

BENCHMARKING THE PERFORMANCE OF LGBTQ INCLUSIVE SHELTERS

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report outlines a benchmarking framework for assessing the performance of LGBTQ+ inclusive homeless shelters in Kenya. Key performance indicators (KPIs) include resident satisfaction, safety incidents, staff training hours, community partnerships, funding received, and successful outcomes. The framework involves data collection, performance assessment, comparative analysis, stakeholder engagement, and regular reporting.

The study surveyed several LGBTQ+ inclusive shelters across Kenya, gathering data on inclusivity policies, services provided, challenges faced, and best practices. Common challenges included financial constraints, safety

concerns, legal barriers, and stigma. Best practices implemented by some shelters included trauma-informed care approaches, community partnerships, and designated safe spaces for LGBTQ+ individuals.

Key recommendations for improvement include increasing funding, strengthening partnerships with LGBTQ+ organizations, enhancing staff training on cultural competency, advocating for legal reforms, and promoting public awareness to reduce stigma. By addressing these areas, LGBTQ+ inclusive shelters in Kenya can continue to improve their services and create more supportive environments for those they serve.

CONTEXT BACKGROUND:

In Kenya, LGBTQ+ individuals face significant challenges, including stigma, discrimination, and legal barriers. For those who are homeless, finding safe and inclusive shelters is crucial. This report aims to map and provide an overview of LGBTQ+ inclusive shelters in Kenya, highlighting their efforts, challenges, and best practices. By understanding these dynamics, stakeholders can better support and advocate for the needs of LGBTQ+ homeless youth and shelters.

METHODOLOGY

Data Collection

Data collection involved both one on one interviews and a Google form survey distributed to shelter representatives and LGBTQ+ individuals across Kenya. We collected quantitative and qualitative data on inclusivity policies, services provided, challenges faced, and best practices. Respondents were selected from various shelters and organizations working with LGBTQ+ communities.

Survey Design

The survey included questions structured around:

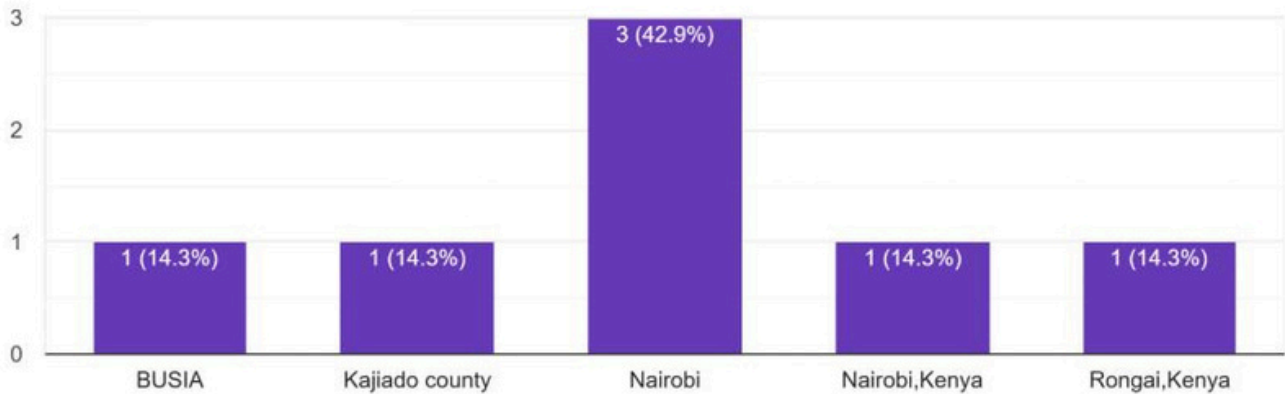
- Shelter demographics and location
- Inclusivity policies and practices
- Services offered to residents
- Common challenges and barriers
- Success stories and best practices
- Recommendations for improvement

Survey Respondent Summary

The survey garnered responses from various LGBTQ+ inclusive shelters across different regions of Kenya. These shelters are instrumental in providing safe and supportive environments for LGBTQ+ individuals experiencing homelessness. Each shelter's profile demonstrates a unique approach to addressing the needs of their residents, highlighting the diversity and impact of their efforts.

The survey revealed that these shelters offer a range of essential services, including temporary accommodation, mental health support, legal assistance, vocational training, and advocacy for LGBTQ+ rights. The shelters also engage in community outreach programs to raise awareness and reduce stigma, ensuring that LGBTQ+ individuals receive the support they need.

