



## Second National Survey of Violence & Discrimination Against Sexual Minorities

### Background

BDSM practitioners experience discrimination and violence due to the social stigma attached to their sexual behavior. This paper describes the prevalence and types of discrimination and violence perpetrated against BDSM practitioners which were reported during an Internet survey of 3,058 adults. The paper also describes the sexual behaviors which the respondents felt had caused this discrimination and violence, the prevalence of particular types of BDSM behaviors that respondents participated in, and the number of BDSM practitioners who consider themselves "out" about their involvement with BDSM activities.

Where appropriate, the data will be compared to the 1998 Violence & Discrimination Survey Against Sexual Minorities which collected over 1,000 responses to similar questions from April 1998 to February 1999, which was also conducted by Susan Wright. The 1998 survey did not cover business or event-related experiences of harassment, nor did it ask about Internet experiences. The 2008 survey also included more questions about sexual activity and identity. In addition, respondents were given the opportunity with each question to expand on their answers with their own comments. Over 550 comments were made on the survey and some are included to illustrate the data where appropriate.

This article addresses the gap in current knowledge by reporting data on the prevalence of violence and discrimination against BDSM and polyamory practitioners. The persecution of these individuals is conceptualized as a manifestation of sexual stigma, that is, society's negative regard for any non-heterosexual behavior, identity, relationship, or community.

### Methods

The Second Survey of Violence & Discrimination Against Sexual Minorities was designed as an online, internet-based survey that took place from April 2007 to June 2008. The survey was promoted through email announcements that were sent to the National Coalition for Sexual Freedom's Coalition Partner groups. The 62 partner groups' email lists totaled an estimated 15,000 email addresses. Additionally, several BDSM-related blogs and websites agreed to host links to the online survey, including: LeatherPages, IML2003.com, and the National Coalition for Sexual Freedom's homepage. Announcements encouraging people to participate in the survey were sent out through list-serves run by the Leather Pride Night, Leather Title-holders, New York boys of Leather, SM-Act, SM-Presenters, as well as to dozens of Yahoo e-mail groups dedicated to BDSM and leather.

A total of 5,000 postcards were mailed for placement at "free literature tables" to sixteen events: Black Rose (Washington D.C.), Folsom Fringe (San Jose, CA), Folsom Street Fair (San Francisco, CA), Frolicon (Atlanta, GA), GMSMA Leatherfest (New York, NY), International Mr. Leather (Chicago, IL), Kinky Kollege (Chicago, IL), Leather Leadership Conference (Minneapolis, MN), Leather Pride Night (New York, NY), Mid-Atlantic Leather (Washington, D.C.), Shibari (Chicago, IL), Sex Positive Community Center - Wetspot (Seattle, WA), SinSations in Leather (Chicago, IL), Spanksgiving (St. Louis, MO), TES Fest, (Edison, NJ) Thunder in the Mountains (Denver, CO).

## Study Population

The 2008 survey saw a total of 3,058 responses collected. 2,892 respondents indicated the country in which they reside. Of those, 2,412 respondents resided in the United States (83.4%). Of the remaining 480 respondents, a total of over 42 other countries were represented. Those from the UK represented 5.5%. Canadians represented 4.9%, and respondents from Germany and Norway combined accounted for an additional 1.8% of the total respondents indicating their nationality. It is interesting to note that no international promotion was performed, yet 16.6% of the respondents were not from the U.S.

2,820 respondents identified their race and ethnicity. Caucasian respondents outnumbered the U.S. average by 8.3%, as per 2006 Census Bureau demographic data. The total percentage of Black and Latino respondents was 5.4% as compared to 27.6% of the U.S. population. However, the number of respondents identifying as multiracial was twice the U.S. average, and the number of respondents identifying as Native American was nearly four times the U.S. average.

	2008 Rspdnts	2008 % of Total	2006 Census Bureau
Caucasian	2,490	88.3%	80.1%
Latino	67	2.4%	14.8%
Black	87	3.1%	12.8%
Asian Pacific Islander	47	1.7%	4.6%
Native American	106	3.8%	1.0%
Multi-racial	88	3.1%	1.6%
Arab/Middle Eastern	19	0.7%	
Other	102	3.6%	

3046 respondents gave their age. The mean and the median age was 40, while the most common age was 38. Table 1. compares 1998 and 2008 percentages of the various age categories of respondents. Over half (55%) of the respondents of the 2008 survey were in the 23 to 44 year-old age range. Over one-third (36%) were between 45-64.

When compared to the 1998 survey, the number of 18-22 year olds more than doubled from 3% to 7%. The youngest recorded age was 15, with two respondents, seven 16-year-olds and seven 17 year olds. The oldest three respondents were 87, 84 and 80 years old.

