

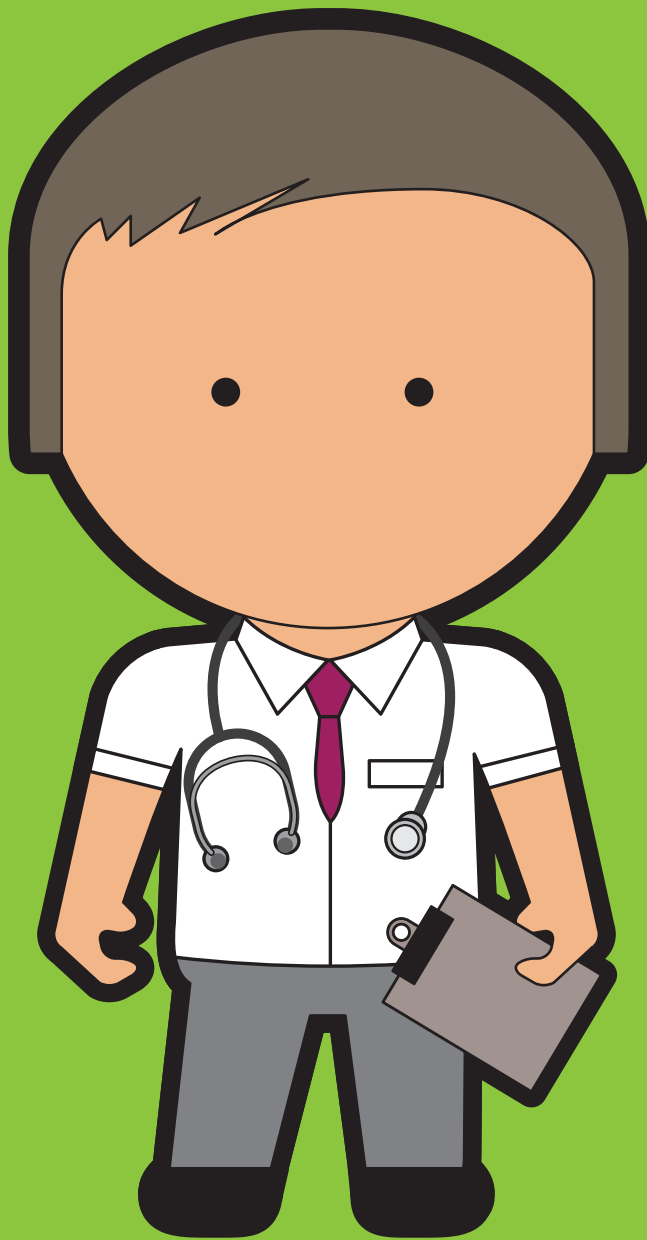
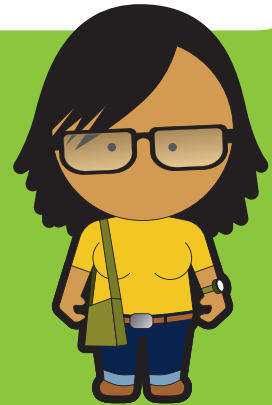


Gay and Bisexual Men's Health Survey Scotland



Gay and Bisexual Men's Health Survey Scotland

by April Guasp



Introduction

With 6,861 respondents from across Britain, this is the largest survey ever conducted of gay and bisexual men's health needs in the world. Here, we present the Scottish findings which demonstrate that many of those needs are not being met and that there are areas of significant concern – most particularly in mental health and drug use - that have been overlooked by health services which too often focus solely on gay men's sexual health.

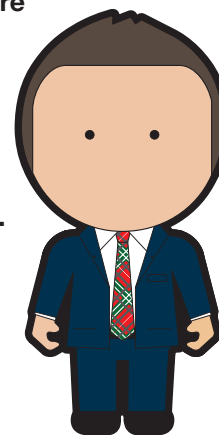
This report also provides hard evidence that gay and bisexual Scots have high rates of attempted suicide and are more likely to self-harm and have depression than their straight peers. They are also more likely to smoke and take illegal drugs. It ill-serves our gay and bisexual communities when these uncomfortable truths are ignored.

Patients accessing healthcare should be confident that they'll be treated compassionately, confidentially and with complete openness. But this pioneering research reveals that for many gay and bisexual men in Scotland this is simply not the case.

These men feel demonstrably neglected by a healthcare system that now has a legal duty to treat everyone equally. Respondents told us that they can't talk openly to GPs and other healthcare workers and they are too often anxious that their confidentiality will not be protected. This lack of trust has a material impact on whether gay and bisexual men take advice on health issues and access appropriate testing and monitoring services.

These findings send a stark message that Scotland's health services need to rethink how they approach many of their patients. We hope they will rise to that challenge. Stonewall Scotland looks forward to working with our health services and the Scottish Government to help deliver better policies for better lives.

Colin Macfarlane
Director, Stonewall Scotland



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Key findings

Smoking, alcohol and drugs

- ‡ **More than three in five** gay and bisexual men in Scotland have smoked at some time in their life compared to half of men in general
- ‡ **More than a quarter** (28 per cent) of gay and bisexual men currently smoke as do 26 per cent of men in general
- ‡ **More than a third** (35 per cent) of gay and bisexual men drink alcohol on three or more days a week, similar to 36 per cent of men in general
- ‡ **More than two in five** (44 per cent) gay and bisexual men have taken drugs in the last year compared to just 11 per cent of men in general

General fitness and exercise

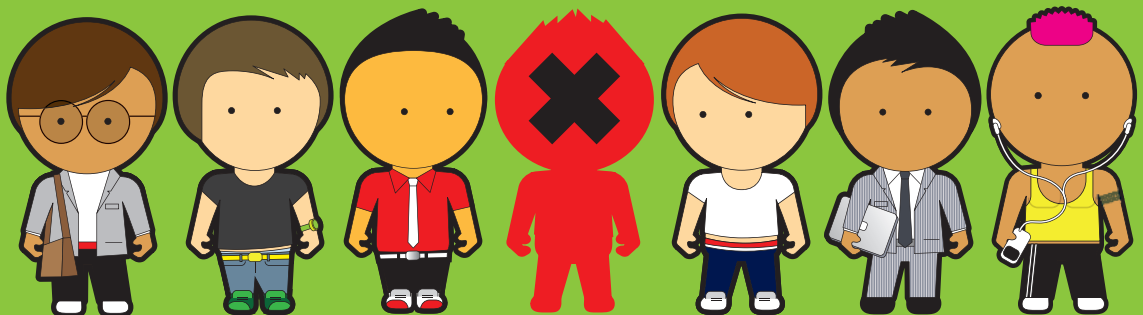
- ‡ **Over half** of gay and bisexual men in Scotland have a normal body mass index (BMI) or are underweight compared to a third of men in general. Just **46 per cent** of gay and bisexual men are overweight or obese compared to 66 per cent of men in general
- ‡ However, **almost one in four** (23 per cent) gay and bisexual men report being in fair or bad health, similar to 24 per cent of men in general
- ‡ Despite being more likely to have a normal BMI, just **two in five** (40 per cent) gay and bisexual men meet recommendations for 30 minutes or more of exercise four times or more per week compared to 45 per cent of men in general

Mental health

- ‡ In the last year, **three per cent** of gay men and **seven per cent** of bisexual men in Scotland have attempted to take their own life
- ‡ **One in sixteen** gay and bisexual men aged 16 to 19 have attempted to take their own life in the last year
- ‡ **One in sixteen** gay and bisexual men deliberately harmed themselves in the last year
- ‡ **One in seven** gay and bisexual men aged 16 to 19 harmed themselves in the last year. It's estimated that between 1 in 15 and 1 in 10 young people in general deliberately harm themselves

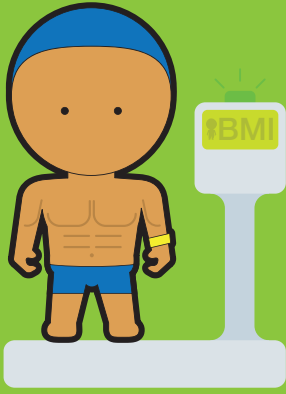
Eating disorders and body image

- ‡ **More than two in five** gay and bisexual men in Scotland worry about the way they look and wish they could think about it less
- ‡ **One in five gay** and bisexual men have had problems with their weight or eating at some time
- ‡ **One in eight** gay and bisexual men have had a problem with their weight or eating in the last year
- ‡ **More than two thirds** of gay and bisexual men who have had a problem with their weight or eating have never sought help from a healthcare professional

