



## Sexual Minority Youth Assistance League Literature Review Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Youth Risk Factors

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### Young Men:

- A study released by the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) in 2003 found that almost half (45.7%) of young (between ages of 13 and 23) gay and bisexual men living with HIV reported being sexually abused before age thirteen.<sup>1</sup> In a separate study, Finklehor reported that only 3% to 4.8% of the general male population received such abuse.<sup>2</sup>
- The above UCLA study found that 42% of young gay and bisexual men living with HIV reported ever attempting suicide.<sup>3</sup> In contrast, the National Longitudinal Study on Adolescent Health found that only 4% of all youth reported attempting suicide in the past year.<sup>4</sup>
- The 2003 UCLA study of young men living with HIV also reports that only 47.9% of gay men and 49.3% of bisexual men report always using condoms since learning of their HIV positive status.<sup>5</sup>
- A California State University study released in 2002 of gay-identified men in four U.S. cities indicates a relationship between “coming out” at a young age and educational level. The study shows that young men who decide they are gay before age 17 are only 79% as likely to earn a Bachelor’s Degree as those who

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<sup>1</sup> Solorio, R., Swendeman, D., & Rotheram-Borus, M. J. (2003). Risk among young gay and bisexual men living with HIV. *AIDS Education and Prevention*, 15(supplement A), 80-89.

<sup>2</sup> Finkelhor, D. (1990). Early and prolonged effects of child sexual abuse: an update. *Professional Psychology Research and Practice*, 21, 325-330.

<sup>3</sup> Solorio, R., Swendeman, D., & Rotheram-Borus, M. J. (2003).

<sup>4</sup> Resnick, M.D., Bearman, P.S., Blum, R.W., Bauman, K.E., Harris, K.M., Jones, J., Tabor, J., Beuhring, T., Sieving, R.E., Shew, M., Ireland, M., Bearinger, H., & Udry, J.R. (1997). Protecting adolescents from harm. Findings from the National Longitudinal Study on Adolescent Health. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 278(10): 823-32.

<sup>5</sup> Solorio, R., Swendeman, D., & Rotheram-Borus, M. J. (2003).

decide they are gay after age 22. Young men who decide they are gay between the ages of 18 and 21 are only 57% as likely to earn a Bachelor's. Young men who become sexually involved with other men before age 17 and between the ages of 18 and 21 are also less likely to earn a college degree than their counterparts who do not engage in intra-male sexual behavior until after age 22 (50% and 67%, respectively).<sup>6</sup>

- Research released in 2002 derived from a secondary analysis of the 1995, 1997, and 1999 Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Study (MYRBS) shows that young men who have sex with both men and women are only 36% as likely to report condom use than young men who have sex with female partners exclusively. These young bisexual men are also nearly three times as likely as heterosexual young men to report having four or more lifetime sexual partners.<sup>7</sup>
- According to research taken from a 2000 Community Intervention Trial for Youth (CITY) project, young bisexual-identified Latino men were more likely to report multiple male partners in the prior three months than their gay-identified peers (77% vs. 57%). Moreover, Latino bisexual men were about 3.5 times more likely to report unprotected insertive anal sex than Latino gay men.<sup>8</sup>
- A study released by the New York Blood Center in 2000 reveals that almost half (46.1%) of young men who have sex with men reported having unprotected anal sex with another man in the previous six months. Furthermore, most of these men reported unprotected oral sex.<sup>9</sup>
- In 2000, the Center for AIDS Intervention Research at the Medical College of Wisconsin released the results of a qualitative study concerning ways to improve HIV prevention programs. One respondent to this study, a YMSM, stressed the importance of a LGBT youth center: "There should be a community center. There is nothing for kids here. We need a place where kids can hang out with adult supervision. A place where you can still be a kid and gay. When you are a kid and realize that you are gay, you are thrown into an adult world because you are gay. There is no world for gay kids."<sup>10</sup>
- In a study conducted by the University of California at San Francisco in 1999, only 48% of Asian and Pacific Islander YMSM reported using a condom every

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<sup>6</sup> Barrett, D. C., Pollack, L. M., & Tilden, M. (2002). Teenage sexual orientation, adult openness, and status attainment in gay males. *Sociological Perspectives*, 45(2), 163-182.

