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SERVING OUR YOUTH 2015:

The Needs and Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning Youth Experiencing Homelessness

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Bianca D.M. Wilson
Jama Shelton
Gary Gates

June 2015

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The Palette Fund honors the legacy of Rand Harlan Skolnick through collaborative grantmaking and programs that value human rights and education. The Foundation focuses on Nutrition & Wellness, Patient Navigation, and Queer Youth. Rand committed his heart and soul to his philanthropic work throughout his life, and The Palette Fund seeks to continue and grow his pioneering vision.

Authoring Organizations

www.TrueColorsFund.org

The True Colors Fund works to end homelessness among lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth, creating a world in which young people can be their true selves. Through a broad continuum of public education & engagement, advocacy & public policy, youth collaboration, research, and community building programs, the True Colors Fund is focused on creating systemic change to holistically address LGBT youth homelessness.

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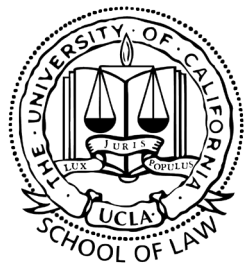
The Williams Institute advances sexual orientation and gender identity law and public policy through rigorous, independent research and scholarship, and disseminates it to judges, legislators, policymakers, media and the public. A national think tank at the UCLA School of Law, the Williams Institute produces high quality research with real-world relevance.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Soon Kyu Choi is a Policy Analyst at the Williams Institute at UCLA School of Law. She conducts research on a diverse set of topics relevant to LGBT health and well-being.

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Jama Shelton is the Deputy Executive Director of the True Colors Fund. She conducts research, trains service providers, and implements programs pertaining to issues relevant to LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness.

Gary J. Gates is the Blachford-Cooper Distinguished Scholar and Research Director at the Williams Institute at UCLA School of Law. He studies the demographic and economic characteristics of the LGBT population.
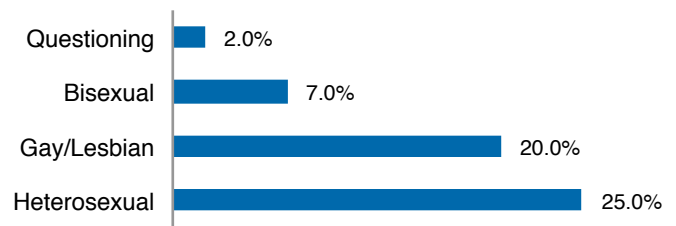
SUGGESTED CITATION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report summarizes findings from the 2014 LGBTQ Homeless Youth Provider Survey, a survey of 138 youth homelessness human service agency providers conducted from March 2014 through June 2014 designed to better understand homelessness among LGBTQ youth. This report updates a similar report based on a survey conducted in 2011 (Durso & Gates, 2012). This new survey was designed to obtain greater detail on the similar and distinct experiences of sexual minority (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and questioning) and gender minority (transgender) youth experiencing homelessness. Recruitment was focused on agencies whose primary purpose is the provision of services to youth experiencing homelessness.
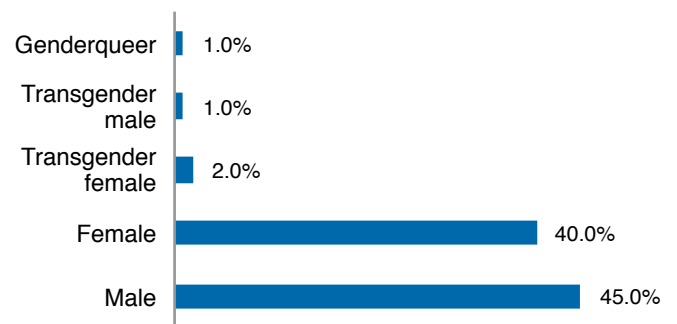
Similar to findings from the previous survey, a majority of providers of homeless youth services reported working with LGBTQ youth.

- Estimates of the percent of LGBTQ youth accessing their services indicate overrepresentation of sexual and gender minority youth among those experiencing homelessness. Of youth accessing their services, providers reported a median of 20% identify as gay or lesbian, 7% identify as bisexual, and 2% identify as questioning their sexuality. In terms of gender identity, 2% identify as transgender female, 1% identify as transgender male, and 1% identify as gender queer.[1]

- Youth of color were also reported to be disproportionately overrepresented among their LGBTQ clients accessing homelessness services. Respondents reported a median 31% of their LGBTQ clients identifying as African American/Black, 14% Latino(a)/Hispanic, 1% Native American, and 1% Asian/Pacific Islander.

- Agency staff reported average increases in the proportion of LGBTQ youth they served over the past 10 years, and this change is higher for transgender youth.

- LGBTQ youth accessing these homelessness services were reported to have been homeless longer and have more mental and physical health problems than non-LGBTQ youth.

MEDIAN % OF YOUTH EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS BY SEXUAL ORIENTATION AS REPORTED BY PROVIDERS (N=83)

Questioning	2.0%
Bisexual	7.0%
Gay/Lesbian	20.0%
Heterosexual	25.0%

MEDIAN % OF YOUTH EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS BY GENDER IDENTITY AS REPORTED BY PROVIDERS (N=83)

Genderqueer	1.0%
Transgender male	1.0%
Transgender female	2.0%
Female	40.0%
Male	45.0%

DURATION OF HOMELESSNESS OF LGBTQ YOUTH COMPARED TO NON-LGBTQ YOUTH AS REPORTED BY PROVIDERS

LGBQ (n=72): Unsure 22.2%, Shorter periods of time 4.2%, Same periods of time 12.5%, Longer periods of time 61.1%
Transgender (n=69): Unsure 15.9%, Same periods of time 4.4%, Longer periods of time 79.7%

- Longer periods of time
- Same periods of time
- Shorter periods of time
- Unsure

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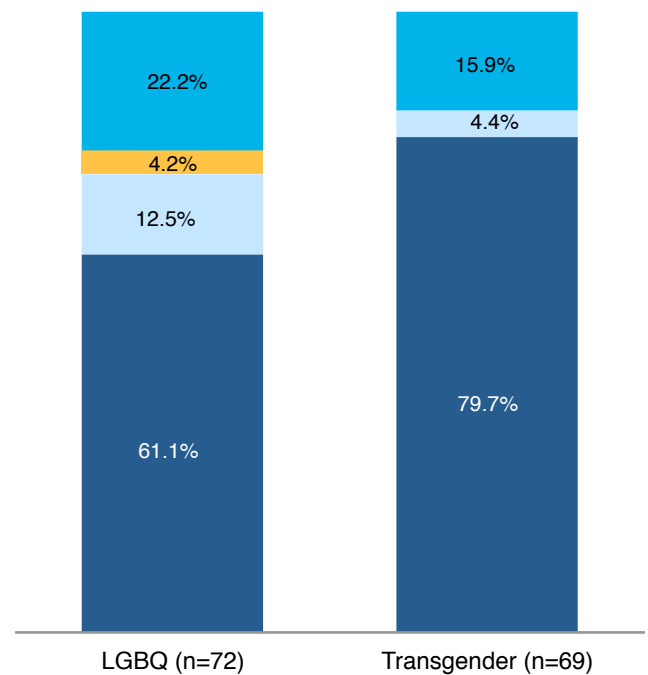
1 The median percent is reported to account for the wide range of responses and any outliers, therefore the sum will not equal 100%.

LGBQ and transgender youth were described as experiencing many similar issues leading to homelessness, but some of these issues were estimated by agency staff to be exaggerated for transgender youth.
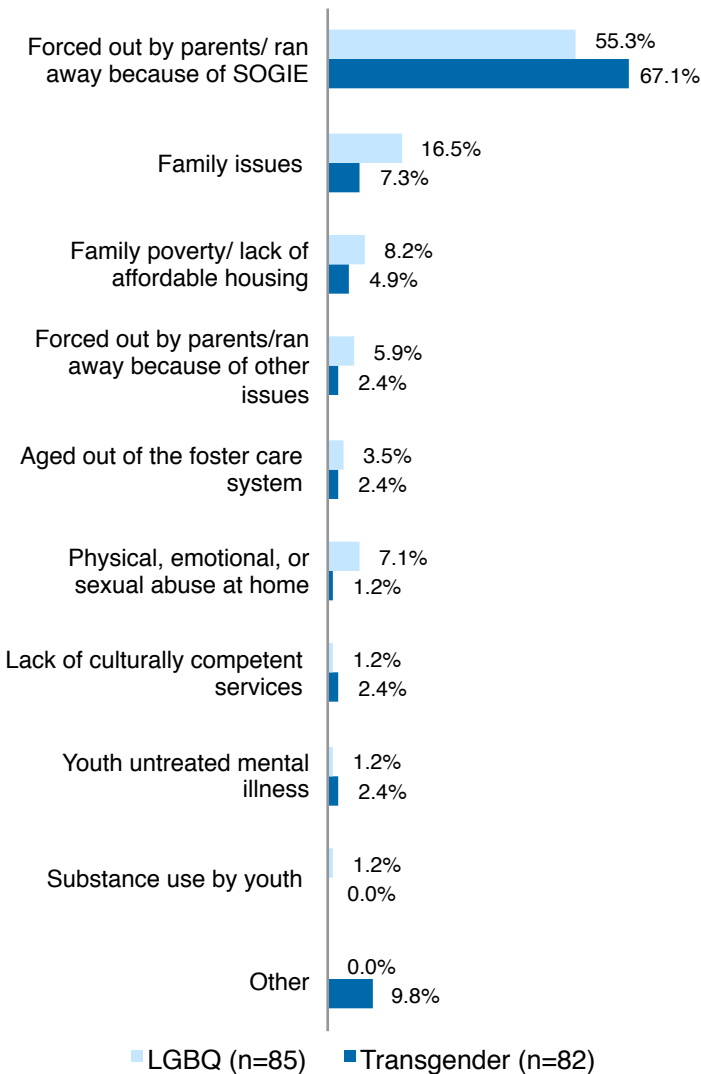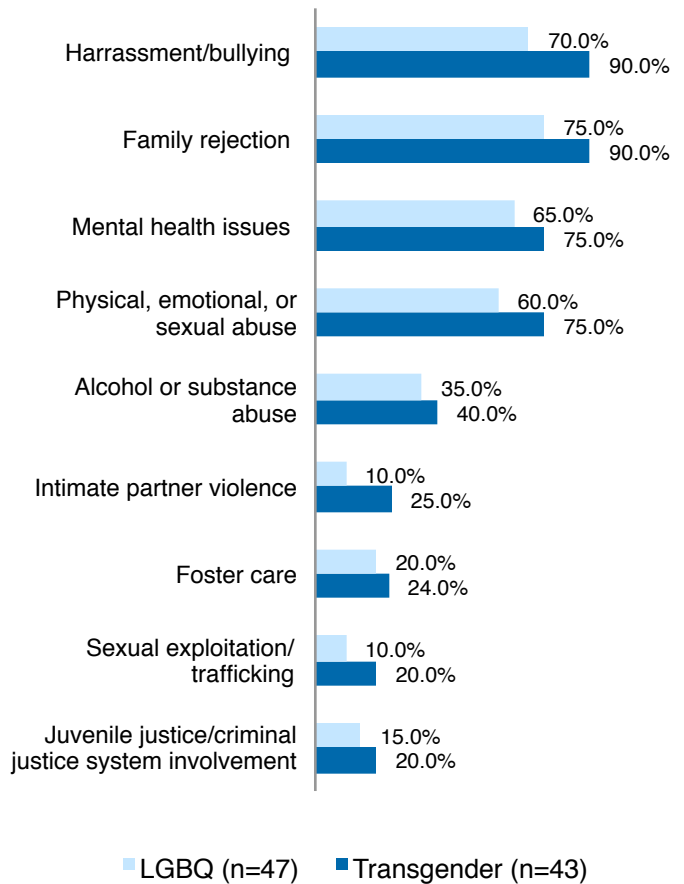
- The most prevalent reason for homelessness among LGBTQ youth was being forced out of home or running away from home because of their sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.

