



# Safeguarding Teenage Intimate Relationships (STIR)

Connecting online and offline contexts and risks

## Research Report

Funded by DAPHNE III European Commission







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## 1. BACKGROUND

European (EU) domestic violence (DV) research, practice and policy (for example the Istanbul Convention) have predominantly focused on adult women's experiences of intimate forms of violence and the impact of adult DV on children and young people.

We know very little about *young people's* experiences of intimate partner violence and abuse (IPVA) in their *own* relationships. In addition, many EU child welfare policies on protecting children fail to recognise IPVA in young people's relationships as constituting a child welfare concern.

Current research on IPVA in young people's relationships has primarily focused on face-to-face forms of violence and abuse. Few national or international research findings have addressed the incidence and impact of new technologies, including social networking sites, on young people's IPVA experiences. New technologies may compound incidence and impact of IPVA in young people's relationships. Earlier UK research (Barter et al 2009, Marsh et al 2010) highlighted the role that online spaces, including social networking sites, can play in underpinning face-to-face (offline) forms of IPVA. New technologies may intensify offline experiences of violence as well as constituting a discrete form of abuse in their own right. Nevertheless, how technological innovation, and young people's integrated use of new technologies in their everyday lives, impact on their experiences of IPVA is as yet largely unexplored both within European and international research.

The rapidity with which EU children and young people are gaining access to online, convergent, mobile and networked media is unprecedented in the history of the technical innovation (Livingstone and Haddon 2008). What seems clear is that online concerns for children and young people are not necessarily the same as those for adults (Livingstone et al 2011), and this applies to the issue of IPVA. Research has clearly demonstrated that, for

young people, online and offline spaces are in fact closely linked requiring an empirical investigation of the complex ways in which new technologies are used and made sense of in everyday life (Holloway and Valentine 2001; Livingstone and Bober 2004). Our research continues this tradition.

The EU Kids Online programme provided ground breaking findings on children's, and their parents', perspectives concerning internet risks and safety (Livingstone et al 2011). The online risks addressed included: pornography, bullying, receiving sexual messages and misuse of personal data. However, the role of new technologies and social media networking sites in instigating and maintaining IPVA in young people's relationships was not explored.

We need to be cautious in transferring adult IPVA understandings and prevention models onto young people's experiences. Although the structural inequalities underpinning IPVA as a form of gender-based violence may be similar, the construction of childhood also brings structural inequalities and limitations for young people that are not experienced by adults. In addition, different European states exhibit disparate structural and cultural dynamics which may influence both the degree and nature of IPVA in young people's relationships, the impact of IPVA on young people's welfare and their help-seeking and resistance strategies.

Greater recognition of the problem of IPVA in young people's relationships is required. Awareness of the issues faced by young people experiencing IPVA and more understanding of the role of new technologies need to be fully integrated into the development of prevention and intervention programmes. The lack of comparable data on IPVA victimisation, and its impact on young people's welfare, hampers this process in a range of EU states. The STIR project aimed to begin to address this gap in EU understanding and prevention development.



## 2. PARTNERS

Partner countries were selected to provide a wide geographical and policy spread and to offer diversity in levels of gender equality as well as variations in young people's use of new technologies. We included a spread of countries based on the European Gender Equality Index to explore how specific country gender dynamics impacted on IPVA experiences. Within our sample, England and Norway were judged to have greater gender equality than Bulgaria, Cyprus and Italy. The countries chosen also reflected the distinctions identified by the EU Kids Online survey on children's and young people's differential use of new technologies and associated risks. We purposely selected EU states identified as having low (Bulgaria and Cyprus), medium (Italy) and high (England and Norway) levels of internet use.

### Project Teams:

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Alba Lanau (University of Bristol) provided statistical support to the project team.



## 3. FUNDING

The project was funded by DAPHNE III European Commission.



## 4. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The project's overall aim was to contribute to:

- raising awareness through the provision of robust evidence;
- enabling young people's experiences and views to inform policy and practice;
- enhancing the development of appropriate prevention and intervention programmes;
- providing a resource which young people can access directly.

The specific research objectives were to:

- 1) Map relevant policy, practice and knowledge on IPVA in young people's relationships within each partner country and the degree to which these address the association between new technologies and IPVA in young people's relationships.
- 2) Create the first European comparative evidence-base on the incidence, impact, and the risk and protective factors associated with online and offline IPVA in young people's relationships.
- 3) Include young people's IPVA experiences and views, including the role of new technologies, to enhance and inform the development of European prevention and intervention responses.
- 4) Develop a virtual resource in each partner language directly accessible through the STIR website and also via a downloadable app. The resource was developed with young people for young people and provides awareness raising, research findings and signposts for appropriate sources of help in each country.



## 5. METHODOLOGY

STIR was based on a four stage mixed-method approach:

- **Stage 1:** Expert workshops: In each country partners, on two occasions convened a group of national experts to identify what was known about IPVA in young people's intimate relationships in each country, and to identify relevant policy and practice developments
- **Stage 2:** A school-based confidential survey of approximately 4,500 young people aged 14-17 year-olds was completed in 45 schools.
- **Stage 3:** Semi-structured interviews with 100 young people, using an interview schedule and vignettes were completed.
- **Stage 4:** Development of an online resource and a downloadable app for young people ([www.stiritapp.eu](http://www.stiritapp.eu)).

A young people's advisory group was convened in each country to comment on all aspects of the study. The groups helped to develop the survey, interview schedule, vignettes and the online resources.



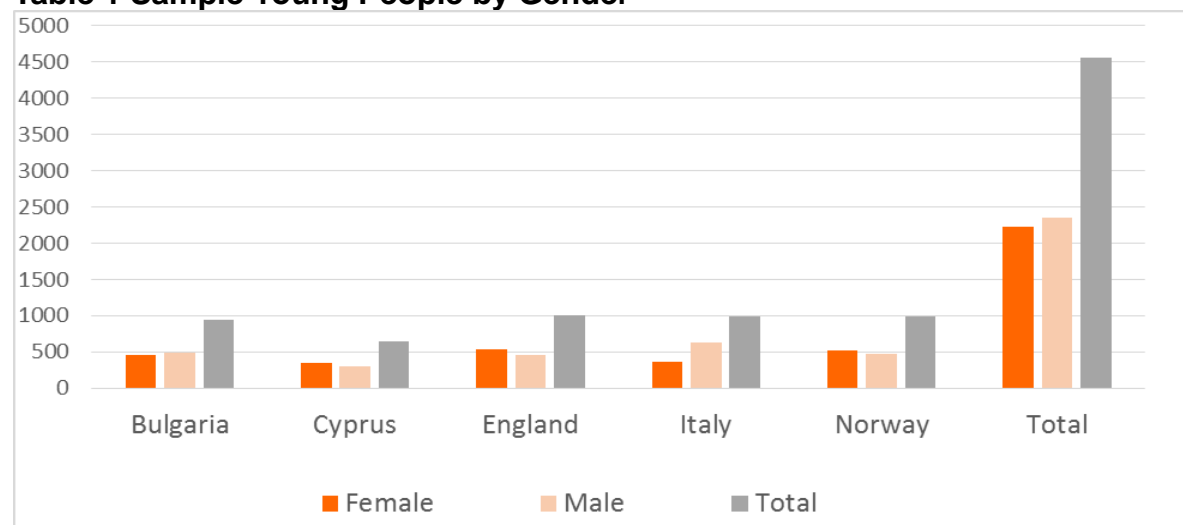
## Sample

**Survey:** 4564 young people took part in the survey. The sample included approximately equal numbers of young women and young men with a lower proportion of young women in the Italian sample (see Table 1). All countries aimed to include 1000 participants except Cyprus where, due to the smaller population size, the target was half this amount, which was subsequently exceeded. All participants were aged between 14 and 17 years-old (see Table 2), the spread of ages was quite similar across most of the sample,, however in England all young people were aged 14 or 15. The majority of



young people (72%) reported having a boyfriend or girlfriend (see Table 3). This proportion was highest in Italy and lowest in Norway. Most young people (96%) had a partner of the opposite-sex and 4% had a same-sex partner. We were unable to systematically record ethnicity or religion due to sensitivity of recording this data in some countries. All the survey findings are based on the **3277** young people who said they had been in a relationship.

**Table 1 Sample Young People by Gender**



**Table 2 Age of Young People in Sample**

	Mean age	Number	Std Deviation
Bulgaria	15.27	950	1.07974
Cyprus	15.62	642	1.09834
England	14.73	1005	.59950
Italy	15.29	991	.89191
Norway	15.10	991	.85630
Total	15.17	4579*	.94749

\*15 did not provide gender and were excluded from the overall analysis

**Table 3 Ever had a Relationship by Gender**

	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Bulgaria	Female	69% (n=313)	31% (n=140)
	Male	69% (n=335)	31% (n=148)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>69% (n= 648)</b>	<b>31% (n=288)</b>
Cyprus	Female	79% (n=272)	21% (n=74)
	Male	79% (n=233)	21% (n=63)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>79% (n=505)</b>	<b>21% (n= 137)</b>
England	Female	74% (n= 401)	26% (n=139)
	Male	70% (n=323)	30% (n=138)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>72% (n=724)</b>	<b>28% (n=277)</b>
Italy	Female	82% (n= 293)	18% (n=66)
	Male	89% (n=565)	11% (n=67)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>87% (n=858)</b>	<b>13% (n=133)</b>
Norway	Female	53% (n=272)	47% (n=242)
	Male	58% (n=270)	42% (n=197)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>55% (n=439)</b>	<b>45% (n=981)</b>

\*48 did not answer this question

**Interviews:** For the qualitative arm of the study, a total of 100 in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with young people: 91 of these interviews were included in the analysis as not all young people recruited had direct experiences of intimate violence. Interviews included in the analysis were completed with 67 young women and 24 young men. Participants were aged between 13 and 19 years-old; the majorities were 15 to 17. The interview respondents were recruited from schools via pastoral services, settings such as youth camps and workshops for young people or specialist services such as those working with IPVA.



