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THE STATE OF MENTAL HEALTH IN LGBTQ COMMUNITIES OF COLOR

Disclaimer: This resource discusses suicide and other sensitive content. If you or someone you know is in suicidal crisis or emotional distress, call the [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](https://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/) at 1-800-273-8255.

LGBTQ people of color experience alarmingly high rates of mental health challenges. It disrupts their daily lives and can be life-threatening, especially for children and youth. Too often, false narratives attempt to blame LGBTQ people and people of color alike for their own mental health challenges. The truth is that mental health challenges are largely due to stigma, discrimination and bias in all of its forms. For LGBTQ people of color, this compounds with decades of harm the medical community has inflicted on them and the overarching distrust it has created among communities of color. LGBTQ people of color also face gaps in receiving adequate mental health care. Significant gaps in health insurance coverage, economic injustice, discrimination, substance use, bias, stigma and violence all interact to worsen the mental health crisis facing LGBTQ people of color today, and often do so at levels higher than the LGBTQ community broadly.

MENTAL HEALTH IN LGBTQ ADULTS OF COLOR

HRC Foundation analyzed data from the most recent [Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System](https://www.brfss.gov/) (BRFSS) and observed that:

- + Over a majority (**54%**) of LGBTQ adults of color are battling poor mental health today.
- + Transgender adults of color are even more likely (**61%**) to face these struggles in their daily lives.



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- + Furthermore, one in five LGBTQ adults say they have sustained periods of time in which they are unable to do usual activities, such as self-care, work or recreation, compared to **15%** of non-LGBTQ adults.
- + Despite high rates of poor mental health, only **29%** of LGBTQ adults of color say they have been diagnosed with a depressive order from a provider, compared to **39%** of the LGBTQ adults broadly.
- + Research from the Center for American Progress shows that people of color systematically receive inadequate health care, which may explain why too few LGBTQ people of color receive diagnoses and the care they need.

MENTAL HEALTH IN LGBTQ YOUTH OF COLOR

In 2018, HRC Foundation partnered with the University of Connecticut and released a study of LGBTQ youth in the United States.

- + LGBTQ youth of color reported that they usually felt...
 - Depressed (**79%**)
 - Hopeless or worthless (**73%**)
 - Nervous or anxious (**82%**).
- + Only **11%** of LGBTQ youth of color in the study felt their racial or ethnic group is regarded positively in the U.S.
 - This was shared by only **4%** of Black youth and **5%** of Latinx youth
- + **58%** of youth of color think about racism often or every single day
 - This was shared by **62%** of Asian or Pacific Islander youth
- + **82%** of respondents experienced racism-related stress in their lifetime
- + Three in four LGBTQ youth of color experienced varied microaggressions — ranging from having to educate white LGBTQ people about race issues to being misunderstood by people within their own racial or ethnic community
- + A previous analysis by HRC Foundation shows that LGBTQ highschoolers of color are more likely to attempt suicide (**27%**) compared to LGBTQ highschoolers (**22%**) and non-LGBTQ highschoolers (**5%**) broadly.
- + Only **35%** of LGBTQ youth of color receive counseling.



ADDITIONAL BARRIERS IMPACTING MENTAL HEALTH IN LGBTQ PEOPLE OF COLOR

- + HRC Foundation observed in BRFSS that **28%** of LGBTQ adults of color currently have no health insurance coverage and **26%** of have needed to see a doctor but could not because of costs.
- + Poverty rates are also highest among LGBTQ people of color compared to non-LGBTQ people and white LGBTQ people. Williams Institute estimates suggest that roughly **3 in 10** LGBTQ people of color live in poverty as well as **4 in 10** transgender people of color.
- + Nearly one in five (**17%**) of LGBTQ youth of color usually sleep somewhere other than the home of a parent or guardian, compared to **3%** of non-LGBTQ youth.



Reporting by the FBI on hate crimes in the United States for the year 2019 shows that sexual orientation motivated nearly **17%** of hate crimes, making it the third largest category after race and religion. The report also shows an uptick in gender identity based hate crimes, which rose by **23%** from 2018.



Racially-motivated crime remains the most common hate crime, with nearly half of race-based hate crimes targeting Black people. For the fourth year in a row, there was a significant uptick in hate crimes targeting the Latinx community, increasing **9 points** from last year.

If you or someone you know are in need of help or assistance, contact The Trevor Project, which runs phone and text chat support lines specifically for LGBTQ youth, or other similar programs committed to providing LGBTQ people with mental health support. You can also take this confidential, online mental health screening test courtesy of our partners at Mental Health America.



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OTHER RESOURCES

[Coming Out Resources](#)

[Coming Out to Your Doctor](#)

[Know Your Healthcare Rights](#)

Methodology for BRFSS Analysis

HRC Foundation extracted data from the combined landline and cell phone database to estimate mental health prevalence and other rates. Data on sexual orientation and gender identity was taken from 28 states across contiguous U.S. as well as Alaska, Hawaii and Guam (31 total sites). Weighting (_LLCPWT) was used, as outlined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, to ensure national representation and generalizability of results.