



YOUTHOUTLOOK

Supporting our LGBTQ+ Friends and Neighbors: An Introduction to Allyship

February 2026



Who's in the room?



Carolyn Wahlskog, LCSW (she/they)

Director of Operations and Programming
Youth Outlook

Co-Coordinator, Name Change Mobilization
Transformative Justice Law Project of IL



Elexis Richardson (they/them)

Affirming Care Education Specialist ²
Youth Outlook



YOUTHOUTLOOK

© Youth Outlook

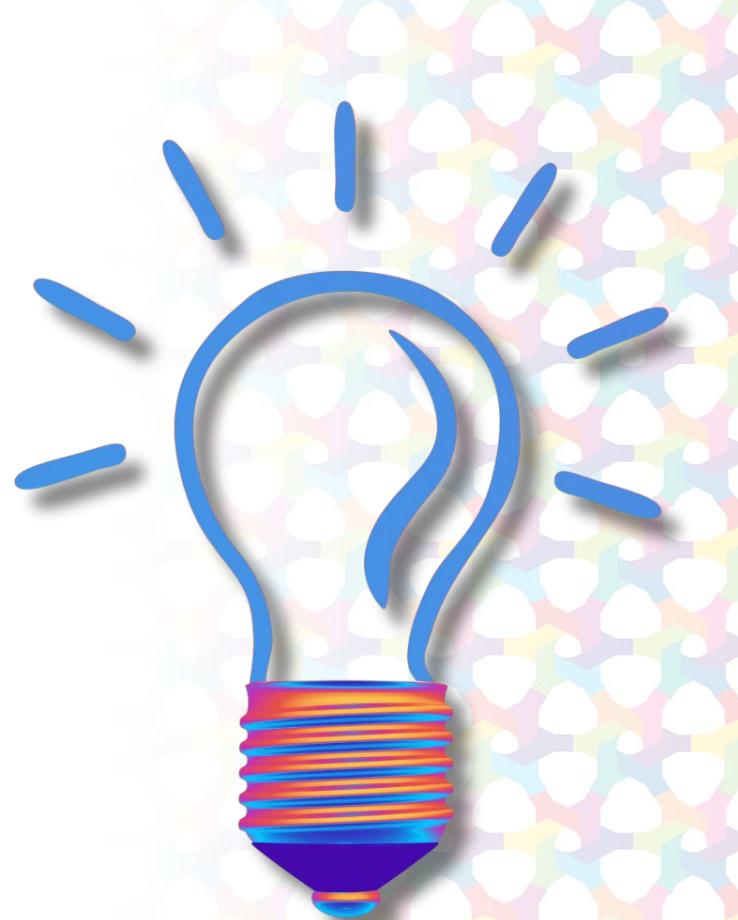
Please introduce yourself

- Name
- Pronouns you use (she/her, he/him, they/them, elle, something else?)
- What's one thing you hope to learn today?



Learning Objectives:

1. Understand key concepts and **affirming terminology** related to LGBTQ+ identities and gender identity development.
2. **Recognize the challenges** facing LGBTQ+ youth and families today.
3. Learn effective strategies to **develop inclusive spaces** that support the wellbeing of LGBTQ+ communities.



Community Agreements

- Shape the discussion to fit your needs
- Half thoughts are welcome
- What happens here, stays here; what's learned here, leaves here
- Respect where each person is
- Commitment to dismantling barriers
- Any others?



About Youth Outlook

Youth Outlook celebrates, empowers, advocates for, and provides services to meet the ever-evolving needs of LGBTQ+ youth and their families, friends, and communities.

Drop-In Centers

Parent & Family Support

Community Education & Professional Development

Health & Wellness Navigation



YOUTHOUTLOOK





YOUTHOUTLOOK



Health & Wellness Navigation

No cost assistance connecting LGBTQ+ individuals (up to age 30) and their families to affirming health and wellness resources.

Navigators can help with:

- Finding affirming physicians, mental health clinicians, and other service providers
- Signing up for public benefits
- Referrals to housing
- Food, clothing, and transportation resources
- Identifying legal supports and access to name change assistance
- Gender-Affirming care resources
- Connecting families to support

Email hwn@youth-outlook.org for support

My Gender Journey

1

Growing up, what messages did you receive from those around you about gender? Did those messages make sense to you?

2

What's your first memory of gender defining or impacting your life?

3

If you were to describe your gender without talking about how you look or what you do, what would you share?

4

How have issues of gender and gender diversity "shown up" in your work with families and youth?

5

How do your other identities (race, ethnicity, class, religion/spirituality, etc) intersect or impact your ideas of gender?

