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## **Disparities in Frequent Mental Distress by Sexual Orientation**

Laura Houghtaling, MPH, Sarah Milder, MPH, Kristin Shaw, MPH, Mary Ann Honors PhD, MPH,  
Tom Eckstein, MBA, Arundel Metrics, Inc

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# Background

- Frequent mental distress (FMD) is a measure representing persistent and likely severe mental health issues
- Despite the higher prevalence of mental health issues in sexual minority populations, data are limited

- Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) is one source of data for these populations
- Questions in 2016 BRFSS SOGI Module:
  - “Do you consider yourself to be 1. Straight; 2. Lesbian or gay; 3. Bisexual?”
  - “Do you consider yourself to be transgender?” If yes, “Do you consider yourself to be 1. male-to-female, 2. female-to-male, or 3. gender non-conforming?”

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# Objective

- To describe disparities and geographic variation in the prevalence of FMD in adults aged 18 and older by sexual orientation in the most recent BRFSS survey, 2016

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# Methodology

- FMD was defined as the percentage of the population reporting 14 or more days of poor mental health in the past month
- Respondents identifying as lesbian, gay, or bisexual (LGB) were grouped together to increase sample size
- Estimates also reported for lesbian or gay (LG) population and bisexual population separately



- Point estimates and 95% confidence intervals were calculated using STATA v15.1
- Following CDC suppression rules, values suppressed where  $n < 50$  from an unweighted sample or relative standard error  $> 30\%$

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# Results

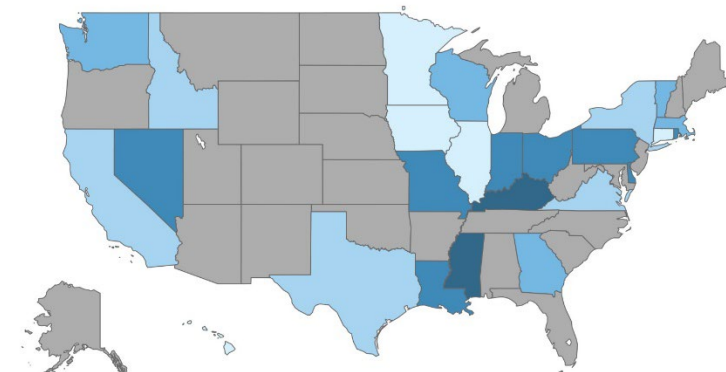
- LGB adults report twice the level of FMD than their heterosexual peers

	Mean (%)	Lower CI (%)	Upper CI (%)	Obs (n)	Population Affected (N)	Ratio
Straight	10.8	10.5	11.1	188,387	13,153,200	1 (ref)
LGB	22.5	20.6	24.4	6,359	1,162,600	2

- Bisexual adults report the highest level of FMD compared to lesbian or gay, and straight adults

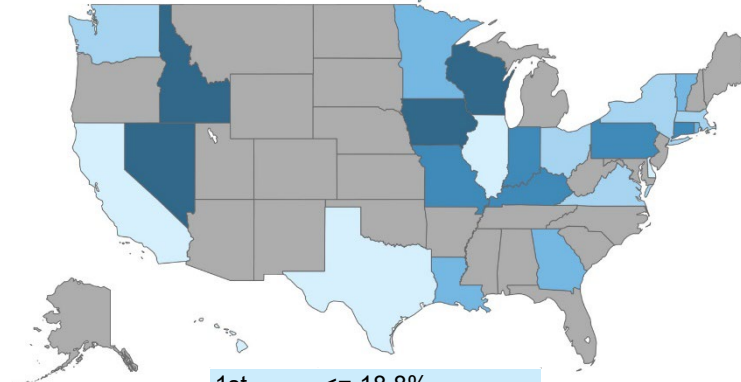
	Mean (%)	Lower CI (%)	Upper CI (%)	Obs (n)	Population Affected (N)	Ratio
Straight	10.8	10.5	11.1	188,387	13,153,200	1 (ref)
LG	16.8	14.3	19.3	3,004	387,500	1.5
Bi	27.1	24.5	29.8	3,355	775,000	2.5

