WHERE WE CALL HOME: LGBT PEOPLE OF COLOR IN RURAL AMERICA

September 2019

movement advancement project

Author

Equality Federation Institute

National Black Justice Coalition NBJC.org

NCLR NATIONAL CENTER FOR LESBIAN RIGHTS

Partners

This report was authored by:

Movement Advancement Project
MAP's mission is to provide independent and rigorous research, insight, and communications that help speed equality and opportunity for all people. MAP works to ensure that all people have a fair chance to pursue health and happiness, earn a living, take care of the ones they love, be safe in their communities, and participate in civic life. For more information, visit www.lgbtmap.org.

Contact Information

Movement Advancement Project
1905 15th Street #1097
Boulder, CO 80306
1-844-MAP-8800
www.lgbtmap.org

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This report was developed in partnership with:

The Equality Federation
The Equality Federation is the movement builder and strategic partner to state-based organizations advocating for LGBTQ people. From Equality Florida to Freedom Oklahoma to Basic Rights Oregon, we amplify the power of the state-based LGBTQ movement. We work collaboratively on critical issues—from advancing workplace fairness and family recognition to defeating anti-transgender bathroom bans and HIV criminalization laws—that affect how LGBTQ people experience the world from cradle to grave. Together with our partners we work on cross-cutting issues impacting our community such as racial equity, reproductive justice, and immigration. Learn more at www.equalityfederation.org.

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NBJC is a civil rights organization dedicated to the empowerment of Black lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and same gender loving (LGBTQ/SGL) people, including people living with HIV/AIDS. NBJC's mission is to end racism, homophobia, and LGBTQ/SGL bias and stigma. As America's leading national Black LGBTQ/SGL civil rights organization focused on federal public policy and grassroots organizing, NBJC has accepted the charge to lead Black families in strengthening the bonds and bridging the gaps between the movements for racial justice and LGBTQ/SGL equality. Learn more at www.nbjc.org.

The National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR)
NCLR was the first national LGBTQ legal organization founded by women and brings a fierce, longstanding commitment to racial and economic justice and our community's most vulnerable. Since 1977, NCLR has been at the forefront of advancing the civil and human rights of our full LGBTQ community and their families through impact litigation, public policy, and public education. Decades ago, NCLR led the way by establishing the first LGBTQ Immigration Project, Transgender Rights Project, Youth Project, Elder Law Project, and began working to end conversion therapy through what is now the Born Perfect campaign. NCLR also hosts regular Rural Pride convenings around the country, which provides a forum to focus on the unique needs of the rural LGBTQ community. Learn more at www.nclrights.org.

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This work contains data generated from the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey, which was conducted by the National Center for Transgender Equality. To find out more about the U.S. Transgender Survey, visit http://www.ustranssurvey.org.

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INTRODUCTION

Millions of people of color[a] call rural America home. Black, Latinx,[b] Native American, Asian and Pacific Islander, Middle Eastern, multiracial, and other people of color play a vital role in rural life and communities, and indeed throughout the country. They are small business owners and community organizers, teachers and ministers, farmers and construction workers, and much more. Roughly one in six rural residents are people of color, meaning that over 10 million people of color live in rural America. And rural America is becoming more racially diverse over time: from 1990 to 2010, nine out of 10 rural areas, across every region of the country, grew more racially and ethnically diverse.[1] In the near decade since 2010, even more people of color are moving to or living in rural areas, as discussed in the next section.

Despite this reality, common portrayals and narratives of rural America typically center on white, "working class," and often conservative residents.[2] Few and far between are the portrayals of people of color in rural areas, and similarly rare are stories of the estimated 2.9-3.8 million rural residents who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT)[3]—let alone stories of rural residents who are both people of color and LGBT. But despite these stereotypes and omissions, people of color, LGBT people, and LGBT people of color are all central and vital parts of rural American life.

Reductive narratives about who does and does not live in rural America mean that, for people of color in rural areas, LGBT people in rural areas, and especially LGBT people of color in rural areas, their lives and needs are often left unexamined, if not entirely overlooked. As a companion report to a larger, recently released report entitled *Where We Call Home: LGBT People in Rural America*, this report focuses specifically on LGBT people of color in rural America. While data on the intersection of these identities and experiences are scarce, this report works to better illuminate what is currently known by examining various communities of color in the United States and their experiences in rural America.

The earlier report shows that LGBT people, including LGBT people of color, are part of the fabric of rural and urban communities alike. LGBT people in rural communities often choose to live there for many of the same reasons that other people do, and LGBT people in rural areas experience many of the same challenges as their non-LGBT rural neighbors, including fewer culturally competent healthcare providers, the ongoing opioid and HIV epidemics, over-policing and criminalization, and fewer educational, workforce development, and employment opportunities.

This report extends the earlier findings to LGBT people of color in rural communities, who, like all people, live at the intersections of multiple characteristics, including race, ethnicity, location, sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression. Their unique experiences as people living in rural communities, as people of color, and as LGBT people cannot be disentangled; in fact, these characteristics combined can lead to different experiences or impacts for rural LGBT people of color, as compared to their urban, white, and/or non-LGBT peers. This is because the unique structures and challenges of rural life amplify the impacts of discrimination and rejection, in at least four ways:

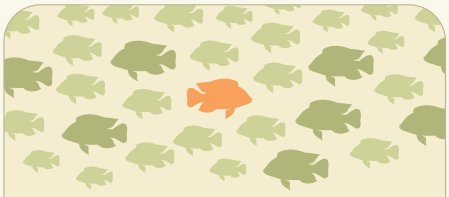
- **Increased visibility.** The smaller population in rural communities means that anyone who is "different" may be more noticeable, which in turn may increase the risk of targeting or mistreatment. Race or ethnicity is often (though not always) immediately visible, meaning that people of color in predominantly white rural areas are likely always and already experiencing heightened visibility. In contrast, LGBT identity may be (though not always) less immediately visible. The often tight-knit nature of rural communities means that when someone is different, more people know it: if an LGBT person in a rural community is open about their identity in even one part of their life, such as work, it is likely that many other community members, including outside of work, will also know they are LGBT. For LGBT people of color, their increased visibility along multiple types of "difference" may subject them to further vulnerability. Even in rural communities that are predominantly comprised of people of color, as are many rural communities in the South for example, LGBT people of color can still feel "other" because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

[a] This report uses the term "people of color" (POC) to refer broadly to African American or Black; Hispanic, Latino/a, or Latinx; Asian/Pacific Islander; Native American; and other non-white people in the United States. These categories (e.g., Black, Hispanic) are not mutually exclusive, and the term "people of color" is not meant to suggest a singular experience. Wherever possible, this report reports statistics disaggregated by race or ethnicity. When discussing data from a particular survey or research project, we use the same terms used in/by that data's source (e.g., "Hispanic or Latino", rather than Latinx, when referring to U.S. Census data).

[b] "Latinx" is a gender-neutral version of the masculine "Latino" and feminine "Latina." This report will generally use the term Latinx for its gender-inclusivity; however, when referring to data from a specific survey or research project, this report will use the terms used in that research (e.g. using "Hispanic or Latino" when referring to Census data, since those are the terms used by the Census).

- **Ripple effects.** This interconnected, tight-knit aspect of rural life and communities may also lead to ripple effects that aren't as profound in urban areas. What happens in one part of life, whether supportive or discriminatory, can ripple outward to other areas of life. This means that experiencing rejection in one part of the community (such as one's faith or church community), especially if by someone influential or in a leadership position in that community, can lead to broader rejection from the community as a whole—but it also means that acceptance can similarly spread from one part of the community to others. For LGBT people of color who may be deeply connected to community organizations built on kinship around race or ethnicity, the risks (and the rewards) of being out as LGBT are heightened and could mean being alienated from central social, faith, and economic institutions and networks.
- **Fewer alternatives** in the face of discrimination. Many rural areas face structural challenges that impact all residents, such as fewer healthcare providers or employers. However, these challenges have a unique impact on people of color and on LGBT people, who may have fewer options for culturally competent providers and fewer opportunities to find doctors or work if they are discriminated against because of their identities as racial/ethnic and sexual minorities. LGBT people of color in rural areas are at risk of multiple types of discrimination, further limiting their chances to access quality services, health care, and employment. Further amplifying this problem, many service providers in rural areas are religiously affiliated and are covered under religious exemption laws that may allow them to discriminate.
- **Fewer support structures.** Finally, the relative geographic isolation of rural areas means there are fewer people and resources overall, and that what, if any, supportive resources exist are fewer and farther between. Resources focused on rural LGBT people, people of color, and especially LGBT people of color are likely even less common or potentially nonexistent. This means that when LGBT people of color face discrimination, or are struggling with acceptance or coming out, there are fewer places to turn for social

STRENGTHS, STRUCTURES, AND CHALLENGES:
HOW RURAL LIFE AMPLIFIES THE IMPACT OF ACCEPTANCE AND REJECTION FOR LGBT PEOPLE OF COLOR



INCREASED VISIBILITY

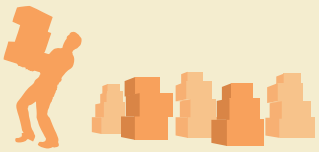
Fewer people in rural communities means any difference is more noticeable. For LGBT people of color, increased visibility along multiple types of "difference" may mean further vulnerability.

RIPPLE EFFECTS

When communities are tightly interwoven, rejection and acceptance in one area of life (such as church) can ripple over into others (such as work or school). LGBT people of color may face risks of rejection along multiple aspects of their identity.

FEWER ALTERNATIVES

In the face of discrimination, the already limited number of rural service providers can be limited even further. LGBT people of color face multiple types of discrimination, further limiting their chances to access quality services, health care, and employment options.



LESS SUPPORT STRUCTURE

More social and geographic isolation means less ability to find supportive resources, build supportive community, and endure challenges or discrimination. Resources focused on LGBT people of color are likely even less common, which may leave LGBT people of color needing to segment their identities.

IMPACTING MANY AREAS OF LIFE:

- Family, Faith, & Community
- Education
- Employment & Economic Security
- Housing & Homelessness
- Public Places & Businesses
- Health Care
- Legal System

support, legal support, or even basic information. And the spaces that do exist—whether they are LGBT-focused or focused on racial equity—may not fully recognize or be able to support the intersecting aspects of someone's identity. For LGBT people of color, what resources may exist are likely geared toward white LGBT individuals and experiences, and so LGBT people of color may experience even further isolation and lack of support structures. And without full recognition of the lived experiences of LGBT people of color and the ways in which discrimination, acceptance, and equality play out for them, LGBT people of color can be left needing to segment their identities.

In addition to these unique experiences, the social and political landscape of rural areas makes LGBT people in rural areas—including LGBT people of color in rural areas—more vulnerable to discrimination: rural states are significantly less likely to have vital nondiscrimination and other LGBT protections, and are also more likely to have harmful, discriminatory laws. This policy landscape is especially harmful to rural LGBT people of color, as more people of color live in rural states without LGBT protections than live in rural states with LGBT protections (*Figure 1a*). For example, in rural states with LGBT-inclusive nondiscrimination laws in employment, housing, and public accommodations, an average of 21% of the population are people of color. However, in rural states without these laws, 28% of the population are people of color. Additionally, *Figure 1b* shows that more people of color live in rural states with anti-LGBT laws, compared to rural states without anti-LGBT laws.

Overall, this report illustrates the unique experiences of LGBT people of color in rural America and highlights distinct experiences across different communities of color. It shows how the structural differences of rural American life uniquely impact LGBT people of color, making them more vulnerable to discrimination and less able to respond to its harmful effects. It also offers recommendations for improving the lives of LGBT people of color in rural America. In conjunction with the earlier report, the *Where We Call Home* series illustrates the importance of considering how place of residence impacts LGBT people's experience throughout America; the unique and often heightened impacts of discrimination and unequal access on LGBT people of color; and the critical need for advancing federal and state nondiscrimination protections and LGBT-inclusive community services in rural America, where so many LGBT people call home.

Figure 1: Rural States With Worse LGBT Policy Climates Also Have Higher Populations of People of Color

Figure 1a: More People of Color Live in Rural States Without LGBT Protections Than in Rural States With LGBT Protections

% of Rural States' Population That is People of Color

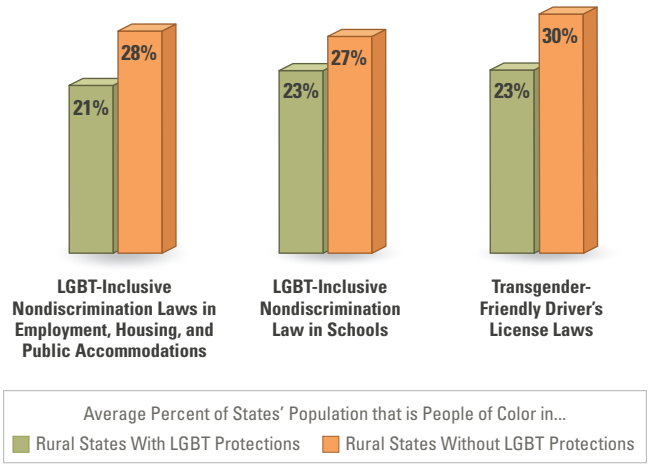
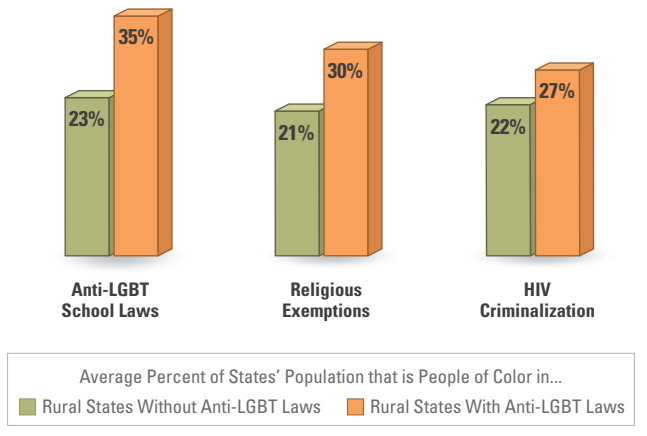


Figure 1b: More People of Color Live in Rural States With Anti-LGBT Laws Than in Rural States Without Anti-LGBT Laws

% of Rural States' Population That is People of Color



Note: States are coded as having "transgender-friendly" driver's license laws if they score a "B-" or better on the National Center for Transgender Equality's grading system.

Source: Rural state determination based on Census data; see April 2019 report for further discussion. Population data based on American Community Survey 2017 estimates. State laws based on MAP's Equality Maps, as of 8/11/19.

What Do We Know (and Not Know) About LGBT People of Color? Data Challenges and Opportunities

LGBT people's experiences have been long missing from large, nationally representative datasets because few surveys ask questions about sexual orientation or gender identity. As a result, researchers, policymakers, and advocates struggle to access data needed to articulate the experiences and needs of the LGBT community, as well as the impacts of policy on the LGBT community. Given both the lack of LGBT inclusion in national datasets and the smaller size of the LGBT community in general, there are also significant obstacles to studying the experiences of groups within the LGBT community, such as LGBT people of different racial or ethnic backgrounds, LGBT people in rural areas, and so on.

This report presents, whenever possible, data that speak to the specific experiences of LGBT people of color as Black LGBT people, Latinx LGBT people, Asian and Pacific Islander LGBT people, Native American LGBT people, multi-racial LGBT people, and others. However, the two largest nationally representative surveys in the country, the decennial Census and the annual American Community Survey (ACS; conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau), do not ask about sexual orientation or gender identity. As a result, the information about the LGBT community that is available through the Census and the ACS is limited to the number of cohabiting same-sex couples, with no information available to determine whether people identify as transgender. Gallup, a private survey organization, now includes questions about LGBT identity in their surveys, which provides some top-level data about the overall LGBT population. The National Center for Transgender Equality's U.S. Transgender Survey (USTS) provides the largest picture of the experiences of transgender and nonbinary people in the U.S., with almost 28,000 respondents in 2015.

But even with these and other data sources that ask about sexual orientation and gender identity, the ability for researchers to speak to the experiences of LGBT people of color, let alone LGBT people of color in rural areas, remains limited. Thus, where data do not exist regarding the unique experiences of LGBT people of color, or LGBT people of color in rural areas, this report presents what data are available about LGBT people and people of color and to make empirically-based arguments about the likely experiences of LGBT people of color in rural areas. In some instances, even this isn't possible, and so we try to draw links between broader experiences of LGBT people, people of color, and/or those in rural areas.

