

LESBIAN, GAY, TRANSGENDER AND BISEXUAL (LGTB)
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN NEW YORK CITY

2000 EDITION

A report of the
NEW YORK CITY GAY AND LESBIAN ANTI-VIOLENCE PROJECT





This report was prepared by the
NEW YORK CITY GAY AND LESBIAN
ANTI-VIOLENCE PROJECT (AVP)

Author: Diane Dolan-Soto, CSW
Domestic Violence Program Coordinator

Layout: Ken Moore
Illustration: Clarence Patton

NEW YORK CITY GAY AND LESBIAN
ANTI-VIOLENCE PROJECT (AVP)
240 West 35th Street, Suite 200
New York, NY 10001
Telephone 212-714-1184

Richard S. Haymes, Executive Director
Clarence Patton, Director of Community Organizing & Public Advocacy
Carl Locke, CSW, Director of Client Services

2 0 0 0 F I N A L E D I T I O N

Copyright © 2000 by National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP).
All Rights Reserved.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Overview | 1 |
| Victim/Survivor Characteristics | 1 |
| Gender | 1 |
| Sexual Orientation | 2 |
| Age | 3 |
| Race/Ethnicity | 3 |
| Locations and Frequency of Abuse | 4 |
| Geographical Distribution of Incidents | 4 |
| Specific Sites of Abuse | 4 |
| Serial Offenses | 5 |
| Police Reporting and Response | 6 |
| Overall Reporting and Police Response | 6 |
| Reporting Statistics for Individual Boroughs | 7 |
| Police Attitude | 7 |
| Perpetrators and Offenses | 7 |
| Perpetrators | 7 |
| Extent of Injuries | 8 |
| Bias/Other Motivation | 8 |
| Weapons Used | 8 |
| Crimes Committed | 9 |
| Access and Response | 9 |
| Referral Sources | 9 |
| Initial Call Received | 9 |
| Outreach | 10 |
| Services | 10 |
| Conclusions and Recommendations | 10 |

Overview

The New York City Gay and Lesbian Anti-Violence Project (AVP) began documenting incidents and providing services to victims/survivors of same-sex domestic violence in 1986. This report encompasses incidents of domestic violence directly reported to AVP in 1999, a year in which a total of 510 domestic violence victims reported 459 incidents of abuse. This report does not purport to document the actual number of domestic violence among lesbian, gay, transgender and bisexual (LGTB) victims/survivors in the New York City area, but is an analysis of information reported to AVP. In collecting data, AVP uses a standardized intake form, as well as definitions, and criteria consistent with that approved in association with other National Coalition of Anti-Violence Projects (NCAVP) organizations. (A copy of the Intake/Incident Form can be requested by contacting AVP.)

