

LOW-INCOME LGBT POPULATIONS AND PROGRAMS TO SUPPORT SELF-SUFFICIENCY: A SNAPSHOT OF THE KNOWLEDGE BASE AND RESEARCH NEEDS



The social and legal environment for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people in the United States is changing rapidly. Despite these changes, existing research suggests that LGBT people, like some other minority groups, may face disproportionate risks to their economic and social well-being.

This brief summarizes the knowledge base and research needs related to low-income LGBT people and programs to support self-sufficiency. The brief addresses three topics: (1) the prevalence of poverty and economic vulnerability among LGBT populations; (2) LGBT populations' receipt of income supports, such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF); and (3) strategies for providing employment assistance effectively to LGBT people. In general, research and data sources inclusive of LGBT populations are limited, and substantial knowledge gaps exist regarding the socioeconomic circumstances of LGBT people and their participation in human services.

POVERTY AND ECONOMIC VULNERABILITY AMONG LGBT POPULATIONS

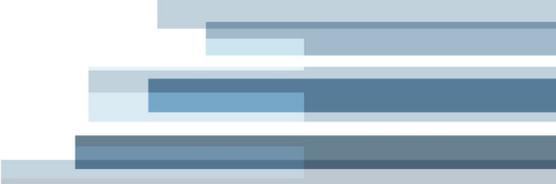
Analyses of nationally representative, population-based surveys suggest that LGBT people are more likely to face economic difficulties than are non-LGBT people. However, findings related to poverty risk vary for LGBT subpopulations and across analyses focusing on individual adults or couples.

For example, analyses conducted for this project of nationally representative data from the National Survey of Family Growth find that bisexual adults (but

LGBT identified adults are 1.7 times more likely than non-LGBT adults to report not having enough money for food in the last year (Gates 2014).

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not gay or lesbian adults) are more likely to be poor than heterosexual adults. Among bisexuals, certain subgroups have higher poverty rates than their heterosexual counterparts. These groups include women and people who are younger (age 18 to 24), have a high school diploma or less education, or are white or multiracial. Analyses focusing on couples and controlling for demographic characteristics have found that both male and female same-sex couples are more likely to be in poverty than are different-sex married couples.¹ No nationally representative, population-based data are available to assess the extent of poverty among transgender people.

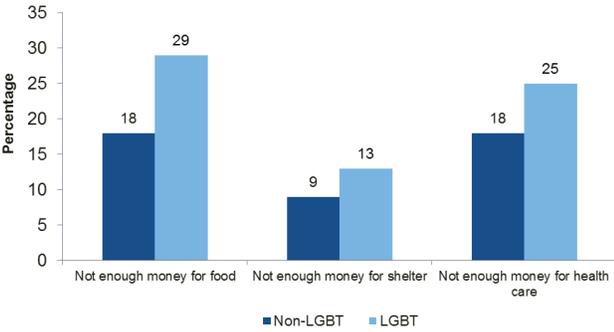
Analyses of data from national surveys with population-based samples indicate that some LGBT populations receive benefits that support low-income people at significantly higher rates than non-LGBT populations do. Multivariate analyses that control for characteristics associated with the likelihood of receiving benefits (including poverty status) found that same-sex male and female couples are more likely to receive cash assistance and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits than similar married different-sex couples.²

RECEIPT OF INCOME SUPPORTS

In analyses focusing on adults ages 18 to 44, bisexual women were more likely than heterosexual women to report receiving cash assistance and SNAP benefits when controlling for other characteristics. Although no national population-based data are available to estimate benefit receipt among transgender people, a survey of a purposive sample of transgender adults found that approximately 5 percent of respondents reported receiving some type of public assistance.³

Observers may interpret relatively high levels of public assistance receipt among

LGBT adults were more likely than non-LGBT adults to report they did not have enough money for food, shelter, or health care in the past year



Source: Analyses of Gallup Daily Tracking Survey (June–December 2012) by Gary J. Gates, Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law.

Within LGBT populations, women in same-sex couples, racial/ethnic minorities, bisexuals, and households with children appear to be at highest risk of poverty.

LGBT populations as evidence that LGBT people do not encounter difficulties receiving these benefits. However, no research has confirmed or refuted this hypothesis.

Research Needs

Future research on LGBT populations' participation in services for low-income individuals and families could address the following topics:

Access to benefits among LGBT populations. This research could explore whether there are differences between eligible LGBT and non-LGBT people in the receipt of income supports.

Experiences among LGBT people in applying for and receiving benefits and services. To identify possible barriers to accessing services, studies could explore how LGBT people experience application processes, interactions with case managers, and other program services.

Options for improving data collection. A fuller understanding of LGBT populations' benefit receipt may depend on collecting administrative and survey data that includes items on sexual orientation and gender identity. Researchers could explore opportunities and barriers associated with collecting this information in program contexts.

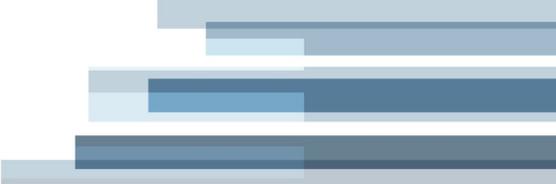
STRATEGIES FOR PROVIDING EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE EFFECTIVELY TO LGBT PEOPLE

Interventions to support self-sufficiency among LGBT populations may need to address LGBT specific barriers to employment. Surveys of LGBT people suggest that large proportions encounter workplace challenges related to their sexual orientation or gender identity. For example, in a nationally representative survey of LGBT adults conducted by the Pew Research Center, more than one in five LGBT individuals (21 percent) reported having ever been treated unfairly by an employer as a result of their sexual orientation or gender identity.⁴ A small number of service providers offer employment assistance designed specifically for LGBT people, especially transgender people, but little is known about the nature or effectiveness of these services.

Research Needs

Studies are needed to identify and evaluate programs providing employment assistance targeting LGBT people. Future research could address:

Analyses of data from national surveys with population-based samples indicate that some LGBT populations receive benefits that support low-income people at significantly higher rates than non-LGBT populations do.



The implementation of employment assistance for low-income LGBT people.

Researchers could document the kinds of assistance that programs offer and help identify innovative service strategies.

Results of employment interventions. Evaluations could assess how participant outcomes compare with those of similar LGBT people who do not receive LGBT-specific services.

For more-detailed information and specific research suggestions, please visit the project webpage [here](#).

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For more information about this project, please contact Andrew Burwick, Project Director, at aburwick@mathematica-mpr.com or Seth Chamberlain, Project Officer, at seth.chamberlain@acf.hhs.gov.

Findings from a nationally representative survey of LGBT adults suggest that one in five LGBT individuals reported ever being treated unfairly by an employer as a result of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

¹ Badgett, M.V.L., L.E. Durso, and A. Schneebaum. "New Patterns of Poverty in the Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Community." Los Angeles, CA: Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law, 2013.

² Badeett et al. "New Patterns of Poverty in the Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Community."

³ Grant, J.M., L.A. Mottet, J. Tanis, J. Harrison, J.L. Herman, and M. Keisling. "Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey." Washington, DC: National Center for Transgender Equality and National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 2011.

⁴ Pew Research Center. "A Survey of LGBT Americans: Attitudes, Experiences and Values in Changing Times." Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, 2013.