

# Inclusive Support for Youth:

Exploring the Perception of LGBTQ+ People in Marginalized Populations in Pitt County

**Zachary Pomeroy**  
Owner and Director  
LA FLECHA FILM CO  
hello@laflecha.cc  
252-220-4757

**Sue Anne Pilgreen, MSN, RN, CPN**  
Program Manager  
Eastern Carolina Injury Prevention Program  
Vidant Medical Center  
252-847-8668  
sfipps@vidanthealth.com

**Breanna Culler, MSW**  
Suicide Prevention Coordinator  
Eastern Carolina Injury Prevention Program  
Vidant Medical Center  
252-847-7652  
Breanna.Culler@vidanthealth.com

**D'Nise Williams-Braswell,**  
**LCSWA, MSW, M.Ed, CCTP, CCATP**  
Child Trauma Response Victim Advocate  
Greenville Police Department  
252-468-2649  
dniselwb@gmail.com



## Introduction

### DEFINITIONS

**LGBTQ** – Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning.

**Gender Identity** – An individual's personal sense of gender. A person's gender identity can correlate with their assigned sex at birth or can differ from it.

**Sexual Identity** – How a person thinks of oneself in terms of to whom one is romantically and/or sexually attracted.

**Racial Identity** – An individual's sense of self that is related to racial group membership.

**Heterosexism** – Discrimination or prejudice against gay people on the assumption that heterosexuality is the normal sexual orientation.

**Cisgenderism** – People whose gender identity and expression matches the biological sex they were assigned when they were born.

**Cis-het** – People who identify as cisgender and heterosexual.

**Intersectionality** – Framework for understanding how interdependent and multidimensional social identities at the individual level, such as race/ethnicity, gender, and sexuality, are shaped by interlocking systems of privilege and oppression at the societal level, such as heterosexism, cisgenderism, and racism.

### ABSTRACT

The South is known for its strong sense of hospitality and friendly folks, melodic drawl, religious roots, and home cooking. We work hard, stand true to long lines of shared family values, and are known to be more conservative than our progressive northern counterparts. Although we pride ourselves in being Pitt County proud, we have not been spared from the public health crisis associated with the rapid increase in suicide rates. Interpreting the statistics, identifying our most vulnerable populations, and understanding the WHY behind suicide are critical elements in formulating a suicide prevention plan.

While suicide affects all races, ages, socioeconomic backgrounds and education levels, some groups are at higher risk than others. Suicide is the second leading cause of death for people ages 10-34, and research has shown that young people who identify within the LGBTQ+ population experience an increased risk of suicide. LGBTQ+ individuals are not inherently prone to suicide risk because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Instead, they are placed at higher risk because of how they are mistreated and stigmatized in society. In order to create a long-lasting impact on those growing up as LGBTQ+ individuals in Pitt County, our team knew that an understanding of the perception of the LGBTQ+ community was critical. In addition to an understanding of perceptions, we studied the intersection of identities and how minority stress may be more persistent and problematic for individuals who occupy multiple marginalized social positions.

### SUPPORTING STATISTICS: LOCAL

2019 Pitt County Schools Youth Risk Survey found that:

- 29.49% of students felt so sad or hopeless that they stopped doing usual activities.
- 15.38% seriously considered attempting suicide.
- 8.65% actually attempted suicide.
- 7.9% of students reported carrying a gun to school in the past 30 days.

During the 2020-2021 school year:

- 5 Pitt County school age students died by suicide. This does not account for the college students that died during this same time frame.
- 76% of students reported that stigma made it difficult to tell a trusted adult if they were depressed or having thoughts of suicide.

The North Carolina Violent Death Reporting System (NCVDRS) identified:

- 7,013 deaths by suicide in NC with 56.7% by firearm.
  - 97 deaths by suicide in Pitt County from 2014-2018, and 67% of those were by firearm.
- Rural Pitt County had over 10% more deaths by firearm than the state average.
- From 2009-2018, the suicide ratio was 3.4 times higher in males than it was in females in Pitt County.

The 2016-2021 VMC Trauma Registry had:

- 13 youth firearm injuries or deaths.
- 328 adult firearm injuries or deaths.

