



# COMMUNITY HEALTH PROFILES **2022**

Birmingham Public Health Division  
September 2022

A BOLDER HEALTHIER BIRMINGHAM

# Public Health Evidence Reports

## 1. Statutory Reports – required by law

### Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

- This is a summary of the health and wellbeing of the people in Birmingham and what can affect their health. This report is refreshed every other year.
- Shows the inequalities at a high level across the city.
- Uses data from across the Council and public sector.

### Annual Director of Public Health Report

- Annual independent report of the Director of Public Health on a specific topic/focus area.

# Public Health Evidence Reports

## 2. Elective Evidence Reports

### Deep Dive Needs Assessments

- Structured needs assessments into a specific area/topic/community
- Brings together published and grey literature, service data and qualitative data from community insight
- Makes recommendations for action

### Community Health Profiles

- Desk top analysis of published evidence and grey literature and population survey data.
- Snapshot of inequalities.

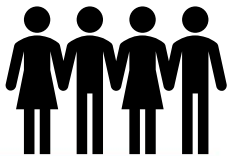


### Topic Based Commissions

- Evolving methodology using evidence collation with active community collaboration to focus on creating evidence-based solutions.

# The Community Health Profiles

- Birmingham has an ambition for a **bolder healthier city**, becoming a city in which, every citizen can live a healthy enjoyable life.
- The Community Health Profiles help us understand the gaps (health inequalities) in achieving this ambition in different communities.
- The Profiles describe the health inequalities of a specific community of identity, interest or experience.
- Setting out the differences in need shown by the evidence can help the Council, its partners and communities take action to close the gaps and improve the health of people in Birmingham.
- The Community Health Profiles will be published on the Council's website as resources to support greater understanding and awareness of the issues affecting different communities in our city.
- We aim to refresh them every 5-8 years depending on the data availability.



# Evidence Report Forward Plan

## Community Health Profiles

- Sikh – (Sept 2021)
- Bangladeshi - (Sept 2021)
- Muslim
- **Lesbian** ←
- Trans
- d/Deaf & Hearing Loss
- Sight Loss
- Nigerian
- Indian
- Caribbean Islands  
Commonwealth States
- Somali
- Kenyan
- Pakistani

## Deep Dive Reports

- Veterans (published)
- End of Life (published)
- Learning Disabilities
- Dual Diagnosis
- Mobility Impairment
- Sensory Impairment

## Commissions

- Birmingham Poverty Truth Commission – focus on Housing issues
- Birmingham & Lewisham African & Caribbean Health Inequalities Review

# Community Health Profiles aim to...



To find and review the physical health, mental health, lifestyle behavioural and wider determinants (social and economic factors) that exist in health in a specific community.



To collect and present this information using the 10 key priority areas identified in the Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Birmingham - Creating a Bolder Healthier City.



To engage with the local communities on the evidence found and highlight the opportunities to address inequalities.



To promote the use of these summaries for Local Authority and wider system use for community and service development.

# Lesbian Community Health and Wellbeing Themes

Getting the Best Start in Life

Mental Wellness and Balance

Healthy and Affordable Food

Active at Every Age and Ability

Working and Learning Well

Protect and Detect

Ageing and Dying Well

Closing the Gaps

Green and Sustainable Future

Mitigating the Legacy of COVID-19

# Methodology

- Academic literature and data: PubMed, ONS, Census 2011, PHE, Stonewall, LGBT Foundation, and Birmingham LGBT
- Grey literature: national, voluntary and community reports, PHE and NHS Digital, Google Scholar, and LGBT/lesbian specific organisations
- Example search terms: 'lesbian(s)' and 'statistics' or 'prevalence' and 'world' or 'global' or 'UK' and 'Birmingham' and 'employment' or 'education etc.



# Limitations of the Findings

- Population data used is from the 2011 Census and is likely to have changed. Conclusions on populations must therefore be interpreted with caution.
- There were limitations in data collection, therefore limited evidence to fully understand the experience of the lesbian population in the context of their health and wellbeing.
- Existing research often does not disaggregate findings between the specific experiences of lesbians, gay men and bisexual men and women.

