

## » Youth Sexuality 9th Iteration

# Prevalence of Sexualised Violence

The Federal Centre for Health Education's (BZgA) representative study Youth Sexuality 9th Iteration is a representative repeat survey. A large-scale survey of young people, their parents and young adults was launched for the ninth time in the summer of 2019. It follows on from predecessor studies conducted between 1980 and 2014. The goal of the study is to acquire reliable data about the attitudes and behaviours of young people in the Federal Republic of Germany with regards to sexuality and contraception.

The subject area of sexualised violence has been captured since 2001 and has been expanded significantly in the current trend survey on Youth Sexuality. The current survey was the first time the examination of negative experiences was expanded further in order to capture non-physical experiences of violence – a broad field that encompasses verbal and non-verbal harassment, from derogatory insults to sexually motivated reputational damage, exhibitionism and also experiences of violence communicated digitally. Furthermore, the respondents were asked in substantially greater detail about their experiences of physical sexualised violence. This fact sheet presents, which experiences adolescents and young adults have had with non-physical and physical sexualised violence.

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## More than half of the adolescents and young adults have experienced non-physical sexualised violence at least once.

Non-physical experiences of violence include verbal and non-verbal harassment, derogatory insults as well as sexually motivated reputational damage and exhibitionism. This area also covers experiences of violence communicated digitally.

Of the adolescents and young adults asked, 54 percent said they had made 'unpleasant experiences' in the context of non-physical sexualised violence or that they had been put under pressure. In this area the percentages hardly differ for the sexes (male respondents 53 %, female respondents 56 %). Even among the 14-year-olds 44 percent of the girls and 45 percent of the boys have been affected. These percentages go up substantially with increasing age.

The most common form of non-physical sexualised violence is verbal for both sexes, meaning via comments, insults or jokes of a sexual nature, or non-verbally via gestures. 39 percent of the female adolescents and young women and 35 percent of the male adolescents and young boys reported having experienced this.

With regard to sexual orientation a clear difference between the sexes can be found in the context of sexual allusions with the aim of insulting someone - e.g. being called 'gay' or 'lesbian' in a negative way.

- Male respondents are almost three times as likely (28 %) as female respondents (11 %) to experience these insults. This is therefore the second-most common form of non-physical sexualised violence for boys and young men. For girls this ranking is held by digital violence.
- Adolescents and young adults who express same-sex attraction are much more likely - at least 20 percentage points more - to experience non-physical sexualised violence than their heterosexual peers. 38 percent of the girls and young women and every second boy and young man (52 %) report discriminatory experiences of this nature.

The second-most common form of non-physical sexualised violence for girls is experiences of violence conveyed in the digital realm, made possible via the use of smartphones, effortless access to the internet and the ability for rapid dissemination via social media. Around one in three of the female respondents (29%) – around twice as many as the male respondents – said they had made unpleasant experiences in this regard and had experienced unwanted ‘sexual come-ons’ or ‘harassment’ online, on platforms such as Instagram or Snapchat. Among the girls under the age of 18 the percentage of those affected increases continually with every year they get older. At 41 percent, the group of 19-year-old women is the most frequently affected (see Figures 1 and 2).

