

Voices of Health 2022

Introduction

For almost 40 years, Rainbow Health Minnesota has been advocating for and serving the LGBTQ+ community, people living with HIV, and all folks facing barriers to healthcare. Rainbow Health is dedicated to working for equitable health care access and outcomes for people who experience injustice at the intersection of health status and identity. We center individuals and communities at risk of and living with HIV or facing barriers to equitable health care access and outcomes because of their identity as gender, sexual, and/or racial minorities.

- We help people navigate healthcare systems by breaking down barriers, particularly LGBTQ+ people and those affected by HIV.
- We work to End HIV by building on our four-decade legacy of providing the most comprehensive array of Minnesota AIDS Project's wrap-around services for people with HIV. As a disease of injustice, the only way to end HIV is to end health disparities.
- We offer unique and specialized mental health and chemical health services by and for the communities we serve. Our care is trauma-informed, harm-reduction based, sex-positive, and meets people where they are. We turn no one away for inability to pay.
- We work to empower people on the margins with relevant information, support, and connection to resources that allow them to lead healthier lives. Our legacy of four decades fighting HIV and LGBTQ+ health disparities has given us insight and experience that we can bring to the broader movement for health equity.
- We educate and train providers about how to deliver better care for the diversity of LGBTQ+ and HIV communities through a lens of intersectionality.

In order to do this important work, we need to know about the health access needs and experiences of LGBTQ+ people across the state. While there has been an increasing understanding that LGBTQ+ identities shape and impact health and wellness, many public health surveys and tools still don't look at sexual orientation and gender identity. Rainbow Health Minnesota's Voices of Health is an annual LGBTQ community health and wellness survey that seeks to uplift and share the health access and experiences of LGBTQ people while highlighting ongoing health disparities.

Methods

The 2022 survey instrument is very similar to previous years of Voices of Health in order to maintain consistency and track trends across years. The core questions on health access and experience have remained consistent since the survey was fielded in 2012.

The survey was conducted through Survey Monkey. Rainbow Health worked with partner organizations throughout the state to publicize the survey and send out links to their communities. The survey was also shared on social media and promoted at Pride events across the state.

In order to boost completion rates, participants were offered a \$10 online gift card as an incentive. When participants completed the survey, they were taken to a page on the Rainbow Health website and able to enter their email information for the gift card to be sent to their email. This ensured that participants' contact information was separate from their survey data.

The data from Survey Monkey was downloaded, cleaned, and checked for duplicates before being analyzed. Respondents from international IP addresses were removed, as were responses with spam entries in the open-ended responses options. The survey was collected through a convenience sampling technique, which is common in research with the LGBTQ community due to the difficulty of achieving a sufficiently large random sample. Through intentional sampling, and targeted boosted posts on Facebook and Instagram, Rainbow Health sought to collect surveys from LGBTQ people of diverse age, race, education, gender identity, and sexual orientation backgrounds.

Demographics

In 2022 1,330 LGBTQ Minnesotans completed the Voices of Health survey.

Sexual Orientation

Respondents were asked to select what best described their sexual orientation from the options provided, or to write in something else. 29% of respondents identified as lesbian, 18% identified as bisexual, 40% identified as gay, 9% identified as queer, 2% identified as pansexual, and 2% identified as asexual. Less than 1% wrote in a response, and less than 1% identified as straight.¹

Gender

Respondents were asked about their current gender and their sex assigned at birth. 38% of survey respondents are transgender or non-binary and 61% are cisgender.

Overall, 30% of respondents are cisgender women and 15% are trans women. 31% of respondents are cisgender men, and 9% are trans men. 16% of respondents are non-binary, genderqueer, gender non-conforming, or genderfluid.

Intersex

3% of respondents report they have been diagnosed with a medically-recognized intersex condition.

Race and Ethnicity

36% of respondents are people of color, and 64% are white.

Overall, 26% of respondents are black, 5% are Latinx or Hispanic, 3% are Native American, 3% are Asian or Pacific Islander, and .8% are Arab or Middle Eastern. Respondents were encouraged to select all options that described them.

¹ While straight and cisgender respondents were removed before analysis, transgender respondents who are straight are included

Location

44% live in the Twin Cities itself, 17% live outside the Twin Cities but in the Twin Cities 7 county metro area.² The remaining 38% live in Greater Minnesota.

Age

At the time of the survey, 19% of respondents were 18-24, 63% were 25-34, 12% were 35-44, 3% were 45-54, 2% were 55-64, and 2% were 65+.

