

HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN (HRC)

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Introduction

As COVID-19 sweeps the world, hundreds of thousands of people have contracted the virus, and every community has been affected. The lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) community in the United States (U.S.) — along with many communities around the globe (as documented [here](#) and [here](#)) — face unique challenges. In addition to the greater risk of health complications as a result of COVID-19, LGBTQ Americans are more likely than the general population to live in poverty and lack access to adequate medical care, paid medical leave, and basic necessities during the pandemic. While lack of data collection on sexual orientation and gender identity has limited generalizable findings about LGBTQ people's economic and health outcomes during the pandemic, the following memo provides data explaining health and economic risks of the community as well as evidence that the community has been adversely impacted on an economic level.

Data Collection and COVID-19

Federal officials have failed to collect data on demographics such as sexual orientation and gender identity in the United States. As a result, information available about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the **16 million** LGBTQ people in the U.S. remains largely unknown. For example, both health data collection efforts from the Centers for Disease Control and economic data collection efforts from the Bureau of Labor Statistics fail to collect these data.

These health and economic data would be critical in helping to indicate how to allocate resources to communities being affected the most by the virus, yet the death toll remains unknown among LGBTQ people as well as key economic outcomes such as employment.

In an effort to help implement and design policies that would support the LGBTQ community during the pandemic, HRC has produced several research briefs and reports with some of the best available data on LGBTQ people and their risks and outcomes during the pandemic.

LGBTQ People are at Greater Economic & Health Risk

In early March 2020, HRC released a [research brief](#) showing the various ways in which LGBTQ people in the United States -- as well as across the globe -- are at greater health and economic risk during the pandemic. Key findings are below.

Health

COVID-19 is a zoonotic virus with some of its most common symptoms being respiratory. People with compromised respiratory systems are at greater risk of health complications if infected with the virus. LGBTQ people are more likely to exhibit these types of respiratory risks with regard to smoking and asthma rates. HRC Foundation's [analysis](#) of 2018 CDC data found:

- **37%** of LGBTQ adults smokers smoke every day compared to **27%** of non-LGBTQ people
- **21%** of LGBTQ adults have asthma, compared to **14%** of non-LGBTQ people

Economic

LGBTQ people are more likely to work in jobs in highly affected industries, often with more exposure and/or higher economic sensitivity to the COVID-19 crisis. HRC Foundation [estimates](#) that **five million** LGBTQ U.S. adults work in five industries: 1) Restaurants and food service, 2) retail, 3) K-12 and 4) higher education, and 5) hospitals.

Being able to afford and access medical care is essential to testing for COVID-19, as well as treating the symptoms of the disease. However, LGBTQ people are more

likely than their non-LGBTQ peers to lack health coverage or the monetary resources to visit a doctor, even when medically necessary. According to HRC Foundation's [analysis](#) of 2018 CDC data:

- **17%** of LGBTQ adults do not have any kind of health insurance coverage, compared to **12%** of non-LGBTQ adults
- **23%** of LGBTQ adults of color, **22%** of transgender adults, and **32%** of transgender adults of color have no form of health coverage.

Available Data Shows LGBTQ People Have Been Negatively Impacted

In a series of nonprobability polls, HRC has been tracking key economic outcomes of LGBTQ adults in the United States. The first poll conducted in early April (April 6, 2020) showed [evidence](#) that LGBTQ people were being affected by the pandemic on an economic level. Data collection continued from April 16 to May 6. At the time, national data showed that communities of color, particularly Black communities were being affected significantly both on a health and economic level. HRC's second series of polls [showed](#) that LGBTQ communities of color (nonwhite communities) were being disproportionately impacted by the pandemic on an economic level. HRC's most recent data and reporting shows [evidence](#) that this pandemic is having a significant impact on LGBTQ communities of color, transgender communities, and especially transgender communities of color.

According to the data, **more than half of transgender and transgender people of color lost work hours, while one in five become unemployed. Transgender and transgender people of color are also more likely to have taken unpaid leave or a pay cut.**

Based on these data, it is imperative that global data collection efforts measure sexual orientation and gender identity demographics and continue to expand our understanding of LGBTQ people's vulnerabilities during this pandemic.

References to Review

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