

THE **TREVOR** PROJECT

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**NATIONAL**

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**SURVEY**

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**ON**

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**LGBTQ**

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**YOUTH**

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**MENTAL**

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**HEALTH**

**2021**

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## INTRODUCTION

The past year has been incredibly difficult for so many, but we also know that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning (LGBTQ) youth have faced unique challenges. The Trevor Project's 2021 National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health sheds light on many of these challenges by capturing the experiences of nearly 35,000 LGBTQ youth ages 13–24 across the United States.

Our third annual survey provides brand new data on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, mental health care disparities, discrimination, food insecurity, conversion therapy, and suicide — in addition to the benefits of LGBTQ-affirming spaces and respecting the pronouns of transgender and nonbinary youth.

**We are also proud that this sample is our most diverse yet, with 45% being LGBTQ youth of color and 38% being transgender or nonbinary.**

Among some of the key findings of the survey:

- **42% of LGBTQ youth** seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year, including **more than half of transgender and nonbinary youth**.
- **12% of white youth** attempted suicide compared to **31% of Native/Indigenous youth, 21% of Black youth, 21% of multiracial youth, 18% of Latinx youth, and 12% of Asian/Pacific Islander youth**.
- **94% of LGBTQ youth** reported that recent politics negatively impacted their mental health.
- **More than 80% of LGBTQ youth** stated that COVID-19 made their living situation more stressful — and **only 1 in 3 LGBTQ youth** found their home to be LGBTQ-affirming.
- **70% of LGBTQ youth** stated that their mental health was “poor” most of the time or always during COVID-19.

- **48% of LGBTQ youth** reported they wanted counseling from a mental health professional but were unable to receive it in the past year.
- **30% of LGBTQ youth** experienced food insecurity in the past month, including half of all Native/Indigenous LGBTQ youth.
- **75% of LGBTQ youth** reported that they had experienced discrimination based on their sexual orientation or gender identity at least once in their lifetime.
- **Half of all LGBTQ youth of color** reported discrimination based on their race/ethnicity in the past year, including **67% of Black LGBTQ youth and 60% of Asian/Pacific Islander LGBTQ youth**.
- **13% of LGBTQ youth** reported being subjected to conversion therapy, with **83% reporting** it occurred when they were under age 18.
- **Transgender and nonbinary youth** who reported having **pronouns respected** by all of the people they lived with attempted suicide at half the rate of those who did not have their pronouns respected by anyone with whom they lived.
- **Transgender and nonbinary youth** who were able to change their name and/or gender marker on **legal documents**, such as driver's licenses and birth certificates, reported **lower rates** of attempting suicide.
- **LGBTQ youth who had access to spaces** that affirmed their sexual orientation and gender identity reported **lower rates** of attempting suicide.
- **An overwhelming majority of LGBTQ youth** said that social media has both positive (**96%**) and negative (**88%**) impacts on their mental health and well-being.

This data underscores many of the serious challenges experienced by LGBTQ youth over the last year and should serve as an urgent call to action. But it also speaks to the diversity and resiliency of LGBTQ youth and provides valuable insights into their everyday sources of strength and positivity.

We hope these findings will be used by fellow researchers, policymakers, and other youth-serving organizations to better support LGBTQ youth across the country and around the globe.

Over the next year, The Trevor Project will release new data from this national survey sample in the form of monthly research briefs and quarterly reports related to LGBTQ youth mental health and suicide prevention. Through our research, education, advocacy, and direct services, we strive to amplify the experiences of LGBTQ youth and to facilitate the implementation of comprehensive, intersectional policy solutions.

And as always, we will continue to do all we can to remind LGBTQ youth that they deserve love and support and the ability to live their lives without fear, discrimination, and violence. If you are an LGBTQ young person, please know that you are never alone and The Trevor Project is here to support you 24/7.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Amit Paley'.

**Amit Paley**  
CEO & Executive Director  
The Trevor Project

## SUICIDE & MENTAL HEALTH

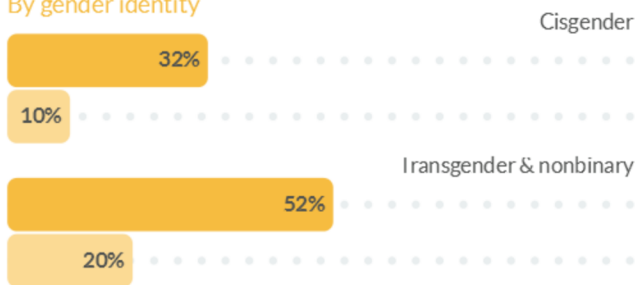
**42% of LGBTQ youth** seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year, including **more than half of transgender and nonbinary youth**.

**12% of white youth** attempted suicide compared to **31% of Native/Indigenous youth**, **21% of Black youth**, **21% of multiracial youth**, **18% of Latinx youth**, and **12% of Asian/Pacific Islander youth**.

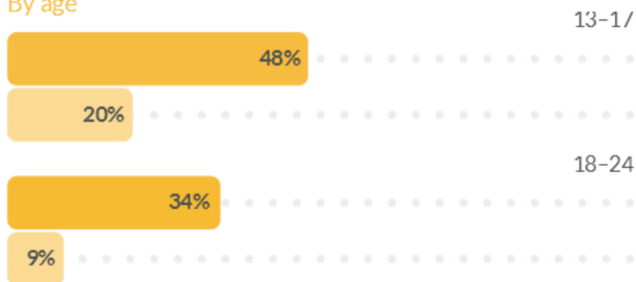
LGBTQ youth who:

