

LGBTQI+

Let's talk about it

The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Intersex (LGBTQI*) community represents a diverse range of identities and expressions of gender and sexual orientation. In addition to these identities, members of the community are diverse in terms of race, religion, ethnicity, nationality and socioeconomic class.

Everyone has a sexual orientation and gender identity. Sexual orientation is who you are romantically or physically attracted to. Gender identity is the internal sense of being male, female, both or neither, which is separate from your biological sex. People who have a different sexual orientation or gender identity from most people fall under the umbrella term LGBTQI+. It is really important to know that identifying as LGBTQI+ is NOT a mental illness or disorder.

While belonging to the LGBTQI community can be a source of strength, it also brings unique challenges. For those who identify as LGBTQI, it's important to recognize how your experience of sexual orientation and gender identity relates to your mental health.

Although being LGBTQI+ is absolutely not a mental illness, many LGBTQI+ people experience mental health struggles. The bisexual and transgender communities have the highest rates of mental health concerns within the LGBTQI+ population. Younger members of the LGBTQI+ community struggle the most with mental health concerns of all the age groups.

Risk Factors

Coming Out

Positive changes in societal acceptance of LGBTQI people act as a protective factor for mental health. However, this shift in acceptance has meant that many LGBTQI youth "come out" or share their sexual orientation or gender identity at younger developmental ages, which can impact their social experiences and relationships. This can have negative mental health impacts, particularly for youth who are not in supportive environments.

Rejection

For many in the LGBTQI community, coming out can be a difficult or even traumatic experience. It can be difficult to cope with rejection of something as personal as one's identity from family or close friends, within the workplace, or in a faith community. According to a 2013 survey, 40% of LGBT adults have experienced rejection from a family member or a close friend. A 2019 school climate survey showed that 86% of LGBTQ youth reported being harassed or assaulted at school, which can significantly impact their mental health. And a 2022 report from The Trevor Project found that just 37% of LGBTQ youth identified their home as an LGBTQ-affirming space.

Trauma

Homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, bullying and feeling identity-based shame is often traumatic for people. The LGBTQI community faces many forms of discrimination, including: labeling, stereotyping, denial of opportunities or access, and verbal, mental and physical abuse. They are one of the most targeted communities by perpetrators of hate crimes in the country.

Such discrimination can contribute to a significantly heightened risk for PTSD among individuals in the LGBTQI community compared to those who identify as heterosexual and cisgender.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT US

Iroquois Center for Human Development
(620) 723 - 2272

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Risk Factors (cont.)

Substance Use

Substance misuse or overuse, which may be used as a coping mechanism or method of self-medication, is a significant concern for members of this community. LGB adults are nearly twice as likely as heterosexual adults to experience a substance use disorder. Transgender individuals are almost four times as likely as cisgender individuals to experience a substance use disorder. Illicit drug use is significantly higher in high school-aged youth who identify as LGB or are unsure of their identity, compared to their heterosexual peers.

Homelessness

It is estimated that LGBTQI youth and young adults have a 120% higher risk of experiencing homelessness — often the result of family rejection or discrimination based on gender identity or sexual orientation. This risk is especially high among Black and Native American/Alaska Native LGBTQI youth. Many members of the LGBTQI community face the added challenge of finding homeless shelters that will accept them, and experience elevated rates of harassment and abuse in these spaces.

Suicide

Many people in this community struggle in silence — and face worse health outcomes as a result.

- The LGBTQI population is at a higher risk than the heterosexual, cisgender population for suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts.
- High school students who identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual are more than four times as likely to have attempted suicide compared to their heterosexual peers.
- 40% of transgender adults have attempted suicide in their lifetime, compared to less than 5% of the general U.S. population.

Inadequate Mental Health Care

The approach to sexual orientation and gender identity in mental health care often groups together anyone in the LGBTQI community, when these communities are considered at all. This method can be problematic as each sub-community faces unique challenges, rates of mental illness and experiences.

The LGBTQI community encompasses a wide range of individuals with separate and overlapping challenges regarding their mental health. Other identity factors including race and economic status can affect the quality of care they receive or their ability to access care.

Additionally, members of this community may face harassment or a lack of cultural competency from potential providers. These experiences can lead to a fear of disclosing sexual orientation and/or gender identity due to potential discrimination or provider bias.

Confronting these barriers and mental health symptoms with an LGBTQI-inclusive mental health provider can lead to better outcomes, and ultimately recovery.

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Resources

CenterLink LGBT Community Center Member Directory

<https://www.lgbtqcenters.org/LGBTCenters>

The American Psychological Association (APA) - Provides educational and support resources on a range of LGBTQ topics.

<https://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/resources/lgbt-health>

The Association of Gay and Lesbian Psychiatrists - Offers many resources for LGBT individuals experiencing mental health conditions and psychiatric professionals with LGBT clients.

<http://www.aglp.org/>

The LGBT National Help Center - Offers confidential peer support connections for LGBT youth, adults and seniors, including phone, text and online chat.

<http://www.glbtnationalhelpcenter.org/>

The National Center for Transgender Equality

Offers resources for transgender individuals, including information on the right to access health care.

<https://transequality.org/>

The Trevor Project - A support network for LGBTQ youth providing crisis intervention and suicide prevention, including a 24-hour text line (text "START" to 678678).

<https://www.thetrevorproject.org/>

LOOKING FOR LOCAL LGBTQIA+ RESOURCES NEAR YOU?

<https://www.lgbtnearme.org/>

LGBT One to One Chat

www.LGBThotline.org/Chat

LGBT National Coming Out Support Hotline

888-OUT-LGBT

(888-688-5428)

LGBTcomingOUT.org

LGBT National Hotline

888-843-4564

All Ages

GLBT National Hotline - 1-888-843-4564

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Source: National Institute of Mental Health



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Resources

LGBT National Youth Talkline
800-246-7743

LGBT National Senior Hotline
888-234-7243

Transgender Community
Trans Lifeline - 877-565-8860

LGBTQ+ Youth
TrevorLifeline - 1-866-488-7386

TrevorText - Text START to 678-678

The Steve Fund Crisis Textline* - Text STEVE to 741741

LGBTQ+ Adults
Lifeline* - 1-800-273-8255

Crisis Text Line* - Text HOME to 741741

*Not LGBTQ+ specific but LGBTQ+ inclusive

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