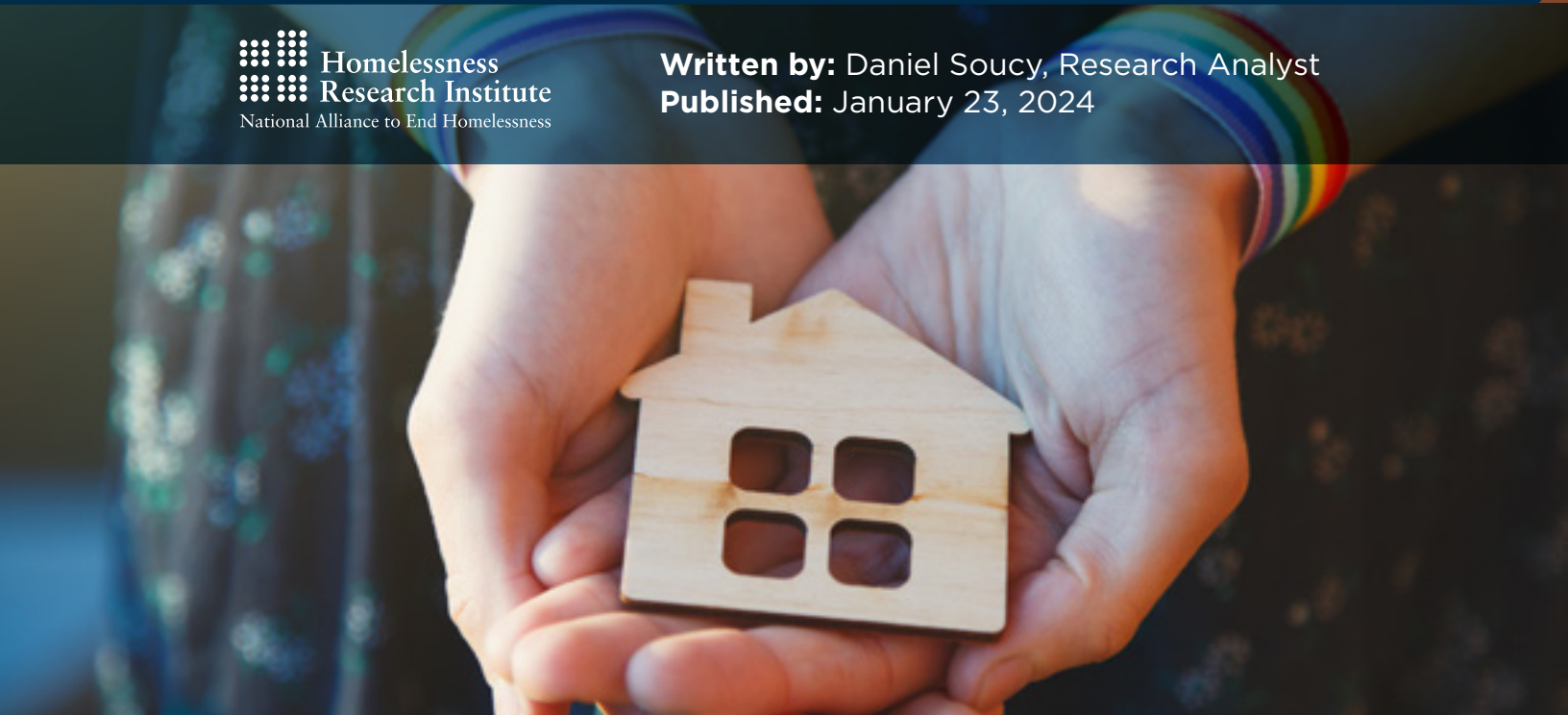


Federal Data Demonstrates the Need for Safe, Supportive, and Specific Housing for Gender-Expansive People



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Published: January 23, 2024



A Note on the Term “Gender-Expansive”

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) instructs emergency housing providers to collect data from people using the homelessness response system. This includes gender. Currently, HUD asks people experiencing homelessness to select their identity as “female,” “male,” “transgender,” “gender non-singular,” “gender-questioning,” or “do not know.” However, HUD has changed these categories over time.

Laws, policies, research, and social expectations in the United States have typically constrained gender to two primary identities: “men” and “women.” As a result, genders that do not neatly fit these categories are frequently described as “other,” “not male or female,” or “not-cisgender.” It is likely that with time, knowledge and increased understanding, the term “gender-expansive” will also need to change and evolve.

The term “gender-expansive” encompasses ways in which people who have changed their identity since birth, and/or do not exclusively and uniformly identify as “female” or “male.” This population often experiences increased economic vulnerability and housing insecurity in the United States. However, it is also important to acknowledge that each of these gender identities are unique and these categories do not capture every person’s experience. This report uses the term “gender-expansive” to reflect this variety in identities and experiences.

