

Center for American Progress



Gay and Transgender Youth Homelessness by the Numbers

June 21, 2010

Report: **On the Streets: The Federal Response to Gay and Transgender Homeless Youth**

There are approximately 1.6 million to 2.8 million homeless young people in the United States, and estimates suggest that disproportionate numbers of those youth are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender. These vulnerable gay and transgender youth often run away from home because of family conflict and then face overt discrimination when seeking alternative housing, which is compounded by institutionalized discrimination in federally funded programs.

We do not have to accept this reality. The federal government has the power to reduce and eventually eliminate rates of gay and transgender youth homelessness while addressing youth homelessness overall. Congress can and should make a financial commitment to services directed at these young people. They should join with federal agencies and couple it with an expansion of equal rights and protections to all gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people. As the numbers below show, it's time we provide these young people with the help they need.

An alarming number of gay and transgender young people are homeless

1.6 million to 2.8 million: The estimated number of homeless youth in the United States.

20 to 40 percent: The portion of the homeless youth population who are gay or transgender, compared to only 5 to 10 percent of the overall youth population.

320,000 to 400,000: A conservative estimate of the number of gay and transgender youth facing homelessness each year.

14.4: The average age that lesbian and gay youth in New York become homeless.

13.5: The average age that transgender youth in New York become homeless.

Homeless gay and transgender youth see higher rates of abuse and victimization

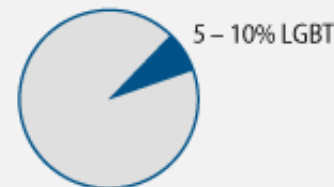
58 percent: The portion of homeless gay and transgender youth who have been sexually assaulted, compared to 33 percent of homeless heterosexual youth.

44 percent: The portion of homeless gay and transgender youth who reported being asked by someone on the street to exchange sex for money, food, drugs, shelter, or clothes, compared to 26 percent of straight homeless youth.

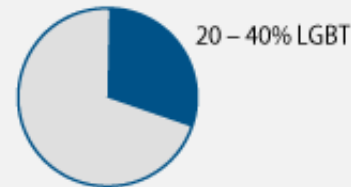
Rejection and discrimination at home lead to severe personal and social problems

13: The average age gay and lesbian youth now come out after self-identifying as gay or lesbian as young as ages 5 to 7.

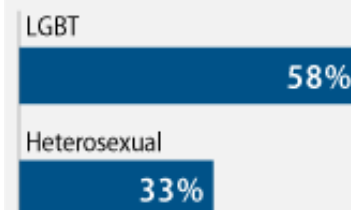
Youth population

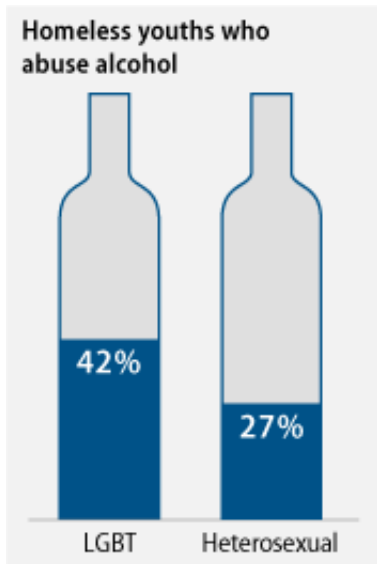


Homeless youth population



Homeless youths who have been sexually assaulted





62 percent: The portion of homeless gay and transgender youth who experience discrimination from their families, compared to 30 percent of their heterosexual peers.

42 percent: The portion of homeless gay and transgender youth who abuse alcohol, compared to 27 percent of heterosexual youth.

62 percent: The portion of homeless gay and transgender youth who attempt suicide, compared to 29 percent of their heterosexual homeless peers.

8.4 times: How much more likely gay and transgender youth are to attempt suicide if they are rejected by their families in adolescence compared to if they are not rejected by their family. They are also 5.9 times as likely to have experienced depression, 3.4 times as likely to have used illicit drugs, and 3.4 times as likely to have had unprotected sex.

Harassment at school leads to high dropout rates

86 percent: The portion of gay and lesbian students who reported being verbally harassed at school due to their sexual orientation in 2007.

44 percent: The portion of gay and lesbian students who reported being physically harassed at school because of their sexual orientation in 2007.

22 percent: The portion of gay and transgender students who reported having been physically attacked in school in 2007. Sixty percent say they did not report the incidents because they believed no one would care.

31 percent: The portion of gay and transgender students who report incidents of harassment and violence at school to staff only to receive no response.

Two times: How much less likely gay and transgender students are to finish high school or pursue a college education compared to the national average.

Child welfare systems often fail to protect gay and transgender youth

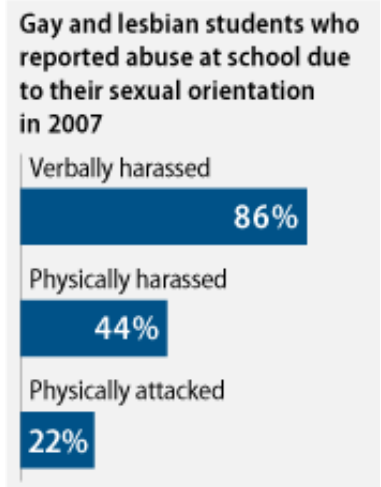
78 percent: The portion of gay and transgender youth who were either removed from or ran away from their New York foster care placements due to conflict and discrimination related to their sexual orientation or gender identity.

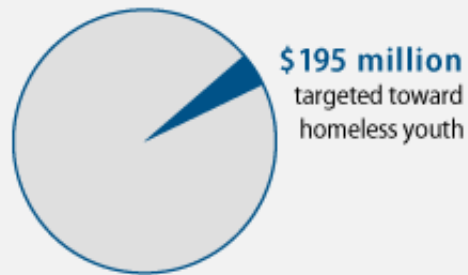
88 percent: The portion of professional staff in out-of-home placements who say that gay and transgender youth were not safe in group-home environments.

\$53,665: The estimated cost to maintain a youth in the criminal justice system for one year, while it only costs **\$5,887** to permanently move a homeless youth off the streets and prevent them from reentering the criminal justice system.

Federal programs overlook homeless gay and transgender youth

\$195 million: The portion of the federal government's \$4.2 billion budget for homeless-assistance programs that is targeted toward homeless youth.



The Federal government's \$4.2 billion budget for homeless-assistance programs

Less than 1 percent: The portion of the \$44 billion federal budget for rental assistance, public housing, and affordable housing programs allocated for homeless youth housing assistance.

44,483: The number of youth who were given a bed in a shelter through Runaway and Homeless Youth Act programs in 2008, compared to **766,800** homeless youth identified through these programs.

For more information, see:

- [On the Streets: The Federal Response to Gay and Transgender Homeless Youth](#)

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