

At the intersections of sexuality and gender: *Exploring increased risk of depression and anxiety among women in Australia*

Wil(liam) Leonard

Director Gay and Lesbian Health Victoria



# Research questions

- How do gender norms interact with sexuality to produce variations in the rates and patterns of mental ill-health between bisexual women and lesbian women and bisexual men?
- How do sexuality and gender interact with age to produce different rates and patterns of mental health problems among different age cohorts of bisexual women and men?

- Are the risk and protective factors for mental ill-health for bisexual women and bisexual men the same or are they shaped by the intersections of gender, sexuality and age?
- How can a better understanding of the gendered social determinants of reduced mental health among bisexuals be integrated into mental health policy and improve access to and the quality of, mental health services for, bisexual women?

In contemporary western democracies, such as Australia, it is impossible to understand what anyone of these terms — **sex, gender or sexuality** — means without reference to the other two.

# Private Lives<sup>2</sup>

Be a part of the second national survey of the health and wellbeing of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Australians

[www.privatelivessurvey.org.au](http://www.privatelivessurvey.org.au)



Conducted by Gay and Lesbian Health Victoria in partnership with the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University



Marian Pitts, Anne Mitchell, Anthony Lyons,  
Anthony Smith, Sunil Patel, Murray Couch, Anna Barrett

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Private Lives  
The national survey on  
the health and well-being  
of LGBT Australians

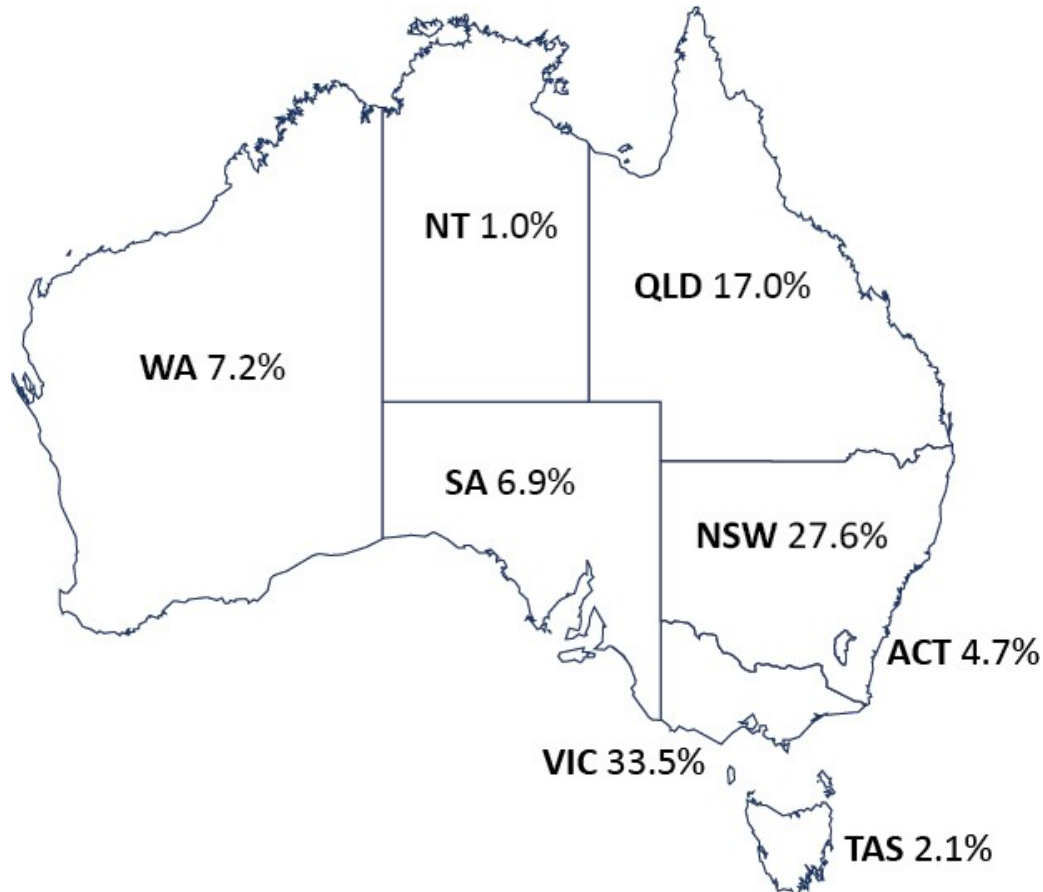
# Aims of PL2

- Document aspects of GLBT Australians' everyday lives and in particular those that relate to their health and wellbeing
- Improve our understanding of the links between minority sexual orientation and gender identity and physical and mental health
- Document GLBT Australians' patterns of health screening and health service use
- Provide evidence for the ongoing improvement of mainstream and targeted health services for GLBT Australians

# Demographic data



# Distribution of participants



**3,835**  
**respondents**

- Total number of respondents **3,835**
- 79% lived in major cities, 20% in inner and outer regional areas and 0.7% in rural and remote areas
- Aged between 16 and 89 years,  $m = 37.7$  years

- 2.3% were of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent
- 18.2% were born overseas
- 23% had a disability or long-term health condition
- Just over 55% were currently in a relationship; and
- 22.1% had children

- 48.2% identified as female
- 44.4% as male
- 4.4% as transgender;and
- 3.0% preferred another term

*Uncomfortable with my default setting of 'female'*

*Transgendered androgynous born female*

- 42.6% identified as gay
- 30.1% as lesbian
- 11.8% as bisexual
- 7.1% as queer; and
- 4.5% preferred another term

