



# New York State Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Brief

The Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System is an annual telephone survey of adults developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention conducted in all 50 States, the District of Columbia, and several United States Territories. The New York Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System is administered by the New York State Department of Health to provide statewide and regional information on behaviors, risk factors, and use of preventive health services related to the leading causes of chronic and infectious diseases, disability, injury, and death.

## Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity: Selected Demographics and Health Indicators New York State Adults, 2021-2022



### Introduction

An estimated 7.2% of United States adults identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender according to data collected in 2022.<sup>1</sup> LGBTQIA+ is an acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex, and asexual. These terms are among several used to describe a person's sexual orientation or gender identity, and the terminology continues to evolve to become more inclusive and culturally responsive. Although defining the size and characteristics of this community is complicated by overlap and intersectionality between identity, behavior, and attraction, collecting information on sexual orientation and gender identity is a key step towards understanding LGBTQIA+ people<sup>5</sup> and their health needs. Moreover, as the number of Americans who identify as members of the LGBTQIA+ community grows, it is increasingly important for public health surveillance systems like the New York State Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System to measure sexual orientation and gender identity to identify the health disparities faced by this community and help achieve optimal health for everyone.<sup>2-4</sup>

In this report we pooled data from 2021 and 2022 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Surveys to estimate the size and demographics of the LGBTQIA+ adult community in New York State and the prevalence of select chronic disease health indicators among the community. We have purposefully separated sexual identities from gender identities in our analyses as lived experiences, health behaviors, and health outcomes can differ between these groups.

### Health Equity

The New York State Department of Health is committed to reducing health disparities experienced by members of the LGBTQIA+ community. Recent actions across the country to reduce the legal rights of LGBTQIA+ people have added to an increasing and targeted backlash against the community, particularly transgender and non-conforming people, that further disparages vulnerable and marginalized persons. Stigma and discrimination against sexual and gender minorities can lead to chronic stress and cause stress responses (e.g., high blood pressure, anxiety) that accrue over time, eventually leading to poor mental and physical health.<sup>4</sup> Fear of discrimination in the health care setting and lack of providers who are knowledgeable about LGBTQIA+ health needs are barriers to accessing quality health care for members of this community.<sup>4</sup> According to a recent New York community health survey, patterns of health inequity among LGBTQ+ communities mirror American society, with the following groups reporting the highest rates of not receiving health services: Black and Hispanic adults; younger persons; persons reporting bisexual, pansexual or other sexual orientations; persons reporting transgender, gender non-conforming or non-binary genders; persons with lower educational attainment and income levels; and persons living with disability.<sup>5</sup> Studies suggest the impacts of stigma and discrimination begin early in the life course. LGBTQIA+ teens and young adults may be at increased risk for attempted suicide and depression and may have higher rates of substance use than heterosexual youth.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the LGBTQIA+ community is a known target of tobacco industry advertising and marketing and have higher rates of tobacco use compared to heterosexual and cisgender peers.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup>LGBT/LGBT+/LGBTQIA+/LGBTQIA+ are all acronyms for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex, and asexual or allied. In New York State, we prefer the acronym LGBTQIA+ as the most inclusive way to acknowledge and respect the diversity of bodies, genders, and relationships.



