

Healthy People 2020 Bisexual Health Fact Sheet

This fact sheet reviews epidemiological data reported in behavioral risk studies and needs assessment surveys conducted in the U.S. and published from 2000 to 2010. The findings are grouped by *Healthy People 2020* topic area.

ACCESS TO HEALTH SERVICES

FINDING: Bisexual women were less likely than heterosexual women to have health insurance, more likely to have been uninsured during the previous year, and more likely to have difficulty obtaining needed medical care.

Data Source: Diamant AL, Wold C, Spritzer K, Gelberg L. Health behaviors, health status, and access to and use of health care: a population-based study of lesbian, bisexual and heterosexual women. *Archives Family Medicine*. 2000;9(10), 1043-1051.

CANCER

FINDING: A large U.S. study of women ages 50 to 79 indicates that bisexual women have higher rates of breast cancer. Bisexual women also reported higher rates of having cancer of any type.

Risk factors for breast cancer that are higher among bisexual women include:

- Not having given birth (bisexual women are more likely to have given birth than lesbians, but less likely than heterosexual women)
- Being more likely than heterosexual women to give birth after age 30
- High rates of alcohol consumption

Data Source: Dobinson C. Top Ten Bisexual Health Issues. Sherbourne Health Center, Toronto. Appendix A.

FINDING: Bisexual men who are sexually active with men (and anyone who has receptive anal sex) are at higher risk for anal cancer due to an increased rate of HPV, the virus that causes genital and anal warts.

Data Source: Dobinson C. Top Ten Bisexual Health Issues. Sherbourne Health Center, Toronto. Appendix A.

HEALTH-RELATED QUALITY OF LIFE AND WELL-BEING

FINDING: A higher percentage of bisexual adults (13.3%) reported being dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their life compared to heterosexual adults (5.2%).

Data Source: New Mexico's Progress in Collecting Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Health Data and Its Implications for Addressing Health Disparities. New Mexico Department of Health. April 2010.

HEART DISEASE AND STROKE

FINDING: A higher proportion of bisexual adults reported high cholesterol than heterosexual adults.

Data Source: New Mexico's Progress in Collecting Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Health Data and Its Implications for Addressing Health Disparities. New Mexico Department of Health. April 2010.

FINDING: In one study, bisexual women reported higher rates of heart disease than heterosexual women, but lower rates than lesbians. Risk factors for heart disease are often more common among bisexual women:

- Smoking – high rates among bisexual women
- High blood pressure – higher among bisexual women than heterosexual and lesbian women
- BMI – higher average BMI than heterosexual women, but lower than lesbians
- High cholesterol – bisexual women have the highest rates
- Cholesterol screening – bisexual women have the lowest rates
- Alcohol use – high rates among bisexual women

Data Source: Dobinson C. Top Ten Bisexual Health Issues. Sherbourne Health Center, Toronto. Appendix A.

HIV

FINDING: Among women, 58.9% of bisexual women reported ever having had an HIV test compared to 38.6% of heterosexual women.

Data Source: New Mexico's Progress in Collecting Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Health Data and Its Implications for Addressing Health Disparities. New Mexico Department of Health. April 2010.

INJURY AND VIOLENCE PREVENTION

FINDING: Nearly 3 times as many bisexual adults reported experiencing intimate partner violence compared to heterosexual adults (47.4% and 17.5%, respectively).

Data Source: New Mexico's Progress in Collecting Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Health Data and Its Implications for Addressing Health Disparities. New Mexico Department of Health. April 2010.

MATERNAL, INFANT AND CHILD HEALTH

FINDING: Among heterosexual, lesbian, and bisexual women, bisexual women have the highest rate of never having a pap test.

Data Source: Dobinson C. Top Ten Bisexual Health Issues. Sherbourne Health Center, Toronto. Appendix A.

FINDING: Bisexual women were less likely than heterosexual women to have had appropriate mammography (0.33).

Data Source: Koh AS. Use of preventive health behaviors by lesbian, bisexual, and heterosexual women: questionnaire survey. *Western Journal of Medicine*, 2000;172(6), 379-384.

