

Reactions and feelings after an assault

If you have experienced sexual violence, any way you react or feel is valid. People respond in many different ways and may have many different emotions, including trouble understanding what happened, helplessness, anger, self-blame, emotional disconnect, anxiety, shame, increased drug or alcohol use, fear, increased or decreased interest in sex, difficulty trusting yourself or others, difficulty concentrating, feeling betrayed by your body, or conflicted emotions about the perpetrator.

Victim service centers can support you by providing counseling and advocacy, accompaniment to medical appointments, and referrals. Services provided by victim service centers are free and confidential, and many hotlines are available 24/7. It is okay to call anonymously, and to ask for LGBTQ-specific services or referrals.

You are not alone

We know through research, through our experience, and through our work that significant percentages of people in LGBTQ communities are sexually violated at some point in their lives. Adolescents in LGBTQ communities are more likely to experience sexual harassment than their straight peers (Farris et al., 2018; Mitchell et al., 2014), and research finds that almost half of transgender adults are sexually abused or assaulted during their lives (James et al., 2016). Research also shows that over 29% of lesbian or bisexual girls and over 25% of gay or bisexual boys experienced rape (Lindley & Walsemann, 2015).

Know that you are not alone and there are resources available to you.

Help is available



To talk to someone at your local rape crisis center:

In Pennsylvania, call 1-888-772-7227 or find your local rape crisis center at pcar.org. Outside of the state, you can call the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN) at 1-800-656-4673.



To make a report of suspected child abuse:

In Pennsylvania, call CHILDLINE at 1-800-932-0313 or call the National Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-422-4453 from anywhere in the U.S. You can also visit the Child Welfare Information Gateway at childwelfare.gov for more information.

What if I was sexually abused as a child by an adult?

Child sexual abuse includes rape, molestation, and exposure to sexual acts or material. Children are not developmentally or legally able to consent to these acts. It is never the child's fault — children rely on and should be able to trust the adults in their lives for support, safety, and respect.

Social stigma of LGBTQ sexuality can compound the impact of sexual abuse, whether survivors identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, straight, or another sexual orientation. Sexual abuse can and often does affect and complicate the way people feel about sex, sexuality, and gender identity, but sexual abuse does not “turn” someone gay or transgender. No matter the gender of the person doing harm or being harmed, sexual violence is largely about access and vulnerability.

Is sexual violence a hate crime?

Sexual abuse is always an act of violence and oppression. People in LGBTQ communities are made uniquely vulnerable through society's disapproval of and lack of support for our communities. Additionally, sexual violence is sometimes used as a weapon against people who identify or are perceived as LGBTQ. Whether these sexual offenses are prosecuted under Hate Crimes laws will depend in many cases on local laws, the District Attorney's priorities, and whether the victim discloses their sexuality or gender identity. Hate-motivated crimes can include sexual harassment, sexual assault, rape, or any of the various forms of sexual violence.

What if I know my abuser well?

Everyone should be able to trust friends, family, and partners to respect their bodies and boundaries. Nevertheless, sexual violence occurs most often with people we know in places we are supposed to feel safe. This is true in all relationships, including those for LGBTQ folks. The power and control dynamics that can be involved may include using drugs or alcohol to incapacitate, forcing sex acts to “prove” a person's identities, threatening to “out” someone, and withholding HIV medication or hormones as punishment.

Additional resources

Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape

www.pcar.org

National Sexual Violence Resource Center

www.nsvrc.org

For Ourselves: Reworking Gender Expression (FORGE)

www.forge-forward.org

National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs

<https://avp.org/ncavp>

Pennsylvania Commission on LGBTQ Affairs

<https://www.governor.pa.gov/pennsylvania-commission-lgbtq-affairs>

Trans Lifeline

<https://www.translifeline.org>
1-877-565-8860

Farris, J., Austin, J., & Brown, C. (2018). *2018 Minnesota adolescent sexual health report*. University of Minnesota Healthy Youth Development, Prevention Research Center. https://www.pediatrics.umn.edu/sites/pediatrics.umn.edu/files/2018_ashr_report_final_0.pdf

James, S. E., Herman, J. L., Rankin, S., Keisling, M., Mottet, L., & Anafi, M. (2016). *The report of the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey*. National Center for Transgender Equality. <http://www.transequality.org/sites/default/files/docs/USTS-Full-Report-FINAL.PDF>

Lindley, L. L., & Walsemann, K. M. (2015). Sexual orientation and risk of pregnancy among New York City high-school students. *American Journal of Public Health, 105*(7), 1379–1386. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2015.302553>

Mitchell, K. J., Ybarra, M. L., & Korchmaros, J. D. (2014). Sexual harassment among adolescents of different sexual orientations and gender identities. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 38*(2), 280–295. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2013.09.008>

Sexual harassment, abuse, and assault thrive when people devalue and disrespect others. To end these acts, we must work together to end the many forms of oppression – including homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia – and replace those with values of equity, respect, and consent.

People in LGBTQ communities often face unique challenges, such as:

- Danger of being “outed” (to have their sexual orientation or gender identity shared; before we are ready), forced out, or forced to out ourselves by reporting sexual violence
- Not wanting to be disloyal to our communities by disclosing assault by an LGBTQ partner or friend;
- Not wanting to affirm harmful beliefs or stereotypes about our communities by disclosing assault by a LGBTQ partner or friend;
- Risk of receiving transphobic, homophobic, and biphobic responses from social and victim services, law enforcement, legal and medical staff, and other systems;
- Incorrect beliefs (by ourselves or others) that we deserve or should expect violence because of our sexuality or gender identity;
- Incorrect beliefs (by ourselves or others) that the assault caused our sexuality or gender identity



1-888-772-PCAR • www.pcar.org



The Crime Victims' Center
HOTLINE: 724 437 3737
OFFICE: 724 438 1470

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Sexual Violence

LGBTQ



What are sexual harassment, abuse, and assault?

Sexual harassment, abuse, and assault are widespread public health and social problems collectively referred to as sexual violence.

Sexual violence includes any type of unwanted sexual contact, harassment, exposure, or abuse.

People may use force, threats, manipulation, or coercion to commit sexual violence, but any sexual behavior without clear consent is sexual assault.

Sexual violence can be committed without the knowledge of the victim or against a person who is unable to give consent. Rape, physical and verbal harassment, exposure, and stalking are all forms of sexual violence. Sexual violence can happen to anyone and by anyone, though it is most often done by people we know, in places we are supposed to feel safe (like our homes and the homes of loved ones).

Sexual violence and LGBTQ communities

Sexual violence can happen to anyone and by anyone, however it is most often committed by people we know in places we are supposed to feel safe. Additionally, for people in LGBTQ communities, sexual violence may also be combined with acts of verbal and physical homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia. Sometimes people in LGBTQ communities are targeted specifically because of their identities.