

# INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE REPORTED BY LESBIAN-, GAY-, AND BISEXUAL-IDENTIFIED INDIVIDUALS LIVING IN CANADA: AN EXPLORATION OF WITHIN-GROUP VARIATIONS

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- While the research and analysis are based on data from Statistics Canada, the opinions expressed do not represent the views of Statistics Canada

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# INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

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Contextualizing partner violence in rainbow  
communities

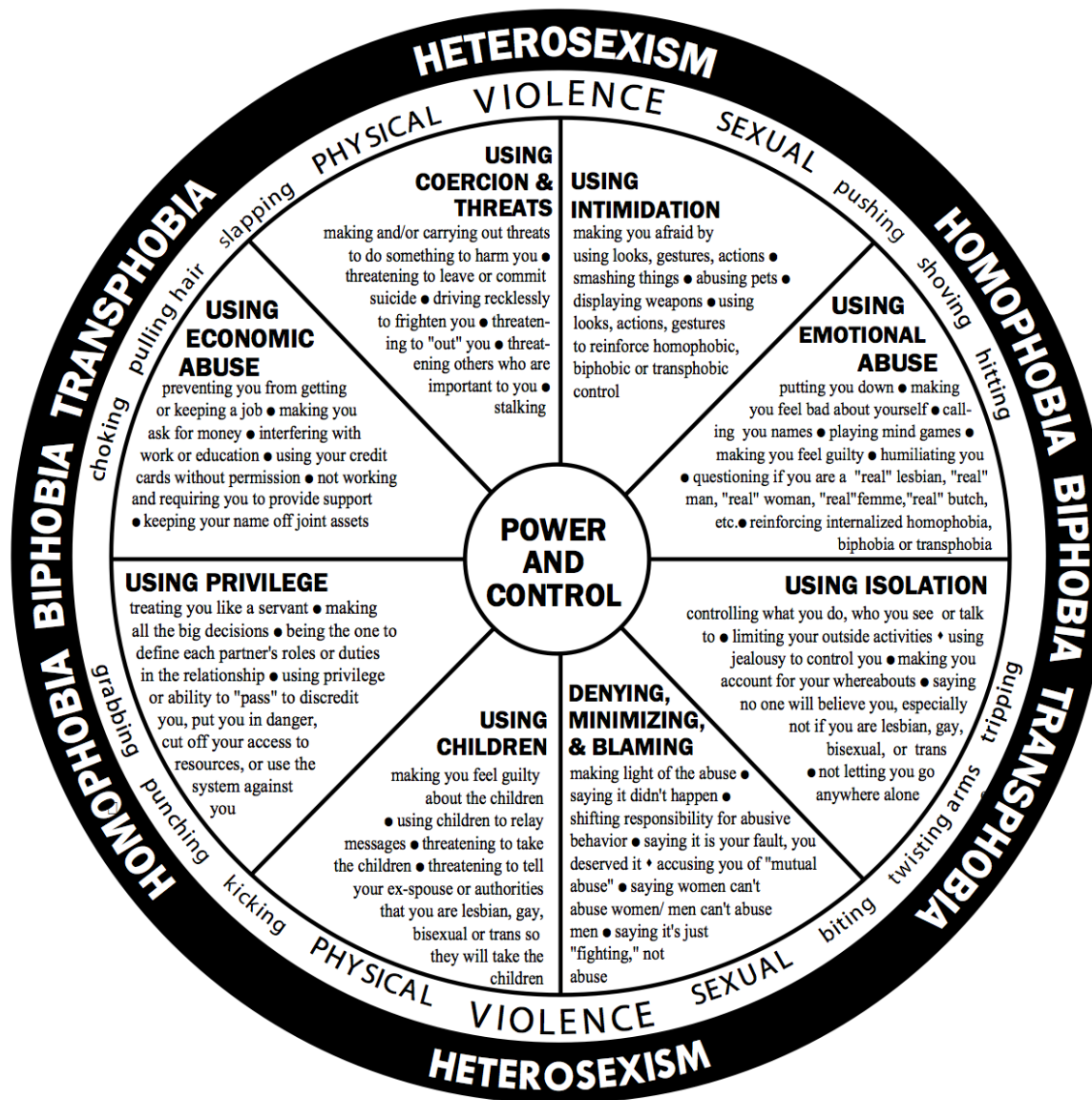
# Rainbow community

- Diverse community encompassing individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, same gender loving, transgender, queer, questioning, and two-spirited (commonly referred to as the LGBT community)



[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gay\\_Canada\\_flag.png](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gay_Canada_flag.png)







# IPV in the LGBT community

Study	Sample	Key findings
Turrell (2000)	N=499 LGBT [convenience]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-83% experienced emotional abuse</li><li>-Past IPV more frequent than current IPV</li><li>-Women experienced more IPV than men</li><li>-Bisexuals experienced less IPV than gays and lesbians</li></ul>
Freedner, Freed, Yang, & Austin (2002)	N=521 LGB and heterosexual adolescents [convenience]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Bisexual males were at greater risk of experiencing at least one form of IPV than gay and heterosexual males</li><li>-Significant differences in IPV not found between lesbian, bisexual, and heterosexual females</li></ul>
Owen & Burke (2004)	N=66 (same sex partners) [convenience]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-56% experienced same sex IPV at some point in their lives (verbal most common)</li><li>-No gender differences found</li></ul>

# IPV in the LGBT community

Study	Sample	Key findings
Halpern, Yong, Waller, Martin, & Kupper (2004)	N=117 (same sex dating) [National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health]	-24% experienced at least one form of psychological or physical IPV -Verbal abuse most common -Females significantly more likely than males to experience IPV
Balsam, Rothblum, & Beauchaine (2005)	N=720 LGB and N=525 heterosexual siblings [convenience]	-LGB persons experienced a greater risk for all forms of IPV than heterosexuals -Bisexual males and females experienced higher rates of sexual IPV (coercion and rape) than lesbians and gays

# IPV in the LGBT community

Study	Sample	Key findings
Messinger (2011)	N=144 LGB (defined as at least one same sex partner) and N=14,038 heterosexual [National Violence Against Women Survey]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-LGB persons were more likely to experience IPV than heterosexuals</li><li>-IPV most commonly reported by bisexuals with opposite sex partners</li><li>-Psychological and verbal IPV most common type of IPV regardless of sexual orientation</li></ul>
Porter & Williams (2011)	N= 1,027 college students (n= 54 LGB) [convenience]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-LGB persons were more likely than heterosexuals to experience psychological, physical, and sexual IPV</li><li>-Psychological IPV most common regardless of sexual orientation</li></ul>

# Summary

- Inconsistent findings across studies
  - Divergent IPV prevalence rates:
    - Low of 24% (psychological or physical)
    - High 83% (emotional IPV)
  - Divergent vulnerabilities found within LGB population
    - Bisexuals experience less IPV than gays and lesbians
    - Bisexuals experience more IPV than gays and lesbians
    - No gender differences, males at higher risk, females at higher risk



# THEORETICAL ISSUES

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Theorizing the unique vulnerabilities of LGBT persons  
for IPV

