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# Understanding and Addressing the Social Determinants of Health for Black LGBTQ People: An Example of the Way Forward for Health Centers

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Strengthening **H**ealth with **I**Nnovation and **E**ngagement

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# Our Roots

## Fenway Health

- Independent 501(c)(3) FQHC
- Founded 1971
- Integrated Primary Care Model, including Behavioral Health, HIV/STI prevention and care
- 35,000 patients
  - Half LGBT
  - 10% transgender

## The Fenway Institute

- Research, Education and Training, Policy





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# Today's Faculty

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Psychotherapist, Fenway Community Health, Boston,  
MA

# Disclosure

I have no financial conflicts of interest.

**“There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives”**

**“If I didn’t define myself for myself, I would be crunched into other people’s fantasies for me and eaten alive”**

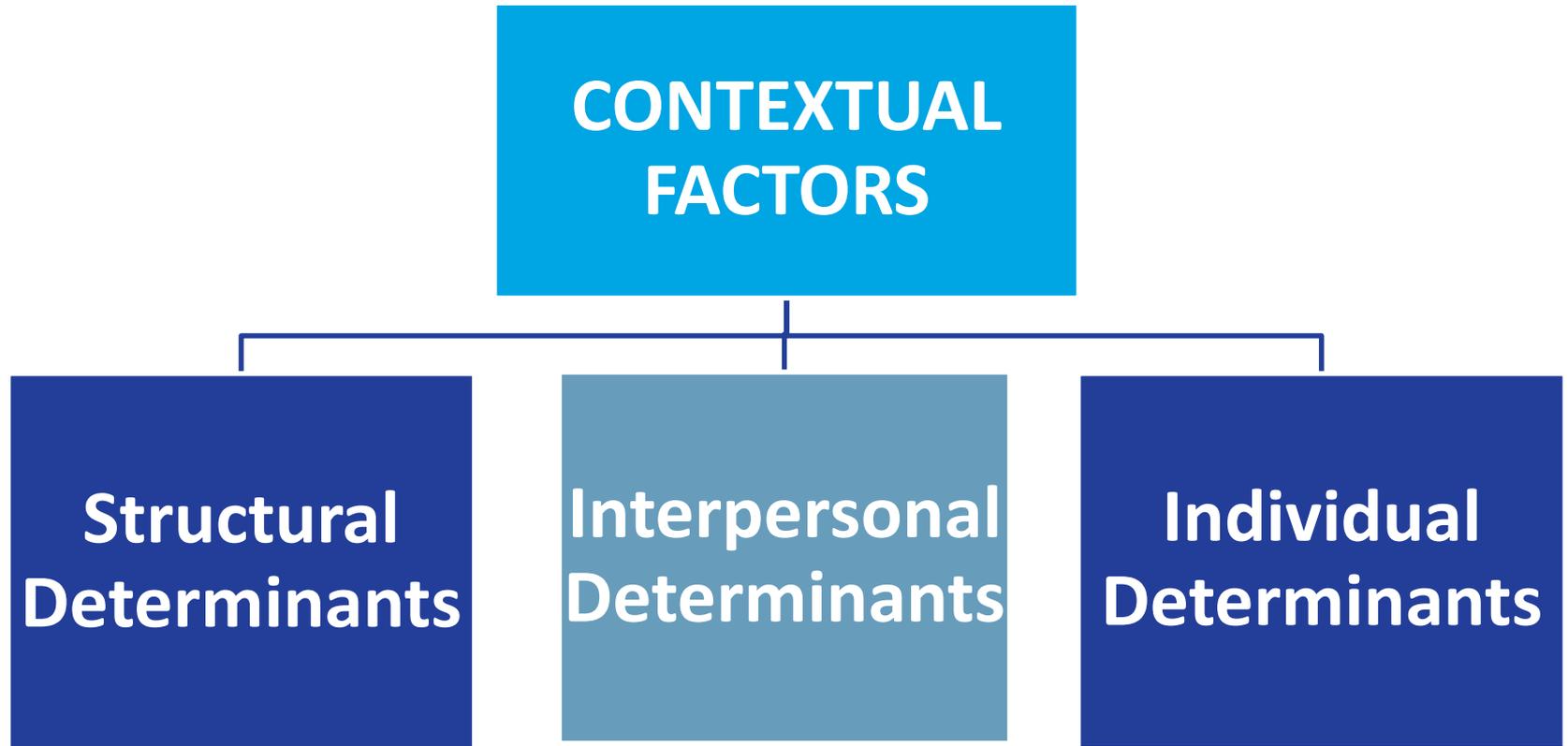
-Audre Lorde, “Black-Lesbian Feminist Mother Love Poet”