MENTAL HEALTH AND MENTAL DISORDERS

FINDING: An anonymous survey was administered at 33 health care sites across the United States and had a number of important findings:

- Sexual orientation influenced the probability of experiencing emotional stress.
- Whether a bisexual woman or lesbian had disclosed her sexual orientation (was "out") impacted the likelihood of having or having had mental health problems.
- Bisexual women and lesbians experienced more emotional stress as teenagers than did heterosexual women.
- Bisexual women were more than twice as likely to have had an eating disorder compared to lesbians.
- If a bisexual woman reported being "out" she was twice as likely to have had an eating disorder compared to a heterosexual woman.
- Lesbians who were not "out" and bisexual women who were "out" were 2.0 to 2.5 times more likely to experience suicidal ideation in the past 12 months.
- Lesbian and bisexual women who were not "out" were more likely to have had a suicide attempt compared to heterosexual women.

Data Source: Koh AS, Ross LK. Mental health issues: a comparison of lesbian, bisexual and heterosexual women. *Journal of Homosexuality*. 2006;51(1):33-57.

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16893825>

FINDING: Over 2 times the percentage of bisexual adults (37.3%) reported depression compared to heterosexual adults (17.2%).

Data Source: New Mexico's Progress in Collecting Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Health Data and Its Implications for Addressing Health Disparities. New Mexico Department of Health. April 2010.

FINDING: Bisexual men and women report consistently higher levels of depression and anxiety than heterosexuals.

Data Source: Dobinson C. Top Ten Bisexual Health Issues. Sherbourne Health Center, Toronto. Appendix A.

FINDING: Nearly 3 times as many bisexual adults (17.4%) reported suicidal ideation compared to heterosexual adults (6.2%).

Data Source: New Mexico's Progress in Collecting Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Health Data and Its Implications for Addressing Health Disparities. New Mexico Department of Health. April 2010.

FINDING: Bisexual men and women report higher levels of self-harm, suicide attempts, and thoughts of suicide than heterosexuals, and in many studies, higher than gay men and lesbians.

Data Source: Dobinson C. Top Ten Bisexual Health Issues. Sherbourne Health Center, Toronto. Appendix A.

FINDING: For some gay and bisexual men, the pressure to achieve the perfect body has resulted in compulsive exercising, steroid use, poor body image, and eating disorders.

Data Source: Dobinson C. Top Ten Bisexual Health Issues. Sherbourne Health Center, Toronto. Appendix A.

FINDING: Bisexual women have the lowest levels of social support. Their quality of life is low compared to heterosexual women, and is lower than or similar to lesbians. Bisexual women and men have the lowest emotional well-being.

Data Source: Dobinson C. Top Ten Bisexual Health Issues. Sherbourne Health Center, Toronto. Appendix A.

FINDING: Bisexual and gay men have lower social support levels when compared with heterosexual men.

Data Source: Dobinson C. Top Ten Bisexual Health Issues. Sherbourne Health Center, Toronto. Appendix A.

FINDING: Perinatal depression is common and may be more common for lesbian and bisexual women than heterosexual women.

Data Source: Ross LE, Steele L, Goldfinger C, Strike C. Perinatal depressive symptomatology among lesbian and bisexual women. *Archive of Women's Mental Health*. 2007;10(2), 53-59.

NUTRITION AND WEIGHT STATUS

FINDING: Lesbian and bisexual women have higher rates of being overweight and obese when compared with heterosexual women (lesbians are most at risk). However, more bisexual women are underweight than heterosexual and lesbian women.

Data Source: Dobinson C. Top Ten Bisexual Health Issues. Sherbourne Health Center, Toronto. Appendix A.

FINDING: Compared to heterosexual female college students, lesbian and bisexual women were both significantly more likely to be overweight or obese.

Data Source: Struble CB, Lindley LL, Montgomery K, Hardin J, Burcin M. Overweight and obesity in lesbian and bisexual college women. Journal of American College of Health. 2010;59(1), 51-56.

FINDING: Lesbian and bisexual women eat fewer fruits and vegetables.

Data Source: Dobinson C. Top Ten Bisexual Health Issues. Sherbourne Health Center, Toronto. Appendix A.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

FINDING: A higher percentage of bisexual adults reported engaging in sufficient amounts of physical activity (71.1%) compared to heterosexual adults (54.1%). This difference was found in both women and men.