# Minority stress

Racism,  
sexism, able-  
ism, classism

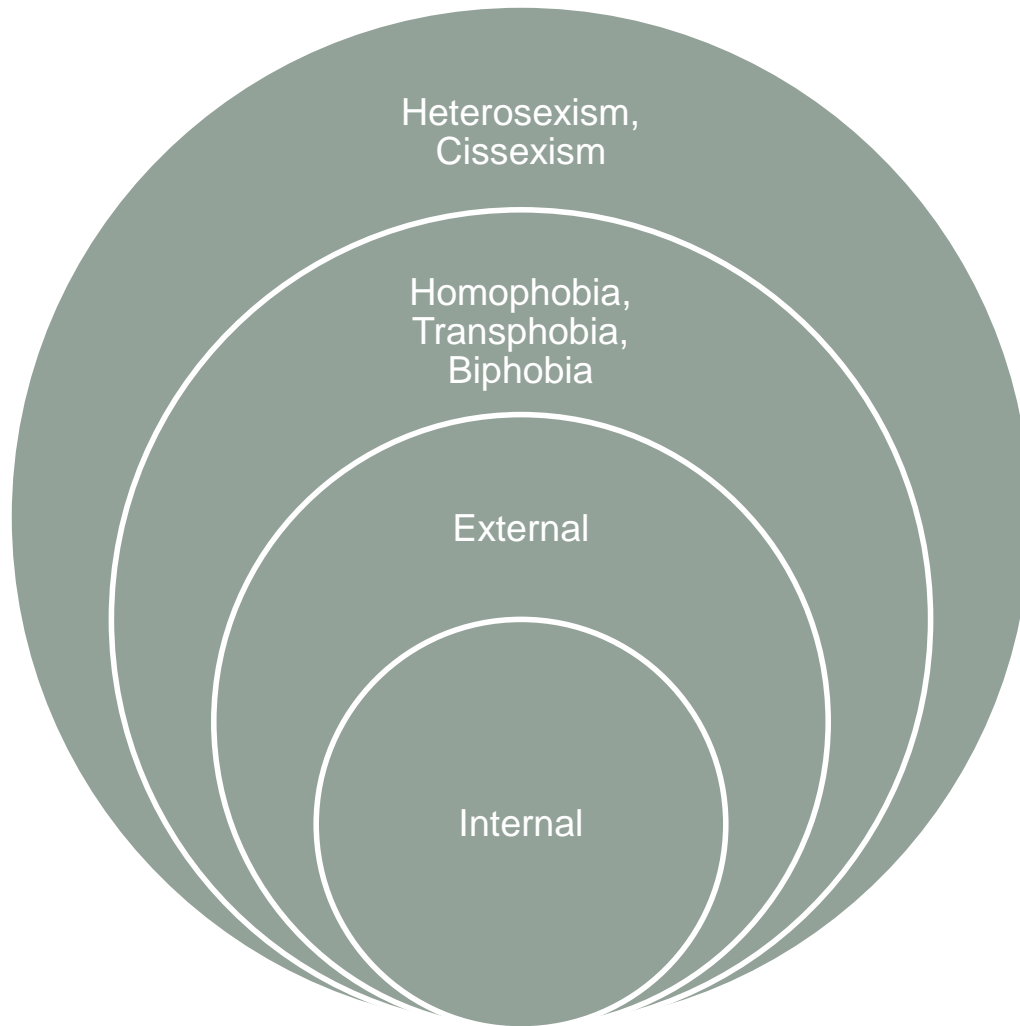
Heterosexism,  
Cissexism

Patriarchy, white  
supremacy,  
capitalism

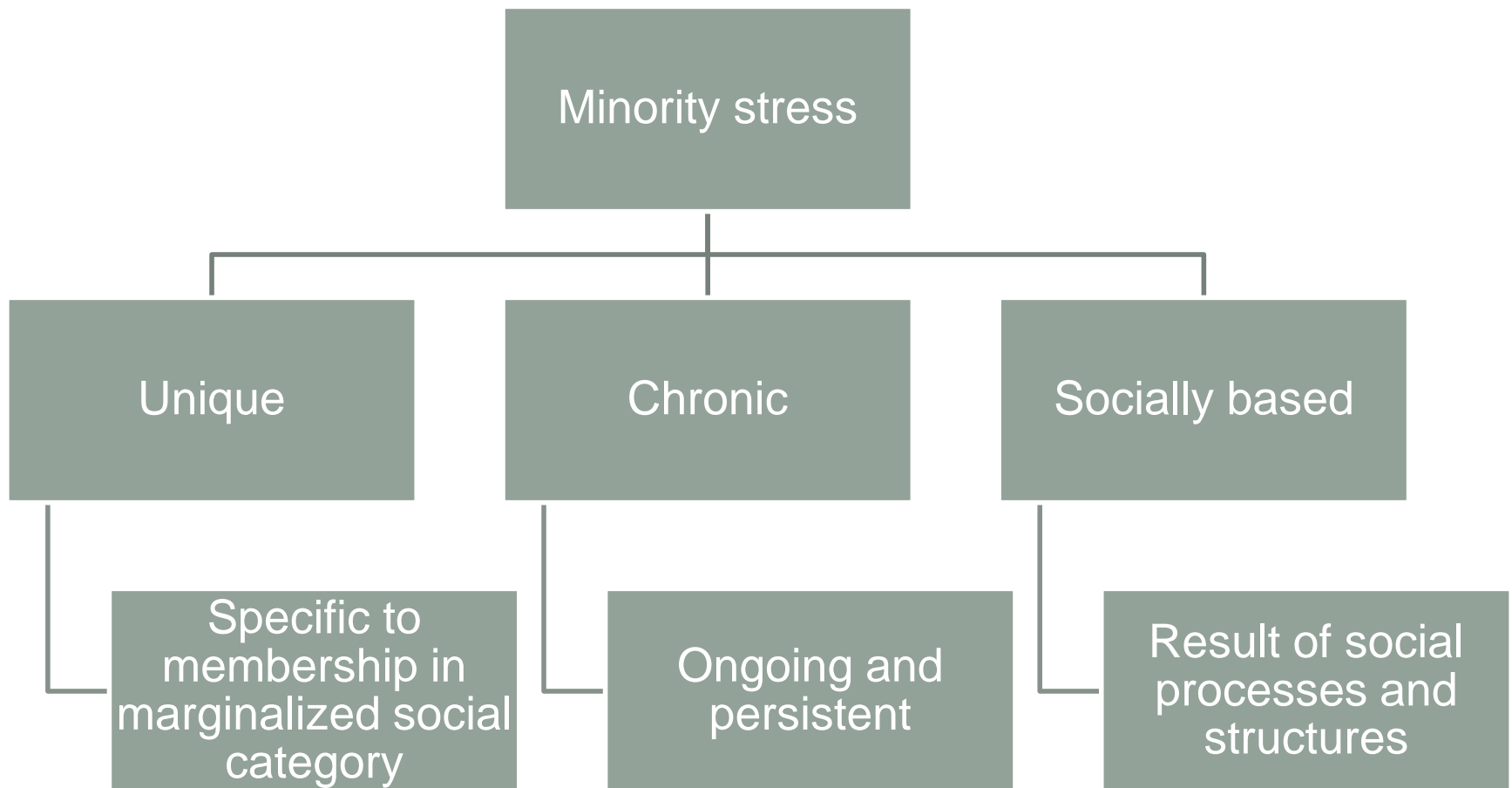
Homophobia,  
Transphobia,  
Biphobia

External

Internal

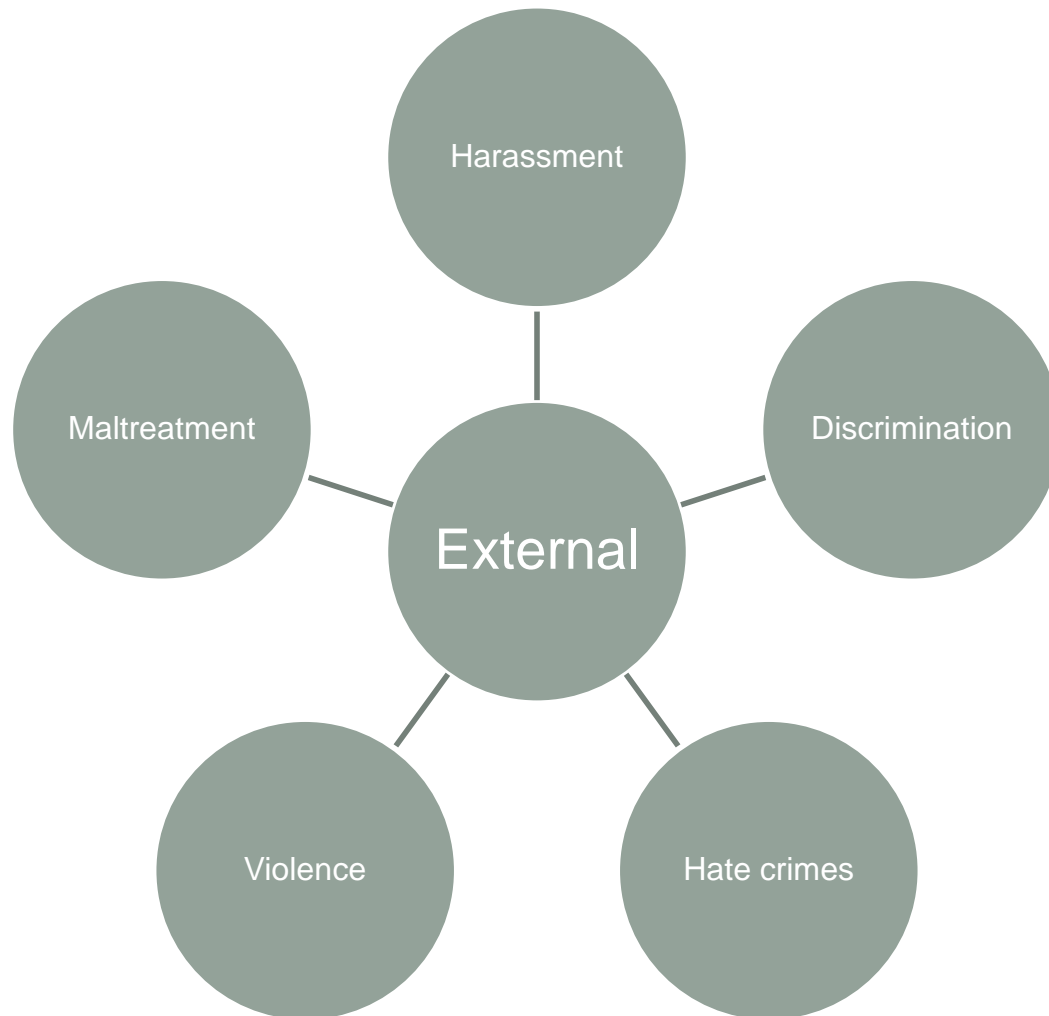


# Minority stress



(Meyer, 2003)

# Minority stress





# Minority stress: External

- LGBT violent victimization (2004 Canadian General Social Survey)
  - Gays, lesbians, and bisexuals experienced higher rates of sexual assaults, robberies, and physical assaults than their heterosexual peers
    - Rates for gays and lesbians was **2.5 times** that of heterosexuals
    - Rates for bisexuals it was **4 times** that of heterosexuals
