

Preliminary Survey Report on Gender-Based Violence in the Slovak Deaf Community

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1. Executive Summary

This report presents findings from a preliminary survey conducted between 23 November 2024 and 15 December 2024, examining gender-based violence (GBV) within the Slovak Deaf community. The survey collected data from 103 valid respondents through an anonymous online questionnaire, which was made accessible in Slovak Sign Language (SPJ) and simplified written Slovak.

Key Findings:

- 44 individuals (42.7%) reported experiencing violence
- 37 women (84.1%) of reported violence cases
- Only 13 survivors (29.5%) sought help
- 30 survivors (68.2%) expressed interest in receiving support services

Demographics Profile:

- 85 participants (82.5%) identified as Deaf, 16 (15.5%) as hearing impaired
- 69 women (67.0%), 23 men (22.3%), 7 non-binary (6.8%), 4 undisclosed (3.9%)
- Transgender identity: 8 participants (7.8%) identified as transgender (6 trans women, 2 trans men)
- Sexual orientation: 67 heterosexual (65.0%), 15 asexual (14.6%), 7 bisexual (6.8%), 5 homosexual (4.9%), 4 pansexual (3.9%), 5 other/undisclosed (4.9%)
- Highest participation from age groups: 28 people aged 31–40 (27.2%) and 27 people aged 41–50 (26.2%)
- Geographic distribution: 24 from Bratislava region (23.3%), 16 from Nitra region (15.5%), 15 from Prešov region (14.6%)

Critical Issues Identified:

- Significant gap between 44 experiencing violence and only 13 seeking help
- Limited awareness about what constitutes violence
- 21 people (70.0%) requested professional counselling and 20 (66.7%) personal support groups
- Need for specialised services with sign language access

Primary Support Needs (of 30 who expressed interest):

- 21 people requested professional counselling (odborné poradenstvo)
- 20 people wanted personal support groups (osobná podporná skupina)
- 18 people wanted workshops (trauma awareness, addiction, diagnostics)
- 16 people wanted online support groups
- 16 people wanted Sign Language Café
- 14 people wanted self-help resources (website with explanations and tips in SPJ)
- 13 people wanted creative activities (painting, writing, dance)
- 11 people wanted live chat support

- 9 people wanted yoga
- 7 people wanted coaching
- 5 people wanted a book club

This survey reveals urgent needs within the Slovak Deaf community regarding violence prevention and support services. While preliminary in nature, these findings provide crucial insights for developing targeted interventions and will inform future European project initiatives aimed at establishing specialised support services for the Slovak Deaf community.

The results emphasise the importance of creating accessible, culturally appropriate support systems while highlighting the need for broader education about violence recognition and prevention within the community.

2. Methodology

2.1. Survey Instrument and Adaptation

The survey instrument was originally developed by Nationell kvinnojour och stöd på teckenspråk (NKJT), a Swedish national helpline and support service for sign language users. The original NKJT instrument focused specifically on sexual abuse in childhood and targeted younger respondents. With the agreement of NKJT and our project partner Turkoois (NL), the instrument was adapted by Innosign (SK) for the Slovak context with the following key modifications:

- **Broadened scope:** The focus was expanded from childhood sexual abuse to all forms of gender-based violence (physical, emotional, sexual, online, financial/property abuse, and neglect), reflecting the broader needs assessment required for the planned European project.
- **Age range:** The target population was extended from children/young people to all age groups (13+), enabling a community-wide prevalence assessment.
- **Cultural adaptation:** Questions and response options were adapted to reflect the Slovak context, including Slovak regional geography and locally relevant support services and organisations.
- **Support needs assessment:** The support type options were adapted to include culturally relevant formats such as Sign Language Café (Kaviareň posunkového jazyka), a community-based peer support format.

The adapted questionnaire comprised 15 questions organised into four sections: demographics and identity (Questions 1–6), violence experience (Questions 7–9), help-seeking behaviour (Questions 10–12), and support needs (Questions 13–15).

