



The Trevor Project Research Brief: Data on Transgender Youth

February 2019

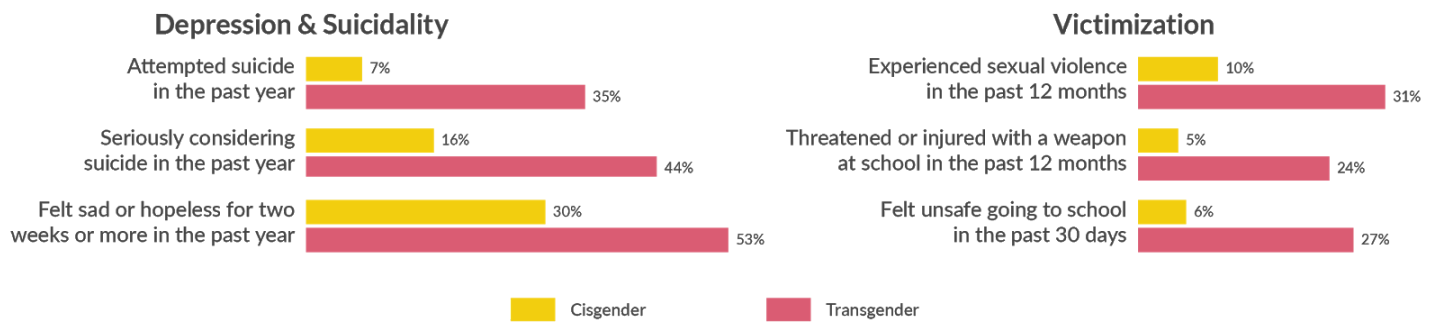
Summary

The inclusion of sexual identity measures in large scale national surveys have added to our knowledge about the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and questioning youth (LGBQ). For example, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention’s Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) has highlighted adverse mental health indicators among LGBQ students, including greater depressive symptoms, increased rates of seriously considering suicide, and higher rates of attempted suicide (Zaza et al., 2016). Until now, there has been a lack of nationwide data on risk factors and negative outcomes associated with transgender youth in the U.S. (diGiacomo et al., 2018). This brief report highlights newly released data from the 2017 YRBS which focuses on transgender high school students (Johns et al., 2019).

Results

Overall, 1.8% of youth identified as transgender. The almost 2% prevalence rate is more than double the previously available estimate of 0.7%. The prior estimate was based on the patterns of transgender identity among adults (Herman et al., 2017). However, it was noted that the 0.7% estimation would be inaccurate if younger cohorts identify as transgender at a sharply higher rate than 18–24 year olds. This YRBS data reveals that younger youth are indeed identifying as transgender at an increased rate.

Transgender youth reported significantly increased rates of depression, suicidality, and victimization compared to their cisgender peers. Notably, in the past year, one in three transgender youth reported attempting suicide, almost one-third reported being a victim of sexual violence, and more than half reported a two-week period of depression.



Methodology

This data represented the largest ever federal effort to capture data on transgender youth by surveying 118,803 high school students in ten states (Colorado, Delaware, Hawaii, Massachusetts, Maryland, Maine, Michigan, Rhode Island, Vermont, Wisconsin) and nine large urban school districts (Boston, Cleveland, District of Columbia, Detroit, Broward County, Los Angeles, New York City, San Diego, San Francisco). Youth gender identity was based on their response to the YRBS 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?” In this report, prevalence rates are based on youth who indicated “Yes, I am transgender” or “No, I am not transgender.” Youth who indicated that they were “not sure” if they were transgender or who indicated that they did not understand the question were excluded from this analysis.

Looking Ahead

This new data provides key insights about transgender youth. However, our knowledge is still incomplete as only 10 states and 9 large urban school districts included a question on gender identity in the 2017 YRBS. Additionally, we do not have information about other youth who do not identify as cisgender including gender fluid, non-binary, and agender youth. The Trevor Project and partner agencies have long advocated for the inclusion of sexual orientation and gender identity and expression questions in population based surveys, including the YRBS. We will continue our efforts to ensure that this valuable data is collected from all states and large urban school districts to best understand and support these youth.

References

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For more information please contact: research@thetrevorproject.org