Income

Respondents were asked their individual income and household income before taxes. This measure doesn't account for household size. The median household income in Minnesota is \$77,720.³ 76% of LGBTQ respondents have household incomes of \$75,000 or less.

| Income category | Household Income | Individual Income |
|--------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| \$0-\$10,000 | 4% | 11% |
| \$10,001-\$20,000 | 7% | 17% |
| \$20,001-\$25,000 | 14% | 17% |
| \$25,001-\$35,000 | 15% | 17% |
| \$35,001-\$50,000 | 18% | 16% |
| \$50,001-\$75,000 | 17% | 15% |
| \$75,001-\$100,000 | 12% | 5% |
| \$100,001+ | 12% | 2% |

According to the MN Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), a living wage that meets basic needs for a single person in Minnesota ranges from around \$30,000 to \$37,000 depending on what area of the state you live in. A basic-needs living wage for a couple with no kids where both adults work ranges from around \$39,000 to \$47,000. For a couple where both adults work with 2 kids the basic-needs cost of living ranges from around \$63,000 in Southwest MN to around \$105,000 in the Twin Cities 7 county metro. See the MN DEED Cost of Living Tool for more information on the basic-needs cost of living.⁴

Respondents were asked if their income covered more than their basic living expenses, covered their basic living expenses, or did not cover their basic living expenses. 36% of respondents described their income as covering more than their basic living expenses. 52% described their income as just covering their basic living expenses, and 12% described their income as not being enough to cover their basic living expenses.

² The Twin Cities 7 County metropolitan area consists of the counties of Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott, Washington, Anoka, Dakota, and Carver.

³ 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Retrieved from <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/profile?g=0400000US27>

⁴ Cost of Living in Minnesota, 2022. MN Department of Employment and Economic Development, retrieved from <https://mn.gov/deed/data/data-tools/col/>

Results

Food Security

43% of LGBTQ respondents reported that at least once in the past 12 months they worried their food would run out before they had money to buy more. 36% did have their food run out before they had money to buy more.

BIPOC respondents reported both worrying about their food running out (53%) and running out of food (43%) at higher rates than White respondents (38% and 31%).

According to the most recent data from Feeding America, 7% of Minnesotans experienced food insecurity.⁵

Tobacco and E-cigarette Use

40% of LGBTQ respondents are “ever smokers” (have smoked 100 cigarettes or more in their lifetime), 16% are former smokers and 23% of all LGBTQ respondents are current smokers. 60% of LGBTQ respondents have never smoked.

In the general population, 14% of adult Minnesotans are current smokers.⁶

Of current smokers, 15% plan to quit smoking in the next month, 17% plan to quit smoking in the next 6 months, and 14% plan to quit smoking sometime in the next year. 27% of current smokers have no intention to quit smoking, and another 27% sometimes think about quitting but don’t have a plan.

Of current smokers, 47% attempted to quit at least once in the past year.

34% of LGBTQ respondents reported having ever used an e-cigarette/vaping. 26% of all respondents are still vaping some days or every day. LGBTQ respondents report e-cigarette use much more frequently than the general population, only 5% of adult Minnesotans regularly use e-cigarettes.⁷

Alcohol Use

46% of respondents reported not drinking alcohol in the past month, and 11% reported drinking alcohol less than once a week. 34% reported drinking 1-3 days per week in the past month. 8% reported drinking 4-5 days per week and only 1% reported drinking 6-7 days per week.

In the general population, 60% of adult Minnesotans report drinking alcohol.⁸

⁵ Feeding America. 2021. Food Insecurity Among Overall Population in Minnesota. Retrieved from <https://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2021/overall/minnesota> on 5/24/2023

⁶ Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System. 2020. Tobacco NUMBRS on MN Department of Health website. Retrieved from <https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/tobacco/data/index.html> on 5/24/2023

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Alcohol Quick Facts. Minnesota Department of Health. Retrieved from <https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/alcohol/data/quickfacts.html> on 5/24/2023

If they had drunk alcohol in the past 30 days, respondents were asked how many drinks they had on average on the days they did drink. On average, on days they used alcohol 13% of LGBTQ respondents who drank had one drink. 26% had two drinks and 25% had three drinks. 17% had four drinks, and 8% had 5 drinks on average when they drank. 3% consumed an average of 6 drinks and 8% of LGBTQ who drink consumed an average of 7 or more drinks on the days they drank alcohol.