  - Elevated risk of victimization among gays, lesbians, and bisexuals remained even after controlling for factors correlated with victimization risk\*

(Beauchamp, 2004)

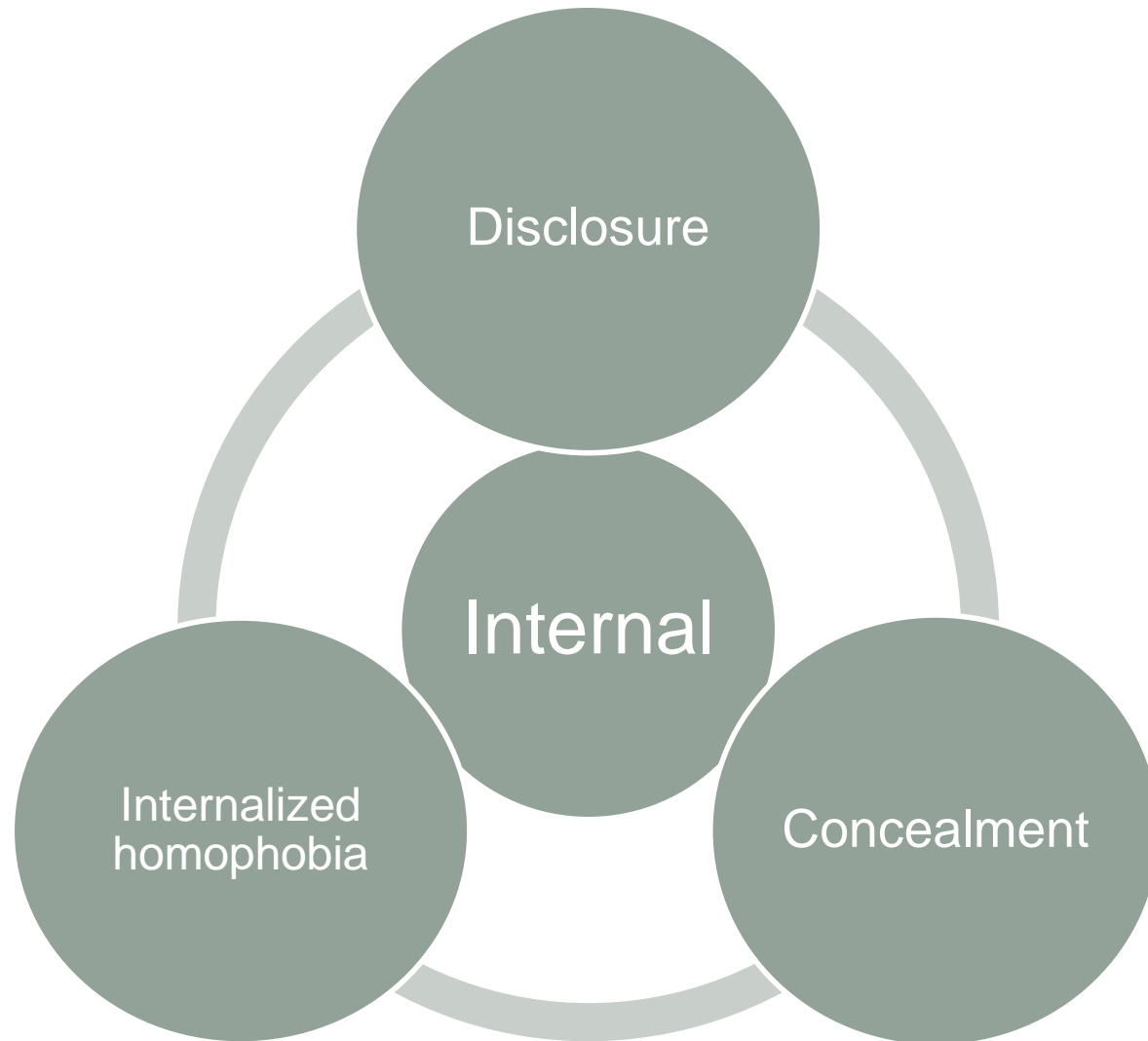
\*being young, single, a student, low income, urban dwelling, and engaging in 30 or more evening activities a month

# Minority stress: External

- Anti-LGBT violence in Canada (2009 Uniform Crime Reporting Survey):
  - 13% of hate crimes motivated by sexual orientation
  - 74% of these were violent in nature
  - The proportion of hate crimes on the basis of sexual orientation that were violent in nature was higher than the proportion of hate crimes that were violent in nature motivated by race/ethnicity (39%) or religion (21%)

(Statistics Canada, 2011)

