



**UniSAFE**  
ENDING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

# **Gender-based violence and its consequences in European Academia**

**FIRST RESULTS FROM THE UNISAFE SURVEY**

7. November 2022

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT



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## SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Complete UniSAFE survey questionnaire, Open Access, available on platform Zenodo: <https://zenodo.org/record/7220636#.Y2PkEeTMJPZ>

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## UNISAFE SURVEY IMPLEMENTATION

Between January and May 2022, UniSAFE coordinated the implementation of a survey among 46 participating universities and research organisations in 15 countries in Europe, to collect measurable evidence on prevalence of gender-based violence in academia and research.

All staff and students (18 years and older) from these organisations received the survey via internal communication channels. The full list of participating organisations is available at <https://unisafe-gbv.eu>. All institutions participated on a voluntary basis, as part of their involvement in the UniSAFE project, as a joint effort to tackle gender-based violence in academia by generating new knowledge and developing operational tools.

The 15 countries include Belgium, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Serbia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, and United Kingdom. The survey was also administered to an international association of mobile researchers.

The response rate to the survey varied across the 46 participating universities and research organisations. Overall, the total response rate is 3.9%, with a significantly higher response rate of 10.5% among staff than among students (2.7%).

## PARTICIPANTS' CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SURVEY

With a sample including data from 42,186 respondents, the UniSAFE survey is the largest cross-cultural survey in Europe on gender-based violence in the context of universities and other research organisations.

In the unweighted sample, 67% (28,214) identify as women, 30% (12,762) identify as men, and the remaining 3% (1,154) identify as non-binary (or a gender identity not listed). In total, 43% of the respondents are staff and 57% are students. Overall, 11% of respondents report having a disability or chronic illness; 6% identify as belonging to an ethnic minority group; 6% report being international staff or students, and 18% identify as asexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer (LGBQ+).

This sample characterisation enabled the survey to capture how gendered experiences can intersect with different factors such as sexual orientation, age, ethnic minority status and international mobility, which may exacerbate exposure to gender-based violence.



## SURVEY CONTENT

The survey questions addressed experiences of different forms of gender-based violence as a survivor, bystander, or perpetrator, as well as the consequences of gender-based violence relating to personal well-being, health, work and studies. Perception and awareness of institutional mechanisms were investigated through questions related to available resources and prevention measures against gender-based violence.

- [Complete UniSAFE survey questionnaire](#) (Lipinsky et al., 2021), available on open access platform Zenodo.

## UNISAFE DEFINITION OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Gender-based violence is understood as violence directed towards a person because of their gender, or violence that affects persons of a specific gender disproportionately. The forms of gender-based violence considered by the UniSAFE survey are based on the four forms outlined in the Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention (2011), that is, violence that can be physical, sexual, psychological, or economic. In addition, the UniSAFE project investigates the problem of sexual harassment and forms of gender-based violence that may emerge in an increasingly digitalised world and can be carried out online.

### Definitions of the six forms of gender-based violence used in UniSAFE Survey

**Physical violence** is any act which causes physical harm as a result of unlawful physical force, e.g. somebody threatened to hurt you physically or pushed you.

**Psychological violence** is any act which causes psychological harm to an individual, e.g. somebody directed abusive comments towards you, interrupted you or spoke over you.

**Economic violence** is any act or behaviour which causes economic harm to an individual, e.g. harmed your work/studies through restricting access to financial resources.

**Sexual violence** is any sexual act performed on an individual without their consent.

**Sexual harassment** includes unwanted verbal, nonverbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, such as comments on looks or body, sending of images with sexual content, making sexist jokes or touching you.

**Online violence** can take many forms, for example, cyberbullying, internet-based sexual abuse, non-consensual distribution of sexual images and text.



