

# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDER RELATIONSHIPS

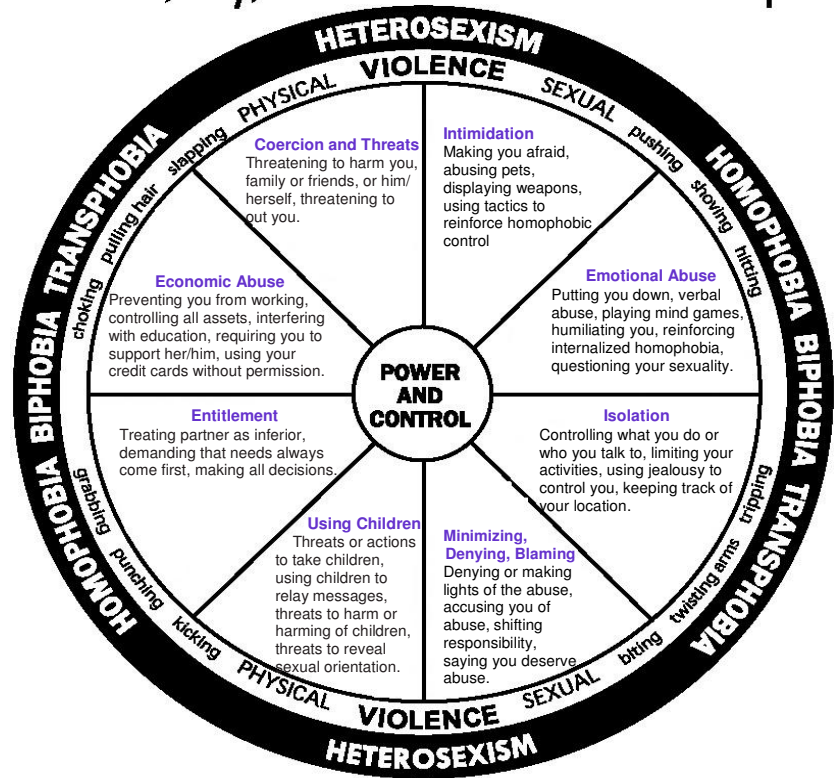
## WHY IT MATTERS

Domestic violence is defined as a pattern of behaviors utilized by one partner (the batterer or abuser) to exert and maintain control over another person (the survivor or victim) where there exists an intimate and/or dependent relationship. Experts believe that domestic violence occurs in the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community with the same amount of frequency and severity as in the heterosexual community. Society's long history of entrenched racism, sexism, homophobia and transphobia prevents LGBT victims of domestic violence from seeking help from the police, legal and court systems for fear of discrimination or bias.<sup>1</sup>

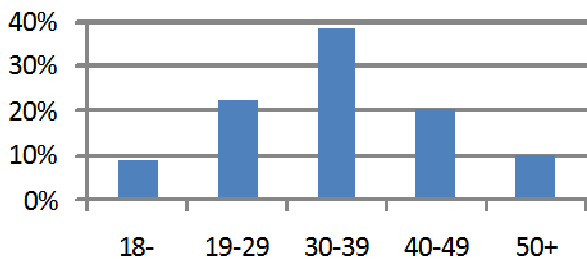
## DID YOU KNOW?

- In ten cities and two states alone, there were 3,524 incidents of domestic violence affecting LGBT individuals, according to the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs 2006 Report on Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual and Transgender Domestic Violence.<sup>1</sup>
- LGBT domestic violence is vastly underreported, unacknowledged, and often reported as something other than domestic violence.<sup>1</sup>
- Delaware, Montana and South Carolina explicitly exclude same-sex survivors of domestic violence from protection under criminal laws. Eighteen states have domestic violence laws that are gender neutral but apply to household members only.<sup>2</sup>
- 30 states and DC have domestic violence laws that are gender neutral and include household members as well as dating partners.<sup>2</sup>

## Power and Control Wheel for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans Relationships



Age of Victims of Reported Cases of LGBT Domestic Violence<sup>3</sup>



## SURVIVORS

- Gay and bisexual men experience abuse in intimate partner relationships at a rate of 2 in 5, which is comparable to the amount of domestic violence experienced by heterosexual women.<sup>3</sup>
- Approximately 50% of the lesbian population has experienced or will experience domestic violence in their lifetimes.<sup>1</sup>
- In one year, 44% of victims in LGBT domestic violence cases identified as men, while 36% identified as women.<sup>1</sup>
- 78% of lesbians report that they have either defended themselves or fought back against an abusive partner. 18% of this group described their behavior as self-defense or "trading blow for blow or insult for insult."<sup>4</sup>

