

# Gender Differences in Sexual Victimization

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Since most sexual offences are committed against women, male victims of sexual offences have been neglected in the literature and in society as well. In order to gain insights into those characteristics associated with male sexual victimisation and to motivate further research, we compared the case files of 221 female sex victims and 39 male sex victims regarding the characteristics of the sexual crime, the offender and the victim. Cases of male and female sexual victimisation differed significantly regarding the type of criminal offence, the gender of the police officer who interviewed the victim, as well as the number of interviews conducted and the delay in reporting the offence. Several characteristics of sexual offences varied significantly with the gender of the victim: whether one or more offenders were involved, whether a weapon was used, whether the victim resisted, whether the victim sustained injuries, and whether the offender and/or victim had consumed alcohol. Male and female victims also differed significantly in terms of age, education level, marital status, relationship to the offender, and continuity of the offence. Several offender characteristics also differed significantly in cases involving male or female victims: gender, education level, employment status, marital status, and parenthood. Results suggest that sexual victimisation can be experienced quite differently by male and female victims in terms of characteristics of the offence, the offender, and police procedure. This highlights the need for more extensive investigations of gender differences in sexual victimisation, since sexual integrity is a gender-neutral human right.

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## 1 Introduction

Sexual victimisation is an important research topic, and the vast majority of studies in the literature have focused on women or children as victims, and the sexual victimisation of men remains under-researched (Davies, 2002; Javaid, 2015; Turchik & Edwards, 2012; Weiss, 2010). Nevertheless, available data suggest that males make up a substantial proportion of sexual victims. Prevalence rates of adult male sexual assault vary from 0.6% to 8.3% depending on the research methodology, definitions, screening approaches and data collection method (Elliot, Mok, & Briere, 2004). A 2010 report from Rape Crisis Network Ireland (2010) showed that 41% of women and 28% of men had experienced at least some form of sexual abuse. Canadian police data from the same year in-

dicated that males accounted for 12% of sexual assault victims (McDonald & Tijerino, 2013). A self-report survey in Canada (McDonald & Tijerino, 2013) in 2009, indicated that the rate of sexual victimisation for males was approximately half that for females (15 vs 34 per 1,000). Stemple and Meyer (2014) assessed the 12-month prevalence and incidence data on sexual victimisation from 5 national surveys conducted independently in the USA between 2010 and 2012, and concluded that men make up a substantial proportion of sex crime victims.

These statistics likely under-estimate the real prevalence of sexual victimisation (Singer, Kovčo Vukadin, & Cajner Mraović, 2002), which helps feed public misperceptions that sex crime victims are overwhelmingly female (Cohen, 2014; Lees, 2002; Reiner, 2002; Walklate, 2004). Stemple and Meyer (2014) proposed several factors that perpetuate the myth that men are rarely victimised: traditional gender stereotypes, outdated and inconsistent definitions of sexual offences, and methodological sampling biases that exclude inmates. In addition, male victims (like many female victims) may be reluctant to report the offence, and in fact, male victims may be even more reluctant than female victims because of social offence expectations based on the idea of heterosexual masculine hegemony: men are supposed to be strong, powerful, invulnerable and capable of protecting themselves (Javaid, 2015; Weiss, 2010). Male victims of sexual assault often

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fear being perceived as homosexual if they report victimisation, or they fear their report will not be taken seriously (Abdullah-Khan, 2008). Homosexual male rape victims may have fears similar to those of female victims, i.e. that others will think that the sexual encounter was consensual or that the encounter never happened in the first place (Kassing, Beesley, & Frey 2005).

Identifying effective methods for investigating male sexual victimisation is challenging. Victimisation studies usually cover a broad range of offences (in addition to sexual), and they usually offer summary-style narratives that lack contextual detail and reflect only the perspective of the victim, raising questions about their veracity (Weiss, 2010). Attempts to probe victimisation issues more deeply in such studies raise ethical questions about risks to victims and benefits to research. Personal sexual victimisation is a sensitive issue and asking highly detailed questions may create emotional problems for the victim, with psychological consequences in the longer term. Asking these questions of male sexual victims may be particularly challenging (Stanko, 1990; Walklate, 2007), which helps to explain why few victimisation studies compare the experiences of male and female victims.

Investigating male sexual victimisation, using data from health-related services contacted by victims such as medical attention or psychological services, can provide detailed information, but the study group is necessarily limited to those victims who ask for help. Therefore, a substantial proportion of victims, in particular males, are missed because they do not seek any help (Davies, Smith, & Rogers, 2009; Lundrigan & Mueller-Johnson, 2013; McLean, Balding, & White, 2005).

The aim of the present paper is to examine male sexual victimisation from several different aspects using various objective measures and thereby avoid the problems of lack of detail and recruitment bias found in many previous studies on this topic. We examined case files of sexual offences between 1998 and 2012 from police departments in Karlovac County and Sisak County, Croatia, and we extracted data about the sexual offence, police procedures, and characteristics of victims and offenders. We compared male and female victims, and our results provide some of the most systematic insights into differences between male and female sexual victimisation. These data are also some of the most detailed on this question from outside the UK and US, the source of the majority of the literature on rape and sexual assault of men published in English (Burrowes & Horvath, 2013; Greathouse, Saunders, Matthews, Keller, & Miller, 2015; Peel Institute on Violence Prevention, 2015).

## 2 Gender Differences in Sexual Victimization

Understanding gender differences in sexual victimisation is quite challenging because researchers use different definitions of sexual assault and data sources. A 2000 report from the US Department of Justice on sexual assaults on young children reported to law enforcement (Snyder, 2000) showed that 85% of all victims of sexual assault were female, and that the relative proportion of female victims increased with age. Nearly all forcible rape involved a female victim, while most forcible sodomy cases involved male victims. Males were most likely to be sexually victimised at the age of 4, and the risk fell 5-fold by age 17. Females were most likely to be sexually victimised at 14, and the risk fell by half by age 17, and then to 20% of peak risk by age 27. Females were more likely than males to be victimised multiple times; females, whether juveniles or adults, were more likely to be victimised alone. Sexual assaults against females were less likely to occur in a residence than assaults involving male victims. For victims older than 12, sexual offences involved similar victim-offender relationships; among victims under 12, however, a greater proportion of female victims than male victims were assaulted by family members.