2.2. Accessibility Features

To ensure full accessibility for Deaf and hearing-impaired respondents, every question was accompanied by an explanatory video in Slovak Sign Language (SPJ), recorded by a Deaf presenter. In total, 15 individual sign language videos were produced and embedded directly within the Google Forms questionnaire. Each video provided the question text, answer options, and contextual explanations in SPJ.

Additionally, an introductory video explaining the purpose of the survey, definitions of violence types, and the consent process was included at the beginning of the questionnaire. All written text was composed at A2/B1 language level to ensure comprehension by respondents for whom written Slovak is a second language.

Before each violence-related question, an educational information box was provided listing and defining the six forms of violence covered in the survey:

- Physical (hitting, kicking, stabbing, pinching, etc.)
- Emotional (humiliation, manipulation, isolation, intimidation, control, jealousy, property damage, stalking, etc.)
- Sexual (rape, assault, coerced sexual acts, revenge pornography, sexting, etc.)
- Online (cyberbullying, stalking, hate speech, etc.)
- Financial/property abuse (control, confiscation, coercion into debt, etc.)
- Neglect (lack of food, lack of love or attention, etc.)

2.3. Data Collection and Sample Size

The survey was distributed online via Google Forms between 23 November and 15 December 2024. A total of 104 responses were received. One entry was excluded from the analysis due to clearly inconsistent and non-serious responses (e.g., claiming to be 80+ years old, CODA, trans woman, and pansexual simultaneously; listing a political figure as the source of help sought; and providing contradictory answers across multiple questions). This resulted in a final sample of 103 valid respondents.

The estimated population of Deaf sign language users in Slovakia is approximately 4,000 (based on national registry data and community estimates). The sample of 103 represents 2.58% of this target population. While this sample size is smaller than traditional statistical requirements for population-level inference, several factors support its validity as preliminary, exploratory research:

- The survey was accessible in Slovak Sign Language, removing a significant barrier to participation
- Respondents were distributed across all eight Slovak regions plus respondents living abroad
- The Deaf community in Slovakia is a hard-to-reach population with limited access to mainstream research
- The study is explicitly positioned as a needs assessment rather than an epidemiological study

2.4. Analysis Methodology

Data analysis was conducted using a combination of automated and manual methods. Initial descriptive statistics were generated using AI-assisted tools, specifically a large language model (LLM) combined with a Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG) pipeline programmed to query the raw response data stored in an Excel spreadsheet. This

approach enabled rapid cross-tabulation and identification of patterns across the 15-variable dataset.

However, verification of the AI-generated analysis against the raw data revealed several discrepancies in the initial output (version 1.0 of this report). These included miscounted totals, omission of entire response categories (notably asexual and pansexual orientations), incorrect regional distributions, and the introduction of support need categories that did not exist in the original survey instrument. A full list of corrections is provided in Appendix B.

For this corrected version (2.0), all statistics were independently recalculated directly from the raw survey data using Python-based data processing scripts, with each figure verified against the source spreadsheet. Human review was applied throughout to ensure proper interpretation within the cultural and linguistic context of the Slovak Deaf community.

Transparency note: The discrepancies found in the AI-generated analysis underscore the importance of rigorous human verification when using AI tools for research data analysis. While AI-assisted methods can significantly accelerate initial data processing, they should not be relied upon as the sole analytical method, particularly for sensitive research involving marginalised communities.

2.5. Informed Consent and Data Protection

Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection. The opening page of the questionnaire contained a detailed consent statement in both written Slovak and Slovak Sign Language (video), which informed participants of:

- **Purpose:** The survey was described as gathering data about gender-based violence in the Slovak Deaf community, with the goal of supporting a European project to implement specific support services.
- **Anonymity:** Participants were explicitly informed that the questionnaire is anonymous ("DOTAZNÍK JE ANONYMNÝ!").
- **Data processing:** The consent text stated that the questionnaire would be processed and analysed by Innosign s.r.o., that all data and personal information would be anonymised, and that GDPR compliance would be maintained throughout the entire process.
- **Data use:** Participants were informed that the analysis results would be used for a planned European project aimed at benefiting the Deaf community in Slovakia.
- **Voluntary participation:** By proceeding to complete the questionnaire, participants indicated their consent. No identifying information was collected at any point.

