Equal Rights, Better Mental Health? The Impact of Non-Discrimination Laws on LGBQ Youth*

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Abstract

Youth suicide has become a growing public health and economic concern in the United States, with sexual minority adolescents facing disproportionately high risks. This paper provides the first evidence on the effects of state-level nondiscrimination laws (NDLs) that explicitly protect sexual minorities on youth mental health. Using nationally representative data from the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System and variation in the timing of NDL adoption across states, we estimate a fully interacted difference-in-differences model comparing sexual minority and heterosexual youth before and after implementation. We find that NDLs lead to significant reductions in suicide attempts among sexual minority adolescents, with results robust to controlling for anti-bullying laws, same-sex marriage legalization, demographic characteristics, and state and year fixed effects. We also document declines in bullying and risky behaviors such as smoking and alcohol use, consistent with improved underlying mental health.

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1 Introduction

Youth suicide has become a pressing public health and economic issue in the United States. Suicide is now among the leading causes of death for teenagers, with rates increasing significantly over the past two decades (Shepard et al., 2016). This crisis is particularly serious among sexual minority youth, those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or questioning (LGBQ).[1] Previous research found that sexual minority adolescents are more than three times as likely to attempt suicide compared to their heterosexual peers (Verlenden, 2024). Understanding the factors that exacerbate or mitigate these disparities is critical from a health equity perspective.

Mental health in adolescence plays a pivotal role in long-term human capital formation. As emphasized by Heckman (2006) and Currie (2009), early-life health shocks, including mental health disruptions, have persistent effects on educational attainment, labor market outcomes, and adult economic status. Suicide attempts, in particular, are associated with lower school completion rates, reduced employment, and higher healthcare costs throughout life (Rosoff et al., 2020; Orri et al., 2022). The economic burden of adolescent self-harm has been estimated to include substantial losses in lifetime productivity, as well as increased reliance on public health and social services (Ghani et al., 2019). Consequently, improving mental health among vulnerable youth is not only a moral imperative but also an economically valuable investment.

The literature on structural stigma suggests that discriminatory environments generate stress and reduce coping resources among sexual minorities, contributing to worse mental health outcomes (Meyer, 2003). However, relatively little know about the role of the legal environment,[2] although these laws can serve as signals of societal acceptance, potentially shifting norms and behaviors even beyond their formal enforcement (Posner, 1992; Sunstein, 1996).

Non-discrimination laws (NDLs), which explicitly prohibit differential treatment based on sexual orientation and gender identity, was aimed for alleviating structural stigma and promote social inclusion. This paper contributes to the literature by providing the first evidence on the mental health

[1] We follow Anderson et al. (2021) and use the term LGBQ, rather than LGBTQ, to describe sexual minority youth in our study, as the data identify students based only on whether they are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or questioning, and do not include information on transgender identity.

[2] Recent empirical research has begun to assess how legal changes affect youth well-being. Rees et al. (2022) show that the adoption of anti-bullying laws (ABLs) significantly reduced suicide planning and attempts among sexual minority teens by reducing peer victimization in schools. In contrast, Anderson et al. (2021) find that same-sex marriage (SSM) legalization had limited short-term effects on the mental health of LGBQ adolescents. These findings suggest that not all pro-LGBQ legal changes are equally effective in reaching marginalized youth. Whereas ABLs directly target school environments, and SSM laws affect adult rights, NDLs represent broader societal commitments to equality and may influence a wider range of interactions.

effects from the state-level NDLs protecting sexual minorities. Using nationally representative data from 2003 to 2019, we exploit variation in the timing of NDL adoption across U.S. states to estimate the impact of these laws on suicide related outcomes among sexual minority youth. Following the difference-in-differences strategy employed by Anderson et al. (2021) and Rees et al. (2022), we estimate fully interacted models that compare LGBQ and heterosexual youth before and after NDL implementation, controlling for plausibly confounding events such as ABLs, SSM laws, and demographic covariates.

Our findings reveal that nondiscrimination laws significantly improve suicide outcomes among sexual minority youth. The estimated effects are robust when controlling multiple policy controls and state and year fixed effects. We also find that NDLs reduce reported bullying among LGBQ students and are associated with decreases in risky behaviors such as cigarette smoking and alcohol use, suggesting improved mental health and coping outcomes.

This research is relevant to multiple stakeholders. For policymakers, it highlights the importance of inclusive legal environments in promoting adolescent mental health. Given that mental illness and suicide impose long-term costs on the economy, legal reforms that improve well-being among marginalized youth can yield high returns in the form of increased productivity, reduced health expenditures, and greater educational attainment. For educators and school administrators, our findings underscore the value of supporting LGBQ-inclusive state policies in conjunction with school-level interventions. From a public health perspective, our results add to the growing body of evidence that institutional protections can act as upstream determinants of health equity. In sum, this paper contributes to economic and policy debates on the social determinants of mental health, structural stigma, and the returns to legal protections. By documenting the protective effects of NDLs on suicide risk and associated behaviors, we identify a potentially powerful and scalable lever for improving adolescent health and reducing inequality.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows: Section II describes our data. Section III illustrates our empirical strategy. We report our main results in Section IV and present the heterogeneity in Section V. We investigate the mechanisms in Section VI. Section VII discusses our results and Section VIII concludes.

2 Data

Our analysis uses individual-level data from Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS), a nationally representative survey of high school students administered by Centers for Disease Con-

trol and Prevention (CDC). We utilize the 2003–2019 YRBSS combined data, which aggregates each state's YRBSS surveys over time.[3] The YRBSS collects information on suicide attempts. Specifically, respondents are asked "how many times they actually attempted suicide in the past 12 months." From this, we construct an indicator for any suicide attempt (1 if the student reported ever attempted, 0 if none). This binary outcome is our primary dependent variable, capturing the most serious non-fatal mental crisis. YRBSS asks other suicide-related questions, which we exploit as other outcome variables of interest. We include: During the past 12 months, whether respondents 1) seriously consider attempting suicide; 2) make a plan about suicide.

A key advantage of the YRBSS for our study is that many state surveys include questions on sexual orientation, allowing identification of sexual minority youth. In each participating state/year that asked the question, students were prompted: "Which of the following best describes you? A. Heterosexual (straight), B. Gay or Lesbian, C. Bisexual, D. Not sure." We use this to define a Sexual Minority indicator, which equals 1 for students self-identifying as gay, lesbian, or bisexual (as well as those unsure/questioning), and 0 for those identifying as heterosexual.[4] In our dataset, about 12.8% of students identify as sexual minority, consistent with prior reports (Raifman et al., 2020), though this proportion grows over time as more states collect the data. We restrict the analytic sample to observations with non-missing sexual orientation and suicide attempt data.[5] Our study effectively leverages the pool of state YRBSS surveys that included the sexual identity item, providing wide geographic and temporal coverage.

For each student record, we attach state-level policy variables indicating the presence of key laws in the student's state and survey year. Non-Discrimination Law (NDL): Equals 1 if, by the given year, the student's state has a law in effect that prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. These laws typically cover areas such as employment and public accommodations (and sometimes education). We compiled the year each state enacted an NDL protecting LGBQ individuals. For example, California's NDL took effect in 1992, while some states had no such law through 2019. Using this, we create a time-varying indicator for whether an NDL is in force for each state-year. We manually collected detailed NDL information across states and summarized the timing, source links, and concise descriptions in Table A5. Anti-Bullying Law (ABL): Equals 1 if the state has adopted a comprehensive anti-bullying law by that year. Start-

[3]The most recent data include waves from 2021 and 2023. Our analysis focus on the time period before 2020 to prevent the impact of COVID-19 bias our estimates.