Click for a helpful resource





Affirming Terminology

Click for a
helpful resource



YOUTHOUTLOOK

Dimensions of Identity

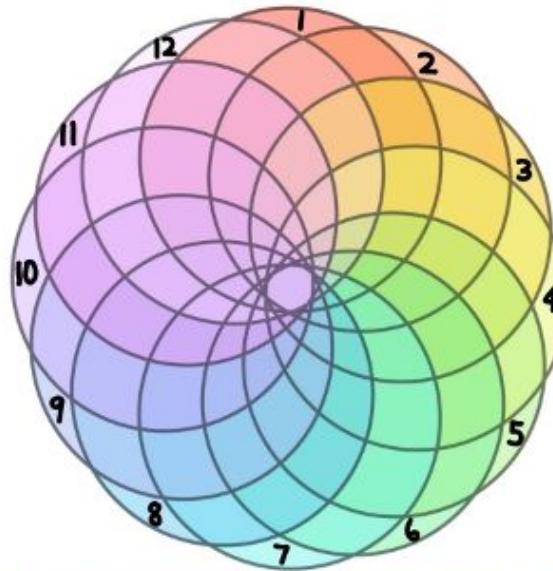
Every individual has their own unique experiences of discrimination and privilege.

Click for a helpful resource



YOUTHOUTLOOK

INTERSECTIONALITY



- 1 Race
- 2 Ethnicity
- 3 Gender identity
- 4 Class
- 5 Language
- 6 Religion
- 7 Ability
- 8 Sexuality
- 9 Mental health
- 10 Age
- 11 Education
- 12 Body size
(...and many more...)

Intersectionality is a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it locks and intersects. It is the acknowledgement that everyone has their own unique experiences of discrimination and privilege.

- Kimberlé Crenshaw -

© youthoutlook.net

SOGIE Identities

We all have them and they are separate things.



Sexual Orientation
Sexual/romantic attraction



Gender Identity
Personal sense of gender



Sex Assigned at Birth
Male, Female, Other/Intersex



Gender Expression
Outward display of gender

Common Terms Related to Sexual Orientation

Sexual/romantic attraction

**Asexual/
Aromantic**

A lack or low level of sexual/romantic attraction for others

Bisexual

Attraction to members of more than one gender

**Demisexual/
Demiromantic**

Sexual/romantic attraction only after forming a strong emotional connection

Gay

Attraction to people of the same gender

**Graysexual/
Grayromantic**

Experience attraction only sometimes, or attraction with no desire for a relationship

Lesbian

A woman or non-binary person who is attracted to other women or non-binary people

**Pansexual/
Panromantic**

Attraction to people of any gender identity or regardless of gender

Queer

Not fitting in with sexuality or gender expectations. **Be mindful** as not everyone has reclaimed this term



Common Terms Related to Sex Assigned at Birth

AFAB

Acronym for:
Assigned Female At Birth

Can be used to refer to sex assigned at birth for someone who may or may not identify as female now

Intersex

An umbrella term for people who are born with variations in their internal or external anatomy, hormones and/or chromosomes

Intersex is not a disorder, disease, or condition

AMAB

Acronym for:
Assigned Male At Birth

Can be used to refer to sex assigned at birth for someone who may or may not identify as male now



Intersex

- An umbrella term for variations in sex traits or reproductive anatomy
- These traits might not fit inside traditional conceptions of what male or female bodies look like
- Intersex people are born with variations in their internal or external anatomy, hormones or chromosomes
- Intersex is not a disorder, disease, or condition



Cisgender

- A term for people whose gender identity aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth
- Cisgender people can be any sexual orientation, such as bisexual, gay, lesbian, heterosexual, etc.
- Do say *cis* or *cisgender*
- Don't say *normal*, *biological*, or *real*



Transgender

- Describes a person whose gender identity does not align with their sex assigned at birth
- Transgender is an adjective - it is not a noun or verb
- Do say, *Sam is a transgender man* or *Carrie is a transgender woman*
- Don't say, *transgendered* or *transgenders*



Non-Binary

- An umbrella term that describes gender identities that don't fit within the accepted binary of male and female
- Individuals can feel they are both genders, neither, or some mixture thereof
- Terms under this umbrella: genderqueer, gender fluid, agender, bigender, etc.
- Non-binary folks may use they/them/theirs pronouns or others



Queer

- This term has been embraced and reclaimed by the LGBTQ+ community as a symbol of pride
- Historically, this was a derogatory slang term used to identify LGBTQ+ people
- Represents individuals who do not fit in with the expectations for sexuality or gender
- May hear this word used in place of the acronym LGBTQ+

Transition/Transitioning:

Someone's process of developing and assuming a gender expression to match their gender identity



May or may not include hormonal and/or surgical procedures



Includes fully, partially, and irreversible interventions



Transitioning is unique to the individual! No singularly defined way to transition

Navigating Transition

Social



Name and pronoun use, gender presentation changes, accessing facilities based on gender identity

Medical



Gender affirming care may or may not include hormonal therapy, surgical treatments, voice coaching, etc.

