

Abuse in Lesbian Relationships & Lesbian Friendly Service:

A Saskatchewan Survey (2001-2002)

Data from Individuals

This survey was intended to measure the level of awareness in Saskatchewan's 'lesbian community' about abuse in female same-sex relationships and the availability of and need for 'lesbian friendly' services for women abused in same-sex relationships. This questionnaire was for **any woman living in Saskatchewan who considers herself to be a woman who has or has had intimate sexual relationships with women**, whether she calls herself lesbian, dyke, gay, queer, a woman who sleeps with women, bi-sexual, two-spirited, or by some other label or none at all.

There were 46 self-selected (as opposed to random) respondents to this questionnaire. All 46 respondents answered every question from 1 to 10 and from 25 to 30, except as noted (see questions 7, 8 & 29).

1. Your sexual orientation/preference is/was known to:

			Out of:	
Friends	Very few friends	2	46	5%
	Some friends	2	46	5%
	Most friends	18	46	39%
	All friends	24	46	52%
Family	No family members	3	46	7%
	Very few family members	4	46	9%
	Some family members	15	46	32%
	Most/all family members	24	46	52%
Other	Just partner/ex-partner	0	46	0%
	One or more co-workers	28	43	65%
	Doctor	29	39	74%
	Therapist/counselor	27	28	96%
	Spiritual advisor	8	10	80%
	Elder	3	5	60%

2. Of those you are out to, your sexual orientation/preference is/was generally accepted by:

		Out of:	
Friends	45	46	98%
Family	34	43	79%
Partner/ex-partner	32	45	71%
One or more co-workers	25	28	89%
Doctor	24	29	83%
Therapist/counselor	25	27	93%
Spiritual advisor	6	8	75%
Elder	3	3	100%

3. What do you currently know about abuse in intimate relationships generally?

	All Respondents	Not abused		Abused	
nothing	0	0	0%	0	0%
very little	3	2	67%	1	33%
some	18	10	56%	8	44%
quite a bit	25	10	40%	15	60%

4. What do you currently know about abuse in female same-sex relationships?

	All Respondents	Not abused		Abused	
nothing	2	2	100%	0	0%
very little	7	4	57%	3	43%
some	24	13	54%	11	46%
quite a bit	13	3	23%	10	77%

5. Of the following, which would you consider to be abusive in an intimate same-sex relationship:

Behaviour	Abusive	Not abusive
Slapping; hitting; punching; choking; kicking; scratching; biting; shoving; cornering; violence to doors, walls, furniture, possessions; threatening looks, gestures; verbal threats to hurt you, your kids, your friends; putting you down; controlling what you wear, who you see	46	0
Hair pulling; grabbing; abuse of your kids; threatening with weapons; verbal threats to hurt your family, pets; forcing you to have sex; forcing you to have rough sex; calling you names; swearing at you; controlling all the money; controlling money you earn; not allowing you to work; blaming your kids for almost everything; making you feel like nothing you do is ever good enough; controlling where you go, what you do, who you talk to, what you say; threatening to out you	45	1
Abuse of your pets; threatening suicide; putting your kids down; humiliating you in front of other people; blaming you for almost everything; making you the 'bad guy'; refusing to let you leave the relationship	44	2
Putting down your friends, family; making you responsible for the money and blaming you when there is not enough; treating you like a servant or slave; outing you against your wishes	43	3
Threatening to leave you; refusing to let you be out	42	4
Yelling; insisting that you work	41	5

Abused?	Other
Yes	belittling your feelings
Yes	sleep deprivation
No	anything that makes you feel bad about yourself, scared or threatened
Yes	creating abusive self doubt
Yes	revealing any STD's you have to everyone they can in the gay/lesbian community
Yes	any other behaviour that takes away from me as a person

6. What do you currently know about the services offered by abuse help agencies to abused straight women?

	All Respondents	Not abused		Abused	
nothing	0	0	0%	0	0%
very little	9	3	33%	6	67%
some	17	12	71%	5	29%
quite a bit	20	7	35%	13	65%

7. What do you currently know about the services offered by abuse help agencies to women abused in same-sex relationships? (answered by 45 respondents)

	All Respondents	Not abused		Abused	
nothing	12	7	58%	5	42%
very little	19	9	47%	10	53%
some	14	5	36%	9	64%
quite a bit	0	0		0	

8. If someone who was experiencing abuse in a female same-sex relationship asked you where to get information or assistance, what would you suggest?