Table 1. Age

Age Category	2008 Rspdnts	1998 Rspdnts	2008 % of Total	1998 % of Total
Under 18	19		1	
18 – 22	212		7	3
23 – 29	454		15	15
30 – 44	1227		40	49
45 – 64	1084		36	31
65 and over	50		1	2
Totals	3046		100	100

In regards to employment status: 529 (17%) of the respondents indicated that they were currently students; 203 (7%) of them reported being unemployed at the time that they took the survey; 344 (11%) reported being employed part-time, and 1417 (46%) reported being employed full-time. 227 respondents (7%) reported that they were retired and 639 reported that they were self-employed (21%).

These percentages are compared to the 1998 survey in table 2.0. There is a significant drop in the full-time employment from 62% in 1998 to 46% in 2008. The number of students doubled from 1998 to 2008 from 8% of the total respondents to 17%.

Table 2.0

Employment	2008 Rspdnts		2008 % of Total	1998 % of Total
Student	529		17%	8%
Unemployed	203		7%	1%
Part-time	344		11%	5%
Self-employed	639		21%	22%
Full-time	1,417		46%	62%
Retired	227		7%	2%
Totals	3,046		109%	100%

Some of the professional respondents identified themselves as belonging to are shown in table 2.1. While an exhaustive study of the various responses to area of employment has not yet been made, it is clear that there are a high number of skilled and educated individuals among the respondents.

Table 2.1

Accountant	16
Artist	17
Consultant	21
Educator	16
Engineer	26
Homemaker	41
IT	57
Legal	33
Management	76
Medical/Mental Health	113
Retail	51
Retired	18
Sales	63
Self-employed	45
Writer	44

Reported income was a required answer with 3,058 respondents. The income level remained stable when compared to the 1998 survey, except that the under \$10,000 responses doubled from 7% to 13%. This corresponds almost exactly to the percentage change in the number of students from 1998 to 2008.

Table 2.1 Income

<u>Income</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>1998</u>
Under \$10K	13%	7%
\$10-24K	17%	17%
\$25-49K	32%	37%
Over \$50K	38%	39%

Of 3,058 of respondents who answered gender orientation: 1,563 (51.1%) responded that they are female; 1,384 (45.3%) responded that they are male; 155 (5.1%) responded "transgender"; and 16 (.5%) described themselves as "Intersexed." The ratio of men to women who responded to the survey shifted from 1998 to 2008, with more women responding to the more recent survey (Table 3.). Respondents, while required to indicate at least one of the four choices for gender, were allowed to choose as many as they felt appropriate, therefore the total equals more than 100%.

Table 3. Gender

	<u>2008</u>	<u>1998</u>
Woman	51%	46%
Man	45%	51%
Transgender	5%	1%
Intersexed	1%	2%

Of 3,058 of respondents who answered sexual orientation: 1,232 (40%) heterosexual; 1,073 (35%) bisexual; 675 (22%) gay and lesbian; 197 (6%) other. It is remarkable that the percentages for sexual orientation remain almost exactly the same compared to the 1998 survey (Table 4.). When compared to the sexual orientation of the general population, the sample population consists of an usually large percentage of bisexuals. Sexual orientation, like gender, was a question which required some answer, but allowed respondents to choose as many as they felt might apply.

Table 4. Sexual Orientation

	<u>2008</u>	<u>1998</u>
Heterosexual	41%	40%
Bisexual	35%	36%
Gay/lesbian	22%	22%
Other	7%	4%

## Results

2,893 respondents answered this question, "Are you out about your involvement in BDSM/Leather/Fetish practices?" In total, 1,651 (57%) said yes, they were "out", while 1,242 (43%) said they were not out.

However, when asked the specific question, "Who are you *Not* out to?" out of 3,058 survey respondents, 1,825 (59.7%) responded they are not out to their job. In addition, 1,820 (59.5%) responded they are not out to their family (Table 5.). So in actuality, only 40% of the respondents are "out" to family and work, with 417 (14%) of the respondents stating they were "out" in the general "are you out" question, when in fact they aren't. 417 respondents considered themselves to be out, even though no one in their family or work environment is aware of their participation in BDSM-fetish activities.

Table 5. Who are you Not out to?

	Who not "out" to?	2008 % of Total
Job	1,825	59.7%
Family	1,820	59.5%
Non-BDSM friends	1,262	41.3%
BDSM community	239	7.8%
Other	357	11.7%

In 1998, the survey asked: "Are you completely 'out' about your involvement in sexual minority practices?" 62% stated they were not "completely out." That is statistically almost the same as the 59.5 and 59.7% of respondents in the current survey who said they aren't out to work and/or family in the 2008 survey.

