



LESBIAN

COMMUNITY HEALTH PROFILE

2022



A BOLDER HEALTHIER BIRMINGHAM

OVERVIEW

THE TERM LESBIAN IS USED TO REFER TO A WOMAN WHO HAS A ROMANTIC AND/OR SEXUAL ORIENTATION



TOWARDS WOMEN Some non-binary people may also identify with this term

Similar to other communities of identity, lesbian women often share

CULTURAL REFERENCES, APPEARANCE, SPACES, LITERATURE, ART AND LANGUAGE



1.1% OF WOMEN IN THE UK IDENTIFIED AS LESBIAN/GAY IN 2019 (ONS)

1.2% OF WOMEN IN THE WEST MIDLANDS IDENTIFIED AS LESBIAN/GAY (ONS)

INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION ON HUMAN RIGHTS



HUMAN RIGHTS ARE FOR EVERYONE, WITHOUT EXCEPTION: lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex (LGBTI) people are just as entitled to protection, respect and fulfilment of their human rights as everyone else, including protection from discrimination, violence and torture'

There are constitutional protections for lesbians in **11 COUNTRIES AROUND THE WORLD AND A FURTHER**

57 HAVE BROAD PROTECTIONS IN PLACE
In 2019 same-sex sexual activity remained criminalised in 72 countries, while 11 countries still had the death penalty for same-sex activities



UK LEGISLATION

In the UK lesbians are protected against discrimination under the **EQUALITIES ACT 2010**

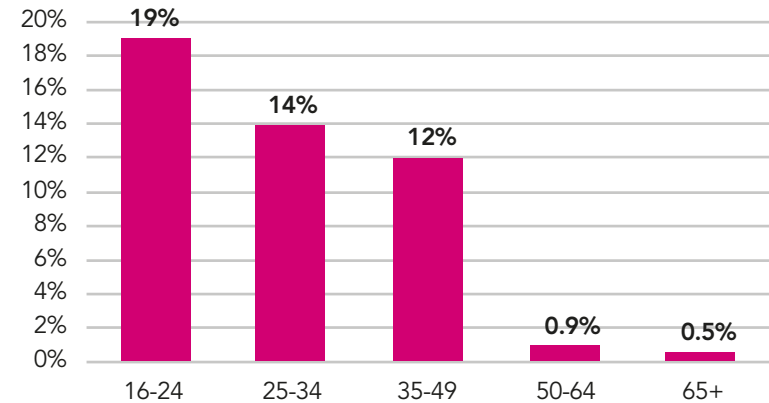


WOMEN WHO WERE YOUNGER AND FROM WHITE ETHNIC COMMUNITIES WERE MORE LIKELY TO SELF-IDENTIFY AS LESBIAN IN THE UK

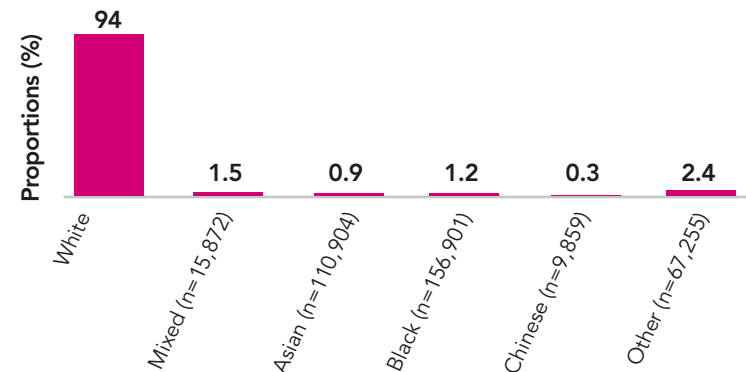
This may reflect the historical stigma and criminalisation of same sex relationships in the UK affecting older women's perceptions of safety around coming out as lesbian and the continued discrimination in some countries which impacts on communities here



Office for National Statistics: The percentages of those who identify as gay/lesbian amongst various age groups within the UK (2019)



Office for National Statistics: The proportions of those who identify as lesbian amongst different ethnic groups



MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS

COMPARED TO HETEROSEXUAL WOMEN, THERE WAS A

38%



higher chance of poor mental health (anxiety or depression) in lesbian women

2x RATES OF SELF-HARM AMONGST LESBIAN WOMEN COMPARED TO THE GENERAL POPULATION AND GAY MEN

ALCOHOL % REGIONAL PROBLEMS WITH ALCOHOL INTAKE
25-37% LESBIAN **7%** ALL ADULTS IN WEST MIDLANDS



DRUG USE **79%** of lesbians reported having ever used drugs compared to heterosexual women **61%**

