

# Avoiding institutional discrimination

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Disasters force people out of secure spaces and social relationships into public places such as refuges and evacuation centres where privacy is reduced. People who identify as members of minority groups in society, such as LGBTQ people, rely on privacy for security. Thus, their vulnerability as members of a community minority is increased during disaster and recovery and may be exacerbated by overt prejudice and discrimination.

In recent years, disaster risk reduction has shifted from an emphasis on vulnerability in the face of disaster to international policies of building resilience. Vulnerability is predicated on inequalities between people, households, groups and communities. Resilience targets the strengths and capacities of people and communities. Resilience is positive in contrast to the negative constructs of vulnerability and is useful to prepare people and communities for potential high-risk hazards. However, vulnerability assessment identifies diversity in society, albeit through a lens of constraints to solutions (e.g. demographics, socio-economic status, cultural, ethnic and gendered minorities) as well as physical proximity to a hazard. The positivity of building resilience identifies strengths and capacities in society, but it has a tendency to homogenise characteristics of resilience to the community level, thereby flattening and hiding diversity. LGBTQ people are largely ignored as a minority with specific needs. During response and recovery, diversity is subjugated to the immediacy of the event. Specific response and recovery processes and actors may exacerbate the vulnerability of the LGBTQ minority, especially during evacuation, support, counselling and rehousing. Faith-based organisations have traditionally provided support and care for people in need. This care provision is formalised when religious buildings and faith-based personnel are selected to provide evacuation centres and arrangements for the management and care of displaced people. An extensive

literature review by King (2022)<sup>1</sup> identified a trend among some faith-based organisations and their adherents towards rejection or condemnation of LGBTQ people. There is a danger that these organisations may discriminate against the LGBTQ people.

A UK Government-funded network of researchers, CASCADE-NET, focused on society's capacity to deal with changing extreme weather risk. A special issue of the *Journal of Extreme Events*<sup>2</sup> examined the diversity of participants in disaster. King's (2022) paper reviewed the literature of experiences of LGBTQ people in disaster with implications for emergency management and policy and the roles and shortcomings of faith-based organisations in service provision. This places LGBTQ people, as both vulnerable and resilient, into a framework for emerging research on informal response to emergencies and disaster.

## Endnotes

1. King D (2022) 'Hearing Minority Voices: Institutional Discrimination Towards LGBTQ in Disaster and Recovery', *Journal of Extreme Events*, 9(2&3). <https://doi.org/10.1142/S2345737622410056>
2. McEwen L, Leichenko R, Garde-Hansen J and Ball T (2022) Increasing Civil Society's Capacity to Deal with Changing Extreme Weather Risk: Negotiating Dichotomies in Theory and Practice, *Journal of Extreme Events*, 9(2&3). <https://doi.org/10.1142/S2345737623020013>