



# Research Brief: How to Best Support Transgender and Nonbinary Young People

For transgender and nonbinary young people, parent and caregiver support was significantly associated with lower suicide risk.

November 2024

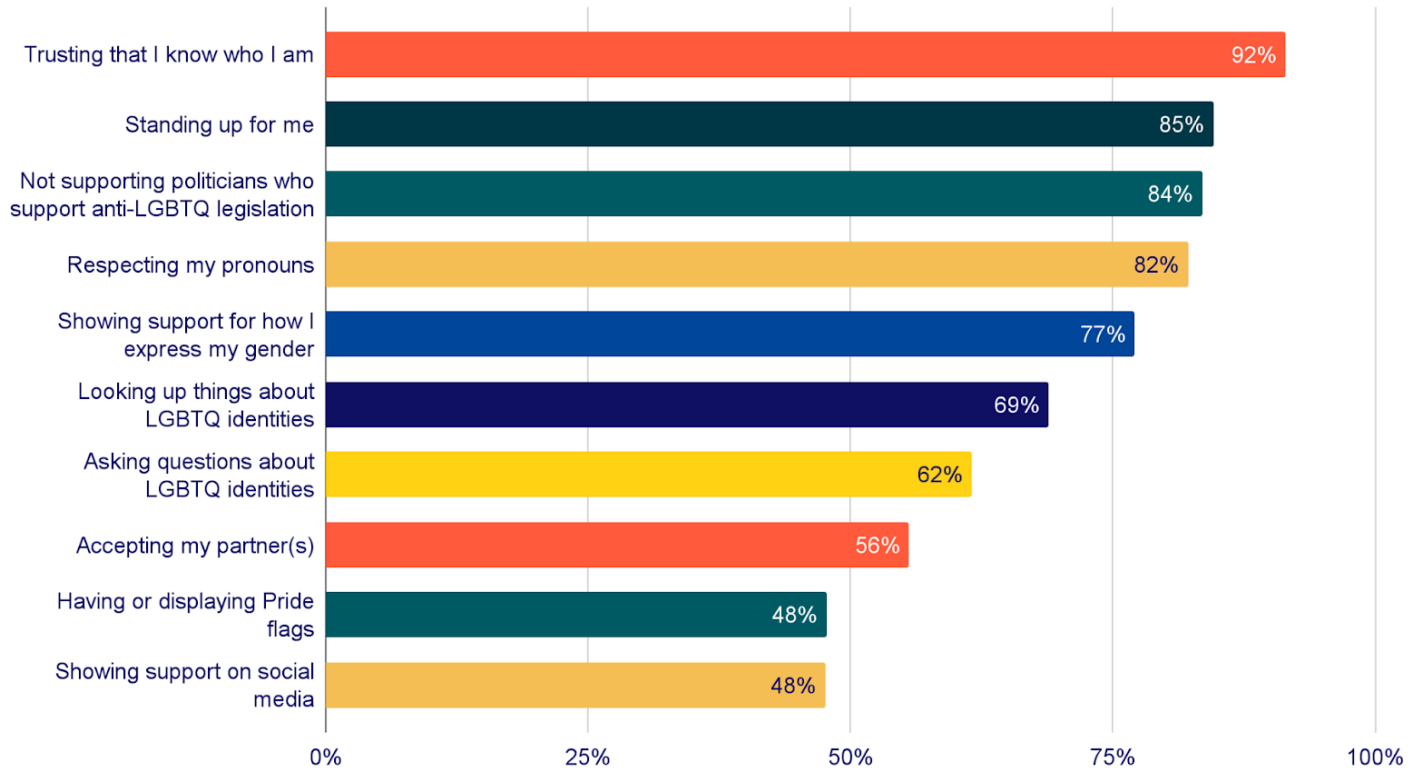
## Background

Support from others, especially parents and caregivers, is crucial for the well-being of transgender, nonbinary, and gender questioning (TGNB) young people, as it provides a solid foundation for their development and health.<sup>1-4</sup> Having access to affirming environments and adults is associated with fewer mental health concerns, including lower rates of depression, anxiety, and suicide attempts for TGNB young people. Some examples of supportive actions include affirming their name and pronouns, providing access to gender-affirming care, and advocating for their needs.<sup>1,4</sup> In contrast, disaffirming or unsupportive actions, such as misgendering a TGNB young person, are associated with negative mental health outcomes,<sup>5</sup> reinforcing the importance of caregivers displaying acceptance. Some specific actions have been identified that show support for LGBTQ+ and TGNB young people. These actions include parents and caregivers not supporting politicians who advocate for anti-LGBTQ+ legislation<sup>1</sup> and respecting a young person's gender identity.<sup>6</sup> However, this research did not examine which actions TGNB young people find the most supportive, or the cumulative impact of supportive actions on suicide risk. With more knowledge about supportive actions and their possible impacts, TGNB youth can be better cared for by parents, caregivers, friends, and community. In observance of Transgender Awareness Week and Transgender Day of Remembrance, the following brief uses data from the [2024 U.S. National Survey on the Mental Health of LGBTQ+ Young People](#) to highlight ways to support TGNB young people and to examine how these supports are associated with suicide risk.