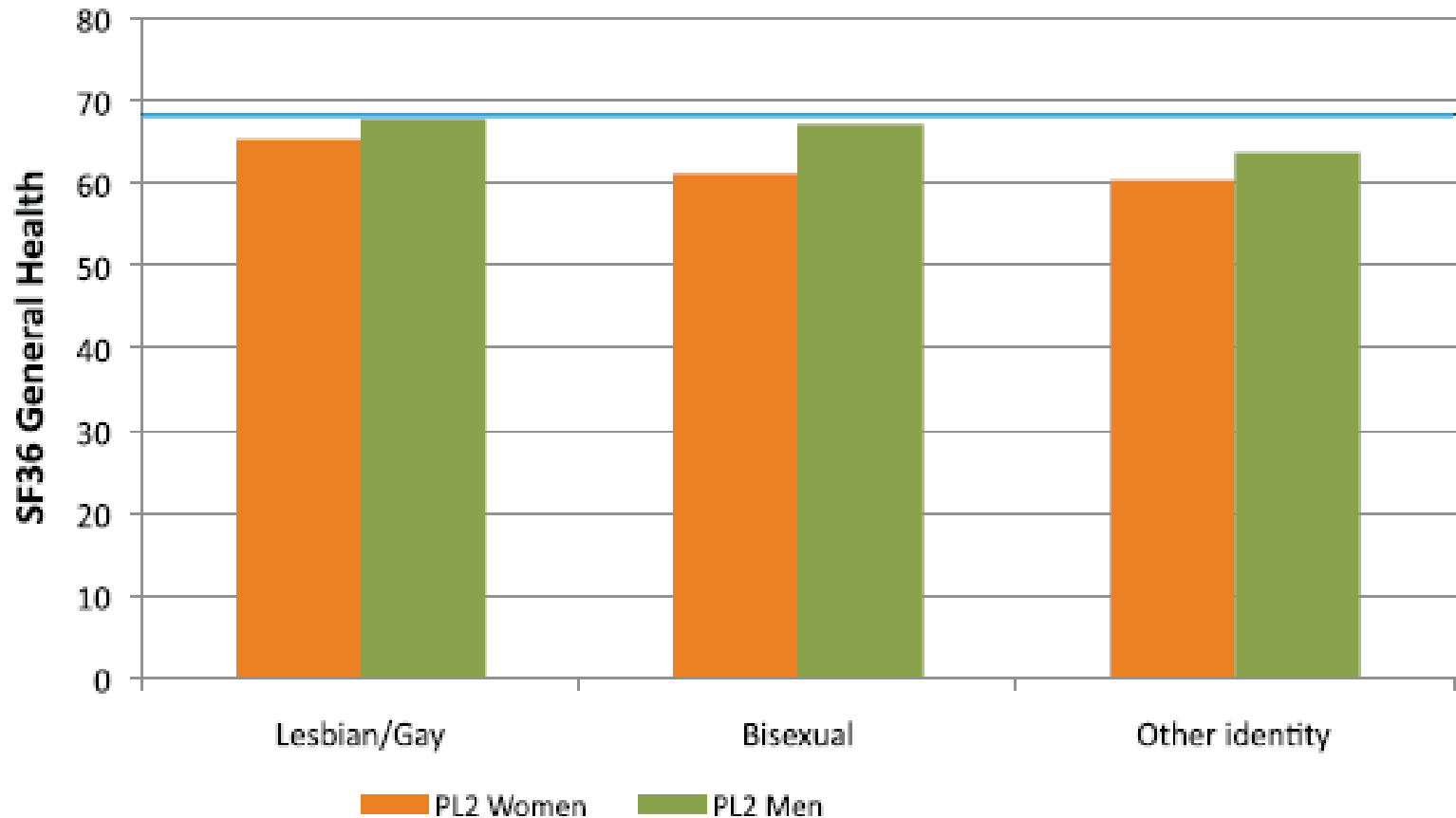
*I dislike labels. I am someone who has mainly liked and been with guys but is currently in a relationship and in love with a girl*

*Heteroflexible*

| Females<br>(n = 1849) |          | Males<br>(n = 1701) |          |
|-----------------------|----------|---------------------|----------|
| Lesbian               | Bisexual | Gay                 | Bisexual |
| 59.9                  | 15.4     | 86.5                | 7.0      |

