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Suicidal Behavior Among Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth Fact Sheet

Suicidal Behavior Among LGBT Youth

- Many studies have found that LGB youth attempt suicide more frequently than straight peers. The Youth Risk Behavior Survey - Data Summary & Trends Report: 2007-2017 found that LGB high school students and students unsure of their sexual orientation were 2.65 times more likely to have attempted suicide in the last year than their straight peers. The Youth Risk Behavior Survey - Data Summary & Trends Report: 2007-2017 found LGB high school students were more than four times as likely as their straight peers to have attempted suicide.
- 39% of LGBTQ youth seriously considered attempting suicide in the past twelve months, with more than half of transgender and non-binary youth having seriously considered
- 71% of LGBTQ youth reported feeling sad or hopeless for at least two weeks in the past year • Less than half of LGBTQ respondents were out to an adult at school, with youth less likely to disclose their gender identity than sexual orientation
- 2 in 3 LGBTQ youth reported that someone tried to convince them to change their sexual orientation or gender identity, with youth who have undergone conversion therapy more than twice as likely to attempt suicide as those who did not
- 71% of LGBTQ youth in our study reported discrimination due to either their sexual orientation or gender identity
- 58% of transgender and non-binary youth reported being discouraged from using a bathroom that corresponds to their gender identity
- 76% of LGBTQ youth felt that the recent political climate impacted their mental health or sense of self



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- 87% of LGBTQ youth said it was important to them to reach out to a crisis intervention organization that focuses on LGBTQ youth and 98% said a safe space social networking site for LGBTQ youth would be valuable to them

Risk and Protective Factors among LGBT Youth

While LGBT youth think about and attempt suicide more often than their straight counterparts, most LGBT youth do not attempt suicide. LGBT youth have many of the same risk factors as straight youth, but many LGBT have more or more severe risk factors. It is important to note that being LGBT is not a risk factor in and of itself; however, the minority stressors that LGBT individuals encounter – such as discrimination and harassment – are directly associated with suicidal behavior as well as indirectly with risk factors for suicide.

- The strongest risk factor for suicide death is previous attempts, and LGB youth attempt more frequently than non-LGB youth.
- Depression and other mental health issues
- Alcohol or drug use
- Stress from prejudice and discrimination (family rejection, harassment, bullying, violence)
- Feelings of social isolation



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Very little research was found on sexual health-related protective factors for LGBT youth 15-24 years. However, there are similarities between the protective factors for heterosexual youth with the main difference being acceptance and the other factors that follow.

- Family acceptance
- Connection to friends and others who care about them
- Sense of safety

Implications for Suicide Prevention

- Because much of the risk for suicidal behavior among LGBT youth stems from the social and cultural environment, a cultural competence approach is recommended by many. Youth workers who understand and help address the stressors that the LGBT youth minority face can be most effective. See <http://www.hrc.org/issues/cultural-competence.htm>
- SPRC recommends that youth-serving agencies
 - Implement in-service staff training about the issues faced by LGBT youth, particularly the higher rate of suicidal behavior, victimization, and family rejection and recognition and response to warning signs for suicide.
 - Establish policies and protocols for appropriate response to suicide attempts, self-injury, and suicides.
 - Institute non-discrimination policies that extend equal rights to all sexual orientations and gender identities (SPRC, 2008).



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Important Resources for Suicide Prevention

The Trevor Project is the leading national organization providing crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning youth. <http://www.thetrevorproject.org>

Suicide Prevention Resource Center
<https://www.sprc.org/populations/lgbt>

American Association of Suicidology Warning Signs of Suicide
[Suicidology.org/suicide-warning-signs](http://suicidology.org/suicide-warning-signs)

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is a free, 24-hour hotline available to anyone in suicidal crisis or distress. Call 1-800-273-TALK (8255). Learn more at <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

American Association of Suicidology Risk Factors for Suicide and Fact Sheets
suicidology.org/facts-and-statistics