

Homeless in Europe

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LGBTIQ Homelessness





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LGBTIQ homelessness

By **Emma Nolan**, *FEANTSA Communications Officer*

The topic of homelessness amongst the LGBTIQ community is enormously under-researched in Europe and the research which does exist points to the same conclusion: the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, intersex and queer community is *vastly* over-represented amongst the homeless population, especially in the under-25 age bracket.

The collection of reliable and comparable data on homelessness is not easy, particularly in Europe where countries often use different methodologies and different definitions of what counts as ‘homelessness.’ The collection of robust data on the proportion of homeless people who are LGBTIQ, therefore, is even more difficult to come by. Estimates included in the article by True Colors, show that between 20 and 40% of young homeless people identify as LGBTIQ in the USA and Canada. In Europe, the figures are less clear, but [research](#) in the UK quotes a figure of 25%. This is a massive over-representation when one considers that LGBTIQ people make up about 7% of the general population.

WHY ARE THE NUMBERS SO HIGH?

A range of reasons have been identified; from family rejection and bullying at school, to inadequate aftercare programmes, abuse, ill-equipped homeless services and discrimination on the housing market. From this list alone, it is easy to see some commonalities between LGBTIQ homelessness and general youth homelessness, which is why the existing work on LGBTIQ homelessness often focuses on young people.

By dedicating this edition of the Homeless in Europe magazine to the issue of LGBTIQ homelessness, we hope to make a useful contribution to the conversation and to take a first step towards further FEANTSA work on the topic.

The first contribution in this edition is an article by Evelyne Paradis of ILGA Europe (the European Region of the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association), which discusses why social exclusion and homelessness amongst the LGBTIQ community is currently so under-studied in

Europe. Paradis makes the important point that very few activists in Europe advocate on this specific issue, meaning that the social exclusion of LGBTIQ communities is often not on the policy-making agenda.

The second article in the magazine is by Jama Shelton of the True Colors Fund, a national organisation in the USA, working specifically to end homelessness among LGBTIQ youth. The article provides a very helpful introduction to the subject of LGBTIQ youth homelessness, and explains why it is so prevalent and what can be done to prevent and ultimately end it. Shelton also explains the way True Colors works by focusing on advocacy, training and education and youth collaboration.

The third article is written by three researchers from Movisie, the Netherlands Centre for Social Development, and details a participatory action study among homeless LGBTIQ young people in Amsterdam, as well as recommendations for research and practice.

The fourth article is jointly written by the Rais Fundación and the Federación Estatal de Lesbianas, Gays, Transexuales y Bisexuales (FELGBT) and discusses the lack of data in Spain on homelessness among the LGBTIQ community and makes a plea for more research to be done and for more collaboration between the homeless sector and LGBTIQ organisations.

The final article is a review of *Where Am I Going to Go? Intersectional Approaches to Ending LGBTQ2S Youth Homelessness in Canada & the US* – a recent book edited by Alexander Abramovich and Jama Shelton, which brings together research in North America on LGBTIQ homelessness and provides some concrete examples for solutions.

This is by no means an exhaustive collection of research or organisations working on this topic and we encourage you to [get in touch](#) if you know of other innovative practices or useful sources of data.

FEANTSA would like to thank all of the authors who contributed to this issue of the magazine.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We would like to give you the chance to comment on any of the articles which have appeared in this issue. If you would like to share your ideas, thoughts and feedback, please send an email to the editor, emma.nolan@feantsa.org

The articles in *Homeless in Europe* do not necessarily reflect the views of FEANTSA. Extracts from this publication can be quoted as long as the sources are acknowledged.



In 2017, why is the issue of LGBTI homelessness still invisible?

By Evelyne Paradis, *ILGA-Europe Executive Director*

Over a decade ago, [ILGA-Europe](#) (the European Region of the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association) and [IGLYO](#) (the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex Youth & Student Organisation) highlighted some of the effects that discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity can have.

[‘Social exclusion of young LGBT people in Europe’](#), was released after both organisations had conducted a wide-ranging survey with young LGBT people from 37 countries. More than half the respondents reported experiences of prejudice and/or discrimination in their own families. Some of the most heart-breaking testimonies came from young people who found themselves on the street after coming out:

“...When my mother “suspected” that I was a lesbian, she read my diary and then when she saw what I had written, she kicked me out...”

“...My father asked me to leave the family house when I was 18 – he ordered me because I told him I was gay...”

