

LGBTQ+ Health & International Perspectives

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SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY THROUGHOUT HISTORY

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and related identities have been present in various forms throughout history. All cultures have included, with varying degrees of acceptance, individuals who practice same-sex relations as well as those whose gender, gender identity and gender expression challenge prevailing norms, and many cultures still do.



UNITED STATES

Native American Great Plains Tribes viewed gender on a spectrum from male to female, including transgender and intersex persons who were considered to have special spiritual significance.



PORTUGAL

16th-19th Century: In Lisbon, communities of men and women were known to have same-sex relationships, and were targeted by the Inquisition.



ITALY

15th-17th Century: During the early Renaissance, "masculine love" was a term used to describe male homosexual orientation (also used in France and England). Michelangelo described same-sex love in his poems, although these references were later edited out. Ancient marble statues unearthed in Rome depicting intersex people inspired a number of Renaissance artists.



ALBANIA

Women identified as burnesha, who take a chastity vow at a young age, can live as men and assume traditionally male roles in society and in their family.



ANCIENT GREECE

6th Century BCE - 6th Century CE: Male homosexuality was an accepted phenomenon, practiced by high-status individuals usually with younger men. The poet Sappho wrote about her affection and desire for other women. The philosopher Plato spoke of a third sex, which was both male and female, as part of original human nature.



RUSSIA

The indigenous Chukchi people in Siberia identified seven genders in addition to male and female.



CHINA

1st century BCE - 17th century CE: Homosexuality was considered a sign of cultural elitism, was not persecuted, and has been documented as early as the Qin, Han and Tang dynasties in poetry and songs.



KOREA

1st century BCE - 1st century CE: Songs and poems from the ancient Silla Dynasty spoke of affection among men, especially among a group of elite male warriors, the *hwarang*, who were known to form same-sex relationships.



INDONESIA

The Bagis ethnic group, native to the Indonesian island of Sulawesi, recognizes three sexes (female, male and hermaphrodite), four genders (women, men, transmen — *calalai*, and transwomen — *calalai*), and a fifth meta-gender group, the *bissu*.



SAMOA

Fa'afafine are a third-gendered people who are mostly born biologically male, but have gender expressions and identity that embody both masculine and feminine behaviour.



MEXICO

In the Mayan culture of the Yucatan Peninsula, sexual relations between men were accepted as part of the social structure. Other indigenous peoples in the region have similar traditions.



NIGERIA

Among the Igbo people of Nigeria (and parts of Benin), a married woman with independent wealth may choose to separate from her husband and marry one or more women.



SOUTH AFRICA

16th-20th century: Wealthy and powerful women, could — even if already married to a man — marry other women, and having many wives was seen as a reflection of prosperity.



KENYA

Among the Nandi people, women may marry other women. The older generally takes on a traditionally male role and is considered a "female husband". The younger may become pregnant by a man but the legal and social "father" of the children will be the female husband.



EGYPT

24th century BCE: The ancient Egyptian royal servants Niankhkhnum and Khnumhotep are believed to be among the first recorded same-sex couple in history, as reflected by the drawings in their tomb.



IRAN

13th century: In Persian poetry, the notion of *Shabed* (male beauty as testimony to the power of God) was frequently used by many poets, including the Persian poet Saadi Shirazi.



SAUDI ARABIA

8th-9th century: Islamic Hadith (report of the deeds and sayings of Prophet Muhammad) state that the Prophet of Islam issued rulings regarding the personal rights of gender variant people identified as *mukhannathun*, especially concerning inheritance.



NEPAL

The Buddhist term *Araṇa*, meaning mental union and loving-kindness, is used to identify transgender people (as well as same-sex couples) and is an accepted part of Nepalese culture since ancient times.



INDIA

Same-sex relations were accepted until British colonialism. Third gender and gender-variant people are still today recognized and accepted throughout Indian cultures.

THIS INFOGRAPHIC IS PRESENTED BY A JOINT EFFORT OF



WITH THANKS TO RESEARCHERS AT THE BUREAU OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, UCLA

IN COMMEMORATING

INTERNATIONAL DAY AGAINST HOMOPHOBIA & TRANSPHOBIA

MAY 17, 2014

DESIGNED BY HOMOPHOBIA.ORG

UML 005

Health Needs of LGBTQ+ People

- Health disparities present

Stem from:

- Health care providers KAP
- Discrimination and stigmatization
- Lack of social support
- Internalized homophobia
- Minority Stress
- Lack of preventative care
- LGBTQ+ youth more at risk for bullying, depression, anxiety, suicide, homelessness



Image from LGBTQ Hub Cameroon

Lesbian health considerations

- Tobacco, drug and alcohol use
- Obesity
- Depression and mental health
- IPV
- Cancers
- Cardiovascular health
- Fertility services/parenting
- STIs and sexual health - screenings



Image from LGBTQ Hub Cameroon

Safe sex also involves Barriers...