### SUPPORTING STATISTICS: NATIONAL

- LGBTQ+ youth contemplate suicide 3 times more than heterosexual youth.
- Youth who come from highly rejecting families are 8.4% times as likely to have attempted suicide as LGBTQ+ who reported no or low levels of family rejection.
- 1 out of 6 LGBTQ+ students nationwide seriously considered suicide in the past year.
- While males are 4 times more likely to take their life than females, LGBTQ+ men are at even greater risk.
- 42% of LGBTQ+ youth seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year; youth of color reported higher rates than their white peers.
- Having at least 1 accepting adult can reduce the risk of a suicide attempt among LGBTQ+ youth by 40%.
- Lesbian, gay and bisexual adults are three to six times more likely than heterosexual adults to report suicidal thoughts, plans and attempts.
- Firearms consistently rank as the most lethal form of suicide.

## Methodology

Participants in this study included Pitt County residents, school counselors, and online participants who completed an online survey containing 13 questions designed to measure the perception of experiences and available resources for LGBTQ+ individuals in Pitt County. All participants in this study were volunteers. Survey links were sent through various community systems, programs and online platforms. Data was collected over the course of 4 weeks, and analyzed according to demographics, intersecting identities, and perceptions of participants. We closed the survey with a total of 191 participants.

## Focus Groups

Three focus groups were conducted as part of the research process. Each focus group lasted one hour. During this time, we asked a series of questions. The participants were instructed to engage in conversation with each other. We started with a focus group of three school counselors. The next focus group that we pursued consisted of four recent graduates from Pitt County high schools. The final focus group was for affirming religious leaders. This group was more difficult to gather but we were able to talk with one prominent Christian leader. We specifically analyzed how religious leaders should approach the topic in a religious sector.

**Religious Focus Group** - "Religion has been used as a social control for a lot of history and it's easy to control people if they are scared of God and what God might do to them."

**Student Focus Group** - "I definitely think the unsafe areas outweigh the 100% safe areas here in Pitt County."

**Counselor Focus Group** - "There is nothing available, resource wise, that is LGBTQ+ specific. The most I can do right now is just listen."



# Inclusive Support for Youth:

Exploring the Perception of LGBTQ+ People in Marginalized Populations in Pitt County

**Zachary Pomeroy**  
Owner and Director  
LA FLECHA FILM CO  
hello@laflecha.cc  
252-220-4757

**Sue Anne Pilgreen, MSN, RN, CPN**  
Program Manager  
Eastern Carolina Injury Prevention Program  
Vidant Medical Center  
252-847-8668  
sfpps@vidanthealth.com

**Breanna Culler, MSW**  
Suicide Prevention Coordinator  
Eastern Carolina Injury Prevention Program  
Vidant Medical Center  
252-847-7652  
Breanna.Culler@vidanthealth.com

**D'Nise Williams-Braswell, LCSWA, MSW, M.Ed, CCTP, CCATP**  
Child Trauma Response Victim Advocate  
Greenville Police Department  
252-468-2649  
dniselwb@gmail.com



## General Survey

### STATEMENT OF INTENT

Our 13 question survey consisted of four demographic questions that aimed to collect participant's racial, age, location, and marginalized identity information. The survey then asked eight questions that focused on the perception of LGBTQ+ resource availability, suicidal ideation amongst marginalized communities and the overall climate of inclusion in Pitt County. For each question, participants were asked to rank their perception from 1 to 5, with one being the lowest and five being the highest, in relation to the following three subsets: gender identity, sexual identity and racial identity. We also included "none of the above" and "unsure" options for some questions, as we found that some participants had little knowledge or experience in relation to the question topic. Our final question was open-ended, allowing participants to offer insight into what they would like to see created to promote a more diverse and inclusive community in Pitt County. The three questions that we focused our research on are highlighted below:

- I feel as if suicidal thoughts are commonly experienced within the minority populations of the following identities.
- I have or know someone who has seriously considered attempting suicide after experiencing opposition or isolation related to one of the following.
- I feel as if mental health support and social resources are available in Pitt County for the following topics.

Based on the data collected from these three questions, we then broke the participants into three separate sections based upon their racial, age and marginalized identity information. After separating the data we then compared the findings to highlight the different perceptions and experiences that exist amongst the following subsets:

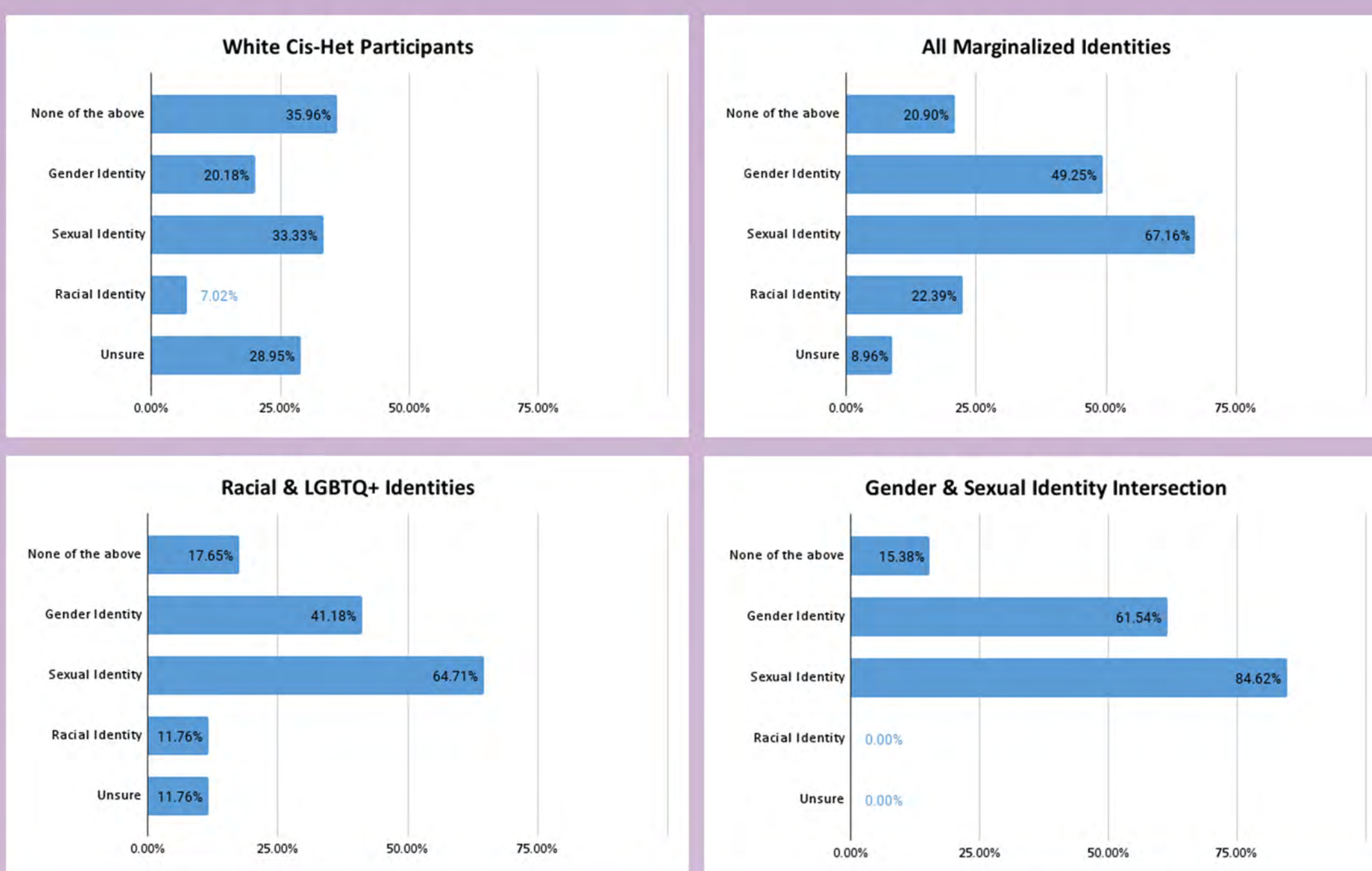
- Intersection of LGBTQ+ and marginalized racial/ethnic identity.
- Intersection of marginalized gender and sexual identity.
- Marginalized sexual or gender identity and age range.
- White cisgender and heterosexual perception of marginalized gender and sexual identities.

