

Oral Health and the LGBTQ+ Community

A Snapshot of Disparities and Discrimination

Individuals who identify as LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, and other sexual orientations and gender identities) “face health disparities linked to societal stigma, discrimination, and denial of their civil and human rights.”

A nationally representative survey of oral health consumers by CareQuest Institute for Oral Health® and NORC at the University of Chicago examined the experiences of individuals identifying as LGBTQ+ regarding their oral health, access to dental care, and experiences with discrimination.

A larger proportion of LGBTQ+ individuals reported experiencing discrimination during their lifetime based on their sexual orientation as well as other factors such as age, gender, and physical appearance compared to those not identifying as LGBTQ+.



LGBTQ+ individuals were
77% more likely
to report
experiencing discrimination
on a weekly basis.



LGBTQ+ individuals were
31% more likely
to say their
most recent dental visit was
two years ago or more.



Individuals identifying as
LGBTQ+ were
77% more likely
to report they had
visited an emergency
department for dental care
within the past year
compared to individuals not
identifying as LGBTQ+.

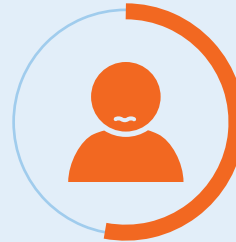


Compared to non-LGBTQ+ individuals,
those identifying as LGBTQ+ were

45% more likely to say they felt
self-conscious or embarrassed because of their teeth, mouth, or dentures
very often, fairly often, or occasionally as opposed to hardly ever or never.



LGBTQ+ individuals were
54% more likely
to report having an
oral health symptom
in the past year
compared to those who did
not identify as LGBTQ+.



Individuals identifying
as LGBTQ+ were
53% more likely
to report having
high levels of anxiety about
receiving dental care
compared to those who did
not identify as LGBTQ+.



Individuals identifying as LGBTQ+ were
58% more likely to report
it would be extremely, very, or moderately difficult to get care from a dentist
if their mouth or teeth were causing pain or discomfort
compared to those who did not identify as LGBTQ+.

Methodology:

The study was designed by CareQuest Institute for Oral Health. Results were collected by NORC at the University of Chicago in January–February 2021 and January–February 2022 from adults 18 and older on the AmeriSpeak panel. AmeriSpeak is a probability-based panel designed to be representative of the United States' (US) household population. Randomly selected US households were sampled using area probability and address-based sampling, with a known, non-zero probability of selection from NORC National Sample Frame. Sampled households were contacted by US mail, telephone, and field interviewers. A sampling unit of 17,603 was used, with a final sample size of 5,682 and a final weighted cumulative response rate of 4.0%. All data presented account for appropriate sample weights. The margin of error for the survey is 1.75%.

Respondents to this 2022 round of the survey were identified as LGBTQ+, in part, if they answered the question "Which of the following best represents how you think of yourself?" with "gay," "lesbian," "bisexual," "something else," or "I don't know the answer." Additionally, for the purposes of this survey, respondents were also identified as LGBTQ+ if they answered the question "How do you describe yourself?" with transgender or [I] do not identify as male, female or transgender. Logistic regression models were used to estimate odds ratios and were adjusted for race/ethnicity, gender, age, education, income, living in an urban vs. rural area, and reporting regularly brushing twice a day. While the cross-sectional nature of these data does not allow for causal conclusions to be drawn, future research should focus on examining underlying factors (e.g., stigma, discrimination, other socioeconomic factors) that may help further explain these findings.

Suggested Citation:

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