

LGBTQ Population

Population estimates of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer/questioning (LGBTQ) people vary widely, in part because of differences in how this data is collected. Surveys may ask about different elements of sexuality (e.g., sexual attraction, sexual behavior, self-identification, or some combination). Often, these domains are not perfectly correlated (e.g., a heterosexual-identified man who has sex with both men and women, but who is primarily attracted to women). Measuring only one or two domains can yield different population estimates.

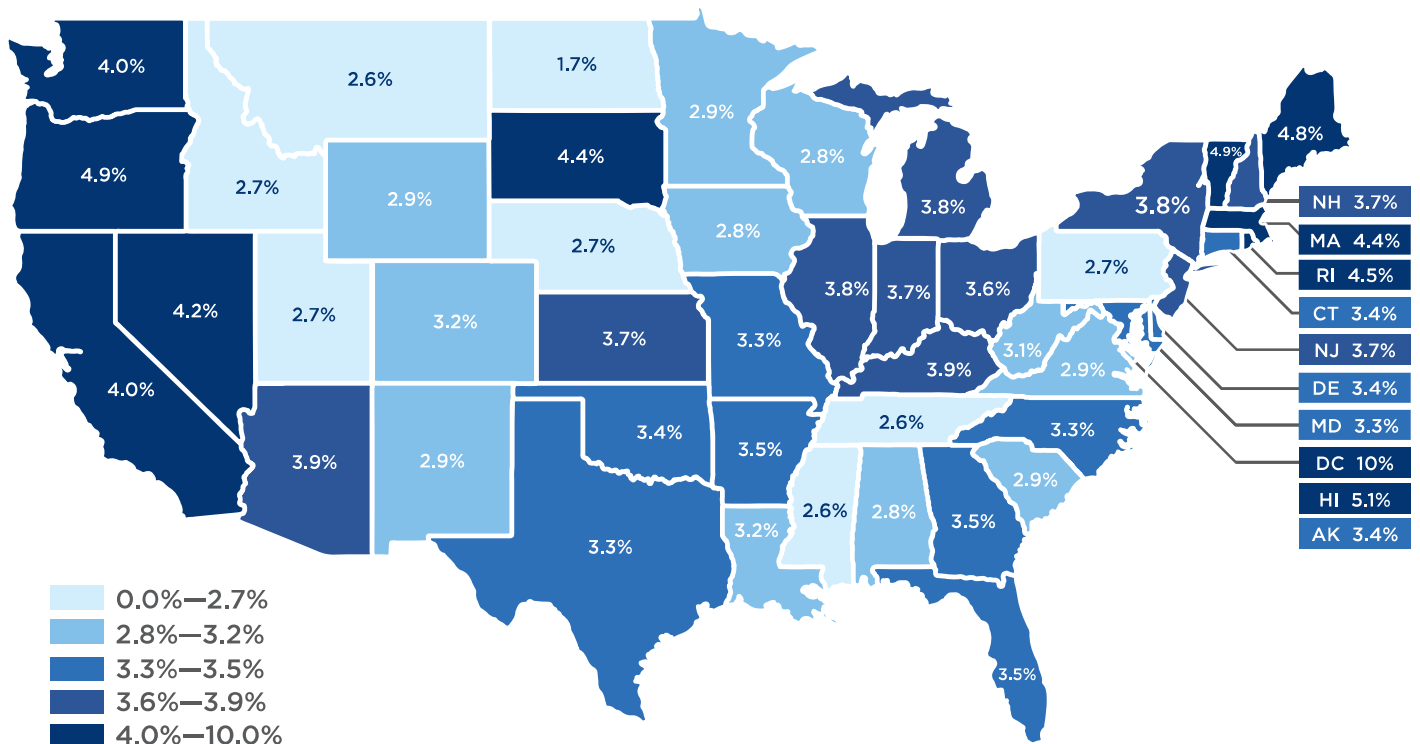
Sexual Identity - Approximately 9 million US adults (3.8%) identify themselves as lesbian or gay (1.7%), bisexual (1.8%), or transgender (0.3%).

Sexual Behavior - Approximately 19 million Americans (8.2%) report engaging in same-sex sexual behavior.

Sexual Attraction - Nearly 25.6 million Americans (11%) acknowledge at least some same-sex sexual attraction.^{1,2}

