

# LGBTQ+ Cancer Survivors Face Major Disparities

Studies show female survivors in particular experience reduced access to care and quality of life if they're a sexual minority.

June 6, 2019 By [Casey Halter](#)

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Results from a new study on LGBTQ+ cancer survivors underscore a need for improved access to post-cancer medical care in the community and notes that sexual minority female survivors in particular experience reduced access to care and poorer quality of life compared with their heterosexual counterparts, [a recent press release reports](#).

Published this week in *CANCER*, a peer-reviewed journal of the American Cancer Society, the study builds off previous research indicating that sexual minorities—lesbian, gay, bisexual and other non-heterosexual-identifying individuals—have worse access to care overall. Until now, studies had not examined the issue among cancer survivors in particular.

To assess LGBTQ+ cancer survivors' access to care and quality of life, researchers at Boston University School of Public Health examined four years of Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey data on U.S. men and women who reported a history of cancer. Of the 70,524 cancer survivors studied, 1,931 identified as sexual minorities.

Compared with heterosexual women, women who identified as LGBTQ+ were more likely to report having no health insurance, not having a personal physician, avoiding medical care owing to cost and not having an annual medical visit. Among men, those who identified as sexual minorities were more likely to avoid medical care as a result of cost—however, regardless of sexual orientation, men had similar access to care overall.

Sexual minority women also had a stronger association with a poor physical quality of life, poor mental quality of life and difficulty concentrating post-cancer than their heterosexual counterparts. LGBTQ+ men were also at higher risk of having difficulty concentrating and poor mental quality of life than other male cancer survivors.

“This calls for policy changes to improve access to care for sexual minority cancer survivors,” said Ulrike Boehmer, PhD, a lead author of the study. “The study’s findings also point to an opportunity for clinicians to address difficulties in access to care with patients during treatment discussions or at the completion of cancer therapy and during follow up visits. Clinicians who are aware of these

disparities and address them during clinic visits may have an impact on sexual minority women's survival rates, which are lower than their heterosexual counterparts' rates."

To learn more about cancer research in the LGBTQ+ community, [click here](#).

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