These words were written in 2006. Has the risk of homelessness or insecure housing decreased for LGBTI people since then?

At first glance, the overall picture does not look too encouraging. In the lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex (LGBTI) movement, we are all too aware that our communities are at risk of social exclusion and homelessness. While coming out can be empowering process, for some LGBTI people, this can be the start of a very precarious situation.

Of course, discrimination against LGBTI people can manifest itself in many different ways. Homelessness might not be a direct result of coming out to unsupportive friends or family. It could also occur when LGBTI people who are searching for new accommodation face obstacles. In the [major 2012 LGBT survey](#) conducted by the EU’s Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), 13% of respondents said they had felt personally discriminated against in the past year –because they were LGBT - when trying to rent or buy property.

A lack of understanding among employers and a disproportionately high level of negative attitudes can make it more difficult for trans people to find employment, thereby increasing their risk of poverty. We can imagine that many LGBTI asylum seekers arriving in Europe encounter similar issues. And very little information currently exists on the specific experiences of intersex people as they try to access accommodation.

There is still so much missing from the conversation about LGBTI homelessness. Some data exists – but it is still the case that much of the knowledge that NGOs and support services have built up on the issue

of LGBTI homelessness is based on individual experience, not hard statistics. The personal interactions and first-hand accounts from LGBTI people heard by activists working at community level are some of the most tangible resources we have. [FEANTSA have eloquently outlined the need](#) for more substantial qualitative and quantitative information on homelessness across Europe. The piecemeal, fragmented information on the LGBTI community and homelessness that we have at the moment is not enough.

Of course, there are some resources - but a simple online search for information on support groups that specifically work with LGBTI service-users is a telling exercise. News articles about shelters and other temporary accommodation options for LGBTI people are frequently accompanied with headlines containing the words “unique”, “only”, or “one-of-a-kind”. The LGBTI community deserve adequate housing and support – not just ‘one-off’ quick fixes.

So, if we know that the problem exists what are we doing to address it? Sadly, it seems the answer to that question is ‘too little’. As a human rights movement, we should be trying to reverse the exclusion risk, even in the absence of completely comprehensive data.

We also have to acknowledge that very few activists in Europe advocate on this issue specifically. The fact is that concerns around social exclusion of LGBTI communities are not on the agenda of many policy-makers. If there are not more public conversations and advocacy going on around LGBTI homelessness, it will continue to be an invisible problem.

That might sound a bit extreme, but it’s true. Many civil society groups focus their attention on too narrow a section of the population. White, middle-class people, perhaps with an education, will generally be included in the work of NGOs. But we don’t always pay enough attention to the other factors that could be contributing to the social exclusion of LGBTI people.

And I’m not saying that ILGA-Europe are perfect while simultaneously pointing the finger of blame at all other NGOs. ILGA-Europe undoubtedly need to learn more too. We need to improve our analysis of the barriers created around class, race, migration status, access to education... We have to keep asking ourselves: who we are listening to? Are we doing enough as an organisation to make sure activists have the tools to get engaged in advocacy work? Who is getting left behind?

We have a responsibility to reflect honestly on our own approach in order to analyse this problem more effectively. Restarting the conversation around LGBTI homelessness is a vital step, and that is why ILGA-Europe are so grateful to FEANTSA for offering us the opportunity to start that work in the pages of “Homeless in Europe”.

“If there are not more public conversations and advocacy going on around LGBTI homelessness, it will continue to be an invisible problem.”



The True Colors Fund: Addressing LGBT youth & young adult homelessness in the United States

By **Jama Shelton, MSW, PhD**

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ISSUE OVERVIEW: LGBT YOUTH & YOUNG ADULT HOMELESSNESS IN THE UNITED STATES

Accurate data on the prevalence of youth and young adult (YYA) homelessness in the United States are significantly lacking, due to challenges collecting this data and variance in definitions of what constitutes homelessness for YYA. Estimates have ranged from several hundred thousand youth up to 1.6 million. Likewise, enumerating subpopulations within the population of YYA experiencing homelessness poses challenges. Studies indicate that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) YYA make up a disproportionate amount of the population of YYA experiencing homelessness in the United States (Choi, Wilson, Shelton, & Gates, 2015; Durso & Gates, 2012; Kipke, Weiss, & Wong 2007; Maccio & Ferguson, 2015; Quintana et al., 2010; Van Leeuwen et al., 2006). LGBT youth are estimated to compose 20%–40% of the overall population of YYA experiencing homelessness. Considering that LGBT youth represent an estimated 7% of the total youth population, these numbers are disproportionately high. While even a single young person without a home is one too many, the disparity of LGBT youth experiencing homelessness is unfathomable.

