

# Alcohol consumption and alcohol related problems among lesbian, bisexual and heterosexual respondents: Results of the Year 2000 National Alcohol Survey

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# Early studies on alcohol consumption in LGB communities



- Early studies, based on convenience samples such as bar patrons, found extremely high rates of heavier and problem drinking (approximately 30%)
- Purposive samples with less biased samples have found less abstinence among lesbian and gay populations and mixed findings related to alcohol dependence and alcohol problems



# Recent population based studies

- **Higher odds for drinking, heavier drinking, alcohol dependence, among women reporting female sex partners** (Cochran et al., 2000; Cochran & Mays, 2000; Scheer et al., 2003; Valanis et al., 2000)
- **However some studies showed elevated but *not* significantly greater DSM alcohol abuse and dependence among women** (Gilman et al., 2001; Sandfort et al., 2001).
- **Another regional study found no difference in heavier drinking among women but found that lesbians were more likely to report being in recovery** (Bloomfield, 1993)



# Background

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- Dearth of population-based studies on sexual orientation and alcohol use
- Few of the population-based studies to date:
  - measure both sexual orientation identity and behavior
  - include full range of alcohol use indicators and alcohol-related problems
  - Use national samples



# Purpose: To Examine...

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- Abstinence, drinking and heavier drinking
- Alcohol related problems and dependence
- Drinking in specific contexts (e.g., bars)



# METHODS

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- 2000 National Alcohol Survey (NAS 10)
- Telephone (CATI) Survey
- RDD N=7,612, 18 and over
- Sexual orientation defined by two questions: sexual orientation identity and sexual behavior (past 5 years)

