



FYSB Family & Youth
Services Bureau

**Division of Runaway
and Homeless Youth**

LGBTQIA2S+ Youth Experiencing Homelessness

June 2023

Introduction

Youth who identify as LGBTQIA2S+ disproportionately experience homelessness and are at high risk for family rejection, physical assaults, and sexual exploitation in shelters and on the streets. Research shows that these youth have a 120% higher risk of experiencing some form of homelessness. LGBTQIA2S+ youth had over twice the rate of early death among youth experiencing homelessness.¹ Providing safe, supportive, and welcoming environments for LGBTQIA2S+ youth is essential for helping them find stability in their lives.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, Two-Spirit



28%



of LGBTQIA2S+ youth report **experiencing homelessness or housing instability** at some point in their lives.²



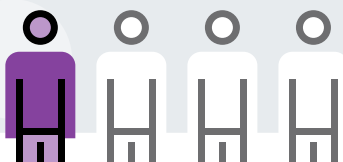
Youth experiencing homelessness or housing instability have **2-4X the odds** of reporting **depression, anxiety, self-harm, considering suicide, and attempting suicide.**

compared to their stably housed peers²

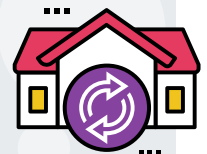
Youth who identify as **both LGBTQIA2S+ and black or multiracial** have some of the highest rates of homelessness.

According to a national survey,

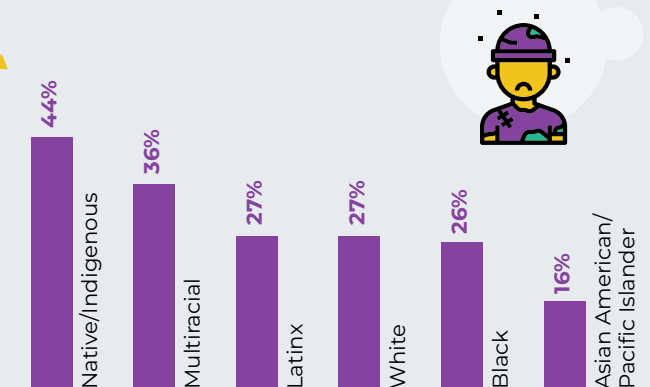
nearly 1 in 4 young black men, ages 18 to 25, who identified as LGBTQIA2S+ reported homelessness during a 12-month period.³



Compared to stably housed LGBTQIA2S+ peers, LGBTQIA2S+ youth who reported **current homelessness or past housing instability** are nearly **6X more likely** to be in foster care at any point in their life.⁴



PERCENT OF LGBTQIA2S+ YOUTH EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS OR HOUSING INSTABILITY AT SOME POINT IN THEIR LIFE⁵



PERCENT OF LGBTQIA2S+ YOUTH EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS OR HOUSING INSTABILITY AT SOME

Effects of Housing Instability on Youth Identifying as LGBTQIA2S+

The volatility of housing instability makes it difficult for young people to stay connected to supportive institutions such as school, employment or case management.⁶

WHAT DOES HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING INSTABILITY LOOK LIKE?⁶



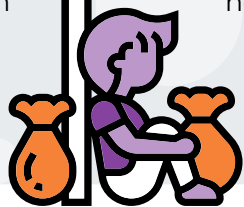
LIKELIHOOD TO EXPERIENCE HOMELESSNESS:⁷

LGBTQIA2S+ high school students are **2.2X more likely**

to experience homelessness than heterosexual high school students.

Transgender high school students are **9.2X more likely**

to experience homelessness than non-transgender/cisgender high school students.



