

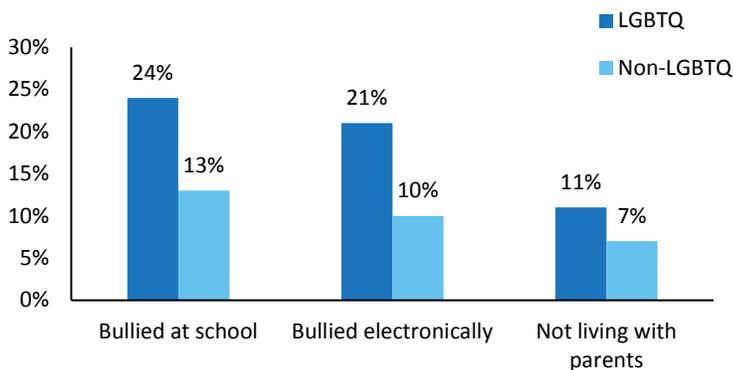
Stressors, Mental Health, and Sources of Support among LGBTQ Public High School Students in New York City

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning youth (LGBTQ)¹ are more likely to experience bullying and homelessness, placing them at greater risk of depression and suicide, compared with their non-transgender heterosexual peers.^{2,3} Using data from the 2015 New York City Youth Risk Behavior Survey (NYC YRBS) and two focus groups, this brief describes experiences of harassment, separation from guardians, mental health concerns, and sources of support among LGBTQ youth.

LGBTQ youth experienced a higher prevalence of bullying and living away from guardians than non-LGBTQ youth

- In 2015, 24% of NYC LGBTQ youth reported being bullied on school property, compared with 13% of non-LGBTQ youth. The percentage of LGBTQ youth who reported being electronically bullied was twice that of non-LGBTQ youth (21% vs. 10%).
- Compared with non-LGBTQ youth, more LGBTQ youth lived away from parents or guardians because they had been kicked out, had run away, or had been abandoned (11% vs. 7%).

Prevalence of bullying and separation from guardians among New York City youth, 2015



LGBTQ = lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning
Source: NYC Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2015

- Responses from focus groups conducted among NYC LGBTQ youth (ages 12 to 18 years) mirrored findings from the YRBS regarding experiences of living away from parents or guardians.

“My life has made a complete 180. Two years ago, I was, living on the streets. ... Yeah, I just didn’t really care anymore.”

Source: Teen Mental Health and Social Media Focus Groups, 2016

Data Sources:

Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) 2015:

The YRBS is a biennial self-administered, anonymous survey conducted in NYC public high schools by the NYC Health Department and the NYC Department of Education. For survey details, visit www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/data/data-sets/nyc-youth-risk-behavior-survey.page.

Teen Mental Health and Social Media

Focus Groups 2016: The NYC Health Department held six focus groups with 54 participants ages 12 to 18 to inquire about use of social media, mental health, and developmental challenges among youth. Screeners asked participants to identify their sexual orientation (heterosexual, bisexual, gay, or lesbian) and their gender identity (male, female, transgender, agender, gender nonconforming, or queer). Quotes from two focus groups, comprised of 22 self-identified LGBTQ youth, were used to contextualize YRBS results.

Definitions:

LGBTQ is an acronym to refer to people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning of their sexual orientation or gender identity.¹

Transgender refers to youth who responded in the NYC YRBS “Yes” to the question “A transgender person is someone whose biological sex at birth does not match the way they think or feel about themselves. Are you transgender?”

Questioning includes youth who endorsed “not sure” for the sexual orientation and “I don’t know” for the gender identity questions. It is also possible that youth who were not sure of their sexual orientation did not understand the question.

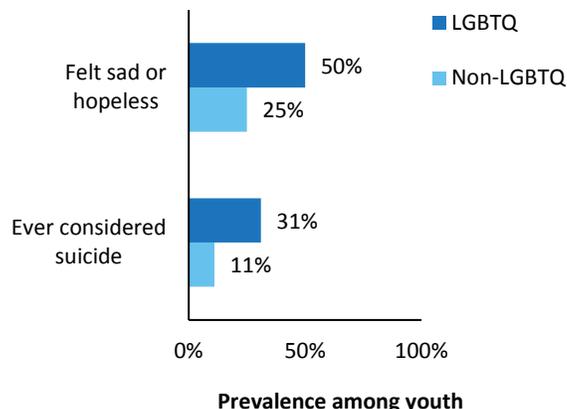
Electronic bullying includes bullying through e-mail, chat rooms, instant messaging, web sites, or texting.

