

Study finds higher rates of sexual violence among bisexual women

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While sexual harassment and sexual violence have been pervasive problems for women over the course of history, a recent study has uncovered that bisexual women specifically experience sexual violence more often than straight and lesbian women.

In fact, 50% of [bisexual women](#) have experienced rape at one point of their lifetime while within the United States, approximately 75% report experiencing sexual [violence](#).

These shocking statistics come from "Why Us? Toward an Understanding of Bisexual Women's Vulnerability for and Negative Consequences of Sexual Violence," a recently published article in the *Journal of Bisexuality* by Nicole Johnson, a counseling psychology professor at Lehigh University's College of Education.

Johnson proposes multiple factors that contribute to why bi women experience higher rates of sexual violence when compared to lesbian and straight women, as well as why bi women may have worse mental health outcomes following sexual violence. She outlines three factors as the main contributors: substance use, hypersexualization, and biphobic harassment.

According to her research, bi women struggle with substance use not only more than straight women, but also more than lesbians. Johnson says that this type of intoxication may make victims easy targets for perpetrators and further contributes to negative mental health outcomes in the wake of sexual violence.

In an interview with *Bisexual.org* interview, Johnson explains how bi women are hypersexualized by men. She says: "The media, and pornography in particular, have a long history of depicting women as 'bisexual' while engaging in same sex behaviors for the pleasure of male on lookers. Recently, this experience, which has been

labeled 'performative bisexuality,' has become common place in bars and at parties where two girls/women engage in same-sex behavior for the purposes of arousing men/boys. Many of these women/girl later denounce bisexuality, furthering the 'invisible-hypervisible' experience of bisexuality."

The study also finds that sexual violence enacted against bisexual women within intimate relationships may result from social construction of bisexual women as especially worthy of distrust, jealousy, and other emotions and perceptions related to uneven power dynamics and hostility within the relationship.

Although traditionally less documented, Johnson's research is beginning to demonstrate that bi women face far greater negative consequences following sexual violence when compared to lesbian and straight women.

Johnson concludes in the *Bisexual.org* interview that increasing conversation and awareness regarding the hypersexualization, objectification, and rejection of bisexual [women](#) is crucial within the LGBT community, as well as the larger community as a whole. She says that these types of conversations will decrease both [sexual violence](#) as well as its [negative consequences](#).

More information: Nicole L. Johnson et al, Why Us? Toward an Understanding of Bisexual Women's Vulnerability for and Negative Consequences of Sexual Violence, *Journal of Bisexuality* (2017). [DOI: 10.1080/15299716.2017.1364201](#)

Provided by Lehigh University

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