● Considered suicide ● Attempted suicide

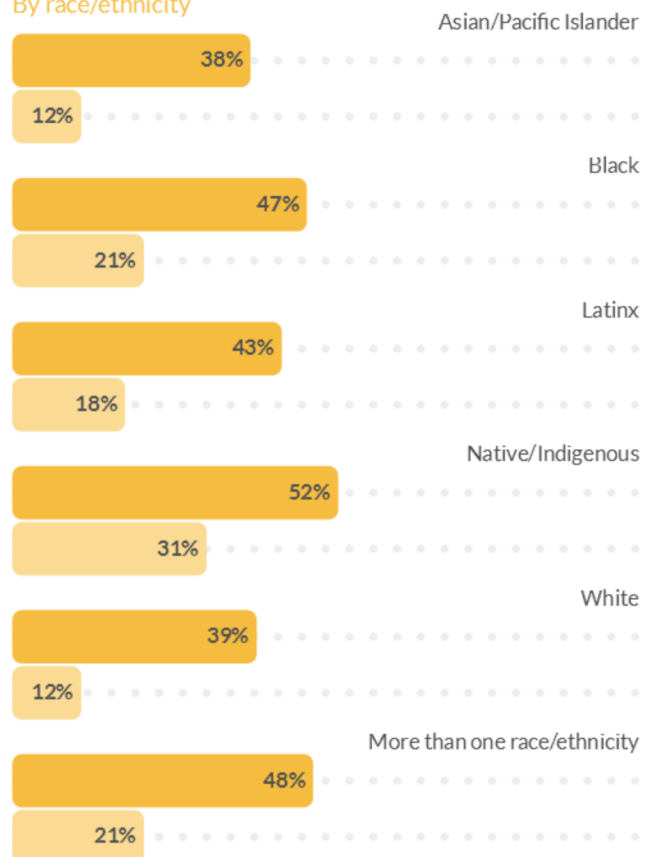
By gender identity



By age



By race/ethnicity





## SUICIDE & MENTAL HEALTH

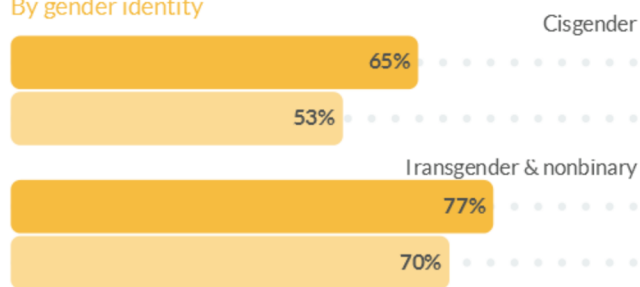
**72% of LGBTQ youth** reported symptoms of generalized anxiety disorder in the past two weeks, including **more than 3 in 4 transgender and nonbinary youth.**

**62% of LGBTQ youth** reported symptoms of major depressive disorder in the past two weeks, including **more than 2 in 3 of transgender and nonbinary youth.**

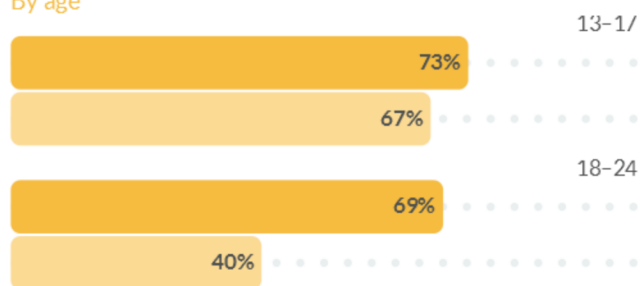
LGBTQ youth who experienced symptoms of:

