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Improving the Law Enforcement Response to LGBT-Identified Individuals

NOVEMBER 4, 2016 AT 3:17 PM ET BY [CARRIE BETTINGER-LOPEZ](#)

Summary: This week, I want to focus specifically on the question of how gender bias may affect law enforcement response to members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT

Last week, I [wrote about](#) several efforts initiated by the Department of Justice to identify and prevent gender bias in law enforcement response to domestic violence and sexual assault. This week, I want to focus specifically on the question of how gender bias may affect law enforcement response to members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) community.

Some sobering statistics help to illustrate the importance of these issues and the urgent need for additional work in this arena. This summer, the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) published the first-ever [nationwide survey](#) on the health risks faced by lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) youth, which includes important statistics on how this population is disproportionately affected by crime. Of the 1.3 million U.S. high school students who identify as gay, lesbian, or bisexual, the survey found that nearly 18 percent have been forced to have sex, compared to about 5 percent of their heterosexual peers. Bisexual and gay students were also twice as likely to have experienced physical violence, sexual dating violence, and bullying. The CDC report also documented the levels of sexual violence, other than rape, that the following populations have experienced in their lifetimes:

- 1 in 8 lesbian women (13.1%)
- Nearly half of bisexual women (46.1%)
- Nearly half of bisexual men (47.4%)
- 4 in 10 gay men (40.2%)

The statistics for LGBT college students are similarly concerning. In January, the Bureau of Justice Statistics and the Office on Violence Against Women released the [Campus Climate Survey Validation Study \(CCSVS\)](#). Through surveys of 25,000 students across 9 demographically diverse schools, the study confirmed previous statistics about campus sexual assault: that on average, more than 1 in 5 (21%) female students experience sexual assault in college, with a significant number of those assaults occurring in the beginning of the academic year; and that 34 percent of college women reported experiencing sexual assault in their lifetimes. But the CCSVS study also provided new data regarding LGBT students, where the news was even worse:

EXPERIENCED SEXUAL ASSAULT IN COLLEGE:

- 28% of transgender women
- 35% of bisexual women

EXPERIENCED SEXUAL ASSAULT IN LIFETIME:

- 46% of transgender women
- 59% of bisexual women
- 42% of gay men and lesbian women

At the White House and throughout the federal government, we are working to foster a better understanding of what these statistics mean for the LGBT community and translating this knowledge into effective prevention and response strategies. DOJ's Guidance on "[Identifying and Preventing Gender Bias in Law Enforcement Response to Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence](#)," described in last week's blog, is one such response. The guidance presents ways for police officers to recognize and address biases, assumptions, and stereotypes about victims. For example, it explains that not all victims of gender-based violence are female, not all perpetrators are male, and, not all intimate partner violence is exclusive to heterosexual relationships. Using the DOJ guidance as a basis for developing trainings, protocols, and improved supervision, can be especially useful to law enforcement when engaging with LGBT survivors, who may not initially feel safe in coming forward to law enforcement with reports about violence in their relationships.

Additionally, the Administration is working with communities across the country to advance recommendations of the [President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing](#) that bear on these issues. The Task Force's final report made recommendations on policy and oversight, training and education practices, and other strategies to address implicit bias and improve cultural responsiveness to the LGBT community. These recommendations include the establishment of policies that (1) prohibit profiling and discrimination based on gender, gender identity/expression and sexual orientation, and (2) that incorporate early training for recruits, as well as top-down training for all officers, on cultural diversity that includes specific responsiveness to LGBT and gender non-conforming individuals. (These policies may

include many of the principles in the [Identifying and Preventing Gender Bias in Law Enforcement Response to Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Guidance](#).)

DOJ has also hosted various convenings, such as a [Roundtable on Identifying and Preventing Gender-Bias in Law Enforcement Response to Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence \(hosted by the Office on Violence Against Women\)](#) and a [Forum on Gender, Sexuality, and 21st Century Policing \(hosted by the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services \(COPS\)\)](#), that have brought together police executives, subject matter experts, and advocates from across the country to discuss specific strategies, best practices, and policies related to policing and the challenges of gender identity and protecting the rights of women and LGBT people. Also, the [White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault](#), co-chaired by the Office of the Vice President and the White House Council on Women and Girls, is working to address the impact of gender violence on all students—including those who identify as LGBT—and to provide schools and law enforcement with practical help to develop effective, compassionate, and respectful approaches to addressing these issues.

Finally, from a data perspective, we need to ensure that we are continuing to capture the full dimensions of law enforcement response to LGBT individuals and any trends over time. In 2012, the Attorney General [announced](#) that the FBI would begin employing a revised definition of rape used in the collection of national crime statistics, ensuring that rape will be more accurately reported by state and local communities in the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting System (UCR). Importantly, the revised UCR definition is more inclusive of sexual assault against men, bisexual, and transgender individuals. The systematic collection of this data over time will guide the development of smart and effective policy responses.



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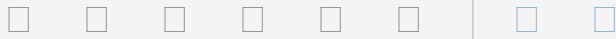
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