

# US sexual minorities less likely to be in work or insured than straight peers

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Sexual minorities in the US are less likely to be in work or to have health insurance than their straight peers, reveal the results of a large survey, published in the online journal *BMJ Open*.

They also have poorer health and quality of life.

These disparities may be even wider as the study sample was predominantly white and from relatively affluent backgrounds, suggest the researchers.

Previous research indicates that sexual minorities are more likely to be out of work and to be uninsured than their straight counterparts, but these studies have focused primarily on direct comparisons of cohabiting same sex and different sex couples, and so overlooked singles and young people.

The researchers therefore drew on just under 10,000 responses from 18-32 year olds, taking part in the annual Growing Up Today Study (GUTS) in 2013. GUTS collects information in sexual identity/orientation.

Participants were asked if they had been unemployed, uninsured, or hadn't had a routine physical exam over the past year. And they were asked to rate their mobility, self-care, capacity for routine activities, and levels of pain/discomfort and anxiety/depression.

Analysis of the responses showed that sexual minorities—both men and women—were around twice as likely as their straight peers to have been unemployed and uninsured over the past year. And they were more likely to report poorer health and quality of life.

This is an observational study, and as such, cannot establish cause. But the findings prompt the researchers to note: "These sexual-orientation disparities in employment and [health insurance](#) in a population with high social status highlight the ubiquity of sexual orientation inequities in the employment and healthcare systems."

They go on to suggest that despite the US Supreme Court's recent extension of marriage rights to same sex couples, these inequalities are likely to persist, particularly as 28 states don't have any employment law covering discrimination against [sexual minorities](#), and three actively prevent the passage or enforcement of non-discriminatory legislation.

"Until all people, regardless of sexual orientation, are treated equally in the eyes of the law, including with non-discrimination laws protecting [employment](#), as well as housing, public accommodations and credit/lending, sexual orientation-related [health](#) disparities will persist," they conclude.

**More information:** Sexual orientation-related disparities in employment, health insurance, healthcare access and health-related quality of life: a cohort study of US male and female adolescents and young adults, *BMJ Open* (2018). [DOI: 10.1136/bmjopen-2017-020418](https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2017-020418)

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