

The violently gender-equal Nordic welfare states

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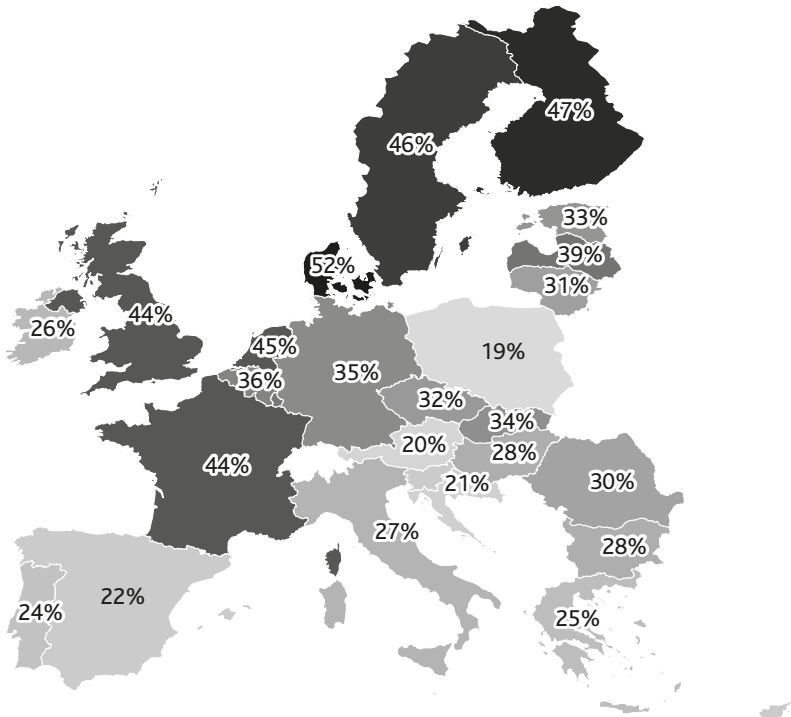
Introduction

Sexual harassment is recognised as a form of violence against women and as discrimination on the grounds of sex, gender and/or sexuality. It includes non-consensual physical contact, such as grabbing, pinching, slapping, or rubbing against another person in a sexual way. It also includes non-physical forms, such as catcalls, sexual comments about a person's body or appearance, demands for sexual favours, stalking or non-consensual exposure of sex organs (UN, 2018). Sexual harassment is a violation of the principle of equal treatment of women, men and further genders.

Sexual harassment is one of the most common forms of violence against women (FRA, 2014), although there is a lack of research and empirical evidence on its prevalence, consequences and how to prevent it (Latcheva, 2017). This evidence matters, as there is a need for research-based preventive instruments to tackle sexual harassment (Simonsson, 2020). The different forms that sexual harassment takes range widely in their degree of severity. All forms, however, create a cultural environment that harms, whether or not it provides an 'entry point' to other forms of violence against women, including embodied acts of sexual or physical violence. If violence against women is understood as autotelic – meaning here that different forms are interrelated and thus correlated – then sexual harassment can be taken to be indicative of a broader climate of violence against women. Thus, in this chapter we focus on empirical measurements of violence and violence against women, with the understanding that it nevertheless is informative about the sexual harassment taking place within the Nordic countries.¹

The largest prevalence survey on violence against women, including sexual harassment, in the EU – conducted by the European Union Agency of Fundamental Rights (FRA) – ranks the Nordic countries at the top compared to other EU countries when it comes to disclosed² levels of physical violence, psychological violence, sexual violence, and sexual harassment (FRA, 2014) (see Figures 4.1 and 4.2).

Figure 4.1: Disclosed levels of physical and/or sexual violence against women since the age of 15 in the EU (FRA, 2014)