Kimerling, Rellini, Kelly, Judson and Learman (2002) compared the demographic, psychosocial, and assault characteristics of male and female adult patients who received acute sexual services at the San Francisco Rape Treatment Center from 1992 to 1996 ( $N_f = 478$ ;  $N_m = 68$ ). Male victims were more likely than females to identify as gay or bisexual and to have current psychiatric symptoms, a history of psychiatric disorders, or a lifetime history of psychiatric hospitalisation. Male and female victims were similar in their rates of diagnosis with chronic medical conditions and physical disability, substance abuse, and lifetime history of victimisation. Men were more likely than women to report that their assailants used restraints, while women were more likely than men to experience assaults involving penetration, to file a police report, and to sustain injuries during the assault. The authors of that study concluded that sexual assault may be a different experience for women than men, and that gender issues among sexual assault victims merit further inquiry.

Weiss (2010) compared sexual assaults against male and female victims and examined the sexual victimisation experience of males in the United States using results from the National Crime Victimization Study and a representative sample of victim narratives. Sexual victimisation included rape, attempted rape and a broad range of other sexual assaults. Among the total sexual assaults examined ( $N = 1.050$ ), 9% involved male victims ( $N_m = 94$ ). Assaults involving male or female victims differed significantly in offender's gender

and the victim's willingness to report the assault to officials. Analysis of narratives revealed a broad range of sexual victimisation incidents, including rape by male strangers, attempted rape by female acquaintances, and various unwanted sexual contacts perpetrated by both male and female offenders. Male respondents sometimes described getting drunk and fighting back during their incidents, which is consistent with stereotypes of masculine hegemony.

A 2010 Rape Crisis Network (2010) report on male victims of sexual victimisation in Ireland, based on a national survey, forensic reports, and rape statistics, showed that approximately 10% of men had been sexually assaulted in adult life. The most frequent form of sexual violence against men was sexual assault and against women, rape. Vulnerability of men decreased in adulthood to a greater extent than vulnerability of women. The relationship between victim and offender could differ significantly for male and female victims, both in childhood and adulthood. Among sexual assaults recorded in 2009, male victims identified their offenders as authority figures more often than female victims. There were often significant differences in how male and female victims experienced and processed trauma and used support services. Only 5.5% of male victims visited the voluntary interagency sexual assault treatment unit for victims aged 14 and older. Gender differences in sexual victimisation extend to post-assault consequences for the victim. Burrowes and Horvath (2013) found that male victims tend to experience post-traumatic stress disorder and other complex psychological impacts more often than female victims, as well as greater levels of drug and alcohol abuse. Other psychological effects of male rape include depression, sexual dysfunction, loss of masculinity or confusion about sexual identity, loss of self-esteem, and anger and revenge fantasies (Walker, Archer, & Davies, 2005). Elliot, Mok and Briere (2004) found that sexual victimisation may be especially traumatic for men because it violates traditional male sex roles.

### 3 Sexual Victimization of Men in Croatia

Gender-specific data on sexual victimisation in Croatia are available in official police statistics. National-level analysis of sexual assaults reported to police from 2013 to 2015 indicate that juvenile males were more frequently victims of sexual assault than adult males (13.8% vs 6.2%), which may reflect greater willingness to report child exploitation. The most frequent offences reported by male adult victims were lewd acts ( $N = 330$ ); the least frequent, sexual harassment ( $N = 57$ )<sup>4</sup>. The

proportion of adult male victims was highest in harassment cases (14%) and lowest in prostitution (0.5%). The most frequent offence against male minors was sexual exploitation of a child under 15 ( $N = 673$ ); the least frequent, exploitation of children for pornographic performances ( $N = 4$ ). The proportion of juvenile male victims was highest in cases of exploitation of children in pornographic performances (75%) and lowest in child pandering cases (4.2%). No cases of sexual exploitation of a male child over the age of 15 were reported during the study period.

Mamula (2011) analysed national-level police statistics involving sex crimes for the period 2000–2010. She found that the most frequent offences were lewd acts (34%), followed by rape (18%), satisfying lust in the presence of a child or juvenile (15%), and sexual intercourse with a child (10%). Across all offences, 86% of victims were female, but males made up substantial proportions of victims for certain types of offence, such as rape (5%), sexual intercourse under duress (6%), possessing child pornography in a computer system or network (29%), and exposing children to pornography (47%).

We are unaware of studies focusing specifically on adult male sexual assault victims in Croatia; studies have focused on children (Ajduković, Sušac, & Rajter, 2013; Buljan Flander, 2007; Ručević, 2010), students (Hodžić, 2007; Štulhofer, Jureša, & Mamula, 2003), or women (Mamula, 2007). Studies on sexual offending in general or on sexual victimisation in particular have focused on certain types of offences and victims (Cajner Mraović, 2005; Kovčo Vukadin, 2005; Kurtović Mišić & Garačić, 2010; Martinjak, 2004; Radačić, 2014; Singer & Uzelac, 2005), making it difficult to gain a comprehensive picture of gender-specific trends in sexual victimisation.

Therefore, the present study presents a significant advance in understanding differences between male and female sexual victimisation in Croatia. It draws on police statistics to analyse gender-specific characteristics of sexual offences, police procedures, offenders, and victims. This work may be particularly interesting in a regional context because Croatia is among those European countries with the lowest rates of sexual offences reported to the police (European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control, 2014). This likely reflects not so much low rates of victimisation as low rates of reporting. This work may also be particularly interesting from a global perspective because the majority of English-language literature on sexual victimisation has been conducted in North America and the UK.

