

# Review

## Exposure to violence and other forms of crime – victim surveys 2005-2021

This report deals with the results of the national victim surveys of Danes' exposure to crime. The first national victim surveys were conducted in the early 1970s, and representative surveys of the exposure to theft, vandalism, violence and threats of violence of persons aged 16-74 have been conducted annually since 2005. Since then, questions on the exposure to rape (formerly 'forced sexual intercourse'), other sexual offences, cybercrime and psychological abuse have been included in the victim surveys.<sup>1</sup> In addition to examining Danes' exposure to crime, the annual victim surveys look into the Danes' propensity to report crime and their concerns about crime.

The overall results of the report can be summarised as follows:

### Theft

In 2021, 4.8 per cent of the respondents indicated that they had been victims of theft (not including burglary) within the past year, which is a statistically significantly lower proportion than in 2020 and in 2012-2020 overall. The proportion of victims corresponds to 184,000-230,000 persons aged 16-74 having experienced being victims of theft annually. Bike theft is the most frequent type of theft committed against private individuals.

Of those asked in 2021, 41 per cent of the victims of theft indicated that they had reported the incident to the police, or the police had become aware of the incident in some other way. This proportion is statistically significantly lower than the proportion in 2020 and in 2012-2020 overall.

### Burglaries of private homes

In 2021, 1.9 per cent of the respondents indicated that they had been victims of burglary of their private homes within the past year. This proportion does not differ significantly from the proportion in 2020, but it is statistically significantly lower than in 2012-2020 overall. The proportion of victims corresponds to 68,000-97,000 persons aged 16-74 – or around 42,000 households – being victims of burglary annually. The direct financial loss suffered from each burglary has dropped. More than half of the victims also indicated that they reported the burglary to their insurance company and that in by far the majority of the cases, they received compensation, in full or in part, or the stolen items were recovered.

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<sup>1</sup> Robbery was formerly included as a question in the victim survey but was excluded in 2015 as it turned out that the responses to that question ended up comprising an array of other crimes than robbery.

The propensity to report burglaries is considerably higher than for other types of theft. Of those asked in 2021, 74 per cent of the victims of burglary or attempted burglary indicated that they had reported the incident to the police, or the police had become aware of the incident in some other way. Overall, the propensity to report burglary or attempted burglary does not differ significantly from the preceding year or the period from 2014 to 2020 overall.

### **Vandalism**

Of those asked in 2021, a total of 3.7 per cent indicated that they had been victims of vandalism within the past year. This proportion does not differ significantly from the proportion in 2020, but it is statistically significantly lower than in the preceding 10-year period (2011-2020), and the proportion was halved from 2005 to 2021. The proportion of victims corresponds to 137,000-177,000 persons aged 16-74 having experienced being victims of vandalism annually. In most cases, the vandalism was aimed at the victim's car.

Of those asked in 2021, 38 per cent of the victims of vandalism indicated that they had reported the incident to the police, or the police had become aware of the incident in some other way. The propensity to report vandalism varies with no obvious development trend identified for the period under review. However, there is a trend towards a decline in the propensity to report vandalism in the past three years, and in 2021 it was at the lowest level recorded since the end-1990s.

### **Violence**

Of those asked in 2021, a total of 1.1 per cent indicated that they had been victims of violence within the past year. This proportion does not differ significantly from 2020, but it is statistically significantly lower than in the preceding 10-year period (2011-2020) overall. The proportion of victims corresponds to 41,000-57,000 persons aged 16-74 having experienced being victims of violence annually. The decline in the exposure to violence primarily reflects that fewer men experience being exposed to violence.

Viewed in a long-term perspective, the exposure to violence in the population develops in spurts. In the interpretation of the development, allowance should be made for changes in what the population experiences and perceives as violence.

The risk of being exposed to violence is highest for young people until they reach their mid-20s. Nearly half of the victims of violence indicate that the violence took place in a public place, such as in the street. In close to two-thirds of the violent incidences, either the offender, the victim or both were under the influence of alcohol and/or controlled substances.

Of those asked in 2021, nearly half (49 per cent) of the victims of violence indicated that they had reported the incident to the police, or the police had become aware of the incident in some other way. This proportion does not differ significantly from the preceding year or the preceding 10-year period (2011-2020) overall. The propensity to report violence varies with no obvious upward or downward development trend identified for the period under review.



## Psychological abuse

As from 2020, the victim survey has included questions about psychological abuse committed by a person closely related to the household. Of those asked in 2021, a total of 2.5 per cent indicated that they had been victims of psychological abuse within the past year. The proportion of victims does not differ significantly from 2020 and corresponds to 95,000-119,000 persons aged 16-74 having experienced being victims of psychological abuse committed by a person close to the household annually.

The propensity to report psychological abuse is markedly lower than for violence overall. Of those asked in 2021, 15 per cent of the victims of psychological abuse indicated that they had reported the incident to the police themselves, or the police had become aware of the incident in some other way.

## Rape

As from 2021, the question about rape was changed to ensure that the wording of the question was consistent with the new legislation on rape based on consent. Of those asked in 2021, 3.4 per cent of the female respondents indicated that they had been victims of rape or attempted rape within the past five years, corresponding to 62,000-81,000 women aged 16-74. Viewed in a five-year perspective, the proportion of persons exposed is statistically significantly higher in 2020 and the preceding 10-year period (2011-2020) overall. The relatively high proportion of persons exposed in 2021 is probably closely related to the change in the wording of the question, and as in the case of violence, the population's experience and perception of rape may have changed.