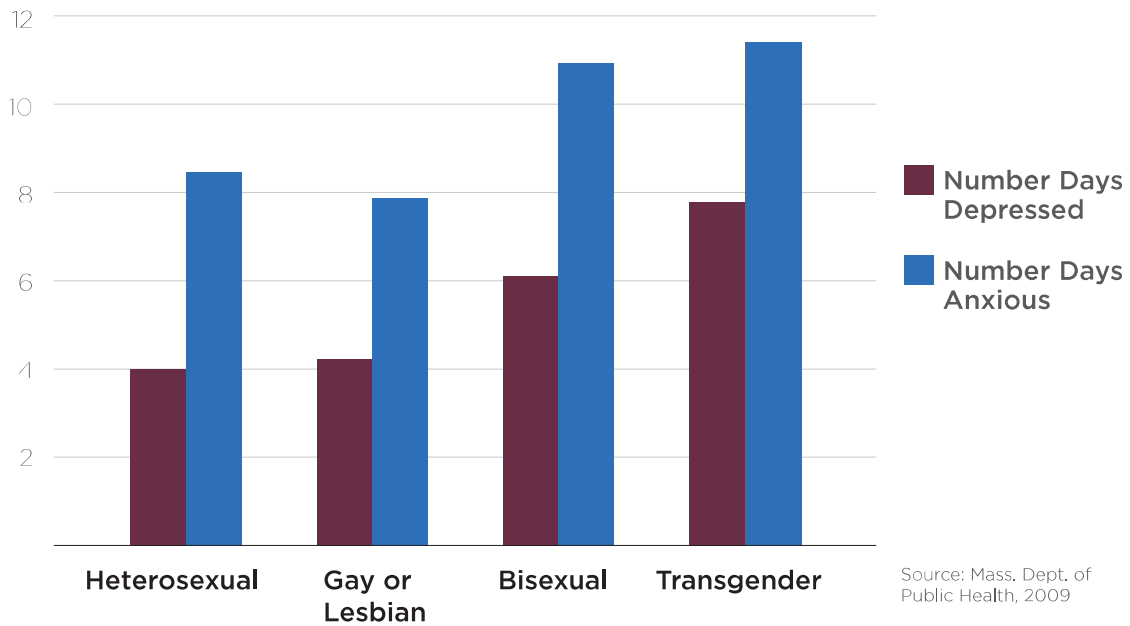
Transgender is a term that refers to people whose gender identity (or gender expression) differs in some way from the sex they were assigned at

Percentage of LGBTQ Population by State



Source: Gates & Newport, 2013

LGBTQ Individuals and Mental Health



birth. Transgender individuals may identify in myriad ways. Some people identify as another gender (e.g., man or woman), while others adopt a non-binary identity (e.g., genderqueer) or no gender at all queer/questioning. Some transgender people seek medical or surgical treatments to help with gender transition while others do not. One recent study estimated that there are nearly 1 million transgender people in the U.S.³

Population estimates of LGBTQ people also appear to vary geographically, ranging from an average of 2% in South Dakota to 5.3% in Hawaii and 8.3% in the District of Columbia.⁴

Mental Health Status and Disparities

- LGBTQ individuals are more than twice as likely as heterosexual men and women to have a mental health disorder in their lifetime.⁵
- LGBTQ individuals are 2.5 times more likely to experience depression, anxiety, and substance misuse compared with heterosexual individuals.⁶
- Women who identify as lesbian/bisexual are more than twice as likely to engage in heavy (alcohol)

drinking in the past month than heterosexual women (8.0% vs. 4.4%). Gay/bisexual men were less likely than heterosexual men (8.6% vs 9.9%) to engage in heavy drinking in the past month.⁷

- Transgender individuals who identify as African American/black, Hispanic/Latino, American Indian/Alaska Native, or Multiracial/Mixed Race are at increased risk of suicide attempts than white transgender individuals.⁸
- LGBTQ individuals have higher rates of mental health service use than their heterosexual counterparts.⁹

Sexual Orientation	Considered Attempting Suicide
Heterosexual	2.3%
Gay or Lesbian	4.4%
Bisexual	7.4%
Transgender	30.8%

Source: Mass. Dept. of Public Health, 2009

- The rate of suicide attempts is four times greater for lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth and two times greater for questioning youth than that of heterosexual youth.¹⁰
- LGBTQ older adults face a number of unique challenges, including the combination of anti-LGBTQ stigma and ageism. Approximately 31% of LGBTQ older adults report depressive symptoms; 39% report serious thoughts of taking their own lives.¹¹

Stigma & Discrimination

Health disparities among LGBTQ people are linked to stigma and discrimination.⁶ For example:

- Many LGBTQ people have reported experiencing stigma and discrimination when accessing health services, leading some individuals to delay necessary health care or forego it altogether.¹²
- LGBTQ individuals may have less social support than heterosexual individuals, particularly if they live in a region without a large LGBTQ population or if they have experienced rejection by their family of origin. Bisexual people may feel particularly isolated, experiencing stigma both in society at-large and within the LGBTQ community.¹³
- Transgender individuals have higher rates of poverty and unemployment than non-transgender individuals.¹⁴ This is exacerbated by a lack of federal employment non-discrimination protections for LGBTQ individuals.
- LGBTQ individuals are more likely to be victims of violence compared with their heterosexual peers. The risk of experiencing violence is even higher for undocumented and racial/ethnic minority LGBTQ.¹⁵

Being LGBTQ Is Not a Mental Disorder

All major professional mental health organizations have affirmed that homosexuality is *NOT* a mental disorder. Being transgender or gender variant is *NOT* a mental illness and does not imply any impairment in judgment, stability, reliability, or general social or vocational capabilities.¹⁹

To learn about best practices for treating diverse populations and to get answers to your questions by leading psychiatrists, please visit APA's Cultural Competency webpage at <https://www.psychiatry.org/psychiatrists/cultural-competency>.