LGBT youth experience homelessness for a variety of reasons, some of which are the same as the reasons all youth experience homelessness, such as family conflict, poverty, and aging out of systems of care. Some unique reasons LGBT youth experience homelessness include identity-based family rejection and exiting systems of care that are not equipped to affirmatively serve LGBT youth at the intersections of gender identity, sexual orientation, and race. Additionally, these systems of care are ill-equipped to meet the unique needs of youth who have experienced stigma and oppression related to heterosexism/homophobia, cisgenderism/transphobia, and racism (Olivet & Dones, 2016; Choi et al., 2015).

Once homeless, LGBT YYA are disproportionately impacted by a range of negative outcomes. For instance, LGBT YYA experiencing homelessness report higher rates of housing instability, mental health concerns, substance use, and physical and sexual

exploitation, and are at increased risk of involvement in the criminal legal system in comparison to their heterosexual and cisgender peers (Abramovich & Shelton, 2017; Cochran et al., 2002; Durso & Gates, 2012). In a recent survey of service providers working with homeless youth in the United States, respondents reported that the LGBT YYA they serve experience longer durations of homelessness compared to their heterosexual and cisgender counterparts. Similarly, providers reported that the LGBT youth, especially transgender youth, they serve are often in worse physical and mental health than their heterosexual and cisgender counterparts (Choi et al., 2015). For transgender YYA, structural barriers create additional challenges to program engagement, retention, and successful outcomes (Shelton, 2015). Despite these challenges, LGBT YYA are less likely than heterosexual and cisgender YYA to access services, often due to societal and institutional stigma, fear, harassment, and discrimination (Abramovich, 2016; Gattis, 2013).

THE TRUE COLORS FUND: ADDRESSING LGBT YOUTH & YOUNG ADULT HOMELESS IN THE UNITED STATES

Founded in 2008, the True Colors Fund is a national organization working to end homelessness among LGBT YYA in the United States, and create a world in which all young people can be their true selves. The True Colors Fund works within communities across the U.S. to develop solutions to prevent LGBT YYA homelessness and, when it occurs, help to make it a rare, brief, and one-time occurrence. The True Colors Fund does this work in three ways: through advocacy, training and education, and youth collaboration.

Through the Training & Education program, the True Colors Fund develops and disseminates educational materials and collaborates with professionals across youth serving sectors to ensure that LGBT YYA experiencing homelessness have access to the inclusive and affirming services they need. An example of a Training & Education project is the True U Challenge. True U is an online training platform designed to guide people toward cultural inclusivity in an interactive way – and at their own pace. Through short-form videos, articles, podcasts, and quizzes, True U helps individuals working with YYA to better serve LGBT young people



experiencing homelessness. True U provides organizations with simple ways to create inclusive policies and procedures, while giving a baseline for LGBT issues and terminology so that everyone is on the same page (and it's free!). Providing LGBT YYA with inclusive and affirming services often requires a cultural shift at an organization. It's crucial that all staff have a common understanding of LGBT inclusivity. From front line workers to facilities staff to administrators, every team member has the ability to make a positive impact on a young person's life. In order for that to happen, every staff member needs to be prepared to fully support any young person who walks through the door. A True U Challenge is an initiative to train a set number of people in a set amount of time to meet this exact goal. It's a fun, engaging way to get your staff motivated and create change at your organization quickly and efficiently. A True U Challenge can be implemented within a single organization or amongst a network of organizations.

The Advocacy program elevates the voices of LGBT YYA experiencing homelessness in local, state, and national government, and in the media to ensure vital social services and policy protections are in place to meet their needs. The biggest legislative priority of the True Colors Fund has been the reauthorization of the [Runaway and Homeless Youth Act](#), which funds and regulates runaway and homeless youth services, including street outreach programs, basic center programs, and transitional living programs. Unfortunately, LGBT young people sometimes face discrimination when attempting to access these services. For this reason, the True Colors Fund has been working to ensure that a strong nondiscrimination policy in place that protects all youth, but especially LGBT youth, when accessing life-saving homelessness services and supports.

