

OHIO SUICIDE PREVENTION FOUNDATION

Suicide in the LGBTQ+ Community

The lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer/questioning (LGBTQ+) population is at higher risk for suicide than the non-LGBTQ+ population. Why is the LGBTQ+ community at such increased risk?

A Vulnerable Population

There are countless tragedies of LGBTQ+ people who ended their lives because of bullying or rejection. Discrimination not only heightens suicide risk but also increases the likelihood of violence, depression, anxiety, substance use disorders, and low self-esteem, all of which further compound the risk.

Risk Factors

There are four common risk factors among the LGBTQ+ community.

- 1. Behavioral health disorders**, including depression, anxiety, and substance use disorder. These disorders can be pre-existing or brought on by life stressors. That, coupled with lack of available resources, support, and understanding of the connection between mental health and sexual orientation/gender identity can leave many LGBTQ+ people struggling in isolation and silence.
- 2. Exposure to discrimination**, including homophobia, transphobia, bullying, cyberbullying, and violence. In a national survey, 24% of LGBTQ+ young people reported they have been physically threatened or harmed in the past year due to their sexual orientation or gender identity, which increases suicide risk.¹
- 3. Relationship conflicts** regarding sexual and/or gender identity. Family and friends may verbalize disapproval, which can leave a person feeling alone and unsupported.
- 4. Internal conflict** about sexual and/or gender identity and hiding one's true self can lead to low self-esteem, self-dislike, and self-criticism.

Ohio's LGBTQ+ Population²

462,000 total LGBTQ+ population (13+), or about 4% of Ohioans

5% of workforce is LGBTQ+

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

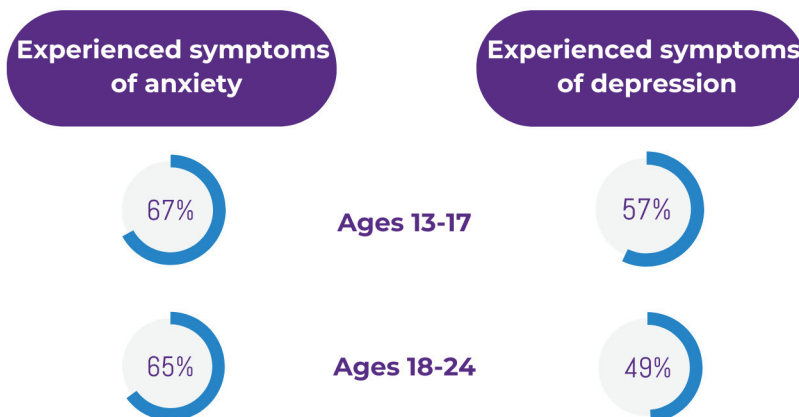
20th largest LGBTQ+ population in the U.S.³

When compared to heterosexual males and females, gay males are 6 times more likely and lesbian females are 2 times more likely to attempt suicide.⁴

Practical Ways to Help

- DO understand that casual language like, “That’s so gay,” and other homophobic and transphobic slurs are offensive and 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. Examples would include joining a local Gay-Straight Alliance or PFLAG.
- DO speak up (if you feel safe to do so) when others make jokes or harass someone because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.
- DON’T hesitate to respond to suicidal ideations by pulling them aside and directly asking, “Are you thinking of suicide?”
- DON’T forget that being LGBTQ+ is just one part of a person’s life and identity. While it is important, there are many other wonderful things you can talk about and bond over.

Anxiety & Depression Symptoms Among LGBTQ+ Youth¹



References

- 1 The Trevor Project. The Trevor Project’s 2023 U.S. National Survey on the Mental Health of LGBTQ+ Young People. <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/survey-2023/>. Accessed February 21, 2025.
- 2 Movement Advancement Project. Ohio’s Equality Profile. https://www.lgbtmap.org/equality_maps/profile_state/OH. Accessed February 7, 2025.
- 3 LGBT Demographic Data Interactive. (January 2019). Los Angeles, CA: The Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/visualization/lgbt-stats/?topic=LGBT#about-the-data>. Accessed February 7, 2025.
- 4 Western Michigan University. Lesbian, bisexual, Gay and Transgender Youth and Suicide. <https://wmich.edu/suicideprevention/lgbt>. Accessed February 7, 2025.

ABOUT OHIO SUICIDE PREVENTION FOUNDATION

Ohio Suicide Prevention Foundation (OSPF) educates, advocates for, and builds connections and support for individuals, families, and communities to prevent suicide.



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