



# Supporting LGBTQ+ young people who have suicidal thoughts

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A new suicide prevention plan  
Conference 2023

**#NSPACnf**



National  
**Suicide Prevention**  
Alliance

**Supporting LGBTQ+ young people  
who have suicidal thoughts**

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**SUICIDE PREVENTION**

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# GRASSROOTS

## SUICIDE PREVENTION

**Building a future where more  
lives are saved from suicide.**

**Connecting**

**Campaigning**

**Educating**

GRASSROOTS

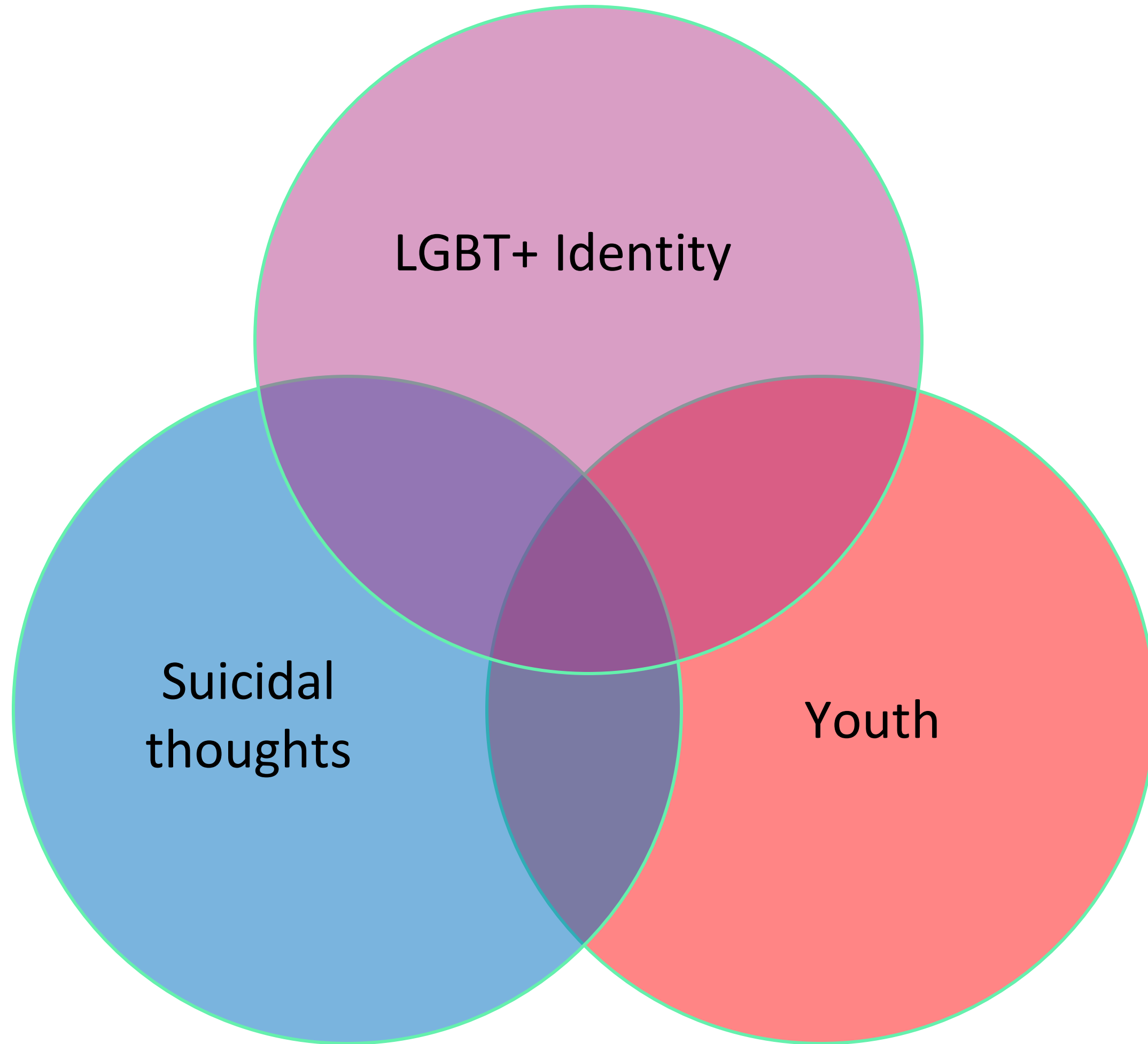
**GRASSROOTS**  
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Allsorts Youth Project listens to, supports and connects children & young people, age 5 - 25, who are **LGBT+** (lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or trans), or **exploring their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.**