Legal



Changing gender marker on legal documents like driver's license, passport, social security card, birth certificate, and/or legal name change

Pronouns

It's ok to ask people what pronouns they use!

Click for a
helpful resource



Click for a
helpful resource



How to Ask Someone What Pronouns They Use



YOUTHOUTLOOK



If you make a mistake:

1

Apologize or thank the person who corrected you

2

Correct yourself

3

Move on

4

Practice



Let's Practice!

This student is non-binary.

Say a sentence using they/them pronouns.



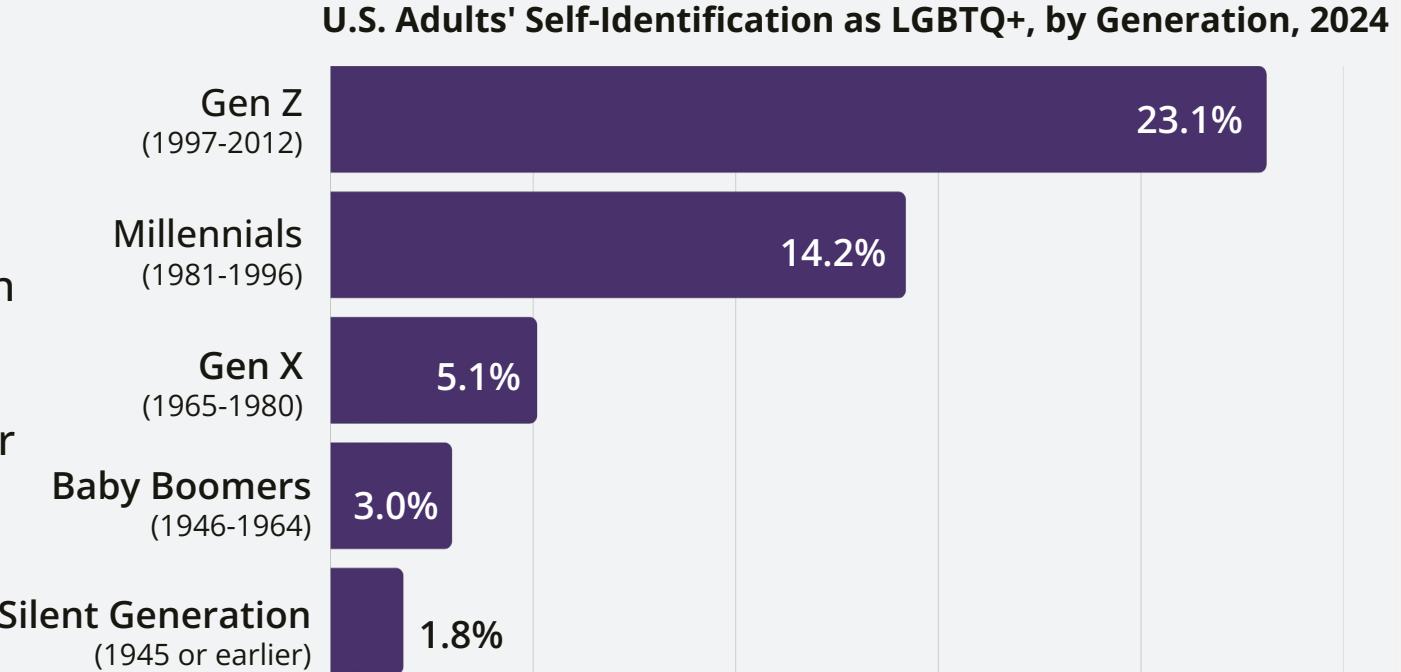
What's Happening in Our Community



YOUTHOUTLOOK

Trends in Coming Out

LGBTQ+ growth tied to higher identification among younger adults



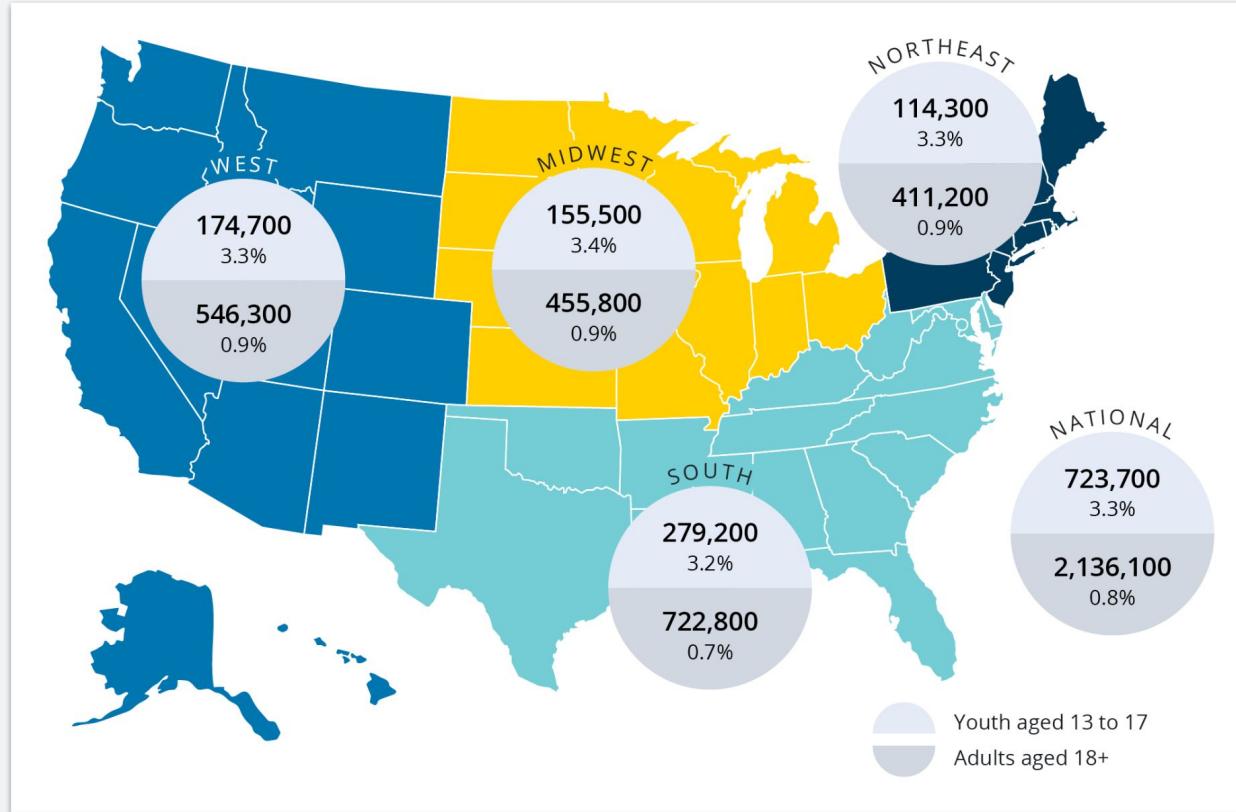
YOUTHOUTLOOK

Source: [Gallup](#) - Feb. 2025

© Youth Outlook

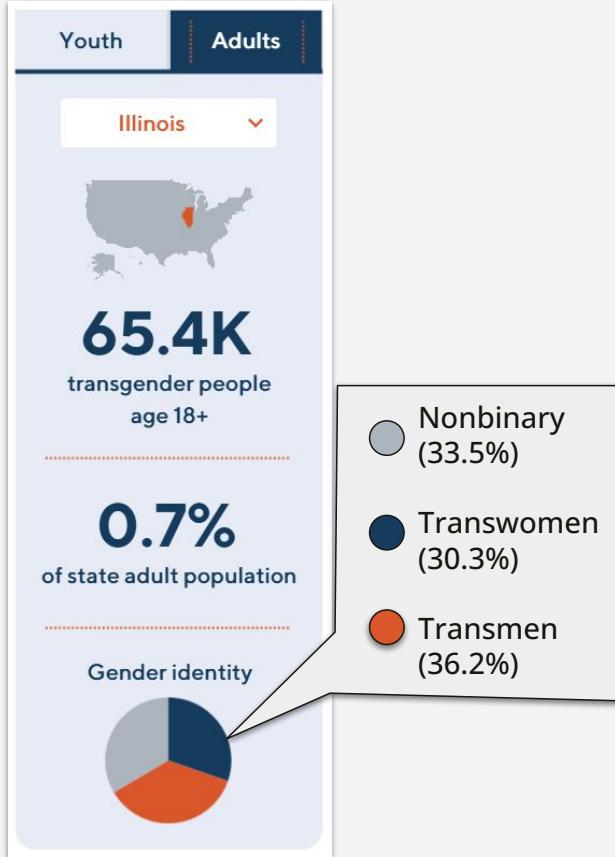
How many Adults and Youth Identify as Transgender in the U.S.?

Over 2.1 million adults (18+) and 724,000 youth (13-17) identify as transgender in the U.S.



