

Suicide risk and mental health in LGBTQ+ communities: Understanding and supporting wellbeing

While suicide is a complex issue with no single cause, it often arises when mental health struggles and life stressors combine to create a deep sense of hopelessness. For LGBTQ+ people, that emotional burden can be intensified by experiences of stigma, discrimination, and rejection.

It's important to remember: most LGBTQ+ people, including youth who face adversity, do not become suicidal. Still, specific challenges unique to LGBTQ+ communities can increase vulnerability and deserve our attention, care, and collective action.

What increases risk?

Some members of the LGBTQ+ community face elevated risks for mental health concerns and suicidal behavior due to external pressures and lack of affirming support. These risk factors include:

- **Social rejection:** Being rejected by family, peers, or communities can be deeply painful, especially for young people discovering and expressing their identities.
- **Discrimination and harassment:** Facing bullying, harassment (online and offline), or mistreatment in healthcare, schools, workplaces, or public spaces contributes to distress.
- **Mental health challenges:** Anxiety, depression, low self-worth, and substance use may develop or worsen due to experiences of exclusion and marginalization.
- **Lack of legal protections:** Inadequate or absent laws to protect LGBTQ+ rights — and policies that explicitly discriminate — can send a message of unworthiness, compounding feelings of isolation.
- **Barriers to care:** LGBTQ+ people often encounter challenges accessing affirming mental healthcare, especially in environments that are unwelcoming or uninformed.

Research suggests that:

- Gay, lesbian, and bisexual adults are more likely than heterosexual peers to report having attempted suicide, both in the past year and across their lifetime.
- Bisexual people report particularly high rates of suicidal thoughts and attempts.
- Transgender people face some of the highest reported rates of suicide attempts, due to layered and persistent forms of discrimination and minority stress.

What helps protect and empower LGBTQ+ lives?

Just as risk can increase under certain conditions, resilience can grow through affirmation, connection, and support. Here's what makes a powerful difference:

- **Family acceptance:** LGBTQ+ youth who are embraced by their families report significantly better mental health outcomes than those who are rejected.
- **Safe and inclusive environments:** Reducing bullying, ensuring school and workplace safety, and challenging stigma can help LGBTQ+ people thrive.
- **Affirming healthcare:** Access to providers who are knowledgeable and respectful of LGBTQ+ identities builds trust and improves outcomes.
- **Community and connection:** Being part of an affirming community — whether in person or online — can buffer against isolation and promote hope.
- **Strong legal protections:** Anti-discrimination laws and inclusive policies signal societal support and protect basic human rights.



Creating a future where everyone belongs

Suicide prevention in LGBTQ+ communities requires more than awareness — it calls for **affirmation, equity, and compassion**. When we stand up for LGBTQ+ rights, foster inclusive environments, and connect people to life-affirming support, we create the conditions for hope to grow.

If you or someone you know is struggling, help is always available:

- **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline:** Call or text 988
- **Trevor Project (LGBTQ+ Youth):** Call 1-866-488-7386 or text START to 678678
- **Trans Lifeline:** 877-565-8860

Source: [AFSP](#)