<sup>4</sup> The official translations of criminal offences from Croatian Criminal Code are used in this paper.

## 4 Method

### 4.1 Sample and Procedure

This study, which was approved by the Croatian Ministry of the Interior, draws on police case files of sexual victimisations reported between 1998 and 2012 to the police administrations<sup>5</sup> of Karlovac County and Sisak County. These two counties were selected because of convenience – two of the authors are employees in those two counties. The second author of this paper collected data in Karlovac County and the third author of this paper collected data in Sisak County. This period was chosen because it covers the period of enforcement of the Croatian Criminal Code of 1997 (Kazneni zakon, 1997, 1998, 2000, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2011), before implementation of a new criminal code on 1 January 2013, which changed the definitions of some sex crimes. This would have made it more difficult to compare data before and after 1 January 2013. The present study examined several crimes mentioned in the Criminal Code (Kazneni zakon, 1997, 1998, 2000, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2011) that involved sexual relations (namely rape, sexual intercourse with a helpless person, sexual intercourse under duress, sexual intercourse by abuse of position, and sexual intercourse with a child). This study did not examine other criminal offences against sexual freedom and sexual morality as defined in Chapter XIV of the Criminal Code of 1997 (Kazneni zakon, 1997, 1998, 2000, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2011), namely, incest, lewd acts, satisfying lust in the presence of a child or a juvenile, pandering, abuse of children or juveniles in pornography, exposing children to pornography, and possessing child pornography on a computer system or network.

Interestingly, the Criminal Code (Kazneni zakon, 1997, 1998, 2000, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2011) of 1997 expanded the legal definition of rape to include the possibility of male rape and marital rape, and it recognized the possibility that a woman could be a sex crime offender. The previous Criminal Code (Kazneni zakon, 1993, 1996) of 1993 defined a rape offender as “whoever coerces another female

person with whom he is not in marital union by force or by threat of immediate attack upon his life or limb, or the life or limb of a person close to him, to sexual intercourse ...”.

Altogether, 230 case files were analysed: 104 (45.2%) in Karlovac County and 126 (54.8%) in Sisak County.<sup>6</sup> Some of the case files included multiple victims and/or multiple offenders, in which case data were collected on all offenders and all victims. Male victims made up 15% of all victims, and the most prevalent criminal offences were rape<sup>7</sup> (52.7%) and sexual intercourse with a child<sup>8</sup> (39.2%). Much less prevalent were sexual intercourse with a helpless person<sup>9</sup> (5%), sexual intercourse by abuse of position<sup>10</sup> (2.7%) and sexual intercourse under duress<sup>11</sup> (0.4%). Most criminal offences (90.8%) were completed. During the study period 1998–2012, the sexual criminal offences in our sample accounted for an average of 8.1% of all such offences at the national level.

### 4.2 Instrument

After reviewing five representative case files for different sex offences, a questionnaire was developed with 100 variables in order to extract uniform data from the full dataset of case files. When a case file included multiple offenders or victims, data for all offenders and victims were collected. Variables were as follows:

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- <sup>6</sup> Nine case files at the Sisak police administration during the study period could not be analysed because they were destroyed in a flood.
  - <sup>7</sup> The Croatian Criminal Code (Kazneni zakon, 1997, 1998, 2000, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2011) of 1997 defines rape as follows: “Whoever coerces another by force or by threat of immediate attack upon his life or limb, or the life or limb of a person close to him, to sexual intercourse or an equivalent sexual act shall be punished by imprisonment for one to ten years.”
  - <sup>8</sup> “Whoever performs sexual intercourse or an equivalent sexual act on a child (*under 14*) shall be punished by imprisonment for one to eight years.”
  - <sup>9</sup> “Whoever performs sexual intercourse or an equivalent sexual act with another person, taking advantage of his mental illness, temporary mental disorder, mental deficiency or some other more severe mental disturbance or any other condition which prevents such a person from resisting, shall be punished by imprisonment for one to eight years.”
  - <sup>10</sup> “Whoever, by abusing his/her position, induces another person to submit to sexual intercourse or an equivalent sexual act and where that person is in a position dependent towards him/her due to harsh material, family, social, health or any other conditions or circumstances shall be punished by imprisonment for three months to three years.”
  - <sup>11</sup> “Whoever forces another person to sexual intercourse or to an equivalent sexual act with a serious threat of serious harm shall be punished by imprisonment for three months to five years.”

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<sup>5</sup> The Croatian Ministry of the Interior has a centralised, hierarchical structure with three levels (Zakon o policiji [Law on Police], 2011, 2012): (1) General Police Directorate, (2) County police administrations, and (3) police stations. There are 20 county police administrations in Croatia. They are arranged in a hierarchy of four levels based on the size of the area they cover, number of inhabitants, number of criminal offences, characteristics of traffic routes and geographical positions. The Zagreb County police administration, which covers the territory of the Croatian capital and Zagreb County, is the only police administration in the first category. Police administrations in Karlovac and Sisak are in the third category.

Crime report and police procedure:

- Who filed a report about the crime, and how?
- Did the victim know the offender?
- How much time elapsed between the crime and the filing of a crime report?
- Was the victim examined medically?
- Did the victim receive urgent medical help?
- Whom did police interview and how many times?
- What was the gender of the police investigator who interviewed the victim?

Criminal offence:

- Nature of the offence?
- Type of location (private or public)?
- Use of force (physical, threats, weapon)?
- Did the victim resist the offender?
- Was the victim under the influence of alcohol or drugs *tempore criminis*?
- Was the offender under the influence of alcohol or drugs *tempore criminis*?
- Did the victim sustain injuries?
- When during the year and week did the offence occur?
- How many criminal activities were committed?
- How many offenders were involved?