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE EXPERIENCED

35% Trans **35%** Bisexual **33%** Lesbian **15%** Gay Men

45% OF LESBIANS REPORTED TO BE CIGARETTE SMOKERS
 SIMILAR TO GAY MEN **45%**
 BUT HIGHER THAN HETEROSEXUAL WOMEN **36%**



HEALTHY AND AFFORDABLE FOOD

EATING DISORDERS Around **1 in 5** lesbian and bisexual women had an eating disorder compared to **1 in 20** heterosexual women



HEALTHY BODYWEIGHT

#1 Bisexual women **62%**
#2 Heterosexual women **54%**
#3 Lesbian women **49%**

OBESITY Likelihood of a lesbian woman being obese was around

1.5-2x MORE LIKELY THAN A HETEROSEXUAL WOMAN



DIET

Lesbians were more likely than heterosexuals to have ever eaten red meat in the previous year.
 Lesbians were more likely to have reported a history of weight cycling (losing 10 pounds more than once) than heterosexual women (**43% vs 34%**)



ACTIVE AT EVERY AGE & ABILITY

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY MORE THAN 150 MINS / WEEK (PHE, 2018)

#1 Bisexual women **70%**
#2 Heterosexual women **60%**
#3 Lesbian women **51%**

39% of lesbian and bisexual women said that they exercised on most days, HIGHER THAN HETEROSEXUALS (Health Survey for England) **28%**

LESBIANS HAVE BEEN FOUND TO BE MORE LIKELY TO OWN THEIR OWN BICYCLE than gay men or bisexuals



LESBIAN AND BISEXUAL WOMEN AGED 40 AND OVER WERE MORE LIKELY TO

REPORT THAT THEY EXERCISED WEEKLY than their heterosexual counterparts



LESBIAN WOMEN HAVE BEEN SHOWN TO BE AROUND **34%** more likely to partake in physical activity compared to heterosexual women

GETTING THE BEST START IN LIFE

LESBIAN WOMEN FACE MORE CHALLENGES IN BECOMING PARENTS THAN HETEROSEXUAL WOMEN



80% LESS LIKELY TO HAVE EVER BEEN PREGNANT COMPARED TO HETEROSEXUAL WOMEN

However lesbian & bisexual young women have a higher risk of teenage conception than heterosexual women

IVF



Lesbian women still face barriers to accessing IVF treatment despite NICE setting out guidelines for the NHS that includes same-sex partners

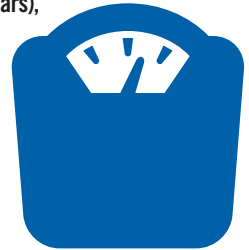
THERE WERE HIGHER RATES OF POLYCYSTIC OVARY SYNDROME CAUSING INFERTILITY IN LESBIAN WOMEN compared to heterosexual women



WEIGHT STATUS OF SCHOOL PUPILS

In an examination of BMI trajectories from adolescence to adulthood (11 years to 34 years),

LESBIAN WOMEN HAD A NEARLY A TWO-FOLD RISK OF DEVELOPING OBESITY



after accounting, for other known risk factors

WORKING AND LEARNING WELL

LEVEL OF QUALIFICATION

There is weak evidence that lesbian women

ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE EDUCATED TO A HIGHER LEVEL COMPARED TO HETEROSEXUAL WOMEN



7.1% Within the UK, lesbian women are paid 7.1% more than heterosexual women

Women in same-sex households were more likely to be in the highest occupation level (professional, administration or managerial employees) **59%** COMPARED TO HETEROSEXUAL WOMEN 37%



25% OF LESBIANS REPORTED 'FAIR TO POOR HEALTH' a higher proportion compared to heterosexual women (21%)

NEUROLOGICAL CONDITIONS

THERE WAS A HIGHER RATE OF SELF-REPORTED PREVALENCE OF LONG-TERM NEUROLOGICAL CONDITIONS IN LESBIANS **2.9%** COMPARED TO HETEROSEXUAL WOMEN 1.9%

PROTECT AND DETECT

CERVICAL CANCER SCREENING

The regular attendance for cervical screening for lesbian women in the West Midlands was between **48-55%** LOWER THAN THE AVERAGE RATES OF SCREENING IN THE GENERAL POPULATION (82% OF WOMEN 25-64)