In the current survey, the question was asked differently: "Are you "out" about your involvement in BDSM-Leather-Fetish practices?" and then the respondents were asked, "Who are you not out to: Partner/lover/spouse, BDSM Community, Family, Non-BDSM Friends, Job (co-workers), other." Asking the question this way allowed respondents to differentiate between social groups they were out to.

Why did 14% of the respondents indicate they were "out" when in fact their family and coworkers don't know about their BDSM-leather-fetish activities? Perhaps there is confusion about what "out" means. As one respondent said, "This is no longer relevant; yet, "OUT" necessarily & appropriately must carry a highly restrictive interpretation in a classroom."

Some respondents may consider themselves to be "out" yet they don't speak to family and coworkers about their BDSM behaviors, depending on appropriateness and the level of their relationship with each individual. A few representative comments include: "Talking about my private life is not always a part of my job. Depending on the person I'm working with I may or may not disclose personal details of my private life." "It hasn't come up." "I haven't been asked."

The 1,242 respondents who identified themselves as not being out about their participation in BDSM/Leather/Fetish activities were asked their "Reasons for not being out" and were given the option of checking all that applied: 68.2% stated family disapproval; 58.1% stated job repercussions; 52.2% stated public disapproval; 47.7% stated friend's disapproval; 37.8% stated fear of harassment; 11.2% stated loss of child custody; 9.3% stated partner's disapproval; while 14.7% stated "other."

The comments about why people weren't "out" were split in roughly half with 259 respondents stating some variation of "it's a personal matter" while 239 respondents cited concern about other people's attitude about BDSM, lack of understanding, and fear of repercussions if they come out.

There were 94 comments that specifically stated, "None of their business," while 48 comments included the mention of "private" or "privacy": "Should it become relevant, I will come out; I am simply private about my private life." "I like some privacy."

Some respondents specifically cited both privacy reasons and fear of repercussions: "Personal privacy preferences, other people's discomfort." "None of their business in some cases, fear of disapproval with others." "It's none of their business. I worried about child custody years ago, but now my daughter is 17." "Because BDSM is often misunderstood AND it's none of their business."

Of the 239 comments that mentioned concern about other peoples' reactions or lack of understanding include: "It doesn't really concern others enough to make them unnecessarily uncomfortable around me if they are the type who would not understand." "They wouldn't understand. The topic and my reasons for participation would baffle them."

More serious were the 188 comments stating fear of some kind of repercussions because of persecution or discrimination: "The lack of understanding casual acquaintances may have, not knowing me well. Repercussions against my child." "Safety issues - I have been threatened and harassed, and had things (like glass bottles) thrown at me." "Inability to adopt when ready."

Of 3,058 respondents, 1,262 (41.3%) are not out to their non-BDSM friends. Only a small number – 239 (7.8%) – are not out to the BDSM community. Almost the same number, 231 (7.6%) are not out to their partner/lover/spouse. As one respondent sadly stated: "My husband is vanilla, would not accept my practices."

Of 3,058 respondents, 357 (11.7%) are not out to "other". Some examples of the respondents self-described "other" in the comments are: "82 year old mother," "a high profile friend that could be effected by it, if she knew," "anyone I don't have a certain level of trust for," "child's school friends parents; classmates," "community at large," "extended family," "landlord," "neighbors," "parents," "partner's family", "roommates," "some coworkers and friends," "union," and "volunteer associates."

## **Aggregate Findings**

A total of 1,146 (37.5%) respondents indicated that they had either been discriminated against, had experienced some form of harassment or violence, or had some form of harassment or discrimination aimed at their BDSM-leather-fetish-related business. Of the respondents who reported some form of persecution, 476 (41.5%) identified as male, 615 (53.7%) identified as female, 9 (.8%) identified as intersexed and 78 (6.8%) identified as transgendered. (Sexual orientation, like gender, was a question which required some answer, but allowed respondents to choose as many as they felt might apply, so the percentage totals more than 100%.)

Of the 1,146 respondents who indicated that they had either been discriminated against or had experienced some form of harassment or violence, 380 (33.2%) identified as heterosexual, 440 (38.4%) identified as bisexual and 292 (25.5%) identified as gay or lesbian. Another 97 (8.5%) indicated that they identified in some other way from heterosexual, bisexual or gay/lesbian. (Sexual orientation, like gender, was a question which required some answer, but allowed respondents to choose as many as they felt might apply, so the percentage totals more than 100%.)

The sexual orientation of respondents who were discriminated against or had experienced some form of harassment or violence is compared in Table 6.1 to the total percentage of respondents who identified their orientation. It is interesting to note that Gay/lesbian, Bisexual and Other respondents have slightly higher rates of persecution than their average percentage of total respondents, while Heterosexuals are less likely to be discriminated against.

