LGBTQ+ Housing & Homelessness Survey 2022-23

Final Report

Edith England & Neil Turnbull

Mapping queer homelessness across the UK. Welcome! We are trying to find out more about the problems LGBTQ+ people have with housing, and what kinds of help are available to you to help with this. We really want to understand how different groups of LGBTQ+ people in different areas are having different experiences. This is the largest survey of its kind! We will be using the findings to try to improve different homelessness services, need to use them. If to make them better for LGBTQ+ people who and live in the UK you are aged over 18, identify as LGBTQ+, to have been homeless please complete the survey! You don't need bigger project. to take part. The survey is part of a Local authorities We'll also be sending out FOIs to We'll be and doing face to face interviews. The survey writing a report, as well as publishing academic where you live, about papers- let us know if you'd like a copy of the report. from 1st July 2022 will take about 10 minutes to complete. You will be asked questions about on Cardiff yourself, and about your housing situation now and in the past. The survey will be open The to 31st March 2023. We will be very careful with the information you give us: it will be stored For more Met secure servers. We will anonymise your responses and we will make sure that you cannot be identified. Please information about the study, or to discuss any concerns, please email Edith: EEngland@CardiffMet.ac.uk. to take study is led by Dr Edith England (Cardiff Metropolitan University) and Dr Neil Turnbull (Cardiff University) LGBTQ+ confirm your consent to taking part. Before we continue, we need to check whether you are eligible No – part in the survey. To take part, you need to be over 18, living in the UK and identify as I am under 18, I don't live in the UK, and/or I do not identify as LGBTQ+. Location Questions Please tick to confirm... O I am aged over 18, I live in the UK, and I identify as LGBTQ+. O We would like to ask you some questions about where you live. We are trying to understand Which area do you live in? Can you tell us the name of the local authority (council or borough) in which you live? If you live in more than one local authority, please tell us all the local authorities you live in. O My local authority is ..../ my local authorities are ___. O Prefer not to say. Did you move to your current Local authority area (Cardiff) as a result of problems with your housing – for instance, being asked to leave your home, or having problems finding somewhere to live? O Yes. O No. How long have you lived in your current Local Authority? (e.g. Cardiff). O Less than a month. O One month to six months. O Six months to two years. O Two years or more. Demographic Questions The next questions are about you, this is so we can understand more about the experiences of different groups of LGBTQ+ people. Please skip any question you'd rather not answer. How would you describe your sexual orientation? (tick all that apply). O Asexual. O Bisexual/pansexual. O Gay / lesbian. O Heterosexual / straight. O Queer. O In another way ___. How would you describe your gender? (tick all that apply). O Man. O Non-binary. O Woman. O In another way ___. Are you trans? O Yes. O No. O Prefer to put this in another way ___. O Prefer not to say. Which of these best matches your ethnic group? (tick all that apply). O Asian / Asian British / Caribbean background. O Mixed / multiple ethnic groups. O White. O O Black / African Other ethnic group. You described your ethnic background as 'Asian / Asian British'. Which of these descriptions best matches your identity? (tick all that apply). O Indian. O Pakistani. O Bangladeshi. O Other Asian background. You described your ethnic background as 'Black / African / Caribbean background'. Which of these descriptions best matches your identity? (tick all that apply) O African. O Caribbean. O Any other Black / African / Caribbean background. You described your ethnic background as 'Mixed / multiple ethnic groups'. Which of these descriptions best matches your identity? (tick all that apply). and White African. O Asian and White. O Any other mixed / multiple ethnic background. You O Black and White Caribbean. O Black 'White'. Which of these descriptions best matches your identity? (tick all that apply). O British. described your ethnic background as O English. O Gypsy or Irish Traveller. O Irish O Scottish. O Welsh. O Northern Irish. O Any other White Background. You indicated that the descriptions given did not match your identity very well. Can you give more detail on your ethnic/national identity? ___. How old are you? ___. Do you have children aged 16 or under, or 19 or under and in full time education, living with you as part of your household? O Yes. O No. Do you have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses? O Yes. O No. Has this lasted, or is it expected to last, for 12 months Do any of your illnesses or conditions reduce your ability to carry out day to day activities? O Yes, a lot. O Yes, a little. O No. Before the age of 18, were you at any point in local authority care? O Yes. O No. Before the age of 18, were you ever without anywhere to live? O Yes. O No. Housing since age 16 The next questions are about your housing experiences since the age of 16. This is so we can understand more about the experiences of different groups of LGBTQ+ people over the lifetime. Since the age of 16 have you had to do any of the following? (tick all that apply)? O Sleeping outside (on the streets, in a vehicle or in a public space) – apart from as part of a planned holiday. O Sofa surfing / staying with friends or relatives temporarily. O Staying in temporary accommodation - e.g., a mobile home, hostel, hotel or bed and breakfast. O None of these. Since the age of 16 have any of the following happened to you? (tick all that apply). O Having to share a bedroom with someone other than your partner or having no bedroom. O Lived in housing that was in such poor condition that it affected your mental, physical or emotional health, or that of someone you lived with. O Experienced violence or abuse within your home. O No – I have never experienced any of these issues. Have any of the following happened to you since the age of 16? (tick all that apply). O Being unable to afford somewhere to live. O Having to leave your home following relationship breakdown. O Family or friends asking you to leave their accommodation. O Violence and/or abuse in the home. O Leaving prison, the armed forces, or hospital. O Leaving local authority care. O None of these. Have you ever made a homelessness application to a UK local authority before the age of 18? O Yes. O No. Since the age of 16, have you asked for help with your housing from...[tick all that apply]. There is space for you to give details of the organisation you approached but this is optional. O Friends and/or family. O local authority homelessness department. O Another service (tick all that apply) ___. O Specialist LGBTQ+ organisation / charity ___. O Specialist homelessness service ___. O Sometimes also ___. O Have you asked for help with my housing. The next questions are about your experiences in the last 12 months. The next questions are about your experiences in the last 12 months. O Being outside (on the streets, in a vehicle or in a public space). O Sofa surfing / staying with friends or relatives temporarily. O Staying in temporary accommodation – e.g., a mobile home, hostel, hotel or bed and breakfast. O No – I have not had to do any of these in the last 12 months. Have any of the following happened to you in the last 12 months? [tick all that apply] O Being unable to afford somewhere to live. O Relationship breakdown. O Family or friends asking you to leave their accommodation. O Violence and/or abuse in the home. O Leaving prison, the armed forces, or hospital. O Leaving local authority care. O None of these. In the last 12 months have you experienced any of the following? [tick all that apply]. O Living in very overcrowded housing – for instance, having to share a bedroom with someone who partner. O Living in very poor condition housing which affected your mental physical or emotional health or that of someone you live with. O Violence or abuse within your home. O none of these. In the last 12 months have you made a homelessness application to the local authority? O Yes. O No. Current housing situation We want to understand whether you might be at risk of becoming homeless in the near future..The next questions are about the house you currently live in. Who owns the house that you live in? O Myself or my partner(s). O I/we live rent from a private landlord. O I/we rent from a social landlord (e.g., local authority or housing association, or charity). O My parents, friends or family rent the accommodation. O My parent, friends or family own the accommodation. O I am in temporary accommodation or street homeless. O I live in a housing co-op. O Another situation ___. Is your name on the deeds of the property that you live in? O Yes. O No. In the last 12 months have you ever been behind with your rent or mortgage? O Yes. O No. How likely to do think it is that you will lose your home within the next 12 months? By 'lose' we mean being asked to leave your current accommodation other than as part of a planned house move. If you had nowhere to live, where would you go for help? [tick all that apply] There is space for you to give details, but this is optional. O Local authority homelessness service. O Specialist LGBTQ+ service ___. O Specialist housing / homelessness service ___. O Other service ___. What helps LGBTQ+ people when making homelessness applications? We are trying to understand what LGBTQ+ people need from homelessness services. We are interested in your answers even if you have never been homeless or made a homelessness application. Which of the following would help in making you more comfortable in using local authority homelessness services, if you needed to? O Staff asking me for my pronouns. O Posters / decoration indicating LGBTQ+ inclusion. O Posters / decoration indicating trans inclusion. O Specialist LGBTQ+ homelessness services. O Knowing other LGBTQ+ people had good experiences of the service. O Having specialist LGBTQ+ staff to deal with application. O Knowing staff had training on LGBTQ+ inclusion. O Knowing staff had training on trans inclusion. O Specialist LGBTQ+ homelessness accommodation. Knowing how to make an application. Would you like to add anything else? This might be about your experiences of housing and homelessness, of using homelessness services, or anything else you think might be relevant. We are interested in hearing more about your experiences of housing over your lifetime. Would you be interested in taking part in a longer interview? If so, please give your email address. Your email address will be kept confidential. It will not be kept with your survey answers. If you would like any further information, or to be kept updated on the study, please email Edith England EAAEngland@cardiffmet.ac.uk. for your Thank time. you

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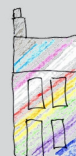
LGBTQ+ Housing & Homelessness Survey 2022-23

Final Report

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Plate 1 LGBTQ+ billboard visibility on UK streets

Source: Photograph by Neil Turnbull

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0.0 Executive summary

Homelessness – an extreme form of social marginalisation – has long been believed to be especially prevalent among LGBTQ+ people. UK law has, since 1977, defined homelessness in terms of being without access to an adequate, safe, and sustainable home – as having nowhere with a legal right to occupy, and/or is reasonable to occupy. Those who are homeless under UK law are, at least in England, Wales, and Scotland, likely to be entitled to at least some support and assistance from their Local Authority.

Understanding prevalence of homelessness among LGBTQ+ people, alongside which sub-groups within the community are at risk of homelessness, is crucial to the development and delivery of effective services. However, while existing research on LGBTQ+ homelessness is extremely valuable in improving understanding of the experiences of this group, studies have tended to be small-scale and geographically specific, raising questions about the extent they can be generalisable for the whole population. Furthermore, existing work has been primarily concerned with youth homelessness, with those over age 25 largely invisible within the research. Additionally, prior studies often use more limited definitions of homelessness than that accepted within UK law, meaning that they do not provide a good estimate of likely service demand.