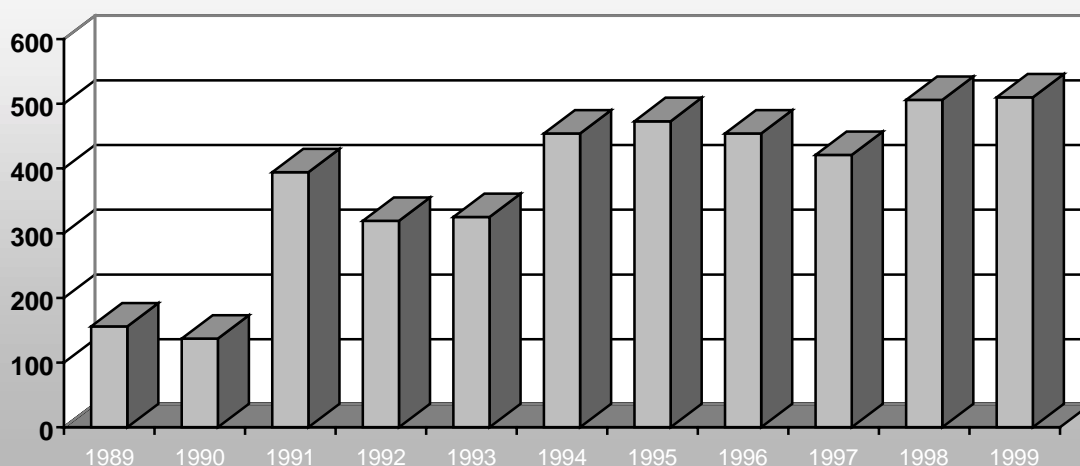
Victim/Survivor Characteristics

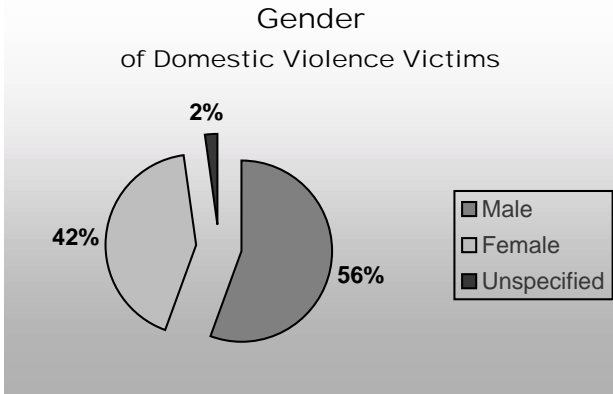
Gender

Male victims of domestic violence accounted for 56% (283) of the total victims reporting incidents of domestic violence to AVP, while female victims accounted for 42% (215). Gender was unspecified for 2% (12). The greater percentage of male, versus female victims, is consistent with the overall client base that the agency serves. This does not necessarily indicate that males are in abusive relationships at a higher rate than are females. It has been AVP's experience that lesbians and transgender women do not report incidents of victimization as consistently as gay men. Further research is needed to study the frequency and dynamics of LGTB domestic violence before definitive conclusions can be drawn regarding comparisons of gender.

People of transgender experience may self-identify according to the categories available on the intake form as transgender male to female (M to F), female to male (F to M), female, male, or questioning/unsure. In 1999, twelve (12) clients self-identified as transgender M to F.

Number
of Domestic Violence Cases





One (1) client self-identified as transgender F to M. Given that gender information is compiled based on clients' self-identification, it is possible that a greater number of males of transgender experience or additional females of transgender experience were served but were noted under their self-identified gender.

Sexual Orientation

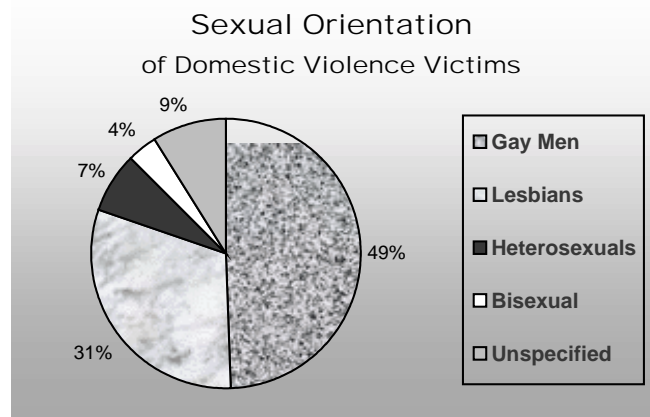
Gay males (246) accounted for 48% of the total number of domestic violence clients served at AVP. Lesbians (153) accounted for 30% of this number. Four of the latter identified themselves as lesbians of transgender experience. There were no self-identified gay males of transgender experience.

Heterosexuals (36) accounted for 7% of clients. Clients of heterosexual orientation come to AVP for several reasons. These clients may be of bisexual orientation experiencing domestic violence within a heterosexual relationship. They may feel more comfortable accessing services through AVP in discussing the variation and history of their relationship patterns. Heterosexual clients may have a friend or family member of significance to them who is LGTB and who recommended the agency's services. Some heterosexuals are referred by other service providers, and some find AVP in resource guides and only recognize the Anti-Violence Project component of the agency's name. Depending on their level of comfort and whether they find the services beneficial, heterosexual clients, primarily women (26) may choose to continue with the agency. Six of the clients who identified as heterosexual

were women of transgender experience (M to F). Ten (10) heterosexual men accessed AVP in 1998. It has been AVP's experience that when heterosexual men contact AVP, they often present as victims of domestic violence who fear being treated as the abuser if they access assistance through a battered women's hotline.

Clients of unknown sexual orientation (44) comprised 9% of AVP's domestic violence clients. Of the number of unknown sexual orientation, nineteen (19) were female, sixteen (16) were male, one (1) was transgender M to F, one (1) was transgender F to M, and seven (7) were of unknown gender. Sexual orientation is generally determined by the client's self-identification. However, people from various groups, cultural, ethnic, etc. may not identify as LGTB even if they are in relationships with same sex partners. Future adjustments to the intake form may address this by adding categories for women who partner/have sex with women and men who partner/have sex with men. Clients who are not "out" may be reluctant to label their orientation despite contacting AVP. In some cases, sexual orientation may be unknown because the client made only an initial or limited contact with the agency, usually through an information gathering hotline call. The data may not have been made available to the counselor, or the client may have declined to give this information.

Bisexual victims (18) comprised 4% of victims. Of clients self-identified as bisexual, nine (9) were female, seven (7) were male, and one (1) was of unspecified gender. In 1999 no clients of transgender experience self-identified as bisexual. Nine (9) clients self-identified as



questioning/unsure, and comprised 2% of victims. Of these, six (6) were female and three (3) were male.

