



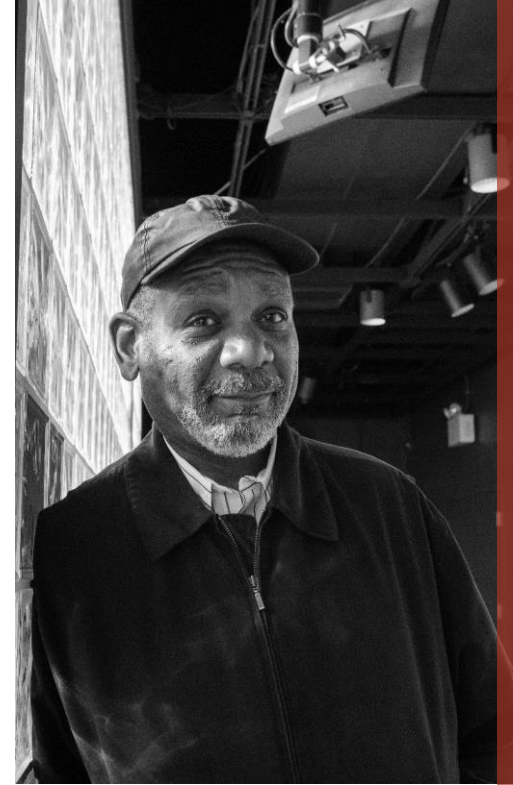
A program of Pathways to Housing PA

# **Falling Through the Cracks:** *LGBTQ+ Disparities in Homelessness*

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[www.HousingFirstUniversity.org](http://www.HousingFirstUniversity.org)



# Agenda

- Introduction
- Identifying the disparities
- Root causes
- What to do about it
- Q & A



# Learning Objectives

*By the end of this session you will be able to...*

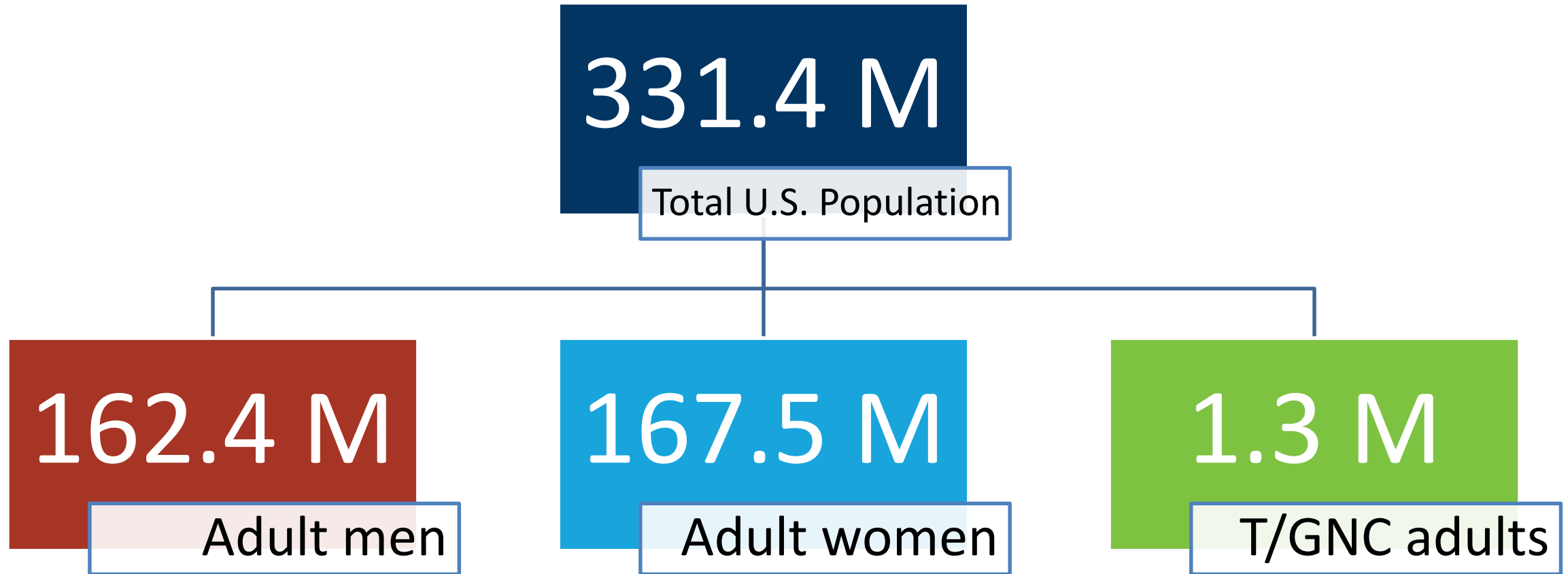
- Identify disparities in homelessness for members of the LGBTQ+ community
- Explore root causes contributing to these disparities
- Name three strategies you can use to improve health & wellness outcomes for LGBTQ+ individuals experiencing housing instability in your community



