

LGBTQ+ Housing Insecurity and Homelessness

Presented to the Homeless Services Consortium | March 23, 2023



About Me...



Presenter:

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- **Pronouns:** he/him and they/them, used interchangeably
- **Role:** Program Director and Willma's Fund Co-coordinator
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About OutReach LGBTQ+ Community Center:

- **Our mission is to promote “equity and quality of life for all LGBTQ+ people through community building, health and human services, and economic, social, and racial justice advocacy.”**
- **Example services:**
 - Peer counseling and advocacy
 - Social/support groups
 - Educational Services
 - Earl Greely Memorial Library
 - Harm reduction education and supplies
 - Support for LGBTQ+ people dealing with housing insecurity/homelessness

Overview



- 1. Review of LGBTQ+ 101**
- 2. Current Legal Protections for LGBTQ+ People**
- 3. The Impact of Discrimination**
- 4. Housing Insecurity and Homelessness**
- 5. Safety and Security for LGBTQ+ People**
- 6. LGBTQ+ Housing Programs**

Group Agreements



We are all still learning.

Be hard on systems and soft on people.

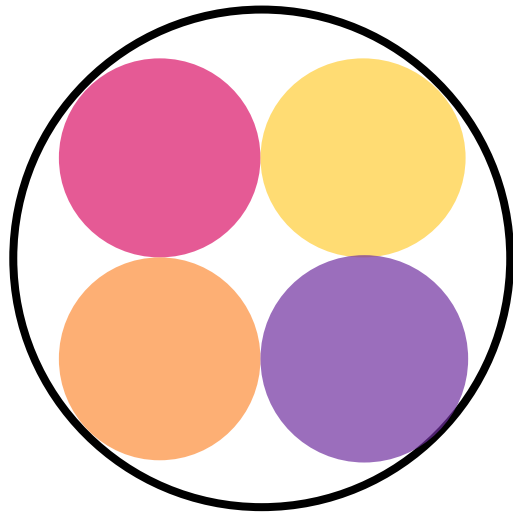
Reserve the right to change your mind.

What is shared here stays here, what is learned here leaves here.

Expect unfinished business and unanswered questions.

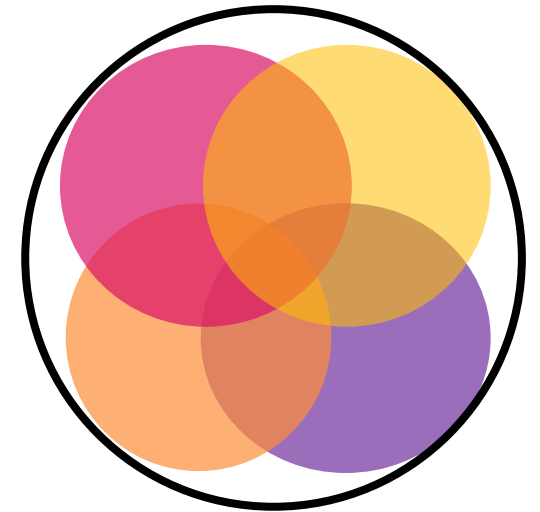
Review of LGBTQ+ 101

Intersectionality



Overlapping forms of discrimination based on social identities such as race, gender, sexual orientation, ability, education, and others

Considers the interactions of discrimination and privilege, not each identity separately.



Intersectionality



- **Intersectionality is a framework for understanding the experiences of people within the LGBTQ+ community**
 - The LGBTQ+ community is diverse, even more than the general population.
 - There is not one universal LGBTQ+ experience
- **Example: gender identity, gender expression, and race.**

Social Privilege



- **The benefits that an individual has by virtue of belonging to certain social identity groups have cultural, economic, or political power.**
- **Does not erase individual experiences and difficulties in life**
- **People can experience privilege due to one of their identities and discrimination due to another**

Cultural, economic, or political power are gained as a result of the historical and on-going disenfranchisement of minority groups

LGBTQ+ Terms



Sex: assigned at birth and most often based on external anatomy

Male

Intersex

Female

Some governments allow an “X” marker birth certificates, driver’s licenses, passports, or other documents.

Sexual orientation: who a person is attracted to and how they experience attraction to others

Gay

Straight

Pansexual

Lesbian

Bisexual

Queer

Asexual

And others

LGBTQ+ Terms



Gender: Subjective, socially-mediated roles, expectations, behaviors, expressions, and identities

Gender identity: one's personal sense of one's own gender

Cisgender

Transgender

Non-Binary

Genderqueer

Agender

And others...