● Generalized anxiety disorder ● Major depressive disorder

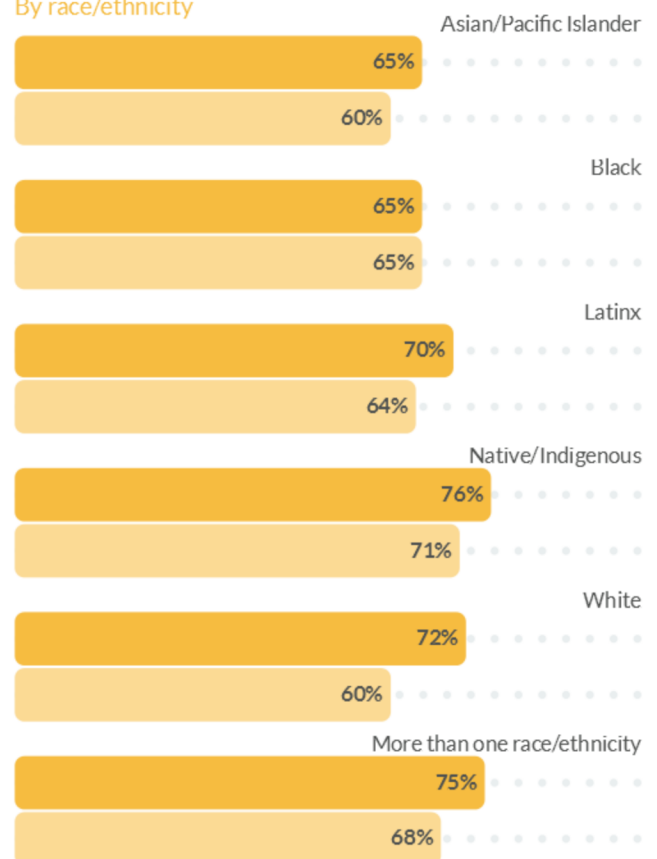
By gender identity



By age

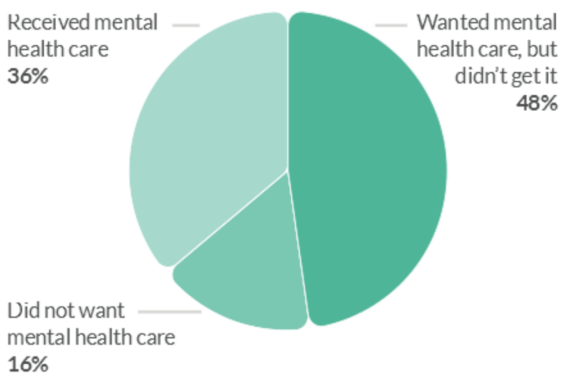


By race/ethnicity



## FINDING SUPPORT: MENTAL HEALTHCARE

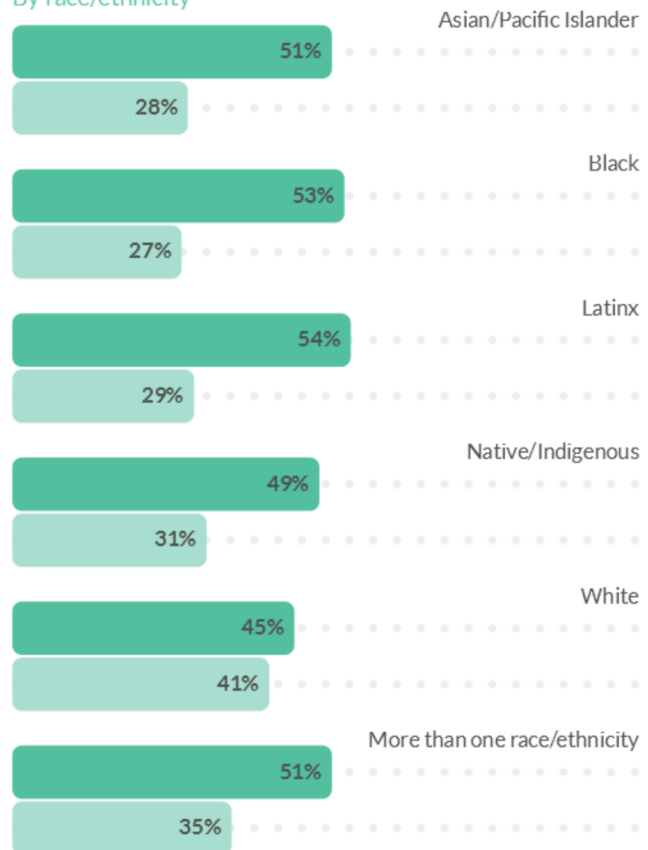
In the past year, **nearly half of LGBTQ youth** have wanted counseling from a mental health professional, but did not receive it.



LGBTQ youth who wanted counseling from a mental health professional in the past year:

- Wanted mental health care, but didn't get it
- Received mental health care

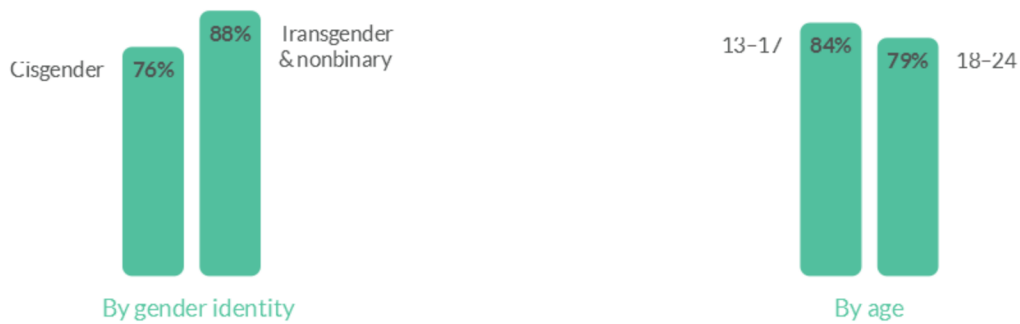
### By race/ethnicity



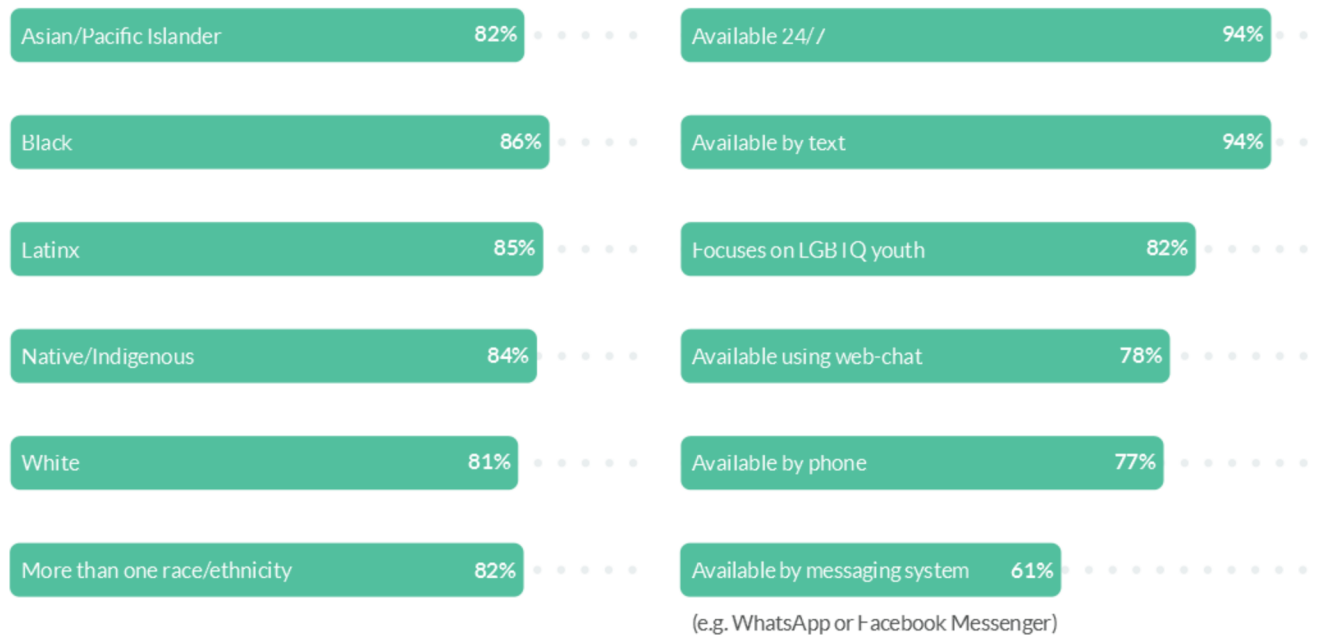
## FINDING SUPPORT: CRISIS SERVICES

**More than 80% of LGBTQ youth of all races/ethnicities** said it was important that a crisis line include a focus on LGBTQ youth, should they need it.

LGBTQ youth who say a focus on LGBTQ youth would be important if they needed to use a crisis line:



By race/ethnicity

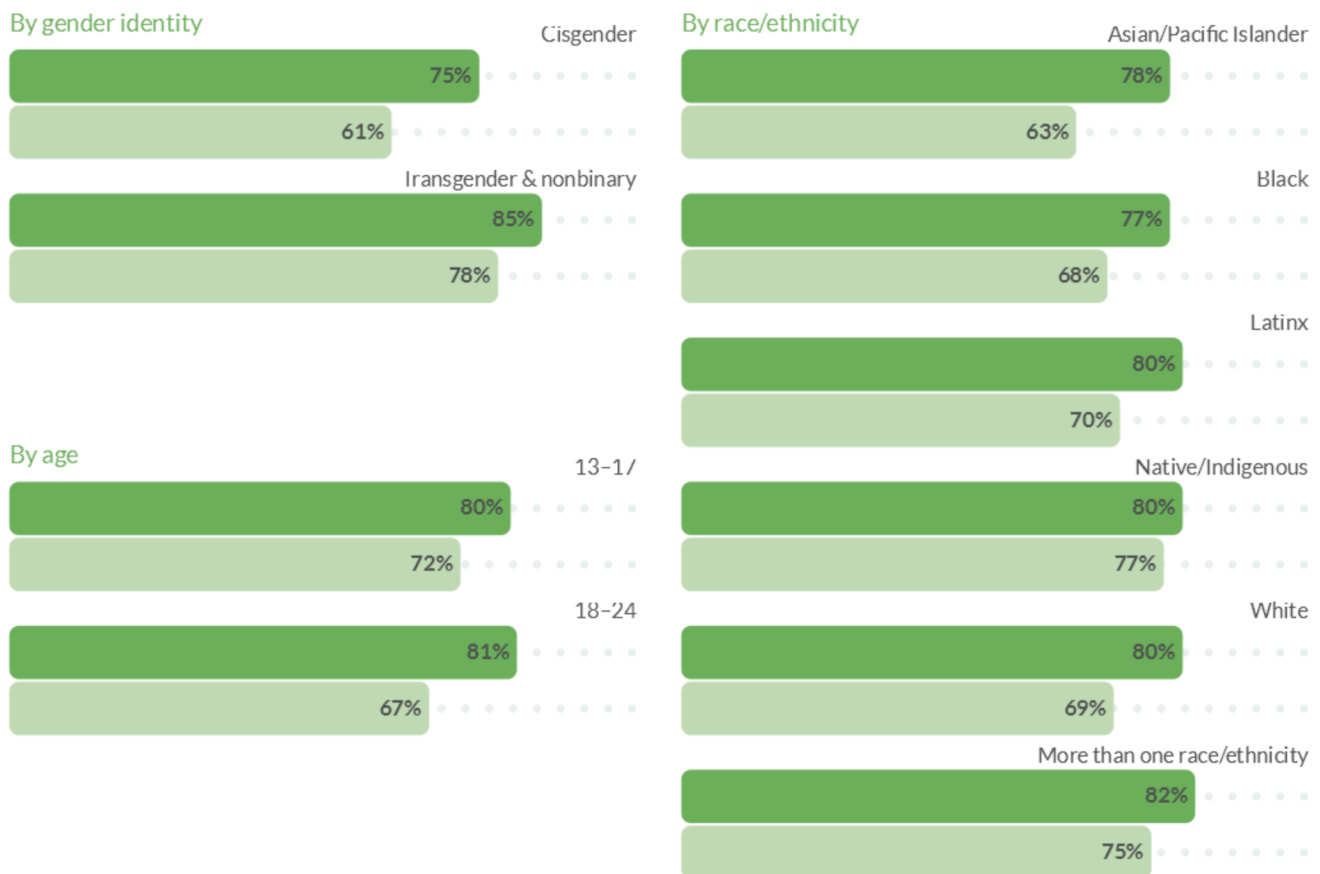


## COVID-19

**70% of LGBTQ youth** stated that their mental health was “poor” most of the time or always during COVID-19.

LGBTQ youth who said:

- COVID-19 negatively impacted their mental health
- Their mental health was “poor” most of the time or always during COVID-19



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## COVID-19

**Nearly half of LGBTQ youth** said that COVID-19 impacted their ability to express their sexual orientation.

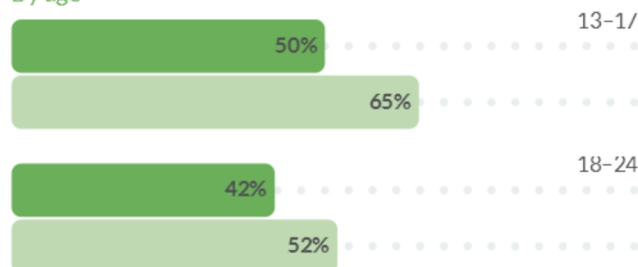
**Nearly 60% of transgender and nonbinary youth** said that COVID-19 impacted their ability to express their gender identity.

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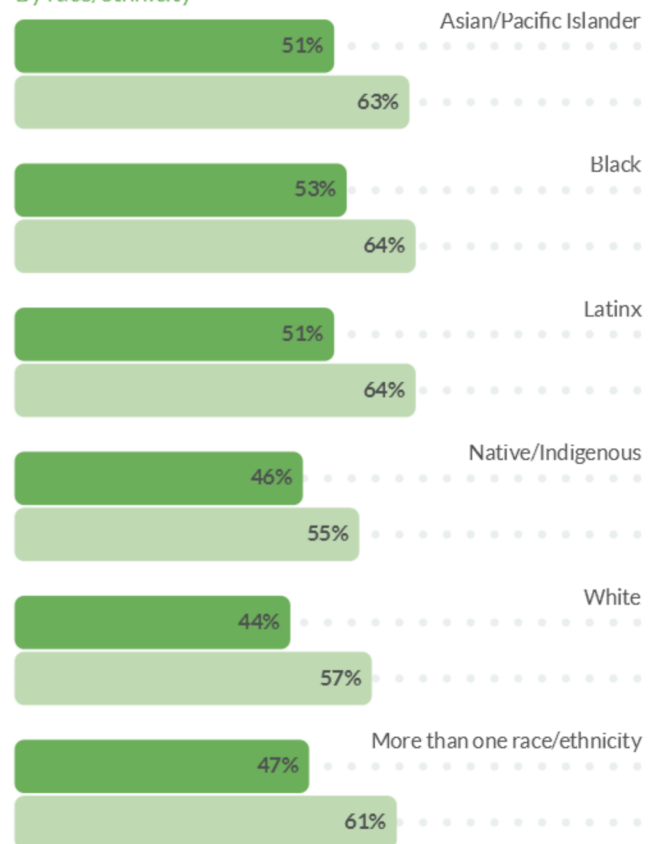
LGBTQ youth who said COVID-19 impacted their ability to express their:

● Sexual orientation ● Gender identity

By age



By race/ethnicity



## COVID-19

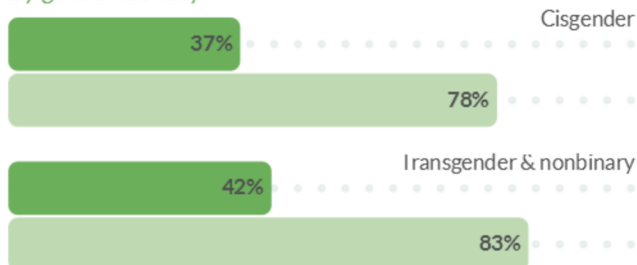
**Nearly 40% of LGBTQ youth who had a job reported that they lost it during COVID-19.**

