

Nationwide Survey Shows Widespread Discrimination Against Gender-Expansive People, Including in Emergency Shelters

Maintaining and Enforcing the Equal Access Rule Is Critically Important to Connect People with Homeless Services

By Daniel Soucy

This publication is a collaboration between [Advocates for Trans Equality \(A4TE\)](#) and the National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH). It highlights **previously unreleased data** from the [2022 U.S. Transgender Survey](#), which asked 92,000 transgender people about their lives and experiences. It is the largest survey of transgender people in the United States.

Summary

Gender-expansive¹ people in the United States face a disproportionately high risk of homelessness. Systemic discrimination, weak policy protections against discrimination, and social stigma drive this trend. Newly released data from the 2022 U.S. Trans Survey reveals that nearly one in three respondents has experienced homelessness in their lifetime - **eight times the rate of the general population. 58 percent** have been denied access to shelter due to their gender and **27 percent** left shelter due to poor treatment. Recent political and economic trends have likely exacerbated these inequities. This publication examines the strong link between discrimination and housing instability and evaluates the importance of the Equal Access Rule in ending homelessness.

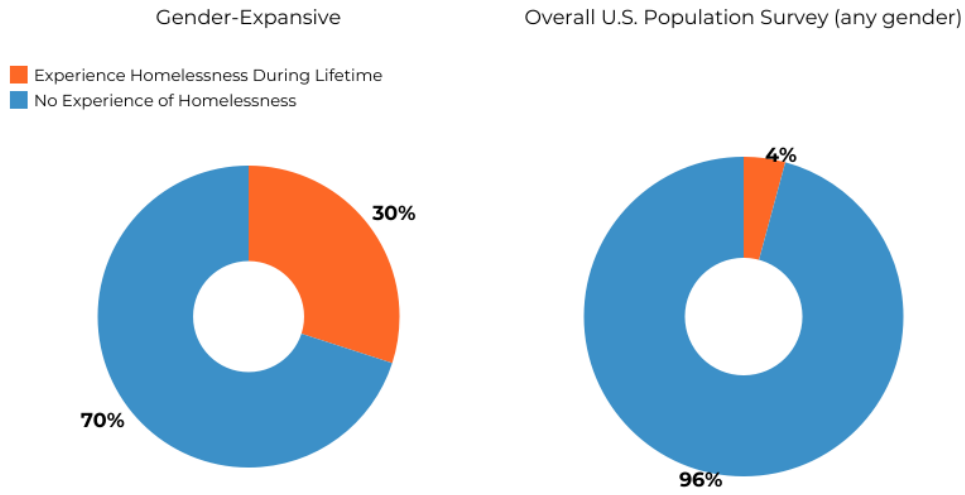
Gender-Expansive Survey Respondents Are Eight Times More Likely to Experience Homelessness

The 2022 U.S. Trans Survey reveals that a significant percentage of respondents have experienced homelessness. *Family rejection, discrimination, and ongoing stigma contribute to the group's elevated risk.*

- **Discrimination is closely linked to homelessness:** people who reported that others could tell they were transgender were more likely to experience homelessness.
- **30 percent** of respondents experienced homelessness during their lifetime: 8x more than a comparable study of the general population.
- **1 in 14** respondents experienced homelessness in the previous 12 months.

¹The U.S. Transgender Survey included the following gender identity categories: Transgender Men, Transgender Women, Nonbinary people assigned male at birth, Nonbinary people assigned female at birth and crossdresser. The Alliance uses the term gender-expansive to describe people whose gender identities have changed since birth, and/or whose identities do not neatly fit into categories of male or female.

Gender-Expansive People are More Likely to Experience Homelessness in Their Lifetime



And in the Past 12 Months

All Gender-Expansive People

7.0%

Overall U.S. Population Survey (any gender)