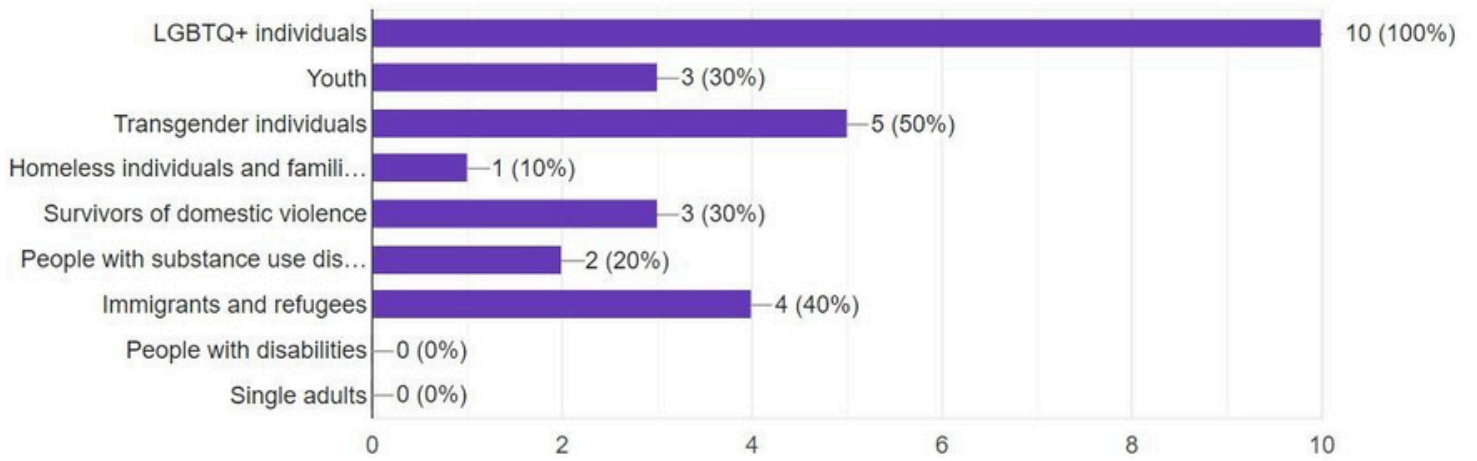
The survey's findings underscore the importance of increased funding, collaborative networks, policy advocacy, and capacity building to enhance the effectiveness and reach of these shelters. By addressing these key areas, LGBTQ+ inclusive shelters in Kenya can continue to improve their services and create more inclusive and supportive environments for those they serve.



Shelters Overview

This section provides detailed profiles of surveyed shelters, outlining their location, target population, inclusivity policies, and services provided. This comprehensive view illustrates the diversity in approaches among shelters to meet the unique needs of LGBTQ+ individuals.

Shelter Name	Location	Target Population	Explicitly LGBTQ+ Inclusive?	Services Provided
Rainbow Family Support and Advocacy (RaFaSA)	Nairobi	LGBTQ+ individuals, immigrants, refugees	Yes	Emergency housing, counseling, medical support, skills development, education for children, nutritional meals
Resilient Hearts Africa	Kajiado	LGBTQ+ individuals, transgender individuals, substance users	Yes	Emergency housing, psycho-social support, drug abuse rehabilitation, skills training, LGBTQ+ support
Kenneth and Jacob's House	Kajiado	LGBTQ+ individuals, transgender individuals, homeless, domestic violence survivors	Yes	Safety and protection, shelter, care, psychosocial services, advocacy
RISO Shelter	Kajiado	LGBTQ+ individuals, youth, transgender individuals, immigrants, refugees	Yes	Emergency housing, medical and job assistance, food, LGBTQ+ support
Transmen Initiative Kenya	Nairobi	Transgender individuals, substance users	Yes	Emergency housing, advocacy, livelihood and economic justice, gender-affirming healthcare, psycho-social support
Nadharia Kenya	Nairobi	LGBTQ+ individuals, youth, transgender individuals	Yes	Safe housing, individual and group counseling, community advocacy, vocational training
Community Support Initiative for Refugees	Kiambu	LGBTQ+ individuals, immigrants, refugees	Yes	Shelter housing, counseling referral, STI prevention and treatment referral, livelihood training
Mary Gladys Children Rescue Center	Busia	LGBTQ+ individuals, youths, survivors of domestic violence	Yes	Counseling services
Most at Risk Young Mothers and Teenage Girls Living with HIV Initiative (MOYOTE)	-	LGBTQ+ individuals, survivors of domestic violence, immigrants and refugees.	Yes	Emergency housing, and psychosocial support

