

Bisexual adults less likely to enjoy health benefits of education

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Education has long been linked to health—the more schooling people have, the healthier they are likely to be. But a new study from Rice University sociologists found that the health benefits of a good education are less evident among well-educated bisexual adults.

"Education and [health](#): The joint role of gender and [sexual identity](#)" examines health among straight, bisexual, gay and lesbian adults with various educational backgrounds. Authors Zhe Zhang, a postdoctoral research fellow at Rice, Bridget Gorman, a professor of sociology at Rice, and Alexa Solazzo, a postdoctoral research fellow at the Harvard University T.H. Chan School of Public Health, were particularly interested in bisexual adults, since they may experience distinctive health vulnerabilities.

The researchers found that while having at least a bachelor's degree was linked to [better health](#) among bisexual adults, they received less benefit than heterosexual and gay or lesbian adults with similar education. This effect was especially true for [bisexual women](#).

"The health benefits of education are well established—so much so that anything we do to promote and improve public education should really be viewed as health policy," Gorman said. "It's that impactful on health and well-being. That our analysis showed less health benefit associated with education among bisexual adults compared to heterosexual, gay and lesbian adults is concerning."

While the researchers could not pinpoint the exact cause, they theorized the problem might be [social stigma](#) and additional anxiety among women due to [gender discrimination](#), Zhang said.

"Discrimination of any kind can take a heavy toll on health," Zhang said. "While we cannot say with certainty that is what is happening in this study, it's a very real possibility."

The authors based their study on data from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, which included a sample of more than 1.2 million adults living in 44 U.S. states and territories from 2011-2017. They hope the study will raise awareness of the issue and help health professionals provide better care.

Provided by Rice University

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