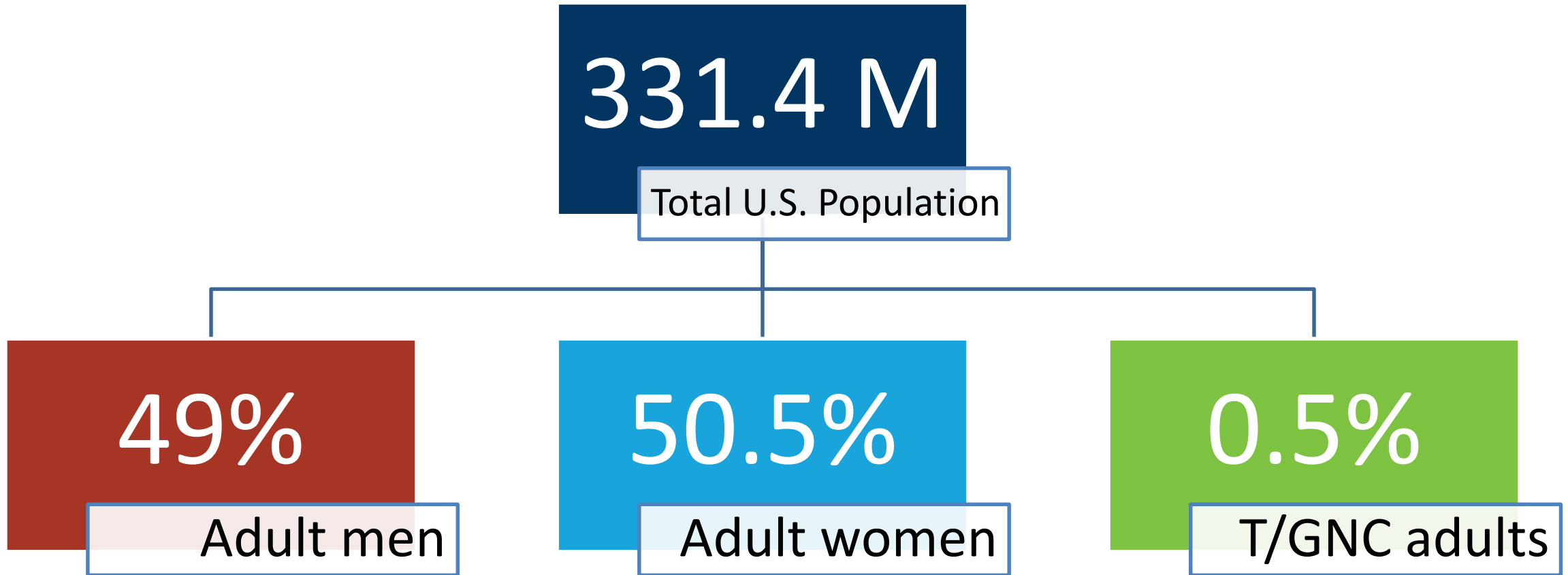
# Identifying the Disparities



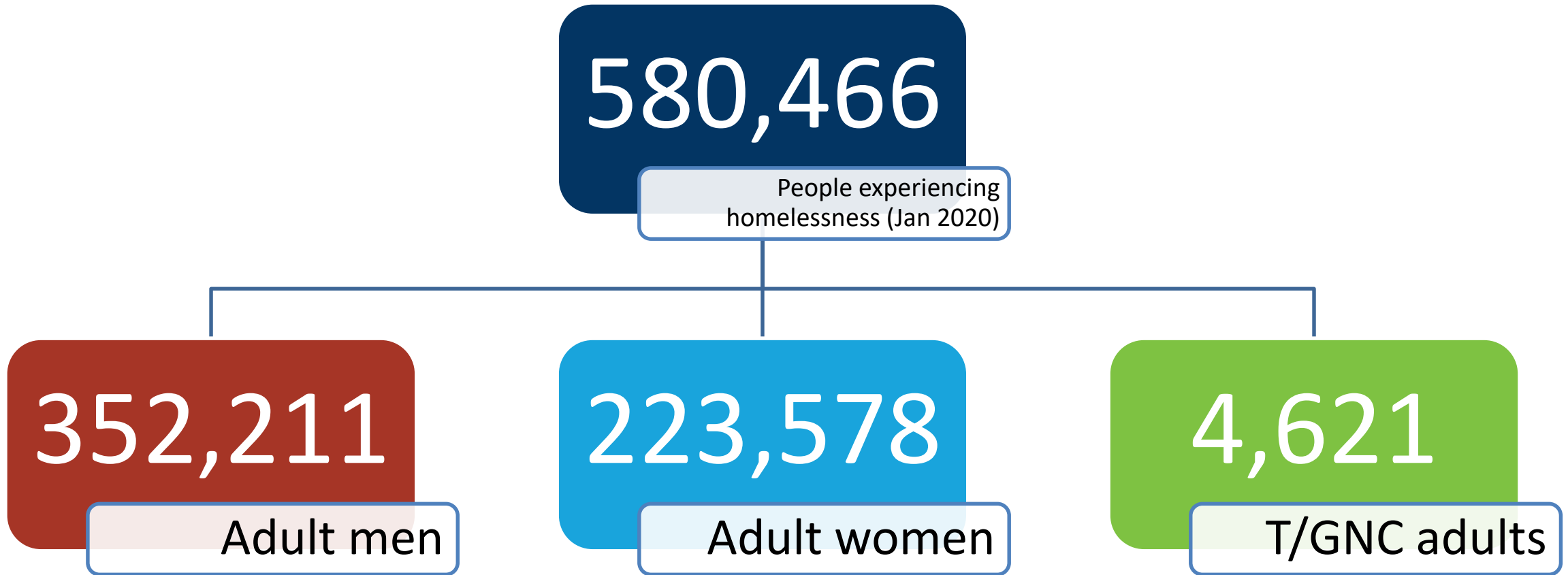
# U.S. Population (April 2020)



