

Suicide & LGBTQA+ Communities

CHANGING THE NARRATIVE ON SUICIDE



Background

Current research consistently shows that LGBTQA+ people are disproportionately affected by self-harm, suicidal thoughts and attempts, when compared to our cisgender, heterosexual counterparts. This health inequality is often attributed to experiences of stigma, discrimination and harassment. As such, everyone, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, can play a role in collective action to contribute to a better climate for LGBTQA+ communities.

LGBTQA+ identities are not themselves risk factors for self-harm and suicide, but negative experiences that LGBTQA+ people have in their everyday lives may put them at risk. Examples of these can include harmful stigma; structural, systemic, and historical barriers in life domains such as work, housing and healthcare; and injustices associated with ongoing oppression, discrimination, societal exclusion, and public vilification (hate speech and crimes). Collectively, these factors contribute to numerous inequalities that contribute to poorer mental health outcomes and increased risk of intentional self-harm and suicide for LGBTQA+ people. Therefore, advocating for improvements in the wider social and political environments and access to basic human rights for LGBTQA+ people are a crucial foundation for suicide prevention efforts.

In many parts of the world, LGBTQA+ identities are not routinely captured in official census or mortality data. As such, it is not possible to estimate the true rate of self-harm and suicide in LGBTQA+ communities, and there is an urgent need for high quality, inclusive research into the needs and experiences of LGBTQA+ individuals globally. Although much of the available research comes from western countries, emerging research suggests this is also true for LGBTQA+ people in other, historically underrepresented, countries, particularly in parts of the world where LGBTQA+ identities continue to be criminalised.

Call to Action

Along with the World Health Organization, leading health and human rights organisations across the world recommend that urgent action is needed to address these risk factors. Collaboration across LGBTQA+ communities, academics, NGOs, activists, and public health educators is urgently needed. Such collaborations can further develop the evidence-base to better understand those risk factors contributing to poorer mental health among LGBTQA+ people, and to develop effective interventions that can reduce such harms. In sum, these collaborations can help ensure that LGBTQA+ people live full, thriving lives, wherever they may live, work or learn.

Key Points



LGBTQA+ people are disproportionately affected by suicidal thoughts and behaviours.

47.7%

Almost half of LGBTQ+ people (47.7%) had seriously thought about suicide in their lifetime, compared with just over one in seven heterosexual people (15.3%)

28.5%

More than one in four trans people (28.5%) had seriously thought about suicide in their lifetime, compared with one in six cisgender people (16.5%).



The contributors to this elevated risk are not inherent to LGBTQA+ identities but instead are associated with specific sets of social stressors and the increased exposure to adversity.

Australian Bureau of Statistics (2024), Mental health findings for LGBTQ+ Australians.

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How Can I Get Involved?

Support and advocate for LGBTQA+ people wherever and however you can. For example, encourage your co-workers and work organisation to seek out training that can assist in providing safe and inclusive environments for all LGBTQA+ people.

Take Action

If you do identify as being a member of an LGBTQA+ community:

- Find your connection points and ways to be involved in your local community.
- If it is safe to do so, utilize resources from NGOs in your country to learn how to advocate for LGBTQA+ inclusive laws and regulations at the local, regional, and national level
- Where safe and possible, support or volunteer for a local LGBTQA+ suicide prevention organization.

If you don't identify as being a member of an LGBTQA+ community:

- Learn how to become an active ally by educating yourself on LGBTQA+ experiences.
- Utilize resources from NGOs in your country to learn how to advocate for LGBTQA+ inclusive laws and regulations at the local, regional, and national level
- Speak with friends and family about the importance of acceptance and inclusion of the LGBTQA+ community.

If you are a researcher:

- Advocate for LGBTQA+ inclusive and affirming research practices. A few examples of how this might look include:
- Improving data collection practices on sex, gender identity and sexual orientation. Understand and follow best practice guidelines for collecting data on LGBTQA+ identities and experiences (regardless of whether your research is LGBTQA+ specific)
- Partner with LGBTQA+ communities and organisations to identify research gaps and priorities, and co-produce culturally responsive research.

Resources

- [ILGA-Europe](#)
- [The Trevor Project. 2024 US National Survey on the Mental Health of LGBTQ+ Young People](#)
- [LGBTQI+ Health Australia. Mental health and suicide prevention](#)
- [The Trevor Project. Guide to Being an Ally to Transgender and Nonbinary young people](#)
- [Suicide Prevention Toolkit: surviving and thriving as an LGBTQ+ person](#)