There is great need for more and better data—disaggregated by, for example, gender/gender identity, race, and ethnicity—on the LGBT population. More data on these subpopulations are critical to developing a comprehensive understanding of, and then addressing, the needs of all members of the LGBT population. Strategies can and must be developed to ensure that isolated—due to language, geography, and other reasons—populations are reached. What's more, agencies and advocates must ask the questions needed to better understand the experiences of LGBT people of color. That means asking about sexual orientation and gender identity. It means asking about race and ethnicity using various languages to ensure that disparities are adequately documented. Federal, state, and local surveys examining health, school environments, economic security, and housing and homelessness need to include questions about sexual orientation and gender identity so that the ways in which LGBT people are impacted become clearer. More precise and systematic data collection that includes questions about sexual orientation and gender identity (as well as race, ethnicity, and other key categories) will enable better examination of the unique experiences and needs of the broad LGBT community as well as the many diverse populations within it.

DEMOGRAPHICS OF LGBT PEOPLE OF COLOR IN RURAL AMERICA

LGBT People of Color

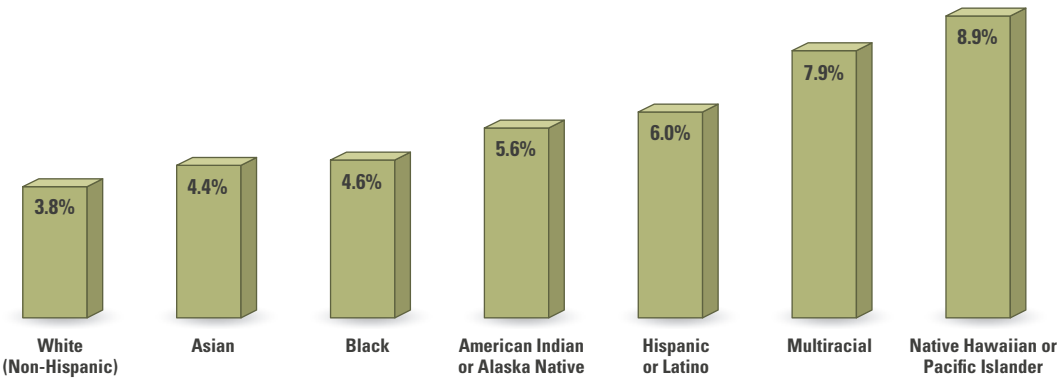
Though there are increasing amounts of data about LGBT people in the United States, challenges remain when examining groups within the LGBT community, such as LGBT people in specific parts of the country or different racial and ethnic groups within the broader LGBT population.

Estimates of the number of LGBT people of color living in rural America do not currently exist. However, analysis of Gallup data shows that nationwide, people of color are more likely than white people to identify as LGBT (*Figure 2a*).[4] Indeed, while people of color make up approximately 35.5% of the national adult population, people of color make up 42% of the adult LGBT population (*Figure 2b*) and 45% of the adult transgender population (*Figure 2c*).[5,c]

Figure 2: LGBT People are Racially and Ethnically Diverse

Figure 2a: People of Color Significantly More Likely than Whites to Identify as LGBT

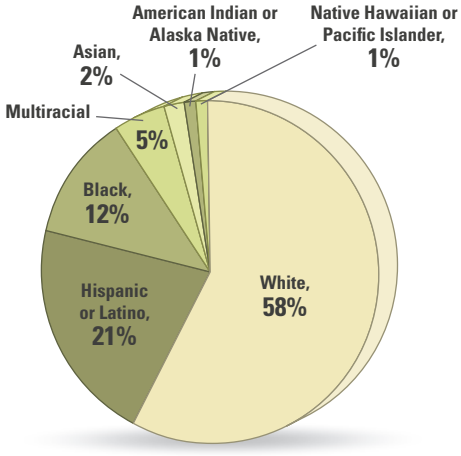
% of Adults in Each Racial/Ethnic Group That Identify as LGBT



Source: Gallup Daily Tracking Poll, analyzed by Williams Institute's LGBT Demographic Data Interactive (Jan 2019).

Figure 2b: More than 2 in 5 LGBT Adults Are People of Color

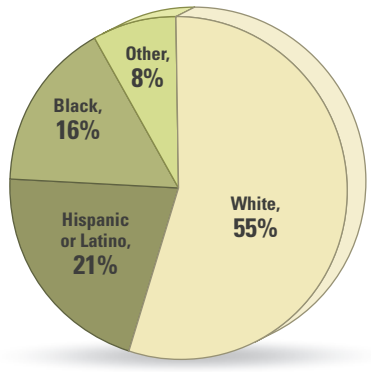
% of LGBT Adult Population That is Each Race/Ethnicity



Source: Gallup Daily Tracking Poll, analyzed by Williams Institute's LGBT Demographic Data Interactive (Jan 2019).

Figure 2c: Nearly Half of Transgender Adults Are People of Color

% of Transgender Adult Population That is Each Race/Ethnicity



Note: "Other" includes Asian or Pacific Islanders, Native Americans, multiracial people, and other identities. Source authors did not report these groups separately due to sample size limitations.

Source: Andrew Flores, Taylor Brown, and Jody Herman. Oct 2016. "Race and Ethnicity of Adults Who Identify as Transgender in the United States." The Williams Institute.

[c] The Williams Institute estimates that approximately 5% of LGBT adults identify as multiracial (Figure 2b). Due to a lack of available data on multiracial LGBT people and their experiences, this report does not directly address the experiences of multiracial LGBT people in rural areas. However, for multiracial individuals who are people of color, many of the disparities and themes discussed throughout this report can and likely do describe their experiences as well. It is imperative that more data are collected on LGBT people throughout the country, so that the experiences of multiracial LGBT people (and other groups within the LGBT community) can be better understood.

For LGBT people of color, discrimination based on race is often compounded by discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, and vice versa. These experiences are also affected by other characteristics including gender, disability, immigrant status, and more. For example, between 2013 and 2016, over 9,100 complaints (called "charges") of discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity were filed with the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.[6] Among these charges of anti-LGBT discrimination, nearly one in six also alleged that the act of discrimination was based on race or color, while one in seven also alleged discrimination based on disability.[7] Similarly, a 2017 Harvard study showed that LGBTQ people of color are more than twice as likely as white LGBTQ people to have experienced anti-LGBTQ discrimination, and that Latino LGBTQ adults were more likely than Latino non-LGBTQ adults to report experiencing discrimination based on their ethnicity.[8] In the 2017 National School Climate Survey, Black LGBTQ youth reported high rates of harassment and discrimination based on both their race *and* their sexual orientation and gender identity.[9]

Additionally, people of color in rural communities are more concerned about job availability, which can make the threat of discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and race all the more salient. Two in five (42%) of all rural residents say the availability of jobs is a major problem in their local community, but rural people of color especially feel the brunt of scarce jobs: 53% of rural people of color said job availability is a major problem in their community, compared to 38% of rural white people.[10] For LGBT people of color in rural areas, these experiences may be even further magnified by the unique structures and challenges of rural life, as outlined both above and in the main report.

LGBT People of Color in Rural Areas

Using estimates of the national LGBT population and Census data about rural communities, there are an estimated 2.9-3.8 million LGBT people who live in rural areas across the country. To date, no estimates of rural LGBT people who are also people of color exist. What is known more broadly, however, is that many people of color live in rural communities across the country, that the number of people of color in rural populations is growing, and that LGBT people of color are undoubtedly part of those communities. Research shows that many people (including LGBT people and people of color) choose to stay in the rural communities in which they were raised, and further that some people raised in rural communities (including LGBT people and people of color) are returning to those rural areas as adults to start their families.[11]

As of 2017, people of color comprise an estimated one in six (16.6%) of the rural population and more than one in five (22%) of the nonmetropolitan population.[12] Both of these conceptualizations of "rural" suggest that at least 10 million people of color live in rural America.[d]

Among the 16.6% of rural residents who are people of color, nearly two in five are Black and more than one in four are Hispanic or Latino, as shown in the infographic on the next page. Roughly one in eight are multiracial and another one in 10 are American Indian or Alaska Native.

While people of color live in rural communities throughout the country, some groups are more concentrated in certain regions than in others. *Figure 3* on the next page shows that nonmetropolitan counties that have 10% or more of their population from a single racial or ethnic minority group have distinct geographic patterns. Rural communities with at least 10% Black residents are concentrated in the South, while those communities with 10% or more Latino or Hispanic rural residents are more commonly in the Southwest, West, and some Midwestern counties. Native American rural residents are spread throughout the upper Midwest and parts of the Southwest, as well as throughout Alaska. Figure 3 also shows that in several rural parts of the

[d] The 2010 Census showed that 19.3% of the total U.S. population lives in rural areas. This rural estimate has not been updated since 2010. In 2017, the total U.S. population was roughly 321 million (2013-2017 ACS 5-year estimate), so combining these datapoints suggests that an estimated 62 million people currently live in rural America. Of these rural residents, 83.4% are non-Hispanic white and 16.6% are people of color, meaning an estimated 10.3 million people of color live in rural areas. Using a different understanding of "rural" produces similar results: research by the USDA's Economic Research Service uses 2017 Census data to show that approximately 14% of the U.S. population, or 46.1 million people, live in nonmetropolitan areas, and that 22% of these nonmetropolitan residents are people of color. This suggests that an estimated 10.1 million people of color live in nonmetro areas.

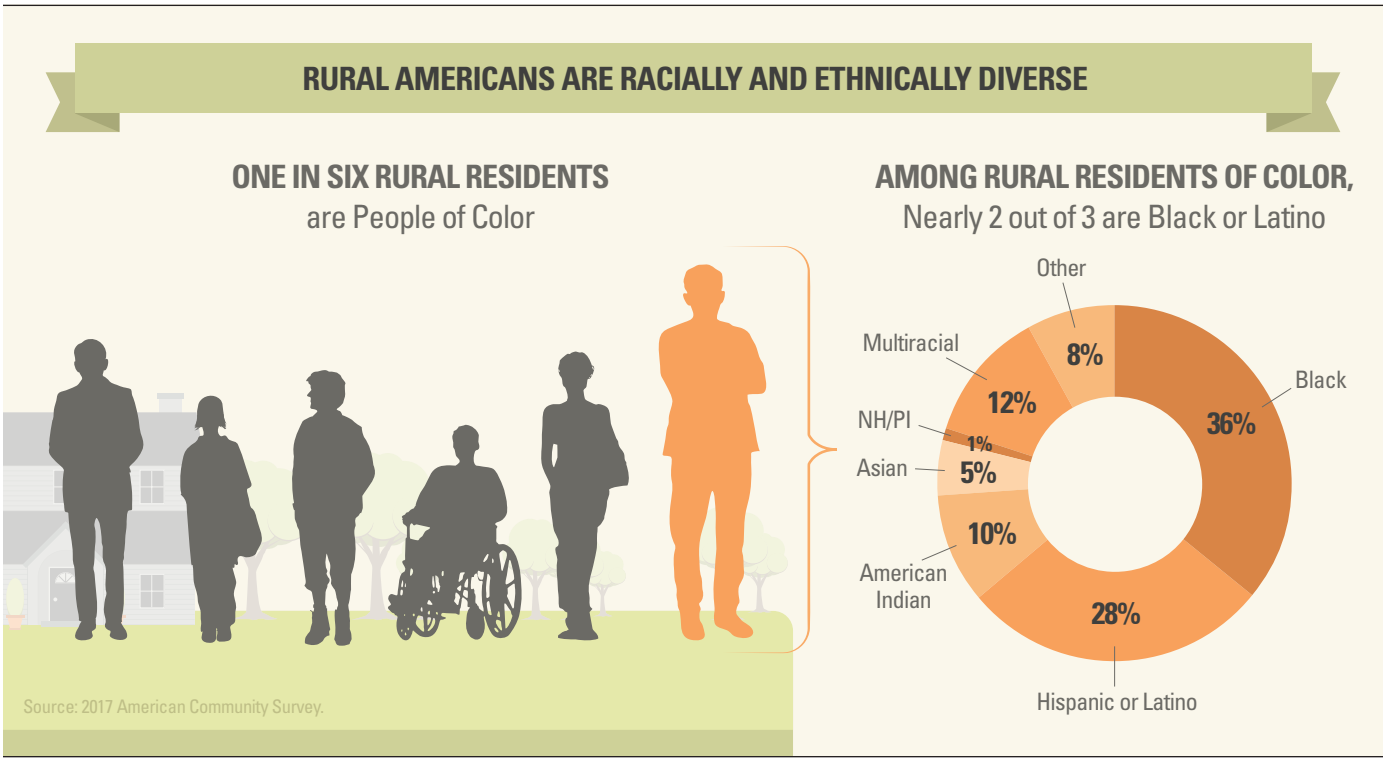
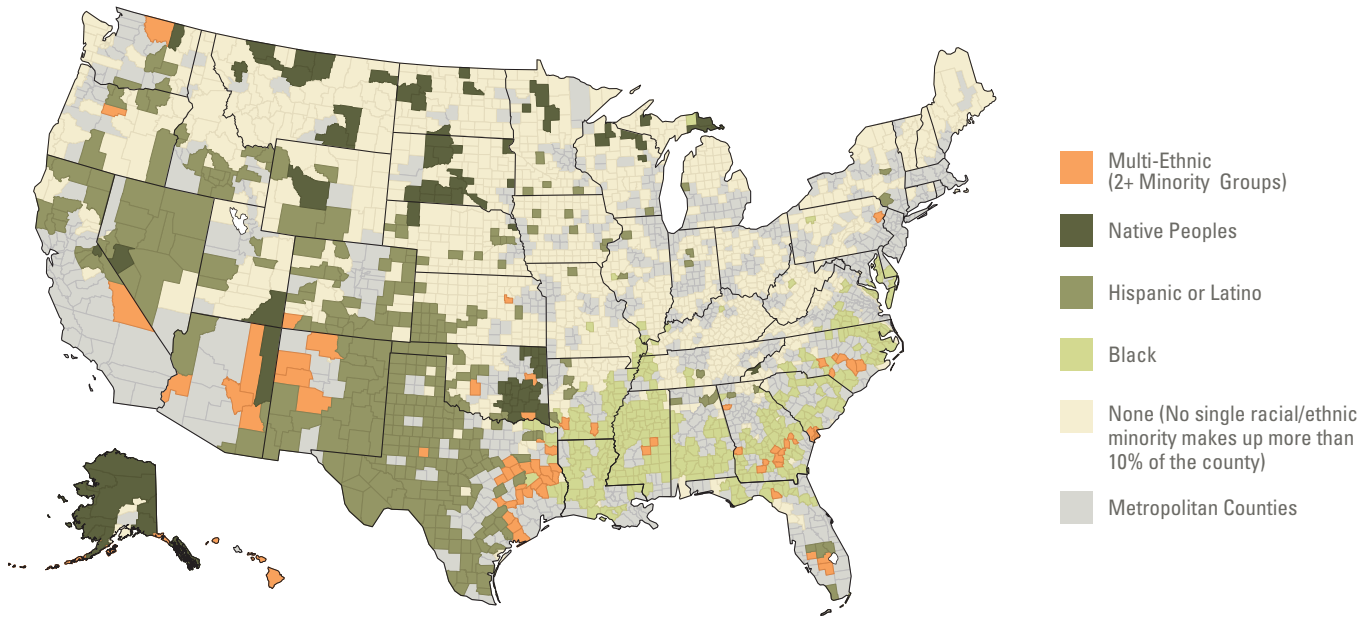


Figure 3: Rural People of Color Live Throughout the U.S., Though Often Concentrated in Different Regions

Nonmetropolitan Counties Where 10% or More of the Population is Each Racial/Ethnic Minority



Note: This map shows concentrations of racial or ethnic minorities in nonmetropolitan counties. It illustrates that many nonmetropolitan counties in the South, for example, have populations that are at least 10% Black (light green), while multiple counties in the South and Southwest have populations of at least 10% each of multiple minority groups (orange). For example, Harrison County, Texas, is a nonmetropolitan county whose population is over 20% Black and over 10% Hispanic or Latino. Some nonmetropolitan counties have no single racial or ethnic minority that makes up more than 10% of that county's population (beige), but that county may still have many residents of color. Dunklin County, Missouri, for example, is 9% Black and 6% Latino, but because no single minority group comprises at least 10% of the county population, it is shaded beige here. As of the 2010 Census, the only rural counties with a population of at least 10% Asian or Pacific Islander residents also had a population of at least 10% of another racial/ethnic minority (e.g. Hispanic), so these counties are included in the orange "multi-ethnic" category.

Source: Adapted from Kenneth Johnson. 2012. "Rural Demographic Change in the New Century." The Carsey Institute, University of New Hampshire.

country, there are many nonmetropolitan counties with more than 10% each of multiple racial/ethnic minority groups (e.g., counties with 10% or more Black residents and 10% or more Hispanic or Latino residents).