Gender expression: behaviors, mannerisms, appearance, or interests that are associated with certain genders

Feminine

Masculine

Androgynous

Gender Neutral

And others...

Key Take-Aways



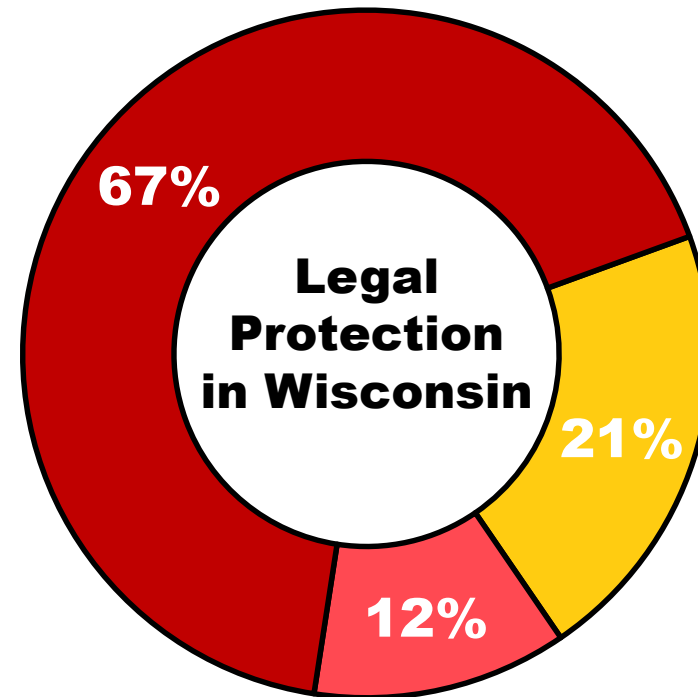
1. **There is not a “universal” LGBTQ+ experience: there are people in our community of all races, religions, abilities, etc.**
2. **Sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, and gender expression are separate terms with distinct meanings.**
3. **Language to describe sexual orientation and gender identity has changed and will continue to change. We all have to commit to on-going education.**

Legal Protection for LGBTQ+ People

Current Laws



- Wisconsin passed nation's first nondiscrimination law including sexual orientation in 1983
- *Bostock v. Clayton County* (June 2020) prohibits employment discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender
- No statewide nondiscrimination law covering gender-based discrimination in housing or public accommodation



Fully protected from gender discrimination by local ordinance

Partially protected from gender discrimination by local ordinance

No legal protection from gender discrimination

Dane County



	Fully inclusive SO/GI protections	Local Sexual Orientation Protections			Local Gender Identity Protections		
		Employment	Housing	Public Accom.	Employment	Housing	Public Accom.
Dane County		🛡️	🛡️	🛡️		✅	
Milwaukee County		🛡️	🛡️	🛡️	✅	✅	
Appleton	✅	🛡️	🛡️	🛡️	✅	✅	✅
Cudahy	🛡️	🛡️	🛡️	🛡️	🛡️	✅	✅
De Pere	✅	🛡️	🛡️	🛡️	✅	✅	✅
Green Bay	✅	🛡️	🛡️	🛡️	✅	✅	✅
Janesville	✅	🛡️	🛡️	🛡️	✅	✅	✅
La Crosse		🛡️	🛡️	🛡️		✅	✅
Madison	✅	🛡️	🛡️	🛡️	✅	✅	✅
Milwaukee	✅	🛡️	🛡️	🛡️	✅	✅	✅
Oshkosh		🛡️	🛡️	🛡️		✅	
Racine	✅	🛡️	🛡️	🛡️	✅	✅	✅
Sun Prairie	✅	🛡️	🛡️	🛡️	✅	✅	✅
Verona	🛡️	🛡️	🛡️	🛡️	✅	🛡️	✅

