

RESEARCH THAT MATTERS

# THE IMPACT OF THE 2025 EATON FIRE ON LGBTQ+ COMMUNITIES

January 2026

---

Brad Sears  
Laurel Sprague  
Keyanna P. Taylor  
Neko Michelle Castleberry  
Brent Efron  
Yan Cui  
Megha D. Shah

---

We dedicate this report to Chuck Williams and Stu Walters, co-founders of the Williams Institute, Kris Bicknell, our Williams Institute colleague, our colleagues at the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, and all of those who lost their homes or had their lives upended by the Eaton and Palisades fires.

---

# CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....	2
Key Findings .....	2
BACKGROUND .....	7
Prior Research on LGBTQ+ Disaster Experiences .....	7
Disaster Vulnerability Among LGBTQ+ People in Los Angeles County .....	8
Unique Needs and Challenges for LGBTQ+ People Impacted by Los Angeles County Wildfires .....	9
The Current Study .....	10
FINDINGS .....	11
Rapid Needs Assessment .....	11
Housing Status and Needs .....	11
Health Status and Needs .....	14
Financial Needs .....	16
Other Needs .....	17
Support .....	18
Listening Sessions .....	20
CONCLUSION .....	28
Recommendations .....	28
AUTHORS .....	31
Acknowledgements .....	31
Suggested Citation .....	32
APPENDIX .....	33
Methods .....	33
Limitations .....	35
Tables .....	36

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In January 2025, Los Angeles County experienced two of the most destructive wildfires in California's history, the Eaton Fire and the Palisades Fire.<sup>1</sup> While LGBTQ+<sup>2</sup> and non-LGBTQ+ residents experienced many of the same forms of loss and hardship as a result of the wildfires, LGBTQ+ survivors entered the disaster with greater economic and health vulnerabilities and encountered additional barriers during recovery. This report draws on data about Eaton Fire survivors<sup>3</sup> from a rapid needs assessment survey<sup>4</sup> conducted by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health and from two rounds of listening sessions with LGBTQ+ people impacted by the Eaton Fire. It documents how pre-existing inequities, particularly in housing, health, income, and social inclusion, shaped recovery outcomes and contributed to compounding harms for LGBTQ+ people.

## KEY FINDINGS

### Impact of the Fire on the Housing and Health of LGBTQ+ Survivors

Quantitative data from the rapid needs assessment survey indicate that, following the Eaton Fire, LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ respondents reported largely similar needs, including help repairing damaged homes, accessing air purifiers, securing mental health services, and covering essential costs. The most meaningful quantitative disparity emerged in housing vulnerability: LGBTQ+ respondents were far more likely to be renters (45% vs. 24%) and less likely to be homeowners (43% vs. 69%). Consistent with that difference, the survey also found that LGBTQ+ respondents were three to four times more likely than non-LGBTQ+ respondents to need legal assistance navigating tenants' rights or resolving disputes with landlords.

The emotional and psychological impacts of the Eaton Fire were severe and enduring for LGBTQ+ survivors. LGBTQ+ people in Supervisorial District 5, where the Eaton Fire was located, had higher rates of mental health conditions than non-LGBTQ+ people prior to the fire. Participants in the listening sessions described profound grief, feelings of disorientation, and difficulty reestablishing stability in the months following displacement. Sensory reminders such as construction noise, ash, and smoke residue triggered ongoing distress, preventing many from feeling grounded or comfortable in their environment.

### Loss of Essential LGBTQ+ Social, Cultural, and Physical Community Supports

These emotional and psychological burdens unfolded alongside the collapse of social, cultural, and community infrastructure that LGBTQ+ people previously relied on for support, safety, and belonging.

<sup>1</sup> California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. (2025). Top 20 Most Destructive California Wildfires. California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, Sacramento, California. <https://34c031f8-c9fd-4018-8c5a-4159cdff6b0d-cdn-endpoint.azureedge.net/-/media/calfire-website/our-impact/fire-statistics/top-20-destructive-ca-wildfires.pdf?rev=737a1073f76947b4a3bfb960b19f44c7&hash=7CA02D30D9BF46A32D5D98BD108BA26A>

<sup>2</sup> Following the acronym usage in the Los Angeles County Wildfire Rapid Needs Assessment of "LGBTQ+", this report uses this term as the default. Only when referencing data in other articles does this report use other terms, including LGBTQ and LGBT. Los Angeles County Department of Public Health states that "LGBTQ+ includes lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, gender non-binary/non-conforming/queer." See Los Angeles County Department of Public Health. (2025). "Los Angeles County Wildfire Rapid Needs Assessment Report". Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, Los Angeles, California. [http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/wildfire/docs/LAC\\_Wildfire\\_RNA\\_Report-Nov2025.pdf](http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/wildfire/docs/LAC_Wildfire_RNA_Report-Nov2025.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Due to the small sample size of respondents who identified as LGBTQ+ survivors of the Palisades fire to the Los Angeles County Wildfire Rapid Needs Assessment survey, conducted by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, the listening sessions and this report focus on survivors of the Eaton Fire.

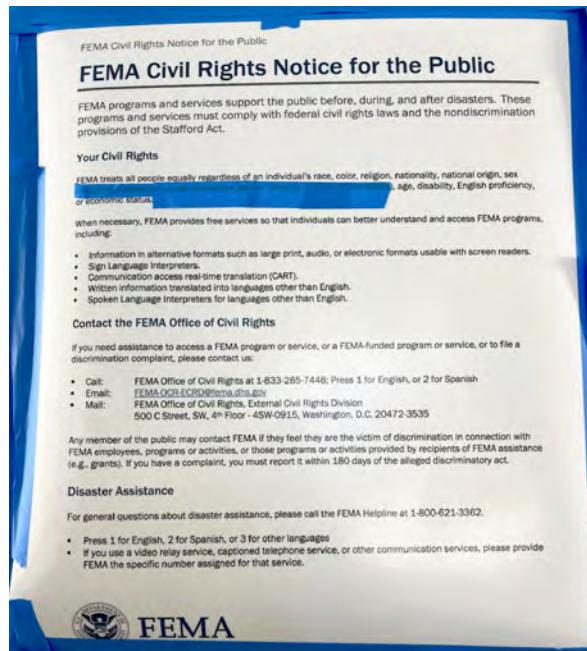
<sup>4</sup> Los Angeles County Department of Public Health. (2025). "Los Angeles County Wildfire Rapid Needs Assessment Report". Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, Los Angeles, California. [http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/wildfire/docs/LAC\\_Wildfire\\_RNA\\_Report-Nov2025.pdf](http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/wildfire/docs/LAC_Wildfire_RNA_Report-Nov2025.pdf)

LGBTQ+ people in Supervisorial District 5 were more likely to live alone than non-LGBTQ+ people before the fire. Survivors described the loss and destruction of LGBTQ+-affirming gathering spaces, sober living homes, community centers, and local venues that were important to them. For those able to return to the impacted areas, the displacement of chosen family and community networks that provided regular care and support intensified the isolation and difficulties of recovery. With fewer LGBTQ+ residents remaining in affected neighborhoods, participants described heightened vigilance about personal safety and a fear that the Eaton Fire had permanently erased their community.

## Discrimination, Exclusion, and Privacy Concerns Shaped Recovery for LGBTQ+ Survivors

Discrimination was a defining feature of many LGBTQ+ survivors' recovery experiences. While the rapid needs assessment survey did not directly measure discrimination, listening session findings revealed a consistent pattern of bias across multiple points of contact. Participants described being misgendered, having their partnerships dismissed, and encountering skepticism or discomfort from service providers unfamiliar with LGBTQ+ family structures. For example, one survivor recalled a FEMA representative asking, "What's a domestic partnership?" Several participants said they believed their claims or needs were taken less seriously once their sexual orientation or gender identity became apparent. For example, one LGBTQ+ couple described insurance adjusters who ignored or minimized obvious fire damage, with one dismissing the smell of smoke as simply "barbecue." Transgender and nonbinary survivors additionally reported discrimination when seeking temporary housing and anticipated mistreatment in the rental search. Several participants also noted that civil rights protections for sexual orientation and gender identity had been visibly removed from FEMA forms, reinforcing a sense of exclusion at a time of acute vulnerability.

### Participant photo of FEMA Civil Rights Notice for the Public



These experiences of bias were reinforced and often magnified by broader institutional barriers across formal disaster response systems, including FEMA, insurance companies, aid organizations, and local governments. Participants widely described the FEMA application process as confusing, rigid, and overwhelming, with “brutal” deadlines that did not account for trauma, displacement, caregiving responsibilities, or disability. The rapid needs assessment data reflect these challenges: more than half of LGBTQ+ respondents (51%) reported feeling overwhelmed by the volume of information provided, and about one-third (32%) reported not knowing what services were available. Participants from the listening sessions reported long delays in disbursement of aid funds, contradictory guidance from staff, and eligibility decisions that felt arbitrary or opaque. Some shared that, after investing significant time in applications, they were ultimately told they did not qualify, while others chose not to apply because the process seemed impossible to navigate.

Faith-based agencies also created barriers, with some LGBTQ+ survivors encountering requirements to participate in religious activities to obtain essentials like water. These experiences felt conditional and exclusionary, and heightened fears of mistreatment.

Beyond these barriers, transgender and nonbinary participants expressed concern about potential challenges tied to mismatched gender markers on identification documents and fear that disclosing their gender identity could expose them to further mistreatment. One participant stated: “In the middle of this, I had to get my driver’s license renewed. I needed it to work with FEMA, but I wasn’t sure if I should start using my deadname and sex assigned at birth again or get my license renewed with my real name and gender. Would I be putting myself at risk if my state ID doesn’t match my federal ID?” These dynamics highlight how the design and implementation of disaster relief systems can place LGBTQ+ people, especially transgender and gender nonconforming people, in positions where accessing help requires difficult tradeoffs between safety, privacy, and recovery.

## LGBTQ+ Survivors Experienced Intersectional Inequities by Race, Class, and Housing Status

LGBTQ+ survivors who were also people of color, living with low incomes, or renters described compounding inequities that shaped nearly every aspect of their recovery. Listening session participants from historically Black neighborhoods reported unequal protections during the disaster, including needing to call repeatedly for patrols to prevent looting, while perceiving that predominantly White areas received quicker or more consistent attention. Others described being treated as potential trespassers when attempting to re-enter their own homes. Spanish-speaking LGBTQ+ participants also encountered significant language barriers at resource centers and aid agencies, which often lacked bilingual staff, leaving them uncertain about their eligibility for programs, re-entry procedures, or available aid.

These inequities were intensified by economic and housing status disparities. Rapid needs assessment survey data showed that LGBTQ+ respondents were more likely than non-LGBTQ+ respondents to be renters; listening session participants who were renters consistently felt overlooked in a recovery process that prioritized homeowners. Participants reported inconsistent guidance, limited legal protections, and, in some cases, being turned away from disaster resource centers despite experiencing total losses. Rising rental costs after the Eaton Fire further displaced many LGBTQ+ renters, threatening the long-term survival of LGBTQ+ communities in the affected areas. LGBTQ+ participants living on low incomes

also described difficulties taking time off work to complete FEMA paperwork and insurance claims, with many worrying about slipping into homelessness as assistance has expired and return costs have mounted. Rapid needs assessment survey data showed that one-fifth of LGBTQ+ respondents (19%) reported needing help finding work after the fire. These intersecting inequities illustrate how existing socioeconomic disparities shaped the pace, accessibility, and feasibility of recovery for LGBTQ+ survivors.

## Community-Based Support Filled Recovery Gaps for LGBTQ+ Survivors

Given these shortcomings, LGBTQ+ survivors overwhelmingly relied on mutual aid networks, family, friends, and community-based organizations as their most trusted sources of support. Results from the rapid needs assessment survey show that more than 40% of LGBTQ+ respondents considered their community groups and organizations the most helpful source of support. LGBTQ+ community groups mobilized quickly, disseminating reliable information, distributing supplies, organizing housing resources, and providing emotional support. Yet this reliance came with substantial costs: many LGBTQ+ survivors were also frontline workers at nonprofits, clinics, or community organizations, resulting in significant burnout by September as they struggled to help others while managing their own recovery.

## LGBTQ+ Survivors Recommendations for Recovery Support Systems

Listening session participants offered robust guidance for improving disaster systems for the current recovery process and for future disasters. Participants' recommendations for the present crisis highlighted urgent needs:

- Rebuild and preserve LGBTQ+ community spaces lost to the fire.
- Intentionally include LGBTQ+ residents in post-disaster planning and rebuilding.
- Ensure displaced residents can return.

To support future disaster responses that are inclusive of LGBTQ+ survivors' needs, participants emphasized additional needs:

- Centralized and trustworthy resource hubs amidst disasters
- Inclusion of existing LGBTQ+ community organizations and service providers in recovery efforts
- Provision of direct assistance to navigate forms, deadlines, and available services
- Development of community-focused spaces specifically for LGBTQ+ gathering, mourning, healing, and care
- Resources to address the vulnerabilities of renters and to prioritize them alongside homeowners
- Focused attention, resources, and support for those who live alone or may lack support from immediate family members
- Confidential, low-barrier, stigma-free mental health services for individuals and communities
- Broader disaster literature that reinforces these priorities and adds that the inclusion of sexual orientation and gender identity data collection is imperative for conducting research to inform disaster preparedness systems and programs for LGBTQ+ people specifically.

Ultimately, findings reveal that the most consequential harms LGBTQ+ survivors faced were not caused by the fire alone, but by the systems layered on top of the disaster: housing markets, policing, insurance processes, aid systems, and widespread discrimination. Addressing these challenges requires equity-centered, trauma-informed, and LGBTQ-inclusive disaster response strategies that reflect the lived experiences of the communities most affected.

## BACKGROUND

Natural disasters have sometimes been called “great equalizers.” However, research has shown that low-income and marginalized communities often suffer the most after natural disasters, such as hurricanes, tornadoes, wildfires, or floods. In recent years, a growing body of research in the United States has examined how natural disasters affect the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) populations when compared to the general population. This research has shown a consistent pattern that LGBTQ+ communities face disproportionate impact from disasters and disparate barriers in disaster response and recovery. Further, these disparities are even greater for LGBTQ+ people who hold other marginalized intersecting identities.

While this report generally uses LGBTQ+ to describe the population of survivors of the Eaton Fire who are sexual and gender minorities, when describing the findings of prior research, we use the acronyms and/or terms used in the underlying study. Due to study design and/or data limitations, research on sexual and gender minorities in many cases focuses on a subpopulation of the broader LGBTQ+ community.

