



Memorandum of Understanding
between the
Central Statistics Office
and the
Department of Justice and Equality
relating to a
Survey to measure the Prevalence of Sexual Violence in Ireland

Background to the requirement for a Survey to measure the Prevalence of Sexual Violence in Ireland

1. There is a significant policy need for better quality information on the prevalence of sexual violence in Ireland.
2. In order to accurately measure the prevalence of sexual violence it is necessary to conduct a large national survey of households. Access to reliable and timely data is necessary to inform policy responses.
3. There have been repeated calls by a number of stakeholders for a new national survey on the prevalence of sexual violence in Ireland and there has been strong cross-party support expressed in the Oireachtas. In late 2017, the Cabinet Committee on Social Policy and Public Services decided to commission a national survey and established a scoping group to consider the availability of data and make recommendations on a study to identify the current prevalence of sexual abuse and violence in Ireland and to also examine emerging trends. The group submitted its report to the Minister for Justice and Equality in April 2018 and recommended that a new national survey on the prevalence of sexual violence in Ireland be undertaken. Subsequent legal advice was sought from the Attorney General on the appropriate approach to conducting the survey.
4. A Government Decision was taken in November 2018 that the Central Statistics Office (CSO) would undertake a comprehensive national survey on the prevalence of sexual violence. An indication of the total costs involved will become evident as the research phase progresses.

Background to this MoU

5. Given the overall scale, complexity and cost for the CSO of undertaking a survey to measure the prevalence of sexual violence in Ireland and given the involvement of a sponsoring department (the Department of Justice and Equality) this MoU is required to specify:
 - a. the roles of each party;
 - b. the funding, governance and operational roles and responsibilities;
 - c. the structures for communication and reporting of progress.

The Parties to the MoU

6. The parties are the Department of Justice and Equality ('the Department') and the Central Statistics Office (CSO). The Department will act as the sponsoring department for a survey to measure the prevalence of sexual violence in Ireland. The CSO will be responsible for all elements of the survey life cycle¹.

Governance Arrangements

7. The CSO will undertake the survey within the framework of the Statistics Act, 1993. The CSO will take cognisance of any legal advice provided by the Attorney General and this will be reflected in any decisions made regarding the survey.
8. As outlined in paragraph 6 above, the CSO will be responsible for all elements of the life cycle for the survey to measure the prevalence of sexual violence in Ireland. The CSO is responsible for all aspects of the survey including:
 - a. the development of the survey instrument(s);
 - b. the design of a national survey that can, as far as possible, meet national user needs in this area while providing comparability at an international level;
 - c. the conduct, including all methodological issues, of the survey;
 - d. the preparation, including content and timing, of written text of report(s) and analysis.
9. A CSO-Department Steering Group will be established and will meet on a quarterly basis to review progress against agreed milestones. This Group will assess and agree on funding requirements as the project evolves.
10. A National Liaison Group will be established as an information sharing and advisory mechanism.
11. The CSO will create appropriate internal project governance structures to oversee all aspects of the project planning of the survey.

¹ See <https://www.cso.ie/en/methods/gsbpm/>

Role of the National Liaison Group

12. The National Liaison Group will consist of representatives from the CSO, the Department, specific non-governmental organisations and other relevant experts. The Group will be chaired by the CSO.
13. The National Liaison Group terms of reference are to:
 - a. Provide a mechanism for the CSO to share information on progress of the overall programme of work;
 - b. Advise on user needs and where necessary prioritise demands;
 - c. Provide a mechanism for the CSO to leverage the experience and expertise of the National Liaison Group members in dealing with this complex and sensitive topic.

Funding

14. The CSO will require funding from the Department in order to complete the survey to measure the prevalence of sexual violence in Ireland. The Department is committed to funding all aspects of the survey, subject to the budgetary process.
15. It is recognised that, for the survey to proceed, the CSO will require additional field force and headquarters staff to be made available in a timely manner. An indication of the numbers required broken down by year and by function cannot be determined until the completion of the preparatory phase of the project. Staffing commitments will be subject to approval by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.
16. The CSO will provide an indicative multi-annual budget for the survey following the completion of the preparatory phase.

Indicative schedule for implementation of survey

17. *Phase one: Survey research, stakeholder consultation and scoping (12 months commencing January 2019)*

This stage will involve extensive stakeholder consultation. The Liaison Group of relevant stakeholders, governmental and non-governmental, will be established to advise primarily on the survey instrument. Consideration will be given to the establishment of an ethics committee to advise the Director-General on relevant matters.

Appropriate governance structures will be put in place in early 2019. The CSO will begin the task of outlining the survey life cycle for the national sexual violence prevalence survey and engage with technology professionals to start designing the collection, processing, analysis and dissemination processes. Developing appropriate documentation will be important at all stages of the process. Documentation will be crucial in supporting the sustainability of the survey and maximising the value of the data collected to all stakeholders in the medium to long term.