🛡️ - Local ordinance does not provide this protection, but county/state does

✅ - Local ordinance provides this protection

Dane County



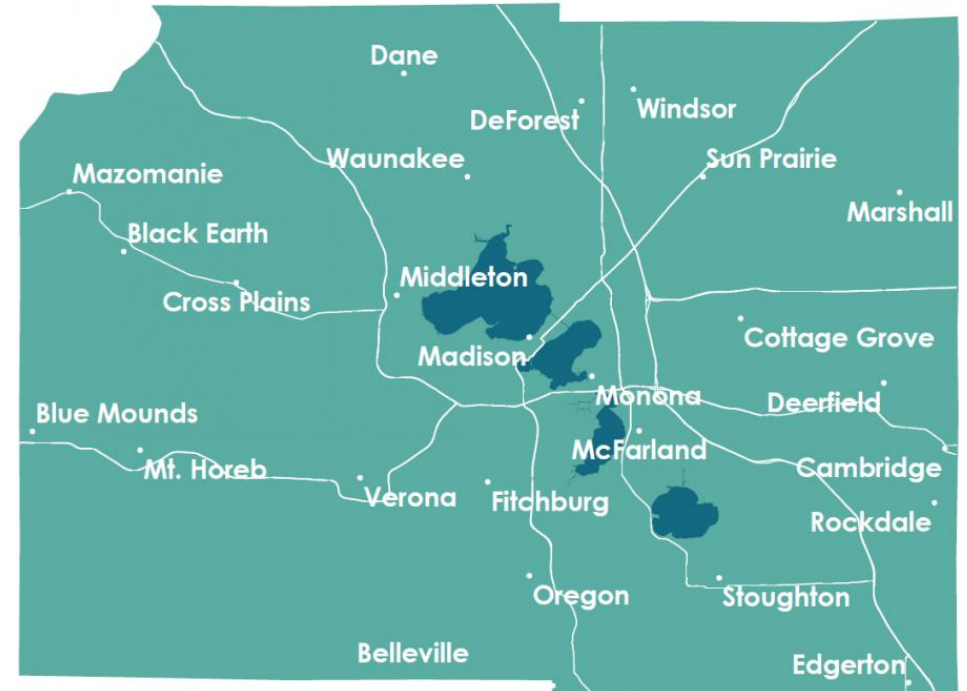
Dane County:

- Protection for County employees against gender-based discrimination but not private employees.
- Protection against gender-based discrimination in housing.
- No protection against gender-based discrimination in public accommodation.

City of Madison:

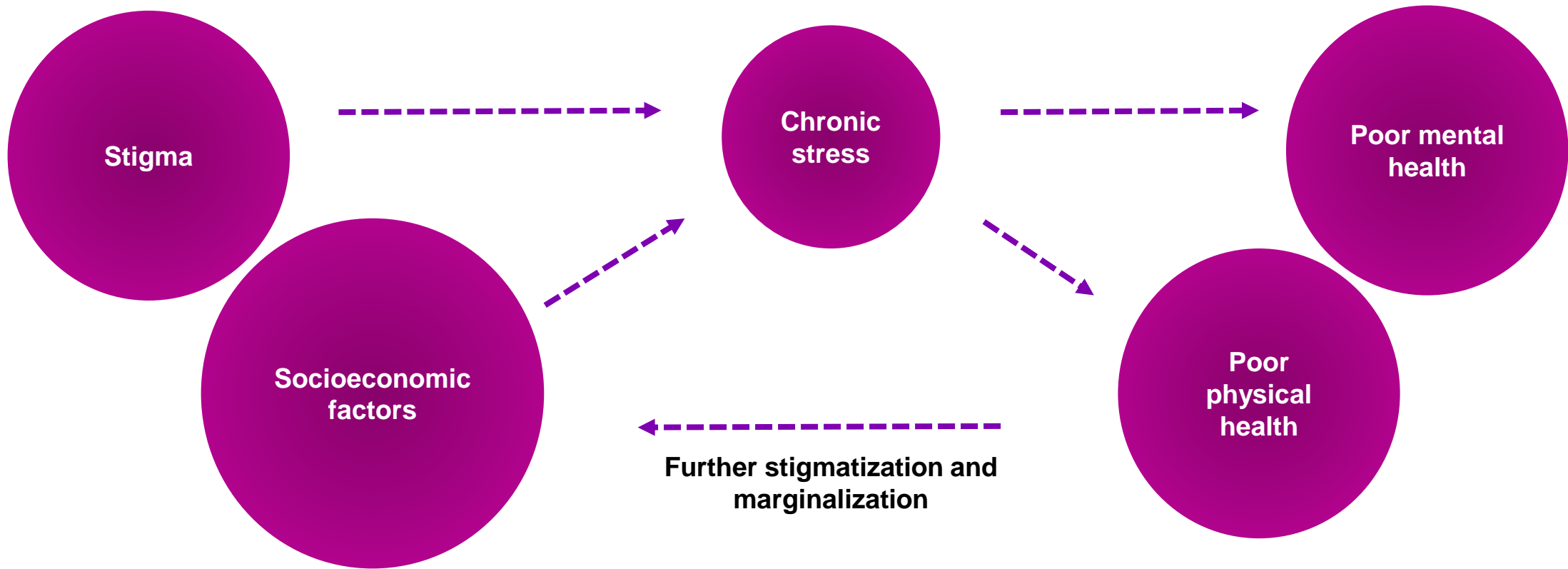
- Protection against gender-based discrimination in housing, employment, and public accommodation.