It is important to note that, in several states, people of color are the majority or a substantial share of rural and small-town residents, including in Hawai`i (69% of rural and small-town residents are people of color), New Mexico (61%), South Carolina (44%), Mississippi (43%), Arizona (42%), Texas (42%), and New Jersey (41%).[13]

Additionally, research by the Housing Assistance Council shows that in many rural areas, people of color make up far more than 10% of the population, and indeed are the majority of the population in many rural areas.[14]

The number of people of color living in rural areas is increasing over time. From 1990 to 2010, nine out of 10 rural areas across every region of the country experienced increases in racial and ethnic diversity.[15] More recently, between 2000 and 2010, rural counties gained 2.2 million residents, and racial and ethnic minorities accounted for 82.7% of that population growth.[16]

The increasing diversification of the rural U.S. is especially evident among youth. According to the University of New Hampshire's Carsey Institute, at the time of the 2010 U.S. Census there were nearly 600 counties across the U.S. with "more minority than white children (so-called 'majority-minority' counties), and another 300 [counties] are 'near' majority-minority, with between 40 and 50 percent minority youth populations." Of these nearly 900 counties with 40% or more minority youth, nearly 60% are nonmetropolitan counties, and these "rural majority-minority counties are concentrated in the Mississippi Delta, the Rio Grande Region, the Southeast, and in the Northern Great Plains."[17] These data show not only the increasing share of people of color in rural areas, but further that people of color are often choosing rural areas to build their families.

That so many people of color, including LGBT people of color, choose to live in or return to rural America may be a surprise to some, but there are many reasons that people of color live in rural communities. General stereotypes, media coverage, and pop culture portrayals of rural communities often portray rural areas as predominantly, if not exclusively white. But as shown here, there are millions of people of color living in rural communities, many of whom explicitly choose to stay in, live in, or return to rural America. Two in five rural residents (42%) said they came back or remained in their communities in order to be near family,[18] and U.S. Department of Agriculture research similarly shows that common reasons for returning to rural areas include family (either having parents or family members in rural communities, or wanting to raise one's own family there) and the quality of community.[19] Indeed, when asked what the biggest strength is of their community, rural residents' most frequent answer was the closeness of the community.[20]

For LGBT people of color, including those in rural areas, being LGBT may not always be the most salient identity, or the identity that has the greatest impact on a person's experiences. As noted earlier, all people live at the intersections of multiple identities or characteristics, including race, ethnicity, location, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, immigration status, and more. Each of these identities can affect, both positively and negatively, how a person is treated or the experiences they may have.[e] In some cases (though not all), LGBT people of color's day-to-day lives may be more impacted by issues that disproportionately harm or target people of color (such as criminalization and policing), as compared to issues that disproportionately harm or target gay, lesbian, or bisexual people (such as adoption rights for same-sex couples). For transgender or gender non-conforming people, the unique interactions of their race, ethnicity, and gender identity or expression may make the relationships between their identities and everyday experiences even more complex. See *Spotlight: #RuralPride Campaign* on page 22 for more discussion.

[e] Additionally, holding multiple minority identities, such as being both LGBT and a person of color, can lead to unique experiences of racism and anti-LGBT prejudice. See earlier discussion.

BLACK LGBT PEOPLE IN RURAL AMERICA

In 2017, Black Americans comprised 12.7% of the national population and 6% of the national rural population, but more than one-third (36%) of the population of rural people of color.[21] According to the Williams Institute, 4.6% of Black adults in the United States identify as LGBT, and roughly one in eight (12%) LGBT adults are Black (as shown in Figures 2a-2c on page 5).[22] In addition to the terms lesbian, gay, or bisexual, another frequently used term in Black communities is same gender loving (SGL), which some African Americans use to refer to the intersection of their racial and sexual identities. One 2014 survey of Black LGBT adults found that 14% of respondents identified as same gender loving.[23]

Rural Black people, including Black LGBT/SGL adults, are concentrated in the South. Black Americans in rural areas (and in general), are especially concentrated in the South, as shown in *Figure 4a* on the next page: in fact, 58% of all Black people, and nearly nine out of 10 Black people living in rural and small towns, in the United States reside in the South.[24] Similarly, Black same-sex couples are also concentrated in the U.S. South, as shown in *Figure 4b* on the next page. Nine of the ten states with the highest concentration of Black same-sex couples are in the South, and seven of the top ten are "majority-rural" states, in which the majority of counties have majority-rural populations.[f] While Census data can currently only show same-sex couples, it is likely that similar trends hold for Black LGBT-identified individuals, especially given that the majority of Black people live in the South.

The U.S. South is, generally speaking, the harshest policy climate for LGBT people. No Southern state has LGBT-inclusive nondiscrimination protections, Southern states are the most likely to have restrictive religious exemptions and anti-LGBT schools laws, and all Southern states but Texas have an HIV criminalization law.[25] As a result, these statistics about where Black people live, including many Black same-sex couples, may come as a surprise to some. However, given the previously discussed number of people who continue to live near or return to their rural communities of origin, the fact that Black same-sex couples (and likely Black LGBT/SGL people) live in rural communities in the South, where there are already high concentrations of Black residents overall, is not surprising.

Generally, rural communities center around the social and support networks provided by family and communities of faith, and this is especially true for many rural Black people. Often, churches were the first buildings or public spaces that were created when rural towns were first formed, and over time these churches have grown to become central pillars of many rural communities. For rural Black communities, particularly in the South, faith and church communities were and continue to be sanctuaries from discrimination, racism, and ongoing legacies of segregation and slavery. Additionally, "the Black church has served a dominant role as an informal social service provider throughout its history,"[26] offering important services, such as physical and mental health care, in addition to spiritual and social connection. In fact, Black churches provide more such services than white churches, in both rural and urban areas alike.[27]

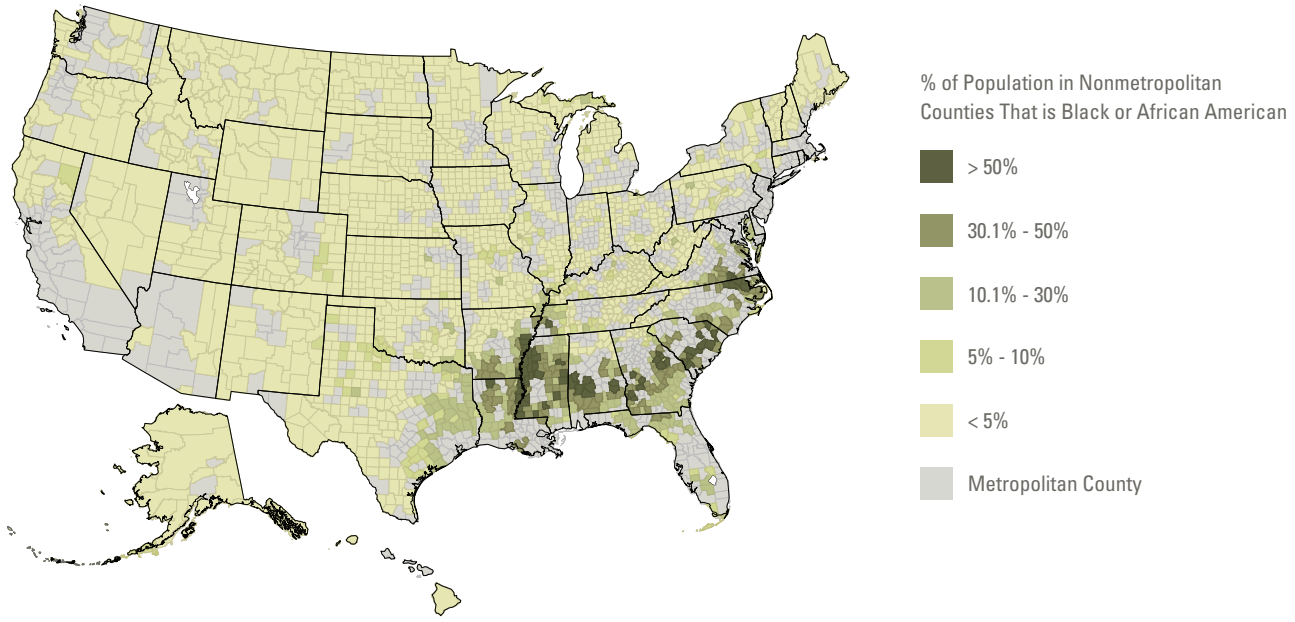
Black people in the U.S. also report high rates of religious affiliation: according to a 2014 Pew study, over three quarters of Black Americans are Christian, with only 18% saying they are religiously unaffiliated, the lowest rate of any racial or ethnic group.[28] Among all Black adults, even those who are religiously unaffiliated, 91% say their religion is very or somewhat important to their life.[29] Many Black LGBT/SGL adults are also people of faith, with, for example, more than three out of four (77%) Black transgender people having been part of a faith community at some point in their life.[30]

When these institutions are supportive of LGBT/SGL people, the impact of that support cannot be understated. However, when families, communities, and institutions are discriminatory, the impact of that discrimination is often magnified in rural communities. Black LGBTQ/SGL youth, for example, are four times as likely to experience homelessness than white non-LGBTQ youth, and Black youth in rural areas also experience disproportionate rates of homelessness, all of which may be influenced by family rejection and other factors.[31] In rural areas where there are fewer homeless shelters or youth services, these youth experiencing family rejection may experience additional obstacles to getting basic needs like food and shelter. In another example, if a person is excluded from their faith community for being gay, they may have a difficult time at work or finding a job, because their church members may also be their coworkers or potential employers. However, this effect may also work

[f] The ten states with the highest density of Black same-sex couples are: Alabama, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, New York, North Carolina, and South Carolina. According to the U.S. Census' 4-region definition, all of these states except New York are included in "the South." According to MAP's definition of majority-rural states (based on Census data), of these ten states only Delaware, DC, and Maryland are not majority-rural. See the April 2019 report for more detailed explanation of "majority-rural states."

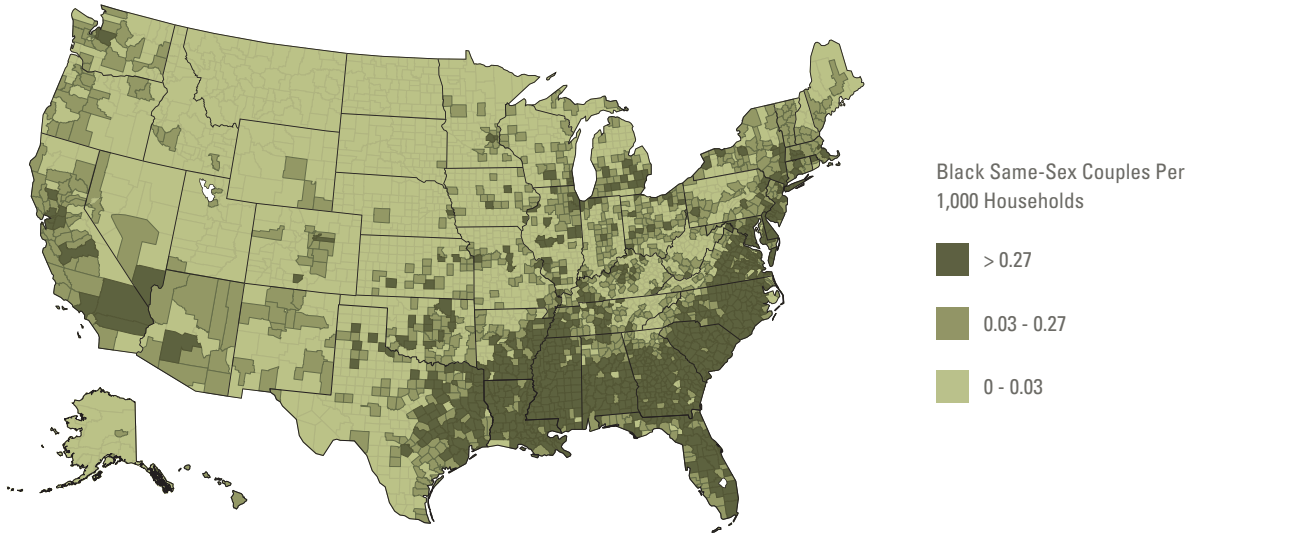
Figure 4: Rural and LGBT Black People Are Concentrated in the U.S. South

Figure 4a: Rural Black Population Is Concentrated in U.S. South



Source: Adapted from Rural Health Information Hub, based on U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Decennial Census, Summary File 1.

Figure 4b: Black Same-Sex Couples Are Concentrated in U.S. South



Source: Adapted from The Williams Institute's LGBT Demographic Data Interactive (Jan 2019), based on U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Decennial Census. Population density categories set by Williams Institute.

in a positive way: if a rural church community or employer takes a supportive stand for local LGBT residents, that support can also ripple outward to other areas of life. In Black faith communities and institutions like historically Black colleges and universities, such support may lead to even stronger positive impacts.

Rural Black residents, including Black LGBT/SGL people, experience significant economic insecurity and disparities. After generations of racial discrimination, the enduring legacy of transatlantic enslavement, sharecropping, Jim Crow, legal and de facto segregation, a lack of economic investment, policing and imprisonment,

and more, Black people across the country experience severe economic, health, and criminal justice disparities relative to whites.[32] For rural Black residents, these experiences and disparities persist and are sometimes even starker, relative to both to their urban Black counterparts and to their rural white neighbors.

In fact, the Black-white racial disparities seen nationally, and well-documented in urban centers, are mirrored in rural communities. For example, in urban communities, the median household income for 2011-2015 among white families was $25,182 higher than for Black families. Similarly, in rural communities, rural white families' median income was $22,808 higher—or 72% more—than for rural Black families (see *Figure 5*).[33] Unsurprisingly then, in 2015, more than twice as many Black residents in the rural South lived in poverty (33%), compared to whites in the rural South (16%).[34] More recent research from 2019 shows that Black rural residents continue to financially struggle more than other rural residents, as shown in *Figure 6* on the following page.

Educational attainment (and access to quality education more broadly) strongly influences economic security, but here again rural Black residents face large disparities compared to both their urban Black peers and their rural white neighbors: among those ages 45-64, over half (52%) of rural Black adults had less than a high school diploma or a GED, compared to 30% of urban Black adults and 22% of rural white adults.[35] Additionally, a 2017 survey showed that Black Americans in rural communities were less likely to say they were encouraged to attend college (43%), compared to Black Americans in urban areas (67%).[36]

While data specifically about Black LGBT/SGL people living in rural communities are extremely limited, research finds that the same economic patterns that rural Black people experience also hold true for Black LGBT/SGL people. As shown in *Figure 7* on the next page, Black LGBT adults experience higher economic insecurity than Black non-LGBT adults, across various measures including unemployment, food insecurity, and poverty level incomes.[37]

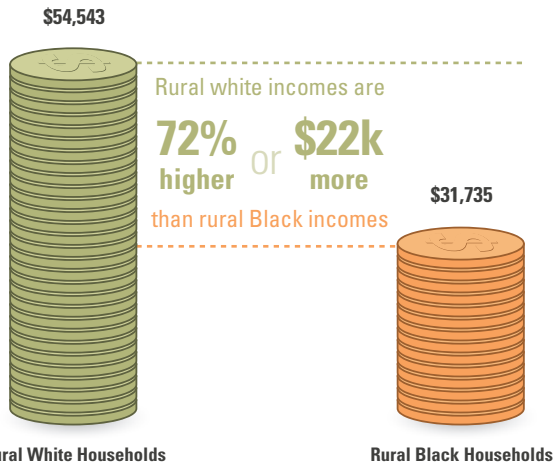
Deeper Dive: Faith and Social Justice

Historically, faith communities have played an important role in the history of social justice in the United States.[9] For example, in the 19th century, churches and faith were instrumental in abolition movements, and in the 20th century, faith communities were part and parcel of the civil rights movement. More recently, faith communities—particularly in rural areas—have played an increasing role in advocating for labor, immigrant, and LGBT rights. The "Moral Mondays" movement, which began in North Carolina and has since spread to numerous other states, features clergy and other religious leaders organizing a series of protests and civil disobedience actions against discriminatory legislation and other government actions. In all of these examples, Black faith leaders and other people of color have played and continue to play leadership roles.

On both individual and structural levels, faith communities can and regularly do work to promote social justice, from fundraising to support community members in need or providing shelter for immigrants or refugees, to leading efforts for social or policy change. In rural areas, where faith communities are often key anchor institutions, the actions of churches and faith leaders can have an even larger impact on the local community, its culture, and its values.

[9] Charles Marsh. 2005. *The Beloved Community: How Faith Shapes Social Justice, from the Civil Rights Movement to Today*. Basic Books, Perseus Books Group: New York, NY.

Figure 5: Median Household Income is Higher for Rural White Families than Rural Black Families



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey.

