

BiRCH: Bisexual Research Collaborative on Health

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What does the bisexual population look like?

- There are approximately 9 million LGBT people in the United States **with more than half of that population identifying as bisexual**.⁸ In a large nationally representative survey of US adults and adolescents (*NSSHB*), **2.6% of adult men and 3.6% of adult women identify as bisexual; additionally, 1.6% of adolescent men and a striking 8.4% of adolescent women identify as bisexual**.⁹ Higher rates have engaged in bisexual behavior at different points throughout the life course. Yet, there is **little consensus on how to measure bisexuality** with both risks and outcomes varying based on behavioral versus identity-based measures¹⁻⁴
- Additionally, Americans are more likely to report same-sex sexual behavior or attraction than those who report identifying as LGBT: an estimated **19 million Americans (8.2%) report engaging in same-sex behavior** and nearly **25.6 million Americans (11%) acknowledge some same-sex attraction**.
- This highlights the importance of population based surveys that properly distinguish between sexual orientation, sexual behavior and gender identity, to avoid artificially inflated or lowered indicators.

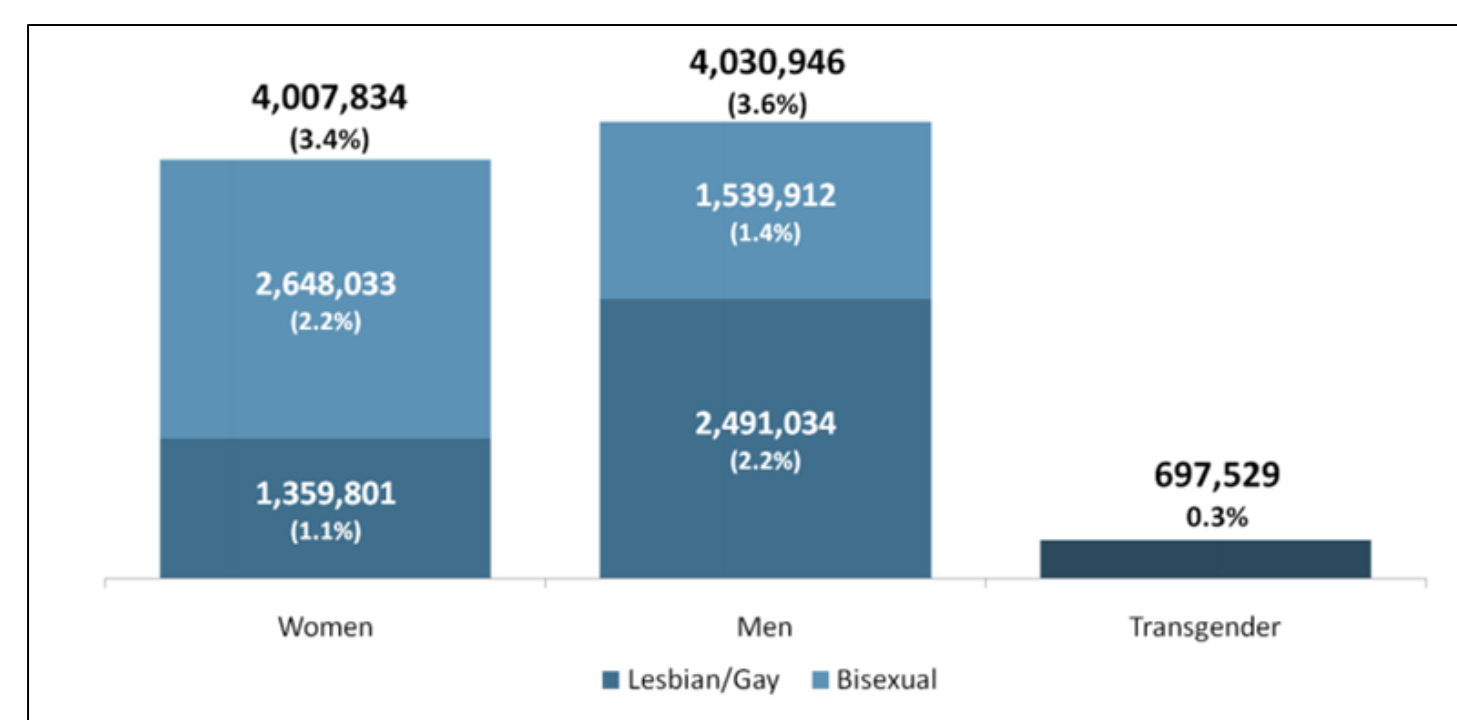
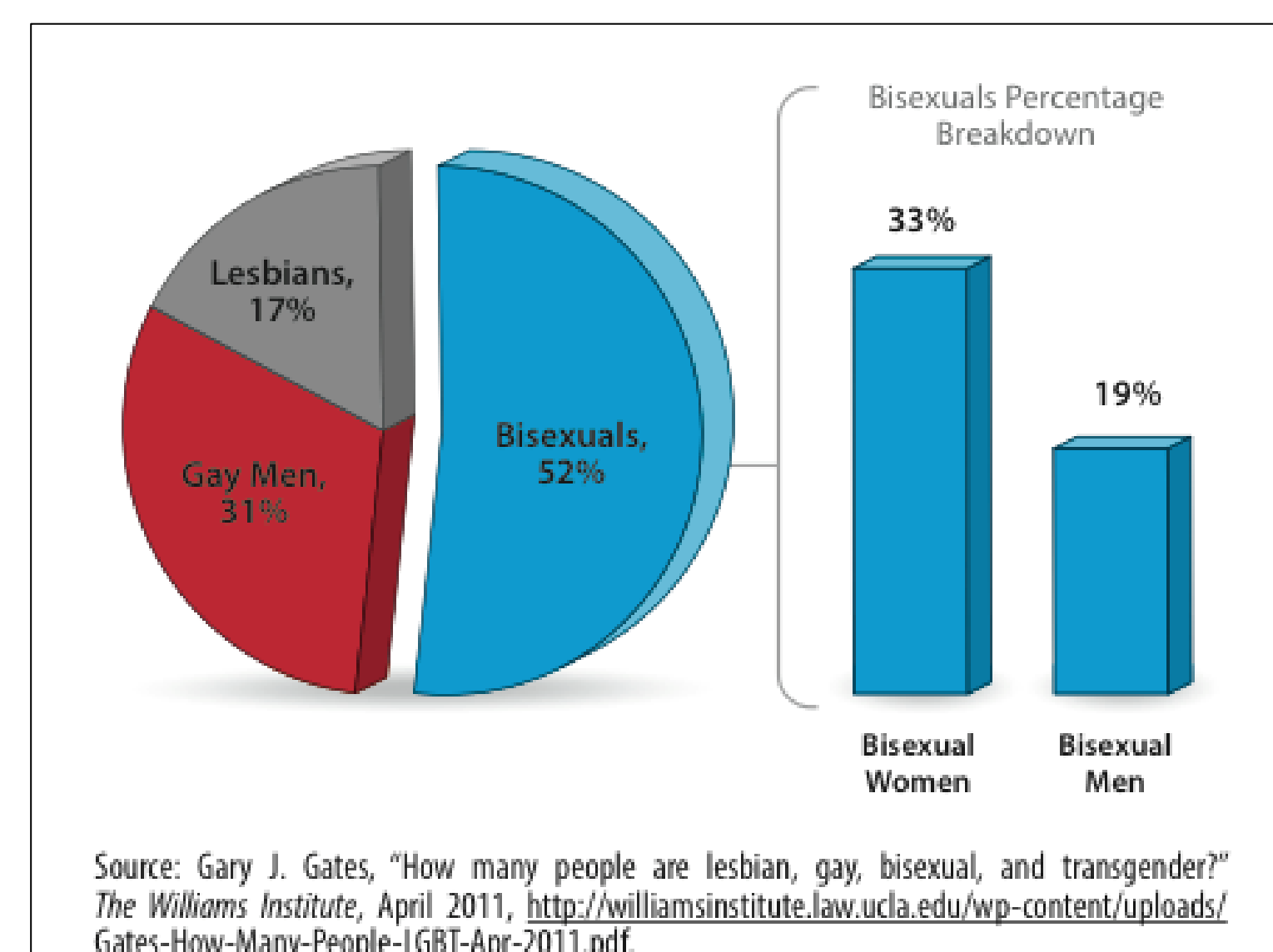