## PRIOR RESEARCH ON LGBTQ+ DISASTER EXPERIENCES

Existing research on LGBTQ+ populations in the wake of disasters has found that LGBTQ+ communities are particularly vulnerable to disasters and disproportionately displaced from their communities. Prior Williams Institute research found that same-sex couples are disproportionately concentrated in regions and cities of the country that are more vulnerable to flooding, poor air quality, wildfires, and extreme heat.<sup>5</sup> An analysis of 2022-2023 data from the U.S. Census Household Pulse Survey revealed that LGBTQ+ adults were almost twice as likely as non-LGBTQ+ adults to be displaced in disasters within the prior year (2.4% compared to 1.4%), with LGBTQ+ people of color facing the highest rates of displacement.<sup>6</sup> This study also found that “states with more anti-LGBTQ+ policies also generally have higher LGBTQ+ displacement during disasters.”<sup>7</sup> Additionally, a 2021 research article posited that LGBTQ+ people may be disproportionately affected by environmental disasters due to existing disparities between LGBTQ+ people and cisgender, heterosexual individuals, including higher rates of homelessness, unemployment, lack of health care, and identity-based violence.<sup>8</sup>

Another way in which LGBTQ+ populations are uniquely vulnerable to disasters relates to LGBTQ+ community infrastructures and the distinct needs and concerns of LGBTQ+ individuals compared to the needs of heterosexual nuclear families. A 2015 study of nongovernment, scholarly, and media commentaries on LGBT experiences of natural disasters in the 21<sup>st</sup> century highlighted the unique risks to LGBT community infrastructure, particularly the destruction of community hubs (e.g., bars and community centers) and queer-friendly neighborhoods, that undermine resilience among LGBT

---

<sup>5</sup> Mahowald, L. & Shaw, A. (2024). Climate Change Risk for LGBT People in the United States. The Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law, Los Angeles, California. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Climate-Change-LGBT-Apr-2024.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Geiger, J., Méndez, M., & Goldsmith, L. (2023). Amplified Harm: LGBTQ+ Disaster Displacement. School of Social Ecology, UC Irvine, Irvine, California. [https://socialecology.uci.edu/sites/default/files/users/mkruz/amplified\\_harm-\\_lgbtq\\_disaster\\_displacement\\_12.7.23.pdf](https://socialecology.uci.edu/sites/default/files/users/mkruz/amplified_harm-_lgbtq_disaster_displacement_12.7.23.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Id. at 1.

<sup>8</sup> Goldsmith, L. & Michelle L. Bell, M. L. (2022). Queering Environmental Justice: Unequal Environmental Health Burden on the LGBTQ+ Community. *Am J Public Health*, 112(1):79–87. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2021.306406>

populations.<sup>9</sup> The authors concluded that it is equally vital for LGBT individuals to return to their physical homes as it is for other LGBT people, including their friends and neighbors, to return to their neighborhood, as LGBT people rely on these social safe spaces.<sup>10</sup>

Prior research also highlights various barriers to disaster relief and recovery efforts for LGBTQ+ communities. A 2022 literature review highlighted that reliance on faith-based organizations for disaster relief can expose LGBTQ survivors to homophobic discrimination, particularly when these charities have exclusionary policies, and deter many from seeking aid.<sup>11</sup> In some cases, religious homophobia can include institutional leaders blaming LGBTQ people for disasters.<sup>12</sup> Disasters can also interrupt access to the health care needs of LGBTQ+ people, such as HIV treatment, hormone therapy, and mental health care.<sup>13</sup>

Disaster response and recovery services can pose unique challenges to transgender and nonbinary (TNB) people. Most shelter and service facilities are gender-segregated, excluding or endangering transgender and nonbinary individuals.<sup>14</sup> One such example occurred during Hurricane Katrina in 2005, when two Black transgender women were arrested for using the women's showers in an emergency shelter.<sup>15</sup> TNB people may also experience difficulties accessing federal emergency services due to identification requirements.<sup>16</sup>

## DISASTER VULNERABILITY AMONG LGBTQ+ PEOPLE IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY

As highlighted in prior Williams Institute research, living in areas such as Los Angeles County that have a heightened risk of dry conditions, heat waves, and wildfires increases the vulnerability of LGBT people to climate change disasters like the 2025 Eaton fires.<sup>17</sup> Prior research from the Williams Institute and the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health also suggested that LGBTQ people would be more vulnerable to the 2025 Los Angeles wildfires due, in part, to existing disparities between LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ people.<sup>18</sup> Over a third of LGBTQ people in Los Angeles County are living below 200% of the federal

---

<sup>9</sup> Gorman-Murray, A., McKinnon, S., & Dominey-Howes, D. (2014). Queer Domicide: LGBT Displacement and Home Loss in Natural Disaster Impact, Response, and Recovery. *Home Cultures*, 11(2), 237–261. <https://doi.org/10.2752/175174214X13891916944751>

<sup>10</sup> *Id.*

<sup>11</sup> King, D. (2022). Hearing Minority Voices: Institutional Discrimination Towards LGBTQ in Disaster and Recovery. *Journal of Extreme Events*, 09(02n03), 2241005. <https://doi.org/10.1142/S2345737622410056>

<sup>12</sup> *Id.*

<sup>13</sup> Goldsmith, L. & Michelle L. Bell, M. L. (2022). Queering Environmental Justice: Unequal Environmental Health Burden on the LGBTQ+ Community. *Am J Public Health*, 112(1):79–87. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2021.306406>

<sup>14</sup> Goldsmith, L., Raditz, V. and Méndez, M. (2022), Queer and present danger: understanding the disparate impacts of disasters on LGBTQ+ communities. *Disasters*, 46: 946-973. <https://doi.org/10.1111/dis.12509>

<sup>15</sup> Gray, L. (2005, Sept. 15). Transgender evacuee survives all obstacles. *Chron* (formerly the Houston Chronicle). <https://www.chron.com/news/hurricanes/article/Transgender-evacuee-survives-all-obstacles-1931933.php>

<sup>16</sup> Goldsmith, L., Raditz, V. and Méndez, M. (2022), Queer and present danger: understanding the disparate impacts of disasters on LGBTQ+ communities. *Disasters*, 46: 946-973. <https://doi.org/10.1111/dis.12509>

<sup>17</sup> Mahowald, L. & Shaw, A. (2024). Climate Change Risk for LGBT People in the United States. The Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law, Los Angeles, California. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Climate-Change-LGBT-Apr-2024.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> Sears, B., Conron, K.J., Mallory, C., Fuentes Carreño, M., Cui, Y., & Shah, M. (2024). Communities of Resilience: The Lived Experiences of LGBTQ Adults in Los Angeles County. The Williams Institute, UCLA, Los Angeles, CA. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/LACo-LGBTQ-Adults-Jun-2024.pdf>

poverty level. Compared with non-LGBTQ people, they are more likely to be cost-burdened by housing costs, living alone, and lack the social and family support they need, which means they are more likely to be rebuilding their lives and homes alone. LGBTQ people in LA also entered this crisis with poorer health as indicated by a number of measures, including higher rates of depression symptoms, lifetime suicide attempts, binge drinking, and difficulty accessing needed medical care compared to non-LGBTQ people in Los Angeles. LGBTQ people of color, bisexual women, and TNB people in particular reported higher levels of housing, economic, and health needs.<sup>19</sup>

More specifically, LGBTQ people in Supervisorial District 5, which includes the area impacted by the Eaton Fire, were more likely to be living alone and less likely to be married or in a domestic partnership compared to non-LGBTQ people in Supervisorial District 5.<sup>20</sup> In terms of health, LGBTQ people in Supervisorial District 5, in comparison to non-LGBTQ people, were more likely to be at risk of major depression, to have attempted suicide, and to have experienced interpersonal violence.

## UNIQUE NEEDS AND CHALLENGES FOR LGBTQ+ PEOPLE IMPACTED BY LOS ANGELES COUNTY WILDFIRES

Media reports, mutual aid requests, and LGBTQ+ service providers indicate various ways that LGBTQ+ people in LA have been impacted by the fires and unique challenges they face with recovery. A preliminary review of over 40 “personal narratives” on a mutual aid request spreadsheet for LGBTQ+ people revealed some of these needs and challenges, including the loss of housing (houses and apartments), finding temporary housing that will allow pets (including service animals as required by California law), meeting caretaking responsibilities for children and elderly household members, not having immediate family support, loss of jobs and income, replacing key identity documents that were lost, struggling with the poor air quality as a result of the fires, worsening mental health, and greater difficulties in accessing medical care, including disruptions to gender-affirming care.<sup>21</sup> LGBTQ+ people seeking mutual aid also described overcoming barriers to applying for government benefits and disaster relief. These barriers may be even more onerous in the current political climate, where LGBTQ+ people must rely on FEMA and other federal government agencies that are barred from recognizing the existence of TNB people<sup>22</sup> and are eliminating resources and data related to LGBTQ+ people.<sup>23</sup>

In their personal narratives, several LGBTQ+ people highlighted their struggles with disruptions to LGBTQ+-focused community services and service providers, especially given how unique and strong Los

---

<sup>19</sup> Sears, B., Conron, K.J., Mallory, C., Fuentes Carreño, M., Cui, Y., & Shah, M. (2024). Communities of Resilience: The Lived Experiences of LGBTQ Adults in Los Angeles County. The Williams Institute, UCLA, Los Angeles, CA. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/LACo-LGBTQ-Adults-Jun-2024.pdf>;

Herman, J.L., Salcedo, B., Chatham, K., Mahowald, L., Ortega, H.M.Q.V., & Redfield, E. (2024). Para Mi Punto de Vista/From My Point of View: Results of the 2023 LA County Trans & Nonbinary Survey. The Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law, Los Angeles, California. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/LACo-Trans-NB-Jun-2024.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> Sears, B., Castleberry, N.M., & Mallory, C. (2024). Communities of Resilience: LGBTQ People by Supervisorial District in Los Angeles County. The Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law, Los Angeles, California. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/LACo-Districts-Nov-2024.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> Los Angeles LGBTQIA+ Fire Relief Resources & Referrals. (2025). LA LGBTQIA+ Fire Relief. Retrieved Feb. 12, 2025, from <https://lalgbtfirerelief.info/>

<sup>22</sup> Redfield, E., & Chokshi, I. (2025). Impact of the Executive Order Redefining Sex on Transgender, Nonbinary, and Intersex People. The Williams Institute, UCLA, Los Angeles, CA. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Sex-Definition-EO-Jan-2025.pdf>

<sup>23</sup> Meyer, I.H., & Bouton, L.J. (2025). Impact of the Executive Orders on Access to Federal Data. The Williams Institute, UCLA, Los Angeles, CA. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/SOGI-Data-Removal-EO-Feb-2025.pdf>

Angeles' LGBTQ+ communities are, while others focused on how LGBTQ+ communities are rallying to provide support. In terms of community spaces, media reports documented that four recovery and sober living facilities focused on LGBTQ+ people in Pasadena and Altadena had to be evacuated<sup>24</sup>, and a restaurant in Altadena that had a monthly pizza party for TNB communities burned down.<sup>25</sup> Prior Williams Institute research focused on LGBTQ people in Los Angeles showed not only a community that has unique needs, but that is uniquely resilient<sup>26</sup> and plays an outsized role in providing community support and services to LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ people.<sup>27</sup>

## THE CURRENT STUDY

The current study aims to better understand how LGBTQ+ people in Los Angeles were impacted by the Eaton Fire. This includes examining how LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ people were affected differently; how impacted LGBTQ+ people are experiencing local, state, and federal recovery services and efforts, including any barriers unique to being LGBTQ+; and the role that LGBTQ+ people have in supporting disaster relief efforts, including supporting other LGBTQ+ people and the broader community. Using data from the Los Angeles County Wildfire Rapid Needs Assessment survey, conducted by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, and data gathered from listening sessions with community members and service providers directly impacted by the Eaton Fire, this report seeks to answer the following questions:

- How did the Eaton Fire impact LGBTQ+ people, and in what ways did this differ from non-LGBTQ+ people?
- What unique challenges have they faced in accessing recovery services?
- What have been the larger impacts on LGBTQ+ community spaces and providers?
- How have LGBTQ+ people rallied to support members of LGBTQ+ communities and others?
- What recommendations do LGBTQ+ people have for improving recovery assistance?

---

<sup>24</sup> Wagner, T.L. (2025, Jan. 15). Recovering addicts were rebuilding their lives. Now their home is gone. *Spectrum News*. <https://spectrumnews1.com/ca/southern-california/news/2025/01/15/recovering-addicts-were-rebuilding-their-lives—now-their-home-is-gone->

<sup>25</sup> Adamczeski, R. (2025, Jan. 13). L. A. pizzeria that hosts monthly 'Trans Pizza Party' burns down in wildfires. *The Advocate*. <https://www.advocate.com/news/pizza-of-venice-transgender-wildfires#rebellitem1>

<sup>26</sup> Sears, B., Conron, K.J., Mallory, C., Fuentes Carreño, M., Cui, Y., & Shah, M. (2024). Communities of Resilience: The Lived Experiences of LGBTQ Adults in Los Angeles County. The Williams Institute, UCLA, Los Angeles, CA. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/LACo-LGBTQ-Adults-Jun-2024.pdf>

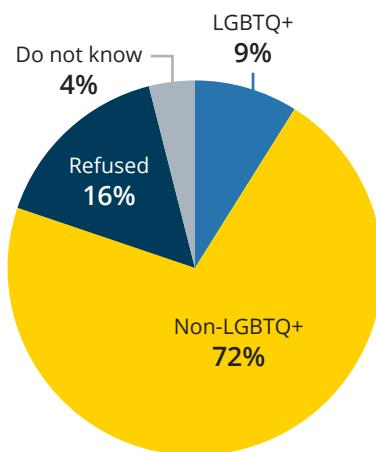
<sup>27</sup> Sears, B., Mallory, C., & Conron, K.J. (2024). We Are LA! What LGBTQ People Contribute to Los Angeles. The Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law, Los Angeles, California. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/LACo-LGBTQ-Contributions-May-2024.pdf>

# FINDINGS

## RAPID NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The following section presents results from a quantitative analysis of the Los Angeles County Wildfire Rapid Needs Assessment survey. Due to the small number of LGBTQ+ survivors of the Palisades Fire who responded to the Rapid Needs Assessment survey, this report focuses only on those impacted by the Eaton Fire. There were 1,468 respondents from the Eaton Fire-impacted area, 948 of whom answered the demographic question regarding LGBTQ+ status. Of these responses, 9% of respondents from the Eaton Fire-impacted area identified as LGBTQ+, which is consistent with prior research on LGBTQ+ adults in Los Angeles County.<sup>28</sup>