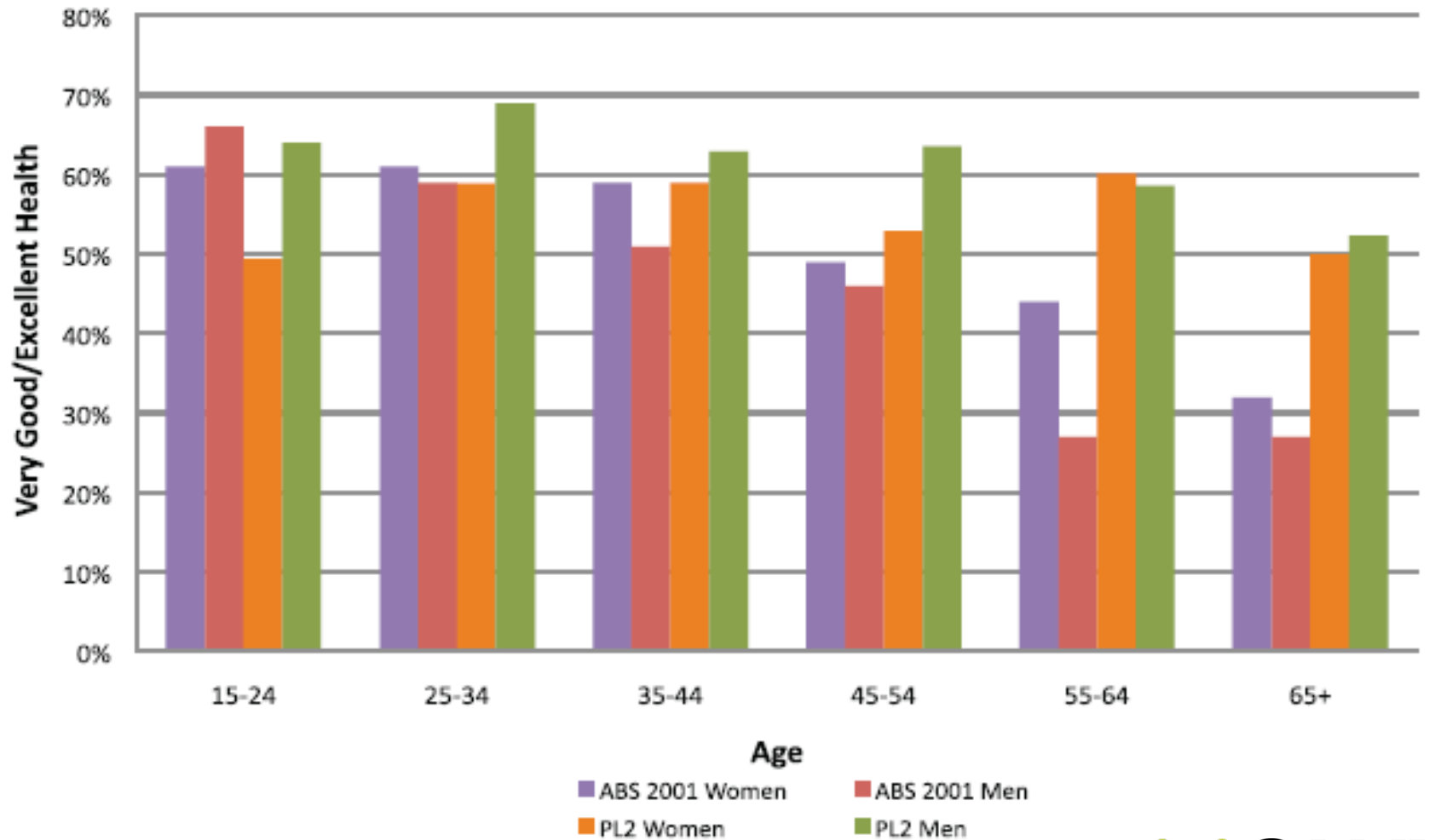
# General health & wellbeing

# Self-reported general health (SF36) by sexuality



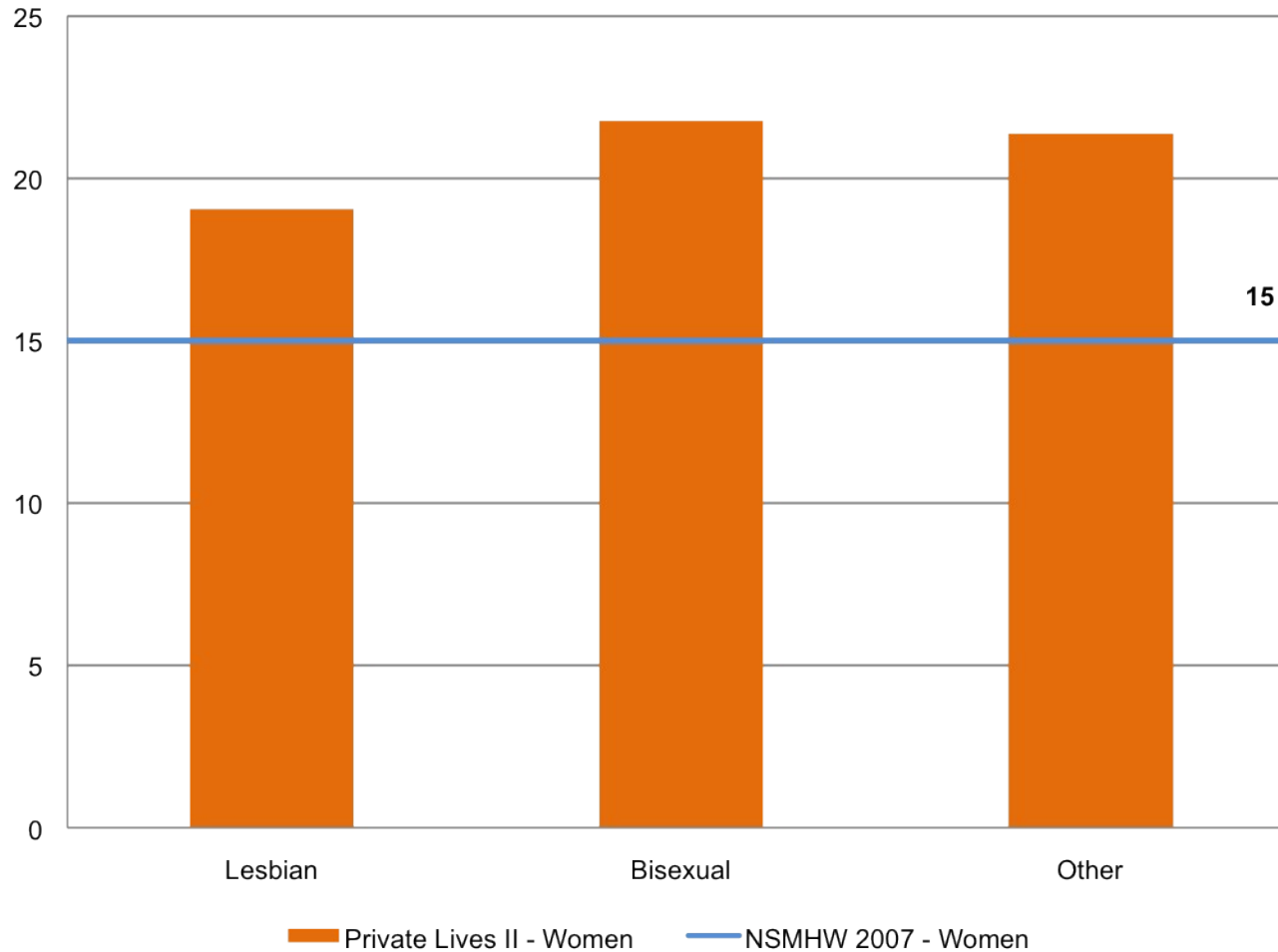


