



## Coachella Valley LGBT Report Good Overall Health, but More Illness

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Members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities in Coachella Valley largely report having health insurance and being in "good" to "excellent" health, but they also report high rates of mental illness and other health problems, according to a survey by the LGBT Community Center of the Desert, *HealthyCal* reports.

### Details of Study

The survey -- funded by the Desert Healthcare District -- was developed by the community center using statistics compiled by the Health Assessment Resource Center.

The poll was sent to community center members and posted online for seven weeks.

More than 700 individuals responded to the survey, including:

- 547 participants who identified as being gay;
- 117 participants who identified as being lesbian;
- 31 participants who identified as being bisexual;
- 20 participants who identified as being transgender; and
- 54 participants who identified as being heterosexual.

More than 90% of respondents were white and more than 80% were over age 50.

### Findings

Of the respondents:

- More than 80% reported having a chronic illness, such as high cholesterol, arthritis or hepatitis;
- 65% reported having several sexual partners, with about half saying they did not ask their partners about HIV before sex and 35% saying they did not use protection;
- 64% reported being overweight or obese;
- 30% reported using illicit drugs;
- 19% reported having been diagnosed with HIV;
- 15% reported smoking cigarettes;
- Fewer than 10% reported binge drinking; and
- 9% reported having been diagnosed with AIDS.

In addition, more than half of those surveyed reported having been diagnosed with a mental illness, such as:

- Anxiety;
- Depression; or
- Panic disorder.

Sixty percent of respondents said they sought professional help for a mental illness and 25% said they had considered suicide, compared with a national rate of 3.7%.

## Reaction

Jill Gover, director of the study, said many of the health disparities stem from past discrimination or abuse, especially among individuals who were adults in the 1980s.

Service providers can use the results as evidence when they apply for grant money to address health disparities in the LGBT community, according to *HealthyCal* (Potter, *HealthyCal*, 11/7).

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