



SNAPSHOT

A QUICK LOOK AT CALIFORNIA'S HEALTH BEHAVIORS

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Snapshot is a publication that demonstrates the uses of Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) data to illustrate various health behaviors among adult Californians. BRFSS is the largest, ongoing, telephone health survey in the world. The California BRFSS is an annual effort by the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), Chronic Disease Surveillance and Research Branch, in collaboration with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), to assess the prevalence of and trends in health-related behaviors and to monitor preventable risk factors for chronic diseases and other leading causes of death in the California adult population.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY: SELECTED DEMOGRAPHICS AND HEALTH INDICATORS CALIFORNIA ADULTS, 2015—2019

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people are a growing sexual and gender minority population in the United States (U.S.). According to the 2018 Gallup tracking survey, approximately 11 million (4.5 percent) U.S. adults identify as LGBT.¹ Although the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Healthy People 2030 has identified the improvement of health, safety, and well-being of LGBT populations as priority health research², data are still limited. Research has consistently shown that health disparities are a major concern for the LGBT population. Sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) data are a critical component of accurately assessing the current issues that LGBT people experience, particularly those such as mental health and substance use disparities, and barriers in access to health insurance coverage and health care. Collecting information on SOGI on the BRFSS survey is instrumental towards understanding LGBT populations and their health needs and provides comprehensive data for advocates, researchers, policymakers, and service providers to develop effective policies and programs to address these health disparities in this population.

Since 2006, the sexual orientation question has been consistently asked on the California BRFSS, while the gender identity question has been asked since 2016. For the purposes of this fact sheet, BRFSS data pooled from 2015 through 2019 were used to estimate and compare demographic characteristics and select chronic disease health indicators among the self-identified LGBT and heterosexual populations in California.

California BRFSS Questions:

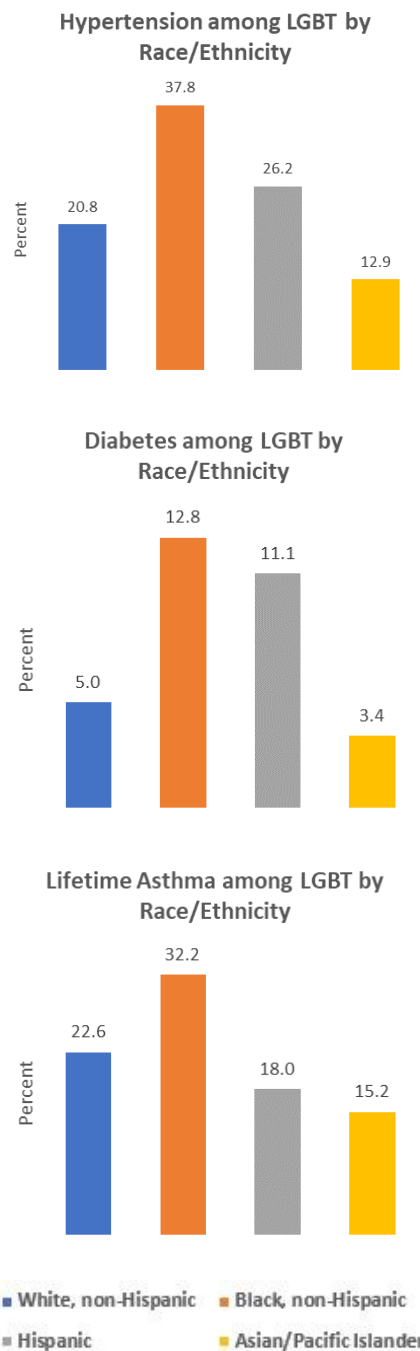
Sexual Orientation: Do you consider yourself to be: 1. Heterosexual, that is, straight; 2. Homosexual, that is gay or lesbian; 3. Bisexual, or 4. Other?

Gender Identity: Do you consider yourself to be transgender? If yes, do you consider yourself to be: 1. male-to-female, 2. female-to-male, or 3. gender non-conforming?

