

# More vulnerable male adults are victims of forced marriage than previously thought

March 9 2018, by Charlotte Anscombe

---



Credit: University of Nottingham

A higher number of men with learning disabilities are victims of forced marriage than previously thought, suggesting that better education and training is needed to recognise those at risk.

This was just one of the findings of the new study – 'My Marriage, My Choice' which shows that there appears to have been a reversal in trends related to gender, with more cases of men with learning [disabilities](#) now being reported than those of women.

The two-year study, which looked at forced [marriage](#) among adults with learning disabilities, aims to improve understanding of the issue, as well as helping to develop policy and practice to support professionals in their work of safeguarding [vulnerable children](#) and adults.

The study is the first of its kind which has collated the views of all

stakeholder groups involved and that has subsequently produced training materials to improve policy and practice as a result. This has included the production of the first ever film on the topic and practice guidance on assessing capacity to consent.

## **Year-on-year rise in reported cases**

The research is led by Rachael Clawson at the University of Nottingham's School of Sociology and Social Policy in collaboration with a team from the University of Kent, the charity RESPOND and the Ann Craft Trust.

As part of their work, the research team worked in partnership with the Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) to study statistics collected between 2009 and 2015 to better understand forced marriage in the population of people with learning disabilities.

The areas of the UK identified by the FMU as having the highest incidence of reported cases were; London & the South East; the West Midlands; the North West and Yorkshire and Humberside. Interviews and focus groups were carried out with four key stakeholder groups in each of these areas.

According to the FMU, there has been a year-on-year rise in the number of people with learning disabilities being reported who may be at risk or have been the subject of forced marriage. A law introduced in 2014 makes this kind of marriage illegal and so not only are people with learning disabilities at risk of being married when they know little about marriage and what it involves, but families and other people around them are at risk of getting into trouble with the law if they encourage loved ones to enter into such marriages.

## **Lack of education around the law**

The findings from the study found that there is a blurred line for many families about what was considered an arranged or forced marriage. When carers were questioned, some were aware of the law but many were not.

Rachael Clawson, the lead researcher on the study, said: "The laws on forced marriage and the importance of establishing capacity to consent needs better publicity and [family](#) carers need more opportunities to learn about the laws. There is clearly a lack of knowledge across all stakeholder groups about the subject which needs addressing."

The results of the study also show that for many families of vulnerable adults, their motivations for considering marriage for their son or daughter were impacted by concerns about their future care.

"A lot of families are worried about who will care for their loved one once they are no longer able, and this really affects their decisions about marriage. Families need to understand that whilst they think they may be doing the best for their child, they cannot make decisions on their behalf, and that there is support out there for them."

As a result of the study the team has produced a film aimed at people with learning disabilities and their families which raises awareness of the issue, a case study document to highlight findings from the research and a practice guidance toolkit for assessing capacity to consent to marriage.

Provided by University of Nottingham

Citation: More vulnerable male adults are victims of forced marriage than previously thought (2018, March 9) retrieved 23 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2018-03-vulnerable-male->

[adults-victims-marriage.html](#)

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.