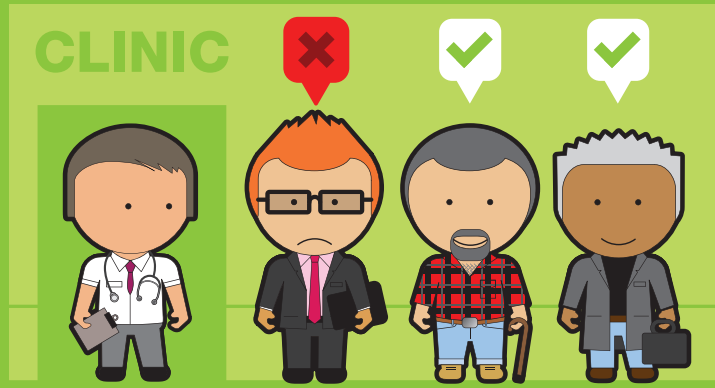


One in seven gay and bisexual men aged 16 to 19 have harmed themselves in the last year





Over half of gay and bisexual men have a normal body mass index



A third of gay and bisexual men who have accessed healthcare services in the last year have had a negative experience related to their sexual orientation

P05



Domestic abuse

- ‡ **Half** of gay and bisexual men in Scotland have experienced at least one incident of domestic abuse from a family member or partner since the age of 16
- ‡ **More than a third** of gay and bisexual men have experienced at least one incident of domestic abuse from a partner compared to one in seven men in general
- ‡ **One in four** gay and bisexual men have experienced domestic abuse from a family member, for example mother or father, since the age of 16
- ‡ **Three in four** gay and bisexual men who have experienced domestic abuse have never reported incidents to the police. Of those who did report, **one in four** were not happy with how the police dealt with the situation

Cancer and common male health problems

- ‡ Just **a third** of gay and bisexual men in Scotland check their testicles monthly as recommended as a preventative measure against testicular cancer
- ‡ Just **one in ten** gay and bisexual men have ever discussed prostate or bowel cancer with a healthcare professional and only **four per cent** have ever discussed lung cancer
- ‡ **More than four in five** gay and bisexual men have never discussed heart disease with a healthcare professional. **Four in five** have never discussed high blood pressure or high cholesterol with a healthcare professional

Sexual health and HIV

- ‡ **One in three** gay and bisexual men in Scotland have never been tested for any sexually transmitted infection
- ‡ **One in three** gay and bisexual men have never had an HIV test in spite of early diagnosis now being a public health priority

Discrimination in healthcare

- ‡ **A third** of gay and bisexual men in Scotland who have accessed healthcare services in the last year have had a negative experience related to their sexual orientation
- ‡ **More than a third** of gay and bisexual men are not out to their GP or healthcare professionals. Gay and bisexual men are more likely to be out to their manager, work colleagues, family and friends than their GP

What good service looks like

- ‡ Only **a quarter** of gay and bisexual men said their healthcare professional acknowledged they were gay or bisexual after they had come out and just **one in ten** were told that their partner was welcome to be present during a consultation
- ‡ Only **a quarter** of gay and bisexual men said that healthcare workers had given them information relevant to their sexual orientation
- ‡ Only **one in four** said that their GP surgery displayed a policy stating that they would not discriminate against people because of their sexual orientation and just **two in five** gay and bisexual men said their GP had a clear policy on confidentiality





1 Smoking, alcohol and drugs

While smoking and alcohol consumption among gay and bisexual men is broadly similar to men in general, illegal drug use is much higher.

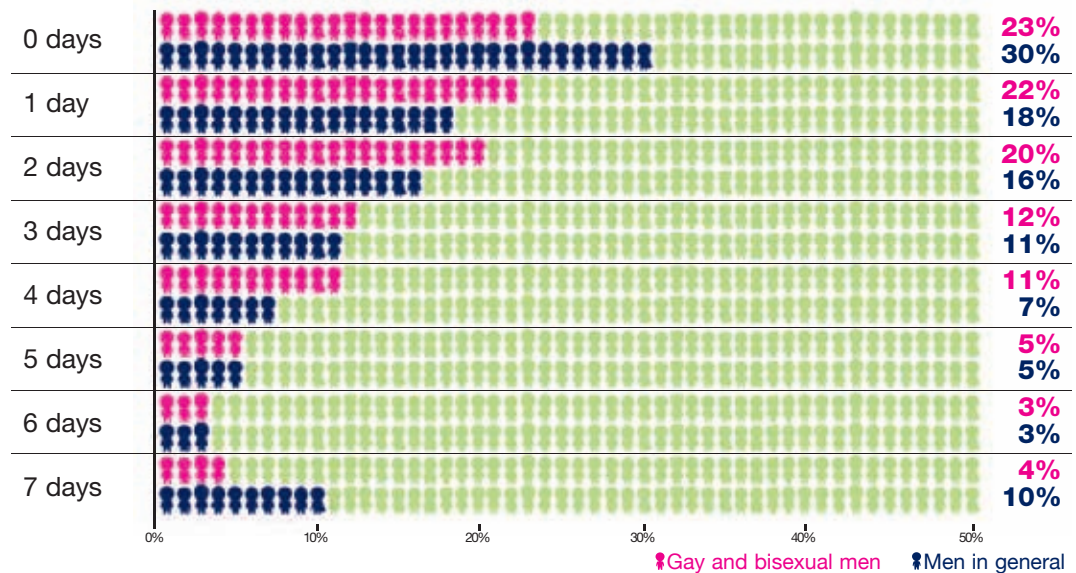
Smoking

More than three in five (62 per cent) gay and bisexual men in Scotland have smoked at some time in their life compared to half of men in general who have smoked. **More than a quarter** (28 per cent) of gay and bisexual men currently smoke as do 26 per cent of men in general.

Alcohol

More than three quarters (77 per cent) of gay and bisexual men in Scotland had a drink in the last week compared to seven in ten (70 per cent) men in general. **More than a third** (35 per cent) of gay and bisexual men drank alcohol on three or more days in the previous week, similar to 36 per cent of men in general.

On how many days out of the last seven did you drink alcohol?



'I've drunk until ill.'

Duncan, 19

One in five (20 per cent) gay and bisexual men have been drunk or hung over while working, going to school or taking care of other responsibilities more than once in the last six months. **One in seven** (13 per cent) have missed or were late for work, school or other activities because they were drinking or hung over more than once in the last six months. **One in twenty** (five per cent) have drunk alcohol even though a doctor suggested they stop drinking. **Twelve per cent** have sought help or advice from a healthcare professional about problems with drinking.



More than three quarters of gay and bisexual men in Scotland have had a drink in the last week





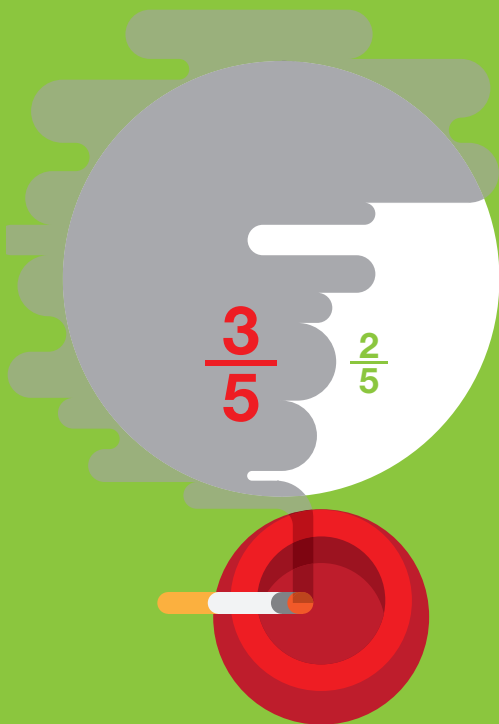
Drugs

More than two in five (44 per cent) gay and bisexual men in Scotland have taken drugs in the last year compared to just 11 per cent of men in general.

