



# Transgender Mental Health

How common are mental health conditions among transgender people?

## Transgender people face stigmas affecting their mental health.

One in every 256 people are estimated to be transgender; one in twenty young adults report being transgender or nonbinary (identifying with neither gender; [Pew 2022](#)).

Transgender population estimates rely on self-reporting, which can be influenced by perceptions of community discrimination against lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender/queer individuals ([Meerwijk 2017](#); [Coffman 2013](#)).

- Higher percentages of young adults reporting being transgender may be a result of perceived increases in visibility and social acceptance ([UCLA 2022](#); [Meerwijk 2017](#)).

In a five-year follow-up study of youth who socially transitioned their gender (regardless of access to gender-affirming care; [Olson 2022](#)):

- 94% remained transgender
- 3.5% had transitioned to nonbinary

## Research Highlights

Over half a percent of people in the U.S. identify as transgender.

Transgender individuals are at higher risk for discrimination and suicide.

Access to gender-affirming treatments can improve mental health outcomes, including gender dysphoria.

The American Psychiatric Association ([DSM-5](#)) and the World Health Organization ([ICD-11](#)) do not consider being transgender to be a mental illness/disorder.

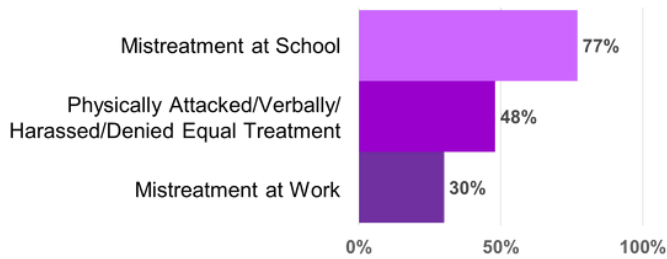
- Psychological distress resulting from a mismatch between gender identity and biological sex ('gender dysphoria') can be clinically significant and require care ([APA 2022](#), [APA 2013](#))

The WHO outlines the specific health needs and access to care for transgender individuals, including gender-affirming hormone therapy and surgery ([WHO 2022](#)).

Transgender youth who get gender-affirming care report 15% less suicidal ideation than those who want gender-affirming care but cannot access it ([Turban 2019](#)).

- Parents and up to 93% of transgender youth self-report worry and stress at losing access to gender-affirming care ([UCLA 2023](#)).

For more information on gender-affirming hormone therapies, please read our Science Note: [Transgender Hormone Therapy](#).



**Figure 1. Transgender individuals face discrimination at school, work and in public.** Bars indicate the percent of transgender individuals (of 7,500 surveyed) who self-report facing stigma and discrimination in these scenarios over the last year. (CDC 2022).

## Transgender people are at a high risk for discrimination & suicide.

Roughly half of transgender individuals report at least one mental health diagnosis, most commonly major depression and anxiety (Wanta 2019). Transgender individuals have an increased risk for suicide due to stress from hiding their gender identities, violence from others, community exclusion, and family discrimination, rejection, or abuse (Bauer 2015; Austin 2020; Figure 1).

A survey of 372 transgender youth found more than half had reported past suicide attempts and 86% had considered suicide (Austin 2020).

In a study of more than 400 transgender people, roughly 20% delayed routine health care for fear of discrimination (Seelman 2017).

In another study, transgender people of color (i.e. African American) reported higher rates of discrimination and depression (25% vs. 16%) than White transgender people (Jefferson 2014).

Transgender youth are at a 25-45% increased risk of using substances like cigarettes, alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, and prescription opioids to cope with psychological stress (Barbee 2022).

Read our Science Notes on [Suicide Education & Prevention Programs](#) and [Suicide Risks in Veterans](#) for more on policy approaches to reduce suicide in other vulnerable populations.

## Gender-affirming drugs can improve mental health outcomes among transgender people.

Research suggests that gender-affirming care can improve mental health and quality of life (van Leerdam 2023; Baker 2021; Hughto 2016).

- Strength of existing data is limited due to small sample sizes, lack of controls, confounding factors (e.g. sex reassignment surgery), and lack of uniformity between studies (van Leerdam 2023; Ramos 2021; Baker 2021; Hughto 2016).

Transgender patients on **puberty blockers** report experiencing greater body satisfaction and decreased anxiety, depression, self-harm, and suicidal thoughts (Ramos 2021).

**Hormone replacement therapy (HRT)** improved quality of life and psychological wellbeing (van Leerdam 2023; Baker 2021; Hughto 2016).

- Access to HRT can decrease depression, anxiety, gender dysphoria, and body dissatisfaction (van Leerdam 2023; Baker 2021; Hughto 2016).

While studies show that transgender people on HRT are still at higher risk of suicide compared to the general population, no large-scale review measures suicide risk among transgender people before and after HRT (Marshall 2015).

- Factors that are protective against suicide among transgender people include self-esteem and voluntary emotional, social, and practical support (Kia 2021; Johns 2018).

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