

# **Victimization of Gay and Bisexual Men: A Public Problem with Private Consequences**

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This presentation reports on a study of victimization in a U.S. nationwide sample of self-identified gay and bisexual men (GBM), and it considers the systemic context in which this victimization occurs.

Worldwide evidence of high rates of victimization among GBM (United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2012) indicates the presence of a serious global problem that has received little attention from social work researchers.

Research in the U.S. shows GBM experience a high rate of sexual orientation bias-related victimization (Herek, 2009; National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, 2010). GBM may be victimized as well because of their gender expression, race or ethnicity, or for non-bias reasons (Martin & Alessi, 2012). In addition, they experience intimate partner violence at rates comparable to women in opposite-sex relationships, and much higher than men in opposite-sex relationships (Greenwood et al., 2002). Examining incidence of total victimization among GBM is important because behavioral, emotional, or physical health problems may result from any kind of victimization incident.

The current study recruited a convenience sample of 297 adult men through several Internet-based methods. Self-reported data were collected via an Internet-hosted questionnaire. Victimization was measured with 13 items adapted from Herek's (1994-1997) Northern California Men's Study. The study found a high rate of victimization during the previous 6 months, with 72% experiencing an incident of any kind and 22% experiencing a violent victimization incident. Incidents included verbal insults or abuse (60%), threats of violence (27%), and being hit or beaten (15%).

The presentation will note that although GBM must cope with the personal impact of victimization, evidence of widespread violence toward them indicates the need for systemic solutions. Thus, social work researchers must attend both to the personal and the public aspects of this problem.