<sup>7</sup> Goodenow, C., Netherland, J., & Szalacha, L. (2002). AIDS-related risk among adolescent males who have sex with males, females, or both: evidence from a statewide survey. *American Journal of Public Health*, 92(2), 203-210.

<sup>8</sup> Agronick, G., O'Donnell, L., Stueve, A., Doval, A. S., Duran, R., & Vargo, S. (2004). Sexual behaviors and risks among bisexually- and gay-identified young Latino men. *AIDS and Behavior*, 8(2), 185-197.

<sup>9</sup> Koblin, B. A., Torian, L. V., Guilin, V., Ren, L., MacKellar, D. A., Valleroy, L. A. (2000). High prevalence of HIV infection among young men who have sex with men in New York City. *AIDS*, 14(12), 1793-1800.

<sup>10</sup> Seal, D. W., Kelly, J. A., Bloom, F. R., Stevenson, L. Y., Coley, B. I., Broyles, L. A., & The Medical College of Wisconsin CITY Project Research Team (2000). HIV prevention with young men who have sex with men: what young men themselves say is needed. *AIDS Care*, 12(1), 5-26.

time they had anal sex. 8% reported not using a condom with two or more partners in the previous 3 months.<sup>11</sup>

- A national study of LGBT college students conducted by Western Kentucky University over the 2001-2002 academic year found that only one in three (35.6%) of gay, bisexual, and transgender men in college reported using a condom during their most recent sexual encounter.<sup>12</sup>
- A 2000 study by the Violence Prevention Consulting Group in Boston showed that more gay-identified young men report experiencing abuse from a date or romantic partner than straight young men (44.6% vs. 28.6%).<sup>13</sup>

### Young Women:

- In a Pennsylvania State University study released in 2003, 75% of young lesbian and bisexual women reported receiving verbal abuse in their lifetime. Moreover, 30% reported having been physically threatened, 13% reported physical assault, and 12% reported sexual assault.<sup>14</sup>
- The same study shows that 14% of young women who have sex with women reported verbal abuse and 7% reported physical abuse from their mothers due to their sexual orientation.<sup>15</sup>
- In a study released by Washington University in 2002, 28% of young women who dated only other women reported verbal and physical abuse from a date or romantic partner. Almost half (44%) of young bisexual women reported the same.<sup>16</sup> In contrast, the Youth Risk Behavior Study found that only 9.23% of all young women report dating violence.<sup>17</sup>
- According to a study released by the University of Washington and the University of Minnesota in 1999, bisexual or lesbian young women reported higher rates of pregnancy (12% vs. 5.3%), physical abuse (19% vs. 12%), and sexual abuse (22% vs. 15%) than heterosexual female adolescents.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Choi, K.-H., Han, C., Hudes, E.S., & Kegeles, S. (2002). Unprotected sex and associated risk factors among young Asian and Pacific Islander men who have sex with men. *AIDS Education and Prevention*, 14(6), 472-481.

<sup>12</sup> Lindley, L. L., Nicholson, T. J., Kerby, M. B., & Liu, N. (2003). HIV/STI associated risk behaviors among self-identified lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender college students in the United States. *AIDS Education and Prevention*, 15(5), 413-429.

<sup>13</sup> Freedner, N., Freed, L. H., Yang, Y. W., & Austin, S. B. (2002). Dating violence among gay, lesbian, and bisexual adolescents: results from a community survey. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 31(6), 469-474.

<sup>14</sup> D'Augelli, A. R. (2003). Lesbian and bisexual female youths aged 14 to 21: developmental challenges and victimization experiences. *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, 7(4), 9-29.

<sup>15</sup> D'Augelli, A. R. (2003).

<sup>16</sup> Elze, D. E. (2002). Against all odds: the dating experiences of adolescent lesbian and bisexual women. *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, 6(1), 17-29.

<sup>17</sup> Howard, D., & Wang, M.Q. (2003). Risk profiles of adolescent girls who were victims of dating violence. *Adolescence*, 38(149), 1-14.

<sup>18</sup> Saewyc, E. M., Bearinger, L. H., Blum, R. W., & Resnick, M. D. (1999). Sexual intercourse, abuse and pregnancy among adolescent women: does sexual orientation make a difference? *Family Planning Perspectives*, 31(3), 127-131.