The True Colors Fund collaborates with LGBT YYA in all areas of their work, and specifically through the Youth Collaboration program, which provides LGBT YYA experiencing homelessness with leadership development and opportunities enabling them to play an active role in creating solutions to address LGBT YYA homelessness. One such example is the National Youth Forum on Homelessness. Co-hosted by the National Alliance to End Homelessness and the True Colors Fund, the Forum is creating youth-led change in the national movement to end youth homelessness. The Forum ensures that strategies to end youth homelessness are generated by YYA and that the conversation regarding YYA homelessness in the U.S. is informed by the perspectives of YYA who have experienced homelessness. YYA involved in the Forum identify and analyze policies that impact youth at risk of or experiencing homelessness, experiencing homelessness, provide input to U.S.-based national organizations working to address YYA homeless-

ness, assess the effectiveness of interventions to assist YYA experiencing homelessness, advocate for strong policy and practice at the national, state, and local level to support YYA experiencing homelessness (Abramovich & Shelton, 2017).

CENTERING THE VOICES OF YOUTH & YOUNG ADULTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Central to the work of the True Colors Fund is the direct involvement of LGBT YYA who have experienced homelessness. Involving those to whom services are targeted is not common practice, particularly when services are crisis-based and targeted towards youth. As such, YYA experiencing homelessness may not be offered the same collaborative opportunities as YYA who are stably housed. Service providers may believe that due to the crisis of homelessness, YYA are not able to meaningfully participate in decision-making processes or to inform the development of programs, policies, and services meant to meet their needs. This assumption can create an "us/them" mentality that may be alienating to YYA. Further, it can perpetuate one-dimensional understandings of YYA experiencing homelessness as victims of their circumstances, thereby ignoring the strength, creativity, resilience, and possibilities they also possess. YYA who experience homelessness and are impacted by housing stability must be at the center of solutions meant to address LGBT YYA homelessness.

WHAT'S NEXT?

The True Colors Fund periodically receives the question: Why the focus on LGBT YYA? What about all the other YYA experiencing homelessness? In addition to the disproportionate representation, unique precipitating factors to homelessness, and disparate experiences once homelessness, we believe that when services are safe and affirming of the most marginalized YYA, we can be confident that they'll be safe and affirming for all YYA. When considering how to better address LGBT YYA homelessness, communities must recognize that **LGBT YYA homelessness requires a specialized response**. Discrimination against LGBT people continues to be a sanctioned activity in many countries. The U.S. does not currently have federal non-discrimination protections that are inclusive of sexual orientation and gender identity. In addition to the lack of federal non-discrimination protections, LGBT people in the U.S. have recently been subjected to a barrage of state and local level challenges to the rights of LGBT people in public accommodations, housing and employment. This is particularly true for transgender people. Preventing and responding to LGBT YYA homelessness requires specialized responses and targeted strategies that carefully consider the unique and diverse needs of LGBT YYA.

“While even a single young person without a home is one too many, the disparity of LGBT youth experiencing homelessness is unfathomable.”



Equally important is the **expansion of systems to include a focus on the prevention of LGBT YYA homelessness, as well as long term housing solutions**. A crisis response is important, yet it cannot be the only response. A comprehensive strategy would include policies and service systems that prioritize prevention and long-term solutions

(i.e., adequate housing and support), supported by emergency services to bridge the gap (Gaetz, 2013). The goal of services should be preventing homelessness from occurring, but when it does occur, making it a rare, brief, and one-time occurrence (Abramovich & Shelton, 2017).

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While the work is specific to LGBT youth, the strategies we employ to improve services across the country affect all young people experiencing homelessness.



Out on the Streets: why homeless LGBTIs run double the risk

By Michelle Emmen, Afiah Vijlbrief & Hanneke Felten, *Movisie*

At least 25 to 40 percent of homeless (young) adults in the United States and Canada are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender¹. Homeless LGBT young people leave home twice as often as their peers². One of the major causes of homelessness for young LGBT people is running away or being turned out following rejection by their families³. One third of them have been physically, emotionally or sexually abused⁴. LGBT youth have to deal with the challenges of coming out *and* discrimination⁵, in addition to the vulnerabilities, day-to-day problems and survival challenges of living rough⁶. Of course these statistics from the United States cannot be transferred directly to the Dutch context. Dutch people as a rule are more tolerant towards lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgender people⁷. Still the acceptance of LGBT rights is an issue, especially with Dutch young people⁸ and religious and ethnic minority groups⁹. Research studies in the Netherlands show that LGBT youth on average face more problems than their peers: both at home, in school, and in their social networks. They also run a higher risk of substance abuse and mental problems, such as suicidal behaviour and trauma¹⁰. LGBT adults also suffer more mental health problems¹¹. Relatively little is known about young people with an intersex condition¹²; but internationally they are often included within the LGBT spectrum¹³. Australian research shows that young people with an intersex condition find it harder to finish their education¹⁴. Dutch research shows that adults with an intersex condition may suffer feelings of shame because of their condition and experience fear of rejection¹⁵.