Non-suicidal self-injury (NSSI) is self-inflicted injury without suicidal intent. Common forms include cutting, burning and scratching.

LGBTQ youth reported more depressive symptoms, suicidal ideation, suicide attempts, and non-suicidal self-injury than non-LGBTQ youth

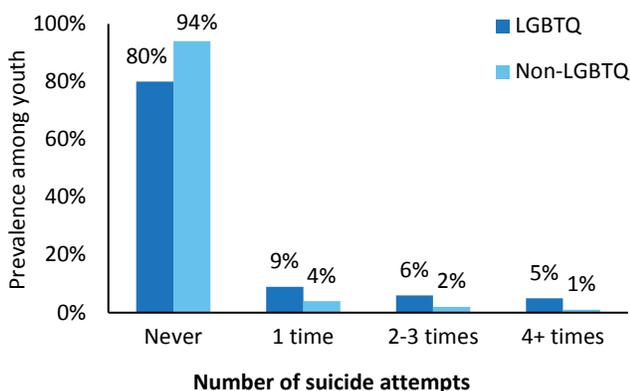
- In 2015, half (50%) of LGBTQ youth reported depressive symptoms, such as sadness or hopelessness for two weeks or more that interfered with their usual activities compared with a quarter (25%) of non-LGBTQ youth.
- Approximately three in ten (31%) LGBTQ youth, compared with one in ten (11%) non-LGBTQ youth, ever seriously considered attempting suicide.
- Almost 20% of LGBTQ youth attempted suicide in the past year, compared with 6% of non-LGBTQ youth. Five percent of LGBTQ youth attempted suicide four or more times, whereas less than 1% of non-LGBTQ youth attempted suicide four or more times.
- Among youth who attempted suicide in 2015, the percentage of attempts resulting in an injury, poisoning, or overdose that required treatment by a doctor or nurse was similar among LGBTQ youth and non-LGBTQ youth (37% vs. 34%).
- NYC LGBTQ youth had a higher prevalence of non-suicidal self-injury (NSSI) behaviors than non-LGBTQ youth (32% vs. 10%). Approximately 13% of LGBTQ youth engaged in NSSI four or more times in the past year versus 3% of non-LGBTQ youth.

Prevalence of feeling sad or hopeless and suicidal ideation among New York City youth, 2015

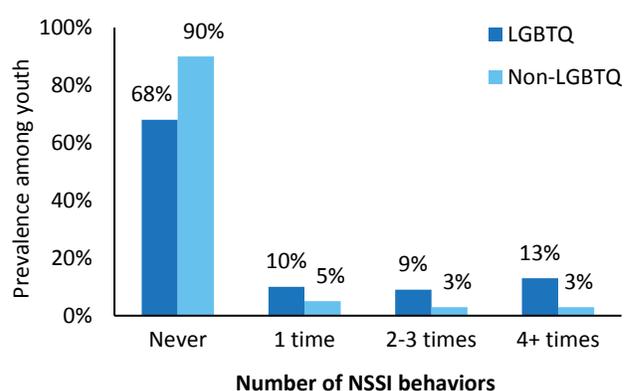


LGBTQ = lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning
 Source: NYC Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2015

Prevalence of suicide attempts among New York City youth, 2015



Prevalence of non-suicidal self-injury behaviors among New York City youth, 2015



LGBTQ = lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning; NSSI = non-suicidal self-injury
 Source: NYC Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2015

- Responses of focus group participants indicated that NYC LGBTQ youth faced a number of challenges that could have placed them at increased risk for mental health problems. Among transgender youth, in particular, issues around transitioning represented unique stressors.

“So [restricting access to hormones] just like puts people in an unfair position and drives people to the point of insanity because they can’t transition which causes depression and sometimes suicide.”

