

A representative study by forsa and cosnova reveals that partner violence remains a taboo subject for young women

A troubling truth: many young women have already experienced boundary violations and violence in their relationships

Sulzbach, 16 July 2025 – Most recently published figures confirm: the proportion of women experiencing violence in their relationships is increasing. The “Un_Safe Spaces Report” by forsa and cosnova shows that domestic violence influences women's relationship experiences from an early age (18-35 years old). Violence is alarmingly common in romantic partnerships among young women in Germany and overshadows their first partnership experiences:

- 37% of women between 18 and 35 have experienced psychological violence in a relationship
- One in four has been pressured into unwanted sexual acts, and 17% have experienced physical violence in a relationship
- 44% of respondents between 18 and 35 know a woman who has experienced violence in a relationship
- Only 6% of women who have experienced partner violence reported it to the police

The “Un_Safe Spaces Report: Gender-specific experiences of violence among young women in Germany” was compiled as part of the “cosnova says NO – united to end violence against women” initiative. In January of this year, the social research institute forsa interviewed 1,500 women between the ages of 18 and 35 for the study. The German cosmetics company cosnova, known for brands such as essence and Catrice, is working with Zonta International Germany to promote a violence-free society for women. The initiative aims to raise awareness of gender-based abuse and educate young women about the issue.

“Partner violence is not a niche phenomenon, but rather a problem that unfortunately affects many women in Germany from a young age, and it concerns us all. This form of violence usually takes place in private and often goes unnoticed. That's why it's important that we educate others, offer support, and stand up for one another as a society,” says Astrid Haury, Senior Manager of Corporate Responsibility at cosnova. “We want to break the taboo and encourage those affected to seek help.”

Silence leads to dark figures: Few assaults in relationships are reported to the police

Only six percent of the women interviewed who had experienced violence in a relationship reported it to the police. Of those cases, only one percent resulted in legal consequences for the perpetrators.

About a quarter of the respondents kept quiet about their experiences of violence. Support from public authorities such as counseling services, the police, helplines and women's shelters are rarely utilized. There are many reasons for this silence. Most frequently, women state that they did not consider the incidents to be serious enough (44%), that they were convinced they could handle the difficulties on their own (39%), or that they felt partly responsible for the situation (34%). Other reasons reported by affected women include feeling ashamed about what they experienced (30%), fearing how those around them would react (27%), and quietly hoping things would improve (24%).

Women criticize the lack of social support

The “Un_Safe Spaces Report” reveals an alarming social problem: 83% of respondents agree with the statement that victims of sexual assault in Germany are often given some of the blame for their own victimization. Three-quarters of women believe that gender-based violence is not taken seriously enough, while 66% complain about insufficient public discussion in politics, the media, and social networks.

“The study data shows that domestic violence among young people is widespread and often trivialized by society, which is alarming. This is unacceptable. We must hold perpetrators accountable, invest in prevention, and promote respectful relationships. One way to achieve this is by incorporating gender equality into the curricula of our educational institutions. Not only does prevention fulfill Germany's obligations under the Istanbul Convention, it also prevents suffering and benefits society as a whole,” says Susanne von Bassewitz of Zonta International Germany, which is committed to improving the legal, political, economic and professional situation of women worldwide.

At the beginning of the year, cosnova raised awareness of gender-based violence in public spaces with its “Un_Safe Spaces Report” and received widespread media coverage.

About the study

On behalf of cosnova Beauty, forsa Gesellschaft für Sozialforschung und statistische Analysen mbH conducted a representative study on the topic of “Gender-Based Violence Experienced by Young Women”. Interviews were conducted with 2,024 women aged between 18 and 65, including 1,501 women aged between 18 and 35. The age group was selected because it aligns with the core target group of the company's brands essence and Catrice, which cosnova wanted to highlight within the framework of the survey. The interviews were conducted via the representative online panel forsa.omninet from 6 to 15 January 2025. In addition to the topic of domestic violence, the study examined gender-specific boundary violations on social media and violence experienced by young women in public.

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About cosnova Beauty

cosnova Beauty has its headquarters in Germany and distributes its decorative cosmetics brands essence and Catrice in around 90 countries worldwide. In 2024, the family-owned business achieved net sales of 954 million euros. cosnova is the 6th largest company for "Decorative Cosmetics" in the world and the 2nd largest by unit sales.

Besides its beauty business, the cosnova Group also invests in a variety of companies and assets, some to utilize synergies in the beauty segment and others as stand-alone investments. cosnova has grown substantially since it was founded more than 20 years ago. Around 900 employees at various locations around the world are committed to the company's success story.