



LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY AND SEXUAL ASSAULT

This resource is for the LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, and more) community. Violence and abuse often reflect larger issues of power in society. LGBTQ+ people experience hate crimes, discrimination, poverty, and stigma. This puts them at higher risk for sexual assault. People may target LGBTQ+ people because they believe negative stereotypes about them. Misinformation about who can be assaulted, or who causes harm, are common. While anyone can be sexually assaulted, LGBTQ+ people are also targeted based on their identity or expression (2).

FACTS

1. For LGBTQ+ people, sexual assault can be combined with other violence. This includes verbal harassment and physical violence based on hate or fear. (4)
2. LGBTQ+ people are 4 times more likely to experience violence in their life than non-LGBTQ+ people. (3)
3. Services for sexual assault survivors often seem designed for cisgender women (women who were assigned female at birth). This is a barrier for LGBTQ+ survivors to get help. Survivors may even fear violence and harassment from the people they turn to for help. (1,2)

4. LGBTQ+ people of color, especially transgender people of color, are more likely to face unequal economic and social status. This leads to higher risk to experience violence. (5)
5. About half of transgender people and bisexual women have been sexually assaulted at least once in their life. (1,3)
6. LGBTQ+ people of color face more discrimination because of racism and homophobia. (3)

SOURCES

1. Sexual Assault and the LGBTQ Community. Retrieved from <https://www.hrc.org/resources/sexual-assault-and-the-lgbt-community>
2. Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs, LGBTQ, 2018. Retrieved from <https://www.wcsap.org/resources/culturally-specific/lgbtq/advocacy-considerations>
3. National Sexual Violence Resource Center, Fact Sheet on Injustice in the LGBTQ community, 2021. Retrieved from <https://www.nsvrc.org/blogs/fact-sheet-injustice-lgbtq-community>
4. Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape, About Sexual Violence, 2022. Retrieved from <https://pcar.org/about-sexual-violence/lgbtq>
5. National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and HIV-Affected Intimate Partner Violence in 2015. Retrieved from https://avp.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/2015_ncavp_lgbtqipv-report.pdf

HOW SEXUAL ASSAULT CAN LOOK DIFFERENT FOR THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY

- A person may threaten to out someone, using this to exploit them.
- An abuser may manipulate someone who is not out, or who is questioning their identity.
- A person may target someone with little or no supportive community or housing. They may try to isolate them even more.
- People often have negative ideas about LGBTQ+ people. For example, thinking of them as "less than," overly sexual, or not to be taken seriously. These ideas are then used to excuse violence against them.

HOW ANYONE CAN SUPPORT THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY

- Challenge negative ideas about LGBTQ+ people that lead to violence. You can:
 - Avoid hateful comments about the LGBTQ+ community.
 - Not assume a person's identity based on their appearance or stereotypes.
 - Treat LGBTQ+ people with kindness and care.
- Believe LGBTQ+ survivors of abuse.
- Create inclusive spaces with LGBTQ+ people in mind.
- Use inclusive language.
 - Use the gender pronouns that people use for themselves.
 - Use the name that people use for themselves. (Some people change their name to match more with their gender identity.)
 - Correct yourself if you use the wrong name or pronouns.

- Challenge misinformation about the LGBTQ+ community. This includes:
 - The myth that identifying as LGBTQ+ is harmful for children/youth.
 - The myth that identifying as LGBTQ+ is a choice.
 - The myth that sexual assault only happens when a man assaults a woman. Anyone can be sexually assaulted.
 - The myth that a sexual assault can indicate a person's sexual orientation.

Education is key to preventing sexual violence. Everyone needs to learn about how to prevent violence from a young age. Sexual health education should include LGBTQ+ people. LGBTQ+ relationships should be normalized early on, to prevent harmful ideas that target people based on their gender identity, sexual orientation, or expression.

Another great way to prevent sexual violence for LGBTQ+ people is to build community. Building support systems can protect people from violence.

Harborview Medical Center is named as an LGBTQ+ Equality Leader in Healthcare by the Human Rights Campaign. Our clinics follow policies and practices in LGBTQ+ care. Our clinics follow best practices in LGBTQ+ care.

For more information:

The Harborview Abuse & Trauma Center is proud to be a resource for LGBTQ+ people experiencing trauma or violence. uwhatc.org

Resources for LGBTQ patients in health care: <https://www.hrc.org/resources/patient-resources>