**More than 80% of LGBTQ youth stated that COVID-19 made their living situation more stressful.**

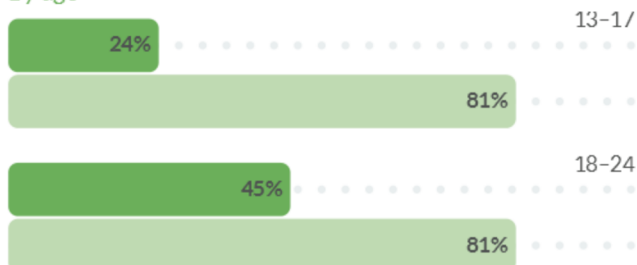
LGBTQ youth who, due to COVID-19:

● Lost a job (if they had one) ● Experienced a more stressful living situation

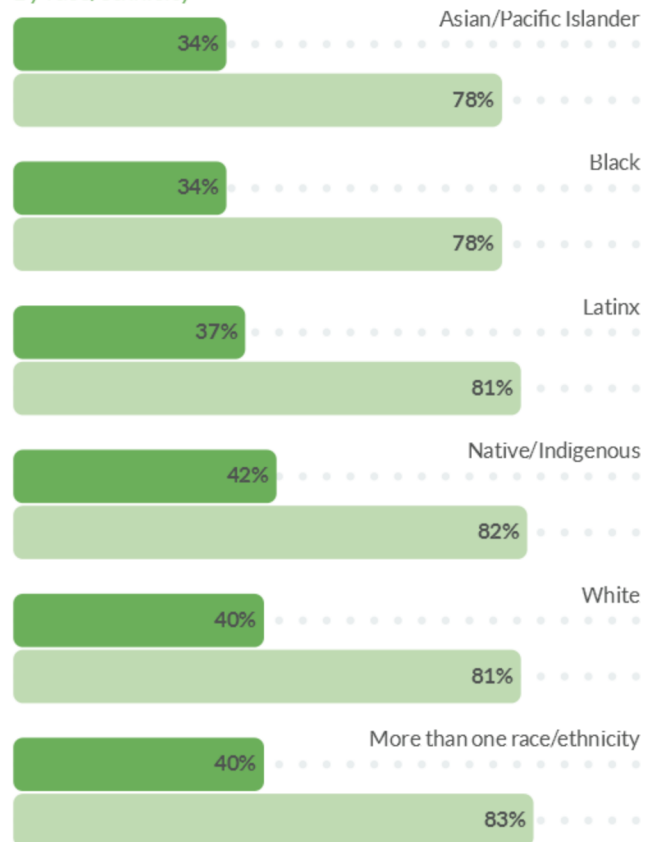
By gender identity



By age



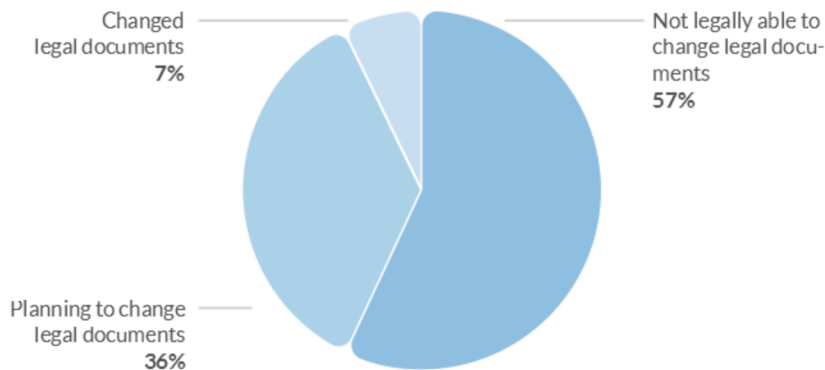
By race/ethnicity



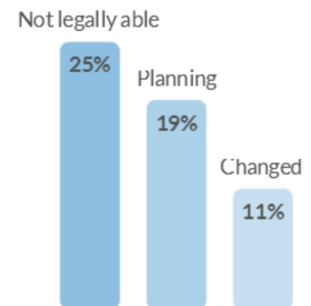
## SUPPORTING TRANSGENDER & NONBINARY YOUTH

Affirming **transgender and nonbinary youth** by respecting their **pronouns** and allowing them to change **legal documents** is associated with lower rates of attempting suicide.

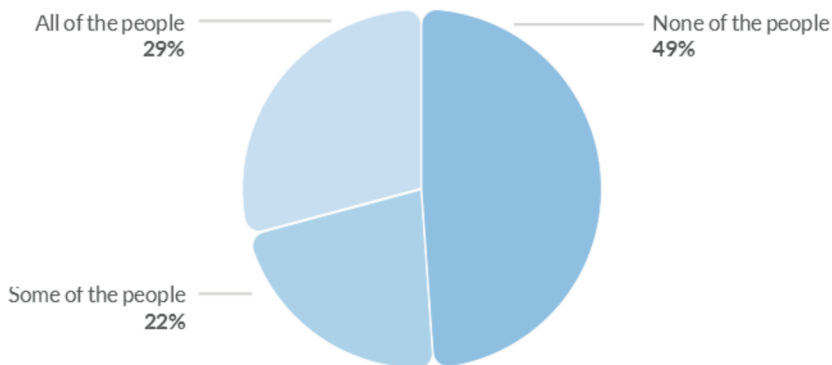
Transgender & nonbinary youth who wanted to change their legal documents, such as driver's licenses and birth certificates:



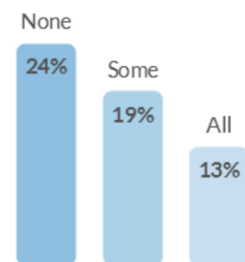
Transgender & nonbinary youth who attempted suicide in the past year, comparison across ability to change legal documents:



If you live with other people, how many of them respect your pronouns?



Transgender & nonbinary youth who attempted suicide in the past year, comparison across the number of people they live with who respected their pronouns:



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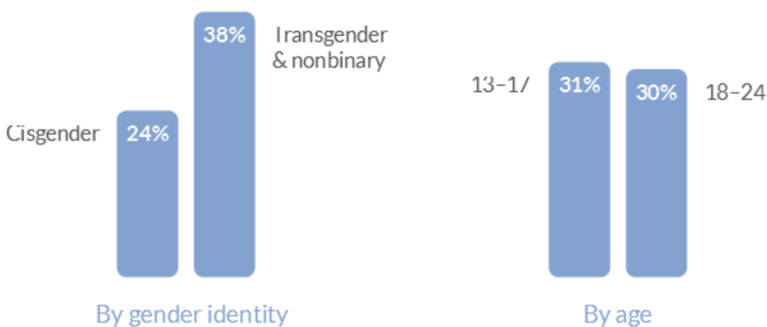
## FOOD INSECURITY

**30% of LGBTQ youth** experienced food insecurity in the past month, including **half of all Native/Indigenous LGBTQ youth**.

