



Autistic People's Experiences of Violence

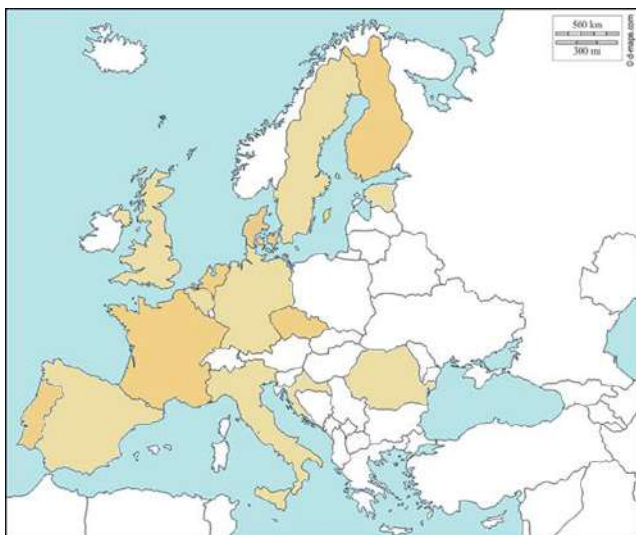
By Sara Rocha

Trigger warning: we will be discussing topics covering
various types of violence

Date: 01/08/2023

European Council of Autistic People

- Umbrella organisation for autistic-led national and regional organisations in Europe.
- 24 organisations in 16 countries



Sara Rocha

- EUCAP Board and in the European Disability Forum's Women's Committee
- Public health data expert for the University of Cambridge



Survey



EUCAP Survey - Autistic people's experiences of violence

Mandatory questions are marked with a star (*)

Introduction

EUCAP is carrying out this survey in order to understand experiences of different types of violence affecting autistic people. Responses will be treated completely anonymously, following our data protection and privacy policy, which you can view [here](#).

The results of this survey will be presented in a webinar on International Women's Day (March 8th). The results will be used in advocacy guides and fact sheets to support the efforts of EUCAP and its member organisations to advocate on this subject.

All participants must be 18 or older and be diagnosed or self-identify as autistic. An autistic person who needs support to communicate can respond with the help of another person, but please do not respond on behalf of an autistic person without their full involvement.

For more information on this project, see the [project page on the EUCAP website](#), or contact our survey team through sera.recho@eucap.eu.

Instructions for respondents

This survey covers sensitive topics that can be triggering and upsetting. If you experience distress while participating in the survey, you are free to stop at any point, to discard your response or to resume the survey at your convenience. If you wish to view all the questions before starting, download the pdf version [here](#).

To pause and continue later, click 'Save & continue later', and follow instructions to send a link to your email. Your email address will not be recorded by us, so your response will remain anonymous.

To stop responding without continuing later, simply close the survey window. We will not process unsubmitted or incomplete survey responses, so any data you have entered will be discarded.

Submitting your response: Once you click the 'Submit' button, a summary of all your answers will be made available, and you have the option of editing them. When you are satisfied with your response, click 'Finish' to complete the process. After this, we cannot remove your response from our data.

Background

The World Health Organisation reports that one in three women have been subjected to physical or sexual violence in their lifetimes. Recent studies ([Griffiths et al., 2019](#); [Carpais et al., 2020](#)) show that autistic people are exposed to a higher prevalence of violence than non-autistic people. However, there is not enough data either on autistic people's experiences of violence nor of reporting/access to services. This study will allow us to understand better how to advocate for these themes.

DISCLAIMER

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- Questions on:
 - sociodemographic factors
 - Prevalence of different types of violence and context of it:
 - Harassment
 - Hate crime
 - Psychological and emotional
 - Verbal
 - Physical
 - Sexual
 - Bullying and mate crime
 - Neglect
 - Trafficking
 - Medical setting
 - Domestic violence
- experiences trying to access reporting services
- experiences trying to access support services

<https://eucap.eu/project-on-violence/>

General violence

GENERAL



99.6%

experienced at least one type of violence

NON-PHYSICAL VIOLENCE



90%

or more of autistic people were subjected to harassment, psychological and emotional, and verbal violence

PHYSICAL VIOLENCE



72.6%

of autistic people had at least one type of violence perpetrated against them during childhood, with 47.5% of these being physical or sexual violence