The full consent text (in Slovak) read:

"Na základe rozhovorov s nepočujúcimi ženami a mužmi, ktoré zažili rôzne formy násillia, sa Innosign snaží uskutočniť krátky prieskum o rodovo podmienom násillí v slovenskej komunite nepočujúcich. Výsledky tohto prieskumu, ktorý sa uskutoční alebo sa už uskutočnil aj v iných krajinách,

podporia európsky projekt na mapovanie rodovo motivovaného násillia v komunite nepočujúcich a vykonávanie opatrení, ako je napríklad zriadenie osobitných podporných služieb.

DOTAZNÍK JE ANONYMNÝ!

Dotazník bude spracovaný a analyzovaný pod innoSign s.r.o. a všetky vaše dáta a údaje budú anonymizované. V priebehu celého postupu je dodržaná súlad s GDPR. Po využití dát a analýz budú odovzdané výsledky nového plánovaného európskeho projektu, ktorý bude prospešný pre nepočujúcu komunitu na Slovensku.

Ďakujeme za zapojenie sa do iniciatívy, v ktorej sa snažíme zlepšiť podmienky pre obeť a prevenciu násillia v komunite nepočujúcich."

The full consent text (translated into English) read:

"Based on interviews with Deaf women and men who have experienced various forms of violence, InnoSign is conducting a short survey on gender-based violence within the Slovak Deaf community. The results of this survey, which has also been or will be conducted in other countries, will support a European project aimed at mapping gender-based violence in the Deaf community and implementing measures such as establishing specialized support services.

THE SURVEY IS ANONYMOUS!

The survey will be processed and analysed by InnoSign s.r.o., and all your data and information will be anonymized. Throughout the entire process, compliance with GDPR is ensured. After the data is used and analysed, the results will be submitted to a new planned European project, which will benefit the Deaf community in Slovakia.

Thank you for participating in this initiative, through which we aim to improve conditions for victims and prevent violence in the Deaf community."

2.6. Ethics Statement

This survey was conducted as an applied needs assessment within the framework of a planned European project, rather than as formal academic research. No formal ethics committee review was sought, as the study was carried out by a non-academic organisation (InnoSign s.r.o.) for programme development purposes.

Nevertheless, the following ethical principles were observed throughout the research process:

- **Anonymity:** No personally identifiable information was collected. The Google Forms platform does not record email addresses or IP addresses when configured for anonymous responses.

- **Informed consent:** All participants received a clear explanation of the survey's purpose, data handling procedures, and their right to discontinue participation at any time, in both written Slovak and Slovak Sign Language.
- **GDPR compliance:** Data processing complied with the EU General Data Protection Regulation (Regulation 2016/679).
- **Do no harm:** The survey was designed with sensitivity to the subject matter. Questions were phrased carefully and in accessible language. Participation was voluntary, and respondents could skip sections or discontinue at any point.
- **Community sensitivity:** Given the small size of the Slovak Deaf community (approximately 4,000 deaf sign language users), particular care was taken in reporting to ensure that combinations of demographic variables could not be used to identify individual respondents.
- **Data minimisation:** Only data necessary for the needs assessment was collected. No detailed narrative accounts of violence were solicited.

2.7. Limitations

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings:

- **Self-selection bias:** As an online survey distributed through community networks, the sample may over-represent individuals who are digitally connected and those with stronger ties to Deaf community organisations.
- **Violence recognition:** A notable limitation is the apparent difficulty many respondents had in recognising or labelling their experiences as violence, despite detailed explanations provided in both video format and written text. This suggests the reported prevalence (42.7%) may underestimate the true rate.
- **Online response verification:** The inherent difficulty in verifying online responses means that some answers may be unreliable. One entry was excluded for clearly non-serious responses, but subtler inconsistencies may remain.
- **Sample size:** While 103 respondents represents a meaningful proportion (2.58%) of the estimated Deaf sign language user population in Slovakia, the sample is too small for robust subgroup analyses or population-level generalisation.
- **Cross-sectional design:** As a single-timepoint survey, the data cannot establish causality or track changes over time.
- **Instrument adaptation:** The survey instrument was adapted from one originally designed for a different context (childhood sexual abuse in Sweden). While the adaptation broadened the scope and was reviewed for cultural appropriateness, it has not been formally validated for the Slovak Deaf population.

