

# Characteristics of People Who Identify as LGBTQ Experiencing Homelessness

*Findings from the 2018  
Minnesota Homeless Study*

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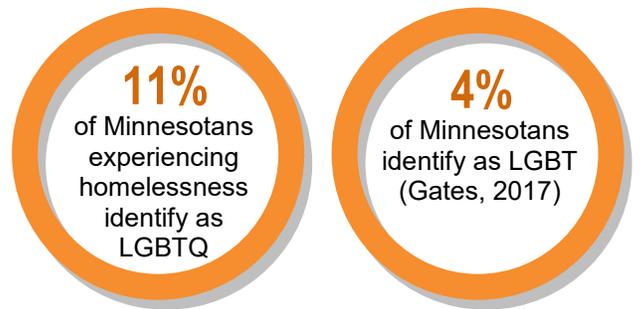
# Key findings

The Minnesota Homeless Study, conducted every three years since 1991, is a point-in-time study aimed at better understanding homelessness in Minnesota. The historical nature of the study allows us to look at trends over time, and the breadth and depth of the study (through thousands of face-to-face interviews) allows us to look more closely at the experiences of specific populations, such as the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning and queer (LGBTQ) community.

Out of the more than 4,000 people interviewed for the 2018 study, 440 respondents, or 11%, identified as LGBTQ. The following summary provides key findings from an analysis of their responses.

## *LGBTQ people are disproportionately represented within the homeless population.*

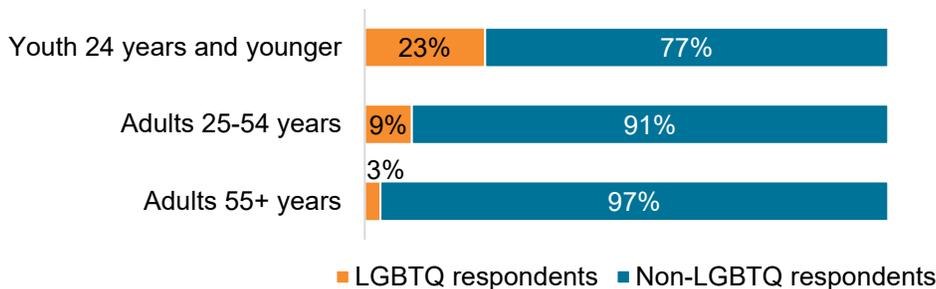
The percentage of Minnesotans experiencing homelessness who identify as LGBTQ is 11%, and the percentage of all Minnesotans who identify as LGBTQ<sup>1</sup> is 4% (Gates, 2017), suggesting that LGBTQ people are over-represented in the Minnesota homeless population. A total of 67 respondents identified as transgender or gender queer (2% of all homeless respondents; 15% of LGBTQ respondents).



## *Among the homeless population, the proportion of people identifying as LGBTQ is higher among youth.*

The proportion of homeless respondents identifying as LGBTQ varied by age. Out of all homeless youth age 24 and younger, 23% identified as LGBTQ. Comparatively, 9% of all homeless adults age 25-54 identified as LGBTQ, and 3% of all homeless adults age 55 and older identified as LGBTQ.

## Proportion of homeless study respondents identifying as LGBTQ by age



<sup>1</sup> A 2017 study did not use the term queer.

**LGBTQ people experiencing homelessness most often lost their last housing because of financial reasons. Interpersonal issues are also a primary factor and are more prevalent among those who identify as LGBTQ.**

Overall, those who identified as LGBTQ reported similar reasons as non-LGBTQ respondents for leaving their last permanent housing; the most common were related to financial and interpersonal issues. Over one-third said that they lost their last permanent housing because they were evicted or their lease was not renewed (38%) or they could not afford their rent or house payments (36%).

However, interpersonal reasons were more prevalent among LGBTQ respondents. The other top reasons LGBTQ respondents cited for leaving their last housing were problems getting along with the people they live with (37%, compared to 28% of non-LGBTQ respondents) and abuse by someone they live with (32%, compared to 19% of non-LGBTQ respondents).

**Top reasons why LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ respondents left their last permanent housing**



Interpersonal issues and conflict at home are particularly prevalent for LGBTQ youth (age 24 and younger) who most commonly reported becoming homeless due to problems getting along with someone they lived with (54%). In a subset of questions asked only of respondents age 20 or younger, 76% of LGBTQ youth said that frequent fighting with parents or guardians was a main or partial cause of becoming homeless. Of note, 31% of LGBTQ respondents age 20 or younger reported lack of tolerance for their sexual orientation or gender identity as a contributor to their homelessness.

**Those experiencing homelessness who are Indigenous or a person of color and identify as LGBTQ face compounding and systemic discrimination.**

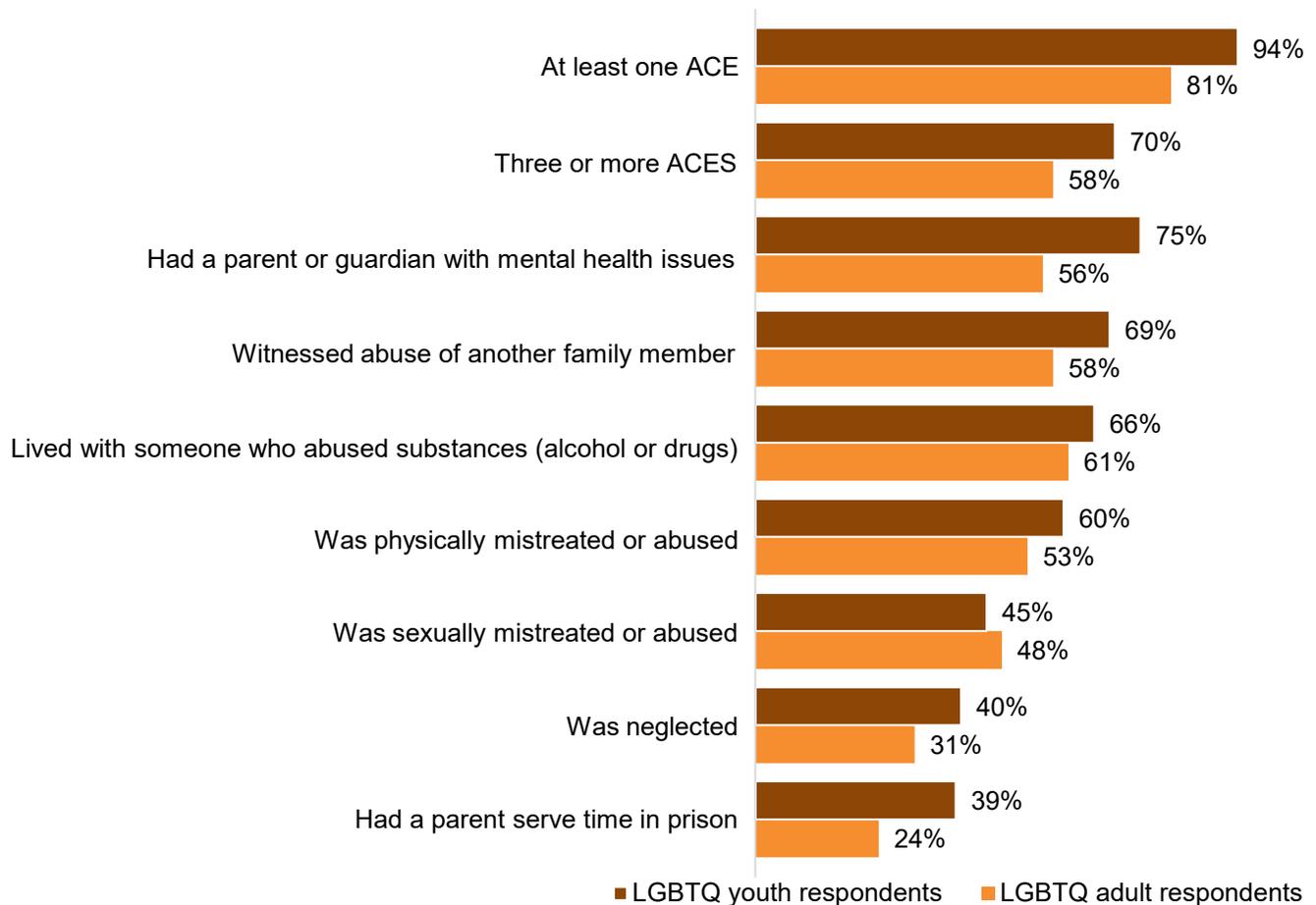
Similar to the non-LGBTQ homeless population, two-thirds (68%) of LGBTQ respondents identified as African American, Native American, Hispanic, Multiracial, or Asian, meaning that there is an overrepresentation of Indigenous and people of color within the homeless population, regardless of their gender identity or sexual orientation. Existing research shows that, for those who identify as both LGBTQ

and a person of color, the effects of systemic discrimination are double hitting, particularly in systems related to housing, employment, and health care (NPR, 2017). Specific to the Minnesota Homeless Study, higher proportions of LGBTQ Indigenous and people of color had spent the night on public transportation in the past 12 months (40%, compared to 29% of White LGBTQ people experiencing homelessness) or had been turned away from shelter in the past three months because it was full (39%, compared to 30% of LGBTQ White people).

