



# Prevalence of Depressive Disorders Among LGBTQ+ Adults with Disabilities

## Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), 2022

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### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- *LGBTQ+ adults with disabilities experienced a higher prevalence of depression.*
- *65% of LGBTQ+ adult females with disabilities reported experiencing depression.*
- *43% of LGBTQ+ adult males with disabilities reported experiencing depression.*
- *60% of transgender adults with disabilities reported experiencing depression.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

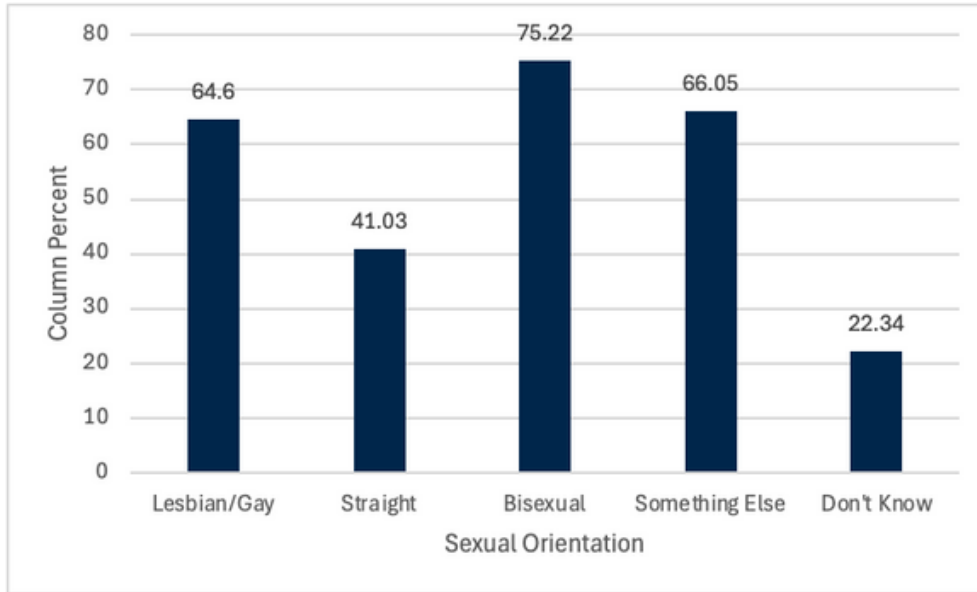
Approximately 25% of adults in the U.S. and 16% of individuals globally have a disability (World Health Organization, 2023; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2023). According to the Pew Research Center, about 7% of Americans identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual, while 1.6% of Americans identify as transgender or non-binary (Brown, 2023). Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ+) populations experience higher rates of disability compared to their heterosexual and cisgender counterparts (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2023). Disabled individuals are about five times more likely to experience mental distress and are twice as likely to have chronic health conditions, such as depression (World Health Organization, 2023). LGBTQ+ individuals also face elevated rates of mental health issues, with gay and bisexual males and females reporting higher odds of frequent mental distress and depression (Gonzales & Henning-Smith, 2017).

However, there is limited research on the disparities at the intersection of disability status, sexual orientation, and gender identity. This brief aims to address this gap by analyzing differences in depression prevalence among disabled LGBTQ+ adults to highlight disparities and advocate for health interventions that address these intersecting inequities.