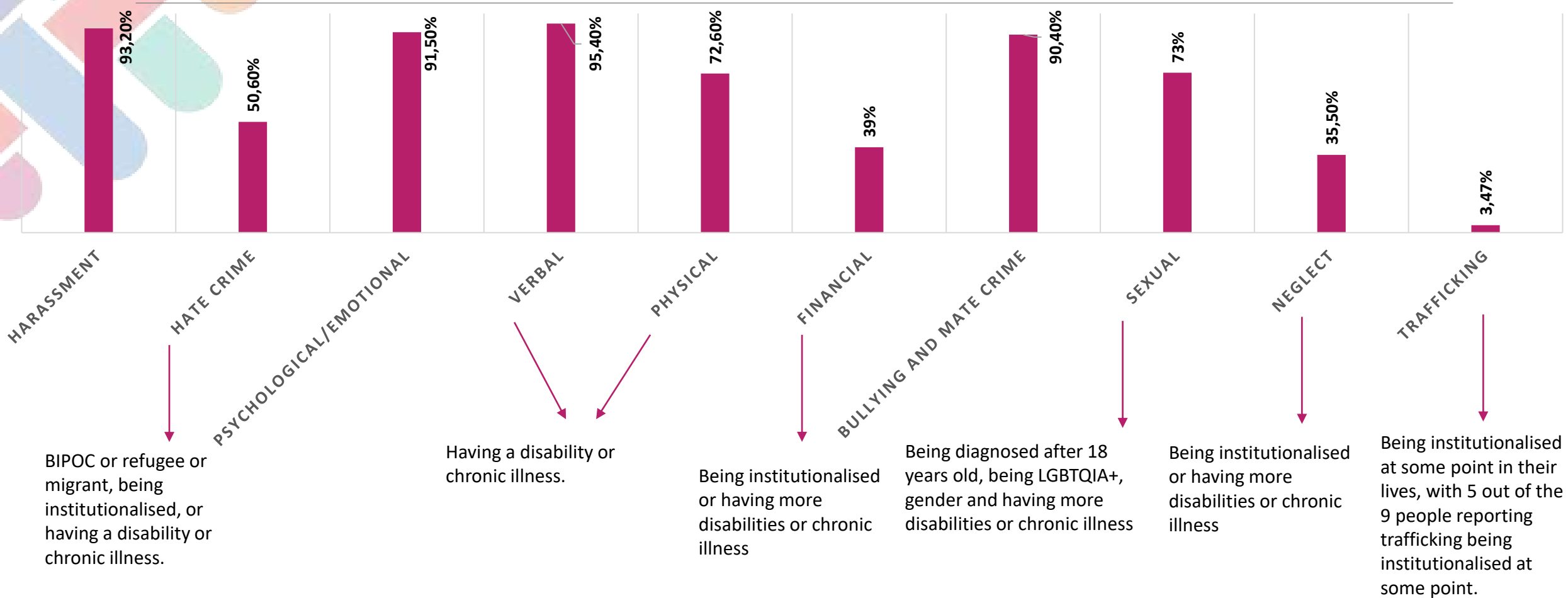
CHILD MALTREATMENT



78.4%

of autistic people had at least one type of violence perpetrated against them during childhood, with 47.5% of these being physical or sexual violence

Types of violence



Violence in medical setting

DIAGNOSIS



90%

of women and 91% of non-binary people were diagnosed after 18 years old, compared to 58% of men

VIOLENCE IN MEDICAL SETTINGS



64.5%

of participants suffered violence in a medical setting.

40.2%

had or have trauma due to interactions with mental health professionals.

32%

were denied a diagnosis for a disability or chronic condition.

29%

were overmedicated at some point in their life.

21%

were denied access to medical care.

17.4%

of people diagnosed before the age of 18, were subjected to harmful treatments for autism.

12.4%

of autistic participants were restrained or secluded at some point in their life.

14.7%

were denied disability aids (AAC, mobility aids, etc)

8.5%

were subjected to some type of violence from a disability support service.

6.6%

of autistic participants were hospitalized in a psychiatric facility against their will.

2.7%

were denied access to birth control or reproductive healthcare.

3

participants were forced, coerced or pressured to have an abortion.

1

participant was sterilised after being forced, coerced or pressured to do it.

Gender-based violence

SEXUAL VIOLENCE



8 in 10

women and 78% of non-binary people experienced sexual violence, with more than half happening more than once.

SEXUAL ABUSE



1 in 2

women and non-binary people were sexually abused.

AGE



75.7%

of the sexual violence against women, 78.6% against men and 86.8% against non-binary people happen **before the age of 18.**

RAPE



1 in 3

autistic women who participated have been raped, compared with reports indicating that 1 in 20 women in the EU have been raped (28% of non-binary people and 12.5% of men).

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

86%

of autistic women and non-binary people, and 72.5% of men, experienced domestic violence from family or a partner.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE BY A FAMILY MEMBER



76.3%

of autistic women experienced domestic violence by a family member (62.5% for men and 74% for non-binary people).

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE BY A PARTNER



55%

of autistic women experienced domestic violence by a spouse or intimate partner (37.5% for men and 50% for non-binary people).