**Figure 1. LGBTQ+ status of respondents from the Eaton Fire-impacted area**

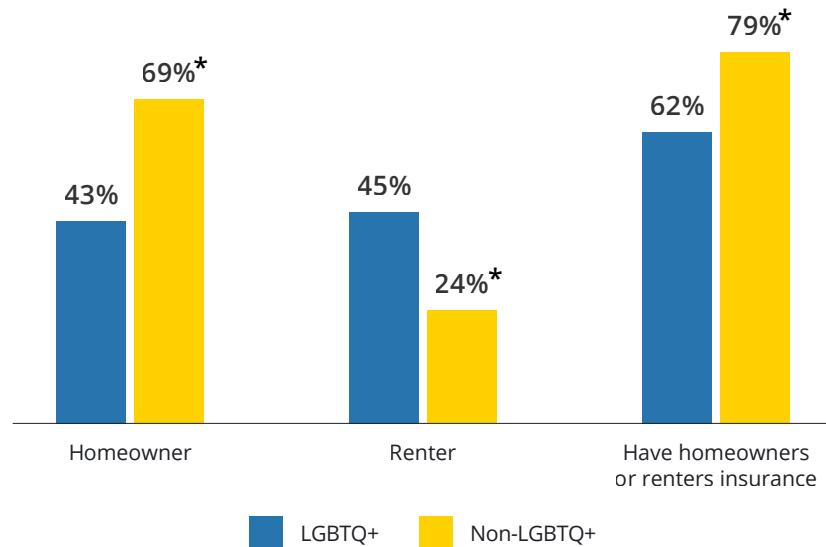


## HOUSING STATUS AND NEEDS

Before the fire, 43% of LGBTQ+ respondents from the Eaton Fire-impacted area were homeowners, and 45% were renters. LGBTQ+ respondents were more likely than non-LGBTQ+ respondents from the Eaton Fire-impacted area to be renting (45% vs. 24%) and less likely to be homeowners (43% vs. 69%), which is consistent with prior research on LGBTQ adults in Los Angeles County.<sup>29</sup> Less than two-thirds of LGBTQ respondents (62%) reported having homeowners or renters' insurance. LGBTQ respondents were less likely than non-LGBTQ respondents to report having homeowners or renters' insurance (62% vs. 79%).

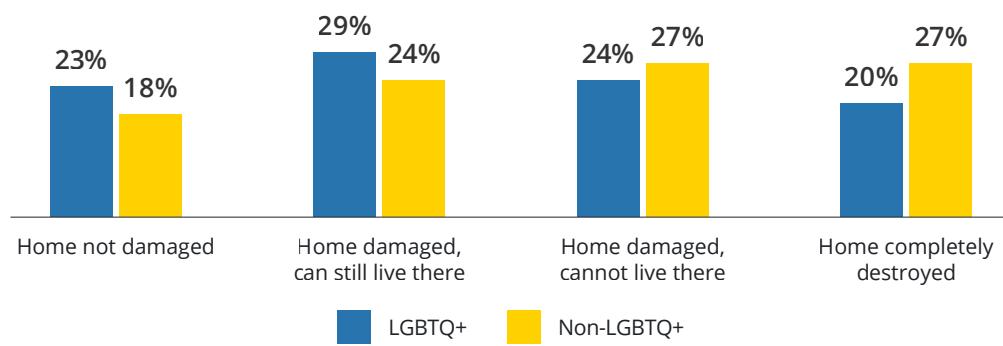
<sup>28</sup> Sears, B., Conron, K.J., Mallory, C., Fuentes Carreño, M., Cui, Y., & Shah, M. (2024). Communities of Resilience: The Lived Experiences of LGBTQ Adults in Los Angeles County. The Williams Institute, UCLA, Los Angeles, CA. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/LACo-LGBTQ-Adults-Jun-2024.pdf>

<sup>29</sup> Sears, B., Conron, K.J., Mallory, C., Fuentes Carreño, M., Cui, Y., & Shah, M. (2024). Communities of Resilience: The Lived Experiences of LGBTQ Adults in Los Angeles County. The Williams Institute, UCLA, Los Angeles, CA. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/LACo-LGBTQ-Adults-Jun-2024.pdf>

**Figure 2. Living situation among respondents from the Eaton Fire-impacted area prior to fire**

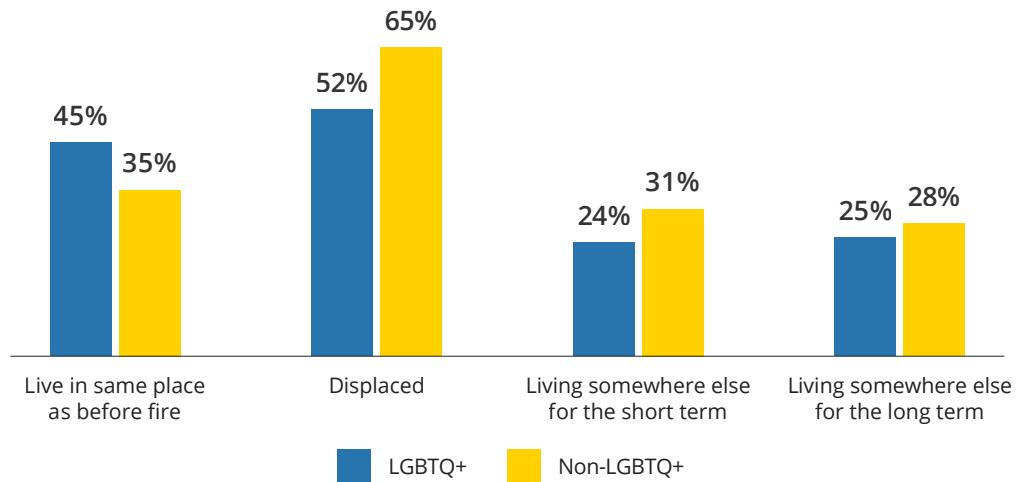
Note: \*Statistically significant differences between LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ respondents

Almost three-fourths of LGBTQ+ respondents from the Eaton Fire-impacted area (73%) reported their homes were damaged, with 29% reporting that they could still live there despite the damage, 24% reporting they could not, and 20% reporting that their homes were completely destroyed. Less than a quarter of LGBTQ+ respondents (23%) reported their homes were not damaged by the fire or strong winds. A similar percentage of non-LGBTQ+ respondents reported damage to their homes.

**Figure 3. Home damaged in any way by the fire or strong winds during the Los Angeles fires among respondents from the Eaton Fire-impacted area**

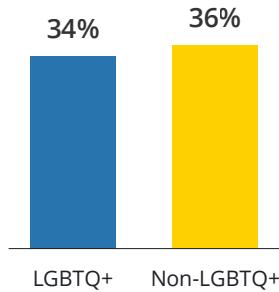
Note: There are no statistically significant differences between LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ respondents.

More than half of LGBTQ+ respondents from the Eaton Fire-impacted area (52%) reported being displaced from their homes after the fire. Similar percentages reported they were currently living somewhere else for the short term (24%) or for the long term (25%). Most (81%) were staying within Los Angeles County.

**Figure 4. Living situation among respondents from the Eaton Fire-impacted area after fire**

Note: There are no statistically significant differences between LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ respondents.

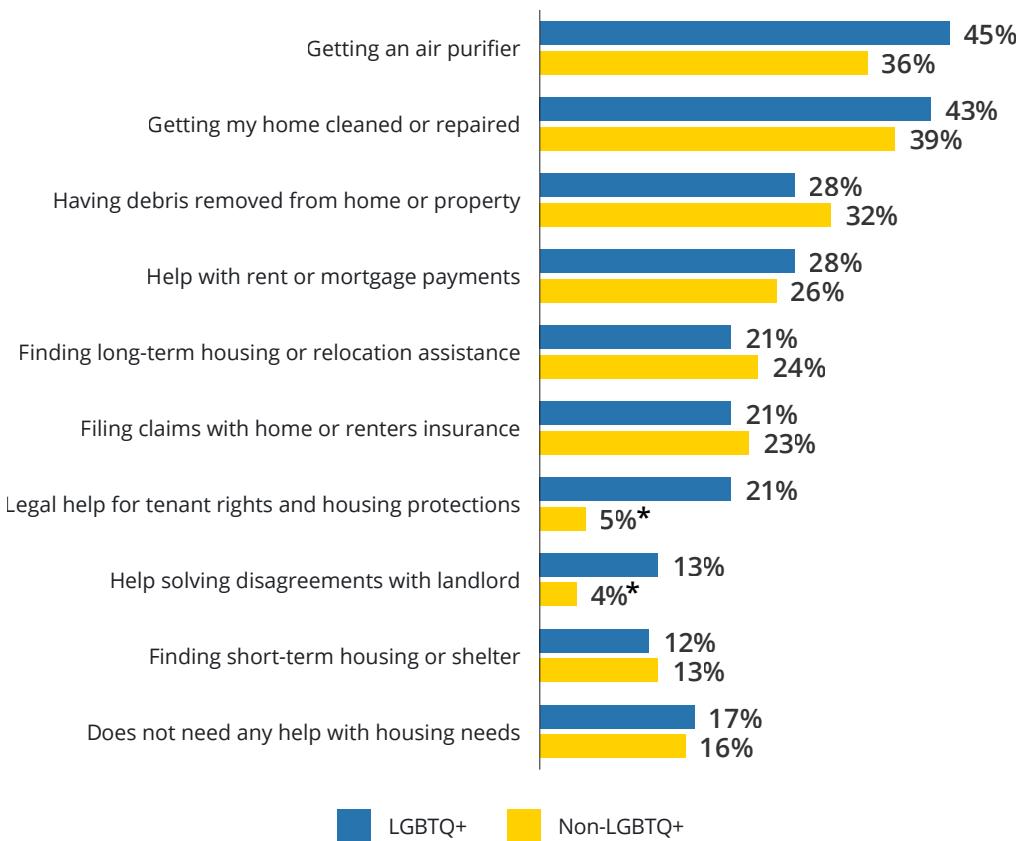
A third of LGBTQ+ respondents (34%) from the Eaton Fire-impacted area reported that it has been difficult to find a safe, stable place to sleep at night and store belongings since the fire.

**Figure 5. Respondents from the Eaton Fire-impacted area who report difficulties finding a safe, stable place to sleep**

Note: There are no statistically significant differences between LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ respondents.

The top two housing needs that LGBTQ+ respondents from the Eaton Fire-impacted area reported needing help with were getting an air purifier (45%) and getting their home cleaned or repaired (43%). More than a quarter of LGBTQ+ respondents reported needing help with their rent or mortgage payments (28%) or removing debris from their home or property (28%). A fifth of LGBTQ+ respondents reported needing help finding long-term housing or relocation assistance (21%) or filing claims with home or renters' insurance (21%). One in eight LGBTQ+ respondents reported needing help finding short-term housing or shelter (12%). LGBTQ+ respondents were three times as likely to report needing help solving landlord disagreements (13% vs. 4%) and four times as likely to report needing help obtaining legal help for tenant rights and housing protections (21% vs. 5%), compared to non-LGBTQ+ respondents. This is consistent with LGBTQ+ adults being more likely to be renters and less likely to be homeowners compared to non-LGBTQ+ adults.

**Figure 6. Housing needs for which respondents from the Eaton Fire-impacted area reported needing help**

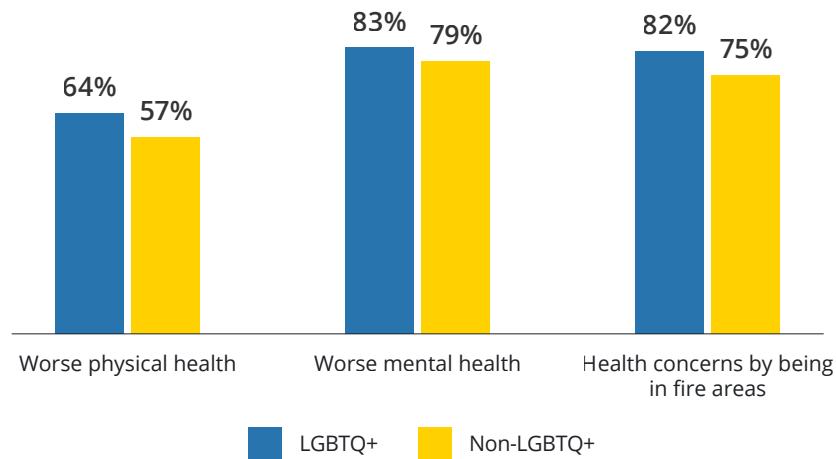


Note: \*Statistically significant differences between LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ respondents

## HEALTH STATUS AND NEEDS

More than four in five LGBTQ+ respondents (82%) from the Eaton Fire-impacted area agreed or strongly agreed that they have health-related concerns about their household being in or nearby areas that were burned by the fire. Though not statistically significant, LGBTQ+ respondents were more likely than non-LGBTQ+ respondents to agree or strongly agree that their household experienced worsening physical health (64% vs. 57%) and mental health (83% vs. 79%).

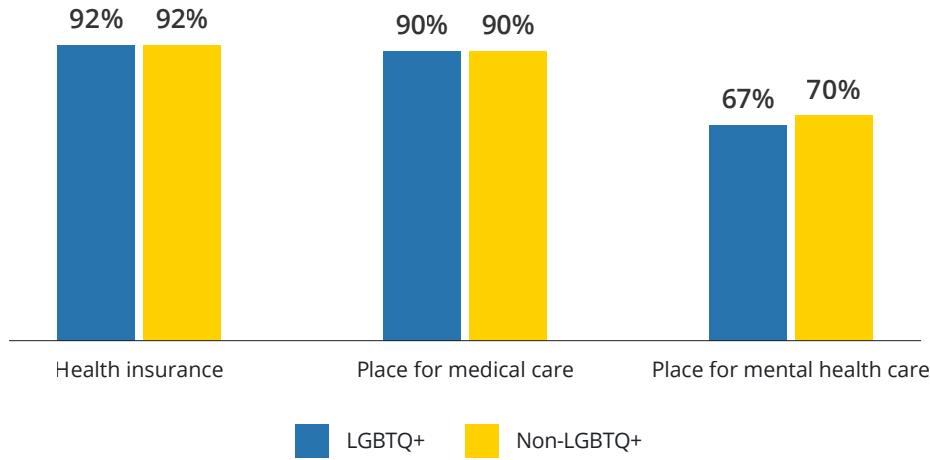
**Figure 7. Percent of respondents from the Eaton Fire-impacted area who agreed or strongly agreed that their household was experiencing worsening health after fire**



Note: There are no statistically significant differences between LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ respondents.