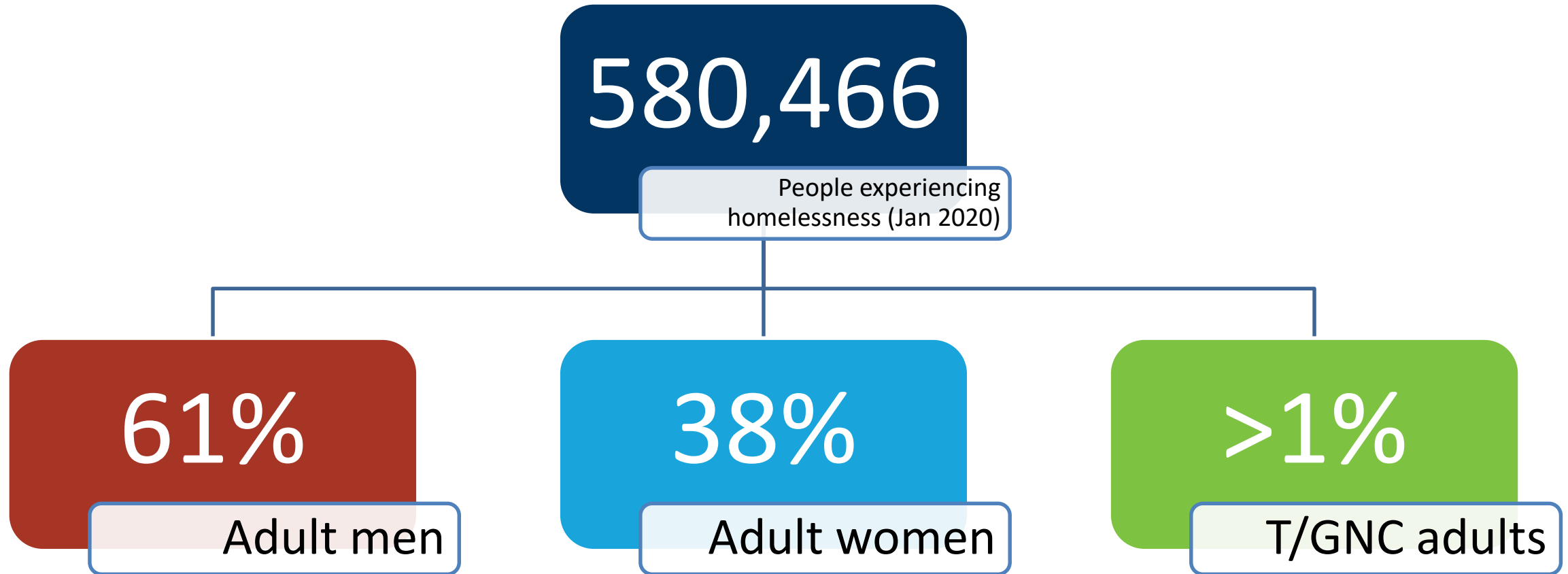
# U.S. Population (April 2020)