To address these omissions, we surveyed 1119 LGBTQ+ people across the UK to specifically ask about homelessness. Using an understanding of homelessness drawn from UK law, we asked them about experiences at different points in their lives, and recent events known to be risk factors for homelessness, as well as whether they had ever made a homelessness application. We also asked them about where they would seek help if they became homeless, and what would encourage them to use homelessness services.

We found that homelessness among LGBTQ+ people was high: a fifth reported recent experiences which fall within the UK-wide recognised definition of homelessness. This was even higher for certain groups, notably those who were trans, non-binary or agender, and those who had experienced homelessness before the age of 18. Risk of homelessness among LGBTQ+ people was also high, with a fifth having at least one risk factor for homelessness and a tenth anticipating losing their home in the next year. Willingness to seek help from the Local Authority if they did become homeless was, however, relatively low, with only a third indicating that they would do so if they became homeless. When asked what would encourage them to make an application, LGBTQ+ people were most likely to identify service reputation and procedural knowledge as being the most important factors.

Based on these findings, we feel that more work is needed to identify why LGBTQ+ people are at elevated risk of homelessness (especially given recent attempts to address LGBTQ+ inequalities, such as the Equality Act 2010), that LGBTQ+ inclusion practice guidelines for Local Authorities and other service providers would be helpful in improving service engagement among LGBTQ+ people, that funding for LGBTQ+ specific homelessness interventions should be ringfenced, and that more work is needed to record LGBTQ+ experiences of homelessness through administrative or other routine data collection.

Edith England and Neil Turnbull
Cardiff, Wales, UK
June 2024

Plate 2 Physical tools of our survey - flyers

Source: Photograph by Neil Turnbull

1.0 Introduction

Despite significant advances toward full equality LGBTQ+ people remain at higher risk of social and financial exclusion, increasing the risk of homelessness (Waite, Ecker and Ross, 2019; Folch, 2022) – itself an extreme form of social and economic marginalisation. Several important studies over the last few years have increased our understanding of how certain LGBTQ+ groups experience homelessness – notably those who are under 25 (Tunåker, 2015; Abramovich, 2016; McCann and Brown, 2019).

This work has helped us understand the rich complexity of queer experience as it exists in the margins, However, we lack definitive information on prevalence and patterning of LGBTQ+ experiences of homelessness. Without this, it is difficult to identify either the scale of the issue, or ways to address it.

To address this, we surveyed 1119 LGBTQ+ people about their experiences of homelessness, in the 2022-23 LGBTQ+ Housing and Homelessness Survey. We asked about experiences of homelessness across the lifespan and within the last year, whether people had risk factors for homelessness, and what they felt might help them if they did become homeless. We also worked with community groups across the UK to ensure that we had responses which reflect the British LGBTQ+ population in terms of where they live, age, gender, sexuality, and gender identity.

The results give a broad picture of the housing and homelessness experiences of LGBTQ+ people across the UK today. We found that not only are LGBTQ+ people at high risk of homelessness, LGBTQ+ people do not necessarily see existing services as a useful source of help. This is especially the case for those who are trans, and those who have experienced homelessness before the age of 18.

We hope that these findings will contribute to improving the housing situation for LGBTQ+ people facing homelessness.

Plate 3 LGBTQ+ Mural on UK streets

Source: Photograph by Neil Turnbull

2.0 Aims

Addressing LGBTQ+ homelessness is hampered by a lack of clear evidence about prevalence and patterning. Existing data sources, while useful, are predominantly either small-scale and qualitative, tending to be focused upon a subsection of the population (e.g. Abramovich, 2012; Tunåker, 2015; England, 2024), or, while large in scope, do not explore experiences of homelessness in detail, requiring extrapolation from one or two questions (McNeil et al., 2012; Bachman and Gooch, 2018).

A further issue is that these studies tend to be geographically and/or demographically limited, with participants often recruited through local authority or third-sector organisations.

Our data collection recruited a broad demographic broad demographic of LGBTQ+ people about their experiences of housing and homelessness in the UK. We wanted to ensure that we recruited:

- Sufficient participants to produce results which were likely to be representative of the LGBTQ+ population of the UK as a whole.

- Across demographic groups (sexuality, gender identity, gender, age, ethnicity, disability), to provide information about all parts of the LGBTQ+ population.

- Across the whole of the UK (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales), addressing a tendency for LGBTQ+ focused studies to primarily recruit participants from areas of high concentration of services for LGBTQ+ people (such as Brighton, London, and Manchester).

Plate 4 LGBTQ+ progress pride flag visibility in UK streets

Source: Photograph by Neil Turnbull

3.0 Structure of the report

This report has a further six sections. The following section (4.0 Outline of the research) describes our approach to the research. This starts with a subsection that reviews literature to define different kinds of homelessness and signposts current knowledge of LGBTQ+ people's experiences where possible (4.1 Homelessness) and the research gap (4.2 LGBTQ+ People and homelessness: the data gap). This is followed by subsections that present our methodology (Methodology 4.3), research questions (4.4 Homelessness questions), and carefully outlines the demographics of our research participants (4.5 Who completed our survey). The next section (5.0 Findings and discussion) shares analysis and discussion of the survey data. This primarily focuses on quantitative figures (derived from closed-ended answers), in part illustrated by qualitative facts (gathered through free text comments). This is arranged around the following four themes and discussed in relation to existing literature.

- Experiences of homelessness (Section 5.1)
- Risk factors for homelessness (Section 5.2)
- Where do LGBTQ+ people seek help if they become homeless (Section 5.3)
- Experiences of homelessness among different LGBTQ+ groups (Section 5.4)

The next section (6.0 Conclusions and recommendations) outlines our closing thoughts on this research and sets out a list of recommendations and provocations for further practical real-world and academic action. This is followed by references (7.0 References), acknowledgement and thanks to the LGBTQ+ community for their participation, support, and patience throughout the survey, and subsequent analysis of data, writing, and publication of this report (8.0 Acknowledgements), and signposting to further resources for those affected by issues discussed in this report (9.0 Further Support).

Plate 5 LGBTQ+ sticker visibility 'transphobia in Wales? Dim Diolch' [*No, thank you!*]

Source: Photograph by Neil Turnbull

4.0 Outline of the research

4.1 Homelessness

Homelessness is widely recognised as a global public health crisis (Fazel, Geddes and Kushel, 2014; House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts, 2017), with severe impacts upon health, education and social and economic inclusion (Sleet and Francescutti, 2021; White et al., 2022). The UK recognises homelessness as occurring where an individual or household are without (or are soon to be without) anywhere they can reasonably be expected to occupy. This can include those who have no legal right to remain in their accommodation (for instance those who are sofa surfing, squatting, or sub-letting), or whose accommodation is unsafe (for instance those experiencing severe overcrowding or living in conditions of housing disrepair, or violence within their home). An individual or household can also be entitled to help if they are threatened with homelessness within a set period of time. This legal understanding of homelessness draws upon a wider idea of 'ontological home' (Dupuis and Thorns, 1998) – an idea of home as a space which is secure, private, sustainable, and is a fundamental human need.

British homelessness law has historically offered a right to assistance for those experiencing or at risk of homelessness (defined broadly, as above), albeit restricted to those considered 'deserving' of this assistance. As articulated in the Housing (Homeless Person) Act 1977 and subsequent legislation, this approach is characterised by an 'implicit heteronormativity' (Carr et al., 2022, p. 3). Families with children have long been afforded priority access to assistance (primarily lifetime, affordable social housing tenancies)[1]. While other groups could secure help, this was conditional upon them demonstrating that they were at much elevated risk as a result of being homeless[2]. Homelessness law and systems devolved after 1999, with changes to the previous system introduced in Scotland, Wales, and England. The Homelessness (Scotland) Act (2003) was especially notable in abolishing 'priority need' categories, affording all those experiencing homelessness a right to housing, which indirectly

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1   Note that although a child-centric approach will tend to disadvantage LGBTQ+ people in terms of access to social housing, since they are a group less likely to have dependent children, it is important to recognise that homeless families with dependent children face specific and extensive forms of marginalisation, and that a heteronormative orientation within homelessness provision also limits options available to homeless mothers. See (Cruikshank, 1999; Bimpson, Parr and Reeve, 2020; England and Henley, 2024).

2   Since the introduction of the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977, the question of how to measure vulnerability among homeless people – an already highly vulnerable population – has been fiercely debated, including through the courts. One outcome of this is conservatism and use of demographic stereotypes among frontline workers in terms of threshold vulnerability (Bretherton, Hunter and Johnsen, 2013).

4.1   Homelessness (cont.)

benefitted LGBTQ+ people (as a group less likely to have dependent children). The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 largely retained the structure of the previous legislation, but introduced an enhanced obligation upon local authorities were required to assist with preventing and resolving homelessness (stopping short of the national right to housing introduced in Scotland). The Guidance the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 also requires that Local Authorities ensure that staff are trained in trans awareness, with considerable guidance provided around how to work with LGBTQ+ people who have experienced different forms of homelessness. With the Homelessness Reduction Act (2017), England introduced similar changes to Wales but did not explicitly introduce guidance around LGBTQ+ applicants.

The British definition of homelessness closely overlaps with the ETHOS typology developed by FEANSTA (European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless) and the European Observatory on Homelessness. The ETHOS typology is especially helpful in providing a clear, circumstance-based definition of different types of homelessness which allows population (including international) comparison. This approach categorises homeless populations by type of homelessness experienced, conceptualised in terms of exclusion from the benefits of home – having a decent and habitable space, where it is possible to live as a social human being, and with 'exclusive possession, security of occupation and legal title" (Edgar, Doherty and Meert, 2003, p. 15). Among the forms of homelessness recognised in the UK, overlapping with the ETHOS typology, are - rough sleeping, living in temporary accommodation, sofa surfing, and domestic abuse and other forms of violence. Two additional forms of homelessness are also often recognised: living in overcrowded, and poor quality, housing.