# Sharing Community Health Profiles

- Written report and PowerPoint slide set
- Published on the BCC Communities webpage:

[Lesbian community health profile | Community health profiles | Birmingham City Council](#)

- YouTube highlights video
- Webinars for lesbian and trans community and wider partners



# COMMUNITY HEALTH PROFILES **2022**

Lesbian Profile

Weblink: [Lesbian community health profile | Community health profiles | Birmingham City Council](#)

A BOLDER HEALTHIER BIRMINGHAM

# Overview of Lesbian Community

- According to Stonewall, a lesbian refers to a woman who has a romantic and/or sexual orientation towards women. Some people who identify as non-binary may also identify themselves as lesbian.<sup>[3]</sup>
- Younger people (aged 16 to 24) were most likely to identify as lesbian and bisexual, making up the highest proportion of the community in the UK (**37%**).<sup>[2]</sup>
- Out & about survey suggests that lesbians make up approximately **31%** of the LGBT+ population in Birmingham.<sup>[4]</sup>
- The lesbian community is protected in law by the Equality Act (2010).<sup>[5]</sup>

Globally estimated that 1% of women identify as lesbian, gay or homosexual<sup>[1]</sup>.



Est. 370,000 people in the UK who identify as lesbian.<sup>[2]</sup>



Est. 4,000-14,000 people living in Birmingham identify as lesbian.<sup>[2]</sup>

# Overview of Inequalities

Higher rates of poor mental health

Increased risk of substance misuse, smoking and alcohol consumption

Increased risk of obesity

Lower rates of cervical cancer screening

More likely to report no confidence in doctors

Increased risk of eating disorders and self harming behaviour


# Getting the Best Start in Life

- Lesbians are the least likely to have adopted (**1.1%**) a child, compared to gay men and all bisexuals (1.9%) and all trans people (4.1%).<sup>[4]</sup>
- A total of 29,465 babies were born in Birmingham between March 2019 and October 2021, 45 (**0.2%**) of which were born from lesbian mothers.<sup>[6]</sup>
- Lesbians are more likely than heterosexual women to have oligomenorrhea/amenorrhea, acne, hirsutism, and polycystic ovary syndrome (**38% vs 14%**).<sup>[7]</sup>
- Lesbians are more likely to undergo IVF than heterosexual women but face more barriers:

## Barriers to IVF<sup>[4]</sup>




# Getting the Best Start in Life (cont.)




- **45%** of lesbian, gay, bi and trans pupils are bullied for being LGBT at school according to Stonewall school report.<sup>[8]</sup>




- Lesbian high school students were **1.9 times** more likely to be overweight compared to their heterosexual counterparts.<sup>[9]</sup>



- Depressive symptoms are higher amongst sexual-minority adolescent females (**66%**) than sexual-minority adolescent males (34%) and heterosexual females (52%).<sup>[10]</sup>



- Prevalence of self-harm is higher amongst sexual-minority adolescent females (**67%**) than sexual-minority adolescent males (33%) and heterosexual females (56%).<sup>[10]</sup>



- Limited data on childhood poverty and educational attainment for lesbian youth or children to lesbian parents.



# Mental Health and Wellbeing

- Public Health England reports **38%** higher rates of poor mental health (anxiety and depression) in lesbians compared to heterosexual women.<sup>[11]</sup>
- **2 in 5** lesbians have experienced negative or mixed reactions from mental healthcare professionals.<sup>[12]</sup>
- Problems with alcohol intake among lesbians from the West Midlands (**25-37%**) were higher than the regional average for all adults aged 16+ (7%).<sup>[13]</sup>
- More lesbians (**79%**) reported having ever used drugs compared to heterosexual women (61%).<sup>[14]</sup>
- Lesbians are more likely to have experience a hate crime in the last year due to their sexual orientation (**21%**) than other LGB people.<sup>[15]</sup>





# Healthy and Affordable Food

- Around **1 in 5** lesbian and bisexual women have an eating disorder (1 in 20 heterosexual women).<sup>[11]</sup>
- Fewer lesbians (**49%**) are at a healthy bodyweight compared to heterosexual women (54%) and bisexual women (62%).<sup>[11]</sup>
- Lesbians are around **1.5 to 2 times** more likely to be obese than heterosexual women.<sup>[16,17,18]</sup>