## Straight w/ FMD (%)



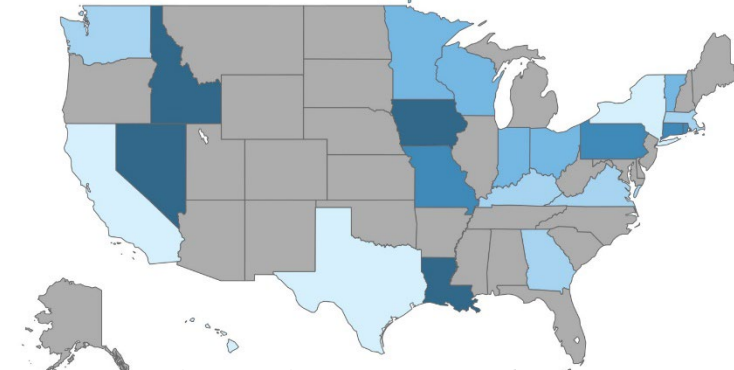
1st	<= 9.7%
2nd	9.8% to 10.4%
3rd	10.5% to 11.3%
4th	11.4% to 12.6%
5th	>= 12.7%
Data not available	

## LGB w/FMD (%)



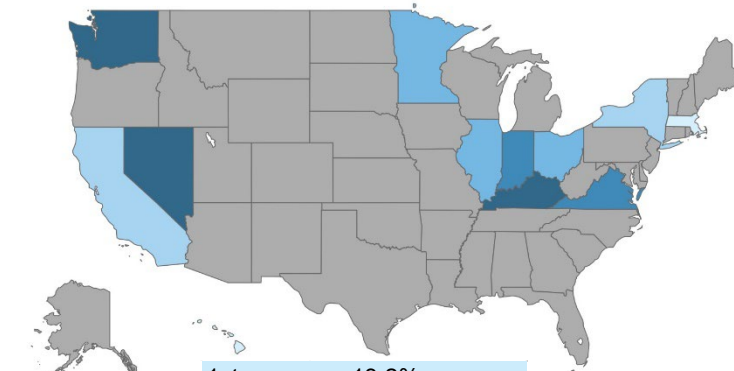
1st	<= 18.8%
2nd	18.9% to 26.0%
3rd	26.1% to 28.8%
4th	28.9% to 31.1%
5th	>= 31.2%
Data not available	

