

# UN-MENAMAIS

## UNderstanding the MEchanisms, NAture, MAgnitude and Impact of Sexual violence in Belgium

**DURATION**  
 15/01/2017 - 15/04/2021

**BUDGET**  
 1 500 000 €

### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

**Background** Sexual violence (SV) is a major public health, judicial and societal concern in Belgium. A comparative and representative study of SV in Belgium is still lacking. SV may induce long lasting sexual, reproductive, physical and mental ill-health affecting the victim and his/her peers, offspring and community. People exposed to violence during childhood are susceptible to subsequent (re)victimization, perpetration and maladaptive parental practices, which contributes to the intergenerational transmission of violence. The complex mechanisms behind coping behaviours as well as the effectiveness of response measures to all genders has not been studied. At political level in Belgium, the current national action plan on violence advocates a holistic management of SV victims. Furthermore, a new Ministerial Guideline on the Sexual Aggression Set (SAS) has just been issued while Sexual Assault Care Centres (SACC) are being piloted. The recent transfer of competences to the regions reorganises the judicial landscape. Hence the necessity to conduct a Belgian representative prevalence SV study examining all vulnerabilities to victimisation and perpetration.

**Objectives** Contribute to a better understanding of the mechanisms, nature, magnitude and impact of sexual violence on female, male and transgender victims, their peers, offspring, professionals and society in Belgium and generate policy recommendations and prevention and response strategies. **Objective 1** Map how citizens and migrant residents in Belgium aged 16 -100 years, with different sexual orientations, frame SV. **Objective 2** Explore to what extent the research population has been exposed to sexual victimisation and perpetration since childhood. We study experiences of victims, perpetrators, peers and family of different generations. **Objective 3** Map indicatory pathways of how this exposure impacted the lives of victims, their family and peers and professionals they contacted for assistance. **Objective 4** Map the historical social and technical construction of the SAS and its impact on current and future forensic sexual assault practices performed by professionals. **Objective 5** Formulate recommendations for future policies and practices concerning SV in Belgium and provide sensitization scripts.

**Method** We apply a mixed methods methodology. We combine a literature review with a survey on SV victimization and perpetration in the general population and in-depth interviews with SV victims. In addition, we conduct a survey and focus groups with professionals on SAS and a final seminar with a Café Dialogue with professionals and SV victims on policy recommendations.

**Interdisciplinary approach** The team has a background in health sciences, criminology, law, psychology, psychiatry, sexology and anthropology. A multidisciplinary and (inter)national expert follow-up committee will assist assuring the quality of the study.

**Potential impact of the research** To have clear insights into the mechanisms, nature, magnitude and impact of sexual violence in different population groups of all ages, genders, sexual orientations and legal statuses in Belgium which will lead to sensitization scripts and specific recommendations to better address this major public health, judicial and societal concern.



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## **Deliverables**

**Data collection:** Questionnaire on SV victimization and perpetration; Survey on the attitudes of health professionals on SV; Focus groups with professionals and Café Dialogue

**Data sets:** A database of scientific articles and policy documents on SV victimization and perpetration; one on SV victimization and perpetration of a nationally representative sample of people in Belgium; A quantitative dataset obtained from health care professionals; A qualitative dataset, with fully ad verbatim transcribed interviews with SV victims and complete coding scheme; one on focus groups; and one that will contribute to a fine thematic analysis of the intervention of healthcare professionals

**Meetings:** A kick-off meeting will be held to discuss the detailed objectives, planning, task assignment and communication strategy. We'll hold 16 Consortium meetings with all partners, 5 Scientific follow-up committees together with the international experts and a yearly steering committee meeting with Belspo. At the end of the project we will organise a closing seminar to present and discuss all results.

**Data communication & Outcomes:** *Internal communication:* 1 Initial administrative report, 16 minutes of the consortium meetings, 5 minutes of the Follow-Up Committee, 4 minutes of the yearly meetings with the funder, 3 intermediate administrative and scientific progress reports, 1 final report. *External communication: Academics:* 4 oral presentations at leading international scientific conferences, 8 scientific papers: 4 published by the end of the project and 4 others either in draft or submitted. *Policy makers:* Set of policy recommendations for future better sexual violence prevention and response, 1 to 3 scripts for future sensitisation campaigns. *SV professionals:* Lectures at each of the partner universities, Regular project information and results will be spread through (inter)national networks, platforms, associations and organisations *General public:* Press releases, Press interviews on Belgian radio, television and newspaper press.

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

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