Victim characteristics:

- Age?
- Education?
- Marital status?
- Parental status?
- Former sexual victimisation?
- Victim's relationship to the offender?
- Continuity of the criminal offence?

Offender characteristics:

- Gender?
- Age?
- Education?
- Employment?
- Marital status?
- Parental status?
- Recidivism?

## 5 Results

### 5.1 Data Analysis

Data for categorical variables were compared using the chi-squared test, and data for continuous variables were com-

pared using the *t* test. Whenever possible, data were compared with results from other studies. This was not always possible because of differences in datasets and in how criminal offences were defined and analysed between studies.

### 5.2 Crime Reporting and Police Procedures

In 48.1% of the cases in our dataset, the victim reported being victimised, usually by coming to the police station. In other cases (29.2%), the offence was reported to police by a person in whom the victim had confided, including a family member, work colleague, or medical staff. A slightly smaller percentage of cases (21.5%) was reported to police by a state agency such as the Centre for Social Welfare or by the police themselves as a result of investigating another crime. In two cases (0.8%), a witness unrelated to the victim reported the criminal offence to police, and in another, the offender himself reported the offence. The manner in which offences were communicated to police did not vary significantly with the gender of the victim.

Delays in reporting sex crimes have often been noted to engender greater scepticism about their veracity (Lonsway, Archambault, & Lisak, 2009). Just under half (47.3%) of the offences in our dataset were reported within 24 hours (22.7%) or within one year (24.6%). The interval from event to reporting was significantly shorter for offences involving female victims ( $M = 3.43$ ;  $SD = 1.78$ ) than for offences involving male victims ( $M = 4.19$ ;  $SD = 1.60$ ) ( $t = 2.437$ ,  $p < 0.03$ ). Offences involving female victims were reported most often after 2–7 days, while those involving male victims were reported most often after 1–4 weeks, with the most frequent reason cited for delaying a report was fear of the offender.

In 95% of cases, offenders were personally known to male and female victims, and no differences were found across victim's gender. This contrasts with the still pervasive idea that sexual assaults are perpetrated mostly by strangers. Estrich (1987) defined the "real rape stereotype" as rape perpetrated by a stranger outdoors, involving the use of force, resistance from the victim and visible injuries. This idea can be dangerous because it may lead the public or police to question whether a purported sexual assault was a consensual event or whether it even occurred at all. Consistent with our results, Astion (2008) found that the offender was known to the victim in 70.7% of 7,096 sexual assault cases in which the victim sought medical attention in Massachusetts between 2000 and 2008. In that study, the mean age of victims assaulted by offenders known to them was 3 years younger than that of victims assaulted by strangers, and the proportion of assaults perpetrated by strangers increased with the age of the victim. Assaults by strangers were more likely to involve force and/or

multiple assailants and to cause bleeding injuries than assaults by people known to the victim.

Research is just beginning to uncover significant differences between male and female victims in the relationships they have with the individuals who sexually assault them (Rape Crisis Network Ireland, 2010). For example, males are the victims of sexual violence committed by a partner/ex-partner much less often than females, and males are much more often the victim of sexual violence by strangers than are women. Muir and Macleod (2003) found that 20% of rapes of male victims reported in a large UK metropolitan area were committed by strangers, while Kimerling and colleagues (2002) found that 30% of rapes of male victims in a US rape treatment centre sample were committed by strangers.

Medical examination of the victim was unnecessary in 46.5% of cases in our sample. In 7.7% of cases, the victim went by him- or herself to undergo a medical examination, while in 45.8% of cases, the police escorted the victim to the medical examination. These practices did not vary significantly with the gender of the victim. Most victims (90.8%) did not require urgent medical help, while 7.3% of victims received some medical help in an ambulance, and 1.9% was hospitalised, and these results were also similar for male and female victims.

Across all victims, male and female police officers conducted similar numbers of interviews (39.6% vs. 38.8%), including when multiple interviewers conducted interview with the same victim (21.5%). Male victims were interviewed similarly often by male officers (35.9%) or by male and female officers (38.5%) while female victims were interviewed similarly often by female (41.2%) or male (40.3%) officers. Male victims were interviewed by male and female officers more often than were female victims. The Croatian Code of Criminal Procedure (Zakon o kaznenom postupku, 2008, 2009, 2011, 2012, 2013) of 2008 affords the victim of a sex crime the right to be interviewed by a same-sex police officer and same-sex representative of the State Attorney's Office. This practice reflects, in particular, the idea that female victims may feel more comfortable revealing their victimisation to another woman, and that female police officers are generally better than male officers at establishing rapport with sex crime victims. These ideas have been called into question by recent studies. Rich and Seffrin (2012) point out that research has not shown conclusively that female officers achieve better rapport, while it has been shown that rape myths can be as pervasive among female officers as among their male colleagues. The experience of male victims in interviews conducted by male or female officers has yet to be examined systematically.

Our dataset contained a total of 982 interviews involving 468 interviews with victims, 244 with offenders, 25 with

witnesses and 245 with others. Police conducted significantly more interviews with female victims ( $M = 1.20$  times;  $SD = 0.513$ ) than with male victims ( $M = 0.85$  times;  $SD = 0.366$ ) ( $t = -0.173$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). This might reflect the fact that male victims were younger than female victims and there is a rule to interview young victims just once. In contrast, the gender of the victim was not significantly related to the numbers of interviews conducted with offenders ( $t = 0.756$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ), witnesses ( $t = 1.574$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ) or others ( $t = 1.854$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ).

### 5.3 Characteristics of the Criminal Offences

Analysis of the characteristics of criminal offences by gender of the victim is shown in Table 1. Snyder (2000) found that females were more often victims of forcible rape (99%), sexual assault with an object (87%), and forcible fondling (82%), while most males were victims of forcible sodomy (54%). Weiss (2010) found that women were significantly more likely than men to be victims of rape and attempted rape rather than sexual assault. In our sample, the most frequent criminal offences were rape (52.7%), with female victims predominating over male victims, and sexual intercourse with a child (39.2%), where male victims predominated.

