

Sexual Orientation Victimization Subject of New CDC Report

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Results of a report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) about victimization by sexual orientation found that lesbian women and gay men reported levels of sexual violence and intimate partner violence similar to those of heterosexuals. The report also found that compared with lesbian and heterosexual women, bisexual women had a higher lifetime prevalence of rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner (43.8% and 35.0% vs 61.1%, respectively). These findings were [published online](#) January 25 on the CDC Web site.

The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS) was initiated by the CDC in 2010 to collect data regarding incidence and prevalence estimates for intimate partner violence, sexual violence, dating violence, and stalking victimization. The report focused on 2010 data collected during interviews with 16,507 men and women aged 18 years or older regarding "self-reported sexual orientation and their lifetime victimization experiences of sexual violence, stalking, and violence by an intimate partner."

The survey found that the majority of bisexual women (89.5%) and gay men (90.7%) who experienced intimate partner violence reported only male perpetrators. Among lesbian women, 67.4% reported having only female perpetrators of intimate partner violence; 78.5% of bisexual men, and 99.5% of heterosexual men also reported having only female perpetrators.

Among other key findings, the survey also found a statistically significant difference in stalking victimization among lesbian and heterosexual women, with approximately 1 in 3 (36.6%) bisexual women and 1 in 6 (15.5%) heterosexual women reporting having been victims of stalking behavior in their lifetime. Physical violence at the hands of an intimate partner was also significantly higher among bisexual women (55.1%) compared with lesbian women (36.3%) and heterosexual women (29.8%).

The report also addressed the effects of sexual violence (being fearful, being injured, needing housing or legal services, symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder, etc). More than half (57.4%) of bisexual women reported at least a single measured effect related to intimate partner violence; 33.5% of lesbian women and 28.2% of heterosexual women reported any effect.

"The findings of this report indicate that bisexual woman had significantly higher prevalence of virtually all types of sexual violence and intimate partner violence measured in the [NISVS] when compared to both heterosexual and lesbian women," write Mikel L. Walters, PhD, from the Division of Violence Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, CDC, Atlanta, Georgia, and colleagues.

The authors suggest measures to aid in preventing sexual violence among lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) individuals; specifically, an increase in the availability of support services for bisexual men and women. The authors note that the young age (11 - 17 years) at which most bisexual women (48.2%) experience their first rape also speaks to the need for more research into the adolescent experience of LGB individuals to aid in identifying risk factors for rape.

"A comprehensive violence prevention plan that includes LGB individuals will assist in furthering a comprehensive understanding of intimate partner violence, sexual violence, and stalking," the study authors write.

In addition, the authors note that only a small number of domestic violence shelters have programs specifically designed for lesbian survivors of intimate partner violence, and the number of services available to gay and bisexual men is even more limited.

"To our knowledge, the [NISVS] provides the first nationally representative prevalence estimates of sexual violence, stalking, and intimate partner violence among those who identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual," write Dr. Walters and colleagues.

"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," they conclude.

The authors have disclosed no relevant financial relationships.

"The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey: 2010 Findings on Victimization by Sexual Orientation." CDC, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. [Full text](#)