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LGBT POVERTY IN THE UNITED STATES
Trends at the Onset of COVID-19

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This brief details levels of poverty among LGBT people before and since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. When our last LGBT poverty report was released in 2019, data indicated an economic disparity between LGBT and non-LGBT people. Since that report, the COVID-19 pandemic hit, and a cascade of negative economic effects were felt by large proportions of the U.S. population. Our new analyses, across multiple datasets, indicate that these disparities persist—a higher percentage of LGBT than non-LGBT people have incomes below the federal poverty level (FPL). We see consistency in the relevance of LGBT status over time, pre-pandemic, during the most severe period, and since. We also demonstrate that while specific estimates differ across data sources (the U.S. Census Household Pulse Survey reports generally higher rates of poverty), the patterns among LGBT subgroups are similar.

- In 2021, we saw a dramatic decrease in the number of people experiencing poverty across LGBT and non-LGBT groups overall. The proportion of straight cisgender people experiencing poverty went from 16% in 2020 to 12% in 2021, and for LGBT people it dropped from 23% to 17%. Most notably, the change for bisexual cisgender women changed from approximately 30% in 2020 to 20% in 2021.

US poverty rate, by LGBT status (2018-2021)
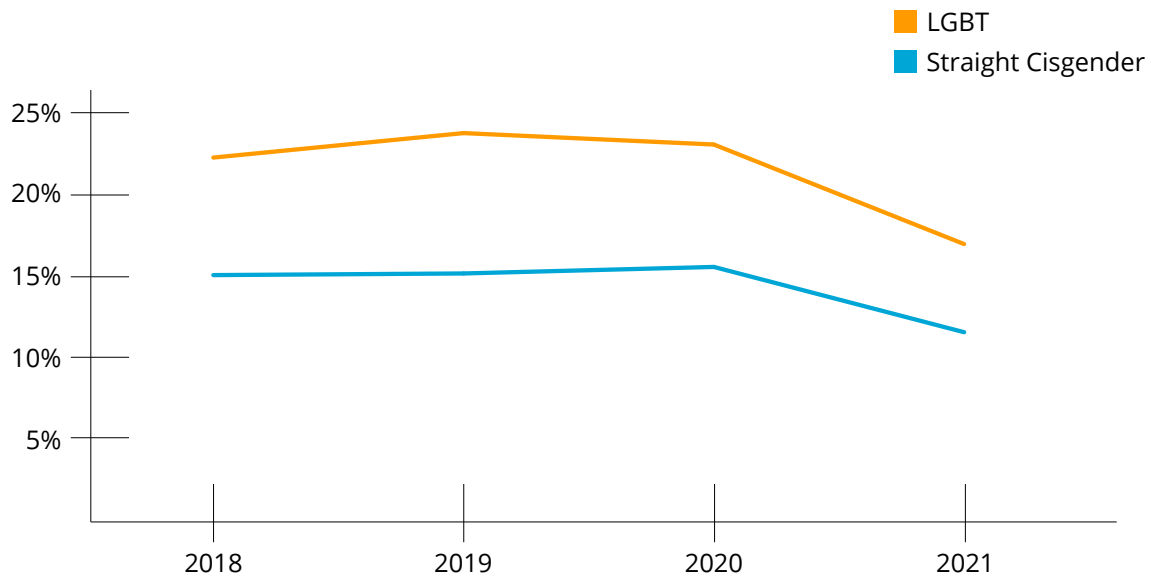
Source: BRFSS, 2018-2021

- Among households with children, the decreases they experienced were more dramatic. For example, bisexual cisgender women (from 42% to 27%) and transgender people (from 52% to 26%) who were living with children in their homes (most of whom are parents) had significantly lower levels of poverty in 2021 compared to 2020.

US poverty rate among households with children, by LGBT status and gender (2018-2021)
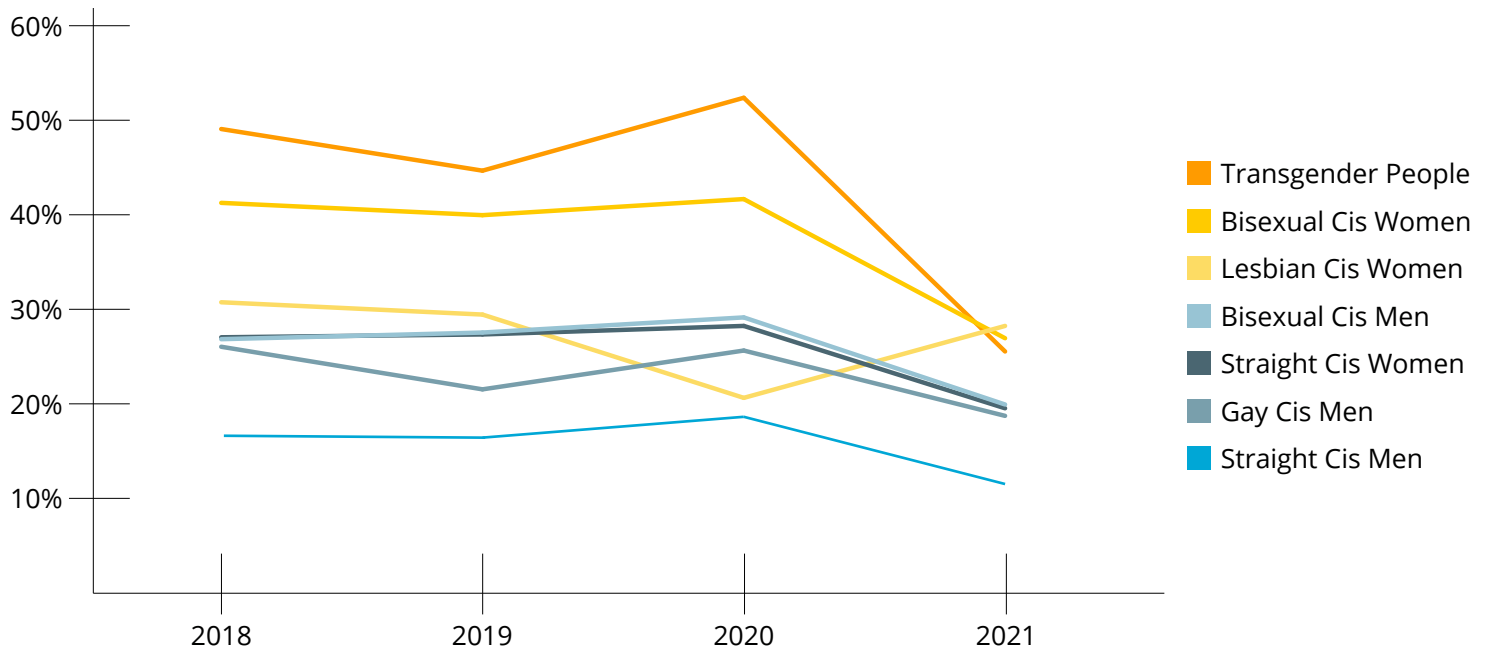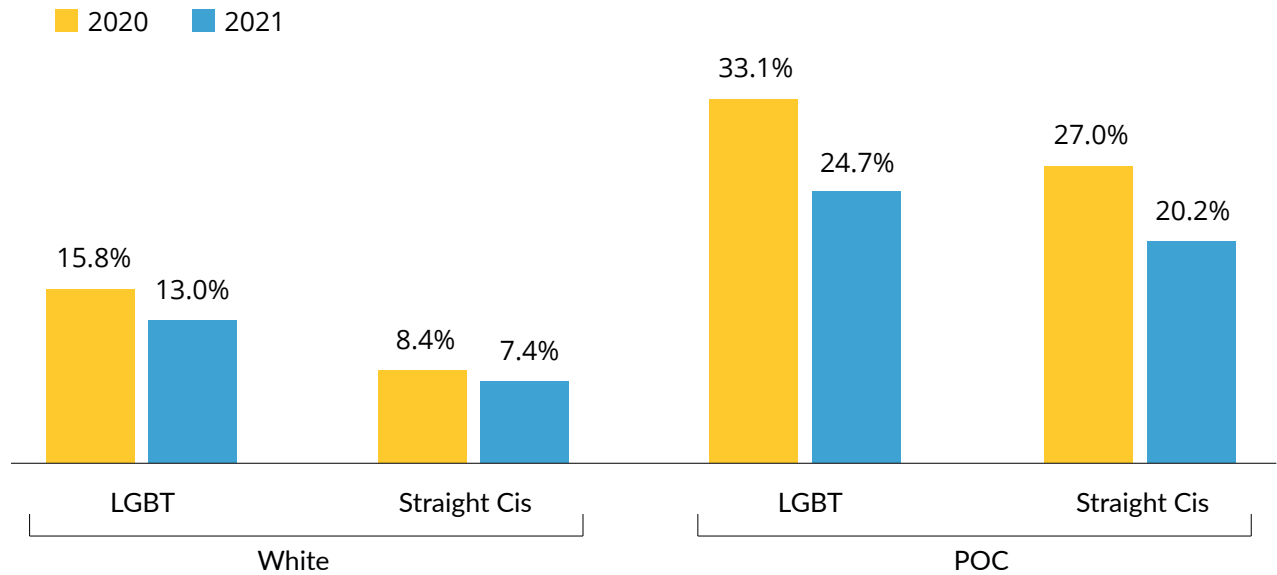

