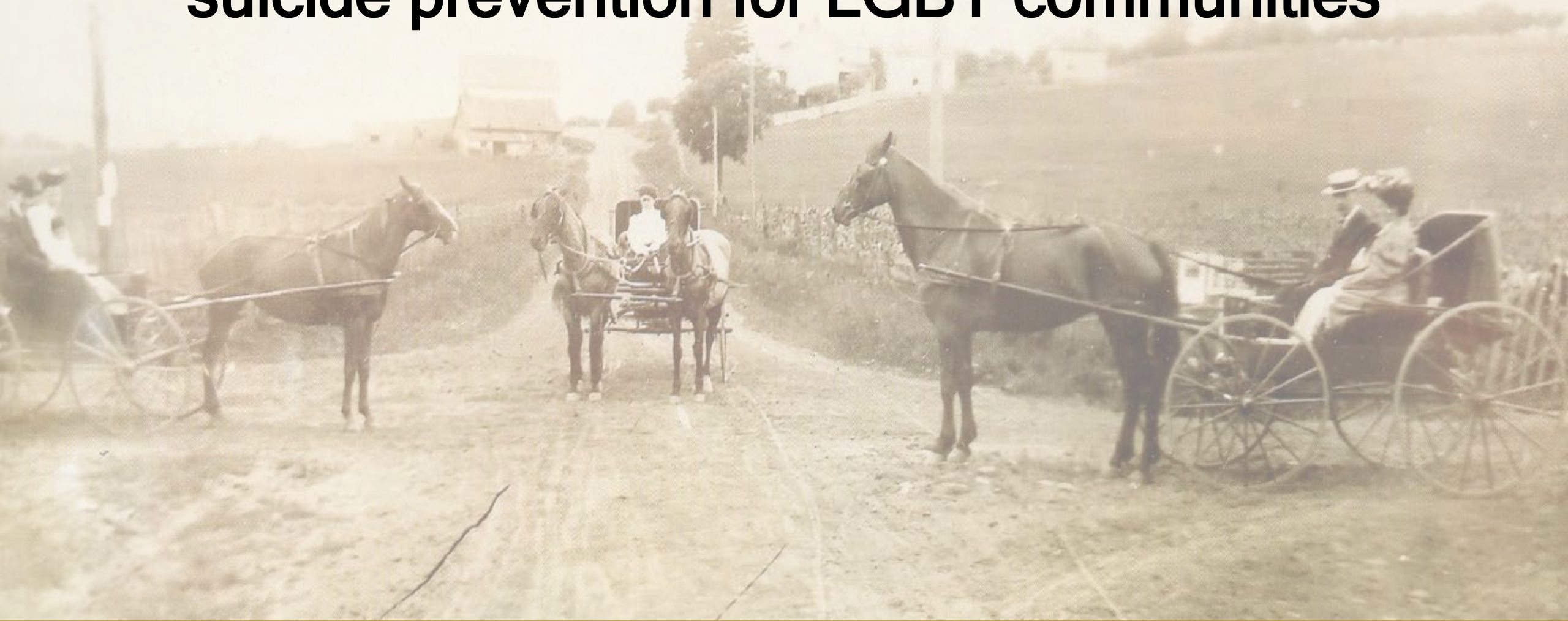


# At crossroads: How place, data, and identity impact suicide prevention for LGBT communities



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University of Southern California  
Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work

# Overview

## Describe

unique health risk  
factors for LGBT  
populations

## Summarize

differences in suicide  
morbidity and mortality  
for LGBT individuals

## Explain

data limitations  
hampering research  
about LGBT  
communities

## Disclosures

- Support from NIMH (DP2MH129967 - PI Blosnich; R21MH125360 - PI Blosnich)
- Opinions are those of the presenter and do not necessarily reflect those of the funders or institution

**Who is this  
guy?**

**LGBT  
Population**

**Health  
Disparities**

**The Role of  
Stigma**

**The Need  
for Data**

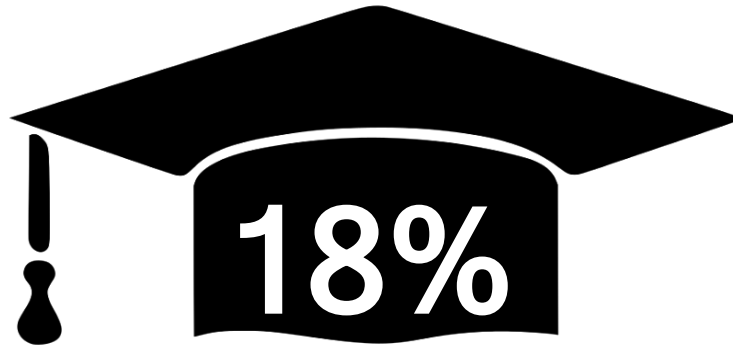




# Greene County Is Like Many Rural Areas in Appalachia



**White**

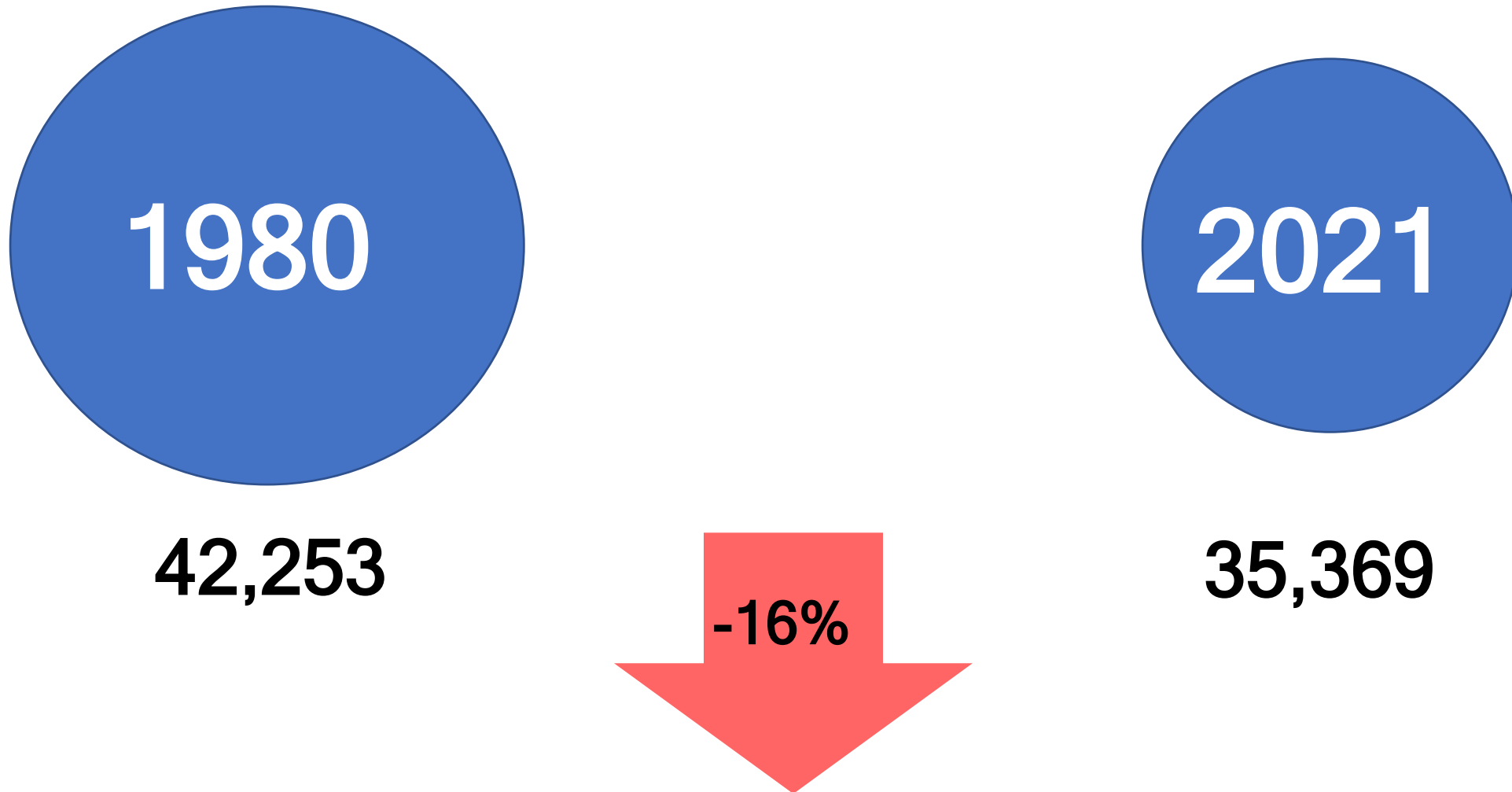


**College  
Degree**

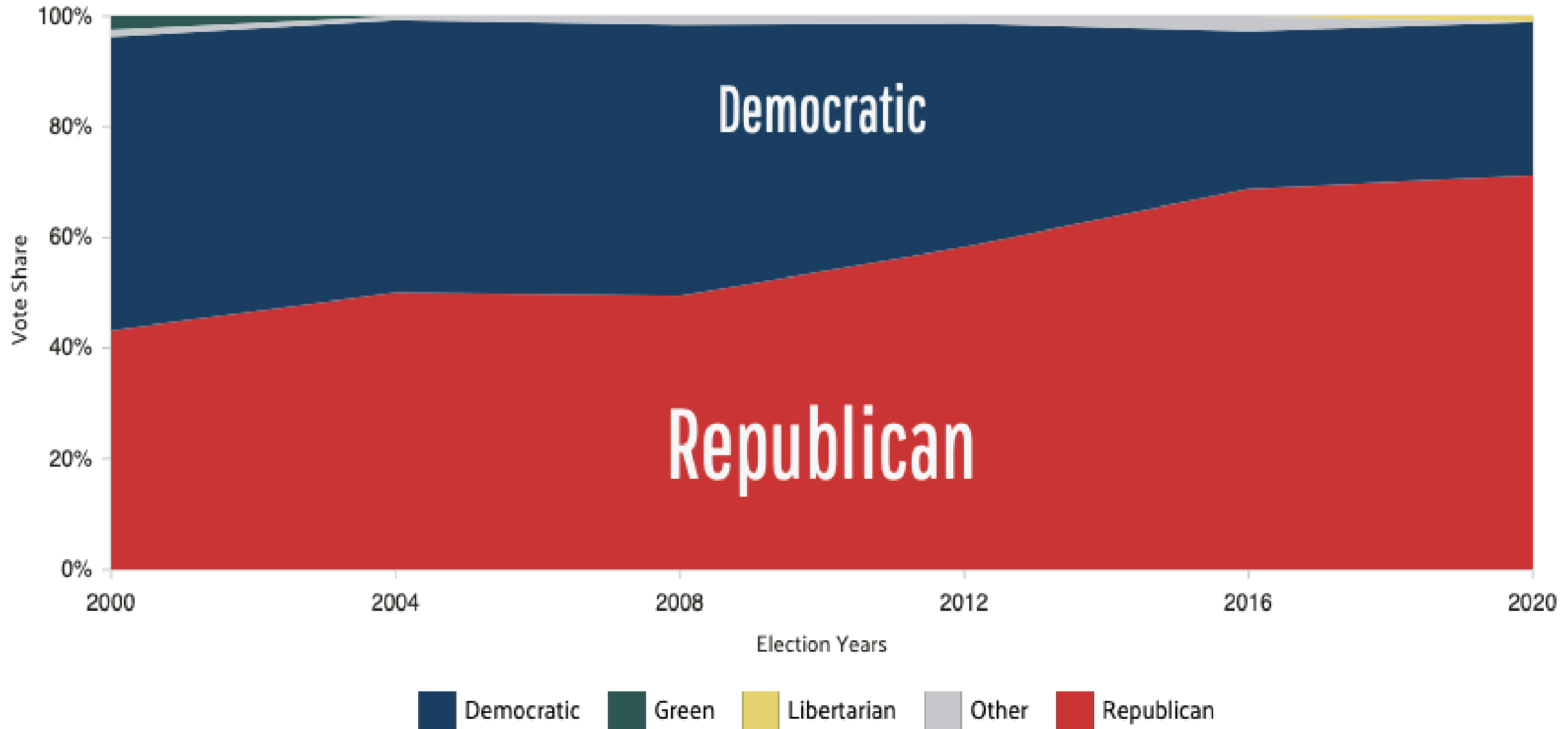



**Median Age**

# Greene County Is Like Many Rural Areas in Appalachia



# Greene County Is Like Many Rural Areas in Appalachia





Who is this  
guy?

