteen, by background variables (%).

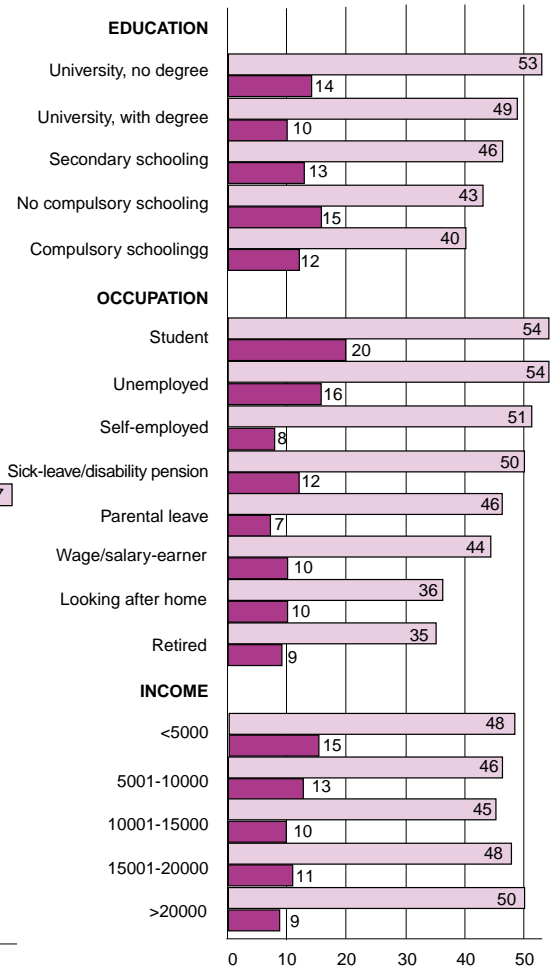


Fig 4. Women subjected to violence by a man since turning fifteen, by background variables (%).

Violence in the last year and the age factor

Experiences of violence *in the last year* are most common in the age group 18-24. Nearly one woman in four (22 per cent) in this age group has been subjected to violence. Of women aged 25-34 and 35-44, twelve and eleven per cent respectively have been subjected to violence. Among women aged 45-54 and 55-64, the corresponding figure is nine per cent.

Sexual harassment

Fiftysix per cent of women in total have been subjected to sexual harassment, 16 per cent *in the last year*. Nearly two thirds of women aged 18-24 and 25-35 have been sexually harassed.

Experiences of violence and harassment in total

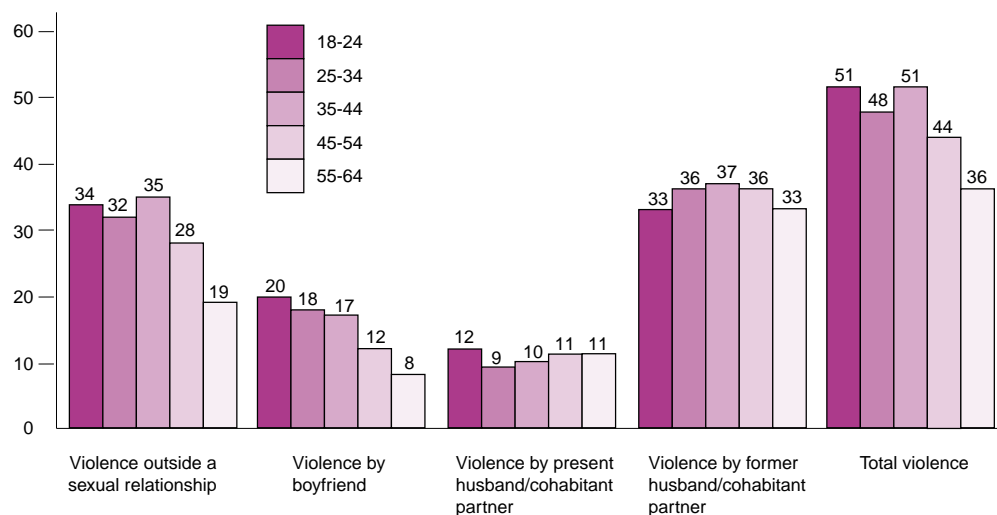
In total, 67 per cent of women aged 18-24 in Sweden have been subjected to violence by a man and/or have been sexually harassed since their fifteenth birthday.

Summary and comments

These numbers illustrate the fact that violence against women is far from being a marginal problem. Nearly every second woman has been subjected to violence at some point since her fifteenth birthday. In the light of this it is impossible to regard violence to women as a marginal and isolated problem which can be dealt with separately from discussion of relations between men and women in society as a whole. Moreover, for many women their violent experiences are not distant in time; young women especially have undergone such experiences in the last year.

It is imperative that the knowledge of the extent of gender-related violence revealed by this study should result in measures to halt the violence. Such measures will need to take particular account of the scale of the violence and its consequent bearing on the everyday life of men and women.

Fig 5. Violence in various relationships, by age groups (%).



Origin of this study

The research context

This study is the first major national enquiry to have been carried out in Sweden with the object of studying the extent of men's violence against women. The results are of interest not only because of the high percentage of responses – of the 10 000 women who received the questionnaire, containing approximately 350 questions, 70 per cent responded – but also because knowledge of the phenomenon of violence to women contributed to the design and execution of the study. Knowledge developed by feminist research¹ into violence and its infliction on women has been of vital importance to our work, and with its aid we have designed a study whose outcome has yielded increased knowledge of the extent of violence, of women's experiences of violence, of the links between different types of violence, and of the consequences of violence. Thus the study may help to shed light on how prevalent violence is, and its results could form a foundation for future researches into the subject of violence.

Until 2001, no statistics existed to indicate the extent of violence against women. Until recently, broadly speaking, research-based knowledge about violence to women was lacking in Sweden, and studies aimed at developing theories of gender-related violence are still a neglected field. Nevertheless since the 1970s there has been an explosive growth of gender-related research into violence against women, both in the Nordic countries and internationally.

Norway has been conducting two major research programmes concerned with violence to women² since the middle of the 1980s, and Finland has recently initiated its first research programme on gender and violence.³

In Sweden, the absence of research-based knowledge concerning violence to women has caused violence to be treated as a marginal phenomenon, and society's approach to it has been coloured by a long-established view – more or less in the nature of reasoned truth – of the perpetrator of violence as a deviant, exceptional man, and of violence as a phenomenon occurring in special, socially deprived milieux.⁴ An important part of the groundwork for the gender-related study of violence was to find alternatives to the prevailing view of violence as a matter of behaviour by “deviant” individuals.⁵ The earlier quantitative studies were supplemented by a qualitative methodological approach focusing on the experiences of women subjected to violence. This focus on women's experiences was a reaction against the way the established forms of research analysed the cause of violence without giving voice to women's experiences, thus failing to bring out the gender dimension or to study the relation between power and gender. The emphasis was on ameliorating the life-situation of women and combating the inequality inherent in a society which subordinates women to men.

According to the Norwegian research programme “Battered Women” (*Kvin-*

nemishandling) (1986-1991), feminist studies emerged "as a critical alternative to studies which had focused mainly on deviant personal attributes of the man which were able to explain that he did not know what he was doing, and deviant personal attributes of the woman which were able to explain that she wanted to be a victim".⁶ The behaviour of the violent man is explained by his pathology, i.e. lack of impulse-control, or in terms of individual psychological factors such as "disturbance", "illness" or some other deviation, sexual for example. Social influences, such as an unhappy childhood or "social heredity", are also invoked as explanations.⁷ Feminist studies reacted against the shift of responsibility between perpetrator and victim which resulted from this, and they began discussing the problems involved in concepts such as "normal", "abnormal" and "deviant".⁸ Gender was introduced as an analytical concept in the study of violence, and the problem of violence was discussed and analysed from a structural perspective, which raised new questions.⁹

A new understanding of the problems was generated through the new and critical gender-related studies, and violence against women gained status as a public and societal issue requiring to be tackled at political level. However, in Sweden there are still large gaps in what we know about violence. No attempt has been made to collate and scrutinise the few and isolated research contributions which exist on the topic of violence against women, or to develop and flesh out a body of research-based knowledge such as would be essential to enable the scale of violence to be combated effectively.

One of the evidences for this is the fact that no major programme of research into violence to women exists or has existed in Sweden.

The Commission on Violence to Women: more than a milestone

Very important changes of attitude with regard to violence to women have come about in the political world,¹⁰ where a number of initiatives have been taken to restrain men's violence to women by means of both legislative measures and special financial appropriations for the police and medical services.¹¹ These changes of attitude are especially apparent in the legislative field. During the 1980s, the laws relating to sexual offence were changed. Following the report of the Commission on Sexual Offences of 1982¹² (whose proposals came into force in 1984¹³) assaults in public places and rape were brought into the category of offences subject to public prosecution. In 1988, a law was enacted enabling visiting bans to be imposed for the purpose of protecting people from harassment and persecution, "particularly women who are being subjected to assault and other abuse".¹⁴ This law soon became an instrument frequently resorted to, although still not always with much effect, in combating violence. The number of visiting bans granted against men increased from 62 in 1988 to 2 295 in 1999.¹⁵

The Commission on Violence to Women was established by the then Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Health and Social Affairs, Bengt Westerberg, in 1993. The Commission, chaired by Britta Bjelle, Member of Parliament and now Director-General of the Crime Victim

Compensation and Support Authority (*Brottsoffermyndigheten*), was charged with the task to “scrutinise issues related to violence to women from a female perspective and to propose measures to counteract such violence”.¹⁶ The “female perspective” was then clarified in the text as being synonymous with the perspective which has emerged from feminist studies of violence to women. The result of this initiative was to create an alliance of gender-related studies, politics and the law in order to combat violence to women, a move which has given Sweden a leading position internationally in this field of legislation.

One of the main tasks of the Commission on Violence Against Women was to overhaul chapter 6 of the Penal Code, dealing with sexual crimes. Ten years had passed by then since the 1982 Commission on Sexual Crimes had presented its report. The legislature felt that since opinions about violence to women had changed considerably during the interval between the two Commissions, it was a matter of urgency to overhaul not only sex offences but also other rules of penal law. The Commission put forward a number of radical proposals for changes in the legislation pertaining to violence against women and children. The Government introduced a few of the proposed changes to the Penal Code in its Bill 1997/98:55 Protection of Women’s Integrity. A committee was appointed to scrutinise all sex crime legislation, materially, systematically and technically, partly as a result of the Commission’s comments concerning the lack of protection for women and children exposed to violence.¹⁷

One of the key proposals presented by

the Commission on Violence to Women was the introduction of a new crime in the form of breach of a woman’s integrity. The proposal was adopted after some changes and was termed *gross violation of a woman’s integrity*.¹⁸ The new “breach of a woman’s integrity” crime is based on the knowledge we have of the effects of the normalisation process and the impact of repeated violations on women subjected to them.¹⁹ The intention behind the new crime is to raise the penalty value of acts which, viewed separately, are relatively minor but when repeated may lead to substantial violation of the victim’s integrity. In this way the legislature has taken account of the changes which a woman gradually experiences while being subjected to violence and of the fact that violations which may seem fairly minor when viewed separately have a grave negative effect on a woman when they are part of a process, thus meriting severe punishment. Other legislative changes touching on violence to women also ensued from the work of the Commission. One of the provisions of Government Bill 1997/98:55 Protection of Women’s Integrity was a proposal to enlarge the definition of the crime of rape, criminalisation of the purchase of sexual services and a tightening up of various aspects of legislation relating to equality of the sexes.²⁰ Thus fairly considerable efforts have been made in political quarters to adapt the legislation relating to violence to the research-based knowledge available today of the way in which violence affects women subjected to it.

One of the investigatory tasks assigned by directive to the Commission on Violence against Women was to determine whether criminal statistics ought to be broken

down by sex to a greater extent in order to furnish a better basis for estimating criminal trends related to violence against women.²¹ However, criminal statistics record only those offences which come to the knowledge of the police. Since the number of unrecorded cases of violence to women is large, a great deal of such violence remains invisible.²² It is generally thought that only about 25% of all crime is reported.²³ The number of unrecorded cases involving violence towards women is most likely higher than for violent crime in general. Three elements in particular are considered to influence the propensity of victims to make a police report: gravity of the crime, relation to the perpetrator, and the place where the crime was committed. This indicates that much of the violence inflicted on women is never reported since this kind of violence is quite commonly committed by the woman's partner in their joint home.²⁴ Lack of information about the true scale of violence to women seriously affects society's scope for combating the crime. Moreover, the criminal statistics on violence available today do not furnish any detailed knowledge concerning the situation of the victim nor of the consequences of the violence, which is why many pressing questions remain unanswered.

The Commission on Violence Against Women considered the time had come to conduct the first major crime victim survey on the incidence of violence against women. A crime victim survey was carried out in Canada in 1993 and had contributed important knowledge about the incidence of violence.²⁵ A similar survey in Sweden, the Commission felt, would be able to "increase our knowledge of the incidence and distribution of

violence to women and give an insight into other elements of importance in preventing such violence and reducing the harmful effects of the violence which occurs".²⁶ It would also improve our knowledge of what resources should be deployed to combat the violence to which women are subjected. The Crime Victim Compensation and Support Authority was commissioned by the Government to conduct a survey of criminal victims.²⁷ The Authority in turn commissioned Professor Eva Lundgren and Associate Professor and Chief Physician Gun Heimer, both of Uppsala University, to carry out the survey.

Dominant perspectives on violence in Sweden

The model of explanation commonly used in Sweden when trying to understand men's violence against women is of an *individual psychological* character. This model has been devised mainly by psychologists engaged in clinical work, and the samples in the studies they have conducted are based on clinical samples. This approach links the violence to the individual violent man, who is regarded as "mad", "sick" or "deviant" in some other way, and the explanation of his violent actions is sought in his personality.²⁸ Inherent in this approach is the concept of violence as consisting of isolated, deviant deeds committed by special, abnormal men. Possibly too, the women subjected to violence may be regarded as deviant in some way, for example as "inadequate" or "provocative".²⁹ Alongside this perspective, a *socially-oriented perspective* has had a strong influence on the understanding of men's violence to women.³⁰ These

perspectives have been developed within the criminological field and the samples in the studies conducted are based mainly on men who appear in the criminal statistics as being guilty, accused or merely suspected of various violent or sexual crimes. These men too may be regarded as “deviant”. From this angle of approach the spotlight falls on the social conditions applicable to the perpetrator of violence, such as social exclusion, alcohol abuse or unemployment. The two perspectives may also be combined, such as when the “social heritage” is linked to so-called re-victimisation.³¹ These circumstances, whether they exist now or were present during the man’s childhood, are presumed to cause his violent behaviour. Another related way of understanding violence to women may be said to be based on the so-called *systems theory*, in which the “special violent family” is placed at the centre and related to the family and its structure, its discords and imbalance. The systems theory models of explanation concentrate on the balance between individual members of the family, the parties being regarded as fairly equal whereas systematic power imbalance between men and women is ignored.

A new perspective, represented here by the Commission on Violence Against Women, gradually began to manifest itself. The directive to the Commission on Violence Against Women states that “the Commission is being established in order to scrutinise issues related to violence to women from a female perspective and to propose measures to counteract such violence”.³² The *female perspective* was then defined as being synonymous with the perspective of feminist studies, which

in the Commission’s words meant that “the violence must be viewed from the perspective of gender power”.³³ The Commission takes the view that a society which shares power and control equally between women and men takes an important step in combating violence to women.³⁴ Thus the fact that men subject women to violence may be regarded from a structural perspective as an expression of male superiority which may manifest itself in actual physical attacks on women, but also in less drastic phenomena such as sexual harassment or verbal abuse. On this view, the violence to which men subject women not only expresses superiority but also helps to re-create it and to shape men’s and women’s conceptions of what being a man or a woman means.

Design of the questionnaire

The main purpose of the study has been to form as clear a picture as possible of the extent of men’s violence against women. However, to produce a picture of “how things are” is very difficult in all types of research work, and this study is no exception. The kind of knowledge which can be gained is limited by the fragmentary form of the questionnaire and the simplification of the questions at issue which it requires. In addition to this, it is also difficult to ask questions about experiences of violence. If women suffering violence in a relationship are in a process of change and degradation, a process in which the man’s violent acts have become continuous and are gradually assuming a new meaning as the boundaries shift, we cannot believe that simple questions such as “Have you been abused?” will provide us with the most reliable picture of the prevalence

of violence to women. The questions about violence put to women by the researcher must penetrate behind any possible reinterpretations or minimising of the violence if we are to attain knowledge of women's experiences.

A comprehensive survey of male violence to women, using questionnaires distributed by post, was conducted in Finland in 1997,³⁵ and the percentage of responses was high. Because of this, and because it was considered important to lay a foundation for other Nordic and European comparative studies, questionnaires distributed by post were the method chosen for the Swedish survey as well.³⁶ The questions were worded and grouped together in a way facilitating comparisons with the Finnish study.

Preliminary work on the questionnaire

The questionnaire was tested on several pilot groups before being distributed. Each group made comments on the questionnaire, which was amended accordingly.³⁷ On the whole, the women took a favourable view of the questionnaire's design, and there was little criticism of its length. No radical changes to the questionnaire were necessitated as a result of the pilot groups' comments, but minor adjustments were made which in our judgment considerably increased the questionnaire's readability.

A consultative group was linked to the project as well.³⁸ The group met twice for detailed discussions of the organisation of the study and the design of the questionnaire. The group's members were appointed on the basis of their qualifications in the field of statistics and/or their familiarity with violence to women as a field of research.

Ethical scrutiny

This study, including the design of the questionnaire, has undergone ethical scrutiny by the ethical committee of the HSFR (the Swedish Council for Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences). The committee approved the study following the incorporation of additional provisions for the protection of participating informants. The committee particularly emphasised the importance of clearly stating that participation in the study was voluntary.³⁹

Methodological foundations

What we have asked for is women's experiences of violence, which means that in designing the questionnaire we have had to allow for women making their own interpretations as to which experiences they consider to constitute violence.

Anyone aspiring to understand anything about violence or wanting to ask other people questions in this field will soon discover that there is little help to be had from the definitions used in everyday life, which are often taken from jurisprudence. On the contrary, the fixed jurisprudential breakdown into different categories of crime soon turns out to be useless when women are questioned about their experiences of subjection to violence. There are no watertight bulkheads between different kinds of violence. For example, how can one tell the difference between sexual and physical violence? Does not much sexual violence involve the use of physical violence? And where is the line to be drawn between threats and actual violence? For a woman who has been beaten, the threat of further assault is a reality which may be as frightening as the

violence itself. Threats to kill the woman may likewise be uttered at the same time as threats of abuse made earlier are being put into effect, so that threats of violence and actual violence become very hard to separate. These and other questions of definitions of violence, along with questions concerning the choice of categories in which to arrange the questions about violence, have been necessary and continuous accompaniments throughout the work on the questionnaire and the analysis of the responses.

Violence as a continuum

“Sexual violence” is haunted by the concept of a *continuum* of violence, a continuous series of physical, verbal and sexual assaults committed by men on women. The concept of “sexual violence” includes “any physical, visual, verbal or sexual act that is experienced by the woman or girl, at the time or later, as a threat, invasion or assault, that has the effect of hurting her or degrading her and/or takes away her ability to control intimate contact”, hereafter referred to as *gender-related violence*.⁴⁰ This approach views threats, violence and sexual abuse as actions impossible to isolate from one another; characteristically the *boundaries between them are fluid* and *actions merge into one another*. A sexual assault may include physical violence or threats; threats may be related to previous violent acts, and so on. A woman’s experience of a violent deed may also be coloured by and related to earlier experiences she has had of gender-related violence, and well-defined boundaries between different types of violence are therefore impossible to draw. Even though separate violent actions may

manifest themselves in different ways, the *common denominator* is that the abused woman is negatively affected. Looking at violence as a continuum enables us to see the *linkages* between its various forms, putting serious violence on *the same scale* as acts which are less serious, perhaps not criminalised, or even considered acceptable. The concept thus links together commonly-used expressions of sexism and acts of criminal violence.

The continuum concept thus makes it possible to understand that actions which the law defines as minor may signify an explicit or implicit threat to an abused woman, i.e. that they are anything but minor to her. At the same time this may help us to understand why women often play down the importance of violent actions, for example by comparing them with how much worse they might have been: the threat could have been physical violence instead, or the sexual assault could have been a rape.

The idea of violence as a continuum means that all forms of gender-related violence are understood to be serious; the concept is not to be construed as a method of creating hierarchies of more or less serious abuses. However, the concept can be utilised to analyse the incidence of different types of gender-related violence in such a way as to indicate that there are forms of gender-related violence which most women experience at some point in their lives and which they will probably also experience repeatedly.

Violence: its dynamics and normalisation process

Violence is not a clear-cut phenomenon, as is illustrated not least by the discussion

above. For abused women the problems of definition which are central to an understanding of violence bring difficulties in naming and defining their own experiences. Furthermore, living in a violent relationship *changes* the parties involved, including their (re)interpretations and understandings of the violence. The concept of *normalisation of violence* brings these changes under scrutiny by pointing out that women cohabiting with men who abuse them are living in a process where boundaries are being shifted and acts of violence gradually take on a new meaning.⁴¹ An attack which an outsider would regard as violence may for the woman involved be a manifestation of something wrong with herself; the violence has assumed a new meaning in her eyes in that the man's understanding of it has become valid for her as well. She accepts his interpretation of his violence as a manifestation of her own failure as a woman.

Interview studies also prove that it is difficult for women to interpret and put into words violence to which they have been subjected by men in close relationships.⁴² One of the reasons for this is stereotyped notions that violence is a marginal problem, that it is practised under special circumstances, and that it is directed at a special type of woman and practised by a special kind of man.⁴³ In addition, many women feel a strong inner resistance against identifying themselves as "battered women" and regarding their husbands/partners as "abusers", i.e. against identifying both themselves and their partners as deviants from the norm of an equal paired relationship. In addition, women subjected to violence by their partners experience

fear, guilt and shame. Defining the violence as something other than actual violence, thus making it less serious, may be one way of coping with these violent experiences. If violence has been employed in a relationship and if it has been going on for some time, developing a systematic character, this dynamic is reinforced through the normalisation process.⁴⁴

In interviews with women who have left violent men, an important difference emerges in their retrospective understanding of the violence compared with the way they viewed the man's actions when they were still living *with* him and *with* the violence.⁴⁵ It is only when the woman is *out of* the relationship and *out of* the violence that she can fully bring herself to describe the experiences as violent. This difference of possible interpretation can be understood in the light of the dynamics and normalisation process of the violence, as can the control exercised by the man over the woman by means of violence combined with e.g. brainwashing, isolation of the woman, and switching between violence and warmth. A prerequisite of a woman's being able to interpret the man's violent actions as simply violence is that she should no longer normalise these acts, nor should she internalise *his* image of *her* as constituting the "problem". This "denormalisation process" is a social process requiring that the woman's isolation shall have been broken and that the man shall no longer have the same control over her. It further requires that she should no longer be at risk of subjection to further violence. Paradoxically, one of the adaptive strategies employed by women to avoid triggering violence makes it impossible, as long as they are *in* the relationship and *in*

the violence, to interpret or name these actions as constituting violence.