Age

The largest age category for victims of domestic violence was in the 30-44 year range 41% (209). This number is consistent with 1998's total for this age group and may reflect AVP's general outreach practices including the distribution of materials in bars, advertisements in gay/lesbian publications and mailings to political activist organizations. It may also be attributed to a larger sense of awareness among people in this age range about what constitutes an abusive relationship. It is likely that people in this age range often have more access to, and awareness of resources. AVP has launched a number of outreach initiatives including flyering, hosting events, and participating in other LGTB events to broaden outreach efforts.

The second largest category was 20% (100) in the 23-29 year range. This number is up from last year's total of 85 in this age range. The next youngest age category of 18-22 year olds accounted for 6% (32) of clients served at AVP. Although this category mildly decreased from last year's reported 48, in balance, the number of victims under 18 rose from 5 in 1998 to 25 (5%) in 1999. This number may reflect AVP's increased efforts at alliance building with agencies serving youth. There was an increase in the number of victims in the 45-64 age range, 74 (14%), up from 58 last year. Victims age 65 or above (5) accounted for 1%. Unspecified victims (65) accounted for 13%.

Consistent with AVP's previous recording of domestic violence victims below age 18 and above age 65, these remain the lowest reporting categories. Generally, AVP has not had services targeted to LGTB adolescent victims of domestic violence. Adolescents comprise a rapidly growing sector of domestic violence victims, and LGTB adolescent victims of domestic violence would likely seek services from providers known for their work with adolescents. Therefore those under the age of 18 served by AVP in 1999 cannot be indicative

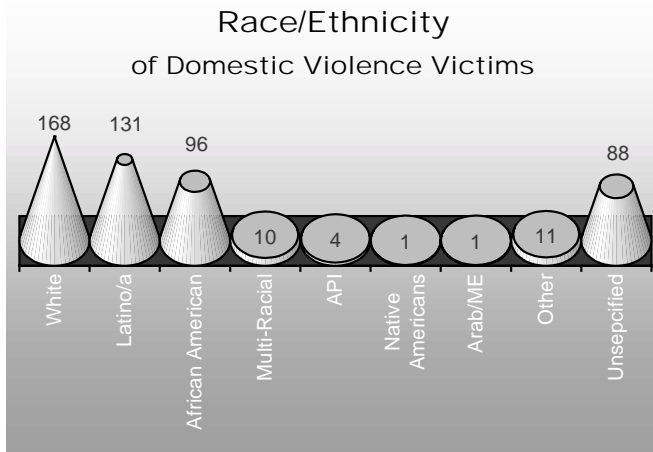


of the prevalence of domestic violence in LGTB adolescent relationships and AVP's numbers are more likely an understatement of the rate of incidence among LGTB youth. Additionally, it is likely that this age group would have less awareness of identifying factors for abusive relationships and less resources available tailored to this population and structured to address intimate partner violence. AVP is continuing efforts to review possible avenues of greater service to domestic violence victims aged 18 and below. LGTB domestic violence victims 65+ may report at consistently lower rates due to a different generational understanding of abusive relationships, as well as generational/individual barriers which would likely inhibit access of an openly gay organization for services. AVP has begun efforts to work with LGTB senior organizations in New York City to address this.

Race/Ethnicity

Categories of race and ethnicity were last revised in the early 1990's with the establishment of NCAVP's standardized intake form. NCAVP intends to review and revise these categories again in the future. For a listing of the categories used by NCAVP, please refer to a copy of the Intake/Incident Report Form used by NCAVP.

Overall the racial/ethnic spectrum of victims accessing AVP remained consistent with 1998's figures. The largest number of victims who reported domestic violence to AVP in 1999 identified as white and comprised 32% (168) of the total reports received (victims who identified as Jewish in 1999 (13), were also identi-



fied as white and were included within this category). The second largest category of victims identified as Latina/o and comprised 26% (131). Victims who identified as African American comprised 19% (96), a slight increase from eighty-five (85) in 1998. Those identified as multi-racial percent accounted for 2% (10) of victims, Asian/Pacific Islanders (4) comprised 1%, while those who identified as Native Americans (1) and Arab/Middle Eastern (1) combined comprised 1%. Clients who identified as other comprised 2% (11), and were primarily individuals reluctant to be placed in one category that may not have been fully representative of their identity. Victims of unknown race/ethnicity comprised 17% (88). This number reflects those who were either reluctant to identify under any of the existing categories or whose race/ethnicity was not made known to AVP staff.

Limitations of language (AVP provides bilingual services in English and Spanish) and limited culture-specific outreach may have inhibited reporting in some categories. There may also be cultural barriers in accessing a western gay-identified organization. It is particularly likely, for instance with Asian/Pacific Islanders, that language as well as cultural barriers may obstruct reporting to AVP. Services for LGTB victims of domestic violence may need to be specifically adapted, hosted in specific LGTB community groups, or may need to be integrated with services already serving specific communities. Research and funding are necessary to under-

stand and develop services appropriate to various ethnic and cultural LGTB communities.