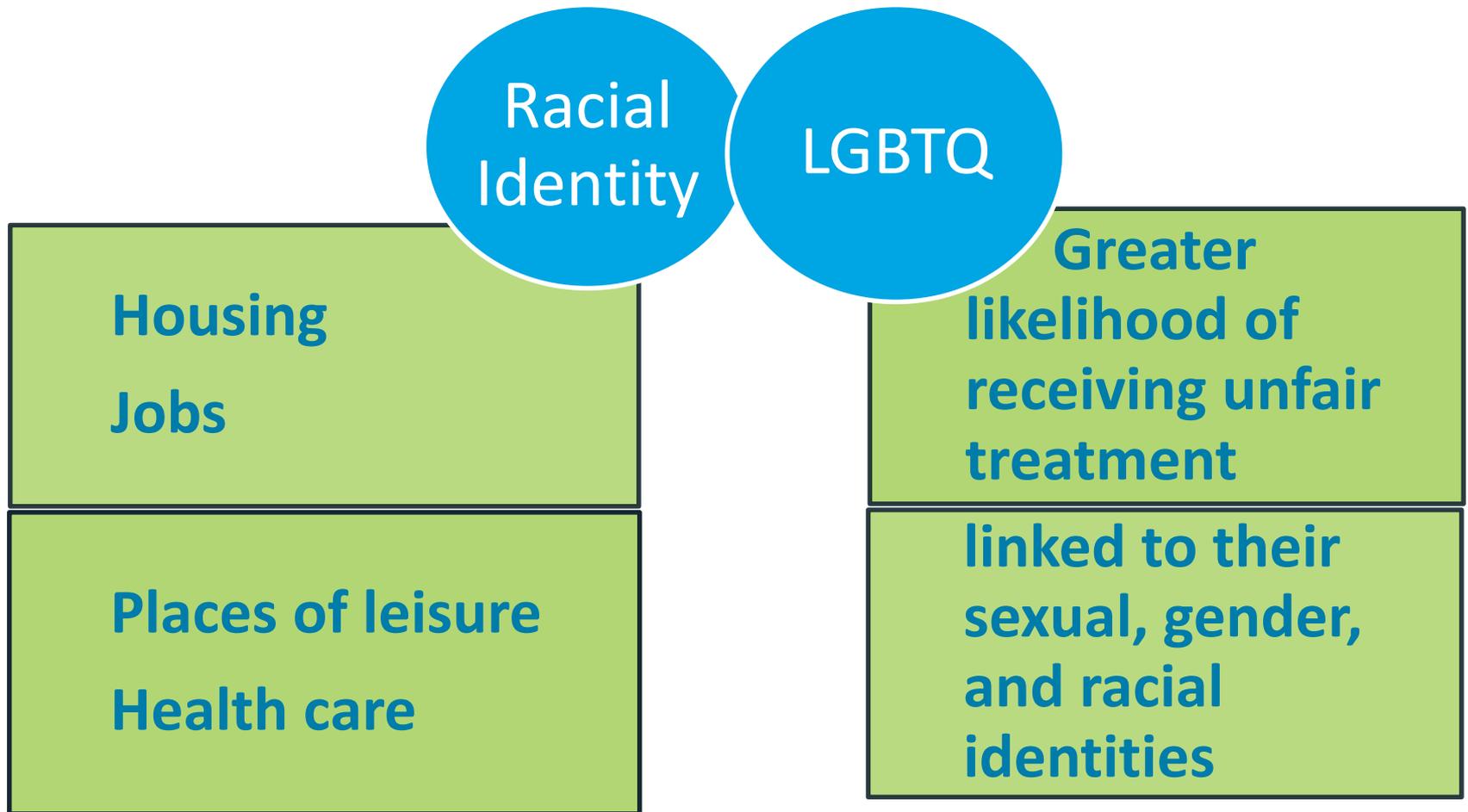
# Presentation Overview

- **Contextual Factors**
  - Structural Determinants
  - Interpersonal Determinants
  - Individual Determinants
- **Way Forward**
  - Increasing Awareness and Integration of the Lived Experiences of Black LGBTQ People
  - Examining and Changing our Personal Views and Behaviors
  - Assessing the Institutional Cultures of our Health Services
  - Providing Resources and Mechanisms to Empower Black LGBTQ People
  - Supporting the Resilience of Black LGBTQ People

# Factors Affecting Black LGBTQ



# Structural Determinants



# Hate/Violence Against LGBTQ of Color

According to National Coalition of Anti-Violence Program, of the total number of homicides in 2017

## RACE AND ETHNICITY OF VICTIMS OF ANTI-LGBTQ HOMICIDES

Race and Ethnicity of Victims n=52

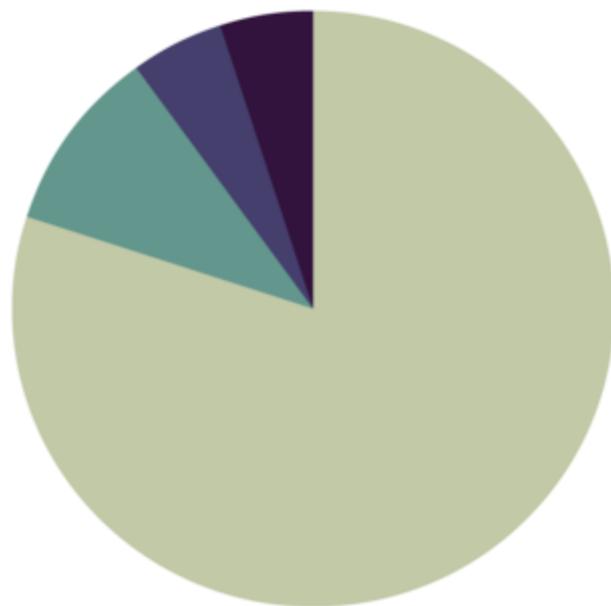
NCAVP



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# Hate/Violence Against Transgender Women



## **MURDERS OF TRANSGENDER WOMEN BY RACE**



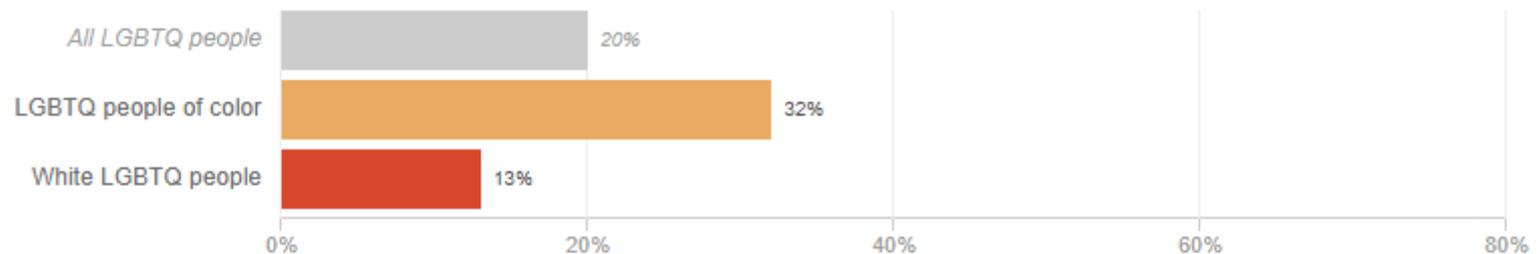
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 **TRANSGENDER DAY  
OF REMEMBRANCE**

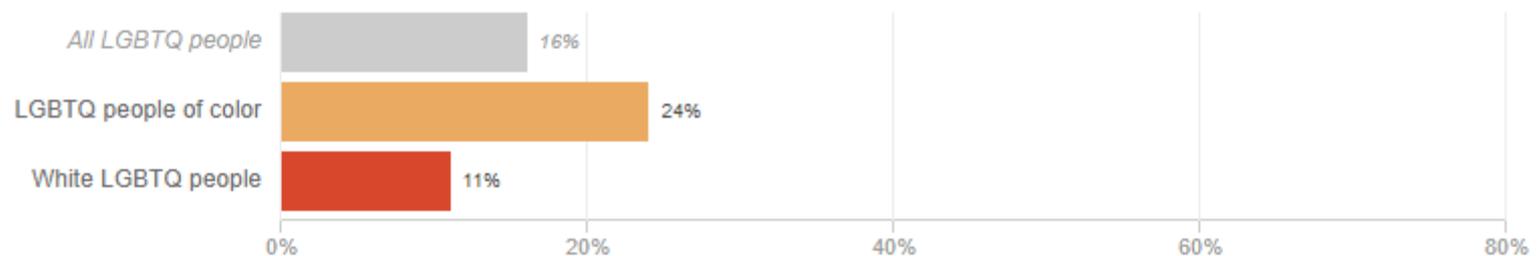
# Structural Determinants

Percentage of LGBTQ people, by race or ethnicity, saying they have ever been **personally discriminated against** in each situation because they are LGBTQ

## APPLYING FOR JOBS



## INTERACTING WITH POLICE



Source: NPR/Robert Wood Johnson Foundation/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health: "Discrimination in America: Experiences and Views of LGBTQ Americans." Survey of 489 U.S. adults conducted Jan. 26-April 9, 2017. The margin of error for the full LGBTQ sample is +/- 6.6 percentage points. Each question was asked of half of the sample.