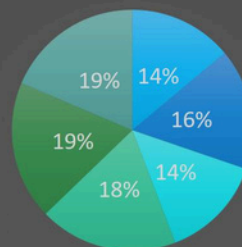


Target Population Statistic - Source: Survey Data, 2023/24

Inclusivity policies are crucial for creating safe and affirming environments within shelters. The survey revealed widespread adoption of inclusive practices among surveyed shelters.

The survey examined specific steps and policies that shelters have implemented to ensure LGBTQ+ inclusivity and affirmation. The responses from shelters provide insight into the measures they have adopted to create supportive and inclusive environments for LGBTQ+ individuals experiencing homelessness.

Specific steps and policies each shelter had in place to ensure LGBTQ inclusivity.



- Staff training on LGBTQ+ cultural competency
- Gender-neutral and inclusive language usage
- Transgender-inclusive policies (e.g., housing based on gender identity)
- Anti-discrimination policies
- LGBTQ+ support groups or counseling services
- Collaboration with LGBTQ+ organizations

Anti-Discrimination Policies (18%)

Only 18% of shelters have established anti-discrimination policies to protect LGBTQ+ individuals from discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. This low adoption rate means many LGBTQ+ residents may face discrimination, impacting their safety and mental well-being.

Recommendation: It is crucial to mandate the implementation of comprehensive anti-discrimination policies across all shelters. These policies should be enforced rigorously to ensure equal treatment and respect for all residents, fostering a safe and supportive environment.

LGBTQ+ Support Groups or Counseling Services (19%)

With only 19% of shelters offering LGBTQ+ support groups or counseling services, a significant gap exists in addressing the unique mental health needs of LGBTQ+ individuals. Without these services, many residents may lack the necessary support to manage their mental health effectively.

Recommendation: Shelters should increase the availability of LGBTQ+ support groups and counseling services. Providing adequate mental health support through professional counseling and peer groups can significantly improve the overall well-being of LGBTQ+ residents.

Collaboration with LGBTQ+ Organizations (19%)

The same 19% of shelters collaborate with LGBTQ+ organizations, which enhances their capacity to provide comprehensive services. However, the low collaboration rate means many shelters miss out on the benefits of partnerships, such as advocacy, legal support, and community outreach.

Recommendation: Strengthening partnerships between shelters and LGBTQ+ organizations is essential. Such collaborations can provide shelters with additional resources and expertise, enabling them to offer more effective and informed support to LGBTQ+ residents.

Gender-Neutral and Inclusive Language Usage (16%)

Only 16% of shelters have adopted gender-neutral and inclusive language in their communication and documentation. This lack of inclusive language can contribute to an environment that feels unwelcoming or invalidating to LGBTQ+ residents. **Recommendation:** Shelters should encourage the widespread use of gender-neutral and inclusive language. This practice helps create an environment of respect and affirmation, recognizing and validating the identities of all residents, thereby fostering a more inclusive atmosphere.

Transgender-Inclusive Policies (16%)

With just 16% of shelters implementing transgender-inclusive policies, many transgender individuals may not have housing arrangements that align with their gender identity. This misalignment can negatively impact their safety and well-being. **Recommendation:** It is vital for all shelters to adopt transgender-inclusive policies, such as housing arrangements based on gender identity. Ensuring that transgender individuals are housed in environments that reflect their gender identity can significantly enhance their safety and comfort.

Staff Training on LGBTQ+ Cultural Competency (14%)

Only 14% of shelters provide staff training on LGBTQ+ cultural competency. Without this training, staff may lack the knowledge and skills necessary to support LGBTQ+ residents effectively, leading to interactions that are not respectful or affirming.

Recommendation: Developing and mandating comprehensive training programs on LGBTQ+ cultural competency for all shelter staff is crucial. This training will equip staff with the skills to interact with LGBTQ+ residents respectfully and affirmatively, improving the overall quality of support provided.

SHELTERS' INCLUSIVITY OVERVIEW.