**FIGURE 1**



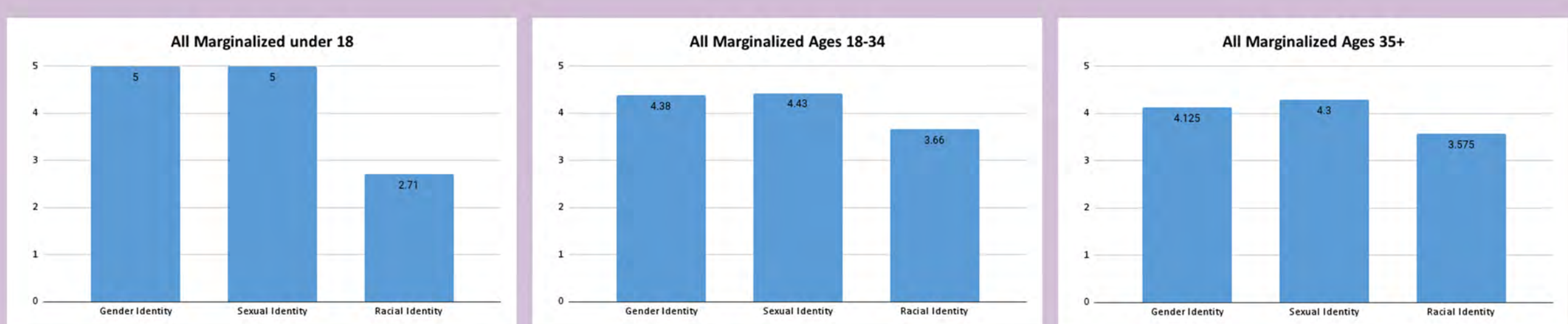
**FIGURE 2**

I have or know someone who has seriously considered attempting suicide after experiencing opposition or isolation related to one of the following.



**FIGURE 3**

I feel as if suicidal thoughts are commonly experienced within the minority populations of the following identities.





# Inclusive Support for Youth:

Exploring the Perception of LGBTQ+ People in Marginalized Populations in Pitt County

**Zachary Pomeroy**  
Owner and Director  
LA FLECHA FILM CO  
hello@laflecha.cc  
252-220-4757

**Sue Anne Pilgreen, MSN, RN, CPN**  
Program Manager  
Eastern Carolina Injury Prevention Program  
Vidant Medical Center  
252-847-8668  
sfipps@vidanthealth.com

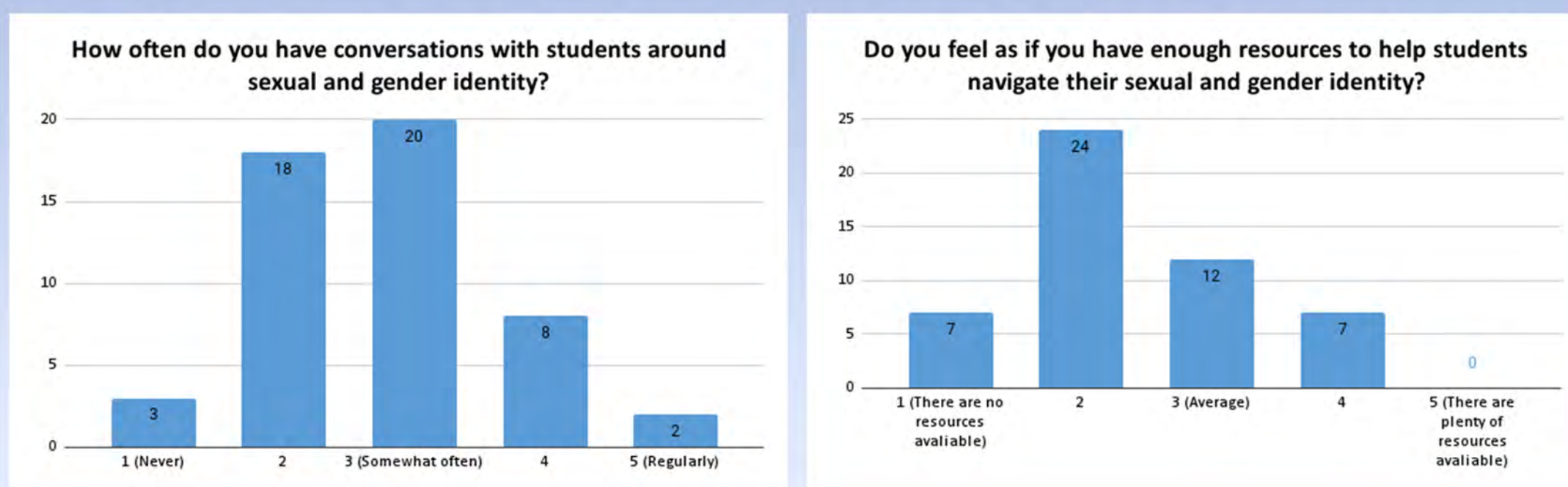
**Breanna Culler, MSW**  
Suicide Prevention Coordinator  
Eastern Carolina Injury Prevention Program  
Vidant Medical Center  
252-847-7652  
Breanna.Culler@vidanthealth.com

**D'Nise Williams-Braswell,**  
**LCSWA, MSW, M.Ed, CCTP, CCATP**  
Child Trauma Response Victim Advocate  
Greenville Police Department  
252-468-2649  
dniselwb@gmail.com



