

Fact Sheet: Criminal Victimization of People with Mental Illness

Rates of criminal victimization among people with mental illness are extremely high

Preliminary results of a study of 1000 psychiatric aftercare patients in Chicago show that a person with a serious mental illness is more than 7 times more likely to be the victim of any crime, including 9 times more likely to be the victim of violent crimes, and 24 times more likely to be the victim of rape.ⁱ

Forty-four percent of 1800 homeless people with mental illness who participated in a community treatment program were the victims of at least one crime during the two months before entering the program.ⁱⁱ

More than 8 percent of involuntarily admitted psychiatric inpatients released to aftercare in a North Carolina study were the victims of violence, compared to 3 percent of the general population.ⁱⁱⁱ

Women with mental illness who are victims of crime face particular challenges

Women with mental illness are more likely to be victims of sexual assault as adults than are men with mental illness, according to a study of 100 psychiatric inpatients.^{iv}

Women face the risk of additional victimization along gender lines by service providers: they may be discredited as witnesses, blamed for complicity, or not taken seriously in their reporting of crimes perpetrated against them.^v

Victimization can contribute to mental illness (in addition to mental illness being a risk factor for victimization) and substance abuse is correlated to both of these characteristics

Adults abused during childhood are more than twice as likely to have at least one lifetime psychiatric diagnosis.^{vi}

Illness severity may both contribute to and be exacerbated by recent victimization.^{vii}

Victimization of people with mental illness is strongly associated with substance abuse longitudinally – substance abuse is both a risk factor and may follow from victimization.^{viii}

ⁱ Linda Teplin. "Criminal Victimization of the Mentally Ill," Workshop on Crime Victims with Developmental Disabilities, National Research Council's Committee on Law and Justice, National Academy of Sciences, Irvine, CA, October 28-30, 1999.

ⁱⁱ J. Lam and R. Rosenheck. "The Effects of Victimization on Clinical Outcomes of Homeless Persons with Serious Mental Illness," *Psychiatric Services* 49:5, May 1998.

ⁱⁱⁱ Virginia Hiday, Marvin Swartz, Jeffrey Swanson, Randy Borum, and H. Ryan Wagner. "Criminal Victimization of Persons With Severe Mental Illness," *Psychiatric Services* 50:1, January 1999.

^{iv} Andrea Jacobson and Bonnie Richardson. "Assault Experiences of 100 Psychiatric Inpatients: Evidence for the Need for Routine Inquiry," *American Journal of Psychiatry* 144:7, July 1987.

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^v Susan Salasin and Robert Rich. "Mental Health Policy for Victims of Violence: The Case Against Women." *International Handbook of Traumatic Stress Syndromes*. Ed. John P. Wilson and Beverley Raphael. New York: Plenum Press, 1993.

^{vi} J.A. Stein, J.M. Golding, J.M. Siegel, M.A. Burnam, and S.B. Sorenson. "Long-term Psychological Sequelae of Child Sexual Abuse: The Los Angeles Epidemiologic Catchment Area Study." *Lasting Effect of Child Sexual Abuse*. Ed. G.E. Wyatt and G.J. Powell. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1988.

^{vii} L.A. Goodman, M.P. Salyers, K.T. Mueser, S.D. Rosenberg, M. Swartz, S.M. Essock, F.C. Osher, M.I. Butterfield, and J. Swanson. "Recent Victimization in Women and Men with Severe Mental Illness: Prevalence and Correlates." *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 14: 4, April 2001.

^{viii} Ibid.

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