

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES BETWEEN ADULT MALE & FEMALE SURVIVORS OF CHILDHOOD SEXUAL ABUSE

Reported incidents of sexual abuse are greater for females than for males (although the actual rate of sexual abuse may be more gender neutral than is reflected in the reporting data).

Reported incidents of sexual abuse of males more often involve a male perpetrator (although recent research suggests that female offenders are more common than is reflected in reporting data).

Males are most commonly sexually victimized by someone who is familiar to them but who is outside the immediate family constellation – e.g., coach, mentor, clergy, babysitter, extended relative, friend of a parent or sibling, etc.

Perpetrators of male sexual abuse are often younger than perpetrators of female sexual abuse.

Males are less likely than females to disclose incidents of sexual abuse.

Males are less likely to identify as a “victim” or to acknowledge that an incident of sexual abuse was harmful to them. (Heterosexually-identified males who were abused by an older female or homosexually-identified males who were abused by an older male frequently report that they experienced the abuse more positive than female victims of sexual abuse.)

Males are more inclined than females to internalize responsibility for their sexual abuse; upon disclosure of abuse, males are more frequently scrutinized for their potential responsibility in their victimization.

Males are less likely than females to seek assistance for their sexual abuse; care-givers, partners, and/or family members are more likely to minimize the impact of victimization when a male is not voluntarily receptive to treatment interventions.

Males who have been sexually abused are more likely to have sought mental health services than the general population of males; male survivors more commonly seek mental health services for generalized psychological, physical, and behavioral symptoms rather than specifically for their sexual abuse. (Females more frequently seek treatment for sexual abuse as a primary presenting issue.)

Males have a greater propensity than females to externalize their reactions to sexual abuse, including heightened aggression, sexual promiscuity, and hyper-masculinity. (Females have a greater tendency to internalize their reaction to sexual abuse and to suffer from depression.) Males more frequently than females report a desire to hurt others and they pose a greater risk for assaultive or victimizing behaviors towards others; females are more vulnerable to being re-victimized.

Males are more likely than females to have sexual fantasies about children and to desire to engage in sexual activities with children or adolescents.

Male survivors (whether victimized by a male or a female) more predictably struggle with residual questions about sexual identity and sexual preference than female survivors.

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