Services Provided By The Shelters

Shelters offer a range of services tailored to meet the diverse needs of LGBTQ+ residents. These services play a critical role in supporting individuals experiencing homelessness.

Services Offered by LGBTQ+ Inclusive Shelters

- **Emergency Housing:** Offered by all shelters.
- **Counseling and Psycho-Social Support:** Widely available.
- **Skills Development and Vocational Training:** Implemented by several shelters.
- **Medical Support:** Provided by some shelters.
- **Nutritional Meals:** Specific to certain shelters like RaFaSA.

How shelters have been ensuring the safety and security of LGBTQ residents and addressing past/present insecurities.



Challenges Faced

Despite their efforts, LGBTQ+ inclusive shelters encounter various challenges that hinder their ability to provide comprehensive support to residents.

Common Challenges Faced by Shelters

- **Financial Constraints:** Nearly all shelters face this challenge.
- **Safety and Security Concerns:** Reported universally.
- **Legal Barriers:** Particularly impacting shelters supporting refugees.
- **Stigma and Discrimination:** Both within shelters and from the broader community.

Benchmarking Framework

To assess the performance of homeless shelters, a benchmarking framework based on the identified KPIs is proposed. This framework involves:

1. **Data Collection:** Regularly collecting data on the identified KPIs from each shelter.
2. **Performance Assessment:** Analyzing the data to assess performance against the KPIs.
3. **Comparative Analysis:** Comparing performance across shelters to identify strengths and areas for improvement.
4. **Stakeholder Involvement:** Engaging stakeholders in the benchmarking process to provide insights and recommendations.

Best Practices and Success Stories

Shelters have developed effective strategies and practices to address challenges and provide quality care to LGBTQ+ residents.

Best Practices Implemented by Mapped Shelters

- **Trauma-Informed Care Approach:** Adopted by several shelters.
- **Community Partnerships:** Leveraged for resources and training.
- **Safe Spaces:** Designated areas within shelters for LGBTQ+ individuals.

Source: Survey Data, 2023/24

Case Study: Kenneth and Jacob's House

Kenneth and Jacob's House has successfully implemented a trauma-informed care approach, providing residents with tailored support that addresses their unique needs. The shelter has also established strong partnerships with local LGBTQ+ organizations, enabling them to offer a wide range of services and resources to residents.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Identifying key performance indicators (KPIs) is essential for improving the performance of homeless shelters. The following KPIs have been identified based on the survey responses and best practices:

1. **Occupancy Rate:** Percentage of available beds occupied. Most of the shelters can only hold up to 14 residents at maximum capacity while some only host 12 residents as per their policies.
2. **Service Utilization Rate:** Percentage of residents utilizing available services (e.g., counseling, medical support). The services offered by these shelters are all mandatory as they all go hand in hand in contributing to the wellbeing and recovery of the residents during their stay unless it's an outside case.
3. **Resident Satisfaction:** Measured through surveys.
4. **Resident Retention Rate:** Percentage of residents who remain in the shelter for a period of 30 days or more.
5. **Staff Training Hours:** Total hours of staff training on LGBTQ+ cultural competency.
6. **Community Partnerships:** Number of active partnerships with local and international organizations.
7. **Funding Received:** Amount of funding received from various sources.
8. **Successful Outcomes:** Percentage of residents who achieve positive outcomes (e.g., stable housing, employment).



FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS

Nearly all shelters encounter financial constraints. Funding limitations has hinder their ability to provide adequate services and support to LGBTQ+ individuals. These constraints may result from reduced funding, limited donations, or competing priorities within the organization.

SAFETY AND SECURITY CONCERNS

Safety and security are universal concerns for LGBTQ+ inclusive shelters. These shelters often serve vulnerable populations who may face discrimination, violence, or harassment. Ensuring a safe environment is crucial to protect residents and staff members alike.



LEGAL BARRIERS

Legal barriers disproportionately impact shelters that support LGBTQ+ refugees. These barriers can include discriminatory laws, lack of legal recognition for LGBTQ+ individuals, and challenges related to immigration status. Navigating complex legal systems can strain shelter resources and hinder their ability to provide comprehensive assistance.



STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION

Stigma and discrimination persist both within shelters and from the broader community. Some residents may face judgment or mistreatment from fellow shelter occupants due to their sexual orientation or gender identity. Additionally, societal prejudice can create additional challenges for LGBTQ+ individuals seeking shelter and support.