In order to gauge binge drinking, respondents were also asked how many times in the past 30 days they had had 4 or more drinks on one occasion. 40% of all respondents reported binge drinking at all in the past month. 6% of all respondents reported binge drinking once in the past month and 8% reported binge drinking twice in the past month. 12% reported binge drinking 3-4 times in the past month and 10% reported binge drinking 5-9 times. 4% of all LGBTQ respondents reported binge drinking 10 or more times in the past month at the time of the survey.

LGBTQ respondents reported binge drinking at twice the rate of the general population. In the general population, 18% of adults reported binge drinking in the past month.⁹

Anti- LGBTQ Behavior

80% of respondents experienced some form of anti-LGBTQ behavior¹⁰ in the past 12 months.

76% have ever experienced verbal abuse or harassment because they were LGBTQ in their lifetime. 59% of LGBTQ respondents experienced verbal abuse or harassment in the past year.

50% have ever been physically attacked or threatened because they were LGBTQ in their lifetime. 21% of LGBTQ respondents were physically threatened or attacked in the past year.

Homelessness

10% of respondents were homeless (including couch-surfing or living in a car) at the time they took the survey. 40% of LGBTQ respondents had experienced homelessness or housing instability at least once in their life.

Unwanted Sexual Activity

49% of LGBTQ respondents have experienced some form of unwanted physical sexual activity in their lifetime, with 16% experienced unwanted physical sexual activity in the past 12 months.

30% of respondents who had experienced unwanted physical sexual activity said that they did not seek help, tell anyone, or report their most recent experience. 42% of respondents told someone about their experience. 17% called a sexual assault crisis line. 34% saw a doctor or nurse. 29% talked to a therapist about their experience. 12% reported their experience to police. Respondents could select multiple options for seeking help.

⁹ Ibidbidome

¹⁰ Rejected by a friend or family member, made to feel unwelcome at a place of worship, received poor service or denied service at a place of business, received poor healthcare or denied healthcare, treated unfairly by a coworker or supervisor, treated unfairly by an employer, or other anti-LGBTQ behavior

Physical or Emotional Abuse in a Relationship

44% of LGBTQ respondents have experienced physical or emotional abuse in a relationship in their lifetime, with 15% of respondents experienced physical or emotional abuse in the past year.

22% of LGBTQ respondents who had experienced physical or emotional abuse in a relationship said that they did not tell anyone about their most recent experience. 54% told someone about the abuse. 17% called a domestic violence hotline. 33% saw a medical doctor or nurse. 31% talked a therapist about the abuse. 10% reported the abuse to police. Respondents could select multiple options for seeking help.

HIV

72% of LGBTQ respondents have ever been tested for HIV. 6% of LGBTQ respondents who have been tested report having been diagnosed with HIV. Of respondents who are living with HIV, 100% had an HIV-related medical appointment, HIV medical prescription, or HIV labs in the past 12 months. When asked if they had ever used HIV support services such as a case manager, benefits counselor, or getting connected to medical or social service resources, 67% of people living with HIV said they'd used those services in the past year, 26% said they'd used them previously, and 7% said they had never used such services

PrEP

Of respondents that answered questions about PrEP use, 15% of respondents were currently taking PrEP daily as prescribed, and 19% reported they were sometimes taking PrEP. 14% previously had taken PrEP but were not currently taking in. 51% had never taken PrEP and only 1% didn't know what PrEP was.

Of the people that had ever used PrEP, 40% said they had used PrEP for 1 to 6 months. 40% had used it for 7 to 12 months and 20% had used it for 13 months or longer.

COVID-19

At the time of the survey in late summer/ fall of 2022, 28% of all LGBTQ respondents reported ever having had COVID-19.

White respondents (29%) reported having ever had COVID-19 at a slightly higher rate than BIPOC respondents (25%).

56% of respondents knew someone who became seriously ill because of COVID-19. 33% of LGBTQ respondents personally knew a family member or friend who died because of COVID-19.

At the time of the survey, 88% of all LGBTQ respondents reported having been vaccinated against COVID-19. An additional 6% reported they intended to get vaccinated soon, and another 4% said they intended to get vaccinated but planned to wait to get a vaccine. Only 2% reported they did not plan on ever getting vaccinated for COVID-19.

Slightly more White respondents (90%) reported being vaccinated than BIPOC respondents (85%). Of the respondents who haven't been vaccinated for COVID-19, BIPOC respondents (3.5%) were slightly more likely to report planning to not get vaccinated than White respondents (1.4%).