Influence on the wording of the questions

When viewed from the perspective discussed above, the experiences of violence sought by the questionnaire may be very difficult for women to define or put words to. The definitions of violence current in society express a fragmented view of violence with fixed lines of demarcation between different types of act and their degrees of gravity, and there may be none of them that corresponds to the way the woman herself would define her experiences. In designing a postal questionnaire on gender-related violence so as to form a picture of how common it is for women to experience gender-related violence, what sort of violence it is and how it affects the women concerned, it is important to make use of knowledge of the ways in which the women interpret their experiences in the light of the type of relationship the woman is living in and what her situation is.

Questions to focus on relationships rather than type of act

A woman's relationship with the perpetrator has a major influence on how she interprets the violence to which she is subjected. For this reason, and in order to get round the reluctance which the woman may feel to relate unpleasant and abusive experiences, the questionnaire is designed so as to lead step by step to the violent experiences, while the questions *focus on the woman's relationship to the perpetrator rather than the type of act committed*. In addition, we begin

with questions about more "remote" experiences, i.e. not experiences of violence by men in *close* relationships. Because of this the questionnaire is longer than it would have been if the questions had been grouped by types of act, since the respondent has to answer the same question several times, but in respect of men with whom they have had different types of relationship. To have arranged the questions according to types of act would also have encouraged an interpretation of the violence in which the woman's experiences would be fragmented and kept separate instead of being construed in context with each other and with life as a whole.

We know that the questions may be very delicate. This is another reason why the questionnaire puts questions about the least close experiences first, so that questions about unknown men and casual acquaintances precede those about men with whom the woman has or has had a sexual relationship, or where she has or has had a sexual relationship *and* has cohabited with the man concerned. The design of the questionnaire thus resembles a kind of gradual progress from the remote and presumably less delicate experiences towards matters which may be both hard to express in words and painful to think about. This also makes it easier for the woman to recall things she may have "forgotten"; matters which have been too painful to remember may be brought out, little by little and somewhat less painfully. In this way the questionnaire takes account of the fact that women often interpret violence in close relationships differently from violence on the part of a stranger.

We have divided the various relationships into the following categories:

- **Men with whom the respondent does *not* have and has not had a sexual relationship (for example neighbours, friends, colleagues, relatives or unknown men)**
- **Boyfriends and other men with whom the respondent has or has had a sexual relationship but with whom she neither cohabits nor has cohabited**
- **Present husband or cohabitant partner**
- **Former husband or cohabitant partner**

Another idea underlying the framing of the questions to elicit *relationships* rather than *actions* has been to make the questionnaire adaptable so as to focus on certain areas judged to be particularly important.⁴⁶ For example, questions concerning *physical violence* are framed in greater detail in the section on present and former husbands/cohabitant partners respectively than in the sections on other relationships. Questions about *controlled behaviour* appear only in the sections dealing with present and former husbands/cohabitant partners. Questions about sexual harassment are asked only in respect of men with whom the woman has never had a sexual relationship, not in respect of present or former husbands/cohabitant partners or boyfriends.⁴⁷

Concrete questions

Regarding the *wording of the questions*, we have made this as *concrete* as possible. Here

too the object is to penetrate beyond any possible reinterpretation and minimising of the violence by the women concerned. For a woman living in a relationship in which violence occurs in some regular sense the question “Have you been abused?” may be irrelevant. Instead of grouping the questions according to types of violence – e.g. “Have you been abused?”, “Have you been raped?” - we have preferred to ask concretely: Has the man “punched you, struck you with a hard object or kicked you?”, “-pushed, held or dragged you?”, “-banged your head against something?” etc. As regards sexual abuse, the questions are framed in the same concrete manner, e.g. “Has your present husband/cohabitant partner ever forced you into any form of sexual activity by threatening you, holding you or hurting you in any way?”

The experiences which we have asked about can be roughly divided into:

- **Physical violence**
- **Sexual violence**
- **Threats of violence**
- **Sexual harassment**
- **Controlling behaviour**

Violence, a holistic approach

According to the conception of gender-related violence as a *continuum*, threats, violence and sexual abuse are acts which cannot be isolated from each other; they are characterised by the fluidity of the boundaries between them. We can also see this from the women’s answers; many of them have experienced all types of violence, and their experiences are not

isolated. In accordance with this view, when *violence* is mentioned in the analysis of the results in the report below, this means *physical violence*, *sexual violence* and *threats*. (Sexual harassment and controlling behaviour are not defined as violence, since we have tried to restrict our definition of violence to criminalised actions) In those instances where a breakdown into categories has been considered necessary in order to illustrate differences of experience which can be linked to variables such as age, for example, this is indicated by using the terms *physical violence*, *sexual violence* and *threats*. Thus the analysis shifts between breaking down the various types of violence and keeping them together.

The idea of violence as a continuum and the interpretative perspective on the normalisation of violence have thus had a considerable influence over the design of the questionnaire. As will be shown below, these perspectives have also played a part in the way the material has been analysed.

Method

Since an important aim of the study was to describe the experiences of women in Sweden of male violence occurring after their fifteenth birthday, we elected to base the study on a large sample (N=10 000) in order also to obtain enough data for subgroups of women in Swedish society.⁴⁸

A survey of violence against women was conducted in Finland in 1997.⁴⁹ We were influenced by this study and wanted to design the Swedish questionnaire to resemble the Finnish as far as possible so as to facilitate comparisons between the two countries. The questionnaire consists of 115 questions in various sections,

grouped in accordance with the present or past relationship subsisting between the woman and man in question.

The data were collected in cooperation with Statistics Sweden (*Statistiska Centralbyrån, SCB*). A probability sampling of 10 000 women aged 18-64 resident in Sweden was extracted from SCB's register of the total population. The data were collected between 15 October 1999 and 27 January 2000. A thank-you and reminder card was sent out on 27 October, after which two additional reminders with questionnaires attached were sent out in November and December. By the time the collection of data had been completed, 6 926 replies had been received, signifying a response rate of 70.1 per cent. The total non-response was thus 2 957. Considering the length of the questionnaire and the sensitive nature of the questions, the percentage of responses must be considered high.⁵⁰ We interpret the women's high degree of willingness to respond to constitute an acknowledgement that the questions raised and the way they were asked touched a chord that echoed women's experiences. Despite the fact that the questions awakened painful memories among many women, or may very likely have taken some time to answer, these women did respond and return the questionnaire to us. Of those who responded, 43% replied in the affirmative to the question whether they would be willing to take part in an eventual follow-up study.

¹ The term "feminist research" is used synonymously with "research into women's issues" and "gender-related research".

² Forskningsprogram om kvinnemishandling 1968-91 and Forskningsprogram om seksualiserat vold. NAVF.

³ Makt, våld och kön, Finlands Akademi.

⁴ Brantsæter 2001.

⁵ Ibid: chap 9.

⁶ NAVF Rapport 1, 1985 p 6f.

⁷ Brantsæter 2001 p 323.

⁸ See e.g. Brantsæter 2001.

⁹ The sociologist Ann Edwards has compiled a survey of developments in modern feminist studies, which in her view have focused on 1) violence as a vital instrument in maintaining male dominance, 2) sexualised violence as an indivisible problem (that is, instead of distinguishing between rape, assault, incest etc, the problem is viewed collectively from the analytical standpoint, concentrating on the fact that these are all examples of the oppression of women) and 3) sexuality as a social construct and its relation to violence, power and men's control over women. See Jeffner 1997 chapter 7 for an overview of the research field.

¹⁰ In 1990, the Government established a professorship in sociology, especially women's research focusing particularly on violence to women. This post has been held by Eva Lundgren since 1993. Responsibility for official judicial statistics was transferred from Statistics Sweden (*Statistiska Centralbyrån, SCB*) to The National Council for Crime Prevention (*Brottsförebyggande rådet, BRÅ*) in 1996. A Government Bill (1997/98:55) affirmed the need for speedy action to improve statistics relating to crimes of violence against women. See further footnote 12 for details of action in the medical services field.

¹¹ The Government decided in the autumn of 1994 to establish a national resources and information centre at the Department of Women's and Children's Health (*Kvinnokliniken*) of the Uppsala University Hospital to be responsible for surveys, research, education and information services relating to battered and raped women, and for improving the care available to such women. It was in this way that the Swedish National Center for Battered and Raped Women. (*Rikskvinnocentrum, RKC*) came into existence. The Center is headed by its chief physician, Associate Professor Gun Heimer.

¹² SOU 1982:61

¹³ Prop 1983/84:105, bet. 1983/84Ju25, rskr. 1983/84:332, SFS 1984:399

¹⁴ Prop 1987/88:137 p 9.

¹⁵ Rikspolisstyrelsen, Kirunaenheten.

¹⁶ SOU 1995:60 Kvinnofrid, Del A p 49.

¹⁷ Dir. 1998:48 Översyn av lagstiftning om sexualbrott. SOU 2001:14.

¹⁸ Prop 1997/98:55.

¹⁹ Prop 1997/98:55 p 74 ff and Lundgren 1993 and 1995.

²⁰ The banning of the purchase of sexual services was not investigated by the Commission on Violence Against Women but was prepared in SOU 1995:15 Könshandeln. However, the Government dealt with this issue along with the introduction of the crime of gross violation of a woman's integrity in Government Bill 1997/98:55. The ban has not been embodied in the Penal Code but is formulated as a separate law (1998:408).

²¹ Not until 1981 did it become possible to distinguish from the official statistics those cases of reported violence in which a woman was the victim.

²² The figure for unrecorded cases indicates the proportion between the actual number of crimes and the visible or reported number of crimes. If for example the figure for unrecorded cases is one, all crimes committed are reported. If the figure for unrecorded cases is two, the actual number of crimes committed is twice as many as the visible number of crimes. Source BRÅ, <http://www.bra.se/web/brott/rattsvasendet/ordlista.html>, 2001-01-10.

²³ Heimer & Nylen 1999 p 3.

²⁴ Ibid:1999.

²⁵ Statistics Canada 1993.

²⁶ SOU 1995:60 Kvinnofrid p 91.

²⁷ Prop. 1997/98:130 p 149.

²⁸ Brantsæter 2001 chap 9, Lundgren 1994 p 25-32.

²⁹ Bergman 1989. See also NAVF Rapport 1, 1985 p 6f.

³⁰ Brantsæter 2001 chap 9.

³¹ Theories of re-victimisation aim to show a connection between perpetrators having themselves been abused as children and subsequently, as adults, inflicting violence on those around them.

³² Dir. 1993:88 p 1.

³³ SOU 1995:60 Kvinnofrid p 106.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Faith, Hope, Battering. A Survey of Men's Violence against Women in Finland. Markku Heiskanen, Minna Piispa, Statistikcentralen, Finland, Justice 1998:20. In 1993, a survey of the incidence of male violence against women was conducted in Canada by means of telephone interviews. Statistics Canada 1993.

³⁶ Since many of the questions raised by the questionnaire are very delicate in numerous ways, there was some debate in the project's initial phase as to whether it would be possible at all to use a questionnaire distributed by post. Would women with experience of violence throw the questionnaire away when the questions became too painful? Or would respondents be provoked by the detailed nature of the questions and the length of the questionnaire? In previous Swedish studies of delicate issues the interview method had been employed (*Sex i Sverige. Om sexualitet i Sverige* 1996. Bo Lewin, ed p 31). The reasons were mainly that a postal questionnaire must be very limited in length and that it is impossible to jump about between the questions as can be done during an interview. At the same time the Finnish postal questionnaire, which the Swedish one resembles closely both in length and in the substance of the questions, elicited a very high percentage response. After weighing the pros and cons (comparability with the Finnish study being one of several important reasons), we decided on the postal questionnaire method.

³⁷ For a more detailed discussion of the results from the pilot groups, see Appendix 2.

³⁸ The members of the consultative group were Eckart Külhorn, the National Council for Crime Prevention (*Brottsförebyggande rådet, BRÅ*), Monika Olsson, the National Council for Crime Prevention (*Brottsförebyggande rådet, BRÅ*), Britta Bjelle, director-general of the Crime Victim Compensation and Support Authority (*Brottsoffermyndigheten*), Bo Lewin, associate professor at Uppsala University, Maud Eduards, professor at Stockholm University, Gunnell Gustafsson, professor at Umeå University, and Sven-Olof Isacson, professor at Lund University.

³⁹ For a more detailed description of the ethical scrutiny, see Appendix 3.

⁴⁰ Kelly 1988 p 41

⁴¹ Lundgren 1993

⁴² Kelly 1988

⁴³ Ibid

⁴⁴ Lundgren 1993

⁴⁵ Mellberg 2002. See Bibliography.

⁴⁶ Of course it would have been desirable to ask detailed questions concerning all types of violence in all types of relationships, but the need to limit the length of the questionnaire weighed more heavily in this regard. We develop briefly the considerations underlying the choice of specific questions pertaining to different kinds of relationships in the relevant passages of the text.

⁴⁷ From a legal point of view, sexual harassment is a concept found in labour legislation. However, we have chosen to widen our definition of the concept to include also harassment to which a woman may be subjected *outside* a work relationship but with a man with whom she does not have and has not had a sexual relationship.

⁴⁸ See also Appendix 4. The effective sample comprised 9 883 women since 117 women had died or emigrated.

⁴⁹ Heiskanen & Piispa 1998.

⁵⁰ See footnote 37.

Violence within sexual relationships

Questions about violence within sexual relationships were asked pertaining to

1. Men with whom the women have or have had a non-cohabiting sexual relationship
2. Present husbands/cohabitant partners
3. Former husbands/cohabitant partners

Since criminal statistics indicate that physical violence against women occurs most commonly within close relationships, we considered it important to ask further and more precisely worded questions about physical violence in the questionnaire sections concerned with close relationships (present and former husbands/cohabitant partners respectively).¹

The wording of the questions aims to penetrate beyond possible reinterpretation and minimising of the violence.

Violence by former husband/cohabitant partner

- 35 per cent of women who have been married to or cohabiting with a man have been subjected to violence by the former husband/cohabitant partner.
- Half of divorced² women have been subjected to violence by a former husband/cohabitant partner.

The figures presented in this section are based on the number of women who

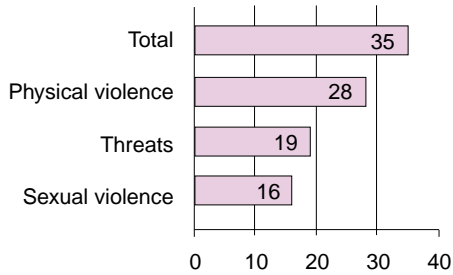


Fig 6. Type of violence suffered by women in former marriage or cohabitant relationship (%; N=2 755).

have had at least one former husband or cohabitant partner. The number of women in this group is 2 755.

Physical Violence

A total of seven concrete questions were asked regarding women's experiences of physical violence on the part of a former husband/cohabitant partner. The questions asked were the same for both present and former husbands/cohabitant partners. They concern whether the man has ever thrown anything at the woman which could have injured her, whether he has pushed her, held her or dragged her, punched her, struck her with a hard object or kicked her, throttled her or tried to suffocate her, banged her head against something or threatened to use, or used, a firearm or other weapon.³

- In total, 28 per cent of women have experienced being subjected to physical violence by a former husband/cohabitant partner.

Nearly one woman in four, i.e. 23 per cent, has been pushed, held or dragged by her former husband/cohabitant partner. Sixteen per cent have been punched, struck with a hard object or kicked by a former husband or cohabitant partner, and 13 per cent have had a hard object or an object that could cause injury thrown at them. Eight per cent have experience of a man throttling or trying to suffocate them. Seven per cent of the women have had their heads banged against some hard surface and six per cent state that a man has threatened them with, or used, a knife, firearm or some other weapon.

Three per cent have been pushed, dragged or held *in the last year*. Two per cent have had things thrown at them which could have caused injury. One per cent have been punched, struck with a hard object or kicked.

Sexual violence

Four questions were asked about sexual violence. The respondent was asked whether her former husband/cohabitant partner had *forced* her into any form of sexual activity by threatening her, holding her or hurting her in any way, whether

he had *tried to force* her into any form of sexual activity by threatening her, holding her or hurting her in any way, whether he had *forced or tried to force* her into any form of sexual activity when she was unable to defend herself, e.g. because she was asleep or under the influence of drugs, and finally, whether he had *touched her in a sexual way against her will*, e.g. by grabbing, holding, kissing or hugging her.

• In total, 16 per cent of women have experienced sexual violence on the part of a former husband/cohabitant partner.

Seven per cent of the women have been forced into a sexual activity by a former husband or cohabitant partner as a result of his threatening, holding or in some way hurting her. Eight per cent have experienced attempts by a former husband/cohabitant partner to force her into sexual activity. Thirteen per cent of the women state that former husbands/cohabitant partners have touched them in a sexual way against their will.

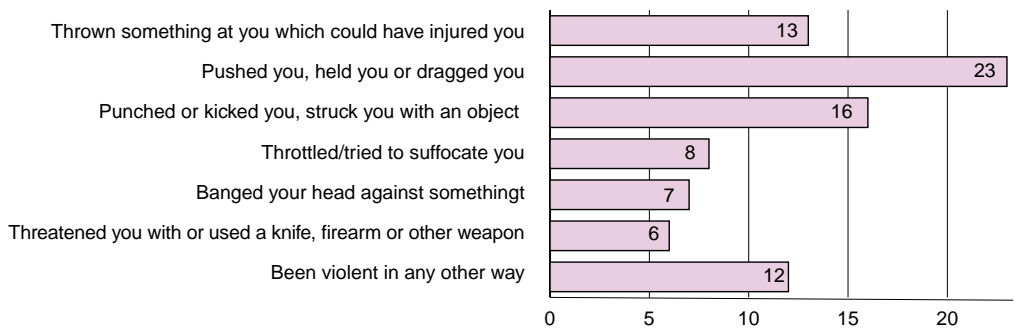


Fig 7. Has a former husband/cohabitant partner ever behaved violently towards you in any of the following ways? (Yes in %, N=2 755).

Threats

As regards threats, there is one question about whether the man has threatened the woman with physical harm.

• In total, nearly every fifth woman, i.e. 19 per cent, has been threatened by a former husband/cohabitant partner

Two per cent have been threatened by a former husband/cohabitant partner *in the last year*.

How frequent was the violence?

We asked two questions about the number of times women have been subjected to violence by their former husband/cohabitant partner, viz how many times it has happened *in the last year* and how many times it has happened earlier. Respondents may thus have indicated affirmatively to both these questions, depending on their experiences.

• In total, almost two thirds, i.e. 64 per cent, of women who have experienced violence on the part of a former husband/cohabitant partner report that this has happened more than once.

Thirtyeight per cent of women who have been subjected to violence by a former husband/cohabitant partner state that they were subjected to sexual or physical violence or threats 2-10 times and 17 per cent state that they were subjected to it 11-50 times. One woman in ten with experience of violence has been subjected to it more than fifty times. In total, 27 per

Frequency	%
Once	19.9
2-10 times	38.2
11-50 times	16.6
>50 times	9.5
No response	15.8

Table 2. Frequency of violence by former husband/cohabitant partner (% of women responding to the question, N=941)

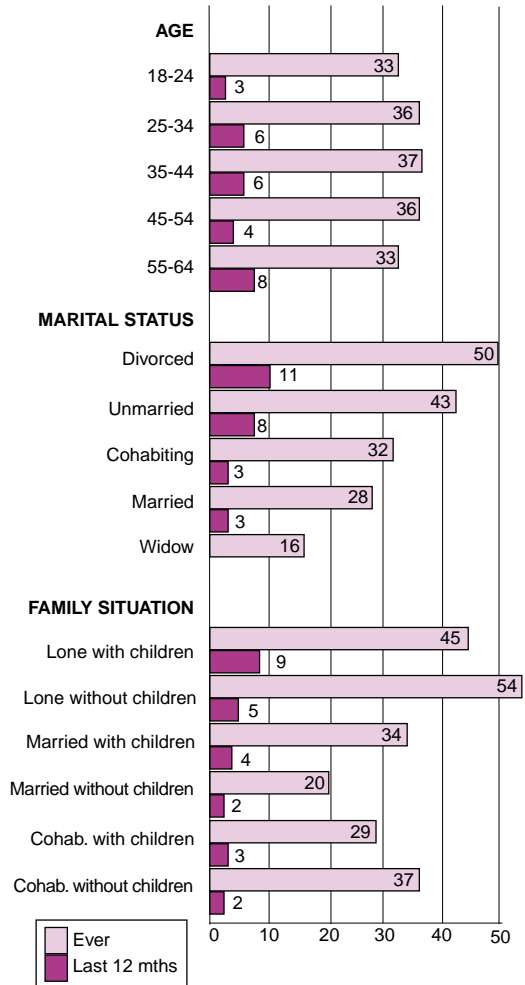


Fig 8. Women subjected to violence by former husband or cohabitant partner, by women's background variables (% of women who have former husband/cohabitant partner).

cent of women with experience of violence on the part of a former husband/cohabitant partner have been subjected to it more than ten times. Only 20 per cent state that they were subjected to violence only once.

Age

There are no major differences between different age groups as regards their experiences of violence on the part of a former husband/cohabitant partner. Women aged 35-44 show the highest level of reported violence on the part of former husbands/cohabitant partners, more than one woman in three (37 per cent) having had such experiences. The lowest reported level is found among women aged 18-24, but the differences are small: Thirtythree per cent of women in this age group have experienced violence by a former husband/cohabitant partner.

Marital status and family circumstances

Of lone women *with* children under the age of eighteen, 45 per cent have been subjected to violence by a former husband/cohabitant partner. Nearly one in ten lone woman with children has been subjected to violence *in the last year*. Of lone women *without* children the proportion is even higher, 54 per cent having experienced violence by a former husband/cohabitant partner. However, the latter group reports a lower level of violence - five per cent - *in the last year*.

If the women are divided up into those *living with a man today* and *those who are not living with a man*, we see that 43 per cent of *women living alone* have experiences of violence by a former husband/cohabitant partner. Of women

currently cohabiting with a man and who have been married to/cohabiting with a man before, 30 per cent have such experiences. Thus, looking at women's *current marital status*, women not living with a man report a higher level of experiences of violence on the part of former husbands/cohabitant partners than do women who are currently living with a man.

