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# MENTAL HEALTH AND THE LGBTQ COMMUNITY

## LGBTQ YOUTH & MENTAL HEALTH

**Because of stigma and discrimination, LGBTQ youth are more likely than non-LGBTQ youth to struggle with their mental health.**

- Transgender youth are far more likely than their non-transgender peers to experience depression — nearly four times the risk, according to one study (Reisner 2015). Similarly, LGBTQ teens experience significantly more depression symptoms than their heterosexual peers (Marshal 2011).
  - In a 2016-2017 survey from HRC, 28 percent of LGBTQ youth — including 40 percent of transgender youth — said they felt depressed most or all of the time during the previous 30 days, compared to only 12 percent of non-LGBTQ youth (HRC Foundation 2017).
  - **According to the CDC's 2015 Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 60 percent of LGBTQ youth reported being so sad or hopeless they stopped doing some of their usual activities (Kann 2016).**
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**60%**  
of LGBTQ youth reported  
being so sad or hopeless  
they stopped doing some  
of their usual activities.
- LGBTQ young people are more than twice as likely to feel suicidal, and over four times as likely to attempt suicide, compared to heterosexual youth (Kann 2016); the rates may be especially high for bisexual teens (Marshal 2011). According to one study, a third of transgender youth have seriously considered suicide, and one in five has made a suicide attempt (Reisner 2015).
  - Basic issues like restroom access have a profound effect on transgender youth well-being. For instance, one study showed that transgender students denied access to gender-appropriate facilities on their college campuses were 45 percent more likely to try to take their own lives (Seelman 2016).

**Supportive environments at home and school help LGBTQ youth thrive.**

- Strong family bonds, safe schools and support from caring adults can all protect LGBTQ youth from depression and suicidality (Committee on Adolescence 2013).
- In a study published in the Journal of Child and Psychiatric Nursing, Dr. Caitlin Ryan and colleagues found that LGBTQ youth with affirming families reported higher levels of self-



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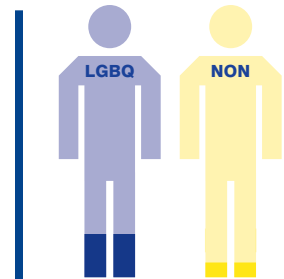
esteem and overall health. Youth with the least accepting families were more than three times as likely to consider and attempt suicide compared to those with highly accepting families (Ryan 2010).

- For transgender children and youth, family and community support makes all the difference. Although research has repeatedly found that transgender children experience mental health problems, including suicidality, at high rates, a recent study found that transgender children whose families affirmed their gender identity were as psychologically healthy as their non-transgender peers (Olson 2016).

## LGBTQ ADULTS & MENTAL HEALTH

### LGBTQ adults are more likely than others to have mental health or substance use problems.

- In 2015, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) found that one in three LGBTQ adults experienced mental illness in 2015, compared with only one in five heterosexual adults (Medley 2016).
- According to the National Center for Transgender Equality's U.S. Transgender Survey, 40 percent of transgender adults reported serious psychological distress in the month before they took the survey, dramatically higher than the five percent of the US population who say the same (James 2016).
- **Even among adults with mental illness, LGBTQ adults may experience more serious symptoms. Among LGBTQ adults living with mental illness, thirteen percent had a serious mental illness that substantially interfered with major life activities. The same was true for only four percent of heterosexual adults living with mental illness (Medley 2016).**
- According to the U.S. Transgender Survey, 40 percent of transgender adults have attempted suicide during their lifetime, compared to less than five percent of the US population as a whole (James 2016).
- The NSDUH found that 15 percent of LGBTQ adults had an alcohol or drug use disorder in the past year, compared to eight percent of heterosexual adults (Medley 2016).



### Stigma drives the higher rates of mental health problems in LGBTQ communities.

- A 2014 study found that LGBTQ people who live in communities with more stigmatizing attitudes about their sexual orientation die an average of 12 years earlier than LGBTQ people in the least-prejudiced communities (Hatzenbuehler 2014).



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- After 16 states passed bans on marriage equality in 2004-2005, the prevalence of mood disorders increased more than 30 percent among LGBTQ respondents in these states, compared with a 20 percent decrease in states without such bans (Hatzenbuehler 2010).
- Numerous studies have shown that transgender people who experience more stigma and discrimination are more likely to experience mental health problems or suicidality (Bariola 2015, Clements-Nolle 2006, Budge 2013, Nuttbrock 2010).
- At the state level, transgender adults living in states with more LGBTQ-affirming environments are less likely to have attempted suicide (Perez-Brumer 2015).

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