



Fair's FAIR

A SNAPSHOT OF VIOLENCE AND ABUSE
IN SYDNEY LGBT RELATIONSHIPS 2006



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Domestic violence is a major health concern for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender communities. It has been argued that domestic violence is the third most severe health problem for gay men, following HIV/AIDS and substance abuse.

A recent large scale Australian study - *Private Lives: A report on the health and wellbeing of GLBTI Australians*, investigated the level of 'intimate partner abuse' in same sex relationships and found that 32.7% of respondents had experienced violence or abuse. Overseas studies have attempted to determine the nature and extent of same sex domestic violence (SSDV), but at the time of conducting this survey no major original Australian research had been conducted.

Prior to this report, the main body of data available on SSDV had been collected from service providers. To address the lack of available data, the Same Sex Domestic Violence Interagency Working Group (SSDV WG) undertook a quantitative study of the prevalence and types of violence and abuse in relationships in Sydney's gay and lesbian communities. Further, the research aimed to examine the types of support that respondents who had experienced domestic violence sought.

The Private Lives report on gay and lesbian intimate partner abuse was published after the survey was commissioned by the SSDV WG.

KEY FINDINGS

- The sample of 308 Australian respondents demonstrates significant levels of violence and abuse in same sex relationships.
- Similar patterns of violence and abuse occurred across all genders in the sample.
- Overall, including responses from participants of all genders and for both previous and current relationships, the types of abuse indicated ranged from: controlling-jealous behaviour (47.7%); humiliation (45.1%); physical abuse (34.4%); social isolation (30.8%); financial control (17.8%); sexual abuse (16.8%) and outing (16.8%).
- Young people aged 15-25 recorded high levels of some forms of abuse, particularly humiliation, outing and controlling or jealous behaviour.
- Overall, the majority of respondents who reported any abuse in a current or previous relationship (57.7%) did not seek any support in relation to the abuse.
- 67.1% of male respondents who reported one or more forms of abuse in a current or previous relationship did not seek any support.
- The most common type of support accessed by participants who had experienced abuse was informal support from family or friends (32.8%). The most common type of formal support sought was provided by a counsellor/ psychologist/ social worker (19.0%).
- 13.8% of respondents who reported one or more forms of abuse in their current relationship have children under the age of 16 in their care. It was more common for women than men to report abuse in a current relationship and to have children under the age of 16 in their care. Also, 16.3% of respondents who reported one or more forms of abuse in a previous relationship indicated that they had children in their care during the relationship.
- Respondents who reported abuse in a previous relationship were more likely to have entered into subsequent abusive relationships.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Wide implementation of training and development programs for service providers and key agencies including police, local court staff, magistrates, and hospital staff to enable an effective response to people experiencing SSDV
- The allocation of funding for specific and specialised services in counselling, housing and emergency accommodation, court assistance and sexual assault.
- Further work to raise awareness of same sex domestic violence within gay and lesbian communities, particularly amongst young people.
- Further work to increase awareness about SSDV services within GLBT communities.
- Further research to investigate the impact on children in same sex relationships where domestic violence is present.
- Continued community education within GLBT communities to improve the capacity of friends and family of those experiencing domestic violence to provide appropriate and accurate support and information.

INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence is a major health concern for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (GLBT) communities. It has been argued that domestic violence is the third most severe health problem for gay men, following HIV/AIDS and substance abuse.¹ A recent large scale Australian study - *Private Lives: A report on the health and wellbeing of GLBTI Australians*, investigated the level of intimate partner abuse in same sex relationships and found that 32.7% of respondents had experienced violence or abuse in a relationship.² The Same Sex Domestic Violence Interagency and Working Group (SSDV WG) were established in 2000 in response to an increasing number of presentations from individuals experiencing domestic violence in same sex relationships. This research project was developed to assist the SSDV WG to understand the nature and extent of SSDV in the Sydney GLBT communities.

As with domestic violence in heterosexual relationships, domestic violence in same sex relationships is manifested through a pattern of behaviour involving one partner using and maintaining power and control over the other. The pattern of behaviour can include any or all of the following: emotional and verbal abuse, physical violence, sexual abuse, social and cultural isolation, stalking, harassment and financial control. Individuals in same sex relationships can experience additional abuse through homophobic and heterosexist perpetrator tactics.³ The threat of disclosing an individual's sexuality as leverage for control is specific to same sex domestic violence, and can have a significant social and psychological impact. Abusive partners can threaten to 'out' their partner; threaten loss of parental custody due to sexuality; prevent partners from accessing services by creating the impression that those services will be homophobic; or the abusive or violent behaviour is 'normalised' as a part of gay or lesbian relationships.⁴ Perpetrators can also exercise control in the relationships by threatening to disclose their partner's HIV status, withhold or threaten to withhold medication, or conversely, refuse to take HIV medication.

The impact for individuals experiencing violence in same sex relationships bears similarities to the impact on heterosexual victims of domestic violence. That is physical injuries, the loss of self-esteem, depression, social isolation, drug and alcohol abuse and post-traumatic stress disorders.⁵ Unique impacts upon individuals experiencing same sex domestic violence relate to

isolation due to homophobia and the resulting dependency on the abusive partner for support.⁶ The provision of social support from the gay and lesbian community may be limited by the abusive partner's isolating behaviour. Individuals may have difficulty in recognising the partner's behaviour as domestic violence due to common myths and the perception that domestic violence is a heterosexual issue.

