

Sexual Violence Against LGBTQ+ Individuals

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MAINE COALITION AGAINST
SEXUAL ASSAULT

In our society, having a sexual orientation or gender identity - real or perceived - that differs from heterosexual and/or cis-gender puts one at higher risk for sexual violence. Homophobia, transphobia, and beliefs about gender norms continue to support rape culture.¹ Victims/survivors within the LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer) community face unique challenges in healing from sexual violence.

Prevalence

It is difficult to quantify the rate at which lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, and intersex people experience sexual violence, as most major data collection surveys have only just begun to examine these issues.

Recently, the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey found that:²

- One in two bisexual women will experience rape in their lifetime.
- One in two bisexual men will experience sexual violence other than rape in their lifetime.
- Four in 10 gay men will experience sexual violence other than rape in their lifetime.
- One in two queer people will experience at least one instance of sexual coercion in their lifetime.
- One in 8 lesbian women will experience rape in their lifetime.
- One in 2 transgender people will experience sexual violence in their lifetime.
- At this time, data on sexual violence in the lives of intersex people are unavailable.

LGBTQ+ individuals often experience sexual violence within the context of hate violence incidents.³

Impacts

In addition to the many impacts of sexual violence that victims and survivors usually experience following an assault, members of

the LGBTQ+ community face many barriers to reporting and/or seeking/receiving services. Due to a combination of societal norms that depict rape as an act perpetrated by cis-gender heterosexual men against cis-gender heterosexual women, the historical criminalization of the LGBTQ+ community by law enforcement and healthcare providers, and society's hypersexualization of the LGBTQ+ community, individuals are less likely to report instances of violence.

Some LGBTQ+ people face the additional concern that they will be forced to come out to family, friends, and service providers, and we know that it is not always possible or safe for LGBTQ+ people to come out.

LGBTQ+ individuals face many unique barriers to seeking help and reporting an assault.

MECASA's Work

Maine's sexual assault support centers and allied organizations are working together to build capacity of Maine's sexual assault support centers to better serve LGBTQ+ survivors of sexual violence. MECASA's LGBTQ+ Advisory Board supports agency collaboration on statewide efforts including Safe Space, which is a cross-training designed to offer

sexual assault support centers the tools to create a welcoming and inclusive space for LGBTQ+ survivors of sexual violence. Other efforts include LGBTQ+-specific support groups and outreach and awareness campaigns. Visit mecasa.org for more information.

Learn More

[MECASA's Safe Space](#)

With many partners across the state, Maine's sexual assault support centers and allied organizations are working together to build the capacity of Maine's sexual assault support centers to better serve LGBTQ+ survivors of sexual violence. The link will bring you to Maine-based allied organizations and resources created by the MECASA LGBTQ+ Advisory Board and our partners.

[NISVS 2010 Findings on Victimization by Sexual Orientation](#)

Little is known about the national prevalence of sexual violence and stalking among lesbian, gay, and bisexual women and men in the United States. Published in 2013, the NISVS 2010 Findings on Victimization by Sexual Orientation is the first of its kind to present comparisons of victimization by sexual orientation for women and men. Click the title for the full report, or [click here for a factsheet](#).

[FORGE](#)

FORGE (For Ourselves: Reworking Gender Expression) is a national organization whose mission is to support, educate and advocate for the rights and lives of transgender individuals and SOFFAs (Significant Others, Friends, Family, and Allies).

[Strategies for Supporting LGBTIQ Survivors](#)

This issue of Connections was created to help raise awareness of differences in both gender identity and sexual orientation and to engage advocates in best practices for supporting and serving survivors of the LGBTIQ communities.

Sources

1 Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs. (2010). Setting the stage: Strategies for supporting LGBTIQ survivors. *Connections Magazine*, 13.

2 Walters, M.L., Chen J., & Breiding, M.J. (2013). *The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2010 Findings on Victimization by Sexual Orientation*. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved from http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/nisvs_sofindings.pdf

3 Ibid.