Despite some legal protection, discrimination is still very common

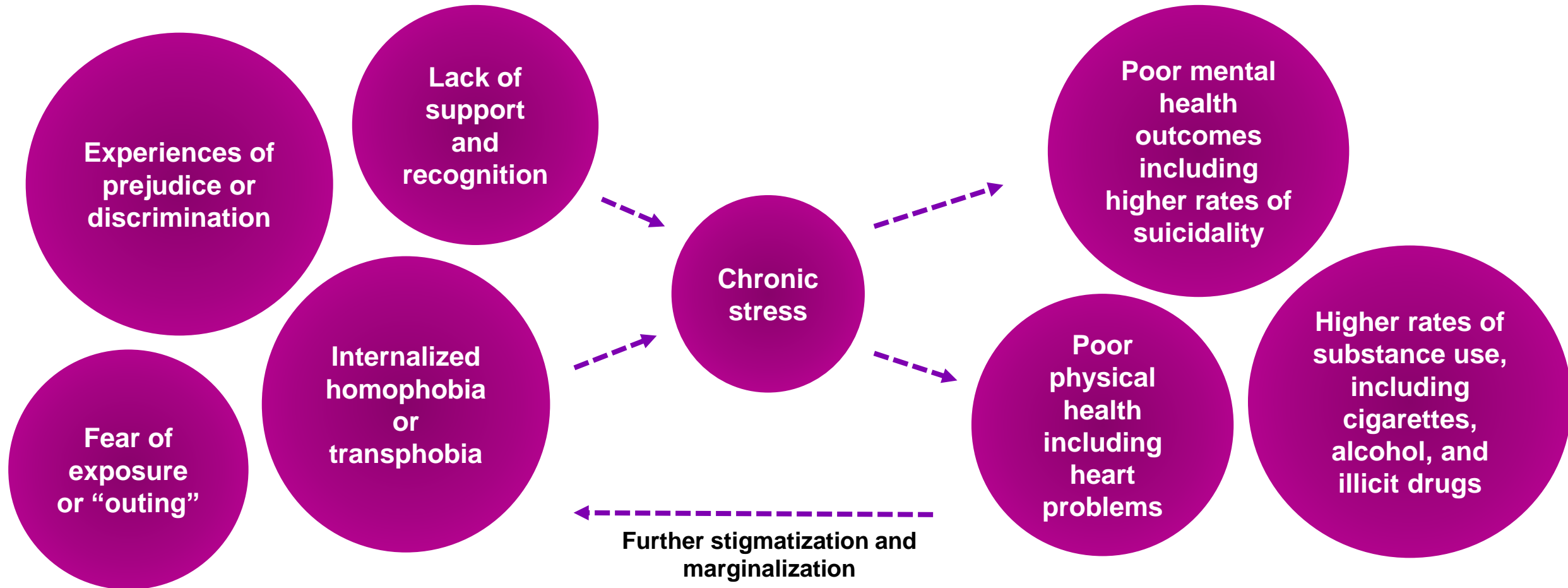


The Impact of Discrimination

Minority Stress



Minority Stress



Improving Lives



Negative mental and physical health outcomes are a consequence of how marginalized communities are treated

Counter negative attitudes and provide culturally competent, affirming care and support

Acceptance and affirmation save lives

Rejection and discrimination



Poor mental and physical health outcomes

Acceptance and affirmation



Improved mental and physical health outcomes

Housing Insecurity and Homelessness

Income Inequality

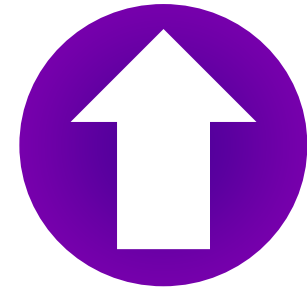


Unemployment and underemployment lead to financial instability

Lack of knowledge or lack of support in accessing social services

Fear of rejection from services due to sexual orientation and/or gender

LGBTQ+ people are more likely to live in poverty than the general population



47%

Almost half of all LGBTQ+ people of color live in poverty and are more likely to be unemployed than white LGBTQ+ people

Food Security



Transgender people are more likely to sometimes or often not have enough food to eat.

