



Study: Homeless rates 3 times higher among sexual minority teens

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Melissa Jenco, News Content Editor

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Gay, lesbian and bisexual teens are three times more likely to be homeless than other teens, a new study found.

The risk of homelessness among these teens was lower in states that are more accepting of sexual minorities, according to “[Homelessness Among Sexual Minority Youth](#),” (Deal C, Gonzales G. *Pediatrics*. Nov. 20, 2023).

Researchers analyzed data from the 2017 and 2019 Youth Risk Behavior Surveys on high school students in 21 states. About 17% identified as a sexual minority (gay, lesbian or bisexual) while 83% identified as heterosexual.

The data showed 12% of sexual minority youths reported homelessness in the past 30 days compared to 4% of heterosexual youths. The most common places for LGBTQ homeless youths to report living were a non-parental home (41%), on the streets (20%), in a shelter (19%) and in a hotel (12%).

Half of homeless sexual minority youths reported suicidal ideation compared to 39% of sexual minority youths who were not homeless. Homeless sexual minority youths also had higher rates of suicidal plans and attempts, sex with four or more partners, unprotected sex and substance use.

Authors called for expanding school and community-based programs for homeless sexual minority teens. They also said these teens need access to mental health, sexual health and substance use resources.

The study did not find a link between state policies and rates of homelessness among sexual minority youths. However, authors also looked at a measure of cultural stigma and acceptance of sexual minorities. They found a 20-percentage point increase in a state's acceptance was associated with a nearly 7 percentage point decrease in homelessness.

"This may be because of a variety of reasons, such as decreased structural stigma lessening the risk for homelessness, shelter systems that are more supportive of LGBTQ+ youth, or greater parental acceptance of sexual diversity lessening the amount of sexual minority youth who become homeless," authors wrote.

Authors of a [related commentary](#) applauded the research and called for more protections for sexual minority youths.

"To ensure the well-being of all young people, clinicians and policy makers should pursue tailored clinical and social programs, but also strive to make states and communities more safe and supportive places for sexual and gender minority youth," they wrote. "Their lives depend on it."

Resource

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