Reducing Anti-LGBT Hate Crimes and Improving Services to Survivors

Liz Coston
Virginia Commonwealth University, ecoston@vcu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/research-fellows

Part of the Public Affairs, Public Policy and Public Administration Commons

© The Author

Downloaded from
https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/research-fellows/4

This Policy Brief is brought to you for free and open access by the Center for Public Policy at VCU Scholars Compass. It has been accepted for inclusion in Translational Research Fellows Policy Briefs by an authorized administrator of VCU Scholars Compass. For more information, please contact libcompass@vcu.edu.
Reducing Anti-LGBT Hate Crimes and Improving Services to Survivors

Over the course of a lesbian, gay, or bisexual individual’s lifetime there is a 20% risk of experiencing hate violence, while a transgender individual’s risk of violence is 27%.\textsuperscript{1,2}

Recommendations

Recent research points to three key recommendations for reducing the victimization of LGBT people by hate crimes:

- Shifts in state public policies that affirm LGBT persons as equal citizens under the law reduce the rates of hate crime victimization in a state.
- Training for police and medical personnel in recognizing hate-crime victimization and cultural competency related to LGBT communities is needed to make reporting of hate crimes safer for victims.
- Anti-bullying and educational programs for youth and young adults, who are most likely to commit anti-LGBT hate crimes, could improve the social climate for LGBT people and reduce anti-LGBT hate crimes.

Findings – Impact of State Policies:

- Public policy decisions impact rates of hate crimes victimization. The enactment of same-sex marriage bans are associated with higher rates of anti-LGB hate crimes while passage of same-sex marriage legislation is associated with reduced rates of anti-LGB hate crimes.\textsuperscript{3}
- Without action, state-level rates of anti-LGBT hate crime victimization are largely predicted by the rate of such hate crimes in the previous year.\textsuperscript{4}

(Views are those of individual faculty member and not lobbying positions of VCU as a public university.)
• Though invalidated in practice by a Supreme Court ruling, Virginia still has laws and a constitutional amendment that bans same-sex marriage. Based on this research, removing such “dead-letter” laws is likely to reduce rates of victimization.

Findings – Barriers to victims seeking help:
• LGBT people are at similar risk of victimization regardless of race, class, or gender
• Only 44% of victims seek help from the police, and only 14% seek medical care, despite the fact that hate crimes more often result in injury to victims than non-bias crimes.
• In 23% of hate crimes reported to community organizations, LGBT victims say that officers refused to file a report, and 27% experienced hostility from officers; improved training would minimize negative post-victimization interactions with police and increase hate crime reporting.
• Training on differences within the LGBT community, would result in improved classification and understanding of hate crimes. Use of the category “anti-LGBT” is more common than appropriately recognizing and classifying hate crimes specifically as “anti-lesbian”, “anti-gay”, “anti-bisexual” or “anti-transgender”.
• Improved police and medical personnel training to recognize victims of anti-LGBT hate crimes and to accurately classify such crimes can improve the services received by victims and improve the quality of data reported that show the scope of the problem.
• Fostering collaborations among police, health care providers, and community organizations to improve service provision to victims of LGBT hate crimes would also improve services to victims.

Findings – Educating potential offenders:
• Non-White offenders are reported to the police 3.5 more often, though White offenders commit anti-LGBT hate crimes at similar rates.
• Young adults most frequently commit anti-LGBT hate crimes.
• Anti-bullying and educational programs would be beneficial for improving the social climate for LGBT people and reducing anti-LGBT hate crimes.

3 Coston, Liz G. 2017. "Anti-LGBT Hate Crimes in the US." PhD, Sociology, Stony Brook University, Stony Brook, NY.