

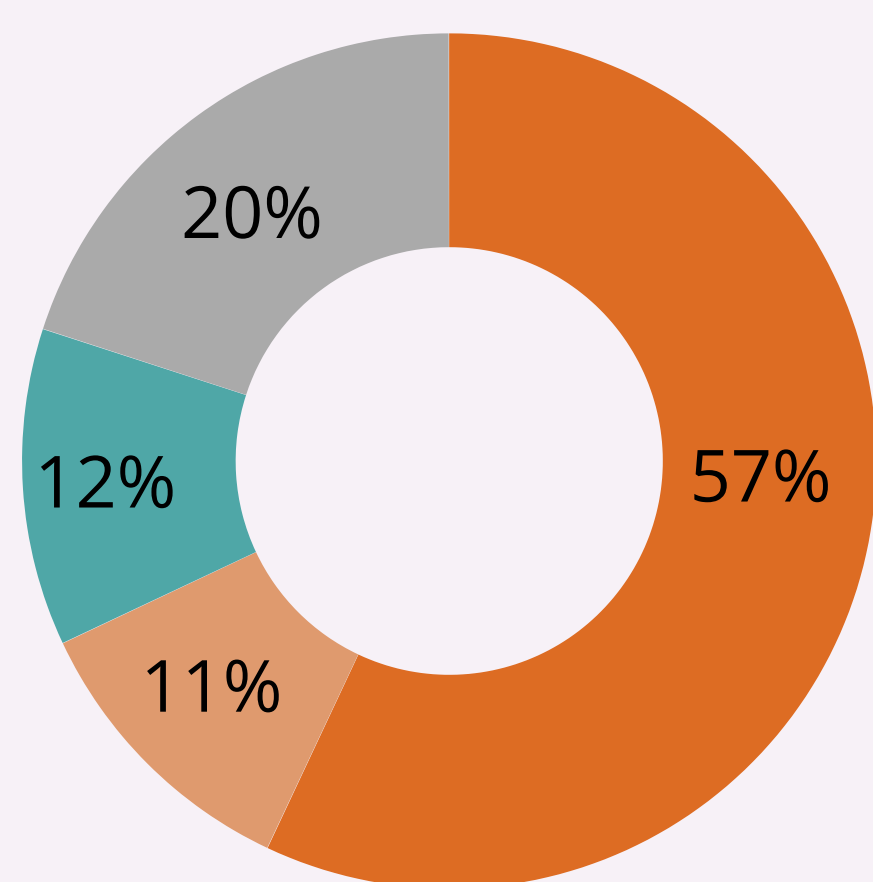
2021 Arizona Youth Risk Behavior Survey

Teen Weight Control: Connections to Unhealthy Weight Control Behaviors and Poor Mental Health

The majority of **Arizona teens in grades 9-12** are trying to control their weight and nearly half are trying to lose weight. Teens that are trying to lose weight are most likely to engage in **unhealthy behaviors to control their weight** like not eating for 24+ hours, vomiting, and taking diet pills. **Female** and **LGBTQ+ teens*** are most affected. Teens experiencing **childhood adversity**, **poor mental health** (stress, anxiety, depression), and **thoughts about suicide** are more likely to engage in these behaviors.

