



## FACT SHEET

# LGBTQ+ AND CORONAVIRUS

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**Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, plus (LGBTQ+) people are at particular risk for coronavirus disease 2019 (or COVID-19) for multiple reasons:**

## SMOKING

- *According to the World Health Organization, smoking increases vulnerability for coronavirus transmission and can increase the severity of the virus [1]*
- 20.5% of LGB adults smoke cigarettes compared to 15.3% of straight adults [2]
- Transgender adults are 2.1 times more likely than cisgender adults to smoke [3]
- LGBT young adults are nearly twice as likely to use tobacco as their non-LGBT counterparts [4]

## HEALTH DISPARITIES

- *People with pre-existing health conditions and compromised immune systems are especially vulnerable to serious illness [5]*
- LGBTQ+ people as a whole experience higher rates of cancer and HIV [6]
- Gay and bisexual men accounted for 69% of all HIV diagnoses in the U.S. in 2018 [7]
- More than 1 out of 5 transgender adults have at least one or more chronic condition, such as diabetes, arthritis, or asthma [8]
- LGBTQ+ individuals are 2.5 times more likely to experience depression, anxiety, and substance misuse compared with heterosexual individuals. [9]

## ACCESS TO CARE

- Transgender individuals in the U.S. are less likely to have insurance and often do not see a doctor when they need to due to fear of discrimination [10]
- *Older people currently have the highest mortality rate from COVID-19 [1]*
- LGBTQ+ elders are less likely than their heterosexual and cisgender peers to reach out to health and aging providers due to fear of discrimination [11]
- Closure of local clinics and overburdened hospitals means losing access to hormone treatment for some trans people [12]
- Border closures, shipping delays, and medical supply shortages are anticipated to present even further challenges [12]
- Gender affirming surgeries being cancelled has a significant effect on the mental wellness of trans individuals for whom these procedures are essential [13]
- *People experiencing homelessness are at risk when there is community spread [14]*
- One in five trans people in the US will experience homelessness in their lifetime [10]



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## MENTAL HEALTH

- Social distancing is difficult for everyone but especially can exacerbate existing mental health conditions due to isolation and lack of social support [8]
- LGBTQ+ people have higher rates of mental health diagnoses (depression, anxiety, PTSD, etc) than their cisgender heterosexual counterparts [15]
- Especially for trans youth, social distancing can mean being separated from affirming relationships while trapped with unaccepting family members

## THIS HEIGHTENED RISK STAYS TRUE IN NEBRASKA:

- 30% of LGBTQ+ Nebraskans smoke cigarettes every day
- 38% of LGBTQ+ Nebraskans couldn't afford to see a doctor in the last year
- 22% of LGBTQ+ Nebraskans have an underlying physical health diagnosis
- Over half of LGBTQ+ Nebraskans have a diagnosis of depression or anxiety  
*[These statistics are from the 2019 Nebraska LGBTQ+ health survey]*

**NOTE: The minority stress model developed by social psychologists and employed by public health officials explains how the extreme stress experienced by members of a stigmatized minority group can create adverse health outcomes. Research indicates that LGBTQ+ health disparities are linked to societal stigma, discrimination, and denial of civil and human rights. It is important that we remember that these outcomes are a result of societal failures and not individual choices.**

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Data compiled by Midlands Sexual Health Research Collaborative