



FEANTSA



# INTERSECTIONS

DIVING INTO THE  
FRA LGBTI II  
SURVEY DATA

HOMELESSNESS  
BRIEFING

Prepared By :

Aisling Reidy  
Advocacy Officer, ILGA-Europe

Sergio Pérez Barranco  
Youth & LGBTIQ+ Policy Officer, FEANTSA



Co-funded by  
the European Union

*Intersectional analysis from findings of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) 2nd LGBTI survey on LGBTI people in the EU and North Macedonia and Serbia (2019)*

# Introduction

In 2019, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) conducted the second round of the LGBTI Survey on the experiences of LGBTI people across Europe [1]. This briefing, and other briefings in the Intersections series [2], analyses the results of the FRA LGBTI Survey II and summarises the relevant data about experiences of homelessness among the LGBTI community.

The survey asked about experiences of housing difficulties, therefore the results do not show how many people are currently experiencing homelessness but rather the number of LGBTI people who have faced housing difficulties at any point across their lifetime. Housing difficulties “refers to any point in a person’s life at which they had no place of their own (either owned or rented) where they could live and therefore were forced to stay with friends/family, stay in emergency or other temporary accommodation, a place not intended as a permanent home or had to sleep in a public space”. [3] This falls under the most widely used definitions of homelessness [4], however people who have spent periods of time couchsurfing or living in insecure housing are often reluctant to recognise those experiences as being homeless, therefore other terms which carry less stigma such as ‘housing difficulty’ can be useful in this kind of research [5]. In this briefing the terms experiencing ‘homelessness’ and ‘housing difficulty’ will be used interchangeably.

It should also be noted that as this survey was conducted online and many people facing housing difficulties have less access to the internet, it is likely that the numbers here are under-representative of the reality.

LGBTI people are particularly at risk of homelessness, making up an estimated 20-40% of the homeless population [6]. Family rejection, higher instances of poverty, lack of institutional and community support, and discrimination from landlords and employers all contribute to this increased vulnerability. However, LGBTI people are often invisible in conversations on addressing homelessness. Sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics are often not registered by services, and from research we know that many LGBTI people don’t access relevant services out of fear of discrimination and violence. Many policies tackling homelessness don’t address the specific situation of LGBTI people despite being a known contributing factor, especially for younger people.

[ FRA (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights) (2020), *A long way to go for LGBTI equality*, Luxembourg, Publications Office. Available at: <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2020/eu-lgbti-survey-results>

2. Available from: <https://www.ilga-europe.org/report/fra-lgbti-report-2019-intersections/>

3. Eurostat. *Material deprivation, well-being and housing difficulties*. 2018. European Commission. Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/1012329/8706724/2018+EU-SILC+module\\_assessment.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/1012329/8706724/2018+EU-SILC+module_assessment.pdf)

4. *FEANTSA Ethos*

5. Quilty A. & Norris M. *A Qualitative Study of LGBTQI+ Youth Homelessness in Ireland*. 2019. Focus Ireland. Available at: [https://www.focusireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/LGBTQI-Youth-Homelessness-Report\\_FINAL-VERSION.pdf](https://www.focusireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/LGBTQI-Youth-Homelessness-Report_FINAL-VERSION.pdf)

6. Fraser B, Pierse N, Chisholm E, Cook H. *LGBTIQ+ Homelessness: A Review of the Literature*. *Int J Environ Res Public Health*. 2019, 16(15). Available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6695950/>

This has slowly begun to change, for example with the establishment of LGBTI-specific homeless services in Belgium, Italy and Slovenia, and growing research into homelessness among the LGBTI community [7]. What this research has shown is that sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics shape LGBTI people's experiences of homelessness, their needs and therefore their pathways towards secure housing. Targeted policy solutions and services are needed to address these factors and challenge the high rates of homelessness among the community. This briefing attempts to provide an overview of the risk factors and profile of LGBTI people with experiences of homelessness.

The methodology and background information on the survey are available in Annex 1. The full disaggregated data analysis is available in table form [at this link](#). For this report, data were drawn both from the disaggregation file and from the FRA LGBTI Survey II data explorer [8].

