

ASSIST TRAUMA
CARE

ASSIST TRAINING

Why do some people get PTSD while others don't?

An increasing amount of research is now taking place regarding PTSD epidemiology, but many questions still remain unanswered.

The only British study to date is related to disaster survivors, as highlighted by the Disasters Working Party Report commissioned by the Home Office in 1991. Results of this study showed that following a major disaster:

40-70%	experience distress in the first month
20-40%	experience distress after the first year
15-20%	experience chronic levels of anxiety which remain high for longer than 2 years (Raphael, 1986, cited HMSO, 1991)

Other studies, mainly conducted in the USA, have looked at the prevalence of PTSD according to the type of traumatic event, and have produced the following figures:

Shipwreck survivors	75%
Bomb survivors	50%
Hijack survivors	37%
Burn injuries	30-40%
Combat veterans	22-50%
Sexual assault	24%
Assault	23%
Rape survivors	21%
Experience of sudden unexpected death of a loved one	14%
Child's life threatening illness	10%

Occupational related PTSD

Police	12-14%
Ambulance service	18%
Fire-fighters	14%

Davidson JRT et al (1991) *Post Traumatic Stress Disorder in the Community, an epidemiological study: Psychological Medicine*, 21. Helzer, JE et al (1987) Post Traumatic Stress Disorder in the General Population, *New England Journal of Medicine*, 317

Risk factors identified included:

Childhood trauma (sexual assault, parental split before the age of 10)
Adverse life events prior to trauma
Prior psychological disorder
Family history of psychiatric illness

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