# U.S. Homelessness (Jan 2020)



# U.S. Homelessness (Jan 2020)





# Men

49% of population

61% of homeless

+ 24%

# Women

50.5% of population

38% of homeless

- 25%

# T/GNC

0.39% of population

0.79% of homeless

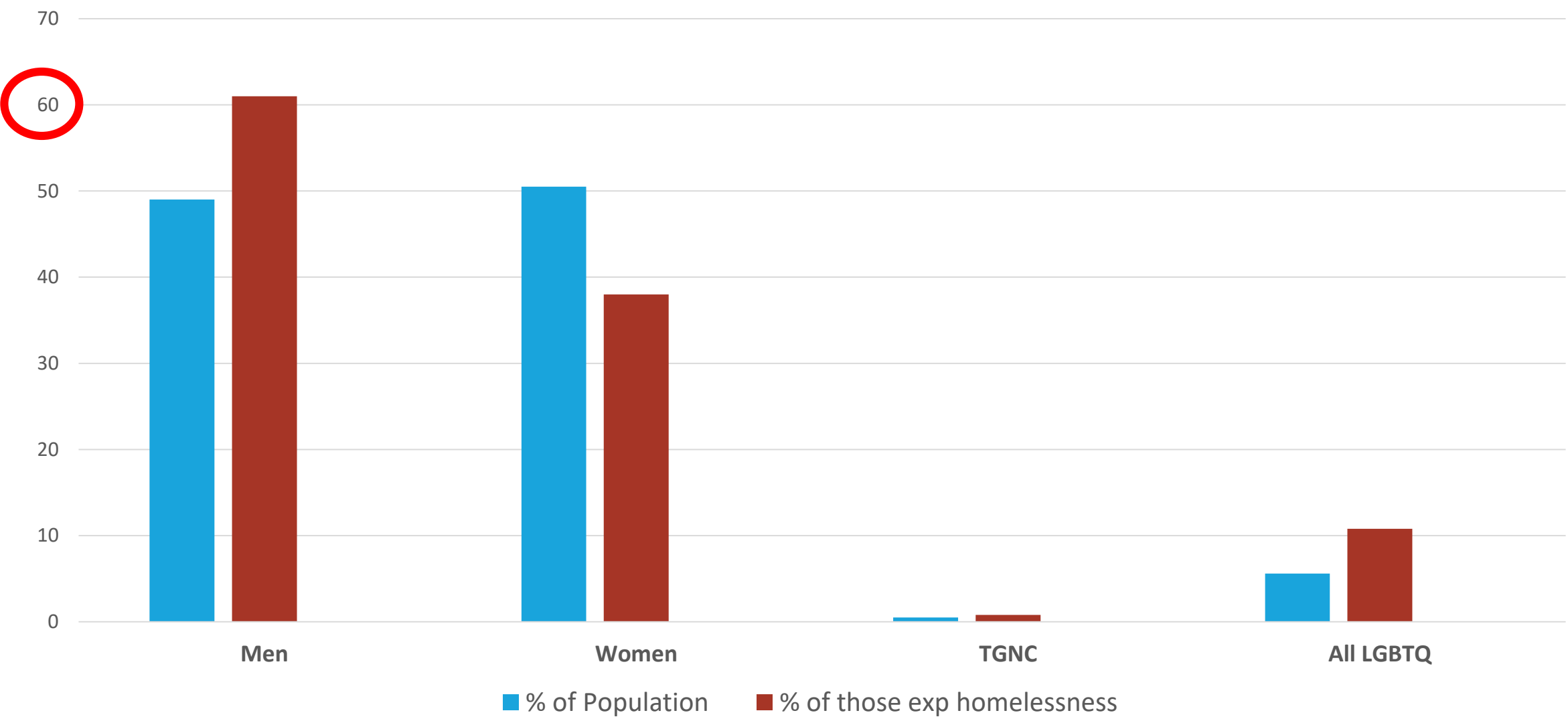
+ 103%

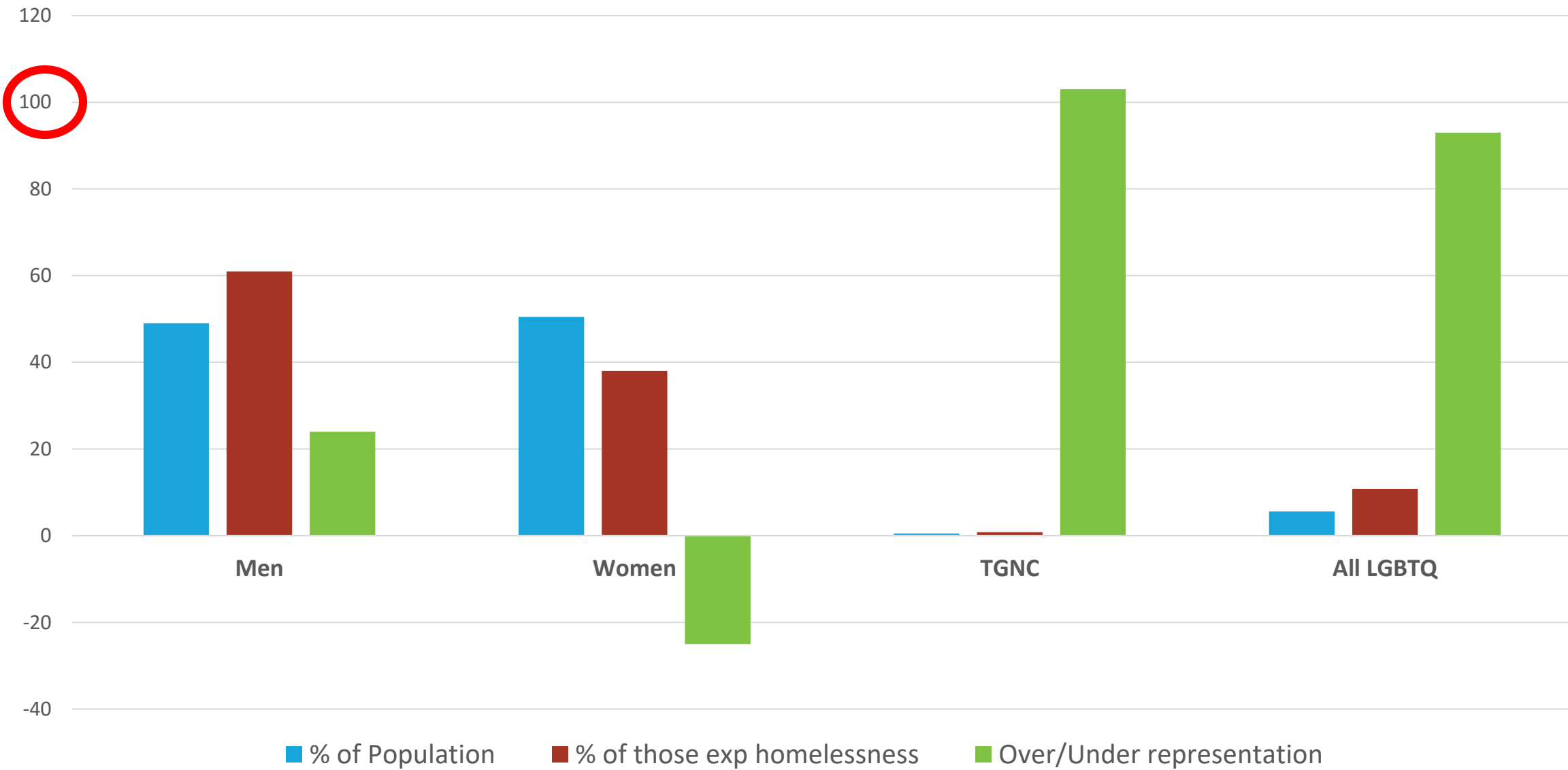
# LGBT

5.6% of population

10.8% of homeless

+ 93%





# LGBTQ+ Homeless

- No nationally representative data sets on homelessness include SOGI measures
- 30% of transgender adults report experiencing homelessness
- 17% of sexual minority adults report experiencing homelessness in their lifetime
  - Compared to 6% of the general population
- These percentages increase exponentially when we look at the experiences of racial minority LGBTQ+ individuals

