

2024 LGBTQ COMMUNITY CENTER SURVEY REPORT

*The Impact and Infrastructure of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual,
Transgender, and Queer Community Centers*

October 2024



This report was authored by:

CenterLink: The Community of LGBTQ Centers

CenterLink strengthens, supports, and connects LGBTQ community centers. Founded in 1994, CenterLink plays an important role in addressing the challenges centers face by helping them to improve their organizational and service delivery capacity, access public resources and engage their regional communities in the grassroots social justice movement. For more information, visit www.lgbtqcenters.org.

Movement Advancement Project

MAP's mission is to provide independent and rigorous research, insight and communications that help speed equality and opportunity for all people. MAP works to ensure that all people have a fair chance to pursue health and happiness, earn a living, take care of the ones they love, be safe in their communities, and participate in civic life. For more information, visit www.mapresearch.org.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2024 LGBTQ Community Center Survey Report is the latest installment in a biennial survey series of LGBTQ community centers across the United States, which began in 2008. This joint report by the Movement Advancement Project (MAP) and CenterLink presents findings from the ninth study in the series.

This report shows that, across the country, LGBTQ centers are vital anchors for local communities, providing both LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ people with critical resources, services, and programs, and bolstering local economies with thousands of jobs and volunteer opportunities. Also, because they tend to be locally rooted, LGBTQ centers also play a crucial role in the broader LGBTQ movement, offering an invaluable link between LGBTQ people and local, state, and national efforts to advance LGBTQ equality and meet the needs of LGBTQ people and their families—especially in recent years' escalating political attacks on LGBTQ people.

The 2024 report highlights the centers' vital contributions, including strengthening communities across the country and responding adeptly to immediate needs and lasting structural challenges. This year's report also underscores persistent and emerging challenges, including rising threats to safety and security in an increasingly hostile political and legislative climate.

Participating Centers

Overall, 199 LGBTQ community centers participated in this year's survey, representing 42 states, DC, and Puerto Rico. See *Figure 1* for a map or Appendix B for a list of participating centers.

In this year's survey, 34% of responding centers were small budget centers (with 2024 budgets of less than \$250,000), and 66% were large budget centers (with budgets of \$250,000 or more). The largest portion of small centers operates in the South, while the largest share of big centers operates in the West.

Programs & Services



People Served

- **LGBTQ community centers collectively serve over 58,700 people each week, or over 3 million people per year.** Further, they refer nearly 14,800 individuals per week, or about 770,000 people per year, to other agencies or providers, such as LGBTQ-friendly medical providers, lawyers, or businesses.
- **Many responding centers primarily serve people and communities that are historically under-resourced and under-served.** Among centers reporting each type of demographic data, over half of centers state that a majority of the people they serve are low-income (64% of centers). Over one-third of centers primarily serve people of color (36%). Additionally, 29% of centers say the majority of people they serve are transgender people, 26% primarily serve young people under the age of 18, and 20% of centers primarily serve people who live in rural areas.



Programs

- **Centers offer tailored programs and services that reflect the diversity of both the LGBTQ community and the local community.** Most centers offer programming specifically tailored to transgender and gender-diverse people (90% of centers), LGBTQ young adults ages 18-24 (75%), low-income LGBTQ people (71%), parents of LGBTQ youth (70%), LGBTQ youth under 18 (67%), and LGBTQ people of color (66%), among others. Other programming targeted LGBTQ older adults, people living with HIV, LGBTQ people in rural areas, people in recovery, formerly incarcerated people, and LGBTQ youth in the child welfare system or juvenile justice system, and many others.
- **Centers offer many types of programs to address the diverse needs, experiences, and interests of the people and communities they serve.** For example:
 - 97% of centers offer social, recreational, and community programs, such as social groups, game

clubs, youth drop-ins, mentoring programs, exercise classes, outdoor recreation activities, and more.

- 95% of centers offer **informational and educational** programs like an LGBTQ speakers' bureau, educator support or outreach, resume building and career support, financial literacy training, GED and/or continuing education classes, and more.
- 95% of centers offer **arts and cultural** programs such as film festivals or screenings, art galleries or display spaces, and beyond.
- 86% of centers offer **basic needs** services, such as a food pantry, clothing swaps, social work assistance, direct cash support, housing services, and reentry support for formerly incarcerated people, among other programs.
- 83% of centers offer **legal services**, like legal aid clinics or workshops (e.g., name change or gender marker clinics, Know Your Rights legal education), hate crimes reporting, immigration support, and more.

- **Centers strive to make their programs and services accessible.** Overall, 73% of centers offer at least some programs or services online, and 68% of centers offer access measures such as captions, interpreters, or digital or large print materials for at least some of their programs. Additionally, nearly half (45%) of centers offer services in a language other than English, with Spanish and American Sign Language as the most frequently offered languages.



