

## 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.

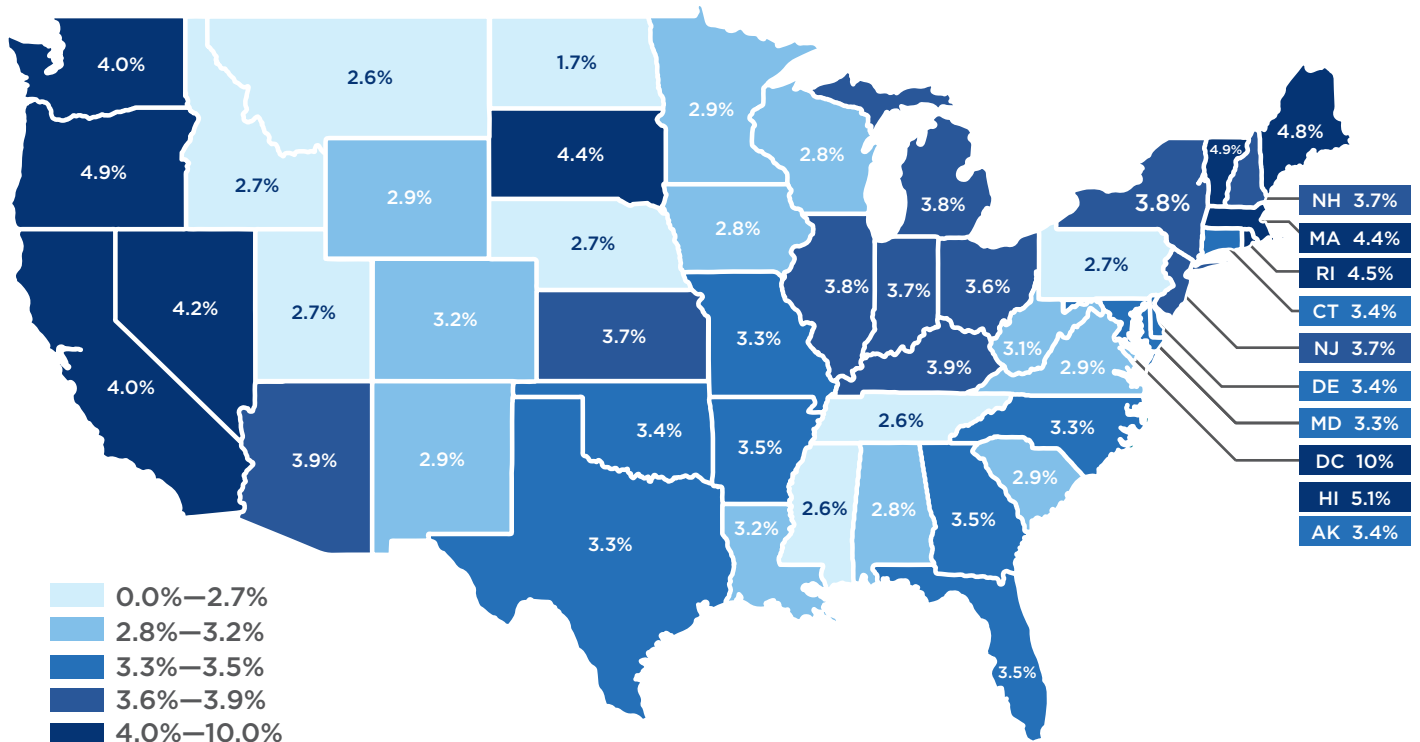
**Sexual Identity** - Approximately 9 million US adults (3.8%) identify themselves as lesbian or gay (1.7%), bisexual (1.8%), or transgender (0.3%).

