



Research Brief: The Role of Parent and Caregiver Support on Perceived Life Expectancy and Life Purpose for Black Transgender and Nonbinary Young People

Black transgender and nonbinary young people with parents and caregivers who supported their LGBTQ+ identity reported a greater sense of life purpose and perceived life expectancy.

February 2025

Background

Black transgender and nonbinary (TGNB) young people often face societal discrimination, leading to stress and poor mental health outcomes.¹ However, support from parents and caregivers can mitigate the impact of discrimination and protect against negative mental health outcomes.^{2,3} For example, when Black TGNB young people received a high amount of support from their families, they had 47% lower odds of a suicide attempt in the past year compared to Black TGNB young people with low to moderate support.⁴ Less understood is how parental/caregiver support translates into positive outcomes. For this research brief, we explored how supportive actions do not simply limit negative consequences, but also promote positive mental health for Black TGNB young people. Specifically, we examined the effect of parental/caregiver support on perceived life expectancy and a sense of life purpose. The following brief uses data from the [2024 U.S. National Survey on the Mental Health of LGBTQ+ Young People](#) to underscore the importance of parental/caregiver support in the mental health promotion of Black transgender and nonbinary young people.

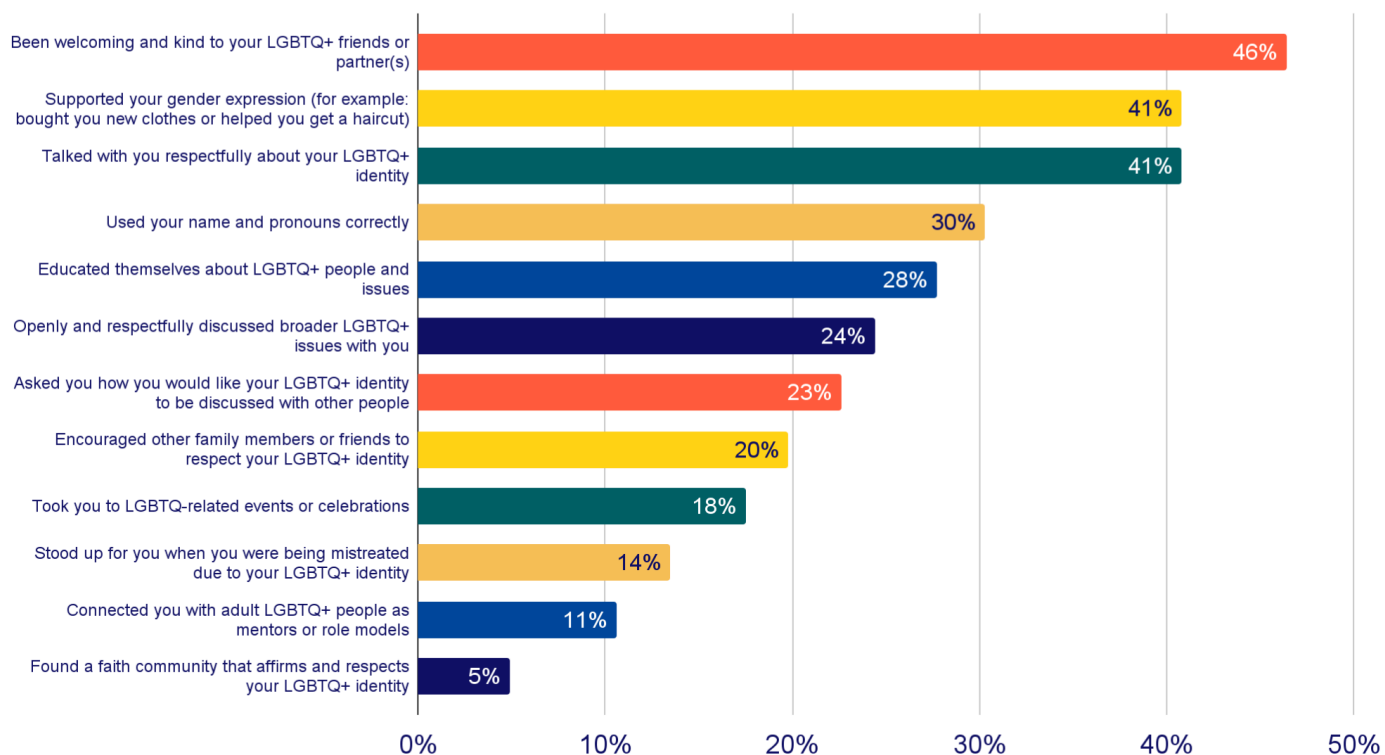
Results

Supportive Actions

