



# Violence and Law Enforcement Interactions with LGBT People in the US

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Research shows that transgender people in the United States face persistent and pervasive discrimination and violence. According to the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey—the largest national survey of transgender persons in the United States, with over 27,000 respondents—46% of respondents had been verbally harassed in the previous year, and 9% had been physically attacked as a result of being transgender (James et al., 2016). Nearly half (47%) had been sexually assaulted at least once during their lifetime. At work, 30% of respondents reported being fired, denied a promotion, or experiencing harassment including physical or sexual assault. And 40% of respondents had attempted suicide in their lifetime, which is nine times the rate within the general U.S. population.

Transgender African Americans, according to research, are disproportionately impacted by violence among LGBT people. Among respondents to the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey, 44% of Black respondents reported being verbally harassed, and more than half (53%) were sexually assaulted at least once in their life (James et al., 2016). Another study of anti-LGBTQ violence found that 71% of reported homicides were people of color, 52% were transgender or gender nonconforming, and 40% were transgender women of color (National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, 2018).

LGBT people in the United States are particularly susceptible to violence and discrimination by law enforcement. LGBT people have historically been subject to heightened surveillance and victimization by law enforcement, and a study by the Williams Institute found substantial evidence that “LGBT individuals and communities [continue to] face profiling, discrimination, and harassment at the hands of law enforcement officers” (Mallory et al., 2015). For example, a 2014 report on a national survey of LGBT people and people living with HIV found that 73% of respondents had experienced in-person contact with police in the past five years, and of those, 21% experienced hostile attitudes from officers, 14% reported verbal assault by the police, 3% reported sexual harassment, and 2% reported physical assault (Lambda Legal, 2014). In the same survey, victims of crime reported inadequate police response to their reports of violence, with 205 respondents noting that they had filed formal complaints about

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police misconduct. Notably, police abuse and misconduct were reported at higher rates by respondents of color and transgender and gender non-conforming respondents.

This experience is echoed in data from the U.S. Transgender Survey, in which 61% of Black respondents experienced some form of mistreatment by police, including being verbally harassed, or physically or sexually assaulted (James et al., 2016). Likewise, an earlier study of Latina transgender women in Los Angeles by the Williams Institute found that two-thirds of participants reported experiencing verbal harassment, 21% reported physical assault, and 24% reported sexual assault—all at the hands of law enforcement (Blair Woods et al., 2013).

Research also shows that transgender people are more likely to experience violence at the hands of law enforcement while incarcerated. A Williams Institute study of data from the National Inmate Survey, 2011-2012 (NIS-3) found that transgender people in jails/prisons are at increased risk of sexual victimization and are more likely than cisgender inmates to experience assault or injury from assault by prison staff (Herman et al., 2016).

*Research shows that transgender people in the U.S. face persistent and pervasive discrimination and violence.*

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