

Co-designing a national bi+ sexual health and HIV framework: key learnings and outcomes

Authors:

Bushby B¹, Salerno J², Sarasola H², Bavinton B¹, Gray J²

¹ The Kirby Institute, UNSW Sydney

² Health Equity Matters

Background/Purpose:

Bi+ (bisexual, pansexual, queer, and more) people represent a significant proportion of the LGBTQIA+ community. However, their distinct health needs and lived experiences are often overlooked in both mainstream and LGBTQIA+ HIV and sexual health services and data suggests barriers to engagement for bi+ people. In response, Health Equity Matters in partnership with bi+ communities, member organisations and researchers have developed a national, community-led sexual health and HIV framework to guide organisations to engage with and support bi+ communities to improve sexual health outcomes.

Approach:

A co-design approach was used. Two advisory committees consisting of staff representatives from Health Equity Matters member organisations (n=11) and bi+ community leaders (n=10) oversaw the framework development and participated in 4 and 6 co-design sessions, respectively. An online needs assessment was completed by staff members (n=97) working at Health Equity Matters member organisations across Australia. Insights from these activities, alongside literature review, informed the framework's priorities and were refined through ongoing consultation to ensure relevance and appropriateness.

Outcomes/Impact:

The framework outlines essential knowledge for working with bi+ communities and provides strategies to effectively engage bi+ people from diverse experiences in HIV and sexual health care. Key recommendations identified in the consultation activities were: increasing awareness of diversity within bi+ communities; strategies for targeted bi+ affirming engagement and outreach; embedding inclusive, culturally responsive and intersectional approaches; LGBTIQ+ sector workforce training and capacity building; fostering community partnerships, representation and co-design; and guidance on inclusive data collection, measurement, and evaluation methods.

Innovation/Significance:

To our knowledge, this is first bi+ HIV and sexual health framework of its kind and marks an important first phase in delivering more inclusive and responsive care for bi+ people in Australia. This work reinforces the central role of meaningful community partnership and collaboration in developing effective strategies essential to achieving national HIV and STI reduction goals.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

Health Equity Matters receives funding from the Australian Government to support its work across Australia's HIV response. Health Equity Matters receives funding from the Australian Government and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria to support its work across the Indo-Pacific region. The Kirby Institute

receives funding from the Australian Government. The Kirby Institute received funding from Health Equity Matters to assist with this work.