

Social exclusion and binge drinking in young people attracted to more than one gender

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A report by the University of Otago, Wellington shows that many young people attracted to more than one gender tend to binge drink because they feel stigmatised and socially excluded.

Lead author, Frank Pega, from the University's Department of Public Health and the Harvard School of Public Health, says that a minority of young people who are attracted to more than one gender binge drink. However, [binge drinking](#) is higher in this [social group](#) than in other sexual minority and heterosexual young people.

"Sexual minority communities, health practitioners, and policy makers have long wanted to tackle this issue, but too little information has been available." he says.

This report explains why young people who are attracted to more than one gender binge drink, and suggests possible interventions for preventing and treating binge drinking in this social group. It also provides further detail to inform national guidelines for [alcohol addiction](#) prevention and treatment in sexual minorities.

The report is based on in-depth interviews with 32 participants aged 18-25 years in eleven focus groups conducted this year in Auckland, Wellington, and Dunedin.

One of the most significant factors identified is the wide-ranging social exclusion experienced by these young people, from not only

heterosexual, but also lesbian and gay communities.

"Most [study participants](#) reported that they commonly experienced biphobia and discrimination, and some had been verbally harassed and physically abused for their [sexual attraction](#). For many, these experiences resulted in a sense of being stigmatised, which caused daily stress and anxiety," says Pega.

"While many participants were very resilient and responded positively, some participants binge drank to manage this stress."

"More-than-one-gender attracted young people manage their exclusion from heterosexual as well as lesbian and gay communities, but at the same time there is a lack of targeted community spaces and organisations for this group. This provides an explanation for their higher rates of binge drinking."

The study also identifies interventions that create positive social arrangements which can be protective against binge drinking in this group of young people.

"In the interviews, young people quickly identified a range of effective strategies and interventions that would help reduce binge drinking in their communities," says Pega.

The report suggests more attention needs to be paid to reducing social stigma towards young people attracted to more than one gender. It proposes three types of effective interventions to achieve this.

"Firstly, interventions that support community-building initiatives for more-than-one-gender attracted young people, to increase opportunities to meet, socialise and organise. Secondly, broad anti-stigma campaigns that increase society's understanding of this group of [young people](#) and

how prejudices and bigotry negatively affect them."

"The third type of intervention is social policies that ensure equal rights for sexual minorities. One example is the marriage equality legislation, currently before parliament. Going from US evidence, we can expect marriage equality and similar legislation to improve the health of [sexual minority](#) populations in general, including reducing binge drinking," says Pega.

More information: www.otago.ac.nz/wellington/otago039306.pdf

Provided by University of Otago

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