## Key Findings



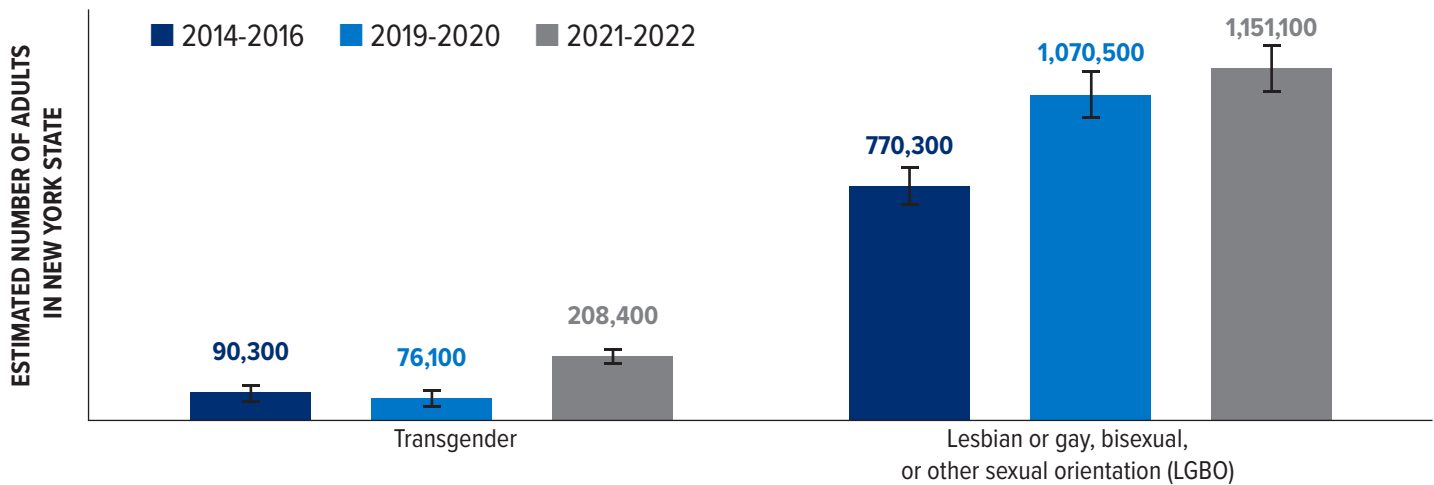
- In New York State, over one million adults identify as LGBTQIA+. An estimated 8.2% of the adult population identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or another sexual orientation (LGBO); 3.9% of New York State adults identify as bisexual; 2.9% identify as lesbian or gay; and 1.4% identify as another sexual orientation, including questioning, asexual, and pansexual. An estimated 1.4% of New York State adults identify as transgender, gender non-conforming, non-binary, or intersex.
- One in five adults aged 18-24 identify as LGBO (20.0%), as well as a larger segment of certain other demographic groups, including females (9.1%), adults who are currently unemployed (11.5%), adults living with disability (11.3%), and adults with food insecurity (11.0%).
- Substance use is more prevalent among LGBO and transgender adults when compared to the non-LGBTQIA+ community, including e-cigarette use (LGBO: 12.8%; transgender: 14.2%; non-LGBTQIA+: 5.3%), cannabis consumption (LGBO: 31.2%; transgender: 38.6%; non-LGBTQIA+: 11.4%), and binge or heavy drinking (LGBO: 25.6%; transgender: 25.0%; non-LGBTQIA+: 17.9%).
- LGBTQIA+ adults are more than twice as likely to report higher rates of frequent mental distress when compared to the non-LGBTQIA+ population, defined as reported problems with stress, depression, or emotions more than 14 days a month (LGBO: 29.1%; Transgender: 32.1%; non-LGBTQIA+: 12.4%), or ever being diagnosed with a depressive disorder (LGBO: 38.4%; Transgender: 36.9%; non-LGBTQIA+: 15.7%).
- LGBO and transgender adults report having higher prevalence of two or more adverse childhood experiences (ACES) (LGBO: 59.0%; Transgender: 50.2%), and suicidal thoughts, planned or attempted suicide in the past year (LGBO: 15.2%; Transgender: 14.3%), than the non-LGBTQIA+ population (41.0% and 3.4%, respectively). In addition, the LGBTQIA+ community also report higher rates of sometimes, rarely, or never receiving needed social and emotional support (LGBO: 33.7%; Transgender: 51.3%), compared to the non-LGBTQIA+ community (22.9%). However, in the past year a greater percentage of LGBTQIA+ New Yorkers report having accessed one or more resources to support their mental health (LGBO: 66.8%; Transgender: 64.8%) than the non-LGBTQIA+ community (51.5%).
- Several health-related social needs are more prevalent in the LGBTQIA+ community than among non-LGBTQIA+ New Yorkers, including cost barriers for needed medical care (LGBO: 13.5%; Transgender: 17.3%; non-LGBTQIA+: 7.3%), the lack of a regular health care provider (LGBO: 16.0%; Transgender: 14.9%, non-LGBTQIA+: 13.1%), unreliable transportation and/or housing insecurity (LGBO: 28.8%; Transgender: 36.2%; non-LGBTQIA+: 17.1%), and food insecurity (LGBO: 31.6%; Transgender: 39.9%; non-LGBTQIA+: 22.9%).

