

# LGBTIQ+ and Homelessness in Germany

Queer Perspectives, Experiences and Needs

Prof. Dr. Claudia Steckelberg



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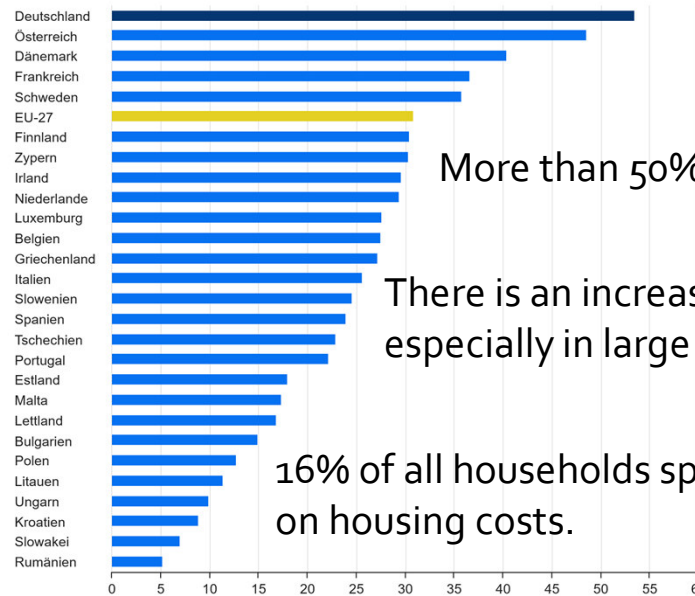
# Introduction to the study

- funded for one year (01.01.23 – 31.12.2023) by the Magnus Hirschfeld Federal Foundation and the research funding program of the Neubrandenburg University of Applied Sciences
- qualitative study: 14 narrative interviews with people who
  - identify as queer/ LGBTIQ+
  - are homeless or have experienced homelessness in the past.
- queer research team,
- using social media, professional and private networks, and contact via the mobile counselling services against right-wing extremism



# Housing and Homelessness in Germany

Anteil der Bevölkerung, der zur Miete wohnt 2022  
in %



More than 50% of the population live in rented housing.

There is an increasing shortage of affordable housing, especially in large cities and areas of touristical interest.

16% of all households spend more than 40% of their income on housing costs.

Quelle: Eurostat

© Statistisches Bundesamt (Destatis), 2024

In 2022, the number of homeless people was estimated at 600,000.



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## LGBTIQ+/ Queer in Germany

- LGBTIQ+/queer
  - do not conform to binary and heterosexual gender norm,
  - experience marginalisation, neglect and assault due to heteronormative discrimination

**+** Positive development in the past decades in terms of equality, recognition and legal protection

**■** Sharp increase of hate crimes against queer people

Far right parties are continuously gaining power - inhuman attitudes and discourses that neglect human rights are being normalised



## Hostile Private Space: Families

### Neglect and hostility within families

*„Of course, the fact that I am a trans and bisexual person has had a strong influence on me living on the streets, because my family is so very conservative and there were other problems with them too, why I don't keep in touch, but part of it is just when I stay with them, then I cannot be myself, because they don't want to hear about it, so I have to, when I visit them, I have to pretend all the time, but I cannot do that anymore.“ (Jascha 2023, Z. 770-776)*

*„My family could theoretically offer me help. That is, I could live in their house, look for work, but I'm mentally not able to do that, I don't know how I should deal with imitating someone I'm not, for don't know how long, until I've saved up enough money for a flat, for example. I'm just not able to accept their help, even if the other problems didn't exist.“ (Jascha 2023, Z. 785-793)*



## Hostile Private Space: Neighbourhood and Communities

Assaults and violence from neighbours



Communities and state institutions that trivialise right-wing violence and do not provide support

*„So on December 24th, I received a letter from public prosecution. It said: ‚Proceedings are hereby closed, there is no public interest in criminal procedure in this case.‘ I thought that can't possibly be true and above all, I emphasise, Christmas Eve, why are they sending me this on Christmas Eve?“ (Michael 2023, Z. 141-145)*



# Hostile Public Space

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Homeless people, who live mainly in public spaces and shelters are more exposed to discrimination than people with their own housing.

*"So concerning, no idea, I don't know, religious practices like eating kosher, for example or being queer, or being in a lesbian relationship, well obviously, you're out public with everything and all that makes you, that is a potential reason for discrimination, makes you even more exposed and even more vulnerable. And everything that you – well, the more you can cover up about yourself, the better. Finito."*  
(Aaron 2023, Z.1452-1463)

Classism and LGBTIQ+ hostility have a reinforcing effect.

*"That is also difficult because everyone, of course all trans people, but if you're homeless and you look like you're homeless that's doubly difficult because if, for instance, I push a person away from me or react somehow aggressively and someone calls the police, then the police almost automatically takes the side of the other person."* (Jascha 2023, Z. 900-904)



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## Migration: In Search for Safer Spaces

Migration represents a considerable risk factor for becoming homeless and is at the same time inevitable for queer people facing discrimination and violence.

*„And then I said: What could possibly happen? (laughing) Worst case scenario, you get robbed. You don't possess anything anyway. What could they steal from you? Worst case scenario, you get killed. You tried to kill yourself anyway.“ (Emir 2023, Z. 476-478)*

*„When you really can say freely for example: Yes, I'm gay. Or: Yes, I'm a lesbian. Or in my case: I'm pansexual. When you can just say that freely. That is truly, as if you had been underwater for a long long time and then you surface again. That's what it feels like.“ (Emir 2023, Z.476-478)*





# Social Work and Safer Spaces

Queer homeless people are in urgent need of safer spaces in order to survive.

- A Room of One's Own
- Safer spaces in rural areas
- Community Work
- Policy Practice





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