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for Data



# Sex and gender are complex



## Sex

assigned at birth or in utero based on genitals or chromosomes

## Gender

social constructions of how sexes should look, behave, think, etc.

## Gender identity

internal sense of self as masculine, feminine, both, neither, or another identity

## Gender expression

how you show your identity to the world



# A California fire sparked by a gender reveal party has grown to more than 10,000 acres

By Sarah Moon and [Hollie Silverman](#), CNN

🕒 Updated 4:46 PM ET, Tue September 8, 2020

## U.S. Gender Wage Gap Narrowed by Less Than One Cent Last Year

Median income also decreased 1.2% for working women in 2020.

By [Amy Yee](#)

September 14, 2021, 12:32 PM CDT

## 'Bathroom bill' allowing students, teachers to reject shared restrooms with transgender peers clears Senate

[Yue Stella Yu](#) Nashville Tennessean

Published 12:07 p.m. CT April 21, 2021 | Updated 2:54 p.m. CT April 21, 2021



# Common terms related to gender identity

## Transgender

gender identity, expressions, or behaviors that are different from those traditionally associated with one's assigned sex at birth

## Transgender woman

assigned male sex at birth and identifies as woman/feminine

## Transgender man

assigned female sex at birth and identifies as man/masculine

## Many other identities (USTS, 2016)

Genderqueer: 29%

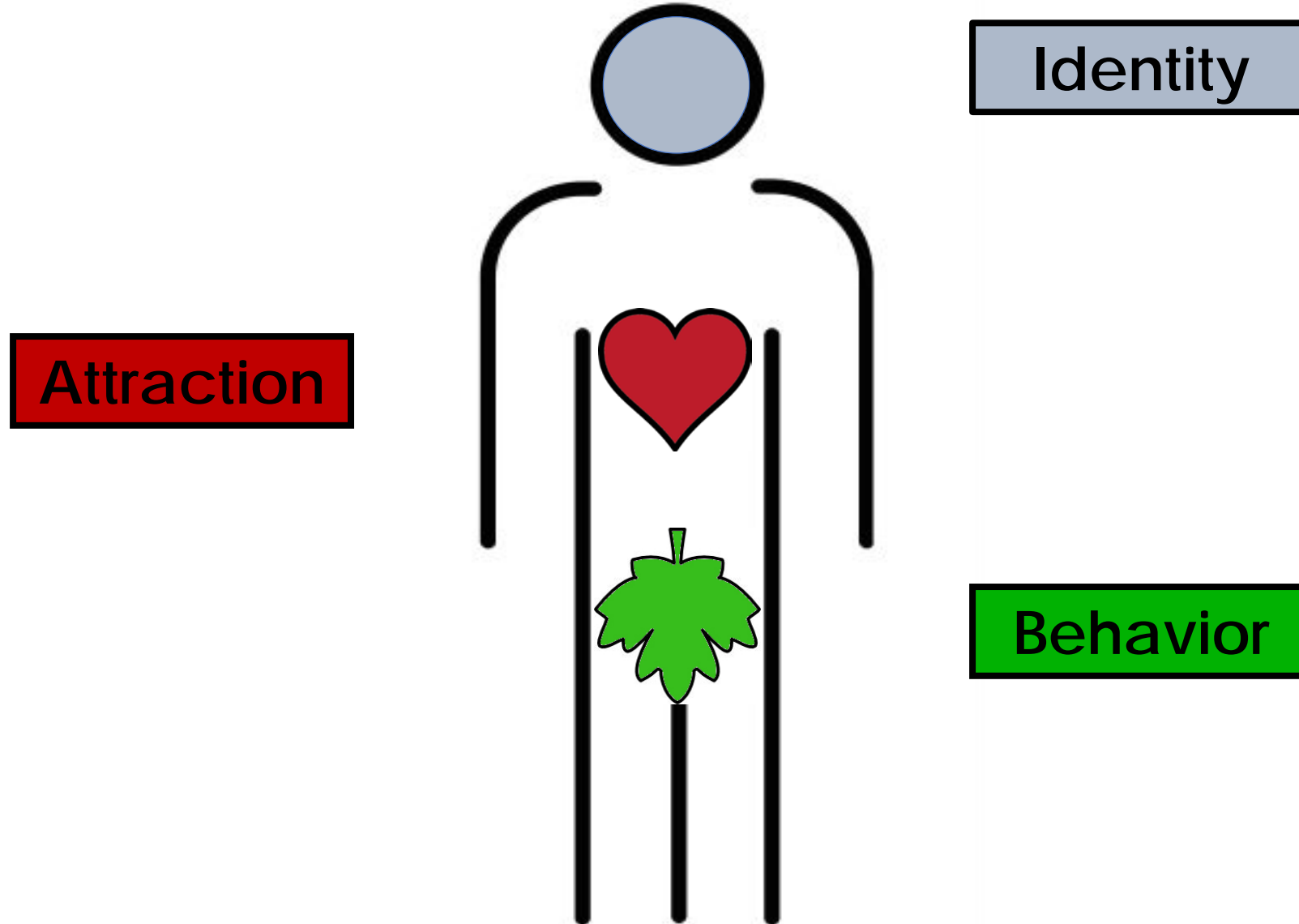
Androgynous: 18%

Non-binary: 31%

Gender fluid: 20%

**Gender identity does not depend on medical interventions**

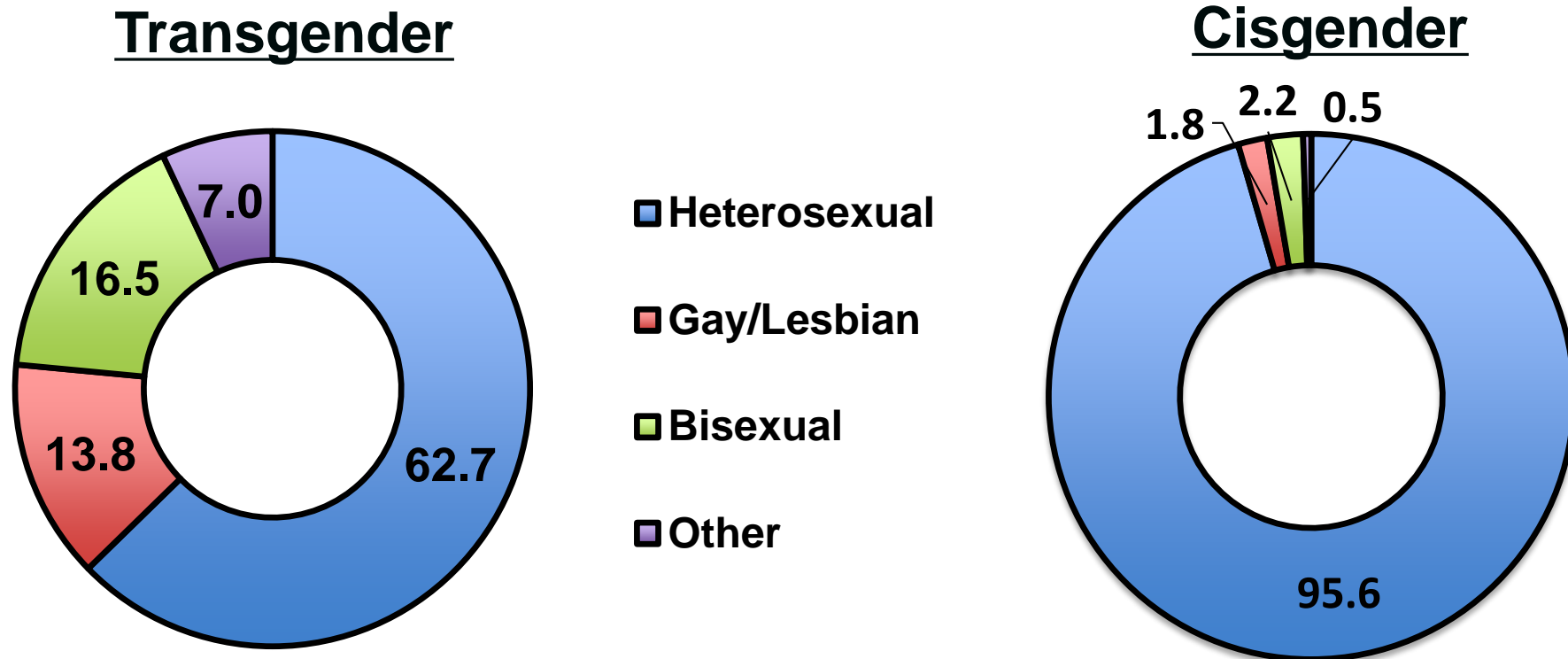
# Sexual orientation is related to, but distinct from, gender identity





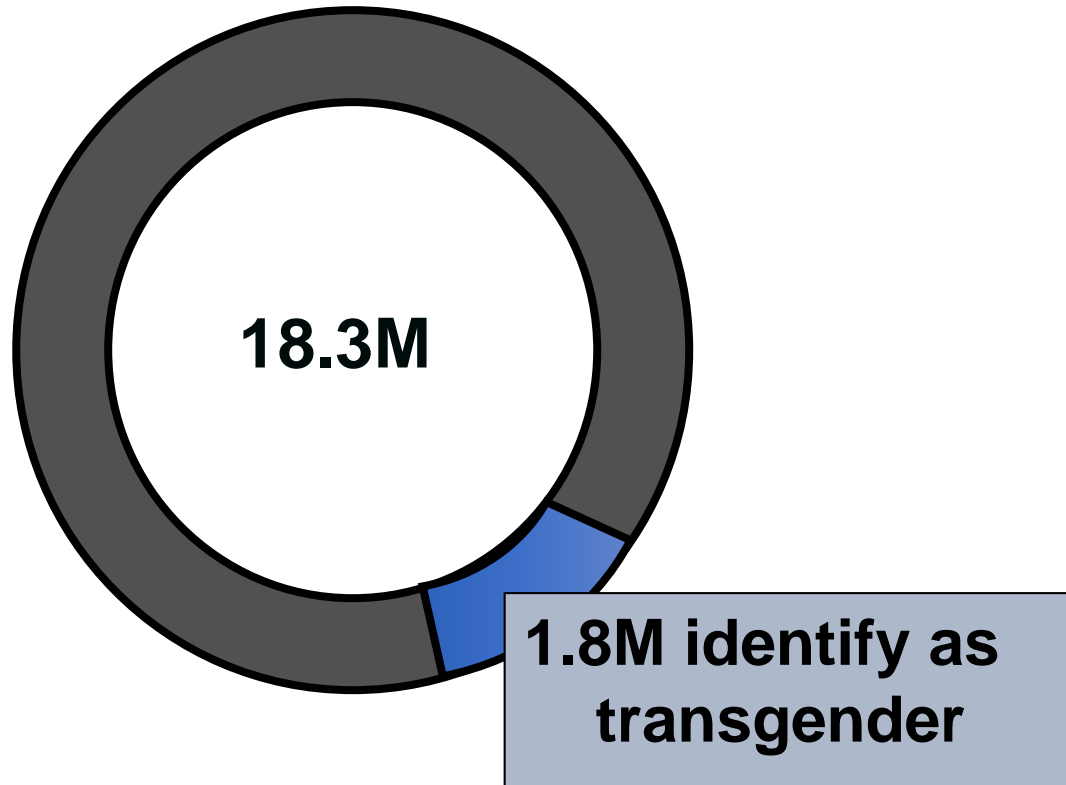
# To emphasize distinction of sexual orientation and gender identity

756 transgender adults answered questions about their sexual orientation (BRFSS, 2016)



# How many adults are LGBT in the US?

**2022 Gallup survey: 7.1%  
identified as LGBT**



- **Could be the 5<sup>th</sup> most populous state in the US**
- **More people than Pennsylvania**

