

Parental rejection of sexual orientation and gender identity 'trigger' for youth homelessness, new study finds

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Parental rejection of sexual orientation and gender identity could be a key trigger in youth homelessness, according to new research.

A report by UCD researchers, in conjunction with Focus Ireland and

BeLonG To Youth Services, found that parents' rejection of their children's sexuality and [gender identity](#) is a contributing factor in [young people](#)'s decision to leave home.

According to the study, there is also a high degree of fear and anxiety among young people when engaging with [homeless](#) services due to fears they would encounter homophobic or transphobic attitudes among service users and staff.

The research, carried out by Professor Michelle Norris and Dr. Aideen Quilty from the UCD School of Social Policy, Social Work and Social Justice, found connections between homelessness and [mental health problems](#), and complex experiences of stigma and shame.

A total of 22 people aged between 18 and 30 were interviewed for the qualitative study, the first of its kind in Ireland.

"The report demonstrates that LGBTQI+ young adults face additional risks of becoming homeless due to conflict with parents and caregivers regarding sexuality and gender identify, in addition these [young adults](#) face additional barriers to accessing services when they do become homeless and building strong relationships with [service](#) providers," said Professor Norris.

Dr. Quilty added: "[It] is important that we listen to and hear carefully the voices of these courageous young people. Their powerful stories highlight significant levels of resilience in the face of challenging, distressing and damaging experiences of homelessness. We have a responsibility to ensure their stories matter and that we respond through targeted, appropriate actions."

According to the report's main findings:

- Young people who are LGBTQI+ not only experience all the interpersonal, familial and intra-personal problems of the young population-at-large but also have a range of other challenges associated with their sexuality and gender identity, particularly relating to coming out and/or transitioning.
- Despite significant progress in Ireland homophobia and transphobia persist.
- Many young LGBTQI+ people without a home, avoid homeless services and live in a precarious world of 'sofa surfing' with friends and acquaintances.
- Many participants of the study showed exceptional levels of resilience.
- The overwhelmingly positive impact for those who did access front line services.

The report makes a number of recommendations, including that the issue of LGBTQI+ homelessness should be included in the new Youth Homelessness Strategy that was promised as part of the Program for Government.

It also recommends more mediation services and training on gender issues, and measures to make homeless services more accessible and supportive for young LGBTQI+ homeless people.

Moninne Griffith, CEO of BeLonG To Youth Services, said: "The need for information on homelessness among LGBTQI+ young people is particularly urgent in light of the rise in [youth](#) homeless in Ireland in recent years. Coming out can still lead to LGBTQI+ youth being made homeless. In our front line services, we witness a significant number of LGBTQI+ youth living without a permanent home and surviving by sleeping on friends' sofas, squatting or staying in other insecure or unsafe places. This group are even more difficult to identify and consequently are often referred to as the forgotten or hidden homeless."

More information: A Qualitative Study of LGBTQI+ Youth Homelessness in Ireland: [belongto.org/wp-content/upload ... rt FINAL-VERSION.pdf](https://belongto.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/rt_FINAL-VERSION.pdf)

Provided by University College Dublin

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