

The Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) is an annual statewide telephone survey of adults developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and administered by the New York State Department of Health. The BRFSS is designed to provide information on behaviors, risk factors, and utilization of preventive services related to the leading causes of chronic and infectious diseases, disability, injury, and death among the noninstitutionalized, civilian population aged 18 years and older.

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity: Selected Demographics and Health Indicators

New York State Adults, 2014-2016

Introduction and Key Findings

Approximately 3.5% of United States adults identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual and 0.3% of adults identify as transgender.¹ Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) is an umbrella term which includes several groups: lesbian (homosexual woman), gay (homosexual man or woman), bisexual (person attracted to both genders), and transgender (person who identifies their gender as different from their sex assigned at birth).² While defining the size and distribution of the LGBT population can be challenging due to the heterogeneity of LGBT groups and overlap between identity, behavior, and attraction, collecting information on sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) (see Appendix) is a key step towards understanding LGBT populations and their health needs. SOGI questions were first asked on the NYS BRFSS in 2014. In this report we use pooled BRFSS data from 2014 through 2016 to estimate the size, demographics, and select chronic disease health indicators for the LGBT population in New York. Our analyses also explore LGBT sub-populations; i.e., sexual minorities, defined as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or other sexual orientation (LGBO), and gender minorities, defined as transgender.

The New York State Department of Health is committed to reducing the unique health disparities experienced by sexual and gender minorities. LGBT individuals experience higher rates of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and other sexually transmitted infections, substance abuse, unhealthy weight control/perception, smoking, depression and anxiety, and violence victimization.³ The many benefits of addressing health concerns and reducing disparities include reductions in disease transmission and progression; increased mental and physical well-being; reduced health care costs; and, increased longevity.⁴

Key Findings

In New York, an estimated 798,800 adults, or 5.1% of the state's adult population, identify as LGBT (Table 1). Subpopulation analyses indicate that 4.9% of adults identify as LGBO and 0.6% identify as transgender (Table 1, Figure 1). Bisexual female adults and males who identify as gay account for the largest proportion of sexual minorities in the state. Demographic indicators for the LGBO and transgender populations are presented in Table 2. Although those who identify as LGBO represent an estimated 4.9% of the adult population, they represent a larger segment of certain populations including those who are younger (below the age of 34), without a high school education, earning less than \$25,000, currently unemployed, and living with a disability. Higher percentages of LGBO adults live in New York City compared to the rest of the state. Demographic patterns for the transgender adult population are similar to those observed for LGBO adults.

Health indicators for the LGBO and transgender populations are presented in Table 3 and Figure 2. Health risk behaviors that are more common among LGBO adults when compared to the general population include smoking (19.3%), binge or heavy drinking (22.6%), and sugar-sweetened beverage consumption (23.9%). Health conditions, such as having ever been diagnosed with a depressive disorder (31.1%) and self-reported poor mental health (17.9%), defined as reported problems with stress, depression, or emotions on at least 14 of the previous 30 days are also more common among LGBO adults. Findings by health indicators for transgender adults are similar to those observed for LGBO adults.

BRFSS Questions

- Do you consider yourself to be (1) Straight; (2) Lesbian or gay; (3) Bisexual?
- Do you consider yourself to be transgender?

Note: Respondent can answer with either the number or the text/word. Definition of transgender is provided if asked by participant.

Table 1. Percent of Adults Who Self-Identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Other Sexual Orientation, or Transgender in NYS, BRFSS 2014-2016*

		Percent	95% CI	Estimated Weighted N
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Other Sexual Orientation, Transgender (LGBT)**		5.1	(4.7-5.5)	798,800
Sexual Orientation	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Other Sexual Orientation (LGBO)	4.9	(4.6-5.3)	770,300
	Lesbian or Gay	2.0	(1.8-2.2)	306,400
	Female	0.6	(0.5-0.8)	99,500
	Male	1.3	(1.1-1.5)	206,800
	Bisexual	2.3	(2.1-2.6)	363,000
	Female	1.5	(1.3-1.8)	238,100
	Male	0.8	(0.6-1.0)	124,800
	Other Sexual Orientation	0.6	(0.5-0.8)	101,000
Gender Identity	Transgender	0.6	(0.4-0.7)	90,300

* Includes pooled BRFSS survey data years 2014-2016. **Since the LGBO groups and Transgender groups overlap, the population estimates for these two groups do not add to the population estimate for LGBT.

Figure 1. Estimated Number of Adults Who Self-Identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Other Sexual Orientation, or Transgender in NYS, BRFSS 2014-2016*



* Includes pooled BRFSS survey data years 2014-2016.