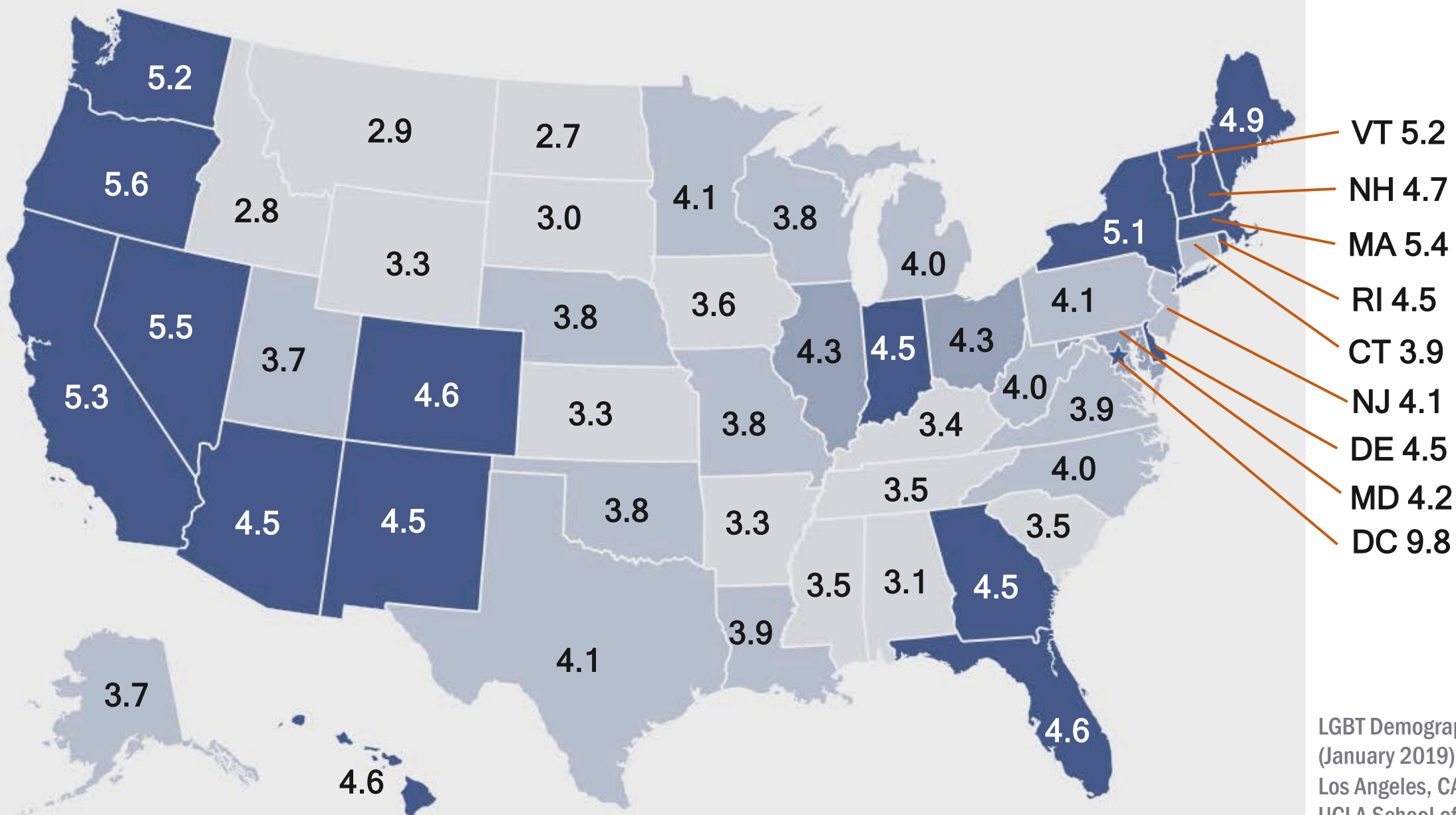
# LGBT identities more common among younger generations

## Americans' Self-Identification as LGBT, by Generation

	<b>LGBT</b>	<b>Straight/Heterosexual</b>	<b>No response</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Generation Z (born 1997-2003)	20.8	75.7	3.5
Millennials (born 1981-1996)	10.5	82.5	7.1
Generation X (born 1965-1980)	4.2	89.3	6.5
Baby boomers (born 1946-1964)	2.6	90.7	6.8
Traditionalists (born before 1946)	0.8	92.2	7.1

GALLUP, 2021

# % LGBT-identified Adults, 2015-2017



LGBT Demographic Data Interactive.  
(January 2019).  
Los Angeles, CA: The Williams Institute,  
UCLA School of Law



Who is this  
guy?

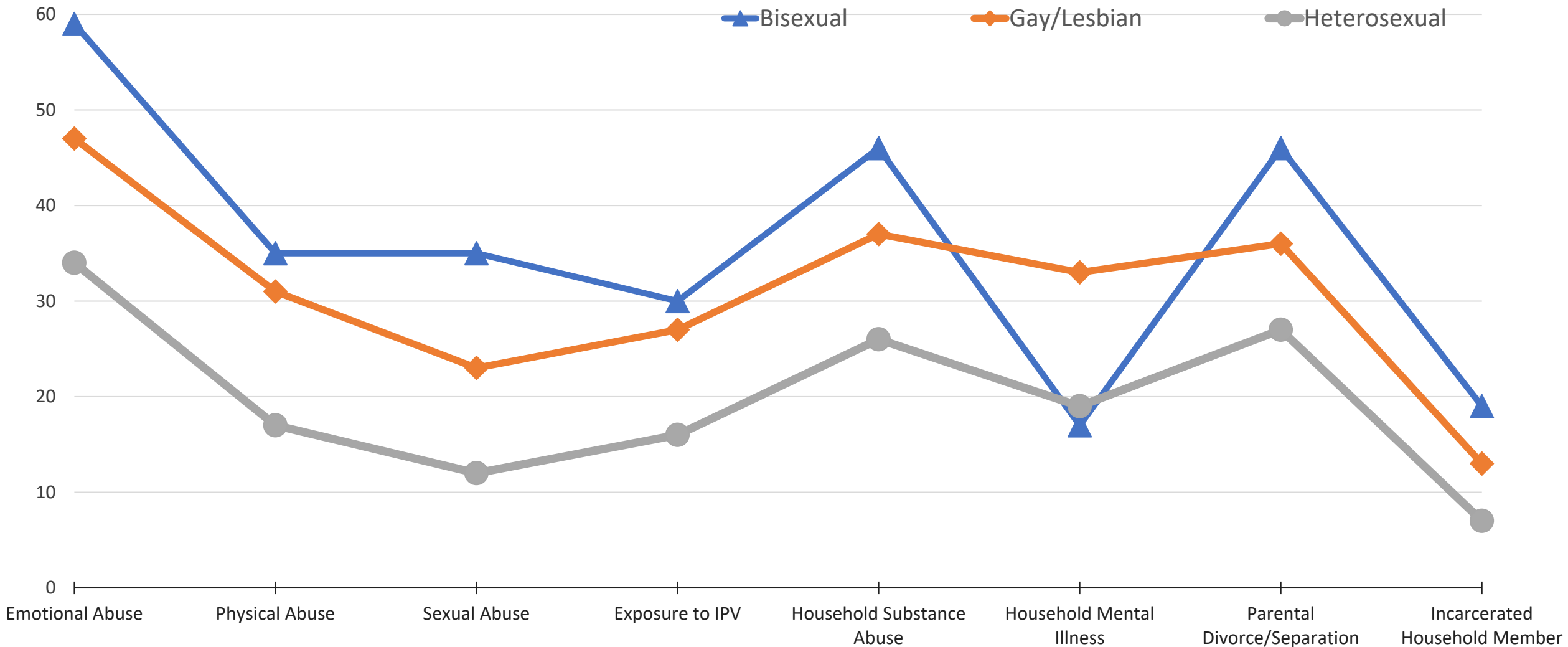
LGBT  
Population

**Health &  
Risk  
Disparities**

The Role of  
Stigma

The Need  
for Data

# Adverse childhood experiences are highly prevalent



# Research shows other health and risk disparities of LGBT vs. non-LGBT people



**More likely to smoke**



**More likely to experience chronic stress**



**More likely to be victims of assault**



**More likely to use opioids**



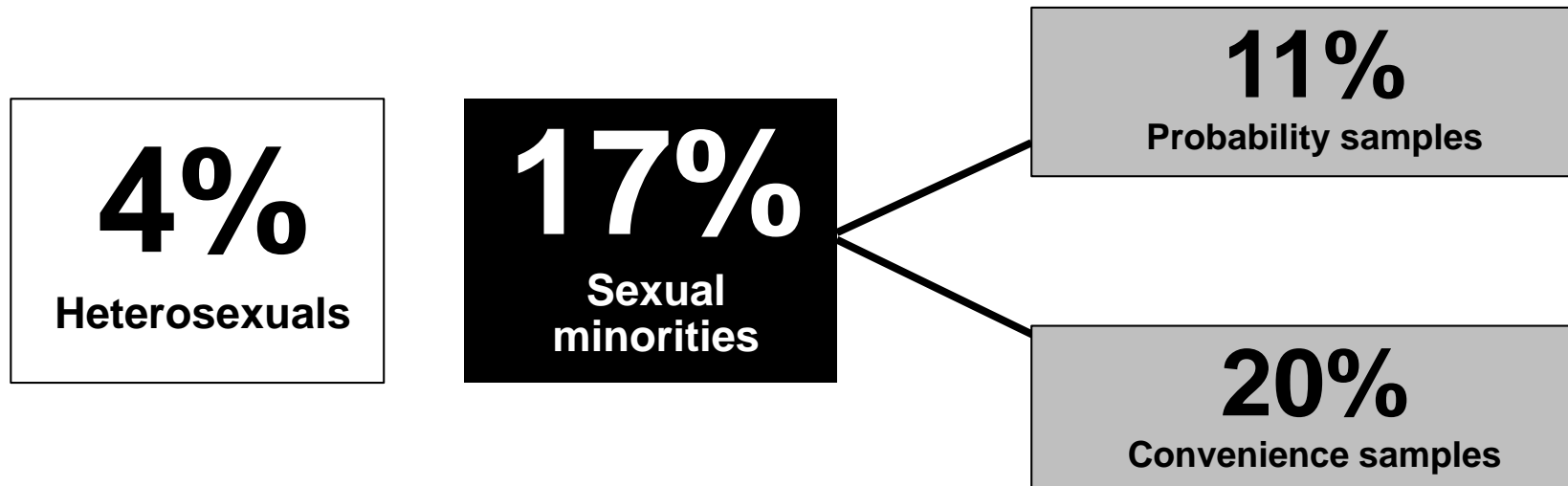
**More likely to have lifetime suicide ideation and attempt**