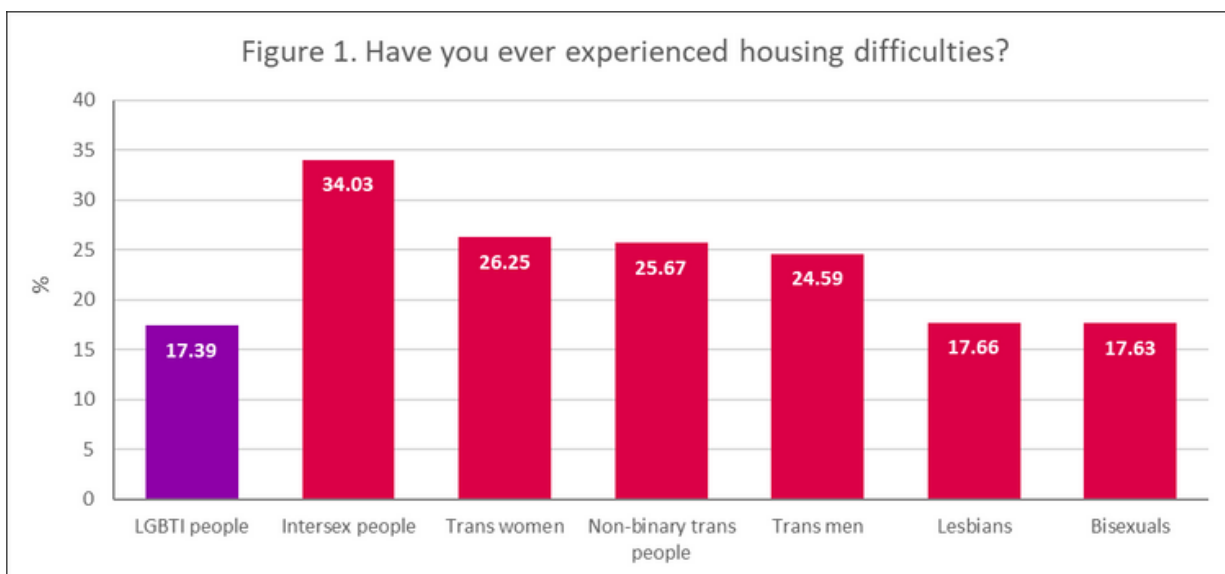
## Recommendations

**Based on this analysis, ILGA-Europe and FEANTSA recommend that states and institutions:**

- Collect high quality disaggregable data on LGBTI homelessness, its causes and solutions.
- Work with homeless service providers and LGBTI organisations to raise awareness and increase the accessibility and inclusivity of services.
- Include LGBTI people and specifically the most affected parts of the community as target groups when designing, implementing and evaluating policies to tackle homelessness and housing poverty.
- Include housing difficulty and homelessness in policies addressing LGBTIQ+ equality.
- Focus on prevention and raise awareness of LGBTI resources, information centres, and employment supports, given that unemployment and financial reasons are the most frequent cause of homelessness cited by LGBTI people.
- LGBTI groups should be explicitly acknowledged in national strategies to end homelessness by 2030, in order to meet the goals of the Lisbon Declaration.

# Results and Discussion

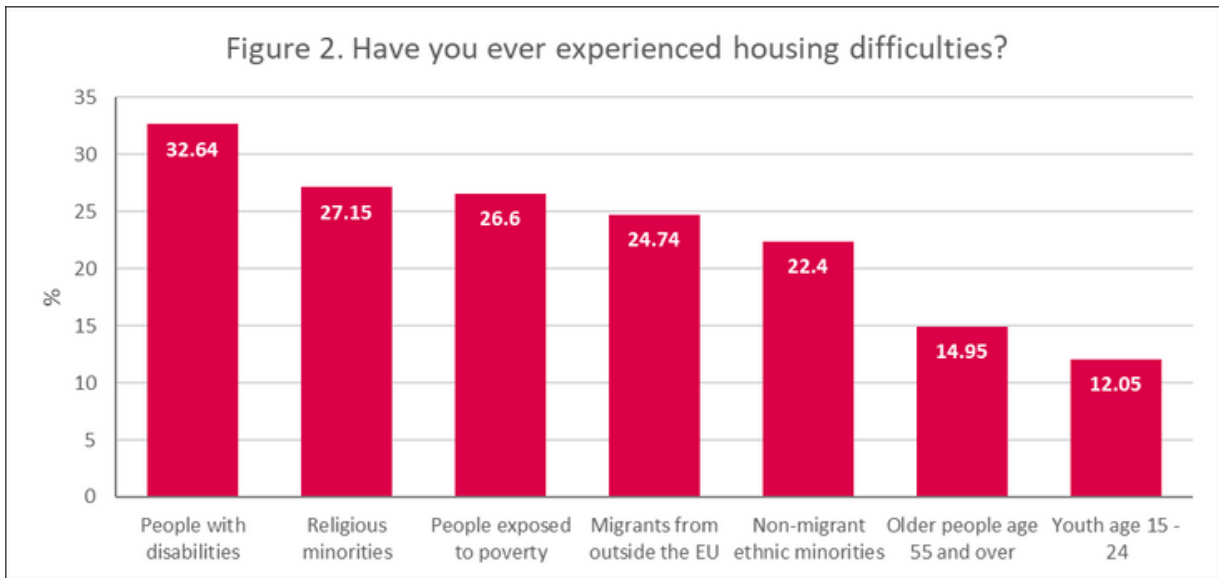
17.39% of LGBTI people surveyed had experienced housing difficulties during their lifetimes, almost 1 in 5 (figure 1). Among LGBTI people, trans and intersex people were the most likely to have faced housing difficulties. A third of all intersex people and a quarter of all trans people had experienced homelessness during their lives. This extremely high prevalence of homelessness is likely linked to the increased rates of discrimination that LGBTI people experience from landlords or employers and incidences of family rejection, leading to less economic and social security, as has been documented in the other editions in this briefing series [9]. on the experiences of trans and non-binary people [10].



Compared to the overall group of respondents, LGBTI people belonging to an ethnic minority (including from a migrant background), a religious minority and LGBTI people with disabilities were more likely to have experienced homelessness. 22.40% of LGBTI people of an ethnic minority, a quarter of LGBTI migrants from outside the EU (24.74%) and a third of LGBTI people with disabilities (32.64%) have been homeless at some point in their lives.

