

Risk and Protective Factors Among LGBTQ+ High School Students in Maine

Presented by

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BACKGROUND: *Why important?*



- **LGBTQ+ students experience health disparities compared to non-LGBTQ+ peers:**
 - Violence victimization
 - Substance use
 - Suicide risk
 - Sexual risk
- **Differences linked to social disadvantage, such as a history of exclusion or discrimination**
- **Historical lack of data contributes to invisibility and stigma**
- **Population estimates and identified health disparities essential for advocacy**

Background: MIYHS

- **Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey (MIYHS)**
 - Biennial health survey of Maine high school students
 - All high schools in Maine invited to participate
 - 4 versions of survey (A,B,C,D; Version C = Maine YRBS)
 - All data are weighted

BACKGROUND

Survey Question – Sexual Orientation (SO)

- Sexual orientation question revised in 2021 to include more inclusive answer options

2009 - 2019 Survey Question:



Which of the following best describes you?

- A. Heterosexual (straight)
- B. Gay or lesbian
- C. Bisexual
- D. Not sure

2021 & 2023 Survey Question:

Which of the following best describes you?

- A. Heterosexual (straight)
- B. Gay or lesbian
- C. Bisexual
- D. I describe my sexual identity some other way
- E. I am not sure about my sexual identity (questioning)
- F. I do not know what this question is asking

BACKGROUND

Survey Question – Gender Identity (GI)

- 2017: 10 states (CO, DE, HI, ME, MD, MA, MI, RI, VT, WI) and 9 large urban districts (Boston, Broward County, Cleveland, Detroit, DC, LA, NYC, San Diego, SF) included the question on their YRBS survey

2017 – 2023 Survey Question:

**Some people describe themselves as transgender when their sex at birth does not match the way they think or feel about their gender.
Are you transgender?**

- A. No, I am not transgender
- B. Yes, I am transgender
- C. I am not sure if I am transgender
- D. I do not know what this question is asking

METHODS

- **Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey (MIYHS), 2023**
 - 75% of high schools participated
 - 66% of all students in participating schools
 - 49% overall survey response rate

29,770
total high school respondents in 2023

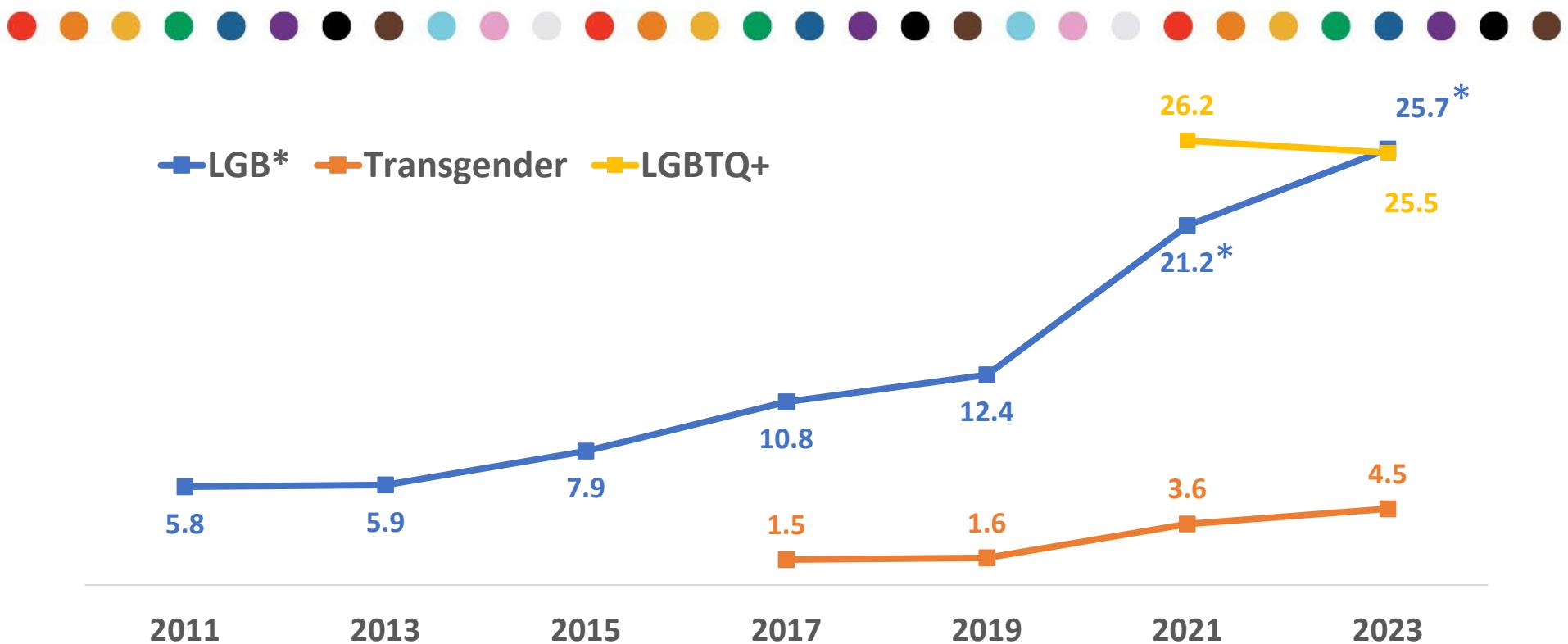
- **Analyzed using SAS 9.4 survey procedures**
 - 2- and 3-way cross tabulation and chi-square χ^2 analyses