Summary and comments

What emerges from the responses is that being subjected to violence on the part of a former husband/cohabitant partner is a common experience among Swedish women. More than one third of women have had such experiences. In total, 28 per cent have been subjected to physical violence, 16 per cent to sexual violence and 19 per cent to threats by a former husband/cohabitant partner. Thus physical violence, sexual violence and threats all occur, but *physical violence seems to be particularly prevalent*. The violence was not confined to isolated incidents: only one fifth of women subjected to violence by a former husband/cohabitant partner report *one* incident (of those so subjected more than one year ago). In total, 27 per cent of the women report more than ten violent incidents, which indicates that the violence has been of systematic character, with repeated and continuous offences.⁴

There is a significant difference between the violence reported respectively by lone women and women cohabiting with a man. One of many possible interpretations of the reasons for this is that women who have experienced violence choose, more often than those who have not, to refrain

from embarking on a new relationship with a man. Another possible interpretation is that women living with men *under-report* the violence to which they were subjected by previous men; in other words a woman's interpretation of her experiences of violence are influenced by whether she is "in" or "out of" a relationship with a man - and not only the man who employed violence towards her. As we shall see below, there are also great differences between reported violence on the part of the former husband/cohabitant partner and on that of the present husband/cohabitant partner respectively.

Violence by present husband/cohabitant partner

The research material contains data relating to 4 771 women who are married/cohabiting.

- **In total, slightly more than one woman in ten, i.e. 11 per cent, has been subjected to violence by their present husband/cohabitant partner. Half of these have been subjected to violence *in the last year*.**

- **7 per cent have been subjected to *physical violence* by their present husband/cohabitant partner.**

Physical violence

The questions about physical violence are the same with respect to both present and former husbands/cohabitant partners. As was discussed in the section concerning the questionnaire's design, these questions were worded to allow for the tendency of women subjected to violence to reinterpret and minimise it. The questions were accordingly made as concrete as possible. Seven questions were asked about physical

violence, and the information sought was whether the husband/cohabitant partner had thrown anything at the woman which could have injured her, whether he had pushed, held or dragged her, punched her, struck her with a hard object or kicked her, throttled her or tried to suffocate her, banged her head against something or threatened her with or used a firearm or any other weapon.⁵

In total, seven per cent of the women have been subjected to physical violence by their present husband/cohabitant partner.

Six per cent of women cohabiting with a man report that he has pushed, held or dragged them. Two per cent report that the man has thrown something at them which could have injured them. Two per cent have been punched, struck with a hard object or kicked.

Women in the 18-24 age group report the highest level of *physical violence* on the part of present husband/cohabitant partner (nine per cent), but the differences between the age groups are small. There is a slight difference between married and unmarried couples. Of the women who are cohabiting and have children, nine per cent have been subjected to violence by their present husband/cohabitant partner. The corresponding number for married women with children is six per cent.

Three per cent have been subjected to physical violence in their present marriage *in the last year*.

Sexual violence

The questions about sexual violence are the same for all kinds of relationships: four were asked. They concerned whether

the woman had been *forced* into any form of sexual activity as a result of the man threatening, holding or hurting her in some way, whether he had *tried to force* her into any form of sexual activity by threatening, holding or hurting her in some way, whether he had *forced or tried to force her* into any form of sexual activity when she was unable to defend herself, e.g. because she was asleep or under the influence of drugs, and finally whether he had *touched her in a sexual way against her will*, e.g. by grabbing, holding, kissing or hugging her.

In total, 3 per cent of the women have been subjected to *sexual violence* by their present husband/cohabitant partner.

Women aged 45-54 reported the highest level of sexual violence (i.e. four per cent) on the part of their present husband/cohabitant partner. However, the differences are small; two per cent of the women aged 25-34 report sexual violence by their present husband/cohabitant partner. There is no real difference between married and unmarried women in this respect: reports of sexual violence amounted to about three per cent in respect of married and unmarried couples, with or without children.

As regards the extent of the various types of sexual violence on the part of present husbands/cohabitant partners, the reports amount to less than one per cent, with the exception of the question whether the man has touched the respondent in a sexual way against her will; three per cent report such experiences.

Threats of violence

In total, one per cent of the women have been threatened with violence by their present husband/cohabitant partner.⁶

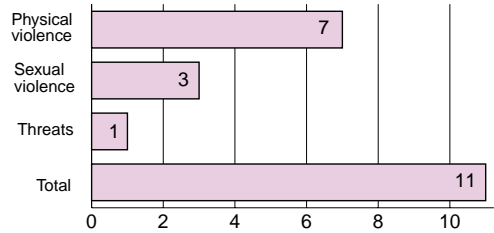


Fig 9. Women subjected to violence by present husband/cohabitant partner, by type of violence (%; N=4 771).

Age

Violence on the part of a present husband/cohabitant partner is most prevalent in the youngest age group, but the differences are fairly small on the whole. In total, twelve per cent of women aged 18-24 have been subjected to violence by their present husband/cohabitant partner, the corresponding figure for women aged 25-34 being approximately nine per cent. In the 35-44, 45-54 and 55-64 age groups, just over one woman in ten has been so subjected.

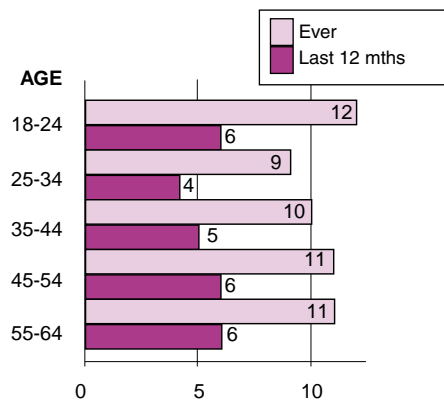


Fig 10. Proportion of women subjected to violence by present husband/cohabitant partner, by different age groups (% of women currently in a relationship)..

Summary and comments

Reports of violence on the part of present husbands/cohabitant partners are considerably fewer than women's reports of violence by former husbands/cohabitant partners. At the same time it appears that just over one woman in ten has been subjected to violence by the man she is married to or cohabiting with. In half of these instances the most recent such violent experience occurred *in the last year*. As was the case with violence by former husbands/cohabitant partners, it is *physical violence* that appears to be the most common form.

The differences between the age groups are small, but a difference can be detected between married and unmarried couples in that women who are not married to their male partners report a slightly higher degree of violence.

Controlling behaviour

Not only reported crimes but other aspects too must be taken into consideration to be able to elucidate satisfactorily how violence influences the circumstances under which women live. It is also important to take account of the control and exercise of power to which men subject women and which is *not* covered by any code of punishments.⁷ Therefore questions were asked in the questionnaire about women's experiences of behaviour which might not all be categorised as criminal but which enables the woman and her personal space to be controlled. The term controlling behaviour includes such manifestations as jealousy, the man preventing the woman from seeing relatives and friends, calling her disparaging names or forbidding her to make her own decisions about money.⁸ These forms of behaviour may constitute

serious violations of the woman's integrity and self-esteem. In cases where the man also employs physical violence, the controlling forms of behaviour can be regarded as being related to the woman's other experiences of the man's violence.

Ten questions were asked concerning different forms of controlling behaviour. The respondents had to decide in respect of each of the stated forms of behaviour whether it constituted an *appropriate description* of their former or present husband/cohabitant partner.⁹ Examples of such behaviour might be wanting to know whom she had met and what she had been doing, calling her disparaging names, forbidding her to see her relatives/friends or to have money or buy things, deliberately damaging her belongings, or threatening to harm himself if she left him.

Former husbands /cohabitant partners

This group of respondents comprises 2 755 women, i.e. women disclosed by the research data to have had at least one former husband/cohabitant partner.

Fortyeight per cent of these women state that their former husband/cohabitant partner employed controlling forms of behaviour towards them.

One in three women, i.e. 33 per cent, states that a former husband/cohabitant partner was jealous and wanted to know whom she had met and what she had been doing. Sixteen per cent of the women stated that their former husband/cohabitant partner threatened to harm himself if she left him. Twentynine per cent stated that their former husband/cohabitant partner made them feel useless and inferior, and 25 per cent were called disparaging names

by a former husband/cohabitant partner. Seventeen per cent reported that their former husband/cohabitant partner provoked a quarrel when they were going to see relatives or friends, while seven per cent of the women were forbidden by

their former husband/cohabitant partner to see relatives/friends. In eleven per cent of cases, the women were not allowed to make decisions about money or buy things they wanted.

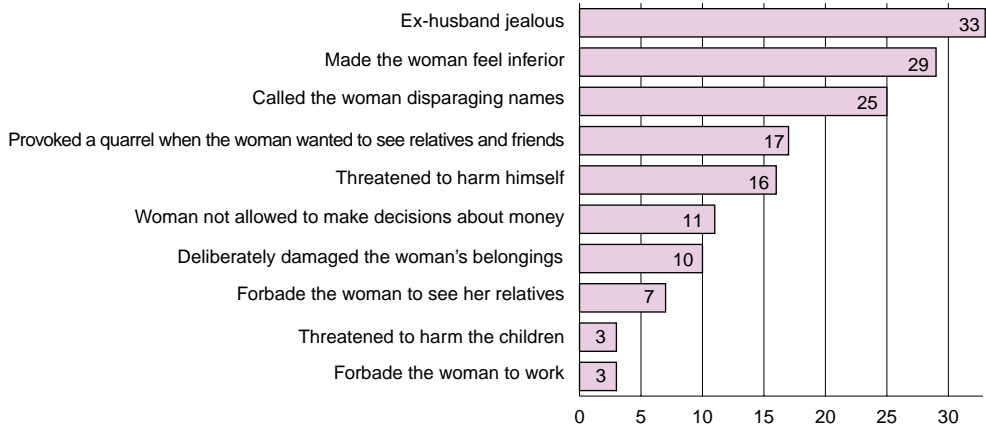


Fig 11. Controlling behaviour by former husband or cohabitant partner (%; N=2 755).

- In total, nearly one woman in two states that her former husband/cohabitant partner exhibited controlling behaviour towards her.
- One woman in three states that her former husband/cohabitant partner was jealous and wanted to know whom she had met and what she had been doing.

- Just over one woman in four states that her former husband/cohabitant partner made her feel inferior and useless.
- One woman in four has been called disparaging names by her former husband/cohabitant partner.

Present husbands /cohabitant partners

The group responding to these questions consists of 4 771 women.

There are fewer reports of controlling behaviour in current relationships than in relationships which the women have had previously.

- More than one woman in ten, i.e. 12 per cent, states that her present husband/cohabitant partner exhibits some degree of controlling behaviour towards her.

Six per cent of the women state that their husbands/cohabitant partners are jealous and want to know where they have been and whom they have met. Four per cent have been called disparaging names by their present partners and five per cent feel that their present partners

make them feel useless and inferior. Two per cent state that their present husbands/cohabitant partners provoke quarrels when they are going to see relatives or friends and two per cent are not allowed to make decisions about money or buy things they want.

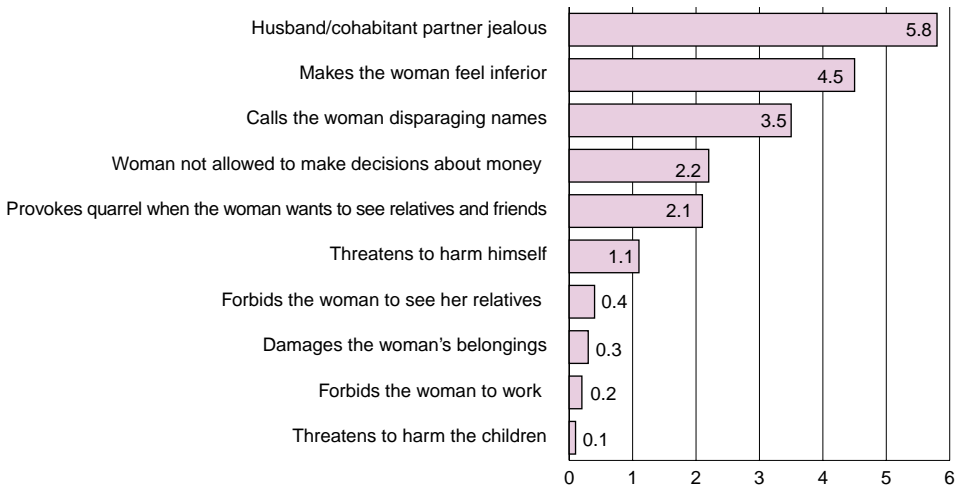


Fig 12. Controlling behaviour by present husband/cohabitant partner (%; N=4 771).

Summary and comments

Half of the women who have a former husband/cohabitant partner report controlling behaviour on his part. If the figures for controlling behaviour by *former* husbands/cohabitant partners are compared with the reports of controlling behaviour by the women's *present* husbands/cohabitant partners, we can see that the women paint a lighter picture of their current relationships than of the relationships they have left. Just as was the case with violence, controlling behaviour seems to have occurred in the terminated relationships but to be found more rarely in the relationships in which women are living today. We shall come

back to this discrepancy in our concluding discussion and link it to the question of how *the relationship* influences women's interpretation and understanding of the violence to which they are subjected.

Linkages

The material in the prevalence study opens the possibility of investigating whether for example there is a linkage, in the sense of covariance, i.e. correlation, between a man's threatening to hurt a woman physically and his subjecting her to physical and sexual violence.¹⁰

Linkages between controlling behaviour and violence

• Four out of ten women who state that their present husbands/cohabitant partners are jealous have been subjected to violence by them.

• Three out of four women called disparaging names by their present husbands/cohabitant partners have been subjected to violence by them.

The material in the study shows strong linkages between the man's employing controlling behaviour towards the woman and his subjecting her to threatened or actual physical or sexual violence.

The incidence of controlling behaviour has been described above. Seven out of ten women who stated that a *former husband/cohabitant partner* was jealous report having been subjected to violence by a former partner. Of those called disparaging names by a former cohabitant partner or husband, 81 per cent have been subjected to violence, and of women whose former husbands/cohabitant partners provoked quarrels when they were going to see relatives/friends, 80 per cent have been subjected to violence by a man they have been married to or cohabiting with. Of women whose former husband/cohabitant partner threatened to harm her children or their joint children, 96 per cent were subjected to violence. In cases where the woman has stated that the former husband/cohabitant partner deliberately damaged her belongings, 92 per cent have been subjected to violence, and where the man threatened to harm himself, 78 per

		Present husband controlling		Former husband controlling	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
Violence in present marriage	Yes	44.6	5.9		
	No	51.8	91.1		
Violence in former marriage	Yes			63.4	8.8
	No			32.5	90.9
	No response	3.6	3.0	4.1	0.3
	Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
	Number	568	4031	1316	1428

Table 3. Correlation between controlling behaviour and violence in present and former marriage or cohabitant relationship (%).

cent of the women report having been subjected to violence.

The linkages between controlling behaviour and employment of violence are also evident in *current relationships*. For example, 100 per cent of women whose husbands/cohabitant partners threaten to harm themselves have been subjected to violence by them. Of women whose men are jealous, 41 per cent have been subjected to violence by their husbands/cohabitant partners. Of women who have been called disparaging names by their present husbands/cohabitant partners, nearly three out of four, i.e. 72 per cent, have been subjected to violence. In cases where women state that their present husbands/cohabitant partners make them feel inferior and useless, more than half, i.e. 52 per cent, have been subjected to violence by them.

Thus the questionnaire shows that there is a strong linkage between *controlling behaviour* and the employment of *violence*.

Linkages between threats and physical violence

As was discussed in the section dealing with the conception of continuum, making a sharp distinction between threats of violence and actual employment of violence is a complicated matter, as is illustrated by the fact that violent acts often include threats of violence which subsequently turn into actual employment of violence. Threats can also have a terrifying effect on a woman if the man has used violence towards her previously.

The results from the questionnaire show a special linkage between the *incidence of threats* and the *incidence of physical violence*. Of women subjected to threats by a *former husband/cohabitant partner*, nearly nine out of ten, i.e. 88 per cent, have also been subjected to physical violence by a former husband/cohabitant partner.

		Threats in present marriage		Threats in former marriage	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
Physical violence in present marriage	Yes	55.4	6.6		
	No	43.2	92.7		
Physical violence in former marriage	Yes			87.9	13.3
	No			9.4	86.1
	No response	1.4	0.6	2.6	0.7
	Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
	Number	67	4547	514	2149

Table 4. Correlation between threats and physical violence in present and former marriage or cohabitant relationships.

Linkages between threats and sexual violence

As has been remarked, covariance appears to be most in evidence between physical violence and threats, but a linkage between sexual violence and threats is also appa-

rent. Half (i.e. 51 per cent) of women who have been threatened by a former husband/cohabitant partner have also been subjected to sexual violence.

Summary and comments

The study reveals clear linkages between controlling behaviour and violence, and also between threats and physical violence and between threats and sexual violence. The women's responses show that the various types of violence are interconnected; the women have experience of being subjected to different types of violence. We can comprehend the apparent linkages between controlling behaviour and violence, and between threats and employment of physical and sexual violence, from a *process perspective*, in which the man, by means of physical and sexual violence combined with threats and controlling behaviour, gradually takes control of and limits the woman's personal space. The high frequency of violent experiences that women report from former marriages/cohabitant relationships suggests that the process of violence as an interpretative perspective is of importance when interpreting the answers to the questionnaire. To distinguish between controlling behaviour and threats, or between threatened and physical employment of violence, also appears, from a continuum perspective, not to be a very fruitful way of comprehending the circumstances of the lives of women who have extensive experiences of gender-related violence.

Will it ever end?

For a woman to leave a man who is abusing her does not necessarily mean the end of his violence towards her. On the contrary, the violence may escalate if she breaks away, and it does happen that women who are murdered by men have left or been about to leave the man in question. In other cases the man continues to molest and harm the woman by pursuing her and threatening her, with or without physical attacks. Even if the violence does not escalate, the man's abusive behaviour may continue either in the form of physical or sexual violence or by stalking her, loitering around her home or telephoning her.

Violence after a divorce

We asked the women whether their former husband/cohabitant partner, after their separation, had threatened her face to face or by telephone, whether he had come to her home against her will, whether he had waited for, waylaid or followed her, or whether he had subjected her to physical violence.

Only women who had been subjected to violence by a former husband/cohabitant partner answered these questions, i.e. 970 women in all.

One in three women with a violent former husband/cohabitant partner has been threatened by him since the divorce. One in ten women with a violent former husband/cohabitant partner has been subjected to physical or sexual violence by the former husband/cohabitant partner since the divorce.

With regard to the most recent former marriage/cohabitant relationship in which violence occurred, 33 per cent of the women state that they have been threatened by their former partner since the divorce. Thirtythree per cent have received unwanted visits since their divorce and one woman in five, i.e. 20 per cent, has been followed by her ex-husband. One woman in ten has been subjected to physical or sexual violence.

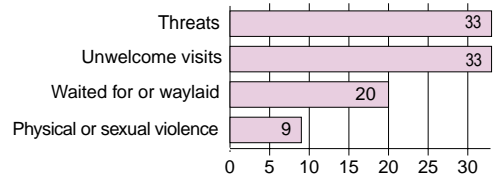


Fig 13. Women subjected to violence or threats by former husband or cohabitant partner after divorce/separation (% of women with a violent former husband, N=970).

Violence in connection with access to children after a divorce

For a woman who separates from a man who has used violence against her and with whom she has joint children, access to the children may mean that she is compelled to continue in contact with the man who violated and abused her. For this reason, our study contained questions about violence in connection with access. These questions were addressed only to women with a former husband/cohabitant partner who had been violent.¹¹ The questions about violence, threats and harassment in connection with access to or contact with joint children, or when collecting or handing over the children, are the same as the questions regarding experiences of violence after the divorce. The questions relate to threats face to face

or over the telephone, whether the man has come to her home against her will, waited for her or followed her, or whether he has subjected her to physical or sexual violence.

One in four women with a violent former husband/cohabitant partner by whom she has children has been subjected to threats by the former husband/cohabitant partner in connection with access to children.

Twentyfour per cent of the women stated that they had been subjected to threats in connection with access to children. Four per cent had been subjected to physical or sexual violence by the man in connection with access to children. Seventeen per cent of the women stated that their former husband/cohabitant partner had come to their home against their will and eight per cent had experienced the man waiting for, waylaying or following them.

Summary and comments

When a woman leaves a man the violence does not necessarily cease. One woman in three has been subjected to violence on the part of her violent former husband/cohabitant partner after the divorce/separation. The present study shows *threats* to be the form of violence most commonly employed. Unwanted visits are also common, and one in five women divorced/separated from a violent man has experienced being followed by the man since the divorce. Consequently, separating from a violent man does not always help a woman.

Children witnessing and falling victim to violence

Little research has been done concerning the children of abused women. Studies in which children have been asked whether or how they have been affected by violence have revealed that they have witnessed a good deal of violence being employed against the woman, and in approximately half the cases they have themselves been subjected to violence by the man.¹² The women in our study were asked what they thought the children had witnessed or heard of the violence inflicted on them (the women), and also what the women had seen or heard of the physical and sexual violence inflicted on the children. Only women who stated that they had or had had a violent husband/cohabitant partner answered these questions.¹³

Children as witnesses

We asked the women whether any of their children had seen or heard their present or former husband/cohabitant partner behave violently towards her.

- **More than half the women with children and a violent *former* husband/cohabitant partner state that the children have seen or heard the man behaving violently towards the woman.**

- **Nearly one woman in three who has children and lives with a violent present husband/cohabitant partner states that the children have seen or heard the man subjecting her to violence.**

The women's responses show that children have witnessed a good deal of the violence. Fiftyfour per cent of the women who have children and have been subjected to violence by a former husband/cohabitant partner state that their children have seen or heard the *former* husband/cohabitant partner employing violence towards them (the women).

In current relationships where the husband/cohabitant partner has employed violence, 29 per cent of respondents state that the children have witnessed the violence.

These figures reflect what the women believe the children have seen and heard. Thus it is possible, or even likely, that even more children have seen or heard violence inflicted on their mother than the women's responses disclose.

Children as victims

For obvious reasons the questions concerning victimised children too were addressed only to women with children. The questions were directed only to women who have experienced violence on the part of a former or present husband/cohabitant partner.¹⁴

We asked the women whether any of their children had been subjected to violence or any form of sexual abuse by the husband/cohabitant partner (or former husband/cohabitant partner). We did not define either violence or the meaning of "any form of sexual abuse". (Below we use the terms physical violence and sexual abuse).