SHELTERS' BEST PRACTICES SUCCESS TESTIMONIES:



“We have managed to reduce Harassment and Discrimination reports among our shelter residents, leading to a safer and more peaceful living environment. Residents often find that the affirming atmosphere in our shelter helps them build self-esteem and self-acceptance. They feel validated in their identities, which is a crucial step towards personal growth and recovery. Residents who receive support with our housing and skill training in glass making often have more successful transitions to stable housing. This reduces the risk of returning to homelessness and promotes self-sufficiency.” - Resilient Hearts Africa.

“Our shelter has been able to train its beneficiaries in barbershop, salon, nails and spa services. This gives them skills to earn a livelihood where some are absorbed at our shop.” - Refugee Independence Support Organization .

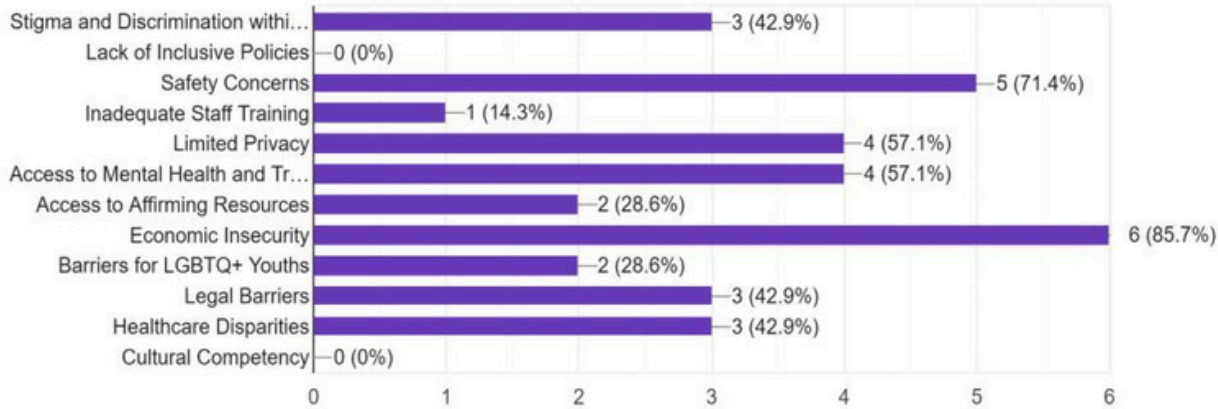
“Our shelter residents feel validated in their identities, which is a crucial step towards personal growth and recovery.” - Transmen Initiative

“Most of our house members reported improved mental health. Having a safe and affirming space allowed them to express themselves authentically, leading to reduced stress and anxiety levels. The job training and assistance (by training cv writing and job employability skills) have helped individuals secure stable employment. This empowerment not only provides financial stability but boosts self-esteem and fosters independence.” - Nadharia Kenya

“Education opportunities secured for children of residents. Past residents supported to kick start their self-reliance journey through our "Exit Plan" program.” - RAFASA

CRITICAL CHALLENGES FACED BY LGBTQ INDIVIDUALS SEEKING SHELTER AND HOUSING ASSISTANCE.

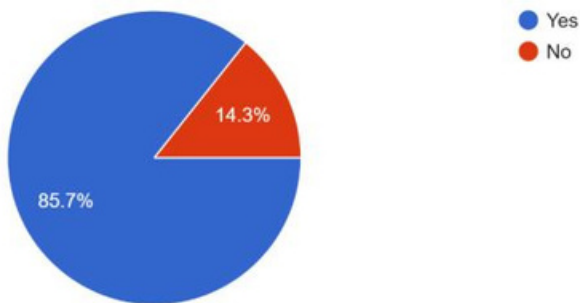
These include significant concerns such as safety within shelters due to discrimination and inadequate security measures, as noted by 71.4% of respondents. Issues like limited privacy (57.1%) and barriers to accessing mental health and trauma support (57.1%) also feature prominently. Economic insecurity emerged as a prevalent issue, with 85.7% indicating its impact. Legal barriers and health-care disparities were noted by 42.9% of respondents, highlighting systemic challenges.



