

Thirty-six percent of youth who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) made a suicide plan in the past year, which is significantly higher than heterosexual/cisgender youth (9%).<sup>1</sup> LGBT youth may be at higher risk for suicide because of how they are mistreated and stigmatized in society.<sup>2</sup> Suicide prevention strategies seek to reduce risk factors and promote protective factors.

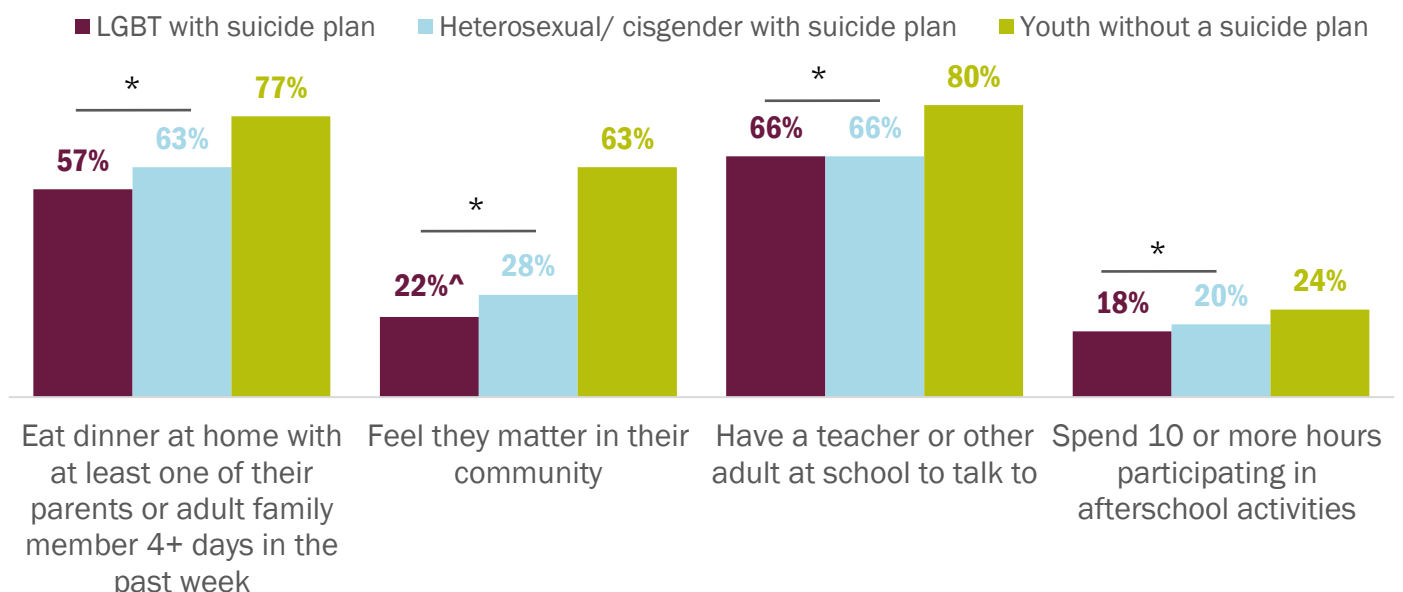
## Protective Factors

Protective factors are associated with a lower likelihood of negative health outcomes. LGBT youth with a suicide plan are significantly less likely to feel they matter to people in their community compared to heterosexual/cisgender youth with a plan, and youth without a plan. A few protective factors are less prevalent in youth who have made a suicide plan: participating in afterschool activities, feeling they have an adult at school to talk to about problems, and eating dinner at home with a family member most days of the week. These are not specific to LGBT youth with a suicide plan, but all youth who have made a plan.

### KEY POINTS

- **36% of LGBT students made a suicide plan in the past year.**
- **Compared to heterosexual / cisgender youth who with a suicide plan, and youth without a suicide plan, LGBT youth with a suicide plan are:**
  - **Significantly less likely to feel that they matter to people in their community.**
  - **Significantly more likely to experience:**
    - **Bullying**
    - **Dating violence**
    - **Sexual violence**

### LGBT youth who have made a suicide plan are less likely to have protective factors.



Source: Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2019

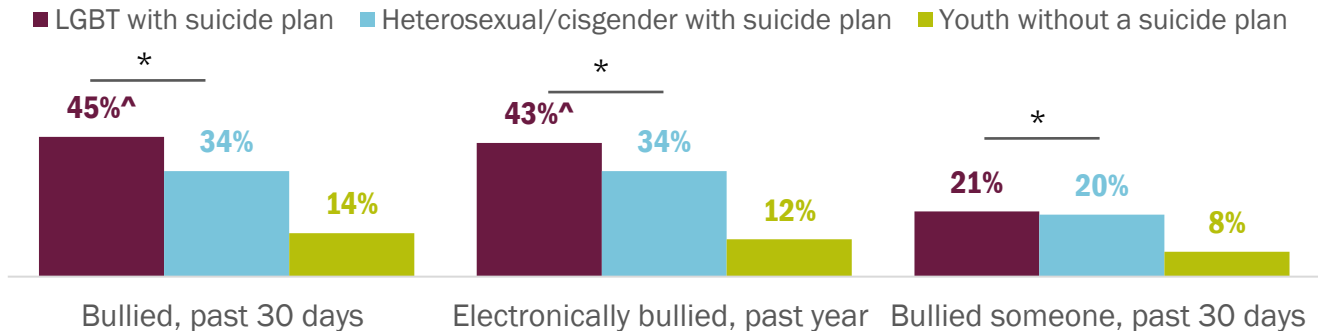
\*Statistically lower than youth without a suicide plan

<sup>^</sup>Statistically lower than heterosexual cisgender students with a plan

## Risk Factors Related to Bullying

Being a victim or perpetrator of bullying is associated with a myriad of social and emotional outcomes, including an increased risk for suicidal thoughts and behaviors.<sup>3</sup> LGBT youth with a suicide plan are significantly more likely to have been bullied compared to heterosexual/ cisgender students with a suicide plan, and students without a plan. Youth who made a suicide plan are also more likely to have bullied someone else, compared to youth who have not made a suicide plan.