# Key findings from UniSAFE survey

## PREVALENCE OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

The prevalence of gender-based violence is defined as the proportion of respondents who have experienced any form of gender-based violence asked about in the survey since they started at their institution. These different forms of gender-based violence consist of physical violence, psychological violence, economic violence, sexual violence, sexual harassment, and online violence. **The data show that 62% of the survey respondents have experienced at least one form of gender-based violence since they started working or studying at their institution.**

Table demonstrates that respondents from minoritised groups (based on gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or disability) were more likely to disclose gender-based violence. Women and non-binary people were more likely than men to experience all forms of gender-based violence, except for physical violence, which more men than women indicated, but the gender identity at most risk are non-binary people. Moreover, respondents who identified as LGBTQ+, who reported a disability or chronic illness, and belonged to an ethnic minority group were more likely to have experienced at least one incident of gender-based violence compared to those who did not identify with these characteristics.



*Table 1: Prevalence of any form of gender-based violence in total, by target group and sociodemographic characteristics*

	%	n
<b>Total</b>	62%	42,055
<b>Staff</b>	73%	17,933
<b>Student</b>	58%	24,122
<b>Women</b>	66%	28,166
<b>Men</b>	56%	12,722
<b>Non-binary</b>	74%	1,121
<b>Disability or chronic illness - yes</b>	72%	4,465
<b>Disability or chronic illness - no</b>	60%	36,722
<b>Ethnic minority group - yes</b>	69%	2,470
<b>Ethnic minority group - no</b>	61%	39,049
<b>Heterosexual</b>	60%	32,496
<b>LGBQ+</b>	68%	7,732
<b>Domestic staff and students</b>	62%	39,319
<b>International staff and students</b>	62%	2,621

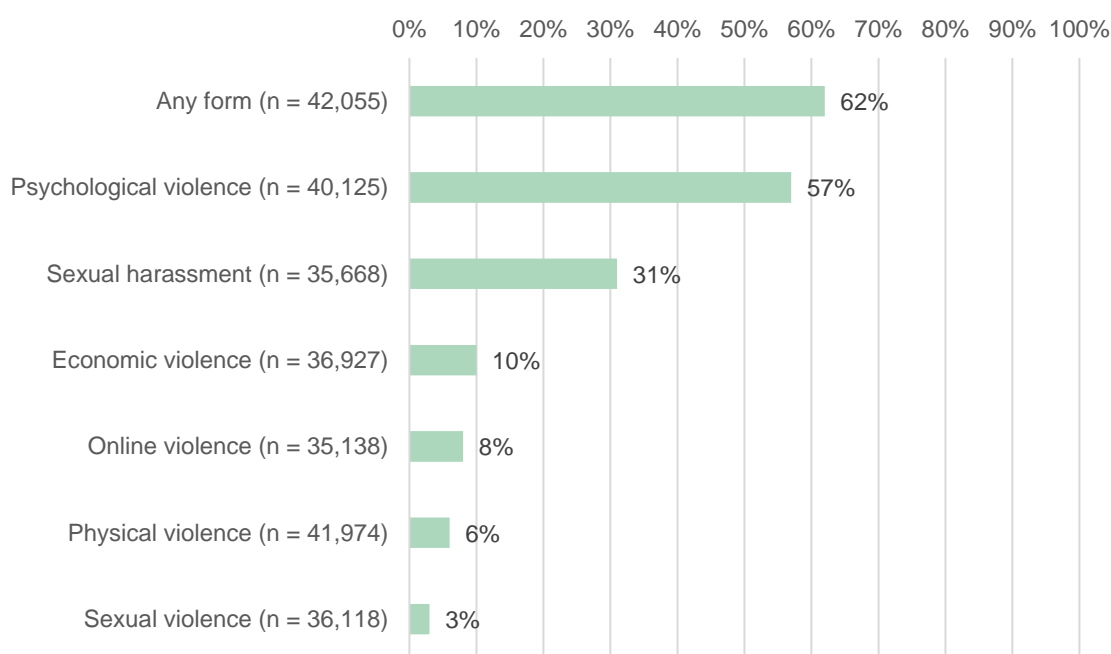
**Note:** Prevalence was calculated as the weighted number of cases reporting at least one experience of violence, divided by the total number of valid cases, multiplied by 100; i.e., all cases coded as 'Prefer not to say' or 'No answer: break-off' were excluded from the calculation. For the prevalence of any form of violence, cases were excluded from the calculation if there was no valid data for any of the specific forms of violence. The total n refers to the unweighted number of cases per category. 'Q7: Non-binary' collapses two answer options: 'A non-binary person' and 'Not listed here'. 'Q12: LGBQ+' collapses five answer options: 'asexual', 'bisexual', 'homosexual', 'queer' and 'a sexual orientation not listed here'. **Source of data in this table:** <https://doi.org/10.7802/2475>