The data provides valuable initial insights for programme development, though results should be interpreted as indicative rather than definitive for the broader Deaf population.

3. Demographics Profile

The survey gathered responses from 103 participants, representing diverse demographics across age, gender, and disability status within the Slovak Deaf and hearing-impaired community.

3.1. Age Distribution

The majority of respondents fell within the middle-age brackets. The age distribution shows that 28 participants (27.2%) were aged 31–40 years, closely followed by 27 participants (26.2%) in the 41–50 age group. Young adults aged 18–25 comprised 23 participants (22.3%), while 14 respondents (13.6%) were between 26–30 years old. The survey also included 7 participants (6.8%) aged 51–60, 2 participants (1.9%) aged 13–17, and 3 participants (2.9%) in other age categories.

3.2. Gender Representation

Women formed the largest group of respondents with 69 participants (67.0%), while men accounted for 23 participants (22.3%). The survey also included 7 non-binary individuals (6.8%), and 4 participants (3.9%) chose not to disclose their gender identity.

Regarding transgender identity, 8 participants (7.8%) identified as transgender — 6 as trans women (5.8%) and 2 as trans men (1.9%). While this proportion is higher than estimates for the general population, the confidential and anonymous nature of the survey may have provided a safe space for individuals to disclose their identity freely.

3.3. Disability Status

The majority of participants identified as Deaf, with 85 respondents (82.5%) belonging to this category. Additionally, 16 participants (15.5%) identified as hearing impaired. A small portion of the respondents included 1 CODA (Child of Deaf Adult) and 1 Deaf-Blind individual (1.0% each).

3.4. Sexual Orientation

Heterosexual individuals represented the largest group with 67 respondents (65.0%). The second largest group was asexual participants with 15 respondents (14.6%), followed by 7 bisexual participants (6.8%), 5 homosexual respondents (4.9%), and 4 pansexual participants (3.9%). Five participants (4.9%) gave other responses or preferred not to disclose their sexual orientation.

The relatively high proportion of asexual respondents (14.6%) is a notable finding that warrants further investigation, particularly given the known intersection between experiences of sexual violence and asexual identity in some research literature.

3.5. Geographic Distribution

The survey captured responses from across all eight Slovak regions, with the highest representation from Bratislava region with 24 respondents (23.3%), followed by Nitra region with 16 participants (15.5%), and Prešov region with 15 participants (14.6%). The Trenčín region contributed 11 respondents (10.7%), and a further 11 respondents (10.7%) were living abroad. The remaining participants were distributed across Trnava region 9

(8.7%), Žilina region 8 (7.8%), Košice region 5 (4.9%), and Banská Bystrica region 4 (3.9%).

4. Violence Experience Analysis

From the total of 103 respondents, 44 individuals (42.7%) reported experiencing some form of violence, while 59 participants (57.3%) reported no experience of violence.

However, it is crucial to note that these numbers might not reflect the full reality of violence in the community. During follow-up conversations with some participants, we discovered that many individuals had difficulty recognising or labelling their experiences as violence.

The survey identified various forms of violence, with many respondents experiencing multiple types:

Type of violence	Count	% of all respondents (N=103)
Emotional	28	27.2%
Physical	26	25.2%
Sexual	18	17.5%
Online	13	12.6%
Financial/property abuse	13	12.6%
Neglect	8	7.8%

Regarding the age of first violence experience:

Age range	Count	% of all respondents (N=103)
13–17 years	13	12.6%
18–24 years	11	10.7%
25–30 years	6	5.8%
5–12 years	5	4.9%
0–4 years	3	2.9%
41–50 years	3	2.9%
36–40 years	2	1.9%
81+ years	1	1.0%

The data shows that women experienced a disproportionately higher rate of violence:

Gender	Violence survivors	% of survivors (N=44)
Women	37	84.1%
Men	4	9.1%
Non-binary	2	4.5%
Preferred not to say	1	2.3%

For future research, we recommend including questions about the relationship between victims and perpetrators, as this data point was present in the original NKJT instrument but was not included in the adapted version.