- **Finger cots (finger condoms)** – made of latex & worn on fingers to use when fingering. Could be made by cutting off a finger from a non-powdered latex glove.
- **Dental dam** – A square piece of latex that is laid flat over the entire vulva, vaginal opening and clitoris. Can be used for oral sex or rimming (licking the anus) where you lay it against the anus. You could also cut open a condom (as shown below) to make a dam.
- **Cling wrap (plastic wrap)** – the wrap used to cover food can be used if there's no dental dam at hand. Do not use microwaveable wrap as that has holes in it.
- **Latex gloves** – disposable gloves like those used by doctors. Can use for oral sex, rimming, fingering and fisting. Only use each glove once and only use water-based lubricants.
- **Female condom (internal condom)** – a thin sheath that is placed inside the vagina. At both ends of the condom are two flexible rings – an open end which stays outside and closed end which goes inside the vagina. Do not use a male condom at the same time as a female condom as the friction between the two could cause the condom to break. Female condoms can be used with oil-based lubes.



Image from: <https://www.health.qld.gov.au/news-alerts/news/oral-sex-STI-protection-condom-dental-dam>



For more information you can contact: She.Barbados on FaceBook and Instagram or barbados.she@gmail.com



Resources and references

RainbowHealthOntario.ca - lesbian health brochure

<https://thetriangleprojectsite.files.wordpress.com/2014/08/safer-sex-for-lesbian-and-bi-women-with-logo.pdf>

www.scarleteen.com - All the barriers all the time!

NHS.uk - sexual health for lesbian & bisexual women

Safer Sex for Lesbians & Queer Women

There are countless ways for women to have sex, and share sexual pleasure with other women – oh yes!!

But there's a common thought that sex between women is risk-free and that's not quite true. While the chances of contracting HIV are low, there are other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) you should be thinking about protecting yourself from during sexy times.



Common STIs

Bacterial vaginosis (BV) is the most common STI in lesbians and is caused by an imbalance in the normal bacteria in the vagina. Can be passed between women by sharing toys or oral-anal sex and can increase the risk of other STIs. There can be no symptoms or a thin grey/green/white vaginal discharge with a strong fishy smell. Treatment is with antibiotics and the partner should also be tested.

Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) is a group of viruses causing warts and cervical cancer. Transmission is through intimate skin contact. The warts may be itchy, but are usually painless and treated by freezing and medicated creams. Regular pap smears and the HPV vaccine can detect and prevent cervical cancer

Trichomoniasis can be passed between women during any sex involving vaginal fluid exchange. There can be no symptoms or there can be a frothy discharge, discomfort when urinating, vulval soreness, and unpleasant vaginal odour. It is treated with antibiotics.

Gonorrhoea and Chlamydia are caused by bacteria infecting the cervix, rectum, throat and urethra. There may be a discharge, but usually there are no symptoms. Untreated, they can cause infertility and are passed between women through shared sex toys, hands, and by rubbing or scissoring. Treatment is with antibiotics.

Thrush/Yeast infection is caused by an overgrowth of candida. Symptoms can be vulval and vaginal itching, pain and soreness on penetration, burning urination & a thick, white discharge. Yeast infections can be transmitted through touching and sharing sex toys. Treated with cream, pessaries and tablets.

HIV transmission is uncommon but is a risk between women through fingering/fisting, oral sex and sharing sex toys. Barriers can prevent transmission & treatment is with antiretrovirals.

For safer sex try to:

Communicate...

Use a fresh condom on dildos/ vibrators.
Clean sex toys before sharing; can use mild, anti-bacterial soap and water. Rinse all soap off completely to prevent irritation



Wash hands before and after sex. Keep fingernails short and clean.
Use barriers or gloves during **rough sex** because tearing and bleeding may occur.
Use barriers if having **sex (oral/scissors) during a period**, as blood could contain infections. Use barriers if there are cuts or sores in the mouth or genital area of either partner.



Consider **lube!** – it reduces friction, reducing skin tears and can make any type of sex feel more pleasurable
Know that **alcohol, drugs, needles**, and some sex work may involve greater risk
Consider that some trans people on hormones may still be able to get pregnant or to impregnate their partner; reduce unplanned pregnancy by using condoms or other **contraception**.