# Minority stress: Internal

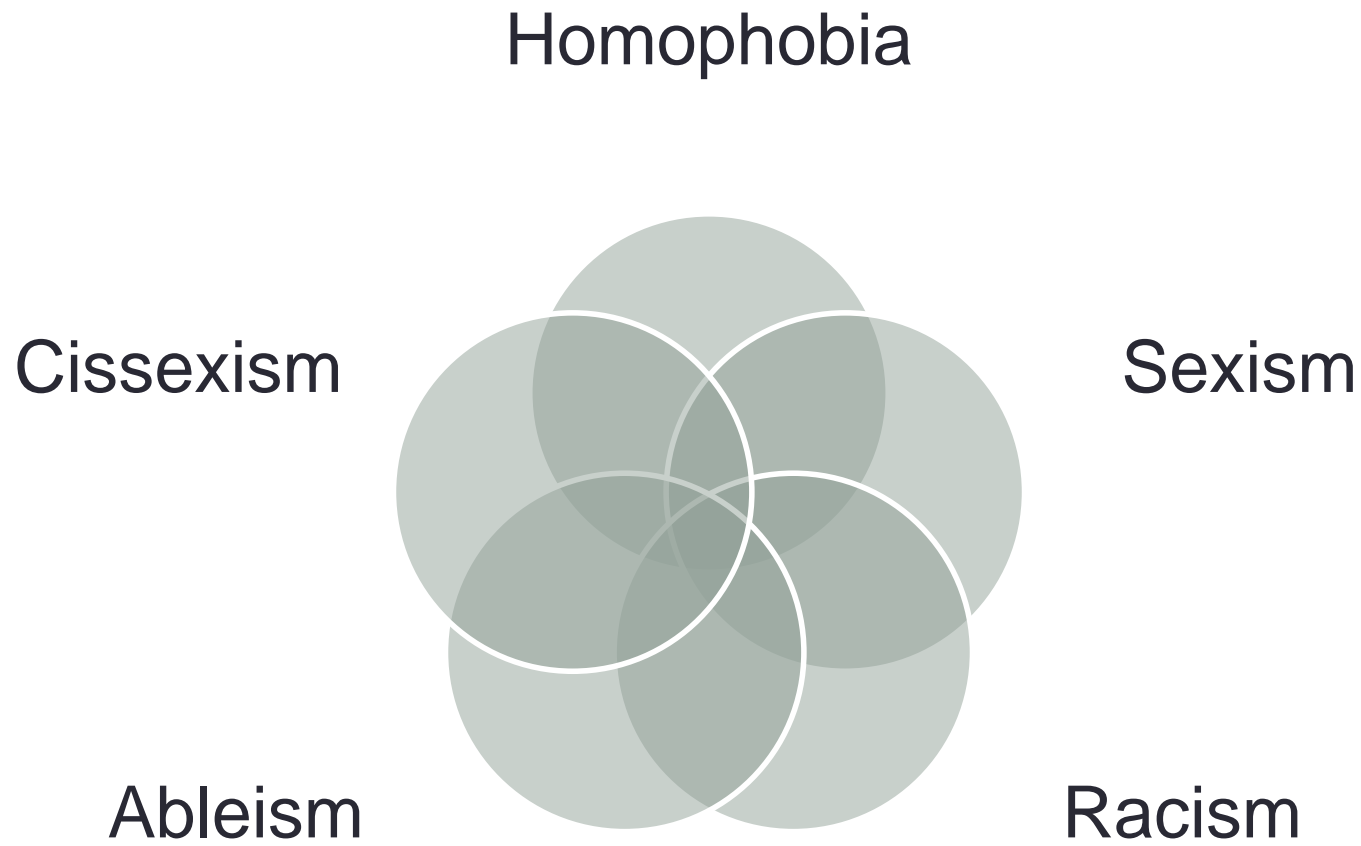


# Biphobia

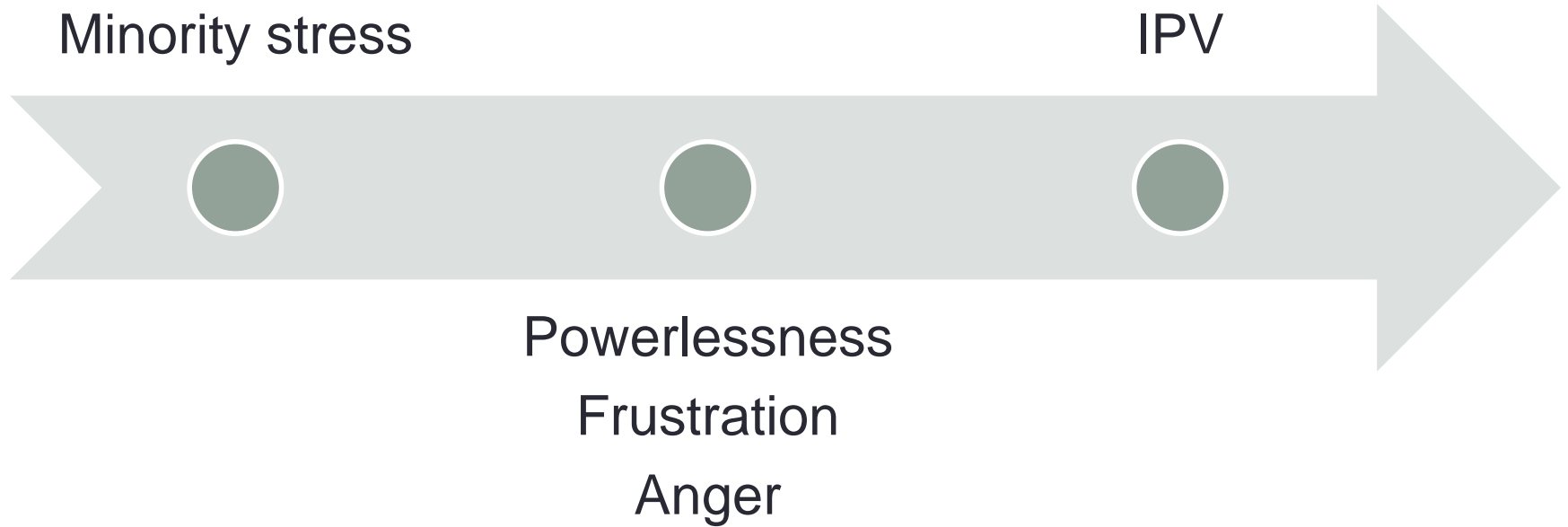
- Myths and negative beliefs about bisexuality which contribute to **fear and distrust** of bisexual people, for example
  - Questioning the “legitimacy” of bisexual identity
  - Belief that bisexuals are confused and are “really” just heterosexual or gay/lesbian
- Contributes to bisexuals experiencing marginalization in both heterosexual and rainbow communities

(see qualitative research by Ross, Dobinson, & Eady, 2010 for extensive discussion of specific forms of biphobia)

# Intersectionality



# Minority stress and IPV



# METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

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Challenges to the empirical study of partner violence in  
rainbow communities

# Sampling challenges

- Primary reliance on convenience samples

Source	Examples	Limitations
LGBT specific events and organizations	-Pride events -Michigan Womyn's Music Festival	-May exclude LGBT persons who are not "out" or actively engaged with LGBT community
IPV specific organizations	-Battered women's shelters	-Perceived heterosexual bias of these services may deter LGBT persons from their utilization
College or university samples	-Psychology "participant pools"	-Criticized for low generalizability



# Measurement challenges

Disparate (or no) definitions of IPV

Disparate definitions of “LGBT” (e.g. behavior vs. identity)

Consideration of different time frames (e.g. lifetime vs. recent)

Psychometric properties of measures not addressed

Absence of studies which include both partners

Failure to assess gender of perpetrator

For in-depth discussion of LGBT research methods, see Burke & Follingstad, 1999 and Murray & Mobley, 2009

# PRESENT STUDY

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Research questions, study aims, and methods

# Overarching goals

- Establish valid **prevalence estimates** of LGB IPV based on a Canadian community sample
- Using an **intersectional framework**, examine the ways in which sexual orientation intersects with other identity categories to create differential vulnerabilities for IPV for some members of the LGB community
- Examine the potential association of one form of **minority stress** (discrimination) with LGB IPV

# Specific aims

- Examine both **prevalence and severity** of LGB IPV (emotional, financial, physical, sexual) in a nationally representative Canadian sample
- Examine **group differences** of prevalence of IPV within LGB population based on:
  - Socio-demographic factors
  - Past experiences of discrimination based on sexual orientation
  - Sexual orientation
  - Gender

# Data source

- 2004 General Social Survey (cycle 18)
- Collected between January and December 2004
- Targeted persons over age of 15 in 10 Canadian provinces
- Excluded Yukon, Northwest Territories, Nunavut, and individuals who were full time residents of institutions