Source: BRFSS, 2018-2021
Note: Cis = Cisgender

- Among racialized groups, a higher proportion of Black, Latinx/Hispanic, Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander (NH/PI), American Indian/Alaskan Native (AI/AN), and Multiracial people were experiencing poverty than White or Asian American (AA) people.

  ○ For POC as a whole, LGBT POC had higher rates of poverty than straight cisgender POC, however, both groups showed a similar decline in poverty from 2020 to 2021 (LGBT POC: 33% in 2020 to 25% in 2021; straight cisgender POC: 27% in 2020 to 20% in 2021).

  ○ White LGBT people showed a bigger decline in poverty compared to straight cisgender White people (LGBT White people: 16% in 2020 to 13% in 2021; straight cisgender White people: 8% in 2020 to 7% in 2021).

US poverty rate, by LGBT status and race/ethnicity (2020-2021)

■ 2020   ■ 2021

	White		POC	
	LGBT	Straight Cis	LGBT	Straight Cis
2020	15.8%	8.4%	33.1%	27.0%
2021	13.0%	7.4%	24.7%	20.2%

Source: BRFSS, 2020-2021

Note: Cis = Cisgender

This study serves as an update to the 2019 LGBT Poverty in the United States report (which used data from 2014-2017), as well as an assessment of changes in LGBT poverty in relation to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic—a globally historic period of time that impacted the health and economics of the world's population. We find that LGBT economic disparities measured through household income have been evident before and since the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the actual percentage of LGBT people living in poverty decreased significantly by 2021, a year after the onset of the pandemic. The general population also saw a decrease in poverty. Research has suggested that the changes in proportions of people experiencing poverty, especially among people raising children, are likely a result of COVID-19 economic relief funding and payments provided by the U.S. government, such as the American Rescue Plan Act, which included unemployment benefits, family and childcare tax credits, and direct cash payments. These findings, and the limitation of examining economic status through a health survey, underscore the importance of adding measures of sexual orientation and gender identity to federal surveys, including the Current Population Survey (CPS), the American Community Survey (ACS), and the Decennial Census.

BACKGROUND

In 2019, we reported the percentage of LGBT people experiencing poverty in the U.S., nationally and within each state.[1] It was clear that more LGBT people were living in poverty (i.e., living on incomes below the Federal Poverty Level) compared to cisgender heterosexual people, and that this disparity was largely driven by transgender people and cisgender bisexual women who had the highest poverty rates. Since that report, the COVID-19 pandemic hit, and a cascade of negative economic effects were felt by large proportions of the U.S. population.[2] A reasonable question is whether the economic impacts of COVID-19 appear to have shifted what we once knew about LGBT poverty. The aim of this brief is to update the estimates of LGBT and non-LGBT poverty with data during and since the most severe phase of the COVID-19 pandemic.

DATA SOURCES

In our 2019 report on poverty by sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) statuses, we relied on data from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS). At that time, it was the only national probability dataset available that included measurements of SOGI among sexual and gender minority and majority populations in most states. Since the publication of that 2019 poverty report, the U.S. Census Household Pulse Survey (HPS), a survey designed to track real-time data on household impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, included measures of SOGI. Given the introduction of a new national probability dataset measuring LGBT status, we provide information on poverty estimates for both of these data sources (see Table 1).

In addition, we provide an overview of poverty estimates over the last seven years (since the first year of data from our previous report) from several leading sources of federal data on economic outcomes (Figure 1). The distinctions in patterns across these datasets illustrate some important limitations and strengths of using BRFSS for an analysis of poverty data across sexual orientation and gender identity categories. All datasets measure poverty status using some combination of information about household income and household size. Approaches to measuring poverty through the Census surveys (ACS, CPS, HPS) include detailed income and household information which allow for nuanced documentation of economic indicators. The Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM) further advances the information collected through the Census surveys and uses models to estimate factors that are not directly measured, taking inflation into account and adjusting for housing type and geography. It is through the SPM, that researchers have identified a national drop in poverty since 2020, particularly among those with access to COVID-19 relief programs.[3] Despite the strengths of these various surveys

[1] Badgett, M.V.L., Choi, S.K., & Wilson, B.D.M. (2019). *LGBT poverty in the United States.* Los Angeles, CA: The Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law. https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/lgbt-poverty-us/

[2] Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. (2022, February 10). *Tracking the COVID-19 economy's effects on food, housing, and employment hardships.* https://www.cbpp.org/research/poverty-and-inequality/tracking-the-covid-19-economys-effects-on-food-housing-and; Parker, K., Minkin, R., & Bennett, J. (2020, September 24). *Economic fallout from COVID-19 continues to hit lower-income Americans the hardest.* Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2020/09/24/economic-fallout-from-covid-19-continues-to-hit-lower-income-americans-the-hardest/; Bauer, L., Broady, K., Edelberg, W., & O'Donnell, J. (2020, September 17). *Ten facts about COVID-19 and the U.S. economy.* The Hamilton Project. Brookings. https://www.brookings.edu/research/ten-facts-about-covid-19-and-the-u-s-economy/

[3] Creamer, J., Shrider, E.A., Burners, K., & Chen, F. (2022, September). *Poverty in the United States: 2021.* United States Census Bureau. https://www.census.gov/library/publications/2022/demo/p60-277.html; Parrot. S. (2022, June 14).

for assessing economic factors and outcomes, a major limitation in their ability to study economic disparities is that most do not include a measure of SOGI, and the one that does only started in 2021. As such, we rely most heavily on the BRFSS, a health survey that has included SOGI measures for nearly 10 years, for our primary estimates of poverty proportions because it allows for analyses of changes over time. However, scholars have noted a limitation of BRFSS is that its calculations of poverty are generally higher than those using most other federal surveys.[4]

