

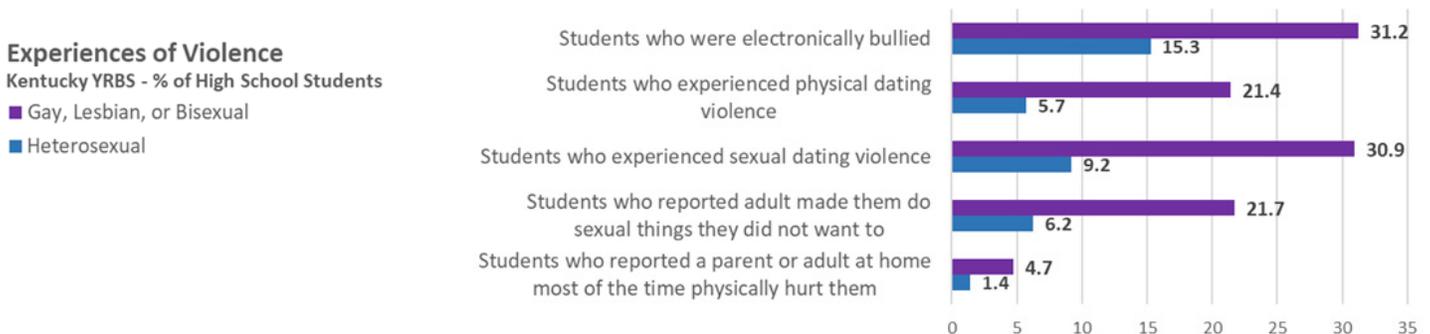
KENTUCKY IS PROUD OF ITS CHILDREN AND YOUTH



Kentucky's youth are the future of the Commonwealth. This is why it's critical that we ensure that **ALL children and youth in Kentucky are healthy, safe, and engaged, with opportunities to develop their full potential**, which is the vision of the [Kentucky Coalition for Healthy Children](#). This means that we must put an end to the harm being caused to children and youth who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning (LGBTQ+), learn about the challenges they face, stand up to the discrimination they encounter, and support measures that will ensure their well-being.

4.5% of the US population identifies as LGBTQ+.¹ The data collected on LGBTQ+ children and youth in Kentucky indicates that 73% are white and 64% are between the ages of 13 and 17. 29% identify as boy or man, 25% as girl or woman, 38% as nonbinary, bigender, genderfluid or gender queer, and 8% are questioning."²

As the National Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion states "Research suggests that LGBT individuals face health disparities linked to societal stigma, discrimination, and denial of their civil and human rights. Discrimination against LGBT persons has been associated with high rates of psychiatric disorders, substance abuse, and suicide."³

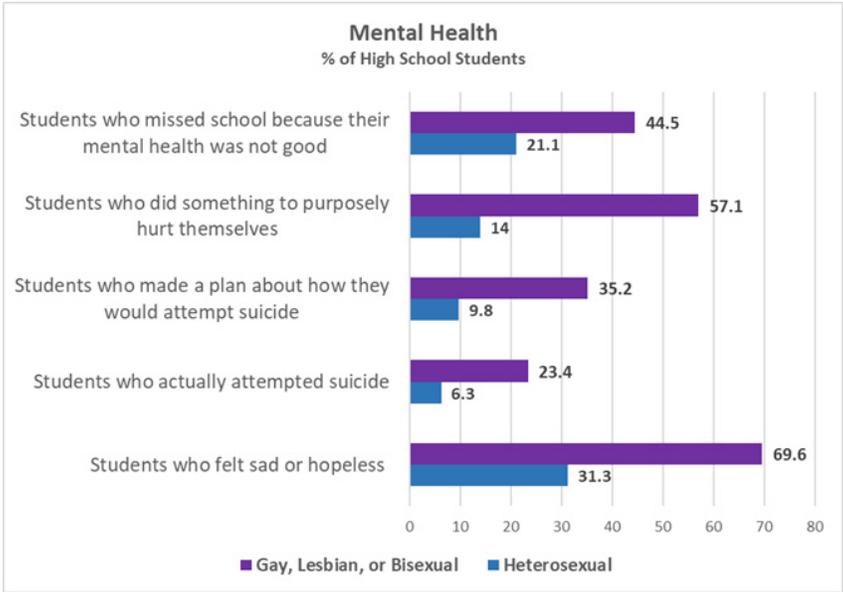
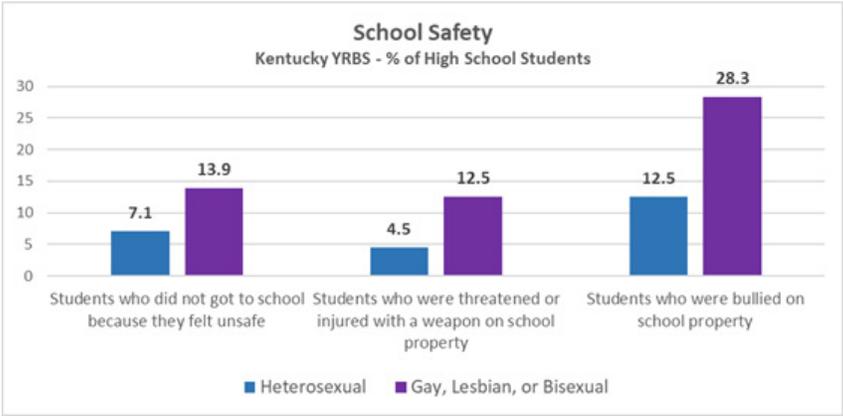