Figure 7 shows that one in five (20%) Black transgender adults are unemployed, nearly twice the rate for Black adults and four times the national unemployment rate at the time of the survey.[38] Additionally, Black people in same-sex couples have poverty rates at least twice the rate of Black people in different-sex married couples, with Black men in same-sex couples six times more likely to live in poverty compared to white men in same-sex couples.[39] In a survey of Black LGBT people, when asked to list the most important issue in their lives, economic issues topped the list, with nearly one quarter of Black LGBT adults saying it was their most important issue.[40]

Figure 6: Rural Black Residents More Likely than Other Rural Residents to Report Financial Difficulties

Figure 6a: Rural Black Americans More Likely to Report Having Problems Paying for Important Bills in Recent Years

% Saying They've Had Problems Paying for Medical Bills, Housing, or Food in Past Few Years

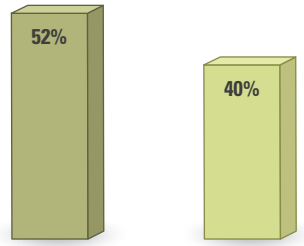
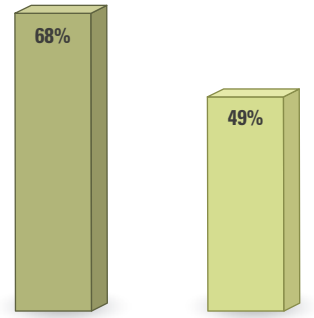


Figure 6b: Rural Black Americans More Likely to Say They'd Have Difficulty Paying A Large Unexpected Expense

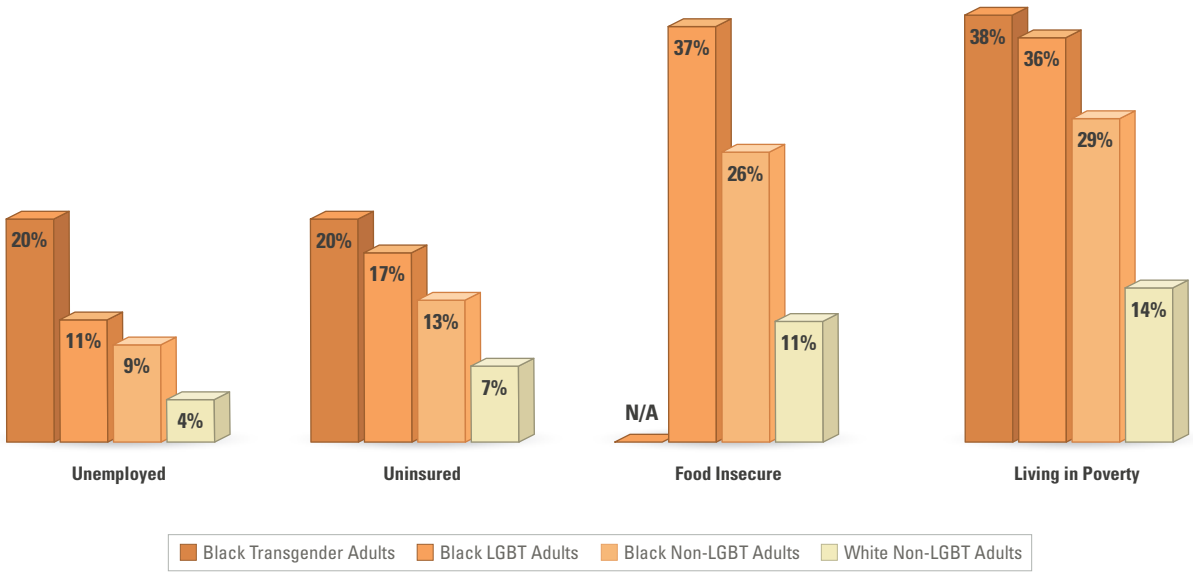
% Saying They Would Have a Problem Paying Off an Unexpected $1,000 Expense



Source: NPR, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. May 2019. *Life in Rural America, Part II.*

Figure 7: Black LGBT Adults Experience Higher Economic Insecurity Than Non-LGBT Black and White Adults

% of Adults Who Are...



Note: Food insecurity data not available for Black transgender adults.

Sources: "2015 U.S. Transgender Survey: Report on the Experiences of Black Respondents" (Sept 2017); Williams Institute's LGBT Demographic Data Interactive (Jan 2019).

Taking these trends together—that rural Black residents face higher economic insecurity than rural whites, and that Black LGBT/SGL people face higher economic insecurity than Black non-LGBT/SGL people—these data suggest that rural Black residents who are also LGBT/SGL are very likely to experience particularly high rates of economic insecurity.

Rural Black residents, including Black LGBT/SGL people, experience unique barriers to healthcare access on top of stark health disparities. Much has been written about the lack of access to health care for rural communities. The closing of hospitals, the lack of culturally competent health providers, and lack of health insurance impacts rural Black people, who are already at higher risk for health disparities related to poverty, racial discrimination, and suppressed education access and attainment.[41] While many rural communities are facing decreasing options for healthcare providers, including over 110 rural hospital closures since 2010,[42] *Figure 8* shows that that rural Black residents are more likely than other rural residents to say that their local hospitals have closed in the past few years,[43] and further that rural Black adults face significant disparities in health such as HIV status.

The lack of accessible, affordable, and competent rural healthcare providers and clinics is a particular problem for Black LGBT/SGL people, given that half of rural HIV/AIDS diagnoses in the United States occur among Black people, with most of those occurring in the rural south.[44] *Figure 8b* shows that, according to the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey, 19% of Black transgender women reported living with HIV, *rates more than 60 times that of the national population*.[45] While the sample size of rural Black transgender adults in the 2015 USTS is too small to analyze, the known obstacles to healthcare in rural communities suggest that rural Black transgender people likely face similarly disproportionate rates of HIV. Indeed, in the Deep South (where the majority of Black people living in rural communities reside), a higher proportion of young adults and adolescents were diagnosed with HIV than in any other region of the country.[46]

In conclusion, Black residents, including Black LGBT/SGL people, are especially concentrated in the U.S. South, a predominantly rural region and a region with the harshest policy climate for LGBT people in the United States. Notably, Black LGBT/SGL people in rural areas face significant obstacles to economic security and healthcare access, both of which are particularly troubling given the extraordinary disparities in HIV rates.

Figure 8: Rural Black and Transgender Adults Face Significant Disparities in Health and Healthcare Access

Figure 8a: Rural Black Residents Twice as Likely as Other Rural Residents to Report Local Hospitals Have Recently Closed

% Saying Local Hospital Has Closed in the Last Few Years

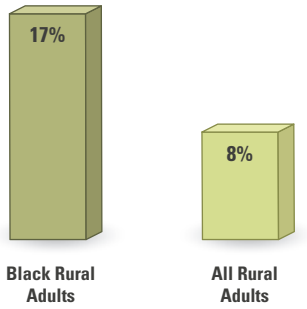
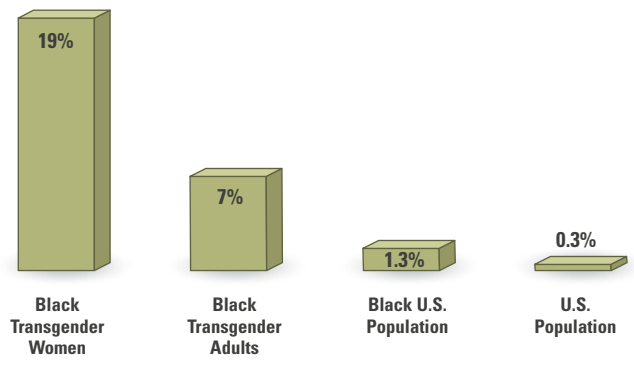


Figure 8b: Black Transgender Adults, Especially Women, Are Significantly More Likely to Be HIV+

% of Each Population That is HIV+



Sources: NPR, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. May 2019. *Life in Rural America, Part II*. USTS 2015.

Queer Black Cowboy Culture in the Mississippi Delta

Photographer Rory Doyle's ongoing project "Delta Hill Riders" aims to tell a more realistic and diverse story about Black cowboys today by focusing on African-American cowboys and cowgirls in the Mississippi Delta, a flat farming region in the Deep South between Memphis, Tennessee, and Vicksburg, Mississippi.

Through his research, Doyle said in a phone interview, he found little historical photographic documentation of Black cowboys in the United States. "African Americans have been contributing to this history for generations… There are a number of things throughout American history where proper credit hasn't been given, and this is one example. ...[Members of the Black cowboy community] will tell you, 'This is what we've always done. My dad did it. This is how I identify.'"

He has also captured LGBTQ cowboy groups, highlighting a subculture that is often overlooked.

Doyle, who is originally from Maine, moved to Cleveland, Mississippi, in 2009. He first saw Black cowboys and cowgirls riding in the city's Christmas parade in 2016. "My first thought was, 'There's a lot more diversity in cowboy culture than I realized, and there's a story here,'" he said.

Adapted from https://www.cnn.com/style/article/african-american-cowboys-rory-doyle/index.html.

LGBT People of Color in Rural America & HIV/AIDS

Communities of color, both in the general population and in the LGBT population, are disproportionately impacted by HIV. In the general population in 2017, African Americans accounted for 43% of new HIV diagnoses despite comprising only 13% of the U.S. population, and Hispanics and Latinos accounted for 26% of new HIV diagnoses while only comprising 18% of the U.S. population.[47] Similarly, gay and bisexual men accounted for 66% of all new HIV diagnoses in 2017, and among these men, 67% were either Black (38%) or Latino or Hispanic (29%).[48]

Transgender people of color are among the people most affected by HIV today. As shown in *Figure 9* on the next page, transgender women of color, and especially Black transgender women, are particularly impacted by HIV. While there is not enough data on HIV rates among specific transgender communities of color in rural areas, existing data about transgender communities of color in general, combined with known obstacles to healthcare access in rural areas, suggest that rural transgender people of color likely face similarly disproportionate impacts from HIV.

In some rural areas of the country, HIV rates are as high or higher than many metropolitan centers: rural Indiana, for example, recently saw an outbreak of nearly 200 new HIV diagnoses in a small town of only 4,000 people.[49] And as shown in *Figure 10* on the following page, the rates of new HIV diagnoses are highest in the South, a predominantly rural region: by Census definitions, 63% of all counties in the South are mostly or completely rural.[50] People living in the South made up over half (52%) of all new HIV diagnoses in 2017, despite comprising only 38% of the total U.S. population.[51] The South also faces the highest rates of HIV-related deaths in the country, even after adjusting for factors including age, gender, population density, and method of transmission.[52]

The South's high rates of HIV diagnoses and deaths again disproportionately impacts people of color: of these new HIV diagnoses in the South, 74% were among Black (53%) or Latino (21%) people.[53] Additionally, given that the South is home to nine out of every 10 rural Black people[54] and at least one in four rural or small town Latinxs,[55] HIV in the South has a particularly stark impact on rural people of color. For people of color in the South—and especially those in the rural South—the disproportionate impacts of HIV are further amplified by limited access to health care, stigma, and more.

Nationwide, roughly 60% of adults have never been tested for HIV, and in rural areas that number increases to 68% of adults.[56] Rural areas have fewer healthcare providers and hospitals, limiting rural residents' ability to access needed care, education, or prescriptions that could prevent HIV transmission and enable people living with HIV to live full and healthy lives. Additionally, stigma around HIV and sexuality contributes to an avoidance of health care, even in the uncommon occasions when such care is available in rural areas. For example, an HIV clinic based in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, hired a case manager in rural Woodward County over two hours away, to serve rural residents and spare them the long drive to the urban clinic's services. However, the clinic ultimately eliminated the position because, as the clinic's medical director says, "Nobody would go see her… because they didn't want to be seen walking into the HIV case manager's office in that tiny town—that can only mean one thing."[57]

Overall, research shows that many factors contribute to HIV and other health disparities in the South, including factors such as "rampant stigma, racism, uneven access to education, poverty, and lack of insurance coverage—an issue exacerbated by the lack of Medicaid expansion" in many Southern states.[58] What's more, while more than half of new HIV diagnoses occurred in the South, less than one-quarter (22%) of HIV-related funding went to the South,[59] and every Southern state but Texas has an HIV criminalization law.[60] These laws not only unfairly punish people living with HIV—who are disproportionately people of color and therefore already disproportionately targeted by the criminal system—they also create a strong disincentive for being tested for HIV. Additionally, when religious exemption laws apply to medical professionals—as they do in Alabama, Mississippi, and Tennessee—this may allow doctors to refuse to treat HIV or pharmacists to refuse to fill prescriptions for PrEP, a medication that can help prevent HIV. All these factors perpetuate the disproportionate impact of HIV in the South, and particularly on Southerners of color.

However, there are numerous advocates on the ground working against these structural obstacles. For example, a Southern Alabama clinic named Medical Advocacy and Outreach of Alabama treats nearly 2,000 HIV/AIDS patients, and in 2012 began seeing patients remotely using telemedicine. As reported by Pew, rather than asking rural-based patients or urban-based providers to make a multi-hour roundtrip, "Nurses at the [rural] sites use Bluetooth stethoscopes and other equipment so an HIV-trained doctor or nurse practitioner in Montgomery or Dothan can administer a full medical exam remotely. Patients can also get treatment for mental illness or drug addiction through the telemedicine program."[61] Similarly, research shows that mobile health clinics can successfully improve health outcomes for vulnerable or hard-to-reach populations, including rural communities.[62] However, as noted above, it is important that such programs and intervention efforts provide a range of healthcare services in addition to HIV services, to reduce the risk that participating in the program or clinic would out someone's HIV status to their neighbors or community members.

Figure 9: Transgender People, Including Transgender People of Color and Rural Residents, Are More Likely To Be Living With HIV

Figure 9a: Rates of HIV in the U.S. General Transgender Population

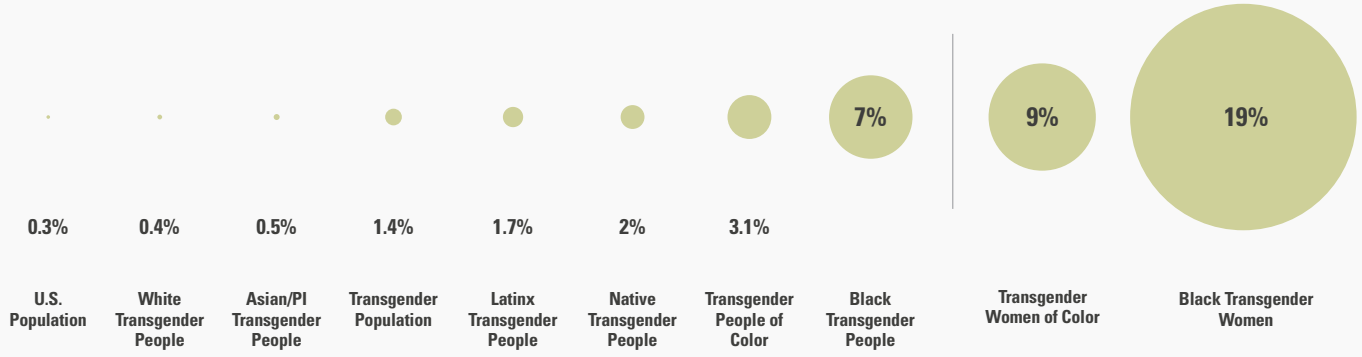
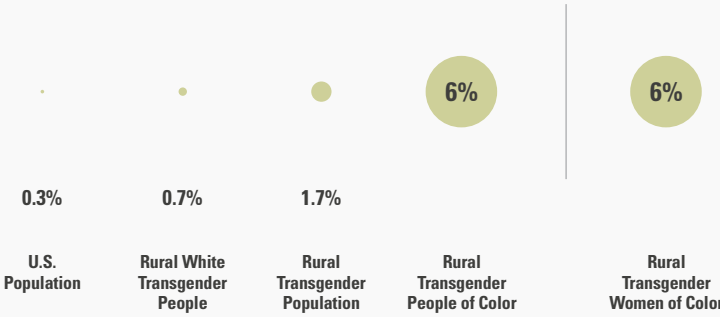
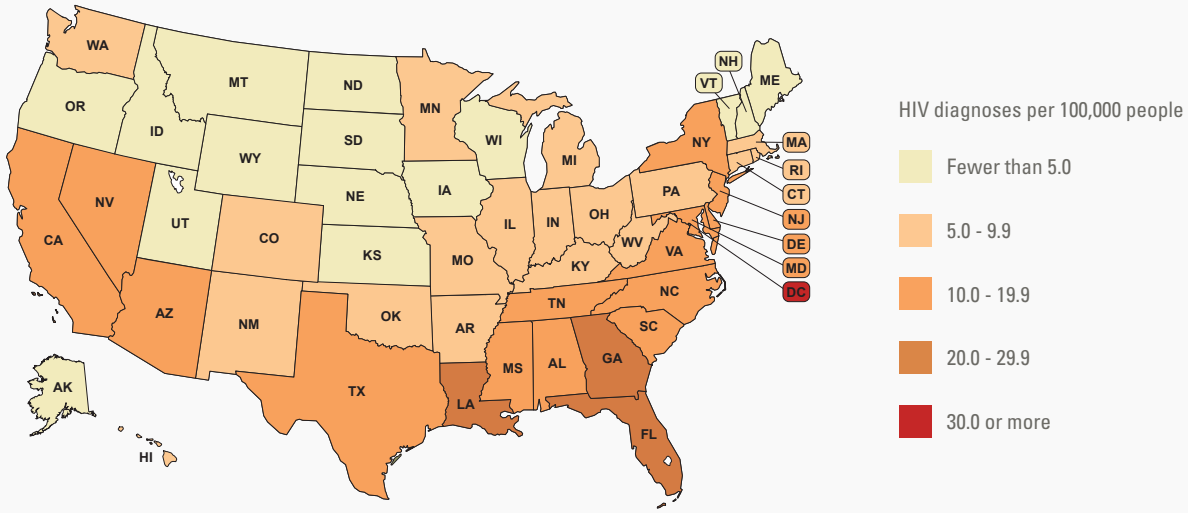


Figure 9b: Rates of HIV in the U.S. Rural Transgender Population



Note: USTS 2015 had too few respondents from rural areas to report on HIV rates of specific communities of color (e.g. Black, Latinx, Native, etc).
Source: U.S. Transgender Survey 2015, including MAP original analysis of USTS 2015 data.