**27% of LGBTQ youth** said they worried that food at home would run out in the last month before they or their family had money to buy more.

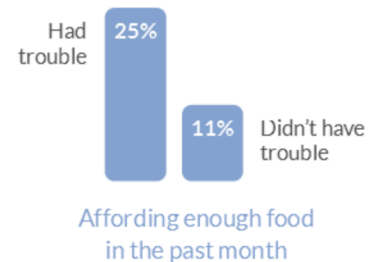
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LGBTQ youth who had trouble affording enough food in the past month:

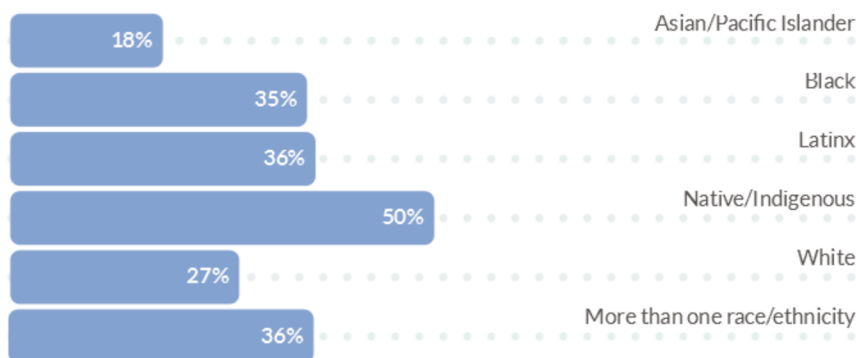


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LGBTQ youth who attempted suicide in the past year, comparison across experiences of food insecurity:



By race/ethnicity



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**19% of LGBTQ youth** said that in the last month, they were hungry but didn't eat because they or their family didn't have enough food.



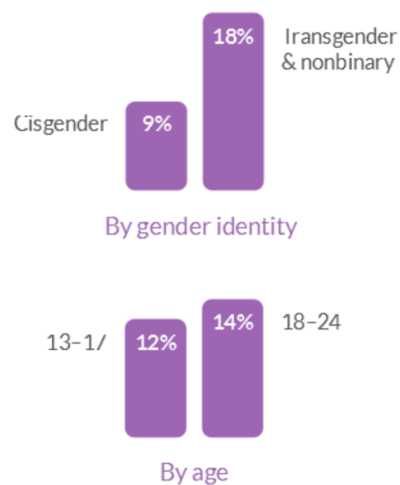
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## CONVERSION THERAPY

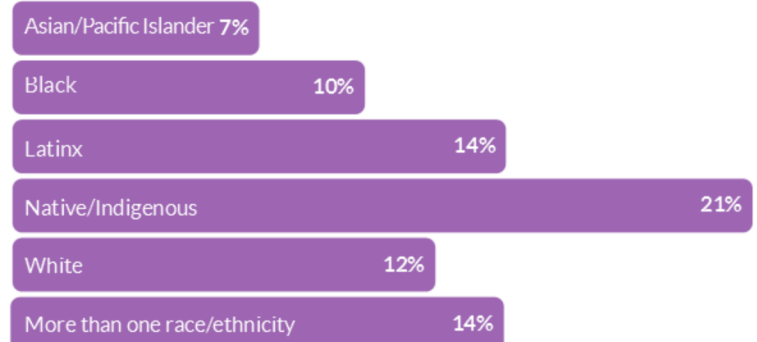
**LGBTQ youth who were subjected to conversion therapy reported more than twice the rate of attempting suicide in the past year compared to those who were not.**

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LGBTQ youth who reported being subjected to conversion therapy:

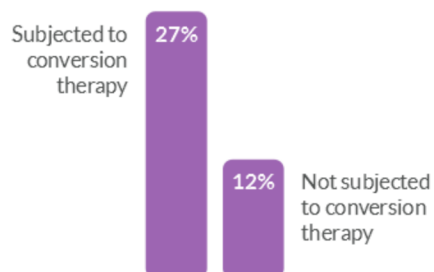


By race/ethnicity



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LGBTQ youth who attempted suicide in the past year, comparison across those subjected to conversion therapy:



**Transgender and nonbinary youth** reported being subjected to conversion therapy at **twice the rate** of cisgender LGBTQ youth.

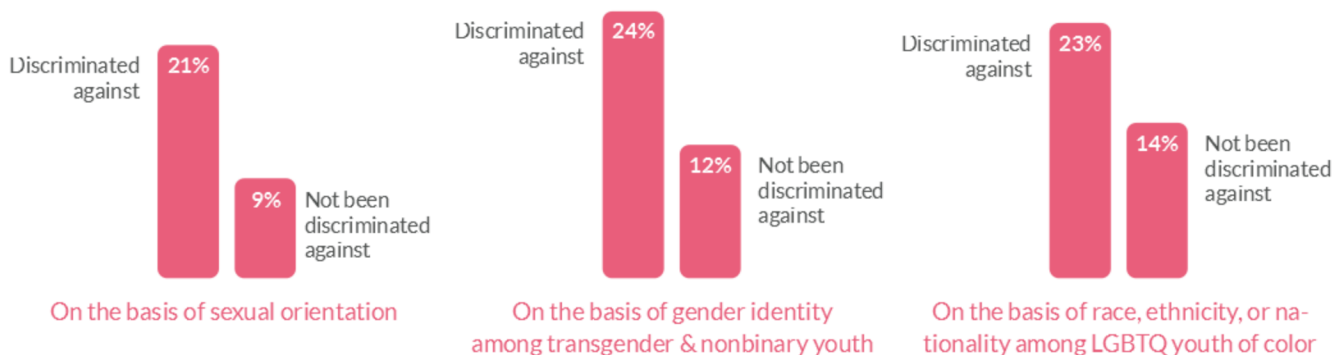
**LGBTQ youth who reported being subjected to conversion therapy** were an average of 15 years old at the time, with **83% of LGBTQ youth** reporting that it occurred when they were younger than 18.