## Analysis

**Survey:** Descriptive statistics including cross-tabulations were run for each form of violence across each country. Chi-squared analysis was undertaken to determine statistically significant differences *within* each country data set. As it was not possible in the confines of this study to collect a randomly stratified sample we are therefore unable to statistically compare *cross*

country differences, however we can observe general patterns in the comparative data.

Running logistic regressions separately for each country confirmed that, with a few exceptions, predictive factors were largely consistent across all five countries. This indicated the use of a single model for each type of violence. Additionally, separate regressions were run for males and females. Key variables were identified on the basis of existing theory, and progressively added into the model, testing for stability of the associations identified at each step. The initial model contained age and country variables to which other block variables were added including participant characteristics, wider attitudes and childhood violence. Associations were found to be generally stable. For this summary, the Odds Ratios (OR) are provided. As with any cross-sectional survey, we cannot identify causal relationships and are therefore unable to determine if the predictive factors are a cause or effect of violence. Only effects that were significant at 0.05 are reported. Interviews were fully transcribed and analysed using a Framework approach, to ensure that comparable issues were identified and understood in context.



The STIR research team had all worked on a range of sensitive research projects with children and young people and were fully aware of the ethical issues involved in undertaking such work. The project received ethical approval from the University of Bristol, School for Policy Studies, Ethics Committee (2013).

### ***Stage 1: Questionnaire***

#### ***Introduction and information distribution***

Initially a researcher from each team introduced the study to school pupils and distributed information leaflets for young people and their parents/carers.

Young people were able to ask questions at this time or individually with the researcher/s afterwards. The information leaflets explained: who the researchers were; how to contact them; the aims of the project; what was involved in participation; guarantees that the survey was completely confidential and anonymous; the voluntary nature of the project and consent. Both young people and parents/carers were provided with contact details of the research team if they had any further questions or concerns.

### *Consent – young people*

All young people who wished to take part in the study were required to sign a consent form before participation. The consent form clearly stated what they had consented to and reminded the young person that the survey was completely confidential and that participation was voluntary.

### *Consent – parents/carers*

Two forms of parental/carer consent were used in the study reflecting the different ethical frameworks in each country. In England parents/carers who did not wish their child to participate were required to sign an opt-out consent form which accompanied the parental/carer information leaflet and return this to the research team in a pre-paid envelope or email the named researcher to withdraw their child from the study. In all other countries parents/carers provided opt-in consent where they were required to sign and return the consent form to allow their child to participate.

### *Survey Administration*

Researcher/s administered the survey in each school. The survey process took between 20 and 30 minutes to complete. A small general quiz was included at the end for participants who finished early or who did not wish to continue with the survey itself.

### *Confidentiality*

The questionnaires were confidential and anonymous. It was made clear to all participants that they could stop at any time and that they did not have to answer any questions they didn't feel comfortable with. Due to the sensitive

nature of the research, a hand-out was given to all young people after completion of the survey containing the names and contact details of relevant local and national support organisations. The researchers were also available afterwards if young people wished to discuss anything.

## **Stage 2: Semi- Structured Interviews**

The interviews with young people lasted between 25 and 40 minutes. The team negotiated with each school or agency the most appropriate procedure for selecting the interview sample which ensured this was not stigmatising or placed pressure on young people to participate. Interviews were undertaken at a time and location most convenient to the young person.

### *Information Leaflet*

Suitably formatted information leaflets for young people and their parents/carers outlined the project, the interview process and limits of confidentiality.

### *Young People's Consent*

As with the survey, all young people who wanted to participate were required to sign a consent form. The consent form clearly stated the participant's rights within the interview process and what they were consenting to.

### *Parental Consent*

As the interviews were not completely confidential, opt-in parental consent was required. Parents/carers or legal guardians of young people aged 16 or under were required to sign and return a consent form. Parents could contact the research team to discuss their child's participation. Parents/carers of young people aged 17 and 18 years-old followed the opt-out consent procedure.

### *Confidentiality Policy*

Conditional confidentiality was offered to interview participants. All information remained confidential to the research team unless the researcher felt that the participant was at risk of significant harm. This was stated and explained in the leaflets and consent forms for young people and parents/carers. The conditional nature of the confidentiality policy was explained again before starting the interview, and repeated periodically throughout the research interaction. The young person was informed that if they said something that indicated to the researcher that a risk of significant harm might exist (examples were provided), either to them or another child/young person, this information would not be kept confidential. At each fieldwork location, a protocol for sharing information was developed in partnership with the school or agency.



## 6. FINDINGS



### Policy and Practice Awareness in Europe on Teenage Intimate Relationships and New Technology

#### The main findings are:

- Bullying/cyberbullying has been used as a concept to include all forms of violence and aggression against children.
- The topic of teenage IPVA, online and offline, is either absent or acknowledged only to a limited degree in law, policies and action plans.
- Awareness of teenage IPVA is low amongst both young people and professionals.
- Training for professionals and young people is offered in all countries, but is usually one-off and is not delivered on a systematic and continuous basis.
- The extent to which the role of gender is recognized in prevention and intervention policies/practices on IPVA in teenage relationships varies greatly between the European countries participating in this study.

#### Concepts and Definitions

In England, experts identified polarized discourses on IPVA in young people's relationships ('lock them up' vs 'they're just kids'), depicting children as 'angels' or 'devils'. The media can contribute to public perceptions that online abuse or bullying is more widespread than is in fact the case.

Schools may define online IPV as bullying because they are familiar with that definition and have policies for managing bullying but young people may not see it in this way. Some behaviours such as the original sharing of sexual

images with a partner may be perceived as consensual by victims so they don't define wider distribution of such images as bullying or abuse.

A further conflict of definitions concerns whether or not images or activities are judged as criminal and as noted below, this field is characterized by a lack of legislation. The experts contributing to the consultation discussions were themselves uncertain as to what aspects of abuse perpetrated online were criminal and it was noted that young people don't know what is illegal or not. Furthermore, young people's conceptions of consent might differ from those of professionals.

In Norway, there has been a focus on bullying in recent years, especially in regards to the *Olweus Programme* which has had a substantial impact on Norwegian schools and their approaches to handling issues of violence and abuse between students. The negative aspect of this is a tendency to define all negative behaviour between young people as bullying. IPVA as well as child abuse and neglect has for a number of years been a focus in Norway, but the IPVA is less acknowledged as a feature of young people's relationships.

In Cyprus, violence in the family has dominated public debate and the political agenda. Indeed, it is the form of violence most widely recognized and offers a framework within which other forms of violence (such as gender-based violence, violence against women, sexual abuse and intimate partner violence) are conceptualized and addressed. IPVA (especially IPVA in young people's relationships) is seldom referred to in the media or every day speech or literature. Sexual abuse in young people's relationships would be likely to be identified as a case of child pornography and addressed as such. Low levels of awareness in respect of IPVA and its impact on the well-being of young people have resulted in a very limited evidence base which could serve as a basis for the formulation of policy and practice.

Bulgarian experts mostly use concepts such as online bullying, gender-based violence and psychological abuse to refer to IPVA in young people's



relationships. If an abusive behaviour is illegal, it is classified as a sexual crime or some more specific class of crime such as the production or dissemination of child abuse material.

In Bulgaria, media coverage of such cases is rarely in accordance with the best interests of the child. Labels like stalker, rape, and paedophile are used to sensationalise the issue. The social discourse rarely allows for unheated discussion of teenage sexuality, so the topic is unpleasant for many parents and teachers.

In Italy, no systematic or coherent data collection activity has been yet implemented so different behaviours – such as paedophilia, sexual abuse in the family, child pornography, child trafficking for sexual exploitation, bullying (and cyber bullying), IPVA, gender-based violence, domestic violence – often get conflated and confused.

## **Policy and Practice Initiatives on Prevention and Intervention**

In England, the experts agreed that there is a general lack of guidance for professionals and services. IPVA in young people's relationships is recognized in some Government policy documents as well as in national media campaigns, but not in other areas of policy such as the Government's child protection guidance in England. NGOs working on domestic violence and children's rights usually recognize the issue in their documents, whilst NGOs working in the field of bullying do not. There are fewer policy initiatives with regard to online IPVA. This form of harm is recognized in Home Office guidance, and by some NGO projects, but not in Home Office domestic violence policy, anti-bullying and anti-cyberbullying policies, nor in publications from Internet safety organisations.

In Norway, the Government's four consecutive action plans on IPVA have to a limited extent acknowledged IPVA in young people's relationships. In the recent government report, *Strategy to Combat Violence and Sexual Abuse of*

*Children and Adolescents*, IPVA both online and offline, is mentioned specifically. However, the strategy places more emphasis on cyberbullying (as well as grooming and other adult crimes against children online) than digital violence and abuse. A number of these laws and policies are new, such as prohibiting the posting of pictures without the consent of the persons portrayed, as the topic has received increasing attention in the last years. NGOs in Norway have to a limited extent acknowledged teenage intimate partner violence, offline and online. There are, however, a couple of exceptions where organizations such as Reform, the Oslo refuge for abused women and Jentevakta, an online volunteer service for young women, have worked extensively on preventing IPVA in young people's offline relationships. There are also a number of violence prevention programmes in schools, but none of them, to our knowledge, specifically acknowledge IPVA in young people's relationships.

In Cyprus, the topic of violence in teenage intimate relationships is absent from policy and practice. Laws and policies regarding domestic violence are not effective for young people's relationships as these take place outside the family (as defined by law). There are, however, policies and laws that could apply to both offline and online cases of sexual abuse/exploitation within young people's relationships. Other forms of IPVA in young people's relationships, both offline and online, are not directly regulated by any law or policy and are addressed under laws on general harassment if reported to the police. There are no clear guidelines on how to best deal with incidents of IPVA in young people's relationships, which relevant State services need to be involved and on how victims can be best protected and supported.