Figure 1

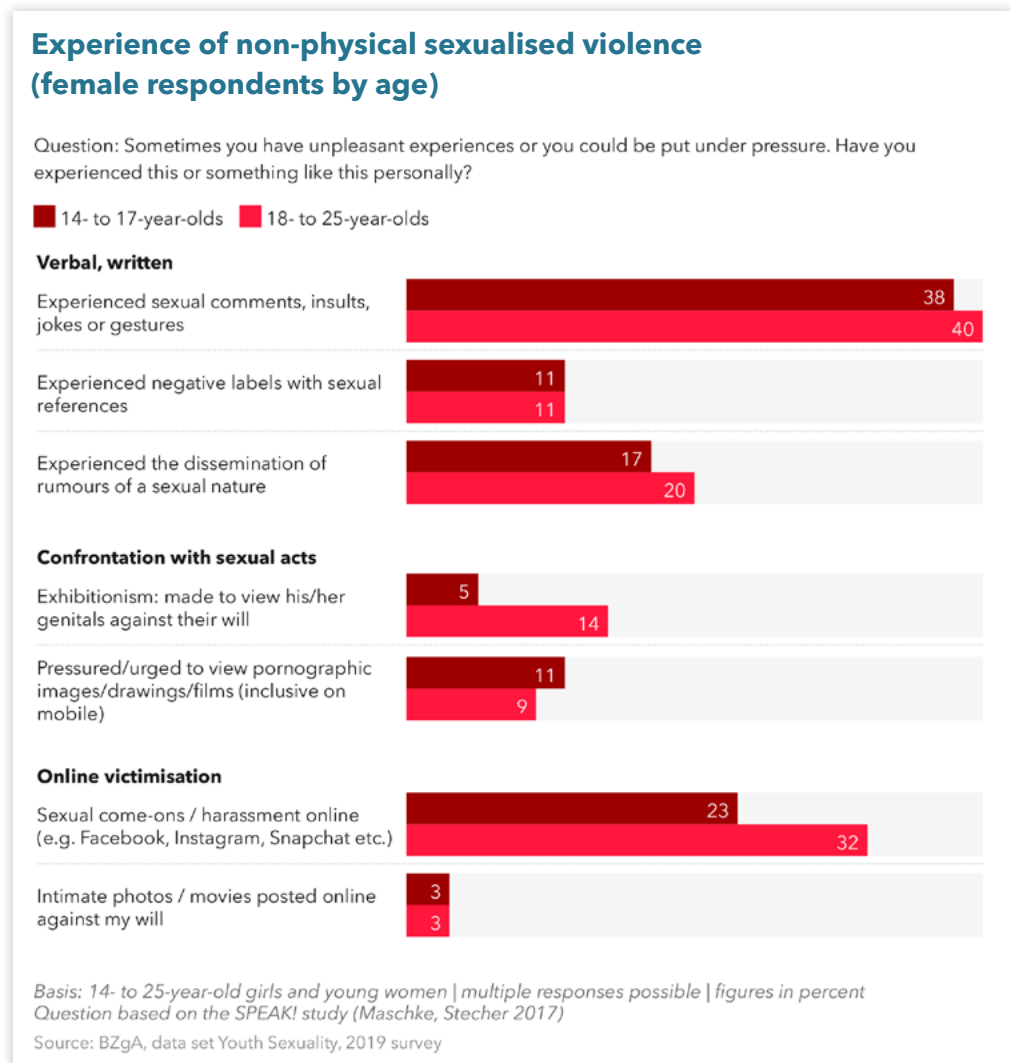
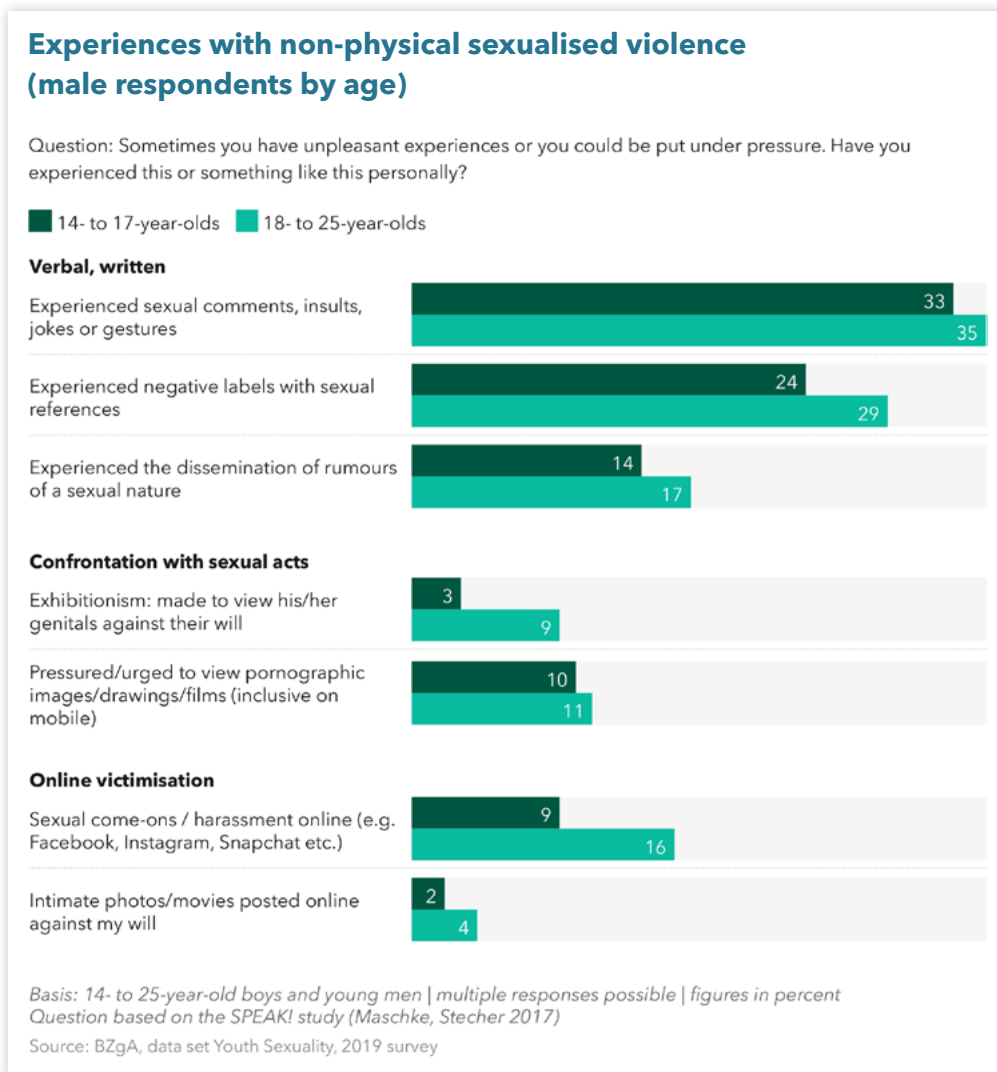