Regarding access to health insurance and health care, the vast majority of LGBTQ+ respondents from the Eaton Fire-impacted area reported their entire household had access to health insurance (92%) and a place to go for medical care (90%). Two-thirds reported that their entire household had a place to go for mental health care. Non-LGBTQ+ respondents from the Eaton Fire-impacted area reported similar rates to LGBTQ+ respondents.

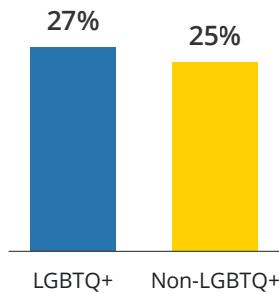
**Figure 8. Access to health care among respondents from the Eaton Fire-impacted area**



Note: There are no statistically significant differences between LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ respondents.

While most LGBTQ+ respondents (67%) from the Eaton Fire-impacted area reported that their household had a place to go for mental health care, one-fifth (21%) reported not having a place to go. Similarly, when asked what health needs they need help with, more than a quarter of LGBTQ+ respondents (27%) reported needing help finding mental health support or counseling services.

**Figure 9. Respondents from the Eaton Fire-impacted area needing help finding mental health support or counseling services**

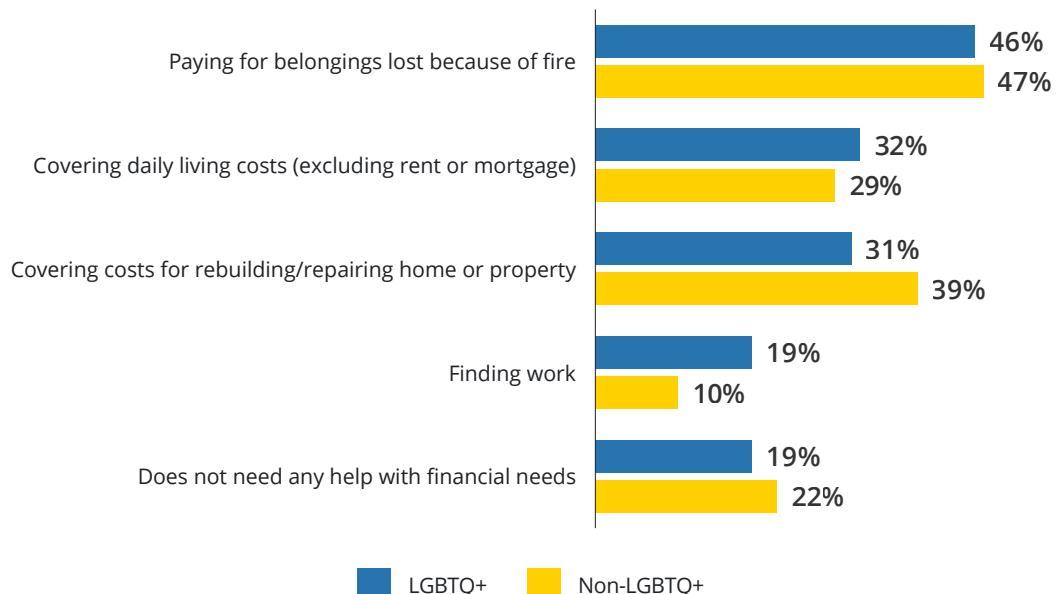


Note: There are no statistically significant differences between LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ respondents.

## FINANCIAL NEEDS

The top three financial needs that LGBTQ+ respondents from the Eaton Fire-impacted area reported needing help with were paying for lost belongings (46%), covering daily living costs (32%), and covering costs to rebuild or repair their home or property (31%). Non-LGBTQ+ respondents reported the same top three financial needs (47%, 29%, and 39% respectively). Though not statistically significant, LGBTQ+ respondents were more likely to report needing help finding work compared to non-LGBTQ+ respondents (19% vs. 10%).

**Figure 10. Financial needs for which respondents from the Eaton Fire-impacted area reported needing help**

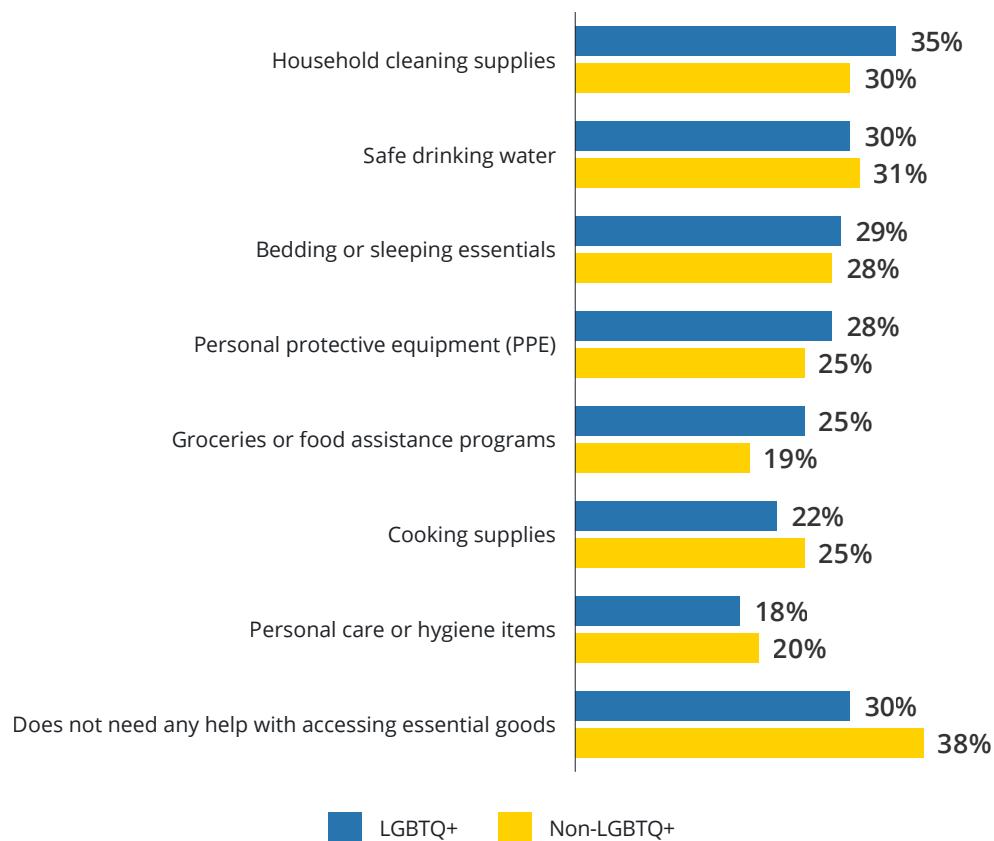


Note: There are no statistically significant differences between LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ respondents.

## OTHER NEEDS

The top three essential goods that LGBTQ+ respondents from the Eaton Fire-impacted area reported needing help accessing were household cleaning supplies (35%), safe drinking water (30%), and bedding or sleeping essentials (29%). These are the same top three essential goods reported by non-LGBTQ+ respondents (30%, 31%, and 28% respectively). Twenty-eight percent of LGBTQ+ respondents reported needing assistance obtaining personal protective equipment, and a quarter (25%) reported needing help accessing groceries or food assistance programs. One in five LGBTQ+ respondents reported needing help accessing cooking supplies (22%) and personal care or hygiene items (18%).

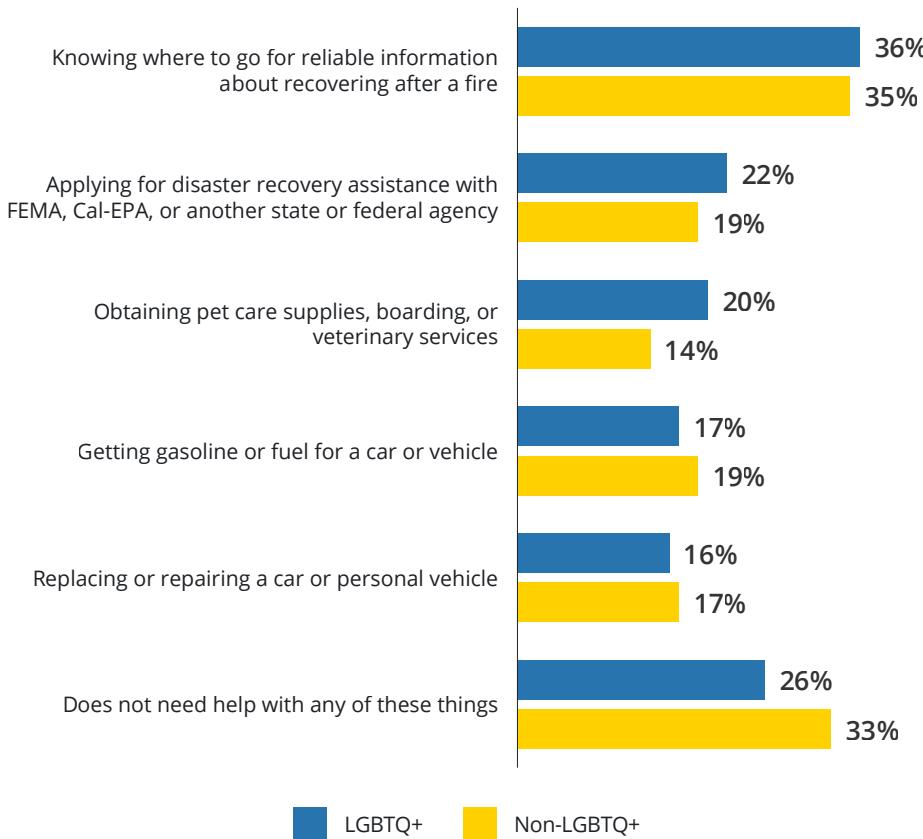
**Figure 11. Essential goods that respondents from the Eaton Fire-impacted area reported needing help accessing**



Note: There are no statistically significant differences between LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ respondents.

Similar to non-LGBTQ+ respondents, over one-third of LGBTQ+ respondents from the Eaton Fire-impacted area (36%) reported needing help knowing where to go for reliable information about fire recovery. One-fifth of LGBTQ+ respondents reported needing help applying for disaster recovery assistance with state/federal agencies (22%) and obtaining pet care supplies, boarding, or veterinary services (20%). Similar percentages of LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ respondents reported needing help replacing or repairing a car or vehicle (16% vs. 17%) or getting fuel (17% vs. 19%).

**Figure 12. Other needs for which respondents from the Eaton Fire-impacted area reported needing help**

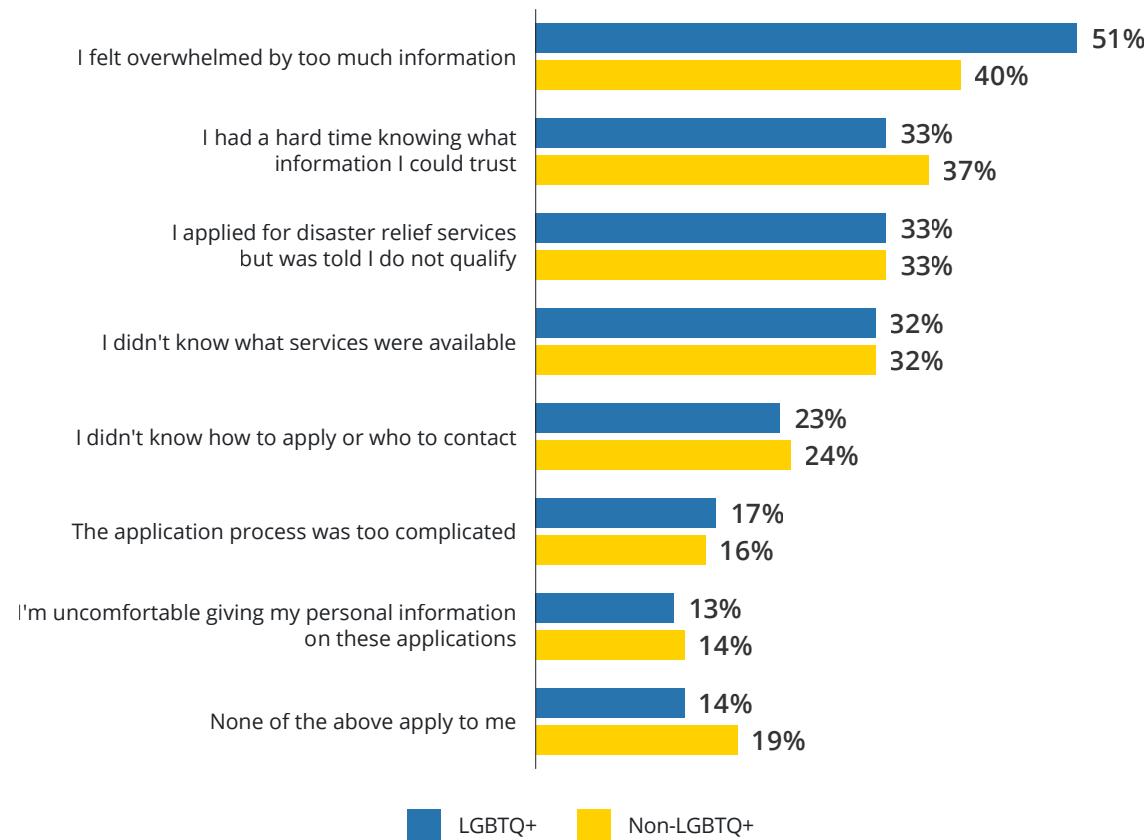


Note: There are no statistically significant differences between LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ respondents.

## SUPPORT

When asked about their experiences with accessing disaster relief services, more than half of LGBTQ+ respondents from the Eaton Fire-impacted area (51%) reported feeling overwhelmed by too much information. Similar to non-LGBTQ+ respondents from the Eaton Fire-impacted area, one-third of LGBTQ+ respondents reported having a hard time knowing what information they could trust (33%) and not knowing what services were available (32%). More than one-fifth of LGBTQ+ respondents reported not knowing how to apply for disaster relief services or who to contact; one-sixth said the application process was too complicated (17%); and a third reported applying but being told they did not qualify (33%). Thirteen percent of LGBTQ+ respondents said they were uncomfortable giving their personal information on these applications.