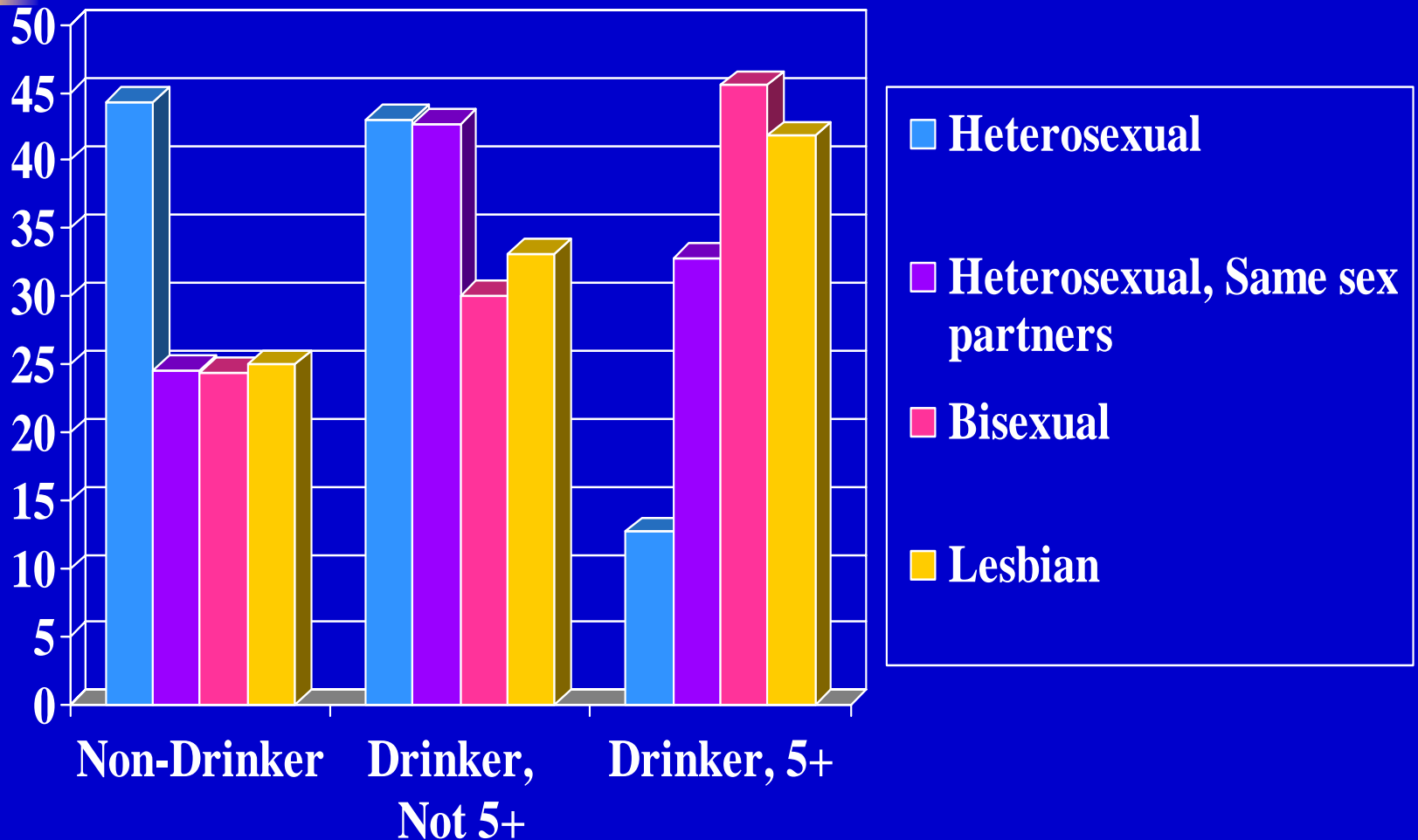


## Women, full sample (N=6924)

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- 96% heterosexual, exclusively opposite sex partners
- 1.8% heterosexual, reporting same sex partners
- 1.3% bisexual
- 0.9% lesbian

# Distribution of Drinking, Women



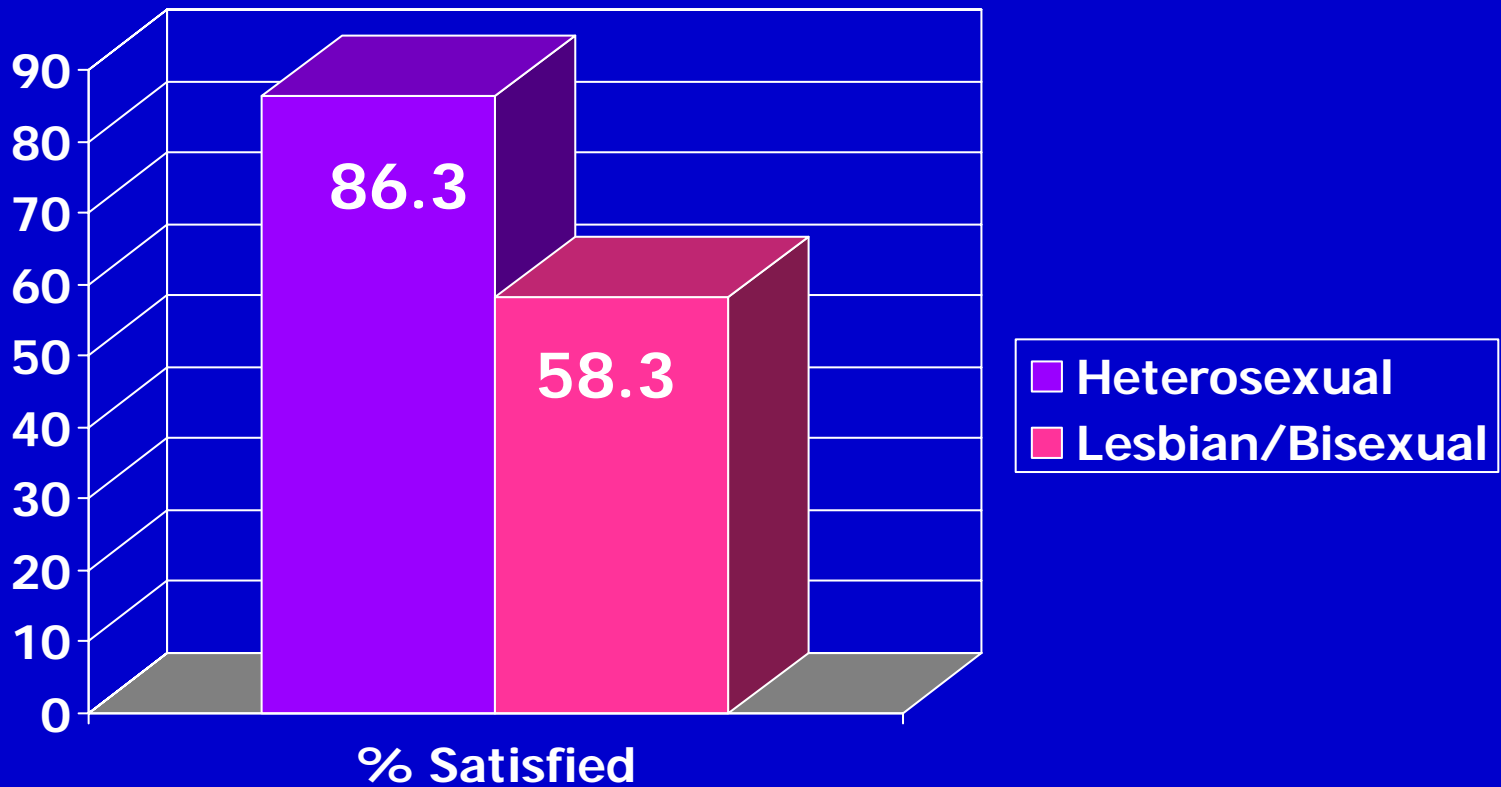
# Odds for Alcohol-Related Problems Among Women, Current Drinkers