In 2021, well over three-fourths of the female victims of rape indicated that the incident had taken place in a private home. Moreover, there seems to be a trend towards an increase in the proportion of victims who indicate that the offender was a (previous) friend or pal, but this is subject to considerable statistical uncertainty as the analysis is based on relatively few responses.

As from 2019, the male exposure to rape has also been examined. Of those asked in 2021, 0.4 per cent of the male respondents indicated that they had been victims of rape or attempted rape within the past five years, corresponding to 6,000-13,000 males aged 16-74. The estimated number of victims is based on very few observations and is therefore subject to considerable uncertainty. It is not possible to estimate the development in the male exposure from year to year.

The propensity to report rape is low. In the period under review (2008-2021), only about every fourth victim of rape within the past five years indicated that they had reported the incident to the police, or the police had become aware of the incident in some other way.



### **Other sexual assaults**

As from 2019, the victim survey has included questions about sexual assaults other than rape. In 2021, 1.1 per cent of the respondents indicated that they had been victims of other sexual assaults within the past year. The proportion does not differ from the previous years and corresponds to 39,000-55,000 persons aged 16-74 having experienced being exposed to other sexual assaults than rape annually.

The propensity to report other sexual assaults is even lower than for rape. Of those asked in 2019-2021, 8 per cent of the victims of other sexual assaults indicated that they had reported the incident to the police themselves, or the police had become aware of the incident in some other way. The low propensity to report reflects that the victims typically do not consider the incident a criminal offence and that they only rarely consider the incident to be particularly serious.

### **Violence and sexual abuse committed by an intimate partner**

Of those asked in 2020-2021, a total of 1.5 per cent indicated that they had been exposed to violence, psychological abuse, rape and/or other sexual abuse committed by a current or previous intimate partner within the past year. This corresponds to 56,000-69,000 persons aged 16-74 being exposed to violence and/or sexual abuse committed by a current or previous intimate partner annually. Female victims account for the highest proportion.

Of the total number of victims of violence, 7 per cent indicated that the violence was committed by a current or former intimate partner. This also applied to half of the total number of victims of psychological abuse while more than one-third of the total number of female victims of rape or attempted rape indicated that the abuse was committed by a current or former intimate partner.

In any case, the propensity to report violence and sexual abuse is lower when the offender is a current or former intimate partner than when there is another relationship between the victim and the offender.

### **Hate crimes**

Of those asked in 2020-2021, 0.6 per cent indicated that they had been exposed to vandalism, violence and/or online hate speech which, according to the victim, was due to racism, the victim's sexual orientation or gender identity (that a person is exposed for being, for example, a homosexual, a trans person or other LGBTI persons) and/or the victim's religious persuasion. This corresponds to 20,000-31,000 persons aged 16-74 having experienced being exposed to such hate crimes annually. The estimated number of persons exposed is based on very few observations and is therefore subject to considerable uncertainty.

Of the total number of victims of vandalism, 7 per cent indicated that vandalism *most certainly* was due to racism, the victim's sexual orientation or gender identity or the victim's religious persuasion. The same applied to every fifth victim of violence.



## **Cybercrime**

Of those asked in 2021, a total of 3.7 per cent indicated that they had been exposed to cybercrime, including misuse of credit card details, fraud in connection with online purchases, social engineering fraud, misuse of personal data and hate speech within the past year. This is a statistically significantly lower proportion than in 2020 and corresponds to 142,000-171,000 persons aged 16-74 having experienced being exposed to one of the above-mentioned types of cybercrime annually. The most frequent type of cybercrime is misuse of credit card details and fraud in connection with online purchases; a lower proportion has experienced being exposed to social engineering fraud and misuse of personal data.

Of those asked in 2021, 42 per cent of the victims of misuse of credit card details indicated that they had reported the incident to the police, or the police had become aware of the incident in some other way. The same applied to 35 per cent of the victims of fraud in connection with online purchases, 34 per cent of the victims of social engineering fraud and 35 per cent of the victims of misuse of personal data.

## **Concerns about crime**

Of those asked in 2021, 9 per cent indicated that they were concerned about being exposed to crime themselves *almost all the time* or *often*. This is the lowest level recorded from the first recordings were made in the 1970s and until today. Likewise, of those asked, 13 per cent indicated that they were *very* concerned about violence and other types of crime in society. This is also the lowest level recorded from the first recordings were made in the 1980s and until today.

Women were generally more concerned about personally being exposed to crime and about an escalation of crime in society than men. Likewise, young people aged 16-24 were more often concerned about being exposed to crime themselves than persons in the older age brackets. By contrast, young people were less concerned about crime in society.

The majority of those who were concerned about violence and other types of crime in society were not concerned about being exposed to crime themselves.

## **COVID-19 and lockdown**

The vast majority of the survey questions deal with the exposure to crime within the past 12 months, and the surveys are conducted on a continuing basis over the year. Accordingly, like the survey for 2020, the survey for 2021 comprises periods of lockdown of society due to COVID-19. The lockdowns may have had an impact on the development in crime which is illustrated in the survey. For example, the proportion of thefts and burglaries of private homes was at the lowest level recorded in the victim surveys, while the proportion of violence in private homes was at a very high level. The proportion of those who were concerned about becoming victims of crime themselves and the proportion who were concerned about violence and other types of crime in society were at the lowest levels ever recorded. The results might be influenced by the fact that the population generally spent more time at home during the



lockdowns and less time in the public space. Similar trends are seen in other surveys.

