

# Study: People with mental disorders more likely to have experienced domestic violence

December 26 2012

---

Men and women with mental health disorders, across all diagnoses, are more likely to have experienced domestic violence than the general population, according to new research from King's College London's Institute of Psychiatry, in collaboration with the University of Bristol. Previous studies into the link between domestic violence and mental health problems have mainly focused on depression, but this is the first study to look at a wide range of mental health problems in both male and female victims.

In this study, funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) and published today in [PLOS ONE](#), researchers reviewed data from 41 studies worldwide. Compared to women without [mental health problems](#), women with depressive disorders were around 2 and a ½ times more likely to have experienced [domestic violence](#) over their adult lifetime (prevalence estimate 45.8%); women with [anxiety disorders](#) were over 3 and a ½ times more likely (prevalence estimate 27.6%); and women with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) were around 7 times more likely (prevalence estimate 61.0%).

Women with other disorders including [obsessive compulsive disorder](#) (OCD), eating disorders, common mental health problems, schizophrenia and bipolar disorder were also at an increased risk of domestic violence compared to women without mental health problems. Men with all types of mental disorders were also at an increased risk of domestic violence. However, prevalence estimates for men were lower than those for women, indicating that it is less common for men to be

victims of repeated severe domestic violence.

Professor Louise Howard, senior author of the study from King's Institute of Psychiatry, says: "In this study, we found that both men and women with mental health problems are at an increased risk of domestic violence. The evidence suggests that there are two things happening: domestic violence can often lead to victims developing mental health problems, and people with mental health problems are more likely to experience domestic violence."

This study is part of PROVIDE, a 5-year research programme on domestic violence funded by NIHR. Professor Gene Feder, co-author of the study from the University of Bristol's School of Social and Community Medicine and chief investigator of PROVIDE says: "We hope this review will draw attention to the mental health needs of survivors of domestic violence and remind general practitioners and mental health teams that experience of domestic violence may lie behind the presentation of mental health problems."

Internationally, the [lifetime prevalence](#) of physical and/or sexual partner violence among women ranges from 15-71%. In the UK, the 2010/11 British Crime Survey reported that 27% of women and 17% of men had experienced partner abuse during their lifetime, with women experiencing more repeated and severe violence than men. From March 2013, the UK Home Office will be amending its definition of domestic violence to include 16 and 17 year olds, and will be defined as "any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass, but is not limited to, psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional abuse."

Professor Howard concludes: "Mental health professionals need to be

aware of the link between domestic violence and mental [health problems](#), and ensure that their patients are safe from domestic violence and are treated for the [mental health](#) impact of such abuse."

**More information:** Trevillion, K. et al. 'Experiences of domestic violence and mental disorders: a systematic review and meta-analysis' *PLOS ONE*, [dx.plos.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0051740](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0051740)

Provided by King's College London

Citation: Study: People with mental disorders more likely to have experienced domestic violence (2012, December 26) retrieved 6 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2012-12-people-mental-disorders-experienced-domestic.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--