

# Smoking and Smoking-Related Factors among Lesbian and Bisexual Women in Los Angeles County:

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## Problem

The gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (GLBT) community continues to face social discrimination as well as disparities in health care. Further, only limited attention has been focused upon this community in studying various health behaviors such as smoking.

## Objective

To study the relationship between sexual orientation and smoking and smoking-related health factors.

## Design and Methods

Biennial, population-based telephone health survey conducted in 1999 among adult women living in Los Angeles County.

SUDAAN was used to obtain proportions and standard errors while taking into account the sampling design. Two-way cross-tabulation analyses were conducted to examine the associations among sexual orientation, smoking, and smoking-related factors. Follow-up logistic regression analyses were conducted to determine whether sexual orientation had an independent contribution after controlling for race/ethnicity, age, and education.

## Variables of Interest

The independent variable of interest was sexual orientation: self-reported lesbian or bisexual women versus self-reported heterosexual women.

The dependent variables of interest were: smoking status, smoking frequency, exposure to secondhand smoke, heart disorder diagnosis, and asthma diagnosis.

## Results

Lesbian and bisexual women had significantly higher odds (in comparison with self-reported heterosexual women) of being current smokers, exposed to secondhand smoke outside the home, diagnosed with heart disorder, and diagnosed with asthma. Heterosexual and non-heterosexual groups were significantly different even after simultaneously controlling for race/ethnicity, age, and education. A trend towards significance was found for lesbian and bisexual women to have significantly higher odds of being a daily smoker and this difference was found to be significant after simultaneously controlling for race/ethnicity, age, and education.

## Conclusions

High rates of smoking, exposure to secondhand smoke outside the home, and tobacco-related health diagnoses indicate that tobacco-related interventions targeted to lesbian and bisexual women are urgently needed. Interventions must be tailored to meet the unique needs of GLBT smokers including: greater exposure to stress due to social discrimination, higher rates of depression, and being the focus of targeting by the tobacco industry through specific advertisements and sponsorships.



## Results of comparisons between lesbian/bisexual and heterosexual female adults living in Los Angeles County in 1999.

Dependent Variable	Lesbian/Bisexual % (95%CI)	Heterosexual % (95%CI)	Odds Ratio* OR (95%CI)	Adjusted Odds Ratio*† OR (95%CI)
Current smoking	34 (10)	15 (1)	3.02 (1.92, 4.76)	3.00 (1.83, 4.90)
Daily smoking	87 (11)	75 (4)	2.32 (0.92, 5.84)	3.09 (1.14, 8.40)
Secondhand Smoke Exposure Outside Home	28 (10)	12 (1)	2.85 (1.76, 4.60)	2.74 (1.69, 4.47)
Heart Disorder Diagnosis	16 (8)	5 (1)	3.61 (1.96, 6.66)	4.01 (2.16, 7.42)
Asthma Diagnosis	17 (9)	9 (1)	1.98 (1.10, 3.56)	1.92 (1.06, 3.47)

\* Reference category is the heterosexual group. † The logistic regression model assessing the independent contribution of sexual orientation for each dependent variable was adjusted for race/ethnicity, age, and education.

