

# Men with disabilities 4 times more likely to be sexually abused than men without disabilities

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Previous studies have documented that women with disabilities are more likely to be sexually assaulted than women without disabilities. A new study published online today in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* is the first population-based investigation to examine sexual violence victimization against men with disabilities. Researchers report that men with disabilities are more than four times more likely to be victimized by sexual assaults compared to men without disabilities.

"Men with disabilities are at a heightened risk for lifetime and current [sexual violence](#) victimization," according to lead investigator Monika Mitra, PhD, Research Scientist, Center for Health Policy and Research, and Assistant Professor, Department of [Family Medicine](#) and Community Health, University of Massachusetts Medical School. "The most notable finding is that the prevalence of lifetime sexual violence, completed rape, and attempted rape against men with disabilities was comparable to that against women without disabilities, and past-year rates for men with disabilities exceeded those for women without disabilities."

Dr. Mitra adds that "this study also broadened research of such victimization against men with disabilities beyond the [intimate partner](#) context to acquaintances and strangers, as well as family members, intimate partners, and dates. This is particularly relevant for people with disabilities whom earlier studies have suggested are especially likely to

experience abuse from caregivers and personal care and other attendants, in addition to intimate partners."

Investigators from the University of Massachusetts Medical School and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health used data from close to 22,000 respondents collected as part of the 2005-2006 Massachusetts [Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System](#) (MA-BRFSS), which is an annual health survey of noninstitutionalized adults conducted in collaboration with the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC).

Approximately 13.9% of men with disabilities reported lifetime sexual violence, compared to 3.7% of men without disabilities, 26.6% of women with disabilities, and 12.4% of women without disabilities. Men with disabilities (5.3%) were more likely to report past-year sexual violence than [men](#) (1.5%) and women (2.4%) without disabilities and less likely than women with [disabilities](#) (6.3%).

Participants were asked (1) whether anyone ever had or attempted to have sex with them without their consent; and (2) whether in the past year anyone had touched them sexually without their consent/despite their objections or had exposed them to nonconsensual sexual situations that did not involve physical touching.

To determine disability status, respondents were asked whether they had limitations because of physical, mental, or emotional problems, any health problem that required use of special equipment, trouble learning, remembering or concentrating because of a health problem or impairment, or a physical, mental, emotional, or communication-related disability. Those responding yes to any of these questions and whose disability had limited their activities for at least one year were classified as having a disability.

**More information:** The article is "Sexual Violence Victimization Against Men with Disabilities" by Monika Mitra, PhD, Vera E. Mouradian, PhD, and Marci Diamond, MPA. ([doi: 10.1016/j.amepre.2011.07.014](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2011.07.014)). It appears in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, Volume 41, Issue 5 (November 2011)

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