In Bulgaria, there are several policy documents relevant to prevention and intervention in cases of IPVA. Although IPVA in young people's relationships is not mentioned in the Bulgarian Child Protection Act (2010), there was consensus among the experts that such cases are a risk to the health and development of children and, as such, are child protection issues. In accordance with the National Plan for Prevention of Violence against Children 2012-2014, a special mechanism for counteracting bullying and cyberbullying

was established by the Ministry of Education. This plan includes support for the Bulgarian Safer Internet Helpline. Projects aimed at prevention of violence and bullying/cyberbullying have been implemented and methodologies have been developed by the NGO sector.

In Italy, all levels of government in Italy have set up policies and actions to support and protect children. In 2007, the Public Education Ministry issued a directive for all schools, underlining the risks related to bullying and cyberbullying specifically, and set up a phone line and website, as well as permanent observatories on bullying in each region. Italian experts agreed on the relevance of one particular project conducted at national level: Connected Generations, developed by Telefono Azzurro and Save the Children Italy, to reduce online risks for children with special attention to cyber-bullying.

## **Barriers to Prevention and Intervention**

The expert groups in all countries noted a lack of evidence regarding effective policies or interventions. Evaluations tended to be local and small-scale and no systematic data collection has been yet implemented for creating a database of best practices. There were no national systems for monitoring and analyzing IPVA in young people's relationships. However, a scoping review of preventive interventions addressing IPVA in young people's relationships has been completed in the UK (Stanley et al forthcoming 2015).

In England, the barriers to prevention and intervention in this field were understood as being related to school environments. Schools were seen to be reluctant to talk about sexual bullying and trying to make them address the issue in their policies or teaching was described as very difficult. The extent to which they responded to disclosures of online abuse in young people's relationships was usually dependent on one teacher acting as a champion. Experts argued that instead prevention should be seen as a whole school issue and that an institutional level response was needed.

In Norway, schools are recognised as one of the main arenas for prevention work. However, schools are similarly reluctant to work with issues of violence and abuse. The 2013/2014 curricula for elementary schools and upper secondary schools include issues of violence and sexual abuse but do not specify IPVA in young people's relationships. As in other countries, NGOs working on IPVA in young people's relationships have recently experienced restrictions in funding which has impacted on these services.

At the expert meeting in Bulgaria, the participants pointed out that the current policies and practices are not very effective for several reasons. First, trust between agencies is low and professionals are reluctant to report cases due to concerns about secondary victimization when multiple agencies have to intervene and interrogate the child several times. Conflicting procedures and the limited use of child-friendly interrogation facilities also pose a problem when a child enters the judicial system. Second, there are insufficient resources to ensure the implementation of comprehensive prevention measures across the country. Third, there is a high staff turnover in child protection services which impedes continuous training and the development of the expertise required to address child abuse especially in its latest online manifestations. Last but not least, the training delivered by NGO organizations might be relevant and up-to-date, but its reach is usually limited to a few schools or municipalities.

In Cyprus, all experts recognized that interventions in the field of bullying and cyber bullying are primarily focused on prevention and awareness-raising whilst interventions remain relatively weak. In absence of a comprehensive policy framework, there are no clear guidelines on how schools can best proceed with handling IPVA incidents in the school environment, what actions need to be taken and which relevant authorities or professionals need to be involved. With regards to service provision, there are few government services that can offer victims support. Instead, NGOs fill this gap in service provision, providing psychological support through their helplines. Also,

awareness-raising campaigns take place in an ad-hoc and piecemeal manner, lacking systematic and joined-up approaches.

In Italy, the implementation of policies and guidance varies considerably between regions. In the current economic crisis, NGOs who have contributed to work in this field have suffered from cuts in public funding. Whilst incidents of IPVA in young people's relationships may be identified, there is a lack of resources and expertise to implement effective forms of support for young people. A risk-management perspective focused on managing the perpetrator seemed to prevail rather than an approach that would emphasise protecting the victim and preventing future violence.

## Levels of Awareness

In England, awareness of teenage intimate partner violence is generally low amongst young people and professionals, although recent initiatives such as the Home Office's *This Is Abuse* campaign may have had some impact in this respect. However, most initiatives and campaigns focus on the victim rather than perpetrator. There is a lack of relevant language to challenge the behaviour of perpetrators. Recognition of abusive behaviour may be compromised by the normalization of violence and abuse both online and in intimate relationships generally and young people may lack of understanding of what a respectful relationship might look or feel like. However, some experts considered that young people may get involved in abusive behaviour online despite having exposure to models of respectful relationships. In such cases, involvement in online forms of IPVA might be explained by access to technology or exposure to pornography together with natural sexual exploration and a propensity for risky behaviour among teenagers. Additionally, the problem of IPVA in young people's relationships, whether online or offline, is often hidden from adults and professionals. Their lack of awareness is partly attributable to the fact that knowledge of actual incidents is confined to peer groups.

In Norway, awareness is low among professionals. Campaigns and awareness material have been targeted at adults. Awareness of IPVA appears higher among young people since this is an issue that affects them and their friends, but victims seldom communicate with or seek help from adults.

In Cyprus, there is little information disseminated and very few awareness-raising activities that address IPVA in young people's relationships. The most important awareness raising activity in this field was the development and dissemination of the *Youth 4 Youth* manual for professionals. Although this manual was devised as tool to combat gender-based violence, it includes a specific chapter on IPVA in young people's relationships as well guidelines for both prevention and the management of such incidents.

In Bulgaria, experts consider aggressive interaction between peers in general to be increasing. However, IPVA in young people's relationships is rarely discussed, so most professionals are not aware either of its manifestations or the prevalence of this phenomenon in schools. Some NGOs also organize interactive discussions for young people, which the experts considered more effective than the distribution of fliers and brochures, since they assist young people to develop skills to cope with challenging situations.

In Italy, the expert group could not identify any awareness raising initiatives specifically addressing IPVA in young people's relationships.

## **Training for Professionals**

The English experts agreed that there were differences discernible in levels of training and awareness amongst the police and education professionals. In general however, practitioners are wary about intruding into area of intimate relationships – these are seen as private territory - but, for young people,

privacy rules are shifting. Practitioners are not confident about working with new technology and need to learn how to ask questions about cyberlives. There are a few training initiatives mainly delivered by NGOs such as Tender which trains teachers to deliver a programme aimed at tackling IPVA to children and young people in schools. However, the topic of IPVA in young people's relationships is not routinely addressed in teacher training.

In Norway, as in England, practitioners are wary about addressing the issue of teenage IPV both online and offline. The expert group considered that the generation gap that exists in respect of new technologies makes it difficult for young people and adults/professionals to address issues together in a fruitful way. Professionals, such as teachers and the police, are to varying degrees equipped to deal with these cases; they usually lack relevant training but rather rely on personal interest and engagement. Refuges for abused women provide expertise on IPV, but, until recently, they have had a limited focus on teenagers and their relationships. Teachers in Norway receive very limited training, if any, on these topics during their professional education and there are few opportunities for them to receive any further training on these issues after qualifying.

In Cyprus, the experts agreed that even though there have been attempts to educate teachers on cyberbullying, substantial gaps in knowledge and skills are still evident. Trainings is often ad-hoc and lacks continuity and consistency. Young people's intimate relationships are not a topic of priority for teachers' continuing education and teachers therefore lack the required skills and do not feel confident to teach the subject of relationships. While the Ministry of Education and the Pedagogical Institute have trained a considerable number of parents and educators on (cyber) bullying and on safer Internet use, this training was not systematic and continuous. NGOs also deliver occasional training on cyberbullying and online risks for educators and other professionals.

Participants in the expert meeting in Bulgaria felt that professionals working with young people were not adequately prepared to address issues such as

bullying and gender-based violence. They emphasised that professionals are especially uncertain in situations that involved new technologies due to their own lack of confidence in this area. Training for teachers on IPVA was judged unsatisfactory and the training that was available was not delivered on a regular basis. As in other countries, there is a reliance on NGOs to develop these training initiatives.

In Italy, the experts noted that schools are a primary setting for prevention of IPVA. However, teachers lack the training they need to identify and deal with events of abuse and violence. Instead, they resort to referral to social services which is often inappropriate or at too late a stage.

## **Education for Children and Young People**

In England, there are a number of preventive programmes for young people. Most of these target IPVA, and some explicitly address IPVA that is perpetrated online. However, such interventions tend to be delivered in schools on a one-off basis, sometimes in response to an incident, rather than being embedded into the curriculum. In Norway there are a number of school-based prevention programmes that focus on bullying and relational work however, none of them focus specifically on IPVA in young people's relationships. The experts agreed that such training is usually delivered in response to an NGO's outreach initiatives in schools or as an ad-hoc initiative organized by an individual teacher or youth leader.

There is material available for educating young people on cyber-bullying and safe use of the internet. Sex education includes a focus on interpersonal relationships but gender plays little part in this teaching. In Bulgaria, education on IPVA for young people consists mainly of one-off on issues such as bullying and gender-based violence and delivery is determined by the interests of the individual teacher or school policy. Juvenile delinquency services are also responsible for preventive interventions, so they may organise discussions on the topic with young people but again this is at the discretion of the local office. Some NGOs visit schools or organise training for



young people outside school on issues such as bullying and cyberbullying. There are also some peer research and mentoring programmes addressing bullying and online safety.

In Italy, many schools deliver teaching to students, usually through class discussion, on bullying/cyberbullying. Gender-based violence is infrequently addressed and the issue of IPVA is not tackled in school settings. The experts noted that no information was available on which schools and NGOs were working on this issue, in what ways and with what levels of effectiveness.

## Gender Perspectives

In England, the gender dimension of teenage IPV was fully recognised by members of the expert group and they identified two campaigns that had addressed issues of gender. However they concluded that whilst IPVA is a gendered issue in England, interventions for young people often lack a gendered approach. The gendered aspect of the issue is conveyed in everyday speech and the use of stereotypical and misogynist language. Some experts suggested that schools avoided the gendered dimension by default, framing the issue as bullying rather than the more 'difficult', 'embarrassing' and 'sexual' issue of IPVA. It was thought particularly important to engage young men in interventions that would allow and enable them to change abusive behaviour.

In Norway, the gender dimension of IPVA as well as IPVA in young people's relationships is recognized by experts, although official documents and laws may be gender neutral.