In addition, to compare rates of gender-expansive homelessness with female and male homelessness, this report uses the term “cisgender.” Cisgender individuals have a gender-identity that is the same as the sex they were assigned at birth.

Highlights from This Report

Federal data reveals that the number of gender-expansive people experiencing homelessness has increased rapidly since 2015, when gender categories were first included in annual homelessness counts.

Data suggest that gender-expansive people — especially gender-expansive people of color and gender-expansive youth — are overrepresented in the population of people experiencing homelessness.

Federal data also demonstrates that between 2019 and 2021, the number of gender-expansive households entering emergency shelters, receiving Rapid Re-Housing (RRH), or receiving permanent supportive housing (PSH) subsidies increased.

Emergency shelters are often unsafe for gender-expansive people experiencing homelessness.

By continuing to improve data collection and uplift protections for gender-expansive people seeking independent and emergency housing, the federal government can help reduce housing insecurity among gender-expansive people experiencing homelessness.

About this Report

A [sizable](#) and [increasing](#) number of people living in the United States openly identify as transgender or nonbinary. Often times, gender-expansive communities do not receive equitable support from local, state and federal resources. Gender-expansive people have fiercely advocated against discrimination, challenging these barriers to housing and stability by creating their own supportive communities, group homes, community centers and other forms of mutual aid. The data in this report confirms that the homelessness response system is not adequately meeting their needs, and that an effective system necessitates the authentic inclusion of the gender-expansive community.

About the Data in this Report

The current understanding of how homelessness impacts gender-expansive individuals is likely underreported and limited: legal restrictions, discrimination, and stigma have made it difficult to conduct research with and about people whose genders exist outside of the male-female binary.

HUD has also changed its gender categories to try and collect more accurate data about the gender-expansive community. In 2015, HUD began collecting data about transgender people in its annual Point-in-Time (PIT) Count of people experiencing homelessness on a given night in January, and reporting this data in the Annual Homelessness Assessment Report to Congress (AHAR).

HUD publishes this data in two major reports:

- [AHAR Part 1](#): assesses trends in the number of people experiencing homelessness on a given night, e.g. the PIT Count.
- [AHAR Part 2](#): analyzes the number of people interacting with the emergency housing system over the course of an entire year using additional data from the Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS).

The Alliance used data from both the AHAR Part 1 and the AHAR Part 2 Reports to inform the findings in this report. At the time of this publication, the AHAR Part 1 included data up to the 2023 PIT Count and the AHAR Part 2 included data up to the year 2021. To evaluate how gender-expansive homelessness and service use has changed over time, the Alliance compared data from 2019 to data from 2021 and 2023.

Past HUD Gender Terminology and Data

From 2014 to 2017, individuals who had transitioned from male to female or female to male were included in the data sets that HUD uses to write the AHAR Part 2, which reports who entered emergency housing over the course of the entire year. However, these counts were not reported in the written AHAR Part 1 or 2 during this time.

From 2018 to 2021, HUD included the term “gender non-conforming” in the PIT count and reported this data in the AHAR Part 1, which provides information on the number of people experiencing homelessness on a given night in January.

Current HUD Gender Terminology and Data

Since 2022, HUD has included a more consistent methodology to describe the gender of people entering the homelessness response system. PIT Count questions allow people experiencing homelessness to select their gender from the following categories: “female,” “male,” “transgender,”¹ “gender-questioning,”² and “not singularly female or male.”³⁴ In combination with increasing awareness, a broader range of gender identity categories likely leads to more accurate data collection.

While it is likely that the disparities described in this report have existed for much longer than these official counts reveal, HUD’s decision to include these categories is extremely important. Doing so can allow researchers and policy-makers to improve their understanding of how experiences of discrimination and stigma associated with diverse gender identities impact rates and experiences of homelessness.

Implications on Affordable Housing

The [most recent PIT Count data](#) demonstrated large increases in homelessness among gender-expansive people. However, previous counts did not collect sufficient data on gender-expansive homelessness. It is therefore likely that some of these increases can be attributed to more informed and accurate data collection that resulted from updated gender categories and the increased willingness of gender-expansive people to disclose their identities. At the same time, it is also likely that gender-expansive people are undercounted due to continued stigma and discrimination.

The underlying story that the data tells is consistent and clear: **people are experiencing higher rates of homelessness than ever before due to large shortages in affordable housing.** These shortfalls disproportionately impact gender-expansive people due to the heightened social, economic, and legal barriers they face when trying to access emergency housing from the homelessness response system as well as independent housing on the private market.

This report will examine the impact of these barriers by providing analysis on recent homelessness data, an assessment of current federal policies, and recommendations for specific practices to address the needs of gender-expansive people experiencing homelessness.



