

Disclosing sexual abuse is critical

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Half of sexual abuse survivors wait up to five years before disclosing they were victimized, according to a collaborative study from the Université de Montréal, the Université du Québec à Montréal and the Université de Sherbrooke published in *The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*.

"The number of victims who never reveal their secret or who wait many years to do so is very high," says co-author Mireille Cyr, a psychology professor of the Université de Montréal. "This is regrettable because the longer they wait to reveal the abuse, the harder and more enduring the consequences will be."

The research team surveyed 800 Quebec men and women and found 25 percent of respondents never divulged being sexually abused as children. The scientists also found a sharp contrast between genders: 16 percent of women remain quiet about abuse, while 34 percent of men never share their secret.

The investigation found that 22 percent of women and 10 percent of men reported being survivors of abuse, which ranged from molestation to rape, which is comparable to the findings of previous studies on the topic.

The psychological distress of victims includes anxiety, depression, troubles concentrating and irritability. Certain victims suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, some relive the abuse psychologically while others have dulled emotions or become hyper-vigilant.

The data suggests that victims are more likely to denounce their abuser when he or she is a stranger. Unfortunately, in most cases, serious abuse such as rape is committed by friends or family members. This is true in 85 percent of cases for female victims and 89 percent for male victims.

Professor Isabelle Daigneault, of the Université de Montréal Department of Psychology, conducted a separate study correlating the likelihood of young victims to become adult victims of sexual or physical abuse.

Published in *The International Journal of Child Abuse & Neglect*, her sample examined 9,170 women and 7,823 men throughout Canada. Her conclusions are startling: female survivors of childhood [sexual abuse](#) are three to four times likely to be victims of physical or sexual abuse as adults.

"It's the first time that we combine data on sexual abuse during childhood and eventual relationship problems," says Daigneault.

Male survivors of childhood sexual abuse are three times more likely to be victims of physical abuse as men. However, too few men reported sexual abuse as adults to establish a statistically significant correlation.

More information:

About study cited from *The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*:

publications.cpa-apc.org/media...php?mid=840&xwm=true

About study cited from *The International Journal of Child Abuse & Neglect*: click [here](#)

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