

# Understanding the Relationships of Childhood Sexual and Physical Violence (CSPV) and Subsequent Adult Sequelae among Persons with HIV Disease in British Columbia

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## Background

Sexual violence in childhood has been linked with increased HIV vulnerability in adult life. Little is known about whether childhood *physical* violence relates to such risk.

## Objective

To determine whether CSPV is associated with injection drug use, sex trade work, and institutional experience in adult life among HIV-positive male members of BCPWA.

## Methods

Between May and September 2002, a total of 561 men completed self-administered questionnaires. Data collected include demographic variables, social identity, CSPV (before age 17), injection drug use, sex trade work, and institutional experience. Participants were classified into one of four mutually exclusive categories of experience with childhood violence (no violence, physical abuse only, sexual abuse only, both sexual and physical abuse). We calculated odds ratios (95% CI) for adult sequelae of interest for each of these categories of childhood violence (CV) relative to men who did not experience violence.

## Results

Mean age of respondents was 45 years (range: 21-79). Most men were born in Canada (82%), and Caucasian (86%). Respondents resided in BC for a median duration of 22 years. With respect to sexual identity, 40% of men identified themselves as gay, 36% as homosexual, and 12% as straight. Overall, 76 (14%) men did not experience any CV, 206 (37%) experienced physical abuse, 31 (6%) experienced sexual abuse, and 248 (44%) experienced both. Men who reported *both* sexual and physical violence in childhood were 4.1 times more likely to report injection drug use (95% CI: 2.0, 8.3), 4.4 times more likely to report involvement in the sex trade (95% CI: 2.5, 7.9), and 4.6 times more likely to report adult experience in institutions (95% CI: 2.4, 9.0).

**Table 1: Demographic characteristics of 561 HIV-positive men who completed BCPWA Survey #5**

Variable	n (%)
Born in Canada	
Yes	460 (82)
No	81 (14)
Not reported	20 (4)
Ethnicity	
Caucasian	485 (86)
Aboriginal	35 (6)
Other	41 (7)
Education – Completed Grade 12?	
Yes	431 (77)
No	129 (23)
Not reported	1 (<1)
Employed	
Yes	122 (22)
No	422 (75)
Not reported	17 (3)
Household Income	
< \$10,000	110 (20)
\$10,000-\$50,000	294 (52)
> \$50,000	92 (16)
Not reported	65 (12)

**Table 1 continued: Demographics**

Variable	n (%)
Type of Housing	
Apartment	268 (48)
Single detached house	116 (21)
Condominium	95 (17)
Townhouse	25 (4)
Hotel room	15 (3)
Prison	6 (1)
Rooming house	6 (1)
Recovery house	2 (<1)
Not reported	28 (5)
Age	<b>Years</b>
Mean	45
Standard deviation	8.6
25 <sup>th</sup> percentile	39
Median	44
75 <sup>th</sup> percentile	51
Range	21 to 79

**Table 2: Sexual identity, childhood sexual/physical violence, and adult sequelae reported by 561 HIV-positive men who completed BCPWA survey**

Variable	n (%)
Sexual Identity	
Gay	227 (40)
Homosexual	200 (36)
Straight/Heterosexual	65 (12)
Bisexual	19 (3)
I hide my identity	11 (2)
Queer	12 (2)
Fag	4 (<1)
Other	5 (<1)
Not reported	18 (3)
Physical/Sexual abuse before the age of 17	
None	76 (14)
Physical abuse only	206 (37)
Sexual abuse only	31 (5)
Both physical and sexual abuse	248 (44)
Unprotected sex with anonymous partner(s)	119 (21)
Injection Drug Use	129 (23)
Involvement in sex trade	203 (36)
Institutional experience (includes any of the following: jail, prison, detox and recovery centres, training school, halfway house, residential schools, psychiatric wards)	171 (30)

**Table 3: Association between childhood sexual and physical abuse and adult sequelae**

	Injection Drug Use	Sex Trade Work	Institution
No abuse (referent category)	1.00	1.00	1.00
Physical abuse only	1.2 [0.5, 2.6]	1.0 [0.5, 1.9]	2.3 [1.1, 4.7]
Sexual abuse only	1.1 [0.3, 3.9]	1.8 [0.7, 4.5]	1.6 [0.5, 4.8]
Both physical and sexual abuse	4.1 [2.0, 8.3]	4.4 [2.5, 7.9]	4.6 [2.4, 9.0]

## Conclusions

Health care interventionists need to acknowledge the ramifications of child victimization in later life and its inherent social costs.