[4]This classification follows the CDC's coding, which groups gay/lesbian and bisexual youth together as sexual minorities.

[5]Not all states and years included the orientation question – only 2 states did so in 1997, but by 2015 around half of the states did, and by 2019, roughly 30 states asked about sexual identity.

ing in the mid-2000s, many states required school districts to implement anti-bullying policies. These laws often specifically mention protections for enumerated groups (including LGBQ students in some cases). We use data on the enactment year of state ABLs, drawn from prior research (Rees et al., 2022). Same-Sex Marriage (SSM) Law: Equals 1 if same-sex marriage is legally recognized in the state in that year. This variable tracks the rollout of marriage equality via state legislation or court decisions up until the 2015 Obergefell ruling, which legalized SSM nationwide.[6]

By merging these policy indicators with the YRBSS data (based on each student's state and survey year), we obtain a cross-sectional dataset including state policy exposures for the youth in our sample. In terms of controls, we incorporate students' demographic characteristics: age, sex, and race/ethnicity. These account for differences in suicide risk across groups. We also control for the state unemployment rate (annual) as a proxy for economic conditions that might affect mental health.

Table 1 reports summary statistics for the analysis sample. The average respondent is about 15.9 years old, and approximately 13% identify as sexual minorities. Around 16% report seriously considering suicide, 14% report making a suicide plan, and 8.5% report at least one suicide attempt during the past year. However, there are stark disparities in suicide-related risks. Among sexual-minority youth, 39% report seriously considering suicide, 33% report making a suicide plan, and 22% report at least one suicide attempt during the past year. In contrast, the corresponding rates among heterosexual youth are substantially lower (13%, 11%, and 7%), respectively. Roughly two-thirds of respondents reside in states with a NDL in effect during the survey year, while the majority live in states that have enacted ABL or SSM legalization by the end of the observation period.

3 Empirical Strategy

3.1 Main Difference-in-Differences Specification

We estimate the impact of NDLs on youth suicide attempts using a difference-in-differences (DiD) framework that exploits variation across states and over time in the adoption of the non-discrimination laws. The basic idea is to compare the change in suicide attempt rates for sexual minority youth, which is the group we expect to benefit from the policy, relative to the change for heterosexual youth, before versus after a state implements an NDL.[7] This can be viewed as a form

[6]Before 2015, there was substantial variation: e.g., Massachusetts adopted SSM in 2004, whereas many states did not until the Supreme Court mandate (Anderson et al., 2021).

[7]To validate this identifying assumption, we estimate the regressions of suicide outcomes on the adoption of all three policies (NDL, ABL, and SSM), using the same control variables as in the main analysis but restricting the sample to heterosexual youth. Across all specifications, we find no significant effects of NDL adoption on this group.

of triple-differences: we have a treatment group dimension (LGBQ vs. non-LGBQ), a policy time dimension (pre vs. post law within a state), and a state dimension (since different states enact laws at different times).

To execute this, we specify a regression model for the suicide attempt indicator. Conceptually, the model can be written as:

$$\begin{aligned} S_{ist} = \alpha + \beta_1(SexualMinor_i \times NDL_{st}) + \beta_2(SexualMinor_i \times ABL_{st}) + \beta_3(SexualMinor_i \times SSM_{st}) \\ +\theta_1 NDL_{st} + \theta_2 ABL_{st} + \theta_3 SSM_{st} + \gamma_1 SexualMinor_i \\ +\delta' X_{ist} + \phi'(SexualMinor_i \times X_{ist}) + \mu_s + \lambda_t + \varepsilon_{ist} \end{aligned} \tag{1}$$

In this specification, subscripts i, s, and t denote individuals, states, and years, respectively. S_{ist} denotes the binary indicator for whether student i in state s and year t attempted/considered/planned suicide in the past year. $SexualMinor_i$ is an indicator for sexual minority status. NDL_{st}, ABL_{st}, and SSM_{st} are indicators for whether state s in year t has enacted a nondiscrimination law, an anti-bullying law, or a same-sex marriage law, respectively. X_{ist} includes demographic characteristics (age, sex, and race/ethnicity indicators) and the state-level unemployment rate. We include state fixed effects μ_s to absorb all time-invariant differences across states. We also include year fixed effects λ_t to capture shocks or secular trends common to all states in a given year, such as nationwide shifts in suicide reporting or mental health awareness. All regressions apply the adjusted YRBSS survey weights following Anderson et al. (2021) so that results are representative of the national high school population, and standard errors are clustered by state to adjust for non-independence of observations within states over time.

The main coefficient of interest is β_1, which attaches to the interaction terms $SexualMinor_i \times NDL_{st}$. This parameter captures how suicide-related outcomes among sexual minority youth change after NDL is enacted, relative to changes for heterosexual youth in the same state and period. In a difference-in-differences interpretation, β_1 measures the NDL policy effect on LGBQ youth, using heterosexual youth as the counterfactual for what would have occurred in the absence of the law.

A crucial aspect of our methodology is using a fully interacted model to address confounders and trends that could vary by sexual orientation. We follow the approach of Anderson et al. (2021)

For example, the coefficient on NDL is −0.008 with a standard error of 0.008 when the outcome is suicide attempt. It indicates the estimated effects in our main results reflect changes among sexual minority youth rather than shifts in the control group.

by interacting sexual minority status with key covariates. In practice, this means our regression includes not only the triple interaction terms for policies ($SexualMinor \times NDL$, etc.), but also interactions like $SexualMinor \times$ Age, $SexualMinor \times$ Female, $SexualMinor \times$ Race dummies, and $SexualMinor \times$ Unemployment. By doing so, we allow the effects of demographics and economic conditions to differ between LGBQ and non-LGBQ youth. This saturation of the model helps satisfy the "parallel trends" assumption of DiD as any underlying trend in LGBQ vs. heterosexual suicide risk (unrelated to policies) is accounted for by our rich set of fixed effects and interaction controls.

We also include the interaction terms $SexualMinor \times ABL$ and $SexualMinor \times SSM$. This is to control for the influence of other policies that coincide with NDLs. For example, if an anti-bullying law also improved LGBQ youth outcomes, not accounting for it could overestimate NDL effect. By including these terms, β_1 isolates the effect of the nondiscrimination law net of any contributions from ABL and SSM laws.

Beside suicide attempt, we also estimate *considered suicide* and *planned suicide* to capture earlier stages in the progression of suicidality. Examining these related outcomes helps assess whether state-level policies influence not only the later stage outcomes but also the antecedent psychological stages that precede a suicide attempt. Together, these analyses provide a more complete understanding of how protective policies may affect both the incidence and the escalation of suicidal behavior among sexual minority youth.

3.2 Event Study Design

To assess the validity of the parallel trends assumption and to visualize the dynamic effects of nondiscrimination laws (NDLs) over time, we conduct an event study analysis. This specification replaces the single post-policy indicator in Equation (1) with a series of relative-year dummies that trace the evolution of suicide attempt differentials between sexual minority and heterosexual youth before and after NDL adoption. The model is expressed as:

$$
\begin{aligned}
S_{ist} \;=\; & \alpha \;+\; \sum_{k\neq -1} \beta_k \big(SexualMinor_i \times D^{\mathrm{NDL}}_{s,t+k}\big) \\
& + \underbrace{\theta_1\, NDL_{st} + \theta_2\, ABL_{st} + \theta_3\, SSM_{st}}_{\text{policy main effects}} \\
& + \underbrace{\pi_1\big(SexualMinor_i \times ABL_{st}\big) \;+\; \pi_2\big(SexualMinor_i \times SSM_{st}\big)}_{\text{static controls for other laws (diff. effects)}} \\
& + \gamma\, SexualMinor_i \;+\; \delta' X_{ist} \;+\; \phi'\big(SexualMinor_i \times X_{ist}\big) \;+\; \mu_s \;+\; \lambda_t \;+\; \varepsilon_{ist}.
\end{aligned}
\tag{2}
$$

$D^{\mathrm{NDL}}_{s,t+k}$ is the event-time indicator equal to one if state s is k years from NDL adoption in year t; $k = -1$ is omitted as the reference period. The terms $SexualMinor_i \times ABL_{st}$ and $SexualMinor_i \times SSM_{st}$ ensure that any differential impact of anti-bullying or same-sex marriage laws on sexual-minority youth is partialled out when tracing the NDL dynamics. This specification mirrors the fully interacted main model while keeping only NDL in event time to avoid multicollinearity when policy adoptions cluster.