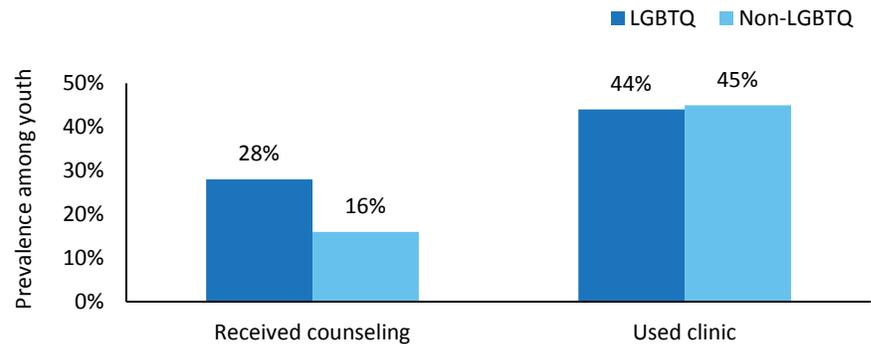
“One thing I used to do when I used to get depressed, like because I couldn’t transition, at first, was I called Trevor Project. But if you’re just talking about your depression, they’re here to talk...”

Source: Teen Mental Health and Social Media Focus Groups, 2016

Resources sought by LGBTQ youth to enhance their health and wellbeing

- In 2015, 28% of LGBTQ youth received help from a professional counselor, social worker or therapist for an emotional or personal issue that they could not face alone. Among non-LGBTQ youth, 16% reported obtaining treatment from a mental health professional.
- Among NYC youth attending schools with a school-based health center, there was similar use of school clinic services between LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ youth in 2015 (44% vs. 45%).
- LGBTQ youth experienced extensive exposure to stressors and mental health concerns. In line with these findings, participants in the LGBTQ youth focus groups sought and located several sources of support. Some youth identified allies in their schools and found encouragement in literature, while others pursued opportunities for LGBTQ youth provided by the city's child welfare system.

Prevalence of mental health and school clinic * help-seeking behaviors among New York City youth, 2015



*Among youth whose schools had a health clinic
 LGBTQ = lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning
 Source: Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2015

“My school has like a special ... LGBT affirming counselor. So like before I came out I talked to her a lot.”

“I really like reading YA, like young adult literature. There's a lot of really good LGBT books in that category I think. And so I follow a lot of authors. And they post about stuff like from, like, reflecting on their growing up, and that helps me I think.”

“If you've been on the streets and stuff ... and you're under 18, it's for you to go the LGBT group homes... that's for you to take advantage of that.”

Source: Teen Mental Health and Social Media Focus Groups, 2016

Authors: Melissa Kull, Lauren Murray, Marivel Davila, Carol Yoon, Willem van der Mei

Acknowledgements: Kinjia Hinterland, Sophia Greer, Hannah Gould, Amber Levanon Seligson, Kelli Peterman, Khushbu Srivastava, Alexander Harris, Madeline Travers, Nneka Lundy de la Cruz, Wen Qin Deng

References:

1. Gill AM, Frazer MS. Health risk behaviors among gender expansive students: Making the case for including a measure of gender expression in population-based surveys. Washington, DC: Advocates for Youth. 2016. <http://advocatesforyouth.org/storage/advfy/documents/YRBSS.pdf>. Last accessed January 5, 2017.
2. Birkett M, Newcomb ME, Mustanski B. Does it get better? A longitudinal analysis of psychological distress and victimization in lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth. *J Adolesc Health*. 2015; 56(3):280-285.
3. Kann L, Olsen EO, McManus T, et al. Sexual identity, sex of sexual contacts, and health-related behaviors among students in grades 9-12 – United States and selected sites, 2015. *MMWR Surveill Summ*. 2016; 65(9):1-202.

Suggested citation: Kull M, Murray L, Davila M, Yoon C, van der Mei W. Stressors, mental health, and sources of support among LGBTQ public high school students in New York City. New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene: Epi Data Brief (93); September 2017.

MORE New York City Health Data and Publications at nyc.gov/health/data

Visit EpiQuery – the Health Department's interactive health data system at nyc.gov/health/EpiQuery

New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene





Epi Data Tables

September 2017, No. 93

Stressors, Mental Health, and Sources of Support among LGBTQ Public High School Students in New York City

Data Tables

- Table 1.** Prevalence of stressors among New York City public high school students, by LGBTQ self-identification, 2015
- Table 2.** Mental health concerns among New York City public high school students, by LGBTQ self-identification, 2015
- Table 3.** Resources and sources of support among New York City public high school students, by LGBTQ self-identification, 2015

Data Source

Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) 2015: The YRBS is a biennial self-administered, anonymous survey conducted in NYC public high schools by the NYC Health Department and the NYC Department of Education. For survey details, visit www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/data/data-sets/nyc-youth-risk-behavior-survey.page.