**LGBTQ people experiencing homelessness have high rates of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs); this was especially true for LGBTQ youth.**

Almost all LGBTQ youth age 24 and younger (94%) reported at least one ACE (compared to 81% of LGBTQ adults age 25 years and older) and 70% had three or more ACEs (58% of LGBTQ adults). Higher proportions of LGBTQ youth respondents experienced each of the ACEs included in the survey compared to LGBTQ adult respondents, except for experience of sexual abuse, which was similar for youth (45%) and adults (48%). During childhood, many LGBTQ youth and adults had a parent or guardian with mental health issues, witnessed abuse of another family member, and lived with someone who abused substances.

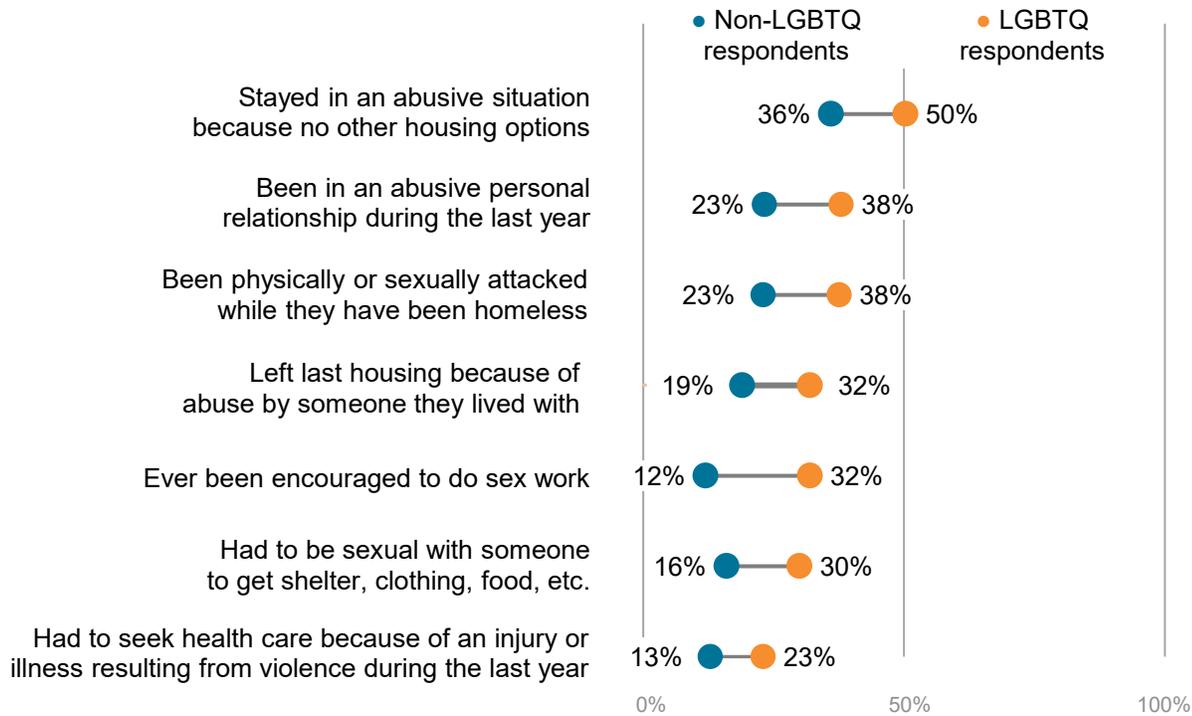
**Adverse childhood experiences of LGBTQ youth and LGBTQ adult respondents**



**Experiences with violence are common among LGBTQ people experiencing homelessness. This violence is both a cause of homelessness, and can be a result of the unsafe situations in which homeless people often need to stay.**

Homeless respondents who identify as LGBTQ were more likely than non-LGBTQ respondents to report each type of violence, abuse, and sexual exploitation measured on the survey.

**Violence, abuse, and sexual exploitation by LGBTQ identification**



The percentage of LGBTQ respondents who reported at least one act of violence, abuse, or sexual exploitation differed by gender identity. A higher percentage of people who identified as gender queer (82%) and women (80%) reported having these experiences compared to men (65%).

A higher percentage of LGBTQ than non-LGBTQ respondents reported trading sex for something of value (30% vs. 16%, respectively) and ever having been encouraged to do sex work (32% vs. 12% respectively). With discrimination in jobs, housing, and education, sex work has long been a means of income and survival for a subset of the LGBTQ population. Although it is important to acknowledge that some people who engage in sex work do so willingly, and some sex work may not be violent or exploitative, people experiencing homelessness, especially youth, are particularly vulnerable and more likely to be engaging in “survival sex” which puts them at risk of violence and exploitation (Dank et al., 2015).

***LGBTQ people experiencing homelessness report higher rates of mental health diagnoses than homeless individuals who do not identify as LGBTQ.***

Three-quarters of LGBTQ respondents (77%) reported a mental health diagnosis, compared to 62% of non-LGBTQ respondents. Among all LGBTQ respondents, 64% reported having an anxiety or panic disorder, 58% reported depression, and about half (49%) reported having PTSD. This finding mirrors the population-wide pattern of LGBTQ people being more likely to experience lifetime mental health issues than non-LGBTQ people (American Psychiatric Association, 2017). Mental health issues among LGBTQ people are linked to stigma and discrimination and should not be interpreted as LGBTQ status in and of itself causing mental health issues or vice versa (American Psychiatric Association, 2017). Discrimination when accessing health care, less social support, higher rates of poverty, and increased experiences of violence are all documented in the LGBTQ community and are just some of the systematic factors linked to increased mental health issues (American Psychiatric Association, 2017).

The following report provides further detail on the analysis of LGBTQ respondents interviewed on the night of the 2018 Homeless Study. This is a public report and is intended to be used by anyone who wants to learn more about homelessness in Minnesota, especially among those who identify as LGBTQ. For additional reports, please visit [www.mnhomeless.org](http://www.mnhomeless.org).

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# Introduction

Every three years, Wilder Research conducts a statewide study to better understand the prevalence of homelessness in Minnesota, as well as the circumstances of those experiencing homelessness. The most recent study was conducted on October 25, 2018. The study included face-to-face interviews with people throughout the state who met the federal definition of homelessness, as well as a count of people who were homeless on a single night in late October. Wilder Research and its partners conducted 4,279 face-to-face interviews with adults and unaccompanied youth in emergency shelters, domestic violence shelters, transitional housing, and non-shelter locations such as encampments, hot meal programs, and other drop-in service sites.

Out of the 4,279 people interviewed in the 2018 study, 4,167 answered questions about gender and sexual orientation identity that allowed us to determine lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) status. Respondents for whom we could not determine LGBTQ status are not included in this report. This report highlights findings from interviews with 440 people who identified as LGBTQ and were experiencing homelessness in Minnesota. 173 of those people were LGBTQ youth age 24 and younger.

Unlike the overall Minnesota Homeless Study, the data reported here have not been “weighted” to represent everyone who we counted on the night of the study. A full explanation of study methods is in the Appendix.

The intended audience for this report is advocates, community leaders, providers, and funders who work towards ending homelessness and improving the lives of LGBTQ individuals. We hope this report equips readers with the data they need to identify and address systemic issues, improve programs and policies, and ultimately eliminate homelessness in Minnesota. Additional fact sheets and reports about Minnesotans experiencing homelessness can be found at [www.mnhomeless.org](http://www.mnhomeless.org).

## REPORT POPULATION AND LANGUAGE

This report includes the combined survey responses of people experiencing homelessness in Minnesota who identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or a gender other than man or woman.

Throughout the report, we use the acronym “LGBTQ” to describe this group as a whole - the 440 people who:

- Identified their sexual orientation as gay, lesbian, bisexual, unsure, or reported a different sexual orientation not listed
- Identified their gender as something other than man or woman.
- Identified themselves as transgender

We use the term transgender to mean people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from what is typically associated with the sex they were assigned at birth (GLAAD, n.d.).