- Transgender youth were estimated to have experienced bullying, family rejection, and physical and sexual abuse at higher rates than LGBQ youth.

- Both LGBTQ-specific and non-LGBTQ issues were cited as primary reasons for homelessness among LGBTQ youth.

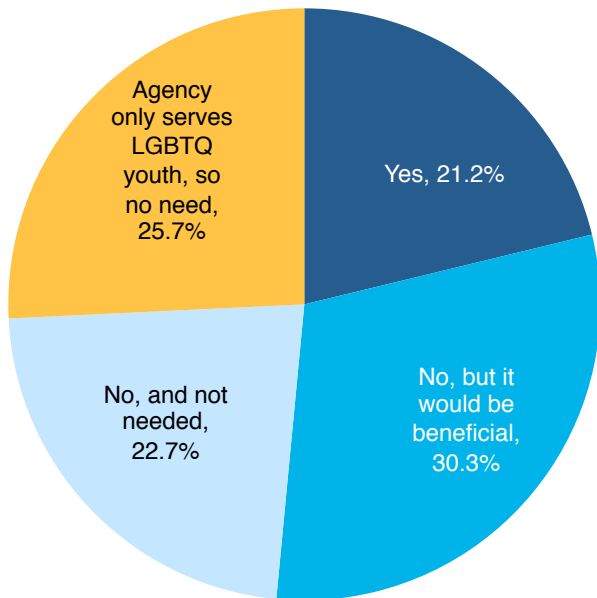## PRIMARY REASON FOR HOMELESSNESS FOR LGBQ AND TRANSGENDER YOUTH AS REPORTED BY PROVIDERS

Forced out by parents/ ran away because of SOGIE — 55.3% / 67.1%

Family issues — 16.5% / 7.3%

Family poverty/ lack of affordable housing — 8.2% / 4.9%

Forced out by parents/ran away because of other issues — 5.9% / 2.4%

Aged out of the foster care system — 3.5% / 2.4%

Physical, emotional, or sexual abuse at home — 7.1% / 1.2%

Lack of culturally competent services — 1.2% / 2.4%

Youth untreated mental illness — 1.2% / 2.4%

Substance use by youth — 1.2% / 0.0%

Other — 0.0% / 9.8%

LGBQ (n=85)   Transgender (n=82)

PROVIDER REPORTED MEDIAN % OF LGBTQ YOUTH EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS, BY REPORTED HISTORY

Harrassment/bullying — 70.0% / 90.0%

Family rejection — 75.0% / 90.0%

Mental health issues — 65.0% / 75.0%

Physical, emotional, or sexual abuse — 60.0% / 75.0%

Alcohol or substance abuse — 35.0% / 40.0%

Intimate partner violence — 10.0% / 25.0%

Foster care — 20.0% / 24.0%

Sexual exploitation/ trafficking — 10.0% / 20.0%

Juvenile justice/criminal justice system involvement — 15.0% / 20.0%

LGBQ (n=47)   Transgender (n=43)

Several factors that continue to help or hurt existing efforts to address homelessness among LGBTQ youth were identified.

- After housing needs, acceptance of sexual identity and emotional support was the second most cited need for LGBQ youth experiencing homelessness. Whereas, transition services (access to healthcare specific to transgender youth, access to hormones, emotional support during transition, and legal support) was the second most cited need for transgender youth experiencing homelessness.

- Most survey respondents believed their agency staff was representative of the youth they served in terms of sexual orientation, race, and gender identity and expression. When asked if their agency employed a dedicated LGBTQ staff, 26% of the respondents reported that they worked exclusively with LGBTQ youth and 21% worked at agencies with dedicated LGBTQ staff. Less than a quarter reported they did not have dedicated LGBTQ staff and did not need one.

DOES YOUR AGENCY EMPLOY A DEDICATED LGBTQ STAFF? (N=66)

Yes, 21.2%

No, but it would be beneficial, 30.3%

No, and not needed, 22.7%

Agency only serves LGBTQ youth, so no need, 25.7%

PROPORTION OF REASONS CITED BY PROVIDERS FOR SUCCESS IN SERVING LGBTQ YOUTH BY TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONSES

Staff qualities and characteristics, including LGBT inclusiveness, staff competencies, staff training, staff who identify as LGBTQ, etc
- 36.7%
- 34.4%

Program qualities, including types of therapeutic approaches, targeted programs, etc
- 33.1%
- 37.4%

Organization qualities, including mission, commitment to ongoing LGBT trainings, organizational climate, etc
- 30.1%
- 28.2%

■ LGBQ (n=166)　　■ Transgender (n=163)

- Similar to findings from the 2011 survey, lack of funding was identified as the biggest barrier to serving LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness. This was followed by lack of non-financial resources such as lack of community support and lack of access to others doing similar work as barriers to serving youth experiencing homelessness. Between 26-37% of respondents also cited lack of training to address LGBTQ needs and difficulty identifying LGBTQ youth as a barrier.

- On the other hand, service providers attributed their successes in serving LGBTQ youth to their staff members, their programmatic approach, and their organizations' commitments to serving this population of young people.

  - About 7% of respondents cited the role of out LGBT staff as contributing to their success working with LGBTQ youth.
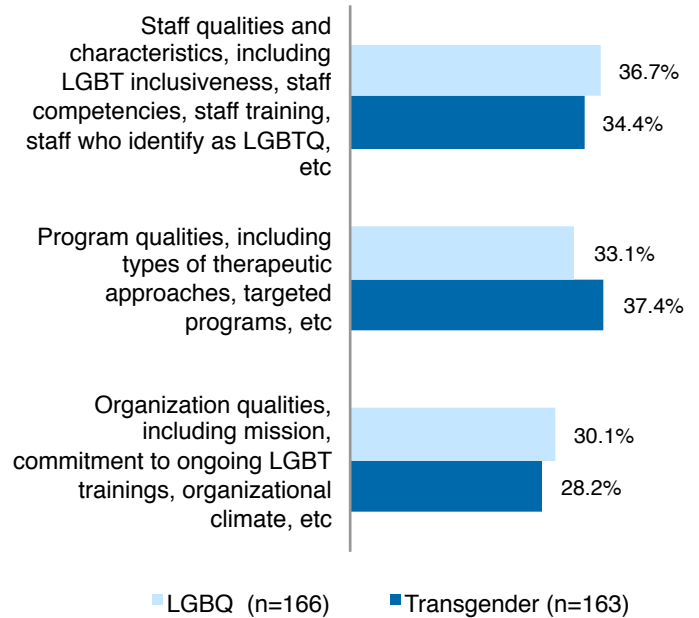
This study highlights the need to further understand not only the differences in experiences between LGBTQ youth and non-LGBTQ youth, but also differences between cisgender LGBQ and transgender youth. Further, the findings also indicate that a number of agencies are employing various strategies to address the unique needs of LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness. Yet there are also many agencies that either do not see this population as a needed focus or reported the need for more help on how best to work with LGBTQ youth, including through training and organizational policies. The combination of findings that show many staff acknowledge that they received LGBT-related trainings and are aware of some existing policies with the results indicating a call for additional trainings and policies indicate that future research also needs to assess the actual effectiveness of current training and policy initiatives. Evaluations of the effects of what currently exists may help the field better understand how to fill in the gaps highlighted by this report.

ABOUT THE SURVEY

Background

In 2011, The True Colors Fund identified the need to better understand the experiences of homeless youth service providers relating to their care of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth experiencing homelessness. In response to this need, The True Colors Fund, in partnership with the Williams Institute at UCLA and the Palette Fund, launched The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Homeless Youth Provider Survey. Though LGBT youth were understood to be overrepresented in the population of youth experiencing homelessness, little national data existed about those providing services to this population and their perspectives on the needs of LGBT youth experiencing homelessness. The inaugural 2012 study assessed the experiences of agencies in providing services to LGBT youth. It also assessed staff members' estimates of how many LGBT youth within the homeless populations were being served by these agencies (Durso and Gates, 2012).

Current Study

This initial survey was an important first step at looking at agencies doing this work; however, it did not clearly distinguish staff members' understandings of the experiences of transgender youth from those that are cisgender LGB.[2] Therefore, a new survey was designed and launched in 2014 to document homelessness service providers' experiences with and understanding of transgender youth separate from their cisgender LGB counterparts. Youth questioning their sexuality were also included in this new study and reported alongside youth who identify as cisgender LGB.

Methods

The 2014 survey was conducted from March 2014 through June 2014. Recruitment was focused on agencies whose primary purpose is the provision of services to youth experiencing homelessness. Requests to participate in the web-based survey were sent to all providers registered with the Runaway and Homeless Youth Training and Technical Assistance Center (RHYTTAC). RHYTTAC is funded by the Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children and Families, Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) as the training and technical assistance provider for all Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) grantees. All of the agencies associated with RHYTTAC receive federal funding to provide services to youth experiencing homelessness. Homeless youth service providers who are members of the

True Colors Fund's Forty to None Network were also invited to complete the survey. In total, 138 providers responded. These respondents represented 126 agencies.[3,4] While the sample is smaller than the 2012 report, the targeted recruitment strategy employed resulted in a more focused sample of agencies for which service provision to youth experiencing homelessness is their primary function. A better understanding of these specific types of agencies is important in order to understand the experiences of LGBTQ youth specifically within the homeless youth service system.

For analyses of the data, standard descriptive statistics were used to summarize data for most questionnaire items. The median value (i.e., the midpoint) is often reported along with or instead of the mean (i.e., the average) because many questions had a few respondents that reported very low or very high numbers, which create means that do not represent the data well. Appropriate inferential statistics (based on type of question) were used for any statements about correlations, relationships, or differences in the data. In analyses for the report, missing responses were not included in percent calculations or statistical tests.

Looking at LGBQ and Transgender Youth Separately

A new contribution of this follow-up survey was the assessment of the characteristics and experiences of cisgender LGBQ youth separately from those of transgender youth. The previous survey asked agency staff to estimate experiences (such as duration of homelessness) and characteristics (such as age) separately from questions about sexual orientation and gender identity. The current study sought to provide more detail on the experiences and characteristics of youth served for each of these two main groups of interest, cisgender LGBQ and transgender youth experiencing homelessness.[5]

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3 When there were multiple responses from a single agency, averages across all responses from a given agency were reported except when responses were missing from one or more of the participating respondents from the same agency. When a response was missing, then the entered response is taken alone instead of an average. When responses differed with regard to services provided by a given agency, these analyses assume that the service was provided if at least one respondent indicated that to be the case.

4 "Provider" refers to an individual who works at an agency serving homeless and at-risk youth, regardless of job title. "Respondent" refers to an individual who provides survey responses. In this report, the term "provider" is used interchangeably with the term "respondent."

5 In this report, the term LGBQ is used to refer to cisgender LGBQ youth, however, it is possible that there may be some overlap in reporting as transgender youth may also identify their sexual orientation as LGBQ and the findings are based on providers' knowledge and assumptions about the identities of the youth they serve.

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2 Cisgender is a term that pertains to individuals whose gender identity aligns with their sex assigned at birth (Schilt & Westbrook, 2009; Green, 2006). , it is used in place of "non-transgender" as it complements the term "transgender" (Schilt & Westbrook, 2009).

ABOUT THE AGENCIES SURVEYED

The sample includes 126 agencies located throughout the United States almost equally distributed across the West (27%), Midwest (24%), the South (25%) and the Northeast (23%). One agency from Canada also participated. Respondents reported that a median estimate of 183 youth experiencing homelessness were served last year by their agencies.