# Trends

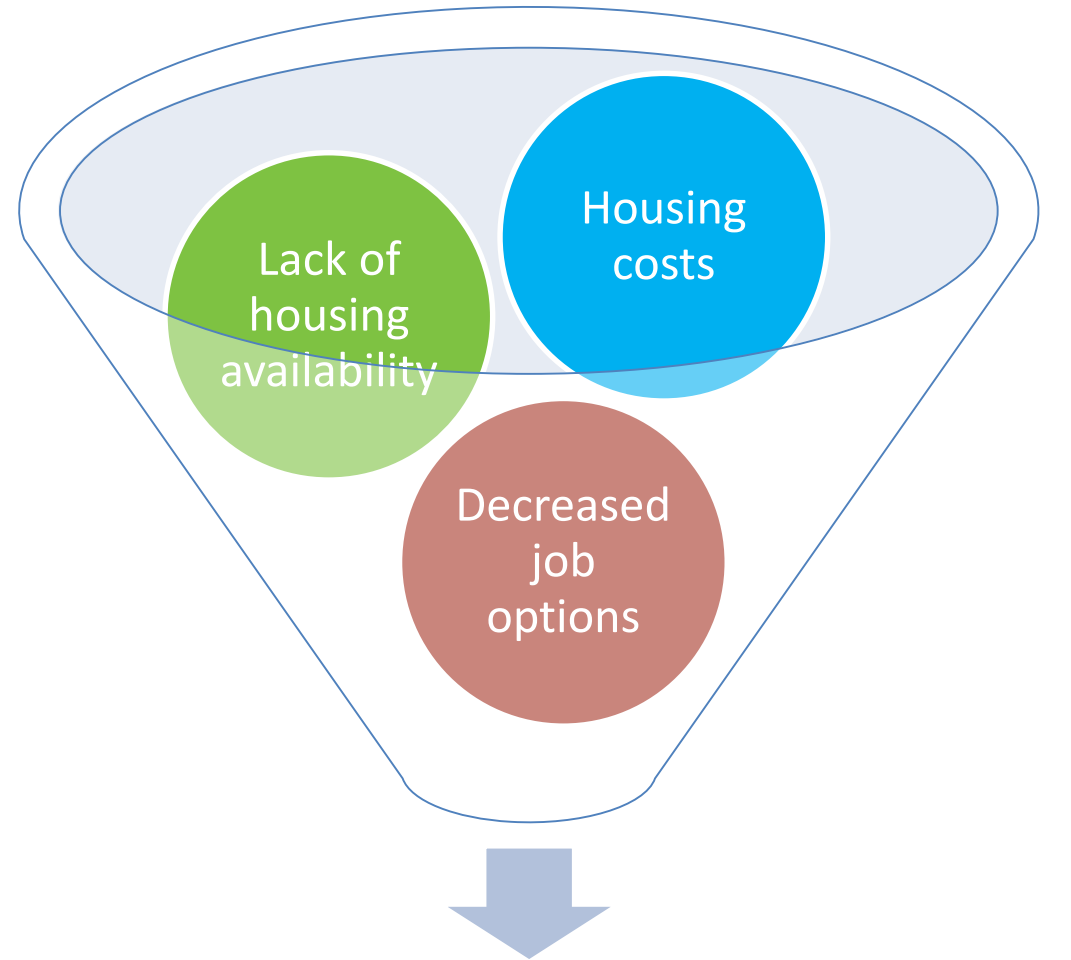
- Rates of homelessness among transgender people increased by 88% between 2016-2020
- Rates of *unsheltered* homelessness for this same population rose by 113%
- During this same period, rates of other subpopulations experiencing homelessness increased by only 8-35%
- LGBTQ young people are 120% more likely to experience homelessness than non-LGBTQ youth

# Root Causes



# ***What causes homelessness?***

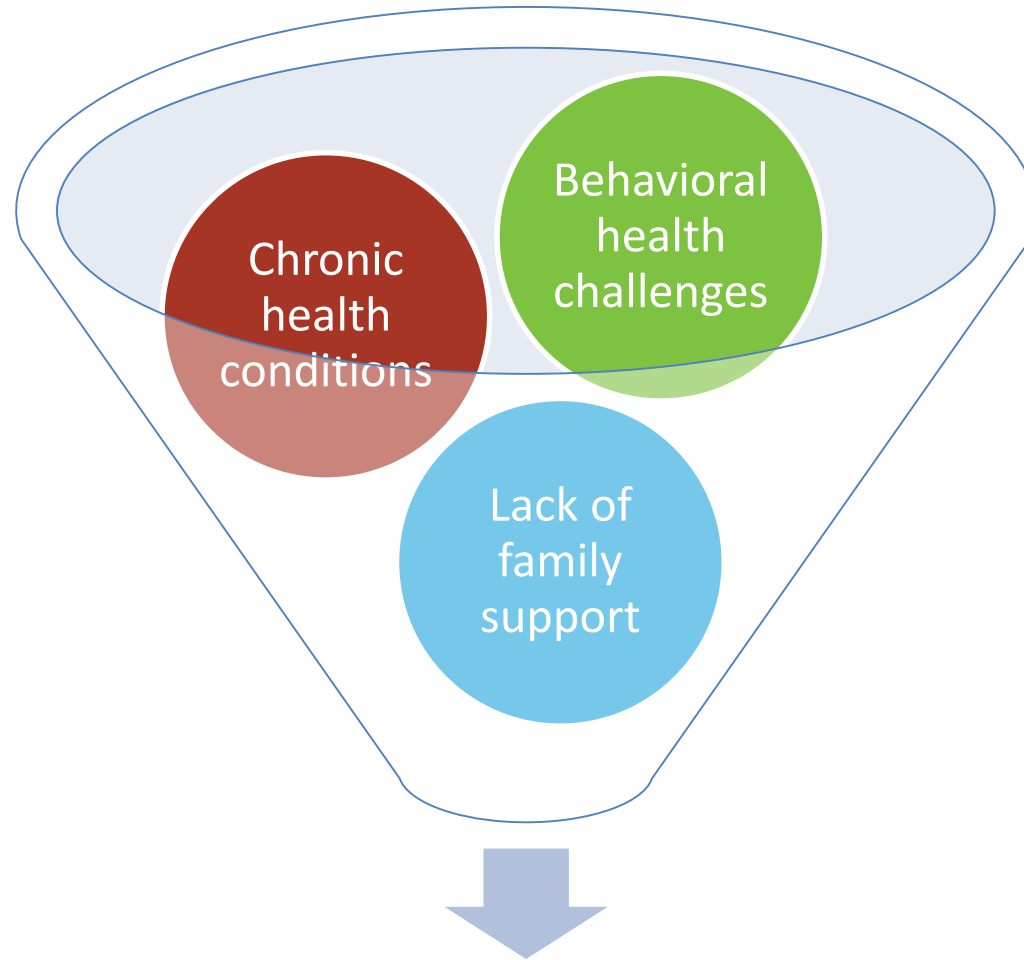
- Lack of affordable housing*
- Jobs that don't pay a living wage*
- Removal of institutional supports*
- History of racist and exclusionary housing policies*