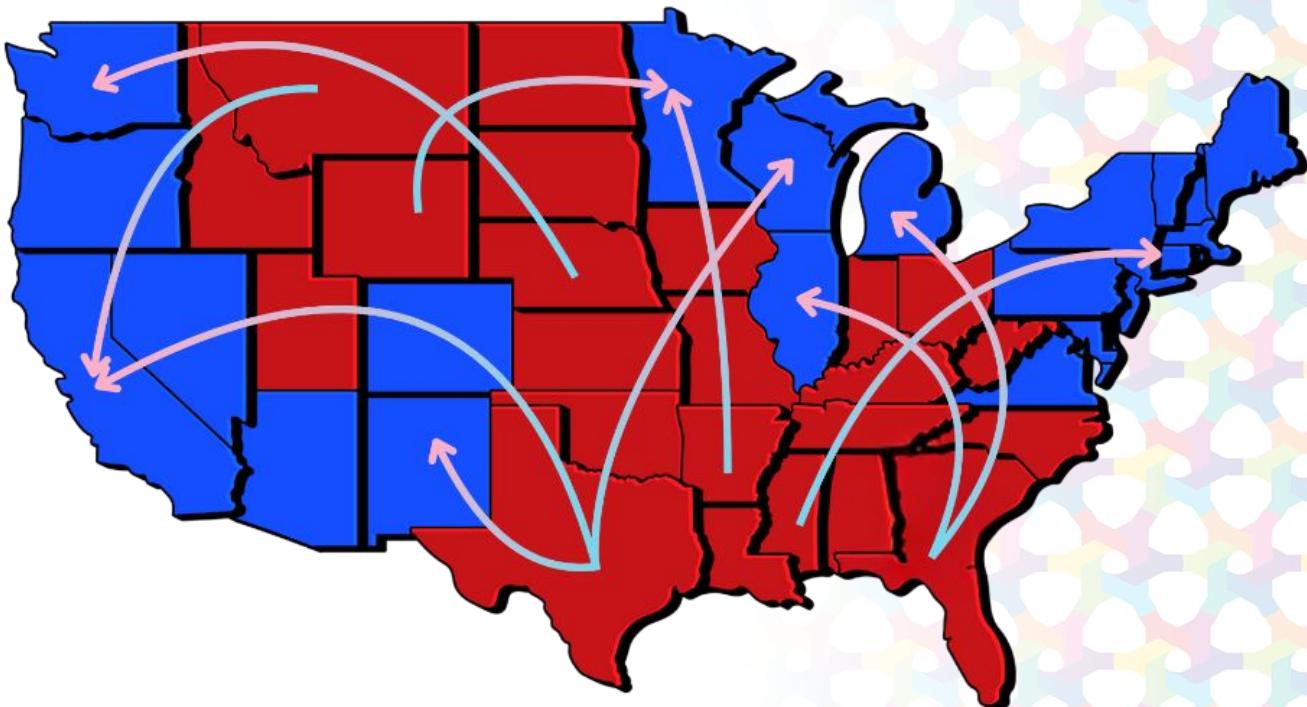
How many Adults and Youth Identify as Transgender in Illinois?

65.4K adults (18+) and 27.5K youth (13-17) identify as transgender in Illinois.



Source: [The Williams Institute](#) - Aug. 2025

An estimated
400,000
transgender
people have fled
their home states
since the 2024
election.