In the last year, **one in ten** (ten per cent) gay and bisexual men have taken cocaine compared to four per cent of men in general. **One in eleven** (nine per cent) gay and bisexual men have taken ecstasy in the last year compared to just three per cent of men in general. **One in fourteen** (seven per cent) have taken mephedrone compared to less than one per cent of men in general.

Four per cent of gay and bisexual men have taken ketamine in the last year compared to less than one per cent of men in general. **Four per cent** of gay and bisexual men have taken amphetamines and tranquilizers in the last year compared to two per cent of men in general. **Two per cent** of gay and bisexual men have taken GHB in the last year and **one per cent** have taken crystal meth.

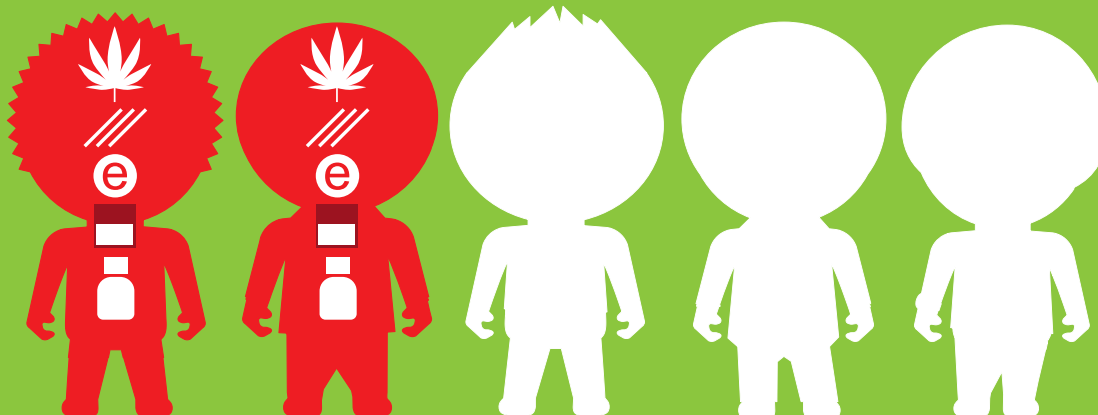
In the last year, **one in five** (21 per cent) gay and bisexual men have used cannabis compared to nine per cent of men in general. **One in four** (26 per cent) have taken amyl nitrate (poppers) in the last year compared to just one per cent of men in general.



More than three in five gay and bisexual men in Scotland have smoked at some time in their life



One in five gay and bisexual men have been drunk or hung over while working, going to school or taking care of other responsibilities more than once in the last six months



More than two in five gay and bisexual men in Scotland have taken drugs in the last year



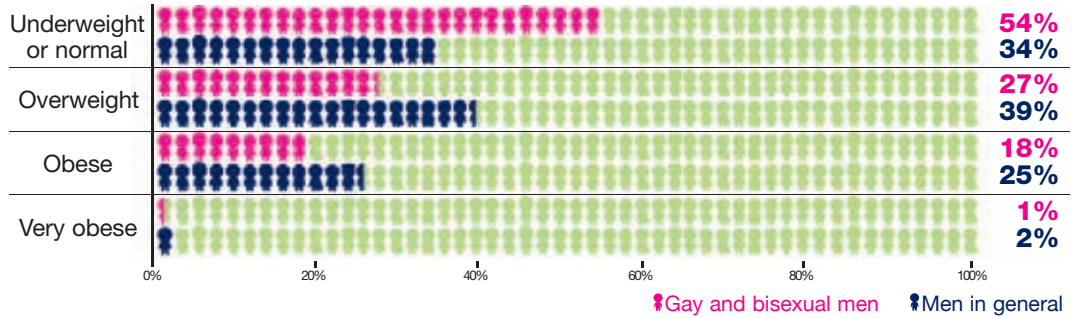


2 General fitness and exercise

Despite being more likely to have a normal body mass index (BMI), gay and bisexual men are no more likely than men in general to meet recommended levels of exercise.

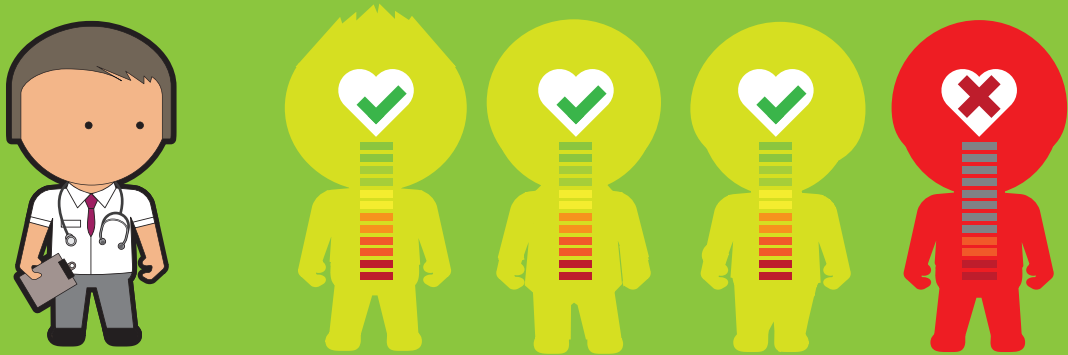
Gay and bisexual men in Scotland are less likely than men in general to be overweight or obese. **Over half** of gay and bisexual men have a normal BMI or are underweight compared to a third of men in general. **Just 46 per cent** of gay and bisexual men are overweight or obese compared to 66 per cent of men in general.

Body Mass Index

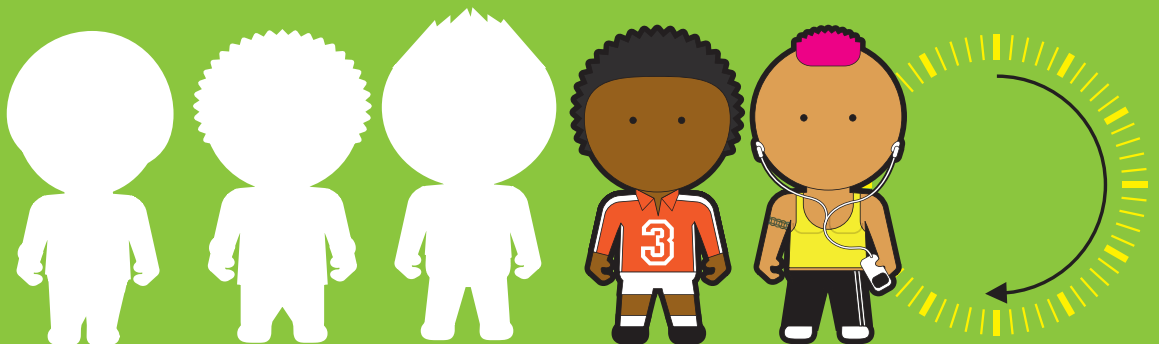


However, gay and bisexual men rate their health similarly to men in general. **Seventy seven per cent** of gay and bisexual men said their health is good or very good, similar to 76 per cent of men in general. **Almost one in four** (23 per cent) gay and bisexual men report being in fair or bad health, similar to 24 per cent of men in general.

Just **two in five** (40 per cent) gay and bisexual men take 30 minutes or more of exercise four times or more per week compared to 45 per cent of men in general who meet the Scottish Government's recommendation for 30 minutes of physical activity on most days of the week.



Almost one in four gay and bisexual men in Scotland report being in fair or bad health



Just two in five gay and bisexual men in Scotland meet recommendations for 30 minutes or more of exercise five times or more per week





P09



One in sixteen gay and bisexual men in Scotland aged 16 to 19 attempted to take their own life in the last year

3 Mental health

'I feel the mental health of gay men can sometimes be overlooked.'

Seb, 32

'I think mental health is a big issue for many gay men and yet it is still taboo in our community.'

Greg, 38

A worryingly high number of gay and bisexual men report having attempted to take their own life. Rates of depression, anxiety and deliberate self-harm among gay and bisexual men are also higher than for men in general.