This study relies on staff reports of organizational, program, and client characteristics. Over half of the respondents reported that they used approximately two methods to track demographic information of the youth they served. As Figure 1 shows, the majority reported using client intake forms (90%) or case notes and client records (81%), while less than half of the respondents reported their agencies used estimates based on staff or volunteer observations (45%) or other means (16%). The absence of a method to track demographic information made no statistically significant difference in the number reported of youth experiencing homelessness. When asked about databases used for client records, 62% reported their agency used Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), 52% reported they used Runaway and Homeless Youth Management Information System (RHYMIS), and 43% reported they used both databases. About a quarter of the providers reported their agency used another type of database and about 23% of providers reported their agency used its own internal database for client record keeping. About 12% of the providers reported they did not use any database for this purpose.

FIGURE 1: PERCENT OF METHODS USED, BY METHOD TYPE

Agency Funding Sources

In fiscal year 2013, providers reported that on average nearly 60% of their funding came from some form of public or government source (Table 1).[6]

TABLE 1: PERCENT OF FUNDS, BY FUNDING SOURCE

	Mean %	Median %	Range
Local (n=36)	23.7	15.2	0-90%
State (n=36)	15.8	15.0	0-60%
Federal (n=37)	21.6	15.0	0-90%
Foundations (n=42)	21.4	17.5	0-90%
Corporations (n=28)	7.2	5.0	0-26%
Public Support (n=40)	28.0	18.0	0-85%
Other (n=12)	11.5	4.5	0-100%

Transitional living programs were the most cited program receiving government funding (46%), followed by emergency shelter services (41%) and street outreach services (41%). Over 30% of agencies reported receiving government funding for drop-in services (31%), case management services (33%) and mental health or therapeutic services (40%). Homelessness prevention services and host home services (10%) were the least cited programs to receive government funding by agencies.
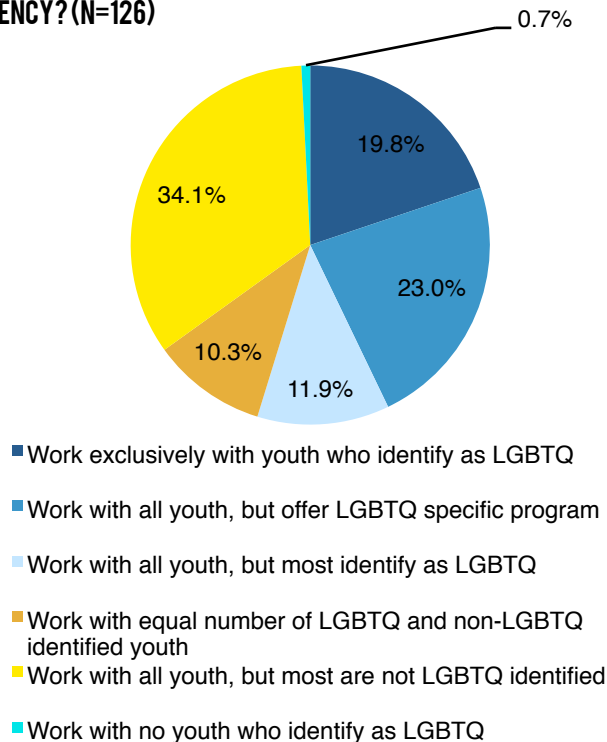
In response to the question "How would you describe your experiences working with your local, state, and federal government?" over 30% of providers reported they had a positive experience working with local, state, and the federal government. Approximately 20% reported they had a very positive experience with both federal and local governments and 11% reported the same positive experience with state government. Between 20-28% reported a somewhat positive experience with the different levels of governments. Less than 3% of the providers reported having a negative experience with federal and state government, while 12% of the providers reported a negative experience with city or county government. Many agencies also reported having no direct experience working with federal government (27%), state government (23%), and local government (8%).

To provide context for the communities in which agencies were working, about 90% of service providers reported their agency was involved with a coalition that addresses homelessness. Most agencies belonged to local coalitions (90%) or state coalitions (56%), and less than a third of the agencies reported belonging to national coalitions (27%). As respondents were asked to check all coalition types that their agency was involved with, on average, results show that an agency belonged to a median estimate of two coalitions.

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6 Table 1 reports both the mean percent and median percent. The mean percent provides the average percent of the responses by funding source or the sum of all responses divided by the number of responses. The median percent is the midpoint when the data is organized from lowest to highest. Given that respondents reported within the range of 0-90% for many of the funding source types, the median percent is included in this table. The median percent is lower than the mean percent, indicating that the data is clustered on the lower end of the range and sparse in the higher range.

Agencies' LGBTQ Youth Focus

To understand how central serving LGBTQ youth are to an agency's mission, providers were asked to identify a statement that best represented their agencies target population. As Figure 2 shows, 20% of agency respondents reported working exclusively with youth who identify as LGBTQ. Seventy-nine percent of agency respondents reported their agency provided services to all youth, and reported varying degrees of LGBTQ identified youth within the population of youth they served.

FIGURE 2: WHICH STATEMENT BEST FITS YOUR AGENCY? (N=126)

- ■ Work exclusively with youth who identify as LGBTQ
- ■ Work with all youth, but offer LGBTQ specific program
- ■ Work with all youth, but most identify as LGBTQ
- ■ Work with equal number of LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ identified youth
- ■ Work with all youth, but most are not LGBTQ identified
- ■ Work with no youth who identify as LGBTQ

More than six out of ten providers (66%) also reported that their agency had a LGBTQ-specific program or initiative. Most respondents who reported their agency worked with LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness also reported their agency had a LGBTQ-specific plan (70%). In regards to support for LGBTQ-specific programs, providers

FIGURE 3: PERCENT OF FUNDING FOR LGBTQ-SPECIFIC PROGRAMS, BY SOURCE

Foundations	76.2%
Public Support	71.4%
Local	40.4%
Federal	38.1%
State	31.0%
Corporations	28.6%
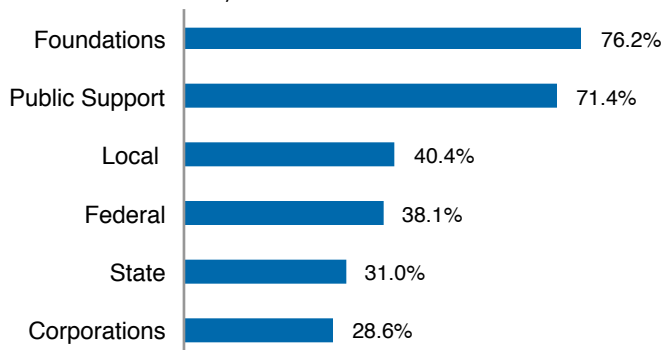
reported that over 70% of their agency's funding came from foundations (76%) or public support (71%) as shown in Figure 3. A smaller proportion of funding for LGBTQ-specific programs came from the state (31%) or corporations (29%). On average, agencies received funding for LGBTQ-specific programs from two to three different funding sources.

Agencies in Context

Aside from funding support, agencies and the clients they serve are affected by the non-financial support and resources within their city or county. Six out of ten respondents (61%) reported that their city or county has a plan to end homelessness. Of those that reported their city or county had a plan to end homelessness, 67% of those plans include a plan specific for youth and 21% include a plan specific for LGBTQ youth.

The number of beds available in a city or town is also an important resource as it indicates the general local capacity to house people experiencing homelessness. As Table 2 indicates, the number of beds in responding agencies' cities or towns varies widely. Providers reported their city or town has a median number of 25 emergency beds and transitional living beds available. Although most respondents reported that there were no beds specifically dedicated to LGBTQ youth in their city or town, 8% of the respondents reported there are 10-20 beds available and 13% of agency respondents reported their city or town has over 40 beds dedicated specifically to LGBTQ youth.

TABLE 2: MEDIAN NUMBER OF BEDS AVAILABLE IN CITY/TOWN AS REPORTED BY PROVIDERS

|	Median	Range	N
# of emergency beds	25.0	0-1500	45
# of transitional living beds	25.0	0-1500	39
# of other types of beds	17.5	0-5000	26
# of total beds specifically dedicated to LGBTQ youth	0.0	0-750	45

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF LGBTQ YOUTH EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Eighty-five percent of providers reported that their agency worked with LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness. When asked about the sexual orientation of the youth they served in the last year, survey respondents reported that a large proportion identified as sexual minorities. Respondents' report that an estimated 20% of their youth identified as gay or lesbian, 7% as bisexual, and an estimated 2% of their clients were questioning their sexual orientation (Figure 4). This reported proportion of LGB youth far exceeds the 3.5%

estimate of LGB adults (Gates & Newport, 2013) or the 7-8% estimate of LGB youth within the general U.S. population (Wilson et al., 2014).

FIGURE 4: MEDIAN % OF YOUTH EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS BY SEXUAL ORIENTATION AS REPORTED BY PROVIDERS (N=83)

Questioning	2.0%
Bisexual	7.0%
Gay/Lesbian	20.0%
Heterosexual	25.0%
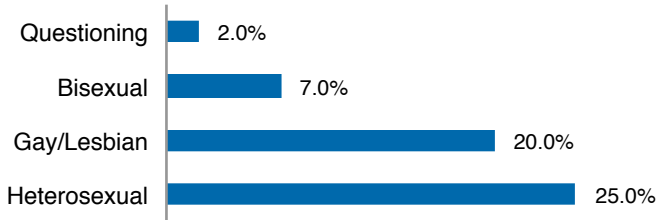
Respondents were also asked to provide information on youth by gender identity. Compared to the previous survey that provided respondents with the options "male, female, and other" the current survey provided options "male, female, transgender female, transgender male, and gender non-conforming/ gender queer" to better understand the proportion of transgender youth served at homeless youth centers. Providers reported that a majority of the youth they served in 2013 identified as either male or female (Figure 5). An estimated median 2% of their youth identified as transgender female, 1% as transgender male, and 1% as gender queer or gender non-conforming. This reported figure of transgender youth by agency respondents also far exceeds the reported 0.3% of adults who identify as transgender within the general U.S. population (Gates, 2011) and exceeds or is similar to estimates of transgender youth comprising less than 3% of the general population (Wilson et al., 2014).

FIGURE 5: MEDIAN % OF YOUTH EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS BY GENDER IDENTITY AS REPORTED BY PROVIDERS (N=83)

Genderqueer	1.0%
Transgender male	1.0%
Transgender female	2.0%
Female	40.0%
Male	45.0%
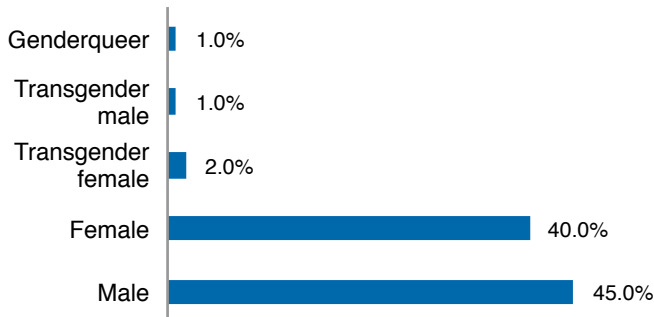
LGBTQ Clients Served over Time

Looking at the proportion of LGBTQ youth served over time, providers report that there has been an increase of LGBTQ youth served at their agencies over the past 10 years and 5 years (Figure 6).

