

Sexual Violence in the LGBTQIA+ Community

Sexual violence affects every demographic and every community – including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), lesbian, gay and bisexual people experience sexual violence at similar or higher rates than heterosexuals. The National Coalition of Anti-Violence Projects (NCAVP) estimates that nearly one in ten LGBTQ survivors of intimate partner violence (IPV) has experienced sexual assault from those partners₁.

Sexual Assault and Stalking

- The 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey found that 47% of transgender people are sexually assaulted at some point in their lifetime₁.
- 44% of lesbians and 61% of bisexual women experience rape, physical violence, or stalking by an intimate partner₁.
- 26% of gay men and 37% of bisexual men experience rape, physical violence, or stalking by an intimate partner₁.
- 46% of bisexual women have been raped, and 22% of bisexual women have been raped by an intimate partner₁.
- Within the LGBTQ community, transgender people and bisexual women face the most alarming rates of sexual violence. Among both of these populations, sexual violence begins early, often during childhood₁.
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Dating/Domestic Violence

There is limited research on relationships within the LGBTQIA+ community. Most data gathered within the community has been focused on same-sex relationships.

The majority of gay and lesbian families are happy, healthy, and well-functioning, similar to that of healthy heterosexual families. Domestic violence in same-sex families does occur, however. Studies have found that domestic violence occurs among same-sex couples at comparable rates to straight couples:

- One out of four to one out of three same-sex relationships has experienced domestic violence₁.
- Both straight and gay victims of domestic violence experience a similar pattern of abuse, albeit with some notable distinctions₁.

Straight and same-sex domestic violence share many common characteristics, but domestic violence in same-sex relationships is distinctive in many ways from domestic violence in heterosexual relationships:

Gay or lesbian abusers may threaten “outing” their victims to work colleagues, family, and friends. This threat is amplified by the sense of extreme isolation among gay and lesbian victims since some are still closeted from friends and family, have fewer civil rights protections, and lack access to the legal system. Lesbian and gay victims may be more reluctant to report abuse to legal authorities. Survivors may not contact law enforcement agencies because doing so would force them to reveal their sexual orientation or gender identity₂.

Gay and lesbian victims may also be reluctant to seek help out of fear of showing a lack of solidarity among the gay and lesbian community. Similarly, many gay men and women hide their abuse out of a heightened fear that society will perceive same-sex relationships as inherently dysfunctional₂.

Abusers can threaten to take away the children from the victim. In some states, adoption laws do not allow same-sex parents to adopt each other’s children. This can leave the victim with no legal rights should the couple separate. The abuser can easily use the children as leverage to prevent the victim from leaving or seeking help. Even when the victim is the legally recognized parent an abuser may threaten to out the victim to social workers hostile to gays and lesbians, which may result in a loss of custody. In the worst cases the children can even end up in the custody of the abuser₂.

Resources and Further Information

The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance at Rutgers Camden offers individual counseling to victim/survivors of sexual violence that is free and confidential. Our counseling services seek to provide you with the opportunity to talk about your feelings, fears, questions, and options moving forward. We will not try to “make you” do anything. We will not try and make you leave the relationship, press criminal charges or get a restraining order. What we will do is give you the opportunity to explore all of your options and help you make informed decisions. It is up to you. We wish to support you while you make these difficult choices. If you are interested in counseling, please call our office at (856) 225-2326 to make an appointment.

The Human Rights Campaign lists LGBTQ-friendly resources on their website, which are also listed below:

[Let's Talk About It: A Transgender Survivor's Guide to Accessing Therapy](#)

National Sexual Assault Hotline – can also refer you to a local rape crisis center

1-800-656-HOPE (4673) 24/7 or

Online Counseling at <https://ohl.rainn.org/online/>

Love is Respect Hotline

1-866-331-99474 (24/7) or Text “loveis” 22522

[The Anti-Violence Project](#)– serves people who are LGBTQ

Hotline 212-714-1124 Bilingual 24/7

GLBT National Help Center
Hotline 1800-246-PRIDE (1-800-246-7743) or
Online Chat at <http://www.volunteerlogin.org/chat/>

Gay Men's Domestic Violence Project Hotline
1-800-832-1901

[FORGE](#)– serves transgender and gender nonconforming survivors of domestic and sexual violence;
provides referrals to local counselors

[The Network La Red](#)– serves LGBTQ, poly, and kink/BDSM survivors of abuse; bilingual
Hotline - 617-742-4911

[Northwest Network](#)– serves LGBT survivors of abuse; can provide local referrals
Hotline– 206-568-7777

References

[1] Center for American Progress. (2011). Domestic Violence in the LGBT Community: A Fact Sheet.

[2] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2010). NISVS: An overview of 2010 findings on victimization by sexual orientation.