

LGBTIQ+ people

Recommendation re data

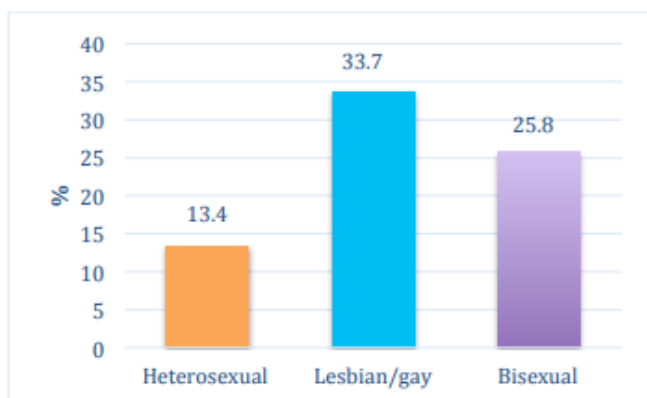
Data on LGBTIQ+ identities is not collected in a systematic way in either the AIHW homelessness data or the Census homelessness count. This creates a gap that needs to be addressed to increase our knowledge about prevalence of LGBTIQ+ people in homeless populations and the pathways in and out of homelessness for this group.

The National Housing and Homelessness Plan can drive significant improvements in our knowledge requiring questions relating to sexuality and gender identity to be included in the data recorded by homelessness services (SHIP/AIHW) data and the ABS Census homelessness short form.

What we do know¹

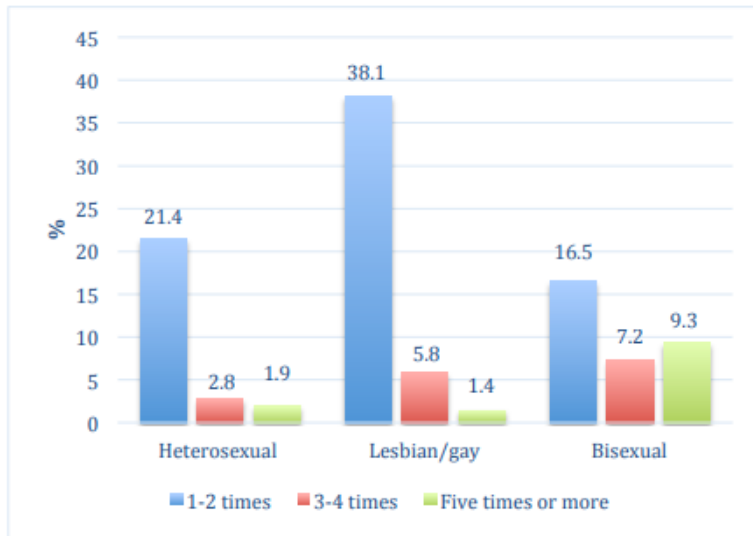
The 2014 General Social Survey (GSS) in Australia recorded that people who identified as LGB were at least twice as likely as those who identified as heterosexual to have ever experienced homelessness, and were far more likely to have had repeat experiences of homelessness than people identifying as heterosexual

Figure 1. Ever experienced homelessness (GSS)



¹ Data throughout this section drawn from McNair, R, Andrews, C, Parkinson, S, Dempsey, D, [LGBTQ Homelessness: Risks, Resilience, and Access to Services in Victoria](#), GALFA, 2017

Figure 2. Number of times experienced homelessness (GSS)



A survey of people with intersex variation in Australia, revealed that 6% responded that they were homeless or living precariously (Jones et al, 2016).

A survey of 859 14-25 year old trans and gender diverse Australians found that 22% had experienced accommodation problems or homelessness (Strauss et al, 2017).

Youth homelessness providers commonly estimate that at least 25 per cent of all homelessness clients are LGBTIQ+, with an increasing number of trans clients in recent years.

Causes of homelessness²

Discrimination on the basis of sexual or gender identity is a central driver of homelessness for LGBTIQ+ people.

LGBTQ people experience housing market discrimination making it more difficult to gain a tenancy or to share accommodation and discrimination in employment making it more likely that they will experience poverty.

People also experience family conflict, violence and rejection as a result of their sexual or gender identity. This directly causes homelessness, particularly for LGBTIQ+ children and young people, who are more likely to become homeless before the age of 16 than their heterosexual peers³.

Family rejection also causes significant trauma that results in other vulnerabilities, including mental illness and substance misuse. These vulnerabilities are more prevalent among homeless LGBTIQ+ people than their heterosexual peers and contribute to repeat cycles of homelessness.

² Information on causes of homelessness draws on McNair, R, Andrews, C, Parkinson, S, Dempsey, D, [LGBTQ Homelessness: Risks, Resilience, and Access to Services in Victoria](#), GALFA, 2017

³ Gaetz et al, 2016 in McNair, R, Andrews, C, Parkinson, S, Dempsey, D, [LGBTQ Homelessness: Risks, Resilience, and Access to Services in Victoria](#), GALFA, 2017

Experiences of violence in intimate relationships and in living environments are another important driver of homelessness for LGBTIQ+ people.