Abused?	Suggestions from Saskatoon
Yes	I don't know.
Yes	?
Yes	Call GLHS
Yes	counselling or leave
Yes	Gay and Lesbian Health Services for a referral
Yes	GLHS
Yes	GLHS or Family Service Bureau
Yes	GLHS, Interval House (Last Resort)
Yes	GLHS, Sexual Assault Centre (if applicable)
Yes	Hot Peach Pages
Yes	Hot Peach Website
Yes	I would suggest calling or going down to our local GLHS
Yes	refer to gay and lesbian health services hotline
Yes	Sexual Assault Center, Women's shelter (on Victoria in Saskatoon), Tamara's House, Crisis Line, counsellors, Doctor, police, lawyer
Yes	Sexual Assault Centre, GLHS, Family Service Saskatoon Mental Health
Yes	the Hot Peach Pages, GLHS
Yes	to call GLHS for info, sexual abuse line, Crisis line, and there are a few counselors I would recommend.
No	Call local gay & lesbian centre
No	Charlotte Huculak at GLHS
No	Contact Interval House for more information
No	Contact Tamara's House, Crisis Nursery, GLHS
No	GLHS
No	Interval House, Saskatoon Sexual Assault and Info Centre
No	maybe phoning one of the shelters, church

No	Same as a straight relationship where there is abuse.
No	Sexual Assault Centre, GLHS, U of S LGB Centre, PATHS
No	Sexual Assault Services; Gay & Lesbian Health Services; counsellor
No	Suggest GLHS, my minister, a counsellor, ask her if she has a plan to get away, check out the crisis lines in the phone book, what kind of assistance does she need, offer her a place to stay for a while
No	Support them as much as possible. Possibly go with them down to GLHS to get a referral to or an agency that is gay-positive.
No	Talking to a physician or GLHS
No	Talking to someone at GLHS
No	U of S Women's Centre, Sexual Assault Centre

Abused?	Suggestions from Regina
Yes	Call the Regina Women's Centre & Sexual Assault Line
Yes	Contact the LBGHI or the GLHS
Yes	I'd refer them to Pat Cavanaugh at Family Service Regina or Gladys Benesh, private counsellor
Yes	PFLAG, Pink Triangle
Yes	Regina Women Centre or Mobile
Yes	to talk to a few lesbian councillors that I know

Abused?	Reside?	Suggestions from outside of Saskatoon and Regina
Yes	in Small City	Call the local shelter
No	in Small City	Local gay and lesbian center
No	in Small City	Local gay/lesbian centre
No	in Village or Town	Victim Services, shelter
No	at a resort on a lake	I would assume the local crisis centres would assist any abused woman.
No	at a resort on a lake	Look in the yellow pages under gay or lesbian help lines.

9. Your current status:

	# of Total Respondents	Abused	Never Abused
Single	11	7	4
In female same-sex relationship	32	17	15
Other	3		3

10. Have you ever been abused in a female same-sex relationship? Yes: 24 No: 22

If no, please go to question 25.

If yes, and you are not currently in a female same-sex relationship, go to question 12.

11. Have you been abused in your current female same-sex relationship? Yes: 6 No: 11

(ID #'s 6, 7, 9, 33, 37 & 39)

If no, go to question 12.

If yes, is this the first same-sex relationship in which you have been abused? Yes: 3 No: 3

(ID #'s 6, 33 & 39)

If yes, go to question 16.