Little is known on how the situation of these LGBTI young people differs from other homeless young people in the Netherlands, and what kinds of specific support they would need¹⁶. But there is good news: in April 2017 the city of Amsterdam started a participatory action study among homeless LGBTI young

people¹⁷. This article will map relevant indications that this target group is also overrepresented in the Netherlands and suffers specific problems and needs. We present recommendations for research and practice. At the end of this article we provide an outline of our Amsterdam study.

DIFFICULTIES THAT YOUNG HOMELESS PEOPLE AND YOUNG LGBTI PEOPLE HAVE IN COMMON

It is clear that young LGB people are likely to face similar problems as young homeless people face. Less is known about transgender youth and even less about young people with an intersex condition, but they seem to have problems comparable to those of other young homeless people. Both homeless and LGBTI young people often face the following problems:

- *Problems in the family*; young homeless people have relatively often faced prior problems in their families with attachment, neglect, negligence, rejection by parents and lack of trust in parents¹⁸. LGBT youth are less likely to discuss their worries with their parents and experience less support from their families¹⁹. Moreover coming out (to parents) is not self-evident. In traditional migrant and refugee communities honour related violence might even take place to protect or reinstate the family's reputation²⁰. Young people in the Netherlands with an intersex condition suffer stigmatisation and taboos. Shame and fear of negative reactions prevent them from opening up²¹.
- *School problems*; the majority of young homeless people have stopped going to school long before they hit the street, they have problems with teachers and often have a lower level of educa-

“Future research among homeless youth should include intersects such as sexual preference and gender identity, to allow insight in the number of young homeless LGBTI people.”

1 Edidin, Ganim, Hunter & Karnik, 2012; Josephson & Wright, 2000; Ray, 2006

2 Cochran, Stewart, Ginzler, & Cauce 2002

3 Durso & Gates, 2012; Edidin et al., 2012; Ray, 2006

4 Durso & Gates, 2012

5 Ray, 2006

6 Cochran et al., 2002

7 Collier, Hornb, Bos, & Sandfort, 2015

8 Keuzenkamp & Kuyper, 2013; Kuyper, 2015; De Roos, Kuyper, & Iedema, 2014

9 Collier, Bos, Merry, & Sandfort, 2014; Huijnk, 2014; De Roos et al., 2014

10 Van Bergen & Van Lisdonk, 2010; Beusekom, Baams, Bos, Overbeek, Sandfort, 2015; Beusekom, Collier, Bos, Sandfort, 2014; Collier, Bos, Sandfort, 2013; Keuzenkamp & Kuyper, 2013; Kuyper, 2015

11 Keuzenkamp, 2012; Keuzenkamp, 2012

12 Intersex refers to the experiences of people born with a body that does not fit the normative definitions of man and woman (Van Hoof & van der have, 2016).

13 Hoof & van der Have, 2016.

14 Jones, 2016 quoted by Hoof & van der Have, 2016

15 Lisdonk, 2014

16 Felten, Boote & Emmen, 2015

17 The main research question: *‘Do homeless young people and (young) adults have specific experiences, problems and needs related to their LGBTI identity and, if so, what are they? Is specific support needed for this target group and, if so, what should it look like?’*

18 Jeeninga, 2010; Jonker, 2012

19 Kuyper, 2015

20 Brenninkmeijer, Geerse, & Roggeband, 2009; Felten, 2014

21 van Hoof & van der Have, 2016



tion²². LGB young people are also less likely to end up in higher education than heterosexual youth, they show twice as much truancy and are more likely to have a bad relationship with teachers. In school LGB youth experience bullying four times as often as heterosexual pupils²³, which increases the risk of homelessness²⁴, and they more often face violence²⁵. Non-gender-conforming youth ('feminine' boys and 'masculine' girls) are specifically at risk²⁶. It may be assumed that transgender pupils also run a higher risk: a sample in secondary schools shows that one in five transgender pupils suffered serious physical abuse compared to 3% of non-transgender pupils²⁷.