Health & Wellness Services

- The majority (66%) of LGBTQ community centers directly provide **physical health, mental health, and/or anti-violence services or programs**—and this number jumps to 95% of centers when including those that provide referrals to LGBTQ-friendly health providers.
 - Over half (55%) of centers directly provide **mental health services**, which can include clinical therapy, peer-led support groups, substance use recovery programs, and psychiatric services. Including referrals, this jumps to 94% of centers.

- Over one-quarter (25%) of centers directly provide **physical health services**, such as HIV or STI testing or treatment, PrEP, contraception, addiction or recovery care, gender-affirming hormone therapy, primary care, and more. Including referrals, this jumps to 91% of centers.

- Just under one-fifth (17%) of centers directly provide **anti-violence programs or services**, such as assisting survivors with legal or medical processes, hate crime prevention or community education, hate crime response services, emergency shelter assistance, and more. Including referrals, this jumps to 83% of centers.

- In 2023 alone, centers provided health services to over 81,500 people across 80 centers, though these numbers are a minimum estimate. Another 25 centers which do offer direct health services did not provide data on the number of individuals they served. This figure also does not include the many referrals that centers made to other care providers.



Computer Resources

- Half of centers (50%) offer computer resources or services to the public, including 15% of all centers offering these resources through the David Bohnett CyberCenter Program. In 2023, computer resources at responding centers were used by over 1,200 people every week, or nearly 62,000 people over the year.
- Among centers offering computer resources:
 - 78% say demand for these resources has remained steady or increased over the past two years.
 - 67% offer computer training classes, services, or assistance, such as software-specific training (e.g., Excel, Photoshop) or support with job searches, schoolwork, and more.
- The most frequent uses of computer resources are job searches and career-related uses; social services applications (e.g. housing, food stamps, etc.); and schoolwork and education.



Advocacy & Civic Engagement

- **Nearly all (92%) centers engage in advocacy, public policy, or civic engagement activities**, across a wide range of issues and areas. Nearly all centers work in advocacy or civic engagement **at the local level (97% of centers)** and **state level (84%)**, and two-fifths (40%) also engage at the national or federal level.
- **More than half (53%) of all centers engage in voter registration efforts**, and 42% participate in get-out-the-vote drives. Six percent (6%) of centers also serve as a polling location for elections.
- While centers advocate on a wide range of issues and civic engagement efforts, **more than one-third (34%) of all centers specifically mentioned anti-transgender legislation or other transgender issues as their number one advocacy priority**, reflecting the increasingly hostile political and legislative landscape today.

Threats to Security & Safety



Threats & Harassment

- Unfortunately, anti-LGBTQ violence, rhetoric, and legislative attacks are again on the rise, and this has affected LGBTQ community centers as well as LGBTQ individuals across the country. **Overall, 73% of LGBTQ centers reported they had experienced anti-LGBTQ threats or harassment over the past two years.**
- A majority of centers said they had experienced these threats or harassment offline (63% of centers) as well as online (58%). Almost half of centers (47%) said they had experienced both online and offline harassment in the past two years.
- Numerous centers mentioned in open-ended comments that these threats or harassment were specifically in response to anti-LGBTQ politics or rhetoric (77%), transgender-related events or programing (50%), and youth-related programing (42%), again reflecting the current political environment and its targeted attacks on LGBTQ, and specifically transgender youth.

Center Capacity



Center Staff, Volunteers, and Board

- In just 2023, **roughly 11,600 people volunteered over 421,000 hours at responding community centers**, helping centers with and without paid staff to significantly expand their reach and impact.
- Overall, **84% of responding centers employ paid staff**, providing jobs to 3,100 people (with another 300 currently open positions) across 41 states, DC, and Puerto Rico. Centers with paid staff provide an average of 17 paid positions to their local community.ⁱ
- **However, more than half (48%) of all LGBTQ community centers remain thinly staffed, despite the vital programs and services they provide**: 31% of centers currently have five or fewer paid staff, and 17% have no paid staff whatsoever, relying exclusively on volunteers. This is especially true for small budget centers, 95% of whom have five or fewer paid staff (44%) or no paid staff (51%). In contrast, 25% of big centers have five or fewer staff and no big centers were solely volunteer-run.
- **The staff at LGBTQ centers are diverse, frequently mirroring the communities they serve**. Across centers that reported this information, a majority of all center staff (63%) and of all senior staff (52%) are people of color, while 40% of executive directors are people of color. Notably, LGBTQ community centers employ many transgender people, with one in five (20%) paid staff and 24% of executive directors at responding centers identifying as transgender.ⁱⁱ
- Among centers that provided demographic data about board members' race and ethnicity, **more than one in five (35%) of LGBTQ center board members nationwide are people of color**. Among reporting centers, 10% of all board members are transgender.

ⁱ This average includes open positions and excludes the outlier Los Angeles LGBT Center, with a staff of over 700. Including the Los Angeles LGBT Center, centers with paid staff have an average of 22 positions.

