

Quick Facts on Sexual Minority Youth

(1) **NUMBER OF GAY, LESBIAN AND BISEXUAL YOUNG PEOPLE:**

The short answer is 4.5 to 9%. One 1995 study of over 8,000 high school students (grades 9-12) found that 4.5% identified themselves as gay, lesbian or bisexual. Ninety-one percent identified themselves as heterosexual. The remaining 4.5% said they were “not sure” about their sexual orientations.¹ That means that in a student body of 1,000 teens between 45 and 90 students may now or at some point consider themselves gay, lesbian or bisexual. This *also* means, of course, that between 4.5 and 9% of younger children will one day realize that they are sexual minorities.

(2) **NUMBER OF TRANSGENDER YOUNG PEOPLE:**

Nobody can provide a reliable figure of the proportion of people who identify as transgender, but as transgender people become more visible, a growing number young people – especially in urban areas – are recognizing and naming their feelings as “trans” or “genderqueer”. One subset of transgender people is those who are intersexual; at least 3/500 babies are born with atypical genitals and at least 1/500 with anomalies of the sex chromosomes (neither XX nor XY).

(3) **AGE OF AWARENESS:**

“A 1996 study [of sexual minority youth] found that, on average, girls are aware of an attraction to other girls at age ten and have their first same-sex experience at age fifteen. Boys now have their first awareness of same-sex attraction at age nine and their first same-sex experience at age thirteen. Both girls and boys begin to identify themselves as lesbian or gay at age sixteen [on average].”²

(4) **SEXUAL BEHAVIOR OF SEXUAL MINORITY YOUTH:**

A young person does not have to have same-gender sexual experience to know that his or her sexual orientation is not heterosexual. In fact, he or she could choose to be abstinent and still very clear about the genders of people to whom he or she felt attracted. A 1997 study of about 4,000 high school students found that, of those who described themselves as gay, lesbian or bisexual, about one-fourth had no sexual experience at all. About one-fourth had only other-gender sexual experience. About half had at least one experience with a partner of each gender.³

Quick Facts on Bullying and Harassment

(1) **RACIAL BULLYING:**

In 1999, a Seattle study found that 41% of middle schoolers and 32% of high schoolers report experiencing race-based verbal or physical attacks at school or on the way to or from school. Those rates are down from 59% and 44% respectively in 1995.⁴

(2) **SEXUAL BULLYING:**

In 1999, 30% of Seattle middle schoolers and 34% of high schoolers reported experiencing gender-based verbal or physical attacks at school or on the way to or from school. That reflects no change since 1995 at the middle school and a slight improvement at high school.⁵

(3) **ANTI-GAY BULLYING:**

We have no data for middle schools, but in 1999, 6% of Seattle high school students reported experiencing verbal or physical attacks at school or on the way to or from school because someone thought they were gay or lesbian. Two-thirds of these targeted students described themselves as heterosexual, one-third as gay, lesbian or bisexual. Forty-nine percent of gay/lesbian students and thirty-nine percent of bisexual students experiencing this kind of bullying or violence.⁶

¹ Findings from Seattle Public Schools' 1995 Teen Health Survey, reported in “*Eighty-Three Thousand Youth*: Selected Findings of Eight Population-Based Studies as they pertain to anti-gay harassment and the safety and well-being of sexual minority students”, Safe Schools Coalition of Washington, 1999 [http://www.safeschools-wa.org/83000youth.pdf].

² Data originally reported by citing G. Herdt and A. Boxer, *Children of Horizons*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996) cited in “Hatred in the Hallways: Violence and Discrimination Against Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Students in U.S. Schools”, Human Rights Watch, 2001 [http://www.hrw.org/reports/2001/uslgbt/]

³ Findings from Massachusetts' 1997 Youth Risk Behavior Survey, reported in “*Eighty-Three Thousand Youth*: Selected Findings of Eight Population-Based Studies as they pertain to anti-gay harassment and the safety and well-being of sexual minority students”, Safe Schools Coalition of Washington, 1999 [http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org/83000youth.pdf].