The detrimental impact on physical, emotional and psychological health for an individual being forced or coerced to engage in sexual acts is also well documented.⁷ Additional concern has been raised in relation to the potential transmission of HIV and or other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) within same sex relationships. In the US, a study undertaken by Heintz and Melendez (2006) has highlighted the decreased ability of a partner to negotiate safer sex practices in an abusive relationship where sexual abuse was a factor. In some instances the attempt to negotiate safer sex has triggered increased levels of violent and abusive behaviour.⁸

Further complexities for victims in same sex relationships may arise in relation to services and support, such as inappropriate service provision or an absence of specific services. Services may minimise the experience of violence and abuse due to the victim and perpetrator being the same gender. Homophobia and discrimination experienced within services can and does instigate secondary trauma for the victim, and therefore is a barrier to victims accessing services.⁹ One of the reasons cited to explain the under reporting of same sex domestic violence is the impression by the victim that the violence will be treated by police and other legal services as 'mutual battering'.¹⁰ Other reasons include issues around confidentiality, fear of inappropriate service provision and fear of the violence escalating within the relationship following police involvement.

Since the inception of the NSW SSDV Interagency, the two main areas of focus have been increasing community awareness of SSDV and reorienting services to respond appropriately to people experiencing SSDV. In 2003 the SSDV WG launched a community awareness campaign targeted at GLBT communities. The campaign's primary aims were to highlight domestic violence as an issue for the community; increase understanding of the types of violence and abuse experienced; and provide referral information for people experiencing SSDV. An evaluation determined that the campaign was successful in meeting the aims and objectives of the community awareness project.¹¹

Overseas studies have attempted to determine the nature and extent of SSDV but at the time this survey was conducted no major original Australian research had been conducted. *The Private Lives* report was published after the SSDV WG undertook this research. Previously, the main body of data available on SSDV had been collected from service providers. To address the lack of available data, the SSDV WG has undertaken a quantitative study of the prevalence and types of violence and abuse indicated in same sex relationships in the Sydney gay and lesbian identified community. Further, the research aimed to explore the types of support that respondents who had experienced domestic violence sought.

1 Island, D. & Lettelier, P. (1991) Men who beat the men who love them: Battered gay men and domestic violence Harrington Park Press, New York.

2 Pitts, M., Smith, A., Mitchell, A. & Patel, S. (2006) Private Lives: A report on the health and wellbeing of GLBTI Australians, ARCShS, Melbourne.

3 Chan, C. (2005) Domestic Violence in Gay and Lesbian Relationships Domestic & Family Violence Clearinghouse Topic Paper.

4 Ibid.

5 Tully, C.T. (2000) Lesbians, Gays & the Empowerment Perspective, Columbia University Press, New York.

6 Island, D. & Lettelier, P. Op cit.

7 Lettelier, P. (1996) 'Twin Epidemics: Domestic Violence and HIV Infection Among Gay and Bisexual Men,' in Violence in Lesbian and Gay Domestic Partnerships, (C.M Renzetti & C.H. Miley eds.) Haworth Press.

8 Heintz, A. & Melendez, R. (2006) 'Intimate partner violence and HIV/STD risk among lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals', Journal of interpersonal violence, Vol. 21, No. 2, pp. 193-208.

9 ACON (AIDS Council of NSW) (2004) Homelessness and Same Sex Domestic Violence in the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program.

10 Chan, op Cit.

11 Cerise, S. (2006) Same Sex Domestic Violence Community Awareness Campaign: Evaluation Report, ACON: Sydney.

Numerous studies of the help-seeking behaviours of heterosexual women experiencing domestic violence have found that the most common type of support is that provided by friends and family.¹² Very little research has focused on informal help-seeking behaviours of victims of SSDV; instead the focus has predominantly been formal service provision. Renzetti's (1989) mixed method study of help-seeking behaviours of lesbians experiencing domestic violence found that they most frequently sought help from friends (69%) and the next most frequently sought assistance was a counsellor (58%). Renzetti found that only one third of victims sought help from family, and the majority of those who did seek help from family found this support unhelpful. Respondents who did not seek assistance from family reported that this was because either their sexuality was unknown to their family, or alternatively, if their sexuality was known, the respondent did not want to reinforce the family's already critical opinion.¹³

METHOD AND ANALYSIS

The research instrument was developed by members of the Same Sex Domestic Violence Working Group (SSDV WG) research steering committee. The instrument was a self administered 2-page survey and provided a structured means to examine the nature and extent of violence and abuse in the respondent's relationships. The draft questionnaire was piloted amongst ACON staff and was modified to take into account the feedback provided. The final survey was approved by the SSDV WG meeting in February 2006. A copy of the survey is attached as Appendix 1.

A convenience or accidental sampling strategy was utilised at the 2006 New Mardi Gras Fair Day on Sunday 19th February 2006 at Victoria Park, Sydney. The survey was available at a number of stalls from 10am through to 5pm. The SSDV WG selected Fair Day to conduct the survey due to the scale of the event – historically attracting a large and diverse section of the GLBT communities, and thus providing convenient access to the target group.

The Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project (AVP) coordinated the survey and was the primary stall for recruitment of participants. The methods used to engage and recruit respondents were the provision of AVP resources – whistles, magnets and postcards. Upon completing the survey, respondents were provided with SSDV pamphlets and referral contact numbers should support be required. In addition, the survey form had a tear off slip that provided respondents with referrals to service providers. The data from 314 completed surveys was collated and analysed via SurveyMonkey, an online web survey tool.

