

Health Access and Substance Use Disparities Among Massachusetts' Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Residents Related to Marital Status

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Background and Study Rationale

- Prior research on general population (heterosexual couples) shows health benefits of marriage (Coombs, 1991)
- Gaps in knowledge on impact of marriage on lesbians, gay men and bisexual men and women
- Legal marriage may have similar impacts for LGB people based on access to health care and other stabilizing effects

Hypotheses Regarding Disparities in Access to Care and Substance Use

- Lesbians and bisexual women are disproportionately affected compared to heterosexual counterparts
- Gay and bisexual men are disproportionately affected compared to heterosexual counterparts
- Marriage has a mitigating effect on disparities for both men and women.

BRFSS

- Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) (<http://www.cdc.gov/brfss/>)
 - Annual telephone survey of health conducted in 50 US states, DC, PR, and US Virgin Islands
 - CDC provides core survey; states can add additional questions
 - Stratified probability sample; adults ages 18 and up are eligible to participate

MA BRFSS Survey

- Beginning in 2001, participants ages 18-64 were asked:

Do you consider yourself to be:

- **Heterosexual or straight**
- **Homosexual or gay (if male), lesbian (if female)**
- **Bisexual**
- **Other**

Don't know responses and refusals are recorded by the phone interviewer

MA Sexual Orientation Identity 2001-2005

N = 32,237

■ Heterosexual/straight	92.7%
■ Lesbian or gay	1.8%
■ Bisexual	1.0%
■ Other	0.4%
■ Don't know	0.5%
■ Refused	3.6%

LGB 2.74% (95% CI 2.51, 2.98)

Marriage by Sexual Orientation Status by Year

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
	% Married	% Married	% Married	% Married	% Married
Hetero	57.51	57.39	57.16	58.59	57.86
LGB	11.87	3.73	4.72	18.23	23.15

Outcome Variables: Access to Care

- Health insurance (Yes/No) - “Do you have any kind of health care coverage, including health insurance, prepaid plans such as HMOs or government plans such as Medicare?”

Outcome Variables: Cigarette Use

- Current smoker (Yes/No) based on the question “Do you now smoke cigarettes every day, some days, or not at all?”

Outcome Variables: Drug User

- Current Drug User (Yes/No) based on use of the following drugs used within 30 days:
 - Marijuana,
 - Powdered cocaine, Crack cocaine
 - Heroin
 - Hallucinogens
 - MDMA/Ecstasy
 - Tranquilizers/Sedatives
 - Oxycontin

Health insurance: Are Lesbians and bisexual women more likely to be uninsured?

Multivariable*

	<u>OR</u>	<u>95% CI</u>
Straight	1	
Lesbian/Bi	1.62	(1.09, 2.39)

*adjusting for age, race/ethnicity and education

Health insurance: Does marriage matter?

- Adding marriage to the demographic variables in the multivariate analysis:

	<u>OR</u>	<u>95% CI</u>
Straight	1	
Lesbian/Bi	1.27	(0.85, 1.91)

Health insurance: Are gay and bisexual men more likely to be uninsured?

Multivariable*

	<u>OR</u>	<u>95% CI</u>
Straight	1	
Gay/Bi	1.77	(1.14, 2.76)

*adjusting for age, race/ethnicity and education

Health insurance: Does marriage matter?

- Adding marriage to the demographic variables in the multivariable analysis:

	<u>OR</u>	<u>95% CI</u>
Straight	1	
Gay/Bi	1.28	(0.80, 2.04)

Current smoking: Are Lesbians and bisexual women more likely to be smokers?

Multivariable*

	<u>OR</u>	<u>95% CI</u>
Straight	1	
Lesbian/Bi	1.42	(1.02, 1.99)

*adjusting for age, race/ethnicity and education

Current smoking: Does marriage matter?

- Adding marriage to the demographic variables in the multivariable analysis:

	<u>OR</u>	<u>95% CI</u>
Straight	1	
Lesbian/Bi	1.18	(0.85, 1.65)

Current smoking: Are gay and bisexual men more likely to be smokers?

Multivariable *

	<u>OR</u>	<u>95% CI</u>
Straight	1	
Gay/Bi	1.87	(1.30, 2.68)

*adjusting for age, race/ethnicity and education

Current smoking: Does marriage matter?

- Adding marriage to the demographic variables in the multivariable analysis:

	<u>OR</u>	<u>95% CI</u>
Straight	1	
Gay/Bi	1.38	(0.96, 2.00)

Current drug use: Are Lesbians and bisexual women more likely to be recent drug users?

Multivariable *

	<u>OR</u>	<u>95% CI</u>
Straight	1	
Lesbian/Bi	4.82	(3.11, 7.48)

*adjusting for age, race/ethnicity and education

Current drug use: Does marriage matter?

- Adding marriage to the demographic variables in the multivariable analysis:

	<u>OR</u>	<u>95% CI</u>
Straight	1	
Lesbian/Bi	3.36	(2.10, 5.38)

Current drug use: Are gay and bisexual men more likely to be recent drug users?

Multivariable *

	<u>OR</u>	<u>95% CI</u>
Straight	1	
Gay/Bi	2.84	(1.71, 4.71)

*adjusting for age, race/ethnicity and education

Current drug use: Does marriage matter?

- We added marriage to the demographic variables in the multivariable analysis:

	<u>OR</u>	<u>95% CI</u>
Straight	1	
Gay/Bi	1.63	(1.03, 2.58)

Summary

- Lesbians and bisexual women are more likely to lack health insurance, to smoke, and report recent drug use than their heterosexual counterparts
- Gay and bisexual men are more likely to lack health insurance, to smoke, and report recent drug use than their heterosexual counterparts

Summary

- Marriage tends to attenuate the differences, especially for health insurance and smoking
- Sexual orientation-related disparities are similar for men and women in the areas of health insurance and smoking
- Sexual orientation-related disparities in the area of current drug use appear to be greater for Lesbians and bisexual women than gay and bisexual men

Strengths

- Large household probability sample
- Measure of sexual orientation identity (vs. behavior or cohabitating same-sex partners)

Limitations

- Cross-sectional observational data
- Can't make causal claims from these analyses

Future Research

- Use natural experiment in Massachusetts and examine change in the point prevalence of outcomes between sexual orientation groups to see if change in prevalence coincides with legalization of same-sex marriage.

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