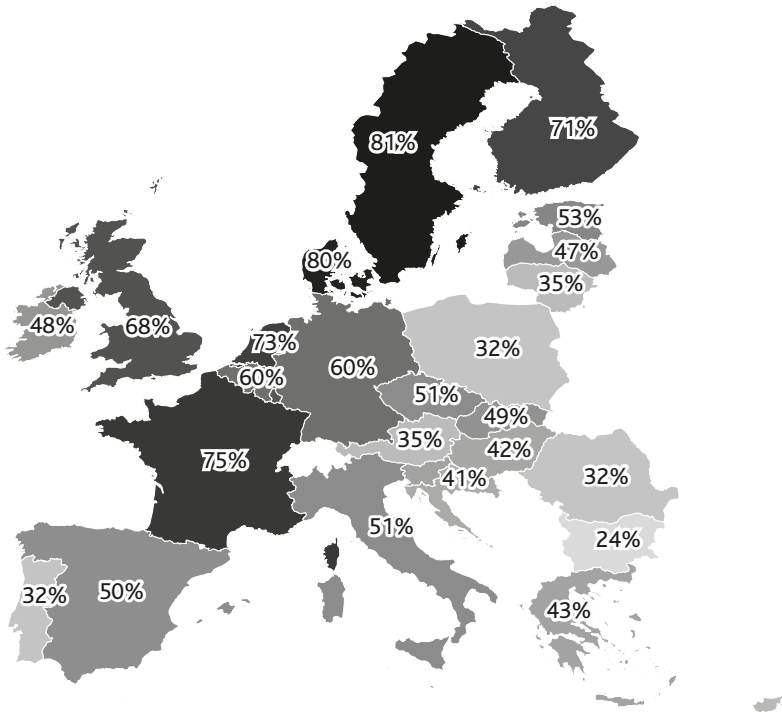


Source: <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/data-and-maps/survey-data-explorer-violence-against-women-survey> @ GeoNames, Microsoft, OpenStreetMap, TomTom

This is at odds with the Nordic countries being ranked in various composite indices as the most gender-equal, or as ‘women-friendly’ (Hernes, 1987) welfare states, a phenomenon referred to as the ‘Nordic paradox’ (see Figure 4.3) in the literature (Gracia and Merlo, 2016).

While gender equality and the Nordic welfare state models are widely debated, mainstream comparative analyses of these welfare models have not adequately covered gender (Orloff, 2009) or violence (Strid et al, 2021). Welfare state regimes research, with a very long history in the social sciences (Titmuss, 1963; Therborn, 1983; Esping-Andersen, 1990) including that on gender welfare regimes (Lewis, 1992; Duncan, 1995, 2002; Sainsbury, 1999), once indicated that some welfare states were more women-friendly than others. Women-friendliness, a contested concept originally used by German-Norwegian political scientist Helga Maria Hernes (1987), views the women-friendly welfare state as an instrument for the empowerment of women as citizens, workers and mothers, as these welfare states propel women’s social status closer to that of men – and towards system equilibrium.

Figure 4.2: Disclosed levels of sexual harassment against women since the age of 15 in the EU (FRA, 2014)

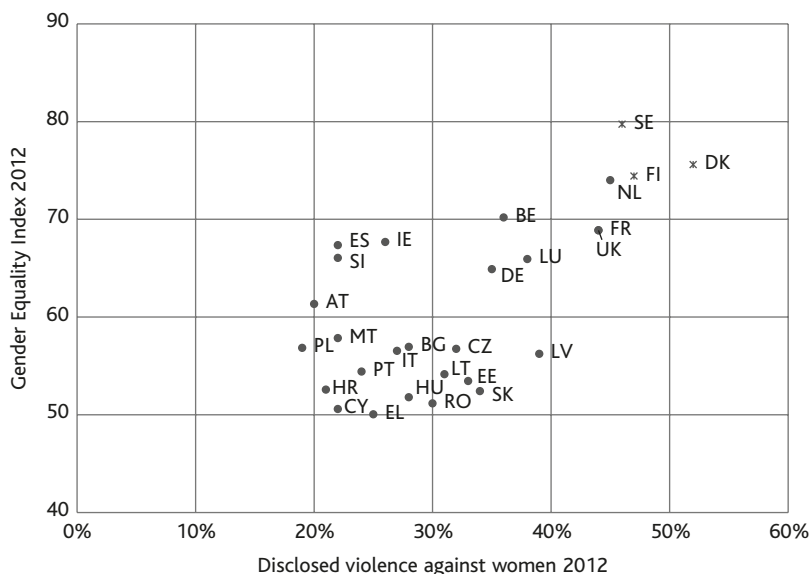


Source: <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/data-and-maps/survey-data-explorer-violence-against-women-survey> @ GeoNames, Microsoft, OpenStreetMap, TomTom

In a welfare state regime analysis, the social democratic welfare states, such as the Nordic welfare states, come out as more women-friendly than those that are conservative/corporatist or liberal.³

