

Estimates of alcohol use and clinical treatment needs among homosexually active men and women in the U.S. population

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Concerns about dysfunctional alcohol use among lesbians and gay men are longstanding. However, most surveys have relied on convenience-based samples, often recruited from venues linked to alcohol consumption. To avoid problems with sampling bias, we examined alcohol use patterns and treatment utilization among adults interviewed in the 1996 National Household Survey of Drug Abuse. During the interview, respondents indicated the genders of their sex partners in the prior year. From these reports, we classified sexually active men and women into two groups: those with at least one same-gender (n=194) and those with only opposite-gender sex partners (n=9,714). We then compared these two groups, separately by gender. Normative alcohol use patterns or morbidity indicators did not appear to differ significantly between homosexually and exclusively heterosexually active men. However, homosexually active women reported using alcohol more frequently and in greater amounts than exclusively heterosexually active women, and also experienced greater alcohol-related morbidity. Findings suggest higher risk for alcohol-related problems among lesbians as compared to other women, perhaps due, in part, to a more common pattern of moderate alcohol consumption in this population.

Learning Objectives: 1. Identify normative patterns of alcohol use among lesbians and gay men. 2. Describe the burden of alcohol dependency within this population and their propensity to utilize related health care services

Keywords: Alcohol Use, Gay

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