FIGURE 6: MEDIAN % OF LGBTQ CLIENTS SERVED OVER TIME AS REPORTED BY PROVIDERS

Transgender: 1.5% (10 years ago), 5.0% (5 years ago)
LGBQ: 20.0% (10 years ago), 22.0% (5 years ago)
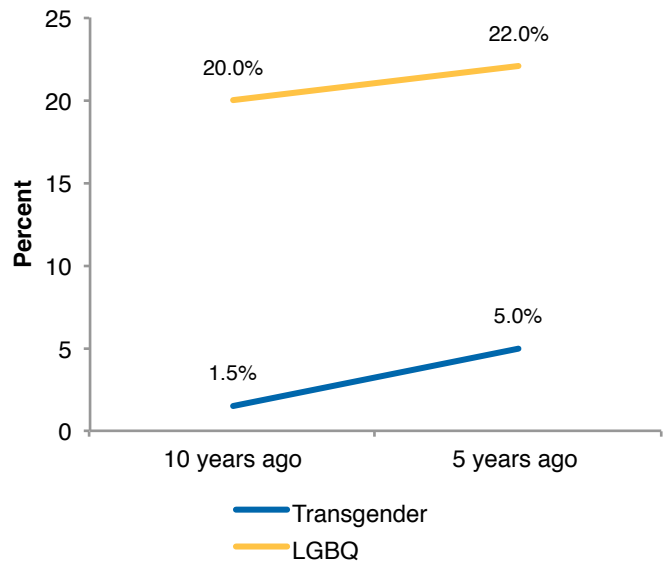
Race and Ethnicity

Of the LGBTQ youth served at agencies, respondents reported that nearly 40% identified as Caucasian/White. About 31% were African American/ Black and 14% were of Latino(a)/ Hispanic origin. An estimated 1% of the LGBTQ youth served were reported as Native American and an estimated 1% as Asian/Pacific Islander (Figure 7).

FIGURE 7: MEDIAN % OF LGBTQ YOUTH EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS BY RACE AS REPORTED BY PROVIDERS (N=81)

Caucasian/White (non-Latino)	39.5%
African American/ Black (non-Latino)	30.5%
Latino(a)/Hispanic	13.5%
Native American	1.0%
Asian/Pacific Islander	1.0%
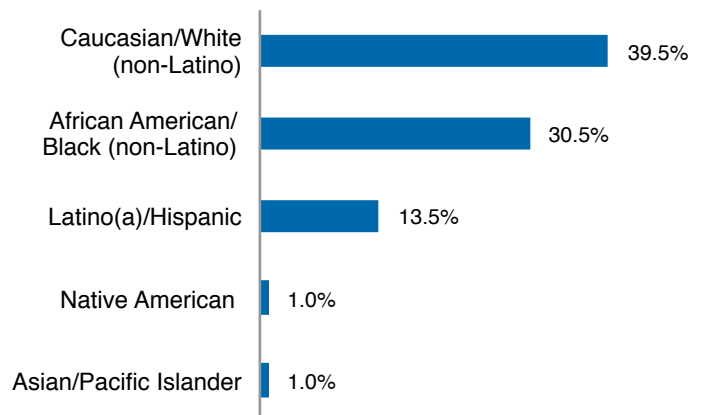
Age

The majority of youth experiencing homelessness (LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ youth) served at agencies fall between the age range of 18-20 (Figure 8). These results make sense in the context of which organizations received invitations to complete the survey - survey respondents were recruited from RHYTTAC which is funded by FYSB, through which services are limited to youth under age 21. However, these characteristics also indicate that most of the youth served by homeless service providers are young adults, leaving few agencies providing services for minors experiencing homelessness.

Additionally, providers were asked whether the average age of youth served at their agencies in 2013 changed over the past five years comparing non-LGBTQ youth with LGBTQ youth. Figure 9 shows that while the majority of agencies believed youth served in 2013 were the same age as youth served five years ago, the results also show that staff estimated that LGBQ and transgender youth in particular seemed to be younger these days.

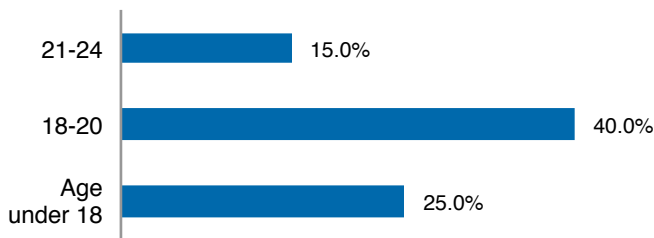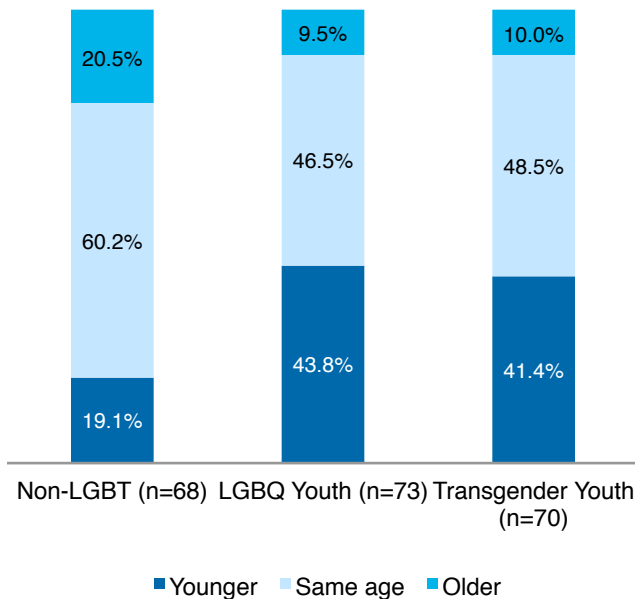### FIGURE 8: MEDIAN % OF YOUTH EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS BY AGE AS REPORTED BY PROVIDERS (N=81)

Age	%
21-24	15.0%
18-20	40.0%
Age under 18	25.0%

FIGURE 9: PROVIDER REPORTED AVERAGE AGE CHANGE OVER THE PAST 5 YEARS

	Non-LGBT (n=68)	LGBQ Youth (n=73)	Transgender Youth (n=70)
Older	20.5%	9.5%	10.0%
Same age	60.2%	46.5%	48.5%
Younger	19.1%	43.8%	41.4%

■ Younger ■ Same age ■ Older

Education Status of LGBTQ Youth Experiencing Homelessness

Almost half of the survey respondents reported their agency collected information on secondary educational milestones or high school attainment of their LGBTQ clients and 35% reported collecting information on the current educational status of their LGBTQ clients.

For the agencies that collected these types of educational data, Figure 10 indicates the educational milestones achieved by their LGBQ and transgender clients. Forty percent of LGBQ youth and 25% of transgender youth obtained a high school diploma. On the other end, 12% of LGBQ youth and 20% of transgender youth served at responding agencies were reported to have dropped out of high school. Although it appears that a higher proportion

FIGURE 10: PROVIDER REPORTED MEDIAN % OF LGBTQ YOUTH EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS BY ACHIEVED EDUCATIONAL MILESTONES

	LGBQ Youth (n=28)	Transgender Youth (n=24)
Obtained high school diploma	39.5%	25.0%
Enrolled in high school and working towards completion	12.5%	10.5%
Obtained a GED	3.5%	0.0%
Enrolled in GED program and working towards completion	1.0%	2.5%
Dropped out of high school	11.5%	20.0%

■ LGBQ Youth (n=28) ■ Transgender Youth (n=24)
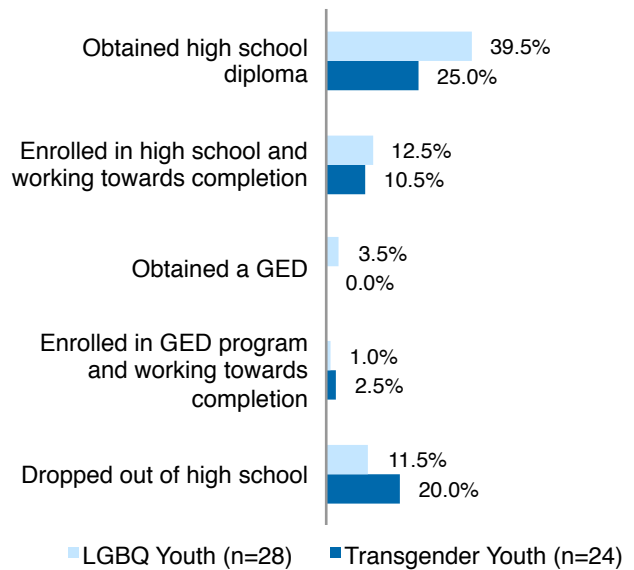
FIGURE 11: PROVIDER REPORTED MEDIAN % OF CURRENT EDUCATION STATUS FOR LGBTQ YOUTH EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

	LGBQ (n=28)	Transgender (n=26)
Junior High School	2.5%	0.0%
High School	50.0%	50.0%
GED program	5.0%	7.5%
2 year college	4.0%	5.5%

■ LGBQ (n=28) ■ Transgender (n=26)
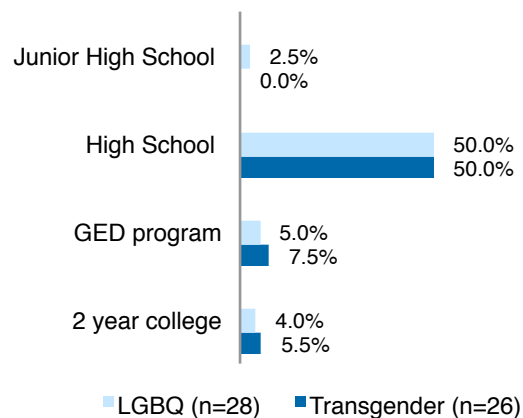
of LGBQ youth have reached more educational milestones than did transgender youth served at responding agencies, these differences are not statistically significant.

When asked about current education statuses of LGBQ and transgender clients, respondents reported that 50% of their LGBQ youth and transgender youth are currently enrolled in high school and a much smaller proportion of their youth are enrolled in GED programs or higher education (Figure 11).

## UNDERSTANDING THE EXPERIENCE OF HOMELESSNESS

Pathways to Homelessness

Family problems, transitions from foster care and other public systems, and economic problems are the most commonly cited reasons for homelessness among youth in America (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2013). To better understand the pathways to homelessness among LGBTQ youth, survey respondents were asked to identify the three most prevalent reasons for homelessness among their LGBTQ clientele. The most commonly cited reason for homelessness among LGBTQ clients, from the perspectives of agency staff, was due to being forced out by parents or running away because of their sexual orientation or gender identity/ expression (i.e., SOGIE) (Figure 12). This is followed by family issues, such as substance abuse, mental illness or violence in the household, and youth being aged out of foster care systems with nowhere stable to live for both LGBQ and transgender youth. A higher proportion of respondents reported that lack of culturally competent services was a reason for homelessness among transgender youth than they did for LGBQ homeless youth. Other differences between LGBQ and transgender youth in terms of reasons for homelessness are not statistically significant.

Service providers were then asked to identify the primary reason for homelessness among their LGBTQ clientele in 2013. As Figure 13 indicates, more than half of the providers reported that the primary reason for homelessness among their LGBTQ clients was due to being forced out by parents or running away because of their SOGIE. This result aligns with another study that found LGBT youth in Los Angeles County are at risk for homelessness because of conflict with family regarding their sexual orientation or gender identity (Milburn et al., 2006). Figure 13 survey results also indicate that a higher proportion of transgender youth experience homelessness due to their SOGIE identity than do LGBQ youth.

