



Division for the Advancement of Women



"Violence against women: a statistical overview, challenges and gaps in data collection and methodology and approaches for overcoming them"

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**Violence against women in France:
The context, findings and impact of the Enveff survey**

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In France, feminists have been actively denouncing forms of violence against women since the beginning of the 1970's. There have been three main themes to the struggle - the legal definition of rape as a crime or felony, the recognition of sexual harassment in the workplace, and the struggle against domestic violence - provoking differentiated mobilisations, each following its own rhythm¹. In 1976 feminists started to go into the courts to demand that the tribunals recognise rape as a crime or felony, making it clear that a change in the law was necessary. This led to the Penal Code defining acts of sexual violence as assaults on persons instead of offences to public morals (1980). The denunciation of violence within the family, often associated with organisations dealing with the protection of children, was reinforced and the last ten years have seen specific laws enter the statute book: in 1992 the Penal code defined violence within a couple's relationship as aggravating circumstances, with effect since 1994. Over the same period, sexual harassment in the workplace has been recognised as a criminal offence. While egalitarian legislation has been promoted, we are still waiting for an equivalent movement forward in judicial practices.

The organisations fighting violence against women (the Association européenne contre les violences faites aux femmes au travail or AVFT, the Collectif féministe contre le viol and the Fédération nationale solidarité femmes) have received state funding, which confirmed the importance of their work. In 1995, the group coordinating the 4th World Women's Conference ensured that violence was a major theme in the French contribution to the discussion², recommending that governments provide precise statistics on violence against women.

Context

Making the most of the momentum generated by the Beijing conference, the Service des Droits de femmes commissioned a survey in 1997 which was undertaken by the French State Secretary of Women's Rights. The Enveff survey was carried out in financial partnership with the ANRS, the Cnaf, the Fas, the Ihesi, the OFDT, the Conseil régional d'Île-de-France, the Conseil régional PACA, and the Mission de recherche Droit et Justice. It was co-ordinated by the Institut de démographie de l'Université Paris 1 (Idup) and carried out under the direction of Maryse Jaspard by a multidisciplinary team of researchers belonging to public research institutions (CNRS, Ined, Inserm, various universities)³. It is part of the statistical surveys programme initiated by the Conseil national de l'information statistique pour l'année 2000 (Journal officiel, January 23, 2000).

In 1997, knowledge of the phenomenon was partially determined by administrative statistics (from the police, the courts and organisations) and by ill-adapted studies of victimisation. While the victim support organisations had a good sense of the violence experienced by the people who went to them for help, the qualitative research available was not very plentiful and we had no idea what was happening on the scale of the population as a whole. A survey of the general population has proved necessary so as to take the real measure of the phenomenon, especially seeing as the debate around

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1. Fougeyrollas-Schwebel Dominique, Jaspard Maryse : " Compter les violences envers les femmes. Contexte institutionnel et théorique de l'enquête *Enveff*. " *Cahiers du Genre* n°35, pp. 41-65.
 2. Aubin C., Gisserot H. (1994) : *Les femmes en France : 1985-1995*. Rapport établi par la France en vue de la 4e Conférence mondiale sur les femmes, Paris : La Documentation française, 149 p.
 3. Members of the *Enveff* team Maryse Jaspard, director, and Elizabeth Brown, Institut de démographie de l'université Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne (Idup); Stéphanie Condon, Jean-Marie Firdion, Institut national d'études démographiques (Ined); Dominique Fougeyrollas-Schwebel, Brigitte Lhomond, Florence Mailllochon, Marie-Ange Schiltz, Centre national de la recherche scientifique (CNRS); Annik Houel, Université Lumière- Lyon II; Marie-Josèphe Saurel-Cubizolles, Institut national de la santé et de la recherche médicale (Inserm).

violence against women feeds upon a number of prejudices. The new survey is then to compile valid data from a representative sample of the female population living in France and to provide useful information for different institutions (political, social, the media...) and for society as a whole.