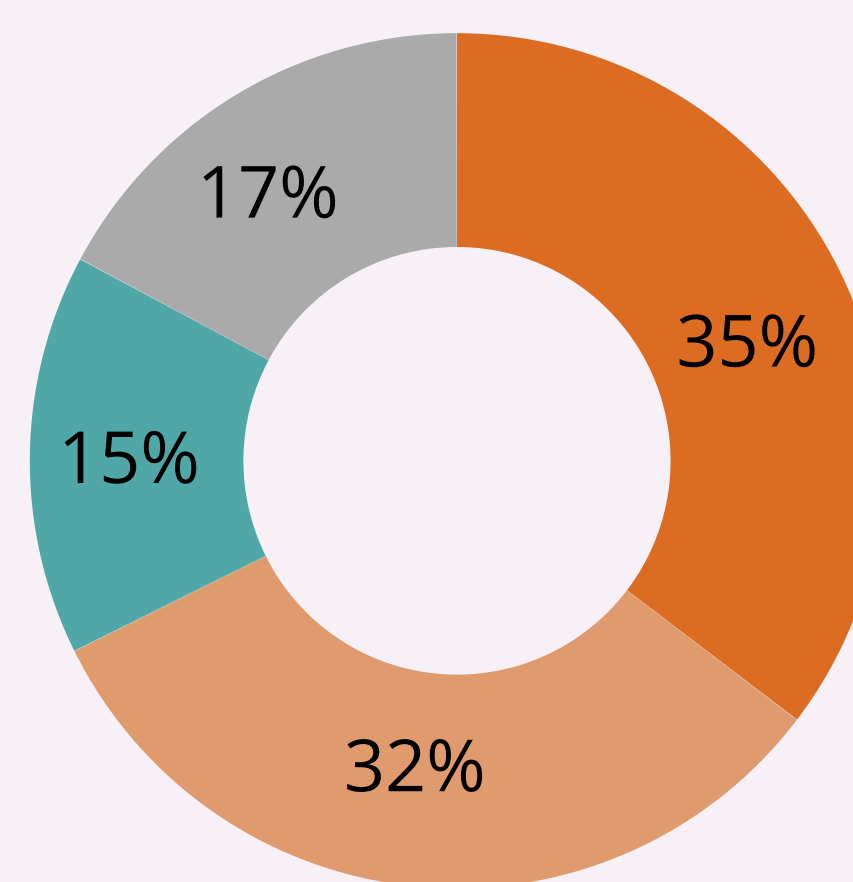
8 in 10 Arizona teens are trying to control their weight.

Most teens (80% of female teens and 83% of male teens) are trying to control their weight (lose, gain, or stay the same).



Female teens

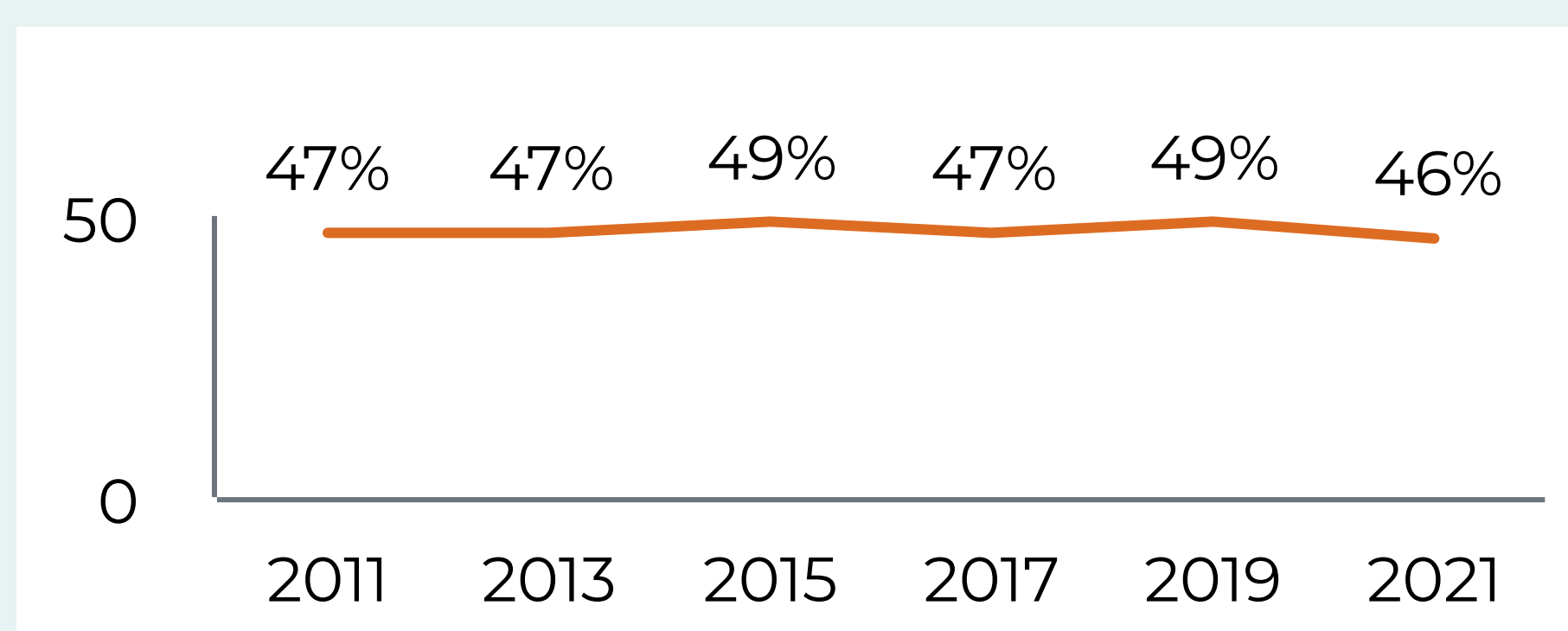
- Trying to lose weight
- Trying to stay same weight
- Trying to gain weight
- Not trying to do anything



