

Report Shows Elevated Violence in the LGBTQI Community

New data provides a qualitative look at how the community perceives and experiences violence, to help inform violence prevention strategies.

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February 10, 2015

Together with the SF Human Rights Commission and Learning for Action, the SF LGBT Center has released a Violence Prevention Needs Assessment detailing how members of the LGBTQI community perceive and experience violence and the availability of resources. Commissioned in light of highly publicized attacks against the community, the assessment is meant to inform both local and national decision makers.

“Historically, there has been very little data collected on the LGBTQI community.” said Rebecca Rolfe, executive director of the SF LGBT Center. “This report gives us a deeper lens on what’s actually happening and how we can effectively address it.” With over 400 respondents, the team employed interviews, surveys, focus groups and literature review to put together the report.

“This unique report sheds light on the myriad types of violence that continue to affect LGBTQI people across San Francisco,” said Theresa Sparks, Director of the SF Human Rights Commission. “It’s important because it goes beyond hate violence and looks at physical violence, sexual violence and harassment more broadly. The information will help the HRC develop data-driven violence prevention strategies that work for our diverse communities.”

San Francisco City Supervisor David Campos said: “The more information we have to draw from, the better we’re able to come up with a holistic approach that brings together different agencies and addresses the violence problem closer to the core. Now is the time to address this problem.”

The report focused on four main areas affecting the community:

(1) **Perceptions of community safety and connectedness:** the lack of affordable housing in SF has exacerbated safety concerns, coupled with a high level of mistrust in police. In particular, transgender members of the community - especially those of color - are 7 times more likely to feel unsafe and limited by safety concerns.

(2) **Experiences of violence:** High proportions of the community have experienced physical violence, sexual violence and harassment, with numbers particularly high for transgender individuals. A substantial portion of respondents chose not to report the incidents.

(3) **Services for survivors of violence:** Survivors are more likely to reach out to informal services (family, friends) than formalized ones. Support services on the other hand, aren't well equipped to handle the needs of respondents and are often not visible enough.

(4) **Violence prevention:** The landscape of violence prevention is a difficult one to define, given institutionalized issues such as lack of funding and task forces to help push the effort forward. Proposed strategies must include direct participation from the community.

Despite San Francisco's standing as the symbolic heart of the LGBT community, we are not immune to the homophobia, transphobia and other forms of discrimination that exist today. This report confirms the prevalence and impact of violence on the LGBT community and lays the foundation for effective violence prevention strategies to take root and ensure the safety of the community.

"Too much of the violence we experience has become a routine and unremarkable aspect of our day to day lives," said Commissioner Susan B. Christian, SF Human Rights Commission Chair. "Studies like this are important because they allow us to step back, assess our experiences and regain perspective on what our lives can be and should be. The HRC is grateful for the hard work and commitment of the SF LGBT Center and all the LGBT health and social service providers that participated in this report. We will take a close look at the findings and recommendations and work to address service gaps at the local level."

Find a copy of the full report at www.sfcenter.org/violencereport.