Objectives and methodology

The primary aim of the Enveff survey was to gauge the frequency of the different types of interpersonal violence directed against adult women in the different areas of their lives (couple, family, work, public places). All kinds of violence – verbal, psychological, physical and sexual – were taken into account, regardless of the perpetrator. Alongside the issue of frequency, the survey analysed the familial, social, cultural and economic context of the acts of violence, as well as the process leading up to such acts. It studied women's reactions to the violence they suffered and their resorting to their entourage and institutional services, as well as its consequences in terms of their physical and mental well-being, their family lives, social lives and use of the public space.

As this was the first statistical survey carried out on this topic in France, we were unable to rely on any previous model or experience. While the object of study and research methodology were inspired by international work already done on the issue, it was not possible to simply transfer foreign approaches: a number of surveys centred only on the family while others only took into account male violence.

Definitions of violence

Male violence can be analysed as a basic mechanism of social control, used to control women. The violence women endure testifies to their position as dominated. However, this does not rule out the fact that they themselves exercise certain forms of violence.

Essentially, violence directed against women is rooted in the relations of inequality and domination between the sexes; violence is at once one of the effects of that domination and one of the ways of maintaining it.

However, the recognition of violence against women remains problematic. Such violence is perpetrated daily, most of the time in the context of a person's private or personal life. It is often occulted or even denied by the victims themselves. This invisibility is one of the obstacles that have to be overcome in the study of violence against women. Moreover, to account for this violence it must be spoken about - and to speak about violence is to give it a name. Finding the words to speak about violence poses a problem: there is a tension between the (relative) precision of the legal terms used to define assaults and the need to speak in a language that the interviewees can understand.

Though violence is present in all social spheres, in each sphere it takes on a specific form. The nature of violent acts is linked to cultural factors which, beyond the hierarchical relationship between the sexes, go back to the norms adopted by the individual such as the kind of relationship they have with their bodies, or with language. We have limited our object of study to interpersonal violence and excluded institutional or social forms of violence from our field. Yet, in many cases, such discrimination is difficult: the boundaries between these forms are not always clear. One could argue that interpersonal violence is often institutional in the sense that it is linked to the rules governing the institutions upon which society is founded: the family, school, the world of work, the social security system, health, public safety... It is also social in that it is determined by living conditions, environment and social status as well as by the range of ages and sexes.

The questionnaire

Lasting on average 45 minutes, the questionnaire⁴ was almost exclusively composed of closed questions. In order to establish a relationship of trust with the interviewee, questions related to acts of violence came after a first section gathering contextual information (family, economic, social and residential information...), and details concerning the woman's life history, her state of health and that of her partner (if she had one).

The questions related to acts of violence were formulated in different ways. Violence was never named as such, only facts – not qualified as violent – were mentioned. Designed to gradually reveal the scenes in which violence took place, this structure to the questioning helped the interviewees to recall past facts and enabled them to talk about painful episodes which sometimes took place a long time ago.

Six sections dealt with the violence experienced in the twelve months leading up to the interview: in public places, at work or at school/university, in their current relationship, with a former partner, within the family or social circle. Each section recorded the sequence of events described in a more or less identical fashion according to the context. The investigation dealt also with the circumstances, the women's reactions and the help they sought from friends and family or institutions for what was in the interviewees' opinion the most serious incident.

The last sections concerned physical violence endured since the age of 18 and sexual violence at whatever age endured. The age, the perpetrators, the circumstances, and legal actions were recorded. In the case of repeated acts of violence, the first and the last were taken into account.

Carrying out the survey

The data was gathered from a representative sample of 6,970 women aged between 20 and 59 in 2000. The survey was conducted by phone, using the CATI method (computer assisted telephone interviewing) and was carried out by a polling agency and overseen by the research team. It took four months to gather the data. The calling procedures and management of the files of telephone numbers ensured that the total anonymity, confidentiality and safety of the interviewees were respected at all times.

Due to the sensitive nature of the subject and the complexity of the project a particular effort was made both to train and to support the female interviewers over the four months. It was arranged to integrate various organisations, making it possible to respond to any difficulty arising from either the interviewee's or the interviewer's reactions. It was possible to call upon voluntary organisations to participate in our work and at the end of each interview the telephone number for "Femmes Info Service" was given out systematically. All the women were interested, and all noted down the number.