## Results

When asked how people in their lives can best show support, TGNB young people reported the following ways: 1) Trusting that I know who I am (reported by 92% of participants), 2) Standing up for me (85%) 3) Not supporting anti-LGBTQ+ politicians (84%), 4) Respecting my pronouns (82%), and 5) Showing support for how I express my gender (77%). See chart for the top 10 ways that TGNB young people reported others can support them.

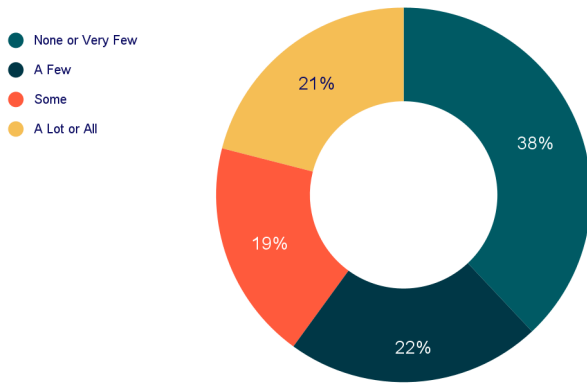
## Percent of TGNB Young People Who Report the Following Actions Are the Best Way to Support Them



When specifically asked about parents and caregivers, TGNB participants reported that the following top 5 actions made them feel supported: 1) Being welcoming and kind to their LGBTQ+ friends or partners (reported by 74% of participants), 2) Talking respectfully with them about their LGBTQ+ friends or partners (67%), 3) Supporting their gender expression (e.g., buying new clothes or helping them get a haircut; 60%), 4) Using their name and pronouns correctly (49%), and 5) Educating themselves about LGBTQ+ issues (48%). TGNB young people also reported that they felt supported when their parents or caregivers respectfully discussed LGBTQ+ issues with them (46%), encouraged others to respect their LGBTQ+ identity (41%), asked how their identity should be discussed (40%), took them to LGBTQ+ events (32%), and stood up for them when they were being mistreated (25%).

Three in five TGNB young people (60%) reported that their parents or caregivers engaged in less than half of the listed actions, and nearly 1 in 5 (17%) reported that their parents or caregivers engaged in none of these supportive actions related to their LGBTQ+ identity. Only 6% reported that their parents or caregivers engaged in all of the listed actions that were applicable to them (see graph for more information).

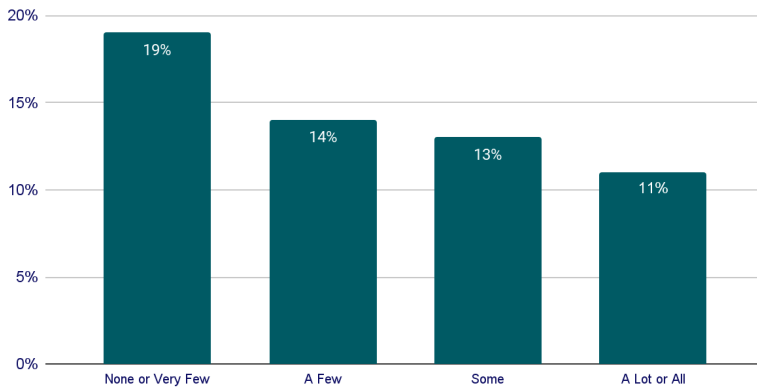
**Levels of Parental or Caregiver Support Experienced by TGNB Young People**



The number of supportive actions varied by demographic groups among TGNB young people, including sexual orientation, gender identity, race/ethnicity, and age. For example, those ages 13-17 were more likely to report experiencing no or few supportive actions (39%) compared to their older peers ages 18-24 (36%). This was also true for youth of color (45%) compared to White youth (33%). Additionally, pansexual (43%), asexual (41%), and questioning (41%) TGNB young people

reported high rates of experiencing little to no supportive actions, compared to individuals of other sexual orientations. Further, transgender girls and women (41%) and gender questioning young people who were assigned female at birth (47%) reported high rates of little to no supportive actions, compared to individuals of other gender identities.

**Past-year Suicide Attempt by Level of Parental or Caregiver Support Reported by TGNB Young People**



Regarding suicide risk, greater parent or caregiver support was related to lower suicide risk among TGNB young people. Those who experienced none or very few supportive actions reported the highest rate of a past-year suicide attempt (19%), followed by those who experienced a few supportive actions (14%), some supportive actions (13%), and many or all supportive actions (11%). Notably, an increase of just one supportive action from parents and caregivers was associated with 6% lower

odds of a suicide attempt in the past year (aOR = 0.94, 95% CI = 0.92-0.95, p < 0.001).