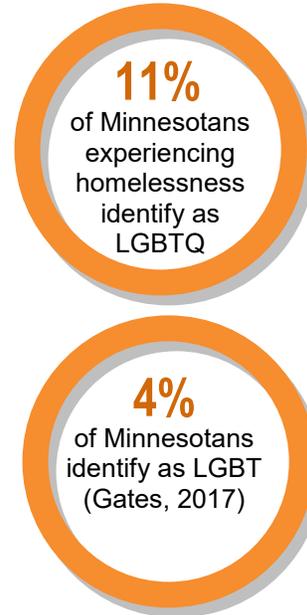
We use the term cisgender to mean people whose gender identity and/or gender expression corresponds to the sex the person was assigned at birth (GLAAD, n.d.).

For those who identified their gender as something other than man or woman, we use the term gender queer throughout the report.

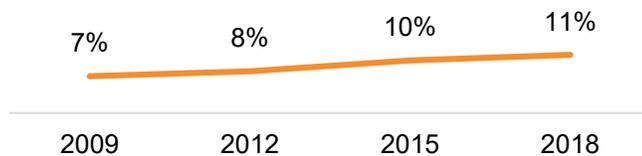
# Characteristics of LGBTQ people experiencing homelessness

Eleven percent of respondents interviewed in the 2018 Minnesota Homeless Study identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning and queer (LGBTQ). The percentage of all Minnesotans who identify as LGBT is 4% (Gates, 2017), suggesting that LGBTQ people are over-represented in the Minnesota homeless population.

The percentage of respondents that identified as LGBTQ has increased somewhat from the 2009 Minnesota Homeless Study, when 7% of respondents identified as LGBTQ (Figure 1). It should be noted that the definition of “LGBTQ” has changed slightly over the course of the study. For a description of how questions have been asked over the years, please see the Appendix. While this slight increase may be due to a true increase in LGBTQ homeless people in Minnesota, it may also be due to changes in the definition of LGBTQ, more people feeling comfortable identifying as LGBTQ, or other factors.



## 1. Percentage of homeless study respondents identifying as LGBTQ, 2009-2018



Throughout this report, comparisons are made between LGBTQ respondents and non-LGBTQ respondents to give readers a sense where experiences may differ. Wherever possible, LGBTQ responses are further disaggregated, and comparisons are made between the following groups: youth and adults; Indigenous and people of color (IPOC) and White people; people identifying as women, men, and gender queer; and transgender and cisgender respondents. It is important to note that the number of respondents (i.e., n-size) for some of these categories is small.

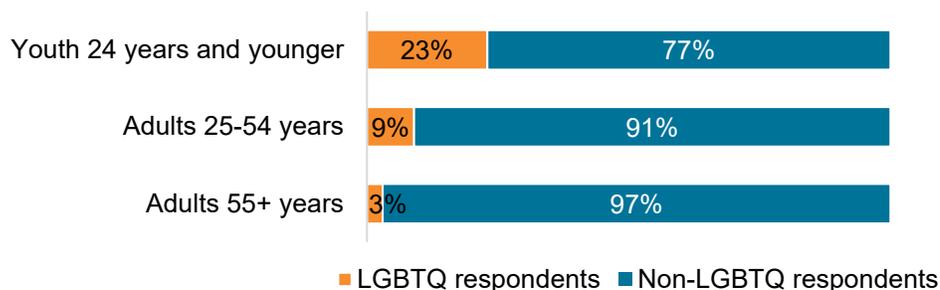
This disaggregation is in acknowledgement of the diverse range of experiences within the LGBTQ community. For example, past research suggests that LGBTQ IPOC face higher levels of discrimination than White LGBTQ people, including in health care, applying for jobs, and interacting with the police (NPR, 2017). Transgender people, especially transgender IPOC, face some of the highest levels of discrimination, including when seeking housing (NPR, 2017). Bisexual women experience higher levels of violence compared to heterosexual or lesbian women (NCADV, 2018). Throughout the report instances are noted where we did and did not find these differences. This context is important to understand when considering the intersecting identities of Minnesota’s LGBTQ population experiencing homelessness.

## Age

*A greater proportion of LGBTQ respondents were youth and young adults, compared to their non-LGBTQ counterparts.*

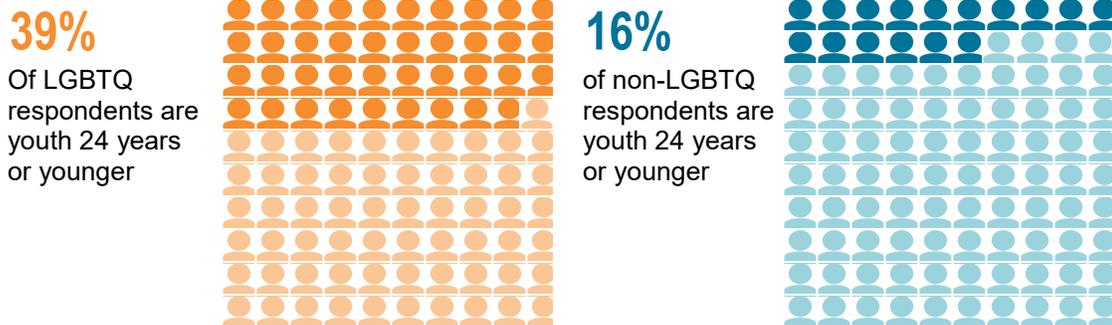
The proportion of respondents identifying as LGBTQ varied by age; out of all homeless youth age 24 and younger, 23% identified as LGBTQ. Comparatively, 9% of all homeless adults age 25-54 identified as LGBTQ, and 3% of all homeless adults age 55 and older identified as LGBTQ (Figure 2).

### 2. Percentage of homeless study respondents identifying as LGBTQ by age



Looking at the data another way, out of the 440 people who identified as LGBTQ, 39% were age 24 and younger. Sixteen percent of non-LGBTQ respondents were age 24 years or younger, suggesting that a greater proportion of LGBTQ respondents were youth and young adults, compared to their non-LGBTQ counterparts (Figure 3).

### 3. Age of homeless study respondents, LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ respondents



The average age of LGBTQ respondents was 32 years old, compared to an average of 40 years old for non-LGBTQ respondents. There is a similar age difference in the general Minnesota population, with LGBTQ Minnesotans being younger on average (37.9 years) than non-LGBTQ Minnesotans (48.6 years) (The Williams Institute, 2019).

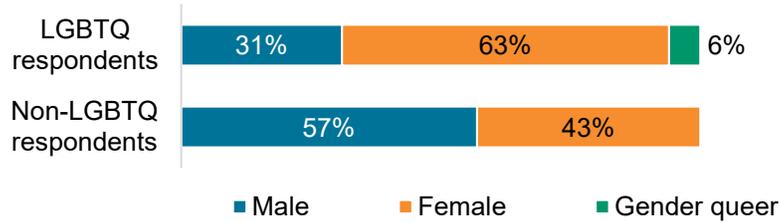
There may be multiple reasons for this variance by age, including young people feeling more comfortable identifying themselves as LGBTQ. Regardless of the reason, the relatively higher proportion of youth in the LGBTQ homeless population influences multiple outcomes in this report. For example, young people experiencing homelessness are, in general, more likely to report adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) compared to older people, so the increased percentage of LGBTQ people who report ACEs is influenced in part by the younger age of the LGBTQ sample.

## Gender identity

*A higher percentage of LGBTQ respondents identified as women, compared to their non-LGBTQ counterparts.*

All respondents were asked to identify their gender as man or woman, or they could describe their gender in their own words (common responses included gender fluid, gender queer, or non-binary). Sixty-three percent of LGBTQ respondents identified as women (Figure 4). The opposite was found in non-LGBTQ respondents, where respondents were more likely to identify as men (57%).

#### 4. Gender identity of LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ respondents



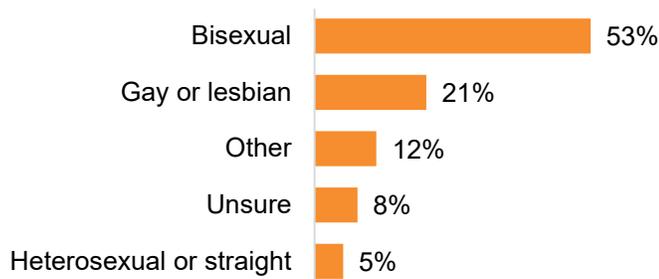
All respondents, regardless of gender identity, were asked if they identify as transgender. A total of 67 respondents identified as transgender or gender queer, which accounts for 2% of all homeless respondents and 15% of LGBTQ respondents. As discussed above, transgender people, especially transgender IPOC, experience high levels of individual and systemic discrimination both within and outside of the LGBTQ community (NPR, 2017).

## Sexual orientation

*About half of LGBTQ respondents identified as bisexual, and about one-quarter identified as gay or lesbian.*

Gender identity is different from sexual orientation; for example, transgender people may be of any sexual orientation, and so it may or may not be the case that transgender respondents are also LGBQ identified. Over half (53%) of LGBTQ respondents identified their sexual orientation as bisexual, and 21% identified as gay or lesbian; 8% reported they were unsure of their sexual orientation and 5% identified as heterosexual/straight along with transgender or gender queer (Figure 5).

