

FACT SHEET:

The Health of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender People: Building a Foundation for Better Understanding A report from the Institute of Medicine

WHAT HAPPENED?

After so long in the public policy closet, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people are now in the national news with a federal report describing who we are, the diversity among us, and how our healthcare is affected negatively because of historical discrimination. A new gold-standard report from the Institute of Medicine (IOM):

Reviews what's known about LGBT health	Identifies specific needs for more research and how it should be done	Insists on the importance of training healthcare providers about LGBT health.
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The National Institutes of Health (NIH), an agency of the federal government dealing with health research, funded this report in order to get advice on research priorities in LGBT health.

HOW IS THE REPORT ORGANIZED?

Within the United States, LGBT people are poorly understood and, in general their health needs have not been looked at. This report uses four “lenses” to better understand how LGBT people are different from others and what this means for our health:



LIFE COURSE

Events at one stage of life effect future stages; experiences are shaped by age and the world around us.



MINORITY STRESS

LGBT people experience on-going stress from societal discrimination and stigma.



INTERSECTIONALITY

People have many parts about themselves that interact with each other, including race/ethnicity, income, gender, sexual orientation and gender non-conformity.



SOCIAL ECOLOGY

Relationships with families, communities, and society influence the health of LGBT people.

Chapters are organized by different life stages-childhood/adolescence, early/middle adulthood, and older age. The existing research is then summarized according to: development of sexual orientation and gender identity, mental health status, physical health status, risk and protective factors, health services, and how many of us are discriminated against by families, at school and church, and where we work.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE LGBT HEALTH RESEARCH FINDINGS DISCUSSED IN THE REPORT?



DURING CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE:

- Gender-variant (transgender) children may have more trouble making friends and behavioral problems than non-gender-variant children.
- Male-to-female transgender youth may face higher risk for HIV than young gay and bisexual men.
- Childhood abuse may be higher among LGB youth.
- Suicidal behavior is higher among LGB youth.



DURING EARLY/MIDDLE ADULthood:

- Gay men may have higher rates of erectile dysfunction than heterosexual men.
- Lack of health insurance, fear of discrimination by providers, and dissatisfaction with services act as barriers to accessing health care.
- Like heterosexual adults, LGB adults experience intimate partner violence; data on IPV among transgender adults has not been studied.



DURING LATER ADULTHOOD:

- Transgender elders may have health problems as a result of long-term hormone use.
- LGBT elders have encountered discrimination for much of their lives.
- Lesbian and gay elders are less likely than their heterosexual peers to have children, and their family relationships are not well understood.

WHAT AREAS OF RESEARCH WERE NAMED AS MOST IMPORTANT?

The report named these necessary research areas to build a foundation of knowledge about LGBT health:

- Research on who makes up the LGBT community
- Research on new methods to improve LGBT health
- How the world around us effects the lives of LGBT people
- Transgender-specific health needs
- Unfair treatment and access to health care

WHAT WAS RECOMMENDED TO THE NIH?

- Collect data on LGBT people in federal surveys and in electronic medical records.
- Provide training in LGBT research throughout the NIH and encourage grant applicants to explain why they do, or do not, include LGBT people in their studies.
- Ask questions about LGBT people uniformly across research studies and sponsor research about the best ways to do it.

This fact sheet was created through a collaboration between The Center for Population Research in LGBT Health and the Network for LGBT Health Equity at The Fenway Institute, www.thefenwayinstitute.org.

THE FENWAY INSTITUTE Ansin Building 1340 Boylston Street Boston MA 02215
TEL 617.927.6450 **WEB** thefenwayinstitute.org