# Sexual minority adults 3-5x higher prevalence lifetime suicide attempt

AJPH RESEARCH

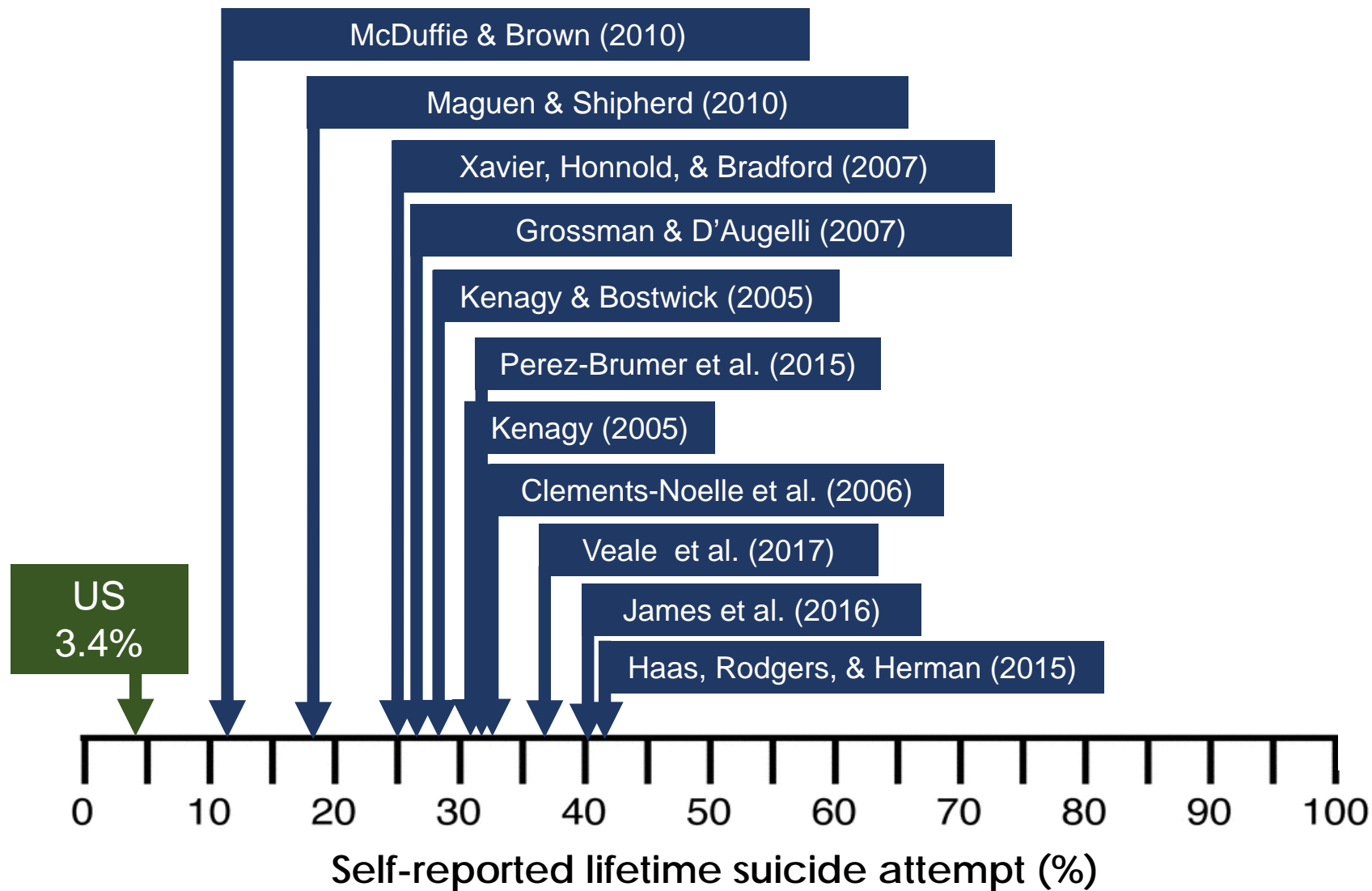
## Lifetime Prevalence of Suicide Attempts Among Sexual Minority Adults by Study Sampling Strategies: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis

*Travis Salway Hottes, MSc, Laura Bogaert, MSc, Anne E. Rhodes, PhD, David J. Brennan, PhD, and Dionne Gesink, PhD*