Male teens

- Trying to lose weight
- Trying to stay same weight
- Trying to gain weight
- Not trying to do anything

Trying to Lose Weight



Nearly 1 in 2 Arizona teens are trying to lose weight and this has **stayed high** over the last 10 years.

*Because the 2021 Arizona YRBS did not have a question assessing gender identity, this report does not highlight data specifically on students who identify as transgender. Therefore, the T commonly used in the acronym LGBTQ+ is not included when referring to the data.



Female and **LGBQ+ teens** are more likely than their male and heterosexual peers to desire weight loss.

Percent of teens trying to lose weight

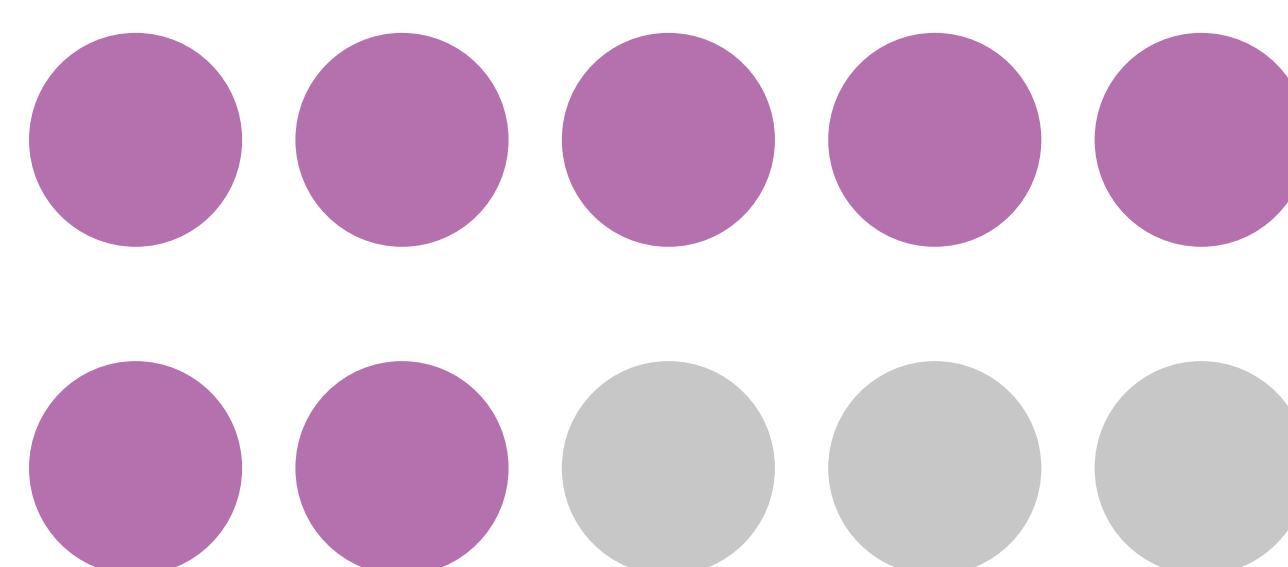


Females and LGBQ+ teens who are **trying to lose weight** are more likely to report **poor mental health**.

