

WHY?

Every day, we are working to be a relentless force for a world of longer, healthier lives. We strive to save and improve the lives of all Americans. "All" Americans includes people of all backgrounds and across the spectrum of all diversity elements: sexual orientation, gender identity, age, race, ethnicity, faith, socio-economic levels, and physical and cognitive disabilities. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer/questioning (LGBTQ) people are members of every community. They are diverse, come from all walks of life, and include people of all races and ethnicities, all ages, all socioeconomic levels, and from all parts of the country.

Research suggests that LGBTQ individuals face health disparities linked to societal stigma, discrimination and denial of civil and human rights. Discrimination against LGBTQ persons has been associated with high rates of psychiatric disorders, substance abuse and suicide, to name a few. Many forms of mental health issues can affect heart disease, which is why it's important that we gain a thorough understanding of the health challenges faced by this vulnerable community.

THE FACTS...



Most research does not collect current gender identity, sex assigned at birth, and current sexual orientation.

This prevents researchers from accurately studying health and disease in LGBTQ people. When questions are asked, they usually focus on sexual orientation; there is little to no focus on sexual minorities. As a result, there are very few research studies that assess the health and well-being of sexual minority people.



Despite increased acceptance and recent gains in human rights, particularly the Supreme Court's decision on same-sex marriage, **sexual minorities face significant discrimination and marginalization in the United States.¹**

Experiences with stigma are **associated with poor health outcomes, decreased life expectancy, and increased mortality among sexual minorities.¹**



About **13 percent** of **LGBTQ adults** report being **denied health care or given poor care because of their sexual or gender identities.²**

Among **transgender participants**, that number jumped to **40 percent.²**

Greater levels of depression are associated with higher cardiovascular disease (CVD) risk.³ **Sexual minority men exhibit greater levels of depression or depressive symptoms compared to heterosexual men in the United States.¹** Compared to individuals that were never depressed, adults with depression have a **60% higher risk** for the development of cardiovascular disease.⁴

Stress may be a factor that contributes to health disparities in sexual minorities.¹ **Sexual minority men report significantly greater levels of stress compared to heterosexual men.¹** Stress may affect behaviors and factors that increase heart disease risk: high blood pressure and cholesterol levels, smoking, physical inactivity and overeating. Some people may choose to drink too much alcohol or smoke cigarettes to "manage" their chronic stress.⁶



Poor mental health is more common among sexual minority women compared to heterosexual women.¹

In healthy individuals, depression has been independently associated with the development and progression of coronary artery disease and with death from cardiovascular diseases.⁵



Sexual minority men are less likely to be overweight or obese compared to heterosexual men, whereas **sexual minority women have higher Body Mass Index (BMI)** compared to heterosexual women.¹

TOBACCO USE AND THE LGBTQ COMMUNITY

Sexual minorities are particularly vulnerable to social stresses that lead to **increased tobacco and substance use.**¹ Social stress may also contribute to body image, exercise, and eating habits.¹



Compared with heterosexual men, **sexual minority men are significantly more likely to use tobacco.**¹ Rates of death among U.S. smokers are **3 times higher** than for people that have never smoked.⁹ On average, male smokers die 12 years earlier than male nonsmokers.⁹



Overall, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender adults smoke at rates up to **2.5 times higher** than straight adults.⁷

Of the **10.8 million e-cigarette users** in the United States, **51.2 percent are under age 35 years**, **60 percent are men**, and a disproportionate number identify LGBTQ.⁸



Sexual minority women are significantly more likely to use tobacco compared to heterosexual women.¹ On average, female smokers die 11 years earlier than female nonsmokers.⁹



DID YOU KNOW?

Tobacco use is deadly

- At least **30,000 LGBTQ people die each year from smoking-related causes.**¹⁰
- **Smoking rates are higher among LGBTQ people.** 1 in 4 LGBTQ adults smoke, compared to 1 in 6 heterosexual adults.¹⁰
- **51% of LGBTQ youth have experimented with cigarettes**, compared to just 29.5% of youth who identify as heterosexual.¹¹
- **Smokers living with HIV lose an additional 6 years of life**, compared with those who never smoked. Smoking weakens the effectiveness of life-saving medications.¹⁰
- **Tobacco kills more people** than AIDS, drugs, alcohol, gun violence, and car accidents -combined.¹⁰

The Tobacco industry pushes its products onto LGBTQ people

- **The tobacco industry has targeted LGBTQ communities** through the sponsorship of organizations like Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD), Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC), and Pride events across the country, advertising in magazines and newspapers geared toward LGBTQ people, and by offering discounted cigarettes in gay bars and clubs.¹⁰
- **Tobacco companies develop predatory campaigns that manipulate LGBTQ consumers**, using messaging that will resonate with LGBTQ people about freedom, rights, and choice.¹⁰

Here's what YOU can do to help

- Advocate for **tobacco-free "LGBTQ Pride" events, festivals, etc.** and **anti-tobacco legislation.**
- Support **tobacco cessation** programs.
- Provide **tools and resources** that help this community **reduce stress, anxiety and depression.**

For questions or comments, contact the Diversity and Inclusion Team in the Office of Health Equity at diversity@heart.org.

PRIDE AT HEART REFERENCE LIST

¹ Caceres et al. A Systematic Review of Cardiovascular Disease in Sexual Minorities. *Am J Public Health*. 2017;107(4):e13-e21

² <https://www.heart.org/en/news/2018/07/13/aging-lgbt-seniors-a-major-public-health-issue?s=q%253DLGBT%252520seniors%25>

³ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24282187>

⁴ <https://www.hindawi.com/journals/cpn/2013/695925/>

⁵ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2719442/>

⁶ <https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/stress-and-heart-health>

⁷ <https://tobaccocontrol.bmj.com/content/18/4/275.long>

⁸ <https://annals.org/aim/article-abstract/2698112/prevalence-distribution-e-cigarette-use-among-u-s-adults-behavioral> and from Nancy's News from the Heart <http://view.heartemail.org/?qs=9be8084561ca1d212411419094bfca1f2bd1e7b96d5bc2716888149924da782f77604833dbc221bd-ecd9d7cb3758f72e2f0f731b63f3bd53f42e37144890107f3fe32b58a76c2d32b4c50ac0d80fa0b6>

⁹ <https://www.ahajournals.org/doi/10.1161/CIR.0000000000000659>. Page e34

¹⁰ William Way LGBT Community Center Tobacco-Free Prides Fact Sheet

¹¹ Philly Pride 2017 LGBT and Tobacco-Use Fact Sheet