Figure 1. US poverty rate, by nationally representative survey (2014-2021)
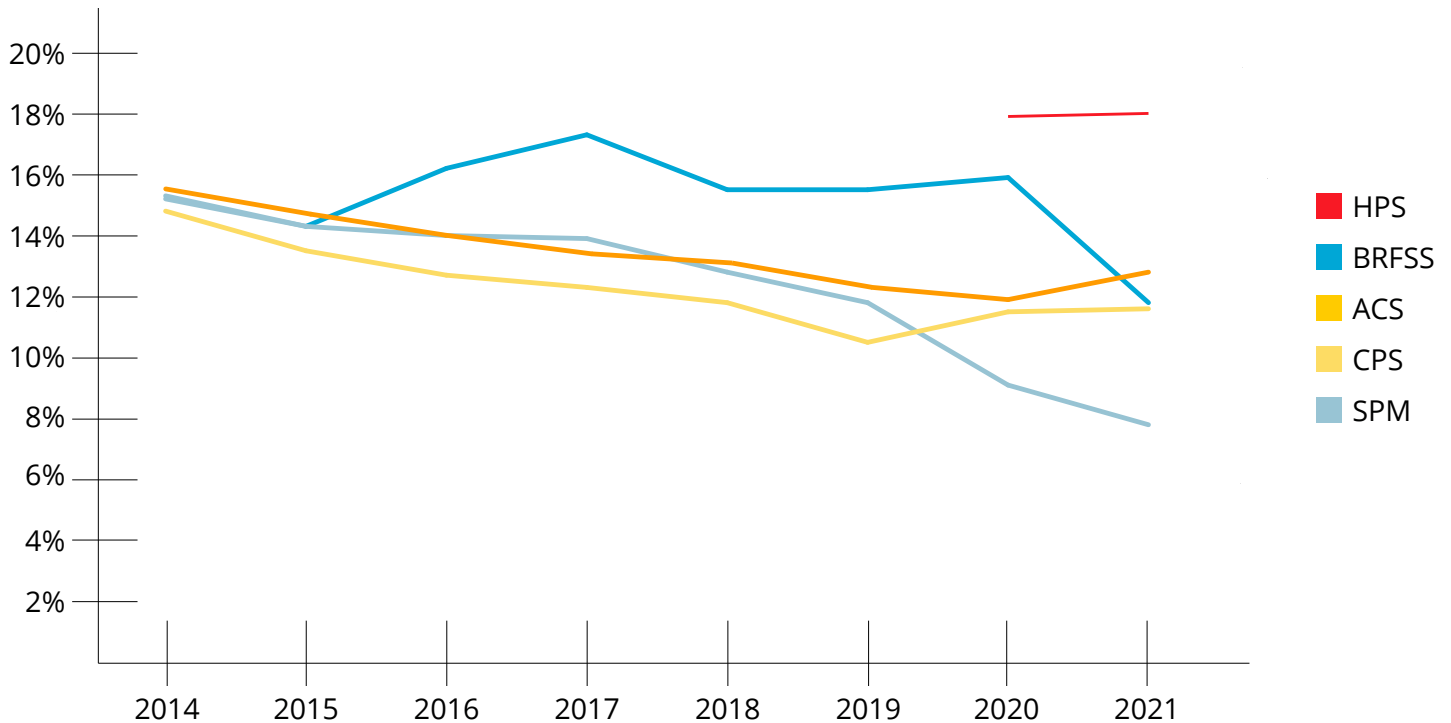
Source: HPS = Household Pulse Survey, 2020-2022 (2021 includes 5 months of 2021 and 7 months of 2022); BRFSS = Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey, 2014-2021 (restricted to respondents who answered sexual orientation and gender identity questions); ACS = American Community Survey, 2014-2021[5]; CPS = Current Population Survey, 2014-2021[6]; SPM = Supplemental Poverty Measure, 2014-2021[7].

Robust COVID relief achieved historic gains against poverty and hardship, bolstered economy. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. https://www.cbpp.org/research/poverty-and-inequality/robust-covid-relief-achieved-historic-gains-against-poverty-and-0; Wheaton, L., Giannarelli, L., & Dehry, I. (2021, July). *2021 poverty projections: Assessing the impact of benefits and stimulus measures.* Urban Institute. https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/104603/2021-poverty-projections_0_0.pdf

[4] Carpenter, C.S., Eppink, S.T., & Gonzalez, G. (2020). Transgender status, gender identity, and socioeconomic outcomes in the United States. *ILR Review*, *73*(3), 573–599. https://doi.org/10.1177/0019793920902776

[5] U.S. Census Bureau. (2014-2019 and 2021*). ACS 1-Year estimates subject tables: S1701* https://data.census.gov/table?t=Poverty&tid=ACSST1Y2014.S1701; U.S. Census Bureau. (2020). Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE). https://www.census.gov/datatools/demo/saipe/#/?x_tableYears=2020&map_yearSelector=2020

[6] U.S. Census Bureau. (2014-2021*). CPS poverty data tables: Table 2. Poverty status of people by family relationship, race, and hispanic origin.* https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/income-poverty/historical-poverty-people.html

[7] U.S. Census Bureau (2014-2021*). Supplemental Poverty Measure: Poverty in the United States: 2014-2021.* https://www.census.gov/topics/income-poverty/supplemental-poverty-measure.html

FINDINGS

Table 1 shows the percentages of people living in poverty by sexual orientation and gender identity in addition to poverty levels by parental (households with children) status. Differences by SOGI were mostly similar across years and data sources (BRFSS and HPS). For example, while consistently more women than men had incomes that fell below the federal poverty level (FPL), similar percentages of straight cisgender men and gay cisgender men experienced poverty, as well as similar percentages of straight cisgender women and lesbian cisgender women. Bisexual cisgender women and transgender people had the highest percentages of those living in poverty, while bisexual cisgender men frequently had poverty rates similar to straight cisgender and lesbian cisgender women.

In 2021, poverty decreased for all groups except lesbian cisgender women (Figure 2). The percentage of straight cisgender people went from about 16% in 2020 to 12% in 2021 (about a 4% decrease for both men and women), and for LGBT people it went from 23% in 2020 to 17% in 2021 (Table 1). Most dramatically, the percentage of bisexual cisgender women experiencing poverty changed from approximately 30% in 2020 to 20% in 2021.

For households with children, the proportion experiencing poverty remained stable across years until a significant drop in 2021, when fewer straight cisgender parents and LGBT parents reported incomes below the federal poverty level (Figure 3). The proportion of bisexual cisgender women (42% to 27%) and transgender people (52% to 26%) experiencing poverty especially decreased between 2020 and 2021 (Table 1).

