

PERCEPTIONS



Addressing LGBTI Youth Homelessness in Europe and Central Asia:
Findings from a Survey of LGBTI Organisations

Provided By



ILGA Europe

ILGA-Europe is an independent, international non-governmental umbrella organisation bringing together 650+ organisations and groups from 54 European and Central Asian countries. ILGA-Europe is a driving force for political, legal and social change in Europe and Central Asia. We advocate for human rights and equality for LGBTI people at the European level and work to strengthen the LGBTI movements in Europe and Central Asia by providing capacity enhancing opportunities, funding and by engaging with funders.



True Colors United

True Colors United implements innovative solutions to youth homelessness that focus on the unique experiences of LGBTQ young people.



SILBERMAN CENTER FOR SEXUALITY AND GENDER

The Silberman Center for Sexuality and Gender (SCSG) at the Silberman School of Social Work, Hunter College supports groundbreaking research in sexuality and gender; facilitates education to enhance learning related to sexuality and gender for social workers; advocates for gender and sexual equity; and engages with local, national, and international communities, to increase understanding and exploration of sexuality and gender.

Citations

Shelton, J., Ritosa, A., Van Roozendaal, B., Hugendubel, K. & Dodd, S.J. (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.

Executive Summary

This report by the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association - Europe (ILGA-Europe), True Colors United, and the Silberman Center for Sexuality and Gender (SCSG) summarizes findings from the 2020 Survey of LGBTI Organisations in Europe and Central Asia about Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) Youth Homelessness, a web-based survey conducted from August 2020 to September 2020. The survey was designed to explore the experiences of LGBTI focused organisations in Europe and Central Asia in working on the issue of LGBTI youth homelessness, and to estimate the prevalence of LGBTI youth experiencing homelessness being served by responding organisations. In total, 71 organisations participated in the survey, representing 32 countries. Key findings are summarized below. These results must be placed in the context that only 71 LGBTI organisations out of more than 650 invited organisations took this survey, which is a low number for surveys compared to those that ILGA-Europe has previously conducted.



Over one third (41%) of respondents reported that their organisations exist to work specifically and primarily with or on behalf of various groups of LGBTI youth experiencing homelessness.

- Three quarters (75%) of respondents reported having worked directly with an LGBTI youth experiencing homelessness, even if this is not the population their organisations specifically exist to work with.
- Only 63% of respondents reported organisational confidence in knowing how to support LGBTI youth experiencing homelessness.
- Respondents reported a variety of reasons for homelessness in the LGBTI youth populations they serve, with recurring themes of family rejection, poverty, trauma/mental health issues, and migration/refugee status.

“ Long story made short: 50% among LGBT youth, they are driven away by ultra-religious families from disadvantaged and ultra-homophobic backgrounds. Others lost their jobs in the pre-pandemic period.”

The majority of respondent organisations reported a lack of governmental, policy, and financial support for LGBTI youth homelessness.

- In the majority of respondents' countries, there is either no national policy targeting the issue of youth homelessness (39%) or respondents were unsure (23%) if such a national policy exists in their country.
- Nearly three-quarters (72%) of respondents indicated that no national policy exists specifically addressing the issue of LGBTI youth homelessness.
- Over half of respondents (59%) reported a lack of governmental support for programmes that focus on LGBTI youth homelessness, and nearly half (47%) reported a lack of funding support for such programmes.

"The most difficult challenge is a political climate and a rising wave of homophobia and transphobia. In connection to the political situation, we are concerned with further actions of the government that can make situation of transgender people in Poland even worse, while solving problems already affecting the community could be only possible with governmental legal, financial and infrastructural support."

Prevalence rates of LGBTI youth homelessness are unclear.

- Almost one quarter (22.5%) of respondents indicated that they "honestly have no idea" what percentage of the youth homelessness population in their countries are LGBTI.
- The most common estimate of the in-country prevalence rate of LGBTI youth homelessness was 10-20%, with almost one-third (30%) of organisations selecting this response option.

“ The field of LGBTIQ* homelessness in this country is hardly elucidated! We have only glimpses.”



The COVID-19 pandemic has affected service delivery and service user needs for the majority of respondent organisations.

- Just over half (56%) of respondents indicated that the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted LGBTI youth homelessness and their work in this area, citing several distinct impacts.
- Of those 56% of respondents, the most commonly cited impact (37.5%) of COVID-19 was a decrease in job opportunities and income; 35% noted an increase in or exacerbation of issues related to LGBTI youth staying with unaccepting family members due to the pandemic
- Despite greater need for housing and other resources, respondents reported that governments are not prioritizing support for individuals experiencing homelessness.

The practice of demographic data collection varied across organisations, as did the types of data collected and the methods for collecting demographic data.

- One third (34%) of organisations surveyed collect some type of demographic information about service users while just over one third (37%) sometimes collect some type of demographic information about service users.
- Just under half of respondents reported that their organisations collect information about service users' sexual orientation (45%) and gender identity (46%). Over a third (39%) reported collecting information about service users' sex.
- While the survey item did not distinguish whether or not respondents collect specific information about transgender and intersex experiences, three-quarters (76%) of respondents reported working specifically with transgender people and over half (52%) with intersex people.

“ [The] pandemic affected LGBTI youth homelessness as they were left out from the Government's anti-crisis plan, despite the consultations with community-based organisations... Under these circumstances, queer people were left without income and employment, as well as without the support of family members or community solidarity, [and so] find themselves at serious risk of homelessness.”



“ It's very hard to get statistics or information in general in Sweden that's broken into different identity categories, such as lgbtqi, race, or other areas. This makes our work, and to start up new work, harder.”

Definitions of “youth” varied widely among the organisations surveyed.

- 34% of organisations define “youth” as individuals under the age of 30.
- 17% of organisations consider “youth” to include individuals aged 24 and under.

About the Survey

Background

Housing instability and homelessness impact LGBTI youth and young adults across the globe. In 2017, True Colors United began working with ILGA-Europe to organize a session on LGBTI youth homelessness at their annual conference, held in Warsaw, Poland. Since that time, the organisations have collaborated to provide workshops at ILGA-Europe's annual conferences and worked together with The European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA) to better understand the realities of LGBTI youth homelessness in Europe. A study session for organisations working on these issues in Europe was organized and FEANTSA and ILGA-Europe integrated homelessness as a policy issue in their advocacy work with

European institutions. Knowing more about the challenges LGBTI organisations face working on the issue of LGBTI youth homelessness and/or working with LGBTI youth experiencing homelessness, True Colors United, FEANTSA and ILGA-Europe have worked together to create a plan for conducting research that would establish a baseline of understanding about LGBTI youth homelessness across LGBTI focused organisations and inform the development of resources to aid in addressing the challenges that organisations face when working on this critical issue. This survey, developed by ILGA-Europe and True Colors United and in collaboration with the Silberman Center for Sexuality and Gender at Hunter College, is the first step in that process.

Current Study

The purpose of this study is to deepen understanding of the needs of LGBTI youth experiencing homelessness, how those needs are being met, and the successes and challenges that LGBTI-focused organisations face in working on the issue of LGBTI youth homelessness and in providing LGBTI youth experiencing homelessness with vital assistance. This study builds upon a similar study conducted in 2019 between FEANTSA, True Colors United, and the Silberman Center for Sexuality and Gender (SCSG) at Hunter College.