Reporting

MOST REPORTED

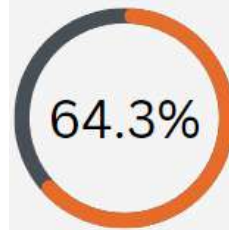


61.8%

of men, 51% of women and 42.5% of non-binary people reported bullying and mate crime, which was the most reported type of violence, although it was the type with the least consequences

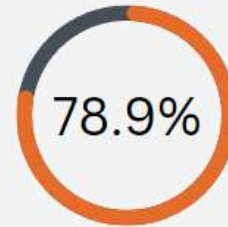
LEAST REPORTED

Men



of men that experienced **sexual violence** didn't report it

Women and non-binary people



of non-binary people and 72.3% of women didn't report **financial violence**.

DIFFICULTIES FOUND WHILE REPORTING



The most common difficulties that autistic people found with reporting were **'They did not believe me'**, **'They blamed me/considered me responsible for the violence I experienced'** and **'Lack of knowledge about Autism and autistic traits'**.

COURT CONVICTIONS



2.3%

of autistic people who experienced sexual or physical violence obtained a court conviction.

Access to services

Only 30% of our participants tried to access support services.

The **highest rating** was for **neurodivergent peer support-groups**. The **lowest rating** was attributed to **child support services**.

DIFFICULTIES ACCESSING SERVICES



93.5%

of autistic people who tried to access or accessed support services had difficulties in accessing it. The **most common difficulty** in accessing services was the **lack of knowledge of autistic traits or neurodiversity**, followed by long waiting lists or expensive services, and type of support available not being helpful.

“In my case I feel that support-seeking was risky and traumatic.”

“The first professional who understood autism was also someone who believed my experiences and said they weren't my fault. While I did get the feeling from others that it was my fault.”

This project intended to map autistic people's experiences of violence, disaggregated by gender, including gender-based violence.

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EUCAP Survey - Autistic people's experiences of violence

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Background
The World Health Organisation reports that one in three women have been subjected to physical or sexual violence in their lifetime. Recent studies ([Gelles et al. 2021](#); [Cassidy et al. 2022](#)) show that autistic people are exposed to a higher prevalence of violence than non-autistic people. However, there is not enough data either on autistic people's experiences of violence nor of reporting/access to services. This study will allow us to understand better how to advocate for them.

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STORIES BEYOND VIOLENCE
PERSONAL STORIES OF AUTISTIC PEOPLE AS VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE

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Webinar International Women's March 8th
Preliminary survey results and presentation on working with Neurodivergent Victims of Sexual Violence by Dr. Sudy Ridout

Webinar: AUTISTIC PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCES OF VIOLENCE

Funded by **eucap**

Ver no YouTube

Webinar on Autism Acceptance Day, April 2nd
Publishing of the eBook 'Stories beyond violence', an anthology on personal stories of autistic people victims of violence.

April webinar series - Publishing of **Acceptance Month**

Publishing of "Stories beyond violence"

An anthology on personal stories of autistic people victims of violence

Ver no YouTube

April 2nd
Sunday at 15:00 CEST

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EUCAP FACTSHEET VIOLENCE AGAINST AUTISTIC PEOPLE PROJECT RESULTS

COUNTRIES
220 participants from 30 countries in Europe and 31 countries from 10 other regions in Europe

METHODOLOGY
Funded by European Union's Liberty and Solidarity, and coordinated by EUCAP Survey member teams between July and February 2023.
Questions on sociodemographic factors, different types of violence suffered and experiences accessing reporting and support services.
209 autistic participants, either diagnosed or self-identified as autistic, of whom 100 identified themselves as women, 40 as men and 50 as non-binary or other genders.
The types of violence analysed were harassment, hate crime, psychological, emotional, verbal, physical and sexual violence, including, rape, sexual assault, trafficking and medical violence.

"They really just don't even care at all."
"I find it very difficult to find support and therapy for neurodivergent adults. The only thing that helps me is the community."
"I don't always feel like that so I thought it was normal."

DISAGGREGATED
90% of women and 83% of non-binary participants were diagnosed after the age of 18, compared to 50% of men.

DISABILITIES
64.5% of the participants had other disabilities or chronic illnesses.

DIVERSITY
42.5% of our participants were LGBTQIA+ and 20% were gender non-conforming. 43% were BPOC or part of an ethnic or cultural minority and 8.5% were migrants.

For more information on the project visit our [data page](#) or [contact us](#) at sara.rocha@eucap.eu
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Factsheet with survey results

EUCAP FACTSHEET ON VIOLENCE AGAINST AUTISTIC PEOPLE PROJECT RESULTS

RECOMMENDATIONS

Research and data collection based on the social model of disability
Data and research are needed to understand better the barriers and autistic people's needs in victim of violence. There is a lack of data collection on autistic women and girls, and disaggregated data on violence by disability and gender, further to the requirements of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, and the directive in the 2021-2025 EU Disability Strategy to ensure equal leadership and reporting. Funding needs to be allocated for more projects on this topic, and to research that aligns with the social model of disability.