However, the claim of being a women-friendly welfare state has been heavily criticised. In the welfare state, as elsewhere, the gender system operates through gender segregation and hierarchy, positioning women as both subordinate to and separate from men (Hirdman, 1988).⁴ Other critics have suggested a reformulation and contextualisation with gender equality as the key notion, focusing on *which* social policies can be considered to be women-friendly, and for *which* women (Borschorst and Siim, 2002; Sainsbury, 2006). Feminist scholars have also challenged the idea of the women-friendly state by questioning conventional understandings of the welfare state and women's relationship to it (for example: MacKinnon, 1989; Elman, 1996; Weldon, 2002), including for example the relationship between feminist mobilisation and progressive policy on gender-based violence (Htun and Weldon, 2012; see also Strid et al, 2021). More recently, the welfare state

Figure 4.3: Gender Equality Index vs levels of disclosed violence against women since the age of 15, 2012



Austria AT	Estonia EE	Italy IT	Portugal PT
Belgium BE	Finland FI	Latvia LV	Romania RO
Bulgaria BG	France FR	Lithuania LT	Slovakia SK
Croatia HR	Germany DE	Luxembourg LU	Slovenia SI
Cyprus CY	Greece EL	Malta MT	Spain ES
Czech Republic CZ	Hungary HU	Netherlands NL	Sweden SE
Denmark DK	Ireland IE	Poland PL	United Kingdom UK

Sources: <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/data-and-maps/survey-data-explorer-violence-against-women-survey> and <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2015>

regime typology and its notion of women-friendliness have been further challenged by intersectional perspectives, and criticised in particular for neglecting diversity, migration, multiculturalism, and ‘race’ (Sainsbury, 2006; Siim and Borchorst, 2017; Dahlstedt and Neergaard, 2019).

This chapter takes a step further and considers what could be learnt from placing violence centre stage in debates on gender equality and welfare states, and the extent to which the Nordic welfare states are women-friendly. Despite the range of critiques of the women-friendly welfare state, it is notable that the empirical bases on which welfare regimes typologies and their critics build when classifying and theorising about the women-friendly welfare state, with few exceptions, continue to exclude men’s violence against women as an indicator of women-friendliness or indeed gender equality. Hence, while there is a long tradition of feminist research

on gender equality and the welfare state, research on men's violence against women *and* the welfare state is less prevalent (see, for example [Haavind and Magnusson, 2005](#); [Tanhua, 2020](#)). Recently however, these themes, and the tensions between them, have been picked up and explored from a different angle, namely through exploring the so-called 'Nordic paradox' ([Gracia and Merlo, 2016](#)). The 'Nordic paradox' literature departs from the observed positive correlation between gender equality and disclosed levels of violence against women in the Nordic countries. A naïve interpretation of this correlation would suggest that the more gender equality there is in a country, the more violence against women there is, which of course needs to be – and has been – further analysed in relation to a range of factors, not least attitudes and understandings of gender-based violence as violence ([Humbert et al, 2021](#)).⁵ This counterintuitive correlation suggests either that a violence regime is independent of gender equality regimes ([Hearn et al, 2020](#); [Strid et al, 2021](#)), and/or that the Nordic welfare states are not as women-friendly as once argued. What is clear is that the 'Nordic paradox' points towards a complex relationship between gender equality and violence against women, which needs to be further explored.

In this chapter, we interrogate why formally gender-equal welfare states such as the Nordic welfare states report comparatively higher levels of violence against women, including sexual harassment, while at the same time are ranked as the most gender-equal and women-friendly welfare states. This primarily conceptual chapter starts by problematising this vision of the Nordic welfare states as gender-equal and 'women-friendly' by showing that this may not hold true if violence against women – including sexual harassment – is taken into account. However, before violence can be incorporated into an assessment of how gender-equal the Nordic countries are, it is necessary to further discuss the concept of violence: what counts as violence, violence as a system ([Strid and Meier-Arendt, 2020](#)) and how it relates to (gender) inequalities. The aim is to move towards alternative conceptualisations of welfare states in relation to gender equality, ones which fully integrate the problem of violence against women, including sexual harassment. The chapter discusses what violence is and asks what happens when we focus primarily on violence as a central question for analysing the Nordic welfare state(s). It thus contributes to the debate on gender power relations in the Nordic countries by simultaneously placing violence at the centre of such relations.

Theoretical perspectives with violence centre stage

The complexity of violence against women and gender equality takes us back to the question posed earlier in this chapter: 'Why are formally gender-equal welfare states substantively unequal?' There are multiple approaches

to responding to that question. Turning to theory, and to classical feminist (political) theory, different responses, or emphases, are offered. This chapter relies mainly on a radical feminist analysis and focuses on men's violence as a root cause of inequality (Atkinson, 1969; Firestone, 1970). Radical feminists do not view gender equality as sameness – and hence do not see gender equality as equal participation in the same practices or in the same places – and instead locate inequalities in patriarchal gender relations, in institutions, ideologies, discourses and practices of sex/intimacy and, more importantly here, violence against women.