## **Environmental Factors**

# ***What causes homelessness?***

- *Severe mental illness*
- *Substance use disorders*
- *Trauma*
- *Cognitive impairment*
- *Chronic health conditions*
- *Returning from the military*

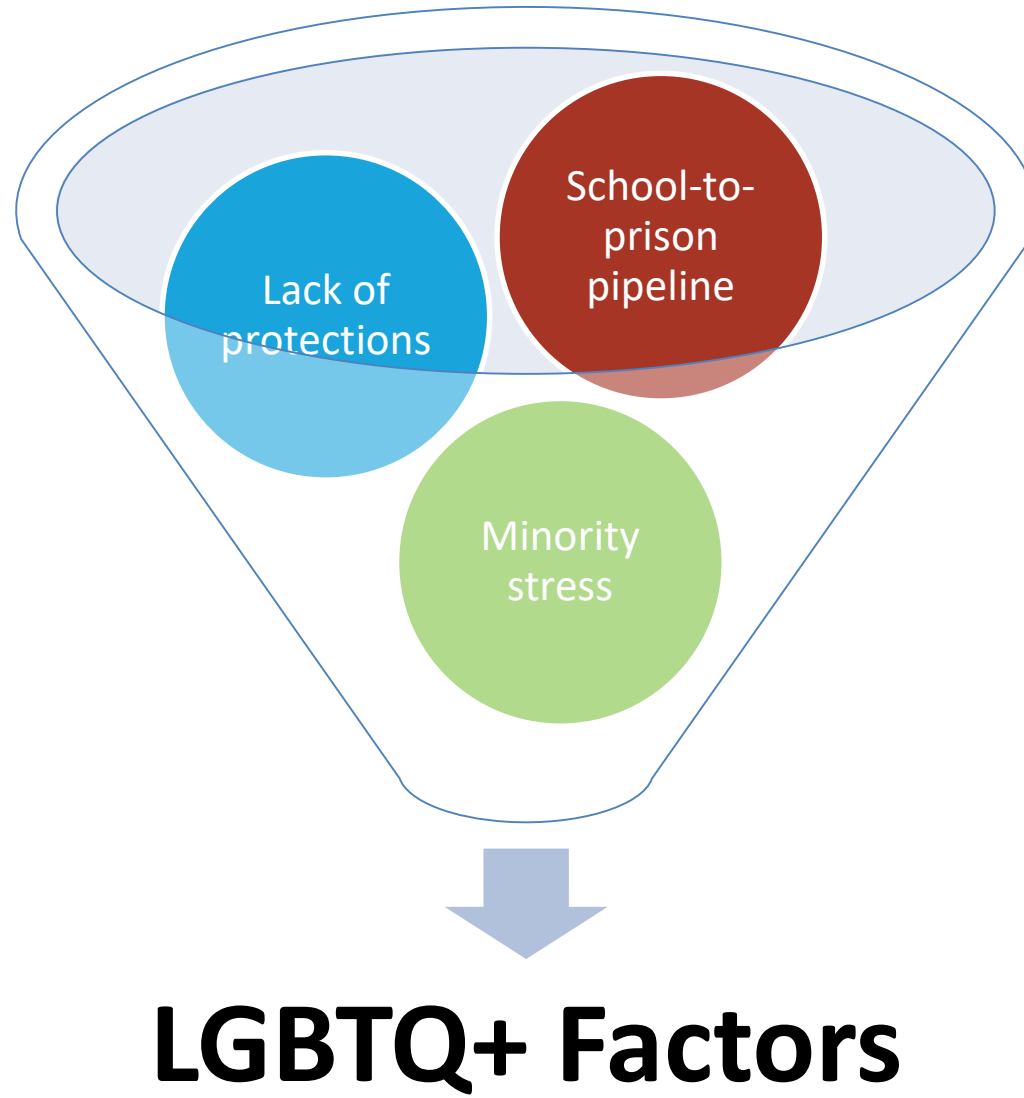


## **Individual Factors**



# ***What causes homelessness?***

- *Family rejection*
- *Unemployment*
- *Poverty*
- *Violence/victimization*
- *Incarceration*



**LGBTQ+ Factors**

# Education

LGBTQ students disproportionately experience violence, harassment, and discrimination, less likely to graduate high school and pursue higher education

# Family Rejection

LGBTQ youth and young adults are more likely to experience family rejection, often leading to a lack of stable housing

# Job Discrimination

Discrimination, lack of access to education, and other systemic barriers (ID, name change, etc.) result in higher rates of unemployment, harassment, and job termination