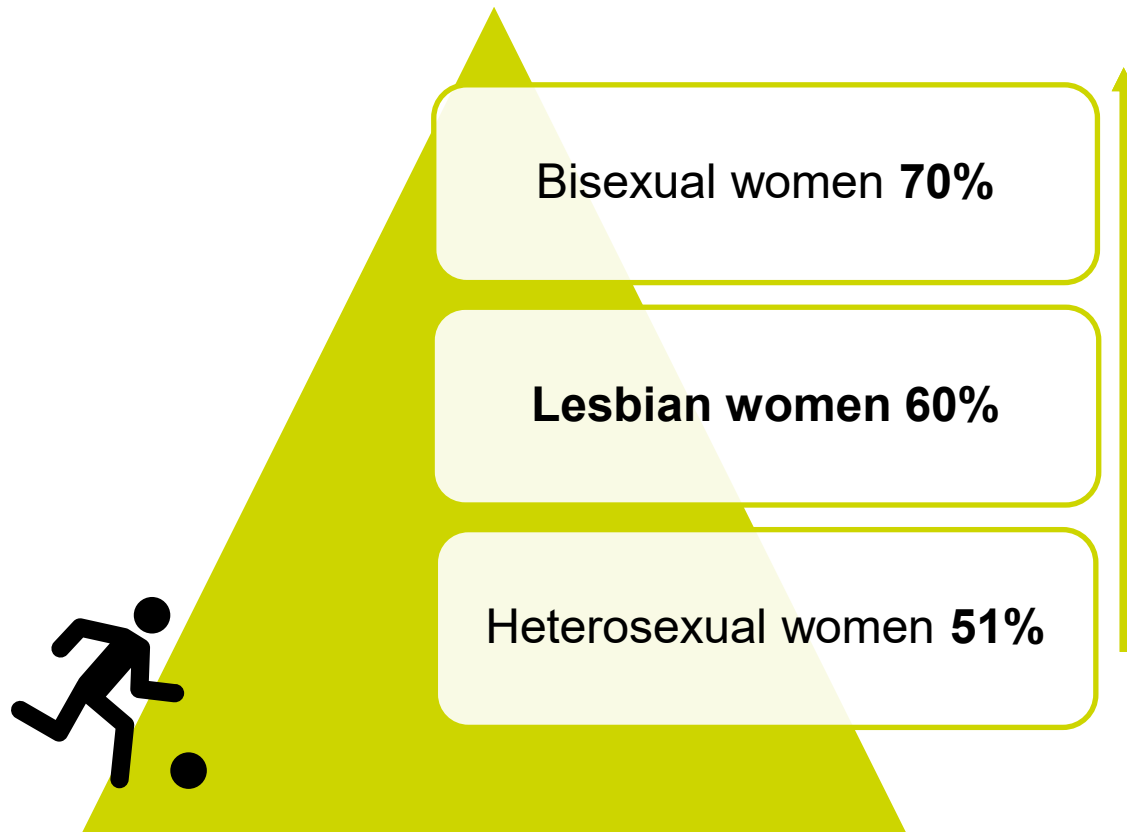


## Research Limitations

- Limited evidence to understand healthy eating knowledge amongst lesbians.
- Lack of information as to why lesbians are more likely to have higher body weight.
- Small number of studies looking at lesbian diet and eating habits.

# Active at Every Age and Ability

Physically Active (>150 minutes/week)