5. Help-Seeking Behaviour

Of the 44 individuals who experienced violence, 13 respondents (29.5%) sought help, while 31 individuals (70.5%) did not seek any assistance.

5.1. Who Survivors Contacted

Among the 13 who sought help (respondents could select multiple options):

Source of help	Count
Family/Friends	9
Hearing psychologist	5
General practitioner	2
Police	2
Hospital doctor	2
Other organisation (shelter, victim support, youth care)	2
Teacher	1
Colleague	1
Women's group	1
Peer group	1

Notably, no respondents reported contacting a Deaf psychologist or a support organisation specific to the Deaf community, despite these being available as response options.

5.2. Experience with Support Received

Of the 13 who sought help:

Experience rating	Count
Very good	4
Good	4
Very bad	3
Neutral	1
Bad	1

While 8 out of 13 (61.5%) rated their experience positively, 4 out of 13 (30.8%) rated it negatively. This polarisation suggests highly inconsistent quality of support services.

5.3. Interest in Future Support

30 participants (68.2%) expressed interest in receiving additional support. Their specific needs:

Support type	Count	% (N=30)
Professional counselling	21	70.0%
Personal support group	20	66.7%

Workshop (trauma, addiction, diagnostics)	18	60.0%
Online support group	16	53.3%
Sign Language Café	16	53.3%
Self-help website in SPJ	14	46.7%
Creative activities	13	43.3%
Live chat support	11	36.7%
Yoga	9	30.0%
Coaching	7	23.3%
Book club	5	16.7%

5.4. Reasons for Not Seeking Support

Among the 14 respondents who did not want support:

Reason	Count
Belief in self-reliance	6
Fear of community/family reaction	3
Lack of trust that help would be effective	3
Preferred not to answer	3
Fear of perpetrator	2
Fear of not being believed	2
Negative past experiences seeking help	2
Fear of retaliation	1
Cultural or religious reasons	1
Lack of knowledge about rights	1
Shame or guilt	1
Distrust of carers or organisations	1

6. Discussion and Recommendations

6.1. Key Discussion Points

The low rate of help-seeking behaviour (only 29.5% of violence survivors sought help) indicates significant barriers within the current support system. This is particularly concerning given that 42.7% of respondents reported experiencing violence.

The high number of respondents (68.2%) expressing interest in future support services indicates a clear need for specialised services. The most requested forms — professional counselling (70.0%) and personal support groups (66.7%) — point to specific service gaps. Community-oriented formats such as Sign Language Café (53.3%) and workshops (60.0%) were also highly requested.

A critical finding is the apparent lack of awareness about what constitutes violence, and the complete absence of respondents who contacted Deaf-specific support organisations for GBV-related issues.

6.2. Comparative Analysis

With 42.7% of respondents reporting experiences of violence, compared to 34% of hearing women in Slovakia (FRA, 2014), these initial findings warrant further investigation.

These findings are consistent with the broader European context documented by NKJT. Their 2021 report described a "Kafka-like process" of systemic barriers in accessing support (NKJT, 2021). NKJT's 2024 research on economic violence against sign language-using women revealed patterns of lifelong vulnerability (NKJT, 2024a). Their parallel 2024 study on elderly women's vulnerability further documented how lack of accessibility compounds domestic violence risks (NKJT, 2024b).

The barriers documented by NKJT in the Swedish context — poor treatment by authorities, information inaccessibility, and lack of sign language support — likely parallel those faced by Slovak Deaf survivors.