More than one woman in five who has been subjected to violence by a *former* husband/cohabitant partner states that her children have been subjected to *physical violence* by the man.

Twentyone per cent of women who have had a *former* husband/cohabitant partner who was violent towards them state that their children have been subjected to *physical violence* by the man.

Two per cent of women state that their children have been subjected to some form of sexual abuse by the former husband/cohabitant partner.

Five per cent of women with a *current* husband/cohabitant partner who has subjected them to violence state that their children too have been subjected to physical violence by the man. One woman out of 331 states that she has children who are being *sexually abused* by the current husband/cohabitant partner.

Summary and comments

We asked about the extent to which women know whether their children have seen or heard them being subjected to violence by a former or present husband/cohabitant partner, and also about the extent to which the children have been subjected to violence and sexual abuse by the man in question. Thus what emerges from the answers is the women's perception of what the children witness, not the children's own reports.

More than half the women subjected to violence by a former husband/cohabitant partner state that their children have witnessed or heard the violence. One woman in five states that her children have

been subjected to physical violence by the former husband/cohabitant partner.

It is a traumatic experience for children to be forced to see or hear a parent being assaulted. It is impossible to define the boundaries between a child as a witness or as a victim of violence; when a man inflicts on a child the awareness that its mother is being abused, the child itself becomes a victim of the violence.

The responses from women who have had children in a violent relationship which is now terminated - i.e. the responses relating to former husbands/cohabitant partners – show a higher level of reports of children having seen or heard violence than those from women who are currently in a violent relationship. The figures reporting the extent to which children have been subjected to violence in the terminated relationships are likewise higher. *It is four times as common for children to have been subjected to violence by a former violent husband/cohabitant partner than to have been so subjected by a current one.*

Exactly as is the case with the questions about violence by former husbands/cohabitant partners and current husbands/cohabitant partners respectively, women

paint a lighter picture of the current relationship in that the children are reported as neither witnessing nor being subjected to violence by current violent husbands/cohabitant partners to the same extent as was the case with the men that the women have divorced or separated from.

It is possible that as well as reflecting the facts, the difference between the reports relating to former and current husbands/cohabitant partners respectively may illustrate the difficulty which the women have in seeing and admitting that the children too are affected by the violence to which they themselves are being subjected.¹⁵

Violence by boyfriends with whom the woman has not cohabited

The questions concerning violence by boyfriends were answered by 5 261 women,¹⁶ and it is on these responses that the figures in this section are based.

• 15 per cent of women have been subjected to violence by a boyfriend.

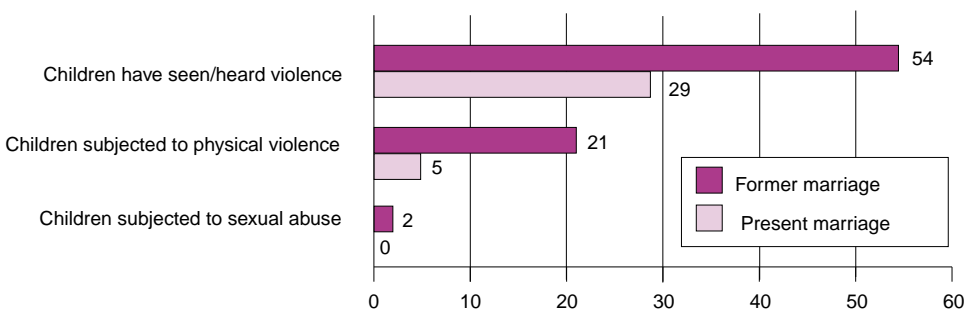


Fig 14. Women stating that the children have witnessed or been subjected to violence by present or former husband or cohabitant partner (% of women subjected to violence and with children, non-responses not included).

The questions pertaining to experiences of violence inflicted by men with whom the women have or have had a sexual relationship but never cohabited are not as detailed as those relating to violence by current and former husbands/cohabitant partners. Instead of the relatively specific questions about *physical violence*, only one question was asked, the term physical violence being defined as “e.g. being struck on the face or body, being pushed, forced against a wall, kicked, held in order to be struck, bitten, cut with a knife or shot”. Two questions were asked regarding threats of physical violence, the first relating to being threatened face to face and the second to threats by letters or telephone. The questions regarding *sexual violence* were the same as those relating to current or former husbands/cohabitant partners.

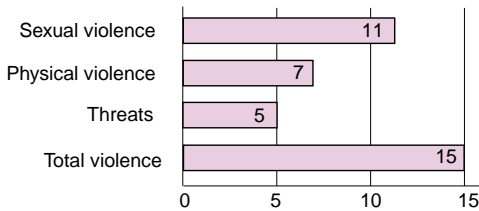


Fig 15. Women subjected to violence by boyfriend, by type of violence (%). (N=5 261).

Physical violence

In total, seven per cent of women have experienced physical violence by a partner with whom they have never cohabited, and fifty per cent of these report at least one violent experience *during the last year*. Experience of violence is most common among women aged 25-34, nine per cent of this age group having had such experience. In the highest age groups, three per cent of women state that they have been subjected to physical violence

by a man with whom they have had a sexual relationship but never cohabited. No major differences are observable in terms of the women’s marital status.

• **35 per cent of women subjected to *physical* violence were abused in their own home on the last occasion.**

Sexual violence

In total, eleven per cent of women state that they have been subjected to violence by a man with whom they have or have had a sexual relationship but have not cohabited. Of women with experience of sexual violence by a boyfriend, 74 per cent report at least one experience *in the last year*.

Fourteen per cent of women in the 18-24 age group have been subjected to violence by a boyfriend, while the corresponding figure for the 55-64 age group is six per cent. Of single women without children, 14 per cent have been subjected to violence by a man with whom they have or have had a sexual relationship but have not cohabited.

• **Of women subjected to *sexual* violence by a boyfriend, 28 per cent were abused in their own home on the last occasion and 29 per cent were abused in someone else’s home.**

Threats

In total, five per cent of women who have or have had a sexual relationship with a man without cohabiting have been threatened by him. Fortyfive per cent of

these women report having been threatened at least once *in the last year*.

• Four out of ten women who have been threatened by a present or former boyfriend were threatened in their own home on the last occasion.

women aged 18-24 compared with one per cent of women over 45 have been subjected to violence by a boyfriend *in the last year*.

	Physical violence	Sexual violence	Threats	N
18-24	8.9	13.6	6.9	751
25-34	9.4	12.4	7.5	1256
35-44	6.5	12.7	5.5	1213
45-54	4.7	8.9	3.7	1187
55-64	2.7	5.7	2.1	853

Table 5. Type of violence by boyfriend, by woman's age (% of age groups).

Age

There are relatively large differences between the various age groups. Reports of violence by boyfriends with whom the woman had not cohabited fall as age rises.

The youngest women make the most reports, one in five women in this group, i.e. 19 per cent, having been subjected to violence by a boyfriend.

Of the oldest age group, 55-64 years of age, approximately eight per cent report experience of violence in this kind of relationship. The differences are even bigger for violent experiences *in the last year*; approximately six per cent of the

Summary and comments

Younger women are more liable to violence on the part of boyfriends than are older women, and the differences are fairly large. For abused women, violence is not far away, and this applies to all types of violence. *Sexual violence* is the most commonly occurring type. Even if the woman is not living with the man, much of the violence against her takes place in her own home. The home is thus not a free zone even if the woman in question is not cohabiting with the man with whom she has a sexual relationship.

¹ Heiskanen & Pispá 1998, Statistics Canada 1993

² The "divorced" group comprises women who have been married and are not currently cohabiting with a man. There are 425 such women in this material.

³ This question includes an element in which the respondent is asked whether the man has threatened her with or used a knife, firearm or any other weapon. This question is part of the basis of calculation of the incidence of physical violence. See the section above on "Violence as a continuum" for a discussion of the underlying problems of breaking violence down into different categories.

⁴ Since internal dropout is included in the calculations, the total sum does not amount to 100 per cent.

⁵ See footnote 54.

⁶ Because of an error in the printing of the questionnaire, the question about threats by the current husband/cohabitant partner disappeared. The figures pertaining to threats from present husband/cohabitant partner are thus based on a threat variable constructed from questions 51:8, 51:10 and 59. Measurement of threats from the present husband/cohabitant partner is therefore probably underestimated compared with that of threats from the former husband/cohabitant partner.

⁷ Kelly 1988

⁸ The term controlling behaviour has been chosen having in mind that these actions are presumed to imply a possibility of controlling the woman's personal space, which, in accordance with the conceptions of violence as a continuum and the normalisation of violence, may be even more effective if the man also subjects the woman to violence or threats of violence.

⁹ Thus the way we have asked the questions differs from how we asked the women about their experiences of violence. In the section on controlling behaviour, the woman has had to comment on the character of her husband/cohabiting partner rather than concrete actions as is the case with questions pertaining to violence.

¹⁰ However, these linkages tell us nothing about the *causal relation* between the circumstances being studied, i.e. *nothing* about whether for example controlling behaviour causes violence. It is not possible to draw such conclusions and it is important to keep in mind that the linkages which we are studying have no bearing on causality.

¹¹ Christensen 1990, Lundgren 1994.

¹² The figures in this question are based on the number of women responding to the question with yes or no (N=497). Consequently women stating that they have no children with the man in question or who have answered Don't know/Don't remember are not included.

¹³ The questionnaire does not tell us how many women have children, their own or joint, from the various relationships. Therefore unless stated otherwise, the figures are based on the number of women who have answered yes or no to the questions about whether their children have witnessed violence or been subjected to violence themselves by a man with whom the woman has or has had a sexual relationship. These questions (questions 61 and 72) are addressed only to women with children. Thus, those not responding and those answering Don't know/Don't remember (these answers cannot be distinguished from one another in the coding) are not included in the figures. Out of 970 women with a violent former husband/cohabitant partner and 477 with a violent present one, 498 and 331 respectively answered yes or no to the questions enquiring whether the children had witnessed or heard the violence.

¹⁴ The question enquiring whether the children had been subjected to physical violence by a former husband/cohabiting partner was answered by 509 women, and the method of calculation explained in footnote 63 has been applied. The question was answered by 335 women with a violent present husband/cohabitant partner.

¹⁵ Mellberg 2002.

¹⁶ Boyfriend signifies a man with whom a woman has or has had a sexual relationship but not cohabited.

Violence outside sexual relationships

The category of men outside sexual relationships comprises all men with whom a woman does not have and has not had a sexual relationship.¹ For example they may be colleagues, friends, teachers or men with whom the woman is unacquainted. The questions in this section were put to all women responding to the questionnaire.

As with the questions relating to violence committed by boyfriends, the questions about physical violence by men outside sexual relationships are less detailed than those about such violence by men with whom the woman has or has had a close relationship. In this section only one question was asked about physical violence and two about threats.² On the other hand, we asked for more details about *where* the violence occurred and *who* perpetrated it.³ The questions about sexual violence in this section of the questionnaire are the same as for the other types of relationships.

Extent, type of violence and frequency

In total, 30 per cent of the women have been subjected to violence by a man outside a sexual relationship. Four out of ten of these women state that the most recent perpetrator was a colleague, fellow-student, friend or acquaintance or neighbour. More than half of the women's *most recent* experiences of violence outside sexual relationships consisted of *sexual violence*. One in four women has been subjected to *sexual violence* by a man outside a rela-

tionship, and nearly one woman in three aged 35-44 has had such experiences.

In total, 30 per cent of women have had experience of being subjected to violence by a man outside a sexual relationship. Reports of violence by men outside sexual relationships differ between age groups. Again, the level of reporting is consistently much lower by women aged 55-64 than by other age groups.

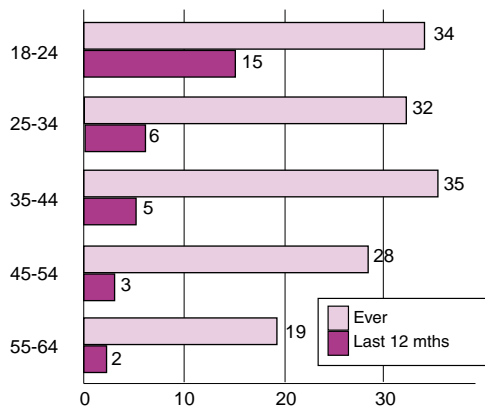


Fig 16. Women subjected to violence outside a sexual relationship, by woman's age (%).

Physical violence

In total, nine per cent of women have been subjected to physical violence by a man outside a sexual relationship at some point after their fifteenth birthday. The differences between the various age groups are relatively large. Twelve per cent of women aged 18-24 have been

subjected to physical violence by a man outside a sexual relationship, whereas the corresponding percentage for women aged 55-64 is four.

Sexual violence

One woman in four has experienced sexual violence on the part of a man with whom she does not have and has not had a sexual relationship. Such experiences are most common among the younger half of the cohort studied; of women aged 18-24, 28 per cent report such experiences, of women aged 25-34, 27 per cent, and of women aged 35-44, 31 per cent. In the 55-64 age group, 17 per cent have experienced sexual violence outside sexual relationships.

In total, five per cent of *all* women taking part in the study have *been forced* at least once into some form of sexual activity by a man outside a sexual relationship. Nine per cent of all women responding to the questionnaire state that they have experience of a man outside a sexual relationship *attempting* to force them into sexual activity by threatening, holding or hurting them in some way. Five per cent state that a man has forced them or tried to force them into some form of sexual activity when they were under the influence of drugs or otherwise unable to

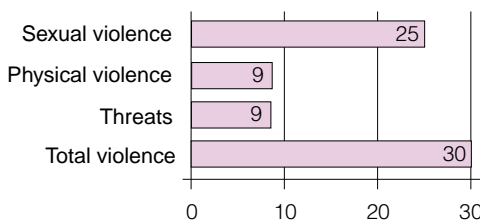


Fig 17. Women subjected to violence outside a relationship, by type of violence (%). (N=6 926).

defend themselves. Twentytwo per cent of the women have been touched in a sexual way against their will by a man with whom they have not had a sexual relationship.

• Altogether 13 per cent of women have been subjected to gross sexual violence outside sexual relationships

Threats

In total, nine per cent of women have been threatened once or several times by a man with whom they do not have and have not had a sexual relationship. Seven per cent have experience of being threatened face to face and three per cent have been threatened by telephone

Frequency of violence

The women who reported experiences of violence by men outside a sexual relationship were asked how many times they had been subjected to violence *in the last year* and earlier. The answers show the women to have had more than one violent experience. Sixty per cent of women with experience of violence by men outside sexual relationships report more than one instance of violence.

	In the last year	Earlier	Total
Once	48.7	33.8	35.1
2-10 times	41.6	53.4	52.6
11-50 times	2.0	6.5	6.2
>50 times	0.3	1.9	1.8
Don't know /no response	7.4	4.3	4.3
N =	346	1805	1928

Table 6. Frequency of violence outside sexual relationship (column per cent).

Eight per cent of the women with such experience report more than ten occurrences. Over one third, viz 35 per cent, report one violent experience.

The most recent violent experience

We know that violence inflicted on women by their partners takes place indoors for the most part, often in the woman's own home. In order to gain increased knowledge of the violence employed towards women by *men outside sexual relationships*, questions about the *most recent* experience of violence outside a sexual relationship were put to the women with experience of such violence. The questions concerned the *type of violence* to which she was subjected, *when* the incident took place and *who* the man was.⁴ A total of 2 046 women were in this group, but the internal dropout varies. The figures below include the internal dropout and are calculated from the 2 046 women who replied that they had experience of being subjected to violence by a man outside sexual relationship.

When was the most recent violent incident?

In total, 38 per cent of the women subjected to violence by men with whom they do not have and have not had a sexual relationship experienced such violence in the last five years. For 16 per cent of the women, the most recent violent incident occurred less than a year ago.

What type of violence did the most recent experience consist of?

In total, more than half of the most recent violent incidents consisted of *sexual violence*.

Fourteen per cent of the most recent violent incidents consisted of the man *forcing* or *attempting to force* the woman into some kind of sexual activity, either by threatening, holding or hurting her in some way, or else when she was unable to defend herself, e.g. because she was asleep or under the influence of drugs. Forty-two per cent of the most recent violent incidents happened when a man with whom the woman did not have and had not had a sexual relationship touched her in a sexual way against her will, e.g. by holding, hugging or kissing her, by a man with whom the woman did not have and had not had a sexual relationship. One in ten women reported *physical violence* as constituting the last abuse and ten per cent reported *threats*.

Who abused the woman?

According to the women's replies, the most common abusers are *men who are known to the women* (e.g. friends, neighbours and work colleagues). More than four out of ten women report that the man who most recently abused them was a work colleague, fellow-pupil, a friend, acquaintance or a neighbour. Five per cent were abused on the most recent occasion by their superior at work supervisor or teacher and seven per cent by a male relative. In a little less than one third of the cases, the perpetrator was an *unknown* man.

Where does violence take place?

A little under one third of the most recent violent incidents reported by women involving men with whom they do not have and have not had a sexual relationship took place at home, i.e. the woman's own home or someone else's. Thirteen per cent

of the women were assaulted at work or in school. Slightly over one third of the women report that the most recent violent incident occurred in a public place, indoors or outdoors, half of them at a restaurant or dance hall.

Where did *physical* violence take place?

Twentyfive per cent of the women whose most recent experience of violence was physical report that it took place in their own home. Altogether 40 per cent of the most recent physical violence occurred in a home environment (their own or someone else's home, or in the courtyard or stairway of a block of flats). Eleven per cent were assaulted in school or at work, 13 per cent at a restaurant or dance hall and twelve per cent in a public place outdoors (e.g. a street or square).

Where did *sexual* violence take place?

It is not unusual for women to be subjected to sexual violence in public places. One out of every five women who reported that her most recent violent experience was of a sexual nature was assaulted at a restaurant or dance hall. In 14 per cent of cases, the most recent incident occurred in the woman's own home, while 15 per cent were assaulted in someone else's home. Twelve per cent of the women had been assaulted at school or at work and six per cent in a street, square or some other public place outdoors.

Where do *threats* take place?

Of the women who stated their most recent violent experience to consist of *threats*, 29 per cent were threatened in their own home. Nine per cent were in someone else's home. Fifteen per cent of the women were threatened at school or at work, nine per cent at a restaurant or dance hall and ten

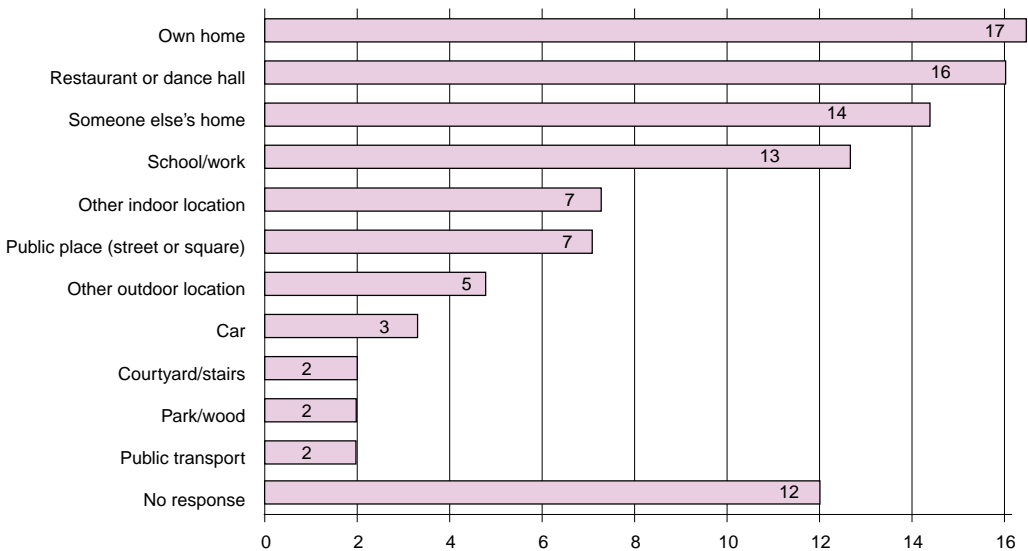


Fig 18. Location at which the most recent violent incident outside a sexual relationship occurred (% of women indicating a location, N=1 963).

per cent in a public place outdoors such as a street or square.

Summary and comments

Violence against women on the part of men with whom they do not have a sexual relationship is widespread. Nearly one woman in three has experienced this. *Sexual violence* is particularly prevalent, one in every four women having experienced it, and half of what were reported as the *most recent* violent incidents outside a sexual relationship were of a sexual nature. In general the oldest women report markedly fewer violent experiences than other age groups, while the reporting of such experiences by women aged 18-24, 25-34 and 35-44 is fairly similar.

What emerges from the women's responses is that *violence is not a matter of isolated incidents*. Nearly two thirds of the women state that they have been subjected to violence outside a relationship between two and over fifty times. Just under four out of ten women have been subjected to violence in the last five years.

If we look at the *most recent violent incidents*, in most cases these have involved a man *known* to the woman. Only a little under one third of the women report the last assault as being by an unknown man.

The public debate has revolved largely around violence inflicted on women by husbands/cohabitant partners. In the light of the picture which emerges from women's reports of violence outside sexual relationships, it seems necessary to widen the scope of the public debate concerning violence against women. Our study shows clearly that scrutiny cannot remain focused on so-called partner violence alone, but

must also take in the violence – of which the sexual variety seems to be particularly widespread – to which women are subjected by the men in the environment in which they move, such as friends, acquaintances, colleagues, neighbours and superiors at work. The women's responses also seem to indicate that there are no free zones; violence can occur in a woman's own home as well as in public places, in the streets or in parks.

Worry about violence

We asked the women whether they were worried in case of being subjected to violence when walking home alone in the dark or of being raped by an unknown man. The responses are consolidated as worry about violence.

Women aged 18-24 report the highest level of worry about violence; 85 per cent in this age group worry about it. Of women aged 25-34, 79 per cent worry in case of being subjected to violence. The lowest level of reporting such worry is found among women aged 55-64, of whom 49 per cent worry about being subjected to violence.

Women between the ages of 18 and 24 are the age group most frequently subjected to violence *in the last year*. One in five women in this group has been

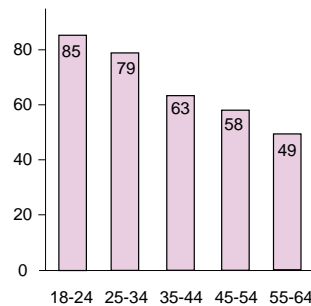


Fig 19. Women worried in case of being subjected to violence, by age groups (%).

subjected to violence by a man during this period. Women in this group are also the ones most fearful of violence. Three quarters of women aged 18-24 are afraid of walking home alone in the dark and two thirds are afraid of being raped by an unknown man. Of women aged 25-34, 71 per cent are afraid of walking home alone after dark and 56 per cent are afraid of being raped by an unknown man.