Figure 10: Southern States Have Highest Rates of HIV Diagnoses



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Diagnoses of HIV Infection in the United States and Dependent Areas, 2017." HIV Surveillance Report 2017;29.

LATINX LGBT PEOPLE IN RURAL AMERICA

According to the Williams Institute, 6% of Hispanic or Latino adults in the United States identify as LGBT, and roughly one in five (21%) LGBT adults are Latino (see Figures 2a-2c on page 5).[63] In California, a state with a large Latinx population, 3.2% of rural Latino residents identified as LGB compared to 4.3% of urban Latino residents.[64]

Latino or Hispanic residents, including rural and LGBT Latinxs, are especially concentrated in the southwestern United States. This is true for Latinos in general, as well as for those living in rural areas specifically: *Figure 11a* on the next page shows that Latinos living in nonmetropolitan counties are concentrated throughout the southwestern United States. In fact, more than half of all rural and small town Hispanics are concentrated in just four states (Texas, California, New Mexico, and Arizona), with nearly one in four of all rural and small town Hispanics living in Texas alone.[65] However, recent years have seen a marked influx of Latinos, including Latino immigrants, to rural counties in the Midwest and the South, primarily because of economic opportunities.[66] *Figure 11b* shows that Latino/a same-sex couples are also heavily concentrated in the Southwest, as well as in some Midwestern counties and along the eastern seaboard.

Immigrants make significant contributions to rural communities and economies. While immigrants to the U.S. come from many different racial and ethnic backgrounds, U.S. discussions of immigration typically focus on Hispanic or Latino people. As of 2017, immigrants make up roughly 14% of the total U.S. population, and 44% of all immigrants are Hispanic or Latino.[67] In rural areas, immigrants make up just under 5% of the rural population, and over half (54%) of these rural-residing immigrants are Hispanic or Latino.[68] Additionally, there are approximately 904,000 LGBT adult immigrants in the country, approximately 42% of whom are Hispanic or Latino.[69]

Immigrants make significant contributions to rural communities and economies, including in industries such as agriculture, food processing, and health care.[70] The Midwest in particular, for example, is home to many rural areas whose economies center around agriculture or food processing, and local immigrant residents are a vital part of both these local communities and their cornerstone industries.[71] Similarly, about one in six U.S. healthcare workers are immigrants, including doctors, dentists, pharmacists, and optometrists, among others—all professions in short supply in rural areas.[72] In fact, these foreign-born medical professionals are more likely to work in rural areas and underserved communities in the U.S., compared to U.S.-born healthcare workers.[73]

Immigrants who lack legal work authorization face unique obstacles in finding and navigating work, limiting their ability to provide for themselves and their families. For immigrants of color, these obstacles are further amplified by potential racial or ethnic discrimination, and further amplified again if they are also LGBT. Employment opportunities may be limited—especially in rural areas with fewer overall employers—and employees may be

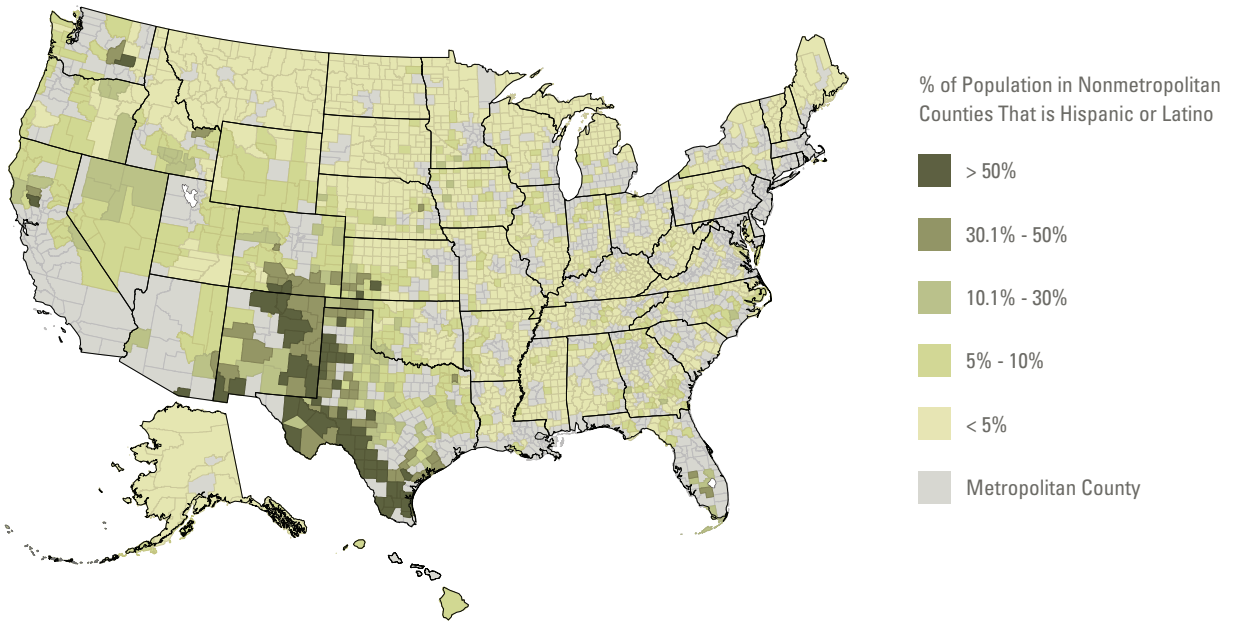
SPOTLIGHT

Supporting Transgender Women Detained by Immigration & Customs Enforcement (ICE)
Transgender Resource Center of New Mexico

New Mexico houses the only pod for transgender women who are seeking asylum and are currently detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). The **Transgender Resource Center of New Mexico** provides non-legal services and visitation with transgender women who are held there. Volunteers and the Co-Director of the Center visit the facility twice a month to provide physical and emotional support to the transgender women detained there. In addition, the Center provides money so the women can make phone calls, obtain stamps, or purchase food. The center also provides referrals and support to the transgender women who are detained and those who are released.

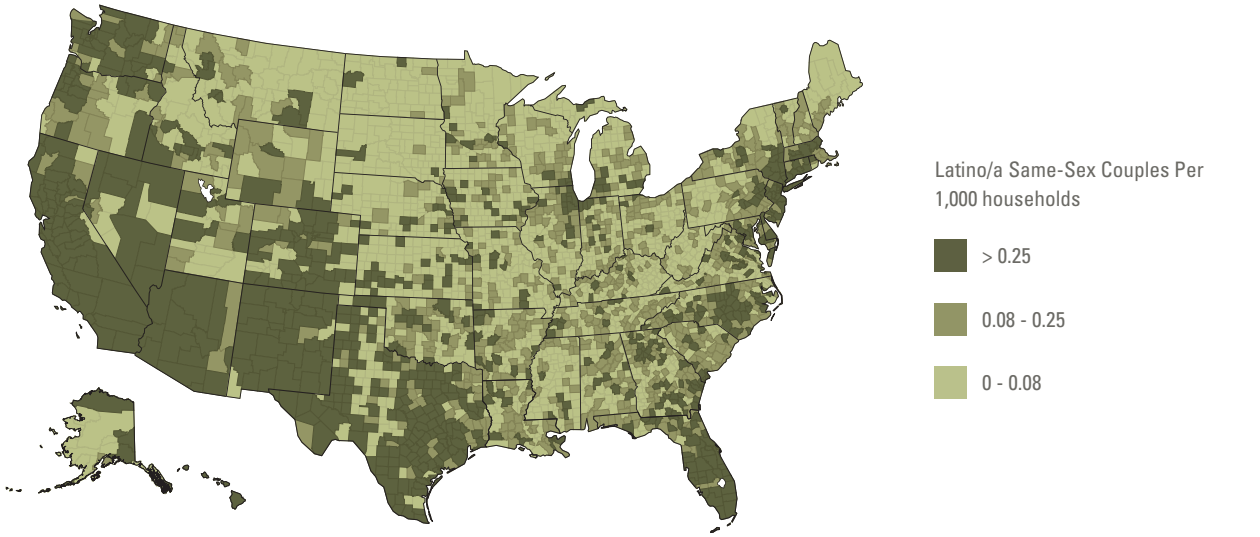
Figure 11: Rural and LGBT Latinos Are Concentrated in the U.S. Southwest

Figure 11a: Rural Latino Population Is Concentrated in U.S. Southwest



Source: Adapted from Rural Health Information Hub, based on U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Decennial Census, Summary File 1.

Figure 11b: Latino/a Same-Sex Couples Are Concentrated in U.S. Southwest and West



Source: Adapted from The Williams Institute's LGBT Demographic Data Interactive (Jan 2019), based on U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Decennial Census. Population density categories set by Williams Institute.

more vulnerable to exploitation due to their legal status. Additionally, undocumented workers may be afraid to speak up when they see or experience legal violations, such as unsafe working conditions or unfair wages, out of fear of being deported.[74] In a survey by the National Employment Law Project, 76% of undocumented workers worked off the clock without pay and 85% did not receive overtime.[75] The fear of deportation may also deter undocumented people from filing discrimination complaints against employers, even when such

discrimination is prohibited by federal law (as with race and national origin based discrimination) or state law (as with LGBT discrimination, in only 21 states and the District of Columbia).

LGBT Latinx people, including in rural areas, experience discrimination based on their sexual orientation, gender identity, race/ethnicity, and more. Latinx LGBT people may experience discrimination based on their ethnicity (as Latinx people), race (such as also being Black), national origin (either as an immigrant or by being perceived as an immigrant), language or accent, other characteristics such as disability, sexual orientation, gender or gender identity, or any of these in combination with one another. For example, one in five (22%) Latinx LGBTQ students said they felt unsafe at school because of their race or ethnicity, while 44% said they felt unsafe because of their gender expression and 55% felt unsafe because of their sexual orientation.[76]

Additionally, research shows that LGBT Latinxs experience not only high rates of discrimination based on their sexual orientation and gender identity, but also higher rates of racial or ethnic discrimination. A 2017 Harvard survey showed that LGBT people of color (including LGBT Latinos) are more than twice as likely as white LGBT people to report being personally discriminated against because of their LGBT identity both when applying for jobs and when interacting with police.[77] That same survey also showed that LGBT Latinos

SPOTLIGHT

California Rural Legal Assistance

California Rural Legal Assistance (CRLA), founded in 1966, is a nonprofit legal service program created to help low-income people and communities throughout rural California. It has 18 offices throughout the state and provides free legal assistance and community education to more than 43,000 low-income rural Californians every year. As over 62% of Californians are people of color, CRLA provides many services directly to rural Californians of color, including LGBT people of color.[h]

CRLA has a dedicated LGBT Program that provides education and legal services in five key areas: the Rural Safe School Summits, designed to improve school climate and policies for LGBTQ youth and their families; an "anti-violence project that works with rural District Attorneys' offices, service providers, law enforcement, and other government agencies to ensure LGBT victims, particularly people of color, are treated with respect and care"; Proyecto Poderso, a partnership with the National Center for Lesbian Rights, to improve legal services for low-income rural LGBT people; the Equal Access Project, working for equality for LGBT people in employment, housing, and access to public spaces; and community education and capacity building programming to create safe and equitable communities for LGBT people of color.[i] This includes a program called Conexiones, an LGBT leadership and support program.

For example, Roselyn, a transgender Latina farmer working in the fields of California picking raspberries, often experienced harassment and bullying from her male coworkers. As Roselyn describes, they had a machista attitude and would call her gay, make comments about her body, and direct her to the men's restrooms. She rarely had health insurance, and without it, her hormones cost $100 every month. When Roselyn applied for office jobs, her inaccurate identity documents became an issue and employers turned her away, especially after interviewing. Roselyn turned to the LGBT community for support and discovered CRLA's programming and services. She connected with CRLA's Conexiones program and eventually became not only a program leader, but ultimately a full-time staff member for CRLA.

"Before I joined Conexiones, I was treated poorly by hospital staff. Sometimes I wouldn't go see the doctor, even if I were sick. Thanks to Conexiones, I know my rights. I stand up for myself and see the doctor when I need to. … Every day I put my make up on and go to work, I feel fabulous, powerful, and that I am going to be successful."

Source: Roselyn's story adapted from materials provided by CRLA.

[h] U.S. Census Bureau, 2017 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.
[i] California Rural Legal Assistance. "CRLA Fast Facts: LGBT Program." Accessed August 12, 2019.

are more than twice as likely (46%) as non-LGBT Latinos (20%) to say they have been threatened or harassed because they are Latino.[78] This dynamic may be even further exacerbated for LGBT Latinxs in rural areas, where "difference" (as both an LGBT person and a Latinx) is more visible and there are generally fewer support structures available to prevent or respond to such discrimination.

Rural LGBT Latinxs may face unique challenges in faith communities and accessing religiously-provided services. As noted earlier, churches and faith institutions are often instrumental in building and supporting rural communities. In rural areas, faith institutions also frequently play key roles in providing vital services and resources, including job training, physical and mental health care, legal support, shelter for those experiencing domestic violence or homelessness, transportation, and more.[79] This is because nonprofit and social service providers face many challenges in serving rural areas—including both low funding and high costs to deliver services across geographically large but relatively sparsely populated areas[80]—and so faith communities that already exist and provide (spiritual) services in rural areas can and often do take advantage of their already existing infrastructure to deliver additional needed services.

Rural faith communities and the services they provide may be particularly important for rural Latinxs, including immigrants, who have unique needs and experiences that existing (non-religious) service providers may not be equipped (or willing) to support. For example, churches in rural communities may be on the front line of providing not only faith connection, but also social connection, English language classes, legal support for immigration-related and other concerns, as well as basic needs such as meals, clothing, and housing assistance.[81]

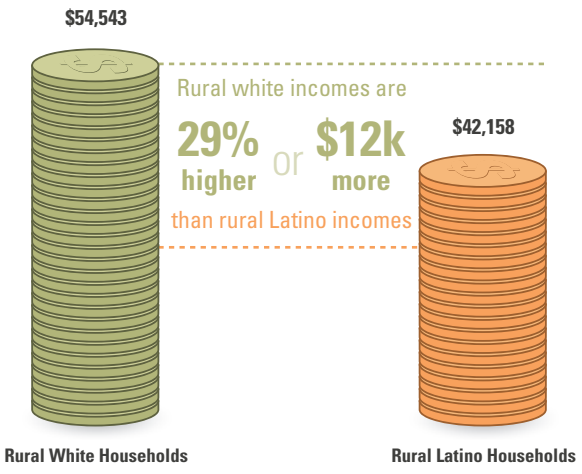
For LGBT people in rural communities, anti-LGBT sentiment or hostility in a religious community can therefore mean not only rejection from a faith community, but also from vital services and far more that would benefit, if not sustain, their lives—both spiritually and materially. This may be especially true for LGBT Latinxs, given that two thirds of all U.S. Latinos are either Catholic or Evangelical Christian,[82] both traditions with well-established institutional opposition to LGBT people. However, data show high levels of support for LGBT nondiscrimination protections among both Hispanic and white Catholics, and further that Latinos in rural areas are significantly more likely than whites in rural areas to hold pro-LGBT positions on support for marriage, nondiscrimination protections for LGBT people, and whether businesses should be able to turn away LGBT people.[83] This suggests that both Catholic churches and Latinxs in rural communities can play important leadership roles in creating and maintaining LGBT-supportive and -inclusive rural communities.