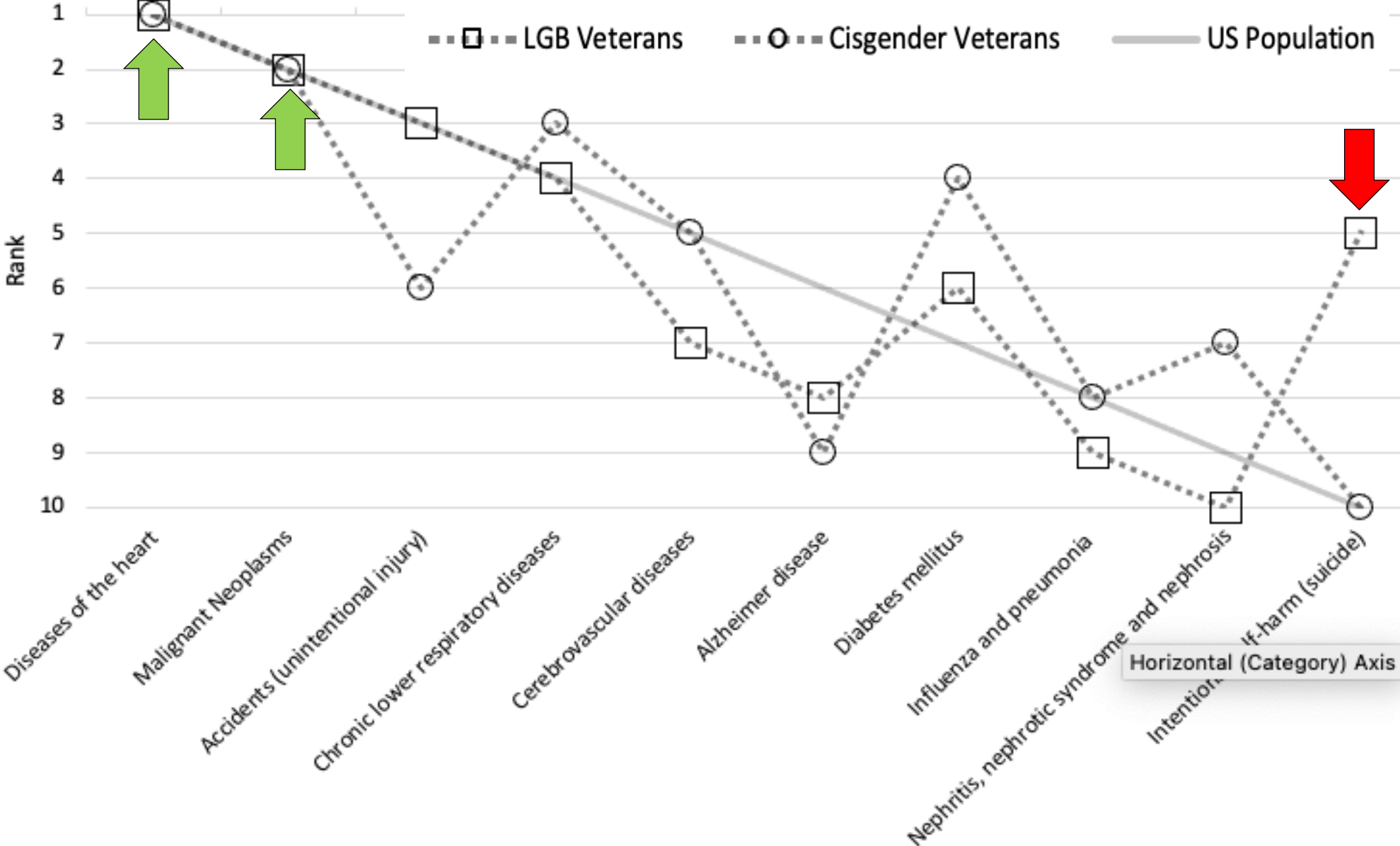




# High prevalence of lifetime suicide attempt among TGD individuals

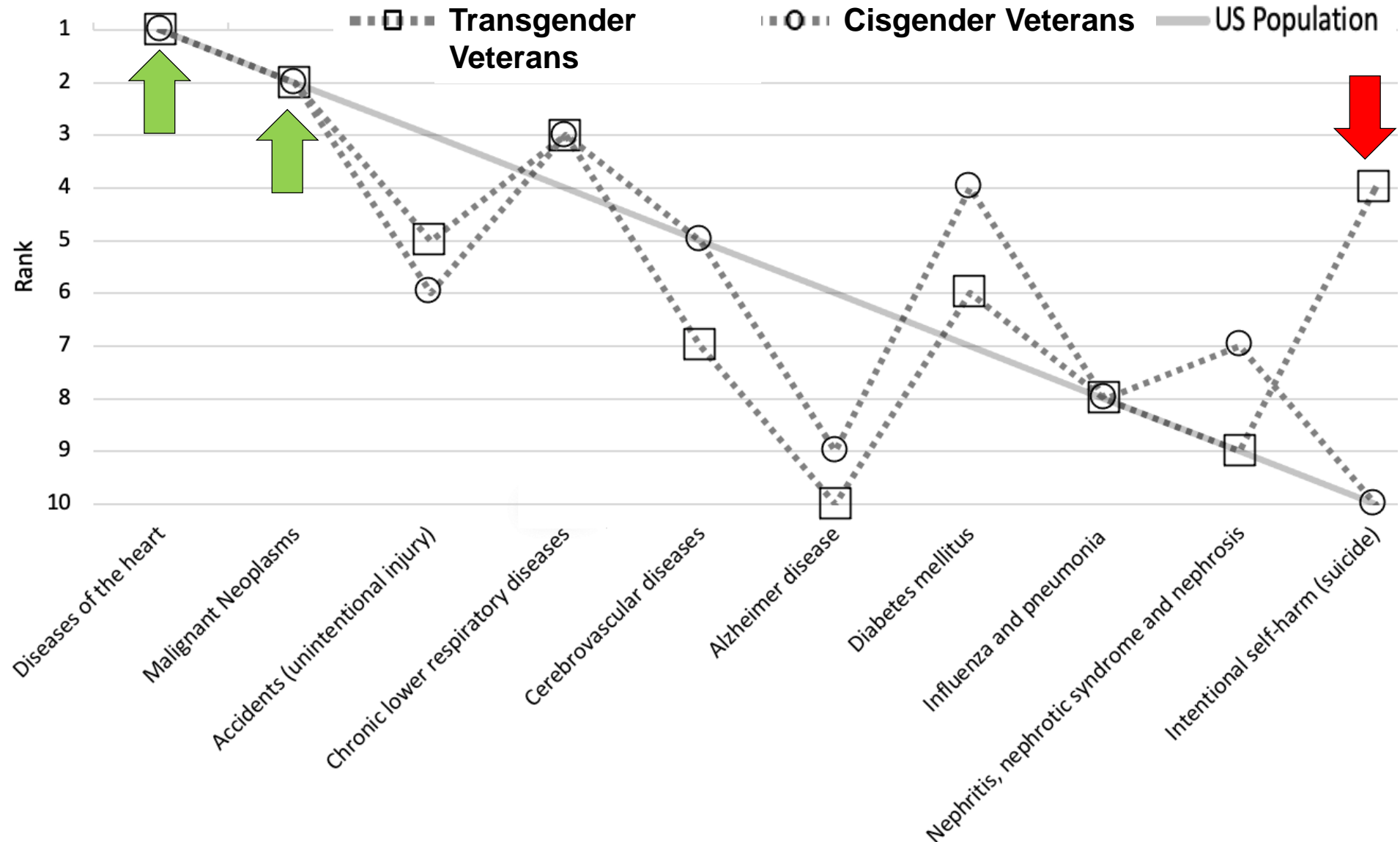


# Suicide 5<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death for LGB VHA Veterans

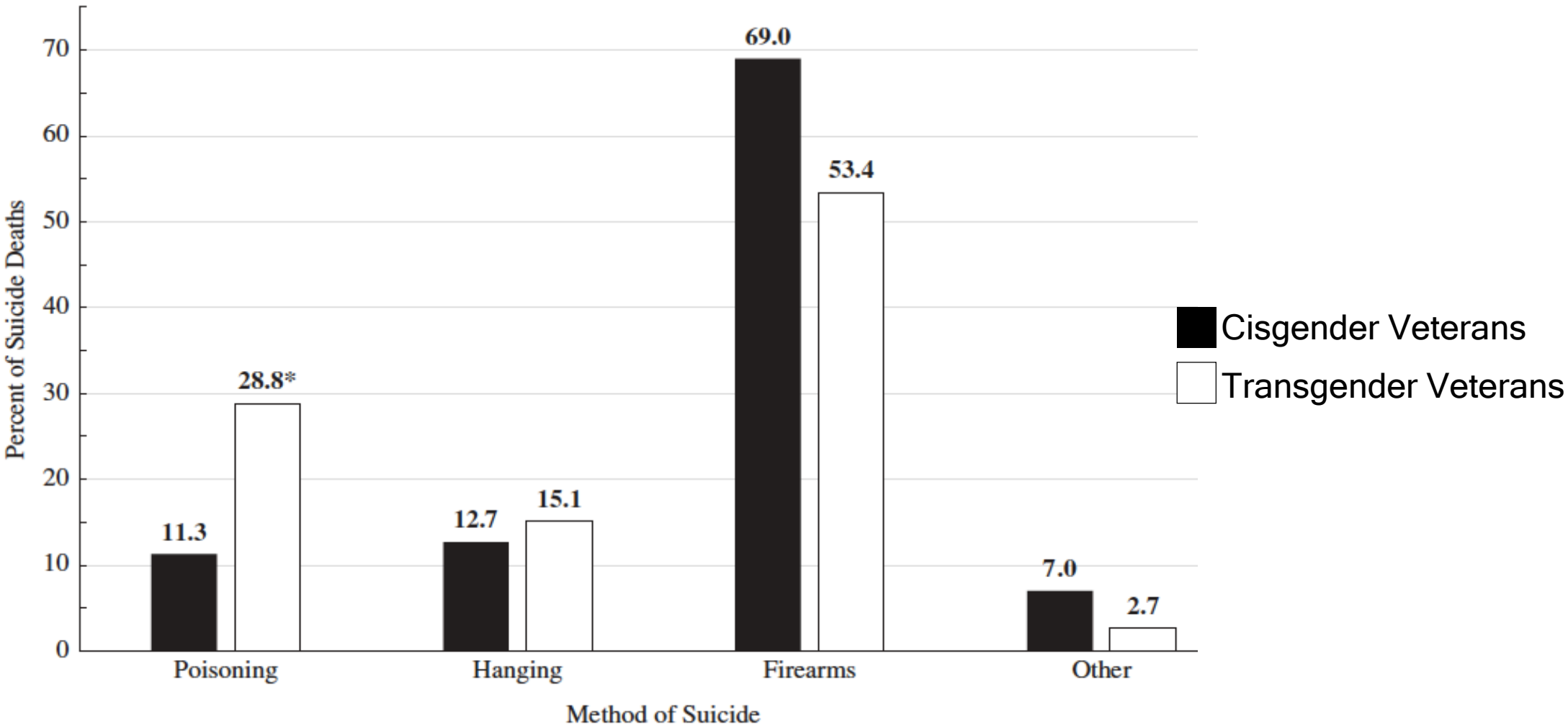


Horizontal (Category) Axis

# Suicide 4<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death for transgender VHA Veterans



# Looking more closely at suicide deaths of transgender Veterans



Blosnich JR, Boyer TL, Brown GR, Kauth MR, Shipherd JC. Differences in Methods of Suicide Death Among Transgender and Nontransgender Patients in the Veterans Health Administration, 1999–2016. Medical Care. 2021;59:S31-S35.



# Firearms less prevalent in the households of sexual minorities

## General Social Survey

Sexual minorities had 45% lower odds of firearm in household compared to heterosexuals

## Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System – CA & TX

Sexual minorities had 53% lower odds of firearm in household compared to heterosexuals

Clark KA, Blosnich JR, Coulter RW, Bamwine P, Bossarte RM, Cochran SD. Sexual orientation differences in gun ownership and beliefs about gun safety policy, General Social Survey 2010–2016. *Violence and Gender*. 2020;7(1):6-10.


Blosnich JR, Clark KA, Mays VM, Cochran SD. Sexual and gender minority status and firearms in the household: findings from the 2017 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Surveys, California and Texas. *Public Health Reports*. 2020;135(6):778-784.

# Among people who inject drugs, gay/lesbian people may have higher mortality

2,007 people who inject drugs in Denver recruited between 1996 and 2011 enrolled in study to enhance treatment retention

Mortality records obtained from Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment; combined with behavioral information collected during the interviews

Gay/lesbian people who inject drugs had over twice the risk of death compared to heterosexual who inject drugs (HR=2.22, 95%CI=1.02-4.82)



Who is this  
guy?

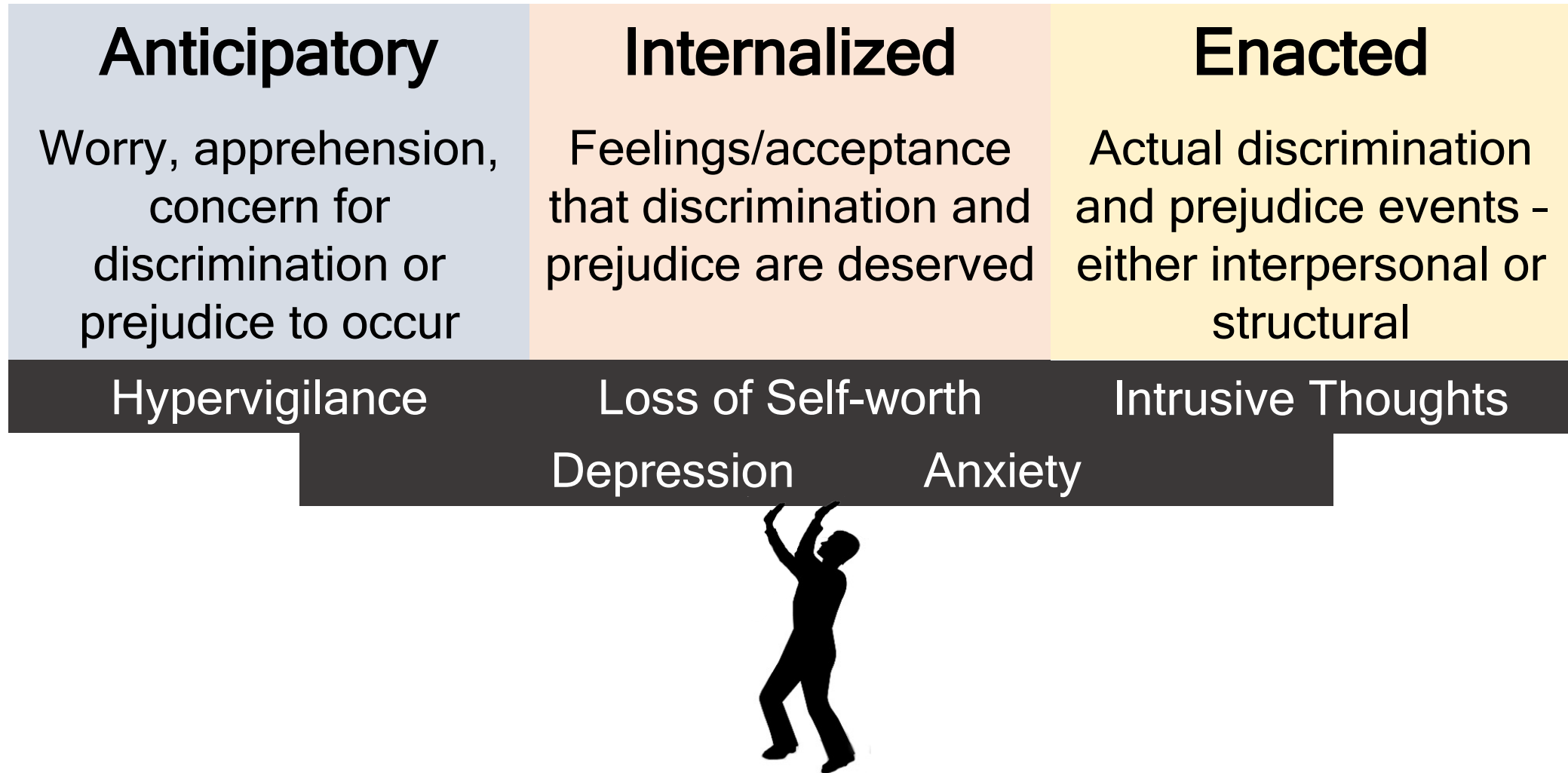
LGBT  
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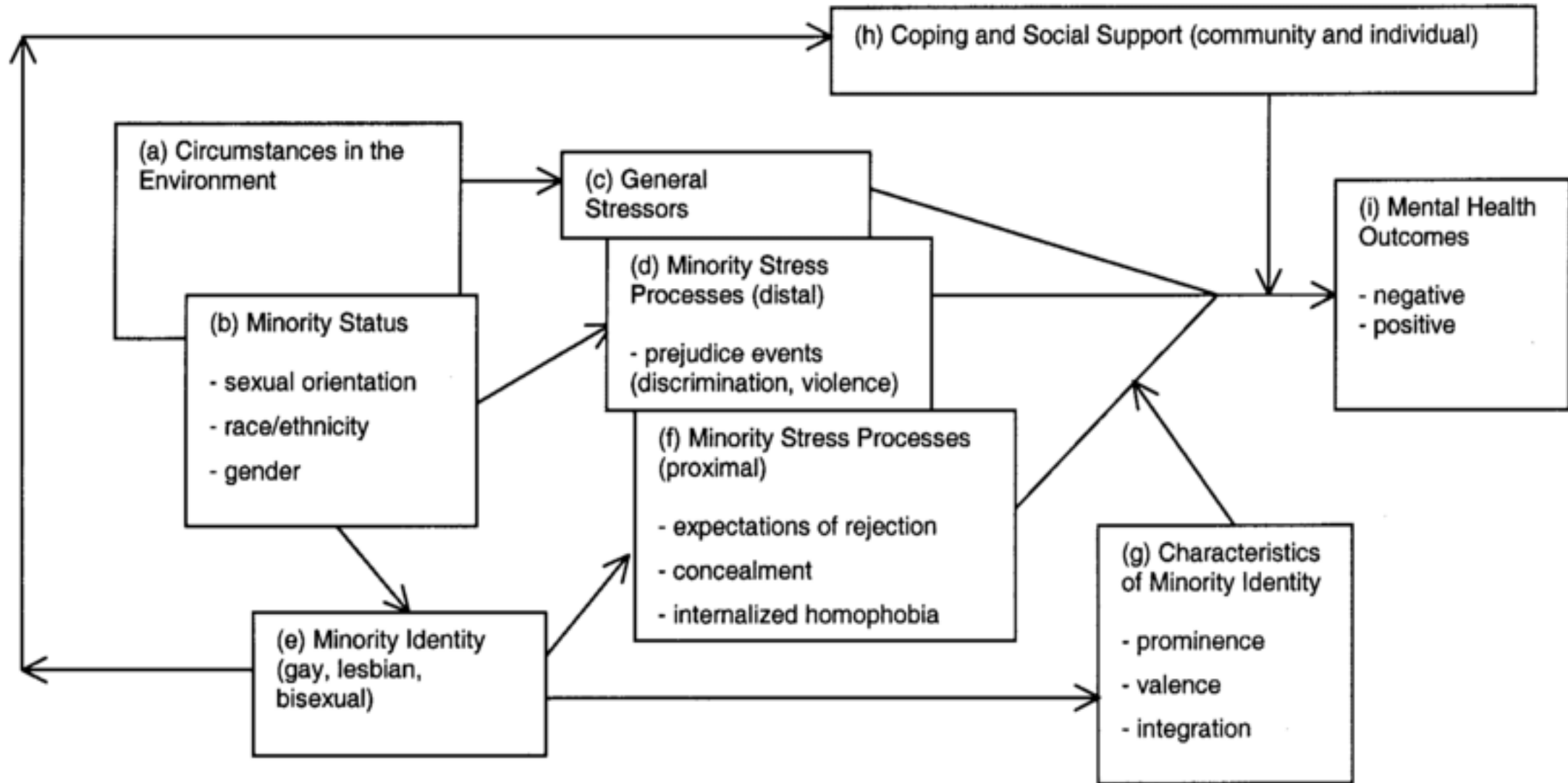
**The Role of  
Stigma**

