

LGBTQ+ young people are over-represented in foster systems. A 2019 study found that 30.4% of youth in foster system identify as LGBTQ+ and 5% as trans, compared to 11.2% and 1.17% of youth not in the foster system.

While many LGBTQ+ youth enter the child welfare system for the same reasons as non-LGBTQ+ youth, 44% of LGBTQ+ youth in state custody report they were removed, ran away, or were thrown out of their home for reasons directly related to their identity.

Compared with non-LGBTQ+ youth and youth in stable housing, LGBTQ+ youth in unstable housing report poorer school functioning, more substance use, and poorer mental health.

LGBTQ+ youth experience higher rates of childhood maltreatment, interpersonal violence, and traumatic experiences than non-LGBTQ+ youth, and as much as 57% of trans youth report family rejection.

Once in the system, LGBTQ+ youth are at higher risk of additional harms, including discrimination, institutionalization, and abuse. They are more likely to age out without ever finding a permanent family home.

Reports have found that around 40% of youth experiencing homelessness identify as LGBTQ+.

Trans, Nonbinary, and Gender Diverse youth, who may identify across the sexual orientation spectrum, are overrepresented in child welfare systems at even higher rates than youth who identify as LGBQ.

Reports have found that around 40% of youth experiencing homelessness identify as LGBTQ+. They typically report factors such as familial conflict, poverty, abuse, and emancipation from the foster system as the underlying causes of their homelessness. LGBTQ+ youth may face rejection or abandonment by family members due to their sexual orientation or gender identity, which also can lead to homelessness.

In New York City, the birthplace of the modern gay rights movement, studies show some 78% of LGBTQ+ youth were removed or ran away from foster homes because of the hostilities they faced, and 56% chose to live on the street — rather than in a foster care placement — because they felt safer there.

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LGBTQ+ youth are more likely to suffer from a mental health condition than their non-LGBTQ+ counterparts. According to a 2022 survey, 45% of respondents reported that they had seriously considered attempting suicide, 73% experienced symptoms of anxiety, and 58% experienced symptoms of depression.



LGBTQ+ youth are also overrepresented in the juvenile legal system. While LGBTQ+ youth comprise only an estimated 5% to 7% of the overall youth population in the United States, they represent **13% to 15%** of those currently in the juvenile legal system.

Findings show that, when compared with their heterosexual and cisgender peers, LGBTQ+ youth in the juvenile legal system are **twice as likely** to have experienced child abuse, group and foster care placement, and homelessness.

LGBTQ+ young people in congregate placements, the foster system, and juvenile legal system are **disproportionately people of color** and are therefore exposed to heightened and unique inequities associated with their intersectional identities.



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