## Bisexual w/ FMD (%)



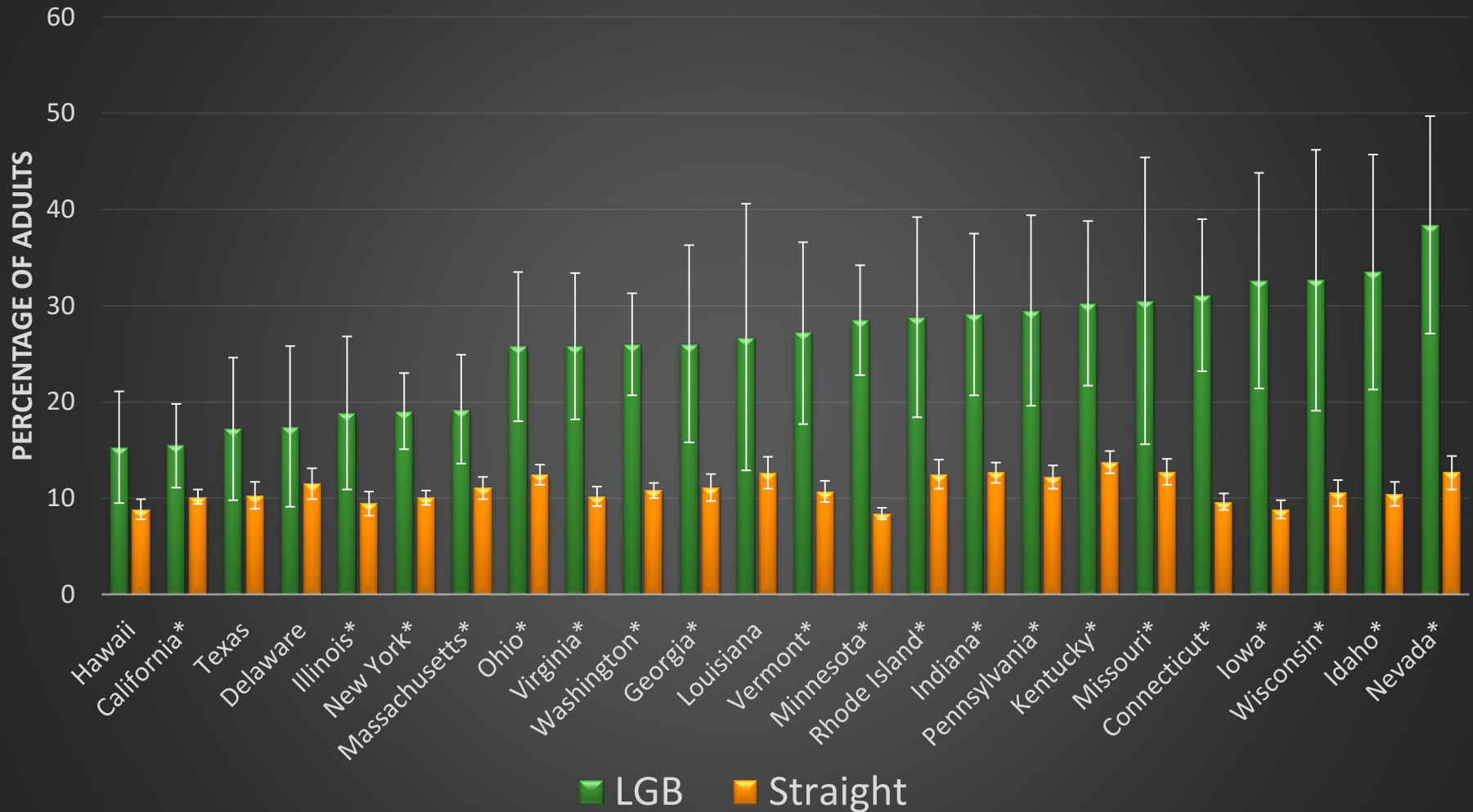
1st	<= 24.6%
2nd	24.7% to 31.1%
3rd	31.2% to 34.6%
4th	34.7% to 37.4%
5th	>=37.5%
Data not available	