Figure 2



Around 3 percent of the adolescents and young adults have experienced the dissemination of pictures and videos featuring sexual content against their will. In the context of viewing pornographic imagery and videos, 10 percent of the adolescents and young adults report having been pressured or even forced into this. There are virtually no differences here with regard to the sex and age of the respondents.

11 percent of the girls and young women have been affected by confrontations with sexual acts in the form of exhibitionism; the same is true for 7 percent of the male respondents. However, with increasing age these figures triple for both sexes. One in six women and one in eleven men between the ages of 18 and 25 have been affected by exhibitionism (see Figure 2).

One particularly concerning data point is the connection between non-physical and physical sexualised violence (see Result 2). 86 percent of those who have been exposed to physical sexualised violence say they have also experienced at least one of the forms of non-physical violence described here.

Result 2

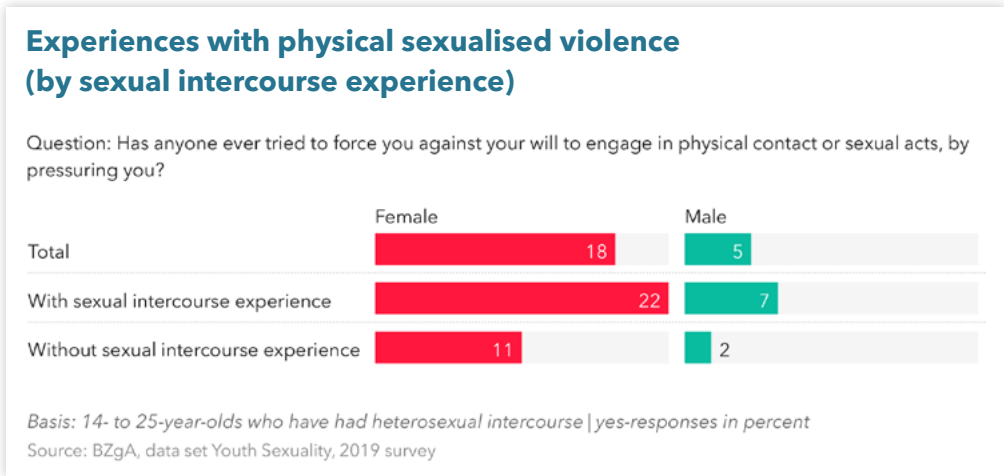
**Central risk factors for physical sexualised violence are: sex, age, sexual activity and sexual orientation.**