Early diagnosis
One of the most repeated comments throughout this study for autistic people was the importance of diagnosis and understanding their own difficulties. Autistic diagnosis is still being denied throughout Europe, particularly to adults, women, and non-binary people. Researchers should be put in touch to enhance reporting and capacity of professionals to diagnose and support autistic people in a timely, effective manner, as well as the possibility of participants in case of refusal of access to a diagnosis.

The criminalisation or regulation of harmful practices
Harmful and extreme behaviours need to be addressed in cases for adults in Europe, and 17% of our participants that declared a diagnosis before 18 years old, reported the idea that some professionals were exposed to them. It is essential to regulate the EU law how criminal offences and adults are exposed to appropriate measures. These interventions, mental health, and other professional and support services continue to be often directed towards men and girls in the EU, and based on a medical model of disability in at least 13 EU Member States, especially for people caregivers of their legal capacity, and such measures need to be re-evaluated.

Access to justice
Disabled people in general, and autistic people specifically, need to ensure equal access to justice and procedures before the law, and receive accommodations as necessary. Having of appropriate officials in the areas of justice and law enforcement, should be mandatory, with accommodations in training and more alternative forms of support needed for development and expansion in value, especially to report violence where there is a responsibility for early filing, before access of institutions.

Including autistic voices into public health and social policies
The autistic self-advocacy movement is growing in Europe. It is essential that autistic advocates, lawmakers, and experts are included in the development of policies that will affect them, especially in policies against gender-based violence. Working with autistic people in considering their needs will contribute to enhancing their participation. Mental health care and legislation should be reviewed to ensure autistic people are not re-traumatised through repetitive hearings.

Accessibility and training of victim services
Reporting accessibility for autistic groups is essential, and give support to victims of violence is essential and urgent, including online and telephone services. One aspect of this is the quality of any service provider that will be in contact with victims of violence, for autistic people. Training needs to have autistic people involved in their development and delivery, in addition, it is necessary to assess the impact and effect of the training in actual situations with autistic people and measure it in the practice and experience.

Creation of specialised community support services
The consistent and systematic lack of access to reporting and support services for autistic people are victims of violence above the support needs for services in the community that are designed and implemented by autistic people, and for autistic people. The highest-rated support service in our participants was requirements-person-centred support services. The highest-rated support service for autistic people in the development among autistic women and girls was trauma-informed services setting.

EU strategies and legislation on equality
EU strategies and policies for equality should consider specific and new types of violence that affect autistic people, such as violence in health care and healthcare settings, and EU strategies on employment, education, and mental health should acknowledge the needs of women and caregivers against violence people, and create a plan against it. This needs to be achieved by enhancing the role of EU and its Member States and organisations, especially involving autistic people and organisations led by autistic people in their development, in accordance with Working Group on Artificial Intelligence.

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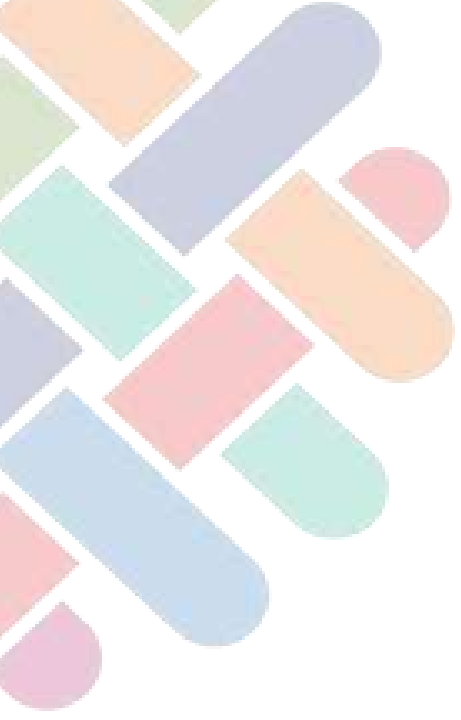
Recommendations

- Survey with 259 autistic people on experiences of:
- Types of violence
 - Accessing reporting services
 - Accessing support services

eBook 'Stories beyond violence: Personal stories of autistic people as victims of violence'

sara.rocha@eucap.eu

<https://eucap.eu/project-on-violence/>



LINKS AND CONTACT INFORMATION

- EUCAP website: <https://eucap.eu>
- Project page: <https://eucap.eu/project-on-violence/>
- Email: sara.rocha@eucap.eu

Feel free to ask any questions after the session