Table 1. Prevalence of stressors among New York City public high school students, by LGBTQ self-identification, 2015

Source: NYC Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2015

Data are weighted to the NYC public high school student population.

Data are not age-adjusted.

Data were prepared by the Bureau of Children, Youth and Families.

	LGBTQ Youth ¹				Non-LGBTQ Youth ²			
	Weighted N	%	95% Confidence Interval	p-value	Weighted N	%	95% Confidence Interval	p-value
During the past 12 months, have you ever been bullied on school property?								
Yes	11,000	24.5 ^D	(20.6, 28.9)	< 0.001	29,000	13.0	(11.7, 14.4)	referent
No	33,000	75.5 ^U	(71.1, 79.4)		196,000	87.0	(85.6, 88.3)	
During the past 12 months, have you ever been electronically bullied?								
Yes	9,000	20.9	(18.5, 23.6)	< 0.001	24,000	10.4	(9.7, 11.2)	referent
No	33,000	79.1	(76.4, 81.5)		202,000	89.6	(88.8, 90.3)	
During the past 12 months, did you ever live away from your parents or guardians because you were kicked out, ran away or were abandoned?								
Yes	3,000	10.8	(8.4, 13.7)	0.014	12,000	7.2	(6.1, 8.6)	referent
No	28,000	89.2	(86.3, 91.6)		150,000	92.8	(91.4, 93.9)	

¹ LGBTQ youth refers to youth who self-identified as gay, lesbian, transgender, and/or questioning of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Sexual orientation was ascertained with the question: "Which of the following best describes you?" Youth who responded "gay or lesbian," or "bisexual" were categorized as LGBTQ. Gender identity was assessed with the question: "A transgender person is someone whose biological sex at birth does not match the way they think or feel about themselves. Are you transgender?" Youth who reported "Yes, I think of myself as a boy/man", "Yes, I think of myself as a girl/woman", or "Yes, I think of myself some other way" were categorized as LGBTQ. Youth who responded "not sure" to the sexual orientation question or "I don't know" to the gender identity question may be questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity, and were categorized as LGBTQ. However, it is also possible that they did not understand the questions.

² Non-LGBTQ youth refers to youth 1) who self-identify as "heterosexual (straight)" to the sexual identify question or 2) who responded "No, I am not transgender" or "I do not know what this question is asking" to the gender identity question.

Weighted N population estimates are rounded to the nearest 1,000.

Confidence Intervals are a measure of estimate precision: the wider the CI, the more imprecise the estimate.

Bold p-values are significant at the 0.05 level.

D When reporting to nearest whole percent, round down

U When reporting to nearest whole percent, round up

Table 2. Mental health concerns among New York City public high school students, by LGBTQ self-identification, 2015

Source: NYC Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2015

Data are weighted to the NYC public high school student population.

Data are not age-adjusted.

Data were prepared by the Bureau of Children, Youth and Families.

	Weighted N	%	LGBTQ Youth ¹		Non-LGBTQ Youth ²			
			95% Confidence Interval	p-value	Weighted N	%	95% Confidence Interval	p-value
During the past 12 months, did you ever feel so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row that you stopped doing some usual activities?								
Yes	22,000	50.4	(47.1, 53.7)	< 0.001	57,000	25.4	(23.6, 27.3)	referent
No	21,000	49.6	(46.3, 52.9)		167,000	74.6	(72.7, 76.4)	
During the past 12 months, did you ever seriously consider attempting suicide?								
Yes	13,000	30.5 ^U	(27.0, 34.2)	< 0.001	23,000	10.5 ^U	(9.3, 11.9)	referent
No	29,000	69.5 ^D	(65.8, 73.0)		200,000	89.5 ^D	(88.1, 90.7)	
During the past 12 months, how many times did you actually attempt suicide?								
Never	28,000	79.6	(77.2, 81.9)	< 0.001	180,000	94	(93.1, 94.8)	referent
1 time	3,000	9.0	(6.8, 11.8)	< 0.001	7,000	3.5 ^U	(3.0, 4.2)	referent
2 or 3 times	2,000	6.2	(5.0, 7.8)	< 0.001	3,000	1.6	(1.3, 2.0)	referent
4+ times	2,000	5.1	(3.6, 7.3)	< 0.001	2,000	0.8	(0.5, 1.3)	referent
Among youth who attempted suicide, suicide attempt resulted in an injury, poisoning, or overdose that required treatment by a doctor or nurse?								
Yes	2,000	37.5 ^D	(30.6, 44.9)	0.516	4,000	33.8	(27.7, 40.4)	referent
No	4,000	62.5 ^U	(55.1, 69.4)		7,000	66.2	(59.6, 72.3)	
During the past 12 months, how many times did you do something to purposely hurt yourself without wanting to die, such as cutting or burning yourself on purpose?								
Never	30,000	67.6	(63.8, 71.1)	< 0.001	202,000	89.7	(88.5, 90.7)	referent
1 time	5,000	10.2	(8.6, 12.2)	< 0.001	11,000	4.7	(3.8, 5.8)	referent
2 or 3 times	4,000	8.7	(6.1, 12.3)	0.001	6,000	2.8	(2.2, 3.5)	referent
4+ times	6,000	13.4	(11.1, 16.2)	< 0.001	7,000	2.9	(2.3, 3.6)	referent