This dynamic specification provides two key insights. First, it allows us to test for pre-trends. If the coefficients for the years prior to the enactment ($k < 0$) are statistically indistinguishable from zero, this supports the identification assumption that, in the absence of the policy, suicide attempt rates for sexual minority and heterosexual youth would have followed parallel trends. Second, the post-adoption coefficients ($k \geq 0$) reveal how the estimated policy effects evolve over time, whether they emerge immediately or gradually after implementation, and whether they persist or attenuate in later years.

3.3 Pseudo-panel Approach

We employ a pseudo-panel approach as well. Following Deaton (1985), cohort or cell-level averages (by state, year, gender, age category, race, and sexual-orientation category) can be treated as observations in a synthetic panel, under appropriate conditions of cohort stability and large cell sizes. This allows us to exploit within-state over-time variation while controlling for unobserved heterogeneity in ways analogous to fixed-effect panel models.[8] The pseudo-panel complements our individual-level DiD estimates, providing a robustness check that the estimated treatment effects are not driven by idiosyncratic sampling variation among sexual-minority youth (who constitute a relatively small share of the sample each year).

[8] Verbeek and Nijman (1992) emphasize that aggregation reduces individual-level noise and mitigates attrition or non-response biases common in panels. Guillerm (2017) further argues that the pseudo-panel approach is especially valuable when individual identifiers are unavailable, the time range is long, and sample sizes per cell are sufficiently large to produce stable averages.

Specifically, we construct a pseudo-panel that aggregates individual responses to state-year-gender-age-race-orientation cells. Let $c \equiv (s, t, g, a, r, o)$ index a cell; let $\bar{S}_c$ denote the survey-weighted mean of the suicide outcome in cell c, and $\bar{X}_c$ the vector of cell-weighted covariate means. This aggregation reduces idiosyncratic noise from small sexual-minority samples and preserves within-state policy variation over time. We estimate the fully interacted model at the cell level in a way that is notation- and content-consistent with Eq. (1):

$$\begin{aligned}\bar{S}_{stgaro} = \alpha &+ \beta_1\big(SM_o \times NDL_{st}\big) + \beta_2\big(SM_o \times ABL_{st}\big) + \beta_3\big(SM_o \times SSM_{st}\big) \\ &+ \theta_1 NDL_{st} + \theta_2 ABL_{st} + \theta_3 SSM_{st} + \gamma\, SM_o \\ &+ \delta' \bar{X}_{stgar} + \phi'\big(SM_o \times \bar{X}_{stgar}\big) + \mu_s + \lambda_t + \varepsilon_{stgaro},\end{aligned} \tag{3}$$

where SM_o is the sexual-minority indicator for orientation o, $\bar{X}_{stgar}$ contains the cell shares for age, female, race groups, and the state unemployment rate. We weight by the sum of individual survey weights within the cell and cluster standard errors at the state level.

We view the pseudo-panel estimators in Eq.(3) as robustness checks to the individual-level models. They deliver the same identifying variation in within-state changes over time affecting sexual minorities differentially while attenuating sampling noise from small LGBQ subsamples. Consistency of signs, magnitudes, and pre-trend diagnostics between the pseudo-panel and the individual-level estimates strengthens the credibility of our causal interpretation.

4 Results

Table 2 presents estimates from the fully interacted difference-in-differences specification with state and year fixed effects. The results show that state nondiscrimination laws significantly reduce suicide-related outcomes among sexual minority youth. The coefficient on the interaction term $NDL \times SexualMinor$ is negative and statistically significant for suicide attempts and suicidal consideration. Specifically, the enactment of an NDL is associated with a 2.97 percentage point decrease in suicide attempts and a 3.15 percentage point decline in suicidal consideration among sexual minority students relative to their heterosexual peers. The coefficient for suicide planning is negative but statistically insignificant.

Given that approximately 16% of sexual minority adolescents report attempting suicide in the past year, the point estimate implies roughly an 18% relative reduction in suicide attempts following the adoption of an NDL. This reduction represents a substantial improvement in population

mental health, potentially translating into thousands of averted suicide attempts among LGBQ youth each year in states with inclusive protections. Importantly, the estimated effect of NDLs is robust to the inclusion of other policy interactions. The interaction terms for anti-bullying laws ($ABL \times SexualMinor$) and same-sex marriage ($SSM \times SexualMinor$) are statistically insignificant across all specifications. In contrast, the NDL coefficient remains stable in magnitude and significance, suggesting that nondiscrimination policies exert an independent and more direct protective influence.

To examine dynamic treatment effects and assess the plausibility of the parallel-trends assumption, Figure 1 plots the event-study coefficients for the interaction $SexualMinor \times NDL$ based on the fully interacted model. While the coefficients for most pre-treatment years are close to zero, the second lead (approximately five years before adoption) are marginally significant, indicating some deviation from perfect pre-trends. However, these early coefficients correspond to event years with few adopting states, as shown in Figure A1, and should therefore be interpreted with caution. Beyond these early leads, the pre-treatment coefficients stabilize near zero, suggesting that differential pre-trends are unlikely to drive the main findings.

Following NDL adoption (event year $k = 0$), the coefficients turn negative and remain so for several subsequent periods, with the most pronounced decline occurring roughly five to six years post-adoption. This pattern suggests that nondiscrimination laws may have delayed but persistent effects on reducing suicide attempts among sexual minority youth, possibly reflecting the gradual diffusion of legal protection and social acceptance over time. The absence of a directional or monotonic pre-trend, combined with improvements that emerge only after treatment, supports the interpretation that the observed reductions reflect policy effects rather than anticipatory behavior.

Table 3 presents results from the pseudo-panel analysis, where observations correspond to state – year – gender – age – race – orientation cells constructed using adjusted YRBSS sampling weights. The pseudo-panel approach mitigates sampling noise and measurement error, providing an additional check on the robustness of our main findings.

The results corroborate the main estimates. The coefficient on $NDL \times SexualMinor$ remains negative and highly significant across all three suicide-related outcomes. The estimated magnitudes are even slightly larger than in the individual-level regressions: a 3.5 percentage point reduction in suicide attempts, a 5.7 percentage point decline in suicidal consideration, and a 2.8 percentage point reduction in suicide planning, all significant at least the 5% level. The consistency of results across the micro and pseudo-panel specifications suggests that the estimated effects are not driven

by individual-level sampling variation but reflect a broader policy-induced shift in mental health outcomes among sexual minority youth.

The pseudo-panel estimates for ABL interactions are negative but less stable across outcomes, and those for SSM interactions remain small and insignificant. Together, these findings reinforce the interpretation that nondiscrimination protections, rather than general pro-LGBT policy climate or symbolic legal changes, play a central role in reducing suicide risks among vulnerable adolescents.

Across all models, the evidence consistently indicates that nondiscrimination laws exert a significant and robust protective effect on LGBQ youth mental health. Event-study patterns confirm that these effects emerge following policy adoption rather than pre-existing trends, and pseudo-panel estimates validate their robustness to aggregation and potential sampling variability.