# Self-rated health (very good/excellent) by sex and age

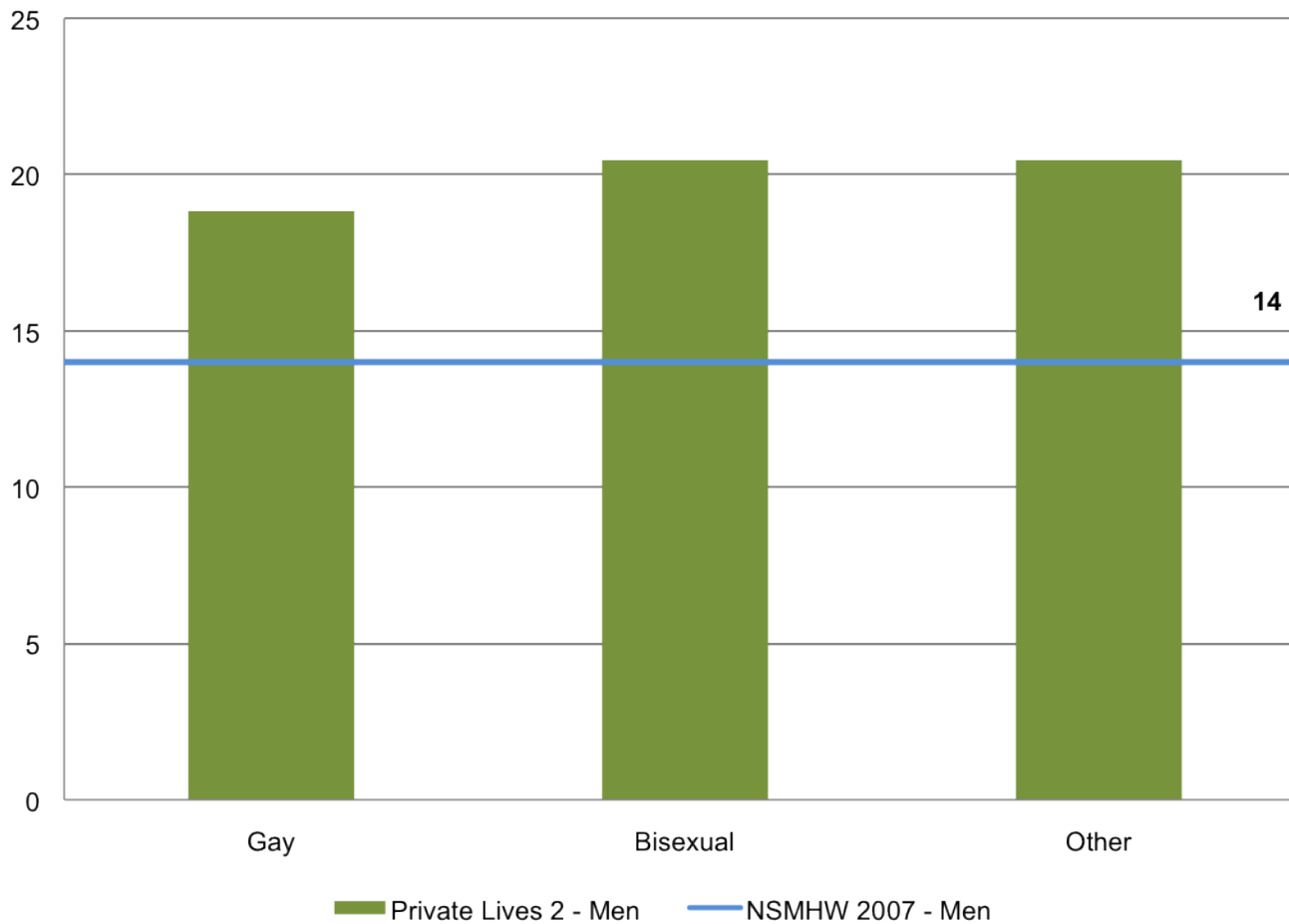


# Mental health & wellbeing

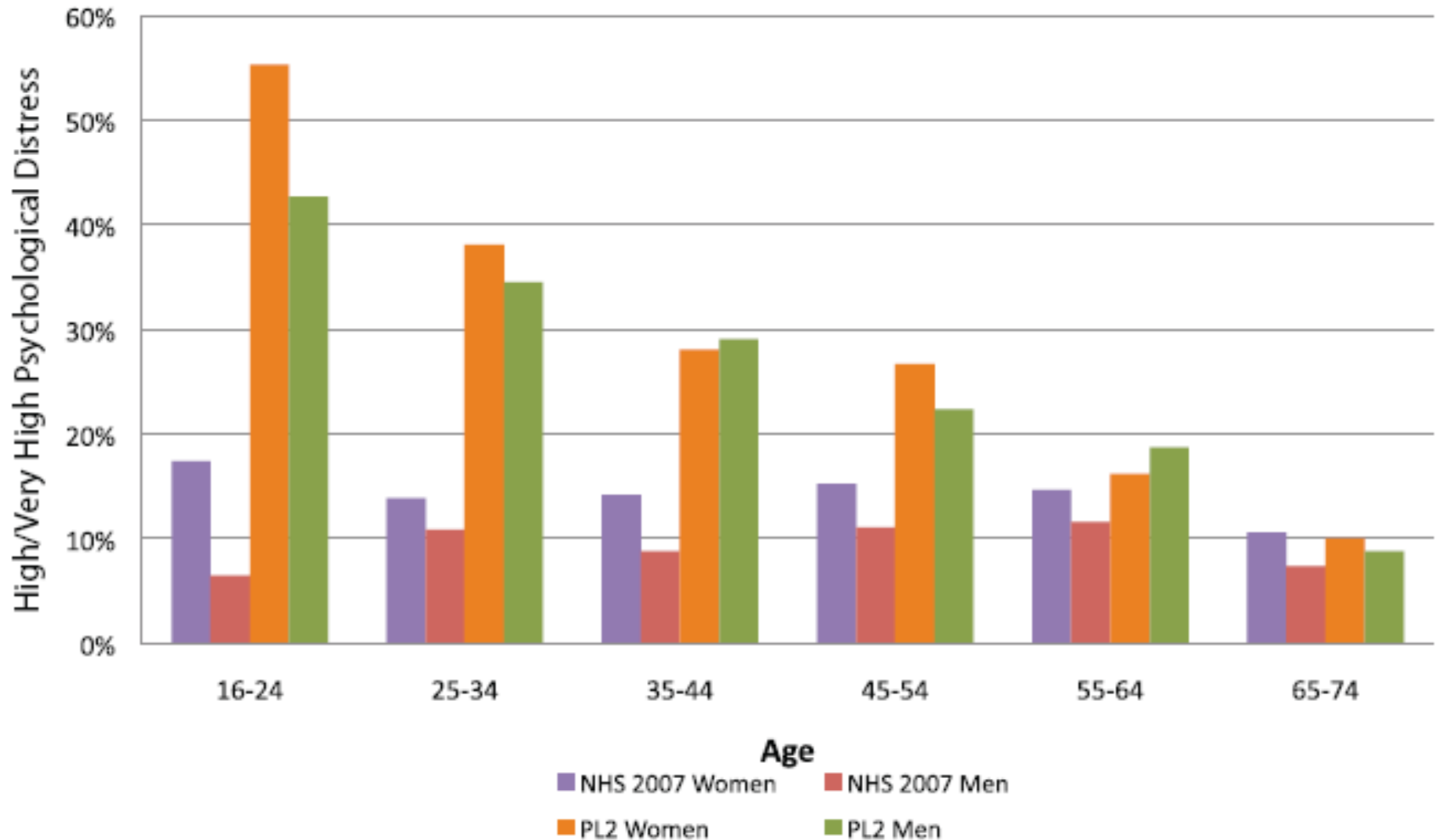