¹ LGBTQ youth refers to youth who self-identified as gay, lesbian, transgender, and/or questioning of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Sexual orientation was ascertained with the question: "Which of the following best describes you?" Youth who responded "gay or lesbian," or "bisexual" were categorized as LGBTQ. Gender identity was assessed with the question: "A transgender person is someone whose biological sex at birth does not match the way they think or feel about themselves. Are you transgender?" Youth who reported "Yes, I think of myself as a boy/man", "Yes, I think of myself as a girl/woman", or "Yes, I think of myself some other way" were categorized as LGBTQ. Youth who responded "not sure" to the sexual orientation question or "I don't know" to the gender identity question may be questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity, and were categorized as LGBTQ. However, it is also possible that they did not understand the questions.

² Non-LGBTQ youth refers to youth 1) who self-identify as "heterosexual (straight)" to the sexual identify question or 2) who responded "No, I am not transgender" or "I do not know what this question is asking" to the gender identity question.

Weighted N population estimates are rounded to the nearest 1,000.

Confidence Intervals are a measure of estimate precision: the wider the CI, the more imprecise the estimate.

Bold p-values are significant at the 0.05 level.

D When reporting to nearest whole percent, round down

U When reporting to nearest whole percent, round up

Table 3. Resources and sources of support among New York City public high school students, by LGBTQ self-identification, 2015

Source: NYC Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2015

Data are weighted to the NYC public high school student population.

Data are not age-adjusted.

Data were prepared by the Bureau of Children, Youth and Families.

	LGBTQ Youth ¹				Non-LGBTQ Youth ²			
	Weighted N	%	95% Confidence Interval	p-value	Weighted N	%	95% Confidence Interval	p-value
During the past 12 months, did you get help from a professional counselor, social worker, or therapist for an emotional or personal issue that you could not face alone?								
Yes	12,000	28.1	(24.8, 31.6)	< 0.001	36,000	16.4	(15.1, 17.8)	referent
No	30,000	71.9	(68.4, 75.2)		181,000	83.6	(82.2, 84.9)	
Among students attending a school with a health center: Have you ever used the school-based health center (school clinic) at your school?								
Yes	3,000	44.1	(39.4, 49.0)	0.768	13,000	45.0	(41.0, 49.1)	referent
No	4,000	55.9	(51.0, 60.6)		16,000	55.0	(50.9, 59.0)	

¹ LGBTQ youth refers to youth who self-identified as gay, lesbian, transgender, and/or questioning of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Sexual orientation was ascertained with the question: "Which of the following best describes you?" Youth who responded "gay or lesbian," or "bisexual" were categorized as LGBTQ. Gender identity was assessed with the question: "A transgender person is someone whose biological sex at birth does not match the way they think or feel about themselves. Are you transgender?" Youth who reported "Yes, I think of myself as a boy/man", "Yes, I think of myself as a girl/woman", or "Yes, I think of myself some other way" were categorized as LGBTQ. Youth who responded "not sure" to the sexual orientation question or "I don't know" to the gender identity question may be questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity, and were categorized as LGBTQ. However, it is also possible that they did not understand the questions.

² Non-LGBTQ youth refers to youth 1) who self-identify as "heterosexual (straight)" to the sexual identify question or 2) who responded "No, I am not transgender" or "I do not know what this question is asking" to the gender identity question.

Weighted N population estimates are rounded to the nearest 1,000.

Confidence Intervals are a measure of estimate precision: the wider the CI, the more imprecise the estimate.

Bold p-values are significant at the 0.05 level.