

# LGBTQ

## Violence in Communities of Color WOCN, Inc. FAQ Collection

The mission of the Women of Color Network (WOCN Inc.) is to eliminate violence against ALL women and their communities by centralizing the voices and promoting the leadership of women of color across the Sovereign Nations, the United States and U.S. Territories.

## Violence in LGBTQ Communities of Color

### Identities and Sexualities

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer communities (LGBTQ) are diverse and multifaceted, and are varied within their experiences and risks for violence. Some identities are at greater risk for certain types of violence than others. There are challenges unique to LGBTQ communities that decrease access to services<sup>1</sup> and these challenges often result in LGBTQ individuals experiencing intimate partner violence (IPV) without assistance, and quite frequently IPV goes unreported.<sup>2</sup>



The Women of Color Network, Inc.

# LGBTQ Communities

## Black and Latino trans people

maybe reluctant to contact to the police because they are likely to be physically or sexually assaulted in prison.<sup>4</sup> Nearly half of all Black/African/African American transgender people, 47 percent, have been incarcerated at some point. Like most oppressed communities, Law Enforcement cannot be the first line of response or defense. According to the 2014 Report on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and HIV-Affected Hate Violence:

- Transgender people were 3.32 times as likely to experience police violence compared to non- transgender people.<sup>5</sup>
- Transgender people of color were 2.46 times as likely to experience physical violence by the police compared to white non-transgender people.
- Transgender women were 2.90 times as likely to experience police violence compared to overall people reporting violence.
- Transgender women were 2.71 times as likely to experience physical violence by the police compared to overall people reporting violence.



- **Lifetime prevalence of rape: Lesbian 13.1% and bisexual 46.1%**
- **Lifetime prevalence of rape, physical violence and/or stalking was 43.8% Lesbian and 61.1% bisexual women**
- **Lifetime prevalence of severe physical violence was 29.4% and 49.3% bisexual women**
- **More than one-half of bisexual women (57.4%) and one-third of lesbians (33.5%) who experienced rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner in their lifetime reported at least one negative impact**
- **2014 Report on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and HIV-Affected Hate Violence**

## Trans people may be more reluctant

to contact the police because they fear being assaulted and/or murdered by police more than inmates. Once incarcerated Trans people have no access to hormones. Nearly half of all Black/African/African American transgender people — 47 percent — have been incarcerated at some point. For info on trans people of other racial backgrounds visit: <http://www.thetaskforce.org/category/reports-studies/>



Domestic violence in LGBTQ relationship can involve various types of abuse including physical, emotional, sexual and economic abuse. In addition, batterers may use additional forms of abuse and tactics to exert their power and control over the victim. Abusers' tactics of coercion and intimidation for LGBTQ partners may include<sup>6</sup>:

- Economic abuse, which can include limiting access to money/resources, interfering with school or work, causing the survivor to lose their job through harassment, (including outing to employers and colleagues), damaging credit and identity theft
- Intimidation, which can include threats of violence, threats to hurt loved ones, and threats to out the survivors LGBTQ identity, HIV status, mental health issues, drug or alcohol use or other stigmatized identities or behaviors
- Isolation, which can include creating rifts between the survivor and their support system, cutting off access to that support system, posing as the abused partner to prevent the survivor from accessing the limited resources available and/or tracking the survivor through service providers
- Physical abuse, which can include hitting, slapping, punching, kicking, pushing, and withholding food, medication or medical care
- Privilege tactics, which can include incorporating biased language and slurs regarding the survivor's various identities into verbal abuse, utilizing institutions that may be oppressive to LGBTQ survivors like the court and child welfare systems, exposing the survivor to hate violence and/or outing the survivor as outlined above
- Psychological/emotional abuse, which can include making the survivor think they are "crazy", blaming the survivor for the abuse, denying or minimizing the abuse, withholding psychotropic medication the survivor may be using, and/or limiting access to treatment