Around one in five of the female respondents between the ages of 14 and 25 have already experienced physical sexualised violence, some of them multiple times. Five percent of the male adolescents and young men are similarly affected. Significant risk factors for experiencing physical sexualised violence are sex, age, sexual activity and sexual orientation.

**Risk factor sex: there is a clear difference between the sexes regarding who is affected.**

Responding to the question whether someone has ever tried to coerce them into physical contact or sexual acts against their will, by pressuring them, 18 percent of the female respondents and 5 percent of the male respondents said yes (see Figure 3). The probability of having been affected by physical sexualised violence more than once is also greater among the girls and young women (6 %) than among the boys and young men (1 %).

Figure 3



**Risk factor sexual activity: if the respondents are already sexually active, the risk for physical sexualised violence increases.**

Almost a quarter of the sexually active girls and young women (22 %) as well as 7 percent of the male respondents reported such experiences. The risk of experiencing violence increases for the male respondents too if they are sexually active. The figure is three times higher for boys and young men when they are sexually active (7 %) compared to when they have not yet had sexual intercourse (2 %).

**Risk factor age: the older the boys and girls are, the more likely they are to have experienced physical sexualised violence.**

At 22 percent, almost twice as many 18- to 25-year-old young women said they had experienced physical sexualised violence compared to the younger respondents between the ages of 14 and 17 (11 %). It is also of note that girls who became sexually active at a young age are particularly at risk. Among the 14- to 17-year-old girls the percentage of those affected almost doubles, from 8 to 15 percent, if they have already been sexually active. 24 percent of girls who had sexual intercourse aged 14 or younger have been affected and they were also more likely to say they experienced such violence more than one time (10 %).

**Risk factor sexual orientation: those who are sexually same-sex orientated are disproportionately at risk.**

Among the female respondents the number of those affected increases by 16 (!) percentage points to 34 percent when the girls and young women say they are gay or/and bisexual. For the male respondents too the percentage increases to more than double, from 5 to 11 percent, if they are not exclusively opposite-sex attracted.



Result 3

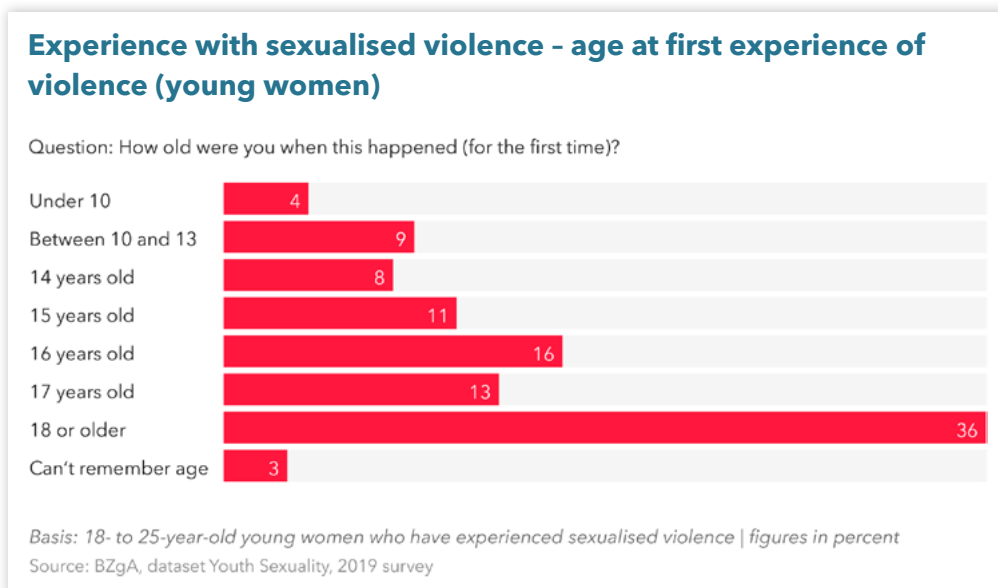
## Young women are generally still minors when they experience physical sexualised violence for the first time.

