

# Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Among Massachusetts High School Students

## Results of the 2015 Youth Risk Behavior Study

### LGBTQ Students: A Demographic Overview

In the 2015 MYRBS, 11.1% of students surveyed described themselves as gay, lesbian, or bisexual or not sure (questioning) about their sexual orientation and 2.9% identified themselves as transgender or questioning their gender identity. These categories overlapped, with half (50%) of transgender/questioning youth also self-identifying as LGBQ. Altogether, 12.5% of Massachusetts high school students were LGBTQ.

More female- than male-identified adolescents were LGBTQ (15.4% vs. 9.4%). The percent of youth who said they were LGBTQ varied across racial/ethnic groups (12% of white youth, 10% of African American, 18% of Hispanic, 10% of Asian-American, and 13% of multi-ethnic youth). Gender and racial/ ethnic differences were statistically significant.

| Percent of Students Who Reported Risk Behaviors and Experiences, 2015  | LGBTQ Students | Heterosexual - Cisgender Students |
|--|----------------|-----------------------------------|
| Bullied at school during past year   | 28.2           | 13.9                              |
| Skipped school in past month because felt unsafe   | 14.4           | 3.4                               |
| Been in a physical fight at school in the past year  | 9.4            | 5.1                               |
| Carried a weapon at school in the past year  | 6.1            | 2.8                               |
| Threatened or injured with weapon at school  | 10.0           | 3.2                               |
| Hurt self on purpose in the past year (e.g., by cutting, burning self)                                       | 43.3           | 14.3                              |
| Seriously considered suicide in past year  | 40.5           | 11.2                              |
| Made a suicide attempt in the past year  | 22.0           | 4.8                               |
| Can talk to parents about "things that are important to you"   | 65.2           | 84.5                              |
| Smoked cigarettes in past month  | 14.1           | 6.9                               |
| Any lifetime heroin use  | 6.7            | 1.0                               |
| Had experienced sexual contact against their will  | 21.8           | 7.4                               |
| All differences between LGBTQ and Heterosexual/Cisgender students are statistically significant, $p < .05$ . |                |                                   |

The 2015 MYRBS was conducted in 75 randomly selected public high schools. In total, 3120 students in grades 9 - 12 participated in this voluntary and anonymous survey. Because of the high student and school response rates, the results of this survey can be generalized to apply to public high school students across Massachusetts.