- 1 When collecting a client’s data, HUD instructs service providers to classify the client as “transgender” using the following definition: “Clients who live or identify with a transgender history, experience, or identity.”
- 2 When collecting a client’s data, HUD instructs service providers to classify the client as “gender-questioning” using the following definition: “Clients who may be unsure, may be exploring, or may not relate to or identify with a gender identity at this time. Note that ‘Client doesn’t know’ is different than ‘Questioning.’ ‘Questioning’ is about exploring one’s gender identity. ‘Client doesn’t know’ should only be selected when a client doesn’t know their gender from the options available, including ‘Questioning.’”
- 3 When collecting a client’s data, HUD instructs service providers to classify the client as “A gender that is not singularly ‘Female’ or ‘Male’” using the following definition: “Clients who live or identify as a gender other than female, a gender other than male, a gender outside the binary, no gender, more than one gender, or a gender that changes over time.” This report will refer to this category as “gender non-singular.”
- 4 HUD added the category “gender-questioning” to the annual Point-in-Time Count in 2022. Since this is a relatively new change, this report combines counts of gender-questioning individuals with counts of individuals who identify as not singularly female or male to better compare trends in gender-expansive homelessness over time.

Examining the Data: Shelter Stays Outpace Permanent Housing Placements

Recent HUD data demonstrates that the number of gender-expansive households⁵ using the homelessness response system is increasing. According to the [AHAR Part 2](#), there was a 55 percent increase in the number of gender-expansive households who entered emergency shelters between 2019 and 2021. There were 1,493 additional transgender households and 962 additional gender non-singular and gender-questioning households in shelter between 2019 and 2021. This is a 42 percent and 110 percent increase respectively. Despite these large jumps, HUD acknowledges that these numbers may be low since many gender-expansive people may not feel comfortable disclosing their identity to shelters and try to pass as their gender-assigned at birth.

Households Using		2019	2021	Absolute Increase from 2019 to 2021	Percent Increase from 2019 to 2021
Emergency Shelter	Gender Non-Singular and Gender-Questioning	871	1,833	+962	110%
	Transgender	3,594	5,087	+1,493	42%
Rapid Re-Housing	Gender Non-Singular and Gender-Questioning	80	208	+128	160%
	Transgender	531	588	+57	11%
Permanent Supp. Housing	Gender Non-Singular and Gender-Questioning	170	180	+10	6%
	Transgender	1,603	1,699	+96	6%

Figure 2: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2021 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress Part 2

Percent Change in **Households Using Emergency Shelter** from 2019–2021

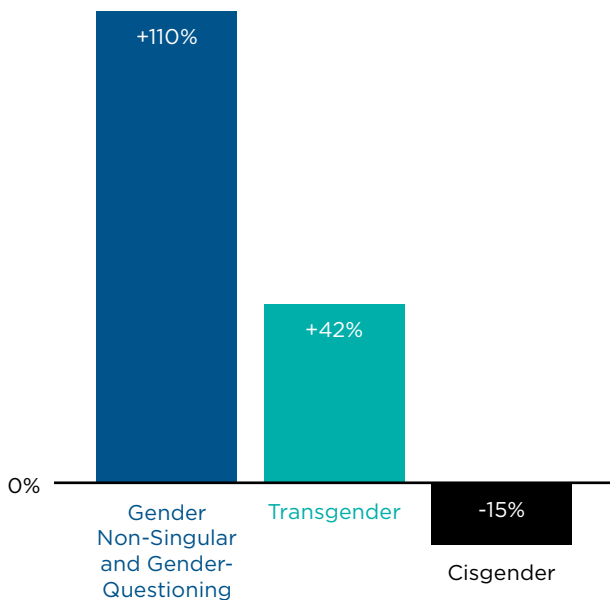


Figure 1: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2021 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress Part 2

As illustrated in Figure 2, the number of gender-expansive people in Rapid Re-Housing and permanent supportive housing is also **growing**. The number of transgender households in PSH increased by approximately six percent, a similar rate to gender non-singular and gender-questioning households in PSH. However, the use of RRH increased by 11 percent among transgender households, while the number of gender non-singular and gender-questioning households in RRH increased by 160 percent.

Importantly, only 80 gender non-singular and gender-questioning households used RRH in 2019. Therefore, while 160 percent is a large increase, the total number of gender non-singular and gender-questioning households using RRH in 2019 was small compared with the total number using emergency shelters (871 households).

It is significant that gender-expansive people access emergency shelter more than they access Rapid Re-Housing or permanent supportive housing. While shelters present an important immediate response to address unsheltered homelessness, RRH and PSH offer long-term solutions.