Alternatively, some liberal feminist theories view gender equality in terms of sameness across gender, sex/gender role difference, or rooted in legal inequalities and lack of equal opportunities and equal treatment (Okin, 1991), while some other liberal feminists draw on radical feminism to focus on the examination of the nature of violence (Nussbaum, 1999). Marxist feminists also vary in their analysis, with many viewing gender equality as sameness, and locating inequalities in private ownership, individual property ownership and oppression under capitalist modes of production (Friedan, 1963; Fergusson, 1989), although some also stress questions of sex and reproduction as fundamental (see Hearn, 1991 and O'Brien, 1981, for discussions). Finally, socialist feminists address the interconnectedness of capitalism and patriarchy, and sometimes also imperialism, to explain and transform the oppression of women (Hartmann, 1979; Ferguson, 1989).

Drawing on an analysis of society informed by radical feminist ideas, this chapter places men's violence against women centre stage in the analysis of gender relations. It understands violence as an expression of power and calls for a transformation of society where the institutions and norms that uphold men's material and discursive privileges are both challenged and transformed. Such transformation requires an analysis of patriarchy and the welfare state in which violence and violence against women take centre stage (Atkinson, 1969; Firestone, 1970). Doing so places violence, in its many forms, at the centre of patriarchy and conceptualises violence as its 'organising principle' (Strid and Hearn, 2021). The concept of an organising principle is borrowed from the natural sciences where it is a/the core assumption from which everything else by proximity can derive a classification or a value. Violence is treated and conceptualised as the central reference point that allows all other objects to be located, and used, in a conceptual framework. For example, the idea of the solar system is based on the 'organising principle' that the sun is located at a central point, around which all planets revolve.

Using the thought experiment of an organising principle can help simplify and get a handle on a particularly complicated field, domain, set of social relationships, or phenomena. It allows a shift in understanding, particularly by going beyond heterotelic interpretations of violence, meaning here an understanding of how violence is used as a means to achieve another goal.

An example is the use of violence to maintain control over women or to uphold patriarchal institutions – such as via sexual harassment or economic forms of violence. In this view, violence is complex and understood in line with a radical feminist analysis of violence as an expression of power, but *not reducible* to power; violence is understood as dominance, but it is *not reducible* to dominance. While violence is connected to power and dominance, it is not about power or dominance for their own sake, but transcends these to achieve another goal. While heterotelic understandings of violence are useful, the argument here is that they are not enough and should be combined with autotelic understandings of violence. Violence can be viewed as autotelic when it is a goal in itself, an activity, process and institution that contains its own meaning or purpose (Schinkel, 2004, 2010; Hearn et al, 2020, 2022). Autotelic violence means that violence is not merely a tool, it is also self-perpetuating and an end in itself, as can occur with, for example, organisation(al) violence (Hearn and Parkin, 2001), structural violence (Galtung, 1969), cultural violence (Galtung, 1990), and epistemic violence (Spivak, 1988). The approach concerns the ontology of violence and questions whether violence is always to be explained by something else, for example, as social exclusion, economic marginalisation or individual pathology (Strid and Meier-Arendt, 2020; Hearn et al, 2020, 2022).

In the following discussion, the chapter engages with these themes and tensions. First, it engages with debates on gender equality and (the lack of) violence in welfare state research. It then discusses the concept of violence, what counts as violence, and violence as a system (Strid and Meier-Arendt, 2020). The chapter then relies on an analysis of violence regimes, and uses a recently constructed composite measure of different forms of interpersonal violence including homicide, femicide, physical violence, and sexual violence and harassment, to show that violence against women in the Nordic welfare states operates relatively independently from other measures and indicators of gender equality (Strid et al, 2021). These results are then discussed in relation to systems of violence and oppression, gender equality and feminist theory. Finally, the chapter proposes violence as a means of understanding gender relations in the ‘violently gender-equal’ Nordic countries.⁶

