

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Questioning Students and Selected Behaviors – Data Brief

2013 Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey

Background

While Vermont was the first state to legalize gay marriage through the legislative process, and has one of the oldest lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth advocacy organizations in the U.S., health disparities between lesbian, gay, bisexual, and questioning (LGBQ) youth and their heterosexual peers remain.

The Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) asks students “Which of the following best describes you?” with answer choices of: Heterosexual (straight); Gay or lesbian; Bisexual; Not sure. In total, 1% of students describe themselves as gay or lesbian, 5% as bisexual, and 3% as not sure. Females are significantly more likely to describe themselves as bisexual compared to males.ⁱ

Youth Assets

LGBQ high school students are less likely to agree that they matter to their community, and less likely to talk to their parents at least once a week about school compared to their heterosexual peers.

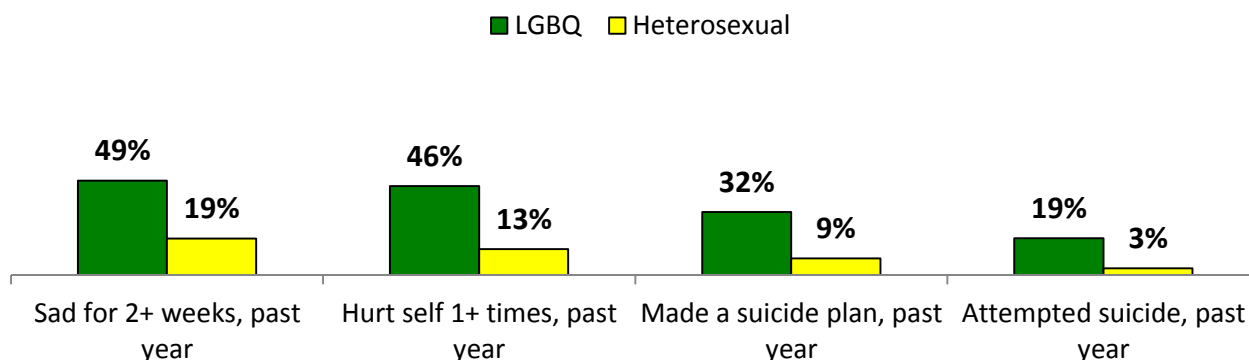
Percent of high school students who report youth assets by sexual orientation



Suicide and Mental Health

Almost half of all LGBQ students report feeling sad for at least two weeks in a row in the past year, more than twice as likely as their heterosexual peers. LGBQ students are more than three times as likely as their heterosexual peers to report making a suicide plan in the past year, and hurting themselves on purpose (without the intention of killing themselves) in the past year. LGBQ students are six times as likely to report attempting suicide compared to their heterosexual peers.

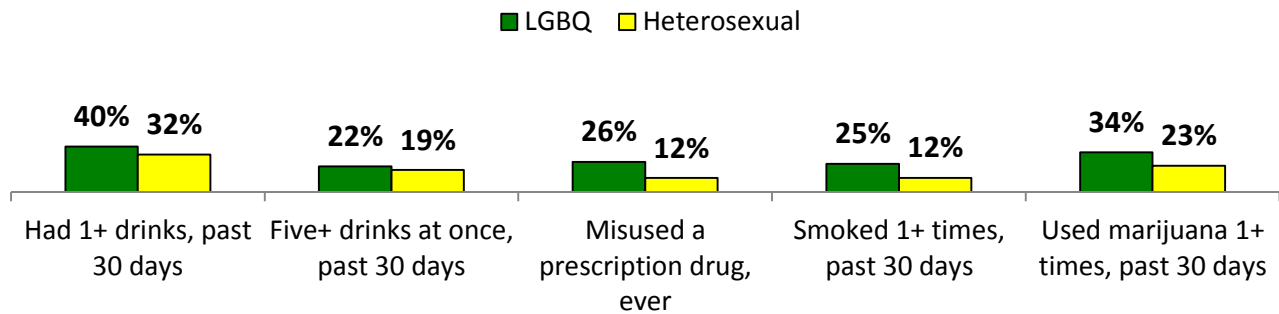
Percent of high school students who report suicide and mental health risk factors by sexual orientation



Substance Use

LGBQ students are more likely than their peers to report drinking in the past 30 days, binge drinking in the past 30 days, misusing a prescription drug in their lifetime, smoking cigarettes in the past 30 days, and using marijuana in the past 30 days compared to their heterosexual peers.

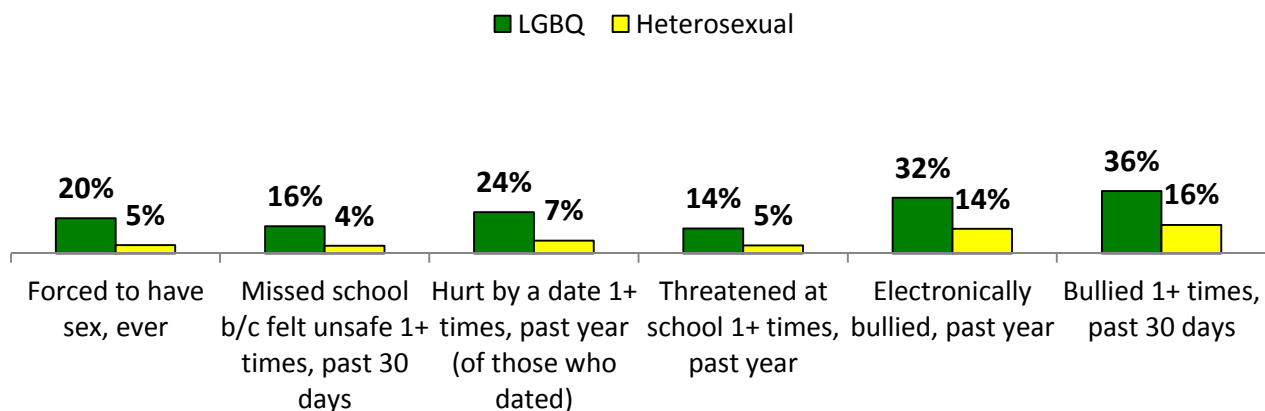
Percent of high school students who report substance use by sexual orientation



Safety

LGBQ students are four times as likely to report being forced to have sexual intercourse in their lifetimes and missing school because they felt unsafe in the past 30 days compared to their heterosexual peers. LGBQ students are three times as likely to report being hurt by someone they were dating in the past year, and almost three times more likely to report being threatened with a weapon at school compared to their heterosexual peers. LGBQ students are more than twice as likely to report being bullied in the past 30 days and being electronically bullied in the past year compared to their peers.

Percent of high school students who report personal safety risk factors by sexual orientation



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ⁱ The Vermont YRBS does not ask students about their gender, so there is no data on transgender youth.