# Survival Economies

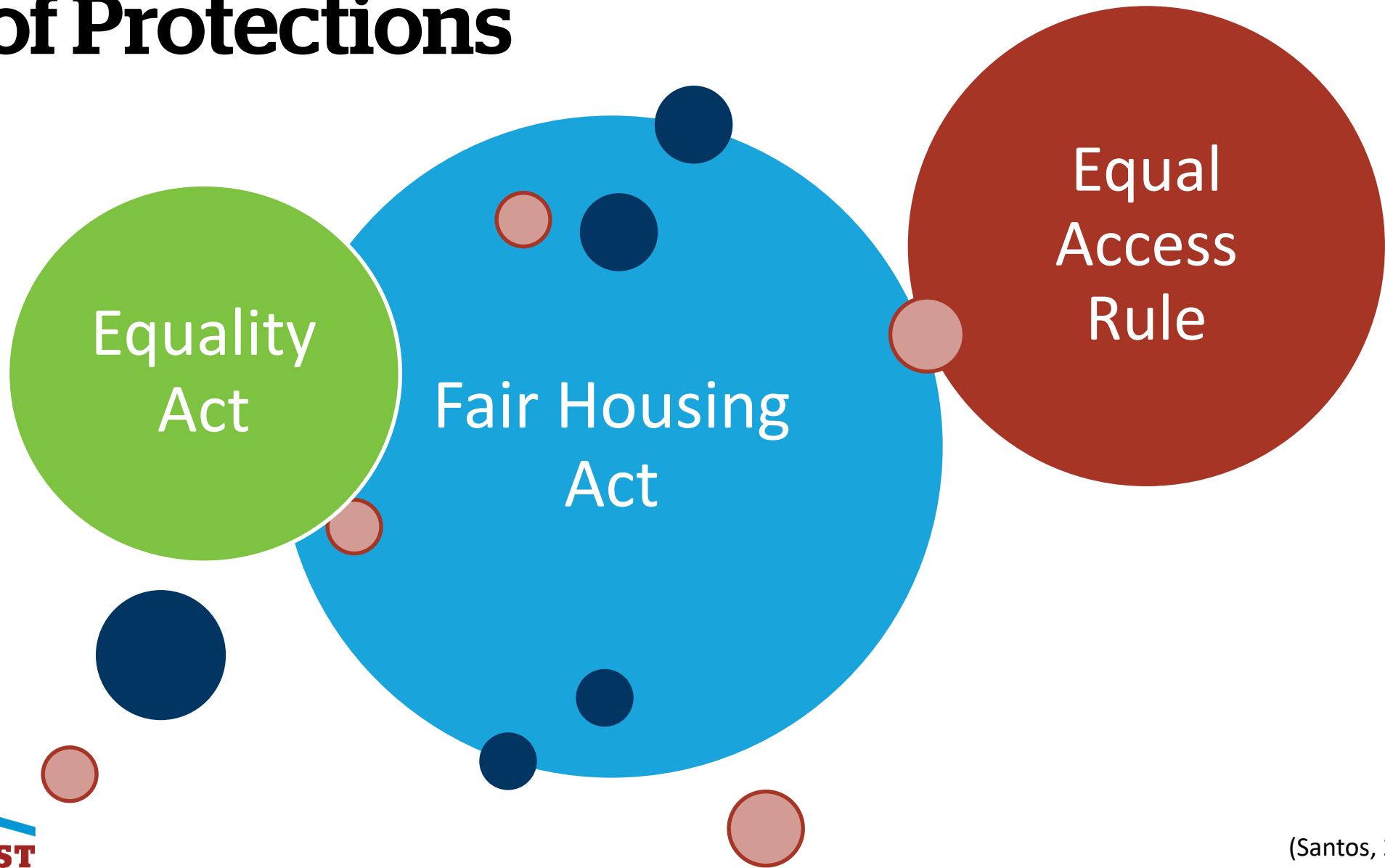
Without access to employment, LGBTQ folks are more likely to rely on underground economies such as sex work or narcotics trade for income

# Incarceration

Increased scrutiny and policing ensure that harassment, arrest, and imprisonment are normative experiences for LGBTQ folks

(Wallner & Walker, 2018)