In Cyprus, the gender perspective is completely absent from the legal framework, policy and practice addressing any form of violence. Experts lacked knowledge and awareness of what it would mean to have a gender perspective incorporated in policy and practice. This lack of any gender perspective in policies and practices that address violence and abuse resulted in women going unrecognized as the primary victims. Moreover, as a gender

perspective was absent, there was limited data available regarding how women and men, young people experience violence and are affected by it in different ways.

In Bulgaria, according to the participants in the experts' meeting, a gender perspective on violence and abuse is confined to social workers and is rarely found outside social services. Teachers and policy makers tend to be insensitive to gender issues. Including the gender perspective in policy and practice was considered important for ensuring that the wellbeing of both men and women was adequately addressed.

Experts in Italy reported that little attention was given to gender in prevention and intervention policies and practices on violence/bullying/cyber-bullying in young people's intimate relationships.



## Incidence Rates and Impact of Experiencing Interpersonal Violence and Abuse in Young People's Relationships

The main findings are:

- Between a half and two-thirds of young women aged 14 to 17 years-old and between a third and two-thirds of young men from the five countries reported experiencing IPVA.
- The majority of young women reported a negative impact from their experiences while the majority of young men reported an affirmative impact or no effect.
- In all countries, young people who reported experiencing IPVA in their relationships were at least twice as likely to have sent a sexual image or message compared to young people who had not been victimised.

### Incidence Rates

The survey explored four different types of IPVA: Online Emotional Violence; Face-to-Face Emotional Violence; Physical Violence and Sexual Violence. We also asked about sending and receiving sexual messages. Each type of violence was measured by a range of questions. For the results we have combined all the questions for each form of violence victimisation to give an overall incidence rate for each country (see Table 4).

**Table 4 Gender and Incidence Rates for Experiencing IPVA**

Country	Gender	Online %		Emotional %		Physical %		Sexual %	
		no	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes
Bulgaria	Female	53	47	59	41	89	11	79	21
	Male	57	43	65	35	85	15	75	25
Cyprus	Female	55	45	69	31	90	10	83	17
	Male	57	43	66	34	91	9	81	19
England	Female	52	48	52	48	78	22	59	41
	Male	75	25	73	27	88	12	86	14
Italy	Female	60	40	59	59	91	9	65	35
	Male	54	46	41	41	87	13	61	39
Norway	Female	62	38	68	32	82	18	72	28
	Male	80	20	81	19	92	8	91	9

## ***Online Emotional Violence***

Online forms of emotional violence were measured by six questions. In the survey, respondents were asked 'Have any of your partners ever done any of these things using a mobile phone, computer or tablets to:

- Put you down or sent ever sent you any nasty messages?
- Post nasty messages about you that others could see?
- Sent you threatening messages online or by mobile phones?
- Try and control who you can be friends with or where you can go?
- Constantly check- up on what you have been doing / who you have been seeing, for example, by sending you messages or checking your social networking page all the time?
- Used mobile phones or social networking sites to stop your friends liking you, for example, pretending to be you and sending nasty messages to your friends?

The overall rate for experiencing some form of online violence was around 40% for both young women and young men in each country. However, young men in England and Norway reported much lower levels of online violence compared to young people in other countries (around 23%). Controlling behaviour (measured by 'control who you can be with...') and surveillance (measured by 'constantly checked up on...') were the most commonly experienced forms of online violence for both young women and young men.

## ***Face-to-Face Emotional Violence***

In the survey, to measure offline or face-to-face emotional forms of violence we asked respondents 'Have any of your partners ever done any of these things face-to-face':

- Put you down in a nasty way?
- Shouted at you/ screamed in your face/ called you names?
- Said negative things about your appearance, body, friends or family?
- Threatened to hurt you physically?

Rates for experiencing face-to face violence were more wide-ranging than rates for online violence. Across the five countries, between 31% and 59% of

young women and 19% and 41% of young men reported experiencing this form of behaviour from a partner. Young women and young men in Italy reported the highest levels. As with online forms of violence, young men in England and Norway reported the lowest levels of face-to-face emotional violence.

### ***Physical Violence***

Physical violence was measured by: 'Have any of your partners ever done any of these things:

- Used physical force such as slapping, pushing, hitting or holding you down?
- Used more severe physical force such as punching, strangling, beating you up, hitting you with an object?

In each country, between 9% and 22% of young women and 8% to 15% of young men reported some form of physical violence. Young women in England and Norway reported the highest levels: almost one in five reported having experienced physical violence compared to 1 in 10 young women in other countries.

### ***Sexual Violence***

Lastly, to explore sexual violence we asked young people: 'Have any of your partners ever done any of these things:

- Pressured you into intimate touching or something else?
- Physically forced you into intimate touching or something else?
- Pressured you into having sexual intercourse?
- Physically forced you into having sexual intercourse?

Rates for sexual violence ranged from 17% to 41% for young women and 9% to 25% for young men. Most young people reported pressure rather than physical force. The majority reported this occurred face-to-face or both face-to-face and online, very few reported online pressure in isolation. Again, young women in England and Norway reported the highest rates with one in three reporting some form of unwanted sexual activity.

## **Note on Comparative Research**

As European research on adult domestic violence (DV) has shown, the willingness of participants to report their experiences is often heavily influenced by how DV is viewed in different countries (FRA 2014). Countries with higher gender equality and greater DV awareness also often report the highest levels of DV. This may be because in these countries DV is viewed as a social and political rather than a personal and therefore private problem. The STIR expert meetings and the young people's advisory groups identified that England and Norway had the highest levels of awareness in respect of interpersonal abuse in young people's relationships. They also had the highest levels of physical and sexual violence for young women. It may therefore be that young women in Bulgaria and Cyprus are under-reporting their experiences of physical and sexual violence in a social context where awareness of the problem is lower.

## **Overall Incidence Rates for Victimization**

By combining all of the above responses into one category, we can see how many young people in each country experienced violence from a partner. Between 53% and 66% of young women and 32% and 69% of young men reported experiencing at least one form of violence. Incidence rates for young women were similar across the countries with England and Italy reporting the highest levels. Italy also reported the highest rates for young men whilst England and Norway had the lowest rates for young men. Most young people who experienced violence reported both online and offline forms of violence, few reported online victimisation in isolation.

## **Subjective Impact**

For each form of IPVA we asked respondents: How did this behaviour make you feel? The response options were placed to ensure that affirmative and negative impacts were dispersed. For the analysis results we grouped responses into two categories:

**Negative** responses were; upset; scared; embarrassed; unhappy; humiliated; bad about yourself; angry; annoyed; and shocked.

**Affirmative/no effect** responses were: loved; good about yourself; wanted; protected; thought it was funny and 'no effect'.

Impacts varied across the different types of violence. Nevertheless, a clear pattern emerged. Young women were much more likely to report a negative only impact, whilst young men were more likely to report a positive/ or no effect response to their experiences. This was most noticeable for sexual violence where between 81% and 96% of young women reported a negative only impact whilst between 60% and 75% of boys reported a positive or no effect response. It therefore appears that young women may be more negatively affected by their experiences than young men.

### **Instigation Rates for IPVA**

In each country, the percentage of young women who identified themselves as instigators of online violence is higher than for young men (see Table 5). This gender difference was more pronounced in England and Norway. Similarly, in all five countries young women are also more likely to report using face-to-face emotional violence; this difference was greatest in Bulgaria, England and Norway. Young women also report greater incidence rates for physical violence. In contrast, young men are substantially more likely than young women to report using sexual violence. It is noticeable that instigation rates for males in Italy are very high; which may also help to explain the high rate of sexual victimisation also reported by Italian young men. If we compare incidence rates for experiencing and instigating IPVA it is clear that some anomalies exist. Young women generally reported similar or greater levels of violence compared to young men; especially in England and Norway. However they also report higher levels of instigation, except in relation to sexual violence.

**Table 5 Gender and Incidence Rates for Instigating IPVA**

Country	Gender	Online %		Emotional %		Physical %		Sexual %	
		no	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes
Bulgaria	Female	68	32	57	43	85	15	93	7
	Male	72	28	68	32	91	9	83	17
Cyprus	Female	63	37	70	30	88	12	97	3
	Male	69	31	76	24	94	6	85	15
England	Female	74	26	69	31	91	9	98	2
	Male	82	18	84	16	96	4	93	7
Italy	Female	59	41	60	40	92	8	93	7
	Male	61	39	64	36	93	7	63	37
Norway	Female	78	22	80	20	93	7	96	4
	Male	86	14	88	12	95	5	95	5

### **Sending and receiving sexual images and text messages**

Although there was little difference in young people's access to mobile phones, substantial variations existed between countries in relation to sending and receiving sexual images and messages. Between 6% and 44% of young women and 15% to 32% of young men said they had *sent* a sexual image or text message to a partner (see Table 6). Similar proportions of young women, between 9% and 49%, and a slightly higher proportion of young men, 20% to 47%, reported received a sexual image or message from a partner. The highest rates for both sending and receiving were in England and the lowest in Cyprus. In all countries it seems that this was often a reciprocal activity, as approximately two-thirds of young people who had sent an image or message had also received one.

**Table 6: Sending and receiving sexual images and text messages**

<b>Sent</b>	<b>Bulgaria</b>	<b>Cyprus</b>	<b>England</b>	<b>Italy</b>	<b>Norway</b>
Female	26%	6%	44%	16%	34%
Male	29%	15%	32%	25%	25%
Total	28%	10%	38%	22%	30%
<b>Received</b>	<b>Bulgaria</b>	<b>Cyprus</b>	<b>England</b>	<b>Italy</b>	<b>Norway</b>
Female	35%	9%	49%	18%	37%
Male	36%	20%	47%	36%	35%
Total	35%	14%	48%	30%	36%



Many participants reported an affirmative only impact to sending images or messages, with between 41% and 87% of young women and 75% to 91% of young men stating this. However, between 13% and 59% of young women and 9% and 25% of young men recorded some form of a negative impact after sending sexual images or text message. Girls in England, Norway and Italy were more likely to report a negative impact.