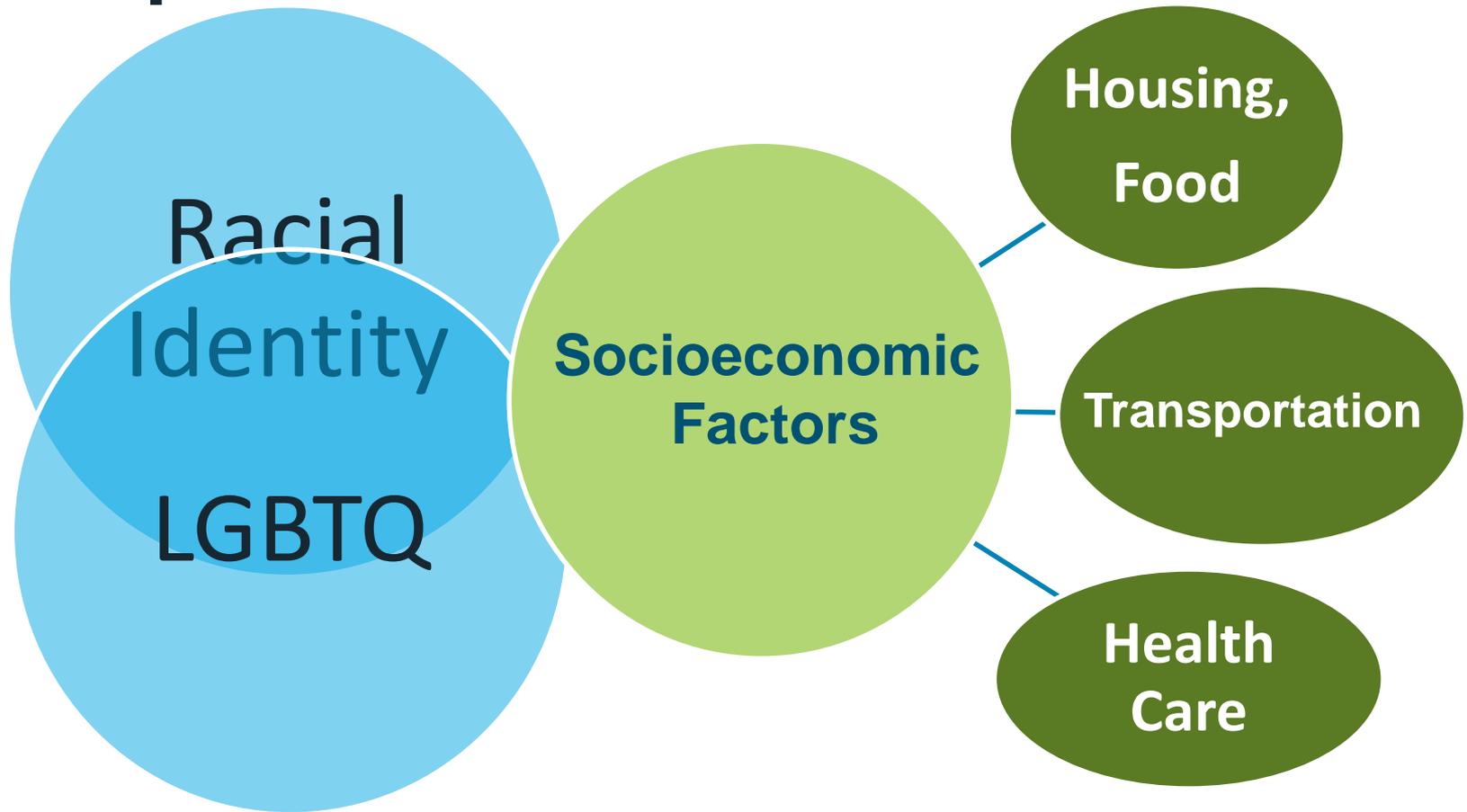
Credit: Matthew Zhang/NPR



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# Compounded burden of SES



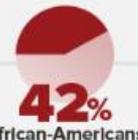
# Compounded burden of SES



Approximately 2.2 million LGBT people experienced a time in the last year when they did not have enough money to feed themselves and their families.

## Among LGBT people...

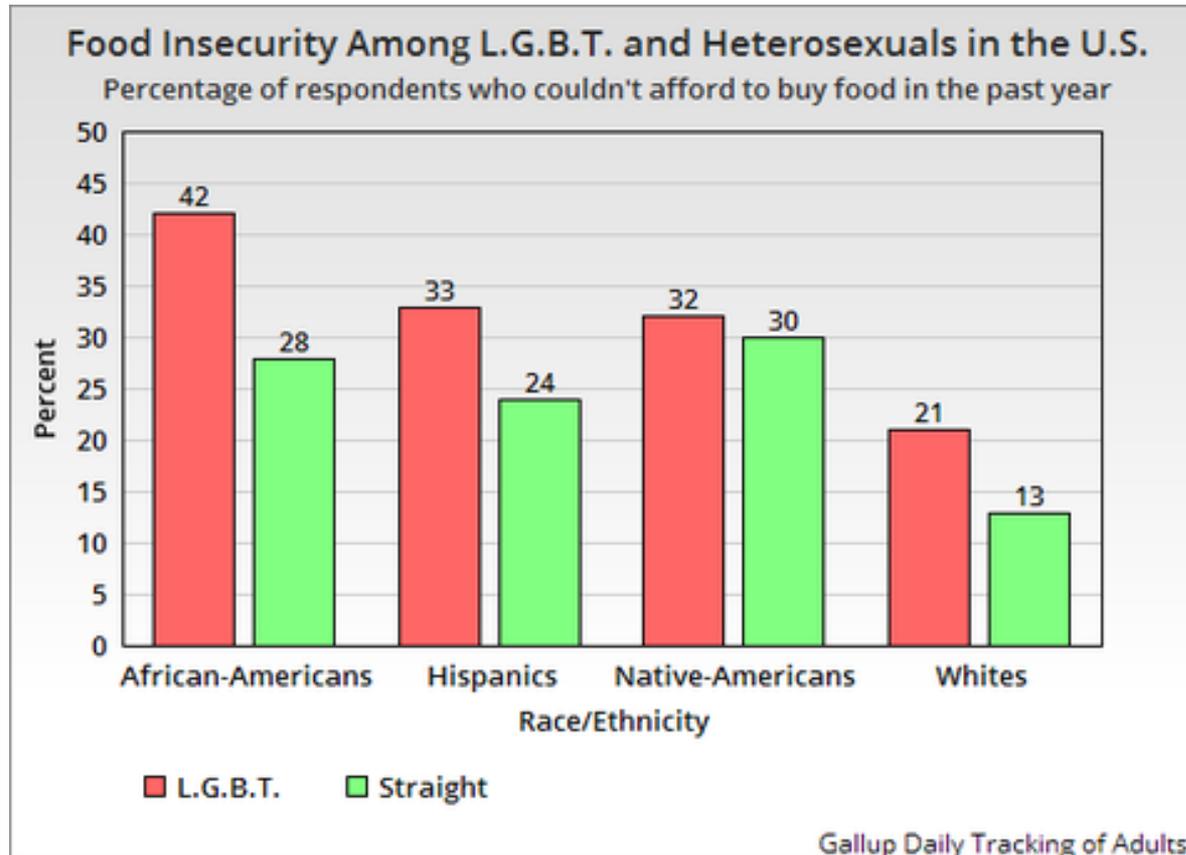
Food insecurity is not distributed evenly across the LGBT community. Rather, women, certain racial and ethnic minorities, unmarried individuals, and those with children in the home are particularly vulnerable to food insecurity.



...did not have enough money for the food that they or their families needed in the past year.

