

# Dermatologic Concerns of the LGBTQIA Community: A Cross-Sectional Analysis of Reddit

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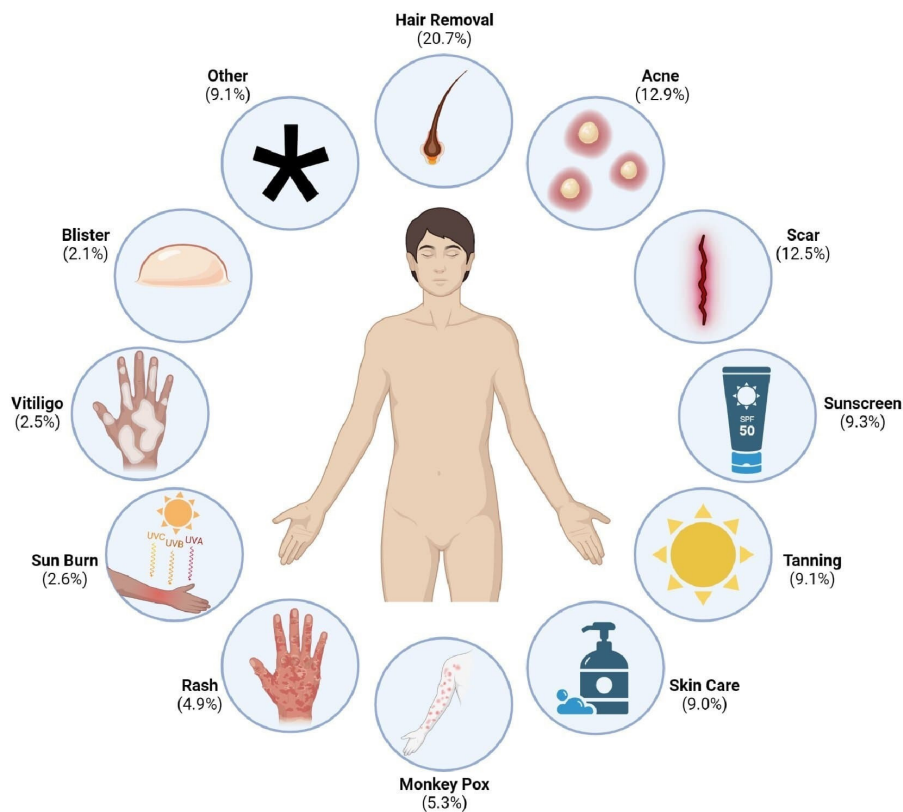
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Sexual and gender minority (SGM) populations often encounter unique healthcare challenges, including dermatologic concerns, that may be underrepresented in the medical field [1]. Understanding and addressing the dermatologic aspects of LGBTQIA health is essential for dermatologists to provide effective and inclusive care. Social media platforms, such as Reddit, have become an invaluable resource for healthcare providers, offering real-time insights into patients' unfiltered health narratives [2]. Herein, we utilize Reddit to further characterize the dermatologic concerns of the LGBTQIA community as to better understand and address the unique healthcare needs of this population.

The r/lgbt subreddit was identified as an optimal data pool for cross-sectional analysis given the large posting size and number of group members identifying as LGBTQIA. Within the subreddit, the text of Reddit posts and their comments from the start of 2008 to the end of 2023 were identified and analyzed for discussions referencing dermatologic conditions and related subjects. Mention of topics related to dermatology were recorded and tallied for each time the subject was brought up in other posts. Deleted, duplicated, or unrelated posts were not considered in the final analysis.

A total of 678 total posts were identified containing content pertaining to the field of dermatology. Of those posts, the most popular content included hair removal (20.7% of posts), acne (12.9%), scar (12.5%), sunscreen (9.3%), tanning (9.1%), and skin care (9.0%) (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Percentage of Reddit posts within the r/lgbt sub-reddit that discuss each topic from 2008 to 2023. “Other” category includes combined percentages for filler (1.8%), wart (1.6%), eczema (1.5%), cold sore (1.2%), skin cancer (1.0%), Botox (1.0%), lupus (0.5%), and psoriasis (0.5%). Created with BioRender.com.

Although the LGBTQIA population’s unique set of healthcare needs have become increasingly recognized, there still exists a high degree of discrimination and stigmatization that limit their access to comprehensive care [1]. As a result, many patients have taken to social media platforms, such as Reddit, to find solace in their shared experiences and discuss concerns outside of traditional healthcare settings. The r/lgbt subreddit has become widely utilized by LGBTQIA individuals, with over 1 million active members posting about their experiences, challenges, and evidently unique skin concerns.

Results from our study indicate that hair removal, acne, and scars are three of the most highly discussed dermatologic topics on the r/lgbt subreddit. Facial and body hair

significantly influence perception of age, attractiveness, and gender, leading many SGM patients to seek treatment to affirm their desired identity [3]. Acne vulgaris is also a notable concern, but few guidelines exist for management of acne in SGM patients [4]. Many of these individuals face additional obstacles, such as gender-affirming hormone therapy, that make treatment of acne much more difficult. Scars also hold a profound significance within the LGBTQIA population, representing a visible reminder of the diverse experiences that these individuals face [5]. For many SGM individuals, scars may not only arise from gender-affirming surgeries such as “top surgery” in transmen, but also from personal struggles, self-harm, and other challenges along the journey to self-acceptance.

Despite our study being limited to data from a self-selected subset and solely focusing on the Reddit platform, our study offers invaluable insights into the skin-related concerns of the LGBTQIA community while illustrating the potential for online platforms to provide a window into marginalized communities' unfiltered health narratives.

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None.

#### CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

None declared.

#### PATIENT CONSENT

Not applicable.

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