Homelessness and housing instability were reported at **higher rates among transgender and nonbinary youth**, including:⁹

39% of transgender boys/men

38% of transgender girls/women

35% of nonbinary youth



compared to **23%** of cisgender LGBTQIA2S+ youth

Compared to stably housed LGBTQIA2S+ peers, LGBTQIA2S+ youth who reported experiencing homelessness or housing instability had higher rates of:⁸



victimization



being in foster care



food insecurity

Compared to stably housed LGBTQIA2S+ peers, LGBTQIA2S+ youth who reported past housing instability or current homelessness had more than

3X greater odds of ever being physically

threatened or abused due to their sexual orientation or, among youth who identify as transgender and/or nonbinary.¹⁰



Lack of Family Support

Youth who come out to their parents typically described a gradual escalation of the parent-child conflict over time, or a growing sense of rejection in the home, rather than an immediate reaction to the disclosure that caused homelessness.¹¹ Analyses of a seven-city survey of LGBTQIA2S+ young adults (YA) experiencing homelessness revealed LGBTQIA2S+ YA most commonly experienced homelessness because they were kicked out/asked to leave the home of their parents, relatives, foster or group homes. This experience was more common among transgender YA.¹²

“

When I put my head on the pillow at night, I think about my daughter and just hope she's safe. I don't know where she is. I haven't heard from her since I threw her out of the house when she told me she was lesbian. I didn't know what to do. I wish I had acted differently. I would give anything to be able to change that now.”

Monica, mother of 16-year old lesbian youth¹³



LGBTQIA2S+ youth reported **multiple reasons for sleeping away from their parents/caregivers residence**, including:¹⁴



55% being mistreated or fear of mistreatment due to their LGBTQIA2S+ identity



40% being kicked out or abandoned due to their LGBTQIA2S+ identity

Parents and families who believe that homosexuality and gender non-conformity are wrong or harmful have responded in a variety of ways to try to prevent their children from becoming gay or transgender:¹⁵



preventing their child from having an LGBTQIA2S+ friend



preventing their child from participating in a support group for LGBTQIA2S+ youth

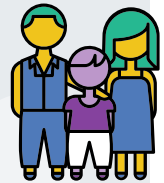


preventing their child from learning about their LGBTQIA2S+ identity



excluding their child from family events and activities

Parents and families who engage in these behaviors are often motivated by helping their children. In this case, families are trying to prevent their children from adopting what they perceive as a “lifestyle” or “choice” that they believe will hurt them.



Understanding reactions that parents and families think are caring but that LGBTQIA2S+ youth experience as rejecting and harmful helps motivate parents, families, and caregivers to modify or stop rejecting behaviors, to support their children.^{16,17}

Key family therapy approaches can help parents learn to support their LGBTQIA2S+ youth. These include:¹⁸



Give families respectful language to talk about sexual orientation and gender identity



Let parents and caregivers tell their story



Educate families on how family rejecting behaviors affect their LGBTQIA2S+ child



Educate families on how supportive and accepting behaviors affect their LGBTQIA2S+ child

Mental Health Challenges

LGBTQIA2S+ youth who experienced homelessness or housing instability reported higher rates of mental health challenges, compared to their stably housed LGBTQIA2S+ peers.¹⁹

Families and caregivers who react with or through rejecting behaviors when learning that their children identify as LGBTQIA2S+ are often not aware that their reactions can result in their children having an increased risk of attempted suicide and other serious health concerns.²⁰

Compared to those who did not report any housing instability, LGBTQIA2S+ youth who reported homelessness or housing instability are...²¹



2.0X more likely to experience **anxiety**



2.1X more likely to experience **depression**



2.3X more likely to **self-harm**



2.6X more likely to **consider suicide**



3.7X more likely to **attempt suicide**

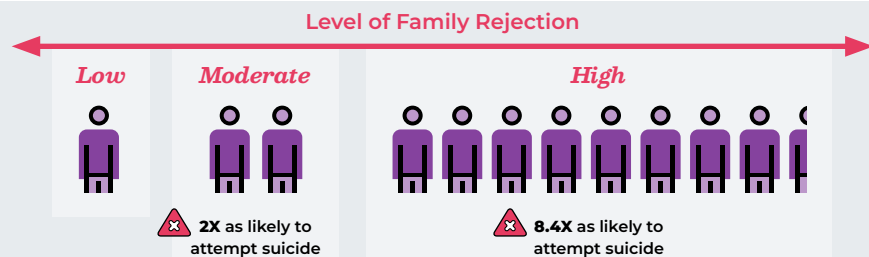
28% of youth who reported **past housing instability**



& 35% of youth who were **currently homeless** reported a **suicide attempt** in the last year