Table 6.1

	Total % 2008 respondents	% persecuted
Gay/lesbian	22%	25.5%
Bisexual	35%	38.4%
Heterosexual	41%	33.2%
Other	7%	8.5%
total	105%	105.6%

Of those 1,146 respondents indicating that they had experienced discrimination, harassment or violence, the racial breakdown is listed in Table 6.1. When this is compared to the ethnicity of the total sample, the percentages are statistically similar. The largest variation occurs in Native Americans which consist of 3.7% of the total respondents while 5.9% of the Native Americans were discriminated against.

Table 6.2 Ethnicity/Discrimination

Ethnicity/Discrimination	2008 Rspdnts	2008 % of Persecuted	1008 % of Total
Caucasian	1,000	87.3%	87.4%
African American	29	2.5%	3.0%
Latina/o	29	2.5%	2.4%
Multi-racial	35	3.1%	3.0%
Native American	66	5.8%	3.7%
Asian/Pacific Islander	16	1.4%	1.6%
Arab/Middle Eastern	11	1.0%	0.7%
Other Racial Group	55	4.8%	3.5%

These samples can be compared to the findings of "Hate Crimes and Stigma-Related Experiences Among Sexual Minority Adults in the United States: Prevalence From a National Probability Sample" by Gregory Herek, Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 2009, 24; 54. Using survey responses collected via the Internet from a U.S. national probability sample of gay, lesbian and bisexual adults (N=662) reports the prevalence estimates of criminal victimization and related experiences based on the target's sexual orientation.

Approximately 20% of respondents in Herek reported having experienced a personal or property crime based on their sexual orientation; about 50% had experienced verbal harassment, and more than 10% reported having experienced employment or housing discrimination. Employment and housing discrimination was significantly higher for gay men and lesbians than for bisexuals.

### Discrimination

2,995 respondents answered the question: "Have you ever experienced discrimination because you are, or were perceived to be, involved in SM-Leather-Fetish practices?" 804 (26%) reported they were discriminated against. That compares to 30% who reported being discriminated against in the 1998 survey. Respondents could check one or more of the specific ways they were discriminated against listed in Table 7.

Table 7. Discrimination

	2008	1998
Internet Harassment	35.8%	
Persecution	22.5%	40%
Loss of Job or Contract	20.0%	25%
Refused Services	18.7%	
Divorce/settlement	13.1%	
Loss of Promotion/demotion	12.2%	17%
Refused membership	8.1%	11%
Loss of child custody	6.2%	3%
Refused housing	4.4%	
Arrest	2.6%	5%
<b>Other</b>	<b>35%</b>	

The largest category of reported persecution is Internet Harassment, with 16 comments including: "Photos of me from a BDSM-party got out in the Internet. People from the university found it and send it to organizations at the university. It end up with people stopped talking to me and talking shit behind my back. It got so bad I quit my studying at the school." "The provider of domain services refused to prolong my account because I was mentioning being involved in the BDSM scene on my former homepage. There was NO adult content on that site by the way." "Was a member of Yahoo clubs and also of meet-up groups until I revealed that I was involved in the fetish lifestyle."

Comments with specific mention of persecution included: "I have been denied participation in various government projects because: (1) prior public persecution by the print and broadcast media; (2) one or more individuals objected to my inclusion due to my BDSM activities." "Religious persecution by a 'Christian Based' therapist who projected his own beliefs onto my BDSM practices, requiring draconian measures to 'cure' me which resulted in divorce and loss of custody of my child."

20% of respondents who were discriminated against reported a loss of job or contract, with another 12.2% reporting loss of promotion/demotion, totaling 32.2% as compared to 42% in the 1998 survey. There were 68 comments regarding work-related discrimination and persecution, including: "Job was threatened if bd/sm blog was not taken down." "I was outed to several of my clients who have now refused to come back to me for services." "Banned from work's social events." "I was investigated by state board of nursing." "I endure insulting comments from co-workers about 'perverts'."

The percentage of respondents who were discriminated against reported loss of child custody doubled to 6.2% from 3% in the 1998 survey. Another 13.1% felt they were discriminated against in divorce settlements. There were 26 comments about child custody and divorce cases, including: "A judge granted my former husband supervised visitation on the basis of two pictures of me bound with rope that happened to be over 10 years old...my former husband didn't have to prove anything..." "My first divorce lawyer withdrew from my case when my ex started detailing my bedroom practices." "We are currently getting ready to fight against my husbands ex wife who found out about our BDSM involvement and has now decided that based on that we are not fit parents."