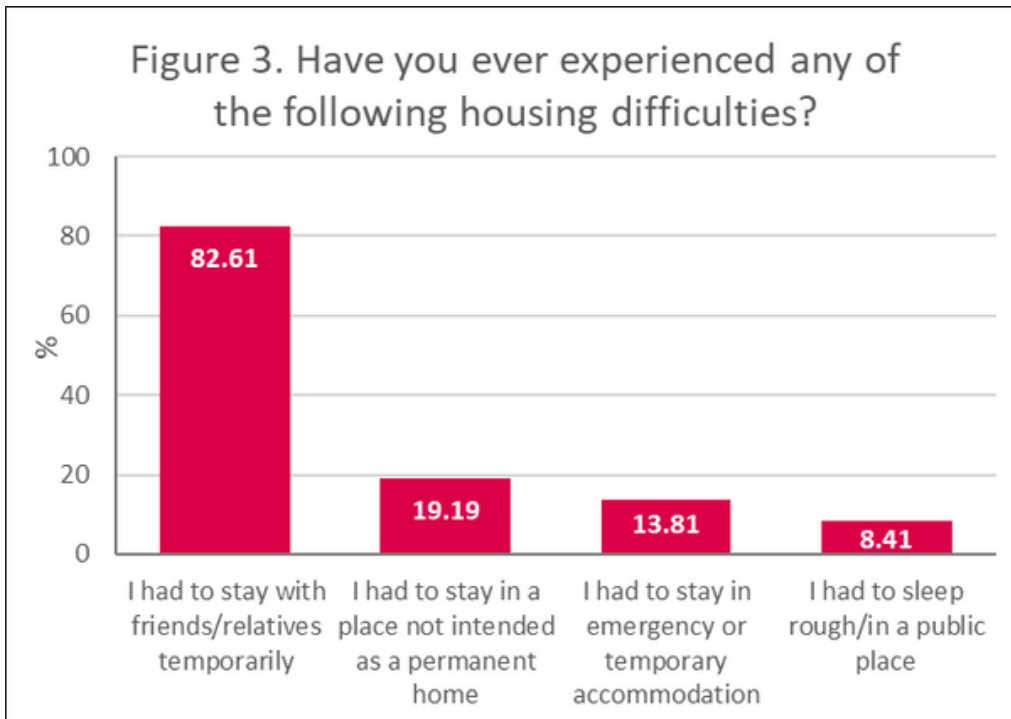
9. *Intersections* briefings available at: [The FRA LGBTI II Survey Data Explorer reports data to one digit after the decimal place.](#)

10. Russell C B, Sanders F & Watkins F. *Intersections: the LGBTI II Survey – Trans and Non-Binary Analysis*. ILGA-Europe. Available at: [The FRA LGBTI II Survey Data Explorer reports data to one digit after the decimal place.](#)

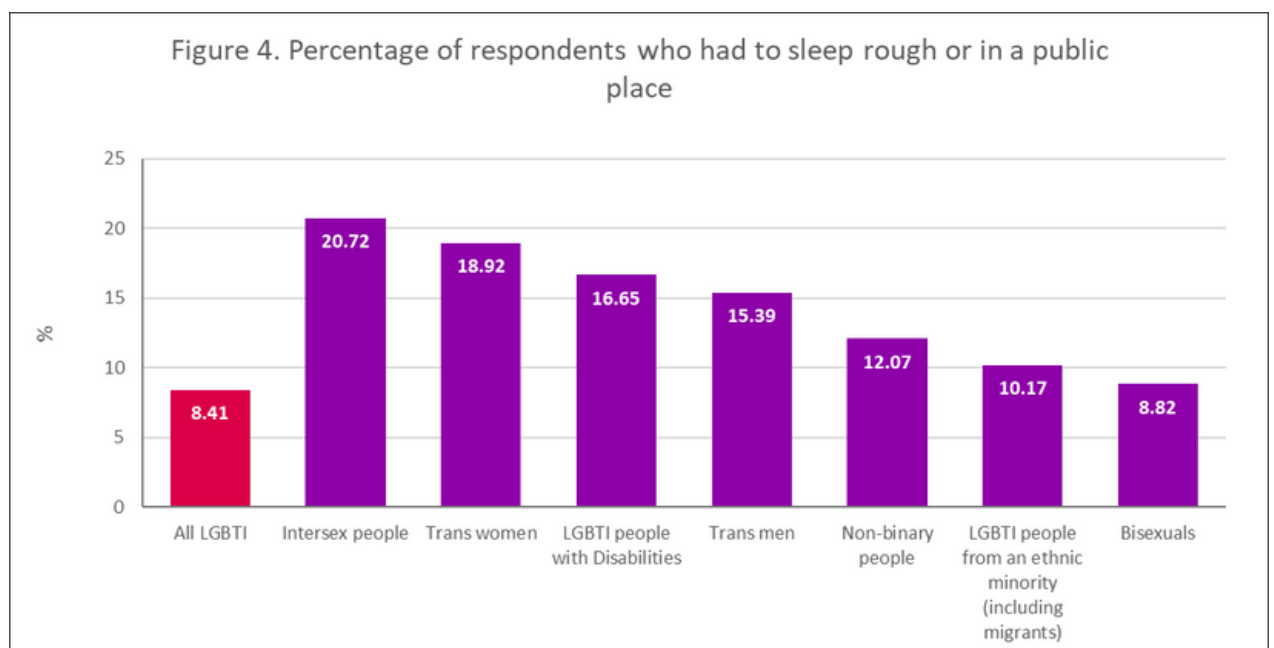


## Type of housing difficulty

Just 13.81% of those who had experienced housing difficulties had accessed emergency or temporary accommodation (figure 2). Due to fears of discrimination and violence from staff and other guests, LGBTI people are more likely to avoid traditional homeless shelters and services [11]. This pushes people into taking risks with unsafe accommodation – as shown here, almost one in ten homeless LGBTI people had been forced to sleep rough in a public place, and one in five had slept in places not intended as a permanent home.