Source: [Movement Advancement Project](#) - Oct. 2025



YOUTHOUTLOOK

© Youth Outlook

Supporting LGBTQ+ individuals Through the Changing National Landscape

Executive Orders and Legislative Threats to LGBTQ+ Rights



Restricting student and educator rights



Healthcare restrictions



Weakening civil rights laws



Barriers to accurate IDs



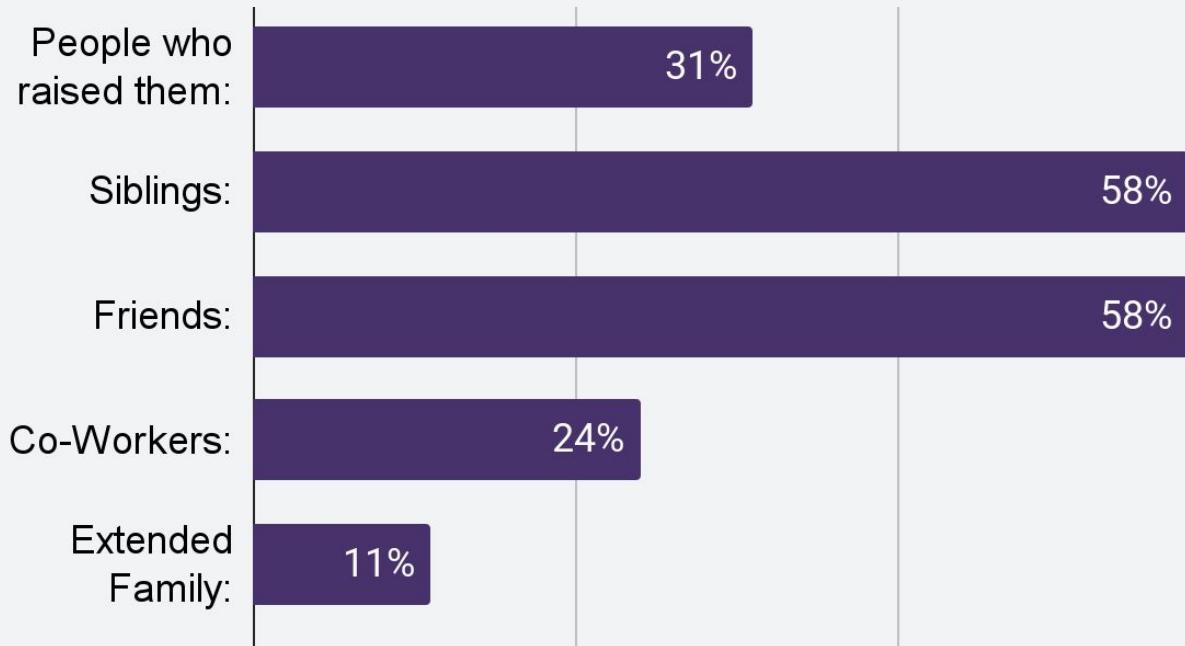
Public accommodation bans



Free speech and expression bans

Social Acceptance of Transgender Adults

% of U.S. Transgender adults who say **all** in each of the following groups have been accepting of them.



Source: [Pew Research Center](#) - Oct. 2025

LGBTQ+ Youth Mental Health

The impact of affirming and inclusive spaces is profound



Affirming homes
lowered the suicide
attempt rate



Schools with
affirming policies
lowered the suicide
attempt rate



Accepting
communities had
less than half the
suicide attempt rate



65% report knowing
at least one older
LGBTQ+ person they
consider a role model

Source: [2024 U.S. National Survey on the Mental Health of LGBTQ+ Young People](#)