4.4% of respondents who were discriminated against reported discrimination in housing: "Evicted from a flat share by force." "A relative that I was renting an apartment from had me move out." "I experienced some difficulty in obtaining an apartment when prospective landlords/landladies discovered I wrote books in the aforementioned gay/gay-BDSM genres. I received comments such as 'well, this is a family-oriented neighborhood, and we're sure you wouldn't fit in here', etc. Anxiety over finding a place to live will certainly make it very hard to be creative!"

The largest category that falls under the 35% "Other" discrimination consists of the 59 comments about persecution by family and friends. "Alienation from former friends and some loss of close family ties." "My family calls me 'sick' and lost to the 'devil'." "Estrangement from my parents." "My family persecutes me daily for my lifestyle." "I lost my best friend, cause I came out to her."

There were 37 comments about discrimination and harassment against BDSM-leather-fetish nonprofit events and groups. These comments include: "Hotel refused to host the event, canceling at the last minute. This forced us to relocate to a very miserable and crude warehouse space which was far from satisfactory." "When there was a new Board of Directors at the Community center we met at for a couple years, they decided they didn't want 'our kind' meeting there anymore. We were told at 8pm the night before our monthly party in which we had the place reserved." "Long story with a happy ending, we found a better place to hold our munch and are now doing so...and the last restaurant lost \$87,000.00 a year in income that was generated by hosting our group." "Picket/protesters, attempts to get event cancelled." "Expose in Daily News, threats to kick us off campus 12 years ago by other organizations."

There were also 9 comments about persecution by LGBT individuals and organizations: "South Asian GLBT and vanilla lesbian communities have not accepted me due to 'extreme' sexual practices." "Refused use of local GLBTQ center for Leather gathering." "It has been devastating to learn that some gay and lesbian folks reject me as a leatherwoman because I am not a lesbian. No matter what I do or how hard I work for the leather community, I will not be accepted based on my sexuality. Pretty ironic don't ya think?"

An additional 26 comments describing "other" kinds of discrimination include: "There are two levels. One is general discomfort. The other is refusal of service. I have experienced both." "Discrimination can be more subtle than these options above... in my case I was slowly edged out of a dance performance troupe." "Mostly just people making fun or hitting on me because they assume that being leather means being easy. I am luck in that I am well protected by my leather family and in my personal relationships." "Excommunicated from church group."

### **Discrimination by Professionals**

11.3% (346) of the total number of respondents (3,058) reported being discriminated against by professional or personal service providers. That is 30% (346) of the respondents who were discriminated against (1,146). Those respondents could check one or more of the specific ways they were discriminated against (Table 8.), with 48.8% discriminated against by a medical doctor, and 39.3% discriminated against by a mental health practitioner.

Table 8. Discrimination by Professionals

Medical Doctor	48.8%
Mental Health practitioner	39.3%
Police or govt. employee	25.4%
Other Professional service provider	8.4%
Lawyer	7.8%
Other Personal service provider	6.1%
Dentist	1.7%
Building contractor	1.7%
Accountant	1.2%
Other	6.9%

Nearly half of the respondents who reported discrimination by a professional indicated it was by a medical doctor. There were 63 comments, including: "One medical Doctor refused to continue treatment after I showed him bruising." "I have been put through questioning that was unnecessary given the reason for my visit to the doctor because of their seeing marks from play/body modifications, including the assertion that I had mental issues." "I hurt my shoulder throwing a flogger. When asked I told the truth. He refused to treat me and asked me to leave (of course he still charged me my co-pay and billed my insurance)." "My doctor invoked St. Peter and then my mother in an attempt to make me feel guilty after I told her that I am polyamorous. She then sabotaged the screenings that my partner and I needed."

39.3% of the respondents who reported being discriminated against by a professional indicated it was by a mental health practitioner. There were another 63 comments, including: "The therapist refused to continue to see me until I acknowledge that I was being 'Abused'." "I was told by a licensed psychologist that I was a sick individual, and that if I did not get help immediately, and change the way I lived, that I would never have a productive life, and that I would never find any happiness. By fitting into the 'norm' I would be a more socially 'productive' person, and I would be able to live a 'normal' life." "Mental Health Professional that I was psychologically unsound. That no one in their right mind would consent to 'those types' of activities." "I have been told that I am not a suitable patient by a Licensed Clinical Social Worker who was being contacted for therapy services. She believed that my sexual practices were contrary to health and she would not provide me therapy if I chose to practice."

