

## » Youth Sexuality 9th Iteration

# Disclosure Behaviour after Experiencing Sexualised Violence

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

Since 2001 the subject area of sexualised violence has been included in the Youth Sexuality Surveys and has been significantly expanded in this current survey. 2019 was the first time the survey of the negative experiences was expanded to include non-physical experiences of violence - a broad field that includes verbal and non-verbal harassment, from derogatory insults to sexually motivated reputational damage to exhibitionism and experiences of violence that take place online. With regard to physical sexualised violence a substantially greater level of detail was asked about. Questions about the disclosure behaviour regarding the experience and knowledge of support services were also integrated. The information obtained here can provide important impulses for prevention and intervention. This fact sheet provides central insights into the disclosure behaviour for the respondents - largely girls and young women - after they experienced sexualised violence.

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## A quarter of the girls and young women affected do not talk to anyone about their experiences of violence.

Studies show that confiding in someone is an important factor for ending any sexualised violence that is still ongoing and that this can have a positive impact on how the individual in question processes the events (Gulowski & Krüger, 2020). This survey reveals that the majority of the girls and young women affected either tell someone directly after their first experience with sexualised violence or they never tell anyone.

### Keeping quiet about the experience of violence

One in four of the girls and young women affected say they do not tell anyone about what they experienced:

- 25 percent of the young women and girls say they have never spoken to anyone about it.
- 17 percent only spoke about what they experienced several years later.

### Disclosing the experience of violence

Almost one in three confided in someone shortly after the experience of violence:

- 29 percent confided in someone immediately afterwards.
- 17 percent confided in someone a few days later.
- 12 percent of those affected spoke to someone about the sexualised violence they experienced within a few weeks or months (see Figure 1).

Figure 1



### Experience of violence as an influencing factor on communication behaviour

Whether and how close to the event those affected confided in someone also depends on the nature of the violence experience:

- Those girls and young women who were able to fend off attempts of unwanted sexual acts were disproportionately likely to confide in someone immediately afterwards (43 %; see Figure 2).
- Only 28 percent confided in someone immediately after the event if unwanted physical contact such as kissing or petting occurred.
- 12 percent of the female respondents said they had talked about it immediately after they had been forced into sexual intercourse and 12 percent also said they spoke about it right away if they had experienced other sexual acts against their will.
- In cases where there was forced sexual intercourse, 21 percent of the female respondents spoke to someone relatively close to the event, a few days afterwards, while 19 percent spoke about it after a few weeks or months, a quarter (25 %) after a few years and 23 percent never.

- If the experience was one of unwanted physical touching (e.g. kissing or petting), then the respondents affected mostly spoke about it either immediately (28 %) or not at all (22 %). 15 percent spoke about it after a few days and another 15 percent after a few weeks or months. Around 20 percent of the girls and young women affected only spoke about it after years.
- If the female respondents affected were forced into other unwanted sexual acts, the majority did not speak to anyone about it at all or only after years (both 27 %). Around 20 percent spoke about their experience after a few days and a further around 20 percent spoke about it a few weeks or months later (see Figure 2).