## DISCRIMINATION

**75% of LGBTQ youth** reported that they had experienced discrimination based on their sexual orientation or gender identity at least once in their lifetime.

**More than half of LGBTQ youth** reporting that they had experienced discrimination based on their sexual orientation or gender identity in the past year.

LGBTQ youth who attempted suicide, comparison across those who have been discriminated against in the past year:



LGBTQ youth who attempted suicide in the past year, comparison across the number of types of discrimination experienced:

By number of types

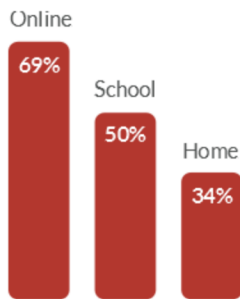


**Half of LGBTQ youth of color** reported discrimination based on their race/ethnicity in the past year, including **67% of Black LGBTQ youth** and **60% of Asian/Pacific Islander LGBTQ youth**.

## AFFIRMING SPACES

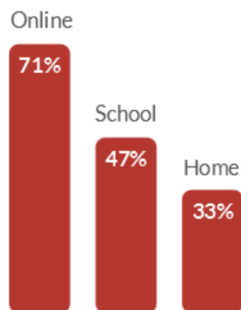
# Only 1 in 3 LGBTQ youth found their home to be LGBTQ-affirming.

Where LGBTQ youth access LGBTQ-affirming spaces:



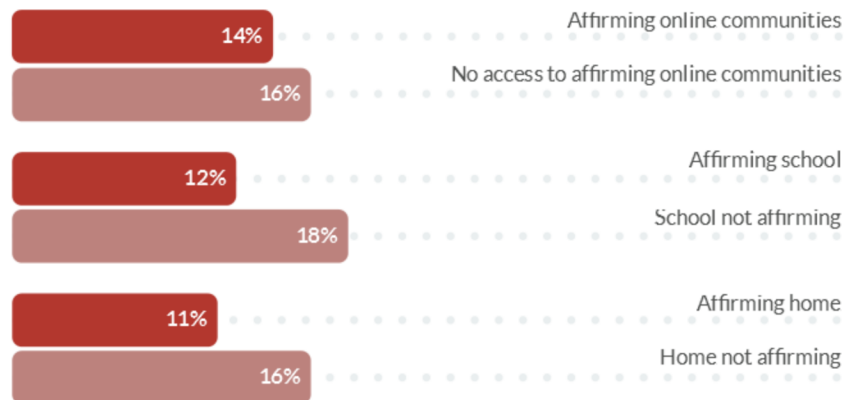
**LGBTQ youth who had access to spaces that affirmed their sexual orientation and gender identity reported lower rates of attempting suicide than those who did not.**

Where transgender and nonbinary youth access gender-affirming spaces:



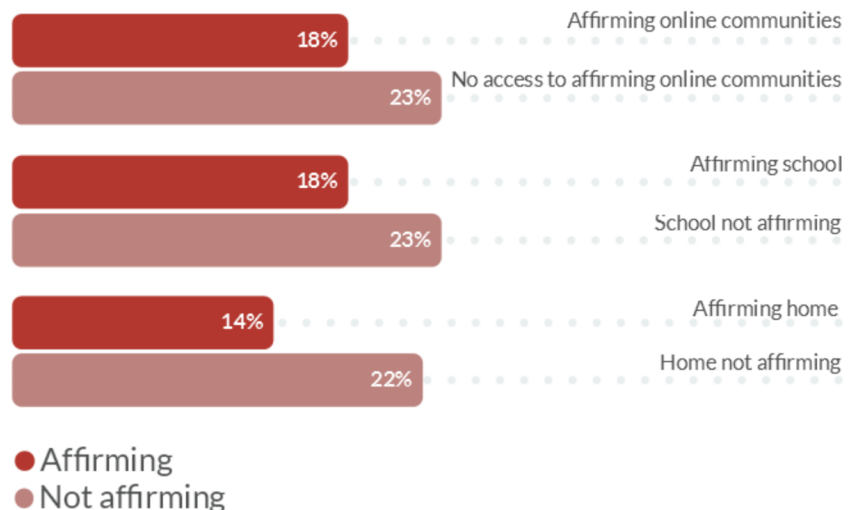
**Most LGBTQ youth had access to online spaces that affirmed their sexual orientation and gender identity.**

LGBTQ youth who attempted suicide in the past year, comparison across access to LGBTQ-affirming spaces:



**Social media has both positive and negative impacts on LGBTQ youth. 96% of LGBTQ youth said social media positively impacted their well-being, and 88% of LGBTQ youth said it negatively impacted their well-being.**

Transgender & nonbinary youth who attempted suicide in the past year, comparison across access to gender-affirming spaces:



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## FINDING JOY

Although LGBTQ youth described a number of challenges in their lives, they also listed hundreds of ways they find joy and strength, including:

Affirming parents • Anime • Chosen family  
Educational opportunities • Faith & spirituality  
Feeling seen • Finding community online  
Having a pet • Having a supportive partner  
Learning more about LGBTQ history  
LGBTQ support at school • Moving away • Music  
Others who identify in similar ways  
Reading & writing • Representation in media  
Seeing others take pride in being LGBTQ  
Seeing rainbow flags & stickers in public  
Supportive friends • Theater • Therapy  
Unapologetic embracing of self • Video games  
Watching LGBTQ people on TikTok & YouTube  
Working out

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## RESEARCH

The mission of The Trevor Project's Research Department is to **produce and use innovative research** that brings new knowledge and clinical implications to the field of suicidology and LGBTQ youth mental health.

### To address this mission we:

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#### Advance Scientific Inquiry

Providing empirical data to better understand the lives of LGBTQ youth and suicidality including risk factors, protective factors, and outcomes.

- The Trevor Project will be a leading source of scientific information on the needs and strengths of LGBTQ youth
- The Trevor Project will collaborate with key national and international research teams and agencies to improve the lives of LGBTQ youth

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#### Support The Trevor Project's Life-Saving Work

Using internal and external data and research findings to advance The Trevor Project's crisis services and peer support programs as well as advocacy and education initiatives.

- The Trevor Project's advocacy and training activities will be supported by data collected directly by The Trevor Project as well as evidence gathered from the broader research literature
- The Trevor Project will embody an evidence-informed culture in which all staff are supported and recognized in the use of research evidence

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#### Inform Public Knowledge

Ensuring our research and evaluation findings are applicable and widely communicated to the broader public including LGBTQ youth-serving agencies and mental health organizations.