Though this survey did not ask respondents to compare pathways to homelessness of LGBTQ youth with that of non-LGBTQ youth, other studies have looked at this comparison and found that LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ have similar reasons for leaving home, but LGBT youth leave home more
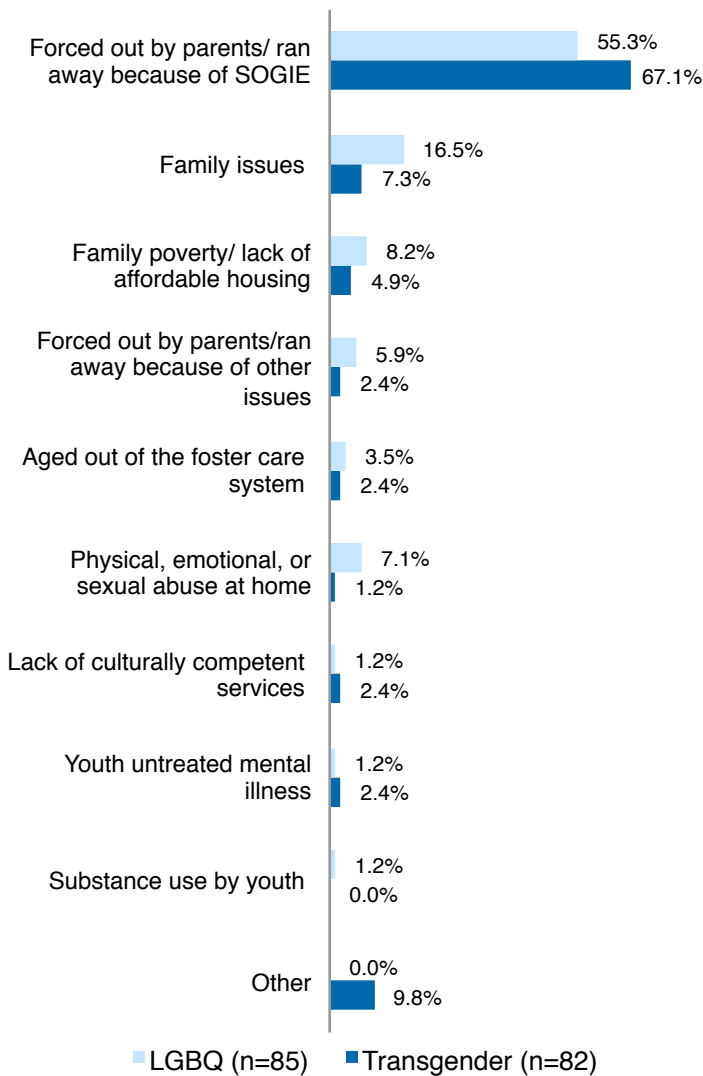
FIGURE 12: THREE MOST PREVALENT REASONS FOR HOMELESSNESS FOR LGBQ AND TRANSGENDER YOUTH AS REPORTED BY PROVIDERS

LGBQ (n=87)   Transgender (n=84)
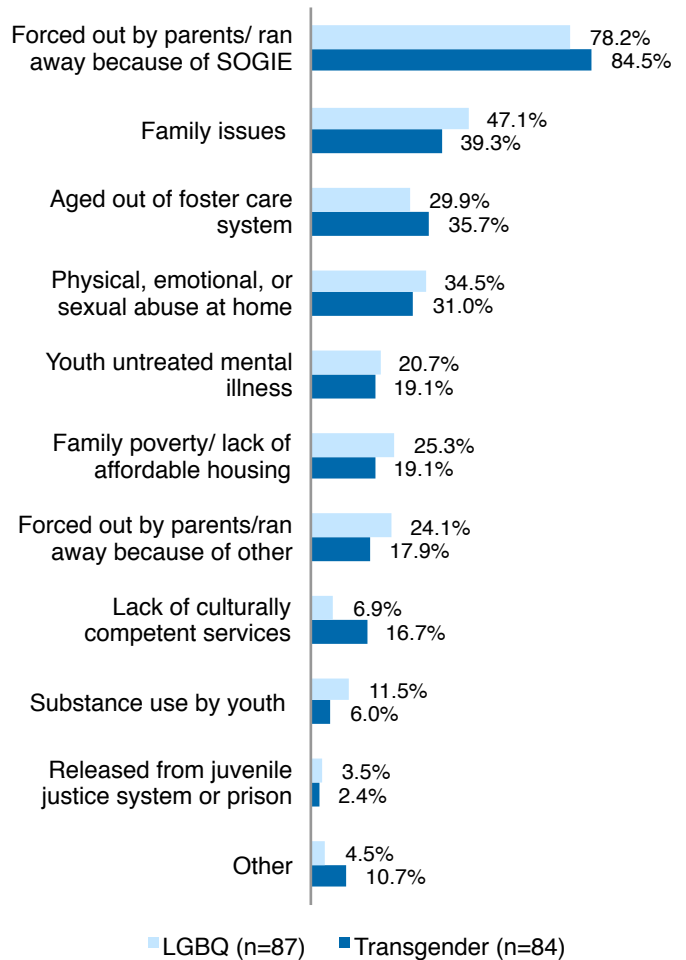
often than non-LGBT youth (Cochran et al., 2002, Corliss et al., 2011, Rosario et al., 2012). According to Cochran et al., family conflict was the most common reason for leaving home for LGBT and non-LGBT youth, though LGBT youth were more likely to leave due to domestic physical abuse. Unlike our survey results however, only 14% of the 82 LGBT youth surveyed in the Cochran et al. study cited conflict with parents over sexual orientation as a reason for leaving home (ibid). On the other hand, several studies find that the sexual minority status of LGB youth experiencing homeless is a major contributor to youth being kicked out or leaving home (Corliss et al., 2011; Rew et al., 2005; Whitbeck et al., 2004), whereas parental disapproval for substance use was a common reason for being kicked out or leaving home in a study of heterosexual youth (Rew et al., 2005).

Understanding whether youth are fleeing their hometowns to live in other cities and experiencing homelessness is important for thinking about developing services that rely on accessing families of origin as resources in finding stable housing. Nine in ten respondents (90%) reported that LGBQ and transgender youth served at their agency came from their

FIGURE 13: PRIMARY REASON FOR HOMELESSNESS FOR LGBQ AND TRANSGENDER YOUTH AS REPORTED BY PROVIDERS

Forced out by parents/ ran away because of SOGIE — LGBQ 55.3%, Transgender 67.1%

Family issues — LGBQ 16.5%, Transgender 7.3%

Family poverty/ lack of affordable housing — LGBQ 8.2%, Transgender 4.9%

Forced out by parents/ran away because of other issues — LGBQ 5.9%, Transgender 2.4%

Aged out of the foster care system — LGBQ 3.5%, Transgender 2.4%

Physical, emotional, or sexual abuse at home — LGBQ 7.1%, Transgender 1.2%

Lack of culturally competent services — LGBQ 1.2%, Transgender 2.4%

Youth untreated mental illness — LGBQ 1.2%, Transgender 2.4%

Substance use by youth — LGBQ 1.2%, Transgender 0.0%

Other — LGBQ 0.0%, Transgender 9.8%

■ LGBQ (n=85) ■ Transgender (n=82)

FIGURE 14: DURATION OF HOMELESSNESS OF LGBTQ YOUTH COMPARED TO NON-LGBTQ YOUTH AS REPORTED BY PROVIDERS

LGBQ (n=72): 61.1%, 12.5%, 4.2%, 22.2%
Transgender (n=69): 79.7%, 4.4%, 15.9%

■ Longer periods of time ■ Same periods of time
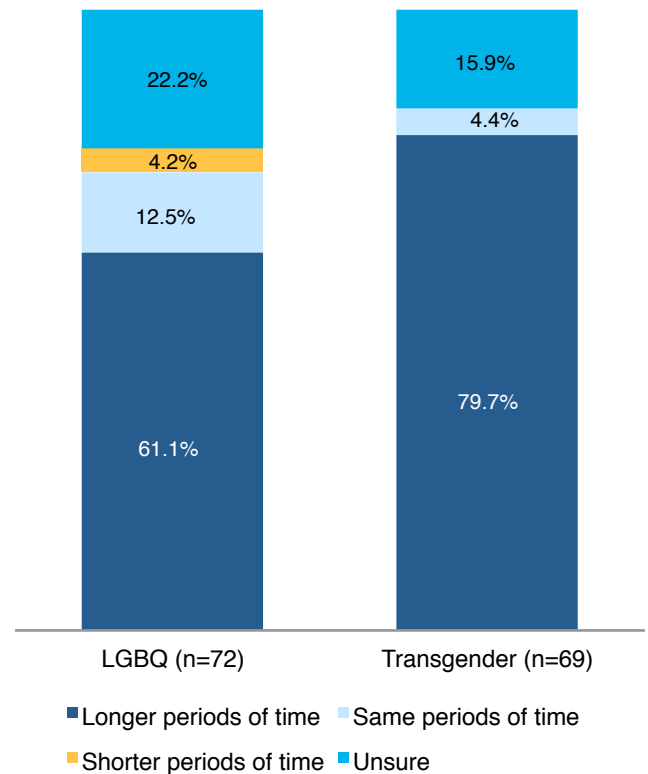■ Shorter periods of time ■ Unsure

general geographic area or within 50 miles of the agency's physical location. About 4% of agency respondents reported that none of their transgender clients came from the general geographic area and about 2% reported the same regarding their LGBQ clients.

Duration of Homelessness, Comparing LGBQ and Transgender Youth

Compared to non-LGBTQ youth, both LGBQ and transgender youth are estimated by respondents to have remained in longer periods of homelessness (Figure 14). More respondents reported that transgender youth experience longer periods of homelessness than LGBQ youths. Only 4% of agency respondents reported that LGBQ youth have a shorter period of homelessness than non-LGBTQ youth and no respondent reported that transgender youth have a shorter period of homelessness than non-LGBTQ youth. These findings seem to correspond to reports of LGBTQ

foster youth being more likely to experience homelessness and having more housing placements, two other indicators of unstable housing (Wilson et al., 2014).

Health of LGBTQ Youth Experiencing Homelessness

Compared to non-LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness, many providers indicated that their LGBQ clients have worse physical health, but more than half reported that the health of LGBQ and non-LGBQ clients was about the same. However, most providers indicated that the health of transgender youth was worse than that of cis-gender youth (Figure 15). In a study comparing risk factors between LGB and non-LGB youth experiencing homelessness, results find that LGB youth face more public health risks and are more likely to be physically unhealthier than their heterosexual counterparts (Van Leeuwen et al., 2006).

Similar to the physical health results of LGBTQ clients compared to non-LGBTQ clients, providers reported that LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness had overall worse mental health than their non-LGBTQ counterparts (Figure 16). Numerous other studies have also found that compared to non-LGBTQ youth who experience homelessness, LGBTQ youth show higher levels of depressive symptoms, anxiety, and other internalizing symptoms and behaviors (Rosario et al., 2012).