LGBT Latinxs, including in rural areas, face obstacles to economic security. In general, LGBT people are more likely to experience various types of economic insecurity, due to discrimination and other factors.[84] The same pattern holds true for LGBT people in rural areas, who are, for example, more likely to live in poverty than their non-LGBT rural neighbors.[85]

Similarly, Latinos in the U.S. are more likely to experience various types of economic hardship and disparities, including rates of living in poverty.[86] This also holds true in rural communities, where, for example, the median household income for rural white families is $12,385 higher, or 29% more, than the median income for rural Latino or Hispanic families (see *Figure 12*).[87] Additionally, more than half (53%) of rural Hispanic adults did not complete high school, compared to 22% of rural white adults.[88]

Given these patterns, it is not surprising that LGBT Latinxs experience even higher rates of economic insecurity. *Figure 13* on the following page shows that, compared to non-LGBT Latinx adults, Latinx LGBT adults (especially transgender Latinxs) experience higher economic insecurity across multiple measures, including unemployment and living in poverty.[89]

Figure 12: Median Household Income is Higher for Rural White Families than Rural Latino Families



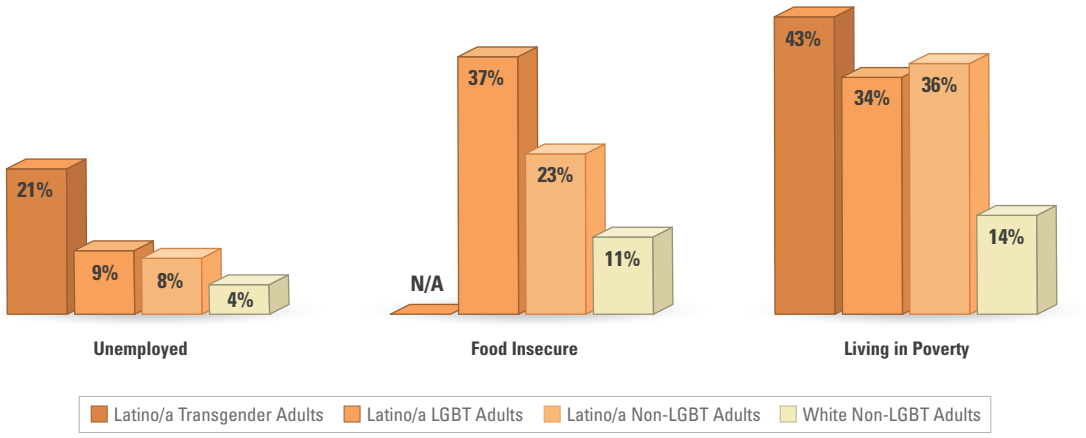
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey.

Given that patterns of poverty in LGBT and Latinx communities persist in rural areas, it is reasonable to assume that the higher rates of insecurity for LGBT Latinxs (Figure 13) would also persist, if not be further magnified, in rural areas where there are fewer employers and fewer providers of economic support, such as job training programs or government benefit offices.

In conclusion, Latinxs, including rural and LGBT Latinxs, are concentrated in the U.S. South and Southwest. They face widespread economic insecurity and disparities, as well as discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, race, ethnicity, and immigration status. Despite these obstacles, Latinxs contribute greatly to rural communities, and Latinos' higher levels of support for LGBT protections suggest that they may already be leading the way in supporting LGBT-inclusive rural communities.

Figure 13: Latinos Face Higher Economic Insecurity Than Whites, and LGBT Latinos Experience Similar or Higher Economic Insecurity Than Non-LGBT Latinos

% of Adults Who Are...



Note: Food insecurity data not available for Latino/a transgender adults.
Sources: "2015 U.S. Transgender Survey: Report on the Experiences of Latino/a Respondents" (Oct 2017); Williams Institute's LGBT Demographic Data Interactive (Jan 2019).

Forbidden: Undocumented and Queer in Rural America

When Moises Serrano was just a baby, his parents risked everything to flee Mexico and make the perilous journey across the desert in search of the American dream. After 23 years growing up in the rural south where he is forbidden to live and love, Moises sees only one option—to fight for justice.

Forbidden is a feature length documentary about an inspiring young man whose story is exceptional, although not unique. Moises is like the thousands of young people growing up in the United States with steadfast dreams but facing overwhelming obstacles. The film chronicles Moises' work as an activist traveling across his home state of North Carolina as a voice for his community, all while trying to forge a path for his own future.

Forbidden illustrates the intersection of queer and immigrant issues and addresses the realities facing LGBTQ minorities who have grown up in the rural South surrounded by white faces and homophobic attitudes. The threat is real—the KKK still holds weekly meetings not far from Moises' hometown of Yadkinville, and he has found dead rats in his mailbox and white crosses on his front porch. Not everyone in the United States is treated equally or given a fair chance. Moises' story demonstrates courage, conviction, and an unyielding desire to succeed.

Adapted from the film's website. Learn more: http://www.forbiddendoc.com.

#RuralPride Campaign Highlights the Experiences of Rural LGBT People, including the Unique Experiences of Rural LGBT People of Color

As a national organization focused on advancing legal equality for LGBT people through impact litigation, public policy, and public education, the National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR) leads the **#RuralPride Campaign**, an initiative focused on rural communities and the LGBT people who live there. Over the past nine years, NCLR has crisscrossed the country to more than 15 communities and counting in places like Lost River (WV), Visalia (CA), Des Moines (IA), and Hunstville (AL). Many of these convenings are held in locations that are home to many people of color, such as Alabama, Mississippi, and California.

The centerpiece of the Rural Pride campaign is a day-long convening in each location to provide local rural LGBT residents an opportunity to discuss the unique needs and vulnerabilities of the LGBT rural community with local, state, and federal policymakers and advocates. Through these convenings NCLR seeks to identify the challenges and needs of our rural community members and ensure that their voices are heard in federal policy debates. With the U.S. Department of Agriculture as a project partner, NCLR and the #RuralPride Campaign have also worked to ensure that all rural communities have access to the resources they need to thrive.

During the Alabama summit, participants emphasized the intersections of poverty, race, and disability for rural LGBT people, explaining that both policies (such as refusing to expand Medicaid) and political choices (such as the high cost of PrEP and the underinvestment of federal healthcare dollars in rural areas) cause disproportionate harm to those in rural areas, and especially so to LGBT people of color and/or those with disabilities. One participant memorably described the experience of not being able to afford being simultaneously poor, Black, and sick, and further said that each day a person is forced to choose which of those experiences to tend to. Another attendee shared a striking image of a long line of people—predominantly people of color—waiting long amounts of time to get their HIV medication.

At the Mississippi event, attendees noted that for many LGBT people of color in Mississippi, issues like public displays of the confederate flag and the right to vote affected their lives more than marriage equality or access to legal adoption. Criminalization issues were of particular concern for Black LGBT Mississippians, and especially the ways in which local governments (including many in rural areas) rely on the criminal legal system, which disproportionately targets people of color, to extract fines and fees from residents to fund municipal operations.

At the California Rural Pride, attendees reported that language access remains a problem for LGBT people who are non-English speakers, particularly when trying to get medical care. Attendees also shared that they personally knew people who had been turned away by healthcare clinics claiming they could not serve them because they didn't have interpreters available.

The issues highlighted at these different locations around the country illustrate both the unique experiences of LGBT people of color in rural areas, as well as the different concerns that different communities of color or regional areas may experience. But despite the challenges clearly highlighted in these convenings, many attendees told NCLR and Rural Pride organizers that they wanted to "challenge the assumption that LGBT folks living in rural communities would move out if they could," as NCLR attorney Julie Gonen shared. Gonen continued, "LGBT people aren't just living and working and going to school and raising kids and making their homes in rural America. They're proud to be doing it."

NATIVE AMERICAN LGBT AND TWO-SPIRIT PEOPLE IN RURAL AMERICA

As shown in Figures 2a-2c on page 5, 5.6% of American Indian or Alaska Native (AIAN) adults identify as LGBT in the United States, including those living in sovereign Native American nations within the U.S.[j] The Williams Institute estimates that there are 285,000 LGBT AIAN adults in the United States, making up about 1% of all LGBT U.S. adults.[90]

According to the National Congress of American Indians, there are currently 573 sovereign tribal nations in the United States.[91] Each of these Native American nations is different from the next, with unique histories, cultural practices, and languages. In some, though not all indigenous communities, "Two-Spirit" is another term used to describe individuals or genders that fall outside binary or stereotypical understandings of male and female. In the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey, more than half (51%) of American Indian and Alaska Native transgender people indicated that they identify as Two-Spirit.[92]

The 573 sovereign tribal nations in the U.S. each maintain a "formal nation-to-nation relationship with the US government."[93] Just like the governments of other countries or of individual U.S. states, these tribal nations are independent and self-determining governments, though the United States' recognition of this autonomy is limited at best. These nearly 600 nations are located across 36 different U.S. states, and they "exercise jurisdiction over lands that would make Indian Country the fourth largest state in the [U.S.]."[94]

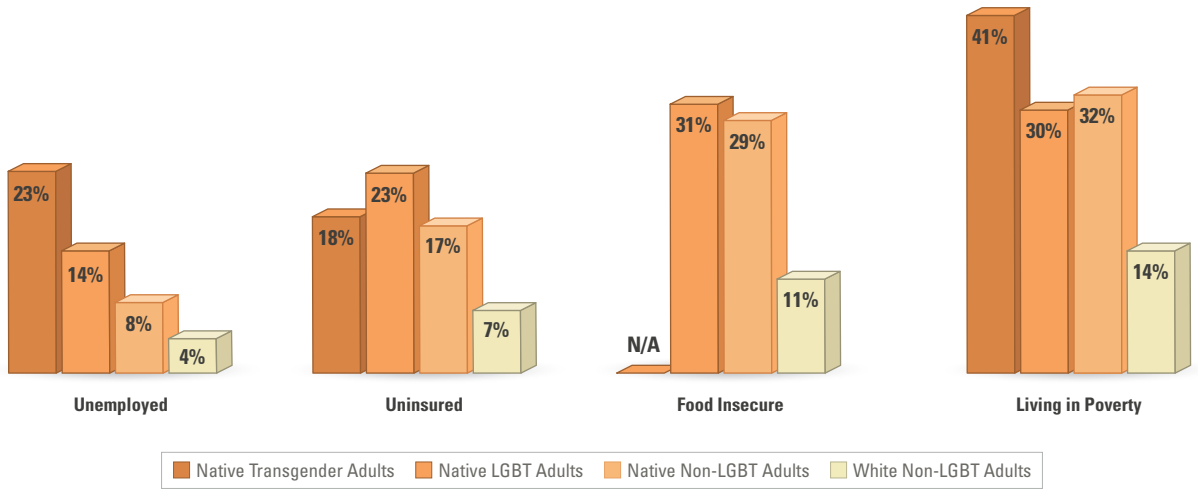
A majority of Native Americans live in rural and isolated areas, both in the United States and in sovereign tribal nations located within the United States. According to the First Nations Development Institute, "a majority (54%) of AIAN people live in rural and small-town areas, and 68% live on or near their tribal homelands" (see *Figure 15* on the following page).[95] Native Americans are also the only racial or ethnic minority community in the U.S. to have a higher concentration in rural areas (2% of the rural population) than in urban areas (0.5% of the urban population).[96]

Native American LGBT and Two-Spirit people face stark economic and educational disparities, compared to both their Native non-LGBT peers and to white adults. *Figure 14* shows that Native American LGBT adults experience higher economic insecurity than both non-LGBT Native Americans and non-LGBT white adults. This is particularly evident in unemployment and lacking health insurance. Transgender Native Americans report significantly higher rates of unemployment and poverty-level incomes.

[j] This report uses the terms Native American and American Indian or Alaska Native (AIAN) interchangeably to refer to individuals and communities who are indigenous to North America. The term indigenous or indigenous people is therefore also used in this report. When referring to specific data sources, this report uses the same terms used by that data source. Additionally, because many Latinx people are indigenous to the American continents, many people who identify or would be categorized in some contexts as Hispanic or Latinx are also indigenous. This section relies on data about self-identified American Indian and Alaska Natives.

Figure 14: Native LGBT Adults Experience Far Higher Economic Insecurity Than Native non-LGBT and White Adults

% of Adults Who Are...

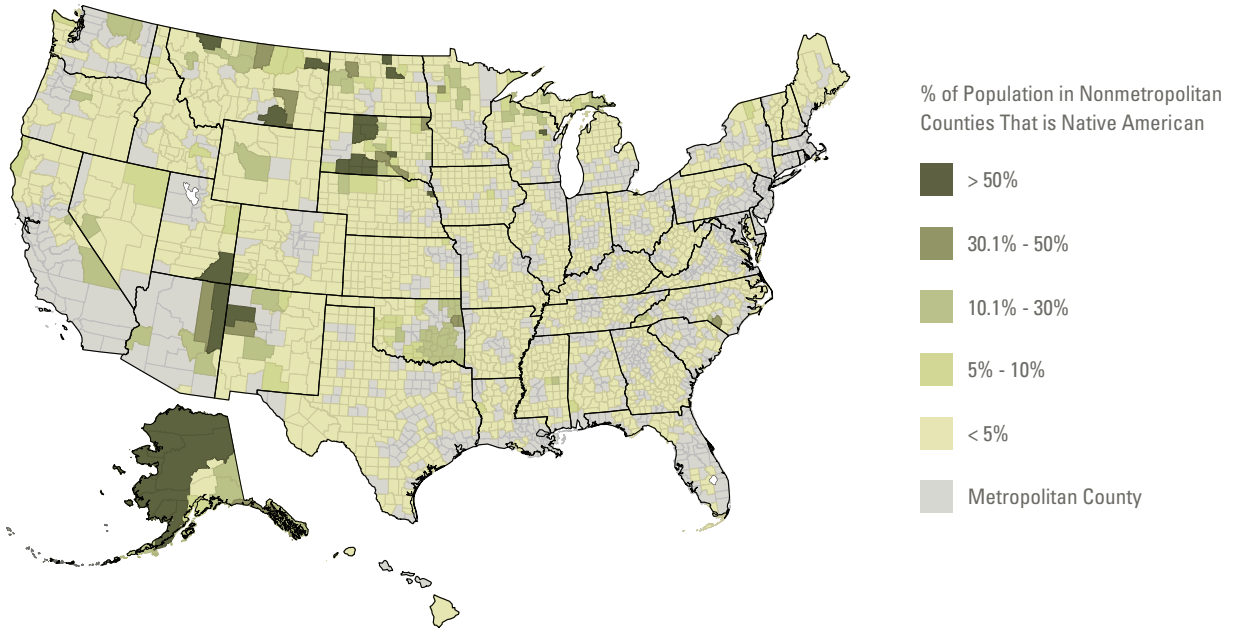


Note: Food insecurity data not available for Native/AIAN transgender adults.

Sources: "2015 U.S. Transgender Survey: Report on the Experiences of American Indian and Alaska Native Respondents" (Nov 2017); Williams Institute's LGBT Demographic Data Interactive (Jan 2019).

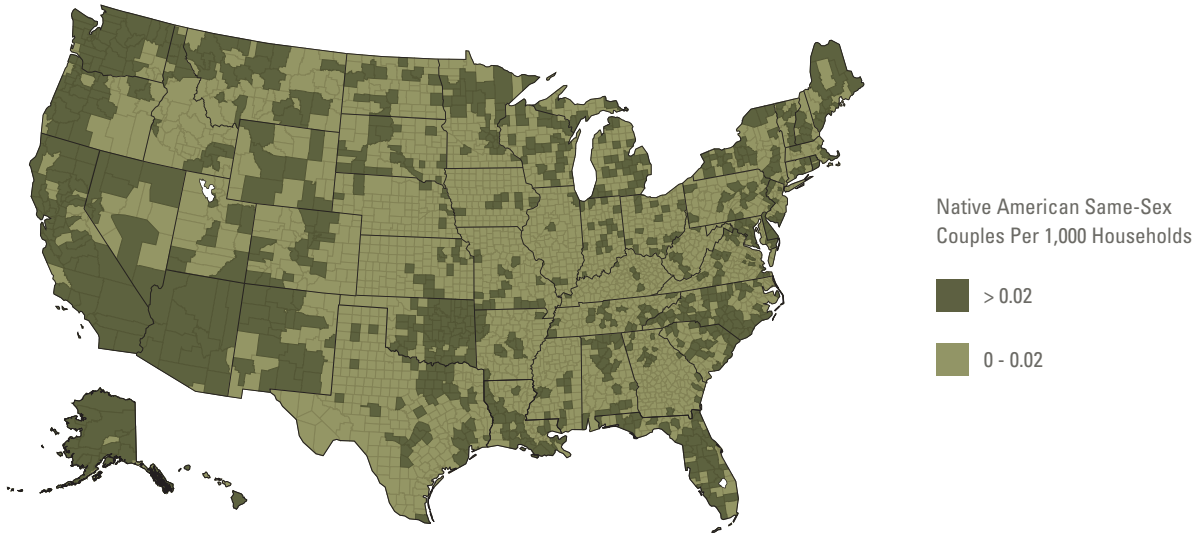
Figure 15: Rural and LGBT Native Americans Are Concentrated in the Southwest and Great Plains

Figure 15a: Rural Native American Population Is Concentrated in U.S. Southwest, Great Plains, and Alaska



Source: Adapted from Rural Health Information Hub, based on U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Decennial Census, Summary File 1.