At AVP it has become apparent that inclusive representation by staff personnel, and sensitive-specific outreach, can serve to increase reporting by various facets of AVP's client population. To the degree possible, and resources available, AVP regularly attempts to deliver services and retain providers and volunteers that are relevant to the client population.

Locations and Frequency of Abuse

Geographical Distribution of Incidents

The number of domestic violence incidents reported for 1999 totaled 459. The majority of reported incidents 36% (167) occurred in Manhattan. Brooklyn followed with 21% (95), Queens with 13% (58), Bronx, 11% (48), and Staten Island with 3% (15). Of those who reported to AVP, 1% were victimized in the outer counties of Westchester (2), Suffolk (1), and Nassau (2), while another 1% (6) came from the greater New York State area. 7% came from outside New York State including New Jersey (18), Connecticut, Pennsylvania and calls received from across the country (16). The locations of the remaining 7% (31) were unspecified.

AVP primarily serves New York City, however, given the scarcity of LGTB sensitive or specific services, victims beyond this area frequently call on AVP. AVP works to serve victims beyond the NYC area to whatever degree possible.

Specific Sites of Abuse

Victims of domestic violence are subject to danger no matter where they may be, out in public, at work, and most especially within the home. Violence often occurs where the perpetrator feels most in control or feels that she or he is most likely to maintain control. Not surprisingly then, an overwhelming 79% (360) of incidents

reported occurred in victims' homes. Incidents on the street or in public areas, occurred 5% (25) of the time. Victims indicated their workplace in 3% (12) of incidents. Incidents were also reported to have occurred 5% (24) of the time in locations such as stores or restaurants, in and around LGTB businesses and institutions (bars, bookstores, community center, etc.), at LGTB events, on public transportation, at schools or colleges. Strikingly 1% (6) of incidents were reported to have occurred in police precinct or jail settings. In cases of mutual arrests, domestic violence victims may even be subject to further abuse while within the confines of a police precinct or jail cell, further demonstrating that domestic violence may not be limited by setting. In 7% (32) of incidents reported to AVP the location was unspecified.

Serial Offenses

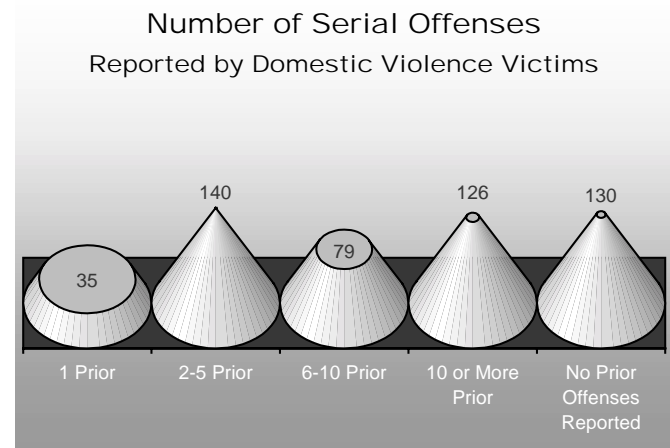
Violence can continue to occur even after a victim has attempted to leave or has left their abuser. As previous sources have demonstrated, a victim may in fact be at greater risk of violence at these times. Domestic violence is understood to increase in frequency and intensity over time and abuse typically follows a pattern of escalating violence which may include, but is not limited to emotional, verbal, financial, sexual, social and physical abuse. Often victims try to minimize or excuse the abuse and so do not often seek help initially. Strikingly, domestic violence incidents had occurred previously in 83% (380) of cases reported to AVP in 1999. It also generally understood that assistance is usually sought during periods of crisis. AVP collects data that indicates if a victim has experienced one, two-to-five, six-to-ten, or ten or more previous incidents. Of note, in 1999 the greatest percentage of those who experienced previous incidents contacted AVP after two-to-five prior incidents, 37% (140), while in 1998 42% (165) contacted AVP after ten or more incidents.

Additionally, during 1999, under an on-going NYC mayoral initiative, a citywide advertising campaign about domestic violence was conducted to reach hetero-

sexual female victims and may have raised awareness about intimate partner violence generally. This may have prompted LGTB victims who recognized similar abuse in their relationships to reach out sooner. This can only be speculated. If the mayoral initiative did in fact impact this shift, it is worth considering what impact the campaign could have exerted in reaching victims if it had been specifically LGTB inclusive and educational about same sex intimate partner violence.

Of the remaining victims that reported a prior history of incidents, 9% (35) reported one previous incident, 21% (79) reported a history of six-to-ten prior incidents and 33% (126) reported ten or more prior incidents.