# Overview

- Explain the prevalence of suicide in LGBT+ young people
- Explore the challenges that LGBT+ young people face that contributes to the high rate of suicidality in this group
- Present practical strategies that you can use to support LGBT+ young people at risk of suicide



LGBT+ Identity

Suicidal  
thoughts

Youth

# Ben's Story



# **Why do some LGBT+ young people self-harm or have suicidal feelings?**

- 1. Experiences of homophobia, biphobia, or transphobia**
- 2. Sexual and gender norms**
- 3. Managing sexual orientation and gender identity across multiple life domains**
- 4. Being unable to talk**
- 5. Other life crises**





# Evidence - risk factors



Homo/bi/transphobic discrimination

Being unable to share sexual or gender identity

Cis-heteronormativity

Identifying as LGBTQ+ at an early age

Being gender diverse

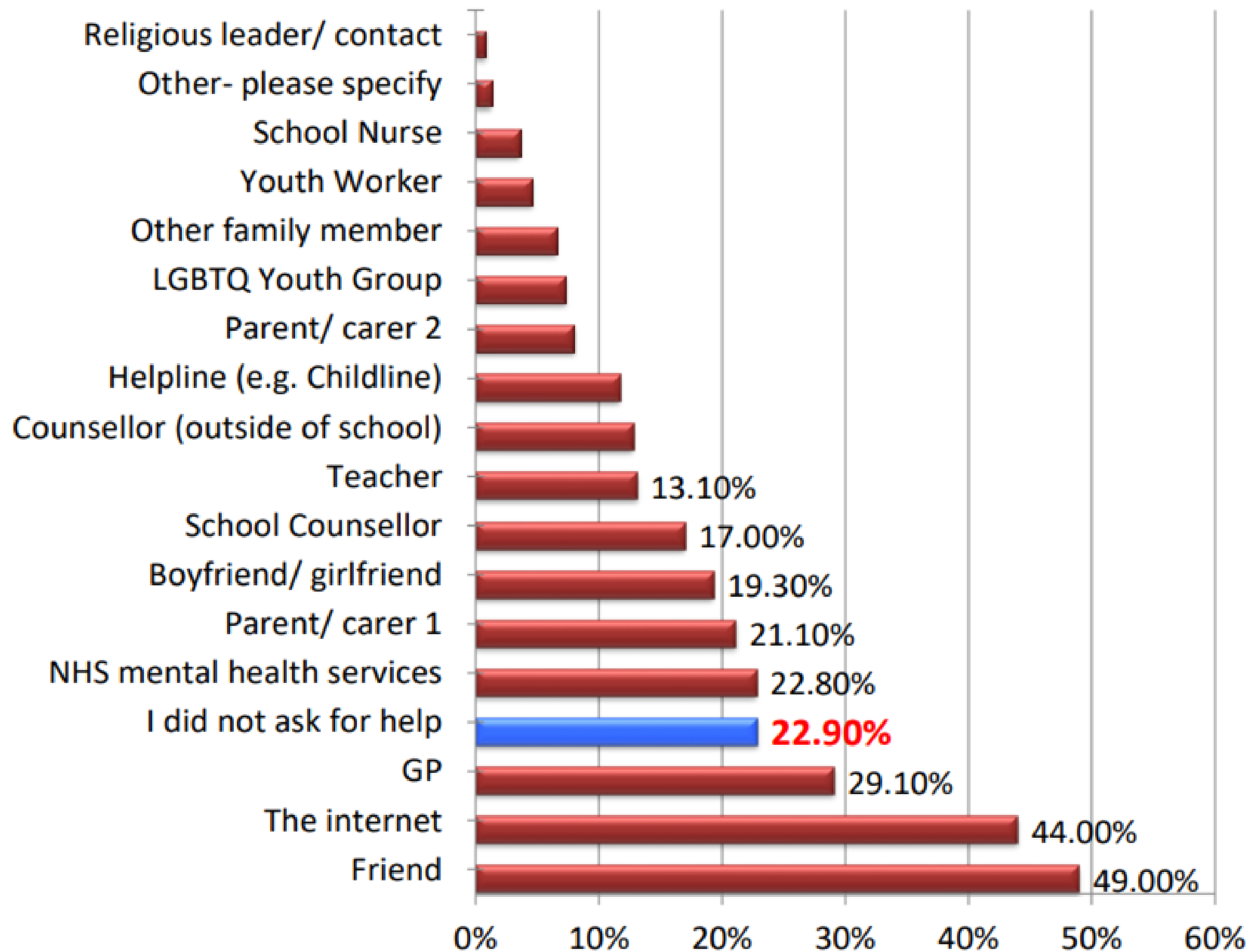
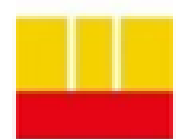
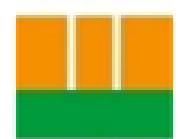
Conflict with family or peers about sexual or gender identity