While the FEANTSA study examined the experience of European homelessness service providers working with LGBTI youth experiencing homelessness, this study examines the experiences of LGBTI organisations working on the issue of LGBTI youth homelessness. Both studies are based on a similar study conducted in the United States by True Colors United and the Williams Institute, first in 2012 and again in 2015. The U.S. based study laid the foundation for national organizing and technical assistance provision for service

providers working with this population. The current study involved a web-based survey that was distributed among ILGA-Europe member organizations. Survey development was a collaborative effort between ILGA - Europe and True Colors United, and the SCSG Center at Hunter College. The study was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Research Participants at Hunter College.

The online survey was conducted on the Qualtrics platform, from August 2020 - September 2020. Requests to participate in the online survey were sent to all 650 ILGA-Europe member organisations and other LGBTI organisations in ILGA-Europe's database. The call for participation was also spread via social media channels. Although the survey platform recorded 218 visits to the survey, only 71 organisations completed the majority of the survey and are included in the analysis. Due to the small sample size and the exploratory nature of this

study, the findings are descriptive in nature and cannot be generalized to all ILGA-Europe member organisations nor to all organisations working with LGBTI individuals or on LGBTI issues. Nonetheless, the data presented in this report builds upon the previously described FEANTSA study to provide critical baseline information towards systematically recognizing and addressing homelessness among LGBTI youth in the European context.

ABOUT THE PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

This study relies on staff reports about their organisations and the work of their organisations. The majority of organisations (83%; n = 59) are registered with the government of their country, and although this survey did not directly inquire, we recognize that there are varying reasons why organisations would strategically choose not to register with their country, including perhaps greater autonomy to achieve organisational goals amid a repressive social and political environment. The sample includes 71 organisations representing 32 European countries. See Table 1 for response rates from each country.

TABLE 1

Response Rates by Country					
Albania	2	Greece	2	Poland	1
Armenia	1	Hungary	4	Portugal	1
Austria	1	Iceland	1	Romania	5
Belgium	5	Ireland	2	Serbia	3
Bosnia and Herzegovina	2	Italy	4	Slovenia	2
Bulgaria	1	Kyrgyzstan	1	Spain	5
Denmark	4	Latvia	1	Sweden	3
Finland	2	Malta	1	Switzerland	1
France	2	Montenegro	1	Ukraine	1
Georgia	2	North Macedonia	1	United Kingdom	3
Germany	5	Netherlands	1		

Participating organisations serve diverse regions across Europe. Some organisations work with multiple countries in their region, while some work in rural towns and villages. Just over a quarter of organisations (28%) surveyed serve large metropolitan cities. An almost equal number (27%) serve their entire country. See Table 2 for a complete breakdown of the diverse geographies in which respondent organisations work. In terms of physical space, nearly three quarters (70%) of participating organisations report having a physical space that is open for community members to enter.

It is important to note the countries that are missing representation in this report. Their absence, caused perhaps

by language and other barriers due to the limitations of this survey, do not imply that LGBTI youth homelessness is not an issue in these countries. In countries like Turkey and Russia, LGBTI youth experience homelessness and local advocates are working to improve policies to be more inclusive^{1,2,3}. There are many reasons why organisations would not have responded to this survey - including the absence of capacities to work on LGBTI youth homelessness - and we hope that this report will inspire more organisations to participate and to expand the collective knowledge of global LGBTI youth homelessness in future surveys.

TABLE 2



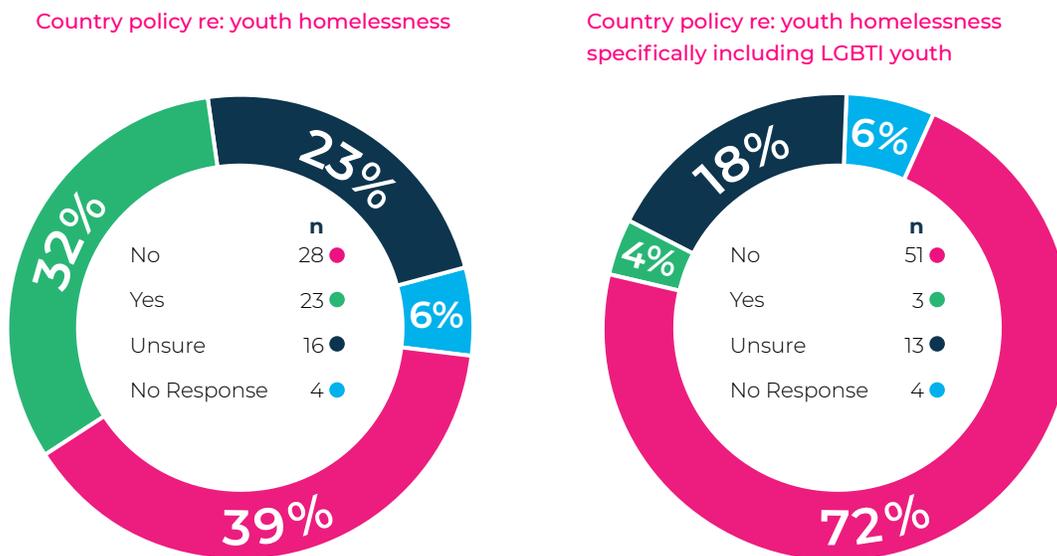
In an effort to further assess the broader social context within which organisations are operating, the survey included several questions about youth homelessness policies, as well as questions about government and philanthropic support of LGBTI related programmes. Specifically, the survey queried whether or not policies targeting youth homelessness exist in respondents' countries and whether or not policies targeting youth homelessness specifically include LGBTI youth. The survey asked if the governments of the respondents' countries support programmes targeting LGBTI youth

homelessness and if they support programmes that pay specific attention to trans and intersex youth. Finally, the survey asked about the availability of funding opportunities related to LGBTI youth homelessness. The majority of respondents indicated that these policies and supports do not exist, or that they are unsure whether or not these policies and supports exist. Figures 1 and 2 provide details regarding policy, governmental, and financial support for LGBTI youth homelessness, as reported by organisational respondents.

“ We are struggling to make our national government understand the size of the LGBTI youth homelessness phenomenon and the need to undertake measures at national level. Policies of prevention are needed as well as more fundings to tackle the issue.”