It continues to be alarming that 83% of cases reported a prior history of offenses. This high percentage may speak to several issues. It may be that current approaches to addressing domestic violence need to be revisited and revised. Although there has been a concerted effort to address domestic violence in New York generally, LGTB victims are usually not specifically indicated or targeted in educational outreach done by most mainstream organizations. Where LGTB victims are meant to be included, the effort is usually obliquely made through the subtlety of gender neutral language. This subtlety usually misses LGTB victims as well as service providers. Clear and direct language should be incorporated in all educational and outreach modalities and materials. Trainings on domestic violence need to



cover LGTB victims and same-sex domestic violence in order to be truly comprehensive.

Police Reporting and Response

Overall Reporting and Police Response

The majority of domestic violence victims served by AVP, 71% (359) did not report incidents of domestic violence to the police. 26% (133) indicated that they had reported incidents to the police, and 3% (14) of clients reported that they had attempted to file but police refused to take their complaint. In 66% (88) of cases where clients had reported filing a complaint, no arrest was made. For LGTB domestic violence victims, criminal court is the only access to obtaining an Order of Protection. If no arrest is made, a victim is unable to secure a restraining order through criminal court. Therefore LGTB victims of intimate partner violence are in the position of having to experience a higher level of violence before they are entitled to receive protection under the law. In contrast, domestic violence victims who are married, have a child in-common or are related by blood have access to civil Orders of Protection which generally only require that a complaint be filed with the police and that the victim express fear for their safety.

Gay men and lesbians are not permitted to marry. It is only with rare exception that same sex partners have been able to gain co-adoption of children. And blood relation is meant to encompass intra-familial violence. These limitations effectively block lesbian and gay male victims, most transgender and bisexual victims as well as non-married heterosexual victims from receiving necessary protection under the law. Additionally, it is considerably more difficult for LGTB victims of intimate partner violence to obtain exclusionary Orders of Protection which ban the abuser from the home. For LGTB victims to obtain this added level of protection it often requires multiple criminal charges or a charge for

a more severe offense, usually involving a weapon or serious injury as a result of an assault.

9% (45) of victims in 1999 reported that they had a complaint taken, but no arrest was made. In 6% (32) of cases, victims reported that they intended to file a complaint after contact with AVP. In 3% (14) of cases where victims reported incidents to the police, they reported that the police had refused to take their complaints. This number captures the status of reporting to police made on intake to AVP. The actual number is likely higher than captured here. Domestic violence victims seen over time frequently report experiencing one or more previous incidents where police were called but no complaint was taken. In 2% (10) of reported cases where a victim sought police protection, the victim was himself or herself arrested. This number is likely higher than captured here. Just as service providers using heterosexist standards often have difficulty distinguishing LGTB victims, police frequently have difficulty distinguishing the victim from the abuser in same-sex relationships. While there is a growing body of documentation on heterosexual female victims who protect themselves through physical means along with gradual changes in the law to acknowledge this awareness, LGTB victims who act similarly are often incorrectly labeled as abusers by themselves, service providers and law enforcement. Victims who have acted to defend themselves in same sex relationships and who are then arrested frequently identify themselves on intake to AVP as the abuser seeking supportive/corrective services. For the remaining 9% (48), it was unclear if reporting had occurred at the time of intake. This number likely reflects incidents where clients contacted AVP while in the midst of a crisis. In some cases further client follow-up was not possible until sometime later or other interventions were more pressing such as medical attention. It is notable that, of the total number of domestic violence clients, only 77 (13%) stated that they had reported a previous incident to the police, despite 402 (80%) of clients reporting that they had experienced prior incidents. (See also Serial Offenses).

Note: For service providers and those in domestic violence situations alike, it is important to know that in New York City there are one or more Domestic Violence Police Officers (DVPOs) in every precinct. These officers are specially trained in domestic violence. Their training encompasses how to handle domestic violence situations with same sex couples. DVPOs have, with some exceptions, provided a uniquely receptive and appropriately protective resource to lesbian, gay and bisexual victims and some transgender victims. (Transgender victims often still encounter significant bias and misunderstanding by a majority of service providers. This also likely hinders accurate incident reporting.) Some boroughs within the City have initiated special exploratory programs to facilitate LGTB victims obtaining Orders of Protection. And throughout New York City, criminal courts, in 1998, began domestic violence “sections” which ostensibly act to track heterosexual domestic violence cases in criminal court that are corollary to cases being heard in family court. It is unclear the full benefit this last development may have for LGTB victims. At the very least this development may provide a more accurate record of LGTB cases of domestic violence handled within criminal courts. This information will be reviewed for its implications for the law and provision of service.

