

Two in five individuals with schizophrenia have attempted suicide

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Functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) and other brain imaging technologies allow for the study of differences in brain activity in people diagnosed with schizophrenia. The image shows two levels of the brain, with areas that were more active in healthy controls than in schizophrenia patients shown in orange, during an fMRI study of working memory. Credit: Kim J, Matthews NL, Park S./PLoS One.

A new study by the University of Toronto (U of T), released today, found that those with schizophrenia who'd been physically abused during childhood were five times more likely to have attempted suicide.

The [lifetime prevalence](#) of [suicide attempts](#) among individuals with schizophrenia was 39.2 per cent compared to 2.8 per cent of those without the disorder, according to the study.

"Even after taking into account most of the known risk factors for suicide attempts, those with schizophrenia had six times the odds of having attempted suicide in comparison to those without schizophrenia," reported lead author Professor Esme Fuller-Thomson, Sandra Rotman Endowed Chair at the University of Toronto's Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work and Institute for Life Course and Aging.

The study examined a representative sample of 21,744 community-dwelling Canadians, of whom 101 reported they had been diagnosed with schizophrenia. Data were drawn from the 2012 Canadian Community Health Survey-Mental Health.

"When we focused only on the 101 individuals with schizophrenia, we found that women and those with a history of drug or alcohol abuse and/or [major depressive disorder](#) were much more likely to have attempted suicide," said co-author Bailey Hollister, a recent U of T [social work](#) graduate.

Of particular concern, individuals with schizophrenia who reported that they had been physically abused during their childhood were five times more likely to have attempted suicide and early adversities explained 24 per cent of the variability in suicide attempts, said the authors.

"Clearly those with [schizophrenia](#) are an extremely vulnerable population. Knowledge of the added risk of suicide attempts associated with childhood abuse and substance abuse could help clinicians improve targeting and outreach to this population," said Fuller-Thomson

The paper was published online this week in the journal *Schizophrenia*

Research and Treatment and can be accessed here:

www.hindawi.com/journals/schizort/2016/3165243/

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