Records from these types of formal shelters and rough sleeper counts are the most common methods of measuring homeless by governments and regional authorities, which are then used to determine where and what type of services are needed. As can be seen from the data, most LGBTI respondents fall outside these counts. The vast majority (82.61%) of LGBTI people who had experienced housing difficulties relied on friends or relatives for accommodation at least once. These forms of homelessness which are physically hidden from public view, not engaged in services and not present in official homelessness statistics are often described as “hidden homelessness” [12]. This invisibility in official data and in the public eye leads policy makers to focus disproportionately on more “visible” forms of homelessness in service provision and strategies addressing housing.



Being LGBTI can act both as a root cause of homelessness and as a barrier to accessing help. For some young LGBTI people, remaining in the family home after coming out is not a safe nor a realistic option. Homeless service providers that lack awareness of LGBTI issues sometimes don't understand this, and the refusal of a young person to return to their family home in the face of homelessness can be seen as trivial. This can bar them from access to services and assistance which are reserved for those who are believed to have no alternative [13].

For those who do attempt to engage with formal services, experiences of ignorance, discrimination and sometimes even hate from staff or other clients can make it preferable for LGBTI people to seek out their own solutions. As many shelters are gender segregated, trans, intersex and non-binary people risk being excluded from shelters due to a lack of legal gender recognition or services being unsure how to place them [14]. Intersex people and trans women were far more likely than other LGBTI groups to have slept rough or in a public place (figure 3). One in five intersex people (20.72%) who had experienced housing difficulties had been forced to sleep rough.

12. The Scottish Government. *Hidden homelessness international evidence review: exploring ways of identifying and counting hidden homeless populations*, 2023.

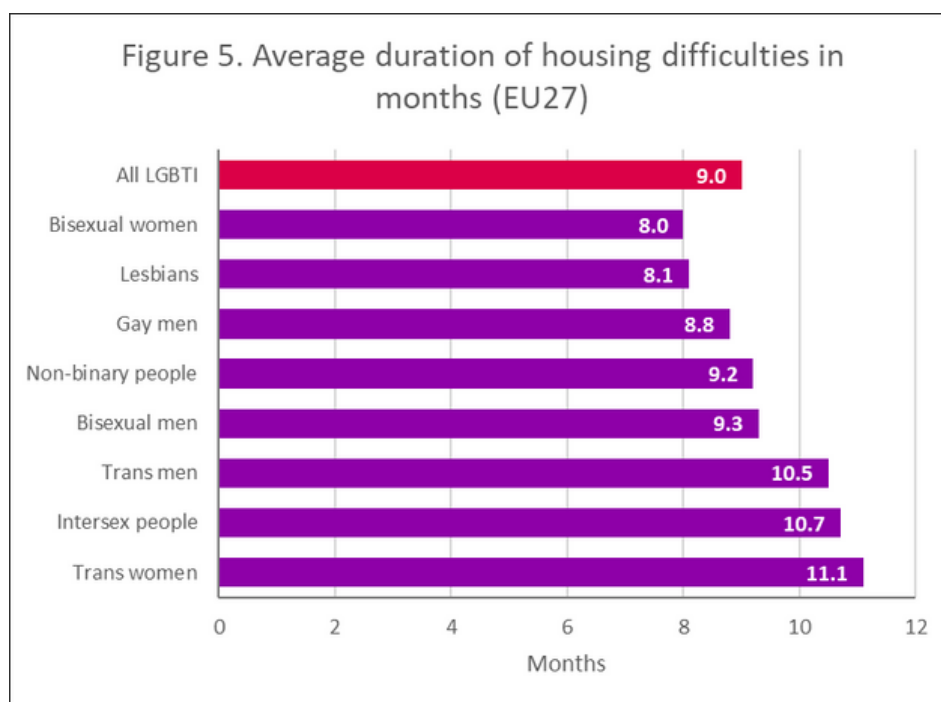
13. Asmussen, K. *Gender Norms Prevent LGBT+ People Experiencing Homelessness from Accessing Help*. FEANTSA Homeless in Europe: Pride - Homelessness in the LGBTIQ Community, Spring 2023.

14. Ibid.

Research among homeless organisations showed that service providers themselves agree that there is a lack of knowledge of LGBTI issues in the sector, and that this is preventing organisations from providing effective support [15]. In one study, 75% of homeless organisations reported having worked directly with LGBTI young people experiencing homelessness, yet 55% of organisations identified a lack of knowledge on LGBTI homelessness as a major challenge in their work [16]. Likewise, LGBTI organisations often lack the knowledge and expertise to deal with homelessness among the community. As this awareness starts to grow on both sides, cooperation and targeted solutions are starting to appear.

## Duration of homelessness

The average duration of housing difficulty for LGBTI people in the EU was 9 months (figure 4). There is also a notable variation among the community in this regard. Again, trans women and intersex people faced the most difficulties, experiencing housing difficulties for around 11 months on average [17].



Given that the average duration of homelessness was nine months, it is likely that many people had to move several times during this period. From the data above on type of housing difficulty (figure 2), we can see that many LGBTI people had to make use of several different types of accommodation while experiencing homelessness.

