

Risk of violent crime rises with depression, study finds

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But doctors may be more likely to focus on self-harm, suicide.

(HealthDay)—People with depression might be more likely to commit a violent crime than those without depression, a new study suggests.

Researchers analyzed data from more than 47,000 people in Sweden who were diagnosed with depression and followed for an average of three years. They were compared to more than 898,000 gender- and age-matched people without depression.

People with depression were five to six times more likely than those in the general population to harm others or themselves, according to the researchers at Oxford University in England.

"One important finding was that the vast majority of depressed persons were not convicted of [violent crimes](#), and that the rates reported are below those for schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, and considerably

lower than for alcohol or drug abuse," study author Seena Fazel, a professor of psychiatry, said in a university news release.

"Quite understandably, there is considerable concern about self-harm and suicide in depression. We demonstrate that the rates of violent crime are at least as high, but they don't receive the same level of attention in clinical guidelines or mainstream clinical practice," Fazel added.

Specifically, almost 4 percent of depressed men and 0.5 percent of depressed women committed a violent crime after their depression diagnosis, compared with slightly more than 1 percent of men and 0.2 percent of women in the general population.

The researchers defined violent crime as a conviction for any of the following: murder or attempted murder; aggravated or common assault; robbery; arson; sexual offences (including indecent exposure); and illegal threats or intimidation.

The findings are published Feb. 24 in the journal *Lancet Psychiatry*.

The study authors did not examine what effect treatment for [depression](#) had on the risk of violent crime, but they added that they plan to investigate this question in further research.

More information: The U.S. National Institute of Mental Health has more about [depression](#).

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