1.5%

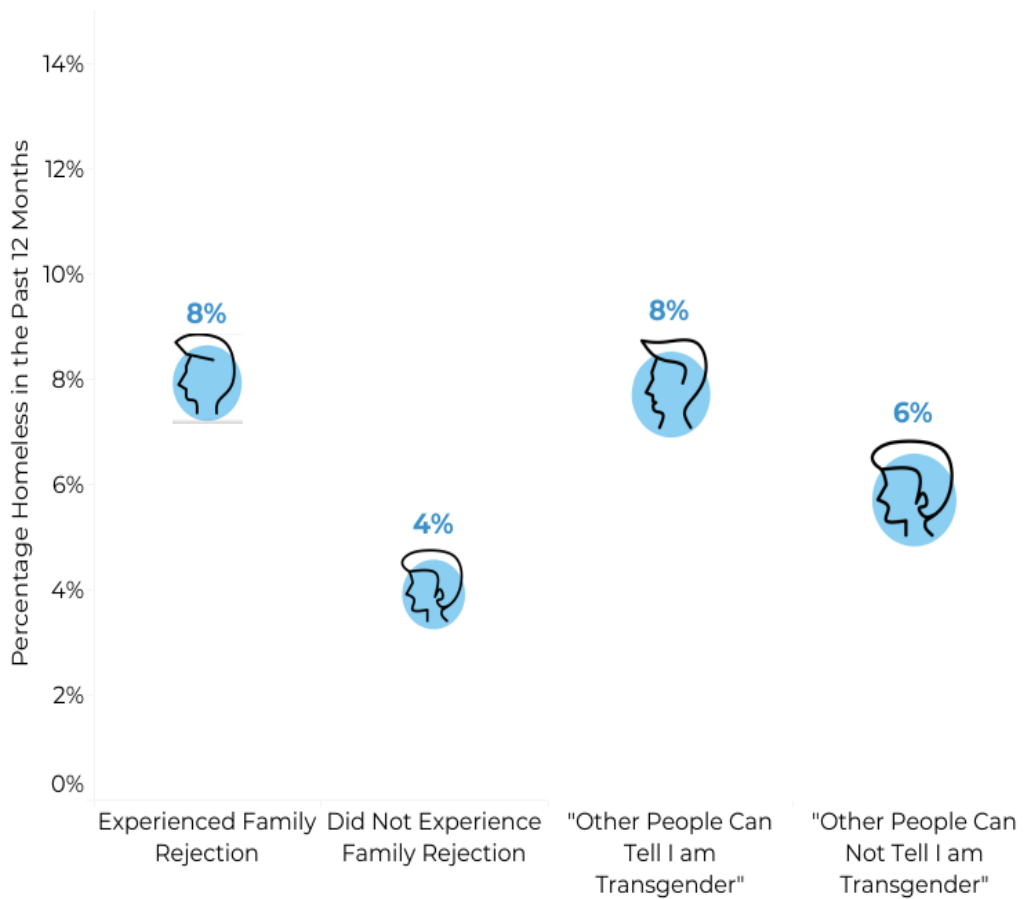
Source: 2022 US Trans Survey. *Advocates for Transgender Equality* <https://ustransurvey.org/> and Tsai, Jack. Lifetime and 1-year prevalence of homelessness in the US population: results from the National Epidemiologic Survey on Alcohol and Related Conditions-III. *Journal of Public Health*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/pubmed/fox034>.
Note: This is an approximate comparison. The US Trans Survey and the National Epidemiologic Survey on Alcohol and Related Conditions-III are both nationally representative but they use different methods. Additionally, the USTS was conducted in 2022 while the National Epidemiologic Survey on Alcohol and Related Conditions-III was conducted from 2012-2013.

Respondents Who Experienced Rejection and Stigma Were At A Higher Risk of Homelessness

[Research](#) suggests that discrimination and stigma make it harder for gender-expansive people to find employment and housing, [pushing](#) them into homelessness. This increases their need for homeless services. The U.S. Trans Survey demonstrates that **gender-expansive people who experience rejection and stigma are more likely to experience homelessness**. Many gender-expansive people [enter homelessness](#) because their families do not accept them, forcing them to leave home, lose an important support system and ultimately confront a housing and employment market that [discriminates](#) against them.

Eight percent of survey respondents who experienced family rejection also experienced homelessness, compared to only **four percent** of those respondents who did not experience rejection from their family. Respondents also indicated that when other people can tell they are gender-expansive, they are more likely to experience homelessness.

Homelessness is More Prevalent Among Gender-Expansive People Who Experience Rejection and Stigma



