

# LGBTQ Youth Risk Data

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (“LGBTQ”) youth are coming out and publicly acknowledging that they are LGBTQ at younger ages than ever before. For many LGBTQ youth, their sexual orientation or gender identity is why they are in out-of-home care in the first place. Their families may have rejected them outright, or they were forced to escape physically or psychologically abusive families who wanted to “cure” or punish them. Further exacerbating their situation is the harassment and violence that LGBTQ youth often face in school settings. As a result, LGBTQ youth are over-represented in out-of-home systems of care. They are at increased risk of homelessness, dropping out of school, physical or emotional abuse, depression, substance abuse, rape and suicide.

**20-40% of all homeless youth** identify as LGBT.

From *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Youth: An Epidemic of Homelessness*, National Gay & Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute & National Coalition for the Homeless (2006).

**65% of 400 homeless LGBTQ youth** reported having been in a child welfare placement at some point in the past.

From “Putting the Pieces Together for Queer Youth: A Model of Integrated Assessment of Need and Program Planning,” Berberet, H., *Child Welfare Journal*, Vol. 85, No. 2, 2006.

**Half of a sampling of gay and lesbian young people** in out-of-home care reported having been homeless at some point in the past.

From *We Don't Exactly Get the Welcome Wagon: The Experiences of Gay and Lesbian Adolescents in the Child Welfare Systems*, Mallon, Gerald P., Columbia University Press (1998).

**When compared to heterosexual homeless youth**, LGBT homeless youth:

- Are physically or sexually victimized on average by seven more people;
- Leave home an average of 12 times as compared to seven times for non-LGBT youth;
- Have had nearly twice as many sexual partners;
- Have used 11 of 12 dangerous substances more frequently.

From “Challenges Faced by Homeless Sexual Minorities: Comparison of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgendered Homeless Adolescents with their Heterosexual Counterparts,” Cochran, B. N., Stewart, A., Ginzler, J. A., & Cauce, A. M., *American Journal of Public Health*, Vol. 92, 2002.

**74% of transgender youth** reported being sexually harassed at school, and 90% of transgender youth reported feeling unsafe at school because of their gender expression.

## FOSTERING TRANSITIONS

A CWLA/Lambda Legal  
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From *National School Climate Survey*, Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (2001).

**LGBT students** are significantly more likely than other students to:

- Have been bullied (42% v. 21%) or threatened or injured with a weapon at school (22% v. 5%), and to have skipped school because they felt unsafe (15% v. 4%);
- Report a suicide attempt (32% v. 7% of other students);
- Report current alcohol use (60% v. 45%) and binge drinking (44% v. 26%);
- Report having been or gotten someone pregnant (17% v. 9%) and having been diagnosed with HIV or another STD (16% v. 7%).

From *2003 Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results*, Goodenow, C., Massachusetts Department of Education (2004).

**28% of lesbian, gay and bisexual youth** drop out of school because of verbal or physical harassment by other students.

From “Verbal and Physical Abuse as Stressors in the Lives of Lesbian, Gay Male, and Bisexual Youths: Associations with School Problems, Running Away, Substance Abuse, Prostitution, and Suicide,” Savin-Williams, R. C., *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, Vol. 62, 1994.

**78% of youth** report that young people who are gay or thought to be gay are teased or bullied in their schools and communities; 93% hear other youth at school or in their neighborhood use slurs like *fag*, *homo*, *dyke*, *queer* or *gay* at least once in a while, with 51% hearing them every day.

From *What Does Gay Mean?* National Mental Health Association (2002).

**In a survey of 402 transgender people**, 78% reported having been verbally harassed and 48% reported having been victims of assault, including assault with a weapon, sexual assault and rape.

From *First National Survey of Transgender Violence*, Wilchins R., Lombardi E., Priesing D., & Malouf, D., Gender Public Advocacy Coalition (1997).

**Lesbian, gay and bisexual youth** are twice as likely as heterosexual youth to abuse alcohol, and eight times as likely to use cocaine or crack.

From “The Association Between Health Risk Behaviors and Sexual Orientation Among a School-based Sample of Adolescents,” Garofalo, R., Wolf, R., Kessel, S., Palfrey, J., DuRant, R., *Pediatrics*, Vol. 101, No. 5, 1998.

**31% of men and 29% of women** reported experiencing harassment or physical violence from family members on the basis of their sexual orientation.

From *The 1999–2000 Study of Discrimination and Violence against Lesbian and Gay Men in Philadelphia and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*, Gross, L., Aurand, S., & Addressa, R., Philadelphia Gay and Lesbian Task Force (2000).

**26% of gay male youth** were forced to leave home because of conflicts with family members over sexual orientation.

From “Male Homosexuality: The Adolescent Perspective,” Remafedi, G., *Pediatrics*, Vol. 79, 1987.

**LGB young adults with high levels of family rejection** are significantly more likely to report having attempted suicide, high levels of depression, illegal drug use and unprotected sex compared to LGB adults with little or no family rejection.

From “Family Rejection as a Predictor of Negative Health Outcomes in White and Latino Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Young Adults,” Ryan, C., Huebner, D., Diaz, R.M., & Sanchez J., *Pediatrics*, Vol. 123, 2009.

**The Getting Down to Basics tool kit offers support for serving LGBTQ youth.**

This tool kit includes additional handouts covering a variety of topics addressing the needs of LGBTQ youth and adults involved with the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, such as *Basic Facts About Being LGBTQ*, *Caseworkers with LGBTQ Clients*, *Teaching LGBTQ Competence in Schools of Social Work*, *Working with Transgender Youth*, *Families Supporting an LGBTQ Child*, *Information for LGBTQ Youth in Care* and *LGBTQ Youth Resources*. To order free copies of the *Getting Down to Basics* tool kit, contact Lambda Legal at 1-866-LGBTTeen (toll free) or 212-809-8585, or download it for free at [www.lambdalegal.org](http://www.lambdalegal.org) or [www.cwla.org](http://www.cwla.org).



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