Summary and comments

Statistics Sweden (*Statistiska centralbyrån, SCB*) has published a study on women's and men's worries about violence in which comparisons are made between worry about violence and so-called actual exposure. A frequently-cited statistical picture of worry about violence, taken from the SCB's so-called ULF study,⁵ is that women worry more than men about violence but men are more frequently subjected to it. The message underlying the statistics seems to be that women worry unnecessarily.⁶

The results produced by our study, however, seem to show that violence to women is considerably more widespread than the figures in the ULF study suggest. Our study shows that 46 per cent of women in Sweden have been subjected

to violence by a man since their fifteenth birthday. In the light of this, women's worries, both in our study and in the SCB study, appear well founded. Women's fear thus corresponds to a violent reality. There is also a linkage between worry about violence and being subjected to it inasmuch as younger women worry the most and it is this group which is most frequently subjected to violence. More than one in five women between 18 and 24 years of age has been subjected to some type of violence, i.e. physical or sexual violence or threats, *in the last year*.

Since there is a linkage between worry about violence and subjection to violence, the worry cannot be separated from the violence but should be viewed in context with women's experiences of gender-related violence. The worry then becomes more than "just" worry: it becomes part of the experience that violence exists as a reality in many women's lives. Taking the results of this study as a starting point and applying the concept of violence as a continuum, worry about violence can be placed at one end of a scale running from grossly violent acts via "milder" types of control, such as controlling behaviour, to the worry which women feel about being subjected to violence.

¹ Husbands, cohabitant partners and boyfriends are included in the category of men with whom the woman concerned has had a sexual relationship.

² The term physical violence is defined as "e.g. being struck on the face or body, being pushed, forced against a wall, kicked, held in order to be struck, bitten, cut with a knife or shot". The questions about threats relate to threats face to face and threats by telephone or letter.

³ This section of the questionnaire also included questions on sexual harassment, but the results of the latter are reported in a section of their own below.

⁴ Not all women who stated that they had been subjected to violence responded to the questions about the most recent violent experience. The *dropout* is highest, i.e. 25 per cent, in respect of the question asking what the woman was subjected to most recently but significantly lower for the questions about when it happened, where and by whom. Since the internal dropout is included, the total does not add up to 100 per cent in the figures given below.

⁵ På tal om kvinnor och män. Lathund om jämställdhet. Statistiska centralbyrån 2000.

⁶ *Ibid.*

The most recent violent incident, regardless of relationship

Part of the questionnaire deals with violence experienced by the respondent in various types of relationship, including the most recent violent experience outside a sexual relationship, while another part focuses on *the most recent violent incident regardless of relationship*. By asking questions about the most recent experience some idea may be gained about the general nature of violence towards women. We therefore asked all women who reported some violent experience or experiences to answer questions about their most recent one.¹

The most recent violent incident, by type of violence

The most recent violent incident for 40 per cent of women consisted of threats. Sexual violence was the second most common form, 33 per cent of women having been subjected to this on the

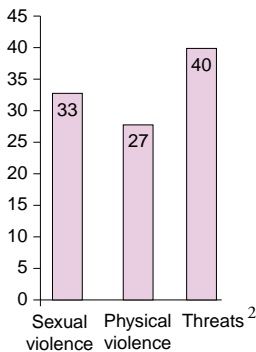


Fig 20. Most recent violent incident regardless of relationship (% of respondents, N=1 377).

most recent occasion. Physical violence constituted 27 per cent of the most recent violent incidents.

- **One third of the most recent violent incidents reported involved sexual violence.**
- **In half of the most recent violent incidents reported, the perpetrator was a man known to the woman.**
- **More than one woman in three states that the perpetrator of the most recent violent incident was a man with whom they have or have had a sexual relationship.**
- **Nearly one woman in five with experience of violence states that physical violence on the part of a man with whom she has or has had a sexual relationship constituted her most recent violent experience.**
- **The location at which violence is most commonly reported to have occurred is the victim's own home. 35 per cent of women were subjected to violence in their own home on the most recent occasion.**
- **One woman in five was in a public place outdoors (street or square) or in some other outdoor location (a park or wood) when the most recent violent incident occurred.**

What kind of violence, in what kind of relationship?

Of the most recent violent incidents reported, one of the most common is *physical violence* on the part of a man with whom the woman has or has had a sexual relationship. Eighteen per cent of women state this to be the most recent violent incident. A similar proportion of women, 18 per cent, state the most recent incident to have been a man *exposing himself indecently* to them. The third most common violent incident, reported by eleven per cent of women, involves threats by a man with whom the respondent has or has had a sexual relationship. Ten per cent of women reported their most recent violent experience to have consisted of being touched in a sexual way against their will by an unknown man.

If it is possible to draw conclusions as to the general nature of violence by asking questions about the most recent violent experience, the results derived from the questionnaire reveal it to be as common

for the perpetrator to be a man known to the woman as it is for him to be unknown. In 34 per cent of cases, the violence was committed by a man with whom the woman had a sexual relationship. In a total of 51 per cent of cases, the perpetrator of the most recent violent incident was known to the woman, compared with 49 per cent of cases in which the perpetrator was an unknown man.

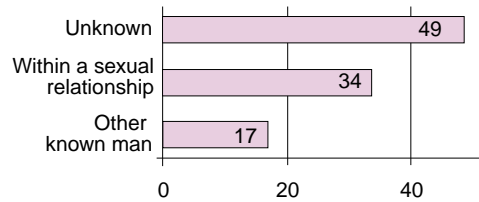


Fig 21. Perpetrator of the most recent assault (% of respondents, N=1 377).

Where did violence take place?

The most recent violent incident in 35 per cent of cases took place in the woman's own home and in eleven per cent of cases in someone else's home. Three per cent

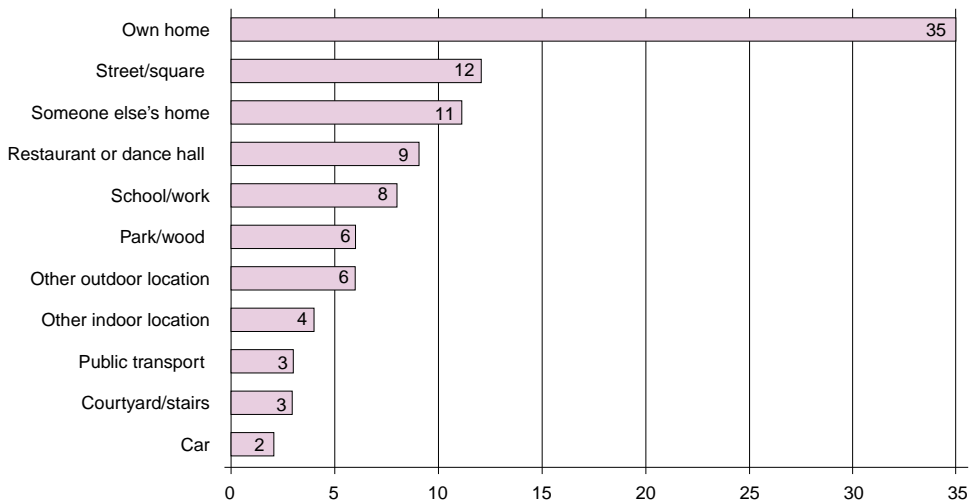


Fig 22. Location at which the most recent violent incident occurred (% of respondents, N=1 608).

occurred in the courtyard or stairway of a block of flats. This means that *half* of the most recent violence perpetrated on these women occurred either inside or adjacent to a dwelling. Twelve per cent of women suffered their most recent violent experience in a street, square or some other *public place*. In all, 24 per cent of the violence is reported to have occurred *outdoors* in a public place, in a wood or park or some other outdoor location. Nine per cent of the women were at a restaurant or dancehall on the most recent occasion they were subjected to violence, and eight per cent had their most recent experience of violence either at school or at work.

When did it take place?

• 21 per cent of women had their most recent violent experience less than a year ago.

In 29 per cent of cases, the most recent incident of violence occurred 1-5 years ago. Altogether half the women have suffered such abuse in the last five years. In 18 per cent of cases, the most recent incident occurred 6-10 years ago, while 32 per cent of the women had their most recent experience more than ten years ago.

Summary and comments

Of the most recent violent experiences, one of the most common is physical violence on the part of a man with whom the woman has or has had a sexual relationship. If the most recent violent experiences are broken down into physical violence, sexual violence and threats, threats are the most common. In one third of cases the women had been subjected to sexual violence during the most recent violent incident. The commonest place for violence to be committed is the woman's own home. The women's experiences of violence occurred fairly recently; in half the cases the most recent occasion was during the last five years, and for one fifth of the women it was less than a year ago.

¹ However, only half of the women reporting violent experiences since their fifteenth birthday answered the questions in this section. Thus the figures in this chapter, unless stated otherwise, are based on those women who did answer the questions in this section, not on the total number of women reporting violent experiences since their fifteenth birthday. The reasons for the dropout cannot be established. A possible interpretation is that the women themselves do not regard what they experienced as constituting violence.

² Questions about indecent exposure were asked only in this section and the section on sexual harassment. In this section, experience of a man exposing himself indecently is assigned to the threats category. Sexual harassment has not been categorised as violence.

Where do women seek help?

Was the most recent violent experience reported to the police?

Some of the questions put to respondents concerning the most recent violent incident were designed to discover whether the women, and if so how many of them, report violent incidents to the police, and also what crimes – if any – are most commonly so reported.

In 1999, when the data for this study were collected, 19 982 reports of violence against women were filed with the police. The National Council for Crime Prevention (*Brottsförebyggande Rådet, BRÅ*), estimates that only about 25 per cent of all violent crimes come to the notice of the police.¹ It is generally thought by criminologists that many cases of violence against women go unrecorded. Thus the circumstances surrounding the violence inflicted on women by men in close relationships indicate that much violent crime against women remains unknown to the police and judiciary.

In this study, a total of 3 193 women stated that they had been subjected to violence at least once since their fifteenth birthday. However, not all of these women answered the questions in the section of the questionnaire dealing with the most recent violent incident. The number of women replying to the questions in this section varies between 1 400 and 1 750 depending on the question, i.e. on average the questions were answered by about

half of the women with experience of violence according to the questionnaire. The percentages are based on the number of women responding to these questions.²

The questionnaire contains a question enquiring whether the women *reported the most recent violent incident to the police*. The response options were “yes”, “no” and “no, but the police found out about the incident in some other way”. The question was answered by 1 740 women.

- Only 15 per cent of the women reported the most recent violent incident to the police.

- In 81 per cent of cases, the most recent violent incident did not come to the notice of the police.

Fifteen per cent of women replied that they reported the incident to the police. Four per cent replied that they did not make a report but the police found out about it anyway. A total of 1 416 women replied that they did not report the incident to the police nor did the police find out about it in some other way.

Why did the women *not* report the most recent violent incident to the police?

In total, 1 416 women replied to the question why they did not report the most recent incident of violence to the police.

They were asked to indicate whether it was because they did not think the police would believe them, because the police would not be able to do anything, because the incident was too trivial, because they were ashamed or had feelings of guilt, because they were afraid the perpetrator might take revenge, because they did not want the police to be involved, or because they did not want the perpetrator to go to prison.

• Nearly half of the women who did not report the most recent violent incident to the police stated the reason for this to be that they thought the incident was too trivial.

Nearly half, i.e. 46 per cent, of the women who did not make a report state the reason to have been that they thought the incident was too trivial. Eight per cent said the reason for not making a report was that they did not want the police to

be involved, and as many again, eight per cent, said that they did not think the police would be able to do anything. Six per cent of the women gave feelings of shame as their reason for not reporting the most recent violent incident to the police. About one half per cent of the women said that they refrained from making a report because they did not think the police would believe them.

Type of violence

If the women's responses are broken down according to the *type of violence* to which they were subjected most recently, we find that of the women whose most recent violent experience consisted of *sexual violence* and who did not report it to the police, 51 per cent stated the reason to have been that they thought the incident was too trivial. Eleven per cent of the women had feelings of shame and five per cent did not want to involve the police.

Of women who were subjected to *physical violence* during the most recent

Reason no police report made:	Type of violence in most recent incident		
	Sexual	Physical	Threats
Police would not believe	1.1	0.3	0.2
Police would not be able to do anything	6.3	4.1	14.3
Too trivial	50.7	45.8	50.2
Feelings of shame	11.2	4.9	0.9
Fear of revenge	1.2	4.9	2.9
Did not want police involved	4.8	17.2	5.4
Perpetrator might go to prison	0.5	1.1	0.2
Other reason	11.1	11.0	11.5
No response	13.0	10.8	14.4
Total	100%	100%	100%
N =	415	288	450

Table 7. Most recent violent incident not reported to the police. Type of violence and reason.

violent incident but did not make a police report, 46 per cent replied that the incident was too trivial to be reported. In 17 per cent of cases the women replied that they did not want to involve the police, five per cent said they had feelings of shame and five per cent were afraid the perpetrator might take revenge.

Of the women whose most recent violent experience consisted of *threats*, 50 per cent stated as their reason for not reporting it that the incident was too trivial. Five per cent said they did not want to involve the police. Three per cent were afraid the perpetrator might take revenge and 14 per cent did not think that the police would be able to do anything.

What types of violence in what relationships do women (not) report?

The following figures are based on the number of women who stated, in respect of *the most recent* violent incident, the type of violence and type of relationship, *and* who answered the question whether they reported the incident to the police. There were 1 378 women in this category all told.

The women show no major differences pertaining to the *relationship* with the perpetrator in their propensity to report the most recent violent experience. The propensity to make a report lies between 9 and 13 per cent irrespective of whether the perpetrator is unknown, known or someone with whom the woman has or has had a sexual relationship. Thus, this also applies to women whose most recent violent experience consisted of violence on the part of a current or former husband/cohabitant partner.

• Only 8 per cent of women subjected to *sexual violence* during their most recent violent experience reported the incident to the police.

*The propensity to make a report is low regardless of the kind of perpetrator; 13 per cent of women whose most recent violent experience was at the hands of an unknown man reported the incident to the police. One woman in ten whose most recent violent experience was at the hands of a present or former husband/cohabitant partner reported the incident to the police. Where the perpetrator was another man whom the woman knew, nine per cent made a report to the police.*³

If the women's most recent violent experiences are divided into categories according to *type of violence* – viz threats, physical and sexual violence – we see that *physical violence* is most commonly reported to the police. Of the women whose most recent violent experience consisted of physical violence, 16 per cent reported the incident to the police. Where *threats* constituted the most recent violent experience, 15 per cent of women made a report to the police. *Sexual violence* is least commonly reported; eight per cent of the women whose most recent violent experience was of a sexual nature reported it to the police.

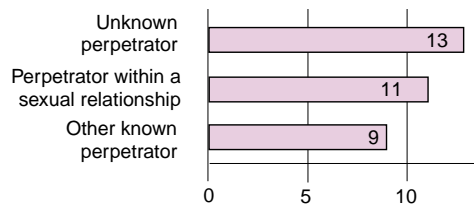


Fig 23. Propensity to report, by type of perpetrator (%; N = 1 377).

Summary and comments

Only 15 per cent of women reported the most recent violent incident to the police, and according to the women's responses over 80 per cent of the most recent violent incidents were not brought to the police's attention. Our data disclose *no major differences relating to the perpetrator in the women's propensity to report. On the other hand, sexual violence appears to be the type of violence which women have the least propensity to report.*

The low proportion of women reporting the most recent violent incident to the police suggests that women do not consider it to be of any use to seek help from the police by reporting the violence to which they have been subjected. There may be some link here with the women's responses indicating the reasons for not making a police report. Nearly half the women state that no police report was made because they thought the incident was too trivial. One interpretation of the women's reluctance to contact the police is that women have a propensity to play down the violence to which they are subjected, especially when the violence is of a sexual nature. The fact that only about half of the women stating that they had had experience of violence answered the questions about the most recent violent incident may also be interpreted as an indication that the violence is minimised by the women themselves.

Then where do women seek help if subjected to violence by a man in a sexual relationship?

We asked questions about whether the women sought assistance from any service or agency – apart from the police – in connection with having been subjected to violence by a husband/cohabitant partner. The respondent was supposed to answer them by reference to the *most recent "violent relationship"*, i.e. present or former husband/cohabitant partner depending on the relationship in which the woman was subjected to violence most recently. The response options given were women's refuge, victim support, social emergency services, social welfare secretary, lawyer, family counselling, psychiatrist, other medical services or "other services". We also asked whether the women were satisfied or dissatisfied with the help received. The basis for the figures in this section comprises 1 373 women, i.e. the number of women replying either that they were subjected to violence by a former husband/cohabitant partner or that they are being subjected to violence in their current relationship. The dropout in this part of the questionnaire is large, viz about 40 per cent.⁴

- One third of the women with a violent current or former husband/cohabitant partner sought help from some service or agency.
- The women seek help most commonly from the medical services.

One third of the women who live or have lived with a man employing violence

towards them sought help. These women most commonly seek help from the medical services. Twelve per cent applied to a psychiatrist and nine per cent to other medical services. Twelve per cent approached family counselling agencies. Eleven per cent of women sought assistance from a lawyer and nine per cent from a social welfare secretary. Five per cent of women state that they applied to a women's refuge, four per cent to the social emergency service and two per cent to victim support.

The largest proportion of women satisfied with the response to their approach was found among those who sought assistance from health and medical services (not including psychiatric care); 84 per cent of these women expressed satisfaction with the help received. The corresponding figure for women seeking psychiatric help is 66 per cent. Of the women who approached a lawyer, 77 per cent report satisfaction with the assistance received. Of those applying to

victim support, 75 per cent were satisfied and of those applying to a women's refuge, 70 per cent. The highest level of dissatisfaction is found among women applying to the social services: more than one woman in two who sought help from the social emergency services was dissatisfied with the response. Of those who sought help from family counselling agencies, 46 per cent were dissatisfied, while the corresponding figure for those who approached a social welfare secretary was 44 per cent dissatisfaction.

Summary and comments

It may be assumed that when women seek help, one of the factors influencing their choice of agency is how they themselves regard the violence to which they are being subjected. Our data indicate that most of these women's approaches are made to the psychiatric and other medical services, which may indicate that the women interpret the violence in terms of psychological disorder or physical illness. Another possible reason why women choose to approach the medical services is that having delayed rather a long time before seeking assistance, in the end they incur quite serious psychological damage as a result of the violence, or alternatively that the violence eventually causes serious physical injuries. The proportion of women applying to women's refuges is relatively small, i.e. five per cent.

The women's assessment of the help provided indicates that services focusing on safeguarding the interests of women, such as medical services, lawyers, women's refuge and victim support, receive the highest satisfaction rating. However, many women were dissatisfied with the assistance given by the social services.

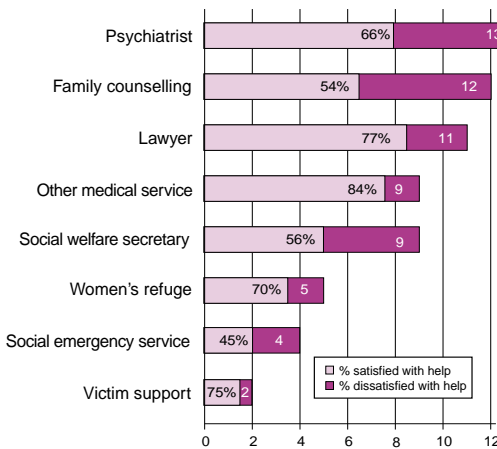


Fig 24. Services and agencies approached by abused women, and women's satisfaction with the help received (% of women subjected to violence by present or former husband/cohabitant partner, N=1 373).

Putting the abused woman, her interests and situation at the centre of the picture when dealing with her case may influence her level of satisfaction with the help

she receives. It is also possible that an agency's knowledgeability on the subject of violence may play a role in how the woman evaluates its help.

¹ According to Heimer & Nylén 1999, p 3. On the number of cases of assault and battery of women, see <http://www.bra.se/extra/statistics/extraview>.

² The reasons for the dropout cannot be established, though here too a possible interpretation, cf footnote 74, is that the women themselves do not consider what they experienced to have been violence, and therefore had not thought it possible to report it to the police.

³ These figures do not indicate the general propensity to make a report to the police, but they do reveal the extent to which the women have reported the most recent violent experience depending on who the perpetrator was.

⁴ The internal dropout is included in the figures for the number of women applying for help. The figures showing the proportion of women satisfied/dissatisfied with the help received are based on the actual number of women stating that they sought help from each service respectively.

Violence, a question of health and living conditions?

Previous studies of violence/health have focused primarily on women seeking treatment. When the sample has been based on women seeking treatment, a correlation has been found between the incidence of physical and psychological disorders among the women and their having had experiences of violence.¹ Since women with experience of violence are more prone to seek treatment than women without it, it is difficult to generalise the results derived from clinical selections as being applicable to the female population as a whole.² However, even in studies in which a random selection of women has been questioned, correlations have been found between physical and sexual violence on the one hand and depression³ and gynaecological problems⁴ on the other, and between sexual violence and backache⁵.

Our questionnaire was focused on studying the extent of violence to women and the types of violent experience women have. It also opens possibilities of investigating what correlations may exist between violent experiences and health. The knowledge gained from earlier qualitative studies of the consequences of violence indicates that violence and health are connected, and that violence can be regarded as amounting to changes for the worse in the living conditions of the women subjected to it.⁶

Physical and psychological disorders and violent experiences

Women were asked in the questionnaire to *assess their state of health*, the response options being excellent, very good, good, fairly good, poor and very poor. Two questions followed probing more closely into the women's state of health. The first of these asked the women to assess whether they had suffered from any one or more of a number of listed *physical* conditions in the previous month and if so, whether they had suffered much or little as a result. The conditions listed were headaches, recurrent pain in other parts of the body, stomach trouble, numbness of arms/legs, palpitation of the heart, nausea or vomiting, dizziness, trembling of the hands, and heavy perspiration not following bodily exertion. The second of the two questions concerned *psychological* conditions in the previous month and whether the women had suffered much or little from them. These were over-exertion, impaired memory or impaired concentration, weakness or tiredness, sleeplessness, nervousness, irritability, depression, and finally a sense of "everything becoming too much" for them.

Women subjected to violence tend to suffer both more intensely and from a greater number of *physical* ailments than do women who do not report any violent

experiences. There is a correlation between experiencing violence and suffering from *psychological* disorders. Women who have been subjected to *threats* report suffering both more intensely and from more physical and psychological disorders than do women subjected to other types of violence.