The total percentage of women aged between 20 and 59 and speaking French who refused to take part was 12%, which is relatively low, and the rate of women who did not complete the survey was 5%. There was therefore a good level of participation in the survey.

4. The *Enveff* questionnaire is available online from the websites of Idup (<http://idup.univ-paris1.fr>) and Ined in their series of working papers " Documents de travail ", No. 116 (www.ined.fr/publications/collections/).

Continuing our work, analogous surveys were carried out in Polynesia (face to face) and in Reunion (by telephone) in 2002 and in New Caledonia (face to face) in 2003, on a sample of 1000 women.

The principal findings

The first findings of the Enveff survey were announced at a press conference on December 6, 2000, two months after the data became available. The January edition of *Population et sociétés*⁵ is the first publication resulting from the survey. The final report was handed to the sponsors in June 2001 and published in 2003 by La Documentation française⁶.

In order to estimate the frequency of different types of violence (excluding verbal insults), it was necessary to establish indicators that grouped together a number of variables:

- Physical assaults included: slaps, blows with or without a blunt instrument, threatening use of a weapon, attempted strangulation or murder, other physical acts of brutality; locking up or preventing from going out, abandoning on the roadside (when travelling by car), preventing from entering the home; theft accompanied by violence in a public space.
- Sexual advances: “unwanted physical contact”; in the workplace, unsolicited sexual advances, forcing women to look at pornographic images.
- Sexual abuse: forced petting, attempted rape, and rape; within a couple: forced sex, and imposing unwanted sexual acts.
- Psychological pressure: within a couple's relationship: threatening to involve the children, controlling going out or seeing people; demanding specific types of behaviour; contempt, denigration; refusing to talk, preventing access to resources. At work: victimisation, denigration, exclusion.

Whatever the type of violence reported, in the three domains (public space, work, home) the youngest women – between 20 and 24 years old – claimed to have suffered more violence than their elders. It is behind the closed doors of a couple's relationship that most physical violence is perpetrated.

Figure 1: Proportion of women that reported having suffered verbal, psychological, physical or sexual abuse over the last 12 months in the three areas of their lives (%)

Type of violence	20-24yrs	25-34yrs	35-44yrs	45-59yrs	Total
In public places *	<i>n</i> = 717	<i>n</i> = 1,934	<i>n</i> = 2,122	<i>n</i> = 2,197	<i>n</i> = 6,970
Verbal abuse	24.6	15.2	11.7	8.6	13.2
Physical abuse	2.7	1.6	1.2	1.7	1.7
Sexual harassment and assault	6.4	2.6	0.9	0.5	1.9
At work **	<i>n</i> = 336	<i>n</i> = 1,410	<i>n</i> = 1,593	<i>n</i> = 1,411	<i>n</i> = 4,756
Verbal abuse	11.7	10.1	8.8	6.2	8.5
Psychological pressure	20.2	18.6	15.2	15.7	16.7
- including psychological harassment (a)	5.2	4.7	3.6	3.1	3.9

5. Maryse Jaspard and the *Enveff* team: “ Nommer et compter les violences envers les femmes : une première enquête nationale en France ”, *Population et sociétés* n°364, Ined, janvier 2001.

6. Jaspard Maryse, Brown Elizabeth, Condon Séphanie, Fougeyrollas-Schwebel Dominique, Houel Annik, Lhomond Brigitte, Maillolchon Florence, Saurel-Cubizolles Marie-Josèphe, Schiltz Marie-Ange, 2001, *Les violences envers les femmes en France. Une enquête nationale*.