#### 5. Sexual orientation of LGBTQ respondents

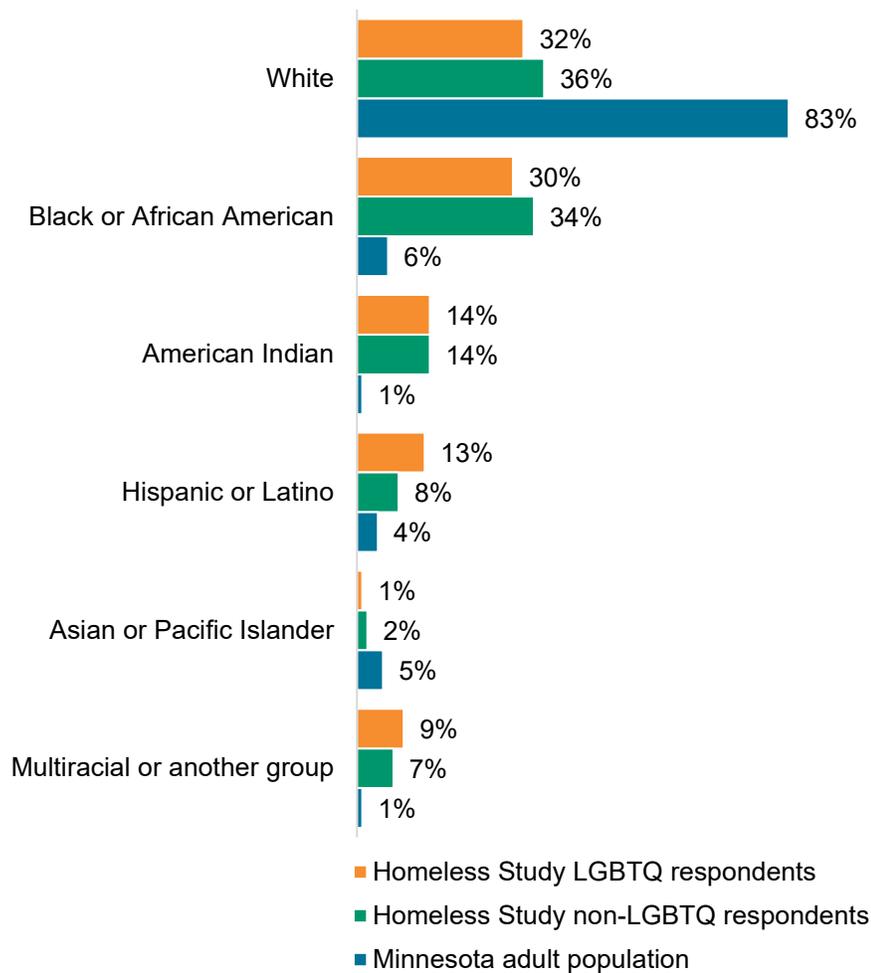


## Racial and ethnic background

*Similar to the non-LGBTQ homeless population, two-thirds of LGBTQ respondents identified as African American, Native American, Hispanic, Multiracial, or Asian.*

Generational impacts of discriminatory housing policies and other systemic inequities have contributed to the overrepresentation of Native Americans and people of color in Minnesota’s general homeless population. Relative to the Minnesota adult population, people identifying as African American or American Indian are notably overrepresented in the homeless population, disparities that include the LGBTQ homeless population as well (Figure 6).

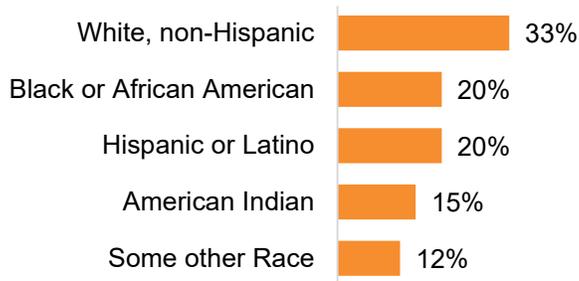
### 6. Racial and ethnic background of LGBTQ homeless study respondents, non-LGBTQ homeless study respondents, and general Minnesota adult population



Source. Vintage 2018 Population Estimates, U.S. Census Bureau were used for the Minnesota adult population.

Among respondents identifying as transgender, two-thirds (67%) identified as Indigenous or a person of color, with one-fifth identifying as Black/African American and one-fifth identifying as Hispanic or Latino (Figure 7). Due to the small sample size of 67 transgender people, disaggregating into specific racial/ethnic categories leads to a very small number of participants in each category. Therefore, throughout the report, when comparisons are made among transgender respondents, they are between White and IPOC transgender respondents.

## 7. Race of transgender respondents



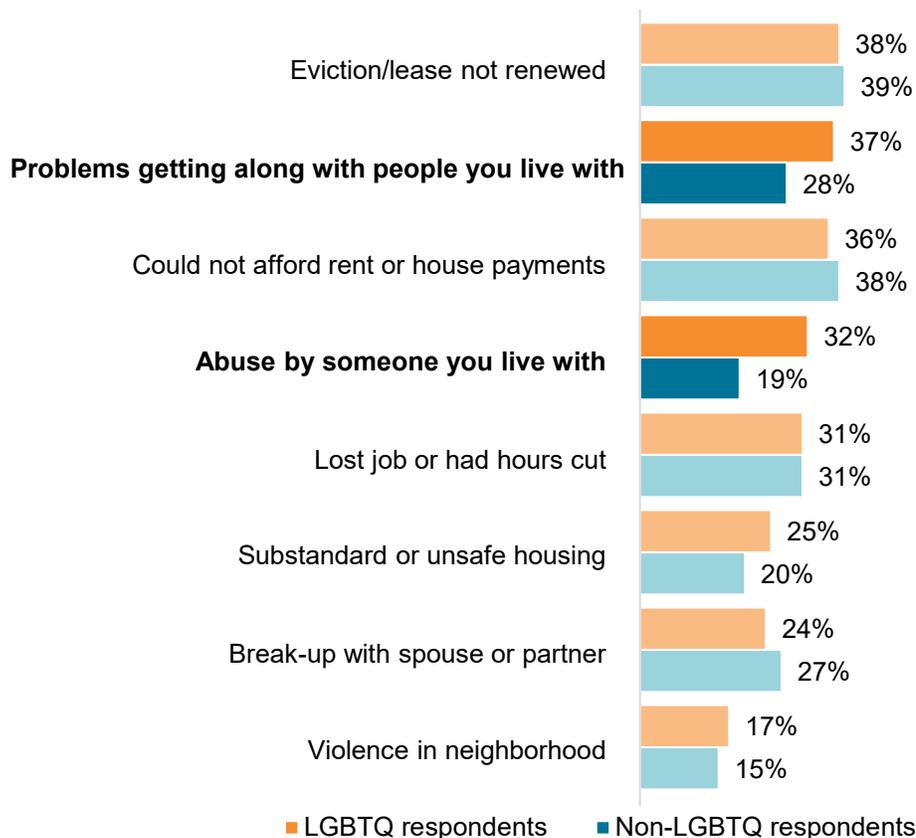
# History of housing and homelessness

## Causes of homelessness

*Financial and interpersonal issues are among the most common reasons cited for leaving last permanent housing.*

The most common reasons for becoming homeless cited by LGBTQ respondents were financial (eviction/lease not renewed, inability to afford rent or house payments, lost job or had hours cut) and interpersonal (problems getting along with or abuse by other people in the home). These reasons were similar to non-LGBTQ respondents, although problems getting along with people they lived with and abuse by someone they lived with was a more commonly cited reason for LGBTQ respondents (Figure 8). An even higher percentage of transgender respondents (41%) reported abuse by someone they lived with as a reason for leaving, compared to cisgender LGBTQ respondents (31%).

### 8. Reasons why LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ respondents left their last permanent housing



Note. Respondents could provide more than one reason. Categories with the largest difference between LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ respondents are in bold.

## Causes of homelessness for LGBTQ youth

*The most common reason for becoming homeless cited by LGBTQ youth was problems getting along with someone they lived with.*

Over half (54%) of LGBTQ respondents age 24 and younger reported they left their last regular or permanent housing because of problems getting along with someone they lived with, and the second most common reason, reported by 34%, was abuse by others in the household (Figure 9). This suggests that for LGBTQ youth, homelessness is heavily influenced by conflict at home.

