

Study calls for legal reform on 'hidden crime' few male victims will talk about

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A call for a change in the law to class men, forced to have sex with

women, as rape victims has been made in a new study by Lancaster University researchers published today.

Men have added their voices to a ground-breaking study—the first of its kind to interview men in the UK—which examines their experience of non-consensual sex with women (known as 'forced to penetrate' cases or FTP).

The term 'forced-to-penetrate' has been coined for these cases because, while they involve non-consensual sex, they do not fall under the offence of rape.

The majority of participants interviewed in the study labelled their forced to penetrate (FTP) experiences as rape, even though this is not reflected in current UK laws.

Reform of sexual offences legislation was important to participants to ensure male survivors' experiences were appropriately acknowledged and labelled.

The study, funded by the British Academy, also found:

- Men were often repeatedly victimised with, for example, repeated instances of being FTP the same/different women, childhood sexual abuse, and varying types of sexual violence.
- Victims most frequently reported the crime was committed by their female partner or ex-partner and their FTP experiences were one element of domestic abuse or post separation abuse
- The fear of not being believed, and feelings of guilt and self-blame were identified as key barriers to men disclosing they had been forced to have sex with women
- Men forced to have sex with women were likely to experience significant mental health issues, including depression, anxiety,

and suicidal thoughts, and often took several years to disclose their experiences to anyone or to seek help and support

- The majority of participants in the research did not report the crime to the police and, of those who did, most had negative experiences
- Participants had 'overwhelmingly negative perceptions' of the police, criminal justice system, and the law

The in-depth study, which breaks the silence around men being sexually violated by women has been published by a research team led by Dr. Siobhan Weare, of Lancaster University Law School, in partnership with Survivors Manchester.

The study 'Experiences of men forced-to-penetrate women in the UK: Context, consequences and engagement with the criminal justice system' focused on the experiences of 30 men who took part in in-depth interviews and shared their stories.

The study builds on research already undertaken in this area by Dr. Weare who, in 2016, conducted an online survey around forced-to-penetrate cases which was completed by more than 150 men.

The study calls for:

- Legal reform
- The introduction of a national strategy to end intimate violence against men and boys. Currently this is only a footnote in a national strategy focused on women and girls
- Clearer recognition of men's experiences of sexual violence perpetrated by [women](#) with properly signposted [support services](#) and specialist training for police officers, social workers, therapists, and counsellors.

"These new findings have provided a far greater insight and understanding about this 'hidden crime'," said Dr. Weare.

"These men were incredibly brave sharing their stories. By 'breaking their silence', we hope that the findings from this research study can help to shape policy and practice in this area.

"This is a hugely under-discussed issue and so services must make sure that their staff are trained appropriately to support male survivors. We must also make sure that this issue is adequately and accurately addressed in national policies and law.

"That is why we are calling for law reform in this area and the introduction of a national 'Ending Intimate Violence Against Men and Boys' strategy."

Examples of FTP circumstances might include:

- A man waking up to find a woman having sex with him without his consent.
- A man being forced to have non-consensual sex with a woman as a result of her blackmailing him.
- A man having non-consensual sex with a woman after being physically, emotionally, or financially threatened.

Dr. Weare launched her research findings today at a knowledge exchange event attended by academics and practitioners, including Third Sector service providers, NHS and other health professionals and the Crown Prosecution Service.

Provided by Lancaster University

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