

# LGBT youth face greater cancer risks

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A new study led by City College of New York psychologist Margaret Rosario found that youths of same-sex orientation are more likely to engage in behaviors associated with cancer risk than heterosexuals. The peer-reviewed findings appear in the February 2014 issue of the *American Journal of Public Health*.

Titled "Sexual Orientation Disparities in Cancer-Related Risk Behaviors of Tobacco, Alcohol, Sexual Behaviors, and Diet and Physical Activity: Pooled Youth Risk Behavior Surveys," the study pooled YRBS (Youth Risk Behavior Survey) data from 2005 and 2007. The YRBS is a national survey of high school students conducted biennially.

Dr. Rosario, professor of psychology in CCNY's Colin Powell School for Civic and Global Leadership and The Graduate Center, CUNY, and her research team then studied 12 cancer-risk behaviors in sexual minorities (youth with same-sex orientation) and heterosexuals in grades 9 through 12. Of an available sample of 65,871 youth, 7.6 percent were found to be a sexual minority.

The 12 cancer-risk behaviors included tobacco use, drinking alcohol, early sex, multiple sexual partners, higher [body mass index](#) (BMI) and lack of exercise. The report found that for all 12, [sexual minorities](#) were more likely than [heterosexuals](#) to engage in the risky [behavior](#).

"Sexual minorities are at risk for cancer later in life, I suggest, from a host of behaviors that begin relatively early in life," said Professor Rosario. "No sex or ethnic racial group is at greater risk or protected for

these behaviors. Overall, the study underscores the need for early interventions."

Her collaborators included researchers from Boston Children's Hospital, the University of Illinois at Chicago, the Fenway Institute, and Northwestern University.

**More information:** [ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/ ...  
105/AJPH.2013.301506](https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/10.1093/ajph.2013.301506)

Provided by City College of New York

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