Physical abuse	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.5	0.6
Sexual harassment and assault	4.3	2.8	1.9	0.8	2.0
Violence within a relationship ***	<i>n = 464</i>	<i>n = 1,707</i>	<i>n = 1,872</i>	<i>n = 1,865</i>	<i>n = 5,908</i>
Verbal abuse	6.1	4.1	4.3	3.9	4.2
Emotional blackmail	2.7	1.4	2.3	1.6	1.8
Repeated psychological pressure	37.6	26.1	23.0	21.0	24.3
- including psychological harassment (b)	12.1	8.3	7.7	6.7	7.9
Physical abuse	3.9	2.5	2.5	2.2	2.5
Rape and other forced sexual acts	1.2	0.9	1.0	0.6	0.9
(a) Among the three components of this indicator (victimisation, denigration, exclusion) at least one is a frequent occurrence.					
(b) Having suffered more than three constitutive types of psychological pressure, one of which occurring frequently.					
Population concerned: * all women aged 20 to 59; ** women aged 20 to 59 who worked in the 12 months preceding the survey;					
*** women aged 20 to 59 who were in a relationship in the 12 months preceding the survey.					
Source: ENVEFF survey, 2000					

The public space is considered here in opposition to the private spaces of the family or the working environment and includes the street, public transport, sports clubs, restaurants, nightclubs, public gardens and parks etc. The most frequent forms of violence were insults (13.2% of women had experienced such violence in the twelve months preceding the survey), being followed (5.2%), indecent exposure (2.9%) or sexual harassment (being subjected to unwanted physical contact, 1.9%). Physical assault (theft accompanied by violence, physical assault including slaps and blows, armed threat or assault) affected 1.7% of women during the year. Sexual abuse (unwanted petting, attempted rape, rape) were much rarer in the timescale of a year; nonetheless, 0.1% of the respondents had been victims of such abuse.

Within the public space women are not most at risk from the direct bodily harm that is the result of physical violence. Rather it is the different kinds of bullying (insults, being followed, groped, flashed at) that present a real threat and restrict their freedom of movement. All these kinds of rudeness and sexual harassment occur more often in large towns and cities: large towns and cities appear to be unfair and sexist, rather than ultra-violent places. Serious acts of violence – though they occur less frequently – are seen as a constant risk in public places, whether they consist in physical or sexual assault.

At work, psychological pressure and verbal abuse are generally denounced. While insults often come from clients and customers, psychological pressure is more likely to come from colleagues or superiors, and female colleagues are also perpetrators. Indeed, of the respondents who could indicate the number of employees of each sex in their workplace, the majority worked in a largely female environment (55%) and less than a third in a company where there was more or less the same number of men as women. An equal balance of men and women reduced the proportion of all abuse while an over-representation of men increased the manifestations of violence. Physical violence was very infrequent in the workplace (0,6%). Sexual assault (touching, attempts to force sexual acts, forced sexual acts) were rare in the timescale of a year. On the other hand, 2% of women had suffered sexual harassment: they had to cope with unwanted sexual advances, an exhibitionist or a voyeur, they had been groped, forcefully kissed or forced to look at pornographic images.

Interpersonal violence

The analysis of conjugal violence extends to all partner relationships, whether or not the partners are married or cohabit; the partner is not only the man with whom the woman lives, he may be the boyfriend or the fiancé. All women having had such a relationship in the twelve months preceding the survey (5,908) were questioned. A number of them (115) had separated recently and were therefore no longer in a relationship at the time of the survey. These women stated that in the preceding year

they had been subjected to three or four times more violence at the hand of their former partners than the others.

From the very first analyses it was clear that all kinds of violence were being perpetrated behind the closed doors of a relationship. While blows, other forms of brutality or murder attempts tend to be perpetrated by the male partner, the term “battered woman” as it is usually used does not take into account the full spectrum of violence in relationships. Psychological pressure plays a big part. Such psychological violence includes attempts to control the other person’s actions (demanding to know with whom and where she has been, preventing her from meeting or talking to friends or family members), imposing authority (regarding the choice of clothing or hairstyle, or behaviour in public), as well as denigration or contempt.

Violence and conflict are often mistaken for one another. Conflict manifests itself principally in arguments that can degenerate into repetitive domestic scenes but it is a relational mode that implies reciprocity between the protagonists. Violence, on the other hand, while it can assume the same guises as conflict, is massively one-sided. The data from the Enveff survey allow us to distinguish between violent situations and climates of conflict.

