

# **Nearly 4 million Californians report sexual or physical violence from a spouse or companion**

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Nearly 4 million adults in California reported being a victim of physical or sexual violence at the hands of a spouse, companion or other intimate partner, according to a new policy brief from the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research.

Of those victims, more than 1 million reported being forced to have sex by an intimate partner, the study found.

Although reported incidences of intimate partner violence, or IPV, are widespread, especially among women and certain ethnic groups, reported IPV was surprisingly high among lesbians, gays and bisexuals in California, who are almost twice as likely to experience violence as heterosexual adults, researchers said.

Specifically, 27.9 percent of all lesbian or gay adults reported experiencing IPV in their adult lives. The rate of reported IPV is even higher among bisexual adults, at 40.6 percent. In contrast, only 16.7 percent of heterosexual adults reported incidences of IPV.

"This is not a group commonly associated with violence," said the study's lead author, Elaine Zahnd, a sociologist and senior research scientist at the Public Health Institute, which partners with the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research in conducting the California Health Interview Survey. "These findings should cause us to reconsider our assumptions

about the root causes of violence, even as we redouble our efforts to eradicate it."

Zahnd noted that the large number of Californians experiencing violence made the preservation of state-subsidized [domestic violence](#) shelters and services — currently under threat from [budget cuts](#) — all the more essential.

Also important, the researchers said, is routine screening by health providers to check for signs that might be indicative of violent victimization among men and women, such as substance abuse. In the study, researchers found that nearly one in 10 victims of recent IPV engaged in binge drinking, possibly as a way of coping with the mental and emotional trauma of abuse. Such signs might help health providers identify a problem that is often not obvious, as only 56.5 percent of victims report talking about such violence with a third party.

"This is often an invisible health crisis," said study co-author David Grant, director of UCLA's California Health Interview Survey.

The study, supported by the Blue Shield of California Foundation, draws on new data on IPV from the California Health Interview Survey (CHIS), the nation's largest state health survey and consequently one of the largest surveys of IPV victims in the nation. The CHIS is also one of the few surveys to collect extensive health data on lesbians, gays and bisexuals. The survey is conducted by the UCLA Center for [Health Policy](#) Research, in collaboration with the Public Health Institute, the California Department of Public Health and the Department of Health Care Services.

Other findings from the study include:

## **Divorced, widowed Californians at risk**

The rate of adult IPV among Californians who are separated, divorced or widowed is among the highest of all groups, at 41.0 percent. This is nearly twice the rate of adults living with a partner (24.6 percent) and more than three times the rate of married (13.3 percent) or single (13.2 percent) adults.

## **Gender disparity persists**

Women are almost twice as likely (21.0 percent) to be victims of adult physical violence as men (11.0 percent) and are eight times (8.0 percent) as likely to report being the victim of [sexual violence](#) since turning 18 as men (1.0 percent).

## **High levels of recent IPV among Latinos**

While the overall IPV rate was relatively low among Latinos — only 13.7 percent of American-born and 10.5 percent of foreign-born Latinos reported experiencing IPV since turning 18 — 28.3 percent of those who have experienced IPV reported incidences in the last 12 months, the second highest rate of recent IPV after African Americans (30.6 percent).

## **Asians have the lowest rates of IPV**

Among U.S.-born Asians, 13.4 percent reported incidences of IPV. Among foreign-born Asians, the rate was even lower, at 7.1 percent.

Provided by University of California - Los Angeles

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