Table 2. Percent of Adults Who Self-Identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Other Sexual Orientation, or Transgender in NYS by Demographic Indicators, BRFSS 2014-2016*

	LGBO**		Transgender	
	Percent who Identify as LGBO	95% CI	Percent who Identify as Transgender	95% CI
New York State [n=53,412]	4.9	(4.6-5.3)	0.6	(0.4-0.7)
Region				
Rest of State (NYS excluding NYC)	4.0	(3.6-4.5)	0.4	(0.3-0.6)
New York City	6.3	(5.6-7.0)	0.8	(0.5-1.1)
Sex				
Male	5.0	(4.5-5.6)	0.7	(0.4-0.9)
Female	4.9	(4.3-5.4)	0.5	(0.3-0.7)
Race/Ethnicity				
White/Non-Hispanic	4.2	(3.8-4.7)	0.4	(0.3-0.5)
Black/Non-Hispanic	5.6	(4.4-6.8)	0.7	(0.3-1.0)
Hispanic	6.4	(5.3-7.5)	0.9	(0.4-1.4)
Other Race or Multiracial/Non-Hispanic	6.2	(4.5-7.8)	- -	- -
Age				
18-24 Years Old	8.8	(7.0-10.6)	0.9	(0.4-1.4)
25-34	6.8	(5.7-7.9)	0.6	(0.3-0.9)
35-44	4.9	(3.9-5.9)	0.6	(0.3-1.0)
45-54	4.9	(4.1-5.7)	0.3	(1.8-0.5)
55-64	3.8	(3.2-4.5)	0.7	(0.3-1.1)
65+	2.3	(1.9-2.7)	0.5	(0.2-0.7)
Educational Attainment				
Less than High School	7.3	(5.7-8.9)	1.2	(0.6-1.8)
High School or GED	4.4	(3.7-5.1)	0.9	(0.6-1.2)
Some College	4.5	(3.8-5.2)	0.3	(0.1-0.4)
College Graduate	5.0	(4.4-5.5)	0.3	(0.2-0.5)
Annual Household Income				
Less than \$25,000	6.5	(5.6-7.4)	0.9	(0.6-1.3)
\$25,000 - 49,999	4.6	(3.8-5.3)	0.7	(0.4-1.1)
\$50,000 and greater	4.1	(3.6-4.5)	0.3	(0.2-0.5)
Missing	5.8	(4.5-7.1)	0.6	(0.3-0.9)
Employment Status				
Employed/Self-Employed	4.7	(4.2-5.1)	0.5	(0.4-0.7)
Unemployed	7.3	(5.5-9.2)	- -	- -
Not in Labor Force	4.8	(4.2-5.4)	0.6	(0.4-0.9)
Disability Status^a				
Yes	6.6	(5.7-7.5)	1.0	(0.6-1.4)
No	4.5	(4.1-4.9)	0.5	(0.3-0.6)

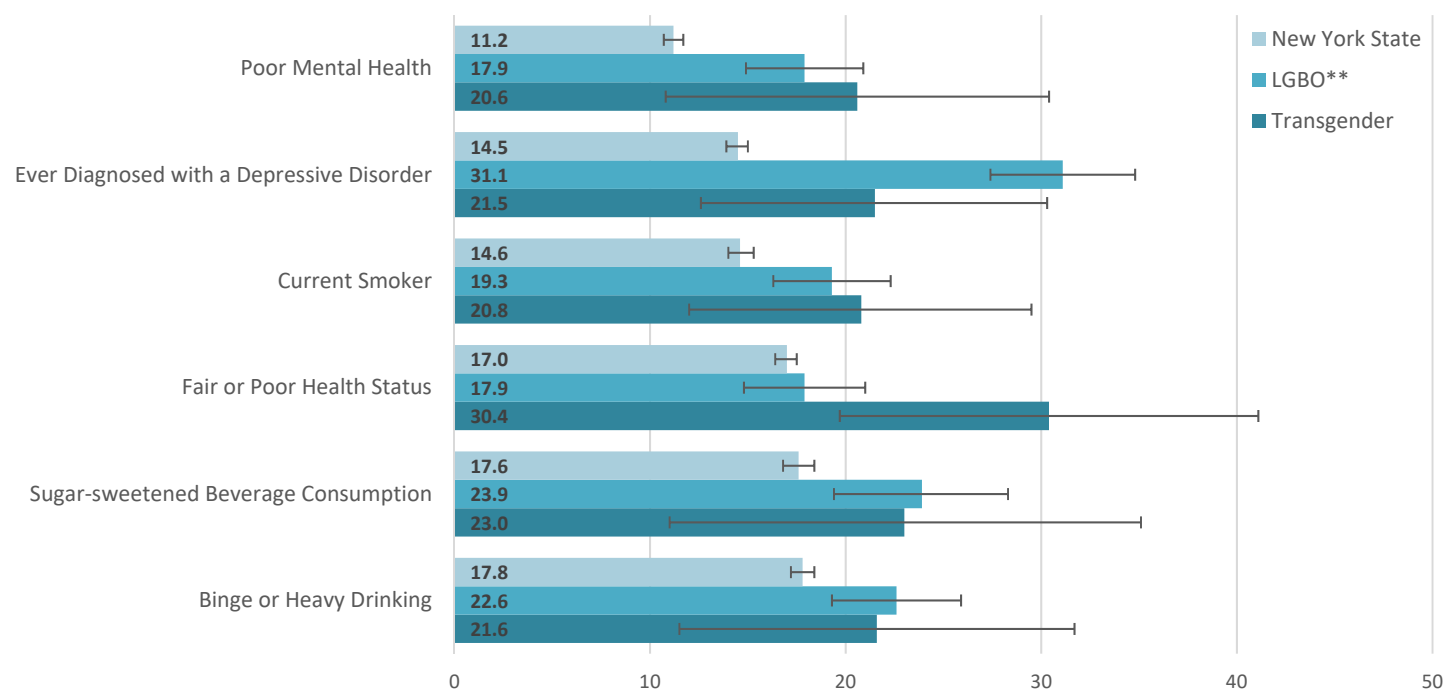
Technical Notes: Rows are suppressed when there are less than 50 observations, a confidence interval with a half-width or greater than 10, or when the relative standard error is greater than 0.30. Missing category included because more than 10% of the sample did not report income. * Includes pooled BRFSS survey data years 2014-2016. ** LGBO is an acronym used to reference adults who self-identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, or Other Sexual Orientation. a) Living with any disability is defined as having at least one type of a disability (cognitive, ambulatory, vision, self-care, or independent living).

