

## **EXPLORING DOMESTIC ABUSE IN THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS**

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Domestic abuse within the LGBTQ+ community remains a significant yet understudied phenomenon, often overshadowed by heteronormative narratives of intimate partner violence (IPV). This inquiry seeks to delve into the complexities of domestic violence experienced by LGBTQ+ individuals, examining prevalence rates, unique dynamics and barriers to accessing support.

This article aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the multifaceted nature of intimate partner violence within LGBTQ+ relationships.

### **Prevalence and under-reporting**

Available data suggest that rates of domestic abuse amongst LGBTQ+ individuals are comparable to, or higher than, those in heterosexual relationships. However, accurate prevalence figures are elusive due to significant under-reporting within the LGBTQ+ community. Factors such as fear of discrimination, distrust of service providers and societal stigma contribute to the reluctance of LGBTQ+ individuals to disclose their experiences of abuse, resulting in a shortage of comprehensive data on the subject. However, a study carried out by the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence in 2018 indicated that:

- 43.8% of lesbian women and 61.1% of bisexual women have reported instances of rape, physical violence and/or stalking.
- 26% of gay men and 37.3% of bisexual men have similarly experienced such forms of violence, compared to 29% of heterosexual men.
- Research into male same-sex relationships revealed that only 26% of individuals sought police assistance following near-lethal violence incidents.
- Further data from 2012 indicates that fewer than 5% of LGBTQ+ survivors of intimate partner violence pursued orders of protection.
- Transgender individuals facing intimate partner violence are more prone to experiencing such incidents in public settings.
- Bisexual individuals are at a higher risk of encountering sexual violence compared to their non-bisexual counterparts.

Work carried out in the USA indicated that disparities also exist within racial demographics, with LGBTQ+ Black/African American individuals more susceptible to physical intimate partner violence, whereas LGBTQ+ white individuals are more prone to sexual violence. Furthermore, LGBTQ+ individuals reliant on public assistance are at a heightened risk of experiencing intimate partner violence compared to those not on public assistance.

The scarcity of UK-specific data on domestic violence within LGBTQ+ relationships underscores a broader issue of under-representation and invisibility of this issue in mainstream discourse. The below organisations were contacted in the quest for research, but were not able to provide or point to any reliable UK source:

- LGBT Foundation (Manchester)
- Proud Trust (Manchester)
- National LGBTQIA+ Support Line
- GALOP
- Women's Aid.

While statistics from the US provide some insight into the prevalence of domestic abuse among LGBTQ+ individuals, it's crucial to recognise the limitations of relying solely on these figures for a UK audience.

The lack of localised data reflects systemic challenges in acknowledging and addressing domestic violence within same-sex relationships, revealing gaps in research, support services and policy responses.

Under-representation highlights the urgent need for more comprehensive studies and inclusive approaches to data collection that accurately capture the experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals in the UK. By amplifying their voices and experiences, we can better understand the unique dynamics of domestic abuse within these communities and work towards more effective interventions and support mechanisms.

### **Intersectionality and unique dynamics**

Domestic violence within the LGBTQ+ community intersects with various aspects of identity, including sexual orientation, gender identity, race and socioeconomic status. Intersectional analyses reveal nuanced dynamics of abuse, with specific subgroups facing heightened risks and distinct forms of violence.

For example, transgender individuals,

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