15. Štefanec V & Morič M. *Ljubo Doma? BIVANJSKE RAZMERE LGBTIQ+ OSEB V SLOVENIJI*. SQVOT. 2021.

16. Shelton, et al. (2021). *Perceptions: Addressing LGBTI Youth Homelessness in Europe and Central Asia - Findings from a Survey of LGBTI Organisations*. ILGA-Europe, True Colors United, and the Silberman Center for Sexuality and Gender at Hunter College. Available at:

[https://www.feantsa.org/public/user/Activities/events/2021/Perceptions\\_-\\_ILGA\\_Europe\\_Compressed.pdf](https://www.feantsa.org/public/user/Activities/events/2021/Perceptions_-_ILGA_Europe_Compressed.pdf)

17. Data here was taken from the FRA data explorer, and represents respondents from only the 28 EU member states. Data from this source is also only available to one decimal place, instead of two as in the rest of the report. The lesbian, bisexual and gay categories exclude respondents who also identified as trans or intersex, who are instead included in the trans and intersex categories, respectively.

The question on the average duration of housing difficulty looks at the duration of a single experience of housing difficulty, as the survey questions ask about the respondent's most recent experience. Very often, homelessness is not a one-off experience with a well-defined, permanent end but rather is part of a larger experience of social exclusion and poverty which doesn't always end with gaining access to housing. The root causes of LGBTI homelessness – family conflict, economic struggles, a lack of affordable housing, discrimination – are often complex, interconnected, long-term problems, and many people experience repeated instances of housing difficulties in various different forms in between periods of stability.

The longer a person is homeless, the harder it becomes to successfully exit homelessness. Many of the harmful effects of facing housing insecurity – declining physical health, extreme stress, social exclusion, loss of work and educational opportunities – accumulate over time and do not disappear once someone has a stable home [18]. For example, a gap in education or employment caused by a period of homelessness can act as a barrier to financial stability even once a person's housing instability is resolved. Stereotypes and stigma around homelessness means that admitting the cause of a gap on a CV to a potential employer is not always a desirable option.

The additional vulnerabilities faced by LGBTI people compound these stresses. In one study, young LGBTI homeless people identified being “doubly in the closet” regarding their SOGIESC and their status as homeless, and the shame and stigma attached to the continuous ‘coming out’ process for both: “You cannot come out as LGBTQI+ within the homeless context, for fear for your personal safety, and simultaneously you cannot come out as homeless within the LGBTQI+ context for fear of ostracisation by your peers” [19]. This leads to LGBTI homeless people being shut out from community supports and access to services.

## Causes of LGBTI homelessness

When asked for the main causes of their housing difficulties, financial problems and insufficient income was the most common response (figure 5). For a quarter of respondents, unemployment had been the main cause, reflecting that job insecurity, low paid work and discrimination in employment are all significant triggers for homelessness among the LGBTI community [20]. Among all LGBTI people, 36.79% stated that their households had difficulty making ends meet.

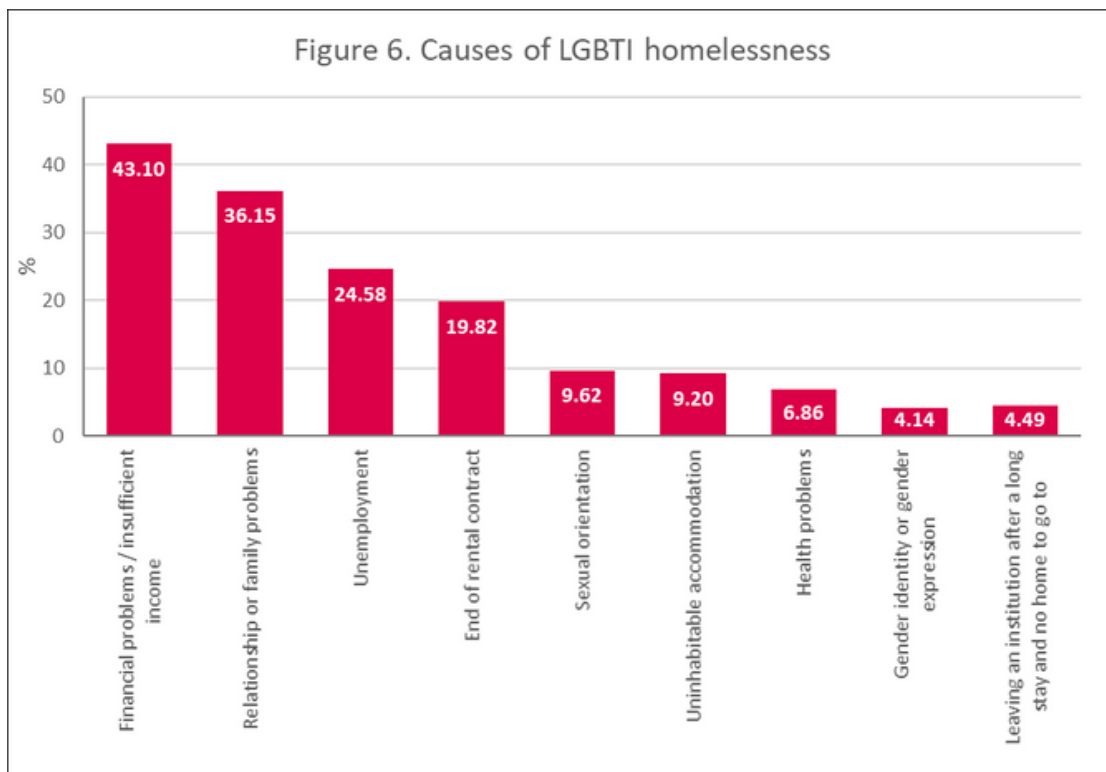
Relationship or family problems were the main cause for over a third of LGBTI homeless people (36.15%). This could be for reasons related to their identity, such as being unwelcome in the family home after coming out, or for unrelated reasons such as a relationship between adults who are cohabiting coming to an end.