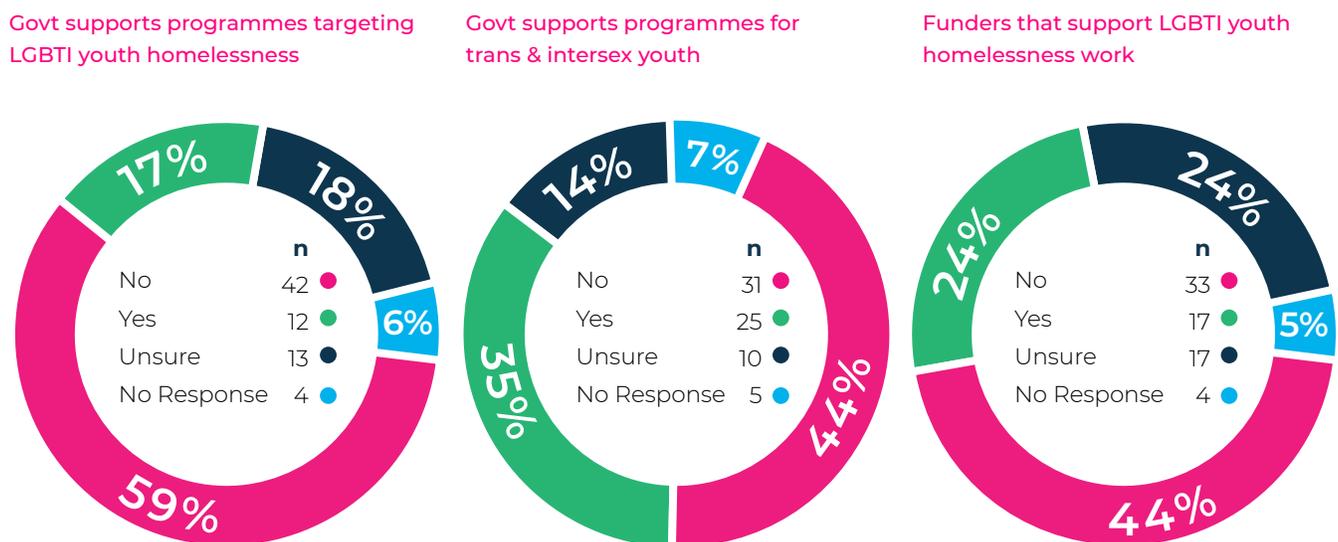
Policy Supports for LGBTI Youth Homelessness

FIGURE 1



Governmental and Financial Support for LGBTI Youth Programmes

FIGURE 2



Populations Served

Survey respondents were asked if they exist to work specifically and primarily with or on behalf of various groups of people, including 14 specific groups and a write-in option in the event that a specific response option was not provided. Each group was considered separately with yes/no/unsure as the response options. Most organisations exist to work specifically and primarily with or on behalf of multiple populations within the LGBTI umbrella. 68% of organisational respondents indicated that they work with LGBTI youth, and 41% indicated that they work with LGBTI youth experiencing homelessness. Just over three-quarters of respondents (76%) reported working with trans individuals, and just over half (52%) reported working with intersex people. Almost half (48%) of respondents reported working with LGBTI migrants, immigrants, and refugees, highlighting several responses (n=6) that migration is a perceived reason for LGBTI youth homelessness. Notably, less than a quarter (24%) of respondents indicated having worked with Deaf and Disabled LGBTI people within their organisations, begging further research. Each population group and the percentage of organisations reporting that they work with or on behalf of each group can be found in Figure 3.

FIGURE 3

Populations Served

		%	n
LGBTI youth		68%	48
LGBTI youth exp homelessness		41%	29
LGBTI migrants, immigrants, refugees		48%	34
Deaf & Disabled LGBTI ppl		24%	17
LGBTI sex workers		34%	24
LGBTI people living in poverty		41%	29
LGBTI people minority race/ethnic background		54%	38
LGBTI people living with HIV		48%	34
BI people		68%	48
Intersex people		52%	37
Trans people		76%	54
Lesbian/Bi women		73%	52
Gay/Bi Men		73%	52
Not LGBT people (service providers, families etc)		39%	28
Other		18%	13

Demographic Data Collection

Collecting demographic data is important for understanding the ways in which social issues impact subpopulations. One third of organisations (34%) collect demographic data about the individuals they serve, and just over a third of organisations (37%) sometimes collect demographic data.

FIGURE 4

Demographic Data Collection		
	%	n
Yes	34%	24
No	18%	13
Sometimes	37%	26
Unsure	4%	3
No Response	7%	5

The most commonly reported type of demographic information collected is the age of service users (59%). Nearly half (48% and 45%) reported collecting the gender identity and/or sexual orientation of service users; 44% collect both gender identity and sexual orientation. Three organisations reported collecting gender identity but not sexual orientation

and 1 organisation reported collecting sexual orientation and not gender identity. Just over one third of respondents (39%) reported collecting the sex of service users. Organisations were least likely to collect the race of service users, with only 10% of respondents reporting that they collect this information.

“ Privacy is very important to intersex people. We only collect the absolute minimum of data required for the specific purpose of our surveys. None of the above applies in the sense that these boxes are usually used in surveys”

Methods for collecting demographic information varied. The most commonly reported method for collecting demographic information was through intake forms completed by service users.

FIGURE 6

Methods for Collecting Demographic Information		
	%	n
Intake form completed by service user	32%	23
Government issued identification card	3%	2
Demographic information is assumed by staff	4%	3
Some other method	16%	11
Not Sure	4%	3
Don't collect demographic information	18%	13
Multiple ways	8%	6
No response	15%	10

FIGURE 5

Types of Demographic Information Collected		
	%	n
Housing Status	24%	17
Race	10%	7
Ethnicity	24%	17
Age	59%	42
Gender Identity	48%	34
Sex	39%	28
Sexual Orientation	45%	32
Income	18%	13
Employment Status	28%	20
Food Security	45%	32

Adopting a standardized procedure for collecting data about the sexual orientation, gender identity, sex, and housing status of service users would better allow organisations to identify LGBTI youth experiencing homelessness or those at risk of experiencing homelessness, and to address the unique needs of this population.

Defining “Youth”

A frequently reported barrier to systematically addressing youth homelessness is a lack of consensus regarding the definition of the term “youth.” Given this identified challenge, we included a survey item inquiring about the definition for youth that is utilized by each participating organisation. Response options included: 18 and under, 21 and under, 24 and under, under age 30, not sure, and something else. The most common response option was age 30 and under, with 34% of organisations reporting using this definition for

the term youth. One-fifth of respondents (20%) answered “something else.” See Table 3 for a complete breakdown of selected responses, and Table 4 for the write-in responses provided by respondents who selected “something else.” Findings reveal differential definitions of youth, which has implications for the consistent provision of youth services as well as for the development of a systematic response to youth homelessness.