Suicide

In the last year, **three per cent** of gay men and **seven per cent** of bisexual men in Scotland have attempted to take their own life.

One in sixteen (six per cent) gay and bisexual men aged 16 to 19 have attempted to take their own life in the last year.

In the last year, **30 per cent** of gay men and **37 per cent** of bisexual men thought about taking their own life even if they would not do it.

Half (51 per cent) of gay and bisexual men said they have felt life was not worth living. **Two in five** (41 per cent) gay and bisexual men who have felt this way did so in the last year.

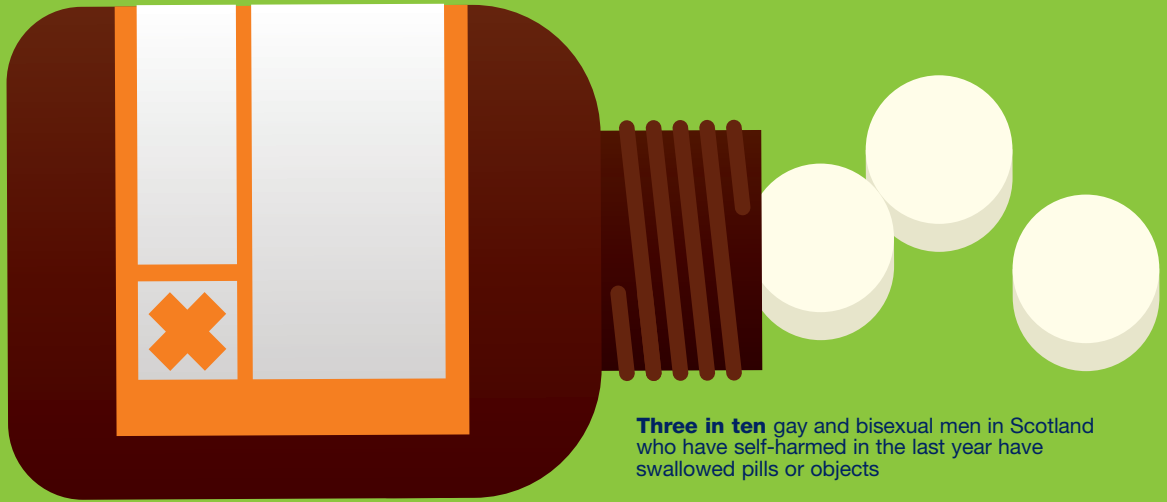
'There was a lot of homophobia in my family. I was around 16 and knew I was gay. When my father was drunk he told me that if I ever came out he would pretend to respect me yet would be always laughing at me behind my back. It was comments like those that made me so disgusted with who I was that I was suicidal for a lot of my youth and I suffered mental issues that only now are starting to be resolved as I grow older and more proud of who I am.'

Kevin, 20

Depression and anxiety

One in seven (14 per cent) gay and bisexual men in Scotland are currently experiencing moderate to severe levels of mixed depression and anxiety. A further **eight per cent** of gay and bisexual men are experiencing moderate to severe depression with mild or no anxiety. A further **two per cent** of gay and bisexual men are experiencing moderate to severe anxiety with mild or no depression. In general, one in six (15 per cent) people experience mental health problems at any one time.





Three in ten gay and bisexual men in Scotland who have self-harmed in the last year have swallowed pills or objects

Self-harm

One in sixteen (six per cent) gay and bisexual men in Scotland deliberately harmed themselves in the last year, which included cutting themselves or swallowing pills or objects.

One in seven (14 per cent) gay and bisexual men aged 16 to 19 have deliberately harmed themselves in the last year. It's estimated that between 1 in 15 and 1 in 10 young people in general deliberately harm themselves.

Rates of self-harm are also higher among bisexual men; **nine per cent** of bisexual men have self-harmed in the last year.

'Very occasionally I hit myself with hands and objects to release frustration and to get a sense of release.'

Wayne, 35

'Banging my head off a wall and biting myself until I bleed.'

Ian, 20

Three in five (58 per cent) gay and bisexual men who have self-harmed in the last year have cut themselves and **three in ten** (29 per cent) have swallowed pills or objects. **One in seven** (13 per cent) have burned themselves. Respondents also said they have bit or scratched themselves and punched themselves or objects.

Gay and bisexual men also said that mental health services often failed to recognise their needs.

'My therapist made a point of telling me he was straight after I came out to him and then ignored the issue completely even though I wanted to talk about it.'

Neil, 32

'My doctor wouldn't acknowledge the other problems that were contributing to my depression and seemed to presume it was entirely due to my difficulty in coming out and lack of gay friends.'

Spencer, 21

'I have recently been seeing mental health workers due to bad anxiety. They don't really know anything about gay people.'

Andrew, 50



4 Eating disorders and body image

P11



A worrying number of gay and bisexual men in Scotland report issues with eating disorders and the way they feel about their body.

Eating disorders

A third (33 per cent) of gay and bisexual men said they worry a lot about the way they eat and wish they could think about it less. **One in five** (21 per cent) gay and bisexual men have had or have been told they have problems with their weight or eating at some time.

One in eight (12 per cent) gay and bisexual men have had a problem with their weight or eating in the last year.

Sixteen per cent of gay and bisexual men who have ever had a problem with eating said they had anorexia, **17 per cent** said they had bulimia and **39 per cent** said they would binge eat.

One in four (26 per cent) gay and bisexual men often feel that they can't control what or how much they eat. Within the last three months, **one in eight** (12 per cent) have deliberately fasted or not eaten for 24 hours and **1 in 25** (four per cent) have made themselves vomit in order to lose weight.

More than two thirds (70 per cent) of gay and bisexual men who have had a problem with their weight or eating have never sought help from a healthcare professional.

Body image

More than two in five (44 per cent) gay and bisexual men in Scotland worry about the way they look and wish they could think about it less.

More than one in three (35 per cent) gay and bisexual men have had or been told they have problems with the way they feel about their body. **More than three in four** (78 per cent) of those have never sought help from a healthcare professional.

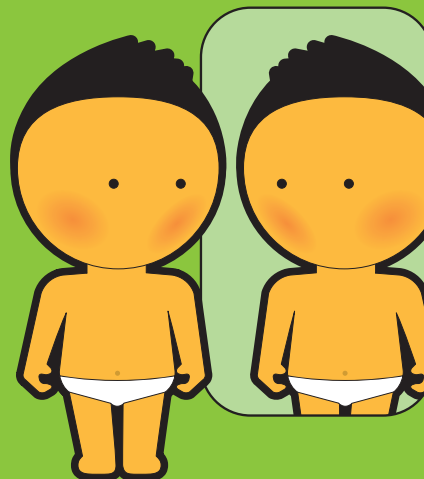
'I feel there is still a lot of pressure on gay men to be thin and attractive, especially from other gay people.'

Derek, 25



A third of gay and bisexual men said they worry a lot about the way they eat and wish they could think about it less

More than two in five gay and bisexual men worry about the way they look and wish they could think about it less





5 Domestic abuse

A significant number of gay and bisexual men in Scotland have experienced at least one incident of domestic abuse from a family member or partner since the age of 16.

'I went to the GP because I was having a hard time with an abusive partner. They said they didn't have the experience and just suggested I sought help within the gay community. Looking back now I realise that the issues involved in an abusive relationship are the same whether you are gay or straight and that I should not have been told that they could not help because I was gay.'

Alastair, 47

Half (49 per cent) of gay and bisexual men in Scotland have experienced at least one incident of domestic abuse from a family member or partner since the age of 16. **More than a third** (37 per cent) of gay and bisexual men have experienced domestic abuse from a partner compared to one in seven (13 per cent) men in general.

One in three (33 per cent) gay and bisexual men have experienced at least one incident of domestic abuse in a relationship with a man. Gay and bisexual men also report that they have experienced domestic abuse from women when in a relationship with them. **One in eleven** (nine per cent) have experienced domestic abuse in a relationship with a woman. **One in four** (24 per cent) gay and bisexual men since the age of 16 have experienced domestic abuse from a family member.

'I have been mentally abused as long as I can remember by means of name-calling, being ignored, belittled. This started with my dad, and then with male partners and I never understood why.'