- *Limited social network*; the social network of homeless youth on average is smaller in size and of lower quality²⁸. LGB young people do not have smaller networks, but of lesser quality. They often feel more lonely than their heterosexual peers²⁹. Transgender people – including 16 to 24 year olds – feel lonely more often³⁰.
- *More traumatic experiences*; homeless young people relatively often suffered traumatic experiences³¹. We know that LGBTI young people more often have traumatic experiences, for instance half of them experience violence in school³², threats and unwanted sexual attention³³. 42% of transgender youth suffers negative reactions such as name-calling, threats and physical violence³⁴.
- *Worse mental health*; caused by such traumatic experiences: 40% of homeless youth suffers serious mental problems³⁵. LGB pupils suffer twice as much from emotional and behavioural problems and hyperactivity. 73% of transgender 16 to 24 olds suffer mental health problems³⁶. The stress that LGBTI people experience is also called minority stress: the additional stress caused by negative reactions, hiding that you're different, internalized negativity and lack of social support³⁷.
- *More suicidal behaviour*; both young homeless and young LGB people show more suicidal behaviour than average. A study among homeless youth in

Utrecht, Netherlands, showed that 8% of them had attempted to commit suicide in the previous year³⁸. The figure was 9% amongst non-homeless LGB young people. This number of suicide attempts is 4,5 times higher compared to heterosexual peers³⁹. We know that 21% of transgender people – including 16 to 24 year olds – attempted to commit suicide⁴⁰.

MORE ATTENTION NEEDED FOR HOMELESS LGBTI YOUTH

This list of problems shows clear similarities in risk factors and negative experiences between LGBTI and homeless young people. It is not unlikely that in the Netherlands, LGBTI young people are overrepresented among homeless youth. We call for more attention to the LGBTI identity of LGBTI homeless youth, both in practice and in research.

Talking about it

If the vulnerable position of LGBTI young people is related to their LGBTI identity and a lack of acceptance, it seems logical to discuss this identity when offering them support. However, research in youth care shows that LGBTI feelings are not identified, that it is not a subject for discussion, that there is no support for LGBTI young people and that they are not referred to specialist care⁴¹. This is especially relevant for young transgender people⁴²: they are rarely informed of possibilities to visit a gender clinic or to consider physical transition⁴³. Young people with an intersex condition seem to be invisible to professionals: none of the 421 professionals in a youth care study had ever met a young person with an intersex condition. Professionals working with young people try to behave 'as normal as possible' and avoid the subject. What they fail to see is that being LGBTI is special for the young people themselves. On average, it takes three and a half years before they dare to discuss their feelings with someone else. Some LGB young people try not to be recognized and would prefer being heterosexual⁴⁴. Offering qualitative support and care to these young people means that the LGBTI theme needs to be addressed.

22 Jeeninga, 2010; Jonker, 2012

23 Kuyper, 2015

24 Gemeente Leeuwarden, 2012

25 Mooij, Fettelaar, & De Wit, 2012; Collier, Bos & Sandfort, 2013

26 Baams & Bos, 2014; Van Beusekom, Roodenburg, & Bos, 2012

27 Scholte, Nelen, de Wit en Kroes, 2016

28 Jeeninga, 2010; Jonker, 2012

29 Kuyper, 2015

30 Keuzenkamp, 2012

31 Jeeninga, 2010

32 Mooij et al., 2012

33 Kuyper, 2015

34 Keuzenkamp, 2012

35 Jeeninga, 2010

36 Keuzenkamp, 2012

37 Baams, Grossman, & Russell 2015; Meyer, 2003

38 Beijersbergen, Jansen, & Wolf, 2008

39 Kuyper, 2015

40 Keuzenkamp, 2012

41 Emmen et al., 2014

42 De Vries, 2010

43 Emmen et al., 2014

44 Van Bergen & Van Lisdonk, 2010; Van Lisdonk & Van Bergen, 2010; Kuyper 2015



Access to youth care and shelter

We also need to find out whether the various forms of support and care services for young homeless people are also suitable for LGBTI youth. Research shows that care providers do not automatically pay attention to sexual preference and gender identity, and do not connect LGBT feelings with other mental and social problems young people may have. Research among specific bicultural and religious LGBT groups shows that they are in need of professional care but are rarely identified and referred to specialist care⁴⁵.

There has not been research in shelters in the Netherlands yet. In the United States, LGBTI young people indicate that they are not safe in shelters⁴⁶. It is difficult for them to find help, because it is unclear how care providers feel about their sexual preference or gender identity. Or because they expect not to meet with understanding because of a lack of knowledge⁴⁷. The lack of fitting support causes homeless LGBTI young people to spend more time sleeping rough and to have more difficulty in getting off the street than their heterosexual peers⁴⁸.

