

# Low heart rate linked to stalking behaviors in men

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Danielle Boisvert, director of Criminal Justice Graduate Programs and associate professor at Sam Houston State University, College of Criminal Justice, led the study investigating a link between low resting heart rate and stalking behaviors. Credit: Harriet McHale/SHSU

A low resting heart rate, which has been linked to aggression and violent offending, has been implicated in stalking behavior in males, according to a recent study.

"Low Resting Heart Rate and Stalking Perpetration," by Danielle Boisvert, Jessica Wells, Todd Armstrong, Richard H. Lewis, Matthias Woeckener and Matt Nobles, is the first study to incorporate the biological factor of resting [heart rate](#) in assessing stalking behaviors and is among a growing body of literature linking autonomic nervous system functions to antisocial behavior.

The study found that males with a low [resting heart rate](#) were at significantly greater risk of engaging in stalking behavior. Based on arousal theory, those with low levels of arousal are less fearful, more likely to seek opportunities to pursue victims to feel stimulated, and are more likely to exhibit [impulsive behaviors](#).

"Participants whose [heart](#) rate was one standard deviation below the mean or lower had nearly three times the odds of having engaged in stalking as compared with all other participants, suggesting that low resting heart rate is associated with increased prevalence of stalking [behavior](#)," said Boisvert. "Overall, our findings suggest that while heart rate is generally found to be associated with aggression and [antisocial behavior](#) across the sexes, these associations may be sex specific when discussing stalking perpetration."

Recent estimates suggest that 16.2 percent of women and 5.2 percent of men in the U.S. have been stalked at some point in their lifetime, which represents 20 million women and six million men. Stalking can lead to significant psychological, social and economic effects for victims, costing an estimated \$342 million in the U.S. annually.

The study is based 384 college students from a Southern university who

answered a survey on stalking measures and had their heart rate monitored through a finger pulse oximeter. Participants were asked if they followed, watched or spied on someone; or tried to communicate through a variety of written and physical methods with someone against their will over the last year. Of the sample, 32 had engaged in these stalking behaviors, including 15 females and 17 males.

**More information:** Danielle Boisvert et al, Low Resting Heart Rate and Stalking Perpetration, *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* (2017).  
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Provided by Sam Houston State University

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