¹² Hadeed, L.F. & El-Bassel, L.F. (2006) 'Social Support Among Afro-Trinidadian Women Experiencing Intimate Partner Violence,' in *Violence Against Women*, Vol 12 (8), pp. 740-760.; Liang, B., Goodman, L., Tummala-Narra, P. & Weintraub, S. (2005) 'A Theoretical Framework for Understanding Help-Seeking Processes Among Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence' in *American Journal of Community Psychology*, Vol. 36 (1/2) pp.71-85.; Burke, J.G., Gielen, A.C., McDonnell, K.A., O'Campo, P. & Maman, S. (2001) 'The Process of Ending Abuse in Intimate Relationships: A Qualitative Exploration of the Transtheoretical Model' in *Violence Against Women*, Vol 7(10) pp. 144-163.; Tan, C., Basta, J., Sullivan, C., & Davidson, W. (1995). The role of social support in the lives of women exiting domestic violence shelters: An experimental study,' in *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 10(4), 437-451.

¹³ Renzetti, C. (1989) 'Building a Second Closet: Third Party Responses to Victims of Lesbian Partner Abuse,' in *Family Relations*, Vol 38 (2), pp.157-163.

Of the 314 respondents who completed the survey; six (6) respondents were found to be non-resident, and have thus been excluded in the analysis. Therefore, the size of the final sample is 308 Australian residents.

WHO ARE THE RESPONDENTS?

Gender

The majority of the respondents of the survey were female (61.4%), while male respondents made up just over one third (37.7%) of the sample. 0.6% of participants identified as transgender and 0.3% of participants identified as intersex.

Table 1: Respondents by Gender

GENDER	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS
Female	189
Male	116
Transgender	2
Intersex	1
TOTAL	(308)

Sexuality

The survey asked respondents to identify their sexuality. Over half the respondents identified as lesbian or gay woman (54.5%), 34.1% identified as gay or homosexual man, and 7.8% identified as bisexual. There were 3.2% respondents who identified as heterosexual and 0.3% who chose the 'other' category.

Age

The 26-35 age group was the most common for participants, followed by the 36-45 bracket and then 18-25 bracket. The 15-17 and 66 or over bracket were not well represented in the sample. Please note that as one male respondent did not indicate an age, the overall age total is 307 only.

Table 2: Respondents by age

AGE BRACKET OF RESPONDENTS	No OF RESPONDENTS	% OF RESPONDENTS
15 – 17	4	1.3
18 – 25	63	20.5
15 – 17	4	1.3
18 – 25	63	20.5
26 – 35	109	35.5
36 – 45	74	24.1
46 – 55	47	15.3
56 – 65	9	2.9
66 or over	1	0.3
TOTAL (307)	100	

RESULTS

Cultural Background

A significant proportion of respondents (80.8%) disclosed their ethnic or cultural background. The sample is diverse and is representational with 32 different ethnic or cultural groups; whilst almost two thirds of respondents identified as Anglo or Anglo Australian (62.4%). See appendix 2 for the cultural analysis of the sample.

Region of residence

Respondents indicated living primarily in the Sydney region, with almost one quarter of the sample located in the Inner West (23.2%), followed by Central Sydney (13.7%) and Outer Western Sydney (13.0%). A small portion of the sample did reside in areas other than Sydney.

Table 3: Respondent Residence

REGION	No OF RESPONDENTS	% OF RESPONDENTS
Inner West	71	23.2
Central Sydney	42	13.7
Outer Western	40	13.0
Western Suburbs	30	9.7
North Sydney	21	6.8
St. George/ Sutherland	19	6.2
Central Coast	14	4.5
Eastern Suburbs	13	4.2
Australian Capital Territory	13	4.2
North Western Sydney	11	3.6
South West	11	3.6
Illawarra/ South Coast	7	2.3
Hunter Region	6	1.9
Unknown	4	1.3
Regional NSW	2	0.6
Victoria 2	0.6	
Queensland	1	0.3
South Australia	1	0.3
TOTAL No OF RESPONDENTS	(308)	100.0

Relationship Status

Overall, 70.4% respondents reported being in a current relationship. 69.9% of those in a relationship resided with their partner. A 'single' status was indicated by 29.6% of the sample.

TYPES OF ABUSE

Respondents were asked to indicate whether their partner had displayed abusive behaviours and, if so to identify the types of abuse displayed. The same questions were asked for both previous and current relationships.

All Respondents Previous and Current Relationships

For all respondents the four most frequently indicated forms of abuse were controlling-jealous behaviour (47.7%); followed by humiliation (45.1%); physical abuse (34.4%) and social isolation (30.8%). Respondents who indicated abuse in both a current and a previous relationship have only been counted once.

Table 4: Types of abuse – All Respondents Current and Previous Relationships

RANK	TYPES OF ABUSE	No OF RESPONDENTS	% OF RESPONDENTS
1.	Acted over-protective and become jealous for no reason	147	47.7
2.	Humiliated you, called you names or made fun of you to make you feel worthless	139	45.1
3.	Hit, kicked, pushed or thrown things at you	106	34.4
4.	Made it difficult for you to attend social events or to see friends or family	95	30.8
5.	Controlled your money against your will	55	17.8
6.	Forced you to engage in sexual acts that you weren't comfortable with	52	16.8
7.	Threatened to 'out' you to your family, friends or work	52	16.8
TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS		(308)	100.0

All Respondents Current Relationships

For all 308 respondents, the most frequently reported forms of abuse in a current relationship were controlling-jealous behaviour (6.2%); humiliation (4.5%); social isolation (3.2%) and outing (2.6%).