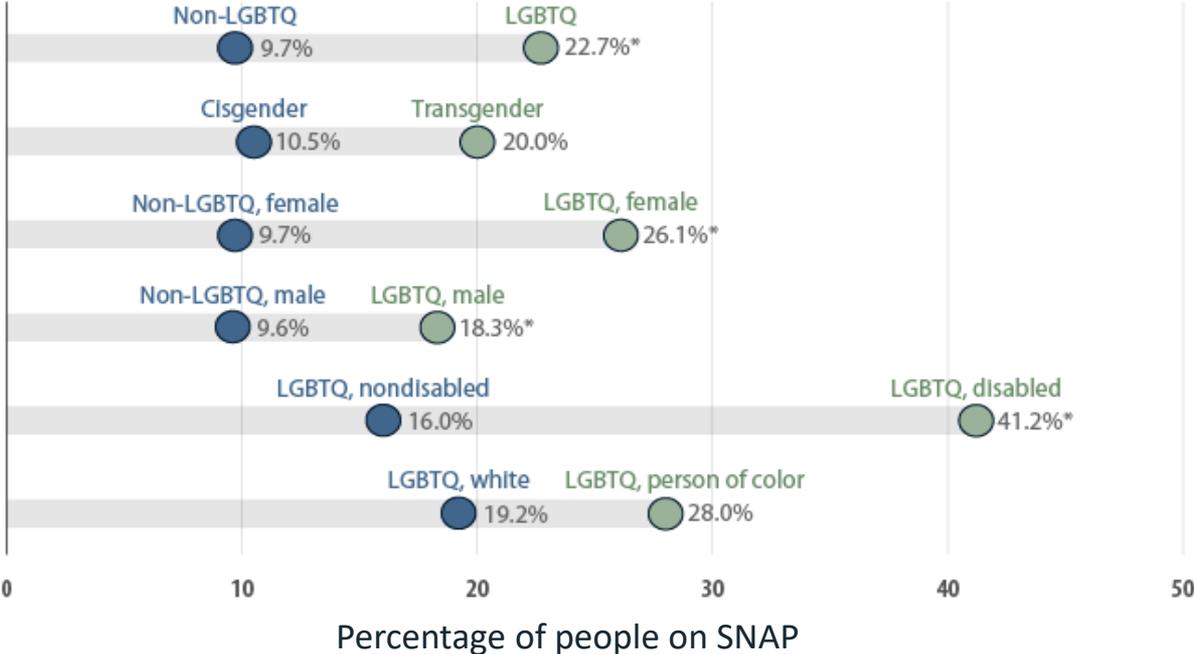


# Compounded burden of SES



# Compounded burden of SES

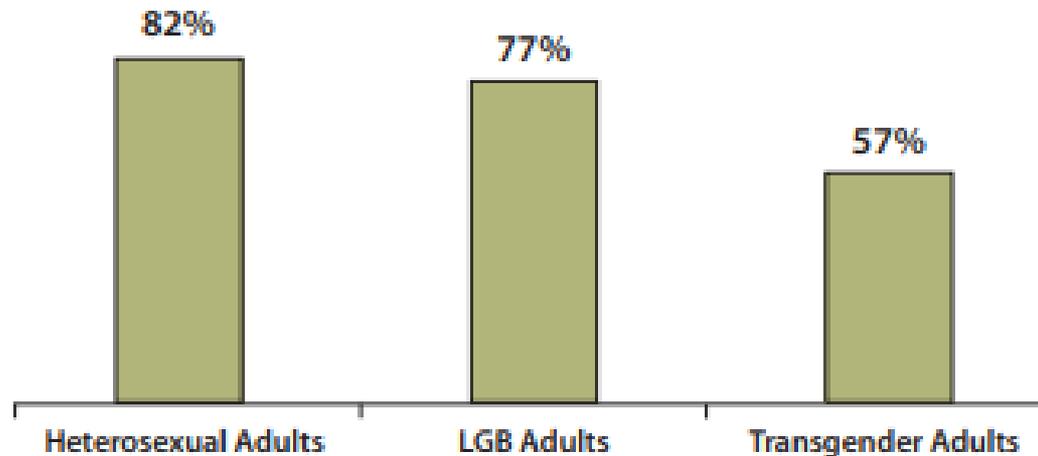
**FIGURE 1**  
**LGBTQ people, especially those with disabilities, are more likely to receive SNAP**  
Percent of respondents reporting that they or their family received SNAP, by demographic



\* Indicates a statistically significant different at the  $p < .05$  level

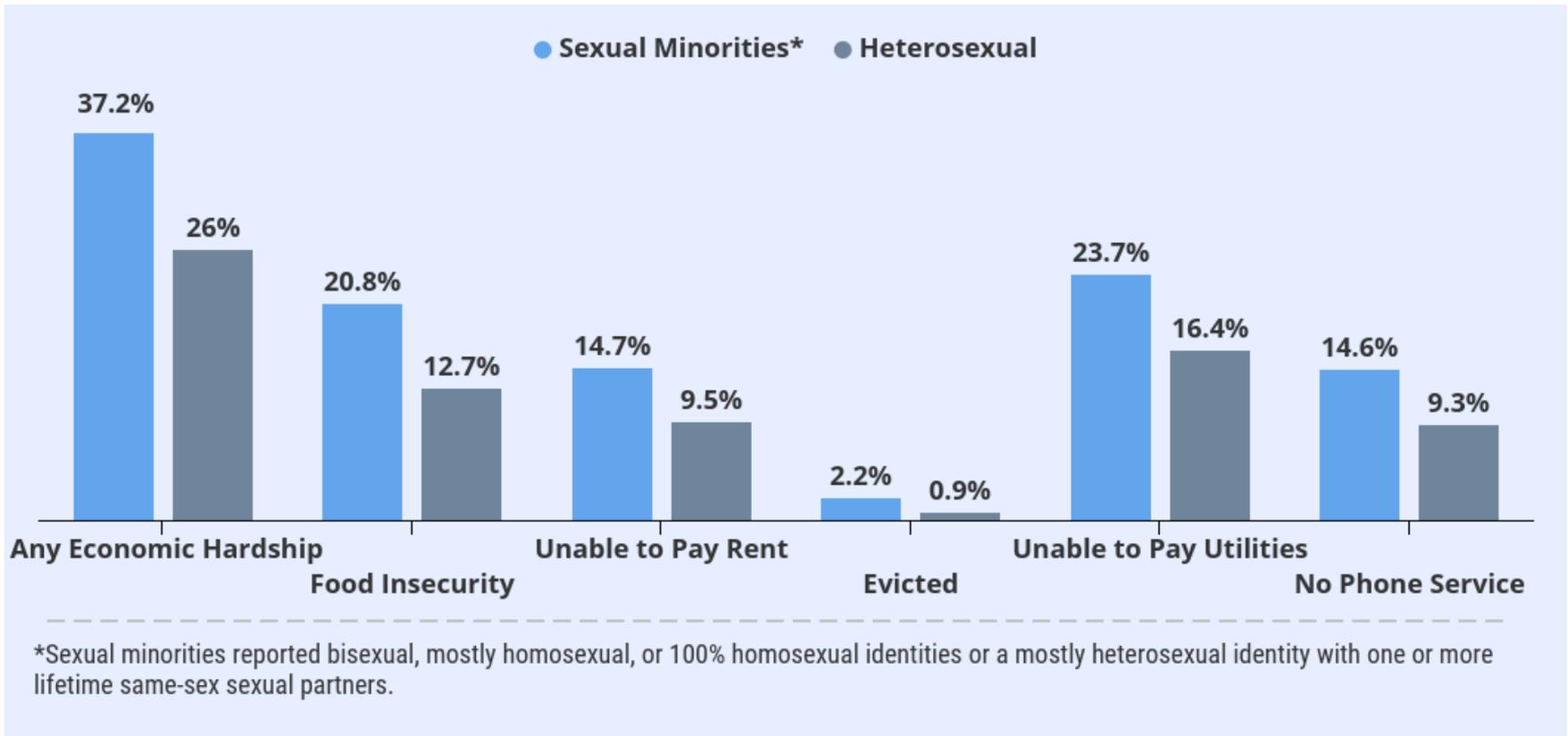
# Structural Determinants

Figure 31: Percent of Adults with Health Insurance



Source: Jeff Krehely, "How to Close the LGBT Health Disparities Gap," Center for American Progress, December 2009.

