

Many of the barriers to care experienced by men are similar to those previously discussed in relation to other survivors of sexual violence, though may be experienced slightly differently. Some particular examples of barriers to care for men are described below. Remember that these are generalized and likely to vary from context to context. If and how they are experienced will depend upon specific cultural and social norms and survivor characteristics, such as ethnicity, religion, socio-economic status and sexual orientation.

**Traditional masculine norms do not promote help-seeking.** Traditional norms of masculinity that pressure men to always be strong, in control, independent and not express emotions make it less likely for them to seek help, even when they have experienced a stressful event.

**Feelings of shame and fear of stigma.** Related to the masculine norms discussed above, male survivors may experience strong feelings of shame and may fear being stigmatized for what has happened to them. This is particularly the case if the masculine norms in their environment suggest that men must be powerful and sexually dominant.

**Concerns and fears about sexuality.** A common myth in some settings is that male survivors of sexual violence perpetrated by men are gay or will become gay. There is no evidence to suggest that an experience of sexual violence influences sexual orientation. However, if this myth is commonly believed, and if homophobia is prevalent in a community, male survivors may not seek help because they are grappling with these questions themselves and/or fear the reactions of others. This can be a particularly significant barrier to help seeking in societies where homosexuality is criminalized.

**Fear of not being believed.** Due to traditional masculine social norms, male survivors may fear that they will not be believed if they tell someone about what they experienced.

**Risk of substance abuse.** Using alcohol or other drugs as a way to manage or numb emotions may be even more common among male survivors as a result of norms that discourage men from acknowledging and expressing emotion.