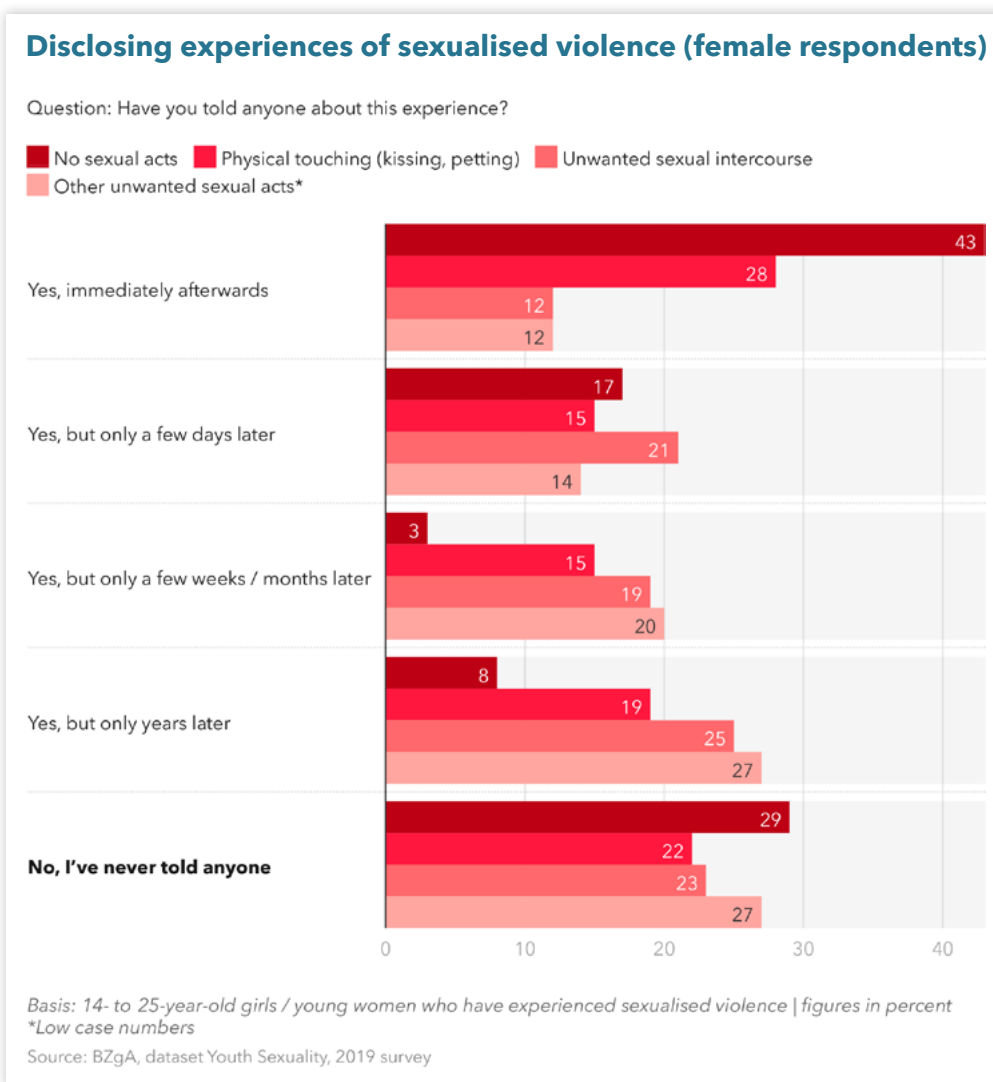


Figure 2

## Result 2

## Whether and how close to the event the individuals affected talk about the violence depends on their relationship to the perpetrator.

Whether or not someone discloses an experience of sexualised violence also depends on their relationship to the perpetrator. Whether or not an affected girl or young woman confides in someone and in what time period also depends on the social context the perpetrator is from and how well the affected girl or young woman and the perpetrator knew each other.

The likelihood that the affected person confides in someone close to the event is reduced if the violence was committed by a current or former partner. Only 11 percent of the girls and young women said they had spoken to someone about it immediately afterwards if this was the case. 17 percent spoke about it a few days later, 18 percent after a few weeks or months, but the majority only spoke about it after years (26 %) or never (28 %).

If the perpetrator was someone from the affected person's wider peer group, such as someone from the friendship circle or a classmate, then more than half of the female respondents affected spoke about it immediately afterwards (29 %) or after a few days (26 %). 22 percent did not confide in anyone.

If the sexualised violence came from a new acquaintance, the majority of the young women said they had either spoken to someone directly (41 %) or a few days later (26 %). In this group it was also less likely that the individuals in question never told anyone (14 %).