When asked about actions that their parents or caregivers have taken to support their LGBTQ+ identity, Black transgender and nonbinary young people (N=351) most frequently reported the following five actions: 1) Being welcoming and kind to their LGBTQ+ friends or partner(s) (55%), 2) Talking respectfully about their LGBTQ+ identity (42%), 3) Supporting their gender expression (e.g. buying them new clothes or helping them get a haircut) (41%), 4) Using their name and pronouns correctly (34%), and 5) Educating

themselves about LGBTQ+ people and issues (29%). We only asked this question to those who indicated that they were out about their sexual orientation or gender identity to their parents or caregivers (73%). The average total number of supportive actions taken by parents or caregivers, reported by Black transgender and nonbinary young people, was just over three ($M=3.34$, $SD=3.59$), with 69% of Black transgender and nonbinary young people reporting that their parents or caregivers have taken at least one LGBTQ+ supportive action from the provided list of 12.

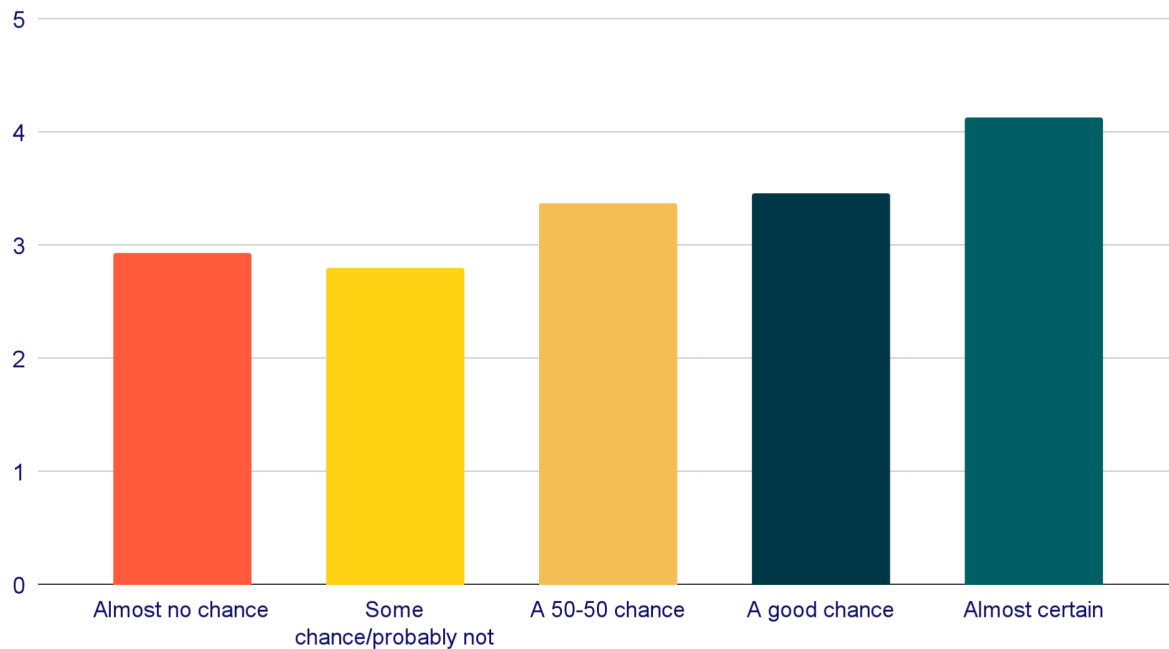
Actions Taken by Parents/Caregivers to Support LGBTQ+ Identity



Perceived Life Expectancy

For the full sample of Black TGNB young people, one in five (20%) were nearly certain they would live to age 35. Nearly 29% reported a good chance that they would live to age 35, and 29% reported a 50-50 chance. Almost 17% reported they would probably not live to age 35, and 5% reported almost no chance of living to age 35. Black TGNB young people who reported more supportive actions from their parents or caregivers generally perceived a higher likelihood of living to age 35. However, after accounting for other factors like age, gender identity, and sexual orientation, this relationship was not statistically significant. Still, the small positive correlation ($r=0.19$) suggests a modest relationship between perceived life expectancy and supportive actions.

