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**BROOKLINE YOUTH RISK BEHAVIOR SURVEY**

**Health Risk Behaviors and Sexual Identity**

**Brookline Department of Public Health 2014**

**SUMMARY OF RESULTS**

**Section 1 – Self-Reported Sexual Identity of BHS Students**

11% of Brookline High School (BHS) Students reported that they were either lesbian,

gay, bisexual or questioning. Popular estimates of national rates of the prevalence of

LGBT individuals are at 11% while estimates for Boston and Massachusetts are

reported around 7% and 6% respectively.

**Section 2 –Bullying, Sexual Violence and the School Environment**

About 3 out of 4 students of ALL sexual identities heard negative comments about

LGBT people at school in the last month. There was not a statistically significant

association between hearing such comments and a student’s sexual identity.

About 25% of LGBQ students at BHS reported being a target of bullying in the past 12

months, compared to 15% of heterosexual students.

11% of LGBQ students report ever being forced to have sexual contact against their

will, compared to 6% of heterosexual students.

About 3 out of 4 of all students have an adult to talk to at school about problems.

**Section 3 – Mental Health and Suicide**

84% of LGBQ BHS students reported feeling overwhelming stress or anxiety in the

past 12 months, compared to 76% of heterosexual students.

40% of LGBQ BHS students reported feeling suicidal at least once in the past year,

compared to 18% of heterosexual students.

Nearly half of LGBQ BHS students sought mental health help in the past year,

compared to 20% of heterosexual students.

**Section 4 – Alcohol and Tobacco Use**

21% of LGBQ BHS students reported that they had smoked at least once in the past 30

days, compared with 9% of heterosexual students. There was a statistically significant

association between sexual identity and smoking in the past month.

There was no statistically significant association between sexual identity and recent

alcohol use, binge drinking, or risky sexual behavior.

**Section 5 – Illegal Drug Use**

There was a statistically significant association between sexual identity and recent

marijuana use, and also with any previous use of amphetamines or use of prescription

pain medication recreationally.

**LIMITATIONS**

This report has several limitations. First, the survey was conducted only at a public high school,

so the sample may not be representative of all adolescents in Brookline. Second, due to the

stigma and stress associated with identifying as LGBT, surveying and analyzing data about

LGBT populations is difficult. Even though a total sample size may be large, the number of

respondents willing to identify at all as LGBT can prevent adequate representation of LGBT

populations. Using survey questions that ask respondents to self-label sexual identity and about

the sex/gender of their sexual contacts can help with this problem. Third, the exclusion of

transgender as a possible answer to the sexual identity survey question prevents any analysis of

this sub-population. Nationally, nearly 1/3 of LGBT students drop out of high school, about 3

times the national average, so the sample of LGBQ students acquired in Brookline may not be

representative of all LGBQ adolescents.

**The following definitions are used in this report:**

**Sex** – A person’s biological or anatomic sex

**Gender** – Social perception of a person being male or female

**Gender Identity** – The subjective and personal experience of ‘feeling’ male or female,

regardless of biological sex

**Sexual Orientation** – Gender to which an individual is romantically or sexually attracted

**Sexual Identity** – Internal experience and interpretation regarding the gender or sex to which a

person is romantically or sexually attracted

**Heteronormative** -- Implicit or explicit assumptions that promote heterosexual conformity to

the detriment of other sexual orientations2

**Sexuality Stress** – Stress specifically caused by being non-heterosexual in a heteronormative

environment, regardless of the presence of overt prejudice or discrimination

[Click here to read the full “Health Risk Behaviors and Sexual Identity Report.”](http://weebly-file/2/9/2/9/2929884/healthy_brookline_vol._xv.pdf)