

# Adolescents and young adults open to discussing sexual identity and gender identity with doctors, research finds

October 20 2023

---



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

Teenagers and young adults are fairly open to the idea of talking with their doctors and nurses about their sexual orientation and gender

identity, and are okay being asked through various methods, whether on paper, electronically, or in person, according to research presented during the [2023 AAP National Conference & Exhibition](#) at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center.

This is one of the first studies to establish how adolescents would prefer to broach this sensitive subject while visiting their [health care provider](#). Gender-diverse and lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth are far more open to having these personal conversations with [health care providers](#) than their straight and cisgender peers, according to the research abstract.

Researchers who wrote the abstract, "Asking Adolescents and Young Adults about their Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity: Lessons for Clinic Staff and EHR Documentation," surveyed 260 youth, ages 10 to 26, and found that nearly 70% were comfortable with being asked about their sexual orientation and gender identity during medical visits.

"Our study showed that teenagers are remarkably open to discussing their sexual orientation and gender identity through various methods when visiting their doctor's office. This finding emphasizes the importance of creating diverse avenues for communication, whether in-person or through virtual or paper registration forms," said Jessica Pourian, MD, who conducted her research as a pediatric resident at Hasbro Children's Hospital in Providence, Rhode Island and is now a clinical informatics fellow at the University of California, San Francisco.

"By facilitating these discussions, we can foster an inclusive health care environment that ultimately leads to more effective and tailored care for our [young patients](#)," Dr. Pourian added.

While 64% of all youth agreed that it is important for health care providers to ask about their gender identity, chosen name, and pronouns, gender diverse youth were far more comfortable with that conversation

(83%) than were their cisgender peers (45%). Lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth were also more open to conversations about sexual orientation—56% compared to 38% of heterosexual youth. Over 96% of gender diverse youth expressed a desire to have their chosen name and pronouns displayed in [electronic health records](#), available to all medical staff.

"When health care providers make assumptions about patients' sexual orientation or gender identity, they miss opportunities for screening, risk causing distress, and can damage patient–provider relationships," Dr. Pourian said. "This research shows that clinics should focus on integrating conversations about [sexual orientation](#) or [gender identity](#) into their practice to provide better and more comprehensive care to teenagers and [young adults](#)."

**More information:** Abstract Title: Asking Adolescents and Young Adults about their Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity: Lessons for Clinic Staff and EHR Documentation

Provided by American Academy of Pediatrics

Citation: Adolescents and young adults open to discussing sexual identity and gender identity with doctors, research finds (2023, October 20) retrieved 29 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-10-adolescents-young-adults-discussing-sexual.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--