**Table 1. Percent of Adults Who Self-Identify as Lesbian or Gay, Bisexual, Other Sexual Orientation (LGBO), or Transgender, Gender Non-conforming, Non-binary or Intersex in New York State, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey, 2021-2022\***

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Other Sexual Orientation, Transgender <sup>†</sup>		Percent	95% CI <sup>a</sup>	Estimated Weighted, N
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Other sexual orientation (LGBO)	8.2	7.8 - 8.7	1,151,100
	Bisexual	3.9	3.6 - 4.2	548,900
	Lesbian or Gay	2.9	2.6 - 3.1	399,500
	Other sexual orientation, including Questioning, Asexual, and Pansexual	1.4	1.3 - 1.6	202,700
<b>Gender Identity</b>	Transgender, Gender Queer, Gender non-conforming, Non-binary, or Intersex	1.4 <sup>‡</sup>	1.2 - 1.6	208,400

**Notes:** <sup>a</sup>CI = confidence interval. <sup>\*</sup>Includes pooled Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey data years 2021-2022. <sup>†</sup>Note: The sexual orientation and gender identity groups overlap and are not mutually exclusive. <sup>‡</sup>A portion of respondents who identify as transgender will also identify as LGBO (62.5%), and a portion will identify as straight (37.5%).

**Figure 1. Estimated number of adults who self-identify as lesbian or gay, bisexual, other sexual orientation (LGBO) or transgender<sup>§</sup> in New York State, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey, by pooled survey years**



Notes: <sup>§</sup>For survey years 2021-2022, in addition to transgender, this category includes adults who report sex at birth as intersex and gender identity as gender queer, gender non-conforming, or non-binary. Error bars represent 95% confidence interval.

**Table 2. Percent of adults who self-identify as lesbian or gay, bisexual, other sexual orientation (LGBO), or transgender<sup>a</sup> in New York State by demographic indicators, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey, 2021-2022**

	LGBO		Transgender	
	% <sup>b</sup>	95% CI <sup>b</sup>	%	95% CI
<b>New York State [n=56,895]</b>	<b>8.2</b>	<b>7.8 - 8.7</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>1.2 - 1.6</b>
<b>Region</b>				
New York City	9.5	8.8 - 10.3	1.8	1.4 - 2.1
New York State excluding New York City	7.4	6.9 - 7.8	1.2	1.0 - 1.4
<b>Sex at Birth<sup>c</sup></b>				
Female	9.1	8.5 - 9.7	1.4	1.2 - 1.7
Male	7.2	6.6 - 7.7	1.3	1.1 - 1.6
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>				
Asian, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, non-Hispanic	8.1	6.4 - 9.8	1.8	1.1 - 2.6
Black, non-Hispanic	8.5	7.2 - 9.7	1.4	0.9 - 2.0
Hispanic	9.5	8.5 - 10.6	2.1	1.6 - 2.6
White, non-Hispanic	7.7	7.2 - 8.2	1.0	0.8 - 1.2
All Other race groups combined, non-Hispanic <sup>d</sup>	11.4	8.6 - 14.3	3.4	1.4 - 5.4
<b>Age (Years)</b>				
18-24	20.0	17.2 - 22.7	3.0	2.0 - 4.0
25-34	12.3	10.7 - 13.8	1.6	1.0 - 2.2
35-44	7.5	6.3 - 8.7	1.2	0.8 - 1.7
45-54	4.9	3.9 - 5.8	0.9	0.4 - 1.3
55-64	5.1	4.1 - 6.2	0.8	0.4 - 1.2
65+	3.8	3.1 - 4.5	0.6	0.3 - 0.8
<b>Educational Attainment</b>				
Less than high school	7.9	6.5 - 9.4	2.4	1.6 - 3.1
High school or GED	8.3	7.4 - 9.2	1.3	1.0 - 1.6
Some post-high school	8.1	7.3 - 9.0	1.4	1.1 - 1.8
College graduate	8.3	7.7 - 9.0	1.1	0.9 - 1.3

**Table 2. Percent of adults who self-identify as lesbian or gay, bisexual, other sexual orientation (LGB), or transgender<sup>a</sup> in New York State by demographic indicators, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey, 2021-2022**