Alan, 50

One in six (15 per cent) gay and bisexual men have been repeatedly belittled and made to feel worthless by a member of their family. **One in fourteen** (seven per cent) have been pushed or slapped and **1 in 16** (six per cent) have been kicked, bit or hit with a fist by a family member. **One in sixteen** (six per cent) have been stopped from seeing friends and relatives.

One in nine (11 per cent) gay and bisexual men have had their sexual identity used against them by a family member.

'My ex-partner used sexuality to blackmail me at work as I work with children – hence getting away with abusing me for a few months. I eventually told my manager and was able to get out of the relationship.'

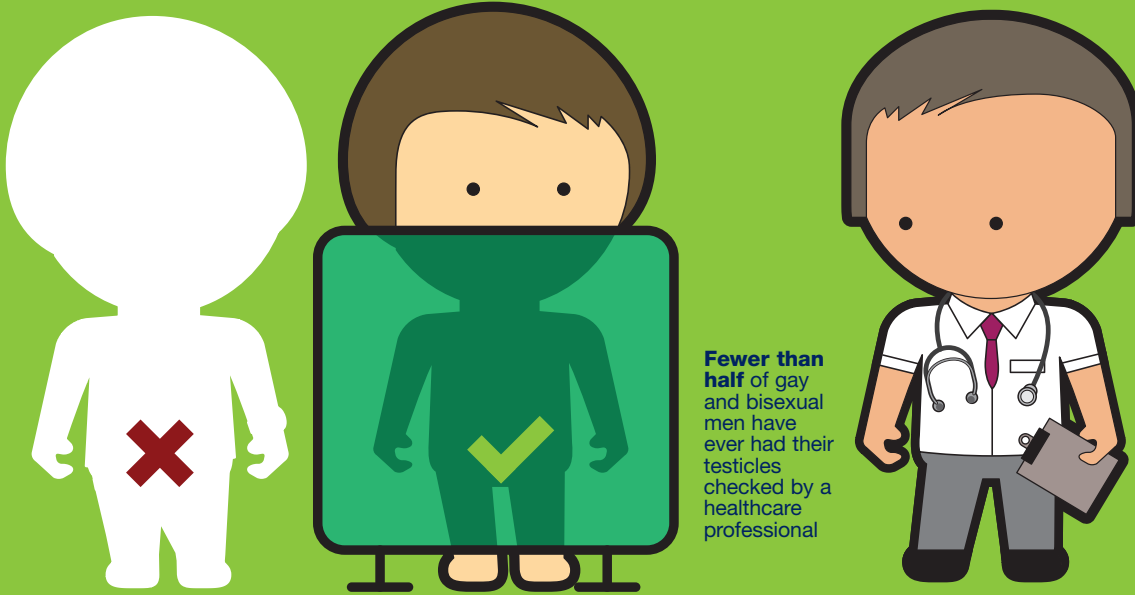
Rory, 36

One in six (17 per cent) gay and bisexual men said that they had been repeatedly belittled by a male partner and made to feel worthless. **One in six** (17 per cent) have been pushed, held down or slapped by a male partner. **One in six** (16 per cent) have been kicked, bit or hit with a fist.

One in eight (12 per cent) gay and bisexual men have been stopped from seeing friends and relatives by a male partner. **One in ten** (ten per cent) have been frightened that they will be hurt or that someone close to them will be hurt. **One in fourteen** (seven per cent) gay and bisexual men have been forced by a male partner to have unwanted sex. **One in sixteen** (six per cent) continued to be abused after separation. **Three per cent** have experienced death threats.

Three in four (73 per cent) gay and bisexual men who have experienced domestic abuse have never reported incidents to the police. Of those who did report, **one in four** (25 per cent) were not happy with how the police dealt with the situation.





6 Cancer and common male health problems

Cancer

Testicular cancer is the most common cancer in men aged 15 to 44. It's recommended that men should check their testicles once a month. Just **a third** (34 per cent) of gay and bisexual men do this. **Fewer than half** (44 per cent) have ever had their testicles checked by a healthcare professional.

Prostate cancer is the most common cancer in men overall. Its incidence is significantly higher in men over 50. Government efforts focus on raising awareness of risk factors and self-monitoring is encouraged. Just **one in ten** (ten per cent) gay and bisexual men have ever discussed prostate cancer with a healthcare professional. **Seven in ten** (70 per cent) gay and bisexual men aged over 50 have not had a discussion.

Lung cancer is the second most common cancer in men. Its incidence is significantly higher in men over 40. Just **four per cent** of all gay and bisexual men have ever talked about lung cancer with a healthcare professional and **95 per cent** of gay and bisexual men aged over 40 have not had a discussion.

Bowel (colorectal) cancer is the third most common cancer in men. Its incidence is also strongly related to age. Just **one in ten** (ten per cent) gay and bisexual men have ever talked about bowel cancer with a healthcare professional. **Two thirds** (65 per cent) of gay and bisexual men aged over 50 have not had a discussion.

Heart and circulatory disease

Heart and circulatory disease is a leading cause of death in Scotland.

More than four in five (84 per cent) gay and bisexual men have never discussed heart disease with a healthcare professional. Just **12 per cent** have ever been tested for heart disease.

Four in five (80 per cent) gay and bisexual men have never discussed high blood pressure (hypertension) with a healthcare professional. Just **27 per cent** have been tested for high blood pressure.

Four in five (79 per cent) gay and bisexual men have never discussed high cholesterol with a healthcare professional. Just **31 per cent** have had a cholesterol test.





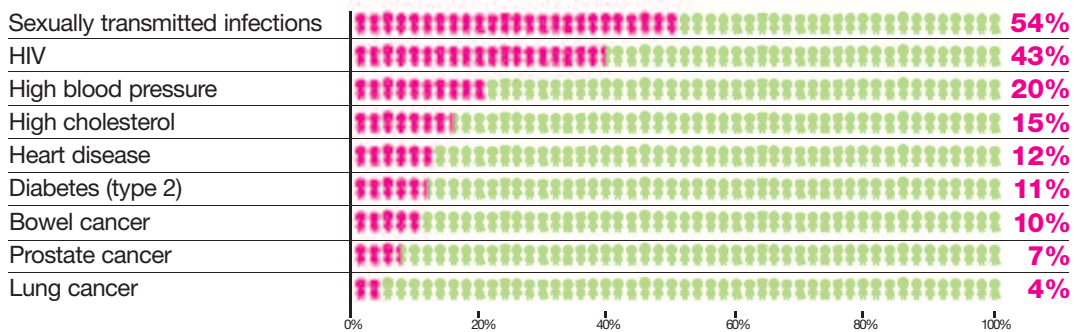
Diabetes (type 2)

Just **one in nine** (11 per cent) gay and bisexual men have ever discussed diabetes with a healthcare professional. **Three per cent** of gay and bisexual men have diabetes as do three per cent of men in general.

Erectile dysfunction

Almost half (46 per cent) of gay and bisexual men say they have at some point experienced problems with delayed ejaculation, which is higher than estimates that range from 3 to 11 per cent of men in general. However, rates of problems with getting and maintaining an erection and with premature ejaculation are broadly more similar between gay and bisexual men and men in general. **Almost a third** (31 per cent) of gay and bisexual men have at some point had problems with getting and maintaining an erection compared to 39 per cent of men in general. **Twenty eight per cent** of gay and bisexual men have had problems with premature ejaculation compared to an estimated 20 to 30 per cent of men in general.

Have you ever discussed any of the following with a healthcare professional?



7 Sexual health and HIV

Despite the focus of the NHS on the sexual health of gay and bisexual men and the acknowledged benefits of early HIV diagnosis and regular testing, many gay and bisexual men have never been tested for sexually transmitted infections or HIV.

Sexually transmitted infections

One in three (34 per cent) gay and bisexual men in Scotland have never been tested for sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

Four in five (81 per cent) gay and bisexual men who have never been tested said 'I don't think I'm at risk'. **One in six** (17 per cent) are 'scared' to have a test. **One in seven** (13 per cent) said they are 'too busy'.

'I don't exhibit any of the symptoms.'

Lachlan, 61

'I know I should have one but I've never made the effort.'

Tyler, 33





'I don't know where to go.'