People sleeping rough

Rough sleeping – where someone is 'roofless', or without any physical shelter, and therefore sleeping outdoors (including in a tent or doorway), in a derelict or abandoned building which lacks basic amenities (such as running water), or in a vehicle or boat – is widely recognised as a crisis situation (Clarke, 2016). It has a significant, negative long term impact on health, wellbeing and safety, and a greater risk of early mortality (Breen and Butt, 2022; White et al., 2022). There is a lack of definitive population level figures on rough sleepers, and approaches to estimates are not consistent across the four nations. For instance, England and Northern Ireland use 'rough sleeper counts', administered primarily through services such as emergency shelters, while Scotland measures numbers who slept rough directly prior to a homelessness application (Department for Communities Northern Ireland, 2023; Department for Levelling up, 2023; Mackie et al., 2017; Scottish Government Riaghaltas na h-Alba, 2023). Wales does not currently administer a rough sleeper count, but previously used a similar approach to England (Llywodraeth Cymru/ Welsh Government, 2019). Minoritised groups, including women and LGBTQ+ people, are much less likely to use these services (Bretherton, 2020; Carr et al., 2022), leading to concern that they may be under-reported in rough-sleeping estimates. Existing official evidence on prevalence of rough sleeping indicates that it is likely to affect under 0.5% of the population at any one time (Department for Communities Northern Ireland, 2023; Department for Levelling up, 2023; Scottish Government Riaghaltas na h-Alba, 2023).

Informal accommodation

UK homelessness law also recognises households as homeless where they do not have a legal right to occupy their accommodation. This includes those who are living temporarily with friends or family, or 'sofa surfing' - a form of hidden homelessness especially prevalent among groups – including LGBTQ+ people- for whom non-specialist services are likely to be less accessible, and for whom rough sleeping and use of services is likely to be perceived as risky (Clarke, 2016; Mayock, Bretherton and Baptista, 2016; Fitzpatrick et al., 2019; England, 2022a; Deleu, Schrooten and Hermans, 2023). Sofa surfing carries its own risks.

It can make people highly reliant upon those around them, creating conditions where exploitation and abuse are a risk, and affecting personal wellbeing, physical and mental health, relationships and employment (Sanders, Ben; Boobis, Sophie; Albanese, 2019; White et al., 2022).

Obtaining general population figures on sofa surfing is very difficult, since it is, by nature, often concealed (Fitzpatrick et al., 2019; Sanders, Boobis and Albanese, 2019) . However, based on research undertaken by homeless charity Crisis, it is estimated that in the UK sofa surfing affects 71,400 households at a given time (Sanders, Ben; Boobis, Sophie; Albanese, 2019), around 0.5% of the general population is likely to be sofa surfing[3]. However, there is also some evidence that this may be much higher among certain groups, including young people (Clarke, 2016).

Domestic abuse

The UK recognises domestic abuse as a situation where an individual is experiencing physical abuse, violence or threatening behaviour, controlling behaviour/ coercive control, or economic, psychological, emotional, or other abuse from someone with whom they are 'personally connected', including being, or having been, in a relationship with each other. Those who have currently or recently experienced domestic abuse are recognised both as being homeless under UK law, and very likely to fall into a category entitled to additional support, including direct housing provision (England, 2022c).

For the last few years, prevalence of experience of domestic abuse in the general population has been consistently estimated to be around 3% in a 12 month period (Office for National Statistics, 2023). Around 1 in 5 people are believed to have experienced domestic abuse during their lifetime (Elkin, 2022). LGBTQ+ people are believed to experience domestic abuse at rates at least comparable to the general population (McGregor, 2023). However, they are believed to be less likely to use specialist services, both because their experiences of

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3   Note that direct sampling approaches have found higher rates among specific groups. For instance Clarke (2016) found very high rates of sofa surfing among young people.

domestic abuse are often normalised and ignored, and because there is poor understanding of LGBTQ+ specific forms of domestic abuse (such as misgendering and outing) (Donovan et al., 2006; Donovan and Barnes, 2020). Recent work has also explored how cisnormativity and heteronormativity themselves create conditions where victimisation of family members who do not conform to binarised gender roles become not only normalised, but acceptable – for instance, in conversion therapy and misgendering (Rogers, 2021; Donovan, Magić and West, 2023). England (2024) has highlighted the importance of youth homelessness services framing identity erasure as domestic abuse, noting that where services failed to do so, young people were forced into retraumatising and abusive interactions (e.g. mediation).

Temporary homelessness accommodation

Those living in short-stay accommodation because they do not have anywhere else that they can legally and safely occupy are normally recognised as homeless under UK law. In many cases they will be occupying this accommodation after a decision from their local authority that they both fall within the British definition of homelessness, and that the local authority is likely to owe them a duty to house them. Local authorities provide a range of short-term accommodation, including dedicated hostels, supported accommodation and short-term temporary accommodation and night shelter accommodation, offering emergency relief. In England and Wales, those who are likely to be entitled to longer term housing assistance are also entitled to temporary accommodation while their claim is resolved. Less than 1 % of households in England are currently housed in local authority temporary accommodation (Wilson and Barton, 2023; Yapp and Trace, 2023), with similar figures for Wales (StatsWales, 2023; Yapp and Trace, 2023), Northern Ireland (McFadden, Katie; Curry, Lesley; Callaghan, 2023), and Scotland (Scottish Government Riaghaltas na h-Alba, 2023)[4,5]

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4   This may be an underestimation as there has been very little research into how many households are managing their own homelessness by staying in private hostel accommodation.

5   The UK approach to temporary accommodation includes ETHOS 3, but also aspects of ETHOS 2 (night-shelter accommodation) but also other forms of specialist accommodation-based provision, including refuges for those who have experienced domestic abuse (ETHOS 8).

4.1   Homelessness (cont.)

The 2021 Census found that 7.7% of those in hostels and temporary homelessness shelters in England and Wales identified as lesbian, gay or bisexual. This is more than double the figures identifying as lesbian, gay or bisexual in the Census overall (Yapp and Trace, 2023)[6]. Temporary accommodation can offer a reprieve from rough sleeping and from difficult living situations (for instance, sofa surfing). However, it can also expose people, especially those in minoritised groups, to risk of harm, and there is evidence that use of these services is lower among those likely to face discrimination, violence and aggression, including as a result of having a socially stigmatised status (Casey, Goudie and Reeve, 2008; England, 2022b). England (2021) found that homeless trans people experienced extensive and systematic exclusion, and minority stress, in local authority run homelessness hostels, which then often drove disengagement (see also England, 2024; Pyne, 2011).

4.2   LGBTQ+ people & homelessness: the data gap

As noted above, there exists no single agreed definition of homelessness. This means establishing prevalence among LGBTQ+ people based on prior research is complicated. However, there is some evidence that experiences which would be recognised as homelessness under UK law are high among LGBTQ+ people. Deal, Doshi and Gonzales (2023) found that over a fifth (22%) of gender minority youth reported homelessness in the previous month, and that they were significantly more likely to be sleeping rough. Durso and Gates (2012) estimate, based on service provider reports, that around two fifths of those using youth homelessness services across the US were LGBTQ+. Gattis (2013) found similar figures in Toronto. Corliss et al (2011) found that rates of homelessness (defined as lacking a 'fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence' (Corliss et al., 2011, p. 1684) among lesbian and gay adolescents was eight times higher than their heterosexual counterparts, with a quarter homeless at the time of the study[7].

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6   The Census data (Yapp and Trace, 2023) on sexuality and homelessness provides a useful indicator, but does need to be treated with caution. First, it is likely to capture only a very small subsection of those experiencing homelessness – those who have been able to access temporary accommodation. It does not include other groups – those sleeping rough, those sofa surfing, or those living in unsafe housing -unless they were using homelessness services included in census data capture (such as day centres). Response rates for temporary accommodation were around three quarters of those for the general population (76% compared to 97%). Those in temporary accommodation were also much less likely to answer questions about sexuality compared to the general population (13.5% did not answer this question compared to 7.5% generally). It is also important to recognise that it does not consider how trans, non-binary and agender identity interacts with homelessness, and that it does not include Scotland or Northern Ireland.

7   Homelessness prevalence for bisexual adolescents were above that of heterosexual peers, but approximately half that of lesbian and gay students.

In the UK, Stonewall has estimated that around 18% of LGBTQ+ people have experienced homelessness at some point in their lives, with those who are disabled, trans and/or non-binary especially likely to have experienced homelessness (Bachmann and Gooch, 2018)[8]. The Trans Mental Health Study also found high rates of lifetime homelessness, with 19% reporting at least one experience of homelessness and 11% reporting repeated homelessness (McNeil et al., 2012)[9].

However, these studies have several limitations in terms of providing comparable and generalisable data on LGBTQ+ homelessness prevalence and risk.

First, studies of LGBTQ+ homelessness tend to focus on specific populations, especially younger people (those aged under 25), and those in urban areas. Second, surveys focused upon homelessness experience tend to either use service-provider reports, or recruit participants through service providers, meaning that they are not capturing the experiences of those who are not currently (and who may never) have used services. Third, most do not consider the likelihood of needing to use homelessness services in the near future, and so do not offer information which might be helpful in preventing homelessness or addressing it at a very early stage. A fourth problem is that homelessness itself is not consistently defined, especially in studies where the focus is not housing and homelessness. A particular concern is of studies that ask participants to identify whether they have been homeless, without defining what is meant by homelessness. Public understanding of what constitutes homelessness does not necessarily reflect legal definitions: a study which simply asks people whether they have experienced homelessness at any point in their life, rather than asking about specific experiences, may not capture actual homelessness prevalence accurately. This means that there is a data gap around prevalence of homelessness (as recognised under UK law) among LGTBQ+ people. This is key information, needed to understand the extent of LGBTQ+ need for homelessness services, what kinds of services are needed, and who needs them.