Racial disparities in economic stability remained regardless of the year. More Black, Latinx/Hispanic, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (NH/PI), American Indian/Alaskan Native (AI/AN), and Multiracial people experienced poverty than White or Asian American people (AA) (Table 2). When looking at POC together, analyses show that although LGBT POC had higher poverty rates than straight cisgender POC (and even higher rates compared to White LGBT people), both LGBT and straight cisgender POC showed a similar significant decline in poverty between 2020 and 2021(LGBT POC: 33% in 2020 to 25% in 2021; Straight cisgender POC: 27% in 2020 to 20% in 2021 versus White LGBT: 16% in 2020 to 13% in 2021; White straight cisgender: 8% in 2020 to 7% in 2021). [Figure 4].
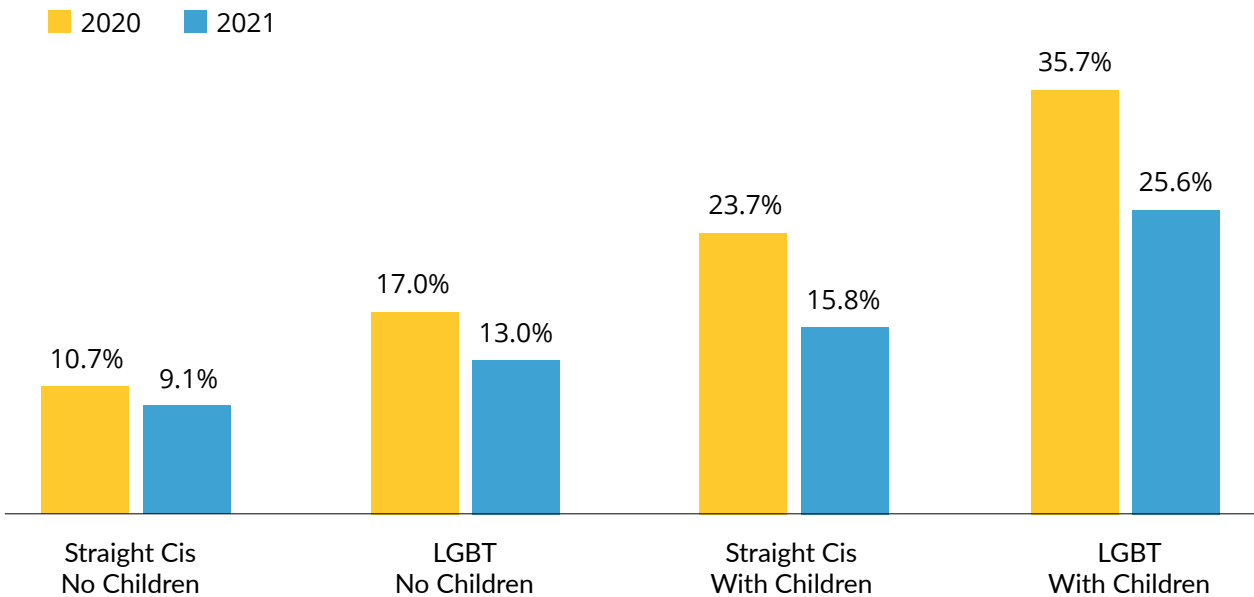
Figure 2. US poverty rate in 2020 and 2021, by LGBT status and gender
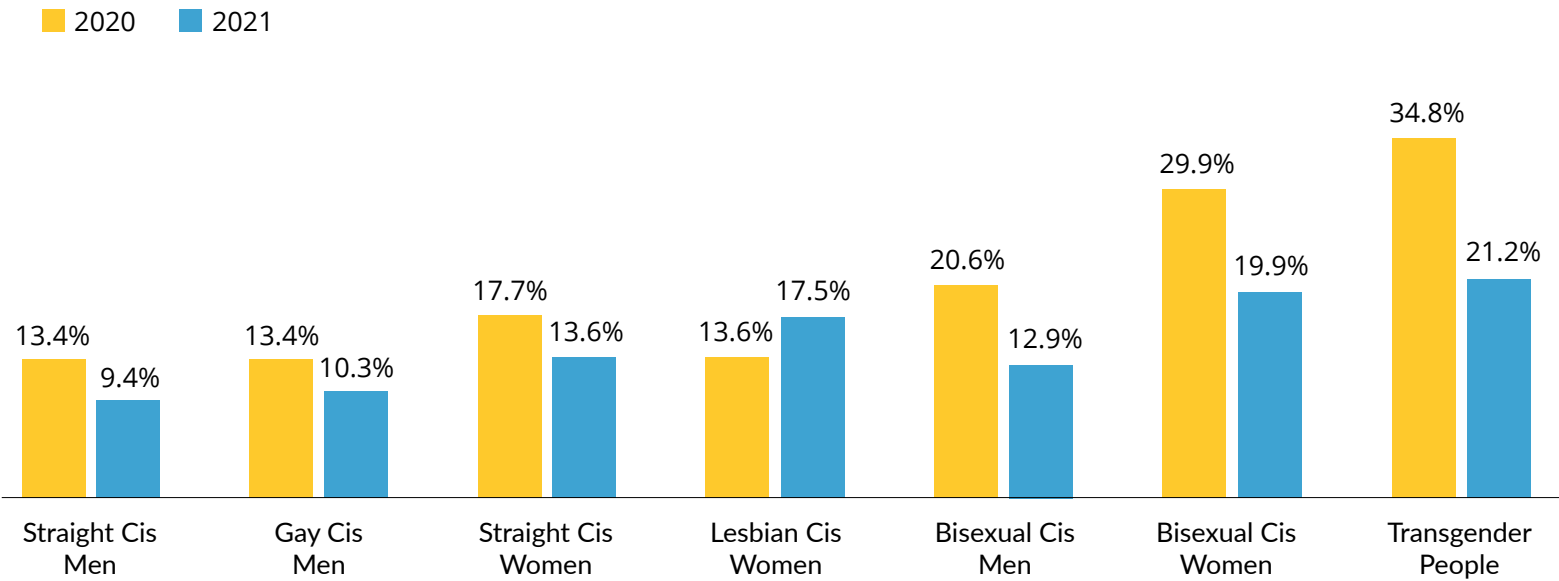
Source: BRFSS, 2020-2021

Note: Cis = Cisgender

Figure 3. US poverty rate in 2020 and 2021, by LGBT status, gender and parental status

Source: BRFSS, 2020-2021

Note: Cis = Cisgender; "With Children" refers to respondents who live in a household with a child under the age of 18.
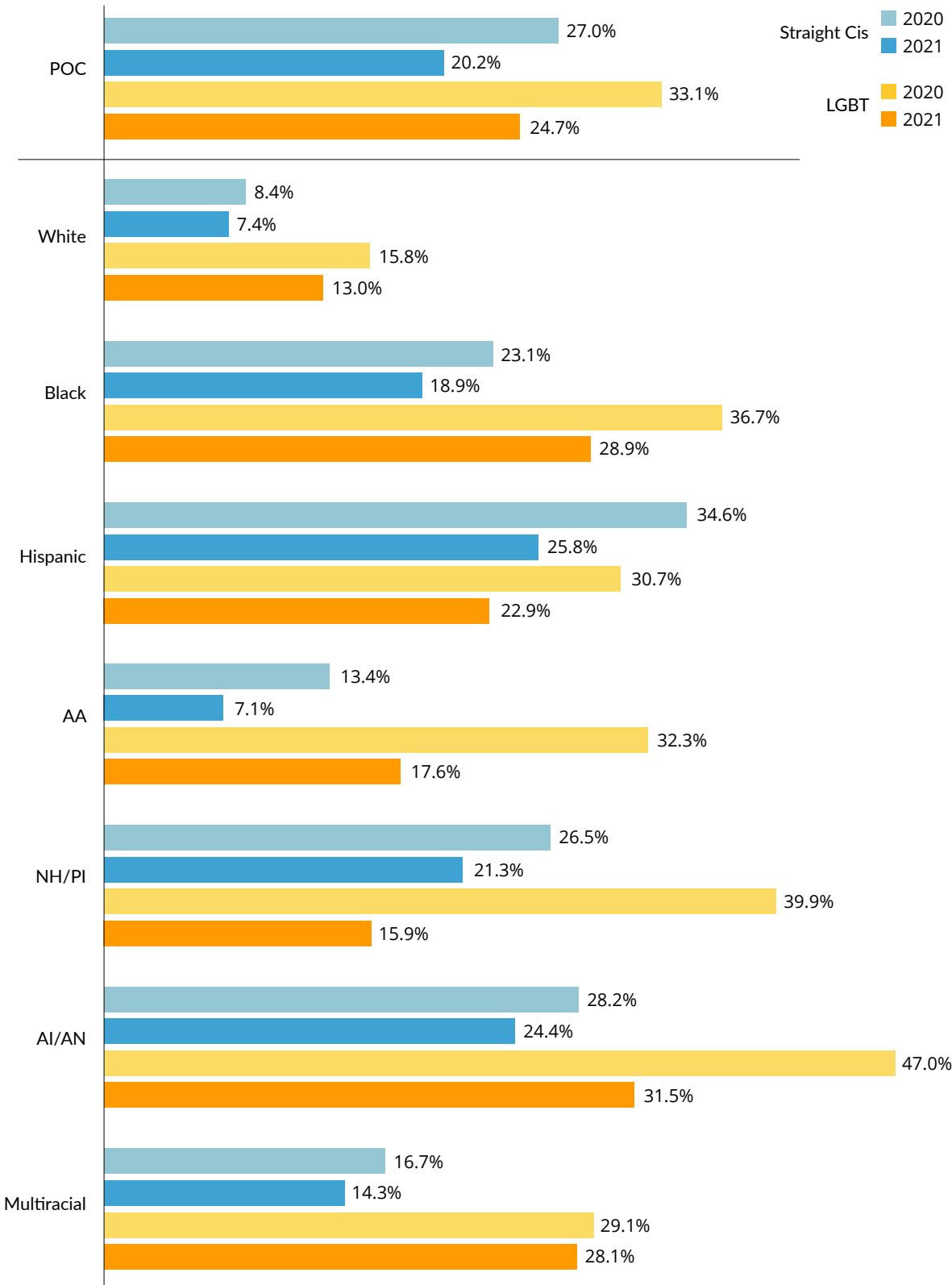
Table 1. Poverty estimates among the US population, by LGBT status, gender and parental status (BRFSS 2014-2021 & HPS 2021-2022)