Welfare regimes

The often-referred-to work of Esping-Andersen (1990), *Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*, led to an entire industry of research analysing or fitting welfare states in Europe and beyond into ideal-type categories (Liebfried, 1991; Goodin et al, 1999) and feminist critique thereof (Sainsbury, 1991, 1999; Lewis, 1992; Orloff, 1993). Esping-Andersen was predominantly occupied with class and commodification (rather than gender and violence). His well-known distinction between liberal, conservative, and social

democratic regime types moved away from expenditure as the sole criterion for welfare efforts, and instead replaced it with the notion of the impact of the decommodification of labour, social stratification and the public-private mix of social provisions. The liberal US, conservative Germany and social democratic Sweden typified the ideal models/types of each welfare state category. Esping-Andersen was in ‘good company’ when he omitted gender in his original analysis; most post-war writing on welfare states makes little, if any, mention of women or gender (for example: [Titmuss, 1963](#); [Goodin et al, 1999](#)). The feminist critique of Esping-Andersen stresses the importance of gender as both an outcome and an explanation of outcome: that is, gender and gender relations as both independent and dependent variables in social policy and welfare regime research. In particular, these critiques focus on notions of the family, unpaid work and care ([Lewis, 1992](#); [O’Connor et al, 1999](#); [Sainsbury, 1999](#)) and on women’s dependency on the welfare state, drawing on earlier feminist work on private and public patriarchies ([Siim, 1987](#)). These feminist critiques have further developed the welfare state regime typology by gendering it. They concluded that a wider range of issues needed to be included in the theorisation and comparison of forms of gender regime, violence being one of them ([Walby, 2009, 2013](#)). Yet, the gender regime framework took neither violence nor women’s and men’s relationship to violence into account, not even ten years later (for example, [Sörensen and Bergqvist, 2002](#)). Any conclusions about how some welfare state regimes are ‘more women-friendly’ than others therefore need to be revisited.

Gender-based violence is an extensive global problem with significant impacts on individuals, families and societies. It is defined by the EU ([EC, 2021](#)), the [Council of Europe \(2011\)](#), the [UN \(1993\)](#) as a cause and a consequence of gender inequality. It has pandemic proportions: one in three women has been subjected to some form of physical or sexual violence in her lifetime ([FRA, 2014](#)). More than one in two women in the EU, on average, have experienced sexual harassment since the age of 15 ([FRA, 2014](#)) (see [Figure 4.2](#)). For Denmark, Finland and Sweden – three Nordic welfare states often labelled the most gender-equal countries in the world ([World Economic Forum, 2001, 2022](#); [EIGE, 2021, 2019](#)) – the disclosed prevalence of physical and sexual violence against women is even higher: between 52, 47 and 46 per cent respectively ([FRA, 2014](#); see also [Lundgren et al, 2002](#) and [Westerstrand et al, 2022](#) for Sweden) (see [Figure 4.1](#)). To some, the FRA data point towards a paradox, namely the coexistence of high levels of gender equality and high levels of violence against women ([Gracia and Merlo, 2016](#)). The growing debates about the ‘Nordic paradox’ examine the interpretation of these data including: the extent to which questions about violence, definitions of violence and violent experiences have the same meanings in different national and linguistic contexts ([Martín-Fernández et al, 2020](#)); the extent to which violence, or rather different kinds of violence, are

accepted and normalised (Gracia and Merlo, 2016); and the extent to which responses of exposure to violence are affected by social shame (Enander, 2009; Weiss, 2010) and gender equality. Others have explained the apparent paradox with contextual and situational factors (Humbert et al, 2021) and pointed to the relative independence of gendered violence from other gender equality indicators (Strid et al, 2021). Nonetheless, violence seems key to understanding gender inequality and gender relations, and the relationship between violence and gender equality remains an interesting topic to explore.

This also raises questions about how to understand violence against women, and violence more generally in relation to societal context, and poses the very question of ‘what is violence?’ in an even more fundamental way (Lawrence and Karim, 2007; Ray, 2018). There are multiple contestations of what violence is, including physical violence, assault, sexual violence, coercive control, homicide, and genocide, as well as less directly physical violence, such as cultural, symbolic, epistemic and systemic violence (Bourdieu, 1998; Žižek, 2008). Violence includes, but is not limited to, state violence, economic violence, terrorism, gender-based violence, violence against women, anti-lesbian, gay and transgender violence, intimate partner violence, gang violence, hate crime, cyberviolence, and stalking. The societal contextualising of violence and violence against women problematises any simple definition of violence and its boundaries (Walby et al, 2017; Walby and Towers, 2017; Bjørnholt and Hjemdal, 2018).