Interpersonal violence is a reality that takes many different forms, and is not immediately perceived as such – either by the perpetrators or by the victims or their entourage. Distinguishing between types of verbal, psychological, physical and sexual abuse did not prove to be very relevant since in many cases these forms of abuse cross over into one another. A domestic violence situation seemed a better phrase, and more likely to reflect the reality experienced by the greater number of victims. That is why we built a general indicator of domestic violence⁷. Almost one in ten women in a relationship at the time of the survey experienced situations of domestic violence during the twelve months preceding the survey. This indicator is subdivided into two levels so as to show the progression in the seriousness of the situations. The “serious” level corresponds above all to repeated insults and emotional harassment and in rarer cases to single occurrences of physical or sexual assault (7%). The “very serious” level refers to an accumulation of acts of violence; in this case physical and sexual abuse is more frequent and is repeated or associated with verbal insults and emotional harassment (3%).

The circumstances of the abuse

Apart from sexual violence which takes place in private, in more than half of all cases children witness the scenes of violence, and this is even more likely to be the case when the situation is very serious and has been going on for a long time: almost two thirds of women in a “very serious” situation reported that their children were present when the violence took place

Almost half of the victims that spoke in the survey about having been victims of abuse were speaking out for the first time: 31% of whom were in very serious situations. Sexual violence was the most reluctantly talked about, reported only after having described other forms of violence, which around half of the victims reported immediately.

7. Includes women having suffered from emotional harassment or repeated insults, from physical or sexual violence, some subjected to an accumulation of several types of violence.

Interpersonal violence and the pattern of the relationship

The older women were, the more the proportion of “serious” violent situations declined, which seems linked more to a decline in emotional harassment. On the other hand, “very serious” situations were lived at all ages. The frequency of these violent situations is not affected by the presence of children or by the length of the relationship. Analysing the events that trigger off violent acts can help us to put into perspective the theory that one kind of violence leads inexorably to another, more serious kind: situations of accumulated acts of violence may be triggered off very early and last a long time; on the contrary, situations of psychological harassment may occur over a whole lifetime without evolving into physical or sexual abuse.

Figure 2: Proportion of women in a situation of domestic violence over the last twelve months, according to age (%)

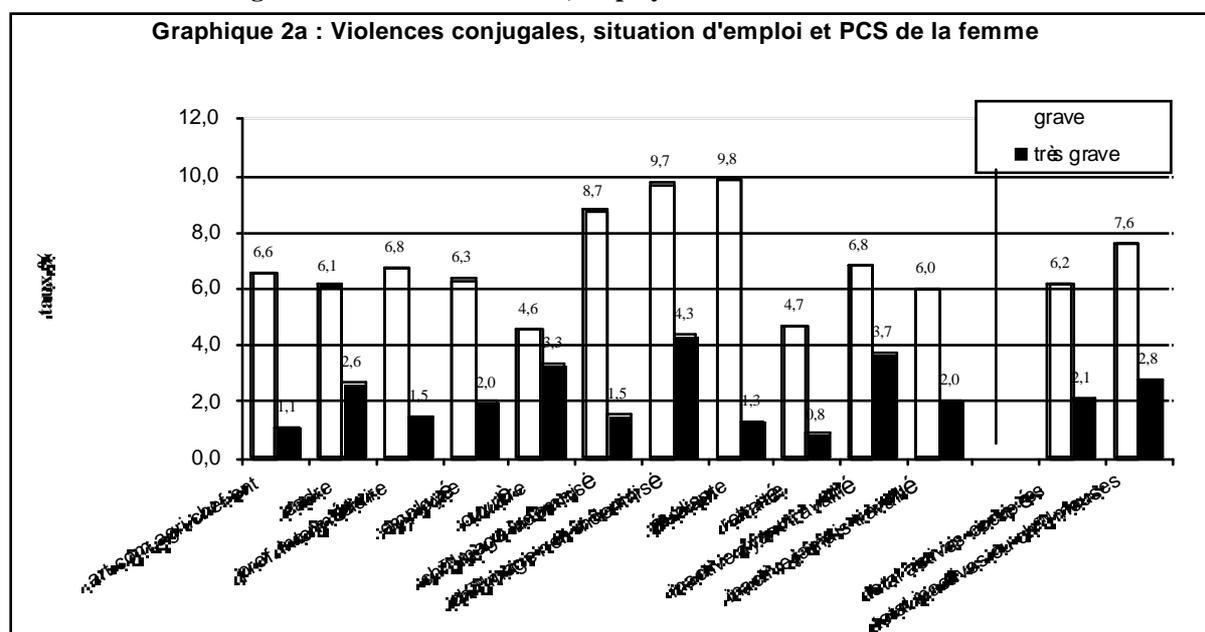
Women’s age at the time of the survey	20-24 yrs	25-34 yrs	35-44 yrs	45 yrs and over	Total*
Women in a situation of domestic violence	12.1	10.1	9.0	7.6	9.0
Of which (1) – psychological harassment	9.0	8.2	6.5	5.2	6.7
(2) – accumulation of types of violence	3.1	1.9	2.5	2.4	2.3