HOUSEHOLD INCOME IS LESS THAN 100% OF FEDERAL POVERTY LEVEL (FPL)	BEHAVIORAL RISK FACTOR SURVEILLANCE SURVEY (BRFSS)				HOUSEHOLD PULSE SURVEY (HPS)
	2014-2017 (N = 582,020)	2018-2019 (N = 375,123)	2020 (N = 187,385)	2021 (N = 187,960)	JULY 2021 - AUG 2022 (N = 739,656)
	% (95% CI)	% (95% CI)	% (95% CI)	% (95% CI)	% (95% CI)
Sexual Orientation Gender Identity (SOGI)					
Straight Cisgender (Cis)	15.7 (15.4, 15.9)	14.8 (14.6, 15.1)	15.5 (15.1, 16.0)	11.5 (11.2, 11.8)	16.8 (16.6, 17.0)
Men	13.4 (13.1, 13.7)	12.2 (11.9, 12.6)	13.4 (12.7, 14.1)	9.4 (9.0, 9.9)	13.6 (13.3, 14.0)
Women	17.8 (17.5, 18.2)	17.4 (17.0, 17.9)	17.7 (17.0, 18.4)	13.6 (13.1, 14.1)	19.9 (19.6, 20.2)
LGBT	21.6 (20.5, 22.9)	23.2 (21.8, 24.6)	23.0 (20.7, 25.5)	16.9 (15.5, 18.5)	22.4 (21.5, 23.2)
Gay Cis Men	12.1 (10.4, 13.9)	14.2 (11.9, 16.9)	13.4 (10.4, 17.0)	10.3 (7.5, 13.9)	16.5 (15.1, 17.9)
Bisexual Cis Men	19.5 (16.8, 22.6)	19.1 (16.3, 22.2)	20.6 (15.9, 26.3)	12.9 (10.1, 16.2)	22.0 (19.3, 24.9)
Lesbian Cis Women	17.9 (15.1, 21.2)	19.8 (16.5, 23.5)	13.6 (10.1, 18.0)	17.5 (12.9, 23.2)	20.1 (18.4, 22.0)
Bisexual Cis Women	29.4 (27.1, 31.8)	29.4 (26.8, 32.0)	29.9 (26.7, 33.4)	19.9 (17.5, 22.5)	25.5 (24.2, 26.8)
Transgender People	29.4 (25.7, 33.5)	32.0 (26.9, 37.5)	34.8 (22.8, 49.1)	21.2 (17.4, 25.7)	30.6 (27.4, 34.0)
Parental Status and SOGI*					
Straight Cis: No Children	10.9 (10.7, 11.2)	10.8 (10.5, 11.1)	10.7 (10.3, 11.2)	9.1 (8.8, 9.5)	14.6 (14.4, 14.9)
Straight Cis: With Children	23.6 (23.2, 24.0)	21.8 (21.3, 22.4)	23.7 (22.8, 24.7)	15.8 (15.1, 16.5)	20.6 (20.2, 21.0)
Men	18.5 (17.9, 19.1)	16.1 (15.3, 16.8)	18.6 (17.2, 20.0)	11.5 (10.7, 12.4)	14.8 (14.1, 15.5)
Women	28.0 (27.4, 28.6)	26.8 (26.0, 27.6)	28.2 (26.9, 29.6)	19.5 (18.5, 20.6)	25.7 (25.2, 26.2)
LGBT: No Children	15.6 (14.5, 16.9)	17.1 (15.6, 18.6)	17.0 (14.2, 20.3)	13.0 (11.5, 14.7)	20.1 (19.3, 21.0)
LGBT: With Children	35.6 (32.9, 38.3)	37.3 (34.3, 40.4)	35.7 (31.9, 39.7)	25.6 (22.4, 29.1)	28.8 (27.0, 30.8)
Gay Cis Men	21.6 (15.7, 29.0)	23.5 (16.8, 31.9)	25.6 (15.0, 40.2)	18.7 (10.2, 31.7)	23.3 (18.7, 28.8)
Bisexual Cis Men	29.5 (23.4, 36.5)	27.5 (21.0, 35.1)	29.1 (19.2, 41.5)	19.9 (13.3, 28.6)	23.7 (16.7, 32.6)
Lesbian Cis Women	29.4 (22.9, 37.0)	31.1 (23.8, 39.4)	20.6 (13.1, 31.0)	28.2 (17.2, 42.7)	27.3 (23.2, 31.7)
Bisexual Cis Women	41.1 (37.4, 44.9)	41.4 (37.3, 45.6)	41.6 (36.6, 46.8)	26.9 (22.9, 31.4)	31.4 (29.2, 33.6)
Transgender People	42.2 (34.5, 50.4)	49.5 (39.2, 59.9)	52.3 (41.2, 63.1)	25.5 (18.1, 34.5)	31.4 (24.4, 39.2)

Note: Due to small sample sizes, sexual orientation and specific gender identity such as "trans woman" is not shown for transgender respondents.

*"With Children" refers to respondents who live in a household with a child under the age of 18.

Figure 4. US poverty rate in 2020 and 2021, by LGBT status and race/ethnicity

Source: BRFSS, 2020-2021

Note: Cis = Cisgender; NH/PI = Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander; AI/AN = American Indian/Alaska Native; AA = Asian American; POC = People of Color (includes all groups except for White).

Table 2. Poverty estimates among the US population, by LGBT status and race/ethnicity (BRFSS 2017-2021 & HPS 2020-2022)

SURVEY	WHITE	BLACK	HISPANIC	AA	NH/PI	AI/AN	MULTIRACIAL	POC
	% (95% CI)	% (95% CI)	% (95% CI)	% (95% CI)	% (95% CI)	% (95% CI)	% (95% CI)	% (95% CI)
HPS 2021-2022 (N = 739,656)								
Straight/ Cis	12.8 (12.6, 13.0)	29.1 (28.3, 30.0)	26.7 (25.9, 27.6)	11.6 (10.8, 12.5)			22.2 (21.1, 23.4)	24.7 (24.2, 25.2)
LGBT	18.9 (18.1, 19.7)	34.2 (31.0, 37.5)	30.3 (27.4, 33.3)	13.0 (9.6, 17.4)			28.5 (25.4, 31.8)	29.1 (27.3, 30.9)
BRFSS 2021 (N = 187,960)								
Straight/ Cis	7.4 (7.2, 7.7)	18.9 (17.8, 20.1)	25.8 (24.2, 27.5)	7.1 (5.8, 8.6)	21.3 (16.1, 27.6)	24.4 (21.8, 27.1)	14.3 (12.3, 16.4)	20.2 (19.4, 21.0)
LGBT	13.0 (11.5, 14.7)	28.9 (23.3, 35.2)	22.9 (18.6, 28.0)	17.6 (8.0, 34.3)	15.9 (7.8, 29.6)	31.5 (19.5, 46.7)	28.1 (20.7, 36.9)	24.7 (21.5, 28.2)
BRFSS 2020 (N = 187,385)								
Straight/ Cis	8.4 (8.1, 8.7)	23.1 (21.8, 24.6)	34.6 (32.7, 36.5)	13.4 (10.8, 16.5)	26.5 (21.6, 32.0)	28.2 (24.5, 32.3)	16.7 (14.1, 19.6)	27.0 (25.9, 28.1)
LGBT	15.8 (14.2, 17.5)	36.7 (30.9, 42.9)	30.7 (24.6, 37.5)	32.3 (14.5, 57.0)	39.9 (18.1, 66.7)	47.0 (34.0, 60.4)	29.1 (21.2, 38.5)	33.1 (28.3, 38.2)
BRFSS 2018-2019 (N = 375,123)								
Straight/ Cis	9.5 (9.3, 9.7)	23.5 (22.6, 24.4)	33.9 (32.5, 35.2)	14.2 (12.7, 16.0)	28.1 (24.6, 31.9)	26.1 (23.5, 28.8)	17.1 (15.4, 19.0)	26.4 (25.7, 27.1)
LGBT	17.3 (15.8, 18.8)	28.7 (24.6, 33.3)	38.0 (33.2, 43.1)	21.4 (14.8, 30/0)	23.8 (15.6, 34.6)	51.6 (40.0, 63.0)	27.1 (21.0, 34.3)	32.7 (29.9, 35.6)
BRFSS 2014-2017 (N = 582,020)								
Straight/ Cis	9.1 (8.9, 9.3)	25.3 (24.5, 26.1)	38.0 (37.1, 39.0)	14.6 (13.4,15.9)	25.4 (20.9,30.6)	26.9 (24.6,29.4)	20.8 (19.1, 22.7)	29.0 (28.5, 29.6)
LGBT	15.4 (14.2, 16.6)	30.8 (27.0, 34.9)	37.3 (33.1, 41.7)	22.9 (17.2, 29.8)	29.0 (16.0, 46.6)	32.4 (23.6,42.6)	22.3 (16.9, 28.8)	31.9 (29.4, 34.4)

