

It's not easy being gay

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Members of 'sexual minorities' are around twice as likely as heterosexuals to seek help for mental health issues or substance abuse treatment. A model of treatment-seeking behavior, described in the open access journal *BMC Psychiatry* supports the idea that lesbian, gay and bisexual people may have specific treatment needs.

Susan Cochran worked with a team of researchers from the University of California, Los Angeles using data they collected from 2074 people first interviewed in the California Health Interview Survey. They found that 48.5% of lesbian/[gay](#)/bisexual individuals reported receiving treatment in the past year as compared to 22.5% of heterosexuals. In addition, gender was shown to play a large role; lesbians and bisexual women were most likely to receive treatment and heterosexual men were the least likely.

According to Cochran, "It is well known that health services utilization is greater among women generally. Here we have shown that minority sexual orientation is also an important consideration. Lesbians and bisexual women appear to be approximately twice as likely as heterosexual women to report having received recent treatment for mental health or substance use disorders."

The researchers speculate that the causes driving this increased use of healthcare may include higher exposure to discrimination, violence, and other stressful life events. Cochran adds, "The pervasive and historically rooted societal pathologizing of homosexuality may contribute to this propensity for treatment by construing homosexuality and issues

associated with it as [mental health](#) problems".

More information: Influence of gender, [sexual orientation](#), and need on treatment utilization for substance use and mental disorders: findings from the california quality of life survey; Christine E. Grella, Lisa Greenwell, Vickie M. Mays and Susan D. Cochran; *BMC Psychiatry* (in press); www.biomedcentral.com/bmcpsychiatry/

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