FIGURE 15: PHYSICAL HEALTH OF LGBTQ CLIENTS COMPARED TO NON-LGBTQ CLIENTS AS REPORTED BY PROVIDERS
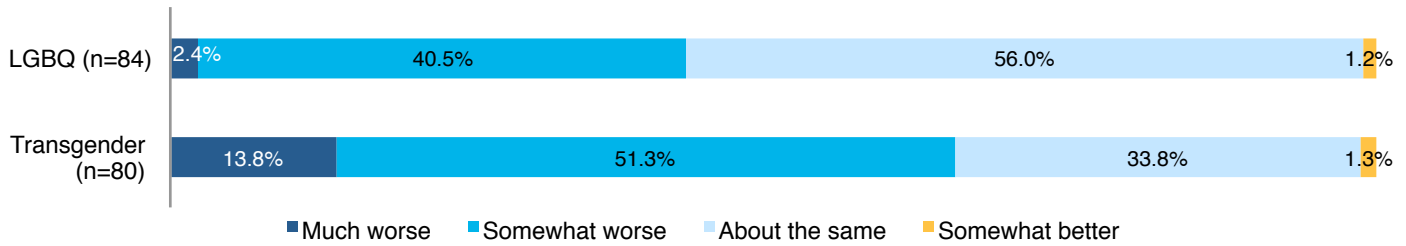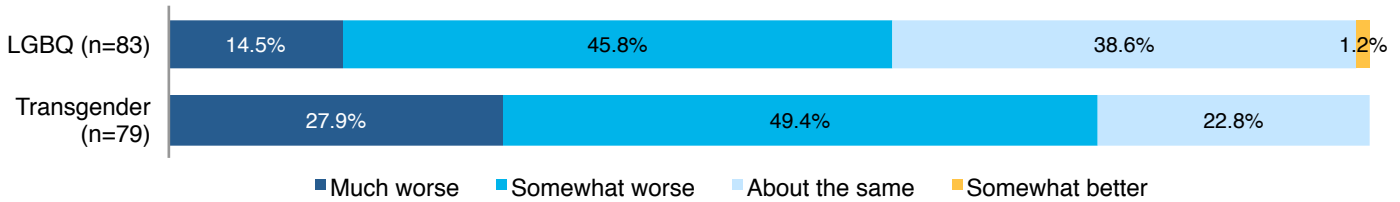

	Much worse	Somewhat worse	About the same	Somewhat better
LGBQ (n=84)	2.4%	40.5%	56.0%	1.2%
Transgender (n=80)	13.8%	51.3%	33.8%	1.3%

FIGURE 16: MENTAL HEALTH OF LGBTQ YOUTH COMPARED TO NON-LGBTQ YOUTH AS REPORTED BY PROVIDERS

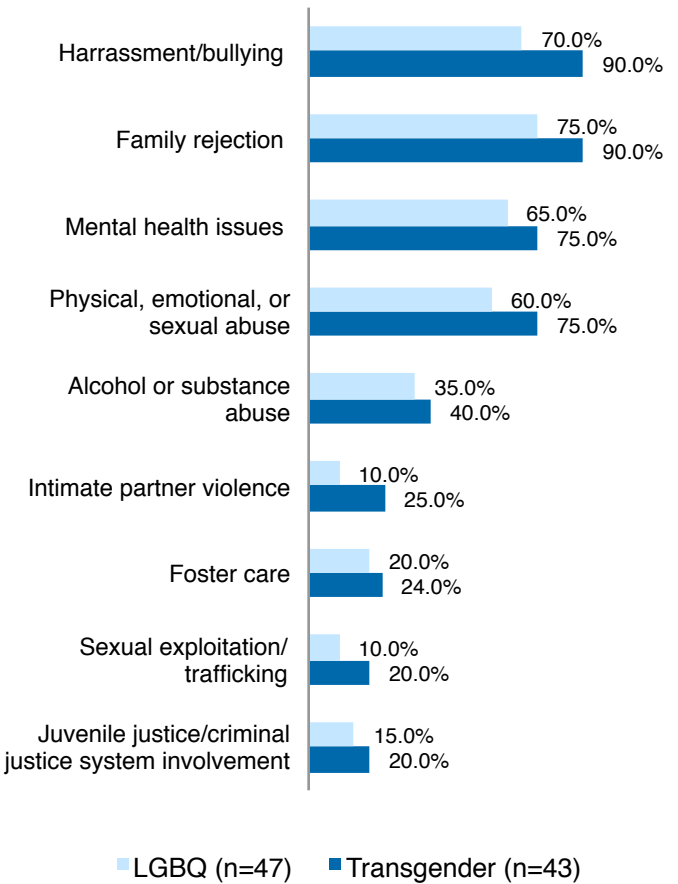|	Much worse	Somewhat worse	About the same	Somewhat better
LGBQ (n=83)	14.5%	45.8%	38.6%	1.2%
Transgender (n=79)	27.9%	49.4%	22.8%	

Histories of Trauma

Overall service providers reported that a higher proportion of their transgender clients than LGBQ clients experienced various abuses from harassment and bullying to intimate partner violence (Figure 17). Notably, respondents indicated that 90% of their transgender clients have experienced family rejection and harassment or bullying based on their sexual orientation or gender identity while they reported 70-75% of their LGBQ clients had experienced the same abuse. Differences between LGBQ and transgender youth reported histories are statistically significant with the exception of differences regarding foster care and involvement with the justice system.

Comparing LGB youth with non-LGB youth, Whitbeck et al. (2004) find that LGB youth experiencing homelessness were more likely to have experienced physical, emotional or sexual abuse than their heterosexual counterparts. LGB youth were also more likely to have experienced sexual exploitation or trafficking than non-LGB youth experiencing homelessness. No studies were found comparing the histories and experiences of transgender youth with cis-gender youth experiencing homelessness.

Reported Needs

Aside from understanding the history of LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness, survey respondents were also asked to report on the needs of LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness based on survey results that providers conducted on their own of clients who identify as LGBQ or transgender. Open-ended responses were coded into the six categories displayed in Figure 18 for responses from LGBQ youth. Housing and acceptance and support of youth's SOGIE identity were the most cited needs by LGBQ youth served at responding agencies.

FIGURE 17: PROVIDER REPORTED MEDIAN % OF LGBTQ YOUTH EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS, BY REPORTED HISTORY

	LGBQ (n=47)	Transgender (n=43)
Harrassment/bullying	70.0%	90.0%
Family rejection	75.0%	90.0%
Mental health issues	65.0%	75.0%
Physical, emotional, or sexual abuse	60.0%	75.0%
Alcohol or substance abuse	35.0%	40.0%
Intimate partner violence	10.0%	25.0%
Foster care	20.0%	24.0%
Sexual exploitation/ trafficking	10.0%	20.0%
Juvenile justice/criminal justice system involvement	15.0%	20.0%

Transgender youth needs were coded into the following six categories: housing needs, employment needs, education needs, general physical and mental health care needs, need

for transitional support,[7] and other. As Figure 19 shows, housing and transitional support needs were the most cited needs by transgender youth served at responding agencies.

FIGURE 18: PERCENT OF NEEDS CITED BY LGBQ YOUTH BY TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONSES

- Housing, 26.0%
- Other, 12.5%
- Acceptance/emotional support of SOGIE identity, 18.8%
- Health Care, 17.7%
- Education, 7.3%
- Employment, 17.7%

FIGURE 19: PERCENT OF NEEDS CITED BY TRANSGENDER YOUTH BY TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONSES

- Housing, 28.3%
- Other, 7.5%
- Transitional support, 25.5%
- Health Care, 13.2%
- Education, 6.6%
- Employment, 18.9%

7 Transitional support includes access to legal support, name/gender marker change, access to healthcare specific to trans-gender youth, access to hormones, and emotional support during transition.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SERVICES AVAILABLE TO LGBTQ YOUTH EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Types of Programs

Surveyed agencies provide a wide array of services to youth experiencing homelessness from homelessness prevention and family service to providing permanent housing solutions. Although these services are not uniquely designed to support the needs and patterns of risk that are more prevalent in LGBTQ youth, this survey attempts to understand the extent to which LGBQ and transgender youth utilized these services. By asking providers to estimate the proportion of youth who use a certain service by LGBQ or transgender identity, results can also indicate whether current services address the most cited needs of LGBTQ youth such as family rejection due to sexual identity, harassment and bullying, or mental and physical health issues that were reported earlier. Figure 20 shows that most respondents reported that their agency provided drop-in services or homeless prevention services. Close to half of the respondents reported providing street outreach, after care, and transitional living services. Permanent housing and host home services were the least cited services.

FIGURE 20: PERCENT OF AGENCIES OFFERING SERVICES, BY TYPE OF SERVICE

- Drop-in Services (n=70): 61.4%
- Homeless prevention (n=67): 61.2%
- Street Outreach (n=69): 55.1%
- After Care (n=69): 53.6%
- Transitional Living (n=70): 51.4%
- Emergency Shelter (n=70): 48.6%
- Family Service (n=68): 47.1%
- Rental Assistance (n=69): 23.2%
- Host Home (n=69): 17.4%
- Permanent Housing (n=69): 15.9%
- Other (n=65): 9.2%

Preventive Services Characteristics

One method to address homelessness is to prevent youth from becoming homeless in the first place. Homeless prevention services provide financial assistance and services to individuals and families who otherwise would be homeless without this assistance. Family services provide a temporary housing solution to families with minors or dependent children who are experiencing housing instability. Respondents reported that a higher proportion of LGBQ youth were served by their homeless prevention and family services with mean estimate ranging from 41% to 22% compared to mean estimates of transgender youth serviced at 11% and 3% (Table 3).

TABLE 3: PROVIDER REPORTED MEDIAN PERCENT SERVED BY PREVENTIVE SERVICES, BY SOGIE

	Homeless prevention (n=26)	Family service (n=17)
Mean % Youth Served Identifying as LGBQ (Median %)	41.2 (27.5)	22.3 (10)
Mean % Youth Served Identifying as Transgender (Median%)	11.2 (5)	2.9 (1)

Street Outreach and Drop-In Center Service Characteristics

The majority of agencies that provided street outreach and drop-in services served youth of all age ranges (Table 4). Survey respondents reported that an estimated 41% of their street outreach program clients identified as LGBQ compared to the mean estimate of 9% who identified as transgender. These estimates of LGBTQ youth are slightly higher than the 30% estimate of LGB youth and 7% estimate of transgender youth reported in a study focusing on street

outreach utilization by youth experiencing homelessness (Whitbeck et al., 2014). Drop-in centers were the most commonly cited program that respondents reported their agencies provided. An estimated median 48% of LGBQ youth and 12% of transgender youth utilized agency drop-in centers. For both services, a higher proportion of LGBQ youth were served compared to transgender youth.

TABLE 4: PROVIDER REPORTED STREET OUTREACH AND DROP-IN CENTER SERVICE CHARACTERISTICS

	Street outreach (n=38)	Drop-in services (n=43)
Age range served		
% Serving Youth Under Age 18	84.2	86.0
% Serving Youth Ages 18-20	89.4	93.0
% Serving Youth Ages 21-24	86.8	83.7
Youth served by SOGIE		
Mean % Youth Served Identifying as LGBQ (Median %)	41.2 (30)	47.9 (50)
Mean % Youth Served Identifying as Transgender (Median %)	9.2 (5)	12.4 (8)

Housing Services Characteristics

About 27% of responding agencies provide at least one type of housing service to their clients. On average, agencies that provide emergency shelter services have 24 beds available while agencies that provide host home services have four beds available (Table 5). About nine out of ten agencies that provide emergency shelter services served youth under age 18 and all 11 agencies that provide permanent housing services served youth 18-20. More than 75% of reporting agencies that provided transitional living or permanent housing services, served youth ages 21-24.

TABLE 5: PROVIDER REPORTED HOUSING SERVICES CHARACTERISTICS

	Housing Service Type			
	Emergency Shelter (n=34)	Transitional Living (n=36)	Permanent Housing (n=11)	Host Home (n=12)
Infrastructure capacity				
Mean number of beds available (Median)	24.1 (15)	27.2 (20)	46.3 (23.5)	4.5 (4)
Age range served				
% Serving Youth Under Age 18	91.2	38.9	18.2	58.3
% Serving Youth Ages 18-20	52.9	91.7	100.0	41.7
% Serving Youth Ages 21-24	38.2	75.0	81.8	50.0
Youth served by SOGIE				
Mean % Youth Served Identifying as LGBQ (Median %)	21.4 (15)	28.7 (15)	48.5 (43)	38.3 (45)
Mean % Youth Served Identifying as Transgender (Median %)	9.0 (2)	8.3 (2)	22.0 (10)	27.5 (15)

Given the data estimates, it appears that the majority of respondents reported their agencies provided short term housing solutions to youth under age 18 and all or most respondents reported their agencies provided permanent housing to youth age 18-24 years. A higher proportion of LGBQ youth compared to transgender youth were served at emergency shelters, transitional living, and permanent housing services. Though it appears there is a difference between LGBQ and transgender youth served at host home services, this difference is not statistically significant.

Rental Assistance and Aftercare Services Characteristics

As Table 6 shows, most agencies provided both rental assistance and aftercare services to youth age 18-24, with less than 20% of respondents reporting their agencies provided rental assistance to youth under age 18. Respondents reported that a higher proportion of LGBQ youth were served compared to transgender youth for both rental assistance and aftercare services.

