Sexual Violence Against Lesbian, Gay, & Bisexual Communities

The LGBTQ+ community faces a greater risk of sexual violence due to the oppression of their gender expression and sexual orientation. The root of sexual assault perpetration is power and control, and sexual violence flourishes when people are devalued and disrespected. Sexual violence can be used to maintain abusive beliefs that are connected to heterosexism in society, endangering the LGBTQ+ community.

- As of 2018, there were 4,702,570 adults living in Maryland. Of these adults, 198,000, or 4.2%, identify as LGBTQ.¹
- About 48.3% of lesbian women and 61.1% of bisexual women have experienced rape, physical violence, and stalking by an intimate partner at some point in their lifetime, compared to 35% of heterosexual women.²
- According to a 2017 report by the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP), survivors who identified as lesbian were 5x more likely to report experiencing violence by a current partner compared to survivors who identified with other sexual orientations.³
- Nearly half of all bisexual men and 4 in 10 gay men have experienced some form of sexual violence other than rape in their lifetime. It’s likely this rate is higher or comparable to heterosexual men.⁴
- Many survivors do not report their assaults due to the perceived bias in the criminal justice system, the fear of revealing their sexual orientation or gender identity, and the lack of resources made available for those who identify as LGBTQ.⁵

Youth and Violence

- Gay, lesbian, bisexual, and questioning adolescents are believed to be at higher risk than their heterosexual peers for violence.⁶
- A 2020 study, using data from the National Youth Risk Behavior Survey, found that 20.6% of sexual minority adolescents reported experiencing sexual assault, 18.0% reported experiencing forced intercourse, and 12.5% reported experiencing sexual assault by a romantic partner.⁶
- A study by VALOR US (formally the California Coalition Against Sexual Assault), found that sexual violence victimization may be extremely common among foster care youth—73.3% of heterosexual and 94.7% of sexual minority foster youth reported sexual assault.⁷

¹ Movement Advancement Project, “Maryland’s Equity Profile”, 2018.
² National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, “Domestic Violence and the LGBTQ Community,” 6 June 2018
³ National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, “Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and HIV-Affected Hate and Intimate Partner Violence in 2017
⁶ Caputi TL, Shover CL, Watson RJ. Physical and Sexual Violence Among Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Questioning