18. What is the impact of homelessness? Homeless Link. Available at: [https://homelesslink-1b54.kxcdn.com/media/documents/3\\_-\\_what\\_is\\_the\\_impact\\_of\\_homelessness\\_1.pdf](https://homelesslink-1b54.kxcdn.com/media/documents/3_-_what_is_the_impact_of_homelessness_1.pdf)

19. Quilty A. & Norris M. A Qualitative Study of LGBTQI+ Youth Homelessness in Ireland. Focus Ireland. 2019. Available at: [https://www.focusireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/LGBTQI-Youth-Homelessness-Report\\_FINAL-VERSION.pdf](https://www.focusireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/LGBTQI-Youth-Homelessness-Report_FINAL-VERSION.pdf)

20. Discrimination in employment for certain groups in the community are discussed in the other briefings in this series, available here: <https://www.ilga-europe.org/report/fra-lgbti-report-2019-intersections/>





Gender identity/expression and health problems were more important factors among trans, intersex and non-binary respondents. 28.10% of trans women, 15.50% of trans men and 26.01% of intersex people with housing difficulties identified gender identity or expression as the main cause of their homelessness.

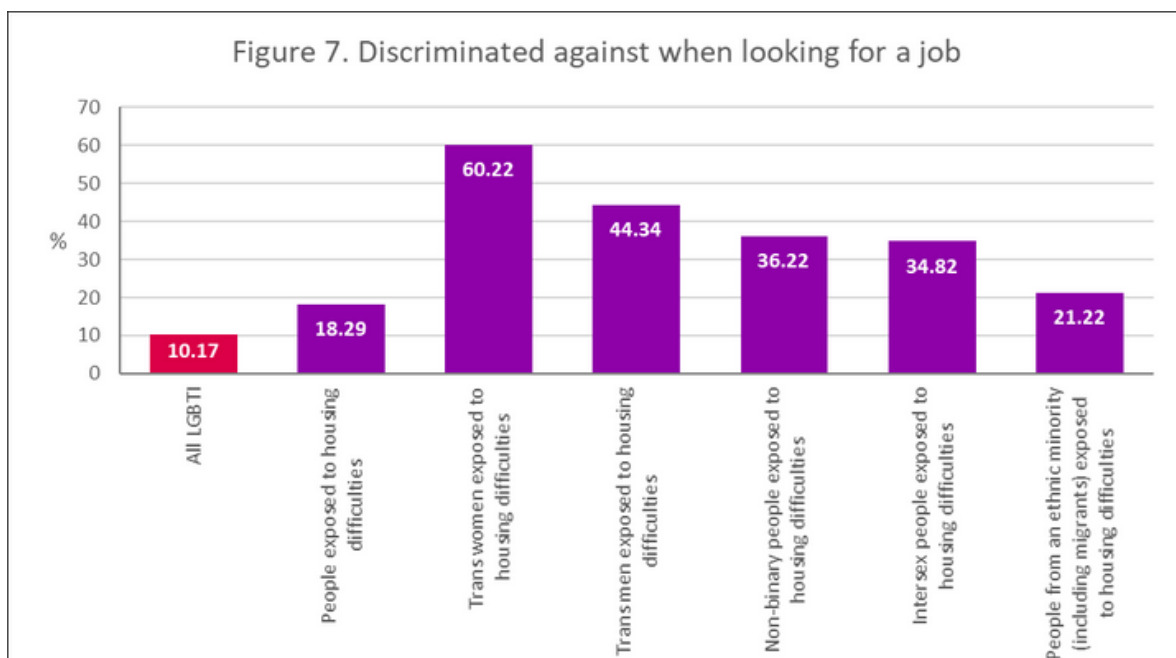
General difficulties with accommodation are also notable results here, with 9.20% of those who had experienced homelessness choosing uninhabitable accommodation as the main cause of homelessness. For a fifth of respondents, being unable to renew a rental contract or find alternative accommodation had led to their housing difficulty. A potential explanation for this could be facing discrimination when looking for housing on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression or sex characteristics. It could also point to LGBTI people's fears of facing discrimination in homeless services, which make people choose uninhabitable accommodation over formal services.

Experiences of discrimination, and its disproportionate impact on subgroups, will be explored in further detail in the next section.

## Discrimination and social exclusion

Being in insecure housing makes all other areas of life infinitely more difficult. A fixed address is required in most countries for access to basic social services, healthcare, education and employment. A lack of adequate housing can also cause serious health difficulties, including the extreme effects of exposure while sleeping rough, lack of access to timely and preventative healthcare, and high risks to mental health.