Figure 1. Percent and number of adults who identify as LGBT in the United States
Gates, G.J (2011). "How many people are lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender?" The Williams Institute.
<http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Gates-How-Many-People-LGBT-Apr-2011.pdf>



Source: Gary J. Gates, "How many people are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender?" The Williams Institute, April 2011, <http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Gates-How-Many-People-LGBT-Apr-2011.pdf>.

Figure 2. Percentage of Bisexuals in LGBT Community

What are most prevalent bisexual health concerns?

- Despite the exponential increase in LGBT scholarly literature in the past three decades, there remain significant gaps in our basic understanding of the health status, behaviors and outcomes in specifically bisexual populations.
 - 2011 report on LGBT health by the IOM recommends³ an increased focus due to the dearth of empirical work devoted explicitly to bisexuals.

We do know that relative to exclusively heterosexual and exclusively homosexual counterparts, **bisexual individuals report higher rates of:**

- psychosocial health issues**, such as *depression and anxiety*¹ (figure 4), *substance use*², *intimate partner violence* (figure 3), *violence victimization*³, *self harm and suicidality*⁴; *isolation and lack of access to community and social support*¹⁰
- health risk behavior issues**, such as *unprotected sex, sex work engagement, higher number of sexual partners*⁷, *smoking and illicit drug use*⁵⁻⁶, *frequent use of emergency contraception and pregnancy termination*⁷; and
- biomedical health issues**, including *disproportionate rates of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STI)*⁷, *as well as lower health-related quality of life*.

