New York City Alliance Against Sexual Assault

Violence Against the LGBTQI Community

Statistics

The following statistics are from the Gay, Lesbian, & Straight Education Network's (GLSEN) 2015 National School Climate Survey (Joseph G. Kosciw, Emily A. Greytak, Noreen M. Giga, Christian Villenas, David J. Danischewski, 2015), the Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault (2015), and the Center for Disease Control's 2010 National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey:

- Close to 9 in 10 LGBT students were harassed in school.
- Nearly three quarters of students reported being verbally harassed at school because of their sexual orientation; more than half were verbally harassed because of their gender expression.
- About 1 in 6 students reported being physically assaulted at school in the past year, primarily because of their sexual orientation, gender expression, or gender.
- Over half of students [LGBT-identified] reported being sexually harassed at school in the past year.
- 1 in 10 transgender individuals have been assaulted in a healthcare setting.
- More studies reveal that approximately 50% of transgender people experience sexual violence at some point in their lifetime.
- 40% of gay men and 47% of bisexual men have experienced sexual violence other than rape, compared to 21% of heterosexual men.
- 44% of lesbians and 61% of bisexual women experience rape, physical violence, or stalking by an intimate partner, compared to 35% of heterosexual women.
- 46% of bisexual women have been raped, compared to 17% of heterosexual women and 13% of lesbians.

Overview

Victimization of the LGBTQ community includes harassment, vandalism, robbery, assault, rape and murder, with the added component of the crimes being committed specifically because the victim identifies within the queer community. Whether within an urban environment, such as New York City or San Francisco, or a rural landscape, violence against this community

can happen anytime, anywhere. Violence occurs everywhere: in schools, the workplace, public places and in the home.

The Societal Context & Background

The lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, and intersex community (LGBTQI, colloquially the 'queer community' for the remainder of this fact sheet) has faced violence and disrespect within our society for generations. From facing persecution by Nazi Germany in World War II to fighting for basic civil rights, primarily sparked by the Stonewall Riots of New York City starting in 1969, the queer community has had their share of violence. It should be noted, of course, that prior to World War II, the queer community still faced intense resistance to say the least, and homosexuality was classified as a mental health disorder until 1973. Queer rights are varied around the world, but for the purposes of this paper, we will be focusing primarily on Western beliefs and attitudes and, specifically, violence within the queer community within the United States.

According to a study done by the New York Times (2016), they found that the queer community (LGBT only within the report) experiences the highest amounts of hate crimes than any other minority tracked for hate crimes. The study also claims that "L.G.B.T. people are twice as likely to be targeted [for hate crimes] as African-Americans, and the rate of hate crimes against them has surpassed that of crimes against Jews." It should be noted that because of the nature of these crimes and the identities of this special population – the very identities for which the motive of the crime was produced – often makes this population that much more hesitant to seek assistance from law enforcement, hospitals, shelters, or rape crisis centers, the very resources that are supposed to help. Additionally, there has been a general mistrust between this community and the providers listed before; one of the primary factors for the revolution for queer rights came about because of a riot against the police unnecessarily raiding queer-owned establishments. In fact, in A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey, released by the National Gay and Lesbian Taskforce (2011), they found that nearly 6% of transgender respondents had been physically assaulted in at least one interaction with the police and 2% had been sexually assaulted. Among black transgender people, 15% reported physical assault and 7% reported sexual assault by the police. Furthermore, 22% of shelter-seeking transgender individuals had reported some form of sexual assault within the shelter by either another shelter resident or staff member. It goes without saying that not all within the queer community are victimized, nor are those working within systems all abusers. It should be understood, however, that the queer community is still a community at risk, and when comparing rates of violence within the queer community to the general population, it is clear that the queer community is being targeted and that we must do everything we can to prevent this type of violence from ever happening.

Special Concerns for Victims

Similar to violence directed toward those for other backgrounds including race, ethnicity, religion, gender, or ability status, the queer community, and particularly those who have been victimized, may face feelings of a lack of self-worth and hatred towards their own identity. This

may ultimately lead to a host of other issues including self-harming behaviors, isolation, acting out (particularly for youth), and suicidality. The feelings of vulnerability due to criminal reactions by others can lead to stress and self-dehumanization. The victim viewing themselves as perpetually vulnerable or that their existence is the cause of this violence is unhealthy and maladaptive. It is important that they not fall into the common trap of self-blame and recognize that their orientation did not lead to the attack, but rather consider "that this was not a random attack, but a pre-meditated, purposeful act aimed at...their community" (Serving Victims of Bias Crimes, 1992).

Programs to Reduce Anti-Gay/Lesbian Violence

A practical victim assistance/crime prevention measure was established after the hate-motivated murder of Paul Broussard of Houston, Texas on July 4, 1991. This community, proactive program allows police to escort gays to their cars in a large gay area in Houston (Hightower, 1992). The New York City Anti-Violence Project detected a 10 percent drop in the severity of anti-gay and lesbian attacks from 1990 to 1991 and attributed the decrease to community patrols. The Project currently sponsors a program which examines and responds to violence toward those perceived or reportedly perceived to have HIV/AIDS. Berrill reports "all evidence suggests that AIDS has negatively affected the cultural climate in which anti-gay violence occurs" (Herek, Berrill, p.38).

Considerations for Victims

The victim has the right to not report an incident if he or she so chooses. If the attack requires hospitalization, medical service providers may be required to report the incident to the police. If so, the victim may identify the attack as hate-related or not. There are several arguments for reporting the incident as hate-related. Without documentation as to the prevalence of anti-gay or lesbian violence, there is less justification for legislation to be enacted which will hopefully decrease the frequency of these crimes. Just as legislation requires justification to be enacted, so do programs set up in response to specific problems. Without input from victims, community patrols or other programs may be suspended. On an interpersonal level, increased exposure to gays and lesbians may work toward dispelling negative stereotypes, and thus reduce a perceived threat to would-be offenders. To anonymously report crimes against gays and lesbians, victims or witnesses can call the Department of Justice, Community Relations Service National HATE Crime Reporting Hotline at (800) 346-HATE.

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