

may experience rage or anger, impotence, grave concern for their partner, inability to communicate with their partner about her experience and theirs, chemical use and abuse, risk-taking behaviors, and grieving and sadness, among other reactions.<sup>7</sup> As in other areas of life, teens may be most vulnerable: In Britain, teenager Leon Boulton hanged himself weeks after discovering his ex-girlfriend had had an abortion. Wanting to keep the baby, Boulton felt “gutted” upon finding out that his girlfriend decided to have an abortion after tests revealed the possibility of an ectopic pregnancy.<sup>8</sup>

**7 Men and women are equally pro-life:** The mainstream media often portray “abortion rights” as a men-versus-women issue, with men supposedly trying to suppress women by denying them abortion. Yet polls consistently show that men and women favor and disfavor abortion in approximately equal proportions, independent of a pro-life or pro-choice bias of the polling institution. From a 2012–2013 report of The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 53 percent of men and 55 percent of women say that abortion should be legal in either all or most cases.<sup>9</sup>

**8 Resources for post-abortive men are now available:** Resources for men, often ignored in the past, have increased exponentially in the past few years. For more information, visit [www.FatherhoodForever.org](http://www.FatherhoodForever.org) and [www.MenAndAbortion.info](http://www.MenAndAbortion.info).

#### Notes

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# MEN AND ABORTION

*Men can also suffer spiritually and mentally following a partner's abortion.*



# Men and Abortion

**1 Men suffer in the aftermath of abortion as well as women:** Though not nearly as much research has been done on abortion's effects on men as on women, considerable evidence shows that abortion often negatively affects men's mental health and that a large proportion of men regret their partner's abortion later on. A March 1989 poll published in the *Los Angeles Times* found that two-thirds of men surveyed who were the fathers of aborted children felt guilt, one-third feeling regret.<sup>1</sup>

**2 Pro-choice sociologist finds 1 in 20 who go to the clinic severely affected:** In "Abortion Clinics and Waiting Room Men: Sociological Insights," Arthur B. Shostak, Emeritus Professor of Sociology at Drexel University and the first social scientist to publish a study on the effects of abortion on men, wrote together with two co-authors, "While one would not know this from media and social science neglect, about 600,000 men (male partners in ill-timed and unwanted pregnancies) accompanied a client to her abortion appointment last year (about half of all abortion-seeking women generally have a man sitting by in the clinic or doctor's waiting room)."<sup>2</sup> He told Adam Voiland in a *U.S. News* interview, "I would say that 90 percent of men consider the day of an abortion to be one of the most stressful of their lives," yet about 5 percent will suffer from mental scarring as a result of their partners' abortions.<sup>3</sup> He has not studied the one-half of men who do not accompany their

## Ninety percent of men consider the day of an abortion to be one of the most stressful of their lives; 5 percent will suffer from mental scarring.

partners for their abortions and who also may be distressed by abortion.

**3 The proportion may be much higher:** Shostak does not have data on the possible long-term debilitating effects of post-abortive trauma. But he and his co-authors report, "Our attention as applied sociologists was quickly drawn to a finding first noted in 1983-4, namely, four out of five of the 1,000 males deemed the abortion experience one of the most difficult of their lives." Asked to describe their emotions at the time of the abortion, 24 percent chose "guilty."

**4 Anecdotal evidence supports post-abortive trauma for men:** A burgeoning "lost fatherhood" movement has become involved in pro-life activism, with post-abortive men carrying signs at the annual March for Life proclaiming "I Regret Lost Fatherhood." "Men don't like to admit they have a problem, but there are a lot of guys out there who are really hurting," explained Bruce Mulligan, a hospital administrator from Minnesota who struggles with the emotional impact of the abortion of an unplanned pregnancy he and his wife decided to undergo 37 years ago.<sup>3</sup> Dr. Vincent Rue, a psychologist who has long experience with abortion's effects on men, spoke at a "Reclaiming Fatherhood" conference. He wrote in

an article called "The Effects of Abortion on Men," "[M]en do grieve following abortion, but they are more likely to deny their grief or internalize their feelings of loss rather than openly express them. . . . A guilt-ridden, tormented male does not easily love or accept love. His preoccupation with his partner, his denial of himself and his relentless feelings of post-abortion emptiness can nullify even the best of intentions."<sup>4</sup>

**5 Men undergo physiological changes during their partners' pregnancies:** The post-abortive trauma of many men may lie



*A guilt-ridden, tormented male does not easily love or accept love.*

not only in psychological factors, but in physiological ones as men's bodies prepare for the births of their children, births that never occur. In "The Making of a Modern Dad," published in the March-April 2002 edition of *Psychology Today*, Douglas Carlton Abrams wrote, "[R]esearch shows that men go through significant hormonal changes alongside their pregnant partners, changes most likely initiated by their partner's pregnancy and ones that even cause some men to experience pregnancy-like symptoms such as nausea and weight gain. It seems increasingly clear that just as nature prepares women to be committed moms, it prepares men to be devoted dads. . . . There may be actual physiological signals exchanged between partners in close contact, such as the transmission of pheromones."<sup>5</sup> Abrams said that two studies reported that about "90 percent of men develop at least one pregnancy-related symptom" when living with a pregnant partner, possible because "hormone changes in expectant fathers therefore the same hormones that are changing in an expectant mother."<sup>6</sup>

**6 Just like women, different men respond very differently to abortion:** According to the coordinators of the "Reclaiming Fatherhood" conferences, men