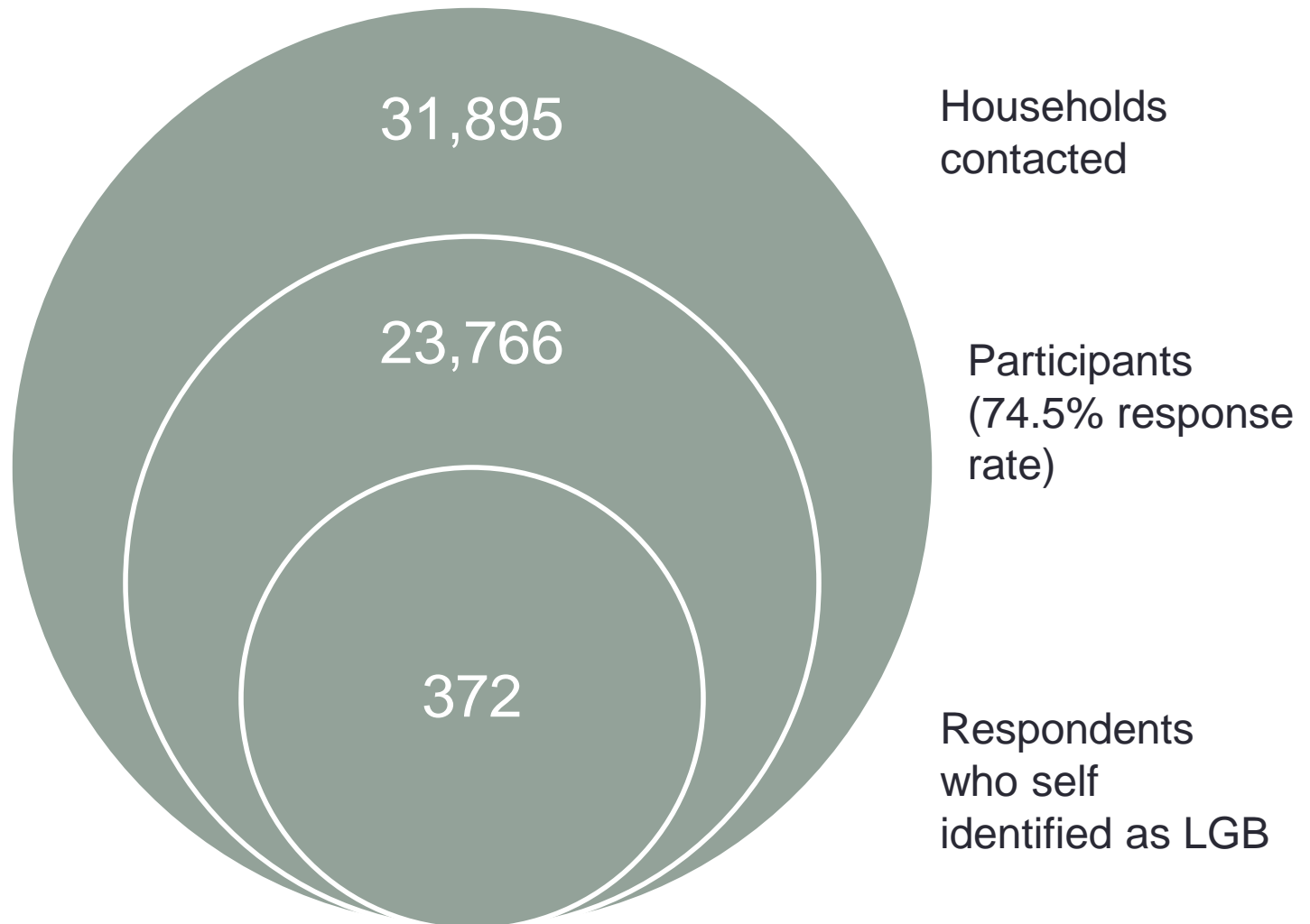
# Data source

- Telephone survey (Random Digit Dialing [RDD])
  - Excluded those without landline or those who exclusively used cell phones
  - Approximately 2% of households during study period did not possess land line and less than 3% of Canadians reported exclusive cell phone use during this time (Statistics Canada, 2005)
- Interviews conducted by trained interviewers who received personal preparedness training by a psychologist because of sensitive nature of interviews

# RDD methods and LGBT research

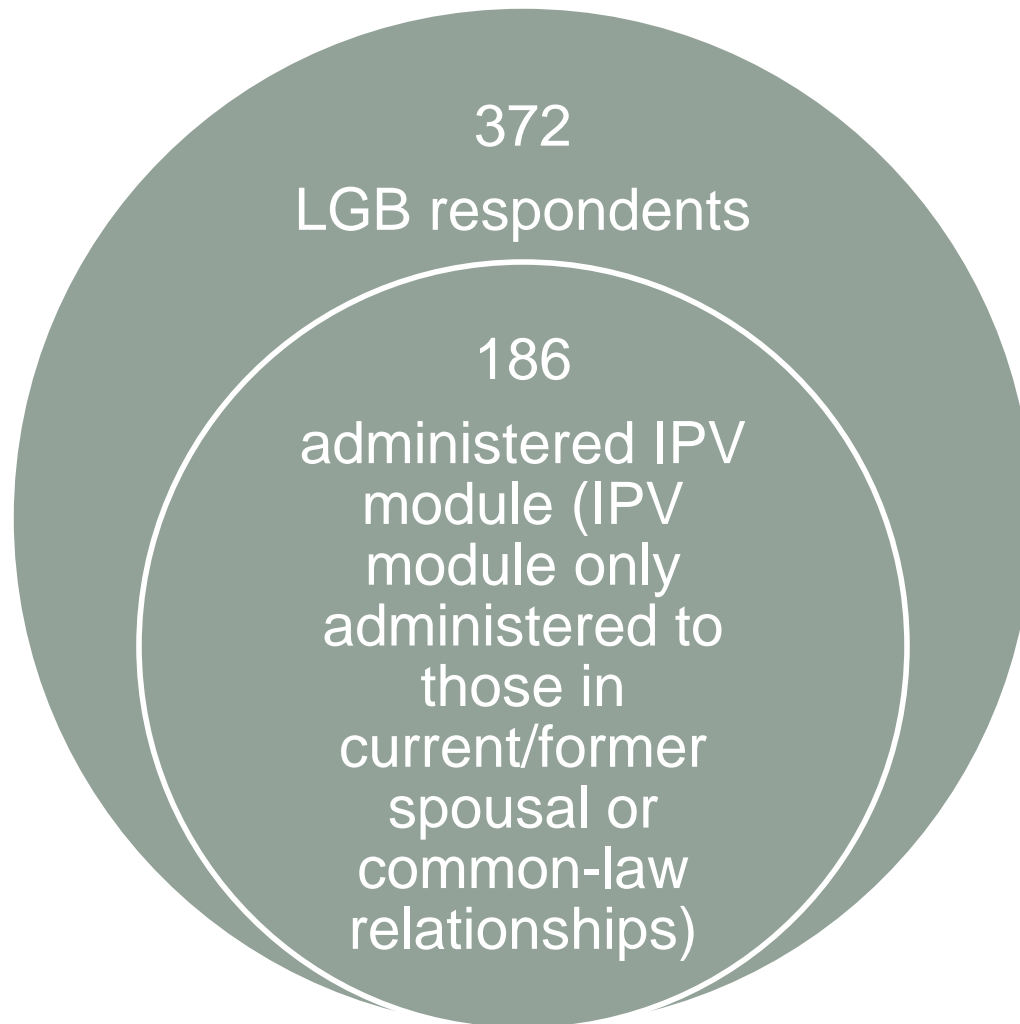
- Research conducted by Meyer & Colten (1999) concluded that using Random Digit Dialing (RDD) methods to obtain community based samples of gay men is an effective means of reducing sampling bias