Around 60 percent of the affected women between 18 and 25 were under the age of 18 when they had to experience physical sexualised violence for the first time.

13 percent were still children (aged 10 to 13), around 20 percent were between 14 and 15 and around 30 percent were 16 or 17 when they experienced sexualised violence for the first time. Around one third of the young women affected were already of age, meaning 18 or older (see Figure 4). It can also be seen that among those girls and young women who had their first experience with sexual intercourse very early - aged 14 or younger - the first experience of sexualised violence is also disproportionately likely to have occurred early, at 14 or younger.

A comparison between the sexes is not possible here because of the small number of male respondents who have been affected. However, it can be seen that young men are similarly likely as young women to have experienced physical sexualised violence at a very young age, but a larger percentage only experiences sexualised violence for the first time in adulthood.

Figure 4



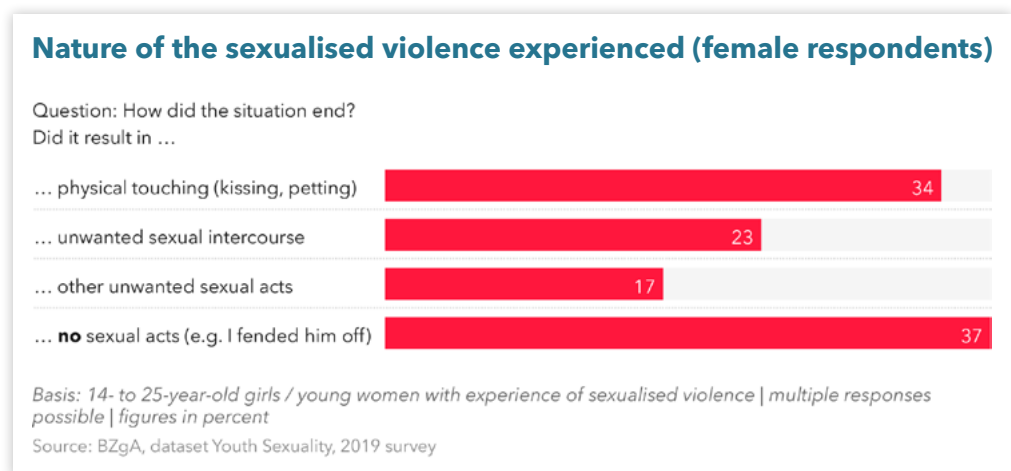
## Result 4

## In three in five cases sexualised acts of violence are perpetrated against girls and young women despite resistance.

Adolescents and young adults experience different forms of sexualised violence. They range from unwanted touching to other sexual acts all the way to forced sexual intercourse.

Just over a third of the girls and young women affected said they had experienced a form of unwanted physical contact, such as kissing or petting (34%). 23 percent – almost one in four – was forced into sexual intercourse and around one in six (17%) experienced other unwanted sexual acts. 37 percent were able to fend off the attempts at sexualised violence such that no unwanted sexual acts occurred (see Figure 5).

Figure 5



If the figures between the age groups are compared, we can see varying percentages for those who fended off sexual acts and for the type of violence experienced (see Figure 6).

- 47 percent of the 14- to 17-year-old girls and 35 percent of the young women between the ages of 18 and 25 were able to fend off sexual acts.
- 40 percent of the girls experienced unwanted physical touching compared to 32 percent of the young women.