Most criminal offences in our sample occurred at private locations (67.3%), while 3.8% occurred on multiple occasions at both private and public locations. The most frequent private place was a house; the most frequent public place, the offender's car. These characteristics of offences did not differ significantly with the gender of the victim. Similarly, Weiss (2010) found no differences in location between assaults involving male or female victims. Snyder (2000) found that 70% of sexual assaults reported to law enforcement occurred at the victim's residence. Kimerling and colleagues (2002) also noted that most sexual assaults occurred in the home of either victim or offender, and that the proportion of sexual assaults committed in a residence was significantly smaller for female victims (69%) than male victims (77%). In our sample, similarly low proportions of sexual offences affecting males and females occurred at the victim's residence (17.9% vs. 16.7%). The proportion of sexual offences occurring at the offender's residence was larger for those offences involving male victims (23.1%) than for female victims (13.6%).

Offenders in our sample used physical force in nearly two-thirds and threats in 22.3% of cases. Use of force or threats did not significantly depend on the gender of the victim. Offenders used a firearm in 1.2% of cases, all of which involved female victims, while a knife or razor was used in 2.7% of cases, again all involving female victims. Snyder (2000) found that 8% of sexual assaults involved the use of a knife or club (6%) or a firearm (2%). Weiss (2010) found 7%

of sexual assaults involved a weapon, regardless of the gender of the victim, and that approximately 89% of both male and female victims used some form of resistance strategy. In our sample, the victim resisted the offender in 90% of cases, with female victims resisting significantly more often than male victims (Table 1). This result is understandable: females in our sample were victims of rape more often than men, and the legal definition of rape is interpreted as it requires that the victim put up resistance (Radačić, 2014). Males, in contrast, were more often the victims of sexual intercourse with a child, which does not necessarily involve resistance from the victim.

In an analysis of narratives by victims of sexual assault, Weiss (2010) found that men were more than three times as likely as women to reveal that they had been drinking or using drugs before the offence. That author suggested that this difference may be due in part to male desires to explain or excuse their inability to resist the attack (“too drunk to control the situation”). In contrast, Kimerling and colleagues (2002) found no differences in rates of substance abuse between male and female victims seeking acute treatment. Our results provide an intriguing contrast to these trends. Nearly half the victims in our sample (43%), more females than males, reported being under the influence of alcohol *tempore criminis*, while a

smaller number of victims (13.8%), comprising similar numbers of males and females, was under the influence of drugs *tempore criminis*.

In contrast to victims, most offenders (75.9%) were under the influence of alcohol *tempore criminis*, and all cases in which offenders were under the influence of alcohol involved female victims. More than one-quarter of offenders were under the influence of drugs *tempore criminis*, and this did not differ significantly with the gender of the victim.

Weiss (2010) found no differences in the proportions of male or female incidents involving physical injuries requiring medical help. Kimerling and colleagues (2002), in contrast, found that women were more likely than men to experience injuries. In our sample, victims suffered mild injuries in 18.1% of cases and serious injuries in 2.3%; 4.2% involving female victims led to pregnancy. Female victims suffered mild injury significantly more often than male victims, but the rate of serious injury was similar between the two groups of victims.

**Table 1:** Characteristics of the criminal offence, stratified by gender of the victim

Variable	Category	Victim's gender (%)		χ <sup>2</sup>	P
		Male (N = 39)	Female (N = 221)		
Criminal offence	rape	12.8	59.7	34.873	p < 0.01
	sexual intercourse with a helpless person	7.7	4.5		
	sexual intercourse by abuse of position	0	3.2		
	sexual intercourse under duress	0	0.5		
	sexual intercourse with a child	79.5	32.1		
Victim resisted offender	yes	33.3	68.5	15.133	p < 0,01
<i>Tempore criminis</i> victim under influence of alcohol (N <sub>m</sub> = 20; N <sub>f</sub> = 79)	yes	10.0	57.0	14.115	p < 0.01
Victim suffered mild injuries	yes	5.1	20.4	5.195	p < 0.03

One criminal event may constitute multiple criminal offences. Snyder (2000) found that a single sexual assault was the only crime against the victim in 92% of all sexual victimisations, and that female victims were more likely to experience multiple offences than male victims (10% vs 4%). In our sample, the number of criminal offences committed during a single victimisation ranged from 1 to 3, and most cases (80%) involved only one criminal offence. Other criminal offences included satisfying lust in the presence of a child or juvenile, family violence, lewd act, and unlawful deprivation of freedom. The numbers of offences committed during a single victimisation did not vary significantly with the gender of the victim ( $t = 1.027$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ).

Weiss (2010) found that approximately 95% of sexual offences involving male or female victims were perpetrated by only one offender. In contrast, Kimerling et al. (2002) found that approximately one-fourth of sexual assault victims was victimised by multiple offenders. The number of offenders per case in our sample ranged from 1 to 4 ( $M = 1.22$ ;  $SD = 0.638$ ). The number of offenders per case was significantly higher in the case of male victims ( $M = 1.97$ ;  $SD = 1.203$ ) than in the case of female victims ( $M = 1.09$ ;  $SD = 0.332$ ) ( $t = 4.556$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ).

#### 5.4 Temporal Characteristics of Criminal Offence

For the 192 of cases in our sample for which month(s) of occurrence were available, criminal offences were spread fairly evenly across the months of the year, with small peaks in December (8.5%) and August (7.7%). A small proportion of offences (12.3%) were committed over multiple months, and the distribution of offences by month did not differ significantly between offences involving male or female victims ( $t = 1.519$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ).

Similarly, analysis of days of the week for the 160 cases for which data were available showed a similar distribution for offences involving male or female victims ( $t = 1.096$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ; Table 5). The frequency of offences involving male or female victims was slightly higher on the weekend than during the week.

