

Lesbian, gay, bisexual individuals risk psychiatric disorders from discriminatory policies

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A Mailman School of Public Health study examining the effects of institutional discrimination on the psychiatric health of lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) individuals found an increase in psychiatric disorders among the LGB population living in states that instituted bans on same-sex marriage. The study, published in the March issue of the *American Journal of Public Health*, is available online.

Deborah Hasin, PhD, professor of clinical Epidemiology at the Mailman School of Public Health and senior author, and colleagues at the NYS Psychiatric Institute and Harvard University analyzed data from the National Epidemiologic Survey on Alcohol and Related Conditions (NESARC). Participants were initially interviewed during 2001 - 2002 (Wave 1) and again during the period 2004-2005 (Wave 2), at which time participants' [sexual orientation](#) was assessed.

"To address the impact of institutional discrimination on mental health, we examined whether LGB individuals living in states that instituted constitutional amendments banning gay marriage via the 2004-2005 elections evidenced increased rates of [psychiatric disorders](#) between Wave 1 and Wave 2 of the survey," according to the authors.

Among LGB study participants living in these states, the prevalence of mood disorders, generalized anxiety disorder and alcohol use disorders increased significantly between Wave 1 to Wave 2, with the greatest

increase, more than 200%, in [generalized anxiety disorder](#). The prevalence of any psychiatric disorder also increased slightly among heterosexual respondents, but to a much lesser extent than their LGB counterparts.

"Before this study, little was known about the impact of institutional discrimination toward lesbian, gay and bisexual individuals in our society," said Dr. Hasin. "The study highlights the importance of abolishing institutional forms of discrimination, including those leading to disparities in the mental health and well-being of LGB individuals."

Institutional [discrimination](#) is characterized by societal-level conditions that limit the opportunities and access to resources by socially-disadvantaged groups.

During the 2004 election and soon after, the authors note, 14 states approved constitutional amendments restricting marriage to unions between heterosexual couples.

Provided by Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health

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