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## Press release: UN-MENAMAIS

### Two third of the Belgian population is sexually victimised during their lifetime

Brussels, June 15th, 2021:

Sexual violence is rampant in Belgium. In the first large-scale representative and gender- and age-sensitive study on sexual violence in Belgium, called “UN-MENAMAIS” (Understanding the Mechanisms, Nature, Magnitude and Impact of Sexual Violence in Belgium), experts from Ghent University, the University of Liège, and the National Institute for Criminology and Criminalistics found that two third of the Belgian population experienced sexual violence during their life.

#### **Sexual violence happens to people from all genders, sexual orientations and ethnic backgrounds...**

In people between 16 and 69 years, 64% (81% females and 48% males) experienced sexual violence during their life. Two in five women and one in five men indicated to have been subjected to hands-on sexual violence (with physical contact between the assailant and the victim) with 5% of men and 16% of women indicating to have been raped.

80% of LGBTQIA+ persons were exposed to any type of sexual violence; 79% experienced hands-off sexual violence (e.g. sexual harassment, forms without physical contact between the assailant and the victim) and 42% hands-on sexual violence, of which 24% concerned (attempt to) rape.

For applicants of international protection residing in Belgium victimisation rises to over 84%, in 61% this happened in the last 12 months when they were already in Europe or Belgium.

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Sexual violence was linked to adverse mental health outcomes such as depression, anxiety, PTSD and suicide attempts.

Most victims had not sought for help so far. Only 7% looked for professional help and 4% reported their victimisation to the police.

### **... and ages. Older adults are also exposed to sexual violence.**

Today, June 15th, is World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD). Therefore, we want to draw specific attention to our study results on sexual violence in older adults.

In addition to 44% of participants of 70 years and older reporting they had been victimised in their life, one in 12 older adults of 70+ said they had been victimised in the past 12 months: 7% reported hands-off, 2.5% hands-on sexual violence and 0.6% (attempted) rape.

Women and men were equally victimised at this age. Older victims continue to cope with mental health problems, such as depression, anxiety, PTSD and hazardous alcohol use, as a result of sexual violence earlier in life.

Less than half of the older victims had ever talked about their experience to someone in their social network, 6% sought professional help, and only 4% reported the violence to the police.

### **More information about the research project**

This study was conducted by an interdisciplinary research consortium from Ghent University, ULiège and NICC, led by Prof. Ines Keygnaert (Ghent University) and funded by BELSPO between 2017-2021. To get a better understanding of the mechanisms, nature, magnitude and impact of sexual violence, a representative sample of more than 5000 people living in Belgium and professionals were questioned on sexual violence through an online survey as well as face-to-face interviews. Moreover, over 150 participants who were victimised were interviewed in-depth on the impact of the victimisation on their lives as well as on that of their families. In addition, many healthcare and judicial professionals were questioned on forensic responses through a knowledge, attitude and practice survey as well as interviews.

### **Questions on sexual violence?**

Sexual violence cannot be justified in any situation. Never hesitate to ask help. There are several organisations that provide help through telephone or chat in an anonymous way. All help is free.

In Dutch:

- Chatlijn na seksueel geweld: [www.seksueelgeweld.be](http://www.seksueelgeweld.be)

- De Zorgcentra na Seksueel Geweld: [www.seksueelgeweld.be](http://www.seksueelgeweld.be)
- CAW 0800 13 500
- Tele-Onthaal 106
- Zelfmoordlijn 1813
- Awel Jongerentelefoon 102
- Nupraatikerover.be
- Vzwpunt.be
- Hulplijn voor vragen over geweld 1712

#### In French

- Chat violences sexuelles : [www.violencessexuelles.be](http://www.violencessexuelles.be)
- CPVS (Centre de Prise en Charge des Violences Sexuelles) : Bruxelles (02/535.45.42),

#### Liège (04/367.93.11)

- SOS Viol : [www.sosviol.be](http://www.sosviol.be) (ou 0800 98 100)
- Télé-Accueil : [www.tele-accueil.be](http://www.tele-accueil.be) (107)
- Respects Seniors : [www.respectseniors.be](http://www.respectseniors.be) (0800 30 330)
- Collectif contre les violences familiales et l'exclusion) : [www.cvfe.be](http://www.cvfe.be) (04 221 60 69)
- Infor-Homes : [www.inforhomeasbl.be](http://www.inforhomeasbl.be) (02 219 56 88)
- SEPAM (Infor-Homes en région de Bruxelles Capitale) : 02 223 13 43
- Praxis : [www.asblpraxis.be](http://www.asblpraxis.be) (04 228 12 28)
- Senoah : [www.senoah.be](http://www.senoah.be) (081 22 85 98)

#### More information:

##### On [UN-MENAMAIS](#) - Understanding the Mechanisms, Nature, Magnitude and Impact of Sexual Violence in Belgium

Sexual violence is an important public health, justice and social issue. This research project aims to get a better understanding of the mechanisms, the nature, the extent and the impact of sexual violence on victims (women, men and transsexuals), their peers, their offspring on professionals and on society in Belgium.

Contact person: Prof. Ines Keygnaert, Co-ordinator of the UN-MENAMAIS project, Vakgroep Volksgezondheid en Eerstelijnszorg, Universiteit Gent, M +32 485 96 14 04

##### On [BELSPO](#)

The Federal Science Policy Office coordinates major research programmes and provides the federal government with the data it needs to take decisions in areas such as sustainable development, climate change, biodiversity, energy, health, etc. The Federal Science Policy Office is also involved in the research activities of our country's universities and research centres through numerous multi-year programmes. The Federal Science Policy Office is also involved in the research activities of our country's universities and research centres through numerous multi-year programmes. The Federal Science Policy also manages the federal cultural and scientific heritage kept in the federal scientific institutions.

##### On the research programme [BRAIN-be](#)

The BRAIN-be framework programme integrates several funding initiatives of the Belgian Science Policy Office with the aim of stimulating even more effective collaborations in the research implemented by the Federal Scientific Institutions (FSIs) and the rest of the scientific community. It also endeavours to meet the needs of the federal departments in terms of knowledge in a more appropriate way.