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%).\(^1\) LGBT youth may be at higher risk for suicide because of how they are mistreated and stigmatized in society.\(^2\) 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.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>LGBT with suicide plan</th>
<th>Heterosexual/ cisgender with suicide plan</th>
<th>Youth without a suicide plan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eat dinner at home with at least one of their parents or adult family member 4+ days in the past week</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel they matter in their community</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have a teacher or other adult at school to talk to</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spend 10 or more hours participating in afterschool activities</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2019

*Statistically lower than youth without a suicide plan

*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.³ 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.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>LGBT with suicide plan</th>
<th>Heterosexual/cisgender with suicide plan</th>
<th>Youth without a suicide plan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bullied, past 30 days</td>
<td>45%^</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electronically bullied, past year</td>
<td>43%^</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullied someone, past 30 days</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2019
*Statistically higher than youth without a suicide plan;
^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.³ 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.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>LGBT with suicide plan</th>
<th>Heterosexual/cisgender with suicide plan</th>
<th>Youth without a suicide plan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Someone dating/going out with purposely tried to control them or emotionally hurt them one or more times, past year</td>
<td>56%^</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experienced physical dating violence, past year</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Someone has done sexual things they did not want, ever</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2019
*Statistically higher than youth without a suicide plan;
^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.⁴
- Educating youth about mental health and suicide-related behaviors.⁵,⁶

References:

1. Youth Risk Behavior Survey Report, 2019
2. The Trevor Project
3. CDC Suicide Webpage
4. Suicide Prevention Recommendations 2020 Report to Legislature

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