Based on findings from the California BRFSS, an estimated 1.4 million or 5.5 percent of the state's adult population identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, other sexual orientation (LGBO), or transgender. Among the LGBT population, 5.2 percent of adults identify as LGBO and 0.3 percent identify as transgender. Of BRFSS respondents (N=56,884), LGBT males (53.8 percent) account for a larger proportion than LGBT females (46.2 percent), while among the heterosexual population, the opposite is true with a larger proportion represented among females than males (51.2 versus 48.8 percent respectively). White, non-Hispanics account for a larger proportion among both LGBT and heterosexual populations compared to other race/ethnicities. Although those who identify as LGBT account for only 5.5 percent of the adult population, they represent a larger proportion of younger (below the age of 35), with college or post graduate degrees, earning less than \$20,000, and currently unemployed compared to the heterosexual population (Table 1).

TABLE 1.	LGBT		Heterosexual or Straight	
	%	95% CI	%	95% CI
California (N=56,884)	5.5	(5.0 - 6.1)	94.5	(93.9 - 95.0)
Sex at birth				
Male	53.8	(49.1 - 58.5)	48.8	(47.8 - 49.8)
Female	46.2	(41.5 - 50.9)	51.2	(50.2 - 52.2)
Race/Ethnicity				
White, non-Hispanic	53.6	(48.9 - 58.3)	42.9	(42.0 - 43.9)
Black, non-Hispanic	4.7	(3.2 - 6.2)	5.4	(4.9 - 5.9)
Hispanic	24.0	(20.3 - 27.7)	34.0	(33.0 - 34.9)
Asian/Pacific Islander	10.0	(6.8 - 13.2)	12.3	(11.5 - 13.1)
Other non-Hispanic	7.7	(5.9 - 9.5)	5.4	(4.9 - 5.9)
Age				
18 - 24	25.1	(20.7 - 29.6)	13.1	(12.3 - 14.0)
25-34	26.5	(21.7 - 31.3)	17.7	(16.9 - 18.5)
35-44	15.3	(11.9 - 18.8)	18.8	(18.0 - 19.6)
45-54	13.3	(10.8 - 15.8)	19.5	(18.7 - 20.3)
55-64	11.8	(9.7 - 13.9)	15.0	(14.4 - 15.5)
65-74	5.4	(4.3 - 6.5)	9.1	(8.8 - 9.5)
75+	2.6	(1.9 - 3.2)	6.8	(6.5 - 7.1)
Educational Attainment				
Less than High School	3.9	(3.0 - 4.8)	12.4	(11.8 - 13.0)
High School or GED	22.8	(18.1 - 27.5)	20.3	(19.5 - 21.2)
Some College or Tech School	30.2	(25.9 - 34.5)	26.2	(25.3 - 27.1)
College or Post Graduate	43.1	(38.5 - 47.7)	41.1	(40.1 - 42.0)
Annual Household Income				
< \$20,000	24.1	(19.8 - 28.5)	19.5	(18.6 - 20.3)
\$20,000 - \$34,999	14.2	(10.8 - 17.5)	15.5	(14.7 - 16.2)
\$35,000 - \$49,999	13.7	(9.3 - 18.2)	11.0	(10.3 - 11.7)
\$50,000 - \$74,999	11.4	(9.1 - 13.6)	13.0	(12.3 - 13.7)
\$75,000 - \$99,999	13.5	(10.1 - 16.8)	13.6	(12.8 - 14.3)
\$100,000+	23.1	(19.0 - 27.2)	27.5	(26.6 - 28.5)
Employment Status				
Employed	55.8	(50.8 - 60.7)	59.1	(58.0 - 60.1)
Unemployed	9.7	(6.1 - 13.3)	6.5	(6.0 - 7.1)
Homemaker	4.6	(2.3 - 6.9)	8.7	(8.1 - 9.3)
Student	13.7	(9.8 - 17.5)	7.1	(6.4 - 7.7)
Retired	7.3	(5.8 - 8.8)	12.5	(12.0 - 13.0)
Unable to work	8.9	(5.7 - 12.2)	6.2	(5.7 - 6.7)