TABLE 3

Definitions of “Youth”	%	n
18 & Under	10%	7
21 & Under	7%	5
24 & Under	17%	12
Under age 30	34%	24
Unsure	5%	3
Something Else	20%	14
No Answer	7%	5

TABLE 4

YOUTH DEFINITIONS	
Responses to “Something Else”	
16 and under	15 - 30 years
26 and under	16 - 29 years
27 and under	18 - 24 years
28 and under	18 - 25 years
29 and under	18 - 30 years
31 and under	
No age limit	No specific definition

In addition to varying definitions of the term “youth,” variation also exists regarding the definition of homelessness. This was not addressed in the survey, however one respondent addressed the issue in response to an open-ended question, writing “I

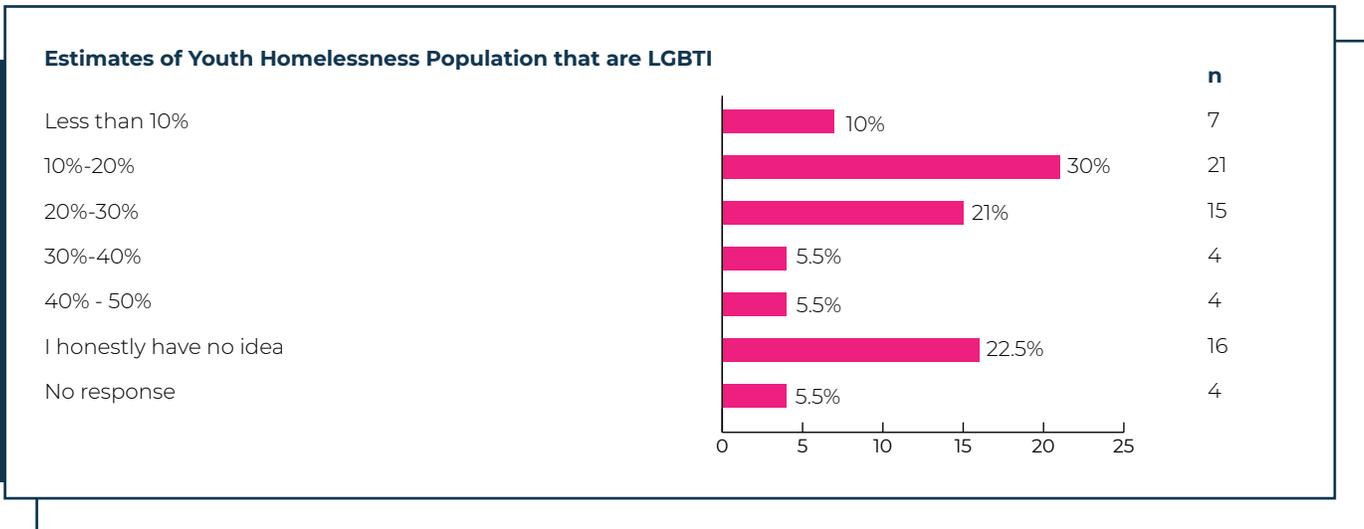
do think that first of all it is important to define what we mean under the homelessness, in Georgian legislation this issue is not well defined, which creates obstacles in practice.” The use of varying definitions of these concepts creates challenges for establishing

prevalence rates of LGBTI youth homelessness and advocating for consistent inclusion in governmental policies and protections.

LGBTI YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

Respondents were asked to estimate what percentage of youth experiencing homelessness in their countries are LGBTI. Respondents could choose between 6 options, ranging from “less than 10%” to “I honestly have no idea.” The most common estimate was between 10% and 20%, with 30% of respondents choosing this option. The second most common response was “I honestly have no idea,” with 22.5% of respondents choosing this option. The breakdown of all responses can be found in Figure 7.

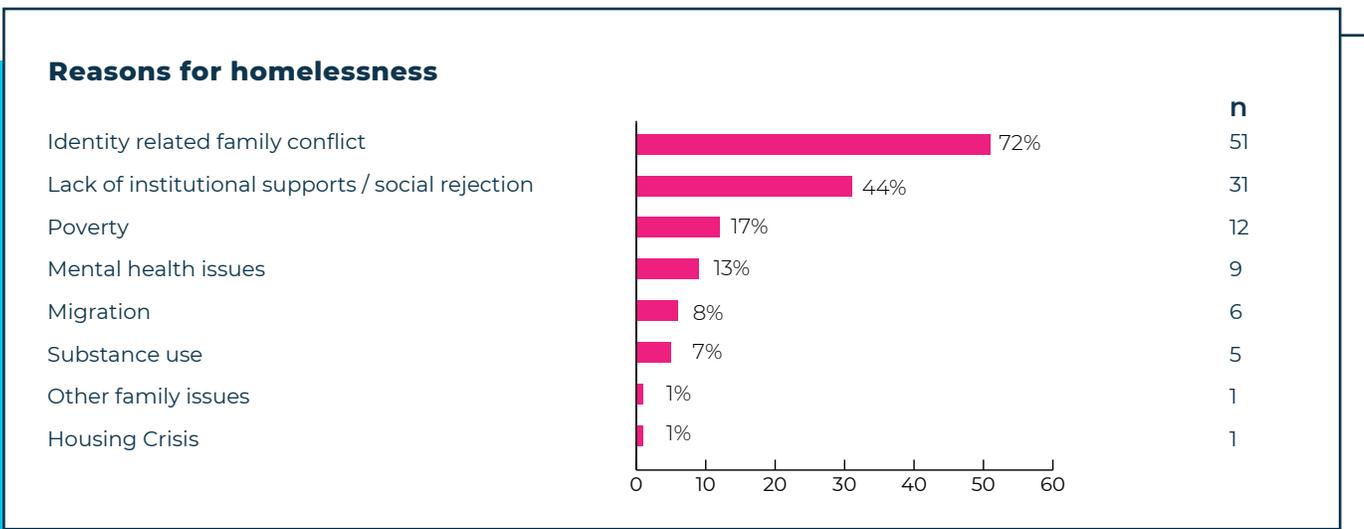
FIGURE 7



Reasons LGBTI Youth Experience Homelessness

Respondents were asked to think about the reasons LGBTI youth experience homelessness, and to provide all relevant and applicable reasons. Nearly two-thirds of respondents (n=40) answered this open ended question. Responses were grouped into 7 thematic categories, including: poverty, mental health issues, identity related family conflict, substance abuse, lack of institutional support/social rejection, migration, and other family issues. Figure 8 includes the frequency with which each category was cited as a reason LGBTI youth experience homelessness.

FIGURE 8



“ I do believe lgbtqi-youth are more at risk when it comes to homelessness as well as other kinds of vulnerability. Of those we meet that are homeless many are asylum seekers or undocumented.”

Due to the open-ended nature of this survey question, a range of nuances were reported regarding the reasons LGBTI youth experience homelessness. For example, distinctions were often made between the LGBTI youth's choice to flee from violence in the family home and family rejection

leading to their expulsion. Lack of education, lack of social services specific to LGBTI youth in regard to housing and employment, and nuances of social rejection were also reported.

The Impact of COVID-19

Respondents' perceptions of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic were solicited using the open-ended prompt “Is the Covid-19 crisis affecting LGBTI youth homelessness and your work in this area? Please tell us how.”

About 21% (n=15) of total respondents reported that COVID affected job/income with about 18% (n=13) saying there has been an increase in the threat of homelessness since the start of the pandemic. About 7% (n=5) noted an increase in counseling services for LGBTI youth, whether it was related to experiences of homelessness was not determined. Notable is that 3 respondents said COVID didn't so much as cause new issues but reveal existing structures that work to target and oppress LGBTI youth and especially transgender youth. Stress and violence in an unaccepting family home was mentioned about 20% (n=14) of the time, sometimes citing a decrease in LGBTI-affirming spaces as causal as well.

In addition to the over half (56%) of respondents who reported their work with LGBTI youth has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, 10% expressed not knowing if their work has been affected, a third (31%) did not answer, and a couple (3%) noted no significant changes from the time before the global pandemic.

