



Domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking are serious crimes and all victims deserve access to life-saving services. The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), first authorized in 1994, is at the core of our nation's response to these insidious and pervasive crimes and creates and supports comprehensive, effective and cost saving responses. VAWA's reauthorization should clarify that it includes protections and services for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) victims, who are under-served and face discrimination when accessing services.¹

- VAWA should ensure that all victims of domestic and dating violence, sexual assault and stalking are eligible for VAWA protections and services regardless of the gender of their perpetrator.
- LGBTQ people should be included in VAWA because they experience domestic violence in 25-35% of relationships, which is the same rate as the general population.²
- Domestic violence against LGBTQ women is severe and pervasive. LGBTQ women make up the majority of domestic violence-related murders in the LGBTQ community. In addition, they account for nearly half of all reports of LGBTQ domestic violence.³
- More than half of all LGBTQ survivors experience physical violence.⁴
- The change from "spouse" to the Center for Disease Control's language of "intimate partner" does not extend additional rights to LGBTQ people but instead is a reflection of the reality that most victims of domestic violence, including teens, are not married⁵ to their abusers and that VAWA must still protect those in dating relationships.
- LGBTQ victims face discrimination when accessing services. Nearly half are turned away from domestic violence shelter and nearly a quarter are mis-arrested as the primary aggressor by local law enforcement. More than 55% of LGBTQ survivors were denied orders of protection and only 7% of all victims reported violence to the police.⁶
- LGBTQ victims are an under-served population. In another 2010 study, 96% of victim services and law enforcement agencies said that they did not have specific services for LGBTQ victims.⁷ In fact, studies have shown that only one in five survivors of same-gender sexual assault and intimate partner violence received victim services.⁸

¹ *LGBTQ Intimate Partner Violence in 2010 in the United States*, retrieved from: <http://avp.org/documents/IPVReportfull-web.pdf>. (Last retr November 2, 2011.)

² Heintz, Adam J., Melendez, Rita M., *Intimate Partner Violence and HIV/STD Risk Among Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Individuals*, *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, Feb 2006, Vol. 21 Issue 2, p193-208.

³ *LGBTQ Intimate Partner Violence in 2010 in the United States*, retrieved from: <http://avp.org/documents/IPVReportfull-web.pdf>. (Last retr November 2, 2011.)

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/26/us/26marry.html>

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ *Why It Matters: Rethinking Victim Assistance for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Victims of Hate Violence & Intimate Partner Violence*, retrieved from: <http://www.avp.org/documents/WhyItMatters.pdf>. (Last retrieved November 2, 2011.)

⁸ McClennen, Joan C., *Domestic Violence Between Same-Gender Partners: Recent Findings and Future Research*, *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*; 2005, Vol. 20; 149.