Chronic Health Conditions by Race/Ethnicity among LGBT California BRFSS 2015—2019

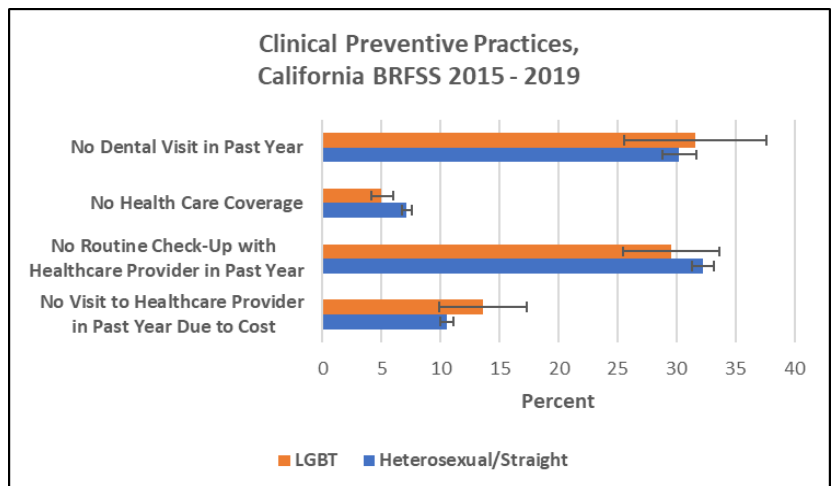
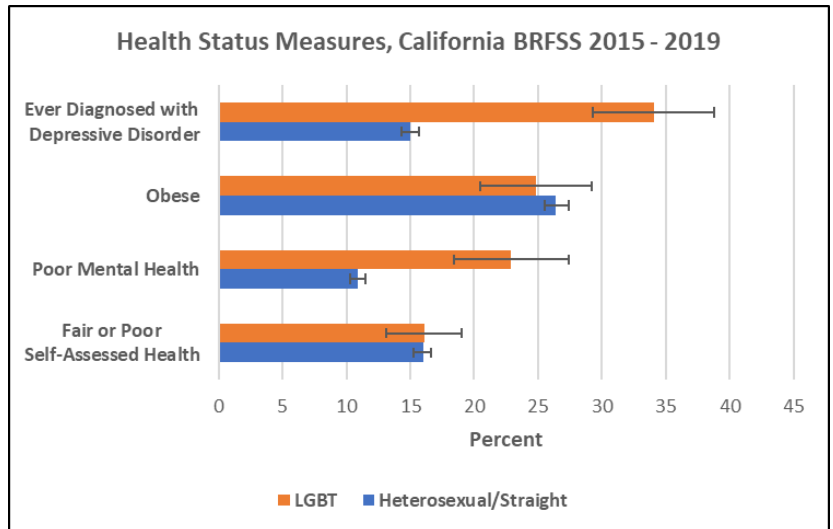
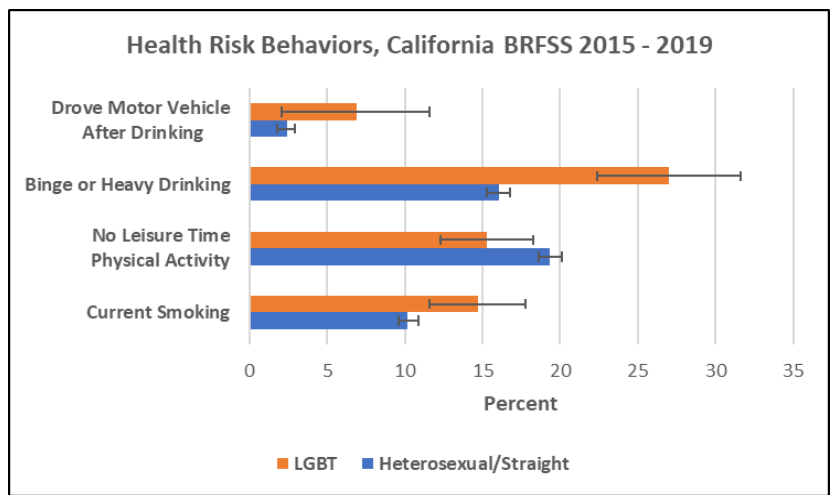


*Table and figures prepared by the California Department of Public Health, Chronic Disease Surveillance and Research Branch.