Violence is still often framed and defined in terms of physical violence, even to the extent that sometimes (physical) sexual violence is separated from physical violence and not even discussed as part of physical violence, as we have argued elsewhere (Humbert et al, 2021). Feminist activists and scholars have long argued that domestic violence, gender-based violence and intimate partner violence also include non-physical forms of violence (such as economic, psychological and emotional violence) (Kelly, 1998; Hearn, 2013). Accordingly, violence and violence against women need to be understood in relation to societal conditions, broadly based structures of inequality, governance and welfare state regimes, as well as social movements. For example, inequalities and entrenched oppressions may mean that the act or use of violence, especially physical violence, is not necessary to maintain oppressive or unequal social relations, as long as the potential for and threat of violence are available (Hearn, 2013), such as in cases of symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1998) and structural violence (Galtung, 1969). In these circumstances, the very act of physical violence is not necessary to control and dominate – that is, the setting is so unequal that direct or physical violence as a means of more inequality is not needed. Paradoxically, ‘violence, or at least direct, interpersonal and physical violence, may not be used as necessary in some very violating contexts’ (Humbert et al, 2021, p 3). The question then is, as framed by Hearn and colleagues (2022, p 2), ‘is violence a set of

material bodily actions and effects? A range of discursive constructions? Is violence more structural in character, as, for example, through institutions or structural inequalities? Or all of these – all intersectionally gendered?

Violence and violence regimes

There is a very long tradition of feminist research on violence (Brownmiller, 1975; Kelly, 1988; Hearn, 1998; Hester et al, 2008), although recently it seems to have fallen out of fashion.⁷ There is also a very long tradition of feminist research on violence and the state (MacKinnon, 1989; Elman, 1996; Hearn, 1998), challenging our understandings of the welfare state and women's relationship to it. One of the more explicit approaches is MacKinnon's (1989), who argues that the state itself is patriarchal through male dominance and violence. Nonetheless, violence is not as yet fully addressed by mainstream social theory, with the role of violence as a source of social stratification within and between welfare states underexplored (Strid et al, 2021). The importance of violence, from welfare regime research to contemporary research, is often either underestimated or rendered invisible, not least in mainstream social sciences and social theory, but also in contemporary gender studies (Hearn, 2013; Walby, 2013). The consequences, when considering welfare responses to gendered violence are, first, that one might miss greater differences between the same welfare regimes and gender regimes than commonly assumed (Pringle, 2005; Lister, 2009), and second, that welfare regimes deemed women-friendly may not turn out to be women-friendly at all.

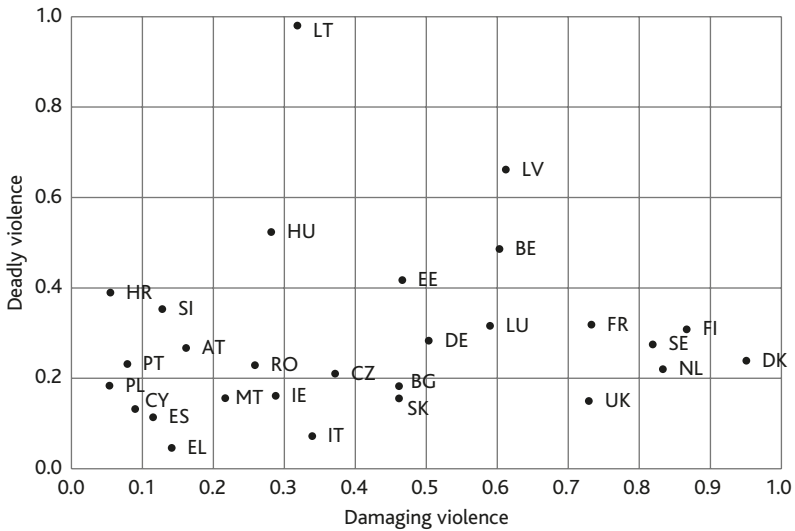
While there have been movements, both gendered and non-gendered, towards a more cohesive analysis of the regulation and deployment of violence, which hint at the potential of the further integration of theories of violence (Enloe, 2000; Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois, 2004; Gregory, 2004; Roberts, 2008), the separation of the study of different forms and levels of violence in different disciplines has led to fragmented theory and explanations (Lundgren in Norrby, 2012; Walby, 2013; Hearn et al, 2020). However, some research has indicated extensive similarities across forms of violence and extensive differences between countries in the organisation of violence. Research has further indicated that its many forms – interpersonal (such as crime, gender-based violence), interstate (war), state-citizen (such as the use of the death penalty) and group-state (such as terrorism) – may be connected so that an increase in one form is likely to lead to an increase in other forms, and a decrease in one is linked to a decrease in others (Walby, 2009). These links, the interconnectedness of different forms of violence, may constitute different and distinguishable systems of violence, or 'violence regimes' (Hearn et al, 2020).