Marcus, 56

Almost half (46 per cent) of gay and bisexual men have never discussed STIs with a healthcare professional.

In the last five years, **83 per cent** of respondents have had sex with men only, **11 per cent** have had sex with both men and women, **one per cent** have had sex with women only and **five per cent** have not had sex with anyone.

HIV

Even though testing for HIV is a public health priority, because early diagnosis reduces onward transmission and facilitates much better treatment, **one in three** (33 per cent) gay and bisexual men in Scotland have *never* had an HIV test.

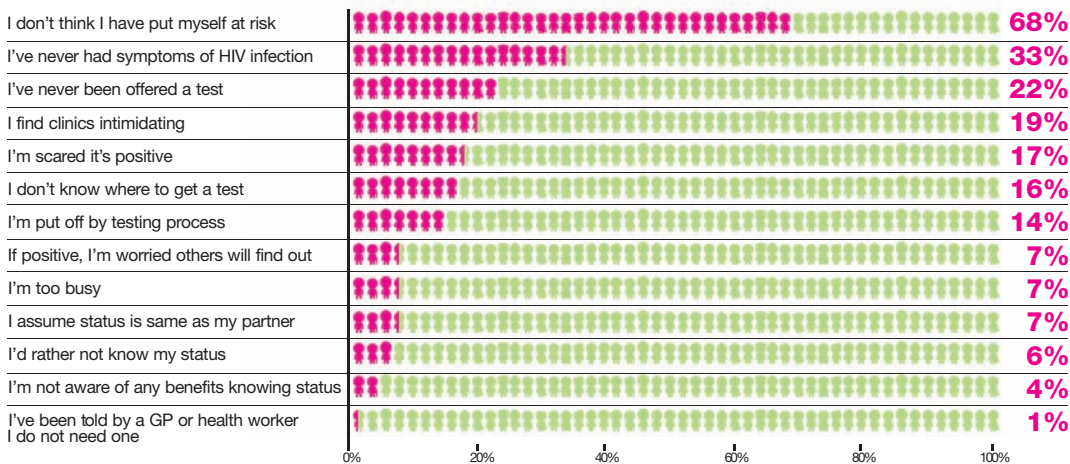
Seven in ten gay and bisexual men who haven't tested said they haven't had a test because they don't think they have put themselves at risk. **A third** said it's because they have never had any symptoms of HIV infection.

More than one in five gay and bisexual men who haven't had an HIV test said it's because they've never been offered one. **One in six** said it's because they don't know where to get a test.

Almost three in five (57 per cent) gay and bisexual men have never discussed HIV with a healthcare professional.

These figures do raise grave concerns about the effectiveness with which hundreds of millions of pounds of public money have been spent on HIV awareness and prevention in recent years.

Why have you never had an HIV test?



HIV TESTS

One in three gay and bisexual men in Scotland have never had an HIV test





8 Discrimination in healthcare

A third (34 per cent) of gay and bisexual men in Scotland who have accessed healthcare services in the last year have had a negative experience related to their sexual orientation.

'I recently changed doctor due to what I felt was homophobia and disinterest in my problems.'

Rufus, 29

'When I registered with my new GP surgery with my husband's form along with my own the receptionist seemed taken aback at my calling him my husband.'

Jay, 29

'Medical advice given assumed I was HIV positive.'

Malcolm, 35

Coming out to a healthcare worker

More than a third (37 per cent) of gay and bisexual men in Scotland are not out to their GP or healthcare professionals. They are more likely to be out to their manager, work colleagues, family and friends than their GP.

'My GP does not know of my sexuality.'

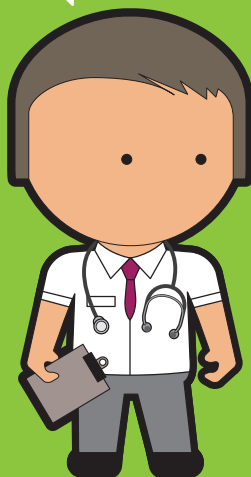
Aji, 16

'It is easier and safer to fit in with assumptions rather than run the risk of negative reactions.'

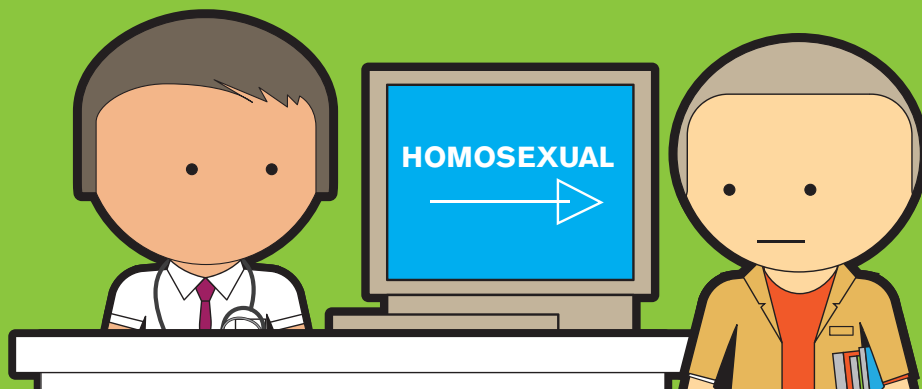
Frankie, 21

'It does not always feel safe to come out because they might cause you unnecessary pain or discomfort – e.g. being rough with injections deliberately.'

Kieran, 28

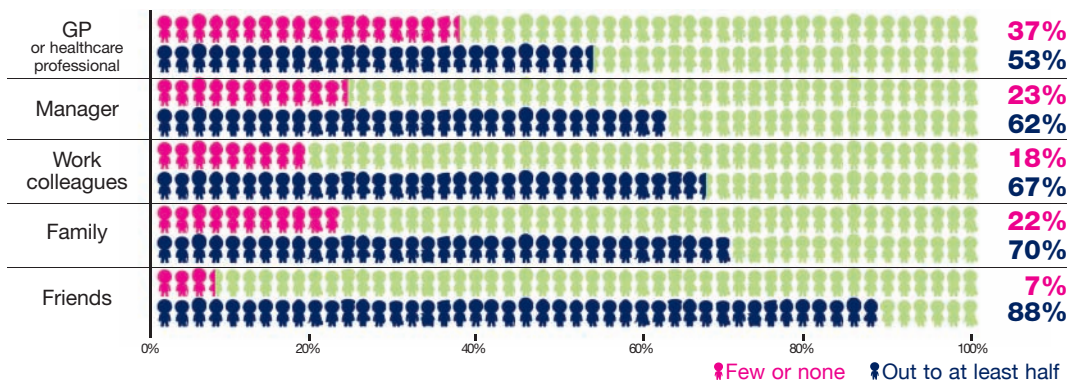


More than a third of gay and bisexual men in Scotland are not out to their GP or healthcare professionals



One in six gay and bisexual men are not sure what their GP's policy is on confidentiality

What proportion of people know you are gay or bisexual?



Making assumptions

One in six (15 per cent) gay and bisexual men said that in the last year healthcare professionals had assumed that they were straight. **One in seven** (13 per cent) gay and bisexual men said that during the last year there was no opportunity to discuss their sexual orientation with a healthcare professional.

'In my experience they always assume you're heterosexual.'

Leon, 31

'I find that healthcare workers usually assume that I am heterosexual.'

Theo, 43

'My GP assumed I was heterosexual and advised me to put on weight to attract women!'

Tarek, 36

'There is never any sign of gay acceptance in their offices and they never comment on my coming out to them so I never know how they are reacting. Even if the place is gay-friendly, I can't judge - except in limited circumstances - when them being aware of my sexuality is important or not to my medical needs.'

Barry, 57

Confidentiality

One in six (15 per cent) gay and bisexual men are not sure what their GP's policy is on confidentiality.

'I don't know if my GP surgery has a clear policy on confidentiality or a non-discrimination policy.'

Arthur, 49





9 What good service looks like

Gay and bisexual men also described occasions when they had positive experiences in healthcare and the difference this made for them.

'I have an excellent GP who is fully aware of my sexuality and is very open about this.'