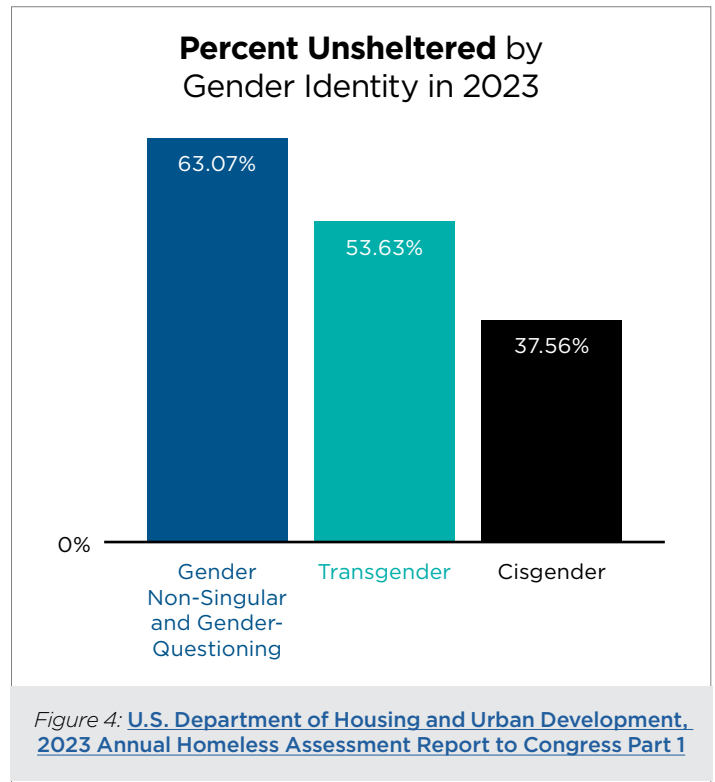
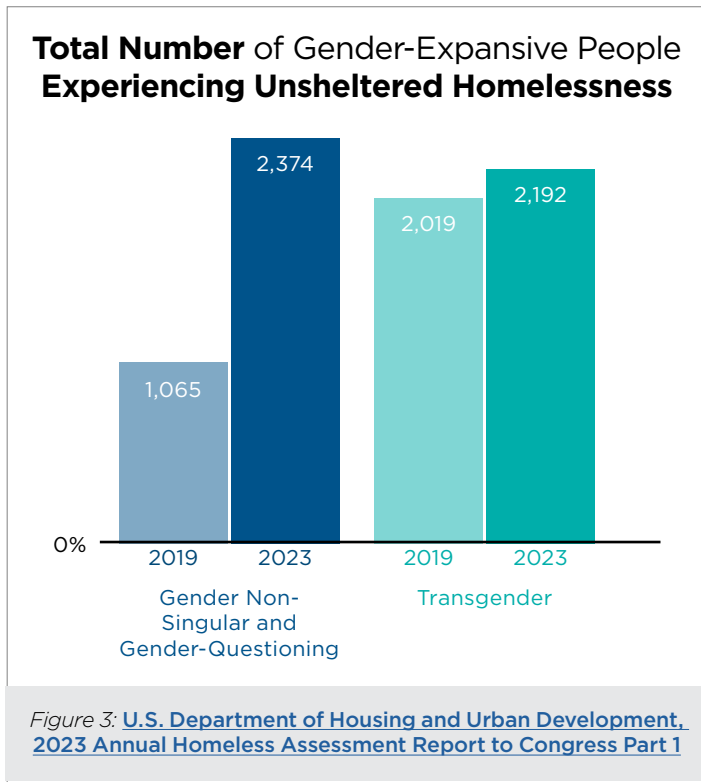
5 A household can include multiple individuals who live together. It can also include single individuals. The gender of the household is defined by the individual designated as the “head of household.” According to HUD, the head of a household “is the member of the family or household to whom all other members of the household are associated in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). For families and adult-only households, the head of household must be an adult. In a child-only household, the parent of another child is designated as the head of household; otherwise, each child in a household without adults is designated as a head of household.”

Gender-Expansive Homelessness is Outpacing the Homelessness Response System’s Resources

Data from the 2023 AHAR Part 1 showed that the number of transgender people experiencing homelessness [increased](#) by at least 26 percent between 2019 and 2023, while the combined number of gender non-singular and gender-questioning people experiencing homelessness increased by at least 183 percent. In comparison, during this same time, the number of cisgender women experiencing homelessness increased 14 percent and the number of cisgender men experiencing homelessness increased 15 percent. These numbers clearly show disparities in who experiences homelessness

based on gender identity, specifically among gender-expansive people.

There are also a greater number of gender-expansive people experiencing unsheltered homelessness. Specifically, the [PIT Counts](#) reveal that at least 173 more transgender people experienced unsheltered homelessness in 2023 than in 2019. In these same four years, the number of gender non-singular and gender-questioning people experiencing unsheltered homelessness more than doubled.



PUT SIMPLY, GENDER-EXPANSIVE PEOPLE ARE INCREASINGLY MORE LIKELY THAN THEIR CISGENDER COUNTERPARTS TO LIVE IN A PLACE NOT SUITED FOR HUMAN HABITATION.