## LG w/ FMD (%)



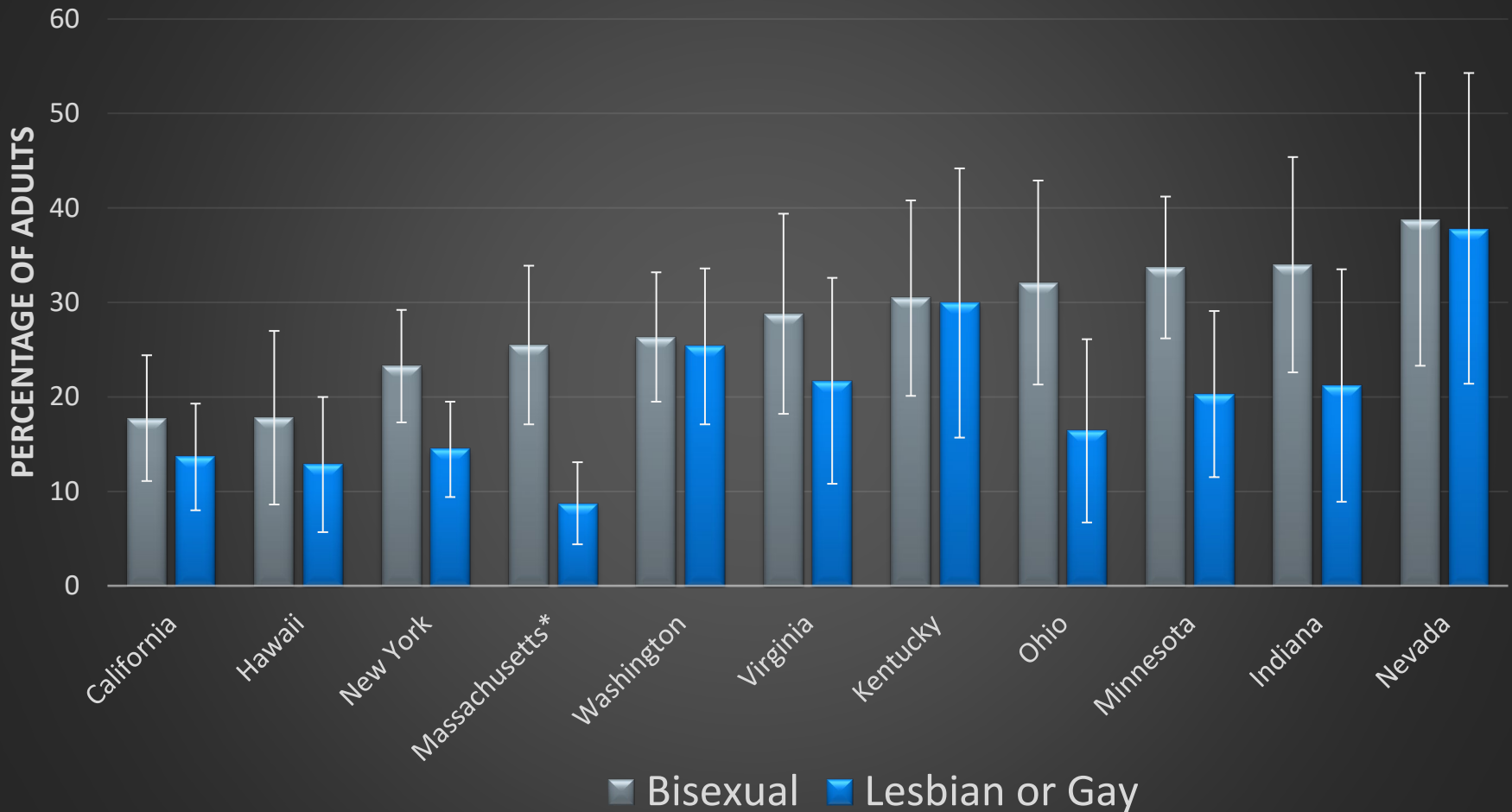
1st	<= 13.2%
2nd	13.3% to 19.0%
3rd	19.1% to 21.3%
4th	21.4% to 28.1%
5th	>= 28.2%
Data not available	

# FMD prevalence by state with 95% CIs, sorted by LGB



\* INDICATES A STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE BASED ON NON-OVERLAPPING 95% CONFIDENCE INTERVALS

# FMD prevalence by state with 95% CIs, sorted by bisexual



\* INDICATES A STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE BASED ON NON-OVERLAPPING 95% CONFIDENCE INTERVALS

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# Discussion



- Overall and in majority of states collecting sexual orientation data:
  - The prevalence of FMD is significantly higher among LGB adults compared to straight adults
  - When you separate the lesbian/gay and bisexual populations, the prevalence of FMD is greater among bisexual compared to lesbian/gay and straight adults

- The high prevalence of persistent and severe mental health issues in the LGB community compared to the straight population demands greater awareness, action, and data collection
- Ongoing data collection essential to understanding needs and tracking trends in LGBT population

- More states should adopt the SOGI module as part of their annual BRFSS survey
- More analyses are needed exploring behaviors and outcomes by sexual orientation and gender identity using BRFSS data
- Stratification by sex, age, race/ethnicity, income, education and/or rurality could provide additional context

- Analysis is limited by small sample size and lack of data for all 50 states and the District of Columbia
- Recall bias with self-reported data
- Cultural, generational, socioeconomic differences in terminology and identification
- Other category/don't know/refused may be those who identify as queer

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# Thank You

**Arundel Metrics, Inc**

Laura Houghtaling, MPH

651-393-5370

[laura@arundelmetrics.com](mailto:laura@arundelmetrics.com)

**Arundel Metrics, Inc**

Melanie Buhl

Tom Eckstein, MBA

Mary Ann Honors, PhD, MPH

Sarah Milder, MPH

Kristin Shaw, MPH