5 Heterogeneity

While our main analysis focuses on the binary adoption of nondiscrimination laws (NDLs) protecting sexual minorities in employment, the scope of legal protection varies substantially across states. Some states extend protections beyond employment to include housing, public accommodations, insurance, and other domains. These "comprehensive protection" states may foster a broader climate of inclusion and institutional recognition, amplifying the impact of NDLs on youth mental health. To examine this possibility, we conduct a heterogeneity analysis based on the breadth of legal protection.

We first construct a dummy variable, Comprehensive_s, that equals one for states offering protections in additional domains beyond employment, and zero otherwise.[9] We then estimate an augmented version of Eq. (1), introducing a triple-difference term that captures the differential effect of NDLs in these more protective environments:

$$\begin{aligned} S_{ist} = \alpha + \beta_1(SM_i \times NDL_{st} \times \text{Comprehensive}_s) + \beta_2(SM_i \times ABL_{st}) + \beta_3(SM_i \times SSM_{st}) \\ + \theta_1 NDL_{st} + \theta_2 ABL_{st} + \theta_3 SSM_{st} + \gamma\, SM_i + \delta' X_{ist} + \phi'(SM_i \times X_{ist}) + \mu_s + \lambda_t + \varepsilon_{ist}. \end{aligned} \tag{4}$$

Here, β_1 identifies the incremental impact in comprehensive states. A negative and significant β_1 would indicate that the mental-health benefits of NDLs are stronger where legal protections are broader and more encompassing.

[9] Specifically, we classify Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Iowa, Maryland, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, and Utah as comprehensive states, based on their inclusion of at least two non-employment protections (housing, insurance, or public services, etc). See Table A5 for details.

Additionally, we perform a sub-sample analysis contrasting states with comprehensive legal protections for LGBQ individuals against those without, employing the main specification in Eq. (1). We hypothesize that the effects on suicide-related outcomes will be more pronounced in states with comprehensive protections.

Table A2 shows the results. Column (1) estimates the triple-difference model using all states, interacting NDL adoption, sexual-minority status, and an indicator for states with comprehensive LGBQ protections, i.e., those extending beyond employment to cover housing, insurance, or public accommodations. Columns (2) and (3) restrict the sample to comprehensive and non-comprehensive states, respectively.

The triple-difference coefficient in Column (1) is largely negative but statistically insignificant, indicating that the estimated effect is directionally stronger in comprehensive states but imprecisely measured given the limited number of such states. Subsample estimates further highlight policy heterogeneity: the $NDL \times SexualMinor$ coefficient is -0.084 and significant at the 10 percent level in comprehensive states, compared with a smaller -0.031 in non-comprehensive states. These differences suggest that the effects of NDLs are nearly three times larger in states with broader legal protections, whereas ABL and SSM laws show little consistent association with suicide attempts.

To examine whether the protective effect of NDL varies by the broader sociopolitical climate toward sexual minorities, we construct an indicator for whether a state had legalized same-sex marriage (SSM) prior to the national ruling on June 26, 2015. States that adopted SSM earlier are generally understood to be more accepting of LGBT individuals, and therefore provide a relevant context for testing whether NDLs matter more in less welcoming environments where baseline protections or social norms are weaker. We interact this "welcome state" indicator (instead of Comprehensive_s) with both sexual-minority status and NDL adoption in the framework of (4) and additionally estimate separate models for welcome and non-welcome states.

We report the results Table A3. The triple-interaction term is again small and statistically insignificant, indicating no measurable difference in the NDL effect between welcome and non-welcome states. Subsample regressions reveal that the $NDL \times SexualMinor$ coefficient remains negative and significant in both groups, with slightly larger effects observed in non-welcome states. This pattern suggests that nondiscrimination laws provide protective benefits regardless of underlying social acceptance and may be especially influential in states where baseline inclusion is weaker.

Taken together, these results show that although NDL effects are amplified in states with comprehensive LGBQ protections, they remain robust across broader institutional and cultural environments. The consistency of the estimates across both sets of robustness checks reinforces the interpretation that nondiscrimination laws play an independent and substantive role in improving the mental health of sexual-minority adolescents.

6 Mechanism: School Climate and Risk Behaviors

To explore the potential mechanisms through which nondiscrimination laws influence mental health outcomes, we examine three intermediate outcomes that capture the school and behavioral environment of sexual minority youth: (i) whether a student reports being bullied at school, (ii) cigarette use in the past 30 days, and (iii) alcohol consumption in the past 30 days. Table 4 reports estimates from the fully interacted individual-level model, while Table A1 presents corresponding results from the pseudo-panel specification.

Consistent with theoretical and empirical work on minority stress and social integration (Becker, 1968; Hatzenbuehler, 2011; Fields and Wotipka, 2022), the results suggest that nondiscrimination laws improve youth outcomes partly by reducing hostile school climates and discouraging risky coping behaviors. In Table 4, the interaction coefficient $NDL \times SexualMinor$ is negative and statistically significant across all three channels. Specifically, NDL adoption is associated with a 2.2 percentage point reduction in the probability of being bullied, a 3.5 percentage point decline in cigarette use, and a 2.9 percentage point decline in alcohol use among sexual minority students relative to heterosexual peers. These magnitudes are substantial given that about 20% of youth report bullying and 25% report substance use.

The pseudo-panel estimates in Table A1 yield even stronger and more precisely estimated effects. The coefficient on $NDL \times SexualMinor$ implies a 4.9 percentage point reduction in bullying, a 4.4 percentage point decline in cigarette use, and a 4.0 percentage point reduction in alcohol use. These effects remain significant and are robust to aggregation. The consistency across both levels of analysis reinforces the interpretation that nondiscrimination laws operate partly through improving school climates and decreasing maladaptive coping behaviors such as smoking and drinking.

By contrast, the interaction terms for ABL and SSM show no systematic protective effects in both models. This divergence supports the view that broad nondiscrimination statutes may exert deeper structural influence like altering social norms, institutional accountability, and perceived fairness, which are beyond the narrower scope of anti-bullying statutes or symbolic marriage recognition

(Short and Mollborn, 2015; Anderson et al., 2021).

Taken together, the evidence suggests that nondiscrimination policies reduce suicidality among LGBQ youth in part by improving their daily social environment, lessening exposure to bullying and reducing risky behaviors that often accompany chronic stress or stigma. These findings align with the economic literature emphasizing the role of social context and institutional trust in shaping health behavior (Short and Mollborn, 2015; Case and Deaton, 2021). The results underscore that legal protections not only confer formal equality but also yield tangible behavioral and psychosocial benefits that contribute to population well-being.

7 Discussion

A key threat in policy evaluations is that individuals or institutions may adjust behavior in advance of the policy, generating anticipation effects. In our setting, schools, local governments, or LGBQ advocacy groups might signal support even before formal NDL adoption, potentially affecting reporting behavior or underlying mental health outcomes of sexual-minority youth.

One potential threat is selection into treatment if the composition of sexual-minority youth differs systematically before and after NDL adoption from the following reasons:

1) *Migration-Based Selection*: YRBSS respondents are high school students whose residential mobility is determined primarily by parents, not state-level LGBQ policies. Interstate mobility among minors is extremely limited and largely unrelated to civil-rights laws. Thus, migration-based selection is unlikely to confound our results. 2) *Self-Identification-Based Selection*: A more plausible concern is that youth may be more willing to disclose their sexual-minority status after NDL adoption. If the newly identifying youth differ in mental health from those previously willing to self-identify, this could bias our estimated treatment effects.