Violence regime is a relatively new concept developed to set up a theoretical framework by which states/societies can be compared and contrasted according to how violent they are and how much violence they

produce at micro, meso and macro levels (Hearn et al, 2020; Strid et al, 2017, 2021).⁸ Violence regime includes the relationship between violence and the institutions and policy set up/implemented to counter violence. Violence as a regime, where violence is approached holistically, addresses the fragmentation of the study of violence.

An approach to violence that considers the co-variance and interrelationships between different forms of violence and shows how many forms of violence are interrelated or interconnected can be used to derive different systems of violence. This has been measured empirically through the creation of a Violence Regimes Index (Strid et al, 2021), where the relationship between deadly violence (homicides, and so on) and damaging violence has been examined (see Figure 4.4). The interconnectedness of different forms of

Figure 4.4: Violence Regimes Index: relationship between the scores for 'deadly violence' and 'damaging violence'



Austria AT	Estonia EE	Italy IT	Portugal PT
Belgium BE	Finland FI	Latvia LV	Romania RO
Bulgaria BG	France FR	Lithuania LT	Slovakia SK
Croatia HR	Germany DE	Luxembourg LU	Slovenia SI
Cyprus CY	Greece EL	Malta MT	Spain ES
Czech Republic CZ	Hungary HU	Netherlands NL	Sweden SE
Denmark DK	Ireland IE	Poland PL	United Kingdom UK

Note: Scores are normalised on a range from 0 to 1, with higher scores associated with higher levels of violence

Source: Strid et al., 2021

(autotelic) violence can then be used to derive different systems of violence using violence regimes. This use of regime is analogous to Esping-Andersen's, who used the term regime to draw attention to 'the complex ways in which welfare states ... can both reshape and reproduce inequalities' (Hudson, 2018, p 48). As others have shown (Walby, 2009), different forms of violence on interpersonal, intra-state and interstate levels correlate, so that increases on one form of violence co-vary with increases in other forms of violence, thus constituting a domain or regime of violence.

As argued elsewhere (Hearn et al, 2020, 2022; Humbert et al, 2021; Strid et al, 2021), this approach to violence regimes requires outlining what is to be meant by violence, and the problem of what violence is, or could be, pervades these discussions. In alignment with previous and ongoing collaborative work,⁹ we see violence as a form of inequality, beyond the mere physical and measurable (or indeed 'countable', see Myhill and Kelly, 2019). This approach concerns the ontology of violence, and calls into question whether violence should always be explained by something else, for example, as social exclusion, economic marginalisation or individual pathology – or, as argued here, an inequality, as power and as privilege.

Conclusion

The Nordic countries consistently rank high on different gender equality indices. But they also show higher levels of violence against women and sexual harassment compared to other EU countries. Does this suggest that the Nordic countries – formally regarded as gender-equal welfare states or women-friendly welfare states – have not been capable of reducing or preventing violence against women and sexual harassment? More importantly for this chapter, violence against women is not analysed as central to the welfare state, gender equality or gender relations. If violence were placed centre stage in theoretical and empirical analyses of gender relations, the levels of gender equality in the Nordic countries would drop.

The significance of violence in the mainstream social sciences, social theory and contemporary gender studies is growing, but there is still an underestimation of its importance in the analysis of gender relations. Sexual harassment, with higher levels disclosed in the Nordic 'women-friendly' welfare states compared to other EU countries, is no exception. This failure to incorporate violence has led to analyses that are less relevant and nuanced than they could be, and to policy interventions that could be better evidenced and substantiated.

The positioning of violence as a central organising principle, and the analysis of violence regimes, is an attempt to bring violence back into the analysis, to place it at the centre of the analysis, and to identify the pivot of unequal gender relations. Furthermore, it calls into question welfare state

regime research, including gendered regimes, which has concluded that some welfare state regimes are ‘more women-friendly than others’. The analysis in this chapter, which has built on collaborative and previous work, challenges this idea and shows how the empirical bases for such conclusions have not fully, or sometimes not at all, considered violence. Finally, the exclusion of violence means that welfare state regime research has overlooked one of the most substantial and deep-rooted causes and consequences of gender inequality.

