



Information Notice

Central Statistics Office to oversee the development and delivery of a significant new national survey on the prevalence of sexual violence in Ireland

FAQ

(Last updated 14 March 2019)

1. Why has the Central Statistics Office been asked to undertake this survey?

In December 2017, at the request of the Minister for Justice and Equality, the Central Statistics Office (CSO) took part in a working group whose role was to consider the availability of data in relation to sexual violence and to make recommendations regarding future requirements. The result was a consensus on the need for a comprehensive national survey on the prevalence of sexual violence in Ireland.

The CSO has now been requested by the Minister to oversee the development and delivery of a new national survey on the prevalence of sexual violence in Ireland.

2. Has the CSO formally agreed to undertake the work?

In January 2019, the Director-General of the Central Statistics Office (CSO), Mr Pádraig Dalton and the Secretary General of the Department of Justice and Equality, Mr Aidan O'Driscoll, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Central Statistics Office (CSO) and the Department of Justice and Equality on the undertaking of a comprehensive national survey on the prevalence of sexual violence in Ireland.

Further information is available in the [Memorandum Of Understanding between the CSO and the Department of Justice and Equality](#).

3. Has the CSO the necessary expertise to conduct a highly sensitive survey of this kind?

As Ireland's national statistical office, the CSO's role is to support research and public policy by producing impartial and robust data reflecting Ireland's economy, people and society.

There is a breadth and depth of statistical expertise in the CSO, but the CSO is also cognisant of the particularly sensitive nature of data on sexual violence and the unique challenges associated with its collection. As a result, the design phase of the survey will include stakeholder consultation and specialist training for staff. In addition, the CSO will identify best international practice and leverage the expertise of colleagues in other National Statistical Institutes with experience in this area.

4. Why is this data necessary in the first place?

The scoping group agreed that there is a need for the collection of new data on sexual violence as the most recent data available was collected in 2002 and there has been considerable societal change in the interim.

The survey will establish the prevalence of sexual violence. It will also identify the proportion of crimes that are reported to An Garda Síochána and the data collected will therefore inform policy in several areas, including justice and equality, health and social service provision to survivors, education and children.

5. What kinds of questions need to be asked of respondents?

In order for the data to be robust, very explicit questions regarding behaviours associated with sexual violence may have to be asked of some respondents. As a result, the design and implementation of this survey will require specialist expertise and training. It will involve consultation with key stakeholders and consideration of best practice from international statistical organisations regarding appropriate collection methods as well as identification of the skills, training and structures that may be required to support data gathering in this sensitive area.

Questionnaire design will form part of the survey development phase but examples of the type of questions that are asked in a survey of this nature are available in the [Report of the Scoping Group on Sexual Violence Data](#).

6. What are the challenges associated with conducting this type of survey?

Conducting a sensitive survey of this nature involves designing a means of collecting data which addresses legal and ethical concerns and protects the privacy of respondents as well as supporting survey staff in the field. At the same time, the survey design must support accurate, reliable, robust and sustainable survey results.

7. What methodology does the CSO intend to use to conduct this survey?/How will the data be collected?

No decision has been made as to the most appropriate method for data collection. The choice of data collection mode will be an important consideration in the survey design phase. Careful planning will be required to ensure that the data collection model protects the privacy and safety of the respondents and those collecting the data.

8. What will the survey design stage involve?

The survey design stage will involve stakeholder consultation and consideration of best practice from international statistical organisations regarding appropriate collection methods. It will be necessary to identify the skills, training and technical infrastructure that may be required to support data gathering in this sensitive area.

Careful planning is also required to ensure that the data collection model ensures the privacy and safety of the respondents and those collecting the data.

9. How long will it take to undertake all aspects of the survey?

Given the complexity and sensitivity of the survey, it is envisaged that the entire process of planning, designing, executing and reporting on the survey will take in the region of five years and it is planned to include the following phases:

- Phase one: Survey research, stakeholder consultation and scoping (12 months commencing January 2019)
- Phase two: Survey design and preparation, including pilot (24 months commencing January 2020)
- Phase three: Data collection (9 months commencing January 2022)
- Phase four: Data processing and analysis, preparation of results (15 Months commencing October 2022)
- Phase five: Dissemination of results

Further information is available in the [Memorandum of Understanding \(MoU\) between the CSO and the Department of Justice and Equality](#) which was signed in January 2019.

10. Why will the survey take five years?

The provision of reliable, robust, objective and internationally comparable information requires that the planning and execution of this survey is undertaken in a professional and comprehensive manner and to do otherwise may compromise the quality of the resulting data. Therefore, the five year duration of the new Sexual Violence Survey (SVS) is to ensure that all aspects of the survey are undertaken and completed to the highest possible standard.

