

Lower education and income linked to higher suicide risks for gay and bisexual men

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UBC men's health researcher Olivier Ferlatte. Credit: University of British Columbia

Gay and bisexual men making less than \$30,000 a year and without a university degree have more than five times the odds of attempting suicide compared with their more advantaged peers, according to new research from the University of British Columbia.

"Less-educated men might feel a greater sense of hopelessness because they see few options to improve their lot, compared to their peers, who could address their poverty by using their education," said study lead author and UBC postdoctoral research fellow Olivier Ferlatte.

Researchers also found that [bisexual men](#) who were in a relationship with a woman were less likely to attempt suicide compared with those who were single or had male partners.

"For a bisexual man, having a female partner is probably protective in that it shields them from the stress of being a member of a 'visible minority' and from potential discrimination," said Ferlatte, who works in the men's health research program at UBC's school of nursing.

Ferlatte and colleagues from the non-profit Community-Based Research Centre for Gay Men's Health evaluated data from a national health survey of 8,382 men who have sex with men. Analysis focused on 145 men who reported having attempted suicide in the past 12 months.

"The number of gay and bisexual men who die by suicide is comparable to those who die from HIV/AIDS, yet we know little about the factors contributing to this health crisis - and particularly about how social factors and suicidal behaviours intersect," said Ferlatte. "Our study is the first in Canada to analyze how socioeconomic factors like income and education are associated with suicide risks for these men."

Study co-author and UBC nursing professor John Oliffe says the results could be used to design better suicide prevention programs.

"As gay and bisexual men are not affected by suicide equally, interventions should acknowledge the diversity of experiences in this community. We have to make sure that messages are relevant and available to men with lower income and education levels. Information about suicide, mental [health](#) and available resources must be specific to their needs and easy to understand," said Oliffe.

"Recent [suicide](#) attempts across multiple social identities among gay and bisexual men: An intersectionality analysis" was published today in the *Journal of Homosexuality*.

More information: Olivier Ferlatte et al, Recent Suicide Attempts Across Multiple Social Identities Among Gay and Bisexual Men: An Intersectionality Analysis, *Journal of Homosexuality* (2017). DOI: [10.1080/00918369.2017.1377489](https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2017.1377489)

Provided by University of British Columbia

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