Resources

- AMA LGBT Advisory Committee <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/about-ama/our-people/member-groups-sections/glb-advocacy-committee.page?>
- American Psychiatric Association - Toolkit for Working with Transgender and Gender-Variant Individuals
- American Psychiatric Association - Resource Document on Working with Transgender Individuals
- American Psychological Association, www.apa.org/pi/lgbt
- Association of Gay and Lesbian Psychiatrists (AGLP) www.aglp.org
- Center for Excellence in Transgender Health <http://transhealth.ucsf.edu/>
- Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, www.glaad.org
- Gay & Lesbian Medical Association www.glma.org
- Human Rights Campaign, www.hrc.org
- Institute of Medicine Report - The Health of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender People
- LGBT Suicide Prevention, www.theTrevorProject.org
- National Center for Transgender Equality, www.nctequality.org
- National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, www.thetaskforce.org
- Parent, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays www.pflag.org
- The National LGBT Health Education Center www.lgbthealtheducation.org/
- World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH) www.wpath.org

Footnotes

- ¹Gates G. "How Many People are Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender?" (The Williams Institute). 2011. <http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/research/census-lgbt-demographics-studies/how-many-people-are-lesbian-gay-bisexual-and-transgender/>
- ²Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Sexual Orientation Information Statistics." 2015. Available at <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhis/sexual-orientation/statistics.htm>
- ³Meerwijk E, et al. "Transgender population size in the United States: a meta-regression of population-based probability samples." *Am J Pub Health*. 2017. 107(2):e1-e8. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/28075643>
- ⁴Gates G.). "Vermont Leads States in LGBT Identification". State of the States. Gallup Politics. February 15, 2017. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/203513/vermont-leads-states-lgbt-identification.aspx>
- ⁵Semlyen J, et al. "Sexual Orientation and Symptoms Of Common Mental Disorder or Low Wellbeing: Combined Meta-Analysis Of 12 UK Population Health Surveys." *BMC Psychiatry*. 2016. 24;16:67. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4806482/>
- ⁶Kates, J, et al. "Health and Access To Care And Coverage For Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Individuals in the U.S. Retrieved." Kaiser Family Foundation. 2016. <http://kff.org/report-section/health-and-access-to-care-and-coverage-for-lesbian-gay-bisexual-and-transgender-health-challenges/>
- ⁷Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services. "Sexual Orientation and Estimates of Adult Substance Use and Mental Health: Results from the 2015 National Survey on Drug Use and Health." 2016. NSDUH Data Review. <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/NSDUH-SexualOrientation-2015/NSDUH-SexualOrientation-2015/NSDUH-SexualOrientation-2015.pdf>
- ⁸Hass A, et al."Suicide Attempts among Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Adults." The Williams Institute Report. 2014. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/AFSP-Williams-Suicide-Report-Final.pdf>
- ⁹Platt L. "Patterns of Mental Health Care Utilization Among Sexual Orientation Minority Groups." *J Homosex*. March 2017. [Epub ahead of print] <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/28346079>
- ¹⁰ Kann L, et al. "Sexual Identity, Sex of Sexual Contacts, and Health-Related Behaviors Among Students in Grades 9–12 — United States and Selected Sites, 2015. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*. 2016. 65(9);1–202 <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/65/ss/ss6509a1.htm>
- ¹¹Fredriksen-Goldsen KL. (2011). "The Aging and Health Report: Disparities and Resilience among Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Trans-gender Older Adults." Seattle, WA: Institute for Multigenerational Health. <https://www.homophobia.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Full-Report- FINAL-11-16-11.pdf>
- ¹²Safer J, et al. "Barriers to Health Care for Transgender Individuals." *Curr Opin Endocrinol Diabetes Obes*. 2016. 23(2):168-171. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/26910276>
- ¹³Hsieh N. "Explaining the Mental Health Disparity by Sexual Orientation: The Importance of Social Resources. *Society and Mental Health*. 2014. <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/2156869314524959>
- ¹⁴Movement Advancement Project. "Paying an Unfair Price: The Financial Penalty for Being Transgender in America." 2015. <http://www.lgbtmap.org/unfair-price-transgender>
- ¹⁵National Coalition of Anti Violence Programs. "National Report on Hate Violence against Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and HIVAffected Communities." 2014. www.avp.org/storage/documents/2013_mr_ncavp_hvreport.pdf

This resource was prepared by the Division of Diversity and Health Equity. Updated and reviewed, respectively, by Jeremy Kidd, M.D., and the Council on Minority Mental Health and Health Disparities.