# Sample





# Sample



# Sexual orientation

- *Do you consider yourself to be:*
- *(1) heterosexual (sexual relations with people of the opposite sex)?*
- *(2) homosexual, that is lesbian or gay (sexual relations with people of your own sex)?*
- *(3) bisexual (sexual relations with people of both sexes)?*

# Measures: Physical/Sexual IPV

Threatened to  
hit with fist or  
object that could  
hurt you

Thrown anything  
that could hurt  
you

Pushed, shoved,  
or grabbed in  
way that could  
hurt you

Slapped you

Kicked you, bit  
you, or hit with  
fists

Hit you with  
something that  
could hurt you

Assessed acts committed by either current or former intimate partners in the period of the last five years

# Measures: Physical/Sexual IPV

Beaten you

Choked you

Used or threatened to  
use a gun or knife on  
you

Forced you into any  
unwanted sexual  
activity by threatening  
you, holding you down,  
or hurting you in some  
way

# Measures: Severity IPV

## Frequency

- Number of incidents
- 1-11 (11=10 or more times)

## Fear

- *Did you ever fear your life was in danger because of your spouse's/partner's violent or threatening behavior?*

## Injuries

- *During this (these) incident(s) were you ever physically injured in any way, for example, bruises, cuts, broken bones, etc.?*

# Measures: Emotional/Financial IPV

Tries to limit contact  
with friends/family

Puts you down or calls  
you names to make you  
feel bad

Is jealous and doesn't  
want you to talk to other  
men/women

Harms or threatens to  
harm someone close to  
you

# Measures: Emotional/Financial IPV

Demands to know who you are with and where you are at all times

Damages or destroys your possessions or property

Prevents you from knowing about or having access to the family income, even if you ask

# Measures: Discrimination

- *Discrimination happens when people are treated unfairly because they are seen as being different from others. In the past five years, have you experienced discrimination or been treated unfairly by others in Canada because of your sexual orientation?*
- Yes/No



# Measures: Socio-demographic

Current partner  
residing in  
household

Visible minority

Aboriginal

Immigrant  
status

Education

Income

Geographic  
region  
(urban/rural)

Household  
language

Physical or  
mental  
limitations

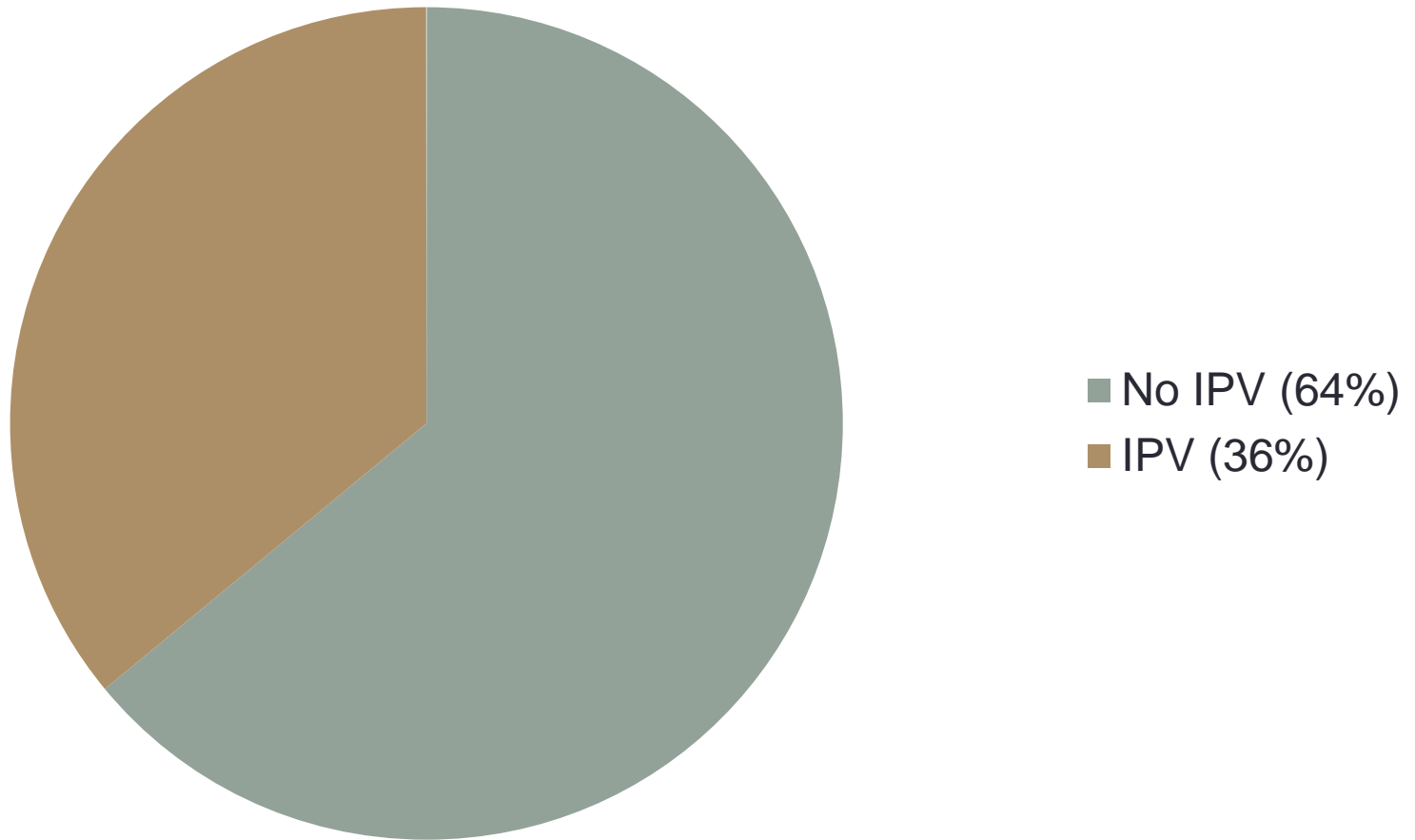
# KEY FINDINGS

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Prevalence, severity, and within-group variations of relational violence experienced by lesbian, gay, and bisexual identified individuals

