

Expand Your Research: Include Sexual and Gender Minority Health

Have you considered pursuing research that addresses the health issues of sexual and gender minority (SGM) populations?

SGM populations include individuals whose sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, or reproductive development varies from traditional, societal, or cultural norms. Often, they identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or intersex (LGBTI). They may also identify as queer, questioning, Two Spirit, asexual, or gender variant.



Expanding a research question to include SGM considerations can reveal unexpected associations.

For example, when researchers analyzed data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health through the lens of sexual orientation, they found young gay men were almost twice as likely as heterosexual men to have high blood pressure. The higher risk could not be explained by cardiovascular disease risk factors—such as smoking, alcohol use, drug use, body mass index, or level of physical activity—or by minority stress.¹

Research Needs

SGMs have distinct health issues that call for research in many areas, including:

- Aging
- Cancer risk
- Cardiovascular disorders
- Depression, suicidality, and other mental health disorders
- Endocrine problems
- Exogenous hormone use and risks
- Exposure to violence
- Impact and effects of stigma (minority stress)
- Needs across the lifespan
- Obesity
- Racial, ethnic, sex, and gender differences
- Resiliency or protective factors affecting health outcomes
- Risk and pathobiology of infectious diseases (e.g., hepatitis C, HIV)
- Tobacco and alcohol/drug use

More research in these areas can help us better understand health risks, conditions, and protective factors associated with sexual orientation and gender identity across the lifespan.



National Institutes of Health
Turning Discovery Into Health



Funding

Researchers may apply for funding under any mechanism supported by NIH, including, but not limited to, topic-specific funding opportunity announcements. Researchers can also consider adding questions about sexual orientation and gender identity into existing projects and/or applying for supplemental funding to incorporate SGM populations or relevant aims into existing research projects.



Take Action

- ✓ **Read** the 2011 Institute of Medicine report, *The Health of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender People: Building a Foundation for Better Understanding*, and the [NIH FY2010 portfolio analysis and report](#) to learn more about SGM health research needs.
- ✓ **Initiate** conversations with researchers knowledgeable about SGM issues and with members of the SGM community to better understand research considerations specific to SGM communities and ways that current research could address SGM health.
- ✓ **Explore** opportunities for NIH funding at www.grants.nih.gov.
- ✓ **Talk** with NIH program officers about research areas that are ready for exploration and ways to integrate SGM considerations into existing research.
- ✓ **Contact** members of the NIH SGM Research Coordinating Committee, which includes representatives from NIH Institutes and Centers, to identify ways to develop new research proposals and incorporate SGM health into existing research—or to learn about promising areas for new investigation. Reach us at sgmhealthresearch@od.nih.gov.

1. Everett, B., & Mollborn, S. (2013). *Differences in hypertension by sexual orientation among U.S. young adults*. *Journal of Community Health*, 38(3), 588–596.