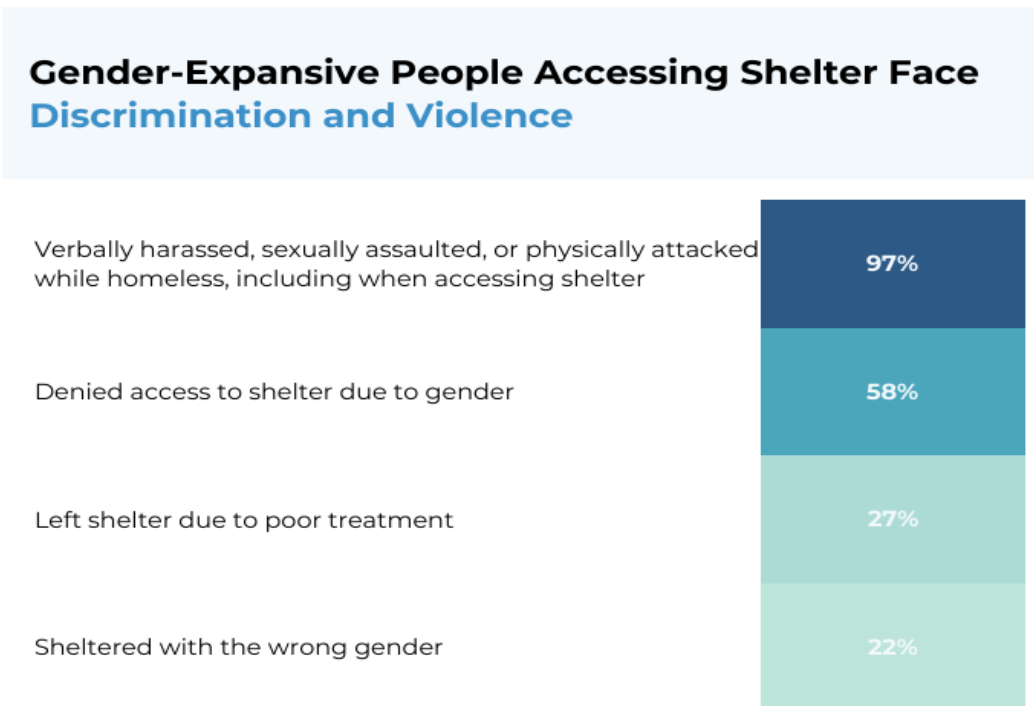
Source: 2022 US Trans Survey. <https://ustranssurvey.org/>

Since the survey was conducted in 2022, hostility toward gender-expansive people has [continued to increase](#), including hateful rhetoric and discriminatory policies from the nation's highest office. Increasing economic uncertainty, [cuts to lifesaving government programs](#) for underserved communities and the [rollback of protections against discrimination](#) may have made homelessness among gender-expansive people even worse.

Survey Respondents Face Discrimination in Accessing Homeless Services: The Equal Access Rule is Needed to Prevent Unfair Treatment

Homeless service providers' primary goal is to make sure that people have safe and stable housing. These providers do good work in communities. For example, they have been [steadily increasing](#) the number of people who have access to shelter and permanent housing. But the data indicate that gender-expansive people do not have equal access to these life-saving services.

Nearly all gender-expansive people taking the survey experienced abusive treatment while homeless. The majority (**58 percent**) had been **denied access to shelter due to their gender**.



Source: 2022 US Trans Survey. *Advocates for Transgender Equality* <https://ustranssurvey.org/>

Discrimination and stigma [keeps gender-expansive people homeless longer](#) by making it more difficult to access the services that could help them reenter housing. Making sure that everyone has fair and equal access to housing and homeless programs is fundamental to ending homelessness.