- Restricting freedom such as dictating what groups or organizations the survivor can be in, what the survivor can read or know about, what movies the survivor can see, and where the survivor can go
- Sexual abuse, which can include forced or non-consensual sex and verbal sexual abuse.
- The presence of HIV/AIDS may create another dynamic to perpetuate abuse where the perpetrator may threaten or actually disclose the illness, not dissimilar to “outing” of sexual orientation or gender identity<sup>7</sup>
- HIV/AIDS medication can be withheld, or the perpetrator may threaten to withhold their medication as blackmail, prevent medical treatment and/or use any financial vulnerability as described in economic abuse above<sup>8</sup>
- Verbal abuse, which can include insults, demeaning language, slurs and vicious personal attacks
- Forced coercion into gender roles
- Cruelty to animals or children

LGBTQ survivors experiencing intimate partner violence may be reluctant to report abuse or to seek services due to concerns of homo/bi/trans-phobic responses (negative feelings, behaviors or attitudes based on sexual orientation or gender expression)<sup>9</sup>. This reluctance may be compounded by any existing negative histories of law enforcement, courts, hospitals or shelters. Under these circumstances, many LGBTQ survivors are less likely to turn to these institutions for help for fear of being re-victimized or discriminated against. The lack of LGBTQ specific shelters, a failure by mainstream shelter workers to screen either the victim or perpetrator appropriately, and/or common references to a woman's the as a “man” before the gender of the abusive partner is disclosed are additional reasons for the lack of access to services. As a result, LGBTQ victims may not identify their experience as domestic violence and/or may believe that services are unresponsive to their needs. Survivors who do report their victimization may risk ostracism by members of LGBTQ communities for seeking help.






## Statistics...

- 12.2% of abusive partners used heterosexist and anti-LGBTQ oppression as a method to have power over and control their partners, while 6.3% of abusive partners used anti-transgender IPV<sup>10</sup>
- LGBTQ people under 30 were 1.59 times as likely to experience physical violence as all other age groups<sup>11</sup>
- LGBTQ people of color were nearly 4 times as likely to experience physical violence<sup>12</sup>
- Although greatly under-reported there were 2,679 Domestic/Intimate Partner Violence reports for LGBTQ survivors in 2011<sup>13</sup>
- Over a third of the survivors in the United States were youth, between the ages of 19 to 29 (40.3%), reflecting an increase from 2011 numbers; survivors aged 60 and older only accounted for 1.6% of total survivors, a decrease from 2011<sup>14</sup>
- Transgender people of color were four times as likely to experience police violence<sup>15</sup>
- Undocumented immigrants were 2.31 times as likely to experience physical violence<sup>16</sup>

## Myths...

There are myths about domestic violence and sexual assault that continue to impact help seeking for LGBT communities. (Myths adapted from © 1998 R.S. Nickel, Training Materials, from Fenway Community Health Center and from the NYC Gay and Lesbian Anti-Violence project).<sup>17</sup>

- Men aren't victims, they can defend themselves
  - Men are supposed to be aggressive
  - Women don't really hurt each other, it's only a "cat fight"
  - Women don't batter
  - It's not DV, it's mutual abuse
  - Abuse in same-sex relationships is different from LGBTQ
- 



- LGBTQ individuals have enough support, they have a lot of friends and community support in LGBTQ clubs and gyms
- LGBTQ openly identify as LGBTQ
- You can always recognize an abuser
- LGBTQ abuse is really just Sadism & Masochism (The practice of using pain as a sexual stimulant).<sup>18</sup>
- Lesbians cannot rape each other

From Elle Hearn at Get Equal...

- Trans women are not women
- Trans women ask to be assaulted
- Trans women must have hyper feminine presentation
- Trans women must conform to the binary and have a surgical procedure
- Black Trans women are not capable of leading their anti-violence movement
- All gay and trans people of color have AIDS or HIV

(LGBTQ) people, like other marginalized groups, often experience barriers in accessing mainstream organizations. Barriers for LGBTQ people can include homophobic and heterosexist attitudes among service providers and a general lack of knowledge and skills in working with LGBTQ clients. It is not a simple matter of physically entering a building, going to reception and requesting service. Accessing services is a complex interplay of many factors, including age, race, culture, ability, socio-economic background, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, past experiences accessing mainstream organizations and more.<sup>19</sup>

Many mainstream, heterosexual-based organizations have limited capacity to provide culturally relevant services that acknowledge the lived experiences and cultural identities of LGBTQ people. It is not unusual for agencies to rely on an LGBTQ staff person to be the service provider for LGBTQ persons. There are several drawbacks to this approach. The LGBTQ staff person may end up with an increased and unmanageable workload without being officially recognized or compensated by management for this unique skills set. If this LGBTQ staff person should leave, the organization is left with even less or no capacity to serve LGBTQ clients appropriately.