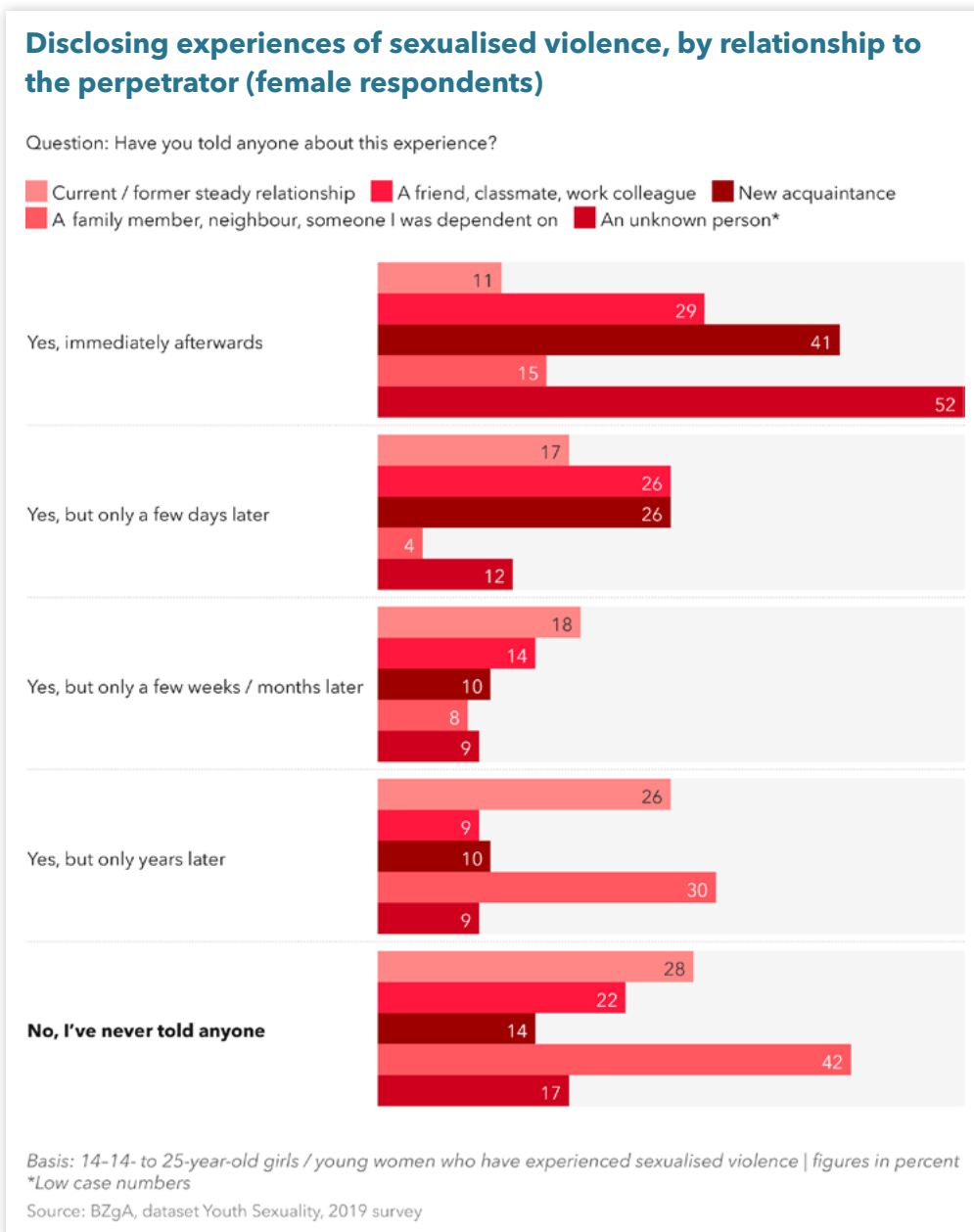
If the perpetrator was a family member, someone from the neighbourhood or someone else the affected individual was dependent on, then it is particularly likely that the affected individual never told anyone (42 %) or only after years (30 %), with a combined figure of more than 70 percent. Only 15 percent spoke about it directly, 4 percent a few days later. 8 percent spoke about it after a few weeks or months.