Why Higher Rates of Unsheltered Homelessness are Especially Concerning

Unsheltered homelessness presents a [significant risk](#) to an individual's health and safety. This risk is even greater for gender-expansive people. Despite significant underreporting, [research](#) demonstrates that transgender people are far more likely to experience violent crime than their cisgender counterparts, [a risk compounded for people living in encampments, vehicles or other unsheltered locations](#). Due to historic discrimination and economic marginalization, gender-expansive people are also [more likely](#) to experience [mental health and physical health challenges](#), [struggle with indicators of poverty](#), [lack access to healthcare and live shorter lives](#): signs of poor well-being that are exacerbated by unsheltered homelessness in particular.

Beyond calling attention to a shortfall in the amount of supportive housing resources, unsheltered homelessness is also a health, safety and well-being crisis for the gender-expansive community. While it is true that shelter placements have increased, it is also true and deeply concerning that gender-expansive people face significant barriers to accessing housing in the private market and housing through the homelessness response system given the higher risk that homelessness has on their health and safety.

The Unique Impact of Housing Inequity and Homelessness on Gender-Expansive Youth

It is also important to point out how homelessness specifically impacts youth. The majority of gender-expansive youth [experience harassment and bullying in school](#) because of their identity. They are also [twice as likely](#) as their cisgender peers to experience abuse at home. These experiences can also increase the number of gender-expansive youth forced to enter the foster system, a key [predictor of future homelessness](#).

Likely because of this context, [nearly four percent of unaccompanied youth](#) experiencing homelessness identify as transgender, not singularly female or male, or gender-questioning — a rate four times as high as adult only households. HUD data also indicates that

as many as [20 percent](#) of all homeless youth identify as members of the broader LGBTQ+ community. Despite a 14 percent decrease in the total number of unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness between 2019 and 2023, according to the [2023 PIT Count](#), the number of gender-expansive, unaccompanied youth experiencing sheltered or unsheltered homelessness increased by more than 51 percent.

Percent Change in **Unaccompanied Youth Experiencing Homelessness: 2019–2021**

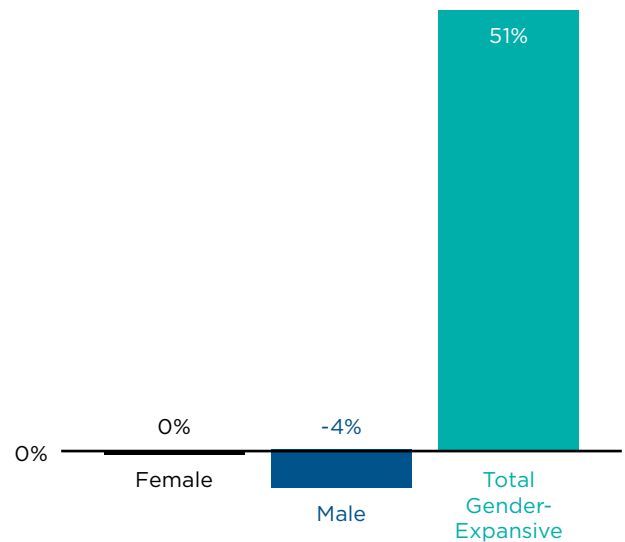


Figure 5: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2023 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress Part 1

These disparities are [exacerbated](#) by race, especially among Black, Hispanic or Latino, and most acutely, Indigenous youth, who [disproportionately experience violence from the foster system](#) and lack access to economic opportunity. As a result, gender-expansive youth of color are [twice as likely](#) to experience homelessness compared with their white counterparts. Data on gender-expansive youth experiencing homelessness is also likely underreported due to heightened stigma and youths' increased dependence on adults for basic needs. Even with the data that does exist, family and social stigma appears to exacerbate gender-expansive identity as a [risk factor](#) for youth homelessness. This trend is especially concerning since [homelessness worsens physical and mental health conditions](#), especially the already [high risk of self-harm and suicide](#) among gender-expansive youth.

Beyond the Numbers: What These Trends Indicate About Housing Supply and Gender-Expansive Access to Housing

Increases in homeless counts and disparities may partially result from improved data collection and the previously mentioned changes in gender categories. Although better data collection helps to reveal existing disparities, available evidence suggests that historic discrimination in housing and employment, as well as from relatives, is a long-standing problem that has made it **more likely** for gender-expansive people to have **lower incomes**. In a **scarce and increasingly expensive housing market**, lower incomes heighten the risk of homelessness. Therefore, these trends are rooted in the fact that there is not enough safe, affordable and accessible housing for low-income individuals: a problem that is only **increasing**.