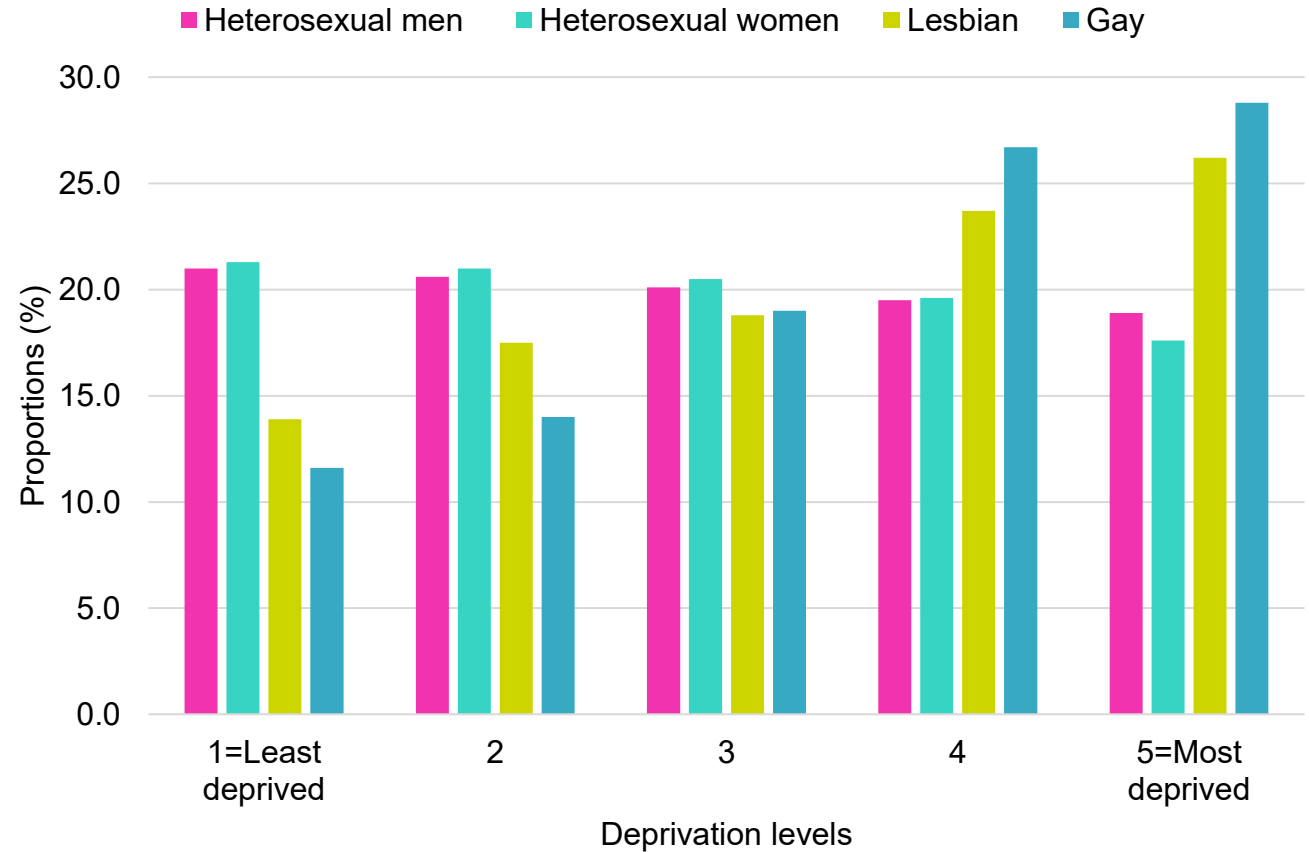
- Rates of physical inactivity (<30 minutes/week) are lower in lesbians (**21%**) than heterosexual women (**32%**).<sup>[11]</sup>
- **39%** of lesbian and bisexual women said they exercised on most days compared to 28% of heterosexual women.<sup>[16]</sup>
- Evidence to suggest lesbians are more active than heterosexual counterparts, but limited information on the barriers and facilitators to physical activity.

# Working and Learning Well

## Employment and Education

- **67%** of lesbians cited the highest level of qualification as 'Degree or Equivalent'.<sup>[4]</sup>
- Employment rates amongst lesbians ranges from **15% to 17%** higher than heterosexual women.<sup>[19,20]</sup>
- Lesbians have around **5% lower chance** of being interviewed than heterosexual women.<sup>[19]</sup>

## Deprivation Amongst Lesbian Community<sup>[21]</sup>



# Protect and Detect

- Lesbians are **less likely** to attend cancer screenings including the Pap smears when compared to heterosexual women, despite having similar rates of cervical abnormality.<sup>[22]</sup>
- **35%** of LGB women think they don't need a test because of their sexuality while **38%** did not think it was important.<sup>[23]</sup>
- **61%** of LGB women had been told by a health professional, family or friends that a test was unnecessary due to their sexual orientation.<sup>[23]</sup>
- **37%** of lesbians, compared to 69% of heterosexual women, thought that appropriate attitudes of healthcare professionals contributed to a good experience of breast screening.<sup>[13,24]</sup>

## Barriers to Accessing Screening<sup>[23]</sup>



Stigma around sexual orientation in healthcare

Fear of being discriminated

Negative experiences through heteronormative questioning

Wrong perceptions on the need for screenings by healthcare professionals

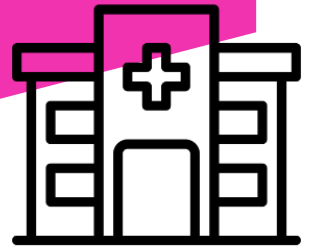
# Protect and Detect

78% of lesbians reported never visiting a sexual health clinic; this is a larger proportion compared to trans people (75%), bisexuals (53%) and gay men (27%).<sup>[4]</sup>