ⁱⁱ For comparison, according to the Williams Institute (2022), an estimated 0.52% of the U.S. adult population—or roughly one in every 200 adults—is transgender.



Finances

- **The financial realities of LGBTQ community centers vary greatly.** Over one-third (34%) of responding centers are “small” centers (annual budgets of less than \$250,000), and the remaining 66% of centers are “big” centers (budgets of \$250,000 or more). Small and big centers vary widely across nearly every measure, including facilities, staff, programming, and more.
- **Centers reported a collective 2024 budget of over \$366 million across all centers, or over \$290 million excluding one outlier center. However, 98% of that collective budget belongs to big centers.** Responding big centers report a collective budget of \$285 million (not including one outlier center) and an average budget of \$2.7 million (not including one outlier).⁵ In contrast, responding small budget centers report a collective budget of \$5.2 million and an average budget of \$97,800.
- **Big and small budget centers draw funding from different sources.** For large budget centers, government grants comprised the largest share of 2023 revenue, while small centers most frequently reported that individual contributions were their main source of revenue.



Government Grants

- Grants from federal, state, or local governments allow centers to provide vital programs and services not only to LGBTQ people, but to local communities across the country. **Overall, over six in ten (64%) responding LGBTQ community centers currently receive government grants**, covering over 1300 grants and totaling more than \$117 million.
- **Centers use these grants to provide vital services to local communities, particularly around health, youth, elders, and community development.** Looking at the purposes of grants to each center, more than half of responding centers (52%) received grants to support LGBTQ youth, over half got grants for providing mental health services (52%), nearly two

out of five (39%) for HIV and STI services, over one in three (34%) for community development, and over one in four (26%) for supporting older LGBTQ people, among other grant purposes.

- **Government grants are a key source of revenue for LGBTQ community centers:** among all responding centers, over a quarter (28%) said that government grants were their number one source of revenue. This is especially true for large budget centers, among whom over two in five (41%) large budget centers reported that government grant funding was their number one source of revenue.
- Despite the importance of government grants to both centers and the local communities they serve, the majority of centers report that both the grant application and grant reporting processes are **significant obstacles to accessing these grants**.



Facilities and Accessibility

- **Nearly nine in ten (87%) responding centers have a dedicated physical space**, with 10% lacking any physical space and another 3% in some other kind of arrangement, such as drop-in offerings in other groups’ spaces. Small budget centers are more likely to lack a physical space.
- **Centers strive to make their physical space available**, with 69% of centers with space open at least some evening hours and 42% open at least some weekend hours. Centers with physical space are currently open an average of 35 hours per week.
- **Centers also strive to make their buildings accessible**, though there remains room for improvement. Overall, 90% of centers with space report having accessible restrooms, 83% provide clear paths of travel within the building, and 82% offer accessible entrances and exits. Nearly two in three centers (65%) have designated accessible parking spaces, and 64% offer natural and/or adjustable lighting.

⁵ Including the outlier, Los Angeles Community Center, bigger budget centers have collective budget over \$461 million, and an average budget of \$4.4 million.

Major Challenges and Opportunities

- When asked, centers highlighted numerous challenges in serving their communities, as indicated throughout this report:
- Overall Challenges.** The increase in anti-LGBTQ legislation and rhetoric over the last several years is creating challenges for many community centers, including strains of safety and security, staff, and impacts on center programs and services. Centers have shown tremendous responsiveness to this political climate in both their services and their operations despite the obstacles that hostile policies are creating. Nevertheless, centers are reporting negative impacts on the ability to provide certain health services, lower non-health program attendance, and other effects on their operations. In addition to community centers, LGBTQ people themselves experience the harms of the discriminatory policies and harsh discourse, which underscores that the need for the vital role LGBTQ centers play in their communities is in fact increasing.
- Threats to Safety and Security.** The overwhelming majority (73%) of responding community centers reported that in the past two years they have experienced some manner of anti-LGBTQ threats or harassment, whether online, offline, or both. Moreover,

numerous centers reported that these threats targeted their transgender-related events or programing, drag events, and youth-focused programs. This is a chilling reflection of the impact that the political and legislative attacks on LGBTQ people generally, and especially on transgender youth is having on the ability of centers to do their vital work.

- Staff Capacity.** There is an urgent need for significant and sustained financial investment in community centers. Centers reported on obstacles to engaging in advocacy, pursuing government grants, offering computer resources, and more. In each case, centers reported time and again that their primary obstacles included limited staff capacity and finances. Centers must be robustly funded for their work and their operational needs, including support for their staff.

However, the report finds **clear opportunities** to support the vital work that LGBTQ community centers provide. Given the critical role of LGBTQ community centers, CenterLink and MAP recommend that individuals, communities, funders and foundations, governments, and the LGBTQ movement prioritize giving these centers the additional support and assistance needed to grow and sustain their work—work that is needed now more than ever.



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