

People with disabilities at greater risk of violence and subsequent mental ill-health

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People with disabilities are at a greater risk of being the victims of violence and of suffering mental ill health when victimized, according to research published February 20 in the open access journal *PLOS ONE* by Hind Khalifeh and colleagues from University College London and King's College London.

A recent World Report on Disability highlighted violence as a leading cause of morbidity among disabled people. The research published today is the first to assess the extent to which people with disabilities experience different kinds of violence and the associated health and economic costs. The authors analyzed data from the 2009-2010 British Crime Survey to estimate the odds of a person with physical or mental disabilities experiencing physical, sexual, domestic or non-[domestic violence](#). The survey did not include individuals with disabilities living in institutions.

On the whole, the authors found that, compared to those without any disability, the odds of being a victim of violence in the past year were three-fold higher for those with mental illness-related disability, and two-fold higher for those with [physical disability](#). The odds were similarly raised for physical and [sexual violence](#), and for domestic and non-domestic violence. Their analysis also revealed that victims with disability were twice as likely to experience emotional difficulties following violence than non-disabled victims.

Across England and Wales in 2009, approximately 224,000 people with disabilities experienced violence, resulting in an excess economic burden of £1.51 billion. The authors state that overall, the prevalence and risk of violence they estimated in their study is consistent with reports from other countries such as the US and Taiwan.

According to the authors, their research highlights the need for clinicians to be aware of the greater risks of domestic and non-domestic violence

among patients with all disability types, and of the increased risk of emotional difficulties among disabled victims. The study concludes, "Future research should evaluate the effectiveness of violence prevention programs in people with disability that address risk factors specific to this group, such as caregiver stress or communication barriers to disclosure."

More information: Khalifeh H, Howard LM, Osborn D, Moran P, Johnson S (2013) Violence against People with Disability in England and Wales: Findings from a National Cross-Sectional Survey. *PLOS ONE* 8(2): e55952. [doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0055952](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0055952)

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