## MOST PREVALENT FORMS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

The most prevalent form of gender-based violence was psychological violence (57%), followed by sexual harassment (31%), see Figure 1 below. Economic violence has been experienced by 10% of respondents and fewer than 10% have indicated at least one incident of online violence (8%) or physical violence (6%). Sexual violence was the least reported form of gender-based violence (3%).

Figure 1: Prevalence of any form of gender-based violence and by form of gender-based violence



**Note:** Prevalence was calculated as the weighted number of cases reporting at least one experience of violence divided by the total number of valid cases, multiplied by 100, i.e., all cases coded as 'Prefer not to say' or 'No answer: break-off' were excluded from the calculation. Prevalence was calculated individually for the specific forms of violence and for any form of gender-based violence. For any form of violence cases were excluded from the calculation if there was no valid data for any of the specific forms of violence. The total n refers to the number of valid responses per category. **Source of data in this graph:** <https://doi.org/10.7802/2475>



## REPORTING OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE INCIDENTS

Data from the UniSAFE survey show that of those who had experienced any form of gender-based violence only 13% reported it. Among the reasons for not reporting events of gender-based violence, almost half of the victims (47%) said they felt uncertain whether the behaviour was serious enough to report it. Another frequent reason for not reporting was that victims do not always recognise the behaviour as violence at the time of the incident, indicated by 31% of the victims.

Figure 2: Reasons for not reporting incidents of gender-based violence

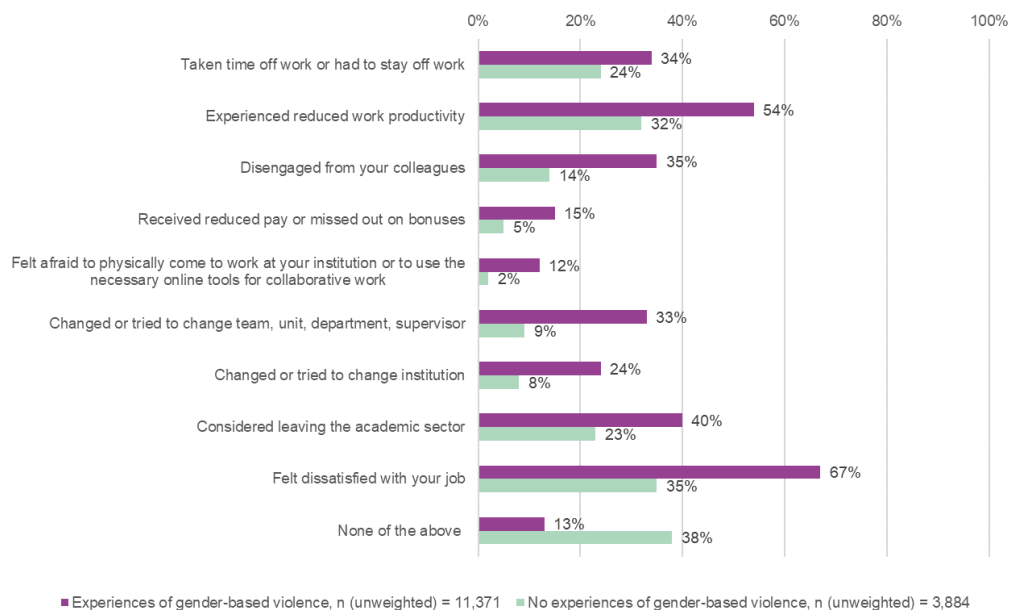


**Note:** Source of data in this graph: <https://doi.org/10.7802/2475>

## CONSEQUENCES OF EXPERIENCING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

The consequences of gender-based violence in universities and research organisations are clear for both staff and students. For staff, such experiences have led to a decrease in work productivity, increased consideration to leave the academic sector, more disengagement from colleagues, and dissatisfaction with their job.

