



Sexual Assault and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Communities

Sexual assault can happen to anyone regardless of their race, class, age, appearance, or sexual orientation. Lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and transgender people are subject to the same spectrum of sexual assault as the general population. In fact, according to many statistics, they are subject to more. Approximately ten percent of hate crimes against gay men and lesbians include sexual assault (Comstock, Violence Against Lesbians and Gay Men, 1991). This percentage may be higher, since it is sometimes difficult for individuals to discern whether they were attacked because of being identified as a member of a LGBT community or as an individual. **Sexual assault is not defined by the gender of the offender or the victim: anyone is capable of assaulting a person of any gender.**

Some Frequently Asked Questions:

Is same sex assault motivated by homosexual attraction?

Heterosexual attraction and/or homosexual attraction are not the key issues when trying to understand what motivates offenders. Sexual assault is predominantly an act of violence, and is committed for similar reasons as other types of assault. Offenders may be acting out of the desire to control, humiliate or harm the victim. Victims are often chosen because of their perceived vulnerability rather than how sexually appealing they are to the offender. If someone is a victim of same sex sexual violence, it does not necessarily mean they are LGBT.

Are LGBT people more likely to be perpetrators of sexual violence than heterosexuals?

No. As part of the oppression that LGBT people have faced for their sexual orientation and/or gender identification, their sexual activities have sometimes been criminalized. In some areas of the U.S., they still are. Legally speaking, this may put sexually active LGBT people in violation of the sex codes, but it does not make them perpetrators of sexual violence. (*Groth AN, Men Who Rape. Plenum Press, NY, 1979.*)

How and why are LGBT people more likely to be victims/survivors of sexual assault?

Homophobia in our culture puts LGBT people at greater risk for sexual assault. It is common for perpetrators to use sexual violence as a way to punish and humiliate someone for being LGBT, and/or for sexual assault to be one type of violence that occurs during an anti-LGBT battering. A common example of this, is when individuals who think they can "change" a person's sexual orientation, specifically target lesbians and bisexual women for sexual assault.

Do LGBT people face the same danger from acquaintance, date and partner rape as heterosexuals?

Yes. According to research, LGBT people are at approximately the same risk as heterosexuals of being sexually assaulted by someone they know.

Fifty-two percent of participants in a study of sexual coercion in Gay/Lesbian relationships reported at least one incident of sexual assault/coercion.

Gay men reported 1.6 incidents on average; in comparison the 1.2 incidents reported by lesbians. (*Waldner-Haugrud, Lisa K., and Vaden Gratch, Linda. (1997). Sexual Coercion in Gay/Lesbian Relationships Descriptives and Gender Differences. Violence and Victims, 12 (1), 87-98.*)

LGBT people are more likely to be victims of domestic violence (including sexual assault) than of anti-LGBT violence. (*National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, 1992.*)