### 9. Top reasons LGBTQ youth and LGBTQ adults became homeless

LGBTQ youth	LGBTQ adults
<b>54%</b> Problems getting along with other household members	<b>46%</b> Eviction/lease not renewed
<b>34%</b> Abuse by household member	<b>38%</b> Couldn't afford rent/house payments
<b>33%</b> Couldn't afford rent/house payments	<b>33%</b> Lost job/had hours cut

*LGBTQ respondents age 20 or younger commonly reported conflict with their families.*

A subset of survey questions was asked of respondents age 20 or younger. Three-quarters (76%) of LGBTQ respondents under age 20 reported that frequent fighting with parents or guardians was a main or partial cause of them becoming homeless (compared to 64% of non-LGBTQ respondents under age 20), and just under half (46%) reported they didn't feel safe due to violence in the home (compared to 30% of non-LGBTQ respondents; Figure 10). Of note, 31% reported lack of tolerance for their sexual orientation or gender identity as a contributor to their homelessness.

**10. Main or partial causes of current episode of homelessness for LGBTQ youth age 20 or younger**



## Current episode of homelessness

*Six in ten LGBTQ respondents had been homeless for at least one year.*

Sixty percent of LGBTQ respondents had been homeless for a year or longer, with 15% reporting that their current episode of homelessness had lasted more than 5 years (Figure 11).

**11. Length of LGBTQ respondents' current episode of homelessness**



■ Less than 1 month ■ 1 to 12 months ■ 1 year to 5 years ■ More than 5 years

- One-quarter of LGBTQ respondents (25%) were currently staying in a place not fit for habitation, such as outdoors, in a car, or in a vacant building. Fifty-eight percent were staying in a shelter or transitional housing, and 17% were temporarily doubled up with friends or family.
- In the previous 30 days, 42% of LGBTQ respondents had spent at least one night “unsheltered,” meaning outside, in a vehicle or vacant building, or in any other place not meant for habitation.
- A higher percentage of LGBTQ youth were temporarily doubled up (32%) compared to LGBTQ adults (7%) and a lower percentage were unsheltered (6% and 31%, respectively).

## History of homelessness

*Most LGBTQ respondents have been homeless multiple times.*

Eighty-four percent of LGBTQ respondents had been homeless multiple times, with homelessness histories very similar to non-LGBTQ respondents. Thirty percent reported they had been homeless four to seven times, and over one-quarter (28%) reported they had been homeless more than eight times.

Sixty-six percent of LGBTQ respondents were experiencing long-term homelessness per Minnesota guidelines, defined as those who have been without a permanent residence for at least one year, or four or more times during the last three years.

## Barriers to stable housing

*Lack of affordable housing was the most common barrier cited by LGBTQ respondents to obtaining housing.*

Fifty-seven percent of LGBTQ respondents cited lack of affordable housing as a barrier to obtaining housing. Other common barriers were credit problems (44%), no local rental history (32%), and criminal background (29%). Barriers to obtaining housing were generally similar between transgender and cisgender LGBTQ respondents, as well as between LGBTQ respondents who were White and IPOC.

Over one-third (36%) of LGBTQ respondents had spent the night on public transit in the previous year. Higher proportions of the following groups had spent the night on public transportation:

- Respondents who identified as gender queer (43%) and men (42%), compared to women (33%)
- IPOC (40%), compared to White LGBTQ respondents (29%)

Over one-third (36%) of LGBTQ respondents had been turned away from a shelter in the previous three months because it was full. While percentages were similar between gender identity groups, a higher percentage of IPOC (39%) reported being turned away from a shelter than White LGBTQ respondents (30%).

Almost half of LGBTQ respondents (47%) were on a subsidized housing wait list. On average, those on a list had been waiting 12 months. Percentages of people on waiting lists were generally similar between sub-groups of LGBTQ respondents.

## Adverse childhood experiences, violence, and social service placements

Violence and abuse often lead to unstable housing situations. Higher percentages of LGBTQ respondents reported a range of childhood trauma experiences than their non-LGBTQ peers, in addition to relationship violence and sexual exploitation. In interpreting these results, it is important to note that the majority of LGBTQ respondents were women (63%), and issues such as domestic violence and sexual exploitation impact women at higher rates (National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, n.d.). However, LGBTQ women as well as LGBTQ men consistently experienced higher rates of abuse, violence, and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) than non-LGBTQ men and women in the homeless population.

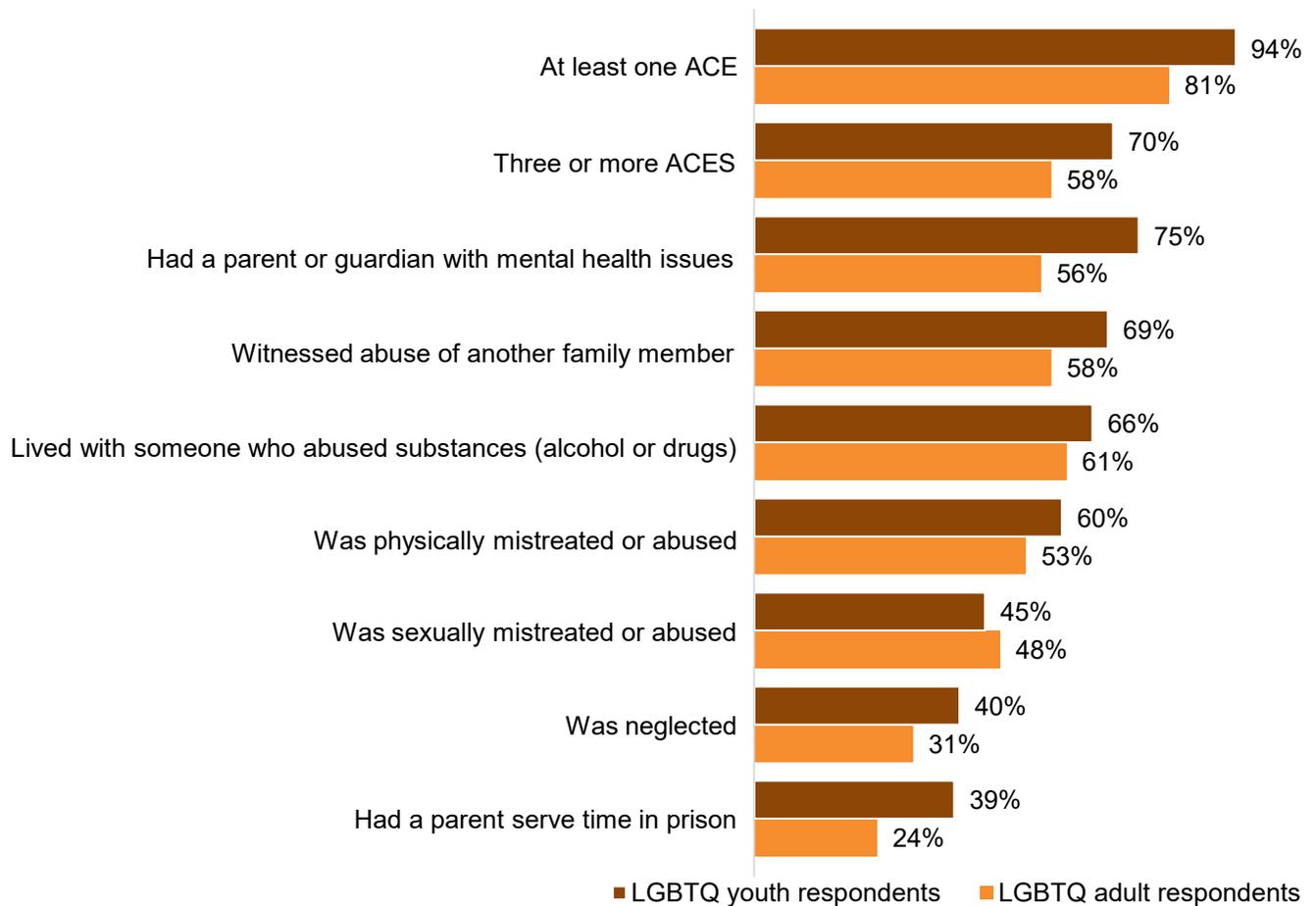
### Childhood trauma: Adverse childhood experiences

*High percentages of LGBTQ respondents, especially youth, reported experiencing multiple ACEs.*

Respondents were asked if they had experienced any of seven different ACEs, which are potentially traumatic events that occur within the first 18 years of life. They include violence or abuse and other aspects that can undermine a child's sense of "safety, stability, and bonding, such as growing up in a household with substance misuse, mental health problems, and instability due to parental separation or household members being in jail or prison" (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020). It should be noted that, generally, there are 11 ACEs measured, but, for the purposes of this research, we ask about seven (and combine emotional and physical neglect into one category).

