

Massachusetts High School Students and Sexual Orientation Results of the 2009 Youth Risk Behavior Survey

The Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey (MYRBS) is conducted every two years by the Massachusetts Department of Education with funding from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The survey monitors behaviors of high school students that are related to the leading causes of morbidity and mortality among youth and adults in the United States.

The 2009 MYRBS was conducted in 59 randomly selected public high schools. In total, 2707 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.

Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Students

The MYRBS found that:

- 5.9 percent of students surveyed described themselves as gay, lesbian or bisexual.
- 9.4 percent of all students described themselves as gay, lesbian or bisexual and/or reported same-sex sexual contact.

Students at Risk

Students who described themselves as gay, lesbian, or bisexual were significantly more likely than their peers to report attacks, suicide attempts and drug and alcohol use. When compared to peers, this group was:

- **over four times more likely to have attempted suicide in the past year**
- **over four times more likely to have skipped school in the past month because of feeling unsafe**
- **over twice as likely to have been injured or threatened with a weapon at school**

Reported Behaviors	GLB Students*	Other Students
Attempted suicide in the past year	24.7%	5.6%
Required medical attention as a result of a suicide attempt	8.8%	2.2%
Skipped school in the past month because of feeling unsafe on route to or at school	13.9%	3.4%
Was threatened/injured with a weapon at school in the past year	17.3%	6.4%
Was in a physical fight resulting in treatment by doctor or nurse	9.0%	3.0%
Has been pregnant or gotten someone pregnant	10.5%	5.2%

**All differences between GLB students and Others are statistically significant, p. < .05.*