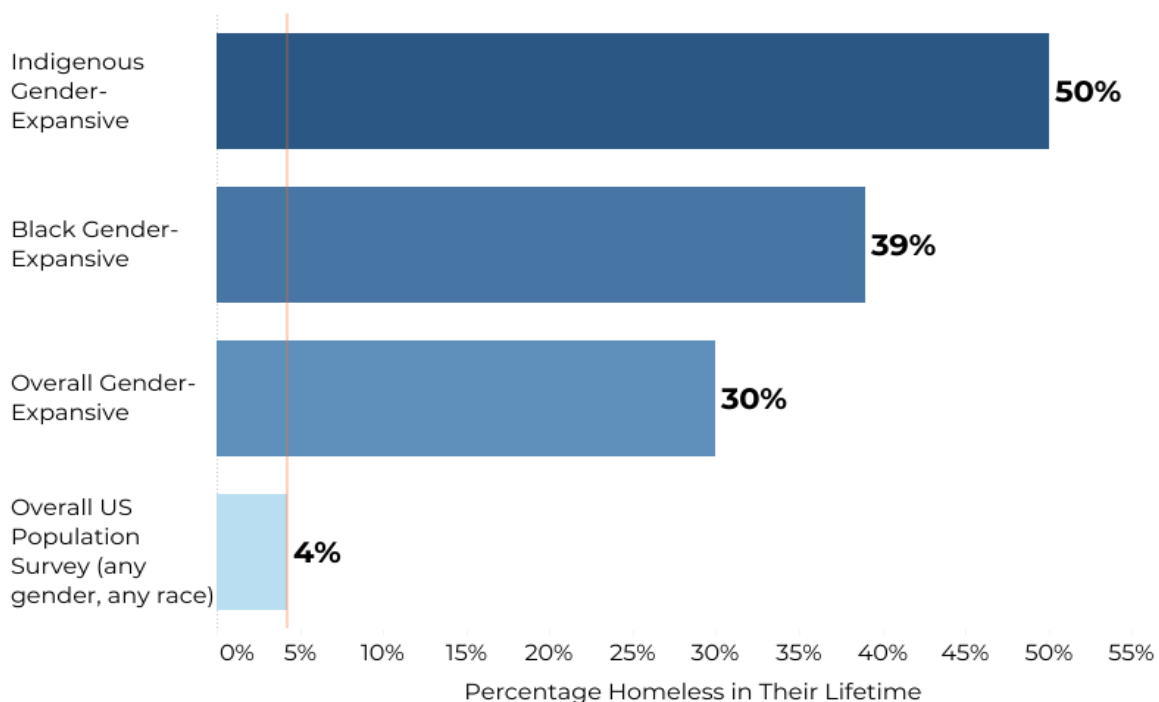
Rather than work to address discrimination in these programs, the federal government is actively making things worse through its attempts to [rescind the Equal Access Rule](#) and require homeless service providers to discriminate against gender-expansive people. [Some lawmakers are also openly attacking](#) gender-expansive people, increasing stigma. If the administration and lawmakers are serious about ending homelessness, they will use the Equal Access Rule to ensure that everyone has access to housing, shelter, and services.

Black and Indigenous Respondents Are at a Higher Risk of Homelessness: Backsliding Will Hurt Them the Most

Efforts to roll back equal protections follow a familiar and concerning pattern by hurting people of color the most. Discriminatory laws and practices (even when they're not explicitly about race) often put people of color at a disadvantage. Data from the U.S. Trans Survey show persistent racial disparities – **half of indigenous respondents and 39 percent of black respondents experienced homelessness during their lifetime, compared with 30 percent of respondents of all races.**

Ending homelessness requires [proactive policies](#), including the Equal Access Rule, to [stop](#) and [reverse](#) discrimination's negative impact. Rolling back protections against discrimination will threaten progress and further inequality. [Research](#) indicates that inequality hurts everyone by making it harder for people to contribute to their communities, limiting economic development.

Indigenous and Black Gender-Expansive People Are More Likely to Experience Homelessness in Their Lifetime



Source: 2022 US Trans Survey. *Advocates for Transgender Equality* <https://ustranssurvey.org/> and Tsai, Jack. Lifetime and 1-year prevalence of homelessness in the US population: results from the National Epidemiologic Survey on Alcohol and Related Conditions-III. *Journal of Public Health*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/pubmed/fox034>.

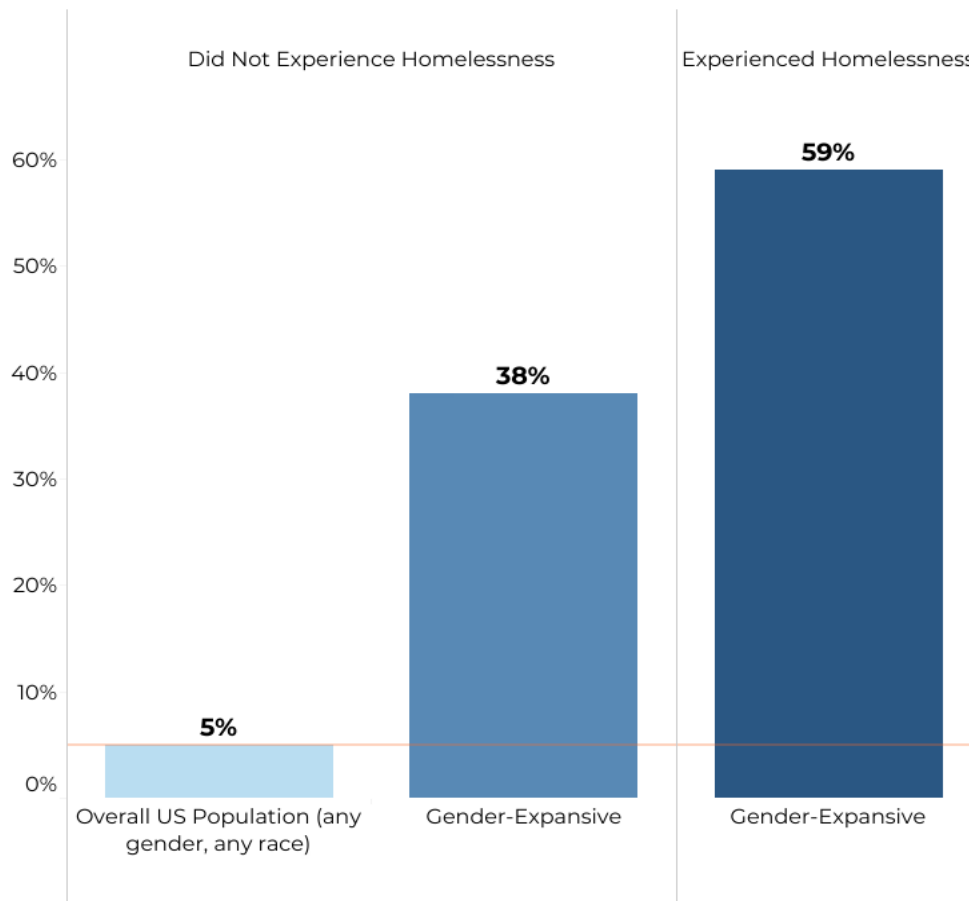
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Homelessness is More Dangerous for Gender-Expansive Respondents