Table 5: Types of abuse – All Respondents Current Relationships

RANK	TYPES OF ABUSE	No OF RESPONDENTS	% OF RESPONDENTS
1.	Acted over-protective and become jealous for no reason	19	6.2
2.	Humiliated you, called you names or made fun of you to make you feel worthless	14	4.5
3.	Made it difficult for you to attend social events or to see friends or family	10	3.2
4.	Threatened to 'out' you to your family, friends or work	8	2.6
5.	Hit, kicked, pushed or thrown things at you	6	1.9
6.	Forced you to engage in sexual acts that you weren't comfortable with	4	1.3
7.	Controlled your money against your will	4	1.3
TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS		(308)	100.0

All Respondents Previous Relationships

For all 308 respondents the most common form of abuse reported in a previous relationship was controlling-jealous behaviour (43.2%); followed by humiliation (42.2%); physical abuse (32.5%) and social isolation (28.2%).

RESULTS

Table 6: Types of Abuse – All Respondents Previous Relationships

RANK	TYPES OF ABUSE	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	% OF RESPONDENTS
1.	Acted over-protective and become jealous for no reason	133	43.2
2.	Humiliated you, called you names or made fun of you to make you feel worthless	130	42.2
3.	Hit, kicked, pushed or thrown things at you	100	32.5
4.	Made it difficult for you to attend social events or to see friends or family	87	28.2
5.	Controlled your money against your will	52	16.9
6.	Forced you to engage in sexual acts that you weren't comfortable with	48	15.6
7.	Threatened to 'out' you to your family, friends or work	44	14.3
TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS		(308)	

Female Current Relationships

Among the 189 female respondents the most commonly reported forms of abuse within current relationships were humiliation and controlling-jealous behaviour (4.7%); followed by social isolation (2.6%) and outing (1.1%).

Table 7: Types of Abuse – Female Current Relationships

RANK	TYPES OF ABUSE	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	% OF RESPONDENTS
1.	Humiliated you, called you names or made fun of you to make you feel worthless	9	4.7
2.	Acted over-protective and become jealous for no reason	9	4.7
3.	Made it difficult for you to attend social events or to see friends or family	5	2.6
4.	Threatened to 'out' you to your family, friends or work	2	1.15
	Forced you to engage in sexual acts that you weren't comfortable with	2	1.1
6.	Hit, kicked, pushed or thrown things at you	2	1.1
7.	Controlled your money against your will	1	0.5
TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS		(189)	

Female Previous Relationships

Among the 189 female respondents the most frequently reported form of abuse in a previous relationship was humiliation (46.0%) followed by controlling-jealous behaviour (45.5%); physical violence (36.5%) and social isolation (31.7%).

Table 8: Types of Abuse – Female Previous Relationships

RANK	TYPES OF ABUSE	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	% OF RESPONDENTS
1.	Humiliated you, called you names or made fun of you to make you feel worthless	87	46.0
2.	Acted over-protective and become jealous for no reason	86	45.5
3.	Hit, kicked, pushed or thrown things at you	69	36.5
4.	Made it difficult for you to attend social events or to see friends or family	60	31.7
5.	Controlled your money against your will	37	19.6
6.	Forced you to engage in sexual acts that you weren't comfortable with	35	18.5
7.	Threatened to 'out' you to your family, friends or work	31	16.4
TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS		(189)	

Male Current Relationships

The most commonly reported form of abuse among the 116 male respondents was controlling-jealous behaviour (8.6%) with 4.3% of the male sample indicating outing; social isolation and humiliation as the next most common types of abuse.

Table 9: Types of Abuse – Male Current Relationships

RANK	TYPES OF ABUSE	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	% OF RESPONDENTS
1.	Acted over-protective and become jealous for no reason	10	8.6
2.	Threatened to 'out' you to your family, friends or work	5	4.3
3.	Made it difficult for you to attend social events or to see friends or family	5	4.3
4.	Humiliated you, called you names or made fun of you to make you feel worthless	5	4.3
5.	Controlled your money against your will	3	2.6
6.	Hit, kicked, pushed or thrown things at you	3	2.6
7.	Forced you to engage in sexual acts that you weren't comfortable with	2	1.7
TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS		(116)	

Male Previous Relationships

In previous relationships, the most frequently indicated form of abuse was controlling-jealous behaviour (38.8%); followed by humiliation (35.3%); physical abuse (25.8%) and social isolation (22.4%).

Table 10: Types of Abuse – Male Previous Relationships

RANK	TYPES OF ABUSE	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	% OF RESPONDENTS
1.	Acted over-protective and become jealous for no reason	45	38.8
2.	Humiliated you, called you names or made fun of you to make you feel worthless	41	35.3
3.	Hit, kicked, pushed or thrown things at you	30	25.8
4.	Made it difficult for you to attend social events or to see friends or family	26	22.4
5.	Controlled your money against your will	14	12.1
6.	Forced you to engage in sexual acts that you weren't comfortable with	12	10.3
7.	Threatened to 'out' you to your family, friends or work	12	10.3
TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS		(116)	

Transgender respondents

Two (2) respondents identified as transgender. Both respondents reported abuse in a current relationship. One transgender respondent indicated "outing" and the other reported physical violence. One transgender respondent indicated humiliation and controlling-jealous behaviour in a previous relationship.

Intersex respondents

One respondent who identified as intersex recorded a response for each type of abuse within the previous relationship category.

RESULTS

Indicators of abuse by age

Respondents aged 18 – 25 indicated high levels of humiliation, outing and controlling, jealous behaviour compared to other age groups. Levels of abuse appear lower in the 26 – 35 age range. The 36 – 45 age range reported high levels of a range of forms of abuse, most worryingly reporting the highest levels of physical and sexual abuse of any age group. The levels of abuse appear to decline in the 46 – 55 age range, with the exception of social isolation which may be more of an issue for older GLBT people.