18. *Phase two: Survey design and preparation, including pilot (24 months commencing January 2020)*

The design phase includes the development of an appropriate methodology which will ensure respect for the legal, moral and ethical considerations. This phase would also involve the identification and development of IT systems required for data collection and questionnaire design. The IT system will need to be designed in a manner that maintains the confidentiality of respondent data at all stages. This would involve catering for the anonymisation of survey information disclosed in a self-completion, face-to-face or telephone interviewing environment.

The details of the survey instrument will be finalised, having regard to consultation with and inputs from, all relevant stakeholders and the ethics committee if relevant. Cognitive testing of the proposed questionnaire will be conducted to understand how respondents interpret the questions and instructions.

The sampling frame and sampling criteria will be defined, and the most appropriate sampling methodology will be identified. The actual sample will be created using the methodology specified in this phase.

A full pilot of an appropriate size will be conducted in the field in Q4 2020/Q1 2021. The pilot will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the questions, the mode of collection and respondent engagement. No results or data on prevalence rates will be compiled from the pilot survey. The findings from the pilot will be evaluated and incorporated into the main survey. Recruitment and training of interviewers will take place in this phase. The final element of this phase will be to develop protocols for appropriate respect and care for respondents, including referral to support services if necessary. This element will also address self-care protocols and other appropriate supports for survey staff. These tasks will require the advice of appropriate experts.

19. Phase three: Data collection (9 months commencing January 2022)

The sample will be selected in this phase and will consider the impact of non-response. In some instances, a multi-stage approach may be necessary for data collection as it is possible that the respondent may not be in a position to complete a questionnaire requesting highly sensitive information at the time of the initial contact.

The personal safety of respondents and interviewers in the field will be important considerations in this phase. Appropriate debrief procedures will need to be put in place to support the data collection team.

20. Phase four: Data processing and analysis, preparation of results (15 Months commencing October 2022)

Processing will involve the classification, review and validation of data. Data editing may be necessary in some instances. Data will need to be weighted to ensure that results are representative of the population prior to aggregation.

Outputs are validated and reviewed, and statistical disclosure controls are applied before outputs are finalised in the analysis phase. Data will then be tabulated.

21. Phase five: Dissemination of results

The CSO will be solely responsible for publishing the survey results in line with section 13(a) to (c) of the Statistics Act, 1993.

It will be necessary to adopt a differentiated approach to dissemination to meet the needs of a wide range of audiences. A publication that contains appropriate accessible content will be designed for the public, press and assorted media outlets. A separate mechanism to meet the needs of the research community will be required, while the needs of NGOs and state agencies will be met primarily via customised tabulations.

Prior to the publication date, all survey results are confidential and subject to strict CSO data governance policies on confidentiality. Pre-release access is an exception and can only be facilitated in accordance with CSO pre-release policy².

Access to anonymised data, micro data research files and protocols for release of data will be undertaken under the Statistics Act, 1993 and will conform to the highest statistical standards as well as be consistent with the Data Protection Acts and/or General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Access will be strictly limited.

² <https://www.cso.ie/en/aboutus/lgdg/csodatapolicies/csopolicyonpre-releaseaccess/>

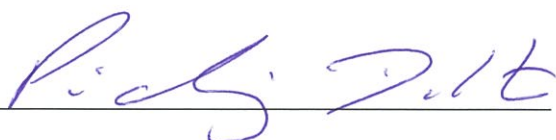
Confidentiality

22. All statistical information obtained by CSO pursuant to this agreement is confidential and may be used for statistical purposes only as per sections 32, 33 and 34 of the Statistics Act, 1993. The data will be treated in accordance with the CSO's Code of Practice on Statistical Confidentiality. This means that no data will be disclosed in an identifiable form.

Annual Review

23. The conduct of the Survey and the terms of this Agreement are subject to an annual review by both parties.
24. This agreement may be modified at any time on the request of either party and with the agreement of the other party.

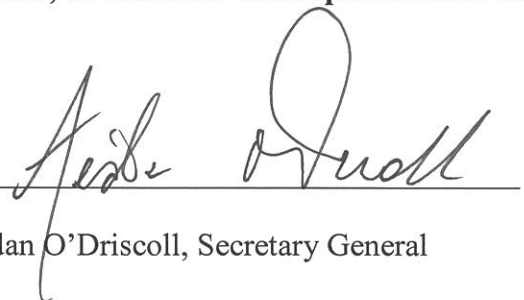
Signed, on behalf of the Central Statistics Office:



Date: 10/1/19.

Pádraig Dalton, Director General

Signed, on behalf of the Department of Justice and Equality:



Date: 10/1/2019.

Aidan O'Driscoll, Secretary General