For the 152 cases for which the time of day for the offences was known, the most frequent times of occurrence were between 6 and 12 pm (25%) and between midnight and 6 am (20%). This was similar for offences involving male and female victims ( $t = -0.298$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ). Snyder (2000) found that the time of day when sexual assault occurred was related primarily to the age of the victim: peak times were 3 pm for victims younger than 6 years, noon for victims aged 6–11, between 3 pm and 11 pm for victims aged 12–17, and 2 am for victims aged 18 and older. These times likely reflect when children are leaving school or are having meals.

#### 5.5 Characteristics of the Victims

In our sample, the age of the victims ranged from 3 to 81 years ( $M = 21.76$ ;  $SD = 16.205$ ). Male victims were significantly younger ( $M = 10.95$ ;  $SD = 6.70$ ) than female victims ( $M = 23.67$ ;  $SD = 16.645$ ) ( $t = -8.200$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). Snyder (2000) found that victims in 67% of sexual assaults reported to law enforcement agencies were juveniles, with more than half younger than 12 years and 14% younger than 6. He also found that 86% of all victims of sexual assault were female, and that the relative proportion of female victims increased with the age of the victim. Mamula (2011) found that most victims of sex crimes were children under 14 (32%), followed by juveniles age 14–18 (30%), young adults age 18–22 (15%) and adults age 23–30 (11%). Only 12% of cases involved victims older than 30 years. Weiss (2010) found the median age for male and female victims of sexual assault was 24, while Kimerling and colleagues (2002) found that mean age among sexual assault victims who sought treatment in hospital emergency rooms was 30 for males and 31 for females. Data from Ireland (Rape Crisis Network Ireland, 2010) suggest that the vulnerability of men to sexual assault decreases much more as they age than it does for women. However, this finding may reflect less willingness among older victims to report victimisation. This remains an open question, since elderly victims, in general, remain invisible in sexual victimisation research. While some studies have addressed elderly female victims (Ball, 2005), elderly male victims have not been analysed. The largest proportion of victims in our sample reported little or no formal schooling (34%, Table 2), followed by those who attended secondary school (17%), attended elementary school (14.7%), completed elementary school (12.4%), attended pre-school (11.2%), completed higher education (8.9%), completed secondary school (1.2%) or were still attending higher education (0.8%). A larger proportion of male than female victims were preschool children, and related to this, male victims had generally lower levels of education than female victims. These results reflect gender differences in the dominant type of criminal offence: for male victims, it was sexual intercourse with a child, which implies being younger than 14 years.

Less than one-quarter of female victims (21.3%) had given birth before their sexual victimisation. Among the 240 victims for which marital status was available, most (64.2%) were under the legal age for marriage (18 years), 17.9% were single, 13.7% were married or in cohabitation, and 4.2% were separated/divorced/widowed. Most male (87.2%) and most female victims (64.2%) were below the legal age for marriage, while larger proportions of female victims than male victims were married or in cohabitation or were separated/divorced/widowed.

Re-victimisation is an important but still under-researched topic in the field of sexual victimisation. Kimerling

and colleagues (2002) found that approximately one-half of victims had previously been sexually assaulted, while one third had been physically assaulted as an adult. Those authors found no gender differences in lifetime history of victimisation. In our sample, 15.4% of cases involved re-victimisations. No differences were observed between male and female victims on the basis of available data.

A different question is how many times a sexual offence was committed during a single event, known as continuity of the offence. In 34.2% of cases, an offender committed the offence multiple times, and this occurred significantly more often to male victims than to female ones.

Extensive literature exists on the relationship between victim and offender because of the persistent popular misconception that most victims have no prior relationship with their offenders. Snyder (2000) found that 27% of all offenders were family members of the victims, and that victim-offender relationships were similar for male and female victims. Weiss

(2010) found males and females to be victimised by strangers at similar relative frequencies, while co-workers were more likely to victimise men than women, whereas intimate partners were more likely to victimise women. In a national prevalence study in Ireland (Rape Crisis Network, 2010), nearly half of adult victims of sexual violence (47% women and 42% men) were victimised by a friend or acquaintance, while most juvenile victims (52% girls and 66% boys) were victimised by someone other than a family member.

In our sample, 13.1% of cases involved no prior relationship between victim and offender, while such a relationship did exist in all other cases. This relationship was most often friendship or acquaintance (38.1%), familial (21.2%), intimate (15.8%), or other type (11.5%). The presence of a prior relationship did differ significantly between male and female victims; females were victimised more often either by strangers or by intimate partner/ex-partner, whereas males were victimised more often by a friend or acquaintance.

**Table 2:** Characteristics of sexual assault victims, stratified by gender of the victim

Variable	Category	Victim's gender (%)		χ <sup>2</sup>	P
		Male (N = 39)	Female (N = 221)		
<b>Education</b>	preschool child	43.6	2.7	77.696	p < 0.01
	no school/few years	10.3	11.4		
	attending elementary school	38.5	33.2		
	completed elementary school	5.1	16.4		
	attending high school	2.6	14.1		
	completed high school	0.0	20.0		
	studying at college/university	0.0	1.4		
	completed college/university program	0.0	0.9		
<b>Marital status (N<sub>m</sub> = 39; N<sub>f</sub> = 201)</b>	single	12.8	18.9	12.862	p < 0.01
	marriage/cohabitation	0.0	16.4		
	separated/widower	0.0	5.0		
	below legal age for marriage	87.2	59.7		
<b>Victim's relationship to the offender</b>	no relationship	7.7	14.1	13.278	p < 0.03
	friendship/acquaintance	61.5	34.1		
	intimate relationship	2.6	18.2		
	family	20.5	21.4		
	other	7.7	12.3		
<b>Continuity of criminal activity</b>	yes	48.7	31.7	4.277	p < 0.05

## 5.6 Characteristics of the Offenders

Of the 259 known offenders in our sample, 96.9% were male, and only 3.1% were female. Other studies have shown that males are the majority offenders in sex crimes; in fact, the concept of female sex offender has been recognised only relatively recently (Ackerman, 2011; Allsopp, 2014). Snyder (2000) found that 4% of offenders in his sample were female, while in our sample, female offenders victimised male victims more often than female victims. This is consistent with the finding of Weiss (2010) that 99% of women were victimised by men, and only 54% of men were victimised by men.