6.3. Recommendations

Immediate Actions Needed:

- Develop accessible education programmes about recognising different forms of violence, delivered in sign language
- Create specialised GBV support services with sign language access
- Establish confidential reporting mechanisms designed specifically for the Slovak Deaf community
- Train professional support staff in Deaf culture and sign language

Long-term Strategic Goals:

1. **Build a comprehensive support network including:**
 - Psychological counselling services in sign language
 - Legal support with qualified sign language interpreters

- Safe houses with staff trained in sign language
- Peer support groups led by trained Deaf facilitators

2. Implement prevention programmes:

- Early education in schools for Deaf children about recognising violence
- Community awareness campaigns in sign language
- Training for healthcare providers and social workers on Deaf-specific needs

3. Develop institutional capacity:

- Train more Deaf professionals in counselling and social work
- Create partnerships between Deaf community organisations and existing GBV organisations
- Establish regular monitoring and evaluation systems

7. Conclusion

This preliminary survey of 103 respondents from the Slovak Deaf community provides valuable insights into the prevalence and impact of gender-based violence. With 42.7% of participants reporting experiences of violence, the findings highlight a significant issue that demands immediate attention.

While 44 individuals reported experiencing violence, only 13 sought help, indicating a substantial gap. However, 30 participants expressed interest in receiving support, suggesting potential for positive change if appropriate services are made available.

The demographic diversity of respondents provides a broad perspective of the challenges. The high representation of women among violence survivors (84.1%) indicates a particular vulnerability that needs addressing.

These findings provide a foundation for developing targeted interventions and will inform the planned European project, helping to shape programmes that are both accessible and culturally appropriate for the Slovak Deaf community.

8. References

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9. Appendix A: Survey Instrument

The full questionnaire "Dotazník GBV — Gender Based Violence (Rodovo podmiemené násilie)" was administered via Google Forms with Slovak Sign Language video accompaniment for each question. The instrument comprised 15 questions:

Demographics and Identity (Questions 1–6):

- Q1. How old are you? — Single choice: age ranges from 5–12 to 80+
- Q2. How do you identify? — Girl/Woman, Boy/Man, Non-binary, Don't want to answer, Other
- Q3. Sexual orientation? — Asexual, Bisexual, Homosexual, Heterosexual, Pansexual, Other
- Q4. Transgender identity? — Yes trans man, Yes trans woman, No
- Q5. Are you... — Deaf, Hearing impaired, Deaf-Blind, CODA, Hearing
- Q6. Which region? — 8 Slovak regions + living abroad

Violence Experience (Questions 7–9):

- Q7. Have you ever experienced violence? — Yes/No
- Q8. At what age did you first experience violence? — Age ranges from 0–4 to 81+
- Q9. What type of violence? — Physical, Emotional, Sexual, Online, Financial/property, Neglect

Help-Seeking (Questions 10–12):

- Q10. Did you seek help? — Yes/No
- Q11. Who did you contact? — 11 options including Deaf/hearing psychologists, police, family, organisations
- Q12. Experience with support? — Very good / Good / Neutral / Bad / Very bad

Support Needs (Questions 13–15):

- Q13. Would you like additional help/support? — Yes/No
- Q14. What type of support? — 11 options + Other
- Q15. If you don't want support, why not? — 16 options + Other

10. Appendix B: Corrections Log (v2.0 vs v1.0)

This version corrects data inaccuracies found in version 1.0:

Issue	v1.0 (incorrect)	v2.0 (corrected)
Total valid respondents	102	103
Violence reported	43 (42.2%)	44 (42.7%)
Non-binary total	6	7
Sexual orientation	Omitted asexual (15) and pansexual (4)	All categories included
Trenčín region	7	11
Košice region	9	5
Trnava region	8	9
Žilina region	7	8
B. Bystrica region	5	4
Online violence	14	13
Financial/property abuse	11	13
Neglect	6	8
Sexual violence	19	18
Help sought	13/43 (30.2%)	13/44 (29.5%)
Women among victims	37/43 (86%)	37/44 (84.1%)
Support types	Fabricated categories	Actual survey options