

Fresno Community Action Report

LGBTQ Community Center | Fresno (2023)

UNDERSTANDING THE STRUGGLES OF FRESNO'S LGBTQ COMMUNITY: A HOLISTIC ANALYSIS.

With [LGBTQ+ Advocacy Day](#) taking place on August 29, it is important that Fresno's citizens are aware of what problems plague the city's LGBTQ community today. Given that Fresno is given one of the [lowest LGBTQ-accessible city ratings](#) in California per the Human Rights Campaign in various aspects (housing, bathrooms, healthcare, etc), it is unfortunate how little research has been done on the region.

The intention of this article is not to provide new information, but summarize what issues have already been researched and isolate what more can/should be done to guide future research. All of the research cited is specific to Fresno unless stated otherwise.

Currently, research has been done in two areas of LGBTQ life—homelessness and healthcare.

Here are the main findings:

1. Housing

Facts:

- 34% of LGBTQ populations report that safe housing is a challenge (Fobear & Fitzpatrick, 2021).

- 24% of LGBTQ populations are denied housing on the basis of gender/sexuality by landlords (Fobear & Fitzpatrick, 2021).
- 37% of LGBTQ populations face homelessness (in comparison to 24.8% of the general population), but only 24% seek public assistance (Fobear & Fitzpatrick, 2021).
- Of the 52% denied shelter, 40% attributed that denial to their gender/sexual orientation (Fobear & Fitzpatrick, 2021).
- 47% of LGBTQ populations report harassment, discrimination, or abuse by the staff at shelter (Fobear & Fitzpatrick, 2021).

Explanation:

Unfortunately, LGBTQ populations in Fresno face significant housing discrimination and homelessness. The most likely cause for this is rising rent prices while wages have not caught up. LGBTQ populations are especially vulnerable to these price hikes as they make 10% less on average than their cisgender-heterosexual counterparts. While discrimination based on gender/sexuality is illegal, there is no way to enforce it since denial of housing is not verifiable—many report being perfectly fine with a landlord until they meet in person and the landlord suddenly proceeds to deny the house. In addition to discrimination and price hikes, LGBTQ face the compounded disadvantage of having limited houses to choose from because several neighborhoods are notoriously not inclusive of their identity (Fobear & Fitzpatrick, 2021).

Solutions:

The reports advocate not only for policies to incentivize lower housing prices, but also housing with more LGBTQ focus/services. Many shelters are not mindful of the needs of LGBTQ populations and those who run the shelters are not trained to show respect or cater to particular needs. The reports argue that Fresno should off of the sanctuary housing programs at Fresno's Economic Opportunities Commission and make it more common place (Fobear & Fitzpatrick, 2021). Furthermore, with Creative LLC vs. Elenis which allows business discrimination to LGBTQ folks on the basis of religion, it is crucial that Fresno expresses it's explicit disapproval for denying houses based on gender, sexual orientation, or religious beliefs.

2. Healthcare

Facts:

- 90% of Fresno participants had to educate their doctors about being LGBTQ (Fobear, 2021).
- 22% of the LGBTQ population are refused care after revealing their identity (Fobear, 2021).
- 22% of the LGBTQ population are mistreated/degraded by their medical provider (Fobear, 2021).
- Almost 30% of the LGBTQ people travel outside Fresno for gender-affirming care, and of those, 31% traveled more than 50 miles (Fobear, 2021).
- 17.4% of the LGBTQ population do not have insurance coverage (Fobear, 2021).

Explanation:

With Fresno having one of the highest rates of STDs across the state and thousands facing discrimination by healthcare providers on the basis of gender/sexuality, healthcare inequality is faced by nearly every facet of Fresno's LGBTQ community. Most research, however, is focused on gender-affirming care for the transgender community.

Namely, the resources for gender-affirming care is limited. Most participants surveyed cite only having two options—Dr. Julie Nicole or Planned Parenthood—which is not enough to accommodate the entire population. Other doctors simply deny service because they do not know enough about gender-affirming care. Furthermore, you need insurance for most services which is its own set of barriers.

Not only are there issues with changing one's legal name or gender marker, but several insurance plans require a specialist to diagnose you with gender dysmorphia before being able to get treated. These diagnoses, that come in the form of a "referral letter," are often an arduous task to obtain and harmful to the patient when they are denied the letter because it is seen as invalidating one's identity. On top of that, the types of gender-affirming care one has access to are limited—several treatments such as gender-affirming surgeries and voice feminization are not provided.

On a day-to-day basis, LGBTQ folks also face discrimination simply by their regular providers. Many are not aware of LGBTQ-specific needs, ask invasive questions, or deny proper treatment on the basis of gender or sexuality. The front desk is especially reported to not be mindful and out their patients. Even the pharmacists artificially change the drug dosages or refuse to fill a prescription at their own whims (usually for testosterone) (Fobear, 2021; Fitzpatrick, J., 2021).

Solution:

The reports argue for more LGBTQ-specific training to providers, specialists, and the front desk staff to be mindful of their needs. Compounded with more events to reduce LGBTQ stigma and creating demand for a larger supply of gender-affirming specialists, the goal of the policies is to target the root cause of issues faced, which is ignorance (Fitzpatrick, C., 2023).

Conclusion

As one can see from the studies above, a lot of research is yet to be done—from understanding youth perspectives in the education system to employment to HIV/AIDS care, the LGBTQ Community Center strongly encourages people to think about just how pervasive queerphobia is in Fresno's community and together, create change for the better.

Works Cited

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