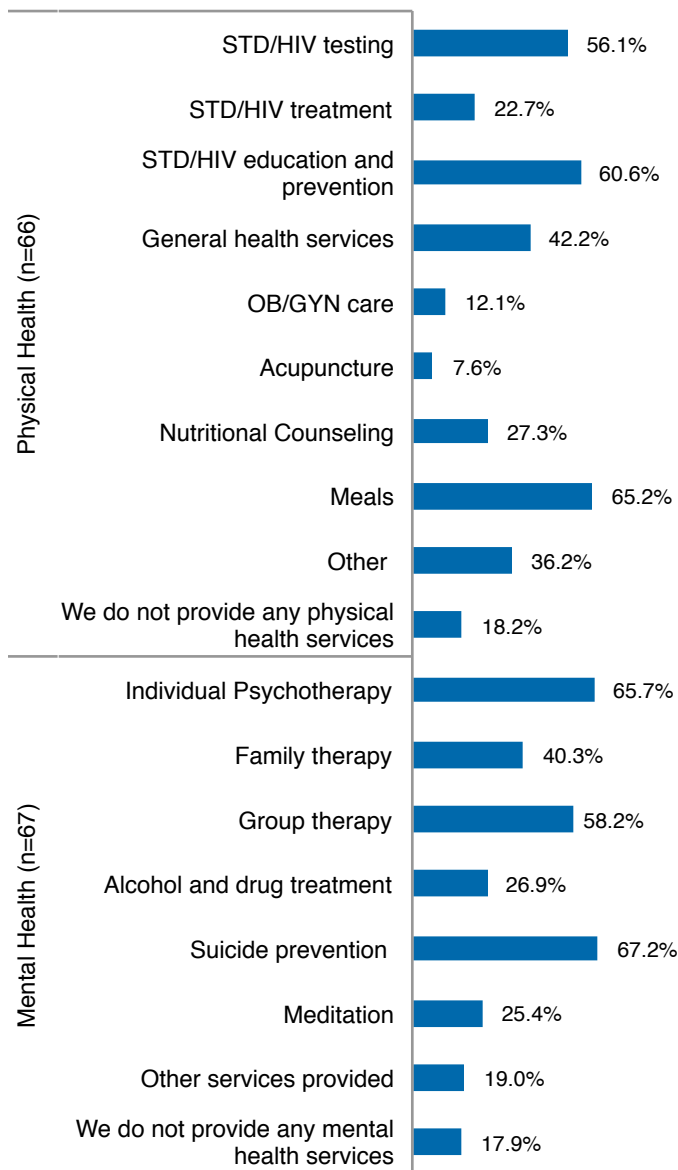## TABLE 6: PROVIDER REPORTED RENTAL ASSISTANCE AND AFTERCARE SERVICES CHARACTERISTICS

	Rental assistance (n=16)	Aftercare (n=37)
Age range served		
% Serving Youth Under Age 18	18.7	78.3
% Serving Youth Age 18-20	81.2	81.0
% Serving Youth Age 21-24	93.7	81.0
Youth served by SOGIE		
Mean % Youth Served Identifying as LGBQ (Median %)	27.5 (10)	23.1 (14)
Mean % Youth Served Identifying as Transgender (Median %)	9.4 (0)	5.1 (3.5)

Additional Types of Programs

Aside from housing services, agencies also provide programs to address physical and mental health issues as well as educational and vocational programs to enhance their clients' protective factors. Service providers were asked to report on the types of physical and mental health programs offered at their agency. Cultural, recreational, or civic programs and vocational or educational services were also reported.

As Figure 21 shows, more than half of the respondents reported their agency provided STD/HIV testing, STD/HIV education and prevention, and meals as part of their physical health and wellness program. Individual psychotherapy, group therapy, and suicide prevention services are the most commonly provided mental health services, with a smaller proportion of organizations providing alcohol and drug
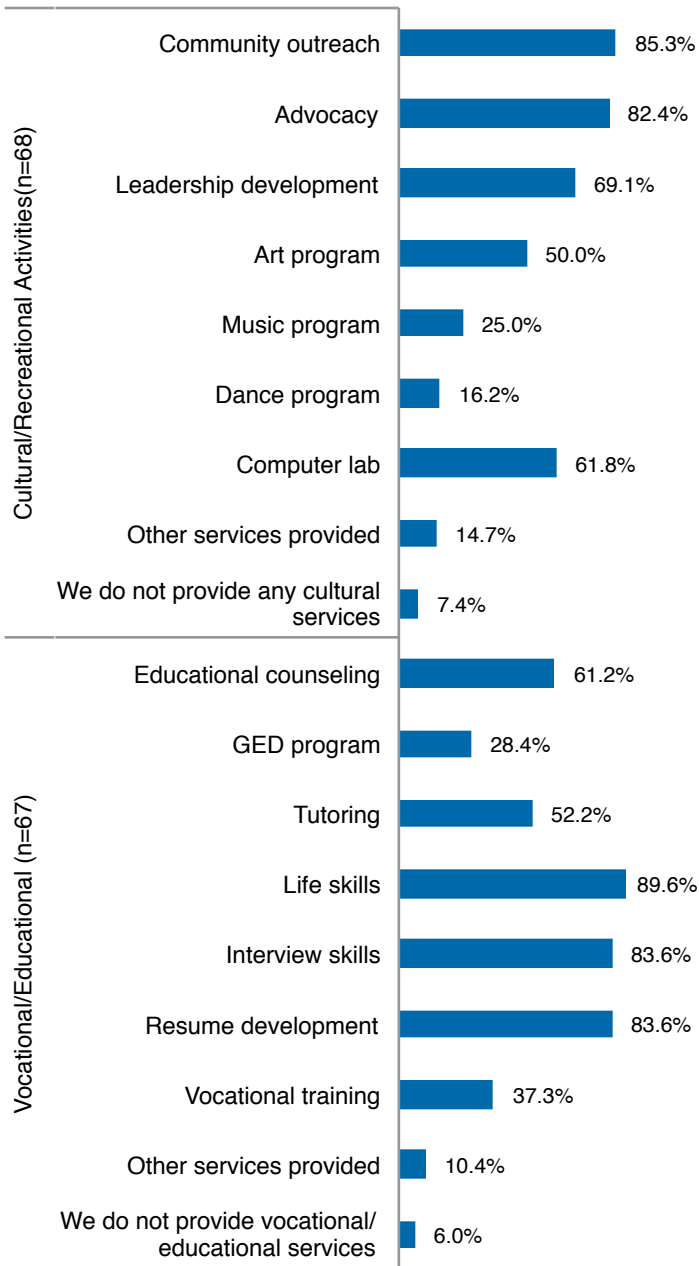
FIGURE 21: PROVIDER REPORTED AVAILABILITY OF PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMS, BY PROGRAM TYPE

Physical Health (n=66)

- STD/HIV testing — 56.1%
- STD/HIV treatment — 22.7%
- STD/HIV education and prevention — 60.6%
- General health services — 42.2%
- OB/GYN care — 12.1%
- Acupuncture — 7.6%
- Nutritional Counseling — 27.3%
- Meals — 65.2%
- Other — 36.2%
- We do not provide any physical health services — 18.2%

Mental Health (n=67)

- Individual Psychotherapy — 65.7%
- Family therapy — 40.3%
- Group therapy — 58.2%
- Alcohol and drug treatment — 26.9%
- Suicide prevention — 67.2%
- Meditation — 25.4%
- Other services provided — 19.0%
- We do not provide any mental health services — 17.9%

treatment services. Nearly 20% of agencies reported they do not provide any physical or mental health programs.
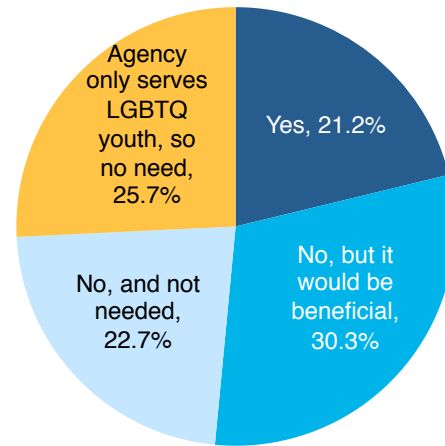
Figure 22 results indicate that life skills, community outreach, interview skills, and resume development are the more commonly provided services with a smaller proportion of respondents reporting their agencies provided vocational training and GED programs. Comparing the two figures, respondents reported that their agencies overall provided more cultural and vocational or educational programs than they did physical or mental health programs.

FIGURE 22: PROVIDER REPORTED AVAILABILITY OF CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL/VOCATIONAL PROGRAMS, BY PROGRAM TYPE

Cultural/Recreational Activities (n=68)

Program	Percentage
Community outreach	85.3%
Advocacy	82.4%
Leadership development	69.1%
Art program	50.0%
Music program	25.0%
Dance program	16.2%
Computer lab	61.8%
Other services provided	14.7%
We do not provide any cultural services	7.4%

Vocational/Educational (n=67)

Program	Percentage
Educational counseling	61.2%
GED program	28.4%
Tutoring	52.2%
Life skills	89.6%
Interview skills	83.6%
Resume development	83.6%
Vocational training	37.3%
Other services provided	10.4%
We do not provide vocational/educational services	6.0%

STAFFING NEEDS FOR SERVING LGBTQ YOUTH EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Staffing Strategies

Based on the results above, agency respondents indicated that LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness are disproportionately overrepresented among their clients and that while their needs are similar to their non-LGBTQ counterparts, they tend to be more frequent and prominent. Some agencies employ a designated staff person for LGBTQ youth to address these needs. To better understand how

agencies respond to LGBTQ youth needs, service providers were asked whether their agency employed a dedicated LGBTQ staff. As Figure 23 shows, 26% of respondents work at agencies that are dedicated to serving LGBTQ youth and 21% of respondents work at agencies that have dedicated LGBTQ staff. While 30% of respondents reported they had no dedicated LGBTQ staff but believed it would be beneficial to have staff at their agency, 23% reported they had no dedicated LGBTQ staff and believed it was not necessary.

FIGURE 23: DOES YOUR AGENCY EMPLOY A DEDICATED LGBTQ STAFF? (N=66)

Agency only serves LGBTQ youth, so no need, 25.7%
Yes, 21.2%
No, but it would be beneficial, 30.3%
No, and not needed, 22.7%

LGBTQ youth face many barriers to accessing service, and provider prejudice and provider lack of knowledge or difficulty identifying LGBTQ youth is a factor (Burwick et al., 2014). To address this barrier, one organizational level approach is to involve staff with expertise in serving LGBTQ youth. Additionally, such staff could be a resource for information and organizational partnership and improve service delivery for LGBTQ youth. On the other hand, agencies may be reluctant to employ a dedicated LGBTQ staff because they are concerned with focusing on a specific population, while addressing the needs of all youth who require the agency's services (ibid).

Agencies were also asked whether they had staff or board members who outwardly identified as either LGBQ or transgender. About 90% of respondents reported their agency had staff members who outwardly identified as LGBQ and 47% reported to have staff whom outwardly identified as transgender. About six out of ten (61%) respondents reported their agency had at least one board member who outwardly identified as LGBQ and 22% reported they had at least one board member who outwardly identified as transgender.

Service Providers' Experience Working with LGBTQ Youth

Each service provider was asked to rate their confidence level with six different areas related to working with LGBTQ

youth. Close to 90% of respondents reported they are either somewhat confident or very confident working with LGBTQ youth on various needs of LGBTQ youth. Less than 10% of respondents said they were "not very confident" or "not at all confident" on the same issues.