2.5x

4.5x

Transgender people of color are especially at risk of sometimes or often not having enough food to eat.

Transgender people are less likely to access or apply for government services like SNAP

Having to show ID or share legal name is a barrier for transgender people who do not have the correct name and/or gender on IDs

Housing Access

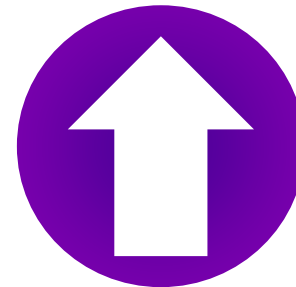
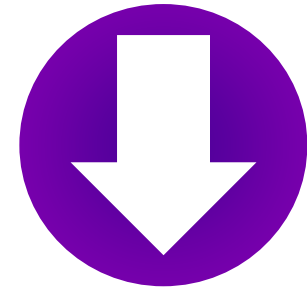


**No legal protection
from gender-based
housing discrimination**

**Lack of information
about filing formal complaints**

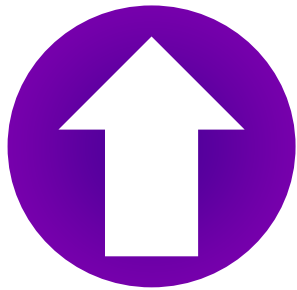
**Inability (financial, legal, or
otherwise) to engage with
legal system**

**Lower number of rental showings
or tours if sexual orientation or
gender are disclosed**



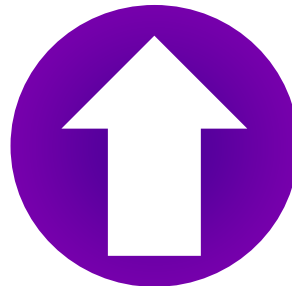
**Higher rent, fees, or additional
background checks when
sexual orientation or gender
are disclosed**

Housing Stability



A higher percent of the LGBTQ+ population are renters compared to the general population

LGBTQ+ people of color are more likely to be behind on their rent than white LGBTQ+ people and cisgender, straight people of color



Disparities in employment and income limit ability to afford rent or move towards homeownership

Few options for rental assistance with COVID-related programs ended or ending

Homelessness

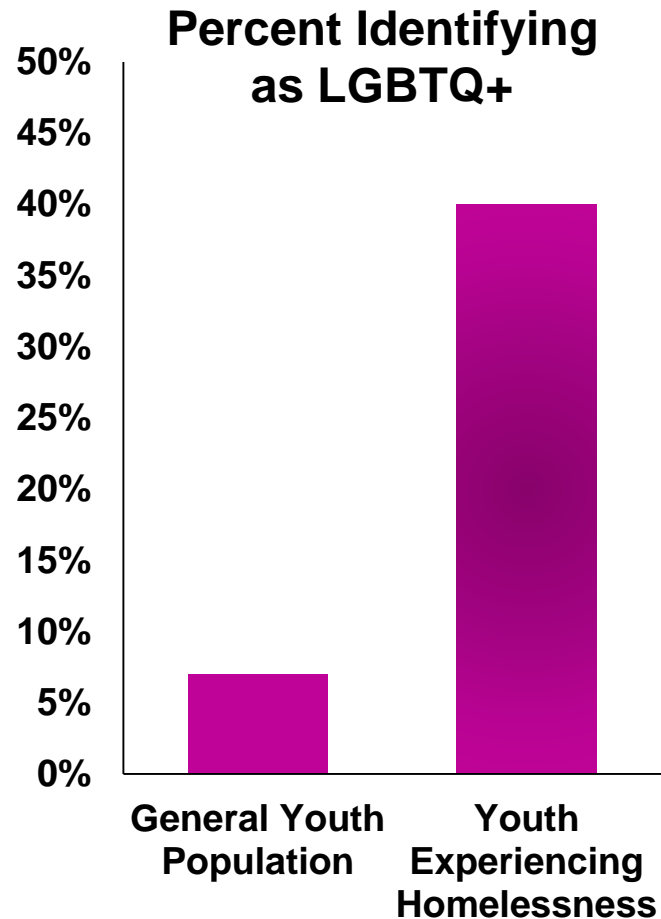


Illustration: James Heimer from "Young and homeless, LGBTQ+ youth are at greatest risk," by Jenny Peek. Isthmus. March 10, 2016.

