DISPARITIES IN HEALTH AND SOCIAL OUTCOMES FOR LGBTQ+ STUDENTS
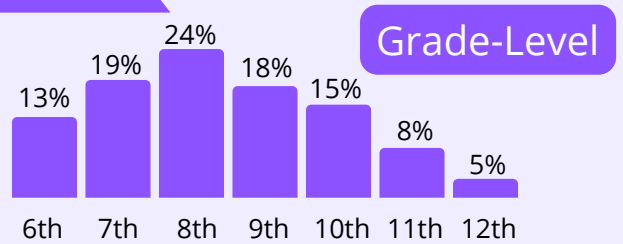## *in Rhode Island*

While adolescence is a difficult time for all youth, LGBTQ+ youth are additionally burdened by disproportionate amounts of violence, bullying, and other negative factors that increase their risk of experiencing adverse health and social outcomes. [1]
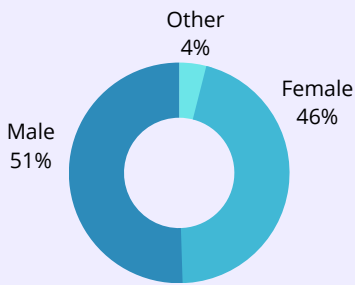
The Rhode Island Student Survey (RISS) is a survey of middle and high school students throughout Rhode Island that examines risk and prevalence of youth substance use, mental health, bullying and violence, and school performance. The results of this survey have been analyzed to compare LGBTQ+ students with their heterosexual and cisgender peers to determine the extent of the disparities experienced by LGBTQ+ youth in Rhode Island (RI). All results were statistically significant with a p-value <0.05.
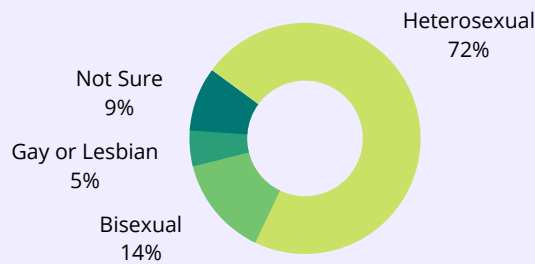
Demographics

20,411

In 2022, students participated in the survey representing 34% of all 6th-12th grade public-school students in RI*

Grade-Level

- 6th: 13%
- 7th: 19%
- 8th: 24%
- 9th: 18%
- 10th: 15%
- 11th: 8%
- 12th: 5%

Gender Identity

- Male 51%
- Female 46%
- Other 4%

Sexual Orientation

- Heterosexual 72%
- Bisexual 14%
- Not Sure 9%
- Gay or Lesbian 5%

Transgender

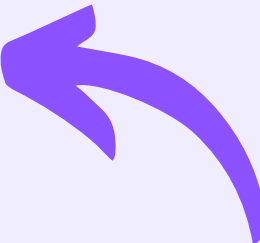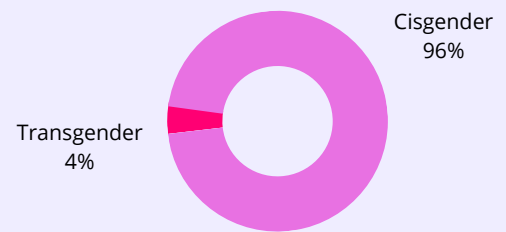- Cisgender 96%
- Transgender 4%

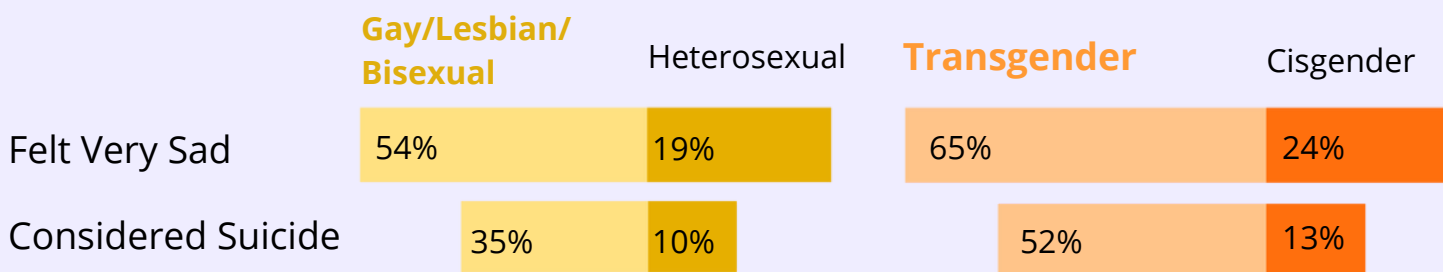Most students identified as male, heterosexual, or cisgender