Almost all LGBTQ youth age 24 years and younger (94%) reported at least one ACE (compared to 81% of LGBTQ adults age 25 years and older), and 70% had three or more ACEs (58% of LGBTQ adults; Figure 12). Higher proportions of LGBTQ youth respondents experienced each of the ACEs included in the survey compared to LGBTQ adult respondents, except for experience of sexual mistreatment and abuse, which was similar for youth (45%) and adults (48%). This is a similar trend to the general homeless population, with young people experiencing homelessness being, in general, more likely to report ACEs compared to older people.

## 12. Adverse childhood experiences of LGBTQ youth and LGBTQ adult respondents



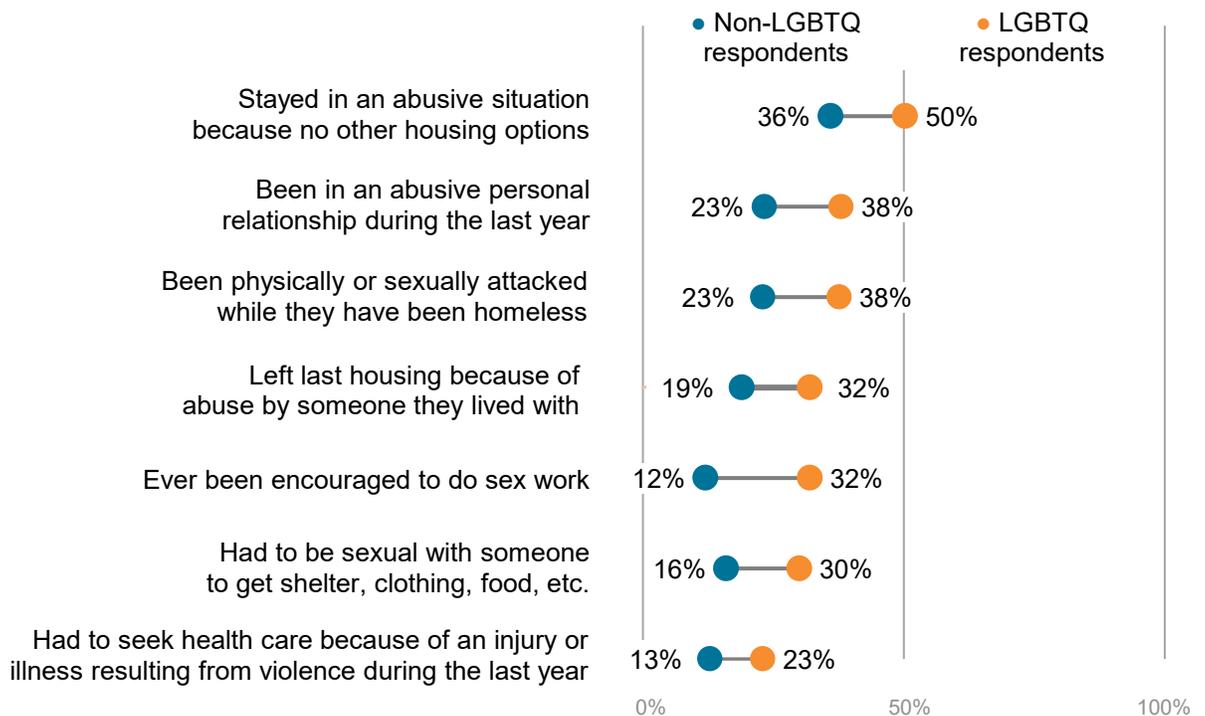
- Overall, the most frequently reported ACEs for LGBTQ respondents were living with someone who abused substances (63%), had a parent or guardian with mental health issues (63%), and witnessed the abuse of another family member (62%). These results, combined with the results presented above on reasons that contribute to LGBTQ youth becoming homeless, suggest that the home environment for LGBTQ homeless youth is often unstable.
- 63% of LGBTQ respondents reported experiencing three or more of the ACEs included in the interview. Research suggests that people with three or more ACEs have an increase in poor health outcomes later in life.
- For each ACE included in the survey, a higher percentage of LGBTQ respondents experienced the ACE than non-LGBTQ respondents; a higher percentage of LGBTQ respondents also experienced three or more ACEs.

# Domestic violence, sexual exploitation, and other experiences of violence

*People identifying as LGBTQ were more likely to experience each type of violence asked about in the survey, compared to non-LGBTQ respondents.*

Experiences with violence are common among LGBTQ people experiencing homelessness. This violence is both a cause of homelessness, and can be a result of the unsafe situations in which homeless people often need to stay. Homeless respondents who identify as LGBTQ were more likely than non-LGBTQ respondents to report each type of violence, abuse, and sexual exploitation measured on the survey (Figure 13).

## 13. Violence, abuse, and sexual exploitation by LGBTQ identification



The percentage of LGBTQ respondents who reported at least one act of violence, abuse, or sexual exploitation asked about in the survey differed by gender identity. A higher percentage of people who identified as gender queer (82%) and women (80%) reported having these experiences, compared to men (65%; Figure 14).

#### 14. Violence, abuse, and sexual exploitation by gender of LGBTQ respondents



The percentage of transgender respondents (79%) reporting violence, abuse, and sexual exploitation was similar compared to cisgender (75%) respondents, and the percentage of IPOC (75%) and White LGBTQ respondents (76%) was also similar.

#### Domestic violence

*A higher percentage of LGBTQ respondents had been in an abusive personal relationship, compared to non-LGBTQ respondents.*

In the United States, people who identify as lesbian, gay, and bisexual have an equal or higher prevalence of experiencing intimate partner violence compared to heterosexuals (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, n.d.; NCADV, 2018). Bisexual women and lesbian women are more likely to experience violence from an intimate partner than heterosexual women (NCADV, 2018). The findings presented below reflect some of the national trends of LGBTQ people being more likely to experience domestic violence. However, LGBTQ people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness may be in particularly dangerous situations, because, as the data below suggest, they may stay in abusive situations in order to avoid becoming homeless.

- 50% of LGBTQ respondents had stayed in an abusive situation because they did not have other housing options, compared to 36% of non-LGBTQ respondents. Looking deeper, this difference seems to be entirely driven by LGBTQ women (58% who reported staying in an abusive situation) and people identifying as gender queer (54%), whereas LGBTQ men (35%) were similarly likely to report staying in an abusive relationship as non-LGBTQ respondents.
- 38% of LGBTQ respondents had been in a physically abusive relationship in the past year, compared to 23% of non-LGBTQ respondents.
- 32% of LGBTQ respondents cited abuse by someone they lived with as a reason for leaving their last permanent housing, compared to 19% of non-LGBTQ respondents.

## Sexual exploitation

*A higher percentage of LGBTQ respondents than non-LGBTQ respondents had traded sex for something of value.*

With discrimination in jobs, housing, and education, sex work has long been a means of income and survival for a subset of the LGBTQ population. Although it is important to acknowledge that some people who engage in sex work do so willingly, and some sex work may not be violent or exploitative, people experiencing homelessness, especially youth, are particularly vulnerable and more likely to be engaging in “survival sex” which puts them at risk of violence and exploitation (Dank et al., 2015).

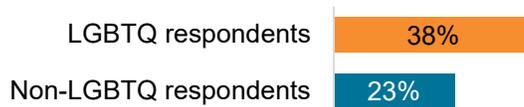
- 32% of LGBTQ respondents have been encouraged by another person to make money by dancing, stripping, posing for nude photos, working for an escort service, or otherwise exchanging sex for money, compared to 12% of non-LGBTQ respondents. For those approached to work in the sex industry, the average age when LGBTQ respondents were first approached was 18, compared to 22 for non-LGBTQ respondents.
- 30% of LGBTQ respondents have been sexual with someone for the purpose of getting shelter, clothing, food, or other things, compared to 16% of non-LGBTQ respondents.

## Other violence

*Over one-third of LGBTQ respondents had been physically or sexually attacked or assaulted while experiencing homelessness.*

- Over one-third (38%) of LGBTQ respondents were physically or sexually attacked or assaulted while they were experiencing homelessness, compared to 23% of non-LGBTQ respondents (Figure 15). A higher percentage of people who identified as gender queer (46%) and LGBTQ women (42%) reported being attacked or assaulted, compared to 28% of LGBTQ men. There were no notable differences between transgender (36%) and cisgender LGBTQ respondents (39%) on this measure.

### 15. Percentage of LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ respondents who have been physically or sexually attacked or assaulted while experiencing homelessness



- In the previous year, 23% of LGBTQ respondents had to seek health care because of an injury or illness resulting from violence, compared to 13% of non-LGBTQ respondents.

## Social service and correctional placements

*One-third of LGBTQ respondents had spent time in a foster home*

Respondents were asked if they had ever lived in a social service placement (e.g., foster home, group home) or treatment facility. Similar percentages of LGBTQ respondents reported a history of living in social service placements compared to non-LGBTQ respondents, except a slightly higher percentage of LGBTQ respondents reported having stayed in a mental health treatment program (47% vs. 33%; Figure 16).