In addressing these challenges, shelters must prioritize several key services and supports. Firstly, ensuring safety and security measures are key to prevent discrimination and violence is crucial. Implementing inclusive policies and providing training for staff on LGBTQ+ issues (14.3%) is essential to create an affirming environment. Offering privacy (57.1%) and access to mental health and trauma support (57.1%) are vital, alongside

economic stability programs (85.7%) and legal assistance (42.9%). Health-care access and cultural competency training (0%) are also critical to meet the diverse needs of LGBTQ+ individuals effectively. By focusing on these areas, shelters can better support LGBTQ+ individuals in securing safe and inclusive housing solutions.

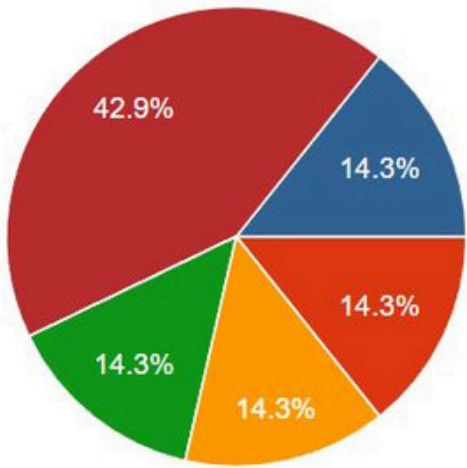
THE AVAILABILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY OF SHELTERS OPTIONS FOR LGBTQ YOUTHS



Based on the responses indicating that 85.7% of participants have not stayed in LGBTQ+ inclusive and affirming shelters, it can be inferred that these individuals have likely sought housing alternatives. Common alternatives might include couch surfing, staying with friends or family, seeking temporary accommodation in non-affirming shelters or housing

facilities, or potentially facing homelessness without access to specialized LGBTQ+ supportive services. This underscores the ongoing challenges faced by LGBTQ+ individuals in finding safe and affirming housing options, pointing to the need for increased availability and accessibility of inclusive shelter options.

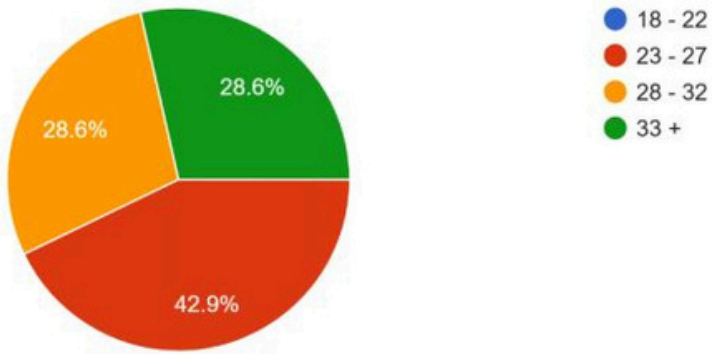
HOW LONG IT TAKES TO GET OUT OF HOMELESSNESS AS AN LGBTQ YOUTH



- I am currently experiencing homeless...
- Less than a month: I have been homel...
- 1-3 months: I have been homeless for...
- 3-6 months: I have been homeless for...
- 6-12 months: I have been homeless fo...
- 1-2 years: I have been homeless for o...
- 2-5 years: I have been homeless for t...
- 5+ years: I have been homeless for m...
- Intermittently: I experience homelesn...
- I have never experienced homelesne...

Based on the responses gathered regarding the duration of homelessness among participants, the majority (42.9%) reported experiencing homelessness intermittently, with periods of housing in between. Additionally, 14.3% indicated experiencing homelessness for less than a month, another 14.3% for 1-3 months, and another 14.3% for 3-6 months. Interestingly, 14.3% stated they have never experienced homelessness. These

responses highlight varied experiences with homelessness among LGBTQ+ individuals, ranging from short-term to intermittent challenges, underscoring the diverse and complex nature of housing instability within this community. Addressing these challenges requires tailored support systems that accommodate the unique needs and circumstances of LGBTQ+ individuals facing homelessness.



Based on the responses regarding the age distribution of participants, 28.6% fall within the age range of 23-27 years, while another 28.6% are aged 28-32. Additionally, 42.9% of respondents are aged 33 and above. This demographic breakdown indicates a predominance of young adults and individuals in their early thirties among those surveyed.

Based on the survey findings and bench-marking assessment, the following recommendations are proposed to improve the performance of LGBTQ+ inclusive shelters in Kenya:

1. **Increase Funding:** Secure additional funding to enhance services and improve facilities.
2. **Strengthen Partnerships:** Foster collaborations with local and international LGBTQ+ organizations to leverage resources and expertise.
3. **Enhance Staff Training:** Provide ongoing training

on LGBTQ+ cultural competency and trauma-informed care.