Table 11: All Respondents Current and Previous Abuse Indicated by Age

AGE	NO OF RESPONDENTS	HUMILIATION %	OUTING %	SOCIAL ISOLATION %	CONTROLLING-JEALOUS %	FINANCIAL CONTROL %	PHYSICAL ABUSE %	SEXUAL ABUSE %
15 – 17	4	25.0	25.0	25.0	25.0	25.0	25.0	25.0
18 – 25	63	49.2	23.8	33.3	57.1	19.0	30.2	17.5
26 – 35	109	40.4	11.9	22.0	39.4	11.9	28.4	12.8
36 – 45	74	48.6	22.9	39.2	51.4	20.3	48.6	22.9
46 – 55	47	44.6	8.5	40.4	51.0	27.6	31.9	19.1
56 – 65	9	55.5	11.1	11.1	33.3	11.1	33.3	0.0
66 over	1	100.0	100.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	100.0	0.0
TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	(307)*							

(*one male respondent did not indicate an age group)

Levels of Assistance Sought

Of the 189 respondents who indicated one or more abusive behaviours in a current or previous relationship, less than half (42.3%) sought any assistance, either formal or informal.

Of those who reported one or more forms of abuse, 32.8% sought assistance from friend and family networks. The most common type of formal support accessed was provided by a counsellor/ psychologist/ social worker (19.0%).

Table 12: Types of Assistance – All Genders Previous and Current Relationships

RANK	TYPE OF ASSISTANCE SOUGHT	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	% OF RESPONDENTS
1.	Family/ friends	62	32.8
2.	Counsellor/ psychologist/ social worker	36	19.0
3.	Police	22	11.6
4.	Women's Health Centre	12	6.3
5.	Legal Service	11	5.8
6.	ACON/ Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project	8	4.2
7.	GP/ Medical Centre	8	4.2
8.	Victim of Crime Service	6	3.2
9.	Sexual Assault Service	6	3.2
10.	Hospital	5	2.6
11.	Domestic Violence Line	4	2.1
12.	Other	0	0.0
TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS WHO REPORTED ONE OR MORE FORMS OF ABUSE			(189)

Female respondents

53.5% of female respondents who indicated one or more forms of abuse in a previous or current relationship did not seek any form of assistance. 46.5% of the female respondents did seek assistance. Family and/or friends were accessed most frequently (37.1%) followed by assistance from a counsellor/ psychologist/ social worker (21.6%).

Table 13: Types of Assistance – Female Respondents Previous and Current Relationships

RANK	TYPE OF ASSISTANCE SOUGHT	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	% OF RESPONDENTS
1.	Family/friends	43	37.1
2.	Counsellor/ psychologist/ social worker	25	21.6
3.	Police	17	14.7
4.	Women's Health Centre	11	9.5
5.	Legal Service	11	9.5
6.	GP/ Medical Centre	6	5.2
7.	Victim of Crime Service	5	4.3
8.	Sexual Assault Service	5	4.3
9.	ACON/ Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project	4	3.5
10.	Domestic Violence Line	4	3.5
11.	Hospital	4	3.5
12.	Other	0	0.0
TOTAL NUMBER OF FEMALE RESPONDENTS WHO REPORTED ONE OR MORE FORMS OF ABUSE			(116)

RESULTS

Male respondents

67.1% of male respondents who indicated one or more forms of abuse in a previous or current relationship did not seek any assistance or support. 32.9% of male respondents did seek assistance. Among the 70 male respondents who reported experiencing abusive behaviour the most common form of assistance was informal support from family/ friends (24.3%) followed by professional support from a counsellor/ psychologist/ social worker (11.4%).

Table 14: Types of Assistance – Male Respondents Previous and Current Relationships

RANK	TYPE OF ASSISTANCE SOUGHT	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	% OF RESPONDENTS
1.	Family/friends	17	24.3
2.	Counsellor/ psychologist/ social worker	8	11.4
3.	Police	5	7.1
4.	ACON/ Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project	4	5.7
5.	GP/ Medical Centre	2	2.9
6.	Victim of Crime Service	1	1.4
7.	Sexual Assault Service	1	1.4
8.	Hospital	0	0.0
9.	Legal Service	0	0.0
10.	Domestic Violence Line	0	0.0
11.	Women's Health Centre	0	0.0
12.	Other	0	0.0
TOTAL NUMBER OF MALE RESPONDENTS WHO REPORTED ONE OR MORE FORMS OF ABUSE		(70)	

Transgender respondents

All respondents sought assistance; however, only two of the possible twelve support services were indicated. Counsellor/ psychologist/ social worker was the most common response (100%) and family and or friends ranked second (50%). No other services were sought.

Intersex respondents

This individual accessed family/ friends, hospital, counsellor/ psychologist/ social worker and the women's health centre for service and support in relation to the abuse experienced.

CHILDREN UNDER 16 YEARS

Of the 36 respondents who reported experiencing one or more forms of abuse in a current relationship, 13.8% also reported having children under the age of 16 in their care during this relationship. 26.6% of women who reported abuse in a current relationship also indicated that they had children under 16 in their care. 5.2% of male respondents who indicated abuse in a current relationship also indicated that they had children under 16 in their care.

Of the 153 respondents that experienced abuse in a previous relationship, 16.3% indicated having children in their care during that relationship. 22.7% of female respondents who reported abuse in a previous relationship also indicated that they had children under 16 in their care during that relationship. 3.9% of men who indicated one or more forms of abuse in a previous relationship indicated that they had a child under 16 in their care during that relationship.

LENGTH OF TIME SPENT IN AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP

Current Relationships

16 respondents disclosed the length of time spent in a current abusive relationship. The mean was 3 years with a range of 1 month to 11 years.

Previous Relationships

Of the 138 participants who indicated a previous abusive relationship the mean length of time for this relationship was 3 years, ranging from 1 week to 30 years.

