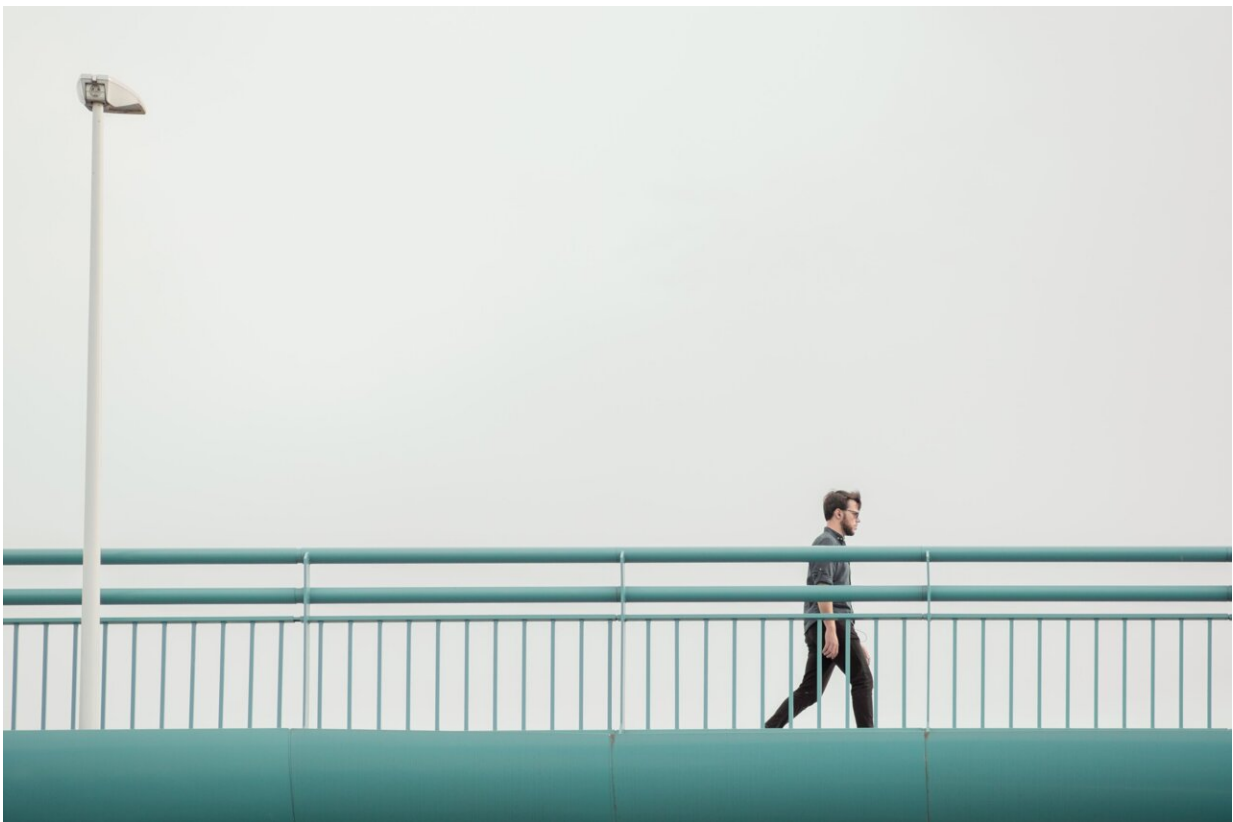


More than 90% of victims experience psychological impacts following stalking behavior, says study

October 25 2023, by Olivia Miller



Credit: Unsplash/CC0 Public Domain

The majority of stalking victims experience significant psychological impacts as a result of stalking behavior according to new research by

Kent psychologists in partnership with the Suzy Lamplugh Trust.

The research findings, revealed on World Mental Health Day 2023, find that an increase in the variety of stalking behaviors experienced by a victim result in heightened impacts on their psychological and physical well-being, and the well-being of those around them.

Their research paper, titled "[The Impact of Stalking and Its Predictors: Characterizing the Needs of Stalking Victims](#)," is published by the *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*.

Furthermore, because victims are experiencing so many types of stalking behaviors (e.g. emails, threats, hacking, following or attending their home or workplace) it could mean that they have fewer spaces they feel safe to retreat to, to recover from the effects of the stalking intrusions, further compounding the negative impact.

The cases reviewed showed high levels of violence and victim impact following stalking behavior:

- 5% of victims disclosed psychological impacts of stalking such as anxiety, depression and [substance abuse](#).
- 54% disclosed practical impacts on their lives and activities, including investing in extra security, limiting [social activities](#) and changing a workplace or home.
- 35% revealed that the stalking had an impact on other individuals around them such as children, family, friends, and colleagues.

These findings are critical because they highlight the need to recognize the diversity of stalking behaviors when considering victim impact and the likely presence of psychological harm. The findings also identify a larger circle of individuals who can potentially be impacted by stalking, meaning there may be more need for support services beyond the

stalking targets themselves.

The research was carried out by forensic psychologist Dr. Jennifer Storey alongside Dr. Afroditi Pina at Kent's School of Psychology, as well as Cherise Williams (Royal Holloway, University of London). The researchers analyzed anonymous data from the National Stalking Helpline, part of the National Staking Service run by the Suzy Lamplugh Trust—the UK's pioneering personal safety charity and leading stalking authority.

With the research being focused on victims who contacted the charity for support and self-reported their personal impact stories, findings could underestimate the prevalence of impact.

Dr. Storey stresses that the research suggests that the levels of impact on victims' lives necessitates trauma informed practice by mental health clinicians. She said, "Often when assessing impact and the subsequent need for supporting stalking targets, we gravitate to the severity of the stalking behavior for guidance. Naturally this is because the severity can be a sign of significant negative outcomes for victims, such as physical harm. Yet, our findings suggest that when assessing the targets' needs, we must also consider the diversity of stalking behaviors and prioritize diverse cases for tailored support."

"Our research also highlights the need for an impact reporting index to inform the implementation of trauma informed practice by professionals. This would enhance our existing provisions and provide clinicians and frontline responders with the information they need to assist victims more effectively."

Suky Bhaker, CEO at the Suzy Lamplugh Trust, said, "We know from our work with thousands of victims a year that stalking has a deeply traumatic impact on most victims and this research reiterates the

devastating psychological effect of multiple diverse behaviors carried out in-person and online."

"World Mental Health Day is vitally important for raising awareness about the hidden epidemic of mental health issues faced by victims of stalking. Too often victims of stalking do not receive the support they so critically need and our super complaint on the police response to stalking specifically highlighted failures in detecting or evidencing psychological harm. These findings highlight the urgent need for training across the criminal justice system in recognizing the impact of stalking and provision of a trauma-informed response, as well as ring-fenced funding for specialist stalking [support services](#), to provide holistic support to [victims](#) when they need it the most."

More information: Jennifer E. Storey et al, The Impact of Stalking and Its Predictors: Characterizing the Needs of Stalking Victims, *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* (2023). [DOI: 10.1177/08862605231185303](https://doi.org/10.1177/08862605231185303)

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