### LGBT youth who have made a suicide plan are more likely to report bullying.



Source: Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2019

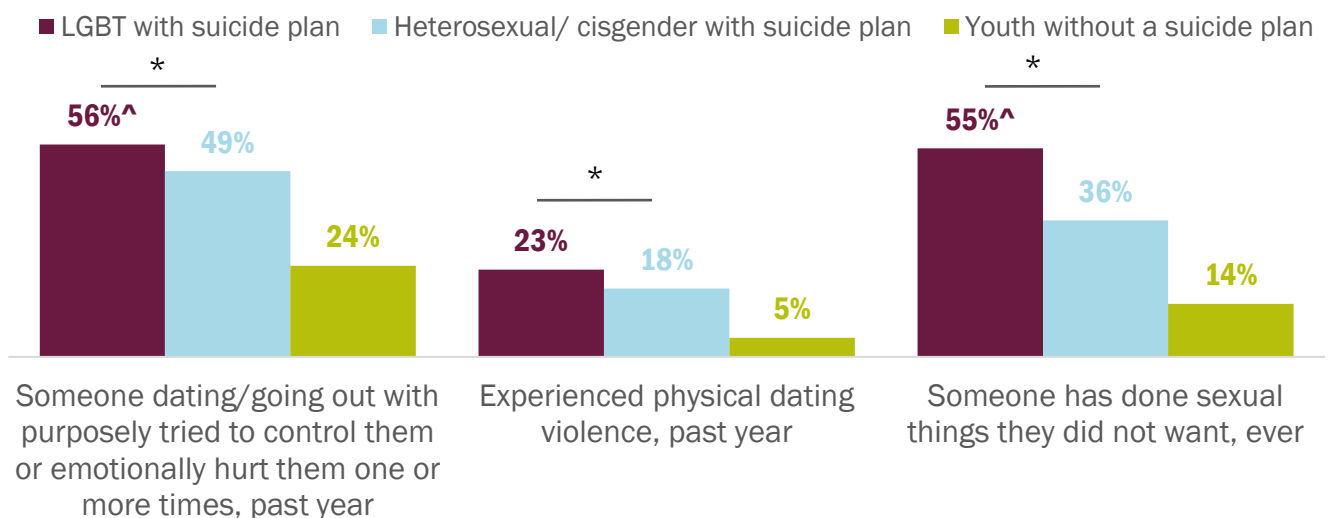
\*Statistically higher than youth without a suicide plan;

<sup>^</sup>Statistically higher than heterosexual cisgender students with a plan

## Risk Factors Related Sexual and Dating Violence

Youth who experience sexual and dating violence are at higher risk for suicide-related thoughts and behaviors.<sup>3</sup> LGBT youth who made a suicide plan are significantly more likely to have experienced physical dating violence, emotional dating violence, or sexual dating violence, compared to both heterosexual/ cisgender youth with a suicide plan and youth without a plan.

### LGBT youth who have made a suicide plan are more likely to report sexual and dating violence.



Source: Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2019

\*Statistically higher than youth without a suicide plan;

<sup>^</sup>Statistically higher than heterosexual cisgender students with a plan

## Key Takeaways

Students who identify as LGBT are at higher risk for suicide. Some of the factors presented in this brief are significantly higher or lower compared to heterosexual/cisgender students who have made a plan, and students who have not made a plan. The protective and risk factors include:

- Feel they matter to people in their community (protective)
- Experiencing bullying, either in person or electronically (risk)
- Experiencing someone who did unwanted sexual things to them (risk)
- Feel like someone that they were dating purposefully tried to control or emotionally hurt them (risk)

Prioritizing these factors may lead to a reduction in LGBT youth making a suicide plan.

Some of the evidence-based strategies that can reduce suicide-related behaviors include:

- Creating safe and supportive environments, like student-led organizations known as gay-straight alliances.<sup>4</sup>
- Educating youth about mental health and suicide-related behaviors.<sup>5,6</sup>

References:

1. [Youth Risk Behavior Survey Report, 2019](#)
2. [The Trevor Project](#)
3. [CDC Suicide Webpage](#)
4. [Suicide Prevention Recommendations 2020 Report to Legislature](#)
5. [Kaczkowski, W., Jingjing, L., Cooper, A., Robin, L. \(2022\) Examining the relationships between LGBTQ Supportive School Health Policies and Practices and Psychosocial Health Outcomes of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Heterosexual Students.](#)
6. [Mann, J., Michel, C., Auerbach, R. \(2021\) Improving Suicide Prevention Through Evidence-Based Strategies: A Systematic Review](#)

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**Safe and supportive environments can help reduce suicide-related thoughts and behaviors among LGBT youth.**