Among female teens trying to lose weight:



Among LGBQ+ teens trying to lose weight:



Unhealthy Weight Control Behaviors

Unhealthy weight control behaviors* to lose or keep from gaining weight include going without eating for 24 hours or more; taking any diet pills, powders, or liquids; vomiting or taking laxatives; smoking cigarettes; or skipping meals.

1 in 2 teens who are trying to lose weight **AND**

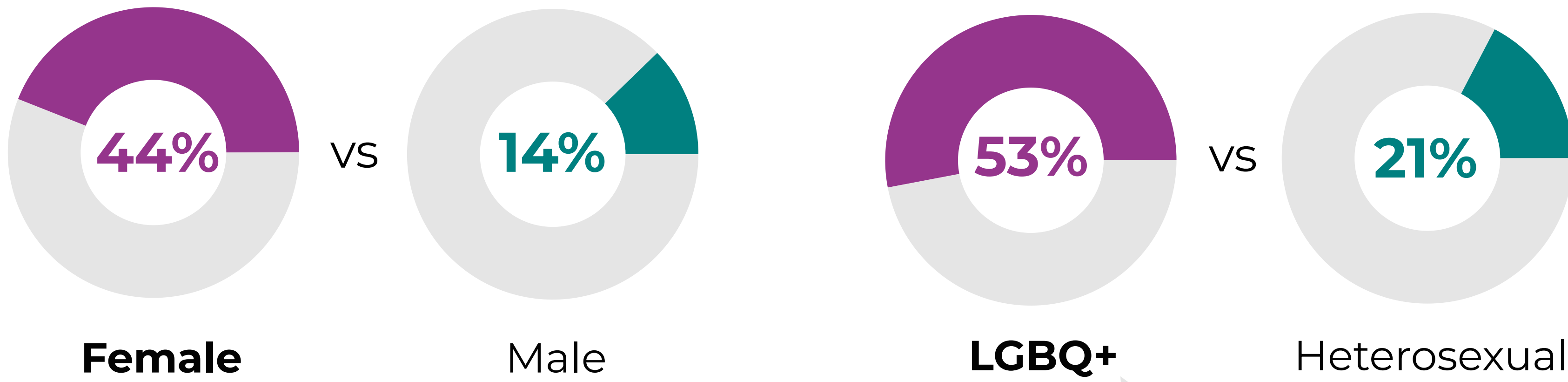
1 in 3 teens who are trying to stay the same weight

are engaging in **unhealthy weight control behaviors**.



*Unhealthy weight control behaviors have dangerous effects on teens' health and are known risk factors for the development of certain eating disorders. This 2021 Arizona YRBS question does not capture all unhealthy weight control behaviors (e.g. compulsive exercise, steroid use) and does not capture teens engaging in unhealthy weight control behaviors for reasons other than to lose or keep from gaining weight (e.g. behaviors to gain weight or muscle).

Females and LGBTQ+ teens are more likely to engage in unhealthy weight control behaviors.