If the perpetrator was an unknown individual, the likelihood that the affected girl or young woman spoke about it immediately afterwards is highest at 52 percent. Around 20 percent confided in someone after a few days or

after a few weeks or months, but here too roughly a third only spoke about it after years. 17 percent never told anyone (see Figure 3).

Among the boys and young men affected by sexualised violence, the disclosure pattern is similar. However, the small case numbers here mean we can only identify tendencies.

Figure 3



## Result 3

## Peers are the most common confidants after experiencing sexualised violence.

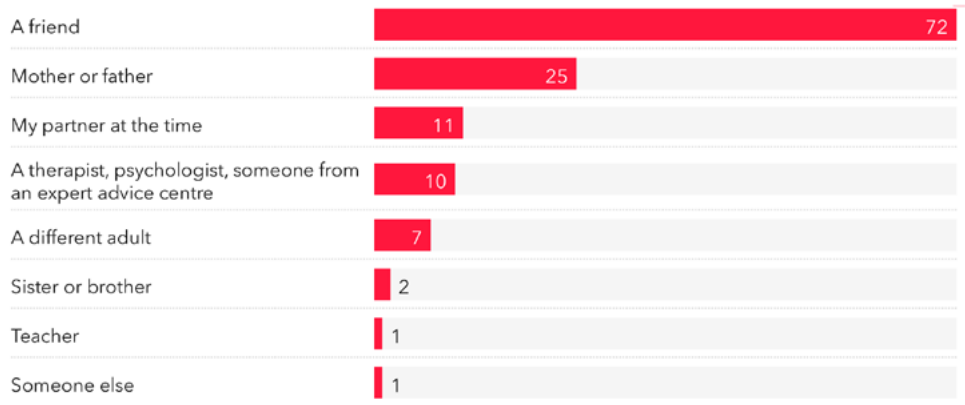
Friends (72 %) are by far the most-cited group that those affected confide in after a sexualised violence experience. If we add to this the 11 percent who confided in their partner (at the time), around 80 percent of the female respondents affected spoke to someone in their peer group (see Figure 4).

One in four of the girls and young women who spoke about their experiences confide in their father or mother. Only 10 percent confide in educational or therapeutic experts. This is done particularly in those cases when the sexualised violence resulted in forced sexual intercourse or other sexual acts (girls: 23 % and young women: 17 %). Only one percent turned to a teacher after experiencing sexualised violence. This frequency distribution is similar for the boys and young men affected by sexualised violence. However, only one in ten of the male respondents affected, unlike their female counterparts, confided in their father or mother after experiencing sexualised violence.



**Confidants after experiencing sexualised violence (female respondents)**

Question: Who did you tell about this experience?



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

Source: BZgA, dataset Youth Sexuality, 2019 survey

Figure 4

[See Youth Sexuality 9th Iteration - Fact Sheet 'In Focus: Advice Centres'](#)



The majority of those affected said that they felt their conversations had been sufficient. 10 percent said they would have liked further support from a therapist or someone from an expert advice centre.

## Result 4

## Two thirds of the female respondents and more than half of the male respondents are aware of at least one support service.

This 9th survey in the Youth Sexuality trend series was the first to ask about how familiar the respondents were with a number of relevant support services. Their knowledge of subject-specific services, which have often been established for decades, varies greatly. The study examined how well known nine different support services were that offer those affected by violence support, either in person, over the phone or online. Some of the services (Telefonseelsorge, Nummer gegen Kummer, Wildwasser) have been working in this area for a number of decades.

Others have developed since around 2010 in the course of the start of the work of the Federal Government's independent commissioner for questions relating to child sexual abuse (Hilfetelefon sexueller Missbrauch, hilfe-portal-missbrauch.de, save-me-online.de) or as a response to new challenges such as digital violence on the internet (Juuuport e. V.) and the expansion of target group-specific offers (e. g., for people with Muslim faith: Muslimisches SeelsorgeTelefon).