Reporting Statistics for Individual Boroughs

Police response can vary from precinct to precinct and among the boroughs also impacting accurate reporting. From AVP's data there were only 147 incidents of domestic violence within NYC that were documented by the police. The largest number documented by the police was 31% (45) which occurred in Manhattan. Other incidents documented by precinct were, by borough, 16% (24) in Brooklyn, 16% (23) in the Bronx, 7% (11) in Queens, 4% (6) in Staten Island, and the precincts for the remaining 26% (38) were either made to NYC Housing Police, or unspecified at the time of intake.

Police Attitude

Overall, 39% (58) evaluated the attitude of the police as courteous while 24% (35) reported police attitude as indifferent. A number of domestic violence victims reported that they experienced verbal abuse without bias slurs 6% (9), up from 4% in 1998. 4% (6) reported they had experienced verbal abuse and bias slurs, also up slightly from 3% in 1998. In 1999 no LGTB domestic violence victims reported physical abuse in addition to homophobic slurs, as opposed to 1% who reported experiencing this in 1998. The attitude of the police was unknown in 27% (39) of cases where victims had reported. This number likely reflect two issues. When the intake occurs during a crisis, this information may not initially be obtained and therefore cannot be reflected by data based on intake. In other instances, those who reported their experience with the police as “okay” may decline to categorize police attitude as either courteous or indifferent. Alternative categorizations of police attitudes may need to be considered for future reporting.

Perpetrators and Offenses

Perpetrators

There were 481 offenders reported in 459 domestic violence incidents. Lovers/partners accounted for 47% (227) of offenders. Ex-lovers accounted for 32% (154) of offenders and is consistent with the understanding that violence does not end with the termination of an abusive relationship. In most cases of domestic violence, abuse escalates when the victim attempts to leave, often in the form of increased harassment, stalking, as well as assaults. In many cases the violence continues to escalate well after the victim is out of the relationship.

The remainder of clients' perpetrators reflected that 5% (24) were relatives or family members, 3% (16) were roommates, 1% (7) were from other relationships, 7% (34) were unspecified. In the case of roommate, other

relationships and unspecified there is often found to be a current or past intimate relationship that is not being presented as such at intake. This may reflect cultural or generational differences in identifying same sex relationships or difficulty identifying as LGTB. For instance elderly LGTB victims of domestic violence frequently do not identify directly as being in a same sex or bisexual relationship and may instead refer to a perpetrator as a roommate or "friend." People of various cultures also do not always use the terms LGTB, and may not identify their relationship as same sex or bisexual. They may be more likely to identify themselves and their perpetrators (usually the primary partner) in terms of another relational context such as a friendship, relative or family member. Further, abusers are also known to engage family members, friends and others in the abuse of their victim, indicated by the greater number of offenders as compared to incidents.

Extent of Injuries

Injuries ranging from minor to fatal were reported for 37% (189) of victims. There were six same sex domestic violence related murders (1%) reported to AVP in 1999. It is likely that this does not indicate higher levels of violence but rather some increased awareness by social and legal service providers as well as media, as they were the primary reporters of these murders. Often for those not involved in work with domestic violence, abuse or the potential for harm is minimized because the abuser is someone close to the victim. For those who are familiar with domestic violence, it is understood that the closeness of the relationship is at times itself a factor for increased risk. Victims of domestic violence related murders in 1999 included children as well as adult partners. One case involved the murder of a same sex partner by the victim's former spouse. The method used ranged from shooting or stabbing to decapitation and dismemberment. Serious injuries were reported for 6% (32) of victims while 30% experienced minor injuries. The extent of injuries was not specified for 8% (38). Injuries sustained ranged from contusions, cuts and

scratches, concussions, bites, to broken bones, and ruptured or lost organs.

For those who indicated injuries, it was reported that 2% (4) required hospitalization, 23% (43) required outpatient care, and 17% (32) needed but did not receive medical attention. For 45% (85) medical attention was unspecified at the time of intake, and 13% (25) reported that they did not require medical attention for their injuries. LGTB victims are often reluctant to seek medical attention for fear of bias or further victimization. This coupled with embarrassment related to being victimized by an intimate partner can lead to delayed or untreated injuries.

Bias/Other Motivation

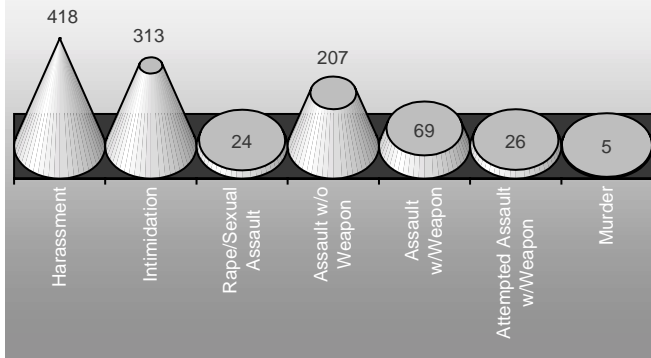
Victims who reported domestic violence were asked if incidents of abuse included any additional bias/motivation(s) on the part of the abuser. Additional bias/motivations identified, included: 8% (38) economic; 7% heterosexual; 5% (22) AIDS/HIV-related; 3% (12) other disability; 2% (8) racist/ethnic; 1% (6) anti-transgender; 1% (5) anti-immigrant; and 2% (9) other including sexist and religious. Bias/motivations often represent areas of vulnerability or additional tools which the abuser uses to further intimidate, harass and control her or his victim.

