



Men and Sexual Abuse

The CARE Office is dedicated to understanding the unique challenges our survivors face and hope to provide confidential services for all members of the UC Merced community. The reality is that men and boys experience interpersonal violence at rates higher than reported. Our goal is to support all survivors regardless of how they identify.

Some men may never have spoken about their experience before or even acknowledged it. Men who are reaching out for help for the first time may be very nervous or defensive about asking for help, unsure of what to expect, or ambivalent about moving forward. Men and boys who have been sexually assaulted or abused may also face some additional challenges because of societal attitudes and stereotypes about men and masculinity. Socialized as boys to hide and deny emotions such as fear, sadness and depression - men often fall back on ineffective coping mechanisms that can lead to addictions, risky physical activities, anger management issues, suicide, and violence against themselves or others.

Research has found that 1 in 6 men have experienced unwanted or abusive sexual experiences before the age of 18. The commonly reported number of 16% of males experiencing abuse is grossly underestimated because males who have such experiences are less likely to disclose them than females. Simply stated, male sexual abuse is common, under-reported, under-recognized, and under-treated.

<https://1in6.org/>

Sexual Assault and College Aged Men

Oftentimes we highlight the number of female sexual abuse survivors while in college. However, men experience sexual violence at alarming rates as well. Most recent estimates show that 1 in 16 men are sexually assaulted while in college and that 1 in 71 men will experience rape in their lifetime. The male experience is often under-reported and under-treated.

<http://www.nsvrc.org/>

Common Reactions

Men and boys who have been sexually assaulted may experience the same effects of sexual assault as other survivors, and they may face other challenges that are more unique to their experience. Men who were sexually abused as boys or teens may respond differently than men who were sexually assaulted as an adult.

Reactions and experiences commonly shared by men and boys that are survivors of sexual assault include:

- Anxiety, depression, fearfulness, or post-traumatic stress disorder
- Concerns or questions about sexual orientation
- Sense of blame or shame over not being able to stop the assault or abuse, especially if they experienced an erection or ejaculation
- Feeling on-edge, being unable to relax, and having difficulty sleeping
- Feeling like "less of a man" or that they no longer have control over your own body
- Avoiding people or places that are related to the assault or abuse
- Fear of the worst happening and having a sense of a shortened future
- Withdrawal from relationships or friendships and an increased sense of isolation

Who are the perpetrators of sexual assault against men and boys?

- Perpetrators can be any gender identity, sexual orientation, or age, and they can have any relationship to the victim. Like all perpetrators, they might use physical force or psychological/emotional coercion tactics.

How does being assaulted affect sexual orientation?

- Sexual assault is in no way related to the sexual orientation of the perpetrator or the survivor, and a person's sexual orientation cannot be caused by sexual abuse or assault. Some men and boys have questions about their sexuality after surviving an assault or abuse—and that's understandable. This can be especially true if you experienced an erection or ejaculation during the assault. Physiological responses like an erection are involuntary, meaning they have no control over them.
- Sometimes perpetrators, especially adults who sexually abuse boys, will use these physiological responses to maintain secrecy by using phrases such as, "You know you liked it." In no way does an erection invite unwanted sexual activity, and ejaculation in no way condones an assault.

<https://www.rainn.org/articles/sexual-assault-men-and-boys>