**Figure 13. Experiences with accessing disaster relief services among respondents from the Eaton Fire-impacted area**



Note: There are no statistically significant differences between LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ respondents.

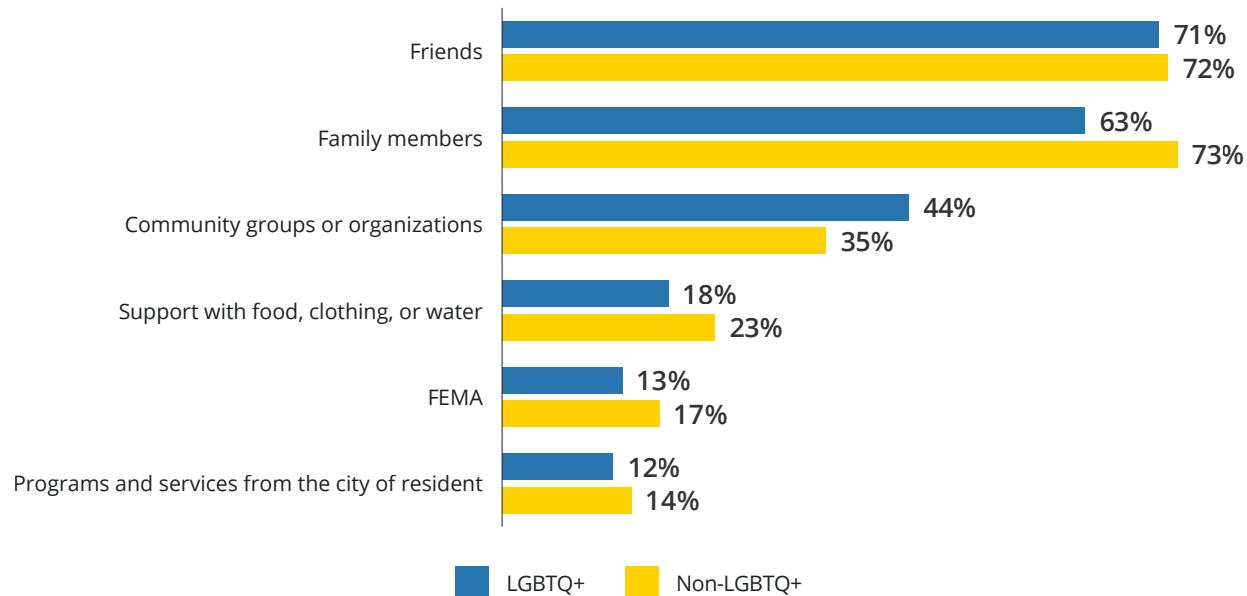
When asked what were “the most helpful sources of support” for themselves and their households,<sup>30</sup> most LGBTQ+ respondents from the Eaton Fire-impacted area reported that their friends (71%) and family members (63%) were among their most helpful sources of support. These were the top two groups identified as among the most helpful sources of support for both LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ respondents from the Eaton Fire-impacted area. Forty-four percent of LGBTQ+ respondents reported that community groups and organizations were among their most helpful sources of support, and 18% reported that support with food, clothing, or water was among the most helpful. One in eight LGBTQ+ respondents reported that FEMA (13%) and their city’s programs and services (12%) were among the most helpful sources of support.

While the differences were not statistically significant, the numbers appear to trend toward a higher percentage of LGBTQ+ respondents reporting reliance on community groups or organizations and a lower percentage reporting reliance on family members. This would be consistent with LGBTQ+ individuals’ greater likelihood of experiencing family rejection. Future research should explore the

<sup>30</sup> Respondents could select more than one source of support in response to this survey question.

limitations of recovery services that assume family support and the benefits of providing recovery support through LGBTQ+ community groups and organizations.

**Figure 14. Most helpful sources of support reported by respondents from the Eaton Fire-impacted area**



Note: There are no statistically significant differences between LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ respondents.

## LISTENING SESSIONS

**“We took care of each other when no one else would.”**

The following section presents results from a qualitative analysis of listening session participants' experiences during the months following the Los Angeles wildfires. Listening sessions were held in Altadena, the location of the Eaton Fire. Results emerged in two overarching categories: general challenges experienced by survivors, and LGBTQ-specific challenges that compounded or uniquely shaped recovery for LGBTQ+ survivors. Within each category, themes are grouped around two major dimensions, the impacts of the disaster itself and the impacts of the disaster response, and are further examined across two time points, May 2025 and September 2025, when the listening sessions were conducted.

The “LGBTQ-Specific Challenges” section details the burdens created by discrimination, loss of affirming community spaces, disparities in access to assistance, intersectional inequities, and the critical role of mutual aid organizations.

The “General Challenges” section then summarizes the mental, physical, logistical, and economic consequences of displacement; difficulties securing housing and meeting basic needs; and participants' interactions with insurance companies, government agencies, and other formal recovery entities. These experiences were recounted by LGBTQ+ survivors and demonstrate that they endured the same

burdens as other survivors, in addition to the specific harms related to marginalization based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

## LGBTQ-Specific Challenges

### Impacts of the Disaster

**Impacts on social inclusion and belonging.** For LGBTQ+ survivors, loss from the fires compounded pre-existing vulnerabilities. A significant impact reported by many participants was the physical and emotional loss of safe and affirming community spaces, which served as emotional lifelines and sources of belonging. Many LGBTQ+ survivors reported profound devastation and emotional pain due to the physical loss of meaningful gathering spaces, but also the displacement of their chosen families, social networks, and cultural enclaves. Participants stated how the disappearance of these spaces increased isolation and a felt need for vigilance regarding personal safety:

*As a queer community, we build and seek out safe spaces. Being forcibly removed from that is traumatic.*

*There aren't many of us left here now, so I stay on guard.*

### Impacts of the disaster response

**Impacts on meeting basic needs.** Some survivors reported discrimination and exclusionary practices when seeking temporary and long-term housing. Participants reported that transgender and gender nonconforming survivors were turned away from temporary housing options, and others reported anticipating and experiencing discrimination from new landlords in the housing search.

**Impacts related to additional care burdens.** Multiple survivors also reported being employed at nonprofits, clinics, and other community-based organizations. This created a dual burden for LGBTQ+ survivors serving as community responders who carried the task of navigating the disaster, trauma, and recovery for themselves while working full-time to support others.

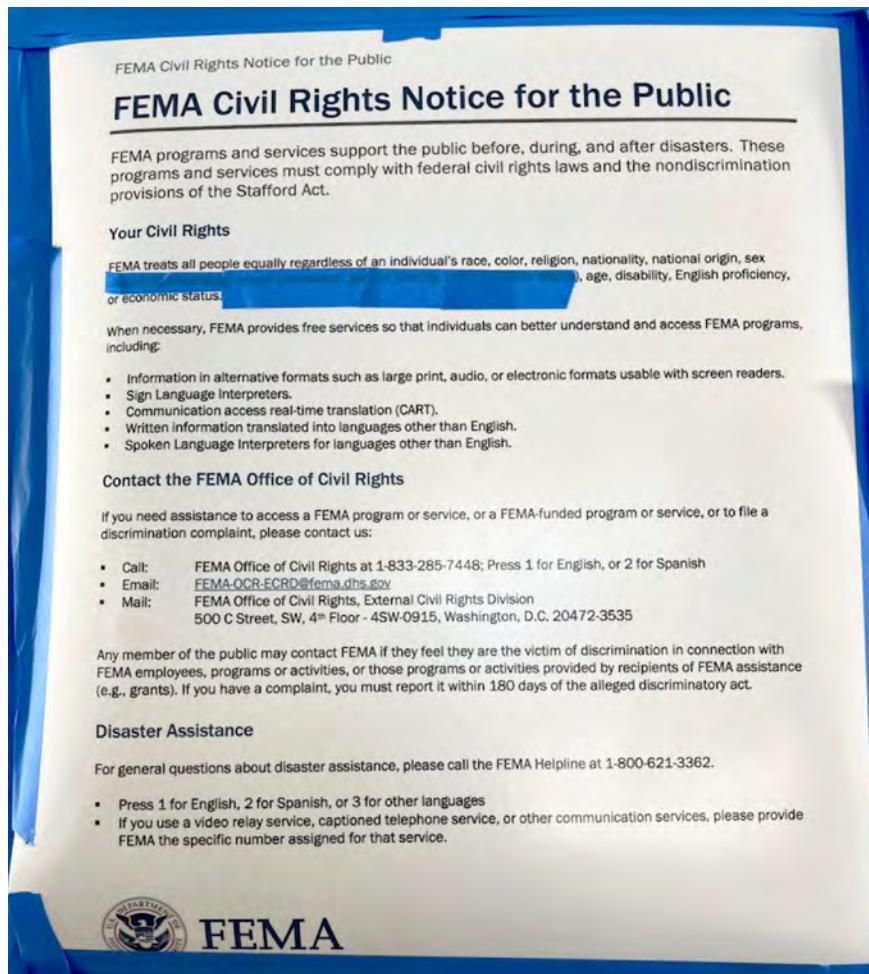
Finally, in May, many survivors reported extensive volunteer efforts to help their community throughout the disaster. But by September, multiple survivors reported feeling burnt out and exhausted from helping others over an extended period.

**Anti-LGBTQ+ discrimination by support agencies.** Discrimination, both overt and systemic, emerged as a defining challenge for LGBTQ+ survivors navigating disaster recovery and contributed directly to widespread distrust of aid systems. Survivors described facing extra documentation requirements, exclusionary practices, and dismissive treatment across government and nongovernmental agencies. Many recounted that their relationships and family structures were questioned or invalidated, with partners' pronouns ignored, domestic partnerships dismissed, and same-sex relationships met with discomfort. One participant recalled being asked by an agent at FEMA, "What's a domestic partnership?" Another shared:

*Once they found out my partner was a woman, they stopped returning my calls.*

Several survivors noted that civil rights protections for sexual orientation and gender identity had been visibly removed from FEMA forms, reinforcing a sense of exclusion at a time of acute vulnerability. One example of this removal can be seen in Figure 15.

Figure 15. Participant photo of FEMA Civil Rights Notice for the Public



Source: Listening session participant, May 7, 2025, Altadena, California

Many survivors interpreted not only these direct acts of discrimination but also frequent microaggressions and the absence of cultural competence as part of the same continuum of bias. They described harm perpetrated through ignorance and ascribed this to a lack of LGBTQ+ training or awareness within service agencies. The most common example of this behavior manifested as requiring individuals to repeatedly explain their identities and justify their family structures. The absence of affirming, knowledgeable services itself became a form of discrimination, one that compounded survivors' stress and reinforced distrust in formal recovery systems.

**Distrust of government and nongovernment aid and service providers.** The accumulation of discriminatory experiences led many survivors to express deep skepticism toward both government and nongovernment service providers. Survivors shared fears of homophobia and transphobia when

interacting with agencies, contractors, and insurance adjusters, especially those from out of state. They emphasized a strong preference for trusted organizations with demonstrated experience serving LGBTQ+ communities.

Several survivors described encountering what they termed “tragedy allies”: people or companies who publicly presented themselves as LGBTQ+-friendly but appeared motivated by profit rather than genuine solidarity. Others feared that disclosing their sexual orientation or gender identity to government agencies could expose them to further mistreatment. Transgender and nonbinary survivors described bureaucratic challenges tied to mismatched gender markers on identification documents. One person explained:

*In the middle of this, I had to get my driver's license renewed. I needed it to work with FEMA, but I wasn't sure if I should start using my deadname and sex assigned at birth again or get my license renewed with my real name and gender. Would I be putting myself at risk if my state ID doesn't match my federal ID?*

**Barriers created by faith-based agencies.** Faith-based agencies also provided essential supplies for some survivors but created barriers for others. Several survivors reported that even to receive something as basic as bottled water, they had to sit through mandatory religious sermons. For LGBTQ+ people and secular or agnostic survivors, this felt like conditional help, tied to control rather than compassion. Many chose to avoid faith-based providers entirely due to fears of discrimination, which limited options for support.

These experiences illustrate how discrimination and distrust operate cyclically. Past and ongoing instances of bias undermined survivors' confidence in recovery systems, while institutional unresponsiveness and lack of cultural competence further entrenched that mistrust.

**Long-term displacement of the LGBTQ+ community.** Across time points, multiple survivors expressed concern that recovery resources could pull local funding away from other critical services, such as shelters and organizations for LGBTQ+ youth, that communities rely on daily. Additionally, participants expressed a deep fear of long-term displacement, that rising rent costs and gentrification might permanently erase the LGBTQ+ community that existed before the fires. By September, survivors generally noted some visible progress in rebuilding and environmental restoration, alongside continuing uncertainty about the long-term return of LGBTQ+ community members. Some expressed hope in the reemergence of community events and familiar spaces, while others worried about the permanent displacement of neighbors and the loss of cultural and social fabric, particularly within LGBTQ+ enclaves threatened by gentrification.

## Intersectional Inequities of the Disaster Response

Survivors repeatedly emphasized that the impacts of the fires, and especially the challenges of navigating recovery, were not distributed evenly. LGBTQ+ participants who were also members of racial and ethnic minority groups, living with low incomes, or in renter households described distinct and compounded barriers that shaped every stage of the recovery process. Their experiences illustrate how pre-existing inequities shaped the information they received, the protections they were offered, and the resources they could access during recovery.

**Race and ethnicity-based inequities.** Survivors from historically Black neighborhoods reported uneven access to protection and support during the disaster. Some described having to repeatedly call authorities to secure patrols to prevent looting. One participant noted, "We had to call every day just to get patrols in our area," while perceiving that predominantly White neighborhoods received more immediate or consistent attention. As another participant put it, "It felt like White neighbors didn't have to advocate or fight as hard to receive support." Others recounted being treated as potential trespassers when attempting to return to their own properties, reflecting racially disparate patterns of policing. One survivor articulated the consequences of this disparity more broadly:

*Let's face it, this is a historically Black community, and there are no Black people at this meeting ... Just like the Black community has been pushed out, we are worried that those with lower incomes, who are LGBTQ, and who are Latinx will also be pushed out as Altadena is rebuilt.*

In addition, Spanish-speaking LGBTQ+ survivors described encountering language barriers, including limited translation at disaster resource centers, town halls, and aid agencies that lacked bilingual staff. Without accessible information, many were left unsure of their eligibility for programs or of the steps required to return to their homes, adding another layer of inequity that compounded the racialized patterns of unequal protection.