### **Sharing Sexual Images and Text Messages**

Between 9% and 42% of young women in four of the five countries reported that a message they sent was shared with other people by their partner. Cyprus was not included due to low numbers. In contrast, only 9% to 13% of young men reported this. Young women in England were most likely to report that a photo or message had been shared (42%), followed by Norway (27 per cent).

Due to low numbers, we can only examine sharing of messages in England and Norway. Our findings indicate that young women whose images or messages were shared with other people by their partners were more likely to report a negative impact. In England and Norway, nearly all young women whose image or message was shared also reported a negative impact (97 per cent in England and 83 per cent in Norway). Nevertheless, although very few Italian young women in the survey reported their images had been shared, a high proportion (43%) reported a negative impact from sending a sexual image or text message.

Variations by country were found in the impact of sexting. These may be explained by more recent access to new technologies in some countries or by differing attitudes towards female sexual activity between countries. Higher reporting of negative impact in some countries may be associated with a greater awareness of the dangers of sexting in those countries particularly in relation to sharing messages.

## Associations with Relationship Violence and Abuse

In all countries, young people were more likely to have sent a sexual image or text message if they were experiencing violence or control in their relationships. Also in all countries, young people who reported experiencing IPVA were at least twice as likely to have sent a sexual image or text compared to young people who had not experienced IPVA (see Table 7). This was the case for all types of violence, irrespective of gender.

**Table 7: Associations between sending images and violence**

Type of abuse	Female		Male	
	Victim	Non-victim	Victim	Non-victim
<b>Online</b>	8% - 65%	4% - 24%	20% -50%	11% -26%
<b>Emotional</b>	11%- 59%	3% - 30%	26% -53%	19% -24%
<b>Physical</b>	21% -75%	4% - 35%	38% -58%	13% - 29%
<b>Sexual</b>	28% -68%	6% - 28 %	24% - 69%	13% - 25%

## Reasons for Sending Sexual Images and Messages

The most common reasons for sending a sexual image or message were: because a partner asked them to send it (between 32% and 56% of young women and between 20% and 44% of young men); to feel sexy or flirtatious (between 36% and 51% of young women and between 21% and 57 % of young men); and as a joke (between 14% and 47 % of young women and between 17% and 39% of young men). In England, some young women reported sending sexual images and text messages to prove their commitment to a partner (43%) and because they were pressured by a partner (27%).



## Risk and Protective (Predictive) Factors for IPVA Victimisation and Instigation

The main findings are:

- Being a victim of interpersonal violence and abuse (IPVA) was significantly associated with: not doing well at school; having an older partner; negative gender attitudes; family violence; bullying and, for young men, having peers who used intimidation.
- Instigation of IPVA was significantly associated with: not doing well at school; having older and younger partners; negative gender attitudes; watching pornography; family violence; bullying and associating with peers who used intimidation.

### Survey findings: Predictive factors

The survey measured a range of predictive or protective and risk factors in addition to age and gender. These factors were chosen on the basis of previous research findings and associations identified through direct practice.

The factors can be grouped into two categories:

- The first grouping addressed young people's general experiences and attitudes including: how young people feel they are doing at school; the age of their partner; their gendered attitudes and if they regularly watched online pornography (see Table 8).
- The second grouping measured young people's wider experiences of childhood violence and abuse including: domestic violence and child abuse in the family (family violence); being bullied and bullying others and aggressive peer friendship groups (see Table 9).

## General Experiences and Attitudes

**Table 8: General Experiences and Attitudes**

Country	Gender	Doing well at school			Age of partner		Gendered Attitudes			Regularly watch pornography	
		Yes %	No %	Don't Know %	Includes older %	Same or Younger %	1 %	2 %	3 %	Yes %	No %
Bulgaria	Female	65	7	28	66	34	36	50	14	8	92
	Male	55	16	29	14	86	17	42	41	44	56
	<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>73</b>
Cyprus	Female	78	7	15	57	43	33	59	8	3	97
	Male	76	7	17	24	76	9	50	41	59	41
	<b>Total</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>72</b>
England	Female	74	8	18	52	48	53	43	4	3	97
	Male	80	4	16	17	83	29	54	18	39	61
	<b>Total</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>81</b>
Italy	Female	82	1	16	70	30	67	31	2	5	95
	Male	72	3	25	24	76	25	54	21	44	56
	<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>70</b>
Norway	Female	79	8	13	44	56	53	43	4	7	93
	Male	75	9	16	13	87	28	55	16	48	52
	<b>Total</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>74</b>

### *Doing Well at School*

The survey asked young people: 'Do you feel you are generally doing well at school?' Respondents could answer 'yes', 'no' or 'don't know'. A similar pattern was evident across the five countries showing that the majority of young people felt they were doing well at school. This was slightly lower for Bulgaria where a greater proportion of young people were unsure of how well they were doing. For analysis purposes, 'no' and 'don't know' categories were merged.

### *Age of Partner*

Participants were asked 'generally have your partners been': 'much younger (more than 2 years)'; 'slightly younger (between 1 and 2 years)'; 'same age'; 'slightly older (1-2 years)'; and 'much older (more than 2 years)'. Respondents often ticked more than one category. Consequently, and reflecting previous research findings on predictive factors, we coded responses into two

categories: participants who reported at least one older partner; and participants who reported only a same age or younger partner. In all countries, young women were statistically more likely to report an older partner and young men were more likely to have had a younger partner.

### ***Gender Attitudes***

Young people's gender attitudes were measured using three questions. Each question was chosen to reflect a specific aspect of gender inequality.

Respondents were asked to report on a five point scale 'How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements:'

- For the most important job it is better to choose a man instead of women.
- Women lead men on sexually and then complain about the attention they get.
- It is sometimes acceptable for a man to hit women if she has been unfaithful.

Respondents were allocated a score that reflected their levels of agreement with these statements; the higher the score the more negative the gender attitude. For ease of analysis, scores were categorised into three groups: 1 (scored 3-6); 2 (scored 6-9); 3 (scored 10-15). Group 1 held the least negative attitudes and Group 3 the highest negative gendered attitudes. In all countries, young men were statistically more likely than young women to hold more negative gender attitudes. Young people in Bulgaria and Cyprus reported higher negative gender attitudes compared to young people in the other three countries. Focusing on the three questions separately, the highest scores, and therefore the most negative attitudes, irrespective of gender or country, were associated with question two which measured attitudes to women's responsibility for sexual violence.

### ***Pornography***

Respondents were asked 'Do you regularly watch online pornography?' In line with other research, young men were very much more likely to report watching pornography than young women in all countries. Young men in Cyprus were most likely to report regular exposure to online pornography.

## Wider Experiences of Childhood Violence

**Table 9: Wider experiences of childhood violence and abuse**

Country	Gender	Family Violence		Bullied		Bullied others		Aggressive Peer group		
		yes	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no	Don't know
Bulgaria	Female	26	74	31	69	19	81	64	23	13
	Male	21	78	24	76	33	67	62	23	15
	<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>14</b>
Cyprus	Female	12	88	19	81	12	88	11	71	18
	Male	14	86	23	77	23	77	18	58	24
	<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>21</b>
England	Female	32	68	49	51	10	90	11	69	21
	Male	24	76	37	63	19	81	18	56	26
	<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>23</b>
Italy	Female	19	81	25	75	7	93	6	73	23
	Male	20	80	18	82	23	77	14	61	25
	<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>25</b>
Norway	Female	22	78	42	58	12	88	33	75	18
	Male	14	86	38	62	22	78	12	68	20
	<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>19</b>

### *Child abuse and domestic violence in the family*

We measured the extent to which young people had experienced family violence through two interrelated questions. We asked: 'Have any adults in your house/family regularly used physical force such as punching, hitting, slapping?' and/or '...constant name calling/shouting?'. Participants could answer yes or no to the following options: against you; against other children/young people or against other adults. As affirmative responses to the above questions were relatively low, for the regression analysis, all responses were coded into two categories: experienced family violence or had not experienced family violence. England reported the highest rate, although as discussed earlier, this may be influenced by wider awareness and willingness to report.

### *Negative peer experiences*

Three questions sought to measure wider experiences of negative peer interactions. We asked participants: 'Have you ever been bullied?'; 'Have you

ever bullied anyone else?’ and ‘Do your friends use aggression or intimidation against other young people?’

Wide variation in the proportion of young people reporting being a victim of bullying was evident across the five countries. England and Norway reported the highest levels; again this may reflect the greater level of recognition in these countries. Around one in five young people reported being a bully, although the proportion was slightly higher in Bulgaria. On average, young men were twice as likely as young women to report this behaviour. In respect of wider peer aggression, and generally reflecting the pattern found for bullying across the five countries, around one in ten respondents reported that their peers used intimidation. However, in Bulgaria, over 60% of young people reported this, although this may reflect a different interpretation of the question. Levels of intimidation did not differ substantially by gender except in Norway where young women were three times as likely as young men to state that their peers used intimidation.

## **Predictive Factors for Experiencing IPVA**

### **Predictive Factors for Female Experience of IPVA:**

#### ***Wider Experiences and Attitudes***

Young women who reported doing well at school were *less* likely to report online (OR.68), face-to-face (OR.55) and sexual (OR.60) victimisation. However, we do not know if ‘not doing well at school’ is a *consequence* of being in an abusive relationship or a *risk* for entering into an abusive relationship due to, for example, low self-esteem. Female participants with older partners had a greater chance of experiencing victimisation online (OR 2.5), face-to-face (OR 1.7) and sexually (OR 2.0). Young women who reported less positive gender attitudes (category 2) were more likely to report online (OR 1.5), face-to-face (OR 1.3) and sexual (OR 1.4) violence,

compared with young women with the most egalitarian gender attitudes (category 1).