	<b>2 + Social Consequences</b>	<b>Alcohol Dependence</b>	<b>Past Treatment</b>
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>			
Heterosexual (and same sex partners)	.77	2.2	2.2
Bisexual	<b>8.1**</b>	<b>6.4*</b>	<b>4.3*</b>
Lesbian	<b>10.9**</b>	<b>7.1</b>	<b>8.1**</b>

Ref group: Exclusively heterosexual women. (Adjusted for age, relationship status, race/ethnicity, employment, education and income)

\*p<.01, p<.001

# Very or Mostly Satisfied with Treatment



# Odds for Bar-going and for Drinking 4+ in Bar Contexts

	Bar patronage 1 + month (full sample)	4+ drinks in bars (bar-going women)
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>		
Heterosexual w/ same sex	<b>2.5*</b>	<b>3.5*</b>
Bisexual	1.4	<b>2.6*</b>
Lesbian	<b>2.5*</b>	1.6

Ref group: Exclusively heterosexual women. (Adjusted for age, relationship status, race/ethnicity, employment, education and income)

\*p<.01



# Odds for Tobacco and Marijuana Use

	Tobacco Use (Past Year)	Marijuana Use (Past Year)
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>		
Heterosexual w/ same sex partners	<b>2.0*</b>	<b>4.0***</b>
Bisexual	<b>3.5**</b>	<b>6.1***</b>
Lesbian	1.71	<b>4.70**</b>

Ref group: Exclusively heterosexual women. (Adjusted for age, relationship status, race/ethnicity, employment, education and income)

\*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001



# SUMMARY

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- Lesbians, bisexuals, and heterosexually identified women with same sex partners have lower alcohol abstinence rates.
- Lesbian and bisexual women have greater odds for reporting past year alcohol-related problems and dependence symptoms and as well as lifetime help-seeking for alcohol related problems.
- The relationship between bar-going and drinking in bar contexts varies by sexual orientation, but is more complex than originally assumed.



# Discussion

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- Bisexual women and lesbians, may have unique risk and protective factors related to drinking.
- Sexual orientation and behavior questions are valuable demographic variables that should be included in national surveys.
- Despite limitations, this study allows for rich analysis of alcohol consumption in understudied LGB populations.



# Discussion: Implications for Prevention, Treatment & Research

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- Consider the roles of bars and other drinking contexts in relation to both risk and connection to community.
- Consider other environmental and individual differences in risk & resiliency
- Ensure that treatment services are responsive
- Include sexual orientation demographic questions in population surveys and other data collection



# In progress...

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- Exploration of correlates of heavier drinking & alcohol-related problems (e.g., mental health measures, sense of coherence, early childhood trauma) with combined 2000 and 2005 data.
- Tobacco and marijuana use, relationship with sensation seeking and other variables.



# Resources

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- Research

- Elizabeth Ettore, Ed. (2006) Making lesbians visible in the substance use field. Binghamton, NY: Harrington Park Press.

- Treatment

- Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (2001). A provider's introduction to substance abuse for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals (DHHS Publ No. SMA 01-3498). Rockville, MD: SAMHSA. Available through National Clearinghouse on Alcohol and Drug Information