The Need  
for Data

# Dimensions of Stigma

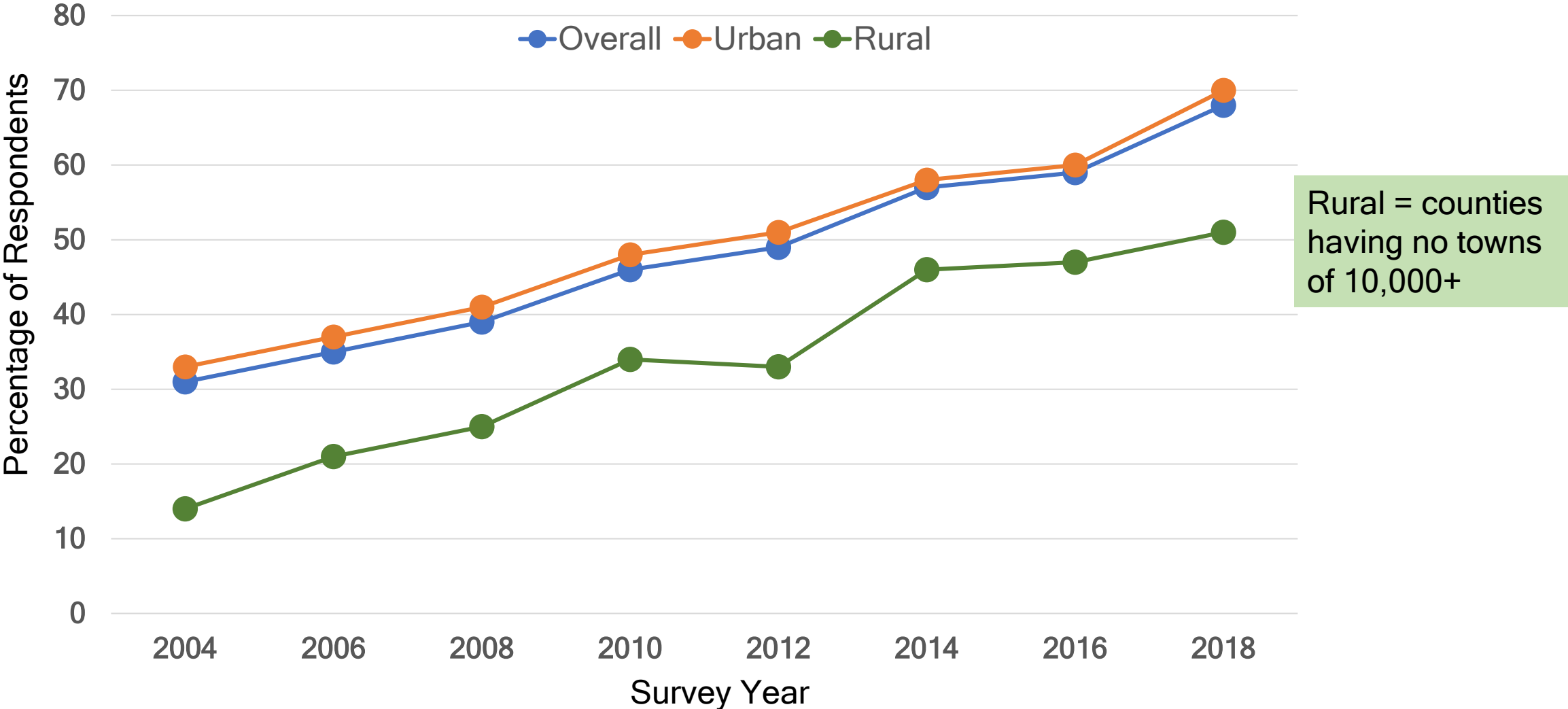


# Minority Stress: the Consequence of Stigma



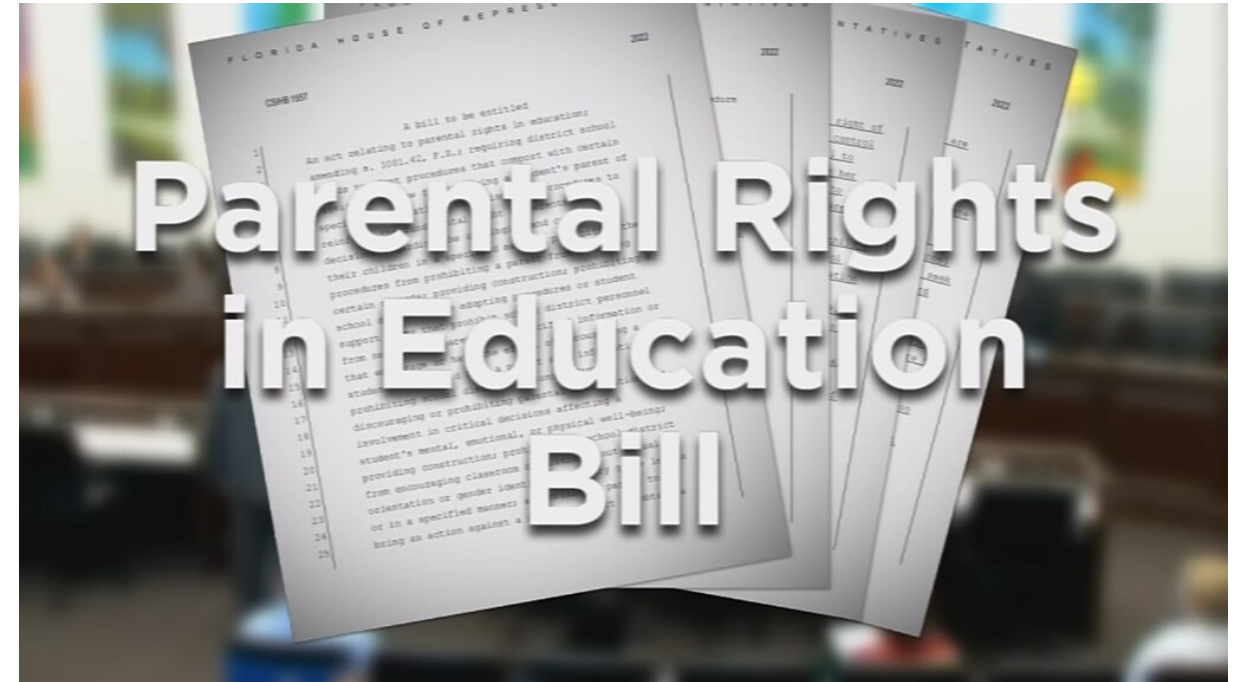
# Changing Landscape of Indicators of Stigma in US

General Social Survey: Strongly Agree/Agree “Homosexual couples should have the right to marry one another.”





Still, stigma abounds...very publicly...and very cleverly



# Example of Identities at Crossroads of Suicide Prevention: Religion

Association of Importance of religion with recent suicidal ideation

21,247 college-enrolled young adults aged 18-30 years

“How important are your religious or spiritual beliefs to your personal identity?”

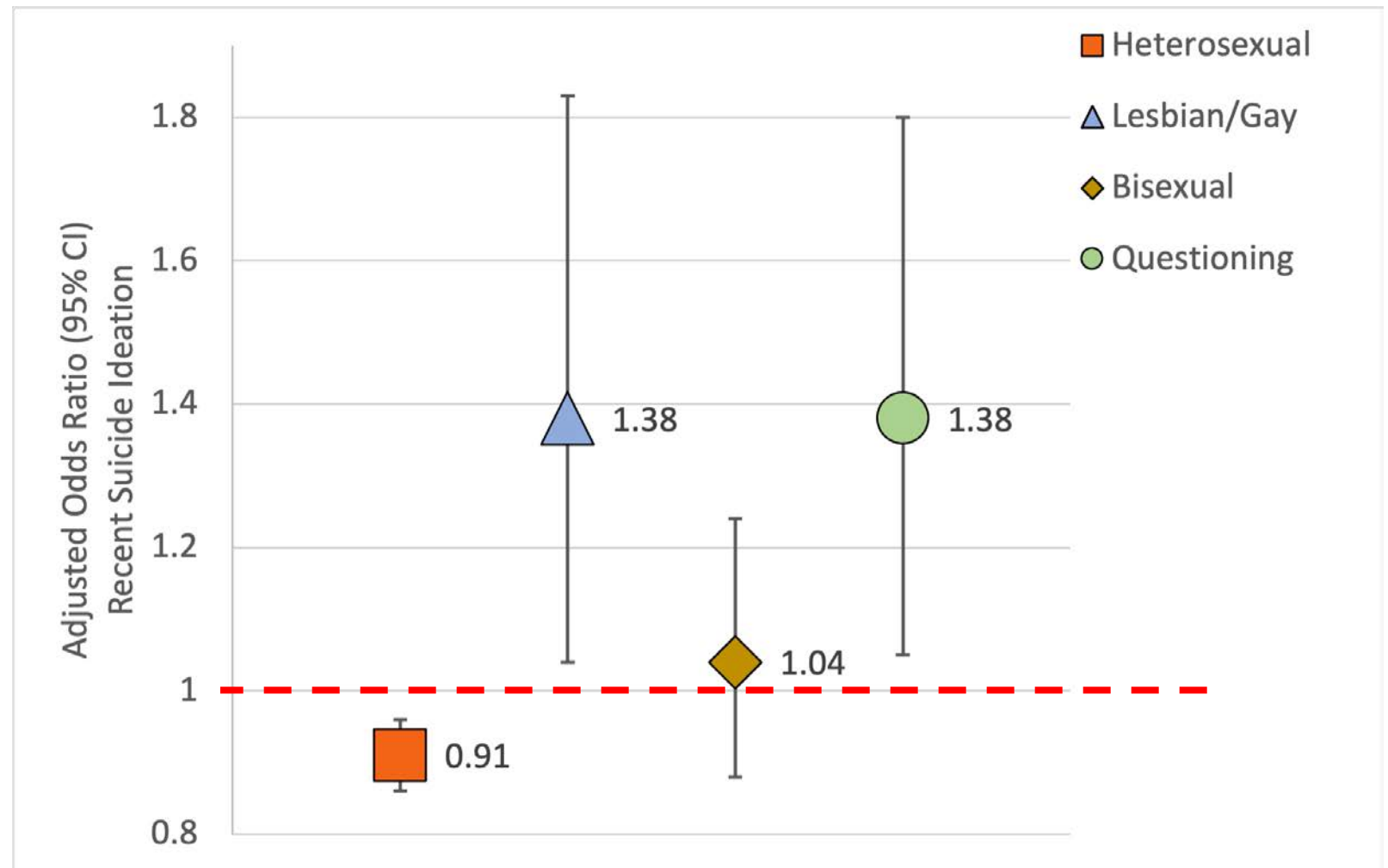
1 = “Not at all important”

2

3 = “Moderately important”

4

5 = “Very important”



# Example of Identities at Crossroads of Suicide Prevention: Religion

Association of Importance of religion with recent suicidal ideation

21,247 college-enrolled young adults aged 18-30 years

Sexual orientation	Religious importance		
	Not important	Moderately important	Very important
Recent suicide ideation			
Lesbian/Gay			
Overall	1.41 (0.81, 2.47)	0.90 (0.33, 2.48)	<b>4.17* (2.27, 7.64)</b>
Bisexual			
Overall	<b>3.10* (2.13, 4.50)</b>	<b>2.69* (1.59, 4.53)</b>	<b>4.62* (2.98, 7.14)</b>
Questioning			
Overall	<b>2.43* (1.31, 4.52)</b>	<b>4.06* (1.96, 8.43)</b>	<b>10.26* (5.73, 18.39)</b>

# Example of Identities at Crossroads of Suicide Prevention: Family

Parents getting to acceptance can be a long road

## Qualitative Examples of Parental Distress after Their Children's Disclosure

*"I was afraid. Fear, fear was my biggest thing. I was petrified. I thought somebody would hurt him."*  
- Grafsky, 2014

*"It's awful to have these thoughts about one of your children. And I think that's what the depression and drinking was about. I felt so torn by all the awful thoughts I had about the child I loved. And I shut down from her and felt so empty."*  
- Saltzburg, 2004

*"It was and still is to date the worst day of my life because all of my dreams were shattered that day."*  
- Jaspal, 2020

*"I know that I was grieving. I was stunned. I felt like, this can't be my daughter...And I felt like I was just losing my child."*  
- Maslowe & Yarhouse, 2015

## Family Acceptance Project®

Building healthy futures for LGBT children and youth through:




