

Coping with COVID-19: How Young People Use Digital Media to Manage Their Mental Health
**Fact sheet: Mental health, digital health practices, and social media use
among LGBTQ+ U.S. teens and young adults (age 14–22)**

This fact sheet presents data from a nationally representative survey of more than 1,500 14- to 22-year-olds in the U.S., conducted in September–November 2020 by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago, on behalf of Common Sense, the California Health Care Foundation, and Hopelab. The complete survey findings, methodology, quotes from participants, and text of the questionnaire are available [here](#).

Many U.S. LGBTQ+ youth (age 14–22) face serious health concerns, especially compared to non-LGBTQ+ youth:

- 65% of LGBTQ+ youth report symptoms of moderate to severe depression, twice the percentage of non-LGBTQ+ youth (31%).
- 19% of LGBTQ+ youth are at risk of problematic substance use, compared with 8% of non-LGBTQ+ youth.

98% of LGBTQ+ youth have used digital tools for health purposes, such as seeking health information online, using a health-related app, connecting to a provider, or finding others online with similar health concerns.

- 92% of LGBTQ+ youth have looked for health information online; the top topics are COVID-19 and anxiety.
- LGBTQ+ youth searched online more than non-LGBTQ+ youth for information on anxiety, depression, and/or stress (77% vs. 51%), sleep disorders (43% vs. 21%), and eating disorders (34% vs. 14%).
- 48% of LGBTQ+ youth have used a mental health app (such as for depression, meditation/mindfulness, mood tracking, stress reduction, and alcohol or drug abuse) compared with 28% of non-LGBTQ+ youth.
- 54% of LGBTQ+ youth have looked for others online with similar health concerns, compared with 38% of non-LGBTQ+ youth.

More than half of LGBTQ+ youth (58%) have used telehealth services to connect with providers online, significantly more than non-LGBTQ+ youth (45%).

- 78% of LGBTQ+ youth who have connected with a provider online say they found it "very" (27%) or "somewhat" (51%) helpful. However, the percentage of LGBTQ+ youth who say it's "very" helpful is significantly lower than that of non-LGBTQ+ youth (27% vs. 41%).
- 55% of LGBTQ+ youth who have not yet connected with a provider online are "very" (12%) or "somewhat" (43%) interested in doing so.

The majority of LGBTQ+ youth encounter homophobic content on social media.

- 74% of LGBTQ+ youth "often" (44%) or "sometimes" (30%) encounter homophobic content on social media.
- More LGBTQ+ youth see homophobic content "often" than do non-LGBTQ+ youth (44% vs. 18%).

However, many LGBTQ+ youth have positive opinions about social media, especially during the era of COVID-19:

- During the coronavirus pandemic, the majority of LGBTQ+ youth say social media has been "very" or "somewhat" important for staying connected to friends and family (81%), keeping informed about current events (78%), and helping learn how to protect themselves and others from the virus (77%).
- LGBTQ+ youth are more likely than non-LGBTQ+ youth to say social media is "very" important to express themselves creatively (36% vs. 23%), get inspiration from others (31% vs. 21%), feel less alone (28% vs. 20%), and get support or advice (28% vs. 19%).
- 52% of LGBTQ+ youth say social media helps them feel better when they are depressed, stressed, or anxious (34% say it makes no difference, and 13% say it makes them feel worse). This is a significantly more positive perception than non-LGBTQ+ youth (42% say it makes them feel better). Additionally, the data shows a significant positive shift from 2018, when 36% of LGBTQ+ youth said social media helps them feel better.

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