

Nearly One in Five University Students Experienced Violence in Last Six Months: Study

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(PhysOrg.com) -- While attending university, men are equally likely as women to have been victims of physical or emotional violence, and that violence is often linked to drinking, according to a new study led by University of British Columbia researcher Elizabeth Saewyc.

The study, first published online in the [Journal of Adolescent Health](#) last month and scheduled for print publication this fall, found 17 per cent of men and 16 per cent of women reported emotional or physical [violence](#) in the past six months. It's the first multi-site study covering both the U.S. and Canada that focuses on recent violence while attending university.

"Whether it's from intimate partners or relative strangers, violence has a significant effect on young people's health," says Saewyc, a professor in the School of Nursing and lead author of the study. "At university, the stress from experiencing violence can affect students' grades, their mental health, even their long-term physical health. When nearly one in five young people report recent violence, that's a serious concern for campus health services."

Almost half of the emotional violence and 20 per cent of the physical violence reported by both genders came from intimate partners. "It appears that young men in college are as likely to experience violence as young women, and much of that violence is from their intimate

partners," says Saewyc.

Saewyc, who also holds a Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) Applied Public Health Chair in Youth Health, worked with researchers at the University of Wisconsin and University of Washington in Seattle to survey more than 2,000 students who attended campus health services for routine clinic appointments. The study was part of a larger project on problem drinking and campus health funded by CIHR and the U.S. National Institutes of Health.

The study also found links between alcohol use and violence victimization.

"We've known that drinking increases the risk of perpetrating violence," says Saewyc. "But in this study we found alcohol consumption puts both young men and women at higher risk of being victimized, too."

Of those who experienced violence, more than one in three young women and 59 percent of young men said they had been drinking when the violence happened. Two-thirds of young men experiencing physical violence reported they had been drinking at the time.

Saewyc and her colleagues propose campus health services should do more to screen for violence exposure among students, and universities also need interventions to promote healthy dating relationships.

"There are established guidelines that recommend screening women for intimate partner violence in routine clinical care on campus, but not for men. This study shows we need the same routine screening for young men, too," says Saewyc.

"CIHR is proud to support Dr. Saewyc's study. Her new insights on student victims of violence will help create better violence prevention

and intervention programs," says Dr. Nancy Edwards, Scientific Director of CIHR's Institute of Population and Public Health. "Violence is an important [public health](#) issue in Canada, so it is necessary to identify people at risk to reduce the number of victims."

Source: University of British Columbia ([news](#) : [web](#))

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