Gay men health considerations

- Tobacco, drug and alcohol use
- Body image
- STIs and sexual health – HIV, screenings
- Vaccinations
- Depression and mental health
- IPV
- Cancers
- Fertility services/parenting



Image from LGBTQ Hub Cameroon

Bi+ health considerations

- Invisibility
- Double discrimination
- STIs and sexual health
- Mental health
- Substance use
- Non-communicable diseases
- GI conditions



Transgender Health Considerations

- Access to services
- Hormones
- If you got it, check it - Cancer risk
- STIs
- Alcohol, tobacco and substance use
- Depression and anxiety
- Heart disease
- Violence



Image from LGBTQ Hub Cameroon

Research on LGBTQ+ health outside the Global North

- Even in the US research levels low – 1989 – 2011; apart from HIV, 0.1% NIH grants on LGBTQ+ health; 13% sexual minority women; 6.8% trans population¹
- Systematic review mental health youth – US, UK, Australia, New Zealand, Canada²
- Systematic review mental health sexual minority persons – 2% Asia and Mexico³
- Southern Africa SM women systematic review – <20 studies; sexual violence, mental health, STIs⁴
- Chinese study (2020) – almost 70 million and nothing really known; 18, 000+ participants; ¾ willing to disclose, 5% asked; 8% treated negatively; 6% offered conversion therapy

1. Coulter RW, Kenst KS, Bowen DJ. Research funded by the National Institutes of Health on the health of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender populations. *Am J Public Health*. 2014;104(2):e105–12

2. Wilson, C., Cariola, L.A. LGBTQI+ Youth and Mental Health: A Systematic Review of Qualitative Research. *Adolescent Res Rev* 5, 187–211 (2020)

3. Martin Plöderl & Pierre Tremblay (2015) Mental health of sexual minorities. *A systematic review, International Review of Psychiatry*, 27:5, 367-385

4. Muller, A., Hughes, T.L. Making the invisible visible: a systematic review of sexual minority women's health in Southern Africa. *BMC Public Health* 16, 307 (2016)

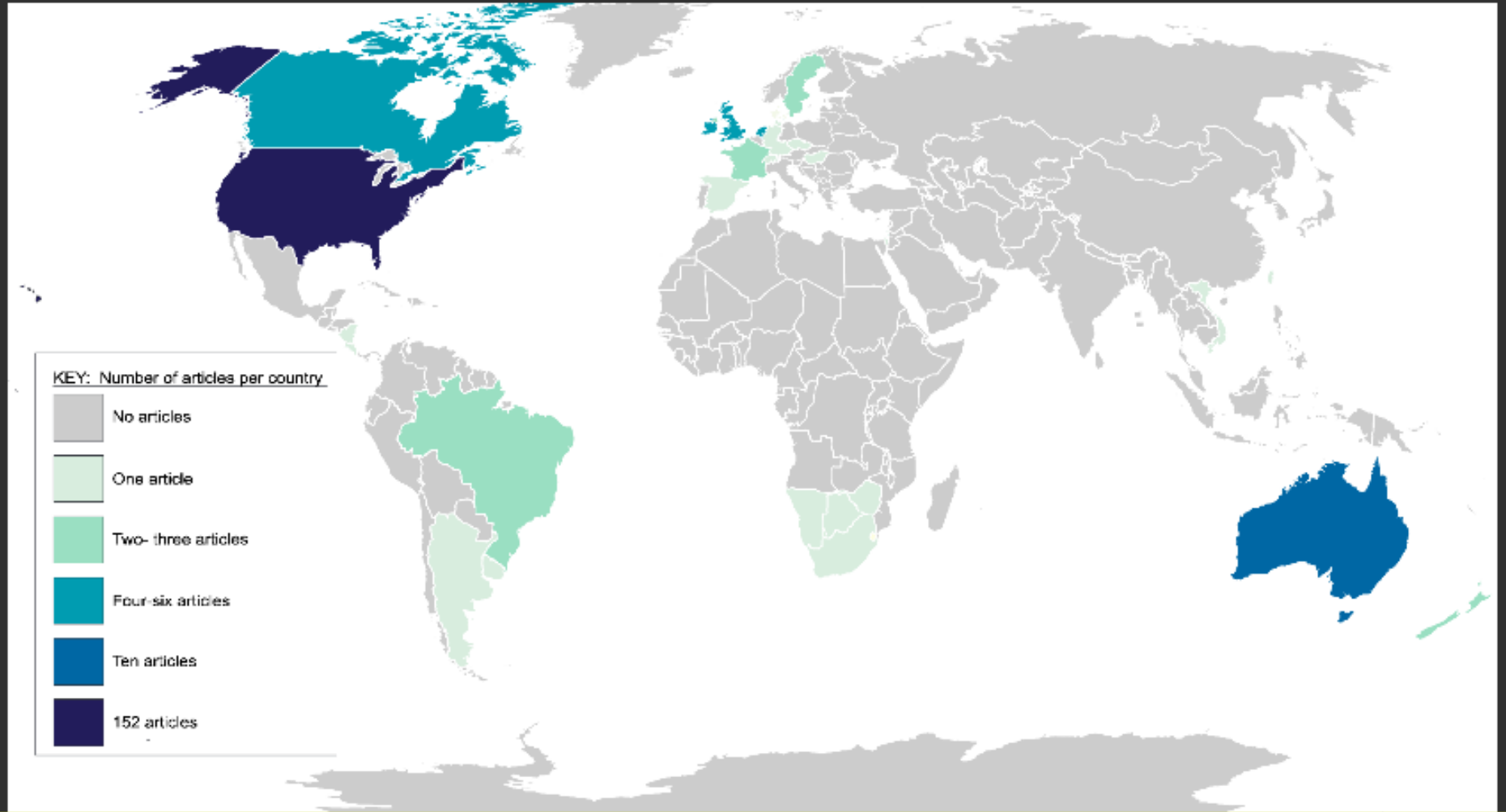
5. Suen, Y., Chan, R.C.H. A nationwide cross-sectional study of 15,611 lesbian, gay and bisexual people in China: disclosure of sexual orientation and experiences of negative treatment in health care. *Int J Equity Health* 19, 46 (2020).



