

## Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Youth in California

**Disparities among youth based on sexual orientation are startling.** Lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) youth in California experience higher rates of poor emotional health, substance use and school absences compared with youth that identify as straight. Addressing these challenges in schools through policies and programs are critical to supporting the health and educational outcomes of all youth.

This issue brief highlights findings from the California Department of Education's California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) and California School Staff Survey (CSSS) for 2013-2015. Students in 7th, 9th and 11th grade and in non-traditional programs, and elementary, middle and high school staff were surveyed. Findings are available for most counties and school districts.



Access more findings at: [kidsdata.org/YouthInSchools](http://kidsdata.org/YouthInSchools)

**61%**

reported feeling so sad almost every day for two weeks or more that they stopped doing usual activities

Compared to 29% of straight peers

**45%**

reported using alcohol or drugs in the past 30 days

Compared to 22% of straight peers

**50%**

reported skipping school or cutting class at least once in the past year

Compared to 35% of straight peers

EMOTIONAL HEALTH



Feelings of depression are associated with bullying and, in the most troubling cases, may lead to suicide ideation and suicide.

**64%** reported being bullied in the past year. Compared to 33% of straight peers

**49%** seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year. Compared to 16% of straight peers

ALCOHOL & DRUG USE



Rates of alcohol and drug use among LGB students are at least double those of straight peers.

**ALCOHOL**  
**35%**



**E-CIGARETTE**

**24%**



**MARIJUANA**

**28%**



SKIPPING SCHOOL



Skipping school is associated with poor emotional health and at-risk behavior. It negatively impacts health and educational outcomes.

**9%** reported skipping school at least once a week during the past year. Compared to 4% of straight peers

**41%** reported skipping school up to once a month. Compared to 31% of straight peers

Policy and Program Implications

LGB students benefit when their school has adequate counseling and support services, addresses substance abuse and engages in collaborations with the community. In settings of positive school climate, all students, including LGB students, experience better emotional health, decreased substance use and fewer unexcused school absences. School staff recognize that more can be done to support students:

Less than one-third of school staff reported that their school

- has adequate counseling and support services
- has effective services for substance abuse and other problems
- engages in community collaboration

Special attention to funding, service delivery and integrated support can strengthen school climate:

- **Maximize funding streams**, such as California's Local Control Funding Formula, the Mental Health Services Act and Medicaid.
- **Provide enhanced health care services delivery**, including mental health services at schools and school-based health centers.
- **Integrate the system of support** so that youth, parents, school staff, local agencies and community organizations can work together to support LGB youth.