Life Expectancy and Reported Number of Supportive Actions Taken by Parents or Caregivers



Life Purpose

Black TGNB young people reported low rates of life purpose across six measures of life engagement. Only 38% reported having a lot of reasons for living, and only 31% reported that the things they do are all worthwhile. Additionally, over half (56%) reported a lack of purpose in their lives, and more than two in five (44%) reported not valuing the activities they partake in. Over two in five (41%) reported that they do not care very much about the things they do, and a quarter (25%) reported that most of what they do seems trivial and unimportant. Similar to above, supportive actions enacted by parents and caregivers were positively associated with life purpose for Black TGNB young people. Each additional supportive action from parents and caregivers was associated with an increase in life purpose scores ($\beta=0.165$, 95% CI = 0.09-0.39). Additionally, participants who reported more than the average number of supportive actions experienced a significant increase in life purpose ($\beta=0.165$, 95% CI = 1.054-4.73).

Looking Ahead

These findings demonstrate the importance of parental/caregiver support in the lives of Black transgender and nonbinary young people. Greater support from parents and caregivers may improve their sense of life purpose and perceived life expectancy. Prior research has shown that higher levels of perceived life expectancy and life purpose are related to better mental health, including lower odds of a suicide attempt

in the past year among LGBTQ+ young people.⁵ Similarly, research has documented the ways that support can buffer against suicide attempts for transgender and gender diverse youth.⁶ This and other research underscore the unique and powerful role that parents and caregivers play in supporting Black transgender and nonbinary young people.

When parents and caregivers of Black TGNB young people engage in more supportive actions, they report better mental health outcomes. However, less than half of Black TGNB young people reported that their parents or caregivers had taken these supportive actions, indicating a significant opportunity to engage with adults via educational resources. Supporting Black TGNB young people in the ways that make them feel supported can lower suicide risk, potentially by fostering a stronger sense of purpose.^{7,8} When we support Black TGNB young people, we give them the space to imagine a future for themselves. You can help improve the mental health and well-being of Black transgender and nonbinary young people by affirming their identities, respecting their unique experiences, and learning through an intersectional lens.

The Trevor Project is committed to supporting Black transgender and nonbinary young people and improving their mental health outcomes. This goal is accomplished through providing 24/7 crisis services via text, phone, and chat, maintaining safe and welcoming social spaces online through TrevorSpace, providing education services for adults seeking to support Black transgender and nonbinary young people, and by advocating for legislation that promotes safe and inclusive environments for young people. The Research team here at Trevor remains dedicated to uplifting the voices and experiences of Black transgender and nonbinary young people through data and working to create a world wherein all Black transgender and nonbinary young people feel supported and encouraged to live out their full potential.

You can read more research from The Trevor Project about the mental health of Black LGBTQ+ young people here: [Mental Health of Black Transgender and Nonbinary Young People](#) and [Discrimination among Black LGBTQ+ Young People and Suicide Risk](#). For more information on Black transgender and nonbinary mental health and how you can support them, check out these resources: [Supporting Black LGBTQ+ Youth Mental Health](#), a [Guide to Being an Ally to Transgender and Nonbinary Young People](#), and the [Magic of Black Queerness](#).

Methods

Data were collected through The Trevor Project's [2024 U.S. National Survey on the Mental Health of LGBTQ+ Young People](#). A total of 18,663 LGBTQ+ young people between the ages of 13 to 24 were recruited via ads on social media. This research brief features data from 692 participants who identified as both Black and transgender, nonbinary or questioning their gender identity, although the effective sample size for analysis was reduced to 351 after accounting for missing data.

To assess support, participants were asked, “How can people in your life best show their support and acceptance for you? Please select all that apply.” Participants could select from a list of 12 actions, and any endorsed action was considered a ‘Yes.’ Participants were also asked, “Have your parents or caregivers ever taken any of the following actions to support your LGBTQ+ identity?” They were provided with a list of 12 actions, and could respond ‘Yes’, ‘No’, or ‘This does not apply to me.’ The total number of ‘Yes’ endorsed actions was counted to create a measure of the number of supportive actions. Additionally, a measure of the mean number of ‘Yes’ endorsed supportive actions was calculated using the average of the sample.