## Looking Ahead

The data reveal a powerful connection between parents' and caregivers' supportive actions, perceived family support, and lower risk of suicide attempts among TGNB young people. Despite these findings, many TGNB youth reported receiving limited or no support from their parents or caregivers. With only 6% of TGNB participants stating that their parents and caregivers engaged in all applicable supportive actions and

nearly a fifth experiencing no supportive actions whatsoever, this gap in family support is both alarming and significant. Importantly, the number of supportive actions varied by demographic variables, with younger TGNB youth and TGNB youth of color reporting lower rates of support. These findings highlight the need to support TGNB young people and their families at younger ages and in culturally affirming ways.

The association between experiencing supportive actions and lower odds of suicide attempts further underscores the importance of parental and caregiver support. Each additional supportive action was associated with a 6% lower odds of reporting a past-year suicide attempt, highlighting the positive and cumulative impact of small, but affirming gestures. Comprehensive education and outreach initiatives targeting parents and caregivers could play a transformative role in ensuring TGNB young people receive the affirmation they need to thrive. By engaging in these forms of support within families and communities, we can create more affirming familial and caregiving environments that bolster mental health outcomes and potentially reduce suicide risk for TGNB youth.

In addition to focusing on parental and caregiver support, broader efforts to promote affirming actions across all areas of TGNB youths' lives are necessary. As documented in other research (Nath et al., 2024), friend support was reported as being stronger than familial support, suggesting that while many TGNB youth find affirmation outside their homes, family environments lag behind.

Ultimately, fostering widespread understanding of TGNB identities and experiences, both within families and communities, is essential for improving mental health outcomes and reducing the risk of suicide among TGNB youth. This research documents the relationship between specific supportive actions and TGNB youths' feelings of being supported by family members, which deserves further exploration in future research.

The Trevor Project is dedicated to supporting TGNB youth through our crisis services, research, and advocacy efforts. Our TrevorSpace social media platform provides TGNB young people with a safe space to connect with LGBTQ+ supportive peers. Our 24/7 crisis services—offered via phone, chat, and text—allow them to reach affirming counselors, of whom many are TGNB identified, whenever they are in crisis. Our education team equips adults to better support TGNB youth across all identities, and our advocacy team is actively working to promote access to affirming, supportive environments. Additionally, we are committed to continuing to publish research focused on TGNB individuals in the future. If you are interested in reading more work about TGNB youth from our research team, here are a few articles: [State-level Anti-transgender Laws Increase Past-year Suicide Attempts Among Transgender and Nonbinary Young People in the USA](#), [Affirming Actions and Gender Euphoria Among Transgender and Nonbinary Young People](#), and [Mental Health of Black Transgender and Nonbinary Young People](#). Furthermore, here are additional publications about supportive actions: [Guide to Being an Ally to Transgender and Nonbinary Young People](#) and [Understanding Gender Identities & Pronouns](#).

## Methods

Data were collected through The Trevor Project's [2024 U.S. National Survey on the Mental Health of LGBTQ+ Young People](#). In total, 18,663 LGBTQ+ young people between the ages of 13 to 24 were recruited via ads on social media. Of these, 51% identified as transgender or nonbinary (n = 9,578), and 14% reported questioning their gender identity (n = 2,596). For this analysis, TGNB was inclusive of both groups.

Participants were asked, "How can people in your life best show their support and acceptance for you? Please select all that apply." They were given a list of 12 different options, and if any were endorsed, they were considered a "Yes." They were also asked, "Have your parents or caregivers ever taken any of the following actions to support your LGBTQ identity?" and were provided a list of 12 different actions, of which they could respond Yes, No, and This does not apply to me. To be asked this set of questions, they needed to be out to their parents or caregivers about their sexual orientation or gender identity. For some of the analyses, the number of experienced actions was summed, and then converted into a scale from 0-1 to allow for reporting percentages. If the item was not applicable to them or they did not answer the question, it was not included in their total or mean score. Another analysis involved categorizing these behaviors into None or Very Little (0-24% of actions), A Little (25-49%), Some (50-74%), and A Lot or All (75-100%). All demographics were gathered by asking participants to select an option from a provided list. The question assessing past-year suicide attempts was taken from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Youth Risk Behavior Survey.<sup>7</sup>

All analyses are statistically significant at least at  $p < 0.05$ . This means there is less than a 5% likelihood these results occurred by chance. Logistic regression was used to examine the relationship between parent and caregiver supportive actions and a past year suicide attempt, while controlling for relevant demographic variables (i.e., race/ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and age).

**Recommended Citation:** The Trevor Project. (2024). How to Best Support Transgender and Nonbinary Young People.

### References

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