Mental Health

LGBTQ people continue to be experiencing high rates of mental distress. It's unclear if the sustained rates of mental distress are due to COVID-19, increasing anti-LGBTQ sentiment and legislation, financial stress, or some other combination of factors. 6 out of 7 LGBTQ respondents were experiencing moderate to severe mental distress at the time of the survey.¹¹ 62% of all LGBTQ respondents were experiencing moderate mental distress and 23% were experiencing severe mental distress at the time of the survey. 15% were experiencing no mental distress or mild mental distress at the time of the survey.

The most recently available data on the general population of Minnesota found that 11% of adults in the general population experienced several psychological distress.¹²

Mental Distress by Sexual Orientation

| | Lesbian | Gay | Bisexual/Pansexual | Queer |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|------------|---------------------------|--------------|
| No or mild mental distress | 17% | 15% | 14% | 13% |
| Moderate mental distress | 59% | 68% | 51% | 53% |
| Severe mental distress | 21% | 25% | 35% | 34% |

Transgender and cisgender respondents experienced similar rates of mental distress – 17% of transgender and 14% of cisgender respondents reported experiencing no or mild mental distress.

White (84%) and BIPOC (86%) respondents reported experiencing similar rates of moderate to severe mental distress.

Income is correlated with experiencing mental distress, with lower rates of moderate and severe mental distress experienced by LGBTQ people whose income covers more than their basic living expenses.

| | Income Does Not Cover Basic Living Expenses | Income Just Covers Basic Living Expenses | Income Covers More than Basic Living Expenses |
|-----------------------------------|--|---|--|
| No or mild mental distress | 6% | 13% | 20% |
| Moderate mental distress | 68% | 62% | 60% |
| Severe mental distress | 27% | 25% | 19% |

Health Insurance

70% of respondents reported having health insurance. 29% reported being uninsured and 1% didn't know if they had health insurance. The majority of respondents who reported being uninsured have incomes of \$25,000 or less, it's unclear if respondents who reported being uninsured are actually

¹¹ Mental distress is measured by the Kessler 6 scale, developed with support from the National Center for Health Statistics. The scale was designed to help identify between cases and non-cases of serious mental illness. Kessler, R.C., Barker, P.R., Colpe, L.J., Epstein, J.F., Gfroerer, J.C., Hiripi, E., Howes, M.J., Normand, S-L.T., Manderscheid, R.W., Walters, E.E., Zaslavsky, A.M. (2003). Screening for serious mental illness in the general population Archives of General Psychiatry. 60(2), 184-189.

¹² National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH, R-DAS) 2018-2019 (SPD). Retrieved from <https://rdas.samhsa.gov/#/survey/NSDUH-2018-2019-RD02YR/crosstab/> on 5/24/2023

enrolled in medical assistance or MinnesotaCare and are unaware that it counts as being insured. Approximately 5% of the general population of Minnesota is uninsured.¹³

Of the respondents with health insurance 29% were insured through their employer and 9% were insured through someone else's employer (spouse, partner, parent). 5% were insured through Medicare and 19% were insured through Medicaid/MinnesotaCare. 6% had private health insurance. Less than 1% had insurance through the military or VA, and 1% had student health insurance through their college or university.

Health Access and Experiences

Health Care Access Barriers

39% of respondents reported there was a time in the past year that they needed to see a health care provider but couldn't because of cost.

33% of LGBTQ respondents reported that there was a time in the past year they needed to see a doctor but did not because they thought they would be disrespected or mistreated as an LGBTQ person.

Primary Care and Routine Check-Ups

23% of respondents report not having a primary care provider or one place they go for routine care (not including emergency care), and 77% do have a primary care provider or one place they go for routine care.

Respondents with a primary care provider (92%) were more likely than LGBTQ people without a primary care provider (68%) to have seen a care provider in the past year, whether for routine care or because of illness.

Respondent with a primary care provider were also more likely to have had a routine check-up in the past 12 months, with 72% of respondents with a primary care provider having had a check up in the past year, compared to 56% of respondents without a primary care provider. 24% of respondents with a primary care provider had their last check up 13 months-2 year ago, and only 4% had their most recent check up more than 2 years ago. 22% of respondents without a primary care provider had their last check up 13 months – 2 years ago, and 12% had their last check up more than 2 years ago. 10% of respondents without a primary care provider had never had an annual check up as an adult.

Sexual Health

When asked when they had their last sexual health discussion with a health care provider of any kind 67% reported this occurred in the past 12 months. 25% said it was 13 months or more, and only 8% said they had never had a discussion about sexual health with a medical provider.