Impact of homelessness⁴

LGBTIQ young people who have experienced homelessness are at higher risk than their cisgender heterosexual counterparts of bullying at school, poorer mental health, experiences of trauma and childhood abuse, substance abuse issues, survival sex, STIs and HIV, and multiple experiences and longer periods of homelessness.

They are also more likely to have a first episode of homelessness before the age of 16, which creates particular risks and vulnerability explored in the section on unaccompanied homeless children and young people. (Gaetz et al, 2016).

LGBTIQ+ people report higher rates of being sexually assaulted than heterosexuals, both from people they are living as well as from others. Experiences of violence can be a driver of homelessness for LGBTIQ+ people, but is also a risk while living without a home.

LGBTIQ+ people report more experiences of harassment and assault while homeless and living in crisis accommodation or marginal housing than other people.

This abuse often continues after being housed, increasing the risk of tenancies breaking down and a return to homelessness.

LGBTIQ+ people also report often having poor experiences when using homelessness services, including facing discrimination from staff as well as from other homelessness service users.

Trans service users, and people who were non-binary or who had a fluid gender identity reported particular problems accessing safe and inclusive services when using homelessness services in which service provision is separated along binary gender divisions, such as women's refuges and crisis accommodation or shelters for single homeless men, including being misgendered, pressured to use services that didn't match their gender identity or being subjected to transphobic abuse from other service users.

Preventing homelessness before it happens

The link between homophobia and transphobia in the broader community, the health and wellbeing of LGBTIQ+ people, and incidence of homelessness for LGBTIQ+ people highlights the **need for evidence-based investment in interventions to reduce homophobia and transphobia and to enhance the acceptance and celebration of diversity in Australian culture.**

⁴ Information on impacts of homelessness, including quote drawn from McNair, R, Andrews, C, Parkinson, S, Dempsey, D, [LGBTQ Homelessness: Risks, Resilience, and Access to Services in Victoria](#), GALFA, 2017

Specific programs targeting families are also needed to reduce the very direct link between family conflict and rejection as a result of homophobia and transphobia and homelessness and trauma being experienced by LGBTIQ+ people.

Participants in Homelessness Australia's consultation on LGBTIQ+ homelessness consultation highlighted the high level of unmet need for advice and support from families seeking to understand and support the needs of LGBTIQ+ children.

Participants also highlighted children's need to be able to get direct support to navigate difficult family situations from a school welfare officer, counsellor or youth worker. Given that schools are a site where almost all children are present, and which are also a trusted touchpoint for parents, this is an obvious location to provide a service to mediate these conversations, or at least to connect children and families to expert family mediation support.

Provision of early intervention programs that support parents to have the knowledge and advice they need to be accepting and nurturing of LGBTIQ+ children and young people, and to mediate conflict around children's sexuality or gender identity is a practical step that would prevent significant trauma and homelessness.

Rapid responses so homelessness is brief and non-recurring

The challenges highlighted in research and reaffirmed in the consultation around LGBTIQ+ homelessness highlights the **need for enhanced practice development and competency from mainstream homelessness services, and for service gaps to be addressed**. While the [LGBTIQ+ Inclusive Practice Guide for Homelessness and Housing Sectors in Australia](#) provides resources to support this practice development, there is no nationally funded capacity building to support its broader implementation.

Many participants in the LGBTQ homelessness research project highlighted the need for the legitimacy of their LGBTQ identity to be acknowledged by services, including by being asked about their LGBTQ status and preferred pronouns at intake. Participants identified they needed not only acknowledgement of their LGBTQ status, but affirmation and visibility.⁵

Access to family violence support for people experiencing violence in same sex relationships and for people experiencing domestic violence in contexts other than their family of origin or intimate partnerships is also a significant service gap.

LGBTIQ+ people have also highlighted the need to have options to access LGBTIQ+ specialist homelessness services as a complement to mainstream services. People at different life stages would need different homelessness responses. Several pilot programs have developed that can be learnt from and further developed.

To achieve the most impact on the overall service system response to LGBTIQ+ people, LGBTIQ+ specialist programs need to be connected to a research and practice development process to enable successful program elements to be replicated across mainstream services. An example of this is the [LGBTI Housing &](#)

⁵ McNair, R, Andrews, C, Parkinson, S, Dempsey, D, [LGBTQ Homelessness: Risks, Resilience, and Access to Services in Victoria](#), GALFA, 2017

[Homelessness Projects](#) based at the University of Melbourne Division of General Practice that has developed a series of important practice guides based on research grounded in practice development.

The development of services responding to LGBTIQ+ homelessness services, whether specialist or mainstream, also need to recognise and be able to respond to the significant levels of trauma and complexity arising from that trauma that are prevalent for many LGBTIQ+ people who have experienced homelessness.

The high and increasing number of trans people needing homelessness services also highlights the need for specific responses that meet the needs of people who are trans, non-binary and transitioning and who need gender affirming support alongside support to exit homelessness.