“We have seen a heightening of the conflict level in the domestic environments. Many of our members live at home and have not disclosed their LGBTI identity to their parents/siblings. In addition, our members most often come from low income families and live in vulnerable housing with large families in small apartments. Being unable to live their usual double-life and gain the emotional support from other peers who are also LGBTI persons with ethnic minority background, therefore increases tensions and have increased the risk of exposure among family members.”

Addressing LGBTI Youth Homelessness

Most respondents indicated that their organisations engage in some type of work related to youth homelessness and/or that the work of their organisations addresses youth homelessness. The majority of organisations (63%; (n = 45) indicated that their organisations do engage in work related to youth homelessness. Nearly a quarter (23%;(n = 16) of organisations do not engage in work related to youth

homelessness. The remaining respondents were either unsure if their organisations engage in work related to youth homelessness (7%; (n = 5) or did not respond to the question (7%; (n = 5).

The majority of respondents (64%) indicated that they would know how to help an LGBTI young person experiencing

homelessness if they came to the organisation seeking help. Ensuring that the organisations LGBTI youth are connected to are able to assist in a housing crisis is important, particularly in regions where there are no programmes for youth experiencing homelessness or that are safe for LGBTI youth experiencing homelessness.

FIGURE 9

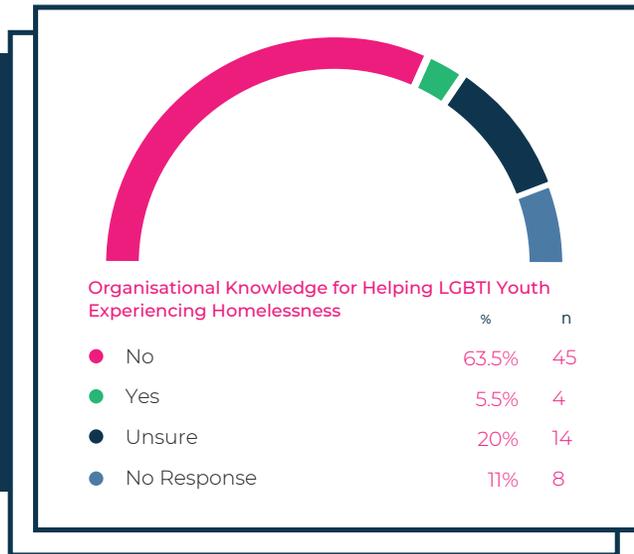
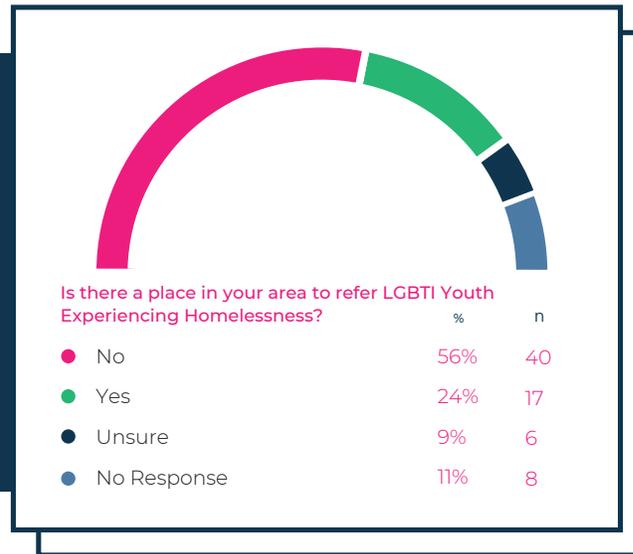


FIGURE 10



The majority of organisations (75%) reported having previously worked directly with and/or provided direct assistance to an LGBTI young person experiencing homelessness. Only 7% of organisational respondents said they had not worked directly with an LGBTI young person experiencing homelessness. Only 56% of organisations reported being aware of a place to refer LGBTI youth who are experiencing homelessness, which means that slightly under half of participating organisations have no place to refer LGBTI youth experiencing homelessness or they aren't aware of such a place.

FIGURE 11

Direct work with an LGBTI youth experience homelessness



Respondents were asked what kinds of youth homelessness related work their organisations engage in, with the option to select as many as applicable from the following response options: we provide shelter, we refer to other shelters, health services, psychological support, legal support, peer support, research, advocacy, or something else.

FIGURE 12



Participants who chose the “Something Else” option wrote in alternatives to direct support services, such as finding host families, working to create shelter, collecting donations to set up supports for rent, and employment support.

“ We offer counselling to lgbtiq individuals and their parents to prevent rejection and homelessness. The rate of parents accepting their children has increased a lot during the years that resulted in an increase of youth still living with their parents and pursuing higher levels of education.”

Populations Served

Organisations often face various challenges working with LGBTI youth experiencing homelessness and/or working on the issue of LGBTI youth homelessness. The survey asked respondents to indicate which challenges out of a list of 10 options their organisations experience, and were then asked which challenge they consider the greatest challenge their organisations face. If their organisations do not work with LGBTI youth experiencing homelessness or on the issue of LGBTI youth homelessness, they were asked to identify which challenges they anticipate their organisations would face if they were to engage in this work.

The most commonly chosen challenge was a lack of research/data about LGBTI youth homelessness; 75% of respondents identified this as an organisational challenge related to

working on the issue of LGBTI youth homelessness. The majority of respondents also reported facing several other challenges, including a lack of funding (72%), a lack of political/governmental support (62%), lack of infrastructure (58%) and a lack of knowledge about the situation of LGBTI homeless youth (55%). There was no response option on the list of provided challenges that was not selected. However, the religious climate was the least common identified challenge, with only 11% of respondents reporting this challenge. Refer to Figure 13 for the complete list of challenges. These results must be placed in the context that only 71 LGBTI organisations out of more than 650 invited organisations took this survey, which is a low number for surveys compared to those that ILGA-Europe has previously conducted.

FIGURE 13

Organisational Challenges		
	%	n
Lack of knowledge about the situation of LGBTI homeless youth	55%	39
Lack of research / data about LGBTI youth homelessness	75%	53
Lack of funding / not enough money to work on this issue	72%	51
Lack of political / governmental support	62%	44
Lack of infrastructure	58%	41
Security / safety issues	34%	24
LGBTI youth homelessness is not the organization's priority	28%	20
Lack staff capacity	45%	32
The religious climate	11%	8
The political climate	32%	23
Something else (please specify)	6%	4
No response	10%	7

“We don’t have any statistics regarding LGBTI’s youth in homelessness situation in Spain. We will try to prepare a report with some homelessness organizations to obtain the percentage. This information is very important to claim more support from the government and to alert public opinion about this sad situation.”

Previous research has demonstrated the unique challenges faced by trans and intersex youth experiencing homelessness, as well as specific organisational challenges related to working with trans and intersex youth ^{4,5,6}. Further, trans and intersex individuals often experience heightened societal marginalization, as well as interpersonal and institutional violence ^{6,7}. Thus, it is imperative that specific attention is given to trans and intersex youth when seeking to address LGBTI youth homelessness. Over half of organisations surveyed (55%) reported facing challenges when working with or on behalf of trans individuals and communities and over a third (34%) reported challenges when working with or on behalf of intersex individuals and communities.