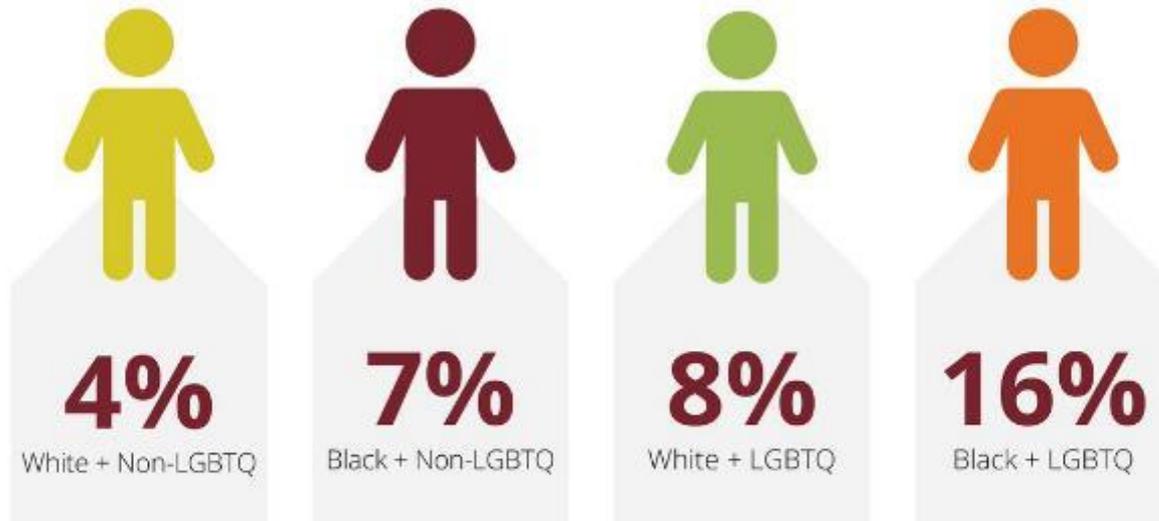
# Compounded burden of SES



# Compounded burden of SES

**Figure 2.** Youth who are black *and* LGBTQ reported the highest rates of homelessness

Explicit homelessness over the last 12 months, self-reported by young adults, ages 18-25. These estimates do not include reports of couch surfing only.



[Source: VoYC National Survey]

# Interpersonal Determinants

A family member may offer support in the face of racism stressors, but not be accepting of LGBTQ identity

White co-worker may relate to a person's LGBTQ identity, yet engage in racial microaggressions

**Intersecting Identities**

Ongoing challenges deciding whether to end certain relationships or set boundaries on the extent of the relationships and amount of contact

May have difficulty finding relationships where they can be completely accepted in all their intersecting identities as a Black LGBTQ person.



# Interpersonal Determinants

“ I feel like a lot of people were bullying me for both targets...and definitely a lot of people tried to go at it because oh, ‘he’s black but he’s also gay so if we can’t pick on the black part, we’re going to pick on the gay part more.’ ” — Dontae, 12th grade

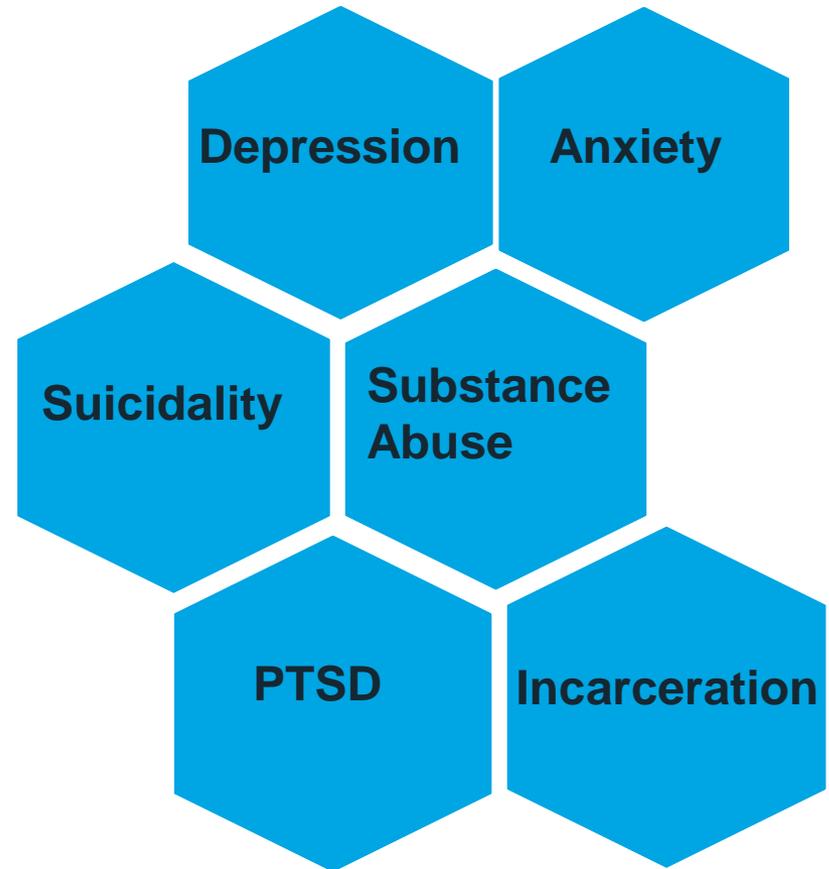
“Be it on the factory floor or in a board meeting; evading questions about family life can be like dodging bullets if you think that revealing your sexuality will make work relations difficult. LGBT people like myself are very aware of the fact that we live in a heteronormative society.”-Bella Qvist

“Teachers and staff are not educated when it comes to a transgender student and therefore do nothing about it, and most of the time they also question my gender and make me embarrassed, and everyone thinks I’m a freak of nature.”—  
Anonymous Student, 11th grade



# Individual Determinants

- **Disproportionate behavioral health struggles**
- **Lack of culturally and racially competent mental health care for Black LGBTQ**
- **Difficulty seeking social support or mental health services and treatments due to stigma and discrimination**



# Individual Determinants

- For LGBTQ people aged 10–24, suicide is one of the leading causes of death.
- LGBTQ youth are 4 times more likely to attempt suicide, experience suicidal thoughts or engage in self-harm than straight people.
- Between 38-65% of transgender individuals experience suicidal ideation.
- One study found that compared with their White counterparts, Black LGBTQ youth had significantly lower prevalence of 1-year suicidal ideation/self-harm yet they had a significantly higher prevalence of suicide attempts.