	LGB		Transgender	
	% <sup>b</sup>	95% CI <sup>b</sup>	%	95% CI
<b>New York State [n=56,895]</b>	<b>8.2</b>	<b>7.8 - 8.7</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>1.2 - 1.6</b>
<b>Annual Household Income</b>				
Less than \$25,000	9.2	8.0 - 10.5	2.6	2.0 - 3.3
\$25,000-\$49,999	8.5	7.6 - 9.4	1.4	1.0 - 1.8
\$50,000 and greater	7.7	7.1 - 8.3	0.9	0.7 - 1.1
Missing <sup>e</sup>	8.4	7.5 - 9.3	1.6	1.2 - 1.9
<b>Primary Health Insurance</b>				
Private	8.3	7.7 - 9.0	1.2	1.0 - 1.5
Medicare	5.1	4.4 - 5.8	0.8	0.6 - 1.1
Medicaid	11.0	9.7 - 12.3	2.6	2.0 - 3.3
Other insurance	9.1	7.7 - 10.6	1.1	0.6 - 1.5
Not insured	8.3	6.4 - 10.1	1.7	1.1 - 2.3
<b>Employment Status</b>				
Employed/self-employed	8.6	8.0 - 9.1	1.3	1.1 - 1.5
Unemployed	11.5	9.7 - 13.2	2.3	1.6 - 3.0
Not in labor force	6.9	6.2 - 7.6	1.3	1.0 - 1.6
<b>Perceived Food Security</b>				
Food insecure	11.0	9.5 - 12.5	1.9	1.2 - 2.5
Food secure	7.4	6.6 - 8.2	0.9	0.7 - 1.2
<b>Disability<sup>f</sup></b>				
Yes	11.3	10.4 - 12.3	2.5	2.0 - 3.0
No	7.3	6.8 - 7.7	1.0	0.8 - 1.1

**Notes:** <sup>a</sup>In addition to transgender, this category includes adults who report sex at birth as intersex and gender identity as gender queer, gender non-conforming, or non-binary. <sup>b</sup>% = weighted percentage; CI = confidence interval; when comparing estimates, the 95% confidence interval provides the statistical range containing the true population percentage with a 95% probability. The width of the confidence interval is influenced by the number of residents surveyed. Although a 95% confidence interval is not a test of statistical significance, estimates whose 95% confidence intervals do not overlap can be considered significantly different. <sup>c</sup>Based on respondent's sex at birth or current gender identity at time of interview if sex at birth is missing. <sup>d</sup>Includes American Indian or Alaska Native, multi-racial, or other race, non-Hispanic respondents. <sup>e</sup>"Missing" category included because more than 10% of the sample did not report income. <sup>f</sup>All respondents who report having at least one type of disability (cognitive, mobility, vision, self-care, independent living, or hearing).

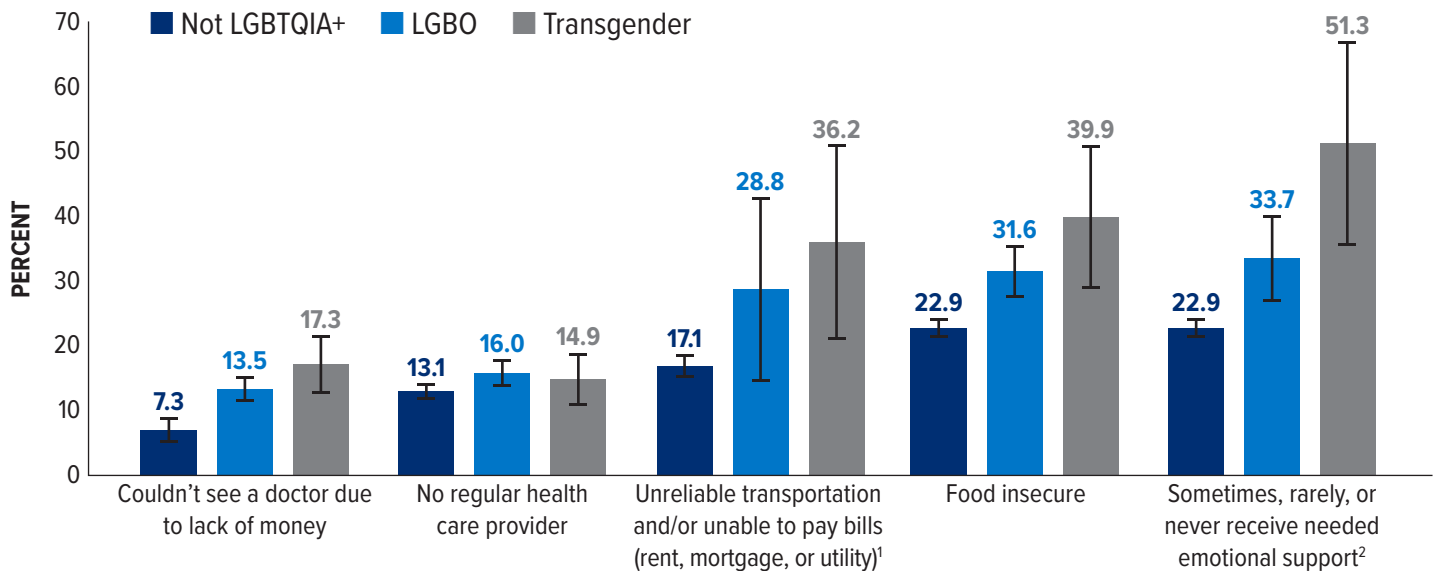
**Table 3. Prevalence of certain health indicators among adults who self-identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or other sexual orientation (LGBO), or transgender§ in New York State, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System 2021-2022, 2021 and 2022**

