

Violence and Disability

The factors that make persons with disabilities more susceptible to abuse are often the very same factors that cause a person to refrain from reporting violence.

These factors include:

- *Dependence upon a caregiver;
- *Lack of access to support services;
- *Mobility/cognitive/communication impairments;
- *Social assumptions.

(Abuse of People with Disabilities, 2000)

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All women, men, and children with disabilities can be victims of violence and abuse. Research has shown, however, that women and children are particularly vulnerable to violence and abuse.

Violence against Women with Disabilities

Evidence shows that women with disabilities, especially those with intellectual disabilities, are more subject to violence than other women.

It is estimated that 83% of women with disabilities will be sexually violated in their lifetime. Approximately only 20% of cases of sexual violence perpetrated against women with disabilities are ever reported to the police, community service agencies, or other authorities.

Depending on whether they live in an institution or community setting, women with disabilities are 1.5 to 10 times more likely than women without disabilities to experience violence or abuse.

For women with disabilities, the violence may be perpetrated by an intimate partner or spouse, a family member or support giver (e.g. health care service provider, doctor, nurse, and residential staff or attendant).

Violence against Children with Disabilities

Research indicates that children with disabilities are 1.7 times more likely to experience violence than children without disabilities. Children with intellectual disabilities are 3.8 times more likely to experience physical and emotional violence, and 4 times more likely to be sexually violated.

Barriers to Reporting Abuse

People with disabilities experience many challenges to reporting violence and abuse. Some challenges include, but are not limited to:

- *Inability to identify or recognize the experience as violence or abuse;
- *Physical inability to call police;
- *Fear of being sent to an institution if violence or abuse is reported.

Government of Nova Scotia. (2000). *Abuse of People with Disabilities*. Halifax, Nova Scotia: Government of Nova Scotia.

Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. (2004). *Advancing the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities*. Ottawa, ON: Government of Canada.

National Clearinghouse on Family Violence. (2008). *Violence against Women with Disabilities*. Ottawa, ON: Public Health Agency of Canada.