

# The health effects of sexual violence: Does age of exposure matter?

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## Objective:

- To compare the negative health effects of sexual violence on a range of health outcomes throughout life through age-stratified and age-agnostic Burden of Proof analyses.

## Methods:

- Systematic review:
  - Peer-reviewed literature indexed in seven databases
  - 54 years of studies (1970-2024)
  - Cohort and case control studies with eligible exposure and outcome definitions
- Burden of Proof meta-analysis:
  - Quantifies the magnitude of the health risk
  - Evaluates the strength of the underlying data

## Recommendations:

- Regardless of age, exposure to sexual violence significantly increases the risk of all six outcomes, including negative physical, mental, and reproductive health outcomes.
- The mean relative risk is higher among adults only for three health outcomes, but the overall state of increased risk is consistent across all ages.
- There is a need for a more integrated approach to addressing, funding, and researching violence against women and children.
- Most urgently, we must move towards supporting the health needs of survivors without classifying their needs based on age of exposure.

