

Statistics & Research regarding Lesbian and Gay Mental Health Issues and Same Sex Marriage Summary Sheet

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Evidence strongly suggests that the inability to marry has a direct connection with psychological harm through confirmation of underlying negative beliefs, adding to 'minority stress', adding another layer of challenge for those in long term committed relationships through a lack of validation.

Most people are not aware of the causes and existence of the significant mental/physical health problems of those who are same sex attracted

These problems are strongly linked to issues including:

- Deeply held beliefs about same sex relationships not being valid
- Being excluded from social institutions which normalize same sex relationships such as marriage
- 'Internalized Homophobia' – negative beliefs including GLBTI are disordered, sick, evil etc.

Statistically we know that a significant proportion of your constituents will either identify as gay or lesbian and are therefore experiencing the above.

25 years experience as a psychologist specializing in the area of same sex attraction and mental health.

- I have treated many people whose self esteem and mental health issues would have been significantly improved if they had access to the ability to marry their partner.

Reasons would include:

- Greater sense of validity and confidence in their relationship
- Challenge to deeply held belief that their relationship is 2nd rate compared with straight peers
- A strong 'healing' mechanism to negative beliefs about what it means to be gay or lesbian

Not being able to marry has for many of my clients increased their sense of:

Defectiveness

Hopelessness from a sense that our society doesn't recognize the most important part of their lives

American Psychological Association Resolution on Marriage Equality for Same Sex Couples

WHEREAS Emerging evidence suggests that statewide campaigns to **deny same-sex couples legal access to civil marriage are a significant source of stress** to the lesbian, gay, and bisexual residents of those states and may have negative effects on their psychological well-being (Hatzenbuehler et al., 2010; Rostosky et al., 2009);

WHEREAS The denial of civil marriage, including the creation of legal statuses such as civil unions and domestic partnerships, **stigmatizes same-sex relationships, perpetuates the stigma historically attached to homosexuality, and reinforces prejudice** against lesbian, gay, and bisexual people (Badgett, 2009; Herek, 2006; Hull, 2006);

Policies supportive of lesbian, gay, and bisexual people's human rights may have **positive effects on their psychological well-being** (Blake, Ledsy, Lehman, Goodenow, Sawyer, Hack, 2001; Goodenow, Szalacha, & Westheimer, 2006; Hatzenbuehler, Keyes, Hasin, 2009);

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, That the American Psychological Association supports full marriage equality for same-sex couples;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the American Psychological Association reiterates its opposition to ballot measures, statutes, constitutional amendments, and other forms of discriminatory policy aimed at limiting lesbian, gay, and bisexual people's access to legal protections for their human rights, including such measures as those that deny same-sex couples the right to marry (Conger, 1975, APA 2007);

Research – Gay & Lesbian Mental & Physical Health

Homosexual/bisexual people are:

- 4 times more likely to have ever been homeless (12% „homosexual/bisexual“ v. 2.9% “heterosexual”)
- Twice as likely to have no contact with family or no family to rely on for serious problems (11.8% v. 5.9%)
- More likely to be a current smoker (35.7% v.22%)
- Twice as likely to have used illicit drugs (64.6% v. 33.2%)
- More likely to have had a chronic condition in the last 12 months (51.3% v. 46.9%)
- Twice as likely to have a high/very high level of psychological distress (18.2% v. 9.2%)
- Almost 3 times as likely to have had suicidal thoughts (34.7% v. 12.9%)
- 5 times as likely to have had suicidal plans (17.1% v. 3.7%)
- 4 times as likely to have attempted suicide (12.6% v. 3.1%)

[Australian Bureau of Statistics (2007) „*National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing*“ additional unpublished analysis] Extract from Press Release: “LGBTI Community Left Out of Health Reform” (National LGBT Health Alliance, April 2010)

Research Demonstrating How This Can Be Improved:

Research - when heterosexuals value the relationships of same sex attracted people that these outcomes significantly improve. (NOT SO PRIVATE LIVES: National Findings on the Relationships and Well-Being of Same-Sex Attracted Australians. Dane S.K., Masser, B.M., MacDonald, G., & Duck, J.M. (2010)

Suicide & Young Gay and Lesbians:

While sexuality and gender identity in itself are not causes of suicide or suicidal behaviour, there are many compounding social and emotional factors related to sexuality and gender identity that increase this risk, including:

- Homophobia
 - LGBT young people grow up in a culture and society where there is extensive prejudice, discrimination, fear and hatred directed at LGBT people in society.
 - LGBT young people are significantly aware of the attitudes and beliefs surrounding sexuality and gender identity.
 - Homophobia includes:
 - Unequal treatment in legislation (such as being excluded from being able to marry).
 - Unequal treatment in schools, (such as exclusion from bringing same-sex partners to significant rite-of-passage social events).
 - Reduced access to relevant health and wellbeing information (such as same-sex safe sex information).
 - Homophobia has long term serious impacts on their health and well-being of LGBT young people.
 - Homophobia reinforces messages to LGBT young people that they are not equal to their heterosexual peers and therefore are unnatural, unhealthy, evil or wrong.
 - These messages are internalised by young people and they believe that they are truths about themselves, resulting in feelings of shame, guilt and self-loathing.