12. While in your past abusive same-sex relationship(s), what did you know about abuse in intimate relationships?

nothing	3
very little	5
some	7
quite a bit	6

13. While in your past abusive same-sex relationship(s), what did you know about abuse in female same-sex relationships?

nothing	5
very little	10
some	4
quite a bit	2

14. While in your past abusive same-sex relationship(s), what did you know about the services offered by abuse help agencies to abused women in general?

nothing	3
very little	8
some	4
quite a bit	6

15. While in your past abusive same-sex relationship(s), what did you know about the services offered by abuse help agencies to women abused in same-sex relationships?

nothing	12
very little	6
some	3
quite a bit	0

16. If you have been or are being abused in a female same-sex relationship, which of the following has occurred:

Behaviour Experienced	Max 24	%
Putting you down	19	79%
Yelling	17	71%
Swearing at you; humiliating you in front of other people	15	63%
Making you feel like nothing you do is ever good enough; making you the 'bad guy'	14	58%
Cornering you; blaming you for almost everything	13	54%
Violence to doors, walls, furniture, possessions; threatening to leave you	12	50%
Shoving; threatening with looks; putting down friends; calling you names; controlling who you see	11	46%
Controlling where you go; what you do	10	42%
Threatening suicide; putting your kids down; putting your family down	9	38%
Hitting; verbal threats to hurt you; forcing you to have sex; making you responsible for all the money and blaming you when there is not enough; refusing to let you leave the relationship; controlling who you talk to	8	33%
Slapping; punching; grabbing; controlling what you say	7	29%
Threatening you with gestures; controlling all the money; outing you against your wishes; refusing to let you be out	6	25%
Biting; forcing you to have rough sex; controlling money you earn; blaming your kids for almost everything;	5	21%
Choking; hair pulling; abusing your kids; verbal threats to hurt your friends; controlling what you wear	4	17%
Kicking; verbal threats to hurt your pets; insisting that you work; treating you like a servant or slave	3	13%
Abusing your pets; verbal threats to hurt your kids; verbal threats to hurt your family; threatening to out you	2	8%
Scratching; threatening you with weapons	1	4%
Not allowing you to work	0	0%

Other
rages
downplaying my feelings because they are angry about something else, holding me in one place so I can't walk away from a verbal argument.
degrading me about how much I made compared to her! (even tho it was very close in amount); she had at least four affairs in 8 years that I know of; telling me that no one else would ever put up with me except for her. If she beat me until I was on the floor, it was my fault the chairs were knocked over. Made me responsible for most of the housework - would say "It doesn't bother me. If it bothers you - you clean it."
sleep deprivation
neglected to allow me a creative avenue
bringing other people home to have sex with me

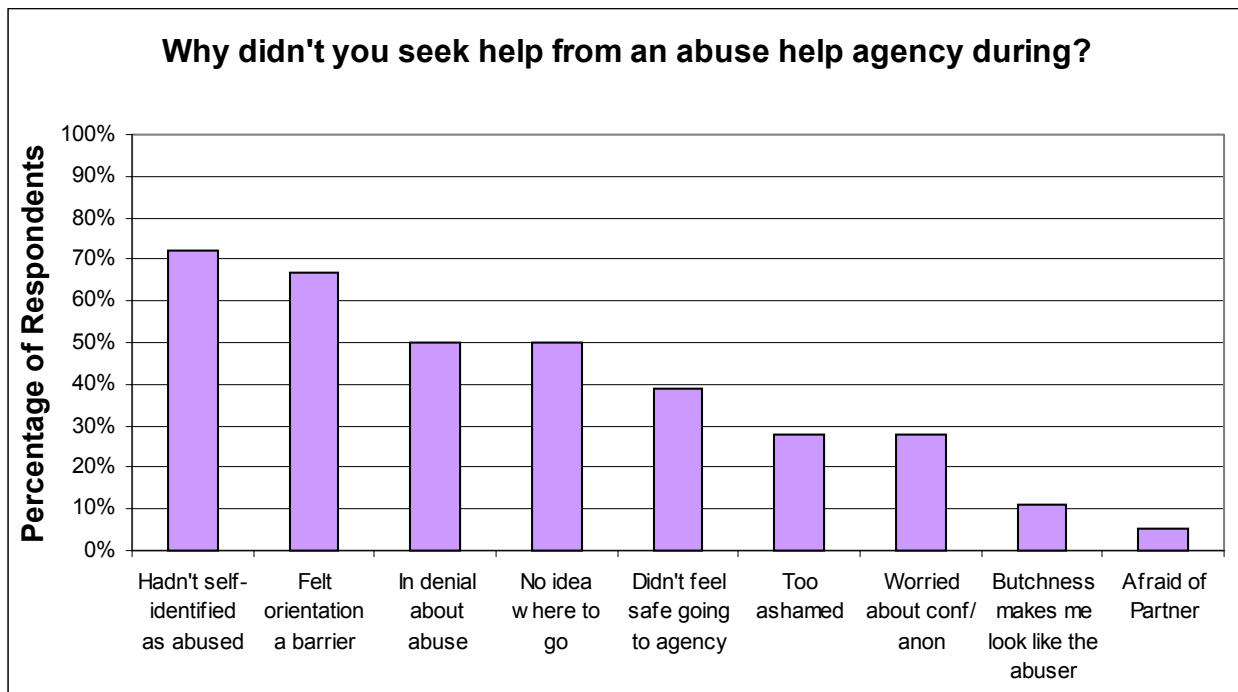
17. While in an abusive same-sex relationship, you have talked about the abuse to:

During Relationship Talked about Abuse to:	#	Out of:		Orientation Accepted when Known by:	
Friends	17	24	71%	24	100%
Abusive partner	14	24	58%		
Therapist/counselor	9	17	53%	16	94%
Family	4	21	19%	16	76%
Co-worker	2	23	8.6%	17	74%
Doctor	1	24	4.2%	17	71%
Spiritual advisor	1	5	20%	3	60%
Elder	0	3	0%	2	67%
No one	3	24	12.5%		
Other	0		0%		

18. While in an abusive same-sex relationship, have you sought help or support from an abuse help agency? Yes: 2 No: 22

If yes, go to question 20.

19. If you have not sought help or support from an abuse help agency while in an abusive same-sex relationship, why not? (a total of 18 respondents indicated one or more of the following)



Out of 18: 13 12 9 9 7 5 5 2 1

ID #	Other
3	Didn't want to be judged
4	Knowing where to go - where to look - knowing I would be helped even though sexual orientation was hidden from everyone then!!
6*	Partner is going for help. [This respondent is in her first abusive same-sex relationship]
7	Finance obligations/working on changing relationship/fear of being alone
8	Because my ex-partner declared herself a feminist & was a big Union activist and some of our friends thought I was 'childish' because I would leave events if she was abusive. They hadn't seen her abuse, just my reaction to it.
9*	I was able to leave the physically abusive relationship without the help from an abuse help agency, following the advice from a friend who worked in a shelter.
10	Had no idea what I would say; felt that it would be hard enough explaining that I was abused, never mind that it was by a woman.
32*	Just didn't get around to it.
36	Didn't consider it a crisis.
38	Needed a clear indication that they were gay-positive & understood same sex violence
40	This was over 20 years ago; nobody talked about abuse then.
41	Initially in denial, then felt orientation was a barrier as well—partner well known in community
43*	I left the relationship & was able to deal with the abuse & abuser very successfully on my own with the help of my new partner.

* chose none of the above barriers

What might have encouraged you to seek the services of an abuse help agency?

ID #	
2	In rural Saskatchewan, there are few options/still not many out people or organizations
3	More publicity about issues
6	If she hadn't gone for help.
7	Increased feeling of self worth
8	Being less proud. Knowing there is a place for lesbians.
9	Dire need?
10	Maybe if the word "Lesbian" was in the name of an agency like "Info and Support Centre for Abused women, including Lesbians." Maybe if a friend had gotten a counsellor to come to me, instead of me having to go to someone.
30	Having an agency specific to gays.
32	If it had been worse.
35	Someone else validating what I went through as real abuse.
36	Awareness of agencies, gay positive identification.
37	Knowledge & acceptance of same sex relationships; offer help to both victim & abuser.
39	Better awareness of agencies available. [This respondent is currently in her first abusive same-sex relationship]
41	Support from friends if I had let them know.
43	If I had been overwhelmed.