Image from LGBTQ Hub Cameroon

Research on alcohol and other drug (AOD) use among sexual minority women: A global scoping review

Tonda L. Hughes, Cindy B. Veldhuis, Laurie A. Drabble, Sharon C. Wilsnack



The Caribbean Experience

- HIV umbrella; emerging support for LGBTQ+ per se
- Guyana – training healthcare providers, med student sessions, “certifying” health centers, webinars
- The research?.... [Puerto Rico], Jamaica, Guyana, Barbados; paucity in smaller states



Image from LGBTQ Hub Cameroon

Remaining gaps and opportunities

- Gender and sex differences in research
- Lack of large scale, population sample numbers
- Issues with research methodologies
- Researching in countries with small populations and disclosure
- Intersectional research, especially race
- Significant gaps in trans health research; Bi+ research
- Global south – lack of baseline data and the vicious circle of not having numbers
- Publishing in Global South

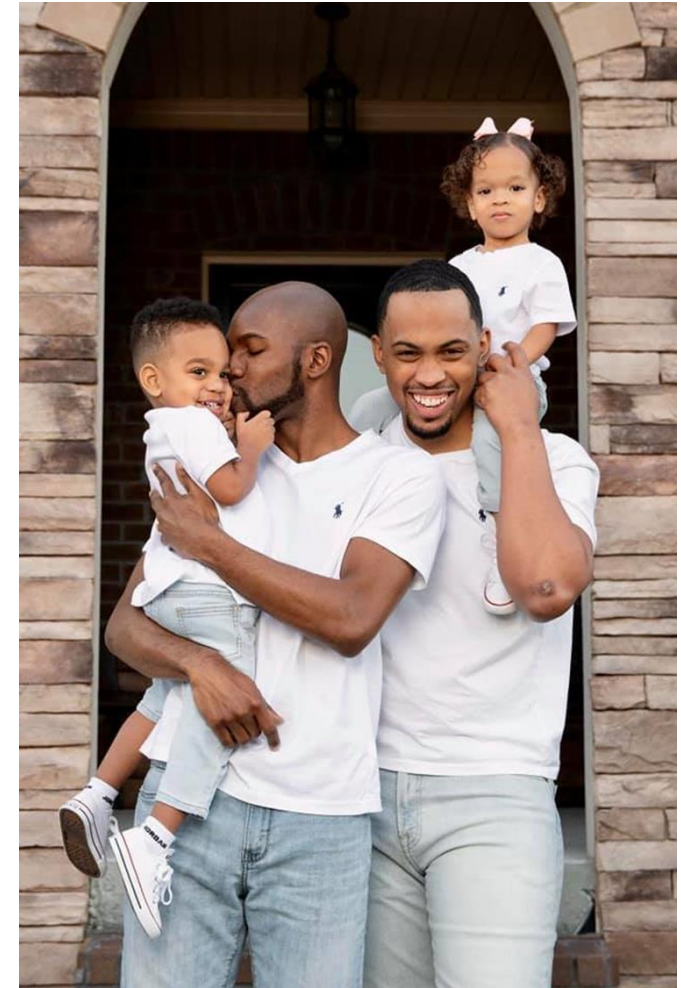


Image from LGBTQ Hub Cameroon



Shannon and Marquita; From LGBTQ Hub Cameroon