*Providence Public School District excluded as they do not participate in the RISS and instead opt for the Youth Experience Survey (YES)

Mental Health & Substance Use

Adolescence is a critical period for the development of mental health conditions.[2] LGBTQ+ youth often experience chronic stress and victimization due to their identity leading to increased rates of anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts, and substance use and abuse.[2]

Mental Health

	Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual	Heterosexual	Transgender	Cisgender
Felt Very Sad	54%	19%	65%	24%
Considered Suicide	35%	10%	52%	13%

LGBTQ+ students in RI are more likely to feel very sad or consider suicide compared to their heterosexual and cisgender peers

SUBSTANCE USE

Past 30-Day Use

	Alcohol	Marijuana
Transgender	14%	17%
Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual	14%	15%
Heterosexual & Cisgender	8%	8%
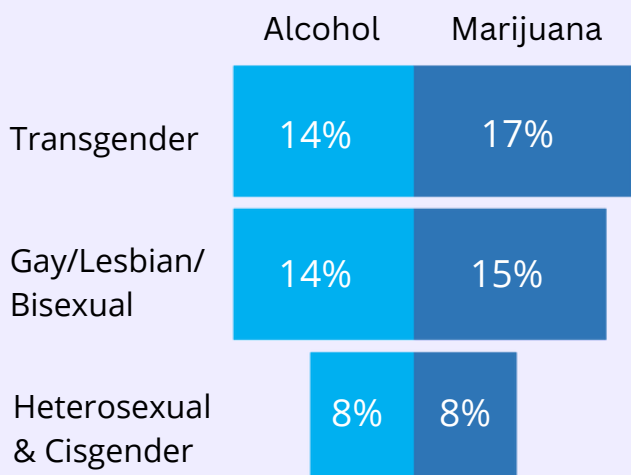
LGBTQ+ students in RI are more likely to report past 30-day use of marijuana and alcohol compared to heterosexual and cisgender students

Social Environment

Social connectedness and emotional support are protective factors for poor mental health and substance use.[3] Having strong relationships with both friends at school and with adults help LGBTQ+ youth feel physically safe and supported.[3,4] Unfortunately, many LGBTQ+ youth face bullying and discrimination due to their identity, often leading to fear and feelings of isolation.[3,4]
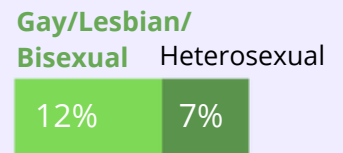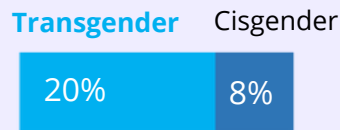
Bullying

Transgender and gay/lesbian/bisexual students are more likely to report being bullied by their peers compared to heterosexual and cisgender students

19%
Heterosexual & Cisgender

38%
Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual

51%
Transgender

VIOLENCE
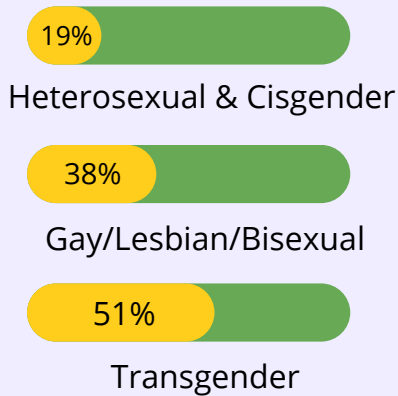
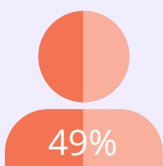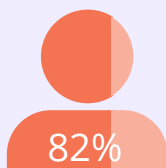|	Transgender	Cisgender	Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual	Heterosexual
Threatened at School	20%	8%	12%	7%
Physical Fight	17%	12%	14%	12%

LGBTQ+ students are more likely to experience violence at school compared to their cisgender and heterosexual peers
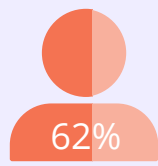
Parental Support

Transgender
49%

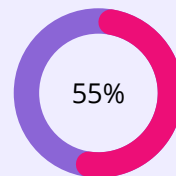Heterosexual & Cisgender
82%

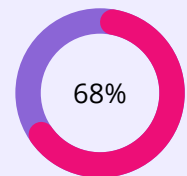Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual
62%

