

Understanding and overcoming health care challenges faced by LGBTQ+ people of color



Challenges in care

Surveys and polls show the degree to which members of the LGBTQ+ community experience poor health care treatment. In testimonials collected by the Human Rights Campaign, LGBTQ+ people say they've been refused care, subjected to ridicule and worse.¹

These experiences happened when seeking treatment for ailments like a broken rib. They also happened while visiting a family member in the hospital or celebrating a child's birth.

More challenges facing LGBTQ+ people of color

In 2020, the Center for American Progress (CAP) fielded a national survey on LGBTQ+ individuals' experiences with discrimination. The CAP study found that LGBTQ+ people of color had experienced discriminatory care, refusal of care, and harsh or improper treatment at higher rates than white LGBTQ+ participants.²



Discrimination

24% vs. 17%

LGBTQ+ discriminatory treatment

Of LGBTQ+ people of color, 24% reported some form of negative or discriminatory treatment from a doctor or health care provider. That compares with 17% of white LGBTQ+ people who reported the same.²

68% vs. 27%

Transgender discriminatory treatment

For transgender people of color, 68% reported negative or discriminatory treatment from a doctor or health care provider. That compares with 27% of white transgender participants who reported the same.²



Refusal of care

10% vs. 4%

Doctor's refusal for sexual orientation

For LGBTQ+ people of color, 10% had a doctor refuse to see them because of their sexual orientation. For white LGBTQ+ participants, 4% had a doctor refuse to see them.²

28% vs. 8%

Doctor's refusal for gender identity

For transgender people of color, 28% had a doctor refuse to see them because of their gender identity. Of white transgender participants, 8% reported the same.²



Harsh or improper treatment

38% vs. 5%

Abuse by doctors

For transgender people of color, 38% reported that a doctor was rough or physically abusive. Of white transgender participants, 5% reported the same.²

29% vs. 8%

Abusive language by doctors

A doctor using harsh or abusive language while treating a transgender person of color was reported by 29%. This happened to 8% of white transgender participants.²



Discrimination and cost of care can lead to untreated conditions

Discrimination caused 28% of LGBTQ+ people of color to postpone medical care when they were sick or injured. Cost is another factor, with nearly half (48%) postponing care because they couldn't afford it.³

Health care challenges faced by Black LGBTQ+ individuals

An estimated 1,210,000 U.S. adults self-identify as Black and LGBTQ+. More than one-third (36%) of Black LGBTQ+ adults are raising children.⁴



Access to medical care

70% vs. 77%

For Black LGBTQ+ adults, 70% have a personal doctor, compared to 77% of Black non-LGBTQ+ adults.⁴



Receiving Medicaid assistance

17% vs. 13%

More Black LGBTQ+ adults (17%) have Medicaid as their primary insurance than do non-LGBTQ+ adults (13%).⁴

Black LGBTQ+ youth and mental health problems

Black LGBTQ+ youth have higher incidence of mental health problems versus Black heterosexual youth.⁵



56% vs. 28%

Risk of depression

Researchers found 56% of Black LGBTQ+ youth at risk of depression, followed by 39% for those who identified as mostly heterosexual and 28% for heterosexual youth.⁵



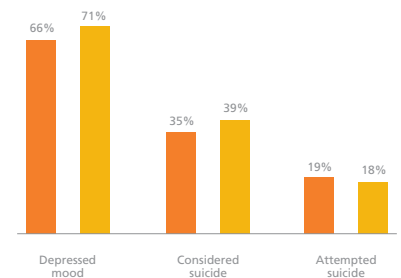
38% vs. 11%

Suicidal thoughts

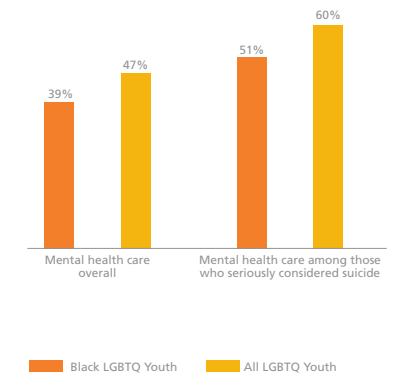
Thoughts of suicide also were highest for Black LGBTQ+ youth, with 38% having suicidal thoughts in the past year. For mostly heterosexual youth, 15% have thoughts of suicide. For heterosexual youth, 11% have these thoughts.⁵

Black LGBTQ+ youth are less likely to receive professional care, despite having similar rates of mental health problems. Black LGBTQ+ youth received professional mental health care at a rate of 39% versus 47% of all LGBTQ+ youth.⁶

Mental health of Black LGBTQ+ youth compared to all LGBTQ+ youth⁶



LGBTQ+ youth who received professional mental health care in the past 12 months⁶



Working to overcome health care challenges faced by LGBTQ+ patients

Optum aims to help all LGBTQ+ people feel comfortable, cared for and respected when visiting a doctor or any other care provider. We've developed programs to rebuild relationships and help LGBTQ+ patients find knowledgeable and welcoming providers. These programs include:

- Training and educating providers and staff to erase biased training
- Retraining Optum call center staff to better communicate with LGBTQ+ callers
- Identifying health care facilities that are friendly to LGBTQ+ people
- Expanding the number of resources available, including suicide prevention and trauma-informed care trainings

The goal is to make sure all people can get health care from professionals who are knowledgeable and open to providing care. This will improve the LGBTQ+ care experience and care quality for all.

For more information or to become an ally, visit:

[Pride365plus.com](https://pride365plus.com)

Sources:

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