## K10 Psychological Distress - Women



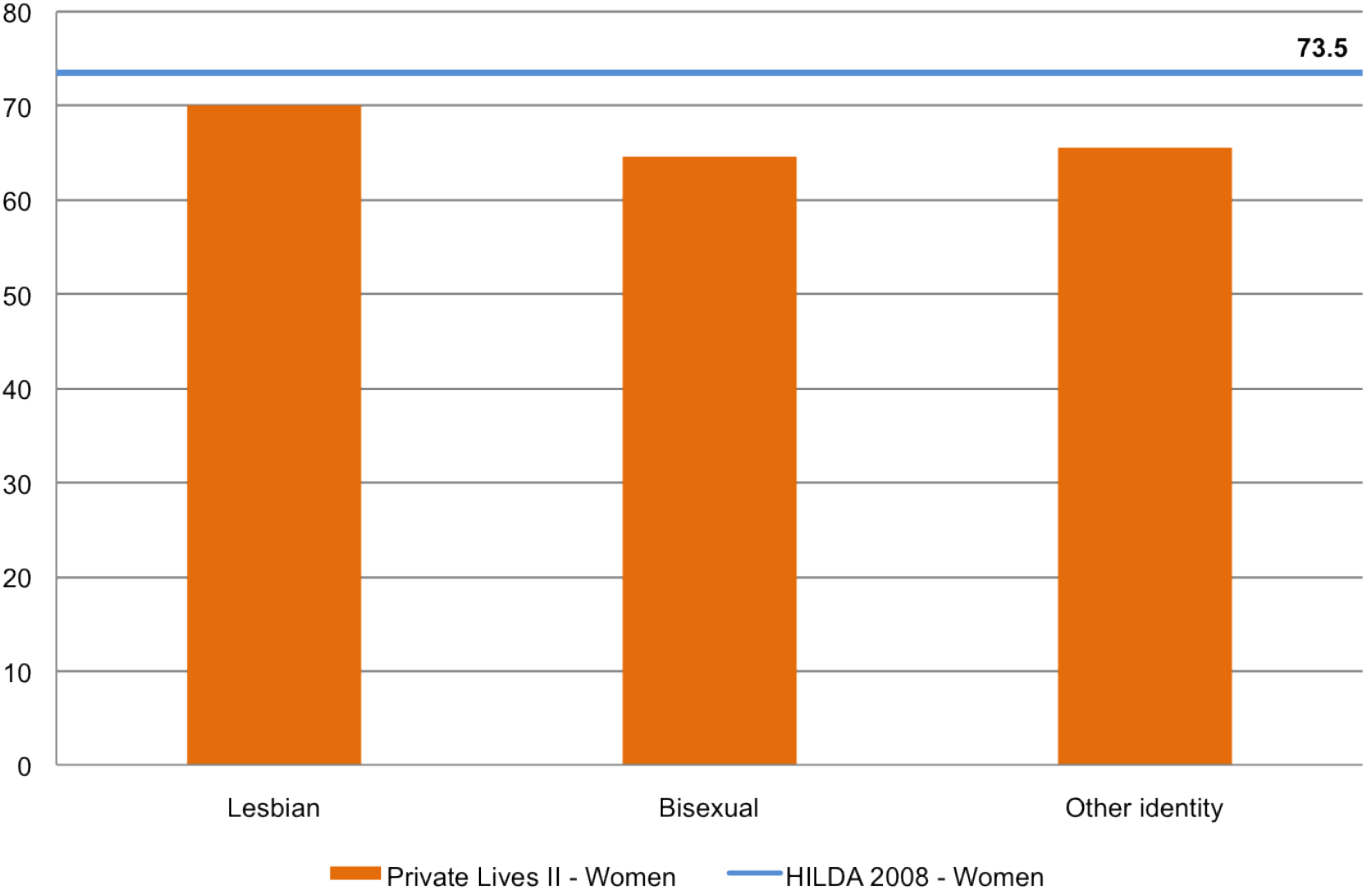
## K10 Psychological Distress - Men



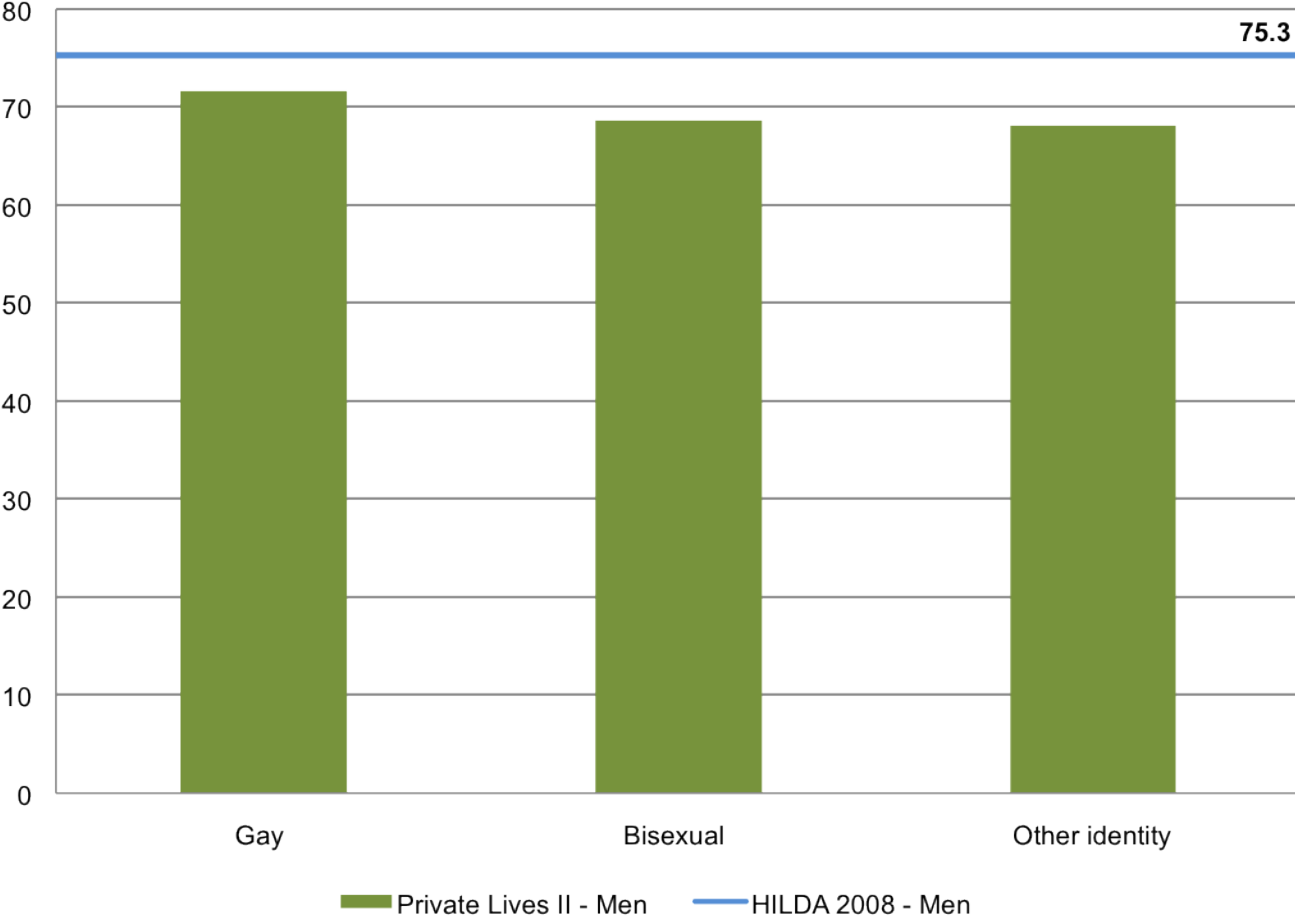
# K10 by sex and age, PL2 and national data