Social isolation

(Bochicchio et al, 2021; McDermott et al, 2016; Haas, 2010)

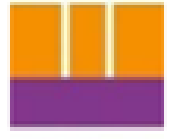
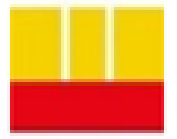
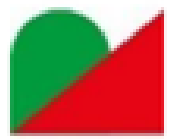
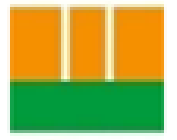


# Who did they ask for help?





# Why did they \*not\* ask for help?



I didn't want to be seen as attention seeking

I did not want them to worry about me

I felt ashamed of my self-harm/ suicidal feelings

I thought my family would be disappointed

I did not want to be judged

I thought I would not be taken seriously

I did not want anyone to know about my sexual...

I did not want to be treated differently

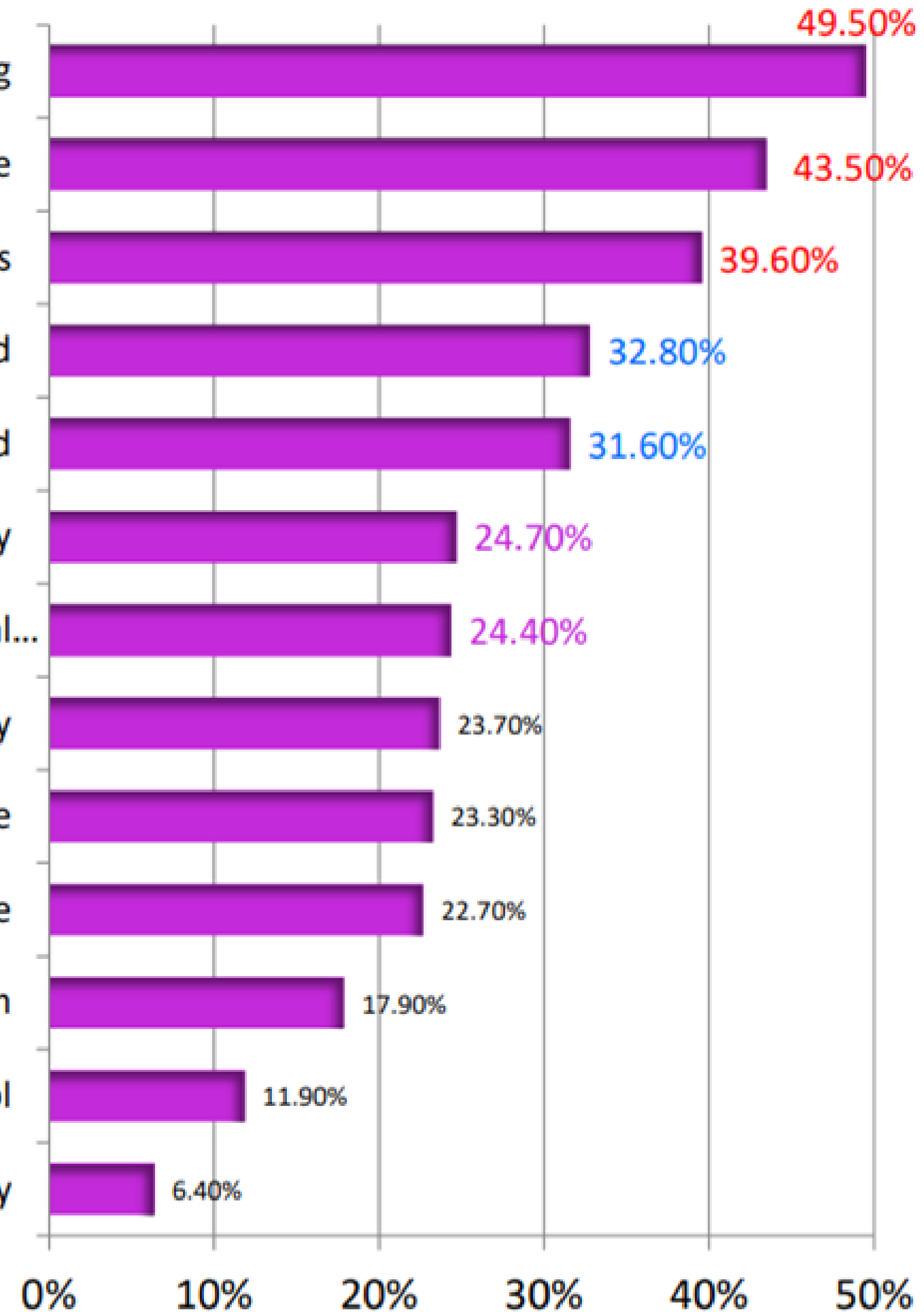
I did not think that anyone would care

It was private

I did not think it was a serious problem

My self-harm was under control

Other- please specify





# The challenges of developing a LGBT+ identity

# WHEEL OF POWER/PRIVILEGE



Adapted from ccrweb.ca

@sylvriaduckworth

# Self harm & Suicide

**A history of self-harm is an important risk factor for future suicide.**

- It elevates the risk of suicide 50 to 100-fold within the year following self-harm.
- Self-harm can reduce a person's fear of pain or death and therefore lead to an ability to self-harm more severely over time
- Long term self-harm does not reduce emotional distress and alternative healthy coping mechanisms are needed
- Risk assessment per se has a very limited and short-term predictive power of a person's future risk: Royal College of Psychiatrists
- It is vital to ask clearly "Are you thinking of suicide?"



# Are you prepared?

- Become aware of your own attitudes towards LGBT+ young people
- Address young people confidently, compassionately, and non-judgementally
- Take a strengths-based approach
- Build awareness of services for LGBT+ young people available in your community

PREVENTION

# Is your service prepared?

- Our materials are inclusive of a diverse audience including LGBT+ young people
- We use gender-inclusive language on intake/history forms and questionnaires
- We have policies regarding talking to young people alone without their parent/caregiver
- Our service attendance hours are convenient for teens
- My team is aware of privacy concerns when young people check in
- Our confidentiality policies are posted in areas that can be viewed by both young people and their families
- We are careful to avoid making assumptions about gender identity or sexual orientation







# Stay Alive

**Our award-winning Stay Alive app was created by people who have lived experience of suicidal feelings and concerns.**

- Stay Alive is free, anonymous, and full of life-saving resources.
- As of October 2022, it has been downloaded over 600,000 times.
- The app can be used by those who sometimes feel at risk of suicide, or by those who are worried about others.



**Thank you!**

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