According to HUD's most recent **Worst Case Housing Needs Report to Congress**, the number of affordable and available housing units per 100 very low-income and extremely low-income renters decreased since 2019. In 2021, this translated to a deficit of **7.3 million affordable and available rental units** for extremely low-income renters. Addressing the lack of affordable housing is critical to reducing rent burdens, housing insecurity, and homelessness among all low and middle-income households. In an environment

of scarcity, low-income individuals are forced to compete for affordable units. However, this is not a fair competition: gender-expansive people (and especially gender-expansive people of color) **face numerous additional barriers** to independent housing, including discrimination from landlords and social networks, as well as **far less access to financial resources**.

Neither the AHAR Part 1 nor the AHAR Part 2 provide an intersectional data set describing gender-expansive homelessness by race. However, research from the **Center for American Progress** and the **UCLA Williams Institute** shows that gender-expansive Black, Indigenous and Hispanic households are more likely to experience housing discrimination and housing insecurity, and thus are more likely to require emergency shelter services. Research conducted by the **Coalition on Homelessness** in 2020 found that gender-expansive people often avoid shelter, due to a fear of and real experiences with **mistreatment, discrimination and violence in shelter settings**. These compounding forms of exclusion mean that shortfalls in affordable and supportive housing are also likely creating an even higher risk of homelessness for gender-expansive people of color.

IN 2021, HUD REPORTED THAT **36 UNITS** WERE AFFORDABLE AND AVAILABLE FOR EVERY⁶ **100 EXTREMELY LOW-INCOME RENTERS**.



Figure 5: [U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2023 Affordable Housing/Worst Case Needs Report to Congress](#)

⁶ The Worst Case Needs Report to Congress does not report data on gender-expansive renters. Given the data in this report, gender-expansive people are more likely to struggle finding affordable housing than their cisgender counterparts.

How This Data Can Inform the Homelessness Response System

Based on this data, disparities in homelessness among gender-expansive people are evident. The following section will provide information on how data on gender-expansive people can inform the homelessness response system, and provide concrete steps that Continuums of Care (CoCs) and homeless service providers can take to best serve this population.

1. Ensure that Federal Policies Promote Inclusive Data Collection and Affirm Equal Access for Gender-Expansive People

Gender-expansive people are overrepresented in the homeless population and are therefore in greater need of affordable housing and emergency housing services. To attempt to address the barriers to services discussed in this report, in 2012, HUD published the [Equal Access Rule](#). This rule required its housing programs to be open to all eligible individuals and families regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or marital status.

The data presented in this report suggests that a lack of affordable housing and [safe, inclusive shelter settings](#) drive gender-expansive people into unsheltered homelessness. The Equal

Access Rule helps to reduce these causes by prohibiting landlords and HUD-funded emergency housing providers from refusing to serve gender-expansive people.

While the Rule does not enforce policies to reduce harassment toward gender-expansive people or provide a comprehensive solution to the disproportionate, structural challenges that gender-expansive individuals face when trying to find economic and housing stability, it does ensure that no one is denied a safe place to sleep simply because of their identity.

However, these protections are consistently under threat. The rights of gender-expansive people are increasingly [under attack](#) by state policy makers and through components of legislation in the [Fiscal Year 2024 Appropriations Process](#). Future administrations could also roll back data collection efforts that include gender-expansive identities. Furthermore, given how difficult it can be to enforce this rule, it is likely that not every community is complying with it in its emergency response system.

Put simply, there is no guarantee that equal protection rules will remain in place without advocacy from service providers, community members and policy makers. Allies need to make clear that the Equal Access Rule allows local homelessness response systems to reach the most vulnerable members of our communities. Providers need to ensure that their shelters enact the Rule’s protections.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE EQUAL ACCESS RULE

In **2012**, HUD published the Equal Access Rule.

In **2016**, HUD extended these protections to programs from the Office of Community Planning and Development to widen its reach to shelters and programs funded through this office.

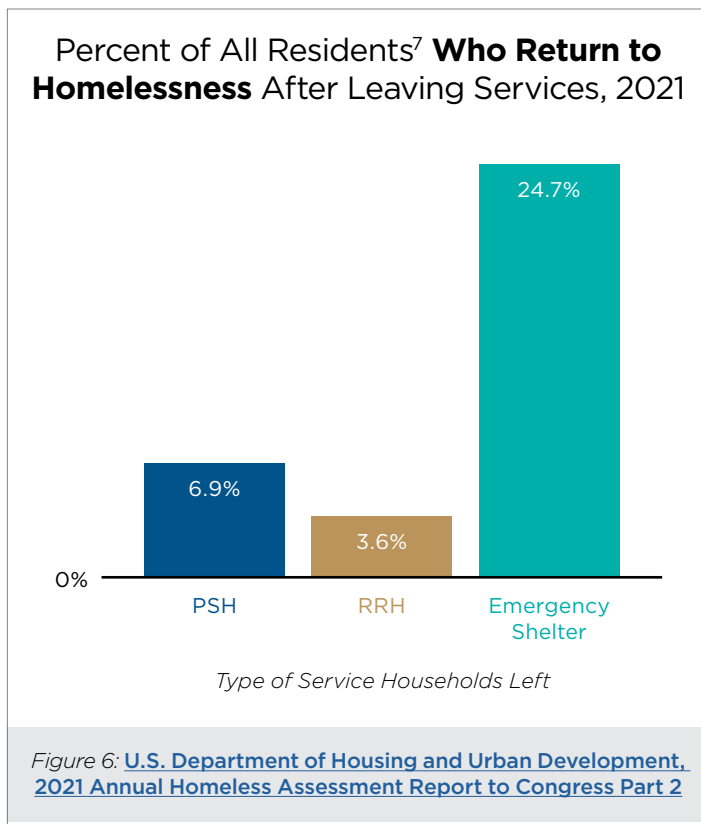
In **2020**, the Trump administration [published proposed changes](#) to the 2016 Rule that would have significantly undercut progress to protect gender-expansive individuals’ access to housing.