Stigma and discrimination:

- Lead to rejection by family and other social support systems like churches
- Contribute to mental and physical health concerns
- Contribute to harm from substance use
- Limit financial resources
- Limit access to housing

LGBTQ+ Youth

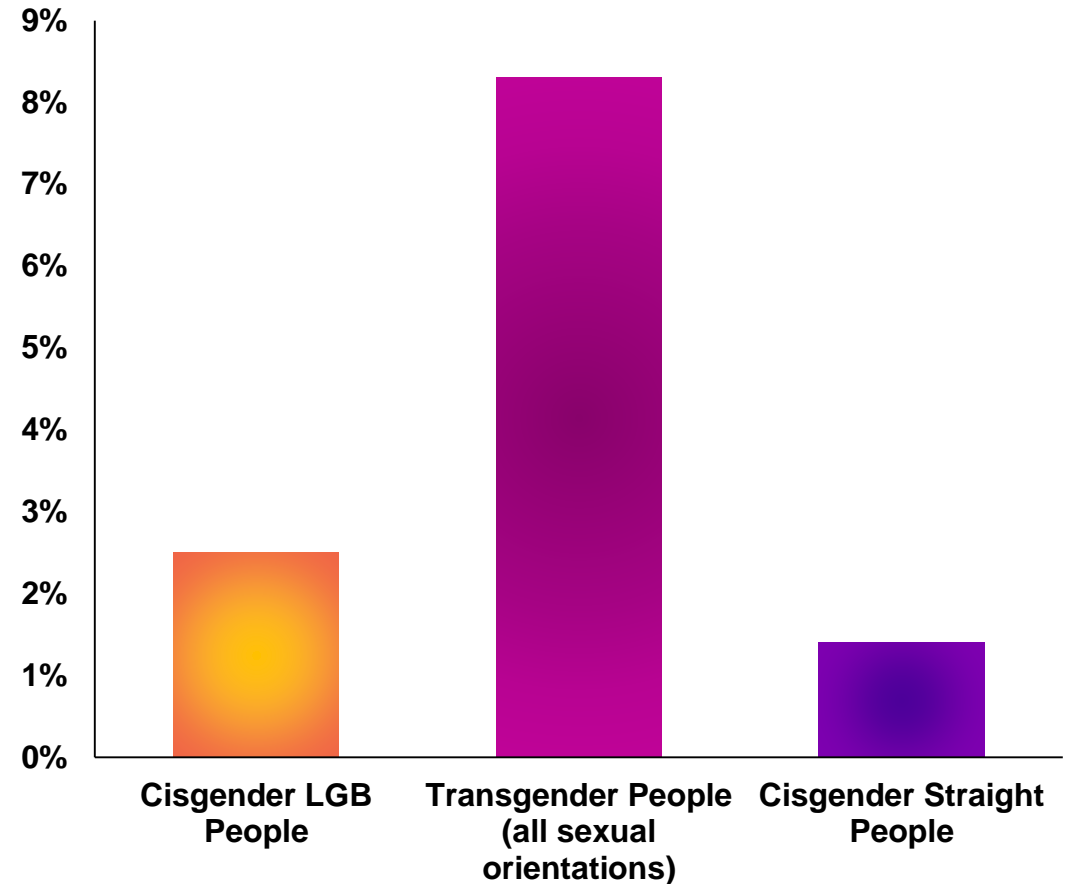


- **LGBTQ+ youth and young adults more likely to experience housing insecurity or homelessness.**
- **Intersectional understanding of risk**
 - Transgender youth and young adults
 - LGBTQ+ youth and young adults of color
- **Family rejection when youth and young adults come out or are outed by others is the leading reason.**

LGBTQ+ Adults



- **LGBTQ+ people are more likely to have recent experiences of homelessness.**
- **Transgender people are more likely than cisgender lesbian, gay, or bisexual people to be homeless.**
- **One-quarter of all transgender people in Wisconsin have experienced homelessness during their lifetime.**



Safety and Security for LGBTQ+ People

Accessing Shelter



LGBTQ+ people of different identities have distinct experiences in shelters.

- All LGBTQ+ people are vulnerable, but transgender, non-binary, and gender expansive individuals tend to be more vulnerable than others.

Over three-quarters of transgender people experiencing homelessness avoid staying in shelters.

Of transgender people who have stay in shelters, 70% report mistreatment due to gender identity.

Experiences of Transgender People in Shelters (in order of frequency reported)

- Verbal harassment
- Choosing to present as the wrong gender in order to feel safe
- Physical harassment or assault
- Sexual assault
- Being asked or forced by shelter staff to present as the wrong gender
- Being thrown out of shelter due to gender identity

National statistics reported in the 2015 National Transgender Survey:
<https://transequality.org/sites/default/files/docs/usts/USTS-Full-Report-Dec17.pdf>

Experiences in Shelters



What we hear from clients...