Another drawback is that LGBTQ communities can be small, and a client might know the service provider through shared networks. In this case, a help seeker may not be comfortable or trustful seeing someone they know and may have added concerns about confidentiality.<sup>20</sup>

# Communities of Color



LGBTQ survivors of color experience barriers associated with heterosexism, domestic violence and racism. Survivors of color may be reluctant to report their abuse because of the pervasiveness of racial stereotypes (e.g. the perception that a partner of color in a interracial relationship is likely to be the abuser). If the batterer is a person of color the survivor may also fear the police or criminal justice system will treat them more harshly. Further, the survivor may encounter racism within the LGBTQ community and will have to choose which community to identify with (e.g. either Asian Pacific Islander community or LGBTQ community), which may impact which services the survivor can or feels comfortable accessing.

There are some specific social contexts LGBTQ survivors of color may experience, such as pressure to participate in master/slave scenarios that they may not agree to, exploitation of the victimized partner's internalized racism, using the partner's reluctance to involve police with knowledge of the history of police brutality against communities of color to discourage them from seeking help. Where applicable, some perpetrators may use their white or light skin privilege to leverage abuse against their partner.<sup>21</sup> Other issues work together to create barriers to accessing services for LGBTQ survivors of color. Their families may not be accepting of non-heterosexual, gender expression or lifestyle. There can be significant difficulty in navigating provider systems, particularly those that are either predominately white or are within communities of color but are intolerant of persons who identify as LGBTQ. This coupled with possible physical and emotional displacement from community and family support systems may create further isolation. Faith communities often lend assistance or support to intimate partner violence- a lack of support for faith communities can create a devastating effect.

Domestic violence in LGBTQ communities compound layers of marginalization within each racial group and cultural lifestyle. Cultural uniqueness may recreate further barriers to mainstream support of LGBTQ advocacy and intervention services within American Indian/Alaskan Native Villager, Asian/Pacific Islander, Black/African American/Caribbean Islander, Middle-Eastern, and Hispanic/Latino community. LGBTQ survivors of color, as an underrepresented group, need specialized advocacy to address the triple barriers that come with race, sexual orientation and abuse.<sup>22</sup> One component of intimate partner violence in LGBTQ communities is economic abuse as described earlier. Economic security is an area of concern; the abuser can out their partner or threaten their confidence at work if employers do not have policies inclusive to LGBTQ populations.

# Economic Barriers

Economic barriers for LGBTQ in communities of color already exist outside of the issue of abuse. For example, in one study Black/African/African American female same-sex households reported a median income of \$18,000 less than their white female counterparts; Black/African/African American male same-sex households reported a median income of \$20,000 less than white male same-sex couples.<sup>23</sup> A study analyzing census data for Latino/a same-sex households in Florida— where the largest population of Latino/a same-sex households is concentrated— showed that the male and female same-sex households in which both partners are Latino/a earn far less than their white same-sex counterparts. Latino households earn approximately \$23,000 less than white households.<sup>24</sup> Same-sex Latino households earn and far less, \$17,500 per year.<sup>26</sup> In another study, household income of less than \$25,000 a year was more common among Asian same-sex partners than among non-Asian gay and lesbian partners, reaching 17% in New York and Los Angeles.<sup>1</sup> An additional study showed that same-sex households were 1.3% of the unmarried partners reported by American Indians and Alaska Native peoples, out of a total indigenous population of 2.5 million. Their overall poverty rate was calculated at 25.7%.<sup>27</sup>

Poverty presents another challenge for many LGBTQ people of color who experience low-income. Low-income LGBTQ people of color are particularly marginalized and vulnerable within both the LGBTQ community and the broader society.<sup>28</sup> They face multiple oppressions and a range of issues including the erosion of public benefits and the dismantling of welfare; lack of affordable housing and homelessness; employment discrimination; immigration restrictions; labor issues and workers' rights; violence; incarceration and involvement with the criminal justice system; and environmental racism.<sup>29</sup>