Note: AA = Asian American; NH/PI = Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander; AI/AN = American Indian/Alaska Native; HPS "Multiracial" includes anyone who identified with more than one race category (with the exception of Hispanic/Latinx) and also includes AI/AN and NH/PI respondents. BRFSS "Multiracial" includes anyone who identified with more than one race/ethnicity with the exception of Hispanic/Latinx. POC = People of Color (includes Black, Hispanic, AA, NH/PI, AI/AN, and Multiracial respondents).

CONCLUSION

This study serves as an update to the 2019 LGBT Poverty in the United States report, with the additional strength of examining changes in LGBT poverty in relation to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic—a globally historic period that impacted the health and economics of the world's population. We find that LGBT economic disparities measured through household income remain before and since the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the actual percentages of poverty decreased significantly by 2021, a year after the onset of the pandemic. The improvement in economic well-being via household income was observed most among people of color and in households with children, with particularly improved rates among cisgender bisexual women and transgender people. The data also indicated that cisgender lesbians showed the least change over time, with no improvement in poverty rates in 2021.

Our findings reflect trends in a decline in poverty observed in the general population through measures like the Census SPM. Over the last decade in the U.S., the poverty rate has been incrementally declining, with a sudden and prominent drop after the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. Unfortunately, our study does not help explain the drop in reports of low incomes as the data are taken from a health survey that does not include measures of many factors contributing to economic stability. Drawing from research on the general population, the significant changes in proportions of people experiencing poverty, especially among people raising children, are most likely a result of COVID-19 economic relief funding and payments provided by the U.S. government, such as the American Rescue Plan Act, which included unemployment benefits, family and childcare tax credits, and direct cash payments.[8] Further research should focus on how the differences between SOGI subgroups (e.g., cisgender lesbians compared to all other groups) are a function of eligibility and access to these types of programs.

Although our study and prior research indicate promising indicators that there was a positive impact of COVID-19 stimulus programs on poverty rates among households, particularly among those with children, other negative outcomes of the pandemic are possibly masked by the decrease in poverty rates. Research suggests several other important measures to assess how well people are surviving economically, as well as the material effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, such as unemployment rates

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[8] Parrot. S. (2022, June 14). *Robust COVID relief achieved historic gains against poverty and hardship, bolstered economy.* Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. https://www.cbpp.org/research/poverty-and-inequality/robust-covid-relief-achieved-historic-gains-against-poverty-and-0; Sherman, A., Trisi, D., & Lukens, G. (2022, September 8). *What to know about next week's poverty, income, and health insurance figures for 2021*. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. https://www.cbpp.org/research/poverty-and-inequality/what-to-know-about-next-weeks-poverty-income-and-health-insurance; Parolin, Z., Collyer, S., Curran, M.A., Wimer, C. (2021, March 11). *The potential poverty reduction effect of the American Rescue Plan*. Center on Poverty and Social Policy at Columbia University. https://www.povertycenter.columbia.edu/news-internal/2021/presidential-policy/biden-economic-relief-proposal-poverty-impact; Creamer, J., Shrider, E.A., Burners, K., & Chen, F. (2022, September). *Poverty in the United States: 2021*. United States Census Bureau. https://www.census.gov/library/publications/2022/demo/p60-277.html; DePillis, L. & DeParle, J. (2022, September 13).

and ability to pay rent/mortgage.[9] Research is also needed to explore differences in the take-up rates for needs-based benefits programs among LGBT people to measure the long-term effects of social insurance programs on LGBT poverty. Unfortunately, there are gaps in available data on these other core indicators of economic well-being that both cover the pre-pandemic period and measure SOGI. These findings, and the limitation of examining economic status through a health survey, underscore the importance of adding measures of sexual orientation and gender identity to federal surveys, including the Current Population Survey, the American Community Survey, and the Decennial Census. Hopefully, as the Household Pulse Survey continues its administration, trends in economic stability across multiple indicators in relationship to shifts in benefit program availability can be assessed among LGBT populations.[10]

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[9] Vagliasindi, M. (2021, October). *Measuring the economic impact of COVID-19 with real-time electricity indicators*. World Bank Group. https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/36424; Ettlinger, M. (2021, October 22*). COVID-19 economic crisis: By state*. Carsey School of Public Policy, University of New Hampshire. https://carsey.unh.edu/publication/COVID-19-Economic-Impact-By-State; Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. (2021, February). *Special series: COVID hardship watch. Tracking the COVID-19 economy's effects on food, housing, and employment hardships.* https://www.cbpp.org/research/poverty-and-inequality/tracking-the-covid-19-economys-effects-on-food-housing-and; Bauer, L., Broady, K., Edelberg, W., & O'Donnell, J. (2020, September 17). *Ten facts about COVID-19 and the U.S. economy*. The Hamilton Project. Brookings. https://www.brookings.edu/research/ten-facts-about-covid-19-and-the-u-s-economy/; Roman, S. Cooke-Hull, S., Dunfee, M., Flaherty, M. Haskell, J., Holland, V. Jackson, C., & Shevlin, C. (2022, July). *The coronavirus pandemic's economic impact*. U.S. Census Bureau. https://www.census.gov/library/publications/2022/econ/coronavirus-pandemics-economic-impact.html; Winston, P. (2021, April). *COVID-19 and economic opportunity: Unequal effects on economic need and program response*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Human Services Policy. https://aspe.hhs.gov/reports/covid-19-economic-opportunity-unequal-effects-economic-need-program-response; Parker, K., Minkin, R. & Bennett, J. (2020, September 24). *Economic fallout from COVID-19 continues to hit lower-income Americans the hardest*. Pew Research Center.

[10] For an example trend analysis assessing economic wellbeing during the pandemic, see Herman & O'Neil (2022), https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/trans-well-being-covid/ However, this analysis was restricted to 2021 data as HPS did not include SOGI items during the 2020 survey administration.

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ABOUT THE WILLIAMS INSTITUTE

The Williams Institute is dedicated to conducting rigorous, independent research on sexual orientation and gender identity law and public policy. A think tank at UCLA Law, the Williams Institute produces high-quality research with real-world relevance and disseminates it to judges, legislators, policymakers, media, and the public. These studies can be accessed at the Williams Institute website.