If you are currently in your first abusive female same-sex relationship, go to question 25. Otherwise, go to question 21.

20. If you have sought help or support from an abuse help agency while in an abusive female same-sex relationship, where did you go for help?

ID #	
29	Family Service Saskatoon, Mental Health, GLHS (Saskatoon)
34	Mental health agency in BC where I was living (Regina)

Why did you go there for help? Were you aware at the time of anything else that was available?

ID #	
29	Knew of gay positive people there
34	Knew the counselor I was seeing was a lesbian . I did not know of other services available (not within the spiritual awareness that I was seeking)

How did it go? What was helpful? What was not helpful? Were there gaps in service? Do you have suggestions for improvement?

ID #	
29	I had minimized some situations and they helped me to realize how bad it really was for me. With that help, I got out. I could have used more education and reminders on abuse. I do wish that GLHS had some decent/good counselors.)
34	Awesome. I was lucky. I found a great support that helped me leave the relationship.

If you are currently in your first abusive female same-sex relationship, go to question 25.

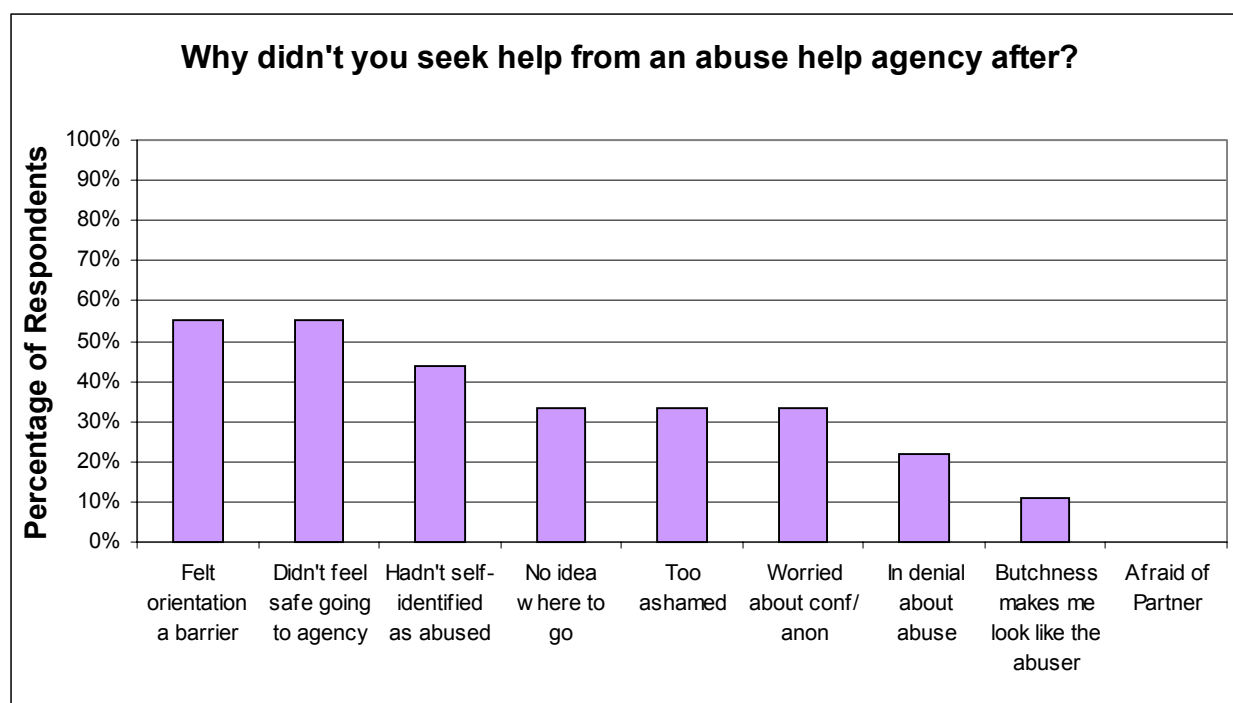
21. Since leaving an abusive same-sex relationship, you have talked about the abuse to:

After Relationship Talked about Abuse to:	#	Out of:		Orientation Accepted when Known by:	
Friends	19	21	90%	21	100%
Abusive partner	9	21	43%		
Therapist/counselor	9	16	56%	16	100%
Family	8	19	42%	14	74%
Co-worker	5	23	22%	16	70%
Doctor	2	21	10%	14	67%
Spiritual advisor	1	5	20%	3	60%
Elder	1	2	50%	2	100%
No one	0	21	0%		
New Partner	13	14	93%		
Other	0		0%		

22. Since leaving an abusive same-sex relationship, have you sought help or support from an abuse help agency? Yes: 6 No: 15

If yes, go to question 24.

23. If you have not sought help or support from an abuse help agency since leaving an abusive same-sex relationship, why not? (a total of 9 respondents indicated one or more of the following)



Out of 9: **5** **5** **4** **3** **3** **3** **2** **1** **0**

ID #	Other
3*	Once out of relationship didn't need help. Therapy costs \$. Therapist lives in Vancouver.
4	After talking with family & friends I am sure I am fine now. Don't have same worries now.
7	Wanted to bury feelings/afraid to be alone
8	There are no lesbian only groups for "battered" womyn as far as I know and I don't feel safe or like I'd fit in a regular battered (straight) womyn's group.
9*	No need
31*	Once I self-identified and was able to talk to friends, new partner, I didn't feel the need to seek counselling.
34*	[Already had had help at agency during the relationship]
40*	It was a long time ago. I've dealt with it through therapy, etc.
41	Partner well known in community - talked to a private therapist/counsellor rather than an abuse help agency.
43*	Working thru it with friends, new partner & therapist helped me.

* chose none of the above barriers

What might have encouraged you to seek the services of an abuse help agency?

ID #	
4	Knowing that it was abuse. Being sure I could get the help. Knowing where to go!!!
5	I just don't know. Trust is important to me.
7	More self esteem
8	Knowing there were lesbian only groups.
9	If I'd had more psychological problems than I felt I could handle.
30	Gay positive agency.
35	Someone else validating what I went through as real abuse.
37	If agency had more experience & knowledge of same sex relationships.
38	Info about gay-positive services & understanding of violence within same sex relationships; lesbian-specific services (i.e. groups, awareness campaigns, counsellors)
40	If I was still in an abusive relationship, I would likely seek counselling somewhere.
41	As a professional in the community, I'm not sure anything would have encouraged me.
43	If I was overwhelmed.

Go to question 25.

24. If you have sought help or support from an abuse help agency since leaving an abusive female same-sex relationship, where did you go for help?

(all in Saskatoon, except where indicated)

ID #	
2	Saskatchewan Mental Health, 13th & Hamilton Street (Regina)
10	Saskatoon Family Services
29	Sexual Assault Centre; Family Service Saskatoon
32	Family Crisis Centre [Family Support Centre?]
36	Mental Health; Family Healing Circle Lodge
42	Counselors at Mental Health (Regina)

Why did you go there for help? Were you aware at the time of anything else that was available?

ID #	
2	Health Care Coverage: Needed to learn about feelings & quit bottling them up
10	I can't remember why I went there. I heard about it through work (I worked for a provincial abuse umbrella association).
29	I was aware of my options (this respondent was the only one who went to an agency during and after)
32	It was the only place I knew of to go for help.
36	(No answer)
42	I needed to talk. I was not aware of anything else at the time

How did it go? What was helpful? What was not helpful? Were there gaps in service? Do you have suggestions for improvement?