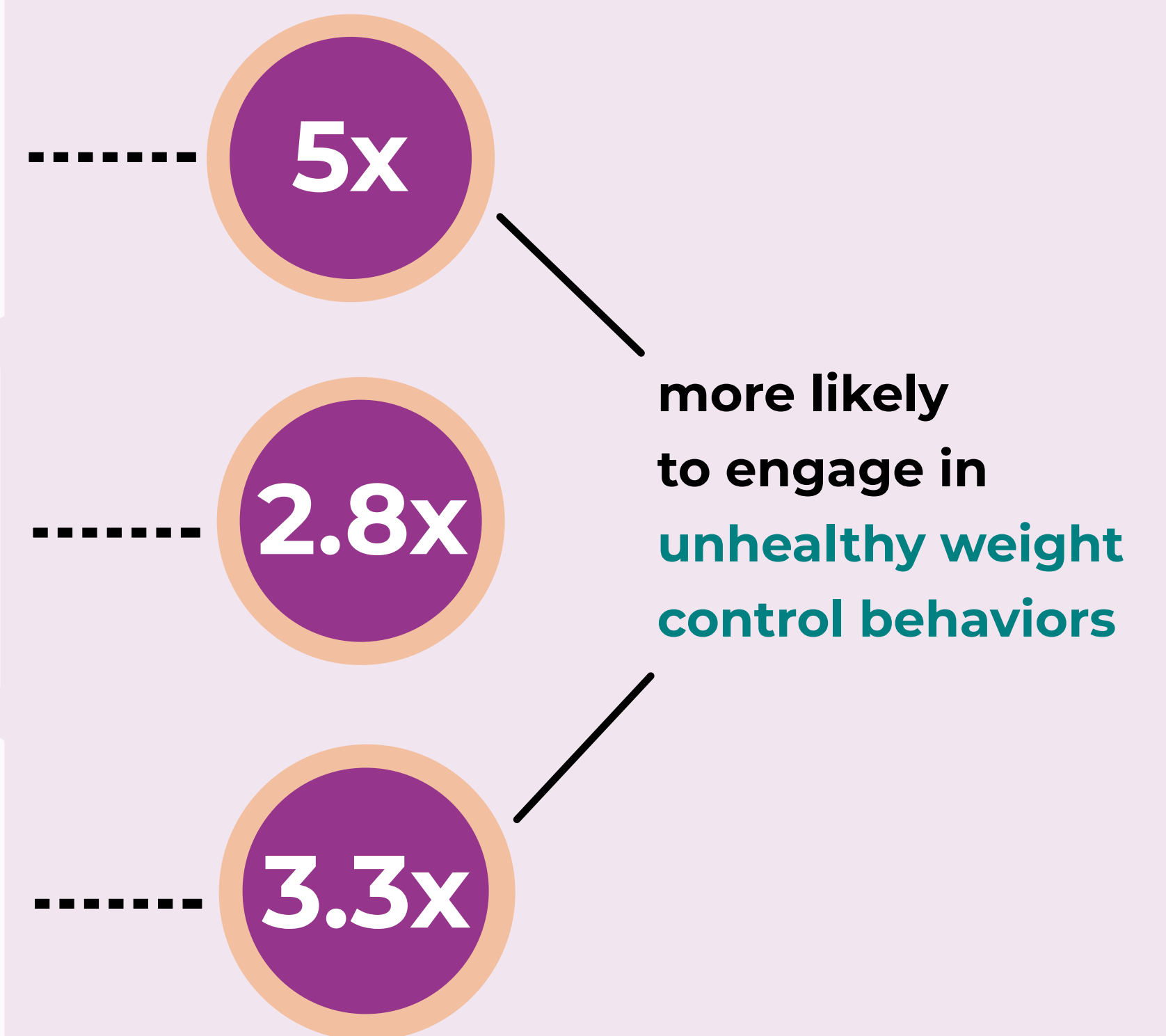


Between 2019 and 2021, these behaviors **rose by 17%** for LGBTQ+ teens.

Teens experiencing Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), poor mental health (stress, anxiety, depression), or suicidal thoughts are more likely to engage in **unhealthy weight control behaviors**.



To view the latest report about ACEs, please click [here](#).



When teens try to control their weight, they often use unhealthy behaviors. How we talk about food, weight, and health can impact teen eating behavior.

Learn more & stay connected:

WithAll: What to Say
For Parents, Coaches, & Health Care Professionals



Language of Health
For Health Teachers & Public Health Professionals



Arizona YRBS

