

# LGBTQI HEALTH 101

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## The Basics

- People who identify as LGBTQI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex) report lower overall health and higher psychological stress.
- These disparities also intersect with race, ethnicity, class, gender, immigration status, and other social statuses.
- The main causes of health disparities in the LGBTQI population are stigma, isolation, violence, poverty, and inadequate care.
- Noticeable barriers between LGBTQI patients and health professionals include lack of knowledge, homophobia/biphobia/transphobia, assumptions of heterosexuality, inappropriate referrals, and violations of patient confidentiality.
- Tips for health care professionals: Ask gender-neutral questions about sexual activity, respect the patient's gender pronouns, take time to educate yourself and others, and do not invalidate your patients' identities and requested services.

## Disparity in the United States

A few causes of LGBTQI health inequalities:

- Peer isolation, parental rejection, and harassment have been linked to negative health outcomes. Youth who are rejected or lack support are more likely to attempt suicide, report depression, use illegal drugs, and have unprotected sex.
- 20-40% of homeless street youth are LGBTQI. Many are kicked out of their homes or run away to avoid violence and perpetual harassment. Homelessness often means elevated risk of HIV/STIs, substance abuse, and experiencing violence. Almost 1 in 5 transgender people report being homeless at some point in their lives.
- Poverty is a large obstacle to health care access and preventative care, and the poverty rates for the LGBTQI population are higher than that of heterosexual adults as a result of many factors, including unemployment due to discrimination that is completely legal in many states.

## Mental Health

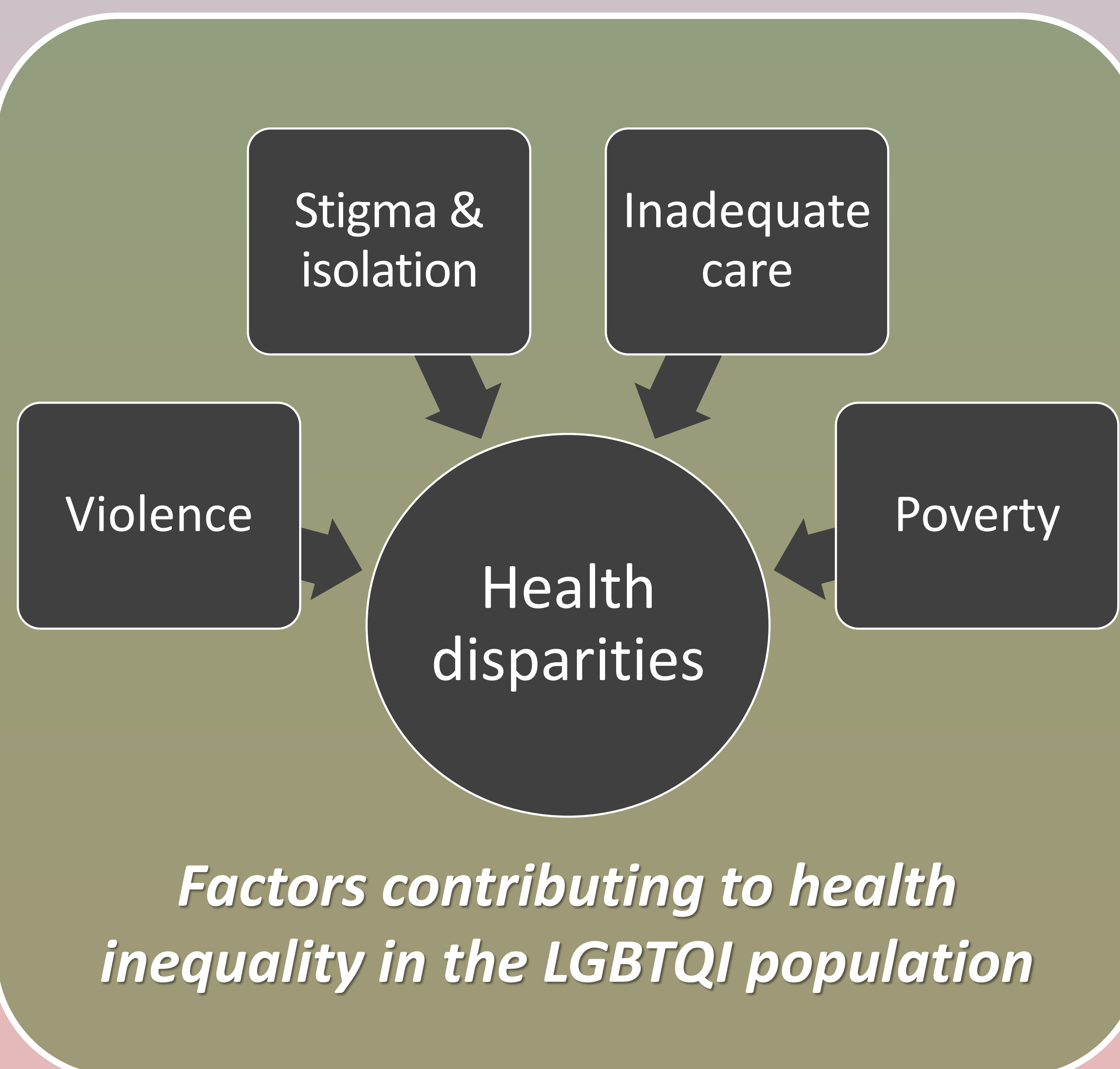
- Mental health is worse among LGBTQI people than among the general population, with depression, anxiety and suicide ideation being 2-3 times higher than the general population.
- Depression and suicide in all adolescents is associated with isolation, bullying, assault, discrimination, and lack of support, which are experiences common to the LGBTQI community.
- Depression and suicide attempts in the LGBTQI community are highest among transgender individuals with an overall 41% attempting suicide, and even higher rates among those who experienced other factors like homelessness (69%), isolation from family (57%), or physical or sexual violence (65-70%).

## Example: HIV/AIDS prevalence

*"When I told my mom I was gay, she immediately said I would get AIDS. I kind of expected this homophobic reaction, but then I looked it up online and some groups within the LGBTQ community do have higher rates of STIs and HIV/AIDS. Why is this?" - Anonymous*

Ironically, the stigma of being LGBTQI is a large contributor to these higher rates of STIs and HIV/AIDS. Increased rates of poverty and homelessness mean less resources, less access to health insurance and preventative health care, and even an increased likelihood of getting involved in sex work. Additionally, non-inclusive sex education oriented around straight couples and/or abstinence leaves LGBTQI youth without equal access to knowledge and self-care. If someone is not "out" to most people in their lives, who do they ask about protection? LGBTQI people also have higher rates of mental health issues, and mental health issues in any sexual orientation or gender identity are correlated to engaging in risky behaviors, including unprotected sex.

If your mom is so concerned about your health, support is one of the best initial preventative measures! Associating LGBTQI with "hypersexual" misunderstands the root of these health disparities.



## Transgender and Intersex Health

Transgender and intersex issues are described separately because these identities are a matter of gender identity and expression, not sexual orientation. Transgender and intersex people can be straight or LGBTQ.

- For those who transition, access to hormones and gender confirmation surgeries are necessary medical care, and legal recognition of that is occurring very slowly in the United States.
- In health care settings, 19% of trans people are refused care, 28% are subjected to verbal harassment, and 50% have to educate their medical providers about transgender health care.
- People who are intersex illustrate a natural variation that is rejected by a society that views biological sex as binary. There is an astonishing lack of knowledge about intersex in the health care field, leading to harmful treatment such as unnecessary surgery.