**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.<sup>1,2</sup>

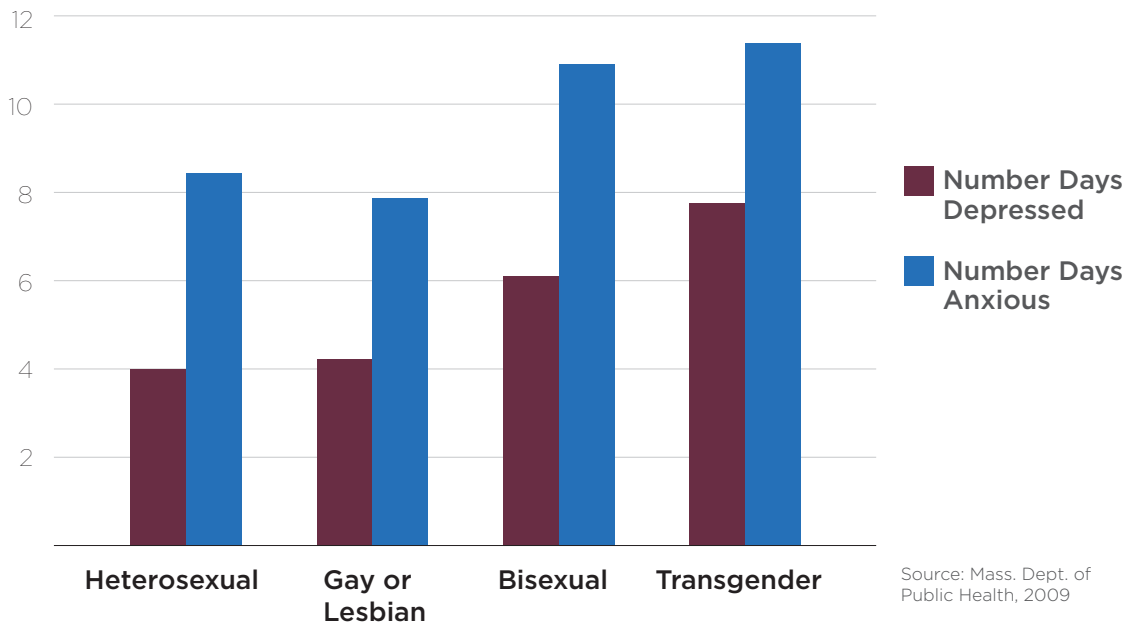
**Transgender** is a term that refers to people whose gender identity (or gender expression) differs in some way from the sex they were assigned at

## 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.<sup>3</sup>

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.<sup>4</sup>

### 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.<sup>5</sup>
- LGBTQ individuals are 2.5 times more likely to experience depression, anxiety, and substance misuse compared with heterosexual individuals.<sup>6</sup>
- 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.<sup>7</sup>

- 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.<sup>8</sup>
- LGBTQ individuals have higher rates of mental health service use than their heterosexual counterparts.<sup>9</sup>

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.<sup>10</sup>
- 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.<sup>11</sup>

## Stigma & Discrimination

Health disparities among LGBTQ people are linked to stigma and discrimination.<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>12</sup>
- 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.<sup>13</sup>
- Transgender individuals have higher rates of poverty and unemployment than non-transgender individuals.<sup>14</sup> 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.<sup>15</sup>

## 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.<sup>19</sup>

**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>.**

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### 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](http://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt)
- Association of Gay and Lesbian Psychiatrists (AGLP) [www.aglp.org](http://www.aglp.org)
- Center for Excellence in Transgender Health <http://transhealth.ucsf.edu/>
- Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, [www.glaad.org](http://www.glaad.org)
- Gay & Lesbian Medical Association [www.glma.org](http://www.glma.org)
- Human Rights Campaign, [www.hrc.org](http://www.hrc.org)
- Institute of Medicine Report - The Health of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender People
- LGBT Suicide Prevention, [www.theTrevorProject.org](http://www.theTrevorProject.org)
- National Center for Transgender Equality, [www.nctequality.org](http://www.nctequality.org)
- National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, [www.thetaskforce.org](http://www.thetaskforce.org)
- Parent, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays [www.pflag.org](http://www.pflag.org)
- The National LGBT Health Education Center [www.lgbthealtheducation.org/](http://www.lgbthealtheducation.org/)
- World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH) [www.wpath.org](http://www.wpath.org)

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## Footnotes

- <sup>1</sup>Gates 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/>
- <sup>2</sup>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Sexual Orientation Information Statistics." 2015. Available at [https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhis/sexual\\_orientation/statistics.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhis/sexual_orientation/statistics.htm)
- <sup>3</sup>Meerwijk 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>
- <sup>4</sup>Gates 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>
- <sup>5</sup>Semlyen 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/>
- <sup>6</sup>Kates, 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/>
- <sup>7</sup>Substance 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>
- <sup>8</sup>Hass 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>
- <sup>9</sup>Platt 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>
- <sup>10</sup> 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>
- <sup>11</sup>Fredriksen-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>
- <sup>12</sup>Safer 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>
- <sup>13</sup>Hsieh 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>
- <sup>14</sup>Movement Advancement Project. "Paying an Unfair Price: The Financial Penalty for Being Transgender in America." 2015. <http://www.lgbtmap.org/unfair-price-transgender>
- <sup>15</sup>National 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](http://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.**