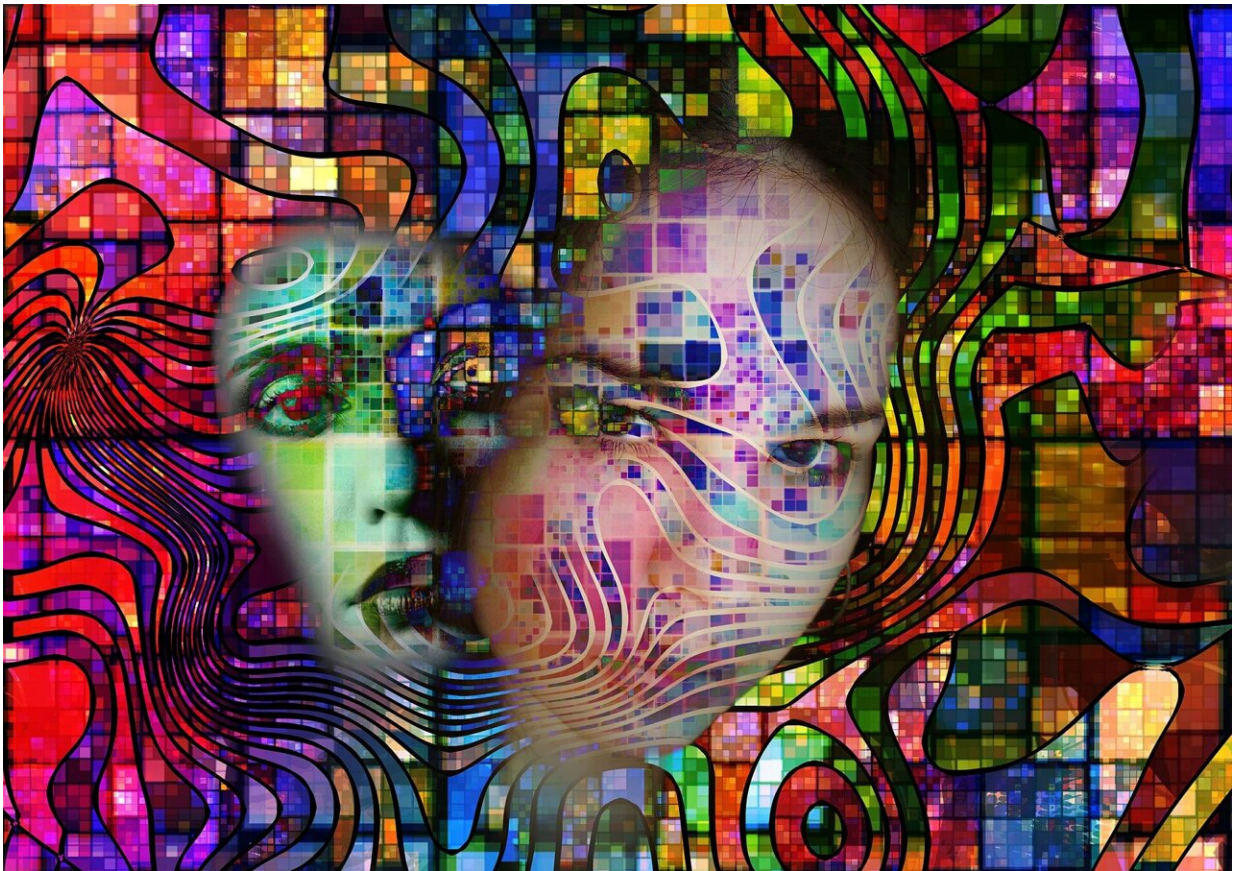


# Pregnant people with schizophrenia have threefold risk of interpersonal violence

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Pregnant and postpartum people with schizophrenia have a more than threefold increase in the risk of an emergency department visit for

interpersonal violence, compared with those without schizophrenia, according to a new study in *Canadian Medical Association Journal*.

Interpersonal [violence](#) can include physical, sexual and psychological abuse by a family member, intimate partner, acquaintance or stranger.

"Though we found a threefold increased risk for individuals with schizophrenia, we also found that the majority of people, both with and without schizophrenia, are screened for interpersonal violence during [pregnancy](#)," says lead author Kelly Leslie, a fourth-year psychiatry resident at the University of Toronto. "This suggests there are many opportunities for health care providers to intervene and prevent harm to these patients and their children."

About 1 in 5 (20.7%) women with schizophrenia experience physical or [sexual violence](#) during their lifetime, about 9 times the risk for those without serious mental illness. However, little is known about their risk during the perinatal period.

Led by researchers from ICES and Women's College Hospital, the study included more than 1.8 million pregnant people aged 15–49 years, of whom 4470 had been diagnosed with schizophrenia. People with schizophrenia were more likely to live in a lower-income neighbourhood, to have other psychiatric and chronic medical conditions, and to have had an emergency department (ED) visit for interpersonal violence in the 2 years before their pregnancy.

Key findings:

- Overall, 3.1% of people with schizophrenia had an ED visit for interpersonal violence during pregnancy and the first year postpartum, versus 0.4% of those without schizophrenia.
- Pregnant individuals with schizophrenia were equally likely to be

screened for (74.3% v. 73.8%), yet more likely to self-report (10.2% v. 2.4%), interpersonal violence.

- Among study participants who were screened and *did not* disclose interpersonal violence in pregnancy, [schizophrenia](#) was associated with a sixfold increase in the risk of experiencing an ED visit for [interpersonal violence](#) in both pregnancy and postpartum.

The study suggests "that routine violence screening in antenatal care settings is an important opportunity for intervention to prevent severe physical, psychological and social harm to these patients and their children," writes Dr. Simone Vigod, head of psychiatry, Women's College Hospital and a professor at the Temerty Faculty of Medicine, University of Toronto, with co-authors.

**More information:** Risk of interpersonal violence during and after pregnancy among people with schizophrenia: a population-based cohort study, *Canadian Medical Association Journal* (2023). [DOI: 10.1503/cmaj.220689](#)

Provided by Canadian Medical Association Journal

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