ID #	
2	It is still going. It is helpful though slow and I have many trust issues and layers. My therapist seems ok with my sexuality (though I do sense some vibes). Maybe old paranoia of homophobia.
10	I got into a Domestic Abuse Program (DAP), with 9 straight women. It went quite well. I felt comfortable about being out to them. Even though all the info was for women abused by men, I was able to apply it in my case almost all the time. It would have been better if there had been some info about lesbian abuse and if the 2 facilitators had known something about lesbian abuse.
29	(No answer)
32	It was helpful.
36	More discussions around same-sex issues.
42	(No answer)

25. Age?

	All Respondents	Those Not Abused	Those Abused
18 to 23	2	2	0
24 to 30	12	8	4
31 to 40	10	2	8
41 to 50	17	8	9
51 to 60	3	1	2
over 60	2	1	1

26. You identify as?

	All Respondents	Those Not Abused	Those Abused
Aboriginal	4	2	2
Caucasian	41	19	22
Metis/Inuit	1	1	0
Black	0		
Latin/Asian	0		
Other	0		

27. Where do you reside in Saskatchewan?

	All Respondents	Those Not Abused	Those Abused
Saskatoon	34	17	17
Regina	6	0	6
Small city	3	2	1
Village/Town	1	1	0
Lake resort	2	2	0
Reserve	0		
Farm	0		

29. Yearly Income? (answered by 43 respondents)

	All Respondents	Those Not Abused	Those Abused
under \$12,000	10	7	3
\$12,000-\$19,999	7	2	5
\$20,000-\$29,999	13	4	9
\$30,000-\$44,999	8	4	4
\$45,000-\$59,999	2	0	2
\$60,000-\$74,999	3	3	0
\$75,000 or more	0		

28. What is your highest level of education?

	All Respondents	Those Not Abused	Those Abused
Grade 12	6	2	4
Some college/university	10	7	3
Trade/professional certificate	10	3	7
College/university degree	15	7	8
Graduate degree	5	3	2

30. Do you have a doctor? a therapist/counselor? a spiritual advisor? Do you consult with an Elder?

	All Respondents		Those Abused	
Doctor	40	87%	24	100%
Therapist/counselor	29	63%	17	71%
Spiritual advisor	11	24%	5	21%
Elder	5	11.5%	3	12.5%

Abused?	Any other comments?
Yes	Glad to see a public funded survey. How about those same sex benefits we have been promised so long? Thank you.
Yes	I was in an abusive relationship with a man prior to my first lesbian abusive relationship. I was far less willing to accept abuse from my ex-male partner. One, because I knew I was a lesbian and was afraid to come out and therefore wasn't as committed emotionally to relationship. And two because I was physically more afraid of his physical strength. Plus it was a daily thing. With my ex-lesbian partner the violence occurred maybe ever 4-6 months (physical). I wasn't as physically afraid because I was capable of fighting her back if I had chosen. And I was afraid if I didn't have her as a partner there wasn't many other choices to be had in our community. I at least know what I had at home.
Yes	Great work doing this project! Thanks!
Yes	Which way to go with the questions in the numbering was a bit confusing. Otherwise good job. I hope the collection of returns makes a difference for your cause. Cheers.
Yes	Thanks for asking.
Yes	I'm an university student and I rely on the health & counselling services at the University and find it frustrating dealing with a constant turn-over of doctors and counsellors, especially none that specialize/are knowledgeable in lesbian/gay health & counselling. My trusted spiritual advisor lives in the United States as a reverend of a Metropolitan Community Church, which is also frustrating but I have yet to find a spiritual advisor here in Saskatoon that I trust.
Yes	Thanks for this. I feel it was very needed!
No	Thank you for the hard work - please keep it up!!
No	Thank you for increasing Lesbian visibility in Saskatchewan. I'm very eager to learn of the results of this questionnaire. Please e-mail me.
No	I think there is a feeling among my lesbian/queer friends (& gay male ones too) that there isn't any place to go for help, except specifically gay agencies. The fear of homophobia whether or not it's justified has kept several queer people I know (both male & female) from getting help. It's really scary.
No	Thank you for carrying out this survey!
No	Question 5 was very difficult to answer in some respects unless one assumes the extreme, or assumes each item includes threatening behaviour.
No	I have found 'emotional' abuse quite common in some of my friend's relationships. Most fail to recognize it, sadly, although I try to give them support to be more assertive.

This survey was carried out by the Saskatchewan Ad Hoc Committee on Abuse in Lesbian Relationships. Email sass@sk.sympatico.ca with questions/comments.