Survey respondents were also asked whether they believed

FIGURE 24: PERCENT OF PROVIDERS WHO BELIEVE STAFF ARE REPRESENTATIVE OF CLIENTS SERVED
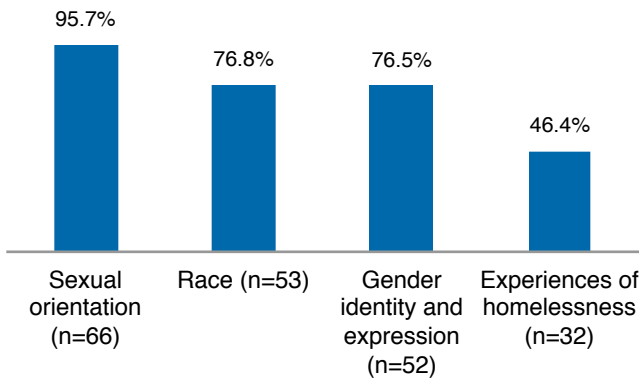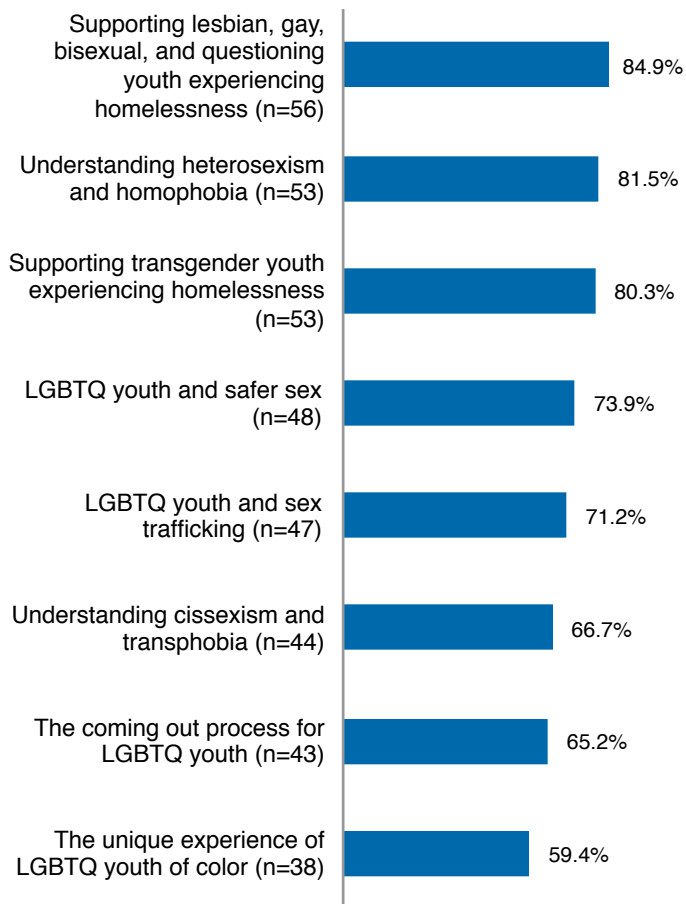

FIGURE 25: PERCENT OF PROVIDERS WHO RECEIVED TRAINING FROM THEIR AGENCY, BY TOPIC

their staff is representative of their clients in terms of sexual orientation, race, gender identity and expression or experiences of homelessness. Almost all respondents reported their staff had similar identities or characteristics as the youth they served in terms of sexual orientation and more than three quarters of respondents reported their staff is representative of their clients in terms of race and gender identity (Figure 24).

In addition to questions about client "representativeness", the survey also included questions directly about training and preparedness for working with LGBTQ youth. As Figure 25 shows, 85% of respondents received training in supporting LGBQ youth experiencing homelessness and a slightly lower percent of respondents received training on supporting transgender youth experiencing homelessness. More than half of the respondents reported having received training on at least one issue pertaining to LGBTQ youth.

Agency-led LGBTQ-related Staff Training

Service providers were asked whether staff at their agency received training on working with LGBTQ youth when hired and as part of ongoing professional development. More than eight out of ten agency respondents reported that their agencies trained their staff on working with LGBTQ youth either when hired (82%) and/or as part of ongoing professional development (89%). Over three-quarters of agency respondents reported their agency provides training to staff both when hired and as part of ongoing professional development (78%).

BARRIERS & SUCCESSES SERVING LGBTQ YOUTH

Survey respondents were asked about organizational level barriers and successes they experienced while serving LGBTQ youth. Figure 26 shows the top three barriers faced by respondents' agencies that are distinct to serving LGBQ youth and transgender youth.

About 65% of the respondents reported that lack of funding was the biggest barrier to serving LGBQ and transgender youth. Lack of community support and lack of access to others doing work in the area were also cited by survey respondents. Lack of information on how best to address the needs of LGBTQ youth was the one area of training noted as more important for transgender youth than LGBQ youth.

Service providers also provided three reasons for their agencies' successes in serving LGBQ and transgender youth. Open-ended responses were coded into three thematic groups: success due to staff qualities (including whether staff identifies as LGBTQ) and emphasis on development of staff competency/training, success due to program qualities or targeted programs, and success due to organization level qualities such as the mission or environment of agency. Figure 27 shows that all three

FIGURE 26: PERCENT OF PROVIDER CITED ORGANIZATIONAL BARRIERS TO SERVING LGBTQ YOUTH
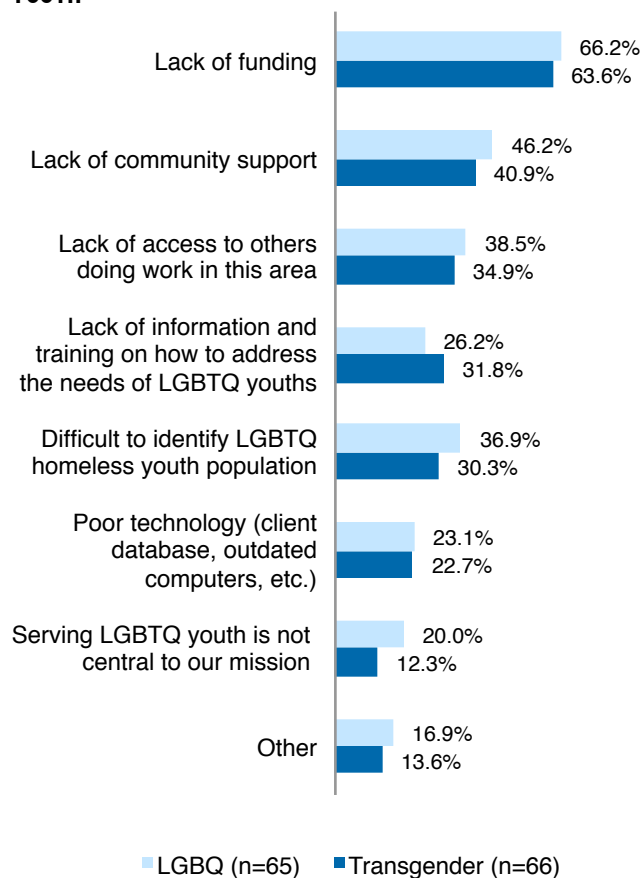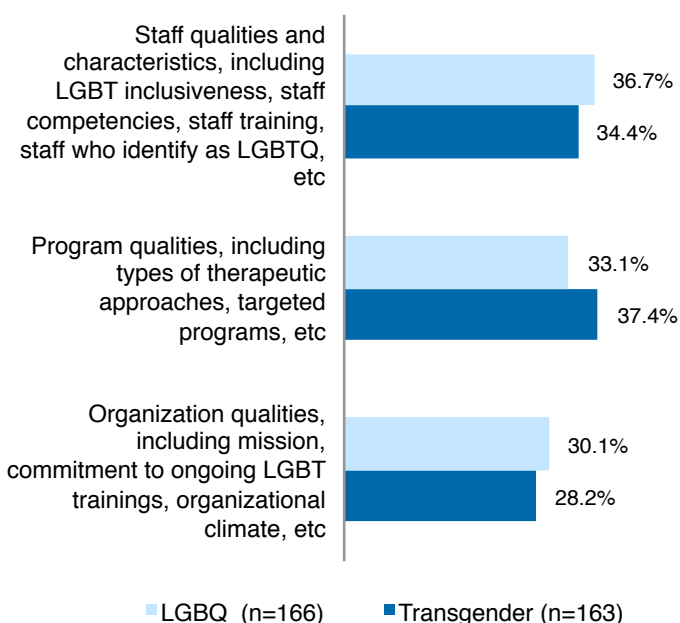
Lack of funding
66.2%
63.6%

Lack of community support
46.2%
40.9%

Lack of access to others doing work in this area
38.5%
34.9%

Lack of information and training on how to address the needs of LGBTQ youths
26.2%
31.8%

Difficult to identify LGBTQ homeless youth population
36.9%
30.3%

Poor technology (client database, outdated computers, etc.)
23.1%
22.7%

Serving LGBTQ youth is not central to our mission
20.0%
12.3%

Other
16.9%
13.6%

■ LGBQ (n=65) ■ Transgender (n=66)

FIGURE 27: PROPORTION OF REASONS CITED BY PROVIDERS FOR SUCCESS IN SERVING LGBTQ YOUTH BY TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONSES

Staff qualities and characteristics, including LGBT inclusiveness, staff competencies, staff training, staff who identify as LGBTQ, etc
36.7%
34.4%

Program qualities, including types of therapeutic approaches, targeted programs, etc
33.1%
37.4%

Organization qualities, including mission, commitment to ongoing LGBT trainings, organizational climate, etc
30.1%
28.2%

■ LGBQ (n=166) ■ Transgender (n=163)

themes were almost equally noted for agencies' successes in serving LGBQ and transgender youth. Staff qualities was more frequently cited as a factor of success for serving LGBQ youth while program qualities was cited more often as a reason for success in serving transgender youth. About 7% of service providers cited the role of out LGBT staff as contributing to their success working with LGBTQ youth.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The findings from the 2014 LGBTQ Homeless Youth Provider Survey echo many of the main findings from the previous study. Namely, nearly all providers of homeless youth services recognize that they are working with LGBTQ youth. Further, estimates of the proportion of youth accessing their services that are LGBTQ continue to indicate overrepresentation of sexual and gender minority youth among those experiencing homelessness. Also similar to the prior study, rejection from families of origin was endorsed as a major factor leading to homelessness for LGBTQ youth.

When agency staff were asked about the characteristics and experiences of the LGBTQ youth they served, the study showed that many staff are aware of not only differences between LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ youth, but also some differences between LGBQ and transgender youth. LGBTQ youth accessing these homelessness services were reported to have been homeless longer and have more mental and physical health problems than non-LGBTQ youth. Further, transgender youth were estimated to have experienced bullying, family rejection, and physical and sexual abuse at higher rates than LGBQ youth.

With regard to developing agency capacity to work with LGBTQ youth, most agencies working with youth experiencing homelessness reported the need for staff dedicated to LGBTQ youth or LGBTQ issues. Some also indicated that having staff who identified as LGBTQ was a factor in the success of working with LGBTQ youth.

The study relied heavily on staff estimates of organizational and client characteristics. Systematic tracking of client demographics was not common (only about 53%), yet whether or not they collected demographic data generally was not related to estimates of youth experiencing homelessness. It is notable however that many agencies that did not collect demographic data did not answer the questions about sexual orientation and gender identity among their clients. As such, it is possible that the median estimates of LGBTQ youth being served reported here do not fully represent the sample surveyed, however we do not know if obtaining those data would have increased or decreased the values found in this study.

A number of facilitating factors and barriers to meeting the needs of LGBTQ youth accessing homelessness services were identified. Many of these factors mirror the findings of

the previous survey. Funding was noted again as a major barrier to working with LGBTQ youth. One interesting finding is the issue of training. On one hand, most surveyed staff reported having received some specialized training for LGBTQ youth work. Yet, almost 25% note that training is a barrier to serving these youth. These findings indicate that the strategies and outcomes of LGBTQ-related competencies need to be better examined and evaluated. There may be increasing amounts of trainings on LGBTQ issues happening throughout the human services system, but these trainings' effectiveness and limitations within a direct service context need to be better understood.

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