FIGURE 14

Greatest Organisational Challenge

	%	n
Lack of knowledge about the situation of LGBTI homeless youth	7%	5
Lack of research / data about LGBTI youth homelessness	13%	9
Lack of funding / not enough money to work on this issue	36.5%	26
Lack of political / governmental support	10%	7
Lack of infrastructure	14%	10
Security / safety issues	0%	0
LGBTI youth homelessness is not the organization's priority	5.5%	4
Lack staff capacity	1%	1
The religious climate	0%	0
The political climate	0%	0
Something else (please specify)	3%	2
No response	10%	7

“ One of the main issues are increased rates of violence towards trans* population in the country, especially towards the ones who provide sex work. Anti-gender movements in the country are especially targeting trans* issues which makes them more vulnerable towards the hostility and violence. Additionally, the state doesn't have any proper regulations which can ensure the gender reassignment procedures in the country and will reduce the health risks related to using non-prescribed hormones or other medication. This was especially obvious during Covid-19 situation and state restrictions when trans* people couldn't afford to pay for hormonal treatment as a preparation to the surgeries and have applied to the organization for receiving financial support.”

FIGURE 15

Does your organisation face challenges when working with or on behalf of trans individuals/communities? Intersex individuals/communities?

Trans Individuals/Communities



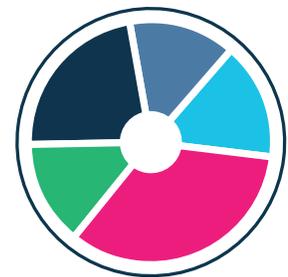
	%	n
● No	55%	39
● Yes	15.5%	11
● Unsure	13%	9
● N/A (we don't work with intersex individuals/communities)	5.5%	4
● No Response	11%	8

“ A challenge that is a very recent one is that ruling politicians and right-wing media focused their campaign on trans people. It makes it necessary for us to be very careful in our everyday work, because we are targeted with provocations and fake news. An email sent by person asking for help can be in fact part of such a provocation intended to libel us, and we have to consider this in our work with the trans community.”

FIGURE 16

Intersex Individuals/Communities

	%	n
● Yes	34%	24
● No	14%	10
● Unsure	22.5%	16
● N/A (we don't work with intersex individuals/communities)	14%	10
● No Response	15.5%	11



The survey also included open-ended questions about the challenges organisations face specifically when working with or on behalf of trans individuals and communities, as well as challenges faced when working with or on behalf of intersex individuals and communities. Among the challenges reported when working with or on behalf of trans individuals and communities include:

- Institutional barriers, legal barriers, political barriers
- Lack of education on, trans identities, lived realities of trans people
- Lack of funding
- Lack of governmental support
- Stigma against trans people
 - Sometimes leads to lack of trust of the organization by trans folks
 - General societal transphobia, leading to violence and institutionalized discrimination
- Especially trans people who are also sex workers
- Violence against trans people
- Lack of access to safe housing for trans people
- We aren't able to connect with trans individuals and communities to provide services
- Trans people aren't able to maintain hormone treatment

Reported challenges related to when working with or on behalf of intersex individuals and communities include:

- Not many/any intersex visibility/community/activists
 - Intersex visibility is new
 - Intersex invisibility is encouraged and pervasive
 - Difficult to identify or connect with intersex individuals
 - The few who are out experience activist fatigue
- Lack of education around intersex issues/realities



Observations and Conclusions

The findings from the 2020 Survey of LGBTI Organisations in Europe and Central Asia about Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) Youth Homelessness provide insight into the experiences of LGBTI focused organisations regarding their work on the issue of LGBTIQ youth homelessness and/or regarding their work directly with LGBTI youth experiencing homelessness. While this is not a representative sample and the findings are not generalizable to all LGBTI focused homeless service organisations across Europe and Central Asia, nor all ILGA-Europe member organisations, the data reported herein add to the existing information about LGBTI youth homelessness in Europe and Central Asia and can inform further research, capacity building, policy and programmatic endeavors geared towards adequately addressing homelessness among LGBTI youth.

A significant limitation of this report is the small sample size, and that limitation must be considered when reviewing the findings. While the survey was distributed to approximately 650 organisations, only 71 organisational representatives completed most of the survey and were thus included in the analysis. This small response rate is notable, as one critical component of adequately addressing LGBTI youth homelessness is accurate data. There are several countries that are not represented in this data, including countries such as Turkey and Russia, where LGBTI homelessness has been noted as a problem^{1,2,3}. It is important to understand the reasons that more organisations elected not to participate. One possible reason is that organisations that do not focus on LGBTI youth homelessness may have felt the survey was not intended for them. Also, the data collection occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, which may have contributed to the low response rate. Another possible reason is a limited understanding of types of homelessness and/or what homelessness entails and/or what “working on the issue of” or “working with people experiencing homelessness” means. While we cannot know all of the reasons, we can speculate that the lack of participation may be related to the above issues, as well as issues such as: organisational capacity, the prioritization of other important issues related to LGBTI individuals and communities, and/or limited access to the information needed to complete the survey. It is our hope that one outcome of this report will be an increased motivation among organisations to participate in future research.

Less than half of organisations surveyed (41%) specifically focus at least part of their work on LGBTI youth homelessness, yet three quarters (75%) of respondents reported working directly with an LGBTI young person experiencing homelessness at some point. The vast majority of responding organisations indicating they’ve worked directly with this population signals the prevalence of this issue across Europe and Central Asia. However, these findings must also be considered within the context of the small sample size. It could be that those who either prioritize their work around the issue of LGBTI youth homelessness, or those who have worked directly with this population, were more likely to complete the survey. We cannot know or even estimate the actual proportion of LGBTI-focused organisations that have worked with youth experiencing homelessness across Europe and Central Asia.

Whilst the majority of responding organisations reported some experience working on the issue, prevalence rates of LGBTI youth homelessness across Europe and Central Asia remain unclear.* Nearly one-quarter (22.5%) of respondents indicated that they “honestly have no idea” what percentage of the youth homeless population in their countries is LGBTI, which was also the most common response from countries in Eastern Europe (42%). The same number of responses from countries in West Europe (20%) and West Asia (33%) showed that they believe less than 10% of the youth homeless population in their countries is LGBTI or that they “honestly [had] no idea.” In North European countries, about one third (31%) of respondents estimated 20-30%, and just under

half (42%) of South European countries estimated 10-20% with a notable 8% estimating 40-50% of youth homeless population in their countries is LGBTI. Defining the scope of a social problem is often a prerequisite to the development of systematic solutions to address the problem, however it is important to consider the sociopolitical contexts within which some of the respondent organisations are operating.

*For our purposes of analysis, regions mentioned in this paragraph are according to the [United Nations Geoscheme](#) as used by the UN Statistics Division. See Appendix A for the complete list of respondent countries organized by region.