### ***Wider Experiences of Violence***

Two forms of childhood violence were statistically significant in predicting female experience of IPVA: family violence and bullying. Family violence was associated with an increased risk of online (OR 2.1), face-to-face (OR 2.2) and sexual (OR 2.2) female victimisation. Three different categories of bullying were associated with an increased risk of intimate violence: victim only; victim and bully and bully only. Being a victim of bullying was associated with being a victim of online (OR 1.8); face-to-face (OR 1.9) and sexual (OR 2.0) violence. Similarly, being both a victim and perpetrator of bullying was associated with experiencing face-to-face (OR 2.5) and sexual (OR 2.1) victimisation. Being a 'bully only' also showed significant association with female victimisation online (OR 2.0); face-to-face (OR 2.4) and sexually (OR 1.9). Associations with wider peer intimidation were not statistically significant.

### **Predictive Factors for Male Experience of IPVA**

#### ***Wider Experiences and Attitudes***

Similar predictive factors were also identified in the regression analysis for male victims. Doing well at school was, however, only a protective factor in relation to face-to-face male victimisation (OR 0.7). As with female participants, having an older partner increased the risk of male victimisation online (OR 2.0), face-to-face (OR 1.8) and sexually (OR 1.6). Similarly, negative gender attitudes were associated with increased male victimisation: young men with the most extreme attitudes were most likely to be victims of online (OR1.9), face-to-face (OR 2.0) and, most strongly, sexual violence (OR 3.3). We know that many young men who reported being victims of sexual violence also reported sexual perpetration which may help to illuminate this association.



### ***Wider Experiences of Violence***

For young men, family violence was associated with an increased risk of experiencing online (OR 1.6), face-to-face (OR 1.8) and sexual violence (OR 2.5). Being a victim of bullying was significantly predictive of victimisation online (OR 1.6) and face-to-face (OR 1.6). Young men who reported being a victim and a perpetrator of bullying were also at an increased risk of intimate victimisation online (OR 1.7) face-to-face (OR 2.0) and sexually (OR 1.9). Lastly, for this variable, being a bully only was a risk for online (OR 1.4) and sexual (OR 1.5) intimate violence. In contrast to female victimisation, having peers who used intimidation was a statistically significant predictor of male victimisation online (OR 2.1) and sexually (OR 1.6). In addition, not knowing if their peers used intimidation was also associated with online (OR 1.6) and face-to-face (OR 1.5) victimisation.

### **Predictive Factors for IPVA Instigation**

#### **Predictive Factors for Female Instigation:**

Note: few young females reported using sexual violence; accordingly the sample sizes for female instigators of sexual violence are very small.

### ***Wider Experiences and Attitudes***

Doing well at school was associated with lower reported rates of face to face instigation (OR 0.7) and it was nearly significant for online violence (OR: 0.8). Female participants with younger partners were more likely to report sexual instigation of violence (OR 3.5). However, and rather oddly, those with at least one older partner reported increased instigation online (OR 2.6) and face to face (OR1.6). As most provided a range of partner ages we cannot be sure that their actions were directed at the older partner. Negative gender attitudes were also a significant predictor of instigating violence online (OR 1.3), face to face (OR 1.5) and, most strongly, sexually (OR 3.6). Watching pornography was associated with increased sexual instigation (OR 5.0), although the

number of young women viewing pornography was extremely low which may also explain the very high odds ratio.

### ***Wider Experiences of Violence***

Family violence was associated with increased online (OR 2.4) and face to face (OR 2.0) instigation. Being a victim of bullying was a significant predictor of face to face IPVA (OR 1.6). Bullying others was associated with online (OR 1.7) and face to face (OR 2.6) instigation. Also, having aggressive peers was associated with face to face violence instigation, although the effect was relatively weak (OR 1.5).

### **Predictive Factors for Male Instigation:**

#### ***Wider Experiences and Attitudes***

As with female respondents, doing well at school was only associated with lower reported rates of face to face violence instigation by young men (OR 0.7). Having an older partner was, rather unexpectedly, associated with online (OR 2.1) face to face (OR 1.6) and sexual (OR 2.0) instigation, although the above caveat stands. Holding negative gender attitudes was also a significant predictor of online (OR 1.7), face to face (OR 2.3) and, most strongly, sexual (OR 2.8) violence instigation. Lastly, watching pornography was significantly associated with sexual violence (OR 2.4), and was nearly significant for online (OR 1.3) and face to face (OR 1.3) instigation.

#### ***Wider Experiences of Violence***

Family violence was significantly associated with all three forms of IPVA instigation: online (OR 1.9); face to face (OR 1.9); and sexual (OR 2.3). Being a victim of bullying was a predictive factor for online (OR 1.8), face to face (OR 2.3), and sexual (OR 1.8) violence instigation. Similarly, young men who reported bullying others were also more likely to use online (OR 1.5), face to face (OR 1.5) and sexual (OR 1.6) forms of IPVA. Lastly, having aggressive friends was an indicator for online (OR 2.0 [don't know OR 1.5]) and sexual (OR 1.5) violence instigation.



## **Young People's Views on Intervention and Prevention for Interpersonal Violence and Abuse in Young People's Relationships**

The main findings are:

- A quarter of the young people surveyed had not talked to anyone about the IPVA they had experienced in their intimate relationships.
- Most young people talked to peers rather than adults about their experiences of IPVA.
- Young people's view of IPVA as a private matter, a lack of trust in others and the desire to protect the perpetrator or the relationship were all barriers to seeking help.
- Young people tended to see themselves and their peers as responsible for preventing IPVA.
- Most young people participating in the study were positive about the value of prevention work in relation to IPVA.
- School and home were identified as the most important settings for prevention of IPVA.

In the survey, those young people who reported experiencing IPVA were asked if they had told anyone about their experience. In the 91 interviews completed with young people who had experienced IPVA, young people were asked in more depth about sources of support following their experience of IPVA as well as for their views on prevention initiatives. These findings are also reported here.

### **Who do young people tell about their experiences of IPVA?**

The vast majority of the young people in all five countries had told someone about their experience of IPVA violence and abuse. However, while 74% had done so, 26% had not talked to anyone.

Most young people, across the five countries, regardless of what form of violence they had experienced, chose to talk to peers rather than adults. A total of 64% chose to confide in a friend whilst only 17 % spoke to an adult. More young women than young men, across all forms of violence and in all countries, were willing to seek support from others. Of the young women, 75% spoke to a friend about the violence, whilst 54% of the young men did the same. Only 18% of the young women and 15% of the young men spoke to an adult, usually a parent. Furthermore, we found no differences in the young people's willingness to reach out to others according to their age and exposure to family violence. However, a willingness to reach out to others did differ depending on the type of IPVA they had experienced. In total, 70% of those who had experienced online IPVA, 66% of those who were victims of face-to-face physical or emotional violence, and 55% of those who experienced sexual violence told someone about it. The most common responses to experiencing IPVA was to end the relationship (14%), delete any messages from the person (27%) and block him/her from contacting them (17%).

### **What are the barriers to seeking support?**

The finding that about one quarter of the young people in this study did not talk to anyone about the violence and only about one in seven talked to an adult highlights the importance of investigating the barriers for seeking support. Through analyzing the young people's accounts, we identified three main reasons for refraining from seeking support from others:

#### ***IPVA was seen as a private issue***

***I think that in order to build my character, I have to sit, think about the situation and cope alone.*** (Sophia, 18, Bulgaria)

Those who felt that the violence was a private issue expressed this in two ways. On one hand, their experience of IPVA was seen as their own responsibility. Those who saw the violence as something they had to take care of themselves argued that they were at an age where they should be

able to handle the issues on their own, that seeking help would be admitting that they weren't able to handle their problems or they simply stated that they liked to handle problems on their own. On the other hand, some young people did not want to burden others with their problems. They felt that others probably had their own problems to deal with or that the violence was not yet significant enough to bother others about it.

### **A lack of trust in others**

***The school nurse, I have talked a little to her, but she knows nothing about this, I can't tell her, 'cos I feel like I can't trust her, she might tell someone else, I feel deep inside that she won't, but you never know, I have experienced school nurses telling before.***  
(Tone, 17, Norway)

A common reason given for not seeking support was a lack of trust in the competence of adults and professionals. Some young people believed that adults gave inadequate advice because of a generation gap, stating that adults were 'old fashioned', or they overreacted and didn't understand the issues today's teenagers face. This was particularly emphasized in respect of online forms of IPV. Others felt that professionals such as school nurses or teachers either lacked necessary knowledge about IPV or didn't take it seriously enough. They were also afraid that adults would share information about their situation carelessly. However, this lack of trust in adults, also extended to peers. Many young people didn't feel that they could trust their friends to be able to see the situation from their point of view. A lack of trust in friends was often associated with previous experience of gossip and rumours which had made them hesitant about sharing such personal information.

### **Young people wanted to protect the perpetrator or the relationship**

***...I told him that he should be careful, I have... 'I could tell the police about you', but I would never do it, but I told him to make him feel a bit afraid... to be a little mean, since I was so tired of him being so angry. But... he knows I would never do that to him.***  
(Lise, 18, Norway)

Some of the young people had chosen not to tell anyone about the IPVA they had experienced because they wanted to protect either the perpetrator or the relationship itself. The young people interviewed gave different explanations for this. Some were worried about the consequences it could have for the perpetrator, for instance, problems with their parents or problems with having to quit school or sports as a punishment might ensue. For others, the violence or abuse was not sufficient to make them want to end the relationship. They were afraid that others, often parents, would force them to end the relationship if they found out about the IPVA.

## Preventing IPVA in Young People's Relationships

### *Role of Schools*

***The schools should talk about it more, take it more seriously. The teachers should be more involved*** (Tone, 17, Norway)

Most young people in the study expressed optimistic views about the value of prevention work. In all five countries, the school was the most frequently mentioned arena where young people thought violence prevention work should take place. Young people suggested a number of ways in which schools could engage in preventive activities. They argued that school counsellors should involve young people in discussion on issues such as setting limits in intimate relationships and the school nurse should be easily approachable and show an understanding of young people's realities. Several young people argued that school prevention work should include stricter, hands-on policies and practices such as not allowing the use of mobile phones and social networking sites during the school day.