Weapons Used

Use of weapons was cited in 95 domestic violence incidents in 1999, a slight decrease from 118 used in 1999. Although there is a slight downward trend in the use of weapons, no conclusion can be drawn from the current data about the reason for this occurrence.

Use of weapons occurred in assaults, and attempted assaults with a weapon (see Crimes Committed for further detail). A total of 97 weapons were used. Objects reported to AVP were categorized into six subtypes: blunt objects including car club, wooden 2x4s, hammer, etc., 27%; bottles, bricks, rocks, 9%; sharp objects including knives, kitchen utensils, razor blades, etc.,

Types of Offenses
in Domestic Violence Cases



27%; firearms, 5%; restraints including ropes, chains, etc., 2%; vehicles 1%; and other weapons including gasoline, cigarettes, furniture, etc., 29%.

Crimes Committed

It is AVP's experience that intimidation and harassment are inherent in all relationships involving domestic violence. As the pattern of abuse escalates, intimidation and harassment frequently lead to violence. In recording statistical information from clients intimidation and/or harassment were noted only when reported clearly evident. Victims reported 1,106 incidents of crimes and/or offenses. Of the 1,106 incidents 38% (418) reported harassment (verbal, sexual, mail, telephone etc.) and 28% (313) reported intimidation. Of those reporting harassment, 70% reported verbal harassment, 15% reported telephone harassment, 4% reported sexual harassment, 3% reported harassment by mail, e-mail, etc., and 8% did not distinguish the form(s) of harassment. Victims reported sexual assault and/or rape by their intimate partner in 2% (24) of incidents. Assault without a weapon was reported by 19% (207). Assault with a weapon occurred in 6% (69) of cases and attempted assault with a weapon occurred in 2% (26) of incidents. Murder was reported in 1% of incidents. Other incidents, which comprised 4% of crimes included, abduction or kidnapping, extortion or blackmail, illegal eviction, robbery, vandalism, etc.

Access and Response

Referral Sources

Referrals to AVP come from a wide range of sources. Overwhelmingly, 48% of clients were referred by friends, or self-referred, based on past experience with or awareness of the agency. Service providers accounted for 20% of referrals. AVP advertising and other media coverage accounted for 9%. Referrals also came from the police, 5%, courts, 1%, and hospitals, 1%. Telephone book listings accounted for 1%. The referral source for 15% was unspecified at the time of intake.

Initial Call Received

AVP can receive initial calls from a variety of sources: victim, friend, service provider and others as suggested by the above referral sources. AVP's policy requires that the client contact the agency directly to initiate service. Initial calls may come from clients as they did in 85% of cases. Others including a lover/friend/family member, 5%, service providers 4%, or a witness of an abusive incident, 1%, may also make initial calls. In 2% of cases it is the abusive partner which initiates the first contact. The abuser may or may not acknowledge his or her role in the relationship. In work with same sex domestic violence, it is a recognized tactic that an abusive partner may attempt to access the police, courts, social and other service providers not for help, but as a means of preventing assistance for the abused partner. Screening and assessment of all incoming contacts is necessary to distinguish victim from abuser. Other or unspecified initial contacts accounted for 3% of calls. These calls may have come from friends/family/neighbors or others who wished to remain anonymous at initial contact.

Outreach

AVP utilizes multiple forms of outreach within the LGTB community, with service providers and to the public generally. Outreach ranges from flyering, presentations at community forums, trainings and conferences, building of alliances and networking, to advertising campaigns. AVP is developing a domestic violence advertising campaign to run in 2000.

Services

In 1999, AVP provided 8,003 units of service to domestic violence clients. The two highest categories were provision of referrals (3409) and client follow-up (2143). The next highest categories were hotline counseling (1201) and short-term professional counseling (365). Other services included information about Crime Victims Board (CVB) claim filing and CVB advocacy (210), advocacy and accompaniment with police (76), legal advocacy (56), support group meetings (85), other advocacy/assistance (110) (including general advocacy with social service providers, emergency financial assistance, etc.), agency follow-up (272), housing advocacy (35), medical/hospital advocacy and accompaniment (21), court accompaniment and monitoring (17), and contact/advocacy with media/elected officials (3).