The results show that overall there is a relative sensitisation towards the existence of these support services: 70 of the female respondents and 54 percent of the male respondents said they had heard of or read about at least one of these services. Telefonseelsorge, which began operating in 1956, and Nummer gegen Kummer, which launched in 1980, are by far the best-known support services:

- Almost half of the female respondents said they had heard of Telefonseelsorge (47 %) or Nummer gegen Kummer (46 %).
- A good third of the male respondents said they had heard of or read about Telefonseelsorge (37 %) or Nummer gegen Kummer (33 %).

The level of familiarity of the other services was lower for both the female and the male respondents.

- Almost a quarter of the female respondents and 11 percent of the boys and young men had heard of Hilfetelefon Gewalt gegen Frauen.

## Disclosure Behaviour after Experiencing Sexualised Violence

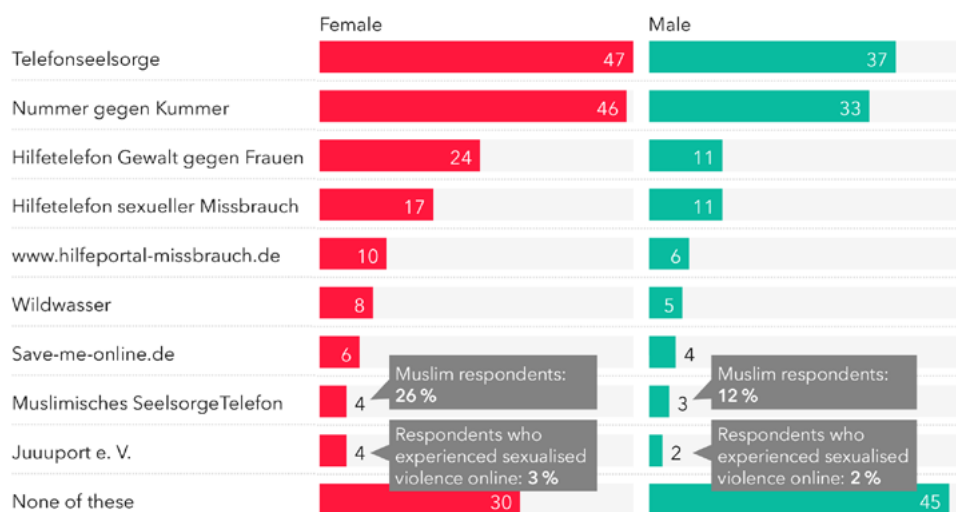
- 17 percent of the female respondents and 11 percent of the male respondents had heard of Hilfefon sexuellen Missbrauch.
- The level of familiarity of other services ranges from 4 to 10 percent among the girls and young women, and between 2 and 6 percent among the boys and young men.

The Muslimische SeelsorgeTelefon service (overall familiarity 4%, support for people with Muslim faith) is viewed as highly target group-specific. This service is known to

- 26 percent of the girls and young women of the Muslim faith and
- 12 percent of the boys and young men of the Muslim faith. In both groups this service is in the top three best-known services.

### Level of familiarity of support services after experiencing sexualised violence (by sex)

Question: There are various services you can turn to if you want to talk to experts about negative experiences, such as harassment or forced sexual acts. Which of these websites and phone numbers have you heard of or read about?



Basis: 14- to 25-year-olds | multiple responses possible | figures in percent  
Source: BZgA, dataset Youth Sexuality, 2019 survey

Figure 5

Knowing support services is particularly relevant for those who have had sexualised violence experiences so that they can access the necessary help and support. Here the figures show that the services have above average levels of familiarity among the group of those respondents affected, but the overall figures of how many know about these services are still too low.