LGBTI people often face discrimination when seeking employment or discriminatory treatment at work, leading to financial insecurity. 10.17% of all respondents reported being discriminated against when looking for a job on the basis of being LGBTI in the past year (figure 6). Among LGBTI people who had experienced housing difficulties, this rises to 18.29%. Most notably, more than half (60.22%) of all trans women who had experienced homelessness had been discriminated against when looking for a job in the past year.



LGBTI people who had experienced housing difficulties were also more likely to be unemployed; 8.26% were unemployed, compared to 4.78% of all respondents. As discussed above, financial problems were the main cause of housing difficulties for almost half of LGBTI people who had experienced homelessness.

Those most affected by this discrimination, including (undocumented) migrants, trans women, and people with disabilities, can be forced to rely on informal or criminalised forms of income such as sex work [21]. The criminalisation of sex work leads to further ostracisation and discrimination when seeking health care or housing assistance, acting as another barrier to successfully exiting homelessness.

10.17% of all LGBTI respondents had experienced discrimination from landlords or rental agencies when looking for accommodation in the past twelve months (figure 7). This was also highest among trans women, more than a quarter of whom (26.48%) had been discriminated against when looking for housing.

Figure 8. Discriminated against when looking for a house or apartment

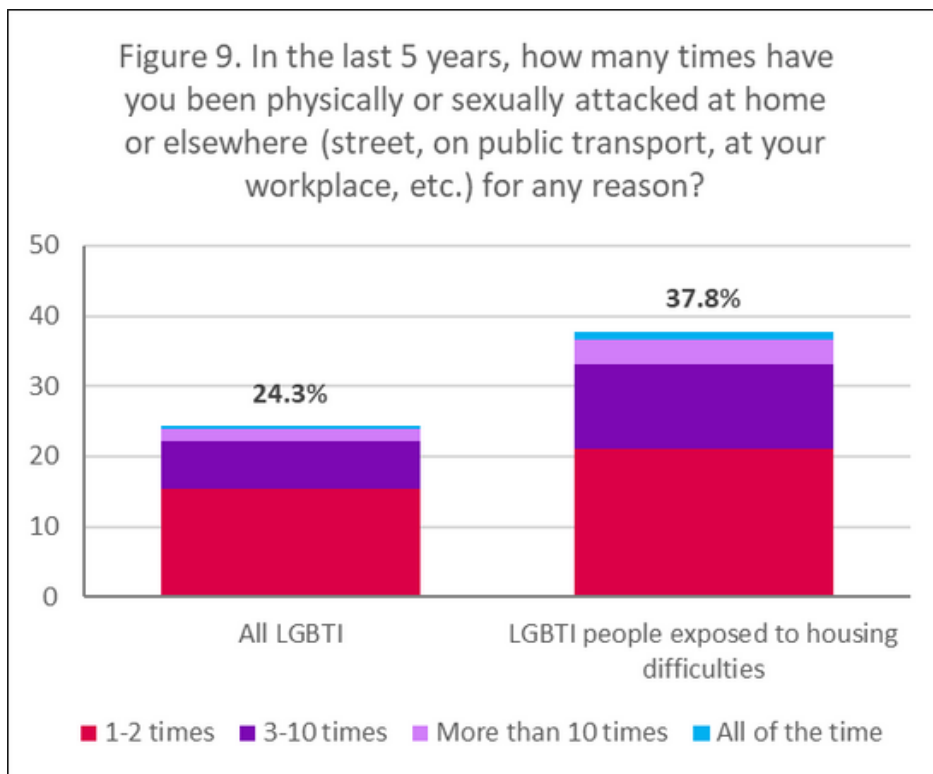


The general lack of affordable housing seen across Europe is most severe on those who are already exposed to discrimination and social exclusion. Overall, 88.37% of those who had experienced discrimination on the ground of being LGBTI did not report the incident. Reasons for not reporting incidences of discrimination included mistrust in authorities and fears of retaliation. In the midst of a housing crisis across most European cities and the spiralling cost of living, choosing to report discrimination comes with higher personal costs. When discrimination is so widespread and affordable housing is scarce, people are forced to accept whatever options are available despite the risks - for example, damp or overcrowded housing, no rental contract, or exploitation.

## Experiences of violence

Having experiences of homelessness was also linked to higher rates of violence and assault. More than one in three LGBTI people exposed to housing difficulties had been physically or sexually attacked in the past 5 years (figure 8).

While the FRA LGBTI Survey II asked about violence over a specified time period, questions about homelessness were over the entire lifespan, so we are unable to tell whether experiences of violence had any connection to the experiences of housing difficulties. However, living on the street or in precarious housing situations makes one much more vulnerable to violence and less able to leave dangerous situations.

