Addressing and Preventing Gender Bias
Responses to Reports of Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, and Stalking

Accurate, evidence-based beliefs about sexual and domestic violence and stalking in law enforcement create an environment in which exemplary investigations and full protection of victims occur. Likewise, biases and outdated stereotypes undermine efforts to end violence, discourage victim reporting and participation, and create an environment in which perpetrators continue committing crimes.

Gender Bias Terms

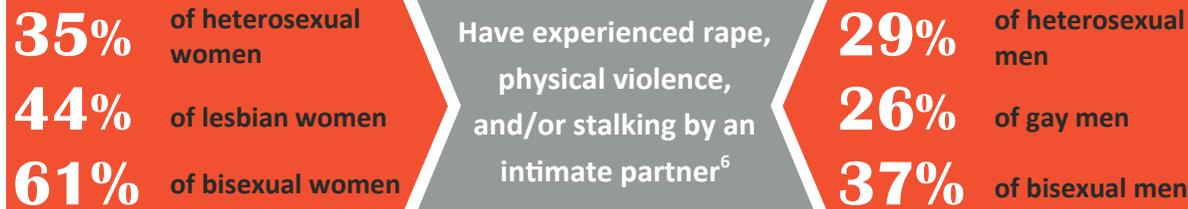**Biases** are positive or negative beliefs about a thing, person, or group, compared with another. [1]

Explicit biases are preferences that people are consciously aware they have. [2]

Implicit biases are a set of automatic preferences in our unconscious minds that affect our decisions and how we perceive people and situations, without our conscious awareness. [3]
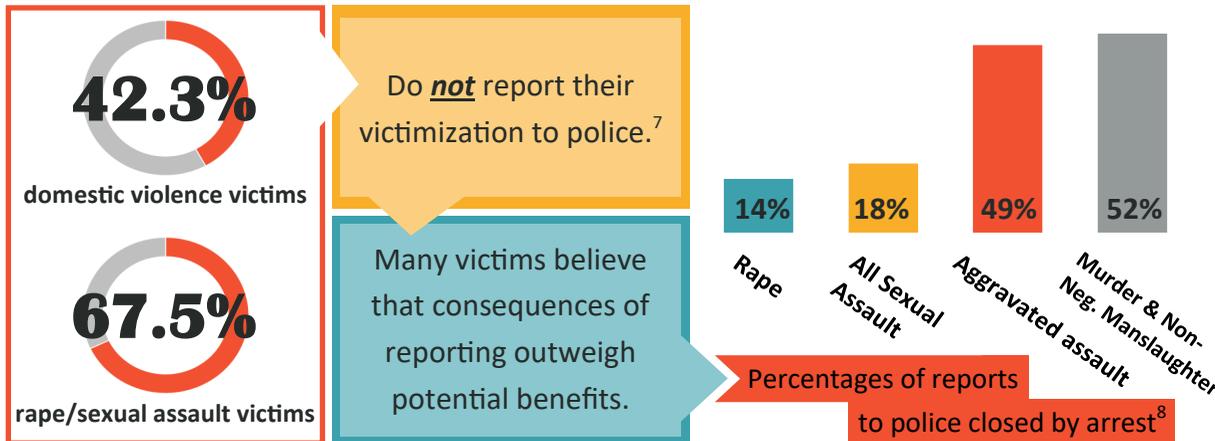
Gender is a societal construct, defined by expectations of the ways people should behave, including but not limited to the way individuals dress, talk, or act. [4]

Gender bias is the idea that a set of unconscious biases about gender—like all biases—may sometimes affect our perceptions, actions, or decision-making. [5]

Sexual assault, domestic violence, stalking, and gender bias affect people of all genders and sexual orientations

35% of heterosexual women
44% of lesbian women
61% of bisexual women

Have experienced rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner [6]

29% of heterosexual men
26% of gay men
37% of bisexual men

Reporting to Law Enforcement:

42.3% domestic violence victims

67.5% rape/sexual assault victims

Do **_not_** report their victimization to police. [7]

Many victims believe that consequences of reporting outweigh potential benefits.

Percentages of reports to police closed by arrest [8]

Rape	All Sexual Assault	Aggravated assault	Murder & Non-Neg. Manslaughter
14%	18%	49%	52%

How might addressing gender bias strengthen my agency & community?

- Ensure victims receive equal protection of the law and protection from harm
- Increase victim, community, and officer safety
- Encourage victims to report crimes
- Encourage victim and witness participation in investigations and the criminal justice system
- Hold offenders accountable
- Strengthen trust between your agency and community

The U.S. Department of Justice outlines eight principles to guide law enforcement in addressing and preventing gender bias in response to sexual assault, domestic violence, and stalking: [9]

- Recognize and address biases, assumptions about victims
- Refer victims to appropriate services
- Treat all victims with respect and employ interviewing tactics that encourage a participation
- Properly identify the assailant
- Investigate reports thoroughly and effectively
- Hold agency members who commit crimes accountable
- Appropriately classify reports
- Maintain, review, and act upon data

For additional information and citations, please visit www.theiacp.org/Gender-bias

Notes:

1. United States District Court, Western District of Washington, *Unconscious Bias*, video, 10:53, March 31, 2017, http://www.wawd.uscourts.gov/jury/unconscious-bias.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. International Association of Chiefs of Police, *Responding to Sexual Violence in LGBTQ+ Communities: Law Enforcement Strategies and Considerations,* 2017, http://www.theiacp.org/Portals/0/documents/pdfs/Communications/IACPRespondingtoSexualViolenceinLGBTQCommunities2017.pdf.

5. United States District Court, *Unconscious Bias.*

6. Mikel L. Walters, Jieru Chen, and Matthew J. Breiding, *The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey: 2010 Findings on Victimization by Sexual Orientation* (Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2013), https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/nisvs_sofindings.pdf.

7. Jennifer L. Truman, and Rachel E. Morgan, *Criminal Victimization, 2015*, U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2016, https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/cv15.pdf.

8. Federal Bureau of Investigation, *National Incident-Based Reporting System, 2012-2014,* 2015, https://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=dcdetail&iid=301; Charles Puzzanchera, J. Smith, and Wei Kang, *Easy Access to NIBRS Victims, 2013: Victims of Violence,* 2015, http://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/ezanibrsdv/.

9. U.S. Department of Justice, *Identifying and Preventing Gender Bias in Law Enforcement Response to Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence,* December 15, 2015, https://www.justice.gov/opa/file/799366/download.