All women

Nearly 80 per cent of the women stated their general health to be excellent, very good or good. In spite of this, what

emerges from the other more specific questions about health is that many of the women do suffer from some disorders.

About 60 per cent of the women suffer from headaches and nearly half from recurrent pain in other parts of the body. More than half the women suffer from weakness and nearly 40 per cent from sleeplessness. Depression afflicts 36 per cent, and 30 per cent of all women have suffered a sense of “everything becoming too much” for them.

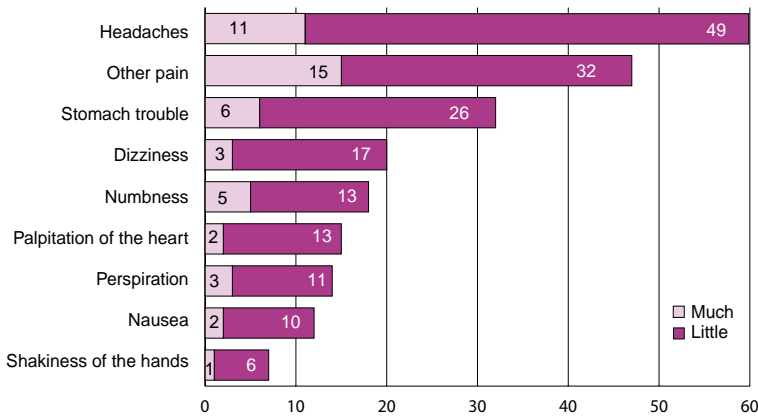


Fig 25. Physical disorders of women (% of all women, N=6 926).

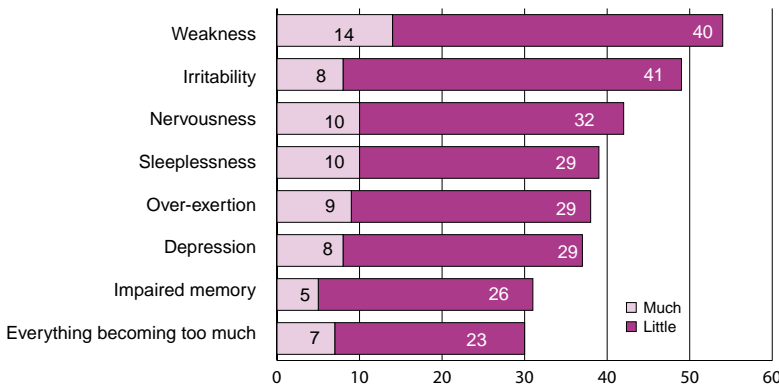


Fig 26. Psychological disorders of women (% of all women, N=6 926).

Physical disorders and violent experiences

Among women who have had experience of violence, the reporting of *physical disorders is generally slightly higher* than among those who have not. For example, women with experience of violence suffer more from bodily pain than women without such experience.

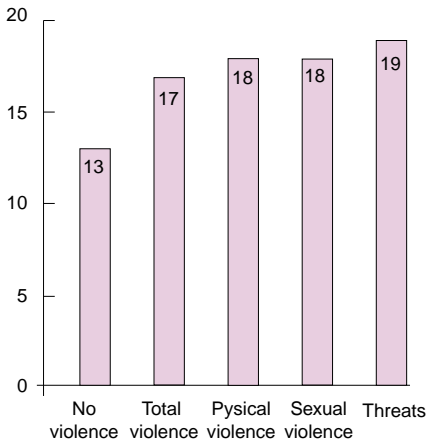


Fig 27. Pronounced bodily pain among women and type of violence to which they had been subjected (%).

Furthermore there is a *tendency* for women who have been subjected to violence to report *more kinds* of physical disorders than women who have not. There are no very great differences in the reporting of physical disorders between women who have been subjected to violence *in the last year* and those whose experience of violence came earlier. Women who have been subjected to threats report the most intense ailments and the most physical disorders. Their reporting is slightly higher throughout compared with the reporting by women subjected to physical and sexual violence.

Psychological disorders and violent experiences

There is a correlation between reports of violence and reports of psychological disorders. This applies to all the psychological disorders enumerated in the questionnaire. Here, as with physical ailments, women who have been subjected to *threats* report the greatest number and intensity of psychological disorders. It is twice as common for women who have been subjected to threats to suffer from much over-exertion and/or depression compared with women who have not reported any violent experiences.

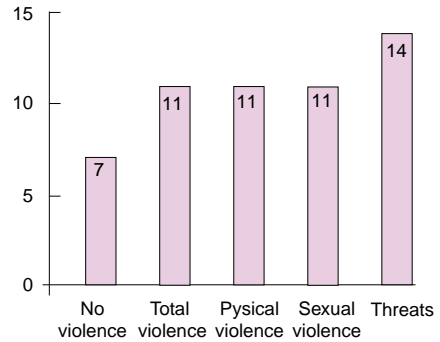


Fig 28. Pronounced overexertion among women and type of violence to which they had been subjected (%).

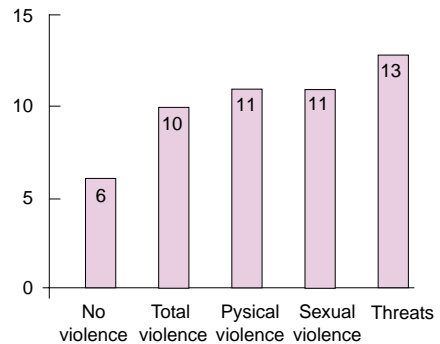


Fig 29. Pronounced depression among women and type of violence they had been subjected (%).

Women's perceptions of the effects of violence

In order to find out *how women themselves regard the relation between experience of violence and various symptoms* we asked those women who had been subjected to violence in what way they considered their experiences to have affected them.⁷

Thirteen response options were offered: fear, feelings of shame, feelings of guilt, anger or hatred, depression, tiredness and listlessness, poor self-esteem, sleeplessness and nightmares, difficulties in concentrating, difficulties in relationships with men, difficulties during gynaecological examinations, difficulties at work or with studies.

Violence is reported by 64 per cent of the women to have had some negative effect on them.

The women's responses indicate the most common reaction after being subjected to violence to be *anger or hatred*. This is stated as a consequence by 38 per cent of women. The next most common consequence is *fear*; 33 per cent of women having felt this. Almost as common a consequence of being subjected to violence is *poor self-esteem*, 30 per cent of women having marked this option. Slightly more than one woman in five state *difficulties in relationships with men* to be a result of being subjected to violence, and as many again report having suffered from *depression*.

Of women who have had experience of violence, 36 per cent have not stated any consequences of the violence.⁸

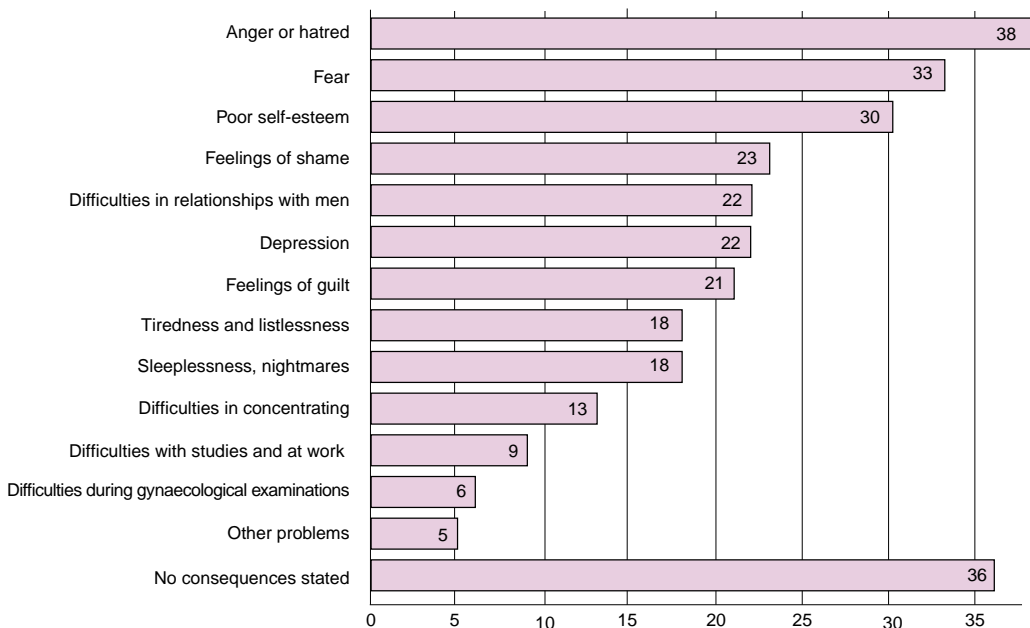


Fig 30. Women's assessment of the consequences of violence. All violence (% of respondents, non-responses not included).

The most negative consequences from threats

We have cross-tabulated the women's responses stating what they consider the consequences of the violence to have been with the type of violence to which they have been subjected.

If the women's responses are broken down by categories according to the type of violence they have experienced, it is apparent that women who have experienced *threats* report the most, and most intensely negative, consequences of violence. This applies not only to comparisons between violent experiences since the fifteenth birthday but also to those between the women's experiences of violence *in the last year*. The difference is particularly conspicuous when experiences of threats in the last year are scrutinised.

Anger or hatred is felt by 58 per cent of those who were threatened in the last year. Fear is felt by 50 per cent and 50 per cent have poor self-esteem. Of the women subjected to threats in the last year, 41 per cent report having suffered from depression while almost one woman in five, i.e. 17 per cent, states that she has experienced difficulties at work or

with studies. Four out of ten women state that they have had difficulties in relationships with men.

- Women who have been subjected to *threats* report the most, and the most intensely negative, experiences compared with women who have been subjected to physical or sexual violence.
- Four out of ten women who have been threatened *in the last year* report difficulties in relationships with men.
- Nearly one woman in five who has been *threatened in the last year* reports having experienced difficulties at work or with studies.

Summary and comments

Of the women who have been subjected to violence, 64 per cent consider that the violence has had negative consequences for them. When we compare the consequences reported by these women with the type of violence to which they have been subjected, we find that women who have experienced threats report the most, and the most intensely negative, consequences.



Fig 31. Consequences of having been subjected to threats in the last year (% of respondents, non-responses not included).

Contemplating and attempting suicide

The women were asked in the questionnaire whether they had ever attempted or contemplated suicide.

Of women who have *attempted* suicide, 72 per cent have been subjected to violence. Of women who have *contemplated* suicide, 64 per cent have suffered violence. Thus, there is a clear correlation between women's experiencing violence and their attempting suicide. Likewise there is a strong correlation between experiencing violence and contemplating suicide.

To have *contemplated* suicide is more than twice as common among women who have experienced violence at some point as among women who have not. Of women who have attempted suicide, 60 per cent have suffered sexual violence, 48 per cent physical violence and 42 per cent threats.

Among women who have experienced *violence in the last year*, attempted suicide is nearly four times as common as among women who did not report such experiences, viz eleven per cent compared with three per cent. Among women who have been subjected to *sexual violence* in the last year, it is approximately five times as common for a woman to have attempted suicide compared with women who do not report any violent experiences.

The relation between gender-related violence to women and contemplated and attempted suicide among them is a field of which we have essentially lacked knowledge up to now.

5 per cent of all respondents state that they have attempted suicide and 23 per cent state that they have contemplated suicide. Nearly three out of four women who have *attempted* suicide have been subjected to violence and nearly two out of three women who have *contemplated* suicide have been subjected to violence.

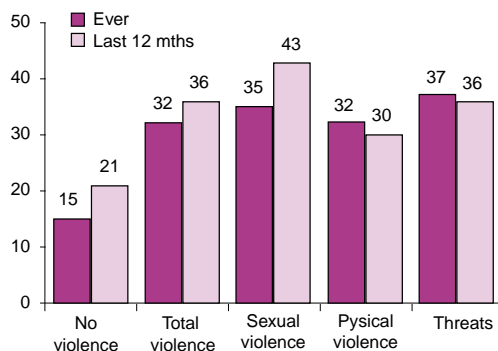


Fig 32. Contemplated suicide and type of violence (%).

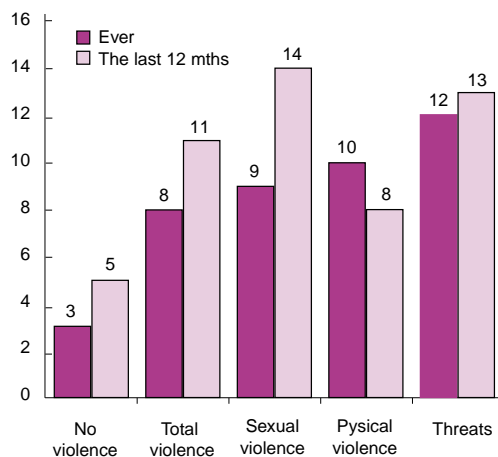


Fig 33. Attempted suicide and type of violence (%).

Violence and physical injury

In one of the questions, the women were asked to state whether they had sustained *physical injuries* as a result of physical violence or sexual abuse and, if so, whether they had sought treatment for their injuries. Women who had done so were also asked whether they had been admitted to hospital for such treatment.

A total of 873 women reported some form of physical injury, the most common being bruises and bodily aches/pains.

Medical treatment was sought by 225 women. The injuries stated by the women to have resulted from the violence inflicted on them were fairly serious. Of these women, 28 were admitted to hospital for

TYPE OF INJURY	NUMBER
Bruises, grazes	719
Wounds	205
Pulled muscle, rupture or dislocation of joint (s)	141
Fracture	40
Injuries to teeth	47
Miscarriage	25
Internal damage	25
Concussion	68
Bodily ache/pain	382
Other injuries	111

Table 8. Types of injury suffered by women (n=873).

treatment. Of those who did not seek treatment, 149 said that they ought to have done so, while 468 women said that they did not do so because their injuries were only minor.

Use of medication

In the questionnaire, the women were asked to state whether, *in the last month*, they had taken medication in order to sleep, calm their nerves or relieve depression. When the women's experiences of violence since their fifteenth birthday are scrutinised, it appears that treatment

with psychopharmacological drugs is reported by a somewhat larger proportion of women with experience of violence than of women without it. It is somewhat more common for women who have experienced *threats* to use medication than for other groups.

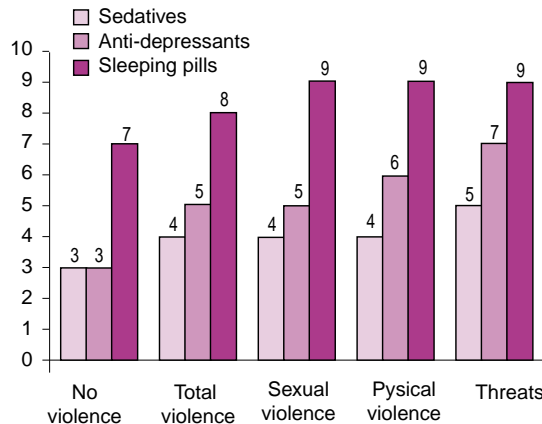


Fig 34. Use of medication and type of violence (%).

Violence during pregnancy

The questionnaire addressed enquiries about violence associated with pregnancy only to *women who reported that their present or former husband/cohabitant partner had at some time employed violence against them*. The number of pregnancies was not gone into. It is therefore impossible to use the responses from the questionnaire to calculate how common it is in Sweden for violence to women to occur during pregnancy.

Women subjected to violence by present or former husbands/cohabitant partners were asked in the questionnaire whether they had been pregnant by the man in question and, if so, whether they had been subjected to physical violence or sexual abuse while they were pregnant. They were also asked whether the man subjected them to threats during their pregnancy.

Violent former husband /cohabitant partner

A total of 534 of the women who had a violent former husband/cohabitant partner state that they have been pregnant by him.

Physical and sexual violence

Sixteen per cent of women were subjected to physical violence or sexual abuse by the former husband/cohabitant partner during pregnancy. Seven per cent were subjected to violence or sexual abuse for the first time during pregnancy. All told, 19 per cent of women had been subjected to physical or sexual violence before the child was one year old.

Threats

Nineteen per cent stated that they had been *threatened* by the husband/cohabitant partner during pregnancy. Eight per cent had been threatened for the first

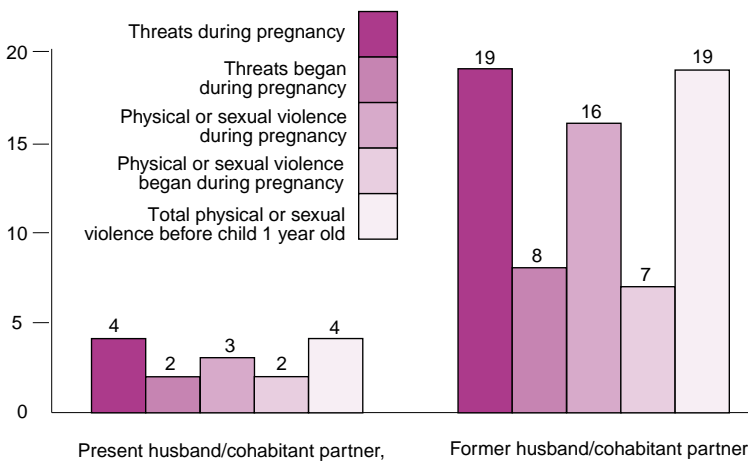


Fig 35. Threats or physical violence by present or former husband/cohabitant partner in connection with pregnancy (%).

time during pregnancy. Altogether nearly one woman in four had been threatened before the child was one year old.

Violent present husband /cohabitant partner

Of the women who report having been subjected to violence by their *present husband/cohabitant partner*, 382 state that they have been pregnant by him. Of these, four per cent state that they have been subjected to *threats* by the husband/cohabitant partner. Approximately half of these women state that the threats began while they were pregnant. Three per cent were subjected to *physical violence* or *sexual abuse* during pregnancy. Two women out of three state that the violence began during pregnancy. Four per cent of women in all report having been subjected to violence before the child was one year old.

Summary and comments

Despite the fact that nearly 80 per cent of the women describe their own state of health as excellent, very good or good, it turns out that physical and psychological disorders are fairly widespread. There is a *discrepancy* between the women's general depiction of their state of health on the one hand and, on the other, the specific and more detailed picture which emerges from their responses.

The women's responses show that there is a correlation between experience of violence and impaired physical and psychological health. Likewise, the use of psychopharmacological drugs is slightly more common among women with experience of violence. Of the various types of violence, *threats* and – in cases of contemplated and attempted

suicide – *sexual violence* appear to be the forms exhibiting the strongest correlation with impaired physical and psychological health. These correlations do not tell us anything about causal relations, however.

When the women were asked *how they themselves consider the violence has affected them*, they declare clearly that they have suffered negative effects in a variety of ways. Prominent among these are such negative emotions as anger, hatred, fear and depression.

A dualism emerges in the women's reporting of how their violent experiences have affected them. *Anger or hatred* is far the most common reaction, which indicates an attitude to their experiences in which the women do not blame themselves for being abused. Feelings of *guilt* and *shame*, for example, are reported by the women to a much less extent than feelings of anger or hatred. On the other hand a high level of *poor self-esteem* and *depression* resulting from the violence is reported, which suggests that the violence has a negative influence on the self-image of its victims. Slightly more than one woman in five who has been subjected to violence states that her experiences have resulted in difficulties in relationships with men.

The dualism manifested in the women's reporting of how violence has affected them can be interpreted to mean that women who have been subjected to violence do not consider themselves primarily as victims. However, the women's own estimation of the negative consequences of violence is that they are quite severe. Society's attitude towards gender-related violence may therefore be crucial to the way women subjected to violence interpret their experiences.

When the *various types of violence* are

scrutinised, it appears that experience of *threats* has particularly negative consequences. Not only do women subjected to threats report the greatest number and variety of negative consequences: they also report the highest level of physical and psychological disorders, the greatest use of psychopharmacological drugs, and a high level of contemplated and attempted suicide. Consequently, this study provides no evidence to support the view of threats as “only” threats, less serious than physical or sexual violence. Any such notion is contradicted both by the women’s own reports of their state of health and by their assessment of the consequences of the violence. On the contrary, cross-tabulation of the women’s responses with the type of violence to which they have been subjected shows threats to be a serious type of violence with severe consequences for its victims.

There are clear correlations between experiences of violence and *contemplated* and/or attempted suicide. The correlation is particularly strong between *attempted* suicide and subjection to *sexual violence* in the last year, and between attempted suicide and experience of *threats*. Overall, the number of attempted suicides is

almost three times as high among women who have had violent experiences as it is among women who do not.

Relatively few women *seek treatment* for the physical injuries caused by physical or sexual violence. The number of women admitted to hospital is remarkably low in proportion to the serious physical injuries for which women report having sought treatment. Only 28 women in the study report having been admitted to hospital because of the injuries resulting from violence. This may be compared with the 873 women who state that they suffered physical injuries in consequence of the violence to which they were subjected.

The responses to the questionnaire indicate *threats* during pregnancy by violent former husbands/cohabitant partners to be *four times as common* as by men in current violent relationships. The reports of former husbands’ violence during pregnancy match up well with corresponding data from Finland.⁹

As elsewhere in the reporting of violence, the figures show a great disparity between women’s reports of violence on the part of *present* husbands/cohabitant partners and *former* husbands/cohabitant partners respectively.

¹ Drossman et al 1995, Felitti 1991, Muellerman et al 1998, Dahl 1993.

² Felitti 1991.

³ Scholle et al 1998, Mullen 1988.

⁴ Plichta et al 1996.

⁵ Linton 1997.

⁶ Hamberg & Johansson 1999.

⁷ Not all women stating that they had had violent experiences (3 193) answered these questions. The number of respondents in this section was 2 364 women.

⁸ This does not mean that the violence did not have any consequences, only that the women did not mark any of the response options.

⁹ Heiskanen & Pispä 1998.

Sexual harassment

The concept of sexual harassment comes from labour legislation. The factor determining whether an act or course of conduct is considered to be sexual harassment under the terms of the Act Concerning Equality between Men and Women (*jämställdhetslagen*) is whether it happens in the place of employment or is related to the employment in such a manner that the employer can be held responsible for remedying the harassment. Behaviour which is considered to be sexual harassment *may* also be criminalised: sexual molestation for example, or more serious offences such as assault, sexual coercion or even rape. Other acts considered to be sexual harassment may be unspecified as offences under the terms of the Penal Code (i.e. not criminalised), but the employer will still be held responsible for remedying the relevant working conditions to ensure that the harassment ceases. The studies which have been made of the incidence of sexual harassment are limited to working life or educational environments. The figures yielded by these studies vary considerably.¹

Since behaviour constituting sexual harassment may be presumed to be common *outside the work environment* as well, it is important to ask questions about women's experiences of sexual harassment in situations unrelated to employment. We therefore asked the women about their experiences of sexual harassment by men with whom they do not have and have not had a sexual relationship, i.e. neighbours,

friends, colleagues and unknown men. Eight questions in all were asked about obscene telephone calls, indecent exposure, unwelcome comments, importunate attentions, uncomfortable proximity, sexually threatening behaviour, stalking, and threats of impaired career prospects if sexual favours are refused.

