

# Women with mental health disability may face four-fold risk of abusive relationship

January 30 2014

---

Women with a severe mental health-related disability are nearly four times more likely to have been a victim of intimate partner violence than those without a disability, according to a new study by Women's College Hospital researcher Janice Du Mont and co-author Tonia Forte.

The study, published in the journal *BioMed Central Public Health*, is the first Canadian population-based study to examine the prevalence of intimate partner violence among [women](#) with activity limitations – or disability – with a specific focus on those due to [mental health](#)-related problems.

"Our study suggests that women whose daily activities were limited by a psychological, emotional or mental health condition may be especially vulnerable to being victimized," said Du Mont, the study's lead author and scientist at Women's College Research Institute. "What's more, we found that the more severe the mental health related disability, the higher the prevalence of [intimate partner violence](#)."

Research shows women with a mental illness are at an increased risk of violence compared to women in the general population. Intimate partner violence, which includes physical, sexual, emotional and financial abuse by a partner, is often recurrent and linked to negative physical and psychological consequences.

"For women with a mental health-related disability, the consequences of experiencing discrimination can be devastating," said Du Mont. "It may

lead to social isolation and put these women at greater risk for harmful or abusive relationships, discouraging them from seeking help from their abusive relationship and their mental health problems."

In the study, researchers examined a sample of 6,851 women who reported contact with a current or former partner in the previous five years and found:

- Nearly 45 per cent of women with severe mental health related disability reported experiencing discrimination in the previous five years, compared to 15 per cent of women without any mental health related disability
- More women with a severe mental health related disability reported lower levels of trust toward family, neighbors and people from work or school and a weaker sense of belonging to their community
- More women living with severe daily activity limitations reported lower household incomes
- Rates of all types of violence – emotional, financial, physical and/or sexual – were higher among women with both severe and moderate mental health disabilities.

"Our findings suggest that prevention and intervention activities may need to better target women with mental health disabilities, to help alleviate the suffering and negative impact of partner abuse," said Du Mont.

Provided by Women's College Hospital

Citation: Women with mental health disability may face four-fold risk of abusive relationship (2014, January 30) retrieved 20 March 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-01-women-mental-health-disability-four-fold.html>

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.