In the study by Snyder (2000), 23% of offenders were younger than 18 years, and the most frequent type of assault among these offenders was forcible sodomy. Across all offenders in our sample, ages ranged from 11 to 81 years ( $M = 31.71$ ;  $SD = 14.270$ ), and there was a weak positive correlation between victim and offender ages ( $r = 0.29$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). In contrast, an offender's age did not differ significantly between cases involving male or female victims ( $t = -1.618$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ). Snyder (2000) found that the nature of the sexual crime was related to offender age. Ybarra and Mitchell (2013), using national-level data from the US, found that sexually violent behaviour among adolescents emerged earlier in males than females, and they suggested that such emergence may be linked to sexual violence in the media. Bojanić and Deljković (2011) found that 45.8% of offenders in 77 rape cases where a court reached a verdict in Bosnia and Herzegovina ranged in age between 26 and 35 years.

Among the 255 offenders in our sample for which data on educational level were available, the largest proportion (38.8%) had finished secondary school, 26.3% had finished elementary school, and 14.3% had only a few years or no years of formal education. These results are similar to those reported by Bojanić and Deljković (2011) for rape offenders in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Muir and Macleod (2003), in their analysis of rapes and attempted rapes in London, found that 88% of offenders had completed secondary school. Offenders in our study who victimised males were usually attending elementary school, implying that male victimisation tends to occur within a peer group. Offenders who victimised females had usually had completed elementary school (Table 3).

Among the 222 offenders in our sample for which employment data were available, the largest proportion was unemployed (36.5%), 29.7% were employed, 19.8% were students, 11.3% were retired, and 2.7% had a part-time job. Bojanić and Deljković (2011) found that 48.6% of rape offenders in their study were unemployed, while the corresponding proportion of offenders in the study by Muir and Macleod (2003)

was 59%. Offenders in our study who victimised male victims were more often students, consistent with the distribution of educational levels among offenders.

Of the 248 offenders in our sample for which marital status was available, most were single (54.4%), 34.7% were married or in cohabitation, and 10.9% were divorced or widowed. The proportion of single offenders in our sample was slightly larger than that among rape offenders in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Bojanić & Deljković, 2011). Offenders in our study who victimised males were more often single than those who victimised females.

Data about parental status were available for 240 offenders. Nearly half (44.2%) had children and the proportion of offenders with children was higher among those who victimised females than among those who victimised males.

Recidivism in our study was defined as a prior criminal or misdemeanour report or conviction. Data about recidivism were available for 255 offenders, of whom 30.6% were recidivists. This rate did not differ between cases involving male or female victims. This rate is much lower than in other studies, particularly in light of the fact that we included misdemeanours as well as felonies, and prior reports as well as convictions. Muir and Macleod (2003) in the UK and Wikström (1991) in Sweden reported that 58% of sex offenders had a prior criminal conviction, while earlier studies from the UK reported higher rates of 70% (Wright, 1980) and 78% (Lloyd & Walmsley, 1989). Interestingly, the study by Bojanić and Deljković (2011) found an even lower rate of recidivism in their sample of rape offenders.

**Table 3:** Characteristics of sexual assault offenders, stratified by gender of the victim

Variable	Category	Victim's gender (%)		$\chi^2$	p
		Male	Female		
<b>Offender's gender</b> ( $N_m = 39$ ; $N_f = 220$ )	male	82.1	99.5	33.870	p < 0.01
	female	17.9	0.5		
<b>Education</b> ( $N_m = 39$ ; $N_f = 206$ )	no school/several years	12.8	15.5	33.119	p < 0.01
	attending elementary school	25.6	2.4		
	completed elementary school	12.8	30.1		
	attending high school	10.3	9.2		
	completed high school	35.9	41.3		
	studying/completed college/university	2.6	1.5		
<b>Employment</b> ( $N_m = 35$ ; $N_f = 187$ )	student	45.7	15.0	20.833	p < 0.01
	Unemployed	22.9	39.0		
	part-time job	5.7	2.1		
	Employed	22.9	31.0		
	Retired	2.9	12.8		
<b>Marital status</b> ( $N_m = 38$ ; $N_f = 210$ )	Single	73.7	51.0	8.845	p < 0.03
	marriage/relationship	26.3	36.2		
	separated/widower	0.0	12.9		
<b>Offender has children</b> ( $N_m = 35$ ; $N_f = 205$ )	no	82.9	51.2	12.135	p < 0.01
	yes	17.1	48.8		

## 6 Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this exploratory study was to contribute to existing scholarship about male victims of sexual assault by analysing police case files and examining potential differences between male and female victims. Our study identified several significant differences between male and female victims, and between offences involving victims of one gender or the other. Offences involving female victims were usually reported to police more promptly than those involving male victims, and female victims were more likely to be interviewed by female police officers and to be interviewed more times than male victims. Females were also more likely to be the victim of rape than males, while males were more likely to be victims of sexual intercourse with a child. Male victims were much younger than female ones and were more often preschool children. This may help explain why female victims resisted the offender more often than male victims, and why they suf-

fered mild injuries more often than males. Male victims were more likely than females to be under the legal age for marriage (18), while female victims were more likely to be married/cohabitating or divorced/separated/widowed. The young age of male victims may help explain why offenders in our sample used a firearm or other weapon only when the victim was a female. The older age of female victims may help explain why they were more likely than males to be under the influence of alcohol during the offence. All the aforementioned differences might reflect differences in type of the most common criminal offence for male and female victims – males were dominantly victims of sexual intercourse with a child (where no force is necessary) and females were dominantly victims of rape.