Findings indicate that a lack of data is one barrier to addressing homelessness among LGBTI youth. When reporting on organisational challenges to working on the issue, 75% of respondents indicated a lack of data as a barrier, while 55% reported a lack of knowledge about the situation of LGBTI youth homelessness as a barrier. Further, although over one third (41%) of respondents reported that their organisations exist to work specifically and primarily with or on behalf of various groups of LGBTI youth experiencing homelessness, findings reveal there is no systematized procedure for collecting demographic information of the people they serve, including housing status, sex characteristics, sexual orientation and gender identity of service users. Adopting a systematized procedure for the collection of demographic data such as housing status, sex characteristics, sexual orientation and gender identity data from service users, in locations where it is safe to do so, would enable a more thorough understanding of the prevalence, causes, and consequences of LGBTI youth homelessness across Europe and Central Asia. Comprehensive data collection efforts that are inclusive of a range of identities and experiences is a critical component of documenting and addressing the disparities faced by this population of young people.

Despite the reported lack of data and knowledge about LGBTI youth homelessness, respondents identified several key reasons they believe LGBTI youth experience homelessness. These reasons mirror those identified in the North American research literature^{4,5,6,7,8}. Identity related family conflict, lack of institutional support/social rejection, poverty, mental health issues, and migration were the most frequently cited reasons among the study sample. The majority of respondents (72%) reported perceiving that negative attitudes from family members play a role in LGBTI youths' experience with homelessness or the threat of homelessness. In addition to building more affirming spaces, we recommend organisations advocate amongst homelessness providers for more positive attitudes toward LGBTI identities in the regions they serve. It is important to understand the causes of homelessness among LGBTI youth so that prevention efforts, policies, and programmes can be appropriately developed.

Three respondents stated that LGBTI youth experience homelessness for the same reasons other groups experience homelessness, including financial, social, and mental health problems. While this may indeed be accurate, it is important to contextualize these common experiences within the social and political climate of each country/region. For instance, in a social climate that is oppressive to LGBTI people, LGBTI youth homelessness may also be in part due to their status as a stigmatized and marginalized group. This type of social climate may also contribute to an inability to become financially stable, if employers and landlords are free to discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity/expression and sex characteristics. Free to discriminate in this context refers to the absence of anti-discrimination legislation and policies in many countries, in combination with low social acceptance and discriminatory treatment of LGBTI people. In too many places stigmatization and mistreatment are normalized, permitted, and even encouraged, resulting in individual landlords and employers feeling that they have the right to perpetrate discrimination.

In addition to identifying a lack of data and knowledge about LGBTI youth homelessness as a primary challenge to addressing the issue, when asked to identify the greatest organisational challenge, respondents most commonly cited a lack of funding as paramount. LGBTI focused organisations are tasked with supporting and advocating for a range of human rights issues, and without appropriate infrastructure and financial support, it is impossible to adequately address the myriad ways in which LGBTI populations are negatively impacted by LGBTI-phobic attitudes and actions. The majority of LGBTI organisations included in this report either indicated a lack of policies to address youth homelessness or were unsure of the existence of such policies in their countries. Almost all of the respondents (90%) reported a lack of LGBTI specific youth homelessness policies or were unsure if such policies exist.

Governmental support for addressing youth homelessness, and LGBTI youth homelessness in particular, is needed to help ensure that all people have access to housing, which is a basic human right. Homelessness is sometimes thought about as an individual failure to secure and maintain housing, rather than what it actually is -- a structural failure and political problem. This is made evident by the criminalization of homelessness in some countries, which results in further social exclusion and additional barriers to exiting homelessness. From a human rights perspective, homelessness is understood as the product of structural inequity and the failure of states to ensure the human rights of all people. As per the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the human right to adequate housing includes the following seven components:

1. "Security of tenure: housing is not adequate if its occupants do not have a degree of tenure security, which guarantees legal protection against forced evictions, harassment and other threats.
2. Availability of services, materials, and infrastructure: housing is not adequate if its occupants do not have safe drinking water, adequate sanitation, energy for cooking, heating, lighting, food storage or refuse disposal.
3. Affordability: housing is not adequate if its cost threatens or compromises the occupants' enjoyment of other human rights.
4. Habitability: housing is not adequate if it does not guarantee physical safety or provide adequate space, as well as protection against the cold, damp, heat, rain, wind, other threats to health and structural hazards.
5. Accessibility: housing is not adequate if the specific needs of disadvantaged and marginalized groups are not taken into account.
6. Location: housing is not adequate if it is cut off from employment opportunities, health-care services, schools, childcare centers and other social facilities, or if located in polluted or dangerous areas.
7. Cultural adequacy: housing is not adequate if it does not respect and take into account the expression of cultural identity"

Where Do We Go From Here?

This report provides a baseline of knowledge regarding the experiences of LGBTI-focused organisations in Europe and Central Asia working on the issue of LGBTI youth homelessness. The findings suggest multiple opportunities for resource development, further research, and collaboration. The following are suggestions for utilizing the study findings to expand upon the current work to address LGBTI youth homelessness across Europe and Central Asia.

- **Expand the research base:**

This report is a first step in documenting the work of LGBTI focused organisations and their engagement with LGBTI youth homelessness in Europe and Central Asia. In countries across Europe including Ireland, Spain, UK, France & Slovenia, services are undertaking research into LGBTI homelessness. This research, along with the recently published data from the Fundamental Rights Agency, has demonstrated the prevalence of LGBTI youth homelessness in Europe and Central Asia, but more research is required.

Due to the limited capacities of the research team, we encourage and support local research centers to establish and expand their involvement in future research that centers on LGBTI youth experiencing homelessness. Additionally, we encourage local organisations to review and interpret the data in this report within their local contexts to increase funding, knowledge, and social supports for LGBTI youth facing housing crises. The limited sample featured in this report gives confidence that local organisations are already doing important, life-saving work and that increasing visibility and involvement in future studies will amplify their potential to respond effectively. We specifically recommend further research into the detailed demographics of LGBTI youth experiencing homelessness and the types of homelessness they experience, as well as the main reasons for their homelessness, the main challenges they face in accessing services and/or in finding long-term

solutions for exiting the situation of homelessness, socio-cultural attitudes about LGBTI youth homelessness, and policies around homelessness, including LGBTI youth homelessness, in various regions of Europe and Central Asia.

To the European Commission we specifically recommend conducting research into the prevalence of LGBTI youth homelessness, with the support of FRA and/or Eurostat.

- **Develop a systematic process of data collection:**

One of the reasons LGBTI youth homelessness is sometimes referred to as a “hidden” issue is because of the absence of systematic data collection about sexual orientation, gender identity, and sex characteristics. Notably missing from this report, we encourage organisations to include sex characteristics on intake forms and in future surveys to more accurately record the diversity of intersex experiences. Collecting data on sex characteristics can lead to anti-discrimination legislation that protects the rights of intersex people, and thus is essential to this work. Understandably, regional context and security must be taken into account when developing these processes. Organisational representatives and young people could form a working group to inform resources and guidance for collecting this information. Ideally, governments can incorporate these systematic data collection efforts into existing

surveys. LGBTI organisations can advocate for the inclusion of these items, and can provide technical assistance to governments as they incorporate sexual orientation, gender identity, and sex characteristics into data collection efforts. In the absence of government support for systematic data collection of this information, LGBTI organisations can work alongside other systems (public welfare, housing, homeless services, healthcare, education, etc.) to include relevant items in their data collection efforts. The European Commission can play a role by collecting data on the specific issues faced by service providers in this area, with the view of providing policy recommendations and exchange of good practices among Member States.