LGBTQ+ Combined Variable



- Included in combined variable if any response between either sexual orientation (SO) or gender identity (GI) question indicated they were:
 - Gay/lesbian
 - Bisexual
 - Describe sexual identity some other way
 - Not sure about their sexual identity (questioning)
 - Transgender
 - Not sure about their gender identity
- Data considered missing for combined variable if:
 - Data for both questions were missing
 - Data for SO was missing + indicated did not know what GI question was asking
 - Data for GI was missing + indicated did not know what SO question was asking
 - Did not understand what either SO or GI questions were asking

Historical Trend



*in 2021 & 2023, LGB also includes students who indicated they described their sexual identity some other way or were questioning their sexual identity (response options that were not available prior to 2021)

RISK: Mental Health

In 2023, LGBTQ+ students were more likely to face mental health challenges.



LGBTQ+ students are 3x as likely to have seriously considered suicide in the past year

LGBTQ+  36%

Non-LGBTQ+  12% $p < .0001$

2021: LGBTQ+, 36%; Non-LGBTQ+, 12%



LGBTQ+ students are more than 2x as likely to have felt sad or hopeless for 2 or more weeks in the past year

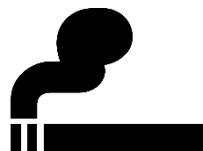
LGBTQ+  60%

Non-LGBTQ+  27% $p < .0001$

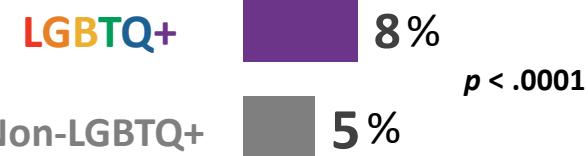
2021: LGBTQ+, 62%; Non-LGBTQ+, 25%

RISK: Substance Use

In 2023, LGBTQ+ students were more likely to turn to harmful substance use.



Nearly 2X as likely to have smoked cigarettes in the past 30 days



2021: LGBTQ+, 9%; Non-LGBTQ+, 4%



More likely to have used marijuana in the past 30 days



2021: LGBTQ+, 24%; Non-LGBTQ+, 16%



More likely to have used an electronic vapor product the past 30 days



2021: LGBTQ+, 22%; Non-LGBTQ+, 16%

$p < .0001$

RISK: Victimization

In 2023, LGBTQ+ students experienced more violence and discrimination at school than non-LGBTQ+ students.



LGBTQ+ students are more than 2x as likely to feel unsafe at school



2021: LGBTQ+, 20%; Non-LGBTQ+, 9%



LGBTQ+ students are more likely to be bullied at school in the past year



2021: LGBTQ+, 24%; Non-LGBTQ+, 13%



LGBTQ+ students are more likely to experience offensive comments or be attacked at school because of:

Perceived Sexual Orientation



Perceived Gender Expression



2021: LGBTQ+, 34%; Non-LGBTQ+, 4%

2021: LGBTQ+, 25%; Non-LGBTQ+, 9%

Data Source: Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey, 2023.
p-value < 0.05 is considered statistically significant.

RISK: Victimization

In 2023, LGBTQ+ students experienced more violence outside of school and at home than non-LGBTQ+ students.