## School Counselor Survey

The first collection of data was executed with a survey given to 51 school counselors. The 51 counselors were asked to share their name, contact, and school information, as some questions in our survey would allow counselors to opt in to being contacted about future research and educational opportunities. This six-question survey aimed to collect data related to the availability of LGBTQ+ resources and frequency of LGBTQ+ centered conversations had with students within their school system. These questions allowed the counselors to share their experiences through a 1 to 5 ranking system, with 1 being none/never and five being plenty/frequently. We also included a multi-checkbox question that allowed counselors to choose what resources they would like to see made available for the LGBTQ+ students within their schools. Through this question counselors were able to choose from our preselected list or include their own ideas in the fill-in-the-blank answer slot. Lastly, we asked three “yes or no” questions that were related to participating in our general survey, focus group and upcoming CALM suicide prevention workshop. The data gained through these questions allowed us to directly contact counselors who were interested in helping us move this work forward. We specifically used the following questions to help format our general survey:



## Conclusions

### FIGURE 1

Based on the data from Figure 1, we concluded that there was a significant gap between the perception of resource availability and suicidal ideation for both gender and sexual minorities. We saw that as the participants were separated into sub-groups, the gap between the perception of resource availability and the perception of suicidal ideation increased greatly. This data highlighted substantial differences related to the perception of resources availability amongst white cis-het participants and marginalized participants.

- White cis-het participants ranked suicidal ideation at a substantially lower rate and ranked resource availability at a higher rate than the other three groups.
- The “all marginalized” group ranked resource availability slightly higher than the two intersecting identity groups.
- Amongst the intersecting marginalized identity participants, we saw a substantial decrease in the perception of resource availability with a slight increase in the perception of suicidal ideation.

Based upon these findings, we concluded that individuals who exist at the intersection of two marginalized identities, whether that intersection is between racial, gender or sexual identities, experience an increased risk of suicidal ideation as well as a decrease in the perception of mental health and social resource availability within Pitt County. This supports the notion that there is a greater need for inclusive mental health and social resources that are equipped to serve individuals who identify with one or more marginalized identities in Pitt County.

### FIGURE 2

Based on the data from Figure 2, we concluded that there is a substantial difference in the marginalized identity perception of suicidal ideation amongst white cis-het participants and participants who identify with one or more marginalized identities.

- While white cis-het participants ranked suicidal ideation at an above average rate in Figure 1, we saw that over half of all White cis-het participants said that they were either unsure or did not know any marginalized individuals who had died by suicide or considered attempting suicide.
- Across the board, we found that over half of all participants who identified with one or more marginalized identities personally experienced or knew someone who had died by suicide or considered attempting suicide.
- Among the “all marginalized” and two intersecting marginalized identity groups, we found that the majority of participants had personally encountered suicidal ideation or suicide attempts amongst individuals who experienced opposition related to their sexual identity. Many participants also expressed a high rate of personal interaction with suicidal ideation or suicide attempts amongst individuals who experienced opposition related to their gender identity. While opposition related to racial identity was rated substantially lower than sexual and gender, there was still a large portion of participants who reported personal interaction with suicidal ideation or suicide attempts amongst individuals who experienced opposition related to their racial identity.

### FIGURE 3

Based upon the Figure 3 data, we concluded that all age groups of individuals who identified with marginalized identities expressed a high perception of suicidal ideation.

- The 18-34 and 35+ age groups expressed similar rates related to the prevalence of suicidal ideation among individuals who identify as a sexual, gender, or racial marginalized identity.
- In comparison to the 25-34 and 35+ age groups, we noticed that participants under 18 expressed a significantly lower rate of suicidal ideation amongst individuals who identify as a racial minority. We also found that participants under 18 expressed an extremely high perception of suicidal ideation among individuals who identify with either a sexual or gender identity.

## Limitations

The limitations that we experienced while exploring the perception of LGBTQ+ youth in Pitt County were confirmation for why this work is so important. One of the first limitations that we experienced happened around the perception of LGBTQ+ youth. In the beginning stages of our research, many people were hesitant to talk about LGBTQ+ topics surrounding youth. Though we experienced frustration during this part of the process, we found ways to accommodate the perception of LGBTQ+ youth without minimizing the work. Another limitation that we experienced occurred in the overall age range of our survey participants. We did not get many participants under the age of 18. Though this was difficult for our specific research, we discovered helpful ways to use the data to inform future research. As we continue through the process, we have experienced a growing interest in LGBTQ+ topics and we are certain this will help our work in the future.

## References

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (n.d.). <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/suicide.htm>.  
NCDHHS Injury and Violence Prevention Branch (n.d.). <https://www.injuryfreenc.ncdhhs.gov/About/ncVDRS.htm>.  
Trevor Project (n.d.). <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/resources/>.