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8   Note that no information about wording of homelessness questions is available for this study, meaning that it is not clear how homelessness has been defined.

9   Again, questions are not publicly available for this survey, meaning that it is not clear how exactly homelessness has been defined.

Plate 6 Disseminating the sruvey

Source: Photograph by Neil Turnbull

4.3 Methodology

Our online survey (n=1119) asked LGBTQ+ people who had lived in the UK about the following: lifetime and recent homelessness, risk of homelessness, where they sought help or expected to seek help if they became homeless, and what they thought would help. We also asked demographic questions including sexuality, gender identity, ethnicity, disability, age, country, and local authority. All participants indicated that they were over 18, were LGBTQ+ and were reporting experience of living in the UK.

We recruited in four ways: 1) through social media, 2) through LGBTQ+ organisations 3) LGBTQ+ community groups and 4) direct adverts placed in community locations (such as bars, clubs, bookshops, and community centres). We did not target those who had experienced homelessness, nor did we recruit through specialist homelessness organisations, or large-scale market-research companies. We also wanted to avoid introducing potential bias by resorting to typical gatekeepers, which can result in over-sampling from those in urban areas and those who are already engaged with services. Participants were recruited across the geographic extent of the UK from Shetland to the Isles of Scilly, and East Anglia to Fermanagh. Community organisations and groups were approached (identified through a desk-based search of LGBTQ+ organisations) and asked to post an invitation and link on their platforms, share emails, and flyers/posters with their members/clients/followers. Alongside this work, during the summer of 2023, we visited over 70 locations and events (specific to LGBTQ+ people and/or their allies) across England, Scotland, and Wales (including Cardiff, Edinburgh, Manchester, and London). We delivered flyers, hung posters, and asked community members to share in their networks. We documented our work on social media (Instagram).

Ethical approval for the project was obtained from the Ethics Board of the School of Education and Social Policy, Cardiff Metropolitan University.

Plate 7 LGBTQ+ safe crossings on UK streets

Source: Photograph by Edith England

4.4 Homelessness questions

We asked about homelessness at three points: before the age of 18, since becoming an adult, and within the last year. We asked about different kinds of homelessness, including rough sleeping, living in temporary accommodation, sofa surfing, living in very poor condition housing, and overcrowding. We asked about specific experiences, such as staying with family and friends, or sleeping outside, because the respondent had nowhere else to live, rather than asking questions which relied on a respondent's own perception of themselves as homeless.

We also wanted to understand who was at risk of homelessness in the near future. We explored this by asking whether respondents had recently experienced certain events associated with increased risk of homelessness. These include personal factors affecting ability to remain in their accommodation, especially unaffordability and being behind on housing payments, being asked to leave by others in the property or a landlord and having no legal right to remain in the property. We also asked participants themselves to indicate, using a five-point scale, how likely they thought it was that they would lose their home in the next year.

We asked respondents to indicate where they would go if they became homeless, and what would encourage them to seek help from their local authority if they became homeless.

The survey also included several opportunities to add free text comments. We have included a selection of these here for illustrative purposes.

Plate 8 Disseminating our survey

Source: Photograph by Neil Turnbull

4.5 Who completed our survey

1119 people completed our survey between July 2022 and January 2024.

Gender identity

We asked people their gender, with an option to self-describe. Gender categories were not exclusive (people could tick more than one box). About a third identified as women and about a third as men (each 34%). Around a fifth identified as non-binary and/or agender (21%). A small number (<1%) identified as having a different gender (including agender, genderqueer, genderpunk, and demiguy). These figures are comparable to the 2021 Census in terms of gender identity where, of those who identified themselves as non-binary, or as trans men or trans women, trans men and trans women each accounted for 38% of respondents, and non-binary people 24% (Roskams, 2023a).

Sexuality

We asked participants about their sexuality in two ways: using pre-defined categories, and self-describing using a text box. Participants were able to select as many categories as they wanted and able to self-describe and select categories. The most common single category was 'lesbian or gay', accounting for half (50%) of responses. Just over a quarter (26%) identified themselves as bi or pansexual. A quarter (25%) identified themselves as 'queer'. Less than one in ten (8%) identified as 'asexual'. Numbers identifying 'in another way' and 'heterosexual' were both less than 5%. A number identifying themselves as 'asexual' also identified themselves as 'aromantic', 'demisexual' or 'aromantic' in the free text box. The main overlapping categories were 'bi/pansexual' and 'queer', although the categories of 'lesbian or gay' and 'bi or pansexual' also overlapped somewhat. In the 2021 Census, 3.2% of those in England and Wales aged 16 or over identified as 'Gay or Lesbian', 'Bisexual' or 'Other sexual orientation' (Roskams 2023b), although, as discussed previously, there is some evidence that those who are experiencing homelessness may be less likely to answer this question. In the Census, 1.54% of those in England and Wales identified themselves as 'Gay or Lesbian' and 1.38 as either 'Bisexual' or 'Pansexual'. This suggests that we may have underrecruited somewhat from bi and pansexual populations.

4.5   Who completed our survey (cont.)

Ethnicity

We used multi-stage questions to understand participants ethnic identity. Mirroring the structure of ethnicity questions in the census, participants were able to choose from multiple categories and a free text box (UK Government, 2022). Although White participants were in a substantial majority (77%) numbers of respondents from other ethnic groups were also represented at rates greater than in the general population, with 5% of respondents identifying as having mixed or multiple ethnic identities. 3% identified as Asian or Asian British, and 2% as each of Black/ Black British/ African/ Caribbean. Nearly a sixth (14%) identified themselves as Other. This is fairly similar to the 2021 England and Wales Census figures, in which 81.7% of the population is white, 9.3% Asian, 4% Black, 2.9% Mixed and 2.1% Other (UK Government, 2022).

Disability

Equality Act 2010 defines disability as having a 'physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative impact on your ability to do normal daily activities'. (Equality Act 2010, Section 6). Nearly a quarter (23%) of the English and Welsh population is disabled (Waddington, 2023). Overall, among those taking part in the study, rates of disability were lower than the UK average at 17%. However, among trans, non-binary and agender respondents, it was much higher than the UK average, with over two fifths (42%) reporting being disabled.

Location

Nearly two thirds (59%) of respondents lived in England, a quarter (26%) in Wales, one in ten (13%) in Scotland and 2% in Northern Ireland.

Age

The age of respondents ranged from 18 to 81. The average age for respondents was 31.

People living in a household with children

8% of respondents were part of a household that included children aged under 16 years old, or under 19 and in full time non-tertiary education.

47%
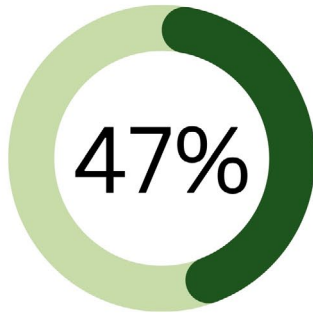
Nearly half of LGBTQ+ people have been homeless since the age of 16 (defined as experiencing at least one of the following - rough sleeping, sofa surfing, staying in temporary accommodation (e.g., a homeless hostel) and/or experiencing domestic abuse.

■ Prevalence of homeless experiences since age 16 (% of total).

Category	Value
Temporary accommodation	16
Domestic abuse	26
Sofa surfing	33

0 5 10 15 20 25 30 35
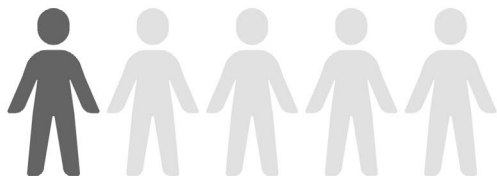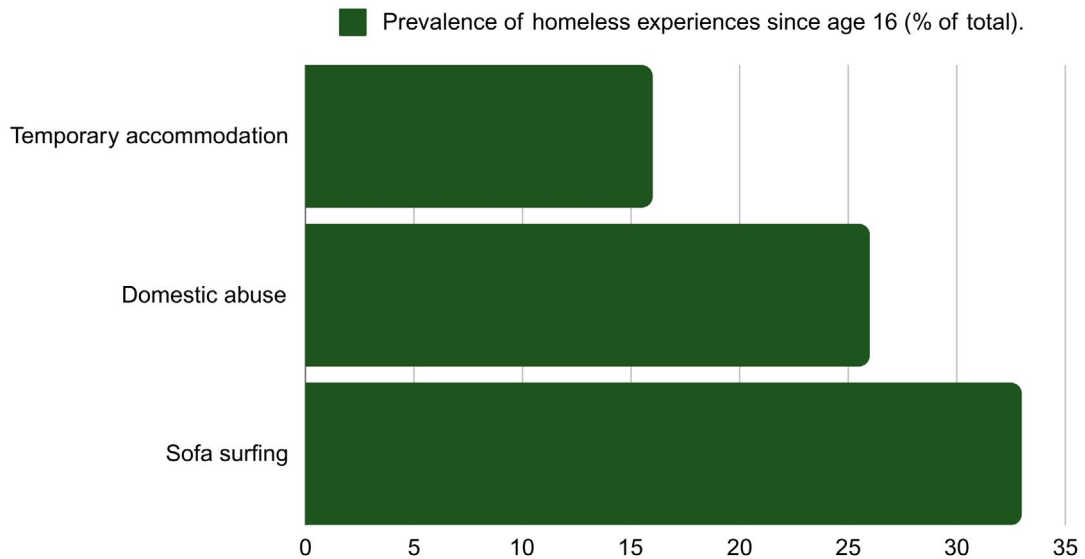
1 in 5 LGBTQ+ people have experienced at least one form of homelessness in the last year.

5.0 Findings and discussion

5.1 Experiences of homelessness

"Queer folks are at a lot higher risk of being made homeless and it isn't accounted for in the way the official government services handle and process queer homeless people."

