

Q&A: Lesbian, gay, and bisexual women found to smoke more and be less likely to quit

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People who identify as lesbian, gay, and bisexual—particularly women—respond more positively to tobacco marketing, are more inclined to smoke cigarettes daily, and may have a more difficult time

quitting, according to two studies by a Rutgers Health researcher.

The studies published in the [*Annals of LGBTQ Public and Population Health*](#) and [*Preventive Medicine Reports*](#), investigated how some among the LGBTQ population respond to [tobacco marketing](#), how they use tobacco and their history of quitting using two large national datasets, including the Population Assessment of Tobacco and Health Study and the National Survey on Drug Use and Health.

Ollie Ganz, a faculty member at the Rutgers Institute for Nicotine and Tobacco Studies and an assistant professor at the Rutgers School of Public Health, who is the lead author of the studies, discussed the significance of the findings to future policy.

Why is specifically studying how sexual minority populations receive tobacco marketing important?

From previous studies, we know that sexual minority individuals are more likely to use tobacco products than [heterosexual](#) individuals. This may be because [tobacco companies](#) have targeted this population with advertising and promotions, but the impact of this has not been studied extensively.

The main thing we wanted to understand in this study is, given that sexual minority individuals are exposed to more tobacco advertising than heterosexual individuals, are there also differences in terms of how receptive they are to the ads, such as having a positive response to the ads.

What did your study find regarding tobacco marketing among sexual minority individuals?

What was unique about our study is that we were able to look at subsets of the LGB population—gay men, bisexual men, lesbian/gay women, and [bisexual women](#)—rather than looking at them as one group.

By looking at these subgroups, we discovered that lesbian/gay and bisexual women were more likely to be receptive to marketing for [tobacco products](#) overall and that bisexual women—but not lesbian/gay women—were more likely to be receptive to marketing for cigarettes, cigars, e-cigarettes, and smokeless tobacco, compared with heterosexual women.

Among men, we discovered that gay men, but not bisexual men, were more likely to be receptive to cigar advertising compared with heterosexual men. We also found that gay and [bisexual men](#) were more likely to be receptive to e-cigarette advertising compared with heterosexual men.

In the *Preventive Medicine Reports* study, you also looked at subsets of the LGB population but focused on cigarette use behaviors. What were your findings?

We discovered that sexual minority women—particularly bisexual women—are smoking at higher rates and are having a harder time quitting compared with heterosexual women. We also found that the differences in the prevalence of cigarette smoking between lesbian/gay and bisexual women and heterosexual women were much greater than the prevalence between sexual minority men and heterosexual men.

These findings show that we need more support to specifically help sexual [minority](#) women quit smoking—particularly bisexual women. This population presents unique challenges, such as greater mental health problems, and there is a need for more resources and tailored interventions to support them in quitting smoking.

How can these findings inform future policy?

In order for tobacco control policies and regulations and public education campaigns to be effective, they need to be able to identify the populations that are at greatest risk for tobacco use. They also need a body of evidence that identifies the factors that are driving elevated use among those populations so effective messages and policies can be developed that directly address those factors.

More information: Ollie Ganz et al, Differences in Tobacco Advertising Receptivity Among Young Adults by Sexual Identity and Sex: Findings From the Population Assessment of Tobacco and Health Study, *Annals of LGBTQ Public and Population Health* (2024). DOI: [10.1891/LGBTQ-2022-0036](https://doi.org/10.1891/LGBTQ-2022-0036)

Ollie Ganz et al, Cigarette smoking behaviors and nicotine dependence at the intersection of sexual identity and sex in the United States: Findings from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, *Preventive Medicine Reports* (2024). DOI: [10.1016/j.pmedr.2024.102593](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pmedr.2024.102593)

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