- Research released by the San Francisco Department of Public Health shows that lesbian and bisexual women are significantly more likely to report recent and lifetime use of all categories of drugs and alcohol than their heterosexual peers. Bisexual and lesbian women are also more likely than their heterosexual peers to report being forced to have sex (50% vs. 23%), trading sex for money or drugs (34% vs. 6%), and being threatened with force to have sex (55% vs. 25%).<sup>19</sup>
- The same study shows that bisexual women are even more at-risk than lesbians within the sexual minority population. Bisexual women were significantly more likely to report trading sex for money or drugs than lesbians (41% vs. 18%).<sup>20</sup>
- In a 2001-2002 national study conducted by Western Kentucky University, only one in five (20.2%) lesbian and bisexual women in college reported using a barrier during their most recent sexual encounter.<sup>21</sup>
- In a 2000 study conducted by the Violence Prevention Consulting Group in Boston, lesbian-identified young women reported experiencing abuse from romantic partners or dates in higher numbers than straight women (43.4% vs. 32.4%).<sup>22</sup>

### **Young Transgender Individuals:**

- A 2001 qualitative study released by the University of Hawaii reveals the benefit of groups that provide services to transgender youth. One transgender respondent linked her academic aspirations to a role model she met through the group: “April is a transsexual like me. She relates more with us, and that makes me feel even more assured. . . . She’s a successful woman, and it makes me feel like there is hope for me. . . . I plan to go to [college] and major in cosmetology or architecture; my goal is to be successful.”<sup>23</sup>
- Another respondent in the same study credited a social worker and the support group, Chrysalis, with building her self-esteem and steering her away from life-threatening behavior: “I was feeling like killing myself because of the way people treated me, the way they talked behind my back. I told April all of this, and she helped me. . . . She helped bring me up to a higher level, and I’m really thankful for how she helped my life. If I didn’t have her, I would be dead or in the hospital. The truth is one time I tried to OD on pills and ended up in the hospital for a few days because I didn’t like my life. I wanted to dress like this, and people would tease me for it. It was really hard. Chrysalis helped me understand myself.”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Scheer, S., Parks, C.A., McFarland, W., Page-Shafer, K., Delgado, V., Ruiz, J. D., Molitor, F. & Klausner, J. D. (2003). Self-reported sexual identity, sexual behaviors and health risks: examples from a population-based survey of young women. *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, 7(1), 69-83.

<sup>20</sup> Scheer, S., Parks, C.A., McFarland, W., Page-Shafer, K., Delgado, V., Ruiz, J. D., Molitor, F. & Klausner, J. D. (2003).

<sup>21</sup> Lindley, L. L., Nicholson, T. J., Kerby, M. B., & Liu, N. (2003).

<sup>22</sup> Freedner, N., Freed, L. H., Yang, Y. W., & Austin, S. B. (2002).

<sup>23</sup> Bopp, P. J., Juday, T. R., & Charters, C. W. (2004). A school-based program to improve life skills and to prevent HIV infection in multicultural transgendered youth in Hawai’i. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Issues in Education*, 1(4), 3-20.

<sup>24</sup> Bopp, P. J., Juday, T. R., & Charters, C. W. (2004).

- In the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network's 2003 national study, 81.3% of transgender-identified high school students report experiences of verbal harassment due to their gender expression, compared to 46.7% of gay and bisexual young men and 35.9% of lesbian and bisexual young women. Moreover, 23.8% of transgender students report physical harassment (vs. 19.5% of gay and bisexual young men and 11.3% of lesbian and bisexual young women) and 10% report physical assault due to their gender expression (vs. 8.5% of gay and bisexual young men and 2.3% of lesbian and bisexual young women).<sup>25</sup>
- The 2003 Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network School Climate report also reveals that 36.3% % of transgender-identified high school students reported feeling unsafe in their school environment due to their gender, while only 2.7% of young gay and bisexual men and 13.3% of young lesbian and bisexual women reported the same. More than three out of four transgender students (78.8%) reported feeling unsafe in school due to their gender expression, as compared with 41.4% of gay and bisexual male youth and 29.8% of lesbian and bisexual female youth.<sup>26</sup>
- A survey of transgender adolescents in an LGBT alternative high school in 2000 provides insight into the difficulties these individuals face in their school environments. One respondent, Cassandra, details the resistance she met in transitioning: "In junior high school, when I decided I wanted to be a girl, my teachers gave me a hard time because I was growing nubs for some reason. I don't know why. They were like, oh, we can't call you a different name. And we have to call you *he* and this, that, and the third. And it really hurt me, you know, I'm trying to be something else and they're bringing reality into my face and it really bothered me a lot."<sup>27</sup>

