



FOR MALE SURVIVORS

MALE SURVIVORS AT STÍGAMÓT

- Men comprise 10-20% of the survivors who seek help at Stígamót annually.
- Over half of the male survivors who visit Stígamót were sexually abused as children.
- A larger ratio of men, compared to women, experience anger as an after-effect of sexual violence. In addition, more men, compared to women, mention alcohol, drug abuse and pornography consumption as having a negative impact on their quality of life.
- Men often seek help years or even decades after the abuse has taken place.

PERPETRATORS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE CAN BE:

Friends; Colleagues; Caregivers; Spouses; Class and school mates; Coaches; Parents; Siblings; Relatives; Strangers; Family friends; Acquaintances; Teachers; Neighbors.

THE PERPETRATOR IS ALWAYS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND NEVER THE SURVIVOR.

“I am so tired of myself, I am so closed off and inaccessible, and I think my wife is giving up on me, because amongst other things I no longer have any interest in having sex.”

- Helgi, 41 years old.

WHAT IS SEXUAL VIOLENCE?

When someone is forced or coerced into a sexual activity, against their will and without their consent, it is called sexual violence or abuse.

Sexual violence can take many different forms. Some of them are:

- Rape
- Incest and sexual abuse of children
- Sexual harassment
- Pornography
- Online/digital sexual abuse
- Harassment
- Violence in close relationships (including marriage)
- Prostitution
- Human trafficking
- Institutional violence through personal services

MEN ARE MOST LIKELY TO BE ABUSED BY:

Male perpetrators	85%
Female perpetrators	9%
Male and Female perpetrators	6%

(Stígamót's annual reports 2011-13)

“I was so ashamed about this, so much that I was convinced that I did not belong at Stígamót. For some reason I thought that male survivors of sexual violence were not welcome.”

- Magnús, 28 years old.



COMMON REACTIONS TO SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Sexual violence is a traumatic event and people react to it in different ways. A wide spectrum of reactions are considered normal and there are no right or wrong ways to react. For instance, it is normal to freeze, to do things to minimize harm, to fight back or try to flee. It is normal to feel powerless when one loses control, or one feels that all power has been taken away from them. It can be normal not to remember anything, or not recall what happened exactly. It is normal not to tell anyone, or not to report the incident.

“When I tried to report the violence, they did not think much of it and I was told that men could not rape other men.”

- Alex, 34 years old.

“After I sought help, it was like a heavy load was lifted off me. I was able to talk about my experience and come to terms with feelings that I had been living with for years.”

- David, 39 years old.



CONSEQUENCES OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE/ ABUSE

Sexual violence can have various consequences and they vary from one person to the next.

Low Self-Esteem: Feeling ashamed, dirty, powerless, unworthy and unintelligent.

Addictions/obsessions: Uncontrollable consumption of alcohol, drugs, sex or food. Excessive shopping, gambling, exercising or overworking to lessen difficult feelings and/or memories.

Sexual Difficulties: Fear of sex, numbness or flashbacks during sex, lack of boundaries and excessive, compulsive or damaging sexual actions.

Relationship and Communication Problems: Difficulties in maintaining relationships, including friendships, relationships with co-workers and romantic relationships.

Depression: Being emotionally closed off. Internalizing problems. Not being able to enjoy activities that have previously been enjoyable and nurturing. Feeling hopeless about the future.

Anxiety: Frequent feelings of anxiety, experiencing panic attacks and fears related to the violence, e.g. in certain locations, situations, among people or atmosphere.

Isolation: Avoiding friends and/or family members. Difficulties in trusting other people.

Physical Symptoms: Persistent physical pain such as headaches, stomach aches, exhaustion and low energy.

“Suddenly, after many years, and after I went to Stígamót for help, I started to cherish that little boy, who survived.”

- Gunnar 53 years old.

ACCORDING TO DOMINANT CULTURAL NORMS, MEN ARE SUPPOSED TO:

... be in control of all aspects of their lives, so if and when a man is sexually abused/violated, he should be able to stop the perpetrator.

... be willing to engage in sex at any time, any place and with almost anyone. Anything less is a sign of an impaired masculinity and a lack of libido.

... be able to handle trauma without needing to seek help.

Many men blame themselves for not being able to resist the perpetrator and the violence/abuse, like 'real' men are supposed to in every situation.

Main reasons for male survivors not seeking help are the feelings of shame and guilt, as well as the self-accusations they experience. All of these are common for survivors of sexual violence. These feelings are maintained through social misconceptions about masculinities on the one hand, and sexual violence on the other.

“I wasn’t able to share how I felt, who would believe me if I said that a woman raped me?”

- Sigurður, 19 years old.



“When I was sexually abused, I felt like I should just be grateful, because I was convinced that no one would want to sleep with a disabled man like me.”

- Geir, 21 years old.

MYTHS ABOUT MALE SURVIVORS

Boys and men cannot be sexually abused. **WRONG.**

Men cannot sexually abuse other men. **WRONG.**

In most cases boys are sexually abused by homosexual men. **WRONG.**

If men experience arousal or an orgasm during the sexual abuse, then they are willing participants who enjoyed the act. **WRONG.**

Boys who are sexually abused by a man become homosexual. **WRONG.**

Those who have been sexually abused will become abusers themselves. **WRONG.**

If the sexual abuse is committed by a female perpetrator, the boy or man should consider himself lucky. **WRONG.**

THE TRUTH IS: Men can be subjected to sexual violence, both as children and as adults. The consequences can be very harmful and can negatively affect their quality of life.

IMPROVED WELL BEING

It is possible to work through the after-effects of sexual violence with the help of a counselor or through participation in a self-help group. People who have sought help report numerous positive changes:

- They no longer feel like a victim but a person who survived.
- They are able to think about the incident without losing control of their emotions.
- They no longer place the blame and shame within themselves.
- They are no longer re-traumatized by the memories of the incident (such as uninvited nightmares and flashbacks).
- They experience less fear, anxiety, depression or feelings of isolation.
- They experience less sexual difficulties.
- They no longer see themselves as damaged, but instead tap into their inner strength and value as an individual.
- They experience self-confidence and respect, instead of self-doubt and self-accusations.
- They experience improved, nurturing and sincere relationships with loved ones, friends and colleagues.



Supported provided by:
Forvarnarsjóður Reykjavíkurborgar

**STÍGAMÓT IS A SELF-HELP
CENTER FOR MEN AND WOMEN
WHO ARE SURVIVORS OF SEXUAL
VIOLENCE AND WANT TO
IMPROVE THEIR QUALITY OF LIFE.**

**OUR EXPERIENCE SHOWS THAT
SURVIVORS WHO ATTEND AT
LEAST FOUR COUNSELING
SESSIONS OR MORE, REPORT
INCREASED SELF ESTEEM, AND
LESS FEELINGS OF DEPRESSION,
ANXIETY AND STRESS.**

**GETTING HELP IS A CRUCIAL
STEP ON THE PATH TO
RECOVERY.**

Stígamót provides:
Private counseling sessions
Phone counseling sessions
Self-help groups
Anonymous online chat

All Services are Free.

Full Confidentiality.

To make an appointment:

Tel. 562 6868

Email: stigamot@stigamot.is

**Counseling sessions with male or
female counselors available.**

**Further information and online chat
available on: www.stigamot.is**