

Study Of Bisexual/Gay Teens in Thailand Reveals Serious Risks

Newly published findings reveal alarming mental and physical health risks facing bisexual and homosexual teenagers.

Teenagers in Thailand who identify as bisexual or gay face a series of serious psychological and physical health risks, according to researchers writing recently in *Archives of Sexual Behavior*.

A team of researchers conducted interviews in 1999 with 1,725 teens between the ages of 15-21 who attended school in Chiang Rai, Thailand. The students were given a series of questionnaires that dealt with same-sex activities and attractions; condom use; and drug and alcohol abuse.

The teens who identified as gay or bisexual were identified as "HB teens" throughout the study. Self-identified bisexuals or gays accounted for 7.7% of males and 8.2% of females in the study.

The study discovered the following about HB versus heterosexual teenagers:

- HB teen males began sexual contact at much earlier ages than heterosexual males (mean: 14.7/14.9 years old compared to 16.8 years old for heterosexual males).
- HB males had a significantly higher number of sexual partners than did heterosexual males.
- 12% of HB males had been paid for offering sex; far higher than heterosexual males.
- 26% of HB males had been coerced into sexual contact or intercourse, compared with 4.6% for heterosexual males.
- The report noted: "In our study, HB males were six times more likely to have been coerced than were heterosexual

males. HB females were 1.5 times more likely to have been coerced than were heterosexual females."

- HB females had a far higher rate of providing sex in exchange for money, gifts, or favors than heterosexual females (14.1% to 3.5% for heterosexual females).

- HB males used methamphetamines (for weight reduction) at a higher level than heterosexuals (52% to 21.8%).

- HB males reported more social isolation and depression than their heterosexual counterparts. No such differences were reported between HB females and heterosexual females.

- HB males used considerably less alcohol than heterosexuals; but HB females used more alcohol and drugs than their heterosexual counterparts.

In their conclusion, the researchers observed: "... the higher levels of sexual coercion and selling sex among HB males and females along with the higher levels of sexual activity, social isolation, and signs of depression in HB males point at the need for differential health-education messages among heterosexual and HB youth." ■

Reference:

Fritz Van Griensven, Peter H. Kilmarx, Supaporn Jeeyapant, Chomnad Manopai boon, Supaporn Korattana, Richard A. Jenkins, Wat Uthavivoravit, Khanchit Limpakarnjanarat, Timothy D. Mastro, "The Prevalence of Bisexual and Homosexual Orientation and Related Health Risks among Adolescents in Northern Thailand," *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, Vol. 33; Issue 2; 2004; P. 137.