Chronic health conditions among LGBT indicate various levels of health disparities by race and ethnicity. A higher proportion of Black non-Hispanic LGBT report ever having been diagnosed with hypertension (37.8 percent) compared to Hispanic (26.2 percent), White non-Hispanic (20.8 percent), and Asian and Pacific Islander (12.9 percent) LGBT. Similarly, Black non-Hispanic LGBT report the highest proportion of being diagnosed with diabetes (12.8 percent) followed by Hispanic (11.1 percent), White non-Hispanic (5.0 percent), and Asian and Pacific Islander (3.4 percent) LGBT. Black non-Hispanic LGBT report a higher proportion of ever being diagnosed with asthma (32.2 percent), followed by White non-Hispanic (22.6 percent), Hispanic (18.0 percent), and Asian and Pacific Islander (15.2 percent) LGBT. No significant disparities were found when comparing similar chronic health conditions between LGBT and heterosexual groups, and therefore these data are not displayed.

With respect to health risk behaviors, LGBT when compared to heterosexuals, report a higher proportion of current smoking^a (14.7 percent), binge or heavy drinking^b (27.0 percent), and driving a motor vehicle after drinking alcohol (6.9 percent). LGBT reported a higher proportion of poor mental health problems^c (22.9 percent) and depressive disorders^d (34.1 percent) compared to similar health status measures among heterosexuals. Fewer LGBT people report a lack of health care coverage as compared to heterosexuals, however, LGBT report higher proportions of not having visited their personal doctor for healthcare needs due to cost (13.6 percent) or had a dental visit in the past year (31.6 percent) when compared to similar clinical preventive practices among heterosexuals.

Technical Notes: a) Current smoking is defined as an adult who reported having ever smoked at least 100 cigarettes (five packs) in their life and that they smoke cigarettes now, either every day or on some days; b) Binge or heavy drinking is defined as the consumption of five or more drinks per occasion (for males) or four or more drinks per occasion (for women) at least once in the previous month; c) Poor mental health is defined as adults reporting 14 or more days of poor mental health, which includes stress, depression, and problems with emotions during the past 30 days; d) Depressive disorder is defined as adults reporting ever being told by a doctor, nurse, or other health professional that they had a depressive disorder including depression, major depression, dysthymia, or minor depression.



*Figures prepared by the California Department of Public Health, Chronic Disease Surveillance and Research Branch.

BRFSS data do have limitations. Despite having combined five years of data, the sample size of LGBT was insufficient to explore LGBT sub-populations (i.e. lesbian, gay, bisexual, and other sexual orientation, and gender identity, or transgender). Also, health status outcomes are self-reported and therefore, subject to recall bias. In addition, the stigma or fear associated with identifying as LGBT potentially prevents respondents from answering truthfully. Despite these limitations, the inclusion of the SOGI questions on the BRFSS survey serves as an essential source of data to learn more about the health concerns and health disparities of LGBT. For more technical information, visit [California BRFSS](https://www.cdph.ca/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/BRFSS.aspx).

¹Gallup, Inc. "In U.S., Estimate of LGBT Population Rises to 4.5%" [Internet]. Gallup.com 2017 [cited 2021 Feb 16]: Available from: <https://news.gallup.com/poll/234863/estimate-lgbt-population-rises.aspx>

²U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Healthy People 2030. Available from: <https://health.gov/healthypeople/objectives-and-data/browse-objectives/lgbt>