Experience of physical violence and mental health among young men and women: a population-based study in Sweden

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Background
In Sweden mental ill-health has increased among the young, especially among young women. Our aim was to investigate the association between experience of physical violence during the past year and self-rated psychological health among young men and women.

Methods
The study population consisted of men (n = 2,624) and women (n = 3,569) aged 18–34 years who participated in the 2008 public health survey study in Skåne. The survey was a cross-sectional random sample postal questionnaire study with a 54.1% participation rate. Associations were investigated by logistic regression models.

Results
The prevalence of poor psychological health was 18.9% among men and 27.7% among women. One in ten men and one in twenty women had experienced physical violence during the past year. Most men were violated in public places, while women were most often violated at home. Women who had experienced violence during the past year showed more than doubled odds of poor psychological health, odds ratio (OR):
2.66 (95% confidence interval (CI): 2.00, 3.53). Such an association could not be seen in men OR: 1.12 (95% CI: 0.85, 1.47). Adjustment for covariates (i.e. age, country of birth, socioeconomic status, economic stress, alcohol risk consumption, emotional support, instrumental support and generalized trust in other people) did not change the association found among women.

**Conclusion**

Violated women, but not men, showed nearly doubled odds of poor psychological health after multiple adjustments. There was also a gender difference regarding location of violence. Awareness of gender differences regarding context and mental impact of violence may assist public health workers in reducing the consequences of violence and to design preventive strategies.

**Key messages**

- Violated women, but not men, showed nearly doubled odds of poor psychological health after multiple adjustments.
- There was also a gender difference regarding location of violence.