Around one third of those affected by non-physical sexualised violence (31 %) know none of the nine support services listed. This is similarly true for those affected by physical sexualised violence (28 %). In the group of those female respondents affected who had spoken to no one about the sexualised violence they had experienced, 36 percent were unfamiliar with all of these support services.

Despite the quite small case numbers, it would seem that the boys and young men affected by sexualised violence are particularly unlikely to know about support services. Almost half of the affected male respondents had not heard of any of the support services listed (see Figure 5).

The subject-specific service offered by Juuport e. V., which is specifically aimed at adolescents and young adults who have experienced harassment online, is not substantially better known among those who were affected by exactly this. A mere 3 percent of the adolescents and young adults had already heard of Juuport and the same was true for those who had been harassed online or who had intimate pictures of themselves published online.

## Level of education and migrant background can influence how well-known support services are.

The level of education and the migrant background of the adolescents and young adults surveyed seem, alongside their sex, to be important influencing factors when it comes to assessing how familiar they are with support services.

### Influencing factor education

The influence of educational qualifications can be summarised as follows:

- The higher someone's level of education, the more likely they are to have heard of at least one of the support services.
- And in reverse: the lower someone's level of education, the more likely it is that they will not have heard of any of the support services (see Figure 6, Figure 7).

The best-known services, Telefonseelsorge und Nummer gegen Kummer, are known to around half of the female respondents and more than 40 percent of the male respondents with a high level of education. Among those respondents with a low level of education, the equivalent figures are just 39 percent among the girls and young women and 30 percent among the boys and young men.

25 percent of the female survey participants with a high level of education and 42 percent with a low level of education said they had not heard of any of the services. Among the male respondents this was true for around 60 percent of those with a low level of education (compared to 37 % for those with a high level of education).

### Influencing factor migrant background

The influence of a migrant background has the following impact:

- The respondents who said they had a migrant background were more likely not to have heard of any of the support services.
- They are less likely to be reached by prevention campaigns that aim to raise awareness of support services.

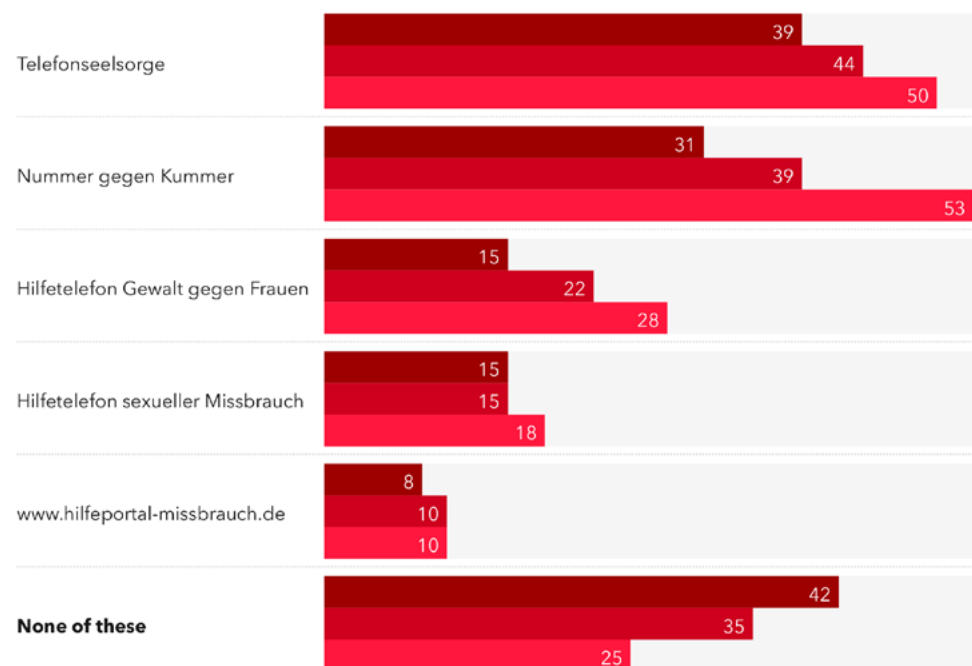
While around half of the female respondents without a migrant background had heard of the two best-known support services - Telefonseelsorge and Nummer gegen Kummer - only 36 percent of the girls and 37 percent of the young women with a migrant background had heard of these. The situation is similar for the male survey respondents: 44 percent (boys) and 37 percent (young men) of the male respondents without a migrant background had heard of Telefonseelsorge or Nummer gegen Kummer, but only 24 percent of the boys and young men with a migrant background indicated having heard of or read about one of them before. Around 60 percent of the respondents with a migrant background said they were unfamiliar with all of the support services listed.

