

COMPARING FATHERING DESIRES BASED ON SEXUAL ORIENTATION: A SECONDARY ANALYSIS OF THE NATIONAL SURVEY OF FAMILY GROWTH

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Background: The National Survey for Family Growth (NSFG) [1] provides national estimates of reproductive health topics such as family building and infertility. Although it first began in 1973, measures of sexual orientation were not included until the 2000s [2]. Research and interventions focused on family planning desires have historically centered on heterosexual couples and women, notably omitting gay and bisexual men [3]. Identifying reproductive health goals of gay and bisexual men could promote inclusivity within family planning and identify unique barriers to family building.

Objective: To compare fathering desires between gay and bisexual men with heterosexual men.

Materials and Methods: We performed a secondary analysis of data from the 2017- 2019 NSFG. Data were grouped into two cohorts, heterosexual or straight for the first cohort, and gay, homosexual, or bisexual for the second cohort, based on respondent self-identified sexual orientation. We analyzed demographics, marital status, childhood and pregnancy history, and questions regarding fathering. Prior to statistical analysis, we weighted all data as recommended by the NSFG. Cohorts were then compared using the student's t-test, Mann Whitney U, or chi-square test.

Results: Our data included responses from 5062 men, with 4784 men identifying as heterosexual and 278 men identifying as either homosexual, gay, or bisexual. On average, heterosexual respondents were older than their gay and bisexual counterparts (31.9 years v. 29.4 years, $p < 0.01$). There were no statistical differences in racial and ethnic makeup of respondents between the two groups. Most gay and bisexual men had 1-3 people in their household (65.9%), compared to 53.1% of heterosexual men ($p < 0.1$); whereas 44.2% of heterosexual men reported 4-6 individuals in their household. Among respondents, 40.5% of heterosexual men were married, compared to 10.7% of gay and bisexual men ($p < 0.001$). There were no statistical differences when comparing number of high school graduates or individuals completing higher education between these two cohorts. Most men in both cohorts stated they are physically able to have children (96.1% of gay/bisexual men, 96.0% of heterosexual men, $p = 0.97$). When asked "how many times have you ever made someone pregnant," heterosexual men responded with a mean 1.50 times, compared to a mean 0.47 times for gay and bisexual men ($p < 0.001$). Heterosexual men were more likely to have any biological or adopted children compared to gay and bisexual men (46.3% v. 11.9%, $p < 0.001$). When asked whether they would be bothered if they could not have any (additional) children, about half of respondents in both cohorts reported that they would not be bothered "at all" (53.5% heterosexual men, 49.2% gay/bisexual men), while 14.4% of heterosexual men and 9.1% of gay and bisexual men would be bothered "a great deal", $p = 0.04$).

Conclusions: In this survey, heterosexual men had larger households than and similar education to their gay and bisexual counterparts. Additionally, heterosexual men were more

likely to have children, but both groups expressed frustration if they could not have more children. This research contributes to the literature suggesting disparities exist between LGBTQ+ and heterosexual individuals' ability to build a family.

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References:

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