* Women aged between 20 and 59 yrs in a relationship at the time of the survey
Source: ENVEFF survey, 2000

Interpersonal violence and socio-economic factors

Unemployed women and students get the highest general indicator (more than 11%). Unemployed women are twice more likely than students to be in a “very serious” violent situation (2.9% against 1.3%), which means that they are close to other women without jobs, to manual workers (around 3%), and more unexpectedly to professional women (2.6%). But by far the most affected by violence are unemployed women not claiming benefits, making up 4.3% of “very serious” situations (cf. chart below). Sensitivity to violent acts changes from one social group to another: the phenomenon is certainly discernable on the “serious” level, where psychological harassment plays a relatively large part, but it plays only a small role in cumulative situations. We can confirm that very serious situations of domestic violence are apparent in all social milieus.

Diagram 2a: Domestic violence, employment and social class of women



Professional instability and withdrawal from the labour market seem to favour situations of cumulative violence. Male professional instability has an even greater impact on domestic violence. This is very obvious in the case of unemployed women not claiming benefits (16%, of which 8% are “very serious” violent situations) or other non-working women no doubt excluded from the job market. For either partner, having been out of work once increases relatively slightly the development of domestic violence, while having been out of work a number of times doubles the global proportion of violent situations and triples those considered “very serious”.

The workplace and women’s personal lives: divorced or separated women are more at risk in the workplace

Women’s matrimonial status and their way of life should be independent from their position in the job market. Yet the two are very strongly linked when it comes to their exposure to violence at work. It would seem that there is a kind of intrusion into a woman’s private life. Married women and women in a relationship are the least affected by all the categories of violence, while divorcees are the most. Insults, harassment and sexual abuse are suffered most by single women living in the parental home and who are younger than the other women (on average 28.3 years old, against 33.6 years for the other single women and 43.0 years for the others). It is marriage, more than the fact of being part of a couple that protects women from psychological pressure and sexual harassment (figure 3). Of the women who had broken up with their partner in the year – a relationship almost always outside of marriage with one in two without cohabitation – the rate of harassment and sexual abuse at work is considerable (6%). As these women, who are often single but not necessarily young, do not publicise the fact of being in a relationship, they are therefore unattached and any man’s potential partner. The emblematic image of the “liberated woman” is often applied undiscerningly to women without a known masculine partner: they are thus supposed to be more receptive to sexual advances.

Figure 3: Proportion of women having reported violence at work (in %) in relation to their marital status

Marital status	Married or widowed, in a relationship	Single, in a relationship	Divorced or separated, in a relationship	Divorced or separated, not in a relationship	Single, not in a relationship
Type of violence					
<i>n</i>	2,883	768	66	335	471
Verbal insults and threats	6.7	7.9	14.7	10.1	12.5
Psychological pressure	13.6	19.9	26.2	22.9	18.9
- of which psychological harassment	2.6	4.3	9.5	6.7	5.5
Destruction of work	1.5	2.4	5.6	3.5	3.8
Physical abuse	0.6	1.2	0.0	1.1	0.4
Sexual harassment and abuse	0.9	3.3	2.9	4.0	3.6