As stated above, it is our hope that organisations begin to participate in future studies, though the necessary work begins sooner; to directly address respondents' most common (75%) organisational challenge, we encourage organisations to actively and intentionally collect data to better record the experiences of LGBTI youth experiencing homelessness in their region. These data can be used to increase government awareness and financial support, the most commonly reported greatest organisational challenge (36.5%) for addressing LGBTI youth homelessness.

· **Awareness raising and advocacy:**

It is important to continue to raise awareness about the prevalence of LGBTI homelessness with policy makers, funders and service providers. LGBTI organisations have a key role to play in this. By focusing advocacy efforts on LGBTI inclusive homelessness and poverty policies, LGBTI organisations can help ensure that the realities of LGBTI youth experiencing homelessness are put squarely on the agenda of policy makers and get addressed as part of larger efforts to combat poverty and social exclusion.

· **Work to strengthen capacities:**

True Colors United, FEANTSA and ILGA-Europe are committed to continue to work to strengthen the capacities of homelessness service providers and LGBTI organisations to address LGBTI homelessness. They hope to work together to develop culturally responsive resources and training to this end. They hope to work together to support organisations in:

- Developing thorough research methodologies and ethical protocols in conducting research and collecting required data on LGBTI youth homelessness;
- Developing and implementing effective alliance building strategies with other actors/service providers addressing homelessness in the country/region and with other LGBTI organisations focusing on LGBTI youth homelessness in the country/region and/or other regions;
- Organising peer-learning and, if needed, expert training about forms of and reasons for homelessness (including LGBTI youth homelessness) and on the best practices, service provision, fundraising and local and international advocacy on LGBTI youth homelessness;
- Developing and implementing creative advocacy and campaigning strategies aimed at raising awareness and shifting socio-cultural attitudes – of decision makers as well as the general public – about LGBTI youth homelessness, its reasons, challenges and the importance of addressing it;
- Developing and disseminating resources on best practices of service provision, research, campaigning and advocacy when it comes to working with LGBTI youth experiencing homelessness and ensuring their human rights.
- The forthcoming European Platform on Combating Homelessness (EPOCH) provides a unique opportunity to provide a strategic framework to

strengthen capacities of both LGBTI and homeless services through ILGA-Europe and FEANTSA membership.

- The European Commission and national agencies should ensure that European Funds including the ESF+ and the renewed Youth Guarantee are mobilised to support LGBTIQ youth at risk of, or experiencing homelessness.

• **Cross-sectoral collaboration:**

The narrative in combating homelessness in general has shifted towards collaboration between sectors, systems and services. Despite the critical work that they do, LGBTI focused organisations cannot prevent and end homelessness on their own, nor can homeless service organisations prevent and end homelessness on their own. LGBTI-focused organisations and homelessness services should partner when possible in order to share knowledge, expertise, and resources to more effectively and holistically address homelessness among LGBTI youth.

• **Resource mobilisation:**

It is paramount that more funding to tackle LGBTI homelessness is made accessible and available. Funders working to combat homelessness and poverty should ensure that funding reaches initiatives tailored towards addressing LGBTI youth homelessness, particularly in countries where no state support is available. This funding should be made available to cover various areas of work: service provision, research, advocacy, campaigning, work in communication, training, and awareness raising, among others. Human Rights funders should work to make sure that LGBTI organisations are supported to address issues of homelessness and poverty and encourage human rights organisations to include LGBTI populations in their work on poverty and homelessness. Governments and local authorities should ensure that appropriate services are provided to LGBTI

youth experiencing homelessness by ensuring that existing services are accessible and inclusive and that LGBTI organisations are supported to provide training and awareness raising to homelessness services on the specific needs of LGBTI young people. Governments and local authorities should work on developing, introducing and implementing anti-discrimination legislation which will make much work on resource mobilisation possible and/or easier.

The European Union should earmark funding for service providers and civil society working with vulnerable youth to research needs and provide services for LGBTI youth experiencing homelessness via its various relevant funding streams.



Respondents' countries by global region

*Regions according to the United Nations Geoscheme as used by the UN Statistics Division¹¹

West Europe	South Europe	North Europe	East Europe	West Asia	Central Asia
Austria	Albania	Denmark	Bulgaria	Armenia	Kyrgyzstan
Belgium	Bosnia & Herzegovina	Finland	Hungary	Georgia	
France	Greece	Iceland	Poland		
Germany	Italy	Ireland	Romania		
Netherlands	Malta	Latvia	Ukraine		
Switzerland	Montenegro	Sweden			
	North Macedonia	United Kingdom			
	Portugal				
	Serbia				
	Slovenia				
	Spain				

Works Cited

- Berkhead, S. (2020, June 4). Quarantined with family, Russia's LGBT youth face new struggles. *The Moscow Times*. <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2020/06/04/quarantined-with-family-russias-lgbt-youth-face-new-struggles-a70477>
- McClain, M., & Waite-Wright, O. (2016). The LGBT community in Turkey: Discrimination, violence, and the struggle for equality. *Creighton Int'l & Comp. LJ*, 7, 152.
- United States Department of State. (2018). *Russia 2018 human rights report*. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor. <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/RUSSIA-2018-HUMAN-RIGHTSREPORT.pdf>
- Abramovich, A. & Shelton, J. (Eds.). (2017). *Where am I going to go? Intersectional approaches to ending LGBTQ2S youth homelessness in Canada and the US*. Toronto, ONT: Canadian Homelessness Research Network Press.
- Choi, S.K., Wilson, B.D.M., Shelton, J., & Gates, G. (2015). *Serving our Youth 2015: The Needs and Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning Youth Experiencing Homelessness*. Los Angeles: The Williams Institute with the True Colors Fund.
- Shelton, J., DeChants, J*, Bender, K., Hsu, H., Narendorf, S., Ferguson, K., Petering, R., Barman-Adhikari, A., & Santa Maria, D. (2018). Homelessness and housing experiences among LGBTQ youth and young adults: An intersectional examination across seven U.S. cities. *Cityscape*, 20(3), 9-33.
- OII Europe. (2020). *Intersex people in Europe face housing an deconomic difficulties*. Retrieved from <https://oiieurope.org/housing-and-economic-difficulties/>
- Ryan, C., Huebner, D., Diaz, R.M., & Sanchez, J. (2009). Family rejection as a predictor of negative health outcomes in white and Latino lesbian, gay, and bisexual young adults. *Pediatrics*, 123(1), 346-52.
- Canada Without Poverty. (2016). *Youth rights! Right now! Ending youth homelessness: A human rights guide*. Retrieved from <https://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/attachments/YouthRightsRightNow-final.pdf>
- UN Habitat. (n.d.). *The right to adequate housing*. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Fact Sheet No. 1. Retrieved from https://www.ohchr.org/documents/publications/fs21_rev_1_housing_en.pdf
- UN Statistics Division. (n.d.). *Methodology. Geographic regions*. <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/methodology/m49/>