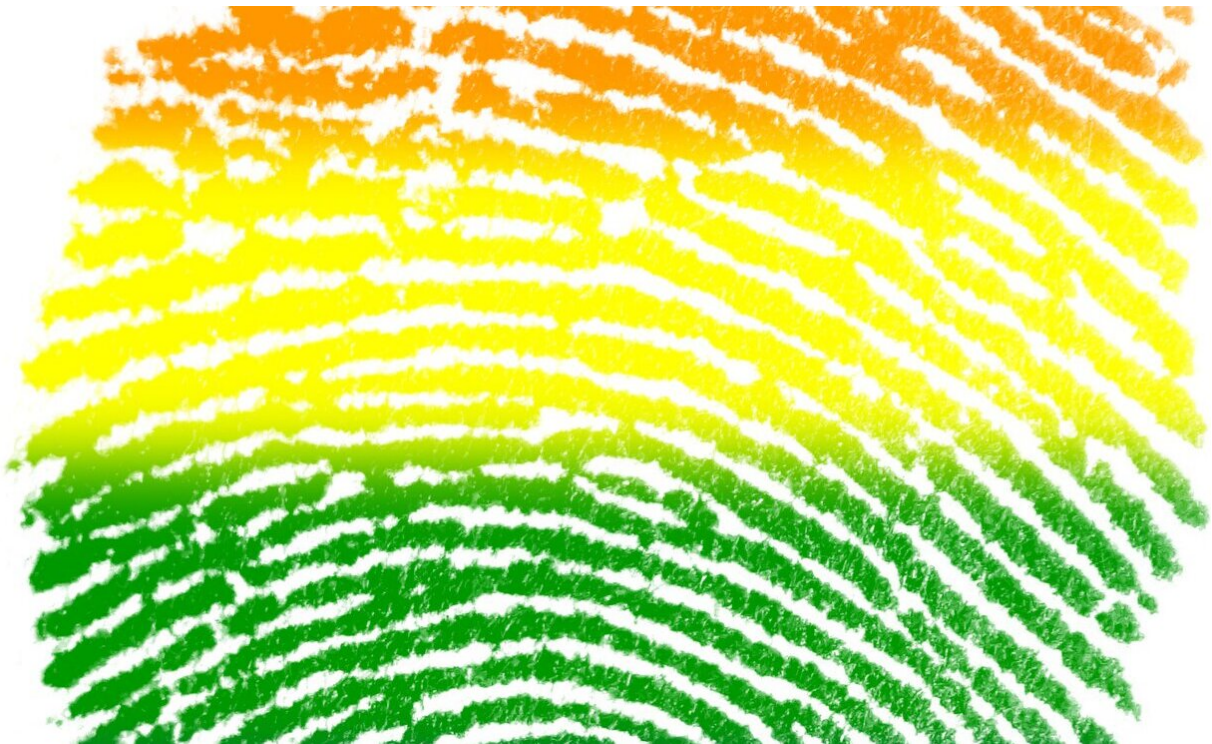


Sexual minorities continue to face discrimination, despite increasing support

November 14 2019, by Katie Bohn



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

Despite increasing support for the rights of people in the LGBTQ+ community, discrimination remains a critical and ongoing issue for this population, according to researchers.

In a recent study, researchers found that adults who identified as gay,

lesbian or bisexual—as well as people who reported same-sex attraction or same-sex [sexual partners](#), referred to as sexual minorities—experienced discrimination and victimization at different rates across age.

Cara Exten, assistant professor of nursing at Penn State, said the findings are a reminder that discrimination is still a significant issue for sexual minorities, which is key for policy, prevention and intervention.

"We conducted this study because we wanted to better understand discrimination experiences affecting sexual [minority](#) populations," Exten said. "We wanted to examine whether there were adults at particular ages who were more likely to have experienced discrimination in the past year—and if so, what types of discrimination. We aimed to call attention to the continued high rates of discrimination that LGBTQ+ individuals are experiencing—because we know that these experiences affect their health."

Collaborator Stephanie Lanza, professor of biobehavioral health and director of the Edna Bennett Pierce Prevention Research Center, noted that "a better understanding of recent experiences of discrimination among adults across a wide range of ages is necessary so that we can add to the national discourse on LGBTQ+ disparities in physical and mental health. Importantly, examining specific types of discrimination experienced by sexual minorities across age can indicate where there is greatest need for intervention—both to support individuals and to address stigma more broadly."

According to the researchers, previous work has found that sexual minorities tend to experience poorer health than non-sexual minorities. Exten said that while sexual minorities are not inherently more vulnerable to health concerns, their experiences with anti-LGB stress, stigma, and discrimination across the life course may lead to poor and

complicated health patterns.

"Research has linked discrimination and poor health outcomes among minorities, but we didn't have a clear picture of whether sexual minorities may be more or less vulnerable to experiencing discrimination at certain points during their life," Exten said. "We might, for example, find that [older adults](#) are more likely to experience discrimination in [health](#) care settings as they age, given that older adults are more likely to need medical care."

The researchers used data gathered from a nationally representative study of U.S. citizens on 2,993 [sexual minorities](#) between the ages of 18 and 65. Participants answered a questionnaire about how often they had experienced discrimination in the previous year due to being perceived as gay, lesbian or bisexual.

The survey included questions about whether they had experienced six different forms of discrimination. The researchers grouped the different types of discrimination into three groups: general, like in public places like shops or restaurants; victimization, such as being called names, pushed or threatened; and healthcare discrimination, such as trouble obtaining healthcare due to sexual orientation, or discrimination during treatment.

After analyzing the data, the researchers found that 17% of participants had experienced some form of discrimination in the previous year. In total, 13% reported general discrimination, 12% reported victimization and 7% reported healthcare discrimination.

The researchers also broke down the data by age, gender, and sexual identity. In general, discrimination experiences were most common in early adulthood, with another increase in middle adulthood. Males were generally more likely to report having experienced anti-LGB

discrimination and victimization in the last year. Healthcare discrimination peaked among individuals in their early 50s.

"The overall rates were quite high," Exten said. "This was particularly true in some subgroups of the community. Among 18-year-olds, one in five males experienced victimization in the past year. Experiencing victimization can be quite traumatic, and certainly acts as a stressor for these individuals. We hope these findings will be a call to action."

Exten said the findings—recently published in the *Journal of Homosexuality*—suggest the need for continued work in reducing discrimination.

"Reducing discrimination in the United States will require broad approaches within our communities, schools, workplaces, healthcare facilities, and families," Exten said. "It is critical that we continue to recognize that [discrimination](#) is happening and that we continue to work to develop more inclusive policies and spaces in our communities.

More information: Cara Exten Rice et al, Sexual Minority-related Discrimination across the Life Course: Findings from a National Sample of Adults in the United States, *Journal of Homosexuality* (2019). [DOI: 10.1080/00918369.2019.1648083](https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2019.1648083)

Provided by Pennsylvania State University

Citation: Sexual minorities continue to face discrimination, despite increasing support (2019, November 14) retrieved 20 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2019-11-sexual-minorities-discrimination.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private

study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.