Sexual violence is defined as any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed against a person’s sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting including but not limited to home and work.

**Key facts:**

- Sexual violence against women and girls can lead to unintended pregnancies, unsafe abortions, gynaecological problems and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV.
- Women who have experienced non-partner sexual violence are 2.3 times more likely to have alcohol use disorders and 2.6 times more likely to have depression or anxiety than women who have not.
- Boys and men also suffer sexual violence, although this remains poorly documented.

**Findings from the survey**

Over half of countries report conducting national surveys on sexual violence and some two-thirds of countries report adopting national action plans to address it. While over half of countries report implementing campaigns to change social and cultural norms, only a third report implementing school-based programmes addressing gender norms and attitudes at a larger scale.

**Prevention approaches**

Addressing the root causes of violence against women — starting prevention efforts at a young age, changing social norms accepting of sexual violence against women and implementing strategies to promote gender equity — are some of the key strategies for preventing sexual violence.

**Proportion of countries with national action plans and surveys**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>National action plans</th>
<th>National surveys</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>52</td>
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School and college programmes

School- and college-based programmes are designed to raise awareness, address gender norms, bystander behaviours, and knowledge and attitudes about rape and sexual assault. Few programmes have been rigorously evaluated, suggesting a critical gap to fill.

Physical environment changes

Physical environment changes include improving formal and informal surveillance, better lighting of public areas and interventions to encourage the use of public spaces. While promising, more research is needed to evaluate their specific effects on sexual violence.

Social and cultural norm-change

Social and cultural norm-change programmes aim to modify norms of male sexual entitlement, and can reduce attitudes and beliefs that are supportive of sexual violence. Rigorous evaluations of social and cultural norm-change strategies are still needed to assess their impact; however, they remain an important strategy to inform and create cultural shifts in what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.