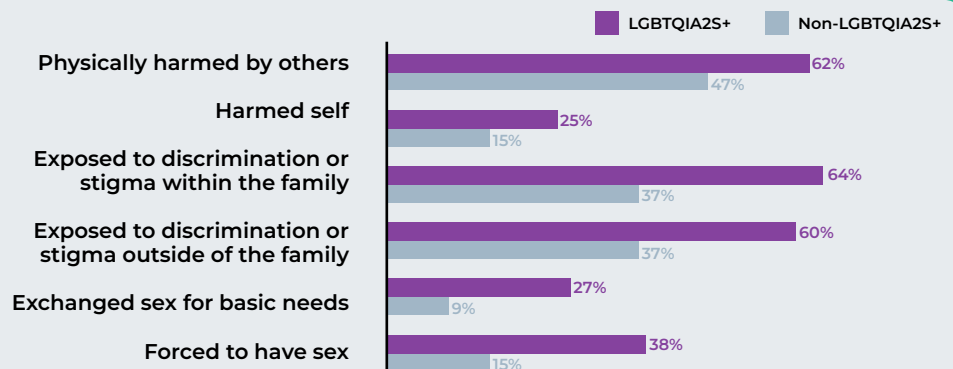
compared to 10% of youth who had not experienced housing instability²²

FAMILY REJECTION OF ADOLESCENTS IDENTIFYING AS LGBTQIA2S+ AND RISK OF SUICIDE ²³



Adversities Specific To LGBTQIA2S+

LGBTQIA2S+ youth endured especially high levels of adversity among youth experiencing homelessness.²⁴



Resources & Support

For Youth

[National Runaway Safeline \(NRS\)](#)

Are you feeling alone and unheard? If you're feeling isolated, depressed, angry, frustrated or have thoughts of harming yourself, NRS has someone available to listen and offer confidential, non-directive and non-judgmental support. Get in touch with NRS via telephone (1-800-RUNAWAY or 1-800-786-2929), [email](#), or [online chat](#).

For Youth-Serving Organizations

[SAMHSA Homelessness Resource Center: Homeless Populations](#)

This Center, which includes LGBTQIA2S+-related resources, is an interactive community of providers, consumers, policymakers, researchers, and public agencies at federal, state, and local levels. Access state-of-the-art training and technical assistance, publications and materials, online learning opportunities and other promising practices to prevent and end youth homelessness.

[A Guide for Understanding, Supporting, and Affirming LGBTQIA2S+ Children, Youth, and Families](#)

This resource provides general information for youth service providers, educators, allies, and community members who seek to support the health and well-being of children and youth who are LGBTQIA2S+ and their families. This guide will help to promote full and affirming inclusion of diverse LGBTQIA2S+ youth and families in all aspects of systems of care.

Sources: (1, 3, 11, 24) Morton, M. H., Samuels, G. M., Dworsky, A., & Patel, S. (2018). Missed opportunities: LGBTQIA2S+ youth homelessness in America. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago. Available at: <https://www.chapinhall.org/research/lgbtq-young-adults-experience-homelessness-at-more-than-twice-the-rate-of-peers/> | (2, 4-6, 8-10, 14, 19-22) [The Trevor Project Homelessness and Housing Instability](#) | (7) SchoolHouse Connection. (2021). Student Homelessness: Lessons from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS). Washington, DC: Author. Available at: <https://schoolhouseconnection.org/student-homelessness-lessons-from-the-youth-risk-behavior-survey-yrebs/> | (12) Shelton, J., DeChants, J., Bender, K., Hsu, H. T., Maria, D. S., Petering, R., ... & Barman-Adhikari, A. (2018). Homelessness and housing experiences among LGBTQIA2S+ young adults in seven US cities. *Cityscape*, 20(3), 9-34. Available at: <https://www.istor.org/stable/26524870> | (13, 15) [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. A Practitioner's Resource Guide: Helping Families to Support Their LGBTQIA2S+ Children](#). HHS Publication No. PEPI4-LGBTKIDS. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. 2014. | (16, 23) Ryan, C. (2009). Supportive families, healthy children: Helping families with lesbian, gay, bisexual & transgender children. San Francisco, CA: Family Acceptance Project, Marian Wright Edelman Institute, San Francisco State University. | (17-18) Ryan, C., & Diaz, R. (2011). Family Acceptance Project: Intervention guidelines and strategies. San Francisco: Family Acceptance Project.