25.4% of the respondents who reported being discriminated against by a professional indicated it was by a law enforcement officer: "I was raped by a roommate a year ago. The detective on the case was convinced that it was a scene just because I was involved with BDSM, and that I reported it as rape because I was a spiteful ex-girlfriend." "I was sexually assaulted and because I was engaged in SM, my claim was not taken seriously and I was blamed for the incident. In the SM community, 'No' still means 'No.' People do not understand that." "My spouse and I were visiting an area dungeon for a play party. The local police showed up due to conflict between the dungeon owner and someone else. The someone else had called the police and told them what was occurring at the location. The play party had to end and everyone left due to threats of arrest by the local police."

Other professional service providers who discriminated against respondents include lawyers, dentists, accountants, and church officials: "An attorney would not help us fight our case because of our lifestyle, and recommended we 'take a plea' even though we had done nothing wrong." "I was refused dental treatment and the nurse sprayed me with anti-bacterial spray and everything I touched." "Excommunicated from church group."

## Business Discrimination

In total, 203 (6.6%) respondents stated their business had been harassed or discriminated against. Respondents could check one or more of the specific ways they were discriminated against (Table 9.).

Table 9. Business Discrimination

Negative media coverage	26.1%
Harassment by police/author	22.2%
Harassment by neighbors	20.7%
Harassment by organizations	20.2%
Loss of lease	17.7%

Refused credit card services	14.8%
Loss of business	13.8%
Refused insurance coverage	8.9%
Loss of occupancy certificate	4.9%
Arrest	3.0%
Fines	2.0%
Other	24.6%

Among the 25 comments, include:

"Employees of my S&M club were arrested at workplace for false charges of prostitution. Out of fear of being persecuted and exposed in the media, they, and other employees, quit. The business that has been running for 17 years closed down."

"Negative press articles related to our operation and the Lifestyle in general. Direct harassment by local authorities such as fire department (constant and unnecessary inspections in an attempt to find things in violation for the purpose of fining us, causing us to spend money, or shutting us down) and police department (harassment of customers by pulling them over as suspected DUI, monitoring our business by parking directly across the street causing distress to our members). Much more...."

"When we moved to a new, more upscale neighborhood, there was umbrage among certain business neighbors, who sent over 'spies' to ask us leading questions, like: 'How many PERVERTS do you get each day?' Nice and subtle."

"The charge card company decided they did not like my business and cancelled my charge card processing."

"Several banks have refused my business on the grounds that I work in the BDSM lifestyle."

## Internet

When asked, "Have you curtailed your use of the Internet for fear of prosecution?" More than one-third of the respondents, 1,065 (34.8%) of the 3058 respondents, said "yes". Respondents could check one or more of the specific ways they curtailed their Internet use (Table 10.).

Table 10. Curtailed Internet Use

Didn't post image	71.5%
Didn't visit website	45.7%
Didn't post text	43.4%
Didn't link to website	38.7%
Didn't join email group	31.0%
Posted 18-over warn	25.7%
Barred users	16.1%
Didn't add meta-text	8.0%
Other	11.0%

9.3% of respondents, 285 out of the total returned surveys, reported that US 2257 had an impact on their use of the Internet. Of the 1,065 respondents who indicated that they had curtailed their use of the Internet regarding BDSM activities, 214 (20.1%) reported that US 2257 was a significant reason for that curtailment.

The comments included: "I don't feel I've been discriminated against or harassed--yet--but, as an author of BDSM Erotica, with a website, I worry about 2257 a great deal. I have been careful not to use any images depicting active sex acts or any images that could be considered the least bit compromising containing recognizable models. I worry that in the current climate, and with the current repressive regime, it won't matter, and if the attentions of the government turn to me, I could be scapegoated and in serious trouble." "I had the good fortune to hardly been discriminated against. As for the question in the section 'because of...USA law#2257...' I don't go on websites of which I feel Big Uncle Sam is watching me.... Since I do a fair bit of business in the USA (Canadian florist/grower) getting across the border, makes me very careful. one never knows of being denied access to the USA. Call it paranoia, but this IS the discrimination I have to deal with. ...then there is always Homeland Security."

## Violence and Harassment

Of the total respondents, 680 (22.2%) reported being a victim of violence and/or harassment. Compared to 36% of the respondents in the 1998 survey, that indicates 14% drop in self-reported violence and harassment in the last decade. Respondents could check one or more of the specific ways they experienced violence and harassment (Table 11.).

Table 11. 2008 - 22% yes 1998 - 36% yes

Verbal harassment	<b>74.6%</b>	<b>87%</b>
Blackmail	<b>29.1%</b>	<b>17%</b>
Stalked	24.3%	19%
Sexual harassment	18.4%	13%
Physical assault	<b>15.7%</b>	<b>25%</b>
Rape/attempted rape	13.4%	10%
Physical harassment	13.4%	
Domestic violence	11.5%	
Vandalism	9.7%	19%
Sexual assault	9%	
Other	6.5%	7%

Three categories of violence have increased since the 1998 survey including sexual harassment at 18.4% compared to 13% in 1998, and rape/attempted rape at 13.4% compared to 10%. This is a very troubling development for members of the alternative sexuality communities. One of the areas of concern are anonymous encounters via the Internet, which indicates that community space where people can play among their peers are increasingly necessary for the health of the community.