4. **Advocate for Legal Reforms:** Work with stakeholders to address legal barriers impacting shelter operations.
5. **Promote Public Awareness:** Launch education and advocacy campaigns to reduce stigma and discrimination.

Recommendations for Improvement

Source: Survey Data, 2023/24

Remarks:

Mapping LGBTQ+ inclusive shelters in Kenya highlighted the critical role these shelters play in supporting vulnerable LGBTQ+ individuals. Despite facing significant challenges, shelters continue to innovate and collaborate to provide safe and affirming environments. By addressing financial constraints.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Detailed Survey Responses

- Includes comprehensive data from each shelter's survey response.

Appendix B: Charts and Graphs Data

- Raw data used for generating charts and graphs.

Appendix C: References

- List of references and additional reading material on LGBTQ+ homelessness and inclusive shelters.

REFERENCES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Here are some key references and further areas for research related to LGBTQ+ inclusive homeless shelters in Kenya and develop a deeper understanding of how to create and implement effective, culturally competent LGBTQ+ homeless shelter systems in Kenya:

- 1. LGBTQ+ Homelessness and Support Networks:** LGBTQ+ individuals in Kenya, particularly transgender and gender non-conforming people, face significant barriers to accessing safe housing. Many shelters are not culturally competent in addressing their unique needs, which leads to further discrimination within the systems that should support them. Understanding how local organizations, like Resilient Hearts Africa, are working to provide inclusive and safe spaces for LGBTQ+ people in Kenya is critical for improving these support systems.
 - o SpringerLink: <https://link.springer.com>
 - o Housing&HomelessnessDashboard: <https://mecklenburghousingdata.org>
- 2. Impact of Policy and Legislative Context:** Kenya's legal environment, which criminalizes same-sex relationships, significantly impacts the housing and shelter experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals. Anti-LGBTQ+ laws exacerbate their marginalization, making it harder to access public services, including shelters. Comparative research could be conducted by looking at countries where LGBTQ+ rights are more established, but where gaps still exist in providing services for homeless LGBTQ+ populations.
 - o Human Rights Watch Report: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/09/28/kenya-coast-rife-anti-lgbt-violence>
 - o Housing&HomelessnessDashboard: <https://mecklenburghousingdata.org>
- 3. Mental Health and Well-being:** LGBTQ+ refugees and homeless individuals often suffer from mental health issues due to trauma, violence, and rejection. There's a need for specialized mental health services that take into account the intersection of homelessness and LGBTQ+ identity. Exploring the mental health impacts of homelessness in LGBTQ+ populations, particularly asylum seekers and refugees in Kenya, would offer insights into more effective service provision.
 - o SpringerLink: <https://link.springer.com>
 - o Williams Institute: <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu>

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This comprehensive report serves as a valuable resource for stakeholders, including shelters, homeless youth, and donors, to understand the challenges and opportunities in providing LGBTQ+ inclusive shelter programs in Kenya.

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Shelters Interviewees:

Dewey Mutebi, Rainbow Family Support and Advocacy-Africa (RaFaSA)
Aineyoona Rodgers, Resilient Hearts Africa (ReHA)
Ruele Okeyo, Kenneth and Jacob's House
Danniel, Refugee Independence Support Organization (RISO)
Jordan Zues, Transmen initiative Kenya
Sanaipei Sadera, Nadharia Kenya
Simon Rutarondwa, Community Support Initiative for Refugees (COSIR)
Kizito Lawrence, Pride Umbrella Kenya (PUK)
Malcom Lwanga, Kenya network of Queer Refugee Sex Worker-Led Organizations (KNESWO)
Collins Echessa, Mary Gladys Children Rescue Center
Edith Kamau, Most at Risk Young Mothers and Teenage Girls Living with HIV Initiative (MOYOTE)
Jacob Awity, Jimmy Bonnie - Spectrum Of Care For Homelessness

Spectrum Of Care For Homelessness (SOCFH) is a network of LGBTQ inclusive shelters, homeless youths and service providers dedicated to providing safe, inclusive, and supportive environments for LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness through queering the shelter system. We work to enhance the visibility and accessibility of services, resources, and support for this marginalized community, ensuring they have the necessary tools to transition out of homelessness.

