

POLITICOPRO

Data reveal economic impact of pandemic for LGBT community

The report highlights how economic hardship has affected various groups within the LGBT community differently.

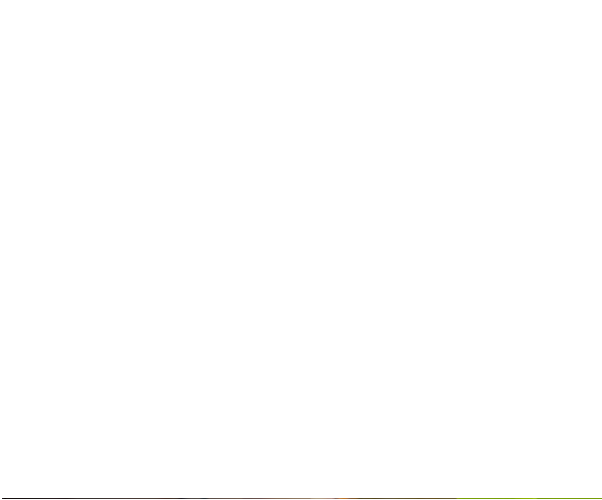
BY: SHAYNA GREENE | 06/28/2022 12:01 PM EDT | UPDATED 06/28/2022 04:11 PM EDT



The report, which coincided with June's Pride Month, highlights how economic hardship has affected various groups within the LGBT community differently. | Omer Messinger/Getty Images

LGBT households are more likely to live in poverty, report losing a source of income and experience more difficulty paying household expenses than non-LGBT households, [a report from the Center for American Progress shows](#).

CAP used data from [the Census Bureau's Household Pulse Survey](#), which began incorporating questions about sexual orientation and gender identity in July 2021.



The report, which coincided with June's Pride Month, highlights how economic hardship has affected various groups within the LGBT community differently. Before the Census Bureau collected this data, the little information that was gathered was mostly from same-sex couples living together, overrepresenting white and wealthy individuals.

“Employment discrimination and workforce exclusion are definitely key contributors,” said Caroline Medina, senior policy analyst at CAP's LGBTQI+ Research and Communications Project. “I think, though, it's really important to recognize sort of more holistically that LGBTQI folks, LGBTQI folks of color or with disabilities are experiencing discrimination across multiple aspects of life that also impacts their economic insecurity.”

Though the Biden administration has [targeted workforce issues](#) exacerbated by the pandemic — including through the [Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act](#) — there is [more work to be done](#) to tackle the unique challenges LGBT workers endure, advocates say.

The Census data only classified LGBT individuals, not the broader LGBTQI+ community.

The pandemic's impact

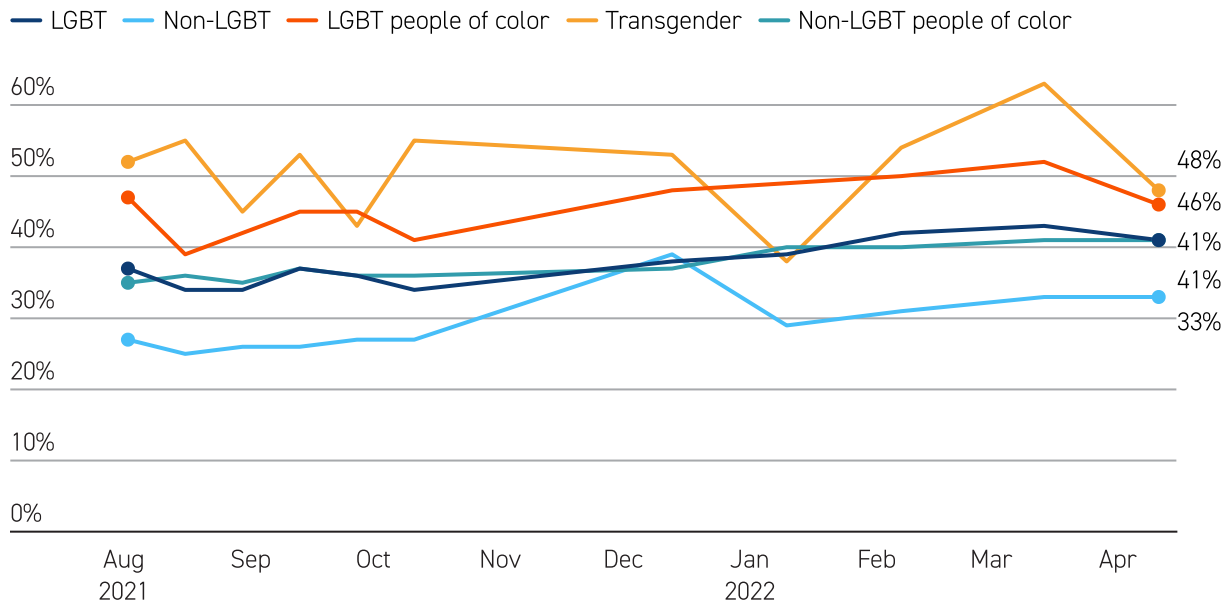
Based on the Census Bureau survey, CAP identified numerous economic trends faced by LGBT respondents.