Figure 15b: Native American Same-Sex Couples Are Concentrated in U.S. Southwest, Great Plains, and Alaska



Source: Adapted from The Williams Institute's LGBT Demographic Data Interactive (Jan 2019), based on U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Decennial Census. Population density categories set by Williams Institute.

The 573 tribal nations across 36 different U.S. states would make Indian Country the fourth largest state in the United States by land size.

In rural communities, these disparities persist. The U.S. Census shows that Native Americans living in rural areas are more likely to live in poverty than their urban counterparts,[97] and further that they have lower household incomes than their rural, non-Native American counterparts: in 2015, the median household income for rural white families was over $19,000 higher, or 56% more (see *Figure 16* on the next page), than for rural Native American families.[98] Additionally, rural Native Americans are more likely than other rural adults to say they have major problems in paying for important bills in recent years, as shown in *Figure 17* on the following page.

Additionally, job opportunities are scarce in rural AIAN communities: while the national unemployment rate was 4.4% in 2017, for Native Americans it was 7.8%, the highest of any racial group.[99] As a result, if Native Americans experience employment discrimination–whether because they are AIAN or because they are LGBT or Two-Spirit—that can leave rural Native Americans with few, if any, options for employment. Furthermore, given that Native American communities are concentrated in states without statewide employment nondiscrimination protections, they are disproportionately vulnerable to potential discrimination.

While education is a major factor affecting employment outcomes and economic insecurity, data from GLSEN's National School Climate Survey show that LGBTQ Native American students were more likely to attend rural schools, where LGBTQ students in general experience more hostile school climates. And, Native American, American Indian, and Alaskan Native LGBTQ students were more likely than other racial or ethnic groups to experience anti-LGBTQ victimization and discrimination.[100] These negative and discriminatory experiences in school lead to poorer academic performance and graduation rates,[101] thus affecting LGBTQ Native Americans not only as children, but over the course of their lifetimes.

In sum, the multiple economic and educational obstacles experienced by both Native American LGBT and Two-Spirit people and by rural residents mean that Native American LGBT and Two-Spirit people in rural communities likely experience dramatic disparities in economic security and wellbeing.

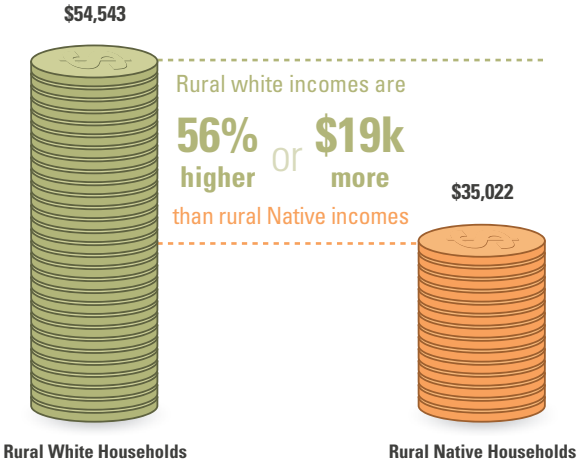
Health and homelessness are also major issues facing rural Native communities. A recent Harvard survey found that, while 8% of rural adults across the country say that hospitals in their local communities have closed down in the last few years, twice as many Native American respondents report these closures.[102] The same survey found that one third (33%) of rural Native Americans have recently experienced problems accessing healthcare, including 27% who say it is a problem for them to travel to the closest hospital (see *Figure 18* on the next page).

LGBT people in rural areas have unique healthcare concerns, and the same applies to Native American communities. For example, rural areas on average have higher healthcare costs, fewer healthcare providers, and lower rates of cultural competency among existing providers.[103] These concerns, taken together with the potential for both anti-LGBT and anti-Native discrimination, show that LGBT and Two-Spirit Native Americans in rural areas face significant challenges to accessing even basic health care.

Additionally, half of rural Native Americans say that homelessness is a problem in their community, compared to 33% of all rural adults.[104] LGBT youth homelessness is a problem nationwide, but in rural areas youth homelessness is more likely to be "hidden," as youth are more likely to couch surf, sleep outside, or sleep in a vehicle than in places like homeless shelters where they can be counted and provided services. Research shows that most LGBT youth experiencing homelessness became homeless not in the immediate aftermath of coming out, but as the result of frayed relationships over time. Family rejection does play a role, however: LGBT youth overall are more than twice as likely to experience homelessness compared to their non-LGBT peers, and LGBT youth of color are at even higher risk. If half of rural Native American adults say that homelessness is a problem in their local community, then it is likely that homelessness for LGBT youth in those communities is also occurring at disproportionately high rates.

In conclusion, Native Americans are the only racial or ethnic minority with a higher concentration in rural areas than in urban areas. They face considerable and systemic challenges across the board, in areas from economic security and education to access to health care and housing. For Native Americans who are also LGBT or Two-Spirit, living in rural areas, or both, these challenges are even further amplified.

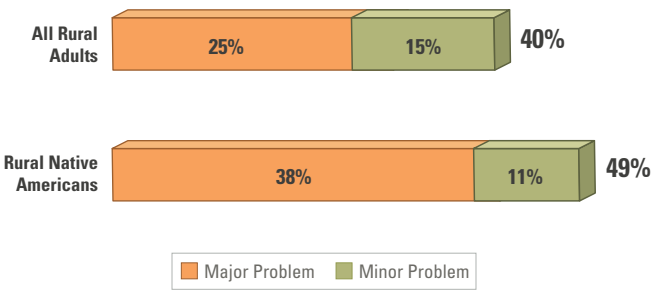
Figure 16: Median Household Income is Higher for Rural White Families than Rural Native American Families



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey.

Figure 17: Rural Native Americans More Likely to Report Having Problems, and to Say These Are Major Problems, in Paying for Important Bills in Recent Years

% Saying They've Had Problems Paying for Medical Bills, Housing, or Food in Past Few Years



Source: NPR, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. May 2019. *Life in Rural America, Part II.*

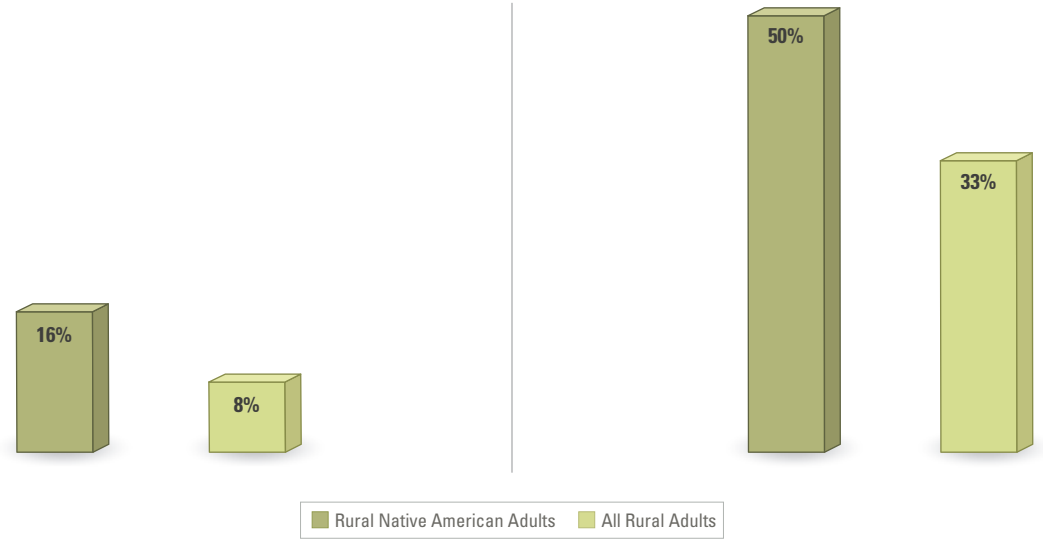
Figure 18: Rural Native Residents More Likely than Other Rural Residents to Report Health and Homelessness Difficulties

Figure 18a: Rural Native Americans Twice as Likely as Other Rural Residents to Report Local Hospitals Have Recently Closed

% Saying Local Hospital Has Closed in the Last Few Years

Figure 18b: Rural Native Americans More Likely to Say Homelessness is a Problem in Their Local Community

% Saying Homelessness is a Problem in Their Local Community



Source: NPR, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. May 2019. *Life in Rural America, Part II.*

LGBT People of Color in Rural America & The Opioid Epidemic

The modern opioid crisis has had a dramatic effect on rural communities. The rate of drug overdose fatalities is rising faster in nonmetropolitan parts of the country than in metropolitan areas,[117] and almost three out of every four farmers and farm workers say they have been directly impacted by opioid misuse.[118] According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), nearly 70% of drug overdose deaths in 2017 involved an opioid, and now nearly 130 Americans die every day from an opioid overdose.

What is less known, or at least less discussed, is that the modern opioid crisis has also had a dramatic effect on communities of color, including those in rural areas. While opioid use rates are similar across Black and white communities, the rates of opioid-related deaths have increased dramatically faster for Blacks than for whites,[119] and in many states, opioid overdose death rates are far higher for Black people than for whites.[120] Additionally, the highest rates of opioid prescriptions are in the South,[121] which is also where the majority of Black people, including nine out of 10 rural Black residents, live.[122]

Rates of substance misuse, including opioid misuses, are higher among LGBT people than the general population, which research attributes to higher experiences of discrimination and trauma.[123] As a result, LGBT people—including those in rural areas, where LGBT people are more vulnerable to discrimination[124]—are more likely to be affected by the opioid crisis. For LGBT people of color, who face additional forms of discrimination and trauma based on both their race/ethnicity and their sexual orientation or gender identity, the risk of substance misuse is likely even higher.

For LGBT people and people of color in rural areas, the opioid crisis (as well as addiction or medical issues more broadly) may cause additional harm beyond medical or health concerns. Given the relatively few healthcare providers available in rural areas, if a person is discriminated against for being LGBT, for being a person of color, and/or for struggling with addiction, they may have no other alternatives for receiving care. Additionally, drug use is typically a criminal offense, and this heightens the likelihood that people of color—who are already disproportionately targeted by the criminal justice system—will be imprisoned or prosecuted for struggling with addiction, rather than provided the help and services they may need.

Furthermore, addiction recovery is an ongoing process, often including frequent and regular participation in group meetings. However, these meetings can also suffer from a lack of LGBT and racial/ethnic cultural competency, or be a source of potential discrimination—one that some people cannot avoid, whether to maintain their recovery or because they are legally required to attend such meetings. In a non-scientific poll conducted by Queer Appalachia of LGBT people in recovery, only four out of 100 had sponsors, and "[s]ome drove up to 8 hours round trip on their one day off to be able to go to a 'more accepting meeting.'" Transgender participants described introducing themselves at meetings only to be interrupted and asked, "What's your real name?" Addiction recovery is challenging enough, let alone with the added burdens of facing disrespect, misgendering, discrimination, or even violence simply for being an LGBT person trying to recover. Similarly, many substance use treatment providers lack basic competency in treating people of color, and researchers and advocates are increasingly calling for explicitly anti-racist frameworks to be integrated into recovery treatment programming.[125] Both these approaches are necessary for supporting LGBT people of color, including those in rural areas, seeking recovery and assistance.

ASIAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER LGBT PEOPLE IN RURAL AMERICA

Given the relatively small percentage of people in the United States who identify as Asian or Pacific Islander (API) *and* the small size of the LGBT population, there are extremely limited data available about the lives and experiences of LGBT API people, let alone those in rural areas. However, given the incredible diversity of national origin, religion, and cultural backgrounds within the broader API population, an overreliance on statistics about the entire API population can mask important differences in experiences, and even LGBT identification, within the API community.

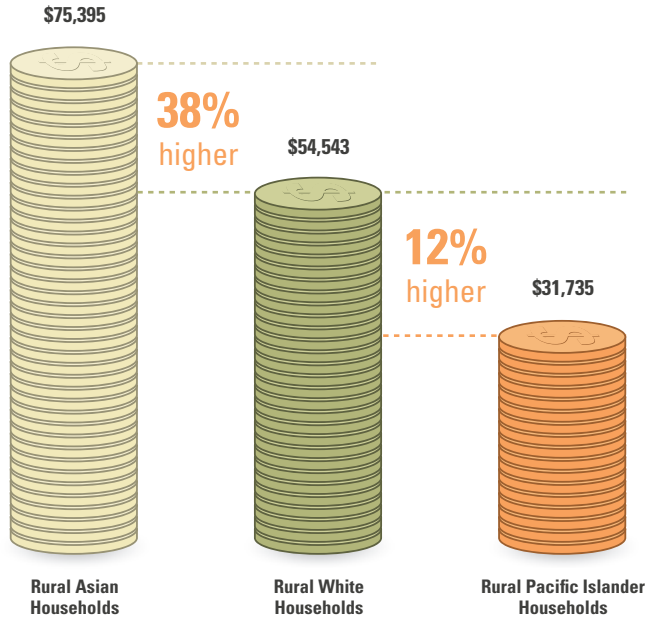
According to the Williams Institute, 4.4% of Asian adults in the United States identify as LGBT, and more than twice as many (8.9%) Pacific Islander or Native Hawaiian adults in the United States identify as LGBT (Figure 2a on page 5). In total, 3% of all LGBT adults are Asian (2%) or Pacific Islander or Native Hawaiian (1%) (Figure 2c on page 5).[105]

Asian and Pacific Islanders, including LGBT API people, are concentrated along the U.S. coasts, as shown in *Figure 20a* on the next page. API residents are particularly likely to reside in the West. *Figure 20b* on the following page shows that same-sex couples with an API householder are similarly concentrated along the U.S. coasts.[106]

Relatively few API people live in rural America, but their presence and experiences in rural communities is important to acknowledge and integrate into societal understandings of who lives in rural settings. While approximately 5.5% of the U.S. population is of Asian (5.3%) or Pacific Islander heritage (0.2%),[107] 1.1% of the rural U.S. population is Asian (1%) or Pacific Islander (0.1%).[108] As noted throughout this report, a common struggle for people of color (as well as LGBT people), in rural areas is the potential isolation from others with shared racial or ethnic (or LGBT) backgrounds, as well as isolation from culturally-competent resources and service providers. Given how few API people live in rural areas, it is likely that such isolation is even further amplified.

API people's experiences of economic insecurity, as well as discrimination, are diverse but often ignored. In California for example, 29% of Vietnamese people live in poverty, compared to 11% of Chinese people and 7% of South Asians.[109] Aggregating all API people together may obscure higher rates of poverty among some populations, as is the case in rural communities. While data show that rural API households have higher median household income than white rural families, looking at different communities with the API population shows a more nuanced picture. While rural Asian families had a median household income roughly 38% higher than rural white families, they also had a median income 55% higher than rural Pacific Islander families (see *Figure 19*). Additionally, rural white families' median household income was nearly $6,000, or 12% higher, than rural Pacific Islander families.[110]

Figure 19: Median Household Income Differs Across Rural Asian, White, and Pacific Islander Families



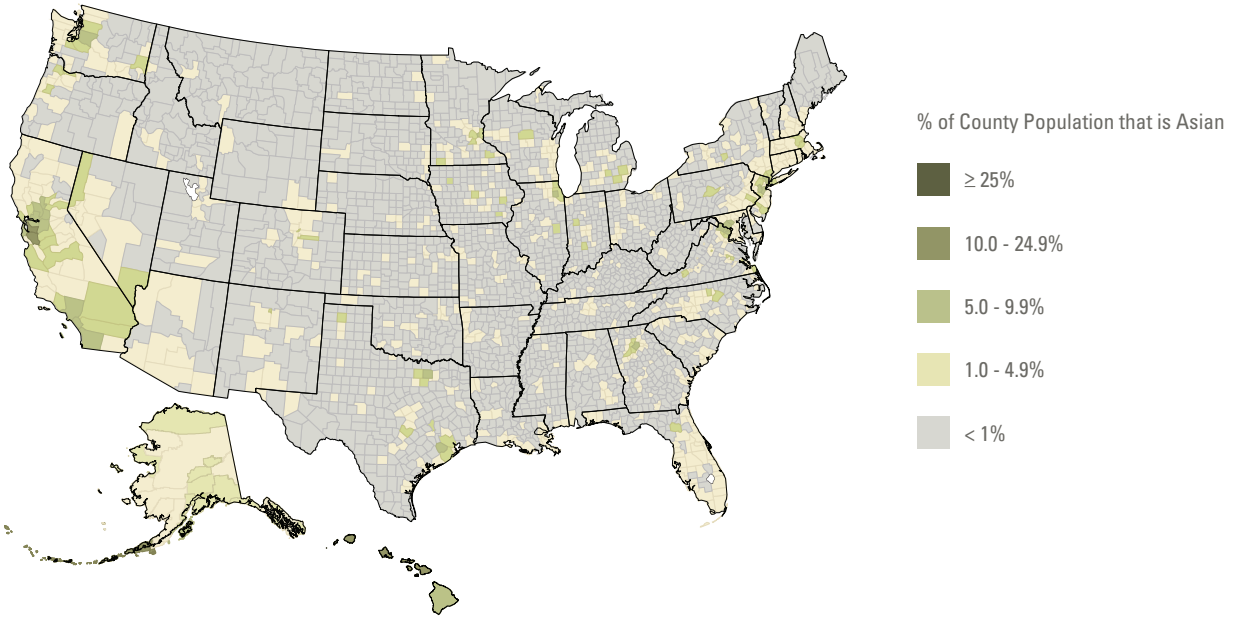
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey.