Lack of privacy in communal shelters makes it difficult if not impossible to stay closeted

Discrimination, verbal/physical harassment, assault, or sexual assault still happen

Staff or other guests may lack understanding of LGBTQ+ experiences or express discomfort

Shelters in Madison



Binary gendered options:



“male-identified”



“identifying
as women or
non-male”

Willing to stay in binary-gendered spaces:

- Known or perceived risks
- Bed availability
- Friends or partners to stay with

Discomfort in binary-gendered spaces:

- Stay with family, friends, or others
- Sleep in a car, on the street, or otherwise unsheltered

Physical Safety



LGBTQ+ people are at an increased risk of harassment and abuse in spaces shared with people who may be prejudiced.

Example policies:

- **Beds or spaces that are closer to staff**
- **Spaces/beds set aside for more vulnerable guests**
- **Access to all gender restrooms/showers or single-stall restrooms/showers**
- **Ability to schedule private shower time if communal showers are the only option**

Emotional/Mental Safety



LGBTQ+ people are vulnerable to verbal harassment and bullying, and can also suffer distress from being misgendered, dead named, or otherwise misidentified.

Example policies:

- **Gender-neutral and transgender-inclusive language on signs, publications, intake forms, and other documents.**
- **Clearly communicated anti-discrimination policies for guests that are part of sign-in paperwork**
- **Transparent and easy to use processes for reporting harassing or oppressive behavior from guests or staff**

Establishing Safety



Listen to lived experience:

- Make sure that LGBTQ+ people with lived experience are involved in decision making
- Provide avenues for LGBTQ+ clients or guests to provide anonymous feedback on services

Remember that education is an on-going process:

- Make sure LGBTQ+ cultural humility training is part of your onboarding process for new staff
- Commit to providing trainings for all staff on a regular basis

Always respect people's abilities and decisions to tell their own story and disclose their identities. Do not discuss someone's sexual orientation or gender identity without their express consent!

LGBTQ+ Housing Programs

Willma's Fund

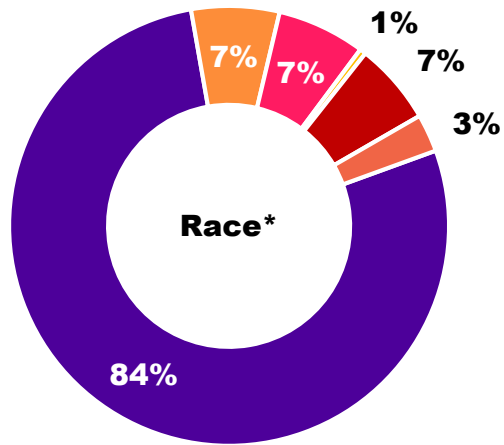


- **Founded in 2011 by Donald Haar, who performs drag under the name Willma Flynn-Stone**
- **Funds for housing support raised through drag shows, community fundraisers, and small grants**
 - **Funding now also includes major corporate donors**
- **Provides short-term assistance to LGBTQ+ adults in Dane County for rent, security deposit, or a short-term hotel stay and connections to other resources**

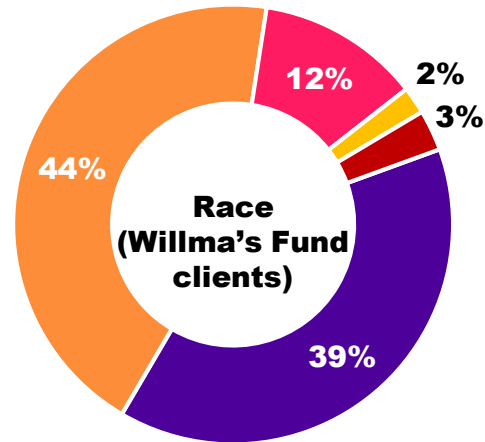
Willma's Fund



Our Clients - 2022



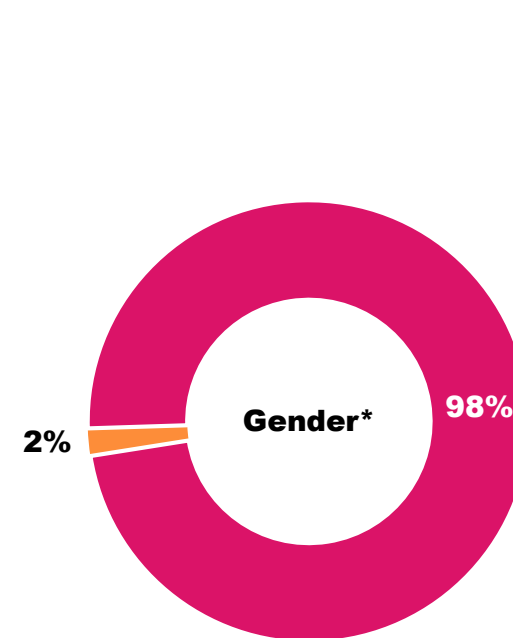
*Dane County demographics from US Census