To test this, we estimate models where the dependent variable is an indicator for identifying as a sexual minority. Across all specifications, the coefficient on NDL adoption is extremely small and statistically indistinguishable from zero (see Table 5). This finding indicates that nondiscrimination laws do not meaningfully alter the proportion of youth who self-identify as LGBQ, reducing concerns about treatment-induced compositional change. While we observe responses to other policies such as ABLs and SSMs, these responses do not affect our core identification strategy, which relies on the stability of sexual-minority reporting around NDL adoption. The absence of such a response for NDLs suggests that our estimated effects on suicide-related out-

comes reflect genuine behavioral or psychological changes rather than shifts in sample composition.

Importantly, any bias from increased willingness to disclose after NDL adoption would work against finding negative treatment effects. Youth who previously felt unsafe but choose to self-identify only after policy adoption may be systematically more vulnerable, creating upward pressure on suicidality rates post-treatment. The fact that we instead observe sizable declines suggests that our estimates likely understate the true protective effects.

8 Conclusion

Our study provides the first comprehensive evidence that state nondiscrimination laws protecting LGBQ individuals can substantially reduce youth suicide attempts. Using nearly three decades of data on U.S. high school students, we found that when states implement laws banning discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, the mental health of sexual minority youth improves markedly relative to their heterosexual peers. The estimated reductions in suicide attempt rates are both statistically and socially significant. These findings are robust when controlling for other contemporaneous policies like same-sex marriage legalization and anti-bullying mandates, suggesting that nondiscrimination laws have an independent and important role in safeguarding youth mental health.

Our study contributes to the understanding of how structural stigma and legal environments shape health disparities. It complements prior evidence that targeted school policies (like anti-bullying laws) can save young lives (Rees et al., 2022), by showing that broader anti-discrimination measures also confer mental health benefits. In policy terms, LGBQ-inclusive nondiscrimination laws are often debated for their economic and civil rights implications; our results reveal they also have public health value by fostering conditions that allow vulnerable youth to thrive. Notably, these laws appear to reduce experiences of bullying and marginalization, and to promote healthier behaviors among LGBQ teens, indicating a ripple effect from legal protections to everyday well-being.

For policymakers and stakeholders aiming to reduce youth suicide and promote health equity, our findings highlight a promising lever: create and uphold inclusive policies. As of the end of our study period (2019), there was wide variation in LGBQ protective laws across states, and this patchwork likely contributes to unequal outcomes. Strengthening and expanding nondiscrimination protections (for example, through federal legislation or broader state coverage) could be a viable strategy to mitigate mental health disparities affecting LGBQ adolescents. Conversely, policies that remove protections or contribute to stigma could worsen those disparities. Ongoing debates

about LGBQ rights in education, healthcare, and public life should weigh not only moral and legal arguments, but also the empirical evidence that supportive policies save lives.

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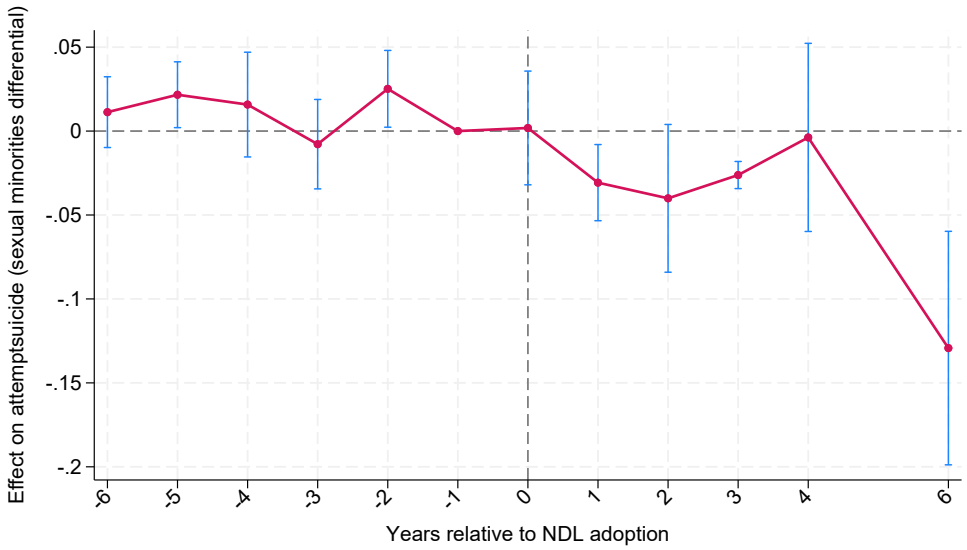
Tables and Figures

Figure 1. Event Study: Sexualminor × NDL



Event study estimates of the impact of NDLs on suicide attempts among sexual minority youth. The figure shows coefficients from Equation (2) and 95% confidence intervals, where the base period is one year before adoption ($k = -1$). The are no observations at $k = 5$.

Table 1. Summary Statistics

	mean	sd	min	max
Age	15.907	1.221	12	18
Female	0.521	0.500	0	1
White	0.544	0.498	0	1
Black	0.088	0.281	0	1
Hispanic	0.221	0.408	0	1
Otherrace	0.156	0.363	0	1
Considered suicide	0.163	0.370	0	1
Made a suicide plan	0.136	0.343	0	1
Attemptsuicide	0.087	0.281	0	1
Sexualminor	0.128	0.334	0	1
NDL	0.661	0.473	0	1
ABL	0.956	0.205	0	1
SSM	0.783	0.412	0	1
Unemployment rate	5.117	2.107	2.17	11.39
Bullying at school	0.201	0.401	0	1
Ever cigarette use	0.311	0.463	0	1
Alcohol use	0.265	0.441	0	1
Observations	276,252			

Table 2. Impact of State Laws on Suicide-Related Outcomes among Sexual Minorities

	(1) Attempt	(2) Consider	(3) Plan
Sexual minority × NDL	-0.0297***	-0.0315**	-0.0076
	(0.0053)	(0.0136)	(0.0103)
Sexual minority × ABL	-0.0238	-0.0453	0.0131
	(0.0178)	(0.0365)	(0.0178)
Sexual minority × SSM	-0.0159	0.0102	0.0092
	(0.0287)	(0.0292)	(0.0281)
sexualminor	0.4538***	0.6593***	0.5491***
	(0.0768)	(0.0712)	(0.126)
NDL	-0.0066	-0.0156	-0.0210**
	(0.0082)	(0.0122)	(0.0089)
ABL	-0.0074	0.0092*	0.0254***
	(0.0062)	(0.0047)	(0.0064)
SSM	0.0179**	0.0209**	0.0187**
	(0.0067)	(0.0100)	(0.0081)
Other Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Adjusted Weights	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	276,252	276,252	276,252
Within R-squared	0.0377	0.0681	0.0524
Note:		*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

All regressions apply adjusted-YRBS weight. All regressions include state and year fixed effects. Standard errors clustered at the state level.

Table 3. Impact of State Laws on Suicide-Related Outcomes among Sexual Minorities

	(1) Attempt	(2) Consider	(3) Plan
Sexual minority × NDL	-0.0352***	-0.0576***	-0.0283**
	(0.0100)	(0.0193)	(0.0134)
Sexual minority × ABL	-0.0809*	-0.0477	0.0596
	(0.0422)	(0.0484)	(0.0520)
Sexual minority × SSM	0.0102	0.0606	0.0574
	(0.0579)	(0.0637)	(0.0689)
sexualminor	0.4298***	0.5260***	0.1024
	(0.1173)	(0.1909)	(0.3468)
NDL	0.0061	-0.0398	-0.0620**
	(0.0100)	(0.0257)	(0.0254)
ABL	-0.0065	0.0286**	0.0428***
	(0.0055)	(0.0128)	(0.0134)
SSM	0.0257***	0.0497***	0.0591***
	(0.0061)	(0.0087)	(0.0141)
Other Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Adjusted Weights	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	9,755	9,870	9,644
Within R-squared	0.387	0.555	0.425
Note:			*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

All regressions apply adjusted-YRBS weight. All regressions include state and year fixed effects. Standard errors clustered at the state level.