There was also a significant 12% increase in the reported incidence of blackmail, up from 17% in 1998 to 29.1% in 2008. There were 4 comments made about threats of outing, including: "I had a partner and while we were both into bdsm, he often threatened to "out" me to my employers. My employers at the time were a children's services agency, and I would have been fired on the spot, no questions asked." "Threatened by ex-wife during divorce to "out" me to my employer as I was a Police Officer, now retired."

Of the respondents who experienced violence and harassment, 74.6% (507) were the victim of verbal harassment. There were 29 comments, including: "Public harassment by people on the street." "Minor harassment on the street." "Looked down upon, gossiped about, made an out-cast in the town I live in."

There were an additional 14 comments about harassment in the workplace, including sexual harassment: "Harassed at work. Talked about by co-workers. Supervisor did not offer me opportunities and alluded to my practice with BDSM." "The manager makes continuous comments about me in a sexual way, sometimes groping at my hips, 'falling' against my chest (which is done obviously on purpose). And this is usually combined with some mention of whips and chains. He introduced me to a new hire in which he made instantly aware of my way."

There were 7 comments about violence and assault: "The harassment and assault I experienced was due to this young man's ignorance about the kink community and its safety regulations. He assumed that because I told him I was a bottom that he could assault me and I'd "like it" :-(  
"Assumption that my services are for hire, or that because I'm in the BDSM community I am "easy" and therefore available for sex with anyone who wants it."

The 680 respondents were asked, "Who was the perpetrator?" and 31.9% responded "a stranger."

Table 12. Who was the perpetrator?

Stranger	31.9%
Acquaintance	21.6%
Lover/partner/spouse	14.6%
Co-worker	11.6%
Family member	4.1%
Other	10.1%

The comments included: "Brought rape charges against an ex of mine when I was 22 - and due to agreeing that we participated in S&M/BDSM activities there was 'no way' to prove that it was rape - this all from MY lawyer." "My husband frowns and complains about my interests. Refuses to learn or participate in it. Says it is not his thing. So the lectures I consider harassment. He warned me that if we ever divorced he would use it against me." "My sexual life being used as a joke at work."

When those respondents who experienced violence and/or harassment were asked, "Did you press charges?" 90% said no as compared to 96% of the respondents in the 1998 survey who did not press charges.

Table 13. Reasons declined to press charges

Fear of further harassment	41.0%
Fear of family disapproval	24.1%
Fear of job safety	22.2%
Fear of legal repercussions	21.9%
Fear of losing child custody	10.6%
Other	34%

Respondents could check one or more of the specific reasons they did not press charges (Table 12.). The comments included: "Police refused to make a report after being mugged."

"I was assaulted by two carloads of thugs in a non BDSM related incident. I reported it to the police. Partly because I was wearing BDSM regalia, mainly a leather vest with pins, I was arrested. I had been injured by flying glass during the attack. The responding paramedics gave me only the most cursory examination and were extremely rude to me and to my wife. My wife, who was a witness to the

assault was handcuffed, threatened with firearms, and sexually assaulted by the Illinois State Police. I was eventually acquitted of Reckless Conduct for the offense of being attacked."

"After being violently assaulted and robbed by a former boyfriend, I went to make a report with the police. When the police questioned the perpetrator, he notified them that I am a professional Dominatrix and am involved in S&M practices. Upon finding out about my involvement with the fetish community, the law enforcement officers dismissed my complaint, explaining that I 'probably liked to get beat up'."

"The stalker I mentioned previously was let go scot-free, and continues to harass my family more than a decade later. More recently, I tried to file a domestic violence complaint against my same-sex partner and the police refused to even take the complaint because my partner told them I participated in BDSM with other people."

### **BDSM Activities**

A total of 2552 respondents indicated one or more activities that they enjoyed participating in.

