

MALE VICTIMS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

In the U.S., about 10% of all victims are male. One in six boys experience sexual abuse before they are 18.

The term sexual assault refers to a number of different crimes, ranging from unwanted sexual touching to forced penetration. As with any sexual victimization, the offender is ALWAYS totally responsible for the abuse.

Concerns male survivors may experience:

Safety - Often, perpetrators use force or threats to prevent a survivor from seeking help.

Privacy - Sexual assault is a very personal crime. Many survivors do not wish to share what happened to them publicly and fear that disclosing or reporting the attack may require them to talk publicly about their assault.

Self-blame - Male survivors may blame themselves for the assault, believing they were not 'strong enough to fight off the perpetrator. Many are confused by the fact that they became physically aroused during the attack, despite the assault or abuse they endured. However, these normal and common physiological responses DO NOT in any way imply that the victim 'wanted' or 'liked' the assault.

Possible effects of sexual assault on a male survivor

Psychological

- Sense of self and concept of "reality" are disrupted.
- Profound anxiety, depression, fearfulness.
- Concern about sexual orientation.
- Development of phobias related to the assault setting.
- Fear of the worst happening and having a sense of a shortened future.
- Withdrawal from interpersonal contact and a heightened sense of alienation.
- Stress-induced reactions (problems sleeping, increased startle response, being unable to relax).
- Psychological outcomes can be severe for men because men are socialized to believe that they are immune to sexual assault and because societal reactions to these assaults can be more isolating.

Heterosexual Male Survivors

- May experience a fear that the assault will make them gay.
- May feel that they are "less of a man."

Homosexual Male Survivors

- May feel the crime is “punishment” for their sexual orientation.
- May worry that the assault affected their sexual orientation.
- May fear they were targeted because they are gay. This fear may lead to withdrawal from the community.
- May develop self-loathing related to their sexual orientation.

Relationships / Intimacy

- Relationships may be disrupted by the assault.
- Relationships may be disrupted by others’ reactions to the assault, such as a lack of belief/support.
- Relationships may be disrupted by the survivor’s reaction to or coping with the assault.

Emotional

- Anger about the assault, leading to outward- and inward-focused hostility.
- Avoidance of emotions or emotional situations, stemming from the overwhelming feelings that come with surviving a sexual assault.

If you, or someone you know, is experiencing any of the thoughts or feelings listed above, please contact Day One or the helpline- 1-800-494-8100 to speak with a trained staffer.

This information was adapted from materials provided by RAINN, www.rainn.org.