

A Child Is a Child

2024 SNAPSHOT:
California Children's Health



LGBTQ+ Youth Health & Well-Being

We know that when children are healthy, they are more likely to succeed in school and in life. We work to address the underlying causes of health inequities by improving the conditions in which children live, learn, grow and play so that young people from historically marginalized communities

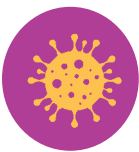
have the resources and opportunities they need to achieve their dreams and reach their full potential. This infographic provides an overview of key LGBTQ+ youth health facts in California and nationally to inform the work we must do together to make California the best state to raise healthy, thriving children.

HIDDEN HEALTH INEQUITIES



California must do more to collect sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) data specific to youth to help illuminate and address health disparities and the underlying challenges LGBTQ+ youth face. This includes asking about and reporting sexual orientation separately from gender identity to better understand the unique experiences of youth within the LGBTQ+ community. The lack of consistently collected SOGI data specific to youth hides health disparities and challenges. We must be able to see beyond broad categories of people, including youth, with greater depth and detail to fully illuminate and address health disparities. With more detailed and accurate data, programs and policies can be put in place to improve the chances for LGBTQ+ youth to have every opportunity to live healthy, safe and successful lives as youth and adults.


COVID-19



Nationally:


- **Over 1 in 2 (56%)** of LGBTQ+ youth report that their **MENTAL HEALTH WAS POOR** most of the time or always due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Over **1 in 4** Latine and Indigenous LGBTQ+ youth (**25%** and **27%**,

respectively) reported losing a close family member or friend due to COVID-19. 

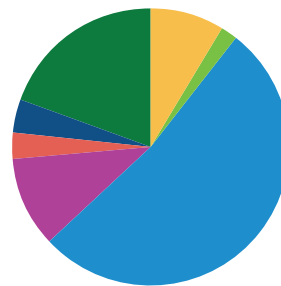
FOOD ACCESS



Nationally, nearly **1 in 3 (30%)** LGBTQ+ youth experienced **FOOD INSECURITY**, including **1 in 2** of all Indigenous LGBTQ+ youth. 

POPULATION


At least **10%** of CA's public middle and high school youth population identify as LGBTQ+, translating to **101,618** of California's 7th, 9th, and 11th grade public school students. Among these children and youth:



- 9% identify as **Black**
- 1% identify as **Indigenous**
- 54% identify as **Latine**
- 11% identify as **Asian American**
- 2% identify as **Pacific Islander**
- 3% identify as **mixed race**
- 20% identify as **white**

HOSTILE ENVIRONMENTS



Numerous harmful policies contribute to hostile environments for LGBTQ+ youth, including book bans, forced outing, and failure to implement affirming policies and provide appropriate mental health services. Multiple school districts have passed policies that require teachers to out trans and gender nonconforming students to their parents. In August 2023, California Attorney General Rob Bonta filed a lawsuit against Chino Valley Unified School District arguing that the policy violates students' civil and constitutional rights and could cause them mental, emotional, psychological and potential physical harm. In September 2023, San Bernardino County Superior Court Judge Thomas Garza ordered that the Chino Valley district [stop its policy](#). 



Nationally, an overwhelming percentage of transgender and nonbinary youth express worry about state and local laws **DENYING THEM ACCESS TO MEDICAL CARE (93%)**, bathroom use (**91%**) and participation in sports (**83%**).

HOUSING INSECURITY



Compared to non-LGBTQ+ youth, LGBTQ+ youth are roughly **2X** as likely to experience **HOMELESSNESS** and live in **UNSTABLE HOUSING**, like sharing a home with more than one family, living with relatives, or staying at a hotel, shelter, campground or other kind of transitional or temporary housing.

PROTECTIVE FACTORS



Affirming adult

Adults who accept LGBTQ+ youth for who they are. Adult acceptance and affirmation, belonging and connectedness, understanding and advocacy are all associated with positive and improved health and well-being for LGBTQ+ youth.

Peers

Support from peers with shared identities and life experiences can be a vital factor that protects the health and well-being of LGBTQ+ youth. LGBTQ+ youth often face isolation and feelings of loneliness due to the stigma and discrimination they may encounter. Peer support provides a safe and welcoming space for LGBTQ+ youth to express themselves and connect with others who share similar experiences. Through peer support, LGBTQ+ youth can develop resilience and coping strategies to deal with adversity from peers who have faced similar challenges. Being surrounded by accepting peers increases self-esteem and mental well-being and reduces isolation, anxiety and depression.