### 16. History of living in a social service placement or treatment facility, LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ respondents

	LGBTQ respondents	Non-LGBTQ respondents
Mental health treatment program	47%	33%
Drug or alcohol treatment facility	37%	44%
Foster home	30%	23%
Group home	23%	21%
Halfway house	22%	28%
Nursing home or residence for people with physical disabilities	4%	6%

A higher percentage of LGBTQ adults reported having lived in a drug or alcohol treatment facility (48%) or halfway house (32%) compared to LGBTQ youth (18% and 5%, respectively), whereas other placements were similar between LGBTQ adults and youth.

### Correctional placements

*Less than half of LGBTQ respondents reported a history of incarceration, a lower percentage than non-LGBTQ respondents.*

A history of incarceration or criminal activity can hinder one's ability to secure both housing and employment due to systemic discrimination against people with criminal backgrounds (Couloute, 2018; Couloute & Kopf, 2018). In this report, we define time in a correctional facility as a week or more spent in juvenile detention, a month or more in a county jail or workhouse, or any time in state or federal prison.

- 42% of LGBTQ respondents were in a correctional facility at some point in their lives, compared to 55% of non-LGBTQ respondents.
- 15% of LGBTQ respondents were currently on probation or parole, similar to 17% of non-LGBTQ respondents.

# Health and well-being

## Mental and physical health

*Three-quarters of LGBTQ respondents reported a mental health condition, and over half reported a chronic physical health condition.*

A greater proportion of LGBTQ respondents reported a mental health diagnosis (77%) compared to non-LGBTQ respondents (62%). This finding mirrors the population-wide pattern of LGBTQ people being more likely to experience lifetime mental health issues than non-LGBTQ people (American Psychiatric Association, 2017). LGBTQ people who are young, bisexual, and transgender have the highest rates of mental health issues within the LGBTQ community (Mental Health America, n.d.).

Mental health issues among LGBTQ people are linked to stigma and discrimination and should not be interpreted as LGBTQ status in and of itself causing mental health issues or vice versa (American Psychiatric Association, 2017). Discrimination when accessing health care, less social support, higher rates of poverty, and increased experiences of violence are all documented in the LGBTQ community and are just some of the systematic factors linked to increased mental health issues (American Psychiatric Association, 2017).

The most commonly reported mental health conditions among all LGBTQ respondents were an anxiety or panic disorder (64%), depression (58%), or PTSD (49%; Figure 17).

### 17. Mental health diagnoses of LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ respondents in the past two years

	LGBTQ respondents	Non-LGBTQ respondents
Anxiety disorder or panic disorder	64%	48%
Major depression or clinical depression	58%	43%
Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)	49%	35%
Bipolar disorder, manic episodes, or manic depression	36%	23%
Obsessive-compulsive personality or any other severe social or personality disorder	23%	12%
Schizophrenia or another paranoid or delusional disorder	14%	10%
<b>Any of the above recent mental health diagnoses</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>62%</b>

Fifty-eight percent of LGBTQ respondents reported living with a chronic health condition.<sup>2</sup> The most commonly reported chronic physical health conditions were severe chronic pain (33%) and asthma (27%). Half of all LGBTQ respondents (49%) live with a disability (physical, mental, or other health condition) that limits their work activities.

*Many LGBTQ respondents have had brain injuries.*

One in three respondents (36%) answered a series of questions in a way that indicates a likely traumatic brain injury (TBI), meaning that they had a head injury that resulted in long-term negative effects. This is similar to the percentage of non-LGBTQ respondents who indicated a likely traumatic brain injury.

## Unmet health care needs

*A majority of LGBTQ respondents had unmet health care needs.*

Nearly three-quarters (72%) of LGBTQ respondents said they needed to see a health professional for health care needs. Most commonly, these unmet health care needs included tooth or gum problems (54%), emotional or mental health problems (50%), and physical health problems (40%).

Half of respondents (51%) had received care in the emergency room in the previous six months. Similar proportions of LGBTQ youth and adult respondents reported receiving care in the emergency room.

Those experiencing homelessness, including LGBTQ individuals, have lower rates of health care coverage than Minnesotans overall (94%; Minnesota Department of Health, 2018). LGBTQ homeless study respondents (77%) had similar rates compared to non-LGBTQ homeless study respondents (76%).

## Substance use

*Nearly three-quarters of LGBTQ respondents smoke cigarettes.*

The survey asks respondents about substance use within the previous 30 days; the most commonly used substances by LGBTQ respondents were cigarettes (70%), a stark contrast to the 14% of all adults in Minnesota who are current smokers (ClearWay Minnesota & Minnesota Department of Health, 2019). The other most commonly reported substances

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<sup>2</sup> Respondents were asked if they had experienced any of the following chronic health conditions in the past 12 months: Asthma, tuberculosis or another lung or respiratory problem, high blood pressure, other chronic heart or circulatory problem, diabetes, cancer, or severe chronic pain.

used in the past 30 days were marijuana (43%), alcohol (39%), and e-cigarettes/vaporizers (23%). Use of these substances was generally similar to non-LGBTQ respondents.

*One-quarter of LGBTQ respondents reported a chemical dependency diagnosis.*

- One-quarter of LGBTQ respondents (25%) reported a chemical dependency diagnosis in the previous two years, which includes alcohol or drug abuse disorders.
- Twenty-three percent of LGBTQ respondents reported a dual diagnosis of mental health and chemical dependency in the last two years.

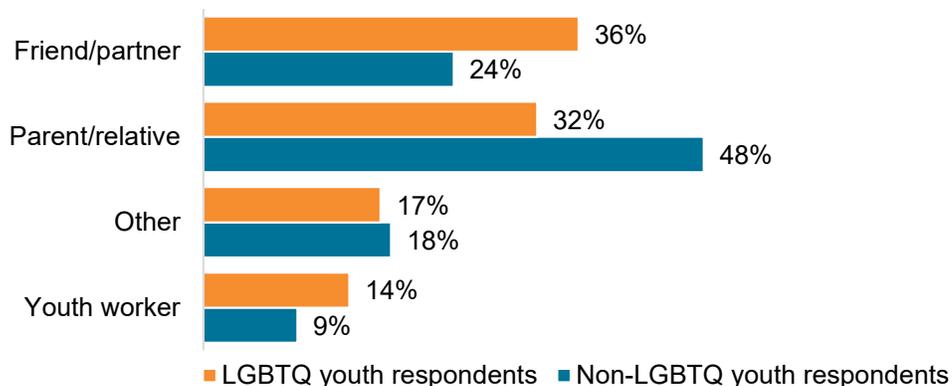
## Trusted adults

*The majority of LGBTQ youth had a trusted adult in their life, and two-thirds reported a youth worker helped them find services in the past 12 months.*

Eighty-two percent of LGBTQ respondents under age 20 reported having an adult in their life that they can trust and talk with about their problems. This was similar to the 76% of non-LGBTQ youth who reported having a trusted adult.

For the LGBTQ youth under age 20 who reported there was an adult in their life they could trust, this individual was most commonly reported to be a friend or partner (36%), whereas, for non-LGBTQ respondents, this individual was most commonly a parent or another relative (48%; Figure 18). This finding fits into the broader trend in the LGBTQ community of having a “chosen family” of friends that provides love and support, as some biological families are not accepting of individuals’ LGBTQ identity (Hull & Ortyl, 2019). Additionally, 67% of LGBTQ youth reported having a youth worker who helped them find services in the last 12 months.

### 18. Relationship to most trusted adult for LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ youth age 20 or younger for those with a trusted adult in their life



# Employment, education, and income

## Employment

*About one-third of LGBTQ respondents were employed at the time of the study, with few being employed full time or making \$15.00/hour or more.*

Thirty-one percent of LGBTQ respondents were employed at the time of the study, with 9% employed full time (35 hours or more each week; Figure 19). These are similar to the employment rates for all homeless study respondents. The majority of employed LGBTQ respondents make less than \$15.00/hour, with only 8% making \$15.00/hour or more.

### 19. LGBTQ respondents' employment status



The majority of unemployed LGBTQ respondents (59%) were currently looking for work; this was particularly true for LGBTQ respondents age 24 and younger (74% were looking for work).

The most commonly cited barriers to getting a job for unemployed LGBTQ respondents were transportation (30%), mental and chemical health issues (27%), and their housing situation (e.g., lack of housing, shelter rules; 24%). Employment barriers were generally similar to non-LGBTQ respondents, except fewer LGBTQ respondents cited physical health issues as a barrier (29% vs. 18%).

## Education

*The majority of LGBTQ respondents have a high school degree or more education*

Twenty-nine percent of LGBTQ respondents had less than a high school education, 38% of respondents highest level of education was completing high school, and 33% had some college or a college degree.