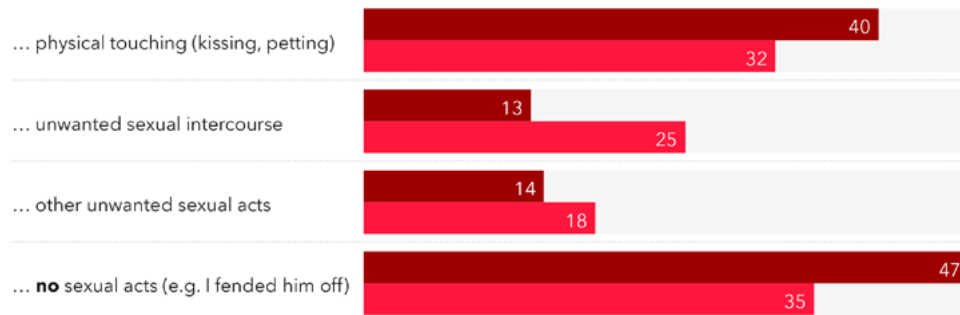
- There is a smaller difference between the age groups in the category 'other unwanted sexual acts', which was not defined more closely (14 % among the girls versus 18 % among the young women).
- 13 percent of the girls affected between the ages of 14 and 17 experienced forced sexual intercourse, while 25 percent of the affected young women between the ages of 18 and 25 experienced the same - in this case one in four women.

What is striking is that those girls and young women who said they had been 14 or younger when they had sexual intercourse for the first time were particularly likely to be affected. Only one in four in this cohort did not experience any unwanted sexual acts. Every second respondent said she had been forced into sexual intercourse as well.

**Nature of the sexualised violence experienced (female respondents by age)**

Question: How did the situation end? Did it result in ...

■ 14- to 17-year-olds ■ 18- to 25-year-olds



Basis: 14- to 25-year-old girls / young women with experience of sexualised violence | multiple responses possible | figures in percent

Source: BZgA, dataset Youth Sexuality, 2019 survey

Figure 6

## Result 5

## Girls and young women experience sexualised violence especially from male perpetrators – boys and young men experience it from both sexes.

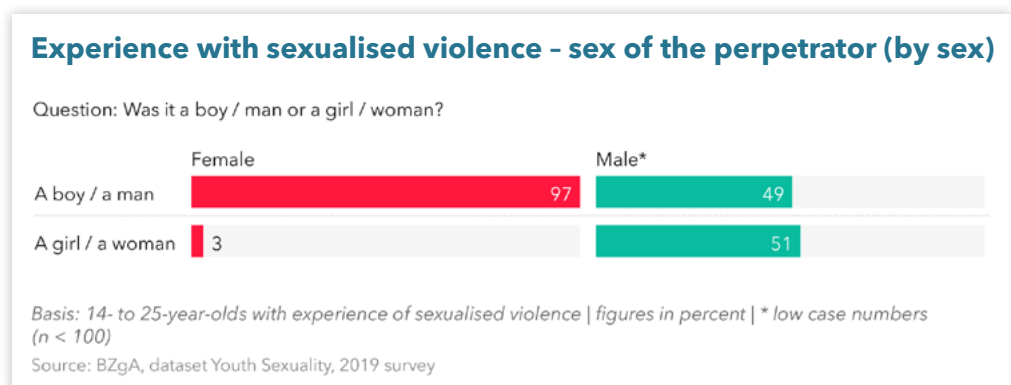
This survey is the first in the series to ask about the sex of the perpetrator of the sexualised violence. The result is a clear sex difference among the female and male respondents affected (see Figure 7). For the female respondents affected, the perpetrator is almost universally male:

- 97 percent of the female respondents affected said that they had experienced the sexualised violence at the hands of a male perpetrator.
- Among the girls and young women with a same-sex or bisexual sexual orientation the percentage who experienced sexualised violence by a member of their own sex was greater, but in this group too more than 90 percent of the perpetrators were male.

The situation was markedly different for the male respondents. They cited female and male perpetrators to a roughly equal degree.