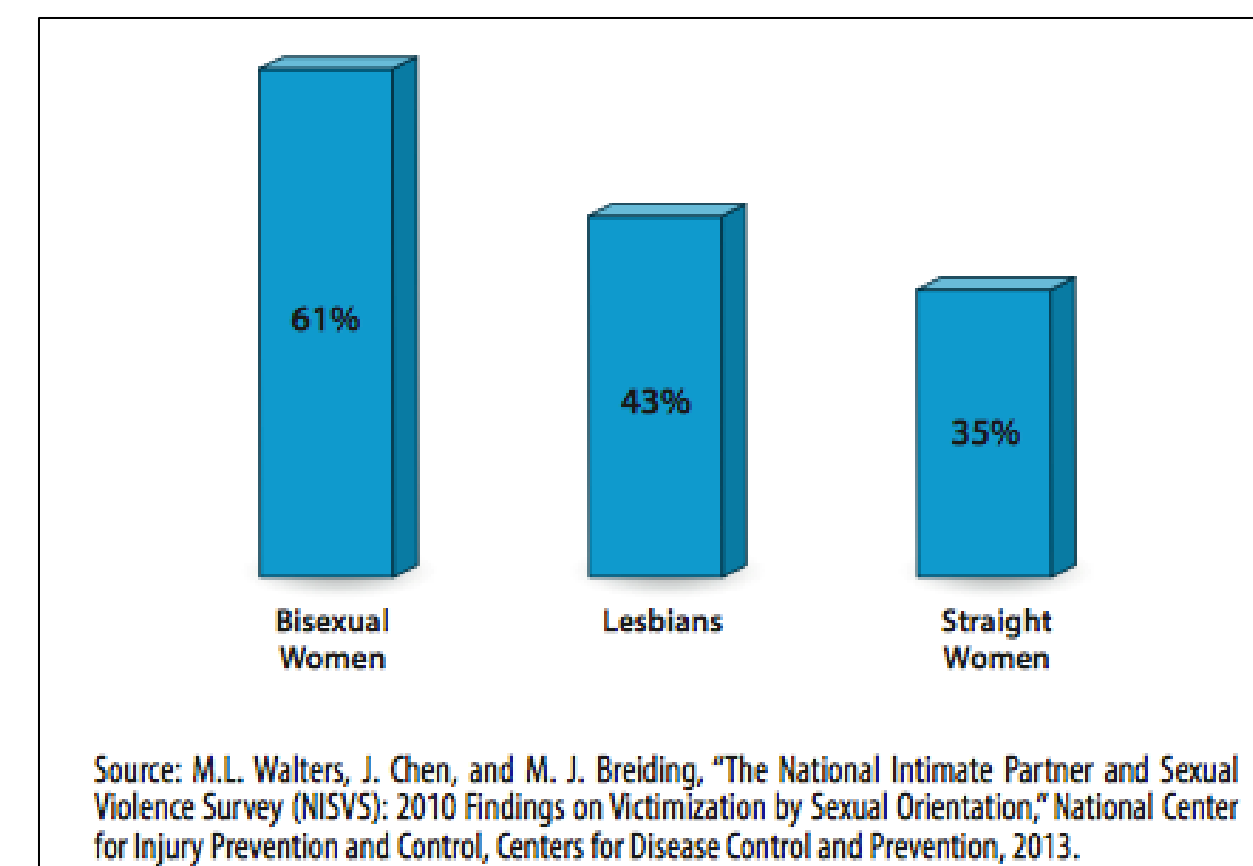


Figure 3. Women Experiencing Intimate Partner Violence
% Of Women Who Say They Have Experience Rape, Physical Violence, and/or Stalking By An Intimate Partner
Source: M.L. Walters, J. Chen, and M. J. Breiding, "The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2010 Findings on Victimization by Sexual Orientation," National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2013.

