

FACTS ABOUT MENTAL ILLNESS AND VIOLENCE

1. An estimated 26.2 percent of Americans ages 18 and older — about one in four adults — suffer from a diagnosable mental disorder in a given year and about 6 percent, or 1 in 17 —suffer from a serious and disabling mental illness.

(Kessler RC, Chiu WT, Demler O, Walters EE. Prevalence, severity, and comorbidity of twelve-month DSM-IV disorders in the National Comorbidity Survey Replication (NCS-R). *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 2005 Jun;62(6):617-27)

2. The vast majority of people with mental illness are not violent. Here is what researchers say about the link between mental illness and violence:

- "The absolute risk of violence among the mentally ill as a group is very small. . . only a small proportion of the violence in our society can be attributed to persons who are mentally ill (Mulvey, 1994)."

- "...the vast majority of people who are violent do not suffer from mental illnesses (American Psychiatric Association, 1994)."

- "People with psychiatric disabilities are far more likely to be victims than perpetrators of violent crime (Appleby, et al., 2001). People with severe mental illnesses, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder or psychosis, are 2 ½ times more likely to be attacked, raped or mugged than the general population (Hiday, et al.,1999)."

3. Inaccurate beliefs about mental illness and violence lead to widespread stigma and discrimination:

The discrimination and stigma associated with mental illnesses stem in part, from the link between mental illness and violence in the minds of the general public (DHHS, 1999, Corrigan, et al., 2002).

The effects of stigma and discrimination are profound. The President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health found that,

“Stigma leads others to avoid living, socializing, or working with, renting to, or employing people with mental disorders - especially severe disorders, such as schizophrenia. It leads to low self-esteem, isolation, and hopelessness. It deters the public from seeking and wanting to pay for care. Responding to stigma, people with mental health problems internalize public attitudes and become so embarrassed or ashamed that they often conceal symptoms and fail to seek treatment (New Freedom Commission, 2003).”

4. More than one quarter of persons with SMI had been victims of a violent crime in the past year, a rate more than 11 times higher than the general population rates even after controlling for demographic differences between the 2 samples ($P<.001$). (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1389236/>)

5 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 being the victim of a 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.**

<http://phys.org/news/2013-10-people-mental-health-problems-high.html>