Roger, 38

'My GP is very friendly and gay-friendly. He encourages me to discuss things with him and I genuinely feel that he is as comfortable as if I were straight and happy to discuss things as relevant.'

Tris, 28

Acknowledging sexual orientation

Only **a quarter** (27 per cent) of gay and bisexual men said their healthcare professional did acknowledge they were gay or bisexual after they had come out. **One in eleven** (nine per cent) said that their healthcare professional had provided them with the opportunity to come out.

'Healthcare professional was non-judgemental and supportive and understanding. Made me feel normal.'

Craig, 33

'While seeing my GP I made reference to my husband, who is a healthcare worker, and the doctor was very friendly and open throughout the conversation.'

Donnan, 43

One in ten (ten per cent) gay and bisexual men said they were told that their partner was welcome to be present during a consultation.

'In A&E the woman was very pleasant when I gave my next-of-kin as my partner.'

Quentin, 26

Getting the right information

Just **a quarter** (25 per cent) of gay and bisexual men said that healthcare workers had given them information relevant to their sexual orientation.

'I have found the healthcare professionals I've dealt with to be pleasant and understanding and they haven't come across as judgmental. They have proved to be knowledgeable about gay men's health issues and concerns.'

Kenny, 27

Clear policies

One in four (23 per cent) said that their GP surgery displayed a policy stating that they would not discriminate against people because of their sexual orientation. Just **one in eight** (12 per cent) said their GP surgery was a welcoming environment for gay and bisexual men by, for example, displaying posters that included same-sex couples or relevant health promotion materials.

Two in five (41 per cent) gay and bisexual men said their GP had a clear policy on confidentiality.



10 Recommendations

P19



1 Understand the specific health needs of gay and bisexual men

Three per cent of gay men and **seven per cent** of bisexual men attempted to take their own life in the last year. Gay and bisexual men are also more likely to self-harm and have depression than their straight peers. They are more likely to take illegal drugs. **Half** have experienced domestic abuse from a family member or partner since the age of 16.

Schools and universities teaching healthcare should cover the specific health needs of gay and bisexual men in their curricula.

'Being gay can affect many aspects of health – not only sexual health. Being comfortable discussing how being gay may impact upon health issues may be the only way for treatment to be really effective.'

Liam, 43

2 Train staff

Only **a quarter** of gay and bisexual men said their healthcare professional acknowledged they were gay or bisexual after they had come out and only **one in ten** said they were told that their partner was welcome to be present during a consultation.

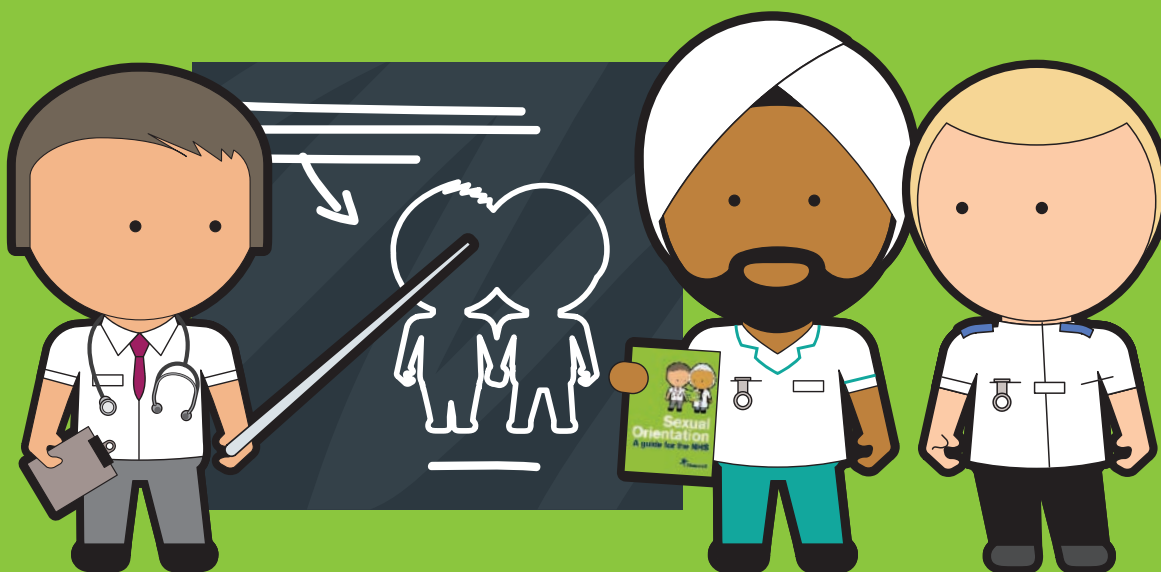
Royal Colleges should update professional development programmes to include topics such as same-sex partner rights.

'I went to the GP because I was having a hard time with an abusive partner. They said they didn't have the experience and just suggested I sought help within the gay community.'

Alastair, 47

'Improve diversity training for GPs in general. I feel that this should be compulsory and not just a half day piece of training either.'

Lawrence, 50



Train staff





3 Don't make assumptions

One in six gay and bisexual men said that in the last year healthcare professionals had assumed that they were straight.

Training for frontline healthcare staff should cover the importance of not assuming someone's sexual orientation.

'In my experience they always assume you're heterosexual.'

Leon, 31

'Healthcare professionals should not assume that everyone is heterosexual.'

Giles, 25

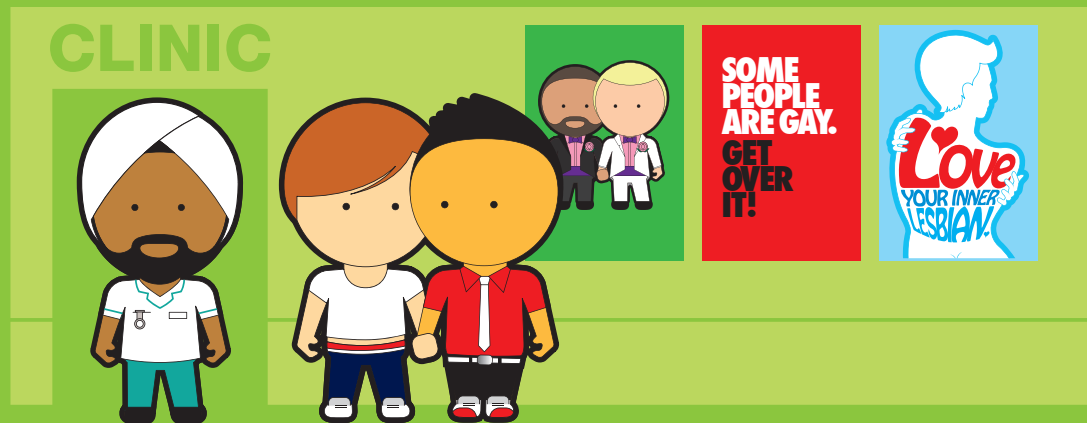
4 Explicit policies

Just **one in four** gay and bisexual men said their GP surgery displayed a policy stating they would not discriminate against people because of their sexual orientation.

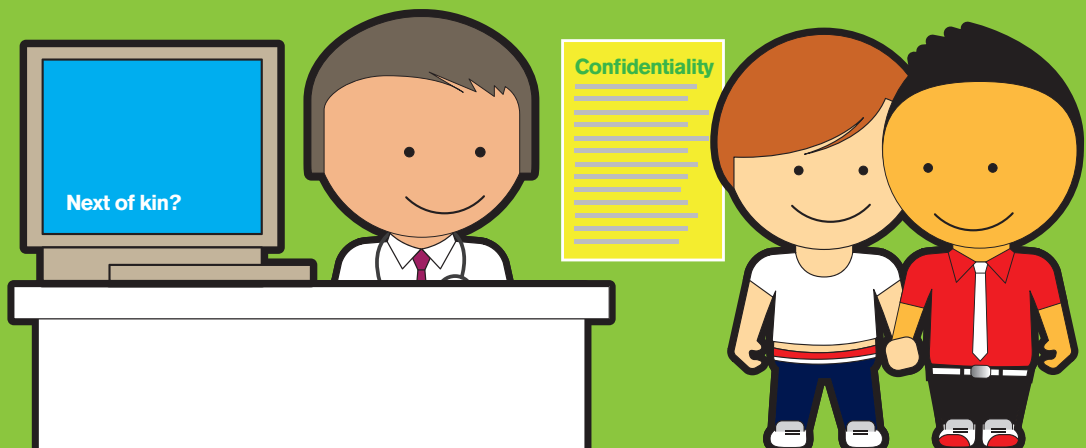
GP surgeries and hospitals should display non-discrimination policies that explicitly protect gay and bisexual people from discrimination.