Ethnic minority lesbians are **more likely** to access services than ethnic minority bisexual women, according to the National LGBT survey.<sup>[12]</sup>

A survey revealed that the main concern of sexual contact in the lesbian community was cancer (69%), followed by the risk of 'other' sexually transmitted infections (43%) and HIV (25%).<sup>[25]</sup>



# Ageing Well and Dying Well

- Lesbians have been found to have **higher rates** of obesity and central adiposity which increases the risk of developing cardiovascular disease (CVD).<sup>[26]</sup>
- Lesbians are **21% less likely** to have hypertension compared to heterosexual women.
  - This increases to **40%** when variables of race/ethnicity, age, education, victimisation and discrimination, smoking status, binge eating, drug use and physical activity are accounted for.<sup>[27]</sup>
- Lesbians with dementia work to resist a '**double stigma**' of their sexuality and dementia, It has been found that many residential care settings feature heteronormative communities.<sup>[28]</sup>



Prevalence of cancers

There may be a **higher prevalence** of certain types of cancer among lesbian and bisexual women.<sup>[11]</sup>



The cancers include mesothelioma, oropharyngeal cancer, stomach cancer and endometrial cancer.<sup>[11]</sup>

Cervical cancer affects lesbians, but uptake of screening is patchy.<sup>[22]</sup>



# Closing the Gaps

## Life Expectancies

- For women who married their same-sex partners between 1989 and 2004, the risk of mortality was **34% higher** than the general female population.<sup>[29]</sup>



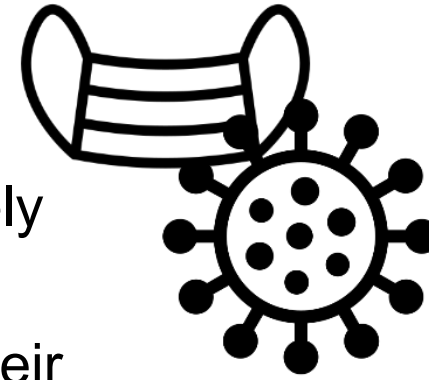
## Experience with Healthcare Sector

- A report by Stonewall in 2008 indicated that **50%** of lesbians had had negative experiences in the health sector in the last year, even though it is unlawful to discriminate against lesbians.<sup>[30]</sup>

## Communication with Healthcare Professionals

- **5.3%** of lesbians in the UK reported lower levels of trust, dissatisfaction with consultants and poorer communication experiences with healthcare professionals.<sup>[22]</sup>

# Mitigating the Effects of COVID-19



- During the pandemic the mental health of lesbians suffered disproportionately compared to other members of the community.<sup>[31]</sup>
- Lesbians school students are more likely than any other group to say that their health was negatively affected by COVID-19 (lesbians = **78%**, gay men = 71%, bisexuals = 74%, non-LGBTQ+ = 49%).<sup>[32]</sup>
- **30%** of lesbians thought their physical health had got worse during the pandemic.<sup>[31]</sup>
- **49 to 77%** said their mental health had worsened during the pandemic. Around **50%** stated that they had accessed services in the previous 12 months, while **12%** tried to but were unsuccessful.<sup>[31, 33]</sup>
- **87%** of lesbian school students said they were “lonely and separated from the people they’re closest to” during the pandemic.<sup>[31, 32]</sup>