Experiences of homelessness overall were high. Nearly half (47%) had had an experience of rough sleeping, sofa surfing, temporary accommodation and/or domestic abuse in their adult lives. A fifth (20%) had experienced at least one form of homelessness in the last year. The most common single experience of homelessness was sofa surfing, which a third (33%) had experienced during their lives, with nearly one in ten (9%) in the last year.

"I moved here to live with a friend and their landlord doesn't want me here so there's nothing I can do."

There has been a recent trend toward specific provision of LGBTQ+ homelessness services and accommodation, as a way to reduce the risk of violence and discrimination and prevent minority stress (Mottet and Ohle, 2006; Pyne, 2011; Willse, 2015; England, 2022a). For example, the Welsh Ty Pride project offers homeless LGBTQ+ youth temporary accommodation, while the Albert Kennedy Trust, a long-established youth LGBTQ+ homelessness provider (Albert Kennedy Trust, 2018), offers a range of support. London-based The Outside Project supports homeless LGBTQ+ adults. These services do have limitations, including being geographically specific (usually centred in large urban areas) (England, 2021; Matthews et al., 2019), and mostly targeted at those under 25. Further, services may not be well set up to address the intersectional needs of homeless LGBTQ+ people – for instance, those who are disabled, from minority ethnic groups, and/or trans, non-binary and/or agender.

26%

Over a quarter of LGBTQ+ people have experienced domestic abuse during their lifetimes.

12%
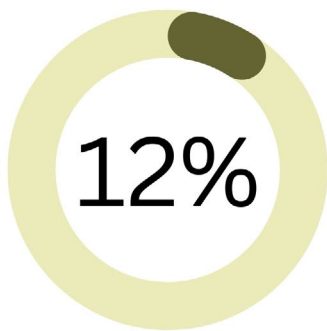
An eighth have lived in housing in such poor condition as to pose a danger to mental or physical health.

5.1 Experiences of homelessness (cont.)

We found that 4% of LGBTQ+ individuals reported having spent time in temporary accommodation, including bed & breakfast and hostel accommodation, in the last year.

> *"I have felt unsafe in some situations and just kept going on with it as I thought it was normal."*

Rates of domestic abuse were also high. Over a quarter (26%) had experienced domestic abuse during their lifetimes, and nearly a twelfth (7%) reported experiences of domestic abuse within the last year.

A sixth (16%) had been in temporary accommodation, including 4% in the last year. There was evidence of poor housing quality to the extent that it constituted homelessness, with an eighth (12%) having lived (or still living) in housing which was in such a poor condition that it posed a danger to their mental or physical health. For some, this included specific homophobia or transphobia:

> *"The abuse I faced within the last 12 months was from a flatmate I was in a contract with. It caused me to frequently, but not permanently stay with friends and family to escape the house. It involved homophobic abuse..."*

One in twenty-five (4%) had experienced, or were still experiencing, severe overcrowding. Others reported that although not currently experiencing abuse or discrimination, this was conditional upon them concealing, or suppressing, their identity.

> *"Though my housing is technically safe I am forced to be closeted whilst I live here, and I have been unable to attain financial means to leave."*

One in fifty (2%) had slept outside (not as part of a planned holiday) in the last year.

22%
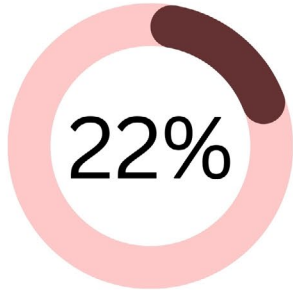
Over a fifth of LGBTQ+ people are at risk of homelessness in the near future.

Risk factors for homelessness among LGBTQ+ people

Asked to leave accommodation					
Behind on rent					
Domestic abuse					
Unable to afford housing costs					

0   2   4   6   8   10
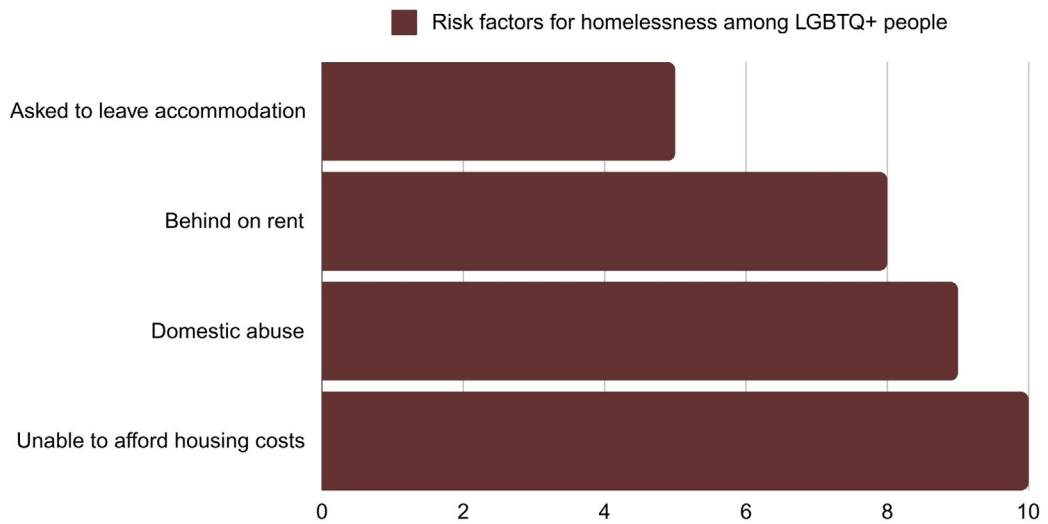
1 in 10 LGBTQ+ people said that they felt that they were likely or very likely to lose their accommodation in the next 12 months.

5.2   Risk factors for homelessness

Over a fifth (22%) also had at least one risk factor for homelessness in the near future. The biggest single risk was unaffordability: a tenth had been unable to afford somewhere to live in the last twelve months and nearly one in twelve (8%) had been behind on housing payments in the last twelve months. Nearly a tenth (9%) saw it as likely or very likely that they would lose their home in the next year (See Figure 5).

Currently I've had to leave my last place to temporarily stay with family and finding a place has been difficult. The current housing crisis in Britain makes it hellish to find another place and due to the decisions to support my ex I'm having to rebuild finances that I lost.
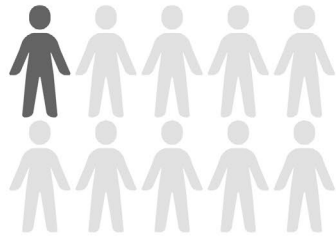
A tenth of LGBTQ+ people have approached their local authority for help after becoming homeless
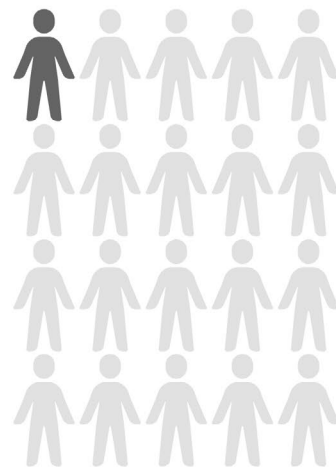
One in twenty LGBTQ+ people approached their local authority for help connected to homelessness within the last year

29%
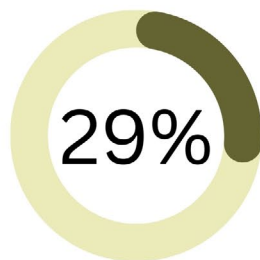
Less than a third said they would approach their local authority homelessness department if they became homeless.

68%
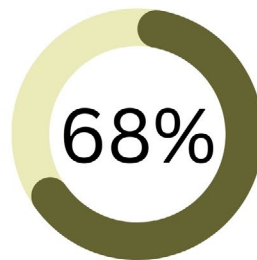
Over two-thirds said they would approach family and friends

5.3   Where do LGBTQ+ people seek help if they become homeless?

Two thirds of participants said that, if they became homeless, they would rely on family and friends (68%).

> *"I think queer people often rely on their chosen families to help support and navigate them through these systems."*

Around a third said they would seek help from the Local Authority (30%), and around a fifth would seek help from a specialist LGBTQ+ homelessness services. A tenth (13%) would go to a different specialist housing or homelessness service.

> *"The bureaucracy is intimidating, and the services try anything to say you're "intentionally homeless" and deny help when you aren't."*

When asked what might encourage LGBTQ+ people to use services, respondents overall saw better knowledge of the service (for instance, how to make an application) as a priority.

> *"I had no idea a 'homelessness application' existed and I don't know what it does."*

Knowing other LGBTQ+ people had had a good experience was also very important:

> *"I'd rely mostly on other queer people's reviews. Giving training and putting up posters, while helpful, doesn't mean staff will actually follow through on anything..."*

72%
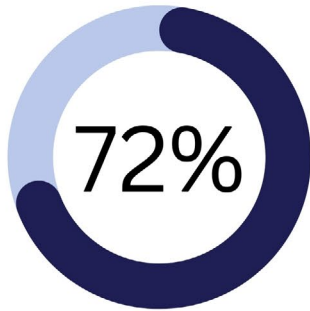
Nearly three-quarters saw it as important that other LGBTQ+ people had had good experiences of the services, when deciding whether to approach their local authority.

72%
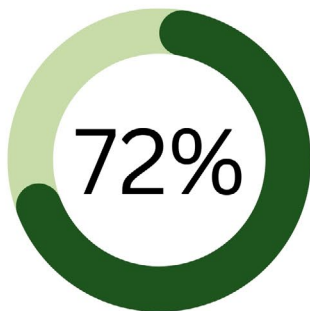
Nearly three-quarters saw better knowledge of how to make a homelessness application as important.

68%
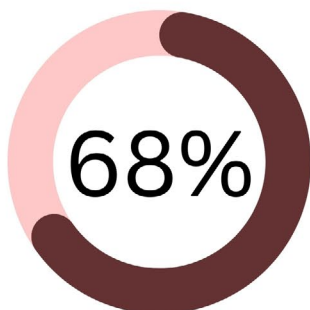
Just over two thirds saw staff training in LGBTQ+ awareness as important in deciding whether to approach their local authority.

