



EP4U STUDENT CONTEST WINNING PAPER

Caring for LGBTIQ+ People Across Europe

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Key Findings

Trans youth in schools are much more likely to face discrimination, harassment, and assault than their cisgender counterparts.

LGBTIQ+ people are much more likely to attempt suicide, self-harm or exhibit depressive symptoms due to lack of support and acceptance.

This is worsened by lack of parental support, making them 14 times more likely to attempt suicide if they do not have supportive parents.

Currently, life for LGBTIQ+ members is remarkably worse – they have much lower self esteem and much lower life satisfaction.

Introduction

In the past several decades society as a whole has made many steps in the right direction in regard to caring for LGBTIQ+ individuals, both legal equality and social acceptance. Despite this, there are still many issues regarding LGBTIQ+ individuals, and progress must not stop. In these same past decades, many issues regarding these individuals have been researched, but seemingly they have persisted. Perhaps the most problematic one is that of the heightened risk of suicide or self-harm across LGBTIQ+ people. If we truly want to create a legal and societal egalitarian society, we must do our best to address this issue, mainly the reasons behind it and what can be done to curb these worrying statistics.

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The Research

Research from the European Congress of Psychiatry¹ has shown that LGB individuals in Germany are up to 7 times more likely to attempt suicide than their heterosexual peers. Studies carried out since the 1990s in Europe have shown that throughout the decades, LGBTIQ+ people have continuously had higher suicide rates and attempted suicides, including teenagers and children who were found to be up to 3.4² times more likely to attempt suicide. In 2019, *The Trevor Project*³ had estimated that 1.8 million LGBTIQ+ youths aged 13-24 had considered suicide in one year. The issue of suicide is so serious that it is the second leading cause of death for 10–24-year-olds, and this risk is increased for many due to being part of the LGBTIQ+ community.

Acceptance of LGBTIQ+ People

It would seem that discrimination against LGBTIQ+ people has been increasing in the last decade. According to a survey⁴, in the EU 43% of LGBT people have stated they

have been discriminated against in 2019, which is a 6% increase from 2012. According to a paper published in 2020⁵, 11% of LGBTIQ+ respondents were physically or sexually assaulted, and those who identified as trans and intersex were more likely to be assaulted at 17% and 22% respectively. Furthermore, nearly 40% of respondents experienced harassment because of their identity, with youth respondents being even more likely at 47%.

There has been little research on stress, anxiety and quality of life in Europe for LGBTIQ+ individuals, thus the following statistics have been taken from Canada. Although it may be that the statistics are not exactly the same for the European Union, it's important to note that the struggles in everyday life which are likely the leading cause, as one study puts it the "marginalisation, stigmatisation and discrimination"⁶ is what causes these differences.

The study by TransPulse⁷ shows that trans youth are more than 50% less likely to be

¹ Azevedo, P., Vitória, J., & Norton, A. (2016). Mental health and suicidal risk in lesbian, gay and bisexual population. *European Psychiatry*, 33(S1), S596-S597. doi:10.1016/j.eurpsy.2016.01.2227

² ILGA-Europe. (2007, August). *Suicidality among lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth*. Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. <https://www.ilga-europe.org/resources/ilga-europe-reports-and-other-materials/suicidality-among-lesbian-gay-bisexual-and>

³ The Trevor Project. (2021, December 15). Facts About LGBTQ Youth Suicide –. Retrieved December 28, 2021, from

<https://www.thetrevorproject.org/resources/article/facts-about-lgbtq-youth-suicide/>

⁴ Miltos Pavlou. (2019). *EU LGBTI Survey II*. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/lgbti_survey_-_general_qa_en.pdf

⁵ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, (2020). A long way to go for LGBTI equality, Publications Office.

<https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2811/582502>
⁶ (ILGA-Europe, 2007)

⁷ Travers, R., Bauer, G., Pyne, J., & Bradley, K. (2012, October). Impacts of Strong Parental Support for Trans Youth. Trans PULSE Project.

satisfied with their lives, 460% less likely to have excellent mental health and 490% less likely to have high self esteem.

Suggestions for Policymakers

These are a few steps that policymakers can take in the right direction – so that we may build a more inclusive and accepting European Union for all LGBTIQ+ people, with the aim of not only curbing discrimination but also preventing suicides.

School Campaigns for Acceptance

No one is born hateful, but rather it is taught⁸, and this is where the importance of funding and structuring school campaigns is. Firstly, the European Union should create a framework for teachers or parents on how to teach their children about the LGBTIQ+ community, with the aim of creating a more accepting and loving union. Secondly, the campaign would also aim to provide support to kids who may be experiencing confusion about their own identities, the path for many LGBTIQ+ people is never a straight road, and some may need help figuring their identity out. Lastly, schools must try to protect LGBTIQ+ kids from harassment, discrimination and bullying by their peers. The aim here is to create an accepting and receptive society, so that the

aforementioned suicide rates may decline, so that their life quality may increase and to finally build an accepting Union.

Learning Centres and Support for Adults

A study published in Lisbon⁹ showed us that “Health professionals and healthcare organizations must cover these **unmet mental health needs** if they move to more integrated, coordinated models of care”. To help LGBTIQ+ individuals, it would be useful to create support groups and centres which would act on a regional basis in order to provide support. These centres would be built off existing institutions and would expand their current capacities and areas of expertise. It would aid LGBTIQ+ people in finding help, whether it is about their identity, how to cope with difficulties in school or workplaces but also providing necessary information for transgender individuals who wish to transition. Every individual has different transition goals and reaching them is often hard and hidden behind medical jargon, complex websites and also stigma surrounding being transgender and thus do not feel confident in talking to doctors. The centres would be welcoming, accepting places in which individuals who need help can organise appointments with trained specialists

<https://transpulseproject.ca/research/impacts-of-strong-parental-support-for-trans-youth/>

⁸ ADL. (2013). How Do Children Learn Prejudice? Anti-Defamation League. Retrieved February 5, 2022, from <https://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools->

[and-strategies/question-corner/how-do-children-learn-prejudice](#)

⁹ Dos Santos, M. (2017). Discrimination and mental health among lesbian, gay and bisexual adults. *European Psychiatry*, 41(S1), S734-S734. doi:10.1016/j.eurpsy.2017.01.1344

which can help them in their specific and often sensitive needs.

Although the LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025 published by the European Union has a section on mental health (2.4) – it fails to touch on the subject of creating helplines in different member states. These helplines would be operated by other LGTBIQ+ people, who are able to provide unique insights and advice to those who need it, that cisgender and heterosexual people cannot. This would not only give LGBTIQ+ members a place to receive help, but would provide jobs, learning opportunities and increase diversity for other LGBTIQ+ members. It would be helpful to build off existing helplines, such as *Samaritans* in Ireland – and the European Union would fund new departments within in specialised in dealing with LGBTIQ+ issues. This is a more pragmatic approach as the foundations of these helplines already exist, and the European Union’s task would be to expand them to include help for LGBTIQ+ people.

Conclusions

Over the past decades our societies have made great strides towards LGBTIQ+ acceptance, but the world is not yet a perfect place. LGBTIQ+ adults and youths are both upwards of 4 times more likely to attempt suicide, and LGBTIQ+ youth often suffer due to unsupportive environments, both in school and at home. The EU must thus work towards a better future, campaigns in schools should be

undertaken to teach acceptance and respect of other’s identities and learning support centres should be set up across EU member states to provide support for LGBTIQ+ people. It is imperative to support them, to guide them into the journey of self-discovery, and also to provide psychological support to those in need.

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