**Class-based inequities.** Low-income LGBTQ+ survivors described significant financial and logistical constraints that impacted their ability to navigate disaster recovery systems. Limited income, unstable employment, and rigid work schedules prevented some from taking time off to attend required appointments, complete paperwork, or pursue appeals for aid. Some expressed fears of slipping into long-term housing instability or homelessness, especially as temporary assistance expired, reconstruction costs mounted, and rental prices increased.

**Housing-based inequities.** Because LGBTQ+ survivors were disproportionately renters, inequities tied to housing status shaped much of their recovery trajectory. Participants widely felt that the disaster response prioritized homeowners, leaving renters feeling overlooked and excluded from housing support. Renters reported inconsistent guidance, limited legal protections, and, in some cases, being turned away from disaster resource centers entirely despite having lost homes, possessions, and community networks. One survivor noted that town halls "only gave information for homeowners. Nothing for renters." These gaps left several renters navigating recovery with ambiguous rights, fewer resources, and less institutional support.

Rising rental costs after the fires created an additional barrier: numerous LGBTQ+ renters found themselves priced out of their neighborhoods. Participants emphasized that this trend threatened the long-term presence of LGBTQ+ residents and contributed to the erasure of established LGBTQ+ cultural networks in the area. As one survivor noted, "Rent got so high we couldn't afford it." The lack of protections, support, and rental options created conditions in which LGBTQ+ renters were not just displaced temporarily but risked being excluded from the rebuilt community entirely.

Race, ethnicity, class, and housing status disparities persisted in September, with survivors continuing to echo the essential role of community mutual aid and support. Still, survivors called for equitable disaster-recovery frameworks that explicitly consider race, income, housing status, sexual orientation, and gender identity.

**Community-led efforts that filled recovery gaps.** In contrast to formal systems, mutual-aid networks and LGBTQ+ community groups were described repeatedly by survivors as reliable, responsive, and affirming. Multiple grassroots groups and collectives rapidly mobilized through technology and social media to share accurate information on resources, housing, and financial aid, and to distribute material support. One person summarized:

*We took care of each other when no one else would.*

For many, systemic barriers in formal aid, from discrimination to confusing requirements, meant that mutual aid didn't just complement recovery; it filled critical gaps and became the most dependable lifeline in the aftermath of the disaster.

## General Challenges

### Impacts of the Disaster

**Mental and emotional impacts.** In the months following the fires, survivors described a profound and lasting disruption of their mental health and well-being. The early aftermath, recounted in May, was characterized by disorientation and grief. They spoke about experiencing profound sadness resulting from the abrupt loss of homes, personal belongings, familiar surroundings, community supports, and the immediate displacement. Survivors noted that visual and sensory reminders such as ash, construction noise, and debris triggered renewed feelings of loss. One person mentioned becoming depressed after relocating to another part of LA County and stated: "Everything is different—the people, the sounds ... the entire environment has changed."

Another participant reflected:

*Hardest thing for me is that there's no routine. I keep waiting for something to click, but it hasn't. It's the psychological aspect that I have not felt at home yet.*

By September, some survivors described gradual improvements in mood and a cautious sense of hope as cleanup and rebuilding progressed, but many also emphasized that psychological recovery remained incomplete. Seeing physical progress in their neighborhoods lessened distress for some, but many continued to express emotional fatigue and a need for accessible, trauma-informed mental health care.

**Physical health impacts.** Physical health concerns also emerged early in the fire recovery process. Reflecting back to the immediate aftermath of the fires through the time of the first listening sessions in May, several survivors reported experiencing ongoing respiratory irritation and other symptoms, perceived as being caused by lingering smoke and soil contamination, compounded by the difficulty of obtaining protective equipment. These effects were particularly pronounced for older adults and those with pre-existing conditions. By September, some still reported physical health symptoms suspected to be due to fire contamination.

**Impacts on the ability to meet basic needs, especially housing.** Many residents lost housing, employment, and financial stability as a result of the fires, with profound effects on their ability to have safe accommodations and to pay for basic necessities. Evacuation and navigating relocation were also significantly stressful for many at both time points. In the early days, securing temporary housing was competitive and burdensome, with many struggling to find housing that accommodated pets or mobility

limitations, and residents with lower incomes also facing barriers to securing leases or deposits. One survivor stated:

*It felt like everyone was fighting for the same few rentals.*

Overall, survivors described the relocation process as chaotic, expensive, and confusing. For some, the financial burden of relocation was worsened by employment loss. Multiple participants spoke about losing their physical workplace and subsequent income due to fire or smoke damage. One participant, who is self-employed and works remotely, also felt the impact of lost income after their teleworking equipment was destroyed in the fire. Furthermore, financial pressures mounted over time as insurance and aid payments lagged, temporary accommodation rates disappeared, and reconstruction costs escalated.

By September, participants spoke of severe exhaustion from navigating multiple bureaucracies and feelings of “survivors’ guilt” towards neighbors unable to return to the community.

## Impacts of the Disaster Response

**Experiences with insurance providers.** Across time points, survivors’ experiences with private insurance companies were mixed. However, many noted particularly negative and frustrating experiences, including constant denials, delays, and exploitative practices by contractors and adjusters. Survivors also reported experiencing price gouging and dismissive assessments:

*A man sent by the insurance company to assess damages entered the home with a flashlight, brushing off the lingering smell of smoke as ‘barbecue.’ The insurance provider defended him as one of their ‘top guys,’ despite dismissing obvious signs of fire damage.*

*Some of the cleanup companies and adjusters wouldn’t provide quotes or information—they just were interested in securing the representation and working directly with the insurance companies so they could get paid.*

Insurance delays, described by one participant as “never-ending,” also created a domino effect for some, impeding access to rebuilding assistance and creating cascading financial strain. One survivor recounted:

*They kept finding reasons not to pay.*

**Experiences with aid agencies.** Experiences with government agencies and nongovernmental aid providers were overall mixed. While some reported positive and supportive experiences with entities such as FEMA and the Red Cross, a deep distrust of major aid agencies also emerged. Numerous survivors reported frustration and disappointment with FEMA and the Red Cross due to confusing paperwork, long delays in fund disbursement, and untrustworthy assessors. One survivor stated:

*Nobody knows how to do this. Filling out the forms [for FEMA disaster relief] is a complete nightmare.*

One of the most urgent suggestions from survivors was to extend application deadlines, which were referred to by one participant as being “brutal,” especially for those navigating trauma, housing instability, disabilities, or helping others while dealing with their own recovery. Others shared that after investing hours into forms, they were denied, while some gave up before even applying because the process felt

impossible. For some who did seek support from FEMA, they were also met with inaccessible or unhelpful services. One person recounted:

*Even when you go to FEMA, they talk too fast and don't keep in mind that people seeking help are still traumatized. The government talks to everyone the same, not considering different needs and abilities.*

Beyond these experiences, a few participants noted major gaps between what supportive resources were offered and what was needed. Survivors said that while donations of clothing poured in, what many really needed was housing, financial help, and logistical support in navigating insurance and government processes. Some also emphasized the importance of trusting survivors to use funds appropriately, rather than having external individuals or organizations dictate what support should look like.

Survivors described being financially depleted after responding to sudden displacement and long-term housing procurement, rebuilding, or remediation. All these processes came with high costs, leaving many struggling to meet basic needs such as food. A few participants specifically stated that survivors should be trusted with monetary support, allowing them to utilize funds as they see fit for recovery.

**Experiences with local government.** In multiple instances, survivors reported feeling unsupported by local government throughout and after the disaster. They reported that county and city representatives, as well as local agencies, did not provide adequate, clear, and accessible disaster response and recovery information. Furthermore, participants stated that there was little public information regarding air and soil testing frequency and which agencies would be responsible for future environmental monitoring. The lack of transparency from local government actors compounded the heavy emotional and mental impact survivors were already experiencing related to the disaster. The existing mental and emotional toll was exacerbated by a dearth of mental health resources and supports available during and after the disaster. Some expressed a desire for local government to facilitate access to mental health resources for survivors as part of the timely, regular, and accessible dissemination of emergency response and recovery information to the public and all individuals impacted.

## CONCLUSION

Findings illustrate that the Eaton Fire's consequences extended beyond physical destruction. Survivors continued to navigate intertwined emotional, economic, and structural challenges months later. While modest improvements in environmental conditions and community organization provided signs of resilience, systemic inequities and institutional mistrust remained significant barriers to full recovery.

With the notable exception in the rates of renting vs. homeownership and housing insurance, survey data from the rapid needs assessment found that LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ respondents in the Eaton Fire-impacted area reported similar needs in terms of housing, health, finances, and other essential necessities. Yet, the experiences captured in the listening sessions highlight how LGBTQ+ participants struggled with unique challenges, such as discrimination and exclusion, along with the loss of essential community supports. Many of the harms that participants described were of human design rather than the result of the natural disaster. As such, these harms could be ameliorated for LGBTQ+ survivors of future disasters with better disaster-response systems, designed for the needs of communities who already face discrimination and marginalization. Participant perspectives highlight the importance of sustained, inclusive, trauma-informed, and equity-focused approaches in future disaster planning and response efforts, specifically for LGBTQ+ communities.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

As climate change exacerbates the likelihood of extreme weather, including wildfires, this study proposes numerous strategies that governments could take to reduce harm to LGBTQ+ people in preparing for disasters and recovery. Several of these recommendations are echoed by prior literature, including but not limited to, integrating LGBTQ+ needs into disaster plans at all levels of government (federal, state, county, and local);<sup>31</sup> identifying LGBTQ+ communities as a vulnerable group in risk assessments and outlining steps to meet their needs in disaster planning;<sup>32</sup> prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity in relief services;<sup>33</sup> making emergency shelters safer and more inclusive of TNB people;<sup>34</sup> developing LGBTQ+ cultural competency training in collaboration with LGBTQ+ organizations and providing it to all disaster personnel;<sup>35</sup> and including LGBTQ+ organizations in disaster response planning and funding in general.<sup>36</sup> Key recommendations from this study include immediate local recommendations for the ongoing response in LA County and broader recommendations to ensure

---

<sup>31</sup> Mahowald, L. & Shaw, A. (2024). Climate Change Risk for LGBT People in the United States. The Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law, Los Angeles, California. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Climate-Change-LGBT-Apr-2024.pdf>

<sup>32</sup> Goldsmith, L., Méndez, M., & Raditz, V. (2023, Mar. 10). Disaster Response Must Help Protect LGBTQ+ Communities. Issues in Science and Technology. <https://issues.org/disaster-response-lgbtq-goldsmith-mendez-raditz/>

<sup>33</sup> *Id.*

<sup>34</sup> LGBTQIA+ Communities and Disasters. Center for Disaster Philanthropy. <https://disasterphilanthropy.org/cdp-resource/lgbtqia-communities-and-disasters/>

<sup>35</sup> Goldsmith, L., Méndez, M., & Raditz, V. (2023, Mar. 10). Disaster Response Must Help Protect LGBTQ+ Communities. Issues in Science and Technology. <https://issues.org/disaster-response-lgbtq-goldsmith-mendez-raditz/>

<sup>36</sup> Goldsmith, L., Méndez, M., & Raditz, V. (2023, Mar. 10). Disaster Response Must Help Protect LGBTQ+ Communities. Issues in Science and Technology. <https://issues.org/disaster-response-lgbtq-goldsmith-mendez-raditz/>; LGBTQIA+ Communities and Disasters. Center for Disaster Philanthropy. <https://disasterphilanthropy.org/cdp-resource/lgbtqia-communities-and-disasters/>

that LGBTQ+ people caught in natural or human-made crises are included in the disaster response in an equitable and supportive way.

## Recommendations for the Ongoing Local Recovery Processes in Response to the Los Angeles Wildfires

- Rebuild and preserve LGBTQ+ community spaces lost to the fires.
- Intentionally include LGBTQ+ residents in post-disaster planning and rebuilding.
- Ensure displaced residents can return.

## Recommendations for Future Disaster Preparedness

- Establish a plan to rapidly disseminate recovery information to the wide network of community supports available. This could include mutual aid networks; local, state, and federal government aid programs; LGBTQ+-trusted local nonprofits, religious and spiritual spaces, local and state companies and businesses; and other community-led and community-based organizations.
- Remove barriers to accessing recovery efforts by
  - Improving the ethnic and cultural competency and inclusivity of all recovery services, particularly those that are government-based
  - Prohibiting discrimination based on protected characteristics, including race, ethnicity, ability status, spoken language, gender identity, and sexual orientation
  - Establishing a standard of care and best practices guide with faith-based service providers to minimize barriers to resources or other supports

## Recommendations for Future Disaster Response and Recovery

- Establish accessible, safe, and trustworthy centralized public locations to serve as resource hubs that inform the community about available government aid as soon as possible during a disaster.
- Engage and resource existing LGBTQ+ community groups and organizations in providing information and recovery services.
- Provide direct assistance in filling out forms, navigating deadlines and requirements, and linking community members to other resources/supports.
- Develop and sustain community-focused spaces specifically for LGBTQ+ gathering, mourning, healing, and care.
- Intentionally invite LGBTQ+ individuals/communities into future decision-making and formal planning for rebuilding the community, and ensure their perspectives are heard and respected.
- Prioritize the ability for former residents to return and the rebuilding/preservation of LGBTQ+ community spaces impacted by disaster.

- Provide resources to address the vulnerabilities renters face and prioritize them alongside homeowners.
- Focus attention, resources, and support for people living alone and do not provide services that assume survivors have in-home or family assistance.
- Provide confidential, low-barrier, stigma-free mental health services for individuals and communities.
- Directly provide survivors with financial resources that promote autonomy in meeting their needs, including food, housing, employment, and insurance navigation, to address financial strain and minimize gaps in available supportive services.

The study also highlights the continuing need for more research in this area. The lack of data on LGBTQ+ individuals in disaster contexts continues to be a persistent problem. Governments and researchers should include sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) variables in disaster impact surveys, needs assessments, and recovery monitoring.<sup>37</sup> For example, adding voluntary SOGI questions to relief aid applications or registries can help provide information about how LGBTQ+ people are affected and what specific assistance they need.

The Biden Administration's U.S. Equitable Data Working Group recommended expanding SOGI data collection in federal surveys,<sup>38</sup> and researchers are taking advantage of new federal SOGI data gathered during the Biden Administration as a result. However, many of these questions have now been removed by the current administration, and these surveys are no longer generating data on LGBTQ+ people. This data removal creates significant data gaps related to LGBTQ+ needs and vulnerabilities, removing research that could otherwise support improved disaster responses for LGBTQ+ people and vulnerable groups more broadly.