The CSO has also agreed that the survey will be repeated at ten-year intervals and it is therefore critical that all aspects of the survey are built to a standard which will allow these future iterations of the survey to be easily undertaken.

11. What will be included as part of the dissemination phase?

Dissemination will be approached in different ways for different audiences.

A national publication that contains tables of information showing the main indicators broken down by demographic characteristics will be designed for the public, press and assorted media outlets. The needs of NGOs and state agencies will be met primarily through bespoke tabulations.

The research community may require more detailed microdata to address their needs. Access to anonymised data, microdata research files and protocols for release of data will be undertaken under the Statistics Act, 1993 and will conform to the highest statistical standards as well as be consistent with the Data Protection Acts and/or General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Access will be strictly limited. Further information is available from the CSO's information page on access to research data:

<https://www.cso.ie/en/aboutus/lgdp/csodatapolicies/dataforresearchers/>

12. How do other countries conduct these types of surveys?

Most surveys conducted internationally involve a personal or telephone interview and are based on some form of random sampling. Eleven European countries are currently involved in a pilot study on the collection of gender-based violence in a project sponsored by the European Commission (Eurostat). The CSO will be liaising with Eurostat colleagues participating in the pilot when identifying best practice in the survey development phase.

13. Who is funding this survey and how much will it cost?

The Department of Justice and Equality will be the project sponsor. An initial amount of €150,000 has been allocated for the scoping of the survey in 2019. The completion of this phase will inform future funding requirements for the development and implementation of the survey in subsequent years.

14. How will you engage with stakeholders?

As a first step, a broad range of stakeholders will be contacted and invited to an information session on the work done to date on the survey. After this, a liaison group will be set up and the role of the group will primarily be an information and structure sharing group which will:

- Share information on progress of the overall programme of work;
- Advise on user needs and where necessary suggesting priorities; and
- Share experiences and expertise in dealing with this complex and sensitive topic

15. What will be the make-up of the Liaison Group?

The CSO will work to ensure that there is a wide range of representation on the Sexual Violence Survey Liaison Group. Membership will be drawn from across the range of stakeholders, including the CSO, the Department, specific Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and other relevant experts. The CSO will work to finalise membership of the group having first consulted with all stakeholders.

16. When will this Liaison Group meet?

The CSO will convene a meeting of all stakeholders in the second quarter of 2019. It will discuss the format and make-up of the Liaison Group at this meeting and the first meeting of the Liaison Group will be held shortly afterwards.

17. What data is available on sexual violence in Ireland now?

A Sexual Assault and Violence in Ireland (SAVI) survey was previously undertaken in Ireland. The results, which were published in 2002, estimated the prevalence of various forms of sexual violence among Irish women and men from childhood through adulthood, through a telephone-based survey. It was based on a sample of over 3,000 participants from the adult population in Ireland.

18. Is this new Sexual Violence Survey (SVS) a repeat of the previous Sexual Assault and Violence in Ireland (SAVI) survey from 2002

The sample for the previous survey, SAVI, was based on randomly generated landline telephone numbers. As per the SAVI report, 86% of Irish households were estimated to have a landline at the time. Societal changes in the 17 years since the last survey have resulted in a large drop in landline usage in Irish households. A change in the survey delivery mode from phone to face to face can introduce a mode effect on the results, which has been seen in other countries. Ultimately the choice of survey methodology is likely to be different to SAVI and may result in a substantial break in the series. Hence, this new Sexual Violence Survey (SVS) which will be conducted by the CSO is not SAVI II.

Instead the new SVS will be undertaken within the framework of the Statistics Act, 1993 and will be produced as part of the work programme of the CSO and will become part of the family of official statistics produced by the CSO. The SVS survey will build upon the work of the 2018 Scoping Group on Sexual Violence Data reflecting changes in society since 2002, as well as changes in Data Protection legislation and methodological practices.

19. What can the CSO offer users in the meantime?

The CSO recognises the challenge that the lack of data presents to stakeholders in this area. The PULSE dataset contains data on reported incidents of sexual assault. International data indicates that the proportion of sexual assaults that are reported to An Garda Síochána are low but this is the best available data at this time.

The CSO intends to publish statistics on the demographic profile of recorded victims of sexual offences in the next quarterly recorded crime release. The CSO will also continue to engage with NGOs working with victims to identify if any further statistics can be extracted from the PULSE dataset.

Further information:

Memorandum of Understanding between the CSO and the Department of Justice and Equality

<https://www.cso.ie/en/aboutus/lgdp/legislation/memorandumsofunderstanding/moucsodje/>

Report of the Scoping Group on Sexual Violence Data

<http://justice.ie/en/JELR/Report-of-the-Sexual-Violence-Survey-Scoping-Group.pdf/Files/Report-of-the-Sexual-Violence-Survey-Scoping-Group.pdf>

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