Just a few months later, on his first day in office, President Biden signed an [Executive Order](#) directing the federal government to fully implement protections for gender identity and sexual orientation under the Civil Rights Act and the Fair Housing Act. This executive order affirmed HUD’s 2012 and 2016 equal protection rules.

2. Evaluate Equity in Rapid Re-Housing and Permanent Supportive Housing Programs

Emergency shelter is an important way to keep gender-expansive people from experiencing unsheltered homelessness. Research has shown that the [Housing First](#) method, when integrated at a systems level, is most successful in helping people avoid returns to homelessness. Through Housing First models of PSH and RRH, gender-expansive populations who are highly vulnerable to chronic, unsheltered homelessness can more easily find, and remain in, stable housing.

CoCs should use their data to evaluate differences in RRH, PSH and shelter utilization by gender and race, then use this data to ensure that gender-expansive people (and especially gender-expansive people of color) are not disproportionately remaining in emergency or unsheltered settings. By providing a stable, long-term, and safe environment, placements in PSH, RRH and independent, affordable housing can help mitigate the impact that historic inequity in housing, earned income and wealth has on gender-expansive people of color.



⁷ The AHAR does not report returns to homelessness by gender. It is likely, given the data in this report, that gender-expansive people experience less effective interventions through the homelessness response system.

3. Ensure that Gender-Expansive People Feel Comfortable Accessing the Homeless Response System

At the same time, emergency shelter beds make up a [significant portion](#) of the homelessness response system and offer an important opportunity to divert people experiencing a crisis into safe, stable, and independent housing. Furthermore, the number of gender-expansive people entering emergency shelter far [outpaces](#) the number entering PSH and RRH. However, entering a shelter and requesting emergency services is frequently anxiety-inducing, and gender-expansive people may also fear exclusion from services or aggression because of their gender identity. Therefore, in addition to receiving protection from HUD, gender-expansive people must also see and feel these protections when they experience a housing crisis and enter shelter.

The AHAR Part 1 and the AHAR Part 2 do not explain why gender-expansive people leave shelter or provide information about where they go when they do leave. However, research from the [Coalition on Homelessness](#) and [UCLA Williams Institute](#) suggest that gender-expansive people often experience danger and harassment in sheltered settings, discrimination in supportive programs, and structural exclusion from independent housing.

CoCs and homeless service providers can correct these barriers by being attentive to forms of exclusion, aggression, and discrimination that occur from the start of the coordinated entry process to the time that gender-expansive people exit to housing.

At a minimum, in their day-to-day interactions with gender-expansive clients, direct service providers should:

- 1. Ensure that case managers ask residents for their pronouns and name.** Respect and acknowledge their residents by using these identifiers in conversation — even if they do not match the resident's official identity documents.
- 2. Ensure that residents have access to gender-affirming clothing.**
- 3. Be transparent with clients about the data collected** and who has access to this data. Gender-expansive people

experiencing homelessness need to be informed about how their data is being used, as well as how it is being protected. This should occur not only when they enter services, but throughout their stay in supportive housing programs. Conversations about data and data privacy should take place in an environment that is as safe and private as possible.

4. Prioritize connecting gender-expansive people with the resources necessary to **acquire documents that align with their gender identity and preferred name.** This may require setting aside resources for staff to learn about local or [state laws](#) and accompany gender-expansive clients to government or medical appointments.
5. Prioritize a **trauma-informed, person-centered approach when asking questions about an individual's past.** Acknowledge and accept that identities and comfort levels change: if a client wants to adjust their pronouns, gender, experience of violence, family situation, etc., be sure to connect the client with any additional services and reflect this change in HMIS data without asking any unnecessary questions.

