

Facts about Mental Health and Suicide Risk for LGBTQ people

Suicide most often occurs when stressors and health issues converge to create an experience of hopelessness and despair. For LGBTQ people, stigma, prejudice and discrimination can increase the likelihood of stress, depression and other mental health concerns. Conditions like depression, anxiety and substance problems, especially when unaddressed or when people lack access to quality mental health care, can increase risk for suicide. Facts about mental health and suicide risk for LGBTQ people include:

- The majority of LGBTQ people, including LGBTQ youth, who experience stressful external factors like discrimination, bullying or family rejection do not become suicidal.¹
- In the United States, no jurisdiction or agency routinely or systematically collects information about individuals' sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) at time of death. As a result, suicide rates for LGBTQ people remain unknown.²
- Compared to straight people, gay and lesbian people are more likely – and bisexual adults are more likely still – to report having made a suicide attempt in the past year and/or over their lifetime.³
- Transgender people report higher prevalence of suicide attempts in the past year and/or over their lifetime, than LGB or straight people.^{3,4}
- Factors associated with a higher prevalence of suicidal behavior in LGBT individuals include:¹
 - Social isolation and low self-esteem, substance abuse, depression, anxiety, and other mental health issues, often resulting from or worsened by stigma and discrimination.
 - Experiences of prejudice and discrimination, including family rejection, bullying, cyberbullying, harassment and mistreatment.
 - Laws and public policies that encourage stigma and discrimination, as well as the lack of laws and policies that protect against discrimination.
- Factors that can reduce the likelihood of suicide attempts and suicide deaths and play a role in promoting wellbeing in the LGBTQ community include:¹
 - Increasing family acceptance and affirmation of one's LGBTQ identity.
 - Reducing anti-LGBTQ stigma and prejudice.
 - Reducing bullying and other forms of victimization.
 - Increasing access to LGBTQ-affirming physical and mental health care.
 - Increasing legal protections from discrimination all play a role in promoting wellbeing in the LGBTQ community.

References

1. Movement Advancement Project, Johnson Family Foundation, and American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. Talking About Suicide & LGBT Populations. 2017 Aug; 2nd edition.
2. Haas AP, et al. Collecting Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Information at Death. *Am J Public Health*. 2019; 109(2): 255-259.
3. Haas AP, Eliason M, Mays VM, et al. Suicide and suicide risk in lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender populations: review and recommendations. *J Homosexual*. 2011; 58(1): 10-51.
4. Toomey RB, Syvertsen AK, & Shramko M. Transgender Adolescent Suicide Behavior. *J Pediatr*. 2018; 142(4).