

Behavioral Health Care Access Among Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual (LGB) Populations

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Webinar
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SAMHSA
Substance Abuse and Mental Health
Services Administration

Center for Financing Reform and Innovation

CFRI is a SAMHSA contract with Westat that seeks to understand financing mechanisms of behavioral health care to identify opportunities, innovations, and challenges to service delivery and access.

CFRI provides SAMHSA with a dynamic mechanism to further its leadership and the field on immediate and relevant behavioral health financing and delivery issues.

Topics covered through CFRI include Financing Coordinated Specialty Care for first-episode psychosis, Value-Based Payment for SUD treatment, and many others.



Center for Financing Reform and Innovation

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Webinar Overview



- I. Opening Remarks
- II. Report Findings
- III. Panel Discussion
- IV. Open Forum Q&A
- V. Closing Remarks

Behavioral Health Care Access Among Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual (LGB) Populations



Purpose of this report

Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Behavioral Health:

Results from the
2021 and 2022 National
Surveys on Drug Use
and Health

SAMHSA
Substance Abuse and Mental Health
Services Administration



- SAMHSA’s National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) report (2023) highlighted elevated rates of substance use, thoughts of suicide, substance use disorders, and mental illness among LGB populations compared to straight individuals.
- The current report investigates whether these disparities exist when other determinants of health, such as age, race, and gender are accounted for.
 - Beginning in 2023, SAMHSA’s NSDUH began including respondent’s sex at birth and current gender including male, female, and/or transgender.

Methodology

- Analyzed NSDUH data from 2015-2019
- Propensity score matching was used to ensure groups were similar based on age, race, education, marital status, income, and participation in government assistance programs.

Study group	Comparison group
Gay men	Straight men
Bisexual men	Straight men
Lesbian women	Straight women
Bisexual women	Straight women

Past Month Substance Use

LGB populations were more likely to report use of most substances than their straight peers.



Marijuana

Lesbian women were **almost twice** as likely than straight women

Bisexual women were **two and a half times** more likely than straight women



Opioids

Lesbian women were **more than twice** as likely than straight women

Bisexual women were **more than two and a half** times more likely than straight women



Inhalants

Gay men were **twenty-six** times more likely to have used than straight men

Bisexual women were **three** times more likely than straight women

Mental Health Concerns

LGB populations were more likely to report having experienced mental health concerns than their straight peers in the past year.



Experienced a major depressive episode

Gay males **2x**, Bisexual males **3x**

Lesbian females **2x**, Bisexual females **2x**



Made a suicide plan

Gay males **3x**, Bisexual males **4x**

Lesbian females **3x**, Bisexual females **4x**



Experienced suicidal thoughts

Gay males **2x**, Bisexual males **3x**

Lesbian females **2x**, Bisexual females **3x**



Attempted suicide

Gay males **4x**, Bisexual males **5x**

Lesbian females **3x**, Bisexual females **4x**

Barriers to Care

Among individuals who did not receive the mental health care they needed in the past year, LGB individuals had higher reported rates of certain barriers to care.



Cost

All LGB populations were more likely to report cost as a barrier than straight individuals of the same gender



Did not know where to go

Bisexual women were more likely to report that they did not know where to go for care as a barrier compared to straight women



Fear of being committed

Lesbian and Bisexual women and Bisexual men were more likely to report a fear of being committed to a psychiatric hospital as a barrier than straight individuals of the same gender

Report Conclusions

- The current study reinforces the urgent need to address substance use and mental health concerns among LGB populations.
- Findings mirror the 2023 NSDUH report, finding that LGB populations experience elevated rates of behavioral health issues even when controlling for potential confounders like financial hardship and race.
- Given the pronounced disparities experienced by bisexual women, future research must specifically address their needs and challenges to ensure more equitable health outcomes.



Next steps for...

Policymakers

Increase funding for LGB-focused behavioral health care programs

Ensure reimbursement policies cover culturally competent care

Providers

Increase trainings on understanding the unique challenges faced by LGB populations

Implement protocols that create a welcoming and respectful environment

Researchers

Identify strategies to reduce stigma and improve access to care for LGB individuals

Look for ways to address the specific barriers, such as fear of discrimination within the health care system

Panel Discussion

Open Forum Q&A

Thank You

SAMHSA's mission is to lead public health and service delivery efforts that promote mental health, prevent substance misuse, and provide treatments and supports to foster recovery while ensuring equitable access and better outcomes.



www.samhsa.gov/cfri

Please visit the Center for Excellence on LGBTQ+ Behavioral Health Equity:

<https://www.samhsa.gov/lgbtq-plus-behavioral-health-equity>

1-877-SAMHSA-7 (1-877-726-4727) • 1-800-487-4889 (TDD)

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