LGBTQ+ students are less likely to report having a parent that they can go to for help if they need it compared to heterosexual and cisgender students
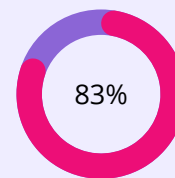
SAFETY AT SCHOOL

55%
Transgender

68%
Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual

83%
Heterosexual & Cisgender

Heterosexual and cisgender students are more likely to report feeling safe at school compared to LGBTQ+ students

School Performance & Addressing Inequities

Students who experience higher levels of victimization and discrimination from peers in and out of school in relation to their sexual orientation or gender identity are more likely to report increased absenteeism.[5] Similarly, LBGTQ+ students who are bullied at school often struggle academically and have lower grade point averages.[5]

Attendance

LGBTQ+ students are more likely to report missing 6 or more days of school in the last 30 days compared to heterosexual and cisgender students

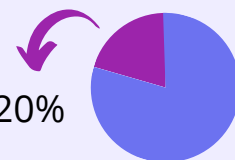| Transgender | 12% |
| Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual | 10% |
| Heterosexual & Cisgender | 6% |

GRADES

LGBTQ+ students are more likely to report having grades in school that are mostly D's or F's compared to heterosexual and cisgender students
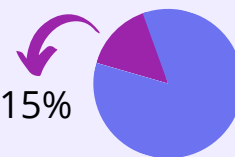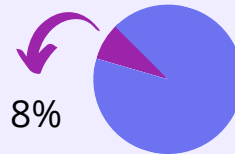
Transgender 20%

Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual 15%

Heterosexual & Cisgender 8%

Addressing Inequities

Schools

★ Provide students with access to gender neutral bathrooms and/or locker rooms [6]

★ Ensure inclusive curricula and reading material that provides representation of LGBTQ+ figures and historical events [5]

★ Supportive Student Clubs (a.k.a. "Gay-Straight Alliances") can help LGBTQ+ students feel included, supported, and safe in their school environment [5]

Caregivers

★ Create a safe space to have open conversations about your child's sexual orientation or gender identity [4]

★ Develop common goals with your child to create a mutual level of understanding and expectations for behavior [4]

★ Regularly engage in both school-related and recreational activities with your child to ensure they feel loved and supported [3]

Policy

★ Increase collection and availability of data pertaining to LGBTQ+ youth [7]

★ Consider using the above data as a resource to implement policies and procedures that support LGBTQ+ youth, promote safe and prosperous learning environments, affirm their identities, and advance respect and equity in all circumstances [8]

Resources
for LGBTQ+ youth and families of LGBTQ+ youth

Gender and Sexual Health Services- Lifespan

The Trevor Project

Trans Lifeline

Tri-County- LGBTQ+ Health Program

The Safe Zone Project

Open Door Health

BH Link

Youth Pride Rhode Island

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

Trans Health Access- Thundermist Health Center

REFERENCES

1. Centers for Disease control and prevention. "Health Disparities among LGBTQ Youth | Health Disparities | Adolescent and School Health | CDC." Www.cdc.gov, 27 Dec. 2019, www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/disparities/health-disparities-among-lgbtq-youth.htm.
2. Russell, Stephen T., and Jessica N. Fish. "Mental Health in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Youth." Annual Review of Clinical Psychology, vol. 12, no. 1, 28 Mar. 2016, pp. 465–487, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4887282/, 10.1146/annurev-clinpsy-021815-093153.
3. Division of Adolescent and School Health. "Mental Health." Www.cdc.gov, 12 Sept. 2022, www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/mental-health/index.htm#:~:text=Building%20strong%20bonds%20and%20relationships%20with%20adults%20and. Accessed 20 Dec. 2022.
4. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "LGBT Youth." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019, www.cdc.gov/lgbthealth/youth.htm.
5. Kosciw, Joseph, et al. "The 2019 National School Climate Survey: The Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Youth in Our Nation's Schools." GLSEN, 2020.
6. Bartholomaeus C, Riggs DW. Whole-of-school approaches to supporting transgender students, staff, and parents. International Journal of Transgenderism. 2017;18(4):361-366. doi:10.1080/15532739.2017.1355648
7. JSI. LGBTQ Youth and Substance Use Prevention Report Region 1: Southern Providence County. John Snow, Inc., May 2019.
8. GLSEN. Respect for all: Policy recommendations to support LGBTQ students. GLSEN. https://www.glsen.org/activity/respect-all-policy-recommendations-support-lgbtq-students

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND
HOPE
DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES & HOSPITALS

Endorsed by the Rhode Island State Epidemiological Outcomes Workgroup (SEOW)

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