# Individual Determinants

- Another study found that 11.6% Black LGBTQ youth were diagnosed with PTSD compared to 6.1% of White LGBTQ youth
- In addition, 16.3% of Black LGBTQ youth had suicidal ideation in the past 12 months and 9.2% had a suicide plan.
  - However, 18.2% of White LGBTQ youth had suicidal ideation and 6.2% had a plan
- Also, 31.2% of Black LGBTQ youth had attempted suicide in their lifetime, compared to 28.1% of White LGBTQ youth.
- In contrast, 14.2% Black LGBTQ youth were diagnosed with major depression compared to 24.2% of White LGBTQ youth.

# Individual Determinants

**Seventy-seven percent** of LGBTQ youth surveyed report that on average they had felt down or depressed in the past week.

**Only forty-one percent** had received psychological or emotional counseling to address these issues in the past 12 months.

**LGBTQ youth of color** face even greater challenges in accessing counseling services.



*"My fear keeps me from seeing a counselor about things like my anxiety and depression. I don't know how they might react [to my LGBTQ identity], so I'd rather go online or talk to my other queer friends about it."*

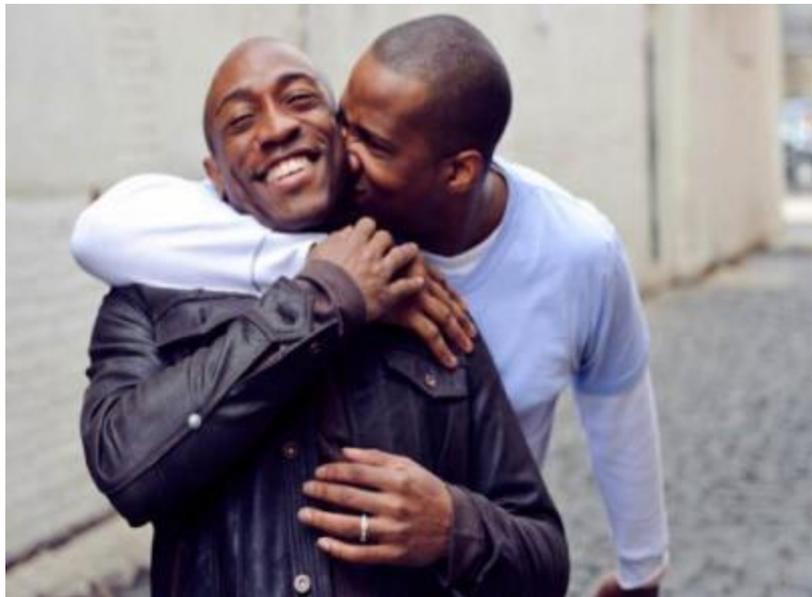


# 2015 APA Survey of Psychology Health Service Providers

Demographic Characteristics		N	%
Gender Identity	Female	2730	59.2
	Male	1871	40.6
	Transgender	s	0.1
	Other	s	0.2
	Total	4611	100.0
Age	Under 30	s	0.2
	30-34	s	5.2
	35-39	414	9.1
	40-44	383	8.4
	45-49	417	9.2
	50-54	451	9.9
	55-59	577	12.7
	60-64	785	17.3
	65-69	703	15.5
70 or older	569	12.5	
Total	4545	100.0	
Race/ Ethnicity <sup>a</sup>	American Indian/Alaska Native	12	0.3
	Asian	113	2.5
	Black/African American	120	2.6
	Hispanic	200	4.4
	Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	s	0.1
	White/Caucasian	4029	87.8
	Multiracial/Multiethnic	80	1.7
	Other	s	0.7
Total	4587	100.0	
Hispanic Ethnicity	Not Hispanic/Latino/Spanish	4370	95.6
	Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano	78	1.7
	Puerto Rican	25	0.5
	Cuban	25	0.5
	Other Hispanic/Latino/Spanish Origin	77	1.7
Total	4575	100.0	
Sexual Orientation	Heterosexual or Straight	4128	90.2
	Gay	110	2.4
	Lesbian	109	2.4
	Bisexual	94	2.1
	Prefer not to answer	120	2.6
	Other	17	0.4
	Total	4578	100.0



# Case Example : How Social Determinants Affect HIV Health Outcomes in Black Gay, Bisexual, and Queer (GBQ) Men



- Black (GBQ) men are disproportionately more likely to be living with HIV in the U.S.
- However, compared to White GBQ men, Black GBQ men engage in lower or similar levels of sexual risk and substance use behaviors, and are more likely to report preventive behaviors.

**What then explains the disparity in prevalence of HIV among Black GBQ men?**

## Structural Factors

1. Black unemployment:8%  
White unemployment:4%
2. Low income/Poverty (Median Black net worth: \$16,000)
3. Blacks make up 56% of all incarcerated
4. 43% of African Americans enroll in college

## Interpersonal Factors

1. Sex with partners of the same race/ethnicity
2. Greater risk of HIV due to the greater percentage likelihood that their partners are living with HIV. (African American gay and bisexual men ages 13 to 34 received 36% of HIV diagnoses)
3. Partly due to geographic clustering of people by race/ethnicity, reflective of biased structural housing policies and lending systems.

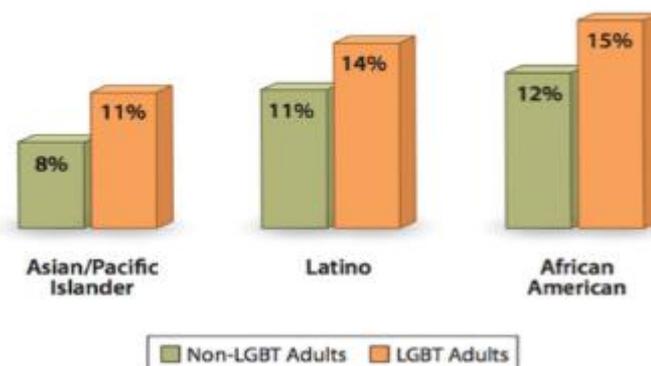
## Medical Mistrust

1. More likely to distrust health care providers
2. Long history of discriminatory treatment of the Black and LGBTQ communities.
3. Encountering homophobic and racist attitudes
4. Adverse effect on mental health
5. Potentially make Black GBQ less likely to engage in health care or negotiate protection consistently with their partners.

