

LGBTQIA+ communities and mental health

A 2020 Gallup poll estimates that 5.6 percent of the population, more than 18 million Americans, identify as LGBTQIA+.¹ The LGBTQIA+ community is comprised of individuals from all socioeconomic, racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds, with diverse gender and sexual identities.

LGBTQIA+ individuals are more likely than the heterosexual population to experience unemployment, poverty and violence because of their sexual identity or gender orientation. Such experiences are known to put people at increased risk for developing a mental health disorder. LGBTQIA+ is not a mental illness; however, LGBTQIA+ adults are twice as likely as heterosexual men and women to experience a mental health disorder in their lifetime.² Bisexual and transgender individuals have the highest rates of mental health issues within the LGBTQIA+ population. Studies show that a high percentage of transgender people have considered or attempted suicide. Unfortunately, fear of discrimination and the stigma surrounding mental illnesses prevent many LGBTQIA+ people from getting the help they need.

LGBTQIA+ Youth

Even before the disruption and adversity caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, surveys showed that youth mental health was suffering. In the 2021 Surgeon General's report, the proportion of high school students reporting persistent feelings of sadness and hopelessness increased by 40 percent.³ Suicidal ideation also increased, as did youth visits to emergency departments for depression, anxiety and other mental health symptoms.

Strong social connections are essential for positive mental health and high self-esteem, but LGBTQIA+ youth may face lack of support from family and friends when coming out, or outright rejection. Bullying, harassment and discrimination also contribute to high rates of depression and anxiety among these young people. LGBTQIA+ adolescents are especially at risk for mental health conditions and are six times more likely to experience symptoms of depression than heterosexual teens. They are also four times more likely to think about suicide, attempt suicide or harm themselves.⁴

Getting Help

If mental health issues are impacting your quality of life or the quality of life of someone you know who identifies as LGBTQIA+, confidential help is available through your program. In addition, a list of community resources is available on the member website.

1. news.gallup.com/poll/329708/lgbt-identification-rises-latest-estimate.aspx

2. psychiatry.org/psychiatrists/cultural-competency/education/lgbtq-patients

3. hhs.gov/sites/default/files/surgeon-general-youth-mental-health-advisory.pdf

4. adaa.org/find-help/by-demographics/lgbtq

Contact your Employee Assistance Program at 1-800-327-0638 (TTY 711) or visit Member.MagellanHealthcare.com to get started.

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