

RESEARCH

Hate Crimes Against Gay and Lesbian People in Gauteng: Prevalence, Consequences and Contributing Factors

Research initiative of the Joint Working Group conducted by OUT LGBT Well-being in collaboration with the UNISA Centre for Applied Psychology



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This research was commissioned by the Joint Working Group (JWG) and conducted by OUT LGBT Well-being in collaboration with the UNISA Centre for Applied Psychology



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HATE CRIMES AGAINST GAY AND LESBIAN PEOPLE IN GAUTENG: PREVALENCE, CONSEQUENCES AND CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

Hate crimes against people belonging to minority groups are a global phenomenon that have negative consequences for its victims. Hate crimes refer to:

Actions against a person based on their race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion or political convictions or gender that intend to do harm or intimidate the person and may vary from verbal abuse to murder.

In this brochure, the terms hate crime, bias-crime or victimisation will be used interchangeably. Although all instances of victimisation have a negative impact, crimes based on sexual orientation have a profound impact on both the victims and the group to which they belong (the gay and lesbian community), causing fear and stigmatic stress including challenging the sense of self as a gay person¹. A number of researchers² have found the prevalence of bias-crimes against gay and lesbian people to be high.

This report will look at the findings of a study conducted by OUT LGBT³ Well-being in collaboration with the Joint Working Group⁴ in 2003/4, on levels of empowerment among gay and lesbian people in Gauteng Province, South Africa. This study was the first representative quantitative study of this magnitude (n= 487) to be conducted in South Africa. The study was extremely vast and looked at both macro- and micro-issues. For the purposes of this brochure, the focus will be on victimisation of gay and lesbian⁵ people in Gauteng.

Fear of Victimisation

- The figures from the OUT study reveal that fears of victimisation overall are higher for black⁶ than for white respondents.
- Sexual abuse/rape, physical abuse and verbal abuse were the most feared.
- Domestic violence was feared more by black than white participants.

¹ Herek, G.M., Gillis, J.R. & Cogan, J.C. (1999). Psychological Sequelae of Hate-Crime Victimization Among Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Adults. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 67 (6), 945-951

² Berrill, 1990; Cromstock, 1991; Finn & McNeil, 1987; Herek, 1989

³ LGBT – lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender

⁴ Formerly known as the "Gay and Lesbian Project Team"

⁵ In his brochure, the reference to gay and lesbian people includes a small percentage of bisexual and transgender people.

⁶ Black in this study refers only to black Africans and is not a generic term for all 'non-whites'.

Prevalence Rates

Victimisation Experienced at School

- Victimisation on the basis of sexual orientation was widespread in schools.
- More males than females reported experiencing victimisation at school.
- With the exception of sexual abuse/rape, white males reported the highest rates of victimisation (verbal and physical) experienced in schools.
- Similar prevalence rates were reported for sexual abuse/rape at schools for both males and females.
- The main source of victimisation was pupils.
- Victimisation by teachers was more prevalent among black pupils.
- Victimisation by principals was low except in the case of black females.

Experiences of Victimisation in 2002/ 2003

	Gay and Bisexual men (%)		Gay and Bisexual men (%)	
	Black	White	Black	White
Verbal abuse	39	33	36	40
Physical abuse	15	15	16	15
Sexual abuse	9	5	10	4
Domestic violence	8	7	17	8
Attacks on property	16	16	12	15

- Except for domestic violence and sexual abuse/rape, victimisation is experienced at similar rates for males and females.

Where and Why?

Locations of Hate Crimes

- Hate crimes occurred more frequently:
 - For black people: in public spaces such as main roads, taxi ranks, bus stops, parks and railway stations.
 - For white people: in the workplace, victim's home (highest for white males), pub/club (highest for white females).

Reasons for Victimisation

- The perceived reasons for victimisation experienced by the respondents are given in the table below in order of significance for each group.

Female		Male	
Black	White	Black	White
Sexism	Homophobia	Homophobia	Homophobia
Homophobia	Sexism	Racism	Mugging/robbery
Racism	Religion	Mugging/robbery	Domestic issues
Religion	Mugging/robbery	Sexism	Religion
Domestic issues			

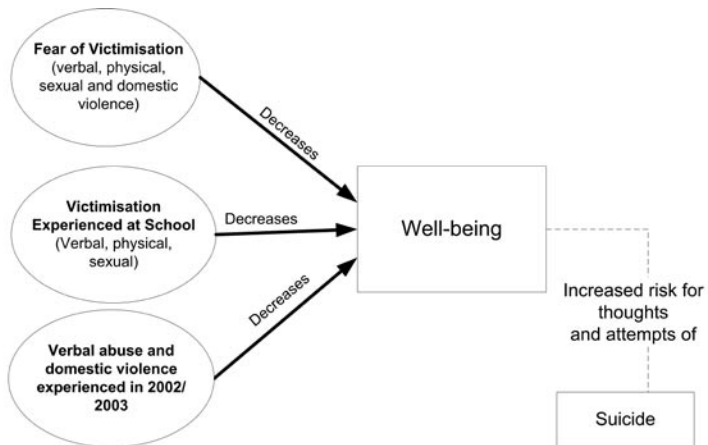
(Please note: Sample size of white women is too small to ensure reliability.)

- Although mugging/robbery does not seem related to sexual orientation, victimisers may view gay and lesbian people as 'soft targets' for crime because they often fail to report such incidents to the police.

Consequences of Victimization

Experience of anti-gay crimes can have a negative impact on well-being, with an increased risk for thoughts of and attempts at suicide, as well as an increase in alcohol consumption as a means of coping.

1. Well-Being and Suicide



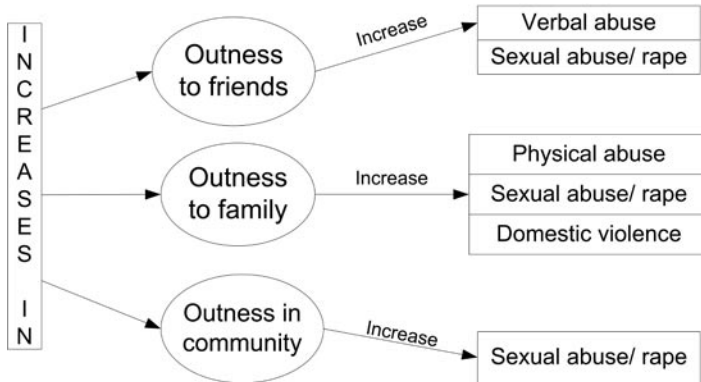
2. Alcohol Use

- Fear of and experience of verbal abuse/harassment result in an increase in alcohol use⁷.

⁷ Note that this is for the sample as a whole. When looking at the different groupings, sexual abuse and domestic violence may prove significant.

Factors affecting Victimization

1. Levels of Outness⁸



2. Time spent Socialising with other LGBT People

- Increased socialising with other LGBT people results in decreased experience of verbal abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse/rape, attacks on property/ possessions.
- Thus it seems that having a sense of community with other LGBT people protects one to some extent from abuse.

3. Education

- Fear of and experiences of domestic violence as well as experiences of sexual abuse/rape decrease as people become more educated, suggesting that the more educated people become, the more empowered they are to take control of their lives.

The above data suggests a need for gay and lesbian organisations in South Africa to work together with the Departments of Education and the South African Police Services to decrease and/or prevent hate crimes against gay and lesbian people.

⁸ Outness refers to the level at which one openly discloses one's sexual orientation.



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