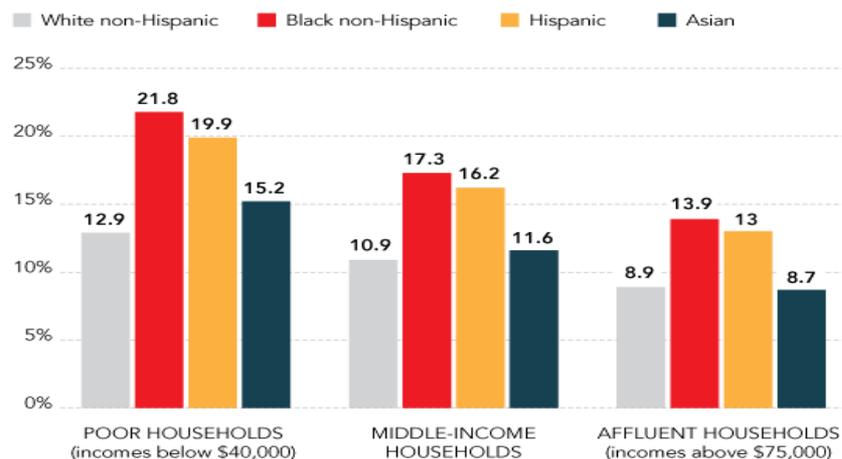
# Structural factors Rooted in Historic Racism

- 1. Black unemployment: 8%
- White unemployment: 4%
- 2. Low income/Poverty
- (Median Black net worth: \$16,000)
- 3. Blacks make up 56% of all incarcerated

**Figure 5: Unemployment Rates**  
By Sexual Orientation/Gender Identity and Race/Ethnicity



Average neighborhood poverty by race/ethnicity and household income in metropolitan regions, 2005–2009



Source: US2010 Project

THE HUFFINGTON POST



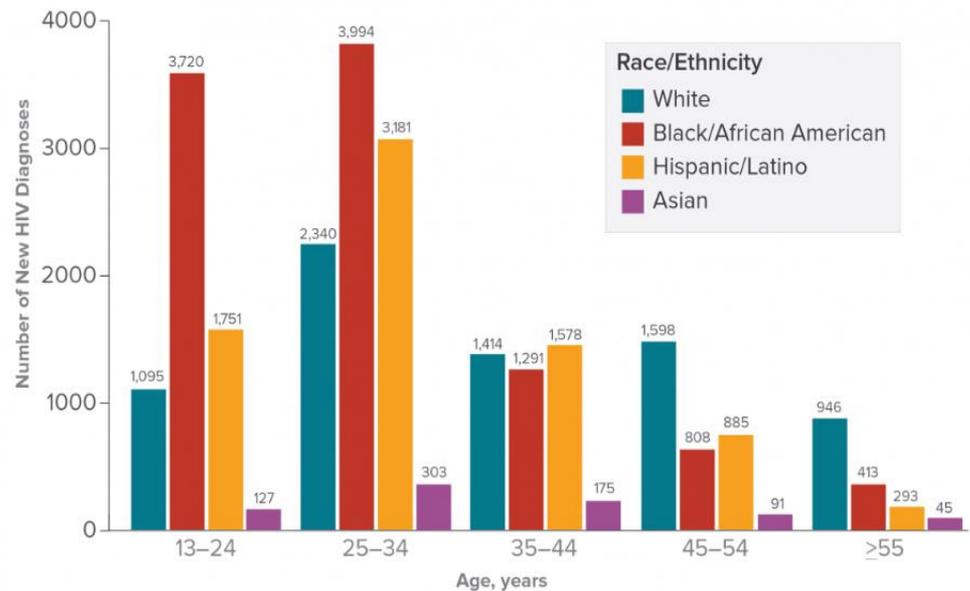
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# Interpersonal factors linked to structural oppression

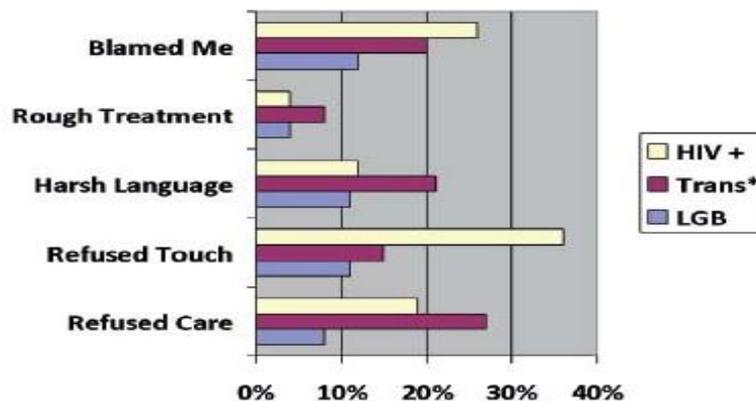
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- Partly due to geographic clustering of people by race/ethnicity, reflective of biased structural housing policies and lending systems.

HIV Diagnoses Among Gay and Bisexual Men  
By Age and Race/Ethnicity in the United States and 6 Dependent Areas, 2016