Our results also highlight significant differences in offender characteristics depending on whether their victim was male or female. Offenders in our sample were under the influence of alcohol only when their victim was female, and of-

fenders were more likely to act with one or more co-offenders when their victim was male. Those who victimised females were more likely to be strangers or intimate partners/ex-partners than those who victimised males. Those who victimised males were more likely to be friends or acquaintances than those who victimised females.

These results provide strong evidence that male and female victims do not share the same experience of sexual victimisation. In particular, our findings that the age of victims and the type of offence are related to the gender of the victim highlight the need for further research in this area.

At the same time, we found numerous characteristics of the offence, offender, and victim that did not differ with the gender of the victim, including the fact that in most cases of sexual assault, the offender is known to the victim. This reinforces an already extensive literature that most sex crimes are not committed by strangers, emphasising the need to eliminate this public misconception and thereby reduce stigma and bias against victims. Our results suggest that drug use is involved in a relatively small proportion of sex crimes, which is inconsistent with other studies (Kraanen & Emmelkamp, 2011). Nearly one-third of offenders in our sample were recidivists, which is higher than the rate in a study of rape offenders in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Bojanić & Deljković, 2011) and much lower than rates reported in other parts of the world (Lloyd & Walmsley, 1989; Muir & Macleod, 2003; Wikström, 1991; Wright, 1980). Further study is needed to investigate the factors behind these differences.

Our findings regarding younger male victims may reflect greater willingness to report such cases, as well as unwillingness among older male victims to report victimisation. The possibility that adult male rape occurs more often than reported is important to investigate because the predominance of the myth that adult male rape rarely (if ever) occurs can compromise societal reactions to male sexual victimisation. As a result, the trauma and victimisation that males may experience from the justice system or the public when they report offences can be worse than what they experienced during the offence. Our results suggest the need for an enlightened social policy that focuses on raising awareness and educating the general public and specific groups, including victims, criminal justice professionals and the media. In addition, since a large proportion of male victims in our sample are still in school, our results argue for implementing interventions within the formal education system. Such interventions should aim to discredit attitudes that support sexual violence and to promote acceptance and understanding, particularly of male victims.

## 7 Research Limitations and Future Directions

While this study has provided insight into similarities and differences between male and female victims of sexual victimisation, several limitations should be noted. First, the results of this study may not be representative of sex crimes across Croatia, since we examined case files from only two police administrations, accounting for only 8.1% of all such criminal offences in the country. Therefore, our study involves a relatively small sample, especially of male victims. To maintain reasonable sample size, we aggregated criminal offences involving any illegal sexual intercourse, which may gloss over important differences among types of sex offences.

Reliance on police data is problematic, particularly for studying sex crimes. Official data can be inaccurate and lack key information (Mosher, Miethe, & Phillips, 2002). In particular, the “dark figure” of unreported sexual offences means that police data may not be representative of the true situation of sexual offences (Knoth & Ruback, 2016; Muir & Macleod, 2003; Van Dijk, Van Kesteren, & Smit, 2007). Although we did our best to collect data in a uniform manner from police case files, we had to design our extraction form ad hoc, and the case files were not standardised.

The analysis presented here aims merely to provide preliminary observations and descriptions to stimulate future work in this highly under-researched area, and no causal relationships can be discerned from our findings. In addition, comparisons of our results with those of other studies should be interpreted carefully, since methodological differences, such as in how sexual offences or rape were defined and how data were collected, can lead to spurious conclusions. Future research should apply both quantitative and qualitative methods to examine gender-based differences in specific types of sexual victimisation within specific age groups. Sexual integrity is a basic human right, and both science and society should pay attention to the “forgotten few”.

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## Razlike med spoloma v primerih spolne viktimizacije

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Večino žrtev spolnih deliktov predstavljajo ženske. Posledično so bili moški kot žrtve spolnih deliktov zanemarjeni tako v literaturi kot tudi v družbi. Z namenom vpogleda v značilnosti, ki so povezane z moško spolno viktimizacijo in opredelitvijo možnosti za nadaljnje raziskovanje, smo primerjali 221 primerov žensk in 39 primerov moških, ki so bili žrtve spolnih deliktov, glede na značilnosti kaznivega dejanja, storilcev in žrtev. Primeri moških in ženskih žrtev spolne viktimizacije se bistveno razlikujejo glede na vrsto kaznivega dejanja, spol policista, ki je opravil intervju z žrtvijo, število izvedenih intervjujev z žrtvijo in časom prijave kaznivega dejanja. Nekatere značilnosti kaznivih dejanj zoper spolno nedotakljivost se razlikujejo glede na spol žrtve: število storilcev, uporaba orožja, upiranje žrtve, poškodovanje žrtve in alkoholiziranost žrtve in/ali storilca. Nadalje smo identificirali razlike med moškimi in ženskimi žrtvami glede na starost, izobrazbo, družinski status, odnos s storilcem in kontinuitete kaznivega dejanja. Opredelili smo številne razlike med značilnostmi storilca glede na spol žrtve: spol, izobrazba, zaposlitveni status, zakonski status in starševstvo. Na podlagi rezultatov sklepamo, da moški in ženske drugače doživljajo spolno viktimizacijo. To doživljanje je odvisno od značilnosti kaznivega dejanja, storilca in policijskega postopka. Na podlagi rezultatov izpostavljamo potrebo po bolj obsežnem raziskovanju razlik glede na spol žrtev v primerih spolne viktimizacije, saj je spolna nedotakljivost pravica vsakega posameznika ne glede na spol.

**Ključne besede:** spolna viktimizacija, razlike med spoloma, policijski primeri

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