They also saw having knowledgeable staff and specialist accommodation as useful. Some respondents did point out that specialist accommodation might not always been accepting or inclusive of all LGBTQ+ people and identities. For instance, a bisexual respondent raised a concern that although they themselves might well be supported, their partners might not be[1]:

> *Specialist LGBT housing might be exclusive of straight partners of bi, pan and poly individuals. If this were on offer, bisexuals (umbrella term) would need to be allowed to have their partners included in this but with the balance caveat of protections against homophobia and transphobia from 'straight' partners in this sort of category.*

Another, who had children, found the specialist service 'fluffy and flighty and didn't actually do anything at all to help.' in contrast to a domestic abuse charity who she found to be more effective.

Respondents also suggested ways in which Local Authorities might increase 'LGBTQ+ friendly' housing stock, which, in turn, could reduce homelessness by making it easier for LGBTQ+ people to find accommodation.

> *Working with private renters and platforms like spare room to make the private rental space ...more explicitly LGBTQ friendly.*

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1   For the purposes of this report, we have not separately reported on bisexual/pansexual individuals as a subgroup because their experiences appeared to be better explained by their gender identity than their sexual identity. Prevalence and patterning of findings was very similar for bi/pan cis people compared to lesbian and gay cis people, and for bi/pan trans, non-binary and agender people, compared to lesbian and gay trans, non-binary and agender people. High rates of trans, non-binary and agender gender identities among bi and pan populations may, therefore, explain high rates of adverse experiences, for instance mental ill health (Siconolfi et al., 2020).
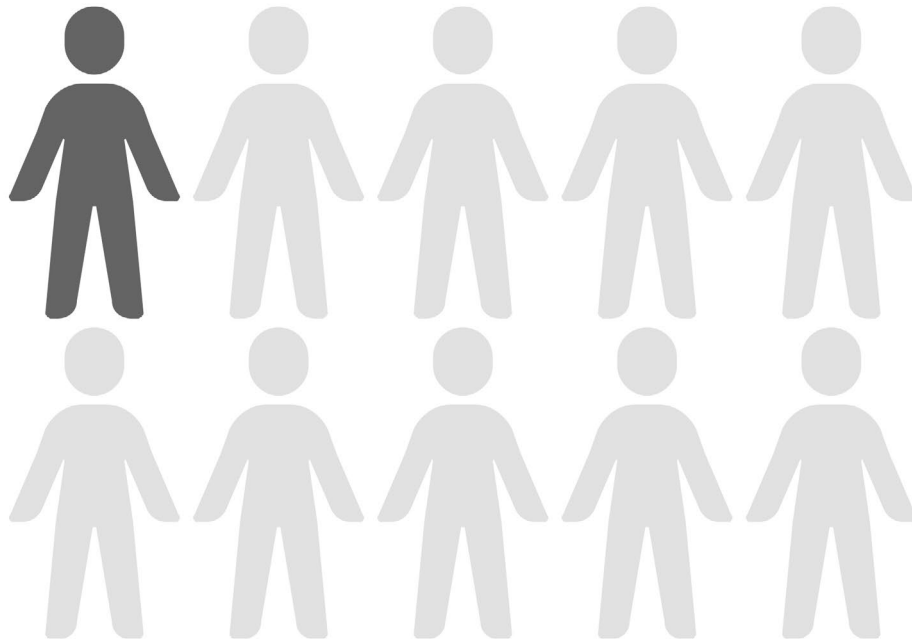
Just over a tenth had been
homeless before age 18
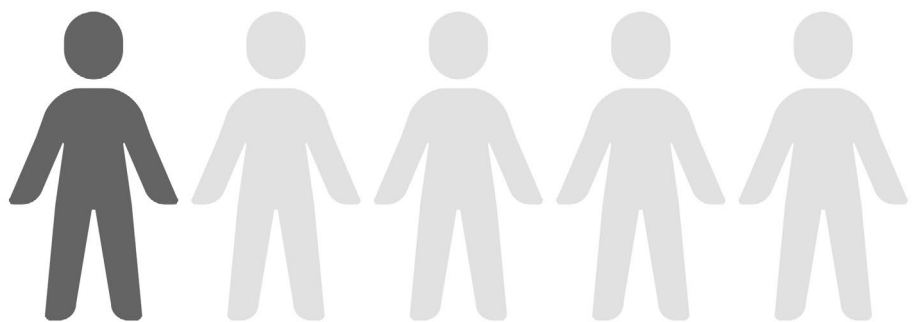
A fifth of trans participants had been
homeless before age 18

5.4 Experiences of homelessness among different LGBTQ+ groups

Specific groups

LGBTQ+ people are a diverse population. There has been an increasing recognition of the importance of intersectionality in understanding the different experiences in the population. This includes those who have experienced early homelessness, trans, non-binary and agender people, and those under 25.

Those who had experienced homeless before age 18

Just over one in ten participants became homeless before the age of 18, rising to nearly a fifth of those who are trans, non-binary and/or agender. Nearly one in twenty had been in care, including 7% of trans people. For over two thirds (63%) this was a result of violence and/or abuse in the home and for two fifths (43%) it was related to lack of acceptance of their gender and/or sexuality.

Recent homelessness among this group was especially high. Over two fifths (43%) had had one or more experiences of recent homelessness. Experiences of rough sleeping were high: four times as high as the average for LGBTQ+ people (8%) in the last year. Over three quarters (79%) had sofa surfed in their adult life, including over a fifth (21%) in the last year. They were also nearly three times the risk of domestic abuse, with a fifth (23%) having recent experience of this. Nearly two fifths (41%) had at least one risk factor for homelessness in the near future, primarily unaffordability (22%) and the threat of being asked to leave accommodation (21%). Nearly a quarter (23%) expected to lose their home in the next year. This group were much more likely than average to go to their Local Authority if they became homeless (54%), and to have made a homelessness application in the last year (10%).
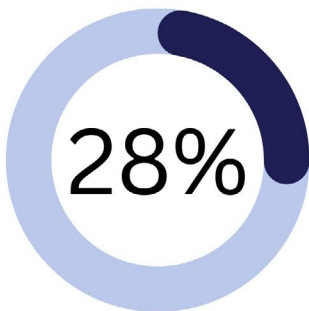
"...I have come from living on the streets as a homeless young person..."

"There needs to be more funding for... work[ing] with young people."
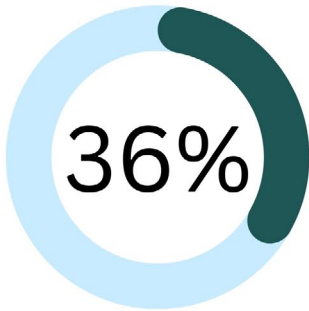
36% Just over a third of those under twenty-five were at risk of homelessness in the near future.

28% Nearly a third of those under twenty-five said they would contact their local authority if they became homeless.

**83%** Over four-fifths of those under twenty-five said they would seek help from family and friends.

Under 25

One in ten people aged 18-25 is believed to have experienced homelessness (Morton, Dworsky and Samuels, 2017). Existing work on LGBTQ+ homelessness has, historically, disproportionately focused on this age group (McCarthy and Parr, 2022). There is some evidence that, at this age, LGBTQ+ people are more likely to experience homelessness than non-LGBTQ+ peers (Corliss et al., 2011; Durso and Gates, 2012; Rice et al., 2013, 2021), and that LGBTQ+ youth may be over-represented in the youth homelessness population (Gattis, 2013; Albert Kennedy Trust, 2018).
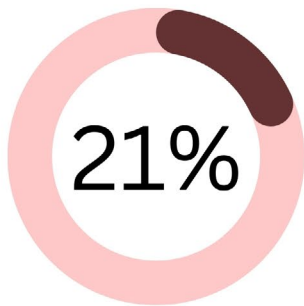
Those under 25 were slightly more likely to have experienced homeless in the last year: a quarter (23%) had experienced at least one form of homelessness. They were especially likely to report recent domestic abuse (16%), followed by sofa surfing and stays in temporary accommodation. They also reported much higher rates of poor-quality accommodation than most other groups.

This group were also more likely than average to have risk factors for homelessness in the near future: just over a third (36%) had one or more risk factor. They were especially reluctant to visit their Local Authority if they became homeless with less that a third (28%) willing to do so, with higher-than-average rates reporting that they would seek help from friends and family (83%). They were more likely than average to have made a recent homelessness application: one in ten had done so (about twice the average).
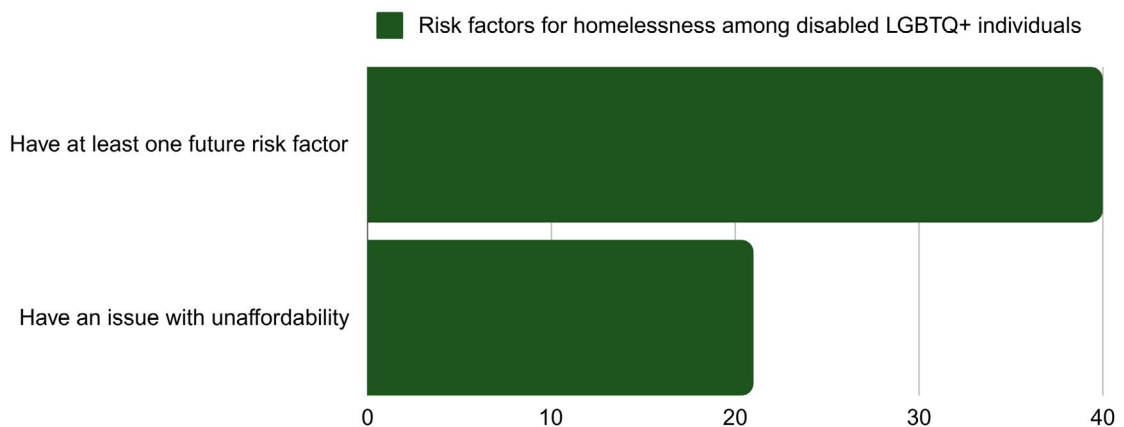
> *"I think young queer people need to know that there are options out there for them because it is a lot harder being a queer person and being homeless."*

47%
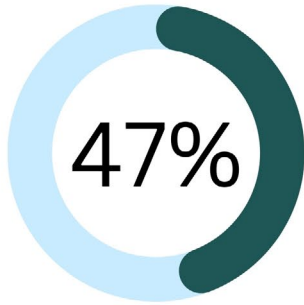
Nearly of disabled respondents had been homeless in the last year.