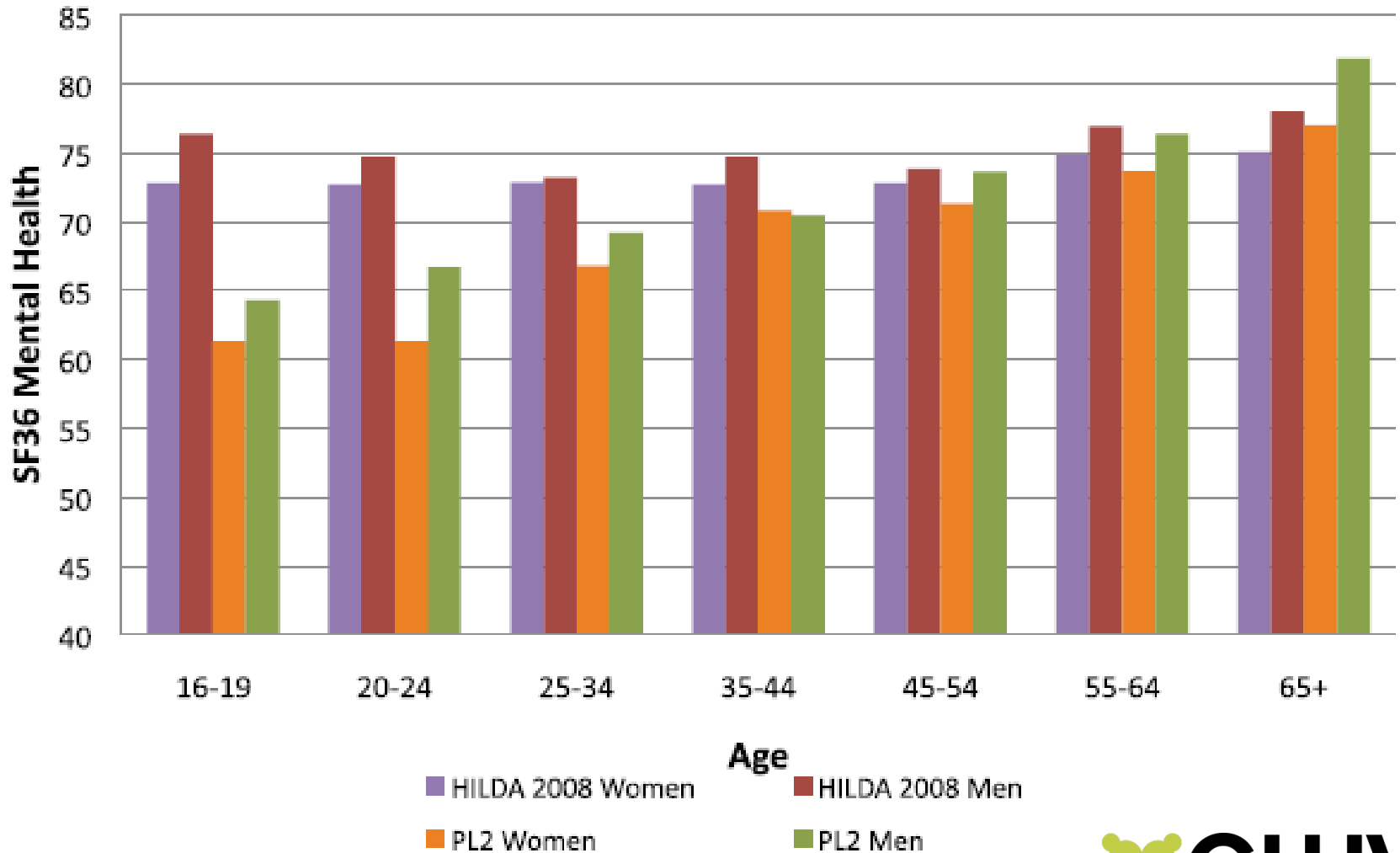
# SF36 Mental Health - Women



# SF36 Mental Health - Men

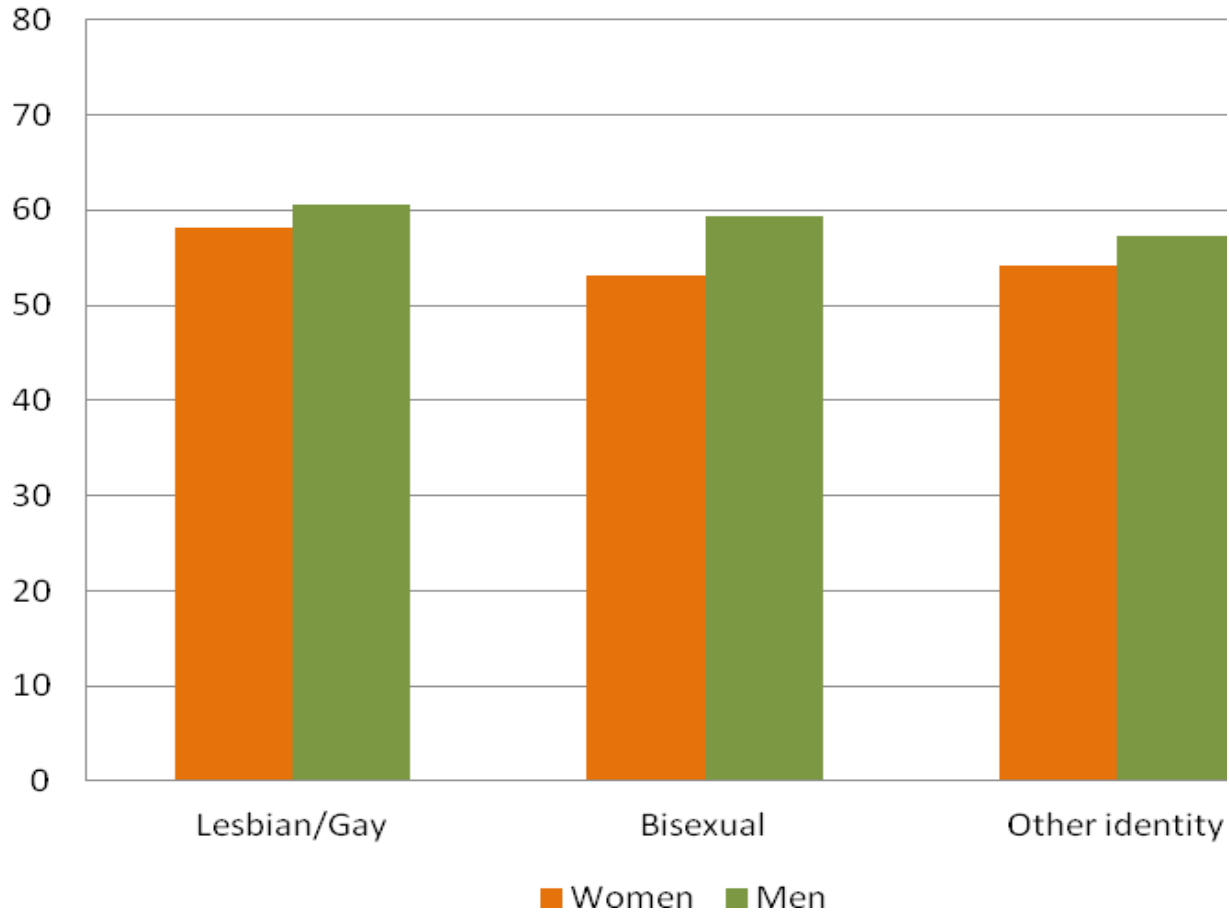


# SF36 mental health by sex and age, PL2 and national data

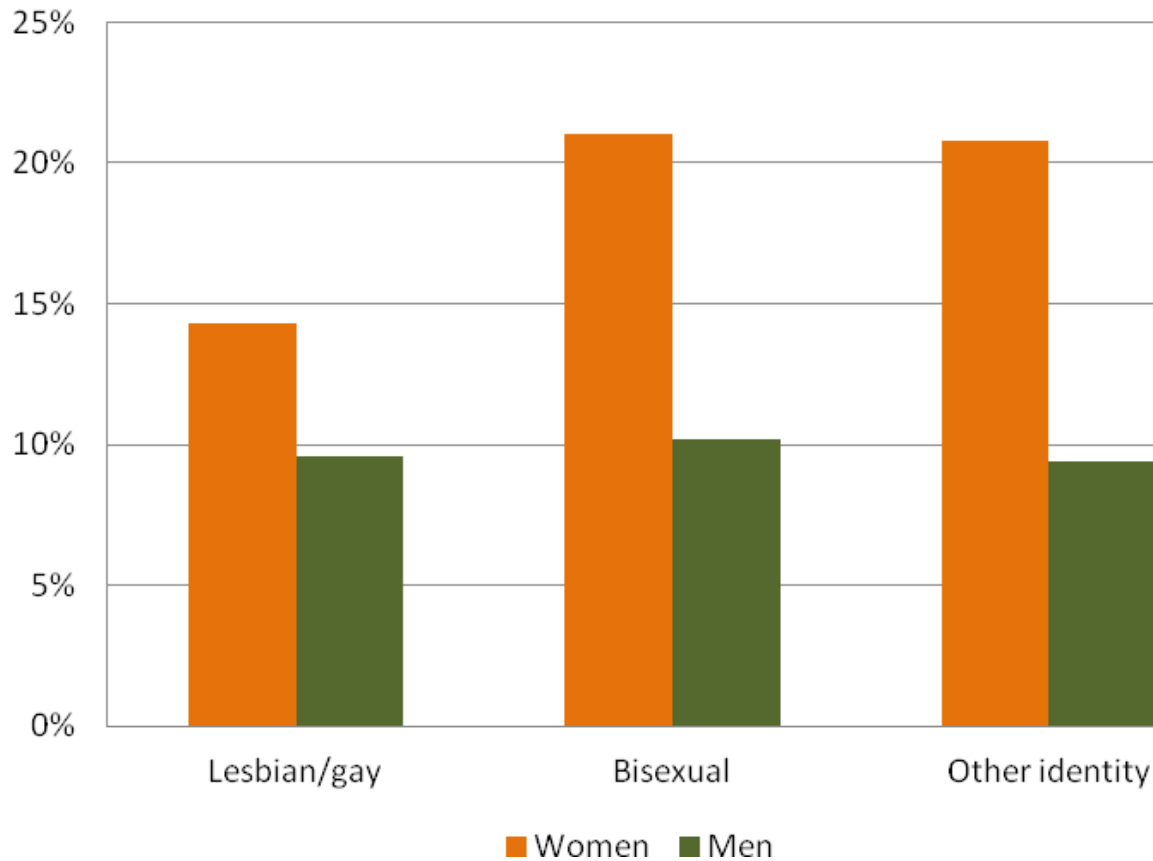




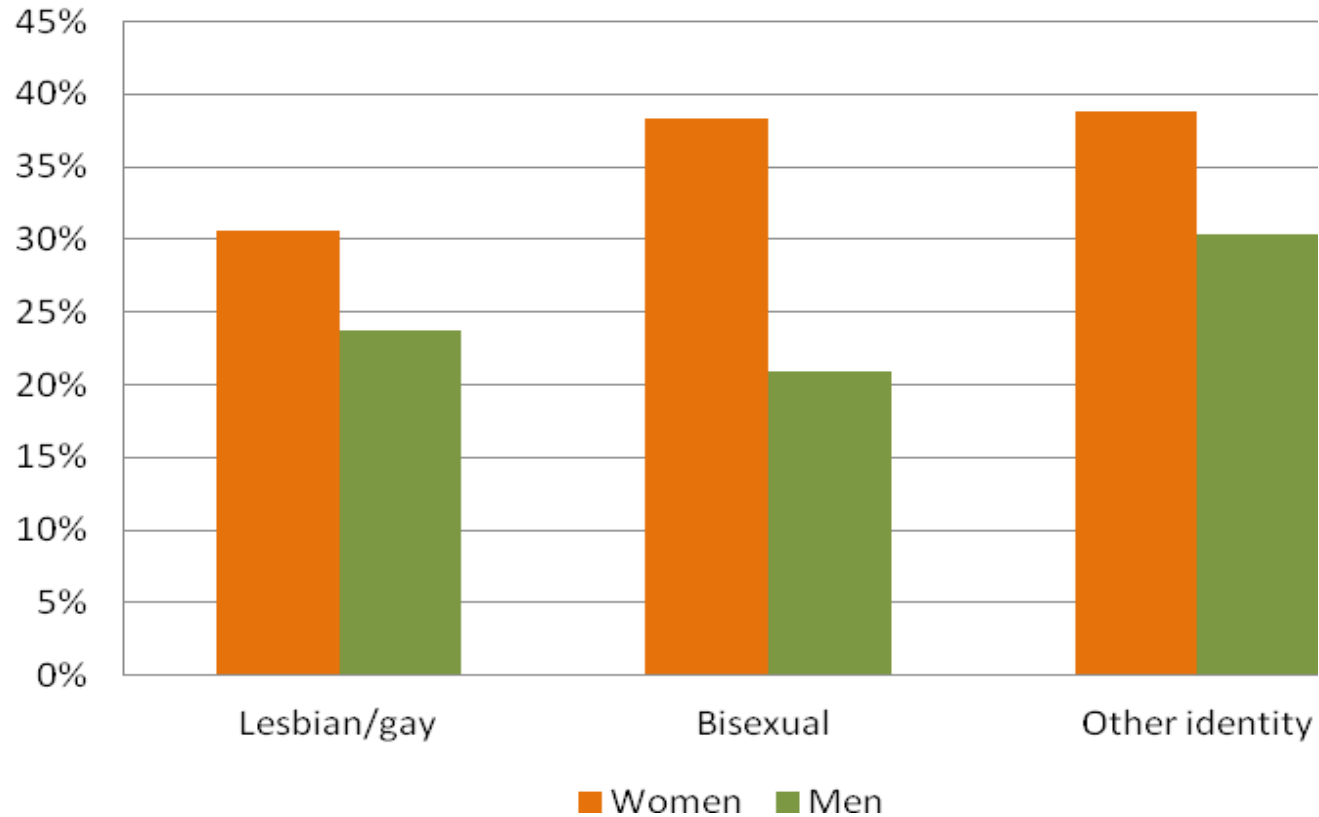
# Brief Resilience Scale



## Often experienced intense anxiety - Past 12 months



# Anxiety Treatment or Diagnosis - Past 3 Years



# Depression Treatment or Diagnosis in Past 3 Years



# Health service use

- Just over 75 % of respondents reported having a regular GP

| Lesbian women  | Bisexual women | Gay men | Bisexual men |
|--|----------------|---------|--------------|
| <b>Does your regular GP know about your sexuality?</b> |                |         |              |
| <b>NO</b>  |                |         |              |
| 12.1   | 39.9           | 14.6    | 61.1         |

# Households, relationships and support

| Lesbian women                               | Bisexual women | Gay men | Bisexual men |
|---|----------------|---------|--------------|
| <b>Are you currently in a relationship?</b> |                |         |              |
| <b>YES</b>                                  |                |         |              |
| 66.4  | 58.6           | 47.0    | 42.6         |
| <b>Who do you currently live with?</b>      |                |         |              |
| <i>Partner (only)</i>                       |                |         |              |