A question assessing perceived life expectancy was taken from Parmar et al.⁹ and asked participants, “What do you think are the chances that you will live to age 35?” Response options were ‘Almost no chance’, ‘Some chance/probably not’, ‘A 50-50 chance’, ‘A good chance’, ‘Almost certain’, and ‘I don’t know’. Responses of ‘I don’t know’ were coded as missing for analyses. Questions assessing life purpose were taken from The Life Engagement Test¹⁰ and modified. These questions asked participants to “Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements: There is not enough purpose in my life; To me, the things I do are all worthwhile; Most of what I do seems trivial and unimportant to me; I value my activities a lot; I don’t care very much about the things I do; and I have lots of reasons for living.” Response options for each statement included ‘Strongly disagree’, ‘Disagree’, ‘Neutral’, ‘Agree’, and ‘Strongly agree’. For analysis purposes, the first, third, and fifth statements were reverse coded, and all six items were summed to create a life purpose score.

Linear regression models were run to examine the association between the number of supportive actions taken by parents/caregivers, perceived life expectancy, and life purpose, controlling for age, gender identity, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status. 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.

References

1. Vance, S. R., Boyer, C. B., Glidden, D. V., & Sevelius, J. (2021). Mental health and psychosocial risk and protective factors among Black and Latinx transgender youth compared with peers. *JAMA Network Open*, 4(3), e213256-e213256. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2021.3256>
2. Tankersley, A. P., Gafsky, E. L., Dike, J., & Jones, R. T. (2021). Risk and resilience factors for mental health among transgender and gender nonconforming (TGNC) youth: A systematic review. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*, 24(2), 183-206. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10567-021-00344-6>
3. Wilson, E. C., Chen, Y. H., Arayasirikul, S., Raymond, H. F., & McFarland, W. (2016). The impact of discrimination on the mental health of trans* female youth and the protective effect of parental support. *AIDS and Behavior*, 20, 2203-2211. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10461-016-1409-7>
4. The Trevor Project (2023a). Mental Health of Black Transgender and Nonbinary Young People. <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/research-briefs/mental-health-of-black-transgender-and-nonbinary-young-people-feb-2023/>
5. The Trevor Project. (2023b). Life Purpose and Expectancy in LGBTQ+ Young People. <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/research-briefs/perceived-life-expectancy-and-life-purpose-in-lgbtq-young-people/>
6. Holt, M.K., Parodi, K.B., Elgar, F.J., Vigna, A., Moore, L.B., & Koenig, B (2023). Identifying protective factors for gender diverse adolescents' mental health. *npj Mental Health Research* 2(10). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s44184-023-00029-8>
7. Kleiman, E.M., Adams, L.M., Kashdan, T.B. & Riskind, J.H. (2013). Gratitude and grit directly reduce risk of suicidal ideations by enhancing meaning in life: Evidence for a mediated moderation model. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 47(5), 539-546. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2013.04.007>
8. Kleiman, E.M. & Beaver, J.K. (2013). A meaningful life is worth living: Meaning in life as a suicide resiliency factor. *Psychiatry Research*, 210(3), 934-939. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychres.2013.08.002>
9. Parmar, D.D., Tabler, J., Okumura, M.J., & Nagata, J.M. (2022) Investigating protective factors associated with mental health outcomes in sexual minority youth. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 70(3), 470-477. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2021.10.004>
10. Scheier, M. F., Wrosch, C., Baum, A., Cohen, S., Martire, L. M., Matthews, K. A., ... & Zdaniuk, B. (2006). The Life Engagement Test: Assessing purpose in life. *Journal of Behavioral Medicine*, 29(3), 291-298. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10865-005-9044-1>

Recommended Citation

The Trevor Project (2025). The Role of Parent and Caregiver Support on Perceived Life Expectancy and Life Purpose for Black Transgender and Nonbinary Young People. <https://doi.org/10.70226/PDHW8773>

For more information please contact: Research@TheTrevorProject.org

© The Trevor Project 2025