

“Many youth who challenge heterosexual norms experience harassment and violence and are more likely to struggle with poor mental health, smoking and other drug use, and unsafe sexual behavior.”  
Franks 2008

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Compiled by:

R.E. Szego and Sunshine  
Breathe Free: OR LGBTQ Coalition Against Tobacco  
c/o SMYRC, 2100 SE Belmont, Portland, OR 97214  
503.784.5813, [r.e.szego@cascadiabhc.org](mailto:r.e.szego@cascadiabhc.org)  
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OREGON LGBTQ COALITION AGAINST TOBACCO

A PROGRAM OF SMYRC, THE SEXUAL MINORITY YOUTH RESOURCE CENTER

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Fact Sheet

## LGBTQQ Youth Physical and Mental Health Risks

Studies have documented increased risks for LGBTQQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning/Queer) youth, including:

- ▼ Increased likelihood of experiencing violence at school and in the community.
- ▼ Increased smoking, and alcohol & drug use, including binge drinking and injection drug use.
- ▼ Increased risk of homelessness due to running away or being kicked out of their guardian’s house.
- ▼ Increased risk of survival sex or prostitution.
- ▼ Increased risk for pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.
- ▼ Increased risk of suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts.

This fact sheet details some of these risks.

Please note that while we aim to provide information inclusive of lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer and questioning sexual orientations *and* transgender gender identities, very limited research exists that includes transgender people.

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## LGBT K-12 Students Across the US.

Results from the 2007 National School Climate Survey conducted by GLSEN.

- 86.2% of LGBT students were **verbally harassed** in the past year because of sexual orientation; 66.5% because of gender expression.
- 73.6% of LGBT students **heard “dyke” or “faggot”** used frequently or often and 90.2% hear **comments like “that’s so gay”** used in a derogatory way frequently or often at school.
- 44.1% of LGBT students were **physically harassed** because of sexual orientation and 30.4% because of gender expression.

### Direct Impact on Educational Attainment:

- 60.8% of students **felt unsafe** at their school because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation; 38.4% for gender expression. 32.7% of LGBT students **missed at least one day of school that month because of feeling unsafe**, more than 5 times as likely to skip school when compared with the general population.
- LGBT students who were frequently harassed because of their sexual orientation reported **significantly lower GPAs** (grade point averages) than those who did not.
- LGBT students twice as likely **NOT to plan to pursue any type of post-secondary education** when compared with a national general sample of students.

## Boulder Valley County, Colorado, Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2005.

Reported Behaviors	GLBQ Students	Other Students
<b>Attempted suicide in the past year</b>	23.6%	6.3%
<b>Felt too unsafe to go to school on at least one day in the last month.</b>	14.9%	2.3%
<b>Was threatened/injured with a weapon at school in the past year</b>	15.3%	5.2%
<b>Have been pregnant or gotten someone pregnant</b>	9.8%	2.3%
<b>Described their health as fair or poor</b>	19.4%	5.7%

Note: **GLBQ youth were at higher risk across all indicators**, which included the above examples as well as others, such as: drunk driving, riding with a drunk driver, tobacco use, alcohol use, marijuana use, cocaine use, ecstasy use, substance use on school property, harassment for a variety of reasons, carrying weapons, violence, sexual assault, rape, partner violence, unhealthy weight loss, early sexual intercourse (at age 13 or younger), and more.

**Note: A 1999 survey in Washington State found that 80% of the students who had experienced anti-LGBTQ harassment identified as heterosexual.**

**“The combined effect of LGB status and high levels of at-school victimization was associated with the highest levels of health risk behaviors. LGB youths reporting high levels of at-school victimization reported higher levels of substance use, suicidality, and sexual risk behaviors than heterosexual peers reporting high levels of at-school victimization.”**

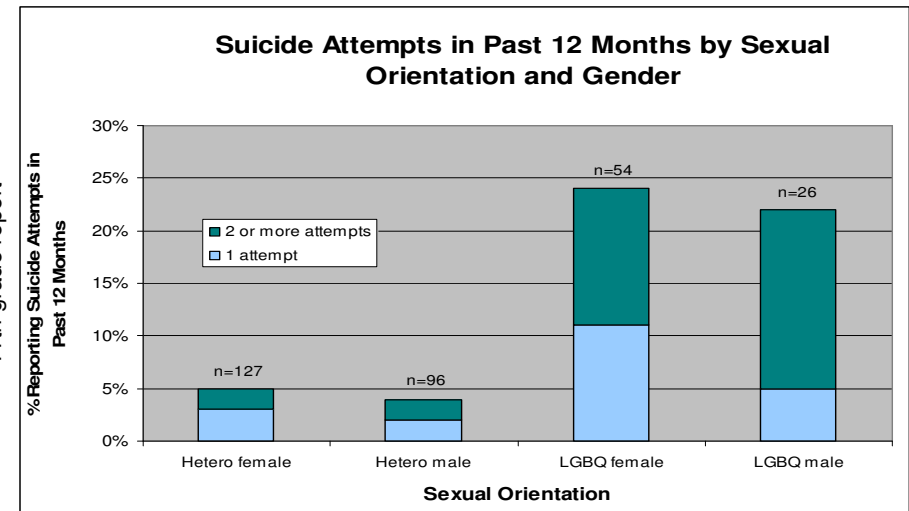
**Bontempo, D.E. and A.R. D’Augelli. 2002.**

### 38-60% of LGBT youth smoke.

Among 12-17 year old LGBT youth:

- Almost 40% smoke weekly.
  - 6 times more likely to smoke in the past month.
  - Almost 10 times more likely to smoke weekly over the past year.
  - Almost 5 times more likely to report that most or all their friends smoke.
- (Austin et al 1999)

Oregon Healthy Teens Survey, 2007.  
11th grade report



**More OHT Results.** In comparison with heterosexual peers, LGBQ youth were significantly more likely to report *lower* mental health status, physical health status, supportive adults, grades, and *higher* harassment, smoking within the past 30 days, having intercourse, rape, substance use with sex, intimate partner violence. (Franks 2008)

Data collection, in general, inclusive of LGBTQ identities and behaviors among youth is limited. For example, the Oregon Healthy Teens Survey only collects information about sexual orientation for 11th graders (and that only since 2006). Respondents who do not identify their gender (as male or female, the only choices) are eliminated; therefore, trans-identified students may be excluded from analysis.