

## **BISEXUAL MEN LIVING WITH HIV: HEALTH, CONNECTEDNESS AND THE IMPACT OF STIGMA**

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**Background:** Most research on wellbeing among PLHIV considers gay and bisexual men as a collective group. However, there are many reasons we might expect the experiences or health outcomes of bisexual men will differ to that of gay men. Studies show bisexual men report poorer mental health than gay or heterosexual men. Bisexual men also tend to be less connected to LGBT communities, marginalising them from gay men's PLHIV support networks. In addition, bisexual men have historically been highly stigmatised in the HIV epidemic, positioned as a threat to heterosexual women. This means bisexual men may have unique experiences of HIV-related stigma. The aim of this paper is to determine whether bisexual men have poorer mental health than other PLHIV and identify factors associated with poorer wellbeing in this group, including stigma.

**Methods:** HIV Futures 8 is a cross-sectional survey of 895 PLHIV in Australia. Data were collected in 2015/2016 using a self-complete instrument containing standard measures of demographic characteristics, health, wellbeing and stigma. Descriptive and comparative statistics (chi-square, ANOVA) were used to compare variables based on gender and sexuality. Multivariable logistic regression was used to identify significant predictors of wellbeing.

**Results:** Compared to gay men, bisexual men reported poorer health outcomes on a range of measures including: general health, emotional wellbeing, and mental health diagnoses. Bisexual men also reported less confidence engaging with healthcare providers, higher levels of perceived HIV-related stigma, less social support and less time spent with other people living with HIV.

**Conclusions:** Contemporary research on the support needs of bisexual men living with HIV is limited. Yet, these findings suggest that this group of men may have complex needs that aren't attended to in programs designed for gay men.

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