Poverty: Respondents were asked in the HPS survey what their income was in 2020 and LGBT individuals were more likely than their non-LGBT counterparts to report a household income of less than \$25,000 that year — 20 percent versus 14 percent, respectively. LGBT respondents of color (26 percent) and transgender respondents (28 percent) were even more likely to earn less than \$25,000 per year.

Paying bills: From July 2021 to April 2022, 38 percent of LGBT individuals overall were more likely to have difficulty paying for typical household expenses, which included food, rent or mortgage, car payments, medical expenses, and student loans, among other things. The rates were consistently highest among LGBT respondents of color (46 percent) and transgender respondents (50 percent).

LGBT individuals have greater difficulty paying their usual household expenses than non-LGBT individuals overall

Share of individuals who reported that it had been "somewhat difficult" or "very difficult" for their household to pay their usual expenses* in the past 7 days



*Including basic amenities such as food, rent, mortgage, and medical expenses. The U.S. Census Bureau collected these data in intervals from July 21, 2021, to April 11, 2022. The dates included refer to the last day of data collection for each interval. All columns not indicating 'people of color' are not race-specific

Source: [U.S. Census Bureau, "Household Pulse Survey Public Use File \(PUF\), Weeks 34-41"](#)

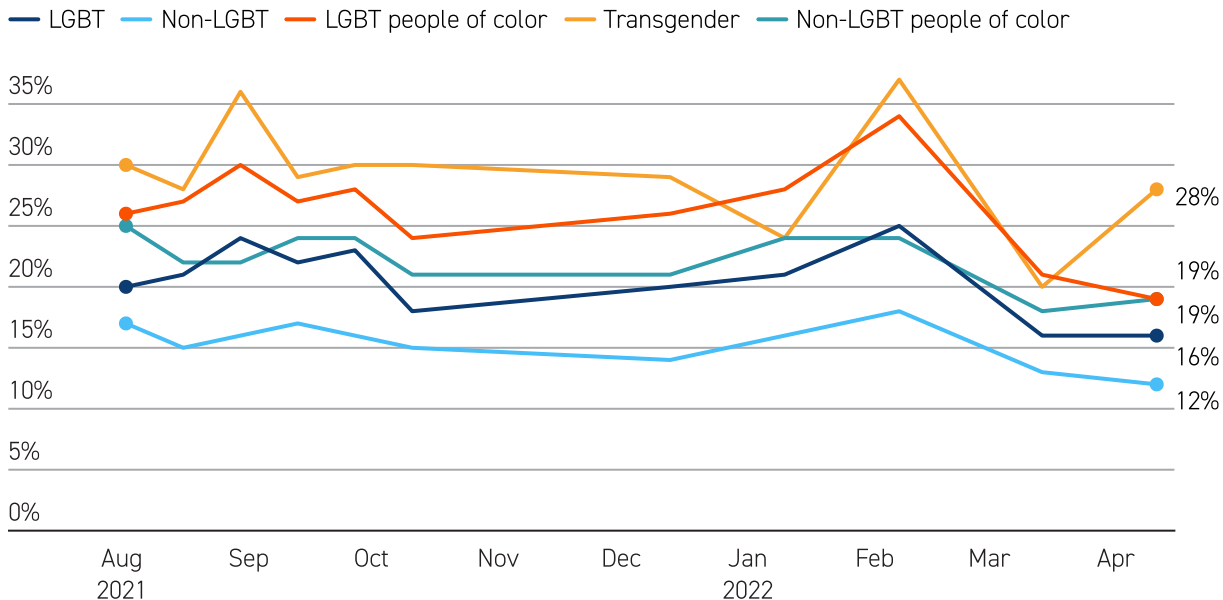
This material was created by the Center for American Progress (www.americanprogress.org).