## TYPES OF ABUSE<sup>5</sup>

- *Physical*: the threat of harm or any forceful physical behavior that intentionally or accidentally causes bodily harm or property destruction.
- *Sexual*: any forced or coerced sexual act or behavior motivated to acquire power and control over the partner. It is not only forced sexual contact but also contact that demeans or humiliates the partner and instigates feelings of shame or vulnerability – particularly in regards to the body, sexual performance or sexuality.
- *Emotional/Verbal*: any use of words, voice, action or lack of action meant to control, hurt or demean another person. Emotional abuse typically includes ridicule, intimidation or coercion.
- *Financial*: the use or misuse, without the victim's consent, of the financial or other monetary resources of the partner or of the relationship.
- *Identity Abuse*: using personal characteristics to demean, manipulate and control the partner. Some of these tactics overlap with other forms of abuse, particularly emotional abuse. This category is comprised of the social "isms", including racism, sexism, ageism, able-ism, beauty-ism, as well as homophobia. Includes threats to "out" victim.

## TRANSGENDER ABUSE<sup>1</sup>

Specific forms of abuse occur in relationships where one partner is transgender, including:

- ⇒ using offensive pronouns such as "it" to refer to the transgender partner;
- ⇒ ridiculing the transgender partner's body and/or appearance;
- ⇒ telling the transgender partner that he or she is not a real man or woman;
- ⇒ ridiculing the transgender partner's identity as "bisexual," "trans," "femme," "butch," "gender queer," etc.;
- ⇒ denying the transgender partner's access to medical treatment or hormones or coercing him or her to not pursue medical treatment.

## HIV/AIDS RELATED ABUSE<sup>1</sup>

The presence of HIV/AIDS in an abusive relationship may lead to specific forms of abuse, which include:

- ⇒ "outing" or threatening to tell others that the victim has HIV/AIDS;
- ⇒ an HIV+ abuser suggesting that she or he will sicken or die if the partner ends the relationship;
- ⇒ preventing the HIV+ partner from receiving needed medical care or medications;
- ⇒ taking advantage of an HIV+ partner's poor health status, assuming sole power over a partner's economic affairs, create the partner's utter dependency on the abuser;
- ⇒ An HIV+ abuser infecting or threatening to infect a partner.

## BARRIERS TO SEEKING SERVICES<sup>1</sup>

Barriers to addressing LGBT intimate partner violence (both for service providers and survivors) include:

- The belief that domestic violence does not occur in LGBT relationships and/or is a gender based issue;
- Societal anti-LGBT bias (homophobia, biphobia and transphobia);
- Lack of appropriate training regarding LGBT domestic violence for service providers;
- A fear that airing of the problems among the LGBT population will take away from progress toward equality or fuel anti-LGBT bias.
- Domestic violence shelters are typically female only, thus transgender people may not be allowed entrance into shelters or emergency facilities due to their gender/genital/legal status.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

### National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs

212-714-1184  
[www.ncapv.org](http://www.ncapv.org)

### GLBT National Help Center

1-888-843-4564  
[www.glbtnationalhelpcenter.org](http://www.glbtnationalhelpcenter.org)

### Gay Men's Domestic Violence Project

1-800-832-1901  
[www.gmdvp.org](http://www.gmdvp.org)

For more information or to get help, please call the  
National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE  
National Sexual Assault Hotline at 1-800-656-HOPE

## SOURCES

<sup>1</sup> National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs. (2006) "Anti-Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Violence in 2006." [www.ncavp.org](http://www.ncavp.org)

<sup>2</sup> National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. (2005) "Domestic Violence Laws in the U.S." [www.thetaskforce.org](http://www.thetaskforce.org)

<sup>3</sup> Greenwood, Gregory, et. al. (2002) "Battering and Victimization Among a Probability-Based Sample of Men Who Have Sex With Men." *American Journal of Public Health*. 92 (12).

<sup>4</sup> Renzetti, C.M. (1992). "Violent betrayal: Partner abuse in lesbian relationships." *Violence Against Women*. Sage Publications.

<sup>5</sup> Gay Men's Domestic Violence Project. "Types of Abuse." [www.gmdvp.org](http://www.gmdvp.org)

### NATIONAL COALITION AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



Every Home A Safe Home

### The Public Policy Office of the National Coalition Against Domestic

**Violence (NCADV)** is a national leader in the effort to create and influence Federal legislation that positively affects the lives of domestic violence victims and children. We work closely with advocates at the local, state and national level to identify the issues facing domestic violence victims, their children and the people who serve them and to develop a legislative agenda to address these issues. NCADV welcomes you to join us in our effort to end domestic violence.