Figure 6

### How well-known are support services that are provided to those affected by experiences of sexualised violence (female respondents by level of education)

Question: There are various services you can turn to if you want to talk to experts about negative experiences, such as harassment or forced sexual acts. Which of these websites and phone numbers have you heard of or read about?

■ Low ■ Moderate ■ High



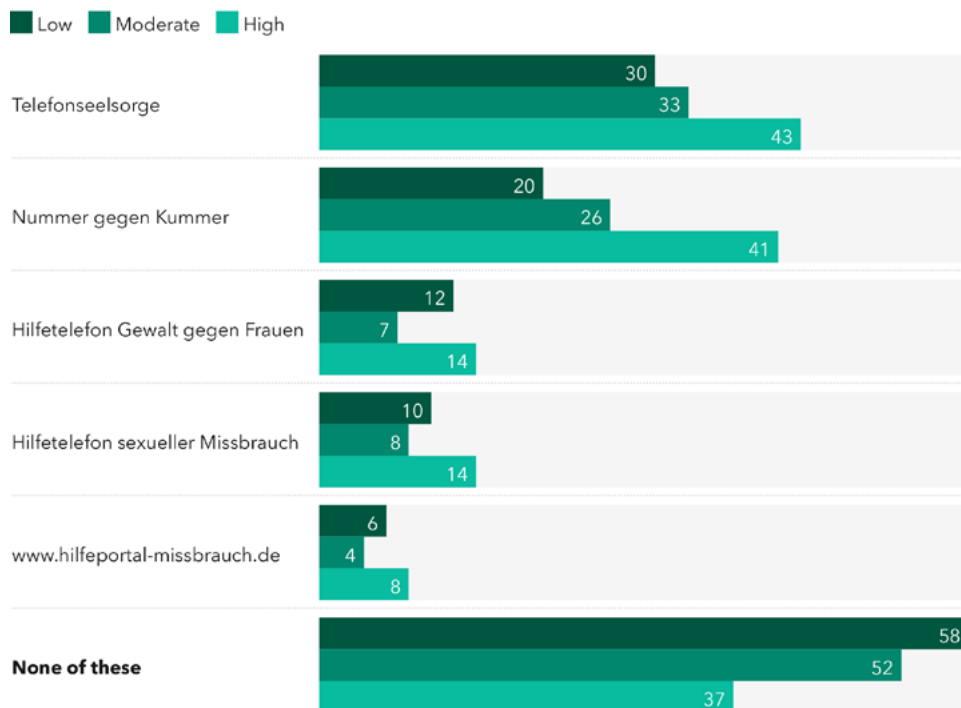
Basis: 14- to 25-year-old girls and women | multiple responses possible | figures in percent

Source: BZgA, dataset Youth Sexuality, 2019 survey

Figure 7

**How well-known are support services that are provided to those affected by experiences of sexualised violence (male respondents by level of education)**

Question: There are various services you can turn to if you want to talk to experts about negative experiences, such as harassment or forced sexual acts. Which of these websites and phone numbers have you heard of or read about?



Basis: 14- to -25-year-old boys and young men | multiple responses possible | figures in percent  
 Source: BZgA, dataset Youth Sexuality, 2019 survey



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## Notes on the data

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



## Imprint

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

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

### Project profile

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



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

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