Table 15: Relationship Length & Number of Abusive Relationships

		LENGTH OF TIME IN AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP MEAN (IN YEARS)	No OF REPORTED ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIPS
Female	Current	2.5	-
	Previous	3.1	2-3
Male	Current	4.5	-
	Previous	3	2-3
Transgender	Current	0.5	-
	Previous	0.5	2
Intersex	Current	-	-
	Previous	2	2

DISCUSSION

Overall, the research demonstrates a high incidence of violent and/or abusive behaviours amongst the respondents.

TYPES OF ABUSE & GENDER

An overview across male, female and transgender respondents demonstrates a pattern of behaviours that are remarkably similar across current and previous relationships. The reported types of abuse, in descending order from most to least frequent, are: controlling-jealous behaviour (47.7%); humiliation (45.1%); physical abuse (34.4%); social isolation (30.8%); financial control (17.8%); sexual abuse (16.8%) and outing (16.8%).

SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE

Significant gender-based differences existed between the types of support and assistance sought. Disturbingly, 67.1% of male respondents and 53.5% of female respondents who experienced abuse did not seek any support. For the female, male and intersex samples, the most common source of support provided by family/ friends; and, the most common formal support was provided by a counsellor/ psychologist/ social worker. Since the most frequently accessed type of formal service provision was from a counsellor / psychologist / social worker it appears that there is a high demand for clinicians skilled in working with domestic violence in same sex relationships. For both the male and female respondents the police were the third most frequently accessed support service. However, transgender and intersex respondents did not contact the police for assistance.

Compared to male respondents, women were more likely to contact formal service providers and contacted a wider range of these services, including medical, legal and support services. One male respondent accessed a Victims of Crime support service and a sexual assault service, and was the only male respondent to do so. Two men contacted their GP; no men sought assistance at a hospital. Except for the police, no other legal services were sought. After the police, ACON was the next most frequent service contacted. Men were more likely to contact ACON than women.

CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

When analysed from a cultural perspective, the overall sample reflects a culturally diverse population. Indications of violence and abuse occurred across most cultural groups, with the largest sub-sample – Anglo / Australian recording high levels. Respondents of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander heritage recorded extremely high levels of abuse with 80% of respondents indicating one or more abusive behaviours.

RELATIONSHIPS

Whilst acknowledging that the majority of gay and lesbian relationships are based on love and respect; the incidence of abusive behaviours suggested by this sample is concerning. Previous relationships for all genders exhibited the highest incidence of violence and abuse. On the average the number of relationships in which abuse occurred was 2-3 relationships, highlighting the potential for a GLBT individual to experience re-victimisation in future relationships.

CHILDREN

The issue of children witnessing violence or abuse has been an issue of concern amongst the human services sector for some time. 5 respondents (4 female respondents and 1 male) indicated one or more forms of abuse within a current relationship and also indicated that they had children under the age of 16 in their care. These respondents represent 13.8% of all respondents who indicated forms of abuse in a current relationship. In previous relationships, 25 respondents (24 female and 1 male) indicated that they had experienced abuse in a previous relationship and that they had children in their care during that relationship. This represents 16.3% of all respondents who indicated one or more forms of abuse in a previous relationship. It was more common for women than for men to indicate that they had children in care during a current or previous relationship where one or more forms of abuse was indicated. Children who witness domestic violence in their parent's relationship can be severely impacted by that experience. Children witnessing domestic violence in same sex relationships is a significant issue.

LIMITATIONS

Challenges presented in quantifying the prevalence of violence and abuse in LGBT relationships involves methodological issues with non-probability-based sampling as the only method available for this population. This has raised concern over the representativeness of previous studies, and the ability to generalise results to the LGBT population. Further, self-reporting victimisation bias and the absence of a standard operationalisation of domestic violence within earlier studies have been problematic.¹⁴ Whilst recognising these limitations, the SSDV WG is not generalising the results to the broader GLBT community. Yet, it must be acknowledged that a large number of respondents in this survey indicated behaviours that were abusive and/or violence.

A high number of respondents (61.4%) selected one or more of types of abuse. Analysis shows that the two most common types of behaviours selected were controlling-jealous behaviour (47.7%); and humiliation (45.1%). Given the potential for subjectivity and the ambiguous nature of these two particular forms of behaviour, these indications may have elevated the overall level of reported violent and abusive behaviour. However, when the types of abuse are analysed independently, a number of respondents also reported having experienced physical and other forms of abuse. Over half of those reporting that their partner acted controlling-jealous also indicated experiencing physical abuse (60.4%). Of the respondents who indicated experiencing humiliation, 63.1% also recorded physical violence. Therefore, whether the indicators are analysed in isolation or collectively the sample does represent high levels of abuse.

The levels of abuse in the Fair Day data are higher than the SSDV WG anticipated. The AVP stall was the primary source of recruiting respondents and was highly visible, with SSDV campaign material prominently displayed. The eye catching artwork and message – ‘There’s no pride in domestic violence’ may have drawn members of the community to the stall that have personally experienced domestic violence. Once individuals approached the stall, the opportunity to participate in research was offered and the majority of individuals accepted. Therefore, there is a possibility that higher than expected numbers of individuals who had experienced violence and or abuse completed the survey, than if there had been no SSDV campaign material displayed. It is recommended for future Fair Day research that questionnaires have an identifying marker indicating at which stall the survey was completed. This will help capture the information about the location of data collection. This method is used for the Gay Men’s Periodic Health surveys.