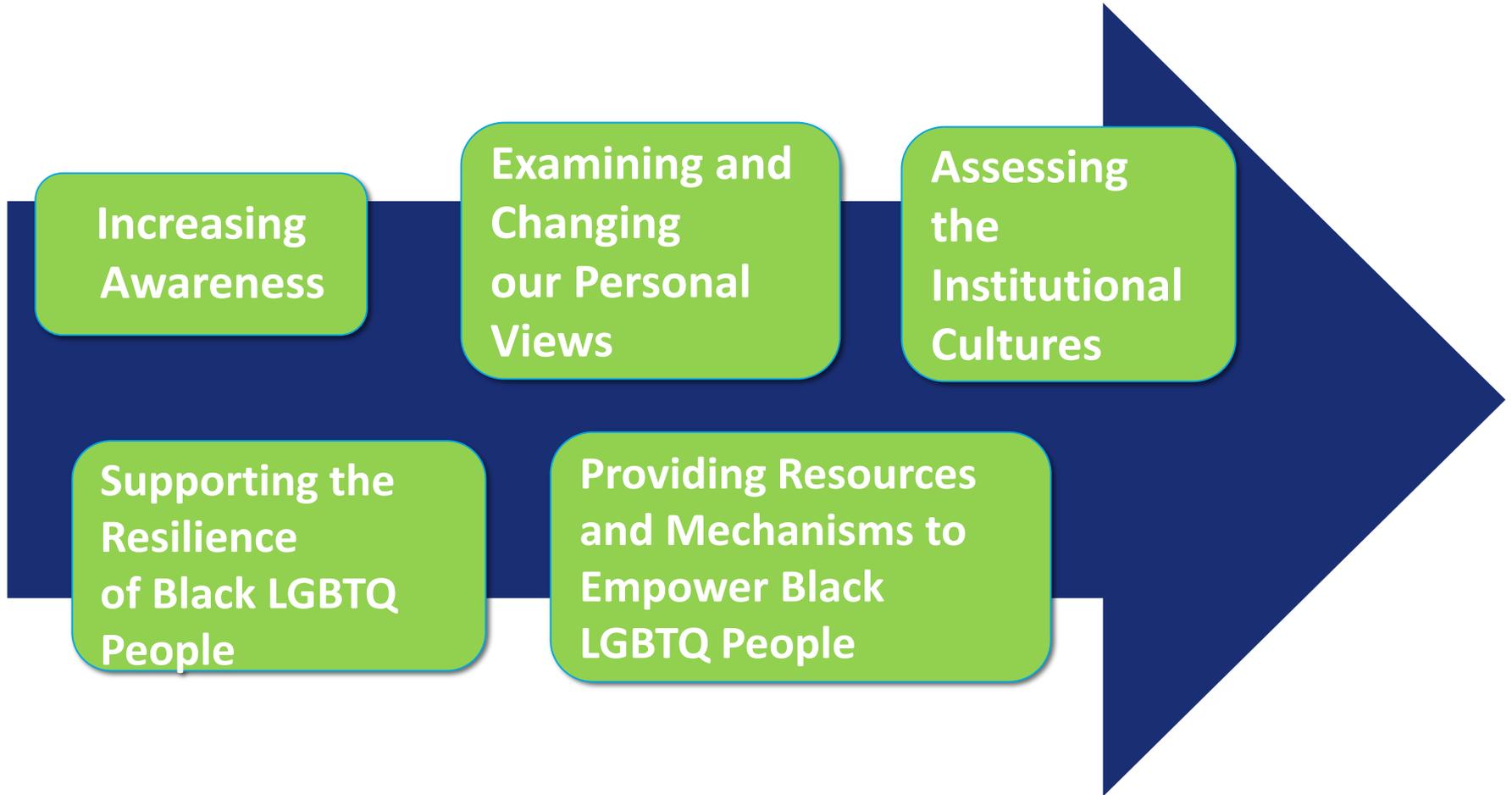


# Medical Mistrust rooted in Historic Racism

- More likely to distrust health care providers
- (30% of lesbians and bisexual women said they'd put off seeing a doctor)
- Long history of discriminatory treatment of the Black and LGBTQ communities.
- Encountering homophobic and racist attitudes (Doctors would use more closed posture and they had their arms crossed, or had their hands in their pockets)
- Potentially make Black GBQ less likely to engage in health care or negotiate protection consistently with their partners.



# A WAY FORWARD



# Increasing Awareness and Integration of the Lived Experiences of Black LGBTQ People

**Actively involving Black LGBTQ people when designing policies or changes.**

**Having Black LGBTQ people and their voices at each table (without tokenizing one voice/representative)**

**Having a diverse representation in leadership roles, advisory boards, human resources, and staff/providers**

**Occasional cultural sensitivity trainings are not enough**



# Examining and Changing our Personal Views and Behaviors

- Take an honest and critical inventory of the messages and ideas we have been taught over our lifespans.
- Examine our day-to-day behaviors that may contribute to the oppression of Black LGBTQ people.
- Resist any inclination to conclude that we are already competent and doing good work, even if we are ourselves Black, LGBTQ, or both.
- Examine our views and behaviors continually.



# Assessing the Institutional Cultures of our Health Services

How is our institution experienced by Black LGBTQ people?

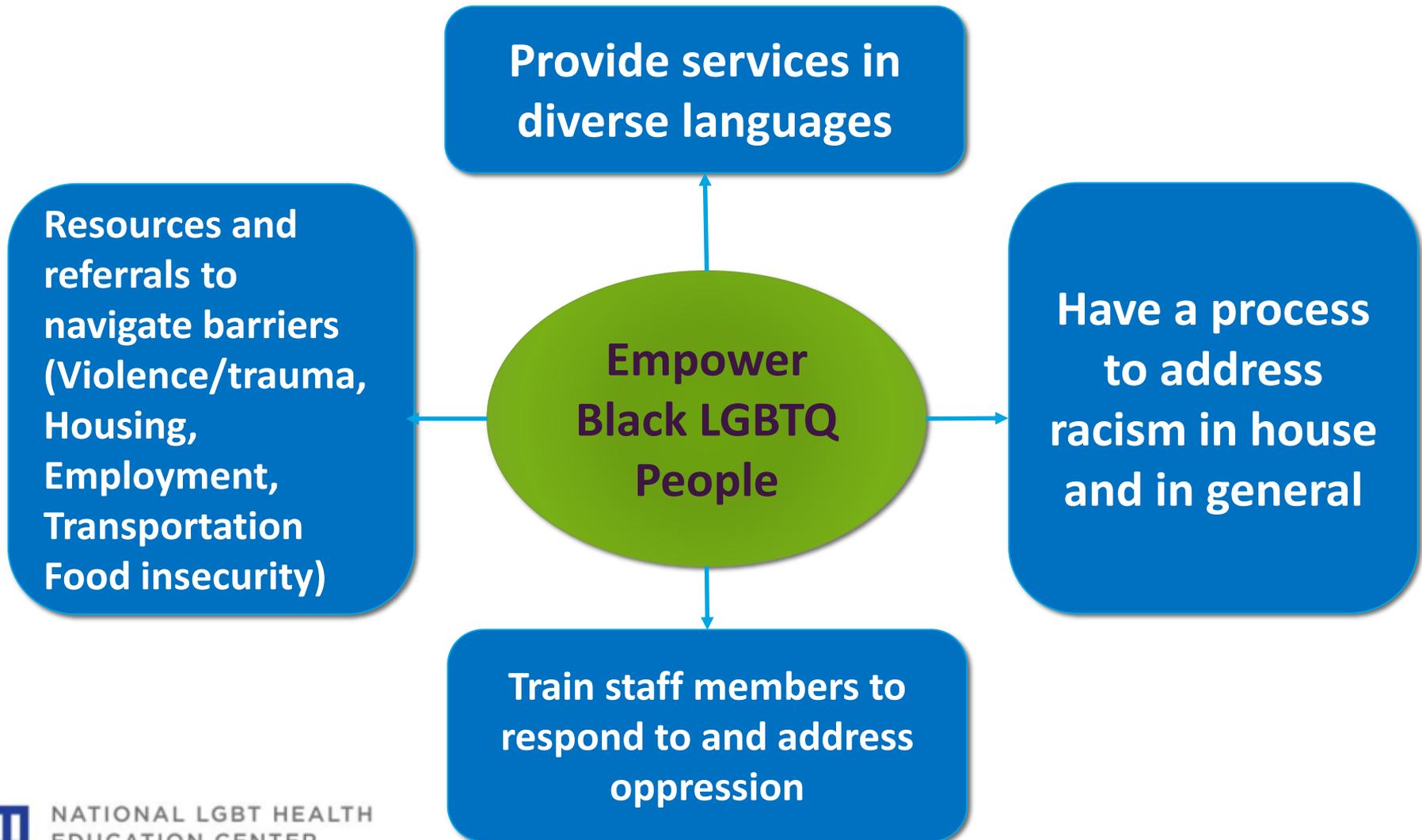
Are Black LGBTQ people at each table and a part of all conversations?

Does our institution have an explicit mission on serving Black LGBTQ people?

Does our institution take a public and internal stance on national incidents relevant to the lives of Black people?



# Providing Resources and Mechanisms to Empower Black LGBTQ People



# Supporting the Resilience of Black LGBTQ People

Black LGBTQ people are resilient.

Coping strategies vary and may include building validating communities, spirituality, arts, etc..

It is essential to reframe the misconception to see Black LGBTQ people as “at risk” and instead as **“at promise”** for a future of good health and well-being.

Quite often health literature discusses Black LGBTQ people mainly from a lens of disparities without naming the contributing structural factors.



# An Exemplary Approach

**Tfawa T. Haynes, MSW, LICSW**

Fenway Community Health, Boston, MA

SHADES

*Shades of Black: A Psychotherapy group  
for Black men who have sex with men*

*An intersectional Approach to Psychotherapy*



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# Resources

- Movement Advancement Project. <http://www.lgbtmap.org/policy-and-issue-analysis/LGBT-people-of-color>
- Human Rights Campaign. <https://www.hrc.org/explore/topic/communities-of-color>
- National LGBT Health Education Center: [www.lgbthealtheducation.org](http://www.lgbthealtheducation.org):
- Center for Engaging Black MSM Across the Care Continuum: <https://www.nastad.org/domestic/hiv-prevention-health-equity/center-engaging-black-msm-across-care-continuum-cebacc>
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