- The Trevor Project will serve as a national model on how to integrate the best research evidence into its practices, programs, and policies
- The Trevor Project will be a leading resource on terminology related to LGBTQ youth

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#### Recommended Citation

The Trevor Project. (2021).  
2021 National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health.  
West Hollywood, California: The Trevor Project.

For additional information please contact:  
Research@TheTrevorProject.org

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## METHODOLOGY

# The content and methodology for The Trevor Project's 2021 National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health were approved by an independent Institutional Review Board.

A quantitative cross-sectional design was used to collect data through an online survey platform between October 12, 2020 and December 31, 2020. A sample of individuals ages 13–24 who resided in the United States was recruited via targeted ads on social media. No recruitment was conducted via The Trevor Project website or any of The Trevor Project's social media sites. Respondents were defined as being LGBTQ if they identified with a sexual orientation other than straight/heterosexual, a gender identity other than cisgender, or both. In order to ensure representativeness of the sample, targeted recruitment was conducted to ensure adequate sample sizes with respect to geography, gender identity, and race/ethnicity. Qualified respondents completed a secure online questionnaire that included a maximum of 142 questions. Questions on considering and attempting suicide in the past 12 months were taken from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Youth Risk Behavior Survey to allow for comparisons to their nationally representative sample. Each question related to mental health and suicide was preceded by a message stating,

**"If at any time you need to talk to someone about your mental health or thoughts of suicide, please call The Trevor Project at 1-866-488-7386."**

Participation was voluntary and informed consent was obtained. No names or personal details were included to ensure anonymity. A total of 82,147 youth from unique IP addresses consented to complete the survey. Eligible youth included those between the ages of 13–24 who identified as LGBTQ and resided in the U.S.

Additionally, in order to develop a sample that more closely approximated the race and ethnicity composition of the United States, quota limits were set for race/ethnicity categories. After providing demographic information — including their age, state, sex assigned at birth, gender identity, sexual orientation, and race/ethnicity — 2,158 youth were screened out based on ages outside of the sample range and residency outside of the United States. Additionally, 27,588 youth were screened out of the survey due to quotas for race/ethnicity already being met, resulting in an eligible sample of 54,559 respondents. A validity check was placed midway through the survey which asked participants to select "agree" from a five-point statement with answers ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." Youth who did not select "agree" (n=804) or who did not reach the validity question in the mid-point of the survey (18,365) were removed from the analytic sample. More detailed screening of response consistency and quality resulted in the removal of an additional 631 respondents.

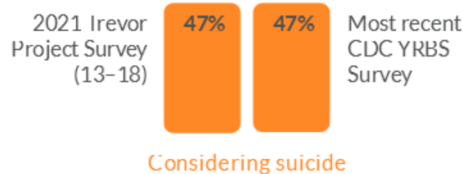
**The final analytic sample consisted of 34,759 LGBTQ youth between the ages of 13–24 residing in the United States who provided valid and reliable responses to survey questions.**

This report uses "transgender and nonbinary" as an umbrella term to encompass non-cisgender youth, which includes young people who identify as transgender and nonbinary as well as other labels outside of the cisgender binary, including genderqueer, agender, genderfluid, gender neutral, bigender, androgynous, and gender non-conforming, among others.



## METHODOLOGY

### Comparability to 2019 Youth Risk Behavior Survey by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):



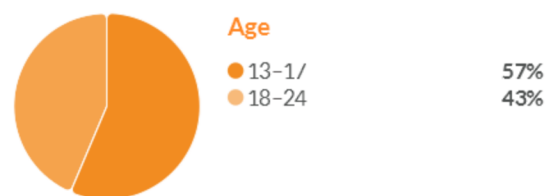
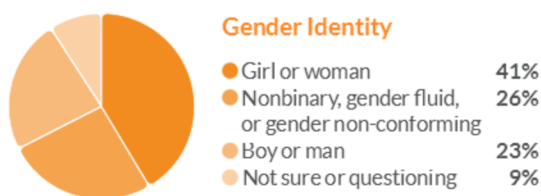
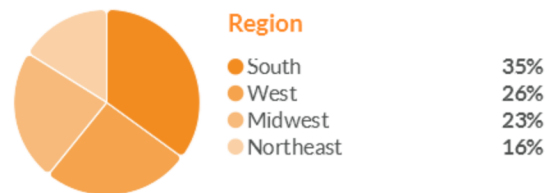
In order to better understand how our sample compares to a national probabilistic sample, we included questions regarding considering and attempting suicide that were identical to those used by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in their Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBS).

Analyses were conducted to compare rates of seriously considering suicide and attempting suicide in the past 12 months among youth ages 13-18 in our sample to the 2019 YRBS sample of lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) high school students.

YRBS prevalence rates among LGB youth for seriously considering suicide (4%) were comparable to rates among the same age range in our sample (4%).

Additionally, 23% of LGB youth in the 2019 YRBS reported a suicide attempt in the past 12 months compared to 19% in our sample of youth ages 13-18.

Our analytical sample has representation from over 7,500 Latinx LGB IQ youth, over 3,700 Asian/Pacific Islander LGB IQ youth, over 3,400 Black LGB IQ youth, and over 1,700 Native/Indigenous LGB IQ youth who reported their race/ethnicity either exclusively or as part of a multiracial identity.



# The Trevor Project is the world's largest suicide prevention and crisis intervention organization for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer & questioning young people.

## Need Help? We are here for you 24/7

For over 20 years, we have worked to save young lives by providing support through our free and confidential crisis services programs, including TrevorLifeline, TrevorChat, and Trevor text. We also run TrevorSpace, the world's largest safe space social networking site for LGBTQ youth, and operate innovative advocacy, research, and education programs across the country.



### Crisis services.

Direct suicide prevention and crisis intervention services to support LGBTQ youth 24/7 via phone, text, and chat



### Peer support.

The world's largest safe space social networking community for LGBTQ youth

## TheTrevorProject.org

- @TrevorProject
- @TheTrevorProject
- @TrevorProject



### Research.

Evaluations and external research that support The Trevor Project in significantly improving its services while maintaining preeminence in scientific inquiry



### Advocacy.

Advocacy at the federal, state, and local levels to fight for policies and laws that protect LGBTQ youth



### Education and public awareness.

Programs, trainings, and content promoting awareness around issues and policies relevant to LGBTQ youth and the adults who support them