Trans people of color face pervasive anti-transgender bias compounded by structural racism with Black/African/African Americans at the top of the list. Trans people of color experience poverty, attempted suicide, housing, education and employment discrimination at much higher rates than the general population.<sup>30</sup> LGBTQ individuals in communities of color may also experience challenges in faith communities. Some in those churches have been unwelcoming to people with a different sexual orientation or gender identity.<sup>31</sup> Some faiths still have theological philosophies that impede upon freedom of sexuality, gender or other variances that may be deemed “immoral”.



# Conclusion

The LGBTQ community is marginalized in many ways. The similarities of heterosexual intimate partner violence such as economic abuse, physical abuse, emotional and verbal abuse exist. However, LGBTQ communities have many layers of barriers that limit access to support. Simply seeking help for LGBTQ communities is often an uphill battle, and many programs are not equipped to meet their needs. can reveal these barriers. With more research, understanding and acceptance there can be more prevention, education and outreach. The goal for programs is to adopt LGBTQ supportive approaches. Domestic violence programs must be respectful of diverse family structures including families with recognized and unrecognized legal marital status, immigration status, extended non-traditional family structures, and survivors who are isolated from traditional forms of family support.<sup>32</sup>



# Resources

## LGBTQ Specific Resources

*Culturally Competent Service Provision to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Survivors of Sexual Violence.* National Resource Center on Domestic Violence. (2009). Available at <http://www.vawnet.org>

*Open Minds Open Doors: Transforming Domestic Violence Programs to Include LGBTQ Survivors.* The Network La Red. (2010). Available at <http://thenetworklared.org>

*Injustice at Every Turn.* A report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey. Available at [http://www.thetaskforce.org/static\\_html/downloads/reports/reports/ntds\\_full.pdf](http://www.thetaskforce.org/static_html/downloads/reports/reports/ntds_full.pdf)

*Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Domestic/Intimate Partner Violence in the United States in 2009.* (2009). Available at <http://www.vawnet.org>

# Resources

## LGBTQ Organizations

allgo: a Texas statewide organization for queer people of color

1 Tillery Street

Austin, TX 78702

(512) 472-2001

email: [allgo@allgo.org](mailto:allgo@allgo.org)

<http://www.allgo.org>

Serving the needs of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, & Transgender People of Color, our Friends and Families

245 Lark Street

Albany, NY 12210

(518) 432-4188

email: <mailto:info@inourownvoices.org>

National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs

The New York City Anti-Violence Project

240 West 35th Street, Suite 200, New York, NY 10001

212.714.1141

email: [webmaster@avp.org](mailto:webmaster@avp.org)

<http://www.avp.org>

The Northwest Network on Bi, Trans, Lesbian and Gay Survivors of Abuse

P.O. Box 18436 Seattle, WA 98118

1(206)568-7777

<http://nwnetwork.org>

# Resources

The Network/La Red  
P.O. Box 6011 Boston, MA 02114  
1(617)742-4911  
<http://tnlr.org>

Asian & Pacific Islander Institute on Domestic Violence  
450 Sutter Street, Suite 600 San Francisco, CA 94108  
Phone: 415.568.3315 Fax: 415.954.9999  
Email: [info@apiidv.org](mailto:info@apiidv.org)  
<http://www.apiidv.org>

Casa de Esperanza  
P.O. Box 40115 St. Paul, MN 55104  
Phone: 651. 646. 5553  
Fax: 651-772-1611  
<http://www.casadeesperanza.org>

Institute of Domestic Violence in the African American Community (IDVAAC)  
290 Peters Hall  
1404 Gortner Avenue  
St. Paul, MN 55108-6142  
Phone: 612-624-5357 or 1-877-NIDVAAC  
Fax: 612-624-9201  
Email: [info@idvaac.org](mailto:info@idvaac.org)  
<http://www.dvinstitute.org>

Manavi  
National Organization Addressing Violence in South Asian Communities  
P.O. Box 3103 New Brunswick, NJ 08903  
Phone: (732) 435-1414  
Fax: (732) 435-1411  
E-mail: [manavi@manavi.org](mailto:manavi@manavi.org)  
<http://www.manavi.org>