**RESEARCH**  
on family acceptance and rejection

**EDUCATION AND TRAINING**  
to decrease risk and promote well-being  
by increasing family acceptance

**FAMILY-ORIENTED SERVICES**  
to help diverse families support their  
LGBT children

**INFORMED PUBLIC POLICY**  
to promote well-being – not just protect  
from harm





**Who is this  
guy?**

**LGBT  
Population**

**Health &  
Risk  
Disparities**

**The Role of  
Stigma**

**The Need  
for Data**



## Detect

Define outcome

Define populations

Measurement

Consider selection bias, confounding



## Understand

Determinants @  
levels, systems

Individual

Family

Organizations

Communities

Policy



## Address

Design intervention

Evaluate

Dissemination

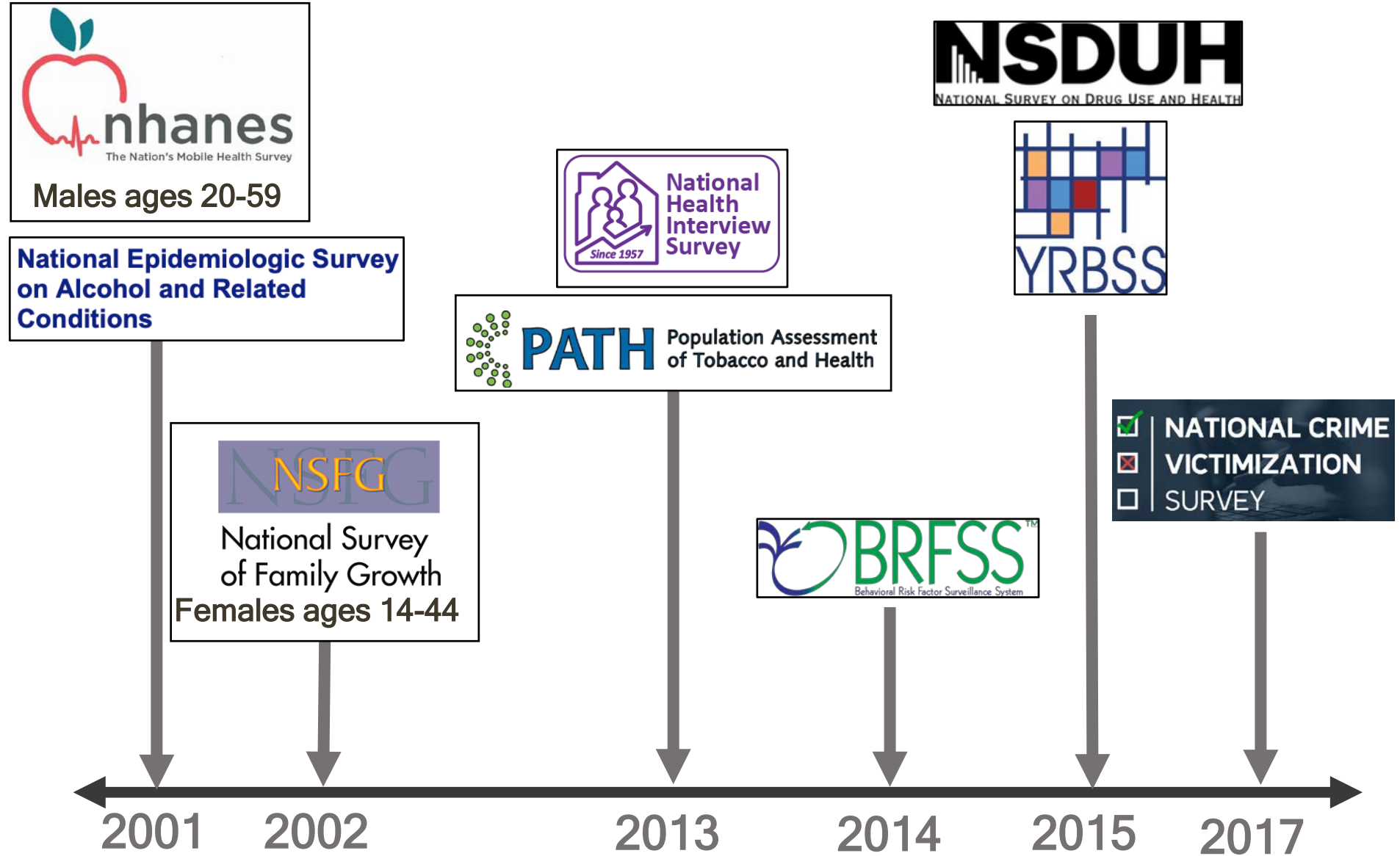
Implementation

Policy

**Community and Stakeholder Engagement**

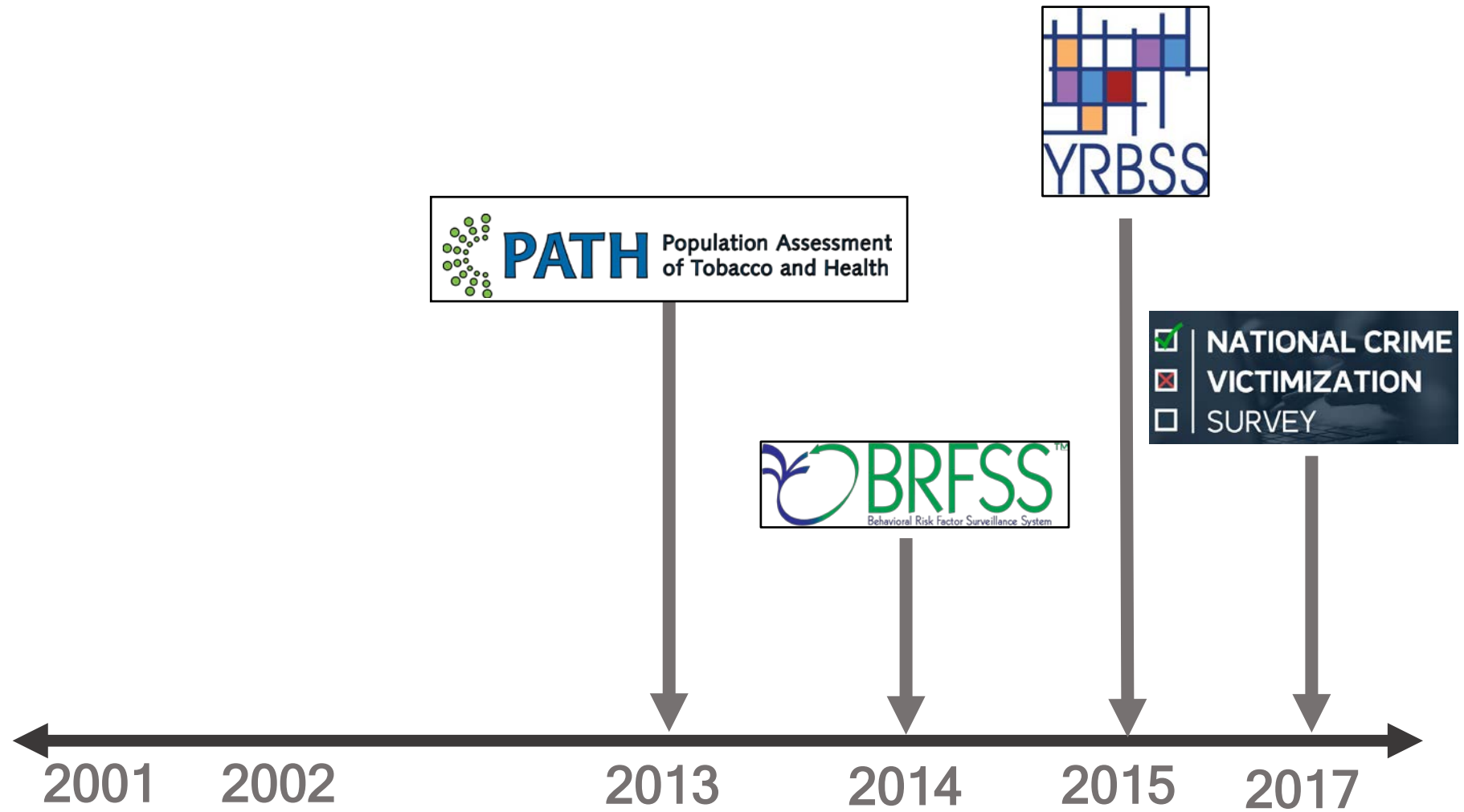


# Sexual identity in ongoing federal health surveillance surveys





# Gender identity in ongoing federal health surveillance surveys



# Considerably less about addressing

## Mental Health, Drug, and Violence Interventions for Sexual/Gender Minorities: A Systematic Review

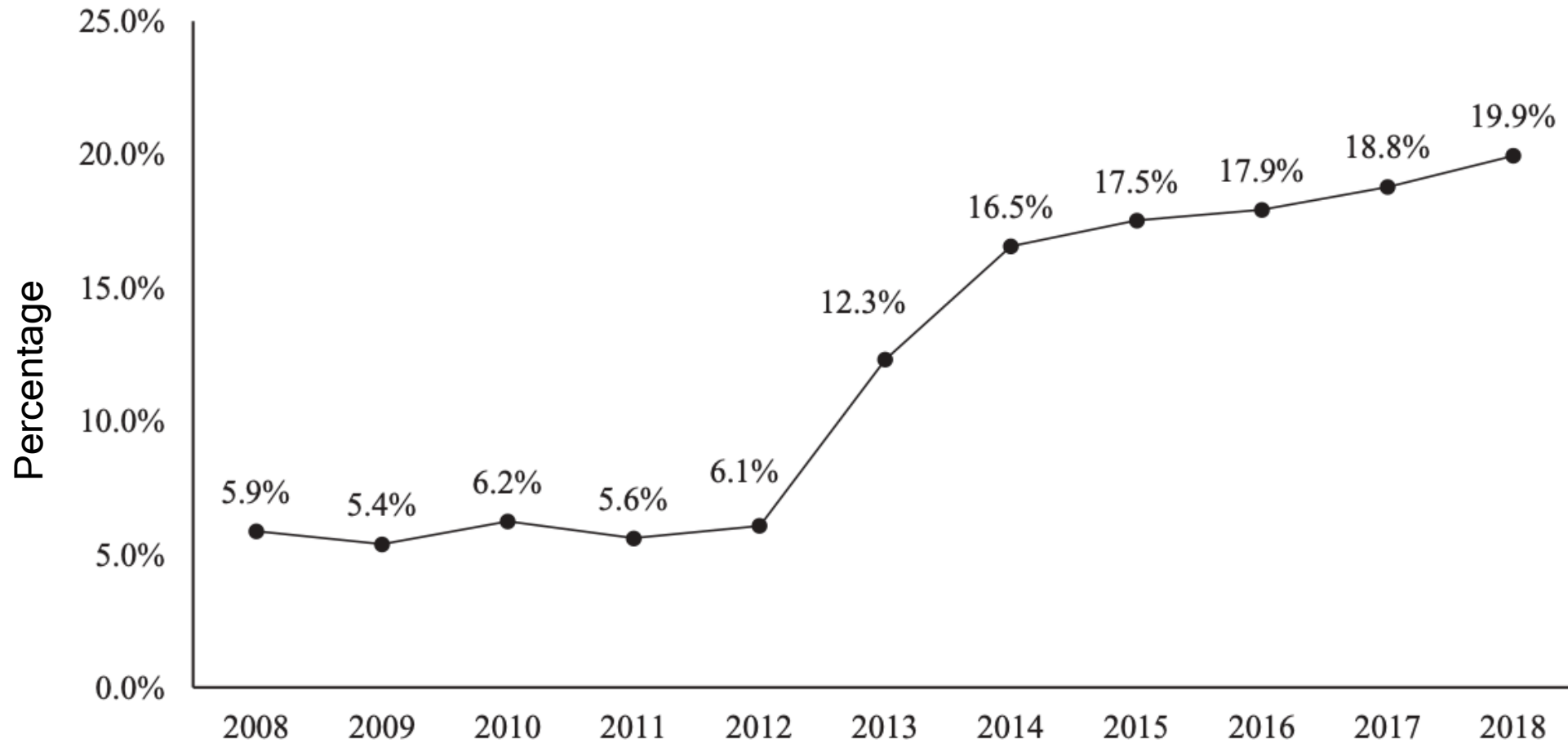
Robert W. S. Coulter, PhD, MPH,<sup>a,b,c,d</sup> James E. Egan, PhD, MPH,<sup>a,b</sup> Suzanne Kinsky, MPH, PhD,<sup>a,b,e</sup> M. Reuel Friedman, PhD,<sup>b,f</sup> Kristen L. Eckstrand, MD, PhD,<sup>g</sup> Jessica Frankeberger, MPH,<sup>a</sup> Barbara L. Folb, MM, MLS, MPH,<sup>a,h</sup> Christina Mair, PhD,<sup>a</sup> Nina Markovic, PhD,<sup>b,i</sup> Anthony Silvestre, PhD,<sup>b</sup> Ron Stall, PhD, MPH,<sup>a,b</sup> Elizabeth Miller, MD, PhD<sup>a,d</sup>

