

Office of Health Equity

Veterans Health Administration

Department of Veterans Affairs



PREVALENCE OF OBESITY AMONG SEXUAL MINORITY VETERANS

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INTRODUCTION

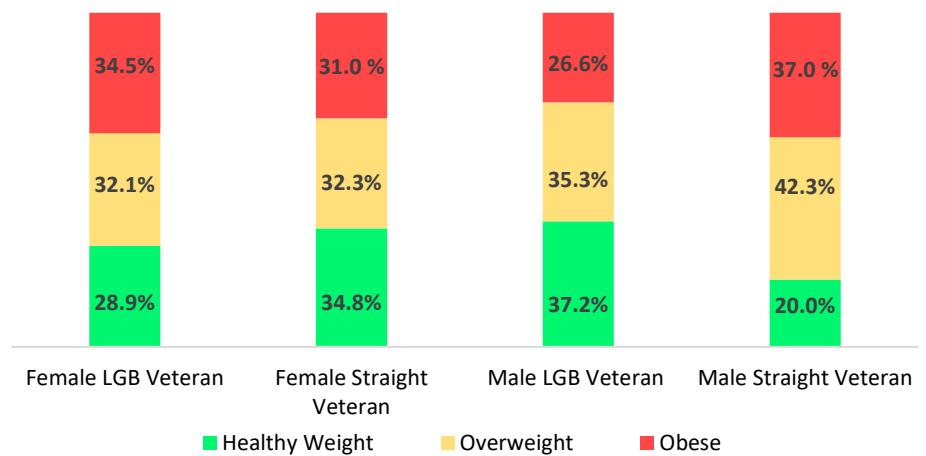
The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) serves a Veteran population that is increasingly diverse. Equitable access to high-quality care for all Veterans is a major tenet of the VA healthcare mission. The Office of Health Equity (OHE) champions the elimination of health disparities and achieving health equity for all Veterans, including LGBTQ+ Veterans.

DIFFERENCES IN OBESITY RATES IN DIFFERENT VETERAN GROUPS

Obesity is a risk factor for health conditions that include high blood pressure, heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and stroke. There are differences in rates of obesity among straight and Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual (LGB) Veterans. There are also differences in obesity rates within male and female Veterans from the LGB community.

Body mass index (BMI) is a ratio of an individual's height and weight. BMI is used to determine weight status – whether someone is normal weight, overweight, or obese.

Weight Status of Male and Female Veterans by Sexual Orientation Status



Data on weight status from the 2015-2018 National Health Interview Survey was used to identify differences in weight status among straight and LGB Veterans who either identified as male or female.

Compared to female straight Veterans, female LGB Veterans are more likely to have BMIs in the obesity category (31.0% vs. 34.5%) and are less likely to have a normal weight BMI (28.9% vs. 34.8%). Male LGB Veterans have the lowest rate of obesity compared to straight male Veterans, female straight Veterans, and female LGB Veterans. Straight male Veterans have the highest rate of obesity and lowest rate of having a normal weight.



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REDUCING HEALTH DISPARITIES

It is important that all Veterans, including LGB Veterans have access to programs that can provide them with the knowledge they need to be the healthiest version of themselves. Two of these programs, MOVE! & Pride in All Who Served, focus on helping Veterans improve their weight and overall health.

THE MOVE! WEIGHT MANAGEMENT PROGRAM FOR VETERANS

MOVE! is VA's weight management, health promotion program designed to improve the lives of Veterans. It is an evidence-based self-management program focused on the core ideas of healthy eating, physical activity, and behavior change. Veterans who have participated in MOVE! Programs across the country have lost weight.

Veterans interested in enrolling in MOVE! can speak to the MOVE! Coordinator or healthcare team at their VA facility.



PRIDE IN ALL WHO SERVED

The “PRIDE In All Who Served” project provides information about the services and support offered to LGBTQ+ Veterans to address their unique health care needs. In addition, PRIDE creates a supportive peer environment empowers LGBTQ+ Veterans to navigate the VA health care system so that they can access the care they need.

It is 10-week health education group developed specifically for LGBTQ+ Veterans. During the 10-week course there is a focus on improving overall wellness, increasing social connectedness, and empowering Veterans to engage in services related to their personal healthcare needs. If interested, please check out the link below to connect with program staff.



To learn more about the MOVE! Program, visit: <https://www.move.va.gov/MOVE/index.asp>

To learn more about the “PRIDE In All Who Served” project, visit: <https://marketplace.va.gov/practices/pride-in-all-who-served-reducing-healthcare-disparities-for-lgbt-veterans>

For more information about the Office of Health Equity visit: <https://www.va.gov/healthequity/>