Field: the total number of women who have worked in the last twelve months

Examination of the data from the *Enveff* survey with regard to the interrelations between the professional sphere and domestic life shows a double polarity in women’s situations (aged between 20 and 59). On the one hand, it is for the most part married women who have secure jobs who are the least at risk from violent abuse, of whatever nature – physical, psychological, sexual – perpetrated by their partner or at work. Contrary to the image of dependence that women who have never worked may evoke, such women (which now make up just a small part of the population), report acts of violence in equivalent proportions to the reports of working women, and clearly inferior to women who have stopped working. On the other hand, women who experience violence at work do not tend to get support from their partners and those who are faced with violence at home do not tend to get support from their colleagues. Often women have to deal with violence in both spheres. If on the one hand it is preferable to be a married working woman, it is nevertheless the case that as soon as violent situations take hold they tend to spread into both areas of a woman’s life. This tells us that while a professional activity does not call into question a woman’s marital life

and conversely being married does not prevent a woman from finding work, women owe it to themselves to maintain harmony in both areas: the slightest difficulty can potentially lead to cumulative effects that impact on the whole of their lives.

Sexual abuse in women's lives.

Of the 6,970 women interviewed 11% were subjected to at least one form of sexual abuse in their lives since childhood. Forced petting, attempted rape and rape were defined as sexual abuse. The form of sexual abuse reported most frequently was attempted rape - 5.7% of the women questioned - after which unwanted petting, - 5.4% - and rape: 2.7%. The majority of women were subjected to only one form of sexual abuse, and close to one quarter reported several other types.

Unwanted sexual advances generally took place before the age of 15, attempted rape took place after the age of 18. It should be noted that most of the sexual abuse reported was perpetrated on young women under the age of 25.

The majority of women were sexually abused by men they knew; in less than one quarter of cases the perpetrators were men the women didn't know, and this tended to be when rape was concerned. Relatives (father, brother or another male relative) tended to submit women to unwanted petting most often, which accounted approximately for one third of the reported incidents. Attempted rape was most often committed by men the women knew (but which were not relatives), whereas close to half the rapes were committed by their partners.

Whatever the form of sexual abuse inflicted by a partner, the main perpetrators were partners with whom the women no longer lived (the partner at the time of the events as opposed to the current partner or to the former partner at the time of the events). This clearly shows that women often leave their violent partners.

When the perpetrators were closely related to the women they abused (in a couple or in the same family), the forms of sexual violence - and above all petting - were often repeated and almost always carried out by the same person.

The impact of the survey

The *Enveff* survey revealed the extent to which women do not speak out about the violence they suffer. They fear that their testimonies will not be heard, because they will be held to be in some way responsible. Sometimes, they choose to say nothing because they consider the abuse to be only a temporary episode and that by talking about it they run the risk of making it into something bigger than it is.

The media communicated the findings as presented at the press conference in December 2000 very effectively. Two figures stood out in particular and can be considered kinds of references:

- one woman in ten is the victim of domestic violence
- 50,000 rapes were perpetrated in the year of the survey

These two figures surprised because they indicate the extent of the phenomenon, and divulging them has without a doubt increased awareness.

The campaign against violence against women implemented by the *Sécretariat aux droits des femmes* - launched at the time of the national meetings in January 2001, and inspired by the conclusions of *Enveff* - has begun to change the way female victims of violence are seen. From the battered woman (or, in other words, marked, stigmatised), we have moved onto the woman who is a victim of violence (of violence itself or one of its forms) and who keeps quiet, but who can now

speak out. Giving women a voice is the first condition of the struggle against violence; hence the slogan: “Break the silence” or “The less we speak about it, the more it hurts”. Thus the data from the *Enveff* survey have helped to raise awareness and train a number of social workers.

At the same time, the way in which victims are received has clearly changed. Specific training for the people who the women go to (the police or the *gendarmerie*, people working in health care) has been developed. The notion of “battered women”, like that of women as victims as been at least partially replaced by a political drive which seeks equal access to the law for women and is committed to reducing the denials too often noted when it comes to criminal offences or crimes against women, the reason being that the aggressor is known to the victim – that is, he is her husband or partner. Indeed, organisations that help women who are the victims of violence, public authorities and particularly the *Service des Droits de femmes*, certain magistrates, and policemen bear witness and expose the distance between the legislation against such violence and the still widespread tolerance that allows it to continue.