| 38.3  | 25.7           | 32.4    | 20.2         |
| <i>Partner and children</i>                 |                |         |              |
| 13.3  | 11.1           | 1.2     | 10.1         |



| Lesbian women  | Bisexual women | Gay men | Bisexual men |
|--|----------------|---------|--------------|
| <b>Have you and your partner formalised your commitment?<br/>YES</b> |                |         |              |
| 17.4   | 25.5           | 11.1    | 41.5         |
| <b>Do you have children or stepchildren?<br/>YES</b>                 |                |         |              |
| 32.5   | 24.8           | 11.0    | 39.5         |

| Lesbian women  | Bisexual women | Gay men | Bisexual men |
|--|----------------|---------|--------------|
| <b>For emotional support would you turn to?<br/>GLBT friends</b> |                |         |              |
| 72.1   | 77.2           | 73.0    | 55.8         |
| <b>Who would care for you if you were sick?<br/>GLBT friends</b> |                |         |              |
| 34.1   | 40.6           | 36.1    | 23.3         |

# Discrimination

| Lesbian women   | Bisexual women | Gay men | Bisexual men |
|---|----------------|---------|--------------|
| <b>In the past year were there situations where you hid your sexuality or gender identity for fear of violence or harassment?<br/>NEVER</b> |                |         |              |
| <i>Home</i>   |                |         |              |
| 86.1  | 74.6           | 81.1    | 40.5         |
| <i>Family members</i>   |                |         |              |
| 71.4  | 45.7           | 65.6    | 28.9         |

# Community connections

| Lesbian women   | Bisexual women | Gay men | Bisexual men |
|---|----------------|---------|--------------|
| <b>How many GLBT community organisations are you a member of?<br/>ONE OR MORE</b> |                |         |              |
| 48.3  | 40.8           | 45.4    | 25.0         |
| <b>How many of your friends are GLBT?<br/>MOST/SOME</b>                           |                |         |              |
| 78.3  | 67.3           | 73.7    | 53.2         |

- **Visibility**
- **Social/community connection**
- **Fluidity**



[www.glhv.org.au](http://www.glhv.org.au)



# Working definition

Gender operates to assign social roles on the basis of particular biological or sexual characteristics....

...in Australia an asymmetric or unequal relationship in which characteristics associated with the male body and being male are overvalued at the expense of those characteristics associated with the female body and being female.

# Heterosexism or the wedding cake model



Leonard, W. (2005) "Queer occupations: Development of Victoria's gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex health and well being action plan". *Gay and Lesbian Issues and Psychology Review* 1:3, 92-97.