



Transgender Sexual Violence Project

www.forge-forward.org/transviolence

Wisconsin data

Transgender Sexual Violence Project: Summary of Wisconsin Data

The Transgender Sexual Violence Project, sponsored by FORGE (For Ourselves: Reworking Gender Expression), conducted a national survey on sexual violence within the transgender and SOFFA (Significant Others, Friends, Family and Allies) community. In addition to a survey, FORGE also led an interactive community dialogue which allowed us to access more detailed information about Wisconsin survivors of sexual violence (both direct and secondary).

Data contained in this handout relate *only* to Wisconsin respondents of the survey. Complete survey responses are available online at www.forge-forward.org/transviolence, providing more generalizable data and trends of how sexual violence has affected individuals within the trans/SOFFA community. Data in this summary are from 32 Wisconsin transgender/SOFFA individuals who responded to the national survey. [The survey data collection was completed by December 31, 2004. The Community Dialogue took place in November of 2004.]

Note: We broadly define transgender to include a large population of people who do not strictly adhere to societally constructed gender norms and stereotypes.

Basic Demographic Information

- Respondents ranged in age from 19 to 57 with 40% in the 41-50 range
- 60% live in or near a major city; 18% live in small communities
- Income ranged from \$0 to over \$80,000, with most people in the \$16,000 – 30,000 range
- Most (81%) respondents had health insurance
- Race of respondents: White (63%), multiracial (16%), Hispanic (9%)
- 41% had one or more disabilities

Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation

- Sex assigned at birth: 69% were classed as female, 31% assigned male
- Gender identity included many write-in classifications, including (in order of frequency): FTM, female, MTF, male, genderqueer, FTM-lesbian identified, femme male, androgynous, trannyfag, non-gendered human, intersex, masculine female, queer, bigendered, T-girl, transman
- Sexual orientation: bisexual (22%), lesbian (19%), queer (19%), gay male (16%), heterosexual (13%), pansexual (6%), celibate (3%)

Basic Sexual Violence Data

- Frequency of sexual violence: 74% experienced more than one incidence of sexual violence
- Type of survivor: 45% were direct survivors (abuse happened directly to them), 45% were both direct and secondary survivors (a secondary survivor is someone who was impacted by sexual violence, but not a direct survivor)
- Abuse/assault occurred most when victims were between 0 and 12 years of age and then again between 19 and 21 years old.
- 86% of survivors knew their abuser
- 21% of abusers were family members, 19% were intimate partners, 15% were dates, only 7% were strangers, 3% were healthcare providers, 2% were police officers. 30% were someone the survivor knew, but who did not fall in the delineated categories.
- Abuse took place in the following locations: 18% in public settings, 16% in childhood home, 16% in adult residence, 16% in partner/date's home, 32% occurred in other locations (public building, healthcare office, workplace, etc.)
- Gender of the perpetrator: male (55%), female (33%), transgender (3%), other/unknown (9%) (Note: many individuals had more than one occurrence of sexual violence, so may have had more than one perpetrator)
- Victim's gender at the time of the assault: female (44%), transgender (29%), male (11%)
- Gender was a contributing factor in the abuse/assault 43% of the time
- 61% of victims did not tell anyone around the time of the abuse/assault

Other Details Provided (selected quotes)

- "I was inappropriately used sexually by my gender therapist in Milwaukee. He began sexually advancing to show me how to be a 'real man', as a way of modeling masculine behavior. It became obvious that I needed to be sexual with him in order to receive the required letter to have chest surgery. We had sex a countless number of times -- sometimes in his office, sometimes my house, sometimes he would make me take him out to dinner and pay the bill. When I realized that this was wrong, I asked him for my surgery letter so I could discontinue 'therapy'. He refused and I had to pay thousands of dollars to reestablish a relationship with another therapist in order to get a surgery letter."
- "Because I was 17, I was scared and didn't have the means to protect myself or even know *what* to do."

Medical Care (physical)

- Medical care was NOT received 75% of the time
- 47% have long term medical conditions or physical scarring from the abuse/assault(s)
- Care was received (in order of frequency reported) at emergency rooms, general doctor's office, specialist office, sexual assault center, STI clinic, complementary medical office, free clinic
- Reasons medical care was received was (in order of frequency reported) to receive psychological services/referrals, evidence collection, a physical injury that required immediate care, to establish a medical record of the incident, for HIV or STI testing/treatment, to have the police called

- All physical medical care was received voluntarily (none against the survivor's will)
- Medical providers knew that the victim was transgender approximately ½ of the time
- Transgender status did not affect the quality of medical care in most cases (14% believe care was compromised because of transgender status)
- Other factors that influenced good quality medical care included race (16%) and no health insurance (16%)

Mental Health Care

- Mental health services were received following an abuse/assault 75% of the time
- The first access of mental health services was most commonly 10 years post abuse/assault
- Many types of mental health services were accessed, including (in order of frequency): one-on-one therapy, self-help books, partner, other survivors, friends, websites, bodywork, listserves, group therapy, social support groups, couples therapy, faith-based support
- 11% of survivors received mental health services against their will
- 5% believed their transgender status *positively* influenced their mental health care, 11% felt their trans status negatively influenced care

What could the mental health care provider do to improve services? (selected quotes)

- "Nothing. The damage was already done."
- "Believed me."
- "Helped us address the clear prejudicial behavior we experienced from other providers and law enforcement."
- "When I was looking for other therapists, I was met with resistance and disbelief that my former therapist was sexually abusive. There seemed to be an 'old boys network' where all the therapists protect each other -- even when there is great harm perpetrated by one of them."

Other Services and Procedures

- Only 6% of survivors had physical evidence collected
- 17% of abuse/assaults were reported to the police
- 16% of survivors received legal services
- Other services/assistance sought included: LGBT community centers, involvement with Take Back the Night, State licensing board, Women's Resource Center, Sexual Assault Victim Services
- If services were not sought, reasons included: abusive police, under 18 when the abuse happened and could not access anonymous services, fear, self-hate, lack of money, did not know where to go for help
- Survivors were met with both support to seek services and encouragement to just "get over it" by friends, peers, parents, partners, and others

What kinds of services would you find useful?

- Connection to other local SV survivors
- Knowledgeable mental health providers
- Ability for minors to get medical care with or without parental consent
- A service to drive victims/survivors to the hospital or medical appointments

“Is there anything else you would like to share?” (selected quotes)

- “Shame has kept me silent all these years. This survey is one of the few times that I have discussed these events. No one wants to hear about this, because therapists are supposed to be God and cannot do any wrong.” [This survivor was abused by hir therapist]
- “Something really needs to be done about the cops. They are horribly misinformed unprepared and misogynistic when it comes to rape cases. That's probably why women/trans/intersexual people don't report.”

More Resources

1. Complete data from the Transgender Sexual Violence Project survey (over 265 survey respondents), as well as the summary report from the November 2004 Community Dialogue, can be found online at www.forge-forward.org/transviolence/
2. Resources on LGBT Sexual Violence (including domestic violence) is available on the FORGE website at www.forge-forward.org/sv/resources.php
3. Contact FORGE / Transgender Sexual Violence Project for more information or answers to specific questions about this Project.
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