



Violence Against Lesbians, Bisexual Women & Transgender People in Japan, Malaysia, Pakistan, Philippines and Sri Lanka

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Key Findings across all five countries:

1. Governments in Asia failed to prevent violence against LBT people. Current laws on the books in the five countries that prohibit violence against women are often discriminatory and do not extend adequate or any protections for LBT people.
2. Emotional violence was the most commonly reported form of violence in both the home and in the public sphere. This violence often continued for many years with long-term consequences.
3. Despite reports of violence by police, religious officers and members of the public, the family was the primary perpetrator of violence towards LBT people in this study.
4. There was an unexpectedly high occurrence of intimate partner violence, including physical and sexual violence.
5. An overwhelming number of perpetrators of sexual violence against LBT people knew their victims. Most perpetrators tended to be heterosexual, cisgender (gender-conforming) males.
6. Greater visibility of non-conforming sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression resulted in greater frequency of violence against LBT people.
7. LBT victims of violence were either denied service or received insensitive services from medical, mental health and State-funded women's shelter networks.

Japan Research Highlights

- Over half of the LBT individuals interviewed for the Japan study reported experiencing sexual violence, from unwanted touching to rape. Sexual violence perpetrators usually knew their victims. They were dating partners, workplace colleagues, family members, and intimate partners. The violence was precipitated by perpetrators' responses to individuals' sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression,
- Emotional violence was the most frequently reported violence in the Japan research. LBT individuals attributed this violence to strictly enforced codes of conduct at home, work places, medical institutions, public facilities and schools. Non-conforming sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression were viewed as antithetical to Japanese culture and family harmony.



- Despite Japan's (trans)gender recognition law, transgender people were most often abused and assaulted because of their visible gender non-conformity.
- A significant number of Japanese LBT interviewees reported that workplace sexual harassment was linked to general sexist attitudes about and sexual objectification of women. Lesbians and bisexual women in the study reported being sexual harassed by male co-workers just as their heterosexual women colleagues were "for being women." Transgender women reported unwanted groping of breasts and buttocks because of "their gender as women." Transgender men who experienced sexual harassment felt their "changed gender was disregarded" and they were targeted for sexual violence as women.
- All the Japanese LBT respondents who experienced violence reported long term and, sometimes, severe consequences, including depression, chronic physical illness and pain, addictions, low self-esteem and low confidence. Forced gender conformity led to acute self-loathing, social isolation, school drop out, disrupted education, job loss, loss of employment opportunities, and difficulty finding housing.
- Suicide was a significant factor. Over half of the LBT respondents in the Japan study had considered suicide to end the violence and the suffering due to violence. Five individuals made unsuccessful attempts to kill themselves. One individual died as a result of suicide during the research.
- Help for LBT people experiencing violence was either unavailable or inadequate because mental health and legal services were insensitive to and uninformed about LBT realities.
- Discriminatory rape and sexual harassment laws denied LBT people in Japan access to legal redress. The primary source of support came from self-help groups.

Malaysia Research Highlights

- Malaysian LBT people reported a life time of violence and discrimination, ranging from verbally demeaning treatment, family and community rejection, forced meetings with religious authorities and mental health professionals, religious condemnation, prolonged silent treatment and isolation by family and people they were close to, employment discrimination, and financial deprivation by the family.
- Physical and emotional violence by family members (usually parents, older brothers) occurred most often after LBT people disclosed their sexual orientation or gender identity, after they were accidentally discovered, or after they were exposed as LBT.
- In some cases, parents severely beat LBT children from a young age for displaying non-conforming sexual orientation and gender identity (e.g., gestures, speech, mannerisms that were viewed as deviant).
- LBT Malaysians also experienced intimate partner violence that included physical and emotional abuse.
- Transgender women reported being sexually taunted and physically assaulted on the streets. There were reports of car abductions and forced sexual activity inside vehicles.



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- State and non-state representatives, specifically, police officers, anti-vice officers, religious officers, religious court judges targeted transgender individuals of lower economic backgrounds for discrimination and violence.
- School teachers targeted students with non-conforming gender expression (tomboys, girls with short hair and dressed in shirts and pants, effeminate boys) for disciplinary measures that included being sent to religious camps, school suspensions and expulsions.
- Section 377 of the Malaysian Penal Code criminalizes “unnatural” offenses such as homosexuality and lesbianism. Section 21 of the Malaysian federal law penalizes “indecent” public behavior such as cross-dressing. These laws fuel the mistreatment of LBT people in Malaysia.
- Ethnic Malay and Muslim LBT people were additionally targeted for violence and abuse by the Malaysian government’s endorsement of religious, including Islamic fundamentalist enforcement of religious (sharia) penalties for gender non-conformity (cross dressing, gender impersonation) and same sex relations between men and between women. These religious penalties in some of the local jurisdictions include whipping, prison and fines.
- Violence by Malaysian police officers and religious officers who are hired to monitor compliance with religious (sharia) laws included threats, verbal humiliation, arbitrary arrest and detention, physical and sexual abuse while in custody, and raids of private premises under the guise of preserving public order and morality.