	Not LGBTQIA+		LGBO		Transgender	
	% <sup>a</sup>	95% CI <sup>a</sup>	%	95% CI	%	95% CI
<b>Substance Use</b>						
Current e-cigarette use	5.3	4.9 - 5.6	12.8	10.9 - 14.7	14.2	10.1 - 18.4
Current smoker	12.0	11.5 - 12.6	13.8	12.0 - 15.6	16.8	11.7 - 21.8
Cannabis consumed in past 30 days	11.4	10.2 - 12.5	31.2	25.1 - 37.3	38.6	23.8 - 53.3
Binge or heavy drinking	17.9	16.9 - 18.8	25.6	22.0 - 29.3	25.0	17.0 - 32.9
<b>Physical and Mental Health</b>						
Fair or poor self-assessed general health	15.5	14.7 - 16.3	18.3	15.8 - 20.8	29.1	22.0 - 36.1
Poor physical health (>14 days/month)	10.5	10.1 - 11.0	10.9	9.3 - 12.6	14.7	10.1 - 19.3
Frequent mental distress (>14 days/month)	12.4	11.9 - 12.9	29.1	26.6 - 31.5	32.1	26.0 - 38.1
Ever diagnosed with a depressive disorder	15.7	15.1 - 16.2	38.4	35.8 - 41.0	36.9	30.9 - 42.9
Experienced 2+ Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) <sup>1</sup>	41.0	39.1 - 42.8	59.0	52.1 - 65.9	50.2	33.2 - 67.2
In the past year had suicidal thoughts, planned, or attempted suicide <sup>1</sup>	3.4	2.7 - 4.1	15.2	10.5 - 19.8	14.3	5.9 - 22.7
<b>Health-related Social Needs</b>						
Lack of social and emotional support <sup>2</sup>	22.9	21.4 - 24.5	33.7	27.2 - 40.2	51.3	35.9 - 66.6
Accessed one or more resources to support mental health <sup>3</sup>	51.5	49.7 - 53.3	66.8	60.2 - 73.4	64.8	49.7 - 79.8
Lack of health insurance	5.4	5.0 - 5.8	5.6	4.3 - 6.8	7.4	4.6 - 10.1
Cost barrier for needed medical care <sup>4</sup>	7.3	6.8 - 7.7	13.5	11.7 - 15.3	17.3	12.8 - 21.7
Lack of regular health care provider	13.1	12.6 - 13.7	16.0	14.1 - 17.9	14.9	10.9 - 18.9
Unreliable transportation and/or housing insecurity <sup>5</sup>	17.1	15.3 - 18.9	28.8	22.3 - 35.2	36.2	21.5 - 50.9
Food insecure <sup>6</sup>	22.9	21.8 - 24.0	31.6	27.7 - 35.5	39.9	29.3 - 50.5

**Notes:** §In addition to transgender, this category includes adults who report sex at birth as intersex and gender identity as gender queer, gender non-conforming, or non-binary. <sup>a</sup>%= weighted percentage; CI=confidence interval; when comparing estimates, the 95% confidence interval provides the statistical range containing the true population percentage with a 95% probability. The width of the confidence interval is influenced by the number of residents surveyed. Although a 95% confidence interval is not a test of statistical significance, estimates whose 95% confidence intervals do not overlap can be considered significantly different. <sup>1</sup>2021 survey only. <sup>2</sup>Respondents answered they sometimes, rarely, or never receive needed social and emotional support that they need; 2021 survey only. <sup>3</sup>During the past 12 months, have you accessed one or more of these resources to support your mental health? Outpatient or inpatient mental health treatment, emergency services, telephone hotline, testing service, social media platform, support group, family or friends, website, employee assistance program; 2021 survey only. <sup>4</sup>Respondents answered 'Yes' to 'Was there a time in the past 12 months when you needed to see a doctor but could not because you could not afford it?' <sup>5</sup>Respondents answered 'Yes' to either 'During the last 12 months, was there a time when you were not able to pay your mortgage, rent, or utility bills?' and/or 'During the past 12 months, has a lack of reliable transportation kept you from medical appointments, meetings, work, or from getting things you needed for daily living?'; 2022 survey only. <sup>6</sup>Respondents answered during the past 12 months they always, usually, or sometime worried about enough money to buy nutritious meals.