Data Source: New Mexico's Progress in Collecting Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Health Data and Its Implications for Addressing Health Disparities. New Mexico Department of Health. April 2010.

FINDING: A study of women aged 50-79 showed bisexual women as exhibiting the highest rates of physical activity.

Data Source: Dobinson C. Top Ten Bisexual Health Issues. Sherbourne Health Center, Toronto. Appendix A.

RESPIRATORY DISEASES

FINDING: Bisexual adults had higher rates of current asthma than heterosexual adults..

Data Source: New Mexico's Progress in Collecting Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Health Data and Its Implications for Addressing Health Disparities. New Mexico Department of Health. April 2010.

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES

FINDING: Bisexual women report higher risk sexual behavior than heterosexual women, such as:

- Having sex with a known man who has sex with men (MSM)
- Sex with an HIV-positive man
- Multiple male sexual partners
- Sex with an intravenous drug user (IDU)
- Sex partner who has had sex with a prostitute
- Not using a condom with a non-steady partner
- Anal sex

Data Source: Dobinson C. Top Ten Bisexual Health Issues. Sherbourne Health Center, Toronto. Appendix A.

FINDING: Compared to heterosexual and lesbian women, bisexual women have the highest rates of combining substance/alcohol use and sex.

Data Source: Dobinson C. Top Ten Bisexual Health Issues. Sherbourne Health Center, Toronto. Appendix A.

FINDING: Bisexual and gay men are more likely to report having a sexually transmitted infection (STI). One study shows that bisexual men report less risky sexual behavior with males (less anal sex and less anal-receptive sex) than gay men. This study also reports that bisexual men are more likely than heterosexual men to have sex with female prostitutes, but they are more likely than heterosexual men to use a condom. Bisexual men are reportedly more likely to have anal sex with women.

Data Source: Dobinson C. Top Ten Bisexual Health Issues. Sherbourne Health Center, Toronto. Appendix A.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

FINDING: Bisexual adults had higher rates (22.6%) of binge drinking than their heterosexual counterparts (14.3%).

Data Source: New Mexico's Progress in Collecting Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Health Data and Its Implications for Addressing Health Disparities. New Mexico Department of Health. April 2010.

FINDING: Research shows that bisexual women have higher rates of drug use than heterosexual women. Some studies indicate that the rates are similar to those of lesbians and some are slightly higher.

Data Source: Dobinson C. Top Ten Bisexual Health Issues. Sherbourne Health Center, Toronto. Appendix A.

FINDING: In several studies, bisexual women report the highest rates of alcohol use, heavy drinking, and alcohol-related problems when compared to heterosexual and lesbian women.

Data Source: Dobinson C. Top Ten Bisexual Health Issues. Sherbourne Health Center, Toronto. Appendix A.

FINDING: Bisexual women reported more hazardous drinking indicators and depression than did heterosexual women or lesbian women.

Data Source: Wilsnack CV, Hughes TJ, Johnson TP, Bostick WB, Szalacha LA, Benson P, Aranda F, Kinnison KE. Drinking and drinking-related problem among heterosexual and sexual minority women. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*. 2008 Jan;69(2):129-130.

TOBACCO USE

FINDING: On the whole, bisexual men and women seem to have the highest smoking rates of any subgroup for which data is readily available. All of the state surveys collecting data on bisexuals found smoking rates higher than 30% – up to a high of 39.1%.

Data Source: American Lung Association. *Smoking Out a Deadly Threat: Tobacco Use in the LGBT Community 2010*.

FINDING: A higher percentage of bisexual adults reported currently smoking (39.1%) compared to heterosexual adults. Both bisexual men and women had higher proportions of current smokers.

Data Source: New Mexico's Progress in Collecting Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Health Data and Its Implications for Addressing Health Disparities. New Mexico Department of Health. April 2010.

FINDING: Bisexual women smoke at higher rates than heterosexual women, and at about the same rates as lesbians.

Data Source: Dobinson C. Top Ten Bisexual Health Issues. Sherbourne Health Center, Toronto. Appendix A.