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RESEARCH THAT MATTERS

APPENDIX

Table 1. States that included BRFSS Module 28 (SOGI), by year

STATE	TOTAL YEARS	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
TOTAL STATES		19	22	25	27	29	30	32	34
ALABAMA	0								
ALASKA	3						X	X	X
ARIZONA	2					X	X		
ARKANSAS	2							X	X
CALIFORNIA	3			X	X			X	
COLORADO	4		X				X	X	X
CONNECTICUT	7		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
DELAWARE	6	X	X	X	X	X	X		
FLORIDA	3				X	X	X		
GEORGIA	6		X	X	X		X	X	X
HAWAII	8	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
IDAHO	7	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
ILLINOIS	6		X	X	X	X		X	X
INDIANA	6	X	X	X	X			X	X
IOWA	7	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
KANSAS	6	X	X			X	X	X	X
KENTUCKY	3	X		X					X
LOUISIANA	7	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
MAINE	0								
MARYLAND	4	X	X			X	X		
MASSACHUSETTS	5		X	X	X			X	X
MICHIGAN	2							X	X
MINNESOTA	8	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
MISSISSIPPI	5			X	X	X	X		X
MISSOURI	4		X	X		X			X
MONTANA	6	X			X	X	X	X	X
NEBRASKA	0								
NEVADA	6	X	X	X	X	X			X
NEW HAMPSHIRE	0								
NEW JERSEY	2							X	X
NEW MEXICO	2							X	X
NEW YORK	7	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
NORTH CAROLINA	5				X	X	X	X	X
NORTH DAKOTA	0								
OHIO	8	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
OKLAHOMA	5				X	X	X	X	X

STATE	TOTAL YEARS	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
TOTAL STATES		19	22	25	27	29	30	32	34
OREGON	0								
PENNSYLVANIA	6	X	X	X	X	X			X
RHODE ISLAND	6			X	X	X	X	X	X
SOUTH CAROLINA	4				X	X	X	X	
SOUTH DAKOTA	0								
TENNESSEE	2						X	X	
TEXAS	7		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
UTAH	3						X	X	X
VERMONT	7	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
VIRGINIA	8	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
WASHINGTON	6			X	X	X	X	X	X
WEST VIRGINIA	5		X			X	X	X	X
WISCONSIN	8	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
WYOMING	1	X							
GUAM	3				X	X		X	

Note: In some years, various states administered their own version of the BRFSS survey and are not included in the national BRFSS dataset which was used for this analysis. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic caused disruption to data collection efforts in some states, in others responses improved.

Table 2. BRFSS and HPS sample sizes in poverty, by LGBT status and gender

	BRFSS						HPS	
INCOME < 100% OF FPL	2018-2019		2020		2021		2021-2022	
	%[a]	n[b]	%[a]	n[b]	%[a]	n[b]	%[a]	n[b]
Transgender People	1.1	395	1.2	195	1.4	219	1.3	863
Cis Men								
Straight	37.7	16,290	39.4	7,873	37.4	6,880	35.3	23,273
Gay	1.1	430	1.0	230	1.0	186	2.1	1,861
Bisexual	1.1	416	1.1	205	1.0	182	1.6	1,010
Cis Women								
Straight	54.4	24,854	52.8	11,770	53.7	10,631	54.0	54,060
Lesbian	1.0	415	0.7	177	1.3	180	1.2	1,325
Bisexual	3.7	1,297	3.9	772	4.3	667	4.5	3,835
Total Sample*	100%	44,097	100%	21,222	100%	18,955	100%	739,656

*Restricted to those who answered SOGI questions
[a] Weighted
[b] Unweighted

METHODS

The Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) is a national telephone survey of more than 400,000 adults designed to collect information on health behaviors, conditions, and services. It is funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). It is administered at the state level by state health departments, universities, or call centers using a random-digit-dialing method on both landlines and mobile phones to adults ages 18 or older. Respondents answer questions over the telephone. Data on health indicators such as usage of health services, chronic health conditions, and health-related risk behaviors are collected annually on an ongoing basis in 50 U.S. states and three U.S. territories. The BRFSS includes a standardized core set of questions that are asked in every state, optional modules that states choose to include, and other specific state-added questions. For more information, please see the BRFSS website.[11] Since 2014, the CDC has allowed states to include an optional module with standardized SOGI questions in the BRFSS survey (See Appendix Table 1).[12]

This study also analyzed repeated cross-sectional data collected between July 21, 2021 and August 8, 2022[13] by the U.S. Census Bureau on the Household Pulse Phase 3.5 Survey[14] (weeks 34 – 48). The Household Pulse Survey is a 20-minute online survey that was developed to assess the impact of COVID-19 on employment, food and housing security, and the physical and mental well-being of the U.S. population. It is part of the agency's Experimental Data Series and began including SOGI questions in week 34 (July 2021). Households were enumerated via the Census Bureau's Master Address File (MAF); email addresses and cell phone numbers were appended to create a contact sampling frame for the survey. Group housing such as homeless shelters, nursing homes, and college dormitories was not sampled. Online surveys were conducted in English and Spanish with 971,836 U.S. adults ages 18 and up. For this brief, the analytic sample was limited to 94,026 survey respondents who could be classified as having a household income above or below the federal poverty level and then further reduced to 86,227 respondents who could also be classified as LGBT or non-LGBT based on the criteria described below (See Appendix Table 2).

MEASURES

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity
In BRFSS 2018-2021, respondents were assigned a sex by their answer to a screening question about gender ("Are you male or female?"). If respondents did not identify as male or female the interview was terminated. Later respondents were asked a question about their sexual orientation ("Which of the following best represents how you think of yourself?" 1 = Gay [or Lesbian]; 2 = Straight, that is, not gay; 3 = Bisexual; 4 = Something else; 7 = I don't know the answer; 9 = Refused) and then a question about transgender gender identity ("Do you consider yourself to be transgender?"). Anyone who answered 'Straight', 'Gay', 'Lesbian', or 'Bisexual' to the sexual orientation questions and answered

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[11] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2022). *Index.*
https://www.cdc.gov/brfss/index.html

[12] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2022). *Annual survey data.* https://www.cdc.gov/brfss/annual_data/annual_data.htm

[13] United States Census Bureau. (2022). *Household Pulse Survey Public Use File (PUF).* https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/household-pulse-survey/datasets.html

[14] United States Census Bureau. (2022*). Household Pulse Survey Technical Documentation.* https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/household-pulse-survey/technical-documentation.html#phase3.5

yes to the transgender identity question were included in the analysis. Respondents who answered "something else" or "don't know or not sure" or who declined to answer the question were not included in the analysis.

In HPS, questions about sex assigned at birth ("What sex were you assigned at birth, on your original birth certificate?") and current gender identity ("Do you currently describe yourself as male, female or transgender?") were added to the Household Pulse Survey starting in week 34 and were used to classify respondents as transgender and cisgender. Respondents were classified as transgender if their gender identity (male, female) was different than their sex assigned at birth (male, female) or if transgender was their current gender identity. Respondents whose gender identity (male or female) matched their sex assigned at birth (male or female) were classified as cisgender. Respondents who were transgender and/or LGB were classified as LGBT while respondents who were cisgender and straight were classified as straight/cisgender.