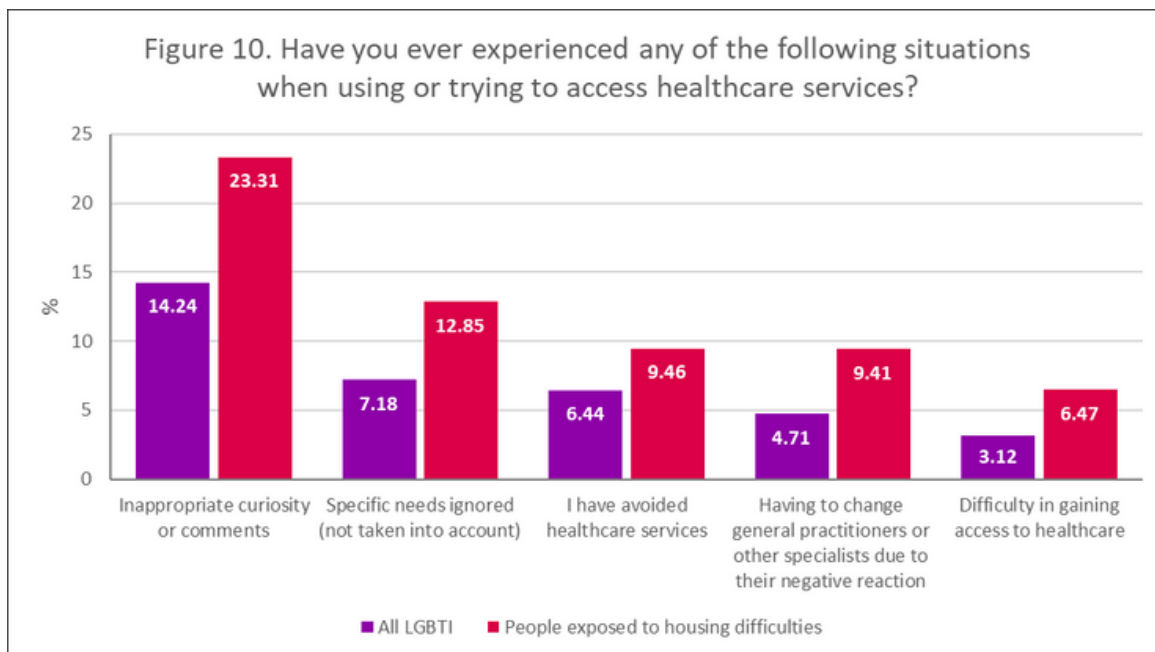


## Healthcare access and health outcomes

Health and access to housing are intrinsically linked. Without steady access to warm shelter, hygiene facilities and a safe place to sleep each night, taking care of basic physical and mental health needs is an almost impossible task. As well as risks of exposure when sleeping in places not intended as a permanent home, homelessness can lead to poor health through a lack of access to preventative healthcare, lack of proper storage for medicines or limited access to basic hygiene facilities.

Access to basic healthcare such as GP services requires a fixed address in many countries. Given that many LGBTI people already face increased barriers to healthcare access compared with the general population [22], LGBTI people facing homelessness are at high risk of having extremely limited access to healthcare. This acts as an impediment to timely, preventative healthcare, meaning that easily resolved issues accumulate and worsen. Particularly for trans and intersex people, lack of access to regular healthcare access and monitoring can have severe negative physical and psychological effects.

In addition to physical and administrative barriers to healthcare access, being homeless and being LGBTI are common grounds for discrimination when accessing healthcare. A quarter (25.40%) of all homeless LGBTI people had faced discrimination by health or social service providers, and 1 in 10 reported healthcare services. 9.41% of LGBTI people with housing difficulties had foregone medical treatment for fear of discrimination or intolerant reactions (figure 9).



The psychological burden of this cumulative discrimination, extreme poverty and insecurity can frequently lead to mental health issues and substance abuse as a way of coping with the stress. These health issues can then act as a further barrier to exiting homelessness, for example by making it more difficult to find steady employment and through services requiring sobriety as a condition for housing assistance [23].

There is also a strong intersection between LGBTI people with disabilities and experiences of homelessness. Among LGBTI people with disabilities, 32.64% had experienced housing difficulties. This is almost double than among LGBTI people generally. Compared to those without disabilities, they were also more likely to have slept rough or in a place not intended as a permanent home.

LGBTI people with long-standing illnesses or who reported their health as being 'Bad' or 'Very bad' were more likely to have experienced housing difficulties. From the survey results, we do not have information on whether these people experienced homelessness due to their health issues, for example due to being unable to work, or whether being homeless exacerbated or caused their poor health. However, 6.86% of LGBTI people who had experienced homelessness said that health problems had been the main cause. LGBTI people who had experienced housing difficulties were almost twice as likely to report being in bad or very bad health (8.42%) compared to LGBTI people overall (4.41%).

## Annex 1: Methodology and survey background information

### Background: FRA LGBTI II Survey 2019

The statistics used to write this brief come from the 2019 EU LGBTI II Survey conducted by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. The survey was open to individuals who were 15 years of age or older who self-identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and/or intersex. The survey was conducted online in 27 EU Member States, the UK, Serbia and North Macedonia between May and July of 2019. The respondents were asked a series of questions about their lived experiences, including information about their experiences of discrimination, harassment, violence, openness about their sexual orientation, gender identity, and sex characteristics experiences in education and at work, their relationships and parenting, health, housing difficulties, living conditions and socio-economic status.

### Representativeness of the results used in the report

The survey was available to the interested LGBTI people who had access to the internet. Due to the survey being in an opt-in form it did not follow the procedure of random sampling, which would have made it representative of the LGBTI community in Europe. However, we applied weights developed by FRA (2019) [24] so the results presented in the report are as representative of the population as possible.

### Sample

This briefing provides information on people with experience of housing difficulties, which was a subset from the entire sample of respondents resulting in a sample size of 23,317 (16.68% of the total respondent population of 139,799 respondents). The subsetting process followed a procedure of removing the answers of respondents who responded affirmatively to the question “Have you ever experienced any of the following housing difficulties” (question H21).

### Statistical methods

The report is based on descriptive statistics extracted from the survey. The primary method used is cross tabulations, which is used to quantitatively analyse the relationship between multiple variables.