

OHIO SUICIDE PREVENTION FOUNDATION

Suicide in the LGBTQ+ Community

When it comes to suicidal thoughts and attempts, the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer or questioning (LGBTQ+) population is at a higher risk than the heterosexual population. If LGBTQ+ people do not die by suicide because they identify as LGBTQ+, then why do they consider suicide?

A Vulnerable Population

The vulnerability of LGBTQ+ people has resulted in countless tragic stories of those who've ended their lives because of relentless bullying or personal rejection. Other reasons they may consider suicide include discrimination, homophobia, depression, anxiety, substance abuse, violence, gender nonconformity, and low self-esteem.

Regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, every person deserves to feel safe.

Risk Factors

There are four common risk factors that are specific to the LGBTQ+ community.

- 1. Psychiatric disorders**, including depression, anxiety, and substance abuse: Mental illness tends to be a silent battle. That, coupled with lack of available resources, support, and understanding of the connection between mental health and sexual or gender identity leaves many LGBTQ+ people struggling in isolation.
- 2. Exposure to discrimination**, including homophobia, transphobia, bullying, cyberbullying, and violence: Research shows that 42 percent of LGBTQ+ youth seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year, including more than half of transgender and nonbinary youth.¹
- 3. Relationship conflicts** regarding sexual identity: Family and friends may verbalize disapproval, saying such things as, "You are an embarrassment to our family." These attacks can leave a person feeling alone and unsupported.
- 4. Internal conflict** about sexual identity, hidden sexual identity, low self-esteem, self-dislike, and self-criticism: One person might ask themselves, "What if they find out about me? I just want to be loved." Being outed by others can make a person feel embarrassed, upset, and vulnerable. Sometimes that can lead to feelings of contempt, anger, or resentment toward other members of the LGBTQ+ community.⁴

Ohio's LGBTQ+ Population

The reported LGBTQ+ population in the Buckeye State is among the nation's largest.²

462,000 total LGBTQ+ population (13+)

5% of workforce that is LGBTQ+

20th largest LGBTQ+ population in the U.S.

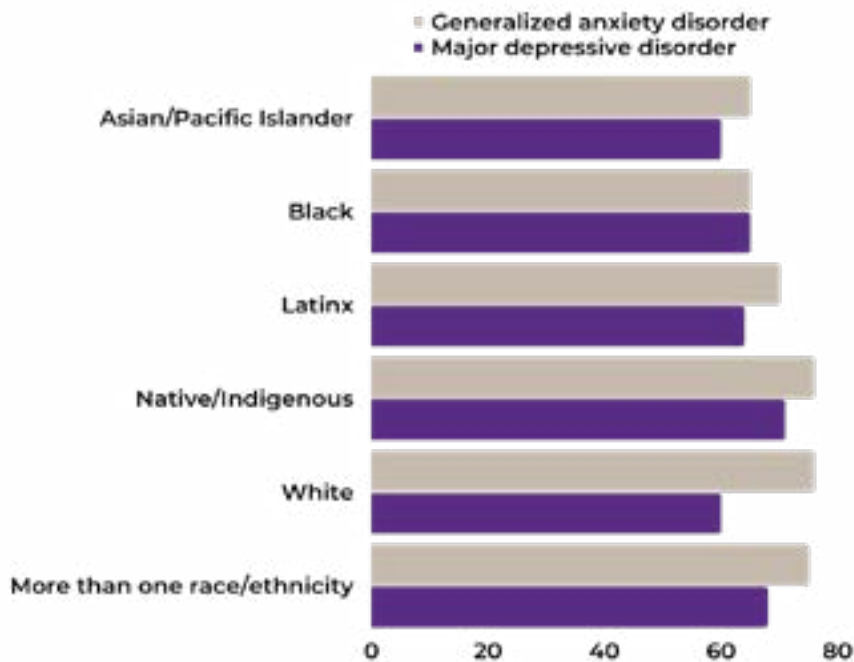
30% of LGBTQ+ adults (25+) are raising children

When compared to heterosexual males and females, gay men are 6 times more likely and lesbian females are 2 times more likely to attempt suicide.³

Practical Ways to Help

- DO understand that casual language like, "That's so gay," can hurt others.
- DO be respectful when an LGBTQ+ person comes out by sharing an empowering response like, "Thank you for having the courage to share with me."
- DO educate yourself on LGBTQ+ issues.
- DO speak up (if you feel safe to do so) when others make jokes or harass someone because of sexual orientation since they may not be aware of how insensitive they're being.
- DON'T be afraid to let LGBTQ+ people know you're an ally, as well as someone to talk with about their mental health or suicidal ideations.
- DON'T hesitate to respond to suicidal ideations the same as you would with heterosexual persons by asking, "Are you thinking of suicide?"
- DON'T forget that being LGBTQ+ is just one part of a person's life and identity.

LGBTQ youth who experienced symptoms of mental health conditions ¹



More than 80% of LGBTQ+ youth said it was important that a crisis line include a focus on LGBTQ youth, should they need it.¹

References

1. The Trevor Project. "The Trevor Project National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health 2021." www.thetrevorproject.org/survey-2021/. Accessed February 28, 2022.
2. Movement Advancement Project. Ohio's Equality Profile. www.lgbtmap.org/equality-maps/profile_state/OH. Accessed April 5, 2022.
3. Western Michigan University. Lesbian, bisexual, Gay and Transgender Youth and Suicide. wmich.edu/suicideprevention/lgbt. Accessed February 28, 2022.
4. With Therapy. What is Homophobia? www.withtherapy.com/therapist-insights/what-is-internalized-homophobia. Accessed April 6, 2022.

ABOUT OHIO SUICIDE PREVENTION FOUNDATION

OSPF gives hope to those in crisis, strength to those in the struggle, and comfort to those in grief. OSPF is a non-profit organization that works tirelessly to help all of Ohio's communities reduce the risk of suicide. Our work includes supporting those impacted by suicide, raising awareness of mental health issues, and coordinating community resources and evidence-based prevention strategies across the state.



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