# Resources

## National Indigenous Women's Resource Center (Native American/Alaskan Villager)

515 Lame Deer Ave.

PO Box 99 Lame Deer, MT 59043

Phone: (406)477-3896 or (855)649-7299

<http://www.niwrc.org>

## National Immigrant Women's Advocacy Project

P.O. Box 341455

West Bethesda, Maryland 20827

Phone: 202-274-4457

<http://www.niwap.org>

## SCESA

The National Organization of Sister of Color Ending Sexual Assault

PO Box 625 Canton, CT 06019

Phone: 1-860-693-2031

<http://sisterslead.org>

## The New York City Anti-Violence Project (LGBTQ)

240 West 35th Street, Suite 200, New York, NY 10001

Phone: 212.714.1184 | TTY: 212.714.1134 | 24-hour Hotline: 212.714.1141

Email: [webmaster@avp.org](mailto:webmaster@avp.org)

<http://www.avp.org>

## Northwest Network (LGBTQ)

P.O. Box 18436, Seattle, WA 98118

Phone: (206) 568-7777 | TTY message: (206) 517-9670

Fax: (206) 325-2601

Email: [info@nwnetwork.org](mailto:info@nwnetwork.org)

<http://nwnetwork.org>

## Vera Institute (Disabilities)

1100 First St NE, Suite 950 Washington, DC 20002

Telephone: (202) 465-8900

Fax: (202) 408-1972

<http://www.vera.org>



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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> The Task Force. Injustice at every turn: A look at Black respondents in the National Transgender Discrimination Survey. Retrieved on January 25, 2015 from [http://www.thetaskforce.org/static\\_html/downloads/reports/reports/ntds\\_black\\_respondents\\_2.pdf](http://www.thetaskforce.org/static_html/downloads/reports/reports/ntds_black_respondents_2.pdf)

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<sup>7</sup> National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs' 2012 Report on Intimate Partner Violence in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and HIV-Affected Communities in the United States. (2013). Retrieved on January 8, 2014 from [http://avp.org/storage/documents/ncavp\\_2012\\_ipvreport.final.pdf](http://avp.org/storage/documents/ncavp_2012_ipvreport.final.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Center for American Progress. (2011). Domestic Violence in the LGBT Community. Retrieved on February 6, 2014 from <http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/lgbt/news/2011/06/14/9850/domestic-violence-in-the-lgbt-community/>

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs' 2012 Report on Intimate Partner Violence in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and HIV-Affected Communities in the United States. (2013). Retrieved on January 8, 2014 from [http://avp.org/storage/documents/ncavp\\_2012\\_ipvreport.final.pdf](http://avp.org/storage/documents/ncavp_2012_ipvreport.final.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Sanctuary for Families. Domestic Violence and the LGBTQ Community. (2012). Retrieved on January 27, 2014 from [http://www.sanctuaryforfamilies.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=52&Itemid=81](http://www.sanctuaryforfamilies.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=52&Itemid=81)

<sup>18</sup> Thomas, T. (2012). S&M Dominates in the Bedroom. The Linfield University Review. Retrieved on February 6, 2014 from <http://www.linfield.edu/linfield-review/2012/10/s-m-dominates-in-bedroom/>

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<http://www.census.gov/prod/2003pubs/censr-5.pdf>

<sup>28</sup> “Out for Change: Racial and Economic Justice Issues in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Communities,” (2005). Retrieved on January 8, 2014 from <http://www.lgbtracialequity.org/publications/LGBT-REJ.pdf>

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> [http://www.thetaskforce.org/static\\_html/downloads/reports/reports/ntds\\_full.pdf](http://www.thetaskforce.org/static_html/downloads/reports/reports/ntds_full.pdf)

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<sup>32</sup> L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center STOP Partner Abuse Domestic Violence Program. (2011). Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Intimate Partner Violence. Retrieved on February 6, 2014 from [http://laglc.convio.net/site/DocServer/Cal\\_Report\\_2011\\_FINAL.pdf?docID=14322](http://laglc.convio.net/site/DocServer/Cal_Report_2011_FINAL.pdf?docID=14322)



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