



## LGBTIAQ+ AND GBV

Gender-based violence (GBV) is violence against another person because of their gender. It can be physical, emotional, sexual, verbal, psychological, economic or cultural. While GBV is largely experienced as violence against heterosexual and cisgender women, it can affect all people, including LGBTIAQ+ people.

**“In South Africa, two key factors that influence levels of GBV are strong patriarchal gender norms and the intersection of race, gender, class and other identities that underlie oppression”.**

**It is important for informed conversations about GBV!**

## SEXUALITY, GENDER AND GBV

- The World Health Organisation states that ‘sex’ refers to “the biological and physiological characteristics that define men and women,” and ‘gender’ refers to “the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women”.
- These definitions are simplistic at best and are indicative of the language used to describe the relationship between what is assigned at birth and one’s personal sense of gender.
- Everyone is assigned a gender at birth – based on a decision made by a medical practitioner that is influenced by what is judged to be ‘normative’. The casualties of this system are intersex infants who are not just assigned a gender at birth – they are coerced into the gender they are assigned through unneeded surgical ‘interventions’ which are performed to ‘choose’ the sex of the infant, which typically causes untold trauma in adolescence
- Traits of a person who is intersex can include ‘non-normative’ - levels of sex hormones, chromosomes, gonads and genitalia. It is in no way harmful to have any of these traits, despite there being stigma that leads to infanticide and hate crimes across the world.
- Gender is a personal sense of self that everyone experiences in relation to that gender they were assigned (coercively or otherwise) at birth. There are an incredible number of gender identities that one may use to describe their sense of self in relation, typically to one being masculine, feminine, neither or both. Gender identity can be fluid.
- One can be cisgender or transgender – cis (the same side) refers to people who identify with the gender that they were assigned at birth. Trans (to cross) refers to people who do not partially or wholly identify with the gender they were assigned at birth.
- Transgender people may be binary or non-binary – people who are binary identify as either being a man or a woman. Non-binary identities include agender (no gender), bigender (2 or more gender identities), genderfluid (a gender that is not static).
- Gender constructs and categories change over time and vary widely within and across cultures, most societies value differently the capacities, abilities and traits attributed to men and women, with those defined as feminine often treated as inferior to those defined as masculine.
- This has the effect of making relations unequal on a range of dimensions, as well as societies characterized by masculinist domination.
- **As the World Health Organisation stated, there is a close and intimate relationship between gender and sexuality. In the same way that societies associate particular abilities and behaviours with specific bodies, so they similarly map sexual practices and expression onto those particular bodies.**
- Dominant conceptions of gender assume that there are only two genders, rather than a spectrum, and that people’s gender identities will always correspond with their gender assigned at birth.
- Closely linked to this is the belief that people are only attracted to those whose gender is different to their own, constructing heterosexuality as the only ‘normal’, acceptable sexual orientation
- Heterosexuality, in turn, is often based on norms that position women as sexually passive and men as sexually aggressive.
- As a consequence, women may be denied sexual agency while men’s sexual needs may also be elevated to the level of entitlements.
- Relationships are not necessarily monogamous exclusively. Polyamorous relationships are present in most cultures and lack legal and societal recognition.
- Not everyone experiences sexual attraction. About 1 percent of the population identify as being asexual (no sexual attraction towards other people). An allosexist world views asexuals as ‘broken’ and confuse asexuality with celibacy.

## GENDER IDENTITY AND GBV

- Despite the fluidity of gender identity and expression, many societies closely police **the behavior of** men and women to prevent deviation from gendered heterosexual 'norms'.
- Where people do not comply with these social expectations, violence, abuse, discrimination and related intolerance may be employed to force conformity, to punish, or to assert dominance and so enforce gendered social relations and hierarchies.
- The term GBV has thus been coined in recognition of the ways in which gender shapes particular manifestations of violence.
- In some contexts, especially when this violence is targeted at someone on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity, it may also be defined in law as a hate crime.

## HATE CRIME

- Hate crime – is a criminal offence perceived as being motivated by prejudice or hate.
- The perpetrators seek to demean and dehumanize their victims, whom they consider different from them based on their actual or perceived race, ethnicity, , gender identity, age, sexual orientation, disability, health status, nationality, social origin, religious convictions, culture, language or other characteristic.
- LGBTIAQ+ individuals may also experience GBV, including on the basis of being transgender and/or not identifying with heterosexuality.

## ADDRESSING ISSUES OF GBV IS EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY

**All individuals can access helpful resources.**

- Gender-based violence is not acceptable.
- Condemnation needs to be constant and consistent, perpetrators need to be prosecuted.
- It requires that we address societal issues of patriarchy, economic relations and changing the way of thinking about gender relations.

**"Creative handling of a sensitive story can not only retain the dignity and respect of those involved, but can be used as a powerful tool to effect change." –**

**GILL GIFFORD, HEALTH-E NEWS EDITOR**

***For more information, reporting of incidents and support you may also contact the Safe Zones project through the Transformation Office***