Additionally, in classifying transgender respondents in HPS, we had to remove some respondents from the analysis. Preliminary analysis showed potential bias in respondents who reported a household size of 10 or more members, and they were excluded from analysis (n = 380). This means that our results are only generalizable to transgender U.S. households with 10 or fewer people. We took this step because our analyses showed that transgender individuals with households of 10 or more members were overrepresented in the sample (18.7% weighted) relative to cisgender households, both among cisgender LGB (1.9% weighted) and in the larger analytic sample (1.0% weighted), and in the US population as a whole (1.2% live in households of 7 or more.)[15] The respondents identified as both transgender and living in households of 10 or more people, were also disproportionately older (54.4% were 65+ weighted), living in households with $200K+ household incomes (14.8% weighted), and Hispanic (62.6%) as compared to cisgender respondents living in 10+ households in HPS (21.1%, 6.1%, and 17.3%, respectively, weighted) and transgender respondents in other population-based datasets (e.g., BRFSS and TransPop[16]). This suggests potential response bias due to mischievous[17] or inattentive[18] responders. Additionally, we did not use imputed sex in classifying respondents' sex and gender so people with missing information on sex and gender were excluded from analysis. Jesdale's (2021) analyses indicated imputed sex probably led to bias in classification of transgender people.[19] For example, the demographic characteristics of those

[15] U.S. Census Bureau. (2021, November). *Historical Households Tables*; Table HH-4. Households by size: 1960 to Present. https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/families/households.html

[16] Meyer, I.H., Wilson, B.D.M., & O'Neill, K. (2021). *LGBTQ people in the US: Select findings from the Generations and TransPop Studies.* Los Angeles: The Williams Institute. https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/generations-transpop-toplines/

[17] Cimpian, J. R. & Timmer, J. D. (2019). Large-scale estimates of LGBQ-heterosexual disparities in the presence of potentially mischievous responders: A preregistered replication and comparison of methods. *AERA Open*, 5(4), 1-35. https://doi.org/10.1177/2332858419888892

[18] Alvarez, R., Atkeson, L., Levin, I., & Li, Y. (2019). Paying attention to inattentive survey respondents. *Political Analysis*, *27*(2), 145-162. https://doi.10.1017/pan.2018.57

[19] Jesdale, B.M. (2021). *Counting gender minority populations in the Household Pulse Survey (The AGENID=2 Memo).* National LGBT Cancer Network. https://cancer-network.org/wpontent/uploads/2021/10/Counting-GM-People-in-Pulse-Data.pdf

classified as transgender based on imputed sex look more like those of cisgender respondents than to those of transgender respondents who answered the sex assigned at birth question.[20]

Race/Ethnicity

In BRFSS, race/ethnicity is categorized into eight categories: White, Black, Latinx/Hispanic, American Indian or Alaska Native (AI/AN), Asian American (AA), Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (NH/PI), Multiracial and Other race. Anyone who identified with more than one race were categorized as 'Multiracial' with the exception of the Hispanic category where anyone who chose Hispanic was categorized as Hispanic, regardless of other race categories chosen. This is because cultural groups not of European descent, such as Latinx/Hispanic ethnicities, have been "racialized" in the U.S. although they contain a diverse group of identities.[21] Therefore, White, Black, American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN), Asian American (AA), and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (NH/PI) categories do not include Latinx/Hispanic or Multiracial respondents.

In HPS, race was categorized into 4 categories White, Black, Asian, and Multiracial/Other. Anyone who chose more than one race was categorized as 'Multiracial,' however anyone who identified as Hispanic was categorized as Hispanic, regardless of the race category chosen (unless more than one race category was chosen). In addition, the HPS automatically included AI/AN and NH/PI respondents in the Multiracial/Other group due to small sample sizes.

Parental Status and Children in the Household

In BRFSS, respondents were asked, "How many children less than 18 years of age live in your household?" Respondents who answered anything other than '0' were categorized as parents/living with children for this analysis. This categorization includes respondents who are parents/guardians, siblings, other relatives, and unrelated people, some of which may not consider themselves to be raising a child. A subset of states asked respondents how they were related to the children in the household (Module 25: Random Child Selection) and among them the majority (90% in 2020; 91% in 2022) answered 'parent (biologic, step, adoptive)', 'grandparent', or 'foster parent or guardian' (n = 49,428 in 2020; 47,403 in 2021). The rest answered 'sibling (biologic, step, adoptive)', 'other relative', 'not related in any way'.

In HPS, respondents were asked, "How many people under 18 years old currently live in your household? Please enter a number." Respondents who answered anything other than '0' were categorized as parents/living with children for this analysis.

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[20]

[21] Wilson, B.D.M., Mallory, C., Bouton, L., & Choi, S.K. (2021). *Latinx LGBT adults in the U.S.* Los Angeles, CA: The Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law. https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/latinx-lgbt-adults-in-the-us/; Cobas, Jose & Duany, Jorge & Feagin, Joe. (2015). *How the United States racializes Latinos: White hegemony and its consequences.* https://doi.10.4324/9781315634104; Grosfoguel, R. (2004). Race and ethnicity or racialized ethnicities?: Identities within global coloniality. *Ethnicities,* 4(3), 315–336. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468796804045237

Poverty

In BRFSS, the poverty variable was created from BRFSS data based on the federal poverty thresholds provided by the U.S. Census Bureau for each respective year of data.[22] Using number of adults in the household, number of children under the age of 18 in the household, and household income, respondents were categorized as either experiencing poverty or not (The official U.S. poverty measure excludes income from people not related to each other by marriage or birth, however the household income question in BRFSS is less specific). Because the BRFSS annual household income variable is a categorical variable of an income range with 8 to 11 categories depending on the year (i.e., less than $10,000; $10,000 to less than $15,000; $15,000 to less than $20,000; $20,000 to less than $25,000; $25,000 to less than $35,000; $35,000 to less than $50,000; $50,000 to less than $75,000; and $75,000 or more, etc.) rather than an exact income that is used by the U.S. Census Bureau, we used the income midpoint (i.e., $12,500 for respondents who answered $10,000 to less than $15,000) as a comparison point. (We also found that using the midpoint to calculate the poverty threshold resulted in proportions closer to the official poverty threshold reported by the U.S. Census Bureau.) For example, suppose a household features two adults and one child and has an annual income in the $15,000–$19,999 category in 2015. We counted the adult BRFSS respondent as below the poverty line because the midpoint of that income range is $17,500, falling below the poverty threshold of $19,078 for that household size (number of children and adults) and age configuration in 2015. The weighted mean income in 2018-2019 was $48,973 ($48,851, $49,096), in 2020 was $50,122 ($49,910, $50,334), and in 2021 was $52,144 ($51,964, $52,324).

In HPS, poverty was calculated in the same way BRFSS was, using the median household income from 8 income categories (Less than $25k, $25k-$34,999, $35k-$49,999, $50k-$74,999, $75k-$99,999, $100k-$149,999, $150k-$199,999, $200k and above), household size, including number of children, and then categorized according to U.S. Census poverty thresholds for the corresponding year (with the exception of HPS, 2022 where 2021 poverty thresholds were used since 2022 thresholds have yet to be released). The weighted mean income for the entire sample during this time period was $80,798 ($80,541, $81,055), which is notably higher than among the BRFSS sample.

Thus, the sample is further limited to individuals who provided a response to the SOGI measures in these states.[23] In addition, because not everyone provided information on all variables, sample sizes vary by variable (See Appendix Table 2).

Weights

Data are weighted to ensure the data are representative of the population based on various demographic characteristics, such as sex, race, education, marital status, home ownership, phone ownership (landline, cellular, or both), and substate region. The BRFSS final weight variable, _LLCPWT, was used for the 2014-2017 (See 2019 report methodology) and for the 2020 and 2021 analyses. A different weighting procedure was used for the 2018-19 pooled years of data, which took into account

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[22] U.S. Census Bureau. *Poverty thresholds*. https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/income-poverty/historical-poverty-thresholds.html

[23] This total sample size and the sample size reported in Appendix Table 2 differ because not everyone who answered the SOGI questions provided information about their gender (male or female), which we used to categorize the cisgender straight, lesbian, gay, and bisexual groups.

states that answered the SOGI modules in both years or in only one year. If a state completed the modules in both years, that weight was divided by 2.

In HPS, all analyses were weighted using person-level weights provided by the Census Bureau. All sample sizes (n) are unweighted (Appendix Table 2).

ANALYTIC STRATEGY

Descriptive analyses were conducted using Stata v17 statistical software. Analyses included confidence intervals (95% CI) to communicate the degree of uncertainty around an estimate due to sampling error. Non-overlapping confidence intervals were deemed indicative of statistically significant differences in two proportions at a one-tailed alpha of 0.05.[24]

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[24] Cumming, G. (2014). The new statistics: Why and how. *Psychological Science*, 25(1): 7–29. https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797613504966