Gender-affirming care

Affirming adults accept LGBTQ+ youth for who they are. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics' statement on [Ensuring Comprehensive Care and Support for Transgender and Gender-Diverse Children and Adolescents](#), in a gender-affirmative care model (GACM), pediatric providers offer developmentally appropriate care that is oriented toward understanding and appreciating a youth's gender identity and experience. A strong, nonjudgmental partnership with youth and their families can facilitate exploration of complicated emotions and gender-diverse expressions while allowing questions and concerns to be raised in a supportive environment. The GACM includes medical, mental health and social services supports for children, youth and families. Providers work together to destigmatize gender variance, promote the child's self-worth, facilitate access to care, educate families, and advocate for safer community spaces where children are free to develop and explore their gender.

DISCRIMINATION



Over **2 in 3 (70%)** of LGBTQ+ youth have experienced **DISCRIMINATION** based on **SEXUAL ORIENTATION** or **GENDER IDENTITY**.



82% of LGBTQ+ BIPOC youth have experienced **RACISM**.

32% of LGBTQ+ youth have been **PHYSICALLY THREATENED** or **HARMED** due to either their **SEXUAL ORIENTATION** or **GENDER IDENTITY**.

Nationally, **36%** of LGBTQ+ youth report that they have been **PHYSICALLY THREATENED** or **HARMED** due to either their **SEXUAL ORIENTATION** or **GENDER IDENTITY**, with Indigenous, Middle Eastern/North African and mixed race LGBTQ+ youth experiencing the highest rates at **49%**, **40%** and **40%**, respectively.

JUVENILE JUSTICE



Nationally, LGBTQ+ youth are overrepresented in the juvenile justice system: the percentage of **INCARCERATED** LGBTQ+ youth is **DOUBLE** that of LGBTQ+ youth in the general population.

Among CA's incarcerated youth, about **1 in 10 boys** and **1 in 2 girls** are LGBTQ+. Of these youth, over **90%** are BIPOC.

MENTAL HEALTH



Over **1 in 2** LGBTQ+ youth report feelings of **CHRONIC SADNESS**. LGBTQ+ youth are **3X** more likely than non-LGBTQ+ youth to report contemplating suicide. Over **1 in 2** transgender youth report contemplating suicide, compared to about 15% of non-transgender youth.

LGBTQ+ youth experience some of the **HIGHEST** rates of **MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES**, with **58%** experiencing symptoms of **DEPRESSION** and **69%** experiencing symptoms of **ANXIETY**. These rates are exacerbated by the lack of access to mental health resources, with **62%** of LGBTQ+ youth wanting to access mental health care but not being able to.

44% of LGBTQ+ youth in California seriously considered suicide, including more than **1 in 2 (54%)** of transgender and nonbinary youth.

SCHOOL CLIMATE AND SAFETY



School Absences

- LGBTQ+ youth are **2X MORE LIKELY** to cite feeling **SAD**, **HOPELESS** and **ANXIOUS** as a reason for missing school than non-LGBTQ+ youth.
- LGBTQ+ youth are **2X MORE LIKELY** as non-LGBTQ+ youth to miss school because they do not feel safe.

Feeling Safe at School

- Only about **1 in 3 (37%)** middle and high school transgender students feel safe at school, compared to **65%** of non-transgender students.
- Fewer than half of bisexual and gay/lesbian students in middle and high school feel safe at school, compared to 6 of every 10 straight students.

Fear of Physical Violence

- 44%** of transgender middle school students and **42%** of transgender high school students report being **AFRAID** of being beaten up, compared to **29%** and **10%**, respectively, for non-transgender students.
- Bisexual and gay/lesbian students were at least **2X** more likely to report being **AFRAID** of being beaten up compared to straight students.

Bullying

- Over two-thirds (**70%**) of transgender middle school and nearly two-thirds (**65%**) of transgender high school students have experienced **HARASSMENT** or **BULLYING**, over double the rate of non-transgender middle and high school students (34% and 28%, respectively).
- In middle school, **70%** of gay/lesbian students and **71%** of bisexual students have experienced **HARASSMENT** or **BULLYING** compared to 32% of straight students. In high school, **59%** of gay/lesbian students and **53%** of bisexual students have experienced harassment or bullying compared to 2% of straight students.

CHILD WELFARE



LGBTQ+ youth are **3X** more likely to live in a foster home or group care, or be awaiting placement, than non-LGBTQ+ youth.



30% of youth in the **FOSTER CARE SYSTEM** and **25%** of **UNHOUSED YOUTH** identify as LGBTQ+, almost **2X** the state representation.