Respondents who identified as heterosexual and who had experienced violent or abusive behaviours (2.1%) were not extracted from the sample, as the gender of the perpetrator(s) was unknown. The survey title identified the research as relating to same sex domestic violence, and the design of the survey successfully captures data pertaining to violent or abusive partner behaviours. However, a further question to ascertain the gender of the partner(s) is necessary for subsequent research. Knowledge of the gender of the respondent partner(s) would enable the removal of heterosexual data from the study. For some individuals, sexuality is not static and is fluid over time. Therefore, sexual identification in one context may not be representative of the individual’s entire relationship history. In these instances, sexual identity may not truly represent the gender of the perpetrator. Two respondents identifying as lesbian recorded in the comment section that the perpetrator was male. Knowledge of perpetrator’s gender would alleviate any misinterpretation of the domestic violence data.

A question relating to gender would assist in further analysis of bisexual data. A high level of abuse was reported by respondents who identified as bisexual (62.5%). In particular, males who identified as bisexual reported disturbingly high levels of violent or abusive behaviour in relationships (88.9%), almost half of the female sample that identified as bisexuals reported abuse in relationships (46.7%).

¹⁴ Rohrbaugh, J.B. (2006) ‘Domestic Violence in Same-Gender Relationships’ in *Family Court Review*, Vol 44 (2), pp.287-299.; Kuehnle, K. & Sullivan, A. (2003) ‘Gay and Lesbian Victimization: Reporting Factors in Domestic Violence and Bias Incidents,’ in *Criminal and Justice Behaviour*, Vol 30 (1), pp. 85-96.; Greenwood, G.L., Relf, M.V., Huang, B., Pollack, L.M., Canchola, M.S. & Catania, J.A. (2002) ‘Battering Victimization Among a Probability Based Sample of Men Who Have Sex With Men,’ in *American Journal of Public Health*; Vol 92 (12) pp. 1964-1969.; Burke, T.W., Jordan, M.L., & Owen, S.S. (2002) ‘A Cross-National Comparison of Gay and Lesbian Domestic Violence,’ in *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, Vol. 18 (3), pp. 231-257.; Burke, L.K. & Follingstad, D.R. (1999) ‘Violence in Lesbian and Gay Relationships: Theory, Prevalence and Correlational Factors,’ in *Clinical Psychology Review*, Vol 19 (5), pp. 487-512.

CONCLUSION

The research found there were significant levels of violence and abuse in same sex relationships within the Sydney gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender communities. The nature and extent of abuse found in same sex relationships in this study is comparable to other Australian and international studies on same sex domestic violence, and concurs with the body of pre-existing knowledge on this topic. Further, this study reinforced the notion that patterns and tactics of abuse in same sex relationships (i.e. emotional, verbal and physical) are similar to the patterns and tactics of abuse found in heterosexual relationships.

The research has raised a number of key issues for policy makers and service providers working with domestic violence and or GLBT people.

The key issues are

- The cumulative impact of abuse and re-victimisation. Respondents who reported abuse in a relationship were more likely to have entered into subsequent abusive relationships and endured several violent partners; therefore the cumulative impact of abuse needs to be considered.
- There were high levels of threatened 'outing' and social isolation; these specific aspects of abuse have a unique impact upon people experiencing DV in same sex relationships.
- Young people aged 18-25 reported high levels of humiliation, threatened 'outing' and controlling or jealous behaviour. Young people entering into first relationships are particularly vulnerable to experiencing abuse.
- Sexual health risks associated with the high levels of forced sexual acts and the potential repercussions of HIV and or other sexually transmitted infections.
- The effects on children of witnessing or experiencing violence or abuse is pertinent for same sex relationships, with 13.2% of respondents who had indicated violence or abuse in a current / previous relationship reporting that children were present in the relationship.
- Generally low levels of assistance were sought by respondents who previously or currently experienced abuse. Only 42.3% of respondents who reported abusive behaviour accessed any kind of support service. There was a significant gender based difference with only 32.9% of male respondents accessing some type of assistance compared to 46.5% of females.
- Friends and family were the most common type of support reinforcing the need to maintain community awareness of domestic violence in same sex relationships. 32.8% of respondents who reported one or more forms of abusive behaviour accessed support from friends and family.
- Although the majority of the respondents were from the metropolitan Sydney area, a number of respondents who reported abusive relationships were from regional NSW, highlighting the need for service provision across the state.

In conclusion, this research has further established domestic violence in same sex relationships as a critical issue for human services in Australia. Although there has been work done to increase community awareness of the issue, and build the capacity of agencies to respond more effectively to SSDV, the extent of abuse in relationships found in this report calls for a more comprehensive response from Government, and other relevant agencies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This report recommends:

- Wide implementation of training and development programs for service providers and key agencies including police, local court staff, magistrates, and hospital staff to enable an effective response to people experiencing SSDV.
- The allocation of funding for specific and specialised services in counselling, housing and emergency accommodation, court assistance, and sexual assault.
- Further work to raise awareness of same sex domestic violence, particularly amongst young people.
- Further work to increase awareness about SSDV services within GLBT communities.
- Further research to investigate the impact of children in same sex relationships where domestic violence is present.
- community education within GLBT communities to improve the capacity of friends and family of those experiencing domestic violence to provide appropriate and accurate support and information.