■ Estimates highlighted in blue indicate statistical significance from adults not in the LGBTQIA+ community.

**Figure 2. Select health indicators reported among adults who self-identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, other sexual orientation (LGBO), or transgender<sup>§</sup> in New York State, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey, 2021-2022, 2021<sup>1</sup>, 2022<sup>2</sup>**



**Note:** <sup>§</sup>In addition to transgender, this category includes adults who report sex at birth as intersex and gender identity as gender queer, gender non-conforming, or non-binary. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

## Appendix: Definitions of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity<sup>7,8</sup>

**Sexual Orientation:** How a person characterizes their emotional and sexual attraction to others.

**Asexual:** describes people who have no sexual feelings or desires, or who is not sexually attracted to anyone.

**Bisexual:** describes people who are primarily emotionally and physically attracted to women/females and men/males. Some people define bisexuality as attraction to all genders.

**Gay:** describes people who are primarily emotionally and physically attracted to the same gender as themselves.

**Heterosexual:** A sexual orientation that describes women who are primarily emotionally and physically attracted to men, and men who are primarily emotionally and physically attracted to women.

**Lesbian:** describes women who are primarily emotionally and physically attracted to other women.

**Pansexual:** describes people who are sexually, romantically, or emotionally attracted towards people regardless of their sex or gender identity.

**Questioning:** describes uncertainty about, or the process of exploring, one's sexual orientation.

**Something Else, or Other Orientation:** is an option for people who identify their sexual orientation as something other than the categories provided (e.g., queer, not listed, unlabeled, polysexual).

**Gender Identity:** A person's inner sense of being a boy/man/male, girl/woman/female, another gender, or no gender.

**Cisgender:** Describes a person whose gender identity aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth, based on societal expectations.

**Transgender:** describes a person whose gender identity and sex assigned at birth do not correspond based on traditional expectations.

**Sex Assigned at Birth:** Is the sex (female or male) assigned to an infant.

**Intersex:** Describes a range of variations in primary and secondary sex characteristics that do not fit into binary notions of female or male bodies. Variations may involve sex chromosomes, external genitalia, gonads, hormone production, hormone responsiveness, and/or internal reproductive organs, and may be identified prenatally, at birth, during puberty, or later in life. Some people with an intersex variation choose to label their gender identity as intersex. People with intersex variations are typically assigned a female or male sex at birth; in a few jurisdictions, an infant may be assigned intersex at birth.



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## Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Questions



### 2021: What sex were you assigned at birth?

1) Male, 2) Female, 3) Intersex, 4) Sex assigned at birth not listed, please specify.

### 2022: What was your sex at birth?

1) Male, 2) Female, 3) Intersex, 4) Sex at birth not listed, please specify.

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### 2021: How do you describe your gender?

1) Male, 2) Female, 3) Gender queer/gender nonconforming/non-binary, 4) Gender not listed, please specify.

### 2022: How do you describe your gender? Do you?

1) Identify as a man, 2) Identify as a woman, 3) Identify as gender queer, gender nonconforming, or non-binary, 4) Identify as transgender, man, 5) Identify as transgender, woman, 6) Identify as transgender, gender non-conforming, 7) Identify as another gender not listed, please specify.

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### 2021: Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?

1) Lesbian or gay, 2) Straight, that is, not gay, 3) Bisexual, 4) Questioning, 5) Sexual orientation not listed, please specify.

### 2022: Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?

1) Lesbian or gay, 2) Straight or heterosexual, that is, not gay, 3) Bisexual, 4) Questioning, 5) Asexual, 6) Pansexual, 7) Other sexual orientation not listed, please specify.

**Note:** Respondent can answer with either the number or the text/word. Definition of ‘transgender’, ‘gender non-conforming’, ‘asexual’, ‘pansexual’ is provided if asked by the participant. In the screening section that establishes survey eligibility, a question asks, “Are you male or female?” (2021 and 2022). The survey will terminate if the respondent indicates “Don’t know/Not sure” or “Refused”.



## Suggested Citation

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## Program Contributions

New York State Department of Health

Bureau of Chronic Disease Evaluation and Research

Office of Program Evaluation and Research, AIDS Institute

Office of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Services, AIDS Institute

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