¹³ Minnesota Department of Health. Minnesota Public Health Data Access tool, health insurance. Retrieved from https://data.web.health.state.mn.us/insurance_basics on 5/24/2023

Out to Doctor

When asked about whether or not they were out as LGBTQ to their health care provider, 84% said they were out as an LGBTQ person. Only 8% said they were not out to their health care provider. 5% said they were somewhat out and 1% didn't know or were unsure if they were out. 3% said it wasn't applicable because they don't have a doctor or place they go for health care. Note that many respondents who reported not having a primary care provider reported that they still are out to health care providers whenever they do seek out health care.

This is the highest percentage of respondents who have ever reported being out to their doctor in Voices of Health surveys, which may be an indication that more clinics and doctors are asking about sexual orientation and gender identity.

Experiences with Providers

1 in 5 LGBTQ respondents (20%) reported having to teach their provider about LGBTQ people so they could get appropriate care in the past 12 months, and an additional 37% have experienced this previously in their life but not in the past 12 months. In other words, 56% of respondents have ever had to teach their provider about LGBTQ people to get appropriate care.

55% of respondents have ever had a provider refuse to treat them because they were LGBTQ. 13% reported that a provider refused to care for them in the past year. An additional 31% have had a provider refuse to treat them previously in their life.

56% of all respondents have ever had a provider ask intrusive or unnecessary questions about their LGBTQ identity. 18% have had a provider ask intrusive or unnecessary questions about their LGBTQ identity unrelated to the purpose of the appointment in the past year. 38% have had this happen previously.

41% of LGBTQ respondents have ever had a provider use harsh or abusive language when treating them. 12% have had a provider use harsh or abusive language when treating them in the past year and an additional 29% have experienced this a year ago or more.

10% had a provider who was physically rough or abusive with them in the past year and an additional 25% have experienced this previously. 35% of respondents have ever had a provider be physically rough or abusive with them because of their sexual orientation or gender identity when they were trying to get health care.

49% of all respondents have ever been verbally harassed in a health care setting. This includes being harassed by other patients/clients, security guards, nurses, front desk staff, etc., and not just experiences with doctors. 17% were verbally harassed in the past year and 32% have been verbally harassed in a health care setting previously.

Provider LGBTQ knowledge

Respondents were asked how important it was that their provider had LGBTQ-specific knowledge and support. Only 4% of LGBTQ people said it wasn't important that their health care provider had LGBTQ-specific knowledge. 18% said it was neither important nor unimportant. 34% said it was slightly

important and 43% said it was very important. In other words, 77% of respondents said it was important that their provider had LGBTQ-specific knowledge.

Summary, Rainbow Health Resources, and Next Steps

While there continue to be positive improvements in the health access and experiences of LGBTQ Minnesotans, these survey findings also point to persistent challenges for ranging from mental health, insurance access, substance abuse, sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and access to LGBTQ competent providers. Our work and programs directly respond to many of the challenges facing LGBTQ Minnesotans.

- The stark data around experiences of anti-LGBTQ behavior, experiences of moderate to severe mental distress, and experiencing unwanted sexual activity or abuse in a relationship underscores the need for LGBTQ affirming and competent mental health services, like the Therapy and Counseling services offered through Rainbow Health.
- The Benefits team helps LGBTQ people understand and navigate the process of getting health insurance, which is crucial to address the rates of uninsurance.
- Our HIV medical case management and support services remain a core part of our work supporting people living with HIV, and in ensuring people have the information and resources necessary to access PrEP.

The continued challenges LGBTQ people face in accessing health care, being denied care, experiencing verbal or physical harassment, and having to educate providers shows the importance of healthcare providers having specific training to appropriately work with LGBTQ patients and clients, and in supporting the rights LGBTQ people in accessing care.

- We advocate with our community partners for policy and systems change across Minnesota, from addressing insurance denials to working to fully fund HIV services.

Additionally, while a variety of public health surveys now collect sexual orientation and gender identity, many surveys still do not ask. Even in some surveys where sexual orientation or gender identity is collected, the data is never analyzed or shared to see what is happening in LGBTQ communities. Ensuring that sexual orientation and gender identity data is appropriately collected, analyzed, and shared in surveys is key to continuing to identifying, understanding, and eliminating LGBTQ health disparities.

The results from this community survey specifically highlight the need for more information and services around insurance, food security, sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and mental health access for LGBTQ people. Rainbow Health Minnesota remains committed to equitable health care access and outcomes for people who experience injustice at the intersection of health status and identity, and we can't address these broad community needs alone. It will require a broad coalition of community partners and organizations to continue to shift our systems so that LGBTQ people across Minnesota can thrive.