3x as likely to have been forced to have sexual contact in their lifetime

2021: LGBTQ+, 30%; Non-LGBTQ+, 9%



Over 2x as likely to consider leaving home due to violence/threat of violence in home

2021: LGBTQ+, 34%; Non-LGBTQ+, 16%



2x as likely to have 4+ adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)

2021: LGBTQ+, 42%; Non-LGBTQ+, 18%



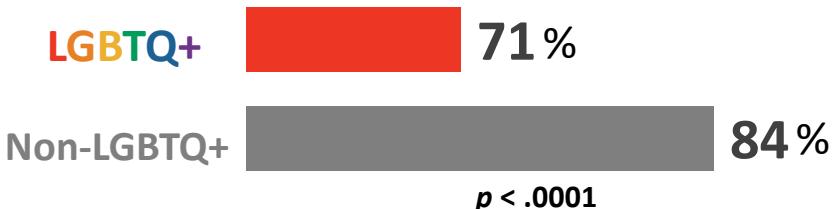
Protective Factors

In 2023, LGBTQ+ students were less likely to have familial and community protective factors than non-LGBTQ+ students.



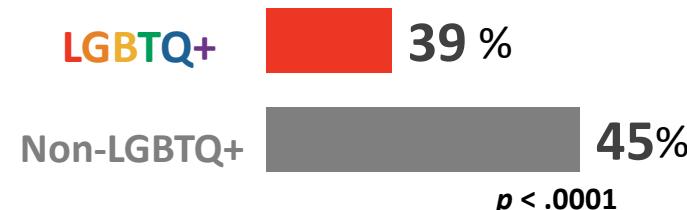
Less likely to receive love and support from family

2021: LGBTQ+, 69%; Non-LGBTQ+, 83%



Less likely to feel people at their school care about and encourage them

2021: LGBTQ+, 39%; Non-LGBTQ+, 47%



Less likely to feel they matter in their community

2021: LGBTQ+, 36%; Non-LGBTQ+, 57%



PROTECTIVE: Family Support



In 2023, **LGBTQ+** students who indicated having support from family were less likely to report mental health challenges and substance use.

Among **LGBTQ+** students:



Considered suicide past year



Felt sad/hopeless 2+ weeks in a row



Current Marijuana Use (Past 30 Days)

Family love & support most of time/always



29 %



53 %



22%

Does not have family love & support most of time/always



53%



77%



35%

2021: Family Supp, 30%;
No Family Supp, 58%

2021: Family Supp, 54%;
No Family Supp, 80%

2021: Family Supp, 20%;
No Family Supp, 34%

PROTECTIVE: School Support



In 2023, **LGBTQ+** students who indicated they felt people at their school cared about them and encouraged them were less likely to report mental health challenges and substance use.

Among **LGBTQ+** students:



Considered suicide past year



Felt sad/hopeless 2+ weeks in a row



Current Marijuana Use (Past 30 Days)

Feels people at school care



26%



49%



19%

Does not feel people at school care



42%



67 %



29 %

2021: School Supp, 27%;
No School Supp, 46%

2021: School Supp, 50%;
No School Supp, 70%

2021: School Supp, 17%;
No School Supp, 29%

p < .0001

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PROTECTIVE: Matter in Community



In 2023, **LGBTQ+** students who indicated they felt they mattered in their community were less likely to report mental health challenges and substance use.

Among **LGBTQ+** students:



Considered suicide past year



Felt sad/hopeless 2+ weeks in a row



Current Marijuana Use (Past 30 Days)

Matter in Community



23%



47%



17%

Do not feel they matter in community



48%



71%



29%

2021: Matter Comm, 23%;
Not Matter Comm, 48%

2021: Matter Comm, 47%;
Not Matter Comm, 71%

2021: Matter Comm, 17%;
Not Matter Comm, 29%

p < .0001

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CONCLUSIONS



- Significant health disparities exist among **LGBTQ+** high school students in Maine
- **LGBTQ+** students are more likely to experience physical, emotional and sexual violence than non-LGBTQ+ students
- **LGBTQ+** students are more likely to:
 - consider suicide, experience depressive symptoms, use illicit substances
- **LGBTQ+** students receive less support from adults than non-LGBTQ+ students
 - *However, the risk of mental health and substance use issues is mitigated among LGBTQ+ students who do receive support from their family, school staff and feel they matter in their community*