LGBT Asian and Pacific Islander adults have unique experiences compared to their non-LGBT API peers. *Figure 21a* on page 30 shows that Asian LGBT adults—and especially transgender API people—experience higher economic insecurity than their non-LGBT Asian peers, across multiple measures.[111] *Figure 21b* (on page 30) similarly shows that LGBT Pacific Islanders also experience higher economic insecurity than non-LGBT Pacific Islanders, with particularly large disparities in unemployment and food insecurity.

In addition to economic insecurity, APIs, including LGBT APIs, also experience significant discrimination. A 2019 Pew panel study showed that 75% of Asian Americans reported personally experiencing discrimination or unfair treatment because of their race or ethnicity.[112] In

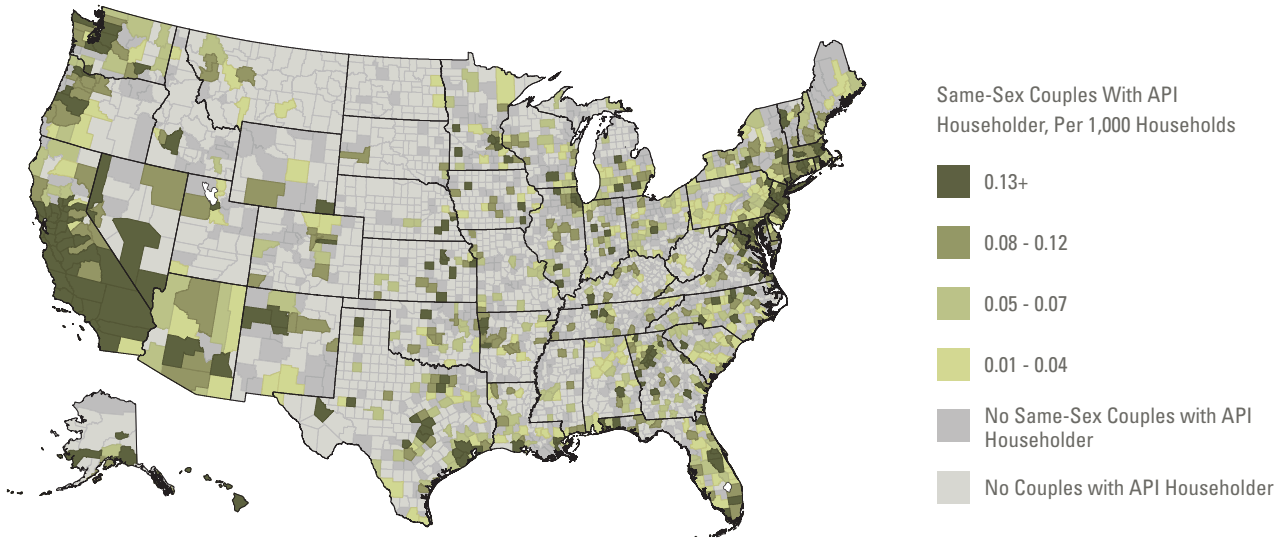
Figure 20: Asian and Pacific Islanders, including LGBT API People, Concentrated Along the U.S. Coasts

Figure 20a: Asian Population Concentrated Along U.S. Coasts



Source: Adapted from Elizabeth Hoeffel, et al. 2012. "The Asian Population: 2010." 2010 Census Briefs. U.S. Census Bureau.

Figure 20b: Same-Sex Couples with an API Householder Are Concentrated Along U.S. Coasts



Source: Adapted from Angeliki Kastanis and Gary Gates. 2013. "LGBT Asian and Pacific Islander Individuals and Same-Sex Couples." The Williams Institute. Based on 2010 U.S. Census. Population density categories set by source authors.

2017, a Harvard study showed that LGBT people of color (including Asian LGBT people) were more than twice as likely to report being personally discriminated against because of their sexuality or gender identity both when applying for jobs and when interacting with police.[113]

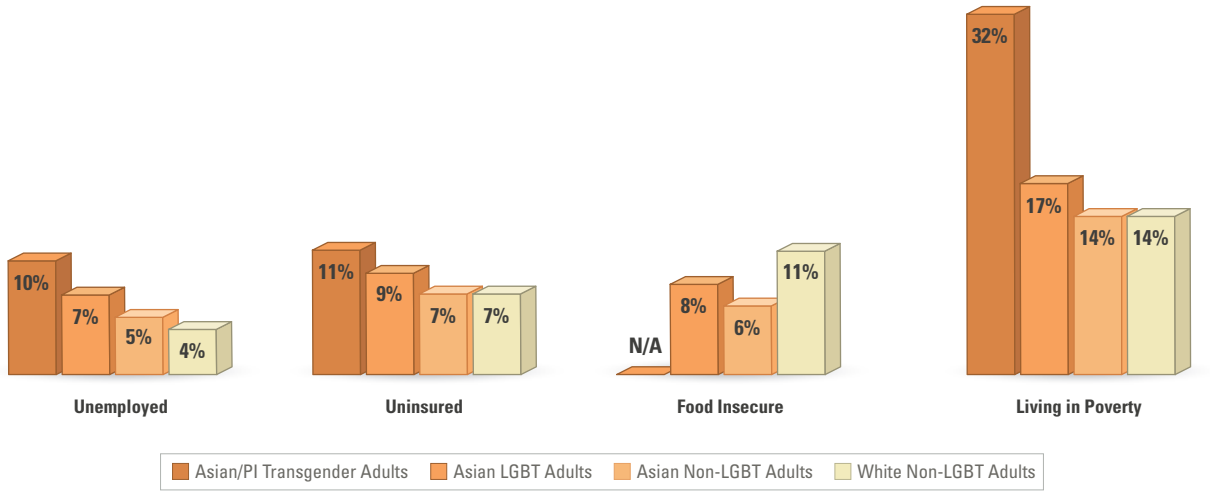
In conclusion, though relatively few API people live in rural areas, their experiences and their presence as part of rural America are both important to recognize. Data show that LGBT API experience higher economic insecurity than their non-LGBT API peers, and further

that experiences within the broader API population are internally diverse. In rural areas where there are generally fewer potential employers, healthcare providers, or social service providers (such as food banks or other forms of assistance for those with low incomes), LGBT and API people experiencing economic insecurity and/or discrimination may have even fewer resources to endure or respond to this adversity. This lack of resources can in turn amplify the impact of these negative experiences for LGBT Asian and Pacific Islanders who live in rural areas.

Figure 21: LGBT Asian and Pacific Islanders Experience Similar or Higher Economic Insecurity than Non-LGBT APIs and Whites

Figure 21a: LGBT Asians Experience Similar or Higher Rates of Economic Insecurity than Non-LGBT Asians and Whites

% of Adults Who Are...

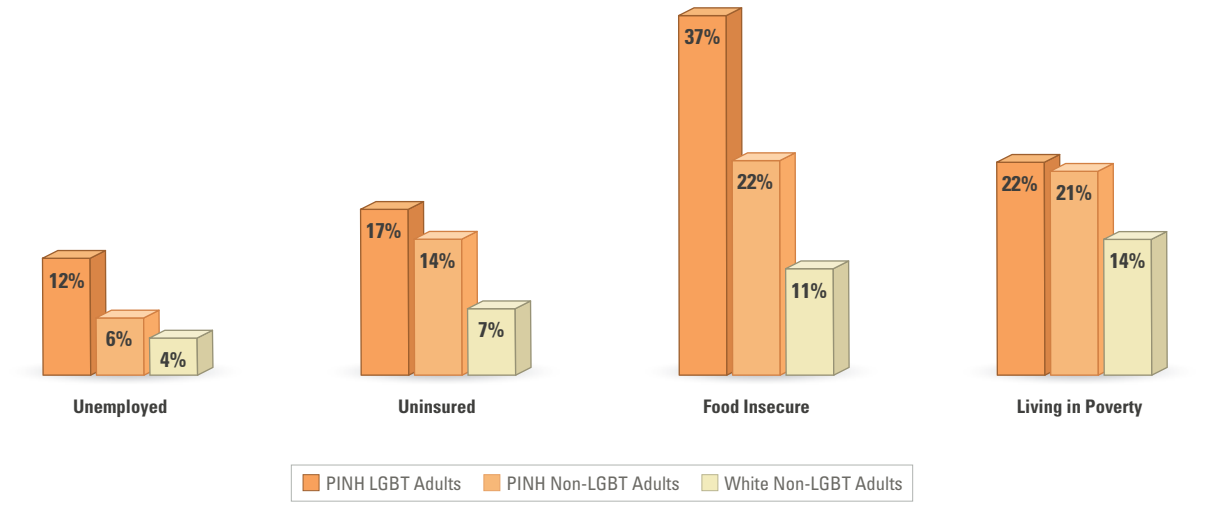


Note: Food insecurity data not available for Asian/Pacific Islander transgender adults. USTS data on Asian transgender adults include Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islanders, but Williams Institute's data do not.

Sources: "2015 U.S. Transgender Survey: Report on the Experiences of Asian, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Respondents" (Dec 2017); Williams Institute's LGBT Demographic Data Interactive (Jan 2019).

Figure 21b: LGBT Pacific Islanders and Native Hawaiians Experience Higher Economic Insecurity than Non-LGBT PI/NH and Whites

% of Adults Who Are...



Source: Williams Institute's LGBT Demographic Data Interactive (Jan 2019).

Rural Communities Provide New Homes for Refugees

As noted earlier, rural America is home to many immigrants, from many parts of the world. For refugees fleeing violence or persecution, they may have little choice as to where they are resettled, as policies are set by the federal government in partnership with states and local communities, but many refugees have also come to call rural America home.[k] And while currently states like California and Washington receive a large share of the refugees accepted by the U.S. government, historically rural America has played a unique role in the resettlement of refugees, many of whom are people of color.

For example, in 1975, Iowa became the first U.S. state to welcome Southeast Asian refugees to the country in the aftermath of the Vietnam War. Initially, the state resettled approximately 1,200 Tai Dam refugees. Later, Iowa welcomed refugees from Eastern Europeans and Bosnians fleeing the war in the Balkans. Over the past decade, most of the refugees to Iowa have arrived from Afghanistan, Bhutan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Iraq, Myanmar, Somalia, and Sudan.[114] To date, Iowa's Bureau of Refugee Services is the only state government run resettlement agency certified by the U.S. Department of State.[115]

In Georgia, one rural community, Clarkston, has welcomed a majority of the more than 37,000 refugees resettled in the state over the last 25 years. Nearly one in every three of Clarkston's almost 13,000 residents was born outside the United States, leading the local mayor to call the town "'the Ellis Island of the South,' a destination for international refugees that packs 40 nationalities speaking 60 languages into the town's 1.4 square miles."[116]

Since 1975, over 3 million refugees have been admitted to the United States. While the overall number of refugees admitted to the United States has waned as a result of actions by the Trump administration, rural communities continue to serve a critical role in providing safety and connection to refugees, who in turn can help to stabilize, grow, and enrich rural communities.

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[k] While the term "immigrant" describes people who voluntarily leave their countries of origin to move to another, the term "refugee" describes people who are forced to leave their home countries due to violence, persecution, or other reasons.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The April 2019 report, *Where We Call Home: LGBT People in Rural America*, contains a comprehensive set of recommendations across numerous areas, including:

- Improving visibility of LGBT people in rural communities and rural people in LGBT communities;
- Improving the experiences of LGBT people in rural areas in faith communities, schools and education, employment, housing, public accommodations, health care, the criminal legal system, and more;
- Addressing the disproportionate vulnerability of LGBT people to discrimination in rural states;
- Addressing the lack of policy protections and the prevalence of discriminatory laws in rural areas; and
- Supporting LGBT organizing and advocacy in rural areas.

MAP's website also contains a set of stand-alone recommendations documents for supporting LGBT people in rural communities, with each document geared toward a specific audience, including community organizations, educators, healthcare providers, policymakers, and more. A list of resources for LGBT people of color in rural communities can be found here. That said, there are several key recommendations that are particularly critical for LGBT people of color in rural America.

Pass—and enforce—nondiscrimination laws prohibiting discrimination in all areas of life including employment, housing, public accommodations, education, health care, and beyond. Given that LGBT people of color may experience discrimination based on their sexual orientation, gender identity, and their race or ethnicity, in addition to other characteristics, nondiscrimination laws are vital in ensuring full participation in all aspects of life. Research finds that LGBT people of color, particularly those in rural communities, may be less likely to live in states with comprehensive nondiscrimination laws. Thus, while state nondiscrimination laws are needed, full, comprehensive federal nondiscrimination legislation is needed to update the country's civil rights laws to ensure that discrimination against LGBT people of color is addressed.

Repeal HIV criminalization laws and work against the broader criminalization of people of color. HIV criminalization laws are based on fears and stereotypes, and they punish and criminalize people (disproportionately those who are people of color and/or LGBT) simply for being HIV-positive. These laws should be repealed, and states' HIV-prevention policies should instead be based in science and public health best practices. Additionally, other practices and policies that contribute to the broader criminalization of people of color, such as the criminal legal system's overreliance on fines and fees to fund municipal operations, should be directly addressed.

Improve competency of service providers. Rural service providers should seek out training and information about how best to serve LGBT people, including LGBT people of color. Too often, providers who regularly work with LGBT populations may not have diverse staff, materials, or programming that is inclusive of LGBT people of color. And community-specific resources focused on the needs of people of color may not fully address the unique concerns of LGBT people of color. There may be opportunities for collaboration and partnership in rural communities either within the community or with regional or state organizations. For example, healthcare clinics in urban centers that serve white LGBT people could create partnerships with rural health clinics serving primary communities of color to build knowledge and infrastructure to meet the needs of LGBT people of color in rural communities.

Improve access to quality, affordable health care, including services related to transgender care, HIV treatment and prevention, and addiction recovery. Rural areas face a scarcity of healthcare providers, and many rural communities have seen hospital closures and other obstacles to accessing care, even while rates of HIV diagnoses, addiction disorders, or other medical needs have dramatically increased. HIV-related medical care and education is of particular importance for rural communities of color, and especially in the South. Additional providers, resources, and programming are critical to respond to the ongoing health needs of rural communities.

Expand research and data collection on LGBT people in rural areas, including adding questions about sexual orientation and gender identity to government surveys. Data on LGBT people are extremely limited, and small sample sizes mean that analysis of the experiences and demographics of LGBT people of color, particularly in rural communities, can be challenging. National, state, and local governments, as well as researchers and nonprofits, should include questions about sexual orientation and gender identity on their survey instruments, including the U.S. Census; state health, labor, and other surveys; and data collection tools.

CONCLUSION

Millions of people of color, including LGBT people of color, call rural America home. However, the strengths, structures, and challenges of rural life mean that any experience of rejection—and acceptance—are amplified, particularly for LGBT people of color who sit at the intersections of multiple marginalized identities. Additionally, the social and political landscape of rural communities offers fewer LGBT-inclusive protections and more discriminatory laws. And while some rural states have relatively better LGBT policy climates than others, rural states with poorer LGBT policy climates also have higher populations of people of color—meaning that LGBT people of color in rural states are especially likely to experience hostile policy climates.

Despite these challenges, many LGBT people of color live in rural communities for the same reasons as their non-LGBT peers, including connection to family, strong social bonds, and a way of life that speaks to them. This report highlights both the joys and the challenges of rural life for LGBT people of color. And in doing so, this report emphasizes many opportunities to improve the experiences of LGBT people of color in rural America. By addressing the overall needs and challenges of rural areas, while also directly addressing the specific needs and experiences of LGBT people of color in rural areas, meaningful and long-lasting change is possible in rural America—the place that so many LGBT people of color call home.

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