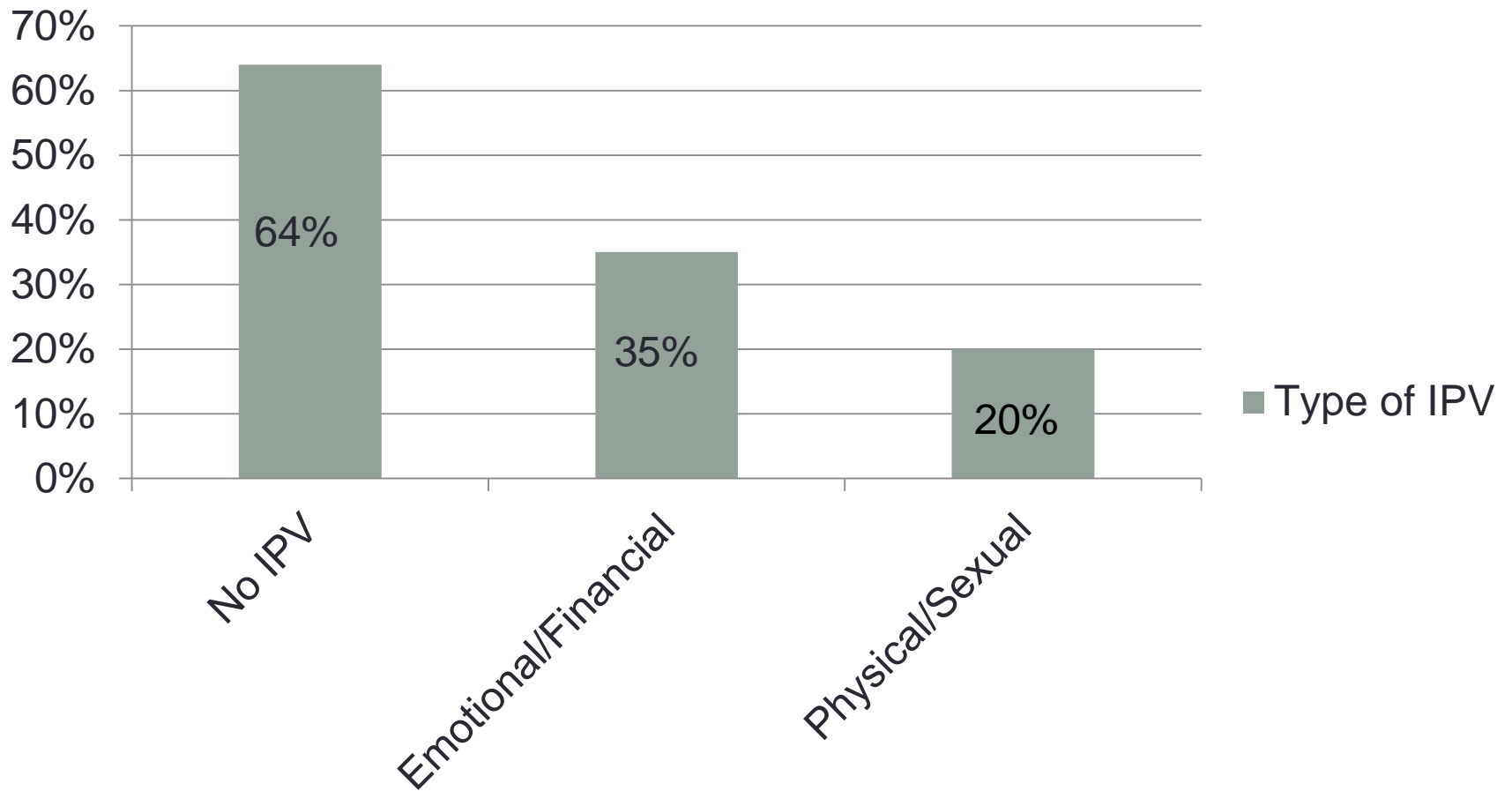
# Prevalence

**Any form of IPV**



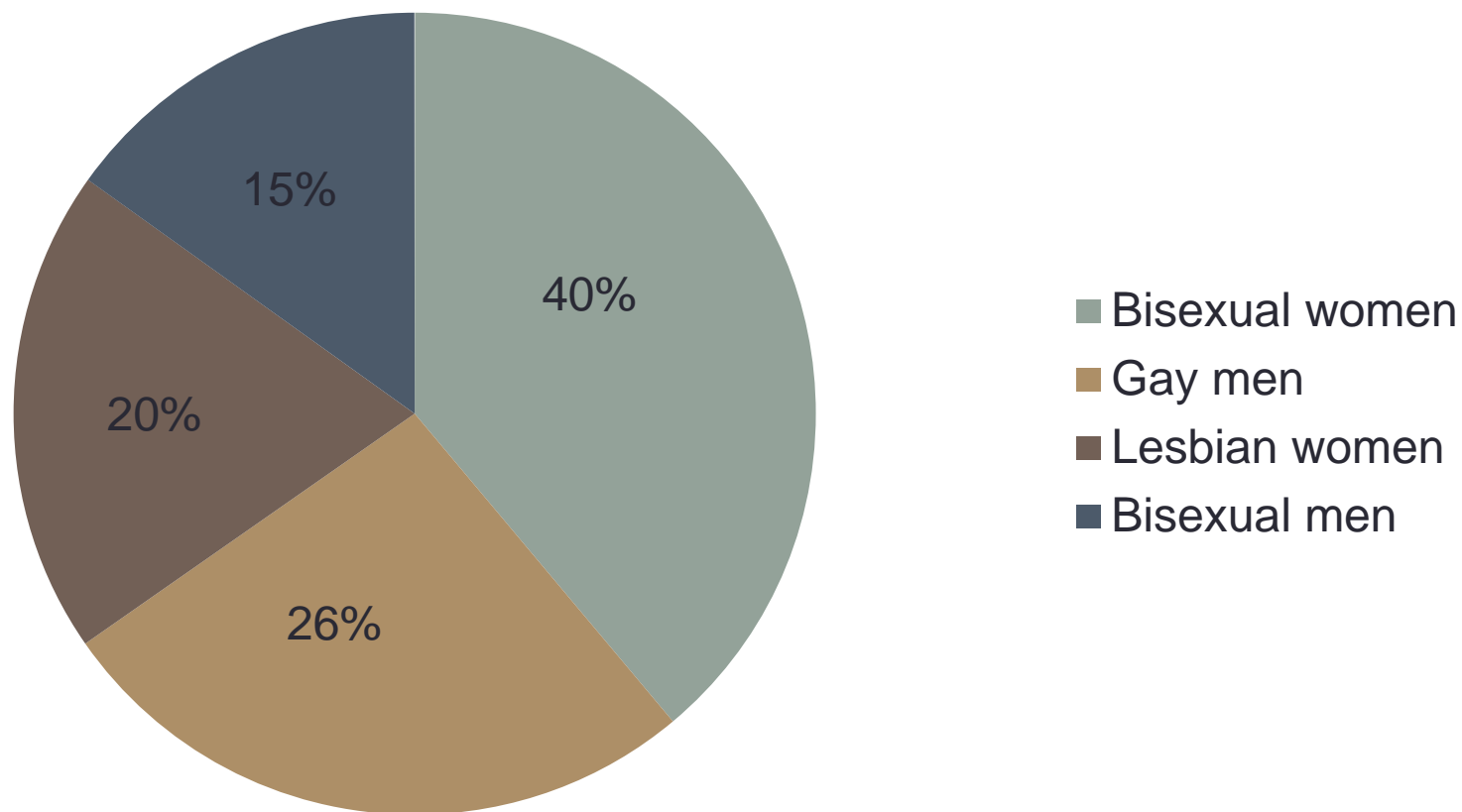
# Prevalence

Type of IPV



# Prevalence by sexual orientation

## Breakdown of physical/sexual IPV victims by sexual identity



(rounded percentages)

# Emotional/Financial IPV

- Most common types experienced:

Type	Percentage
Puts you down or calls you names to make you feel bad	71.2%
Jealous and doesn't want you to talk to other men/women	69.4%
Demands to know who you are with and where you are at all times	58.5%
Tries to limit your contact with family or friends	47.1%
Damages or destroys your possessions or property	25.1%

# Physical/Sexual IPV

- Most common types experienced:

Type	Percentage
Pushed, grabbed, or shoved you in a way that could hurt you	44.9%
Threatened to hit you with fists or object that could hurt you	41.5%
Slapped you	27.8%
Thrown anything at you that could hurt you	25.4%
Kicked you, bit you, or hit you with his/her fists	21.7%
Beaten you	16.9%
Choked you	15.9%

# Frequency and severity

- Physical/sexual IPV

Mean number of instances:

2.27

(SD= 3.51)

Feared for life due to IPV

18.4%

IPV resulted in physical injuries

36.6%



# Socio-demographic variations

- Factors associated at a statistically significant level with an **increased risk** of IPV by a current or former partner

## Age

(younger people at higher risk)

## Partner status

(persons without partner currently in home at higher risk)

## Education level

(high school education or less at higher risk)

## Physical or mental limitations

(persons with limitations at higher risk)

# Discrimination

- A larger proportion of LGB persons who had reported past discrimination experienced IPV (43.9%) than the proportion of LGB persons who had not experienced past discrimination who reported IPV (32.6%)
- However, this difference was not found to be statistically significant (chi-square)

# Sexual orientation and IPV

- Bisexuals were significantly more likely to experience IPV, physical injuries as a result of IPV, and a higher number of incidents of violence

Bisexuals	Gays and lesbians
46.8% of bisexuals reported experiencing emotional/financial IPV	26.6% of gays and lesbians reported experiencing emotional/financial IPV
28.6% of bisexuals reported experiencing physical/sexual IPV	15.5% of gays and lesbians reported experiencing physical/sexual IPV
Bisexuals experienced a mean of 3.16 instances of physical/sexual violence (SD=4.27)	Gays and lesbians experienced a mean of 1.24 instances of physical/sexual violence (SD=1.24)