Contrary to the body of work challenged here, this chapter argues that violence regimes operate somewhat independently from gender equality regimes and welfare regimes, hence pointing to the autotelic nature of violence. The implications of taking violence into account in the regime concept for Nordic countries and developing, both theoretically and empirically, violence regimes, is that it helps us understand that the ‘Nordic paradox’ is, in fact, not so much of a paradox.

Notes

- ¹ This chapter builds on previous results, partly published and partly unpublished, from collaborative work within the Swedish Research Council (VR) funded project *Regimes of Violence* (grant number 2017–01914), including Associate Professor Sofia Strid (Gothenburg and Örebro Universities, Sweden), Professor Anne Laure Humbert (Oxford Brookes University, UK), Senior Professor Jeff Hearn (Örebro University, Sweden), and Associate Professor Dag Balkmar (Örebro University, Sweden).
- ² This chapter refers to the disclosed prevalence of violence against women to recognise that survey-based data underestimate actual prevalence as they can only measure the incidents disclosed by respondents.
- ³ The term ‘regime’ carries different meanings. It has been used to capture and denote: (1) ‘principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures around which actor expectations converge on a given issue-area’ (Krasner, 1982, p 185), explicitly including informal institutions; (2) modes of rule or management; (3) forms of government, or the government in power; (4) a period of rule; and/or (5) a regulated system. The notion adopted here draws on all five and is a flexible concept, incorporating macro, meso and micro levels. Hence, our notion of regime can accommodate both more systemic approaches (Walby, 2009), as well as more institutional ones (Connell, 1987).
- ⁴ Both Helga Maria Hernes and Yvonne Hirdman have had a significant influence on scholarly and policy debates in this space, particularly in Norway and Sweden.
- ⁵ The coexistence of high levels of gender equality and violence against women has been explained in many ways, from rejecting the evidence due to methodological issues with the FRA survey (Walby and Olive, 2014), to violence as a backlash reaction to gender equality. However, this relationship, the apparent paradox, can also be explained away, and ‘undone’. By using a range of methodological, demographic and societal factors to contextualise the disclosed levels of violence in the FRA study (2014), the multilevel analytic approach deployed by Humbert and colleagues (2021) considers how macro and micro levels contribute to the prevalence of violence, which makes the ‘Nordic paradox’ disappear. The results

suggest that the ‘Nordic paradox’ cannot be understood independently from a wider pattern of violence in society, and should be seen as connected and co-constituted in specific formations, domains or *regimes* of violence.

- ⁶ This formulation is owed to Dr Jenny Westerstrand, President of ROKS, the National Organisation for Women’s Shelters and Young Women’s Shelters in Sweden.
- ⁷ As an example, of the last four Swedish national gender studies conferences, none have addressed the modalities of violence. At *g14: National Gender Studies Conference* Umeå, Sweden in 2014, there was only one panel organised on the topic of men’s violence. Two years later, at *g16* in Linköping in 2016, despite ‘sexualised violence’ being a conference keyword, only one panel addressed violence (‘The intersections of violence’) (see <http://liu.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1064192/FULLTEXT01.pdf>). Three years later, at *g19* in Gothenburg in 2019, there was one panel on gender-based violence. Finally, at the *g22* in Karlstad in 2022, the only panel addressing violence addresses not its modalities, but its discourses (‘Discourses of #MeToo’) (see <https://www.kau.se/en/centre-gender-studies/date/national-gender-studies-conference-g22/open-panels>).
- ⁸ As acknowledged in our previous work, the concept of *violence regimes* is not entirely new. It draws on Weber’s understanding of the modern state, where Kössler (2003) uses regimes of violence to discuss the state’s monopoly on the legitimate use of violence after 9/11. It also uses Schinkel’s (2013) subsequent introduction of the idea that a regime of violence describes the relationship between various forms of violence and that, in their different forms, they constitute a way of governing conduct via the medium of violence. This conceptualisation of *violence regimes* is useful and moves the theorisation of violence forward, but it is different from the way *violence regimes* is developed here, namely as a framework for comparative state analysis and as a form in which states themselves are constituted; as the theorising (and ultimately empirical operationalisation) of autotelic violence; and as a system of interrelated forms, aspects and manifestations of violence, including institutions, policy and violence production (Hearn et al, 2022).
- ⁹ For example, in the project ‘Regimes of Violence: Theorising and Explaining Variations in the Production of Violence in Welfare State Regimes’ funded by Swedish Research Council (grant number 2017–01914), and the EU H2020 project UniSAFE, funded under grant agreement 101006261.

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