It should be noted that some of the grosser forms of sexual harassment are *excluded* from the questions.² The findings with regard to sexual harassment would probably have been *higher* if these grosser actions had been included as well.

As with the questions relating to physical violence within relationships, we have striven to be as concrete as possible in wording the questions relating to sexual harassment. We asked about eight fairly specific incidents which the respondent may have felt to be uncomfortable or threatening, see question 24 of the questionnaire, Appendix 1. Here too we were striving to penetrate beyond any possible minimising or normalising of sexual harassment by the women concerned. The concrete wording of the questions makes it possible to circumvent the resistance which a woman might otherwise feel against defining the situation as sexual harassment and the man in question as guilty of that offence.

The aggregate experience of sexual harassment

- A total of 56 per cent of women have been subjected to sexual harassment.
- 16 per cent have been so subjected *in the last year*.

One woman in four has experienced uneasiness at some time through intrusive physical proximity on the part of a man. More than one woman in four has been made to feel ill at ease by a man's comments on her body or private life, or by his making sexual allusions. Not quite one woman in five states that she has felt uneasy because a man asked her out several times and did not take no for an answer. Sixteen per cent of women report having been subjected to sexual harassment *in the last year*.

Who are the victims?

Younger women are the most liable to be sexually harassed: almost two thirds of women aged 18-24 and 25-34 have suffered sexual harassment. Nearly four out of ten women aged 18-24 have been sexually harassed *in the last year*. Students, irrespective of age, are the group most subject to sexual harassment. Every third female student has been sexually harassed *in the last year*. Nearly two thirds of students all told have experienced sexual harassment. Of women who have completed university education but do not have a degree, seven out of ten have been sexually harassed.

Age

The reporting of sexual harassment differs considerably between the age groups, both with respect to experiences *in the last year* and as regards overall experience of sexual harassment. Young women aged 18 to 24 are the group most subject to sexual harassment; 37 per cent of women of that age range state that they have been sexually harassed *in the last year*. Slightly more than one woman in five aged 25 to 34 reports sexual harassment in the last year, while seven per cent of women aged 55 to 64 had such experiences in the same period.

In total, i.e. in terms of aggregate experience of sexual harassment after the age of fifteen, there is no difference between the youngest age group and women aged 25-34. Approximately 64 per cent of the women in these two age groups report experiences of sexual harassment. The corresponding figure for women aged 55-64 is 40 per cent.

Occupation

When we scrutinise the women's occupations we find that it is *students* who report the most sexual harassment. All in all 65 per cent, or nearly two thirds, of the women in this group have been sexually harassed, and one third of female students have suffered this *in the last year*.

Of gainfully employed women, 13 per cent report sexual harassment *in the last year*. In total, 58 per cent of the gainfully employed women have been sexually harassed.

Education

As regards education, women who have completed *university education but do not have a degree* report the *highest* level of sexual harassment. One woman in four in this group, i.e. 26 per cent, has been sexually harassed *in the last year*, and altogether 71 per cent of university-educated women without a degree have had experience of sexual harassment. Women *with a*

university degree also report a high level of such experiences, a total of 65 per cent of the group having been sexually harassed. However, compared with the group of university-educated women without a degree, women with a degree report a considerably lower level of sexual harassment, i.e. only 14 per cent, in terms of incidents *in the last year*.

Of women whose education did not proceed beyond compulsory schooling, eleven per cent have been sexually harassed *in the last year*. In total, 40 per cent of women who have completed compulsory schooling have been sexually harassed.

Income

Reporting of sexual harassment differs between income groups: there seems to be a correlation between income and experiences of sexual harassment. When asked about experiences of sexual harassment after the age of fifteen, *women with the highest incomes have been subjected to them more than those with the lowest*: 69 per cent of women earning more than SEK 20 000 a month after tax have been sexually harassed, whereas for women earning SEK 15 000 – 20 000 a month after tax, the figure is 61 per cent. The corresponding figure for women earning up to SEK 10 000 is 53 per cent.

As regards experiences of sexual harassment *in the last year*, the positions are reversed: women with low incomes are harassed *more* than women with higher incomes. Nearly one woman in four, i.e. 24 per cent, earning less than SEK 5 000 a month after tax has been sexually harassed *in the last year*. The corresponding figure for women earning more than SEK 20 000 a month after tax is twelve per cent.

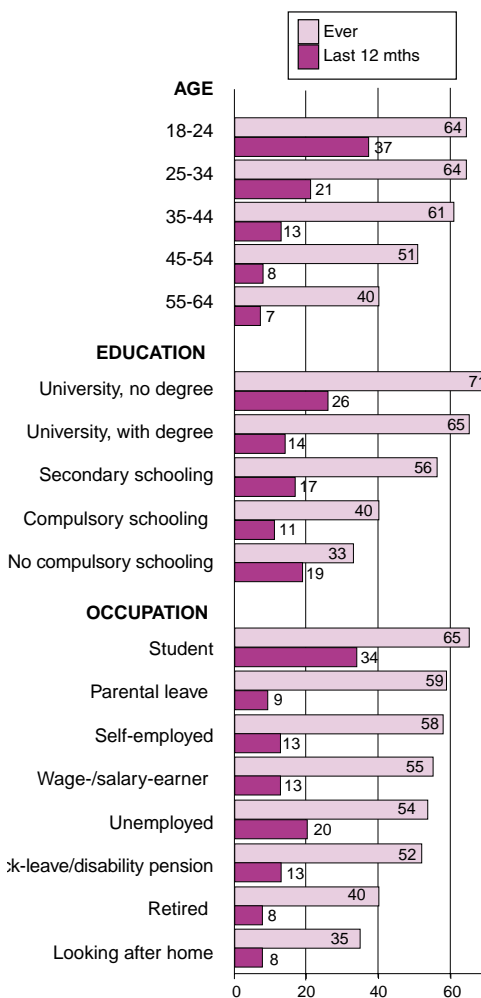


Fig 36. Women subjected to harassment, by women's background variables (%).

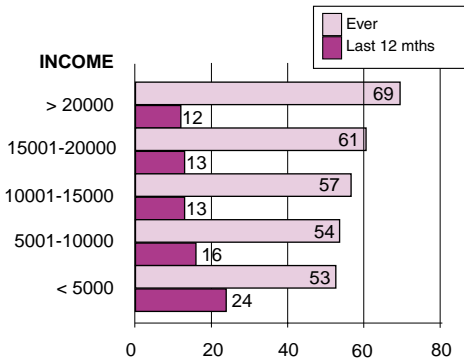


Fig 37. Women subjected to harassment, by women's income (%).

Ethnicity

Women born in African countries report the highest level of harassment *in the last year*. Of women in this group, 42 per cent were sexually harassed during this period.

As regards women's experiences of sexual harassment after the age of fifteen, women born in North America report the highest level of incidents at 91 per cent. However, the groups of women born abroad are small and the percentage of responses from them was low. It is therefore hard to draw reliable conclusions from the responses of these groups.

Who are the perpetrators?

In most cases of sexual harassment, the perpetrator is a man whom the woman *does not know*; 69 per cent of the women harassed were unacquainted with the man concerned. In total, one woman in five, i.e. 21 per cent, *of women who have been sexually harassed* was subjected to the experience by work colleagues/fellow-students or fellow-pupils. Friends, acquaintances/neighbours were reported to be the perpetrators in 27 per cent of cases.

Fourteen per cent of students who have been harassed report a superior/supervisor/teacher to have harassed them sexually while 26 per cent state that a fellow-student or fellow-pupil did so. Of salary- or wage-earners, twelve per cent were harassed by a superior and 22 per cent by a colleague.

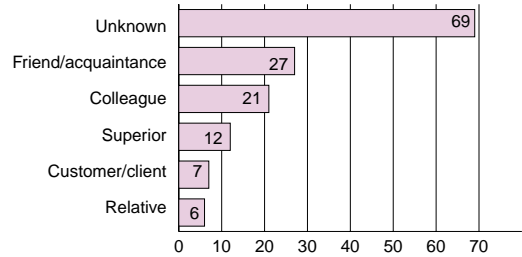


Fig 38. Who are the perpetrators? (% of harassed women, N=3 862)

Summary and comments

More than half of Swedish women have been sexually harassed. Younger women and students are the ones most at risk. Of female students, one in three has been sexually harassed *in the last year*. The perpetrators can be either men with whom the woman is unacquainted or men known to her, such as friends, work colleagues or superiors.

There are differences in the total reporting of sexual harassment and the reporting of harassment in the last year, and these seem to be associated with education and income level. The lower the education and income, the more harassment was suffered *in the last year*, which contrasts with the considerably higher level of incidents in the total perspective reported by women of higher education and income. These correlations are not related to age. One interpretation is that women in the latter

groups are in a position which enables them to acquire knowledge and awareness with regard to sexual harassment, and this may result both in the possibility of action to put a stop to harassment and in realistic reporting, whereas the reverse situation may prevail for women less favourably situated in this respect. Another interpretation is that the public debate about gender equality produces different normative effects on these groups, which may result in under-reporting of harassment in the last year.

Our discussion of the continuum concept in an earlier chapter may be of importance when interpreting and attempting to

understand women's conditions of life in terms of the incidence of sexual harassment. Along the scale hypothesised in the continuum concept, with serious crimes of violence at one end and controlling behaviour at the other, there is a slot for sexual harassment.

In this way it becomes possible to observe the linkages between the various forms in which control over women is exercised, which should be of great relevance in the context of the extent of violence and the high level of reported experiences of both controlling behaviour and sexual harassment.

¹ According to a study made by the National Swedish Police Board (*Rikspolisstyrelsen*) of female civilian employees in police service (2 700 women were included in the study), 20 per cent of women stated that they had experienced sexual harassment in the last three years. Press meddelande 990202 – undersökning om sexuella trakasserier, <http://www.police.se/gemensam/rps/press/sestrxk.htm>. A study made at Uppsala University showed that twelve per cent of the female students had been subjected to sexual harassment, Tydén 1999.

² Some of the acts are criminalised under the terms of the Penal Code (molestation or unlawful threats) while other forms of behaviour can be very uncomfortable or intimidating to a woman even though not criminalised. Questions about grosser forms of behaviour are to be found in other sections of the questionnaire and are then categorised as sexual violence.

Myths about violence?

As well as the commonly accepted picture of violence towards women as a weapon used only by men of the lower social groups, men who abuse alcohol or men who are unemployed, there is another stereotype. This is the violent “male immigrant”, the man who practises violence as a result of his patriarchal cultural heritage. It is assumed that this cultural heritage, in contradistinction to the Swedish culture – which is interpreted as being characterised by equality – leads the man to commit violence.¹ There is also a conception of the abused woman as being “special”: she experienced abuse as a child, for example, which makes her “seek out” violent men after reaching adulthood.

In the questionnaire we enquired about the respondent’s education, her income after tax, her occupation and her own and her parents’ country of birth. We also asked for her present husband’s/cohabitant partner’s country of birth, his parents’ countries of birth, his alcohol and drug habits and his education. Women who reported having had a *violent* former

husband or cohabitant partner were asked about his country of birth, his parents’ countries of birth and his level of education and alcohol habits.

Immigrants

The number of women of foreign background who responded to the questionnaire was relatively low. The data therefore had to be weighted. In terms of exposure to violence and country of birth, a small difference is observable in the material as regards reporting by women born in the Nordic countries.² These show a slightly higher level of reporting of all experiences of violence since the age of fifteen. The differences are small, however.

Of men who according to women’s responses have employed violence towards their current wife/cohabitant partner, several of the groups are too small to enable any conclusions to be drawn.³ Where comparisons are possible, the differences are small. The exception is women whose present husband/cohabitant partner was born in the Nordic countries or Asia. These report a higher level of violent experiences at the hands of their present husband/cohabitant partner, i.e. 21 per cent and 25 per cent respectively, than the average (eleven per cent) for the whole group of women subjected to violence by their present husband/cohabitant partner.

	Yes		No	
	Number	%	Number	%
Sweden	407	9.6	3 665	86.4
Nordic countries	34	20.8	124	76.2
Europe	29	13.6	173	81.4
Africa	3	24.0	8	60.8
Asia	23	25.3	59	64.0
North America	-	-	13	100.0
Latin America	2	15.1	8	60.3
Australia	1	33.3	2	66.7

Table 9. Women subjected to violence by present husband/cohabitant partner, by *his country of birth* (row per cent, calculated for women in present relationships, non-responses ignored).

• Eight out of ten women subjected to violence in their present relationship are married to or cohabiting with a man who was born in Sweden

Of women subjected to violence by their present husband/cohabitant partner, 82 per cent have a husband/cohabitant partner born in Sweden. Of women stating that a former husband/cohabitant partner subjected them to violence, 72 per cent were married to/cohabiting with a man born in Sweden. Of women with a former husband/cohabitant partner who inflicted violence upon them, seven per cent were married to/cohabiting with a man from the Nordic countries, seven per cent to/with a man born in Europe, two per cent to/with a man born in Asia and two per cent to/with a man born in Africa. Seven per cent of the women did not respond to this question.

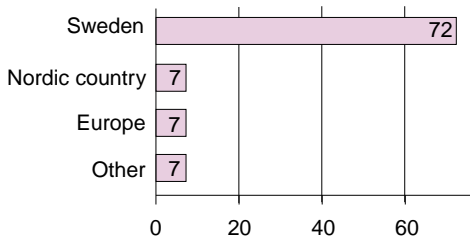


Fig 39. Women subjected to violence by former husband/cohabitant partner, by the man's country of birth (% of women with a violent former husband/cohabitant partner, N=970).

Social classes

As regards women's reporting of violence, some differences can be detected pertaining to the education and income of *the women*. As regards education, women with university education but no degree show the highest total level of violence reported (53 per cent compared with an average of 46 per cent for all women subjected to violence). Slight differences in exposure to violence can also be observed with respect to *the women's* income. Women with the highest and lowest level of income respectively report the highest total level of violence.

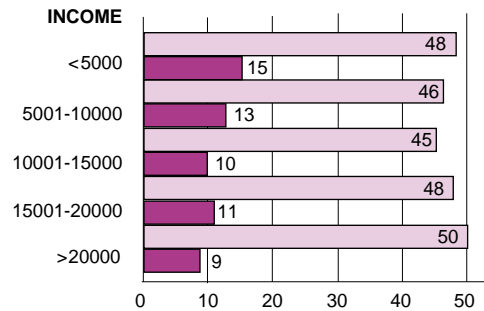
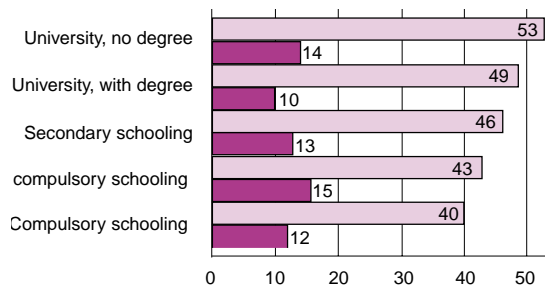


Fig 40. Total women subjected to violence, by women's income (%).

Fig 41. Total women subjected to violence, by women's education (%).



Two thirds of women subjected to violence by their *present husband/cohabitant partner* state that the man is a wage- or salary-earner. Regarding the *man's education*, almost one fourth, i.e. 23 per cent, of women who have been subjected to violence by their present husband/cohabitant partner state that the man in question has a university education with a degree.

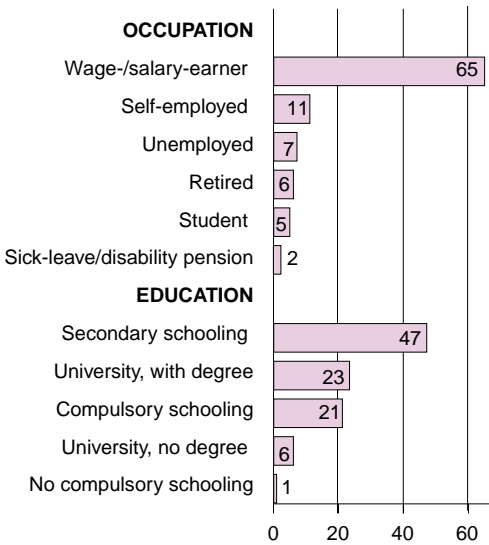


Fig 42. Women subjected to violence at some point by present husband/cohabitant partner, by the man's occupation and education (% of women with a violent present husband/cohabitant partner, N=499)

If we compare the men who – according to the women's reports – have subjected the woman to violence during their marriage/cohabitation with those who have not, there are no real differences in terms of educational level.

Alcohol

The women were asked to state how often they drink alcohol, how often their husbands/cohabitant partners (if any) do so, and, if they have had a husband/cohabitant partner who was violent to them, how often he consumed alcohol. The questions are thus linked to alcohol habits, not to the committing of violence; that is to say, we did not ask questions to elicit whether the man was drunk when he was violent.

We found no differences of subjection to violence associated with women's alcohol consumption.

Four out of five women who have been subjected to violence by their present husband/cohabitant partner belong to the category of those stating that the man concerned consumes alcohol 1-2 times a week or less. Consequently, the majority, i.e. 83 per cent, of those men who have inflicted violence on their current wife/cohabitant partner consume alcohol 1-2 times a week or less.

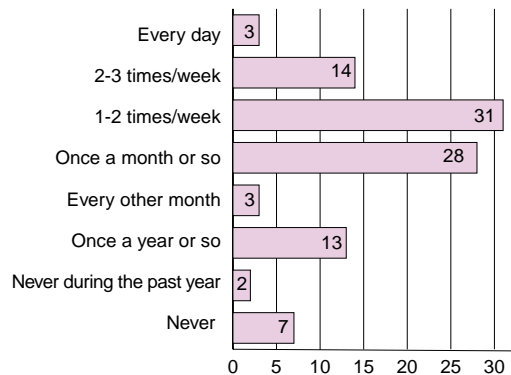


Fig 43. Women subjected to violence by present husband/cohabitant partner and the man's alcohol consumption (% of women subjected to violence, N=499).

In cases where the woman has stated that her husband/cohabitant partner drinks more frequently than 1-2 times a week, and in cases where the man had not consumed alcohol during the past year, the level of violence reported is slightly higher compared with the average for the women in the group as a whole.

Previous experience of violence

We asked the women two questions about their experience of violence prior to their fifteenth birthday. One of these concerned *physical violence* by a family member, an acquaintance or some other man unknown to the woman, while the other concerned *sexual violence* by a man.

Thirtyone per cent of the women have been subjected to violence by an adult before their fifteenth birthday (the latter group may include women who have committed violence). Twenty per cent of all women have had experience of sexual violence by a man (including sexually threatening behaviour) by the time of their fifteenth birthday.

Of women with experience of sexual violence prior to their fifteenth birthday, 57 per cent reported having also been subjected to sexual violence after turning fifteen. Of women who did not have such experiences before their fifteenth birthday, 28 per cent reported having been subjected to them since. Thus there is a correlation between experience of sexual violence before the age of fifteen and the reporting of such experience later on in life as well.

Sexual violence before turning fifteen			
	Yes	No	
Sexual violence since turning fifteen	Yes	57.2	27.5
	No	42.8	72.5
	Total	100%	100%
	N =	1 416	5 510

Table 10. Women subjected to sexual violence before and after their fifteenth birthday.

Summary and comments

The results of the study indicate that violence is widespread in all groups of women. They show that Swedish men are responsible for 82 per cent of the violence inflicted upon women in current marriages/cohabiting relationships. This calls into question the stereotypes of the “violent” immigrant male and the “equal” Swedish male.

As regards the women, it is observable that highly educated women report a slightly higher level of violent experiences, as also do those women with the highest incomes. As far as men’s education is concerned, there are no substantial differences in terms of his committing or not committing violence on his present wife/cohabitant partner.

Regarding the women’s alcohol habits, there are no differences between women who report experiences of violence and those who do not. Nor can the notion of the violent man as an alcoholic be substantiated. Of those women who report having been subjected to violence by their present husband/cohabitant partner, four out of five state that the man concerned drinks alcohol once or twice a week or less.

Consequently the stereotype idea that it is principally men of the lower social classes and/or with drinking problems who commit violence on women does not square with the results of the study.

Women who reported having had experience of sexual violence before the age of fifteen report a higher degree of violence since their fifteenth birthday. There is accordingly a correlation between these experiences. However, the connection is not causal.

The picture emerging from this study is one in which violence against women is widespread, frequent and employed in private as well as in public. The men who employ it are partners, friends, acquaintances, colleagues and unknown men. In the light of these facts, it would be somewhat surprising if women did not have experience of violence prior to the age of fifteen as well. Women are born

into a society where violence to women is a common feature in all spheres and stages of life. We have no reason to believe that violence begins, say, at the fifteenth birthday or any other particular age. One interpretation of the links subsisting between the reporting of sexually violent experiences before and after the fifteenth birthday is that when women designate later experiences of violence as having actually been violence, this also colours their understanding of earlier experiences, in the same way as the earlier experiences may colour the later.

Our results show that the question mark we used in the heading of this section can be deleted. The notion that men commit violence against a particular type of woman, and that most of these men are immigrants, alcohol abusers or ill-educated is a myth.

¹ There are distinct tendencies in the Swedish debate to portray foreign cultures as patriarchal, *in contrast to* the Swedish culture. Whereas violence on the part of Swedish men is explained in terms of individual and/or social factors such as a difficult childhood, unemployment, drug abuse or other social problems, “foreign cultures” are singled out as the reason why men of foreign origin resort to violence.

² “Nordic countries” does not include Sweden.

³ Three men were born in Australia and eleven in Africa.

Summary and comments

Men's violence against women: widespread, frequent and happening now

The results of the prevalence study illustrate that violence against women is far from being a marginal problem. Almost every other woman has experienced violence on the part of a man at some point since her fifteenth birthday. The women concerned also report repeated violence: e.g. one woman in every four subjected to violence by a former husband/cohabitant partner reports it as systematic. Nor is the violence remote either: one woman in four experiencing it did so in the last year. Violence starts early too. Almost one woman in three has experienced it before the age of fifteen.