Crosscutting research

Future research among homeless youth should include intersects such as sexual preference and gender identity, to allow insight in the number of young homeless LGBTI people. In addition we need to gain more understanding of the experiences, desires

and needs of the group of homeless young people with LGBTI feelings, taking into consideration the diversity in their cultural and religious backgrounds. We also need to look at what professionals in youth care know about LGBTI identity and how to address the issue, preferably at an early stage so LGBTI young people no longer leave home too early.

OUT ON THE STREETS IN AMSTERDAM: ACTION RESEARCH WITH HOMELESS LGBT PEOPLE

There is good news as well: the city of Amsterdam commissioned Movisie to research the problems of young LGBTI homeless people in Amsterdam. We use participatory action research: young LGBTI people who have experienced homelessness, are being contracted as co-researchers to interview young people and to question professionals in focus groups. Their prominent role as co-researchers is not new. In the project *Combating Youth Homelessness*, in which Movisie participated, comparative research with homeless youth in Europe was conducted for three years. They concluded that this form of research serves two purposes: improved quality of the research improved and personal development of the co-researchers⁴⁹. The Amsterdam study aims to find out what is needed to really support LGBTI youth and to prevent homelessness. The research question 'Do homeless young people and (young) adults have specific experiences, problems and needs related to their LGBTI identity and, if so, what are they? Is specific support needed for this target group and, if so, what should it look like?' guides the trained target group co-researchers' interviews with other young homeless LGBTI people in Amsterdam. There will also be focus groups with professionals, to provide an overview of the specific support needed for young (adult) LGBTI homeless people in Amsterdam, and what this support should look like. The research results will be ready before summer 2018 and will be implemented in youth policy and in the Pink Agenda of the city of Amsterdam.

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Homelessness and LGBT people in Spain

By the **Federación Estatal de Lesbianas, Gays, Transexuales y Bisexuales (FELGBT) & the RAIS Fundación**

The impact of homelessness on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual people in Spain is unknown. No specific research exists in our country from which we could make a trustworthy analysis. We are talking about the invisibility of the LGBT people inside another invisible phenomenon – homelessness.

Through our daily work, we know that in some cases, LGBT people face discrimination from their own families. This is why some of these people leave their family homes at a very young age. They are also highly vulnerable due to their low economic income (if any, in a country with around 50% of the population under 25 in unemployment). LGBT youth, but mostly trans youth, also have higher risks of being discriminated against at work.

Nevertheless, the absence of reliable information on this issue in Spain makes it impossible to state that LGBT people have more probabilities of experiencing homelessness, as shown by some research carried out in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom.

Nevertheless, **there are two certainties** about this topic:

- The homelessness sector has not paid attention to the management of the sexual diversity and sexual identity of its clients.
- The organizations that work with LGBT people are not adapted to the specific needs of people experiencing homelessness.

WHY HAS THIS ISSUE NOT BEEN IN THE AGENDA?

Homelessness is not present in the agenda of the LGBT movement. Even though this double vulnerability was identified years ago, it is yet to be specifically addressed. For decades, Spanish LGBT organizations have been working on LGBT health, employability, services focused on LGBT migrants, sex workers or sexual and gender diversity outreach. However, most

of the organizations lack a specific service that specifically aims at the LGBT homeless population.

Similarly, organizations working with people experiencing homelessness have not considered the extent to which sexual orientation and gender identity can act as a risk factor for homelessness. This absence could be derived from the heredity of a model of attention to homelessness linked to religious organizations and focused on tackling urgent needs (food, safety, hygiene, rest), more than in providing integral solutions and services to the persons who suffer it.

NO RESEARCH, ONLY EXPERIENCE AND PERCEPTION.

How do we think the available data in other countries can be transferred to our reality? Specific research on homelessness and LGBT people has identified three main problems:

- **Overrepresentation of LGBT people among people experiencing homelessness.** Although LGBT people are 3-5% of the population, some estimates indicate that approximately 35% of people experiencing homelessness are LGBT. For example, last year in Barcelona ACATHI, one of the LGBT organizations part of FELGBT, helped over 40 LGBT homeless people, that were also migrants and asylum seekers.
- **Overrepresentation of transgender persons, especially of transgender women.** The high rates of discrimination that trans people -especially trans women- have to face at work indicates that trans people could be more exposed to homelessness. One in five trans people experience homelessness or are at risk of it¹. One in three trans people experiencing homelessness feels rejected by their gender identity in the homelessness services they use². Harassment, aggressions and sexual assaults of trans people are a reality not only in the streets, but also in the social services and shelters.