Table 14. Preferred BDSM Activities

Activity	Value	Percent
Bondage and Discipline	2316	90.8
Dominance and Submission	2298	90.0
Spanking	2042	80.0
SM	1960	76.8
Leather	1638	64.2
Role-playing	1534	60.1
Exhibitionism	1369	53.6
Polyamory	1333	52.2
Voyeurism	1222	47.9
Clothing Fetish	1227	48.1
Humiliation	1123	44.0
Fisting	1068	41.8
Watersports	918	36.0
Body Modification	735	28.8
Medical Scenes	702	27.5
Foot Fetish	460	18.0
Cross-dressing	330	12.9
Other	231	14.5

597 respondents indicated that they had experienced discrimination, harassment or violence as a result of at least one of the activities on the list. 698 respondents indicated the type of activity that they believed led to their experiences of discrimination, violence or harassment. 1,407 respondents to the survey indicated what activities they thought would most likely lead to someone experiencing discrimination, harassment or violence. The responses to both what people indicated had led to the experiences of discrimination, harassment and violence as well as the responses to what they thought were most likely to lead to such experiences are represented in table 15.

Table 15.

Activity	What led to DHV – absolute value	What led to DHV – percent of total who answered	What you think most likely to lead to DHV – absolute value	What you think most likely to lead to DHV – percent of total who answered
Dominance and Submission	148	21.1	155	11.0
Polyamory	100	14.3	159	11.3
Sadomasochism	100	14.3	301	21.4
Leather	64	9.2	32	2.3
Bondage & Discipline	62	8.9	123	8.7
Other	50	7.2	62	4.4
Cross Dressing	38	5.4	325	23.1
Clothing Fetish	27	3.9	37	2.6
Body Modification	25	3.6	39	2.8
Consensual Exhibitionism	20	2.9	46	3.3
Fisting	19	2.7	16	1.1
Role Playing	12	1.7	10	.7
Spanking	12	1.7	17	3.8
Humiliation	7	1.0	23	1.6
Watersports	7	1.0	54	3.8
Medical Scenes	4	.6	3	.2
Consensual Voyeurism	2	.3	4	.3
Foot Fetish	1	.1	1	.1

There were 2 comments about the ranking system provided by the survey: "Accurate ranking is not possible in my case. Things are and have always been too fluid." "It's difficult to reply with precision to the question about ranking 3 because of the way the categories above are structured. Some of them occur at the same time. For instance, if I do impact play with multiple partners, that's SM and poly at the same time. Can't rank that 1 or 2 or 3. I like spanking, caning, paddling, flogging (etc). I have more than 1 play partner (sometimes at the same time). I also like rope bondage, but I only have 1 partner for that. Sometimes roleplay, often not."

5.4% said that Cross-dressing was the reason they were persecuted, while only 12.9% of the total respondents stated they engaged in cross-dressing activities. This indicates a very high percentage of individuals who engage in cross-dressing are persecuted.

On the other end of the spectrum, 18% of respondents engage in foot fetishism, while only .1% believe that was the reason they were persecuted.

2,460 respondents chose one or more words from a supplied list in response to the question: "how do you identify yourself?".

Table 16. How do you Identify Yourself?

Submissive	41.4%
Bottom	35.2%

Top	32.9%
Switch	27.6%
Dom	26.9%
Master/Mistress	24.1%
Slave	21.9%
Versatile	15.4%
Owner	11.4%
Girl	11.1%
Daddy	10.2%
Boy	8.1%
Pup	5.6%
Boi	3.6%
Mommy	2.6%

In addition, 96 people checked off that “none of the above” words described how they see/refer to themselves, for 3.1% of the total survey population. (12 respondents actually marked “none of the above” but also marked some of the words supplied as self-identifiers.)

Of all respondents to the survey, 2,472 of them responded to the question: “How do you refer to the activities that you participate in which are listed above (circle all that apply)?” The responses are shown below in table 17.

Table 17. How do you refer to the activities you participate in?

How do you refer to sexual activities?	Absolute Value	Percentage of those answering
BDSM	1,842	74.5
Kink	1,538	62.2
D/s	1,248	50.5
SM	1,071	43.3
Bondage	911	36.9
Fetish	891	36.0
Bondage/Discipline	857	34.7
Leather	851	34.4
Master-slave	771	31.2
Polyamory	649	26.3

## Conclusions

Thank you to everyone who participated in this survey of violence and discrimination against BDSM practitioners. This data is invaluable in demonstrating the persecution that takes place against individuals who practice alternative sex.

BDSM practitioners are being persecuted in very high numbers – a total of 1,146 (37.5%) respondents indicated that they had either been discriminated against, had experienced some form of harassment or violence, or had some form of harassment or discrimination aimed at their BDSM-leather-fetish-related business.

More research is clearly needed on the "Are you Out?" question. Why do people indicate they're out while also stating they are not out to coworkers, friends or family members.

More research is also needed on therapists who think BDSM is a result of childhood abuse.

More research is needed on people who are not receiving advice that they should get because they are concealing their BDSM behaviors from doctors and therapists.

More research is needed on people who are not reporting crimes because of fear of additional persecution.