- 51 percent of the male respondents affected said they had experienced sexualised violence at the hands of girls or women.
- 49 percent said their perpetrator had been male.

Figure 7



## The probability of being able to fend off sexualised violence is higher if the perpetrator is not known.

The form of sexualised violence experienced depends on what the relationship to the perpetrator was. If the perpetrator was an unknown individual, more than half of the girls and young women affected (55 %) were able to fend off sexual acts they did not want. The closer the relationship with the perpetrator was, the more difficult fending them off seems to have been for those affected (see Figure 8):

- If those affected were or had been in a steady relationship with the perpetrator, then only 17 percent were able to stop the forced acts by resisting.
- If the sexual acts were committed by someone from the neighbourhood, the family or by someone else the person affected was dependent on, around one third were able to fend off the attempt.
- If the perpetrator was a new acquaintance, a friend, a classmate or a work colleague, around 40 percent of those affected were able to fend off any unwanted attempt.

If the girls and young women surveyed were forced to experience forced sexual intercourse, then more than half of them (53 %) had been in a (former) steady relationship with the perpetrator - in only 5 percent of cases the perpetrator was unknown to them. 26 percent said that the perpetrator was a friend, classmate or work colleague, while 22 percent said it was a new acquaintance. 8 percent of those affected were forced into sexual intercourse by a person in their neighbourhood, a family member or someone else they were dependent on.

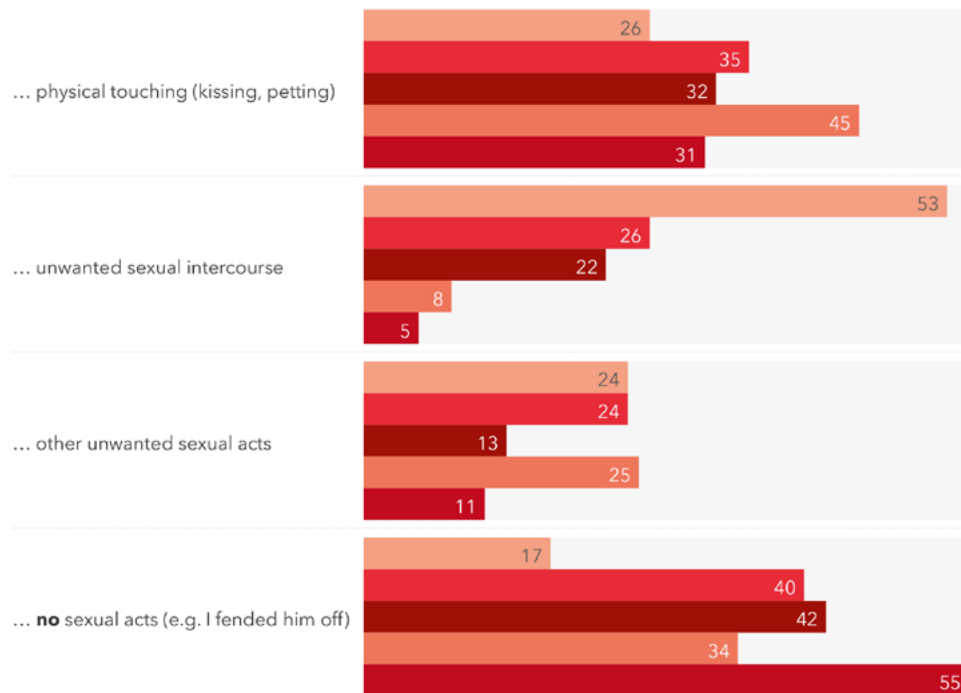
Other unwanted sexual acts were also disproportionately likely to have been committed by a (former) steady partner or by a family member, a neighbour or a person that the individual in question was dependent on (around 25% in each case). Only 11 percent of the female respondents affected said the perpetrator was unknown. 11 percent said it had been a classmate or work colleague, while 13 percent said it had been a new acquaintance.