Table 4. Mechanism: Effect of State Laws on School Bullying/Smoking/Alcohol among Sexual Minorities

	(1) Bullied	(2) Cigaratte	(3) Alcohol
Sexual minority × NDL	-0.0216*	-0.0353**	-0.0289**
	(0.0108)	(0.0159)	(0.0140)
Sexual minority × ABL	-0.0140	0.0277**	0.1114***
	(0.0114)	(0.0122)	(0.0388)
Sexual minority × SSM	-0.0162	-0.0236	-0.0325
	(0.0163)	(0.0214)	(0.0338)
sexualminor	0.4546***	0.0799	0.1694*
	(0.1101)	(0.0607)	(0.0874)
NDL	-0.0094	-0.0138	-0.0050
	(0.0076)	(0.0101)	(0.0191)
ABL	-0.0145***	-0.0065	-0.0047
	(0.0051)	(0.0126)	(0.0123)
SSM	0.0052	0.0389*	0.0308**
	(0.0046)	(0.0212)	(0.0130)
Other Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Adjusted Weights	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	261,682	205,864	276,252
Within R-squared	0.0295	0.0350	0.0326
Note:			*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

All regressions apply adjusted-YRBS weight. All regressions include state and year fixed effects. Standard errors clustered at the state level.

Table 5. Effect of NDL Adoption on Sexual-Minority Self-Identification

	(1)	(2)
	Sexual Minority	
Policy variables		
NDL	0.000	-0.000
	(0.006)	(0.008)
ABL		0.010**
		(0.005)
SSM		0.017**
		(0.007)
Demographics		
Age		-0.001
		(0.001)
Black		0.023**
		(0.010)
Hispanic		0.012**
		(0.005)
Other race		0.018**
		(0.007)
Female		0.090***
		(0.006)
Unemployment rate		-0.001
		(0.003)
Observations	276,252	276,252
R-squared	0.008	0.027
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

All regressions apply adjusted-YRBS weight. All regressions include state and year fixed effects. Standard errors clustered at the state level.

A Appendix Tables and Figures

Table A1. Mechanism: Effect of State Laws on School Bullying/Smoking/Alcohol among Sexual Minorities

	(1) Bullied	(2) Cigaratte	(3) Alcohol
Sexual minority × NDL	-0.0497***	-0.0438*	-0.0403***
	(0.0158)	(0.0247)	(0.0124)
Sexual minority × ABL	-0.0208	0.1714***	0.1486***
	(0.0151)	(0.0366)	(0.0200)
Sexual minority × SSM	-0.0037	0.0518	-0.0409
	(0.0241)	(0.0563)	(0.0348)
sexualminor	0.7246***	-0.2585*	0.2788***
	(0.1577)	(0.1322)	(0.0958)
NDL	-0.0245	-0.0009	0.0011
	(0.0202)	(0.0099)	(0.0159)
ABL	0.0112	-0.0001	0.0032
	(0.0143)	(0.0237)	(0.0092)
SSM	0.0273**	0.0541***	0.0399***
	(0.0106)	(0.0140)	(0.0070)
Other Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Adjusted Weights	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	9,322	7,068	10,617
Within R-squared	0.349	0.450	0.416
Note:			*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

All regressions apply adjusted-YRBS weight. All regressions include state and year fixed effects. Standard errors clustered at the state level.

Table A2. Robustness: Effects of Nondiscrimination Laws by Comprehensiveness of Protection

	(1) All States	(2) Compre States	(3) Non-Compre States
Sexual minority × NDL	-0.032***	-0.084*	-0.031***
	(0.004)	(0.039)	(0.005)
Sexual minority × NDL × Compstate	-0.026		
	(0.017)		
Sexual minority × ABL	-0.015	-0.090**	-0.014
	(0.022)	(0.037)	(0.016)
Sexual minority × SSM	-0.017	0.090	-0.042**
	(0.029)	(0.068)	(0.015)
Other Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Adjusted Weights	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	276,252	76,922	199,330
Within R-squared	0.038	0.037	0.038
Note:			*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

All regressions apply adjusted-YRBS weight. All regressions include state and year fixed effects. Standard errors clustered at the state level.

Table A3. Robustness: Effects of Nondiscrimination Laws by Friendliness of States

	(1) All States	(2) Welcome States	(3) Non-welcome States
sexualminor × NDLw	-0.033***	-0.033***	-0.044**
	(0.011)	(0.007)	(0.014)
sexualminor × NDL× welcomestate	0.001		
	(0.014)		
sexualminor× ABL	-0.024	-0.024	-0.005
	(0.018)	(0.023)	(0.050)
sexualminor × SSM	-0.016	-0.013	-0.041
	(0.029)	(0.035)	(0.039)
Other Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Adjusted Weights	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	276,252	211,319	64,933
Within R-squared	0.038	0.039	0.036
Note:			*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

All regressions apply adjusted-YRBS weight. All regressions include state and year fixed effects. Standard errors clustered at the state level.

Figure A1. State Contributing at Each Event Year

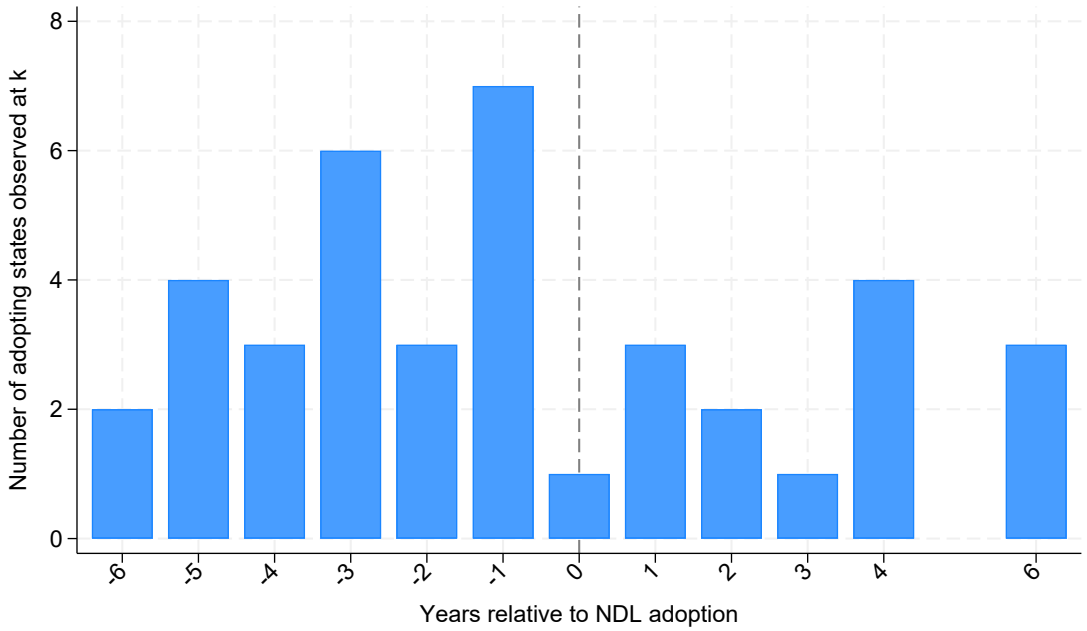


Table A4. Summary of State Nondiscrimination Laws Protecting Sexual Minority

State	Year Passed	Source / Link	Concise Summary
Alabama	–		
Alaska	2020	https://humanrights.alaska.gov/	Alaska briefly expanded LGBTQ protections to housing and public services, but by 2023 the state limited them to employment only, following the attorney general's guidance.
Arizona	2020	https://arizonalawguide.com/discrimination-based-on-gender-identity-in-arizona/	Arizona has no statewide LGBTQ protections; Bostock covers employment, while some cities and executive orders provide limited local and state employee safeguards.
Arkansas	–		
California	1992	https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=GOV&sectionNum=12940.	California law bans discrimination and harassment based on gender identity, sexual orientation, and other traits, providing some of the nation's strongest workplace protections.
Colorado	2007	https://advance.lexis.com/container?config=0345494EJAA5ZjE0MDIyYy1kNzZkLTRkNzktYTkxMS04YmJhNjBlNWUwYzYKAFBvZENhdGFsb2e4CaPI4cak6laXLCWyLBO9&crid=8cde2724-84e6-4be9-a3bf-93d6842b560d	Colorado state laws explicitly prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression

State	Year Passed	Source / Link	Concise Summary
Connecticut	1991	https://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap_814c.htm	Connecticut law bans discrimination in employment, housing, and public life based on sexual orientation and gender identity or expression, protecting transgender and gender-diverse individuals.
Delaware	2009	https://legis.delaware.gov/SessionLaws/Chapter?id=17158	Delaware law bans discrimination based on sexual orientation in employment, housing, insurance, and public accommodations, with limited religious exemptions.
Florida	2020	https://fchr.myflorida.com/file-a-complaint-page	Florida's commission treats LGBTQ bias as sex discrimination under Bostock, though state law doesn't explicitly list those protections.
Georgia	–		
Hawaii	2011	https://fchr.myflorida.com/file-a-complaint-page	Hawaii law bans discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression in employment, housing, and public accommodations, providing broad LGBTQ+ protections.
Idaho	–		
Illinois	2005	https://www.ilga.gov/documents/legislation/ilcs/documents/077500050K1-102.htm	The Illinois Human Rights Act protects people from discrimination based on traits like race, sex, disability, and sexual orientation while promoting equality and fair treatment in all areas of public life.
Indiana	–		
Iowa	2007	https://www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/publications/iactc/82.1/CH0191.pdf	Iowa's Civil Rights Act, ensures equal rights in employment, housing, education, credit, and public accommodations throughout the state.

State	Year Passed	Source / Link	Concise Summary
Kansas	2020	http://www.khrc.net/pdf/Kansas%20Human%20Rights%20Commission%20Concurs%20with%20the%20US%20Supreme%20Court%20Decision%20in%20Bostock%20v%20Clayton%20County.pdf	After the Bostock v. Clayton County ruling, Kansas began treating LGBTQ+ discrimination as sex discrimination under state law, protecting it in employment, housing, and public accommodations.
Kentucky	–		
Louisiana	–		
Maine	2005	https://legislature.maine.gov/legis/statutes/5/title5sec4572.html	Maine bans employment discrimination based on traits like race, sex, disability, or religion, and protects workers from retaliation and unfair hiring practices.
Maryland	2001	https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2014RS/bills/sb/sb0212T.pdf	Maryland prohibits discrimination based on gender identity in employment, housing, and public accommodations.
Massachusetts	1989	https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXXI/Chapter151B/Section4	Massachusetts law prohibits discrimination based on race, sex, gender identity, religion, age, or disability and requires fair treatment and accommodations.
Michigan	2018	https://www.michigan.gov/-/media/Project/Websites/mdcr/mcrc/interpretive-statements/2018/meaning-of-sex.pdf?rev=c5ef0e9276a44504b857435423cb887c	Michigan clarifies that discrimination based on gender identity or sexual orientation counts as sex discrimination under state law, ensuring such complaints are protected and investigated.
Minnesota	1993	https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/363A.08	Minnesota law bans job discrimination based on traits like race, sex, gender identity, or disability and requires reasonable accommodations.

State	Year Passed	Source / Link	Concise Summary
Mississippi	–		
Missouri	–		
Montana	–		
Nebraska	2020	https://nebraskalegislature.gov/laws/statutes.php?statute=18-1724&utm_source	Nebraska law bans job discrimination based on race, sex, religion, disability, and similar traits but doesn't explicitly protect sexual orientation or gender identity, though some cities do.
Nevada	1999	https://archive.leg.state.nv.us/Session/76th2011/Bills/AB/AB211_EN.pdf	Nevada bans job discrimination based on gender identity or expression and empowers the Equal Rights Commission to enforce it.
New Hampshire	1997	https://gc.nh.gov/legislation/1997/hb0421.html	New Hampshire bans discrimination based on sexual orientation and authorizes the state Human Rights Commission to enforce it.
New Jersey	1992	chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.nj.gov/lps/dcr/downloads/NJ-Law-Against-Discrimination-Most-Updated.pdf	New Jersey's Law Against Discrimination bans bias in jobs, housing, and public services based on traits like race, sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity
New Mexico	2003	https://www.nmlegis.gov/Sessions/03%20Regular/bills/house/HB0314.pdf	New Mexico bans discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in jobs, housing, credit, and public services.
New York	2002	https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2019/S1047	New York bans discrimination based on gender identity or expression in jobs, housing, and public life and adds such offenses to the state's hate crime laws.
North Carolina	–		

State	Year Passed	Source / Link	Concise Summary
North Dakota	2020	https://ndlegis.gov/cencode/t14c02-4.pdf	North Dakota human rights and anti-discrimination laws protect categories like race, color, religion, sex, disability, age, national origin, etc.
Ohio	2021	https://civ.ohio.gov/	Ohio bans bias by race, sex, religion, age, and disability; LGBTQ+ protections come from local laws, federal rules, and state executive orders.
Oklahoma	–		
Oregon	2007	https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/bills_laws/lawsstatutes/2007orLaw0100.html	Oregon bans discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in employment, housing, public accommodations, and education, with limited religious exemptions.
Pennsylvania	2018	https://www.pa.gov/content/dam/copapwp-pagov/en/phrc/documents/APPROVED%20Sex%20Discrimination%20Guidance%20PHRA.pdf	Pennsylvania's sex discrimination protections to include sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression, consistent with Bostock v. Clayton County (2020).
Rhode Island	1995	https://www.gladlaw.org/	Rhode Island law explicitly prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity or expression in employment, housing, credit, and public accommodations.
South Carolina	–		
South Dakota	–		
Tennessee	–		

State	Year Passed	Source / Link	Concise Summary
Texas	2021	https://search.txcourts.gov/SearchMedia.aspx?MediaVersionID=5cacf6a5-7ddd-4525-918c-c4bb6fff4b05&coa=coa05&DT=Opinion&MediaID=19e9a9f3-eaf6-4900-8f93-58f54c38ae5d	In Tarrant County College District v. Sims, the court ruled that the Texas Human Rights Act covers sexual orientation discrimination under Bostock v. Clayton County.
Utah	2015	https://le.utah.gov/~2015/bills/static/SB0296.html	Utah law bans employment and housing discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, with limited religious exemptions.
Vermont	1992	https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/21/005/00495	Vermont law bans employment discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and other protected traits, while allowing limited religious exemptions.
Virginia	2020	https://legacylis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?201+sum+SB868	Virginia prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in employment, housing, and public life.
Washington	2006	http://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=49.60.180	Washington bans employment discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender, race, religion, disability, and other protected traits, ensuring equal job opportunity statewide.
West Virginia	–		
Wisconsin	1982	https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/1981/related/acts/334	Wisconsin law bans employment discrimination based on sexual orientation and other traits like race, sex, age, and disability, though it doesn't specifically mention gender identity.
Wyoming	–		