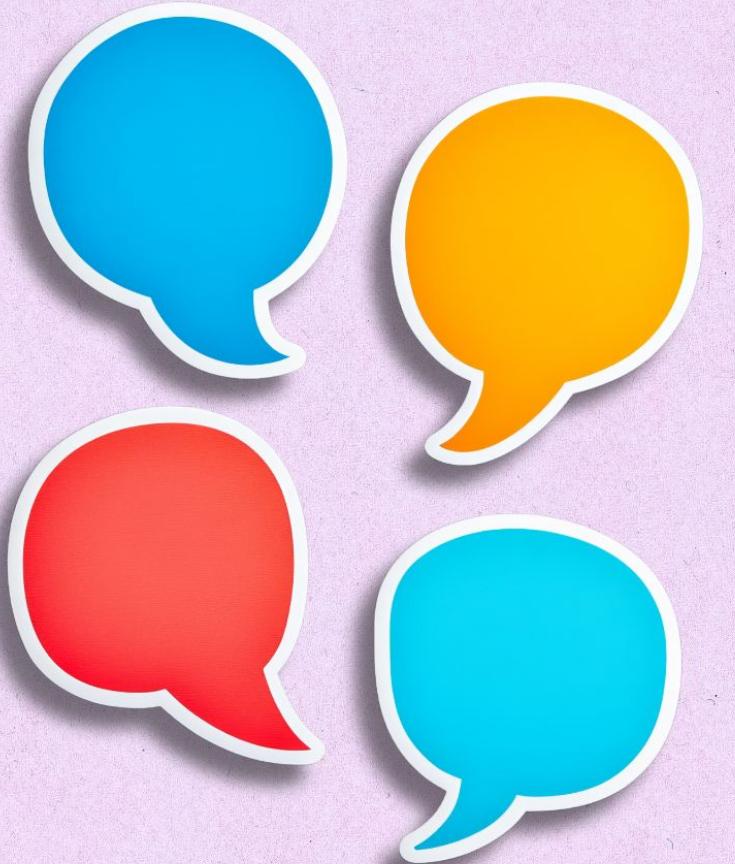
Supporting LGBTQ+ Friends and Neighbors



YOUTH OUTLOOK



YOUTHOUTLOOK

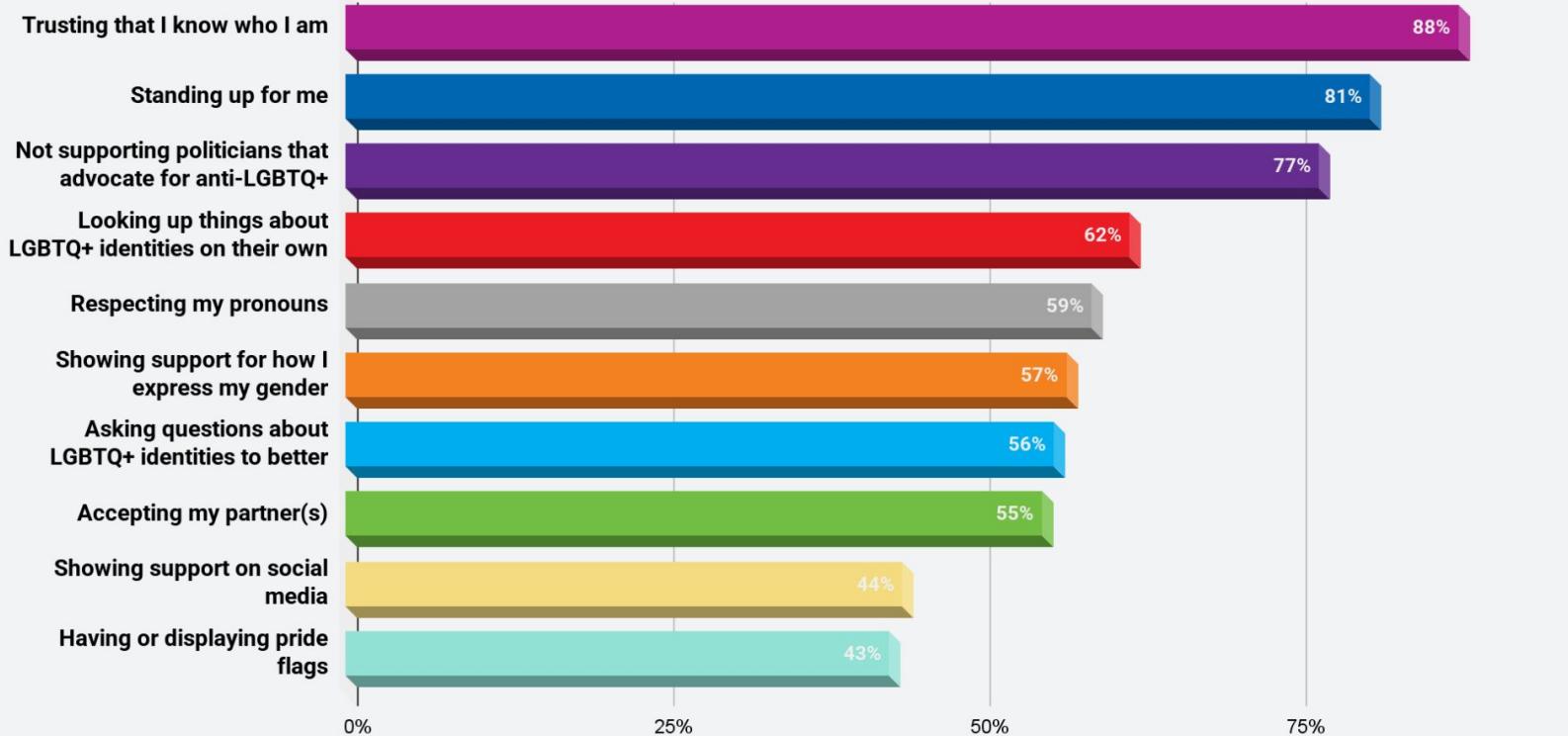


Discussion Question:

In your role in the community,
where do you see LGBTQ+
individuals needing support?

How have you tried to support
LGBTQ+ individuals previously?

Top 10 ways LGBTQ+ youth want adults to show their support and acceptance:



Source: [2024 National Youth Survey on the Mental Health of LGBTQ+ Young People](#)

Inclusive Ways to Greet People

Reduce Binary Language



Do say

- Your child/student
- Good morning, folks
- Hello, friends
- This person here...
- LGBTQ+ community
- Clients/Patrons



Don't say

- Your son/daughter
- Ladies & Gentleman
- You guys
- Gay community
- Sir/ma'am

Tips for supporting LGBTQ+ neighbors:

- Believe people if/when they open up to you
 - 88% of youth felt the best thing someone could do to support them was to trust that they know who they are. *Trevor Project 2024 Youth Survey*
- Avoid assumptions
 - Assumptions tend to erase LGBTQ+ identities, push yourself to question them
- Use inclusive language in place of gendered language
 - Ex. partner instead of boyfriend/girlfriend, sibling instead of brother/sister, parent instead of mom/dad, etc.
- Recognize the individual as a whole
 - LGBTQ+ clients hold numerous identities, make sure you aren't pigeonholing them
- Be a visible ally
 - Flags, stickers, sharing your pronouns
- **What can you do in your community specifically?**



