

March 03, 2023

Five Myths About LGBTQI+ Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, and Stalking

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1

Domestic and dating violence is less common in the LGBTQI+ community than in the general population.

Domestic and dating violence occurs at the same rates, if not higher rates, in the LGBTQI+ community than in the general population. Lesbian and gay individuals experience similar rates of intimate partner violence as heterosexual people. Bisexual people, women in particular, experience significantly higher rates of domestic and dating violence. Transgender people also experience higher rates of intimate partner violence and sexual violence compared to the general population.

2

It is easy to tell in same-sex relationships who the abuser is and who the victim is.

There is no shortcut or easy way to look at an abusive same-sex relationship and know who the abuser is and who the victim is. Sometimes, providers may mistakenly rely on stereotypes and

decide that the more masculine partner is more likely to be the abuser, but this is not the case. Service providers must conduct a comprehensive aggressor-survivor differentiation screening to determine who the survivor is.

3

Same-sex domestic and dating violence is less serious than violence in heterosexual relationships.

Physical violence in same-sex relationships is as serious as in different-sex relationships. Sometimes people assume that violence in a same-sex relationship is more likely to be mutual, and less likely to cause serious injury. This is because of stereotypes like the belief that women are not strong enough to injure others, or that men would fight back against a man who is abusing them. In reality, the same dynamics that exist in heterosexual domestic/dating violence exist in different-sex relationships.

4

LGBTQI+ people are less likely to experience stalking and harassment than the general population.

LGBTQI+ people experience stalking and harassment at higher rates than non-LGBTQI+ people. As with domestic and dating violence, perpetrators of stalking and harassment may choose to target people that they perceive as being vulnerable and use tactics related to those perceived vulnerabilities. For example, a stalker may threaten to out an LGBTQI+ person as part of their stalking/harassment.

5

LGBTQI+ survivors can be excluded from VAWA-funded programs and are not eligible for services.

Service providers cannot turn away someone based on their sexual orientation or gender identity and must treat clients who are not cisgender or heterosexual the same as other clients. VAWA prohibits service providers from discriminating against individuals based on sexual orientation and gender identity. However, this does not mean all service providers are prepared to be LGBTQI+ inclusive and provide a safe place for LGBTQI+ survivors of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking to access trauma-informed culturally competent services. Organizations should regularly review their policies and practices to ensure they're meeting their non-discrimination obligations and providing effective services.

The American Bar Association Commission on Domestic & Sexual Violence is here to help your organization provide LGBTQI+ inclusive legal services to survivors of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking through our [LGBTQI+ Legal Access Project](#).

[You can request training and technical assistance here.](#)