

# People with mental health problems at high risk of being victims of crime

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People with mental health problems are more likely to become victims of crime than the general population, according to new research.

The study was conducted by academics at the Institute of Psychiatry at King's College London, Victim Support, Mind, Kingston University, St George's and UCL (University College London), and was funded by The Big Lottery Fund.

Researchers interviewed a random sample of 361 people with severe [mental illness](#) in London and conducted in-depth interviews with 81 people with mental health problems who had been victims of crime during the last 3 years.

The study found that:

- People with severe mental illness were 3 times more likely to be a victim of any crime than those without.
- People with severe mental illness were 5 times more likely to experience assault than those without.
- Women with severe mental illness were 10 times more likely to experience assault than those without.
- Nearly 45% of people with severe mental illness reported experiencing crime in the last year
- 62% of women with severe mental illness reported being victims of sexual violence as adults.
- People with severe mental illness were 7 times more likely to experience 3 or more different types of crime in a year than the general population.
- People with severe mental illness were significantly more likely to report the police had been unfair or disrespectful compared to the general population.

Dr Paul Moran from King's College London's Institute of Psychiatry, says: "This is the first UK study to provide a detailed picture of criminal victimisation in people with mental health problems. We found that people with mental disorder were three times more likely to become victims of crime and that compared to members of the [general population](#), they were more likely to suffer serious psychological consequences, leading to suicide attempts, as a result of being victimised. Tragically, we also found that many people with mental health problems were reluctant to report a crime to the police. We clearly need a strategic response across health, social care and [criminal justice](#) sectors, in order to support and protect some of the most vulnerable members of society."

Victim Support Chief Executive Javed Khan said: "It is nothing short of a national scandal that some of the most vulnerable people in our society become victims of crime so often and yet when they seek help they are

met with disbelief or even blame. It is unacceptable that the criminal justice system fails to meet the needs of people with mental health problems when this report shows all too clearly the terrible impact of crime on them. There must be an urgent debate across Government, commissioners, criminal justice agencies and the voluntary and public sectors on how best to begin a swift and effective process of reform. We look forward to making a key contribution to this debate."

Mind's Chief Executive Paul Farmer said: "Being a victim of crime is a horrible experience for anyone to cope with but when you have a mental health problem the impact on your life can be even worse. People with mental [health problems](#) have an equal right to justice, yet this report reveals that this is not the reality for far too many of us. It is unacceptable that the police, healthcare staff and others who are supposed to support victims of crime may be dismissive of or not believe a person's experience, or may even blame them for the crime. We are calling on the police, commissioners, healthcare staff, support agencies, local and national government to work together and improve services for people with [mental health](#) problems who are the [victims](#) of [crime](#)."

The full report is titled 'At risk, yet dismissed: the criminal victimisation of people with [mental health problems](#).'

**More information:** [www.victimsupport.org.uk/atriskyetdismissed](http://www.victimsupport.org.uk/atriskyetdismissed)

Provided by King's College London

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