Young people highlighted a particular need for information on what is legal and permitted or appropriate behaviour on digital media. Some young people considered messages addressing gender equality to be an important element of prevention work, but this was not the case in all countries. In Cyprus,

Norway and England, young people pointed out how differences between the genders need to be problematized when dealing with IPVA, whilst in Italy and Bulgaria, gender was less likely to be considered an important issue.

Young people also emphasized that the overall approach taken to prevention is crucial. The message conveyed was that young people want information from and dialogue with adults, but it needs to be done in a respectful and non-judgmental way.

### **Role of the family**

***I think parents should be good role models. If parents scream on the phone and post ugly messages, then you think it is ok, if they don't do it, it is a form of prevention.*** (Sofie, 16, Norway)

The family was identified as another important setting for violence prevention initiatives. It was suggested that parents should teach their children appropriate behaviour as well as providing positive role models. Young people in Norway thought that this role could include following and protecting them on digital media but this view was confined to those young people interviewed in Norway.

### **Role of the Peer Group**

***There are a lot of people who are stressed, and they blow off steam by being mean and hurtful to their partners. In this case [where Nikolaj intervened to protect his friend's partner] it was very important to intervene and say that this is not ok, so that he could calm down.*** (Nikolaj, 18, Bulgaria)

However, not all young people in all countries saw the school and the home as the main contexts for preventing IPVA in young people's relationships. In Bulgaria, most young people suggested that it was young people themselves who should prevent IPVA happening. This view was shared to some extent by interviewees from all five countries. Young people suggested that positive and negative experiences should be shared between friends and that it was important to learn from each other's mistakes. Peers were not only seen as responsible for passing on knowledge about how to prevent violence, they

were also seen as having a role in physically intervening to prevent violence from taking place. Other young people felt that the only person who could prevent violence or abuse occurring was the individual him/herself.





## Young People's Perspectives on Interpersonal Violence and Abuse in Intimate Relationships

The main findings are:

- In all five countries, online and offline control and surveillance was accepted as normal by many young people.
- Verbal abuse was extensive and tolerated by many young people interviewed; physical violence was also normalised, especially when alcohol was involved.
- Offline sexual pressure was extensive for some young women in all five countries and was normalised to the extent that rape was sometimes not recognised.
- Young people in four countries had sent sexual images of themselves and in the England in particular this was perceived as normal behaviour. Online control and surveillance and offline abuse were closely related.
- Using social networking as a means of perpetrating abuse intensified the impact.
- Impact varied according to gender with young women reporting substantially more harmful impact than young men.

The following issues were addressed in the interviews:

1. What is a positive relationship?
2. Experiences of control and surveillance online and offline
3. Experiences of sending sexual images and sexual pressure
4. Experiences of physical and emotional violence
5. Gendered dimensions and impacts of interpersonal violence and abuse
6. The role of new technologies in offline abuse.

## What is a good relationship?

***A good relationship is a relationship where you and your partner really trust each other, feel that you can talk to each other about everything and you can be yourself with the other person... In a good relationship you can feel free to act spontaneously without thinking beforehand if you need to say something.*** (Smaragda, 17, Cyprus).

***The most important thing is the respect and after that comes trust and allowing personal space to the other. That is it!*** (Sophia, 18, Bulgaria)

Almost all young people responded to our question about what comprises a good relationship with comprehensive descriptions of healthy relationship attributes. These included: mutual trust; honesty; effective communication; giving each other space; boosting each other's confidence; liking you for who you are; emotional support and care; feeling safe and mutual respect. Trust was the most common theme identified across the 91 interviews analysed.

## Experiences of control and surveillance online and offline

***The trouble happened when I told him I had to go to church or do some activities with my friends from the parish... shouting and fighting was the rule...*** (Gaia, 17, Italy).

In all five countries, some young people we interviewed had experienced control and surveillance, and in four countries (not Norway) a few reported using these behaviours themselves. Online control included: being instructed not to chat with specific people or to delete contacts; being pressured or forced to give passwords for online accounts; having their text conversations monitored or receiving constant phone calls to check on their whereabouts. Offline control included: limiting contact with friends; telling their partners what to wear; turning up uninvited and getting upset, annoyed and angry if their partner wanted to take part in activities without them.

Normalisation of online and offline control and surveillance was apparent in some of the accounts. Although most of those interviewed considered that

decision making was shared equally in their relationships, it became apparent in the course of the interviews that some young people were in controlling relationships. This contradiction may be explained by the fact that some young people accept controlling behaviour and see it as a normal part of a 'caring' relationship. Sharing passwords appeared to be accepted as standard by many young people; control and surveillance was seen as a sign of care, love or protection:

***Initially I thought it [him calling to ask where I was and wanting details of who I met and what I was doing] was ok... I even kind of liked it, you know... I thought it was a sign he really cared for me.***  
(Claudia, 15, Italy)

***To have your girlfriend 'like' photos of people she doesn't know isn't such a nice thing to see in Facebook...when she does that it's as if she is saying she doesn't want me.*** (Chrysanthos, 16, Cyprus)

Where controlling behaviour was not normalised, it was still accepted by a few young people who were willing to be controlled in order to make their partner happy or to avoid confrontation: *'it's like you'll do anything to make them happy'*. However, some young people were starting to question their acceptance of controlling behaviour *'If he trusts me why is he doing so? Does he want to control me? Isn't this blackmailing?'*

Those young people who had put an end to control and surveillance in their relationships had achieved this by either ignoring it - *'I can do what I want [no matter what they say]'* - by ending the relationship or by making joint decisions to give each other equal freedom: *'He realised that if he wanted to have friends that were like girls he had to like lay off'*.

## **Sending sexual images and sexual pressure**

In four countries, some young people we interviewed had sent sexual images of themselves to their partners. In Cyprus, no-one had sent an image but a few young people knew of people who had. Being asked for a sexual image by partners was accepted as normal by young people in England (almost all

had been asked at one time or another). Sending sexual images was sometimes mutual and freely chosen but normalisation of this in some peer cultures (all but Cyprus) led to expectations that sometimes caused pressure and anxiety for those young women who were afraid that their refusal might end the relationship: *'I do not want to put a barrier between us [by refusing to send nude pictures of myself], but at the same time I do not want to get hurt'*. In Bulgaria, those interviewed felt that they had a choice whether to send such pictures, but some considered that this was normal practice for younger girls:

***'The Internet is full of girls as young as 12-13 with naked photos or clips. For example, they dance and strip. One was only 8 and had such a clip.... Young girls just don't understand. For them, this is something normal'***. (Lois, 17, Bulgaria)

Most young people refused to send images because they did not trust their partners and were afraid of the possibility of the photos being shared with others after the break once the relationship ended:

***I have never shared pictures with guys I have been going out with, one tried, but I thought it was unnecessary, he called when he was drunk and asked why I wouldn't...I didn't trust him, he could have used that picture, it has consequences, if I would break up he could have used that picture against me.*** (Julia, 16, Norway)

Creating and sharing sexual images and text was occasionally described as a *'regular mutual exchange'* (Italy, female 16), in which images might be sent without pressure. One young woman also described initial hesitation that turned into enjoyment *'after a while I liked it too ...I didn't get completely naked but almost. I liked it... I thought it was going to be our little secret'*. But when such images were shared with other people it caused a lot of distress especially for participants from religious families or small communities. Even when images and intimate texts had not been shared, knowing that their partner or ex-partner had them in their possession caused anxiety for some young people, especially young women:

***He walks along with her 'whole life', in his mobile phone, ready to share it with anyone at any time.*** (Erika, 17, Norway)

None of the young people interviewed said that they had put anyone under any sexual pressure. Experience of being pressured online was evident among young people in England, Italy and Norway. Offline sexual pressure and abuse was more extensive and experienced mainly by young women in all five countries. This included forced touching, kissing, oral sex and rape. Sexual pressure was normalised: *'When you are going out with someone when you are 15, you have sex'*, and rape within relationships was not sometimes recognised: *'I know I didn't want it, but regardless, it happened, but I don't see it as that [rape]'*.

Young female participants sometimes were forced to send more explicit sexual images against their wishes. In some instances they continued to do so because their partner applied pressure or threats if more photos were not sent:

***This other guy said that if I did not send him a picture of 'down there', he would post it [the photo he already had]*** (Mia, 15, Norway)

Most young people had talked to a close friend about such incidents, but had not contacted the police due to fear of their parents' reactions. Other young people reported abuse and sharing of images if they felt confident of support from family or teachers but one young English woman who had done so noted that the police *'didn't really do anything, they just spoke to me about it and they spoke to him about it'*.

## **Experiences of physical and emotional violence**

***I beat them with words. This is most hurtful.*** (Stefan, 18, Bulgaria)

The vast majority of young people interviewed in all five countries had experienced behaviours that can be described as emotionally abusive. In four countries (not Norway), a few or even a large minority described perpetrating these behaviours. Emotional violence included: deceit; derogatory comments; being humiliated; betraying privacy; violent outbursts; and extremes of rejection followed by devotion.

In many instances, verbal insults came from both partners and were generally not viewed as abusive behaviour. But emotional abuse could also be one sided and normalised as *'just the way he was. He would tell me how good I was for putting up with him'*. However, the significance of emotional violence was highlighted both by those who had experienced it and those who perpetrated it:

***I'd rather, to be honest I'd rather be beaten than have emotional pain because I don't deal with things like that very well.*** (Bethany, 15, England)

Physical violence had been experienced by at least one person interviewed in each country, and by nearly half of the young people interviewed in Italy. In Bulgaria and Italy, a few young people also described perpetrating physical violence. Perpetration of physical violence appeared to be normalised, especially where alcohol was involved. Again, this was both by those who perpetrated it and those who experienced it:

***It was stupid to beat her, though it does not count when you are drunk...She didn't feel bad because she [had refused to dance with me] out of stubbornness.*** (Peter, 18, Bulgaria)  
***...you know, he was a bit drunk because we were coming back from a party and – true – maybe I shouldn't have looked at messages without telling him.*** (Marta, 16, Italy)

Young people almost always described physical violence as a form of retaliation. Some saw physical violence as an understandable reaction to disobeying their partner's wishes, invading their privacy, or just when it was part of someone's personality: *'I would tell myself, it's his anger talking'*. Young women also blamed themselves for their partner's violence: *'I felt like I annoyed him and kind of led him to do it'*. Others, like this young man from Italy, made a clear distinction between emotional and physical violence: *'fighting and arguing verbally is ok but never, never use physical violence!'* These issues were rarely discussed with adults, who were often seen as dismissive of young people's relationship concerns and were described as making comments like: *'you are too young to be depressed ... your problems are not real'*.

