

MEDIA RELEASE



National Advocacy
for Local LGBTQH Communities

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CDC RELEASES INTIMATE PARTNER AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE DATA FOR LESBIAN, GAY AND BISEXUAL PEOPLE DEMONSTRATING SIMILAR OR HIGHER RATES OF PREVALENCE TO HETEROSEXUAL PEOPLE

STATEMENT FROM THE NATIONAL COALITION OF ANTI-VIOLENCE PROGRAMS

Today, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS) 2010 data on intimate partner and sexual violence among lesbian, gay and bisexual people in a report entitled [2010 Findings on Victimization by Sexual Orientation](#). This data follows the NISVS 2010 Summary Report released in December 2011, which found that sexual violence, stalking, and intimate partner violence are widespread and a major public health problem in the United States. NISVS, developed by CDC's Injury Center, was initiated in 2010 to collect accurate and reliable incidence and prevalence estimates for intimate partner violence, sexual violence, dating violence, and stalking victimization.

Today's report on Sexual Orientation is the **first nationally representative prevalence estimates of sexual violence, stalking, and intimate partner violence among those who identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual** in the United States. The report shows that lesbian, gay and bisexual people experience intimate partner and sexual violence at the **same or higher rates** as heterosexual people.

This report, which cites data from the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP), highlights the **lifetime prevalence of intimate partner violence, sexual violence, and stalking victimization** for U.S. women and men by self-reported sexual orientation. As a result of this data, the CDC's recommendations include a focus on the need for more research, prevention and response to lesbian, gay and bisexual survivors of violence.

"This report is historic in that for the first time the federal government is measuring the prevalence of intimate partner and sexual violence experienced by lesbian, gay and bisexual communities and found that the prevalence was similar to, and in some cases higher than, heterosexual communities," said Sharon Stapel, Executive Director of the New York City Anti-Violence Project. "The report is a good step forward but is limited in scope as it omits data on transgender and gender non-conforming people. In its recommendations for more services, research and prevention for lesbian, gay and bisexual people, the CDC focused on the need to explicitly include transgender and gender non-conforming people in future studies."

Highlights from the report include:

- Lesbian, gay and bisexual people experience intimate partner and sexual violence at the **same or higher rates** as heterosexual people.
- **Bisexual women experienced violence at overall higher rates.** This suggests that research specifically addressing bisexual people, biphobia and how violence and biphobia intersect is necessary.
- Bisexual women and gay men reported intimate partner violence **perpetrators** as primarily male while lesbians and bisexual men reported intimate partner violence perpetrators as primarily female.

- **Transgender and gender non-conforming people were not represented** in the Report because the sample size was too small and based on self-reporting. This suggests there needs for explicit inclusion of gender identity and expression in future Reports.

Despite experiencing violence at the same or higher rates as heterosexual communities, lesbian, gay and bisexual survivors often face unique barriers to receiving services. For example, LGBT victims are denied critical services that can address the violence. A 2011 study found that 61.6% percent of LGBT victims were turned away when they sought help from a domestic violence shelter, 54% did not call the police, and while fewer than 3% of survivors sought orders of protection, 78% of those who did received them.¹ As well, many service providers lack cultural competency to address the unique issues of LGBT victims. For example, a 2010 study found that 94% of victim services providers and law enforcement agencies lack services specific to the needs of LGBT victims. Specialized services are particularly important for this population because reporting rates and prosecution rates are very low.²

“Our country’s response to this violence must explicitly include LGBT people to allow these survivors to get the services and support they need. This includes national legislation, funding priorities, research and studies and policy advocacy,” said Terra Slavin, DV Lead Staff Attorney, Legal Services at the L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center. “This study also shows the critical need for the implementation of non-discrimination provisions that explicitly include sexual orientation and gender identity at each level of government, including federal agencies. This special report underscores that programs need to be ready to serve all communities and individuals by providing responsive and specialized services and supports to LGBT survivors of violence and to include LGBT communities in all prevention programming.”

According to the CDC’s report, “These findings underscore the broad range of violence experienced by LGB individuals in the United States and reiterate the important need for immediate, but thoughtful, actions to prevent and respond to the violence occurring within LGB populations. A more comprehensive plan for violence prevention that includes LGB individuals is needed to address issues that include effective prevention efforts focused on intimate partner violence, sexual violence, and stalking. In addition, the inclusion of LGB persons in national violence research will assist in furthering a more comprehensive understanding of intimate partner violence, sexual violence, and stalking.”

As with any initial data set, this data will be able to be improved. We still need to learn how to best ask questions about sexual orientation and gender identity, to distinguish between different types of identities (e.g., men who have sex with men and gay men), and to address the rate of underreporting by LGBT people, among other barriers, to make more clear the data limitations and ways to correct them. It is imperative, in the next year’s data, that transgender and gender non-conforming people are included so that responses to this violence are appropriately tailored to the specific experiences of all LGBT people and specific services and support are created to address obstacles created by transphobia. NCAVP will continue to work with the CDC and our allies and partners to assure that future data measures the experiences of all LGBT people in the United States.

¹ National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP), *Intimate Partner Violence in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and HIV-Affected (LGBTQH) Communities in the United States in 2011*. Released October 10, 2012. Retrieved from: <http://www.avp.org/documents/2012ReleaseIPVREPORTFinal.pdf>.

² National Center for Victims of Crime and NCAVP: *Why It Matters: Rethinking Victim Assistance for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Victims of Hate Violence & Intimate Partner Violence* (2010), retrieved from: <http://www.avp.org/documents/WhyItMatters.pdf>.