

LGBTQ+ Affirming Care Can Reduce Health Disparities



McKay, T., Tran, N.M., Barbee, H., & Min, J.K. (N.D.). Association of LGBTQ+ affirming care with preventative care and chronic disease outcomes. American Journal of Preventive Medicine.

What did We do?

This study analyzed data from the Vanderbilt University Social Networks, Aging, and Policy Study (VUSNAPS), a large survey of LGBTQ+ adults aged 50-76 living in Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina and Tennessee.

We first asked respondents if they had a usual health care provider that they go to for health needs other than the emergency room. We then respondents if they thought of this usual health care provider as LGBTQ+ affirming. Next, we asked about a range of preventative screenings, vaccinations, and chronic disease outcomes to detect differences between those with and those without access to an LGBTQ+ affirming provider.

What was New, Innovative, or Notable?

The health benefits for LGBTQ+ people who have access to affirming providers are not well understood. This study indicates that LGBTQ+ people who have access to affirming providers are more likely to be up to date with recommended preventative screening and vaccinations, and they feel better about their chronic health condition compared to those who do not have access to an LGBTQ+ affirming provider.

What Did We Learn?



63% of survey respondents said they had a health care provider who was LGBT-affirming. Compared to respondents who did not report having an LGBT-affirming provider, these respondents were:

- **3.8%** more likely to have seen a doctor in the past year
- **7%** more likely to have ever had a colorectal cancer screening
- **6%** more likely to have every had a flu shot
- **7.8%** more likely to have had a flu shot in the last 3

Among LGBTQ+ respondents most at risk of HIV, those with an affirming provider were:

- **13.9%** more likely to have ever had an HIV test
- **32.7%** more likely to have had an HIV test in the last 3 years



Among LGBTQ+ respondents with a mental health condition, those with an affirming provider were:

- **10.8%** more likely to report their condition as "under control"

What Does This Mean for Our Communities?

Implementing and expanding access to LGBTQ+ affirming care may improve the health of middle-age and older LGBTQ+ populations. LGBTQ+ community members have shared several examples of what they look for in a health care provider to determine if they are LGBTQ+ affirming. For example, does the provider use gender inclusive language on medical forms or when speaking with a patient? Or, did the provider ask their patient to get care somewhere else because they didn't know how to provide LGBTQ+ specific care. An ongoing study looks at how these provider attitudes and beliefs towards LGBTQ+ people affect preventative screenings and vaccination, HIV prevention, and how they feel about their chronic health condition.

Action Step: See <https://www.vusnaps.com/findings> for more information and to share the study findings with your friends, family, and community.