Table A5. Summary of State Nondiscrimination Laws Protecting Sexual Minority

State	Year Passed	Source / Link	Concise Summary
Alaska	2020	Alaska State Commission for Human Rights	Alaska briefly expanded LGBTQ protections to housing and public services, but by 2023 the state limited them to employment only, following the attorney general's guidance.
Arizona	2020	Discrimination Based on Gender Identity in Arizona	Arizona has no statewide LGBTQ protections; Bostock covers employment, while some cities and executive orders provide limited local and state employee safeguards.
California	1992	California Government Code §12940: Unlawful Employment Practices	California law bans discrimination and harassment based on gender identity, sexual orientation, and other traits, providing some of the nation's strongest workplace protections.
Colorado	2007	Colorado Revised Statutes §24-34-402: Unlawful Employment Practices	Colorado state laws explicitly prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression
Connecticut	1991	https://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap_814c.htm	Connecticut law bans discrimination in employment, housing, and public life based on sexual orientation and gender identity or expression, protecting transgender and gender-diverse individuals.
Delaware	2009	https://legis.delaware.gov/SessionLaws/Chapter?id=17158	Delaware law bans discrimination based on sexual orientation in employment, housing, insurance, and public accommodations, with limited religious exemptions.
Florida	2020	https://fchr.myflorida.com/file-a-complaint-page	Florida's commission treats LGBTQ bias as sex discrimination under Bostock, though state law doesn't explicitly list those protections.

State	Year Passed	Source / Link	Concise Summary
Hawaii	2011	https://fchr.myflorida.com/file-a-complaint-page	Hawaii law bans discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression in employment, housing, and public accommodations, providing broad LGBTQ+ protections.
Illinois	2005	https://www.ilga.gov/documents/legislation/ilcs/documents/077500050K1-102.htm	The Illinois Human Rights Act protects people from discrimination based on traits like race, sex, disability, and sexual orientation while promoting equality and fair treatment in all areas of public life.
Iowa	2007	https://www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/publications/iactc/82.1/CH0191.pdf	Iowa's Civil Rights Act, ensures equal rights in employment, housing, education, credit, and public accommodations throughout the state.
Kansas	2020	Kansas Human Rights Commission Concurs with the U.S. Supreme Court's Bostock Decision	After the Bostock v. Clayton County ruling, Kansas began treating LGBTQ+ discrimination as sex discrimination under state law, protecting it in employment, housing, and public accommodations.
Maine	2005	https://legislature.maine.gov/legis/statutes/5/title5sec4572.html	Maine bans employment discrimination based on traits like race, sex, disability, or religion, and protects workers from retaliation and unfair hiring practices.
Maryland	2001	https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2014RS/bills/sb/sb0212T.pdf	Maryland prohibits discrimination based on gender identity in employment, housing, and public accommodations.
Massachusetts	1989	https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXXI/Chapter151B/Section4	Massachusetts law prohibits discrimination based on race, sex, gender identity, religion, age, or disability and requires fair treatment and accommodations.

State	Year Passed	Source / Link	Concise Summary
Michigan	2018	https://www.michigan.gov/-/media/Project/Websites/mdcr/mcrc/interpretive-statements/2018/meaning-of-sex.pdf?rev=c5ef0e9276a44504b857435423cb887c	Michigan clarifies that discrimination based on gender identity or sexual orientation counts as sex discrimination under state law, ensuring such complaints are protected and investigated.
Minnesota	1993	https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/363A.08	Minnesota law bans job discrimination based on traits like race, sex, gender identity, or disability and requires reasonable accommodations.
Nebraska	2020	https://nebraskalegislature.gov/laws/statutes.php?statute=18-1724&utm_source	Nebraska law bans job discrimination based on race, sex, religion, disability, and similar traits but doesn't explicitly protect sexual orientation or gender identity, though some cities do.
Nevada	1999	https://archive.leg.state.nv.us/Session/76th2011/Bills/AB/AB211_EN.pdf	Nevada bans job discrimination based on gender identity or expression and empowers the Equal Rights Commission to enforce it.
New Hampshire	1997	https://gc.nh.gov/legislation/1997/hb0421.html	New Hampshire bans discrimination based on sexual orientation and authorizes the state Human Rights Commission to enforce it.
New Jersey	1992	chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.nj.gov/lps/dcr/downloads/NJ-Law-Against-Discrimination-Most-Updated.pdf	New Jersey's Law Against Discrimination bans bias in jobs, housing, and public services based on traits like race, sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity

State	Year Passed	Source / Link	Concise Summary
New Mexico	2003	https://www.nmlegis.gov/Sessions/03%20Regular/bills/house/HB0314.pdf	New Mexico bans discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in jobs, housing, credit, and public services.
New York	2002	https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2019/S1047	New York bans discrimination based on gender identity or expression in jobs, housing, and public life and adds such offenses to the state's hate crime laws.
North Dakota	2020	https://ndlegis.gov/cencode/t14c02-4.pdf	North Dakota human rights and anti-discrimination laws protect categories like race, color, religion, sex, disability, age, national origin, etc.
Ohio	2021	https://civ.ohio.gov/	Ohio bans bias by race, sex, religion, age, and disability; LGBTQ+ protections come from local laws, federal rules, and state executive orders.
Oregon	2007	https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/bills_laws/lawsstatutes/2007orLaw0100.html	Oregon bans discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in employment, housing, public accommodations, and education, with limited religious exemptions.
Pennsylvania	2018	https://www.pa.gov/content/dam/copapwp-pagov/en/phrc/documents/APPROVED%20Sex%20Discrimination%20Guidance%20PHRA.pdf	Pennsylvania's sex discrimination protections to include sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression, consistent with Bostock v. Clayton County (2020).
Rhode Island	1995	https://www.gladlaw.org/	Rhode Island law explicitly prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity or expression in employment, housing, credit, and public accommodations.

State	Year Passed	Source / Link	Concise Summary
Texas	2021	https://search.txcourts.gov/SearchMedia.aspx?MediaVersionID=5cacf6a5-7ddd-4525-918c-c4bb6fff4b05&coa=coa05&DT=Opinion&MediaID=19e9a9f3-eaf6-4900-8f93-58f54c38ae5d	In Tarrant County College District v. Sims, the court ruled that the Texas Human Rights Act covers sexual orientation discrimination under Bostock v. Clayton County.
Utah	2015	https://le.utah.gov/~2015/bills/static/SB0296.html	Utah law bans employment and housing discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, with limited religious exemptions.
Vermont	1992	https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/21/005/00495	Vermont law bans employment discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and other protected traits, while allowing limited religious exemptions.
Virginia	2020	https://legacylis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?201+sum+SB868	Virginia prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in employment, housing, and public life.
Washington	2006	http://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=49.60.180	Washington bans employment discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender, race, religion, disability, and other protected traits, ensuring equal job opportunity statewide.
Wisconsin	1982	https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/1981/related/acts/334	Wisconsin law bans employment discrimination based on sexual orientation and other traits like race, sex, age, and disability, though it doesn't specifically mention gender identity.
Alabama	–		
Arkansas	–		
Georgia	–		

State	Year Passed	Source / Link	Concise Summary
Idaho	–		
Indiana	–		
Kentucky	–		
Louisiana	–		
Mississippi	–		
Missouri	–		
Montana	–		
North Carolina	–		
Oklahoma	–		
South Carolina	–		
South Dakota	–		
Tennessee	–		
West Virginia	–		
Wyoming	–		