

Domestic violence significantly impacts on children's health outcomes, says new study

August 24 2016, by George Wigmore



Growing up in a family in which the mother is victim of domestic violence has negative effects on a child's health, according to a new study from academics at City University London.

Drawing results from the UK Millennium Cohort Study, the study by health economists Professor Mireia Jofre-Bonet, Melcior Rossello-Roig and Dr Victoria Serra-Sastre shows that children living in a household in which there is [domestic violence](#) appear to be between 55% and 61% less likely to have their health rated as Excellent. The paper was published as part of a discussion paper series at City.

Condition accounting for this decline in health outcomes includes a range of issues such as problems with vision, hearing impairment,

learning or understanding, memory, mental health and social or behavioural issues.

In the UK, domestic violence leads to an average of two women being murdered each week and around 30 men per year. Furthermore, it accounts for 16% of all violent crime in the UK, but it is the violent crime least likely to be reported. The costs to the criminal justice system, health services, social care and housing have been estimated to be about £23 billion annually. In terms of the effects on children, previous studies have shown that around 750,000 children witness domestic violence in the form of partner abuse in the United Kingdom.

To further estimate the impact on children, the City researchers used the Millennium Cohort Study (MCS) to further investigate the impact. Started in 2000 to 2001, it is a survey following nearly 19,000 children born in the UK. The first wave was collected when these children were 9 months old.

The City study used waves 3, 4 and 5 of the MCS, which were run when the children were aged 5, 7, and 11, respectively and focused on data which contains information on whether domestic violence exists in the household and also on the children's health status over time, along with a host of other facts. The number of children affected by domestic violence included 221 children at age 5; 185 at age 7; and 134 at age 11.

In terms of questions on general health, the MCS asks parents to rate the child's health given five possible statuses: Poor (5), Fair (4), Good (3), Very Good (2), and Excellent (1). Parents are also asked whether child suffers from any health problems, including issues with vision, hearing impairment, learning or understanding, memory, mental health, and social or behavioural problems.

Professor Mireia Jofre-Bonet, Professor in Health Economics at City

University London and co-author of the study, said:

"When we looked at the data from the Millennium Cohort Study we found evidence that growing up in a family in which the mother is victim of domestic violence has overwhelming effects on child's health, as such children are between 55% and 61% less likely to have their health rated as excellent with often long-lasting effects.

"We also see that the timing of domestic violence reporting by mothers also matters with regards to the long-term influence on child's behaviour and health, as the earlier mothers report the existence of such violence, the lower the impact on child's development and the consequent lower effect on that child's health. As a result, we need better reporting of such domestic violence abuses to not only reduce the impact on affected mothers, but also make sure that [children's](#) [health](#) outcomes are not negatively affected."

Provided by City University London

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