



SexHealthMatters.org is brought to you by the Sexual Medicine Society of North America, Inc.

Sexual Health Among Bisexual Men

What are some of the sexual health challenges faced by bisexual men?

A [study](#) published online last month in The Annals of Preventative Medicine has shed some new light on that question. While bisexual men account for only 2% of the sexually active male population, cultural and social issues affect their sexual health in important ways.

Today, we'll take a brief look at this research.

What is Bisexuality?

In general terms, bisexuality refers to a sexual or romantic attraction to both men and women. This attraction might not be divided equally, however. A bisexual person may feel stronger attraction to men than to women, or vice versa. Or, a person might be attracted to women for a certain period of time and to men for another duration.

The Study

The report was authored by Dr. William L. Jeffries, IV, of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). He analyzed relevant peer-reviewed research published between January 2008 and December 2013.

The study uses several acronyms, which we will retain here:

- MSMW – men who have sex with men and women
- MSM – men who have sex with men
- MSW – men who have sex with women

Sexual Health Concerns

Dr. Jeffries noted a number of sexual health concerns:

Visit [SexHealthMatters.org](http://www.sexhealthmatters.org) today!

Provide Sexual Health Education

Give your patients access by linking to [SexHealthMatters.org](http://www.sexhealthmatters.org) from your practice website: <http://www.sexhealthmatters.org/page/link-to-us>

Fan: [Facebook.com/SexHlthMatters](https://www.facebook.com/SexHlthMatters)

Follow: [Twitter.com/SexHlthMatters](https://twitter.com/SexHlthMatters)

Subscribe: [YouTube.com/SexHlthMatters](https://www.youtube.com/SexHlthMatters)

- About 12% - 21% of MSMW were infected with HIV.
- MSMW were more likely than MSM to have an undiagnosed HIV infection, increasing the risk of transmitting the infection to male and female partners.
- One study found that 21% of MSMW had been treated for a sexually-transmitted infection (STI) in the previous year, compared to 12% of MSM and 2.3% of MSW
- Another study reported that MSMW were more likely to have their first sexual experience before the age of 14.
- Forced sex was more common among MSMW than among MSM or MSW.
- MSMW were more likely to have six or more partners in the past year.
- Drug and alcohol use, which can lead to risky sexual behaviors, figured prominently in the sex lives of many MSMW.
- Some MSMW do not use condoms if their female partner is on another form of birth control, raising the risk of HIV/STI transmission.

Sociocultural Factors

Dr. Jeffries also discussed how society and culture are involved with MSMW's sexual health:

- **Biphobia.** "Societal biphobia – negative attitudes and behaviors toward bisexual individuals – is more prevalent than anti-gay sentiment," he explained. Living with biphobia can lead to social isolation, depression and anxiety. These conditions could increase the likelihood of substance abuse and risky sexual behaviors. MSMW might feel they need to have multiple sexual relationships to "prove" that bisexuality is a valid orientation.

Biphobia can also be found in the healthcare system. MSMW may be reluctant to see doctors or seek information or services for fear of how they will be treated by the medical establishment.

Relationships can be vulnerable to biphobia as well. Partners might not accept bisexuality, weakening the relationship. Intimate partner violence is also a possibility.

- **Economic issues.** Financial stability and bisexual health were connected in many ways. For example, one study found that adolescent MSMW were more likely to skip school. Another found that adult MSMW were less likely to have a bachelor's degree when compared to MSM and MSW. These factors might affect career advancement and earning power.

The research showed that MSMW were more likely than MSM to lack health insurance, which

can decrease the chances that their health concerns will be addressed.

What Can Be Done?

Understanding the issues facing bisexuals is key. Dr. Jeffries recommended culturally- and socially-appropriate interventions and education programs where MSMW feel safe and supported. He also encouraged healthcare providers to participate in sensitivity training so that MSMW will feel more comfortable accessing services.

It's also important to consider the needs of MSMW of color, who may experience racism and have different views on masculinity.

Resources

American Journal of Preventative Medicine

Jeffries, William L., IV, PhD

“Beyond the Bisexual Bridge

(Full-text. Published online: June 22, 2014)

[http://www.ajpmonline.org/article/S0749-3797\(14\)00186-X/abstract](http://www.ajpmonline.org/article/S0749-3797(14)00186-X/abstract)

Brown University Health Services

“Bisexual Health”

“Health Concerns for Bisexuals”

http://brown.edu/Student_Services/Health_Services/Health_Education/lgbtq_health/bisexual_health/health_concerns_for_bisexuals.php

Elsevier

“Bisexual Men Face Unique Challenges to Their Sexual Health”

(Press release. June 23, 2014)

<http://www.elsevier.com/about/press-releases/research-and-journals/bisexual-men-face-unique-challenges-to-their-sexual-health>