

The Rippling Burdens of Sexual Abuse on Children and Society

This is what we know about people who were sexually abused as children compared to those who weren't:

Suicide attempts are twice as common.ⁱ

Clinical depression is 40% higher in women, 20% higher in men.ⁱⁱ

Psychiatric disorders are 22% higher in women and 16% higher in men.ⁱⁱⁱ

Use of illegal drugs is 70% higher by women, 50% higher by men.^{iv}

Alcohol problems are 60% higher in women, 30% higher in men.^v

Smoking during adolescence and beyond is twice as likely among women.^{vi}

Teen pregnancy is more than twice as common.^{vii}

Involvement in being prostituted is significantly more likely.^{viii}

Serious family problems are 70% higher for women, 40% higher for men.^{ix}

Perpetration of sexual abuse against adolescents rates are 30% higher. 46% of adolescent sex offenders reported having experienced childhood sexual abuse and only 16% of non-sex offenders reported such abuse.^x

Violent behaviors, including the use of weapons and fighting is more likely.^{xi}

Obesity rates are 30% higher among those whose abuse included penetration.^{xii}

Type 2 Diabetes rates are 28% higher^{xiii} and

Heart Attack and Stroke rates are 62% higher^{xiv} among women who experienced repeated forced sex as children or adolescents. Only between 37 and 41% of that correlation is explained by traditional risk factors such as body mass index, smoking or alcohol use. This suggests that other factors, such as increased stress reactivity among people with a history of abuse, play a strong role.

Health care costs, across the lifespan, are between 16 and 36% higher for women.^{xv}

Understanding the connections and common causes between these issues is essential to developing effective prevention, and treatment, efforts.

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- ⁱⁱ Ibid.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Martin, G., Bergen H. A. & Richardson A. S. (2004). Sexual abuse and suicidality: Gender differences in a large community sample of adolescents. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 28, 491-503.
- ^{iv} Dube, et al 2005.
- ^v Dube, et al 2005.
- ^{vi} Nichols, H.B. & Harlow, B.L. (2004). Childhood abuse and risk of smoking onset. *Journal of Epidemiology of Community Health*, 58, 402-406.
- ^{vii} Noll, J., Shenk, C. & Putnam, K. (2009). Childhood sexual abuse and adolescent pregnancy: A meta-analytic update. *Journal of Pediatric Psychology*. 34 (4) ; 366-378.
- ^{viii} Senn, T., Carey, M. P., Vanable, P. A., Coury-Doniger, P., & Urban, M. (2007). Characteristics of sexual abuse in childhood and adolescence influence sexual risk behavior in adulthood. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*. 36 (5), 637-645.
- ^{ix} Dube, et al 2005.
- ^x Seto, M., & Lalumiere, M. (2010). What is so special about male adolescent sexual offending? A review and test of explanations through meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*. 135 (4), 526-575.
- ^{xi} Mullers, E. S. & Dowling, M. (2008). Mental health consequences of child sexual abuse. *British Journal of Nursing*, 17, 1428-1433.
- ^{xii} Williamson, D. F., Thompson, T. J., Anda, R. F., Dietz, W. H., & Felitti, V. (2002). Body weight and obesity in adults and self-reported abuse in childhood. *International Journal of Obesity and Related Metabolic Disorders*, 26,1075-1082. Also Alvarez, J., Pavao, J., Baumrind, N. & Kimerling, R. (2007). The relationship between child abuse and adult obesity among California women. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*. 33, 28 – 33.
- ^{xiii} Rich-Edwards, J. W., Spiegelman, D., Lividoti Hibert, E., Jun, H., James Todd, T., Kawachi, I. & Wright, R.. (2010). Abuse in childhood and adolescence as a predictor of Type 2 Diabetes in adult women. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 39 (6) 529-536.
- ^{xiv} American Heart Association (2011, November 13). Abused girls may have higher risk of heart disease, stroke as adults, study suggests. *Science Daily*. Retrieved December 13, 2011, from <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2011/11/1111113141258.htm>
- ^{xv} Bonomi, A. E., Rivara, F. P., Cannon, E. A., Fishman, P.A., Carrell, D. et al. (2008). Health care utilization and costs associated with childhood abuse." *Journal of General Internal Medicine*. 23 (3): 294-299. Health care costs for women who were victims of both physical and sexual abuse were 36% higher than for women who had not experienced either type of abuse. Center for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC). (1997 & 2007). The Adverse Childhood Experience Study, Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Centers for Disease Control & Prevention.

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