

Childhood adversities, including witnessing parental domestic violence, linked to later migraines

24 June 2015



Credit: Sasha Wolff/Wikipedia

Adults who were exposed to childhood adversity, including witnessing parental domestic violence, childhood physical and sexual abuse have higher odds of experiencing migraine headaches in adulthood, according to a new study from researchers at the University of Toronto.

"We found the more types of violence the individual had been exposed to during their childhood, the greater the odds of migraine. For those who reported all three types of adversities—parental domestic violence, childhood physical and sexual abuse—the odds of migraine were a little over three times higher for men and just under three times higher for [women](#)" said Sarah Brennenstuhl, PhD, first author of the study.

Investigators examined a nationally representative

sample of 12,638 women and 10,358 men aged 18 and over from the 2012 Canadian Community Health Survey-Mental Health.

"The most surprising finding was the link between exposure to parental domestic violence and migraines. Even after accounting for variables including age, race, [socioeconomic status](#), history of depression and anxiety, and childhood physical and sexual [abuse](#), men and women who had witnessed parental domestic violence had 52% and 64% higher odds of migraine, respectively, compared to those without such a history " says co-author Esme Fuller-Thomson, professor and Sandra Rotman Endowed Chair at University of Toronto's Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work.

The study was published online this week in the journal *Headache*.

"The cross-sectional design of our study does not allow us to determine if the association between early adversities and migraines is causative, but our findings do underline the importance of future prospective studies investigating the long-term physical health of children exposed to parental domestic violence, says Fuller-Thomson."

Provided by University of Toronto

APA citation: Childhood adversities, including witnessing parental domestic violence, linked to later migraines (2015, June 24) retrieved 20 July 2022 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2015-06-childhood-adversities-witnessing-parental-domestic.html>

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