'I don't know what my GP's policies are.'

Nathaniel, 36



Increase visibility



Encourage disclosure and make confidentiality policies clear





5 Increase visibility

Just **one in eight** said their GP surgery was a welcoming environment for gay and bisexual men.

GP surgeries and hospitals should use posters, leaflets and information that include images of gay and bisexual men to help create a welcoming environment.

'Services need to make themselves more welcoming to the lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans communities by displaying materials that identify the service as lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans friendly.'

Vincent, 42

6 Encourage disclosure and make confidentiality policies clear

More than a third of gay and bisexual men are not out to healthcare professionals, in spite of improvement on why being out is meant to be a good thing for their health. Just **two in five** said their GP had a clear policy on confidentiality.

Doctors and healthcare workers should encourage disclosure by asking open questions and having clear confidentiality policies.

'GP surgeries should be a safe place for gay and bisexual people to be open but I wonder if many people feel that way.'

Reece, 22

'I live in a small town where confidentiality is a huge problem.'

Chris, 40

7 Improve monitoring

Just **one in eleven** gay and bisexual men said they were given the opportunity to come out.

NHS Scotland should ensure sexual orientation is a field available on all confidential electronic patient record systems used by hospitals and GP surgeries.

'I believe that sometimes they don't ask in case the question is "offensive".'

Joe, 49

'Healthcare workers need to ask the right questions.'

Spencer, 47

8 Make complaints procedures clear

A third of gay and bisexual men who have accessed healthcare services in the last year have had a negative experience in relation to their sexual orientation.

NHS complaints teams should make sure information on how people can complain includes information on sexual orientation discrimination.

'I recently changed doctor due to what I felt was homophobia and disinterest in my problems.'

Rufus, 29





9 Tell gay and bisexual men what they need to know

Just **a third** of gay and bisexual men check their testicles monthly as a preventative measure against testicular cancer as recommended. **One in three** have never been tested for STIs and **one in three** have never been tested for HIV, in spite of this being regarded as public health priority.

Schools and colleges should make sure they include the needs of gay and bisexual men in preventative healthcare and healthy lifestyle lessons.

'Specific healthcare advice for gay men is a good thing.'

Steve, 23

'I feel gay and bisexual men still don't seem to know how important it is to get regular check-ups. I know of a bisexual 24-year-old who has had sex with over 40 men but does not think he should get a check-up as he uses a condom during anal (but not oral) sex.'

Ronnie, 24

10 Improve access to sexual health services

More than one in five gay and bisexual men who haven't had an HIV test said it's because they've never been offered one. **One in six** said it's because they don't know where to get a test.

Improving access to sexual health services for gay and bisexual men should be a public health priority for NHS Health Scotland.

'I don't know where to go.'

Marcus, 56

'Access to GUM clinics can be difficult (inaccessible, too busy).'

Caleb, 28

The study

In 2011 Stonewall and Sigma Research asked gay and bisexual men from across Britain to complete a survey about their health. The survey received 6,861 responses, including 633 from Scotland, making it the largest survey of gay and bisexual men's health needs ever conducted in the world. Overall, eighty five per cent of respondents live in England, nine per cent in Scotland and six per cent in Wales. The findings in this report are specific to participants from Scotland.

Ninety one per cent of respondents from Scotland said they were gay and nine per cent said they were bisexual. Ninety nine per cent of respondents from Scotland were white and one per cent of respondents were black or minority ethnic. Eight per cent of Scottish respondents were aged 20 or younger and 13 per cent were aged over 50. The youngest Scottish participant was 16 and the oldest was 84.

The full report on findings for Great Britain and further regional statistics are available at www.stonewall.org.uk/gaymenshealth



Good Practice Programme

The Good Practice Programme supports public sector organisations to improve their workplace and services for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. This programme includes an online learning resource which provides practical examples of training around lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender issues which staff working for the NHS in Scotland may find useful. www.lgbtgoodpractice.org.uk

Stonewall Diversity Champions programme

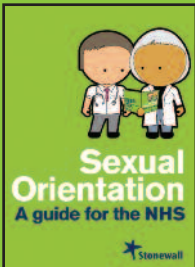
Stonewall's Diversity Champions programme is Britain's good practice forum through which major employers work with Stonewall and each other on sexual orientation issues to promote diversity in the workplace. www.stonewallscotland.org.uk/dcs

Stonewall Healthy Lives

Stonewall's Healthy Lives campaign supports NHS organisations to improve their workplace and services for lesbian, gay and bisexual people. www.healthyives.stonewall.org.uk

Further publications

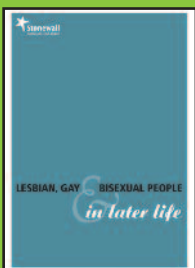
www.stonewallscotland.org.uk/publications



Sexual Orientation:
A guide for the NHS

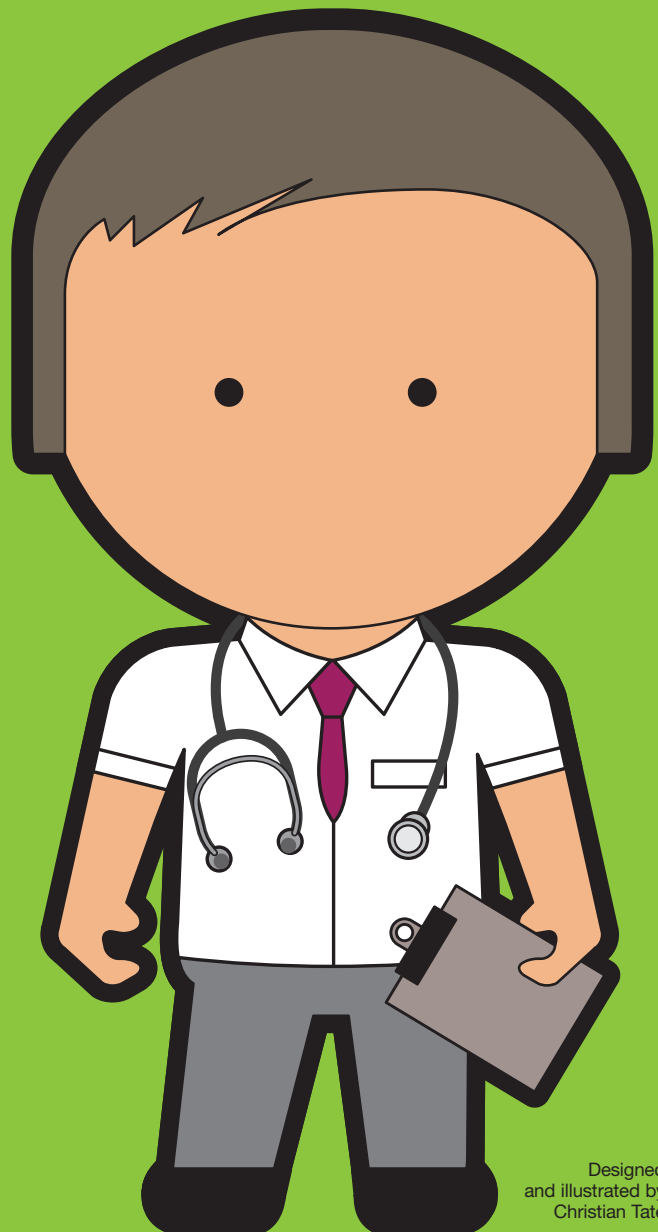


Prescription for Change:
Lesbian and bisexual women's
health check 2008



Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual
People in Later Life

Being the Gay One: Experiences
of lesbian gay and bisexual people
working in the health and
social care sector



Designed
and illustrated by
Christian Tate

Gay and Bisexual Men's Health Survey

www.stonewallscotland.org.uk/gaymenshealth