CoCs should also take steps to build a housing network that invests in their gender-expansive residents' specific needs. CoCs should:

1. **Invest in housing and shelter** provided by and for gender-expansive people.
 - a. This demonstrates a commitment to the community and ensures that gender-expansive people have the power to implement supportive policies that may otherwise be missing from emergency housing services.
2. Evaluate their requirements for identity documents, and **remove requirements** that are not completely necessary.
3. Ensure that bathrooms and showers create **total privacy and safety**: add locks and barriers or facilitate a shower schedule so that residents do not share bathrooms.
4. Building on [HUD guidance](#) and [best practices](#), shelters should develop a clear **non-discrimination and gender-based violence policy.** This policy should outline a quick and efficient reporting process when instances of harassment, violence or discrimination do occur. Once this policy is written, providers should:
 - a. give all new residents a copy of the policy;
 - b. explain the procedures and rules it outlines; and
 - c. if necessary, offer confidential affirmation and guidance to residents during the reporting processes.
5. Prioritize gender-expansive individuals for available **single-room occupancy (SRO) beds** while continuing to build capacity for additional SROs.
 - a. While gender-expansive people should be able to choose their shelter based on their gender identity, they also should not be forced to choose between binary (e.g., female-only or male-only) living congregate housing.

RESEARCH SHOWS THAT SIMPLE AFFIRMATIONS LIKE RESPECTING PRONOUNS AND CLOTHING CHOICES CAN INCREASE HEALTH, WELL-BEING, AND QUALITY OF LIFE IN GENDER-EXPANSIVE POPULATIONS.

6. **Conduct specific, targeted outreach to housing developers and landlords** to combat discrimination against the gender-expansive community. This can help plan for and address barriers to safety that gender-expansive clients often encounter.

a. Example: [Research](#) shows that gender-expansive people are also more likely to [feel unsafe commuting on public transit](#). An apartment 20 minutes away from the closest bus stop that is also managed by a landlord who makes disparaging comments about the client's clothing choices may exacerbate a client's trauma. This can lead to a more precarious housing situation in the future.

b. Similarly, if a gender-expansive client's ID does not match their gender presentation, they may feel less safe during a traffic stop or doctor's appointment. Organizations should recognize these needs and plan ahead to ensure that when gender-expansive clients enter their doors, they have quick and reliable access to the housing and living support that makes them feel safe and understood.

7. **Build partnerships** with providers outside of the housing sector.

a. In addition to safe, affirming housing, coordinating access to services like healthcare, child care, harm reduction programs, education, and employment can help prevent and reduce homelessness. This approach can also help gender-expansive people. By learning about their clients' needs and having conversations with medical providers, employers and academic institutions, case managers have an opportunity to advocate for needs that are deeply connected with and crucial to their gender-expansive clients' housing stability.

The Role of Lived Experience

Employing and providing equitable compensation to gender-expansive staff who have lived experience of homelessness is also critical to ensuring that supportive services are safe, accessible, and equitable. Gender-expansive people have experience building networks of inclusion and support for one another. They have found creative ways to survive despite a lack of public resources and support. CoCs can rely on this knowledge and experience to break down barriers that gender-expansive people face when accessing homelessness systems. Consistent, reliable, and well-compensated peer support, mentorship and affinity groups can [improve physical, mental and emotional health](#) for gender-expansive people experiencing homelessness.

An organization or CoC likely serves gender-expansive individuals with a variety of experiences due to their specific gender identity, racial identity, Indigenous identity, immigration status, location, physical ability, mental differences, class, religion, and/or histories of trauma. Engaging people with lived experience will help providers identify these specific needs. Anonymous surveys, focus groups and guided conversations with gender-expansive people experiencing homelessness can help CoCs facilitate this engagement.

Crucially, CoCs and organization should pay gender-expansive people with lived expertise of homelessness for their work. Compensation rightfully acknowledges the commitments of time, knowledge, energy and effort required to improve how CoCs address gender-expansive homelessness. It also supports the gender-expansive community's access to economic opportunity. Allying with, rather than merely requesting information from, gender-expansive people will help to increase support for and engagement with homelessness programs.

Conclusion

It is up to advocates, CoCs and organizations to challenge and correct inequities in the homelessness response system. Due to structural discrimination and historic injustice, gender-expansive people, and especially gender-expansive people of color, are most at risk of housing insecurity and unsheltered homelessness. At the same time, they are also less likely to receive services from the emergency housing system. By addressing these inequities and ensuring safe homes for gender-expansive people, providers and CoCs can create a more informed and more effective response system. Doing so will improve collective health, safety and economic opportunity by ensuring that everyone has a place to call home.



For additional information and context, the Alliance encourages readers to review the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) [Annual Homelessness Assessment Reports \(AHAR\)](#). Collectively, these reports depict trends in homelessness and emergency housing access using two primary data sources, the Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS) and the Housing Inventory Count (HIC). It also provides data on the number of available supportive housing beds in each state and in local Continuums of Care.