



WCSAP
Washington Coalition of
Sexual Assault Programs

RESEARCH & ADVOCACY REVIEW

Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey

Based on data from the first-of-its-kind national survey, this report reveals devastating statistics about the frequency of blatant discrimination and outright violence against transgender people in schools, the workplace, healthcare, the criminal justice system, and social services.

“Almost a quarter (23%) of...respondents experienced a catastrophic level of discrimination, having been impacted by at least three...major life-disrupting events due to bias. These compounding acts of discrimination—due to the prejudice of others or unjust laws—exponentially increase the difficulty of bouncing back and re-establishing a stable economic and home life.” (Grant, J. M., et. Al., page 10)

“People of color very clearly experienced the compounding and devastating effects of racism, with far higher levels of discrimination and poorer health outcomes than the sample as a whole.” (Grant, J. M., et. Al., page 179)

The report also paints a picture of the incredible resiliency and strength of individuals, their families, and the community. Despite pervasive and repeated bias, discrimination, and violence, survey respondents reported higher levels of education than the general population, as one example.

Transgender People and Sexual Assault Victimization

The survey asked participants about experiences of sexual assault in several specific settings, including employment, education, healthcare, and criminal justice.

The report found that transgender students who identified as people of color experienced higher rates of sexual assault: “American Indian (24%), multiracial (18%), Asian (17%), and Black (15%) respondents experienced sexual assault at higher rates than students of other races.” Those respondents with less education, lower household income, and/or who identified as people of color were more often victims of sexual assault at work. In addition, the report found that “MTF [male-to-female] respondents experienced sexual assault more often (15%) than their FTM [female-to-male] peers (10%).” (Grant, J. M., et. Al., page

36)

- Six percent (6%) of respondents reported being sexually assaulted by someone at work because of being transgender or gender non-conforming. (Grant, J. M., et. Al., page 59)
- Undocumented noncitizens reported particularly high rates of sexual assault at 19%, over three times the rate of the overall sample. (Grant, J. M., et. Al., page 59)
- 64% of those who had experienced a sexual assault had attempted suicide. (Grant, J. M., et. Al., page 82)
- 69% of those who were sexually assaulted by teachers had attempted suicide. (Grant, J. M., et. Al., page 45)
- Ten percent (10%) of respondents were sexually assaulted in a healthcare setting due to bias. (Grant, J. M., et. Al., page 80)
- Of study participants who had interacted with police...2% reported sexual assault because of being transgender or gender non-conforming. Those who have worked in the underground economy [sex work, selling drugs] experienced high rates of...sexual assault (8%). (Grant, J. M., et. Al., page 160)
- Respondents who went to jail/prison reported alarming levels of...sexual assault (15%) perpetrated both by other inmates and by staff. Black respondents reported the highest incidence of sexual assault in prison (34%) by other inmates or by staff. (Grant, J. M., et. Al., page 167)

Advocate Tips

1. Program planning and outreach should include reaching out to survivors of workplace violence, sexual assault in prison, and those in the underground economy.
2. Intake and advocacy with survivors who are transgender or gender non-conforming should include screening and appropriate referral for suicide.

Experiences with Sexual Assault Programs & Other Support Services

The survey asked respondents about their experiences with social, health, and safety services including sexual assault programs, homeless shelters, medical care, and the criminal justice system.

- Respondents reported unequal treatment (5%), verbal harassment/disrespect (4%), and physical assault (1%) when utilizing rape crisis centers. (Grant, J. M., et. Al., page 134)
- One-fifth (19%) reported experiencing homelessness at some point in their lives because they were transgender or gender non-conforming. The majority of those trying to access a homeless shelter were harassed by shelter staff or residents (55%), 29% were turned away altogether, and

- 22% were sexually assaulted by residents or staff. (Grant, J. M., et. Al., page 4)
- Transgender and gender non-conforming people frequently experience discrimination when accessing health care, from disrespect and harassment to violence and outright denial of service [19% were refused care]. These realities, combined with widespread provider ignorance about the health needs of transgender and gender non-conforming people, deter them from seeking and receiving quality health care. (Grant, J. M., et. Al., page 72)
 - Police harassment and assault had an apparent deterrent effect on respondents' willingness to seek out help from law enforcement with 46% of the sample reporting that they were uncomfortable seeking help from police while only 35% reported that they were comfortable doing so. (Grant, J. M., et. Al., page 162)

The report states that because "Tremendous damage results from institutional structures weighted against transgender and gender non-conforming people...All of us...[should] take responsibility for the pervasive civil rights violations and callous disregard for basic humanity recorded and analyzed here." The report continues by urging us each to consider "...the institutional policies we reject or uphold" in terms of how they "either recreate or confront the outrageous discrimination study participants endure." (Grant, J. M., et. Al., page 11)

Advocate Tips

1. Advocates should be aware of possible negative experiences and attitudes towards medical professionals and the criminal justice system when working with transgender survivors, and build a list of referrals in those fields for transgender survivors.
2. "Places of public accommodation [including rape crisis centers] should develop their own non-discrimination policies related to gender identity/expression and train staff on how to follow these policies. Service organizations should develop cultural competency." (Grant, J. M., et. Al., page 136)

About the Report

This report comes from the National Center for Transgender Equality and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. It includes a valuable executive summary, a portrait of transgender and gender non-conforming people (demographics), as well as sections on education, employment, health, family life, public accommodations (including rape crisis centers and domestic violence shelters), and police and incarceration. Each section includes key findings, a more in depth look at the data, conclusions, and recommendations.

This report is based on a first-of-its-kind national survey of transgender people from all walks of life. Most sections of the report include information about experiences of sexual assault in various settings, for example in education and employment. Additionally, the report cites the crucial negative impact of experiences of sexual assault and other violence on the physical and mental health of transgender people. The section on public accommodation includes data about the experiences of transgender people with rape crisis centers and domestic violence shelters. The report includes specific recommendations for schools, employers, and shelters, among other places, to improve services and eliminate discrimination and violence towards transgender people.

References

Grant, J. M., Mottet, L. A., Tanis, J., Harrison, J., Herman, J. L., and Keisling, M. *Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey*. Washington: National Center for Transgender Equality and National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 2011. Retrieved from:
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