Academic research should also delve into subgroups under the LGBTQ+ umbrella, for instance, studying disaster impacts on LGBTQ+ youth in foster care, or elderly LGBTQ+ populations (who often lack family support), or nonbinary and gender-nonconforming people (who may not be captured by "male/female" gender data).<sup>39</sup> Future studies should also examine how overlapping inequalities (including those related to racial and ethnic minority status, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, and more) compound to shape disaster experiences, survival, recovery, and resilience.<sup>40</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup> Mahowald, L. & Shaw, A. (2024). Climate Change Risk for LGBT People in the United States. The Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law, Los Angeles, California. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Climate-Change-LGBT-Apr-2024.pdf>

<sup>38</sup> The White House (2022 April). A Vision for Equitable Data: Recommendations from the Equitable Data Working Group. Author. <https://bidenwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/eo13985-vision-for-equitable-data.pdf>

<sup>39</sup> LGBTQIA+ Communities and Disasters. Center for Disaster Philanthropy. <https://disasterphilanthropy.org/cdp-resource/lgbtqia-communities-and-disasters/>

<sup>40</sup> Mahowald, L. & Shaw, A. (2024). Climate Change Risk for LGBT People in the United States. The Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law, Los Angeles, California. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Climate-Change-LGBT-Apr-2024.pdf>

## AUTHORS

**Brad Sears, J.D.**, is the Rand Schrader Distinguished Scholar of Law and Policy at the Williams Institute. He is also the Associate Dean of Public Interest Law at the UCLA Law School.

**Laurel Sprague, Ph.D.**, is the Research Director and Blachford/Cooper Distinguished Scholar at the Williams Institute.

**Keyanna P. Taylor, M.P.H., M.S.**, is a Research Data Analyst at the Williams Institute.

**Neko Michelle Castleberry, Ph.D.**, is a Research Data Analyst at the Williams Institute.

**Brent Efron, M.P.A.**, was a 2025 Summer Policy Fellow at the Williams Institute.

**Yan Cui, M.D., Ph.D.**, is the Chief of the Community Health Assessment Unit at the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health.

**Megha D. Shah, M.D., M.P.H., M.S.**, is the Director of the Office of Health Assessment and Epidemiology at the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to thank the Los Angeles County Wildfire Rapid Needs Assessment survey respondents and the listening session participants for taking the time to share their experiences, thoughts, and recommendations with us, in the spirit of improving disaster responses for LGBTQ+ people now and in the future. This report would not be possible without them.

The listening sessions would not have been possible without the work of our facilitators and note takers, including Nic Arnzen, Commissioner with Los Angeles County's LGBTQ+ Commission and Chair of the Community Engagement Committee; Joshua Arrayales, Renberg Law Fellow at the Williams Institute; Kris Bicknell, Graphic Designer at the Williams Institute; Kim Chatham, Educational Programs Coordinator and Administrative Specialist at the Williams Institute; Nathan Cisneros, HIV Criminalization Project Director at the Williams Institute; Rachel Dowd, Communications Director at the Williams Institute; Jordan Grasso, Research Data Analyst at the Williams Institute; Emily "Eve" Tuyêt Nhi Huynh, Research Assistant at the Williams Institute; Jer Adrienne "Juju" Lelliott, Commissioner with Los Angeles County's LGBTQ+ Commission; Jairo Israel Loaeza, volunteer at the Williams Institute; Christy Mallory, Roberta A. Conroy Interim Executive Director and Legal Director at the Williams Institute; Tonya Martin, Commissioner with Los Angeles County's LGBTQ+ Commission; Sunitha Menon, Executive Director of the Los Angeles County LGBTQ+ Commission; Clarissa Moran, Assistant Director of Finance and Administration at the Williams Institute; Annie Patpatian, Management Analyst for the Los Angeles County LGBTQ+ Commission; Dolores Magdalena Loaeza Pech, Research Assistant and Undergraduate Fellow at the Williams Institute; Héctor Trinidad Plascencia, Commissioner with Los Angeles County's LGBTQ+ Commission; Bamby Salcedo, President and CEO of the TransLatin@ Coalition; Will Tentindo, Staff Attorney at the Williams Institute; and Wendy Isabel Pech Villalobos, volunteer at the Williams Institute.

Thank you to our co-sponsors for their support, which enabled these listening sessions to happen: Altadena Libraries; Altadena Pride; Bienestar Human Services; California Department of Insurance; County of Los Angeles Department of Public Health; LA County LGBTQ+ Commission; LA County Recovery,

Health and Social Services, Vulnerable Populations Subcommittee; Pasadena Village; San Gabriel Valley LGBTQ Center; and the TransLatin@ Coalition.

We thank the following for their thoughtful reviews and feedback on this paper: Amy Lightstone, Cynthia Chow, Jacqueline Porcel, Dulmini Wilson, Nichole Quick, Anish Mahajan, and Jeremiah Garza from the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, with Christy Mallory, Roberta A. Conroy Interim Executive Director and Legal Director at the Williams Institute.

## SUGGESTED CITATION

Sears, B., Sprague, L.D., Taylor, K.P., Castleberry, N.M., Efron, B., Cui, Y., & Shah, M.D. (2026). *The Impact of the 2025 Eaton Fire on LGBTQ+ Communities*. The Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law, Los Angeles, California.

## ABOUT THE WILLIAMS INSTITUTE

The Williams Institute is dedicated to conducting rigorous, independent research on sexual orientation and gender identity law and public policy. A think tank at UCLA Law, the Williams Institute produces high-quality research with real-world relevance and disseminates it to judges, legislators, policymakers, media, and the public. These studies can be accessed at the Williams Institute website.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

The Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law  
[williamsinstitute@law.ucla.edu](mailto:williamsinstitute@law.ucla.edu)  
[williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu](http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu)

RESEARCH THAT MATTERS



## APPENDIX

### METHODS

This report used a mixed-method approach, which included both quantitative data and qualitative data. For the quantitative section, this report used data from the Los Angeles County Wildfires Rapid Needs Assessment survey developed by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, in collaboration with the LA County Wildfire Recovery Health and Social Services Task Force. This survey was developed for adult respondents who live or lived in the Palisades or Eaton Fire-impacted areas and was designed to understand what the affected communities need to recover and, ultimately, to help direct resources to support the most critical, community-identified needs. The survey was distributed electronically between February 19, 2025, and March 10, 2025, by government agencies, including the LA County Board of Supervisors and the Department of Public Health, as well as by the LA County Wildfire Recovery Health and Social Services Task Force member organizations. The survey was available in English, Spanish, Chinese Simplified, Chinese Traditional, Korean, Tagalog, and Vietnamese. It included questions about housing, financial, and other basic or essential goods needs; insurance coverage, physical and mental health impacts, and access to care; other needs; use and assessment of disaster relief services; and other sources of social and community support.

There were 1,468 survey responses from the Eaton Fire-impacted area and 838 survey responses from the Palisades Fire-impacted area to the Rapid Needs Assessment survey. Of these responses, 84 (9%) of the Eaton Fire-impacted respondents and 22 (5%) of the Palisades Fire-impacted respondents identified as LGBTQ+. Given the small sample size of LGBTQ+ respondents from the Palisades Fire area, this report focuses on LGBTQ+ people from the Eaton Fire-impacted area. Of the remainder of the 1,468 respondents from the Eaton Fire-impacted area, 681 respondents identified as non-LGBTQ+, 35 indicated that they did not know, 148 refused to answer the LGBTQ+ status question, and 520 did not respond to the LGBTQ+ survey question (i.e., missing values).

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health provided the William Institute's research team with deidentified data from the Rapid Needs Assessment survey that was already analyzed and aggregated by LGBTQ+ status, comparing LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ respondents. The Williams Institute research team did not receive individual data records. Analyses were primarily descriptive in nature in order to describe the prevalence of various experiences of LGBTQ+ people impacted by the Los Angeles wildfires. Confidence intervals (95% CI) were included in Appendix tables to assess the statistical significance between LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ respondents and communicate the degree of uncertainty around an estimate due to sampling error. Please refer to "Los Angeles County Wildfire Rapid Needs Assessment Report" for more details.<sup>41</sup>

For the qualitative section, this report used data collected from LGBTQ+-focused listening sessions. Town halls for LGBTQ+ people impacted by the Los Angeles wildfires were held to share the LGBTQ+ specific results of the rapid needs assessment, followed by listening sessions designed to get an understanding of the experiences of LGBTQ+ people impacted by the fires and in the disaster recovery process. Finally, recommendations were sought about how to make recovery efforts more inclusive for LGBTQ+ people when future disasters strike.

<sup>41</sup> Los Angeles County Department of Public Health. (2025). "Los Angeles County Wildfire Rapid Needs Assessment Report". Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, Los Angeles, California. [http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/wildfire/docs/LAC\\_Wildfire\\_RNA\\_Report-Nov2025.pdf](http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/wildfire/docs/LAC_Wildfire_RNA_Report-Nov2025.pdf)

Two listening sessions were held on May 7, 2025, and September 27, 2025, in private rooms at the Altadena Main Library in Altadena, California. Listening sessions were two hours each. A virtual option via Zoom was provided for those not able to attend in person. Participants attending in person were provided with dinner (May 7) and lunch (September 27), free home air purifiers, N95 face masks, and time to peruse information tables set up by local agencies offering support services.

Attendees for the listening sessions were recruited through social media postings and emails by the UCLA research team and the Los Angeles County LGBTQ+ Commission, the Vulnerable Populations Subcommittee of the Los Angeles County Wildfire Recovery Health and Social Services Task Force, the TransLatin@ Coalition, and Altadena Pride. Flyers for the events were posted at the Altadena Library.

Attendees were provided with an information sheet and an informed consent form. Verbal consent was obtained to avoid collecting any personally identifying information, and attendees were provided with alternatives to participation if they chose. To protect confidentiality, no audio or video recordings were made.

A total of 52 people participated in the May session, and 27 people participated in the September session. Participants were welcome to attend both sessions; however, when asked, few of the September participants indicated verbally that they had attended in May. Participants were organized into eleven groups in May and six groups in September. Three of these groups were held via Zoom for interested participants unable to attend in person: two were held simultaneously during the May 7 event, and the third was held on October 13, after the September 27 event. At each session, one group was conducted in Spanish; the others were conducted in English.

A facilitator and a notetaker were assigned to each group. Facilitator guides with predetermined topics and questions were provided. The topics covered included housing, health, and financial needs; disaster relief agency experiences; community support; and recommendations for Los Angeles County recovery efforts and for more LGBTQ+-inclusive future disaster relief efforts. Written notes were taken by the notetakers. After the listening session, notes were typed and edited to remove identifying information.

The analysis of the feedback from the listening sessions was conducted by two members of the study team using an iterative process. First, the qualitative data from the May listening sessions were synthesized and reviewed for major themes and recommendations. The themes and supporting data were discussed by the researchers until reaching consensus, then put into a framework for discussion with participants at the September listening session. At the September listening session, the findings from the May discussions were reported to participants. After the presentation of these findings, participants' reactions to the results and recommendations from the May session and further insights about the progress of the disaster response were solicited. After the September listening session, responses were again synthesized and reviewed against the May data. New themes, recommendations, and quotes were added. The May and September responses were kept separate to track any differences that could identify any progress or different challenges between the two time points.

The Williams Institute submitted the protocol for the secondary analysis of the Los Angeles County survey data and to conduct the LGBTQ+ listening sessions to the UCLA Office of the Human Research Protection Program and received a Certification of Exemption on April 30, 2025.

The listening sessions were co-hosted by the Williams Institute with Altadena Libraries; Altadena Pride; Bienestar Human Services; California Department of Insurance; County of Los Angeles Department of Public Health; LA County LGBTQ+ Commission; LA County Recovery, Health and Social Services, Vulnerable Populations Subcommittee; Pasadena Village; San Gabriel Valley LGBTQ Center; and the TransLatin@ Coalition.

## LIMITATIONS

Though this study has many strengths, it is not without limitations. Regarding the Los Angeles County Wildfire Rapid Needs Assessment survey, there was only a single question on the survey asking if respondents were “LGBTQ+” or not. Accordingly, we could not look more specifically at subgroups based on sexual orientation and gender identity, despite prior research showing that bisexual men and women and transgender and nonbinary people in Los Angeles, in general, went into the fires with greater health, housing, and other economic vulnerabilities.<sup>42</sup> Further, the sample size of LGBTQ+ respondents from the Eaton Fire-impacted area limited our ability to do sub-analyses, including by race/ethnicity, age, household size, and housing status. Additionally, given that the needs assessment survey was conducted immediately after the fires and before the listening sessions, we were unable to ask respondents about any experiences of discrimination or exclusion, as was discussed during the listening sessions. In addition, the Los Angeles County Wildfire Rapid Needs Assessment survey was designed for all those impacted by the Los Angeles fires, so questions that more specifically focused on the experiences of LGBTQ+ respondents (including levels of being out, family rejection, LGBTQ+ specific discrimination and harassment) and focused on Altadena as a historic Black community, and more recent residential community for LGBTQ+ people, were not included.

Participants in the listening sessions did not fully represent the racial and ethnic diversity of those impacted by the Eaton fire. Though participants were not asked for demographic characteristics, the participants were majority White or white-passing adults, and a smaller number of people who were Spanish-speaking or identified themselves through their responses as Latinx participants. Given that approximately half of Altadena residents affected by the Eaton Fire are people of color and 18% are Black,<sup>43</sup> these listening sessions were not representative in terms of racial and ethnic diversity. As a result, the results reported are likely to underreport or to have missed experiences in the disaster response of Black, Latinx, and other LGBTQ+ people of color.

To reassure participants of the confidential nature of the sessions, recording devices were not utilized for the listening sessions; thus, all data are limited to what was captured by moderators and note takers.

The smaller sizes of both the rapid needs assessment survey and the listening sessions limit the generalizability of the findings presented here. The needs assessment survey and listening sessions may also be limited by selection bias, in that those who chose to participate may not represent the broader population of LGBTQ+ people in the Eaton Fire-impacted areas.

