

Bullied lesbian, gay and bisexual students more likely to carry weapons

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Prior research has revealed sexual minority youth (lesbian, gay, bisexual) are more likely to carry weapons both outside of and within school. However, until now, no study has examined the degree to which bullying and harassment is associated with weapon carrying among this group.

A new study has found youth who report carrying a [weapon](#) have higher odds of experiencing bullying and bullying-related victimization. Minoritized student populations, especially sexual minority youth disproportionately experience bullying and bullying victimization.

"Pediatricians should recognize that experiencing bullying and feeling unsafe are associated with weapon carrying, particularly among [sexual minorities](#)," says corresponding author Carl Streed, Jr., MD, MPH, FACP, assistant professor of medicine at Boston University School of Medicine (BUSM).

Using the Youth Risk Behavior Survey to examine the prevalence and likelihood of carrying weapons

by sexual identity, the researchers examined self-report of adverse experiences (being bullied, skipping school due to fear for [personal safety](#)) and performed analysis to estimate the odds of carrying a weapon. When surveyed by [sexual identity](#), 14 percent of heterosexual, 21.8 percent of gay/lesbian, 18.5 percent of bisexual and 17.4 percent of "not sure" students reported carrying a weapon in the past 30 days.

The odds of carrying a weapon were significantly increased for youth who skipped school due to feeling unsafe at school, had ever been threatened with a weapon in the past year and had ever been in a physical fight. Compared to heterosexual female peers, sexual minority women had increased odds of carrying a weapon.

"Pediatricians and professionals who work with youth should recognize that reported experiences of bullying may not be the most salient indicator of risk for weapon carrying among all youth, and that other fears of or experiences with bullying are crucial to screen for among sexual minorities in particular," adds Streed, who also is a primary care physician and research lead in the Center for Transgender Medicine & Surgery at Boston Medical Center.

According to the researchers, this work is critical in the [current political climate](#) that is witnessing an erosion of LGBTQ acceptance (GLAAD, 2019) and is leading to a potential increase in minority stress through the bullying of certain youth populations, particularly sexual minority [youth](#). They believe future research should investigate associations between longitudinal trends in bullying and attitudes toward sexual and gender [minority](#) persons in U.S. politics.

More information: Carl G. Streed, Jr. et al. Safety and Predictors of Sexual Minority Youth Carrying Weapons. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*. First Published December 8, 2020 Research Article

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