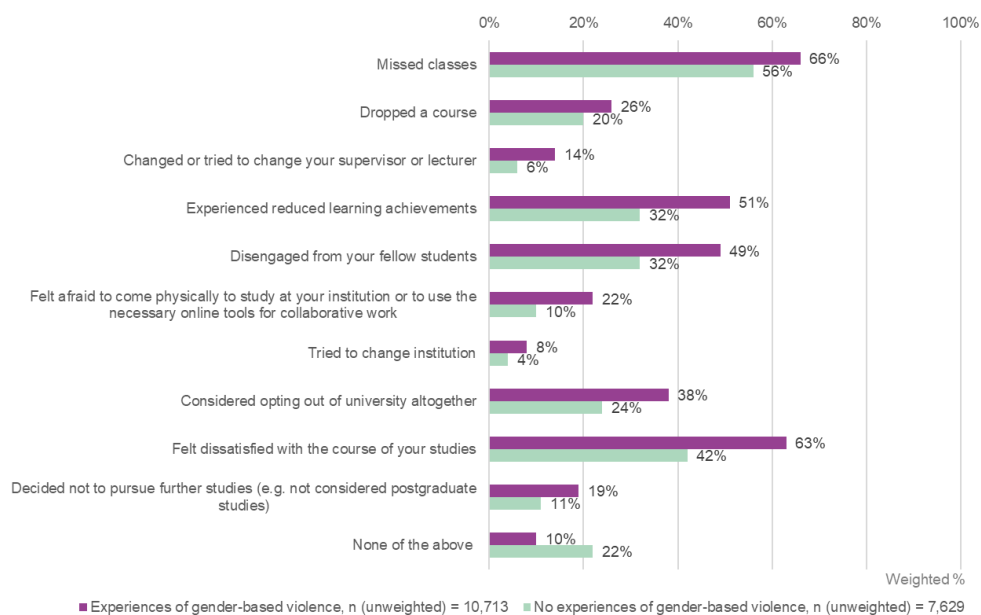
*Figure 3: Work-related consequences for staff since they started working at their institution, by whether they experienced gender-based violence or not*



**Note:** Source of data in this graph: <https://doi.org/10.7802/2475>

For students, experiences of gender-based violence have led to missed classes, reduced learning achievements, more disengagement from their fellow students and dissatisfaction with the course of their studies.

*Figure 4: Study-related consequences for students since they started studying at their institution, by whether they experienced gender-based violence or not*



**Note:** Source of data in this graph: <https://doi.org/10.7802/2475>

# The UniSAFE project

UniSAFE is an EU-funded project that aims to produce in-depth knowledge on gender-based violence and sexual harassment in research performing organisations, and to translate this research into operational tools for higher education and research organisations. The project collects empirical evidence of the prevalence of gender-based violence, understanding how this relates to its determinants and consequences, but also how it responds to the roles of universities and research organisations in preventing, protecting, prosecuting, providing services, supported by policies and partnerships (7Ps model). These mechanisms are investigated at national, organisational, and individual levels, using a holistic research model.

The online survey is only one of the sources of data for UniSAFE's research. The anonymised quantitative data from individuals will be closely analysed alongside results from interviews of early-career researchers, a set of institutional case studies and an assessment of the policy and legal framework. This information feeds into the development of a multi-level analysis report, publicly available in December 2022. By Autumn 2023, the project's findings will be translated into concrete policy recommendations, tailored tools and capacity-building activities to empower stakeholders to reduce gender-based violence in higher education and research organisations.

## UNISAFE CONSORTIUM



## MORE INFORMATION

Find out more about the UniSAFE project by visiting <https://unisafe-gbv.eu>, subscribing to its [newsletter](#) (4 issues/year) and following its news on social media:

 [@UniSAFE\\_gbv](#)

 [/company/unisafe-gbv](#)

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