

Adult male victims of sex assault seek out five or more medical services

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While only a small percentage of adult males who are victims of sex assault report the crime, a new study by Women's College Research Institute (WCRI) and the Ontario Network of Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence Treatment Centres (ONSA/DVTCs) shows of those who do, an overwhelming majority—almost 90 per cent—use five or more services ranging from counselling to medical care and treatment.

The study, published in the *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, sheds light on the characteristics of male victims of sex assault and the services they use. The findings will help [healthcare providers](#) better tailor current services to the population.

"Sexual assault is vastly underreported, and in men, adult sex assault is under researched," the study's lead author and WCRI's Dr. Janice Du Mont says. "While women generally comprise more than 90 per cent of all reported sex assault cases, it is important to understand the characteristics of male victims and the assaults they experience so that we can be sure we are offering services that meet their full range of needs."

The study collected information from 38 males aged 12 and older who used 29 sex assault treatment centres in Ontario over a 12-month period. According to the authors, many men came from groups known to be at higher risk for sex assault—a large minority were Aboriginal, unemployed, working in the [sex trade](#), living on the streets, in a rehab centre or in jail, and more than one in 10 had no social supports. About one-third had either a psychiatric or [developmental disability](#).

A significant proportion of [study participants](#) also reported having been coerced and subjected to [physical violence](#) that included [strangulation](#), being gagged, shoved, hit, confined or bit. All victims used at least one service, which included crisis

counselling, testing for sexually transmitted infections, referral for followup care and medical treatment. About 14 per cent used one to four services and 86 per cent used five or more services.

"The results of our study demonstrate a very high use of services by adolescent boys and adult men attending the treatment centres," said the study's co-author Sheila Macdonald, provincial coordinator for the ONSA/DVTCs and clinical manager of Women's College Hospital's Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence Care Centre. "If these findings are reflective of the level of needs of most male victims, this raises concerns about those who are not coming in for help."

Providing access to a range of psychological, medical and forensic treatment options, and referrals to the community proved to be of value for male victims, the study notes. For this reason, the authors suggest gender sensitive care should be more widely available for men sexually assaulted as adults and adolescents so that their needs are acknowledged and met.

Provided by Women's College Hospital

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