¹<https://news.gallup.com/poll/234863/estimate-lgbt-population-rises.aspx> ²<https://www.thetrevorproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/The-Trevor-Project-2022-National-Survey-on-LGBTQ-Youth-Mental-Health-by-State.pdf> ³<https://nicic.gov/office-disease-prevention-and-health-promotion-lesbian-gay-bisexual-and-transgender-health>

In Kentucky, the **2021 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) – Kentucky High School Risk Behavior and Sexual Identity report**⁴ showed that LGBTQ+ youth experience as targets much higher rates of violence and do not feel safe when at school. **LGBTQ+ students experience over three times more incidents of sexual violence from adults than do heterosexual students.** LGBTQ+ youth were bullied and threatened or injured with a weapon on school property double the times experienced by their heterosexual peers. Added to the bullying and violence LGBTQ+ children and youth face, they must deal with the lack of personal, family, and social acceptance of sexual orientation and gender identity.

All these factors have led to serious mental health problems. As Mental Health America reports “Although being LGBTQ+ is absolutely not a mental illness, many LGBTQ+ people experience mental health struggles. The bisexual and transgender communities have the highest rates of mental health concerns within the LGBTQ+ population. Younger members of the LGBTQ+ community struggle the most with mental health concerns of all the age groups.”⁵

70% of LGBTQ+ youth reported feeling sad or hopeless and an alarming 35.2% attempted suicide, compared to 9.8% of their heterosexual peers.



LET’S PROTECT KENTUCKY’S FUTURE

The Nation’s leading medical institutions and associations, including the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Medical Association, American Psychological Association, American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, American College of Obstetricians & Gynecologists, the Endocrine Society, and the Pediatric Endocrine Society, have issued statements and reports to guide us in protecting LGBTQ+ children and youth.⁶

Their recommendations include the need for all of us to:

- ✓ Support legislation that prohibits all licensed mental health providers from engaging in any practices that intend to change a minor’s sexual orientation or gender identity – ban conversion “therapy”.
- ✓ Ensure that LGBTQ+ children and youth have access to comprehensive, gender-affirming, and developmentally appropriate health care that is provided in a safe and inclusive clinical space.
- ✓ Support evidence-based, scientific provisions of appropriate medical and mental health care for LGBTQ+ youth, including family-based therapy and support that recognizes the importance of an individualized approach
- ✓ Support gender-affirming care as the life-saving health care that it is for transgender youth and oppose legislation that would undermine it.
- ✓ Ensure schools have anti bullying and nondiscrimination policies and efforts. The Kentucky Coalition for Healthy Children has developed [Principles for Equity and Justice in Schools](#) which provides recommendations for schools and policymakers to address the issues that are holding back our children and youth from developing their full potential.

⁴[https://education.ky.gov/curriculum/WSCC/data/Pages/Youth-Risk-Behavior-Survey-\(YRBS\).aspx](https://education.ky.gov/curriculum/WSCC/data/Pages/Youth-Risk-Behavior-Survey-(YRBS).aspx) ⁵<https://mhanational.org/issues/lgbtq-communities-and-mental-health#-Source%20202> ⁶<https://www.aap.org/en/patient-care/lgbtq-health-and-wellness/>; <https://www.hrc.org/resources/policy-and-position-statements-on-conversion-therapy>