

# PREVALENCE, CORRELATES, AND CONSEQUENCES OF NON-CONSENSUAL CONDOM REMOVAL (STEALTHING) IN A REPRESENTATIVE SAMPLE OF ADULTS: THE THIRD AUSTRALIAN STUDY OF HEALTH AND RELATIONSHIPS

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## Background:

Non-consensual condom removal (stealthing) is a form of sexual assault that has recently been criminalized across Australia as part of broader consent reforms. We provide the first population-based estimates of the prevalence, correlates, and consequences of stealthing among a representative sample of Australian adults.

## Methods:

Data were drawn from the Third Australian Study of Health and Relationships, a nationally representative survey of 12,833 adults aged 16–69 years. Stealthing was assessed in the main survey using the questions: Has anyone ever taken a condom off during sex, without your consent? Has this happened in the last 12 months? A follow-up survey of 7,025 participants collected more detailed information on the most recent experience.

## Results:

The prevalence of ever experiencing stealthing was 6.6% (95%CI:6.0-7.2); among these, 9.1% reported an incident in the past year. Stealthing was more prevalent among women (PRR:1.93;95%CI:1.58-2.35) and non-binary individuals (4.19;2.50-7.03), people not in a relationship (3.52;2.77-4.46), those aged 20-29 years vs 40-49 years (1.77;1.38-2.27), those with disability (2.35;1.96–2.82), participants identifying as homosexual (2.41;1.69-3.43) or bisexual (3.51;2.82-4.36), and those experiencing unstable housing (2.32;1.40-3.86), financial insecurity (1.98;1.61-2.45), recent sex work (6.18;3.47-11.00), recent injecting drug use (4.18;3.00-5.82), recent imprisonment (8.52;5.39-13.48), psychological distress (3.01;2.45-3.70) and fair/poor self-rated health (1.82;1.49-2.22). For the most recent experience, most perpetrators were cisgender men (76.5%) and casual partners (57.6%). During the encounter, 23.1% of perpetrators and 21.8% of study participants

were drunk or high. The most common consequences were distress (42.7%), lost trust (30.0%), shame (25.9%), use of emergency contraception (20.8%), trouble sleeping (18.6%), fear of sex (16.3%), and a pregnancy (9.1%) or STI (5.0%). Only 19.3% reported seeking help.

**Conclusions:**

The high prevalence of stealthing, its emotional, sexual, and reproductive consequences, and low levels of help seeking, highlight a need for improved prevention, consent education, and clinical responses following recent legal reforms.

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