

# Improving care for LGBTIQ+ individuals experiencing intimate partner violence

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Credit: Nicholas Swatz from Pexels

New Curtin University research, in collaboration with WAAC (formerly the WA AIDS Council), is putting the spotlight on the significant challenges and barriers faced by LGBTIQ+ individuals experiencing intimate partner violence (IPV) in accessing primary care in Western Australia, calling for greater improvements to ensure services are more inclusive and responsive.

The research encompassed a comprehensive state-wide survey and in-depth consultations with LGBTIQ+ individuals and primary care providers and included the creation of educational materials aimed at increasing awareness of IPV and equipping [primary care providers](#) with the tools needed to offer appropriate support.

Chief investigator Dr. Roanna Lobo, from Curtin's School of Population Health, said [the study](#) revealed a critical need for the development of more understanding primary care to ensure LGBTIQ+ individuals experiencing IPV receive the support they need.

"Our research shows more than half of the LGBTIQ+ participants reported experiencing forms of abuse in their intimate relationships, with many struggling to seek help due to fears of judgment and a lack of understanding within primary care settings, while providers revealed a lack of confidence in recognizing IPV in LGBTIQ+ clients and expressed a desire to give better support," Dr. Lobo said.

"Our findings highlight a disturbing gap in our primary care system that fails to provide safe, affirming and effective care for LGBTIQ+ individuals facing IPV. It's imperative that we bridge this divide by integrating comprehensive education into primary care settings."

Participant quotes:

"I did try and call up one place, it was a very brief call that stopped me from trying to call other places that, from my voice alone, they went, 'We're not for you.'"—Transgender Man, Bisexual, 26

"You have to go through the emotional labor of educating a practitioner about issues that seem to be extremely basic LGBTIQ+ issues... I've come here for a service and now I'm being treated like I'm some kind of novelty specimen."—Non-Binary, Lesbian, 35

Co-investigator Dr. Jack Farrugia, from Curtin's School of Population Health, said IPV is a significant public health concern, particularly affecting LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities.

"Primary care settings must be capable of responding in an appropriate way to avoid further compounding harm to individuals in crisis," Dr. Farrugia said.

"This research will help guide the development of services, interventions and further resources to facilitate early help-seeking, recognize individuals in crisis situations and enhance psychosocial well-being."

The "Safer Options" study recommends the development of clear guidelines for primary care services to address IPV as experienced within LGBTIQ+ relationships, the adaption of existing resources to be more inclusive and the establishment of a referral directory for LGBTIQ+ friendly primary care services.

Key findings:

- 51% of participants reported experiencing IPV, with 24% experiencing it in more than one relationship.
- Emotional abuse emerged as the most prevalent form of abuse, accounting for 53% of reported cases.
- Alarmingly, 48% of those who experienced IPV did not seek professional support.

**More information:** Building the Capacity of Primary Care Providers to Support LGBTIQ+ Individuals Experiencing or at Risk of Intimate Partner Violence: [www.saferoptions.org.au/wp-con ... -Research-Report.pdf](http://www.saferoptions.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Safer-Options-Research-Report.pdf)

Provided by Curtin University

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