The knowledge which this study has afforded us about the extent and character of gender-related violence must have an impact on our understanding of violence. If nearly fifty per cent of women in Sweden have been subjected to violence since their fifteenth birthday – and close to one woman in three before that – and if such a large proportion of women report numerous experiences of violence and such a large proportion of these experiences are recent, as this study has shown, this means that violence is a widespread, frequent and topical phenomenon. This contradicts the notion that it is only a few men who practise violence on women. Any measures taken to stop the violence, if they are to be successful, must rest upon a *new understanding* in which knowledge about the role of violence in the life of women and men is linked to their everyday lives.

Violence outside sexual relationships – no free zones

Our study also shows that the previous focus on the so-called partner violence to which women are subjected constitutes *too narrow a perspective*. It is certainly true that much violence is inflicted on women by their partners, in the women's own homes. At the same time, one woman in three has been subjected to violence outside a sexual relationship. It is *sexual violence* that seems to be particularly prevalent outside partner relationships. Thirteen per cent of *all* women report experiences of *gross* sexual assaults – rape, attempted rape, sexual coercion, sexual exploitation or attempted sexual exploitation by a man outside a sexual relationship. The violence is committed in the woman's home, in indoor and outdoor public places and at women's places of work. The results seem to show that there are no free zones for women.

Violence is everywhere. Our results highlight the need for awareness of all the violence – especially the sexual violence – to which women are subjected by the men around them, by friends, acquaintances, colleagues and neighbours.

Sexual harassment – part of the violence in women’s everyday life

The results of the study show sexual harassment to be widespread. More than half the women in Sweden have been sexually harassed. Nearly two out of three women aged 18-24 and 25-35 have been subjected to sexual harassment. Universities and colleges seem to be a “high-risk” environment; nearly two out of three female students have been sexually harassed. Of women with university education but *no degree*, 71 per cent have been sexually harassed. The perpetrator in 14 per cent of cases of harassment of female students was a superior/supervisor/teacher, and in 26 per cent of cases he was another student or a colleague. Of wage- or salary-earners, twelve per cent were harassed by a superior while 22 per cent were harassed by a colleague.

Sexual harassment as we have defined it, which includes harassment not connected with working life, slots in along the scale envisaged in the continuum concept, in which gross crimes of violence are placed at one end of the scale and controlling behaviour at the other. In this way sexual harassment can also be included among the diverse mechanisms for exercising power and control over women.

The concept of continuum make it possible to view as a *connected whole* the various forms in which violence, harassment and other kinds of control over women manifest themselves. The extent of violence against women (almost fifty per cent of all women have experienced violence), the distribution of its perpetrators (partners, friends and acquaintances as well as unknown men) and the places at which violence is practised (in women’s homes, in public places and at work) indicate that women’s experiences must be regarded as a *connected whole*, illuminating the conditions in which they live. From this point of view, the widespread incidence of sexual harassment is yet another manifestation of vulnerability and a life-situation, not infrequently linked to the working environment, in which violence forms one of the conditions of women’s lives and everyday experience.

“Mere” threats

The continuum concept tries to break away from the idea that there are well-defined boundaries and hierarchies separating different kinds of violence, with threats, for example, being considered as distinct from and

less serious than so-called actual physical violence. The intention is not to deny the seriousness of so-called gross violence but to show the seriousness of incidents which might otherwise be considered less severe while also bringing to view the links that exist between the various forms of violence.

The results of our study suggest there is a link between controlling behaviour by the male and his subjecting the female to violence, including threats. There is also a clear link between threats on the one hand and the exercise of physical and sexual violence on the other. Linking women's own reporting of the consequences of violence to experiences of being threatened shows that threats are a serious matter. Women who have been subjected to threats report more negative consequences of the violence, and in addition they report more physical and psychological disorders than women who have been subjected to physical or sexual violence. Women with experience of threats and women with experience of sexual violence show the highest reporting rates for contemplated and attempted suicide.

Women's own understanding of their experiences shows that one cannot speak of "mere" threats: on the contrary, threats appear to be a severe form of violence. When we speak of "psychological violence", what this may involve is a combination of threats and controlling behaviour on the part of the man - a type of violence which women who have suffered it sometimes describe as "the worst kind". This perspective on the problem may provide a new angle of approach for studies of "psychological violence", a phenomenon which has not previously been investigated in depth. The lack of research in this area is probably due to the fact that the phenomenon appears diffuse and difficult to pin down.

Physical violence within sexual relationships – sexual violence outside sexual relationships?

Our study has highlighted differences between women's reports of violence *within* and *outside* sexual relationships respectively. *Physical violence* appears to be a particularly common feature in partner relationships, whereas *sexual violence* is the most common type of violence employed by men outside partner relationships.

These differences may reflect the different manifestations of violence, but a supplementary interpretation might be that they express the kind of relationship the woman has with the man, whether it is sexual or not, and that this colours her interpretation of her experiences.¹ The public debate has revolved around physical violence within partner relationships and this may be why it is easier for women to report such experiences rather than experiences of sexual violence. Moreover, it has been shown that one of the

factors governing young people's view of rape is the relationship between the girl and the boy, inasmuch as an established sexual relationship between them is a circumstance which helps to diminish or completely obscure the issue of whether the boy has committed sexual acts upon the girl against her will.² The analysis of young people's reinterpretations of sexual violence committed within sexual relationships offers a possible interpretative perspective on the differences in women's reporting in our material. That is to say, perhaps adult women, just like younger people, reinterpret sexual abuse when it occurs within sexual relationships.

There are differences of reporting associated with age which show that younger women are at greater risk of violence than older women, both outside relationships and on the part of boyfriends. Older women (aged 45-54 and 55-64) report a markedly lower level of violence outside partner relationships. Regarding violence perpetrated by former or current husbands/cohabitant partners, the levels reported do not differ between age groups. Perhaps the wide difference between younger and older women in their reporting of violent experiences *outside* relationships reflects the view prevalent in our culture that younger women are more attractive. In this perspective, the low level of reporting by older women may be explained in terms of their experiences of this kind of violence dating further back in time. We shall therefore leave open the possibility that there may have been under-reporting in respect of this group.



Fig 44. Percentage of women who have or have had a violent husband/cohabitant partner and state that they have children.

The violence that vanished

About half of the women who stated that they had been subjected to violence by a man since their fifteenth birthday did not respond to the questions relating to “the most recent violent incident”. Of those who did respond to this section of the questionnaire, only 15 per cent had reported the most recent violent incident to the police. The reporting of *sexual violence* is particularly low. When we asked women why they did not report the most recent violent incident, more than half of them replied that they thought it was too trivial to report. Women themselves thus seem to play down and minimise their experiences of violence. When we consider the substantial difference between women’s reports of the children’s situation in current and terminated violent relationships respectively, it may be that even the violence inflicted on children may be minimised. Perhaps the women concerned cannot bear to “see” the violence?³

Of the few abused women who do seek assistance, the majority approach the health and medical - mainly psychiatric- services rather than the police. It appears that among the women who sought treatment for physical injuries, the injuries involved were relatively severe. It may be that in the same way, women who sought psychiatric treatment did not do so until serious mental health problems presented themselves. Viewed from this perspective, it is only when the consequences of violence become serious that the women concerned ask for help. Might one interpretative perspective on what amounts to a depreciation and minimising of violence be the one represented by the common attitude of society, viz that “mere threats” are too trivial to really count? Could it also be that the normative pressures of gender equality policy cause women to play down and minimise experiences that do not fit in with the norm of an equal relationship?

Better and better day by day?

The women’s reports indicate terminated relationships to be considerably more violent than current ones. The reporting of violence committed by current husbands/cohabitant partners is considerably lower than that of violence by former ones. This difference forms a *pattern* throughout the women’s responses, applying to the reporting both of controlling behaviour and of violence during pregnancy. The same applies to the children: according to the women’s responses, it is four times as common for a violent former husband/cohabitant partner to have committed violence on the woman’s children as it is for a violent present husband/cohabitant partner to do so. On the whole, a much more favourable picture is painted of current relationships compared with relationships that the women have terminated.

The difference between “then and now” can give rise to various interpretations. One way of understanding the lower level of reported violence and controlling behaviour within current relationships is that current relationships are more equal than terminated relationships and that in the long run, men who control women will eventually be left by them. Such an interpretation means that violence should generally become less prevalent in course of time. No such development is evidenced by other statistics on violence towards women, nor has it been borne out by charitable organisations or professional workers in the field of violence to women.

In the light of our earlier discussion of violence as a continuum, the dynamics of violence and the normalisation process, in the course of which we drew attention to the way in which boundaries are shifted and actions merge into one another, it is pertinent to point to the possible interpretation that the woman does *not* understand the violence which occurs within her

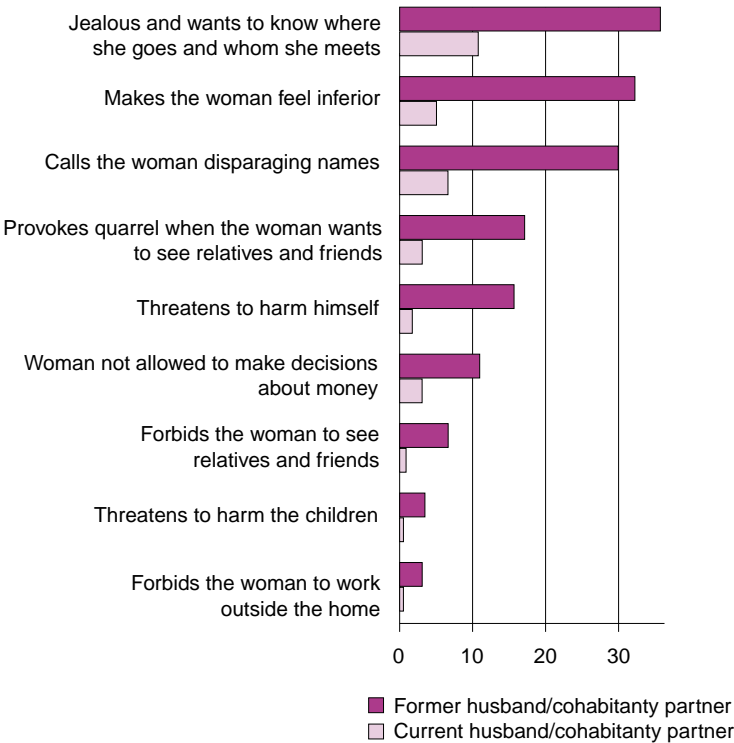


Fig 45. Controlling behaviour by present and former husband/cohabitant partner respectively (%).

current relationship and the controlling behaviour to which she is subjected by her current partner as *actually being* violence or controlling behaviour, which thus can result in under-reporting by the woman of the treatment to which she has been subjected.

In interviews with women who have left violent men, an important difference appears in the women's retrospective understanding of the violence compared with the way they regarded the man's actions while they were still *in* the relationship with the man and *in* the violent situation. It is only when the woman is *out* of both the relationship and the violence that she can fully put words to her experiences as actually constituting violence. One prerequisite which has to be met to enable the woman to interpret the man's violent actions as amounting to actual violence is that she should no longer normalise these actions and no longer internalise his picture of her as "the problem".⁴

The "de-normalisation process" is a social process which requires the woman's isolation to have been broken and the man to be no longer controlling her. It also requires her to be no longer at risk of more violence, i.e. to be "out" of the relationship. Paradoxically, as long as women are *in* the relationship and *in* the violent situation, one of the adaptive strategies which

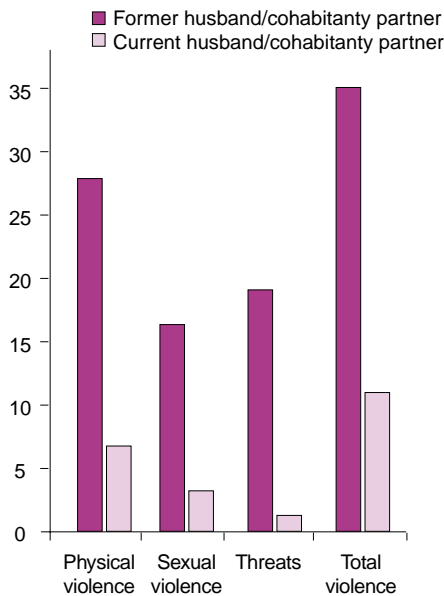


Fig 46. Types of violence in present and former marriage/cohabitant relationship respectively (%).

they use in order to avoid triggering the violence may entail their being unable to interpret and verbalise these acts as violence.

Apart from the difficulties of naming violence as violence, the woman's experience of being subjected to violence by her husband/cohabitant partner conflicts with strong normative conceptions of what a modern Swedish heterosexual partner relationship is supposed to be like. In a culture whose official message is that equality shall prevail between the sexes, it may be presumed that both men and women will develop a propensity to interpret their lives in conformity with this norm. In other words the Swedish self-image, and Sweden's very strong tradition as "the most equal country in the world", may set their impress on how women view and interpret their experiences of life. Gender equality can here be seen as a *discursive truth*, a discourse that functions as a standard for the interpretation of social life.⁵ The normative character of the Swedish equality ideology may mean as far as women are concerned that they shrink from interpretations of their partners that deviate from the ideal of an equal relationship. From this perspective, the contrasting of the previous partner as a controlling and abusive figure compared with the present partner as an equal can be interpreted as a device for maintaining the women's image of themselves as equal. In this way the woman's own interpretation of her life-situation is brought into harmony with the discursive imperative that women and men ought to have relationships built on gender equality and that women should leave men who abuse them.

More alike than unlike? A comparison with the Finnish study

In 1997, a prevalence study of men's violence against women was carried out in Finland. The Swedish questionnaire was designed so as to facilitate comparison between the studies.⁶

Comparison of the Swedish and Finnish results shows that 46 per cent of the Swedish women report having been subjected to violence by a man since their fifteenth birthday while the corresponding figure in the Finnish study is 40 per cent. If experience of violence in different relationships is compared, it is found that Swedish women report less violence committed by husbands/cohabitant partners, whether former or current, but a higher level of violence by other men.

One in five women in Finland reports violence on the part of a present husband/cohabitant partner compared with one in ten in Sweden. Half the Finnish women with a former husband/partner report having been subjected to violence by him, compared with 35 per cent in Sweden. At the same time it should be noted that *the total reporting of violence is higher in Sweden than*

in Finland, at 46 per cent of the Swedish women compared with 40 per cent of the Finnish. It is violence by men who are *not* and have not been the woman's husband/cohabitant partner that is higher for Swedish women, 35 per cent of them having had experience of violence outside a husband/cohabitant partner relationship. In the Finnish study, 24 per cent of the women reported having had such experience.

A comparison also reveals that the Swedish women report more *sexual violence* outside husband/cohabitant partner relationships than do the Finnish women: 30 per cent of Swedish women have experienced such violence compared with 17 per cent of women in the Finnish study. On the other hand the Finnish women report more *physical violence* and threats by husbands/cohabitant partners (present or former) than do the Swedish women. In current marriages/cohabitant relationships, 20 per cent of Finnish women report physical violence compared with seven per cent of Swedish. In former marriages/cohabitant relationships, 45 per cent of Finnish women report physical violence compared with 28 per cent of Swedish.

One factor common to both studies is that *physical violence* by both present and former husbands/cohabitant partners is the kind of violence most frequently reported by the women. As regards other men, *sexual violence* is the type most frequently reported by both Swedish and Finnish women. The reporting of sexual harassment is similar in both studies at 52 per cent of Finnish and 56 per cent of Swedish women respectively. The difference in the reporting of violence prior to age fifteen, at 31 per cent for Swedish women and 29 per cent for Finnish, is insignificant.

The results of the two studies show that violence against women is widespread in both Sweden and Finland. However, whereas the Finnish women report more violence within marriage/cohabitant relationships, both

	Total violence		Violence by unknown or boyfriend		Violence by present husband/cohab		Violence by former husband/cohab		Violence before age fifteen	
	Sw	Fi	Sw	Fi	Sw	Fi	Sw	Fi	Sw	Fi
All violence	46	40	35	24	11	22	35	50	31	29
Physical violence	25	30	13	10	7	20	28	45	18	21
Sexual violence	34	—	30	17	3	6	16	19	20	16
Threats	18	—	12	11	1	9	19	34	—	—

Table 11. Comparison between the Finnish and Swedish prevalence studies of violence against women, by relationship and type of violence (%).

present and past, Swedish women report a higher level of violence outside such relationships. The difference between women's reporting of violence by present and former husbands/cohabitant partners is also greater in the Swedish study; Swedish women's reporting of violence committed by former husbands/cohabitant partners is more than three times as high as that by current husbands/cohabitant partners (eleven per cent compared with 35 per cent). In the Finnish study, the level of reporting is more than twice as high in this respect (22 compared with 50 per cent).

One way of interpreting these differences is to say that they reflect different realities. Men's violence to women is an issue of public concern and has formed the subject of legislation in Sweden to a greater extent than in Finland. This may have resulted in a diminution of violence towards women. A complementary interpretation is that the differences are connected with the influence of the Swedish gender equality norm on the women's reporting. It may be that Sweden has a stronger gender equality norm than Finland, one which puts more pressure on women in Sweden and may manifest itself in the way women report violence on the part of their present husbands/cohabitant partners.

Recommendations

Developments in the field of gender-related violence, resulting mainly from the efforts of scholars engaged in gender studies, have opened the way for an analysis of the influence of structural and cultural dimensions on violence against women, and also of the significance of gender in this respect. Our prevalence study of violence against women in Sweden forms an abundant and reliable body of empirical data furnishing a unique opportunity to enhance the knowledge we have about violence towards women. The results of the study show that violence to women is so prevalent and of such a character that some of the received explanations and theoretical interpretations of that violence must be abandoned and new theories developed.

There is an urgent need for further improvement of our theoretical and empirical expertise on the topic of violence by means of more intensive analysis of the prevalence study and the theoretical demands which it makes, especially because until now violence to women has been a neglected field of research in Sweden.

We recommend that like Norway and Finland, Sweden should establish a *research programme* in order to create a new understanding of gender-related violence in which results from the prevalence study which appear to be particularly interesting are studied more intensively. Theoretical developments in the field of gender studies should be applied and further elaborated within the framework of the research programme.

The data amassed by our study suggest the following research fields and problem areas to be particularly interesting:

- *Different reporting of types of violence in different relationships*

It appears that the type of male violence within sexual relationships which women report most frequently is physical violence, while the most common type occurring outside sexual relationships is sexual violence. How do women interpret sexual violence inside and outside sexual relationships respectively?

- *“Psychological violence”*

Is it possible to arrive at a definition of the concept of psychological violence from the results of the study pertaining to the mutual relations between threats and violence, controlling behaviour and violence, and women's reports of how they are affected by the violence? The field is

unexplored, and the reliable data in the prevalence study provides an opportunity to study the relationships between various “milder” types of violence and control and the way in which these affect the quality of life of the women concerned and their interpretation of their violent experiences.

- *Threats*

The results of the study show threats to constitute a serious violation of the woman to whom they are made. There are clear correlations between threats and the exercise of physical and sexual violence. At the same time public opinion has a tendency to minimise the importance of threats: people say they are “only” threats. There is a pressing need for some study to be made of the significance of threats in the violence process, and of the possible impact which the playing down of existing threats has on the conditions of women’s lives.

- *Systematic violence*

The results of the study show that the majority of women subjected to violence report more than one such experience and that, for example, more than one woman in four with a violent former husband/cohabitant partner has been subjected to violence more than ten times. This situation calls for studies of the extent of *systematic violence* to women and of the way in which the conditions of women’s lives are affected by their being victims of such violence.

- *Children of abused women*

The results show that the violence to which a woman is subjected also affects her children. The children may be forced to see or hear the violence and/or may themselves suffer physical or sexual violence. The results of our study also indicate that women find it very hard to talk about these matters. It is therefore a matter of urgency to examine more closely the situation of children whose mothers are being subjected to violence.

- *Young women*

One woman in five between the ages of 18 and 24 has been subjected to violence in the last year, and this group is also particularly liable to sexual harassment. An important task for researchers is to investigate how young women are affected by the frequent violence and what their everyday (violent) experience of life is like. What are the consequences of the violence in terms of the conditions in which young women live?

- *Sexual harassment*

Sexual harassment is very widespread. Female students are particularly subject to it; one female student in three has been sexually harassed in the last year. Seven out of ten women with university education but no degree have been sexually

harassed. How does the high incidence of harassment affect women's life-situation and opportunities for study, and what sort of structures are found in the work environments where harassment occurs?

- *Suicide and violent experiences*

What links are there between contemplated and attempted suicide by women and their experiences of violence? The prevalence study provides a platform for continued studies of this unexplored field, in which the consequences of violence in terms of women's will to live may be examined in greater detail.

- *Violent experiences and health*

Previous research on the subject of violence and women's health has been confined to women who have actively approached the health and medical services. The study reveals that abused women show both psychological and physical symptoms, and the pattern of injury thus brought to light indicates serious consequences of violence. Moreover, the results of the study reveal a picture of women's use of psychopharmacological drugs. This being so, further research into the topic of abused women's health would be of great interest.

- *Discrepancies in the women's responses*

There are great discrepancies in the women's responses between general and specific questions and between reported violent experiences from present and former husbands/cohabitant partners respectively. Current relationships appear considerably more tranquil than relationships which have been terminated. These discrepancies ought to be studied in more detail.

- *Violence and culture*

The prevalence study brings to the fore the need to study the links between gender, violence and culture in various majority- and minority-cultural situations. The influence of the Swedish gender equality discourse on the interpretations of violence committed by men of diverse cultural backgrounds, the view of the "immigrant male" as specially violent being one of these, appears to be an important subject for study, as also is its impact on the interpretations of violence committed by Swedish men.

- *Comparisons between the Swedish and the Finnish study*

The results of the Swedish and Finnish prevalence studies show both similarities and differences between women's reports of their experiences of violence. These studies ought to be compared in greater detail and analysed from a (gender-) cultural perspective in which similarities as well as differences in the reporting are analysed.

¹ See "Design of the questionnaire" and "Methodological foundations" on the tendency to reinterpret, which intensifies *pari passu* with the closeness of the relationship and the normalisation of the violence.

² Jeffner 1997.

³ Mellberg, see Bibliography.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Discourse in this context signifies the underlying meaning in public dialogue which may also be crystallised as defined conceptions and more or less defined social practices. Lundgren 2001 p 42.

⁶ There are differences, such as those pertaining to the breakdown into different relationships. In the Finnish questionnaire, known and unknown men are in the same category and boyfriends are not in a separate category. In addition there are differences as to how sexual violence is defined, the Swedish questionnaire being more concretely worded in this respect and offering more response options than the Finnish questionnaire. Our definition of sexual harassment is somewhat narrower than the Finnish as well. Moreover, the Finnish study is based on a sample of women aged 18-74 while the Swedish sample consisted of women aged 18-64.

Appendix