Unemployment benefits: LGBT respondents, particularly transgender respondents, were more likely than non-LGBT respondents to report receiving unemployment insurance since January 2022.

Employment: From July 2021 to April 2022, 21 percent of LGBT individuals reported that they or someone in their household had lost a source of employment income in the past four weeks, compared to 15 percent of non-LGBT individuals. These disparities were more pronounced for LGBT respondents of color (26 percent) and transgender respondents (29 percent).

LGBT individuals report greater loss of employment income during the pandemic than non-LGBT individuals overall

Share of individuals who reported that they or someone in their household lost their employment income in the past 4 weeks



The U.S. Census Bureau collected these data in intervals from July 21, 2021, to April 11, 2022. The dates included refer to the last day of data collection for each interval. All columns not indicating 'people of color' are not race-specific

Source: [U.S. Census Bureau, "Household Pulse Survey Public Use File \(PUF\), Weeks 34-41"](#)

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Compounding factors

LGBT respondents were found to be overrepresented in frontline jobs affected by the coronavirus pandemic — almost twice as likely to work at food, grocery and convenience stores, with higher rates for LGBT respondents of color and transgender people.

Those industries suffered more from the pandemic than others, experiencing shutdowns, layoffs and greater exposure to Covid-19.

Charleigh Flohr, a senior research manager at the Human Rights Campaign, said that even though there isn't a lot of evidence explaining why LGBT workers were found to be concentrated in these industries, there are some factors that could contribute.

For example, Flohr said that people may gravitate to the food and retail industries because of "lower levels of higher education attainment" and "all of the sort of economic consequences to familial rejection growing up, mental health challenges from rejection and stigma and bias."

Many of these industries are “either low-wage, they’re lower wage than the average wage of the typical worker or they don’t have as many benefits,” said Flohr.

Lacking benefits like health insurance and paid leave, or having coverage that excludes certain types of care or doesn’t factor in same-sex relationships, can become an additional financial burden for workers.

HRC found through its own research that LGBT workers were more likely to [have experienced a cut in work hours](#), take unpaid leave and face pay cuts.

“There really was a diverse array of experiences,” said Flohr. “While one community or subcommunity within the broader LGBT community might have been really struggling with unemployment, another one at the same time could have been struggling with pay cuts.”

Discrimination cited as a big factor

In 2020, the Supreme Court ruled in [Bostock v. Clayton County](#) that Title VII of the Civil Rights Act protects LGBT employees against discrimination. Despite that landmark ruling, discrimination is still a major problem, advocates say.

“I think the core of why the community has faced economic disparity for decades and generations really boils down to roughly one thing. There's obviously more than one thing, but I think one of the most key things is discrimination,” Flohr said. “It's not just being denied the opportunity to do a job when you sit down for the interview. It's being denied promotions, it's being denied raises or benefits packages — going beyond just wages.”

In May 2021, [UCLA's School of Law William Institute conducted a survey](#) of 935 LGBT adults employed as of March 2020 and found that almost 9 percent said they were fired or not hired because of their sexual orientation or gender identity in the past year — 11.3 percent of LGBT employees of color compared to 6.5 percent of white LGBT employees.

The Biden administration has taken some steps to address the issue. President Joe Biden issued [an executive order last year that](#) directs all federal agencies that enforce federal laws prohibiting sex discrimination to also prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Another [executive order directed](#) federal agencies to promote equity, civil rights, and equal access to opportunities and benefits for LGBT communities and other underserved communities.

Legislative solutions

In order to address these economic issues, advocates say there needs to be [an improvement of data collection](#) — which then can be used to inform policy and legislation.

“The Household Pulse Survey adding specific questions about sexual orientation and gender identity really is a milestone,” said CAP’s Medina. “It’s the first time that the Census Bureau has asked those questions on one of their own sponsored surveys so we’re super pleased to see that development.”

Last week, the Biden administration came out in support of [the LGBTQI+ Data Inclusion Act](#), which would [require federal agencies to enhance data collection](#) for the community while also prioritizing safety and privacy.

House Majority Leader [Steny Hoyer](#) said: “Although there is evidence that LGBTQ Americans — especially transgender people — still face substantial prejudice in areas such as housing, employment, and education, we need more data to determine the scope of these challenges and to devise policy solutions that work for all. We must make sure that LGBTQ Americans do not go unseen.”

CORRECTION: An earlier version of this report misstated the timeframe for poverty rates for LGBT respondents. Those statistics are based on respondents' incomes from 2020.



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