

Mental Health Issues

Major Depressive Disorder (MDD) affects an estimated one-third of all rape victims, often for an extended period of time. One-third of women who are raped contemplate suicide and 17 percent attempt suicide.

(National Center for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. 2004. *Sexual Assault against Females*. Washington, D.C.: Department of Veteran Affairs.)

A recent study indicates that 94 percent of women who were raped experienced symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) during the two weeks following the attack. After nine months, 30 percent of the women were reporting the same pattern of symptoms. (Ibid.)

In a study of the effects of 80 different natural and manmade disasters, involving over 50,000 survivors, researchers found that mass violence was by far the most psychologically disturbing type of disaster. Of the individuals who experienced mass violence, 67 percent of the survivors had severe psychological impairments compared to 34 percent of the survivors of technological disasters and 42 percent of the survivors of natural disasters.

(The International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies. 2001. *50,000 Disaster Victims Speak*. Washington, D.C.: The National Center for PTSD and the Center for Mental Health Services.)

According to the PTSD Alliance, the estimated risks of developing PTSD after the following traumatic events are: rape (49 percent); severe beating or physical assault (31 percent); other sexual assault (23.7 percent); shooting or stabbing (15.4 percent); sudden unexpected death of a family member or loved one (14.3 percent); and witness to a murder or assault (7.3 percent).

(PTSD Alliance. "Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Fact Sheet. Sidran Institute. <http://www.sidran.org/ptsdfacts.html>. Accessed September 24, 2004.)

Studies of children at risk of violence show high rates of PTSD. As many as 100 percent of children who witness a parental homicide or sexual assault, 90 percent of sexually abused children, 77 percent of children exposed to school shootings, and 35 percent of children exposed to community violence develop PTSD.

(National Center for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. 2004. *PTSD in Children and Adolescents*. Washington, D.C.: Department of Veteran Affairs.)

Crime victims show much higher incidences of PTSD than people not victimized by crime. Research shows that 25 percent of crime victims experienced lifetime PTSD and 9.7 percent had current PTSD (PTSD within six months of being surveyed), whereas 9.4 percent of people who had not been victims of crime had lifetime PTSD and 3.4 percent had current PTSD.

(Kilpatrick, D. and Acierno, R. "Mental Health Needs of Crime Victims: Epidemiology and Outcomes." *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 2003:1612.)

Adolescents and young adults are at a higher risk of victimization and are more likely to develop PTSD after being victimized. (Ibid.)

Women who experienced a homicide of a family member or close friend had higher levels of PTSD than non-homicide survivors; 22 percent experienced lifetime PTSD, and 8.9 percent had current PTSD. (Ibid.)

Molestation victims also report high levels of PTSD as an effect of the victimization. The National Institute of Health's Co-morbidity Study found that 12.2 percent of men and 26.5 percent of women who were molested developed PTSD. (Ibid.)

Depression is a major factor in the mental health of crime victims; 36.6 percent of people diagnosed with PTSD also suffer from depression. (Ibid.)

Victims of rape are 13.4 times more likely to develop two or more alcohol-related problems and 26 times more likely to have two or more serious drug abuse-related problems. (Ibid.)

A recent report based on the 1995 National Survey of Adolescents (NSA) found that a history of sexual assault was associated with a four- to five-fold increase in the prevalence rate of PTSD. The report found that sexually assaulted boys had a lifetime PTSD rate of 28.2 percent, compared with 5.4 percent of boys who had not been sexually assaulted. Sexually assaulted girls had a lifetime PTSD rate of 29.8 percent, compared with 7.1 percent of girls who had not been assaulted.

(National Institute of Justice. 2003. *Youth Victimization: Prevalence and Implications*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice.)

Experiencing either a physical assault or physically abusive punishment was associated with a lifetime PTSD rate of 15.2 percent among boys, compared to a lifetime rate of 3.1 percent among boys who had not been physically assaulted or abused. The rate of lifetime PTSD was 27.4 percent among girls who had been physically assaulted or received physically abusive punishment, compared with six percent among girls who had not. (Ibid.)

Many boys (11.2 percent) and girls (20.2 percent) who witnessed violence had PTSD at some point in their lives, compared to 2.3 percent of boys and 4.2 percent of girls who had not witnessed violence. (Ibid.)

Of the estimated 5.3 million rapes, physical assaults, or stalking incidents by intimate partners each year, nearly 1.5 million result in some type of mental health counseling. The total number of mental health care visits by intimate partner victims each year is estimated to be more than 18.5 million.

(Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2003. *Costs of Intimate Partner Violence Against Women in the United States*. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.)

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