PEDIATRICS Volume 144, number 3, September 2019:e20183367

Study	Global Quality Rating	Addressed suicidality
Costa et al. 2015	Weak	No
De Vries et al. 2011	Weak	No
De Vries et al. 2014	Weak	No
Diamond et al. 2012	Weak	Suicidal ideation
Lucassen et al. 2015	Weak	No
Painter et al. 2018	Weak	No
Raifman et al. 2017	Strong	Suicide attempt
Schwinn et al. 2015	Weak	No
Seelman & Walker 2018	Moderate	Suicidal ideation & attempt

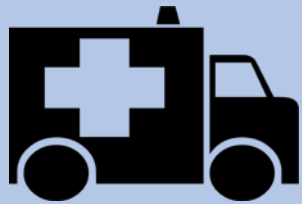
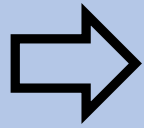
# Ability to evaluate programs and services

SUD treatment facilities with LGBT-tailored programs, United States 2008 - 2018



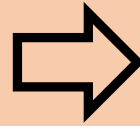
Qeadan, F., Akofua Mensah, N., Gu, L. Y., Barbeau, W. A., Madden, E. F., Porucznik, C. A., & English, K. (2021). Factors associated with the availability of tailored programs for LGBT clients in substance use disorder treatment facilities in the US from 2008 to 2018. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services*, 1-22.

# LGBTQ people not represented in mortality statistics



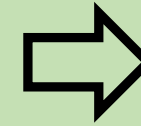
More likely  
to be victims  
of assault

Greater  
risk of  
homicide?



Greater use of  
opioids

Greater risk of  
death from  
overdose?



Frequent  
suicide ideation  
and attempt

Greater risk  
of suicide?

Bender, A. K., & Lauritsen, J. L. (2021). Violent victimization among lesbian, gay, and bisexual populations in the United States: Findings from the National Crime Victimization Survey, 2017–2018. *American journal of public health, 111*(2), 318-326.

Capistrant, B. D., & Nakash, O. (2019). Lesbian, gay, and bisexual adults have higher prevalence of illicit opioid use than heterosexual adults: Evidence from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2015–2017. *LGBT health, 6*(6), 326-330.

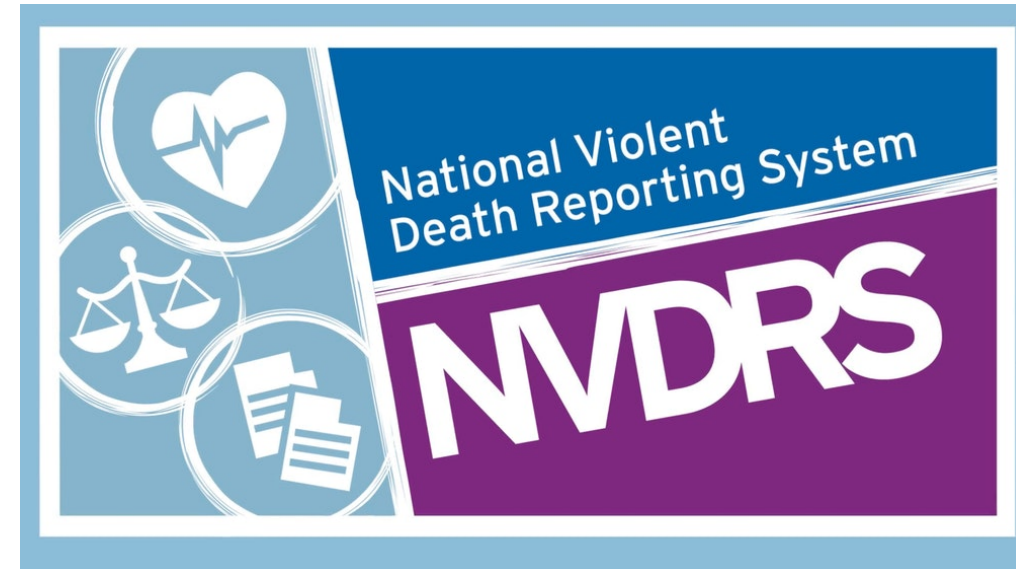
Hottes, T. S., Bogaert, L., Rhodes, A. E., Brennan, D. J., & Gesink, D. (2016). Lifetime prevalence of suicide attempts among sexual minority adults by study sampling strategies: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *American journal of public health, 106*(5), e1-e12.

# Example of improving data systems: Postmortem SOGI Project

History: May 2014 meeting to develop consensus plan

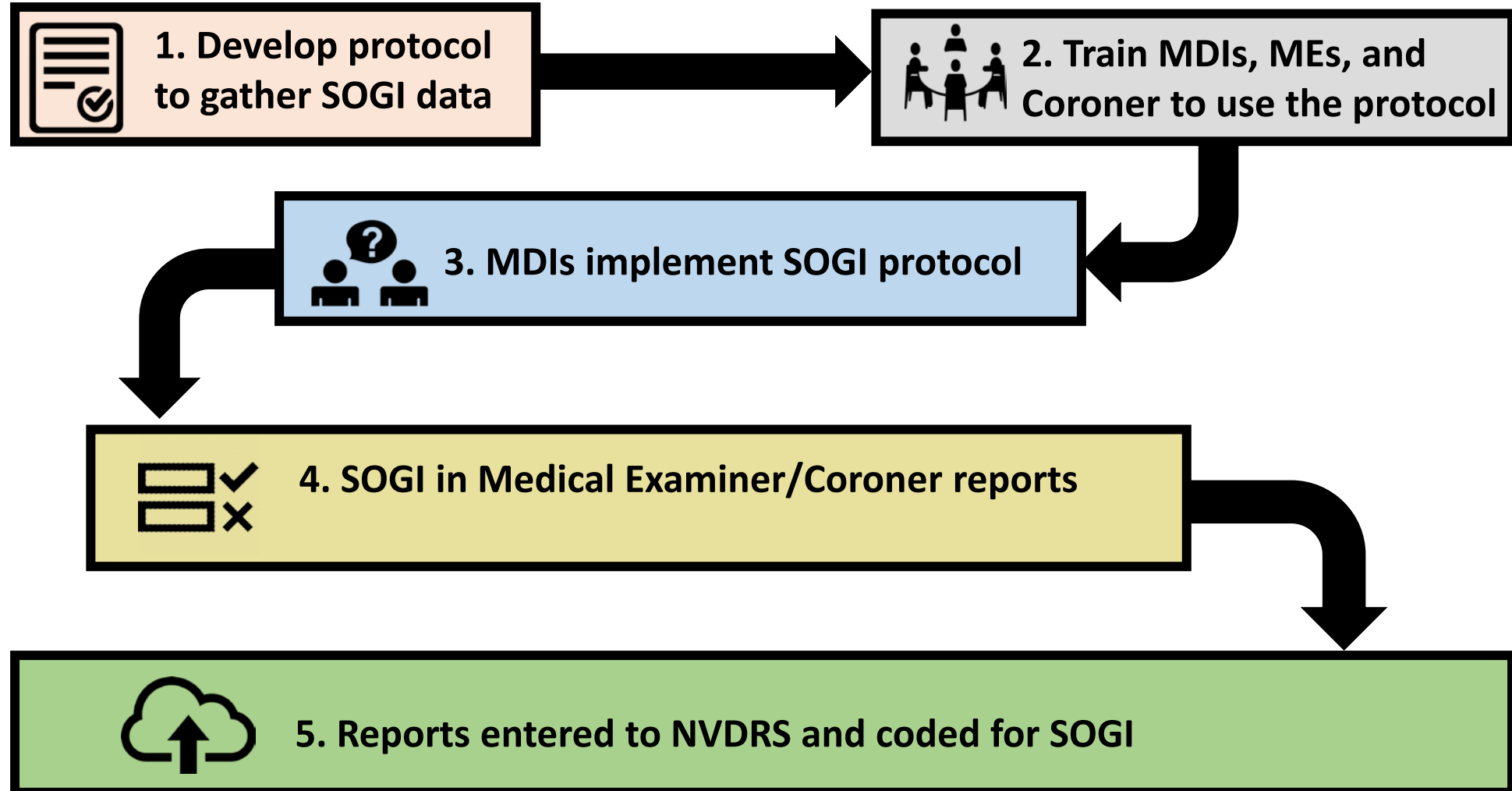
Goal: Getting more complete SOGI data in mortality surveillance

Focus: Decedents of suicide and other violent or investigated deaths



Audience: Medicolegal death investigators (MDIs), medical examiners, coroners

# Envisioning a data pipeline



# Despite suspecting LGBT cases, most investigators are not asking about SOGI

Death investigators (n=113; Nevada, Colorado, New York)

78%

Had investigation when they suspected decedent was LGBT

59%

Did not ask about decedent's sexual orientation

75%

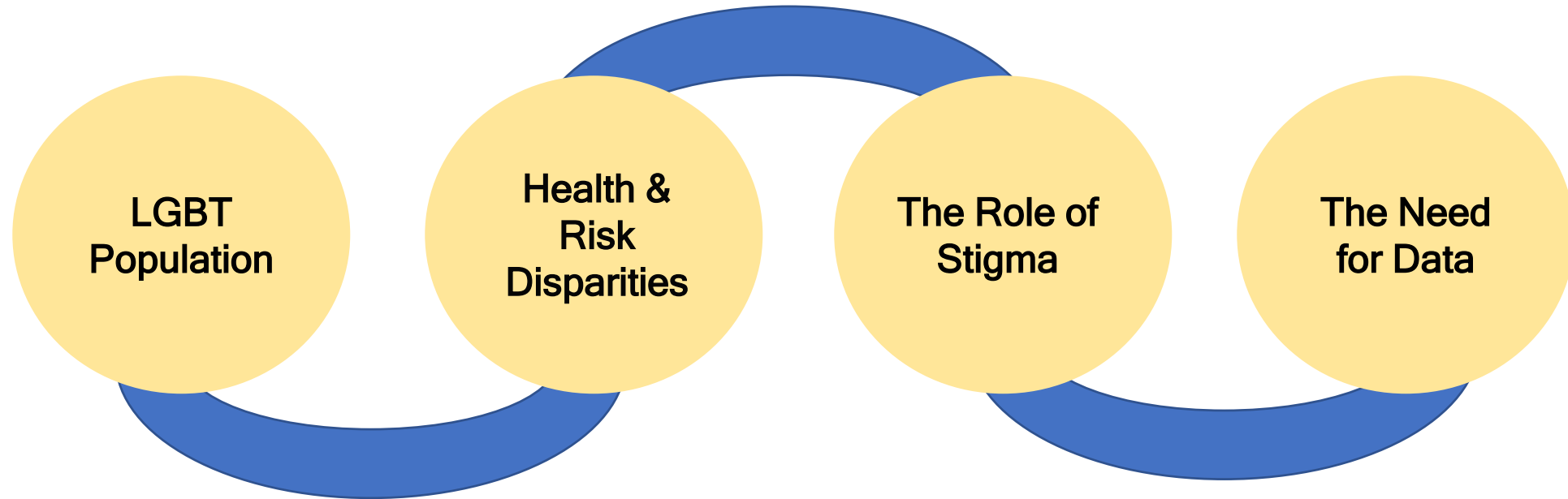
Did not ask about decedent's gender identity

0%

Had training about how to collect SOGI data



# Tying it all together



**Without data we:**

**Cannot fully measure burdens of disease - outcomes of risk**

**Cannot measure service utilization**

**Cannot evaluate public health and clinical interventions**

# **At crossroads: How place, data, and identity impact suicide prevention for LGBT communities**

**Thank you**

**John R. Blosnich, PhD, MPH**

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