<sup>42</sup> See generally, Sears, B., Conron, K.J., Mallory, C., Fuentes Carreño, M., Cui, Y., & Shah, M. (2024). Communities of Resilience: The Lived Experiences of LGBTQ Adults in Los Angeles County. The Williams Institute, UCLA, Los Angeles, CA. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/LACo-LGBTQ-Adults-Jun-2024.pdf>

<sup>43</sup> Ong, P., Pech, C., Frasure, L., Comandur, S., Lee, E., and González, S.R. (2025). LA Wildfires: Impacts on Altadena’s Black Community. UCLA Ralph J. Bunche Center for African American Studies, Center for Neighborhood Knowledge, and Latino Policy and Politics Institute, Los Angeles, California. [https://bunchecenter.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/112/2025/02/LA\\_Wildfire\\_Altadena\\_Black\\_Community\\_Report.pdf](https://bunchecenter.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/112/2025/02/LA_Wildfire_Altadena_Black_Community_Report.pdf)

## TABLES

Table A1. Living situation and housing needs among respondents in the Eaton Fire-impacted area

	LGBTQ		NON-LGBTQ	
	%	95% CI	%	95% CI
<b>Living situation prior to fire</b>				
Homeowner	42.9%	[32.3, 53.5]	<b>69.3%</b>	[65.8, 72.8]
Rented	45.2%	[34.6, 55.9]	<b>23.9%</b>	[20.7, 27.1]
Have homeowners or renters insurance	61.9%	[51.5, 72.3]	<b>78.6%</b>	[75.5, 81.6]
Home damaged by the fire or strong winds during LA fires				
Home not damaged	22.6%	[13.7, 31.6]	18.1%	[15.2, 21.0]
Home damaged, can still live there	28.6%	[18.9, 38.2]	24.4%	[21.2, 27.7]
Home damaged, cannot live there	23.8%	[14.7, 32.9]	27.4%	[24.0, 30.8]
Home completely destroyed	20.2%	[11.6, 28.8]	27.1%	[23.7, 30.4]
<b>Current living situation</b>				
Live in same place as before fire	45.2%	[34.6, 55.9]	35.0%	[31.4, 38.6]
Displaced	52.4%	[41.7, 63.1]	64.7%	[61.1, 68.3]
Living somewhere else for the short term <sup>b</sup>	23.8%	[14.7, 32.9]	30.9%	[27.4, 34.4]
Living somewhere else for the long term <sup>b</sup>	25.0%	[15.7, 34.3]	27.6%	[24.3, 31.0]
<b>Among those who are displaced:</b>				
Currently staying in Los Angeles County	81.8%	[70.4, 93.2]	87.2%	[84.1, 90.4]
Having difficulty with finding a safe, stable place to sleep at night and store belongings since the fire	34.0%	[20.5, 47.6]	36.3%	[31.8, 40.7]
<b>Housing needs respondents reported needing help with<sup>a</sup></b>				
Getting an air purifier to help with the indoor air quality in my home	44.6%	[33.9, 55.3]	35.5%	[31.9, 39.1]
Getting my home cleaned or repaired	43.4%	[32.7, 54.1]	38.8%	[35.1, 42.4]
Having debris removed from my home or property	27.7%	[18.1, 37.4]	31.8%	[28.3, 35.3]
Help with rent or mortgage payments	27.7%	[18.1, 37.4]	25.7%	[22.4, 29.0]
Finding long-term housing or relocation assistance	20.5%	[11.8, 29.2]	23.8%	[20.6, 27.0]
Filing claims with my home or renter's insurance for home loss, home repairs, lost belongings, or lodging costs	20.5%	[11.8, 29.2]	22.6%	[19.5, 25.8]

	LGBTQ		NON-LGBTQ	
	%	95% CI	%	95% CI
Legal help for tenant rights and housing protections	20.5%	[11.8, 29.2]	<b>5.2%</b>	[3.5, 6.9]
Help solving disagreements with my landlord about rent increases, repairs, or deposit returns	13.3%	[5.9, 20.6]	<b>4.0%</b>	[2.5, 5.5]
Finding short-term housing or shelter	12.0%	[5.0, 19.1]	13.2%	[10.6, 15.7]
I do not need any help with my housing needs	16.9%	[8.8, 24.9]	16.0%	[13.2, 18.7]

Source: Los Angeles County Wildfire Rapid Needs Assessment survey

CI = confidence interval; **bolded values** = p-value less than 0.05 when comparing LGBTQ people to non-LGBTQ people.

Due to small sample sizes and concerns related to confidentiality, as well as statistical reliability, not all data are presented. The counts within each section may not sum to the total count for this question.

<sup>a</sup> Survey respondents were able to select more than one response option for this question. Due to small sample sizes and concerns related to confidentiality, as well as statistical reliability, not all data are presented.

<sup>b</sup> The terms "short term" and "long term" do not have specific time frames included in the questionnaire and were solely based on the respondents' interpretation of these terms.

**Table A2. Health and well-being of respondents in the Eaton Fire-impacted area**

	LGBTQ		NON-LGBTQ	
	%	95% CI	%	95% CI
Entire household has health insurance	91.6%	[85.6, 97.6]	91.7%	[89.6, 93.8]
Entire household has a place to go for medical care	90.4%	[84.0, 96.7]	90.1%	[87.9, 92.4]
Entire household has a place to go for mental health care	66.7%	[56.6, 76.8]	69.5%	[66.0, 73.0]
<b>Respondent agreed or agreed with the following statements:</b>				
At least one person in household, including myself, has experienced worsening physical health since fire	63.9%	[53.5, 74.2]	57.4%	[53.7, 61.2]
At least one person in household, including myself, has experienced worsening mental health since fire	83.3%	[75.3, 91.3]	78.5%	[75.4, 81.6]
Health concerns about at least one person in household being in or nearby areas that were burned by fire	82.1%	[73.9, 90.3]	75.3%	[72.1, 78.6]
<b>Health needs respondents reported needing help with</b>				
Finding mental health support or counseling services	26.9%	[17.1, 36.8]	24.6%	[21.2, 27.9]
I do not need any help with my health or mental health care needs	48.7%	[37.6, 59.8]	55.2%	[51.4, 59.1]

Source: Los Angeles County Wildfire Rapid Needs Assessment survey

Due to small sample sizes and concerns related to confidentiality, as well as statistical reliability, not all data are presented. The counts within each section may not sum to the total count for this question.

**Table A3. Financial needs among respondents in the Eaton Fire-impacted area**

	LGBTQ		NON-LGBTQ	
	%	95% CI	%	95% CI
Paying for belongings that I lost because of the fire, such as furniture, clothing, or other household items	46.4%	[35.7, 57.1]	47.3%	[43.5, 51.1]
Covering daily living costs (other than rent or mortgage)	32.1%	[22.1, 42.1]	28.5%	[25.1, 32.0]
Covering costs for rebuilding or repairing my home or property	31.0%	[21.0, 40.9]	39.1%	[35.4, 42.8]
Finding work	19.0%	[10.6, 27.5]	10.0%	[7.7, 12.3]
I do not need any help with my financial needs	19.0%	[10.6, 27.5]	22.2%	[19.0, 25.4]

Source: Los Angeles County Wildfire Rapid Needs Assessment survey

Survey respondents were able to select more than one response option for this question. Due to small sample sizes and concerns related to confidentiality, as well as statistical reliability, not all data are presented. The counts within each section may not sum to the total count for this question.

**Table A4. Essential goods respondents in the Eaton Fire-impacted area reported needing help accessing**

	LGBTQ		NON-LGBTQ	
	%	95% CI	%	95% CI
Household cleaning supplies (such as disinfectants, paper towels, etc.)	35.4%	[24.9, 46.0]	30.3%	[26.8, 33.8]
Safe drinking water	30.4%	[20.2, 40.5]	31.1%	[27.5, 34.6]
Bedding or sleeping essentials (such as blankets, pillows, air mattresses, etc.)	29.1%	[19.1, 39.2]	28.3%	[24.9, 31.8]
Personal protective equipment (PPE) to wear while cleaning up my home or property (such as face masks or gloves)	27.8%	[17.9, 37.8]	25.4%	[22.1, 28.8]
Groceries or food assistance programs (such as Cal-Fresh, SNAP or EBT)	25.3%	[15.7, 34.9]	19.0%	[16.0, 22.0]
Cooking supplies (such as pots and pans, utensils, plates, etc.)	21.5%	[12.4, 30.6]	25.1%	[21.8, 28.4]
Personal care or hygiene items (such as soap, shampoo/conditioner, menstrual products, etc.)	17.7%	[9.3, 26.2]	19.5%	[16.4, 22.5]
I do not need any help with accessing essential goods	30.4%	[20.2, 40.5]	37.9%	[34.2, 41.6]

Source: Los Angeles County Wildfire Rapid Needs Assessment survey

Survey respondents were able to select more than one response option for this question. Due to small sample sizes and concerns related to confidentiality, as well as statistical reliability, not all data are presented. The counts within each section may not sum to the total count for this question.

**Table A5. Other needs among respondents in the Eaton Fire-impacted area**

	LGBTQ		NON-LGBTQ	
	%	95% CI	%	95% CI
Knowing where to go for reliable information about recovering after a fire	35.5%	[24.7, 46.3]	34.5%	[30.9, 38.2]
Applying for disaster recovery assistance with FEMA, Cal-EPA, or another state or federal agency	22.4%	[13.0, 31.8]	18.9%	[15.9, 21.9]
Obtaining pet care supplies (such as food or medication), boarding, or veterinary services	19.7%	[10.8, 28.7]	13.6%	[11.0, 16.2]
Getting gasoline or fuel for a car or vehicle	17.1%	[8.6, 25.6]	18.8%	[15.8, 21.8]
Replacing or repairing a car or personal vehicle	15.8%	[7.6, 24.0]	16.6%	[13.8, 19.5]
I do not need help with any of these things	26.3%	[16.4, 36.2]	33.3%	[29.7, 36.9]

Source: Los Angeles County Wildfire Rapid Needs Assessment survey

Survey respondents were able to select more than one response option for this question. Due to small sample sizes and concerns related to confidentiality, as well as statistical reliability, not all data are presented. The counts within each section may not sum to the total count for this question.

**Table A6. Experiences with accessing disaster relief services among respondents in the Eaton Fire-impacted area**

	LGBTQ		NON-LGBTQ	
	%	95% CI	%	95% CI
I felt overwhelmed by too much information	51.2%	[40.5, 61.9]	40.1%	[36.4, 43.8]
I had a hard time knowing what information I could trust	33.3%	[23.2, 43.4]	37.1%	[33.5, 40.8]
I applied for disaster relief services but was told I do not qualify	33.3%	[23.2, 43.4]	33.1%	[29.6, 36.7]
I didn't know what services were available	32.1%	[22.1, 42.1]	31.6%	[28.1, 35.2]
I didn't know how to apply or who to contact	22.6%	[13.7, 31.6]	23.9%	[20.7, 27.2]
The application process was too complicated	16.7%	[8.7, 24.7]	16.3%	[13.5, 19.1]
I'm uncomfortable giving my personal information on these applications	13.1%	[5.9, 20.3]	14.3%	[11.6, 16.9]
None of the above apply to me	14.3%	[6.8, 21.8]	18.6%	[15.6, 21.5]

Source: Los Angeles County Wildfire Rapid Needs Assessment survey

Survey respondents were able to select more than one response option for this question. Due to small sample sizes and concerns related to confidentiality, as well as statistical reliability, not all data are presented. The counts within each section may not sum to the total count for this question.

**Table A7. Most helpful sources of support among respondents in the Eaton Fire-impacted area**

	LGBTQ		NON-LGBTQ	
	%	95% CI	%	95% CI
Friends	70.7%	[60.9, 80.6]	72.0%	[68.6, 75.4]
Family members	63.4%	[53.0, 73.9]	73.3%	[69.9, 76.6]
Community groups or organizations	43.9%	[33.1, 54.7]	34.6%	[31.0, 38.2]
Support with food, clothing, or water	18.3%	[9.9, 26.7]	22.7%	[19.5, 25.9]
FEMA	13.4%	[6.0, 20.8]	16.5%	[13.7, 19.3]
Programs and services from the city that I live in	12.2%	[5.1, 19.3]	14.2%	[11.6, 16.9]

Source: Los Angeles County Wildfire Rapid Needs Assessment survey

Survey respondents were able to select more than one response option for this question. Due to small sample sizes and concerns related to confidentiality, as well as statistical reliability, not all data are presented. The counts within each section may not sum to the total count for this question.

**Table A8. General challenges experienced by listening session participants after fires, in May and September 2025**

MAY 2025	SEPTEMBER 2025
Mental/emotional impact of losing homes	Mental/emotional impact of losing homes
Physical health concerns	Physical health concerns
Financial burden	Financial burden
Employment impact of recovery	Employment impact of recovery
Predatory services	Predatory services
Insurance frustrations, time-consuming, stressful	Insurance frustrations, time-consuming, stressful
Poor communication from authorities; lack of alerts	
Discrepancy between needed and received support	
Gov aid confusing, slow, mixed experiences	Mixed experiences with gov aid
Disparate support and information for renters vs. homeowners	Disparate support and information for renters vs. homeowners
Relocation challenges: finding accessible, affordable, and appropriate housing	Relocation challenges: finding accessible, affordable, and appropriate housing
Survivor's guilt	Returner's guilt
	Long-term displacement

Source: 2025 Listening Sessions conducted by authors

**Table A9. LGBTQ+-specific challenges experienced by listening session participants after fires, in May and September 2025**

MAY 2025	SEPTEMBER 2025
Impact of anti-LGBTQ+ social-political climate	Impact of anti-LGBTQ+ social-political climate
LGBTQ+ discrimination across governmental and nongovernmental providers/agencies	LGBTQ+ discrimination across governmental and nongovernmental providers/agencies
Lack of LGBTQ+ competent services	Lack of LGBTQ+ competent services
Distrust of government and nongovernment aid and service providers	Distrust of government and nongovernment aid and service providers
Loss of safe community	Loss of safe community
Intersectional impacts	Intersectional impacts
Minimal presence of LGBTQ+ support organizations	Minimal presence of LGBTQ+ support organizations
Gentrification (long-term loss of LGBTQ+ community and essential locations)	Gentrification (long-term loss of LGBTQ+ community and essential locations)
“Fake allyship” from organizations participating in recovery efforts	“Fake allyship” from organizations participating in recovery efforts
Conflicts with religious or spirituality-based supports/resources	Conflicts with religious or spirituality-based supports/resources
LGBTQ+ community care is essential	LGBTQ+ community feeling overextended due to the emphasis on community care and self-reliance
Trans discrimination in seeking temp housing	Fears of trusting new people, housing search challenges, and discrimination (actual and feared)

Source: 2025 Listening Sessions conducted by authors

**Table A10. LGBTQ+ resilience and support experienced by listening session participants after fires, in May and September 2025**

MAY 2025	SEPTEMBER 2025
Emergence of LGBTQ+ mutual aid groups across the region to support LGBTQ+ survivors	Birth of new LGBTQ+ support networks

Source: 2025 Listening Sessions conducted by authors