Conclusions and Recommendations

In 1999 the overall information reported to AVP remained consistent with data recorded in 1998. Several shifts, however, were evident. The most significant shift in 1999 was the report of six same sex domestic violence related murders compared to none reported in the previous year (see Extent of Injuries). It is likely that this does not indicate higher levels of violence but rather increased awareness by social and legal service providers as well as media. These three groups were the primary reporters of these murders. Victims of these same sex domestic violence related murders included children as

well as adult partners and were committed by both current and former partners.

Overall, there was a slight increase in LGTB domestic violence reported to AVP in 1999. Reports of domestic violence have generally continued to escalate since reporting began in 1989. As awareness is raised about LGTB people and same sex domestic violence, it is likely that the number of reported domestic violence cases will continue to rise. There was some broadening by age range of clients served by AVP. Additionally, there was a slightly positive shift in reporting of serial incidents. In 1999 the greatest percentage of victims contacted AVP after two-to-five prior incidents of abuse, as compared with 1998 when the majority of victims contacted AVP after ten or more incident (see Serial Offenses). Significantly, in 1999 no LGTB domestic violence victim reported physical abuse by a police officer, compared to 1998. However, in 3% of cases where LGTB domestic violence victims attempted to file, police refused to take a complaint. Although theoretical hypotheses may be drawn about this report, the data cannot indicate conclusive reasons for the observed shifts. Dedicated research would need to be conducted to make such determinations.

Because domestic violence victims are generally considered to be predominately heterosexual females, other victims of domestic violence either go entirely unrecognized, or are significantly minimized. The justification that many offer for this neglect is that the numbers are thought to be comparatively so much lower, for LGTB domestic violence and GTB male victims. Heterosexual female domestic violence victims faced similar societal biases and misperceptions only a short time ago. Domestic violence had been seen as an infrequent and insignificant issue. Police officers, physicians and even social service providers told women that their situations were only domestic issues that should be dealt with in the home. Or worse, women were seen as bringing the violence on themselves. This past attitude toward heterosexual female domestic violence victims is not unlike blaming LGTB domestic violence victims for

not conforming to heterosexist standards and therefore bringing the violence on themselves. It eventually became understood that such societal attitudes inhibited an accurate calculation of the severity and pervasiveness of domestic violence, and were also shown to have severely inhibited victims from seeking necessary protection and supports. Similar denial combined with homophobia, transphobia and heterosexism continue to minimize the extent of LGTB domestic violence. Service providers who hold these attitudes, or who are not aware that domestic violence can affect all forms of intimate relationships (regardless of gender or sexual orientation), often expose LGTB victims to re-victimization. Self-blame, fear of homophobic/transphobic bias and heterosexist responses, frequently prevent an LGTB victim from seeking, or being able to access, appropriate protection or services.

Heterosexist perceptions of domestic violence continue to obfuscate the existence of LGTB domestic violence; thus preventing the identification of needed services and the justification for funding to develop appropriate resources. Funding for research is needed to more accurately document incidents of LGTB intimate partner violence. Documentation and understanding of the full scope of the problem, and the dynamics unique to the various population groups within the LGTB community, are necessary to effect changes in the law, provision of services, and to broaden access to funding traditionally inaccessible to LGTB victims of intimate partner violence.

The following are recommendations based on AVP's history of experience in this field and the data contained within this report:

Informed thought and action must be given to the ways in which LGTB domestic violence is conceptualized, including making needed changes to the law to recognize and support a victim's efforts to obtain safety.

Increased access to funding sources is needed to facilitate research and develop appropriate services (e.g. appropriate LGTB domestic violence shelter settings, expanded recognition of and services for gay male and

transgender domestic violence victims, same sex abusers' programs, etc.)

Education and outreach is clearly needed among mainstream providers, and within the LGTB community. Where lesbian and gay victims are meant to be included, such efforts are usually obliquely made through the subtlety of gender neutral language. While this is an important step, it falls pitifully short of LGTB inclusion. The subtlety of gender neutral language is frequently missed by lesbian and gay victims, as well as by service providers. Further, it is necessary for service providers to recognize that clients do not always identify as LGTB for a variety of reasons. Identification and behavior may, and often do, differ. Clients who identify as heterosexual, or do not identify as LGTB, despite their behavior, are more likely to access mainstream services.

Data collected by AVP and presented in this report is unique within the LGTB community and among domestic violence providers generally. AVP is the only agency within New York State specifically funded to serve LGTB victims of intimate partner violence. And even among service providers, AVP is unique in its documentation of statistical information about domestic violence.

AVP uses this information, and its experience in addressing areas of intersecting trauma-including bias, sexual assault, HIV related violence, etc.-for the purposes of education, advocacy and service provision.

AVP's history of work and documentation should be considered in any comprehensive analysis of domestic violence theory, and should similarly be considered by anyone interested in program development, or efforts to obtain equal treatment under the law, for victims of same sex domestic violence.