APPENDIX 1

LESBIAN & GAY ANTI VIOLENCE PROJECT RELATIONSHIP SURVEY

1. Do you identify as
 - Female
 - Male
 - Transgender
 - Intersex
2. Which best describes your sexuality
 - Lesbian/Gay woman
 - Gay/Homosexual man
 - Bisexual
 - Heterosexual
 - Other (please specify)
3. Which of these age groups do you belong to
 - 15 - 17
 - 18 - 25
 - 26 - 35
 - 36 - 45
 - 46 - 55
 - 56 - 65
 - 66 or over
4. Do you live in Australia? Yes No
5. What is your postcode? |_|_|_|_|_|
6. Do you identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander? Yes No
7. Please state your ethnic or cultural background(s)

- 8 a) Are you single
in a relationship
- b) If you are in a relationship, do you live with this person? Yes No
9. Think about your current or past relationships and answer the following questions. (Tick if yes)
 - Has your partner ever
 - Humiliated you, called you names or made fun of you to make you feel worthless
 - Threatened to 'out' you to your family, friends or work
 - Made it difficult for you to attend social events or to see friends or family
 - Acted over-protective and become jealous for no reason
 - Controlled your money against your will
 - Hit, kicked, pushed or thrown things at you
 - Forced you to engage in sexual acts that you weren't comfortable with
10. If these behaviours occurred in a previous relationship how long did it happen for?
 - |_| years |_| months
11. Did you have children, under the age of 16, in your care during this relationship? Yes No
12. If these behaviours are occurring in a current relationship how long has this been happening?
 - |_| years |_| months
13. Do you have children, under the age of 16, in your care in this relationship? Yes No
14. Have you experienced these behaviours in more than one relationship? Yes No
15. If yes, in how many relationships has this occurred? |_|
16. If you have experienced any of these behaviours did you/have you sought assistance? Yes No
17. If you sought assistance, did you contact/ talk to any of the following? (Tick if yes)
 - Family/friends
 - Police
 - ACON/Lesbian & Gay Anti-Violence Project
 - Legal Service
 - Victim of Crime Service
 - Hospital
 - GP/medical centre
 - Sexual Assault Service
 - Counsellor/ Psychologist/ Social Worker
 - Women's Health Centre
 - Domestic Violence Line
 - Other service (please specify)
18. Do you have anything else that you would like to add?

APPENDIX 2

RESPONDENT CULTURAL BACKGROUND

CULTURAL BACKGROUND	No OF RESPONDENTS	% OF RESPONDENTS
Anglo/ Anglo Australian	152	62.4
United Kingdom	22	9.2
Chinese	6	2.5
Maltese	6	2.5
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	5	2.1
Indian	5	2.1
New Zealand	5	2.1
European	4	1.6
German	4	1.6
Jewish	4	1.6
Greek	3	1.2
Italian	3	1.2
Polish	3	1.2
American	2	0.8
Asian	2	0.8
Dutch	2	0.8
Eurasian	2	0.8
Filipino	2	0.8
South American	2	0.8
Thai	2	0.8
Turkish	2	0.8
Canadian	1	0.4
Danish	1	0.4
French	1	0.4
Indonesian	1	0.4
Japanese	1	0.4
Malaysian	1	0.4
Mauritian	1	0.4
Russian	1	0.4
Serbian	1	0.4
Spanish	1	0.4
Vietnamese	1	0.4
TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	(249)	100.0

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SSDV Working Group

The SSDV working group is made up of representatives of the following organisations: ACON (Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project, Housing Project, Counselling Unit); Inner City Legal Centre; City of Sydney; NSW Police; St. Vincent's Hospital; Women's Health Unit, SESIAHS; St Vincent's Community Health; NSW Department of Health; Inner City Legal Centre; NSW Attorney General's Department; NSW DV Line; Education Centre Against Violence; Langton Centre, SESIAHS; Dolores Refuge; St. George Domestic Violence Counselling; Department of Community Services; Sydney Psychology Pty Ltd; Sydney Sexual Health Centre; Relationships Australia; Northern Sydney Sexual Health, HIV & Hep C Service and Same Sex Domestic Abuse Group.

Research Participants

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Further Information

For further information on same sex domestic violence, recovering from a violent relationship or supporting a friend in an abusive same sex relationship see www.ssdv.acon.org.au.

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HELP & SUPPORT

NSW POLICE

In an emergency call 000. The Police have the power and responsibility to intervene to protect you from physical or sexual violence and stalking. If it is not an emergency you can contact the Police switch on 9281 0000. You can ask for the nearest station or to speak with a specially trained Gay and Lesbian Liaison Officer or a Domestic Violence Liaison Officer.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LINE

The Domestic Violence Line, run by the Department of Community Services, is free and staffed 24 -hours, 7 days a week. Staff at the Domestic Violence Line are trained in dealing with gay men and lesbians experiencing domestic violence. The Domestic Violence Line can help you find emergency accommodation, refer you to services such as counselling, family support, legal services, hospitals and health centres and provide advice and information about Apprehended Violence Orders and how to apply for them

Freecall: 1800 65 64 63 TTY: 1800 67 14 42

ACON SERVICES

ACON is a health organisation based in the gay, lesbian bisexual and transgender communities. The Lesbian & Gay Anti-Violence Project at ACON can provide information and referrals for people experiencing domestic violence, and can help you access ACON services such as emergency housing or counselling. The Anti-Violence Project is generally staffed between 10am and 6pm, Monday to Friday.

Phone: (02) 9206 2116 Freecall: 1800 06 30 60 www.ssdv.acon.org.au

SEXUAL ASSAULT SERVICES

For women, the NSW Rape Crisis Centre offers 24-hour counselling, support and information.

Phone: (02) 9515 3680 TTY: (02) 9181 4349 or 1800 42 40 17

For women or men, the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital's Sexual Assault Service offers 24-hour counselling, support and referral.

Business hours: (02) 9515 9040

After hours: (02) 9516 6111 and ask for the after hours sexual assault worker.

LAWACCESS NSW

LawAccess NSW provides free telephone information. Advice, referral and assistance to people in NSW. The LawAccess website has plain language legal information on general legal matters such as applying for an AVO.

Phone and TTY: 1300 88 85 29 www.lawaccess.nsw.gov.au