Table 3. Prevalence of Select Health Indicators among Adults Who Self-Identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Other Sexual Orientation, or Transgender in NYS, BRFSS 2014-2016*

Health Risk Behaviors								
	Current Smoker ^a		Binge or Heavy Drinking ^b		Sugar-sweetened Beverage Consumption 1+ Times per Day		No Leisure Time Physical Activity ^c	
	Percent	95% CI	Percent	95% CI	Percent	95% CI	Percent	95% CI
NYS	14.6	(14.0-15.2)	17.8	(17.2-18.4)	17.6	(16.8-18.4)	27.1	(26.4-27.8)
LGBO**	19.3	(16.3-22.3)	22.6	(19.3-25.9)	23.9	(19.4-28.3)	25.1	(21.6-28.7)
Transgender	20.8	(12.0-29.5)	21.6	(11.5-31.7)	23.0	(11.0-35.1)	29.5	(19.7-39.2)
Health Conditions								
	Fair or Poor Self- Assessed Health		Obese ^d		Poor Mental Health ^e		Ever Diagnosed with a Depressive Disorder ^f	
	Percent	95% CI	Percent	95% CI	Percent	95% CI	Percent	95% CI
NYS	17.0	(16.4-17.5)	25.9	(25.2-26.5)	11.2	(10.7-11.7)	14.5	(13.9-15.0)
LGBO**	17.9	(14.8-21.0)	28.5	(24.9-32.1)	17.9	(14.9-20.9)	31.1	(27.4-34.8)
Transgender	30.4	(19.7-41.1)	28.5	(18.2-38.7)	20.6	(10.8-30.4)	21.5	(12.6-30.3)
Health Care Indicators								
	No Personal Doctor or Health Care Provider			No Health Insurance				
	Percent	95% CI		Percent	95% CI			
NYS	17.4	(16.8-18.0)		13.2	(12.5-13.8)			
LGBO**	19.8	(16.4-23.1)		15.3	(12.2-18.5)			
Transgender	27.3	(15.9-38.7)		21.3	(11.2-31.3)			

Technical Notes: Rows are suppressed when there are less than 50 observations, a confidence interval with a half-width or greater than 10, or when the relative standard error is greater than 0.30. * Includes pooled BRFSS survey data years 2014-2016. ** LGBO is an acronym used to reference adults who self-identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, or Other Sexual Orientation. a) Current smoker is defined as an adult who has smoked at least 100 cigarettes in their lifetime and currently smokes on at least some days. b) Binge drinking is defined as consuming four or more drinks for women and five or more drinks for men on a single occasion in the past month and heavy drinking is defined as eight or more drinks per week for women and fifteen or more drinks per week for men. c) No leisure time physical activity is defined as having no regular physical activity, other than a regular job, in the past 30 days. d) Obese is defined as having a body mass index of 30 kg/m² and higher. e) Poor mental health is defined as reported problems with stress, depression, or emotions on at least 14 of the previous 30 days. f) A depressive disorder includes depression, major depression, dysthymia, or minor depression.

Figure 2. Prevalence of Select Health Indicators among Adults Who Self-Identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Other Sexual Orientation, or Transgender in NYS, BRFSS 2014-2016*



* Includes pooled BRFSS survey data years 2014-2016. ** LGBO is an acronym used to reference adults who self-identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, or Other Sexual Orientation.

Appendix: Definitions of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity⁵

Sexual orientation: How a person characterizes their emotional and sexual attraction to others.

Gender identity: A person's inner sense of being a boy/man/male, girl/woman/female, another gender, or no gender.

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Program Contributors

New York State Department of Health
Bureau of Chronic Disease Evaluation and Research, Center for Community Health
Office of Program Evaluation and Research, AIDS Institute
LGBT Health and Human Services Unit, AIDS Institute

Order Information

Copies may be obtained by contacting:

BRFSS Coordinator
New York State Department of Health
Bureau of Chronic Disease Evaluation and Research
Empire State Plaza, Rm. 1070
Corning Tower
Albany, NY 12237-0679

Or by phone or electronic mail:

(518) 473-0673

or

BRFSS@health.ny.gov

or

www.health.ny.gov