1 Minter, S., & Daley, C. (2003). Trans Realities: A legal needs assessment of San Francisco's Transgender Communities. San Francisco: National Center for Lesbian Rights and Transgender Law Center. Retrieved from <http://www.nclrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/transrealities0803.pdf>

2 Abramovich, A. (2014). 1 in 3 transgender youth will be rejected by a shelter on account of their gender identity/expression. Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. Retrieved from <http://www.homelesshub.ca/blog/1-3-transgender-youth-will-be-rejected-shelter-account-their-gender-identityexpression>



“We are talking about the invisibility of the LGTB people inside another invisible phenomenon – homelessness.”

- **High risk of LGBT youth.** Existing research in the USA and Canada indicates that 40% of young people experiencing homelessness identifies as LGBT³. In the United Kingdom, the rates are around 25%. In Spain, FELGBT is used to help LGBT youth whose family have threatened to throw them out of their family homes due to their gender identity or sexual orientation. However, given the lack of a specific LGBT homeless programme, a proper registry of these cases is not being carried out.

Although we are not aware of any specific research in the field, the experience of FELGBT and RAIS Fundación indicates that **LGBT elders who have lost their partners** constitute another subgroup of the LGBT population at risk of experiencing homelessness. They wander from one city to another hoping to find a place where they can settle down because in most cases they can't go back to their hometowns, usually small towns where they suffered discrimina-

tion in the past. They also face great difficulties to find a place to live due to the absence of elderly residences that take into account sexual and gender diversity.

CONCLUSIONS AND ACTION NEEDED IN SPAIN

RAIS Fundación and FELGBT believe it is necessary and urgent to address two main challenges:

It is necessary and urgent to generate **reliable information** to know the real impact of homelessness in LGBT people in Spain. We need to understand the mechanisms of intersectionality between both phenomena and the associated risk and protection factors. Only with good knowledge can we provide good answers.

It is necessary and urgent to generate **spaces of joint work**, based on the evidence, between LGBT and homelessness organizations.

Building real equality for LGBT people. Nobody living in the street.

³ Ray, N. (2006). Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth: An epidemic of homelessness. New York: National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute and the National Coalition for the Homeless. Retrieved from http://www.thetaskforce.org/static_html/downloads/HomelessYouth.pdf



Book Review – Where Am I Going to Go? Intersectional Approaches to Ending LGBTQ2S Youth Homelessness in Canada & the US – Edited by Alexander Abramovich & Jama Shelton

By **Robbie Stakelum**, *FEANTSA Policy Officer*

Where Am I Going to Go? shines a light on an often-under-served community in the homeless sector. Researchers, service providers and policy makers frequently forget the vulnerable position of homeless youth, particularly those who identify as LGBTIQ. The unfortunate reality, certainly in a European context, is that there hasn't been a sufficient investment in research or data, to identify the true scale of the problem. This book helps to bring together research from North America, supported both by case studies and examples of service provisions and filled with insightful and moving personal reflections from both service users and staff.

This book highlights the particularly vulnerable position of youth and the obstacles they face in exiting homelessness including barriers to affordable housing and accessing a range of basic services including education, training, health and employment. These barriers are further compounded by homophobia, transphobia and the broader criminalisation of homelessness, which pitches vulnerable youth as criminals, rather than as victims of systemic failures by social systems.

The authors go on to offer insight into the “dual dilemma” suffered by the black community in being simultaneously victims of homophobia and racism, resulting in discrimination and harassment by policy, the community and in some instances the social services they rely on for supports.

The true value in this book lies not only in the identification of problems, but in the identification and provision of concrete examples of solutions for the LGBTIQ community in the homeless sector, from tailored examples for ethnic minorities and specific housing solutions for youth, to Housing First for youth, the creation of safe LGBTIQ spaces and harm reduction models, which are developed to specifically deal with youth specific needs.

Where Am I Going to Go? What am I going to do? puts a human face on LGBTIQ homelessness and clearly shows why we in the homeless sector should re-double our efforts to combat homelessness for this specific and under-served group.



“The true value in this book lies not only in the identification of problems, but in the identification and provision of concrete examples of solutions for the LGBTIQ community in the homeless sector.”

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