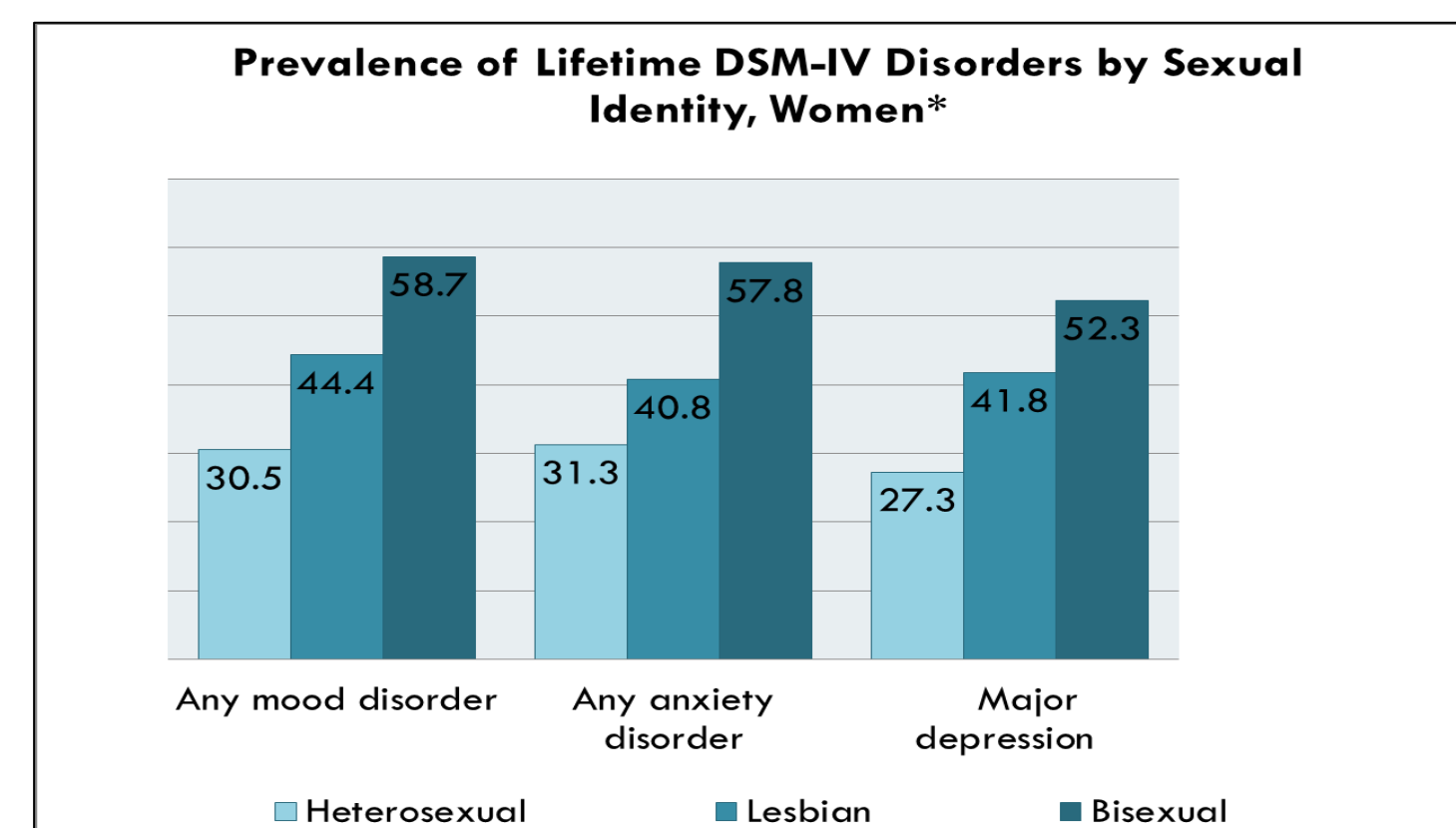


Figure 4. Bostwick, WB, Boyd, C.J., Hughes, T.L., McCabe, S.E. (2010). "Dimensions of sexual orientation and the prevalence of mood and anxiety disorders in the United States." *American Journal of Public Health*

What can BiRCH do to help?

In 2013, the White House held a meeting of bisexual community leaders and a small number of LGBT scientists, to gather information that would support increased information about this understudied population and provide guidance for those who expressed interest in further work.

Following this meeting, the Fenway Institute held a meeting of national scientists and bisexual leaders to consider critical areas of study to advance the growing field of bisexual research, and to develop a national collaborative of individuals to increase and support bisexual work.

- The third in this series of scientific meetings held at Fenway in June 2014, provided a critical first scientific consensus to create BiRCH with the following aims in mind:
 - To identify and bring together scientists and leaders in bisexuality and promising new graduate students studying the field to advance the state of the science in the field of bisexual health research.
 - To foster research collaborations and strengthen the growth of the field
 - To develop a mechanism for participants to continue working together to build the field of bisexuality health and increase the number and diversity of other scientists, students and community leaders working or wanting to participate in further development of bisexuality research.
 - To address current gaps in bisexual health research, including documenting these in strategic publications, and proposing new studies to fill these gaps.

Acknowledgements and Affiliations



Figure 5: Group photo of attendees at Fenway's third scientific meeting, where BiRCH was initiated, in June of 2014.



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- Self-harm and suicidality (Balsam et al, 2005; Bolton & Sareen, 2011; Steele, et al 2009)
- Smoking (Blosnich et al, 2014; Conron et al, 2010; Lindley, et al, 2012)
- Illicit drug use (McCabe et al, 2009; McCabe et al 2004)
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