LESBIANS WERE LESS LIKELY to report that they were satisfied with the cancer care they received from a regular provider than a heterosexual woman



SEXUAL HEALTH % OF POPULATION WHO HAVE NEVER VISITED A SEXUAL HEALTH CLINIC

78% Lesbians
53% All Bisexuals
27% Gay Men



21% of lesbians with HPV had no sexual contact with men, dispelling myths that HPV is only passed through sex with men

AGEING AND DYING WELL

BODYWEIGHT AND CVD LESBIAN WOMEN HAVE BEEN FOUND TO HAVE HIGHER RATES OF OBESITY AND CENTRAL ADIPOSITY which increases the risk of developing CVD

HYPERTENSION

LESBIAN WOMEN WERE less likely to have hypertension compared to heterosexual women **21%**



ASTHMA

Prevalence of asthma by sexuality **11%** Heterosexual women
14% Bisexual women
15% Lesbian women



CANCER EVIDENCE FROM THE UK SHOWS THAT THERE MAY BE A HIGHER PREVALENCE

of certain types of cancer among lesbian and bisexual women; these include mesothelioma, oro-pharyngeal cancer, stomach cancer and endometrial cancer

1 IN 12 LESBIAN AND BISEXUAL WOMEN aged between 50 and 79 have been diagnosed with breast cancer, compared to

1 IN 20 WOMEN IN THE GENERAL POPULATION

DEMENTIA LESBIAN WOMEN WITH DEMENTIA WORK TO RESIST A 'DOUBLE STIGMA'

of their sexuality and dementia and there is a need for better inclusive care for older lesbians



END OF LIFE Limited information about end of life care for older lesbians. Some research suggests that end of life support is NOT USUALLY LGBT SPECIFIC



CLOSING THE GAPS

LESBIAN WOMEN WERE MORE LIKELY TO REPORT **NO TRUST OR CONFIDENCE IN THE DOCTOR**



and were less likely than a heterosexual woman to have visited the GP in the last 3 months

DISCRIMINATION

1 in 10 said that a healthcare worker ignored them when they did 'come out'

AND ONLY THREE IN TEN SAID THAT HEALTHCARE WORKERS DID NOT MAKE INAPPROPRIATE COMMENTS WHEN THEY CAME OUT

LESBIAN WOMEN HAVE CITED AN ISSUE IN ACCESSING AND USING HEALTHCARE SERVICES WHEN THE PRACTITIONER HAS BELIEFS ON SAME-SEX MARRIAGE OR RELATIONSHIPS



NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES

50%



OF LESBIAN WOMEN HAVE HAD NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES IN THE HEALTH SECTOR IN THE LAST YEAR (STONEWALL, 2008)

GREEN AND SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

There is little information on the impact that lesbian women have on

CONTRIBUTING TO A GREEN AND SUSTAINABLE FUTURE



MITIGATING THE IMPACT OF COVID

STUDENTS Lesbian **78%**

% of students who felt like their health was worsened due to COVID-19



Bisexuals **74%**

Gay men **71%**

Non-LGBT+ **49%**

Research demonstrates that during COVID-19 the coping mechanisms in response to stress adopted by some lesbians can be unhealthy,



SUCH AS BINGE EATING AND SELF-HARMING

CONCERNS



WORRIED ABOUT SICKNESS OF FAMILY



WELL-BEING



SEEING FRIENDS

The thematic areas that the report covers are:

Theme	Topic Areas
Getting the Best Start in Life	Prevalence and general information, infant mortality and live births, childhood vaccinations, screening programmes, childhood obesity, child poverty, school readiness, school exclusions, bullying, maternal health, other childhood information
Mental Health Balance	Mental Health, Alcohol, smoking, drug use, domestic violence, hate crimes and discrimination
Healthy and Affordable food	Diet and Obesity
Active at Every Age and Ability	Physical Activity
Working and Learning Well	Education, economic activity, housing, general health, long-standing health impairment, illness or disability
Protect and detect	Cancer screening, vaccination programmes, sexual health
Ageing Well and Dying Well	Diabetes, cardiovascular disease, COPD, hypertension, cancer, dementia, end of life
Contributing to a green and sustainable future	Climate change
Mitigating the legacy of COVID-19	Mental health, challenges with COVID-19