

Issue Brief: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transsexual Relationship with Violence
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Key Words

LGBT Americans, Violence, Minorities, Hate Crime Reporting

Description

This issue brief aims to clarify the primary targets and motivators for violence against the LGBT population. The prevalence of the LGBT population has been increasing and many individuals see them as altering a relatively stable culture, this often is the cause of violence against this group of people.

Key Points

- The majority of those who commit violence against the LGBT population are young males.
- Schools are where anti-LGBT sentiment often begins through teaching and understanding of social norms.
- Men tend to be targeted on anti-LGBT violence more than women.
- A majority proportion of the LGBT population has been assaulted or knows someone who has been assaulted because of his or her sexual orientation.
- Compiling statistics on the LGBT community is a difficult task because of their fear of identification.

Issue Brief

The United States of America has a long history of violence against minority populations. Typically, these populations have been categorized by physical characteristics, primarily being race although not always. The main reason for this violence has primarily led to the excuse that “they do not belong here” or they are “changing the status quo of what it means to be American”. Violence against minority groups is far from extinct; the past fifty years have demonstrated that violence against LGBT individuals on the basis of sexual orientation has become more common.

In the last two decades there has been a noteworthy alteration in the presence of the LGBT population. The percentage that a given individual knows a gay or lesbian since 1992 has increased by over thirty percent (Figure One).

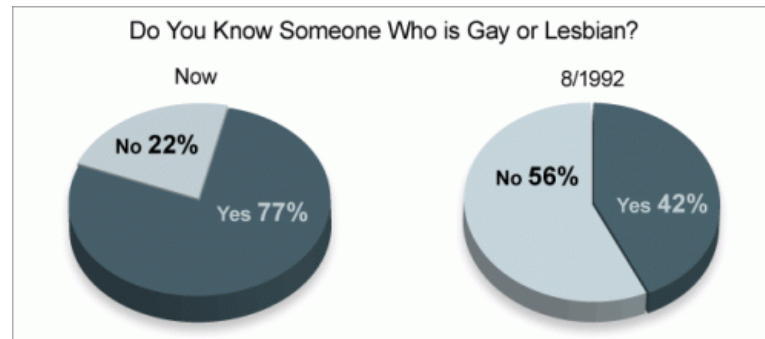


Figure One

This increase has a significant impact on individuals who have an interest in resisting change. Currently, there are seventeen states that allow gay marriage (www.galperlaw.com). When it comes down to demographics such as the census, the ability to clearly show sexual orientation and gender becomes extremely difficult. This is because a significant proportion of this population aims to disguise the gender or sexual orientation, at least to the government, if not their peers. In the 2000 census, they did not count gay marriages directly; instead they counted two members that were part of a household that were the same gender but unrelated as a proxy for gay marriage. This led to the assumption that there 594,391 "gay couples" currently in America (www.galperlaw.com). This number is far from exact; it fails to take into account singles and people who do not want to marry. It gives a tiny fraction of the whole LGBT picture. Figure 2 is an interesting figure in that it shows the dispersion of the gay population across the United States. For the most part, the gay population tends to be concentrated on the West and Northern Atlantic Coasts.

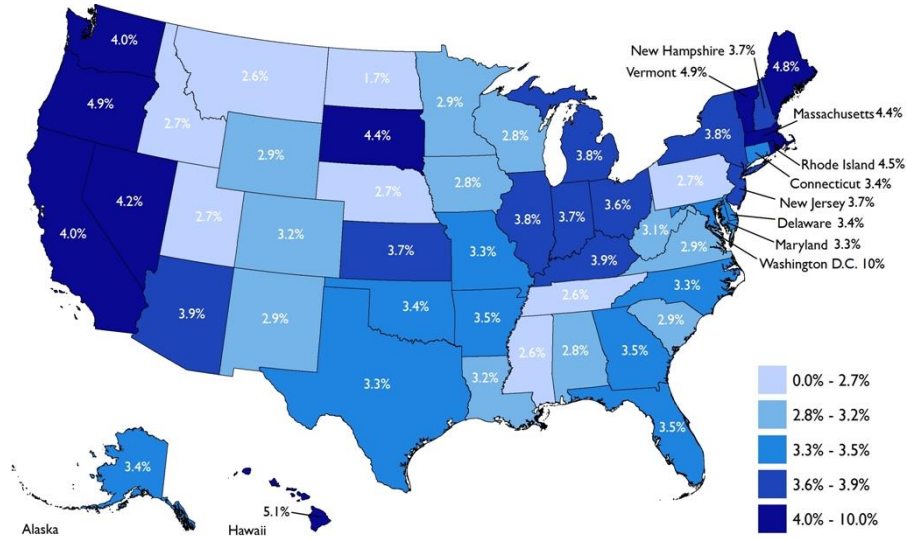


Figure Two

As previously mentioned, America has had a problem of violence against minorities. In the 1980's, there was a significant increase in anti-gay violence (Berrill, p. 247). This was over a decade after the African American's civil rights era, when the gay population was starting to emerge. Dworkin believes that the notion gays are inherently different from the mainstream population is instilled in the mind by the end of elementary school (Dworkin, p. 274). This stems from the basic cultural idea that those who are different from the majority of the population are worse. This is similar to the rationale for many minority problems the United States has faced over time.

Perpetrators of gay violence are not constrained to a given set of characteristics; however, hate crimes against LGBT population are commonly associated with young males, typically in their late teens to early twenties. When looking at violent crimes, many of them are performed by groups that target the LGBT individual (Dworkin, p. 275). Victims of LGBT hate crimes tend to be males, particularly when it comes to violent crimes. A strong

rationale for this is that gay males typically “come out” six years before their lesbian female acquaintances (Berrill, p. 282). All types of individuals can perpetuate violence and fall victim to it.

Violence against the gay population often has more complications than physical damage. Frequently, these crimes go unreported for two main reasons. First, law enforcement has participated in the violence against the LGBT population (Dworkin, p. 271). A reason to keep silent would include furthering violence against oneself. Furthermore, part of the LGBT population that experiences these crimes has not openly identified themselves as part of the LGBT population. Because they do not want to affiliate with the LGBT population, they are not willing to report the crime. In continuation, the main symptoms of being the victim of violent crimes as a gay person involves: post-traumatic stress disorder, denial, guilt, and a numbing of emotions (Dworkin, p. 274). Violent crimes against the LGBT remain widespread and are similar to that of crimes against other minority populations.

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