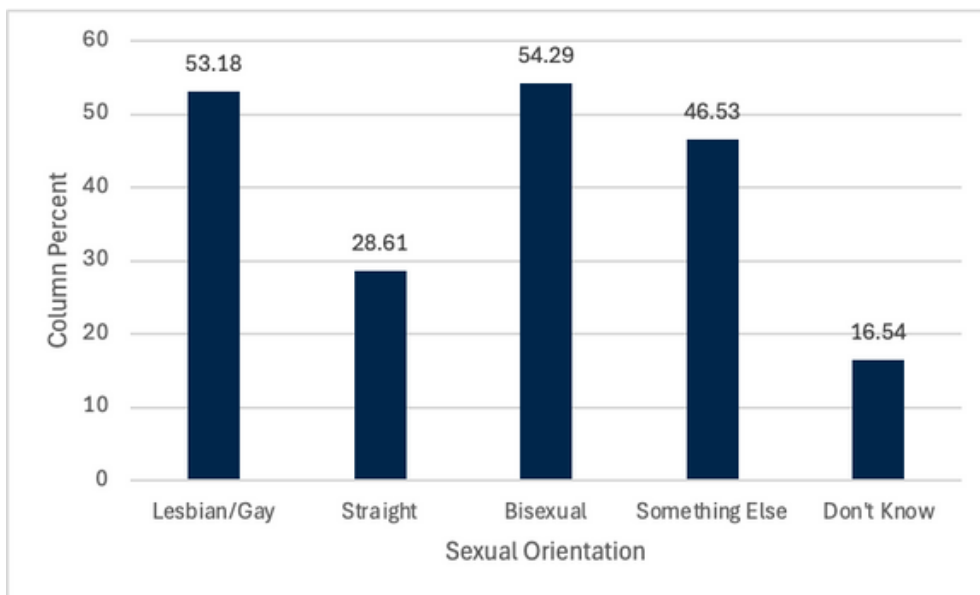
**FINDINGS**

**Figure 1.** Depression Prevalence Among Disabled Female Adults by Sexual Orientation, BRFSS 2022 (n = 12,374)



LGBTQ+ adult females with disabilities reported a higher prevalence of depression than heterosexual females with disabilities-- as 75.22% of bisexual adults, 66.05% of “something else” adults, and 64.60% of lesbian adults have experienced depression, while 41.03% of straight adults have experienced depression.

**Figure 2.** Depression Prevalence Among Disabled Male Adults by Sexual Orientation, BRFSS 2022 (n = 8,540)

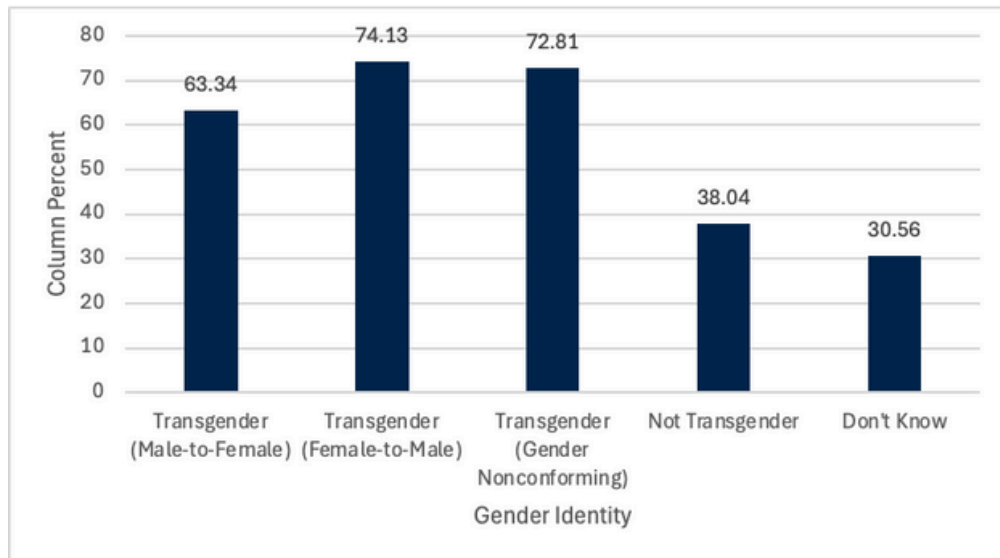




On average, LGBTQ+ adult males with disabilities experienced depression more than heterosexual males with disabilities-- as 54.29% of bisexual adults, 46.53% of “something else” adults, and 53.18% of gay adults have experienced depression, while 28.61% of heterosexual adults experienced depression.

Comparing females and males, females with disabilities reported have a greater prevalence of depression across all sexual orientation groups-- elucidating that women with disabilities, particularly those who identify as LGBTQ+, disproportionately experience depression when compared to LGBTQ+ males.

**Figure 3.** Depression Prevalence Among Disabled Adults by Gender Identity, BRFSS 2022 (n = 2,414)



Transgender adults with disabilities experienced depression more than cisgender adults with disabilities-- as 74.1% of transgender (female-to-male) individuals, 72.8% of transgender (gender nonconforming) individuals, and 63.3% of transgender (male-to-female) individuals experience depression, while 38.0% of cisgender individuals experienced depression.