A higher percentage of LGBTQ respondents (44%) than non-LGBTQ respondents (33%) had an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or received special education services while in school.

# Income

*Median income for LGBTQ respondents was lower than for non-LGBTQ respondents.*

LGBTQ respondents reported a median income from all sources of \$400 per month, compared to \$500 for non-LGBTQ respondents (Figure 20). This median income is markedly lower than the 2018 fair market rent of \$864 per month for a one-bedroom apartment in the Twin Cities and \$576 per month in greater Minnesota (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2018).

## 20. Median monthly income, LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ respondents



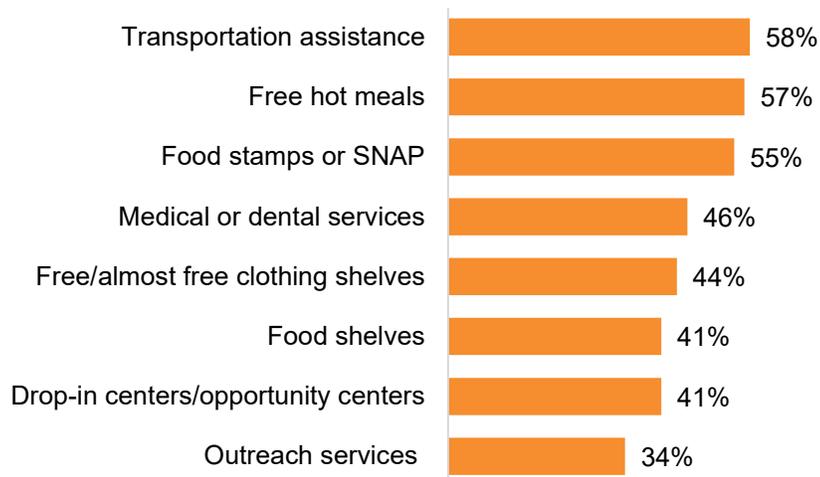
The top three most frequent sources of income in the month of the study for LGBTQ respondents were employment (23%), General Assistance (19%), and another social security program like disability insurance (18%). Fifteen percent reported no income sources in the month of the study. Main income sources were generally similar to non-LGBTQ respondents.

## Benefits and services

*Transportation and food assistance were the most commonly accessed benefits and services by LGBTQ respondents.*

During the month of the interview, LGBTQ respondents accessed public services and benefits to varying degrees. Services that were accessed by more than half of respondents included transportation assistance (58%), free hot meals (57%), and food stamps or SNAP (55%; Figure 21). Generally, services and benefits accessed were similar between LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ respondents.

### 21. Services and benefits most often accessed by LGBTQ respondents in October 2018



## Considerations

Roughly, one in 10 people experiencing homelessness in Minnesota identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ). Statewide, 4% of Minnesotans identify as LGBT,<sup>3</sup> meaning that LGBTQ people are over-represented within the homeless population (Gates, 2017).

In many ways, the LGBTQ homeless population shares similar histories and faces similar barriers to those who do not identify as LGBTQ. Generational impacts of discriminatory housing policies and other systemic inequities have contributed to the overrepresentation of Native Americans and people of color in Minnesota's general homeless population. The deep racial disparities that have taken root within housing and homelessness systems affect LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ groups alike. In addition, regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation, people experiencing homelessness most commonly lost their last permanent housing because of financial and interpersonal issues.

In addition, one-third of respondents had been turned away from shelter in the previous three months because it was full (LGBTQ: 36%, non-LGBTQ: 33%) and roughly half were on a subsidized housing wait list with an average wait time of 12 months (LGBTQ: 47%, non-LGBTQ: 48%). Across the board, there is simply “a critical need for 1) more shelter beds and support services to help those in crisis and 2) more affordable housing across our state” (Pittman et al., 2020).

There are some notable differences between the Minnesota LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ population. LGBTQ people experiencing homelessness report greater incidences of adverse childhood experiences, domestic abuse and violence, and mental health diagnoses, all of which can make this population more vulnerable to a variety of risks, including homelessness.

Those experiencing homelessness who are Indigenous or a person of color and identify as LGBTQ face compounding and systemic discrimination. Existing research shows that, for those who identify as both LGBTQ and a person of color, the effects of systemic discrimination are double hitting, particularly in systems related to housing, employment, and health care (NPR, 2017). In this study, higher proportions of LGBTQ Indigenous and people of color had spent the night on public transportation in the past 12 months (40%, compared to 29% of White LGBTQ people experiencing homelessness) or had been turned away from shelter in the past three months because it was full (39%, compared to 30% of LGBTQ White people).

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<sup>3</sup> A 2017 study did not include people identifying as queer.

Despite these obstacles, LGBTQ people experiencing homelessness exhibit significant resilience and are able to find supports in their communities. The majority (71%) of the homeless LGBTQ population have a high school degree or more education, suggesting that they were able to graduate high school despite trauma and other adverse experiences. It also suggests that, with support and connection to employment services, they have the qualifications for well-paid work. Most LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness (82%) say they have a trusted adult in their life.

Finding from this study suggest that LGBTQ people experiencing homelessness could benefit from housing and other services that are trauma-informed. Many could benefit from services that integrate the needs of people with mental and physical health conditions. It is also critical to provide support for people of all genders and sexual orientations.

Finally, it is important to think about preventing the cycle of homelessness by providing early intervention for youth and families in crisis, and emphasizing the importance of informal connections from friends and community members in supporting the needs of LGBTQ people who may be at-risk of losing their housing.

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# Appendix

## About the study

Wilder Research conducts the Minnesota Homeless Study, along with a companion study of homelessness on American Indian reservations, every three years. The 2018 study took place on October 25, 2018, and included two components that captured information on that date: 1) face-to-face interviews with people throughout the state who meet a federal definition of homelessness, and 2) a count of people experiencing homelessness.

## Defining LGBTQ

For this report, respondents were identified as LGBTQ based on their responses to three survey questions. People were included in the analysis if they answered affirmatively to one of the following:

1. Identified their sexual orientation as gay, lesbian, bisexual, unsure, or self-identified
2. Self-identified a gender other than man or woman<sup>4</sup>
3. Identified themselves as transgender

It is important to note that, in 2018, changes were made to the response options for the items used to identify LGBTQ respondents; changes include:

- Gender response options
  - 2009-2015: Male, Female, Other
  - 2018: Male, Female, Self-identify
- Sexual orientation response options
  - 2009-2015: Heterosexual or straight, Gay or lesbian, Bisexual, Unsure
  - 2018: Heterosexual or straight, Gay or lesbian, Bisexual, Unsure, Self-identify
- Transgender status response options
  - 2009-2015: Yes, male to female; Yes, female to male; Yes, other; No
  - 2018: Yes, No

Calculation of the percentage of respondents identifying as LGBTQ was standardized as much as possible between years.

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<sup>4</sup> For those who identified their gender as something other than man or woman, we use the term gender queer throughout the report.

# Homeless Study methods

## *Interviews with people experiencing homelessness*

In 2018, information about the characteristics of people experiencing homelessness was gathered from 4,279 face-to-face interviews with homeless adults and minor youth (under 18 without their parents). Interviews were conducted with people known to be homeless on October 25, 2018, including 2,338 adults in shelters, as well as another 1,843 adults in non-shelter locations. 440 of the people interviewed identified as LGBTQ, of which 173 were youth age 24 years or younger.

The interviews were conducted by over 1,000 trained volunteers and program staff in more than 300 locations, including shelters and transitional housing programs, meal sites, service centers, encampments, and other places not intended for housing. In shelter and transitional housing programs, one adult per family was asked to complete the interview.

Each interview lasted about 30 to 45 minutes. The survey was translated into Spanish and Somali. Study participation was voluntary and participants received \$10 for completing the interview.

## *Weighting*

Unlike the overall Minnesota Homeless Study data, the responses in this report have not been “weighted” to represent everyone counted on the night of the study. For respondents interviewed in the shelter system, the weighting procedure uses as population targets the shelter settings counts of residents overall and by gender at each specific shelter setting participating in the study. This creates a dataset that is representative at both the statewide and individual Continuum of Care region levels.

Because LGBTQ status is not factored into the weighting procedure, using the weights created for the overall Minnesota Homeless Study are unlikely to result in a dataset representative of LGBTQ respondents specifically. As such, in this report focusing specifically on the LGBTQ population, we are using unweighted data.

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- Hennepin County Office to End Homelessness
- Ramsey County
- Family Housing Fund
- Metropolitan Council
- Greater Twin Cities United Way
- The Minneapolis Foundation
- FR Bigelow Foundation  
(MN Philanthropy Partners)
- St. Paul Foundation  
(MN Philanthropy Partners)
- Northwest Area Foundation

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