⁴ 1999 *Seattle Teen Health Survey*, Seattle Public Schools and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in subsequent analysis by Public Health – Seattle & King County.

⁵ *ibid*

⁶ *ibid*

The short and long-term consequences of (or at least associations with) bullying and harassment, include:

- Among victims ...
 - ♦ Those harassed based on race or gender were about twice as likely, and those harassed for being perceived as gay were almost three times as likely, as non-harassed peers to report having missed whole days of school in the past month due to fear.⁷
 - ♦ Those harassed for race or gender were about 1.5 times as likely, and those harassed for being perceived as gay were almost twice as likely, as non-harassed peers to report heavy drug use.⁸
 - ♦ Those harassed for being perceived to be gay report frequent changing of schools (14% of targeted youth), increased likelihood of dropping out altogether (16%), and loneliness and social isolation.^{9,10,11}
 - ♦ Harassed students report much higher rates of *suicidality* (thoughts, attempts).¹²
 - ♦ Harassed students experience rage and, in rare cases with other contributing factors, have committed homicide.¹³
- Among offenders ...
 - ♦ Four-fold increase of future criminal behavior (60% of former bullies had at least one conviction by age 24)¹⁴
 - ♦ poor academic achievement¹⁵
 - ♦ increased likelihood of drug-use and other self-endangering behavior¹⁶
- Among bystanders ...
 - ♦ they report participating less in class, trouble concentrating in class and cutting classes,¹⁷
 - ♦ they report feeling self-conscious, unsafe, afraid¹⁸

Quick Facts on Sexual Minority Parents And Their Children

(1) NUMBER OF CHILDREN WITH A LESBIAN OR GAY PARENT

"An estimated two million to eight million parents in the United States are lesbian or gay. Their children are no more likely than any other youth to be lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, but they are often targeted for harassment and violence because of their parents' sexual orientation ..."¹⁹

"A Kaiser Family Foundation poll last fall revealed that of 405 self-identified gay, lesbian and bisexual adults, 8 percent had children under age 18 living with them. The 2000 U.S. Census counted 594,391 same-sex-partner households, but those data have not been correlated with children living at home. In 1995, the National Opinion Research Center estimated that between 1 million and 9 million American children have at least one lesbian or gay parent."²⁰

⁷ ibid

⁸ 999 Seattle Teen Health Risk Survey

⁹ Safe Schools Coalition of Washington, They Don't Even Know Me: Understanding Anti-Gay Harassment and Violence in Schools (1999)

¹⁰ Nansel, T. et al, Bullying Behaviors Among U.S. Youth: Prevalence and Association with Psychological Adjustment, *JAMA*. 2001; 16:2094-2100.

¹¹ Olweus, D. , *Bullying at School: What We Know and What We Can Do*. Oxford, England: Blackwell; 1993.

¹² ibid

¹³ "Why violence? The Secret Service's findings on school shootings" March 6, 2001, Kathy Slobogin, CNN Education and Family Correspondent

¹⁴ Olweus, D., 1993

¹⁵ Nansel, T., 2001

¹⁶ ibid

¹⁷ Safe Schools Coalition of Washington, 1999

¹⁸ ibid

¹⁹ Findings from C.J. Patterson, "Lesbian Mothers, Gay Fathers, and Their Children," in A.R. D'Augelli and C.J. Patterson, eds., *Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Identities of the Lifespan* (NY, Oxford University Press, 1995) discussed in "*Hatred in the Hallways: Violence and Discrimination Against Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Students in U.S. Schools*", Human Rights Watch, 2001 [<http://www.hrw.org/reports/2001/uslgbt/>]

²⁰ "Naming the Baby Was the Easy Part" Barbara E. Martinez, The Washington Post, 5/30/2002