21%

A fifth of disabled respondents reported sofa surfing in the last year.

■ Risk factors for homelessness among disabled LGBTQ+ individuals

Have at least one future risk factor

Have an issue with unaffordability

| 0 | 10 | 20 | 30 | 40 |

Disabled

The Equality Act 2010 defines disability as having 'a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities.' There is a recognised, but underexplored, correlation between homelessness and disability (Beer et al., 2019; England et al., 2022). Disabled people are especially likely to face barriers to securing good quality, sustainable housing, and are much less likely to own their own homes (Putz, 2019).

One in six (17%) participants identified themselves as disabled under the Equality Act 2010. This group reported especially high rates of recent homelessness: two fifths (43%) had been homeless in the last year – this is double the LGBTQ+ average. A fifth (21%) had sofa surfed in the last year – over twice the LGBTQ+ average.

Both overcrowding and poor conditions were very high in this group. Nearly a third had experienced very poor conditions, and nearly one in ten had experienced overcrowding, in the last year. One respondent explained, finding suitable accommodation was hard:

> *"My disabilities have a much bigger impact on my ability to find housing than my LGBTQ+ status."*

Two fifths had at least once risk factor for homelessness in the near future (compared to a fifth of LGBTQ+ respondents). Unaffordability was an issue for a fifth (21%), with over a tenth having been behind on rent.

> *"The prospect of going into Residential Care fills me with dread, knowing how little diversity awareness is usually present… I am concerned by being affected by multiple issues e.g. being an older person, differently abled AND LGBTQ+."*

35%
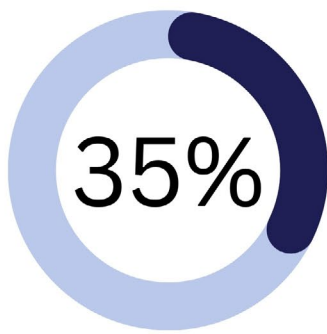
Over a third of respondents from minority ethnic groups had been homeless in the last year.
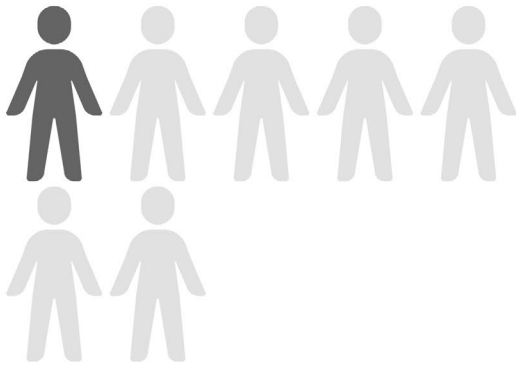
1 in 7 people respondents from minority ethnic groups had had to sofa surf in the last year.

Disabled (cont.)

However, willingness to engage with the Local Authority was relatively high compared to other groups, at half (48%) compared to under a third of the general LGBTQ+ population. One in ten had made a homelessness application in the last year – twice the LGBTQ+ average), despite worry about services being inclusive and accessible:
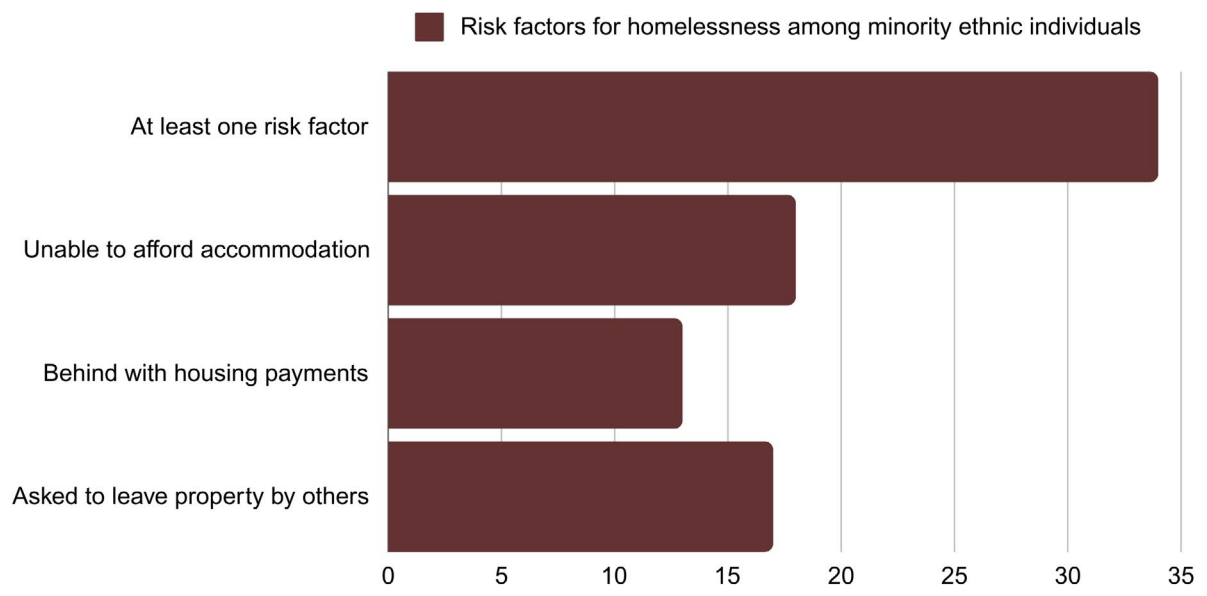
"[I] often worry about homelessness services not being disability inclusive, especially to neurodivergent folk. Hostels seem to be really unaccommodating of neurodivergent needs."

Minority ethnic groups

Homelessness among minority ethnic people is high internationally compared to other groups, (Bramley et al., 2022; Fowle, 2022). Minority ethnic people face specific obstacles in securing safe and affordable housing, including overt and indirect discrimination by landlords and letting agencies, social renting practices including access to public funds for migrants (Netto, 2006).

Those from minority ethnic groups reported relatively high rates of homelessness. Over a third (35%) had been homeless in the last year – nearly twice the LGBTQ+ average. One in seven (15%) had had to sofa surf. They were twice as likely to have experienced rough sleeping (4%) compared to the LGBTQ+ average.

A third (34%) of those from minority ethnic groups had at least one risk factor for homelessness – again, above the average. Unaffordability was a particular issue, with nearly a fifth (18%) having been unable to afford somewhere to live in the last year (around twice the average), and over a tenth (13%) having been behind with housing payments. Over twice as many as average (17%) had been asked to leave their property by others who lived there, and/or a landlord. Participants highlighted how poverty and exclusion, combined with requirements within the private rented sector, could make it difficult to resolve homelessness. For instance, the common requirement that those on lower incomes have a guarantor was mentioned by several minority ethnic respondents as creating a particular barrier for them.

Risk factors for homelessness among minority ethnic individuals

At least one risk factor	
Unable to afford accommodation	
Behind with housing payments	
Asked to leave property by others	

0   5   10   15   20   25   30   35

Minority ethnic groups (cont.)

"Not having UK based guarantors has been the biggest challenge to secure a place. There are people who have family here but are estranged from them due to their queer identities. More services should be made available for these individuals in providing them with guarantors."

Respondents also mentioned language barriers as a issue which could affect awareness of support and willingness to interact with services.

*"Language and cultural barriers prevent a lot of people seeking help."*

This highlights the importance of ensuring that LGBTQ+ inclusive support and resources are available in languages which reflect those used by service users.

"Imagine you get kicked out by a partner, Where do you go? Especially if English is not you're first language. It increases risk of exploitation."

Trans, non-binary and agender

Just under a third (30%) of those who responded identified themselves on the survey as trans, non-binary and/or agender. Trans, non-binary and agender individuals are believed to be at elevated risk of homelessness, as a result of poverty, employment and housing discrimination, higher rates of physical and mental ill-health, and barriers to accessing healthcare (England, 2021, 2022a, 2024). This was reflected in this study, with over a third of trans, non-binary and agender individuals reporting at least one form of homelessness in the last year – nearly twice the LGBTQ+ average.
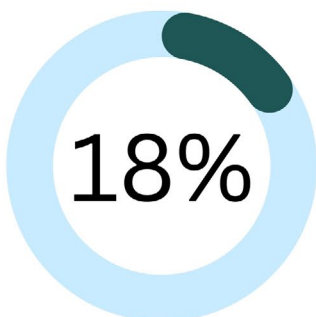
"It is especially difficult to find housemates if you are trans, which can affect housing options."
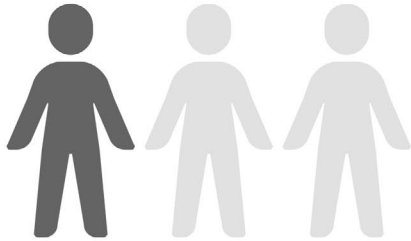
Over a third of trans, non-binary and agender individuals reported at least one form of homelessness in the last year (nearly twice the LGBTQ+ average).

41%

two fifths of trans, non-binary and/or agender individuals had experienced domestic abuse.

18%

A sixth of trans, non-binary and/or agender individuals had recent experience of sofa surfing or staying temporarily with friends or family.

Trans, non-binary and agender (cont.)