## **REFERENCES**

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## **DATA SOURCE**

This Statistical Brief uses data from the BRFSS 2022 survey. For additional information about the BRFSS data set, see: <https://www.cdc.gov/brfss/index.html>

## **POPULATION**

The BRFSS includes a Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) module, which provides researchers with the opportunity to evaluate patterns in health outcomes for individuals based on their sexual orientation or gender identity. This statistical brief references data from the module, as the brief's target population is LGBTQ+ individuals who have a disability. Referencing BRFSS' terminology, LGBTQ+ adults with disabilities are individuals who identify as "lesbian", "gay", "bisexual", "transgender", "something else", or "other" and have a condition that affects their cognition, vision, hearing, mobility, self-care, or independent living.



**VARIABLES AND DEFINITIONS**

**Depression**

Depression is measured by a yes/no response to the question “Has a doctor, nurse, or other health professional ever told you that you have a depressive disorder including depression, major depression, dysthymia, or minor depression?”

**Disability Module**

BRFSS’ Disability module consists of six questions centered around six categories of disability– hearing, vision, decision, mobility, self-care, and independent living disability.

**Table 1.** BRFSS Disability Questions

<b>Question No. / Variable Name</b>	<b>Question</b>	<b>Response Option</b>
DEAF	Some people who are deaf or have serious difficulty hearing use assistive devices to communicate by phone. Are you deaf or do you have serious difficulty hearing?	1 = Yes 2 = No 7 = Don’t know / Not sure 9 = Refused
BLIND	Are you blind or do you have serious difficulty seeing, even when wearing glasses?	1 = Yes 2 = No 7 = Don’t know / Not sure 9 = Refused
DECIDE	Because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition, do you have serious difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions?	1 = Yes 2 = No 7 = Don’t know / Not sure 9 = Refused
DIFFWALK	Do you have serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs?	1 = Yes 2 = No 7 = Don’t know / Not sure 9 = Refused
DIFFDRES	Do you have difficulty dressing or bathing?	1 = Yes 2 = No 7 = Don’t know / Not sure 9 = Refused
DIFFALON	Because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition, do you have difficulty doing errands alone such as visiting a doctor’s office or shopping?	1 = Yes 2 = No 7 = Don’t know / Not sure 9 = Refused

### Sexual Orientation Gender Identity (SOGI) Module

BRFSS' Module 26: Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) asks 2 questions centered around the respondent's sexual orientation and gender identity, providing a filter through which health outcomes can be analyzed and compared between different groups. To maintain consistency and clarity, this brief will reference BRFSS' definitions of sexual orientation and gender identity.

**Table 2.** BRFSS SOGI Questions

Question No. / Variable Name	Question	Response Option
SOMALE	Which of the following best represents how you think of yourself?	1 = Lesbian or Gay 2 = Straight, that is, not gay 3 = Bisexual 4 = Something else 7 = I don't know the answer 9 = Refused
SOFEMALE	Which of the following best represents how you think of yourself?	1 = Lesbian or Gay 2 = Straight, that is, not gay 3 = Bisexual 4 = Something else 7 = I don't know the answer 9 = Refused
TRNSGNDR	Do you consider yourself to be transgender? (If yes, ask "Do you consider yourself to be male-to-female, female-to-male, or gender non-conforming?")	1= Yes, Transgender, male-to-female 2 = Yes, Transgender, female-to-male 3 = Yes, Transgender, gender nonconforming 4 = No 7 = Don't know 9 = Refused



### **Suggested Citation**

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### ***CENTER FOR DISABILITY HEALTH AND WELLNESS (CDHW)***

The University of Michigan Center for Disability Health and Wellness (U-M CDHW) aims to develop and apply innovative research, clinical, and educational strategies to address inequities in healthcare access, quality, and outcomes experienced by individuals with disabilities across the lifespan. We work in partnership with members of the disability community to ensure that all people, regardless of type or severity of disability, have full access to quality health care and to wellness activities personalized to their background, strengths and needs.

Website: <https://disabilityhealth.medicine.umich.edu/research/ahead-dc-rrtc>