All tests statistically significant at a level of  $p < .05$  or higher (chi-square, t-tests)

# Gender and IPV

- Although approaching the level of significance, there were no statistically significant gender differences in:
  - Likelihood of experiencing IPV
  - Fearing for one's life
  - Injuries as a result of IPV
- However, statistically significant gender differences were found in number of incidents of violence
  - Females experienced a higher number of incidents of violence ( $M=3.07$ ,  $SD=4.09$ ) than males ( $M=1.15$ ,  $SD=2.07$ )

# Sexual orientation, gender, and IPV

- One-way between groups analysis of variance (ANOVA)

Group	Incidents of violence
Bisexual women	$M=3.83, SD=4.61$
Lesbian women	$M=1.57, SD =2.34$
Bisexual men	$M=1.44, SD=2.78$
Gay men	$M=.99, SD=1.61$

Post hoc comparisons using Tukey's HSD test indicated that the mean number of incidents of IPV experienced by bisexual females was significantly different than the mean number of incidents for gay males

# DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

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Contributions of this work to research, theory, and  
practice

# Summary of key findings

- Approximately **1 in 3** (36%) of LGB persons in Canada experienced any form of IPV
  - Approximately **1 in 3** (34%) experienced emotional and/or financial IPV
  - Approximately **1 in 5** (20.4%) experienced physical and/or sexual IPV
- To our knowledge, this is the first attempt to establish a prevalence rate for LGB IPV in a nationally representative Canadian sample

# Summary of key findings

- Compared to their gay and lesbian peers, **bisexual individuals** experienced:
  - Higher likelihood of experiencing any form of IPV
  - Higher likelihood of experiencing physical injuries as a result of IPV
- Further, **bisexual females** reported a higher frequency (number of incidents) of IPV



# Heightened risk for bisexuals

- Our study was **unable to identify** whether IPV perpetrated against bisexuals was more likely to be committed in the context of same sex or opposite sex relationships
- Previous research (Messinger, 2011), however, found that bisexuals were more likely to experience IPV in the context of **opposite sex** rather than same sex relationships
- One possible interpretation of this is IPV experienced by bisexuals is not connected to their identity as members of sexual minority communities but rather is a manifestation of IPV in male-female relationships
  - Thus, bisexual IPV may be best understood in the context of research and theorizing on **heterosexual IPV**

# A word of caution..

- We urge caution in endorsing that interpretation because:
  - Lack of further studies to replicate Messinger's findings in other samples of bisexual individuals
  - Problematically defines sexual relationships in terms of sexual *behavior* (same sex vs. opposite sex) rather than constructs of sexual *identities* (lesbian, gay, bisexual, heterosexual)

# Heteronormativity

- Privileged status of heterosexuality is threatened by any sexual *identity* which deviates from the heterosexual norm
  - Any behavior which transgresses the norms of opposite sex behavior, attraction, and partnerships presents a challenge to heteronormativity
- As such bisexual *identity* is a direct threat to heteronormativity (and the patriarchal social structures which support and endorse heteronormativity) **even when bisexual identified individuals are partnered with opposite sex partners**

# Bisexual identity

- Thus, bisexual IPV must be understood in the context of both **patriarchal** and **heteronormative** social structures which oppress all sexual minorities
- To treat bisexual individuals as “heterosexual” when they are in opposite sex relationships and “gay or lesbian” when they are in same sex relationships is:
  - (1) Overly simplistic
  - (2) Obscures the unique social positioning of bisexual identity
  - (3) Ignores salient role of “**bi-phobia**” in both heterosexual and lesbian and gay communities which marginalize bisexuals within both

# Intersectionality

- Our study found that certain socio-demographic characteristics were associated with an increased risk of IPV for LGB persons, for example:
  - Persons with **lower levels of education**
  - Persons with **physical or mental limitations**
- Suggests that LGB persons experiencing **multiple forms of oppression** (e.g. class and ability based oppressions) are at a heightened risk of IPV

# Intersectionality

- As LGB persons have differential access to power and privilege based on their membership in **multiple identity** categories, these inequalities may render some LGB persons at a higher risk of violence
- Feminists have theorized that IPV is a manifestation at the micro level of **power inequalities** between privileged and oppressed groups at the macro level
- Suggest that these factors may also contribute to IPV within sexual minority communities

# Discrimination

- Although not statistically significant, our study did find that individuals who experienced discrimination were **more likely** to have experienced IPV
- Timing?
  - LGB survivors of IPV may experienced discrimination when **seeking help** in the aftermath of IPV
  - Discrimination may contribute to experiences of **minority stress** which may increase risk of IPV
- Future research warranted to further untangle these relationships

# A positive note

- Our study found that individuals who are currently **un-partnered** were more likely to have experienced past IPV than those currently partnered
- Suggests that despite cultural and institutional barriers to accessing resources in the aftermath of IPV, many LGB persons are able to **successfully exit** violent relationships
- Further research should explore the **strengths and resiliencies** which facilitate exiting abusive relationships for LGB persons



# Future directions: Practice

- IPV service providers need to be cognizant of diversity **within** LGB populations
- Approaches which homogenize rainbow communities may fail to meet the **unique and diverse needs** of individuals within these communities
- Efforts at inclusiveness must be responsive to the diverse range of identities within rainbow communities
- Models of heterosexual IPV are insufficient in and of themselves to address the potential complexities of IPV within LGB populations

# Future directions: Research

- Qualitative research with individuals who partner with both **same and opposite sex partners** to further explore the unique vulnerabilities of this population for IPV
- Further quantitative and qualitative examination of the role of **minority stressors** in the lives of LGB survivors of IPV
- Qualitative research with survivors to identify factors that facilitate **exiting violent relationships** specific to lesbian, gay, and bisexual populations

# STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS

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Important reflections on our findings and methods

# Strengths

## Sampling

- Most studies use convenience samples drawn from IPV or LGBT service organizations
- Individuals connected to those organizations may differ from those who do not
- Our use of data from a nationally representative sample helps to address these potential sampling biases

## Measurement

- Assessed multiple forms of IPV (physical, sexual, emotional, and financial)
- Used numerous behavioral indicators to assess IPV
- Assessed not only presence of violence but also severity
- All of which contribute to a more detailed understanding of LGB IPV

# Limitations

## Sampling

- Insufficient variation in our sample on some important socio-demographic variables
- Unable to meaningfully analyze group differences in these areas (e.g. Aboriginal and Visible Minority identities)
- Also unable to assess the experiences of transgender and/or gender queer individuals

## Data Collection

- Data was collected and sponsored by Statistics Canada
- In the absence of explicitly LGBT identified researchers or sponsors, individuals may have not felt safe disclosing their sexual identity or participating in this research
- May have led to lower response rates among LGB individuals

# Limitations

## Measurement

- GSS only assesses IPV in spousal or common-law relationships
- IPV in dating or other relationship configurations (e.g. open relationships, polyamorous relationships, etc.) was not able to be assessed

## Measurement

- Unable to identify the sex of the perpetrator of IPV
- Cannot establish if IPV occurred in context of same or opposite sex relations
- Fluidity of sexual identity across the life course renders the possibility that IPV reported by currently gay or lesbian identified individuals may have been perpetrated by opposite sex partners

# Limitations

## Measurement

- Measures of IPV originally drawn from the Violence Against Women Survey (1993)
- Excludes measures of IPV that may be specific to LGB individuals (e.g. threatening to “out” someone; questioning the authenticity of their sexual identity, etc.)

## Important considerations

- Our data cannot be used to make inferences about prevalence of same-sex perpetrated IPV
- Many of the measurement limitations noted suggest the likelihood that are findings may underestimate the prevalence of IPV perpetrated against LGB identified individuals in Canada

# CONTACT INFORMATION

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