Practice Scenarios

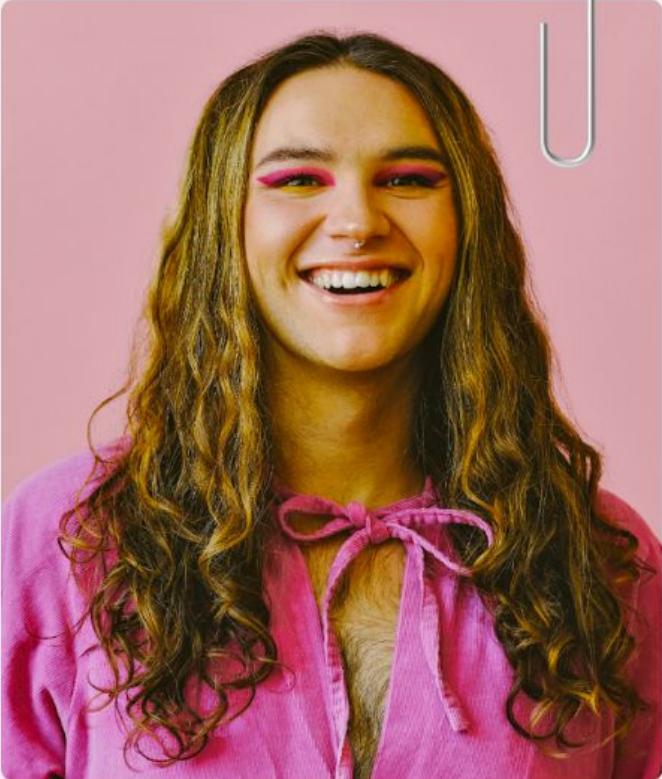


YOUTHOUTLOOK

Scenario #1

You go out to eat with a group of people from your community. The person taking your order presents very androgynously and wears a pronoun pin that says 'they/them' as well as a pin with the queer flag. When they leave the table, a member of the group says "I just don't get how you can be a they/them. You're either created male or female."

How might you respond?



Scenario #2

A family member sends you a Christmas card with a picture of their family, and one of their children is presenting their gender differently than in previous cards. The card, which is usually signed individually by each member of the family, now simply reads, "Love, the Johnsons."

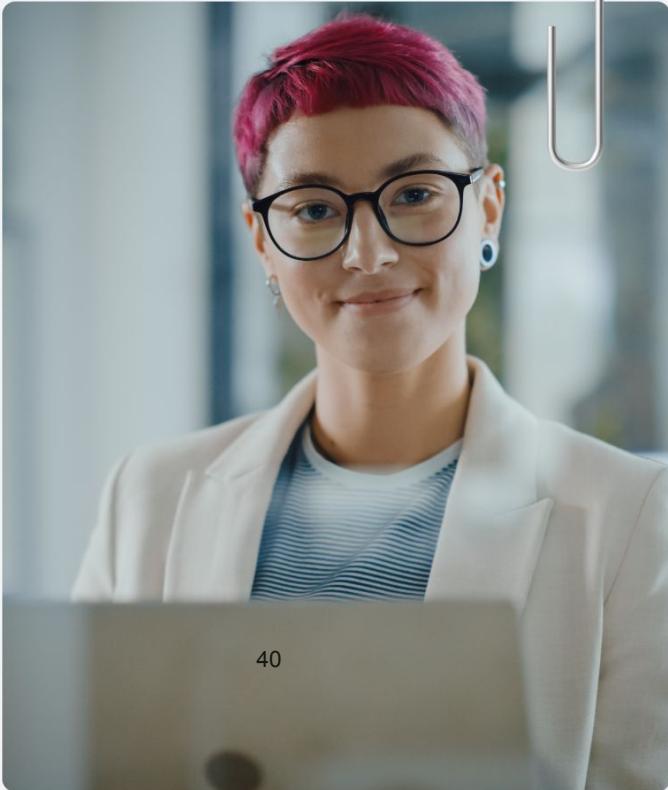
How do you address this family and child the next time you see them?



Scenario #3

An article with the headline 'LGBTQ+ people experience depression and anxiety at higher rates than their straight or cisgender peers' with a link to the research has been getting shared all over social media. The next day at work in the break room, a coworker brings it up to you and says "If they didn't put their sexuality on display so much, people would leave them alone."

How would you respond?



40

Scenario #4

Your friend of many years tells you they are questioning their gender identity.

How do you offer support?



YOUTHOUTLOOK

© Youth Outlook



YOUTHOUTLOOK

RESOURCES



youth-outlook.org



Online Resources & Information



West Suburban Community Network



Stay Up-To-Date

Follow these trusted sources for the latest updates on LGBTQ+ rights and policy changes.

Advocates for
Trans Equality-
News Briefs

Erin in the
Morning-
Independent Trans
Journalist

Movement
Advancement
Project

Chase Strangio-
ACLU LGBTQ+
Project on
Instagram



YOUTH OUTLOOK

Other Resources:

opalga+

(Oak Park area group,
changing name to **Out
with Purpose** in 2026)

new IL Pride
Connect Legal Hotline:
855-805-9200
(Mon-Thurs,
9am-4pm)

Supporting Your
LGBTQ+ Grandchild
A Guide from PFLAG

The Trevor Project:
Resource Center



YOUTHOUTLOOK

Thank you!

Carolyn Wahlskog, LCSW

carolyn.wahlskog@youth-outlook.org

Elexis Richardson

lexis@youth-outlook.org

youth-outlook.org

Instagram: [@youthoutlook](https://www.instagram.com/@youthoutlook)

Facebook: [@youthoutlookIL](https://www.facebook.com/youthoutlookIL)



YOUTHOUTLOOK

Let us know how we did!

Takes less than five minutes.
[Click here](#) or scan the QR code.



© Youth Outlook