# COMMUNITY HEALTH PROFILES **2022**

Lesbian Profile  
Infographics

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**

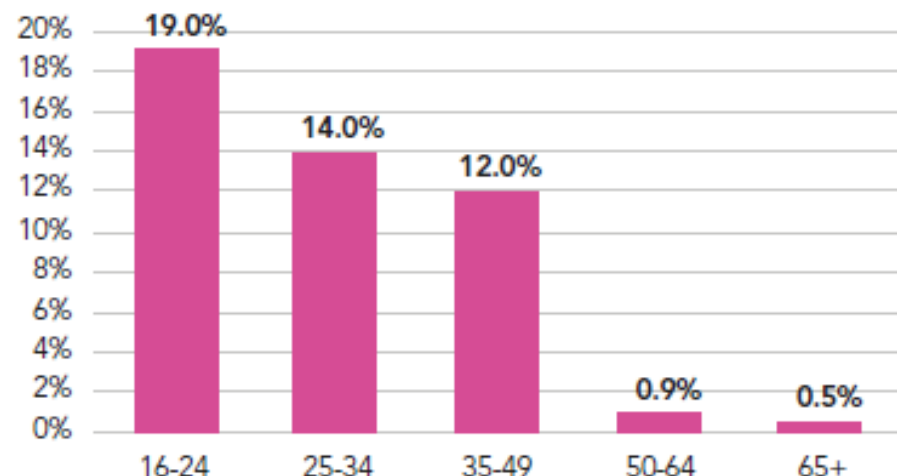


## WOMEN WHO ARE YOUNGER AND FROM WHITE ETHNIC COMMUNITIES ARE MORE LIKELY TO SELF-IDENTIFY AS LESBIAN IN THE UK

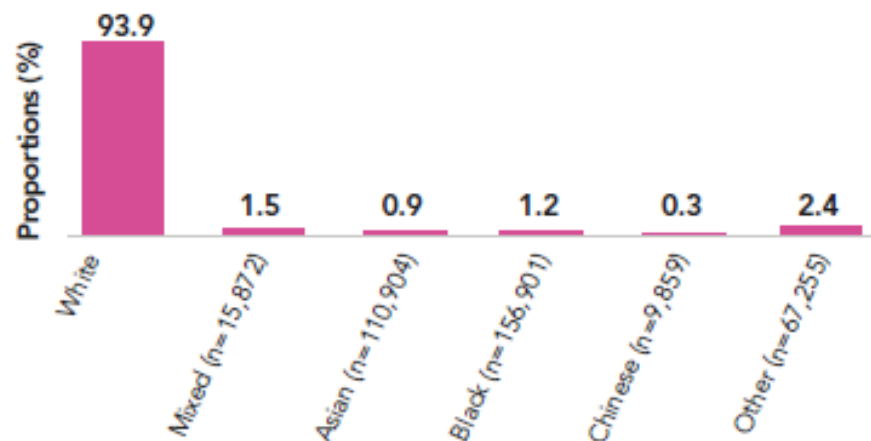
This may reflect the historical stigma and criminalisation of same sex relationships in the UK affecting older women perceptions of safety around coming out as lesbian and the continued discrimination in some countries which impacts on communities here



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 IS 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 **60.5%**

**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE EXPERIENCED**

**34.9%** Trans **34.6%** Bisexual **32.9%** Lesbian **14.7%** 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 have an eating disorder compared to **1 in 20** heterosexual women

**HEALTHY BODYWEIGHT**

**#1** Bisexual women **62.2%**  
**#2** Heterosexual women **54.0%**  
**#3** Lesbian women **48.8%**

**OBESITY**

Likelihood of a lesbian woman being obese is 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 **62.2%**  
**#2** Heterosexual women **54.0%**  
**#3** Lesbian women **48.8%**

**39%** of lesbian and bisexual women said that they exercised on most days, **HIGHER THAN HETEROSEXUALS** (Health Survey for England) **60.5%**

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 ARE 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%



**24.9%** OF LESBIANS REPORTED 'FAIR TO POOR HEALTH' a higher proportion compared to heterosexual women (20.5%)

### 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 is between

**48-55%**

LOWER THAN THE AVERAGE RATES OF SCREENING IN THE GENERAL POPULATION (81% 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

**78.1%** Lesbians  
**52.8%** All Bisexuals  
**26.5%** Gay Men



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

## AGEING AND DYING WELL



THERE IS WEAK EVIDENCE THAT LESBIAN WOMEN ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE DIABETIC THAN HETEROSEXUAL WOMEN

### 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 ARE **21%** less likely to have hypertension compared to heterosexual women



### ASTHMA



Prevalence of asthma by sexuality

**11.4%** Heterosexual women  
**14.3%** Bisexual women  
**14.6%** 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

### 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

**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

### 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 ARE MORE LIKELY TO REPORT NO TRUST OR CONFIDENCE IN THE DOCTOR



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

## DISCRIMINATION

**1 IN 10** say that a healthcare worker ignored them when they did 'come out'

AND ONLY THREE IN TEN SAY 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%**  
Bisexuals **74%**  
Gay men **71%**  
Non-LGBT+ **49%**

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



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

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