In those cases where the form of sexualised violence experienced was physical touching, such as kissing or petting, the majority of the perpetrators were family members, from the neighbourhood or were individuals that the person affected was dependent on in another way (45%). A third, respectively, of the affected female respondents experienced unwanted physical touching by a friend, classmate, or work colleague, or by new a new acquaintance or by an unknown person. 26 percent - meaning one in four of the young women/girls affected - experienced forced physical touching in their (former) steady relationship.

### Nature of the sexualised violence experienced (female respondents by perpetrator type)

Question: How did the situation end? Did it result in ...

■ (former) steady relationship  
 ■ A friend, classmate or work colleague  
 ■ A new acquaintance  
■ A family member, neighbour, someone I was dependent on  
 ■ An unknown person\*



Basis: 14- to 25-year-old girls and young women who have experienced sexualised violence | multiple responses possible | figures in percent | \*low case numbers (n < 100)

Source: BZgA, dataset Youth Sexuality, 2019 survey

Figure 8



## References

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## Notes on the data

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- As the percentages shown has been rounded to whole numbers, it is possible that they may not add up to 100 percent.
- For the same reason the combined categories (e.g. 'very satisfied' and 'mostly satisfied') can deviate from the sum of the individual categories depicted.
- For questions where the respondents were able to pick several answers, the total figure can exceed 100 percent.
- Where data is available from previous surveys, the survey results are shown in a trend comparison. Because of how the samples were done it is possible to see the long-term trend covering almost 40 years for boys and girls between 14 and 17 without a migrant background.
- Participants are deemed to have a migrant background if they themselves or at least one parent was born without German citizenship; this definition is also used by the Federal Statistical Office of Germany (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2021).
- The level of education is determined by the (desired) qualifications the study participants were / are seeking at school based on the education system in Germany. Low: 9 years of school, most are around 15 years old when they leave (e.g. Hauptschule) Moderate: 10 years of school, most are around 16 years old when they leave (e.g. mittlere Reife). High: 12 to 13 years of school, most are 18 to 19 years old when they leave (e.g. Abitur).
- Because of the methodological design of the Youth Sexuality Study a further non-binary differentiation of gender has had to be left out. For this same reason, the term 'sex' (biological aspects, assigned by birth) continues to be used (in contrast to 'gender' in the sense of social construction, gender identity as personal internal perception of oneself) to enable statements on long-term trends (see also Census UK, 2019). This decision is purely a methodological necessity and not based on a lack of awareness of diversity here.



## Imprint

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## The Research Project: Background, Research Team, Methodology

The Federal Centre for Health Education's (BZgA) representative study Youth Sexuality 9th Iteration is a repeat survey. In the summer of 2019 the ninth large-scale survey of young people, their parents and young adults began. A total of 6,032 interviews were conducted nationwide. Since 1980, the BZgA has been investigating the attitudes and behaviour of young people in the Federal Republic of Germany with regard to sexuality education, sexuality and contraception. This current study follows on from the previous years' studies with the explicit aim of illustrating trends.

### Project profile

<b>Client</b>	Federal Centre for Health Education (BZgA)
<b>Project lead</b>	Angelika Hessling, BZgA
<b>Survey institute</b>	Kantar GmbH
<b>Survey population</b>	Adolescents and young adults between the ages of 14 and 25
<b>Survey method</b>	Computer-supported combined oral-written survey; for the more intimate questions the questionnaire was to be filled out by the respondents without the interviewers being able to see.
<b>Selection method</b>	A disproportionately selected quota sample with regards to sex, age and migrant background
<b>Sample of young people</b>	6,032 interviews of which 3,556 were with adolescents between the ages of 14 and 17 and 2,476 with young adults between 18 and 25
<b>Sample: parents</b>	In the households of the 14- to 17-year-old adolescents without a migrant background one parent was also surveyed (2,422 interviews)
<b>Weighting</b>	All the data shown underwent a representative weighting in order to remove the sample's disproportionalities caused by the design.
<b>Survey period</b>	May to October 2019



### More information about the study Youth Sexuality 9th Iteration Central results and further fact sheets

<https://www.sexualaufklaerung.de/en/english/projects/detail/youth-sexuality-9th-iteration/>