They reported much higher rates of all forms of homelessness in the last year. Rates of lifetime domestic abuse were high with two fifths (41%) reporting this as at least one reason for homelessness. A sixth (18%) had had to sofa surf or stay temporarily with friends or family in the last year, rising to nearly half (46%) during their lifetimes:
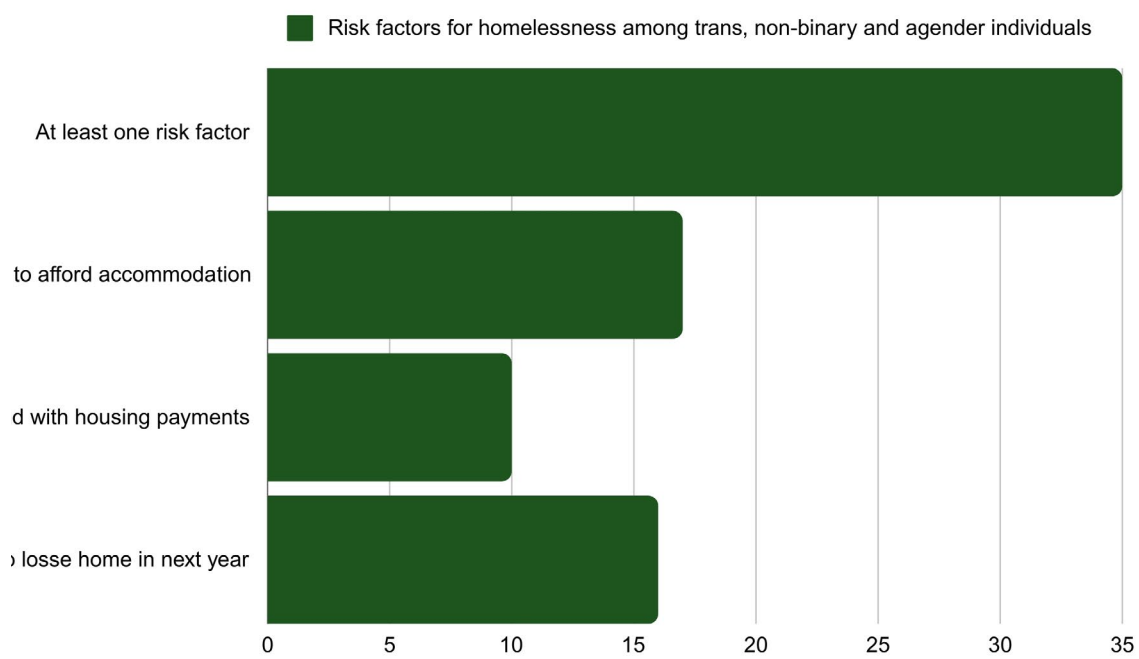
> *"I'm fearful now for the winter, my friends let me stay at theirs, but no telling they could want me to leave, their landlord can be tricky."*

Nearly two-fifths reported (35%) at least one risk factor for homelessness. Unaffordability was especially prevalent: nearly a fifth (17%) had been unable to afford somewhere to live in the last year and a tenth were behind on housing payments:

> *"The driving factors between my homelessness and financial difficulty have been that I am trans. [There are] discriminatory practices regarding the hiring and treatment of trans people leads to unstable income and employment making it extremely difficult to find stable work and housing."*

One in six (16%) of all trans, non-binary and agender people surveyed expected to lose their home in the next year. They were especially likely to seek help from friends and family (80%). Less than two fifths (38%) said that they would visit their Local Authority for help with homelessness.

Knowing that staff had had training on trans inclusion was important in trans people being more likely to seek help from local authorities. They also valued being asked their pronouns, services advertising themselves as trans inclusive, availability of specialist accommodation, and having specialist staff.

Risk factors for homelessness among trans, non-binary and agender individuals

At least one risk factor — 35

to afford accommodation — 17

d with housing payments — 10

o losse home in next year — 16

Trans, non-binary and agender (cont.)

> "*I was fortunate that Women's Aid were great with me being nonbinary but not knowing how I'll be received, whether they'll accept my pronouns makes me reluctant to talk to someone new.*

In free text comments, we also found strong community support from those who were not trans, non-binary or agender, for provision which was inclusive of trans, non-binary and agender people.

> "*I am not myself trans but trans people are under our umbrella and if staff need training to treat them with dignity and respect they should have it.*"

Those who were not trans, non-binary or agender also pointed out that, from a practical perspective, exclusionary services could affect them when members of their household were trans.

> "*I am not trans myself but my daughter is so it is important to me. If we needed help I would need to know services would be safe for her.*"

6.0 Conclusions & recommendations

*"I was *so* lucky with that the homelessness services I used gave a s*** and really tried to help the small queer human that presented to them. I wouldn't still be here otherwise."*

Our research represents the largest and most comprehensive exploration of LGBTQ+ homelessness in the UK, with 1119 participants across all age groups, and including a broad mix of genders, sexualities, ethnicities, and locations. Prevalence of both experience of homelessness, and risk of homelessness in the near future, are high among LGBTQ+ people, with a fifth of LGBTQ+ people having experienced one or more of rough sleeping, sofa surfing, temporary accommodation and/or domestic abuse within the last year. It is also clear that some groups are at especially high risk, especially trans, non-binary and agender people and those who experienced homelessness before the age of 18.

There was also evidence that the LGBTQ+ population as a whole is not engaging with homelessness services. Less than one in twenty-five had made a homelessness application in the last year, and less than a third reported that they would approach their local authority if they became homeless.

We were able to identify some strategies which might make homeless LGBTQ+ people more likely to approach local authorities. In-community reputation – knowing that other LGBTQ+ people had had good experiences of the service – was rated by every group as the single most important factor in encouraging them to approach the local authority. Also, nearly as important as reputation was information about how to make an application. Combined with both comments in the open text boxes, and our previous work (England, 2021, 2024), we believe that it is likely that understanding both the entitlement to assistance, and how to access that assistance among LGBTQ+ people is low.

In terms of specific services, participants were most likely to feel that knowing that staff had had training on LGBTQ+ inclusion, and dedicated LGBTQ+ specific services would

make a difference. There was an age-based split in terms of whether specialist LGBTQ+ homelessness accommodation (like Ty Pride in North Wales, or the services provided by the Albert Kennedy Trust) would be helpful. Those who were under 25 at the time of completing the survey, and those who had experienced homelessness before the age of 18, were the groups most likely to feel that specialist accommodation would be helpful. This may reflect the fact that these services tend to focus upon this age range. However, it may also reflect different needs across the lifespan: for those over the age of 25, on-site accommodation-based support may be less accessible, due to wider life factors.

Most of those surveyed did also see overt 'signalling' of LGBTQ+ and/or trans inclusion as helpful, and we do not suggest that these measures should be abandoned, but rather than they be included in wider attempts to improve engagement from LGBTQ+ people.

Based on these findings, we make four recommendations.

1.   Further exploration to identify LGBTQ+ specific causal factors of homelessness.

Our survey suggests that LGBTQ+ people are at high risk of all forms of homelessness. Homelessness is often associated with social and economic marginalisation. The last three decades have seen considerable attempts, at a legal and policy level, to address both social and economic exclusion among LGBTQ+ people, and to prevent discrimination and hate crime (for instance through the Equality Act 2010 and the Crime and Disorder Act 1998). We suggest that there is a need for a population-wide exploration of causal factors for LGBTQ+ homeless, with especial emphasis on the cumulative impact across the lifespan.

2.   Produce guidelines for local authorities and allied services to improve uptake and engagement among homeless LGBTQ+ people.

There is evidence, both in this study and previous work (Tai Pawb;Turnbull, 2023; England, 2024) of low rates of engagement with local authority homelessness departments. Even where LGBTQ+ people do engage, it is likely that they are also at higher than average risk of disengagement (England, 2021). This was consistent across all England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, despite some regional differences in homelessness law between them (Carr et al., 2022). We recommend that clear and consistent guidelines, developed collaboratively with the LGBTQ+ community, are produced to help local authorities better understand and address the needs of LGBTQ+ people and reduce disengagement.

3. **Explore introducing a requirement to fund LGBTQ+ specific homelessness prevention and relief services.**

At present, there is no requirement that LGBTQ+ homelessness services are provided at all, or if they are, that they are adequately funded. Our research suggests that targeted interventions are needed. As a first step, we suggest that further work is needed to 1) identify which services and provision would be most helpful, for which groups 2) identify which services already exist, how they are funded, and whether they are receiving referrals from homelessness departments.

4. **Explore how to improve administrative data collection methods into order to reflect prevalence of LGBTQ+ identity, to provide a clearer picture of LGBTQ+ homelessness compared to the general population.**

At present, data collection around LGBTQ+ identity among those making homelessness applications is limited, and restricted mainly to those whose homelessness relates to discrimination or hate crime based upon gender identity or sexuality. More accurate data collection would allow evaluation of how well efforts to address LGBTQ+ homelessness are working, as well as understanding experiences of LGBTQ+ people directly compared to others experiencing homelessness.

Data collection around sexuality and gender identity poses specific challenges, including establishing sufficient trust for disclosure, and data protection concerns. However, it is critical to ongoing evaluation of attempts to address LGBTQ+ homelessness. As a first step, we suggest consultation with the LGBTQ+ community to explore how data might be accurately and sensitively collected.

Plate 9 Thank you!

7.0 Acknowledgements & further support

A huge thank you to all our survey respondents. We are very grateful for your time, and recognise the emotional labour involved in sharing your all too often difficult experiences. We hope that this data helps to provide the evidence to work towards and make real positive change.

Thank you to the many many people, groups, and organisations – both online and in-person – throughout the UK who helped us reach out to so many people. This includes over 130 community groups on social media and social networking services, over 80 by email and post, and over 70 LGBTQ+ (and allies) spaces such as community venues, businesses, archives, museums, and charities. Your support, and encouragement has made this possible, taught us more about why this is needed, and motivates our ongoing research.

Finally, to our families, thank you. Your constant support in so many ways has made this possible.

Queer love and solidarity, Neil & Edith.

Please note if you are having current housing issues there are organisations who can help and/or point you in the right direction:

LGBT+ SWITCHBOARD HELPLINE **https://switchboard.lgbt**
GALOP **https://galop.org.u**

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