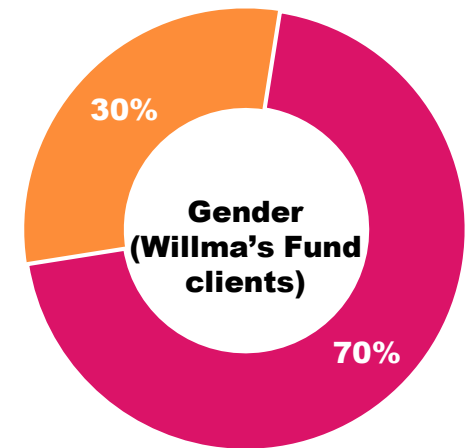
Black or African-American	Hispanic or Latino/a/x	Indigenous or Native American
Asian	Other or Multiracial	White

Transgender, Non-Binary, or gender expansive

Cisgender



*Estimate based on national statistics



Courage MKE



Programs:

- **Courage House: WI's first home for displaced LGBTQ+ youth**
 - Licensed group home, not shelter/drop-in center.
 - Mental health support, case management
- **College scholarships**

<https://www.couragemke.org/>



House of TULIP



New Orleans, LA based program created by transgender people for transgender people

- Current services include hot meals, clothing, personal essentials, computers
- Case manager to help find housing
- Raising funds to buy multi-family property as a pilot housing campus

<https://houseoftulip.org/>



Our Trans Home SF



Programs:

- Navigation Center: 24 hr. shelter centering needs of transgender, gender diverse, intersex people
- Bobbi Jean Baker House: 18-room transitional housing centering needs of transgender, gender diverse, and intersex people
- Rental subsidies
- Housing advocacy

<https://www.ourtranshomesf.org/>



Conclusions



- 1. Higher rates of mental health concerns, substance use, economic insecurity, and food and housing insecurity are a consequence of the way people are treated in our society *not* intrinsic problems.**
- 2. LGBTQ+ people of color and transgender people of all races experience housing insecurity and homelessness at higher rates than the rest of the LGBTQ+ community.**
- 3. We need input from LGBTQ+ people of color and transgender people with lived experience of housing insecurity and homelessness when making decisions about resources.**
- 4. We need participation from service providers and clients/guests to create and maintain safe and affirming spaces for LGBTQ+ people.**

Learn more...



In Madison/Dane County:

- **OutReach LGBTQ+ Community Center**
- **Teens Like Us** (Briarpatch Youth Services)
- **FORGE** (Milwaukee-based, serves all of WI)

Nationally:

- **True Colors United** (youth-focused)
- **National Center for Transgender Equality**
- **The Trevor Project** (youth-focused)
- **The Williams Institute** (University of California Los Angeles School of Law)

Resources & References



HUD Exchange, Equal Access for Transgender People: <https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/Equal-Access-for-Transgender-People-Supporting-Inclusive-Housing-and-Shelters.pdf>

National Center for Transgender Equality, Know Your Rights:

<https://transequality.org/know-your-rights/housing-and-homeless-shelters>

Dane County Office for Equity and Inclusion:

<https://equity.countyofdane.com/>

City of Madison Department of Civil Rights

<https://www.cityofmadison.com/civil-rights>

National Coalition for the Homeless, Homelessness Among the LGBTQ+ Community:

<https://nationalhomeless.org/lgbtq-homelessness/>

The Trevor Project, Homelessness and Housing Instability among LGBTQ+ Youth:

<https://www.thetrevorproject.org/research-briefs/homelessness-and-housing-instability-among-lgbtq-youth-feb-2022/>

The Williams Institute at the University of California Los Angeles School of Law:

<https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/lgbt-poverty-us/>

<https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/lgbt-homelessness-us/>

<https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/racial-differences-lgbt/>

<https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/lgbt-renters-and-eviction-risk/>

<https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/generations-transpop-toplines/>