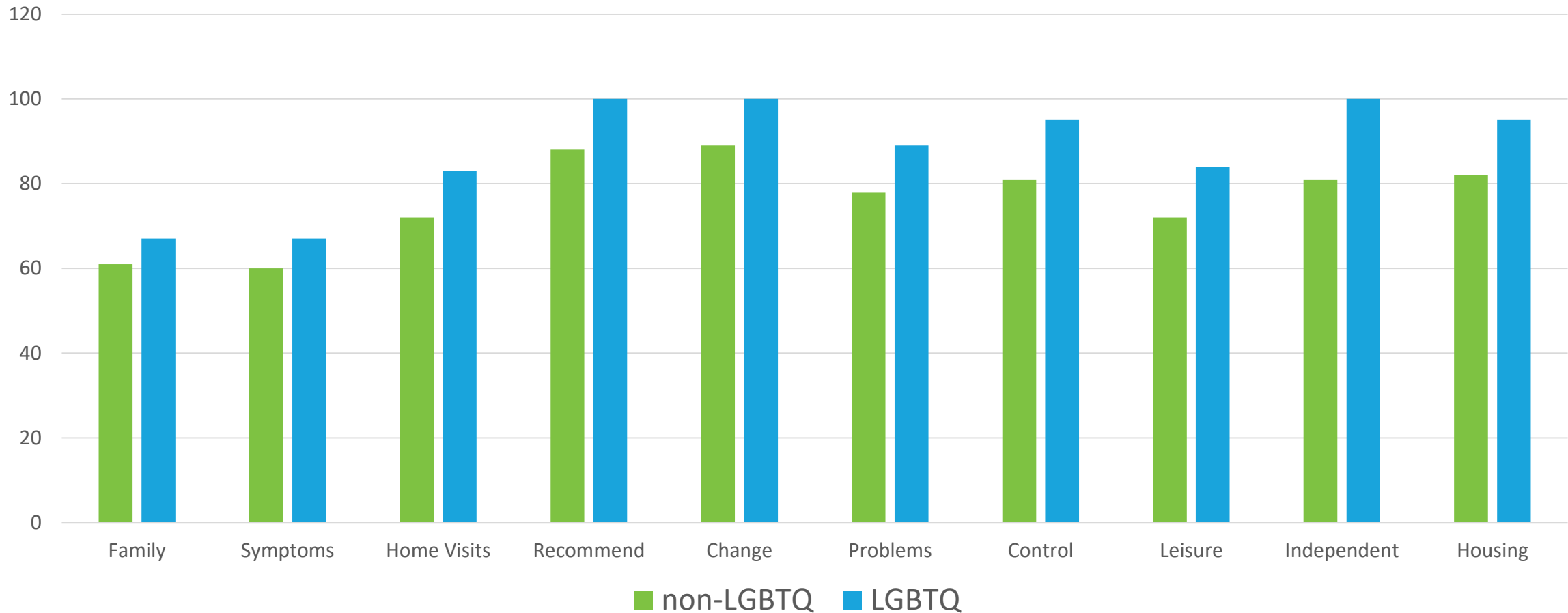
# Lack of Protections



**“But I treat everybody the same!”**

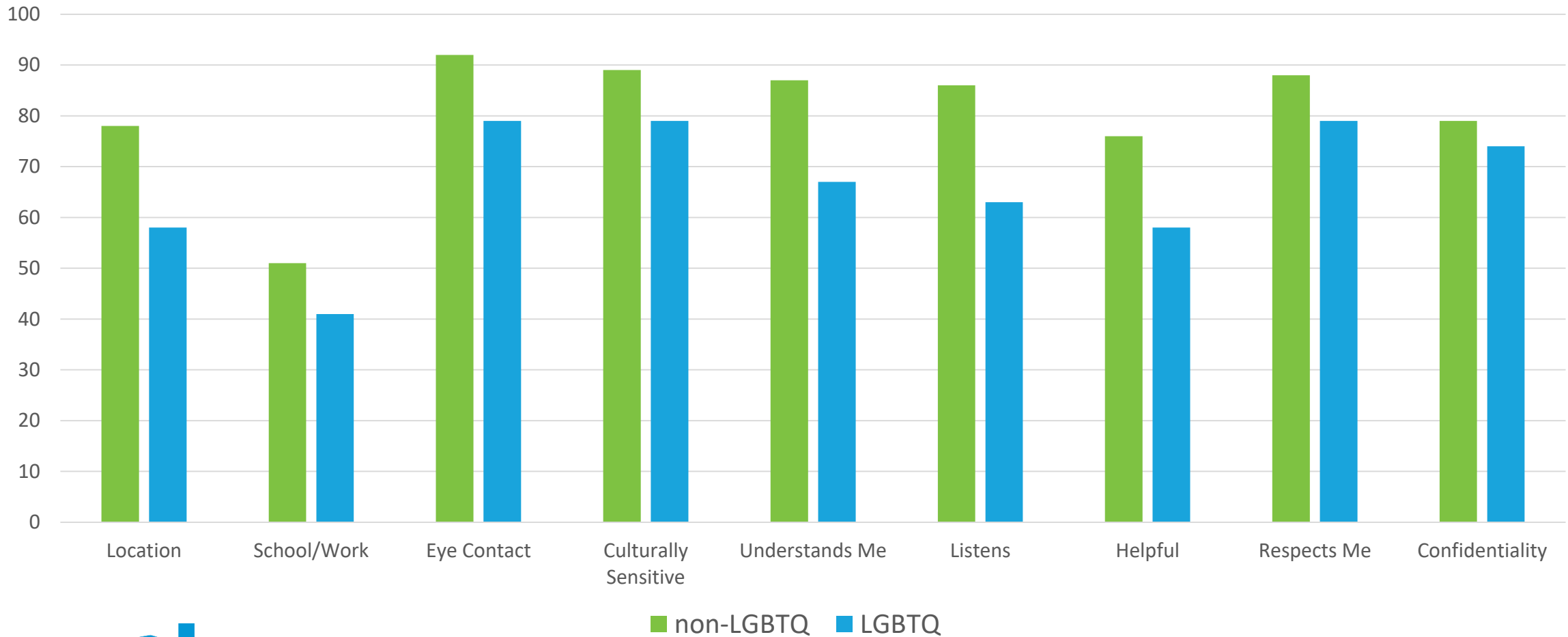


# Participant Satisfaction Survey: Highs



What we did well

# Participant Satisfaction Survey: Lows



**Needs improvement**

# Response

- Hosted a focus group/listening session to learn more
  - Asked teams to reach out to individual participants to invite them
  - More staff than participants showed up
- Tried again
  - Had to step up our snack game
  - Provided gift card incentive
  - Asked service coordinators to transport participants
- Implemented more intensive LGBTQ training for staff

# What You Can Do About It





# In Homeless Services

- Be flexible with program rules around eligibility
  - Allow case managers, providers, or clients to verify homelessness timelines/self-report
  - Couches and motels don't count!
  - Adapt your approach to fit the needs of the population (not the other way around)
- Conduct outreach in areas frequented by LGBTQ+ individuals
  - LGBTQ+ bars, nightclubs, bookstores, and community centers
  - Areas and establishments where LGBTQ+ individuals engage in sex work
- Partner with agencies that can refer those who may qualify for services
  - LGBTQ+ individuals more likely to access services with a “warm hand-off”
  - LGBTQ+ individuals seek out services that are affirming via word of mouth

# Physical Environments

- Conduct an environmental assessment
- Remove unnecessary sex-segregated spaces
- Provide a gender-neutral bathroom
- Update forms, curriculums, and materials to be inclusive
- Consider materials/signage displayed
- Create opportunities for choice
- Maximize privacy



# Clinical Practices

- Respect self-identification and fluidity
- Acknowledge past traumatic experiences with providers
- Remember that physical manifestations of trauma are compounded by complicated relationships to bodies
- Acknowledge tension with recovery and LGBTQ+ social norms
- Include chosen family whenever possible
- Listen, trust, and empower



# Allyship

- Facilitate discussions with all clients about identity and respect
- Recognize the impact of intersectionality
- Interrupt microaggressions/homophobia/transphobia
- Own your mistakes
- Ensure staff training at all levels
- Maintain confidentiality
- Encourage self-education



# Advocacy

As of 5/12/22, the ACLU is tracking 474 anti-LGBTQ bills in the U.S.

[ACLU: Mapping Attacks on LGBTQ Rights in U.S. State Legislatures](#)

- Maintain awareness of legislation impacting LGBTQ+ people
- Build a competent and affirming referral network
- Enact agency non-discrimination policies (for staff & clients)
- Evaluate hiring practices to ensure staff reflect population served
- Educate partners, funders, and other stakeholders
- Seek out flexible funding streams to best meet the needs of the population




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