



FACT SHEET

The Mental Health Consequences of Bullying

Bullying and harassment of LGBT students is an especially serious national and state issue that severely impacts the mental health, physical well-being and educational achievement of a significant percentage of Michigan children and youth.

Extent of Problem

A study of Michigan schools ⁽¹⁾ showed:

- 90% of LGBT students reported hearing homophobic remarks such as “that is so gay” to indicate bad or worthless; 83% heard derogatory terms like “faggot.”
- 71% of the students were harassed due to appearance.
- 66% were harassed because they were **thought** to be lesbian, gay or bisexual.
- 25% said they didn’t report the incidents to a teacher, principal or other school staff person because they believed that school staff would not care or believe them, or that it would only make the situation worse.

In a landmark national study of over 7,200 LGBT youth ages 13-21: ⁽²⁾

- 72% heard homophobic remarks (e.g. “dyke” or “faggot”) frequently at school.
- 61% felt unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation
- 84% were verbally harassed (e.g. called names or threatened) because of their sexual orientation.
- 18% were physically assaulted (e.g. punched, kicked, injured with a weapon) because of their sexual orientation.
- LGBT youth more often report feeling they have nowhere to turn; four out of five gay and lesbian students say they don’t know one supportive adult at school. ⁽³⁾

Academic Consequences

LGBT students are more likely than heterosexual students to report missing school due to fear, being threatened by other students, and having their property damaged at school. ⁽⁴⁾

- 31% of gay youth had been threatened or injured at school in the last year alone. ⁽⁵⁾
- 22% of gay respondents had skipped school in the past month because they felt unsafe. ⁽⁵⁾
- 28% of gay students drop out of school. This is more than three times the national average for heterosexual students. ⁽⁵⁾

Mental Health Consequences

Research has demonstrated that LGBT children and youth suffer from depression, anxiety, and suicidality in significantly greater numbers.

Numerous scientific studies report LGBT youth are more likely to consider or attempt suicide than their non-LGBT peers.

- A large meta-analysis showed 28% of gay teens reported a history of suicidality compared with 12% of heterosexual teens. ⁽⁹⁾
- Further analysis indicates a striking disparity in suicide risk between gay and non-gay youth that appears to increase with each level of severity ranging from suicidal ideation to intent with a plan to actual suicide attempts and attempts requiring medical attention. ⁽⁹⁾
- LGB young adults reporting family rejection due to sexual orientation or identity were 8.4 times most likely to report having attempted suicide. ⁽⁷⁾
- LGBT youth ages 14-21 were significantly more likely to report depression and anxiety than heterosexual peers. ^(7,8)
- A national study by Iowa State University researchers found that one out of every two LGBT youths are regular victims of "cyber-bullying," which causes psychological and emotional distress to victims, including suicidality in some who are repeatedly victimized. ⁽¹⁰⁾
- 44% of GLB youth reported substance use within the past 30 days, with the highest proportion among bisexual youth, 50%.

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