## The role of new technologies in offline abuse

***He had asked me never to speak to a particular boy who had made a comment on one of the pictures I posted on Facebook. Once when he saw me talk to this boy he was so angry he almost slapped me*** (Tatiana, 16, Cyprus).

It is perhaps more useful to identify new technologies of abuse than to consistently distinguish between online and offline abuse as the line between online and offline worlds is blurred for young people. Monitoring of messages could lead to actual physical violence. One young woman from Italy described being repeatedly slapped for having looked at her partner's phone.

Phones could be used to report offline activities, as when an 18 year old young woman discovered by chance an SMS sent to her partner by his friend which reported details of her activities at a party her partner had not attended. She described feeling '*controlled as not even my parents had ever done!*' The SMS then became the cause of a face to face argument as *he 'convinced me that I was the one to blame because I had looked at his private messages'*.

Sexual pressure tended to be applied offline.

Although digital technology had been used to circulate images, a few instances of sharing occurred by physically showing pictures on phones rather than through digital forwarding. For some, sexting did not lead to images being shared and being sexually intimate online could avoid the challenges of sex '*for real... well, that's another story... you could get pregnant... and you have to find the place*'.

Technology played a significant role in online insults: '*he would write different things on his wall that put me down*' and virtual rows where '*you'll soon be like, 'Oh I shouldn't have sent that!' And then you're having to apologise and then it gets even worse*'. But at the same time, some young people preferred discussions via text as this enabled them to take a break; with face to face arguments '*you do not have the luxury of a time-out*'.

## Gendered Impact of IPV

***If a naked picture of mine goes around the web, no problem... for a girl it is different... her reputation would be in trouble...*** (Carlo, 17, Italy)

In common with the findings from the STIR survey, the impact of the control and surveillance described by interviewees was gendered with young men emerging as more likely to feel angry, end contact or end the relationship:

***I left her immediately because I don't accept these things. There is no reason to.*** (Stefano, 16, Italy).

Some young women also resisted being controlled, but others blamed themselves: *'[I] feel guilty for having talked to [ex-boyfriend]'* and they were more likely than boys to describe a feeling sad, hurt, unconfident or isolated as a consequence of IPVA. Different standards for the two partners within a relationship were described and these were usually gendered: *'he knows the password ...but he won't let me have his'*.

The impact of sharing of sexual images and sexual pressure was much more problematic for young women as they were vulnerable to damage to their reputation whereas young men were not. Female virginity and chastity emerged as be important in Cyprus where: *'It is her only dowry'*. In every country where we conducted interviews, sexual pressure was generally reported to be directed at young women.

Young women described stronger feelings of hurt and fear as a consequence of physical violence: *'he scares me,...actually I feel really overpowered and terrified.'* In contrast, young men tended to *'just laugh'* or *'got annoyed and ended the relationship'*. Verbal taunts which some young men saw as a joke, could feel crushing:

***At first he was, it's obviously like jokey stuff ... I don't want to hear this all the time, ...I want to hear you say something nice for once rather than just all the time saying something horrible..***  
(Molly, 15, England)





## 7. IMPLICATIONS

### **Policy and Practice Awareness in Europe on Teenage Intimate Relationships and New Technology**

1. IPVA should be clearly distinguished from bullying or cyber-bullying in policy documents and the gendered nature of this form of harm and abuse should be identified.
2. Awareness of IPVA in young people's relationships is at different levels in different European countries so a European wide policy should start with promoting awareness of both online and offline IPVA in young people's interpersonal relationships.
3. European governments should clarify and publicise existing law that can be used to protect young people from IPVA in both their online and offline intimate relationships. Further research should examine the value and feasibility of strengthening the law to protect young people from this form of harm.
4. Although schools are key sites for prevention and intervention regarding IPVA in young people's relationships, teachers across Europe appear to lack confidence and expertise to address the issue. The EU should promote integrating training on this issue into qualifying education for teachers.
5. Much education for young people on this issue is delivered in an ad-hoc way. Integrating teaching on this issue into the national schools curricula would make for a more sustained and consistent approach to prevention.
6. Strategies for preventing and intervening in IPVA in young people's relationships should include the development of appropriate and acceptable services for victims. Young people themselves should be consulted about what form such services could take.

### **Incidence Rates and Impact of Experiencing Interpersonal Violence and Abuse in Young People's Relationships**

1. This is the first study of IPVA in young people's relationships in the general population across European countries. The findings show high levels of IPVA among young people in all the countries studied and this will compromise their health and wellbeing both in the present and in the future. There is a need to develop pan-European policies that aim

to reduce IPVA among young people. Such policies should address awareness, prevention and interventions.

2. The strong association between online and offline forms of IPVA in young people's relationships clearly demonstrates the inter-connection between these forms of violence and control in the lives of young people across a number of European countries. Online abuse should not be tackled in isolation but as part of a whole strategy addressing all forms of IPVA in young people's relationships.
3. Many young people gave affirmative responses when asked about the impact of sending an image or message. This has implications for policy and practice aimed at educating young people about sharing sexual images and for the development of law in this area.
4. Control and coercion characterise all the forms of IPVA identified by this research. High rates of sexual coercion were reported in some countries and these need to be addressed through education and awareness raising that aims to challenge attitudes and change behaviour.
5. The impact of IPVA varied by gender. This has implications for the content of campaigns and education and how they are targeted at boys and girls.
6. This study demonstrates that it is possible to research sensitive issues such as IPVA with young people across national and language barriers.

### **Risk and Protective (Predictive) Factors for IPVA Victimisation and Instigation**

1. The consistency of risk and protective (predictive) factors across the five countries indicates that a similar response across European countries to identify young people most at risk of IPVA, and the subsequent targeting of resources, may be appropriate.
2. The findings show that family violence and/or bullying are significant risk factors for experiencing or instigating IPVA in teenage relationships. It is therefore important that associated services providing help and support to children and young people in relation to domestic violence, child abuse and bullying recognise that these young people may also be at greater risk of experiencing and/or instigating IPVA in their own relationships and develop appropriate responses. Our research indicates that unless services and intervention programmes provide a more holistic approach to supporting young people they will fail to address the interconnection of risk, incidence and impact of different forms of childhood violence.

3. The association between young people's wider attitudes and norms, especially in relation to young people's negative gender attitudes, requires closer examination. Although we are unable to determine causation it is still clear that young people who hold negative gender attitudes are more likely to experience and/or instigate IPVA. Societal and peer norms and attitudes which condone IPVA require addressing and young people need to be supported to understand how these attitudes perpetuate harm in young people's relationships. Schools, as a universal provision, are an important site for undertaking this work with young people.
4. The association between mainly young men's regular viewing of online pornography and the use of sexual violence in their own relationships requires attention. Sex and relationships education needs to address young people's use of pornography and encourage the development of more critical attitudes that distinguish between the values and behaviour conveyed by pornography and those that characterise positive intimate relationships.

### **Young People's Views on Prevention and Intervention for Interpersonal Violence and Abuse in Young People's Relationships**

1. Young people rely on their peers for support in responding to IPVA but many would welcome more involvement from adults. This requires teachers, counsellors, other professionals and also parents to have increased awareness of IPVA in young people's intimate relationships and access to relevant information and services. European and national awareness raising strategies should target these groups. In addition, services that can assist these frontline sources of support for young people to respond effectively should be developed.
2. Young people emphasized the importance of how violence prevention work is undertaken and delivered. Prevention initiatives addressing IPVA in young people's intimate relationships need to be creative, bottom-up and inclusive and should adopt respectful attitudes towards young people themselves.
3. Young people wanted schools to provide information on the law in respect of both online and offline IPVA. This requires national governments to clarify and summarise the law in this area and to provide information about the relevant legal framework to teachers, counsellors, criminal justice and health professionals as well as to parents and young people themselves.
4. Much education for young people on this issue is delivered in an ad-hoc way. Integrating teaching on this issue into national teacher training curricula would make for a more sustained and consistent approach to prevention.

## Young People's Perspectives on Interpersonal Violence and Abuse in Intimate Relationships

1. Recognising coercion and violence in intimate relationships is crucial if IPVA is to be challenged and ended, yet many of those young people interviewed accepted such behaviour as normal. Raising awareness of IPVA in both its offline and online forms among young people and their parents should be a priority for EU governments.
2. Online and offline forms of control and abuse intersect in young people's lives. Recognition of this interrelation will be key to developing appropriate strategies and interventions to prevent IPVA in young people's intimate relationships.
3. Schools can play a key role in developing young people's understandings of what constitutes a positive relationship and what kinds of behaviours are unacceptable. Any programme offered to young people needs to be aimed at both victims and perpetrators. This is particularly important as the distinction between victims and perpetrators was not always clear; some young people saw themselves as victims of some abusive behaviours whilst perpetrating other forms of violence. In order to avoid polarising positions, learning in non-judgemental environments about appropriate behaviour and boundaries is an essential first step.
4. Both schools and media campaigns could be used to deliver messages about the possible negative outcomes of sharing sexual images. These should be targeted at younger groups of children and young people as well as at older teenagers.
5. Gender inequality structures and sustains IPVA in young people's relationships and its influence should be addressed in education and campaigns. Some of the young men interviewed for this study showed an awareness of gender inequality. Involving young men in campaigns and initiatives, so that male stereotypes are challenged by young men themselves who can provide role models for alternative masculinities is one approach that may prove valuable. Measures promoting gender equality in schools should be embedded across the curriculum and in all aspects of school life.



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