### **LGBT Youth:**

- A study of homeless youth in one south central U.S. city released in 2005 by the University of Texas in Austin shows that 73% of homeless lesbian and gay adolescents and 25.6% of self-identifying bisexual homeless youth reported parental disapproval of their sexual orientation as a reason for their homelessness.<sup>28</sup>
- Research released in 2000 based on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Homeless and Runaway Youth Survey reveals that 46% of gay and bisexual young homeless men and 23% of lesbian and bisexual young homeless women reported exchanging sex for money, drugs, and other needs.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Kosciw, J.G. (2004). *The National School Climate Survey: The school-related experiences of our nation's lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth*. New York: GLSEN.

<sup>26</sup> Kosciw, J.G. (2004).

<sup>27</sup> Gutierrez, N. (2004). Resisting fragmentation, living whole: four female transgender students of color speak about school. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services*, 16(3/4), 69-78.

<sup>28</sup> Rew, L., Whittaker, T. A., Taylor-Seehafer, M. A., & Smith, L. R. (2005). Sexual Health Risks and Protective Resources in Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Heterosexual Homeless Youth. *Journal for Specialists in Pediatric Nursing*, 10(1), 11-19.

<sup>29</sup> Moon, M.W., McFarland, W., Kellogg, T., Baxter, M., Katz, M., MacKellar, D., & Valleroy, L. (2000). HIV Risk Behavior of Runaway Youth in San Francisco: Age of Onset and Relation to Sexual Orientation. *Youth & Society*, 32(2), 184-201.

- The University of Washington's study of homeless youth in Seattle, released in 2002, further indicates the increased risks encountered by LGBT adolescents. Homeless LGBT youths reported leaving home more often than their heterosexual peers (mean of 12.38 times vs. 6.69 times). Homeless LGBT youth also reported being sexually victimized by more people since becoming homeless than their heterosexual peers (mean 8.61 perpetrators vs. 1.24).<sup>30</sup>
- In a study of LGB adolescents living in the U.S., Canada, and New Zealand released by Pennsylvania State University in 2001, more than one in four reported attempting suicide by age sixteen, and most (57%) of those reported a link between their suicide attempt and their sexual orientation.<sup>31</sup> In contrast, the National Longitudinal Study on Adolescent Health found that only 4% of all youth reported attempting suicide in the past year.<sup>32</sup>
- One in ten (10%) LGBT youths in the same Pennsylvania State University study reported attempting suicide within the past year. Of these, 34% reported needing emergency care after the attempt.<sup>33</sup>
- In a regional study of LGB youth in the Southeast released by Georgia State University in 2000, less than half (47%) of LGB youth reported ever being tested for HIV. Of the same group, more than one in three (36%) reported ever having unprotected anal sex and most (79%) reported ever having unprotected oral sex. Additionally, more than one in four (28%) reported ever having unprotected vaginal sex.<sup>34</sup>
- The 2003 Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey (MYRBS) found that LGB youth were more likely to report smoking currently (48% vs. 19%) and on a daily basis (23% vs. 6%) than the general student population. Additionally, more sexual minority youth reported current alcohol use (60% vs. 45%), binge drinking (44% vs. 26%), and current drug use (49% vs. 29%). Most LGB youth reported lifetime drug use, compared to less than half of the general student population (73% vs. 46%).<sup>35</sup>
- The 2003 MYRBS also shows that 30% of sexual minority youth reported dating violence (compared to only 9% of other students) and 41% reported nonconsensual sexual contact (compared to only 8% of other students).<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Cochran, B.N., Stewart, A.J., Ginzler, J.A., Cauce, A.M. (2002). Challenges Faced by Homeless Sexual Minorities: Comparison of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Homeless Adolescents with Their Heterosexual Counterparts. *American Journal of Public Health, 92*(5), 773-777.