Homelessness is strongly associated with worse health and safety, especially for gender-expansive people. Sleeping outside can be dangerous. Unhoused people experience [high rates of violence, illness and mortality](#). Other surveys of people experiencing homelessness indicate that [60 percent](#) of unhoused people have chronic health conditions like hypertension while [nearly half](#) suffer from depression. For gender-expansive people who face discrimination in [healthcare settings](#) and [targeted violence](#) even when they are housed, homelessness may have even more devastating impacts on their health.

Unhoused Gender-Expansive People Are More Likely to Consider Suicide

Percentage of People Who Considered Suicide



Source: 2022 US Trans Survey. *Advocates for Transgender Equality* <https://ustranssurvey.org/> and Rastogi, A., Menard, L., Miller, G. H., Cole, W., Laurison, D., Caballero, J. R., Murano-Kinney, S., & Heng-Lehtinen, R. (2025, June). Health and wellbeing: A report of the 2022 U.S. Transgender Survey. *Advocates for Transgender Equality*. <https://ustranssurvey.org/download-reports/>

According to new data from the U.S. Trans Survey, 59 percent of gender-expansive people who experienced homelessness considered suicide, compared with 38 percent of gender-expansive people who had not experienced homelessness.

[Research](#) suggests that the heightened discrimination, isolation and violence associated with being gender-expansive and unhoused greatly increases the risk of suicide among gender-expansive people. Having access to welcoming housing and shelter can both prevent and address these challenges, keeping people safe and communities healthy.

Why This Data Is Even More Important Now: Protections Against Discrimination Are Under Threat

The challenges highlighted by the U.S. Trans Survey are not new. In 2016, The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) recognized that gender-expansive people faced barriers accessing homeless services and took an important step toward ending homelessness by finalizing the [Equal Access Rule](#). The Equal Access Rule requires all federally funded housing and shelter programs to provide access to eligible individuals and families, regardless of their family composition, sexual orientation, gender identity, or marital status. Under the Rule, individuals can contact HUD and report instances of discrimination, helping address this significant barrier to shelter access.

While the rule is still in full effect and homeless service providers are required to follow it, HUD is taking dramatic and harmful actions to undo the progress previous administrations made toward equal access. Not only is HUD attempting to [repeal the rule](#), they are also trying to [require communities to enact discriminatory policies](#) by withholding funding from providers who do not discriminate based on a person's gender-identity, sexual orientation or family composition. This harms efforts to end homelessness by undermining service providers and making it harder for people of all backgrounds to access homeless services.

The Alliance, A4TE and its partners are expressing their concern for these dramatic changes. Members of the public can and should [submit a comment to HUD](#), opposing the change and expressing their concerns by **June 29, 2026**.

For specific recommendations on how providers can build more safe, accessible and effective programs please visit: <https://endhomelessness.org/resources/toolkits-and-training-materials/how-providers-can-address-homelessness-among-gender-expansive-people/>

To learn how you can help prevent HUD from rescinding the Equal Access Rule, please visit: <https://transequality.org/earcomment>

For more information on fair housing rights, please visit: <https://transequality.org/resources/know-your-rights-housing-and-homelessness>

For more extensive policy recommendations, please visit: <https://endhomelessness.org/resources/research-and-analysis/housing-instability-among-gender-expansive-people-and-paths-for->