Pakistan Research Highlights

- Emotional violence was the most widely reported form of violence in the Pakistan study, from sexually explicit verbal denigration on the streets to psychological torture in the home.
- Sexual violence against LBT people in Pakistan involved sexual harassment on the streets or public spaces and sexual violence in the home – by family members or by violent husbands of lesbians and bisexual women, whose parents had forced them into heterosexual marriages.
- Lesbians, bisexual women and transgender men in the Pakistan research who experienced violence by family members attributed it to the tight hold that families have on daughters’ sexuality and gender conformity. Parents carried out physical punishment at any signs of “rebellious against social and cultural expectations.” In extended families, LBT individuals also faced violence from relatives.
- Transgender women in the study tended to experience most violence in public spaces, on the streets, and while they were working as street dancers, beggars, and/or sex workers. They faced verbal abuse that escalated into physical violence, including beatings and thefts. Perpetrators were usually men on the street.
- Police officers were complicit in street violence against transgender women. Police also lured customers of transwomen sex workers and extorted money from the transwomen and their customers.



- A combination of secular and religious laws prohibiting anal sex, oral sex, and sex outside marriage as well as laws against blasphemy (offending Islam and Prophet Muhammad) were cited as the reasons for “creating a climate of permissiveness” that justified violence against LBT individuals by police, religious leaders, religious vigilantes, and members of the public.

Philippines Research Highlights

- The Philippines study showed that physical, verbal and emotional violence was primarily perpetrated against LBT people in the home, usually after they disclosed their sexual orientation or gender identity, or were accidentally discovered or exposed. Perpetrators were usually older male members of the family or clan
- Transgender women in the Philippines reported being sexually violated at a young age by family members. Many of the respondents did not realize that they had been sexually abused until they were adults.
- In addition to violence in the home, transgender women also experienced physical and verbal violence on the streets, including being beaten up by groups of men, unprovoked attacks with weapons, verbal denigration and sexual taunting.
- Schoolteachers targeted LBT students for lower grades and singled them out for verbal censure, counseling, and, in some instances, religious condemnation.
- Discrimination across multiple sectors denied gender non-conforming women and men jobs, medical services, passports, travel visas, and assistance at police desks for victims of violence.
- According to the Philippines report, the cumulative impact of violence and discrimination on LBT people was depression, self-blame, self-doubt, persistent anger and paranoia.
- Although the Philippines has no law criminalizing same sex relations, there are several laws penalizing gender non-conformity. Article 200 of the Philippines Revised Penal Code (RCP) criminalizes “highly scandalous conduct” which targets gay male establishments for raids. Article 267 has been used to charge butch lesbians and transgender men with abduction and kidnapping when their girlfriends’ parents reject the relationship and want to break up lesbian or transgender couples.

Sri Lanka Research Highlights

- LBT individuals in the Sri Lanka study reported high levels of emotional and physical violence by the family, usually when their sexual orientation or same sex relationship was discovered or disclosed.
- Emotional violence by family members against Sri Lankan LBT people included prolonged silent treatment, forcing gender conformity, forcing the same sex relationship to end, neglect, severing of family ties, communication being monitored and restricted, and religious condemnation.



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- Over half of the LBT people who participated in the Sri Lanka study reported sexual violence, ranging from sexual harassment to rape. Perpetrators were employers, colleagues, family members and strangers.
- A significantly high number of LBT participants in the study had experienced intimate partner violence, including physical and sexual violence. For some the violence was a single incident and for others it was a frequent occurrence.
- Visible gender non-conformity was an excuse for police, military and security officers to stop, question and verbally harass butch lesbians and transgender men, particularly if they were also from a lower economic background.
- Fear of being exposed as LBT prevented individuals who experienced violence from reporting violence even if it was severe. In some instances, the reluctance to report was to avoid exposing violent family members or same sex partners to the heavy hand of the law in a country where the state violates human rights with impunity.
- Reporting violence also exposed victims to the risk of being criminalized themselves for being LBT under Section 365A of the Sri Lankan Penal Code that prohibits homosexuality and lesbianism or Section 399 of the Penal Code that penalizes “impersonation” and “misrepresentation” which applies to transgender men and butch lesbians who can be charged with “disguising as men” and transgender women for “deceiving the public.”
- According to the Sri Lanka report, all the LBT interviewees suffered long lasting effects of the violence, including depression, anxiety, persistent anger, chronic illnesses, and addictions.
- Attempting suicide was a coping mechanism for a significant number of the LBT Sri Lankans who had experienced violence and discrimination.