<sup>31</sup> D'Augelli, A. R., Hershberger, S. L., & Pilkington, N. W. (2001). Suicidality patterns and sexual orientation-related factors among lesbian, gay, and bisexual youths. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior, 31*(3), 250-264.

<sup>32</sup> Resnick, M.D., Bearman, P.S., Blum, R.W., Bauman, K.E., Harris, K.M., Jones, J., Tabor, J., Beuhring, T., Sieving, R.E., Shew, M., Ireland, M., Bearinger, H., & Udry, J.R. (1997). Protecting adolescents from harm. Findings from the National Longitudinal Study on Adolescent Health. *Journal of the American Medical Association, 278*(10): 823-32.

<sup>33</sup> D'Augelli, A. R., Hershberger, S. L., & Pilkington, N. W. (2001).

<sup>34</sup> Maguen, S., & Armistead, L. (2000). Prevalence of unprotected sex and HIV-antibody testing among gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth. *The Journal of Sex Research, 37*(2), 169-174.

<sup>35</sup> Massachusetts Department of Education (2004). *2003 Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results*. Retrieved June 8, 2005 from Massachusetts Department of Education.

<sup>36</sup> Massachusetts Department of Education (2004).

- The Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network's 2003 study of LGBT youth in school shows that 91.5% of GLBT youth reported often hearing derogatory homophobic remarks in school. And though most (70.8%) of LGBT students reported that these remarks were distressing to them, even more (82.9%) reported that school faculty sometimes or never intervened when these comments were made in their presence.<sup>37</sup>
- A study released by the City University of New York in 2002 of LGBT adolescents in New York City showed that bisexual-identified youths reported more discomfort with homosexuality and negative attitudes toward homosexuality than their gay- and lesbian-identified peers.<sup>38</sup>
- A 2001-2002 Western Kentucky University study of LGBT college students in the United States showed that almost all (89.2%) reported never using a condom or barrier for oral sex. Only 4% reported using a barrier consistently for oral sex.<sup>39</sup>
- According to the same Western Kentucky University study, only 38.2% of LGBT college students (between the ages of 18 and 24) reported ever being tested for HIV,<sup>40</sup> while a study at Florida Southern College found that 45.7% of the general college student population reported having been tested for HIV.<sup>41</sup>
- In a 2005 study of LGBT youth and tobacco use conducted by the University of Minnesota Youth and AIDS Project, two-thirds of the respondents were smokers (compared to only 11.7% of all middle-school students and only 28.0% of all high school students, according to the CDC's National Youth Tobacco Survey<sup>42</sup>). When the LGBT youths were asked how to build an effective tobacco prevention program, "many of the respondents discussed the general importance of building social support for nonsmoking and bolstering individuals' self-esteem and positive identification within the LGBT community." One gay youth commented on the importance of LGBT adults in discouraging LGBT youth from smoking: "I think commercials would work if they changed them and just zoomed in on GLBT youth. I think that would actually work if they had messages of older GLBT people saying—they smoked when they were younger and these are the effects and tell them how serious smoking is. . . . The key element is that the commercial would be all GLBT people."<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Kosciw, J.G. (2004).

<sup>38</sup> Rosario, M., Schrimshaw, E.W., Hunter, J., & Gwadz, M. (2002). Gay-related stress and emotional distress among gay, lesbian, and bisexual youths: a longitudinal examination. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 70*(4), 967-975.

<sup>39</sup> Lindley, L. L., Nicholson, T. J., Kerby, M. B., & Liu, N. (2003). HIV/STI associated risk behaviors among self-identified lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender college students in the United States. *AIDS Education and Prevention, 15*(5), 413-429.

<sup>40</sup> Lindley, L. L., Nicholson, T. J., Kerby, M. B., & Liu, N. (2003).

<sup>41</sup> Opt, S.K., Loffredo, D.A. (2004). College students and HIV/AIDS: more insights on knowledge, testing, and sexual practices. *Journal of Psychology, 138*(5), 389-402.

<sup>42</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2005). Tobacco use, access, and exposure to tobacco in media among middle and high school students—United States, 2004. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, 54*(12), 297-301.

<sup>43</sup> Remafedi, G., Carol, H. (2005). Preventing tobacco use among lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youths. *Nicotine & Tobacco Research, 7*(2), 249-257.